

Plays

Susan Glaspell

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Plays by

Susan Glaspell

TRIFLES

THE OUTSIDE

THE VERGE

INHERITORS

TRIFLES

First performed by the Provincetown Players at the Wharf Theatre, Provincetown, Mass., August 8, 1916.

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GEORGE HENDERSON (County Attorney)

HENRY PETERS (Sheriff)

LEWIS HALE, A neighboring farmer

MRS PETERS

MRS HALE

SCENE: _The kitchen is the now abandoned farmhouse of_ JOHN WRIGHT, _a gloomy kitchen, and left without having been put in order--unwashed pans under the sink, a loaf of bread outside the bread-box, a dish-towel on the table--other signs of incompleting work. At the rear the outer door opens and the_ SHERIFF _comes in followed by the_ COUNTY ATTORNEY _and_ HALE. _The_ SHERIFF _and_ HALE _are men in middle life, the_ COUNTY ATTORNEY _is a young man; all are much bundled up and go at once to the stove. They are followed by the two women--the_ SHERIFF_'s wife first; she is a slight wiry woman, a thin nervous face_. MRS HALE _is larger and would ordinarily be called more comfortable looking, but she is disturbed now and looks fearfully about as she enters. The women have come in slowly, and stand close together near the door_.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: (_rubbing his hands_) This feels good. Come up to the fire, ladies.

MRS PETERS: (_after taking a step forward_) I'm not--cold.

SHERIFF: (_unbuttoning his overcoat and stepping away from the stove as if to mark the beginning of official business_) Now, Mr Hale, before we move things about, you explain to Mr Henderson just what you saw when you came here yesterday morning.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: By the way, has anything been moved? Are things just as you left them yesterday?

SHERIFF: (_looking about_) It's just the same. When it dropped below zero last night I thought I'd better send Frank out this morning to make a fire for us--no use getting pneumonia with a big case on, but I told him not to touch anything except the stove--and you know Frank.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: Somebody should have been left here yesterday.

SHERIFF: Oh--yesterday. When I had to send Frank to Morris Center for that man who went crazy--I want you to know I had my hands full yesterday. I knew you could get back from Omaha by today and as long as I went over everything here myself--

COUNTY ATTORNEY: Well, Mr Hale, tell just what happened when you came here yesterday morning.

HALE: Harry and I had started to town with a load of potatoes. We came along the road from my place and as I got here I said, 'I'm going to see if I can't get John Wright to go in with me on a party telephone.' I spoke to Wright about it once before and he put me off, saying folks talked too much anyway, and all he asked was peace and quiet--I guess

you know about how much he talked himself; but I thought maybe if I went to the house and talked about it before his wife, though I said to Harry that I didn't know as what his wife wanted made much difference to John--

COUNTY ATTORNEY: Let's talk about that later, Mr Hale. I do want to talk about that, but tell now just what happened when you got to the house.

HALE: I didn't hear or see anything; I knocked at the door, and still it was all quiet inside. I knew they must be up, it was past eight o'clock. So I knocked again, and I thought I heard somebody say, 'Come in.' I wasn't sure, I'm not sure yet, but I opened the door--this door (_ indicating the door by which the two women are still standing_) and there in that rocker--(_pointing to it_) sat Mrs Wright.

(_They all look at the rocker_.)

COUNTY ATTORNEY: What--was she doing?

HALE: She was rockin' back and forth. She had her apron in her hand and was kind of--pleating it.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: And how did she--look?

HALE: Well, she looked queer.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: How do you mean--queer?

HALE: Well, as if she didn't know what she was going to do next. And kind of done up.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: How did she seem to feel about your coming?

HALE: Why, I don't think she minded--one way or other. She didn't pay much attention. I said, 'How do, Mrs Wright it's cold, ain't it?' And she said, 'Is it?'--and went on kind of pleating at her apron. Well, I was surprised; she didn't ask me to come up to the stove, or to set down, but just sat there, not even looking at me, so I said, 'I want to see John.' And then she--laughed. I guess you would call it a laugh. I thought of Harry and the team outside, so I said a little sharp: 'Can't I see John?' 'No', she says, kind o' dull like. 'Ain't he home?' says I. 'Yes', says she, 'he's home'. 'Then why can't I see him?' I asked her, out of patience. "Cause he's dead", says she. '_Dead_?' says I. She just nodded her head, not getting a bit excited, but rockin' back and forth. 'Why--where is he?' says I, not knowing what to say. She just pointed upstairs--like that (_himself pointing to the room above_) I got up, with the idea of going up there. I walked from there to here--then I says, 'Why, what did he die of?' 'He died of a rope round his neck', says she, and just went on pleatin' at her apron. Well, I went out and called Harry. I thought I might--need help. We went upstairs and there he was lyin'--

COUNTY ATTORNEY: I think I'd rather have you go into that upstairs, where you can point it all out. Just go on now with the rest of the story.

HALE: Well, my first thought was to get that rope off. It looked ... (_stops, his face twitches_) ... but Harry, he went up to him, and he said, 'No, he's dead all right, and we'd better not touch anything.' So

we went back down stairs. She was still sitting that same way. 'Has anybody been notified?' I asked. 'No', says she unconcerned. 'Who did this, Mrs Wright?' said Harry. He said it business-like--and she stopped pleatin' of her apron. 'I don't know', she says. 'You don't _know_?' says Harry. 'No', says she. 'Weren't you sleepin' in the bed with him?' says Harry. 'Yes', says she, 'but I was on the inside'. 'Somebody slipped a rope round his neck and strangled him and you didn't wake up?' says Harry. 'I didn't wake up', she said after him. We must 'a looked as if we didn't see how that could be, for after a minute she said, 'I sleep sound'. Harry was going to ask her more questions but I said maybe we ought to let her tell her story first to the coroner, or the sheriff, so Harry went fast as he could to Rivers' place, where there's a telephone.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: And what did Mrs Wright do when she knew that you had gone for the coroner?

HALE: She moved from that chair to this one over here (_pointing to a small chair in the corner_) and just sat there with her hands held together and looking down. I got a feeling that I ought to make some conversation, so I said I had come in to see if John wanted to put in a telephone, and at that she started to laugh, and then she stopped and looked at me--scared, (_the_ COUNTY ATTORNEY, _who has had his notebook out, makes a note_) I dunno, maybe it wasn't scared. I wouldn't like to say it was. Soon Harry got back, and then Dr Lloyd came, and you, Mr Peters, and so I guess that's all I know that you don't.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: (_looking around_) I guess we'll go upstairs first--and then out to the barn and around there, (_to the_ SHERIFF) You're convinced that there was nothing important here--nothing that would point to any motive.

SHERIFF: Nothing here but kitchen things.

(_The_ COUNTY ATTORNEY, _after again looking around the kitchen, opens the door of a cupboard closet. He gets up on a chair and looks on a shelf. Pulls his hand away, sticky_.)

COUNTY ATTORNEY: Here's a nice mess.

(_The women draw nearer_.)

MRS PETERS: (_to the other woman_) Oh, her fruit; it did freeze, (_to the_ LAWYER) She worried about that when it turned so cold. She said the fire'd go out and her jars would break.

SHERIFF: Well, can you beat the women! Held for murder and worryin' about her preserves.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: I guess before we're through she may have something more serious than preserves to worry about.

HALE: Well, women are used to worrying over trifles.

(_The two women move a little closer together_.)

COUNTY ATTORNEY: (_with the gallantry of a young politician_) And yet, for all their worries, what would we do without the ladies? (_the women do not unbend. He goes to the sink, takes a dipperful of water from the

pail and pouring it into a basin, washes his hands. Starts to wipe them on the roller-towel, turns it for a cleaner place_) Dirty towels! (_kicks his foot against the pans under the sink_) Not much of a housekeeper, would you say, ladies?

MRS HALE: (_stiffly_) There's a great deal of work to be done on a farm.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: To be sure. And yet (_with a little bow to her_) I know there are some Dickson county farmhouses which do not have such roller towels. (_He gives it a pull to expose its length again_.)

MRS HALE: Those towels get dirty awful quick. Men's hands aren't always as clean as they might be.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: Ah, loyal to your sex, I see. But you and Mrs Wright were neighbors. I suppose you were friends, too.

MRS HALE: (_shaking her head_) I've not seen much of her of late years. I've not been in this house--it's more than a year.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: And why was that? You didn't like her?

MRS HALE: I liked her all well enough. Farmers' wives have their hands full, Mr Henderson. And then--

COUNTY ATTORNEY: Yes--?

MRS HALE: (_looking about_) It never seemed a very cheerful place.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: No--it's not cheerful. I shouldn't say she had the homemaking instinct.

MRS HALE: Well, I don't know as Wright had, either.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: You mean that they didn't get on very well?

MRS HALE: No, I don't mean anything. But I don't think a place'd be any cheerfuller for John Wright's being in it.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: I'd like to talk more of that a little later. I want to get the lay of things upstairs now. (_He goes to the left, where three steps lead to a stair door_.)

SHERIFF: I suppose anything Mrs Peters does'll be all right. She was to take in some clothes for her, you know, and a few little things. We left in such a hurry yesterday.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: Yes, but I would like to see what you take, Mrs Peters, and keep an eye out for anything that might be of use to us.

MRS PETERS: Yes, Mr Henderson.

(_The women listen to the men's steps on the stairs, then look about the kitchen_.)

MRS HALE: I'd hate to have men coming into my kitchen, snooping around and criticising.

(_She arranges the pans under sink which the_ LAWYER _had shoved out of

place_.)

MRS PETERS: Of course it's no more than their duty.

MRS HALE: Duty's all right, but I guess that deputy sheriff that came out to make the fire might have got a little of this on. (_gives the roller towel a pull_) Wish I'd thought of that sooner. Seems mean to talk about her for not having things slicked up when she had to come away in such a hurry.

MRS PETERS: (_who has gone to a small table in the left rear corner of the room, and lifted one end of a towel that covers a pan_) She had bread set. (_Stands still_.)

MRS HALE: (_eyes fixed on a loaf of bread beside the bread-box, which is on a low shelf at the other side of the room. Moves slowly toward it_) She was going to put this in there, (_picks up loaf, then abruptly drops it. In a manner of returning to familiar things_) It's a shame about her fruit. I wonder if it's all gone. (_gets up on the chair and looks_) I think there's some here that's all right, Mrs Peters. Yes--here; (_holding it toward the window_) this is cherries, too. (_looking again_) I declare I believe that's the only one. (_gets down, bottle in her hand. Goes to the sink and wipes it off on the outside_) She'll feel awful bad after all her hard work in the hot weather. I remember the afternoon I put up my cherries last summer.

(_She puts the bottle on the big kitchen table, center of the room. With a sigh, is about to sit down in the rocking-chair. Before she is seated realizes what chair it is; with a slow look at it, steps back. The chair which she has touched rocks back and forth_.)

MRS PETERS: Well, I must get those things from the front room closet, (_she goes to the door at the right, but after looking into the other room, steps back_) You coming with me, Mrs Hale? You could help me carry them.

(_They go in the other room; reappear,_ MRS PETERS _carrying a dress and skirt,_ MRS HALE _following with a pair of shoes._)

MRS PETERS: My, it's cold in there.

(_She puts the clothes on the big table, and hurries to the stove._)

MRS HALE: (_examining the skirt_) Wright was close. I think maybe that's why she kept so much to herself. She didn't even belong to the Ladies Aid. I suppose she felt she couldn't do her part, and then you don't enjoy things when you feel shabby. She used to wear pretty clothes and be lively, when she was Minnie Foster, one of the town girls singing in the choir. But that--oh, that was thirty years ago. This all you was to take in?

MRS PETERS: She said she wanted an apron. Funny thing to want, for there isn't much to get you dirty in jail, goodness knows. But I suppose just to make her feel more natural. She said they was in the top drawer in this cupboard. Yes, here. And then her little shawl that always hung behind the door. (_opens stair door and looks_) Yes, here it is.

(_Quickly shuts door leading upstairs._)

MRS HALE: (_abruptly moving toward her_) Mrs Peters?

MRS PETERS: Yes, Mrs Hale?

MRS HALE: Do you think she did it?

MRS PETERS: (_in a frightened voice_) Oh, I don't know.

MRS HALE: Well, I don't think she did. Asking for an apron and her little shawl. Worrying about her fruit.

MRS PETERS: (_starts to speak, glances up, where footsteps are heard in the room above. In a low voice_) Mr Peters says it looks bad for her. Mr Henderson is awful sarcastic in a speech and he'll make fun of her sayin' she didn't wake up.

MRS HALE: Well, I guess John Wright didn't wake when they was slipping that rope under his neck.

MRS PETERS: No, it's strange. It must have been done awful crafty and still. They say it was such a--funny way to kill a man, rigging it all up like that.

MRS HALE: That's just what Mr Hale said. There was a gun in the house. He says that's what he can't understand.

MRS PETERS: Mr Henderson said coming out that what was needed for the case was a motive; something to show anger, or--sudden feeling.

MRS HALE: (_who is standing by the table_) Well, I don't see any signs of anger around here, (_she puts her hand on the dish towel which lies on the table, stands looking down at table, one half of which is clean, the other half messy_) It's wiped to here, (_makes a move as if to finish work, then turns and looks at loaf of bread outside the breadbox. Drops towel. In that voice of coming back to familiar things._) Wonder how they are finding things upstairs. I hope she had it a little more red-up up there. You know, it seems kind of sneaking. Locking her up in town and then coming out here and trying to get her own house to turn against her!

MRS PETERS: But Mrs Hale, the law is the law.

MRS HALE: I s'pose 'tis, (_unbuttoning her coat_) Better loosen up your things, Mrs Peters. You won't feel them when you go out.

(MRS PETERS _takes off her fur tippet, goes to hang it on hook at back of room, stands looking at the under part of the small corner table_.)

MRS PETERS: She was piecing a quilt. (_She brings the large sewing basket and they look at the bright pieces_.)

MRS HALE: It's log cabin pattern. Pretty, isn't it? I wonder if she was goin' to quilt it or just knot it?

(_Footsteps have been heard coming down the stairs_. The SHERIFF enters followed by HALE and the COUNTY ATTORNEY.)

SHERIFF: They wonder if she was going to quilt it or just knot it! (_The men laugh, the women look abashed_.)

COUNTY ATTORNEY: (_rubbing his hands over the stove_) Frank's fire didn't do much up there, did it? Well, let's go out to the barn and get that cleared up. (_The men go outside_.)

MRS HALE: (_resentfully_) I don't know as there's anything so strange, our takin' up our time with little things while we're waiting for them to get the evidence. (_she sits down at the big table smoothing out a block with decision_) I don't see as it's anything to laugh about.

MRS PETERS: (_apologetically_) Of course they've got awful important things on their minds.

(_Pulls up a chair and joins MRS HALE at the table_.)

MRS HALE: (_examining another block_) Mrs Peters, look at this one. Here, this is the one she was working on, and look at the sewing! All the rest of it has been so nice and even. And look at this! It's all over the place! Why, it looks as if she didn't know what she was about!

(_After she has said this they look at each other, then start to glance back at the door. After an instant_ MRS HALE _has pulled at a knot and ripped the sewing_.)

MRS PETERS: Oh, what are you doing, Mrs Hale?

MRS HALE: (_mildly_) Just pulling out a stitch or two that's not sewed very good. (_threading a needle_) Bad sewing always made me fidgety.

MRS PETERS: (nervously) I don't think we ought to touch things.

MRS HALE: I'll just finish up this end. (_suddenly stopping and leaning forward_) Mrs Peters?

MRS PETERS: Yes, Mrs Hale?

MRS HALE: What do you suppose she was so nervous about?

MRS PETERS: Oh--I don't know. I don't know as she was nervous. I sometimes sew awful queer when I'm just tired. (MRS HALE _starts to say something, looks at_ MRS PETERS, _then goes on sewing_) Well I must get these things wrapped up. They may be through sooner than we think, (_putting apron and other things together_) I wonder where I can find a piece of paper, and string.

MRS HALE: In that cupboard, maybe.

MRS PETERS: (_looking in cupboard_) Why, here's a bird-cage, (_holds it up_) Did she have a bird, Mrs Hale?

MRS HALE: Why, I don't know whether she did or not--I've not been here for so long. There was a man around last year selling canaries cheap, but I don't know as she took one; maybe she did. She used to sing real pretty herself.

MRS PETERS: (_glancing around_) Seems funny to think of a bird here. But she must have had one, or why would she have a cage? I wonder what happened to it.

MRS HALE: I s'pose maybe the cat got it.

MRS PETERS: No, she didn't have a cat. She's got that feeling some people have about cats--being afraid of them. My cat got in her room and she was real upset and asked me to take it out.

MRS HALE: My sister Bessie was like that. Queer, ain't it?

MRS PETERS: (_examining the cage_) Why, look at this door. It's broke. One hinge is pulled apart.

MRS HALE: (_looking too_) Looks as if someone must have been rough with it.

MRS PETERS: Why, yes.

(_She brings the cage forward and puts it on the table_.)

MRS HALE: I wish if they're going to find any evidence they'd be about it. I don't like this place.

MRS PETERS: But I'm awful glad you came with me, Mrs Hale. It would be lonesome for me sitting here alone.

MRS HALE: It would, wouldn't it? (_dropping her sewing_) But I tell you what I do wish, Mrs Peters. I wish I had come over sometimes when _she_ was here. I--(_looking around the room_)--wish I had.

MRS PETERS: But of course you were awful busy, Mrs Hale--your house and your children.

MRS HALE: I could've come. I stayed away because it weren't cheerful--and that's why I ought to have come. I--I've never liked this place. Maybe because it's down in a hollow and you don't see the road. I dunno what it is, but it's a lonesome place and always was. I wish I had come over to see Minnie Foster sometimes. I can see now--(_shakes her head_)

MRS PETERS: Well, you mustn't reproach yourself, Mrs Hale. Somehow we just don't see how it is with other folks until--something comes up.

MRS HALE: Not having children makes less work--but it makes a quiet house, and Wright out to work all day, and no company when he did come in. Did you know John Wright, Mrs Peters?

MRS PETERS: Not to know him; I've seen him in town. They say he was a good man.

MRS HALE: Yes--good; he didn't drink, and kept his word as well as most, I guess, and paid his debts. But he was a hard man, Mrs Peters. Just to pass the time of day with him--(_shivers_) Like a raw wind that gets to the bone, (_pauses, her eye falling on the cage_) I should think she would 'a wanted a bird. But what do you suppose went with it?

MRS PETERS: I don't know, unless it got sick and died.

(_She reaches over and swings the broken door, swings it again, both women watch it_.)

MRS HALE: You weren't raised round here, were you? (_MRS PETERS shakes her head_) You didn't know--her?

MRS PETERS: Not till they brought her yesterday.

MRS HALE: She--come to think of it, she was kind of like a bird herself--real sweet and pretty, but kind of timid and--fluttery. How--she--did--change. (_silence; then as if struck by a happy thought and relieved to get back to everyday things_) Tell you what, Mrs Peters, why don't you take the quilt in with you? It might take up her mind.

MRS PETERS: Why, I think that's a real nice idea, Mrs Hale. There couldn't possibly be any objection to it, could there? Now, just what would I take? I wonder if her patches are in here--and her things.

(_They look in the sewing basket_.)

MRS HALE: Here's some red. I expect this has got sewing things in it. (_brings out a fancy box_) What a pretty box. Looks like something somebody would give you. Maybe her scissors are in here. (_Opens box. Suddenly puts her hand to her nose_) Why--(MRS PETERS _bends nearer, then turns her face away_) There's something wrapped up in this piece of silk.

MRS PETERS: Why, this isn't her scissors.

MRS HALE: (_lifting the silk_) Oh, Mrs Peters--it's--

(MRS PETERS _bends closer_.)

MRS PETERS: It's the bird.

MRS HALE: (_jumping up_) But, Mrs Peters--look at it! It's neck! Look at its neck!

It's all--other side _to_.

MRS PETERS: Somebody--wring--its--neck.

(_Their eyes meet. A look of growing comprehension, of horror. Steps are heard outside_. MRS HALE _slips box under quilt pieces, and sinks into her chair. Enter_ SHERIFF _and_ COUNTY ATTORNEY. MRS PETERS _rises_.)

COUNTY ATTORNEY: (_as one turning from serious things to little pleasantries_) Well ladies, have you decided whether she was going to quilt it or knot it?

MRS PETERS: We think she was going to--knot it.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: Well, that's interesting, I'm sure. (_seeing the birdcage_) Has the bird flown?

MRS HALE: (_putting more quilt pieces over the box_) We think the--cat got it.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: (_preoccupied_) Is there a cat?

(MRS HALE _glances in a quick covert way at_ MRS PETERS.)

MRS PETERS: Well, not now. They're superstitious, you know. They leave.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: (_to_ SHERIFF PETERS, _continuing an interrupted conversation_) No sign at all of anyone having come from the outside. Their own rope. Now let's go up again and go over it piece by piece. (_they start upstairs_) It would have to have been someone who knew just the--

(MRS PETERS _sits down. The two women sit there not looking at one another, but as if peering into something and at the same time holding back. When they talk now it is in the manner of feeling their way over strange ground, as if afraid of what they are saying, but as if they can not help saying it_.)

MRS HALE: She liked the bird. She was going to bury it in that pretty box.

MRS PETERS: (_in a whisper_) When I was a girl--my kitten--there was a boy took a hatchet, and before my eyes--and before I could get there--(_covers her face an instant_) If they hadn't held me back I would have--(_catches herself, looks upstairs where steps are heard, falters weakly_)--hurt him.

MRS HALE: (_with a slow look around her_) I wonder how it would seem never to have had any children around, (_pause_) No, Wright wouldn't like the bird--a thing that sang. She used to sing. He killed that, too.

MRS PETERS: (_moving uneasily_) We don't know who killed the bird.

MRS HALE: I knew John Wright.

MRS PETERS: It was an awful thing was done in this house that night, Mrs Hale. Killing a man while he slept, slipping a rope around his neck that choked the life out of him.

MRS HALE: His neck. Choked the life out of him.

(_Her hand goes out and rests on the bird-cage_.)

MRS PETERS: (_with rising voice_) We don't know who killed him. We don't _know_.

MRS HALE: (_her own feeling not interrupted_) If there'd been years and years of nothing, then a bird to sing to you, it would be awful--still, after the bird was still.

MRS PETERS: (_something within her speaking_) I know what stillness is. When we homesteaded in Dakota, and my first baby died--after he was two years old, and me with no other then--

MRS HALE: (_moving_) How soon do you suppose they'll be through, looking for the evidence?

MRS PETERS: I know what stillness is. (_pulling herself back_) The law has got to punish crime, Mrs Hale.

MRS HALE: (_not as if answering that_) I wish you'd seen Minnie Foster when she wore a white dress with blue ribbons and stood up there in the choir and sang. (_a look around the room_) Oh, I _wish_ I'd come over

here once in a while! That was a crime! That was a crime! Who's going to punish that?

MRS PETERS: (_looking upstairs_) We mustn't--take on.

MRS HALE: I might have known she needed help! I know how things can be--for women. I tell you, it's queer, Mrs Peters. We live close together and we live far apart. We all go through the same things--it's all just a different kind of the same thing, (_brushes her eyes, noticing the bottle of fruit, reaches out for it_) If I was you, I wouldn't tell her her fruit was gone. Tell her it _ain't_. Tell her it's all right. Take this in to prove it to her. She--she may never know whether it was broke or not.

MRS PETERS: (_takes the bottle, looks about for something to wrap it in; takes petticoat from the clothes brought from the other room, very nervously begins winding this around the bottle. In a false voice_) My, it's a good thing the men couldn't hear us. Wouldn't they just laugh! Getting all stirred up over a little thing like a--dead canary. As if that could have anything to do with--with--wouldn't they _laugh_!

(_The men are heard coming down stairs_.)

MRS HALE: (_under her breath_) Maybe they would--maybe they wouldn't.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: No, Peters, it's all perfectly clear except a reason for doing it. But you know juries when it comes to women. If there was some definite thing. Something to show--something to make a story about--a thing that would connect up with this strange way of doing it--

(_The women's eyes meet for an instant. Enter HALE from outer door_.)

HALE: Well, I've got the team around. Pretty cold out there.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: I'm going to stay here a while by myself, (_to the_ SHERIFF) You can send Frank out for me, can't you? I want to go over everything. I'm not satisfied that we can't do better.

SHERIFF: Do you want to see what Mrs Peters is going to take in?

(_The_ LAWYER _goes to the table, picks up the apron, laughs_.)

COUNTY ATTORNEY: Oh, I guess they're not very dangerous things the ladies have picked out. (_Moves a few things about, disturbing the quilt pieces which cover the box. Steps back_) No, Mrs Peters doesn't need supervising. For that matter, a sheriff's wife is married to the law. Ever think of it that way, Mrs Peters?

MRS PETERS: Not--just that way.

SHERIFF: (_chuckling_) Married to the law. (_moves toward the other room_) I just want you to come in here a minute, George. We ought to take a look at these windows.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: (_scoffingly_) Oh, windows!

SHERIFF: We'll be right out, Mr Hale.

(HALE _goes outside. The_ SHERIFF _follows the_ COUNTY ATTORNEY _into

the other room. Then_ MRS HALE _rises, hands tight together, looking intensely at_ MRS PETERS, _whose eyes make a slow turn, finally meeting_ MRS HALE_'s. A moment_ MRS HALE _holds her, then her own eyes point the way to where the box is concealed. Suddenly_ MRS PETERS _throws back quilt pieces and tries to put the box in the bag she is wearing. It is too big. She opens box, starts to take bird out, cannot touch it, goes to pieces, stands there helpless. Sound of a knob turning in the other room_. MRS HALE _snatches the box and puts it in the pocket of her big coat. Enter_ COUNTY ATTORNEY _and_ SHERIFF.)

COUNTY ATTORNEY: (_facetiously_) Well, Henry, at least we found out that she was not going to quilt it. She was going to--what is it you call it, ladies?

MRS HALE: (_her hand against her pocket_) We call it--knot it, Mr Henderson.

(CURTAIN)

THE OUTSIDE

First performed by the Provincetown Players at the Playwrights' Theatre, December 28, 1917.

CAPTAIN (of 'The Bars' Life-Saving Station)

BRADFORD (a Life-Saver)

TONY (a Portuguese Life-Saver)

MRS PATRICK (who lives in the abandoned Station)

ALLIE MAYO (who works for her)

SCENE: _A room in a house which was once a life-saving station. Since ceasing to be that it has taken on no other character, except that of a place which no one cares either to preserve or change. It is painted the life-saving grey, but has not the life-saving freshness. This is one end of what was the big boat room, and at the ceiling is seen a part of the frame work from which the boat once swung. About two thirds of the back wall is open, because of the big sliding door, of the type of barn door, and through this open door are seen the sand dunes, and beyond them the woods. At one point the line where woods and dunes meet stands out clearly and there are indicated the rude things, vines, bushes, which form the outer uneven rim of the woods--the only things that grow in the sand. At another point a sand-hill is menacing the woods. This old life-saving station is at a point where the sea curves, so through the open door the sea also is seen. (The station is located on the outside shore of Cape Cod, at the point, near the tip of the Cape, where it makes that final curve which forms the Provincetown Harbor.) The dunes are hills and strange forms of sand on which, in places, grows the stiff beach grass--struggle; dogged growing against odds. At right of the big

sliding door is a drift of sand and the top of buried beach grass is seen on this. There is a door left, and at right of big sliding door is a slanting wall. Door in this is ajar at rise of curtain, and through this door_ BRADFORD _and_ TONY, _life-savers, are seen bending over a man's body, attempting to restore respiration. The captain of the life-savers comes into view outside the big open door, at left; he appears to have been hurrying, peers in, sees the men, goes quickly to them._

CAPTAIN: I'll take this now, boys.

BRADFORD: No need for anybody to take it, Capt'n. He was dead when we picked him up.

CAPTAIN: Dannie Sears was dead when we picked him up. But we brought him back. I'll go on awhile.

(_The two men who have been bending over the body rise, stretch to relax, and come into the room._)

BRADFORD: (_pushing back his arms and putting his hands on his chest_)
Work,--tryin to put life in the dead.

CAPTAIN: Where'd you find him, Joe?

BRADFORD: In front of this house. Not forty feet out.

CAPTAIN: What'd you bring him up here for?

(_He speaks in an abstracted way, as if the working part of his mind is on something else, and in the muffled voice of one bending over._)

BRADFORD: (_with a sheepish little laugh_) Force of habit, I guess. We brought so many of 'em back up here, (_looks around the room_) And then it was kind of unfriendly down where he was--the wind spittin' the sea onto you till he'd have no way of knowin' he was ashore.

TONY: Lucky I was not sooner or later as I walk by from my watch.

BRADFORD: You have accommodating ways, Tony. No sooner or later. I wouldn't say it of many Portagees. But the sea (_calling it in to the_ CAPTAIN) is friendly as a kitten alongside the women that live _here_. Allie Mayo--they're _both_ crazy--had that door open (_moving his head toward the big sliding door_) sweepin' out, and when we come along she backs off and stands lookin' at us, _lookin'_--Lord, I just wanted to get him somewhere else. So I kicked this door open with my foot (_jerking his hand toward the room where the_ CAPTAIN _is seen bending over the man_) and got him _away_. (under his voice_) If he did have any notion of comin' back to life, he wouldn't a come if he'd seen her. (_more genially_) I wouldn't.

CAPTAIN: You know who he is, Joe?

BRADFORD: I never saw him before.

CAPTAIN: Mitchell telephoned from High Head that a dory came ashore there.

BRADFORD: Last night wasn't the _best_ night for a dory. (_to_ TONY,

boastfully) Not that I couldn't 'a' stayed in one. Some men can stay in a dory and some can't. (_going to the inner door_) That boy's dead, Capt'n.

CAPTAIN: Then I'm not doing him any harm.

BRADFORD: (_going over and shaking the frame where the boat once swung_) This the first time you ever been in this place, ain't it, Tony?

TONY: I never was here before.

BRADFORD: Well, _I_ was here before. (_a laugh_) And the old man--(_nodding toward the_ CAPTAIN) he lived here for twenty-seven years. Lord, the things that happened _here_. There've been dead ones carried through _that_ door. (_pointing to the outside door_) Lord--the ones _I've_ carried. I carried in Bill Collins, and Lou Harvey and--huh! 'sall over now. You ain't seen no _wrecks_. Don't ever think you have. I was here the night the Jennie Snow was out there. (_pointing to the sea_) There was a _wreck_. We got the boat that stood here (_again shaking the frame_) down that bank. (_goes to the door and looks out_) Lord, how'd we ever do it? The sand has put his place on the blink all right. And then when it gets too God-for-saken for a life-savin' station, a lady takes it for a summer residence--and then spends the winter. She's a cheerful one.

TONY: A woman--she makes things pretty. This not like a place where a woman live. On the floor there is nothing--on the wall there is nothing. Things--(_trying to express it with his hands_) do not hang on other things.

BRADFORD: (_imitating_ TONY_'s gesture_) No--things do not hang on other things. In my opinion the woman's crazy--sittin' over there on the sand--(_a gesture towards the dunes_) what's she _lookin'_ at? There ain't nothin' to _see_. And I know the woman that works for her's crazy--Allie Mayo. She's a Provincetown girl. She was all right once, but--

(MRS PATRICK _comes in from the hall at the right. She is a 'city woman', a sophisticated person who has been caught into something as unlike the old life as the dunes are unlike a meadow. At the moment she is excited and angry_.)

MRS PATRICK: You have no right here. This isn't the life-saving station any more. Just because it used to be--I don't see why you should think--This is my house! And--I want my house to myself!

CAPTAIN: (_putting his head through the door. One arm of the man he is working with is raised, and the hand reaches through the doorway_) Well I must say, lady, I would think that any house could be a life-saving station when the sea had sent a man to it.

MRS PATRICK: (_who has turned away so she cannot see the hand_) I don't want him here! I--(_defiant, yet choking_) I must have my house to myself!

CAPTAIN: You'll get your house to yourself when I've made up my mind there's no more life in this man. A good many lives have been saved in this house, Mrs Patrick--I believe that's your name--and if there's any chance of bringing one more back from the dead, the fact that you own

the house ain't goin' to make a damn bit of difference to me!

MRS PATRICK: (_in a thin wild way_) I must have my house to myself.

CAPTAIN: Hell with such a woman!

(_Moves the man he is working with and slams the door shut. As the_ CAPTAIN _says, 'And if there's any chance of bringing one more back from the dead_', ALLIE MAYO _has appeared outside the wide door which gives on to the dunes, a bleak woman, who at first seems little more than a part of the sand before which she stands. But as she listens to this conflict one suspects in her that peculiar intensity of twisted things which grow in unfavoring places_.)

MRS PATRICK: I--I don't want them here! I must--

(_But suddenly she retreats, and is gone_.)

BRADFORD: Well, I couldn't say, Allie Mayo, that you work for any too kind-hearted a lady. What's the matter with the woman? Does she want folks to die? Appears to break her all up to see somebody trying to save a life. What d'you work for such a fish for? A crazy fish--that's what I call the woman. I've seen her--day after day--settin' over there where the dunes meet the woods, just sittin' there, lookin'. (_suddenly thinking of it_) I believe she _likes_ to see the sand slippin' down on the woods. Pleases her to see somethin' gettin' buried, I guess.

(ALLIE MAYO, _who has stepped inside the door and moved half across the room, toward the corridor at the right, is arrested by this last--stands a moment as if seeing through something, then slowly on, and out_.)

BRADFORD: Some coffee'd taste good. But coffee, in this house? Oh, no. It might make somebody feel better. (_opening the door that was slammed shut_) Want me now, Capt'n?

CAPTAIN: No.

BRADFORD: Oh, that boy's dead, Capt'n.

CAPTAIN: (_snarling_) Dannie Sears was dead, too. Shut that door. I don't want to hear that woman's voice again, ever.

(_Closing the door and sitting on a bench built into that corner between the big sliding door and the room where the_ CAPTAIN _is_.)

BRADFORD: They're a cheerful pair of women--livin' in this cheerful place--a place that life savers had to turn over to the sand--huh! This Patrick woman used to be all right. She and her husband was summer folks over in town. They used to picnic over here on the outside. It was Joe Dyer--he's always talkin' to summer folks--told 'em the government was goin' to build the new station and sell this one by sealed bids. I heard them talkin' about it. They was sittin' right down there on the beach, eatin' their supper. They was goin' to put in a fire-place and they was goin' to paint it bright colors, and have parties over here--summer folk notions. Their bid won it--who'd want it?--a buried house you couldn't move.

TONY: I see no bright colors.

BRADFORD: Don't you? How astonishin'! You must be color blind. And I guess _we're_ the first party. (_laughs_) I was in Bill Joseph's grocery store, one day last November, when in she comes--Mrs Patrick, from New York. 'I've come to take the old life-saving station', says she. 'I'm going to sleep over there tonight!' Huh! Bill is used to queer ways--he deals with summer folks, but that got _him_. November--an empty house, a buried house, you might say, off here on the outside shore--way across the sand from man or beast. He got it out of her, not by what she said, but by the way she looked at what he said, that her husband had died, and she was runnin' off to hide herself, I guess. A person'd feel sorry for her if she weren't so stand-offish, and so doggon _mean_. But mean folks have got minds of their own. She slept here that night. Bill had men hauling things till after dark--bed, stove, coal. And then she wanted somebody to work for her. 'Somebody', says she, 'that doesn't say an unnecessary word!' Well, then Bill come to the back of the store, I said, 'Looks to me as if Allie Mayo was the party she's lookin' for.' Allie Mayo has got a prejudice against words. Or maybe she likes 'em so well she's savin' of 'em. She's not spoke an unnecessary word for twenty years. She's got her reasons. Women whose men go to sea ain't always talkative.

(_The_ CAPTAIN _comes out. He closes door behind him and stands there beside it. He looks tired and disappointed. Both look at him. Pause_.)

CAPTAIN: Wonder who he was.

BRADFORD: Young. Guess he's not been much at sea.

CAPTAIN: I hate to leave even the dead in this house. But we can get right back for him. (_a look around_) The old place used to be more friendly. (_moves to outer door, hesitates, hating to leave like this_) Well, Joe, we brought a good many of them back here.

BRADFORD: Dannie Sears is tendin' bar in Boston now.

(_The three men go; as they are going around the drift of sand_ ALLIE MAYO _comes in carrying a pot of coffee; sees them leaving, puts down the coffee pot, looks at the door the_ CAPTAIN _has closed, moves toward it, as if drawn_. MRS PATRICK _follows her in_.)

MRS PATRICK: They've gone?

(MRS MAYO _nods, facing the closed door_.)

MRS PATRICK: And they're leaving--him? (_again the other woman nods_) Then he's--? (MRS MAYO _just stands there_) They have no right--just because it used to be their place--! I want my house to myself!

(_Snatches her coat and scarf from a hook and starts through the big door toward the dunes_.)

ALLIE MAYO: Wait.

(_When she has said it she sinks into that corner seat--as if overwhelmed by what she has done. The other woman is held_.)

ALLIE MAYO: (_to herself_.) If I could say that, I can say more. (_looking at woman she has arrested, but speaking more to herself_) That boy in there--his face--uncovered something--(_her open hand on her

chest. But she waits, as if she cannot go on; when she speaks it is in labored way--slow, monotonous, as if snowed in by silent years_) For twenty years, I did what you are doing. And I can tell you--it's not the way. (_her voice has fallen to a whisper; she stops, looking ahead at something remote and veiled_) We had been married--two years. (_a start, as of sudden pain. Says it again, as if to make herself say it_) Married--two years. He had a chance to go north on a whaler. Times hard. He had to go. A year and a half--it was to be. A year and a half. Two years we'd been married.

(_She sits silent, moving a little back and forth._)

The day he went away. (_not spoken, but breathed from pain_) The days after he was gone.

I heard at first. Last letter said farther north--not another chance to write till on the way home. (_a wait_)

Six months. Another, I did not hear. (_long wait_) Nobody ever heard. (_after it seems she is held there, and will not go on_) I used to talk as much as any girl in Provincetown. Jim used to tease me about my talking. But they'd come in to talk to me. They'd say--'You may hear _yet._' They'd talk about what must have happened. And one day a woman who'd been my friend all my life said--'Suppose he was to walk _in!_' I got up and drove her from my kitchen--and from that time till this I've not said a word I didn't have to say. (_she has become almost wild in telling this. That passes. In a whisper_) The ice that caught Jim--caught me. (_a moment as if held in ice. Comes from it. To_ MRS PATRICK _simply_) It's not the way. (_a sudden change_) You're not the only woman in the world whose husband is dead!

MRS PATRICK: (_with a cry of the hurt_) Dead? My husband's not _dead_.

ALLIE MAYO: He's _not?_ (_slowly understands_) Oh.

(_The woman in the door is crying. Suddenly picks up her coat which has fallen to the floor and steps outside._)

ALLIE MAYO: (_almost failing to do it_) Wait.

MRS PATRICK: Wait? Don't you think you've said enough? They told me you didn't say an unnecessary word!

ALLIE MAYO: I don't.

MRS PATRICK: And you can see, I should think, that you've bungled into things you know nothing about!

(_As she speaks, and crying under her breath, she pushes the sand by the door down on the half buried grass--though not as if knowing what she is doing._)

ALLIE MAYO: (_slowly_) When you keep still for twenty years you know--things you didn't know you knew. I know why you're doing that. (_she looks up at her, startled_) Don't bury the only thing that will grow. Let it grow.

(_The woman outside still crying under her breath turns abruptly and starts toward the line where dunes and woods meet._)

ALLIE MAYO: I know where you're going! (MRS PATRICK _turns but not as if she wants to_) What you'll try to do. Over there. (_pointing to the line of woods_) Bury it. The life in you. Bury it--watching the sand bury the woods. But I'll tell you something! _They_ fight too. The woods! They fight for life the way that Captain fought for life in there!

(_Pointing to the closed door_.)

MRS PATRICK: (_with a strange exultation_) And lose the way he lost in there!

ALLIE MAYO: (_sure, sombre_) They don't lose.

MRS PATRICK: Don't _lose_? (_triumphant_) I have walked on the tops of buried trees!

ALLIE MAYO: (_slow, sombre, yet large_) And vines will grow over the sand that covers the trees, and hold it. And other trees will grow over the buried trees.

MRS PATRICK: I've watched the sand slip down on the vines that reach out farthest.

ALLIE MAYO: Another vine will reach that spot. (_under her breath, tenderly_) Strange little things that reach out farthest!

MRS PATRICK: And will be buried soonest!

ALLIE MAYO: And hold the sand for things behind them. They save a wood that guards a town.

MRS PATRICK: I care nothing about a wood to guard a town. This is the outside--these dunes where only beach grass grows, this outer shore where men can't live. The Outside. You who were born here and who die here have named it that.

ALLIE MAYO: Yes, we named it that, and we had reason. He died here (_reaches her hand toward the closed door_) and many a one before him. But many another reached the harbor! (_slowly raises her arm, bends it to make the form of the Cape. Touches the outside of her bent arm_) The Outside. But an arm that bends to make a harbor--where men are safe.

MRS PATRICK: I'm outside the harbor--on the dunes, land not life.

ALLIE MAYO: Dunes meet woods and woods hold dunes from a town that's shore to a harbor.

MRS PATRICK: This is the Outside. Sand (_picking some of it up in her hand and letting it fall on the beach grass_) Sand that _covers_--hills of sand that move and cover.

ALLIE MAYO: Woods. Woods to hold the moving hills from Provincetown. Provincetown--where they turn when boats can't live at sea. Did you ever see the sails come round here when the sky is dark? A line of them--swift to the harbor--where their children live. Go back! (_pointing_) Back to your edge of the woods that's the _edge of the dunes_.

MRS PATRICK: The edge of life. Where life trails off to dwarfed things not worth a name.

(_ Suddenly sits down in the doorway_)

ALLIE MAYO: Not worth a name. And--meeting the Outside!

(_ Big with the sense of the wonder of life_)

MRS PATRICK: (_ lifting sand and letting it drift through her hand_)
They're what the sand will let them be. They take strange shapes like shapes of blown sand.

ALLIE MAYO: Meeting the Outside. (_ moving nearer; speaking more personally_) I know why you came here. To this house that had been given up; on this shore where only savers of life try to live. I know what holds you on these dunes, and draws you over there. But other things are true beside the things you want to see.

MRS PATRICK: How do you know they are? Where have you been for twenty years?

ALLIE MAYO: Outside. Twenty years. That's why I know how brave _they_ are (_ indicating the edge of the woods. Suddenly different_) You'll not find peace there again! Go back and watch them _fight_!

MRS PATRICK: (_ swiftly rising_) You're a cruel woman--a hard, insolent woman! I knew what I was doing! What do you know about it? About me? I didn't go to the Outside. I was left there. I'm only--trying to get along. Everything that can hurt me I want buried--buried deep. Spring is here. This morning I _knew_ it. Spring--coming through the storm--to take me--take me to hurt me. That's why I couldn't bear--(_ she looks at the closed door_) things that made me know I feel. You haven't felt for so long you don't know what it means! But I tell you, Spring is here! And now you'd take _that_ from me--(_ looking now toward the edge of the woods_) the thing that made me know they would be buried in my heart--those things I can't _live_ and know I feel. You're more cruel than the sea! 'But other things are true beside the things you want to see! Outside. Springs will come when I will not know that it is spring. (_ as if resentful of not more deeply believing what she says_) What would there be for me but the Outside? What was there for you? What did you ever find after you lost the thing you wanted?

ALLIE MAYO: I found--what I find now I know. The edge of life--to hold life behind me--

(_ A slight gesture toward_ MRS PATRICK.)

MRS PATRICK: (_ stepping back_) You call what you are life? (_ laughs_) Bleak as those ugly things that grow in the sand!

ALLIE MAYO: (_ under her breath, as one who speaks tenderly of beauty_) Ugly!

MRS PATRICK: (_ passionately_) I have _known_ life. I have known _life_. You're like this Cape. A line of land way out to sea--land not life.

ALLIE MAYO: A harbor far at sea. (_ raises her arm, curves it in as if around something she loves_) Land that encloses and gives shelter from

storm.

MRS PATRICK: (_facing the sea, as if affirming what will hold all else out_) Outside sea. Outer shore. Dunes--land not life.

ALLIE MAYO: Outside sea--outer shore, dark with the wood that once was ships--dunes, strange land not life--woods, town and harbor. The line! Stunted straggly line that meets the Outside face to face--and fights for what itself can never be. Lonely line. Brave growing.

MRS PATRICK: It loses.

ALLIE MAYO: It wins.

MRS PATRICK: The farthest life is buried.

ALLIE MAYO: And life grows over buried life! (_lifted into that; then, as one who states a simple truth with feeling_) It will. And Springs will come when you will want to know that it is Spring.

(_The_ CAPTAIN _and_ BRADFORD _appear behind the drift of sand. They have a stretcher. To get away from them_ MRS PATRICK _steps farther into the room_; ALLIE MAYO _shrinks into her corner. The men come in, open the closed door and go in the room where they left the dead man. A moment later they are seen outside the big open door, bearing the man away_. MRS PATRICK _watches them from sight_.)

MRS PATRICK: (_bitter, exultant_) Savers of life! (_to_ ALLIE MAYO) You savers of life! 'Meeting the Outside!' Meeting--(_but she cannot say it mockingly again; in saying it, something of what it means has broken through, rises. Herself lost, feeling her way into the wonder of life_) Meeting the Outside!

(_It grows in her as_ CURTAIN _lowers slowly_.)

THE VERGE

First performed at the Provincetown Playhouse on November 14, 1921.

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

ANTHONY

HARRY ARCHER, Claire's husband

HATTIE, The maid

CLAIRE

DICK, Richard Demming

TOM EDGEWORTHY

ELIZABETH, Claire's daughter

ADELAIDE, Claire's sister

DR EMMONS

ACT I

The Curtain lifts on a place that is dark, save for a shaft of light from below which comes up through an open trap-door in the floor. This slants up and strikes the long leaves and the huge brilliant blossom of a strange plant whose twisted stem projects from right front. Nothing is seen except this plant and its shadow. A violent wind is heard. A moment later a buzzer. It buzzes once long and three short. Silence. Again the buzzer. Then from below--his shadow blocking the light, comes ANTHONY, _a rugged man past middle life;--he emerges from the stairway into the darkness of the room. Is dimly seen taking up a phone._

ANTHONY: Yes, Miss Claire?--I'll see. (_he brings a thermometer to the stairway for light, looks sharply, then returns to the phone_) It's down to forty-nine. The plants are in danger--(_with great relief and approval_) Oh, that's fine! (_hangs up the receiver_) Fine!

(_He goes back down the stairway, closing the trap-door upon himself, and the curtain is drawn upon darkness and wind. It opens a moment later on the greenhouse in the sunshine of a snowy morning. The snow piled outside is at times blown through the air. The frost has made patterns on the glass as if--as Plato would have it--the patterns inherent in abstract nature and behind all life had to come out, not only in the creative heat within, but in the creative cold on the other side of the glass. And the wind makes patterns of sound around the glass house.

The back wall is low; the glass roof slopes sharply up. There is an outside door, a little toward the right. From outside two steps lead down to it. At left a glass partition and a door into the inner room. One sees a little way into this room. At right there is no dividing wall save large plants and vines, a narrow aisle between shelves of plants leads off.

This is not a greenhouse where plants are being displayed, nor the usual workshop for the growing of them, but a place for experiment with plants, a laboratory.

At the back grows a strange vine. It is arresting rather than beautiful. It creeps along the low wall, and one branch gets a little way up the glass. You might see the form of a cross in it, if you happened to think it that way. The leaves of this vine are not the form that leaves have been. They are at once repellent and significant_.

ANTHONY _is at work preparing soil--mixing, sifting. As the wind tries the door he goes anxiously to the thermometer, nods as if reassured and returns to his work. The buzzer sounds. He starts to answer the telephone, remembers something, halts and listens sharply. It does not buzz once long and three short. Then he returns to his work. The buzzer goes on and on in impatient jerks which mount in anger. Several times_ ANTHONY _is almost compelled by this insistence, but the thing that holds him back is stronger. At last, after a particularly mad splutter, to which_ ANTHONY _longs to make retort, the buzzer gives it up_. ANTHONY _goes on preparing soil.

A moment later the glass door swings violently in, snow blowing in, and also_ MR HARRY ARCHER, _wrapped in a rug._)

ANTHONY: Oh, please close the door, sir.

HARRY: Do you think I'm not trying to? (_he holds it open to say this_)

ANTHONY: But please _do_. This stormy air is not good for the plants.

HARRY: I suppose it's just the thing for me! Now, what do you mean, Anthony, by not answering the phone when I buzz for you?

ANTHONY: Miss Claire--Mrs Archer told me not to.

HARRY: Told you not to answer me?

ANTHONY: Not you especially--nobody but her.

HARRY: Well, I like her nerve--and yours.

ANTHONY: You see, she thought it took my mind from my work to be interrupted when I'm out here. And so it does. So she buzzes once long and--Well, she buzzes her way, and all other buzzing--

HARRY: May buzz.

ANTHONY: (_nodding gravely_) She thought it would be better for the flowers.

HARRY: I am not a flower--true, but I too need a little attention--and a little heat. Will you please tell me why the house is frigid?

ANTHONY: Miss Claire ordered all the heat turned out here, (_patiently explaining it to_ MISS CLAIRE's _speechless husband_) You see the roses need a great deal of heat.

HARRY: (_reading the thermometer_) The roses have seventy-three I have forty-five.

ANTHONY: Yes, the roses need seventy-three.

HARRY: Anthony, this is an outrage!

ANTHONY: I think it is myself; when you consider what we paid for the heating plant--but as long as it is defective--Why, Miss Claire would never have done what she has if she hadn't looked out for her plants in just such ways as this. Have you forgotten that Breath of Life is about to flower?

HARRY: And where's my breakfast about to flower?--that's what I want to know.

ANTHONY: Why, Miss Claire got up at five o'clock to order the heat turned off from the house.

HARRY: I see you admire her vigilance.

ANTHONY: Oh, I do. (_fervently_) I do. Harm was near, and that woke her

up.

HARRY: And what about the harm to--(_tapping his chest_) Do roses get pneumonia?

ANTHONY: Oh, yes--yes, indeed they do. Why, Mr Archer, look at Miss Claire herself. Hasn't she given her heat to the roses?

HARRY: (_pulling the rug around him, preparing for the blizzard_) She has the fire within.

ANTHONY: (_delighted_) Now isn't that true! How well you said it. (_with a glare for this appreciation_, HARRY _opens the door. It blows away from him_) Please do close the door!

HARRY: (_furiously_) You think it is the aim of my life to hold it open?

ANTHONY: (_getting hold of it_) Growing things need an even temperature, (_while saying this he gets the man out into the snow_)

(ANTHONY _consults the thermometer, not as pleased this time as he was before. He then looks minutely at two of the plants--one is a rose, the other a flower without a name because it has not long enough been a flower. Peers into the hearts of them. Then from a drawer under a shelf, takes two paper bags, puts one over each of these flowers, closing them down at the bottom. Again the door blows wildly in, also_ HATTIE, _a maid with a basket_.)

ANTHONY: What do you mean--blowing in here like this? Mrs Archer has ordered--

HATTIE: Mr Archer has ordered breakfast served here, (_she uncovers the basket and takes out an electric toaster_)

ANTHONY: _Breakfast_--here? _Eat_--here? Where plants grow?

HATTIE: The plants won't poison him, will they? (_at a loss to know what to do with things, she puts the toaster under the strange vine at the back, whose leaves lift up against the glass which has frost leaves on the outer side_)

ANTHONY: (_snatching it away_) You--you think you can cook eggs under the Edge Vine?

HATTIE: I guess Mr Archer's eggs are as important as a vine. I guess my work's as important as yours.

ANTHONY: There's a million people like you--and like Mr Archer. In all the world there is only one Edge Vine.

HATTIE: Well, maybe one's enough. It don't look like nothin', anyhow.

ANTHONY: And you've not got the wit to know that that's why it's the Edge Vine.

HATTIE: You want to look out, Anthony. You talk nutty. Everybody says so.

ANTHONY: Miss Claire don't say so.

HATTIE: No, because she's--

ANTHONY: You talk too much!

(_Door opens, admitting_ HARRY; _after looking around for the best place to eat breakfast, moves a box of earth from the table_.)

HARRY: Just give me a hand, will you, Hattie?

(_They bring it to the open space and he and_ HATTIE _arrange breakfast things_, HATTIE _with triumphant glances at the distressed_ ANTHONY)

ANTHONY: (_deciding he must act_) Mr Archer, this is not the place to eat breakfast!

HARRY: Dead wrong, old boy. The place that has heat is the place to eat breakfast. (_to_ HATTIE) Tell the other gentlemen--I heard Mr Demming up, and Mr Edgeworthy, if he appears, that as long as it is such a pleasant morning, we're having breakfast outside. To the conservatory for coffee.

(HATTIE _giggles, is leaving_.)

And let's see, have we got everything? (_takes the one shaker, shakes a little pepper on his hand. Looks in vain for the other shaker_) And tell Mr Demming to bring the salt.

ANTHONY: But Miss Claire will be very angry.

HARRY: I am very angry. Did I choose to eat my breakfast at the other end of a blizzard?

ANTHONY: (_an exclamation of horror at the thermometer_) The temperature is falling. I must report. (_he punches the buzzer, takes up the phone_) Miss Claire? It is Anthony. A terrible thing has happened. Mr Archer--what? Yes, a terrible thing.--Yes, it is about Mr Archer.--No--no, not dead. But here. He is here. Yes, he is well, he seems well, but he is eating his breakfast. Yes, he is having breakfast served out here--for himself, and the other gentlemen are to come too.--Well, he seemed to be annoyed because the heat had been turned off from the house. But the door keeps opening--this stormy wind blowing right over the plants. The temperature has already fallen.--Yes, yes. I thought you would want to come.

(ANTHONY _opens the trap-door and goes below_. HARRY _looks disapprovingly down into this openness at his feet, returns to his breakfast_. ANTHONY _comes up, bearing a box_.)

HARRY: (_turning his face away_) Phew! What a smell.

ANTHONY: Yes. Fertilizer has to smell.

HARRY: Well, it doesn't have to smell up my breakfast!

ANTHONY: (_with a patient sense of order_) The smell belongs here. (_he and the smell go to the inner room_)

(_The outer door opens just enough to admit_ CLAIRE-- _is quickly closed.

With_ CLAIRE _in a room another kind of aliveness is there_.)

CLAIRE: What are you doing here?

HARRY: Getting breakfast. (_all the while doing so_)

CLAIRE: I'll not have you in my place!

HARRY: If you take all the heat then you have to take me.

CLAIRE: I'll show you how I have to take you. (_with her hands begins scooping upon him the soil_ ANTHONY _has prepared_)

HARRY: (_jumping up, laughing, pinning down her arms, putting his arms around her_) Claire--be decent. What harm do I do here?

CLAIRE: You pull down the temperature.

HARRY: Not after I'm in.

CLAIRE: And you told Tom and Dick to come and make it uneven.

HARRY: Tom and Dick are our guests. We can't eat where it's warm and leave them to eat where it's cold.

CLAIRE: I don't see why not.

HARRY: You only see what you want to see.

CLAIRE: That's not true. I wish it were. No; no, I don't either. (_she is disturbed--that troubled thing which rises from within, from deep, and takes_ CLAIRE. _She turns to the Edge Vine, examines. Regretfully to_ ANTHONY, _who has come in with a plant_) It's turning back, isn't it?

ANTHONY: Can you be sure yet, Miss Claire?

CLAIRE: Oh yes--it's had its chance. It doesn't want to be--what hasn't been.

HARRY: (_who has turned at this note in her voice. Speaks kindly_) Don't take it so seriously, Claire. (CLAIRE _laughs_)

CLAIRE: No, I suppose not. But it _does_ matter--and why should I pretend it doesn't, just because I've failed with it?

HARRY: Well, I don't want to see it get you--it's not important enough for that.

CLAIRE: (_in her brooding way_) Anything is important enough for that--if it's important at all. (_to the vine_) I thought you were out, but you're--going back home.

ANTHONY: But you're doing it this time, Miss Claire. When Breath of Life opens--and we see its heart--

(CLAIRE _looks toward the inner room. Because of intervening plants they do not see what is seen from the front--a plant like caught motion, and of a greater transparency than plants have had. Its leaves, like waves

that curl, close around a heart that is not seen. This plant stands by itself in what, because of the arrangement of things about it, is a hidden place. But nothing is between it and the light_.)

CLAIRE: Yes, if the heart has (_a little laugh_) held its own, then Breath of Life is alive in its otherness. But Edge Vine is running back to what it broke out of.

HARRY: Come, have some coffee, Claire.

(ANTHONY _returns to the inner room, the outer door opens_. DICK _is hurled in_.)

CLAIRE: (_going to the door, as he gasps for breath before closing it_) How dare you make my temperature uneven! (_she shuts the door and leans against it_)

DICK: Is that what I do?

(_A laugh, a look between them, which is held into significance_.)

HARRY: (_who is not facing them_) Where's the salt?

DICK: Oh, I fell down in the snow. I must have left the salt where I fell. I'll go back and look for it.

CLAIRE: And change the temperature? We don't need salt.

HARRY: You don't need salt, Claire. But we eat eggs.

CLAIRE: I must tell you I don't like the idea of any food being eaten here, where things have their own way to go. Please eat as little as possible, and as quickly.

HARRY: A hostess calculated to put one at one's ease.

CLAIRE: (_with no ill-nature_) I care nothing about your ease. Or about Dick's ease.

DICK: And no doubt that's what makes you so fascinating a hostess.

CLAIRE: Was I a fascinating hostess last night, Dick? (_softly sings_) 'Oh, night of love--' (_from the Barcorole of 'Tales of Hoffman'_)

HARRY: We've got to have salt.

(_He starts for the door._ CLAIRE _slips in ahead of him, locks it, takes the key. He marches off, right_.)

CLAIRE: (_calling after him_) That end's always locked.

DICK: Claire darling, I wish you wouldn't say those startling things. You do get away with it, but I confess it gives me a shock--and really, it's unwise.

CLAIRE: Haven't you learned that the best place to hide is in the truth? (_as_ HARRY _returns_) Why won't you believe me, Harry, when I tell you the truth--about doors being locked?

HARRY: Claire, it's selfish of you to keep us from eating salt just because you don't eat salt.

CLAIRE: (_with one of her swift changes_) Oh, Harry! Try your egg without salt. Please--please try it without salt! (_an intensity which seems all out of proportion to the subject_)

HARRY: An egg demands salt.

CLAIRE: 'An egg demands salt.' Do you know, Harry, why you are such an unseasoned person? 'An egg demands salt.'

HARRY: Well, it doesn't always get it.

CLAIRE: But your spirit gets no lift from the salt withheld.

HARRY: Not an inch of lift. (_going back to his breakfast_)

CLAIRE: And pleased--so pleased with itself, for getting no lift. Sure, it is just the right kind of spirit--because it gets no lift. (_more brightly_) But, Dick, you must have tried your egg without salt.

DICK: I'll try it now. (_he goes to the breakfast table_)

CLAIRE: You must have tried and tried things. Isn't that the way one leaves the normal and gets into the byways of perversion?

HARRY: Claire.

DICK: (_pushing back his egg_) If so, I prefer to wait for the salt.

HARRY: Claire, there is a _limit_.

CLAIRE: Precisely what I had in mind. To perversion too there is a limit. So--the fortifications are unassailable. If one ever does get out, I suppose it is--quite unexpectedly, and perhaps--a bit terribly.

HARRY: Get out where?

CLAIRE: (_with a bright smile_) Where you, darling, will never go.

HARRY: And from which you, darling, had better beat it.

CLAIRE: I wish I could. (_to herself_) No--no I don't either

(_Again this troubled thing turns her to the plant. She puts by themselves the two which_ ANTHONY _covered with paper bags. Is about to remove these papers_. HARRY _strikes a match_.)

CLAIRE: (_turning sharply_) You can't smoke here. The plants are not used to it.

HARRY: Then I should think smoking would be just the thing for them.

CLAIRE: There is design.

HARRY: (_to_ DICK) Am I supposed to be answered? I never can be quite sure at what moment I am answered.

(_They both watch_ CLAIRE, _who has uncovered the plants and is looking intently into the flowers. From a drawer she takes some tools. Very carefully gives the rose pollen to an unfamiliar flower--rather wistfully unfamiliar, which stands above on a small shelf near the door of the inner room_.)

DICK: What is this you're doing, Claire?

CLAIRE: Pollenizing. Crossing for fragrance.

DICK: It's all rather mysterious, isn't it?

HARRY: And Claire doesn't make it any less so.

CLAIRE: Can I make life any less mysterious?

HARRY: If you know what you are doing, why can't you tell Dick?

DICK: Never mind. After all, why should I be told? (_he turns away_)

(_At that she wants to tell him. Helpless, as one who cannot get across a stream, starts uncertainly_.)

CLAIRE: I want to give fragrance to Breath of Life (_faces the room beyond the wall of glass_)--the flower I have created that is outside what flowers have been. What has gone out should bring fragrance from what it has left. But no definite fragrance, no limiting enclosing thing. I call the fragrance I am trying to create Reminiscence. (_her hand on the pot of the wistful little flower she has just given pollen_) Reminiscent of the rose, the violet, arbutus--but a new thing--itself. Breath of Life may be lonely out in what hasn't been. Perhaps some day I can give it reminiscence.

DICK: I see, Claire.

CLAIRE: I wonder if you do.

HARRY: Now, Claire, you're going to be gay to-day, aren't you? These are Tom's last couple of days with us.

CLAIRE: That doesn't make me especially gay.

HARRY: Well, you want him to remember you as yourself, don't you?

CLAIRE: I would like him to. Oh--I would like him to!

HARRY: Then be amusing. That's really you, isn't it, Dick?

DICK: Not quite all of her--I should say.

CLAIRE: (_gaily_) Careful, Dick. Aren't you indiscreet? Harry will be suspecting that I am your latest strumpet.

HARRY: Claire! What language you use! A person knowing you only by certain moments could never be made to believe you are a refined woman.

CLAIRE: True, isn't it, Dick?

HARRY: It would be a good deal of a lark to let them listen in at

times--then tell them that here is the flower of New England!

CLAIRE: Well, if this is the flower of New England, then the half has never been told.

DICK: About New England?

CLAIRE: I thought I meant that. Perhaps I meant--about me.

HARRY: (going on with his own entertainment) Explain that this is what came of the men who made the laws that made New England, that here is the flower of those gentlemen of culture who--

DICK: Moulded the American mind!

CLAIRE: Oh! (it is pain)

HARRY: Now what's the matter?

CLAIRE: I want to get away from them!

HARRY: Rest easy, little one--you do.

CLAIRE: I'm not so sure--that I do. But it can be done! We need not be held in forms moulded for us. There is outness--and otherness.

HARRY: Now, Claire--I didn't mean to start anything serious.

CLAIRE: No; you never mean to do that. I want to break it up! I tell you, I want to break it up! If it were all in pieces, we'd be (a little laugh) shocked to aliveness (to DICK)--wouldn't we? There would be strange new comings together--mad new comings together, and we would know what it is to be born, and then we might know--that we are. Smash it. (her hand is near an egg) As you'd smash an egg. (she pushes the egg over the edge of the table and leans over and looks, as over a precipice)

HARRY: (with a sigh) Well, all you've smashed is the egg, and all that amounts to is that now Tom gets no egg. So that's that.

CLAIRE: (with difficulty, drawing herself back from the fascination of the precipice) You think I can't smash anything? You think life can't break up, and go outside what it was? Because you've gone dead in the form in which you found yourself, you think that's all there is to the whole adventure? And that is called sanity. And made a virtue--to lock one in. You never worked with things that grow! Things that take a sporting chance--go mad--that sanity mayn't lock them in--from life untouched--from life--that waits, (she turns toward the inner room) Breath of Life. (she goes in there)

HARRY: Oh, I wish Claire wouldn't be strange like that, (helplessly) What is it? What's the matter?

DICK: It's merely the excess of a particularly rich temperament.

HARRY: But it's growing on her. I sometimes wonder if all this (indicating the place around him) is a good thing. It would be all right if she'd just do what she did in the beginning--make the flowers as good as possible of their kind. That's an awfully nice thing for a

woman to do--raise flowers. But there's something about this--changing things into other things--putting things together and making queer new things--this--

DICK: Creating?

HARRY: Give it any name you want it to have--it's unsettling for a woman. They say Claire's a shark at it, but what's the good of it, if it gets her? What is the good of it, anyway? Suppose we can produce new things. Lord--look at the one ones we've got. (_looks outside; turns back_) Heavens, what a noise the wind does make around this place, (_but now it is not all the wind, but_ TOM EDGEWORTHY, _who is trying to let himself in at the locked door, their backs are to him_) I want my _egg_. You can't eat an egg without salt. I must say I don't get Claire lately. I'd like to have Charlie Emmons see her--he's fixed up a lot of people shot to pieces in the war. Claire needs something to tone her nerves _up_. You think it would irritate her?

DICK: She'd probably get no little entertainment out of it.

HARRY: Yes, dog-gone her, she would. (TOM _now takes more heroic measures to make himself heard at the door_) Funny--how the wind can fool you. Now by not looking around I could imagine--why, I could imagine anything. Funny, isn't it, about imagination? And Claire says I haven't got any!

DICK: It would make an amusing drawing--what the wind makes you think is there. (_first makes forms with his hands, then levelling the soil prepared by_ ANTHONY, _traces lines with his finger_) Yes, really--quite jolly.

(TOM, _after a moment of peering in at them, smiles, goes away._)

HARRY: You're another one of the queer ducks, aren't you? Come now--give me the dirt. Have you queer ones really got anything--or do you just put it over on us that you have?

DICK: (_smiles, draws on_) Not saying anything, eh? Well, I guess you're wise there. If you keep mum--how are we going to prove there's nothing there?

DICK: I don't keep mum. I draw.

HARRY: Lines that don't make anything--how can they tell you anything? Well, all I ask is, don't make Claire queer. Claire's a first water good sport--really, so don't encourage her to be queer.

DICK: Trouble is, if you're queer enough to be amusing, it might--open the door to queerness.

HARRY: Now don't say things like that to Claire.

DICK: I don't have to.

HARRY: Then _you_ think she's queer, do you? Queer as you are, you think she's queer. I would like to have Dr Emmons come out. (_after a moment of silently watching_ DICK, _who is having a good time with his drawing_) You know, frankly, I doubt if you're a good influence for Claire. (DICK _lifts his head ever so slightly_) Oh, I don't worry a bit

about--things a husband might worry about. I suppose an intellectual woman--and for all Claire's hate of her ancestors, she's got the bug herself. Why, she has times of boring into things until she doesn't know you're there. What do you think I caught her doing the other day? Reading Latin. Well--a woman that reads Latin needn't worry a husband much.

DICK: They said a good deal in Latin.

HARRY: But I was saying, I suppose a woman who lives a good deal in her mind never does have much--well, what you might call passion, (_uses the word as if it shouldn't be used. Brows knitted, is looking ahead, does not see_ DICK_'s face. Turning to him with a laugh_) I suppose you know pretty much all there is to know about women?

DICK: Perhaps one or two details have escaped me.

HARRY: Well, for that matter, you might know all there is to know about women and not know much about Claire. But now about (_does not want to say passion again_)--oh, feeling--Claire has a certain--well, a certain--

DICK: Irony?

HARRY: Which is really more--more--

DICK: More fetching, perhaps.

HARRY: Yes! Than the thing itself. But of course--you wouldn't have much of a thing that you have irony about.

DICK: Oh--wouldn't you! I mean--a man might.

HARRY: I'd like to talk to Edgeworth about Claire. But it's not easy to talk to Tom about Claire--or to Claire about Tom.

DICK: (_alert_) They're very old friends, aren't they?

HARRY: Why--yes, they are. Though they've not been together much of late years, Edgeworthy always going to the ends of the earth to--meditate about something. I must say I don't get it. If you have a place--that's the place for you to be. And he did have a place--best kind of family connections, and it was a very good business his father left him. Publishing business--in good shape, too, when old Edgeworthy died. I wouldn't call Tom a great success in life--but Claire does listen to what he says.

DICK: Yes, I've noticed that.

HARRY: So, I'd like to get him to tell her to quit this queer business of making things grow that never grew before.

DICK: But are you sure that's what he would tell her? Isn't he in the same business himself?

HARRY: Why, he doesn't raise anything.

(TOM _is again at the door_.)

DICK: Anyway, I think he might have some idea that we can't very well reach each other.

HARRY: Damn nonsense. What have we got intelligence for?

DICK: To let each other alone, I suppose. Only we haven't enough to do it.

(TOM _is now knocking on the door with a revolver_. HARRY _half turns, decides to be too intelligent to turn_.)

HARRY: Don't tell me I'm getting nerves. But the way some of you people talk is enough to make even an aviator jumpy. Can't reach each other! Then we're fools. If I'm here and you're there, why can't we reach each other?

DICK: Because I am I and you are you.

HARRY: No wonder your drawing's queer. A man who can't reach another man--(TOM _here reaches them by pointing the revolver in the air and firing it_. DICK _digs his hand into the dirt_. HARRY _jumps to one side, fearfully looks around_. TOM, _with a pleased smile to see he at last has their attention, moves the handle to indicate he would be glad to come in_.)

HARRY: Why--it's Tom! What the--? (_going to the door_) He's locked out. And Claire's got the key. (_goes to the inner door, tries it_) And she's locked in! (_trying to see her in there_) Claire! Claire! (_returning to the outer door_) Claire's got the key--and I can't get to Claire. (_makes a futile attempt at getting the door open without a key, goes back to inner door--peers, pounds_) Claire! Are you there? Didn't you hear the revolver? Has she gone down the cellar? (_tries the trap-door_) Bolted! Well, I love the way she keeps people locked out!

DICK: And in.

HARRY: (_getting angry, shouting at the trap-door_) Didn't you hear the revolver? (_going to_ TOM) Awfully sorry, old man, but--(_in astonishment to_ DICK) He can't hear me. (TOM, _knocking with the revolver to get their attention, makes a gesture of inquiry with it_) No--no--no! Is he asking if he shall shoot himself? (_shaking his head violently_) Oh, no--no! Um--_um_!

DICK: Hardly seems a man would shoot himself because he can't get to his breakfast.

HARRY: I'm coming to believe people would do anything! (TOM _is making another inquiry with the revolver_) No! not here. Don't shoot yourself. (_trying hard to get the word through_) _Shoot_ yourself. I mean--don't, (_petulantly to_ DICK) It's ridiculous that you can't make a man understand you when he looks right at you like that. (_turning back to_ TOM) Read my lips. Lips. I'm saying--Oh damn. Where is Claire? All right--I'll explain it with motions. We wanted the salt ... (_going over it to himself_) and Claire wouldn't let us go out for it on account of the temperature. Salt. Temperature. (_takes his egg-cup to the door, violent motion of shaking in salt_) But--no (_shakes his head_) No salt. (_he then takes the thermometer, a flower pot, holds them up to_ TOM) On account of the temperature. Tem-per-a--(TOM _is not getting it_) Oh--well, what can you do when a man don't _get_ a thing? (TOM _seems to

be preparing the revolver for action_. HARRY _pounds on the inner door_)
Claire! Do you want Tom to shoot himself?

(_As he looks in there, the trap-door lifts, and CLAIRE comes half-way
up._)

CLAIRE: Why, what is Tom doing out there, with a revolver?

HARRY: He is about to shoot himself because you've locked him out from
his breakfast.

CLAIRE: He must know more interesting ways of destroying himself.
(_bowing to_ TOM) Good morning. (_from his side of the glass_ TOM _bows
and smiles back_) Isn't it strange--our being in here--and he being out
there?

HARRY: Claire, have you no ideas of hospitality? Let him in!

CLAIRE: In? Perhaps that isn't hospitality.

HARRY: Well, whatever hospitality is, what is out there is snow--and
wind--and our guest--who was asked to come here for his breakfast. To
think a man has to _such_ things.

CLAIRE: I'm going to let him in. Though I like his looks out there.
(_she takes the key from her pocket_)

HARRY: Thank heaven the door's coming open. Somebody can go for salt,
and we can have our eggs.

CLAIRE: And open the door again--to let the salt in? No. If you insist
on salt, tell Tom now to go back and get it. It's a stormy morning and
there'll be just one opening of the door.

HARRY: How can we tell him what we can't make him hear? And why does he
think we're holding this conversation instead of letting him in?

CLAIRE: It would be interesting to know. I wonder if he'll tell us?

HARRY: Claire! Is this any time to wonder anything?

CLAIRE: Give up the idea of salt for your egg and I'll let him in.
(_holds up the key to_ TOM_ to indicate that for her part she is quite
ready to let him in_)

HARRY: I want my egg!

CLAIRE: Then ask him to bring the salt. It's quite simple.

(HARRY _goes through another pantomime with the egg-cup and the missing
shaker._ CLAIRE, _still standing half-way down cellar, sneezes._ HARRY,
_growing all the while less amiable, explains with thermometer and
flower-pot that there can only be one opening of the door._ TOM _looks
interested, but unenlightened. But suddenly he smiles, nods, vanishes._)

HARRY: Well, thank heaven (_exhausted_) that's over.

CLAIRE: (_sitting on the top step_) It was all so queer. He locked out
on his side of the door. You locked in on yours. Looking right at each

other and--

HARRY: (_in mockery_) And me trying to tell him to kindly fetch the salt!

CLAIRE: Yes.

HARRY: (_to_ DICK) Well, I didn't do so bad a job, did I? Quite an idea, explaining our situation with the thermometer and the flower-pot. That was really an apology for keeping him out there. Heaven knows--some explanation was in order, (_he is watching, and sees_ TOM _coming_) Now there he is, Claire. And probably pretty well fed up with the weather.

(CLAIRE _goes to the door, stops before it. She and_ TOM _look at each other through the glass. Then she lets him in._)

TOM: And now I am in. For a time it seemed I was not to be in. But after I got the idea that you were keeping me out there to see if I could get the idea--it would be too humiliating for a wall of glass to keep one from understanding. (_taking it from his pocket_) So there's the other thermometer. Where do you want it? (CLAIRE _takes it_)

CLAIRE: And where's the pepper?

TOM: (_putting it on the table_) And here's the pepper.

HARRY: Pepper?

TOM: When Claire sneezed I knew--

CLAIRE: Yes, I knew if I sneezed you would bring the pepper.

TOM: Funny how one always remembers the salt, but the pepper gets overlooked in preparations. And what is an egg without pepper?

HARRY: (_nastily_) There's your egg, Edgeworth. (_pointing to it on the floor_) Claire decided it would be a good idea to smash everything, so she began with your egg.

TOM: (_looking at his egg_) The idea of smashing everything is really more intriguing than an egg.

HARRY: Nice that you feel that way about it.

CLAIRE: (_giving_ TOM _his coffee_) You want to hear something amusing? I married Harry because I thought he would smash something.

HARRY: Well, that was an error in judgment.

CLAIRE: I'm such a naive trusting person (HARRY _laughs_--CLAIRE _gives him a surprised look, continues simply_). Such a guileless soul that I thought flying would do something to a man. But it didn't take us out. We just took it in.

TOM: It's only our own spirit can take us out.

HARRY: Whatever you mean by out.

CLAIRE: (_after looking intently at_ TOM, _and considering it_) But our

own spirit is not something on the loose. Mine isn't. It has something to do with what I do. To fly. To be free in air. To look from above on the world of all my days. Be where man has never been! Yes--wouldn't you think the spirit could get the idea? The earth grows smaller. I am leaving. What are they--running around down there? Why do they run around down there? Houses? Houses are funny lines and down-going slants--houses are vanishing slants. I am alone. Can I breathe this rarer air? Shall I go higher? Shall I go too high? I am loose. I am out. But no; man flew, and returned to earth the man who left it.

HARRY: And jolly well likely not to have returned at all if he'd had those flighty notions while operating a machine.

CLAIRE: Oh, Harry! (_not lightly asked_) Can't you see it would be better not to have returned than to return the man who left it?

HARRY: I have some regard for human life.

CLAIRE: Why, no--I am the one who has the regard for human life, (_more lightly_) That was why I swiftly divorced my stick-in-the-mud artist and married--the man of flight. But I merely passed from a stick-in-the-mud artist to a--

DICK: Stick-in-the-air aviator?

HARRY: Speaking of your stick-in-the-mud artist, as you romantically call your first blunder, isn't his daughter--and yours--due here to-day?

CLAIRE: I knew something was disturbing me. Elizabeth. A daughter is being delivered unto me this morning. I have a feeling it will be more painful than the original delivery. She has been, as they quaintly say, educated; prepared for her place in life.

HARRY: And fortunately Claire has a sister who is willing to give her young niece that place.

CLAIRE: The idea of giving anyone a place in life.

HARRY: Yes! The very idea!

CLAIRE: Yes! (_as often, the mocking thing gives true expression to what lies sombrely in her_) The war. There was another gorgeous chance.

HARRY: Chance for what? I call you, Claire. I ask you to say what you mean.

CLAIRE: I don't know--precisely. If I did--there'd be no use saying it. (_at_ HARRY's _impatient exclamation she turns to_ TOM)

TOM: (_nodding_) The only thing left worth saying is the thing we can't say.

HARRY: Help!

CLAIRE: Yes. But the war didn't help. Oh, it was a stunning chance! But fast as we could--scuttled right back to the trim little thing we'd been shocked out of.

HARRY: You bet we did--showing our good sense.

CLAIRE: Showing our incapacity--for madness.

HARRY: Oh, come now, Claire--snap out of it. You're not really trying to say that capacity for madness is a good thing to have?

CLAIRE: (_in simple surprise_) Why yes, of course.

DICK: But I should say the war did leave enough madness to give you a gleam of hope.

CLAIRE: Not the madness that--breaks through. And it was--a stunning chance! Mankind massed to kill. We have failed. We are through. We will destroy. Break this up--it can't go farther. In the air above--in the sea below--it is to kill! All we had thought we were--we aren't. We were shut in with what wasn't so. Is there one ounce of energy has not gone to this killing? Is there one love not torn in two? Throw it in! Now? Ready? Break up. Push. Harder. Break up. And then--and then--But we didn't say--'And then--' The spirit didn't take the tip.

HARRY: Claire! Come now (_looking to the others for help_)--let's talk of something else.

CLAIRE: Plants do it. The big leap--it's called. Explode their species--because something in them knows they've gone as far as they can go. Something in them knows they're shut in to just that. So--go mad--that life may not be prisoned. Break themselves up into crazy things--into lesser things, and from the pieces--may come one sliver of life with vitality to find the future. How beautiful. How brave.

TOM: (_as if he would call her from too far--or would let her know he has gone with her_) Claire!

CLAIRE: (_her eyes turning to him_) Why should we mind lying under the earth? We who have no such initiative--no proud madness? Why think it death to lie under life so flexible--so ruthless and ever-renewing?

ANTHONY: (_from the door of the inner room_) Miss Claire?

CLAIRE: (_after an instant_) Yes? (_she goes with him, as they disappear his voice heard_, 'show me now ... want those violets bedded')

HARRY: Oh, this has got to _stop_. I've got to--put a stop to it some way. Why, Claire used to be the best sport a man ever played around with. I can't stand it to see her getting hysterical.

TOM: That was not hysterical.

HARRY: What was it then--I want to know?

TOM: It was--a look.

HARRY: Oh, I might have known I'd get no help from either of you. Even you, Edgeworthy--much as she thinks of you--and fine sort as I've no doubt you are, you're doing Claire no good--encouraging her in these queer ways.

TOM: I couldn't change Claire if I would.

HARRY: And wouldn't if you could.

TOM: No. But you don't have to worry about me. I'm going away in a day or two. And I shall not be back.

HARRY: Trouble with you is, it makes little difference whether you're here or away. Just the fact of your existence does encourage Claire in this--this way she's going.

TOM: (with a smile) But you wouldn't ask me to go so far as to stop my existence? Though I would do that for Claire--if it were the way to help her.

HARRY: By Jove, you say that as if you meant it.

TOM: Do you think I would say anything about Claire I didn't mean?

HARRY: You think a lot of her, don't you? (TOM nods) You don't mean (a laugh letting him say it)--that you're--in love with Claire!

TOM: In love? Oh, that's much too easy. Certainly I do love Claire.

HARRY: Well, you're a cool one!

TOM: Let her be herself. Can't you see she's troubled?

HARRY: Well, what is there to trouble Claire? Now I ask you. It seems to me she has everything.

TOM: She's left so--open. Too exposed, (as HARRY moves impatiently) Please don't be annoyed with me. I'm doing my best at saying it. You see Claire isn't hardened into one of those forms she talks about. She's too--aware. Always pulled toward what could be--tormented by the lost adventure.

HARRY: Well, there's danger in all that. Of course there's danger.

TOM: But you can't help that.

HARRY: Claire was the best fun a woman could be. Is yet--at times.

TOM: Let her be--at times. As much as she can and will. She does need that. Don't keep her from it by making her feel you're holding her in it. Above all, don't try to stop what she's doing here. If she can do it with plants, perhaps she won't have to do it with herself.

HARRY: Do what?

TOM: (low, after a pause) Break up what exists. Open the door to destruction in the hope of--a door on the far side of destruction.

HARRY: Well, you give me the willies, (moves around in irritation, troubled. To ANTHONY, who is passing through with a sprayer) Anthony, have any arrangements been made about Miss Claire's daughter?

ANTHONY: I haven't heard of any arrangements.

HARRY: Well, she'll have to have some heat in her room. We can't all live out here.

ANTHONY: Indeed you cannot. It is not good for the plants.

HARRY: I'm going where I can _smoke_, (_goes out_)

DICK: (_lightly, but fascinated by the idea_) You think there is a door on the--hinter side of destruction?

TOM: How can one tell--where a door may be? One thing I want to say to you--for it is about you. (_regards_ DICK _and not with his usual impersonal contemplation_) I don't think Claire should have--any door closed to her. (_pause_) You know, I think, what I mean. And perhaps you can guess how it hurts to say it. Whether it's--mere escape within,--rather shameful escape within, or the wild hope of that door through, it's--(_suddenly all human_) Be good to her! (_after a difficult moment, smiles_) Going away for ever is like dying, so one can say things.

DICK: Why do you do it--go away for ever?

TOM: I haven't succeeded here.

DICK: But you've tried the going away before.

TOM: Never knowing I would not come back. So that wasn't going away. My hope is that this will be like looking at life from outside life.

DICK: But then you'll not be in it.

TOM: I haven't been able to look at it while in it.

DICK: Isn't it more important to be in it than to look at it?

TOM: Not what I mean by look.

DICK: It's hard for me to conceive of--loving Claire and going away from her for ever.

TOM: Perhaps it's harder to do than to conceive of.

DICK: Then why do it?

TOM: It's my only way of keeping her.

DICK: I'm afraid I'm like Harry now. I don't get you.

TOM: I suppose not. Your way is different, (_with calm, with sadness--not with malice_) But I shall have her longer. And from deeper.

DICK: I know that.

TOM: Though I miss much. Much, (_the buzzer_. TOM _looks around to see if anyone is coming to answer it, then goes to the phone_) Yes?... I'll see if I can get her. (_to_ DICK) Claire's daughter has arrived, (_looking in the inner room--returns to phone_) I don't see her. (_catching a glimpse of ANTHONY off right_) Oh, Anthony, where's Miss Claire? Her daughter has arrived.

ANTHONY: She's working at something very important in her experiments.

DICK: But isn't her daughter one of her experiments?

ANTHONY: (_after a baffled moment_) Her daughter is finished.

TOM: (_at the phone_) Sorry--but I can't get to Claire. She appears to have gone below. (ANTHONY _closes the trap-door_) I did speak to Anthony, but he says that Claire is working at one of her experiments and that her daughter is finished. I don't know how to make her hear--I took the revolver back to the house. Anyway you will remember Claire doesn't answer the revolver. I hate to reach Claire when she doesn't want to be reached. Why, of course--a daughter is very important, but oh, that's too bad. (_putting down the receiver_) He says the girl's feelings are hurt. Isn't that annoying? (_gingerly pounds on the trap-door. Then with the other hand. Waits_. ANTHONY _has a gentle smile for the gentle tapping--nods approval as,_ TOM _returns to the phone_) She doesn't come up. Indeed I did--with both fists--Sorry.

ANTHONY: Please, you won't try again to disturb Miss Claire, will you?

DICK: Her daughter is here, Anthony. She hasn't seen her daughter for a year.

ANTHONY: Well, if she got along without a mother for a year--(_goes back to his work_)

DICK: (_smiling after_ ANTHONY) Plants are queer. Perhaps it's _safer_ to do it with pencil (_regards_ TOM)--or with pure thought. Things that grow in the earth--

TOM: (_nodding_) I suppose because we grew in the earth.

DICK: I'm always shocked to find myself in agreement with Harry, but I too am worried about Claire--and this, (_looking at the plants_)

TOM: It's her best chance.

DICK: Don't you hate to go away to India--for ever--leaving Claire's future uncertain?

TOM: You're cruel now. And you knew that you were being cruel.

DICK: Yes, I like the lines of your face when you suffer.

TOM: The lines of yours when you're causing suffering--I don't like them.

DICK: Perhaps that's your limitation.

TOM: I grant you it may be. (_They are silent_) I had an odd feeling that you and I sat here once before, long ago, and that we were plants. And you were a beautiful plant, and I--I was a very ugly plant. I confess it surprised me--finding myself so ugly a plant.

(_A young girl is seen outside_. HARRY _gets the door open for her and brings_ ELIZABETH _in_.)

HARRY: There's heat here. And two of your mother's friends. Mr Demming--Richard Demming--the artist--and I think you and Mr Edgeworthy

are old friends.

(ELIZABETH _comes forward. She is the creditable young American--well built, poised, 'cultivated', so sound an expression of the usual as to be able to meet the world with assurance--assurance which training has made rather graceful. She is about seventeen--and mature. You feel solid things behind her_.)

TOM: I knew you when you were a baby. You used to kick a great deal then.

ELIZABETH: (_laughing, with ease_) And scream, I haven't a doubt. But I've stopped that. One does, doesn't one? And it was you who gave me the idol.

TOM: Proselytizing, I'm afraid.

ELIZABETH: I beg--? Oh--_yes (laughing cordially_) I _see. (she doesn't_) I dressed the idol up in my doll's clothes. They fitted perfectly--the idol was just the size of my doll Ailine. But mother didn't like the idol that way, and tore the clothes getting them off. (_to_ HARRY, _after looking around_) Is mother here?

HARRY: (_crossly_) Yes, she's here. Of course she's here. And she must know you're here, (_after looking in the inner room he goes to the trap-door and makes a great noise_)

ELIZABETH: Oh--_please_. Really--it doesn't make the least difference.

HARRY: Well, all I can say is, your manners are better than your mother's.

ELIZABETH: But you see I don't do anything interesting, so I have to have good manners. (_lightly, but leaving the impression there is a certain superiority in not doing anything interesting. Turning cordially to_ DICK) My father was an artist.

DICK: Yes, I know.

ELIZABETH: He was a portrait painter. Do you do portraits?

DICK: Well, not the kind people buy.

ELIZABETH: They bought father's.

DICK: Yes, I know he did that kind.

HARRY: (_still irritated_) Why, you don't do portraits.

DICK: I did one of you the other day. You thought it was a milk-can.

ELIZABETH: (_laughing delightedly_) No? Not really? Did you think--How could you think--(_as_ HARRY _does not join the laugh_) Oh, I beg your pardon. I--Does mother grow beautiful roses now?

HARRY: No, she does not.

(_The trap-door begins to move_. CLAIRE's _head appears_.)

ELIZABETH: Mother! It's been so long--(_she tries to overcome the difficulties and embrace her mother_)

CLAIRE: (_protecting a box she has_) Careful, Elizabeth. We mustn't upset the lice.

ELIZABETH: (_retreating_) Lice? (_but quickly equal even to lice_)
Oh--yes. You take it--them--off plants, don't you?

CLAIRE: I'm putting them on certain plants.

ELIZABETH: (_weakly_) Oh, I thought you took them off.

CLAIRE: (_calling_) Anthony! (_he comes_) The lice. (_he takes them from her_) (CLAIRE, _who has not fully ascended, looks at_ ELIZABETH, _hesitates, then suddenly starts back down the stairs_.)

HARRY: (_outraged_) Claire! (_slowly she re-ascends--sits on the top step. After a long pause in which he has waited for_ CLAIRE _to open a conversation with her daughter_.) Well, and what have you been doing at school all this time?

ELIZABETH: Oh--studying.

CLAIRE: Studying what?

ELIZABETH: Why--the things one studies, mother.

CLAIRE: Oh! The things one studies. (_looks down cellar again_)

DICK: (_after another wait_) And what have you been doing besides studying?

ELIZABETH: Oh--the things one does. Tennis and skating and dancing and--

CLAIRE: The things one does.

ELIZABETH: Yes. All the things. The--the things one does. Though I haven't been in school these last few months, you know. Miss Lane took us to Europe.

TOM: And how did you like Europe?

ELIZABETH: (_capably_) Oh, I thought it was awfully amusing. All the girls were quite mad about Europe. Of course, I'm glad I'm an American.

CLAIRE: Why?

ELIZABETH: (_laughing_) Why--mother! Of course one is glad one is an American. All the girls--

CLAIRE: (_turning away_) O--h! (_a moan under the breath_)

ELIZABETH: Why, mother--aren't you well?

HARRY: Your mother has been working pretty hard at all this.

ELIZABETH: Oh, I do so want to know all about it? Perhaps I can help you! I think it's just awfully amusing that you're doing something. One

does nowadays, doesn't one?--if you know what I mean. It was the war, wasn't it, made it the thing to do something?

DICK: (_slyly_) And you thought, Claire, that the war was lost.

ELIZABETH: The _war? Lost!_ (_her capable laugh_) Fancy our losing a war! Miss Lane says we should give _thanks_. She says we should each do some expressive thing--you know what I mean? And that this is the _keynote_ of the age. Of course, one's own kind of thing. Like mother--growing flowers.

CLAIRE: You think that is one's own kind of thing?

ELIZABETH: Why, of course I do, mother. And so does Miss Lane. All the girls--

CLAIRE: (_shaking her head as if to get something out_) S-hoo.

ELIZABETH: What is it, mother?

CLAIRE: A fly shut up in my ear--'All the girls!'

ELIZABETH: (_laughing_) Mother was always so amusing. So _different_ --if you know what I mean. Vacations I've lived mostly with Aunt Adelaide, you know.

CLAIRE: My sister who is fitted to rear children.

HARRY: Well, somebody has to do it.

ELIZABETH: And I do love Aunt Adelaide, but I think its going to be awfully amusing to be around with mother now--and help her with her work. Help do some useful beautiful thing.

CLAIRE: I am not doing any useful beautiful thing.

ELIZABETH: Oh, but you are, mother. Of course you are. Miss Lane says so. She says it is your splendid heritage gives you this impulse to do a beautiful thing for the race. She says you are doing in your way what the great teachers and preachers behind you did in theirs.

CLAIRE: (_who is good for little more_) Well, all I can say is, Miss Lane is stung.

ELIZABETH: Mother! What a thing to say of Miss Lane. (_from this slipping into more of a little girl manner_) Oh, she gave me a spiel one day about living up to the men I come from.

(CLAIRE _turns and regards her daughter_.)

CLAIRE: You'll do it, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH: Well, I don't know. Quite a job, I'll say. Of course, I'd have to do it in my way. I'm not going to teach or preach or be a stuffy person. But now that--(_she here becomes the product of a superior school_) values have shifted and such sensitive new things have been liberated in the world--

CLAIRE: (_low_) Don't use those words.

ELIZABETH: Why--why not?

CLAIRE: Because you don't know what they mean.

ELIZABETH: Why, of course I know what they mean!

CLAIRE: (_turning away_) You're--stepping on the plants.

HARRY: (_hastily_) Your mother has been working awfully hard at all this.

ELIZABETH: Well, now that I'm here you'll let me help you, won't you, mother?

CLAIRE: (_trying for control_) You needn't--bother.

ELIZABETH: But I _want_ to. Help add to the wealth of the world.

CLAIRE: Will you please get it out of your head that I am adding to the wealth of the world!

ELIZABETH: But, mother--of course you are. To produce a new and better kind of plant--

CLAIRE: They may be new. I don't give a damn whether they're better.

ELIZABETH: But--but what are they then?

CLAIRE: (_as if choked out of her_) They're different.

ELIZABETH: (_thinks a minute, then laughs triumphantly_) But what's the use of making them different if they aren't better?

HARRY: A good square question, Claire. Why don't you answer it?

CLAIRE: I don't have to answer it.

HARRY: Why not give the girl a fair show? You never have, you know. Since she's interested, why not tell her what it is you're doing?

CLAIRE: She is not interested.

ELIZABETH: But I am, mother. Indeed I am. I do want awfully to understand what you are doing, and help you.

CLAIRE: You can't help me, Elizabeth.

HARRY: Why not let her try?

CLAIRE: Why do you ask me to do that? This is my own thing. Why do you make me feel I should--(_goes to_ ELIZABETH) I will be good to you, Elizabeth. We'll go around together. I haven't done it, but--you'll see. We'll do gay things. I'll have a lot of beaus around for you. Anything else. Not--this is--Not this.

ELIZABETH: As you like, mother, of course. I just would have been so glad to--to share the thing that interests you. (_hurt borne with good breeding and a smile_)

HARRY: Claire! (_which says, 'How can you?')_)

CLAIRE: (_who is looking at_ ELIZABETH) Yes, I will try.

TOM: I don't think so. As Claire says--anything else.

ELIZABETH: Why, of course--I don't at all want to intrude.

HARRY: It'll do Claire good to take someone in. To get down to brass tacks and actually say what she's driving at.

CLAIRE: Oh--_Harry_. But yes--I will try. (_does try, but no words come. Laughs_) When you come to say it it's not--One would rather not nail it to a cross of words--(_laughs again_) with brass tacks.

HARRY: (_affectionately_) But I want to see you put things into words, Claire, and realize just where you are.

CLAIRE: (_oddly_) You think that's a--good idea?

ELIZABETH: (_in her manner of holding the world capably in her hands_) Now let's talk of something else. I hadn't the least idea of making mother feel badly.

CLAIRE: (_desperately_) No, we'll go on. Though I don't know--where we'll end. I can't answer for that. These plants--(_beginning flounderingly_) Perhaps they are less beautiful--less sound--than the plants from which they diverged. But they have found--otherness, (_laughs a little shrilly_) If you know--what I mean.

TOM: Claire--stop this! (_To_ HARRY) This is wrong.

CLAIRE: (_excitedly_) No; I'm going on. They have been shocked out of what they were--into something they were not; they've broken from the forms in which they found themselves. They are alien. Outside. That's it, outside; if you--know what I mean.

ELIZABETH: (_not shocked from what she is_) But of course, the object of it all is to make them better plants. Otherwise, what would be the sense of doing it?

CLAIRE: (_not reached by_ ELIZABETH) Out there--(_giving it with her hands_) lies all that's not been touched--lies life that waits. Back here--the old pattern, done again, again and again. So long done it doesn't even know itself for a pattern--in immensity. But this--has invaded. Crept a little way into--what wasn't. Strange lines in life unused. And when you make a pattern new you know a pattern's made with life. And then you know that anything may be--if only you know how to reach it. (_this has taken form, not easily, but with great struggle between feeling and words_)

HARRY: (_cordially_) Now I begin to get you, Claire. I never knew before why you called it the Edge Vine.

CLAIRE: I should destroy the Edge Vine. It isn't--over the edge. It's running, back to--'all the girls'. It's a little afraid of Miss Lane, (_looking sombrely at it_) You are out, but you are not alive.

ELIZABETH: Why, it looks all right, mother.

CLAIRE: Didn't carry life with it from the life it left. Dick--you know what I mean. At least you ought to. (_her ruthless way of not letting anyone's feelings stand in the way of truth_) Then destroy it for me! It's hard to do it--with the hands that made it.

DICK: But what's the point in destroying it, Claire?

CLAIRE: (_impatiently_) I've told you. It cannot create.

DICK: But you say you can go on producing it, and it's interesting in form.

CLAIRE: And you think I'll stop with that? Be shut in--with different life--that can't creep on? (_after trying to put destroying hands upon it_) It's hard to--get past what we've done. Our own dead things--block the way.

TOM: But you're doing it this next time, Claire, (_nodding to the inner room_) In there!

CLAIRE: (_turning to that room_) I'm not sure.

TOM: But you told me Breath of Life has already produced itself. Doesn't that show it has brought life from the life it left?

CLAIRE: But timidly, rather--wistfully. A little homesick. If it is less sure this time, then it is going back to--Miss Lane. But if the pattern's clearer now, then it has made friends of life that waits. I'll know to-morrow.

ELIZABETH: You know, something tells me this is _wrong_.

CLAIRE: The hymn-singing ancestors are tuning up.

ELIZABETH: I don't know what you mean by that, mother but--

CLAIRE: But we will now sing, 'Nearer, my God, to Thee: Nearer to--'

ELIZABETH: (_laughingly breaking in_) Well, I don't care. Of course you can make fun at me, but something does tell me this is wrong. To do what--what--

DICK: What God did?

ELIZABETH: Well--yes. Unless you do it to make them better--to _do_ it just to do it--that doesn't seem right to me.

CLAIRE: (_roughly_) 'Right to you!' And that's all you know of adventure--and of anguish. Do you know it is you--world of which you're so true a flower--makes me have to leave? You're there to hold the door shut! Because you're young and of a gayer world, you think I can't _see_ them--those old men? Do you know why you're so sure of yourself? Because you can't _feel_. Can't feel--the limitless--out there--a sea just over the hill. I will not stay with you! (_buries her hands in the earth around the Edge Vine. But suddenly steps back from it as she had from_) ELIZABETH) And I will not stay with _you! (grasps it as we grasp what we would kill, is trying to pull it up. They all step forward in horror.

ANTHONY is drawn in by this harm to the plant_)

ANTHONY: Miss Claire! Miss Claire! The work of years!

CLAIRE: May only make a prison! (_struggling with_ HARRY, _who is trying to stop her_) You think I too will die on the edge? (_she has thrown him away, is now struggling with the vine_) Why did I make you? To get past you! (_as she twists it_) Oh yes, I know you have thorns! The Edge Vine should have thorns, (_with a long tremendous pull for deep roots, she has it up. As she holds the torn roots_) Oh, I have loved you so! You took me where I hadn't been.

ELIZABETH: (_who has been looking on with a certain practical horror_) Well, I'd say it would be better not to go there!

CLAIRE: Now I know what you are for! (_flings her arm back to strike_ ELIZABETH _with the Edge Vine_)

HARRY: (_wresting it from her_) Claire! Are you mad?

CLAIRE: No, I'm not mad. I'm--too sane! (_pointing to_ ELIZABETH--_and the words come from mighty roots_) To think that object ever moved my belly and sucked my breast! (ELIZABETH _hides her face as if struck_)

HARRY: (_going to_ ELIZABETH, _turning to_ CLAIRE) This is atrocious! You're cruel.

(_He leads_ ELIZABETH _to the door and out. After an irresolute moment in which he looks from_ CLAIRE _to_ TOM, DICK _follows._ ANTHONY _cannot bear to go. He stoops to take the Edge Vine from the floor._ CLAIRE's _gesture stops him. He goes into the inner room._)

CLAIRE: (_kicking the Edge Vine out of her way, drawing deep breaths, smiling_) O-h. How good I feel! Light! (_a movement as if she could fly_) Read me something, Tom dear. Or say something pleasant--about God. But be very careful what you say about him! I have a feeling--he's not far off.

CURTAIN

ACT II

Late afternoon of the following day. CLAIRE _is alone in the tower--a tower which is thought to be round but does not complete the circle. The back is curved, then jagged lines break from that, and the front is a queer bulging window--in a curve that leans. The whole structure is as if given a twist by some terrific force--like something wrong. It is lighted by an old-fashioned watchman's lantern hanging from the ceiling; the innumerable pricks and slits in the metal throw a marvellous pattern on the curved wall--like some masonry that hasn't been.

There are no windows at back, and there is no door save an opening in the floor. The delicately distorted rail of a spiral staircase winds up from below._ CLAIRE _is seen through the huge ominous window as if shut into the tower. She is lying on a seat at the back looking at a book of

drawings. To do this she has left the door of her lantern a little open--and her own face is clearly seen.

A door is heard opening below; laughing voices, _ CLAIRES _listens, not pleased._

ADELAIDE: (_voice coming up_) Dear--dear, why do they make such twisting steps.

HARRY: Take your time, most up now. (HARRY_'s head appears, he looks back._) Making it all right?

ADELAIDE: I can't tell yet. (_laughingly_) No, I don't think so.

HARRY: (_reaching back a hand for her_) The last lap--is the bad lap. (ADELAIDE _is up, and occupied with getting her breath._)

HARRY: Since you wouldn't come down, Claire, we thought we'd come up.

ADELAIDE: (_as_ CLAIRE _does not greet her_) I'm sorry to intrude, but I have to see you, Claire. There are things to be arranged. (CLAIRE _volunteering nothing about arrangements,_ ADELAIDE _surveys the tower. An unsympathetic eye goes from the curves to the lines which diverge. Then she looks from the window_) Well, at least you have a view.

HARRY: This is the first time you've been up here?

ADELAIDE: Yes, in the five years you've had the house I was never asked up here before.

CLAIRE: (_amiably enough_) You weren't asked up here now.

ADELAIDE: Harry asked me.

CLAIRE: It isn't Harry's tower. But never mind--since you don't like it--it's all right.

ADELAIDE: (_her eyes again rebuking the irregularities of the tower_) No, I confess I do not care for it. A round tower should go on being round.

HARRY: Claire calls this the thwarted tower. She bought the house because of it. (_going over and sitting by her, his hand on her ankle_) Didn't you, old girl? She says she'd like to have known the architect.

ADELAIDE: Probably a tiresome person too incompetent to make a perfect tower.

CLAIRE: Well, now he's disposed of, what next?

ADELAIDE: (_sitting down in a manner of capably opening a conference_) Next, Elizabeth, and you, Claire. Just what is the matter with Elizabeth?

CLAIRE: (_whose voice is cool, even, as if herself is not really engaged by this_) Nothing is the matter with her. She is a tower that is a tower.

ADELAIDE: Well, is that anything against her?

CLAIRE: She's just like one of her father's portraits. They never interested me. Nor does she. (_looks at the drawings which do interest her_)

ADELAIDE: A mother cannot cast off her own child simply because she does not interest her!

CLAIRE: (_an instant raising cool eyes to_ ADELAIDE) Why can't she?

ADELAIDE: Because it would be monstrous!

CLAIRE: And why can't she be monstrous--if she has to be?

ADELAIDE: You don't have to be. That's where I'm out of patience with you Claire. You are really a particularly intelligent, competent person, and it's time for you to call a halt to this nonsense and be the woman you were meant to be!

CLAIRE: (_holding the book up to see another way_) What inside dope have you on what I was meant to be?

ADELAIDE: I know what you came from.

CLAIRE: Well, isn't it about time somebody got loose from that? What I came from made you, so--

ADELAIDE: (_stiffly_) I see.

CLAIRE: So--you being such a tower of strength, why need I too be imprisoned in what I came from?

ADELAIDE: It isn't being imprisoned. Right there is where you make your mistake, Claire. Who's in a tower--in an unsuccessful tower? Not I. I go about in the world--free, busy, happy. Among people, I have no time to think of myself.

CLAIRE: No.

ADELAIDE: No. My family. The things that interest them; from morning till night it's--

CLAIRE: Yes, I know you have a large family, Adelaide; five and Elizabeth makes six.

ADELAIDE: We'll speak of Elizabeth later. But if you would just get out of yourself and enter into other people's lives--

CLAIRE: Then I would become just like you. And we should all be just alike in order to assure one another that we're all just right. But since you and Harry and Elizabeth and ten million other people bolster each other up, why do you especially need me?

ADELAIDE: (_not unkindly_) We don't need you as much as you need us.

CLAIRE: (_a wry face_) I never liked what I needed.

HARRY: I am convinced I am the worst thing in the world for you, Claire.

CLAIRE: (_with a smile for his tactics, but shaking her head_) I'm afraid you're not. I don't know--perhaps you are.

ADELAIDE: Well, what is it you want, Claire?

CLAIRE: (_simply_) You wouldn't know if I told you.

ADELAIDE: That's rather arrogant.

HARRY: Yes, take a chance, Claire. I have been known to get an idea--and Adelaide quite frequently gets one.

CLAIRE: (_the first resentment she has shown_) You two feel very superior, don't you?

ADELAIDE: I don't think we are the ones who are feeling superior.

CLAIRE: Oh, yes, you are. Very superior to what you think is my feeling of superiority, comparing my--isolation with your 'heart of humanity'. Soon we will speak of the beauty of common experiences, of the--Oh, I could say it all before we come to it.

HARRY: Adelaide came up here to help you, Claire.

CLAIRE: Adelaide came up here to lock me in. Well, she can't do it.

ADELAIDE: (_gently_) But can't you see that one may do that to one's self?

CLAIRE: (_thinks of this, looks suddenly tired--then smiles_) Well, at least I've changed the keys.

HARRY: 'Locked in.' Bunkum. Get that out of your head, Claire. Who's locked in? Nobody that I know of, we're all free Americans. Free as air.

ADELAIDE: I wish you'd come and hear one of Mr Morley's sermons, Claire. You're very old-fashioned if you think sermons are what they used to be.

CLAIRE: (_with interest_) And do they still sing 'Nearer, my God, to Thee'?

ADELAIDE: They do, and a noble old hymn it is. It would do you no harm at all to sing it.

CLAIRE: (_eagerly_) Sing it to me, Adelaide. I'd like to hear you sing it.

ADELAIDE: It would be sacrilege to sing it to you in this mood.

CLAIRE: (_falling back_) Oh, I don't know. I'm not so sure God would agree with you. That would be one on you, wouldn't it?

ADELAIDE: It's easy to feel one's self set apart!

CLAIRE: No, it isn't.

ADELAIDE: (_beginning anew_) It's a new age, Claire. Spiritual values--

CLAIRE: Spiritual values! (_in her brooding way_) So you have pulled

that up. (_with cunning_) Don't think I don't know what it is you do.

ADELAIDE: Well, what do I do? I'm sure I have no idea what you're talking about.

HARRY: (_affectionately, as_ CLAIRE _is looking with intentness at what he does not see_) What does she do, Claire?

CLAIRE: It's rather clever, what she does. Snatching the phrase--(_a movement as if pulling something up_) standing it up between her and--the life that's there. And by saying it enough--'We have life! We have life! We have life!' Very good come-back at one who would really be--'Just so! _We_ are that. Right this way, please--'That, I suppose is what we mean by needing each other. All join in the chorus, 'This is it! This is it! This is it!' And anyone who won't join is to be--visited by relatives, (_regarding_ ADELAIDE _with curiosity_) Do you really think that anything is going on in you?

ADELAIDE: (_stiffly_) I am not one to hold myself up as a perfect example of what the human race may be.

CLAIRE: (_brightly_) Well, that's good.

HARRY: Claire!

CLAIRE: Humility's a _real_ thing--not just a fine name for laziness.

HARRY: Well, Lord A'mighty, you can't call Adelaide lazy.

CLAIRE: She stays in one place because she hasn't the energy to go anywhere else.

ADELAIDE: (_as if the last word in absurdity has been said) I_ haven't energy?

CLAIRE: (_mildly_) You haven't any energy at all, Adelaide. That's why you keep so busy.

ADELAIDE: _Well_--Claire's nerves are in a worse state than I had realized.

CLAIRE: So perhaps we'd better look at Blake's drawings, (_takes up the book_)

ADELAIDE: It would be all right for me to look at Blake's drawings. You'd better look at the Sistine Madonna, (_affectionately, after she has watched_ CLAIRE_'s face a moment_) What is it, Claire? Why do you shut yourself out from us?

CLAIRE: I told you. Because I do not want to be shut in with you.

ADELAIDE: All of this is not very pleasant for Harry.

HARRY: I want Claire to be gay.

CLAIRE: Funny--you should want that, (_speaks unwillingly, a curious, wistful unwillingness_) Did you ever say a preposterous thing, then go trailing after the thing you've said and find it wasn't so preposterous? Here is the circle we are in._describes a big circle_) Being gay. It

shoots little darts through the circle, and a minute later--gaiety all gone, and you looking through that little hole the gaiety left.

ADELAIDE: (_going to her, as she is still looking through that little hole_) Claire, dear, I wish I could make you feel how much I care for you. (_simply, with real feeling_) You can call me all the names you like--dull, commonplace, lazy--that is a new idea, I confess, but the rest of our family's gone now, and the love that used to be there between us all--the only place for it now is between you and me. You were so much loved, Claire. You oughtn't to try and get away from a world in which you are so much loved, (_to_ HARRY) Mother--father--all of us, always loved Claire best. We always loved Claire's queer gaiety. Now you've got to hand it to us for that, as the children say.

CLAIRE: (_moved, but eyes shining with a queer bright loneliness_) But never one of you--once--looked with me through the little pricks the gaiety made--never one of you--once, looked with me at the queer light that came in through the pricks.

ADELAIDE: And can't you see, dear, that it's better for us we didn't? And that it would be better for you now if you would just resolutely look somewhere else? You must see yourself that you haven't the poise of people who are held--well, within the circle, if you choose to put it that way. There's something about being in that main body, having one's roots in the big common experiences, gives a calm which you have missed. That's _why_ I want you to take Elizabeth, forget yourself, and--

CLAIRE: I do want calm. But mine would have to be a calm I--worked my way to. A calm all prepared for me--would stink.

ADELAIDE: (_less sympathetically_) I know you have to be yourself, Claire. But I don't admit you have a right to hurt other people.

HARRY: I think Claire and I had better take a nice long trip.

ADELAIDE: Now why don't you?

CLAIRE: I am taking a trip.

ADELAIDE: Well, Harry isn't, and he'd like to go and wants you to go with him. Go to Paris and get yourself some awfully good-looking clothes--and have one grand fling at the gay world. You really love that, Claire, and you've been awfully dull lately. I think that's the whole trouble.

HARRY: I think so too.

ADELAIDE: This sober business of growing plants--

CLAIRE: Not sober--it's mad.

ADELAIDE: All the more reason for quitting it.

CLAIRE: But madness that is the only chance for sanity.

ADELAIDE: Come, come, now--let's not juggle words.

CLAIRE: (_springing up_) How dare you say that to me, Adelaide. You who are such a liar and thief and whore with words!

ADELAIDE: (_facing her, furious_) How _dare_ you--

HARRY: Of course not, Claire. You have the most preposterous way of using words.

CLAIRE: I respect words.

ADELAIDE: Well, you'll please respect me enough not to dare use certain words to me!

CLAIRE: Yes, I do dare. I'm tired of what you do--you and all of you. Life--experience--values--calm--sensitive words which raise their heads as indications. And you _pull them up_--to decorate your stagnant little minds--and think that makes you--And because you have pulled that word from the life that grew it you won't let one who's honest, and aware, and troubled, try to reach through to--to what she doesn't know is there, (_she is moved, excited, as if a cruel thing has been done_) Why did you come here?

ADELAIDE: To try and help you. But I begin to fear I can't do it. It's pretty egotistical to claim that what so many people are, is wrong.

(_CLAIRE, after looking intently at ADELAIDE, slowly, smiling a little, describes a circle. With deftly used hands makes a quick vicious break in the circle which is there in the air._)

HARRY: (_going to her, taking her hands_) It's getting close to dinner-time. You were thinking of something else, Claire, when I told you Charlie Emmons was coming to dinner to-night, (_answering her look_) Sure--he is a neurologist, and I want him to see you. I'm perfectly honest with you--cards all on the table, you know that. I'm hoping if you like him--and he's the best scout in the world, that he can help you. (_talking hurriedly against the stillness which follows her look from him to ADELAIDE, where she sees between them an 'understanding' about her_) Sure you need help, Claire. Your nerves are a little on the blink--from all you've been doing. No use making a mystery of it--or a tragedy. Emmons is a cracker-jack, and naturally I want you to get a move on yourself and be happy again.

CLAIRE: (_who has gone over to the window_) And this neurologist can make me happy?

HARRY: Can make you well--and then you'll be happy.

ADELAIDE: (_in the voice of now fixing it all up_) And I had just an idea about Elizabeth. Instead of working with mere plants, why not think of Elizabeth as a plant and--

(CLAIRE, _who has been looking out of the window, now throws open one of the panes that swings out--or seems to, and calls down in great excitement._)

CLAIRE: Tom! _Tom!_ Quick! Up here! I'm in trouble!

HARRY: (_going to the window_) That's a rotten thing to do, Claire! You've frightened him.

CLAIRE: Yes, how fast he can run. He was deep in thought and I stabbed

right through.

HARRY: Well, he'll be none too pleased when he gets up here and finds there was no reason for the stabbing!

(_They wait for his footsteps, _ HARRY _annoyed, _ ADELAIDE _offended, but stealing worried looks at _ CLAIRE, _who is looking fixedly at the place in the floor where _ TOM _will appear.--Running footsteps._)

TOM: (_his voice getting there before he does_) Yes, Claire--yes--yes--(_as his head appears_) What is it?

CLAIRE: (_at once presenting him and answering his question_) My sister.

TOM: (_gasping_) Oh,--why--is that all? I mean--how do you do? Pardon, I (_panting_) came up--rather hurriedly.

HARRY: If you want to slap Claire, Tom, I for one have no objection.

CLAIRE: Adelaide has the most interesting idea, Tom. She proposes that I take Elizabeth and roll her in the gutter. Just let her lie there until she breaks up into--

ADELAIDE: _Claire!_ I don't see how--even in fun--pretty vulgar fun--you can speak in those terms of a pure young girl. I'm beginning to think I had better take Elizabeth.

CLAIRE: Oh, I've thought that all along.

ADELAIDE: And I'm also beginning to suspect that--oddity may be just a way of shifting responsibility.

CLAIRE: (_cordially interested in this possibility_) Now you know--that might be.

ADELAIDE: A mother who does not love her own child! You are an unnatural woman, Claire.

CLAIRE: Well, at least it saves me from being a natural one.

ADELAIDE: Oh--I know, you think you have a great deal! But let me tell you, you've missed a great deal! You've never known the faintest stirring of a mother's love.

CLAIRE: That's not true.

HARRY: No. Claire loved our boy.

CLAIRE: I'm glad he didn't live.

HARRY: (_low_) Claire!

CLAIRE: I loved him. Why should I want him to live?

HARRY: Come, dear, I'm sorry I spoke of him--when you're not feeling well.

CLAIRE: I'm feeling all right. _Just_ because I'm seeing something, it doesn't mean I'm sick.

HARRY: Well, let's go down now. About dinner-time. I shouldn't wonder if Emmons were here. (*as ADELAIDE is starting down stairs*) Coming, Claire?

CLAIRE: No.

HARRY: But it's time to go down for dinner.

CLAIRE: I'm not hungry.

HARRY: But we have a guest. Two guests--Adelaide's staying too.

CLAIRE: Then you're not alone.

HARRY: But I invited Dr Emmons to meet you.

CLAIRE: (*her smile flashing*) Tell him I am violent to-night.

HARRY: Dearest--how can you joke about such things!

CLAIRE: So you do think they're serious?

HARRY: (*irritated*) No, I do not! But I want you to come down for dinner!

ADELAIDE: Come, come, Claire; you know quite well this is not the sort of thing one does.

CLAIRE: Why go on saying one doesn't, when you are seeing one does (*to TOM*) Will you stay with me a while? I want to purify the tower.

(ADELAIDE *begins to disappear*)

HARRY: Fine time to choose for a *tete-a-tete*. (*as he is leaving*) I'd think more of you, Edgeworthy, if you refused to humour Claire in her ill-breeding.

ADELAIDE: (*her severe voice coming from below*) It is not what she was taught.

CLAIRE: No, it's not what I was taught, (*laughing rather timidly*) And perhaps you'd rather have your dinner?

TOM: No.

CLAIRE: We'll get something later. I want to talk to you. (*but she does not--laughs*) Absurd that I should feel bashful with you. Why am I so awkward with words when I go to talk to you?

TOM: The words know they're not needed.

CLAIRE: No, they're not needed. There's something underneath--an open way--down below the way that words can go. (*rather desperately*) It is there, isn't it?

TOM: Oh, yes, it is there.

CLAIRE: Then why do we never--go it?

TOM: If we went it, it would not be there.

CLAIRE: Is that true? How terrible, if that is true.

TOM: Not terrible, wonderful--that it should--of itself--be there.

CLAIRE: (_with the simplicity that can say anything_) I want to go it, Tom, I'm lonely up on top here. Is it that I have more faith than you, or is it only that I'm greedier? You see, you don't know (_her reckless laugh_) what you're missing. You don't know how I could love you.

TOM: Don't, Claire; that isn't--how it is--between you and me.

CLAIRE: But why can't it be--every way--between you and me?

TOM: Because we'd lose--the open way. (_the quality of his denial shows how strong is his feeling for her_) With anyone else--not with you.

CLAIRE: But you are the only one I want. The only one--all of me wants.

TOM: I know; but that's the way it is.

CLAIRE: You're cruel.

TOM: Oh, Claire, I'm trying so hard to--save it for us. Isn't it our beauty and our safeguard that underneath our separate lives, no matter where we may be, with what other, there is this open way between us? That's so much more than anything we could bring to being.

CLAIRE: Perhaps. But--it's different with me. I'm not--all spirit.

TOM: (_his hand on her_) Dear!

CLAIRE: No, don't touch me--since (_moving_) you're going away to-morrow? (_he nods_) For--always? (_his head just moves assent_) India is just another country. But there are undiscovered countries.

TOM: Yes, but we are so feeble we have to reach our country through the actual country lying nearest. Don't you do that yourself, Claire? Reach your country through the plants' country?

CLAIRE: My country? You mean--outside?

TOM: No, I don't think it that way.

CLAIRE: Oh, yes, you do.

TOM: Your country is the inside, Claire. The innermost. You are disturbed because you lie too close upon the heart of life.

CLAIRE: (_restlessly_) I don't know; you can think it one way--or another. No way says it, and that's good--at least it's not shut up in saying. (_she is looking at her enclosing hand, as if something is shut up there_)

TOM: But also, you know, things may be freed by expression. Come from the unrealized into the fabric of life.

CLAIRE: Yes, but why does the fabric of life have to--freeze into its pattern? It should (_doing it with her hands_) flow, (_then turning like an unsatisfied child to him_) But I wanted to talk to you.

TOM: You are talking to me. Tell me about your flower that never was before--your Breath of Life.

CLAIRE: I'll know to-morrow. You'll not go until I know?

TOM: I'll try to stay.

CLAIRE: It seems to me, if it has--then I have, integrity in--(_smiles, it is as if the smile lets her say it_) otherness. I don't want to die on the edge!

TOM: Not you!

CLAIRE: Many do. It's what makes them too smug in allness--those dead things on the edge, died, distorted--trying to get through. Oh--don't think I don't see--The Edge Vine! (_a pause, then swiftly_) Do you know what I mean? Or do you think I'm just a fool, or crazy?

TOM: I think I know what you mean, and you know I don't think you are a fool, or crazy.

CLAIRE: Stabbed to awareness--no matter where it takes you, isn't that more than a safe place to stay? (_telling him very simply despite the pattern of pain in her voice_) Anguish may be a thread--making patterns that haven't been. A thread--blue and burning.

TOM: (_to take her from what even he fears for her_) But you were telling me about the flower you breathed to life. What is your Breath of Life?

CLAIRE: (_an instant playing_) It's a secret. A secret?--it's a trick. Distilled from the most fragile flowers there are. It's only air--pausing--playing; except, far in, one stab of red, its quivering heart--that asks a question. But here's the trick--I bred the air-form to strength. The strength shut up behind us I've sent--far out. (_troubled_) I'll know tomorrow. And I have another gift for Breath of Life; some day--though days of work lie in between--some day I'll give it reminiscence. Fragrance that is--no one thing in here but--reminiscent. (_silence, she raises wet eyes_) We need the haunting beauty from the life we've left. I need that, (_he takes her hands and breathes her name_) Let me reach my country with you. I'm not a plant. After all, they don't--accept me. Who does--accept me? Will you?

TOM: My dear--dear, dear, Claire--you move me so! You stand alone in a clearness that breaks my heart, (_her hands move up his arms. He takes them to hold them from where they would go--though he can hardly do it_) But you've asked what you yourself could answer best. We'd only stop in the country where everyone stops.

CLAIRE: We might come through--to radiance.

TOM: Radiance is an enclosing place.

CLAIRE: Perhaps radiance lighting forms undreamed, (_her reckless laugh_) I'd be willing to--take a chance, I'd rather lose than never

know.

TOM: No, Claire. Knowing you from underneath, I know you couldn't bear to lose.

CLAIRE: Wouldn't men say you were a fool!

TOM: They would.

CLAIRE: And perhaps you are. (he smiles a little) I feel so desperate, because if only I could--show you what I am, you might see I could have without losing. But I'm a stammering thing with you.

TOM: You do show me what you are.

CLAIRE: I've known a few moments that were life. Why don't they help me now? One was in the air. I was up with Harry--flying--high. It was about four months before David was born--the doctor was furious--pregnant women are supposed to keep to earth. We were going fast--I was flying--I had left the earth. And then--within me, movement, for the first time--stirred to life far in air--movement within. The man unborn, he too, would fly. And so--I always loved him. He was movement--and wonder. In his short life were many flights. I never told anyone about the last one. His little bed was by the window--he wasn't four years old. It was night, but him not asleep. He saw the morning star--you know--the morning star. Brighter--stranger--reminiscent--and a promise. He pointed--'Mother', he asked me, 'what is there--beyond the stars?' A baby, a sick baby--the morning star. Next night--the finger that pointed was--(suddenly bites her own finger) But, yes, I am glad. He would always have tried to move and too much would hold him. Wonder would die--and he'd laugh at soaring, (looking down, sidewise) Though I liked his voice. So I wish you'd stay near me--for I like your voice, too.

TOM: Claire! That's (choked) almost too much.

CLAIRE: (one of her swift glances--canny, almost practical) Well, I'm glad if it is. How can I make it more? (but what she sees brings its own change) I know what it is you're afraid of. It's because I have so much--yes, why shouldn't I say it?--passion. You feel that in me, don't you? You think it would swamp everything. But that isn't all there is to me.

TOM: Oh, I know it! My dearest--why, it's because I know it! You think I am--a fool?

CLAIRE: It's a thing that's--sometimes more than I am. And yet I--I am more than it is.

TOM: I know. I know about you.

CLAIRE: I don't know that you do. Perhaps if you really knew about me--you wouldn't go away.

TOM: You're making me suffer, Claire.

CLAIRE: I know I am. I want to. Why shouldn't you suffer? (now seeing it more clearly than she has ever seen it) You know what I think about you? You're afraid of suffering, and so you stop this side--in what you

persuade yourself is suffering, (_waits, then sends it straight_) You know--how it is--with me and Dick? (_as she sees him suffer_) Oh, no, I don't want to hurt you! Let it be you! I'll teach you--you needn't scorn it. It's rather wonderful.

TOM: Stop that, Claire! That isn't you.

CLAIRE: Why are you so afraid--of letting me be low--if that is low? You see--(_cannily_) I believe in beauty. I have the faith that can be bad as well as good. And you know why I have the faith? Because sometimes--from my lowest moments--beauty has opened as the sea. From a cave I saw immensity.

My love, you're going away--
Let me tell you how it is with me;
I want to touch you--somehow touch you once before I die--
Let me tell you how it is with me.
I do not want to work,
I want to be;
Do not want to make a rose or make a poem--
Want to lie upon the earth and know. (_closes her eyes_)
Stop doing that!--words going into patterns;
They do it sometimes when I let come what's there.
Thoughts take pattern--then the pattern is the thing.
But let me tell you how it is with me. (_it flows again_)
All that I do or say--it is to what it comes from,
A drop lifted from the sea.
I want to lie upon the earth and know.
But--scratch a little dirt and make a flower;
Scratch a bit of brain--something like a poem. (_covering her face_)
Stop _doing_ that. Help me stop doing that!

TOM: (_and from the place where she had carried him_)
Don't talk at all. Lie still and know--
And know that I am knowing.

CLAIRE:
Yes; but we are so weak we have to talk;
To talk--to touch.
Why can't I rest in knowing I would give my life to reach you?
That has--all there is.
But I must--put my timid hands upon you,
Do something about infinity.
Oh, let what will flow into us,
And fill us full--and leave us still.
Wring me dry,
And let me fill again with life more pure.
To know--to feel,
And do nothing with what I feel and know--
That's being good. That's nearer God.

(_drenched in the feeling that has flowed through her--but surprised--helpless_) Why, I said your thing, didn't I? Opened my life to bring you to me, and what came--is what sends you away.

TOM: No! What came is what holds us together. What came is what saves us from ever going apart. (_brokenly_) My beautiful one. You--you brave flower of all our knowing.

CLAIRE: I am not a flower. I am too torn. If you have anything--help me. Breathe, Breathe the healing oneness, and let me know in calm. (_with a sob his head rests upon her_)

CLAIRE: (_her hands on his head, but looking far_) Beauty--you pure one thing. Breathe--Let me know in calm. Then--trouble me, trouble me, for other moments--in farther calm. (_slow, motionless, barely articulate_)

TOM: (_as she does not move he lifts his head. And even as he looks at her, she does not move, nor look at him_) Claire--(_his hand out to her, a little afraid_) You went away from me then. You are away from me now.

CLAIRE: Yes, and I could go on. But I will come back, (_it is hard to do. She brings much with her_) That, too, I will give you--my by-myself-ness. That's the uttermost I can give. I never thought--to try to give it. But let us do it--the great sacrilege! Yes! (_excited, she rises; she has his hands, and bring him up beside her_) Let us take the mad chance! Perhaps it's the only way to save--what's there. How do we know? How can we know? Risk. Risk everything. From all that flows into us, let it rise! All that we never thought to use to make a moment--let it flow into what could be! Bring all into life between us--or send all down to death! Oh, do you know what I am doing? Risk, risk everything, why are you so afraid to lose? What holds you from me? Test all. Let it live or let it die. It is our chance--our chance to bear--what's there. My dear one--I will love you so. With all of me. I am not afraid now--of--all of me. Be generous. Be unafraid. Life is for _life--though it cuts us from the farthest life. How can I make you know that's true? All that we're open to--(_hesitates, shudders_) But yes--I will, I will risk the life that waits. Perhaps only he who gives his loneliness--shall find. You never keep by holding, (_gesture of giving_) To the uttermost. And it is gone--or it is there. You do not know and--that makes the moment--(_music has begun--a phonograph downstairs; they do not heed it_) Just as I would cut my wrists--(_holding them out_) Yes, perhaps this lesser thing will tell it--would cut my wrists and let the blood flow out till all is gone if my last drop would make--would make--(_looking at them fascinated_) I want to see it doing that! Let me give my last chance for life to--

(_He snatches her--they are on the brink of their moment; now that there are no words the phonograph from downstairs is louder. It is playing languorously the Barcarole; they become conscious of this--they do not want to be touched by the love song._)

CLAIRE: Don't listen. That's nothing. This isn't that, (_fearing_) I tell you--it isn't that. Yes, I know--that's amorous--enclosing. I know--a little place. This isn't that, (_her arms going around him--all the lure of 'that' while she pleads against it as it comes up to them_) We will come out--to radiance--in far places (_admitting, using_) Oh, then let it be that! Go with it. Give up--the otherness. I will! And in the giving up--perhaps a door--we'd never find by searching. And if it's no more--than all have known, I only say it's worth the allness! (_her arms wrapped round him_) My love--my love--let go your pride in loneliness and let me give you joy!

TOM: (_drenched in her passion, but fighting_) It's _you_. (_in anguish_) You rare thing untouched--not--not into this--not back into this--by me--lover of your apartness.

(_She steps back. She sees he cannot. She stands there, before what she

wanted more than life, and almost had, and lost. A long moment. Then she runs down the stairs.)

CLAIRE: (_her voice coming up_) Harry! Choke that phonograph! If you want to be lewd--do it yourselves! You tawdry things--you cheap little lewd cowards, (_a door heard opening below_) Harry! If you don't stop that music, I'll kill myself.

(_far down, steps on stairs_)

HARRY: Claire, what _is_ this?

CLAIRE: Stop that phonograph or I'll--

HARRY: Why, of course I'll stop it. What--what is there to get so excited about? Now--now just a minute, dear. It'll take a minute.

(CLAIRE _comes back upstairs, dragging steps, face ghastly. The amorous song still comes up, and louder now that doors are open. She and _ TOM _do not look at one another. Then, on a languorous swell the music comes to a grating stop. They do not speak or move. Quick footsteps _--HARRY _comes up_.)

HARRY: What in the world were you saying, Claire? Certainly you could have asked me more quietly to turn off the Victrola. Though what harm was it doing you--way up here? (_a sharp little sound from _ CLAIRE; _she checks it, her hand over her mouth_. HARRY _looks from her to _ TOM) Well, I think you two would better have had your dinner. Won't you come down now and have some?

CLAIRE: (_only now taking her hand from her mouth_) Harry, tell him to come up here--that insanity man. I--want to ask him something.

HARRY: 'Insanity man!' How absurd. He's a nerve specialist. There's a vast difference.

CLAIRE: Is there? Anyway, ask him to come up here. Want to--ask him something.

TOM: (_speaking with difficulty_) Wouldn't it be better for us to go down there?

CLAIRE: No. So nice up here! Everybody--up here!

HARRY: (_worried_) You'll--be yourself, will you, Claire? (_She checks a laugh, nods_.) I think he can help you.

CLAIRE: Want to ask him to--help me.

HARRY: (_as he is starting down_) He's here as a guest to-night, you know, Claire.

CLAIRE: I suppose a guest can--help one.

TOM: (_when the silence rejects it_) Claire, you must know, it's because it is so much, so--

CLAIRE: Be still. There isn't anything to say.

TOM: (_torn--tortured_) If it only weren't _you_!

CLAIRE: Yes,--so you said. If it weren't. I suppose I wouldn't be so--interested! (_hears them starting up below--keeps looking at the place where they will appear_)

(HARRY _is heard to call_, 'Coming, Dick?' _and_ DICK's _voice replies_, 'In a moment or two.' ADELAIDE _comes first_.)

ADELAIDE: (_as her head appears_) Well, these stairs should keep down weight. You missed an awfully good dinner, Claire. And kept Mr Edgeworth from a good dinner.

CLAIRE: Yes. We missed our dinner. (_her eyes do not leave the place where_ DR EMMONS _will come up_)

HARRY: (_as he and_ EMMONS _appear_) Claire, this is--

CLAIRE: Yes, I know who he is. I want to ask you--

ADELAIDE: Let the poor man get his breath before you ask him anything. (_he nods, smiles, looks at_ CLAIRE _with interest. Careful not to look too long at her, surveys the tower_)

EMMONS: Curious place.

ADELAIDE: Yes; it lacks form, doesn't it?

CLAIRE: What do you mean? How _dare_ you?

(_It is impossible to ignore her agitation; she is backed against the curved wall, as far as possible from them._ HARRY _looks at her in alarm, then in resentment at_ TOM, _who takes a step nearer_ CLAIRE.)

HARRY: (_trying to be light_) Don't take it so hard, Claire.

CLAIRE: (_to_ EMMONS) It must be very interesting--helping people go insane.

ADELAIDE: Claire! How preposterous.

EMMONS: (_easily_) I hope that's not precisely what we do.

ADELAIDE: (_with the smile of one who is going to 'cover it'._) Trust Claire to put it in the unique and--amusing way.

CLAIRE: Amusing? You are amused? But it doesn't matter, (_to the doctor_) I think it is very kind of you--helping people go insane. I suppose they have all sorts of reasons for having to do it--reasons why they can't stay sane any longer. But tell me, how do they do it? It's not so easy to--get out. How do so many manage it?

EMMONS: I'd like immensely to have a talk with you about all this some day.

ADELAIDE: Certainly this is not the time, Claire.

CLAIRE: The time? When you--can't go any farther--isn't that that--

ADELAIDE: (_capably taking the whole thing into matter-of-factness_) What I think is, Claire has worked too long with plants. There's something--not quite sound about making one thing into another thing. What we need is unity. (_from_ CLAIRE _something like a moan_) Yes, dear, we do need it. (_to the doctor_) I can't say that I believe in making life over like this. I don't think the new species are worth it. At least I don't believe in it for Claire. If one is an intense, sensitive person--

CLAIRE: Isn't there any way to _stop_ her? Always--always smothering it with the word for it?

EMMONS: (_soothingly_) But she can't smother it. Anything that's really there--she can't hurt with words.

CLAIRE: (_looking at him with eyes too bright_) Then you don't see it either, (_angry_) Yes, she can hurt it! Piling it up--always piling it up--between us and--What there. Clogging the way--always, (_to_ EMMONS) I want to cease to know! That's all I ask. Darken it. Darken it. If you came to help me, strike me blind!

EMMONS: You're really all tired out, aren't you? Oh, we've got to get you rested.

CLAIRE: They--deny it saying they have it; and he (_half looks at_ TOM_--quickly looks away_)--others, deny it--afraid of losing it. We're in the way. Can't you see the dead stuff piled in the path? (_Pointing._)

DICK: (_voice coming up_) Me too?

CLAIRE: (_staring at the path, hearing his voice a moment after it has come_) Yes, Dick--you too. Why not--you too. (_after he has come up_) What is there any more than you are?

DICK: (_embarrassed by the intensity, but laughing_) A question not at all displeasing to me. Who can answer it?

CLAIRE: (_more and more excited_) Yes! Who can answer it? (_going to him, in terror_) Let me go with you--and be with you--and know nothing else!

ADELAIDE: (_gasping_) Why--!

HARRY: Claire! This is going a little too--

CLAIRE: Far? But you have to go far to--(_clinging to_ DICK) Only a place to hide your head--what else is there to hope for? I can't stay with them--piling it up! Always--piling it up! I can't get through to--he won't let me through to--what I don't know is there! (DICK _would help her regain herself_) Don't push me away! Don't--don't stand me up, I will go back--to the worst we ever were! Go back--and remember--what we've tried to forget!

ADELAIDE: It's time to stop this by force--if there's no other way. (_the doctor shakes his head_)

CLAIRE: All I ask is to die in the gutter with everyone spitting on me. (_changes to a curious weary smiling quiet_) Still, why should they

bother to do that?

HARRY: (_brokenly_) You're sick, Claire. There's no denying it. (_looks at_ EMMONS, _who nods_)

ADELAIDE: Something to quiet her--to stop it.

CLAIRE: (_throwing her arms around_ DICK) You, Dick. Not them. Not--any of them.

DICK: Claire, you are overwrought. You must--

HARRY: (_to_ DICK, _as if only now realizing that phase of it_) I'll tell you one thing, you'll answer to me for this! (_he starts for_ DICK--_is restrained by_ EMMONS, _chiefly by his grave shake of the head. With_ HARRY_'s move to them,_ DICK _has shielded_ CLAIRE)

CLAIRE: Yes--hold me. Keep me. You have mercy! You will have mercy. Anything--everything--that will let me be nothing!

CURTAIN

ACT III

In the greenhouse, the same as Act I. ANTHONY _is bedding small plants where the Edge Vine grew. In the inner room the plant like caught motion glows as from a light within._ HATTIE, _the Maid, rushes in from outside._

ANTHONY: (_turning angrily_) You are not what this place--

HATTIE: Anthony, come in the house. I'm afraid. Mr Archer, I never saw him like this. He's talking to Mr Demming--something about Mrs Archer.

ANTHONY: (_who in spite of himself is disturbed by her agitation_) And if it is, it's no business of yours.

HATTIE: You don't know how he _is_. I went in the room and--

ANTHONY: Well, he won't hurt you, will he?

HATTIE: How do I know who he'll hurt--a person's whose--(_seeing how to get him_) Maybe he'll hurt Mrs Archer.

ANTHONY: (_startled, then smiles_) No; he won't hurt Miss Claire.

HATTIE: What do you know about it?--out here in the plant house?

ANTHONY: And I don't want to know about it. This is a very important day for me. It's Breath of Life I'm thinking of today--not you and Mr Archer.

HATTIE: Well, suppose he does something to Mr Demming?

ANTHONY: Mr Demming will have to look out for himself, I am at work.

(_resuming work_)

HATTIE: Don't you think I ought to tell Mrs Archer that--

ANTHONY: You let her alone! This is no day for her to be bothered by you. At eleven o'clock (_looks at watch_) she comes out here--to Breath of Life.

HATTIE: (_with greed for gossip_) Did you see any of them when they came downstairs last night?

ANTHONY: I was attending to my own affairs.

HATTIE: They was all excited. Mr Edgeworth--he went away. He was gone all night, I guess. I saw him coming back just as the milkman woke me up. Now he's packing his things. _He_ wanted to get to Mrs Archer too--just a little while ago. But she won't open her door for none of them. I can't even get in to do her room.

ANTHONY: Then do some other room--and leave me alone in this room.

HATTIE: (_a little afraid of what she is asking_) Is she sick, Anthony--or what? (_vindicating herself, as he gives her a look_) The doctor, he stayed here late. But she'd locked herself in. I heard Mr Archer--

ANTHONY: You heard too much! (_he starts for the door, to make her leave, but_ DICK _rushes in. Looks around wildly, goes to the trap-door, finds it locked_)

ANTHONY: What are you doing here?

DICK: Trying not to be shot--if you must know. This is the only place I can think of--till he comes to his senses and I can get away. Open that, will you? Rather--ignominious--but better be absurd than be dead.

HATTIE: Has he got the revolver?

DICK: Gone for it. Thought I wouldn't sit there till he got back, (_to_ ANTHONY) Look here--don't you get the idea? Get me some place where he can't come.

ANTHONY: It is not what this place is for.

DICK: Any place is for saving a man's life.

HATTIE: Sure, Anthony. Mrs Archer wouldn't want Mr Demming shot.

DICK: That's right, Anthony. Miss Claire will be angry at you if you get me shot. (_he makes for the door of the inner room_)

ANTHONY: You can't go in there. It's locked. (HARRY _rushes in from outside_)

HARRY: I thought so! (_he has the revolver_ . HATTIE _screams_)

ANTHONY: Now, Mr Archer, if you'll just stop and think, you'll know Miss

Claire wouldn't want Mr Demming shot.

HARRY: You think that can stop me? You think you can stop me? (_raising the revolver_) A dog that--

ANTHONY: (_keeping squarely between_ HARRY _and_ DICK) Well, you can't shoot him in here. It is not good for the plants. (HARRY _is arrested by this reason_) And especially not today. Why, Mr Archer, Breath of Life may flower today. It's years Miss Claire's been working for this day.

HARRY: I never thought to see this day!

ANTHONY: No, did you? Oh, it will be a wonderful day. And how she has worked for it. She has an eye that sees what isn't right in what looks right. Many's the time I've thought--Here the form is set--and then she'd say, 'We'll try this one', and it had--what I hadn't known was there. She's like that.

HARRY: I've always been pleased, Anthony, at the way you've worked with Miss Claire. This is hardly the time to stand there eulogizing her. And she's (_can hardly say it_) things you don't know she is.

ANTHONY: (_proudly_) Oh, I know that! You think I could work with her and not know she's more than I know she is?

HARRY: Well, if you love her you've got to let me shoot the dirty dog that drags her down!

ANTHONY: Not in here. Not today. More than like you'd break the glass. And Breath of Life's in there.

HARRY: Anthony, this is pretty clever of you--but--

ANTHONY: I'm not clever. But I know how easy it is to turn life back. No, I'm not clever at all (CLAIRE _has appeared and is looking in from outside_), but I do know--there are things you mustn't hurt, (_he sees her_) Yes, here's Miss Claire.

(_She comes in. She is looking immaculate._)

CLAIRE: From the gutter I rise again, refreshed. One does, you know. Nothing is fixed--not even the gutter, (_smilingly to_ HARRY _and refusing to notice revolver or agitation_) How did you like the way I entertained the nerve specialist?

HARRY: Claire! You can _joke_ about it?

CLAIRE: (_taking the revolver from the hand she has shocked to limpness_) Whom are you trying to make hear?

HARRY: I'm trying to make the world hear that (_pointing_) there stands a dirty dog who--

CLAIRE: Listen, Harry, (_turning to_ HATTIE, _who is over by the tall plants at right, not wanting to be shot but not wanting to miss the conversation_) You can do my room now, Hattie. (_HATTIE goes_) If you're thinking of shooting Dick, you can't shoot him while he's backed up against that door.

ANTHONY: Just what I told them, Miss Claire. Just what I told them.

CLAIRE: And for that matter, it's quite dull of you to have any idea of shooting him.

HARRY: I may be dull--I know you think I am--but I'll show you that I've enough of the man in me to--

CLAIRE: To make yourself ridiculous? If I ran out and hid my head in the mud, would you think you had to shoot the mud?

DICK: (_stung out of fear_) That's pretty cruel!

CLAIRE: Well, would you rather be shot?

HARRY: So you just said it to protect him!

CLAIRE: I change it to grass, (_nodding to_ DICK) Grass. If I hid my face in the grass, would you have to burn the grass?

HARRY: Oh, Claire, how _can_ you? When you know how I love you--and how I'm suffering?

CLAIRE: (_with interest_) Are you suffering?

HARRY: Haven't you _eyes_?

CLAIRE: I should think it would--do something to you.

HARRY: God! Have you no heart? (_the door opens._ TOM _comes in_)

CLAIRE: (_scarcely saying it_) Yes, I have a heart.

TOM: (_after a pause_) I came to say good-bye.

CLAIRE: God! Have you no heart? Can't you at least wait till Dick is shot?

TOM: Claire! (_now sees the revolver in her hand that is turned from him. Going to her_) Claire!

CLAIRE: And even you think this is so important? (_carelessly raises the revolver, and with her left hand out flat, tells_ TOM _not to touch her_) Harry thinks it important he shoot Dick, and Dick thinks it important not to be shot, and you think I mustn't shoot anybody--even myself--and can't any of you see that none of that is as important as--where revolvers can't reach? (_putting revolver where there is no Edge Vine_) I shall never shoot myself. I'm too interested in destruction to cut it short by shooting. (_after looking from one to the other, laughs. Pointing_) One--two--three. You-love-me. But why do you bring it out here?

ANTHONY: (_who has resumed work_) It is not what this place is for.

CLAIRE: No this place is for the destruction that can get through.

ANTHONY: Miss Claire, it is eleven. At eleven we are to go in and see--

CLAIRE: Whether it has gone through. But how can we go--with Dick

against the door?

ANTHONY: He'll have to move.

CLAIRE: And be shot?

HARRY: (_irritably_) Oh, he'll not be shot. Claire can spoil anything.

(DICK _steps away from the door_; CLAIRE _takes a step nearer it_.)

CLAIRE: (_halting_) Have I spoiled everything? I don't want to go in there.

ANTHONY: We're going in together, Miss Claire. Don't you remember? Oh (_looking resentfully at the others_) don't let any little thing spoil it for you--the work of all those days--the hope of so many days.

CLAIRE: Yes--that's it.

ANTHONY: You're afraid you haven't done it?

CLAIRE: Yes, but--afraid I have.

HARRY: (_cross, but kindly_) That's just nervousness, Claire. I've had the same feeling myself about making a record in flying.

CLAIRE: (_curiously grateful_) You have, Harry?

HARRY: (_glad enough to be back in a more usual world_) Sure. I've been afraid to know, and almost as afraid of having done it as of not having done it.

(CLAIRE _nods, steps nearer, then again pulls back_.)

CLAIRE: I can't go in there. (_she almost looks at_ TOM) Not today.

ANTHONY: But, Miss Claire, there'll be things to see today we can't see tomorrow.

CLAIRE: You bring it in here!

ANTHONY: In--out from its own place? (_she nods_) And--where they are? (_again she nods. Reluctantly he goes to the door_) I will not look into the heart. No one must know before you know.

(_In the inner room, his head a little turned away, he is seen very carefully to lift the plant which glows from within. As he brings it in, no one looks at it_. HARRY _takes a box of seedlings from a stand and puts them on the floor, that the newcomer may have a place_.)

ANTHONY: Breath of Life is here, Miss Claire.

(CLAIRE _half turns, then stops_.)

CLAIRE: Look--and see--what you see.

ANTHONY: No one should see what you've not seen.

CLAIRE: I can't see--until I know.

(ANTHONY _looks into the flower._)

ANTHONY: (_agitated_) Miss Claire!

CLAIRE: It has come through?

ANTHONY: It has gone on.

CLAIRE: Stronger?

ANTHONY: Stronger, surer.

CLAIRE: And more fragile?

ANTHONY: And more fragile.

CLAIRE: Look deep. No--turning back?

ANTHONY: (_after a searching look_) The form is set. (_he steps back from it_)

CLAIRE: Then it is--out. (_from where she stands she turns slowly to the plant_) You weren't. You are.

ANTHONY: But come and see, Miss Claire.

CLAIRE: It's so much more than--I'd see.

HARRY: Well, I'm going to see. (_looking into it_) I never saw anything like that before! There seems something alive--inside this outer shell.

DICK: (_he too looking in and he has an artist's manner of a hand up to make the light right_) It's quite new in form. It--says something about form.

HARRY: (_cordially to_ CLAIRE, _who stands apart_) So you've really put it over. Well, well,--congratulations. It's a good deal of novelty, I should say, and I've no doubt you'll have a considerable success with it--people always like something new. I'm mighty glad--after all your work, and I hope it will--set you up.

CLAIRE: (_low--and like a machine_) Will you all--go away?

(ANTHONY _goes--into the other room._)

HARRY: Why--why, yes. But--oh, Claire! Can't you take some pleasure in your work? (_as she stands there very still_) Emmons says you need a good long rest--and I think he's right.

TOM: Can't this help you, Claire? Let this be release. This--breath of the uncaptured.

CLAIRE: (_and though speaking, she remains just as still_)

Breath of the uncaptured?

You are a novelty.

Out?

You have been brought in.

A thousand years from now, when you are but a form too long repeated,

Perhaps the madness that gave you birth will burst again,
And from the prison that is you will leap pent queernesses
To make a form that hasn't been--
To make a person new.
And this we call creation, (_very low, her head not coming up_)
Go away!

(TOM _goes_; HARRY _hesitates, looking in anxiety at_ CLAIRE. _He starts to go, stops, looks at_ DICK, _from him to_ CLAIRE. _But goes. A moment later_ DICK _moves near_ CLAIRE; _stands uncertainly, then puts a hand upon her. She starts, only then knowing he is there._)

CLAIRE: (_a slight shrinking away, but not really reached_) Um, um.

(_He goes_. CLAIRE _steps nearer her creation. She looks into what hasn't been. With her breath, and by a gentle moving of her hands, she fans it to fuller openness. As she does this_ TOM _returns and from outside is looking in at her. Softly he opens the door and comes in. She does not know that he is there. In the way she looks at the flower he looks at her._)

TOM: Claire, (_she lifts her head_) As you stood there, looking into the womb you breathed to life, you were beautiful to me beyond any other beauty. You were life and its reach and its anguish. I can't go away from you. I will never go away from you. It shall all be--as you wish. I can go with you where I could not go alone. If this is delusion, I want that delusion. It's more than any reality I could attain, (_as she does not move_) Speak to me, Claire. You--are glad?

CLAIRE: (_from far_) Speak to you? (_pause_) Do I know who you are?

TOM: I think you do.

CLAIRE: Oh, yes. I love you. That's who you are. (_waits again_) But why are you something--very far away?

TOM: Come nearer.

CLAIRE: Nearer? (_feeling it with her voice_) Nearer. But I think I am going--the other way.

TOM: No, Claire--come to me. Did you understand, dear? I am not going away.

CLAIRE: You're not going away?

TOM: Not without you, Claire. And you and I will be together. Is that--what you wanted?

CLAIRE: Wanted? (_as if wanting is something that harks far back. But the word calls to her passion_) Wanted! (_a sob, hands out, she goes to him. But before his arms can take her, she steps back_) Are you trying to pull me down into what I wanted? Are you here to make me stop?

TOM: How can you ask that? I love you because it is not in you to stop.

CLAIRE: And loving me for that--would stop me? Oh, help me see it! It is so important that I see it.

TOM: It is important. It is our lives.

CLAIRE: And more than that. I cannot see it because it is so much more than that.

TOM: Don't try to see all that it is. From peace you'll see a little more.

CLAIRE: Peace? (_troubled as we are when looking at what we cannot see clearly_) What is peace? Peace is what the struggle knows in moments very far apart. Peace--that is not a place to rest. Are you resting? What are you? You who'd take me from what I am to something else?

TOM: I thought you knew, Claire.

CLAIRE: I know--what you pass for. But are you beauty? Beauty is that only living pattern--the trying to take pattern. Are you trying?

TOM: Within myself, Claire. I never thought you doubted that.

CLAIRE: Beauty is it. (_she turns to Breath of Life, as if to learn it there, but turns away with a sob_) If I cannot go to you now--I will always be alone.

(TOM _takes her in his arms. She is shaken, then comes to rest._)

TOM: Yes--rest. And then--come into joy. You have so much life for joy.

CLAIRE: (_raising her head, called by promised gladness_) We'll run around together. (_lovingly he nods_) Up hills. All night on hills.

TOM: (_tenderly_) All night on hills.

CLAIRE: We'll go on the sea in a little boat.

TOM: On the sea in a little boat.

CLAIRE: But--there are other boats on other seas, (_drawing back from him, troubled_) There are other boats on other seas.

TOM: (_drawing her back to him_) My dearest--not now, not now.

CLAIRE: (_her arms going round him_) Oh, I would love those hours with you. I want them. I want you! (_they kiss--but deep in her is sobbing_) Reminiscence, (_her hand feeling his arm as we touch what we would remember_) Reminiscence. (_with one of her swift changes steps back from him_) How dare you pass for what you're not? We are tired, and so we think it's you. Stop with you. Don't get through--to what you're in the way of. Beauty is not something you say about beauty.

TOM: I say little about beauty, Claire.

CLAIRE: Your life says it. By standing far off you pass for it. Smother it with a life that passes for it. But beauty--(_getting it from the flower_) Beauty is the humility breathed from the shame of succeeding.

TOM: But it may all be within one's self, dear.

CLAIRE: (_drawn by this, but held, and desperate because she is held_)

When I have wanted you with all my wanting--why must I distrust you now?
When I love you--with all of me, why do I know that only you are worth
my hate?

TOM: It's the fear of easy satisfactions. I love you for it.

CLAIRE: (_over the flower_) Breath of Life--you here? Are you
lonely--Breath of Life?

TOM: Claire--hear me! Don't go where we can't go. As there you made a
shell for life within, make for yourself a life in which to live. It
must be so.

CLAIRE: As you made for yourself a shell called beauty?

TOM: What is there for you, if you'll have no touch with what we have?

CLAIRE: What is there? There are the dreams we haven't dreamed. There is
the long and flowing pattern, (_she follows that, but suddenly and as if
blindly goes to him_) I am tired. I am lonely. I'm afraid, (_he holds
her, soothing. But she steps back from him_) And because we are
tired--lonely--and afraid, we stop with you. Don't get through--to what
you're in the way of.

TOM: Then you don't love me?

CLAIRE: I'm fighting for my chance. I don't know--which chance.

(_Is drawn to the other chance, to Breath of Life. Looks into it as if
to look through to the uncaptured. And through this life just caught
comes the truth she chants._)

I've wallowed at a coarse man's feet,
I'm sprayed with dreams we've not yet come to.
I've gone so low that words can't get there,
I've never pulled the mantle of my fears around me
And called it loneliness--And called it God.
Only with life that waits have I kept faith.

(_with effort raising her eyes to the man_)

And only you have ever threatened me.

TOM: (_coming to her, and with strength now_) And I will threaten you.
I'm here to hold you from where I know you cannot go. You're trying what
we can't do.

CLAIRE: What else is there worth trying?

TOM: I love you, and I will keep you--from farderness--from harm. You
are mine, and you will stay with me! (_roughly_) You hear me? You will
stay with me!

CLAIRE: (_her head on his breast, in ecstasy of rest. Drowsily_) You can
keep me?

TOM: Darling! I can keep you. I will keep you--safe.

CLAIRE: (_troubled by the word, but barely able to raise her head_)

Safe?

TOM: (_bringing her to rest again_) Trust me, Claire.

CLAIRE: (_not lifting her head, but turning it so she sees Breath of Life_) Now can I trust--what is? (_suddenly pushing him roughly away_) No! I will beat my life to pieces in the struggle to--

TOM: To _what_, Claire?

CLAIRE: Not to stop it by seeming to have it. (_with fury_) I will keep my life low--low--that I may never stop myself--or anyone--with the thought it's what _I_ have. I'd rather be the steam rising from the manure than be a thing called beautiful! (_with sight too clear_) Now I know who you are. It is you puts out the breath of life. Image of beauty--_You fill the place--should be a gate._ (_in agony_) Oh, that it is _you_--fill the place--should be a gate! My darling! That it should be you who--(_her hands moving on him_) Let me tell you something. Never was loving strong as my loving of you! Do you know that? Oh, know that! Know it now! (_her arms go around his neck_) Hours with you--I'd give my life to have! That it should be you--(_he would loosen her hands, for he cannot breathe. But when she knows she is choking him, that knowledge is fire burning its way into the last passion_) It _is_ you. It is you.

TOM: (_words coming from a throat not free_) Claire! What are you doing? (_then she knows what she is doing_)

CLAIRE: (_to his resistance_) No! You are _too much_! You are _not enough_. (_still wanting not to hurt her, he is slow in getting free. He keeps stepping backward trying, in growing earnest, to loosen her hands. But he does not loosen them before she has found the place in his throat that cuts off breath. As he gasps_)

Breath of Life--my gift--to you!

(_She has pushed him against one of the plants at right as he sways, strength she never had before pushes him over backward, just as they have struggled from sight. Violent crash of glass is heard._)

TOM: (_faint smothered voice_) _No_. I'm--hurt.

CLAIRE: (_in the frenzy and agony of killing_) Oh, gift! Oh, gift! (_there is no sound._)

CLAIRE _rises--steps back--is seen now; is looking down_) Gift.

(_Like one who does not know where she is, she moves into the room--looks around. Takes a step toward Breath of Life; turns and goes quickly to the door. Stops, as if stopped. Sees the revolver where the Edge Vine was. Slowly goes to it. Holds it as if she cannot think what it is for. Then raises it high and fires above through the place in the glass left open for ventilation_. ANTHONY _comes from the inner room. His eyes go from her to the body beyond_. HARRY _rushes in from outside_.)

HARRY: Who fired that?

CLAIRE: I did. Lonely.

(_ Seeing_ ANTHONY'S _look_, HARRY _'s eyes follow it_.)

HARRY: Oh! What? What? (DICK _comes running in_) Who? Claire!

(DICK _sees--goes to_ TOM)

CLAIRE: Yes. I did it. MY--Gift.

HARRY: Is he--? He isn't--? He isn't--?

(_Tries to go in there. Cannot--there is the sound of broken glass, of a position being changed--then_ DICK _reappears_.)

DICK: (_his voice in jerks_) It's--it's no use, but I'll go for a doctor.

HARRY: No--no. Oh, I suppose--(_falling down beside_ CLAIRE-- _his face against her_) My darling! How can I save you now?

CLAIRE: (_speaking each word very carefully_) Saved--myself.

ANTHONY: I did it. Don't you see? I didn't want so many around. Not--what this place is for.

HARRY: (_snatching at this but lets it go_) She wouldn't let--(_looking up at_ CLAIRE-- _then quickly hiding his face_) And--don't you see?

CLAIRE: Out. (_a little like a child's pleased surprise_) Out.

(DICK _stands there, as if unable to get to the door--his face distorted, biting his hand_.)

ANTHONY: Miss Claire! You can do anything--won't you try?

CLAIRE: Reminiscence? (_speaking the word as if she has left even that, but smiles a little_)

(ANTHONY _takes Reminiscence, the flower she was breeding for fragrance for Breath of Life--holds it out to her. But she has taken a step forward, past them all_.)

CLAIRE: Out. (_as if feeling her way_)

Nearer,

(_Her voice now feeling the way to it_.)

Nearer--

(_Voice almost upon it_.)

--my God,

(_Falling upon it with surprise_.)

to Thee,

(_Breathing it_.)

Nearer--to Thee,

E'en though it be--

(_A slight turn of the head toward the dead man she loves--a mechanical turn just as far the other way_.)

a cross

That

(_Her head going down_.)

raises me;

(_Her head slowly coming up--singing it_.)

Still all my song shall be,
Nearer, my--

(_Slowly the curtain begins to shut her out. The last word heard is the
final_ Nearer--_a faint breath from far_.)

CURTAIN

INHERITORS

Inheritors was first performed at the Provincetown Playhouse on April 27, 1921.

SMITH (a young business man)

GRANDMOTHER (SILAS MORTON'S mother)

SILAS MORTON (a pioneer farmer)

FELIX FEJEVARY, the First (an exiled Hungarian nobleman)

FELIX FEJEVARY, the Second (his son, a Harvard student)

FELIX FEJEVARY, the Second (a banker)

SENATOR LEWIS (a State Senator)

HORACE FEJEVARY (son of FELIX FEJEVARY, the Second)

DORIS (a student at Morton College)

FUSSIE (another college girl)

MADELINE FEJEVARY MORTON (daughter of IRA MORTON, and granddaughter of
SILAS MORTON)

ISABEL FEJEVARY (wife of FELIX FEJEVARY, the Second, and MADELINE'S
aunt)

HARRY (a student clerk)

HOLDEN (Professor at Morton College)

IRA MORTON (son of SILAS MORTON, and MADELINE'S father)

EMIL JOHNSON (an Americanized Swede)

ACT I

SCENE: _Sitting-room of the Mortons' farmhouse in the Middle West--on
the rolling prairie just back from the Mississippi. A room that has been
long and comfortably lived in, and showing that first-hand contact with
materials which was pioneer life. The hospitable table was made on the
place--well and strongly made; there are braided rugs, and the wooden

chairs have patchwork cushions. There is a corner closet--left rear. A picture of Abraham Lincoln. On the floor a home-made toy boat. At rise of curtain there are on the stage an old woman and a young man._
GRANDMOTHER MORTON _is in her rocking-chair near the open door, facing left. On both sides of door are windows, looking out on a generous land. She has a sewing basket and is patching a boy's pants. She is very old. Her hands tremble. Her spirit remembers the days of her strength._

SMITH _has just come in and, hat in hand, is standing by the table. This was lived in the year 1879, afternoon of Fourth of July._

SMITH: But the celebration was over two hours ago.

GRANDMOTHER: Oh, celebration, that's just the beginning of it. Might as well set down. When them boys that fought together all get in one square--they have to swap stories all over again. That's the worst of a war--you have to go on hearing about it so long. Here it is--1879--and we haven't taken Gettysburg yet. Well, it was the same way with the war of 1832.

SMITH: (_who is now seated at the table_) The war of 1832?

GRANDMOTHER: News to you that we had a war with the Indians?

SMITH: That's right--the Blackhawk war. I've heard of it.

GRANDMOTHER: Heard of it!

SMITH: Were your men in that war?

GRANDMOTHER: I was in that war. I threw an Indian in the cellar and stood on the door. I was heavier then.

SMITH: Those were stirring times.

GRANDMOTHER: More stirring than you'll ever see. This war--Lincoln's war--it's all a cut and dried business now. We used to fight with anything we could lay hands on--dish water--whatever was handy.

SMITH: I guess you believe the saying that the only good Indian is a dead Indian.

GRANDMOTHER: I dunno. We roiled them up considerable. They was mostly friendly when let be. Didn't want to give up their land--but I've noticed something of the same nature in white folks.

SMITH: Your son has--something of that nature, hasn't he?

GRANDMOTHER: He's not keen to sell. Why should he? It'll never be worth less.

SMITH: But since he has more land than any man can use, and if he gets his price--

GRANDMOTHER: That what you've come to talk to him about?

SMITH: I--yes.

GRANDMOTHER: Well, you're not the first. Many a man older than you has

come to argue it.

SMITH: (_smiling_) They thought they'd try a young one.

GRANDMOTHER: Some one that knew him thought that up. Silas'd help a young one if he could. What is it you're set on buying?

SMITH: Oh, I don't know that we're set on buying anything. If we could have the hill (_looking off to the right_) at a fair price--

GRANDMOTHER: The hill above the town? Silas'd rather sell me and the cat.

SMITH: But what's he going to do with it?

GRANDMOTHER: Maybe he's going to climb it once a week.

SMITH: But if the development of the town demands its use--

GRANDMOTHER: (_smiling_) You the development of the town?

SMITH: I represent it. This town has been growing so fast--

GRANDMOTHER: This town began to grow the day I got here.

SMITH: You--you began it?

GRANDMOTHER: My husband and I began it--and our baby Silas.

SMITH: When was that?

GRANDMOTHER: 1820, that was.

SMITH: And--you mean you were here all alone?

GRANDMOTHER: No, we weren't alone. We had the Owens ten miles down the river.

SMITH: But how did you get here?

GRANDMOTHER: Got here in a wagon, how do you s'pose? (_gaily_) Think we flew?

SMITH: But wasn't it unsafe?

GRANDMOTHER: Them set on safety stayed back in Ohio.

SMITH: But one family! I should think the Indians would have wiped you out.

GRANDMOTHER: The way they wiped us out was to bring fish and corn. We'd have starved to death that first winter hadn't been for the Indians.

SMITH: But they were such good neighbours--why did you throw dish water at them?

GRANDMOTHER: That was after other white folks had roiled them up--white folks that didn't know how to treat 'em. This very land--land you want to buy--was the land they loved--Blackhawk and his Indians. They came

here for their games. This was where their fathers--as they called 'em--were buried. I've seen my husband and Blackhawk climb that hill together. (_a backward point right_) He used to love that hill--Blackhawk. He talked how the red man and the white man could live together. But poor old Blackhawk--what he didn't know was how many white man there was. After the war--when he was beaten but not conquered in his heart--they took him east--Washington, Philadelphia, New York--and when he saw the white man's cities--it was a different Indian came back. He just let his heart break without ever turning a hand.

SMITH: But we paid them for their lands. (_she looks at him_) Paid them something.

GRANDMOTHER: Something. For fifteen million acres of this Mississippi Valley land--best on this globe, we paid two thousand two hundred and thirty-four dollars and fifty cents, and promised to deliver annually goods to the value of one thousand dollars. Not a fancy price--even for them days, (_children's voices are heard outside. She leans forward and looks through the door, left_) Ira! Let that cat be!

SMITH: (_looking from the window_) These, I suppose, are your grandchildren?

GRANDMOTHER: The boy's my grandson. The little girl is Madeline Fejevary--Mr Fejevary's youngest child.

SMITH: The Fejevary place adjoins on this side? (_pointing right, down_)

GRANDMOTHER: Yes. We've been neighbours ever since the Fejevarys came here from Hungary after 1848. He was a count at home--and he's a man of learning. But he was a refugee because he fought for freedom in his country. Nothing Silas could do for him was too good. Silas sets great store by learning--and freedom.

SMITH: (_thinking of his own project, looking off toward the hill--the hill is not seen from the front_) I suppose then Mr Fejevary has great influence with your son?

GRANDMOTHER: More 'an anybody. Silas thinks 'twas a great thing for our family to have a family like theirs next place to. Well--so 'twas, for we've had no time for the things their family was brought up on. Old Mrs Fejevary (_with her shrewd smile_)--she weren't stuck up--but she did have an awful ladylike way of feeding the chickens. Silas thinks--oh, my son has all kinds of notions--though a harder worker never found his bed at night.

SMITH: And Mr Fejevary--is he a veteran too?

GRANDMOTHER: (_dryly_) You don't seem to know these parts well--for one that's all stirred up about the development of the town. Yes--Felix Fejevary and Silas Morton went off together, down that road (_motioning with her hand, right_)--when them of their age was wanted. Fejevary came back with one arm less than he went with. Silas brought home everything he took--and something he didn't. Rheumatiz. So now they set more store by each other 'an ever. Seems nothing draws men together like killing other men. (_a boy's voice teasingly imitating a cat_) Madeline, make Ira let that cat be. (_a whoop from the girl--a boy's whoop_) (_looking_) There they go, off for the creek. If they set in it--(_seems about to call after them, gives this up_) Well, they're not the first.

(_rather dreams over this_)

SMITH: You must feel as if you pretty near owned this country.

GRANDMOTHER: We worked. A country don't make itself. When the sun was up we were up, and when the sun went down we didn't. (_as if this renews the self of those days_) Here--let me set out something for you to eat. (_gets up with difficulty_)

SMITH: Oh, no, please--never mind. I had something in town before I came out.

GRANDMOTHER: Dunno as that's any reason you shouldn't have something here.

(_She goes off, right; he stands at the door, looking toward the hill until she returns with a glass of milk, a plate of cookies._)

SMITH: Well, this looks good.

GRANDMOTHER: I've fed a lot of folks--take it by and large. I didn't care how many I had to feed in the daytime--what's ten or fifteen more when you're up and around. But to get up--after sixteen hours on your feet-- _I_ was willin', but my bones complained some.

SMITH: But did you--keep a tavern?

GRANDMOTHER: Keep a tavern? I guess we did. Every house is a tavern when houses are sparse. You think the way to settle a country is to go on ahead and build hotels? That's all you folks know. Why, I never went to bed without leaving something on the stove for the new ones that might be coming. And we never went away from home without seein' there was a-plenty for them that might stop.

SMITH: They'd come right in and take your food?

GRANDMOTHER: What else could they do? There was a woman I always wanted to know. She made a kind of bread I never had before--and left a-plenty for our supper when we got back with the ducks and berries. And she left the kitchen handier than it had ever been. I often wondered about her--where she came from, and where she went, (_as she dreams over this there is laughing and talking at the side of the house_) There come the boys.

(MR FEJEVARY _comes in, followed by_ SILAS MORTON. _They are men not far from sixty, wearing their army uniforms, carrying the muskets they used in the parade_. FEJEVARY _has a lean, distinguished face, his dark eyes are penetrating and rather wistful. The left sleeve of his old uniform is empty_. SILAS MORTON _is a strong man who has borne the burden of the land, and not for himself alone--the pioneer. Seeing the stranger, he sets his musket against the wall and holds out his hand to him, as_ MR FEJEVARY _goes up to_ GRANDMOTHER MORTON.)

SILAS: How do, stranger?

FEJEVARY: And how are you today, Mrs Morton?

GRANDMOTHER: I'm not abed--and don't expect to be.

SILAS: (_letting go of the balloons he has bought_) Where's Ira? and Madeline?

GRANDMOTHER: Mr Fejevary's Delia brought them home with her. They've gone down to dam the creek, I guess. This young man's been waiting to see you, Silas.

SMITH: Yes, I wanted to have a little talk with you.

SILAS: Well, why not? (_he is tying the gay balloons to his gun, then as he talks, hangs his hat in the corner closet_) We've been having a little talk ourselves. Mother, Nat Rice was there. I've not seen Nat Rice since the day we had to leave him on the road with his torn leg--him cursing like a pirate. I wanted to bring him home, but he had to go back to Chicago. His wife's dead, mother.

GRANDMOTHER: Well, I guess she's not sorry.

SILAS: Why, mother.

GRANDMOTHER: 'Why, mother.' Nat Rice is a mean, stingy, complaining man--his leg notwithstanding. Where'd you leave the folks?

SILAS: Oh--scattered around. Everybody visitin' with anybody that'll visit with them. Wish you could have gone.

GRANDMOTHER: I've heard it all. (_to_ FEJEVARY) Your folks well?

FEJEVARY: All well, Mrs Morton. And my boy Felix is home. He'll stop in here to see you by and by.

SILAS: Oh, he's a fine-looking boy, mother. And think of what he knows! (_cordially including the young man_) Mr Fejevary's son has been to Harvard College.

SMITH: Well, well--quite a trip. Well, Mr Morton, I hope this is not a bad time for me to--present a little matter to you?

SILAS: (_genially_) That depends, of course, on what you're going to present. (_attracted by a sound outside_) Mind if I present a little matter to your horse? Like to uncheck him so's he can get a bit o'grass.

SMITH: Why--yes. I suppose he would like that.

SILAS: (_going out_) You bet he'd like it. Wouldn't you, old boy?

SMITH: Your son is fond of animals.

GRANDMOTHER: Lots of people's fond of 'em--and good to 'em. Silas--I dunno, it's as if he was that animal.

FEJEVARY: He has imagination.

GRANDMOTHER: (_with surprise_) Think so?

SILAS: (_returning and sitting down at the table by the young man_) Now, what's in your mind, my boy?

SMITH: This town is growing very fast, Mr Morton.

SILAS: Yes. (slyly--with humour) I know that.

SMITH: I presume you, as one of the early settlers--as in fact a son of the earliest settler, feel a certain responsibility about the welfare of--

SILAS: I haven't got in mind to do the town a bit of harm. So--what's your point?

SMITH: More people--more homes. And homes must be in the healthiest places--the--the most beautiful places. Isn't it true, Mr Fejevary, that it means a great deal to people to have a beautiful outlook from their homes? A--well, an expanse.

SILAS: What is it they want to buy--these fellows that are figuring on making something out of--expanse? (a gesture for expanse, then a reassuring gesture) It's all right, but--just what is it?

SMITH: I am prepared to make you an offer--a gilt-edged offer for that (pointing toward it) hill above the town.

SILAS: (shaking his head--with the smile of the strong man who is a dreamer) The hill is not for sale.

SMITH: But wouldn't you consider a--particularly good offer, Mr Morton?

(SILAS, who has turned so he can look out at the hill, slowly shakes his head.)

SMITH: Do you feel you have the right--the moral right to hold it?

SILAS: It's not for myself I'm holding it.

SMITH: Oh,--for the children?

SILAS: Yes, the children.

SMITH: But--if you'll excuse me--there are other investments might do the children even more good.

SILAS: This seems to me--the best investment.

SMITH: But after all there are other people's children to consider.

SILAS: Yes, I know. That's it.

SMITH: I wonder if I understand you, Mr Morton?

SILAS: (kindly) I don't believe you do. I don't see how you could. And I can't explain myself just now. So--the hill is not for sale. I'm not making anybody homeless. There's land enough for all--all sides round. But the hill--

SMITH: (rising) Is yours.

SILAS: You'll see.

SMITH: I am prepared to offer you--

SILAS: You're not prepared to offer me anything I'd consider alongside what I am considering. So--I wish you good luck in your business undertakings.

SMITH: Sorry--you won't let us try to help the town.

SILAS: Don't sit up nights worrying about my chokin' the town.

SMITH: We could make you a rich man, Mr Morton. Do you think what you have in mind will make you so much richer?

SILAS: Much richer.

SMITH: Well, good-bye. Good day, sir. Good day, ma'am.

SILAS: (_ following him to the door_) Nice horse you've got.

SMITH: Yes, seems all right.

(SILAS _stands in the doorway and looks off at the hill_.)

GRANDMOTHER: What are you going to do with the hill, Silas?

SILAS: After I get a little glass of wine--to celebrate Felix and me being here instead of farther south--I'd like to tell you what I want for the hill. (_to_ FEJEVARY _rather bashfully_) I've been wanting to tell you.

FEJEVARY: I want to know.

SILAS: (_getting the wine from the closet_) Just a little something to show our gratitude with.

(_Goes off right for glasses_.)

GRANDMOTHER: I dunno. Maybe it'd be better to sell the hill--while they're anxious.

FEJEVARY: He seems to have another plan for it.

GRANDMOTHER: Yes. Well, I hope the other plan does bring him something. Silas has worked--all the days of his life.

FEJEVARY: I know.

GRANDMOTHER: You don't know the hull of it. But I know. (_rather to herself_) Know too well to think about it.

GRANDMOTHER: (_as_ SILAS _returns_) I'll get more cookies.

SILAS: I'll get them, mother.

GRANDMOTHER: Get 'em myself. Pity if a woman can't get out her own cookies.

SILAS: (_seeing how hard it is for her_) I wish mother would let us do

things for her.

FEJEVARY: That strength is a flame frailness can't put out. It's a great thing for us to have her,--this touch with the life behind us.

SILAS: Yes. And it's a great thing for us to have you--who can see those things and say them. What a lot I'd 'a' missed if I hadn't had what you've seen.

FEJEVARY: Oh, you only think that because you've got to be generous.

SILAS: I'm not generous. _I'm_ seeing something now. Something about you. I've been thinking of it a good deal lately--it's got something to do with--with the hill. I've been thinkin' what it's meant all these years to have a family like yours next place to. They did something pretty nice for the corn belt when they drove you out of Hungary. Funny--how things don't end the way they begin. I mean, what begins don't end. It's another thing ends. Set out to do something for your own country--and maybe you don't quite do the thing you set out to do--

FEJEVARY: No.

SILAS: But do something for a country a long way off.

FEJEVARY: I'm afraid I've not done much for any country.

SILAS: (_brusquely_) Where's your left arm--may I be so bold as to inquire? Though your left arm's nothing alongside--what can't be measured.

FEJEVARY: When I think of what I dreamed as a young man--it seems to me my life has failed.

SILAS: (_raising his glass_) Well, if your life's failed--I like failure.

(GRANDMOTHER MORTON _returns with her cookies_.)

GRANDMOTHER: There's two kinds--Mr Fejevary. These have seeds in 'em.

FEJEVARY: Thank you. I'll try a seed cookie first.

SILAS: Mother, you'll have a glass of wine?

GRANDMOTHER: I don't need wine.

SILAS: Well, I don't know as we need it.

GRANDMOTHER: No, I don't know as you do. But I didn't go to war.

FEJEVARY: Then have a little wine to celebrate that.

GRANDMOTHER: Well, just a mite to warm me up. Not that it's cold. (FEJEVARY _brings it to her, and the cookies_) The Indians used to like cookies. I was talking to that young whippersnapper about the Indians. One time I saw an Indian watching me from a bush, (_points_) Right out there. I was never afraid of Indians when you could see the whole of 'em--but when you could see nothin' but their bright eyes--movin' through leaves--I declare they made me nervous. After he'd been there an

hour I couldn't seem to put my mind on my work. So I thought, Red or White, a man's a man--I'll take him some cookies.

FEJEVARY: It succeeded?

GRANDMOTHER: So well that those leaves had eyes next day. But he brought me a fish to trade. He was a nice boy.

SILAS: Probably we killed him.

GRANDMOTHER: I dunno. Maybe he killed us. Will Owens' family was massacred just after this. Like as not my cookie Indian helped out there. Something kind of uncertain about the Indians.

SILAS: I guess they found something kind of uncertain about us.

GRANDMOTHER: Six o' one and half a dozen of another. Usually is.

SILAS: (_to_ FEJEVARY) I wonder if I'm wrong. You see, I never went to school--

GRANDMOTHER: I don't know why you say that, Silas. There was two winters you went to school.

SILAS: Yes, mother, and I'm glad I did, for I learned to read there, and liked the geography globe. It made the earth so nice to think about. And one day the teacher told us all about the stars, and I had that to think of when I was driving at night. The other boys didn't believe it was so. But I knew it was so! But I mean school--the way Mr Fejevary went to school. He went to universities. In his own countries--in other countries. All the things men have found out, the wisest and finest things men have thought since first they began to think--all that was put before them.

FEJEVARY: (_with a gentle smile_) I fear I left a good deal of it untouched.

SILAS: You took a plenty. Tell in your eyes you've thought lots about what's been thought. And that's what I was setting out to say. It makes something of men--learning. A house that's full of books makes a different kind of people. Oh, of course, if the books aren't there just to show off.

GRANDMOTHER: Like in Mary Baldwin's new house.

SILAS: (_trying hard to see it_) It's not the learning itself--it's the life that grows up from learning. Learning's like soil. Like--like fertilizer. Get richer. See more. Feel more. You believe that?

FEJEVARY: Culture should do it.

SILAS: Does in your house. You somehow know how it is for the other fellow more'n we do.

GRANDMOTHER: Well, Silas Morton, when you've your wood to chop an' your water to carry, when you kill your own cattle and hogs, tend your own horses and hens, make your butter, soap, and cook for whoever the Lord sends--there's none too many hours of the day left to be polite in.

SILAS: You're right, mother. It had to be that way. But now that we buy our soap--we don't want to say what soap-making made us.

GRANDMOTHER: We're honest.

SILAS: Yes. In a way. But there's another kind o' honesty, seems to me, goes with that more seein' kind of kindness. Our honesty with the Indians was little to brag on.

GRANDMOTHER: You fret more about the Indians than anybody else does.

SILAS: To look out at that hill sometimes makes me ashamed.

GRANDMOTHER: Land sakes, you didn't do it. It was the government. And what a government does is nothing for a person to be ashamed of.

SILAS: I don't know about that. Why is he here? Why is Felix Fejevary not rich and grand in Hungary to-day? 'Cause he was ashamed of what his government was.

GRANDMOTHER: Well, that was a foreign government.

SILAS: A seeing how 'tis for the other person--a bein' that other person, kind of honesty. Joke of it, 'twould do something for you. 'Twould 'a' done something for us to have been Indians a little more. My father used to talk about Blackhawk--they was friends. I saw Blackhawk once--when I was a boy. (to FEJEVARY) Guess I told you. You know what he looked like? He looked like the great of the earth. Noble. Noble like the forests--and the Mississippi--and the stars. His face was long and thin and you could see the bones, and the bones were beautiful. Looked like something that's never been caught. He was something many nights in his canoe had made him. Sometimes I feel that the land itself has got a mind that the land would rather have had the Indians.

GRANDMOTHER: Well, don't let folks hear you say it. They'd think you was plum crazy.

SILAS: I s'pose they would, (turning to FEJEVARY) But after you've walked a long time over the earth--and you all alone, didn't you ever feel something coming up from it that's like thought?

FEJEVARY: I'm afraid I never did. But--I wish I had.

SILAS: I love land--this land. I suppose that's why I never have the feeling that I own it.

GRANDMOTHER: If you don't own it--I want to know! What do you think we come here for--your father and me? What do you think we left our folks for--left the world of white folks--schools and stores and doctors, and set out in a covered wagon for we didn't know what? We lost a horse. Lost our way--weeks longer than we thought 'twould be. You were born in that covered wagon. You know that. But what you don't know is what that's like--without your own roof--or fire--without--

(She turns her face away.)

SILAS: No. No, mother, of course not. Now--now isn't this too bad? I don't say things right. It's because I never went to school.

GRANDMOTHER: (_her face shielded_) You went to school two winters.

SILAS: Yes. Yes, mother. So I did. And I'm glad I did.

GRANDMOTHER: (_with the determination of one who will not have her own pain looked at_) Mrs Fejevary's pansy bed doing well this summer?

FEJEVARY: It's beautiful this summer. She was so pleased with the new purple kind you gave her. I do wish you could get over to see them.

GRANDMOTHER: Yes. Well, I've seen lots of pansies. Suppose it was pretty fine-sounding speeches they had in town?

FEJEVARY: Too fine-sounding to seem much like the war.

SILAS: I'd like to go to a war celebration where they never mentioned war. There'd be a way to celebrate victory, (_hearing a step, looking out_) Mother, here's Felix.

(FELIX, _a well-dressed young man, comes in_.)

GRANDMOTHER: How do, Felix?

FELIX: And how do you do, Grandmother Morton?

GRANDMOTHER: Well, I'm still here.

FELIX: Of course you are. It wouldn't be coming home if you weren't.

GRANDMOTHER: I've got some cookies for you, Felix. I set 'em out, so you wouldn't have to steal them. John and Felix was hard on the cookie jar.

FELIX: Where is John?

SILAS: (_who is pouring a glass of wine for_ FELIX) You've not seen John yet? He was in town for the exercises. I bet those young devils ran off to the race-track. I heard whisperin' goin' round. But everybody'll be home some time. Mary and the girls--don't ask me where they are. They'll drive old Bess all over the country before they drive her to the bam. Your father and I come on home 'cause I wanted to have a talk with him.

FELIX: Getting into the old uniforms makes you want to talk it all over again?

SILAS: The war? Well, we did do that. But all that makes me want to talk about what's to come, about--what 'twas all for. Great things are to come, Felix. And before you are through.

FELIX: I've been thinking about them myself--walking around the town to-day. It's grown so much this year, and in a way that means more growing--that big glucose plant going up down the river, the new lumber mill--all that means many more people.

FEJEVARY: And they've even bought ground for a steel works.

SILAS: Yes, a city will rise from these cornfields--a big rich place--that's bound to be. It's written in the lay o' the land and the way the river flows. But first tell us about Harvard College, Felix. Ain't it a fine thing for us all to have Felix coming home from that

wonderful place!

FELIX: You make it seem wonderful.

SILAS: Ah, you know it's wonderful--know it so well you don't have to say it. It's something you've got. But to me it's wonderful the way the stars are wonderful--this place where all that the world has learned is to be drawn from me--like a spring.

FELIX: You almost say what Matthew Arnold says--a distinguished new English writer who speaks of: 'The best that has been thought and said in the world'.

SILAS: 'The best that has been thought and said in the world!' (_slowly rising, and as if the dream of years is bringing him to his feet_) That's what that hill is for! (_pointing_) Don't you see it? End of our trail, we climb a hill and plant a college. Plant a college, so's after we are gone that college says for us, says in people learning has made more: 'That is why we took this land.'

GRANDMOTHER: (_incredulous_) You mean, Silas, you're going to _give the hill away_?

SILAS: The hill at the end of our trail--how could we keep that?

GRANDMOTHER: Well, I want to know why not! Hill or level--land's land and not a thing you give away.

SILAS: Well, don't scold _me_. I'm not giving it away. It's giving itself away, get down to it.

GRANDMOTHER: Don't talk to me as if I was feeble-minded.

SILAS: I'm talking with all the mind I've got. If there's not mind in what I say, it's because I've got no mind. But I have got a mind, (_to_ FEJEVARY, _humorously_) Haven't I? You ought to know. Seeing as you gave it to me.

FEJEVARY: Ah, no--I didn't give it to you.

SILAS: Well, you made me know 'twas there. You said things that woke things in me and I thought about them as I ploughed. And that made me know there had to be a college there--wake things in minds--so ploughing's more than ploughing. What do you say, Felix?

FELIX: It--it's a big idea, Uncle Silas. I love the way you put it. It's only that I'm wondering--

SILAS: Wondering how it can ever be a Harvard College? Well, it can't. And it needn't be (_stubbornly_) It's a college in the cornfields--where the Indian maize once grew. And it's for the boys of the cornfields--and the girls. There's few can go to Harvard College--but more can climb that hill, (_turn of the head from the hill to_ FELIX) Harvard on a hill? (_As_ FELIX _smiles no_, SILAS _turns back to the hill_) A college should be on a hill. They can see it then from far around. See it as they go out to the barn in the morning; see it when they're shutting up at night. 'Twill make a difference--even to them that never go.

GRANDMOTHER: Now, Silas--don't be hasty.

SILAS: Hasty? It's been company to me for years. Came to me one night--must 'a' been ten years ago--middle of a starry night as I was comin' home from your place (_to_ FEJEVARY) I'd gone over to lend a hand with a sick horse an'--

FEJEVARY: (_with a grateful smile_) That was nothing new.

SILAS: Well, say, I'd sit up with a sick horse that belonged to the meanest man unhung. But--there were stars that night had never been there before. Leastways I'd not seen 'em. And the hill--Felix, in all your travels east, did you ever see anything more beautiful than that hill?

FELIX: It's like sculpture.

SILAS: Hm. (_the wistfulness with which he speaks of that outside his knowledge_) I s'pose 'tis. It's the way it rises--somehow--as if it knew it rose from wide and fertile lands. I climbed the hill that night, (_to_ FEJEVARY) You'd been talkin'. As we waited between medicines you told me about your life as a young man. All you'd lived through seemed to--open up to you that night--way things do at times. Guess it was 'cause you thought you was goin' to lose your horse. See, that was Colonel, the sorrel, wasn't it?

FEJEVARY: Yes. Good old Colonel.

SILAS: You'd had a long run o' off luck. Hadn't got things back in shape since the war. But say, you didn't lose him, did you?

FEJEVARY: Thanks to you.

SILAS: Thanks to the medicine I keep in the back kitchen.

FEJEVARY: You encouraged him.

GRANDMOTHER: Silas has a way with all the beasts.

SILAS: We've got the same kind of minds--the beasts and me.

GRANDMOTHER: Silas, I wish you wouldn't talk like that--and with Felix just home from Harvard College.

SILAS: Same kind of minds--except that mine goes on a little farther.

GRANDMOTHER: Well I'm glad to hear you say that.

SILAS: Well, there we sat--you an' me--middle of a starry night, out beside your barn. And I guess it came over you kind of funny you should be there with me--way off the Mississippi, tryin' to save a sick horse. Seemed to--bring your life to life again. You told me what you studied in that fine old university you loved--the Vienna,--and why you became a revolutionist. The old dreams took hold o' you and you talked--way you used to, I suppose. The years, o' course, had rubbed some of it off. Your face as you went on about the vision--you called it, vision of what life could be. I knew that night there was things I never got wind of. When I went away--knew I ought to go home to bed--hayin' at daybreak. 'Go to bed?' I said to myself. 'Strike this dead when you've never had it before, may never have it again?' I climbed the hill. Blackhawk was

there.

GRANDMOTHER: Why, he was _dead_.

SILAS: He was there--on his own old hill, with me and the stars. And I said to him--

GRANDMOTHER: Silas!

SILAS: Says I to him, 'Yes--that's true; it's more yours than mine, you had it first and loved it best. But it's neither yours nor mine,--though both yours and mine. Not my hill, not your hill, but--hill of vision', said I to him. 'Here shall come visions of a better world than was ever seen by you or me, old Indian chief.' Oh, I was drunk, plum drunk.

GRANDMOTHER: I should think you was. And what about the next day's hay?

SILAS: A day in the hayfield is a day's hayin'--but a night on the hill--

FELIX: We don't have them often, do we, Uncle Silas?

SILAS: I wouldn't 'a' had that one but for your father, Felix. Thank God they drove you out o' Hungary! And it's all so dog-gone _queer_. Ain't it queer how things blow from mind to mind--like seeds. Lord A'mighty--you don't know where they'll take hold.

(_Children's voices off_)

GRANDMOTHER: There come those children up from the creek--soppin' wet, I warrant. Well, I don't know how children ever get raised. But we raise more of 'em than we used to. I buried three--first ten years I was here. Needn't 'a' happened--if we'd known what we know now, and if we hadn't been alone. (_With all her strength_) I don't know what you mean--the hill's not yours!

SILAS: It's the future's, mother--so's we can know more than we know now.

GRANDMOTHER: We know it now. 'Twas then we didn't know it. I worked for that hill! And I tell you to leave it to your own children.

SILAS: There's other land for my own children. This is for all the children.

GRANDMOTHER: What's all the children to you?

SILAS: (_derisively_) Oh, mother--what a thing for you to say! You who were never too tired to give up your own bed so the stranger could have a better bed.

GRANDMOTHER: That was different. They was folks on their way.

FEJEVARY: So are we.

(SILAS _turns to him with quick appreciation_)

GRANDMOTHER: That's just talk. We're settled now. Children of other old settlers are getting rich. I should think you'd want yours to.

SILAS: I want other things more. I want to pay my debts 'fore I'm too old to know they're debts.

GRANDMOTHER: (_momentarily startled_) Debts? Huh! More talk. You don't owe any man.

SILAS: I owe him (_nodding to_ FEJEVARY). And the red boys here before me.

GRANDMOTHER: Fiddlesticks.

FELIX: You haven't read Darwin, have you, Uncle Silas?

SILAS: Who?

FELIX: Darwin, the great new man--and his theory of the survival of the fittest?

SILAS: No. No, I don't know things like that, Felix.

FELIX: I think he might make you feel better about the Indians. In the struggle for existence many must go down. The fittest survive. This--had to be.

SILAS: Us and the Indians? Guess I don't know what you mean--fittest.

FELIX: He calls it that. Best fitted to the place in which one finds one's self, having the qualities that can best cope with conditions--do things. From the beginning of life it's been like that. He shows the growth of life from forms that were hardly alive, the lowest animal forms--jellyfish--up to man.

SILAS: Oh, yes, that's the thing the churches are so upset about--that we come from monkeys.

FELIX: Yes. One family of ape is the direct ancestor of man.

GRANDMOTHER: You'd better read your Bible, Felix.

SILAS: Do people believe this?

FELIX: The whole intellectual world is at war about it. The best scientists accept it. Teachers are losing their positions for believing it. Of course, ministers can't believe it.

GRANDMOTHER: I should think not. Anyway, what's the use believing a thing that's so discouraging?

FEJEVARY: (_gently_) But is it that? It almost seems to me we have to accept it because it is so encouraging. (_holding out his hand_) Why have we hands?

GRANDMOTHER: Cause God gave them to us, I s'pose.

FEJEVARY: But that's rather general, and there isn't much in it to give us self-confidence. But when you think we have hands because ages back--before life had taken form as man, there was an impulse to do what had never been done--when you think that we have hands today because

from the first of life there have been adventurers--those of best brain and courage who wanted to be more than life had been, and that from aspiration has come doing, and doing has shaped the thing with which to do--it gives our hand a history which should make us want to use it well.

SILAS: (_breathed from deep_) Well, by God! And you've known this all this while! Dog-gone you--why didn't you tell me?

FEJEVARY: I've been thinking about it. I haven't known what to believe. This hurts--beliefs of earlier years.

FELIX: The things it hurts will have to go.

FEJEVARY: I don't know about that, Felix. Perhaps in time we'll find truth in them.

FELIX: Oh, if you feel that way, father.

FEJEVARY: Don't be kind to me, my boy, I'm not that old.

SILAS: But think what it is you've said! If it's true that we made ourselves--made ourselves out of the wanting to be more--created ourselves you might say, by our own courage--our--what is it?--aspiration. Why, I can't take it in. I haven't got the mind to take it in. And what mind I have got says no. It's too--

FEJEVARY: It fights with what's there.

SILAS: (_nodding_) But it's like I got this (_very slowly_) other way around. From underneath. As if I'd known it all along--but have just found out I know it! Yes. The earth told me. The beasts told me.

GRANDMOTHER: Fine place to learn things from.

SILAS: Anyhow, haven't I seen it? (_to_ FEJEVARY) In your face haven't I seen thinking make a finer face? How long has this taken, Felix, to--well, you might say, bring us where we are now?

FELIX: Oh, we don't know how many millions of years since earth first stirred.

SILAS: Then we are what we are because through all that time there've been them that wanted to be more than life had been.

FELIX: That's it, Uncle Silas.

SILAS: But--why, then we aren't _finished_ yet!

FEJEVARY: No. We take it on from here.

SILAS: (_slowly_) Then if we don't be--the most we can be, if we don't be more than life has been, we go back on all that life behind us; go back on--the--

(_Unable to formulate it, he looks to_ FEJEVARY.)

FEJEVARY: Go back on the dreaming and the daring of a million years.

(_After a moment's pause_ SILAS _gets up, opens the closet door_.)

GRANDMOTHER: Silas, what you doing?

SILAS: (_who has taken out a box_) I'm lookin' for the deed to the hill.

GRANDMOTHER: What you going to do with it?

SILAS: I'm going to get it out of my hands.

GRANDMOTHER: Get it out of your hands? (_he has it now_) Deed your father got from the government the very year the government got it from the Indians?

(_rising_) Give me that! (_she turns to_ FEJEVARY) Tell him he's crazy. We got the best land 'cause we was first here. We got a right to keep it.

FEJEVARY: (_going soothingly to her_) It's true, Silas, it is a serious thing to give away one's land.

SILAS: You ought to know. You did it. Are you sorry you did it?

FEJEVARY: No. But wasn't that different?

SILAS: How was it different? Yours was a fight to make life more, wasn't it? Well, let this be our way.

GRANDMOTHER: What's all that got to do with giving up the land that should provide for our own children?

SILAS: Isn't it providing for them to give them a better world to live in? Felix--you're young, I ask you, ain't it providing for them to give them a chance to be more than we are?

FELIX: I think you're entirely right, Uncle Silas. But it's the practical question that--

SILAS: If you're right, the practical question is just a thing to fix up.

FEJEVARY: I fear you don't realize the immense amount of money required to finance a college. The land would be a start. You would have to interest rich men; you'd have to have a community in sympathy with the thing you wanted to do.

GRANDMOTHER: Can't you see, Silas, that we're all against you?

SILAS: All against me? (_to_ FEJEVARY) But how can you be? Look at the land we walked in and took! Was there ever such a chance to make life more? Why, the buffalo here before us was more than we if we do nothing but prosper! God damn us if we sit here rich and fat and forget man's in the makin'. (_affirming against this_) There will one day be a college in these cornfields by the Mississippi because long ago a great dream was fought for in Hungary. And I say to that old dream, Wake up, old dream! Wake up and fight! You say rich men. (_holding it out, but it is not taken_) I give you this deed to take to rich men to show them one man believes enough in this to give the best land he's got. That ought to make rich men stop and think.

GRANDMOTHER: Stop and think he's a fool.

SILAS: (_to_ FEJEVARY) It's you can make them know he's not a fool. When you tell this way you can tell it, they'll feel in you what's more than them. They'll listen.

GRANDMOTHER: I tell you, Silas, folks are too busy.

SILAS: Too busy! Too busy bein' nothin'? If it's true that we created ourselves out of the thoughts that came, then thought is not something _outside_ the business of life. Thought--(_with his gift for wonder_) why, thought's our chance. I know now. Why I can't forget the Indians. We killed their joy before we killed them. We made them less, (_to_ FEJEVARY, _and as if sure he is now making it clear_) I got to give it back--their hill. I give it back to joy--a better joy--joy o'aspiration.

FEJEVARY: (_moved but unconvinced_) But, my friend, there are men who have no aspiration. That's why, to me, this is as a light shining from too far.

GRANDMOTHER: (_old things waked in her_) Light shining from far. We used to do that. We never pulled the curtain. I used to want to--you like to be to yourself when night conies--but we always left a lighted window for the traveller who'd lost his way.

FELIX: I should think that would have exposed you to the Indians.

GRANDMOTHER: Yes. (_impatiently_) Well, you can't put out a light just because it may light the wrong person.

FEJEVARY: No. (_and this is as a light to him. He turns to the hill_)
No.

SILAS: (_with gentleness, and profoundly_) That's it. Look again. Maybe your eyes are stronger now. Don't you see it? I see that college rising as from the soil itself, as if it was what come at the last of that thinking that breathes from the earth. I see it--but I want to know it's real before I stop knowing. Then maybe I can lie under the same sod with the red boys and not be ashamed. We're not old! Let's fight! Wake in other men what you woke in me!

FEJEVARY: And so could I pay my debt to America. (_His hand goes out_.)

SILAS: (_giving him the deed_) And to the dreams of a million years!
(_Standing near the open door, their hands are gripped in compact_.)

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE: _A corridor in the library of Morton College, October of the year 1920, upon the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of its founding. This is an open place in the stacks of books, which are seen at both

sides. There is a reading-table before the big rear window. This window opens out, but does not extend to the floor; only a part of its height is seen, indicating a very high window. Outside is seen the top of a tree. This outer wall of the building is on a slant, so that the entrance right is near, and the left is front. Right front is a section of a huge square column. On the rear of this, facing the window, is hung a picture of SILAS MORTON. Two men are standing before this portrait_.

SENATOR LEWIS _is the Midwestern state senator. He is not of the city from which Morton College rises, but of a more country community farther in-state_. FELIX FEJEVARY, _now nearing the age of his father in the first act, is an American of the more sophisticated type--prosperous, having the poise of success in affairs and place in society_.

SENATOR: And this was the boy who founded the place, eh? It was his idea?

FEJEVARY: Yes, and his hill. I was there the afternoon he told my father there must be a college here. I wasn't any older then than my boy is now.

(_As if himself surprised by this_.)

SENATOR: Well, he enlisted a good man when he let you in on it. I've been told the college wouldn't be what it is today but for you, Mr Fejevary.

FEJEVARY: I have a sentiment about it, and where our sentiment is, there our work goes also.

SENATOR: Yes. Well, it was those mainsprings of sentiment that won the war.

(_He is pleased with this_.)

FEJEVARY: (_nodding_) Morton College did her part in winning the war.

SENATOR: I know. A fine showing.

FEJEVARY: And we're holding up our end right along. You'll see the boys drill this afternoon. It's a great place for them, here on the hill--shows up from so far around. They're a fine lot of fellows. You know, I presume, that they went in as strike-breakers during the trouble down here at the steel works. The plant would have had to close but for Morton College. That's one reason I venture to propose this thing of a state appropriation for enlargement. Why don't we sit down a moment? There's no conflict with the state university--they have their territory, we have ours. Ours is an important one--industrially speaking. The state will lose nothing in having a good strong college here--a one-hundred-per-cent-American college.

SENATOR: I admit I am very favourably impressed.

FEJEVARY: I hope you'll tell your committee so--and let me have a chance to talk to them.

SENATOR: Let's see, haven't you a pretty radical man here?

FEJEVARY: I wonder if you mean Holden?

SENATOR: Holden's the man. I've read things that make me question his Americanism.

FEJEVARY: Oh--(_gesture of depreciation_) I don't think he is so much a radical as a particularly human human-being.

SENATOR: But we don't want radical human beings.

FEJEVARY: He has a genuine sympathy with youth. That's invaluable in a teacher, you know. And then--he's a scholar.

(_He betrays here his feeling of superiority to his companion, but too subtly for his companion to get it_.)

SENATOR: Oh--scholar. We can get scholars enough. What we want is Americans.

FEJEVARY: Americans who are scholars.

SENATOR: You can pick 'em off every bush--pay them a little more than they're paid in some other cheap John College. Excuse me--I don't mean this is a cheap John College.

FEJEVARY: Of course not. One couldn't think that of Morton College. But that--pay them a little more, interests me. That's another reason I want to talk to your committee on appropriations. We claim to value education and then we let highly trained, gifted men fall behind the plumber.

SENATOR: Well, that's the plumber's fault. Let the teachers talk to the plumber.

FEJEVARY: (_with a smile_) No. Better not let them talk to the plumber. He might tell them what to do about it. In fact, is telling them.

SENATOR: That's ridiculous. They can't serve both God and mammon.

FEJEVARY: Then let God give them mammon. I mean, let the state appropriate.

SENATOR: Of course this state, Mr Fejevary, appropriates no money for radicals. Excuse me, but why do you keep this man Holden?

FEJEVARY: In the scholar's world we're known because of him. And really, Holden's not a radical--in the worst sense. What he doesn't see is--expediency. Not enough the man of affairs to realize that we can't always have literally what we have theoretically. He's an idealist. Something of the--man of vision.

SENATOR: If he had the right vision he'd see that we don't every minute have literally what we have theoretically because we're fighting to keep the thing we have. Oh, I sometimes think the man of affairs has the only vision. Take you, Mr Fejevary--a banker. These teachers--books--books! (_pushing all books back_) Why, if they had to take for one day the responsibility that falls on your shoulders--big decisions to make--man among men--and all the time worries, irritations, particularly now with labour riding the high horse like a fool! I know something about these things. I went to the State House because my community persuaded me it was my duty. But I'm the man of affairs myself.

FEJEVARY: Oh yes, I know. Your company did much to develop that whole northern part of the state.

SENATOR: I think I may say we did. Well, that's why, after three sessions, I'm chairman of the appropriations committee. I know how to use money to promote the state. So--teacher? That would be a perpetual vacation to me. Now, if you want my advice, Mr Fejevary,--I think your case before the state would be stronger if you let this fellow Holden go.

FEJEVARY: I'm going to have a talk with Professor Holden.

SENATOR: Tell him it's for his own good. The idea of a college professor standing up for conscientious objectors!

FEJEVARY: That doesn't quite state the case. Fred Jordan was one of Holden's students--a student he valued. He felt Jordan was perfectly sincere in his objection.

SENATOR: Sincere in his objections! The nerve of him thinking it was his business to be sincere!

FEJEVARY: He was expelled from college--you may remember; that was how we felt about it.

SENATOR: I should hope so.

FEJEVARY: Holden fought that, but within the college. What brought him into the papers was his protest against the way the boy has been treated in prison.

SENATOR: What's the difference how he's treated? You know how I'd treat him? (_a movement as though pulling a trigger_) If I didn't know you for the American you are, I wouldn't understand your speaking so calmly.

FEJEVARY: I'm simply trying to see it all sides around.

SENATOR: Makes me see red.

FEJEVARY: (_with a smile_) But we mustn't meet red with red.

SENATOR: What's Holden fussing about--that they don't give him caviare on toast?

FEJEVARY: That they didn't give him books. Holden felt it was his business to fuss about that.

SENATOR: Well, when your own boy 'stead of whining around about his conscience, stood up and offered his life!

FEJEVARY: Yes. And my nephew gave his life.

SENATOR: That so?

FEJEVARY: Silas Morton's grandson died in France. My sister Madeline married Ira Morton, son of Silas Morton.

SENATOR: I knew there was a family connection between you and the

Mortons.

FEJEVARY: (speaking with reserve) They played together as children and married as soon as they were grown up.

SENATOR: So this was your sister's boy? (FEJEVARY nods) One of the mothers to give her son!

FEJEVARY: (speaking of her with effort) My sister died--long ago. (pulled to an old feeling; with an effort releasing himself) But Ira is still out at the old place--place the Mortons took up when they reached the end of their trail--as Uncle Silas used to put it. Why, it's a hundred years ago that Grandmother Morton began--making cookies here. She was the first white woman in this country.

SENATOR: Proud woman! To have begun the life of this state! Oh, our pioneers! If they could only see us now, and know what they did! (FEJEVARY is silent; he does not look quite happy) I suppose Silas Morton's son is active in the college management.

FEJEVARY: No, Ira is not a social being. Fred's death about finished him. He had been--strange for years, ever since my sister died--when the children were little. It was--(again pulled back to that old feeling) under pretty terrible circumstances.

SENATOR: I can see that you thought a great deal of your sister, Mr Fejevary.

FEJEVARY: Oh, she was beautiful and--(bitterly) it shouldn't have gone like that.

SENATOR: Seems to me I've heard something about Silas Morton's son--though perhaps it wasn't this one.

FEJEVARY: Ira is the only one living here now; the others have gone farther west.

SENATOR: Isn't there something about corn?

FEJEVARY: Yes. His corn has several years taken the prize--best in the state. He's experimented with it--created a new kind. They've given it his name--Morton corn. It seems corn is rather fascinating to work with--very mutable stuff. It's a good thing Ira has it, for it's about the only thing he does care for now. Oh, Madeline, of course. He has a daughter here in the college--Madeline Morton, senior this year--one of our best students. I'd like to have you meet Madeline--she's a great girl, though--peculiar.

SENATOR: Well, that makes a girl interesting, if she isn't peculiar the wrong way. Sounds as if her home life might make her a little peculiar.

FEJEVARY: Madeline stays here in town with us a good part of the time. Mrs Fejevary is devoted to her--we all are. (a boy starts to come through from right) Hello, see who's here. This is my boy. Horace, this is Senator Lewis, who is interested in the college.

HORACE: (shaking hands) How do you do, Senator Lewis?

SENATOR: Pleased to see you, my boy.

HORACE: Am I butting in?

FEJEVARY: Not seriously; but what are you doing in the library? I thought this was a day off.

HORACE: I'm looking for a book.

FEJEVARY: (_affectionately bantering_) You are, Horace? Now how does that happen?

HORACE: I want the speeches of Abraham Lincoln.

SENATOR: You couldn't do better.

HORACE: I'll show those dirty dagoes where they get off!

FEJEVARY: You couldn't show them a little more elegantly?

HORACE: I'm going to sick the Legion on 'em.

FEJEVARY: Are you talking about the Hindus?

HORACE: Yes, the dirty dagoes.

FEJEVARY: Hindus aren't dagoes you know, Horace.

HORACE: Well, what's the difference? This foreign element gets my goat.

SENATOR: My boy, you talk like an American. But what do you mean--Hindus?

FEJEVARY: There are two young Hindus here as students. And they're good students.

HORACE: Sissies.

FEJEVARY: But they must preach the gospel of free India--non-British India.

SENATOR: Oh, that won't do.

HORACE: They're nothing but Reds, I'll say. Well, one of 'em's going back to get his. (_grins_)

FEJEVARY: There were three of them last year. One of them is wanted back home.

SENATOR: I remember now. He's to be deported.

HORACE: And when they get him--(_movement as of pulling a rope_) They hang there.

FEJEVARY: The other two protest against our not fighting the deportation of their comrade. They insist it means death to him. (_brushing off a thing that is inclined to worry him_) But we can't handle India's affairs.

SENATOR: I should think not!

HORACE: Why, England's our ally! That's what I told them. But you can't argue with people like that. Just wait till I find the speeches of Abraham Lincoln!

(_Passes through to left_)

SENATOR: Fine boy you have, Mr Fejevary.

FEJEVARY: He's a live one. You should see him in a football game. Wouldn't hurt my feelings in the least to have him a little more of a student, but--

SENATOR: Oh, well, you want him to be a regular fellow, don't you, and grow into a man among men?

FEJEVARY: He'll do that, I think. It was he who organized our boys for the steel strike--went right in himself and took a striker's job. He came home with a black eye one night, presented to him by a picket who started something by calling him a scab. But Horace wasn't thinking about his eye. According to him, it was not in the class with the striker's upper lip. 'Father,' he said, 'I gave him more red than he could swallow. The blood just--' Well, I'll spare you--but Horace's muscle is one hundred per cent American. (_going to the window_) Let me show you something. You can see the old Morton place off on that first little hill. (_pointing left_) The first rise beyond the valley.

SENATOR: The long low house?

FEJEVARY: That's it. You see, the town for the most part swung around the other side of the hill, so the Morton place is still a farm.

SENATOR: But you're growing all the while. The town'll take the cornfield yet.

FEJEVARY: Yes, our steel works is making us a city.

SENATOR: And this old boy (_turning to the portrait of_ SILAS MORTON) can look out on his old home--and watch the valley grow.

FEJEVARY: Yes--that was my idea. His picture really should be in Memorial Hall, but I thought Uncle Silas would like to be up here among the books, and facing the old place. (_with a laugh_) I confess to being a little sentimental.

SENATOR: We Americans have lots of sentiment, Mr Fejevary. It's what makes us--what we are. (FEJEVARY _does not speak; there are times when the senator seems to trouble him_) Well, this is a great site for a college. You can see it from the whole country round.

FEJEVARY: Yes, that was Uncle Silas' idea. He had a reverence for education. It grew, in part, out of his feeling for my father. He was a poet--really, Uncle Silas. (_looking at the picture_) He gave this hill for a college that we might become a deeper, more sensitive people--

(_Two girls, convulsed with the giggles, come tumbling in_.)

DORIS: (_confused_) Oh--oh, excuse us.

FUSSIE: (_ foolishly_) We didn't know anybody was here.

(MR FEJEVARY _looks at them sternly. The girls retreat_.)

SENATOR: (_ laughing_) Oh, well girls will be girls. I've got three of my own.

(HORACE _comes back, carrying an open book_.)

HORACE: Say, this must be a misprint.

FEJEVARY: (_ glancing at the back of the book_) Oh, I think not.

HORACE: From his first inaugural address to Congress, March 4, 1861. (_ reads_) 'This country with its institutions belong to the people who inhabit it.' Well, that's all right. 'Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing government they can exercise their constitutional right of amending it'--(_ after a brief consideration_) I suppose that that's all right--but listen! 'or their revolutionary right to dismember or overthrow it.'

FEJEVARY: He was speaking in another age. An age of different values.

SENATOR: Terms change their significance from generation to generation.

HORACE: I suppose they do--but that puts me in bad with these lice. They quoted this and I said they were liars.

SENATOR: And what's the idea? They're weary of our existing government and are about to dismember or overthrow it?

HORACE: I guess that's the dope.

FEJEVARY: Look here, Horace--speak accurately. Was it in relation to America they quoted this?

HORACE: Well, maybe they were talking about India then. But they were standing up for being revolutionists. We were giving them an earful about it, and then they spring Lincoln on us. Got their nerve--I'll say--quoting Lincoln to us.

SENATOR: The fact that they are quoting it shows it's being misapplied.

HORACE: (_ approvingly_) I'll tell them that. But gee--Lincoln oughta been more careful what he said. Ignorant people don't know how to take such things.

(_Goes back with book_.)

FEJEVARY: Want to take a look through the rest of the library? We haven't been up this way yet--(_ motioning left_) We need a better scientific library. (_ they are leaving now_) Oh, we simply must have more money. The whole thing is fairly bursting its shell.

DORIS: (_ venturing in cautiously from the other side, looking back, beckoning_) They've gone.

FUSSIE: Sure?

DORIS: Well, are they here? And I saw them, I tell you--they went up to science.

FUSSIE: (_moving the_ SENATOR'S _hat on the table_) But they'll come back.

DORIS: What if they do? We're only looking at a book. (_running her hand along the books_) Matthew Arnold.

(_Takes a paper from_ FUSSIE, _puts it in the book. They are bent with giggling as_ HORACE _returns_.)

HORACE: For the love o' Pete, what's the joke? (_taking the book from the helpless girl_) Matthew Arnold. My idea of nowhere to go for a laugh. When I wrote my theme on him last week he was so dry I had to go out and get a Morton Sundee (_the girls are freshly attacked, though all of this in a subdued way, mindful of others in the library_) Say, how'd you get that way?

DORIS: Now, Horace, don't you _tell_.

HORACE: What'd I tell, except--(_seeing the paper_) Um hum--what's this?

DORIS: (_trying to get it from him_) Horace, now _don't_ you (_a tussle_) You great strong mean thing! Fussie! Make him _stop_.

(_She gets the paper by tearing it_.)

HORACE: My dad's around here--showing the college off to a politician. If you don't come across with that sheet of mystery, I'll back you both out there (_starts to do it_) and--

DORIS: Horace! You're just _horrid_.

HORACE: Sure I'm horrid. That's the way I want to be. (_takes the paper, reads_)

'To Eben
You are the idol of my dreams
I worship from afar.'
What is this?

FUSSIE: Now, listen, Horace, and don't you _tell_. You know Eben Weeks. He's the homeliest man in school. Wouldn't you say so?

HORACE: Awful jay. Like to get some of the jays out of here.

DORIS: But listen. Of course, no girl would _look_ at him. So we've thought up the most _killing_ joke, (_stopped by giggles from herself and_ FUSSIE) Now, he hasn't handed in his Matthew Arnold dope. I heard old Mac hold him up for it--and what'd you think he said? That he'd been _ploughing_. Said he was trying to run a farm and go to college at the same time! Isn't it a _scream_?

HORACE: We oughta--make it more unpleasant for some of those jays. Gives the school a bad name.

FUSSIE: But, listen, Horace, honest--you'll just _die_. He said he was going to get the book this afternoon. Now you know what he _looks_ like,

but he turns to--(_both girls are convulsed_)

DORIS: It'll get him all fussed up! And for nothing at all!

HORACE: Too bad that class of people come here. I think I'll go to Harvard next year. Haven't broken it to my parents--but I've about made up my mind.

DORIS: Don't you think Morton's a good school, Horace?

HORACE: Morton's all right. Fine for the--(_kindly_) people who would naturally come here. But one gets an acquaintance at Harvard. Wher'd'y' want these passionate lines?

(FUSSIE _and_ DORIS _are off again convulsed_.)

HORACE: (_eye falling on the page where he opens the book_) Say, old Bones could spill the English--what? Listen to this flyer. 'For when we say that culture is to know the best that has been thought and said in the world, we simply imply that for culture a system directly tending to that end is necessary in our reading.' (_he reads it with mock solemnity, delighting_ FUSSIE _and_ DORIS) The best that has been thought and said in the world!

(MADELINE MORTON _comes in from right; she carries a tennis racket_.)

MADELINE: (_both critical and good-humoured_) You haven't made a large contribution to that, have you, Horace?

HORACE: Madeline, you don't want to let this sarcastic habit grow on you.

MADELINE: Thanks for the tip.

FUSSIE: Oh--_ Madeline, (holds out her hand to take the book from_ HORACE _and shows it to_ MADELINE) You know--

DORIS: S-h Don't be silly, (_to cover this_) Who you playing with?

HORACE: Want me to play with you, Madeline?

MADELINE: (_genially_) I'd rather play with you than talk to you.

HORACE: Same here.

FUSSIE: Aren't cousins affectionate?

MADELINE: (_moving through to the other part of the library_) But first I'm looking for a book.

HORACE: Well, I can tell you without your looking it up, he did say it. But that was an age of different values. Anyway, the fact that they're quoting it shows it's being misapplied.

MADELINE: (_smiling_) Father said so.

HORACE: (_on his dignity_) Oh, of course--if you don't want to be serious.

(MADELINE _laughs and passes on through_.)

DORIS: What are you two talking about?

HORACE: Madeline happened to overhear a little discussion down on the campus.

FUSSIE: Listen. You know something? Sometimes I think Madeline Morton is a highbrow in disguise.

HORACE: Say, you don't want to start anything like that. Madeline's all right. She and I treat each other rough--but that's being in the family.

FUSSIE: Well, I'll _tell_ you something. I heard Professor Holden say Madeline Morton has a great deal more mind than she'd let herself know.

HORACE: Oh, well--Holden, he's erratic. Look at how popular Madeline is.

DORIS: I should say. What's the matter with you, Fussie?

FUSSIE: Oh, I didn't mean it really _hurt_ her.

HORACE: Guess it don't hurt her much at a dance. Say, what's this new jazz they were springing last night?

DORIS: I know! Now look here, Horace--L'me show you. (_she shows him a step_)

HORACE: I get you. (_He begins to dance with her; the book he holds slips to the floor. He kicks it under the table_.)

FUSSIE: Be careful. They'll be coming back here, (_glances off left_)

DORIS: Keep an eye out, Fussie.

FUSSIE: (_from her post_) They're coming! I tell you, they're _coming!_

DORIS: Horace, come on.

(_He teasingly keeps hold of her, continuing the dance. At sound of voices, they run off, right_. FUSSIE _considers rescuing the book, decides she has not time_.)

SENATOR: (_at first speaking off_) Yes, it could be done. There is that surplus, and as long as Morton College is socially valuable--right here above the steel works, and making this feature of military training--(_he has picked up his hat_) But your Americanism must be unimpeachable, Mr Fejevary. This man Holden stands in the way.

FEJEVARY: I'm going to have a talk with Professor Holden this afternoon. If he remains he will--(_it is not easy for him to say_) give no trouble. (MADELINE _returns_) Oh, here's Madeline--Silas Morton's granddaughter, Madeline Fejevary Morton. This is Senator Lewis, Madeline.

SENATOR: (_holding out his hand_) How do you do, Miss Morton. I suppose this is a great day for you.

MADELINE: Why--I don't know.

SENATOR: The fortieth anniversary of the founding of your grandfather's college? You must be very proud of your illustrious ancestor.

MADELINE: I get a bit bored with him.

SENATOR: Bored with him? My dear young lady!

MADELINE: I suppose because I've heard so many speeches about him--'The sainted pioneer'--'the grand old man of the prairies'--I'm sure I haven't any idea what he really was like.

FEJEVARY: I've tried to tell you, Madeline.

MADELINE: Yes.

SENATOR: I should think you would be proud to be the granddaughter of this man of vision.

MADELINE: (_her smile flashing_) Wouldn't you hate to be the granddaughter of a phrase?

FEJEVARY: (_trying to laugh it off_) Madeline! How absurd.

MADELINE: Well, I'm off for tennis.

(_Nods good-bye and passes on_)

FEJEVARY: (_calling to her_) Oh, Madeline, if your Aunt Isabel is out there--will you tell her where we are?

MADELINE: (_calling back_) All right.

FEJEVARY: (_after a look at his companion_) Queer girl, Madeline. Rather--moody.

SENATOR: (_disapprovingly_) Well--yes.

FEJEVARY: (_again trying to laugh it off_) She's been hearing a great many speeches about her grandfather.

SENATOR: She should be proud to hear them.

FEJEVARY: Of course she should. (_looking in the direction_ MADELINE _has gone_) I want you to meet my wife, Senator Lewis.

SENATOR: I should be pleased to meet Mrs Fejevary. I have heard what she means to the college--socially.

FEJEVARY: I think she has given it something it wouldn't have had without her. Certainly a place in the town that is--good for it. And you haven't met our president yet.

SENATOR: Guess, I've met the real president.

FEJEVARY: Oh--no. I'm merely president of the board of trustees.

SENATOR: 'Merely!'

FEJEVARY: I want you to know President Welling. He's very much the cultivated gentleman.

SENATOR: Cultivated gentlemen are all right. I'd hate to see a world they ran.

FEJEVARY: (_with a laugh_) I'll just take a look up here, then we can go down the shorter way.

(_He goes out right_. SENATOR LEWIS _turns and examines the books_. FUSSIE _slips in, looks at him, hesitates, and then stoops under the table for the Matthew Arnold (and her poem) which_ HORACE _has kicked there. He turns_.)

FUSSIE: (_not out from under the table_) Oh, I was just looking for a book.

SENATOR: Quite a place to look for a book.

FUSSIE: (_crawling out_) Yes, it got there. I thought I'd put it back. Somebody--might want it.

SENATOR: I see, young lady, that you have a regard for books.

FUSSIE: Oh, yes, I do have a regard for them.

SENATOR: (_holding out his hand_) And what is your book?

FUSSIE: Oh--it's--it's nothing.

(_As he continues to hold out his hand, she reluctantly gives the book_.)

SENATOR: (_solemnly_) Matthew Arnold? Nothing?

FUSSIE: Oh, I didn't mean _him_.

SENATOR: A master of English! I am glad, young woman, that you value this book.

FUSSIE: Oh yes, I'm--awfully fond of it.

(_Growing more and more nervous as in turning the pages he nears the poem_.)

SENATOR: I am interested in you young people of Morton College.

FUSSIE: That's so good of you.

SENATOR: What is your favourite study?

FUSSIE: Well--(_an inspiration_) I like all of them.

SENATOR: Morton College is coming on very fast, I understand.

FUSSIE: Oh yes, it's getting more and more of the right people. It used to be a little jay, you know. Of course, the Fejevarys give it class. Mrs Fejevary--isn't she wonderful?

SENATOR: I haven't seen her yet. Waiting here now to meet her.

FUSSIE: (_worried by this_) Oh, I must--must be going. Shall I put the book back? (_holding out her hand_)

SENATOR: No, I'll just look it over a bit. (_sits down_)

FUSSIE: (_unable to think of any way of getting it_) This is where it belongs.

SENATOR: Thank you.

(_Reluctantly she goes out_. SENATOR LEWIS _pursues Matthew Arnold with the conscious air of a half literate man reading a 'great book'. The FEJEVARYS _come in_)

FEJEVARY: I found my wife, Senator Lewis.

AUNT ISABEL: (_she is a woman of social distinction and charm_) How do you do, Senator Lewis? (_They shake hands_.)

SENATOR: It's a great pleasure to meet you, Mrs Fejevary.

AUNT ISABEL: Why don't we carry Senator Lewis home for lunch?

SENATOR: Why, you're very kind.

AUNT ISABEL: I'm sure there's a great deal to talk about, so why not talk comfortably, and really get acquainted? And we want to tell you the whole story of Morton College--the good old American spirit behind it.

SENATOR: I am glad to find you an American, Mrs Fejevary.

AUNT ISABEL: Oh, we are that. Morton College is one hundred per cent American. Our boys--

(_Her boy_ HORACE _rushes in_.)

HORACE: (_wildly_) Father! Will you go after Madeline? The police have got her!

FEJEVARY: _What!_

AUNT ISABEL: (_as he is getting his breath_) What absurd thing are you saying, Horace?

HORACE: Awful row down on the campus. The Hindus. I told them to keep their mouths shut about Abraham Lincoln. I told them the fact they were quoting him--

FEJEVARY: Never mind what you told them! What happened?

HORACE: We started--to rustle them along a bit. Why, they had _handbills_ (_holding one up as if presenting incriminating evidence--the_ SENATOR _takes it from him_) telling America what to do about deportation! Not on this campus--I say. So we were--we were putting a stop to it. They resisted--particularly the fat one. The cop at the corner saw the row--came up. He took hold of Bakhshish, and when the dirty anarchist didn't move along fast enough, he took hold of

him--well, a bit rough, you might say, when up rushes Madeline and calls to the cop, 'Let that boy alone!' Gee--I don't know just what did happen--awful mix-up. Next thing I knew Madeline hauled off and patted the policeman a fierce one with her tennis racket!

SENATOR: She struck the officer?

HORACE: I should say she did. Twice. The second time--

AUNT ISABEL: Horace. (looking at her husband) I--I can't believe it.

HORACE: I could have squared it, even then, but for Madeline herself. I told the policeman that she didn't understand--that I was her cousin, and apologized for her. And she called over at me, 'Better apologize for yourself!' As if there was any sense to that--that she--she looked like a tiger. Honest, everybody was afraid of her. I kept right on trying to square it, told the cop she was the granddaughter of the man that founded the college--that you were her uncle--he would have gone off with just the Hindu, fixed this up later, but Madeline balled it up again--didn't care who was her uncle--Gee! (he throws open the window) There! You can see them, at the foot of the hill. A nice thing--member of our family led off to the police station!

FEJEVARY: (to the SENATOR) Will you excuse me?

AUNT ISABEL: (trying to return to the manner of pleasant social things) Senator Lewis will go on home with me, and you--(he is hurrying out) come when you can. (to the SENATOR) Madeline is such a high-spirited girl.

SENATOR: If she had no regard for the living, she might--on this day of all others--have considered her grandfather's memory.

(Raises his eyes to the picture of SILAS MORTON.)

HORACE: Gee! Wouldn't you say so?

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE: The same as Act II three hours later. PROFESSOR HOLDEN is seated at the table, books before him. He is a man in the fifties. At the moment his care-worn face is lighted by that lift of the spirit which sometimes rewards the scholar who has imaginative feeling. HARRY, a student clerk, comes hurrying in. Looks back.

HARRY: Here's Professor Holden, Mr Fejevary.

HOLDEN: Mr Fejevary is looking for me?

HARRY: Yes.

(He goes back, a moment later MR FEJEVARY enters. He has his hat, gloves, stick; seems tired and disturbed.)

HOLDEN: Was I mistaken? I thought our appointment was for five.

FEJEVARY: Quite right. But things have changed, so I wondered if I might have a little talk with you now.

HOLDEN: To be sure. (_rising_) Shall we go downstairs?

FEJEVARY: I don't know. Nice and quiet up here. (_to_ HARRY, _who is now passing through_) Harry, the library is closed now, is it?

HARRY: Yes, it's locked.

FEJEVARY: And there's no one in here?

HARRY: No, I've been all through.

FEJEVARY: There's a committee downstairs. Oh, this is a terrible day. (_putting his things on the table_) We'd better stay up here. Harry, when my niece--when Miss Morton arrives--I want you to come and let me know. Ask her not to leave the building without seeing me.

HARRY: Yes, sir. (_he goes out_)

FEJEVARY: Well, (_wearily_) it's been a day. Not the day I was looking for.

HOLDEN: No.

FEJEVARY: You're very serene up here.

HOLDEN: Yes, I wanted to be--serene for a little while.

FEJEVARY: (_looking at the books_) Emerson. Whitman. (_with a smile_) Have they anything new to say on economics?

HOLDEN: Perhaps not; but I wanted to forget economics for a time. I came up here by myself to try and celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the founding of Morton College. (_answering the other man's look_) Yes, I confess I've been disappointed in the anniversary. As I left Memorial Hall after the exercises this morning, Emerson's words came into my mind--

'Give me truth,
For I am tired of surfaces
And die of inanition.'

Well, then I went home--(_stops, troubled_)

FEJEVARY: How is Mrs Holden?

HOLDEN: Better, thank you, but--not strong.

FEJEVARY: She needs the very best of care for a time, doesn't she?

HOLDEN: Yes. (_silent a moment_) Then, this is something more than the fortieth anniversary, you know. It's the first of the month.

FEJEVARY: And illness hasn't reduced the bills?

HOLDEN: (_shaking his head_) I didn't want this day to go like that; so

I came up here to try and touch what used to be here.

FEJEVARY: But you speak despondently of us. And there's been such a fine note of optimism in the exercises. (_speaks with the heartiness of one who would keep himself assured_)

HOLDEN: I didn't seem to want a fine note of optimism. (_with roughness_) I wanted--a gleam from reality.

FEJEVARY: To me this is reality--the robust spirit created by all these young people.

HOLDEN: Do you think it is robust? (_hand affectionately on the book before him_) I've been reading Whitman.

FEJEVARY: This day has to be itself. Certain things go--others come; life is change.

HOLDEN: Perhaps it's myself I'm discouraged with. Do you remember the tenth anniversary of the founding of Morton College.

FEJEVARY: The tenth? Oh yes, that was when this library was opened.

HOLDEN: I shall never forget your father, Mr Fejevary, as he stood out there and said the few words which gave these books to the students. Not many books, but he seemed to baptize them in the very spirit from which books are born.

FEJEVARY: He died the following year.

HOLDEN: One felt death near. But that didn't seem the important thing. A student who had fought for liberty for mind. Of course his face would be sensitive. You must be very proud of your heritage.

FEJEVARY: Yes. (_a little testily_) Well, I have certainly worked for the college. I'm doing my best now to keep it a part of these times.

HOLDEN: (_as if this has not reached him_) It was later that same afternoon I talked with Silas Morton. We stood at this window and looked out over the valley to the lower hill that was his home. He told me how from that hill he had for years looked up to this one, and why there had to be a college here. I never felt America as that old farmer made me feel it.

FEJEVARY: (_drawn by this, then shifting in irritation because he is drawn_) I'm sorry to break in with practical things, but alas, I am a practical man--forced to be. I too have made a fight--though the fight to finance never appears an idealistic one. But I'm deep in that now, and I must have a little help; at least, I must not have--stumbling-blocks.

HOLDEN: Am I a stumbling-block?

FEJEVARY: Candidly (_with a smile_) you are a little hard to finance. Here's the situation. The time for being a little college has passed. We must take our place as one of the important colleges--I make bold to say one of the important universities--of the Middle West. But we have to enlarge before we can grow. (_answering_ HOLDEN's _smile_) Yes, it is ironic, but that's the way of it. It was a nice thing to open the anniversary with fifty thousand from the steel works--but fifty thousand

dollars--nowadays--to an institution? (_waves the fifty thousand aside_) They'll do more later, I think, when they see us coming into our own. Meanwhile, as you know, there's this chance for an appropriation from the state. I find that the legislature, the members who count, are very friendly to Morton College. They like the spirit we have here. Well, now I come to you, and you are one of the big reasons for my wanting to put this over. Your salary makes me blush. It's all wrong that a man like you should have these petty worries, particularly with Mrs Holden so in need of the things a little money can do. Now this man Lewis is a reactionary. So, naturally, he doesn't approve of you.

HOLDEN: So naturally I am to go.

FEJEVARY: Go? Not at all. What have I just been saying?

HOLDEN: Be silent, then.

FEJEVARY: Not that either--not--not really. But--be a little more discreet. (_seeing him harden_) This is what I want to put up to you. Why not give things a chance to mature in your own mind? Candidly, I don't feel you know just what you do think; is it so awfully important to express--confusion?

HOLDEN: The only man who knows just what he thinks at the present moment is the man who hasn't done any new thinking in the past ten years.

FEJEVARY: (_with a soothing gesture_) You and I needn't quarrel about it. I understand you, but I find it a little hard to interpret you to a man like Lewis.

HOLDEN: Then why not let a man like Lewis go to thunder?

FEJEVARY: And let the college go to thunder? I'm not willing to do that. I've made a good many sacrifices for this college. Given more money than I could afford to give; given time and thought that I could have used for personal gain.

HOLDEN: That's true, I know.

FEJEVARY: I don't know just why I've done it. Sentiment, I suppose. I had a very strong feeling about my father, Professor Holden. And this friend Silas Morton. This college is the child of that friendship. Those are noble words in our manifesto: 'Morton College was born because there came to this valley a man who held his vision for mankind above his own advantage; and because that man found in this valley a man who wanted beauty for his fellow-men as he wanted no other thing.'

HOLDEN: (_taking it up_) 'Born of the fight for freedom and the aspiration to richer living, we believe that Morton College--rising as from the soil itself--may strengthen all those here and everywhere who fight for the life there is in freedom, and may, to the measure it can, loosen for America the beauty that breathes from knowledge.' (_moved by the words he has spoken_) Do you know, I would rather do that--really do that--than--grow big.

FEJEVARY: Yes. But you see, or rather, what you don't see is, you have to look at the world in which you find yourself. The only way to stay alive is to grow big. It's been hard, but I have tried to--carry on.

HOLDEN: And so have I tried to carry on. But it is very hard--carrying on a dream.

FEJEVARY: Well, I'm trying to make it easier.

HOLDEN: Make it easier by destroying the dream?

FEJEVARY: Not at all. What I want is scope for dreams.

HOLDEN: Are you sure we'd have the dreams after we've paid this price for the scope?

FEJEVARY: Now let's not get rhetorical with one another.

HOLDEN: Mr Fejevary, you have got to let me be as honest with you as you say you are being with me. You have got to let me say what I feel.

FEJEVARY: Certainly. That's why I wanted this talk with you.

HOLDEN: You say you have made sacrifices for Morton College. So have I.

FEJEVARY: How well I know that.

HOLDEN: You don't know all of it. I'm not sure you understand any of it.

FEJEVARY: (_charmingly_) Oh, I think you're hard on me.

HOLDEN: I spoke of the tenth anniversary. I was a young man then, just home from Athens, (_pulled back into an old feeling_) I don't know why I felt I had to go to Greece. I knew then that I was going to teach something within sociology, and I didn't want anything I felt about beauty to be left out of what I formulated about society. The Greeks--

FEJEVARY: (_as_ HOLDEN _has paused before what he sees_) I remember you told me the Greeks were the passion of your student days.

HOLDEN: Not so much because they created beauty, but because they were able to let beauty flow into their lives--to create themselves in beauty. So as a romantic young man (_smiles_), it seemed if I could go where they had been--what I had felt might take form. Anyway, I had a wonderful time there. Oh, what wouldn't I give to have again that feeling of life's infinite possibilities!

FEJEVARY: (_nodding_) A youthful feeling.

HOLDEN: (_softly_) I like youth. Well, I was just back, visiting my sister here, at the time of the tenth anniversary. I had a chance then to go to Harvard as instructor. A good chance, for I would have been under a man who liked me. But that afternoon I heard your father speak about books. I talked with Silas Morton. I found myself telling him about Greece. No one had ever felt it as he felt it. It seemed to become of the very bone of him.

FEJEVARY: (_affectionately_) I know how he used to do.

HOLDEN: He put his hands on my shoulders. He said, 'Young man, don't go away. We need you here. Give us this great thing you've got!' And so I stayed, for I felt that here was soil in which I could grow, and that one's whole life was not too much to give to a place with roots like

that. (_a little bitterly_) Forgive me if this seems rhetoric.

FEJEVARY: (_a gesture of protest. Silent a moment_) You make it--hard for me. (_with exasperation_) Don't you think I'd like to indulge myself in an exalted mood? And why don't I? I can't afford it--not now. Won't you have a little patience? And faith--faith that the thing we want will be there for us after we've worked our way through the woods. We are in the woods now. It's going to take our combined brains to get us out. I don't mean just Morton College.

HOLDEN: No--America. As to getting out, I think you are all wrong.

FEJEVARY: That's one of your sweeping statements, Holden. Nobody's all wrong. Even you aren't.

HOLDEN: And in what ways am I wrong--from the standpoint of your Senator Lewis?

FEJEVARY: He's not my Senator Lewis, he's the state's, and we have to take him as he is. Why, he objects, of course, to your radical activities. He spoke of your defence of conscientious objectors.

HOLDEN: (_slowly_) I think a man who is willing to go to prison for what he believes has stuff in him no college needs turn its back on.

FEJEVARY: Well, he doesn't agree with you--nor do I.

HOLDEN: (_still quietly_) And I think a society which permits things to go on which I can prove go on in our federal prisons had better stop and take a fresh look at itself. To stand for that and then talk of democracy and idealism--oh, it shows no mentality, for one thing.

FEJEVARY: (_easily_) I presume the prisons do need a cleaning up. As to Fred Jordan, you can't expect me to share your admiration. Our own Fred--my nephew Fred Morton, went to France and gave his life. There's some little courage, Holden, in doing that.

HOLDEN: I'm not trying to belittle it. But he had the whole spirit of his age with him--fortunate boy. The man who stands outside the idealism of this time--

FEJEVARY: Takes a good deal upon himself, I should say.

HOLDEN: There isn't any other such loneliness. You know in your heart it's a noble courage.

FEJEVARY: It lacks--humility. (HOLDEN _laughs scoffingly_) And I think you lack it. I'm asking you to co-operate with me for the good of Morton College.

HOLDEN: Why not do it the other way? You say enlarge that we may grow. That's false. It isn't of the nature of growth. Why not do it the way of Silas Morton and Walt Whitman--each man being his purest and intensest self. I was full of this fervour when you came in. I'm more and more disappointed in our students. They're empty--flippant. No sensitive moment opens them to beauty. No exaltation makes them--what they hadn't known they were. I concluded some of the fault must be mine. The only students I reach are the Hindus. Perhaps Madeline Morton--I don't quite make her out. I too must have gone into a dead stratum. But I can get

back. Here alone this afternoon--(_softly_) I was back.

FEJEVARY: I think we'll have to let the Hindus go.

HOLDEN: (_astonished_) Go? Our best students?

FEJEVARY: This college is for Americans. I'm not going to have foreign revolutionists come here and block the things I've spent my life working for.

HOLDEN: I don't seem to know what you mean at all.

FEJEVARY: Why, that disgraceful performance this morning. I can settle Madeline all right, (_looking at his watch_) She should be here by now. But I'm convinced our case before the legislature will be stronger with the Hindus out of here.

HOLDEN: Well, I seem to have missed something--disgraceful performance--the Hindus, Madeline--(_stops, bewildered_)

FEJEVARY: You mean to say you don't know about the disturbance out here?

HOLDEN: I went right home after the address. Then came up here alone.

FEJEVARY: Upon my word, you do lead a serene life. While you've been sitting here in contemplation I've been to the police court--trying to get my niece out of jail. That's what comes of having radicals around.

HOLDEN: What happened?

FEJEVARY: One of our beloved Hindus made himself obnoxious on the campus. Giving out handbills about freedom for India--howling over deportation. Our American boys wouldn't stand for it. A policeman saw the fuss--came up and started to put the Hindu in his place. Then Madeline rushes in, and it ended in her pounding the policeman with her tennis racket.

HOLDEN: Madeline Morton did that!

FEJEVARY: (_sharply_) You seem pleased.

HOLDEN: I am--interested.

FEJEVARY: Well, I'm not interested. I'm disgusted. My niece mixing up in a free-for-all fight and getting taken to the police station! It's the first disgrace we've ever had in our family.

HOLDEN: (_as one who has been given courage_) Wasn't there another disgrace?

FEJEVARY: What do you mean?

HOLDEN: When your father fought his government and was banished from his country.

FEJEVARY: That was not a disgrace!

HOLDEN: (_as if in surprise_) Wasn't it?

FEJEVARY: See here, Holden, you can't talk to me like that.

HOLDEN: I don't admit you can talk to me as you please and that I can't talk to you. I'm a professor--not a servant.

FEJEVARY: Yes, and you're a damned difficult professor. I certainly have tried to--

HOLDEN: (_smiling_) Handle me?

FEJEVARY: I ask you this. Do you know any other institution where you could sit and talk with the executive head as you have here with me?

HOLDEN: I don't know. Perhaps not.

FEJEVARY: Then be reasonable. No one is entirely free. That's naive. It's rather egotistical to want to be. We're held by our relations to others--by our obligations to the (_vaguely_)--the ultimate thing. Come now--you admit certain dissatisfactions with yourself, so--why not go with intensity into just the things you teach--and not touch quite so many other things?

HOLDEN: I couldn't teach anything if I didn't feel free to go wherever that thing took me. Thirty years ago I was asked to come to this college precisely because my science was not in isolation, because of my vivid feeling of us as a moment in a long sweep, because of my faith in the greater beauty our further living may unfold.

(HARRY _enters_.)

HARRY: Excuse me. Miss Morton is here now, Mr Fejevary.

FEJEVARY: (_frowns, hesitates_) Ask her to come up here in five minutes (_After_ HARRY _has gone_) I think we've thrown a scare into Madeline. I thought as long as she'd been taken to jail it would be no worse for us to have her stay there awhile. She's been held since one o'clock. That ought to teach her reason.

HOLDEN: Is there a case against her?

FEJEVARY: No, I got it fixed up. Explained that it was just college girl foolishness--wouldn't happen again. One reason I wanted this talk with you first, if I do have any trouble with Madeline I want you to help me.

HOLDEN: Oh, I can't do that.

FEJEVARY: You aren't running out and clubbing the police. Tell her she'll have to think things over and express herself with a little more dignity.

HOLDEN: I ask to be excused from being present while you talk with her.

FEJEVARY: But why not stay in the library--in case I should need you. Just take your books over to the east alcove and go on with what you were doing when I came in.

HOLDEN: (_with a faint smile_) I fear I can hardly do that. As to Madeline--

FEJEVARY: You don't want to see the girl destroy herself, do you? I confess I've always worried about Madeline. If my sister had lived--But Madeline's mother died, you know, when she was a baby. Her father--well, you and I talked that over just the other day--there's no getting to him. Fred never worried me a bit--just the fine normal boy. But Madeline--(_with an effort throwing it off_) Oh, it'll be all right, I haven't a doubt. And it'll be all right between you and me, won't it? Caution over a hard strip of the road, then--bigger things ahead.

HOLDEN: (_slowly, knowing what it may mean_) I shall continue to do all I can toward getting Fred Jordan out of prison. It's a disgrace to America that two years after the war closes he should be kept there--much of the time in solitary confinement--because he couldn't believe in war. It's small--vengeful--it's the Russia of the Czars. I shall do what is in my power to fight the deportation of Gurkul Singh. And certainly I shall leave no stone unturned if you persist in your amazing idea of dismissing the other Hindus from college. For what--I ask you? Dismissed--for _what_? Because they love liberty enough to give their lives to it! The day you dismiss them, burn our high-sounding manifesto, Mr Fejevary, and admit that Morton College now sells her soul to the--committee on appropriations!

FEJEVARY: Well, you force me to be as specific as you are. If you do these things, I can no longer fight for you.

HOLDEN: Very well then, I go.

FEJEVARY: Go where?

HOLDEN: I don't know--at the moment.

FEJEVARY: I fear you'll find it harder than you know. Meanwhile, what of your family?

HOLDEN: We will have to manage some way.

FEJEVARY: It is not easy for a woman whose health--in fact, whose life--is a matter of the best of care to 'manage some way'. (_with real feeling_) What is an intellectual position alongside that reality? You'd like, of course, to be just what you want to be--but isn't there something selfish in that satisfaction? I'm talking as a friend now--you must know that. You and I have a good many ties, Holden. I don't believe you know how much Mrs Fejevary thinks of Mrs Holden.

HOLDEN: She has been very, very good to her.

FEJEVARY: And will be. She cares for her. And our children have been growing up together--I love to watch it. Isn't that the reality? Doing for them as best we can, making sacrifices of--of _every_ kind. Don't let some tenuous, remote thing destroy this flesh and blood thing.

HOLDEN: (_as one fighting to keep his head above water_) Honesty is not a tenuous, remote thing.

FEJEVARY: There's a kind of honesty in selfishness. We can't always have it. Oh, I used to--go through things. But I've struck a pace--one does--and goes ahead.

HOLDEN: Forgive me, but I don't think you've had certain temptations

to--selfishness.

FEJEVARY: How do you know what I've had? You have no way of knowing what's in me--what other thing I might have been? You know my heritage; you think that's left nothing? But I find myself here in America. I love those dependent on me. My wife--who's used to a certain manner of living; my children--who are to become part of the America of their time. I've never said this to another human being--I've never looked at myself--but it's pretty arrogant to think you're the only man who has made a sacrifice to fit himself into the age in which he lives. I hear Madeline. This hasn't left me in very good form for talking with her. Please don't go away. Just--

(MADELINE _comes in, right. She has her tennis racket. Nods to the two men_. HOLDEN _goes out, left_.)

MADELINE: (_looking after_ HOLDEN--_feeling something going on. Then turning to her uncle, who is still looking after_ HOLDEN) You wanted to speak to me, Uncle Felix?

FEJEVARY: Of course I want to speak to you.

MADELINE: I feel just awfully sorry about--banging up my racket like this. The second time it came down on this club. Why do they carry those things? Perfectly fantastic, I'll say, going around with a club. But as long as you were asking me what I wanted for my birthday--

FEJEVARY: Madeline, I am not here to discuss your birthday.

MADELINE: I'm sorry--(_smiles_) to hear that.

FEJEVARY: You don't seem much chastened.

MADELINE: Chastened? Was that the idea? Well, if you think that keeping a person where she doesn't want to be chastens her! I never felt less 'chastened' than when I walked out of that slimy spot and looked across the street at your nice bank. I should think you'd hate to--(_with friendly concern_) Why, Uncle Felix, you look tired out.

FEJEVARY: I am tired out, Madeline. I've had a nerve-racking day.

MADELINE: Isn't that too bad? Those speeches were so boresome, and that old senator person--wasn't he a stuff? But can't you go home now and let auntie give you tea and--

FEJEVARY: (_sharply_) Madeline, have you no intelligence? Hasn't it occurred to you that your performance would worry me a little?

MADELINE: I suppose it was a nuisance. And on such a busy day. (_changing_) But if you're going to worry, Horace is the one you should worry about. (_answering his look_) Why, he got it all up. He made me ashamed!

FEJEVARY: And you're not at all ashamed of what you have done?

MADELINE: Ashamed? Why--no.

FEJEVARY: Then you'd better be! A girl who rushes in and assaults an officer!

MADELINE: (_earnestly explaining it_) But, Uncle Felix, I had to stop him. No one else did.

FEJEVARY: Madeline, I don't know whether you're trying to be naive--

MADELINE: (_angrily_) Well, I'm _not_. I like that! I think I'll go home.

FEJEVARY: I think you will not! It's stupid of you not to know this is serious. You could be dismissed from school for what you did.

MADELINE: Well, I'm good and ready to be dismissed from any school that would dismiss for that!

FEJEVARY: (_in a new manner--quietly, from feeling_) Madeline, have you no love for this place?

MADELINE: (_doggedly, after thinking_) Yes, I have. (_she sits down_) And I don't know why I have.

FEJEVARY: Certainly it's not strange. If ever a girl had a background, Morton College is Madeline Fejevary Morton's background. (_he too now seated by the table_) Do you remember your Grandfather Morton?

MADELINE: Not very well. (_a quality which seems sullenness_) I couldn't bear to look at him. He shook so.

FEJEVARY: (_turning away, real pain_) Oh--how cruel!

MADELINE: (_surprised, gently_) Cruel? Me--cruel?

FEJEVARY: Not just you. The way it passes--(_to himself_) so _fast_ it passes.

MADELINE: I'm sorry. (_troubled_) You see, he was too old then--

FEJEVARY: (_his hand up to stop her_) I wish I could bring him back for a moment, so you could see what he was before he (_bitterly_) shook so. He was a powerful man, who was as real as the earth. He was strangely of the earth, as if something went from it to him. (_looking at her intently_) Queer you should be the one to have no sentiment about him, for you and he--sometimes when I'm with you it's as if--he were near. He had no personal ambition, Madeline. He was ambitious for the earth and its people. I wonder if you can realize what it meant to my father--in a strange land, where he might so easily have been misunderstood, pushed down, to find a friend like that? It wasn't so much the material things--though Uncle Silas was always making them right--and as if--oh, hardly conscious what he was doing--so little it mattered. It was the way he _got_ father, and by that very valuing kept alive what was there to value. Why, he literally laid this country at my father's feet--as if that was what this country was for, as if it made up for the hard early things--for the wrong things.

MADELINE: He must really have been a pretty nice old party. No doubt I would have hit it off with him all right. I don't seem to hit it off with the--speeches about him. Somehow I want to say, 'Oh, give us a rest.'

FEJEVARY: (_offended_) And that, I presume, is what you want to say to me.

MADLINE: No, no, I didn't mean you, Uncle. Though (_hesitatingly_) I was wondering how you could think you were talking on your side.

FEJEVARY: What do you mean--my side?

MADLINE: Oh, I don't--exactly. That's nice about him being--of the earth. Sometimes when I'm out for a tramp--way off by myself--yes, I know. And I wonder if that doesn't explain his feeling about the Indians. Father told me how grandfather took it to heart about the Indians.

FEJEVARY: He felt it as you'd feel it if it were your brother. So he must give his choicest land to the thing we might become. 'Then maybe I can lie under the same sod with the red boys and not be ashamed.'

(MADLINE _nods, appreciatively_.)

MADLINE: Yes, that's really--all right.

FEJEVARY: (_irritated by what seems charily stated approval_) 'All right!' Well, I am not willing to let this man's name pass from our time. And it seems rather bitter that Silas Morton's granddaughter should be the one to stand in my way.

MADLINE: Why, Uncle Felix, I'm not standing in your way. Of course I wouldn't do that. I--(_rather bashfully_) I love the Hill. I was thinking about it in jail. I got fuddled on direction in there, so I asked the woman who hung around which way was College Hill. 'Right through there', she said. A blank wall. I sat and looked through that wall--long time. (_she looks front, again looking through that blank wall_) It was all--kind of funny. Then later she came and told me you were out there, and I thought it was corking of you to come and tell them they couldn't put that over on College Hill. And I know Bakhshish will appreciate it too. I wonder where he went?

FEJEVARY: Went? I fancy he won't go much of anywhere to-night.

MADLINE: What do you mean?

FEJEVARY: Why, he's held for this hearing, of course.

MADLINE: You mean--you came and got just me--and left him there?

FEJEVARY: Certainly.

MADLINE: (_rising_) Then I'll have to go and get him!

FEJEVARY: Madeline, don't be so absurd. You don't get people out of jail by stopping in and calling for them.

MADLINE: But you got me.

FEJEVARY: Because of years of influence. At that, it wasn't simple. Things of this nature are pretty serious nowadays. It was only your ignorance got you out.

MADELINE: I do seem ignorant. While you were fixing it up for me, why didn't you arrange for him too?

FEJEVARY: Because I am not in the business of getting foreign revolutionists out of jail.

MADELINE: But he didn't do as much as I did.

FEJEVARY: It isn't what he did. It's what he is. We don't want him here.

MADELINE: Well, I guess I'm not for that!

FEJEVARY: May I ask why you have appointed yourself guardian of these strangers?

MADELINE: Perhaps because they are strangers.

FEJEVARY: Well, they're the wrong kind of strangers.

MADELINE: Is it true that the Hindu who was here last year is to be deported? Is America going to turn him over to the government he fought?

FEJEVARY: I have an idea they will all be deported. I'm not so sorry this thing happened. It will get them into the courts--and I don't think they have money to fight.

MADELINE: (_giving it clean and straight_) Gee, I think that's rotten!

FEJEVARY: Quite likely your inelegance will not affect it one way or the other.

MADELINE: (_she has taken her seat again, is thinking it out_) I'm twenty-one next Tuesday. Isn't it on my twenty-first birthday I get that money Grandfather Morton left me?

FEJEVARY: What are you driving at?

MADELINE: (_simply_) They can have my money.

FEJEVARY: Are you crazy? What _are_ these people to you?

MADELINE: They're people from the other side of the world who came here believing in us, drawn from the far side of the world by things we say about ourselves. Well, I'm going to pretend--just for fun--that the things we say about ourselves are true. So if you'll--arrange so I can get it, Uncle Felix, as soon as it's mine.

FEJEVARY: And this is what you say to me at the close of my years of trusteeship! If you could know how I've nursed that little legacy along--until now it is--(_breaking off in anger_) I shall not permit you to destroy yourself!

MADELINE: (_quietly_) I don't see how you can keep me from 'destroying myself'.

FEJEVARY: (_looking at her, seeing that this may be true. In genuine amazement, and hurt_) Why--but it's incredible. Have I--has my house--been nothing to you all these years?

MADELINE: I've had my best times at your house. Things wouldn't have been--very gay for me--without you all--though Horace gets my goat!

FEJEVARY: And does your Aunt Isabel--'get your goat'?

MADELINE: I love auntie. (_rather resentfully_) You know that. What has that got to do with it?

FEJEVARY: So you are going to use Silas Morton's money to knife his college.

MADELINE: Oh, Uncle Felix, that's silly.

FEJEVARY: It's a long way from silly. You know a little about what I'm trying to do--this appropriation that would assure our future. If Silas Morton's granddaughter casts in her lot with revolutionists, Morton College will get no help from the state. Do you know enough about what you are doing to assume this responsibility?

MADELINE: I am not casting 'in my lot with revolutionists'. If it's true, as you say, that you have to have money in order to get justice--

FEJEVARY: I didn't say it!

MADELINE: Why, you did, Uncle Felix. You said so. And if it's true that these strangers in our country are going to be abused because they're poor,--what else could I do with my money and not feel like a skunk?

FEJEVARY: (_trying a different tack, laughing_) Oh, you're a romantic girl, Madeline--skunk and all. Rather nice, at that. But the thing is perfectly fantastic, from every standpoint. You speak as if you had millions. And if you did, it wouldn't matter, not really. You are going against the spirit of this country; with or without money, that can't be done. Take a man like Professor Holden. He's radical in his sympathies--but does he run out and club the police?

MADELINE: (_in a smouldering way_) I thought America was a democracy.

FEJEVARY: We have just fought a great war for democracy.

MADELINE: Well, is that any reason for not having it?

FEJEVARY: I should think you would have a little emotion about the war--about America--when you consider where your brother is.

MADELINE: Fred had--all kinds of reasons for going to France. He wanted a trip. (_answering his exclamation_) Why, he _said_ so. Heavens, Fred didn't make speeches about himself. Wanted to see Paris--poor kid, he never did see Paris. Wanted to be with a lot of fellows--knock the Kaiser's block off--end war, get a French girl. It was all mixed up--the way things are. But Fred was a pretty decent sort. I'll say so. He had such kind, honest eyes. (_this has somehow said itself; her own eyes close and what her shut eyes see makes feeling hot_) One thing I do know! Fred never went over the top and out to back up the argument you're making now!

FEJEVARY: (_stiffly_) Very well, I will discontinue the argument I'm making now. I've been trying to save you from--pretty serious things. The regret of having stood in the way of Morton College--(_his voice

falling_) the horror of having driven your father insane.

MADELINE: _What?_

FEJEVARY: One more thing would do it. Just the other day I was talking with Professor Holden about your father. His idea of him relates back to the pioneer life--another price paid for this country. The lives back of him were too hard. Your great-grandmother Morton--the first white woman in this region--she dared too much, was too lonely, feared and bore too much. They did it, for the task gave them a courage for the task. But it--left a scar.

MADELINE: And father is that--(_can hardly say it_)--scar. (_fighting the idea_) But Grandfather Morton was not like that.

FEJEVARY: No; he had the vision of the future; he was robust with feeling for others. (_gently_) But Holden feels your father is the--dwarfed pioneer child. The way he concentrates on corn--excludes all else--as if unable to free himself from their old battle with the earth.

MADELINE: (_almost crying_) I think it's pretty terrible to--wish all that on poor father.

FEJEVARY: Well, my dear child, it's life has 'wished it on him'. It's just one other way of paying the price for his country. We needn't get it for nothing. I feel that all our chivalry should go to your father in his--heritage of loneliness.

MADELINE: Father couldn't always have been--dwarfed. Mother wouldn't have cared for him if he had always been--like that.

FEJEVARY: No, if he could have had love to live in. But no endurance for losing it. Too much had been endured just before life got to him.

MADELINE: Do you know, Uncle Felix--I'm afraid that's true? (_he nods_) Sometimes when I'm with father I feel those things near--the--the too much--the too hard,--feel them as you'd feel the cold. And now that it's different--easier--he can't come into the world that's been earned. Oh, I wish I could help him!

(_As they sit there together, now for the first time really together, there is a shrill shout of derision from outside_.)

MADELINE: What's that? (_a whistled call_) Horace! That's Horace's call. That's for his gang. Are they going to start something now that will get Atma in jail?

FEJEVARY: More likely he's trying to start something. (_they are both listening intently_) I don't think our boys will stand much more.

(_A scoffing whoop_. MADELINE _springs to the window; he reaches it ahead and holds it_.)

FEJEVARY: This window stays closed.

(_She starts to go away, he takes hold of her_.)

MADELINE: You think you can keep me in here?

FEJEVARY: Listen, Madeline--plain, straight truth. If you go out there and get in trouble a second time, I can't make it right for you.

MADELINE: You needn't!

FEJEVARY: You don't know what it means. These things are not child's play--not today. You could get twenty years in prison for things you'll say if you rush out there now. (_she laughs_) You laugh because you're ignorant. Do you know that in America today there are women in our prisons for saying no more than you've said here to me!

MADELINE: Then you ought to be ashamed of yourself!

FEJEVARY: I? Ashamed of myself?

MADELINE: Yes! Aren't you an American? (_a whistle_) Isn't that a policeman's whistle? Are they coming back? Are they hanging around here to--(_pulling away from her uncle as he turns to look, she jumps up in the deep sill and throws open the window. Calling down_) Here--Officer--_You_--Let that boy alone!

FEJEVARY: (_going left, calling sharply_) Holden. Professor Holden--here--quick!

VOICE: (_coming up from below, outside_) Who says so?

MADELINE: I say so!

VOICE: And who are you talking for?

MADELINE: I am talking for Morton College!

FEJEVARY: (_returning--followed, reluctantly, by_ HOLDEN) Indeed you are not. Close that window or you'll be expelled from Morton College.

(_Sounds of a growing crowd outside_.)

VOICE: Didn't I see you at the station?

MADELINE: Sure you saw me at the station. And you'll see me there again, if you come bullying around here. You're not what this place is for! (_her uncle comes up behind, right, and tries to close the window--she holds it out_) My grandfather gave this hill to Morton College--a place where anybody--from any land--can come and say what he believes to be true! Why, you poor simp--this is America! Beat it from here! Atna! Don't let him take hold of you like that! He has no right to--Oh, let me _down_ there!

(_Springs down, would go off right, her uncle spreads out his arms to block that passage. She turns to go the other way_.)

FEJEVARY: Holden! Bring her to her senses. Stand there. (HOLDEN _has not moved from the place he entered, left, and so blocks the doorway_) Don't let her pass.

(_Shouts of derision outside_.)

MADELINE: You think you can keep me in here--with that going on out

there? (_ Moves nearer_ HOLDEN, _stands there before him, taut, looking him straight in the eye. After a moment, slowly, as one compelled, he steps aside for her to pass. Sound of her running footsteps. The two men's eyes meet. A door slams_.)

CURTAIN

ACT IV

SCENE: _At the_ MORTON _place, the same room in which_ SILAS MORTON _told his friend_ FELIX FEJEVARY _of his plan for the hill. The room has not altogether changed since that day in 1879. The table around which they dreamed for the race is in its old place. One of the old chairs is there, the other two are modern chairs. In a corner is the rocker in which_ GRANDMOTHER MORTON _sat. This is early afternoon, a week after the events of Act II_.

MADELINE _is sitting at the table, in her hand a torn, wrinkled piece of brown paper-peering at writing almost too fine to read. After a moment her hand goes out to a beautiful dish on the table--an old dish of coloured Hungarian glass. She is about to take something from this, but instead lets her hand rest an instant on the dish itself Then turns and through the open door looks out at the hill, sitting where her_ GRANDFATHER MORTON _sat when he looked out at the hill._

Her father, IRA MORTON, _appears outside, walking past the window, left. He enters, carrying a grain sack, partly filled. He seems hardly aware of_ MADELINE, _but taking a chair near the door, turned from her, opens the sack and takes out a couple of ears of corn. As he is bent over them, examining in a shrewd, greedy way_, MADELINE _looks at that lean, tormented, rather desperate profile, the look of one confirming a thing she fears. Then takes up her piece of paper_.

MADELINE: Do you remember Fred Jordan, father? Friend of our Fred--and of mine?

IRA: (_not wanting to take his mind from the corn_) No. I don't remember him. (_his voice has that timbre of one not related to others_)

MADELINE: He's in prison now.

IRA: Well I can't help that. (_after taking out another ear_) This is the best corn I ever had. (_he says it gloatingly to himself_)

MADELINE: He got this letter out to me--written on this scrap of paper. They don't give him paper. (_peering_) Written so fine I can hardly read it. He's in what they call 'the hold', father--a punishment cell. (_with difficulty reading it_) It's two and a half feet at one end, three feet at the other, and six feet long. He'd been there ten days when he wrote this. He gets two slices of bread a day; he gets water; that's all he gets. This because he balled the deputy warden out for chaining another prisoner up by the wrists.

IRA: Well, he'd better a-minded his own business. And you better mind

yours. I've got no money to spend in the courts. (_with excitement_) I'll not mortgage this farm! It's been clear since the day my father's father got it from the government--and it stays clear--till I'm gone. It grows the best corn in the state--best corn in the Mississippi Valley. Not for _anything_--you hear me?--would I mortgage this farm my father handed down to me.

MADELINE: (_hurt_) Well, father, I'm not asking you to.

IRA: Then go and see your Uncle Felix. Make it up with him. He'll help you--if you say you're sorry.

MADELINE: I'll not go to Uncle Felix.

IRA: Who will you go to then? (_pause_) Who will help you then? (_again he waits_) You come before this United States Commissioner with no one behind you, he'll hold you for the grand jury. Judge Watkins told Felix there's not a doubt of it. You know what that means? It means you're on your way to a cell. Nice thing for a Morton, people who've had their own land since we got it from the Indians. What's the matter with your uncle? Ain't he always been good to you? I'd like to know what things would 'a' been for you without Felix and Isabel and all their friends. You want to think a little. You like good times too well to throw all that away.

MADELINE: I do like good times. So does Fred Jordan like good times. (_smooths the wrinkled paper_) I don't know anybody--unless it is myself--loves to be out, as he does. (_she tries to look out, but cannot; sits very still, seeing what it is pain to see. Rises, goes to that corner closet, the same one from which_ SILAS MORTON _took the deed to the hill. She gets a yard stick, looks in a box and finds a piece of chalk. On the floor she marks off_ FRED JORDAN'S _cell. Slowly, at the end left unchalked, as for a door, she goes in. Her hand goes up as against a wall; looks at her other hand, sees it is out too far, brings it in, giving herself the width of the cell. Walks its length, halts, looks up_) And one window--too high up to see out.

(_In the moment she stands there, she is in that cell; she is all the people who are in those cells_. EMIL JOHNSON _appears from outside; he is the young man brought up on a farm, a crudely Americanized Swede_.)

MADELINE: (_stepping out of the cell door, and around it_) Hello, Emil.

EMIL: How are you, Madeline? How do, Mr Morton. (IRA _barely nods and does not turn. In an excited manner he begins gathering up the corn he has taken from the sack_. EMIL _turns back to_ MADELINE) Well, I'm just from the courthouse. Looks like you and I might take a ride together, Madeline. You come before the Commissioner at four.

IRA: What have you got to do with it?

MADELINE: Oh, Emil has a courthouse job now, father. He's part of the law.

IRA: Well, he's not going to take you to the law! Anybody else--not Emil Johnson!

MADELINE: (_astonished--and gently, to make up for his rudeness_) Why--father, why not Emil? Since I'm going, I think it's nice to go in

with someone I know--with a neighbour like Emil.

IRA: If _this_ is what he lived for! If this is why--

(_He twists the ear of corn until some of the kernels drip off_.
MADELINE _and_ EMIL _look at one another in bewilderment_.)

EMIL: It's too bad anybody has to take Madeline in. I should think your uncle could fix it up. (_low_) And with your father taking it like this--(_to help_ IRA) That's fine corn, Mr Morton. My corn's getting better all the time, but I'd like to get some of this for seed.

IRA: (_rising and turning on him_) You get my corn? I raise this corn for you? (_not to them--his mind now going where it is shut off from any other mind_) If I could make the _wind_ stand still! I want to _turn the wind around_.

MADELINE: (_going to him_) Why--father. I don't understand at all.

IRA: Don't understand. Nobody understands. (_a curse with a sob in it_) God damn the wind!

(_Sits down, his back to them_.)

EMIL: (_after a silence_) Well, I'll go. (_but he continues to look at_ IRA, _who is holding the sack of corn shut, as if someone may take it_) Too bad--(_stopped by a sign from_ MADELINE, _not to speak of it_) Well, I was saying, I have go on to Beard's Crossing. I'll stop for you on my way back. (_confidentially_) Couldn't you telephone your uncle? He could do something. You don't know what you're going up against. You heard what the Hindus got, I suppose.

MADELINE: No. I haven't seen anyone to-day.

EMIL: They're held for the grand jury. They're locked up now. No bail for them. I've got the inside dope about them. They're going to get what this country can hand 'em; then after we've given them a nice little taste of prison life in America, they're going to be sent back home--to see what India can treat them to.

MADELINE: Why are you so pleased about this, Emil?

EMIL: Pleased? It's nothin' to me--I'm just telling you. Guess you don't know much about the Espionage Act or you'd go and make a little friendly call on your uncle. When your case comes to trial--and Judge Lenon may be on the bench--(_whistles_) He's one fiend for Americanism. But if your uncle was to tell the right parties that you're just a girl, and didn't realize what you were saying--

MADELINE: I did realize what I was saying, and every word you've just said makes me know I meant what I said. I said if this was what our country has come to, then I'm not for our country. I said that--and a-plenty more--and I'll say it again!

EMIL: Well--gee, you don't know what it means.

MADELINE: I do know what it means, but it means not being a coward.

EMIL: Oh, well--Lord, you can't say everything you think. If everybody

did that, things'd be worse off than they are now.

MADELINE: Once in a while you have to say what you think--or hate yourself.

EMIL: (_with a grin_) Then hate yourself.

MADELINE: (_smiling too_) No thank you; it spoils my fun.

EMIL: Well, look-a-here, Madeline, aren't you spoiling your fun now? You're a girl who liked to be out. Ain't I seen you from our place, with this one and that one, sometimes all by yourself, strikin' out over the country as if you was crazy about it? How'd you like to be where you couldn't even see out?

MADELINE: (_a step nearer the cell_) There oughtn't to be such places.

EMIL: Oh, well--Jesus, if you're going to talk about that--! You can't change the way things are.

MADELINE: (_quietly_) Why can't I?

EMIL: Well, say, who do you think you are?

MADELINE: I think I'm an American. And for that reason I think I have something to say about America.

EMIL: Huh! America'll lock you up for your pains.

MADELINE: All right. If it's come to that, maybe I'd rather be a locked-up American than a free American.

EMIL: I don't think you'd like the place, Madeline. There's not much tennis played there. Jesus--what's Hindus?

MADELINE: You aren't really asking Jesus, are you, Emil? (_smiles_) You mightn't like his answer.

EMIL: (_from the door_) Take a tip. Telephone your uncle.

(_He goes_.)

IRA: (_not looking at her_) There might be a fine, and they'd come down on me and take my land.

MADELINE: Oh, no, father, I think not. Anyway, I have a little money of my own. Grandfather Morton left me something. Have you forgotten that?

IRA: No. No, I know he left you something. (_the words seem to bother him_) I know he left you something.

MADELINE: I get it to-day. (_wistfully_) This is my birthday, father. I'm twenty-one.

IRA: Your birthday? Twenty-one? (_in pain_) Was that twenty-one years ago? (_it is not to his daughter this has turned him_)

MADELINE: It's the first birthday I can remember that I haven't had a party.

IRA: It was your Aunt Isabel gave you your parties.

MADELINE: Yes.

IRA: Well, you see now.

MADELINE: (stoutly) Oh, well, I don't need a party. I'm grown up now.

(She reaches out for the old Hungarian dish on the table; holding it, she looks to her father, whose back is still turned. Her face tender, she is about to speak when he speaks.)

IRA: Grown up now--and going off and leaving me alone. You too--the last one. And--what for? (turning, looking around the room as for those long gone) There used to be so many in this house. My grandmother. She sat there. (pointing to the place near the open door) Fine days like this--in that chair (points to the rocker) she'd sit there--tell me stories of the Indians. Father. It wasn't ever lonely where father was. Then Madeline Fejevary--my Madeline came to this house. Lived with me in this house. Then one day she--walked out of this house. Through that door--through the field--out of this house. (bitter silence) Then Fred--out of this house. Now you. With Emil Johnson! (insanely, and almost with relief at leaving things more sane) Don't let him touch my corn. If he touches one kernel of this corn! (with the suspicion of the tormented mind) I wonder where he went? How do I know he went where he said he was going? (getting up) I dunno as that south bin's locked.

MADELINE: Oh--father!

IRA: I'll find out. How do I know what he's doing?

(He goes out, turning left. MADELINE goes to the window and looks after him. A moment later, hearing someone at the door, she turns and finds her AUNT ISABEL, who has appeared from right. Goes swiftly to her, hands out.)

MADELINE: Oh, auntie--I'm glad you came! It's my birthday, and I'm--lonely.

AUNT ISABEL: You dear little girl! (again giving her a hug, which MADELINE returns, lovingly) Don't I know it's your birthday? Don't think that day will ever get by while your Aunt Isabel's around. Just see what's here for your birthday. (hands her the package she is carrying)

MADELINE: (with a gasp--suspecting from its shape) Oh! (her face aglow) Why--is it?

AUNT ISABEL: (laughing affectionately) Foolish child, open it and see.

(MADELINE loosens the paper and pulls out a tennis racket.)

MADELINE: (excited, and moved) Oh, aunt Isabel! that was dear of you. I shouldn't have thought you'd--quite do that.

AUNT ISABEL: I couldn't imagine Madeline without a racket. (gathering up the paper, lightly reproachful) But be a little careful of it, Madeline. It's meant for tennis balls. (they laugh together)

MADELINE: (_making a return with it_) It's a _peach_. (_changing_)
Wonder where I'll play now.

AUNT ISABEL: Why, you'll play on the courts at Morton College. Who has a better right?

MADELINE: Oh, I don't know. It's pretty much balled up, isn't it?

AUNT ISABEL: Yes; we'll have to get it straightened out. (_gently_) It was really dreadful of you, Madeline, to rush out a second time. It isn't as if they were people who were anything to you.

MADELINE: But, auntie, they are something to me.

AUNT ISABEL: Oh, dear, that's what Horace said.

MADELINE: What's what Horace said?

AUNT ISABEL: That you must have a case on one of them.

MADELINE: That's what Horace would say. That makes me sore!

AUNT ISABEL: I'm sorry I spoke of it. Horace is absurd in some ways.

MADELINE: He's a--

AUNT ISABEL: (_stopping it with her hand_) No, he isn't. He's a headstrong boy, but a very loving one. He's dear with me, Madeline.

MADELINE: Yes. You are good to each other. (_her eyes are drawn to the cell_)

AUNT ISABEL: Of course we are. We'd be a pretty poor sort if we weren't. And these are days when we have to stand together--all of us who are the same kind of people must stand together because the thing that makes us the same kind of people is threatened.

MADELINE: Don't you think we're rather threatening it ourselves, auntie?

AUNT ISABEL: Why, no, we're fighting for it.

MADELINE: Fighting for what?

AUNT ISABEL: For Americanism; for--democracy.

MADELINE: Horace is fighting for it?

AUNT ISABEL: Well, Horace does go at it as if it were a football game, but his heart's in the right place.

MADELINE: Somehow, I don't seem to see my heart in that place.

AUNT ISABEL: In what place?

MADELINE: Where Horace's heart is.

AUNT ISABEL: It's too bad you and Horace quarrel. But you and I don't quarrel, Madeline.

MADELINE: (_again drawn to the cell_) No. You and I don't quarrel. (_she is troubled_)

AUNT ISABEL: Funny child! Do you want us to?

(MADELINE _turns, laughing a little, takes the dish from the table, holds it out to her aunt_.)

MADELINE: Have some fudge, auntie.

AUNT ISABEL: (_taking the dish_) Do you _use_ them?--the old Hungarian dishes? (_laughingly_) I'm not allowed to--your uncle is so choiced of the few pieces we have. And here are you with fudge in one of them.

MADELINE: I made the fudge because--oh, I don't know, I had to do something to celebrate my birthday.

AUNT ISABEL: (_under her breath_) Dearie!

MADELINE: And then that didn't seem to--make a birthday, so I happened to see this, way up on a top shelf, and I remembered that it was my mother's. It was nice to get it down and use it--almost as if mother was giving me a birthday present.

AUNT ISABEL: And how she would love to give you a birthday present.

MADELINE: It was her mother's, I suppose, and they brought it from Hungary.

AUNT ISABEL: Yes. They brought only a very few things with them, and left--oh, so many beautiful ones behind.

MADELINE: (_quietly_) Rather nice of them, wasn't it? (_her aunt waits inquiringly_) To leave their own beautiful things--their own beautiful life behind--simply because they believed life should be more beautiful for more people.

AUNT ISABEL: (_with constraint_) Yes. (_gayly turning it_) Well, now, as to the birthday. What do you suppose Sarah is doing this instant? Putting red frosting on white frosting, (_writing it with her finger_) Madeline. And what do you suppose Horace is doing? (_this a little reproachfully_) Running around buying twenty-one red candles. Twenty-two--one to grow on. Big birthday cake. Party to-night.

MADELINE: But, auntie, I don't see how I can be there.

AUNT ISABEL: Listen, dear. Now, we've got to use our wits and all pull together. Of course we'd do anything in the world rather than see you--left to outsiders. I've never seen your uncle as worried, and--truly, Madeline, as sad. Oh, my dear, it's these human things that count! What would life be without the love we have for each other?

MADELINE: The love we have for each other?

AUNT ISABEL: Why, yes, dearest. Don't turn away from me Madeline. Don't--don't be strange. I wonder if you realize how your uncle has worked to have life a happy thing for all of us? Be a little generous to him. He's had this great burden of bringing something from another day

on into this day. It is not as simple as it may seem. He's done it as best he could. It will hurt him as nothing has ever hurt him if you now undo that work of his life. Truly, dear, do you feel you know enough about it to do that? Another thing: people are a little absurd out of their own places. We need to be held in our relationships--against our background--or we are--I don't know--grotesque. Come now, Madeline, where's your sense of humour? Isn't it a little absurd for you to leave home over India's form of government?

MADELINE: It's not India. It's America. A sense of humour is nothing to hide behind!

AUNT ISABEL: (_with a laugh_) I knew I wouldn't be a success at world affairs--better leave that to Professor Holden. (_a quick keen look from_ MADELINE) They've driven on to the river--they'll be back for me, and then he wants to stop in for a visit with you while I take Mrs Holden for a further ride. I'm worried about her. She doesn't gain strength at all since her operation. I'm going to try keeping her out in the air all I can.

MADELINE: It's dreadful about families!

AUNT ISABEL: Dreadful? Professor Holden's devotion to his wife is one of the most beautiful things I've ever seen.

MADELINE: And is that all you see it in?

AUNT ISABEL: You mean the--responsibility it brings? Oh, well--that's what life is. Doing for one another. Sacrificing for one another.

MADELINE: I hope I never have a family.

AUNT ISABEL: Well, I hope you do. You'll miss the best of life if you don't. Anyway, you have a family. Where is your father?

MADELINE: I don't know.

AUNT ISABEL: I'd like to see him.

MADELINE: There's no use seeing him today.

AUNT ISABEL: He's--?

MADELINE: Strange--shut in--afraid something's going to be taken from him.

AUNT ISABEL: Poor Ira. So much has been taken from him. And now you. Don't hurt him again, Madeline. He can't bear it. You see what it does to him.

MADELINE: He has--the wrong idea about things.

AUNT ISABEL: 'The wrong idea!' Oh, my child--that's awfully young and hard. It's so much deeper than that. Life has made him into something--something he can't escape.

MADELINE: (_with what seems sullenness_) Well, I don't want to be made into that thing.

AUNT ISABEL: Of course not. But you want to help him, don't you? Now, dear--about your birthday party--

MADELINE: The United States Commissioner is giving me my birthday party.

AUNT ISABEL: Well, he'll have to put his party off. Your uncle has been thinking it all out. We're to go to his office and you'll have a talk with him and with Judge Watkins. He's off the state supreme bench now--practising again, and as a favour to your uncle he will be your lawyer. You don't know how relieved we are at this, for Judge Watkins can do--anything he wants to do, practically. Then you and I will go on home and call up some of the crowd to come in and dance to-night. We have some beautiful new records. There's a Hungarian waltz--

MADELINE: And what's the price of all this, auntie?

AUNT ISABEL: The--Oh, you mean--Why, simply say you felt sorry for the Hindu students because they seemed rather alone; that you hadn't realized--what they were, hadn't thought out what you were saying--

MADELINE: And that I'm sorry and will never do it again.

AUNT ISABEL: I don't know that you need say that. It would be gracious, I think, to indicate it.

MADELINE: I'm sorry you--had the cake made. I suppose you can eat it, anyway. I (_turning away_)--can't eat it.

AUNT ISABEL: Why--Madeline.

(_Seeing how she has hurt her_, MADELINE _goes out to her aunt_.)

MADELINE: Auntie, dear! I'm sorry--if I hurt your feelings.

AUNT ISABEL: (_quick to hold out a loving hand, laughing a little_) They've been good birthday cakes, haven't they, Madeline?

MADELINE: (_she now trying not to cry_) I don't know--what I'd have done without them. Don't know--what I will do without them. I don't--see it.

AUNT ISABEL: Don't try to. Please don't see it! Just let me go on helping you. That's all I ask. (_she draws_ MADELINE _to her_) Ah, dearie, I held you when you were a little baby without your mother. All those years count for something, Madeline. There's just nothing to life if years of love don't count for something. (_listening_) I think I hear them. And here are we, weeping like two idiots. (MADELINE _brushes away tears_, AUNT ISABEL _arranges her veil, regaining her usual poise_) Professor Holden was hoping you'd take a tramp with him. Wouldn't that do you good? Anyway, a talk with him will be nice. I know he admires you immensely, and really--perhaps I shouldn't let you know this--sympathizes with your feeling. So I think his maturer way of looking at things will show you just the adjustment you need to become a really big and useful person. There's so much to be done in the world, Madeline. Of course we ought to make it a better world. (_in a manner of agreement with_ MADELINE) I feel very strongly about all that. Perhaps we can do some things together. I'd love that. Don't think I'm hopeless! Way down deep we have the same feeling. Yes, here's Professor Holden.

(HOLDEN _comes in. He seems older_.)

HOLDEN: And how are you, Madeline? (_holding out his hand_)

MADELINE: I'm--all right.

HOLDEN: Many happy returns of the day. (_embarrassed by her half laugh_)
The birthday.

AUNT ISABEL: And did you have a nice look up the river?

HOLDEN: I never saw this country as lovely as it is to-day. Mary is just drinking it in.

AUNT ISABEL: You don't think the further ride will be too much?

HOLDEN: Oh, no--not in that car.

AUNT ISABEL: Then we'll go on--perhaps as far as Laughing Creek. If you two decide on a tramp--take that road and we'll pick you up. (_smiling warmly, she goes out_)

HOLDEN: How good she is.

MADELINE: Yes. That's just the trouble.

HOLDEN: (_with difficulty getting past this_) How about a little tramp?
There'll never be another such day.

MADELINE: I used to tramp with Fred Jordan. This is where he is now.
(_stepping inside the cell_) He doesn't even see out.

HOLDEN: It's all wrong that he should be where he is. But for you to stay indoors won't help him, Madeline.

MADELINE: It won't help him, but--today--I can't go out.

HOLDEN: I'm sorry, my child. When this sense of wrongs done first comes down upon one, it does crush.

MADELINE: And later you get used to it and don't care.

HOLDEN: You care. You try not to destroy yourself needlessly. (_he turns from her look_)

MADELINE: Play safe.

HOLDEN: If it's playing safe it's that one you love more than yourself be safe. It would be a luxury to--destroy one's self.

MADELINE: That sounds like Uncle Felix. (_seeing she has hurt him, she goes over and sits across from him at the table_) I'm sorry. I say the wrong things today.

HOLDEN: I don't know that you do.

MADELINE: But isn't uncle funny? His left mind doesn't know what his right mind is doing. He has to think of himself as a person of sentiment--idealism, and--quite a job, at times. Clever--how he gets away with it. The war must have been a godsend to people who were in

danger of getting on to themselves. But I should think you could fool all of yourself all the time.

HOLDEN: You don't. (_he is rubbing his hand on the table_)

MADELINE: Grandfather Morton made this table. I suppose he and Grandfather Fejevary used to sit here and talk--they were great old pals. (_slowly_ HOLDEN _turns and looks out at the hill_) Yes. How beautiful the hill must have been--before there was a college there. (_he looks away from the hill_) Did you know Grandfather Morton?

HOLDEN: Yes, I knew him. (_speaking of it against his will_) I had a wonderful talk with him once; about Greece--and the cornfields, and life.

MADELINE: I'd like to have been a pioneer! Some ways they had it fierce, but think of the fun they had! A whole big land to open up! A big new life to begin! (_her hands closing in from wideness to a smaller thing_) Why did so much get shut out? Just a little way back--anything might have been. What happened?

HOLDEN: (_speaking with difficulty_) It got--set too soon.

MADELINE: (_all of her mind open, trying to know_) And why did it? Prosperous, I suppose. That seems to set things--set them in fear. Silas Morton wasn't afraid of Felix Fejevary, the Hungarian revolutionist. He laid this country at that refugee's feet! That's what Uncle Felix says himself--with the left half of his mind. Now--the Hindu revolutionists--! (_pause_) I took a walk late yesterday afternoon. Night came, and for some reason I thought of how many nights have come--nights the earth has known long before we knew the earth. The moon came up and I thought of how moonlight made this country beautiful before any man knew that moonlight was beautiful. It gave me a feeling of coming from something a long way back. Moving toward--what will be here when I'm not here. Moving. We seem here, now, in America, to have forgotten we're moving. Think it's just _us_--just now. Of course, that would make us afraid, and--ridiculous.

(_Her father comes in_.)

IRA: Your Aunt Isabel--did she go away--and leave you?

MADELINE: She's coming back.

IRA: For you?

MADELINE: She--wants me to go with her. This is Professor Holden, father.

HOLDEN: How do you do, Mr Morton?

IRA: (_nods, not noticing_ HOLDEN_'s offered hand_) How'do. When is she coming back?

MADELINE: Soon.

IRA: And then you're going with her?

MADELINE: I--don't know.

IRA: I say you go with her. You want them all to come down on us? (_to_ HOLDEN) What are you here for?

MADELINE: Aunt Isabel brought Professor Holden, father.

IRA: Oh. Then you--you tell her what to do. You make her do it. (_he goes into the room at left_)

MADELINE: (_sadly, after a silence_) Father's like something touched by an early frost.

HOLDEN: Yes. (_seeing his opening and forcing himself to take it_) But do you know, Madeline, there are other ways of that happening--'touched by an early frost'. I've seen it happen to people I know--people of fine and daring mind. They do a thing that puts them apart--it may be the big, brave thing--but the apartness does something to them. I've seen it many times--so many times--so many times, I fear for you. You do this thing and you'll find yourself with people who in many ways you don't care for at all; find yourself apart from people who in most ways are your own people. You're many-sided, Madeline. (_moves her tennis racket_) I don't know about it's all going to one side. I hate to see you, so young, close a door on so much life. I'm being just as honest with you as I know how. I myself am making compromises to stay within. I don't like it, but there are--reasons for doing it. I can't see you leave that main body without telling you all it is you are leaving. It's not a clean-cut case--the side of the world or the side of the angels. I hate to see you lose the--fullness of life.

MADELINE: (_a slight start, as she realizes the pause. As one recalled from far_) I'm sorry. I was listening to what you were saying--but all the time--something else was happening. Grandfather Morton, big and--oh, terrible. He was here. And we went to that walled-up hole in the ground--(_rising and pointing down at the chalked cell_)--where they keep Fred Jordan on bread and water because he couldn't be a part of nations of men killing each other--and Silas Morton--only he was all that is back of us, tore open that cell--it was his voice tore it open--his voice as he cried, 'God damn you, this is America!' (_sitting down, as if rallying from a tremendous experience_) I'm sorry--it should have happened, while you were speaking. Won't you--go on?

HOLDEN: That's a pretty hard thing to go on against. (_after a moment_) I can't go on.

MADELINE: You were thinking of leaving the college, and then--decided to stay? (_he nods_) And you feel there's more--fullness of life for you inside the college than outside?

HOLDEN: No--not exactly. (_again a pause_) It's very hard for me to talk to you.

MADELINE: (_gently_) Perhaps we needn't do it.

HOLDEN: (_something in him forcing him to say it_) I'm staying for financial reasons.

MADELINE: (_kind, but not going to let the truth get away_) You don't think that--having to stay within--or deciding to, rather, makes you think these things of the--blight of being without?

HOLDEN: I think there is danger to you in--so young, becoming alien to society.

MADELINE: As great as the danger of staying within--and becoming like the thing I'm within?

HOLDEN: You wouldn't become like it.

MADELINE: Why wouldn't I? That's what it does to the rest of you. I don't see it--this fullness of life business. I don't see that Uncle Felix has got it--or even Aunt Isabel, and you--I think that in buying it you're losing it.

HOLDEN: I don't think you know what a cruel thing you are saying.

MADELINE: There must be something pretty rotten about Morton College if you have to sell your soul to stay in it!

HOLDEN: You don't 'sell your soul'. You persuade yourself to wait.

MADELINE: (unable to look at him, as if feeling shame) You have had a talk with Uncle Felix since that day in the library you stepped aside for me to pass.

HOLDEN: Yes; and with my wife's physician. If you sell your soul--it's to love you sell it.

MADELINE: (low) That's strange. It's love that--brings life along, and then it's love--holds life back.

HOLDEN: (and all the time with this effort against hopelessness) Leaving me out of it, I'd like to see you give yourself a little more chance for detachment. You need a better intellectual equipment if you're going to fight the world you find yourself in. I think you will count for more if you wait, and when you strike, strike more maturely.

MADELINE: Detachment. (pause) This is one thing they do at this place. (she moves to the open door) Chain them up to the bars--just like this. (in the doorway where her two grandfathers once pledged faith with the dreams of a million years, she raises clasped hands as high as they will go) Eight hours a day--day after day. Just hold your arms up like this one hour then sit down and think about--(as if tortured by all who have been so tortured, her body begins to give with sobs, arms drop, the last word is a sob) detachment.

HOLDEN is standing helplessly by when her father comes in.

IRA: (wildly) Don't cry. No! Not in this house! I can't--Your aunt and uncle will fix it up. The law won't take you this time--and you won't do it again.

MADELINE: Oh, what does that matter--what they do to me?

IRA: What are you crying about then?

MADELINE: It's--the world. It's--

IRA: The world? If that's all you've got to cry about! (to HOLDEN)

Tell her that's nothing to cry about. What's the matter with you. Mad'line? That's crazy--cryin' about the world! What good has ever come to this house through carin' about the world? What good's that college? Better we had that hill. Why is there no one in this house to-day but me and you? Where's your mother? Where's your brother? The _world_.

HOLDEN: I think your father would like to talk to you. I'll go outside--walk a little, and come back for you with your aunt. You must let us see you through this, Madeline. You couldn't bear the things it would bring you to. I see that now. (_as he passes her in the doorway his hand rests an instant on her bent head_) You're worth too much to break.

IRA: (_turning away_) I don't want to talk to you. What good comes of talking? (_In moving, he has stepped near the sack of corn. Takes hold of it_) But not with Emil Johnson! That's not--what your mother died for.

MADELINE: Father, you must talk to me. What did my mother die for? No one has ever told me about her--except that she was beautiful--not like other people here. I got a feeling of--something from far away. Something from long ago. Rare. Why can't Uncle Felix talk about her? Why can't you? Wouldn't she want me to know her? Tell me about her. It's my birthday and I need my mother.

IRA: (_as if afraid he is going to do it_) How can you touch--what you've not touched in nineteen years? Just once--in nineteen years--and that did no good.

MADELINE: Try. Even though it hurts. Didn't you use to talk to her? Well, I'm her daughter. Talk to me. What has she to do with Emil Johnson?

IRA: (_the pent-up thing loosed_) What has she to do with him? She died so he could live. He lives because she's dead, (_in anguish_) And what is _he_ alongside her? Yes. Something from far away. Something from long ago. Rare. How'd you know that? Finding in me--what I didn't know was there. Then _she_ came--that ignorant Swede--Emil Johnson's mother--running through the cornfield like a crazy woman--'Miss Morton! Miss Morton! Come help me! My children are choking!' Diphtheria they had--the whole of 'em--but out of this house she ran--my Madeline, leaving you--her own baby--running as fast as she could through the cornfield after that immigrant woman. She stumbled in the rough field--fell to her knees. That was the last I saw of her. She choked to death in that Swede's house. They lived.

MADELINE: (_going to him_) Oh--father, (_voice rich_) But how lovely of her.

IRA: Lovely? Lovely to leave you without a mother--leave me without her after I'd had her? Wasn't she worth more than them.

MADELINE: (_proudly_) Yes. She was worth so much that she never stopped to think how much she was worth.

IRA: Ah, if you'd known her you couldn't take it like that. And now you cry about the world! That's what the world is--all coming to nothing. My father used to sit there at the table and talk about the world--my father and her father. They thought 'twas all for something--that what

you were went on into something more than you. That's the talk I always heard in this house. But it's just talk. The rare thing that came here was killed by the common thing that came here. Just happens--and happens cruel. Look at your brother! Gone--(_snaps his fingers_) like that. I told him not to go to war. He didn't have to go--they'd been glad enough to have him stay here on the farm. But no,--he must--make the world safe for democracy! Well, you see how safe he made it, don't you? Now I'm alone on the farm and he--buried on some Frenchman's farm. That is, I hope they buried him--I hope they didn't just--(_tormented_)

MADELINE: Oh, father--of course not. I know they did.

IRA: How do you know? What do you care--once they got him? _He_ talked about the world--better world--end war. Now he's in his grave--I hope he is--and look at the front page of the paper! No such thing--war to end war!

MADELINE: But he thought there was, father. Fred believed that--so what else could he do?

IRA: He could 'a' minded his own business.

MADELINE: No--oh, no. It was fine of him to give his life to what he believed should be.

IRA: The light in his eyes as he talked of it, now--eyes gone--and the world he died for all hate and war. Waste. Waste. Nothin' but waste--the life of this house. Why, folks to-day'd laugh to hear my father talk. He gave his best land for ideas to live. Thought was going to make us a better people. What was his word? (_waits_) Aspiration. (_says it as if it is a far-off thing_) Well, look at your friend, young Jordan. Kicked from the college to prison for ideas of a better world. (_laughs_) His 'aspiration' puts him in a hole on bread and water! So--mind your own business, that's all that's so in this country. (_constantly tormented anew_) Oh, I told your brother all that--the night I tried to keep him. Told him about his mother--to show what come of running to other folks. And he said--standing right there--(_pointing_) eyes all bright, he said, 'Golly, I think that's great!' And then _he_--walked out of this house. (_fear takes him_) Madeline! (_she stoops over him, her arm around him_) Don't you leave me--all alone in this house--where so many was once. What's Hindus--alongside your own father--and him needing you? It won't be long. After a little I'll be dead--or crazy--or something. But not here alone where so many was once.

MADELINE: Oh--father. I don't know what to do.

IRA: Nothing stays at home. Not even the corn stays at home. If only the wind wouldn't blow! Why can't I have my field to myself? Why can't I keep what's mine? All these years I've worked to make it better. I wanted it to be--the most that it could be. My father used to talk about the Indians--how our land was their land, and how we must be more than them. He had his own ideas of bein' more--well, what's that come to? The Indians lived happier than we--wars, strikes, prisons. But I've made the corn more! This land that was once Indian maize now grows corn--I'd like to have the Indians see my corn! I'd like to see them side by side!--their Indian maize, my corn. And how'd I get it? Ah, by thinkin'--always tryin', changin', carin'. Plant this corn by that corn, and the pollen blows from corn to corn--the golden dust it blows, in the sunshine and of nights--blows from corn to corn like a--(_the word

hurts_) gift. No, you don't understand it, but (_proudly_) corn don't stay what it is! You can make it anything--according to what you do, 'cording to the corn it's alongside. (_changing_) But that's it. I want it to stay in my field. It goes away. The prevailin' wind takes it on to the Johnsons--them Swedes that took my Madeline! I hear it! Oh, nights when I can't help myself--and in the sunshine I can see it--pollen--soft golden dust to make new life--goin' on to _them_,--and them too ignorant to know what's makin' their corn better! I want my field to myself. What'd I work all my life for? Work that's had to take the place o' what I lost--is that to go to Emil Johnson? No! The wind shall stand still! I'll make it. I'll find a way. Let me alone and I--I'll think it out. Let me alone, I say.

(_A mind burned to one idea, with greedy haste he shuts himself in the room at left_. MADELINE _has been standing there as if mist is parting and letting her see. And as the vision grows power grows in her. She is thus flooded with richer life when her_ AUNT _and Professor_ HOLDEN _come back. Feeling something new, for a moment they do not speak_.)

AUNT ISABEL: Ready, dear? It's time for us to go now.

MADELINE: (_with the quiet of plentitude_) I'm going in with Emil Johnson.

AUNT ISABEL: Why--Madeline. (_falteringly_) We thought you'd go with us.

MADELINE: No. I have to be--the most I can be. I want the wind to have something to carry.

AUNT ISABEL: (_after a look at Professor_ HOLDEN, _who is looking intensely at_ MADELINE) I don't understand.

MADELINE: The world is all a--moving field. (_her hands move, voice too is of a moving field_) Nothing is to itself. If America thinks so--America is like father. I don't feel alone any more. The wind has come through--wind rich from lives now gone. Grandfather Fejevary, gift from a field far off. Silas Morton. No, not alone any more. And afraid? I'm not even afraid of being absurd!

AUNT ISABEL: But Madeline--you're leaving your father?

MADELINE: (_after thinking it out_) I'm not leaving--what's greater in him than he knows.

AUNT ISABEL: You're leaving Morton College?

MADELINE: That runt on a high hill? Yes, I'm leaving grandfather's college--then maybe I can one day lie under the same sod with him, and not be ashamed. Though I must tell you (_a little laugh_) under the sod is my idea of no place to be. I want to be a long time--where the wind blows.

AUNT ISABEL: (_who is trying not to cry_) I'm afraid it won't blow in prison, dear.

MADELINE: I don't know. Might be the only place it would blow. (EMIL _passes the window, hesitates at the door_) I'll be ready in just a moment, Emil.

(_He waits outside_.)

AUNT ISABEL: Madeline, I didn't tell you--I hoped it wouldn't be necessary, but your uncle said--if you refused to do it his way, he could do absolutely nothing for you, not even--bail.

MADELINE: Of course not. I wouldn't expect him to.

AUNT ISABEL: He feels so deeply about these things--America--loyalty, he said if you didn't come with us it would be final, Madeline. Even--(_breaks_) between you and me.

MADELINE: I'm sorry, auntie. You know how I love you. (_and her voice tells it_) But father has been telling me about the corn. It gives itself away all the time--the best corn a gift to other corn. What you are--that doesn't stay with you. Then--(_not with assurance, but feeling her way_) be the most you can be, so life will be more because you were. (_freed by the truth she has found_) Oh--do that! Why do we three go apart? Professor Holden, his beautiful trained mind; Aunt Isabel--her beautiful love, love that could save the world if only you'd--throw it to the winds. (_moving nearer_ HOLDEN, _hands out to him_) Why do--(_seeing it is not to be, she turns away. Low, with sorrow for that great beauty lost_) Oh, have we brought mind, have we brought heart, up to this place--only to turn them against mind and heart?

HOLDEN: (_unable to bear more_) I think we--must go. (_going to_ MADELINE, _holding out his hand and speaking from his sterile life to her fullness of life_) Good-bye, Madeline. Good luck.

MADELINE: Good-bye, Professor Holden. (_hesitates_) Luck to you.

(_Shaking his head, stooped, he hurries out_.)

MADELINE: (_after a moment when neither can speak_) Good-bye--auntie dearest. Thank you--for the birthday present--the cake--everything. Everything--all the years.

(_There is something_ AUNT ISABEL _would say, but she can only hold tight to_ MADELINE_'s hands. At last, with a smile that speaks for love, a little nod, she goes_. EMIL _comes in_.)

EMIL: You better go with them, Madeline. It'd make it better for you.

MADELINE: Oh no, it wouldn't. I'll be with you in an instant, Emil. I want to--say good-bye to my father.

(_But she waits before that door, a door hard to go through. Alone_, EMIL _looks around the room. Sees the bag of corn, takes a couple of ears and is looking at them as_ MADELINE _returns. She remains by the door, shaken with sobs, turns, as if pulled back to the pain she has left_.)

EMIL: Gee. This is great corn.

MADELINE: (_turning now to him_) It is, isn't it, Emil?

EMIL: None like it.

MADELINE: And you say--your corn is getting better?

EMIL: Oh, yes--I raise better corn every year now.

MADELINE: (_low_) That's nice. I'll be right out, Emil.

(_He puts the corn back, goes out. From the closet_ MADELINE _takes her hat and wrap. Putting them on, she sees the tennis racket on the table. She goes to it, takes it up, holds it a moment, then takes it to the closet, puts it carefully away, closes the door behind it. A moment she stands there in the room, as if listening to something. Then she leaves that house_.)

CURTAIN

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