

The Plays of Jack London

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Theft

A Play In Four Acts
1910

Characters

Margaret Chalmers
Howard Knox
Thomas Chalmers
Master Thomas Chalmers
Ellery Jackson Hubbard
Anthony Starkweather
Mrs Starkweather
Connie Starkweather
Felix Dobleman
Linda Davis
Julius Rutland
John Gieford
Matsu Sakari
Dolores Ortega
Senator Dowsett Mrs Dowsett
Housekeeper, Servs
Wife of Senator Chalmers
A Congressman from Oregon
A United States Senator and several times millionaire
Son of Margaret and Senator Chalmers
A Journalist
A great magnate, and father of Margaret Chalmers
His wife
Their younger daughter
Secretary to Anthony Starkweather
Maid to Margaret Chalmers
Episcopalian Minister
Labor Agitator

Secretary of Japanese Embassy

Wife of Peruvian Minister

Agents, etc

Time of Play, To-Day, in Washington, D. C.

It Occurs in Twenty Hours

Actors' Description of Characters

Margaret Chalmers. Twenty-seven years of age; a strong, mature woman, but quite feminine where her heart or sense of beauty are concerned. Her eyes are wide apart. Has a dazzling smile, which she knows how to use on occasion. Also, on occasion, she can be firm and hard, even cynical. An intellectual woman, and at the same time a very womanly woman, capable of sudden tenderesses, flashes of emotion, and abrupt actions. She is a finished product of high culture and refinement, and at the same time possesses robust vitality and instinctive right-promptings that augur well for the future of the race.

Howard Knox. He might have been a poet, but was turned politician. Inflamed with love for humanity. Thirty-five years of age. He has his vision, and must follow it. He has suffered ostracism because of it, and has followed his vision in spite of abuse and ridicule. Physically, a well-built, powerful man. Strong-featured rather than handsome. Very much in earnest, and, despite his university training, a trifle awkward in carriage and demeanor, lacking in social ease. He has been elected to Congress on a reform ticket, and is almost alone in fight he is making. He has no party to back him, though he has a following of a few independents and insurgents.

Thomas Chalmers. Forty-five to fifty years of age. Iron-gray mustache. Slightly stout. A good liver, much given to Scotch and soda, with a weak heart. Is liable to collapse any time. If anything, slightly lazy or lethargic in his emotional life. One of the "owned" senators representing a decadent New England state, himself master of the state political machine. Also, he is nobody's fool. He possesses the brain and strength of character to play his part. His most distinctive feature is his temperamental opportunism.

Master Thomas Chalmers. Six years of age. Sturdy and healthy despite his grandmother's belief to the contrary.

Ellery Jackson Hubbard. Thirty-eight to forty years of age. Smooth-shaven. A star journalist with a national reputation; a large, heavy-set man, with large head, large hands — everything about him is large. A man radiating prosperity, optimism and selfishness. Has no morality whatever. Is a conscious individualist, cold-blooded, pitiless, working only for himself, and believing in nothing but himself.

Anthony Starkweather. An elderly, well preserved gentleman, slenderly built, showing all the signs of a man who has lived clean and has been almost an ascetic. One to whom the joys of the flesh have had little meaning. A cold, controlled man whose one

passion is for power. Distinctively a man of power. An eagle-like man, who, by keenness of brain and force of character, has carved out a fortune of hundreds of millions. In short, an industrial and financial magnate of the first water and of the finest type to be found in the United States. Essentially a moral man, his rigid New England morality has suffered a sea change and developed into the morality of the master-man of affairs, equally rigid, equally uncompromising, but essentially Jesuitical in that he believes in doing wrong that right may come of it. He is absolutely certain that civilization and progress rest on his shoulders and upon the shoulders of the small group of men like him.

Mrs. Starkweather. Of the helpless, comfortably stout, elderly type. She has not followed her husband in his moral evolution. She is the creature of old customs, old prejudices, old New England ethics. She is rather confused by the modern rush of life.

Connie Starkweather. Margaret's younger sister, twenty years old. She is nothing that Margaret is, and everything that Margaret is not. No essential evil in her, but has no mind of her own — hopelessly a creature of convention. Gay, laughing, healthy, buxom — a natural product of her care-free environment.

Feux Dobleman. Private secretary to Anthony Starkweather. A young man of correct social deportment, thoroughly and in all things just the sort of private secretary a man like Anthony Starkweather would have. He is a weak-souled creature, timorous, almost effeminate.

Linda Davis. Maid to Margaret. A young woman of twenty-five or so, blond, Scandinavian, though American-born. A cold woman, almost featureless because of her long years of training, but with a hot heart deep down, and characterized by an intense devotion to her mistress. Wild horses could drag nothing from her where her mistress is concerned.

Junus Rutland. Having no strong features about him, the type realizes itself.

John Gifford. A labor agitator. A man of the people, rough-hewn, narrow as a labor-leader may well be, earnest and sincere. He is a proper, better type of labor-leader.

Matsu Sakari. Secretary of Japanese Embassy. He is the perfection of politeness and talks classical book-English. He bows a great deal.

Dolores Ortega. Wife of Peruvian Minister; bright and vivacious, and uses her hands a great deal as she talks, in the Latin-American fashion.

Senator Dowsett. Fifty years of age; well preserved.

Mrs. Dowsett. Stout and middle-aged.

Act I

A ROOM IN THE HOUSE OF SENATOR CHALMERS

Scene. In Senator Chalmers' home. It is four o'clock in the afternoon, in a modern living room with appropriate furnishings. In particular, in front, on left, a table prepared for the serving of tea, all excepting the tea urn itself. At rear, right of center, is

main entrance to the room. Also, doorways at sides, on left and right. Curtain discloses Chalmers and Hubbard seated loungingly at the right front.

Hubbard

(After an apparent pause for cogitation.) I can't understand why an old wheel-horse like Elsworth should kick over the traces that way.

Chalmers

Disgruntled. Thinks he didn't get his fair share of plums out of the Tariff Committee. Besides, it's his last term. He's announced that he's going to retire.

Hubbard

(Snorting contemptuously, mimicking an old man's pompous enunciation.) "A Resolution to Investigate the High Cost of Living!" — old Senator Elsworth introducing a measure like that! The old buck! — — How are you going to handle it?

Chalmers

It's already handled.

Hubbard

Yes?

Chalmers

(Pulling his mustache.) Turned it over to the Committee to Audit and Control the Contingent Expenses of the Senate.

Hubbard

(Grinning his appreciation.) And you're chairman. Poor old Elsworth. This way to the lethal chamber, and the bill's on its way.

Chalmers

Elsworth will be retired before it's ever reported. In the meantime, say after a decent interval, Senator Hodge will introduce another resolution to investigate the high cost of living. It will be like Elsworth's, only it won't.

Hubbard

(Nodding his head and anticipating.) And it will go to the Committee on Finance and come back for action inside of twenty-four hours.

Chalmers

By the way, I see Cartwright's Magazine has ceased muck-raking.

Hubbard

Cartwrights never did muck-rake — that is, not the big Interests — only the small independent businesses that didn't advertise.

Chalmers

Yes, it deftly concealed its reactionary tendencies.

Hubbard

And from now on the concealment will be still more deft. I've gone into it myself. I have a majority of the stock right now.

Chalmers

I thought I had noticed a subtle change in the last two numbers.

Hubbard

(Nodding.) We're still going on muck-raking. We have a splendid series on Aged Paupers, demanding better treatment and more sanitary conditions. Also we are going to run "Barbarous Venezuela" and show up thoroughly the rotten political management of that benighted country.

Chalmers

(Nods approvingly, and, after a pause.) And now concerning Knox. That's what I sent for you about. His speech comes off tomorrow per schedule. At last we've got him where we want him.

Hubbard

I have the ins and outs of it pretty well. Everything's arranged. The boys have their cue, though they don't know just what's going to be pulled off; and this time to-morrow afternoon their dispatches will be singing along the wires.

Chalmers

(Firmly and harshly.) This man Knox must be covered with ridicule, swamped with ridicule, annihilated with ridicule.

Hubbard

It is to laugh. Trust the great American people for that. We'll make those little Western editors sit up. They've been swearing by Knox, like a little tin god. Roars of laughter for them.

Chalmers

Do you do anything yourself?

Hubbard

Trust me. I have my own article for Cartwright's blocked out. They're holding the presses for it. I shall wire it along hot-footed to-morrow evening. Say — — ?

Chalmers

(After a pause.) Well?

Hubbard

Wasn't it a risky thing to give him his chance with that speech?

Chalmers

It was the only feasible thing. He never has given us an opening. Our service men have camped on his trail night and day. Private life as unimpeachable as his public life. But now is our chance. The gods have given him into our hands. That speech will do more to break his influence —

Hubbard

(Interrupting.) Than a Fairbanks cocktail.

(Both laugh.) But don't forget that this Knox is a live wire. Somebody might get stung. Are you sure, when he gets up to make that speech, that he won't be able to back it up?

Chalmers

No danger at all.

Hubbard

But there are hooks and crooks by which facts are sometimes obtained.

Chalmers

(Positively.) Knox has nothing to go on but suspicions and hints, and unfounded assertions from the yellow press.

(Man-servant enters, goes to tea-table, looks it over, and makes slight rearrangements.) (Lowering his voice.) He will make himself a laughing stock. His charges will turn into boomerangs. His speech will be like a sheet from a Sunday supplement, with not a fact to back it up. (Glances at Servant.) We'd better be getting out of here. They're going to have tea.

(The Servant, however, makes exit.) Come to the library and have a high-ball. (They pause as Hubbard speaks.)

Hubbard

(With quiet glee.) And to-morrow Ali Baba gets his.

Chalmers

Ali Baba?

Hubbard

That's what your wife calls him — Knox.

Chalmers

Oh, yes, I believe I've heard it before. It's about time he hanged himself, and now we've given him the rope.

Hubbard

(Sinking voice and becoming deprecatingly confidential.)

Oh, by the way, just a little friendly warning, Senator Chalmers. Not so fast and loose up New York way. That certain lady, not to be mentioned — there's gossip about it in the New York newspaper offices. Of course, all such stories are killed. But be discreet, be discreet If Gherst gets hold of it, he'll play it up against the Administration in all his papers.

(Chalmers, who throughout this speech is showing a growing resentment, is about to speak, when voices are heard without and he checks himself.)

(Enter. Mrs. Starkweather, rather flustered and imminently in danger of a collapse, followed by Connie Starkweather, fresh, radiant, and joyous.)

Mrs. Starkweather

(With appeal and relief.)

Oh — — Tom!

(Chalmers takes her hand sympathetically and protectingly.)

Connie

(Who is an exuberant young woman, bursts forth.) Oh, brother-in-law! Such excitement! That's what's the matter with mother. We ran into a go-cart. Our chauffeur was not to blame. It was the woman's fault. She tried to cross just as we were turning the corner. But we hardly grazed it. Fortunately the baby was not hurt — only spilled. It was ridiculous. (Catching sight of Hubbard.) Oh, there you are, Mr. Hubbard. How de do.

(Steps half way to meet him and shakes hands with him.) (Mrs. Starkweather looks around helplessly for a chair, and Chalmers conducts her to one soothingly.)

Mrs. Starkweather

Oh, it was terrible! The little child might have been killed. And such persons love their babies, I know.

Connie

(To Chalmers.) Has father come? We were to pick him up here. Where's Madge?

Mrs. Starkweather

(Espying Hubbard, faintly.) Oh, there is Mr. Hubbard.

(Hubbard comes to her and shakes hands.) I simply can't get used to these rapid ways of modern life. The motor-car is the invention of the devil. Everything is too quick. When I was a girl, we lived sedately, decorously. There was time for meditation and repose. But in this age there is time for nothing. How Anthony keeps his head is more than I can understand. But, then, Anthony is a wonderful man.

Hubbard

I am sure Mr. Starkweather never lost his head in his life.

Chalmers

Unless when he was courting you, mother.

Mrs. Starkweather

(A trifle grimly.) I'm not so sure about that.

Connie

(Imitating a grave, business-like enunciation.) Father probably conferred first with his associates, then turned the affair over for consideration by his corporation lawyers, and, when they reported no flaws, checked the first spare half hour in his notebook to ask mother if she would have him.

(They laugh.) And looked at his watch at least twice while he was proposing.

Mrs. Starkweather

Anthony was not so busy then as all that.

Hubbard

He hadn't yet taken up the job of running the United States.

Mrs. Starkweather

I'm sure I don't know what he is running, but he is a very busy man — business, politics, and madness; madness, politics, and business.

(She stops breathlessly and glances at tea-table.) Tea. I should like a cup of tea. Connie, I shall stay for a cup of tea, and then, if your father hasn't come, we'll go home. (To Chalmers.) Where is Tommy?

Chalmers

Out in the car with Madge.

(Glances at tea-table and consults watch.) She should be back now.

Connie

Mother, you mustn't stay long. I have to dress.

Chalmers

Oh, yes, that dinner.

(Yawns.) I wish I could loaf to-night.

Connie

(Explaining to Hubbard.) The Turkish Charge d'Affaires — I never can remember his name. But he's great fun — a positive joy. He's giving the dinner to the British Ambassador.

Mrs. Starkweather

(Starting forward in her chair and listening intently.) There's Tommy, now.

(Voices of Margaret Chalmers and of Tommy heard from without. Hers is laughingly protesting, while Tommy's is gleefully insistent.) (Margaret and Tommy appear and pause just outside door, holding each other's hands, facing each other, too immersed in each other to be aware of the presence of those inside the room. Margaret and Tommy are in street costume.)

Tommy

(Laughing.)

But mama.

Margaret

(Herself laughing, but shaking her head.) No. Tommy First —

Margaret

No; you must run along to Linda, now, mother's boy. And we'll talk about that some other time.

(Tommy notices for the first time that there are persons in the room. He peeps in around the door and espies Mrs. Starkweather. At the same moment, impulsively, he withdraws his hands and runs in to Mrs. Starkweather.)

Tommy

(Who is evidently fond of his grandmother.) Grandma!

(They embrace and make much of each other.)

(Margaret enters, appropriately greeting the others — a kiss (maybe) to Connie, and a slightly cold handshake to Hubbard.)

Margaret

(To Chalmers.) Now that you're here, Tom, you mustn't run away.

(Greets Mrs. Starkweather.)

Mrs. Starkweather

(Turning Tommy's face to the light and looking at it anxiously.) A trifle thin, Margaret.

Margaret

On the contrary, mother — —

Mrs. Starkweather

(To Chalmers.) Don't you think so, Tom?

Connie

(Aside to Hubbard.) Mother continually worries about his health.

Hubbard

A sturdy youngster, I should say.

Tommy

(To Chalmers.) I'm an Indian, aren't I, daddy?

Chalmers

(Nodding his head emphatically.) And the stoutest-hearted in the tribe.

(Linda appears in doorway, evidently looking for Tommy, and Chalmers notices her.) There's Linda looking for you, young stout heart.

Margaret

Take Tommy, Linda. Run along, mother's boy.

Tommy

Come along, grandma. I want to show you something.

(He catches Mrs. Starkweather by the hand. Protesting, but highly pleased, she allows him to lead her to the door, where he extends his other hand to Linda. Thus, pausing in doorway, leading a woman by either hand, he looks back at Margaret.) (Roguishly.) Remember, mama, we're going to scout in a little while.

Margaret

(Going to Tommy, and bending down with her arms around him.) No, Tommy. Mama has to go to that horrid dinner to-night. But to-morrow we'll play.

(Tommy is cast down and looks as if he might pout.) Where is my little Indian now?

Hubbard

Be an Indian, Tommy.

Tommy

(Brightening up.)

All right, mama. To-morrow. — — if you can't find time to-day.

(Margaret kisses him.) (Exit Tommy, Mrs. Starkweather, and Linda, Tommy leading them by a hand in each of theirs.)

Chalmers

(Nodding to Hubbard, in low voice to Hubbard and starting to make exit to right.) That high-ball.

(Hubbard disengages himself from proximity of Connie, and starts to follow.)

Connie

(Reproachfully.) If you run away, I won't stop for tea.

Margaret

Do stop, Tom. Father will be here in a few minutes.

Connie

A regular family party.

Chalmers

All right. We'll be back. We're just going to have a little talk.

(Chalmers and Hubbard make exit to right.) (Margaret puts her arm impulsively around Connie — a sheerly spontaneous act of affection — kisses her, and at same time evinces preparation to leave.)

Margaret

I've got to get my things off. Won't you wait here, dear, in case anybody comes? It's nearly time.

(Starts toward exit to rear, but is stopped by Connie.) Madge.

(Margaret immediately pauses and waits expectantly, smiling, while Connie is hesitant.)

I want to speak to you about something, Madge. You don't mind?

(Margaret, still smiling, shakes her head.) Just a warning. Not that anybody could believe for a moment, there is anything wrong, but — —

Margaret

(Dispelling a shadow of irritation that has crossed her face.)

If it concerns Tom, don't tell me, please. You know he does do ridiculous things at times. But I don't let him worry me any more; so don't worry me about him.

(Connie remains silent, and Margaret grows curious.) Well?

Connie

It's not about Tom —

(Pauses.) It's about you.

Margaret

Oh.

Connie

I don't know how to begin.

Margaret

By coming right out with it, the worst of it, all at once, first.

Connie

It isn't serious at all, but — well, mother is worrying about it. You know how old-fashioned she is. And when you consider our position — father's and Tom's, I mean — it doesn't seem just right for you to be seeing so much of such an enemy of theirs. He has abused them dreadfully, you know. And there's that dreadful speech he is going to give to-morrow. You haven't seen the afternoon papers. He has made the most terrible charges against everybody — all of us, our friends, everybody.

Margaret

You mean Mr. Knox, of course. But he wouldn't harm anybody, Connie, dear.

Connie

(Bridling,) Oh, he wouldn't? He as good as publicly called father a thief.

Margaret

When did that happen? I never heard of it.

Connie

Well, he said that the money magnates had grown so unprincipled, sunk so low, that they would steal a mouse from a blind kitten.

Margaret

I don't see what father has to do with that.

Connie

He meant him just the same.

Margaret

You silly goose. He couldn't have meant father. Father? Why, father wouldn't look at anything less than fifty or a hundred millions.

Connie

And you speak to him and make much of him when you meet him places. You talked with him for half an hour at that Dugdale reception. You have him here in your own house — Tom's house — when he's such a bitter enemy of Tom's. (During the foregoing speech, Anthony Starkweather makes entrance from rear. His face is grave, and he is in a brown study, as if pondering weighty problems. At sight of the two women he pauses and surveys them. They are unaware of his presence.)

Margaret

You are wrong, Connie. He is nobody's enemy. He is the truest, cleanest, most right-seeking man I have ever seen.

Connie

(Interrupting.) He is a trouble-maker, a disturber of the public peace, a shallow-pated demagogue —

Margaret

(Reprovingly.)

Now you're quoting somebody — — father, I suppose. To think of him being so abused — poor, dear Ali Baba —

Starkweather

(Clearing his throat in advertisement of his presence.) A-hem.

(Margaret and Connie turn around abruptly and discover him.)

Margaret

And Connie Father!

(Both come forward to greet him, Margaret leading.)

Starkweather

(Anticipating, showing the deliberate method of the busy man saving time by eliminating the superfluous.) Fine, thank you. Quite well in every particular. This Ali Baba? Who is Ali Baba?

(Margaret looks amused reproach at Connie.)

Connie

Mr. Howard Knox.

Starkweather

And why is he called Ali Baba?

Margaret

That is my nickname for him. In the den of thieves, you know. You remember your Arabian Nights.

Starkweather

(Severely.) I have been wanting to speak to you for some time, Margaret, about that man. You know that I have never interfered with your way of life since your

marriage, nor with your and Tom's housekeeping arrangements. But this man Knox. I understand that you have even had him here in your house —

Margaret

(Interrupting.) He is very liable to be here this afternoon, any time, now.

(Connie displays irritation at Margaret.)

Starkweather

(Continuing imperturbably.) Your house — you, my daughter, and the wife of Senator Chalmers. As I said, I have not interfered with you since your marriage. But this Knox affair transcends household arrangements. It is of political importance. The man is an enemy to our class, a firebrand. Why do you have him here?

Margaret

Because I like him. Because he is a man I am proud to call "friend." Because I wish there were more men like him, many more men like him, in the world. Because I have ever seen in him nothing but the best and highest. And, besides, it's such good fun to see how one virtuous man can so disconcert you captains of industry and arbiters of destiny. Confess that you are very much disconcerted, father, right now. He will be here in a few minutes, and you will be more disconcerted. Why? Because it is an affair that transcends family arrangements. And it is your affair, not mine.

Starkweather

This man Knox is a dangerous character — one that I am not pleased to see any of my family take up with. He is not a gentleman.

Margaret

He is a self-made man, if that is what you mean, and he certainly hasn't any money.

Connie

(Interrupting.) He says that money is theft — at least when it is in the hands of a wealthy person.

Starkweather

He is uncouth — ignorant.

Margaret

I happen to know that he is a graduate of the University of Oregon.

Starkweather

(Sneeringly.) A cow college. But that is not what I mean. He is a demagogue, stirring up the wild-beast passions of the people.

Margaret

Surely you would not call his advocacy of that child labor bill and of the conservation of the forest and coal lands stirring up the wild-beast passions of the people?

Starkweather

(Wearily.) You don't understand. When I say he is dangerous it is because he threatens all the stabilities, because he threatens us who have made this country and upon whom this country and its prosperity rest.

(Connie, scenting trouble, walks across stage away from them.)

Margaret

The captains of industry — the banking magnates and the mergers?

Starkweather

Call it so. Call it what you will. Without us the country falls into the hands of scoundrels like that man Knox and smashes to ruin.

Margaret

(Reprovingly.) Not a scoundrel, father.

Starkweather

He is a sentimental dreamer, a hair-brained enthusiast. It is the foolish utterances of men like him that place the bomb and the knife in the hand of the assassin.

Margaret

He is at least a good man, even if he does disagree with you on political and industrial problems. And heaven knows that good men are rare enough these days.

Starkweather

I impugn neither his morality nor his motives — only his rationality. Really, Margaret, there is nothing inherently vicious about him. I grant that. And it is precisely that which makes him such a power for evil.

Margaret

When I think of all the misery and pain which he is trying to remedy — I can see in him only a power for good. He is not working for himself but for the many. That is why he has no money. You have heaven alone knows how many millions — you don't; you have worked for yourself.

Starkweather

I, too, work for the many. I give work to the many. I make life possible for the many. I am only too keenly alive to the responsibilities of my stewardship of wealth.

Margaret

But what of the child laborers working at the machines? Is that necessary, O steward of wealth? How my heart has ached for them! How I have longed to do something for them — to change conditions so that it will no longer be necessary for the children to toil, to have the playtime of childhood stolen away from them. Theft — that is what it is, the playtime of the children coined into profits. That is why I like Howard Knox. He calls theft theft. He is trying to do something for those children. What are you trying to do for them?

Starkweather

Sentiment. Sentiment. The question is too vast and complicated, and you cannot understand. No woman can understand. That is why you run to sentiment. That is what is the matter with this Knox — sentiment. You can't run a government of ninety millions of people on sentiment, nor on abstract ideas of justice and right.

Margaret

But if you eliminate justice and right, what remains?

Starkweather

This is a practical world, and it must be managed by practical men — by thinkers, not by near-thinkers whose heads are addled with the half-digested ideas of the French Encyclopedists and Revolutionists of a century and a half ago.

(Margaret shows signs of impatience — she is not particularly perturbed by this passage-at-arms with her father, and is anxious to get off her street things.)

Don't forget, my daughter, that your father knows the books as well as any cow college graduate from Oregon. I, too, in my student days, dabbled in theories of universal happiness and righteousness, saw my vision and dreamed my dream. I did not know then the weakness, and frailty, and grossness of the human clay. But I grew out of that and into a man. Some men never grow out of that stage. That is what is the trouble with Knox. He is still a dreamer, and a dangerous one.

(He pauses a moment, and then his thin lips shut grimly. But he has just about shot his bolt.)

Margaret

What do you mean?

Starkweather

He has let himself in to give a speech to-morrow, wherein he will be called upon to deliver the proofs of all the lurid charges he has made against the Administration — against us, the stewards of wealth if you please. He will be unable to deliver the proofs, and the nation will laugh. And that will be the political end of Mr. Ali Baba and his dream.

Margaret

It is a beautiful dream. Were there more like him the dream would come true. After all, it is the dreamers that build and that never die. Perhaps you will find that he is not so easily to be destroyed. But I can't stay and argue with you, father. I simply must go and get my things off.

(To Connie.) You'll have to receive, dear. I'll be right back.

(Julius Rutland enters. Margaret advances to meet him, shaking his hand.) You must forgive me for deserting for a moment.

Rutland

(Greeting the others.) A family council, I see.

Margaret

(On way to exit at rear.) No; a discussion on dreams and dreamers. I leave you to bear my part.

Rutland

(Bowing.) With pleasure. The dreamers are the true architects. But — a — what is the dream and who is the dreamer?

Margaret

(Pausing in the doorway.) The dream of social justice, of fair play and a square deal to everybody. The dreamer — Mr. Knox.

(Rutland is so patently irritated, that Margaret lingers in the doorway to enjoy.)

Rutland

That man! He has insulted and reviled the Church — my calling. He —

Connie

(Interrupting.) He said the churchmen stole from God. I remember he once said there had been only one true Christian and that He died on the Cross.

Margaret

He quoted that from Nietzsche.

Starkweather

(To Rutland, in quiet glee.) He had you there.

Rutland

(In composed fury.) Nietzsche is a blasphemer, sir. Any man who reads Nietzsche or quotes Nietzsche is a blasphemer. It augurs ill for the future of America when such pernicious literature has the vogue it has.

Margaret

(Interrupting, laughing.) I leave the quarrel in your hands, sir knight. Remember — the dreamer and the dream. (Margaret makes exit.)

Rutland

(Shaking his head.) I cannot understand what is coming over the present generation. Take your daughter, for instance. Ten years ago she was an earnest, sincere lieutenant of mine in all our little charities.

Starkweather

Has she given charity up?

Connie

It's settlement work, now, and kindergartens.

Rutland

(Ominously.) It's writers like Nietzsche, and men who read him, like Knox, who are responsible.

(Senator Dowsett and Mrs. Dowsett enter from rear.)

(Connie advances to greet them. Rutland knows Mrs. Dowsett, and Connie introduces him to Senator Dowsett.)

(In the meantime, not bothering to greet anybody, evincing his own will and way, Starkweather goes across to right front, selects one of several chairs, seats himself, pulls a thin note-book from inside coat pocket, and proceeds to immerse himself in contents of same.) (Dowsett and Rutland pair and stroll to left rear and seat themselves, while Connie and Mrs. Dowsett seat themselves at tea-table to left front. Connie rings the bell for Servant.)

Mrs. Dowsett

(Glancing significantly at Starkweather, and speaking in a low voice.) That's your father, isn't it? I have so wanted to meet him.

Connie

(Softly.) You know he's peculiar. He is liable to ignore everybody here this afternoon, and get up and go away abruptly, without saying good-bye.

Mrs. Dowsett

(Sympathetically.) Yes, I know, a man of such large affairs. He must have so much on his mind. He is a wonderful man — my husband says the greatest in contemporary history — more powerful than a dozen presidents, the King of England, and the Kaiser, all rolled into one.

(Servant enters with tea urn and accessories, and Connie proceeds to serve tea, all accompanied by appropriate patter — "Two lumps?" "One, please." "Lemon;" etc.)

(Rutland and Dowsett come forward to table for their tea, where they remain.)

(Connie, glancing apprehensively across at her father and debating a moment, prepares a cup for him and a small plate with crackers, and hands them to Dowsett, who likewise betrays apprehensiveness.)

Connie

Take it to father, please, senator.

(Note: — Throughout the rest of this act, Starkweather is like a being apart, a king sitting on his throne. He divides the tea function with Margaret. Men come up to him and speak with him. He sends for men. They come and go at his bidding. The whole attitude, perhaps unconsciously on his part, is that wherever he may be he is master. This attitude is accepted by all the others; forsooth, he is indeed a great man and master. The only one who is not really afraid of him is Margaret; yet she gives in to him in so far as she lets him do as he pleases at her afternoon tea.) (Dowsett carries the cup of tea and small plate across stage to Starkweather. Starkweather does not notice him at first.)

Connie

(Who has been watching.) Tea, father, won't you have a cup of tea?

(Through the following scene between Starkweather and Dowsett, the latter holds cup of tea and crackers, helplessly, at a disadvantage. At the same time Rutland is served with tea and remains at the table, talking with the two women.)

Starkweather

(Looking first at Connie, then peering into cup of tea. He grunts refusal, and for the first time looks up into the other man's face. He immediately closes note-book down on finger to keep the place.) Oh, it's you. Dowsett.

(Painfully endeavoring to be at ease.) A pleasure, Mr. Starkweather, an entirely unexpected pleasure to meet you here. I was not aware you frequented frivolous gatherings of this nature.

Starkweather

(Abruptly and peremptorily.) Why didn't you come when you were sent for this morning?

Dowsett

I was sick — I was in bed.

Starkweather

That is no excuse, sir. When you are sent for you are to come. Understand? That bill was reported back. Why was it reported back? You told Dobleman you would attend to it.

Dowsett

It was a slip up. Such things will happen.

Starkweather

What was the matter with that committee? Have you no influence with the Senate crowd? If not, say so, and I'll get some one who has.

Dowsett

(Angrily.) I refuse to be treated in this manner, Mr. Starkweather. I have some self-respect —

(Starkweather grunts incredulously.) Some decency —

(Starkweather grunts.) A position of prominence in my state. You forget, sir, that in our state organization I occupy no mean place.

Starkweather

(Cutting him off so sharply that Dowsett drops cup and saucer.) Don't you show your teeth to me. I can make you or break you. That state organization of yours belongs to me.

(Dowsett starts — he is learning something new. To hide his feelings, he stoops to pick up cup and saucer.) Let it alone! I am talking to you.

(Dowsett straightens up to attention with alacrity.) (Connie, who has witnessed, rings for Servant.) I bought that state organization, and paid for it. You are one of the chattels that came along with the machine. You were made senator to obey my orders. Understand? Do you understand?

Dowsett

(Beaten.) I — I understand.

Starkweather

That bill is to be killed.

Dowsett

Yes, sir.

Starkweather

Quietly, no headlines about it.

(Dowsett nods.) Now you can go.

(Dowsett proceeds rather limply across to join group at tea-table.) (Chalmers and Hubbard enter from right, laughing about something. At sight of Starkweather they immediately become sober.) (No hands are shaken. Starkweather barely acknowledges Hubbard's greeting.)

Starkweather

Tom, I want to see you.

(Hubbard takes his cue, and proceeds across to tea-table.)

(Enter Servant. Connie directs him to remove broken cup and saucer. While this is being done, Starkweather remains silent. He consults note-book, and Chalmers stands, not quite at ease, waiting the other's will. At the same time, patter at tea-table. Hubbard, greeting others and accepting or declining cup of tea.)

(Servant makes exit).

Starkweather

(Closing finger on book and looking sharply at Chalmers.) Tom, this affair of yours in New York must come to an end. Understand?

Chalmers

(Starting.) Hubbard has been talking.

Starkweather

No, it is not Hubbard. I have the reports from other sources.

Chalmers

It is a harmless affair.

Starkweather

I happen to know better. I have the whole record. If you wish, I can give you every detail, every meeting. I know. There is no discussion whatever. I want no more of it.

Chalmers

I never dreamed for a moment that I was — er — indiscreet.

Starkweather

Never forget that every indiscretion of a man in your position is indiscreet. We have a duty, a great and solemn duty to perform. Upon our shoulders rest the destinies of ninety million people. If we fail in our duty, they go down to destruction. Ignorant demagogues are working on the beast-passions of the people. If they have their way, they are lost, the country is lost, civilization is lost. We want no more Dark Ages.

Chalmers

Really, I never thought it was as serious as all that.

Starkweather

(Shrugging shoulders and lifting eyebrows.) After all, why should you? You are only a cog in the machine. I, and the several men grouped with me, am the machine. You are a useful cog — too useful to lose —

Chalmers

Lose? — Me?

Starkweather

I have but to raise my hand, any time — do you understand? — any time, and you are lost. You control your state. Very well. But never forget that to-morrow, if I wished, I could buy your whole machine out from under you. I know you cannot change yourself, but, for the sake of the big issues at stake, you must be careful, exceedingly careful. We are compelled to work with weak tools. You are a good liver, a flesh-pot man. You drink too much. Your heart is weak. — Oh, I have the report of your doctor. Nevertheless, don't make a fool of yourself, nor of us. Besides, do not forget that your wife is my daughter. She is a strong woman, a credit to both of us. Be careful that you are not a discredit to her.

Chalmers

All right, I'll be careful. But while we are — er — on this subject, there's something I'd like to speak to you about.

(A pause, in which Starkweather waits non-committally.) It's this man Knox, and Madge. He comes to the house. They are as thick as thieves.

Starkweather

Yes?

Chalmers

(Hastily.) Oh, not a breath of suspicion or anything of that sort, I assure you. But it doesn't strike me as exactly appropriate that your daughter and my wife should be friendly with this fire-eating anarchist who is always attacking us and all that we represent.

Starkweather

I started to speak with her on that subject, but was interrupted.

(Puckers brow and thinks.) You are her husband. Why don't you take her in hand yourself?

(Enters Mrs. Starkweather from rear, looking about, bowing, then locating Starkweather and proceeding toward him.)

Chalmers

What can I do? She has a will of her own — the same sort of a will that you have. Besides, I think she knows about my — about some of my — indiscretions.

Starkweather

(Slyly.)

Harmless indiscretions?

(Chalmers is about to reply, but observes Mrs. Starkweather approaching.)

Mrs. Starkweather

(Speaks in a peevish, complaining voice, and during her harrangue Starkweather immerses himself in notebook.) Oh, there you are, Anthony. Talking politics, I suppose. Well, as soon as I get a cup of tea we must go. Tommy is not looking as well as I could wish. Margaret loves him, but she does not take the right care of him. I don't know what the world is coming to when mothers do not know how to rear their offspring. There is Margaret, with her slum kindergartens, taking care of everybody else's children but her own. If she only performed her church duties as eagerly! Mr. Rutland is displeased with her. I shall give her a talking to — only, you'd better do it, Anthony. Somehow, I have never counted much with Margaret. She is as set in doing what she pleases as you are. In my time children paid respect to their parents. This is what comes of speed. There is no time for anything. And now I must get my tea and run. Connie has to dress for that dinner.

(Mrs. Starkweather crosses to table, greets others characteristically and is served with tea by Connie.)

(Chalmers waits respectfully on Starkweather.)

Starkweather

(Looking up from note-book.) That will do, Tom.

(Chalmers is just starting across to join others, when voices are heard outside rear entrance, and Margaret enters with Dolores Ortega, wife of the Peruvian Minister, and

Matsu Sakari, Secretary of Japanese Legation — both of whom she has met as they were entering the house.)

(Chalmers changes his course, and meets the above advancing group. He knows Dolores Ortega, whom he greets, and is introduced to Sakari.)

(Margaret passes on among guests, greeting them, etc. Then she displaces Connie at tea-table and proceeds to dispense tea to the newcomers.)

(Groups slowly form and seat themselves about stage as follows: Chalmers and Dolores Ortega; Rutland, Dowsett, Mrs. Starkweather; Connie, Mr. Dowsett, and Hubbard.)

(Chalmers carries tea to Dolores Ortega.)

(Sakari has been lingering by table, waiting for tea and pattering with Margaret, Chalmers, etc.)

Margaret

(Handing cup to Sakari.) I am very timid in offering you this, for I am sure you must be appalled by our barbarous methods of making tea.

Sakari

(Bowling.) It is true, your American tea, and the tea of the English, are quite radically different from the tea in my country. But one learns, you know. I served my apprenticeship to American tea long years ago, when I was at Yale. It was perplexing, I assure you — at first, only at first I really believe that I am beginning to have a — how shall I call it? — a tolerance for tea in your fashion.

Margaret

You are very kind in overlooking our shortcomings.

Sakari

(Bowling.) On the contrary, I am unaware, always unaware, of any shortcomings of this marvelous country of yours.

Margaret

(Laughing.) You are incorrigibly gracious, Mr. Sakari. (Knox appears at threshold of rear entrance and pauses irresolutely for a moment)

Sakari

(Noticing Knox, and looking about him to select which group he will join.) If I may be allowed, I shall now retire and consume this — tea.

(Joins group composed of Connie, Mrs. Dowsett, and Hubbard.)

(Knox comes forward to Margaret, betraying a certain awkwardness due to lack of experience in such social functions. He greets Margaret and those in the group nearest her.)

Knox

(To Margaret.) I don't know why I come here. I do not belong. All the ways are strange.

Margaret

(Lightly, at the same time preparing his tea.) The same Ali Baba — once again in the den of the forty thieves. But your watch and pocket-book are safe here, really they are.

(Knox makes a gesture of dissent at her facetiousness.) Now don't be serious. You should relax sometimes. You live too tensely.

(Looking at Starkweather.) There's the arch-anarch over there, the dragon you are trying to slay.

(Knox looks at Starkweather and is plainly perplexed.) The man who handles all the life insurance funds, who controls more strings of banks and trust companies than all the Rothschilds a hundred times over — the merger of iron and steel and coal and shipping and all the other things — the man who blocks your child labor bill and all the rest of the remedial legislation you advocate. In short, my father.

Knox

(Looking intently at Starkweather.) I should have recognized him from his photographs. But why do you say such things?

Margaret

Because they are true.

(He remains silent.) Now, aren't they? (She laughs.) Oh, you don't need to answer. You know the truth, the whole bitter truth. This is a den of thieves. There is Mr. Hubbard over there, for instance, the trusty journalist lieutenant of the corporations.

Knox

(With an expression of disgust.) I know him. It was he that wrote the Standard Oil side of the story, after having abused Standard Oil for years in the pseudo-muck-raking magazines. He made them come up to his price, that was all. He's the star writer on Cartwright's, now, since that magazine changed its policy and became subsidizedly reactionary. I know him — a thoroughly dishonest man. Truly am I Ali Baba, and truly I wonder why I am here.

Margaret

You are here, sir, because I like you to come.

Knox

We do have much in common, you and I.

Margaret

The future.

Knox

(Gravely, looking at her with shining eyes.) I sometimes fear for more immediate reasons than that.

(Margaret looks at him in alarm, and at the same time betrays pleasure in what he has said.) For you.

Margaret

(Hastily.) Don't look at me that way. Your eyes are flashing. Some one might see and misunderstand.

Knox

(In confusion, awkwardly.) I was unaware that I — that I was looking at you — — in any way that — —

Margaret

I'll tell you why you are here. Because I sent for you.

Knox

(With signs of ardor.) I would come whenever you sent for me, and go wherever you might send me.

Margaret

(Reprovingly.)

Please, please — — It was about that speech. I have been hearing about it from everybody — rumblings and mutterings and dire prophecies. I know how busy you are, and I ought not to have asked you to come. But there was no other way, and I was so anxious.

Knox

(Pleased.) It seems so strange that you, being what you are, affiliated as you are, should be interested in the welfare of the common people.

Margaret

(Judicially.) I do seem like a traitor in my own camp. But as father said a while ago, I, too, have dreamed my dream. I did it as a girl — Plato's Republic, Moore's Utopia — I was steeped in all the dreams of the social dreamers.

(During all that follows of her speech, Knox is keenly interested, his eyes glisten and he hangs on her words.)

And I dreamed that I, too, might do something to bring on the era of universal justice and fair play. In my heart I dedicated myself to the cause of humanity. I made Lincoln my hero—he still is. But I was only a girl, and where was I to find this cause? — how to work for it? I was shut in by a thousand restrictions, hedged in by a thousand conventions. Everybody laughed at me when I expressed the thoughts that burned in me. What could I do? I was only a woman. I had neither vote nor right of utterance. I must remain silent. I must do nothing. Men, in their lordly wisdom, did all. They voted, orated, governed. The place for women was in the home, taking care of some lordly man who did all these lordly things.

Knox

You understand, then, why I am for equal suffrage.

Margaret

But I learned — or thought I learned. Power, I discovered early. My father had power. He was a magnate — I believe that is the correct phrase. Power was what I needed. But how? I was a woman. Again I dreamed my dream — a modified dream. Only by marriage could I win to power. And there you have the clew to me and what I am and have become. I met the man who was to become my husband. He was clean and strong and an athlete, an outdoor man, a wealthy man and a rising politician. Father told me that if I married him he would make him the power of his state, make him governor, send him to the United States Senate. And there you have it all.

Knox

Yes? — — Yes?

Margaret

I married. I found that there were greater forces at work than I had ever dreamed of. They took my husband away from me and molded him into the political lieutenant of my father. And I was without power. I could do nothing for the cause. I was beaten. Then it was that I got a new vision. The future belonged to the children. There I could play my woman's part. I was a mother. Very well. I could do no better than to bring into the world a healthy son and bring him up to manhood healthy and wholesome, clean, noble, and alive. Did I do my part well, through him the results would be achieved. Through him would the work of the world be done in making the world healthier and happier for all the human creatures in it. I played the mother's part. That is why I left the pitiful little charities of the church and devoted myself to settlement work and tenement house reform, established my kindergartens, and worked for the little men and women who come so blindly and to whom the future belongs to make or mar.

Knox

You are magnificent. I know, now, why I come when you bid me come.

Margaret

And then you came. You were magnificent. You were my knight of the windmills, tilting against all power and privilege, striving to wrest the future from the future and realize it here in the present, now. I was sure you would be destroyed. Yet you are still here and fighting valiantly. And that speech of yours to-morrow —

Chalmers

(Who has approached, bearing Dolores Ortega's cup.) Yes, that speech. How do you do, Mr. Knox.

(They shake hands.) A cup of tea, Madge. For Mrs. Ortega. Two lumps, please.

(Margaret prepares the cup of tea.) Everybody is excited over that speech. You are going to give us particular fits, to-morrow, I understand.

Knox

(Smiling.) Really, no more than is deserved.

Chalmers

The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

Knox

Precisely.

(Receiving back cup of tea from Margaret.)

Chalmers

Believe me, we are not so black as we're painted. There are two sides to this question. Like you, we do our best to do what is right. And we hope, we still hope, to win you over to our side.

(Knox shakes his head with a quiet smile.)

Margaret

Oh, Tom, be truthful. You don't hope anything of the sort. You know you are hoping to destroy him.

Chalmers

(Smiling grimly.) That is what usually happens to those who are not won over.

(Preparing to depart with cup of tea; speaking to Knox.) You might accomplish much good, were you with us. Against us you accomplish nothing, absolutely nothing.

(Returns to Dolores Ortega.)

Margaret

(Hurriedly.) You see. That is why I was anxious — why I sent for you. Even Tom admits that they who are not won over are destroyed. This speech is a crucial event. You know how rigidly they rule the House and gag men like you. It is they, and they alone, who have given you opportunity for this speech? Why? — Why?

Knox

(Smiling confidently.) I know their little scheme. They have heard my charges. They think I am going to make a firebrand speech, and they are ready to catch me without the proofs. They are ready in every way for me. They are going to laugh me down. The Associated Press, the Washington correspondents — all are ready to manufacture, in every newspaper in the land, the great laugh that will destroy me. But I am fully prepared, I have —

Margaret

The proofs?

Knox

Yes.

Margaret

Now?

Knox

They will be delivered to me to-night — original documents, photographs of documents, affidavits —

Margaret

Tell me nothing. But oh, do be careful! Be careful!

Mrs. Dowsett

(Appealing to Margaret.) Do give me some assistance, Mrs. Chalmers.

(Indicating Sakari.) Mr. Sakari is trying to make me ridiculous.

Margaret

Impossible.

Mrs. Dowsett

But he is. He has had the effrontery —

Chalmers

(Mimicking Mrs. Dowsett.) Effrontery! — O, Sakari!

Sakari

The dear lady is pleased to be facetious.

Mrs. Dowsett

He has had the effrontery to ask me to explain the cause of high prices. Mr. Dowsett says the reason is that the people are living so high.

Sakari

Such a marvelous country. They are poor because they have so much to spend.

Chalmers

Are not high prices due to the increased output of gold?

Mrs. Dowsett

Mr. Sakari suggested that himself, and when I agreed with him he proceeded to demolish it. He has treated me dreadfully.

Rutland

(Clearing his throat and expressing himself with ponderous unctiousness.) You will find the solution in the drink traffic. It is liquor, alcohol, that is undermining our industry, our institutions, our faith in God — everything. Yearly the working people drink greater quantities of alcohol. Naturally, through resulting inefficiency, the cost of production is higher, and therefore prices are higher.

Dowsett

Partly so, partly so. And in line with it, and in addition to it, prices are high because the working class is no longer thrifty. If our working class saved as the French peasant does, we would sell more in the world market and have better times.

Sakari

(Bowing.) As I understand it then, the more thrifty you are the more you save, and the more you save the more you have to sell, the more you sell, the better the times?

Dowsett

Exactly so. Exactly.

Sakari

The less you sell, the harder are the times?

Dowsett

Just so.

Sakari

Then if the people are thrifty, and buy less, times will be harder?

Dowsett

(Perplexed.) Er — it would seem so.

Sakari

Then it would seem that the present bad times are due to the fact that the people are thrifty, rather than not thrifty?

(Dowsett is nonplussed, and Mrs. Dowsett throws up her hands in despair.)

Mrs. Dowsett

(Turning to Knox.) Perhaps you can explain to us, Mr. Knox, the reason for this terrible condition of affairs.

(Starkweather closes note-book on finger and listens.) (Knox smiles, but does not speak.)

Dolores Ortega

Please do, Mr. Knox. I am so dreadfully anxious to know why living is so high now. Only this morning I understand meat went up again.

(Knox hesitates and looks questioningly at Margaret.)

Hubbard

I am sure Mr. Knox can shed new light on this perplexing problem.

Chalmers

Surely you, the whirlwind of oratorical swords in the House, are not timid here — among friends.

Knox

(Sparring.) I had no idea that questions of such nature were topics of conversation at affairs like this.

Starkweather

(Abruptly and imperatively.) What causes the high prices?

Knox

(Equally abrupt and just as positive as the other was imperative.) Theft!

(It is a sort of a bombshell he has exploded, but they receive it politely and smilingly, even though it has shaken them up.)

Dolores Ortega

What a romantic explanation. I suppose everybody who has anything has stolen it.

Knox

Not quite, but almost quite. Take motorcars, for example. This year five hundred million dollars has been spent for motor-cars. It required men toiling in the mines and foundries, women sewing their eyes out in sweat-shops, shop girls slaving for four and five dollars a week, little children working in the factories and cotton-mills — all these it required to produce those five hundred millions spent this year in motor-cars. And all this has been stolen from those who did the work.

Mrs. Starkweather

I always knew those motor-cars were to blame for terrible things.

Dolores Ortega

But Mr. Knox, I have a motor-car.

Knox

Somebody's labor made that car. Was it yours?

Dolores Ortega

Mercy, no! I bought it — — and paid for it.

Knox

Then did you labor at producing something else, and exchange the fruits of that labor for the motor-car?

(A pause.)

You do not answer. Then I am to understand that you have a motor-car which was made by somebody else's labor and for which you gave no labor of your own. This I call theft. You call it property. Yet it is theft.

Starkweather

(Interrupting Dolores Ortega who was just about to speak.)

But surely you have intelligence to see the question in larger ways than stolen motor-cars. I am a man of affairs. I don't steal motor-cars.

Knox

(Smiling.) Not concrete little motor-cars, no. You do things on a large scale.

Starkweather

Steal?

Knox

(Shrugging his shoulders.) If you will have it so.

Starkweather

I am like a certain gentleman from Missouri. You've got to show me.

Knox

And I'm like the man from Texas. It's got to be put in my hand.

Starkweather

I shift my residence at once to Texas. Put it in my hand that I steal on a large scale.

Knox

Very well. You are the great financier, merger, and magnate. Do you mind a few statistics?

Starkweather

Go ahead.

Knox

You exercise a controlling interest in nine billion dollars' worth of railways; in two billion dollars' worth of industrial concerns; in one billion dollars' worth of life insurance groups; in one billion dollars' worth of banking groups; in two billion dollars' worth of trust companies. Mind you, I do not say you own all this, but that you exercise a controlling interest. That is all that is necessary. In short, you exercise a controlling interest in such a proportion of the total investments of the United States, as to set the pace for all the rest. Now to my point. In the last few years seventy billions of dollars have been artificially added to the capitalization of the nation's industries. By that I mean water — pure, unadulterated water. You, the merger, know what water means. I say seventy billions. It doesn't matter if we call it forty billions or eighty billions; the amount, whatever it is, is a huge one. And what does seventy billions of water mean? It means, at five per cent, that three billions and a half must be paid for things this year, and every year, more than things are really worth. The people who labor have to pay this. There is theft for you. There is high prices for you. Who put in the water? Who gets the theft of the water? Have I put it in your hand?

Starkweather

Are there no wages for stewardship?

Knox

Call it any name you please.

Starkweather

Do I not make two dollars where one was before? Do I not make for more happiness than was before I came?

Knox

Is that any more than the duty any man owes to his fellowman?

Starkweather

Oh, you unpractical dreamer. (Returns to his note-book.)

Rutland

(Throwing himself into the breach.) Where do I steal, Mr. Knox? — I who get a mere salary for preaching the Lord's Word.

Knox

Your salary comes out of that water I mentioned. Do you want to know who pays your salary? Not your parishioners. But the little children toiling in the mills, and all the rest — all the slaves on the wheel of labor pay you your salary.

Rutland

I earn it.

Knox

They pay it.

Mrs. Dowsett

Why, I declare, Mr. Knox, you are worse than Mr. Sakari. You are an anarchist.

(She simulates shivering with fear.)

Chalmers

(To Knox.) I suppose that's part of your speech to-morrow.

Dolores Ortega

(Clapping her hands.) A rehearsal! He's trying it out on us!

Sakari

How would you remedy this — er — this theft?

(Starkweather again closes note-book on finger and listens as Knox begins to speak.)

Knox

Very simply. By changing the governmental machinery by which this household of ninety millions of people conducts its affairs.

Sakari

I thought — I was taught so at Yale — that your governmental machinery was excellent, most excellent.

Knox

It is antiquated. It is ready for the scrap-heap. Instead of being our servant, it has mastered us. We are its slaves. All the political brood of grafters and hypocrites have run away with it, and with us as well. In short, from the municipalities up, we are dominated by the grafters. It is a reign of theft.

Hubbard

But any government is representative of its people. No people is worthy of a better government than it possesses. Were it worthier, it would possess a better government.

(Starkweather nods his head approvingly.)

Knox

That is a lie. And I say to you now that the average morality and desire for right conduct of the people of the United States is far higher than that of the government which misrepresents it. The people are essentially worthy of a better government than that which is at present in the hands of the politicians, for the benefit of the politicians and of the interests the politicians represent. I wonder, Mr. Sakari, if you have ever heard the story of the four aces.

Sakari

I cannot say that I have.

Knox

Do you understand the game of poker?

Sakari

(Considering.) Yes, a marvelous game. I have learned it — at Yale. It was very expensive.

Knox

Well, that story reminds me of our grafting politicians. They have no moral compunctions. They look upon theft as right — eminently right. They see nothing wrong in the arrangement that the man who deals the cards should give himself the best in the deck. Never mind what he deals himself, they'll have the deal next and make up for it.

Dolores Ortega

But the story, Mr. Knox. I, too, understand poker.

Knox

It occurred out in Nevada, in a mining camp. A tenderfoot was watching a game of poker. He stood behind the dealer, and he saw the dealer deal himself four aces from the bottom of the deck.

(From now on, he tells the story in the slow, slightly drawling Western fashion.) The tenderfoot went around to the player on the opposite side of the table.

“Say,” he says, “I just seen the dealer give himself four aces off the bottom.”

The player looked at him a moment, and said, “What of it?”

“Oh, nothing,” said the tenderfoot, “only I thought you might want to know. I tell you I seen the dealer give himself four aces off the bottom.”

“Look here, Mister,” said the player, “you'd better get out of this. You don't understand the game. It's HIS deal, ain't it?”

Margaret

(Arising while they are laughing.) We've talked politics long enough. Dolores, I want you to tell me about your new car.

Knox

(As if suddenly recollecting himself.) And I must be going.

(In a low voice to Margaret.) Do I have to shake hands with all these people?

Margaret

(Shaking her head, speaking low.) Dear delightful Ali Baba.

Knox

(Glumly.) I suppose I've made a fool of myself.

Margaret

(Earnestly.) On the contrary, you were delightful. I am proud of you.

(As Knox shakes hands with Margaret, Sakari arises and comes forward).

Sakari

I, too, must go. I have had a charming half hour, Mrs. Chalmers. But I shall not attempt to thank you.

(He shakes hands with Margaret.)

(Knox and Sakari proceed to make exit to rear.)

(Just as they go out, Servant enters, carrying card-tray, and advances toward Starkweather.)

(Margaret joins Dolores Ortega and Chalmers, seats herself with them, and proceeds to talk motor-cars.)

(Servant has reached Starkweather, who has taken a telegram from tray, opened it, and is reading it.)

Starkweather

Damnation!

Servant

I beg your pardon, sir.

Starkweather

Send Senator Chalmers to me, and Mr. Hubbard.

Servant

Yes, sir.

(Servant crosses to Chalmers and Hubbard, both of whom immediately arise and cross to Starkweather.)

(While this is being done, Margaret reassembles the three broken groups into one, seating herself so that she can watch Starkweather and his group across the stage.)

(Servant lingers to receive a command from Margaret.)

(Chalmers and Hubbard wait a moment, standing, while Starkweather rereads telegram.)

Starkweather

(Standing up.) Dobleman has just forwarded this telegram. It's from New York — from Martinaw. There's been rottenness. My papers and letter-files have been ransacked. It's the confidential stenographer who has been tampered with — you remember that middle-aged, youngish-oldish woman, Tom? That's the one. — Where's that servant?

(Servant is just making exit.) Here! Come here!

(Servant comes over to Starkweather.) Go to the telephone and call up Dobleman. Tell him to come here.

Servant

(Perplexed.) I beg pardon, sir.

Starkweather

(Irritably.) My secretary. At my house. Dobleman. Tell him to come at once.

(Servant makes exit.)

Chalmers

But who can be the principal behind this theft?

(Starkweather shrugs his shoulders.)

Hubbard

A blackmailing device most probably. They will attempt to bleed you —

Chalmers

Unless —

Starkweather

(Impatiently.) Yes?

Chalmers

Unless they are to be used to-morrow in that speech of Knox.

(Comprehension dawns on the faces of the other two men.)

Mrs. Starkweather

(Who has arisen.) Anthony, we must go now. Are you ready? Connie has to dress.

Starkweather

I am not going now. You and Connie take the car.

Mrs. Starkweather

You mustn't forget you are going to that dinner.

Starkweather

(Wearily.) Do I ever forget?

(Servant enters and proceeds toward Starkweather, where he stands waiting while Mrs. Starkweather finishes the next speech. Starkweather listens to her with a patient, stony face.)

Mrs. Starkweather

Oh, these everlasting politics! That is what it has been all afternoon — high prices, graft, and theft; theft, graft, and high prices. It is terrible. When I was a girl we did not talk of such things. Well, come on, Connie.

Mrs. Dowsett

(Rising and glancing at Dowsett.) And we must be going, too.

(During the following scene, which takes place around Starkweather, Margaret is saying good-bye to her departing guests.)

(Mrs. Starkweather and Connie make exit.)

(Dowsett and Mrs. Dowsett make exit.)

(The instant Mrs. Dowsett's remark puts a complete end to Mrs. Starkweather's speech, Starkweather, without answer or noticing his wife, turns and interrogates Servant with a glance.)

Servant

Mr. Dobleman has already left some time to come here, sir.

Starkweather

Show him in as soon as he comes.

Servant

Yes, sir.

(Servant makes exit.)

(Margaret, Dolores Ortega, and Rutland are left in a group together, this time around tea-table, where Margaret serves Rutland another cup of tea. From time to time Margaret glances curiously at the serious group of men across the stage.)

(Starkweather is thinking hard with knitted brows. Hubbard is likewise pondering.)

Chalmers

If I were certain Knox had those papers I would take him by the throat and shake them out of him.

Starkweather

No foolish talk like that, Tom. This is a serious matter.

Hubbard

But Knox has no money. A Starkweather stenographer comes high.

Starkweather

There is more than Knox behind this. (Enter Dobleman, walking quickly and in a state of controlled excitement.)

Dobleman

(To Starkweather.) You received that telegram, sir?

(Starkweather nods.) I got the New York office — Martinaw — right along afterward, by long distance. I thought best to follow and tell you.

Starkweather

What did Martinaw say?

Dobleman

The files seem in perfect order.

Starkweather

Thank God!

(During the following speech of Dobleman, Rutland says good-bye to Margaret and Dolores Ortega and makes exit.)

(Margaret and Dolores Ortega rise a minute afterward and go toward exit, throwing curious glances at the men but not disturbing them.)

(Dolores Ortega makes exit.)

(Margaret pauses in doorway a moment, giving a final anxious glance at the men, and makes exit.)

Dobleman

But they are not. The stenographer, Miss Standish, has confessed. For a long time she has followed the practice of taking two or three letters and documents at a time away from the office. Many have been photographed and returned. But the more important ones were retained and clever copies returned. Martinaw says that Miss Standish herself does not know and cannot tell which of the ones she returned are genuine and which are copies.

Hubbard

Knox never did this.

Starkweather

Did Martinaw say whom Miss Standish was acting for?

Dobleman

Gherst.

(The alarm on the three men's faces is patent.)

Starkweather

Gherst!

(Pauses to think.)

Hubbard

Then it is not so grave after all. A yellow journal sensation is the best Gherst can make of it. And, documents or not, the very medium by which it is made public discredits it.

Starkweather

Trust Gherst for more ability than that. He will certainly exploit them in his newspapers, but not until after Knox has used them in his speech. Oh, the cunning dog! Never could he have chosen a better mode and moment to strike at me, at the Administration, at everything. That is Gherst all over. Playing to the gallery. Inducing Knox to make this spectacular exposure on the floor of the House just at the critical time when so many important bills are pending.

(To Dobleman.)

Did Martinaw give you any idea of the nature of the stolen documents?

Dobleman

(Referring to notes he has brought.) Of course I don't know anything about it, but he spoke of the Goodyear letters —

(Starkweather betrays by his face the gravity of the information.)

the Caledonian letters, all the Black Rider correspondence. He mentioned, too, (Referring to notes.) the Astonbury and Glutz letters. And there were others, many others, not designated.

Starkweather

This is terrible!

(Recollecting himself.)

Thank you, Dobleman. Will you please return to the house at once. Get New York again, and fullest details. I'll follow you shortly. Have you a machine?

Dobleman

A taxi, sir.

Starkweather

All right, and be careful.

(Dobleman makes exit)

Chalmers

I don't know the import of all these letters, but I can guess, and it does seem serious.

Starkweather

(Furiously.) Serious! Let me tell you that there has been no exposure like this in the history of the country. It means hundreds of millions of dollars. It means more — the loss of power. And still more, it means the mob, the great mass of the child-minded people rising up and destroying all that I have labored to do for them. Oh, the fools! The fools!

Hubbard

(Shaking his head ominously.) There is no telling what may happen if Knox makes that speech and delivers the proofs.

Chalmers

It is unfortunate. The people are restless and excited as it is. They are being constantly prodded on by the mouthings of the radical press, of the muck-raking magazines and of the demagogues. The people are like powder awaiting the spark.

Starkweather

This man Knox is no fool, if he is a dreamer. He is a shrewd knave. He is a fighter. He comes from the West — the old pioneer stock. His father drove an ox-team across the Plains to Oregon. He knows how to play his cards, and never could circumstances have placed more advantageous cards in his hands.

Chalmers

And nothing like this has ever touched you before.

Starkweather

I have always stood above the muck and ruck — clear and clean and unassailable. But this — this is too much! It is the spark. There is no forecasting what it may develop into.

Chalmers

A political turnover.

Starkweather

(Nodding savagely.) A new party, a party of demagogues, in power. Government ownership of the railways and telegraphs. A graduated income tax that will mean no less than the confiscation of private capital.

Chalmers

And all that mass of radical legislation — the Child Labor Bill, the new Employers' Liability Act, the government control of the Alaskan coal fields, that interference with Mexico. And that big power corporation you have worked so hard to form.

Starkweather

It must not be. It is an unthinkable calamity. It means that the very process of capitalistic development is hindered, stopped. It means a setback of ten years in the process. It means work, endless work, to overcome the setback. It means not alone the passage of all this radical legislation with the consequent disadvantages, but it means the fingers of the mob clutching at our grip of control. It means anarchy. It means ruin and misery for all the blind fools and led-cattle of the mass who will strike at the very sources of their own existence and comfort.

(Tommy enters from left, evidently playing a game, in the course of which he is running away. By his actions he shows that he is pursued. He intends to cross stage, but is stopped by sight of the men. Unobserved by them, he retraces his steps and crawls under the tea-table.)

Chalmers

Without doubt, Knox is in possession of the letters right now.

Starkweather

There is but one thing to do, and that is — get them back.

(He looks questioningly at the two men.)

(Margaret enters from left, in flushed and happy pursuit of Tommy — for it is a game she is playing with him. She startles at sight of the three men, whom she first sees as she gains the side of the tea-table, where she pauses abruptly, resting one hand on the table.)

Hubbard

I'll undertake it.

Starkweather

There is little time to waste. In twenty hours from now he will be on the floor making his speech. Try mild measures first. Offer him inducements — any inducement. I empower you to act for me. You will find he has a price.

Hubbard

And if not?

Starkweather

Then you must get them at any cost.

Hubbard

(Tentatively.) You mean — ?

Starkweather

I mean just that. But no matter what happens, I must never be brought in. Do you understand?

Hubbard

Thoroughly.

Margaret

(Acting her part, and speaking with assumed gayety.) What are you three conspiring about? (All three men are startled.)

Chalmers

We are arranging to boost prices a little higher.

Hubbard

And so be able to accumulate more motorcars.

Starkweather

(Taking no notice of Margaret and starting toward exit to rear.) I must be going. Hubbard, you have your work cut out for you. Tom, I want you to come with me.

Chalmers

(As the three men move toward exit.) Home?

Starkweather

Yes, we have much to do.

Chalmers

Then I'll dress first and follow you.

(Turning to Margaret.) Pick me up on the way to that dinner.

(Margaret nods. Starkweather makes exit without speaking. Hub-bard says good-bye to Margaret and makes exit, followed by Chalmers.)

(Margaret remains standing, one hand resting on table, the other hand to her breast. She is thinking, establishing in her mind the connection between Knox and what she has overheard, and in process of reaching the conclusion that Knox is in danger.)

(Tommy, having vainly waited to be discovered, crawls out dispiritedly, and takes Margaret by the hand. She scarcely notices him.)

Tommy

(Dolefully.) Don't you want to play any more? (Margaret does not reply). I was a good Indian.

Margaret

(Suddenly becoming aware of herself and breaking down. She stoops and clasps Tommy in her arms, crying out, in anxiety and fear, and from love of her boy.) Oh, Tommy! Tommy!

Curtain

Act II

Scene. Sitting room of Howard Knox — dimly lighted. Time, eight o'clock in the evening.

Entrance from hallway at side to right. At right rear is locked door leading to a room which does not belong to Knox's suite. At rear center is fireplace. At left rear door leading to Knox's bedroom. At left are windows facing on street. Near these windows is a large library table littered with books, magazines, government reports, etc. To the right of center, midway forward, is a Hat-top desk. On it is a desk telephone. Behind it, so that one sitting in it faces audience, is revolving desk-chair. Also, on desk, are letters in their envelopes, etc. Against clear wall-spaces are bookcases and filing cabinets. Of special note is bookcase, containing large books, and not more than five feet high, which is against wall between fireplace and door to bedroom.

Curtain discloses empty stage.

(After a slight interval, door at right rear is shaken and agitated. After slight further interval, door is opened inward upon stage. A Man's head appears, cautiously looking around).

(Man enters, turns up lights, is followed by second Man. Both are clad decently, in knock-about business suits and starched collars, cuffs, etc. They are trim, deft, determined men).

(Following upon them, enters Hubbard. He looks about room, crosses to desk, picks up a letter, and reads address).

Hubbard

This is Knox's room all right

First Man

Trust us for that.

Second Man

We were lucky the guy with the whiskers moved out of that other room only this afternoon.

First Man

His key hadn't come down yet when I engaged it.

Hubbard

Well, get to work. That must be his bedroom.

(He goes to door of bedroom, opens, and peers in, turns on electric lights of bedroom, turns them out, then turns back to men.) You know what it is — a bunch of documents and letters. If we find it there is a clean five hundred each for you, in addition to your regular pay.

(While the conversation goes on, all three engage in a careful search of desk, drawers, filing cabinets, bookcases, etc.)

Second Man

Old Starkweather must want them bad.

Hubbard

Sh-h. Don't even breathe his name.

Second Man

His nibs is damned exclusive, ain't he?

First Man

I've never got a direct instruction from him, and I've worked for him longer than you.

Second Man

Yes, and you worked for him for over two years before you knew who was hiring you.

Hubbard

(To First Man.) You'd better go out in the hall and keep a watch for Knox. He may come in any time.

(First Man produces skeleton keys and goes to door at right. The first key opens it. Leaving door slightly ajar, he makes exit.)

(Desk telephone rings and startles Hubbard.)

Second Man

(Grinning at Hubbard's alarm.)

It's only the phone.

Hubbard

(Proceeding with search.) I suppose you've done lots of work for Stark —

Second Man

(Mimicking him.) Sh-h. Don't breathe his name.

(Telephone rings again and again, insistently, urgently.)

Hubbard

(Disguising his voice.) Hello — Yes.

(Shows surprise, seems to recognize the voice, and smiles knowingly.)

No, this is not Knox. Some mistake. Wrong number —

(Hanging up receiver and speaking to Second Man in natural voice.) She did hang up quick.

Second Man

You seemed to recognize her.

Hubbard

No, I only thought I did.

(A pause, while they search.)

Second Man

I've never spoken a word to his nibs in my life. And I've drawn his pay for years too.

Hubbard

What of it?

Second Man

(Complainingly.) He don't know I exist.

Hubbard

(Pulling open a desk drawer and examining contents.)

The pay's all right, isn't it?

Second Man

It sure is, but I guess I earn every cent of it. (First Man enters through door at right He moves hurriedly but cautiously. Shuts door behind him, but neglects to re-lock it.)

First Man

Somebody just left the elevator and is coming down the hall.

(Hubbard, First Man, and Second Man, all start for door at right rear.)

(First Man pauses and looks around to see if room is in order. Sees desk-drawer which Hubbard has neglected to close, goes back and closes it.)

(Hubbard and Second Man make exit.)

(First Man turns lights low and makes exit.)

(Sound of locking door is heard.)

(A pause.)

(A knocking at door to right. A pause. Then door opens and Gilford enters. He turns up lights, strolls about room, looks at watch, and sits down in chair near right of fireplace.) (Sound of key in lock of door to right.) (Door opens, and Knox enters, key in hand. Sees Gifford.)

Knox

(Advancing to meet him at fireplace and shaking hands.) How did you get in?

Gifford

I let myself in. The door was unlocked.

Knox

I must have forgotten it.

Gifford

(Drawing bundle of documents from inside breast pocket and handing them to Knox.) Well, there they are.

Knox

(Fingering them curiously.) You are sure they are originals? (Gifford nods.)

I can't take any chances, you know. If Gherst changed his mind after I gave my speech and refused to show the originals — such things have happened.

Gifford

That's what I told him. He was firm on giving duplicates, and for awhile it looked as if my trip to New York was wasted. But I stuck to my guns. It was originals or nothing with you, I said, and he finally gave in.

Knox

(Holding up documents.) I can't tell you what they mean to me, nor how grateful

Gifford

(Interrupting.) That's all right. Don't mention it. Gherst is wild for the chance. It will do organized labor a heap of good. And you are able to say your own say at the same time. How's that compensation act coming on?

Knox

(Wearily.) The same old story. It will never come before the House. It is dying in committee. What can you expect of the Committee of Judiciary? — composed as it is of ex-railroad judges and ex-railroad lawyers.

Gifford

The railroad brotherhoods are keen on getting that bill through.

Knox

Well, they won't, and they never will until they learn to vote right. When will your labor leaders quit the strike and boycott and lead your men to political action?

Gifford

(Holding out hand.) Well, so long. I've got to trot, and I haven't time to tell you why I think political action would destroy the trade union movement.

(Knox tosses documents on top of low bookcase between fireplace and bedroom door, and starts to shake hands.) You're damn careless with those papers. You wouldn't be if you knew how much Gherst paid for them.

Gifford

You don't appreciate that other crowd. It stops at nothing.

Knox

I won't take my eyes off of them. And I'll take them to bed with me to-night for safety. Besides, there is no danger. Nobody but you knows I have them.

Gifford

(Proceeding toward door to right.) I'd hate to be in Starkweather's office when he discovers what's happened. There'll be some bad half hours for somebody. (Pausing at door.) Give them hell to-morrow, good and plenty. I'm going to be in a gallery. So long. (Makes exit.)

(Knox crosses to windows, which he opens, returns to desk, seats himself in revolving chair, and begins opening his correspondence.) (A knock at door to right.)

Knox

Come in.

(Hubbard enters, advances to desk, but does not shake hands. They greet each other, and Hubbard sits down in chair to left of desk.) (Knox, still holding an open letter, re-olves chair so as to face his visitor. He waits for Hubbabd to speak.)

Hubbard

There is no use beating about the bush with a man like you. I know that. You are direct, and so am I. You know my position well enough to be assured that I am empowered to treat with you.

Knox

Oh, yes; I know.

Hubbard

What we want is to have you friendly.

Knox

That is easy enough. When the Interests become upright and honest —

Hubbard

Save that for your speech. We are talking privately. We can make it well worth your while —

Knox

(Angrily.) If you think you can bribe me —

Hubbard

(Suavely.) Not at all. Not the slightest suspicion of it. The point is this. You are a congressman. A congressman's career depends on his membership in good committees. At the present you are buried in the dead Committee on Coinage, Weights, and Measures. If you say the word you can be appointed to the livest committee —

Knox

(Interrupting.) You have these appointments to give?

Hubbard

Surely. Else why should I be here? It can be managed.

Knox

(Meditatively.) I thought our government was rotten enough, but I never dreamed that House appointments were hawked around by the Interests in this fashion.

Hubbard

You have not given your answer.

Knox

You should have known my answer in advance.

Hubbard

There is an alternative. You are interested in social problems. You are a student of sociology. Those whom I represent are genuinely interested in you. We are prepared, so that you may pursue your researches more deeply — we are prepared to send you to Europe. There, in that vast sociological laboratory, far from the jangling strife of politics, you will have every opportunity to study. We are prepared to send you for a period of ten years. You will receive ten thousand dollars a year, and, in addition, the day your steamer leaves New York, you will receive a lump sum of one hundred thousand dollars.

Knox

And this is the way men are bought

Hubbard

It is purely an educational matter.

Knox

Now it is you who are beating about the bush.

Hubbard

(Decisively.) Very well then. What price do you set on yourself?

Knox

You want me to quit — to leave politics, everything? You want to buy my soul?

Hubbard

More than that. We want to buy those documents and letters.

Knox

(Showing a slight start.) What documents and letters?

Hubbard

You are beating around the bush in turn. There is no need for an honest man to lie even —

Knox

(Interrupting.) To you.

Hubbard

(Smiling.) Even to me. I watched you closely when I mentioned the letters. You gave yourself away. You knew I meant the letters stolen by Gherst from Starkweather's private files — the letters you intended using to-morrow.

Knox

Intend using to-morrow.

Hubbard

Precisely. It is the same thing. What is the price? Set it.

Knox

I have nothing to sell. I am not on the market.

Hubbard

One moment. Don't make up your mind hastily. You don't know with whom you have to deal. Those letters will not appear in your speech to-morrow. Take that from

me. It would be far wiser to sell for a fortune than to get nothing for them and at the same time not use them.

(A knock at door to right startles Hubbard.)

Knox

(Intending to say, "Come in") Come —

Hubbard

(Interrupting.) Hush. Don't. I cannot be seen here.

Knox

(Laughing.) You fear the contamination of my company. (The knock is repeated.)

Hubbard

(In alarm, rising, as Knox purses his lips to bid them enter.) Don't let anybody in. I don't want to be seen here — with you. Besides, my presence will not put you in a good light.

Knox

(Also rising, starting toward door.) What I do is always open to the world. I see no one whom I should not permit the world to know I saw.

(Knox starts toward door to open it.) (Hubbard, looking about him in alarm, flees across stage and into bedroom, closing the door. During all the following scene, Hubbard, from time to time, opens door, and peers out at what is going on.)

Knox

(Opening door, and recoiling.) Margaret! Mrs. Chalmers!

(Margaret enters, followed by Tommy and Linda. Margaret is in evening dress covered by evening cloak.)

Margaret

(Shaking hands with Knox.) Forgive me, but I had to see you. I could not get you on the telephone. I called and called, and the best I could do was to get the wrong number.

Knox

(Recovering from his astonishment.) Yes. I am glad.

(Seeing Tommy.) Hello, Tommy.

(Knox holds out his hand, and Tommy shakes it gravely. Linda stays in back-ground. Her face is troubled.)

Tommy

How do you do?

Margaret

There was no other way, and it was so necessary for me to warn you. I brought Tommy and Linda along to chaperon me.

(She looks curiously around room, specially indicating filing cabinets and the stacks of government reports on table.) Your laboratory.

Knox

Ah, if I were only as great a sociological wizard as Edison is a wizard in physical sciences.

Margaret

But you are. You labor more mightily than you admit — or dare to think. Oh, I know you — better than you do yourself.

Tommy

Do you read all those books?

Knox

Yes, I am still going to school and studying hard. What are you going to study to be when you grow up?

(Tommy meditates but does not answer.)

President of these great United States?

Tommy

(Shaking his head.) Father says the President doesn't amount to much.

Knox

Not a Lincoln?

(Tommy is in doubt.)

Margaret

But don't you remember what a great good man Lincoln was? You remember I told you?

Tommy

(Shaking his head slowly.) But I don't want to be killed. — I'll tell you what!

Knox

What?

Tommy

I want to be a senator like father. He makes them dance.

(Margaret is shocked, and Knox's eyes twinkle.)

Knox

Makes whom dance?

Tommy

(Puzzled.) I don't know.

(With added confidence.) But he makes them dance just the same.

(Margaret makes a signal to Linda to take Tommy across the room.)

Linda

(Starting to cross stage to left.) Come, Tommy. Let us look out of the window.

Tommy

I'd rather talk with Mr. Knox.

Margaret

Please do, Tommy. Mamma wants to talk to Mr. Knox.

(Tommy yields, and crosses to right, where he joins Linda in looking out of the window.)

Margaret

You might ask me to take a seat

Knox

Oh! I beg pardon.

(He draws up a comfortable chair for her, and seats himself in desk-chair, facing her.)

Margaret

I have only a few minutes. Tom is at father's, and I am to pick him up there and go on to that dinner, after I've taken Tommy home.

Knox

But your maid?

Margaret

Linda? Wild horses could not drag from her anything that she thought would harm me. So intense is her fidelity that it almost shames me. I do not deserve it. But this is not what I came to you about.

(She speaks the following hurriedly.) After you left this afternoon, something happened. Father received a telegram. It seemed most important. His secretary followed upon the heels of the telegram. Father called Tom and Mr. Hubbard to him and they held a conference. I think they have discovered the loss of the documents, and that they believe you have them. I did not hear them mention your name, yet I am absolutely certain that they were talking about you. Also, I could tell from father's face that something was terribly wrong. Oh, be careful! Do be careful!

Knox

There is no danger, I assure you.

Margaret

But you do not know them. I tell you you do not know them. They will stop at nothing — at nothing. Father believes he is right in all that he does.

Knox

I know. That is what makes him so formidable. He has an ethical sanction.

Margaret

(Nodding.) It is his religion.

Knox

And, like any religion with a narrow-minded man, it runs to mania.

Margaret

He believes that civilization rests on him, and that it is his sacred duty to preserve civilization.

Knox

I know. I know.

Margaret

But you? But you? You are in danger.

Knox

No; I shall remain in to-night. To-morrow, in the broad light of midday, I shall proceed to the House and give my speech.

Margaret

(Wildly.) Oh, if anything should happen to you!

Knox

(Looking at her searchingly.) You do care?

(Margaret nods, with eyes suddenly downcast.) For Howard Knox, the reformer?
Or for me, the man?

Margaret

(Impulsively.) Oh, why must a woman forever remain quiet? Why should I not tell you what you already know? — what you must already know? I do care for you — for man and reformer, both — for —

(She is aflame, but abruptly ceases and glances across at Tommy by the window, warned instinctively that she must not give way to love in her child's presence.)

Linda! Will you take Tommy down to the machine —

Knox

(Alarmed, interrupting, in low voice.) What are you doing?

Margaret

(Hushing Knox with a gesture.) I'll follow you right down.

(Linda and Tommy proceed across stage toward right exit.)

Tommy

(Pausing before Knox and gravely extending his hand.) Good evening, Mr. Knox.

Knox

(Awkwardly.) Good evening, Tommy. You take my word for it, and look up this Lincoln question.

Tommy

I shall. I'll ask father about it.

Margaret

(Significantly.) You attend to that, Linda. Nobody must know — this.

(Linda nods.)

(Linda and Tommy make exit to right.)

(Margaret, seated, slips back her cloak, revealing herself in evening gown, and looks at Knox sumptuously, lovingly, and willingly.)

Knox

(Inflamed by the sight of her.) Don't! Don't! I can't stand it. Such sight of you fills me with madness.

(Margaret laughs low and triumphantly.) I don't want to think of you as a woman. I must not. Allow me.

(He rises and attempts to draw cloak about her shoulders, but she resists him. Yet does he succeed in partly cloaking her.)

Margaret

I want you to see me as a woman. I want you to think of me as a woman. I want you mad for me.

(She holds out her arms, the cloak slipping from them.)

I want — don't you see what I want? — —

(Knox sinks back in chair, attempting to shield his eyes with his hand.)

(Slipping cloak fully back from her again.)

Look at me.

Knox

(Looking, coming to his feet, and approaching her, with extended arms, murmuring softly.) Margaret. Margaret.

(Margaret rises to meet him, and they are clasped in each other's arms.)

(Hubbard, peering forth through door, looks at them with an expression of cynical amusement. His gaze wanders, and he sees the documents, within arm's reach, on top of bookcase. He picks up documents, holds them to the light of stage to glance at them, and, with triumphant expression on face, disappears and closes door.)

Knox

(Holding Margaret from him and looking at her.) I love you. I do love you. But I had resolved never to speak it, never to let you know.

Margaret

Silly man. I have known long that you loved me. You have told me so often and in so many ways. You could not look at me without telling me.

Knox

You saw?

Margaret

How could I help seeing? I was a woman. Only, with your voice you never spoke a word. Sit down, there, where I may look at you, and let me tell you. I shall do the speaking now.

(She urges him back into the desk-chair, and reseats herself.) (She makes as if to pull the cloak around 'her.) Shall I?

Knox

(Vehemently.) No, no! As you are. Let me feast my eyes upon you who are mine. I must be dreaming.

Margaret

(With a low, satisfied laugh of triumph.) Oh, you men! As of old, and as forever, you must be wooed through your senses. Did I display the wisdom of an Hypatia, the science of a Madam Curie, yet would you keep your iron control, throttling the voice of your heart with silence. But let me for a moment be Lilith, for a moment lay aside this garment constructed for the purpose of keeping out the chill of night, and on the instant you are fire and aflame, all voluble with love's desire.

Knox

(Protestingly.) Margaret! It is not fair!

Margaret

I love you — and — you?

Knox

(Fervently and reverently.) I love you.

Margaret

Then listen. I have told you of my girlhood and my dreams. I wanted to do what you are so nobly doing. And I did nothing. I could do nothing. I was not permitted. Always was I compelled to hold myself in check. It was to do what you are doing, that I married. And that, too, failed me. My husband became a henchman of the Interests, my own father's tool for the perpetuation of the evils against which I desired to fight.

(She pauses.) It has been a long fight, and I have been very tired, for always did I confront failure. My husband — I did not love him. I never loved him. I sold myself for the Cause, and the cause profited nothing. (Pause.) Often, I have lost faith — faith in everything, in God and man, in the hope of any righteousness ever prevailing. But again and again, by what you are doing, have you awakened me. I came to-night with no thought of self. I came to warn you, to help the good work on. I remained — thank God! — I remained to love you — and to be loved by you. I suddenly found myself, looking at you, very weary. I wanted you — you, more than anything in the world.

(She holds out her arms.) Come to me. I want you — now.

(Knox, in an ecstasy, comes to her. He seats himself on the broad arm of the chair and is drawn into her arms.)

Knox

But I have been tired at times. I was very tired to-night — and you came. And now I am glad, only glad.

Margaret

I have been wanton to-night. I confess it. I am proud of it. But it was not — professional. It was the first time in my life. Almost do I regret — almost do I regret that I did not do it sooner — it has been crowned with such success. You have held me in your arms — your arms. Oh, you will never know what that first embrace meant to me. I am not a clod. I am not iron nor stone. I am a woman — a warm, breathing woman — .

(She rises, and draws him to his feet.)

Kiss me, my dear lord and lover. Kiss me. (They embrace.)

Knox

(Passionately, looking about him wildly as if in search of something.) What shall we do?

(Suddenly releasing her and sinking back in his own chair almost in collapse.) No. It cannot be. It is impossible. Oh, why could we not have met long ago? We would have worked together. What a comradeship it would have been.

Margaret

But it is not too late.

Knox

I have no right to you.

Margaret

(Misunderstanding.) My husband? He has not been my husband for years. He has no rights. Who, but you whom I love, has any rights?

Knox

No; it is not that.

(Snapping his fingers.) That for him.

(Breaking down.) Oh, if I were only the man, and not the reformer! If I had no work to do!

Margaret

(Coming to the back of his chair and caressing his hair.) We can work together.

Knox

(Shaking his head under her fingers.) Don't! Don't!

(She persists, and lays her cheek against his.) You make it so hard. You tempt me so.

(He rises suddenly, takes her two hands in his, leads her gently to her chair, seats her, and reseats himself in desk-chair.) Listen. It is not your husband. But I have no right to you. Nor have you a right to me.

Margaret

(Interrupting, jealously.) And who but I has any right to you?

Knox

(Smiling sadly.) No; it is not that. There is no other woman. You are the one woman for me. But there are many others who have greater rights in me than you. I have been chosen by two hundred thousand citizens to represent them in the Congress of the United States. And there are many more —

(He breaks off suddenly and looks at her, at her arms and shoulders.) Yes, please. Cover them up. Help me not to forget.

(Margaret does not obey.) There are many more who have rights in me — the people, all the people, whose cause I have made mine. The children — there are two million child laborers in these United States. I cannot betray them. I cannot steal my happiness from them. This afternoon I talked of theft. But would not this, too, be theft?

Margaret

(Sharply.) Howard! Wake up! Has our happiness turned your head?

Knox

(Sadly.) Almost — and for a few wild moments, quite. There are all the children. Did I ever tell you of the tenement child, who when asked how he knew when spring came, answered: When he saw the saloons put up their swing doors.

Margaret

(Irritated.) But what has all that to do with one man and one woman loving?

Knox

Suppose we loved — you and I; suppose we loosed all the reins of our love. What would happen? You remember Gorki, the Russian patriot, when he came to New York, aflame with passion for the Russian revolution. His purpose in visiting the land of liberty was to raise funds for that revolution. And because his marriage to the woman he loved was not of the essentially legal sort worshiped by the shopkeepers, and because the newspapers made a sensation of it, his whole mission was brought to failure. He

was laughed and derided out of the esteem of the American people. That is what would happen to me. I should be slandered and laughed at. My power would be gone.

Margaret

And even if so — what of it? Be slandered and laughed at. We will have each other. Other men will rise up to lead the people, and leading the people is a thankless task. Life is so short. We must clutch for the morsel of happiness that may be ours.

Knox

Ah, if you knew, as I look into your eyes, how easy it would be to throw everything to the winds. But it would be theft.

Margaret

(Rebelliously.) Let it be theft. Life is so short, dear. We are the biggest facts in the world — to each other.

Knox

It is not myself alone, nor all my people. A moment ago you said no one but I had any right to you. You were wrong. Your child —

Margaret

(In sudden pain, pleadingly.) Don't!

Knox

I must. I must save myself — and you. Tommy has rights in you. Theft again. What other name for it if you steal your happiness from him?

Margaret

(Bending her head forward on her hand and weeping.) I have been so lonely — and then you — you came, and the world grew bright and warm — a few short minutes ago you held me — in your arms — a few short minutes ago and it seemed my dream of happiness had come true — and now you dash it from me —

Knox

(Struggling to control himself now that she is no longer looking at him.) No; I ask you to dash it from yourself. I am not too strong. You must help me. You must call your child to your aid in helping me. I could go mad for you now —

(Rising impulsively and coming to her with arms outstretched to clasp her.) Right now —

Margaret

(Abruptly raising her head, and with one outstretched arm preventing the embrace.) Wait.

(She bows her head on her hand for a moment, to think and to win control of herself.)

(Lifting her head and looking at him.) Sit down — please.

(Knox reseats himself.)

(A pause, during which she looks at him and loves him.) Dear, I do so love you —

(Knox loses control and starts to rise.) No! Sit there. I was weak. Yet I am not sorry. You are right. We must forego each other. We cannot be thieves, even for love's sake.

Yet I am glad that this has happened — that I have lain in your arms and had your lips on mine. The memory of it will be sweet always.

(She draws her cloak around her, and rises.)

(Knox rises.) You are right. The future belongs to the children. There lies duty — yours, and mine in my small way. I am going now. We must not see each other ever again. We must work — and forget. But remember, my heart goes with you into the fight. My prayers will accompany every stroke.

(She hesitates, pauses, draws her cloak thoroughly around her in evidence of departure.) Dear — will you kiss me — once — one last time? (There is no passion in this kiss, which is the kiss of renunciation. Margaret herself terminates the embrace.)

(Knox accompanies her silently to the door and places hand on knob.) I wish I had something of you to have with me always — a photograph, that little one, you remember, which I liked so. (She nods.) Don't run the risk of sending it by messenger. Just mail it ordinarily.

Margaret

I shall mail it to-morrow. I'll drop it in the box myself.

Knox

(Kissing her hand.) Good-bye.

Margaret

(lingeringly.) But oh, my dear, I am glad and proud for what has happened. I would not erase a single line of it.

(She indicates for Knox to open door, which he does, but which he immediately closes as she continues speaking.) There must be immortality. There must be a future life where you and I shall meet again. Good-bye.

(They press each other's hands.)

(Exit Margaret.)

(Knox stands a moment, staring at closed door, turns and looks about him indecisively, sees chair in which Margaret sat, goes over to it, kneels down, and buries his face.)

(Door to bedroom opens slowly and Hubbard peers out cautiously. He cannot see Knox.)

Hubbard

(Advancing, surprised.) What the deuce? Everybody gone?

Knox

(Startled to his feet.) Where the devil did you come from?

Hubbard

(Indicating bedroom.) In there. I was in there all the time.

Knox

(Endeavoring to pass it off.) Oh, I had forgotten about you. Well, my callers are gone.

Hubbard

(Walking over close to him and laughing at him with affected amusement.) Honest men are such dubs when they do go wrong.

Knox

The door was closed all the time. You would not have dared to spy upon me.

Hubbard

There was something familiar about the lady's voice.

Knox

You heard! — what did you hear?

Hubbard

Oh, nothing, nothing — a murmur of voices — and the woman's — I could swear I have heard her voice before.

(Knox shows his relief.) Well, so long.

(Starts to move toward exit to right.) You won't reconsider your decision?

Knox

(Shaking his head.)

Hubbard

(Pausing, open door in hand, and laughing cynically.) And yet it was but a moment ago that it seemed I heard you say there was no one whom you would not permit the world to know you saw.

(Starting.) What do you mean?

Hubbard

Good-bye.

(Hubbard makes exit and closes door.) (Knox wanders aimlessly to his desk, glances at the letter he was reading of which had been interrupted by Hubbard's entry of first act, suddenly recollects the package of documents, and walks to low bookcase and looks on top.)

Knox

(Stunned.) The thief!

(He looks about him wildly, then rushes like a madman in pursuit of Hubbard, making exit to right and leaving the door flying open.) (Empty stage for a moment.)

Curtain

Act III

Scene. The library, used as a sort of semi-office by Starkweather at such times when he is in Washington. Door to right; also, door to right rear. At left rear is an alcove, without hangings, which is dark. To left are windows. To left, near windows, a flat-top desk, with desk-chair and desk-telephone. Also, on desk, conspicuously, is a heavy dispatch box. At the center rear is a large screen. Extending across center back of room are heavy, old-fashioned bookcases, with swinging glass doors. The bookcases narrow about four feet from the floor, thus forming a ledge. Between left end of bookcases

and alcove at left rear, high up on wall, hangs a large painting or steel engraving of Abraham Lincoln. In design and furnishings, it is a simple chaste room, coldly rigid and slightly old-fashioned.

It is 9:30 in the morning of the day succeeding previous act.

Curtain discloses Starkweather seated at desk, and Dobleman, to right of desk, standing.

Starkweather

All right, though it is an unimportant publication. I'll subscribe.

Dobleman

(Making note on pad.) Very well, sir. Two thousand.

(He consults his notes.) Then there is Vanderwater's Magazine. Your subscription is due.

Starkweather

How much?

Dobleman

You have been paying fifteen thousand.

Starkweather

It is too much. What is the regular subscription?

Dobleman

A dollar a year.

Starkweather

(Shaking his head emphatically.) It is too much.

Dobleman

Professor Vanderwater also does good work with his lecturing. He is regularly on the Chautauqua Courses, and at that big meeting of the National Civic Federation, his speech was exceptionally telling.

Starkweather

(Doubtfully, about to give in.) All right —

(He pauses, as if recollecting something.) (Dobleman has begun to write down the note.) No. I remember there was something in the papers about this Professor Vanderwater — a divorce, wasn't it? He has impaired his authority and his usefulness to me.

Dobleman

It was his wife's fault.

Starkweather

It is immaterial. His usefulness is impaired. Cut him down to ten thousand. It will teach him a lesson.

Dobleman

Very good, sir.

Starkweather

And the customary twenty thousand to Cartwrights.

Dobleman

(Hesitatingly.) They have asked for more. They have enlarged the magazine, reorganized the stock, staff, everything.

Starkweather

Hubbard's writing for it, isn't he?

Dobleman

Yes, sir. And though I don't know, it is whispered that he is one of the heavy stockholders.

Starkweather

A very capable man. He has served me well. How much do they want?

Dobleman

They say that Nettman series of articles cost them twelve thousand alone, and that they believe, in view of the exceptional service they are prepared to render, and are rendering, fifty thousand —

Starkweather

(Shortly.) All right. How much have I given to University of Hanover this year?

Dobleman

Seven — nine millions, including that new library.

Starkweather

(Sighing.) Education does cost. Anything more this morning?

Dobleman

(Consulting notes.) Just one other — Mr. Rutland. His church, you know, sir, and that theological college. He told me he had been talking it over with you. He is anxious to know.

Starkweather

He's very keen, I must say. Fifty thousand for the church, and a hundred thousand for the college — I ask you, candidly, is he worth it?

Dobleman

The church is a very powerful molder of public opinion, and Mr. Rutland is very impressive. (Running over the notes and producing a clipping.) This is what he said in his sermon two weeks ago: "God has given to Mr. Starkweather the talent for making money as truly as God has given to other men the genius which manifests itself in literature and the arts and sciences."

Starkweather

(Pleased.) He says it well.

Dobleman

(Producing another clipping.) And this he said about you in last Sunday's sermon: "We are to-day rejoicing in the great light of the consecration of a great wealth to the advancement of the race. This vast wealth has been so consecrated by a man who all through life has walked in accord with the word, The love of Christ constraineth me."

Starkweather

(Meditatively.) Dobleman, I have meant well. I mean well. I shall always mean well. I believe I am one of those few men, to whom God, in his infinite wisdom, has given

the stewardship of the people's wealth. It is a high trust, and despite the abuse and vilification heaped upon me, I shall remain faithful to it.

(Changing his tone abruptly to businesslike briskness.) Very well. See that Mr. Rutland gets what he has asked for.

Dobleman

Very good, sir. I shall telephone him. I know he is anxious to hear.

(Starting to leave the room.) Shall I make the checks out in the usual way?

Starkweather

Yes: except the Rutland one. I'll sign that myself. Let the others go through the regular channels. We take the 2:10 train for New York. Are you ready?

Dobleman

(Indicating dispatch box.) All, except the dispatch box.

Starkweather

I'll take care of that myself.

(Dobleman starts to make exit to left, and Starkweather, taking notebook from pocket, glances into it, and looks up.)

Dobleman.

Dobleman

(Pausing.) Yes, sir.

Starkweather

Mrs. Chalmers is here, isn't she?

Dobleman

Yes, sir. She came a few minutes ago, with her little boy. They are with Mrs. Starkweather.

Starkweather

Please tell Mrs. Chalmers I wish to see her.

Dobleman

Yes, sir.

(Dobleman makes exit.) (Maid servant enters from right rear, with card tray.)

Starkweather

(Examining card.) Show him in.

(Maid servant makes exit right rear). (Pause, during which Starkweather consults notebook.) (Maid servant re-enters, showing in Hubbard.)

(Hubbard advances to desk.) (Starkweather is so glad to see him that he half rises from his chair to shake hands.)

Starkweather

(Heartily.) I can only tell you that what you did was wonderful. Your telephone last night was a great relief. Where are they?

Hubbard

(Drawing package of documents from inside breast pocket and handing them over.) There they are — the complete set. I was fortunate.

Starkweather

(Opening package and glancing at a number of the documents while he talks.) You are modest, Mr. Hubbard. — It required more — than fortune. — It required ability — of no mean order. — The time was short. — You had to think — and act — with too great immediacy to be merely fortunate.

(Hubbard bows, while Starkweather rearranges package.)

There is no need for me to tell you how I appreciate your service. I have increased my subscription to Cartwright's to fifty thousand, and I shall speak to Dobleman, who will remit to you a more substantial acknowledgment than my mere thanks for the inestimable service you have rendered.

(Hubbard bows.)

You — ah — you have read the documents?

Hubbard

I glanced through them. They were indeed serious. But we have spiked Knox's guns. Without them, that speech of his this afternoon becomes a farce — a howling farce. Be sure you take good care of them.

(Indicating documents, which Starkweather still holds.) Gherst has a long arm.

Starkweather

He cannot reach me here. Besides, I go to New York to-day, and I shall carry them with me. Mr. Hubbard, you will forgive me —

(Starting to pack dispatch box with papers and letters lying on desk.) I am very busy.

Hubbard

(Taking the hint.) Yes, I understand. I shall be going now. I have to be at the Club in five minutes.

Starkweather

(In course of packing dispatch box, he sets certain packets of papers and several medium-sized account books to one side in an orderly pile. He talks while he packs, and Hubbard waits.) I should like to talk with you some more — in New York. Next time you are in town be sure to see me. I am thinking of buying the Parthenon Magazine, and of changing its policy. I should like to have you negotiate this, and there are other important things as well. Good day, Mr. Hubbard. I shall see you in New York — soon.

(Hubbard and Starkweather shake hands.)

(Hubbard starts to make exit to right rear.)

(Margaret enters from right rear.)

(Starkweather goes on packing dispatch box through following scene.)

Hubbard

Mrs. Chalmers.

(Holding out hand, which Margaret takes very coldly, scarcely inclining her head, and starting to pass on.) (Speaking suddenly and savagely.) You needn't be so high and lofty, Mrs. Chalmers.

Margaret

(Pausing and looking at him curiously as if to ascertain whether he has been drinking.) I do not understand.

Hubbard

You always treated me this way, but the time for it is past. I won't stand for your superior goodness any more. You really impressed me with it for a long time, and you made me walk small. But I know better now. A pretty game you've been playing — you, who are like any other woman. Well, you know where you were last night. So do I.

Margaret

You are impudent.

Hubbard

(Doggedly.) I said I knew where you were last night. Mr. Knox also knows where you were. But I'll wager your husband doesn't.

Margaret

You spy!

(Indicating her father.) I suppose you have told — him.

Hubbard

Why should I?

Margaret

You are his creature.

Hubbard

If it will ease your suspense, let me tell you that I have not told him. But I do protest to you that you must treat me with more — more kindness.

(Margaret makes no sign but passes on utterly oblivious of him.) (Hubbard stares angrily at her and makes exit) (Starkweather, who is finishing packing, puts the documents last inside box, and closes and locks it. To one side is the orderly stack of the several account books and packets of papers.)

Starkweather

Good morning, Margaret. I sent for you because we did not finish that talk last night. Sit down.

(She gets a chair for herself and sits down.)

You always were hard to manage, Margaret. You have had too much will for a woman. Yet I did my best for you. Your marriage with Tom was especially auspicious — a rising man, of good family and a gentleman, eminently suitable —

Margaret

(Interrupting bitterly.) I don't think you were considering your daughter at all in the matter. I know your views on woman and woman's place. I have never counted for anything with you. Neither has mother, nor Connie, when business was uppermost, and business always is uppermost with you. I sometimes wonder if you think a woman has a soul. As for my marriage — you saw that Tom could be useful to you. He had the various distinctive points you have mentioned. Better than that he was pliable, capable of being molded to perform your work, to manipulate machine politics and procure for

you the legislation you desired. You did not consider what kind of a husband he would make for your daughter whom you did not know. But you gave your daughter to him — sold her to him — because you needed him —

(Laughs hysterically.) In your business.

Starkweather

(Angrily.) Margaret! You must not speak that way. (Relaxing.)

Ah, you do not change. You were always that way, always bent on having your will

—
Margaret

Would to God I had been more successful in having it.

Starkweather

(Testily.) This is all beside the question. I sent for you to tell you that this must stop — this association with a man of the type and character of Knox — a dreamer, a charlatan, a scoundrel —

Margaret

It is not necessary to abuse him.

Starkweather

It must stop — that is all. Do you understand? It must stop.

Margaret

(Quietly.) It has stopped. I doubt that I shall ever see him again. He will never come to my house again, at any rate. Are you satisfied?

Starkweather

Perfectly. Of course, you know I have never doubted you — that — that way.

Margaret

(Quietly.) How little you know women. In your comprehension we are automatons, puppets, with no hearts nor heats of desire of our own, with no springs of conduct save those of the immaculate and puritanical sort that New England crystallized a century or so ago.

Starkweather

(Suspiciously.) You mean that you and this man — ?

Margaret

I mean nothing has passed between us. I mean that I am Tom's wife and Tommy's mother. What I did mean, you have no more understood than you understand me — or any woman.

Starkweather

(Relieved.) It is well.

Margaret

(Continuing.) And it is so easy. The concept is simple. A woman is human. That is all. Yet I do believe it is news to you.

(Enters Dobleman from right carrying a check in his hand. Starkweather, about to speak, pauses.) (Dobleman hesitates, and Starkweather nods for him to advance.)

Dobleman

(Greeting Margaret, and addressing Starkweather.) This check. You said you would sign it yourself.

Starkweather

Yes, that is Rutland's. (Looks for pen.)

(Dobleman offers his fountain pen.) No; my own pen.

(Unlocks dispatch box, gets pen, and signs check. Leaves dispatch box open.) (Dobleman takes check and makes exit to right.)

Starkweather

(Picking up documents from top of pile in open box.)

This man Knox. I studied him yesterday. A man of great energy and ideals. Unfortunately, he is a sentimentalist. He means right — I grant him that. But he does not understand practical conditions. He is more dangerous to the welfare of the United States than ten thousand anarchists. And he is not practical. (Holding up documents.)

Behold, stolen from my private files by a yellow journal sneak thief and turned over to him. He thought to buttress his speech with them this afternoon. And yet, so hopelessly unpractical is he, that you see they are already back in the rightful owner's hands.

Margaret

Then his speech is ruined?

Starkweather

Absolutely. The wheels are all ready to turn. The good people of the United States will dismiss him with roars of laughter — a good phrase, that: Hubbard's, I believe.

(Dropping documents on the open cover of dispatch box, picking up the pile of several account books and packets of papers, and rising.) One moment. I must put these away.

(Starkweather goes to alcove at left rear. He presses a button and alcove is lighted by electricity, discovering the face of a large safe. During the following scene he does not look around, being occupied with working the combination, opening the safe, putting away account books and packets of papers, and with examining other packets which are in safe.)

(Margaret looks at documents lying on open cover of dispatch box and glancing quickly about room, takes a sudden resolution. She seizes documents, makes as if to run wildly from the room, stops abruptly to reconsider, and changes her mind. She looks about room for a hiding place, and her eyes rest on portrait of Lincoln. Moving swiftly, picking up a light chair on the way, she goes to corner of bookcase nearest to portrait, steps on chair, and from chair to ledge of bookcase where, clinging, she reaches out and up and drops documents behind portrait. Stepping quickly down, with handkerchief she wipes ledge on which she has stood, also the seat of the chair. She carries chair back to where she found it, and reseats herself in chair by desk.) (Starkweather locks safe, emerges from alcove, turns off alcove lights, advances to desk chair, and sits down. He is about to close and lock dispatch box when he discovers documents are missing. He is very quiet about it, and examines contents of box care-fully.)

Starkweather

(Quietly.) Has anybody been in the room?

Margaret

No.

Starkweather

(Looking at her searchingly.) A most unprecedented thing has occurred. When I went to the safe a moment ago, I left these documents on the cover of the dispatch box. Nobody has been in the room but you. The documents are gone. Give them to me.

Margaret

I have not been out of the room.

Starkweather

I know that. Give them to me.

(A pause.) You have them. Give them to me

Margaret

I haven't them.

Starkweather

That is a lie. Give them to me.

Margaret

(Rising.) I tell you I haven't them —

Starkweather

(Also rising.) That is a lie.

Margaret

(Turning and starting to cross room.) Very well, if you do not believe me —

Starkweather

(Interrupting.) Where are you going?

Margaret

Home.

Starkweather

(Imperatively.) No, you are not. Come back here.

(Margaret comes back and stands by chair.) You shall not leave this room. Sit down.

Margaret

I prefer to stand.

Starkweather

Sit down.

(She still stands, and he grips her by arm, forcing her down into chair.) Sit down. Before you leave this room you shall return those documents. This is more important than you realize. It transcends all ordinary things of life as you have known it, and you will compel me to do things far harsher than you can possibly imagine. I can forget that you are a daughter of mine. I can forget that you are even a woman. If I have to tear them from you, I shall get them. Give them to me.

(A pause.) What are you going to do?

(Margaret shrugs her shoulders.) What have you to say?

(Margaret again shrugs her shoulders.) What have you to say?

Margaret

Nothing.

Starkweather

(Puzzled, changing tactics, sitting down, and talking calmly.) Let us talk this over quietly. You have no shred of right of any sort to those documents. They are mine. They were stolen by a sneak thief from my private files. Only this morning — a few minutes ago — did I get them back. They are mine, I tell you. They belong to me. Give them back.

Margaret

I tell you I haven't them.

Starkweather

You have got them about you, somewhere, concealed in your breast there. It will not save you. I tell you I shall have them. I warn you. I don't want to proceed to extreme measures. Give them to me.

(He starts to press desk-button, pauses, and looks at her.) Well?

(Margaret shrugs her shoulders.) (He presses button twice.) I have sent for Dobleman. You have one chance before he comes. Give them to me.

Margaret

Father, will you believe me just this once? Let me go. I tell you I haven't the documents. I tell you that if you let me leave this room, I shall not carry them away with me. I tell you this on my honor. Do you believe me? Tell me that you do believe me.

Starkweather

I do believe you. You say they are not on you. I believe you. Now tell me where they are — you have them hidden somewhere — (Glancing about room.) — And you can go at once.

(Dobleman enters from right and advances to desk. Starkweather and Margaret remains silent.)

Dobleman

You rang for me.

Starkweather

(With one last questioning glance at Margaret, who remains impassive.) Yes, I did. Have you been in that other room all the time?

Dobleman

Yes, sir.

Starkweather

Did anybody pass through and enter this room?

Dobleman

No, sir.

Starkweather

Very well. We'll see what the maid has to say.

(He presses button once.) Margaret, I give you one last chance.

Margaret

I have told you that if I leave this room, I shall not take them with me.

(Maid enters from right rear and advances.)

Starkweather

Has anybody come into this room from the hall in the last few minutes?

Maid

No, sir; not since Mrs. Chalmers came in.

Starkweather

How do you know?

Maid

I was in the hall, sir, dusting all the time.

Starkweather

That will do.

(Maid makes exit to right rear.) Dobleman, a very unusual thing has occurred.

Mrs. Chalmers and I have been alone in this room. Those letters stolen by Gherst had been returned to me by Hubbard but the moment before. They were on my desk. I turned my back for a moment to go to the safe. When I came back they were gone.

Dobleman

(Embarrassed.) Yes, sir.

Starkweather

Mrs. Chalmers took them. She has them now.

Dobleman

(Attempts to speak, stammers.) Er — er — yes, sir

Starkweather

I want them back. What is to be done?

(Dobleman remains in hopeless confusion.) Well!

Dobleman

(Speaking hurriedly and hopefully.) S-send for Mr. Hubbard. He got them for you before.

Starkweather

A good suggestion. Telephone for him. You should find him at the Press Club.

(Dobleman starts to make exit to right.) Don't leave the room. Use this telephone. (Indicating desk telephone.) (Dobleman moves around to left of desk and uses telephone standing up.) From now on no one leaves the room. If my daughter can be guilty of such a theft, it is plain I can trust no one — no one.

Dobleman

(Speaking in transmitter.) Red 6-2-4. Yes, please.

(Waits.)

Starkweather

(Rising.) Call Senator Chalmers as well. Tell him to come immediately.

Dobleman

Yes, sir — immediately.

Starkweather

(Starting to cross stage to center and speaking to Margaret.) Come over here.

(Margaret follows. She is obedient, frightened, very subdued — but resolved.)

Why have you done this? Were you truthful when you said there was nothing between you and this man Knox?

Margaret

Father; don't discuss this before the —

(Indicating Dobleman.) — the servants.

Starkweather

You should have considered that before you stole the documents.

(Dobleman, in the meantime, is telephoning in a low voice.)

Margaret

There are certain dignities —

Starkweather

(Interrupting.) Not for a thief.

(Speaking intensely and in a low voice.) Margaret, it is not too late. Give them back, and no one shall know.

(A pause, in which Margaret is silent, in the throes of indecision.)

Dobleman

Mr. Hubbard says he will be here in three minutes. Fortunately, Senator Chalmers is with him.

(Starkweather nods and looks at Margaret.) (Door at left rear opens, and enter Mrs. Starkweather and Connie. They are dressed for the street and evidently just going out.)

Mrs. Starkweather

(Speaking in a rush.) We are just going out, Anthony. You were certainly wrong in making us attempt to take that 2:10 train. I simply can't make it. I know I can't. It would have been much wiser —

(Suddenly apprehending the strain of the situation between Starkweather and Margaret.) — Why, what is the matter?

Starkweather

(Patently disturbed by their entrance, speaking to Dobleman, who has finished with the telephone.) Lock the doors.

(Dobleman proceeds to obey.)

Mrs. Starkweather

Mercy me! Anthony! What has happened?

(A pause.) Madge! What has happened?

Starkweather

You will have to wait here a few minutes, that is all.

Mrs. Starkweather

But I must keep my engagements. And I haven't a minute to spare.

(Looking at Dobleman locking doors.) I do not understand.

Starkweather

(Grimly,) You will, shortly. I can trust no one any more. When my daughter sees fit to steal —

Mrs. Starkweather

Steal! — Margaret! What have you been doing now?

Margaret

Where is Tommy?

(Mrs. Starkwater is too confounded to answer, and can only stare from face to face.)

(Margaret looks her anxiety to Connie.)

Connie

He is already down in the machine waiting for us. You are coming, aren't you?

Starkweather

Let him wait in the machine. Margaret will come when I get done with her.

(A knock is heard at right rear.) (Starkweather looks at Dobleman and signifies that he is to open door.)

(Dobleman unlocks door, and Hubbabd and Chalmers enter. Beyond the shortest of nods and recognitions with eyes, greetings are cut short by the strain that is on all. Dobleman relocks door.)

Starkweather

(Plunging into it.) Look here, Tom. You know those letters Gherst stole. Mr. Hubbard recovered them from Knox and returned them to me this morning. Within five minutes Margaret stole them from me — here, right in this room. She has not left the room. They are on her now. I want them.

Chalmers

(Who is obviously incapable of coping with his wife, and who is panting for breath, his hand pressed to his side.) Madge, is this true?

Margaret

I haven't them. I tell you I haven't them.

Starkweather

Where are they, then?

(She does not answer.)

If they are in the room we can find them. Search the room. Tom, Mr. Hubbard, Dobleman. They must be recovered at any cost.

(While a thorough search of the room is being made, Mrs. Starkweather, overcome, has Connie assist her to seat at left. Margaret also seats herself, in same chair at desk.)

Chalmers

(Pausing from search, while others continue.) There is no place to look for them. They are not in the room. Are you sure you didn't mislay them?

Starkweather

Nonsense. Margaret took them. They are a bulky package and not easily hidden. If they aren't in the room, then she has them on her.

Chalmers

Madge, give them up.

Margaret

I haven't them.

(Chalmers, stepping suddenly up to her, starts feeling for the papers, running his hands over her dress.)

Margaret

(Springing to her feet and striking him in the face with her open palm.) How dare you!

(Chalmers recoils, Mrs. Starkweather is threatened with hysteria and is calmed by the frightened Connie, while Starkweather looks on grimly.)

Hubbard

(Giving up search of room.) Possibly it would be better to let me retire, Mr. Starkweather.

Starkweather

No; those papers are here in this room. If nobody leaves there will be no possible chance for the papers to get out of the room. What would you recommend doing, Hubbard?

Hubbard

(Hesitatingly.) Under the circumstances I don't like to suggest —

Starkweather

Go on.

Hubbard

First, I would make sure that she — er — Mrs. Chalmers has taken them.

Starkweather

I have made that certain.

Chalmers

But what motive could she have for such an act?

(Hubbard looks wise.)

Starkweather

(To Hubbard.) You know more about this than would appear. What is it?

Hubbard

I'd rather not. It is too —

(Looks significantly at Mrs. Starkweather and Connie.) — er — delicate.

Starkweather

This affair has gone beyond all delicacy. What is it?

Margaret

No! No!

(Chalmers and Starkweather look at her with sudden suspicion.)

Starkweather

Go on, Mr. Hubbard.

Hubbard

I'd — I'd rather not.

Starkweather

(Savagely.) I say go on.

Hubbard

(With simulated reluctance.) Last night — I saw — I was in Knox's rooms —

Margaret

(Interrupting.) One moment; please. Let him speak, but first send Connie away.

Starkweather

No one shall leave this room till the documents are produced. Margaret, give me the letters, and Connie can leave quietly, and even will Hubbard's lips remain sealed. They will never breathe a word of whatever shameful thing his eyes saw. This I promise you.

(A pause, wherein he waits vainly for Margaret to make a decision.) Go on, Hubbard.

Margaret

(Who is terror-stricken, and has been wavering.) No! Don't! I'll tell. I'll give you back the documents.

(All are expectant She wavers again, and steels herself to resolution.) No; I haven't them. Say all you have to say.

Starkweather

You see. She has them. She said she would give them back.

(To Hubbard.) Go on.

Hubbard

Last night —

Connie

(Springing up.) I won't stay!

(She rushes to left rear and finds door locked.) Let me out! Let me out!

Mrs. Starkweather

(Moaning and lying back in chair, legs stretched out and giving preliminary twitches and jerks of hysteria.) I shall die! I shall die! I know I shall die!

Starkweather

(Sternly, to Connie.) Go back to your mother.

Connie

(Returning reluctantly to side of Mrs. Starkweather, sitting down beside her, and putting fingers in her own ears.) I won't listen! I won't listen!

Starkweather

(Sternly.) Take your fingers down.

Hubbard

Hang it all, Chalmers, I wish I were out of this. I don't want to testify.

Starkweather

Take your fingers down.

(Connie reluctantly removes her fingers.) Now, Hubbard.

Hubbard

I protest. I am being dragged into this.

Chalmers

You can't help yourself now. You have cast black suspicions on my wife.

Hubbard

All right. She — Mrs. Chalmers visited Knox in his rooms last night.

Mrs. Starkweather

(Bursting out.) Oh! Oh! My Madge! It is a lie! A lie! (Kicks violently with her legs.)

(Connie soothes her.)

Chalmers

You've got to prove that, Hubbard. If you have made any mistake it will go hard with you.

Hubbard

(Indicating Margaret.) Look at her. Ask her.

(Chalmers looks at Margaret with growing suspicion.)

Margaret

Linda was with me. And Tommy. I had to see Mr. Knox on a very important matter. I went there in the machine. I took Linda and Tommy right into Mr. Knox's room.

Chalmers

(Relieved.) Ah, that puts a different complexion on it.

Hubbard

That is not all. Mrs. Chalmers sent the maid and the boy down to the machine and remained.

Margaret

(Quickly.) But only for a moment

Hubbard

Much longer — much, much longer. I know how long I was kicking my heels and waiting.

Margaret

(Desperately.) I say it was but for a moment — a short moment.

Starkweather

(Abruptly, to Hubbard.) Where were you?

Hubbard

In Knox's bedroom. The fool had forgotten all about me. He was too delighted with his — er — new visitor.

Starkweather

You said you saw.

Hubbard

The bedroom door was ajar. I opened it.

Starkweather

What did you see?

Margaret

(Appealing to Hubbard.) Have you no mercy? I say it was only a moment.

(Hubbard shrugs his shoulders.)

Starkweather

We'll settle the length of that moment Tommy is here, and so is the maid. Connie, Margaret's maid is here, isn't she? (Connie does not answer.) Answer me!

Connie

Yes.

Starkweather

Dobleman, ring for a maid and tell her to fetch Tommy and Mrs. Chalmer's maid. (Dobleman goes to desk and pushes button once.)

Margaret

No! Not Tommy!

Starkweather

(Looking shrewdly at Margaret, to Dobleman.) Mrs. Chalmer's maid will do.

(A knock is heard at left rear. Dobleman opens door and talks to maid. Closes door.)

Starkweather

Lock it.

(Dobleman locks door.)

Chalmers

(Coming over to Margaret.) So you, the immaculate one, have been playing fast and loose.

Margaret

You have no right to talk to me that way, Tom —

Chalmers

I am your husband.

Margaret

You have long since ceased being that.

Chalmers

What do you mean?

Margaret

I mean just what you have in mind about yourself right now.

Chalmers

Madge, you are merely conjecturing. You know nothing against me.

Margaret

I know everything — and without evidence, if you please. I am a woman. It is your atmosphere. Faugh! You have exhaled it for years. I doubt not that proofs, as you would call them, could have been easily obtained. But I was not interested. I had my boy. When he came, I gave you up, Tom. You did not seem to need me any more.

Chalmers

And so, in retaliation, you took up with this fellow Knox.

Margaret

No, no. It is not true, Tom. I tell you it is not true.

Chalmers

You were there, last night, in his rooms, alone — how long we shall soon find out —

(Knock is heard at left rear. Dobleman proceeds to unlock door.) And now you have stolen your father's private papers for your lover.

Margaret

He is not my lover.

Chalmers

But you have acknowledged that you have the papers. For whom, save Knox, could you have stolen them?

(Linda enters. She is white and strained, and looks at Margaret for some cue as to what she is to do.)

Starkweather

That is the woman.

(To Linda.) Come here.

(Linda advances reluctantly.) Where were you last night? You know what I mean.

(She does not speak.) Answer me.

Linda

I don't know what you mean, sir — unless —

Starkweather

Yes, that's it. Go on.

Linda

But I don't think you have any right to ask me such questions. What if I — if I did go out with my young man —

Starkweather

(To Margaret.) A very faithful young woman you've got.

(Briskly, to the others.) There's nothing to be got out of her. Send for Tommy. Dobleman, ring the bell.

(Dobleman starts to obey.)

Margaret

(Stopping Dobleman.) No, no; not Tommy. Tell them, Linda.

(Linda looks appealingly at her.)

(Kindly.) Don't mind me. Tell them the truth.

Chalmers

(Breaking in.) The whole truth.

Margaret

Yes, Linda, the whole truth.

(Linda, looking very woeful, nerves herself for the ordeal.)

Starkweather

Never mind, Dobleman.

(To Linda.) Very well. You were at Mr. Knox's rooms last night, with your mistress and Tommy.

Linda

Yes, sir.

Starkweather

Your mistress sent you and Tommy out of the room.

Linda

Yes, sir.

Starkweather

You waited in the machine.

Linda

Yes, sir.

Starkweather

(Abruptly springing the point he has been working up to.) How long?

(Linda perceives the gist of the questioning just as she is opening her mouth to reply, and she does not speak.)

Margaret

(With deliberate calmness of despair.) Half an hour — an hour — any length of time your shameful minds dictate. That will do, Linda. You can go.

Starkweather

No you don't. Stand over there to one side.

(To the others.) The papers are in this room, and I shall keep my mind certain on that point.

Hubbard

I think I have shown the motive.

Connie

You are a beast!

Chalmers

You haven't told what you saw.

Hubbard

I saw them in each other's arms — several times. Then I found the stolen documents where Knox had thrown them down. So I pocketed them and closed the door.

Chalmers

How long after that did they remain together?

Hubbard

Quite a time, quite a long time.

Chalmers

And when you last saw them?

Hubbard

They were in each other's arms — quite enthusiastically, I may say, in each other's arms. (Chalmers is crushed.)

Margaret

(To Hubbard.) You coward.

(Hubbard smiles.)

(To Starkweather.) When are you going to call off this hound of yours?

Starkweather

When I get the papers. You see what you've been made to pay for them already. Now listen to me closely. Tom, you listen, too. You know the value of these letters. If they are not recovered they will precipitate a turn-over that means not merely money but control and power. I doubt that even you would be re-elected. So what we have heard in this room must be forgotten — absolutely forgotten. Do you understand?

Chalmers

But it is adultery.

Starkweather

It is not necessary for that word to be mentioned. The point is that everything must be as it was formerly.

Chalmers

Yes, I understand.

Starkweather

(To Margaret.) You hear. Tom will make no trouble. Now give me the papers. They are mine, you know.

Margaret

It seems to me the people, who have been lied to, and cajoled, and stolen from, are the rightful owners, not you.

Starkweather

Are you doing this out of love for this — this man, this demagogue?

Margaret

For the people, the children, the future.

Starkweather

Faugh! Answer me.

Margaret

(Slowly.) Almost I do not know. Almost I do not know.

(A knock is heard at left rear. Dobleman answers.)

Dobleman

(Looking at card Maid has given him, to Starkweather.) Mr. Rutland.

Starkweather

(Making an impatient gesture, then abruptly changing his mind, speaking grimly.) Very well. Bring him in. I've paid a lot for the Church, now we'll see what the Church can do for me.

Connie

(Impulsively crossing stage to Margaret, putting arms around her, and weeping.)

Please, please, Madge, give up the papers, and everything will be hushed up. You heard what father said. Think what it means to me if this scandal comes out. Father will hush it up. Not a soul will dare to breathe a word of it. Give him the papers.

Margaret

(Kissing her, shaking head, and setting her aside.) No; I can't. But Connie, dearest

(Connie pauses.) It is not true, Connie. He — he is not my lover. Tell me that you believe me.

Connie

(Caressing her.) I do believe you. But won't you return the papers — for my sake?

(A knock at door.)

Margaret

I can't.

(Enter Rutland.)

(Connie returns to take care of Mrs. Starkweather.)

Rutland

(Advances beamingly upon Starkweather.) My, what a family gathering. I hastened on at once, my dear Mr. Starkweather, to thank you in person, ere you fled away to New York, for your generously splendid — yes, generously splendid — contribution —

(Here the strained situation dawns upon him, and he remains helplessly with mouth open, looking from one to another.)

Starkweather

A theft has been committed, Mr. Rutland. My daughter has stolen something very valuable from me — a package of private papers, so important — well, if she succeeds in making them public I shall be injured to such an extent financially that there won't be any more generously splendid donations for you or anybody else. I have done my best to persuade her to return what she has stolen. Now you try. Bring her to a realization of the madness of what she is doing.

Rutland

(Quite at sea, hemming and hawing.) As your spiritual adviser, Mrs. Chalmers — if this be true — I recommend — I suggest — I — ahem — I entreat —

Margaret

Please, Mr. Rutland, don't be ridiculous. Father is only making a stalking horse out of you. Whatever I may have done, or not done, I believe I am doing right. The whole thing is infamous. The people have been lied to and robbed, and you are merely lending yourself to the infamy of perpetuating the lying and the robbing. If you persist in obeying my father's orders — yes, orders — you will lead me to believe that you are actuated by desire for more of those generously splendid donations. (Starkweather sneers.)

Rutland

(Embarrassed, hopelessly at sea.) This is, I fear — ahem — too delicate a matter, Mr. Starkweather, for me to interfere. I would suggest that it be advisable for me to withdraw — ahem —

Starkweather

(Musingly.) So the Church fails me, too.

(To Rutland.) No, you shall stay right here.

Margaret

Father, Tommy is down in the machine alone. Won't you let me go?

Starkweather

Give me the papers.

(Mrs. Starkweather rises and totters across to Margaret, moaning and whimpering.)

Mrs. Starkweather

Madge, Madge, it can't be true. I don't believe it. I know you have not done this awful thing. No daughter of mine could be guilty of such wickedness. I refuse to believe my ears —

(Mrs. Starkweather sinks suddenly on her knees before Margaret, with clasped hands, weeping hysterically.)

Starkweather

(Stepping to her side.) Get up.

(Hesitates and thinks.) No; go on. She might listen to you.

Margaret

(Attempting to raise her mother.) Don't, mother, don't. Please get up.

(Mrs. Starkweather resists her hysterically.) You don't understand, mother. Please, please, get up.

Mrs. Starkweather

Madge, I, your mother, implore you, on my bended knees. Give up the papers to your father, and I shall forget all I have heard. Think of the family name. I don't believe it, not a word of it; but think of the shame and disgrace. Think of me. Think of Connie, your sister. Think of Tommy. You'll have your father in a terrible state. And you'll kill me. (Moaning and rolling her head.)

I'm going to be sick. I know I am going to be sick.

Margaret

(Bending over mother and raising her, while Connie comes across stage to help support mother.) Mother, you do not understand. More is at stake than the good name of the family or — (Looking at Rutland.) — God. You speak of Connie and Tommy. There are two millions of Connies and Tommys working as child laborers in the United States to-day. Think of them. And besides, mother, these are all lies you have heard. There is nothing between Mr. Knox and me. He is not my lover. I am not the — the shameful thing — these men have said I am.

Connie

(Appealingly.) Madge.

Margaret

(Appealingly.) Connie. Trust me. I am right. I know I am right.

(Mrs. Starkweather, supported by Connie, moaning incoherently, is led back across stage to chair.)

Starkweather

Margaret, a few minutes ago, when you told me there was nothing between you and this man, you lied to me — lied to me as only a wicked woman can lie.

Margaret

It is clear that you believe the worst.

Starkweather

There is nothing less than the worst to be believed. Besides, more heinous than your relations with this man is what you have done here in this room, stolen from me, and practically before my very eyes. Well, you have crossed your will with mine, and in affairs beyond your province. This is a man's game in which you are attempting to play, and you shall take the consequences. Tom will apply for a divorce.

Margaret

That threat, at least, is without power.

Starkweather

And by that means we can break Knox as effectually as by any other. That is one thing the good stupid people will not tolerate in a chosen representative. We will make such a scandal of it —

Mrs. Starkweather

(Shocked.) Anthony!

Starkweather

(Glancing irritably at his wife and continuing.) Another thing. Being proven an adulterous woman, morally unfit for companionship with your child, your child will be taken away from you.

Margaret

No, no. That cannot be. I have done nothing wrong. No court, no fair-minded judge, would so decree on the evidence of a creature like that.

(Indicating Hubbard.)

Hubbard

My evidence is supported. In an adjoining room were two men. I happen to know, because I placed them there. They were your father's men at that. There is such a thing as seeing through a locked door. They saw.

Margaret

And they would swear to — to anything.

Hubbard

I doubt not they will know to what to swear.

Starkweather

Margaret, I have told you some, merely some, of the things I shall do. It is not too late. Return the papers, and everything will be forgotten.

Margaret

You would condone this — this adultery. You, who have just said that I was morally unfit to have my own boy, will permit me to retain him. I had never dreamed, father, that your own immorality would descend to such vile depths. Believing this shameful thing of me, you will forgive and forget it all for the sake of a few scraps of paper that stand for money, that stand for a license to rob and steal from the people. Is this your morality — money?

Starkweather

I have my morality. It is not money. I am only a steward; but so highly do I conceive the duties of my stewardship —

Margaret

(Interrupting, bitterly.) The thefts and lies and all common little sins like adulteries are not to stand in the way of your high duties — that the end hallows the means.

Starkweather

(Shortly.) Precisely.

Margaret

(To Rutland.) There is Jesuitism, Mr. Rutland. I would suggest that you, as my father's spiritual adviser —

Starkweather

Enough of this foolery. Give me the papers.

Margaret

I haven't them.

Starkweather

What's to be done, Hubbard?

Hubbard

She has them. She has as much as acknowledged that they are not elsewhere in the room. She has not been out of the room. There is nothing to do but search her.

Starkweather

Nothing else remains to be done. Dobleman, and you, Hubbard, take her behind the screen. Strip her. Recover the papers.

(Dobleman is in a proper funk, but Hubbard betrays no unwillingness.)

Chalmers

No; that I shall not permit. Hubbard shall have nothing to do with this.

Margaret

It is too late, Tom. You have stood by and allowed me to be stripped of everything else. A few clothes do not matter now. If I am to be stripped and searched by men, Mr. Hubbard will serve as well as any other man. Perhaps Mr. Rutland would like to lend his assistance.

Connie

Oh, Madge! Give them up.

(Margaret shakes her head.)

(To Starkweather.) Then let me search her, father.

Starkweather

You are too willing. I don't want volunteers. I doubt that I can trust you any more than your sister.

Connie

Let mother, then.

Starkweather

(Sneering.) Margaret could smuggle a steamer-trunk of documents past her.

Connie

But not the men, father! Not the men!

Starkweather

Why not? She has shown herself dead to all shame.

(Imperatively.) Dobleman!

Dobleman

(Thinking his time has come, and almost dying.) Y-y-yes, sir.

Starkweather

Call in the servants.

Mrs. Starkweather

(Crying out in protest.) Anthony!

Starkweather

Would you prefer her to be searched by the men?

Mrs. Starkweather

(Subsiding.) I shall die, I shall die. I know I shall die.

Starkweather

Dobleman. Ring for the servants.

(Dobleman, who has been hesitant, crosses to desk and pushes button, then returns toward door.) Send in the maids and the housekeeper.

(Linda, blindly desiring to be of some assistance, starts impulsively toward Margaret.) Stand over there — in the corner.

(Indicating right front.)

(Linda pauses irresolutely and Margaret nods to her to obey and smiles encouragement. Linda, protesting in every fiber of her, goes to right front.)

(A knock at right rear and Dobleman unlocks door, confers with maid, and closes and locks door.)

Starkweather

(To Margaret.) This is no time for trifling, nor for mawkish sentimentality. Return the papers or take the consequences.

(Margaret makes no answer.)

Chalmers

You have taken a hand in a man's game, and you've got to play it out or quit. Give up the papers.

(Margaret remains resolved and impassive.)

Hubbard

(Suavely.) Allow me to point out, my dear Mrs. Chalmers, that you are not merely stealing from your father. You are playing the traitor to your class.

Starkweather

And causing irreparable damage.

Margaret

(Firing up suddenly and pointing to Lincoln's portrait) I doubt not he caused irreparable damage when he freed the slaves and preserved the Union. Yet he recognized no classes. I'd rather be a traitor to my class than to him.

Starkweather

Demagoguery. Demagoguery.

(A knock at right rear. Dobleman opens door. Enter Mrs. Middleton who is the housekeeper, followed by two Housemaids. They pause at rear. Housekeeper to the fore and looking expectantly at Starkweather. The Maids appear timid and frightened.)

Housekeeper

Yes, sir.

Starkweather

Mrs. Middleton, you have the two maids to assist you. Take Mrs. Chalmers behind that screen there and search her. Strip all her clothes from her and make a careful search. (Maids show perturbation.)

Housekeeper

(Self-possessed.) Yes, sir. What am I to search for?

Starkweather

Papers, documents, anything unusual. Turn them over to me when you find them.

Margaret

(In a sudden panic.) This is monstrous! This is monstrous!

Starkweather

So is your theft of the documents monstrous.

Margaret

(Appealing to the other men, ignoring Rutland and not considering Dobleman at all.)

You cowards! Will you stand by and permit this thing to be done? Tom, have you one atom of manhood in you?

Chalmers

(Doggedly.) Return the papers, then.

Margaret

Mr. Rutland —

Rutland

(Very awkwardly and oilily.) My dear Mrs. Chalmers. I assure you the whole circumstance is unfortunate. But you are so palpably in the wrong that I cannot interfere — (Margaret turns from him in withering scorn.) — That I cannot interfere.

Dobleman

(Breaking down unexpectedly.) I cannot stand it. I leave your employ, sir. It is outrageous. I resign now, at once. I cannot be a party to this.

(Striving to unlock door.) I am going at once. You brutes! You brutes!

(Breaks into convulsive sobbings.)

Chalmers

Ah, another lover, I see.

(Dobleman manages to unlock door and starts to open it.)

Starkweather

You fool! Shut that door!

(Dobleman hesitates.) Shut it!

(Dobleman obeys.) Lock it!

(Dobleman obeys.)

Margaret

(Smiling wistfully, benignantly.) Thank you, Mr. Dobleman.

(To Starkweather.) Father, you surely will not perpetrate this outrage, when I tell you, I swear to you —

Starkweather

(Interrupting.) Return the documents then.

Margaret

I swear to you that I haven't them. You will not find them on me.

Starkweather

You have lied to me about Knox, and I have no reason to believe you will not lie to me about this matter.

Margaret

(Steadily.) If you do this thing you shall cease to be my father forever. You shall cease to exist so far as I am concerned.

Starkweather

You have too much of my own will in you for you ever to forget whence it came. Mrs. Middleton, go ahead.

(Housekeeper, summoning Maids with her eyes, begins to advance on Margaret.)

Connie

(In a passion.) Father, if you do this I shall never speak to you again.

(Breaks down weeping.) (Mrs. Starkweather, during following scene, has mild but continuous shuddering and weeping hysteria.)

Starkweather

(Briskly, looking at watch.) I've wasted enough time on this. Mrs. Middleton, proceed.

Margaret

(Wildly, backing away from Housekeeper.) I will not tamely submit. I will resist, I promise you.

Starkweather

Use force, if necessary.

(The Maids are reluctant, but Housekeeper commands them with her eyes to close in on Margaret, and they obey.)

(Margaret backs away until she brings up against desk.)

Housekeeper

Come, Mrs. Chalmers.

(Margaret stands trembling, but refuses to notice Housekeeper.) (Housekeeper places hand on Margaret's arm.)

Margaret

(Violently flinging the hand off, crying imperiously.) Stand back!

(Housekeeper instinctively shrinks back, as do Maids. But it is only for the moment. They close in upon Margaret to seize her.)

(Crying frantically for help.) Linda! Linda!

(Linda springs forward to help her mistress, but is caught and held struggling by Chalmers, who twists her arm and finally compels her to become quiet.)

(Margaret, struggling and resisting, is hustled across stage and behind screen, the Maids warming up to their work. One of them emerges from behind screen for the purpose of getting a chair, upon which Margaret is evidently forced to sit. The screen is of such height, that occasionally, when standing up and struggling, Margaret's bare arms are visible above the top of it. Muttered exclamations are heard, and the voice of Housekeeper trying to persuade Margaret to sub-mit.)

Margaret

(Abruptly, piteously.) No! No!

(The struggle becomes more violent, and the screen is overturned, disclosing Margaret seated on chair, partly undressed, and clutching an envelope in her hand which they are trying to force her to relinquish.)

Mrs. Starkweather

(Crying wildly.) Anthony! They are taking her clothes off!

(Renewed struggle of Linda with Chalmers at the sight.)

(Starkweather, calling Rutland to his assistance, stands screen up again, then, as an afterthought, pulls screen a little further away from Margaret.)

Margaret

No! No!

(Housekeeper appears triumphantly with envelope in her hand and hands it to Hubbard.)

Hubbard

(Immediately.) That's not it.

(Glances at address and starts.) It's addressed to Knox.

Starkweather

Tear it open. Read it.

(Hubbard tears envelope open.) (While this is going on, struggle behind screen is suspended.)

Hubbard

(Withdrawing contents of envelope.) It is only a photograph — of Mrs. Chalmers.

(Reading.) "For the future — Margaret."

Chalmers

(Thrusting Linda back to right front and striding up to Hubbard.) Give it to me. (Hubbard passes it to him, and he looks at it, crumples it in his hand, and grinds it under foot.)

Starkweather

That is not what we wanted, Mrs. Middleton. Go on with the search.

(The search goes on behind the screen without any further struggling.) (A pause, during which screen is occasionally agitated by the searchers removing Margaret's garments.)

Housekeeper

(Appearing around corner of screen.) I find nothing else, sir.

Starkweather

Is she stripped?

Housekeeper

Yes, sir.

Starkweather

Every stitch?

Housekeeper

(Disappearing behind screen instead of answering for a pause, during which it is patent that the ultimate stitch is being removed, then reappearing.) Yes, sir.

Starkweather

Nothing?

Housekeeper

Nothing.

Starkweather

Throw out her clothes — everything.

(A confused mass of feminine apparel is tossed out, falling near Dobleman's feet, who, in consequence, is hugely mortified and embarrassed.)

(Chalmers examines garments, then steps behind screen a moment, and reappears.)

Chalmers

Nothing.

(Chalmers, Starkweather, and Hubbard gaze at each other dumbfoundedly.)

(The two Maids come out from behind screen and stand near door to right rear.)

(Starkweather is loath to believe, and steps to Margaret's garments and overhauls them.)

Starkweather

(To Chalmers, looking inquiringly toward screen.) Are you sure?

Chalmers

Yes; I made certain. She hasn't them.

Starkweather

(To Housekeeper.) Mrs. Middleton, examine those girls.

Housekeeper

(Passing hands over dresses of Maids.) No, sir.

Margaret

(From behind screen, in a subdued, spiritless voice.) May I dress — now?

(Nobody answers.) It — it is quite chilly.

(Nobody answers.) Will you let Linda come to me, please?

(Starkweather nods savagely to Linda, to obey.) (Linda crosses to garments, gathers them up, and disappears behind screen.)

Starkweather

(To Housekeeper.)

You may go.

(Exit Housekeeper and the two Maids.)

Dobleman

(Hesitating, after closing door.) Shall I lock it?

(Starkweather does not answer, and Dobleman leaves door unlocked.)

Connie

(Rising.) May I take mother away?

(Starkweather, who is in a brown study, nods.) (Connie assists Mrs. Starkweather to her feet.)

Mrs. Starkweather

(Staggering weakly, and sinking back into chair.) Let me rest a moment, Connie. I'll be better. (To Starkweather, who takes no notice.) Anthony, I am going to bed. This has been too much for me. I shall be sick. I shall never catch that train to-day.

(Shudders and sighs, leans head back, closes eyes, and Connie fans her or administers smelling salts.)

Chalmers

(To Hubbard.) What's to be done?

Hubbard

(Shrugging shoulders.) I'm all at sea. I had just left the letters with him, when Mrs. Chalmers entered the room. What's become of them? She hasn't them, that's certain.

Chalmers

But why? Why should she have taken them?

Hubbard

(Dryly, pointing to crumpled photograph on floor.) It seems very clear to me.

Chalmers

You think so? You think so?

Hubbard

I told you what I saw last night at his rooms. There is no other explanation.

Chalmers

(Angrily.) And that's the sort he is — vaunting his moral superiority — mouthing phrases about theft — our theft — and himself the greatest thief of all, stealing the dearest and sacrest things —

(Margaret appears from behind screen, pinning on her hat. She is dressed, but somewhat in disarray, and Linda follows, pulling and touching and arranging. Margaret pauses near to Rutland, but does not seem to see him.)

Rutland

(Lamely.) It is a sad happening — ahem — a sad happening. I am grieved, deeply grieved. I cannot tell you, Mrs. Chalmers, how grieved I am to have been compelled to be present at this — ahem — this unfortunate —

(Margaret withers him with a look and he awkwardly ceases.)

Margaret

After this, father, there is one thing I shall do —

Chalmers

(Interrupting.) Go to your lover, I suppose.

Margaret

(Coldly.) Have it that way if you choose.

Chalmers

And take him what you have stolen —

Starkweather

(Arousing suddenly from brown study.) But she hasn't them on her. She hasn't been out of the room. They are not in the room. Then where are they?

(During the following, Margaret goes to the door, which Dobleman opens. She forces Linda to go out and herself pauses in open door to listen.)

Hubbard

(Uttering an exclamation of enlightenment, going rapidly across to window at left and raising it.) It is not locked. It moves noiselessly. There's the explanation.

(To Starkweather.) While you were at the safe, with your back turned, she lifted the window, tossed the papers out to somebody waiting —

(He sticks head and shoulders out of window, peers down, then brings head and shoulders back.) — No; they are not there. Somebody was waiting for them.

Starkweather

But how should she know I had them? You had only just recovered them?

Hubbard

Didn't Knox know right away last night that I had taken them? I took the up-elevator instead of the down when I heard him running along the hall. Trust him to let her know what had happened. She was the only one who could recover them for him. Else why did she come here so immediately this morning? To steal the package, of course. And she had some one waiting outside. She tossed them out and closed the window —

(He closes window.) — You notice it makes no sound. — and sat down again — all while your back was turned.

Starkweather

Margaret, is this true?

Margaret

(Excitedly.) Yes, the window. Why didn't you think of it before? Of course, the window. He — somebody was waiting. They are gone now — miles and miles away. You will never get them. They are in his hands now. He will use them in his speech this afternoon. (Laughs wildly.)

(Suddenly changing her tone to mock meekness, subtle with defiance.) May I go — now?

(Nobody answers, and she makes exit.) (A moments pause, during which Starkweather, Chalmers, and Hubbard look at each other in stupefaction.)

Curtain

Act IV

Scene. Same as Act I. It is half past one of same day. Curtain discloses Knox seated at right front and waiting. He is dejected in attitude.

(Margaret enters from right rear, and advances to him. He rises awkwardly and shakes hands. She is very calm and self-possessed.)

Margaret

I knew you would come. Strange that I had to send for you so soon after last night

(With alarm and sudden change of manner.) What is the matter? You are sick. Your hand is cold.

(She warms it in both of her hands.)

Knox

It is flame or freeze with me.

(Smiling.) And I'd rather flame.

Margaret

(Becoming aware that she is warming his hand.)

Sit down and tell me what is the matter.

(Leading him by the hand she seats him, at the same time seating herself.)

Knox

(Abruptly.) After you left last night, Hubbard stole those documents back again.

Margaret

(Very matter-of-fact.) Yes; he was in your bedroom while I was there.

Knox

(Startled.) How do you know that? Anyway, he did not know who you were.

Margaret

Oh yes he did.

Knox

(Angrily.) And he has dared — ?

Margaret

Yes; not two hours ago. He announced the fact before my father, my mother, Connie, the servants, everybody.

Knox

(Rising to his feet and beginning to pace perturbedly up and down.) The cur!

Margaret

(Quietly.) I believe, among other things, I told him he was that myself.

(She laughs cynically.) Oh, it was a pretty family party, I assure you. Mother said she didn't believe it — but that was only hysteria. Of course she believes it — the worst. So does Connie — everybody.

Knox

(Stopping abruptly and looking at her horror-stricken.) You don't mean they charged — — ?

Margaret

No; I don't mean that. I mean more. They didn't charge. They accepted it as a proven fact that I was guilty. That you were my — lover.

Knox

On that man's testimony?

Margaret

He had two witnesses in an adjoining room.

Knox

(Relieved.) All the better. They can testify to nothing more than the truth, and the truth is not serious. In our case it is good, for we renounced each other.

Margaret

You don't know these men. It is easy to guess that they have been well trained. They would swear to anything.

(She laughs bitterly.) They are my father's men, you know, his paid sleuth-hounds.

Knox

(Collapsing in chair, holding head in hands, and groaning.) How you must have suffered. What a terrible time, what a terrible time! I can see it all — before everybody — your nearest and dearest. Ah, I could not understand, after our parting last night, why you should have sent for me today. But now I know.

Margaret

No you don't, at all.

Knox

(Ignoring her and again beginning to pace back and forth, thinking on his feet.) What's the difference? I am ruined politically. Their scheme has worked out only too well. Gifford warned me, you warned me, everybody warned me. But I was a fool, blind — with a fool's folly. There is nothing left but you now.

(He pauses, and the light of a new thought irradiates his face.) Do you know, Margaret, I thank God it has happened as it has. What if my usefulness is destroyed? There will be other men — other leaders. I but make way for another. The cause of the people can never be lost. And though I am driven from the fight, I am driven to you. We are driven together. It is fate. Again I thank God for it.

(He approaches her and tries to clasp her in his arms, but she steps back.)

Margaret

(Smiling sadly.) Ah, now you flame. The tables are reversed. Last night it was I. We are fortunate that we choose diverse times for our moods — else there would be naught but one sweet melting mad disaster.

Knox

But it is not as if we had done this thing deliberately and selfishly. We have renounced. We have struggled against it until we were beaten. And now we are driven together, not by our doing but Fate's. After this affair this morning there is nothing for you but to come to me. And as for me, despite my best, I am finished. I have failed. As I told you, the papers are stolen. There will be no speech this afternoon.

Margaret

(Quietly.) Yes there will.

Knox

Impossible. I would make a triple fool of myself. I would be unable to substantiate my charges.

Margaret

You will substantiate them. What a chain of theft it is. My father steals from the people. The documents that prove his stealing are stolen by Gherst. Hubbard steals them from you and returns them to my father. And I steal them from my father and pass them back to you.

Knox

(Astounded.) You? — You? —

Margaret

Yes; this very morning. That was the cause of all the trouble. If I hadn't stolen them nothing would have happened. Hubbard had just returned them to my father.

Knox

(Profoundly touched.) And you did this for me — ?

Margaret

Dear man, I didn't do it for you. I wasn't brave enough. I should have given in. I don't mind confessing that I started to do it for you, but it soon grew so terrible that I was afraid. It grew so terrible that had it been for you alone I should have surrendered. But out of the terror of it all I caught a wider vision, and all that you said last night rose before me. And I knew that you were right. I thought of all the people, and of the little children. I did it for them, after all. You speak for them. I stole the papers so that you could use them in speaking for the people. Don't you see, dear man?

(Changing to angry recollection.) Do you know what they cost me? Do you know what was done to me, to-day, this morning, in my father's house? I was shamed, humiliated, as I would never have dreamed it possible. Do you know what they did to me? The servants were called in, and by them I was stripped before everybody — my family, Hubbard, the Reverend Mr. Rutland, the secretary, everybody.

Knox

(Stunned.) Stripped — you?

Margaret

Every stitch. My father commanded it

Knox

(Suddenly visioning the scene.) My God!

Margaret

(Recovering herself and speaking cynically, with a laugh at his shocked face.) No; it was not so bad as that. There was a screen.

(Knox appears somewhat relieved.) But it fell down in the midst of the struggle.

Knox

But in heaven's name why was this done to you?

Margaret

Searching for the lost letters. They knew I had taken them.

(Speaking gravely.)

So you see, I have earned those papers. And I have earned the right to say what shall be done with them. I shall give them to you, and you will use them in your speech this afternoon.

Knox

I don't want them.

Margaret

(Going to bell and ringing.) Oh yes you do. They are more valuable right now than anything else in the world.

Knox

(Shaking his head.) I wish it hadn't happened.

Margaret

(Returning to him, pausing by his chair, and caressing his hair.) What?

Knox

This morning — your recovering the letters. I had adjusted myself to their loss, and the loss of the fight, and the finding of — you.

(He reaches up, draws down her hand, and presses it to his lips.) So — give them back to your father.

(Margaret draws quickly away from him.) (Enter Man-servant at right rear.)

Margaret

Send Linda to me.

(Exit Man-servant.)

Knox

What are you doing?

Margaret

(Sitting down.) I am going to send Linda for them. They are still in my father's house, hidden, of all places, behind Lincoln's portrait. He will guard them safely, I know.

Knox

(With fervor.) Margaret! Margaret! Don't send for them. Let them go. I don't want them.

(Rising and going toward her impulsively.) (Margaret rises and retreats, holding him off.) I want you — you — you.

(He catches her hand and kisses it. She tears it away from him, but tenderly.)

Margaret

(Still retreating, roguishly and tenderly.) Dear, dear man, I love to see you so. But it cannot be.

(Looking anxiously toward right rear.) No, no, please, please sit down.

(Enter Linda from right rear. She is dressed for the street.)

Margaret

(Surprised.) Where are you going?

Linda

Tommy and the nurse and I were going down town. There is some shopping she wants to do.

Margaret

Very good. But go first to my father's house. Listen closely. In the library, behind the portrait of Lincoln — you know it? (Linda nods.)

You will find a packet of papers. It took me five seconds to put it there. It will take you no longer to get it. Let no one see you. Let it appear as though you had brought Tommy to see his grandmother and cheer her up. You know she is not feeling very well just now. After you get the papers, leave Tommy there and bring them immediately back to me. Step on a chair to the ledge of the bookcase, and reach behind the portrait. You should be back inside fifteen minutes. Take the car.

Linda

Tommy and the nurse are already in it, waiting for me.

Margaret

Be careful. Be quick.

(Linda nods to each instruction and makes exit.)

Knox

(Bursting out passionately.) This is madness. You are sacrificing yourself, and me. I don't want them. I want you. I am tired. What does anything matter except love? I have pursued ideals long enough. Now I want you.

Margaret

(Gravely.) Ah, there you have expressed the pith of it. You will now forsake ideals for me — (He attempts to interrupt.) No, no; not that I am less than an ideal. I have no silly vanity that way. But I want you to remain ideal, and you can only by going on — not by being turned back. Anybody can play the coward and assert they are fatigued. I could not love a coward. It was your strength that saved us last night. I could not have loved you as I do, now, had you been weak last night. You can only keep my love —

Knox

(Interrupting, bitterly.) By foregoing it — for an ideal. Margaret, what is the biggest thing in the world? Love. There is the greatest ideal of all.

Margaret

(Playfully.) Love of man and woman?

Knox

What else?

Margaret

(Gravely.) There is one thing greater — love of man for his fellowman.

Knox

Oh, how you turn my preachments back on me. It is a lesson. Nevermore shall I preach. Henceforth —

Margaret

Yes.

(Chalmers enters unobserved at left, pauses, and looks on.)

Knox

Henceforth I love. Listen.

Margaret

You are overwrought. It will pass, and you will see your path straight before you, and know that I am right. You cannot run away from the fight.

Knox

I can — and will. I want you, and you want me — the man's and woman's need for each other. Come, go with me — now. Let us snatch at happiness while we may.

(He arises, approaches her, and gets her hand in his. She becomes more complaisant, and, instead of repulsing him, is willing to listen and receive.) As I have said, the fight will go on just the same. Scores of men, better men, stronger men, than I, will rise to take my place. Why do I talk this way? Because I love you, love you, love you. Nothing else exists in all the world but love of you.

Margaret

(Melting and wavering.) Ah, you flame, you flame.

(Chalmers utters an inarticulate cry of rage and rushes forward at Knox)

(Margaret and Knox are startled by the cry and discover Chalmers's presence.)

Margaret

(Confronting Chalmers and thrusting him slightly back from Knox, and continuing to hold him off from Knox.) No, Tom, no dramatics, please. This excitement of yours is only automatic and conventional. You really don't mean it. You don't even feel it. You do it because it is expected of you and because it is your training. Besides, it is bad for your heart. Remember Dr. West's warning —

(Chalmers, making an unusually violent effort to get at Knox, suddenly staggers weakly back, signs of pain on his face, holding a hand convulsively clasped over his heart. Margaret catches him and supports him to a chair, into which he collapses.)

Chalmers

(Muttering weakly.) My heart! My heart!

Knox

(Approaching.) Can I do anything?

Margaret

(Calmly.) No; it is all right. He will be better presently.

(She is bending over Chalmers, her hand on his wrist, when suddenly, as a sign he is recovering, he violently flings her hand off and straightens up.)

Knox

(Undecidedly.) I shall go now.

Margaret

No. You will wait until Linda comes back. Besides, you can't run away from this and leave me alone to face it.

Knox

(Hurt, showing that he will stay.) I am not a coward.

Chalmers

(In a stifled voice that grows stronger.) Yes; wait I have a word for you.

(He pauses a moment, and when he speaks again his voice is all right.)

(Witheringly.) A nice specimen of a reformer, I must say. You, who babbled yesterday about theft. The most high, righteous and noble Ali Baba, who has come into the den of thieves and who is also a thief.

(Mimicking Margaret.) "Ah, you flame, you flame!"

(In his natural voice.) I should call you; you thief, you thief, you wife-stealer, you.

Margaret

(Coolly.) I should scarcely call it theft.

Chalmers

(Sneeringly.) Yes; I forgot. You mean it is not theft for him to take what already belongs to him.

Margaret

Not quite that — but in taking what has been freely offered to him.

Chalmers

You mean you have so forgotten your womanhood as to offer —

Margaret

Just that. Last night. And Mr. Knox did himself the honor of refusing me.

Knox

(Bursting forth.) You see, nothing else remains, Margaret.

Chalmers

(Twittingly.) Ah, "Margaret."

Knox

(Ignoring him.) The situation is intolerable.

Chalmers

(Emphatically.) It is intolerable. Don't you think you had better leave this house? Every moment of your presence dishonors it.

Margaret

Don't talk of honor, Tom.

Chalmers

I make no excuses for myself. I fancy I never fooled you very much. But at any rate I never used my own house for such purposes.

Knox

(Springing at him.) You cur!

Margaret

(Interposing.) No; don't. His heart.

Chalmers

(Mimicking Margaret.) No dramatics, please.

Margaret

(Plaintively, looking from one man to the other.) Men are so strangely and wonderfully made. What am I to do with the pair of you? Why won't you reason together like rational human beings?

Chalmers

(Bitterly gay, rising to his feet.) Yes; let us come and reason together. Be rational. Sit down and talk it over like civilized humans. This is not the stone age. Be reassured, Mr. Knox. I won't brain you. Margaret —

(Indicating chair,) Sit down. Mr. Knox —

(Indicating chair.) Sit down.

(All three seat themselves, in a triangle.) Behold the problem — the ever ancient and ever young triangle of the playwright and the short story writer — two men and a woman.

Knox

True, and yet not true. The triangle is incomplete. Only one of the two men loves the woman.

Chalmers

Yes?

Knox

And I am that man.

Chalmers

I fancy you're right.

(Nodding his head.) But how about the woman?

Margaret

She loves one of the two men.

Knox

And what are you going to do about it?

Chalmers

(Judicially.) She has not yet indicated the man.

(Margaret is about to indicate Knox.) Be careful, Madge. Remember who is Tommy's father.

Margaret

Tom, honestly, remembering what the last years have been can you imagine that I love you?

Chalmers

I'm afraid I've not — er — not flamed sufficiently.

Margaret

You have possibly spoken nearer the truth than you dreamed. I married you, Tom, hoping great things of you. I hoped you would be a power for good —

Chalmers

Politics again. When will women learn they must leave politics alone?

Margaret

And also, I hoped for love. I knew you didn't love me when we married, but I hoped for it to come.

Chalmers

And — er — may I be permitted to ask if you loved me?

Margaret

No; but I hoped that, too, would come.

Chalmers

It was, then, all a mistake.

Margaret

Yes; yours, and mine, and my father's.

Knox

We have sat down to reason this out, and we get nowhere. Margaret and I love each other. Your triangle breaks.

Chalmers

It isn't a triangle after all. You forget Tommy.

Knox

(Petulantly.) Make it four-sided, then, but let us come to some conclusion.

Chalmers

(Reflecting.) Ah, it is more than that. There is a fifth side. There are the stolen letters which Madge has just this morning restolen from her father. Whatever settlement takes place, they must enter into it.

(Changing his tone.) Look here, Madge, I am a fool. Let us talk sensibly, you and Knox and I. Knox, you want my wife. You can have her — on one consideration. Madge, you want Knox. You can have him on one consideration, the same consideration. Give up the letters and we'll forget everything.

Margaret

Everything?

Chalmers

Everything. Forgive and forget You know.

Margaret

You will forgive my — I — this — this adultery?

Chalmers

(Doggedly.) I'll forgive anything for the letters. I've played fast and loose with you, Madge, and I fancy your playing fast and loose only evens things up. Return the letters

and you can go with Knox quietly. I'll see to that. There won't be a breath of scandal. I'll give you a divorce. Or you can stay on with me if you want to. I don't care. What I want is the letters. Is it agreed?

(Margaret seems to hesitate.)

Knox

(Pleadingly.) Margaret.

Margaret

Chalmers

(Testily.) Am I not giving you each other? What more do you want? Tommy stays with me. If you want Tommy, then stay with me, but you must give up the letters.

Margaret

I shall not go with Mr. Knox. I shall not give up the letters. I shall remain with Tommy.

Chalmers

So far as I am concerned, Knox doesn't count in this. I want the letters and I want Tommy. If you don't give them up, I'll divorce you on statutory grounds, and no woman, so divorced, can keep her child. In any event, I shall keep Tommy.

Margaret

(Speaking steadily and positively.) Listen, Tom; and you, too, Howard. I have never for a moment entertained the thought of giving up the letters. I may have led you to think so, but I wanted to see just how low, you, Tom, could sink. I saw how low you — all of you — this morning sank. I have learned — much. Where is this fine honor, Tom, which put you on a man-killing rage a moment ago? You'll barter it all for a few scraps of paper, and forgive and forget adultery which does not exist —

(Chalmers laughs skeptically.) — though I know when I say it you will not believe me. At any rate, I shall not give up the letters. Not if you do take Tommy away from me. Not even for Tommy will I sacrifice all the people. As I told you this morning, there are two million Tommys, child-laborers all, who cannot be sacrificed for Tommy's sake or anybody's sake.

(Chalmers shrugs his shoulders and smiles in ridicule.)

Knox

Surely, Margaret, there is a way out for us. Give up the letters. What are they? — only scraps of paper. Why match them against happiness — our happiness?

Margaret

But as you told me yourself, those scraps of paper represent the happiness of millions of lives. It is not our happiness that is matched against some scraps of paper. It is our happiness against millions of lives — like ours. All these millions have hearts, and loves, and desires, just like ours.

Knox

But it is a great social and cosmic process. It does not depend on one man. Kill off, at this instant, every leader of the people, and the process will go on just the same.

The people will come into their own. Theft will be unseated. It is destiny. It is the process. Nothing can stop it.

Margaret

But it can be retarded.

Knox

You and I are no more than straws in relation to it. We cannot stop it any more than straws can stop an ocean tide. We mean nothing — except to each other, and to each other we mean all the world.

Margaret

(Sadly and tenderly.) All the world and immortality thrown in.

Chalmers

(Breaking in.) Nice situation, sitting here and listening to a strange man woo my wife in terms of sociology and scientific slang.

(Both Margaret and Knox ignore him.)

Knox

Dear, I want you so.

Margaret

(Despairingly.) Oh! It is so hard to do right!

Knox

(Eagerly.) He wants the letters very badly. Give them up for Tommy. He will give Tommy for them.

Chalmers

No; emphatically no. If she wants Tommy she can stay on; but she must give up the letters. If she wants you she may go; but she must give up the letters.

Knox

(Pleading for a decision.) Margaret.

Margaret

Howard. Don't tempt me and press me. It is hard enough as it is.

Chalmers

(Standing up.) I've had enough of this. The thing must be settled, and I leave it to you, Knox. Go on with your love-making. But I won't be a witness to it. Perhaps I — er — retard the — er — the flame process. You two must make up your minds, and you can do it better without me. I am going to get a drink and settle my nerves. I'll be back in a minute.

(He moves toward exit to right.) She will yield, Knox. Be warm, be warm.

(Pausing in doorway.) Ah, you flame! Flame to some purpose. (Exit Chalmers.)

(Knox rests his head despairingly on his hand, and Margaret, pausing and looking at him sadly for a moment, crosses to him, stands beside him, and caresses his hair.)

Margaret

It is hard, I know, dear. And it is hard for me as well.

Knox

It is so unnecessary.

Margaret

No, it is necessary. What you said last night, when I was weak, was wise. We cannot steal from my child —

Knox

But if he gives you Tommy? Margaret

(Shaking her head.) Nor can we steal from any other woman's child — from all the children of all the women. And other things I heard you say, and you were right. We cannot live by ourselves alone. We are social animals. Our good and our ill — all is tied up with all humanity.

Knox

(Catching her hand and caressing it.) I do not follow you. I hear your voice, but I do not know a word you say. Because I am loving your voice — and you. I am so filled with love that there is no room for anything else. And you, who yesterday were so remote and unattainable, are so near and possible, so immediately possible. All you have to do is to say the word, one little word. Say it. — Say it.

(He carries her hand to his lips and holds it there.)

Margaret

(Wistfully.) I should like to. I should like to. But I can't.

Knox

You must.

Margaret

There are other and greater things that say must to me. Oh, my dear, have you forgotten them? Things you yourself have spoken to me — the great stinging things of the spirit, that are greater than you and I, greater even than our love.

Knox

I exhaust my arguments — but still I love you.

Margaret

And I love you for it.

(Chalmers enters from right, and sees Margaret still caressing Knox's hair.)

Chalmers

(With mild elation, touched with sarcasm.) Ah, I see you have taken my advice, and reached a decision.

(They do not answer. Margaret moves slowly away and seats herself.) (Knox remains with head bowed on hand.) No?

(Margaret shakes her head.) Well, I've thought it over, and I've changed my terms. Madge, go with Knox, take Tommy with you.

(Margaret wavers, but Knox, head bowed on hand, does not see her.) There will be no scandal. I'll give you a proper divorce. And you can have Tommy.

Knox

(Suddenly raising his head, joyfully, pleadingly.) Margaret!

(Margaret is swayed, but does not speak.)

Chalmers

You and I never hit it off together any too extraordinarily well, Madge; but I'm not altogether a bad sort. I am easy-going. I always have been easy-going. I'll make everything easy for you now. But you see the fix I am in. You love another man, and I simply must regain those letters. It is more important than you realize.

Margaret

(Incisively.) You make me realize how important those letters are.

Knox

Give him the letters, Margaret

Chalmers

So she hasn't turned them over to you yet?

Margaret

No; I still have them.

Knox

Give them to him.

Chalmers

Selling out for a petticoat. A pretty reformer.

Knox

(Proudly.)

A better lover.

Margaret

(To Chalmers.)

He is weak to-day. What of it? He was strong last night. He will win back his strength again. It is human to be weak. And in his very weakness now, I have my pride, for it is the weakness of love. God knows I have been weak, and I am not ashamed of it. It was the weakness of love. It is hard to stifle one's womanhood always with morality. (Quickly.)

But do not mistake, Tom. This of mine is no conventional morality. I do not care about nasty gossiping tongues and sensation-mongering sheets; nor do I care what any persons of all the persons I know, would say if I went away with Mr. Knox this instant. I would go, and go gladly and proudly with him, divorce or no divorce, scandal or scandal triple-fold — if — if no one else were hurt by what I did. (To Knox.)

Howard, I tell you that I would go with you now, in all willingness and joy, with May-time and the songs of all singing birds in my heart — were it not for the others. But there is a higher morality. We must not hurt those others. We dare not steal our happiness from them. The future belongs to them, and we must not, dare not, sacrifice that future nor give it in pledge for our own happiness. Last night I came to you. I was weak — yes; more than that — I was ignorant. I did not know, even as late as last night, the monstrous vileness, the consummate wickedness of present-day conditions. I learned that today, this morning, and now. I learned that the morality of the Church was a pretense. Far deeper than it, and vastly more powerful, was the morality of the dollar. My father, my family, my husband, were willing to condone what they believed

was my adultery. And for what? For a few scraps of paper that to them represented only the privilege to plunder, the privilege to steal from the people.

(To Chalmers.) Here are you, Tom, not only willing and eager to give me into the arms of the man you believe my lover, but you throw in your boy — your child and mine — to make it good measure and acceptable. And for what? Love of some woman? — any woman? No. Love of humanity? No. Love of God? No. Then for what? For the privilege of perpetuating your stealing from the people — money, bread and butter, hats, shoes, and stockings — for stealing all these things from the people.

(To Knox.) Now, and at last, do I realize how stern and awful is the fight that must be waged — the fight in which you and I, Howard, must play our parts and play them bravely and uncomplainingly — you as well as I, but I even more than you. This is the den of thieves. I am a child of thieves. All my family is composed of thieves. I have been fed and reared on the fruits of thievery. I have been a party to it all my life. Somebody must cease from this theft, and it is I. And you must help me, Howard.

Chalmers

(Emitting a low long whistle.) Strange that you never went into the suffragette business. With such speech-making ability you would have been a shining light.

Knox

(Sadly.) The worst of it is, Margaret, you are right. But it is hard that we cannot be happy save by stealing from the happiness of others. Yet it hurts, deep down and terribly, to forego you. (Margaret thanks him with her eyes.)

Chalmers

(Sarcastically.) Oh, believe me, I am not too anxious to give up my wife. Look at her. She's a pretty good woman for any man to possess.

Margaret

Tom, I'll accept a quiet divorce, marry Mr. Knox, and take Tommy with me — on one consideration.

Chalmers

And what is that?

Margaret

That I retain the letters. They are to be used in his speech this afternoon.

Chalmers

No they're not.

Margaret

Whatever happens, do whatever worst you can possibly do, that speech will be given this afternoon. Your worst to me will be none too great a price for me to pay.

Chalmers

No letters, no divorce, no Tommy, nothing.

Margaret

Then will you compel me to remain here. I have done nothing wrong, and I don't imagine you will make a scandal.

(Enter Linda at right rear, pausing and looking inquiringly.) There they are now.

(To Linda.) Yes; give them to me.

(Linda, advancing, draws package of documents from her breast. As she is handing them to Margaret, Chalmers attempts to seize them.)

Knox

(Springing forward and thrusting Chalmers back.) That you shall not!

(Chalmers is afflicted with heart-seizure, and staggers.)

Margaret

(Maternally, solicitously.) Tom, don't! Your heart! Be careful!

(Chalmers starts to stagger toward bell) Howard! Stop him! Don't let him ring, or the servants will get the letters away from us. (Knox starts to interpose, but Chalmers, growing weaker, sinks into a chair, head thrown back and legs out straight before him.)

Linda, a glass of water.

(Linda gives documents to Margaret, and makes running exit to right rear.) (Margaret bends anxiously over Chalmers.) (A pause.)

Knox

(Touching her hand.) Give them to me.

(Margaret gives him the documents, which he holds in his hand, at the same time she thanks him with her eyes.) (Enter Linda with glass of water, which she hands to Margaret.) (Margaret tries to place the glass to Chalmers's lips.)

Chalmers

(Dashing the glass violently from her hand to the floor and speaking in smothered voice.) Bring me a whiskey and soda.

(Linda looks at Margaret interrogatively. Margaret is undecided what to say, shrugs her shoulders in helplessness, and nods her head.)

(Linda makes hurried exit to right.)

Margaret

(To Knox.) You will go now and you will give the speech.

Knox

(Placing documents in inside coat pocket.) I will give the speech.

Margaret

And all the forces making for the good time coming will be quickened by your words. Let the voices of the millions be in it.

(Chalmers, legs still stretched out, laughs cynically.)

You know where my heart lies. Some day, in all pride and honor, stealing from no one, hurting no one, we shall come together — to be together always.

Knox

(Drearily.) And in the meantime?

Margaret

We must wait

Knox

(Decidedly.) We will wait.

Chalmers

(Straightening up.) For me to die? eh?

(During the following speech Linda enters from right with whiskey and soda and gives it to Chalmers, who thirstily drinks half of it. Margaret dismisses Linda with her eyes, and Linda makes exit to right rear.)

Knox

I hadn't that in mind, but now that you mention it, it seems to the point. That heart of yours isn't going to carry you much farther. You have played fast and loose with it as with everything else. You are like the carter who steals hay from his horse that he may gamble. You have stolen from your heart. Some day, soon, like the horse, it will quit. We can afford to wait. It won't be long.

Chalmers

(After laughing incredulously and sipping his whiskey.) Well, Knox, neither of us wins. You don't get the woman. Neither do I. She remains under my roof, and I fancy that is about all. I won't divorce her. What's the good? But I've got her tied hard and fast by Tommy. You won't get her.

(Knox, ignoring hint, goes to right rear and pauses in doorway.)

Margaret

Work. Bravely work. You are my knight. Go.

(Knox makes exit.)

(Margaret stands quietly, face averted from audience and turned toward where Knox was last to be seen.)

Chalmers

Madge.

(Margaret neither moves nor answers.) I say, Madge.

(He stands up and moves toward her, holding whiskey glass in one hand.) That speech is going to make a devil of a row. But I don't think it will be so bad as your father says. It looks pretty dark, but such things blow over. They always do blow over. And so with you and me. Maybe we can manage to forget all this and patch it up somehow.

(She gives no sign that she is aware of his existence.) Why don't you speak? (Pause.)

(He touches her arm.) Madge.

Margaret

(Turning upon him in a blaze of wrath and with unutterable loathing.)

Don't touch me!

(Chalmers recoils.)

Curtain

Daughters of the Rich

A One-Act Play

Characters

John Masterson

Frank Burt

Police Officer

Edna Masterson

Scene

Library in Masterson's house, New York City. Large room, luxuriously furnished. Table, D.R., desk telephone. Fireplace, R. Large chair near fireplace. Bookcases, R. and L. Door, U.L. Couch, L.C. Hall, back. At rise of curtain, Masterson seen asleep in chair. Clock strikes two. Edna enters. C.D. through hall. Crosses to door L. Listens. Draws curtains over window. Takes cigarette from table. Starts to light it. Masterson awakes. Edna drops cigarette.

MASTERSON: Who's there? (Turns in chair. Sees EDNA.) Oh! When did you get in, my dear?

EDNA: Daddy, how you startled me,—I just came in.

Taking another cigarette.

MASTERSON: Must have fallen asleep over my paper. What time is it?

EDNA: Time all dads were in bed. Two o'clock.

MASTERSON: Did you have a nice time at the ball?

Rises, stretching, etc.

EDNA: Yes.

Crosses to chair.

MASTERSON: Danced your feet off, I suppose.

EDNA: Almost.

MASTERSON: Many there?

EDNA: Usual crowd.

MASTERSON: You sent Smithson home early.

Crosses to chair.

EDNA: Yes. The Arnolds brought me home in their car.

Sits in chair, L.C., smoking.

MASTERSON: I wish you wouldn't smoke those things.

EDNA: Old-fashioned Daddy. Everbody smokes. I have smoked ever since I was twelve years old—learned it in school, in fact.

MASTERSON: So that is what you learned at that expensive school?

EDNA: That—and other things. (Police whistle outside.)
The police—(Door bell rings) Ill go—

MASTERSON: My dear, you can't go to the door at this hour. I'll answer it.

EDNA: I suppose the servants are all in bed. Let them ring.
Someone has mistaken the house.
Masterson exits C.D. through hall.

POLICEMAN: (Outside): Sorry to trouble you, Sir—We traced a woman to this house. She let herself in with a latch key—she had just given us the slip.

MASTERSON: You are mistaken, officer. No woman you were after could possibly have a latch key to this house.

OFFICER: She surely came in here.

MASTERSON: Nonsense! Well, don't keep me standing here in the cold. Come in, if you must see for yourself. (Comes down hall and enters C.D., followed by police officer and Frank Burt.) Well—well—what's it all about?

OFFICER: Well, Sir, since this new law went into effect, we've had to keep an eye on the down-town rooming houses and restaurants. We raided a restaurant with private rooms tonight. Had orders to take everyone we found there to the station. I had this young fellow and his lady friend in tow. He stumbled and pretended to turn his foot. She cleared out and jumped into a cab. I did not see her face, she kept her fur over it—but she was a swell all right. I shoved him into another cab and we followed the young lady. She got out in the last block, we stopped a block farther down, and chased her. She came in here all right. I'll swear to that.

EDNA: You couldn't swear to it if you were on the witness stand. You simple got mixed and followed the wrong cab.

OFFICER: (Without turning head looks at EDNA, then back to BURT.): May—be!

MASTERSON: Tut-tut, officer, this is too much! You see there is only myself and my daughter here.

OFFICER:(Looks pointedly at EDNA. To BURT): I don't suppose you ever saw that young lady before?

BURT: Never!

MASTERSON: (Crosses, sputtering with rage): You blockhead! Are you daring to insinuate that my daughter was the woman you followed? This will cost you your job—do you know whose house you are in? I am John Masterson. (Crosses, D.R.) Good God! What's the world coming to? When a man can be insulted in his own house like this.

OFFICER: (His manner changing): No insult meant, Sir. Of course it was a mistake. I did not know it was your house, Mr. Masterson. I am sorr—

BURT: Haven't we inconvenienced this lady and gentleman long enough, officer?

MASTERSON: Yes,—you'll hear more of this—dragging strange men from some brothel into the homes of respectable people. A few more mistakes of this sort and you'll be in for suspension instead of promotion.(Crosses to table) Young man, this

should be a lesson to you, too. Well, good-night, officer. Hope you catch the hussy, whoever she is. Take a tip from me and don't break into any more decent homes to look for her.

Officer turns to go. Stops in doorway.

OFFICER: The lady was very careless, Sir. She dropped this. (Hands jeweled pin to MASTERSON, who, crossing over, examines it) Must have cost a pretty penny.

BURT: You can't be sure that the lady who was with me dropped that.

OFFICER: I can. Dead sure! I saw it fall from her dress. Her given name and the date are engraved on the back, you see. Pity they didn't put the last one on.

MASTERSON: H-m-m. Yes, great pity. Valuable piece too. Perhaps the lady will be more careful in the future. You have aroused my curiosity, officer. What are you going to do with this? Keep it until it is advertised for?

OFFICER: Yes Sir.

MASTERSON: And then?

OFFICER: Well, after the hearing tomorrow morning nothing can bother the young lady unless it happens to get into the newspapers. I hate to think, though, that she gave me the slip. It's my duty to produce her in the police court tomorrow morning, if possible.

MASTERSON: If possible. Well, she did give you the slip and you won't find her by standing here. I did not know that the young women of position, as you seem to think this one was—er—indulged in—er—slumming.

OFFICER: You'd be surprised, Sir, to see some of the swells from the Avenue who get caught in these little affairs.

MASTERSON: I am surprised. Well, well, good-night, Officer. Sorry I could not help you out. My daughter and I came home from a dance just before you rang. We saw no one. Good-night.

OFFICER (Starts out D.C. Turns back.): The—pin—Sir.

MASTERSON: Oh! Yes—yes—the pin.

Hands it to the officer who exits after a searching look. at EDNA.

Masterson shows them out, then enters C.D. and stands looking down at EDNA who is quietly sobbing.

MASTERSON: That was the pin I gave you on your birthday—where did you meet the man?

EDNA sobs.

MASTERSON: (Crosses over to her.): Answer me.

EDNA: Here in this room.

MASTERSON: Who is he? What is he?

EDNA: He came to fix the telephone.

MASTERSON: Came to fix the telephone? Good God! What next? (Crosses C.D.) How long have you known him?

EDNA: Three months.

MASTERSON: And you have been meeting him ever since?
She sobs.

MASTERSON: Answer me!

EDNA: Yes.

MASTERSON: It is unbelievable—my own daughter! You have been brought up like a princess. You were all I had. (Crosses D.R.) And I've worked, slaved, toiled, milled at my desk day and night like the veriest laborer for you. For you lay awake nights scheming how to make money for you. (Crosses C.) That you could disgrace me like this, never entered my head. My reward was the thought that you were happy, that you hadn't a wish ungratified. That you were envied and pointed out as the daughter of John Masterson, and heiress to untold millions. It was my ambition to combine my fortune with an old-world title for you. You were my pride and delight, and what do you do? You get into a vulgar affair with a man who comes to fix the telephone, meet him in a down-town brothel, get caught in a raid,—and are chased to your very door by a policeman. (Crosses C.P.) This may leak out at any time. If the reporters get hold of it, it will cost a fortune to hush it up. (Crosses D.C.) How could you do it?

EDNA: I wanted to live.

MASTERSON: Wanted to live? (Crosses D.R.) Haven't you been living? God knows it has cost enough.

EDNA: That's it! The cost! You think only in dollars and cents. Buy and sell. Horses, houses, land, stocks, bonds, titles, flesh and blood, your own flesh and blood. You are so busy buying and selling that you forget your women are human beings, They are instead things to hang jewels on to reflect your great success.

MASTERSON: Have you ever had a wish ungratified?
Crosses to her.

EDNA: That is just the trouble. I have had too much of everything all my life. (Rises, crosses down to couch.) You tried to keep me in cotton-wool and you made me think I could have anything I wanted, even the moon, if I cried long enough and hard enough. (Sits on couch.) And I, like so many others, of my kind, was brought into the world with diseased nerves.

MASTERSON: Diseased nerves!

EDNA: Yes,—diseased by too much indulgence before my birth, on the part of those who were responsible for me.

MASTERSON: That is some of the up-to-date twaddle you learned in school.
Crosses to her.

EDNA: I learned it from life. (Crosses to R. and sits in chair.) I was born a neurasthenic and brought up in an expensive school with the daughters of other rich men. All of us born old, all of us tingling with curiosity, our frayed nerves crying out for new sensations, and driving us to win the mystery at the back of life.

MASTERSON: Hysteria!

EDNA: The money of our fathers meant to us only so much license. We smoked cigarettes incessantly,—we spent our pocket-money on sweets filled with alcohol, and

on novels our mothers would blush to read. We told stories that you would be ashamed to tell in your club to-day, and then came out into society, still driven by our nerves. We eat and drink and dance and smoke too much in order to excite ourselves, and we dress to excite men. We listen with a laugh to unspeakable things that lecherous old men and lustful young men whisper in our ears, and all the time we are as deadly in our pursuit of our destinies as were the monkey women.

MASTERSON: That is hysterical exaggeration.

EDNA: It is the truth.

MASTERSON: (Crosses to her.): Now you who might have been a princess and are, after all, only a harlot, what are you going to do with yourself?

EDNA: No harlot, a free gift to the man I love.

MASTERSON: A common working man.

EDNA: Thank God!

MASTERSON: If you must indulge in a vulgar liaison why couldn't you select a man in your own set?

EDNA: And what then?

MASTERSON: Marriage, decency.

EDNA: I fail to see why a "vulgar liaison" ending in a marriage with another neurasthenic, like myself, necessarily means decency. I would then be, not only the envied daughter of John Masterson, but the envied wife also of Mr. Something or Other, therefore respectable, because of our unholy matrimony.

Laughs hysterically. Crosses U.R.

MASTERSON: Couldn't you remember your responsibility to society?

EDNA: I never knew I had any. In the curriculum on which all that fortune was spent to fit me for my very high place in the world, my trainers forgot to include that. (Crosses P.L.) They taught me only to gratify myself. All your millions failed to buy me a course in my responsibility to society.

MASTERSON: (Crosses to her.): I never knew you before.

EDNA: You might have known me if you had taken less time for money making. When I was a child I was always a little afraid of you.

MASTERSON: Afraid of your own father—

EDNA: You were a king to me. Never by any chance a father. (MASTERSON crosses to couch.) Nurse and I used often to drive by a row of clean shing little cottages out in the suburbs with flowers in front and children playing all about. Sometimes I saw a man getting off the car, just the common street car at the corner. He picked her up and carried her on his shoulder. Then one of the little girls, about my own age, left her playmates and ran to meet him with a whoop of joy. She buried her hands in his hair and held on tight. A little woman in a simple white dress came down to the gate. He put his arm around her and they all went into one of the cottages. Oh, how I used to envy that little girl.

MASTERSON: You had no need—

EDNA: Hadn't I? I could imagine her toys scattered all over the house, and her father sitting on the floor playing choo-choo cars with her. I used to beg nurse to drive me that way every day, and I made up my mind then, in my childish way, that some day I would have a little cottage like that. I used to lie on a big rug on the nursery floor, in front of the fire, such a lonely little thing—you do not know how lonely the baby of a rich man can be—but I do—I do! I tried to get courage to run and meet you when you came home.

MASTERSON: Why didn't you?

EDNA: You seldom came home, and I was afraid of what the splendid butler might think. Once when I knew you were in the library, I crept down to the door and stood there, but I was afraid to go in. So I, the poor lonely little heiress to almost untold millions, stood in the great big hall with my face pressed tight, tight, against the door, desperately longing to go in and snuggle up to you, as I knew the little girl in the cottage was sitting on her father's lap at that very moment, perhaps.

MASTERSON: Edna,—I never—

Crosses C.

EDNA: No, no, wait, Dad—you say you lived to gratify my every wish. And I want only one thing. (Rises.) Strip me of all this,—I don't want it. I want only my little cottage, with my mate. And I want a little girl who isn't afraid to run and meet her father. I don't know anything about my responsibility to society,—I've done with it,—its shame, its pettiness, its hysterical lean-heartedness. I want no more of it. I want to live my own life in my own way, with my common working-man. It's the only clean, the only decent, the only right way.

MASTERSON: This man who took you into a brothel—

EDNA: He never wanted to meet me in those places. I did not care where I met him, so long as I did meet him, and you may be sure there were others of my set there on that very night. (Crosses to him.) Dad, you must let me marry him, if he'll have me—

MASTERSON: Have you? He'll jump at the chance,—

EDNA: Oh, I'm not so sure of that. You must do this, Dad,—

MASTERSON: Edna, child, you know I would do anything for your happiness,—

EDNA: Then go quick, call up the police station. Make them let him out, now—this minute—You can fix it. You are John Masterson, you can do anything, even with the police—hurry—hurry—

MASTERSON: But this is impossible, this not for your happiness—

EDNA: You won't do it?

MASTERSON: I can't. You are mad.

EDNA takes cloak and starts for door.

EDNA: If your rotten society of which you think so much is sane, then thank God, I am mad.

MASTERSON: If you do—

EDNA: Well, what if I do—Telephone rings. MASTERSON answers.

MASTERSON: What is it? What? Shot himself? Why call me up at three in the morning to tell me that? A letter to my daughter in his pocket? Impossible! My daughter does not know him,—

EDNA: Dad! Frank,—killed himself—

EDNA (Breaks into hysterical laughter): Now,—no need to shock society,—you can buy me a title.

Falls in faint, dragging portieres with her.

CURTAIN

The Acorn-Planter

A California Forest Play
Planned To Be Sung By Efficient Singers
Accompanied By A Capable Orchestra
1916

Argument

In the morning of the world, while his tribe makes its camp for the night in a grove, Red Cloud, the first man of men, and the first man of the Nishinam, save in war, sings of the duty of life, which duty is to make life more abundant. The Shaman, or medicine man, sings of foreboding and prophecy. The War Chief, who commands in war, sings that war is the only way to life. This Red Cloud denies, affirming that the way of life is the way of the acorn-planter, and that whoso slays one man slays the planter of many acorns. Red Cloud wins the Shaman and the people to his contention. After the passage of thousands of years, again in the grove appear the Nishinam. In Red Cloud, the War Chief, the Shaman, and the Dew-Woman are repeated the eternal figures of the philosopher, the soldier, the priest, and the woman — types ever realizing themselves afresh in the social adventures of man. Red Cloud recognizes the wrecked explorers as planters and life-makers, and is for treating them with kindness. But the War Chief and the idea of war are dominant. The Shaman joins with the war party, and is privy to the massacre of the explorers. A hundred years pass, when, on their seasonal

migration, the Nishinam camp for the night in the grove. They still live, and the war formula for life seems vindicated, despite the imminence of the superior life-makers, the whites, who are flooding into California from north, south, east, and west — the English, the Americans, the Spaniards, and the Russians. The massacre by the white men follows, and Red Cloud, dying, recognizes the white men as brother acorn-planters, the possessors of the superior life-formula of which he had always been a protagonist. In the Epilogue, or Apotheosis, occur the celebration of the death of war and the triumph of the acorn-planters.

Prologue

Time. In the morning of the world.

Scene. A forest hillside where great trees stand with wide spaces between. A stream flows from a spring that bursts out of the hillside. It is a place of lush ferns and brakes, also, of thickets of such shrubs as inhabit a redwood forest floor. At the left, in the open level space at the foot of the hillside, extending out of sight among the trees, is visible a portion of a Nishinam Indian camp. It is a temporary camp for the night. Small cooking fires smoulder. Standing about are withe-woven baskets for the carrying of supplies and dunnage. Spears and bows and quivers of arrows lie about. Boys drag in dry branches for firewood. Young women fill gourds with water from the stream and proceed about their camp tasks. A number of older women are pounding acorns in stone mortars with stone pestles. An old man and a Shaman, or priest, look expectantly up the hillside. All wear moccasins and are skin-clad, primitive, in their garmenting. Neither iron nor woven cloth occurs in the weapons and gear.

Act I.

Shaman

(Looking up hillside.)

Red Cloud is late.

Old Man

(After inspection of hillside.)

He has chased the deer far. He is patient.

In the chase he is patient like an old man.

Shaman

His feet are as fleet as the deer's.

Old Man

(Nodding.)

And he is more patient than the deer.

Shaman

(Assertively, as if inculcating a lesson.)

He is a mighty chief.

Old Man

(Nodding.)

His father was a mighty chief. He is like to his father.

Shaman

(More assertively.)

He is his father. It is so spoken. He is his father's father. He is the first man, the first Red Cloud, ever born, and born again, to chiefship of his people.

Old Man

It is so spoken.

Shaman

His father was the Coyote. His mother was the Moon. And he was the first man.

Old Man

(Repeating.)

His father was the Coyote. His mother was the Moon. And he was the first man.

Shaman

He planted the first acorns, and he is very wise.

Old Man

(Repeating.)

He planted the first acorns, and he is very wise.

(Cries from the women and a turning of faces. Red Cloud appears among his

hunters descending the hillside. All
carry spears, and bows and arrows.
Some carry rabbits and other small
game. Several carry deer)

PLAINT OF THE NISHINAM

Red Cloud, the meat-bringer!

Red Cloud, the acorn-planter!

Red Cloud, first man of the Nishinam!

Thy people hunger.

Far have they fared.

Hard has the way been.

Day long they sought,

High in the mountains,

Deep in the pools,

Wide 'mong the grasses,

In the bushes, and tree-tops,

Under the earth and flat stones.

Few are the acorns,

Past is the time for berries,

Fled are the fishes, the prawns and the grasshoppers,

Blown far are the grass-seeds,

Flown far are the young birds,

Old are the roots and withered.

Built are the fires for the meat.

Laid are the boughs for sleep,

Yet thy people cannot sleep.

Red Cloud, thy people hunger.

Red Cloud

(Still descending.)

Good hunting! Good hunting!

Hunters

Good hunting! Good hunting!

(Completing the descent, Red Cloud
motions to the meat-bearers. They throw

down their burdens before the women,

who greedily inspect the spoils.)

MEAT SONG OF THE NISHINAM

Meat that is good to eat,

Tender for old teeth,

Gristle for young teeth,

Big deer and fat deer,

Lean meat and fat meat,

Haunch-meat and knuckle-bone,
Liver and heart.
Food for the old men,
Life for all men,
For women and babes.
Easement of hunger-pangs,
Sorrow destroying,
Laughter provoking,
Joy invoking,
In the smell of its smoking
And its sweet in the mouth.
(The younger women take charge of the meat,
and the older women resume their acorn-pounding.)
(Red Cloud approaches the acorn-pounders
and watches them with pleasure.
All group about him, the Shaman to the
fore, and hang upon his every action, his
every utterance.)
Red Cloud
The heart of the acorn is good?
First Old Woman
(Nodding.)
It is good food.
Red Cloud
When you have pounded and winnowed and
washed away the bitter.
Second Old Woman
As thou taught'st us, Red Cloud, when the
world was very young and thou wast the first man.
Red Cloud
It is a fat food. It makes life, and life is good.
Shaman
It was thou, Red Cloud, gathering the acorns
and teaching the storing, who gavest life to the
Nishinam in the lean years aforetime, when the
tribes not of the Nishinam passed like the dew
of the morning.
(He nods a signal to the Old Man.)
Old Man
In the famine in the old time,
When the old man was a young man,
When the heavens ceased from raining,

When the grasslands parched and withered,
When the fishes left the river,
And the wild meat died of sickness,
In the tribes that knew not acorns,
All their women went dry-breasted,
All their younglings chewed the deer-hides,
All their old men sighed and perished,
And the young men died beside them,
Till they died by tribe and totem,
And o'er all was death upon them.

Yet the Nishinam unvanquished,
Did not perish by the famine.

Oh, the acorns Red Cloud gave them!
Oh, the acorns Red Cloud taught them
How to store in willow baskets
'Gainst the time and need of famine!

Shaman

(Who, throughout the Old Man's recital, has
nodded approbation, turning to Red
Cloud.)

Sing to thy people, Red Cloud, the song of
life which is the song of the acorn.

Red Cloud

(Making ready to begin)

And which is the song of woman, O Shaman.

Shaman

(Hushing the people to listen, solemnly)

He sings with his father's lips, and with the
lips of his father's fathers to the beginning of time
and men.

SONG OF THE FIRST MAN

Red Cloud

I am Red Cloud,

The first man of the Nishinam.

My father was the Coyote.

My mother was the Moon.

The Coyote danced with the stars,

And wedded the Moon on a mid-summer night

The Coyote is very wise,

The Moon is very old,

Mine is his wisdom,

Mine is her age.

I am the first man.
I am the life-maker and the father of life.
I am the fire-bringer.
The Nishinam were the first men,
And they were without fire,
And knew the bite of the frost of bitter nights.
The panther stole the fire from the East,
The fox stole the fire from the panther,
The ground squirrel stole the fire from the fox,
And I, Red Cloud, stole the fire from the ground squirrel.
I, Red Cloud, stole the fire for the Nishinam,
And hid it in the heart of the wood.
To this day is the fire there in the heart of the wood.
I am the Acorn-Planter.
I brought down the acorns from heaven.
I planted the short acorns in the valley.
I planted the long acorns in the valley.
I planted the black-oak acorns that sprout, that sprout!
I planted the sho-kum and all the roots of the ground.
I planted the oat and the barley, the beaver-tail grass-nut,
The tar-weed and crow-foot, rock lettuce and ground lettuce,
And I taught the virtue of clover in the season of blossom,
The yellow-flowered clover, ball-rolled in its yellow dust.
I taught the cooking in baskets by hot stones from the fire,
Took the bite from the buckeye and soap-root
By ground-roasting and washing in the sweetness of water,
And of the manzanita the berry I made into flour,
Taught the way of its cooking with hot stones in sand pools,
And the way of its eating with the knobbed tail of the deer.
Taught I likewise the gathering and storing,
The parching and pounding
Of the seeds from the grasses and grass-roots;
And taught I the planting of seeds in the Nishinam home-camps,
In the Nishinam hills and their valleys,
In the due times and seasons,
To sprout in the spring rains and grow ripe in the sun.
Shaman
Hail, Red Cloud, the first man!
The People
Hail, Red Cloud, the first man!
Shaman
Who showedst us the way of our feet in the world!

The People
Who showedst us the way of our feet in the world!
Shaman
Who showedst us the way of our food in the world!
The People
Who showedst us the way of our food in the world!
Shaman
Who showedst us the way of our hearts in the world!
The People
Who showedst us the way of our hearts in the world!
Shaman
Who gavest us the law of family!
The People
Who gavest us the law of family!
Shaman
The law of tribe!
The People
The law of tribe!
Shaman
The law of totem!
The People
The law of totem!
Shaman
And madest us strong in the world among men!
The People
And madest us strong in the world among men!
Red Cloud
Life is good, O Shaman, and I have sung but
half its song. Acorns are good. So is woman
good. Strength is good. Beauty is good. So is
kindness good. Yet are all these things without
power except for woman. And by these things
woman makes strong men, and strong men make
for life, ever for more life.
War Chief
(With gesture of interruption that causes
remonstrance from the Shaman but which
Red Cloud acknowledges.)
I care not for beauty. I desire strength in
battle and wind in the chase that I may kill my
enemy and run down my meat.
Red Cloud

Well spoken, O War Chief. By voices in council we learn our minds, and that, too, is strength. Also, is it kindness. For kindness and strength and beauty are one. The eagle in the high blue of the sky is beautiful. The salmon leaping the white water in the sunlight is beautiful. The young man fastest of foot in the race is beautiful. And because they fly well, and leap well, and run well, are they beautiful. Beauty must beget beauty. The ring-tail cat begets the ring-tail cat, the dove the dove. Never does the dove beget the ring-tail cat. Hearts must be kind. The little turtle is not kind. That is why it is the little turtle. It lays its eggs in the sun-warm sand and forgets its young forever. And the little turtle is forever the little turtle. But we are not little turtles, because we are kind. We do not leave our young to the sun in the sand. Our women keep our young warm under their hearts, and, after, they keep them warm with deer-skin and campfire. Because we are kind we are men and not little turtles, and that is why we eat the little turtle that is not strong because it is not kind.

War Chief

(Gesturing to be heard.)

The Modoc come against us in their strength. Often the Modoc come against us. We cannot be kind to the Modoc.

Red Cloud

That will come after. Kindness grows. First must we be kind to our own. After, long after, all men will be kind to all men, and all men will be very strong. The strength of the Nishinam is not the strength of its strongest fighter. It is the strength of all the Nishinam added together that makes the Nishinam strong. We talk, you and I, War Chief and First Man, because we are kind one to the other, and thus we add together our wisdom, and all the Nishinam are stronger because we have talked.

(A voice is heard singing. Red Cloud

holds up his hand for silence.)

MATING SONG

Dew-Woman

In the morning by the river,
In the evening at the fire,
In the night when all lay sleeping,
Torn was I with life's desire.
There were stirrings 'neath my heart-beats
Of the dreams that came to me;
In my ears were whispers, voices,
Of the children yet to be.

Red Cloud

(As Red Cloud sings, Dew-Woman
steals from behind a tree and approaches
him.)

In the morning by the river
Saw I first my maid of dew,
Daughter of the dew and dawnlight,
Of the dawn and honey-dew.
She was laughter, she was sunlight,
Woman, maid, and mate, and wife;
She was sparkle, she was gladness,
She was all the song of life.

Dew-Woman

In the night I built my fire,
Fire that maidens foster when
In the ripe of mating season
Each builds for her man of men.

Red Cloud

In the night I sought her, proved her,
Found her ease, content, and rest,
After day of toil and struggle
Man's reward on woman's breast.

Dew-Woman

Came to me my mate and lover;
Kind the hands he laid on me;
Wooed me gently as a man may,
Father of the race to be.

Red Cloud

Soft her arms about me bound me,
First man of the Nishinam,
Arms as soft as dew and dawnlight,

Daughter of the Nishinam.

Red Cloud

She was life and she was woman!

Dew-Woman

He was life and he was man!

Red Cloud and Dew-Woman

(Arms about each other.)

In the dusk-time of our love-night,

There beside the marriage fire,

Proved we all the sweets of living,

In the arms of our desire.

War Chief

(Angrily.)

The councils of men are not the place for
women.

Red Cloud

(Gently.)

As men grow kind and wise there will be
women in the councils of men. As men grow
their women must grow with them if they would
continue to be the mothers of men.

War Chief

It is told of old time that there are women in
the councils of the Sim. And is it not told that
the Sun Man will destroy us?

Red Cloud

Then is the Sun Man the stronger; it may be
because of his kindness and wiseness, and because
of his women.

Young Brave

Is it told that the women of the Sun are good
to the eye, soft to the arm, and a fire in the heart
of man?

Shaman

(Holding up hand solemnly.)

It were well, lest the young do not forget, to
repeat the old word again.

War Chief

(Nodding confirmation.)

Here, where the tale is told.

(Pointing to the spring.)

Here, where the water burst from under the heel

of the Sun Man mounting into the sky.
(War Chief leads the way up the hillside
to the spring, and signals to the Old Man
to begin)

Old Man

When the world was in the making,
Here within the mighty forest,
Came the Sun Man every morning.
White and shining was the Sun Man,
Blue his eyes were as the sky-blue,
Bright his hair was as dry grass is,
Warm his eyes were as the sun is,
Fruit and flower were in his glances;
All he looked on grew and sprouted,
As these trees we see about us,
Mightiest trees in all the forest,
For the Sun Man looked upon them.
Where his glance fell grasses seeded,
Where his feet fell sprang upstarting —
Buckeye woods and hazel thickets,
Berry bushes, manzanita,
Till his pathway was a garden,
Flowing after like a river,
Laughing into bud and blossom.
There was never frost nor famine
And the Nishinam were happy,
Singing, dancing through the seasons,
Never cold and never hungered,
When the Sun Man lived among us.
But the foxes mean and cunning,
Hating Nishinam and all men,
Laid their snares within this forest,
Caught the Sun Man in the morning,
With their ropes of sinew caught him,
Bound him down to steal his wisdom
And become themselves bright Sun Men,
Warm of glance and fruitful-footed,
Masters of the frost and famine.
Swiftly the Coyote running
Came to aid the fallen Sun Man,
Swiftly killed the cunning foxes,
Swiftly cut the ropes of sinew,

Swiftly the Coyote freed him.
But the Sun Man in his anger,
Lightning flashing, thunder-throwing,
Loosed the frost and fanged the famine,
Thorned the bushes, pinched the berries,
Put the bitter in the buckeye,
Rocked the mountains to their summits,
Flung the hills into the valleys,
Sank the lakes and shoaled the rivers,
Poured the fresh sea in the salt sea,
Stamped his foot here in the forest,
Where the water burst from under
Heel that raised him into heaven —
Angry with the world forever
Rose the Sun Man into heaven.

Shaman

(Solemnly.)

I am the Shaman. I know what has gone
before and what will come after. I have passed
down through the gateway of death and talked
with the dead. My eyes have looked upon the
unseen things. My ears have heard the
unspoken words. And now I shall tell you of
the Sun Man in the days to come.

(Shaman stiffens suddenly with hideous
facial distortions, with inturned eye-balls
and loosened jaw. He waves his arms
about, writhes and twists in torment, as
if in epilepsy.)

(The Women break into a wailing, inarticulate
chant, swaying their bodies to the
accent. The men join them somewhat
reluctantly, all save Red Cloud, who
betrays vexation, and War Chief, who
betrays truculence.)

(Shaman, leading the rising frenzy, with
convulsive shiverings and trembling tears
of his skin garments so that he is quite
naked save for a girdle of eagle-claws
about his thighs. His long black hair
flies about his face. With an abruptness
that is startling, he ceases all movement

and stands erect, rigid. This is greeted
with a low moaning that slowly dies
away.)

CHANT OF PROPHECY

Shaman

The Sun never grows cold.

The Sun Man is like the Sun.

His anger never grows cold.

The Sun Man will return.

The Sun Man will come back from the Sun.

People

The Sun Man will return.

The Sun Man will come back from the Sun.

Shaman

There is a sign.

As the water burst forth when he rose into the sky,

So will the water cease to flow when he returns from the sky.

The Sun Man is mighty.

In his eyes is blue fire.

In his hands he bears the thunder.

The lightnings are in his hair.

People

In his hands he bears the thunder.

The lightnings are in his hair.

Shaman

There is a sign.

The Sun Man is white.

His skin is white like the sun.

His hair is bright like the sunlight.'

His eyes are blue like the sky.

People

There is a sign.

The Sun Man is white.

Shaman

The Sun Man is mighty.

He is the enemy of the Nishinam.

He will destroy the Nishinam.

People

He is the enemy of the Nishinam.

He will destroy the Nishinam.

Shaman

There is a sign.

The Sun Man will bear the thunder in his hand.
People
There is a sign.
The Sun Man will bear the thunder in his hand.
Shaman
In the day the Sun Man comes
The water from the spring will no longer flow.
And in that day he will destroy the Nishinam.
With the thunder will he destroy the Nishinam.
The Nishinam will be like last year's grasses.
The Nishinam will be like the smoke of last year's campfires.
The Nishinam will be less than the dreams that trouble the sleeper.
The Nishinam will be like the days no man remembers.
I am the Shaman.
I have spoken.
(The People set up a sad wailing.)
War Chief
(Striking his chest with his fist.)
Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!
(The People cease from their wailing and
look to the War Chief with hopeful
expectancy.)
War Chief
I am the War Chief. In war I command.
Nor the Shaman nor Red Cloud may say me nay
when in war I command. Let the Sun Man
come back. I am not afraid. If the foxes snared
him with ropes, then can I slay him with spear-
thrust and war-club. I am the War Chief. In
war I command.
(The People greet War Chief's pronouncement
with warlike cries of approval.)
Red Cloud
The foxes are cunning. If they snared the Sun Man
With ropes of sinew, then let us be cunning
And snare him with ropes of kindness.
In kindness, O War Chief, is strength, much strength.
Shaman
Red Cloud speaks true. In kindness is strength.
War Chief
I am the War Chief.
Shaman

You cannot slay the Sun Man.

War Chief

I am the War Chief.

Shaman

The Sun Man fights with the thunder in his hand.

War Chief

I am the War Chief.

Red Cloud

(As he speaks the People are visibly won by his argument.)

You speak true, O War Chief. In war you command. You are strong, most strong. You have slain the Modoc. You have slain the Napa.

You have slain the Clam-Eaters of the big water till the last one is not. Yet you have not slain all the foxes. The foxes cannot fight, yet are they stronger than you because you cannot slay them. The foxes are foxes, but we are men.

When the Sun Man comes we will not be cunning

like the foxes. We will be kind. Kindness and love will we give to the Sun Man, so that he will be our friend. Then will he melt the frost, pull the teeth of famine, give us back our rivers of deep water, our lakes of sweet water, take the bitter from the buckeye, and in all ways make the world the good world it was before he left us.

People

Hail, Red Cloud, the first man!

Hail, Red Cloud, the Acorn-Planter!

Who showed us the way of our feet in the world!

Who showed us the way of our food in the world!

Who showed us the way of our hearts in the world!

Who gave us the law of family,

The law of tribe,

The law of totem,

And made us strong in the world among men!

(While the People sing the hillside slowly grows dark.)

ACT I

(Ten thousand years have passed, and it is the time of the early voyaging from Europe to the waters of the Pacific, when the

deserted hillside is again revealed as the moon rises. The stream no longer flows from the spring. Since the grove is used only as a camp for the night when the Nishinam are on their seasonal migration there are no signs of previous camps.)

(Enter from right, at end of day's march, women, old men, and Shaman, the women bending under their burdens of camp gear and dunnage)

(Enter from left youths carrying fish-spears and large fish)

(Appear, coming down the hillside, Red Cloud and the hunters, many carrying meat.)

(The various repeated characters, despite differences of skin garmenting and decoration, resemble their prototypes of the prologue.)

Red Cloud

Good hunting! Good hunting!

Hunters

Good hunting! Good hunting!

Youths

Good fishing! Good fishing!

Women

Good berries! Good acorns!

(The women and youths and hunters, as they reach the campsite, begin throwing down their burdens)

Dew-Woman

(Discovering the dry spring.)

The water no longer flows!

Shaman

(Stilling the excitement that is immediate on the discovery.)

The word of old time that has come down to us from all the Shamans who have gone before!

The Sun Man has come back from the Sun.

Dew-Woman

(Looking to Red Cloud.)

Let Red Cloud speak. Since the morning of the world has Red Cloud ever been reborn with

the ancient wisdom to guide us.

War Chief

Save in war. In war I command.

(He picks out hunters by name.)

Deer Foot... Elk Man... Antelope. Run
through the forest, climb the hill-tops, seek down
the valleys, for aught you may find of this Sun Man.

(At a wave of the War Chief's hand the
three hunters depart in different directions.)

Dew-Woman

Let Red Cloud speak his mind.

Red Cloud

(Quietly)

Last night the earth shook and there was a
roaring in the air. Often have I seen, when the
earth shakes and there is a roaring, that springs
in some places dry up, and that in other places
where were no springs, springs burst forth.

Shaman

There is a sign.

The Shamans told it of old.

The Sun Man will bear the thunder in his hand.

People

There is a sign.

The Sun Man will bear the thunder in his hand.

Shaman

The roaring in the air was the thunder of the
Sun Man's return. Now will he destroy the
Nishinam. Such is the word.

War Chief

Hoh! Hoh!

(From right Deer Foot runs in.)

Deer Foot

(Breathless.)

They come! He comes!

War Chief

Who comes?

Deer Foot

The Sun Men. The Sun Man. He is their
chief. He marches before them. And he is
white.

People

There is a sign.
The Sun Man is white.
Red Cloud
Carries he the thunder in his hand?
Deer Foot
(Puzzled)
He looks hungry.
War Chief
Hoh! Hoh! The Sun Man is hungry. It
will be easy to kill a hungry Sun Man.
Red Cloud
It would be easy to be kind to a hungry Sun
Man and give him food. We have much. The
hunting has been good.
War Chief
Better to kill the Sun Man.
(He turns upon People, indicating most
commands in gestures as he prepares the
ambush, making women and boys conceal
all the camp outfit and game, and
disposing the armed hunters among the
ferns and behind trees till all are hidden.)
Elk Man and Antelope
(Running down hillside)
The Sun Man comes.
(War Chief sends them to hiding places)
War Chief
(Preparing himself to hide)
You have not hidden, O Red Cloud.
Red Cloud
(Stepping into shadow of big tree where he
remains inconspicuous though dimly
visible)
I would see this Sun Man and talk with him.
(The sound of singing is heard, and War
Chief conceals himself)
(Sun Man, with handful of followers, singing
to ease the tedium of the march, enter
from right. They are patently survivors
of a wrecked exploring skip, making their
way inland)
Sun Men

We sailed three hundred strong
For the far Barbaree;
Our voyage has been most long
For the far Barbaree;
So — it's a long pull,
Give a strong pull,
For the far Barbaree.
We sailed the oceans wide
For the coast of Barbaree;
And left our ship a sinking
On the coast of Barbaree;
So — it's a long pull,
Give a strong pull,
For the far Barbaree.
Our ship went fast a-lee
On the rocks of Barbaree;
That's why we quit the sea
On the rocks of Barbaree.
So — it's a long pull,
Give a strong pull,
For the far Barbaree.
We quit the bitter seas
On the coast of Barbaree;
To seek the savag-ees
Of the far Barbaree.
So — it's a long pull,
Give a strong pull,
For the far Barbaree.
Our feet are lame and sore
In the far Barbaree;
From treading of the shore
Of the far Barbaree.
So — it's a long pull,
Give a strong pull,
For the far Barbaree.
A weary brood are we
In the far Barbaree;
Sea cunies of the sea
In the far Barbaree.
So — it's a long pull,
Give a strong pull,
For the far Barbaree.

Sun Man

(Who alone carries a musket, and who is evidently captain of the wrecked company)

No farther can we go this night. Mayhap to-morrow we may find the savages and food.

(He glances about.)

This far world grows noble trees. We shall sleep as in a temple.

First Sea Cuny

(Espying Red Cloud, and pointing.)

Look, Captain!

Sun Man

(Making the universal peace-sign, arm raised and out, palm-outward.)

Who are you? Speak. We come in peace.

We kindness seek.

Red Cloud

(Advancing out of the shadow.)

Whence do you come?

Sun Man

From the great sea.

Red Cloud

I do not understand. No one journeys on the great sea.

Sun Man

We have journeyed many moons.

Red Cloud

Have you come from the sun?

Sun Man

God wot! We have journeyed across the sun, high and low in the sky, and over the sun and under the sun the round world 'round.

Red Cloud

(With conviction.)

You come from the Sun. Your hair is like the summer sunburnt grasses. Your eyes are blue. Your skin is white.

(With absolute conviction.)

You are the Sun Man.

Sun Man

(With a shrug of shoulders.)

Have it so. I come from the Sun. I am the

Sun Man.

Red Cloud

Do you carry the thunder in your hand?

Sun Man

(Nonplussed for the moment, glances at his musket, then smiles.)

Yes, I carry the thunder in my hand.

(War Chief and the Hunters leap suddenly from ambush. Sun Man warns Sea Cunes not to resist. War Chief captures and holds Sun Man, and Sea Cunes are similarly captured and held. Women and boys appear, and examine prisoners curiously.)

War Chief

Hoh! Hoh! Hoh! I have captured the Sun Man! Like the foxes, I have captured the Sun Man! — Deer Foot! Elk Man! The foxes held the Sun Man. I now hold the Sun Man. Then can you hold the Sun Man.

(Deer Foot and Elk Man seize the Sun Man.)

Red Cloud

(To Shaman.)

He said he came in kindness.

War Chief

(Sneering.)

In kindness, with the thunder in his hand.

Shaman

(Deflected to partisanship of War Chief by War Chief's success.)

By his own lips has he said it, with the thunder in his hand.

War Chief

You are the Sun Man.

Sun Man

(Shrugging shoulders.)

My names are many as the stars. Call me White Man.

Red Cloud

I am Red Cloud, the first man.

Sun Man

Then am I Adam, the first man and your
brother.

(Glancing about.)

And this is Eden, to look upon it.

Red Cloud

My father was the Coyote.

Sun Man

My father was Jehovah.

Red Cloud

I am the Fire-Bringer. I stole the fire from
the ground squirrel and hid it in the heart of
the wood.

Sun Man

Then am I Prometheus, your brother. I
stole the fire from heaven and hid it in the heart
of the wood.

Red Cloud

I am the Acorn-Planter. I am the Food-
Bringer, the Life-Maker. I make food for
more life, ever more life.

Sun Man

Then am I truly your brother. Life-Maker
am I, tilling the soil in the sweat of my brow
from the beginning of time, planting all manner
of good seeds for the harvest.

(Looking sharply at Red Cloud's skin
garments.)

Also am I the Weaver and Cloth-Maker.

(Holding out arm so that Red Cloud may
examine the cloth of the coat)

From the hair of the goat and the wool of
the sheep, and from beaten and spun grasses,
do I make the cloth to keep man warm.

Shaman

(Breaking in boastfully.)

I am the Shaman. I know all secret things.

Sun Man

I know my pathway under the sun over all
the seas, and I know the secrets of the stars
that show me my path where no path is. I
know when the Wolf of Darkness shall eat the
moon.

(Pointing toward moon.)
On this night shall the Wolf of Darkness eat
the moon.
(He turns suddenly to Red Cloud,
drawing sheath-knife and passing it
to him.)
More, O First Man and Acorn-Planter. I am
the Iron-Maker. Behold!
(Red Cloud examines knife, understands
immediately its virtue, cuts easily a strip
of skin from his skin garment, and is
overcome with the wonder of the knife.)
War Chief
(Exhibiting a long bow.)
I am the War Chief. No man, save me, has
strength to bend this bow. I can slay farther
than any man.
(A huge bear has come out among the
bushes far up the hillside)
Sun Man
I, too, am War Chief over men, and I can
slay farther than you.
War Chief
Hoh! Hoh!
Sun Man
(Pointing to bear)
Can you slay that with your strong bow?
War Chief
(Dubiously)
It is a far shot. Too far. No man can slay
a great bear so far.
(Sun Man, shaking off from his arms the
hands of Deer Foot and Elk Man,
aims musket and fires. The bear falls,
and the Nishinam betray astonishment
and awe)
(At a quick signal from War Chief,
Sun Man is again seized. War Chief
takes away musket and examines it.)
Shaman
There is a sign.
People

There is a sign.
He carries the thunder in his hand.
He slays with the thunder in his hand.
He is the enemy of the Nishinam.
He will destroy the Nishinam.
Shaman
There is a sign.
People
There is a sign.
In the day the Sun Man comes,
The waters from the spring will no longer flow,
And in that day will he destroy the Nishinam.
War Chief
(Exhibiting musket.)
Hoh! Hoh! I have taken the Sun Man's
thunder.
Shaman
Now shall the Sun Man die that the Nishinam
may live.
Red Cloud
He is our brother. He, too, is an acorn-
planter. He has spoken.
Shaman
He is the Sun Man, and he is our eternal
enemy. He shall die.
War Chief
In war I command.
(To Hunters.)
Tie their feet with stout thongs that they
may not run. And then make ready with bow
and arrow to do the deed.
(Hunters obey, urging and thrusting the
Sea Cunies into a compact group behind
the Sun Man.)
Red Cloud
Shaman I am not.
I know not the secret things.
I say the things I know.
When you plant kindness you harvest kindness.
When you plant blood you harvest blood.
He who plants one acorn makes way for life.
He who slays one man slays the planter of a

thousand acorns.
Shaman
Shaman I am.
I see the dark future.
I see the Sun Man's death,
The journey he must take
Through thick and endless forest
Where lost souls wander howling
A thousand moons of moons.
People
Through thick and endless forest
Where lost souls wander howling
A thousand moons of moons.
(War Chief arranges Hunters with their
bows and arrows for the killing.)
Sun Man
(To Red Cloud.)
You will slay us?
Red Cloud
(Indicating War Chief.)
In war he commands.
Sun Man
(Addressing the Nishinam)
Nor am I a Shaman. But I will tell you true
things to be. Our brothers are acorn-planters,
cloth-weavers, iron-workers. Our brothers are
life-makers and masters of life. Many are our
brothers and strong. They will come after us.
Your First Man has spoken true words. When
you plant blood you harvest blood. Our brothers
will come to the harvest with the thunder
in their hands. There is a sign. This night,
and soon, will the Wolf of Darkness eat the
moon. And by that sign will our brothers come
on the trail we have broken.
(As final preparation for the killing is
completed, and as Hunters are arranged
with their bows and arrows,
Sun Man sings.)
Sun Man
Our brothers will come after,
On our trail to farthest lands;

Our brothers will come after
With the thunder in their hands.

Sun Men

Loud will be the weeping,
Red will be the reaping,
High will be the heaping
Of the slain their law commands.

Sun Man

Givers of law, our brothers,
This is the law they say:
Who takes the life of a brother
Ten of the slayers shall pay.

Sun Men

Our brothers will come after,
On our trail to farthest lands;
Our brothers will come after
With the thunder in their hands.
Loud will be the weeping,
Red will be the reaping,
High will be the heaping
Of the slain their law commands.

Sun Man

Our brothers will come after
By the courses that we lay;
Many and strong our brothers,
Masters of life are they.

Sun Men

Our brothers will come after
On our trail to farthest lands;
Our brothers will come after
With the thunder in their hands.
Loud will be the weeping,
Red will be the reaping,
High will be the heaping
Of the slain their law commands.

Sun Man

Plowers of land, our brothers,
Of the hills and pleasant leas;
Under the sun our brothers
With their keels will plow the seas.

Sun Men

Our brothers will come after,

On our trail to farthest lands;
Our brothers will come after
With the thunder in their hands.
Loud will be the weeping,
Red will be the reaping,
High will be the heaping
Of the slain their law commands.

Sun Man

Mighty men are our brothers,
Quick to forgive and to wrath,
Sailing the seas, our brothers
Will follow us on our path.

Sun Men

Our brothers will come after,
On our trail to farthest lands;
Our brothers will come after
With the thunder in their hands.
Loud will be the weeping,
Red will be the reaping,
High will be the heaping
Of the slain their law commands.

(At signal from War Chief the arrows
are discharged, and repeatedly
discharged. The Sun Men fall. The War
Chief himself kills the Sun Man.)

(In what follows, Red Cloud and Dew-
Woman stand aside, taking no part.
Red Cloud is depressed, and at the
same time is overcome with the wonder
of the knife which he still holds.)

War Chief

(Brandishing musket and drifting stiff-
legged, as he sings, into the beginning
of a war dance of victory.)

Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!

I have slain the Sun Man!

Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!

I hold his thunder in my hand!

Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!

Greatest of War Chiefs am I!

Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!

I have slain the Sun Man!

(The dance grows wilder.)
(After a time the hillside begins to darken)
Dew-Woman
(Pointing to the moon entering eclipse)
Lo! The Wolf of Darkness eats the Moon!
(In consternation the dance is broken off
for the moment)
Shaman
(Reassuringly)
It is a sign.
The Sun Man is dead.
War Chief
(Recovering courage and resuming dance.)
Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!
The Sun Man is dead!
People
(Resuming dance.)
Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!
The Sun Man is dead!
(As darkness increases the dance grows
into a saturnalia, until complete darkness
settles down and hides the hillside.)

Act II

(A hundred years have passed, when the
hillside and the Nishinam in their
temporary camp are revealed. The spring
is flowing, and Women are filling gourds
with water. Red Cloud and Dew-
Woman stand apart from their people.)
Shaman
(Pointing.)
There is a sign.
The spring lives.
The water flows from the spring
And all is well with the Nishinam.
People
There is a sign.
The spring lives.
The water flows from the spring.

War Chief
(Boastingly.)
Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!
All is well with the Nishinam.
Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!
It is I who have made all well with the Nishinam.
Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!
I led our young men against the Napa.
Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!
We left no man living of the camp.
Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!
Shaman
Great is our War Chief!
Good is war!
No more will the Napa hunt our meat.
No more will the Napa pick our berries.
No more will the Napa catch our fish.
People
No more will the Napa hunt our meat.
No more will the Napa pick our berries.
No more will the Napa catch our fish.
War Chief
Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!
The War Chiefs before me made all well with
the Nishinam.
Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!
The War Chief of long ago slew the Sun Man.
Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!
The Sun Man said his brothers would come after.
Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!
The Sun Man lied.
People
Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!
The Sun Man lied.
Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!
The Sun Man lied.
Shaman
(Derisively.)
Red Cloud is sick. He lives in dreams. Ever
he dreams of the wonders of the Sun Man.
Red Cloud
The Sun Man was strong. The Sun Man was

a life-maker. The Sun Man planted acorns,
and cut quickly with a knife not of bone nor
stone, and of grasses and hides made cunning
cloth that is better than all grasses and hides.
— Old Man, where is the cunning cloth that is
better than all grasses and hides?

Old Man

(Fumbling in his skin pouch for the doth.)

In the many moons aforetime,
Hundred moons and many hundred,
When the old man was the young man,
When the young man was the youngling,
Dragging branches for the campfire,
Stealing suet from the bear-meat,
Cause of trouble to his mother,
Came the Sun Man in the night-time.

I alone of all the Nishinam

Live to-day to tell the story;

I alone of all the Nishinam

Saw the Sun Man come among us,
Heard the Sun Man and his Sun Men
Sing their death-song here among us
Ere they died beneath our arrows,
War Chief's arrows sharp and feathered —
War Chief

(Interrupting braggartly.)

Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!

Old Man

(Producing cloth.)

And the Sun Man and his Sun Men
Wore nor hair nor hide nor birdskin.
Cloth they wore from beaten grasses
Woven like our willow baskets,
Willow-woven acorn baskets
Women make in acorn season.

(Old Man hands piece of cloth to Red
Cloud.)

Red Cloud

(Admiring cloth.)

The Sun Man was an acorn-planter, and we
killed the Sun Man. We were not kind. We
made a blood-debt. Blood-debts are not good.

Shaman

The Sun Man lied. His brothers did not come after. There is no blood-debt when there is no one to make us pay.

Red Cloud

He who plants acorns reaps food, and food is life. He who sows war reaps war, and war is death.

People

(Encouraged by Shaman and War Chief to drown out Red Cloud's voice.)

Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!

The Sun Man is dead!

Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!

The Sun Man and his Sun Men are dead!

Red Cloud

(Shaking his head.)

His brothers of the Sun are coming after.

I have reports.

(Red Cloud beckons one after another of the young hunters to speak)

First Hunter

To the south, not far, I wandered and lived with the Petaluma. With my eyes I did not see, but it was told me by those whose eyes had seen, that still to the south, not far, were many Sun Men — war chiefs who carry the thunder in their hands; cloth-makers and weavers of cloth like to that in Red Cloud's hand; acorn-planters who plant all manner of strange seeds that ripen to rich harvests of food that is good. And there had been trouble. The Petaluma had killed Sun Men, and many Petaluma had the Sun Men killed.

Second Hunter

To the east, not far, I wandered and lived with the Solano. With my own eyes I did not see, but it was told me by those whose eyes had seen, that still to the east, not far, and just beyond the lands of the Tule tribes, were many Sun Men — war chiefs and cloth-makers and acorn-planters. And there had been trouble. The Solano had killed Sun Men, and many Solano had the Sun Men killed.

Third Hunter

To the north, and far, I wandered and lived
with the Klamath. With my own eyes I did
not see, but it was told me by those whose eyes
had seen, that still to the north, and far, were
many Sun Men — war chiefs and cloth-makers
and acorn-planters. And there had been trouble.
The Klamath had killed Sun Men, and many
Klamath had the Sun Men killed.

Fourth Hunter

To the west, not far, three days gone I
wandered, where, from the mountain, I looked
down upon the great sea. With my own eyes
I saw. It was like a great bird that swam upon
the water. It had great wings like to our great
trees here. And on its back I saw men, many
men, and they were Sun Men. With my own
eyes I saw.

Red Cloud

We shall be kind to the Sun Men when they
come among us.

War Chief

(Dancing stiff-legged.)

Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!

Let the Sun Men come!

Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!

We will kill the Sun Men when they come!

People

(As they join in the war dance.)

Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!

Let the Sun Men come!

Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!

We will kill the Sun Men when they come.

(The dance grows wilder, the Shaman and
War Chief encouraging it, while Red
Cloud and Dew-Woman stand sadly at
a distance.)

(Rifle shots ring out from every side. Up
the hillside appear Sun Men firing rifles.
The Nishinam reel to death from their
dancing.)

(Red Cloud shields Dew-Woman with

one arm about her, and with the other arm
makes the peace-sign)

(The massacre is complete, Dew-Woman
and Red Cloud being the last to fall.

Red Cloud, wounded, the sole survivor,
rests on his elbow and watches the Sun
Men assemble about their leader)

(The Sun Men are the type of pioneer
Americans who, even before the discovery
of gold, were already drifting across the
Sierras and down into Oregon and
California with their oxen and great wagons.
With here and there a Rocky Mountain
trapper or a buckskin-clad scout of the
Kit Carson type, in the main they are
backwoods farmers. All carry the long
rifle of the period.)

(The Sun Man is buckskin-clad, with long
blond hair sweeping his shoulders.)

Sun Men

(Led by Sun Man.)

We crossed the Western Ocean

Three hundred years ago,

We cleared New England's forests

Three hundred years ago.

Blow high, blow low,

Heigh hi, heigh ho,

We cleared New England's forests

Three hundred years ago.

We climbed the Alleghanies

Two hundred years ago,

We reached the Susquehanna

Two hundred years ago.

Blow high, blow low,

Heigh hi, heigh ho,

We reached the Susquehanna

Two hundred years ago.

We crossed the Mississippi

One hundred years ago,

And glimpsed the Rocky Mountains

One hundred years ago.

Blow high, blow low,

Heigh hi, heigh ho,
And glimpsed the Rocky Mountains
One hundred years ago.
We passed the Rocky Mountains
A year or so ago,
And crossed the salty deserts
A year or so ago.
Blow high, blow low,
Heigh hi, heigh ho,
And crossed the salty deserts
A year or so ago.
We topped the high Sierras
But a few days ago,
And saw great California
But a few days ago.
Blow high, blow low,
Heigh hi, heigh ho,
And saw great California
But a few days ago.
We crossed Sonoma's mountains
An hour or so ago,
And found this mighty forest
An hour or so ago.
Blow high, blow low,
Heigh hi, heigh ho,
And found this mighty forest
An hour or so ago.
Sun Man
(Glancing about at the slain and at the giant
forest.)
Good the day, good the deed, and good this
California land.
Red Cloud
Not with these eyes, but with other eyes in my
lives before, have I beheld you. You are the
Sun Man.
(The attention of all is drawn to Red
Cloud, and they group about him and the
Sun Man.)
Sun Man
Call me White Man. Though in truth we
follow the sun. All our lives have we followed

the sunset sun, as our fathers followed it before us.

Red Cloud

And you slay us with the thunder in your hand.
You slay us because we slew your brothers.

Sun Man

(Nodding to Red Cloud and addressing his own followers)

You see, it was no mistake. He confesses it.
Other white men have they slain.

Red Cloud

There will come a day when men will not slay men and when all men will be brothers. And in that day all men will plant acorns.

Sun Man

You speak well, brother.

Red Cloud

Ever was I for peace, but in war I did not command.
Ever I sought the secrets of the growing things, the times and seasons for planting. Ever I planted acorns, making two black oak trees grow where one grew before. And now all is ended. Oh my black oak acorns! My black oak acorns! Who will plant them now?

Sun Man

Be of good cheer. We, too, are planters.
Rich is your land here. Not from poor soil can such trees sprout heavenward. We will plant many seeds and grow mighty harvests.

Red Cloud

I planted the short acorns in the valley. I planted the long acorns in the valley. I made food for life.

Sun Man

You planted well, brother, but not well enough. It is for that reason that you pass. Your fat valley grows food but for a handful of men. We shall plant your fat valley and grow food for ten thousand men.

Red Cloud

Ever I counseled peace and planting.

Sun Man

Some day all men will counsel peace. No
man will slay his fellow. All men will plant.

Red Cloud

But before that day you will slay, as you have
this day slain us?

Sun Man

You killed our brothers first. Blood-debts must
be paid. It is man's way upon the earth. But
more, O brother! We follow the sunset sun, and
the way before us is red with war. The way
behind us is white with peace. Ever, before
us, we make room for life. Ever we slay the
squalling crawling things of the wild. Ever we
clear the land and destroy the weeds that block
the way of life for the seeds we plant. We are
many, and many are our brothers that come after
along the way of peace we blaze. Where you
make two black oaks grow in the place of one,
we make an hundred. And where we make one
grow, our brothers who come after make an
hundred hundred.

Red Cloud

Truly are you the Sun Man. We knew about
you of old time. Our old men knew and sang of
you:

White and shining was the Sun Man,
Blue his eyes were as the sky-blue,
Bright his hair was as dry grass is,
Warm his eyes were as the sun is,
Fruit and flower were in his glances,
All he looked on grew and sprouted,
Where his glance fell grasses seeded,
Where his feet fell sprang upstarting
Buckeye woods and hazel thickets,
Berry bushes, manzanita,
Till his pathway was a garden,
Flowing after like a river
Laughing into bud and blossom.

SONG OF THE PIONEERS

Sun Men

Our brothers follow on the trail we blaze.
Where howled the wolf and ached the naked plain

Spring bounteous harvests at our brothers' hands;
In place of war's alarums, peaceful days;
Above the warrior's grave the golden grain
Turns deserts grim and stark to laughing lands.

Sun Man

We cleared New England's flinty slopes and plowed
Her rocky fields to fairness in the sun,
But fared we westward always for we sought
A land of golden richness and we knew
The land was waiting on the sunset trail.
Where we found forest we left fertile fields,
We bridled rivers wild to grind our corn,
The deer-paths turned to roadways at our heels,
Our axes felled the trees that bridged the streams,
And fenced the meadow pastures for our kine.

Sun Men

Our brothers follow on the trail we blaze;
Where howled the wolf and ached the naked plain
Spring bounteous harvests at our brothers' hands;
In place of war's alarums, peaceful days;
Above the warrior's grave the golden grain
Turns deserts grim and stark to laughing lands.

Sun Man

Beyond the Mississippi still we fared,
And rested weary by the River Platte
Until the young grass velvety the Plains,
Then yoked again our oxen to the trail
That ever led us west to farthest west.
Our women toiled beside us, and our young,
And helped to break the soil and plant the corn,
And fought beside us in the battle front
To fight of arrow, whine of bullet, when
We chained our circled wagons wheel to wheel.

Sun Men

Our brothers follow on the trail we blaze;
Where howled the wolf and ached the naked plain
Spring bounteous harvests at our brothers hands;
In place of war's alarums, peaceful days;
Above the warrior's grave the golden grain
Turns deserts grim and stark to laughing lands.

Sun Man

The rivers sank beneath the desert sand,

The tall pines dwarfed to sage-brush, and the grass
Grew sparse and bitter in the alkali,
But fared we always toward the setting sun.
Our oxen famished till the last one died
And our great wagons rested in the snow.
We climbed the high Sierras and looked down
From winter bleak upon the land we sought,
A sunny land, a rich and fruitful land,
The warm and golden California land.

Sun Men

Our brothers follow on the trail we blaze;
Where howled the wolf and ached the naked plain
Spring bounteous harvests at our brothers' hands;
In place of war's alarums, peaceful days;
Above the warrior's grave the golden grain
Turns deserts grim and stark to laughing lands.
(The hillside begins to darken.)

Red Cloud

(Faintly.)

The darkness is upon me. You are acorn-
planters. You are my brothers. The darkness
is upon me and I pass.

Sun Men

(As total darkness descends.)

Our brothers follow on the trail we blaze;
Where howled the wolf and ached the naked plain
Spring bounteous harvests at our brothers' hands;
In place of war's alarums, peaceful days;
Above the warrior's grave the golden grain
Turns deserts grim and stark to laughing lands.

Epilogue

Red Cloud

Good tidings! Good tidings

To the sons of men!

Good tidings! Good tidings!

War is dead!

(Light begins to suffuse the hillside, revealing
Red Cloud far up the hillside in a
commanding position on an out-jut of

rock.)
Lo, the New Day dawns,
The day of brotherhood,
The day when all men
Shall be kind to all men,
And all men shall be sowers of life.
(From every side a burst of voices.)
Hail to Red Cloud!
The Acorn-Planter!
The Life-Maker!
Hail! All hail!
The New Day dawns,
The day of brotherhood,
The day of man.
(A band of Warriors appears on hillside.)
Warriors
Hail, Red Cloud!
Mightier than all fighting men!
The slayer of War!
We are not sad.
Our eyes were blinded.
We did not know one acorn planted
Was mightier than an hundred fighting men.
We are not sad.
Our red work was when
The world was young and wild.
The world has grown wise.
No man slays his brother.
Our work is done.
In the light of the new day are we glad.
(A band of Pioneers and Sea Explorers
appears.)
Pioneers and Explorers
Hail, Red Cloud!
The first planter!
The Acorn-Planter!
We sang that War would die,
The anarchy of our wild and wayward past.
We sang our brothers would come after,
Turning desert into garden,
Sowing friendship, and not hatred,
Planting seeds instead of dead men,

Growing men to manhood in the sun.
(A band of Husbandmen appear, bearing
fruit and sheaves of grain and corn.)
Husbandmen
Hail, Red Cloud!
The first planter!
The Acorn-Planter!
The harvests no more are red, but golden,
We are thy children.
We plant for increase,
Increase of wheat and corn,
Of fruit and flower,
Of sheep and kine,
Of love and lovers;
Rich are our harvests
And many are our lovers.
Red Cloud
Death is a stench in the nostrils,
Life is beauty and joy.
The planters are ever brothers.
Never are the warriors brothers;
Their ways are set apart,
Their hands raised each against each.
The planters' ways are the one way.
Ever they plant for life,
For life more abundant,
For beauty of head and hand,
For the voices of children playing,
And the laughter of maids in the twilight
And the lover's song in the gloom.
All Voices
Hail, Red Cloud!
The first planter!
The Acorn-Planter!
The maker of life!
Hail! All hail!
The New Day dawns,
The day of brotherhood,
The day of man!
THE END
A Wicked Woman

[Curtain rises on a conventional living room of a country house in California. It is the Hemingway house at Santa Clara. The room is remarkable for magnificent stone fireplace at rear centre. On either side of fireplace are generous, diamond-paned windows. Wide, curtained doorways to right and left. To left, front, table, with vase of flowers and chairs. To right, front, grand piano.]

[Curtain discovers LORETTA seated at piano, not playing, her back to it, facing NED BASHFORD, who is standing.]

LORETTA. [Petulantly, fanning herself with sheet of music.] No, I won't go fishing. It's too warm. Besides, the fish won't bite so early in the afternoon.

NED. Oh, come on. It's not warm at all. And anyway, we won't really fish. I want to tell you something.

LORETTA. [Still petulantly.] You are always wanting to tell me something.

NED. Yes, but only in fun. This is different. This is serious. Our . . . my happiness depends upon it.

LORETTA. [Speaking eagerly, no longer petulant, looking, serious and delighted, divining a proposal.] Then don't wait. Tell me right here.

NED. [Almost threateningly.] Shall I?

LORETTA. [Challenging.] Yes.

[He looks around apprehensively as though fearing interruption, clears his throat, takes resolution, also takes LORETTA's hand.]

[LORETTA is startled, timid, yet willing to hear, naïvely unable to conceal her love for him.]

NED. [Speaking softly.] Loretta . . . I, . . . ever since I met you I have —

[JACK HEMINGWAY appears in the doorway to the left, just entering.]

[NED suddenly drops LORETTA's hand. He shows exasperation.]

[LORETTA shows disappointment at interruption.]

NED. Confound it

LORETTA. [Shocked.] Ned! Why will you swear so?

NED. [Testily.] That isn't swearing.

LORETTA. What is it, pray?

NED. Displeasuring.

JACK HEMINGWAY. [Who is crossing over to right.] Squabbling again?

LORETTA. [Indignantly and with dignity.] No, we're not.

NED. [Gruffly.] What do you want now?

JACK HEMINGWAY. [Enthusiastically.] Come on fishing.

NED. [Snappily.] No. It's too warm.

JACK HEMINGWAY. [Resignedly, going out right.] You needn't take a fellow's head off.

LORETTA. I thought you wanted to go fishing.

NED. Not with Jack.

LORETTA. [Accusingly, fanning herself vigorously.] And you told me it wasn't warm at all.

NED. [Speaking softly.] That isn't what I wanted to tell you, Loretta. [He takes her hand.] Dear Loretta —

[Enter abruptly ALICE HEMINGWAY from right.]

[LORETTA sharply jerks her hand away, and looks put out.]

[NED tries not to look awkward.]

ALICE HEMINGWAY. Goodness! I thought you'd both gone fishing!

LORETTA. [Sweetly.] Is there anything you want, Alice?

NED. [Trying to be courteous.] Anything I can do?

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Speaking quickly, and trying to withdraw.] No, no. I only came to see if the mail had arrived.

LORETTA AND NED

[Speaking together.] No, it hasn't arrived.

LORETTA. [Suddenly moving toward door to right.] I am going to see.

[NED looks at her reproachfully.]

[LORETTA looks back tantalizingly from doorway and disappears.]

[NED flings himself disgustedly into Morris chair.]

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Moving over and standing in front of him. Speaks accusingly.] What have you been saying to her?

NED. [Disgruntled.] Nothing.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Threateningly.] Now listen to me, Ned.

NED. [Earnestly.] On my word, Alice, I've been saying nothing to her.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [With sudden change of front.] Then you ought to have been saying something to her.

NED. [Irritably. Getting chair for her, seating her, and seating himself again.] Look here, Alice, I know your game. You invited me down here to make a fool of me.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. Nothing of the sort, sir. I asked you down to meet a sweet and unsullied girl — the sweetest, most innocent and ingenuous girl in the world.

NED. [Dryly.] That's what you said in your letter.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. And that's why you came. Jack had been trying for a year to get you to come. He did not know what kind of a letter to write.

NED. If you think I came because of a line in a letter about a girl I'd never seen —

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Mockingly.] The poor, jaded, world-worn man, who is no longer interested in women . . . and girls! The poor, tired pessimist who has lost all faith in the goodness of women —

NED. For which you are responsible.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Incredulously.] I?

NED. You are responsible. Why did you throw me over and marry Jack?

ALICE HEMINGWAY. Do you want to know?

NED. Yes.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Judiciously.] First, because I did not love you. Second, because you did not love me. [She smiles at his protesting hand and at the protesting expression on his face.] And third, because there were just about twenty-seven other

women at that time that you loved, or thought you loved. That is why I married Jack. And that is why you lost faith in the goodness of women. You have only yourself to blame.

NED. [Admiringly.] You talk so convincingly. I almost believe you as I listen to you. And yet I know all the time that you are like all the rest of your sex — faithless, untruthful, and . . .

[He glares at her, but does not proceed.]

ALICE HEMINGWAY. Go on. I'm not afraid.

NED. [With finality.] And immoral.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. Oh! You wretch!

NED. [Gloatingly.] That's right. Get angry. You may break the furniture if you wish. I don't mind.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [With sudden change of front, softly.] And how about Loretta?

[NED gasps and remains silent.]

ALICE HEMINGWAY. The depths of duplicity that must lurk under that sweet and innocent exterior . . . according to your philosophy!

NED. [Earnestly.] Loretta is an exception, I confess. She is all that you said in your letter. She is a little fairy, an angel. I never dreamed of anything like her. It is remarkable to find such a woman in this age.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Encouragingly.] She is so naive.

NED. [Taking the bait.] Yes, isn't she? Her face and her tongue betray all her secrets.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Nodding her head.] Yes, I have noticed it.

NED. [Delightedly.] Have you?

ALICE HEMINGWAY. She cannot conceal anything. Do you know that she loves you?

NED. [Falling into the trap, eagerly.] Do you think so?

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Laughing and rising.] And to think I once permitted you to make love to me for three weeks!

[NED rises.]

[MAID enters from left with letters, which she brings to ALICE HEMINGWAY.]

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Running over letters.] None for you, Ned. [Selecting two letters for herself.] Tradesmen. [Handing remainder of letters to MAID.] And three for Loretta. [Speaking to MAID.] Put them on the table, Josie.

[MAID puts letters on table to left front, and makes exit to left.]

NED. [With shade of jealousy.] Loretta seems to have quite a correspondence.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [With a sigh.] Yes, as I used to when I was a girl.

NED. But hers are family letters.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. Yes, I did not notice any from Billy.

NED. [Faintly.] Billy?

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Nodding.] Of course she has told you about him?

NED. [Gasping.] She has had lovers . . . already?

ALICE HEMINGWAY. And why not? She is nineteen.

NED. [Haltingly.] This . . . er . . . this Billy . . . ?

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Laughing and putting her hand reassuringly on his arm.] Now don't be alarmed, poor, tired philosopher. She doesn't love Billy at all.

[LORETTA enters from right.]

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [To LORETTA, nodding toward table.] Three letters for you.

LORETTA. [Delightedly.] Oh! Thank you.

[LORETTA trips swiftly across to table, looks at letters, sits down, opens letters, and begins to read.]

NED. [Suspiciously.] But Billy?

ALICE HEMINGWAY. I am afraid he loves her very hard. That is why she is here. They had to send her away. Billy was making life miserable for her. They were little children together — playmates. And Billy has been, well, importunate. And Loretta, poor child, does not know anything about marriage. That is all.

NED. [Reassured.] Oh, I see.

[ALICE HEMINGWAY starts slowly toward right exit, continuing conversation and accompanied by NED.]

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Calling to LORETTA.] Are you going fishing, Loretta?

[LORETTA looks up from letter and shakes head.]

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [To NED.] Then you're not, I suppose?

NED. No, it's too warm.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. Then I know the place for you.

NED. Where?

ALICE HEMINGWAY. Right here. [Looks significantly in direction of LORETTA.] Now is your opportunity to say what you ought to say.

[ALICE HEMINGWAY laughs teasingly and goes out to right.]

[NED hesitates, starts to follow her, looks at LORETTA, and stops. He twists his moustache and continues to look at her meditatively.]

[LORETTA is unaware of his presence and goes on reading. Finishes letter, folds it, replaces in envelope, looks up, and discovers NED.]

LORETTA. [Startled.] Oh! I thought you were gone.

NED. [Walking across to her.] I thought I'd stay and finish our conversation.

LORETTA. [Willingly, settling herself to listen.] Yes, you were going to . . . [Drops eyes and ceases talking.]

NED. [Taking her hand, tenderly.] I little dreamed when I came down here visiting that I was to meet my destiny in — [Abruptly releases LORETTA's hand.]

[MAID enters from left with tray.]

[LORETTA glances into tray and discovers that it is empty. She looks inquiringly at MAID.]

MAID. A gentleman to see you. He hasn't any card. He said for me to tell you that it was Billy.

LORETTA. [Starting, looking with dismay and appeal to NED.] Oh! . . . Ned!

NED [Gracefully and courteously, rising to his feet and preparing to go.] If you'll excuse me now, I'll wait till afterward to tell you what I wanted.

LORETTA. [In dismay.] What shall I do?

NED. [Pausing.] Don't you want to see him? [LORETTA shakes her head.] Then don't.

LORETTA. [Slowly.] I can't do that. We are old friends. We . . . were children together. [To the MAID.] Send him in. [To NED, who has started to go out toward right.] Don't go, Ned.

[MAID makes exit to left.]

NED. [Hesitating a moment.] I'll come back.

[NED makes exit to right.]

[LORETTA, left alone on stage, shows perturbation and dismay.]

[BILLY enters from left. Stands in doorway a moment. His shoes are dusty. He looks overheated. His eyes and face brighten at sight of LORETTA.]

BILLY. [Stepping forward, ardently.] Loretta!

LORETTA. [Not exactly enthusiastic in her reception, going slowly to meet him.] You never said you were coming.

[BILLY shows that he expects to kiss her, but she merely shakes his hand.]

BILLY. [Looking down at his very dusty shoes.] I walked from the station.

LORETTA. If you had let me know, the carriage would have been sent for you.

BILLY. [With expression of shrewdness.] If I had let you know, you wouldn't have let me come.

[BILLY looks around stage cautiously, then tries to kiss her.]

LORETTA. [Refusing to be kissed.] Won't you sit down?

BILLY. [Coaxingly.] Go on, just one. [LORETTA shakes head and holds him off.] Why not? We're engaged.

LORETTA. [With decision.] We're not. You know we're not. You know I broke it off the day before I came away. And . . . and . . . you'd better sit down.

[BILLY sits down on edge of chair. LORETTA seats herself by table. Billy, without rising, jerks his chair forward till they are facing each other, his knees touching hers. He yearns toward her. She moves back her chair slightly.]

BILLY. [With supreme confidence.] That's what I came to see you for — to get engaged over again.

[BILLY hedges chair forward and tries to take her hand.]

[LORETTA hedges her chair back.]

BILLY. [Drawing out large silver watch and looking at it.] Now look here, Loretta, I haven't any time to lose. I've got to leave for that train in ten minutes. And I want you to set the day.

LORETTA. But we're not engaged, Billy. So there can't be any setting of the day.

BILLY. [With confidence.] But we're going to be. [Suddenly breaking out.] Oh, Loretta, if you only knew how I've suffered. That first night I didn't sleep a wink. I haven't slept much ever since. [Hudges chair forward.] I walk the floor all night. [Solemnly.] Loretta, I don't eat enough to keep a canary bird alive. Loretta . . . [Hudges chair forward.]

LORETTA. [Hudging her chair back maternally.] Billy, what you need is a tonic. Have you seen Doctor Haskins?

BILLY. [Looking at watch and evincing signs of haste.] Loretta, when a girl kisses a man, it means she is going to marry him.

LORETTA. I know it, Billy. But . . . [She glances toward letters on table.] Captain Kitt doesn't want me to marry you. He says . . . [She takes letter and begins to open it.]

BILLY. Never mind what Captain Kitt says. He wants you to stay and be company for your sister. He doesn't want you to marry me because he knows she wants to keep you.

LORETTA. Daisy doesn't want to keep me. She wants nothing but my own happiness. She says — [She takes second letter from table and begins to open it.]

BILLY. Never mind what Daisy says —

LORETTA. [Taking third letter from table and beginning to open it.] And Martha says —

BILLY. [Angrily.] Darn Martha and the whole boiling of them!

LORETTA. [Reprovingly.] Oh, Billy!

BILLY. [Defensively.] Darn isn't swearing, and you know it isn't.

[There is an awkward pause. Billy has lost the thread of the conversation and has vacant expression.]

BILLY. [Suddenly recollecting.] Never mind Captain Kitt, and Daisy, and Martha, and what they want. The question is, what do you want?

LORETTA. [Appealingly.] Oh, Billy, I'm so unhappy.

BILLY. [Ignoring the appeal and pressing home the point.] The thing is, do you want to marry me? [He looks at his watch.] Just answer that.

LORETTA. Aren't you afraid you'll miss that train?

BILLY. Darn the train!

LORETTA. [Reprovingly.] Oh, Billy!

BILLY. [Most irascibly.] Darn isn't swearing. [Plaintively.] That's the way you always put me off. I didn't come all the way here for a train. I came for you. Now just answer me one thing. Do you want to marry me?

LORETTA. [Firmly.] No, I don't want to marry you.

BILLY. [With assurance.] But you've got to, just the same.

LORETTA. [With defiance.] Got to?

BILLY. [With unshaken assurance.] That's what I said — got to. And I'll see that you do.

LORETTA. [Blazing with anger.] I am no longer a child. You can't bully me, Billy Marsh!

BILLY. [Coolly.] I'm not trying to bully you. I'm trying to save your reputation.

LORETTA. [Faintly.] Reputation?

BILLY. [Nodding.] Yes, reputation. [He pauses for a moment, then speaks very solemnly.] Loretta, when a woman kisses a man, she's got to marry him.

LORETTA. [Appalled, faintly.] Got to?

BILLY. [Dogmatically.] It is the custom.

LORETTA. [Brokenly.] And when . . . a . . . a woman kisses a man and doesn't . . . marry him . . . ?

BILLY. Then there is a scandal. That's where all the scandals you see in the papers come from.

[BILLY looks at watch.]

[LORETTA in silent despair.]

LORETTA. [In abasement.] You are a good man, Billy. [Billy shows that he believes it.] And I am a very wicked woman.

BILLY. No, you're not, Loretta. You just didn't know.

LORETTA. [With a gleam of hope.] But you kissed me first.

BILLY. It doesn't matter. You let me kiss you.

LORETTA. [Hope dying down.] But not at first.

BILLY. But you did afterward and that's what counts. You let me you in the grape-
arbour. You let me —

LORETTA. [With anguish] Don't! Don't!

BILLY. [Relentlessly.] — kiss you when you were playing the piano. You let me kiss you that day of the picnic. And I can't remember all the times you let me kiss you good night.

LORETTA. [Beginning to weep.] Not more than five.

BILLY. [With conviction.] Eight at least.

LORETTA. [Reproachfully, still weeping.] You told me it was all right.

BILLY. [Emphatically.] So it was all right — until you said you wouldn't marry me after all. Then it was a scandal — only no one knows it yet. If you marry me no one ever will know it. [Looks at watch.] I've got to go. [Stands up.] Where's my hat?

LORETTA. [Sobbing.] This is awful.

BILLY. [Approvingly.] You bet it's awful. And there's only one way out. [Looks anxiously about for hat.] What do you say?

LORETTA. [Brokenly.] I must think. I'll write to you. [Faintly.] The train? Your hat's in the hall.

BILLY. [Looks at watch, hastily tries to kiss her, succeeds only in shaking hand, starts across stage toward left.] All right. You write to me. Write to-morrow. [Stops for a moment in doorway and speaks very solemnly.] Remember, Loretta, there must be no scandal.

[Billy goes out.]

[LORETTA sits in chair quietly weeping. Slowly dries eyes, rises from chair, and stands, undecided as to what she will do next.]

[NED enters from right, peeping. Discovers that LORETTA is alone, and comes quietly across stage to her. When NED comes up to her she begins weeping again and tries to turn her head away. NED catches both her hands in his and compels her to look at him. She weeps harder.]

NED. [Putting one arm protectingly around her shoulder and drawing her toward him.] There, there, little one, don't cry.

LORETTA. [Turning her face to his shoulder like a tired child, sobbing.] Oh, Ned, if you only knew how wicked I am.

NED. [Smiling indulgently.] What is the matter, little one? Has your dearly beloved sister failed to write to you? [LORETTA shakes head.] Has Hemingway been bullying you? [LORETTA shakes head.] Then it must have been that caller of yours? [Long pause, during which LORETTA's weeping grows more violent.] Tell me what's the matter, and we'll see what I can do. [He lightly kisses her hair — so lightly that she does not know.]

LORETTA. [Sobbing.] I can't. You will despise me. Oh, Ned, I am so ashamed.

NED. [Laughing incredulously.] Let us forget all about it. I want to tell you something that may make me very happy. My fondest hope is that it will make you happy, too. Loretta, I love you —

LORETTA. [Uttering a sharp cry of delight, then moaning.] Too late!

NED. [Surprised.] Too late?

LORETTA. [Still moaning.] Oh, why did I? [NED somewhat stiffens.] I was so young. I did not know the world then.

NED. What is it all about anyway?

LORETTA. Oh, I . . . he . . . Billy . . . I am a wicked woman, Ned. I know you will never speak to me again.

NED. This . . . er . . . this Billy — what has he been doing?

LORETTA. I . . . he . . . I didn't know. I was so young. I could not help it. Oh, I shall go mad, I shall go mad!

[NED's encircling arm goes limp. He gently disengages her and deposits her in big chair.]

[LORETTA buries her face and sobs afresh.]

NED. [Twisting moustache fiercely, regarding her dubiously, hesitating a moment, then drawing up chair and sitting down.] I . . . I do not understand.

LORETTA. [Wailing.] I am so unhappy!

NED. [Inquisitorially.] Why unhappy?

LORETTA. Because . . . he . . . he wants to marry me.

NED. [His face brightening instantly, leaning forward and laying a hand soothingly on hers.] That should not make any girl unhappy. Because you don't love him is no reason — [Abruptly breaking off.] Of course you don't love him? [LORETTA shakes her head and shoulders vigorously.] What?

LORETTA. [Explosively.] No, I don't love Billy! I don't want to love Billy!

NED. [With confidence.] Because you don't love him is no reason that you should be unhappy just because he has proposed to you.

LORETTA. [Sobbing.] That's the trouble. I wish I did love him. Oh, I wish I were dead.

NED. [Growing complacent.] Now my dear child, you are worrying yourself over trifles. [His second hand joins the first in holding her hands.] Women do it every day. Because you have changed your mind, or did not know you mind, because you have — to use an unnecessarily harsh word — jilted a man —

LORETTA. [Interrupting, raising her head and looking at him.] Jilted? Oh Ned, if that were a all!

NED. [Hollow voice.] All!

[NED's hands slowly retreat from hers. He opens his mouth as though to speak further, then changes his mind and remains silent.]

LORETTA. [Protestingly.] But I don't want to marry him!

NED. Then I shouldn't.

LORETTA. But I ought to marry him.

NED. Ought to marry him? [LORETTA nods.] That is a strong word.

LORETTA. [Nodding.] I know it is. [Her lips are trembling, but she strives for control and manages to speak more calmly.] I am a wicked woman. A terrible wicked woman. No one knows how wicked I am . . . except Billy.

NED. [Starting, looking at her queerly.] He . . . Billy knows? [LORETTA nods. He debates with himself a moment.] Tell me about it. You must tell me all of it.

LORETTA. [Faintly, as though about to weep again.] All of it?

NED. [Firmly.] Yes, all of it.

LORETTA. [Haltingly.] And . . . will . . . you . . . ever . . . forgive . . . me?

NED. [Drawing a long, breath, desperately.] Yes, I'll forgive you. Go ahead.

LORETTA. There was no one to tell me. We were with each other so much. I did not know anything of the world . . . then. [Pauses.]

NED. [Impatiently.] Go on.

LORETTA. If I had only known. [Pauses.]

NED. [Biting his lip and clenching his hands.] Yes, yes. Go on.

LORETTA. We were together almost every evening.

NED. [Savagely.] Billy?

LORETTA. Yes, of course, Billy. We were with each other so much . . . If I had only known . . . There was no one to tell me . . . I was so young . . . [Breaks down crying.]

NED. [Leaping to his feet, explosively.] The scoundrel!

LORETTA. [Lifting her head.] Billy is not a scoundrel . . . He . . . he . . . is a good man.

NED. [Sarcastically.] I suppose you'll be telling me next that it was all your fault. [LORETTA nods.] What!

LORETTA. [Steadily.] It was all my fault. I should never have let him. I was to blame.

NED. [Paces up and down for a minute, stops in front of her, and speaks with resignation.] All right. I don't blame you in the least, Loretta. And you have been very honest. It is . . . er . . . commendable. But Billy is right, and you are wrong. You must get married.

LORETTA. [In dim, far-away voice.] To Billy?

NED. Yes, to Billy. I'll see to it. Where does he live? I'll make him. If he won't I'll . . . I'll shoot him!

LORETTA. [Crying out with alarm.] Oh, Ned, you won't do that?

NED. [Sternly.] I shall.

LORETTA. But I don't want to marry Billy.

NED. [Sternly.] You must. And Billy must. Do you understand? It is the only thing.

LORETTA. That's what Billy said.

NED. [Triumphantly.] You see, I am right.

LORETTA. And if . . . if I don't marry him . . . there will be . . . scandal?

NED. [Calmly.] Yes, there will be scandal.

LORETTA. That's what Billy said. Oh, I am so unhappy!

[LORETTA breaks down into violent weeping.]

[NED paces grimly up and down, now and again fiercely twisting his moustache.]

LORETTA. [Face buried, sobbing and crying all the time.]

I don't want to leave Daisy! I don't want to leave Daisy! What shall I do? What shall I do? How was I to know? He didn't tell me. Nobody else ever kissed me. [NED stops curiously to listen. As he listens his face brightens.] I never dreamed a kiss could be so terrible . . . until . . . until he told me. He only told me this morning.

NED. [Abruptly.] Is that what you are crying about?

LORETTA. [Reluctantly.] N-no.

NED. [In hopeless voice, the brightness gone out of his face, about to begin pacing again.] Then what are you crying about?

LORETTA. Because you said I had to marry Billy. I don't want to marry Billy. I don't want to leave Daisy. I don't know what I want. I wish I were dead.

NED. [Nerving himself for another effort.] Now look here, Loretta, be sensible. What is this about kisses? You haven't told me everything after all.

LORETTA. I . . . I don't want to tell you everything.

NED. [Imperatively.] You must.

LORETTA. [Surrendering.] Well, then . . . must I?

NED. You must.

LORETTA. [Floundering.] He . . . I . . . we . . . I let him, and he kissed me.

NED. [Desperately, controlling himself.] Go on.

LORETTA. He says eight, but I can't think of more than five times.

NED. Yes, go on.

LORETTA. That's all.

NED. [With vast incredulity.] All?

LORETTA. [Puzzled.] All?

NED. [Awkwardly.] I mean . . . er . . . nothing worse?

LORETTA. [Puzzled.] Worse? As though there could be. Billy said —

NED. [Interrupting.] When?

LORETTA. This afternoon. Just now. Billy said that my . . . our . . . our . . . our kisses were terrible if we didn't get married.

NED. What else did he say?

LORETTA. He said that when a woman permitted a man to kiss her she always married him. That it was awful if she didn't. It was the custom, he said; and I say it is a bad, wicked custom, and it has broken my heart. I shall never be happy again. I know I am terrible, but I can't help it. I must have been born wicked.

NED. [Absent-mindedly bringing out a cigarette and striking a match.] Do you mind if I smoke? [Coming to himself again, and flinging away match and cigarette.] I beg your pardon. I don't want to smoke. I didn't mean that at all. What I mean is . . . [He bends over LORETTA, catches her hands in his, then sits on arm of chair, softly puts one arm around her, and is about to kiss her.]

LORETTA. [With horror, repulsing him.] No! No!

NED. [Surprised.] What's the matter?

LORETTA. [Agitatedly.] Would you make me a wickeder woman than I am?

NED. A kiss?

LORETTA. There will be another scandal. That would make two scandals.

NED. To kiss the woman I love . . . a scandal?

LORETTA. Billy loves me, and he said so.

NED. Billy is a joker . . . or else he is as innocent as you.

LORETTA. But you said so yourself.

NED. [Taken aback.] I?

LORETTA. Yes, you said it yourself, with your own lips, not ten minutes ago. I shall never believe you again.

NED. [Masterfully putting arm around her and drawing her toward him.] And I am a joker, too, and a very wicked man. Nevertheless, you must trust me. There will be nothing wrong.

LORETTA. [Preparing to yield.] And no . . . scandal?

NED. Scandal fiddlesticks. Loretta, I want you to be my wife. [He waits anxiously.] [JACK HEMINGWAY, in fishing costume, appears in doorway to right and looks on.]

NED. You might say something.

LORETTA. I will . . . if . . .

[ALICE HEMINGWAY appears in doorway to left and looks on.]

NED. [In suspense.] Yes, go on.

LORETTA. If I don't have to marry Billy.

NED. [Almost shouting.] You can't marry both of us!

LORETTA. [Sadly, repulsing him with her hands.] Then, Ned, I cannot marry you.

NED. [Dumbfounded.] W-what?

LORETTA. [Sadly.] Because I can't marry both of you.

NED. Bosh and nonsense!

LORETTA. I'd like to marry you, but . . .

NED. There is nothing to prevent you.

LORETTA. [With sad conviction.] Oh, yes, there is. You said yourself that I had to marry Billy. You said you would s-s-shoot him if he didn't.

NED. [Drawing her toward him.] Nevertheless . . .

LORETTA. [Slightly holding him off.] And it isn't the custom . . . what . . . Billy said?

NED. No, it isn't the custom. Now, Loretta, will you marry me?

LORETTA. [Pouting demurely.] Don't be angry with me, Ned. [He gathers her into his arms and kisses her. She partially frees herself, gasping.] I wish it were the custom, because now I'd have to marry you, Ned, wouldn't I?

[NED and LORETTA kiss a second time and profoundly.]

[JACK HEMINGWAY chuckles.]

[NED and LORETTA, startled, but still in each other's arms, look around. NED looks sillily at ALICE HEMINGWAY. LORETTA looks at JACK HEMINGWAY.]

LORETTA. I don't care.

CURTAIN

The Birth Mark

SKETCH BY JACK LONDON written for Robert and Julia Fitzsimmons

SCENE — One of the club rooms of the West Bay Athletic Club. Near centre front is a large table covered with newspapers and magazines. At left a punching-bag apparatus. At right, against wall, a desk, on which rests a desk-telephone. Door at rear toward left. On walls are framed pictures of pugilists, conspicuous among which is one of Robert Fitzsimmons. Appropriate furnishings, etc., such as foils, clubs, dumb-bells and trophies.

[Enter MAUD SYLVESTER.]

[She is dressed as a man, in evening clothes, preferably a Tuxedo. In her hand is a card, and under her arm a paper-wrapped parcel. She peeps about curiously and advances to table. She is timorous and excited, elated and at the same time frightened. Her eyes are dancing with excitement.]

MAUD. [Pausing by table.] Not a soul saw me. I wonder where everybody is. And that big brother of mine said I could not get in. [She reads back of card.] “Here is my card, Maudie. If you can use it, go ahead. But you will never get inside the door. I consider my bet as good as won.” [Looking up, triumphantly.] You do, do you? Oh, if you could see your little sister now. Here she is, inside. [Pauses, and looks about.] So this is the West Bay Athletic Club. No women allowed. Well, here I am, if I don’t look like one. [Stretches out one leg and then the other, and looks at them. Leaving card and parcel on table, she struts around like a man, looks at pictures of pugilists on walls, reading aloud their names and making appropriate remarks. But she stops before the portrait of Fitzsimmons and reads aloud.] “Robert Fitzsimmons, the greatest warrior of them all.” [Clasps hands, and looking up at portrait murmurs.] Oh, you dear!

[Continues strutting around, imitating what she considers are a man’s stride and swagger, returns to table and proceeds to unwrap parcel.] Well, I’ll go out like a girl, if I did come in like a man. [Drops wrapping paper on table and holds up a woman’s long automobile cloak and a motor bonnet. Is suddenly startled by sound of approaching footsteps and glances in a frightened way toward door.] Mercy! Here comes somebody now! [Glances about her in alarm, drops cloak and bonnet on floor close to table, seizes a handful of newspapers, and runs to large leather chair to right of table, where she seats herself hurriedly. One paper she holds up before her, hiding her face as she pretends to read. Unfortunately the paper is upside down. The other papers lie on her lap.]

[Enter ROBERT FITZSIMMONS.]

[He looks about, advances to table, takes out cigarette case and is about to select one, when he notices motor cloak and bonnet on floor. He lays cigarette case on table and picks them up. They strike him as profoundly curious things to be in a club room. He looks at MAUD, then sees card on table. He picks it up and reach it to himself, then looks at her with comprehension. Hidden by her newspaper, she sees nothing. He looks at card again and reads and speaks in an aside.]

FITZSIMMONS. "Maudie. John H. Sylvester." That must be Jack Sylvester's sister Maud. [FITZSIMMONS shows by his expression that he is going to play a joke. Tossing cloak and bonnet under the table he places card in his vest pocket, selects a chair, sits down, and looks at MAUD. He notes paper is upside down, is hugely tickled, and laughs silently.] Hello! [Newspaper is agitated by slight tremor. He speaks more loudly.] Hello! [Newspaper shakes badly. He speaks very loudly.] Hello!

MAUD. [Peeping at him over top of paper and speaking hesitatingly.] H-h-hello!

FITZSIMMONS. [Gruffly.] You are a queer one, reading a paper upside down.

MAUD. [Lowering newspaper and trying to appear at ease.] It's quite a trick, isn't it? I often practise it. I'm real clever at it, you know.

FITZSIMMONS. [Grunts, then adds.] Seems to me I have seen you before.

MAUD. [Glancing quickly from his face to portrait and back again.] Yes, and I know you — You are Robert Fitzsimmons.

FITZSIMMONS. I thought I knew you.

MAUD. Yes, it was out in San Francisco. My people still live there. I'm just — ahem — doing New York.

FITZSIMMONS. But I don't quite remember the name.

MAUD. Jones — Harry Jones.

FITZSIMMONS. [Hugely delighted, leaping from chair and striding over to her.] Sure. [Slaps her resoundingly on shoulder.]

[She is nearly crushed by the weight of the blow, and at the same time shocked. She scrambles to her feet.]

FITZSIMMONS. Glad to see you, Harry. [He wrings her hand, so that it hurts.] Glad to see you again, Harry. [He continues wringing her hand and pumping her arm.]

MAUD. [Struggling to withdraw her hand and finally succeeding. Her voice is rather faint.] Ye-es, er . . . Bob . . . er . . . glad to see you again. [She looks ruefully at her bruised fingers and sinks into chair. Then, recollecting her part, she crosses her legs in a mannish way.]

FITZSIMMONS. [Crossing to desk at right, against which he leans, facing her.] You were a wild young rascal in those San Francisco days. [Chuckling.] Lord, Lord, how it all comes back to me.

MAUD. [Boastfully.] I was wild — some.

FITZSIMMONS. [Grinning.] I should say! Remember that night I put you to bed?

MAUD. [Forgetting herself, indignantly.] Sir!

FITZSIMMONS. You were . . . er . . . drunk.

MAUD. I never was!

FITZSIMMONS. Surely you haven't forgotten that night! You began with dropping champagne bottles out of the club windows on the heads of the people on the sidewalk, and you wound up by assaulting a cabman. And let me tell you I saved you from a good licking right there, and squared it with the police. Don't you remember?

MAUD. [Nodding hesitatingly.] Yes, it is beginning to come back to me. I was a bit tight that night.

FITZSIMMONS. [Exultantly.] A bit tight! Why, before I could get you to bed you insisted on telling me the story of your life.

MAUD. Did I? I don't remember that.

FITZSIMMONS. I should say not. You were past remembering anything by that time. You had your arms around my neck —

MAUD. [Interrupting.] Oh!

FITZSIMMONS. And you kept repeating over and over, "Bob, dear Bob."

MAUD. [Springing to her feet.] Oh! I never did! [Recollecting herself.] Perhaps I must have. I was a trifle wild in those days, I admit. But I'm wise now. I've sowed my wild oats and steadied down.

FITZSIMMONS. I'm glad to hear that, Harry. You were tearing off a pretty fast pace in those days. [Pause, in which MAUD nods.] Still punch the bag?

MAUD. [In quick alarm, glancing at punching bag.] No, I've got out of the hang of it.

FITZSIMMONS. [Reproachfully.] You haven't forgotten that right-and-left, arm, elbow and shoulder movement I taught you?

MAUD. [With hesitation.] N-o-o.

FITZSIMMONS. [Moving toward bag to left.] Then, come on.

MAUD. [Rising reluctantly and following.] I'd rather see you punch the bag. I'd just love to.

FITZSIMMONS. I will, afterward. You go to it first.

MAUD. [Eyeing the bag in alarm.] No; you. I'm out of practice.

FITZSIMMONS. [Looking at her sharply.] How many drinks have you had to-night?

MAUD. Not a one. I don't drink — that is — er — only occasionally.

FITZSIMMONS. [Indicating bag.] Then go to it.

MAUD. No; I tell you I am out of practice. I've forgotten it all. You see, I made a discovery.

[Pauses.]

FITZSIMMONS. Yes?

MAUD. I — I — you remember what a light voice I always had — almost soprano?

[FITZSIMMONS nods.]

MAUD. Well, I discovered it was a perfect falsetto.

[FITZSIMMONS nods.]

MAUD. I've been practising it ever since. Experts, in another room, would swear it was a woman's voice. So would you, if you turned your back and I sang.

FITZSIMMONS. [Who has been laughing incredulously, now becomes suspicious.] Look here, kid, I think you are an impostor. You are not Harry Jones at all.

MAUD. I am, too.

FITZSIMMONS. I don't believe it. He was heavier than you.

MAUD. I had the fever last summer and lost a lot of weight.

FITZSIMMONS. You are the Harry Jones that got sousesd and had to be put to bed?

MAUD. Y-e-s.

FITZSIMMONS. There is one thing I remember very distinctly. Harry Jones had a birth mark on his knee. [He looks at her legs searchingly.]

MAUD. [Embarrassed, then resolving to carry it out.] Yes, right here. [She advances right leg and touches it.]

FITZSIMMONS. [Triumphantly.] Wrong. It was the other knee.

MAUD. I ought to know.

FITZSIMMONS. You haven't any birth mark at all.

MAUD. I have, too.

FITZSIMMONS. [Suddenly springing to her and attempting to seize her leg.] Then we'll prove it. Let me see.

MAUD. [In a panic backs away from him and resists his attempts, until grinning in an aside to the audience, he gives over. She, in an aside to audience.] Fancy his wanting to see my birth mark.

FITZSIMMONS. [Bullying.] Then take a go at the bag. [She shakes her head.] You're not Harry Jones.

MAUD. [Approaching punching bag.] I am, too.

FITZSIMMONS. Then hit it.

MAUD. [Resolving to attempt it, hits bag several nice blows, and then is struck on the nose by it.] Oh!

[Recovering herself and rubbing her nose.] I told you I was out of practice. You punch the bag, Bob.

FITZSIMMONS. I will, if you will show me what you can do with that wonderful soprano voice of yours.

MAUD. I don't dare. Everybody would think there was a woman in the club.

FITZSIMMONS. [Shaking his head.] No, they won't. They've all gone to the fight. There's not a soul in the building.

MAUD. [Alarmed, in a weak voice.] Not — a — soul — in — the building?

FITZSIMMONS. Not a soul. Only you and I.

MAUD. [Starting hurriedly toward door.] Then I must go.

FITZSIMMONS. What's your hurry? Sing.

MAUD. [Turning back with new resolve.] Let me see you punch the bag, — er — Bob.

FITZSIMMONS. You sing first.

MAUD. No; you punch first.

FITZSIMMONS. I don't believe you are Harry —

MAUD. [Hastily.] All right, I'll sing. You sit down over there and turn your back.

[FITZSIMMONS obeys.]

[MAUD walks over to the table toward right. She is about to sing, when she notices FITZSIMMONS' cigarette case, picks it up, and in an aside reads his name on it and speaks.]

MAUD. "Robert Fitzsimmons." That will prove to my brother that I have been here.

FITZSIMMONS. Hurry up.

[MAUD hastily puts cigarette case in her pocket and begins to sing.]

SONG

[During the song FITZSIMMONS turns his head slowly and looks at her with growing admiration.]

MAUD. How did you like it?

FITZSIMMONS. [Gruffly.] Rotten. Anybody could tell it was a boy's voice —

MAUD. Oh!

FITZSIMMONS. It is rough and coarse and it cracked on every high note.

MAUD. Oh! Oh!

[Recollecting herself and shrugging her shoulders.] Oh, very well. Now let's see if you can do any better with the bag.

[FITZSIMMONS takes off coat and gives exhibition.]

[MAUD looks on in an ecstasy of admiration.]

MAUD. [As he finishes.] Beautiful! Beautiful!

[FITZSIMMONS puts on coat and goes over and sits down near table.] Nothing like the bag to limber one up. I feel like a fighting cock. Harry, let's go out on a toot, you and I.

MAUD. Wh-a-a-t?

FITZSIMMONS. A toot. You know — one of those rip-snorting nights you used to make.

MAUD. [Emphatically, as she picks up newspapers from leather chair, sits down, and places them on her lap.] I'll do nothing of the sort. I've — I've reformed.

FITZSIMMONS. You used to joy-ride like the very devil.

MAUD. I know it.

FITZSIMMONS. And you always had a pretty girl or two along.

MAUD. [Boastfully, in mannish, fashion.] Oh, I still have my fling. Do you know any — well, — er, — nice girls?

FITZSIMMONS. Sure.

MAUD. Put me wise.

FITZSIMMONS. Sure. You know Jack Sylvester?

MAUD. [Forgetting herself.] He's my brother —

FITZSIMMONS. [Exploding.] What!

MAUD. — In-law's first cousin.

FITZSIMMONS. Oh!

MAUD. So you see I don't know him very well. I only met him once — at the club. We had a drink together.

FITZSIMMONS. Then you don't know his sister?

MAUD. [Starting.] His sister? I — I didn't know he had a sister.

FITZSIMMONS. [Enthusiastically.] She's a peach. A queen. A little bit of all right. A — a loo-loo.

MAUD. [Flattered.] She is, is she?

FITZSIMMONS. She's a scream. You ought to get acquainted with her.

MAUD. [Slyly.] You know her, then?

FITZSIMMONS. You bet.

MAUD. [Aside.] Oh, ho! [To FITZSIMMONS.] Know her very well?

FITZSIMMONS. I've taken her out more times than I can remember. You'll like her, I'm sure.

MAUD. Thanks. Tell me some more about her.

FITZSIMMONS. She dresses a bit loud. But you won't mind that. And whatever you do, don't take her to eat.

MAUD. [Hiding her chagrin.] Why not?

FITZSIMMONS. I never saw such an appetite —

MAUD. Oh!

FITZSIMMONS. It's fair sickening. She must have a tapeworm. And she thinks she can sing.

MAUD. Yes?

FITZSIMMONS. Rotten. You can do better yourself, and that's not saying much. She's a nice girl, really she is, but she is the black sheep of the family. Funny, isn't it?

MAUD. [Weak voice.] Yes, funny.

FITZSIMMONS. Her brother Jack is all right. But he can't do anything with her. She's a — a —

MAUD. [Grimly.] Yes. Go on.

FITZSIMMONS. A holy terror. She ought to be in a reform school.

MAUD. [Springing to her feet and slamming newspapers in his face.] Oh! Oh! Oh! You liar! She isn't anything of the sort!

FITZSIMMONS. [Recovering from the onslaught and making believe he is angry, advancing threateningly on her.] Now I'm going to put a head on you. You young hoodlum.

MAUD. [All alarm and contrition, backing away from him.] Don't! Please don't! I'm sorry! I apologise. I — I beg your pardon, Bob. Only I don't like to hear girls talked about that way, even — even if it is true. And you ought to know.

FITZSIMMONS. [Subsiding and resuming seat.] You've changed a lot, I must say.

MAUD. [Sitting down in leather chair.] I told you I'd reformed. Let us talk about something else. Why is it girls like prize-fighters? I should think — ahem — I mean it seems to me that girls would think prize-fighters horrid.

FITZSIMMONS. They are men.

MAUD. But there is so much crookedness in the game. One hears about it all the time.

FITZSIMMONS. There are crooked men in every business and profession. The best fighters are not crooked.

MAUD. I — er — I thought they all faked fights when there was enough in it.

FITZSIMMONS. Not the best ones.

MAUD. Did you — er — ever fake a fight?

FITZSIMMONS. [Looking at her sharply, then speaking solemnly.] Yes. Once.

MAUD. [Shocked, speaking sadly.] And I always heard of you and thought of you as the one clean champion who never faked.

FITZSIMMONS. [Gently and seriously.] Let me tell you about it. It was down in Australia. I had just begun to fight my way up. It was with old Bill Hobart out at Rushcutters Bay. I threw the fight to him.

MAUD. [Repelled, disgusted.] Oh! I could not have believed it of you.

FITZSIMMONS. Let me tell you about it. Bill was an old fighter. Not an old man, you know, but he'd been in the fighting game a long time. He was about thirty-eight and a gamer man never entered the ring. But he was in hard luck. Younger fighters were coming up, and he was being crowded out. At that time it wasn't often he got a fight and the purses were small. Besides it was a drought year in Australia. You don't know what that means. It means that the rangers are starved. It means that the sheep are starved and die by the millions. It means that there is no money and no work, and that the men and women and kiddies starve.

Bill Hobart had a missus and three kids and at the time of his fight with me they were all starving. They did not have enough to eat. Do you understand? They did not have enough to eat. And Bill did not have enough to eat. He trained on an empty stomach, which is no way to train you'll admit. During that drought year there was little enough money in the ring, but he had failed to get any fights. He had worked at long-shoring, ditch-digging, coal-shovelling — anything, to keep the life in the missus and the kiddies. The trouble was the jobs didn't hold out. And there he was, matched to fight with me, behind in his rent, a tough old chopping-block, but weak from lack of food. If he did not win the fight, the landlord was going to put them into the street.

MAUD. But why would you want to fight with him in such weak condition?

FITZSIMMONS. I did not know. I did not learn till at the ringside just before the fight. It was in the dressing rooms, waiting our turn to go on. Bill came out of his room, ready for the ring. "Bill," I said — in fun, you know. "Bill, I've got to do you to-night." He said nothing, but he looked at me with the saddest and most pitiful face I have ever seen. He went back into his dressing room and sat down.

"Poor Bill!" one of my seconds said. "He's been fair starving these last weeks. And I've got it straight, the landlord chucks him out if he loses to-night."

Then the call came and we went into the ring. Bill was desperate. He fought like a tiger, a madman. He was fair crazy. He was fighting for more than I was fighting for.

I was a rising fighter, and I was fighting for the money and the recognition. But Bill was fighting for life — for the life of his loved ones.

Well, condition told. The strength went out of him, and I was fresh as a daisy. “What’s the matter, Bill?” I said to him in a clinch. “You’re weak.” “I ain’t had a bit to eat this day,” he answered. That was all.

By the seventh round he was about all in, hanging on and panting and sobbing for breath in the clinches, and I knew I could put him out any time. I drew back my right for the short-arm jab that would do the business. He knew it was coming, and he was powerless to prevent it.

“For the love of God, Bob,” he said; and — [Pause.]

MAUD. Yes? Yes?

FITZSIMMONS. I held back the blow. We were in a clinch.

“For the love of God, Bob,” he said again, “the misses and the kiddies!”

And right there I saw and knew it all. I saw the hungry children asleep, and the missus sitting up and waiting for Bill to come home, waiting to know whether they were to have food to eat or be thrown out in the street.

“Bill,” I said, in the next clinch, so low only he could hear. “Bill, remember the La Blanche swing. Give it to me, hard.”

We broke away, and he was tottering and groggy. He staggered away and started to whirl the swing. I saw it coming. I made believe I didn’t and started after him in a rush. Biff! It caught me on the jaw, and I went down. I was young and strong. I could eat punishment. I could have got up the first second. But I lay there and let them count me out. And making believe I was still dazed, I let them carry me to my corner and work to bring me to. [Pause.]

Well, I faked that fight.

MAUD. [Springing to him and shaking his hand.] Thank God! Oh! You are a man! A — a — a hero!

FITZSIMMONS. [Dryly, feeling in his pocket.] Let’s have a smoke. [He fails to find cigarette case.]

MAUD. I can’t tell you how glad I am you told me that.

FITZSIMMONS. [Gruffly.] Forget it. [He looks on table, and fails to find cigarette case. Looks at her suspiciously, then crosses to desk at right and reaches for telephone.]

MAUD. [Curiously.] What are you going to do?

FITZSIMMONS. Call the police.

MAUD. What for?

FITZSIMMONS. For you.

MAUD. For me?

FITZSIMMONS. You are not Harry Jones. And not only are you an impostor, but you are a thief.

MAUD. [Indignantly.] How dare you?

FITZSIMMONS. You have stolen my cigarette case.

MAUD. [Remembering and taken aback, pulls out cigarette case.] Here it is.

FITZSIMMONS. Too late. It won't save you. This club must be kept respectable. Thieves cannot be tolerated.

MAUD. [Growing alarm.] But you won't have me arrested?

FITZSIMMONS. I certainly will.

MAUD. [Pleadingly.] Please! Please!

FITZSIMMONS. [Obdurately.] I see no reason why I should not.

MAUD. [Hurriedly, in a panic.] I'll give you a reason — a — a good one. I — I — am not Harry Jones.

FITZSIMMONS. [Grimly.] A good reason in itself to call in the police.

MAUD. That isn't the reason. I'm — a — Oh! I'm so ashamed.

FITZSIMMONS. [Sternly.] I should say you ought to be. [Reaches for telephone receiver.]

MAUD. [In rush of desperation.] Stop! I'm a — I'm a — a girl. There! [Sinks down in chair, burying her face in her hands.]

[FITZSIMMONS, hanging up receiver, grunts.]

[MAUD removes hands and looks at him indignantly. As she speaks her indignation grows.]

MAUD. I only wanted your cigarette case to prove to my brother that I had been here. I — I'm Maud Sylvester, and you never took me out once. And I'm not a black sheep. And I don't dress loudly, and I haven't a — a tapeworm.

FITZSIMMONS. [Grinning and pulling out card from vest pocket.] I knew you were Miss Sylvester all the time.

MAUD. Oh! You brute! I'll never speak to you again.

FITZSIMMONS. [Gently.] You'll let me see you safely out of here.

MAUD. [Relenting.] Ye-e-s. [She rises, crosses to table, and is about to stoop for motor cloak and bonnet, but he forestall her, holds cloak and helps her into it.] Thank you. [She takes off wig, fluffs her own hair becomingly, and puts on bonnet, looking every inch a pretty young girl, ready for an automobile ride.]

FITZSIMMONS. [Who, all the time, watching her transformation, has been growing bashful, now handing her the cigarette case.] Here's the cigarette case. You may k-k-keep it.

MAUD. [Looking at him, hesitates, then takes it.] I thank you — er — Bob. I shall treasure it all my life. [He is very embarrassed.] Why, I do believe you're bashful. What is the matter?

FITZSIMMONS. [Stammering.] Why — I — you — You are a girl — and — a — a — a — deuced pretty one.

MAUD. [Taking his arm, ready to start for door.] But you knew it all along.

FITZSIMMONS. But it's somehow different now when you've got your girl's clothes on.

MAUD. But you weren't a bit bashful — or nice, when — you — you — [Blurting it out.] Were so anxious about birth marks.

[They start to make exit.]

CURTAIN

The First Poet

A ONE ACT PLAY

SCENE: A summer plain, the eastern side of which is bounded by grassy hills of limestone, the other sides by a forest. The hill nearest to the plain terminates in a cliff, in the face of which, nearly at the level of the ground, are four caves, with low, narrow entrances. Before the caves, and distant from them less than one hundred feet, is a broad, flat rock, on which are laid several sharp slivers of flint, which, like the rock, are blood-stained. Between the rock and the cave-entrances, on a low pile of stones, is squatted a man, stout and hairy. Across his knees is a thick club, and behind him crouches a woman. At his right and left are two men somewhat resembling him, and like him, bearing wooden clubs. These four face the west, and between them and the bloody rock squat some threescore of cave-folk, talking loudly among themselves. It is late afternoon. The name of him on the pile of stones is Uk, the name of his mate, Ala; and of those at his right and left, Ok and Un.

Uk:

Be still!

(Turning to the woman behind him)

Thou seest that they become still. None save me can make his kind be still, except perhaps the chief of the apes, when in the night he deems he hears a serpent... At whom dost thou stare so long? At Oan? Oan, come to me!

Oan:

I am thy cub.

Uk:

Oan, thou art a fool!

Ok and Un:

Ho! ho! Oan is a fool!

All the Tribe:

Ho! ho! Oan is a fool!

Oan:

Why am I a fool?

Uk:

Dost thou not chant strange words? Last night I heard thee chant strange words at the mouth of thy cave.

Oan:

Ay! they are marvellous words; they were born within me in the dark.

Uk:

Art thou a woman, that thou shouldst bring forth? Why dost thou not sleep when it is dark?

Oan:

I did half sleep; perhaps I dreamed.

Uk:

And why shouldst thou dream, not having had more than thy portion of flesh? Hast thou slain a deer in the forest and brought it not to the Stone?

All the Tribe:

Wa! Wa! He hath slain in the forest, and brought not the meat to the Stone!

Uk:

Be still, ye!

(To Ala)

Thou seest that they become still... Oan, hast thou slain and kept to thyself?

Oan:

Nay, thou knowest that I am not apt at the chase. Also it irks me to squat on a branch all day above a path, bearing a rock upon my thighs. Those words did but awaken within me when I was peaceless in the night.

Uk:

And why wast thou peaceless in the night?

Oan:

Thy mate wept, for that thou didst heat her.

Uk:

Ay! she lamented loudly. But thou shalt make thy half-sleep henceforth at the mouth of the cave, so that when Gurr the tiger cometh, thou shalt hear him sniff between the boulders, and shalt strike the flints, whose stare he hatest. Gurr cometh nightly to the caves.

One of the Tribe:

Ay! Gurr smelleth the Stone!

Uk:

Be still!

(To Ala)

Had he not become still, Ok and Un would have beaten him with their clubs... But, Oan, tell us those words that were born to thee when Ala did weep.

Oan (arising):

They are wonderful words. They are such:

The bright day is gone —

Uk:

Now I see thou art liar as well as fool: behold, the day is not gone!

Oan:

But the day was gone in that hour when my song was born to me.

Uk:

Then shouldst thou have sung it only at that time, and not when it is yet day. But beware lest thou awaken me in the night. Make thou many stars, that they fly in the whiskers of Gurr.

Oan:

My song is even of stars.

Uk:

It was Ul, thy father's wont, ere I slew him with four great stones, to climb to the tops of the tallest trees and reach forth his hand, to see if he might not pluck a star. But I said: "Perhaps they be as chestnut-burs." And all the tribe did laugh. Ul was also a fool. But what dost thou sing of stars?

Oan:

I will begin again:

The bright day is gone. The night maketh me sad, sad, sad —

Uk:

Nay, the night maketh thee sad; not sad, sad, sad. For when I say to Ala, "Gather thou dried leaves," I say not, "Gather thou dried leaves, leaves, leaves." Thou art a fool!

Ok and Un:

Thou art a fool!

All the Tribe:

Thou art a fool!

Uk:

Yea, he is a fool. But say on, Oan, and tell us of thy chestnut-burs.

Oan:

I will begin again:

The bright day is gone —

Uk:

Thou dost not say, "gone, gone, gone!"

Oan:

I am thy cub. Suffer that I speak: so shall the tribe admire greatly.

Uk:

Speak on!

Oan:

I will begin once more:

The bright day is gone. The night maketh me sad, sad —

Uk:

Said I not that "sad" should be spoken but once? Shall I set Ok and Un upon thee with their branches?

Oan:

But it was so born within me — even "sad, sad — "

Uk:

If again thou twice or thrice say "sad," thou shalt be dragged to the Stone.

Oan:

Owl Ow! I am thy cub! Yet listen:

The bright day is gone. The night maketh me sad —

Ow! Ow! thou makest me more sad than the night doth! The song —

Uk:

Ok! Un! Be prepared!

Oan (hastily):

Nay! have mercy! I will begin afresh:

The bright day is gone. The night maketh me sad. The — the — the —

Uk:

Thou hast forgotten, and art a fool! See, Ala, he is a fool!

Ok and Un:

He is a fool!

All the Tribe:

He is a fool!

Oan:

I am not a fool! This is a new thing. In the past, when ye did chant, O men, ye did leap about the Stone, beating your breasts and crying, “Hai, hai, hai!” Or, if the moon was great, “Hai, hai! hai, hai, hai!” But this song is made even with such words as ye do speak, and is a great wonder. One may sit at the cave’s mouth, and moan it many times as the light goeth out of the sky.

One of the Tribe:

Ay! even thus doth he sit at the mouth of our cave, making us marvel, and more especially the women.

Uk:

Be still!... When I would make women marvel, I do show them a wolf’s brains upon my club, or the great stone that I cast, or perhaps do whirl my arms mightily, or bring home much meat. How should a man do otherwise? I will have no songs in this place.

Oan:

Yet suffer that I sing my song unto the tribe. Such things have not been before. It may be that they shall praise thee, seeing that I who do make this song am thy cub.

Uk:

Well, let us have the song.

Oan (facing the tribe):

The bright day is gone. The night maketh me sa — sad. But the stars are very white. They whisper that the day shall return. O stars; little pieces of the day!

Uk:

This is indeed madness. Hast thou heard a star whisper? Did Ul, thy father, tell thee that he heard the stars whisper when he was in the tree-top? And of what moment is it that a star be a piece of the day, seeing that its light is of no value? Thou art a fool!

Ok and Un:

Thou art a fool!

All the Tribe:

Thou art a fool!

Oan:

But it was so born unto me. And at that birth it was as though I would weep, yet had not been stricken; I was moreover glad, yet none had given me a gift of meat.

Uk:

It is a madness. How shall the stars profit us? Will they lead us to a bear's den, or where the deer foregather, or break for us great bones that we come at their marrow? Will they tell us anything at all? Wait thou until the night, and we shall peer forth from between the boulders, and all men shall take note that the stars cannot whisper... Yet it may be that they are pieces of the day. This is a deep matter.

Oan:

Ay! they are pieces of the moon!

Uk:

What further madness is this? How shall they be pieces of two things that are not the same? Also it was not thus in the song.

Oan:

I will make me a new song. We do change the shape of wood and stone, but a song is made out of nothing. Ho! ho! I can fashion things from nothing! Also I say that the stars come down at morning and become the dew.

Uk:

Let us have no more of these stars. It may be that a song is a good thing, if it be of what a man knoweth. Thus, if thou singest of my club, or of the bear that I slew, of the stain on the Stone, or the cave and the warm leaves in the cave, it might be well.

Oan:

I will make thee a song of Ala!

Uk (furiously):

Thou shalt make me no such song! Thou shalt make me a song of the deer-liver that thou hast eaten! Did I not give to thee of the liver of the she-deer, because thou didst bring me crawfish?

Oan:

Truly I did eat of the liver of the she-deer; but to sing thereof is another matter.

Uk:

It was no labour for thee to sing of the stars. See now our clubs and casting-stones, with which we slay flesh to eat; also the caves in which we dwell, and the Stone whereon we make sacrifice; wilt thou sing no song of those?

Oan:

It may be that I shall sing thee songs of them. But now, as I strive here to sing of the doe's liver, no words are born unto me: I can but sing, "O liver! O red liver!"

Uk:

That is a good song: thou seest that the liver is red. It is red as blood.

Oan:

But I love not the liver, save to eat of it.

Uk:

Yet the song of it is good. When the moon is full we shall sing it about the Stone. We shall beat upon our breasts and sing, "O liver! O red liver!" And all the women in the caves shall be affrightened.

Oan:

I will not have that song of the liver! It shall be Ok's song; the tribe must say, "Ok hath made the song!"

Ok:

Ay! I shall be a great singer; I shall sing of a wolf's heart, and say, "Behold, it is red!"

Uk:

Thou art a fool, and shalt sing only, "Hai, hai!" as thy father before thee. But Oan shall make me a song of my club, for the women listen to his songs.

Oan:

I will make thee no songs, neither of thy club, nor thy cave, nor thy doe's-liver. Yea! though thou give me no more flesh, yet will I live alone in the forest, and eat the seed of grasses, and likewise rabbits, that are easily snared. And I will sleep in a tree-top, and I will sing nightly:

The bright day is gone. The night maketh me sad, sad, sad, sad, sad, sad —

Uk:

Ok and Un, arise and slay!

(Ok and Un rush upon Oan, who stoops and picks up two casting-stones, with one of which he strikes Ok between the eyes, and with the other mashes the hand of Un, so that he drops his club. Uk arises.)

Uk:

Behold! Gurr cometh! he cometh swiftly from the wood!

(The Tribe, including Oan and Ala, rush for the cave-mouths. As Oan passes Uk, the latter runs behind Oan and crushes his skull with a blow of his club.)

Uk:

O men! O men with the heart of hyenas! Behold, Gurr cometh not! I did but strive to deceive you, that I might the more easily slay this singer, who is very swift of foot... Gather ye before me, for I would speak wisdom... It is not well that there be any song among us other than what our fathers sang in the past, or, if there be songs, let them be of such matters as are of common understanding. If a man sing of a deer, so shall he be drawn, it may be, to go forth and slay a deer, or even a moose. And if he sing of his casting-stones, it may be that he become more apt in the use thereof. And if he sing of his cave, it may be that he shall defend it more stoutly when Gurr teareth at the boulders. But it is a vain thing to make songs of the stars, that seem scornful even of me; or of the moon, which is never two nights the same; or of the day, which goeth about its business and will not linger though one pierce a she-babe with a flint. But as for me, I would have none of these songs. For if I sing of such in the council, how shall I keep my wits? And if I think thereof, when at the chase, it may be that

I babble it forth, and the meat hear and escape. And ere it be time to eat, I do give my mind solely to the care of my hunting-gear. And if one sing when eating, he may fall short of his just portion. And when, one hath eaten, doth not he go straightway to sleep? So where shall men find a space for singing? But do ye as ye will: as for me, I will have none of these songs and stars.

Be it also known to all the women that if, remembering these wild words of Oan, they do sing them to themselves, or teach them to the young ones, they shall be beaten with brambles. Cause swiftly that the wife of Ok cease from her wailing, and bring hither the horses that were slain yesterday, that I may apportion them. Had Oan wisdom, he might have eaten thereof; and had a mammoth fallen into our pit, he might have feasted many days. But Oan was a fool!

Un:

Oan was a fool!

All the Tribe:

Oan was a fool!

The Return of Ulysses: A Modern Version

Scene—a club lounging room.

George (Just back from Klondike) Jack (invalided from Manila)

Harry (who stayed at home)

(Enter George and Harry by opposite doors)

Harry (with hearty surprise)

By Jove! It's George, this is a joy!

George (as they grip hands)

How goes it any way, old boy?

You're looking well—how wags the town?"

And you? It's time you've settled down?

Harry

I have, old man; no more abroad,

The wee sma' hours—

George

Say, how is Maud?
You know, Miss Smith, that slim brunette –
Remember on the parapet
How she and I made poor Jack sweat?
Yes, yes, I know it was a sin,
But then I had my doubts of him
She liked me best, as you'll allow,
Better than all the rest. And now –
Well, I shall try my luck to-night
Pay her a call; if all goes right
You'll be best man-there, there, don't scold,
I know you will do that for–

Harry

Hold!

You do not understand; let me

Explain. You see—I—that is—we–

(Enter Jack, who pounces upon them effusively. All shake hands and clap each other on the shoulder.)

Jack

How's Klondike, George? Let's heft your sack;
Of dust I hope you have no lack;
And Harry, here, who will not roam,
Our gorgeous, glorious stay-at-home –
How fares the world with you? Hast yet
A wife unto your hearth to fret
You to an early grave? But come,
The news, –(steward, your jolliest mumm)–
Who's born? who's dead? who's crossed the line?
The married? the divorced?–in fine,
The news, O man, the news. And say,
Er–Maud, Miss Smith, the little fay,
How is she? Is her name the same
As when I left?

George

Another flame!

Hal Ha!

Jack

What! You! O, I forgot;
It's "I love you,
I love you not" –
A merry game for us to play,
In which, I wage, she'll say you nay.
Why you may have unmeasured gold,
But now-a-days, the soldier bold,
The hero of the camp and field,
Is all the rage; beneath his shield
Stalks Love, triumphant, and the fair
Can rest none other place than there,
Yes, they'll be wild over my scars,
Wild over me, just from the wars,
While you, who did a-mining go,
Tell me, what have you got to show?
George (mock-heroically)

Show? I? What have I got to show?
‘Mid vasty wastes of Arctic snow,
Where blackness shrouds the silent world,
And death broods over all, I hurled
My challenge to the stars, unfurled
My standard and did mighty deeds.
I led a dozen wild stampedes;
I lived for months on moose-meat straight;
I froze my feet, nor did I wait
Their healing, till I froze my nose.
Aye, to great hazards I arose,
And had I proper speech to tell
My “ventures in that frozen hell,
I would your inmost soul affright
With. deeds done by the Northern Light.
(descending to the colloquial manner)
Well, here I am, and I am rich,
‘Yea, in experience—the which
Will not advance my suit, you see.
But as for dust — between us three,
I’m broke, I haven’t got a red;
And yet, I think, when all is said,
I stand as good a chance as you.
You went to war—how did you do
In way of gold? What is your wealth?
And further, how’s your state of health?
You’re looking yellow—quid pro quo,
Speak up, what: have you got to show?

Jack

No more. I did not play polo
With Northern Lights below zero –
No, but I starved on the transports,
With empty stomach stormed the forts,
Or ate poor grub in poorer camp,
Shivered and shook out in the damp,
Was shot through arm, and thigh, and breast,
And caught a cold upon my chest,
Then fever claimed me for his own,
And I was invalided home.
So, like a gory son of Mars,
I've nothing else to show but scars.
And George, old chap, forgive me, do,
For my most foolish words to you;
We're comrades in misfortune, now,
And to. her choice. Maud's choice, we'll bow,
And still be friends.

George (as they shake hands)

And one word more –

He who shall win the lady's door,
Shall recollect his friend forlorn,
And the proud hour of his first born
Shall see him praise and bless the same
By giving it his comrade's name.
Thus is our brotherhood begun,
And. he who wins or loses–

Jack (wildly signalling the steward)

Done!

What will–

Harry (sarcastically)

Suppose it is a girl?

Jack

That is the question of a churl –
We shall call her, and not man her,
Jacqueline or Georgiana.

George (as the steward waits their order)

Ye gods! well done! An answer meet
For the occasion–'tis Harry's treat,
And treat you shall, before you go–
Besides, what have you got to show?

(Harry rises to his feet and is followed by George and Jack.
The steward returns and they raise their glasses.)

Harry,

I stayed at home; I cannot show
War's ravages, nor Klondike's woe.
I've not gained much of which to boast,
But to yourselves I drink a toast:
Here's to Mars' son, who bravely stopped
A brace of Spanish balls – and dropped;
Here's to the son of Mammon, bold,
Wealthy in lore, if not in gold'
And. now a health to the first born–
Here's to her god-papa forlorn;
Here-'s to her dad, who blessed the same
By giving her his rival's name;
And. here's to Maud, the last of all –
Just shake the tree, she's sure to fall.

(They laughingly drink and depart together; but before they
have gone a block, who do they meet but the very Maud in question.)
Maud (most graciously, as she extends both hands to George
and Jack, while Harry drops into the background.)

What a surprise–both George and Jack–
I did not know that you were back.
Why Jack, how brown you are, and so –
Come up this evening–don't say no,
I'm home to you at any time,
That is if you will deign to climb –
We're living in a flat, you know.

(She indicates Harry and lovingly takes his arm.
George and Jack act as though they had a pressing engagement.)

Harry (very modestly)
And this is all I have to show.

Maud
Be sure and come–please don't forget.

Harry (sotto voice)
She'll wait in vain for them, I bet.

(Exit, with Maud clinging to his arm.)
(Jack and George fall upon each other's breast.)

Jack
Our Maud, our dainty Maud, is wed!

George
Woe! Woe! Our eldest born is dead!
(Exit, limply.)

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(December 1898)

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