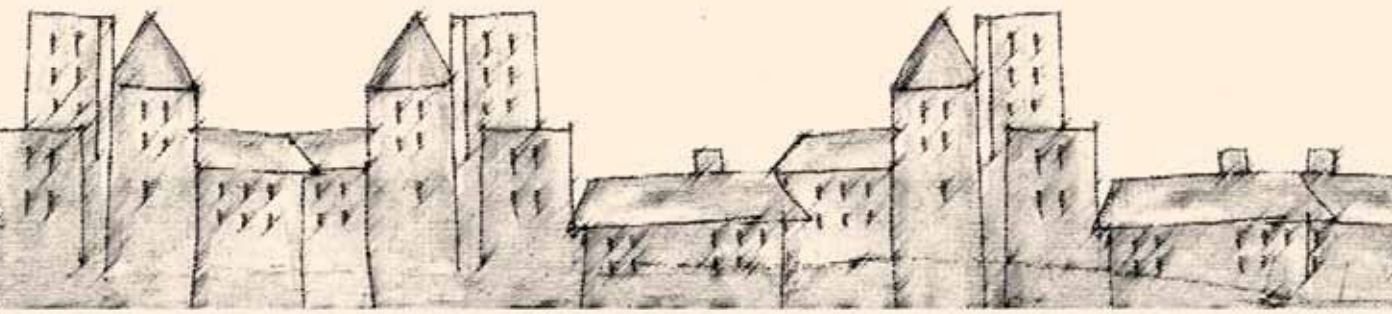
PARADISE

ENGLISH A

PROSE | POETRY | PLAYS

XI and XII

HIGHER SECONDARY
ENGLISH COLLECTIONS



West Bengal Council of Higher Secondary Education

PARADISE

English Collections of Prose, Poetry, Plays

English A

XI & XII

With Financial-Aid from the Government of West Bengal,
this book is to be distributed to students of XI
free of cost. This book is not for sale.

West Bengal Council of Higher Secondary Education

West Bengal Council of Higher Secondary Education

First Edition : May, 2024

Publisher : Dr. Priyadarshini Mallick
Secretary
West Bengal Council of Higher Secondary Education
Vidyasagar Bhawan, 9/2, Block - D-J
Sector-II, Saltlake, Kolkata-700091

Printed at

West Bengal Text Book Corporation Limited
(Government of West Bengal Enterprise)

THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

PREAMBLE

WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a **SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC AND TO SECURE TO ALL ITS CITIZENS :**

JUSTICE, social, economic and political;

LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;
EQUALITY of status and of opportunity and to promote among them all;

FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation;

IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY this twenty-sixth day of November 1949, do **HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE TO OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION.**

Fundamental Rights and Fundamental Duties of Citizens of India

Fundamental Rights (Article 14-35 of Indian Constitution)

1. Right to Equality

- The law of the country considers all citizens equally and protects everybody equally.
- The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them.
- There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State.
- Abolition of untouchability is proclaimed and prohibited.
- Prohibition of acceptance and use of all titles except military and academic.

2. Right to Freedom

- Freedom of speech and expression.
- Freedom to assemble peacefully without arms.
- Freedom to form associations/unions/ cooperative societies.
- Freedom to move freely throughout the territory of India.
- Freedom to reside in any part of the country.
- Right to carry on any trade or profession/ occupation.
- The convicted person will be punished in the existing law.
- A person cannot be convicted for the same offence more than once.
- No person accused of an offence shall be compelled by the State to bear witness against himself.
- Right to life and personal liberty.
- No person can be arrested without any valid reason and the arrested person should be given the scope to defend oneself.

3. Right against Exploitation

- Prohibition of labour without payment or buying and selling of any person.
- Prohibition of employment of children below the age of 14 in any hazardous industry or factories or mines.

4. Right to Freedom of Religion

- Freedom of conscience, the freedom to profess, practice, and propagate religion to all citizens.
- Right to form and maintain institutions for religious and charitable intents and acquire the immovable and movable property.
- There can be no taxes, the proceeds of which are directly used for the promotion and/or maintenance of any particular religion/ religious denomination.
- No religious instruction shall be provided in State-run educational institutions and no religious worship cannot be imparted against the consent of the student in such institutions.

5. Cultural and Educational Rights

- All citizens of our country have the right to protect, preserve, and propagate their language, script and culture.
- The State shall not deny admission into educational institutes maintained by it or those that receive aids from it to any person based on race, religion, caste or language.
- All religious and linguistic minorities have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.

6. Right to Constitutional Remedies

- A person can move to Supreme Court and High Court if he/she wants to get his/her fundamental rights protected.

Fundamental Duties in India (Article 51A of Indian Constitution)

1. Abide by the Indian Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag and the National Anthem.
2. Cherish and follow the noble ideals that inspired the national struggle for freedom.
3. Uphold and protect the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India.
4. Defend the country and render national service when called upon to do so.
5. Promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities and to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women.
6. Value and preserve the rich heritage of the country's composite culture.
7. Protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife and to have compassion for living creatures.
8. Develop scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform.
9. Safeguard public property and to abjure violence.
10. Strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity so that the nation constantly rises to higher levels of endeavour and achievement.
11. Provide opportunities for education to his child or ward between the age of six and fourteen years.

PREFACE

West Bengal Council of Higher Secondary Education (WBCHSE) has taken initiative to revise the curriculum/syllabus of all the subjects with the introduction of Semester System with 2024-2025 academic year. In this direction WBCHSE has formed individual subject committees by inducting faculty members from various schools/colleges/universities.

The WBCHSE has developed *Paradise* as English (A) textbook for Classes XI and XII to be studied in all Government, Government Sponsored, Government Aided and Government Affilliated Schools of West Bengal.

The delight of meeting great minds, the discovery of new worlds, the excitement of facing different real-life situations and characters and the sensitising of the mind while the soul comes to us through the experience of reading and responding to good literature. That is what the selections in *Paradise* aim to do.

In *Paradise,* learners are exposed to a wide range of literary English texts.

The texts are an interesting mix of classic and contemporary selections of prose and poetry. There is an assortment of Indian and global texts in a variety of genres so that students can enjoy the richness of literature in its various forms. A play has also been included in the syllabus for class XII, where serious thought has gone into ensuring that the choice of texts are sensitive, relevant and thought provoking so that students become more insightful and responsive in their reading of literature.

The Government has decided to distribute this book free of cost. We are grateful to Prof. Bratya Basu, the Minister-In-Charge, Department of School and Higher Education, Government of West Bengal, for his initiative.

Suggestions, views and comments to improve the book are welcome.

May, 2024
Vidyasagar Bhavan

Chiranjib Bhattacharjee
President
West Bengal Council of
Higher Secondary Education

Acknowledgment

Prof. Nandini Saha

Dr. Chandrima Karmakar

Dr. Himadri Bhattacharya

Dr. Chandan Mishra

Ms. Indrani Bhattacharyya

CONTENTS

CLASS XI
SEMESTER I

Prose

Verse

SEMESTER II

Prose

Verse

CLASS XII
SEMESTER III

Prose

Verse

SEMESTER IV

CLASS XI

SEMESTER I

The Last Leaf

O' Henry

IN A SMALL PART OF THE CITY WEST OF Washington Square, the streets have gone wild. They turn in different directions. They are broken into small pieces called "places." One street goes across itself one or two times. A painter once discovered something possible and valuable about this street. Suppose a painter had some painting materials for which he had not paid. Suppose he had no money. Suppose a man came to get the money. The man might walk down that street and suddenly meet himself coming back, with-out having received a cent!

This part of the city is called Greenwich Village. And to old Greenwich Village the painters soon came. Here they found rooms they like, with good light and at a low cost.

Sue and Johnsy lived at the top of a building with three floors. One of these young women came from Maine, the other from California. They had met at a restaurant on Eighth Street. There they discovered that they liked the same kind of art, the same kind of food, and the same kind of clothes. So they decided to live and work together.

That was in the spring.

Toward winter a cold stranger entered Greenwich Village. No one could see him. He walked around touching one person here and another there with his icy fingers. He was a bad sickness. Doctors called him Pneumonia. On the east side of the city he hurried, touching many peo-ple; but in the narrow streets of Greenwich Village he did not move so quickly.

Mr. Pneumonia was not a nice old gentleman. A nice old gen-tleman would not hurt a weak little woman from California. But Mr. Pneumonia touched Johnsy with his cold fingers. She lay on her bed almost without moving, and she looked through the window at the wall of the house next to hers.

One morning the busy doctor spoke to Sue alone in the hall, where Johnsy could not hear.

"She has a very small chance," he said. "She has a chance, if she wants to live. If people don't want to live, I can't do much for them. Your little lady has decided that she is not going to get well. Is there something that is troubling her?"

"She always wanted to go to Italy and paint a picture of the Bay of Naples," said Sue.

"Paint! Not paint. Is there anything worth being troubled about? A man?"

"A man?" said Sue. "Is a man worth—No, doctor. There is not a man."

"It is weakness," said the doctor. "I will do all I know how to do. But when a sick person begins to feel that he's going to die, half my work is useless. T alk to her about new winter clothes. If she were interested in the future, her chances would be better."

After the doctor had gone, Sue went into the workroom to cry.Then she walked into Johnsy's room. She carried some of her painting materials, and she was singing.

Johnsy lay there, very thin and very quiet. Her face was turned toward the window. Sue stopped singing, thinking that Johnsy was asleep.

Sue began to work. As she worked she heard a low sound, again and again. She went quickly to the bedside.

Johnsy's eyes were open wide. She was looking out the window and counting—counting back.

"Twelve," she said; and a little later, "Eleven"; and then, "Ten," and, "Nine"; and then, "Eight," and, "Seven," almost together.

Sue looked out the window. What was there to count? There was only the side wall of the next house, a short distance away. The wall had no window. An old, old tree grew against the wall. The cold breath of winter had already touched it. Almost all its leaves had fallen from its dark branches.

"What is it, dear?" asked Sue.

"Six," said Johnsy, in a voice still lower. "They're falling faster now. Three days ago there were almost a hundred. It hurt my head to count them. But now it's easy. There goes another one. There are only five now."

"Five what, dear? Tell your Sue."

"Leaves. On the tree. When the last one falls, I must go, too. I've known that for three days. Didn't the doctor tell you?"

"Oh, I never heard of such a thing," said Sue. "It doesn't have any sense in it. What does an old tree have to do with you? Or with your getting well? And you used to love that

tree so much. Don't be a little fool. The doctor told me your chances for getting well. He told me this morning. He said you had very good chances! Try to eat a little now. And then I'll go back to work. And then I can sell my picture, and then I can buy something more for you to eat to make you strong."

"You don't have to buy anything for me," said Johnsy. She still looked out the window. "There goes another. No, I don't want any-thing to eat. Now there are four. I want to see the last one fall before night. Then I'll go, too."

"Johnsy, dear," said Sue, "will you promise me to close your eyes and keep them closed? Will you promise not to look out the window until I finish working? I must have this picture ready tomorrow. I need the light; I can't cover the window."

"Couldn't you work in the other room?" asked Johnsy coldly.

"I'd rather be here by you," said Sue. "And I don't want you to look at those leaves."

"Tell me as soon as you have finished," said Johnsy. She closed her eyes and lay white and still. "Because I want to see the last leaf fall. I have done enough waiting. I have done enough thinking. I want to go sailing down, down, like one of those leaves."

"Try to sleep," said Sue. "I must call Behrman to come up here. I want to paint a man in this picture, and I'll make him look like Behrman. I won't be gone a minute. Don't try to move till I come back."

Old Behrman was a painter who lived on the first floor of their house. He was past sixty. He had had no success as a painter. For forty years he had painted, without ever painting a good picture. He had always talked of painting a great picture, a masterpiece, but he had never yet started it.

He got a little money by letting others paint pictures of him. He drank too much. He still talked of his great masterpiece. And he believed that it was his special duty to do everything possible to help Sue and Johnsy.

Sue found him in his dark room, and she knew that he had been drinking. She could smell it. She told him about Johnsy and the leaves on the vine. She said that she was afraid that Johnsy would indeed sail down, down like the leaf. Her hold on the world was growing weaker. Old Behrman shouted his anger over such an idea.

"What!" he cried. "Are there such fools? Do people die because leaves drop off a tree? I have not heard of such a thing. No, I will not come up and sit while you make a picture of me. Why do you allow her to think such a thing? That poor little Johnsy!"

"She is very sick and weak," said Sue. "The sickness has put these strange ideas into her mind. Mr. Behrman, if you won't come, you won't. But I don't think you're very nice."

"This is like a woman!" shouted Behrman. "Who said I will not come? Go. I come with you. For half an hour I have been trying to say that I will come. God! This is not any place for someone so good as Johnsy to lie sick. Some day I shall paint my masterpiece, and we shall all go away from here. God! Yes."

Johnsy was sleeping when they went up. Sue covered the window, and took Behrman into the other room. There they looked out the win-dow fearfully at the tree. Then they looked at each other for a moment without speaking. A cold rain was falling, with a little snow in it too.

Behrman sat down, and Sue began to paint.

She worked through most of the night.

In the morning, after an hour's sleep, she went to Johnsy's bed-side. Johnsy with wide-open eyes was looking toward the window. "I want to see," she told Sue.

Sue took the cover from the window.

But after the beating rain and the wild wind that had not stopped through the whole night, there still was one leaf to be seen against the wall. It was the last on the tree. It was still dark green near the branch. But at the edges it was turning yellow with age. There it was hanging from a branch nearly twenty feet above the ground.

"It is the last one," said Johnsy. "I thought it would surely fall dur-ing the night. I heard the wind. It will fall today, and I shall die at the same time."

"Dear, dear Johnsy!" said Sue. "Think of me, if you won't think of yourself. What would I do?"

But Johnsy did not answer. The most lonely thing in the world is a soul when it is preparing to go on its far journey. The ties that held her to friendship and to earth were breaking, one by one.

The day slowly passed. As it grew dark, they could still see the leaf hanging from its branch against the wall. And then, as the night came, the north wind began again to blow. The rain still beat against the windows.

When it was light enough the next morning, Johnsy again com-manded that she be allowed to see.

The leaf was still there.

Johnsy lay for a long time looking at it. And then she called to Sue, who was cooking something for her to eat.

"I've been a bad girl, Sue," said Johnsy. "Something has made that last leaf stay there to show me how bad I was. It is wrong to want to die. I'll try to eat now. But first bring me a looking-glass, so that I can see myself. And then I'll sit up and watch you cook."

An hour later she said, "Sue, some day I hope to paint the Bay of Naples."

The doctor came in the afternoon. Sue followed him into the hall outside Johnsy's room to talk to him.

"The chances are good," said the doctor. He took Sue's thin, shak-ing hand in his. "Give her good care, and she'll get well. And now I must see another sick person in this house. His name is Behrman. A painter, I believe. Pneumonia, too. Mike is an old, weak man, and he is very ill. There is no hope for him. But we take him to the hospital today. We'll make it as easy for him as we can."

The next day the doctor said to Sue: "She's safe. You have done it. Food and care now—that's all."

And that afternoon Sue came to the bed where Johnsy lay. She put one arm around her.

"I have something to tell you," she said. "Mr. Behrman died of pneumonia today in the hospital. He was ill only two days. Someone found him on the morning of the first day, in his room. He was help-less with pain."

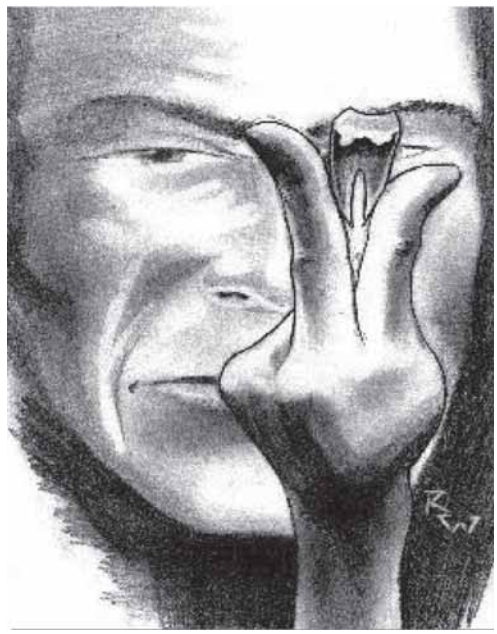
"His shoes and his clothes were wet and as cold as ice. Everyone wondered where he had been. The night had been so cold and wild.

"And then they found some things. There was a light that he had taken outside. And there were his materials for painting. There was paint, green paint and yellow paint. And—

"Look out the window, dear, at the last leaf on the wall. Didn't you wonder why it never moved when the wind was blowing? Oh, my dear, it is Behrman's great masterpiece—he painted it there the night that the last leaf fell."

One of These Days

Gabriel Garcia Marquez



Monday dawned warm and rainless. Aurelio Escovar, a dentist without a degree, and a very early riser, opened his office at six. He took some false teech, still mounted in their plaster mold, out of the glass case and out on the table a fistful of instruments which he arranged in size order, as if they were on display. He wore a collarless striped shirt, closed at the neck with a golden stud, and pants held up by suspenders. He was crect and skinny, with a look that rarely corresponded to the situation, the way deaf people have of looking.

When he had things arranged on the table, he pulled the drill toward the dental chair and sat down to polish the false teeth. He seemed not to be thinking about what he was doing, but worked steadily, pumping the drill with his feet, even when he did not need it.

After eight he stopped for a while to look at the sky through the without, and he saw two pensive buzzards who were drying themselves in the sun on the ridgepole of the house next door. He went on working with the idea that before lunch it would rain again. The shrill voice of his eleven-year-old son interrupted his concentration.

"Papa."

"What?"

"The Mayor wants to know if you'll pull his rooth."

"Tell him I'm not here."

He was polishing a gold tooch. He held it at arm's length, and examined it with his eyes half closed. His son shouted again from the little waiting room.

"He says you are, too, because he can hear you."

---

buzzards: birds of the hawk family.
ridgepole: horizontal beam of a roof.

The dentist kept examining the tooth. Only when he had put it on the table with the finished work did he say:

"So much the better."

He operated the drill again. He took several pieces of a bridge out of a cardboard box where he kept the things he still had to do and began to polish the gold.

"Papa."

"What?"

He still had not changed his expression.

"He says if you don't take out his tooth, he'll shoot you."

Without hurring, with an extemely tranquil movement, he stopped pedalling the drill, pushed it away from the chair and pulled the lower drawer of the table all the way out. there was a revolver. "OK," he said, "Tell him to come and shoot me."

He rolled the chair over opposite the door, his hand resting on the edge of the drawer. The Mayor appeared at the door. He had shaved the left side of his face, but the other side, swollen and in pain, had a five-day-old beard. The dentist saw many nights of desperation in his dull eyes. He closed the drawer with his fingertips and said softly :

"Sit down."

"Good morning," said the Mayor,

"Morning," said the dentist.

While the instruments were boiling, the Mayor leaned his skull on the headrest of the chair and felt better. His breath was icy. It was a poor office: an old wooden chair, the pedal drill, a glass case with ceramic bottles. Opposite the chair was a window with a shoulder-high cloth curtain. When he felt the dentist approach, the Mayor braced his heels and opened his mouth.

Aurelio Escovar turned his head toward the light. After inspecting the infected tooth, he closed the Mayor's jaw with a cautious pressure of his fingers.

"It has to be without anaesthesia," he said.

"Why?"

"Because you have an abscess."

The Mayor looked him in the eye. "All right," he said, and tried to smile. The dentist did not return the smile. He brought the basin of sterilised instruments to the worktable and

---

tranquil: calm movement
braced: made still

took them out of the water with a pair of cold tweezers, still without hurrying. Then he pushed the spitton with the tip of his shoe, and went to wash his hands in washbasin. He did all this without looking at the Mayor. But the Mayor did not take his eyes off him.

It was a lower wisdom tooth. The dentist spread his feet and grasped the tooth with the hot forceps. The Mayor sized the arms of the chair, braced his deet with all his strength and felt an icy void in his kidneys, but did not make a sound. The dentist moved only his wrist. Without rancour, rather with a bitter tenderness, he said:

"Now you'll pay for our twenty dead men."

The Mayor felt the crunch of bones in his jaw, and his eyes filled with tears. But he did not breathe until he felt the tooth come out. Then he saw it through his tears. It seemed so foreign to his pain that he failed to understand his torture of the five previous nights. Bent over the spittoon, sweating, panting, he unbuttoned his tunic and reached for the handkerchief in pants pocket. The dentist gave him a clean cloth.

"Dry your tears," he said.

The Mayor did. He was trembling. While the dentist washed his hands, he saw the crumbling ceiling and a dusty spider web with spider's eggs and dead insects. The dentist returned, drying his hands. "Go to bed," he said, "and gargle with salt water." The Mayor stood up, said goodbye with a casual military salute and walked toward the door, stretching his legs, without buttoning up his tunic.

"Send the bill," he said.

"To you or the town?"

The Mayour did not look at him. He closed the door and said through the screen:

"It's the same damn thing."

---

abscess: a swollen and infected area on the body
panting: breathing heavily
rancour: hatred and anger

To Autumn

O’ Henry

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
  Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
  With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
  And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
    To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
  With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
    For summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
  Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
  Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
  Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
    Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
  Steady thy laden head across a brook;
  Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,
    Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

Where are the songs of spring? Ay, Where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,-
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river sallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

All the World's a Stage

O' Henry

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. At first, the infant,
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.
Then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,
Full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard,
Jealous in honor, sudden and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice,
In fair round belly with good capon lined,
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws and modern instances;
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slippered pantaloon,
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side;
His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide
For his shrunk shank, and his big manly voice,
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

In The Bazaars of Hyderabad

Sarojini Naidu

What do you sell O ye merchants ?
Richly your wares are displayed.
Turbans of crimson and silver,
Tunics of purple brocade,
Mirrors with panels of amber,
Daggers with handles of jade.

What do you weigh, O ye vendors?
Saffron and lentil and rice.
What do you grind, O ye maidens?
Sandalwood, henna, and spice.
What do you call , O ye pedlars?
Chessmen and ivory dice.

What do you make,O ye goldsmiths?
Wristlet and anklet and ring,
Bells for the feet of blue pigeons
Frail as a dragon-fly's wing,
Girdles of gold for dancers,
Scabbards of gold for the king.

What do you cry, O ye fruitmen?
Citron, pomegranate, and plum.
What do you play, O musicians?
Cithar, sarangi and drum.
What do you chant, O magicians?
Spells for aeons to come.

What do you weave, O ye flower-girls
With tassels of azure and red?
Crowns for the brow of a bridegroom,
Chaplets to garland his bed.
Sheets of white blossoms new-garnered
To perfume the sleep of the dead.

CLASS XI

SEMESTER II

Shooting an Elephant

George Orwell

IN MOULMEIN, IN LOWER BURMA, I was hated by large numbers of people--the only time in my life that I have been important enough for this to happen to me. I was sub-divisional police officer of the town, and in an aimless, petty kind of way anti- European feeling was very bitter. No one had the guts to raise a riot, but if a European woman went through the bazaars alone somebody would probably spit betel juice over her dress. As a police officer I was an obvious target and was baited whenever it seemed safe to do so. When a nimble Burman tripped me up on the football field and the referee (another Burman) looked the other way, the crowd yelled with hideous laughter. This happened more than once. In the end the sneering yellow faces of young men that met me everywhere, the insults hooted after me when I was at a safe distance, got badly on my nerves. The young Buddhist priests were the worst of all. There were several thousands of them in the town and none of them seemed to have anything to do except stand on street corners and jeer at Europeans.

All this was perplexing and upsetting. For at that time I had already made up my mind that imperialism was an evil thing and the sooner I chucked up my job and got out of it the better. Theoretically--and secretly, of course--I was all for the Burmese and all against their oppressors, the British. As for the job I was doing, I hated it more bitterly than I can perhaps make clear. In a job like that you see the dirty work of Empire at close quarters. The wretched prisoners huddling in the stinking cages of the lock-ups, the grey, cowed faces of the long-term convicts, the scarred buttocks of the men who had been Bogged with bamboos--all these oppressed me with an intolerable sense of guilt. But I could get nothing into perspective. I was young and ill-educated and I had had to think out my problems in the utter silence that is imposed on every Englishman in the East. I did not even know that the British Empire is dying, still less did I know that it is a great deal better than the younger empires that are going to supplant it. All I knew was that I was stuck between my hatred of the empire I served and my rage against the evil-spirited little beasts who tried to make my job impossible. With one part of my mind I thought of the British Raj as an unbreakable tyranny, as something clamped down, in saecula saeculorum, upon the will of prostrate peoples; with another part I thought that the greatest joy in the world would

be to drive a bayonet into a Buddhist priest's guts. Feelings like these are the normal by-products of imperialism; ask any Anglo-Indian official, if you can catch him off duty.

One day something happened which in a roundabout way was enlightening. It was a tiny incident in itself, but it gave me a better glimpse than I had had before of the real nature of imperialism--the real motives for which despotic governments act.

Early one morning the sub-inspector at a police station the other end of the town rang me up on the phone and said that an elephant was ravaging the bazaar. Would I please come and do something about it? I did not know what I could do, but I wanted to see what was happening and I got on to a pony and started out. I took my rifle, an old .44 Winchester and much too small to kill an elephant, but I thought the noise might be useful in terrorem. Various Burmans stopped me on the way and told me about the elephant's doings. It was not, of course, a wild elephant, but a tame one which had gone "must." It had been chained up, as tame elephants always are when their attack of "must" is due, but on the previous night it had broken its chain and escaped. Its mahout, the only person who could manage it when it was in that state, had set out in pursuit, but had taken the wrong direction and was now twelve hours' journey away, and in the morning the elephant had suddenly reappeared in the town. The Burmese population had no weapons and were quite helpless against it. It had already destroyed somebody's bamboo hut, killed a cow and raided some fruit-stalls and devoured the stock; also it had met the municipal rubbish van and, when the driver jumped out and took to his heels, had turned the van over and inflicted violences upon it.

The Burmese sub-inspector and some Indian constables were waiting for me in the quarter where the elephant had been seen. It was a very poor quarter, a labyrinth of squalid bamboo huts, thatched with palmleaf, winding all over a steep hillside. I remember that it was a cloudy, stuffy morning at the beginning of the rains. We began questioning the people as to where the elephant had gone and, as usual, failed to get any definite information. That is invariably the case in the East; a story always sounds clear enough at a distance, but the nearer you get to the scene of events the vaguer it becomes. Some of the people said that the elephant had gone in one direction, some said that he had gone in another, some professed not even to have heard of any elephant. I had almost made up my mind that the whole story was a pack of lies, when we heard yells a little distance away. There was a loud, scandalized cry of "Go away, child! Go away this instant!" and an old woman

with a switch in her hand came round the corner of a hut, violently shooing away a crowd of naked children. Some more women followed, clicking their tongues and exclaiming; evidently there was something that the children ought not to have seen. I rounded the hut and saw a man's dead body sprawling in the mud. He was an Indian, a black Dravidian coolie, almost naked, and he could not have been dead many minutes. The people said that the elephant had come suddenly upon him round the corner of the hut, caught him with its trunk, put its foot on his back and ground him into the earth. This was the rainy season and the ground was soft, and his face had scored a trench a foot deep and a couple of yards long. He was lying on his belly with arms crucified and head sharply twisted to one side. His face was coated with mud, the eyes wide open, the teeth bared and grinning with an expression of unendurable agony. (Never tell me, by the way, that the dead look peaceful. Most of the corpses I have seen looked devilish.) The friction of the great beast's foot had stripped the skin from his back as neatly as one skins a rabbit. As soon as I saw the dead man I sent an orderly to a friend's house nearby to borrow an elephant rifle. I had already sent back the pony, not wanting it to go mad with fright and throw me if it smelt the elephant.

The orderly came back in a few minutes with a rifle and five cartridges, and meanwhile some Burmans had arrived and told us that the elephant was in the paddy fields below, only a few hundred yards away. As I started forward practically the whole population of the quarter flocked out of the houses and followed me. They had seen the rifle and were all shouting excitedly that I was going to shoot the elephant. They had not shown much interest in the elephant when he was merely ravaging their homes, but it was different now that he was going to be shot. It was a bit of fun to them, as it would be to an English crowd; besides they wanted the meat. It made me vaguely uneasy. I had no intention of shooting the elephant--I had merely sent for the rifle to defend myself if necessary--and it is always unnerving to have a crowd following you. I marched down the hill, looking and feeling a fool, with the rifle over my shoulder and an ever-growing army of people jostling at my heels. At the bottom, when you got away from the huts, there was a metalled road and beyond that a miry waste of paddy fields a thousand yards across, not yet ploughed but soggy from the first rains and dotted with coarse grass. The elephant was standing eight yards from the road, his left side towards us. He took not the slightest notice of the crowd's approach. He was tearing up bunches of grass, beating them against his knees to clean them and stuffing them into his mouth.

I had halted on the road. As soon as I saw the elephant I knew with perfect certainty that I ought not to shoot him. It is a serious matter to shoot a working elephant--it is comparable to destroying a huge and costly piece of machinery--and obviously one ought not to do it if it can possibly be avoided. And at that distance, peacefully eating, the elephant looked no more dangerous than a cow. I thought then and I think now that his attack of "must" was already passing off; in which case he would merely wander harmlessly about until the mahout came back and caught him. Moreover, I did not in the least want to shoot him. I decided that I would watch him for a little while to make sure that he did not turn savage again, and then go home.

But at that moment I glanced round at the crowd that had followed me. It was an immense crowd, two thousand at the least and growing every minute. It blocked the road for a long distance on either side. I looked at the sea of yellow faces above the garish clothes-faces all happy and excited over this bit of fun, all certain that the elephant was going to be shot. They were watching me as they would watch a conjurer about to perform a trick. They did not like me, but with the magical rifle in my hands I was momentarily worth watching. And suddenly I realized that I should have to shoot the elephant after all. The people expected it of me and I had got to do it; I could feel their two thousand wills pressing me forward, irresistibly. And it was at this moment, as I stood there with the rifle in my hands, that I first grasped the hollowness, the futility of the white man's dominion in the East. Here was I, the white man with his gun, standing in front of the unarmed native crowd--seemingly the leading actor of the piece; but in reality I was only an absurd puppet pushed to and fro by the will of those yellow faces behind. I perceived in this moment that when the white man turns tyrant it is his own freedom that he destroys. He becomes a sort of hollow, posing dummy, the conventionalized figure of a sahib. For it is the condition of his rule that he shall spend his life in trying to impress the "natives," and so in every crisis he has got to do what the "natives" expect of him. He wears a mask, and his face grows to fit it. I had got to shoot the elephant. I had committed myself to doing it when I sent for the rifle. A sahib has got to act like a sahib; he has got to appear resolute, to know his own mind and do definite things. To come all that way, rifle in hand, with two thousand people marching at my heels, and then to trail feebly away, having done nothing--no, that was

impossible. The crowd would laugh at me. And my whole life, every white man's life in the East, was one long struggle not to be laughed at.

But I did not want to shoot the elephant. I watched him beating his bunch of grass against his knees, with that preoccupied grandmotherly air that elephants have. It seemed to me that it would be murder to shoot him. At that age I was not squeamish about killing animals, but I had never shot an elephant and never wanted to. (Somehow it always seems worse to kill a large animal.) Besides, there was the beast's owner to be considered. Alive, the elephant was worth at least a hundred pounds; dead, he would only be worth the value of his tusks, five pounds, possibly. But I had got to act quickly. I turned to some experienced-looking Burmans who had been there when we arrived, and asked them how the elephant had been behaving. They all said the same thing: he took no notice of you if you left him alone, but he might charge if you went too close to him.

It was perfectly clear to me what I ought to do. I ought to walk up to within, say, twenty-five yards of the elephant and test his behavior. If he charged, I could shoot; if he took no notice of me, it would be safe to leave him until the mahout came back. But also I knew that I was going to do no such thing. I was a poor shot with a rifle and the ground was soft mud into which one would sink at every step. If the elephant charged and I missed him, I should have about as much chance as a toad under a steam-roller. But even then I was not thinking particularly of my own skin, only of the watchful yellow faces behind. For at that moment, with the crowd watching me, I was not afraid in the ordinary sense, as I would have been if I had been alone. A white man mustn't be frightened in front of "natives"; and so, in general, he isn't frightened. The sole thought in my mind was that if anything went wrong those two thousand Burmans would see me pursued, caught, trampled on and reduced to a grinning corpse like that Indian up the hill. And if that happened it was quite probable that some of them would laugh. That would never do.

There was only one alternative. I shoved the cartridges into the magazine and lay down on the road to get a better aim. The crowd grew very still, and a deep, low, happy sigh, as of people who see the theatre curtain go up at last, breathed from innumerable throats. They were going to have their bit of fun after all. The rifle was a beautiful German

thing with cross-hair sights. I did not then know that in shooting an elephant one would shoot to cut an imaginary bar running from ear-hole to ear- hole. I ought, therefore, as the elephant was sideways on, to have aimed straight at his ear-hole, actually I aimed several inches in front of this, thinking the brain would be further forward.

When I pulled the trigger I did not hear the bang or feel the kick--one never does when a shot goes home--but I heard the devilish roar of glee that went up from the crowd. In that instant, in too short a time, one would have thought, even for the bullet to get there, a mysterious, terrible change had come over the elephant. He neither stirred nor fell, but every line of his body had altered. He looked suddenly stricken, shrunken, immensely old, as though the frighfful impact of the bullet had paralysed him without knocking him down. At last, after what seemed a long time--it might have been five seconds, I dare say--he sagged flabbily to his knees. His mouth slobbered. An enormous senility seemed to have settled upon him. One could have imagined him thousands of years old. I fired again into the same spot. At the second shot he did not collapse but climbed with desperate slowness to his feet and stood weakly upright, with legs sagging and head drooping. I fired a third time. That was the shot that did for him. You could see the agony of it jolt his whole body and knock the last remnant of strength from his legs. But in falling he seemed for a moment to rise, for as his hind legs collapsed beneath him he seemed to tower upward like a huge rock toppling, his trunk reaching skyward like a tree. He trumpeted, for the first and only time. And then down he came, his belly towards me, with a crash that seemed to shake the ground even where I lay.

I got up. The Burmans were already racing past me across the mud. It was obvious that the elephant would never rise again, but he was not dead. He was breathing very rhythmically with long rattling gasps, his great mound of a side painfully rising and falling. His mouth was wide open--I could see far down into caverns of pale pink throat. I waited a long time for him to die, but his breathing did not weaken. Finally I fired my two remaining shots into the spot where I thought his heart must be. The thick blood welled out of him like red velvet, but still he did not die. His body did not even jerk when the shots hit him, the tortured breathing continued without a pause. He was dying, very slowly and in great

agony, but in some world remote from me where not even a bullet could damage him further. I felt that I had got to put an end to that dreadful noise. It seemed dreadful to see the great beast Lying there, powerless to move and yet powerless to die, and not even to be able to finish him. I sent back for my small rifle and poured shot after shot into his heart and down his throat. They seemed to make no impression. The tortured gasps continued as steadily as the ticking of a clock.

In the end I could not stand it any longer and went away. I heard later that it took him half an hour to die. Burmans were bringing dahs and baskets even before I left, and I was told they had stripped his body almost to the bones by the afternoon.

Afterwards, of course, there were endless discussions about the shooting of the elephant. The owner was furious, but he was only an Indian and could do nothing. Besides, legally I had done the right thing, for a mad elephant has to be killed, like a mad dog, if its owner fails to control it. Among the Europeans opinion was divided. The older men said I was right, the younger men said it was a damn shame to shoot an elephant for killing a coolie, because an elephant was worth more than any damn Coringhee coolie. And afterwards I was very glad that the coolie had been killed; it put me legally in the right and it gave me a sufficient pretext for shooting the elephant. I often wondered whether any of the others grasped that I had done it solely to avoid looking a fool.

The Potrait of a Lady

Khushwant Singh

My grandmother, like everybody's grandmother, was an old woman. She had been old and wrinkled for the twenty years that I had known her. People said that she had once been young and pretty and had even had a husband, but that was hard to believe. My grandfather's portrait hung above the mantelpiece in the drawing room. He wore a big turban and loose-fitting clothes. His long white beard covered the best part of his chest and he looked at least a hundred years old. He did not look the sort of person who would have a wife or children. He looked as if he could only have lots and lots of grandchildren. As for my grandmother being young and pretty, the thought was almost revolting. She often told us of the games she used to play as a child. That seemed quite absurd and undignified on her part and we treated them like the fables of the prophets she used to tell us.

She had always been short and fat and slightly bent. Her face was a criss-cross of wrinkles running from everywhere to everywhere. No, we were certain she had always been as we had known her. Old, so terribly old that she could not have grown older, and had stayed at the same age for twenty years. She could never have been pretty; but she was always beautiful. She hobbled about the house in spotless white, with one hand resting on her waist to balance her stoop and the other telling the beads of her rosary. Her silver locks were scattered untidily over her pale, puckered face, and her lips constantly moved in inaudible prayer. Yes, she was beautiful. She was like the winter landscape in the mountains, an expanse of pure white serenity breathing peace and contentment.

My grandmother and I were good friends. My parents left me with her when they went to live in the city and we were constantly together. She used to wake me up in the morning and get me ready for school. She said her morning prayer in a monotonous sing-song while she bathed and dressed me in the hope that I would listen and get to know it by heart. I listened because I loved her voice but never bothered to learn it. Then she would

fetch my wooden slate which she had already washed and plastered with yellow chalk, a tiny earthen ink pot and a reed pen, tie them all in a bundle and hand it to me. After a breakfast of a thick, stale chapati with a little butter and sugar spread on it, we went to school. She carried several stale chapatis with her for the village dogs.

My grandmother always went to school with me because the school was attached to the temple. The priest taught us the alphabet and the morning prayer. While the children sat in rows on either side of the verandah singing the alphabet or the prayer in a chorus, my grandmother sat inside reading the scriptures. When we had both finished, we would walk back together. This time the village dogs would meet us at the temple door. They followed us to our home growling and fighting each other for the chapatis we threw to them.

When my parents were comfortably settled in the city, they sent for us. That was a turning point in our friendship. Although we shared the same room, my grandmother no longer came to school with me. I used to go to an English school in a motor bus. There were no dogs in the streets and she took to feeding sparrows in the courtyard of our city house.

As the years rolled by we saw less of each other. For some time she continued to wake me up and get me ready for school. When I came back she would ask me what the teacher had taught me. I would tell her English words and little things of Western science and learning, the law of gravity, Archimedes' principle, the world being round, etc. This made her unhappy. She could not help me with my lessons. She did not believe in the things they taught at the English school and was distressed that there was no teaching about God and the scriptures. One day I announced that we were being given music lessons. She was very disturbed. To her music had lewd associations. It was the monopoly of harlots and beggars and not meant for gentlefolk. She rarely talked to me after that.

When I went up to university, I was given a room of my own. The common link of friendship was snapped. My grandmother accepted her seclusion with resignation. She rarely left her spinning wheel to talk to anyone. From sunrise to sunset she sat by her wheel, spinning and reciting prayers. Only in the afternoon she relaxed for a while to feed the sparrows. While she sat in the verandah breaking the bread into little bits, hundreds of

little birds collected round her, creating a veritable bedlam of chirrupings. Some came and perched on her legs, others on her shoulders. Some even sat on her head. She smiled but never shooed them away. It used to be the happiest half-hour of the day for her.

When I decided to go abroad for further studies, I was sure my grandmother would be upset. I would be away for five years, and at her age one could never tell. But my grandmother could. She was not even sentimental. She came to leave me at the railway station but did not talk or show any emotion. Her lips moved in prayer, her mind was lost in prayer. Her fingers were busy telling the beads of her rosary. Silently she kissed my forehead, and when I left I cherished the moist imprint as perhaps the last sign of physical contact between us.

But that was not so. After five years I came back home and was met by her at the station. She did not look a day older. She still had no time for words, and while she clasped me in her arms I could hear her reciting her prayer. Even on the first day of my arrival, her happiest moments were with her sparrows, whom she fed longer and with frivolous rebukes.

In the evening a change came over her. She did not pray. She collected the women of the neighbourhood, got an old drum and started to sing. For several hours she thumped the sagging skins of the dilapidated drum and sang of the homecoming of warriors. We had to persuade her to stop to avoid overstraining. That was the first time since I had known her that she did not pray.

The next morning she was taken ill. It was a mild fever and the doctor told us that it would go. But my grandmother thought differently. She told us that her end was near. She said that, since only a few hours before the close of the last chapter of her life she had omitted to pray, she was not going to waste any more time talking to us.

We protested. But she ignored our protests. She lay peacefully in bed, praying and telling her beads. Even before we could suspect, her lips stopped moving and the rosary fell from her lifeless fingers. A peaceful pallor spread on her face and we knew that she was dead.

We lifted her off the bed and, as is customary, laid her on the ground and covered her with a red shroud. After a few hours of mourning we left her alone to make arrangements for her funeral.

In the evening we went to her room with a crude stretcher to take her to be cremated. The sun was setting and had lit her room and verandah with a blaze of golden light. We stopped halfway in the courtyard. All over the verandah and in her room right up to where she lay dead and stiff, wrapped in the red shroud, thousands of sparrows sat scattered on the floor. There was no chirping. We felt sorry for the birds and my mother fetched some bread for them. She broke it into little crumbs, the way my grandmother used to, and threw it to them. The sparrows took no notice of the bread. When we carried my grandmother's corpse off, they flew away quietly. Next morning the sweeper swept the bread crumbs into the dustbin.

Araby

James Joyce

North Richmond Street, being blind, was a quiet street except at the hour when the Christian Brothers' School set the boys free. An uninhabited house of two storeys stood at the blind end, detached from its neighbours in a square ground. The other houses of the street, conscious of decent lives within them, gazed at one another with brown imperturbable faces.

The former tenant of our house, a priest, had died in the back drawing-room. Air, musty from having been long enclosed, hung in all the rooms, and the waste room behind the kitchen was littered with old useless papers. Among these I found a few paper-covered books, the pages of which were curled and damp: The Abbot, by Walter Scott, The Devout Communicant, and The Memoirs of Vidocq. I liked the last best because its leaves were yellow. The wild garden behind the house contained a central apple-tree and a few straggling bushes, under one of which I found the late tenant's rusty bicycle-pump. He had been a very charitable priest; in his will he had left all his money to institutions and the furniture of his house to his sister.

When the short days of winter came, dusk fell before we had well eaten our dinners. When we met in the street the houses had grown sombre. The space of sky above us was the colour of ever-changing violet and towards it the lamps of the street lifted their feeble lanterns. The cold air stung us and we played till our bodies glowed. Our shouts echoed in the silent street. The career of our play brought us through the dark muddy lanes behind the houses, where we ran the gauntlet of the rough tribes from the cottages, to the back doors of the dark dripping gardens where odours arose from the ashpits, to the dark odorous stables where a coachman smoothed and combed the horse or shook music from the buckled harness. When we returned to the street, light from the kitchen windows had filled the areas. If my uncle was seen turning the corner, we hid in the shadow until we had seen him safely housed. Or if Mangan's sister came out on the doorstep to call her brother in to his tea, we watched her from our shadow peer up and down the street. We waited to see whether she would remain or go in and, if she remained, we left our shadow and walked up to Mangan's steps resignedly. She was waiting for us, her figure defined by the light from the half-opened door. Her brother always teased her before he obeyed, and I stood by the railings looking at her. Her dress swung as she moved her body, and the soft rope of her hair tossed from side to side.

Every morning I lay on the floor in the front parlour watching her door. The blind was pulled down to within an inch of the sash so that I could not be seen. When she came out on the doorstep my heart leaped. I ran to the hall, seized my books and followed her. I kept her brown figure always in my eye and, when we came near the point at which our ways diverged, I quickened my pace and passed her. This happened morning after morning. I had never spoken to her, except for a few casual words, and yet her name was like a summons to all my foolish blood.

Her image accompanied me even in places the most hostile to romance. On Saturday evenings when my aunt went marketing I had to go to carry some of the parcels. We walked through the flaring streets, jostled by drunken men and bargaining women, amid the curses of labourers, the shrill litanies of shop-boys who stood on guard by the barrels of pigs' cheeks, the nasal chanting of street-singers, who sang a come-all-you about O'Donovan Rossa, or a ballad about the troubles in our native land. These noises converged in a single sensation of life for me: I imagined that I bore my chalice safely through a throng of foes. Her name sprang to my lips at moments in strange prayers and praises which I myself did not understand. My eyes were often full of tears (I could not tell why) and at times a flood from my heart seemed to pour itself out into my bosom. I thought little of the future. I did not know whether I would ever speak to her or not or, if I spoke to her, how I could tell her of my confused adoration. But my body was like a harp and her words and gestures were like fingers running upon the wires.

One evening I went into the back drawing-room in which the priest had died. It was a dark rainy evening and there was no sound in the house. Through one of the broken panes I heard the rain impinge upon the earth, the fine incessant needles of water playing in the sodden beds. Some distant lamp or lighted window gleamed below me. I was thankful that I could see so little. All my senses seemed to desire to veil themselves and, feeling that I was about to slip from them, I pressed the palms of my hands together until they trembled, murmuring: 'O love! O love!' many times.

At last she spoke to me. When she addressed the first words to me I was so confused that I did not know what to answer. She asked me was I going to Araby. I forgot whether I answered yes or no. It would be a splendid bazaar; she said she would love to go.

'And why can't you?' I asked.

While she spoke she turned a silver bracelet round and round her wrist. She could not go, she said, because there would be a retreat that week in her convent. Her brother and two other boys were fighting for their caps, and I was alone at the railings. She held one of the spikes, bowing her head towards me. The light from the lamp opposite our door

caught the white curve of her neck, lit up her hair that rested there and, falling, lit up the hand upon the railing. It fell over one side of her dress and caught the white border of a petticoat, just visible as she stood at ease.

'It's well for you,' she said.

'If I go,' I said, 'I will bring you something.'

What innumerable follies laid waste my waking and sleeping thoughts after that evening!

I wished to annihilate the tedious intervening days. I chafed against the work of school.

At night in my bedroom and by day in the classroom her image came between me and the page I strove to read. The syllables of the word Araby were called to me through the silence in which my soul luxuriated and cast an Eastern enchantment over me. I asked for leave to go to the bazaar on Saturday night. My aunt was surprised, and hoped it was not

some Freemason affair. I answered few questions in class. I watched my master's face pass from amiability to sternness; he hoped I was not beginning to idle. I could not call my wandering thoughts together. I had hardly any patience with the serious work of life which, now that it stood between me and my desire, seemed to me child's play, ugly monotonous child's play.

On Saturday morning I reminded my uncle that I wished to go to the bazaar in the evening. He was fussing at the hallstand, looking for the hat-brush, and answered me curtly:

'Yes, boy, I know.'

As he was in the hall I could not go into the front parlour and lie at the window. I felt the house in bad humour and walked slowly towards the school. The air was pitilessly raw and already my heart misgave me.

When I came home to dinner my uncle had not yet been home. Still it was early. I sat staring at the clock for some time and, when its ticking began to irritate me, I left the room. I mounted the staircase and gained the upper part of the house. The high, cold, empty, gloomy rooms liberated me and I went from room to room singing. From the front window I saw my companions playing below in the street. Their cries reached me weakened and indistinct and, leaning my forehead against the cool glass, I looked over at the dark house where she lived. I may have stood there for an hour, seeing nothing but the brown-clad figure cast by my imagination, touched discreetly by the lamplight at the curved neck, at the hand upon the railings and at the border below the dress.

When I came downstairs again I found Mrs Mercer sitting at the fire. She was an old,

garrulous woman, a pawnbroker's widow, who collected used stamps for some pious purpose. I had to endure the gossip of the tea-table. The meal was prolonged beyond an hour and still my uncle did not come. Mrs Mercer stood up to go: she was sorry she couldn't wait any longer, but it was after eight o'clock and she did not like to be out late, as the night air was bad for her. When she had gone I began to walk up and down the room, clenching my fists. My aunt said:

I'm afraid you may put off your bazaar for this night of Our Lord.'

At nine o'clock I heard my uncle's latchkey in the hall door. I heard him talking to himself and heard the hallstand rocking when it had received the weight of his overcoat. I could interpret these signs. When he was midway through his dinner I asked him to give me the money to go to the bazaar. He had forgotten.

'The people are in bed and after their first sleep now,' he said.

I did not smile. My aunt said to him energetically:

'Can't you give him the money and let him go? You've kept him late enough as it is.'

My uncle said he was very sorry he had forgotten. He said he believed in the old saying: 'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.' He asked me where I was going and, when I told him a second time, he asked me did I know The Arab's Farewell to his Steed. When I left the kitchen he was about to recite the opening lines of the piece to my aunt.

I held a florin tightly in my hand as I strode down Buckingham Street towards the station. The sight of the streets thronged with buyers and glaring with gas recalled to me the purpose of my journey. I took my seat in a third-class carriage of a deserted train. After an intolerable delay the train moved out of the station slowly. It crept onward among ruinous houses and over the twinkling river. At Westland Row Station a crowd of people pressed to the carriage doors; but the porters moved them back, saying that it was a special train for the bazaar. I remained alone in the bare carriage. In a few minutes the train drew up beside an improvised wooden platform. I passed out on to the road and saw by the lighted dial of a clock that it was ten minutes to ten. In front of me was a large building which displayed the magical name.

I could not find any sixpenny entrance and, fearing that the bazaar would be closed, I passed in quickly through a turnstile, handing a shilling to a weary-looking man. I found myself in a big hall girded at half its height by a gallery. Nearly all the stalls were closed and the greater part of the hall was in darkness. I recognized a silence like that which pervades a church after a service. I walked into the centre of the bazaar timidly. A few people were

gathered about the stalls which were still open. Before a curtain, over which the words Cafe Chantant were written in coloured lamps, two men were counting money on a salver. I listened to the fall of the coins.

Remembering with difficulty why I had come, I went over to one of the stalls and examined porcelain vases and flowered tea-sets. At the door of the stall a young lady was talking and laughing with two young gentlemen. I remarked their English accents and listened vaguely to their conversation.

'O, I never said such a thing!'

'O, but you did!'

O, but I didn't!'

'Didn't she say that?'

'Yes. I heard her.'

'O, there's a... fib!'

Observing me, the young lady came over and asked me did I wish to buy anything. The tone of her voice was not encouraging; she seemed to have spoken to me out of a sense of duty. I looked humbly at the great jars that stood like eastern guards at either side of the dark entrance to the stall and murmured:

'No, thank you.'

The young lady changed the position of one of the vases and went back to the two young men. They began to talk of the same subject. Once or twice the young lady glanced at me over her shoulder.

I lingered before her stall, though I knew my stay was useless, to make my interest in her wares seem the more real. Then I turned away slowly and walked down the middle of the bazaar. I allowed the two pennies to fall against the sixpence in my pocket. I heard a voice call from one end of the gallery that the light was out. The upper part of the hall was now completely dark.

Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger.

The Caged Bird

Maya Angelou

A free bird leaps
on the back of the wind
and floats downstream
till the current ends
and dips his wing
in the orange sun rays
and dares to claim the sky.

But a bird that stalks
down his narrow cage
can seldom see through
his bars of rage
his wings are clipped and
his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings
with a fearful trill
of things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.

The free bird thinks of another breeze
and the trade winds soft through the sighing trees
and the fat worms waiting on a dawn bright lawn
and he names the sky his own.

But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams
his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream
his wings are clipped and his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings
with a fearful trill
of things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.

Dover Beach

Matthew Arnold

The sea is calm tonight.
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits; on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!
Only, from the long line of spray
Where the sea meets the moon-blanched land,
Listen! you hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago
Heard it on the Ægean, and it brought
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
Of human misery; we
Find also in the sound a thought,
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath

Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

CLASS XII

SEMESTER III

War

Luigi Pirandello

The passengers who had left Rome by the night express had had to stop until dawn at the small station of Fabriano in order to continue their journey by the small old-fashioned local joining the main line with Sulmona.

At dawn, in a stuffy and smoky second-class carriage in which five people had already spent the night, a bulky woman in deep mourning was hosted in-almost like a shapeless bundle. Behind her-puffing and moaning, followed her husband-a tiny man; thin and weakly, his face death-white, his eyes small and bright and looking shy and uneasy.

Having at last taken a seat he politely thanked the passengers who had helped his wife and who had made room for her; then he turned round to the woman trying to pull down the collar of her coat and politely inquired:

"Are you all right, dear?"

The wife, instead of answering, pulled up her collar again to her eyes, so as to hide her face. "Nasty world," muttered the husband with a sad smile.

And he felt it his duty to explain to his traveling companions that the poor woman was to be pitied for the war was taking away from her her only son, a boy of twenty to whom both had devoted their entire life, even breaking up their home at Sulmona to follow him to Rome, where he had to go as a student, then allowing him to volunteer for war with an assurance, however, that at least six months he would not be sent to the front and now, all of a sudden, receiving a wire saying that he was due to leave in three days' time and asking them to go and see him off.

The woman under the big coat was twisting and wriggling, at times growling like a wild animal, feeling certain that all those explanations would not have aroused even a shadow of sympathy from those people who-most likely-were in the same plight as herself. One of them, who had been listening with particular attention, said:

"You should thank God that your son is only leaving now for the front. Mine has been sent there the first day of the war. He has already come back twice wounded and been sent back again to the front."

"What about me? I have two sons and three nephews at the front," said another passenger. "Maybe, but in our case it is our only son," ventured the husband.

"What difference can it make? You may spoil your only son by excessive attentions, but you cannot love him more than you would all your other children if you had any. Parental love is not like bread that can be broken to pieces and split amongst the children in equal shares. A father gives all his love to each one of his children without discrimination, whether it be one or ten, and if I am suffering now for my two sons, I am not suffering half for each of them but double..."

"True...true..." sighed the embarrassed husband, "but suppose (of course we all hope it will never be your case) a father has two sons at the front and he loses one of them, there is still one left to console him...while..."

"Yes," answered the other, getting cross, "a son left to console him but also a son left for whom he must survive, while in the case of the father of an only son if the son dies the father can die too and put an end to his distress. Which of the two positions is worse? Don't you see how my case would be worse than yours?"

"Nonsense," interrupted another traveler, a fat, red-faced man with bloodshot eyes of the palest gray.

He was panting. From his bulging eyes seemed to spurt inner violence of an uncontrolled vitality which his weakened body could hardly contain.

"Nonsense, "he repeated, trying to cover his mouth with his hand so as to hide the two missing front teeth. "Nonsense. Do we give life to our own children for our own benefit?"

The other travelers stared at him in distress. The one who had had his son at the front since the first day of the war sighed: "You are right. Our children do not belong to us, they belong to the country..."

"Bosh," retorted the fat traveler. "Do we think of the country when we give life to our children? Our sons are born because...well, because they must be born and when they come to life they take our own life with them. This is the truth. We belong to them but they never belong to us. And when they reach twenty they are exactly what we were at their age. We too had a father and mother, but there were so many other things as well...girls, cigarettes, illusions, new ties...and the Country, of course, whose call we would have answered-when we were twenty-even if father and mother had said no. Now, at our age,

the love of our Country is still great, of course, but stronger than it is the love of our children. Is there any one of us here who wouldn't gladly take his son's place at the front if he could?"

There was a silence all round, everybody nodding as to approve.

"Why then," continued the fat man, "should we consider the feelings of our children when they are twenty? Isn't it natural that at their age they should consider the love for their Country (I am speaking of decent boys, of course) even greater than the love for us? Isn't it natural that it should be so, as after all they must look upon us as upon old boys who cannot move any more and must sit at home? If Country is a natural necessity like bread of which each of us must eat in order not to die of hunger, somebody must go to defend it. And our sons go, when they are twenty, and they don't want tears, because if they die, they die inflamed and happy (I am speaking, of course, of decent boys). Now, if one dies young and happy, without having the ugly sides of life, the boredom of it, the pettiness, the bitterness of disillusion...what more can we ask for him? Everyone should stop crying; everyone should laugh, as I do...or at least thank God-as I do-because my son, before dying, sent me a message saying that he was dying satisfied at having ended his life in the best way he could have wished. That is why, as you see, I do not even wear mourning..."

He shook his light fawn coat as to show it; his livid lip over his missing teeth was trembling, his eyes were watery and motionless, and soon after he ended with a shrill laugh which might well have been a sob.

"Quite so...quite so..." agreed the others.

The woman who, bundled in a corner under her coat, had been sitting and listening had-for the last three months-tried to find in the words of her husband and her friends something to console her in her deep sorrow, something that might show her how a mother should resign herself to send her son not even to death but to a probable danger of life. Yet not a word had she found amongst the many that had been said...and her grief had been greater in seeing that nobody-as she thought-could share her feelings.

But now the words of the traveler amazed and almost stunned her. She suddenly realized that it wasn't the others who were wrong and could not understand her but herself who could not rise up to the same height of those fathers and mothers willing to resign themselves, without crying, not only to the departure of their sons but even to their death.

She lifted her head, she bent over from her corner trying to listen with great attention to the details which the fat man was giving to his companions about the way his son had fallen as a hero, for his King and his Country, happy and without regrets. It seemed to her that she had stumbled into a world she had never dreamt of, a world so far unknown to her, and she was so pleased to hear everyone joining in congratulating that brave father who could so stoically speak of his child's death.

Then suddenly, just as if she had heard nothing of what had been said and almost as if waking up from a dream, she turned to the old man, asking him:

"Then...is your son really dead?"

Everyone stared at her. The old man, too, turned to look at her, fixing his great, bulging, horribly watery light gray eyes, deep in her face. For some time he tried to answer, but words failed him. He looked and looked at her, almost as if only then-at that silly, incongruous question-he had suddenly realized at last that his son was really dead-gone for ever-for ever. His face contracted, became horribly distorted, then he snatched in haste a handkerchief from his pocket and, to the amazement of everyone, broke into harrowing, heart-breaking, uncontrollable sobs.

Debut on Stage

Charlie Chaplin

I was born on 16April 1889, at eight o'clock at night, in East Lane, Walworth. Soon after, we moved to West Square, St George's Road, Lambeth. According to Mother my world was a happy one. Our circumstances were moderately comfortable; we lived in three tastefully furnished rooms. One of my early recollections was that each night before Mother went to the theatre, Sydney and I were lovingly tucked up in a comfortable bed and left in the care of the housemaid. In my world of three and a half years, all things were possible; if Sydney, who was four years older than, I could perform legerdemain and swallow a coin and make it come out through the back of his head, I could do the same so I swallowed a halfpenny and Mother was obliged to send for a doctor.

Every night, after she came home from the theatre, it was her custom to leave delicacies on the table for Sydney and me to find in the morning-a slice of Neapolitan cake or candies-with the understanding that we were not to make a noise in the morning, as she usually slept late.

Mother was a soubrette on the variety stage, a mignonne in her late twenties, with fair complexion, violet-blue eyes and long light-brown hair that she could sit upon. Sydney and I adored our mother. Though she was not an exceptional beauty, we thought her divine- looking. Those who knew her told me in later years that she was dainty and attractive and had compelling charm. She took pride in dressing us for Dunday excursions, Sydney in an Eton suit with long trousers and me in a blue velvet one with blue gloves to match. Such occasions were orgies of smugness, as we ambled along the Kennington Road.

London was sedate in those days. The tempo was sedate; even the horse-drawn tram-cars along Westminister Bridge Road went at a sedate pace and turned sedately on a revolving table at the terminal near the bridge. In Mother's prosperous days we also lived in Westminister Bridge Road. Its atmospherewas gay and friendly with attractive

---

legerdemain: cheating
soubrette: female comedy character
mignonne: small and delicate
orgies: many actions
ambled: walked slowly
sedate: calm

shops, restaurants and music halls. The fruit-shop on the corner facing the Bridge was a galaxy of colour, with its neatly arranged pyramids of oranges, apples, pears and bannas outside, in contrast to the solemn grey Houses of Parliament directly across the river.

This was the London of my childhood, of my moods and awakenings: memories of Lambeth in the spring; of trivial incidents and things; of riding with Mother on top of a horse-bus trying to touch passing lilac-trees-of the many coloured bus tickets, orange, blue, pink and green, that bestrewed the pavement where the trams and buses stopped- of rubicund flower-girls at the comer of Westminister Bridge, making gay boutonnieres, their adroit fingers manipulating tinsel and quivering fem-of the humid odour of freshly watered roses that affected me with a vague sadness-of melancholy Sundays and pale-faced parents and their children escorting toy windmills and coloured balloons over Westminister Briege; and the maternal penny steamers that softly lowered their funnels as they glided under it. From such trivia I believe my soul was bom.

Then objects in our sitting-room that affected my senses: Mother's life-size painting of Nell Gwyn, which I disliked; the long-necked decanters on our sideboard, which depressed med, and the small round music-box with its enamelled surface depicting angels on clouds, which both pleased and baffed me. But my sixpenny toy chair bought from the gypsies I loved, because it gave me an inordinate sense of possession.

Memories of epic moments: a visit to the Royal Aquarium, viewing its side-shows with Mother, watching 'She', the live head of a lady smiling in flames, the sixpenny lucky dip, Mother lifting me up to a large sawdust barrel to pick a surprise packet which contained a candy whistle which would not blow and a toy ruby brooch. Then a visit to the Canterbury Music Hall, sitting in a red plush seat watching my father perform.

Now it is night and I am wrapped in a travelling rug on top of a four-in-hand coach, driving with Mother and her theatrical friends, cosseted in their gaiety and laughter as our trumpeter with clarion braggadocio, heralds us along the Kennington Road to the thythmic jingle of harness and the bear of horses' hoofs.

---

bestrewed: scattered
rubicund: red colour
boutonnieres: flower garland worn by men
adroit: skillful
decanters: containers
inordinate: unusual
cosseted: cared

I was hardly aware of a father, and do not remember him having lived with us. He too was a vaudevillian, a quiet, brooding man with dark eyes. Mother said he looked like Napoleon. He had a light baritone voice and was considered a very fine artist. Even in those days he earned the considerable sum of forty pounds a week. The trouble was that he drank too much, which Mother said was the cause of their separation.

It was difficult for vaudevillians not to drink in those days, for alcohol was sold in all theatres, and after a performer's act he was expected to go to the theatre bar and drink with the customers. Some theatres made more profit from the bar than from the box office, and a number of stars were paid large salaries not alone for their talent, but because they spent most of their money at the theatre bar. Thus, many an artist was ruined by drink-my father was one of them. He died of alcoholic excess at the age of thirty-seven.

Mother was the eldet of two daughters. Her father, Charles Hill, an Irish cobbler, came from County Cork, Ireland. He had rosy apple cheeks, a shock of white hair and a beard like Carlyle in Whistler's portrait. He was doubled over with rheumatic gout due, he said, to sleeping in damp fields hiding from the police during the nationalist uprisings. He eventually settled in London, establishing himself in a boot-repairing business in East Lane, Walworth.

Grandma was half gypsy. This fact was the skeleton in our family cupboard. Nevertheless, Grandma bragged that her family always ground-rent. Her maiden name was Smith. I remember her as a bright little old lady who always greeted me effusively with baby talk. She died before I was six. She was separated from Grandpa, for what reason neither grandparent would tell. But according to Aunt Kete there was a domestic triangle in which Grandpa surprised Grandma with a love.

To gauge the morals of our family by commonplace standards would be as erroneous as putting a thermometer in boiling water. With such genetic attributes, two pretty cobbler's daughters quickly left home and gravitated to the stage.

Aunt Kate, Mother's younger sister, was also a sobruette; but we knew little about her, for she wove in and out of our lives sporadically. She was pretty and temperamental and never got along very well with Mother. Her occasional visits usually ended abruptly with acrimony at something Mother had said or done.

---

baritone: low pitch voice

rheumatic gout: a disease that causes painful swelling in the joints

effusively: emotionally

Mother did not stay long in Africa, but returned to England and married my father. I had no knowledge of what ended the African episode, but in our extreme poverty I would reproach her for giving up such wonderful life. She would laugh and say that she was too young to be cautious or wise.

What degree of feeling she had for my father I never knew, but whenever she spoke of him it was without bitterness, which makes me suspect she was too objective to have been deeply in love. Sometimes she would give a sympathetic account of him, and at other times talk of his drunkenness and violence. In later years, whenever angry with me she would ruefully say: "You'lll finish up in the gutter like your father."

Mother had been having trouble with her voice. It was never strong, and the slightest cold brought on laryngitis which lasted for weeks; but she was obliged to keep working, so that her voice grew progressively worse. She could not rely on it. In the middle of singing it would crack or suddenly disappear into a whisper, and the audience would laugh and start booing. The worry of it impaired her health and made her a nervous wreck. As a consequence, her theatrical engagements fell off until they were practically nil.

It is owing to her vocal condition that at the age of five I made my first appearance on the stage. Mother usually brought me to the theatre at night in preference to leaving me alone in rented rooms. She was playing the Canteen at Aldershot at the time, a grubby, mean theatre catering mostly to soldiers. They were a rowdy lot and wanted little excuse to deride and ridicule. To performers, Aldershot was a week of terror.

I remember standing in the wings when Mother's voice cracked and went into a shisper. The audience began to laugh and sing falsetto and to make catcalls. It was all vague and I did not quite understand what was going on. But the noise increased until Mother was obliged to walk off the stage. When she came into the wings she was very upset and argued with the stage manager who, having seen me perform before Mother's friends, said something about letting me go on in her place.

And in the turmoil I remember him leading me by the hand and, after a few explanatory

---

gauge: measure
erroneous: incorrect
sporadically: occasionally
acrimony: bitter feelings
reproach: criticise
laryngitis: infection of throat
falsetto: unusually high pitched voice
turmoil: confusion

words to the audience, leaving me on the stage alone. And before a glare of footlights and faces in smoke, I started to sing, accompanied by the orchestra, which fiddled about until it found my key. It was a well-known song called Jack Jones that went as follows:

Jack Jones well and known to everybody
Round about the market, don't yer see,
I've no fault to find with Jack at all,
Not when'e's as'e used to be.
But since'e's had the bullion left him
'E has altered for the worst,
For to see the way he treats all his old pals
Fills me with nothing but disgust.
Each Sunday morning he reads the Telegraph,
Once he was contented with the Star,
Since Jack Jones has come into a little bit of cash,
Well,'e don't know where'e are.

Half-way through, a shower of money poured on to the stage. Immediately I stopped and announced that I would pick up the money first and sing afterwards. This caused much laughter. The stage manger came on with a handkerchief and helped me to gather it up. I thought he was going to keep it. This thought was conveyed to the audience and increased their laughter, especially when he walked off with it with me anxiously following him. Not until he handed it to Mother did I return and continue to sing. I was quite at home. I talked to the audience, danced, and did several imitations including one of Mother singing her Irish march song that went as follows:

Riley, Riley, that's the boy to beguile ye,
Riley, Riley, that's the boy for me.
In all the Army great and small,

There's none so trim and neat
As the boble Sergeant Riley
Of the gallant Eighty-eight.

---

bullion: gold or silver
beguile: deceive

And in repeating the chorus, in all innocence I imitated Mother's voice cracking and was surprised at the impact it had on the audience. There was laughter and cheers, then more money-throwing; and when Mother came on the stage to carry me off, her presence evoked tremendous applause. That night was my first appearance on the stage and Mother's

When the fates deal in human destiny, they heed neither pity nor justice. Thus they dealt with Mother. She never regained her voice. As autumn turns to winter, so our circumstances turned from bad to worse. Although Mother was careful and had saved a little money, that very soon vanished, as did her jewellery and other small possessions which she pawned in order to live, hoping all the while that her voice would return.

Meanwhile from three comfortable rooms we moved into two, then into one, our belongings dwindling and the neighbourhoods into which we moved growing progressively drabber.

She turned to religion, in the hope, I suppose, that it would restore her voice. She regularly attended Christ Church in the Westminister Bridge Road, and every Sunday I was made to sit through Bach's organ music and to listen with aching impatience to the Reverend F B Meyer's fervent and dramatic voice echoing down the nave like shuffling feet. His orations must have been appealing, for occasionally I would catch Mother quietly wiping away a tear, which slightly embarrassed me.

Well do I remember Holy Communion on one hot summer's day, and the cool silver cup containing delicious grape-juice that passed along the congregation-and Mother's gentle restraining hand when I drank too much of it. And how relieved I was when the Reverend closed the Bible, for it meant that the sermon would soon end and they would start prayers and the final hymn.

---

dwindling: decreasing
drabber: dull
fervent: intense
congregation: gathering

The boy who fell from the sky

Mamang Dal

When Hoxo first opened his eyes to the world, he saw green. A green wall of trees and bamboo, and a green waterfall that sprayed his cheek and washed the giant fern that seemed to be waving to him.

They were moving very fast. He was being carried on the back of a man whom he was later to call his father. All he knew at this moment was that he was strapped in a basket that was hard and scented with sweat. He could feel the strength of the man; with his head pressed against the wide back, he listened to the sound of a big heart thumping as they trotted silently through an unknown land.

Hoxo would never recall the events before that journey through the great trees. When he spoke about the world, about men and forests, he thought he could taste salt and blood and sense the terror of free fall, but he was not certain why this was so. In his dreams he saw a blazing sun that spun earthwards and exploded in a burst of red fire, blinding him with blood and ash, and that was why, he thought, maybe, his eyes had been shut tight, as though he preferred the darkness to that terrifying light.

The colour green always soothed him. It was the colour of escape and solitude. He could not tell what it was that he had escaped or when, nor could he understand his need to trek into the forest sometimes to be alone.

When they reached the house on the hill, a woman had run out to greet them. He instantly recognized her as someone kind and good. She was tall and young and her face was vivid with love and anxiety.

'Oh, my!' she had said. 'A baby boy!'

She lifted him out of the basket. Even today Hoxo could not remember any happiness greater than the moment of that touch he had known more than half a century ago.

Hoxo immediately sensed there were no other children in the house. He had no idea how old he was, no one said anything, and no one ever asked him if he loved his father more or his mother, like he heard all the other children being asked. When he joined school, the children there stared at him. No one greeted him and he remembered his own tentative smile full of hope and eagerness. Rakut was his first friend.

'Here, catch!' Rakut threw him a stone that arced through the distance between them. It was a flat river-stone that Rakut had specially chosen for them to play with. Theirs was a wonderful friendship. When Hoxo's mother made rice cakes and called his friends, Rakut would be the first to arrive, grinning like an idiot, while Hoxo could hardly eat

anything because he was so happy and full of pride for his parents' generosity. Once, when his father brought home a red squirrel, Hoxo ran all the way to Rakut's house shouting at the top of his voice for him to come and see it. Every day the boys found something new. Every day they explored the hills further and further away from the village, and every day, for many years, they climbed to the flat top of their favourite hill and flung themselves down on the open ground just talking and speaking their thoughts to the trees, the cane bushes and the sharp summer light.

One day Hoxo ran all the way again to call Rakut to come and hear something strange. The two boys tiptoed around the house and lifted themselves at full stretch to peer through the cracks in the bamboo posts.

'It was real, I tell you,' Hoxo's father was saying. 'I heard a splash and when I turned I saw the edge of the river lifted up and the waters falling off the back of this long shining fish… or snake…whatever it was! Then immediately it was gone. But I saw it, I tell you!'

'Tah! How can it be!'

'I tell you, I saw it!'

'What did it look like?'

'I thought I saw a head with horns.'

'What!'

Everyone present knew the story of Biribik, the water serpent. No one, for generations now, remembered the name of the first person who had seen it, but the event was fixed in their collective memory. It had happened on a night of heavy rain when a fisherman was alone with his nets by the river. He heard a rushing sound as the waters parted and then suddenly, when he looked up at the tree he was sheltering under, he saw a serpent coiled up in the branches looking down at him with ancient eyes. What shocked him the most was the fact that the serpent had a head with horns. The fisherman ran for his life, all the way back to the village, but as everyone could have predicted he never recovered from the effects of that terrible vision. Within a year, he had died of a wasting illness.

Anyone studying the signs could understand that something unnatural was bound to happen again, now that Hoxo's father had seen the serpent. In these small clearings in the middle of the forest, people have premonitions. Women dream dreams. Babies are born who grow up unnaturally fast, like deer or lion cubs. Infant mortality is high. Old women still braid threads of vine and pray for safe passage.

So no one was surprised when Hoxo's father was killed in a hunting accident shortly afterwards. A tragedy was expected. Ever since the arrival of firearms into these hills, hunting had become a passion. Suddenly, on any given day, a man would stand up, stretch himself, pick up his gun and walk off into the forest. Many of the hunters disappeared for

days, huddled in a machan or perched, alert, on a broad branch. In the forests beyond the village where the hunters fanned out to go their separate ways, Hoxo's father was mistaken for prey. Deer? Bear? The distraught man who shot him could not say. He only remembered a movement, a dark shape that he swore was definitely not human. He had heard a piercing scream of shock and rage afterwards and had rushed headlong into the thorny undergrowth to find his friend shot through the tender point just below the jaw. He was spilling blood and his eyes were staring wide.

'Hai…I am killed!' He was crouched low and his gun was pointing into the ground. It was propped against his shoulder because his right hand had also been shot away.

His friend shouted and cried, running through the forest like a madman. 'Help me! Help me!' The cries sent a shudder through the village. Everyone rushed out. 'Help me carry his body!'

They worked all night, lifting the dead man and carrying him through the forest, dragging the body, pushing it, cursing and crying, sliding down the hill over the wet leaves and oozing mud. By the time they reached the village the men were torn and bruised and splattered with mud and the blood of the dead man. It was a frightening sight. Hoxo's mother ran out screaming. Dazed out of sleep, the young Hoxo had a vision of her flashing through the air like an incandescent flame. He understood everything, and the secret of love revealed itself to him in that one instant when he saw her embrace the inert body and press her cheek against the shattered head.

Then she said, 'Cover him. Carry him in.'

The punishment for killing a man is death, unless a meeting can be called immediately and the aggrieved party is convinced that the matter is negotiable. In this case the poor friend was banished to live like an animal in the forest for a whole month. His closest kin could take him cooked food but there were so many taboos on the type of food he could eat that it was simpler to let him fend for himself. No one opposed the exile, least of all the man whose fate it had been to mistake a man for prey.

The one thing no one could explain at the time, or at any time later, was the small fish that was found in the dead man's shirt pocket. It was slippery and mashed and the scales stuck to his skin even when they ripped open the shirt and tried to wipe away the blood. Maybe it was a fish he had caught in one of the small streams. Maybe it was something he was bringing back for Hoxo. Or maybe it was the spirit manifestation of something else. Who could tell about these things?

And so it was. The death of Lutor, famous chief of the Ida clan, father of the boy who fell from the sky, was mourned far and wide. And Hoxo's mother became one more widow in the village where so many young women had lost their men in hunting accidents.

Ode to the West Wind

P. B. Shelley

I

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odours plain and hill:

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh hear!

II

Thou on whose stream, mid the steep sky's commotion,
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,

Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread
On the blue surface of thine aëry surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge
Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: oh hear!

III

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
Lull'd by the coil of his crystalline streams,

Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

All overgrown with azure moss and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know

Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves: oh hear!

IV

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O uncontrollable! If even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed
Scarce seem'd a vision; I would ne'er have striven
As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chain'd and bow'd
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

V

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like wither'd leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguish'd hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawaken'd earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

My Grandmother's House

Kamala Das

There is a house now far away where once
I received love……. That woman died,
The house withdrew into silence, snakes moved
Among books, I was then too young
To read, and my blood turned cold like the moon
How often I think of going
There, to peer through blind eyes of windows or
Just listen to the frozen air,
Or in wild despair, pick an armful of
Darkness to bring it here to lie
Behind my bedroom door like a brooding
Dog…you cannot believe, darling,
Can you, that I lived in such a house and
Was proud, and loved…. I who have lost
My way and beg now at strangers' doors to
Receive love, at least in small change?

The Glass Menagerie

Tennessee Williams

SCENE 1

The Wingfield apartment is in the rear of the building, one of those vast hive-like conglomerations of cellular living-units that flower as warty growths in overcrowded urban centres of lower-middle-class population and are symptomatic of the impulse of this largest and fundamentally enslaved section of American society to avoid fluidity and differentiation and to exist and function as one interfused mass of automatism.

The apartment faces an alley and is entered by a fire-escape, a structure whose name is a touch of accidental poetic truth, for all of these huge buildings are always burning with the slow and implacable fires of human desperation. The fire-escape is included in the set - that is, the landing of it and steps descending from it.

The scene is memory and is therefore non-realistic. Memory takes a lot of poetic licence. It omits some details; others are exaggerated, according to the emotional value of the articles it touches, for memory is seated predominantly in the heart. The interior is therefore rather dim and poetic.

At the rise of the curtain, the audience is faced with the dark, grim rear wall of the Wingfield tenement. This building, which runs parallel to the footlights, is flanked on both sides by dark, narrow alleys which run into murky canyons of tangled clothes-lines, garbage cans, and the sinister lattice-work of neighbouring fire-escapes. It is up and down these alleys that exterior entrances and exits are made, during the play. At the end of Tom's opening commentary, the dark tenement wall slowly reveals (by means of a transparency) the interior of the ground floor Wingfield apartment.

Downstage is the living-room, which also serves as a sleeping-room for Laura, the sofa is unfolding to make her bed. Upstage, centre, and divided by a wide arch or second proscenium with transparent faded portieres (or second curtain), is the dining-room. In an old fashioned what-not in the living-room are seen scores of transparent glass animals. A blown-up photograph of the father hangs on the wall of the living-room, facing the audience, to the left of the archway. It is the face of a very handsome young man in a doughboy's First World War cap. He is gallantly smiling, ineluctably smiling, as if to say 'I will be smiling forever'.

The audience hears and sees the opening scene in the dining-room through both the transparent fourth wall of the building and the transparent gauze portieres of

the dining-room arch. It is during this revealing scene that the fourth wall slowly ascends out of sight. This transparent exterior wall is not brought down again until the very end of the play, during Tom' s final speech.

The narrator is an undisguised convention of the play. He takes whatever licence with dramatic convention is convenient to his purpose.

TOM : enters dressed as a merchant sailor from alley, stage left, and strolls across the front of the stage to the fire-escape. There he stops and lights a cigarette. He addresses the audience.

TOM : Yes, I have tricks in my pocket, I have things up my sleeve. But I am the opposite of a stage magician. He gives you illusion that has the appearance of truth. I give you truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion.

To begin with, I turn bark time. I reverse it to that quaint period, the thirties, when the huge middle class of America was matriculating in a school for the blind. Their eyes had failed them or they had failed their eyes, and so they were having their fingers pressed forcibly down on the fiery Braille alphabet of a dissolving economy.

In Spain there was revolution. Here there was only shouting and confusion.

In Spain there was Guernica. Here there were disturbances of labour, sometimes pretty violent, in otherwise peaceful cities such as Chicago, Cleveland, Saint Louis. . . .

This is the social background of the play.

[MUSIC] The play is memory.

Being a memory play, it is dimly lighted, it is sentimental, it is not realistic.

In memory everything seems to happen to music. That explains the fiddle in the wings.

I am the narrator of the play, and also a character in it. The other characters are my mother Amanda, my sister Laura and a gentleman caller who appears in the final scenes.

He is the most realistic character in the play, being an emissary from a world of reality that we were somehow set apart from. But since I have a poet's weakness for symbols, I am using this character also as a symbol; he is the long-delayed but always expected something that we live for. There is a fifth character in the play who doesn't appear except in this larger-than- life-size photograph over the mantel.

This is our father who left us a long time ago.He was a telephone man who fell in love with long distances; he gave up his job with the telephone company and skipped the light fantastic out of town. . . .The last we heard of him was a picture postcard from Mazatlan, on the Pacific coast of Mexico, containing a message of two words -

'Hello - Good-bye!' and no address.

I think the rest of the play will explain itself ...

[AMANDA's : voice becomes audible through the portieres.

LEGEND ON SCREEN : 'Ou SONT LES NEIGES'.

He divides the portieres and enters the upstage area.

AMANDA and LAURA are seated at a drop-leaf table. Eating is indicated by gestures without food or utensils. AMANDA faces the audience. TOM and LAURA are Seated is profile.

The interior has lit up softly and through the scrim we see AMANDA and LAURA seated at the table in the upstage area]

AMANDA [calling] Tom? Yes, Mother.

AMANDA : We can't say grace until you come to the table!

TOM : Coming, Mother. [He bows slightly and withdraws, reappearing a few moments later in his place at the table.]

AMANDA [to her son]: Honey, don't push with your fingers. If you have to push with something, the thing to push with is a crust of bread. And chew !chew! Animals have sections in their stomachs which enable them to digest flood without mastication, but human beings are

supposed to chew their food before they swallow it down. Eat food leisurely, son, and really enjoy it. A well-cooked meal has lots of delicate flavours that have to be held in the mouth for appreciation. So chew your food and give your salivary glands a chance to function !

[TOM deliberately lays his imaginary fork down and his chair back from the table.]

TOM : I haven't enjoyed one bite of this dinner because of your constant directions on how to eat it. It's you that makes me rush through meals with your hawk-like attention to every bite I take. Sickening - spoils my appetite - all this discussion of - animals' secretion - salivary glands - mastication !

AMANDA [lightly]: Temperament like a Metropolitan star ! [He rises and crosses downstage.] You're not excused from the table.

TOM : I'm getting a cigarette.

AMANDA : You smoke too much.

[LAURA rises.]

LAURA : I'll bring in the blancmange.

[He remains standing with his cigarette by the portieres during the following.]

AMANDA [rising]: No, sister, no, sister - you be the lady this time and I'll be the darkey

LAURA : I'm already up.

AMANDA : Resume your seat, little sister, I want you to stay fresh and pretty for gentleman callers!

LAURA : I'm not expecting any gentleman callers.

AMANDA [crossing out to kitchenette. Airily]: Sometimes they come when they are least expected! Why, I remember one Sunday afternoon in Blue Mountain - [Enters kitchenette.]

TOM : I know what's coming

LAURA : Yes. But let her tell it.

TOM : Again?

LAURA : She loves to tell it.

[AMANDA returns with bowl of dessert.]

AMANDA: One Sunday afternoon in Blue Mountain, your mother received seventeen! gentlemen callers! Why, sometimes there weren't chairs enough to accommodate them all. We had to send the nigger over to bring in folding chairs from the parish house.

TOM [remaining at portieres]: How did you entertain those gentleman callers?

A M A N D A :I understood the art of conversation !

TOM : I bet you could talk.

AMANDA : Girls in those days knew how to talk, I can tell you.

TOM: Yes?

[IMAGE: AMANDA AS A GIRL ON A PORCH GREETING CALLERS]

AMANDA: They knew how to entertain their gentlemen callers. It wasn't enough for a girl to be possessed of a pretty face and a graceful figure although I wasn't alighted in either respect. She also needed to have a nimble wit and a tongue to meet all occasions.

TOM : What did you talk about?

AMANDA : Things of importance going on in the world ! Never anything coarse or common or vulgar.

[She addresses Tom as though he were seated in the vacant chair at the table though he remains by portieres. He plays this scene as though he held the book.]

My callers were gentleman -all! Among my callers were some of the most prominent young planters of the Mississippi Delta - planters and sons of planters!

[Tom motions for music and a spot of light on AMANDA. Her eyes lift, her face glows, her voice becomes rich and elegiac.

[SCREEN LEGEND: 'Ou SONT Les NEIGES']

There was young Champ Laughlin who later became vice-president of the Delta Planters Bank.

Hadley Stevenson who was drowned in Moon Lake and left his widow one hundred and fifty thousand in Government bonds.

There were the Cutrere brothers, Wesley and Bates. Bates was one of my bright particular beaux! He got in a quarrel with that wild Wainwright boy. They shot it out on the floor of Moon Lake Casino. Bates was shot through the stomach. Died in the ambulance on his way to Memphis. His widow was also well provided for, came into eight or ten thousand acres, that's all. She married him on the rebound - never loved her - carried my picture on him the night he died !And there was that boy that every girl in the Delta had set her cap for! That brilliant, brilliant young Fitzhugh boy from Greene County!

TOM : What did he leave his widow?

AMANDA : He never married ! Gracious, you talk as though all of my old admirers had turned up their toes to the daisies !

TOM : Isn't this the first you've mentioned that still survives ?

AMANDA : That Fitzhugh boy went North and made a fortune - came to be known as the Wolf of Wall Street! He had the Midas touch, whatever he touched turned to gold!

And I could have been Mrs Duncan J. Fitzhugh, mind you! But - I picked your father !

LAURA [rising]: Mother, let me clear the table.

AMANDA : No, dear, you go in front and study your typewriter chart. Or practise your shorthand a little. Stay fresh and pretty! It's almost time for our gentlemen callers to start arriving. [She flounces girlishly toward the kitchenette.] How many do you suppose we're going to entertain this afternoon?

[Tom throws down the paper and jumps up with a groan.]

LAURA [alone in the dining-room]: I don't believe we're going to receive any, Mother.

AMANDA [reappearing, airily] What? Not one - not one? You must be joking!

[LAURA nervously echoes her laugh.S he slips in a fugitive manner through the half-open portieres and draws them in gently behind her. A shaft of very clear light is thrown on her face against the faded tapestry of the curtains.]

[MUSIC: 'THE GLASS MENAGERIE' UNDER FAINTLY. Lightly]

Not one gentleman caller? It can't be true ! There must be a flood, there must have been a tornado!

LAURA : It isn't a flood, it's not a tornado, Mother. I'm just not popular like you were in Blue Mountain. ... [Tom utters another groan. LAURA glances at him with a faint, apologetic smile. Her voice catching a little.] Mother's afraid I'm going to be an old maid.

THE SCENE DIMS OUT WITH 'GLASS MENAGERIE'

Music 'Laura Haven't you Ever Liked Some Boy?'

SCENE 2

On the dark stage the screen is lighted with the image of blue roses. [Gradually Laura's figure becomes apparent and the screen goes out. The music subsides.

Laura is seated in the delicate ivory chair at the small claw-foot table. She wears a dress of soft violet material for a kimono - her hair tied back from her forehead with a ribbon. She is washing and polishing her collection of glass.

Amanda appears on the fire-escape steps. At the sound of her ascent, Laura catches her breath, thrusts the bowl of ornaments away and seats herself stiffly before the diagram of the typewriter keyboard as though it held her spellbound.

Something has happened to Amanda. It is written in her face as she climbs to the landing: a look that is grim and hopeless and a little absurd.

She has on one of those cheap or imitation velvety-looking cloth coats with imitation fur collar. Her hat is five or six years old, one of those dreadful cloche hats that were worn in the late twenties and she is eloping an enormous black patent-leather pocketbook with nickel clasps and initials. This is her full-dress outfit, the one she usually wears to the D.A.R. Before entering she looks through the door. She purses her lips, opens her eyes very wide, rolls them upward, and shakes her head. Then she slowly lets herself in the door. Seeing her mother's expression LAURA touches her lips with a nervous gesture.]

LAURA : Hello, Mother, I was - [She makes a nervous gesture toward the chart on the Wall. AMANDA leans against the shut door and stares at LAURA with a martyred look.]

A M A N D A: Deception ? Deception ? [She slowly removes her hat and gloves, continuing the sweet suffering stare. She lets the hat and gloves fall on the floor - a bit of acting.]

LAURA [shakily]: How was the DAR. meeting? [AMANDA slowly opens her purse and removes a dainty white handkerchief which she shakes out delicately and delicately touches to her lips and nostrils.] Didn't you go to the DAR. meeting, Mother?

AMANDA [faintly, almost inaudibly]: - No. - No. [Then more forcibly.] I did not have the strength - to go to the DAR. In fact, I did not have the courage! I wanted to find a hole in the ground and hide myself in it for ever ! [She crosses slowly to the wall and removes the diagram of the typewriter keyboard. She holds it in front of her for a second, staring at it sweetly and sorrowfully - then bites her lips and tears it into two pieces.]

LAURA [faintly]: Why did you do that, Mother? [AMANDA repeats the same procedure with the chart of the Gregg alphabet.] Why are you ??

AMANDA : Why? Why? How old are you, Laura?

LAURA : Mother, you know my age.

AMANDA : I thought that you were an adult; it seems that I was mistaken. [She crosses slowly to the sofa and sinks down and stares at LAURA.]

LAURA : Please don't stare at me, Mother.

[AMANDA closes her eyes and lowers her head. Count ten.]

AMANDA : What are we going to do, what is going to be. come of us, what is the future?

[Count ten.]

LAURA : Has something happened, Mother? [AMANDA draws a long breath and takes out the handkerchief again. Dabbing process.] Mother, has - something happened?

AMANDA : I'll be all right in a minute, I'm just bewildered [Count five.] - by life. ...

LAURA : Mother, I wish that you would tell me what's happened!

A M A N D A: As you know, I was supposed to be inducted into my office at the D.A.R. this afternoon. [IMAGE: A SWARM OF TYPEWRITERS.] But I stopped off at Rubicam's business college to speak to your teachers about your having a cold and ask them what progress they thought you were making down there.

LAURA : Oh

AMANDA : I went to the typing instructor and introduced myself as your mother. She didn't know who you were. Wingfield, she said. We don't have any such student enrolled at the school!

I assured her she did, that you had been going to classes since early in January.

'I wonder,' she said, 'if you could be talking about that terribly shy little girl who dropped out of school after only a few days' attendance?'

'No,' I said, 'Laura, my daughter, has been going to school every day for the past six weeks !'

'Excuse me,' she said. She took the attendance book out and there was

your name, unmistakably printed, and all the dates you were absent until they decided that you had dropped out of school.

I still said, 'No, there must have been some mistake I There must have been some mix-up in the records !'

And she said, 'No - I remember her perfectly now. Her hands shook so that she couldn't hit the right keys ! The first time we gave a speed-test, she broke down completely - was sick at the stomach and almost had to be carried into the wash-room! After that morning she never showed up any more. We phoned the house but never got any answer' -while I was working at Famous and Barr, I suppose, demonstrating those - Oh!

I felt so weak I could barely keep on my feet !

I had to sit down while they got me a glass of water !

Fifty dollars' tuition, all of our plans - my hopes and ambition for you - just gone up the spout, just gone up the spout like that. [LAURA draws a long breath and gets awkwardly to her feet She crosses to the victrola and winds it up.]

What are you doing?

LAURA : Oh I [She releases the handle and returns to her seat.]

AMANDA : Laura, where have you been going when you've gone on pretending that you were going to business college ?

L A U RA : I've just been going out walking.

AMANDA : That's not true.

LAURA : It is. I just went walking.

AMANDA : Walking? Walking? In winter? Deliberately courting pneumonia in that light coat? Where did you walk to, Laura?

LAURA : All sorts of places - mostly in the park.

AMANDA : Even after you'd started catching that cold?

LAURA : It was the lesser of two evils, Mother.

[IMAGE: WINTER SCENE IN PARK]

I couldn't go back up. I threw up -on the floor !

AMANDA : From half past seven till after five every day you mean to tell me you walked around in the park, because you wanted to make me think that you were still going to Rubicam's Business College?

LAURA : It wasn't as bad as it sounds. I went inside places to get warmed up.

AMANDA : Inside where?

LAURA : I went in the art museum and the bird-houses at the Zoo. I visited the penguins every day! Sometimes I did without lunch and went to the movies. Lately I've been spending most of my afternoons in the jewel-box, that big glass-house where they raise the tropical flowers.

AMANDA : You did all this to deceive me, just for deception? [LAURA looks down.] Why?

LAURA : Mother, when you're disappointed, you get that awful suffering look on your face, like the picture of Jesus' mother in the museum !

AMANDA : Hush !

LAURA : I couldn't face it.

[Pause. A whisper of strings.

LEGEND: 'THE CRUST OF HUMILITY'.]

AMANDA [hopelessly fingering the huge pocketbook]: So what are we going to do the rest of our lives? Stay home and watch the parades go by? Amuse ourselves with the glass menagerie, darling? Eternally play those worn-out phonograph records your father left as a painful reminder of him? We won't have a business career - we've given that up because it gave us nervous indigestion ! [Laughs wearily.] What is there left but dependency all our lives? I know so well what becomes of unmarried women who aren't prepared to occupy a position. I've seen such pitiful cases in the South - barely tolerated spinsters living upon the grudging patronage of sister's husband or brother's wife ! - stuck away in some little mousetrap of a room - encouraged by one in-law to visit another - little birdlike women without any nest - eating the crust of humility all their life !

Is that the future that we've mapped out for ourselves? I swear it's the only alternative I can think of !

It isn't a very pleasant alternative, is it? Of course - some girls do marry!

[LAURA twists her hands nervously.]

Haven't you ever liked some boy?

LAURA : Yes. I liked one once. [Rises.] I came across his picture a while ago.

AMANDA [with some interest]. He gave you his picture?

LAURA : No, it's in the year-book.

AMANDA : [disappointed] : Oh - a high-school boy.

[SCREEN IMAGE: JIM AS HIGH-SCHOOL HERO BEARING A SILVER CUP]

LAURA: Yes. His name was Jim. [LAURA lifts the heavy annual from the claw-foot table.] Here he is in The Pirates of Penzance.

AMANDA [absently]: The what?

LAURA : The operetta the senior class put on. He had a wonderful voice and we sat across the aisle from each other Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays in the Aud. Here he is with the silver cup for debating !See his grin?

AMANDA [absently]: He must have had a jolly disposition.

LAURA: He used to call me - Blue Roses.

[IMAGE: BLUE ROSES]

AMANDA: Why did he call you such a name as that?

LAURA : When I had that attack of pleurosis - he asked me what was the matter when I came back. I Said pleurosis he thought that I said Blue Roses ! So that's what he always called me after that. Whenever he saw me, he'd holler, 'Hello, Blue Roses ! I didn't care for the girl that he went out with. Emily Meisenbach. Emily was the best-dressed girl at Soldan. She never struck me, though, as being sincere. . . . It says in the Personal Section - they're engaged. That's - six years ago ! They must be married by now.

AMANDA : Girls that aren't cut out for business careers usually wind up married to some nice man. [Gets up with aspark of revival.] Sister, that's what you'll do !

[LAURA utters a startled, doubtful laugh. She reaches quickly for a piece of glass.]

LAURA : But, Mother

AMANDA : Yes ? [Crossing to photograph.]

LAURA [in a tone of frightened apology] : I'm - crippled !

[IMAGE: SCREEN]

AMANDA : Nonsense ! Laura, I've told you never, never to use that word. Why, you're not crippled, you just have a little defect - hardly noticeable, even! When people have some slight disadvantage like that, they cultivate other things to make up for it - develop charm - and vivacity and - charm! That's all you have to do ![She turns again to the photograph.] One thing your father had plenty of - was charm!

[Tom motions to the fiddle in the wings.]

THE SCENE FADES OUT WITH MUSIC

SCENE 3

Legend on screen: 'After the fiasco—'

TOM speaks from the fire-escape landing.

TOM : After the fiasco at Rubicam's Business College, the idea of getting a gentleman caller for Laura began to play a more and more important part in Mother's calculations. It became an obsession. Like some archetype of the universal unconscious, the image of the gentleman caller haunted our small apartment. ...

IMAGE: YOUNG MAN AT DOOR WITH FLOWERS]

An evening at home rarely passed without some allusion to this image, this spectre, this hope.

Even when he wasn't mentioned, his presence hung in Mother's preoccupied look and in my sister's frightened, apologetic manner - hung like a sentence passed upon the Wingfields !

Mother was a woman of action as well as words.

She began to take logical steps in the planned direction. Late that winter and in the early spring - realizing that extra money would be needed to properly feather the nest and plume the bird - she conducted a vigorous campaign on the- telephone, roping in subscribers to one of those magazines for matrons called The Home-maker's Companion, the type of journal that features the serialized , sublimations of ladies of letters who think in terms of delicate cup-like breasts, slim, tapering waists, rich, creamy thighs, eyes like wood-smoke in autumn, fingers that soothe and caress like strains of music, bodies as powerful as Etruscan sculpture.

[SCREEN IMAGE: GLAMOUR MAGAZINE COVER]

[A M A N D A enters with phone on long extension cord. She is spotted in the dim state.]

A M A N D A : Ida Scott? This is Amanda Wingfield! We missed you at the D.A.R. last Monday! I said to myself: She's probably suffering with that sinus condition ! How is that sinus condition? Horrors ! Heaven have mercy !- You're a Christian martyr, yes, that's what you are, a Christian martyr !

Well, I just have happened to notice that your subscription to the Companion's about to expire! Yes, it expires with the next issue, honey !- just when that wonderful new serial by Bessie Mae Hopper is getting off to

such an exciting start. Oh, honey, it's something that you can't miss !You remember how 'Gone With the Wind' took everybody by storm? You simply couldn't go out if you hadn't read it. All everybody talked was Scarlet O'Hara. Well, this is a book that critics already compare to Gone With the Wind. It's the 'Gone With the Wind' of the post-World War generation! -What? -Burning !- Oh, honey, don't let them bum, go take a look in the oven and I'll hold the wire! Heavens - I think she's hung up !

[DIM OUT]

[LEGEND ON SCREEN: 'YOU THINK I'M IN LOVE WITH CONTINENTAL SHOEMAKERS?']

[Before the stage is lighted, the violent voices Of TOM and AMANDA are heard.

They are quarrelling behind the portieres. In front of them stands LAURA with clenched hands and panicky expression. A clear pool of light on her figure throughout this scene.]

TOM : What in Christ's name am !

AMANDA [shrilly]: Don't you use that -

AMANDA : Expression !Not in my -

TOM : Ohhh! !

AMANDA : Presence ! Have you gone out of your senses?

TOM : have, that's true, driven out !

AMANDA: What is the matter with you, you - big - big IDIOT !

TOM : Look !- I've got no thing, no single thing !

AMANDA : L ower Your Voice !

TOM : In my life here that I can call my OWN ! Everything is -

AMANDA: Stop that shouting !

TOM : Yesterday you confiscated my books ! You had the nerve to -

AMANDA : I took that horrible novel back to the library- yes ! That hideous book by that insane Mr. Lawrence. [Tom laughs wildly.] I cannot control the output of diseased minds or people who cater to them - [Tom laughs still more wildly.] BUT I WON'T ALLOW SUCH FILTH BROUGHT INTO MY HOUSE ! NO, no, no, no, no !

TOM : House, house ! Who pays rent on it, who makes a slave of himself to -

AMANDA [fairly screeching] : Don't you DARE to -

TOM : No, no, I mustn't say things ! I've got to just -

AMANDA : Let me tell you-

TOM : I don't want to hear any more! [He tears the portieres open. The upstage area is lit with a turgid smoky red glow.]

[AMANDA's hair is in metal curlers and she wears a very old bathrobe much too large for her slight figure, a relic of the faithless Mr Wingfield. An upright typewriter and a wild disarray of manuscripts are on the drop-leaf table. The quarrel was probably precipitated by his creative labour. A chair lying overthrown on the floor.

Their gesticulating shadows are cast on the ceiling by the fiery glow.]

AMANDA : You will hear more, you -

TOM : No, I won' t hear more, I'm going out !

AMANDA : You come right back in -

A M A N D A: Come back here, Tom Wingfield ! I'm not through talking to you !

TOM : Oh, go -

LAURA [desperately]: Tom !

AMANDA : You're going to listen, and no more insolence from you ! I'm at the end of my patience !

[He comes back toward her.]

TOM : What do you think I'm at? Aren't I supposed to have any patience to reach the end of, Mother? I know, I know. It seems unimportant to you, what I'm doing - what I want to do - having a little difference between them ! You don't think that -

AMANDA : I think you've been doing things that you're ashamed of. That's why you act like this. I don't believe that you go every night to the movies. Nobody goes to the movies night after night. Nobody in their right mind goes to the movies as often as you pretend to. People don't go to the movies at nearly midnight, and movies don't let out at two a.m. Come in stumbling. Muttering to yourself like a maniac! You get three hours' sleep and then go to work. Oh, I can picture the way you're doing down there. Moping, doping, because you're in no condition.

TOM [wildly] : No, I'm in no condition !

AMANDA : What right have you got to jeopardize your job - jeopardize the security of us all? How do you think we'd manage if you were -

TOM : Listen !You think I'm crazy about the warehouse? [He bonds fiercely toward her slight figure.] You think I'm in love with the Continental Shoemakers? You think I want to spend fifty-five years down there in that - celotex interior! with - fluorescent - tubes! Look! I'd rather somebody picked up a crowbar and battered out my brains - than go back mornings! I go ! Every time you come in yelling

that God damn 'Rise and Shine!'- 'Rise and Shine!' I say to myself, 'How lucky dead people are ! 'But I get up. I go! For sixty-five dollars a month I give up all that I dream of doing and being ever! And you say self - selfs' all I ever think of. Why, listen, if self is what I thought of, Mother, I'd be where he is -G 0 N E ! [Pointing to fathers picture.] As far as the system of transportation reaches ! [He starts past her. She grabs his arm.] Don't grab at me, Mother !

AMANDA : Where are you going?

TOM : I'm going to the movies!

AMANDA: I don't believe that lie !

TOM : [crouching toward her, overtowering her tiny figure. She backs away, gasping]: I'm going to opium dens ! Yes, opium dens, dens of vice and criminals' hang-outs, Mother. I've joined the Hogan gang, I'm a hired assassin, I carry a tommy-gun in a violin case! I run a string of cat- houses in the Valley! They call me Killer, Killer Wingfield, I'm leading a double-life, a simple, honest warehouse worker by day, by night a dynamic tsar of the underworld, Mother. I go to gambling casinos, I spin away fortunes on the roulette table ! I wear a patch over one eye and a false moustache, sometimes I put on green whiskers. On those occasions they call me -El Diablo ! Oh, I could tell you things to make you sleepless ! My enemies plan to dynamite this place. They're going to blow us all sky-high some night ! I'll be glad, very happy, and so will you ! You'll go up, up on a broomstick, over Blue Mountain with seventeen gentlemen callers! You ugly - babbling old - witch. [He goes through a series of violent, clumsy movements, seizing his overcoat, lunging to do door, pulling it fiercely open. The women watch him, aghast. His arm catches in the sleeve of the coat as he struggles to pull it on. For a moment he is pinioned by the bulky garment. With an outraged groan he tears the coat of again, splitting the shoulder of

it, and hurls it across the room. It strikes against the shelf of Laura's glass collection, there is a tinkle of shattering glass. LAURA cries out as if wounded.]

[MUSIC. LEGEND: 'THE GLASS MENAGERIE'.]

L A U R A [shrilly] : My glass ! - menagerie. . . . [She covers her face and turns away.]

[But AMANDA is still stunned and stupefied by the 'ugly witch' so that she barely notices this occurrence. Now she recovers her speech.]

AMANDA [in an awful voice]: I won't speak to you - until you apologize ! [She crosses through portieres and draws them together behind her. TOM is left with LAURA. LAURA Clings weakly to the mantel with her face averted. TOM stares at her stupidly for a moment. Then he crosses to shelf. Drops awkwardly on his knees to collect the fallen glass, glancing at LAURA as if he would speak but couldn't.]

'The Glass Menagerie' steals in as

THE SCENE DIMS OUT

SCENE 4

The interior is dark. Faint light in the alley.

A deep-voiced bell in a church is tolling the hour of five as the scene commences.

[Tom appears at the top of the alley. After each solemn boom of the bell in the tower, he shakes a little noise-maker or rattle as

if to express the tiny spasm of man in contrast to the sustained power and dignity of the Almighty. This and the unsteadiness of his advance make it evident that he has been drinking.

As he climbs Me few steps to the fire-escape landing light steals up inside. Laura appears in night-dress observing Tom's empty bed in the front room.

TOM fishes in his pockets for door-key removing a motley assortment of articles in the search, including a perfect shower of movie-ticket stubs and an empty bottle. At last he finds the key, but just as he is about to insert it, it slips from his fingers. He strikes a match and crouches below the door.]

TOM [bitterly]: One crack -and it falls through !

[LAURA opens the door.]

LAURA : Tom ! Tom, what are you doing?

TOM : Looking for a door-key.

LAURA : Where have you been all this time?

TOM : I have been to the movies.

LAURA : All this time at the movies?

TO M : There was a very long programme. There was a Garbo picture and a Mickey Mouse and a travelogue and a newsreel and a preview of coming attractions. And there was an organ solo and a collection for the milk-fund - simultaneously - which ended up in a terrible fight between a fat lady and an usher !

LAURA [innocently]: Did you have to stay through everything?

TOM : Of course ! And, oh, I forgot ! There was a big stage show ! The headliner on this stage show was Malvolio the Magician. He performed wonderful tricks, many of them, such as pouriing water back and forth between pitchers.

First it turned to wine and then it turned to beer and then it turned to whisky. I knew it was whisky it finally turned into because he needed somebody to come up out of the audience to help him, and I came up - both shows ! It

was Kentucky Straight Bourbon. A very generous fellow, he gave souvenirs. (He pulls from his back pocket a shimmering rainbow-coloured scarf.) He gave me this. This is his magic scarf. You can have it, Laura. You wave it over a canary cage and you get a bowl of gold- fish. You wave it over the gold-fish bowl and they fly away canaries. . . . But the wonderfullest trick of all was the coffin trick. We nailed him into a coffin and he got out of the coffin without removing one nail, [He has come inside.] There is a trick that would come in handy for me - get me out of this 2 by 4 situation ! [Flops on to a bed and starts removing shoes.]

LAURA : Tom ? Shhh'!

TO M : What're you shushing me for?

LAURA : You'll wake up mother.

TOM : Goody, goody ! Pay 'er back for all those 'Rise an' Shines'. [Lies down, groaning.] You know it don't take much intelligence to get yourself into a nailed-up coffin, Laura. But who in hell ever got himself out of one without removing one nail?

[As if in answer, the father's grinning photograph lights up.]

[SCENE DIMS OUT]

[Immediately following: The church bell is heard striking six. At the sixth stroke the alarm clock goes off in AMANDA's room, and after a few moments we hear her calling "Rise and Shine! Rise and Shine! Laura, go tell your brother to rise and shine!']

TOM [sitting up slowly]: I'll rise -but I won't shine

[The light increases.]

AMANDA : Laura, tell your brother his coffee is ready.

[LAURA slips into front room.]

LAURA : Tom!- It's nearly seven. Don't make mother nervous. [He stares at her stupidly. Beseechingly.] Tom, speak to mother this morning. Make up with her, apologize, speak to her !

TOM : She won't to me. It's her that started not speaking.

LAURA : If you just say you're sorry she'll start speaking.

TOM : Her not speaking - is that such a tragedy?

AMANDA [calling from kitchenette]: Laura, are you going to do what I asked you to do, or do I have to get dressed and go out myself?

LAURA : Going, going - soon as I get on my coat ![She pulls on a shapeless felt hat with nervous, jerky movement, pleadingly glancing at TOM. Rushes

awkwardly for coat. The coat is one of AMANDA's, inaccurately made-over the sleeves too short for LAURA.] Butter and what else?

AMANDA [centering upstage]: Just butter. Tell them to charge it.

LAURA : Mother, they make such faces when I do that

AMANDA : Sticks and stones can break our bones, but the expression on Mr Garfinkel's face won't harm us ! Tell your his coffee is getting cold.

LAURA [at door]: Do what I asked you, will you, will you, TOM? [He looks sullenly away.]

AMANDA : Laura, go now or just don't go at all !

LAURA [rushing out]: Going -going! [A second later she cries Out. TOM Springs up and crosses to door. AMANDA rushes anxiously in. TOM opens the door.]

LAURA : I'm all right. I slipped, but I'm all right.

AMANDA [peering anxiously after her]: If anyone breaks a leg on those fire-escape steps, the landlord ought to be sued for every cent he possesses ! [She shuts door. Remembers she isn't speaking and returns to other room.]

[As TOM enters listlessly for his coffee she turns her back to him and stands rigidly facing the window on the gloomy gray vault of the areaway. Its light on her face with its aged but childish features is cruelly sharp, satirical as a Daumier print.

MUSIC UNDER: 'AVE MARIA'.

TOM glances sheepishly but sullenly at her averted figure and slumps at the table. The coffee is scalding hot; he sips it and gasps and spits it back in the cup. At his gasp, AMANDA catches her breath and half turns. Then catches herself and turns back to window.

Tom blows on his coffee, glancing sidewise at his mother. She clears her throat. TOM clears his. He starts to rise. Sinks back down again, scratches his head, clears his throat again. AMANDA Coughs. TOM raises his cup in both hands to blow on it - his eyes staring over the rim of it at his mother for several moments. Then he slowly sets the cup down and awkwardly and hesitantly rises from the chair.]

TOM [hoarsely]: Mother. ! - I apologize, Mother. [AMANDA draws a quick, shuddering breath. Her face works grotesquely. She breaks into childlike tears.] I'm sorry for what I said, for everything that I said; I didn't mean it.

AMANDA [sobbingly]: My devotion has made me a witch and so I make myself hateful to my children !

AMANDA : I worry so much, don't sleep, it makes me nervous!

TOM [gently]: I understand that.

AMANDA : I've had to put up a solitary battle all these years. But you're my right-hand bower ! Don't fall down, don't fail !

TOM [gently] :I try, Mother.

AMANDA [with great enthusiasm]: Try and you will suCCEED ! [The notion makes her breathless] Why, you -you're just full of natural endowments ! Both of my children - they're unusual children ! Don't you think I know it? I'm so proud! Happy and - feel I've - so much to be thankful for but - Promise me one thing, Son !

TOM : What, Mother?

AMANDA : Promise, Son, you'll - never be a drunkard !

TOM [turns to her grinning]: I will never be a drunkard, Mother.

AMANDA : That's what frightened me so, that you'd be drinking ! Eat a bowl of Purina !

TOM : Just Coffee, Mother.

AMANDA : Shredded wheat biscuit?

Tom : No. No, Mother, just coffee.

AMANDA : You can't put in a day's work on an empty stomach. You've got ten minutes - don't gulp ! Drinking too hot liquids makes cancer of the stomach. Put cream in.

TOM : No, thank you.

AMANDA : To cool it.

TOM : No! No, thank you, I want it black.

AMANDA : I know, but it's not good for you. We have to do all that we can to build ourselves up. In these trying times we live in, all that we have to cling to is - each other. . . . That's why it's so important to - Tom, ! - I sent out your sister so I could discuss something with you. If you hadn't spoken I would have spoken to you. [Sits down.]

TOM [gently]: What is it, Mother, that you want to discuss?

AMANDA : Laura! [Tom puts his cup down slowly.

MUSIC : ' THE GLASS MENAGERIE']

TOM : - Oh. - Laura ...

AMANDA [touching his sleeve] You know how Laura is. So quiet but - still water runs deep ! She notices things and I think she - broods about them. [Tom looks up.] A few days ago I came in and she was crying.

TOM : What about?

AMANDA : YOU.

TOM : Me?

AMANDA : She has an idea that you're not happy here

TOM : What gave her that idea?

AMANDA : What gives her any idea? However, you do act strangely. ! - I'm not criticizing, understand that! I know your ambitions do not lie in the warehouse, that like everybody in the whole wide world - you've had to make sacrifices, but - Tom - Tom - life's not easy, it calls for - Spartan endurance ! There's so many things in my heart that I cannot describe to you ! I've never told you but - I loved your father. . . .

TOM [gently] : I know that, Mother.

AMANDA : And you - when I see you taking after his ways ! Staying out late - and - well, you had been drinking the night you were in that - terrifying condition ! Laura says that you hate the apartment and that you go out nights to get away from it! Is that true, Tom?

TOM : No. You say there's so much in your heart that you can't describe to me. That's true of me, too. There's so much in my heart that I can't describe to"you! So let's respect each other's -

AMANDA : But, why - why, Tom - am you always so restless? Where do you go to, nights?

TOM : I - go to the movies.

AMANDA : Why do you go to the movies so much, Tom?

TO M : I go to the movies because - I like adventure

Adventure is something I don't have much of at work, so I go to the movies.

AMANDA : But, Tom, you go to the movies entirely too much !

TOM : I like a lot of adventure.

[AMANDA looks baffled, then hurt As the familiar inquisition resumes he becomes hard and impatient again. AMANDA SLIPS back into her querulous attitude towards him.

AMANDA : Most young men find adventure in their careers.

TOM : Then most young men are not employed in a warehouse.

AMANDA : The world is full of young men employed in warehouses and offices and factories.

TOM : Do all of them find adventure in their careers?

AMANDA : They do or they do without it! Not everybody has a craze for adventure.

TOM : Man is by instinct a lover, a hunter, a fighter, and none of those instincts are given much play at the warehouse !

AMANDA : Man is by instinct! Don't quote instinct to me! Instinct is something that people have got away from ! It belongs to animals ! Christian adults don't want it !

TOM , What do Christian adults want, then, Mother?

AMANDA : Superior things! Things of the mind and the spirit ! Only animals have to satisfy instincts ! Surely your aims are somewhat higher than theirs ! Than monkeys - pigs

AMANDA : You're joking. However, that isn't what I wanted to discuss.

TOM [rising] I haven't much time.

AMANDA [pushing his shoulders] Sit down.

TOM : You want me to punch in red at the warehouse, Mother?

AMANDA : You have five minutes. I want to talk about Laura.

[LEGEND: 'PLANS AND PROVISIONS']

TOM : All right! What about Laura?

AMANDA : We have to be making some plans and provisions for her. She's older than you, two years, and nothing has happened. She just drifts along doing nothing. It frightens me terribly how she just drifts along.

TOM : I guess she's the type that people call home girls.

AMANDA : There's no such type, and if there is, it's a pity ! That is unless the home is hers, with a husband !

AMANDA : Oh, I can see the handwriting on the wall as plain as I see the nose in front of my face ! It's terrifying ! More and more you remind me of your father ! He was out all hours without explanation ! - Then left ! Good-bye ! And me with the bag to hold. I saw that letter you got from the Merchant Marine. I know what you're dreaming of. I'm not standing here blindfolded.

Very well, then. Then, do it ! But not till there's somebody to take your place.

TOM : What do you mean?

AMANDA : I mean that as soon as Laura has got somebody to take care of her, married, a home of her own, independent ?- why, then you'll be free to go wherever you please, on land, on sea, whichever way the wind blows you !

But until that time you've got to look out for your sister. I don't say me because I'm old and don't matter - I say for your sister because she's young and dependent.

I put her in business college - a dismal failure ! Frightened her so it made her sick at the stomach.

I took her over to the Young Peoples League at the church. Another fiasco. She spoke to nobody, nobody spoke to her. Now all she does is fool with those pieces of glass and play those worn-out records. What kind of a life is that for a girl to lead?

TOM : What can I do about it?

AMANDA : Overcome Selfishness ! Self, self, self is all that you ever think of !

[Tom springs up and crosses to got his coat. It is ugly and bulky He pulls on a cap with earmuffs.]

Where is your muffler? Put your wool muffler on ! [He snatches it angrily from the closet and tosses it around his neck and pulls both ends tight.] Tom ! I haven't said what I had in mind to ask you.

AMANDA [catching his arm - very importunately. Then shyly]: Down at the warehouse, aren't there some - nice young men?

TOM : No !

AMANDA : There must be - some

TOM : Mother [Gesture.]

AMANDA : Find out one that's clean-living - doesn't drink and - ask him out for sister !

TOM : What?

AMANDA : For sister ! To meet ! Get acquainted

TOM [stamping to door]: Oh, my go- osh !

AMANDA : Will you? [He opens door. Imploringly.] Will you? [He starts down.] Will you? Will you, dear?

TOM [calling back]: YES !

[AMANDA closes the door hesitantly and with a troubled but faintly hopful expression.

SCREEN IMAGE: GLAMOUR MAGAZINE COVER. Spot AMANDA at phone]

AMANDA : Ella Cartwright? This is Amanda Wingfield !How are you, honey?

How is that kidney condition?

[Count Five]

Horrors!

[Count five.]

You're a Christian martyr, yes, honey, that's what you are, a Christian martyr!

Well, I just now happened to notice in my little red book that your subscription to the Companion has just run out! I knew that you wouldn't want to miss out on the wonderful serial starting in this issue. It's by Bessie Mae Hopper, the first thing she's written since Honeymoon for Three.

Wasn't that a strange and interesting story? Well, this one is even lovelier, I believe. It has a sophisticated, society background. It's all about the horsy set on Long Island!

FADE OUT

CLASS XII

SEMESTER IV

When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine

Jhumpa Lahiri

In the Autumn of 1971 a man used to come to our house, bearing confections in his pocket and hopes of ascertaining the life or death of his family. His name was Mr. Pirzada, and he came from Dacca, now the capital of Bangladesh, but then a part of Pakistan. That year Pakistan was engaged in civil war. The eastern frontier, where Dacca was located, was fighting for autonomy from the ruling regime in the west. In March, Dacca had been invaded, torched and shelled by the Pakistani army. Teachers were dragged onto streets and shot, women dragged into barracks and raped. By the end of the summer, three hundred thousand people were said to have died. In Dacca Mr. Pirzada had a three-story home, a lectureship in botany at the university, a wife of twenty year, and seven daughters between the ages of six and sixteen whose names all began with the letter A. "Their mother's idea," he explained one day, producing from his wallet a black-and-white picture of seven girls at a picnic, their braids tied with ribbons, sitting cross-legged in a row, eating chicken curry off of banana leaves. "How am I to distinguish? Ayesha, Amira, Amina, Aziza, you see the difficulty."

Each week Mr. Pirzada wrote letters to his wife, and sent comic books to each of his seven daughters, but the postal system, along with most everything else in Dacca, had collapsed, and he had not heard word of them in over six months. Mr. Pirzada, meanwhile, was in America for the year, for he had been awarded a grant from the government of Pakistan to study the foliage of New England. In spring and summer he had gathered data in Vermont and Maine, and in autumn he moved to a university north of Boston, where we lived, to write a short book about his discoveries. The grant was a great honor, but when converted into dollars it was not generous. As a result, Mr. Pirzada lived in a room in a graduate dormitory, and did not own a proper stove or a television set of his own. And so he came to our house to eat dinner and watch the evening news.

At first I knew nothing of the reason for his visits. I was ten years old, and was not surprised that my parents, who were from India, and had a number of Indian acquaintances at the university, should ask Mr. Pirzada to share our meals. It was a small campus, with narrow brick walkways and white pillared buildings, located on the fringes of what seemed to be an even smaller town. The supermarket did not carry mustard oil, doctors did not make house calls, neighbors never dropped by without an invitation, and of these things, every so often, my parents complained. In search of compatriots, they used to trail their

fingers, at the start of each new semester, through the columns of the university directory, circling surnames familiar to their part of the world. It was in this manner that they discovered Mr. Pirzada, and phoned him, and invited him to our home.

I have no memory of his first visit, or of his second or his third, but by the end of September I had grown so accustomed to Mr. Pirzada's presence in our living room that one evening, as I was dropping ice cubes into the water pitcher, I asked my mother to hand me a fourth glass from a cupboard still out of my reach. She was busy at the stove, presiding over a skillet of fried spinach with radishes, and could not hear me because of the drone of the exhaust fan and the fierce scrapes of her spatula. I turned to my father, who was leaning against the refrigerator, eating spiced cashews from a cupped fist.

"What is it, Lilia?"

"A glass for the Indian man."

"Mr. Pirzada won't be coming today. More importantly, Mr. Pirzada is no longer considered Indian," my father announced, brushing salt from the cashews out of his trim black beard. "Not since Partition. Our country was divided. 1947."

When I said I thought that was the date of India's independence from Britain, my father said, "That too. One moment we were free and then we were sliced up," he explained, drawing an X with his finger on the countertop, "like a pie. Hindus here, Muslims there. Dacca no longer belongs to us." He told me that during Partition Hindus and Muslims had set fire to each other's homes. For many, the idea of eating in the other's company was still unthinkable.

It made no sense to me. Mr. Pirzada and my parents spoke the same language, laughed at the same jokes, looked more or less the same. They ate pickled mangoes with their meals, ate rice every night for supper with their hands. Like my parents, Mr. Pirzada took off his shoes before entering a room, chewed fennel seeds after meals as a digestive, drank no alcohol, for dessert dipped austere biscuits into successive cups of tea. Nevertheless my father insisted that I understand the difference, and he led me to a map of the world taped to the wall over his desk. He seemed concerned that Mr. Pirzada might take offense if I accidentally referred to him as an Indian, though I could not really imagine Mr. Pirzada being offended by much of anything. "Mr. Pirzada is Bengali, but he is a Muslim," my father informed me. "Therefore he lives in East Pakistan, not India." His finger trailed across the Atlantic, through Europe, the Mediterranean, the Middle East, and finally to the sprawling orange diamond that my mother once told me resembled a woman wearing a sari with her left arm extended. Various cities had been circled with lines drawn between them to indicate my parents' travels, and the place of their birth, Calcutta, was signified by a small silver star. I had been there only once and had no memory of the trip. "As you see,

Lilia, it is a different country, a different color," my father said. Pakistan was yellow, not orange. I noticed that there were two distinct parts to it, one much larger than the other, separated by an expanse of Indian territory; it was as if California and Connecticut constituted a nation apart from the U.S.

My father rapped his knuckles on top of my head. "You are, of course, aware of the current situation? Aware of East Pakistan's fight for sovereignty?"

I nodded, unaware of the situation.

We returned to the kitchen, where my mother was draining a pot of boiled rice into a colander. My father opened up the can on the counter and eyed me sharply over the frames of his glasses as he ate some more cashews. "What exactly do they teach you at school? Do you study history? Geography?"

"Lilia has plenty to learn at school," my mother said. "We live here now, she was born here." She seemed genuinely proud of the fact, as if it were a reflection of my character. In her estimation, I knew, I was assured a safe life, an easy life, a fine education, every opportunity. I would never have to eat rationed food, or obey curfews, or watch riots from my rooftop, or hide neighbors in water tanks to prevent them from being shot, as she and my father had. "Imagine having to place her in a decent school. Imagine her having to read during power failures by the light of kerosene lamps. Imagine the pressures, the tutors, the constant exams." She ran a hand through her hair, bobbed to a suitable length for her part-time job as a bank teller. "How can you possibly expect her to know about Partition? Put those nuts away."

"But what does she learn about the world?" My father rattled the cashew can in his hand. "What is she learning?"

We learned American history, of course, and American geography. That year, and every year, it seemed, we began by studying the Revolutionary War. We were taken in school buses on field trips to visit Plymouth Rock, and to walk the Freedom Trail, and to climb to the top of the Bunker Hill Monument. We made dioramas out of colored construction paper depicting George Washington crossing the choppy waters of the Delaware River, and we made puppets of King George wearing white tights and a black bow in his hair. During tests we were given blank maps of the thirteen colonies, and asked to fill in names, dates, capitals. I could do it with my eyes closed.

The next evening Mr. Pirzada arrived, as usual, at six o'clock. Though they were no longer strangers, upon first greeting each other, he and my father maintained the habit of shaking hands.

"Come in, sir. Lilia, Mr. Pirzada's coat, please."

He stepped into the foyer, impeccably suited and scarved, with a silk tie knotted at his collar. Each evening he appeared in ensembles of plums, olives, and chocolate browns. He was a compact man, and though his feet were perpetually splayed, and his belly slightly wide, he nevertheless maintained an efficient posture, as if balancing in either hand two suitcases of equal weight. His ears were insulated by tufts of graying hair that seemed to block out the unpleasant traffic of life. He had thickly lashed eyes shaded with a trace of camphor, a generous mustache that turned up playfully at the ends, and a mole shaped like a flattened raisin in the very center of his left cheek. On his head he wore a black fez made from the wool of Persian lambs, secured by bobby pins, without which I was never to see him. Though my father always offered to fetch him in our car, Mr. Pirzada preferred to walk from his dormitory to our neighborhood, a distance of about twenty minutes on foot, studying trees and shrubs on his way, and when he entered our house his knuckles were pink with the effects of crisp autumn air.

"Another refugee, I am afraid, on Indian territory."

"They are estimating nine million at the last count," my father said.

Mr. Pirzada handed me his coat, for it was my job to hang it on the rack at the bottom of the stairs. It was made of finely checkered gray-and-blue wool, with a striped lining and horn buttons, and carried in its weave the faint smell of limes. There were no recognizable tags inside, only a hand- stitched label with the phrase "Z. Sayeed, Suitors" embroidered on it in cursive with glossy black thread. On certain days a birch or maple leaf was tucked into a pocket. He unlaced his shoes and lined them against the baseboard; a golden paste clung to the toes and heels, the result of walking through our damp, unraked lawn. Relieved of his trappings, he grazed my throat with his short, restless fingers, the way a person feels for solidity behind a wall before driving in a nail. Then he followed my father to the living room, where the television was tuned to the local news. As soon as they were seated my mother appeared from the kitchen with a plate of mincemeat kebabs with coriander chutney. Mr. Pirzada popped one into his mouth.

"One can only hope," he said, reaching for another, "that Dacca's refugees are as heartily fed. Which reminds me." He reached into his suit pocket and gave me a small plastic egg filled with cinnamon hearts. "For the lady of the house," he said with an almost imperceptible splay-footed bow.

"Really, Mr. Pirzada," my mother protested. "Night after night. You spoil her."

"I only spoil children who are incapable of spoiling."

It was an awkward moment for me, one which I awaited in part with dread, in part with delight. I was charmed by the presence of Mr. Pirzada's rotund elegance, and flattered

by the faint theatricality of his attentions, yet unsettled by the superb ease of his gestures, which made me feel, for an instant, like a stranger in my own home. It had become our ritual, and for several weeks, before we grew more comfortable with one another, it was the only time he spoke to me directly I had no response, offered no comment, betrayed no visible reaction to the steady stream of honey-filled lozenges, the raspberry truffles, the slender rolls of sour pastilles. I could not even thank him, for once, when I did, for an especially spectacular peppermint lollipop wrapped in a spray of purple cellophane, he had demanded, "What is this thank-you? The lady at the bank thanks me, the cashier at the shop thanks me, the librarian thanks me when I return an overdue book, the overseas operator thanks me as she tries to connect me to Dacca and fails. If I am buried in this country I will be thanked, no doubt, at my funeral."

It was inappropriate, in my opinion, to consume the candy Mr. Pirzada gave me in a casual manner. I coveted each evening's treasure as I would a jewel, or a coin from a buried kingdom, and I would place it in a small keepsake box made of carved sandalwood beside my bed, in which, long ago in India, my father's mother used to store the ground areca nuts she ate after her morning bath. It was my only memento of a grandmother I had never known, and until Mr. Pirzada came to our lives I could find nothing to put inside it. Every so often before brushing my teeth and laying out my clothes for school the next day, I opened the lid of the box and ate one of his treats.

That night, like every night, we did not eat at the dining table, because it did not provide an unobstructed view of the television set. Instead we huddled around the coffee table, without conversing, our plates perched on the edges of our knees. From the kitchen my mother brought forth the succession of dishes: lentils with fried onions, green beans with coconut, fish cooked with raisins in a yogurt sauce. I followed with the water glasses, and the plate of lemon wedges, and the chili peppers, purchased on monthly trips to Chinatown and stored by the pound in the freezer, which they liked to snap open and crush into their food.

Before eating Mr. Pirzada always did a curious thing. He took out a plain silver watch without a band, which he kept in his breast pocket, held it briefly to one of his tufted ears, and wound it with three swift flicks of his thumb and forefinger. Unlike the watch on his wrist, the pocket watch, he had explained to me, was set to the local time in Dacca, eleven hours ahead. For the duration of the meal the watch rested on his folded paper napkin on the coffee table. He never seemed to consult it.

Now that I had learned Mr. Pirzada was not an Indian, I began to study him with extra care, to try to figure out what made him different. I decided that the pocket watch was one of those things. When I saw it that night, as he wound it and arranged it on the

coffee table, an uneasiness possessed me; life, I realized, was being lived in Dacca first. I imagined Mr. Pirzada's daughters rising from sleep, tying ribbons in their hair, anticipating breakfast, preparing for school. Our meals, our actions, were only a shadow of what had already happened there, a lagging ghost of where Mr. Pirzada really belonged.

At six-thirty, which was when the national news began, my father raised the volume and adjusted the antennas. Usually I occupied myself with a book, but that night my father insisted that I pay attention. On the screen I saw tanks rolling through dusty streets, and fallen buildings, and forests of unfamiliar trees into which East Pakistani refugees had fled, seeking safety over the Indian border. I saw boats with fan-shaped sails floating on wide coffee-colored rivers, a barricaded university, newspaper offices burnt to the ground. I turned to look at Mr. Pirzada; the images flashed in miniature across his eyes. As he watched he had an immovable expression on his face, composed but alert, as if someone were giving him directions to an unknown destination.

During the commercial my mother went to the kitchen to get more rice, and my father and Mr. Pirzada deplored the policies of a general named Yahyah Khan. They discussed intrigues I did not know, a catastrophe I could not comprehend. "See, children your age, what they do to survive," my father said as he served me another piece of fish. But I could no longer eat. I could only steal glances at Mr. Pirzada, sitting beside me in his olive green jacket, calmly creating a well in his rice to make room for a second helping of lentils. He was not my notion of a man burdened by such grave concerns.

I wondered if the reason he was always so smartly dressed was in preparation to endure with dignity whatever news assailed him, perhaps even to attend a funeral at a moments notice. I wondered, too, what would happen if suddenly his seven daughters were to appear on television, smiling and waving and blowing kisses to Mr. Pirzada from a balcony. I imagined how relieved he would be. But this never happened.

That night when I placed the plastic egg filled with cinnamon hearts in the box beside my bed, I did not feel the ceremonious satisfaction I normally did. I tried not to think about Mr. Pirzada, in his lime-scented overcoat, connected to the unruly, sweltering world we had viewed a few hours ago in our bright, carpeted living room. And yet for several moments that was all I could think about. My stomach tightened as I worried whether his wife and seven daughters were now members of the drifting, clamoring crowd that had flashed at intervals on the screen. In an effort to banish the image I looked around my room, at the yellow canopied bed with matching flounced curtains, at framed class pictures mounted on white and violet papered walls, at the penciled inscriptions by the closet door where my father recorded my height on each of my birthdays. But the more I tried to distract myself, the more I began to convince myself that Mr. Pirzada's family was in all

likelihood dead. Eventually I took a square of white chocolate out of the box, and unwrapped it, and then I did something I had never done before. I put the chocolate in my mouth, letting it soften until the last possible moment, and then as I chewed it slowly, I prayed that Mr. Pirzada's family was safe and sound. I had never prayed for anything before, had never been taught or told to, but I decided, given the circumstances, that it was something I should do. That night when I went to the bathroom I only pretended to brush my teeth, for I feared that I would somehow rinse the prayer out as well. I wet the brush and rearranged the tube of paste to prevent my parents from asking any questions, and fell asleep with sugar on my tongue.

No one at school talked about the war followed so faithfully in my living room. We continued to study the American Revolution, and learned about the injustices of taxation without representation, and memorized passages from the Declaration of Independence. During recess the boys would divide in two groups, chasing each other wildly around the swings and seesaws, Redcoats against the colonies. In the classroom our teacher, Mrs. Kenyon, pointed frequently to a map that emerged like a movie screen from the top of the chalkboard, charting the route of the *Mayflower* or showing us the location of the Liberty Bell. Each week two members of the class gave a report on a particular aspect of the Revolution, and so one day I was sent to the school library with my friend Dora to learn about the surrender at Yorktown. Mrs. Kenyon handed us a slip of paper with the names of three books to look up in the card catalogue. We found them right away, and sat down at a low round table to read and take notes. But I could not concentrate. I returned to the blond-wood shelves, to a section I had noticed labeled "Asia." I saw books about China, India, Indonesia, Korea.

Eventually I found a book titled *Pakistan*: *A Land and Its People*. I sat on a footstool and opened the book. The laminated jacket crackled in my grip. I began turning the pages, filled with photos of rivers and rice fields and men in military uniforms. There was a chapter about Dacca, and I began to read about its rainfall, and its jute production. I was studying a population chart when Dora appeared in the aisle.

"What are you doing back here? Mrs. Kenyon's in the library. She came to check up on us."

I slammed the book shut, too loudly. Mrs. Kenyon emerged, the aroma of her perfume filling up the tiny aisle, and lifted the book by the tip of its spine as if it were a hair clinging to my sweater. She glanced at the cover, then at me.

"Is this book a part of your report, Lilia?"

"No, Mrs. Kenyon."

"Then I see no reason to consult it," she said, replacing it in the slim gap on the shelf. "Do you?"

* * *

As weeks passed it grew more and more rare to see any footage from Dacca on the news. The report came after the first set of commercials, sometimes the second. The press had been censored, removed, restricted, rerouted. Some days, many days, only a death toll was announced, prefaced by a reiteration of the general situation. More poets were executed, more villages set ablaze. In spite of it all, night after night, my parents and Mr. Pirzada enjoyed long, leisurely meals. After the television was shut off, and the dishes washed and dried, they joked, and told stories, and dipped biscuits in their tea. When they tired of discussing political matters they discussed, instead, the progress of Mr. Pirzada's book about the deciduous trees of New England, and my father's nomination for tenure, and the peculiar eating habits of my mother's American coworkers at the bank. Eventually I was sent upstairs to do my homework, but through the carpet I heard them as they drank more tea, and listened to cassettes of Kishore Kumar, and played Scrabble on the coffee table, laughing and arguing long into the night about the spellings of English words. I wanted to join them, wanted, above all, to console Mr. Pirzada somehow. But apart from eating a piece of candy for the sake of his family and praying for their safety, there was nothing I could do. They played Scrabble until the eleven o'clock news, and then, sometime around midnight, Mr. Pirzada walked back to his dormitory. For this reason I never saw him leave, but each night as I drifted off to sleep I would hear them, anticipating the birth of a nation on the other side of the world.

One day in October Mr. Pirzada asked upon arrival, "What are these large orange vegetables on people's doorsteps? A type of squash?"

"Pumpkins," my mother replied. "Lilia, remind me to pick one up at the supermarket."

"And the purpose? It indicates what?"

"You make a jack-o'-lantern," I said, grinning ferociously. "Like this. To scare people away."

"I see," Mr. Pirzada said, grinning back. "Very useful."

The next day my mother bought a ten-pound pumpkin, fat and round, and placed it on the dining table. Before supper, while my father and Mr. Pirzada were watching the local news, she told me to decorate it with markers, but I wanted to carve it properly like others I had noticed in the neighborhood.

"Yes, let's carve it," Mr. Pirzada agreed, and rose from the sofa. "Hang the news tonight." Asking no questions, he walked into the kitchen, opened a drawer, and returned, bearing a long serrated knife. He glanced at me for approval. "Shall I?"

I nodded. For the first time we all gathered around the dining table, my mother, my father, Mr. Pirzada, and I. While the television aired unattended we covered the tabletop with newspapers. Mr. Pirzada draped his jacket over the chair behind him, removed a pair of opal cuff links, and rolled up the starched sleeves of his shirt.

"First go around the top, like this," I instructed, demonstrating with my index finger.

He made an initial incision and drew the knife around. When he had come full circle he lifted the cap by the stem; it loosened effortlessly, and Mr. Pirzada leaned over the pumpkin for a moment to inspect and inhale its contents. My mother gave him a long metal spoon with which he gutted the interior until the last bits of string and seeds were gone. My father, meanwhile, separated the seeds from the pulp and set them out to dry on a cookie sheet, so that we could roast them later on. I drew two triangles against the ridged surface for the eyes, which Mr. Pirzada dutifully carved, and crescents for eyebrows, and another triangle for the nose. The mouth was all that remained, and the teeth posed a challenge. I hesitated.

"Smile or frown?" I asked.

"You choose," Mr. Pirzada said.

As a compromise I drew a kind of grimace, straight across, neither mournful nor friendly. Mr. Pirzada began carving, without the least bit of intimidation, as if he had been carving jack-o'-lanterns his whole life. He had nearly finished when the national news began. The reporter mentioned Dacca, and we all turned to listen: An Indian official announced that unless the world helped to relieve the burden of East Pakistani refugees, India would have to go to war against Pakistan. The reporter's face dripped with sweat as he relayed the information. He did not wear a tie or a jacket, dressed instead as if he himself were about to take part in the battle. He shielded his scorched face as he hollered things to the cameraman. The knife slipped from Mr. Pirzada's hand and made a gash dipping toward the base of the pumpkin.

"Please forgive me." He raised a hand to one side of his face, as if someone had slapped him there. "I am-it is terrible. I will buy another. We will try again."

"Not at all, not at all," my father said. He took the knife from Mr. Pirzada, and carved around the gash, evening it out, dispensing altogether with the teeth I had drawn. What resulted was a disproportionately large hole the size of a lemon, so that our jack-o'-lantern wore an expression of placid astonishment, the eyebrows no longer fierce, floating in frozen surprise above a vacant, geometric gaze.

For Halloween I was a witch. Dora, my trick-or-treating partner, was a witch too. We wore black capes fashioned from dyed pillowcases and conical hats with wide cardboard brims. We shaded our faces green with a broken eye shadow that belonged to Dora's mother, and my mother gave us two burlap sacks that had once contained basmati rice, for collecting candy. That year our parents decided that we were old enough to roam the neighborhood unattended. Our plan was to walk from my house to Dora's, from where I was to call to say I had arrived safely, and then Dora's mother would drive me home. My father equipped us with flashlights, and I had to wear my watch and synchronize it with his. We were to return no later than nine o'clock.

When Mr. Pirzada arrived that evening he presented me with a box of chocolate-covered mints.

"In here," I told him, and opened up the burlap sack. "Trick or treat!"

"I understand that you don't really need my contribution this evening," he said, depositing the box. He gazed at my green face, and the hat secured

by a string under my chin. Gingerly he lifted the hem of the cape, under which I was wearing a sweater and a zipped fleece jacket. "Will you be warm enough?"

I nodded, causing the hat to tip to one side.

He set it right. "Perhaps it is best to stand still."

The bottom of our staircase was lined with baskets of miniature candy, and when Mr. Pirzada removed his shoes he did not place them there as he normally did, but inside the closet instead. He began to unbutton his coat, and I waited to take it from him, but Dora called me from the bathroom to say that she needed my help drawing a mole on her chin. When we were finally ready my mother took a picture of us in front of the fireplace, and then I opened the front door to leave. Mr. Pirzada and my father, who had not gone into the living room yet, hovered in the foyer. Outside it was already dark. The air smelled of wet leaves, and our carved jack-o'-lantern flickered impressively against the shrubbery by the door. In the distance came the sounds of scampering feet, and the howls of the older boys who wore no costume at all other than a rubber mask, and the rustling apparel of the youngest children, some so young that they were carried from door to door in the arms of their parents.

"Don't go into any of the houses you don't know," my father warned.

Mr. Pirzada knit his brows together. "Is there any danger?"

"No, no," my mother assured him. "All the children will be out. It's a tradition."

"Perhaps I should accompany them?" Mr. Pirzada suggested. He looked suddenly tired and small, standing there in his splayed, stockinged feet, and his eyes contained a panic I had never seen before. In spite of the cold I began to sweat inside my pillowcase.

"Really, Mr. Pirzada," my mother said, "Lilia will be perfectly safe with her friend."

"But if it rains? If they lose their way?"

"Don't worry," I said. It was the first time I had uttered those words to Mr. Pirzada, two simple words I had tried but failed to tell him for weeks, had said only in my prayers. It shamed me now that I had said them for my own sake.

He placed one of his stocky fingers on my cheek, then pressed it to the back of his own hand, leaving a faint green smear. "If the lady insists," he conceded, and offered a small bow.

We left, stumbling slightly in our black pointy thrift-store shoes, and when we turned at the end of the driveway to wave good-bye, Mr. Pirzada was standing in the frame of the doorway, a short figure between my parents, waving back.

"Why did that man want to come with us?" Dora asked.

"His daughters are missing." As soon as I said it, I wished I had not. I felt that my saying it made it true, that Mr. Pirzada's daughters really were missing, and that he would never see them again.

"You mean they were kidnapped?" Dora continued. "From a park or something?"

"I didn't mean they were missing. I meant, he misses them. They live in a different country, and he hasn't seen them in a while, that's all."

We went from house to house, walking along pathways and pressing doorbells. Some people had switched off all their lights for effect, or strung rubber bats in their windows. At the McIntyres' a coffin was placed in front of the door, and Mr. McIntyre rose from it in silence, his face covered with chalk, and deposited a fistful of candy corns into our sacks. Several people told me that they had never seen an Indian witch before. Others performed the transaction without comment. As we paved our way with the parallel beams of our flashlights we saw eggs cracked in the middle of the road, and cars covered with shaving cream, and toilet paper garlanding the branches of trees. By the time we reached Dora's house our hands were chapped from carrying our bulging burlap bags, and our feet were sore and swollen. Her mother gave us bandages for our blisters and served us warm cider and caramel popcorn. She reminded me to call my parents to tell them I had arrived safely, and when I did I could hear the television in the background. My mother did not seem particularly relieved to hear from me. When I replaced the phone on the receiver it occurred to me that the television wasn't on at Dora's house at all. Her father was lying on the couch,

reading a magazine, with a glass of wine on the coffee table, and there was saxophone music playing on the stereo.

After Dora and 1 had sorted through our plunder, and counted and sampled and traded until we were satisfied, her mother drove me back to my house. I thanked her for the ride, and she waited in the driveway until I made it to the door. In the glare of her headlights I saw that our pumpkin had been shattered, its thick shell strewn in chunks across the grass. I felt the sting of tears in my eyes, and a sudden pain in my throat, as if it had been stuffed with the sharp tiny pebbles that crunched with each step under my aching feet. I opened the door, expecting the three of them to be standing in the foyer, waiting to receive me, and to grieve for our ruined pumpkin, but there was no one. In the living room Mr. Pirzada, my father, and mother were sitting side by side on the sofa. The television was turned off, and Mr. Pirzada had his head in his hands.

What they heard that evening, and for many evenings after that, was that India and Pakistan were drawing closer and closer to war. Troops from both sides lined the border, and Dacca was insisting on nothing short of independence. The war was to be waged on East Pakistani soil. The United States was siding with West Pakistan, the Soviet Union with India and what was soon to be Bangladesh. War was declared officially on December 4, and twelve days later, the Pakistani army, weakened by having to fight three thousand miles from their source of supplies, surrendered in Dacca. All of these facts I know only now, for they are available to me in any history book, in any library. But then it remained, for the most part, a remote mystery with haphazard clues. What I remember during those twelve days of the war was that my father no longer asked me to watch the news with them, and that Mr. Pirzada stopped bringing me candy, and that my mother refused to serve anything other than boiled eggs with rice for dinner. I remember some nights helping my mother spread a sheet and blankets on the couch so that Mr. Pirzada could sleep there, and high-pitched voices hollering in the middle of the night when my parents called our relatives in Calcutta to learn more details about the situation. Most of all I remember the three of them operating during that time as if they were a single person, sharing a single meal, a single body, a single silence, and a single fear.

In January, Mr. Pirzada flew back to his three-story home in Dacca, to discover what was left of it. We did not see much of him in those final weeks of the year; he was busy finishing his manuscript, and we went to Philadelphia to spend Christmas with friends of my parents. Just as I have no memory of his first visit, I have no memory of his last. My father drove him to the airport one afternoon while I was at school. For a long time we did not hear from him. Our evenings went on as usual, with dinners in front of the news. The only difference was that Mr. Pirzada and his extra watch were not there to accompany us. According to

reports Dacca was repairing itself slowly, with a newly formed parliamentary government. The new leader, Sheikh Mujib Rahman, recently released from prison, asked countries for building materials to replace more than one million houses that had been destroyed in the war. Countless refugees returned from India, greeted, we learned, by unemployment and the threat of famine. Every now and then I studied the map above my father's desk and pictured Mr. Pirzada on that small patch of yellow, perspiring heavily, I imagined, in one of his suits, searching for his family. Of course, the map was outdated by then.

Finally, several months later, we received a card from Mr. Pirzada commemorating the Muslim New Year, along with a short letter. He was reunited, he wrote, with his wife and children. All were well, having survived the events of the past year at an estate belonging to his wife's grandparents in the mountains of Shillong. His seven daughters were a bit taller, he wrote, but otherwise they were the same, and he still could not keep their names in order. At the end of the letter he thanked us for our hospitality, adding that although he now understood the meaning of the words "thank you" they still were not adequate to express his gratitude. To celebrate the good news my mother prepared a special dinner that evening, and when we sat down to eat at the coffee table we toasted our water glasses, but I did not feel like celebrating. Though I had not seen him for months, it was only then that I felt Mr. Pirzada's absence. It was only then, raising my water glass in his name, that I knew what it meant to miss someone who was so many miles and hours away, just as he had missed his wife and daughters for so many months. He had no reason to return to us, and my parents predicted, correctly, that we would never see him again. Since January, each night before bed, I had continued to eat, for the sake of Mr. Pirzada's family, a piece of candy I had saved from Halloween. That night there was no need to. Eventually, I threw them away.

The Lamb of the Slaughter

Roald Dahl

The room was warm, the curtains were closed, the two table lamps were lit. On the cupboard behind her there were two glasses and some drinks. Mary Maloney was waiting for her husband to come home from work.

Now and again she glanced at the clock, but without anxiety: She merely wanted to satisfy herself that each minute that went by made it nearer the time when he would come home. As she bent over her sewing, she was curiously peaceful. This was her sixth month expecting a child. Her mouth and her eyes, with their new calm look, seemed larger and darker than before.

When the clock said ten minutes to five, she began to listen, and a few moments later, punctually as always, she heard the car tires on the stones outside, the car door closing, footsteps passing the window, the key turning in the lock. She stood up and went forward to kiss him as he entered.

"Hello, darling," she said.

"Hello," he answered.

She took his coat and hung it up. Then she made the drinks, a strong one for him and a weak one for herself; and soon she was back again in her chair with the sewing, and he was in the other chair, holding the tall glass, rolling it gently so that the ice knocked musically against the side of the glass.

For her, this was always a wonderful time of day. She knew he didn't want to speak much until the first drink was finished, and she was satisfied to sit quietly, enjoying his company after the long hours alone in the house. She loved the warmth that came out of him when they were alone together. She loved the shape of his mouth, and she especially liked the way he didn't complain about being tired.

"Tired, darling?"

"Yes," he sighed. "I'm thoroughly exhausted. And as he spoke, he did an unusual thing. He lifted his glass and drank it down in one swallow although there was still half of it left. He got up and went slowly to get himself another drink.

"I'll get it!" she cried, jumping up.

"Sit down," he said.

When he came back, she noticed that the new drink was a very strong one. She watched him as he began to drink.

"I think it's a shame," she said, "that when someone's been a policeman as long as you have, he still has to walk around all day long." He didn't answer. "Darling," she said," If you're too tired to eat out tonight, as we had planned, I can fix you something. There's plenty of meat and stuff in the freezer." Her eyes waited to an answer, a smile, a nod, but he made no sign.

"Anyway," she went on. "I'll get you some bread and cheese."

"I don't want it," he said.

She moved uneasily in her chair. "But you have to have supper. I can easily fix you something. I'd like to do it. We can have lamb. Anything you want. Everything's in the freezer."

"Forget it," he said.

"But, darling, you have to eat! I'll do it anyway, and then you can have it or not, as you like."

She stood up and put placed her sewing on the table by the lamp. "Sit down," he said. "Just for a minute, sit down." It wasn't until then that she began to get frightened.

"Go on," he said. "Sit down." She lowered herself into the chair, watching him all the time with large, puzzled eyes. He had finished his second drink and was staring into the glass.

"Listen," he said. "I've got something to tell you."

"What is it, darling? What's the matter?"

He became absolutely motionless, and he kept his head down.

"This is going to be a big shock to you, I'm afraid," he said. "But I've thought about it a good deal and I've decided that the only thing to do is to tell you immediately." And he told her. It didn't take long, four or five minutes at most, and she sat still through it all, watching him with puzzled horror.

"So there it is," he added. "And I know it's a tough time to be telling you this, but there simply wasn't any other way. Of course, I'll give you money and see that you're taken care of. But there really shouldn't be any problem. I hope not, in any case. It wouldn't be very good for my job."

Her first instinct was not to believe any of it. She thought that perhaps she'd imagined the whole thing. Perhaps, if she acted as though she had not heard him, she would find out that none of it had ever happened.

"I'll fix some supper," she whispered. When she walked across the room, she couldn't feel her feet touching the floor. She couldn't feel anything except a slight sickness. She did everything without thinking. She went downstairs to the freezer and took hold of the first object she found. She lifted it out, and looked at it. It was wrapped in paper, so she took off the paper and looked at again - a leg of lamb.

All right, then, they would have lamb for supper. She carried it upstairs, held the thin end with both her hands. She went into the living room, saw him standing by the window with his back to her, and stopped.

"I've already told you," he said. "Don't make supper for me. I'm going out."

At that point, Mary Maloney simply walked up behind him and without any pause, she swung the big frozen leg of lamb high in the air and brought it down as hard as she could on the back of his head. She might as well have hit him with a steel bar.

She stepped back, waiting, and the strange thing was that he remained standing there for at least four or five seconds. Then he crashed onto the carpet.

The violence of the crash, the noise, the small table overturning, helped to bring her out of the shock. She came out slowly, feeling cold and surprised, and she stood for a few minutes, looking at the body, still holding the piece of meat tightly with both hands.

All right, she told herself. So I've killed him.

It was extraordinary, now, how clear her mind became all of a sudden. She began thinking very fast. As the wife of a detective, she knew what the punishment would be. It made no difference to her. In fact, it would be a relief. On the other hand, what about the baby? What were the laws about murderers with unborn children? Did they kill them both -- mother and child? Did they wait until the baby was born? What did they do? Mary Maloney didn't know and she wasn't prepared to take a chance.

She carried the meat into the kitchen, put it into a pan, turned on the oven, and put the pan inside. Then she washed her hands, ran upstairs, sat down in front of the mirror, fixed her makeup, and tried to smile.

The smile was rather peculiar. She tried again. "Hello, Sam" she said brightly, aloud. The voice sounded peculiar, too. "I want some potatoes, Sam. Yes, and perhaps a can of bean.s." That was better. Both the smile and the voice sounded better now. She practiced them several times more. Then she ran downstairs, took her coat, and went out the back door, through the garden into the street.

It wasn't six o'clock yet and the lights were still on in the neighborhood grocery. "Hello, Sam," she said brightly, smiling at the man in the shop.

"Good evening, Mrs. Maloney. How are you?"

"I want some potatoes, please, Sam. Yes, and perhaps a can of beans, too. Patrick's decided he's tired and he doesn't want to eat out tonight," she told him. "We usually go out on Thursdays, you know, and now I don't have any vegetables in the house."

"Then how about some meat, Mrs. Maloney?" asked the grocer.

"No, I've got meat, thanks, I've got a nice leg of lamb, from the freezer."

"Do you want these potatoes, Mrs. Maloney?

"Oh, yes, they'll be fine. Two pounds, please."

"Anything else?" The grocer turned his head to one side, looking at her. "How about dessert? What are you going to give him for dessert? How about a nice piece of cake? I know he likes cake."

"Perfect," she said. "He loves it."

And when she had bought and paid for everything, she gave her brightest smile and said, "Thank you, Sam. Good night."

And now, she told herself as she hurried back home, she was returning to her husband and he was waiting for his supper. She had to cook it well and make it taste as good as possible, because the poor man was tired; and if she found anything unusual or terrible when she got home, then it would be a shock and she would have to react with grief and horror. Of course, she was not expecting to find anything unusual at home. She was just going home with the vegetables on Thursday evening to cook dinner for husband.

That's the way, she told herself. Do everything normally. Keep things absolutely natural and there'll be no need for acting at all. As she entered the kitchen by the back door, she was quietly singing to herself.

"Patrick!" she called. "How are you, darling?"

She put the package on the table and went into the living room; and when she saw him lying there on the floor, it really was a shock. All the old love for him came back to her, and she ran over to him, knelt down beside him, and began to cry hard. It was easy. No acting was necessary.

A few minutes later, she got up and went to the phone. She knew the number of the police station, and when the man at the other end answered, she cried to him. "Quick! Come quickly! Patrick's dead."

"Who's speaking?"

"Mrs. Maloney. Mrs. Patrick Maloney."

"Do you mean that Patrick's dead?"

"I think so, " she cried. "He's lying on the floor and I think he's dead."

"We'll be there immediately," the man said.

The car came very quickly, and when she opened the front door, two policemen walked in. She knew them both. She knew nearly all the men at the police station. She fell into Jack Noonan's arms, crying uncontrollably. He put her gently into a chair.

"Is he dead?" she cried.

"I'm afraid he is. What happened?"

In a few words she told her story about going to the grocer and coming back, when she found him on the floor. While she was crying and talking, Noonan found some dried blood on the dead man's head. He hurried to the phone.

Some other men began to arrive -- a doctor, two detectives, a police photographer, and a man who knew about fingerprints. The detectives kept asking her a lot of questions. They always treated her kindly. She told them how she'd put the meat into the overn --"it's there now"--and how she had gone to the grocer's for vegetables and how she came back to find him lying on the floor.

The two detectives were exceptionally nice to her. They searched the house. Sometimes Jack Noonan spoke to her gently. He told her that her husband had been killed by a blow to the back of the head. They were looking for the weapon. The murderer might have taken it with him, but he might have thrown it away or hidden it. - "It's the old story," he said. "Get the weapon, and you've got the murderer."

Later, one of the detectives sat down beside her. Did she know, he asked, of anything in the house that could have been used as a weapon? Would she look around to see if anything was missing.

The search went on. It began to get late -- it was nearly nine o'clock. The men searching the rooms were getting tired. "Jack," she said, "Would you like a drink? You must be extremely tired."

"Well," he answered. "It's not allowed by police rules, but since you're a friend."

They stood around with drinks in their hands. The detectives were uncomfortable with her and they tried to say cheering things to her. Jack Noonan walked into the kitchen, came out quickly, and said, "Look, Mrs. Maloney. Did you know that your oven is still on, and the meat is still inside?"

"Oh," she said. "So it is! I'd better turn it off." She returned with tearful eyes. "Would you do me a favor? Here you all are, all good friends of Patrick's, and you're helping to catch the man who killed him. You must be very hungry by now because it's long past your supper time, and I know that Patrick would never forgive me if I let you stay in the house without offering you anything to eat. Why don't you eat up the lamb in the oven?"

"I wouldn't dream of it," Noonan said.

"Please," she begged. "Personally, I couldn't eat a thing, but it'd be a favor to me if you ate it up. Then you can go on with your work."

The detectives hesitated, but they were hungry, and in the end, they went into the kitchen and helped themselves to supper. The woman stayed where she was and listened to them through the open door. She could hear them speaking among themselves, and their voices were thick because their mouths were full of meat.

"Have some more, Charlie."

"No, we'd better not finish it."

"She wants us to finish it. She said we ought to eat it up."

"That's a big bar the murderer must have used to hit poor Patrick. The doctor says the back of his head was broken to pieces.

"That's why the weapon should be easy to find."

"Exactly what I say."

"Whoever did it, he can't carry a weapon that big around with him."

"Personally, I think the weapon is somewhere near the house."

"It's probably right under our noses. What do you think, Jack?"

And in the other room, Mary Maloney began to laugh.

The Last Ride Together

Robert Browning

I SAID-Then, dearest, since 'tis so,
Since now at length my fate I know,
Since nothing all my love avails,
Since all, my life seem'd meant for, fails,
    Since this was written and needs must be-
My whole heart rises up to bless
Your name in pride and thankfulness!
Take back the hope you gave,-I claim
Only a memory of the same,
-And this beside, if you will not blame;
    Your leave for one more last ride with me.

My mistress bent that brow of hers,
Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs
When pity would be softening through,
Fix'd me a breathing-while or two
    With life or death in the balance: right!
The blood replenish'd me again;
My last thought was at least not vain:
I and my mistress, side by side
Shall be together, breathe and ride,
So, one day more am I deified.
    Who knows but the world may end to-night?

Hush! if you saw some western cloud
All billowy-bosom'd, over-bow'd
By many benedictions-sun's
And moon's and evening-star's at once-
    And so, you, looking and loving best,
Conscious grew, your passion drew

Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too,
Down on you, near and yet more near,
Till flesh must fade for heaven was here!-
Thus leant she and linger'd-joy and fear!
Thus lay she a moment on my breast.

Then we began to ride. My soul
Smooth'd itself out, a long-cramp'd scroll
Freshening and fluttering in the wind.
Past hopes already lay behind.
What need to strive with a life awry?
Had I said that, had I done this,
So might I gain, so might I miss.
Might she have loved me? just as well
She might have hated, who can tell!
Where had I been now if the worst befell?
And here we are riding, she and I.

Fail I alone, in words and deeds?
Why, all men strive and who succeeds?
We rode; it seem'd my spirit flew,
Saw other regions, cities new,
As the world rush'd by on either side.
I thought,-All labour, yet no less
Bear up beneath their unsuccess.
Look at the end of work, contrast
The petty done, the undone vast,
This present of theirs with the hopeful past!
I hoped she would love me; here we ride.

What hand and brain went ever pair'd?
What heart alike conceived and dared?
What act proved all its thought had been?
What will but felt the fleshly screen?
We ride and I see her bosom heave.

There 's many a crown for who can reach.
Ten lines, a statesman's life in each!
The flag stuck on a heap of bones,
A soldier's doing! what atones?
They scratch his name on the Abbey-stones.
My riding is better, by their leave.

What does it all mean, poet? Well,
Your brains beat into rhythm, you tell
What we felt only; you express'd
You hold things beautiful the best,
And pace them in rhyme so, side by side.
'Tis something, nay 'tis much: but then,
Have you yourself what 's best for men?
Are you-poor, sick, old ere your time-
Nearer one whit your own sublime
Than we who never have turn'd a rhyme?
Sing, riding 's a joy! For me, I ride.

And you, great sculptor-so, you gave
A score of years to Art, her slave,
And that 's your Venus, whence we turn
To yonder girl that fords the burn!
You acquiesce, and shall I repine?
What, man of music, you grown gray
With notes and nothing else to say,
Is this your sole praise from a friend,
'Greatly his opera's strains intend,
But in music we know how fashions end!'
I gave my youth: but we ride, in fine.

Who knows what 's fit for us? Had fate
Proposed bliss here should sublimate
My being-had I sign'd the bond-
Still one must lead some life beyond,

Have a bliss to die with, dim-descried.
This foot once planted on the goal,
This glory-garland round my soul,
Could I descry such? Try and test!
I sink back shuddering from the quest.
Earth being so good, would heaven seem best?
Now, heaven and she are beyond this ride.

And yet-she has not spoke so long!
What if heaven be that, fair and strong
At life's best, with our eyes upturn'd
Whither life's flower is first discern'd,
We, fix'd so, ever should so abide?
What if we still ride on, we two
With life for ever old yet new,
Changed not in kind but in degree,
The instant made eternity,-
And heaven just prove that I and she
Ride, ride together, for ever ride?

I Cannot live with thee

Emily Dickenson

I cannot live with You -
It would be Life -
And Life is over there -
Behind the Shelf
The Sexton keeps the Key to -
Putting up
Our Life - His Porcelain -
Like a Cup -
Discarded of the Housewife -
Quaint - or Broke -
A newer Sevres pleases -
Old Ones crack -
I could not die - with You -
For One must wait
To shut the Other's Gaze down -
You - could not -
And I - could I stand by
And see You - freeze -
Without my Right of Frost -
Death's privilege?
Nor could I rise - with You -
Because Your Face
Would put out Jesus' -
That New Grace
Glow plain - and foreign

On my homesick Eye -
Except that You than He
Shone closer by -
They'd judge Us - How -
For You - served Heaven - You know,
Or sought to -
I could not -
Because You saturated Sight -
And I had no more Eyes
For sordid excellence
As Paradise
And were You lost, I would be -
Though My Name
Rang loudest
On the Heavenly fame -
And were You - saved -
And I - condemned to be
Where You were not -
That self - were Hell to Me -
So We must meet apart -
You there - I - here -
With just the Door ajar
That Oceans are - and Prayer -
And that White Sustenance -
Despair -

This is a Photograph of Me

Margaret Atwood

It was taken some time ago.
At first it seems to be
a smeared
print: blurred lines and grey flecks
blended with the paper;
then, as you scan
it, you see in the left-hand corner
a thing that is like a branch: part of a tree
(balsam or spruce) emerging
and, to the right, halfway up
what ought to be a gentle
slope, a small frame house.
In the background there is a lake,
and beyond that, some low hills.
(The photograph was taken
the day after I drowned.
I am in the lake, in the center
of the picture, just under the surface.
It is difficult to say where
precisely, or to say
how large or small I am:
the effect of water
on light is a distortion
but if you look long enough,
eventually
you will be able to see me.)

The Glass Menagerie

Tennessee Williams

SCENE 5

Legend on the screen : 'Annunciation.'

Music is heard as the light slowly comes on.

[It is early dusk on a spring evening. Supper has jot been finished in the Wingfield apartment. AMANDA and LAURA in light-coloured dresses are removing dishes from the table, in the upstage area, which is shadowy, their movements formalized almost as a dance or ritual their moving forms as pale and silent as moths.]

TOM, in white shirt and trousers, rises from do table and crosses toward the fire-escape.]

AMANDA [As he passes her] : Son, Will you do me a favour?

TOM : What?

AMANDA : Comb your hair! You look so pretty when your hair is combed! [Tom slouches on sofa with evening paper. Enormous caption 'Franco Triumphs'.] There is only one respect in which I would like you to emulate your father.

TOM : What respect is that?

AMANDA : The care he always took of his appearance. He never allowed himself to look untidy. [He throws down the paper and crosses to fire-escape] Where are you going?

TOM : I'm going out to smoke.

AMANDA : You smoke too much. A pack a day at fifteen cents a pack. How much would that amount to in a month? Thirty times fifteen is how much, Tom? Figure it out and you will be astounded at what you could save. Enough to give you a night-school course in accounting at Washington U ! Just think what a wonderful thing that would be for you, Son !

[TOM is unmoved by the thought.]

AMANDA [sharply]: I know !That's the tragedy of it. [Alone, she turns to look at her husband's picture.]

[DANCE MUSIC: 'ALL THE WORLD IS WAITING FOR THE SUNRISE !']

TOM [to the audience]: Across the alley from us was the Paradise Dance Hall. On evenings in spring the windows and doors were open and the music came outdoors. Sometimes the lights were turned out except for a large glass sphere that hung from the ceiling. It would turn slowly about and filter the dusk with delicate rainbow colours. Then the orchestra played a waltz or a tango, something that had a slow and sensuous rhythm. Couples would come outside, to the relative privacy of the alley. You could see them kissing behind ash-pits and telegraph poles.

This was the compensation for lives that passed like mine, without any change or adventure.

Adventure and change were imminent in this year. They were waiting around the corner for all these kids.

Suspended in the mist over Berchtesgaden, caught in the folds of Chamberlain's umbrella. In Spain there was Guernica!

But here there was only hot swing music and liquor, dance halls, ban, and movies, and sex that hung in the gloom like a chandelier and flooded the world with brief, deceptive rainbows. ...

All the world was waiting for bombardments !

[AMANDA turns front de picture and comes outside.]

AMANDA [sighing]: A fire-escape landing's a poor excuse for a porch. [She spreads a newspaper on a step and sits down grace and demurely as if she were settling into a swing on a Mississippi veranda.] What are you looking at?

AMANDA : Is there a moon this evening?

TOM : It's rising over Garfinkel's Delicatessen.

AMANDA: So it is ! A little silver slipper of a moon. Have you made a wish on it yet?

TOM : Um-hum.

AMANDA : What did you wish for?

TOM : That's a secret.

AMANDA : A secret, huh? Well, I won't tell mine either. I will be just as mysterious as you.

TOM : I bet I can guess what yours is.

AMANDA : Is my head so transparent?

TOM : You're not a sphinx.

AMANDA : No, I don't have secrets. I'll tell you what I wished for on the moon. Success and happiness for my precious children! I wish for that whenever there's a moon, and when there isn't a moon, I wish for it, too.

TOM : I thought perhaps you wished for a gentleman caller.

AMANDA : Why do you say that?

TOM : Don't you remember asking me to fetch one?

AMANDA : I remember suggesting that it would be nice for your sister if you brought home some nice young from the warehouse. I think that I've made that suggestion more than once.

TOM : Yes, you have made it repeatedly.

AMANDA : Well?

TOM : We are going to have One.

AMANDA: What?

TOM : A gentleman caller !

[THE ANNUNCIATION IS CELEBRATED WITH MUSIC. AMANDA rises

IMAGE ON SCREEN: CALLER WITH BOUQUET]

AMANDA : You mean you have asked some nice young man to come over?

TOM : Yep. I've asked him to dinner.

AMANDA : You really did?

TOM : I did !

AMANDA : You did, and did he - accept?

TOM : He did !

AMANDA : Well, Well ? Well, well ! That's -lovely !

TOM : I thought that you would be pleased.

AMANDA : It's definite, then?

TOM : Very definite.

AMANDA : Soon?

TOM : Very soon.

AMANDA : For heaven's sake, stop putting on and tell me some things, will you?

TOM : What things do you want me to tell you?

AMANDA : Naturally I would like to know when he's coming!

TOM : He's coming tomorrow.

AMANDA : Tomorrow?

TOM : Yep. Tomorrow.

AMANDA : But, Tom !

TOM : Yes, Mother?

AMANDA : Tomorrow gives me no time I

AMANDA : Preparations! Why didn't you phone me at once, as soon as you asked him, the minute that he accepted? Then, don't you see, I could have been getting ready!

TOM : You don't have to make any fuss.

AMANDA : Oh, Tom, Tom, Tom, of course I have to make a fuss! I want things nice, not sloppy! Not thrown together. I'll certainly have to do some fast thinking, won't I?

TOM : I don't see why you have to think at all.

AMANDA : You just don't know. We can't have a gentleman caller in a pigsty ! All my wedding silver has to be polished, the monogrammed table linen ought to be laundered ! The windows have to be washed and fresh curtains put up. And how about clothes? We have to wear something, don't we?

TOM : Mother, this boy is no one to make a fuss over !

AMANDA : Do you realize he's the first young man we've introduced to your sister?It's terrible, dreadful, disgraceful that poor little sister has never received a single gentleman caller ! Tom, come inside! [She opens the screen door.]

TOM : What for?

AMANDA : I want to ask you some things.

AMANDA : You certainly won't do anything of the kind. Nothing offends people worse than broken engagements. It simply means I'll have to work like a Turk ! We won't be brilliant, but we will pass inspection. Come on inside. [Tom follows, groaning.] Sit down.

TOM Any particular place you would like me to sit?

AMANDA : Thank heavens I've got that new sofa ! I'm also making payments on a floor lamp I'll have sent out ! And put the chintz covers on, they'll brighten things up ! Of course I'd hoped to have these walls re-papered. ... What is the young man's name?

TOM : His name is O'Connor.

AMANDA : That, of course, means fish- tomorrow is Friday ! I'll have that salmon loaf - with Durkee's dressing ! What does he do? He works at the warehouse?

TOM : Of course ! How else would -

AMANDA : Tom, he - doesn't drink?

TOM : Why do you ask me that?

AMANDA : Your father did!

AMANDA : He does drink, then?

TOM : Not that I know of !

AMANDA : Make sure, be certain ! The last thing I want for my daughter's a boy who drinks !

TOM : Aren't you being a little bit premature? Mr O'Connor has not yet appeared on the scene !

AMANDA : But will tomorrow. To meet your sister, and what do I know about his character? Nothing ! Old maids are better off than wives of drunkards !

TOM : Oh, my God !

AMANDA : Be still !

TOM [leaning forward to whisper]: Lots of fellows meet girls whom they don't marry !

AMANDA : Oh, talk sensibly, Tom - and don't be sarcastic !

[She has gotten a hairbrush.]

TOM : What are you doing?

AMANDA : I'm brushing that cow-lick down ! What is this young man's position at the warehouse?

TOM [submitting grimly to the brush and the interrogation]: This young man's position is that of a shipping clerk, Mother.

AMANDA : Sounds to me like a fairly responsible job, the sort of a job you would be in if you just had more get-up.

What is his salary? Have you any idea?

TOM : I would judge it to be approximately eighty-five dollars a month.

AMANDA : Well - not princely, but

TOM : Twenty more than I make.

AMANDA : Yes, how well I know! But for a family man, eighty-five dollars a month is not much more than you can just get by on. . . .

TOM : Yes. but Mr O'Connor is not a family man.

AMANDA : He might be, mightn't he? Some time in the future ?

TOM : I see. Plans and provisions.

AMANDA : You are the only young man that I know of who ignores the fact that the future becomes the present, the present the past, and the past turns into everlasting regret if you don't plan for it!

TOM : I will think that over and see what I can make of it.

AMANDA : Don't be supercilious with your mother ! Tell me some more about this - what do you call him?

TOM : James D. O'Connor. The D. is for Delaney.

AMANDA : Irish on both sides! Gracious! And doesn't drink?

TOM : Shall I call him up and ask him right this minute?

AMANDA : The only way to find out about those things is to make discreet inquiries at the proper moment. When I was a girl in Blue Mountain and it was suspected that a young man drank, the girl whose attentions he had been receiving, if any girl was, would sometimes speak to the minister of his church, or rather her father would if her father was living, and sort of feel him out on the young man's character. That is the way such things are discreetly handled to keep a young woman from making a tragic mistake !

TOM : Then how did you happen to make a tragic mistake !

AMANDA : That innocent look of your father's had everyone fooled ! He smiled - the world was enchanted !

No girl can do worse than put herself at the mercy of a handsome appearance !

I hope that Mr O'Connor is not too good-looking.

TOM : No, he's not too good-looking. He's covered with freckles and hasn't too much of a now.

AMANDA : He's not right-down homely, though?

TOM : Not right-down homely. Just medium homely, I'd say.

AMANDA : Character's what to look for in a man.

TOM : That's what I've always said, Mother.

AMANDA : You've never said anything of the kind and I suspect you would never give it a thought.

TOM : Don't be so suspicious of me.

AMANDA : At least I hope he's the type that's up and coming.

TOM : I think he really goes in for self-improvement.

AMANDA : What reason have you to think so?

AMANDA [beaming]: Splendid ! What does he do, I mean study ?

TOM : Radio engineering and public speaking !

AMANDA : Then he has visions of being advanced in the world! Any young man who studies public speaking is aiming to have an executive job some day !

And radio engineering- A thing for the future !

Both of these facts are very illuminating. Those are the sort of things that a mother should know concerning any young man who comes to call on her daughter. Seriously or - not.

TOM : One little warning. He doesn't know about Laura. I didn't let on that we had dark ulterior motives. I just said, why don't you come and have dinner with us? He said okay and that was the whole conversation.

AMANDA : I bet it was! You're eloquent as an oyster.

However, he'll know about Laura when he gets here. When he sees how lovely and sweet and pretty she is, he'll thank his lucky stars be was asked to dinner.

TOM : Mother, you mustn't expect too much of Laura.

AMANDA : What do you mean?

TOM : Laura seems all those things to you and me because she's ours and we love her. We don't even notice she's crippled any more.

AMANDA : Don't say crippled ! You know that I never allow that word to be used !

TOM : But face facts, Mother. She is and - that's not all

AMANDA : What do you mean "not all"?

TOM : Laura is very different from other girls

AMANDA : I think the difference is all to her advantage.

TOM : Not quite all - in the eyes of others - strangers - she's terribly shy and lives in a world of her own and those things make her seem a little peculiar to people outside the house.

AMANDA : Don't say peculiar.

TOM : Face the facts. She is.

[THE DANCE-HALL MUSIC CHANGES TO A TANGO THAT HAS A MINOR AND SOMEWHAT OMINOUS TONE]

AMANDA : In what way is she peculiar - may I ask?

TOM [gently] : She lives in a world of her own - a world of little glass ornaments, Mother. . . . [Gets Up. AMANDA remains holding brush, looking at him, troubled.] She plays old phonograph records and - that's about all - [He glances at himself in the mirror and crosses to door.]

AMANDA [sharply] : Where are you going?

TOM : I'm going to the movies. [Out screen door.]

AMANDA : Not to the movies, every night to the movies! [Follows quickly to screen door.] I don't believe you always go to the movies! [He is gone. AMANDA looks worriedly after him for a moment. Then vitality and optimism return and she turns from the door. Crossing to portieres.] Laura ! Laura ![LAURA answers from kitchenette.]

LAURA : Yes, Mother.

AMANDA : Let those dishes go and come in front ! [LAURA appears with dish towel. Gaily.] Laura, come here and make a wish on the moon !

[SCREEN IMAGE: MOON]

LAURA [entering]: Moon - moon?

AMANDA : A little silver slipper of a moon. Look over your left shoulder, Laura, and make a wish !

[LAURA looks faintly puzzled as if called out of sleep. AMANDA seizes her shoulders and turns her at an angle by the door.] Now ! Now, darling, wish !

LAURA : What shall I wish for, Mother?

AMANDA [her voice trembling and her eyes suddenly filing with tears]: Happiness ! Good fortune !

[The violin rises and the stage dims out.]

CURTAIN

[IMAGE: HIGH SCHOOL HERO]

TOM : And so the following evening I brought Jim home to dinner. I had known Jim slightly in high school. In high school Jim was a hero. He had tremendous Irish good nature and vitality with the scrubbed and polished look of white chinaware. He seemed to move in a continual spotlight. He was a star in basket-ball, captain of the debating club, president of the senior class and the glee club and he sang the male lead in the annual light operas. He was always running or bounding, never just walking. He seemed always at the point of defeating the law of gravity. He was shooting with such velocity through his adolescence that you would logically expect him to arrive at nothing short of the White House by the time he was thirty. But Jim apparently ran into more interference after his graduation from Soldan. His speed had definitely slowed. Six years after he left high school he was holding a job that wasn't much better than mine.

[IMAGE: CLERK]

He was the only one at the warehouse with whom I was on friendly terms. I was valuable to him as someone who could remember his former glory, who had seen him win basketball games and the silver cup in debating. He knew of my secret practice of retiring to a cabinet of the washroom to work on poems when business was slack in the warehouse. He called me Shakespeare. And while the other boys in the warehouse regarded me with suspicious hostility, Jim took a humorous attitude toward me. Gradually his attitude affected the others, their hostility wore off and they also began to smile at me as people smile at an oddly fashioned dog who trots across their path at some distance.

I knew that Jim and Laura had known each other at Soldan, and I had heard Laura speak admiringly of his voice. I didn't know if Jim remembered her or not. In high school Laura had been as unobtrusive as Jim had been astonishing. If he did remember Laura, it was not as my sister, for when I asked him to dinner, he grinned and said, 'You know, Shakespeare, I never thought of you as having folks !'

He was about to discover that I did.

SCENE 6

[LIGHT UPSTAGE.

LEGEND ON SCREEN: 'THE ACCENT OF A COMING FOOT'.

Friday evening. It is about five o'clock of a late spring evening which comes's cattering poems in the sky.'

A delicate lemony light is in the Wingfield apartment.

AMANDA has worked like a Turk in preparation for the gentleman caller. The results are astonishing. The new floor lamp with its rose-silk shade is in place, a coloured paper lantern conceals the broken light fixture in the ceiling, new billowing white curtains are at the windows, chintz covers are on chairs and sofa, a pair of new sofa pillows make their initial appearance.

Open boxes and tissue paper are scattered on the floor.

LAURA stands in the middle with lifted arms while AMANDA crouches before her, adjusting the hem of the new dress, devout and ritualistic. The dress is coloured and designed by memory. The arrangement Of LAURA's hair is changed; it is softer and more becoming. A fragile, unearthly prettiness has come out in LAURA: she is like a piece of translucent glass touched by light, given a momentary radiance, not actual, not lasting.

AMANDA [impatiently]: Why are you trembling?

LAURA : Mother, you've made me so nervous !

A M A N D A : How have I made you nervous ?

LAURA : By all this fuss ! You make it seem so important !

AMANDA : I don't understand you, Laura. You couldn't be satisfied with just sitting home, and yet whenever I try to arrange something for you, you seem to resist it. [She gets up.] Now take a look at yourself. No, wait ! Wait just a moment - I have an idea !

LAURA : What is it now?

[AMANDA produces two powder puffs which she wraps in handkerchiefs and stuffs in LAURA's bosom.]

LAURA : Mother, what are you doing?

AMANDA : They call them 'Gay Deceivers'!

LAURA : I won't wear them !

AMANDA : YOU Will !

LAURA : Why should I?

AMANDA : Because, to be painfully honest, your chest is flat.

LAURA : You make it seem like we were setting a trap.

AMANDA : All pretty girls are a trap, a pretty trap, and men expect them to be !

[LEGEND: ' A PRETTY TRAP']

Now look at yourself, young lady. This is the prettiest you will ever be ! I've got. to fix myself now ! You're going to be surprised by your mother's appearance ! [She crosses through portieres, humming gaily.]

[LAURA moves slowly to the long mirror and stares solemnly at herself. A wind blows the white curtains inward in a slow, graceful motion and with a faint, sorrowful sighing.]

AMANDA [off stage]: It isn't dark enough yet. [LAURA turns slowly before the mirror with a troubled look.]

LEGEND ON SCREEN: ' THIS IS MY SISTER: CELEBRATE HER WITH STRINGS!' MUSIC]

AMANDA [laughing, off]: I'm going to show you something. I'm going to make a spectacular appearance I

LAURA : What is it, Mother?

AMANDA : Possess your soul in patience ? you will see !

Something I've resurrected from that old trunk! Styles haven't changed so terribly much after all.

[She parts the portieres.]

Now just look at your mother !

[She wears a girlish frock of yellowed voile with a blue silk sash. She carries a bunch of jonquils - the legend of her youth is nearly revived.]

[Feverishly] : This is the dress in which I led the cotillion, won the cakewalk twice at Sunset Hill, wore one spring to the Governor's ball in Jackson !

See how I sashayed around the ballroom, Laura?

[She raises her skirt and does a mincing step around the room.]

I wore it on Sundays for my gentlemen callers ! I had it on the day I met your father I had malaria fever all that spring. The change of climate from East Tennessee to the Delta - weakened resistance I had a little temperature all the time - not enough to be serious - just enough to make me restless

and giddy I Invitations poured in - parties all over the Delta! - 'Stay in bed,' said mother, 'you have fever!' - but I just wouldn't. - I took quinine but kept on going, going ! Evenings, dances ! - Afternoons, long, long rides! Picnics. - lovely! - So lovely, that country in May. - All lacy with dogwood, literally flooded with jonquils! - That was the spring I had the craze for jonquils. Jonquils became an absolute obsession. Mother said, 'Honey, there's no more room for jonquils.' And still I kept on bringing in more jonquils. Whenever, wherever I saw them, I'd say, "Stop ! Stop! I see jonquils ! I made the young men help me gather the jonquils ! It was a joke, Amanda and her jonquils ! Finally there were no more vases to hold them, every available space was filled with jonquils. No vases to hold them? All right, I'll hold them myself - And then I - [She stops in front of the picture. M U S I C.] met your father ! Malaria fever and jonquils and then - this - boy....

[She switches on the rose-coloured lamp.]

I hope they get here before it starts to rain.

[She crosses upstage and places the jonquils in bowl on table.]

I gave your brother a little extra change so he and Mr O'Connor could take the service car home.

LAURA [with altered look]: What did you say his name was?

AMANDA : O'Connor.

LAURA : What is his first name?

AMANDA : I don't remember. Oh, yes, I do. It was - Jim !

[LAURA sways slightly and catches hold of a chair.

LEGEND ONSCREEN: ' NOT JIM !']

LAURA [faintly]: Not - Jim!

AMANDA : Yes, that was it, it was Jim ! I've never known a Jim, that wasn't nice !

[MUSIC OMINOUS]

LAURA : Are you sure his name is Jim O'Connor?

AMANDA : Yes. Why?

LAURA : Is he the one that Tom used to know in high school?

AMANDA : He didn't say so. I think he just got to know him at the warehouse.

LAURA : There was a Jim O'Connor we both knew in high school - [Then, with effort.] If that is the one that Tom is bringing to dinner - you'll have to excuse me, I won't come to the table.

AMANDA : What sort of nonsense is this?

LAURA : You asked me once if I'd ever liked a boy. Don't you remember I showed you this boy's picture?

AMANDA : You mean the boy you showed me in the year book?

LAURA : Yes, that boy.

AMANDA : Laura, Laura, were you in love with that boy?

LAURA : I don't know, Mother. All I know is I couldn't sit at the table if it was him!

AMANDA : It won't be him! It isn't the least bit likely. But whether it is or not, you will come to the table. You will not be excused.

LAURA : I'll have to be, Mother.

AMANDA : I don't intend to humour your silliness, Laura. I've had too much from you and your brother, both !

So just sit down and compose yourself till they come. Tom has forgotten his key so you'll have to let them in, when they arrive.

LAURA [panicky]: Oh, Mother - you answer the door !

AMANDA [lightly]: Ill be in the kitchen - busy !

LAURA : Oh, Mother, please answer the door, don't make me do it !

AMANDA [crossing into kitchenette]: I've got to fix the dressing for the salmon. Fuss, fuss - silliness ! over a gentleman caller !

[Door swings Shut. LAURA is left alone

LEGEND : ' TERROR!'

She utters a low moan and turns off the lamp - sits stiffly on the edge of the sofa, knotting her fingers together.

LEGEND ON SCREEN: ' THE OPENING OF A DOOR !'

TOM and JIM appear on the fire-escape steps and climb to landing. Hearing their approach, LAURA rises with a panicky gesture. She retreats to the portieres.

The doorbell, LAURA catches her breath and touches her throat. Low drums.]

AMANDA [calling]: Laura, sweetheart ! The door !

[LAURA stares at it without moving.]

JIM : I think we just beat the rain.

TOM : Uh - huh. [He rings again, nervously. JIM whistles and fishes for a cigarette.]

AMANDA [very gaily]: Laura, that is your brother and Mr O'Connor ! Will you let them in, darling?

[LAURA Crosses toward kitchenette door.]

LAURA [breathlessly]: Mother - you go to the door !

[AMANDA steps out of kitchenette and stares furiously at LAU R A. She points imperiously at the door.]

LAURA : Please, please!

AMANDA [in a fierce whisper] : What is the matter with you, you silly thing?

LAURA [desperately] : Please, you answer it, please !

AMANDA : I told you I wasn't going to humour you, Laura. Why have you chosen this moment to lose your mind?

LAURA : Please, please, please, you go !

A M A N D A : You'll have to go to the door because I can't !

LAURA [despairingly] : I can't either !

AMANDA : Why?

LAURA : I'm sick!

AMANDA : I'm sick, too - of your nonsense ! Why can't you and your brother be normal people? Fantastic whims and behaviour !

[Tom gives a long ring.]

Preposterous goings on ! Can you give me one reason - [Calls out lyrically] COMING! JUST ONE SECOND! - why you should be afraid to open a door? Now you answer it, Laura !

LAURA : Oh, oh, oh ... [She returns through the portieres. Darts to the victrola and winds it franticallly and turns it on.]

AMANDA : Laura Wingfield, you march right to that door !

LAURA : Yes - yes, Mother !

[A faraway, scratchy rendition of 'Dardanella' softens the air and gives her strength to move through it. She slips to the door and draws it cautiously open.

TOM enters With the caller, JIM O'CONNOR]

TOM : Laura, this is Jim. Jim, this is my sister, Laura.

JIM [stepping inside] : I didn't know that Shakespeare had a sister!

LAURA [retreating stiff and trembling from the door] : How - how do you do?

JIM [heartily extending his hand] : - Okay !

[LAURA touches it hesitantly with hers.]

JIM : Your hand's cold, Laura !

LAURA : Yes, well- I've been playing the victrola....

JIM : Must have been playing classical music on it! You ought to play a little hot swing music to warm you up !

LAURA : Excuse me - I haven't finished playing the victrola. ... [She turns awkwardly and hurries into the front room. She pauses a second by the victrola. Then catches her breath and darts through the portieres like a frightened deer.]

JIM : [grinning]: What was the matter?

TOM : Oh - with Laura? Laura is - terribly shy.

JIM : Shy, huh? It's unusual to meet a shy girl nowadays. I don't believe you ever mentioned you had a sister.

TOM : Well, now you know. I have one. Here is the Post Dispatch. You want a piece of it?

JIM : Uh-huh.

JIM : Sports ! [Glances at it.] Ole Dizzy Dean is on his bad behaviour.

TOM [disinterested] : Yeah ? [Lights cigarette and crosses back to fire-escape door.]

JIM : Where are you going?

TOM : I'm going out on the terrace.

JIM [goes after him]: You know, Shakespeare - I'm going to sell you a bill of goods !

TOM : What goods?

JIM : A course I'm taking.

TOM : Huh?

JIM : In public speaking! You and me, we're not the warehouse type.

TOM : Thanks - that's good news. But what has public speaking got to do with it?

JIM : It fits you for - executive positions !

[IMAGE: EXECUTIVE AT DESK]

TOM : In what respect?

JIM : In every ! Ask yourself what is the difference between you an' me and men in the office down front? Brains? No! - Ability? - No ! Then what? Just one little thing

TOM : What is that one little thing?

JIM Primarily it amounts to - social poise! Being able to square up to people and hold your own on any social level!

AMANDA [off stage] : Tom?

TOM : Yes, Mother?

AMANDA : Is that you and Mr O'Connor?

AMANDA : Well, you just make yourselves comfortable in there.

AMANDA : Ask Mr O'Connor if he would like to wash his hands.

JIM Aw, no - no - thank you - I took care of that at the warehouse. Tom-

TOM : Yes?

JI M : Mr Mendoza was speaking to me about you.

TOM : Favourably?

JIM : What do you think?

TOM : Well

JIM : You're going to be out of a job if you don't wake up.

TOM : I am waking up

JIM : You show no signs.

[IMAGE ON SCREEN: THE SAILING VESSEL WITH JOLLY ROGER AGAIN]

TOM : I' m planning to change. [He loans over the rail speaking with quiet exhilaration. The incandescent marquees and signs of the first-run movie houses light his face from across the alley. He looks like a voyager.] I'm right at the point of committing myself to a future that doesn't include the warehouse and Mr Mendoza or even a night-school course in public speaking.

JIM : What are you gassing about?

TOM : I'm tired of the movies.

J IM : Movies!

TOM : Yes, movies ! Look at them ? [A wave toward the marvels of Grand Avenue.] All of those glamorous people - having ,adventures - hogging it all, gobbling the whole thing up ! You know what happens? People go to the movies instead of moving! Hollywood characters are supposed to have all the adventures for everybody in America, while everybody in America sits in a dark room and watches them have them ! Yes, until there's a war. That's when adventure becomes available to the masses ! Everyone's dish, not only Gable's ! Then the people in the dark room come out of the dark room to have some adventure themselves Goody, goody! - It's our turn now, to go to the South Sea Islands - to make a safari - to be exotic, far-off ! - But I'm not patient. I don't want to wait till then. I'm tired of the movies and I am about to move !

JIM [incredulously] : Move?

TOM : Yes.

TOM: Soon !

JIM: Where? Where?

[THEME THREE MUSIC SEEMS TO ANSWER THE QUESTION, WHILE TOM THINKS IT OVER. HE SEARCHES AMONG HIS POCKETS]

TOM : I'm starting to boil inside. I know I seem dreamy, but inside - well, I'm boiling ! - Whenever I pick up a shoe, I shudder a little thinking how short life is and what I am doing! - Whatever that means, I know it doesn't mean shoes - except as something to wear on a traveller's feet ! [Finds paper.] Look

JIM : What?

TOM : I'm a member.

JIM [reading]: The Union of Merchant Seamen.

TOM : I paid my dues this month, instead of the light bill.

JIM : You will regret it when they turn the lights off.TOM: I'm like my father. The bastard son of a bastard! See how he grins? And he's been absent going on sixteen years !

JIM : You're just talking, you drip. How does your mother feel about it?

TOM : Shhh! -

Here comes mother ! Mother is not acquainted with my plans!

AMANDA [enters portieres]: Where are you all?

TOM : On the terrace, Mother.

[They start inside. She advances to them. TOM is distinctly shocked at her appearance. Even JIM blinks a little. He is making his first contact with girlish Southern vivacity and in spite of the night-school course in public speaking is somewhat thrown off the beam by the unexpected outlay of social charm.

Certain responses are attempted by JIM but are swept aside by AMANDA's gay laughter and chatter. TOM is embarrassed but after the first shock JIM reacts very warmly. Grins and chuckles, is altogether won over.

IMAGE : AMANDA AS A GIRL]

AMANDA [coyly smiling, shaking her girlish ringlets]: Well, well, well, so this is Mr O'Connor. Introductions entirely unnecessary. I've heard so much about you from my boy. I finally said tohim, Tom - good gracious! - why don't you bring this paragon to supper? Id like to meet this nice young man at the warehouse! - Instead of just hearing you sing his praises so much!

I don't know why my son is so stand-offish - that's not Southern behaviour !

Let's sit down and - I think we could stand a little more air in here ! Tom, leave the door open. I felt a nice fresh breeze a moment ago. Where has it gone to?

Mmm, so warm already ! And not quite summer, even. We're going to bum up when summer really gets started. However, we're having - we're having a very light supper. I think light things are better fo' this time of year. The same as light clothes are. Light clothes an' light food are what warm weather calls fo'. You know our blood gets so thick during th' winter - it takes a while fo' us to adjust ou'selves! - when the season changes ...

It's come so quick this year. I wasn't prepared. All of a sudden - heavens ! Already summer! - I ran to the trunk an' pulled out this light dress - Terribly old! Historical almost! But feels so good - so good an' co-ol, y' know....

TOM : Mother

AMANDA : Yes, honey?

TOM : How about - supper?

AMANDA : Honey, you go ask Sister if supper is ready ! You know that Sister is in full charge of supper! Tell her you hungry boys are waiting for it.

[To JIM]

Have you met Laura?

JIM : She-

AMANDA : Let you in? Oh, good, you've met already! It's rare for a girl as sweet an' pretty as Laura to be domestic! But Laura is, thank heavens, not only pretty but also very domestic. I'm not at all. I never was a bit. I never could make a thing but angel-food cake. Well, in the South we had so many servants. Gone, gone, gone. All vestige of gracious living ! Gone completely! I wasn't prepared for what the future brought me. All of my gentlemen callers were sons of planters and so of course I assumed that I would be married to one and raise my family on a large piece of land with plenty of servants. But man proposes and woman accepts the proposal ! - To vary that old, old saying a little bit - I married no planter! I married a man who worked for the telephone company! - That gallantly smiling gentleman over there! [Points to the picture.] A telephone man who - fell in love with long distance I - Now he travels and I don't even know where ! - But what am I going on for about my - tribulations?

Tell me yours ? I hope you don't have any ! Tom?

TOM [returning]: Yes, Mother?

AMANDA : Is supper nearly ready?

TOM : It looks to me like supper is on the table.

AMANDA : Let me look - [She rises prettily and looks through portieres.] Oh, lovely ! - But where is Sister?

TOM : Laura is not feeling well - and she says that she thinks she'd better not come to the table.

AMANDA : What? - Nonsense ! - Laura? Oh, Laura !

LAURA [off stage, faintly]: Yes, Mother.

AMANDA : You really must come to the table. We won't be seated until you come to the table ! Come in, Mr O'Connor. You sit over there, and I'll Laura - Laura Wingfield !

You're keeping us waiting, honey ! We can't say grace. until you come to the table !

[The back door is pushed weakly open and LAURA comes in. She is obviously quite faint, her lips trembling, her eyes wide and staring. She moves unsteadily toward the table.

LEGEND : 'TERROR!'

Outside a summer storm is coming abruptly. The white curtains billow inward at the windows and there is a sorrowful murmur and deep blue dusk.

LAURA suddenly stumbles - she catches at a chair with a faint moan.]

TOM : Laura!

AMANDA : Laura !.

LEGEND : 'AH!']

[Despairingly] Why, Laura, you are sick, darling ! Tom, help your sister into the living-room, dear !

Sit in the living-room, Laura - rest on the sofa. Well !

[To the gentleman caller.]

Standing over the hot stove made her ill ! - I told her that was just - too warm this evening, but -

[Tom comes back in. LAURA is on the sofa.]

Is Laura all right now?

TOM : Yes.

AMANDA : What is that? Rain? A nice cool rain has come up!

[She gives the gentleman caller a frightened look.]

I think we may - have grace - now ...

[Tom looks at her steadily.]

Tom, honey - you say grace !

TOM : Oh ...

'For these and all thy mercies-'

[They bow their heads, AMANDA stealing a nervous glance at JIM. In the living-room LAURA, stretched on the sofa, clenches her hand to her lips, to hold back a shuddering sob.]

God's Holy Name be praised

THE SCENE DIMS OUT

SCENE 7

A SOUVENIR

Half an hour later. Dinner is just being finished in the upstage area which is concealed by the drawn portieres.

[As the curtain rises LAURA is still huddled upon the sofa, her feet drawn under her, her head resting on a pale blue pillow, her eyes wide and mysteriously watchful. The new floor lamp with its shade of rose-coloured silk gives a soft, becoming light to her face, bringing out the fragile, unearthly prettiness which usually escapes attention. There is a steady murmur of rain, but it is slackening and stops soon after the scene begins; the air outside becomes pale and luminous as the moon breaks out. A moment after the curtain rises, the lights in both rooms flicker and go out.]

JIM : Hey, there, Mr Light Bulb !

[AMANDA laughs nervously.

LEGEND : 'SUSPENSION OF A PUBLIC SERVICE! .]

AMANDA : Where was Moses when the lights went out? Ha-ha. Do you know the answer to that one, Mr O'Connor?

AMANDA : In the dark!

[JIM laughs appreciatively.]

Everybody sit still. I'll light the candles. Isn't it lucky we have them on the table? Where's a match? Which of you gentlemen can provide a match?

JIM: Here.

AMANDA : Thank you, Sir.

JIM : Not at all, Ma'am!

AMANDA : I guess the fuse has burnt out. Mr O'Connor, can you tell a burnt-out fuse? I know I can't and Tom is a total loss when it comes to mechanics.

[SOUND : GETTING UP: VOICES RECEDE A LITTLE TO KITCHENETTE]

Oh, be careful you don't bump into something. We don't want our gentleman caller to break his neck. Now wouldn't that be a fine howdy-do?

JIM : Ha-ha! Where is the fuse-box?

AMANDA : Right here next to the stove. Can you see anything?

JIM : just a minute.

AMANDA : Isn't electricity a mysterious thing? Wasn't it Benjamin Franklin who tied a key to a kite?

We live in such a mysterious universe, don't we? Some people say that science clears up all the mysteries for us. In my opinion it only creates more !

Have you found it yet?

JIM : No, Ma'am. All these fuses look okay to me.

AMANDA : Tom!

TOM : Yes, Mother?

AMANDA : That light bill I gave you several days ago. The one I told you we got the notices about?

[LEGEND : 'HA!']

TOM : Oh. - Yeah.

AMANDA : You didn't neglect to pay it by any chance?

TOM : Why, I -

AMANDA : Didn't ! I might have known it !

JIM : Shakespeare probably wrote a poem on that light bill, Mrs Wingfield.

AMANDA : I might have known better than to trust him with it! There's such a high price for negligence in this world!

JIM : Maybe the poem will win a ten-dollar prize.

AMANDA : We'll just have to spend the remainder of the evening in the nineteenth century, before Mr Edison made the Mazda lamp!

JIM : Candlelight is my favourite kind of light.

AMANDA : That shows you're romantic! But that's no excuse for Tom.

Well, we got through dinner. Very considerate of them to let us get through dinner before they plunged us into ever-lasting darkness, wasn't it, Mr O'Connor?

JIM : Ha-ha !

AMANDA : Tom, as a penalty for your carelessness you can help me with the dishes.

JIM : Let me give you a hand.

AMANDA : Indeed you will not !

JIM : I ought to be good for something.

AMANDA : Good for something? [Her tone is rhapsodic.] You? Why, Mr O'Connor, nobody, nobody's given me this much entertainment in years - as you have !

JIM : Aw, now, Mrs Wingfield !

AMANDA : I'm not exaggerating, not one bit! But Sister is all by her lonesome. You go keep her company in the parlour ! I'll give you this lovely old candelabrum that used to be on the altar at the church of the Heavenly Rest. It was melted a little out of shape when the church burnt down. Lightning struck it one spring.

Gypsy Jones was holding a revival at the time and he intimated that the church was destroyed because the Episcopalians gave card parties.

JIM : Ha-ha.

AMANDA : And how about you coaxing Sister to drink a little wine? I think it would be good for her ! Can you carry both at once?

JIM : Sure, I'm Superman!

AMANDA : Now, Thomas, get into this apron !

[The door of kitchenette swings closed on Amanda's gay laughter; the flickering light approaches the portieres.

LAURA sits up nervously as he enters. Her speech at first is low and breathless from the almost intolerable strain of being alone with a stranger.

THE LEGEND : 'I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU REMEMBER ME AT ALL ! '

In her first speeches in this scene, before JIM's warmth overcomes her paralysing shyness, LAURA's voice is thin and breathless as though she has just run up a steep flight of stairs.

JIM's attitude is gently humorous. In playing this scene it should be stressed that while the incident is apparently unimportant, it is to LAURA the climax of her her secret life.]

JIM : Hello, there, Laura.

LAURA [faintly]: Hello. [She clears her throat.]

JIM : How are you feeling now? Better?

LAURA : Yes. Yes, thank you.

JIM : This is for you. A little dandelion wine. [He extends it toward her with extravagant gallantry.]

LAURA : Thank you.

JIM : Drink it - but don't get drunk!

[He laughs heartily. LAURA takes the glass uncertainly; laughs shyly.]

Where shall I set the candles?

LAURA : Oh - oh, anywhere...,

JIM : How about here on the floor? Any objections?

LAURA : No.

JIM : I'll spread a newspaper under to catch the drippings. I like to sit on the floor. Mind if I do?

LAURA : Oh, no.

JIM : Give me a pillow?

LAURA : What?

JIM : A pillow !

LAURA : Oh ... [Hands him one quickly.]

JIM : How about you? Don't you like to sit on the floor?

LAURA : Oh - yes.

JIM : Why don't you, then?

LAURA : I - Will.

JIM : Take a pillow ! [LAURA does. Sits on the other side of the candelabrum. JIM crosses his legs and smiles engagingly as her.] I can't hardly see you sitting way over there.

LAURA : I can - see you.

JIM : I know, but that's not fair, I'm in the limelight. [LAURA moves her pillow closer.] Good ! Now I can see you ! Comfortable?

LAURA : Yes.

JIM : So am I . Comfortable as a cow ! Will you have some gum?

LAURA : No, thank you.

JIM : I think that I will indulge, with your permission, [Musingly unwraps it and holds it up.] Think of the fortune made by the guy that invented the first piece of chewing gum. Amazing, huh? The Wrigley Building is one of the sights of Chicago. - I saw it summer before last when I went up to the Century of Progress. Did you take in the Century of Progress?

LAURA : No, I didn't.

JIM : Well, it was quite a wonderful exposition. What impressed me most was the Hall of Science. Gives you an idea of what the future will be in America, even more wonderful than the present time is! [Pause. Smiling at her.] Your brother tells me you're shy. Is that right, Laura?

LAURA : I - don't know.

JIM : I judge you to be an old-fashioned type of girl. Well, I think that's a pretty good type to be. Hope you don't think I'm being too personal - do you?

LAURA [hastily, out of embarrassment]: I believe I will take a piece of gum, if you - don't mind. [Clearing her throat.] Mr O'Connor, have you - kept up with your singing?

JIM : Singing? Me?

LAURA : Yes. I remember what a beautiful voice you had.

JIM : When did you hear me sing?

[VOICE OFF STAGE IN THE PAUSE]

Voice [off stage] : 0 blow, ye winds, heigh-ho,

I'm off to my love With a boxing glove Ten thousand miles away !

JIM : You say you've heard me sing?

LAURA : Oh, yes! Yes, very often I don't suppose - you remember me - at all?

JIM : [smiling doubtfully]: You know I have an idea I've seen you before. I had that idea soon as you opened the door. It seemed almost like I was about to remember your name. But the name that I started to call you - wasn't a' name! And so I stopped myself before I said it.

LAURA : Wasn't it - Blue Roses?

JIM : [springs up. Grinning]: Blue Roses ! - My gosh, yes - Blue Roses! That's what I had on my tongue when you opened the door !

Isn't it funny what tricks your memory plays? I didn't connect you with high school somehow or other.

But that's where it was; it was high school. I didn't even know you were Shakespeare's sister ! Gosh, I'm sorry.

LAURA : I didn't expect you to. You - barely knew me !

JIM : But we did have a speaking acquaintance, huh?

LAURA: Yes, we - spoke to each other.

JIM: When did you recognize me?

LAURA: Oh, right away !

JIM: Soon as I came in the door?

LAURA: When I heard your name I thought it was probably you. I knew that Tom used to know you a little in high school. So when you came in the door Well, then I was - sure.

JIM: Why didn't you say something, then?

LAURA [breathlessly]: I didn't know what to say, I was - too surprised !

JIM: For goodness' sakes I You know, this sure is funny !

LAURA: Yes I Yes, isn't it, though ...

JIM: Didn't we have a class in something together?

LAURA: It was - singing - Chorus !

JIM: Aw !

LAURA: I sat across the aisle from you in the Aud.

JIM: Aw!

LAURA: Mondays, Wednesday, and Fridays.

JIM: Now I remember - you always came in late.

LAURA: Yes, it was so hard for me, getting upstairs. I had that brace on my leg - it clumped so loud I

JIM: I never heard any clumping.

LAURA [wincing at the recollection]: To me it sounded like thunder !

JIM: Well, well, well, I never even noticed.

LAURA: And everybody was seated before I came in. I had to walk in front of all those people. My seat was in the back row. I had to go clumping all the way up the aisle with everyone watching I

JIM: You shouldn't have been self-conscious.

LAURA: I know, but I was. It was always such a relief when the singing started.

JIM: Aw, yes, I've placed you now I I used to call you Blue Rom. How was it that I got started calling you that?

LAURA: I was out of school a little while with pleurosis. When I came back you asked me what was the matter. I said I had pleurosis - you thought I said Blue Roses That's what you always called me after that I

JIM: I hope you didn't mind.

LAURA: Oh, no - I liked it. You see, I wasn't acquainted with many - people....

JIM: As I remember you sort of stuck by yourself.

LAURA: I - I - never have had much luck at - making friends.

LAURA: Well, I - started out badly.

JIM: You mean being -

LAURA: Yes, it sort of - stood between me -

JIM: You shouldn't have let it !

LAURA: I know, but it did, and - JIM: You were shy with people !

LAURA: I tried not to be but never could - JIM: Overcome it?

LAURA: No, I - I never could !

JIM: I guess being shy is something you have to work out of kind of gradually.

LAURA [sorrowfully]: Yes - I guess it -

LAURA: Yes -

JIM - People arc not so dreadful when you know them. That's what you have to remember ! And everybody has problems, not just you, but practically

everybody has got some problems. You think of yourself as having the only problems, as being the only one who is disappointed. But just look around you and you will see lots of people as disappointed as you are. For instance, I hoped when I was going to high-school that I would be further along at this time, six years later, than I am now - You remember that wonderful write-up I had in The Torch? LAURA:: Yes ! [She rises and crosses to table.]

JIM: It said I was bound to succeed in anything I went into!

[LAURA returns with the annual.] Holy Jeez ! The Torch ! [He accepts it reverently. They smile across it with mutual wonder. LAURA crouches beside him and they begin to turn through it. LAURA's shyness is dissolving in his warmth.]

LAURA:: Here you are in The Pirates of Penzance!

LAURA [raptly]: So - beautifully!

JIM [protesting]: Aw -

LAU R A: Yes, yes - beautifully - beautifully !

JIM: You heard me?

LAURA: All three times !

JIM: No !

LAURA: Yes !

JIM: All three performances?

LAURA [looking down]: Yes.

JIM: Why?

LAURA: I - wanted to ask you to - autograph my programme.

LAURA: You were always surrounded by your own friends so much that I never had a chance to.

JIM: You should have just

LAURA: Well, I - thought you might think I was

JIM: Thought I might think you was - what?

LAURA: Oh

JIM [with reflective relish]: I was beleaguered by females In those days.

LAURA: You were terribly popular !

JIM: Yeah

LAURA: You had such a - friendly way

JIM: Including you?

LAURA: I - yes, I - I did, too - [She gently closes the book in her lap.]

JIM: Well, weH, well ! - Give me that programme, Laura. [She hands it to him. He signs it with a flourish.] There youare - better late than never !

LAURA: Oh, I - what a - surprise!

JIM: My signature isn't worth very much tight now. But some day - maybe - it will increase in value ! Being disappointed is one thing and being discouraged is something else. I am disappointed but I am not discouraged. I'm twenty-three years old. How old are you?

LAURA:: I'll be twenty-four in June.

JIM: That's not old age!

LAURA: No, but

JIM: You finished high school?

LAURA [with difficulty]: I didn't go back.

LAURA: I made bad grades in my final examinations. [She rises and replaces the book and the programme. Her voice strained.] How is - Emily Meisenbach getting along?

JIM: Oh, that kraut-head!

LAURA:: Why do you call her that ?

J I M: That's what she was.

LAURA: You're not still - going with her?

JIM: I never see her.

LAURA: It said in the Personal Section that you were engaged!

J I M: I know, but I wasn't impressed by that -propaganda I

LAURA: It wasn't - the truth?

J I M: Only in Emily's optimistic opinion !

[LEGEND: ' WHAT HAVE YOU DONE SINCE HIGH SCHOOL?']

JIM lights a cigarette and loans indolently back on his elbows smiling at LAURA with a warmth and charm which lights her inwardly with altar candler. She remains by the table and turns in her hands a piece of glass to cover her tumult.]

JIM: [after several reflective puffs on a cigarette] : What have you done since high school? [She seems not to hear him.] Huh? [LAURA looks up.] I said what have you done since high school, Laura?

LAURA: Nothing much.

JIM: You must have been doing something these six long years.

LAURA: Yes.

JIM: Well, then, such as what?

LAURA: I took a business course at business college

JIM: How did that work out?

LAURA: Well, not very - well - I had to drop out, it gave me - indigestion

J I M [laughs gently.]: What are you doing now?

LAURA: I don't do anything - much. Oh, please don't think I sit around doing nothing! My glass collection takes up agood deal of time. Glass is something you have to take good care of

JIM: What did you say - about glass?

LAURA: Collection I said - I have one - [she clears her throat and turns away, acutely shy.]

JIM: [abruptly]: You know what I judge to be the trouble with you?

Inferiority complex I Know what that is? That's what they call it when someone low-rates himself !

I understand it because I had it, too. Although my caw was not so aggravated as yours seems to be. I had it until I took up public speaking, developed

my voice, and learned that I had an aptitude for science. Before that time I never thought of myself as being outstanding in any way whatsoever I

Now I've never made a regular study of it, but I have a friend who says I can analyse people better than doctors that make a profession of it. I don't claim that to be necessarily true, but I can sure guess a person's psychology, Laura I [Takes out his gum] Excuse me, Laura. I always take it out when the flavour is gone. I'll use this scrap of paper to wrap it in. I know how it is to get it stuck on a shoe.

Yep - that's what I judge to be your principal trouble. A lack of amount of faith in yourself as a person. You don't have the proper amount of faith in yourself. I'm basing that fact on a number of your remarks and also on certain observations I've made. For instance that clumping you thought was so awful in high school. You say that you even dreaded to walk into class. You see what you did? You dropped out of school, you gave up an education because of a clump, which as far as I know was practically non-existent! A little physical defect is what you have. Hardly noticeable even! Magnified thousands of times by imagination !

You know what my strong advice to you is? Think of yourself as superior in some way!

JIM: Why, man alive, Laura! just look about you a little. What do you see? A world full of common people! All of 'em born and all of 'em going to die !

Which of them has one-tenth of your good points I Or mine ! Or anyone else's, as far as that goes - Gosh !

Everybody excels in some one thing. Some in many !

[Unconsciously glances at himself in the mirror.]

All you've got to do is discover in whatl Take me, for instance.

[He adjusts his tie at the mirror.]

My interest happens to lie in electro-dynamics. I'm taking a course in radio engineering at night school, Laura, on top of a fairly responsible job at the warehouse. I'm taking that course and studying public speaking.

LAURA: Ohhhh.

JIM: Because I believe in the future of television !

[Turning back to her.]

I wish to be ready to go up right along with it. Therefore

I'm planning to get in on the ground floor. In fact I've already made the right connexions and all that remains is for the industry itself to get under way I Full steam

[His eyes are starry.]

Knowledge - Zzzzzp ! Money - Zzzzzzp I - Power! That's the cycle democracy is built on I

[His attitude is convincingly dynamic. LAURA stares at him, even her shyness eclipsed in her absolute wonder. He suddenly grins.]

I guess you think I think a lot of myself !

LAURA: No - o-o-o, !

JIM: Now how about you? Isn't there something you, take more interest in than anything else?

LAURA: Well, I do - as I said - have my - glass collection [A peal of girlish laughter from du kitchen]

JIM: I'm not right sure I know what you're talking about What kind of glass is it?

LAURA: Little articles of it, they're ornaments mostly I

Most of them are little animals made out of glass, the tiniest little animals in the world. Mother calls them A

glass menagerie !

Here's an example of one, if you'd like to see it I This one is one of the oldest. It's nearly thirteen.

[MUSIC: ' THE GLASS MENAGERIE"

He stretches out his hand.]

Oh, be careful - if you breathe, it breaks !

JIM: I'd better not take it. I'm pretty clumsy with things.

LAURA: Go on, I trust you with him !

[Places it in his palm.]

There now - you're holding him gently !

Hold him over the light, he loves the light I You see how the light shines through him? JIM: It sure does shine!

LAURA: I shouldn't be partial, but he is my favourite one.

JIM: A unicorn, huh?

LAURA: Mmmm-hmmm!

JIM: Unicorns, aren't they extinct in the modern world?

LAURA: I know !

JIM: Poor little fellow, he must feel sort of lonesome.

LAURA [smiling]: Well, if he does he doesn't complain about it. He stays on a shelf with some horses that don't have horns and all of them seem to get along nicely together.

JIM: How do you know?

LAURA [lightly]: I haven't heard any arguments among them!

JIM: [grinning]: No arguments, huh? Well, that's a pretty good sign ! Where shall I set him?

LAURA: Put him on the table. They all like a change of scenery once in a while !

LAURA: Oh, oh, yes - it stretches across the ceiling !

JIM: [crossing to door]: I think it's stopped raining. [Opens fire-escape door.] Where does the music come from?

LAURA: From the Paradise Dance Hall across the alley.

JIM: How about cutting the rug a little, Miss Wingfield?

LAURA: Oh

JIM: Or is your programme filled up? Let me have a look at it. [Grasps imaginary card.] Why, every dance is taken! I'll just have to scratch some out. [WALTZ MUSIC 'LA GOLONDRINA'.]. Ahhh, a waltz ! [He executes some sweeping turns by himself then holds his arms toward LAURA.]

LAURA [breathlessly]: I - can't dance !

JIM: There you go, that inferiority stuff ! Come on, try !

LAURA: Oh, but I'd step on you !

JIM: I'm not made out of glass.

J IM: just leave it to me. You hold your arms out a little.

LAURA: Like this?

JIM: A little bit higher. Right. Now don't tighten up, that's the main thing about it - relax.

LAURA [laughs breathlessly]: It's hard not to. I'm afraid you can't budge me.

JIM: What do you bet I can't? [He swings her into motion.]

LAURA: Goodness, yes, you can!

JIM: Let yourself go, now, Laura, just let yourself go.

LAURA: I'm

JIM: Come on!

LAURA: I know but I'm -

JIM: Loosen th' backbone! There now, that's a lot better.

LAURA: Am I?

JIM: Lots, lots better !

[He moves her about the room in a clumsy waltz]

LAURA: Oh, my !

JIM: Ha-ha !

LAURA: Oh, my goodness !

JIM: Ha-ha-ha !

[They suddenly bump into the table. JIM stops] What did we hit on?

JIM: Did something fall off it? I think-

LAURA: Yes.

JIM: I hope that it wasn't the little glass horse with the horn !

LAURA: Yes.

JIM: Aw aw aw- Is it broken?

LAURA: Now it is just like all the other horses.

JIM: It's lost its -

LAURA: Horn!

It doesn't matter. Maybe it's a blessing in disguise.

JIM: You'll never forgive me. I bet that that was your Favourite piece of glass.

LAURA: I don't have favourites much. It's no tragedy, Freckles. Glass breaks so easily. No matter how careful you are. The traffic jars the shelves and things fall off them.

LAURA [smiling] I'll just imagine he had an operation. The horn was removed to make him feel less - freakish !

[They both laugh.]

Now he will feel more at home with the other horses, the ones that don't have horns. .

JIM: Ha-ha, that's very funny !

[Suddenly serious]

I'm glad to see that you have a sense of humour. You know - you're - well - very different ! Surprisingly different from anyone else I know !

[His wire become soft and hesitant with a genuine feeling]

Do you mind me telling you that?

[LAURA is abashed beyond speech]

I mean it in a nice way ...

[LAURA nods shyly, looking away.]

You make me feel sort of - I don't know how to put it ! I'm usually pretty good at expressing things, but This is something that I don't know how to say !

[LAURA touches her throat and clears it - turns the unicorn in her hands. Even softer.]

Has anyone ever told you that you were pretty?

[PAUSE: MUSIC.

LAURA looks up slowly with wonder and shakes her head.]

Well, you are! In a very different way from anyone else. And all the nicer because of the difference, too.

[His voice becomes low and husky. LA U R A turns away, nearly faint with the novelty of her emotions.]

I wish that you were my sister. I'd teach you to have some confidence in yourself. The different people are not like other people, but being different is nothing to be ashamed of. Because other people are not such wonderful people. They're one hundred times one thousand. You're one times one! They walk all over the earth. You just stay here. They're common as - weeds, -but - you - well, you're - Blue Roses!

[IMAGE ON SCREEN: BLUE ROSES. MUSIC CHANGES]

LAURA: But blue is wrong for - roses...

JIM: It's right for you ! - You're - pretty !

JIM: In all respects - believe me ! Your eyes - your hair are pretty! Your hands are pretty !

[He catches hold of her hand.]

You think I'm making this up because I'm invited to dinner and have to be nice. Oh, I could do that ! I could put on an act for you, Laura, and say lots of things without being very sincere. But this time I am. I'm talking to you sincerely. I happened to notice you had this inferiority complex that keeps you from feeling comfortable with people. Somebody needs to build your confidence up and make you proud instead of shy and turning away and - blushing - Somebody -ought to - Ought to - kiss you, Laura !

[His hand slips slowly up her arm to her shoulder.

MUSIC SWELLS TUMULTUOUSLY He suddenly turns her about and kisses her on the lips.

When he releases her, LAURA sinks on the sofa with a bright, dazed look.

JIM backs away and fishes in his pocket for a cigarette.

LEGEND ON SCREEN: ' SOUVENIR'.]

Stumble-john !

[He lights the cigarette, avoiding her look.

There is a peal of girlish laughter from AMANDA in the kitchen.

LAURA slowly raises and opens her hand. It still contains the little broken glass animal. She looks at it with a tender, bewildered expression.]

Stumble-john !

I shouldn't have done that - That was way off the beam. You don't smoke, do you?

[She looks up, smiling, not hearing the question.

He sits beside her a little gingerly. She looks at him speechlessly - waiting.

He coughs decorously and moves a little farther aside as he considers the situation and senses her feelings, dimly, with perturbation. Gently.]

Would you - care for a - mint?

[She doesn't seem to hear him but her look grows brighter even.]

Peppermint - Life-Saver?

My pocket's a regular drug store - wherever I go ...

[He pops a mint in his mouth. Then gulps and decides to make a clean breast of it. He speaks slowly and gingerly.]

Laura, you know, if I had a sister like you, I'd do the same thing as Tom. I'd bring out fellows and - introduce her to them. The right type of boys of a type to - appreciate her.

Only - well - he made a mistake about me.

Maybe I've got no call to be saying this. That may not have been the idea in having me over. But what if it was? There's nothing wrong about that. The only trouble is that in my case - I'm not in a situation to - do the right thing.

I can't take down your number and say I'll phone. I can't call up next week and - ask for a date.

I thought I had better explain the situation in case you misunderstand it and - hurt your feelings.

[Pause.

Slowly, very slowly, LAURA's look changes, her eyes returning slowly from his to the ornament in her palm.

AMANDA utters another gay laugh in the kitchen.]

LAURA [faintly] You - won't - call again?

JIM: No, Laura, I can't.

[He rises from the sofa.]

As I was just explaining, I've - got strings on me. Laura, I've - been going steady !

I go out all of the time with a girl named Betty. She's a home-girl like you, and Catholic, and Irish, and in a great many ways we - get along fine.

I met her last summer on a moonlight boat trip up the river to Alton, on the Majestic.

Well - right away from the start it was - love !

LAURA sways slightly forward and grips the arm of the sofa. He fails to notice, now enrapt in his own comfortable being.]

Being in love has made -a new man of me !

[Leaning stiffly forward, clutching the arm of the sofa LAURA struggles visibly with her storm. But JIM is oblivious, she it a long way of.]

The power of love is really pretty tremendous !

Love is something that - changes the whole world, Laura !

[The storm abates a little and LAURA leans back. He notices her again.]

It happened that Betty's aunt took sick, she got a wire and had to go to Centralia. So Tom - when he asked me to dinner - I naturally just accepted the invitation, not knowing that you - that he - that ! [He stops awkwardly.]

huh - I'm a stumble-john!

[He flops back on the sofa.

The holy candles in the altar of LAURA's face have been snuffed out.

There is a look of almost infinite desolation.

JIM: glances at her uneasily.]

I wish that you would - say something. [She bites her lip which was trembling and then bravely smiles. She opens her hand again on the broken glass ornament. Then she gently takes his hand and raises it level with her own. She carefully places the unicorn in the palm of his hand, then pushes his fingers closed upon it.] What are you - doing that for? You want me to have him? Laura? [She nods.] What for?

LAURA: A - souvenir ...

[She rues unsteadily and crouches beside Lim victrola to wind it up.

LEGEND ON SCREEN: ' THINGS HAVE A WAY OF TURNING OUT SO BADLY !'

OR IMAGE: GENTLEMAN CALLER WAVING GOOD-BYE! - GAILY.

At this moment AMANDA rushes brightly back in the front room. She bears a pitcher of fruit Punch in an old-fashioned cut-glass Pitcher and a plate of macaroons. The Plate has a gold border and poppies painted on it.]

AMANDA: Well, Well, Well ! Isn't the air delightful after the shower? I've made you children a little liquid refteshment.

[Turns gaily to the gentleman caller.]

JIM, do you know that song about lemonade? 'Lemonade, lemonade Made in the shade and stirred with a spade Good enough for any old maid !'

JIM [uneasily]: Ha-ha! No - I never heard it.

AMANDA: Why, Laura ! You look so serious !

JIM: We were having a serious conversation.

AMANDA: Good !Now you're better acquainted !

J I M: [uncertainly] : Ha-ha ! Yes.

AMANDA: You modem young people are much more serious-minded than my generation. I was so gay as a girl I

JIM: You haven't changed, Mrs Wingfield

AMANDA: Tonight I'm rejuvenated ! The gaiety of the occasion, Mr O'Connor !

[She tosses her head with a pod of laughter. Spa lemonade.]

Oooo! I'm baptizing myself!

JIM: Here - let me

AMANDA [Setting the pitcher down] : There now. I discovered we had some maraschino cherries. I dumped them in, juice and all !

AMANDA: Trouble, trouble? Why, it was loads of fun! Didn't you hear me cutting up in the kitchen? I bet your ears were burning! I told Tom how outdone with him I was for keeping you to himself so long a time! He should have brought you over much, much sooner ! Well, now that you've found your way, I want you to be a very frequent caller ! Not just occasional but all the time. Oh, we're going to have a lot of gay times together ! I see them coming !

Mmm, just breathe that air ! So fresh, and the moon's so pretty !

I'll skip back out - I know where my place is when young folks are having a - serious conversation !

JIM: Oh, don't go out, Mrs Wingfield. The fact of the matter is I've got to be going.

AMANDA: Going, now? You're joking ! Why, it's only the shank of the evening, Mr O'Connor !

JIM: Well, you know how it is.

AMANDA: You mean you're a young working man and have to keep working men's hours. Well let you off early tonight. But only on the condition that next time you stay later. What's the best night for you? Isn't Saturday night the best night for you working men?

J I M: I have a couple of time-clocks to punch, Mrs Wingfield. One at morning, another one at night !

AMANDA: My, but you are ambitious ! You work at night, too?

JIM: No, Ma'am, not work but - Betty ! [He crosses deliberately to pick up his hat. The band at the Paradise Dance Hall goes into a tender waltz.]

AMANDA: Betty? Betty? Who's - Betty !

[There is an ominous cracking sound in the sky.]

JIM: Oh, just a girl. The girl I go steady with [He smiles charmingly. The sky falls]

[LEGEND: 'THE SKY FALLS']

AMANDA [a long-drawn exhalation]: Ohhhh. ... Is it a serious romance, Mr O'Connor?

JIM: - We're going to be married the second Sunday in June.

AMANDA: Ohhhh - how nice ! Tom didn't mention that you were engaged to be married.

JIM: The cat's not out of the bag at the warehouse yet. You know how they are. They call you Romeo and stuff like that.

[He stops at the oval mirror to put on his hat. He carefully shapes the brim and the crown to give a discreetly dashing effect.]

It's been a wonderful evening, Mrs Wingfield. I guess this is what they mean by Southern hospitality.

AMANDA: It really wasn't anything at all.

J I M: I hope it don't seem like I'm rushing off. But I promised Betty I'd pick her up at the Wabash depot, an' by the time I get my jalopy down there her train'll be in. Some women are pretty upset if you keep 'em waiting.

AMANDA: Yes, I know - Ile tyranny of women !

[Extends her hand.]

Good-bye, Mr O'Connor. I wish you luck - and happiness - and success ! All three of them, and so does Laura ! -Don't you, Laura?

LAURA: Yes !

JIM [taking her hand]: Good-bye, Laura. I'm certainly going to treasure that souvenir. And don't you forget the good advice I gave you.

[Raises his voice to a cheery shout.]

So long, Shakespeare ! Thanks again, ladies - Good night !

[He grins and ducks jauntily out.]

Still bravely grimacing, AMANDA closes the door on the gentleman caller. Then she turns back to the room with a Puzzled expression. She and LAURA don't dare face each other. LAURA crouches beside the victrola to wind it.]

AMANDA [faintly] Things have a way of turning out so badly.

I don't believe that I would play the victrola. Well, well - well Our gentleman caller was engaged to be married!

TOM!

TOM [from back]: Yes, Mother?

AMANDA: Come in here a minute. I want to tell you something awfully funny.

TOM [enters with macaroon and a glass of lemonade]: Has the gentleman caller gotten away already?

AMANDA: The gentleman caller has made an early departure. What a wonderful joke you played on us !

TOM: How do you mean?

AMANDA: You didn't mention that he was engaged to be married.

TOM: JIM? Engaged?

AMANDA: That's what he just informed us.

TOM: I'll be jiggered ! I didn't know about that

AMANDA: That seems very peculiar.

TOM: 'What's peculiar about it?

AMANDA: Didn't you call him your best friend down at the warehouse?

TOM: He is, but how did I know?

AMANDA: It seems extremely peculiar that you wouldn't know your best friend was going to be married !

TOM: The warehouse is where I work, not where I know things about people !

AMANDA: You don't know things anywhere ! You live in a dream; you manufacture illusions !

[He crosses to door.]

Where are you going?

TOM: I'm going to the movies.

AMANDA: That's right, now that you've had us make such fools of ourselves. The effort, the preparations, all the expense ! The new floor lamp, the rug, the clothes for Laura ! all for what? To entertain some other girl's fiance ! Go to the movies, go ! Don't think about us, a mother deserted, an unmarried sister who's crippled and has no job ! Don't let anything interfere with your selfish pleasure I just go, go, go - to the movies !

TOM: All right, I 'will ! The more you shout about my selfishness to me the quicker I'll go, and I won't go to the movies !

AMANDA: Go, then ! Then go to the moon - you selfish dreamer !

[Tom smashes his glass on the floor. He plunges out on the fire-escape, slamming the door . LAURA screams -cut by door.

Dance-hall Music up. TOM goes to the rail and grips it desperately, lifting his face in the chill white moonlight penetrating narrow abyss of the alley.

LEGEND ON SCREEN: ' AND SO GOOD-BYE...'

TOM 's closing speech is timed with the interior pantomime. [The interior scene is played as though viewed through soundproof glass. AMANDA appears to be making a comforting speech to LAURA who is huddled upon the sofa. Now that we cannot hear the mother's speech, her silliness is gone and she has dignity and tragic beauty.

LAURA' s dark hair hides her face until at the endof the speech she lifts it to smile at her Mother. AMANDA' s gestures are slow and graceful, almost dancelike as she comforts the daughter. At the end of her speech she glances a moment at the father's picture - then withdraws through the portieres. At the close of Tom's speech, LAURA blows out the candles, ending the play.]

TOM: I didn't go to the moon, I went much further - for time is the longest distance between places. Not long after that I was fired for writing a poem on the lid of a shoebox.

I left Saint Louis. I descended the step of this fire-escape for a last time and followed, from then on, in my father's footsteps, attempting to find in motion what was lost in space - I travelled around a great deal. The cities swept about me like dead leaves, leaves that were brightly coloured but tom away from the branches.

I would have stopped, but I was pursued by something.

It always came upon me unawares, taking me altogether by surprise. Perhaps it was a familiar bit of music. Perhaps it was only a piece of transparent glass. Perhaps I am walking along a street at night, in some strange city, before I have found companions. I pass the lighted window of a shop where perfume is sold. The window is filled with pieces of coloured glass, tiny transparent bottles in delicate colours, like bits of a shattered rainbow.

Then all at once my sister touches my shoulder. I turn around and look into her eyes ...

Oh, Laura, Laura, I tried to leave you behind me, but I am more faithful than I intended to be !

I reach for a cigarette, I cross the street, I run into the movies or a bar, I buy a drink, I speak to the nearest stranger -anything that can blow your candles out !

[LAURA bends over the candles.]

- for nowadays the world is lit by lightning ! Blow out your candles, Laura - and so good-bye.

[She blows the candles out.]

THE SCENE DISSOLVES

PARADISE

HIGHER SECONDARY
ENGLISH COLLECTIONS OF
PROSE | POETRY | PLAYS
ENGLISH A AND
ALTERNATIVE ENGLISH

With financial aid from the Government of West Bengal, this book is to be distributed to students of XI free of cost. This book is not for sale.

West Bengal Council of Higher Secondary Education