

THE WRITING OF AN ORIGINAL
THREE ACT PLAY AND THE
ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEMS
IN ITS COMPOSITION

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.

MICHIGAN STATE COLLEGE

Reginald Valentine Holland
1948

This is to certify that the

thesis entitled

"The Writing of an Original Three Act
Play and the Analysis of the Problems
in its Composition"

presented by

Reginald V. Holland

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

Master of Arts degree in Speech, Dramatics,
and Radio Education

Wilson B. Paul

Major professor

Donald O. Buell

Date March 12, 1948

VI

THE WRITING OF AN ORIGINAL THREE ACT PLAY
AND THE ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEMS
IN ITS COMPOSITION.

by

Reginald Valentine ~~Holland~~

A THESIS

Submitted to the Graduate School of Michigan
State College of Agriculture and Applied
Science in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Speech, Dramatics, and Radio

1948

THESIS

4/1/48
g
8

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my sincere thanks to Dr. Wilson R. Paul, Head of the Department of Speech, Dramatics, and Radio, for making it possible to write and produce an original three act play for a thesis project. My gratitude is also expressed to Donald C. Buell, Director of Dramatics, for his sympathetic understanding, encouragement, and guidance during the writing of the play, and to Dr. Virgil J. Scott, Department of English, for his worthwhile criticism of the play in its formative stages.

In directing a play it is difficult to adequately express gratefulness to all those contributing to the production; however, my special thanks goes to the cast, who willingly gave their time and talents, to Homer L. Paris and his crew for their cooperation in producing the play, and to C. H. Nickel and Theta Alpha Phi for backing the production.

Acknowledgement is also due Dr. Charles P. Pedrey and Stuart C. Chenoweth for their many helpful suggestions in writing the thesis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART I. PREFACE TO A NEW PLAY

A. Introduction.....	3
B. The Theme of the New Play.....	4
C. The Form of the New Play.....	5
D. The Type of the New Play.....	8
E. The Kind of a New Play.....	20
F. The Style of the New Play.....	22

PART II. THE SCRIPT

"Bolted Doors" - An Original Drama in Three Acts.....	26
Act One.....	28
Act Two, Scene 1.....	62
" " Scene 2.....	90
Act Three.....	115

PART III. ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEMS IN COMPOSITION

A. Exordium.....	144
B. Aligning a Plausible Story From the Source Material.....	147
C. From Story to Dialogue	
1. The Original Draft in Dialogue.....	165
2. The Second Draft: Revision through Character and Plot.....	168
3. The Third Draft: Theatrical Re- vision.....	172
4. The Fourth Draft: Revision through Rehearsal.....	177
D. The Production.....	182

PART IV. MISCELLANEOUS

Bibliography.....	188
-------------------	-----

PART I. PREFACE TO A NEW PLAY

A. Introduction

On March 4, 1948, an original three act drama called "Bolted Doors" was given its first public performance in the Studio Theatre at Michigan State College. The purpose of the play was to present the story of a woman who was unable to escape the tragic realities of her life even though she spent most of it as a recluse. That drama was chosen as the medium for communicating the story is understandable when the play is examined for the essential elements which must be found in dramatic expression.. Drama presents a series of situations in which the characters express through action and the spoken word what happens to them; it is the playwright who conceives the story and the dialogue, but it is the actor who makes the play come to life. In order to analyze the new play in the light of the modern practice of objectively classifying material, it is well to place it in a certain category; not that this play falls strictly into one division and is excluded from all the characteristics of other divisions, but it is apparent, for the purpose of discussion at least, that it should be given a place in the scheme of drama. Therefore, it was the intention of the playwright to create "A realistic play in three acts: a serious drama of character".

If this classification for the new play is to be accepted, it will be necessary to show how the play fulfills each part of the classification and to explain each term in relation to the new play. Therefore, the discussion will follow the conventional treatment of analyzing the play from the point of view of theme, form, type, kind, and style.

B. The Theme of the New Play

"The theme is the subject or text of the play. It is the essential idea of the play, an idea which can be set down in a simple statement of very few words."¹ Most authors of texts written on dramaturgy agree that a theme, or premise as it is sometimes called, is necessary to any play; it is the central idea which the play expresses as a whole; it is the reference point for the spectator and a governing factor for the playwright in dialogue and action. The theme is a thumb nail synopsis of the play stated in one sentence, whereas expressed in particular terms it becomes the plot.

Plays do not always start with a theme at the beginning of their construction, but for the purpose of unity, the determination of a theme as soon as possible in writing a new play is necessary to keep the purpose clear. The theme will keep the plot coordinated and working toward a unified end, and the characters precise, true, and convincing.

Neither the theme nor any other part of the play stands by itself; all must blend in harmony to make the play sound. It is on this basis the theme of the new play may be stated as follows: "Escape from reality leads to a day of reckoning." It has been the aim of the new play to uphold this theme in its composition and presentation.

1. Samuel Selden, An Introduction to Playwriting, F. S. Crofts and Co., New York, 1946, p. 58.

C. The Form of the New Play

Throughout the history of the dramatic form of communication attempts have been made to define drama. Although these definitions have differed, still they agree in principle to the essentials which make up this form of narrative medium; namely, that a play is a story of a conflict and crisis which is written essentially to be represented on the stage by living actors. In a play it is first necessary to have a dramatic situation. John Gassner states that this may occur when "two or more characters are involved with each other; when any character is involved with outside forces; or when one part of a character's personality is involved with another part".² It is true that a play may have only one of these dramatic situations; or it is also possible that it may possess all three and provide a richer dramatic experience because it does possess all three. It is apparent that all these situations or involvements tend to lead to a conflict or a crisis. The conflict theory of drama was presented by the great French critic, Ferdinand Brunetière in The Law of the Drama and provides a comprehensive definition of this point of view.

"Drama is the representation of the will of man in conflict with the mysterious powers or natural forces which limit and belittle us; it is one of us thrown living upon the stage, there to struggle against fatality, against social law, against one of his fellow mortals, against himself, if need be, against the ambitions, the interests, the prejudices, the folly, the malevolence of those who surround him."³

Although this Law of Drama does form a definition which covers the major source of dramatic material, William Archer has pointed out

2. John Gassner, Producing the Play, The Dryden Press, New York, 1941, p. 13.

3. William Archer, Play-Making: A Manual of Craftsmanship, Dodd, Mead and Co., New York, 1934, pp. 28-29.

that it does not present characteristics which are common to all drama, and he attempts to go further in his analysis of the essence of drama. "A play is a more or less rapidly developing crisis within a crisis, clearly furthering the ultimate event."⁴ Archer's definition has been criticized because there have been good plays written which do not conform to his criteria. Therefore, Allardyce Nicoll has attempted a broader definition which endeavors to distinguish the drama as an art form separate from the other arts. "Drama is the art of expressing ideas about life in such a manner as to render that expression capable of interpretation by actors and likely to interest an audience assembled to hear the words and witness the actions."⁵

Although it may not be possible to formulate one definition of drama which is all inclusive of dramatic art, one can examine the new play in relation to all of the definitions to determine if it fulfills the various premises. The new play sets forth a conflict between an individual and outside forces, between the woman who has attempted to run away from reality by living alone in a hotel suite and keeping all humanity and progress locked out. It presents a series of conflicts between this woman and those who attempt to discover the reasons for her seclusion. And it proffers a conflict within the individual when the woman, confronted with the disclosure of her reasons for living alone all the years, must make her choice of a course of action.

4. Archer, op. cit., p. 36.

5. Allardyce Nicoll, An Introduction to Dramatic Theory, T. X. Crowell, New York, 1931, p. 45.

The play sets forth a series of crises which closely parallel in intensity the important conflicts. These crises grow from the beginning of the play as the woman is confronted with a choice of revealing her secret or doing away with the force which is threatening to expose her; further, when her secret is discovered, and finally when she is faced with a crisis which she is unable to meet - from which she escapes only by taking her own life.

The play follows the convention of the modern theatre by limiting the time of enacting the story to two and a half hours duration, and has within a three act division of scenes, condensed human experiences to show only the climaxes and moments of extreme tension in a unity of action interpreted by actors on the stage.

D. The Type of the New Play

The play has been defined as a serious drama. Between classical tragedy and comedy there is a middle ground into which most of our modern plays are placed. These plays do not have the universality in scope found in the classical drama and cannot be labeled as heroic tragedy or comedy. The theme in serious drama treats the serious side of life and sees life in terms of the events which occur in the experiences of the modern world. It is said that the writer of serious drama "is often closer to the public, which probably finds his outlook on life more like its own..."⁶. This type of play has also been called a "modern drama" and is defined by Allardyce Nicoll as dealing "with human existence from the standpoint of ordinary civilization, conscious of death, but treating it without reference to metaphysical considerations, more intert on social relationships than on abstract problems....."⁷. The theme of the serious play is that of social consideration and its major thesis is the presentation of man living and facing the problems of contemporary civilization. Serious drama is further defined by John Gassner as an "intermediate type of play (which) has dignity, a point of reference, tragic overtones or details and a general tone of seriousness"⁸. On the writing of serious drama, Barnard Hewitt states that the boundary between serious drama and tragedy is often difficult to define and some serious type plays might

6. Milton Marx, The Enjoyment of Drama, F. S. Crofts and Co., New York, 1940, p. 173.

7. Nicoll op. cit., p. 240.

8. Gassner, op. cit., p. 46.

with some justification be treated as a subdivision of tragedy.⁹

Whenever one uses the term "tragedy", however, he is immediately confronted with the classical connotation of the term, and it is with a great deal of reticence that the word is used. It is generally felt that either a play is a tragedy in the traditional sense with all its implications, or the play cannot be classified by so reverent a term. It is doubtful if one could call the new play a modern tragedy without fear of being misunderstood. Many critics of modern drama insist upon putting all modern plays of tragic theme in the class of serious drama, and Alan Reynolds Thompson has classified the plays of Ibsen, Strindberg and Chekhov in this category.¹⁰ Thompson says of the modern serious play, "The majority of modern dramas have not aspired to the height of tragedy. Neither have they sunk so low as primitive melodrama. They are of a middle sort, made to suit a middle class audience. They have been predominantly bourgeois, like modern society."¹¹

It is not the purpose of this discussion to present the argument to its final end regarding the prospects of modern drama reaching true tragedy; however, it is possible to show that a modern serious play can be one of tragic nature without injuring the respect for the word "tragedy". Therefore, the new play is defined as a "serious drama of tragic nature". It must be stated at this point

9. Barnard Hewitt, Art and Craft of Play Production, J. B. Lippincott Co., New York, 1940, p. 53.

10. Alan Reynolds Thompson, The Anatomy of Drama, University of California Press, Los Angeles, 1942, p. 317. •

11. Ibid, p. 313.

that no attempt will be made to present the play as an example of tragedy in the traditional sense. However, the play does have modern tragic overtones which are recognized by the twentieth century audience.

Tragedy, as a form of drama, had its beginning in Greek theatre and as a result the classic definition of Aristotle has remained the basis of examination for the tragic play. By Aristotelian standards, "Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is serious, and, having magnitude, complete in itself; in language variously embellished, the several kinds of embellishment being severally used in different parts of the play; in a manner of an action directly presented, not narrated; through pity and fear effecting the proper catharsis of such emotions."¹² A play then, to be a true tragedy by classical standards, must realize all the elements set forth in this definition. It is not difficult to test the new play by some of these standards for it is an imitation of an action that is complete in itself and directly presented. But the play does not have the magnitude nor quantity in both plot and character to uphold the tragic greatness necessary for classical tragedy, nor does the play have the elements of spectacle and the embellishment of language required. However, the elements of pity and fear are present to some degree; whether they effect the "proper" catharsis of emotions is also a point of conjecture.

Are we then to say that the new play does not contain elements of tragedy because it does not fulfill all the components set forth in

12. Lane Cooper, The Poetics of Aristotle: Its Meaning and Influence, Longmans, Green and Co., New York, 1927, p. 29.

the Aristotelian definition; is it fair to use criteria by which Greek tragedy was evaluated and assume that a modern tragedy must be judged by the same criteria? It would seem much more logical to interpret a modern play which embraces the tragic mood by examining the relative dramatic values as they exist today and compare them to those values which existed in the time of classical tragedy. Greek tragedy gained much of its force through a supernatural element that was extra-human, and it stirred the audience far beyond that of a mere stage presentation. This supernatural element was presented both by visible means and by suggestion through the language. It was an element which lay far beyond the power of the individual actors; they were motivated, not only by the didactic struggle which existed on the stage, but much greater by a belief in the Gods against whom the struggle was useless. It was this fateful element which gave Greek tragedy a sense that more is involved than just the struggle that appears on the surface.

In addition to the spirit of tragedy, some consideration must also be given to the tragic hero. Classically he was a person of high fame and flourishing prosperity which today is beyond the realm of experiences of the ordinary man. He was an exceptional figure, drawn on a scale beyond that of human comparison, and when the tragic hero fell from prosperity to wretchedness and misery, usually bringing with him the destruction of a kingdom or a state, his fall was greater than it would be if the hero were a person of ordinary means. It might be stated regarding the tragic hero that "for the Greeks, domestic tragedy would have been impossible"¹³, as much so as the classical

13. Nicoll, op. cit., p. 103.

tragic hero is impossible today, unless perhaps we are to write a tragedy about a Hitler, a Mussolini, or a Stalin. However, the Greek hero was essentially a good man whose major fault lay in his making the fateful wrong turn at every juncture. The fall of the tragic hero in the new play is brought on by circumstances over which she has no control. Her fall, although not as great in magnitude as the classic counterpart, is caused by natural forces acting upon her, and her final decision to end her own life is made after her doom has already been decided. She is caught by impending circumstances from which there is no escape, and death is her only alternative.

Elizabethan tragedy, in general, followed the patterns set forth by classical drama. While the supernatural events caused by the supreme belief in the fate of the Gods were not present in the exact sense, still Shakespeare has used forces outside physical nature to give a feeling of the supernatural. The ghost of Hamlet's father, the witches, Banquo's spirit, and the symbols in Macbeth invest a sense that we are in touch with the intangible forces of the universe. Shakespeare also depends upon both chance or luck and fate for tragic effect, elements of which a modern audience is skeptical.

If we may use the term, modern tragedy is said to have begun with Ibsen. It was Ibsen who brought tragedy from its lofty heights and gave us people whom we know and understand as those living in modern society. It is said that Ibsen substituted scientific forces for those of the divine. Twentieth century plays of tragic nature have followed his pattern and deal with presenting the tragic hero in conflict with an ideal, a faith, or a class. And yet modern tragedy

has been severely criticized; in fact, there are many who say that tragedy on the modern stage does not exist unless the play is a revival of historical tragedy. Perhaps this statement is true; perhaps tragedy in its true sense is impossible on the modern stage. Are we to say then that we cannot have a tragic theme because the audience, as well as the playwright, today is dealing with a different set of values than the Greek and Elizabethan audience? Perhaps the problem is not to define modern tragedy in the light of classical definitions, but to define tragedy by first admitting that our critical sense of value has changed. It is true that a modern audience will attend the theatre to see a presentation of an historical tragedy and accept the historical conventions of the supernatural, the fates, and the tragic hero, because it is attending the theatre to see a revival. It is not there to see the hero pitted against forces which exist in the twentieth century. The same audience, if it were presented with a modern realistic drama in which the same devices were used as in classical tragedy, might leave the theatre in disgust. Modern audiences, when they see a modern realistic play, usually expect the characters to be real, to be people they know and can accept. Joseph Wood Krutch may have been right when he states, "The tragic solution of the problem of existence, the reconciliation to life by means of the tragic spirit is, that is to say, now only a fiction surviving in art."¹⁴ He feels that not only have we ceased to write tragedy, but the human values present in Elizabethan England and Periclean Athens are absent from our world.

14. Mark Harris, The Case for Tragedy, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1932, p. 123.

In the age of the realistic theatre in the twentieth century, what is needed perhaps is a definition which is willing to accept the fact that the modern drama of tragic mood does not attempt to fulfill the standards of the classical definition. It is even doubtful if writers of modern tragic drama would desire to have their plays of tragic nature placed in comparison with historical tragedy, not only because they realize that a modern realistic play cannot parallel heroic tragedy; but because they have not attempted in the first place to write a play to conform to the classical point of view of tragedy. We cannot say that a play does not have elements of tragedy because it does not present each characteristic brought out by the classical point of view of tragedy, any more than we can say that a man is not good because he does not have all the characteristics of a good man. In other words, the modern tragic theme, even though it does not possess each value of classical tragedy, still possesses enough of the tragic value to be recognized as such. Perhaps a more general definition, one which would include the tragic events which occur in our lifetime, is the criteria needed on which to base judgment of a play written for the modern audience.

Eric Bentley, although he does not attempt to defend the modern tragic play in the traditional sense and states bluntly that traditional tragedy does not exist on the modern stage, does bring forth a definition which presents the modern point of view. "All tragedy, so I would be inclined to state it, is a broad and deep account of the life of the individual, and, at least by inference, his fellows, in which neither man's problems nor his ability to cope with them is belittled.....At the heart of tragedy is a tough dialectical

struggle in which the victory of either side is credible."¹⁵ In a more general way, Milton Marx gives an interpretation of tragedy as "a play written in a serious, sometimes impressive style, in which things go wrong and cannot be set right except at great cost or sacrifice".¹⁶ Both of these definitions would include the modern serious drama of tragic nature, and the new play would fall into this classification.

It is possible to examine the new play for its tragic values with a point of approach which considers the tragic theme in a broader sense. The play presents the story of a woman who is unable to face the tragic realities of her life. Her weakness is her inability to cope with the crises of events as they arise, and she attempts to escape each time by running from them. She is not a good woman; in fact, she is selfish and self-centered. All of her acts are done for the fulfillment of her own desires with little regard for those who oppose her. She is essentially afraid of being condemned by society for her acts against it, and mainly because the rules of society do not uphold her methods of attaining her desires. She is responsible for the death of her father. The act is done with malice to prevent him from telling the man whom she has planned to marry that she is an unwed mother. This fact would no doubt prevent the marriage. It is ironical that his death comes after the secret has been told to her lover. Not only does she lose him, but she must escape the fear of society finding out that she has committed a crime against it for which she will be punished. She does escape, tempor-

15. Eric Bentley, The Playwright as Thinker, Reynal and Hitchcock, New York, 1946, p. 55.

16. Marx, op. cit., pp. 87-88.

arily at least, by locking herself away from society behind the door of a hotel suite, and admitting only those who are necessary for her mere existence. She has locked out all connection with the events of her past life, but escape is not complete for she receives checks from an investment which belonged to her father. These checks, coming to her each month, increase her fear because they seem to come directly from him. Knowing that she has killed her father, and remembering his threat that she will be repaid for what she has done, she is unable to sign the checks. An investigation by the company issuing the checks to find out why they have never been cashed, confronts this woman again with a problem from which she has tried to escape by living the life of a recluse. A visit by her former lover, who knows some of the events which led to her running away from the world, causes her to admit that she has lived her life in terror because she is guilty of her father's death. At the end of the play she is not only confronted with the man who knows her secret but also with her child whom she rejected at birth. This child has known nothing of her parents during her life and, even though she has now reached womanhood, she has been unable to find a trace of her lineage. The final dilemma is reached when the tragic victim, unable to escape from the catastrophe of admitting to her child that she is a murderer, again runs away from the crisis of culminating events - this time through suicide. This, in brief, is the tragic story of the play.

The play presents a story which is of serious theme and a broad and deep account of the life of an individual, who, because of her nature, is unable to live as she would choose, for the realities in her life will not let her escape. She is not an ideal person whose

destruction is brought on by a flaw in her character; rather she is never presented as an ideal person because the tragic flaw has always been apparent in her character. She is a person we do not respect; we never have and never will. In other words, the self-identification which is present in observing the classical tragic hero has now become a matter of self-examination; a characteristic which is present in so many modern plays of tragic nature. We do not hold up the modern tragic character as one with whom we should like to be identified, but we examine ourselves to see what qualities the modern tragic hero has which we also may possess. The modern tragic representation is much closer to life than the classical hero, which no doubt accounts for the change. We do understand this woman in the new play, but we hope and trust that, were we faced with a similar problem, we could act in a more conventional manner and thus prevent the tragic experiences which befell her.

Perhaps it is on this point that the play contains some element of melodrama. The choices which the woman in the play must make as the plot develops may seem to have grown out of situations which are presented merely for the sake of the situation. However, this is not the case, for the situations have grown because of the character not for her. Brander Mathews said that in high comedy or tragedy character dominates plot, and in farce and melodrama the reverse is true.¹⁷ It is the character who creates the plot in the new play and dominates its structure, and it is her inability to face the events of her life and meet them in the conventional manner which causes her eventual downfall. According to Barnard Hewitt a melodrama presents "human

17. Thompson, op. cit., p. 257.

characters involved in human problems, but the characters are not fully rounded and the problems in which they are involved are arbitrarily contrived and arbitrarily resolved".¹⁸ Still a play may have some moments which may seem to be melodramatic in nature, but if these moments have grown logically from the character's action or even inaction, and these moments stem from the character's strength or weakness, we can accept the melodramatic situations because they have arisen from direct character growth. The situations in the new play are not then arbitrarily contrived and resolved if they rise logically from well rounded human beings whose actions are motivated by the strength or weakness of their characters.

When the mood of the new play is considered, a certain element of suspense is present throughout the entire play. It is generally recognized that suspense is one of the important requisites in melodrama, and yet it is apparent that suspense can also be present in tragedy. It is the interest in the eventual outcome of the character struggle which creates suspense in a serious drama, whereas usually in a melodrama suspense is often brought about deliberately by plot involvement.

There are also touches of comedy in the new play but it certainly cannot be considered as a comedy in its entirety. For example, the opening scene between the two young lovers in Act Two should invite a bit of humor. The scene was deliberately given a comic slant to provide emotional relief for the audience. It is difficult to sustain intense feeling of emotion throughout an entire play, and the moments of

18. Hewitt, op. cit., p. 58.

high tension will seem to reach greater heights if they start from a lower degree. Comic relief was written into the play after moments of climax and before scenes in which emotion would reach an elevated pitch in order to provide contrast.

As one can easily see, it is very difficult to place any play in one classification and claim that the play is of one type and exclude all terms by which other plays are defined. The new play does have some features of melodrama and comedy as well as elements of tragedy. But the final purpose of the play is to present a serious story of a tragic nature. It is the story of a woman unable to cope with the problems of modern society, who is finally destroyed, not by modern society, but because of her sins against the conventions of modern society. Not only does she die a tragic death but her whole life is useless in her serious, frustrated struggle against realistic forces from which she cannot escape.

E. The Kind of a New Play

In a general way, plays may be divided into three main kinds relative to the major emphasis toward which the play is focused. These are the play of plot, the play of character, and the play of idea. Most good plays, it is true, are a combination of all three kinds of emphasis to a certain degree, but usually one will be more pronounced even though all three are present. In the play of plot, the main purpose of the play is to tell the story; while elements of character and idea may be present, they are there only to help tell the story. The play is written for the story and the plot is emphasized by both the playwright and the producer. The audience will be interested in the story and its eventual outcome far more than with the characters or the idea which the play presents.

Plays of idea are often exemplified by the type of drama called the propaganda play. The main purpose for which plays of this nature are written are, not to tell a story or present characters, but to leave an idea in the mind of the audience. Much of the social drama of the present left wing theatre falls into the classification of the play of idea. In brief, the main purpose of the idea play is to preach or teach. The idea of the play is not to be confused with the theme of a play. While the theme and idea of a play may be the same, and good plays have, or should have, a theme, the idea play has its existence primarily for the sake of offering an idea or theme to the audience, and both plot and character are subordinated for the sake of the idea.

On the other hand, a play of character exists primarily for the sake of the people presented in the play, and it is this classi-

fication of kind into which the new play falls. Again in the play of character, a story and an idea will usually be present, but the characters make the story and bring out the idea. The interest in the play is centered upon the characters, and the story is important only as a means of showing what the people in the play do to motivate the action of the story. It is the characters who make the story, and it is their action by nature as individuals which causes the action of the plot. The plot in the new play grew almost entirely from an attempt to justify the character of this strange woman who could run away from society and hide behind the bolted door of a hotel room. In striving to know this woman and by introspectively reflecting and reasoning why she became a recluse, the story of the play developed and strengthened into plot. When she became understandable as a human being, the course of action was born and it was possible to fashion a story based upon her character. The new play is a play of character, and the plot and idea grow from knowing the characters in the play so well that the action which first motivated them as individuals formed and motivated the action of the plot and presented the idea of the play. If the emphasis of the new play is veritable in its presentation, the character of the recluse will be remembered far longer than the story she presents, for "the permanent value of a play rests on its characterization".¹⁹

19. George Pierce Baker, Dramatic Technique, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1919, p. 234.

F. The Style of the New Play

It could be dangerous to classify a new play by saying that it fits into only one style and therefore could be produced in only that style exclusively. It is not intended in calling the new play one of realistic nature that the play could not be conceivably, and perhaps convincingly, presented in a manner which included some characteristics of another aesthetic style. It might be possible to produce the new play in a manner by which certain parts were stylized. However, it is doubtful if the play would lend itself to an expressionistic production, or a presentation of symbolistic nature. The play was written in a realistic style and a realistic production would be more in keeping with the style of the material.

Realism in drama, as defined by Hugh S. Davies, is "an effect of approximation to real life as close as compatible with the nature of dramatic illusion. Its chief formal characteristic is that it takes characters which are as far as possible just like ourselves, and so falls between the categories of tragedy and comedy, as defined by Aristotle. Like any other drama, but not more than any other drama, it must be constructed according to the circumstances of the stage and of the theatre"²⁰. Life in a realistic play is seen as an everyday experience and presents an illusion of reality which can be checked against actuality. The material is treated objectively and the emphasis is usually on character rather than plot. It is the state of mind of the character in which the realistic playwright is interested. The dialogue in the new play is

20. Hugh S. Davies, Realism in the Drama, Cambridge University Press, London, 1934, p. 119.

related to the language of real life as much as possible and in this manner adds to the illusion of reality. The play creates the illusion of a story happening to the characters on the stage at the moment, and the characters behave as they would if they were observed through a peep-hole. The realistic effect is obtained because the scenes are psychologically plausible.

However, the new play is not intended to be an impartial naturalistic approach to portray the lives of its characters. The material in the story was selected carefully, based on the principal events which occurred over a twenty-seven year span in the life of the leading character; and while the play has true-to-life scenes, no attempt was made to present the "slice of life" found usually in naturalism at the expense of a carefully constructed plot. The literal truthfulness in naturalism, "the candid presentation of the natural world"²¹, based on scientific determinism is not adhered to in the play. Rather the new play is based on a selective realistic approach. Realism is employed only to give the impression of reality and only selected details are presented to create this impression. John Gassner sums up the style of approach made in treating the material in the new play by stating that selected realism "requires common sense, taste, and a recognition that theatre creates the illusion of reality instead of duplicating it for the sake of duplication; above all it demands that the production concentrate on the meaning or point of dramatic experience and strive to express it economically and clearly"²².

21. Bentley, op. cit., p. 24.

22. Gassner, op. cit., p. 84.

- - - - -

The foregoing discussion has analyzed the new play from the standpoints of theme, form, type, kind, and style in an effort to find its relative place in the classifications of dramatic media. The discussion has shown the bases of classification and has also revealed the aim of the author to create "A realistic play in three acts: a serious drama of character".

PART II. THE SCRIPT

"Bolted Doors" - An Original Drama in
Three Acts

We wish to thank the following for their aid in making the production of BOLTED DOORS possible: Wilson B. Paul, Head of the Department of Speech, Dramatics, and Radio Education, for his advice and assistance; Cecil H. Nickle, technical director, for assistance and advice in the settings, lighting and technical phases of the production; Ben Wampler, designer, for his advice on the decor of the settings; Donald O. Buell, Director of Dramatics, for his encouragement, advice and supervision; Virgil Scott, English Department, for his help on writing the play; Leslie Scott and the Staff of the Student Union Building for their kindness in loaning properties; Jeanette Lee, Home Economics Department, for the loan of costumes; and to all others whose cooperation made this production possible.

"B O L T E D D O O R S"

A Drama in Three Acts

By

REGINALD V. HOLLAND

CHARACTERS

(In order of appearance)

ADAM SPENCER, father of Miss Lorinda.

MISS LORINDA SPENCER.

RICHARD COURTRIGHT.

ANNABELLE GREY, secretary to Peter Murray.

PETER MURRAY, a young corporation lawyer.

CHARLES, a waiter.

SCENES

ACT ONE

The game room of Adam Spencer's Fifth Avenue home, late in June,
1919.

ACT TWO

Scene 1. The office of the Lehigh Valley Manufacturing Company
in Upper New York. Spring, the present.

Scene 2. The living room of Miss Lorinda Spencer's suite in
the Belmore Hotel in New York City, the next day.

ACT THREE

The same. The next morning.

"B O L T E D D O O R S"

ACT ONE

THE TIME: Afternoon. June, 1919.

THE SCENE: The game or sunroom of the Spencer home. It is a cheerful room; a room that was made for relaxation. There is a door down right which leads to the garden, French doors up center and door down left. A long table stands by the wall left and on it are magazines, a brandy decanter and glasses, and a small tray on which is a glass and a bottle of medicine. Right of the table is a large comfortable leather chair - ADAM SPENCER'S own - and beside the chair a large flat top smoking stand. There is a bookcase up left, and up right is a rather large portrait of the late Mrs. Spencer, and beside it a two seated leather couch. A straight back chair stands against the wall near the door down right. There is a window up right through which the garden is visible.

AT RISE: ADAM SPENCER and RICHARD COURTRIGHT enter down left. ADAM SPENCER is a short man but heavy and red faced. He is wearing a dark smoking jacket. He has been ill and it is an effort for him to get around; the least exertion causes him to breathe hard and rapidly and he does not move more than necessary. ADAM SPENCER'S age is sixty but he looks older. What little hair he has left is gray. RICHARD COURTRIGHT is a tall man of thirty. He is well dressed in a light suit (three button coat and very narrow trousers). His shirt has a very narrow collar and he wears a narrow knit tie. He is a figure of a young and secure business man of the time, complete with a small mustache. The men have just finished lunch.

COURTRIGHT

(Enters first, crosses to center.)

That was an excellent lunch, Mr. Spencer.

SPENCER

(Sitting in chair left.)

You call that a lunch - soup and salad. Ugh...Rabbit food! I ate lunch at the Union Club for years and there a man got a real meal - meat and potatoes.

(He points off left.)

That cook out there pays too much attention to my diet, and what's more she won't give me anything unless it's on the list the doctor left here when I was sick. High blood pressure they call it. High blood pressure, umph! It's just a slow way to starve a man to death.

(He settles in a chair stage right. Beside the chair is a table with a brandy decanter and glasses.)

How would you like a spot of brandy, Richard?

COURTRIGHT

(Teasing him.)

Fine - but do you think you should? Brandy's not on your diet. High blood pressure you know!

SPENCER

Get that chess board. I'll beat your britches off for making a remark like that. My grandfather used to say that a spot of brandy after a meal put color in your cheeks. He lived to be 94 and that's good enough for me.

(He pours the drinks.)

COURTRIGHT

(Gets the chess board from the small table up right.)

I say, you'd better enjoy it while you can. No more brandy after next Tuesday.

SPENCER

(Annoyed.)

And why not?

COURTRIGHT

Prohibition. Next Tuesday is July 1st.

SPENCER

By George, that's right. But it won't bother me! You don't think I keep a cellar to hold a furnace, do you?

(He takes a drink.)

COURTRIGHT

(He laughs and crosses back to center with the chess board.)

Shall we play on the smoking stand here?

SPENCER

(Hands COURTRIGHT the brandy.)

That's all right. Here, have your drink.....What do you think about

prohibition, Richard?

COURTRIGHT

Well, many men still overseas aren't going to like it when they come home and find they can't buy a drink. As for me, I'm very passive on the subject. I can take this or leave it.

(He holds up the glass.)

Usually I leave it!

SPENCER

I suppose that's a good way to be.....Prohibition won't bother you very much then. It looks like a permanent thing though; most of the states have already ratified the 18th Amendment. But I say they're going to have a big job enforcing that law. If a man wants a drink he's going to get it some way, even if he has to make it himself. I'm afraid I never can feel as if I'll be breaking a law when I take a little drink, will you?

COURTRIGHT

To tell the truth, I probably won't take one, sir; not if it's illegal.

SPENCER

Dammit - I will!

(He picks up a box of cigars.)

Would you like a cigar?

COURTRIGHT

No thanks. I never smoke cigars.

(He takes out a cigarette.)

SPENCER

You don't? Short on vices, eh?

COURTRIGHT

I'll have one of these.

(He lights SPENCER'S cigar.)

SPENCER

Oh, you're one of those fancy cigarette smokers. I could never get any satisfaction out of those blame cigarettes myself; seems I just get one lighted and it's time to put it out.

(He takes a big drag on the cigar and enjoys it.)

This is a real smoke! But now I have to enjoy each cigar even more than I used to since the doctor made me cut down. It's one after lunch, one after dinner, and one in the evening. I used to smoke about fifteen a day at least.

(He takes another big drag.)

I guess you never really enjoy things until someone takes them away from you.

COURTRIGHT

You're right there.....Say, this is fine brandy.

SPENCER

It is good....

(Takes a drink.)

Yes, when you get old they take things away from you. I wish I were thirty again. Look at you - young, strong - everything for you is to come.....For me, it's past.

COURTRIGHT

I wouldn't say that, Mr. Spencer.

SPENCER

Son, that's because you don't understand what getting old means. It's not the gradual process everyone believes. When I was thirty I didn't feel any differently than when I was twenty.....When I was forty, I felt like I did at thirty. Then one day I was told I could have only three cigars. It was the same as if the doctor had said, "Adam Spencer you're an old man!" I felt old after that, Richard. Yes, I became an old man in one day.

COURTRIGHT

Surely the success you have gained in your life must be a great satisfaction to you. You have that to look back on....

SPENCER

(Puts his glass on the smoking stand.)

That's exactly what I mean. When a man looks back on what he has done instead of ahead to what he is going to do - then he's finished. I'm starting to look back and I don't like it.

COURTRIGHT

You're not finished, Mr. Spencer. It's just because you haven't felt well these past few months that makes you think that way. The hard work you did during the war, too - you're just tired that's all.

SPENCER

(Slowly.)

I wish you were right, son.

COURTRIGHT

(Picks up SPENCER'S glass and puts both glasses on the table left.)

Of course, I'm right. When you start going back to the office every day and get into your old routine again, you'll feel differently.... Where do you keep the chessmen?

SPENCER

I think they're on top of the bookcase.....It's queer but I don't have any desire to go back to the office.

COURTRIGHT

(Gets the chessmen and crosses upper left.)

Oh, come now!

SPENCER

Richard, I had a special reason for asking you to lunch today.
It wasn't just to have our regular chess game...

COURTRIGHT

No?

(Puts the box of chessmen down and crosses back to chair center.)

SPENCER

I'm going to be very frank - you don't mind?

COURTRIGHT

Why, no. I'd prefer you to be that way.

(He gets a chair and places it opposite the chess board from SPENCER and opens the box with the chessmen and stands behind the chair.)

SPENCER

I've known you a long time. Why, I even celebrated with your father the night you were born; I think I was as happy that you were a boy as he. I've watched you grow up - followed you in the things you did, and I'm as proud of you as if you were my own son. Many of the happiest moments in my life were when you came to me and let me help you with some of your problems of growing up. Yes, when your father died, I always hoped you would in some small way, let me take his place.

COURTRIGHT

(Sits in chair center.)

You have done that, sir.

SPENCER

(Pause.)

I've never had a son, Richard. I've had most everything else in life, but never a son. A good business....yes. Richard, do you know there's been an Adam Spencer on Wall Street since 1810? Now the line is finished.

COURTRIGHT

But you do have Lorinda.

SPENCER

(Very slowly.)

Yes, I have Lorinda; sorry to say, but I find little joy in her!

(Pause. He looks at RICHARD a long time.)

You do love my daughter, don't you, Richard?

COURTRIGHT

You know I do, sir. Very much!

SPENCER

Yes, I suppose you do.....I suppose you do.

COURTRIGHT

You don't seem very pleased, Mr. Spencer.

SPENCER

Don't I?

COURTRIGHT

No, sir. Don't you think I'm good enough for her?

SPENCER

(Quickly.)

Yes, yes...of course I do, my boy.

COURTRIGHT

Then what is it?

SPENCER

Nothing. Nothing. It's just that.....

COURTRIGHT

What, sir?

SPENCER

Nothing. I'm a bit upset today is all.....I want to tell you something but I don't know how to get started.

(He picks up a red and a white pawn and hiding one in each hand holds them out to COURTRIGHT.)

Here, which hand do you want?

(COURTRIGHT taps a hand.)

Red - Good! I get white and first move.

(They start to set up the chessmen.)

I suppose it seems pretty good to get back in the bank again?

COURTRIGHT

It surely does.

SPENCER

What department are you in now?

COURTRIGHT

Back in investments. The same as before I went in the army.

SPENCER

Investments. Yes, I knew you'd go back to that. You like the work, don't you?

COURTRIGHT

Very much!.....But you wanted to tell me something, Mr. Spencer. Was it something about Lorinda? Was that why you asked me to lunch today - to find out if I loved your daughter?

SPENCER

No.....No.....that wasn't it.

(Pause.)

It's much bigger! I told you today I felt I would soon be finished as far as my business is concerned.

(Pause. Looks at COURTRIGHT.)

Dammit, Richard, how would you like to take up where I leave off? In other words, I want you to take the place of the son I never had.

COURTRIGHT

You mean you want me in your business?

SPENCER

(Sits up in his chair.)

In it? No! I want you to run it!

COURTRIGHT

(After a pause he stands, then walks to side of chair center and turns to SPENCER.)

That's a pretty big order, Mr. Spencer.

SPENCER

Of course it's a big order...But, I know you can handle it; you have the experience and a business head, too. Why, what you're making at the bank would be peanuts compared to working for me. I'll make it well worth your while, son!

COURTRIGHT

Oh, I know you would, sir. But....

SPENCER

But what? Are you interested?

COURTRIGHT

Why certainly I'm interested. I'd be a fool to say I wasn't. Only...
(Walks down right.)

SPENCER

(Pause.)

You mean Lorinda? Is that what you're thinking about?

COURTRIGHT

Yes, in a way.

SPENCER

Oh, forget Lorinda! We don't even have to tell her.....What do you say?

COURTRIGHT

(Walks back to SPENCER.)

You know I couldn't afford to turn down the proposition you're offering me....

SPENCER

Then you'll take it?

COURTRIGHT

(Pause.)

I'll take it.

SPENCER

(Getting a little excited.)

You'll never be sorry, Richard. I'll make you one of the biggest men in this country....Nothing is going to stop you.

COURTRIGHT

I wish I had as much confidence in my ability as you have.

SPENCER

I'll show you how much confidence I have in you, son.....Are you ready to go to work?

COURTRIGHT

(Surprised.)

Right now?

SPENCER

Right now!

COURTRIGHT

(Laughing. Sits in chair center.)

Why...why, sure. I'm ready!

SPENCER

(Leans back in his chair.)

All right. I've been thinking about investing some money but since I've been sick I haven't had a chance to do it. There are two things I want to do and the first concerns Lorinda. You probably knew that Lorinda's mother left her quite a sum when she died. Well, I've been handling that for her. Most of it is tied up in stocks and with the market fluctuating like it has in the past few weeks, I'd rather the money were in something safe like bonds. Don't you think I'm right?

COURTRIGHT

Yes, I do.

SPENCER

What would you advise then?

COURTRIGHT

I'd rather not say, sir.

SPENCER

Well, why not?

COURTRIGHT

(Rises. Crosses to right center.)

Look, I'll work for you, Mr. Spencer, but I'd rather not handle any of Lorinda's investments. It's a matter of principle, sir.

SPE'CKER

(A bit angry. Pounds arm of chair.)

You and your principles.....Sometimes I think you have too many, Richard. I never got where I am on Wall Street with principles.

COURTFRIGHT

(Quickly. Walks down right.)

I'll do anything else.

(Turns to SPE'CKER.)

All I ask is not to have the responsibility for Lorinda's money.

SPE'CKER

Oh, all right. We'll talk about that later. Now, there's a lot of money being made on the stock market today and I've missed it. You've been following the stocks?

COURTFRIGHT

I have!

SPE'CKER

Humm.....Made any money?

COURTFRIGHT

A little.

SPE'CKER

You have, eh? Well, Richard, I want to get my feet wet, too. What have you been buying?

COURTFRIGHT

Oil.....

SPE'CKER

(Pause as he thinks it over.)

Oil? Humm.....

COURTFRIGHT

Yes, sir. Sinclair Oil!

SPE'CKER

Sinclair Oil - No! - I want something with a future. The war is over - there's no future in oil.

COURTFRIGHT

(Crosses to center.)

Oil's future is in automobiles.

SPE'CKER

But there's no future in automobiles. The market's too small; never sell enough. Look at the price of cars today; why, they're only a luxury for the rich.

COURTRIGHT

I can't go along with you there, sir.

(Crosses to SPENCER.)

Henry Ford says he's going to make a car that will sell so cheaply that everyone can afford to have it. He's going to change the automobile from a luxury to a necessity.

SPENCER

The railroads won't let him!

COURTRIGHT

They can't stop him! Automobiles are in to stay!.....Just look at what automobile stocks have done recently. Chandler Motor gained 34 points last week and General Motors 10 $\frac{1}{4}$. Chandler is paying a 4% dividend the first of the month. They're all up - Stutz, Studebaker, Chevrolet and even Maxwell. I'm sure automobiles are going to have a lot to do with the future of America, and they can't run without gasoline.

SPENCER

What do you know about Sinclair?

COURTRIGHT

Gained 10 points last week.

SPENCER

Huh! What are they selling at now?

COURTRIGHT

61 yesterday.

SPENCER

Is the company solid?

COURTRIGHT

Their net earnings increased 70% over last year. They just bought land for four new refineries here in the east.

SPENCER

(Thinking.)

61, huh?.....

COURTRIGHT

61!

SPENCER

(Pause and then quickly.)

All right, all right, son, I'll take your word for it! Go out to the study and order me 200 shares. You'll find the name of my broker listed beside the telephone.

COURTRIGHT

(Starts to exit left.)

I'll do it right away.

SPENCER

Wait a minute.

(COURTRIGHT stops at doorway.)

You tell that broker to leave Lehigh Valley Manufacturing alone. He's been trying to get me to sell, but I have nearly a controlling interest in the company and I want to keep it. Now I'll admit, today it may not be worth much, but I think in a few years, it will amount to something, and if my judgment is correct.....well, Lorinda will be able to buy herself something extra.

COURTRIGHT

Right. Anything else?

SPENCER

No, that's all.....I'll get these chessmen set up while you're gone.

(COURTRIGHT exits. SPENCER sits in his chair and starts to set up the chessmen.)

Oil.....um.....oil.....Sinclair Oil.....Might be all right!!

(As he sits there mumbling suddenly the French doors open and LORINDA SPENCER enters and stands in the doorway. She is impressive in her fine clothes. She is wearing a suit, the skirt of which is rather tight at the ankles and hangs about six inches from the floor. Her stockings are dark and her shoes high. She wears a large hat with a veil pinned over her face. She is vivacious, full of energy, and the center of attention.)

LORINDA

(Crosses down center.)

Hello, Daddy.....

SPENCER

(Rising and unsteadily taking a few steps toward her, crossing to center.)

Lorinda, Lorinda. You're home again. I can hardly believe it.

LORINDA

(Walking to him.)

Yes, I'm home again.

SPENCER

(He tries to kiss her but she permits him just a "peck" on the cheek.)

Oh, it's good to have you here!

(LORINDA walks to stage right. SPENCER follows.)

Come here, Lorinda!...I've missed you so much, and worried about you too!

LORINDA

(Crosses right, moving away.)

That wasn't necessary.

(SPENCER tries to put his arms around her.)

Be careful now.....You'll muss me!

SPENCER

(Shocked.)

Lorinda, you've been gone so long!

LORINDA

(Turning to him.)

Only about six months.

(Pause.....She looks at him - she sees that she has hurt him.)

Daddy, you don't look at all well to me.

(Crosses to SPENCER.)

SPENCER

Oh, I'm all right!

LORINDA

You're sure? You've been doing what the doctor ordered?

SPENCER

Yes, of course.

LORINDA

Oh, I should have been here to look after you.

(She leads him to the sofa right center.)

Now you sit here and be comfortable.

(SPENCER sits.)

Isn't that better?

SPENCER

Yes, but I'm all right! I want to know about you, Lorinda. How are you?

LORINDA

(Walks down left and crosses left.)

Well, how do I look?

SPENCER

(After a pause.)

Wonderful! Wonderful! But I mean, how do you feel?

LORINDA

(Starting to remove her veil and hat.)

I feel fine. The trip to Bermuda was wonderful. You haven't forgotten, have you, that I've been to Bermuda?

SPENCER

I haven't forgotten.

LORINDA

And everyone thinks that's where I've been? Everyone?

SPENCER

Yes, everyone!

LORINDA

(Crosses to SPENCER and puts an arm on his shoulders.)

Daddy, you're a dear. I'll keep a secret for you sometime.

SPENCER

I hope you'll never have to. But you're all right. I mean, you feel good and everything?

LORINDA

(Crosses stage left.)

Perfect. I don't think I ever felt better in my life.

SPENCER

I'm glad to hear that.

LORINDA

And, did you miss me?

SPENCER

Of course, I missed you. I've been worrying about you since the day you left.

LORINDA

(At left.)

You shouldn't have. I was in perfectly good hands.....Oh, it's good to get into some decent clothes again.

(She moves about like a fashion model.)

Can you tell? Do I look any different?

SPENCER

If anything, Lorinda, you are more beautiful now than before you went away.

LORINDA

(Laughing.)

When I went to Bermuda, you mean! Don't forget that!

SPENCER

I won't forget.

LORINDA

(Going to SPENCER.)

But do you think anyone suspects, father? Everyone really believes I've been away on a trip?

SPENCER

(Turning away.)

No one suspects!

LORINDA

Thank you again, daddy, for helping me keep my secret. Now, no one will ever know I've had a child but you and me. No one will ever find out, will they?

SPENCER

(Looking away.)

You're right, Lorinda; no one will ever find out. But to think something like this should happen to you - my daughter. I still can't believe it.

LORINDA

(Walking down right.)

Don't let it bother you so much. It happens to thousands of girls.

SPENCER

(Turning to her.)

But those girls aren't my daughter, Lorinda! You are....and the only child I have. I wish to God it hadn't happened to you.

LORINDA

It did though...and there's nothing we can do about it now. I want to forget it.....How do you like my new suit?

SPENCER

Forget it! Forget it! Do you think with just a shrug of your shoulders you can pass this thing off? Forget it? I'll never forget it.

LORINDA

(Laying her hat on the floor beside her as she sits on the couch right of SPENCER.)

Come now, it's not that important to you. I should be the one to be sad if anyone has any feeling about it. But I'm not. As far as I'm concerned it's over and done with! It's a chapter in my life that is closed, and closed forever....it will never be opened again.

SPENCER

But how could you keep going with this Larry, and secretly - hiding all this from me.

LORINDA

I loved him, daddy!

SPENCER

Because he was a Major and in a uniform. I told you he was no good - reckless, wild; he cared for nothing but himself.

LORINDA

(Rising, crossing behind sofa.)

Don't you talk that way about Larry. Wasn't it enough that you drove him out of this house. It was you who made me see him secretly.

SPEICER

Now, Lorinda, calm down.

LORINDA

(Standing behind sofa.)

Is it my fault that he was sent overseas and killed before he had a chance to marry me? He would have married me if he had known.

(Slowly.)

That is, if I had wanted him to.....

SPEICER

If you had wanted him to?

LORINDA

That's what I said.

SPEICER

If he hadn't been killed, do you mean to tell me you wouldn't have made him marry you?

LORINDA

I'm not sure whether I would or not!

SPEICER

I don't understand you.....

LORINDA

If I had married him, things would have been much more difficult than they are now.....Yes, and I'm not sorry he is dead! I'll admit he was exciting; he was a very romantic figure, father. Oh, I did love him then. He was tall and looked wonderful in a uniform.....Yes, we danced well together. But it's much more simple because he was killed. Sort of an act of fate, you might call it. Now I have no husband, no child. I'm free to do anything, just as I was before.

SPEICER

I won't have you talk like that!

LORINDA

(Laughing.)

Just think, he didn't know, did he? I wonder if he would have been thrilled to be a father? It's tragic - his not being alive.....

SPEICER

Lorinda!

LORINDA

(Sarcastically.)

But, daddy, you're not sorry he is dead, are you? You told me yourself that you would have killed him! Didn't you?

SPEICER

Lorinda, stop that!

LORINDA

(Crosses left behind smoking stand.)

Stop it? Why shouldn't I say I'm glad he is dead? Because I really am. I don't have a husband and it's much less complicated this way. You think I can say this because, unfortunately, he was the father of my child? True. It would have been better if this hadn't happened. But it did! And now it's over with. Oh, I paid for it. I gave up months of my life; I hid away from peeping eyes, and nosey old women, and paid my penalty. But outside of those few months away, I have lost nothing. Remember, father - I made a trip to Bermuda - as simple as that.

SPENCER

(After a pause, he shakes his head.)

You haven't told me about the child.

LORINDA

The child? Oh, yes, the child! I suppose since you're now a grandfather you would like to hear about the child. They told me it was a girl.

SPENCER

(Shocked.)

Told you?.....Didn't you see your child?

LORINDA

No. I didn't see her. I didn't want to see her!

SPENCER

Lorinda, what kind of a mother are you?

LORINDA

(Fiercely.)

I'm a woman! I'm not a mother!

SPENCER

What did you name her, Lorinda?)

LORINDA

(Crosses to SPENCER behind sofa.)

Oh please stop playing the grandfather.

(Pause.)

I didn't name her. I didn't think it necessary.

SPENCER

(In anger.)

Lorinda, you can't act this way toward your own child. After all she's a Spencer. You can't treat her like this; she's part of you.

LORINDA

(Standing behind sofa.)

Not any more she isn't. Yes, she was part of me - when she made me afraid to look into a mirror. It almost makes me ill even to think how I looked.

SPENCER

Thank God, Lorinda, I'm the only one to hear you talk like this.

LORINDA

(Sits by SPENCER on the couch.)

Come now, daddy, get down off that golden pedestal. Your daughter had a rather distasteful event in her life that put her out of circulation for a shorttime. But now she's back and as good as ever, isn't she?

SPENCER

Have you made up your mind what you are going to do now?

LORINDA

You mean you would like to know my plans for the future?

SPENCER

Yes - if you have any.

LORINDA

But I do! In fact, I know very definitely what I am going to do.

SPENCER

Yes?.....

LORINDA

I'm going to marry Richard Courtright.

SPENCER

Marry Richard?

LORINDA

Yes, Richard! I've made up my mind. Nothing can change me.

SPENCER

But you don't love him.

LORINDA

Love him? Since when has love become necessary for marriage? I realize that he is not all that a woman would desire in a man, but he's firm and rather nice in his way.

SPENCER

There's nothing wrong in being firm and honest. He's too good for you, Lorinda. I don't think he'll have you.

LORINDA

But you know he's devoted to me, daddy, and fond of you, too. You once said I could make you happy by marrying him.

SPENCER

I would have been happy to have you marry Richard. Now, I don't know. What makes you so sure he will have you after what has happened?

LORINDA

But he'll never know.....I'm sure I'll never tell him, and I've seen to it that he won't find out any other way.

SPENCER

How can he help but know? You can't have your child taken care of without a husband finding out some day.

LORINDA

Didn't I tell you? I don't have the child. I gave it away. It's very simple, really; you just have to sign some papers and when the child is born they take it and you walk away a free woman.

SPENCER

Lorinda.....you didn't! A terrible thing like that.....

LORINDA

(Wises and crosses down right.)

Yes, I did. And why shouldn't I? I didn't ask the child to come.... A child didn't fit into my way of living and the easiest thing to do was to give her away. So that's what I did.

SPENCER

Where is the child now, Lorinda?

LORINDA

(At right.)

Don't ask me where the child is because I don't know and even if I did I wouldn't tell you.

SPENCER

No, Lorinda! You could have brought the child home until we found the proper place for it; at least we could look after it then.

LORINDA

That was too much trouble. I think I managed very nicely; in fact, I'm rather proud of myself the way it all turned out.

SPENCER

(Rising.)

I won't let you do this! You forget that I know about the child, too.

LORINDA

I'm not worried about you, daddy. You're too proud of the name of Spencer to say anything about your daughter - especially to Richard. You picked him for your son-in-law and now I'll see to it that your wish comes true.

SPENCER

(Coming to LORINDA.)

You've gone too far this time, Lorinda. Do you think I can sit by and see you ruin Richard like you have ruined every other decent thing you've touched? I've seen enough! I've helped you each time you have

gotten into trouble. Even helped you go away and have your child. You've made a cheat out of me; you've made me lose what self respect I have left. I'm through lying for you!
(Goes back to love seat.)

LORINDA

Come now, daddy, you're being very melodramatic.

SPENCER

(Sits on love seat, right side.)

Don't call me daddy like that - each time you do, you make something curl up inside of me.

LORINDA

(Crosses to SPENCER.)

But, daddy - I am your daughter.

SPENCER

Yes, you're my daughter, but I wish you weren't. I wish to God you weren't.

LORINDA

That's not a nice thing to say.

SPENCER

Nice? What do you know about being nice? I don't think you ever did a nice thing in your life. You're a spoiler, Lorinda; everything you touch spoils. I won't let you spoil Richard.

LORINDA

You don't really mean that, you know. I've been with you too long to believe you would do anything I didn't want you to.

SPENCER

I do mean it. I won't let you marry Richard unless you tell him the truth!

LORINDA

You're being very silly.

SPENCER

Why can't you be a decent woman? You will have a chance. Tell him the whole story - tell him that you are sorry and ashamed. Tell him the truth about yourself.

LORINDA

And if I don't?

SPENCER

Then I will!

LORINDA

I'll never tell him. Neither will you! You're talking like a martyr, and you're no more a martyr than I am. I know what the name Spencer

means to you. You have never cared for me or what I did except that I was a Spencer. And now the Spencers have a child. No, daddy, you'll keep quiet.

SPENCER

(Rising with difficulty.)

Lorinda, I mean what I say. If you don't tell Richard, I will!

LORINDA

Are you threatening me?

(Crosses right.)

SPENCER

You may call it that if you wish.

LORINDA

You make me laugh. You should know by this time that I'll do exactly what I want and if that means telling a few lies, it doesn't bother me a bit.

SPENCER

(Pleadingly.)

Do it for me, Lorinda. Please.....You know I'm not well. Perhaps this is the last thing you will have a chance to do for me.

LORINDA

And lose the one thing I really want most? I want Richard and I'm going to have him. I'll do nothing that might spoil my chances. All I have to do is snap my fingers and he'll come running. He'll do anything I wish. I'll get him and I'll get him my way. And that won't be by telling him about the child.

SPENCER

It would kill me to have you marry that boy under your conditions.
(Crosses left.)

LORINDA

(Starting to leave.)

It would! That's too bad. I guess I'll have to take that chance.

SPENCER

(Following her, crossing between chair and table right.)

Please, Lorinda.....tell him!

LORINDA

No. I'll never tell him!

SPENCER

Think about it. Perhaps you'll change your mind. Perhaps you'll tell him for your father's sake, Lorinda.

LORINDA

For your sake?

(She laughs.)

That's the weakest argument you can think of!
 (Exits through door upstage.)

SPENCER

Lorinda.....Come back here.....Lorinda.....

(He starts to follow her a few steps but the effort is very trying, and he crosses to side of sofa center. Then he turns and looks at the picture of his wife on the wall. He walks slowly, with great effort.)

Mary, I've done a poor job of raising our daughter - a very poor job.. You left too soon. And yet I'm glad you're not here to see her today. You wouldn't like Lorinda at all, and you wouldn't like me because I've failed you. I've tried; I've tried so hard; maybe too hard. But she's not a daughter we can be proud of....I've failed you, Mary. I wish you could tell me what to do. I don't know. I don't know.

(As he stands there looking at the picture, RICHARD COURTRIGHT enters and stands in the doorway down left.)

COURTRIGHT

Well, I placed your order, Mr. Spencer.

SPENCER

(Quickly facing COURTRIGHT.)

Oh, Richard, it's you. You startled me for a moment. Living here all alone plays tricks on me sometimes. Come on in.

COURTRIGHT

(Crosses to chess table, noticing the chessmen on the table.)
 Did you get the chessmen all set up for our game?

SPENCER

(Moving to the chessboard.)

Yes, yes, I've been waiting for you, Richard.

COURTRIGHT

Let me see, I think the last time I was here you won two games from me.

SPENCER

(Having difficulty controlling himself, and as he moves the chessboard, he tips over several pieces.)

I believe I did.

COURTRIGHT

Here, let me do that.

(Pause as he looks at SPENCER.)

You had better take it easy, Mr. Spencer. You seem to be a bit unsteady. Sit here. What happened to you while I was gone?

(He helps SPENCER to the big chair left.)

SPE'NCER

(Leaning back in the chair and closing his eyes.)
Thank you, Richard.....This feels much better.
(He sighs.)

COURTRIGHT

Are you all right now? Is there anything I can get you?

SPE'NCER

No. I'm all right....Just let me rest here a few minutes and I'll take you on. I'm over these little spells in no time.

COURTRIGHT

(Crosses up left to table.)
What about your medicine here?
(Picks up a tray with the medicine bottle from the table.)
Shouldn't you take some of this? Here, I'll help you.

SPE'NCER

No....No....that medicine is only for extreme emergencies. I've only had to take that once, but the doctor insists I keep it with me. It would hold me until he can get here.....I'm all right now. You can put it back.

COURTRIGHT

(Puts the medicine back on the table.)
That's good.....You had me worried for a moment.

SPE'NCER

Sorry about my acting like this; but get those chessmen ready and we'll have our game.

COURTRIGHT

(Crosses back of SPE'NCER and places hand on his shoulder.)
Not on your life. You sit right there and take it easy - no chess now. We'll save it for another time.

SPE'NCER

(Sitting up in his chair.)
Come now, I can play you a game.

COURTRIGHT

(Crosses to chair center.)
No. You just sit back there like you were....You didn't tell me at lunch if you had heard from Lorinda recently.

SPE'NCER

(Slowly.)
Why.....yes, I heard from her today.

COURTRIGHT

(Very eagerly. He sits in chair center.)
You did! Why didn't you tell me? What did she have to say? I

haven't had a letter from her for some time and the last one took ages to reach me. When was yours dated?

SPENCER

Well.....I didn't notice, but it seemed quite recent.

COURTRIGHT

Bermuda is too far away to suit me. I'll bet she doesn't know you have been feeling worse or she'd be here. Did she say when she was coming home?

SPENCER

No, she didn't say just when she was coming home, but I'm sure it will be soon now.

COURTRIGHT

I hope she'll let me know when she docks. She didn't give me a chance to see her sail, so I really want to meet her when she comes back.

SPENCER

Oh, I'm sure she will.

COURTRIGHT

What's she been doing, did she say?

SPENCER

(Haltingly.)

Just the usual things - parties, sightseeing, buying clothes - nothing really important.

COURTRIGHT

(Rises and crosses to picture right.)

I know Lorinda - if she's buying clothes, I'm glad you're paying the bill and not me.

(Looking at the picture.)

I saw you admiring the picture of Mrs. Spencer when I came in.

SPENCER

Yes, sometimes I even talk to her.

COURTRIGHT

Lorinda looks a lot like her, doesn't she? Is Lorinda like her too? I mean, the way she acts and does things?

SPENCER

(Quickly.)

No.....Lorinda is nothing like her mother.

COURTRIGHT

(Picks up the hat which is on the floor right of the couch, stage right.)

This hat, Mr. Spencer, this hat.....isn't it Lorinda's?

(Crosses to center.)

What is it doing here?

SPENCER

I don't know.....I didn't notice it was there. Perhaps the house-keeper.....

COURTNIIGHT

Wait a minute. You're not fooling me.....Lorinda's home. She's here, isn't she? I know she is!

SPENCER

(Looking at COURTNIIGHT, and after a long pause.)
Yes. She's here.

COURTNIIGHT

(Very excited.)
Why didn't you tell me? She's all right, isn't she?

SPENCER

(Slowly.)
She's all right.

COURTNIIGHT

When did she get back?

SPENCER

Only today.

COURTNIIGHT

(Very excited.)
But why didn't you tell me? I wanted to meet her. Where is she now? I must see her.

(He starts to the door upstage.)

SPENCER

(Stopping him at chair center.)
Richard.....Wait a minute.....Come over here and sit down. I want to talk to you.

COURTNIIGHT

(Reluctantly.)
Sir, I'd like to see Lorinda. I've been waiting six months for her to get back.

SPENCER

Please sit down, Richard. You'll have plenty of time to see Lorinda. I have something I must talk to you about.

COURTNIIGHT

But I want to see her now.

SPENCER

Richard, please.

COURTRIGHT

(Sits on the chair right.)

All right, Mr. Spencer.

SPENCER

I have something to tell you, son. I don't want to, but I have to. You told me you loved Lorinda very much?

COURTRIGHT

Very much, Mr. Spencer. I'll marry her whenever she'll say the word!

SPENCER

Then you are going to be hurt, Richard.

COURTRIGHT

I don't understand what you mean. Nothing has happened to her?

SPENCER

Richard, I've known you for a long time. You're a fine young man; one whom I have always wanted for a son. I have to tell you this because you're all I have left.

COURTRIGHT

What do you mean, Mr. Spencer?

SPENCER

(A long pause before he speaks.)

Boy, Lorinda was never in Bermuda.

COURTRIGHT

(Unbelievably.)

Never in Bermuda.....she must have been.....I received her letters from there.

SPENCER

Yes, I know you did. But they were written in this country and re-mailed from Bermuda.

COURTRIGHT

What is this, anyway? If Lorinda wasn't there, then where was she?

SPENCER

She was somewhere near this city all the time.

COURTRIGHT

(Crosses down center.)

I don't understand, sir. She says she's in Bermuda. She's gone for six months, and you say she has been near here all the time. It sounds very strange to me.

SPENCER

Yes, I know it does.

COURTNIIGHT

(Walking to center.)

You knew all the time she wasn't in Bermuda; then why did you let me believe it when I came here to see you?

SPENCER

Richard, I.....

COURTNIIGHT

(Crosses to chess table.)

I hope you enjoyed your chess games, Mr. Spencer. Now I'll see Lorinda myself. I want to know what she has to say about this.

(He starts for the door up center.)

SPENCER

Wait, Richard.....I must tell you this. I know I haven't treated you fairly and I apologize, but please let me explain.

COURTNIIGHT

(At door up center.)

Yes, sir.

SPENCER

(Slowly and quietly.)

Lorinda left home because she was going to have a child.

COURTNIIGHT

(Turns quickly - shocked. Comes to center.)

A child! A child? I can't believe it!

SPENCER

Neither could I, but it happened!

COURTNIIGHT

Then Lorinda is married!

SPENCER

No, Lorinda is not married.

COURTNIIGHT

(Turns away.)

Do you mind if I ask who the father is?

SPENCER

Does that matter? The child will never have a father. He was killed in the war before the baby was born.

COURTNIIGHT

(Crosses right and walks behind sofa.)

Anyone but Lorinda - I can't believe this could happen to her. And you, her father, are telling me this.....Why?.....Why?

SPENCER

Because Lorinda means to marry you now and tell you nothing of what has happened to her.

COURTIGHT

(Standing behind sofa.)

Marry me now? What does she think I am?

(Pause.)

But what of the child? Where is it?

SPENCER

I wish I knew. She wouldn't even see it. She had promised to give it away even before it was born.

COURTIGHT

And she was going to keep all this from me. Marry me as if nothing had happened? You're sure of what you say?

SPENCER

That's what she is planning to do, Richard. I can't sit by and see my daughter ruin you like she has ruined everything else that was good in her life. Do you think I would feel the way I do today if it hadn't been for the constant worry over my daughter? Don't marry her, Richard!

COURTIGHT

(Crosses to SPENCER.)

You realize what you're telling me, Mr. Spencer....You - her own father. If what you say is true.....

SPENCER

It is true. Every word I told you!

COURTIGHT

(Crosses to right center.)

If anyone else had told me what you have, I would have struck him down.. Mr. Spencer, I would have married Lorinda in a minute. It's hard to hear things like this about the woman you love.

(Pause. He walks away and is silent for a moment, then quickly turns to SPENCER.)

But, by God, I do believe you, Mr. Spencer. I don't want to believe you, but I do.....I would have done anything she asked without question... I never would have told you this, yet always in the back of my mind I knew she was playing me for a fool.....But I didn't want to see it. I didn't want to believe that she was anything but sincere with me. I guess I can see lots of things she did that I wondered about, but I couldn't think she did them deliberately. Yes. I can believe you, Mr. Spencer.

SPENCER

You won't marry her now!

COURTRIGHT

I don't know what to say. But I won't let her deceive me. I couldn't marry anyone who would do that!

SPENCER

(Suddenly, as if he just thought of it.)
Will you do something for me, Richard?

COURTRIGHT

What?.....

SPENCER

Promise me that you will.

COURTRIGHT

(Slowly. Crosses back to center.)
Why, yes.....if I can.....

SPENCER

Richard, if anything happens to me, find Lorinda's child and see that it is well taken care of.

COURTRIGHT

(Slowly.)
That's a very strange request to make of me of all people....

SPENCER

Don't you see - you're the only person I can ask to do this.

COURTRIGHT

But why me.....?

SPENCER

I couldn't tell anyone else about the child - I only told you to keep you from marrying my daughter. Please help me.

COURTRIGHT

Do you realize what you're asking me to do, Mr. Spencer?

SPENCER

Yes, I do. I'm not asking you to do it for Lorinda - but for my sake, Richard. Find that child.....do it for me.

COURTRIGHT

When you put it that way, I can hardly refuse you.

SPENCER

Then you'll do it?

COURTRIGHT

Yes...if I can....I promise.

SPENCER

Thank you, Richard.... Thank you.... You're a true son. And see that Lorinda has help if she ever needs it. Take care of her investments.

COURTRIGHT

Knowing her as I do, I don't think she'll ever need any help, but if she does, I'll be there.

SPENCER

You're a good boy - a fine boy!

COURTRIGHT

(Looks toward the door upstage.)

I think I hear someone coming and if its Lorinda, I'd rather not see her now. I'll be out in the garden. I have to think this thing out.

(Walking to the door left, he exits.)

(SPENCER seated in his chair picks up a book and makes believe he is reading as LORINDA enters upstage. She has changed her dress and is now wearing one of a light color - long, with puffed sleeves and narrow skirt.)

LORINDA

(Coming downstage and standing behind chess table.)

Reading?

SPENCER

(Slowly.)

Not reading - Just thinking.

LORINDA

About what?

SPENCER

You, Lorinda, you.

LORINDA

(Crosses around center beside chair.)

I must admit you have chosen someone interesting to think about.

SPENCER

Have you changed your mind, Lorinda? It's not too late; you can start over again and live a life of truth and sincerity. You can still have a contented, happy life. Be the kind of a daughter your mother and I wanted you to be.

LORINDA

(Looks at picture.)

My mother's dead, and I am perfectly happy to be the kind of a daughter I want to be, not what you want me to be.

SPENCER

Lorinda, I've given you everything. I always have since you were a small girl. I've loved you. Perhaps I haven't always shown it like you wanted me to, but where I lacked affection, I gave you all money could buy.

LORINDA

(Crosses behind chess table.)

What are you driving at?

SPENCER

I'm telling you, Lorinda, that I have reached the end. I'm giving you a choice - either you do as I say, or we are through.

LORINDA

(Crosses to chair center and sits.)

You're being very dramatic again, daddy! If you mean telling Richard about the baby.....

SPENCER

That's exactly what I mean!

LORINDA

Then you're wasting your time. I'll never tell Richard. I wouldn't dare take that chance. I told you I am going to marry him without telling him anything and that's exactly what I mean to do.

SPENCER

But you can't marry him and keep back the truth about the child. Marriage has its roots in truth, not deception. Tell him the truth, Lorinda.

LORINDA

And lose him? You know Richard - you know the kind of a person he is! He's a puritan. He'd never break a rule of society - he couldn't stand it! You know very well if I told him I had a child he wouldn't marry me.

(She suddenly rises and looks at him.)

Maybe that's what you want. Perhaps you don't want him to marry me. Yes.....that's it, isn't it? You won't let me have him because you want him!

SPENCER

That's not so, Lorinda. You know it isn't.

LORINDA

(Crosses right.)

Oh, isn't it! You've always been sorry I wasn't a boy; you've always wanted a son instead of a daughter. You even treated me like a son - taught me to ride horseback - to shoot a gun - to drive an automobile - even to think and talk like a man. Yes, I was your son until I had a child - that opened your eyes - sons don't give birth to children, do they?

SPENCER

Lorinda!

LORINDA

(Crosses to center.)

But you can't take Richard away from me. I'll see to it that nothing will keep me from having him - not even you.

SPENCER

You won't tell him?

(Standing in front of his chair.)

LORINDA

Never!

SPENCER

That's your final word?

LORINDA

Yes!.....Yes!

(Crosses right.)

SPENCER

Then I'll tell him myself.

(Pause as SPENCER faces LORINDA.)

Lorinda, get out!

(LORINDA looks at him. She can't believe what she hears.)

Did you hear what I said?.....Get out!...You're no longer wanted in this house!

LORINDA

(Sarcastically.)

Daddy, I believe you really mean it!

SPENCER

I do mean it!

(He walks over to the table left, takes out his checkbook and writes a check.)

What you do from now on is your own affair. I want nothing to do with you.....You're no good! I was hoping there was at least a spark of decency left in you, but I can see now even that is gone.

(Pause.)

I'm writing you a check. This will take care of you for sometime. Now get out!

(He turns away and crosses to chair left, after handing her the check.)

You and I are finished!

LORINDA

(Holding the check)(Crosses left.)

Why, you silly old fool! Do you think you can rid yourself of me that easily? Do you think you can clear your conscience with a check? You should know by this time that you can't buy me. Here's

what I think of you and your money too!

(She tears up the check and flings it to the floor.)

If you wanted your daughter different than she is, you should have changed her years ago - not waited until now. Why, you're just a senile old man.

SPENCER

Go, Lorinda....before we both say things that will hurt each other.

LORINDA

I don't care if I hurt you or not. I know now that I've always wanted to hurt you.....I hate you!

SPENCER

(He grasps the chair for support.)

Get out, Lorinda....There's no place in my house for a daughter who no longer loves her father! Get out, I say!

LORINDA

(Facing him.)

Love you? I never have loved you. You know that. You and your money. You think you can buy anything. And now you want to buy Richard from me; you want to buy yourself a son. Your power is money, but you have no power over me because I don't need your money.

(She walks toward him.)

I hate you. Do you realize what I said? I hate you!

SPENCER

(He sinks into the chair and through LORINDA'S speech is struck with a severe heart attack.)

Stop, Lorinda.....don't say anymore!

LORINDA

(Crosses to center.)

Stop?....Never!...I'm just starting. I've been waiting to tell you this for years.

SPENCER

(He tries to get up to get his medicine but is unable to do so.)

Stop, Lorinda.....My medicine.....quickly, my medicine.

LORINDA

You thought you could control me with your money, but you can't buy what you wanted most, can you?

SPENCER

(Struggling to get up.)

My medicine, Lorinda.....Get it!

LORINDA

(Crosses to table left, getting the bottle and holding it out of his reach.)

Is this what you want? Is this what you're begging for?

SPENCER

Yes! Yes, give it to me quickly!

LORINDA

(Crosses to center.)

What are you now, big Mr. Spencer? You're begging like a little child.

SPENCER

Please, Lorinda, I'm your father.

LORINDA

(Laughing.)

That doesn't mean a thing....I'll give it to you when I'm good and ready.

SPENCER

No, Lorinda....You can't do this. You can't. No! No! Please, please, give it to me.

LORINDA

Beg - - beg.....You were going to tell Richard all about me. You were going to keep me from marrying him. Tell him now - go ahead - tell him!

SPENCER

This is the last thing you'll ever do to me, Lorinda. You'll never forget what you're doing now. You can't ever escape me. Wherever you go I'll be with you.

LORINDA

You still threaten me - even now.....I'm not afraid of you!..... Your power is gone.

SPENCER (During LORINDA'S speech.)

Please.....my daughter.....please.....Lorinda.

(He is dead and he sits staring at her.)

LORINDA

I have it all right here in my hand. Go ahead - sit there and stare at me. I'm laughing at you. Yes, this is Lorinda - your daughter - holding this bottle. Why don't you reach for it? Don't you want it anymore? Oh, I hate you!

(COURTIGHT is seen standing in the doorway left behind LORINDA.)

Do you hear? I hate you!! Try to run my life if you can. I can do whatever I wish to do without your interference. Tell Richard and the world that you know about my child.

(She hears the door close, turns and sees COURTIGHT.)

Richard.....Richard.....

(She pauses.....looks at her father.)

Oh, Richard, daddy is having an attack.

(COURTIGHT runs over to SPENCER.)

I tried to give him some medicine, but I couldn't get any response from

him. Do something, Richard.....Call the doctor. Do something. Anything.

COURTRIGHT

(Slowly turning to LORINDA.)

Your father is dead, Lorinda.

LORINDA

No....Not dead! He was just talking to me. I tried to give him this medicine, but he didn't take it. I did all I could, didn't I?

(COURTRIGHT takes the medicine from her hand and puts it on the smoking stand. He starts for the door right. LORINDA runs after him.)

Richard, where are you going? I need you; please don't leave me now.

(COURTRIGHT turns at the door and looks at her in disgust.

Why are you leaving? I don't know what to do!

(COURTRIGHT starts to open the door but LORINDA stands in front of it.)

Richard, I love you! Don't you understand? I want to marry you. I won't make you wait any longer. Honest. I love you, Richard. Believe me!

(COURTRIGHT just looks at her.)

Can't you see what it will mean? We can go away somewhere - just you and I - together. ...Please, Richard, you'll marry me, won't you? Say you will.....Talk to me - don't stand there looking at me like that. I haven't done anything. Really I haven't.....I'll treat you differently than I have, I promise. I'll be the kind of a wife you want me to be....I love you, Richard! I do! I'm yours.....all yours.

(LORINDA puts her arms around COURTRIGHT and he thrusts her aside with such force that she falls in a heap on the floor. Without even looking at her, COURTRIGHT exits. Lights start to dim.)

LORINDA

(Half sobbing.)

Richard.....come back.....please, don't leave me! Please....come back.

(Slowly she picks up a piece of the torn check beside her on the floor. She looks at it and turns and sees her father. She is now afraid - she is terrified. She tries to look away, but cannot; she tries to exit upstage, but in keeping away from her dead father, she runs into the smoking stand. The chessmen spill on the floor.)

No....No....don't stare at me like that! Leave me alone - don't stare at me....don't.....don't.....no.....no.

(She runs screaming and exits upstage. The doors remain open. Dim out until only the father is seen in a single dim light.)

FAST CURTAIN

ACT TWO

Scene 1

THE TIME: The present. Afternoon, a spring day.

THE SCENE: (PETER MURRAY'S modest office on the second floor of the Lehigh Valley Manufacturing Company located in upper New York State. The main entrance is located downstage left; upstage from the door is a secretary's desk which faces the door. On stage right is a large outside window and near the window is PETER'S large, modern desk; the desk is set on an angle, facing both the audience and the main entrance; it is covered with the usual amount of papers, pens, a telephone, etc. Upstage center is another door which opens to the main office; on one side is a bookcase filled with books and on the other side two filing cabinets. On the whole, the office is very modern in its furnishings. The two pictures on the wall are of the founder of the company and its present president.)

AT RISE: (As the curtain rises ANNABELLE GREY, PETER'S very attractive secretary, is seated at the desk at left busily typing. Suddenly she makes an error and with an "Oh, damn!" she pulls the paper out of the typewriter and throws it in the wastebasket. As she is putting a new sheet in the typewriter the telephone on her desk rings. She answers it.....)

ANNABELLE

Mr. Murray's office....No, I'm sorry, Mr. Murray isn't back from lunch yet.....Yes, I expect him most any minute now.....Yes, sir....

(She continues typing as PETER MURRAY enters carrying a long tubular case. He is a good looking young man about thirty dressed in a smart tweed business suit. He is full of spirit and pep as he enters.)

PETER

(In doorway.)

Hello, beautiful! I just bought myself a present.

(He tosses his hat on her desk, sits in chair center, and begins to open the case.)

ANNABELLE

Hello, Peter.

(She stands.)

What is it?

PETER

Just a minute until I get it out.

(Pulling a new fly rod from the case and starting to put it together.)

ANNABELLE

(Crosses to PETER.)

It looks like some sort of fish pole.

PETER

(Near his desk.)

It is! It's a fly rod. Isn't it a beauty? I just paid forty bucks for it.

(He runs his fingers on his nose and then rubs them on the ferrules of the rod.)

ANNABELLE

What are you doing?

PETER

(Leaning on his desk.)

A little nose oil. You see if you get a little oil off your nose and put it on the ferrules, the rod goes together easier.

ANNABELLE

Nose oil sounds horrible! Do you have to use that?

PETER

No, you can use oil off your hair or most anything.

(He has it all together now and tries it. He stands and leans against desk right.)

You know, these used to sell for fifty-nine dollars but old Watkins down the street sold it to me for forty dollars because I helped him out with his income tax.

ANNABELLE

(Crosses left center.)

Peter, you're just like an old woman.

PETER

Why?

ANNABELLE

(Turns to PETER.)

You can't resist a bargain, can you? If you thought you were getting

one you'd buy something even if you didn't need it. I'm sure that's why you have this job here as the company lawyer - just so you can keep them from spending money unless they find a bargain.

PETER

Sure, this is a bargain.....but I needed it, too.

ANNABELLE

Did you? Why?

PETER

I expect to use it when we go up north on our honeymoon.

ANNABELLE

(Crosses left behind her desk.)

Who said I wanted to spend my honeymoon fishing?

PETER

Don't worry, honey, that isn't all we're going to do.

ANNABELLE

I didn't mean that.

(PETER strikes her lightly with the fish pole.)

Now, Peter, stop that.....

PETER

(Crosses to ANNABELLE.)

Look.....if you're going to marry me, you're going to have to learn to fish.

ANNABELLE

Oh, I know how to fish.

PETER

(Surprised.)

You do? You haven't told me that.

ANNABELLE

(Taking the rod from him.)

Sure, I used to fish a lot when I spent my summers at camp. It's been quite some time though.

PETER

Well, try that pole.....Be careful.....Don't jam it into anything. Isn't it balanced nicely?

ANNABELLE

(Making a cast or two.)

It's not bad, is it? What does it weigh?

(Crosses right of PETER.)

PETER

Four and a half ounces - There you got one----

ANNABELLE

(Pantomimes catching a trout.)

What do I do now?

PETER

Take it easy - play him awhile.....Don't reel him in too fast.....
Easy.....Easy now.....

ANNABELLE

Well, get the landing net, Peter.

PETER

(Grabs his hat and starts to land the fish.)

All right, now ease him over toward me....That's it....That's it.

ANNABELLE

Don't lose him now!

PETER

There!.....I got him!.....Gee, that's a dandy, Annabelle.
(Holding up the fish.)

ANNABELLE

Now what are you going to do with it?

PETER

Toss it back in the stream - The season isn't open yet, you know.

(He tosses the fish away and crosses to her.)

Say, why didn't you tell me you knew how to fish? I probably would
have asked you to marry me even sooner than I did. You handle
that pole as if you know what you're doing.

ANNABELLE

(Giving him back the pole.)

Oh, there are lots of things about me you don't know.

(Crosses to PETER'S desk.)

PETER

(Starts to take the pole apart.)

What for example?

ANNABELLE

(Picking up the mail on his desk.)

I'm probably a better secretary than I am a housekeeper...You'd better
look over the mail that came while you were out instead of playing
with that fish pole.

PETER

(Crosses to upstage side of desk.)

Was there anything important?

ANNABELLE

(Crosses to her desk left and sits.)

No. I don't think so. I've taken care of some of it.

PETER

(Puts the fish pole in the case and sits at his desk. He looks through the mail quickly. ANNABELLE goes to her desk.)
Oh, I hate to get back to work on a day like this. There's something about a fish pole that gives me spring fever.

(He puts a letter aside.)

You can answer this one, too, Annabelle. Tell Mr. Fredricks that the 22nd will be fine for me.

(ANNABELLE starts to type again. PETER stands up.)

Say, did you see this folder from that hotel in Maine where I spent a week last summer?

(Crosses left, taking it to her.)

Look at this, Annabelle - isn't it a beautiful spot? It's just as pretty around there as the picture shows, too.

ANNABELLE

(Looking at the folder.)

It is nice, isn't it?

PETER

How would you like to go up there?

ANNABELLE

When?

PETER

For our wedding trip. Just say the word and I'll write for reservations today.

ANNABELLE

I wish I could, Peter.

PETER

Then we could swing down and spend some time with my folks - Mother would love to have us.

ANNABELLE

I know she would, Peter, and I think she's grand. That trip we took before to meet your mother and father was just marvelous...Their home is beautiful. Oh, I like them - very much.

PETER

They liked you, too, Annabelle.

ANNABELLE

But don't you see, Peter. I can't take you to meet my mother and father because I've never had any. At least, not that I know anything about.

PETER

Oh, Annabelle, we've been over this before.

(Crosses to center, turns to ANNABELLE.)

And I'll tell you again that you're making something out of nothing.

ANNABELLE

Yes, I know. But -

(Pause.)

PETER

(Crosses to ANNABELLE.)

But nothing....You love me, don't you?

ANNABELLE

You know I do - very much.

(Rises.)

I want to marry you, Peter, only.....

PETER

Only.....

ANNABELLE

I'm just sort of afraid.

PETER

Afraid? Afraid of what? Of me?

ANNABELLE

No, of course not. But, how do you know I'll make a good wife?

PETER

(Crosses down left.)

You don't see me worrying about that, do you? I'll take my chance!

(Turns and sits on desk left.)

How about me? How do you know I'll make a good husband?

ANNABELLE

(Seated at her desk.)

It's different with you, Peter - you've led a normal life. I haven't! I don't even know what its like to have a home because I've never had one. I've always shuttled between some girl's school in the winter and summer camp in the summer. I never had any other place to go. The only homes I've known were those in which I've been a guest.

PETER

All the more reason we should be married; then you'll have a home of your own.

ANNABELLE

Yes, Peter. I hope I'll be able to make the kind of a home for you that you want.

PETER

(Takes her hand tenderly.)

I'm sure you will! Come on, sweetheart, let's set a date.....Please. Name the day for our wedding.

ANNABELLE

I will soon, I promise. Only sometimes I wish we were married already and didn't need to have a wedding.

PETER

I thought all girls liked weddings. I was sure you felt the same.

ANNABELLE

I do, Peter - that is if our wedding could be like someone else's.

PETER

It can....You can have any kind you like - just as big as you please.

ANNABELLE

(Rises. Crosses to center.)

That's just it. I can almost see it now - your side of the church filled with relatives and friends and mine empty. I don't have anyone.

PETER

But you have lots of friends; I'm sure they will come.

ANNABELLE

Yes, friends.

(Crosses to PETER.)

But do you realize, Peter, that I don't have a single relative that I can invite - not even one - not a father to give me away - nor a mother to be there. Just nobody, Peter.

PETER

Well, we don't have to have a big wedding, you know. We could just slip off somewhere and be married without any big ceremony and all that.

ANNABELLE

(Quickly. Crosses up center.)

No, I want a wedding - at least I think I do. Peter, sometimes I'm so mixed up I don't know what I want. But if I only knew....even if I were sure that my parents were both dead, I'd feel differently then, but it's this not knowing - not knowing anything about them or even myself.

(Seated behind desk left.)

Don't you see, Peter, I don't want to act like this but I guess I just can't help it sometimes. I'm sorry.

PETER

(Crosses to center.)

I understand, Annabelle, but this can't go on forever.....

ANNABELLE

(Coming to PETER.)

I know it, Peter. I shouldn't be talking like this, I know; I should

be very happy engaged to the nicest fellow there is, but I just can't keep myself from thinking. You're very patient with me and I appreciate it very much, you know.

PETER

(Turns to her.)

I only wish I could help you, Annabelle.

ANNABELLE

I do, too, Peter. It's not being fair to you.

PETER

(Crosses to his desk.)

It's not that, but it seems strange to me that you have never had the least clue. The part I don't understand about the things you've told me is how you went to school and these summer camps. The school that you went to takes money, I know; surely someone paid that.....and yet you could never find out who.

ANNABELLE

(Crosses to desk.)

I tried - I tried several times. I asked deans, the counsellors. Oh, I asked everybody and the answer was always, "We don't know, Annabelle". Then they would tell me not to worry about it - that I would find out someday, but I never have.

PETER

What about money for clothes and things like that?

ANNABELLE

I had a checkbook.

PETER

Gee, that was convenient, wasn't it? Could you sign the checks yourself?

ANNABELLE

Yes, but they had to be countersigned by my housemother.

PETER

(Quickly.)

What bank were they on?

ANNABELLE

(Crosses center.)

A New York bank. That's no lead, Peter, because I went to the bank and talked with everyone from the President down and no one could give me the answer I wanted.

PETER

Well, what happened to the checkbook? You still have it?

ANNABELLE

No. On the day I finished college I received a very nice letter

which congratulated me on my work there but it also told me the check book was discontinued. There was a check for one thousand dollars and I was notified from that day I was on my own. The letter was unsigned.

PETER

And then?

ANNABELLE

Nothing. That's the last I ever heard.

(Sits in chair center.)

PETER

Someone looked after you, Annabelle, and very well, I'd say.

ANNABELLE

(Turns to PETER.)

Oh, they did. But who, Peter - who? I'd like to know. I must have some one - some place.

PETER

Yes, there must be, but we'll get nowhere talking about it like this.

(Pause. He looks at his watch.)

I guess we'd better get to work. I do have a lot to do this afternoon and I don't want to keep you late again tonight or we'll start some idle talk. Someone might think I have an interest in you.....

ANNABELLE

(Standing.)

Say, that reminds me, Mr. Barrett called just before you came in. He said he'd call back, but maybe you'd better call him. He seemed anxious to get you.

PETER

What about?

ANNABELLE

(Crosses to her desk.)

He didn't say.

PETER

(Picking up the telephone.)

Okay. I'll call him. Mr. Barrett, please.....

(PETER speaks to ANNABELLE.)

Did you finish that report for Mr. Wright?

ANNABELLE

I'm working on that now.

PETER

(Into the phone.)

Hello, Mr. Barrett....Yes, Murray.....Yes, I have the files on Lorinda Spencer. Who?.....Richard Courtwright? Um-hum, New York banker, isn't he? All right.....you give me about five minutes and I'll have all the information ready on the Spencer case.....Yes, sir. Bye.

(He hangs up the 'phone and turns to ANNABELLE.)
 Say, Annabelle, Mr. Barrett is sending in a Mr. Richard Courtright in about five minutes to go over some things on this Spencer case. Could you get all the information from the files for me?

ANNABELLE

The Spencer case?.....Who did you say was coming in?
 (Crosses to files.)

PETER

(Straightening up his desk and putting the fish pole away.)
 Richard Courtright, Esq. Ever hear of him?

ANNABELLE

(At the files.)
 No. Who is he?

PETER

From what I can gather he's the banker of Miss Lorinda Spencer. Barrett sent for him as a last resort before we go to court about her.

ANNABELLE

What's he sending him in here for?

PETER

You remember the Spencer case - that old lady I went to New York to see and didn't?

ANNABELLE

Oh, yes....

PETER

Well, Barrett wants me to pump all the information I can from Courtright about Miss Spencer.

ANNABELLE

(Bringing a stack of letters to PETER'S desk.)
 I never did understand much about this case, and I can't see anyone acting so strangely, especially a woman.

PETER

You mean no one else could act so strangely but a woman -

ANNABELLE

All right, now...

PETER

(Leans back in chair.)
 Seriously, Annabelle, this is a funny one. Here for years we've been sending her annual dividend checks and she hasn't cashed one of them. You know she owns a lot of the stock in this company. Left to her when

her father died, I think.

ANNABELLE

(Looking over PETER'S shoulder.)

But what could be her reason for not wanting this money? It must amount to a small fortune by now.

PETER

And how! Fifty-six thousand dollars! That ain't hay, sweetheart! We could live on that a long time.

ANNABELLE

(Crosses to right center.)

I would think, Peter, the company would see to it that those checks are cashed.

PETER

They are seeing to it. That's why it's in my hands now. Barrett told me that if we couldn't get any satisfaction very shortly that we would have to go to court about it.

(He picks up a stack of letters.)

Look at this stack of letters. All written to Miss Spencer. And not one of them answered.

(Rises.)

This money has been accumulating year after year until now it has reached the point where the Board of Directors wants something done about it. Of course, if we don't have to take it to court it will save the company's face and a lot of needless expense.

ANNABELLE

Bargain hunter! But just think of someone not even bothering to sign her name to get all this money. There must be something to it that we don't know.

PETER

(Sitting on upstage corner of desk.)

Right! I've only been working on this for a short time, but I'm sure there's a lot we don't know. That's why I'm anxious to see Mr. Courtright; I hope he can give us the answers.

(Pointing to papers on desk.)

Is this everything now?

ANNABELLE

Yes. This is everything from our files at least. I could check the General Files. Shall I look now?

PETER

We'd better dig it all out. But wait until after Mr. Courtright comes.

ANNABELLE

(Crosses to desk left.)

What did you find out about this woman? Doesn't she have any use for her money?

PETER

I don't know and that's what puzzles me. All I know is that the company has been sending these checks to her in New York and they've never been cashed.

(Standing.)

I'd like to see someone who can stick up her nose to fifty-six thousand dollars. She really must be some old girl!

ANNABELLE

Is she old?

PETER

(Crosses to center.)

I've never seen her and I guess no one here really knows her age, but she's probably no youngster. Yet, she's Miss Lorinda Spencer. Could be she's an old maid. Just like you'll be if you don't marry me soon.

ANNABELLE

(Sitting.)

But I don't have fifty-six thousand dollars.....

PETER

With what you've got, you don't need it, Annabelle.

ANNABELLE

(Ignoring him.)

I still don't quite see where this Mr. Courtright fits in.

PETER

(Sits on desk right.)

Well, he's Miss Spencer's banker. We can't find out anything about her ourselves and that's why Courtright is here. He probably know more about her than anyone else.

ANNABELLE

Could he stop you from going to court?

PETER

Possibly - If he comes all the way up here from New York to see us he must have a reason.

ANNABELLE

If you could only get in to see this Lorinda Spencer and talk to her.

PETER

That's just it, Annabelle! You can't get in to see her. I told you what a time I had when I went to New York for the purpose. For two whole days I tried every trick I knew to get in to see that woman. She is a legend at the hotel. No one sees her. Finally I was asked to leave in no gentle terms by the hotel detective.

ANNABELLE

(Laughing.)

I'd like to have seen you being escorted out!

PETER

Yes, I'm sure you would.

(There is a knock on the door.)

Get the door, will you, please. That must be Mr. Courtright.

(ANNABELLE goes to door. RICHARD COURTRIGHT ENTERS. He is a very nicely dressed man of about sixty with very gray hair. He could pass for an old actor with his dark blue suit with a white flower in the buttonhole. He is tall and very well preserved for a man of his years; he is very straight and his manner is a bit austere. He carries his gray gloves and a Homburg. PETER walks toward him.)

COURTRIGHT

(Standing in doorway.)

I'm Richard Courtright.

ANNABELLE

Come in, please.

PETER

(Shaking hands with COURTRIGHT.)

Mr. Courtright, I'm Peter Murray.

COURTRIGHT

(Nodding.)

I'm very happy to know you, Mr. Murray.

PETER

(Pointing toward ANNABELLE.)

And this is my secretary, Miss Grey.

COURTRIGHT

It's a pleasure, Miss Grey.

ANNABELLE

How do you do, Mr. Courtright.

PETER

(Crosses to his desk right.)

Will you sit down, sir?

(Indicating a chair on the left of his desk, near stage center.)

COURTRIGHT

(Walking toward the chair center.)

Thank you.

ANNABELLE

(Walking to the door upstage.)

If you gentlemen will excuse me? I'll see what I can find in the other files, Mr. Murray.

COURTRIGHT

(Watching ANNABELLE.)

By all means...

PETER

Surely, Miss Grey...

(ANNABELLE exits.)

COURTRIGHT

(Sitting.)

A very attractive secretary you have, Mr. Murray.

PETER

May I take your hat, Mr. Courtright?

(COURTRIGHT gives him the Homburg and PETER walks over and hangs it on the hall tree.)

Yes, Miss Grey is a very nice person. And she's a very good secretary, too.....A combination of good looks and brains - something you don't always find together these days. I don't know what I'd do without her.

(PETER returns to his desk right.)

COURTRIGHT

She hasn't worked for you too long, has she?

PETER

(Sits at his desk.)

Oh, she's been with me about six months but she's been with the company longer.

COURTRIGHT

Yes, I know.

PETER

(Very surprised.)

You know, did you say?

COURTRIGHT

(Quickly, trying to cover up.)

Well, I mean I had heard she was working here upstate.

PETER

Do you know her?

COURTRIGHT

(Taken back a bit.)

No. No. That is, I just knew of her that's all.

(Quickly changes the subject.)

I believe you wanted to ask me something about Miss Lorinda Spencer.

PETER

You'll pardon me for asking, Mr. Courtright, but would you mind telling me what you know about Miss Grey?

(Rises.)

COURTRIGHT

Nothing. Nothing. It's just that I heard you and Annabelle were engaged to be married.

PETER

(Surprised.)

Yes, that's right.

COURTRIGHT

May I offer you my congratulations?

PETER

Why.....Why....thank you. But how did you know about us?

COURTRIGHT

I believe Mr. Barrett mentioned it when I was talking to him.

PETER

I would have sworn Mr. Barrett knows nothing other than that Miss Grey is my secretary.

COURTRIGHT

(Hedging.)

Well, maybe it wasn't Mr. Barrett - someone - perhaps I overheard talking in the main office.....It doesn't really matter.

PETER

But it does; we've been keeping our plans a secret around here.

(Crosses right.)

We didn't think it would be wise to announce our engagement since Miss Grey is my secretary. No. I'm sure no one know in this office.

(Crosses back to desk.)

I really don't think anyone would know....

(Leans toward COURTRIGHT.)

....unless they were keeping track of Miss Grey or me very carefully.

COURTRIGHT

It's really unimportant, Mr. Murray! I merely mentioned your engagement to make conversation.

PETER

I'm sorry but I can't be satisfied with that, sir. I can't help but feel that you are acquainted with Miss Grey better than you

are willing to admit.

(Standing in back of chair right.)

You know her well enough to know her first name - you called her Annabelle.

COURTRIGHT

I did?

PETER

Yes, you did. You know her pretty well, don't you?

COURTRIGHT

Perhaps.

PETER

Mr. Courtright, I don't know how well you know Annabelle or how much you know about her, but I don't mind telling you that the reason we aren't married today is because she knows nothing of her parents - she has an idea that she doesn't want to marry until she can find out something of her background.

COURTRIGHT

I'm sure she's better off not knowing.

PETER

What do you mean, sir?

COURTRIGHT

I mean, some things are meant to be kept secret.

PETER

And you think you are qualified to judge which?

COURTRIGHT

Yes, I'm positive I am!

PETER

I'm not sure I believe you.

COURTRIGHT

That's up to you. However, I had no intention of bringing up this conversation and I think it has gone far enough!

PETER

No, Mr. Courtright, you're the first real clue that Annabelle has had regarding her past.

COURTRIGHT

But Annabelle knows nothing about our conversation, does she?

PETER

No, she doesn't.

COURTRIGHT

(Looks at his watch.)

Then let's drop it. I'd rather we weren't talking about her when she comes back.

PETER

But it's very important to me, sir. So far you are the only one who...

COURTRIGHT

(Interrupting him.)

Mr. Murray, I'm a busy man. I have to catch a train back to New York and I don't have too much time. Mr. Barrett told me you would like to ask me something about Miss Lorinda Spencer.

PETER

(Sits in chair right.)

Well, yes, I would.

COURTRIGHT

Of what assistance can I be?

PETER

Of course, being her banker, you knew that she received several dividend checks from us which she never cashed.

COURTRIGHT

So Mr. Barrett told me. But, quite frankly, I didn't know it until today. All I knew until I arrived here was that he wished to see me regarding Miss Spencer - that there was a possibility of a court action.

PETER

And you came up here to see if you could prevent this case coming up in court.

COURTRIGHT

Quite naturally. Miss Spencer is one of my clients.

PETER

Well, tell me. Just what is Miss Spencer like, anyway? And why should she refuse fifty-six thousand dollars?

COURTRIGHT

One question at a time, my boy. I truthfully don't know why she won't accept the money, but anything she does, does not surprise me.

(ANNABELLE enters and goes to her desk.)

However, I can tell you a little about the lady herself.

PETER

(To COURTRIGHT.)

Excuse me, please....

(Rises, goes two steps left.)

Did you find anything else, Miss Grey?

ANNABELLE

(Sitting at her desk.)

No. I'm sure you have all the information available.

PETER

Thank you. You might take some notes on my conversation with Mr. Courtright.

(He turns to COURTRIGHT.)

That is, if you don't mind, sir.

COURTRIGHT

No. That's quite all right.

PETER

You were telling about Miss Spencer.

(Pointing to letters.)

We've written her several letters and received no answer. I've also tried to reach her by telephone with no success.

COURTRIGHT

I can understand that. She doesn't have a telephone.

PETER

Yes, so I found out!

(Sits - Gives COURTRIGHT a cigarette.)

COURTRIGHT

You see, she's a strange woman. She lives in a large hotel suite with no telephone, no radio; she never sees a newspaper, and she allows no one to see her except by special appointment. I'm her banker, and I only see her once a year.

PETER

Just once a year - Well, what is she like when you do see her? And why do you suppose she doesn't want this money?

COURTRIGHT

In the first place she doesn't need the money. Miss Lorinda has little use for it. Her life is simple; she hasn't left her hotel rooms since God knows when.

(To ANNABELLE.)

She wears clothes that are thirty years behind time, but no one ever sees her, so I guess that matters little.

PETER

A real hermit.

COURTRIGHT

That's it.....a hermit. She will see no one except those whom she absolutely has to see. Even as her banker, my meetings are very short. She wants to know how she stands financially and our meeting is over. In fact, she seems to resent my being there.

PETER

Just how could I get to see her? I've tried everything in the book and some things that weren't in the book.

COURTNEY

You tried? You mean you've been to New York to see her?

PETER

Yes, but I had no luck at all.

COURTNEY

When was this?

PETER

A couple of weeks ago.

COURTNEY

(Quickly.)

You didn't get in then?

PETER

Oh, I got to the door of her suite all right, but not in her rooms.

COURTNEY

Did she know you were there?

PETER

I know she did. I talked to Charles, her waiter, and with the help of a five dollar bill, of course, got him to take her a message.

COURTNEY

Yes?.....

PETER

She just ignored it. Told Charles to tell me to be on my way! I tried to get something out of Charles since he sees her everyday but he shut up like a clam. He would have nothing to do with any more money I offered him - as much as told me that what I would give him was chicken feed to what he made from Miss Spencer.

COURTNEY

Yes. I wouldn't expect much from Charles.

PETER

I saw Mr. Fernmore, the hotel manager, but he couldn't tell me anything. In fact, he was surprised that anyone would insist upon seeing her.

COURTNEY

Then you didn't see her.

PETER

No! I even tried to get in through the fire escape and that was

when the hotel detective threw me out.

COURTRIGHT

(Pointing to the letters on PETER'S desk.)
And nothing from that correspondence?

PETER

(Rises, stands beside desk and picks up letters.)
Not a thing. We've never received one letter from her. Am I right, Miss Grey?

ASTORILLE

Yes, that's true.

COURTRIGHT

Well, if she hasn't answered your letters, she doesn't want to see you. You just don't see her and that's final.

PETER

(Crosses center.)
As definite as that. You know, I'm not used to being shut out of places.

COURTRIGHT

Believe me, Mr. Murray, no one gets in to see Miss Lorinda unless she wants to see him.

PETER

(Crosses to COURTRIGHT down center.)
But you do, Mr. Courtright. I'm sure she must have some reason for holding up in a hotel that way. What is it? You're her banker. Surely you know more than you're telling me.

COURTRIGHT

Perhaps.
(Turns away.)

PETER

(Very insistent.)
After all, you must know something about her personal affairs. What do you know about Miss Spencer - personally, that is?

COURTRIGHT

(A bit irritated.)
Yes, I'm her banker, and I have been for a good number of years.
(Pause. Rises.)
Mr. Murray, you're a lawyer, I can see by your manner. You know that there are some things we just don't tell about our clients. And, Mr. Murray, I'm certainly not here to submit to a third degree. After all, this isn't a courtroom and I'm not on the witness stand.

PETER

I'm sorry, sir, I didn't mean to offend you, but I have to do some-

thing about this situation. Just what would you suggest?

(Crosses left.)

I seem to be running into bottlenecks everywhere I turn! Miss Grey will vouch for that.

ANNABELLE

Yes. This case has him stopped, Mr. Courtright.

PETER

You want to keep this out of court and so do we. What can I do?

COURTRIGHT

I really don't know what you can do.

PETER

(Crosses to center.)

Can you, as her banker, help me out?

COURTRIGHT

Perhaps - but I couldn't promise.

PETER

You could get me in to see her?

COURTRIGHT

(Sits.)

I -- get you in? No...no...that's out of the question.

PETER

(Crosses down right.)

Why is it? I know you get in to see her.

COURTRIGHT

Yes, but only on rare occasions, and by special appointment.

PETER

(Crosses behind desk right.)

But you would get in if there was an emergency.

COURTRIGHT

An emergency - yes.

PETER

This is an emergency, Mr. Courtright. You said you wanted this kept out of court.

COURTRIGHT

I do.

PETER

(Sits.)

Then get me in to see her or else I'll have to proceed with this case.

COURTNIIGHT

What good would that do?

PETER

I'm not sure. But I'll get her to sign those checks or know her reason for not doing it! What do you say?

COURTNIIGHT

You don't leave me much alternative, do you?

PETER

Not unless you want to go to court.

COURTNIIGHT

You're right. I don't want that.

PETER

Then you'll get me in to see her?

COURTNIIGHT

(To ANNABELLE.)

Mr. Murray strikes a hard bargain, doesn't he?

ANNABELLE

Sometimes he does, I'll admit.

PETER

Well?.....

COURTNIIGHT

I'll see what I can do. I won't promise though.

PETER

That's good enough for me.

COURTNIIGHT

When could you come to New York?

PETER

Anytime you say.

COURTNIIGHT

Suppose we make it the day after tomorrow.

(Rises.)

That will give me a little time to make arrangements.

PETER

(Rises.)

That's fine. Where will I meet you?

COURTNIIGHT

You know where Miss Lorinda's suite is?

PETER

Yes.

COURTRIGHT

I'll meet you there - let's say at ten o'clock that morning.

PETER

Good. I'll be there.

COURTRIGHT

(Starts to go.)

Now, Mr. Murray - I must be going - that train won't wait for me.

PETER

(Getting COURTRIGHT'S hat.)

Thank you very much for coming, sir. I enjoyed our conversation.

COURTRIGHT

(Shakes hands.)

I'm not sure whether I did or not. You're a very insistent young man.

PETER

Just doing my job, Mr. Courtright.

COURTRIGHT

Yes, I suppose you are.

(Crosses to door right.)

I'll be expecting to see you then - day after tomorrow.

PETER

Yes, sir. It's been a pleasure, Mr. Courtright.

COURTRIGHT

(Stopping at ANNABELLE'S desk.)

It has been nice to see you, too. Goodbye, Annabelle.

ANNABELLE

(Rising.)

Goodbye, Mr. Courtright.

PETER

Goodbye.

(COURTRIGHT exits.)

You know, Annabelle, this thing about Miss Lorinda gets more and more strange every minute.

(Crosses to right and sits on desk facing ANNABELLE.)

I don't know much more about her now than I did before I talked to Courtright, and he didn't seem too surprised to learn that she wouldn't have anything to do with this money, did he? I'm sure he knows more about this woman than he cares to tell. Did you hear him say, "There are just some things we don't tell about our clients"? He's hiding something he doesn't want anyone to know!

ANNABELLE

(Leaning on her desk.)

Maybe you can find out when you're in New York.

PETER

I hope so. Well, I accomplished something anyway.

(Crosses to back of desk.)

At least I'm going to get a chance to see Miss Spencer - thanks to Mr. Courtright.

ANNABELLE

I really don't think he wanted you to.

PETER

I don't either - but I guess I was the lesser of two evils.

(Sits at his desk.)

He seemed afraid to have this case go to court.

ANNABELLE

Yes, I'm sure he doesn't want that.

PETER

(Pause.)

Are you sure you don't know Mr. Courtright - that you've never seen him before?

ANNABELLE

Of course not! What makes you say that?

PETER

How did he know your name was Annabelle?

ANNABELLE

(Two steps to center.)

Did he call me that?

PETER

Sure he did.

ANNABELLE

I remember now - when he left he said, "Goodbye, Annabelle".

PETER

That isn't all. When you were out he asked some questions about you, too. He seemed to know that you hadn't worked for me too long.

ANNABELLE

(Crosses to PETER.)

Honest, Peter, I can't remember seeing him before. You're not kidding, are you? Please don't kid me about this - it means too much to me.

PETER

I'm not kidding. He didn't have anything to do with your coming to

work here, did he?

ANNABELLE

(Crosses center.)

No. I don't think so.

PETER

How did you happen to come here? You never told me.

ANNABELLE

(Leans against her desk right.)

I received a letter one day from the school telling me about a job up here and I came up to see about it. I was hired and here I am. Nothing strange about that, is there?

PETER

No.

ANNABELLE

(Turns to PETER.)

Peter, do you suppose Mr. Courtright does know something about me? Do you think he could tell me anything?

PETER

He knew you were engaged to me.

ANNABELLE

How could he know, Peter?

PETER

I didn't tell him!

ANNABELLE

(Crosses to PETER.)

Then he does know something about me - I'm sure he does...He'd have to, Peter, if he knows we're engaged.

PETER

Now, don't get so excited; there's probably nothing to it. It's just because we were talking about it before he came in and now we're trying to associate it with something he said.

ANNABELLE

(Earnestly.)

But he did call me Annabelle and you said he knew we were engaged.

PETER

Annabelle, you're just clutching for a broomstraw.

ANNABELLE

(Turning away.)

Maybe you're right, but it's something.....Peter, I've got to know. I'll even grasp a broomstraw if it means finding out something about

myself. You don't know what it means living everyday, wondering where you came from, who you are, who your parents were.

(Sits.)

Sometimes I think I can't stand it much longer.

PETER

(Pause.)

Annabelle....

ANNABELLE

Yes.

PETER

(Rises slowly.)

If you did find out about yourself, did you ever think it might be something you didn't want to know?

ANNABELLE

(Turns.)

What do you mean, Peter?

PETER

Perhaps it's better not to know; perhaps it's better for you not to find out.

ANNABELLE

(On the verge of tears.)

Oh, Peter, not you, too - don't be like everyone else, telling me that it's all for the best? I couldn't stand that!...I have to know. I'm alive.....I walk.....I breathe.....But who am I?

PETER

(Goes over and puts his arms around her.)

I know who you are - you're Annabelle Grey, and I love you very much. That's good enough for me!

ANNABELLE

(Looks up and smiles at him.)

I'm sorry, Peter. I didn't mean to go all to pieces like this. I'm all right now.

(Takes his hand.)

What are you going to do when you see Miss Spencer.

PETER

(Crosses and leans on desk left.)

I really don't know. I'll just have to wait until I see her, I guess.

ANNABELLE

You seem very positive that you'll see her this time. Remember Mr. Courtright would make no promises.

PETER

Oh, he'll get me in to see her. By the way, get me Mr. Barrett, will

you? I'd better tell him that I'm going to New York. I'll be glad when this case is finished - it's been nothing but a headache so far.

ANNABELLE

(Using the 'phone on PETER'S desk.)

Mr. Barrett, please...Mr. Murray's office calling.

(She hands PETER the 'phone as he walks by.)

Here you are.

(She walks back to her desk and sits.)

PETER

Thanks. Hello....Mr. Barrett, Peter Murray talking....no, Mr. Court-right just left.....Frankly, I didn't get very much out of him. But he's going to get me in to see Miss Spencer....Yes, day after tomorrow,. All right. I'll call you then from New York. Bye....

(Hangs up the 'phone and sits thinking.)

ANNABELLE

(Rising quickly.)

Peter, take me to New York with you!

PETER

(Turning toward her surprised.)

Take you to New York with me.....What for?

ANNABELLE

(Crosses to PETER.)

Peter, don't you see? I could corner Mr. Courtright and find out just what he does know about me.

PETER

(Stands.)

At Miss Spencer's?

ANNABELLE

Why not? Will you take me with you, Peter?

PETER

Well, I don't know; I hadn't thought about that....Maybe we can work it.....Wait a minute...

(He picks up the telephone.)

Hello, get Mr. Barrett again, please, Mr. Murray calling.

(To ANNABELLE.)

I've got an idea....

(Back to the telephone.)

Hello, Mr. Barrett, this is Peter Murray again. I'd like to take Miss Grey to New York with me....Yes, that's right - Miss Grey - You see, maybe she could get Miss Spencer to talk better than I could...You know, the woman's angle, Mr. Barrett....Yes, I think it's a good idea, too. Thank you, sir.....Right. I'll see you as soon as we get back.

(He puts down the 'phone and turns to ANNABELLE crossing to center.)

All right, gal, you can pack your duds; you're going to New York with me in the morning.

ANNABELLE

(Running to PETER.)

Oh, Peter, I'm so glad.

(She gives him a big kiss.)

PETER

(Very, very pleased.)

Hey, if I get paid like that, I'll take you to New York everyday!

(He holds her away from him and sternly teases her.)

Miss Grey, don't you realize that there is a time and place for everything....and it isn't here in the office during working hours!

ANNABELLE

Yes, Mr. Murray. I'll get to work right away, sir.

(They both rush to their desks.)

FAST CURTAIN

ACT TWO

Scene 2

THE TIME: Afternoon the following day.

THE SCENE: (MISS LORINDA'S living room in the Delmore Hotel in New York City. It is a rather large room, very cold in color. Upstage center is a large window with the dark, heavy draperies drawn, and even though it is midafternoon, little of the afternoon sun can find its way through the window into the room. The furniture is of old vintage but very expensive looking in its antiquity. Perhaps at one time there may have been bright colors in the furniture but they have long since faded. Near the center of the stage is a long, heavy table with a lamp and two large plants. Downstage of the table is a large, old sofa. At stage left is a love seat and behind it a bridge lamp. There is a small table on rollers upstage left, and upstage right is a tall secretary. There is a large, heavy chair at right center stage with a reading lamp beside it. The entrance to the outside corridor in the hotel is upstage left and the entrance to MISS LORINDA'S bedroom is downstage right. There is a straight back chair beside the secretary and one right center. Each piece of furniture seems to be in its precise place. It looks as if the room is never used; there is nothing in the room to show that anyone lives in it, except the light burning on the table, and a large wall clock upstage left center with its swinging pendulum.

AT RISE: (As the curtain rises the stage is void of characters. There is a rap on the door up left and then silence. MISS LORINDA SPENCER enters from stage left. She is in a dark dress of very long length which might have been the latest creation about twenty-five years ago. She is very straight and almost masculine in her actions; each movement is brisk and precise. Her hair is almost white and her face has a stern look,

one of authority. In her way MISS LORINDA might even be called a beautiful woman. It is hard to tell her age; but for her hair, she may be forty; but by her clothes, she may be sixty. Her actions are not those of an old woman, nor is her carriage. Yet there seems to be a fear about her as she always appears to be quickly glancing from one place to another, as if she is expecting to find something she does not want to find. Always she moves quickly; never can she seem to remain in one place very long. At times she can be gracious; at times she is severe and bitter.

As MISS LORINDA enters the room she stands at the doorway for a moment and looks at door up left. There is another knock on the door - louder this time, and a key is heard in the lock as an attempt is made to enter, but the bolt inside prevents admittance. MISS LORINDA stands looking at the door, making no attempt to answer the knock. The knock is heard again and is stopped by off stage female voices. "Don't knock on that door; get away from there!" "I was just going inside to clean." "Oh! but you never go in that suite to clean. Some old lady lives in there and no one ever bothers her. You go down to 1123; that man just checked out." Voices trail off in the distance. MISS LORINDA walks to the door and listens, then to the window and pulls the draperies even closer together to cut out a stray ray of sunshine that may make its way into the room. She shakes the draperies a bit while she is at the window. Walking downstage left she picks up a pillow that is on the love seat, pats it a bit and then replaces it. She turns on the lamp on stage left. She crosses, sits in the chair right and picks up her crocheting which is lying on the arm. She begins to crochet and then suddenly puts it down. She walks to the table, snips off a few dead leaves from the plants and, as she moves some objects on the table, a book falls to the

floor. She picks it up to where it has fallen open and reads silently for a moment. Then she begins to read aloud. It is a sonnet by John W. Weaver.)

LOREIDA

"Why all this cry for Immortality?
Neither in Fame, nor in fact, do I
Hope that my name or spirit will not die.
Oh, I shall not go gladly. It will be
With rage that I shall face the Ultimate;
There will be songs unsung. There will be Mays
Not smelled; there will be flaming autumn days
Not seen; and suddenly will cease the spite
Of words....But I give thanks that in the grass,
Among the waves, within the crowded town,
I felt a lyric, Something hover down,
And made my senses clear, I watched it pass.
And if, after long years, one among men
Should say, 'Why, he touched Beauty once!....

Well,.....then....."23

(She stands looking at the book, and repeats the last phrase.)

"Why, he touched Beauty once!"

(She begins to laugh softly, somewhat hysterically, and flings the book down on the table and says softly...)

Touched Beauty!

(Long pause as she looks about the room and sits on the sofa.)

Beauty!....Not for me...

(Again she begins to laugh softly, ironically....She stops as suddenly as she began. The old clock strikes three. Slowly she turns toward the clock and looks at it for a moment and then stands. She stares toward the audience and then quite suddenly gains her composure; brushes her dress and quickly walks to the door left and slides the bolt. A WAITER enters carrying a large tray. He is a small man dressed in black with a bow tie. He is about sixty and no doubt has been a waiter for nearly all of those sixty years. He sets the tray on the small rolling table up right. LOREIDA walks to the center of the room; she does not show what has gone on before the WAITER entered the door.. Both the WAITER and LOREIDA seem to have a mutual disrespect for one another.)

WAITER

Good day, Miss Spencer.

LORINDA

Good day, Charles.

(All through the conversation the WAITER is making ready to serve LORINDA'S dinner. He rolls the table to the center of the room and sets the table with the dishes he has on the tray. The food is in covered dishes which he serves her one by one. After the table is set, he gets a chair from upstage left and helps her as she is seated. All is very smoothly done, for this is a daily occurrence. This is the one time each day that LORINDA talks with someone. LORINDA stands on stage left and critically watches the WAITER as all the preparations for her dinner are made, then crosses right and stands with arms folded. Turns to CHARLES.)

LORINDA

Did you see anyone at my door when you came in?

CHARLES

No, Miss Spencer.

LORINDA

There was someone - someone rapped three times.

CHARLES

I'm sorry, ma'm.

LORINDA

I won't have it Charles! You tell Mr. Fennemore that again today someone was at my door and I want it stopped immediately.

CHARLES

(Rolling the table center.)

It was probably some of the new help - there is a new maid on this floor. She probably didn't know you were never to be disturbed.

LORINDA

I don't care who it was; I won't have it!

CHARLES

Yes, ma'm!

LOLINDA

What do you have for me today?

CHARLES

Lobster à la Newburg. Is that all right?

LOLINDA

I guess it will do.

CHARLES

(Puzzled.)

But last time you said you liked lobster.

LOLINDA

(Severely.)

I said it will do, didn't I?

CHARLES

Yes, ma'm

(Starts placing the silverware.)

LOLINDA

(After a pause.)

Wipe that silverware off before you put it on the table.

CHARLES

Yes, ma'm!

(Wipes the silverware with a napkin.)

LOLINDA

(Crosses toward CHARLES.)

Do I have to tell you that everyday?

CHARLES

No, ma'm!

LOLINDA

Surely, I pay you enough each week for what you do for me and I expect it done the way I want it.

CHARLES

Yes, ma'm!

(Drops a knife on the floor.)

Sorry, ma'm!

(Picks up the knife.)

LOLINDA

Sometimes, Charles, I think you're getting too old to be a waiter. You've been serving me for a long time.

CHARLES

About eight years, Miss Spencer.

LORINDA

Do you like it? Bringing my meal up here each day, I mean?

CHARLES

You pay me well; I serve you well, ma'm.

LORINDA

(Crosses right.)

Yes, I pay you well because you don't ask questions, because you mind your own business while you're in here. I hope this food is better than what I have been getting recently. What's the matter with those cooks anyway?

CHARLES

It's not the cooks' fault, ma'm - It's just that things are hard to get with the Marshall plan and all.

LORINDA

Marshall Plan? Who is Marshall - someone new at the hotel?

CHARLES

(Getting the chair.)

Oh, no, ma'm. It's his plan that's gonna help the starving of people of Europe. We're sending food to Europe - that's why it's hard to get.

LORINDA

I'm not interested in Europe. First it was the war - I had a hard enough time keeping that out of this room - and now Marshall; it's always something. I'm willing to pay for what food I get and I want you to bring me the best. Do you understand?

CHARLES

Yes, ma'm. Your dinner is ready.

(He gets a chair and helps her into it and then begins to serve her.)

LORINDA

Thank you.

(There is a pause in the conversation as the waiter serves her.)

You seem to have little to say today, Charles. Why is that?

CHARLES

If you don't say nothin', nobody knows nothin'!

LORINDA

Meaning what?

CHARLES

Meaning - the less I talk to you, the less chance I have to say something I shouldn't.

LORENDA

You don't like your job, do you, Charles?

CHARLES

(Stops back left center.)

You pay me well; I serve you well, ma'm.

LORENDA

(Tasting the food.)

This food is not hot. Why can't you bring me food that's hot?

CHARLES

I try. But it's eleven floors up here and that's a long way from the kitchen.

LORENDA

If you weren't so slow in getting up here, it probably would be hot. What do you do, stop on every floor and gossip about me?

CHARLES

No, ma'm.

LORENDA

Do you ever talk about me?

CHARLES

No, ma'm.

LORENDA

You know I don't believe you.

CHARLES

Why should I want to talk about you?

LORENDA

You're human, Charles. And I know servants - they're never happy unless they can talk about the people they serve. Isn't that so?

CHARLES

(Ignoring her question.)

May I pour your coffee now?

LORENDA

You didn't answer my question.

CHARLES

No, ma'm.

LORENDA

Well, are you going to answer me?

CHARLES

No, ma'm.

LORINDA

Sometimes I wonder why I put up with you, but I suppose if it weren't you who brought my food up, it would be someone even worse. At least, you're frank about things. You know when you have a good thing, and that's what looking after me is - am I right?

CHARLES

Yes, ma'm.

LORINDA

Yes, Charles, you may pour my coffee.

CHARLES

(Pouring the coffee.)

Right, ma'm.

LORINDA

What do the other people in the hotel say about me?

CHARLES

No one knows you live here.

LORINDA

I mean the other people who work here - those women who rapped on my door. I heard them talking about me.

CHARLES

Very few of the help know you exist.

LORINDA

But they do talk about me, don't they?

CHARLES

(Crosses left around sofa.)

Not as much as they do the other permanent guests.....It's a beautiful day outside, Miss Spencer.

LORINDA

Is it?

CHARLES

(Walking to window up center.)

Yes, lots of sunshine today. You ought to let some of it in your room.

(Goes over to the draperies as if to pull them apart.)

LORINDA

(Fiercely.)

Charles, leave those alone! I don't like sunshine; in fact, I hate it. I want those draperies closed; I never want you to touch them, do you understand?

CHARLES

(Crosses toward LORINDA left center.)

Yes, ma'm. I was only going to.....

LORINDA

Never mind what you were going to do. If I can't see out, then I'm sure no one can see in. Pour me some more coffee.

CHARLES

Yes, ma'm.

(Crosses back to center and pours the coffee.)

LORINDA

Did I have any mail this morning?

CHARLES

I would have brought it up if you had, ma'm. A telegram came for you, though.

LORINDA

A telegram - where is it?

CHARLES

(Taking it from his pocket.)

I have it here.

LORINDA

Well, give it to me.

(He hands her the telegram.)

Why didn't you bring it up before?

CHARLES

How could I have gotten in to give it to you?

LORINDA

(Reads the telegram.)

Oh, never mind.....I'm going to have a visitor.

(Rises and stands behind chair.)

CHARLES

Are you going to let him in?

LORINDA

(Quickly)

Him? How did you know it was a man?

(Holding up the telegram.)

Did you read this?

CHARLES

Why, no, ma'm.

LORINDA

I know you're lying. But it doesn't matter since it's only Richard Courtright. I suppose you know who he is, too.....?

CHARLES

Yes. He's your banker. He's been here before.

LORINDA

(To herself.)

But this is not the time for him to come.

(Crosses down right.)

Clear these things away. He says "around three" and it's that now.

CHARLES

Then, you're going to see him?

LORINDA

Yes, I'll see him. Get these dishes out of here.

CHARLES

But you've eaten hardly anything...

LORINDA

Stop muttering and get out.

CHARLES

Yes, ma'm.

(Puts chair up left.)

Is there anything more you want of me today?

LORINDA

No. Only be quick with what you're doing.

CHARLES

Yes, ma'm.

(Rolls table upstage left.)

LORINDA

(Reads the telegram again.)

I can't understand why Mr. Courtright would want to see me today.

(Crosses up right.)

Charles is there anything wrong outside - I mean in government or business? But I don't suppose you would know, would you?

CHARLES

Prices are mighty high, Miss Spencer.

LORINDA

They are?

CHARLES

Some places butter costs a dollar a pound.

LORINDA

No, I mean is there something wrong on the stock market?

CHARLES

(Picks up tray from table.)

I don't know, ma'm. Lots of people are worried about the Russians. Some people think the whole world is going Communistic.

LORINDA

Even in America?

CHARLES

(Starts for door left.)

Some say so, but I don't think the Democrats will let that happen.

LORINDA

Do you know who Mr. Courtright is? Would you know him if you saw him?

CHARLES

I think so.

LORINDA

If you see him outside, send him in.

CHARLES

Yes, ma'm.

(He exits with try. LORINDA brushes her dress and straightens herself up for her visitor. CHARLES enters again.)

Mr. Courtright is outside, ma'm.

LORINDA

(Crosses to left of davenport.)

Well, don't stand there. Send him in. Send him in!

CHARLES

Yes, ma'm

(He exits. RICHARD COURTRIGHT enters.)

COURTRIGHT

Miss Spencer.

LORINDA

Put the bolt on the door, please Mr. Courtright.

(Crosses to right center in front of sofa.)

COURTRIGHT

(Following her instructions.)

Miss Spencer, you look the same as you did the last time I was here. You've been well, I trust.

(He comes forward and shakes her hand.)

LORINDA

Yes, I've been well. And what may be the nature of this unexpected visit? Nothing wrong, I hope.

COURTRIGHT

Nothing wrong, Miss Spencer, I hope.

(He sees her still holding the telegram.)

I see you have my telegram.

LORINDA

Yes. That stupid waiter just gave it to me. But why the telegram?... Why are you here?

COURTRIGHT

(Crosses left center.)

I sent you the telegram because I wanted you to guess a bit. If you wondered, then I was sure you would let me in to see you. In that, I've succeeded.

LORINDA

Please be seated, Mr. Courtright, and let's get to the point.

COURTRIGHT

(Sits on love seat left.)

Thank you.

LORINDA

You wouldn't be here unless it were very important, and you know that I wouldn't see you unless I thought it was.

COURTRIGHT

Don't you ever talk of anything but business?

LORINDA

You know I don't.

(Sits at sofa.)

Is there something wrong with my holdings at the bank?

COURTRIGHT

No....it isn't that. It's something I don't quite understand.

LORINDA

Why, Mr. Courtright, I thought that a man with your experience in handling financial affairs would understand everything relating to my business dealings. They're not too complicated, are they?

COURTRIGHT

No. They are not as complicated as all that. It's not only to discuss financial affairs that this call is made, Miss Spencer. You must realize that I don't see you but once a year and only when because I made a promise to your father to look after you.

LORINDA

You've told me that before. I know you would do nothing for me except for that stupid promise you made to my father.....But you're not here to discuss that.

COURTRIGHT

No.

LORINDA

What is it then?

COURTRIGHT

I've been able to look after your interests because you've given me a free hand in managing them.

LORINDA

You still have - -

COURTRIGHT

No. Now you're keeping something from me.

LORINDA

Why, that's absurd. You have my complete trust!

COURTRIGHT

Have I, Miss Spencer? What about the matter of \$56,000 worth of uncancelled checks from the Lehigh Valley Manufacturing Company?

LORINDA

(Visibly shaken, rises, walks down right.)

Oh, those - why, they're nothing.....But how did you know?

COURTRIGHT

I talked with a Mr. Murray - the company lawyer.

LORINDA

A lawyer.....But those checks - I, I just neglected to do anything about them. That's all.

COURTRIGHT

(Rising.)

No, that isn't all.....One doesn't neglect to cash checks year after year for such a long period. One doesn't ignore \$56,000....unless there is a very good reason. What is it, Miss Spencer?

LORINDA

No reason at all.....If I don't wish to cash those checks, it's my own business. If that is all you came up to see me about, then we may consider this interview over. I don't wish to talk about this anymore. Good day to you, Mr. Courtright!

COURTRIGHT

(Going toward her, center.)

But it's not quite as simple as that. You can't toss this off by a shrug of your shoulders like you do everything else.....and a bolted door in a hotel room won't help you this time. If you don't do something about those checks immediately, you'll find yourself in court.

LORINDA

In court?

COURTRIGHT

Yes - and I'm sure you don't want that!

(Crosses to left.)

You might have to tell something you don't want known.

LORINDA

(Crosses to center.)

What do you mean?

COURTRIGHT

I'm not sure, but I know you wouldn't shut yourself up in a hotel room all these years unless you have a very good reason - - unless you are afraid of something, or unless you have done something you don't want the world to find out.

LORINDA

Richard Courtright....I don't have to listen to you!

COURTRIGHT

(Ignoring her.)

What are you going to do about the checks?....Do you want this thing brought into court?

LORINDA

(Crosses in front of him.)

I don't know.....I don't know.....

(Turns to center.)

But they can't take this thing to court.

COURTRIGHT

Yes, they can - And if I know this young Peter Murray, he won't wait much longer.

LORINDA

It's my money.....I can do as I wish with it.

COURTRIGHT

Yes, if you cash those checks.....All the company is interested in is getting this matter off their books.....Sign those checks and you can do as you please with the money. You have the checks, haven't you?

(Sits at sofa center.)

LORINDA

Yes....yes, I have them....all of them.

(Going to the secretary.)

In here.

COURTRIGHT

Well, get them and let's get this thing over with.

LORINDA

(Bringing back a stack of letters tied with string.)

They're all here, I'm sure.

(She gives them to COURTNIIGHT.)
Here you are.

COURTNIIGHT

This is beyond me....
(He separates the checks from the letters.)
Why have you kept these all these years?
(Stands.)

LOUIEIDA

(Crosses right.)
But they can't go into court over this....It is not important!

COURTNIIGHT

Of course it's not important.....Come now, you sign these and I'll take them with me and deposit them to your account at the bank.
(He draws a chair up to the table and gets out his fountain pen.)

LOUIEIDA

But just a minute.....Let me think.....
(Standing down right.)

COURTNIIGHT

(Impatient as he puts the checks on the table for her to sign.)
Come now, Miss Spencer, you're wasting time...
(LOUIEIDA stands looking at him.)
These are no different than any other checks, and I know you have signed a lot of others...
(He sees her staring at him.)

LOUIEIDA

(As if she is talking to herself, trying to make herself believe what she has heard...)
It's not that important.....They won't go to court over this....

COURTNIIGHT

(Severely.)
But they will, I tell you! Mr. Murray is coming to see you tomorrow about it.

LOUIEIDA

Tomorrow?
(She still stands looking at him.)

COURTNIIGHT

Yes, tomorrow - I had to make an appointment for him to see you. It was the only thing I could do to keep him from going to court immediately.

LOUIEIDA

But I won't see him!

COURTNIIGHT

You won't have to if you sign these checks.

LORINDA

(Pause.)

I won't do it!

(She stands looking at him.)

COURTNIIGHT

I don't understand.....Come....sign these; it will only take a moment.

(He walks over to her.)

Why, Miss Lorinda, what's wrong? You're as white as a ghost....Surely you're not afraid of those checks....Or, are you?....Yes. You're afraid to sign them, Miss Lorinda....That's it, isn't it?

LORINDA

(Crosses down left.)

No. No! I'm not afraid....I'm not afraid of them I tell you....

COURTNIIGHT

(Pulls chair out.)

Then, sit down and sign them.....

LORINDA

(Pause.)

I will.....I'll sign them....

(She sits down quickly and grabs the pen. COURTNIIGHT stands behind her. She starts to sign one of the checks, but can't do it. She looks across the room, horrified....and almost in a whisper says slowly -)

Don't stare at me like that - Please, don't stare at me!

(She covers her eyes and then looks again.)

You can't find me here.....Don't stare at me I tell you.

(She jumps up and slowly backs into COURTNIIGHT as he stands watching her.)

COURTNIIGHT

(Softly.)

Who was staring at you? What did you see, Lorinda? Why can't you sign these checks?

LORINDA

(Backing to up right.)

I can't do it.....Do you hear?.....I can't do it.....It's been the same everytime I try...I can't do it.....

COURTNIIGHT

But why? Why can't you sign them?.....You seemed to see someone - who was it?

LOREIDA

(Crosses to side sofa right.)

I don't know.....I don't know.....Please, go away and leave me alone.

COURTRIGHT

(Crosses right.)

No! I won't go until I know the reason for this.....There is a reason.

(Pause.)

Are you going to tell me?

LOREIDA

No.....No. I won't tell you.

(Crosses left.)

Take those checks and get them out of here! Please go away. I won't tell you anything.

COURTRIGHT

(Sits in chair right.)

Perhaps I can tell you why you are so afraid. Perhaps I can tell you why you can't make yourself sign those checks....

LOREIDA

(Turning quickly toward him.)

What do you know?....I've lived alone for all these years and no one knows anything - not even you.

COURTRIGHT

But remember - I knew your father very well. Yes, perhaps I knew him better than you realize....

LOREIDA

(Crosses toward center.)

But he didn't tell you anything about me; he couldn't have....oh, I know he wouldn't.....He was afraid to tell anyone anything.....even if he hated me!

COURTRIGHT

He didn't hate you. It was you who hated him.

LOREIDA

(Looks at COURTRIGHT and speaks slowly, bitterly.)

Yes, I hated him.....Does that tell you anything, Mr. Courtright? I hated him when he was alive...and I've hated him every minute since he has been dead....

COURTRIGHT

You were glad when he died....You wanted to see him dead, didn't you?

LOREIDA

(Afraid.)

No. No! I didn't.....

COURTIGHT

(Stands.)

Are you sure? You had reasons to wish he were dead....He knew the kind of a daughter he had - a vicious, heartless daughter who would stop at nothing until she got what she wanted. But he had taken all he could; he wouldn't go along with your plans any longer. He was in the way, wasn't he? Oh, yes, you wanted him dead!

LORINDA

(Crosses left center.)

You're lying - you're making this up.

COURTIGHT

No - it's taken me a long time to see through this completely but, now I'm beginning to understand.

LORINDA

What do you mean?

COURTIGHT

Why did you come to live at this hotel? Why did you shut yourself off from the world like this? You - Lorinda Spencer - whose sole object in life was to have a good time and do exactly what you wanted even though it meant pushing aside those who loved you...

(Sits.)

To think I loved you once, Lorinda. Yes, I did you know. Today I can laugh at you and your hermit's life.

LORINDA

(Quickly.)

But I'm not a hermit! I just would rather live by myself.

COURTIGHT

(Slowly.)

I escaped you, Lorinda. A very narrow escape it was, too...I've often wondered what it would have been like to be married to you. Thank God, I didn't have to find out.

LORINDA

Get out of here! Do you hear me?

COURTIGHT

(Coming to her.)

I told you I wouldn't leave until I found out about those checks.

LORINDA

You'll never find out.

COURTIGHT

They came from your father's investment, didn't they? An investment that became yours after his death. It's strange that the only money you refuse is that which comes directly from your father.

LORINDA

(Becoming very nervous. Crosses left center.)
What are you talking about?

COURTNIIGHT

(Follows her to center.)
Perhaps there is some direct connection between those checks and your father.

LORINDA

(Crosses down left.)
You're just imagining things.

COURTNIIGHT

You know I'm not. As I said before, I could never quite justify in my mind your running away from everything and living all by yourself in these hotel rooms.

(Crosses right to center.)
I knew you had a reason, Lorinda, but I could never believe that reason was strong enough.

LORINDA

What reason are you talking about?

COURTNIIGHT

(Turns to her - a long pause.)
Your child.

LORINDA

My child?

COURTNIIGHT

Yes, your child. I knew about her.

LORINDA

(Coming to COURTNIIGHT.)
But you couldn't! No one knew!

COURTNIIGHT

Your father did.

LORINDA

He couldn't have told you....He didn't have a chance to tell....

COURTNIIGHT

He told me just before he died. You would never have told me, Lorinda. You would have had me marry you and told me nothing.

LORINDA

(Seated on love seat left.)
Then you've known all these years?

COURTNEY

Yes.

LORINDA

That was why you wouldn't marry me?

COURTNEY

That, and other things. It only made me see you as you really were.

LORINDA

Do you know what happened to my daughter? .

COURTNEY

Yes.....

LORINDA

Where is she?

COURTNEY

You're starting a little late to think about her now, aren't you?

LORINDA

Tell me where she is! You know, don't you?

COURTNEY

Yes, I know. But you'll never see her! I'll see to that.

LORINDA

Tell me, where she is!

COURTNEY

No, I'll never tell you! I've looked after your daughter, Lorinda. I've watched her grow each day to become a beautiful young woman. And each day I've grown to despise you more and more for what you did to her. I have but one feeling left for you, Lorinda, and that is contempt!

LORINDA

So you raised my daughter?

COURTNEY

I only helped, in an unseen way.

LORINDA

(Rises and crosses to COURTNEY.)

Tell me about her, Richard.

COURTNEY

(Crosses right.)

I'll tell you nothing. You don't even deserve the pleasure of hearing about her.

LORINDA

(A pause as she looks at COURTNEY.)

No, I don't suppose you will.

(She walks toward him. A pause, and she turns to him.)

So you know about my child. How many other people have you told?

COURTNEY

No one.

LORINDA

Can I believe you?

COURTNEY

You have no reason not to believe me, have you?

LORINDA

(Slowly.)

No.

COURTNEY

Rest assured. Your secret has been safe with me, though not because of you, Lorinda, but for your daughter's sake.

LORINDA

(Seated on sofa.)

You know now why I have lived all these years here alone in those rooms; you have known my secret all the time.

COURTNEY

I have known about your child, if that's what you mean, but you can't make me believe having a child caused you to come here to live alone.

LORINDA

What do you mean?

COURTNEY

(Crosses behind sofa.)

There was more to it than just the child. The child didn't mean anything to you - you wouldn't have come here because of her. You were afraid of something. You were afraid of the same thing that makes you unable to sign these checks.

(He picks up the checks from the table and brings them to her.)

They stand for something you fear. What is it?

(He waits for an answer.)

If you won't answer that question, I'll answer it for you.....You're afraid of your father, Lorinda.

LORINDA

(Quickly.)

But he's dead. I saw him dead.

COURTRIGHT

Yes, he's dead. But you've never been quite sure. You tried to escape him by running away....you didn't even go to your father's funeral, did you?

LORINDA

I couldn't!

COURTRIGHT

No, you couldn't because you had to escape from him.
(Pause.)

But you had no reason to be afraid of your father.....unless...

LORINDA

Unless, what.....?

COURTRIGHT

Unless you killed him, Lorinda.

LORINDA

(Rises and turns away.)

No. No! I didn't kill him.

COURTRIGHT

(Following her.)

That was your reason for coming here, wasn't it? You had to get away from him even though he was dead. But it's impossible - even here. That's why you can't sign these checks. Each time you try, you see him sitting in his chair, staring at you, just as he was when I walked in on you the day he died.

LORINDA

(Turning to COURTRIGHT.)

No. No! You don't know what you're saying.

COURTRIGHT

You're afraid of these checks because they come from your father and you killed him!

LORINDA

But you were there - you know how he died.

COURTRIGHT

Yes. I saw him in that room with you. I also saw you holding his bottle of medicine.

LORINDA

I was trying to give it to him.

COURTRIGHT

Or did you take it away from him? That medicine meant life or death to your father. Did you keep it away from him so he would die?

LORINDA

(Crosses right.)

No, I didn't, I tell you.

COURTRIGHT

(Pause - then softly.)

The bottle was unopened, Lorinda.

LORINDA

(Turns to COURTRIGHT.)

I didn't have time to.....

COURTRIGHT

I heard what you were saying when I came in.

LORINDA

(Coming to COURTRIGHT.)

But you didn't see him die. There was no one there when he died - just my father and me.....What did you hear? You've got to tell me!

COURTRIGHT

You don't know, do you? You don't know when I came in the room?

LORINDA

There was no one there. You couldn't have seen what happened.

COURTRIGHT

Are you sure?

LORINDA

No, I'm not sure.....How much do you know?

COURTRIGHT

I've learned enough today to know that you were responsible for your father's death. The things I've wondered about for years all add up to murder!

(Crosses right.)

LORINDA

You're mad!

COURTRIGHT

(Crosses to center.)

I know now why you came here to live in seclusion. You wanted to be sure no one would find out what you had done!

LORINDA

(Crosses to COURTRIGHT.)

But you can't prove this.

COURTRIGHT

I don't have to - you proved it already because you can't sign those checks - your father won't let you! He may be dead as far as the world is concerned, but he's alive to you, isn't he?

LORINDA

(To right.)

Yes.....Yes.....He is alive! He's here all the time!

COURTLIGHT

And you'll never escape him - - It must have been terrible to live alone all these years with your conscience - wondering each day if you would do something that would give away your secret.

(Pause.)

I've found your secret, Lorinda - it's taken me years, but you know I've learned the truth.

LORINDA

You're not going to tell anyone about this, are you, Richard? Promise me you won't. I'll pay you well. I'll give you anything you ask.

COURTLIGHT

You can't buy me, Lorinda. You know you can't. You tried years ago.. Remember?

(He starts for the door.)

LORINDA

Where are you going?

COURTLIGHT

Does it matter?

LORINDA

(Crosses behind davenport.)

But what are you going to do?

COURTLIGHT

(At door.)

I don't know yet - I'll have to think it over. But you can be assured that I'll make you suffer for what you've done, Lorinda - and in my own way, too. Your secret is no longer safe behind this bolted door.

LORINDA

I wish you were dead!

COURTLIGHT

Yes, I believe you do.

(Pause.)

But I'll be here to see you in the morning....at ten, let us say, and I wouldn't advise you to keep me locked out. Mr. Murray and I want to talk to you about a little matter of some uncashed checks. Good day....Miss Spencer!

(He exits. LORINDA stands looking at the door for a moment and walks over to it and slides the bolt. She

walks to the table and picks up the checks. Slowly she goes to the center of the stage and lights a match to the checks. The lights die slowly, leaving only the light from the burning checks.)

CURTAIN SLOWLY FALLS.

ACT THREE

THE TIME: Ten o'clock in the morning the following day.

THE SCENE: The living room of LORINDA SPENCER'S hotel suite.

AT RISE: (As the curtain rises there is no one on stage and the room looks much the same as it did the previous scene. The clock begins to strike. As it reaches six, LORINDA enters and stands in the doorway down right until the clock has finished striking ten. She enters and goes to the door up left as if to open it and then stops suddenly behind the table center and stands looking at the door. She is obviously afraid. She starts back toward the door down right. Again she stops and looks at the door up left. Slowly she walks over to door up left. She stands looking at the bolt and finally slides it open. She opens the door slightly and see RICHARD COURTRIGHT standing there. He enters and walks down center. LORINDA bolts the door and walks up right.)

COURTRIGHT

(As he enters.)

Good morning, Miss Lorinda. I see you were waiting for me.

(He turns and looks at her.)

You don't seem very happy to have me here. Am I not welcome this morning?

(She does not answer.)

Don't you have anything to say to me today?

LORINDA

(Suddenly facing him and crossing down right to edge of sofa.)

What are you going to do, Richard?

COURTRIGHT

It's not what I'm going to do, it's what you are going to do, Lorinda!

LORINDA

(Coming to him.)

But you haven't told anyone?.....

COURTRIGHT

No - not yet I haven't.

LORINDA

(Pleading.)

You won't, will you, Richard? - For my father's sake?

COURTNIIGHT

(Crosses left.)

I don't know - I don't know - Have you seen anything of Mr. Murray?
He hasn't been here yet, has he?

LORINDA

No.

COURTNIIGHT

I waited for him in the lobby - I thought perhaps he had come up.

LORINDA

No one has been here since you left yesterday.

COURTNIIGHT

(Sitting at the love seat left.)

He should be along anytime now.

LORINDA

I don't want to see him.

COURTNIIGHT

No. I don't suppose you do!

LORINDA

You had no right - asking him to meet you here!

COURTNIIGHT

Perhaps that's true. Perhaps I should let Mr. Murray go to court.

LORINDA

No!

COURTNIIGHT

After what I found out yesterday, perhaps it would be best.

LORINDA

You wouldn't.

COURTNIIGHT

Oh, wouldn't it? - I'm sure I would be a star witness. Yes, you'll see Mr. Murray, Lorinda; you have no choice.

LORINDA

But I have nothing to say to him.

COURTNIIGHT

You had better start thinking of something to say.

LORINDA

No! No! I won't see him I tell you. Why can't you leave me alone--
all of you?

(A knock is heard on the door up left.
LORINDA quickly exits down right.
COURTRIGHT follows her toward the
door down right.)

COURTRIGHT

Come back here. You can't run away this time.

(A knock is again heard on the door up
left. COURTRIGHT stops and starts
toward the door up left; then he turns
quickly and goes to the door down right.)

Lorinda.....Lorinda.....come out here I tell you!

(A knock is again heard on the door up
left. COURTRIGHT quickly goes to the
door up left, slides the bolt and opens
the door. ANNEBELL enters followed
quickly by PETER.)

ANNEBELL

Good morning.

PETER

Good morning, Mr. Courtright - I hope we haven't kept you waiting.

COURTRIGHT

Why, no - but, Miss Grey - I....I hardly expected to see you!

PETER

Yes, I brought her along. I thought perhaps you might need a
secretary, then, too, it might put Miss Spencer more at ease to have
another woman around. By the way, where is Miss Spencer?

COURTRIGHT

She's here. She's here so close - but I'm sure it won't be necessary
for Miss Grey to remain. I'm quite positive you won't need a secretary.

PETER

I don't think Miss Spencer would mind if she stays.

ANNEBELL

I'll keep quite out of the way, Mr. Courtright.

COURTRIGHT

You don't know what a time I've had to convince her just to see
you, Mr. Murray - No. I'd rather not have anyone else here.
(Crosses to ANNEBELL.)

I'm sorry, Miss Grey, but I'm going to have to ask you to leave.

ANNABELLE

All right, Mr. Courtright, I'll go, but not until I have made an appointment to see you. I must talk to you.

COURTRIGHT

Talk to me - why - what about?

ANNABELLE

Peter said you seemed to know quite a bit about me. I was hoping you could answer some of my questions.

COURTRIGHT

I'm sure he's mistaken. But I'll talk to you, only not now - and some other place - not here!

LORINDA

(Standing in the doorway down right. She is very cold and calm.)

You didn't tell me I was to have two visitors, Mr. Courtright.

COURTRIGHT

(Crosses down right to LORINDA.)

I didn't know, Miss Lorinda - I was expecting only Mr. Murray myself.

PETER

(Crosses down left.)

I'm Mr. Murray. I took the liberty of bringing my secretary, Miss Grey. I didn't think you'd mind.

ANNABELLE

(Crosses to left of sofa.)

How do you do, Miss Spencer.

COURTRIGHT

I was just telling them that I didn't think a secretary would be necessary. Miss Grey was just leaving.

ANNABELLE

Yes, I'll go if you don't need me.

LORINDA

Well, since you're in here, you may as well stay.

COURTRIGHT

I'm sure we don't need Miss Grey.

LORINDA

(Ignoring COURTRIGHT.)

Please sit down.

COURTRIGHT

But Miss Grey need not stay. I insist that she leave.

LORINDA

Oh, stop bickering and let's get this over. This is still my apartment, Mr. Courtright. Miss Grey may stay if I choose. Now, sit down, all of you! I'll be frank; I have no desire to see anyone, but Mr. Courtright demands it.

(ANNABELLE is seated on the love seat down left. COURTRIGHT sits on the sofa. LORINDA remains standing right.)

PETER

(As he sits.)

Thank you, Miss Spencer. Surely you know we mean no harm by our visit. We're here merely to help you.

LORINDA

I've gotten along for many years without your help. I'm sure I don't need it now.

ANNABELLE

Perhaps you'll help us then.

LORINDA

I'm not in the habit of helping people I don't know.

COURTRIGHT

Miss Spencer is not in the habit of helping anyone.

LORINDA

(Ignoring COURTRIGHT.)

Well, Mr. Murray, you have finally succeeded in forcing your way in here against my will. I'm sure you found out when you were here before and made a nuisance of yourself that I didn't want to see you. I still don't!

PETER

I apologize for being a nuisance, Miss Spencer, but I had to talk to you. Really, I can be a gentleman. Why don't you wish to see me?

LORINDA

(Sitting in the chair right.)

Let my reasons for not seeing you be as they may....You're in here now. What do you want?

PETER

I've been sent to see you by the Lehigh Valley Manufacturing Company..

LORINDA

I know that. Come to the point!

PETER

Yes, ma'am. As a principle stockholder, you've been receiving checks for a number of years which represent earnings from your investment. Those checks have never been cashed. Isn't that true?

LOREINDA

Yes, that's true.....What of it?

PETER

(Standing.)

You must realize that the company does not wish to cause you any unnecessary embarrassment...It has the stockholders' interest at heart...

LOREINDA

(Annoyed.)

Yes, yes.....go on.

PETER

I'm sure you understand the company cannot have the large amount of money accumulated on its books without wondering about it.... We have been very patient with you, Miss Spencer; we sent you several letters, but we never received an answer...I trust you got them?

LOREINDA

I received them.

PETER

Can you tell me why you have never cashed the checks?

LOREINDA

Because I believe what I do with my money is my business and not that of your company.

PETER

That's true - all we ask you to do is sign the checks and you may do whatever you wish with the money.

LOREINDA

And if I don't choose to sign them...?

PETER

Then we will be forced to take this matter into court. We don't wish to, you understand, but if you won't cooperate with us, you leave us no alternative.

LOREINDA

That won't be necessary.

PETER

Then you'll sign them?

LORINDA

No. I don't have the checks...

PETER

You don't have them? I thought....

LORINDA

(Standing.)

I don't have them; now, will you go and leave me alone....?

COURTIGHT

She's not telling the truth; she had them yesterday. I saw them.

LORINDA

(Walks down right.)

Yes, I had them yesterday, but I don't have them now....

COURTIGHT

What did you do with them?

LORINDA

(Defiantly.)

I burned them.

PETER

(Shocked.)

You mean you actually burned \$50,000? I don't understand....

COURTIGHT

(Rising.)

Miss Lorinda doesn't want you to understand...

(Going toward LORINDA.)

So that's what you did. I expected something like that, just what I didn't know.

(He walks closer to her.)

So you burned them....No. These people don't understand why you would do that.....but I do.

LORINDA

No....No! You don't!

COURTIGHT

Yes, I do, Miss Lorinda....but I can't prove it.

(Pause as he walks away from her.)

I could tell what I know however; it would be very interesting to Mr. Murray.

LORINDA

(Walking toward him.)

You don't dare.

COURTIGHT

Oh, don't I.....?

LOREINDA

(Crosses to PETER.)

Don't believe him; he doesn't know what he's talking about. He's just made up a fantastic story...and it's all lies, lies...all of it.

(Going to PETER.)

I've known him for a long time - you can't believe a thing he says.

COURTRIGHT

(Following LOREINDA.)

Miss Lorinda, I meant what I said.

LOREINDA

(Ignoring COURTRIGHT.)

Why, years ago even as a young man he was selfish and deceitful. I remember the time when he tried to.....

COURTRIGHT

(Crosses right, stopping LOREINDA.)

Oh, stop this nonsense. Why, you don't know what it is to be an honest woman and you call me deceitful!

LOREINDA

Oh, I won't listen to you talk like this! I tell you, Mr. Murray, he knows nothing of these checks. You couldn't believe his word against mine, could you? I assure you he's not a man to be trusted in the least!

COURTRIGHT

(At right, very angry.)

You can't shut me up with your slanderous talk, Lorinda Spencer. Either you tell them about those checks or I will! Then we'll know just who the lying and deceitful person is around here.

LOREINDA

(To PETER.)

Are you going to stand here and let him talk to me this way, young man?

PETER

(Crosses to COURTRIGHT.)

No. I don't think all this is quite necessary, Mr. Courtright!

COURTRIGHT

(Turning to PETER.)

You stay out of this. If you want the results you came after, you'd better let me handle this my way.

ANNABELLE

(Rising.)

But it shouldn't be necessary to talk that way to anyone.

LORINDA

(To PETER.)

Make him get out of here. Please. I'll tell you everything, only not while he's here. Make him go.

PETER

(Crosses to COUNTRIGHT.)

Yes, you'd better leave, Mr. Courtright.

ANNABELLE

(Leading LORINDA over to the love seat.)

Here.....come and sit down.....There's no need for anyone to get so excited.

(LORINDA and ANNABELLE sit.)

COURTRIGHT

(Crosses right center.)

No, I won't leave...not until I have had a chance to talk.

LORINDA

Please make him go....I'll tell you anything - only after he's gone!

PETER

(Walking toward COURTRIGHT.)

I said you had better leave, Mr. Courtright.....

COURTRIGHT

(Crosses to up right center.)

No. I'd rather you left. Let me talk to her alone...I should have known better than to let you in in the first place.

LORINDA

You heard what I said, Mr. Murray - I'll say nothing while he's still here.

PETER

(Following COURTRIGHT, almost threateningly.)

Mr. Courtright.....I mean it....I said get out!!

COURTRIGHT

(Backing away.)

Well, all right then...all right! I'll go. You don't have to get belligerent.

PETER

(Opening the door for COURTRIGHT.)

This way, Mr. Courtright.....

COURTRIGHT

(At the door.)

Murray, you're an impetuous young fool. I know more about this than you do. You're making a mistake in listening to her.

PETER

You heard what Miss Spencer said - out!

(PETER pushes him out and shuts and bolts the door.

Walks toward LORINDA.)

I'm very sorry, Miss Spencer, that Mr. Courtright spoke as he did.

LORINDA

(Very sweetly.)

Thank you very much for getting rid of him like you did.

PETER

(Seated on sofa right center.)

Why, I had no idea that he would act like that. What was the matter with him anyway?

LORINDA

Why, I don't know. But of late he has acted so strangely....Yesterday when he was here he frightened me so...

ANNABELLE

You shouldn't let him in to see you if you're afraid of him.

LORINDA

I know, but he has been my banker for such a long time. Living like I do I don't have contact with anyone on the outside. I wouldn't know anyone else who would handle my affairs. But I think there must be something wrong with him.....The last few times he's been here to see me he hasn't acted like himself at all.

PETER

Don't see him when you're all alone!

ANNABELLE

I think what Peter says is true.

LORINDA

Yes, I guess you're right...I won't let him come again...I'm so glad that you were here...I can't thank you enough for getting him out.

PETER

That's all right, Miss Spencer...I'm glad I was here. If he bothers you anymore I would get in touch with Mr. Fennamore, or even the police; you don't have to stand for that you know.

LORINDA

(The word "police" startles her.)

The police?...I mean, I'm sure he won't bother me anymore....

ANNABELLE

But I would be careful.

LORINDA

I can assure you I will.

(She rises and walks to the other side of the room as if to exit at door right.)
 And now, Mr. Murray, since the matter of those checks is settled, I have several things I have to do today....

PETER

(Rising.)
 I'm sorry, Miss Spencer, that matter isn't exactly settled. You said you would tell us about them. Don't you remember?

LORINDA

I have told you about them. I told you I destroyed them. I burned them....What more is there to tell? They're gone, aren't they?

PETER

You're right. Those checks are gone, but that doesn't clear the company's books. They'll just have to issue you another to cover the amount.

LORINDA

(Crosses to PETER.)
 You mean they'll send me more checks?

PETER

Yes, that's right.....

LORINDA

(Surprised.)
 But I don't want them. Don't you understand?

PETER

You don't want \$50,000?

LORINDA

No....no....I don't....I don't want anything that comes from outside. All I want is to be left alone in here.

(She comes to PETER.)
 Promise me you won't let them send me anymore - will you do that?

PETER

Why, I can't do that, Miss Spencer. They wouldn't believe me if I told them you didn't want the money.....But why? Can you tell me that?

LORINDA

(Walking away.)
 No, I can't tell you why. Tell them what you like, but don't send me anymore.....

PETER

(Following LORINDA.)
 But there must be a reason....What is it? Perhaps I can help you...

LORINDA

I don't need the money..

(Pause, then turning toward PETER.)

Yes, that's it. I have enough money. Isn't that a good enough reason?

ANNABELLE

But if you don't need the money, then why don't you give it to some worthy cause?

LORINDA

(Crosses quickly to ANNABELLE.)

Some worthy cause...what do you mean?

ANNABELLE

You could give it to some charitable institution. Some place where they help people who are in need.

LORINDA

(Quickly.)

Yes...yes...that's what I could do. Then you wouldn't have to send the checks to me, would you? I would never have to bother with them at all.

(Walks over to PETER quickly.)

You could fix it so I would never receive those checks? You could do that, couldn't you, Mr. Murray?

PETER

Why, yes, I think that could be arranged. Do you have any particular organization that you would like to give the money to, Miss Spencer?

LORINDA

No. You take care of all the details. You pick the organization - any one - I don't care. Then they would never send me anymore checks, would they?

PETER

Well, no. I suppose we could make arrangements for the money to go directly to a charity and I'm sure I could find one that would be pleased to receive your donations. Of course, you would have to allot the money, but I'd be very happy to take care of this for you...I could bring the papers up to you tomorrow. Will that be all right?

LORINDA

(Crosses up left center.)

Yes, yes...anything you say. I'll be expecting you again tomorrow.

ANNABELLE

(Rising. Crosses up to LORINDA.)

I think this is a wonderful thing for you to do, Miss Spencer. There should be more fine people like you in the world.

PETER

(Crosses to door.)

Yes, Miss Spencer...this is a fine gesture. We'll be up to see you, say about ten-thirty.

LORINDA

(Trying to hurry them out.)

Yes....that will be fine.

PETER

(Unbolting the door.)

You will be sure to let us in now, won't you?

LORINDA

Yes, of course, I will.....Goodbye to you.

AMABELLE

Goodbye, Miss Lorinda. It has been a real pleasure talking to you. You're a wonderful person.

(PETER opens the door and as he does so COURTRIGHT rushes in. He goes past PETER and down left.)

PETER

(Walking after COURTRIGHT.)

Here.....here....where are you going, Mr. Courtright?

COURTRIGHT

Never you mind....I have a few things to say to Miss Lorinda and I'll ask you to stay out of it this time!

PETER

But there is no need to say anything to her now; everything is all settled. I know Miss Lorinda doesn't wish to see you.

COURTRIGHT

(Surprised.)

All settled? What do you mean?

PETER

Miss Spencer has decided to send the money to some charitable institution. And I'm sure I can take care of this for her. Now, if you will come with me we can work out the details together...that is, if Miss Spencer still wishes you to handle her affairs after the way you acted today....I'm sure I wouldn't blame her if she were to find someone else.

COURTRIGHT

(Pause.)

Mr. Murray, you're a fool. She had you devise some way so she wouldn't have a thing to do with those checks, didn't she?

PETER

Why, yes, but what of that? She just doesn't wish to be bothered is all....

COURTIGHT

Ha! So, by playing the part of an innocent old lady, she deceived you like she has everyone else.

ANTHILL

(Crosses down left.)

She hasn't deceived us. She's just afraid of the world that exists outside these rooms and she's locked the world out for that reason.

COURTIGHT

Miss Spencer is not afraid of the world, nor any of the people in it. She's afraid of herself.....If you're such a smart lawyer, have you found out why she refuses to sign those checks?

LORINDA

(Crossing down right from behind sofa.)

Make him leave.....please, Mr. Murray.....please.

COURTIGHT

Don't worry....I'll get out of here as soon as I have had my say...

(To LORINDA.)

I've tried to protect you.....Tried to shield you from these people but now I'm through! Now, I want to talk and you won't stop me!

LORINDA

(Pleading to PETER.)

Get him out of here.....Get him out of here, I say....

COURTIGHT

(Walking toward LORINDA.)

You.....giving money to a charitable institution - you'd give it to anyone as long as you didn't have to touch it, wouldn't you?.....You - giving money to the poor - that's a laugh, isn't it, Miss Lorinda?

(He laughs at her - she backs away from him.)

Yes, that's a laugh...I can see the headlines now...."Eccentric spinster turns over thousands to the poor."

(He laughs again.)

Why, you'll be a hero, won't you? Do you think you can clear your conscience by making such a gesture? Do you think that you can get rid of your haunts and fears this easily? Oh, yes, you'll rid yourself of the checks that have been coming to haunt you, but that won't do it, Miss Lorinda....you'll still be haunted by what you have done. You'll never escape....Never....Not as long as I'm alive. Now you'll start worrying about me and what I know....You'll worry more than when you thought no one knew your secret.....But now I know, too...

LORINDA

(Backing away from him and sinking into the chair right.)

No. No! No! Please leave me alone...

PETER

(Rushing over to COURTRIGHT.)

What are you doing - frightening Miss Spencer like this?

COURTRIGHT

Ask her what I'm talking about....Ask her why she's afraid to have me talk and why she tried to bribe me yesterday to keep me quiet...

LORINDA

(Very intense.)

Don't you believe a thing he's saying.

(She jumps to her feet.)

I'll tell you what it is...Yes, I'll tell you....He's trying to blackmail me....Don't you understand - that's what he is trying to do? He wanted that money for himself, and now that we're going to give it to a worthy cause, he's not going to get it.....Help me, Mr. Murray.....Don't let him do this to me.

PETER

So that's what it is.....That's why you were so secretive concerning Miss Spencer.

LORINDA

Yes, yes - that's why!

PETER

I didn't expect this of you, Courtright. I can see why you wouldn't tell me what you knew - you were afraid I would suspect something...

COURTRIGHT

(Turning to PETER.)

That's not true....You damn fool, let me finish what I have to say!

PETER

You thought you had a perfect set-up, didn't you? An old lady living alone in a hotel room....I'm sure the police would be interested, Mr. Courtright. Blackmail is a pretty tough rap in this state.

COURTRIGHT

Yes, yes, that's right - call the police. Go ahead, call the police. I'm sure Miss Lorinda would like that. Do you want them to call the police, Miss Lorinda?.....Go on, tell them....

(Pause. LORINDA stares at COURTRIGHT.)

Tell them to call the police, Miss Lorinda....or are you afraid to?

PETER

What about it - shall I call the police?

(He pauses and LORINDA still stares at them.)

Annabelle, go out and send for the police....There's a house phone near the elevator.

(ANNABELLE starts for the door.)

LORINDA

No.....No.....You can't do that....

(She runs to the door and bolts it, then stands with her hands across it to keep ANNABELLE from going out. There is a long pause.)

COURTRIGHT

(Crosses down right.)

Now, will you be quiet and listen to me?

PETER

All right, but start talking and talk fast. I've had enough of this going around in circles!

COURTRIGHT

(Very calmly.)

I'll tell you what I know, I promise, but first you must have Annabelle leave. I'd rather she didn't hear what I have to say.

ANNABELLE

(Very surprised. Crosses down center.)

I leave? What have I got to do with this, Mr. Courtright?

(Pause.)

Or are you going to tell something that might answer my questions?

(LORINDA looks very strangely at ANNABELLE.)

COURTRIGHT

(Very gently.)

I won't tell you, Annabelle....I'm asking you, yes, even begging you to leave. Believe me, it's for your own happiness. Please, take my word for it and go.

ANNABELLE

(Coming over to COURTRIGHT.)

No. I won't go out of here. I have a right to hear what you have to say. If you are going to tell something that concerns me, I must know.....I've been waiting years to find out something about myself...

COURTRIGHT

(Pleading with PETER.)

Please, make her go....It's for your good, too; if you love her, make her leave this moment.

PETER

(Crosses left center.)

I think I know why you want her to leave, Mr. Courtright - it has some connection with the conversation we had a couple of days ago.

COURTRIGHT

Yes, yes, it does - Now will you believe that it would be best for her not to be present?

ANNABELLE

(Rushing over to PETER.)

No....oh, no! Don't make me leave now. You won't, will you, Peter?
Say I can stay, please....

PETER

(Slowly - after a pause.)

I don't know what to say now....Perhaps...

ANNABELLE

(Going to COURTRIGHT.)

You do know something about me, don't you?

COURTRIGHT

(Slowly.)

Yes....yes, my dear, I do.....And I promise to tell you sometime.

PETER

Perhaps, later, Annabelle - Later Mr. Courtright will talk to you.

ANNABELLE

No. Now. I have to know now.....Please! I've waited so long.
Peter, help me....

PETER

It's really for Mr. Courtright to say - not me.

(Crosses and sits on love seat.)

But if you are to learn sometime, well, it might as well be now.

ANNABELLE

(Pleading to COURTRIGHT.)

You'll tell me, won't you?

COURTRIGHT

It might not be pleasant to hear.

ANNABELLE

(Sits at sofa.)

I'm not afraid. What you have to tell me never can be as terrifying
as all these years of knowing nothing - of wondering and trying to
piece together small bits of information.

COURTRIGHT

I'm sorry if that is true, Annabelle. Believe me when I tell you it
wasn't meant that you should suffer. It was for your own happiness
that you were never told.

ANNABELLE

(LOLINDA stands in back of ANNABELLE.)

But don't you see, I never will be really happy until I know who I am.
No matter what you have kept from me - - -

COURTNEY

I don't want to tell you, Annabelle.

ANNABELLE

But you will....

COURTNEY

(Looks at LORINDA, who answers "No" under her breath as she crosses and stands behind the sofa.)

If you insist.

ANNABELLE

(Very excited.)

I do - I do. You knew my family - who they were - what they did - where they lived - everything?

COURTNEY

Yes....I knew all about them.

ANNABELLE

Then, tell me, please.

COURTNEY

Yes, I knew your family, Annabelle - very well.

(To LORINDA.)

Perhaps no one knew them better than I.

ANNABELLE

Are they still alive?

COURTNEY

(Pause.)

They left this world, as you and I know it, shortly after you were born.

ANNABELLE

Then I have no living relatives?

COURTNEY

You might say that.

ANNABELLE

Tell me about them. Where did they live?

COURTNEY

(Sits in chair right.)

Here in New York in a very beautiful home. They were people of means, Annabelle - fine people. Your grandfather was one of the finest persons I knew - he was one of the biggest men on Wall Street in his day.

(LORINDA grips the back of the sofa where she is standing up center.)

ANNABELLE

He's dead, too?

COURTIGHT

(Looks at LOPINDA.)

Yes, he died years ago. You would have loved him, I know - he was jolly and even though your grandmother had died many years before, he lived his life with a spirit I have tried to imitate. I would have liked to have been such a man as was your grandfather, Annabelle.

ANNABELLE

But how is it that you know all of these things? Do you....belong to my family?

COURTIGHT

No, my dear, I don't.

(Rising, crosses right center.)

ANNABELLE

Still you know so much about me - you even knew Peter and I are to be married.

COURTIGHT

Yes, I've known everything you did since you were a small child.

ANNABELLE

But how could you?

COURTIGHT

Because of a promise I made to your grandfather just before he died.

ANNABELLE

A promise?

COURTIGHT

Yes. I gave my word to your grandfather that if anything happened to him I would look after you.

ANNABELLE

Then you have been the unknown person in my life...?

COURTIGHT

Perhaps you might call me that....

ANNABELLE

And you have kept your promise - oh, you have -

COURTIGHT

It wasn't only the promise, Annabelle - perhaps at first I cared for you only because of my obligation to your grandfather, but soon I found myself doing things for you because of the fine person you are.

ANNABELLE

(Crosses to COURTRIGHT.)

It was you then who took care of me, looked after my bringing up - sent me through college - paid for all of those things?

COURTRIGHT.

Yes, I hope I've helped, my dear.

ANNABELLE

Oh, Mr. Courtright, how can I ever thank you enough.

PETER

And I want to join in Annabelle's thanks, sir. We shall always be grateful to you for what you've done.

COURTRIGHT

No need for that. I have been repaid a thousand times to watch you grow up; to see you as you are today has been my reward. I couldn't be more proud of you if you were my own daughter.

ANNABELLE

(Slowly.)

But, I'm not, am I?

COURTRIGHT

Not what, my dear?

ANNABELLE

Not your daughter - you're not my father.

COURTRIGHT

No, I'm sorry - I'm not your father, although I'd like to be.

ANNABELLE

(Sits at sofa.)

You knew him? What was he like?

COURTRIGHT

No. I didn't know him. I knew of him, though.

ANNABELLE

Yes....

COURTRIGHT

(Also sits on sofa.)

Your father was a hero, my dear. He gave his life for his country before you were born - he was killed in France in the first World War.

(LORINDA is bewildered.)

PETER

He never saw Annabelle, then?

COURTRIGHT

No. He never saw his daughter. I'm sure he would be pleased if he could see her today.

ANNABELLE

(Very happy.)

But my mother, Mr. Courtright - you haven't told me about her.

COURTRIGHT

No - no - I haven't, have I?

(He looks at LORINDA. She is staring at him; she crosses right behind davenport.)

ANNABELLE

Tell me - I know I have thought about her more than anyone else.

COURTRIGHT

Yes, I suppose a girl would naturally think first of her mother.

ANNABELLE

I wondered so often what she was like.

COURTRIGHT

(Rising.)

What did you want her to be like, Annabelle?

ANNABELLE

(Slowly.)

I'm not sure - why do you ask?

COURTRIGHT

Have you ever pictured your mother? Has she been someone real to you?

ANNABELLE

Oh, yes, yes. She has. I've dreamed of someone.....

COURTRIGHT

Who was she?

ANNABELLE

(In a very soft, subdued way she speaks - almost as if she is dreaming - seeing someone in a fantasy.)

I'm not sure who she was. Probably the sum total of all the mothers I've known. The best in each of them put together to make one person.

COURTRIGHT

Yes. She must be wonderful.

ANNABELLE

Oh, she is - she's kind, and beautiful. I think I've passed her on the street a number of times. Often I've stopped and looked at her face. I've seen her in the street car, the subway, shopping in the stores. I've prayed that someday I might find her.

COURTRIGHT

(Sits again at sofa.)

She seems like someone alive and near to you?

ANNABELLE

Yes. And still, I've always thought that my real mother must be dead. I know if she were alive she never would have let me be so lonely.

COURTRIGHT

But, Annabelle, if your real mother weren't all these things you hoped her to be?

ANNABELLE

What do you mean, Mr. Courtright?

COURTRIGHT

Did you ever think that this picture you have drawn might not be accurate?

ANNABELLE

Yes - that's why I have been so afraid - that's why I have had to find out.

COURTRIGHT

You've been afraid? Why, Annabelle?

ANNABELLE

(LORENDA walks slowly to door right during this speech.)

I don't know. I've wanted to learn everything and yet - yet sometimes I've been afraid, too. Sometimes I've felt there was something evil following me wherever I go. Something sinister lurking in the shadows of my family. Perhaps that's why I have fashioned a mother who could only exist in my mind.

PETER

(Rises, facing ANNABELLE.)

And it's that fear that has kept us from being married.

COURTRIGHT

I see. And this mother of yours, she was your ideal....

ANNABELLE

Yes, I've tried to live my life as I imagined she had lived.

COURTRIGHT

(Rising, turning to ANNABELLE.)

Annabelle, you didn't expect to find anyone in real life like the mother of your dream.

ANNABELLE

(LORENDA is at the door watching ANNABELLE.)

I'm not sure.....

COURTRIGHT

But if she weren't like her - your real mother, I mean - what then?

ANNABELLE

I don't know - I don't know!

COURTRIGHT

(Quickly.)

Would it make any difference?

ANNABELLE

How can I answer your question, Mr. Courtright?

COURTRIGHT

But what would you do if I told you your dreams could never come true?

ANNABELLE

Please don't torture me like this. Tell me - tell me about my mother. What difference does it make what I would do - how I would feel? I have to know - Tell me please.

(As ANNABELLE starts this speech
LOREIDA disappears into her bedroom
down right and slowly closes the door.
She is not seen by any of the characters
on stage.)

COURTRIGHT

(After a pause.)

My dear, my dear - if you only knew what you are asking me to do!

ANNABELLE

But I have a right to know - you have kept these things from me all these years - wasn't that sufficient? Are you going to build up all my hopes and anticipation and still leave me knowing only a little more than I did before?

COURTRIGHT

But I've told you about your family. I've assured you that your family was one of the best. What more can you ask?

ANNABELLE

Tell me about my mother - that's what I want to know!

COURTRIGHT

(Slowly.)

Would it help if I told you I loved your mother once?

ANNABELLE

You were in love with my mother?

COURTRIGHT

Yes, I loved her. Need I tell you more?

ANNABELLE

Oh, yes, yes! I must know everything about her - everything! And you can tell me.....

COURTIGHT

(Slowly.)

No...I can't make that choice, my dear. That decision does not belong to me. If you must know about your mother, you'll have to ask Miss...

(He turns to where LORINDA was standing but she is no longer there.)

Lorinda - Where are you?

(He starts toward the door down right.)

Lorinda, Lorinda!

(He has taken a step or two when a shot is heard off right.)

(COURTIGHT stops, he looks at ANNABELLE and PETER who stand frozen. Then COURTIGHT rushes into the bedroom. PETER runs to the door down right. ANNABELLE follows. PETER looks in and then turns and stops ANNABELLE.)

PETER

(Turning ANNABELLE around and leading her center stage.)

No....No! Don't look in there. Quickly - go out and call a doctor.

(ANNABELLE hesitates a moment and then goes to the door up left. She seems a bit bewildered as she turns and faces PETER who is watching her.)

PETER

Hurry, now, Annabelle! You'll find a phone in the hallway.

(ANNABELLE tries to open the door but she cannot because of the bolt.)

ANNABELLE

I can't open the door.....

PETER

It's bolted, Annabelle - unlock it.

(PETER unlocks the door for her. ANNABELLE goes out. PETER closes the door and walks to the door down right and is about to enter as COURTIGHT comes out, and slowly closes the door.)

COURTIGHT

It's no use, Mr. Murray - she's dead.

(He walks slowly across to stage right. PETER stands watching him. Suddenly he turns and faces PETER.)

You knew, didn't you!

PETER

That she was Annabelle's mother? Is that what you mean?

COURTNEY

Yes.

PETER

Yes...yes....I was pretty sure.

(Pause.)

But why did she do it?

COURTNEY

That's a question I cannot answer.

(Pause.)

We must never tell Annabelle who she was...

(Crosses toward PETER.)

PETER

It would be better not to, I agree.

COURTNEY

(Crosses right to PETER.)

You've got to help me, son.

PETER

I will, sir; I'll do all I can, you know that. I won't let anything hurt Annabelle; she's been hurt enough as it is.

COURTNEY

Yes....she must never find out.

(ANNABELLE enters quickly and comes downstage toward PETER and COURTNEY who stand watching her.)

ANNABELLE

I called a doctor.

PETER

(Slowly.)

It's too late, Annabelle.

ANNABELLE

(Crosses to center.)

Then, she's.....?

PETER

Yes, she's dead.

(ANNABELLE turns and slowly walks to the love seat and is seated. PETER and COURTNEY follow her.)

COURTIGHT

This has been a shock to you, my dear.

ANNABELLE

(Very softly.)

She's dead.....I found her and now she's dead!

COURTIGHT

You found her.....?

ANNABELLE

My mother...Oh, I know she was. Don't try to tell me differently.

(COURTIGHT and PETE are speechless. ANNABELLE pauses and then looks at COURTIGHT.)

She was my mother, wasn't she? You know, Mr. Courtight.

COURTIGHT

(After a long pause.)

Yes, Annabelle - Miss Lorinda was your mother.

ANNABELLE

You knew all the time - that was why you wanted me to leave.

COURTIGHT

(Slowly.)

Yes.

ANNABELLE

(Rises.)

But why did she do it? She must have known I was her daughter. She knew that!

COURTIGHT

Yes. I'm sure she did. But she didn't want you to know.

ANNABELLE

(Crosses to COURTIGHT.)

Why? Why? You know, don't you?

COURTIGHT

Yes, I know.

ANNABELLE

Then tell me.

COURTIGHT

(Crosses to door right.)

No, Annabelle - I told you that was her decision to make, not mine. Miss Lorinda made her decision. She didn't want you to know....!

ANNABELLE

(After a pause.)

Miss Lorinda.....Miss Lorinda.....My mother wasn't married. I was her

child but she wasn't married.....That's true, isn't it?

COURTRIGHT

(Slowly.)

Yes, it's true she was never married.

ANNABELLE

Then that was her reason for coming here to live alone all these years. She was ashamed - she couldn't face her father - her friends knowing she was an unwed mother.

(Crosses to COURTRIGHT.)

That was why she came here to live.... She had no other reason for living like this. No other reason, Mr. Courtright?

(There is a pause and COURTRIGHT turns away.)

Why don't you answer me?

COURTRIGHT

(Slowly turns and faces ANNABELLE.)

She had no other reason for coming here to live, Annabelle.

ANNABELLE

Oh, if I could only have known before now - before it was too late. How awful it must have been living here - how long the years were..... I could have helped her; it wouldn't have made any difference to me.

(She goes to PETER.)

We would have loved her just as much, wouldn't we, Peter?

PETER

Yes, Annabelle, we would have loved her, I'm sure.

ANNABELLE

(Going to COURTRIGHT.)

But you knew all these things - you were the only one. It was you who kept us apart - kept me from finding my mother.

COURTRIGHT

No, Annabelle - you don't understand.

ANNABELLE

Oh, don't I? You told me you loved my mother once. But she wouldn't have you; she loved someone else. And this is your way of getting revenge. That's true, isn't it?

(There is a long pause. COURTRIGHT does not answer her question.)

I know it's true. It was you who made her suffer all these years - knowing her secret and doing nothing about it. But you wanted her to suffer, didn't you - to pay her back because of me! You got your revenge....You killed her....do you understand? You killed her the same as if you had fired the shot!

COURTRIGHT

No, Annabelle.

ANNABELLE

(Softly, as she looks toward the door down right.)
Yes, she sacrificed everything just to protect me. The evil thing
that I feared in my life was not my mother, but you.

(Pause, as she looks at COURTRIGHT and turns away from him.)
Oh, God - to think you might have been my father!

(She goes to PETER.)

Take me away from here, Peter, quickly! You have been very kind to
wait for me and I'm no longer afraid to marry you because I know my
mother - she was as I dreamed her to be....I promise I'll spend the
rest of my life making up for your patience. It's you I want now -
nothing else. Let's leave, Peter. I can't stay here with him.

PETER

Yes, Annabelle - I'll help you forget what has happened here!

(ANNABELLE and PETER quickly go to the
door up left. PETER opens it and exits
first. ANNABELLE stands a moment and
looks at COURTRIGHT. Her look is of
utter contempt.)

COURTRIGHT

(Starts toward ANNABELLE.)

Annabelle.....Annabelle!....

(He has taken a few steps as ANNABELLE exits and slams the door.
He stops and stands looking at the door - then walks slowly over
and slides the bolt, walks down center and standing in front of
sofa, slowly speaks)

How well you have bolted your doors, Miss Lorinda.

(He slowly sinks into the sofa as off
stage left can be heard voices. "This
is the room right here, doctor" "Yes
thank you...." A loud rap is heard on
the door up left. COURTRIGHT is lost
in thought. Again a pounding is heard
on the door.)

CURTAIN SLOWLY FALLS:

THE END

PART III. ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEMS IN COMPOSITION

A. Exordium

Something must strike the fancy of a playwright to compel within him a desire to create a drama. George Pierce Baker states that a play can start from most anything, and in the extensive and varied list found in his book, Dramatic Technique, one may read that a play may have its origin in "a mere incident - noted in a newspaper"²⁴. It was from a feature story which appeared in the Detroit Free Press that the germ idea for the new play was discovered.

"Her Universe - A Hotel Suite

STINGY OLD LADY CUT OFF--AND \$25,000
Free Press Chicago Tribune Wire
MIL YOUNG - The strange tale of how Mary Powers closed her door to the world--and \$25,000 has come to light.

Since 1939 the Glen Alden Coal Co., at Scranton, Pa., has been sending her dividend checks due her as executrix of an estate.

Miss Powers, a graying spinster living at the fashionable Hotel Seymour, has steadfastly refused to cash them.

Under a 1937 law, the State of Pennsylvania has gone into court in an effort to get the money because it has been unclaimed for six years.

Reporters went to the hotel. They wanted to find out why anyone would turn down \$25,000. But the doors to Miss Powers' five-room suite were bolted.

Ralph P. Lohak, manager of the hotel, had an explanation. "What's \$25,000?" he said. "She is believed to be worth 15 millions."

Miss Powers hasn't left the hotel--even for a walk--for the last 15 years. And for at least four years, she hasn't even left her suite.

She wears the clothes of the 90s and apparently she still lives in the 90s. She has no radio. She never reads a newspaper.

Only four visitors are permitted to cross the threshold of her narrow little world.

They are Lohak, who sees her four times a year when he collects the rent for her \$30-a-

24. Baker, op. cit., p. 47.

day suite; the waiter who serves her the one meal she eats daily; the doctor who visits her once a year, and an official of the Fifth Ave. Bank where she keeps her money.

Sometimes curiosity gets the best of her and she questions the waiter about current events.

'She worries about labor troubles', Lohak said. 'I guess she is afraid of losing her money.'

Miss Powers has been living at the Seymour the last 25 years.

Lohak said he understood she came of English stock and that a brother died several years ago, leaving her a sizable fortune.

This, added to her own, made her wealthy enough to turn her aristocratic nose up at a mere \$25,000.

Miss Powers, the manager went on, lives in such secrecy that other residents of the 200-room hotel aren't even aware of her existence.

The doors are barred so that the management can't even get in with a pass key. She will not permit a maid or housekeeper inside.

Lohak described the recluse as five feet, three inches tall, weighing about 120 pounds, 'cute as a button', and 'pretty spry'. She's spry enough, in fact, to do her own laundry.

And apparently she still has a streak of vanity. About a year ago, Leo O'Connor, long an employee at the hotel, brought her some mail.

She asked, 'Are you still here?'

He said, 'Yes.'

She said, 'How do I look?'

He replied, 'You look just fine.'

And it wasn't blarney, O'Connor said Wednesday." 25

Having searched for sometime for an idea from which a three act play might be written, it was believed that in this news story there were definite possibilities. If the story is assigned one may find several things which will lend themselves to dramatic treatment. The situation is different from ordinary material used by writers of most modern plays; yet it is not so unique that it is

25. "Her Universe - A Hotel Suite", Detroit Free Press, March 6, 1947, p. 1, co. 3-6.

beyond plausibility, and it is in this novel quality that the appeal is found. One is surprised to find a woman living in our modern society who would almost completely shut herself away from humanity and live the life of a recluse. One is fascinated to discover a person who has apparently more money than she can ever spend, and yet has no use for money nor any of the modern conveniences so important in the life of the average person.

The appeal of the story is made essentially by the character of the woman, and it is almost a universal appeal - one which would interest young and old or rich and poor. We are interested in this woman as a personality, and, almost immediately upon reading the story, we ask ourselves the question, "Why would she do that?" It is on the basis of this question that the news story grew into a play. There seems no end to the speculation one might make in attempting to analyze the events which caused this woman to go to the hotel and live her life in seclusion and refuse to sign checks totaling twenty-five thousand dollars. There is almost no end to the ideas one might entertain if he lets his imagination run free concerning this strange character. The problem becomes not one of searching for material which will be extensive enough for a three-act play, but one of condensing the material to confine it within the limit of a three-act play. The possibilities growing from this news story seemed endless.

"At least nine out of every ten plays start with a character",²⁶ and the new play was no exception. Mary Powers was a person whose character could be presented effectively in dramatic form.

26. Selden, op. cit., p. 9.

B. Aligning a Plausible Story From the Source Material

The first idea stimulated by the source material was to write a comedy. Perhaps the reason came from the first impression of the news story in that it had a somewhat humorous slant. It is possible that a play could be written about the same eccentric spinster showing her reaction to all the new things existing in the world outside her hotel suite, which she has never seen during her long period within her rooms. A good many humorous situations could be presented showing her utter fascination with all the new mechanical wonders, and the climax would be reached when she actually does leave her hotel to become an ultra modern woman who even surpasses our expectations. It was with this idea in mind that the first story was attempted.

The experiment with the story slanted for comedy was unsuccessful, and several attempts to rewrite it ended in failure. It seemed impossible to arrange a plausible excuse to get the woman to come out of her rooms. A person who had given up everything most people are constantly striving to attain would have to be motivated very strongly to accept all that she has forsaken. To find that motivation and still keep the play a comedy was of paramount importance. The several attempts made to get her out of the hotel and still retain the flavor of comedy failed because they were not consistent with the character of a woman - a person who could, in the first place, lock herself away from society for those many years. She was a woman with a strong will, and the motivation to break down her disposition to live her life as she desired would have to be even stronger than her will. A force as strong as this was not found which could still be treated as comedy. Baker describes this

situation by pointing out that, "You wish to write a comedy; the idea cries 'make a tragedy of me, or a story-play'. At last, after a struggle, you master the idea."²⁷ By comical treatment it seemed impossible to answer logically the question, "Why, years ago, did this woman choose to live in the hotel?"; it also seemed impossible to take her out of the hotel by the same reasoning. The force which drove her to become a recluse was probably not one of comedy, but of more serious or even tragic nature, and, therefore, the comic theme seemed incongruous with the basic idea of the story. There seemed nothing left but to discard the several stories which endeavored to treat the material with a comic theme and start afresh by writing a play with a serious point of attack. It was impossible to forget the observation made by William Archer, "But, though the presence of logic should never be forced upon the spectator's attention, still less should he be disturbed and baffled by its conspicuous absence."²⁸

The development of a more serious theme began at the same point that made it necessary to reject the story as a possibility for comedy. It began with an attempt to reason, in a logical manner, what could have happened some twenty odd years ago, in the life of a rather well-to-do young woman, that would cause her to give up everything and become the person described in the source material. It would be necessary to answer this question in such a manner that the answer would be accepted by those who would see the play. The process of arriving at a suitable conclusion became one of asking questions and speculating as to

27. Baker, op. cit., pp. 47-48.

28. Archer, op. cit., p. 296.

the most probable conclusion, and it was by this method that the first serious story for the new play developed.

The source material gave a character and a situation, and the problem was to find the cause for the situation. If a person were to run away from all reality, the force which caused her to flee would have to be very powerful. It might logically be deducted that an escape from something she had done in the past would cause her actions. But what had she done that would compel her to escape? If it were possible to discover an event that had happened to her as a young woman, one might have the answer. If escape were to be the motive for her running away, one must find that force, and make sure that it was strong enough to cause her actions. Would shame be the cause-- shame because she was an unwed mother perhaps? It seemed reasonable that a person could attempt to escape society to hide her sin, and having once run away, live her life in seclusion to keep her secret. After she had made her first decision to escape, each succeeding year would make it more difficult to live again the life of a normal woman. The knowledge that she was the mother of an illegitimate child, and therefore a social outcast, became an obsession with her until she would not see anyone for fear that she might be suspected for what she had done, and that, in some way, she might reveal her secret. So finally, after many questions and through trial and error attempts to find plausible ground, this reason was selected as the driving force of the play. And with the basic force known, it was now possible to begin to form the story.

Again the process of writing became one of trying to answer credibly the many questions which the source material left unanswered.

It was first necessary to have someone get in to see this woman. Probably the most logical one would be a representative from the company issuing the checks which remained uncashed. But this person could not just go up to the hotel room and walk in; he would have to find a likely method by which he could gain entrance. There were those who did get in to see the woman, and the one most likely to be concerned with the checks would be the banker. With his help the bolted door might be opened. The banker might also have some knowledge related to the past of the woman, and he could well be the connecting link between the past and the present. He might be a former lover; he might even know something relative to the child in her past. Would it then be possible to use the child as one of the characters in the story? Perhaps she was now a young woman who had never been able to find any trace of her parents; perhaps the young woman might even be employed by the company issuing the checks. It was necessary to have a reasonable excuse to bring all these people together; however, it could not be an unrealistic excuse, but one which would seem the result of events happening in a natural order.

In attempting to present a sequence of events showing the development of the story, it is almost impossible to show all the flights of imagination that went on to arrive at even a starting point. Ideas came and were discarded in favor of new ideas. It is not a process which can be followed through in one paragraph; the process is not as simple as it may appear when it is written. Essentially the story developed after it had been decided that the main characters would be: a woman who had spent twenty-five years living as a recluse in an attempt to escape from a crime she had

committed; a brother who was connected in some way with the death of the woman; a young man trying to get in to see her; and a young woman who was the illegitimate child of the spinster. Even after deciding upon the main characters, the barest thread of the story was all that had been accomplished. This thread had to be extended and enlarged until there was enough material from which to write a play. It was necessary to decide what events in the lives of the characters must be told, and choose those scenes which could be presented in a unified story. "In good playwriting it is not a question of bringing together as many incidents or as many illustrations of character as you can crowd together in a given number of acts, but of selecting the illustrative incidents, which, when properly developed will produce in an audience the largest amount of emotional response desired."²⁹

The original story for the play was written with divisions for acts and scenes. It appears that there is no set rule in playwriting technique which states whether the first story of the play should be organized in simple narrative form or whether the events should be divided into acts and scenes. In his discussion of scenarios, Baker points out that much depends upon the playwright himself; that a scenario is an organization of the action in the play, and the method of organization depends upon the writer. He does state, however, that a good scenario should show the types of the characters and the relation of the characters to one another. It should also set forth a dramatic outline which provides unhistorical background of the story, but most important, it must present the basic action of the play.³⁰

29. Baker, op. cit., p. 55.

30. Ibid., pp. 426-72.

The first story that was written is very different from the final form, but it provided a starting point; it gave at least an outline from which to begin, and the basic selection of events and incidents included in the new play.

By starting with the information given in the newspaper account and changing the names of the characters and situations to fit the new story, the first plan for the play was developed. The known facts are that Miss Lorinda Spencer, the name given to the leading character, is a spinster who has been living at the Pelmore Hotel for the past twenty years. In the last ten years she has not left her room. As far as anyone knows, she has no callers; she never reads a newspaper; she has no radio; her doors are bolted. A waiter brings her a meal once a day; a doctor visits her once a year; the hotel collects the rent from her \$40.00-a-day suite every six months; and the banker sees her occasionally. It is believed that she is worth some 25 million dollars, but no one is sure of the exact amount. With these facts as a starting point, the following story was written. For purposes of discussion it appears as it was composed.

ACT ONE

Scene 1

The scene opens in the office of John Garrett, President of the Valley Manufacturing Company. With him is Peter Murray, a junior executive. They are going over Miss Lorinda's files preparing for a meeting with Richard Courtright, Miss Lorinda's banker. They are planning to go to court to see what can be done about the large amount of money Miss Lorinda refuses to acknowledge. Mr. Courtright is soon expected as Miss Lorinda's representative. It is very difficult for

them to understand why anyone would refuse to cash checks amounting to that sum of money. Peter exits and Annabelle Grey, Garrett's attractive secretary, enters and announces Mr. Courtright.

Garrett and Courtright are old friends and the conversation begins concerning Miss Grey. It seems, unknown to Miss Grey, Courtright has been the one who has insisted that Garrett give Miss Grey a job. He is again questioned by Garrett but reveals nothing. Garrett admits that it really doesn't matter because Miss Grey is a very efficient girl and he is well pleased to have her for his secretary. Mr. Courtright questions Mr. Barrett about Annabelle and finds that there is a start of a romance between her and Peter Murray, and thus further questions Mr. Barrett about Peter.

Returning to business, Mr. Barrett begins discussing the pending court action against Miss Lorinda, explaining that she is one of the prominent stockholders of the company, and that they have been carrying the large amount of money on their books for a long time. The company doesn't wish to take court action against Miss Lorinda, nor offend her in so doing, as she otherwise makes no demands on them and is a satisfactory stockholder. Mr. Barrett calls in Peter for advice on the court action to be followed, and Miss Grey comes in to make some notes of the conversation. Mr. Courtright is very much against the company going to court, and questioned by the others, tells of Miss Lorinda's life - of her living all alone in her big suite of rooms and seeing no one. Mr. Barrett agrees that he would rather not go to court if the whole situation can be cleared up in some other way. He also agrees to give Mr. Courtright some time to see if he can influence Miss Lorinda. Mr. Courtright exits.

Mr. Barrett decides that he will send Peter and Miss Grey to New York to see what they can uncover about Miss Lorinda. He also lets slip that Mr. Courtright is the one who was responsible for Miss Grey being hired at the Valley Manufacturing Company. Mr. Barrett exits, leaving Peter and Annabelle talking about Courtright's possible connection with Annabelle's job. Annabelle has never met Mr. Courtright and knows nothing of his help. She then admits to Peter her reason for not marrying him immediately. It is because she doesn't know enough about herself or who her parents were - only that she was raised by an old doctor and his wife. She was graduated from a girl's school and then began her present job. She feels she must know more about herself before she can marry Peter. Again they wonder what Mr. Courtright could know about Annabelle, but feel perhaps they can find out during their trip to New York.

ACT ONE

Scene 2

The scene opens in the hotel room of Miss Lorinda Spencer. It is the living room of her expensive suite. The furniture is antique but kept in very good order. There is an entrance on stage right which leads to the hallway of the hotel; the door on stage left leads to the bedroom. Upstage there are two large windows with an outside view. Even with the two large windows there is little light in the room from the warm afternoon sun. It is a cold room. All of the furnishings are dull and drab. The room gives the impression of one belonging to a hunted person.

Miss Lorinda enters from stage left. She is a very straight, older woman dressed in a costume of at least thirty years ago.

Stopping at the doorway and looking around, she suddenly goes to the window and lowers the shade to shut out the small ray of sunshine. Her movements are sure and quick. Her carriage is that of one who is stern and bitter. One can tell that she is used to being alone. Each of her movements is planned - not one is wasted. She sees a small object out of place on the table; she straightens a picture on the wall; everything must be in perfect order. Her face shows no emotion. She is like someone defeated and yet she has accepted her defeat.

Picking up a book of poetry, she reads silently. Quite suddenly she begins to read aloud. It is a sonnet by John W. A. Weaver....."Why all this cry for immortality?" It ends with "And if, after long years, one among men should say, 'Why, he touched Beauty once'....." She throws the book aside violently as she repeats those last lines - "Why, he touched Beauty once!". Suddenly she laughs hysterically and then stops as suddenly as she began.

She goes over and looks at the clock and then rolls a small table to the middle of the room, placing a chair to the right of the table, and polishing some silverware taken from the drawer. As she sets the table for one, the clock strikes three and there is a knock at the door to which she goes and turns the lock. A waiter enters with her dinner and proceeds to lay the table as she watches; he helps her as she sits down, and serves her food. She picks up the mail he has put before her. Finding a telegram, she wishes to know why it hasn't been brought up to her before; the waiter explains that he had been up with it earlier but there was no response to his knock. She is very angry for the telegram advises she will have a visitor who may arrive any minute. She therefore sends the waiter away with her uneaten dinner and tells

him to bring it back in an hour.

As the waiter exits, Mr. Courtright enters and greets Miss Lorinda. She scoffs at him and demands to know the reason for his call. She reminds him that she does not like to have her routine disturbed and admonishes him to state his business and leave. He explains the matter of the uncashed checks. She tells him that if that is all he came for, she is not interested and he can leave right away. Courtright asks why, but she gives no answer. He then asks if it was because at one time this company belonged to her father. She wants to know what he means by that, and he explains that he knew she hated her father, but didn't realize it was to the extent that she wouldn't accept any money which came from his interests.

Miss Lorinda flies into a rage, but she is also afraid of what Courtright might know, and wonders how he knew she hated her father. He reminds her that her father was a good friend of his, and he recalls that she wasn't present at her father's funeral. She tells him that she was ill that day. He advises that he knows she had not seen her father for two years before his death, and Miss Lorinda says her father had told her to leave the house, that he did not want to see her anymore.

She says she was glad when he died. Courtright blames her for her father's death, saying he died of a broken heart. She wants to learn just how much Courtright knows, and he tells her that he understands everything. He realizes why her father sent her away.. He has knowledge of her daughter! Miss Lorinda is afraid - she had thought no one alive was aware of her secret. Courtright tells her that he has seen her daughter often, which is more than Lorinda can stand. She

tells him to get out! As he goes, she tells him she is going to kill him; then no one will know her secret.

ACT TWO

Scene 1

The next day.

The scene opens in the hallway of the eleventh floor of the luxurious Belmore Hotel in New York City. Upstage left is the elevator door which opens into the hallway; upstage right is the door to Miss Lorinda's suite; upstage center is a large overstuffed dayport. Each side of the set gives the impression that the hallway extends, as in a hotel.

As the scene opens there is someone standing waiting for the elevator. The light goes on above the elevator door and the doors slide open. Annabelle, Peter, and Fennamore, the effeminate hotel manager, enter. They are talking about Miss Lorinda. Fennamore is explaining he only sees Miss Lorinda once in a great while, that she has been in the hotel longer than he, and very few people in the hotel know she lives there. Peter wants to know how he and Annabelle can get in to see her. Fennamore is not sure he can give an answer. He states that there are two times each day when Miss Lorinda will open the door - at ten in the morning when she is brought her mail, and at three in the afternoon when the waiter brings her the one mail she has each day.

Peter runs on the door very loudly. Fennamore stops him immediately, explaining that while he thinks Miss Lorinda is an old sorceress, still she is the hotel's best customer and cannot be disturbed. Peter wishes to call her on the telephone, but is told she

has no solution. Fannmore suggests that they write her a letter, but Peter explains that they have written several letters and have never received an answer. Fannmore believes they had better give up and go home, because if Miss Lorinda decides not to see anyone, that person just does not get in to see her. He wants no one disturbing her. Fannmore exits.

Peter goes to the door and raps again, getting no results. Then he really bangs on it. Giving up in disgust, he and Annabelle try to decide some other way to get in. Just then the waiter enters and stands in front of Miss Lorinda's door looking at his watch. Peter rushes over to him and the waiter tells Peter that Miss Lorinda will open the door at 10:00 o'clock sharp. Peter tells the waiter he wishes to go in with him, but the waiter says it will be impossible. He wants to know what Peter wishes to see Miss Lorinda about and promises he will give her the message. Promptly the door is unlatched at ten o'clock and the waiter enters. Peter and Annabelle try to look in but they are unsuccessful.

Soon the waiter comes out and advises them that Miss Lorinda does not want to see them. Peter says that it is absolutely necessary for them to see Miss Lorinda and wonders if the waiter has any ideas as to how this may be accomplished. Then Peter attempts to induce the waiter to change clothes with him that afternoon when Miss Lorinda's dinner is brought up. But the waiter advises him to leave since Miss Lorinda has no desire to see them.

Peter decides that at three that afternoon he and Annabelle will force their way in, and if that doesn't work, they will take their whole case to court and it will be disastrous for Miss Lorinda. Peter

is very disgusted at Miss Lorinda's obstinacy, and he and Annabelle speculate upon the reasons for keeping herself locked up in her room for so many years. Peter thinks she must be insane. He goes over and gives the door another hard rap, and then kicks it in disgust. As he is doing this, Mr. Courtright enters from the elevator.

Courtright is very surprised to see Annabelle and Peter there and immediately wishes to know the reason. They tell him, and also question him to find out what he knows about Annabelle - why he went out of his way to get her a job. Peter tells him that Annabelle will not consent to be married until she can find out more about herself. They also want to know if Mr. Courtright can get them in to see Miss Lorinda. He does not wish them to see Miss Lorinda, especially Annabelle, and they wonder what Miss Lorinda has to do with Annabelle. Courtright is at a loss to explain, and, being on the spot himself, will not commit himself. Annabelle and Peter realize that he is withholding some information and they press him with inquiries. He wants them to leave New York and go back home. He will straighten out the financial matter with Miss Lorinda. Annabelle says she is no longer interested in Miss Lorinda, but wishes to know what Mr. Courtright and Miss Lorinda know about her. Peter wonders if Mr. Courtright actually could get them in to see Miss Lorinda. Mr. Courtright assures them that he could, but he won't. When Peter threatens him, Mr. Courtright laughs.

Finally Annabelle convinces him that she must see Miss Lorinda - she knows Miss Lorinda knows something about her and she must find it out. Courtright will not give Annabelle any immediate satisfaction, but finally decides to get them in to see Miss Lorinda if they promise

only to ask her about the uncashed checks. Courtright goes to the door and at exactly 10:30 the door opens and he enters. Annabelle and Peter wait anxiously. Soon Mr. Courtright opens the door and asks them to come in.

ACT TWO

Scene 2

The scene is inside Miss Lorinda's suite, in the living room as in Act One, Scene 2. The scene opens immediately following Act Two, Scene 1. Miss Lorinda is seated near stage center. She is sitting very straight and is very defiant as she sees Peter and Annabelle enter with Mr. Courtright. She acknowledges the introductions curtly. She explains she has no interest in seeing them whatsoever, but they are there because Mr. Courtright has insisted and she cannot refuse him, for reasons of her own. Her hatred for Mr. Courtright is apparent as she speaks of him.

She requests Peter and Annabelle to come straight to the point so that they may have this interview over and leave her alone. Peter explains the matter of the uncashed checks. Miss Lorinda tells him that she has made up her mind, and nothing he can say will change it. She will have nothing to do with the money, and someday she expects to ruin his company. Peter wishes to know why. Miss Lorinda lets him know in no uncertain terms that the matter is none of his business. Peter insists that it is his business since he is a representative of the company. Miss Lorinda tells them to get out.

Mr. Courtright advises that at one time Miss Lorinda's father owned the company and if they ask her about this, perhaps it might make a difference. Miss Lorinda threatens Courtright. She can see

that he is attempting to break her down. Peter tells Miss Lorinda that if she doesn't want the money, she could give it to some worthy charity. Miss Lorinda laughs and tells him there is no such thing as worthy charity - the world outside is made of hates, and she will have none of it. She is very bitter and again tells them to get out. Peter reminds her that if it is necessary, the company will go to court to get a settlement on the money. Miss Lorinda says she doesn't care - no good can come from this money because it was born of hate.

Peter tells Miss Lorinda that if her father had been the owner of the company, he must have been dead for at least 16 years. Peter wonders if a hate as strong as hers could last that long. Miss Lorinda looks at Peter strangely. She is surprised that someone is interested in her as an individual. Peter asks her what good it has done to hate her father for so many years. He points out by living in the hotel all alone, she has allowed her hate to grow so strong that it now is not only for her father but for everything. Peter tells her of love, of its power and its beauty.

He tells her of his love for Annabelle and what it has done for him. He tells her that people are wonderful and life is worth living. Miss Lorinda laughs at him. Do they think she hasn't known love? Do they think that if it hadn't been for love she would be living in a hotel room by herself? She says love is nothing but the seed of hate. Peter tells Miss Lorinda the story of his love for Annabelle, and how it has changed his outlook on life completely.

Miss Lorinda is interested, especially in Annabelle's story. She looks at Annabelle for a long time. She begins to question Annabelle as to her age and where she has lived. Miss Lorinda is strangely

excited, as if she cannot believe what she is hearing. She asks when Annabelle was born. The date is like a blow to her. She looks at Courtright. "You know," she says, "You know?.....Is she?" "Yes", Courtright answers, "Annabelle is your daughter". Miss Lorinda looks at Annabelle. "Oh, my God", she says as the curtain falls.

ACT THREE

The third act opens a few minutes after the close of Act Two. Miss Lorinda is crying and Annabelle is trying to comfort her...Miss Lorinda is telling them to get out - now that they have found her secret, they should go away and leave her alone. She had tried to keep it secret, for all those years, that she was not married and had a daughter.

She questions Annabelle about her life, and tells her that she had never seen her before. The doctor had taken Annabelle away when she was born, as Lorinda had never wanted to see her but only to forget that she existed. Lorinda had shut herself away from the world so no one would ever find out about her child. Lorinda looks at Courtright. Yes, he had known for some time. It was he who had seen that Annabelle had been sent to school and had looked after her for a number of years. He had promised Miss Lorinda's father that he would look after both Annabelle and Lorinda.

Miss Lorinda tells the story of her love - how Annabelle's father had been killed just before they were to be secretly married, and how her father had hated the man she was going to marry, and sent her from home when he discovered she was to have a baby. She explains the baby was born here in the hotel, and by living alone, her hate had grown until she wanted nothing to do with the baby, not to

see it or hear of it after it was born.

One can't help but feel pity for Miss Lorinda and her life of hate as she realises that it has all been useless and wants to die. She is beaten, broken, and all hardness has left her. She asks them again to go and leave her alone. Annabelle says she will not leave her and Miss Lorinda is unable to understand how anyone could forgive her for her past. Annabelle believes Lorinda has been punished sufficiently by her lonely life, and wants to stay with her so she will never be lonely again.

Miss Lorinda confesses that while she had tried to make everyone believe she was hard and bitter, really she was afraid all the time and her life had been a living hell. Peter softly goes up and asks Miss Lorinda if she will have him as a son-in-law; he would like to marry her daughter. Miss Lorinda wonders if Annabelle will love her for a son-in-law. She looks at Peter who is standing with his arm around Annabelle. She looks at Gabriel who is smiling. She smiles, then laughs..."I can still laugh", she says. She is embarrassed and remarks, "It's awfully dark in here." She goes over and raises the shade and the sunlight floods over her. The curtain falls.

The End.

The first story of the play is included in the discussion in order to show the progression of the play from its original to its finished form. The original scenario was one of the most important steps. It is readily granted that the first story leaves much to be desired; yet it did serve as a basis of departure, and without some starting point the play could not have grown. Needless to say, a play written which followed exactly the original story would meet with

little success. It would lack the dramatic crises needed to gain emotional response from the audience and there would be too many questions regarding the leading characters left unanswered.

C. From Story to Dialogue

1. The Original Draft in Dialogue

It was now the problem to change the material from story form into dialogue, and this is essentially the business writing of a play. The changes, which come about in the story through its rearrangement into dialogue form, are many, and they stem from two main causes. First, one gets many new ideas about the characters and the situations through the act of writing dialogue; and second, the characters, when understood, often act in a different manner from what was expected of them. It is possible to create a situation to begin with, but the eventual outcome depends upon what the characters will do in that situation, and, try as one may, the characters do not always act as they were pictured in the first place. It is always difficult to see beforehand just how the characters will react to one another. Then too, when one places them on the stage and realizes the only knowledge the audience will gain is by the spoken word and action of the characters, it is not always as simple to communicate the essential information as it appeared in story form. When the first draft of the play is finished many changes will have been made in the original scenario. Even the act and scene divisions may be different.

The original story opened in the office of Mr. Barrett, but it was felt that in play form, it might be wise to change the locale to the office of Peter Murray. Mr. Barrett really has little to do in the story other than to open the play by presenting the problem of the uncashed check. He does not appear in any other scene and is probably not necessary at all. The scene could just as well open in Mr. Murray's office, and the same discussion take place between Anne'elle and Peter without the necessity of having Mr. Barrett in the

scene. Barrett also served as a foil to point up the fact that Court-right knew something about Annabelle, but this situation could be handled, and probably more effectively, by Peter.

However, even though this conversation about the checks might be interesting, it seemed better to start the play with something with a little more action and more immediate audience appeal. In the beginning, no doubt, the audience would be much more interested in the love affair between Annabelle and Peter than with matters of business; so it was at this point the play started.

The change which affected the play to the greatest extent was one of basic nature. In the story it was accepted that the reason Miss Lorinda went to the hotel to live in the beginning stemmed from her attempt to escape from society. She could not bear the shame of being an unwed mother. But this reason did not seem to be a strong enough force when she was confronted with the problem of signing the checks. It did not seem to have the causal relationship necessary for her to refuse the money simply because it came from her father whom she hated. The hatred for her father came about because she brought shame upon him to such an extent that he drove her from her home. But that was not enough to make her run away for good. It was at this point the story was not clear. Even in 1919, for a woman to lock out the world because of the dishonor of an illegitimate child seemed a bit farfetched. Something was needed to make her afraid to sign the checks. Perhaps she was afraid because the checks represented a crime she had committed. If she had killed her father, then her escape to the sanctuary of her hotel rooms would have more reason. It was possible to combine both the motives of

fear and shame and arrive at a plausible force commensurate with the events. A woman who had killed her father to keep him from telling that she was the mother of an illegitimate child would certainly fear the checks which seemed to come from her dead father, and would be motivated enough by his untimely death to drive her into becoming a recluse.

When this new force was injected into the play, it changed almost completely the approach to the main character. No longer did we have a woman who became an unlikeable person because she had lived many years away from society, but we had a more consistent character who was evil from the very beginning. Therefore, when this new Miss Lorinda emerged, she changed the basic structure of the play.

The scene in which we see Miss Lorinda for the first time in the refuge of her hotel room must show her now as a hateful person. In her opening scene with the waiter she must treat him with meanness; if we are to understand her as a person who has killed for her own selfish ends, we must get that impression from the very first.

The ensuing scene between Miss Lorinda and Richard Courtright had to be written with an entirely new approach. No longer was Miss Lorinda's refusal to sign the checks brought on by a hate for her dead father, but because she was actually afraid of the checks and what they represented. Although Courtright knew about Lorinda's child, he must suspect more. He must be able to relate Lorinda's refusal to sign the checks with what he knows of her past, and he must make her admit the real reason for becoming a recluse was not because of her child, but because she was trying to escape from her crime.

Furthermore, with the basic motivation change, Act Two, Scene 2, and Act Three were no longer consistent with the new approach. It was now necessary to present a situation where Lorinda is confronted with both the discovery of her daughter and the revelation of her secret. Her first choice is to eliminate all who know her secret by doing away with Annabelle, Peter and Courtright, and when she fails in this attempt, she takes her own life. The ending of the play, with this tragic note, leaves Annabelle in a dilemma. She has finally discovered her mother after long years of searching, but the mother she found is a murderer.

In brief, the first draft of the play presented the following story. Peter Murray is commissioned to see Miss Lorinda Spencer in order to find the reason for the uncashed checks; Annabelle accompanies him. She wishes to see Mr. Courtright, hoping he may know something of her past. Mr. Courtright learns from Lorinda that she has killed her father. Annabelle and Peter are able to get in to see Miss Lorinda through Mr. Courtright's help and they discover not only that Miss Lorinda is Annabelle's mother, but that Lorinda is a murderer. Miss Lorinda escapes by ending her own life jumping from the hotel window as Courtright watches her.

2. The Second Draft: Revision through Character and Plot.

The task of changing a story into the form of a play had been a trying and difficult undertaking. The first draft presented characters and situations in dramatic dialogue, but the dialogue was rough and often stilted; the plot was weak; and the characters were inconsistent. Probably the main reason for these faults can be traced to the act of writing itself. In the beginning one has an

idea; one seems to understand the characters and what they will do in the situations planned for them. However, the process of making the characters talk gives a greater understanding of the people one is attempting to present in the play. And when the first draft is finished, the characters in the beginning are far different from the persons at the end of the third act. In other words, the characters become inconsistent as the play progresses through the act of writing about them. One does not understand them well enough in the beginning to make them say and do things the same way they do in the end of the play.

The author was fortunate, at this point in the development of the drama, to work with Dr. Virgil Scott, a member of the English Department at Michigan State College. Dr. Scott pointed out that probable reasons for the inconsistencies in the play regarding plot, character, and dialogue were due to a lack on the part of the writer to understand the characters he had produced. It was Dr. Scott's suggestion that the writer get to know his characters by writing their biographies - actually to sit down and write their life stories until all the facts needed to present them as living people were known. It was suggested that for each main character a composition of some five thousand words would be necessary before one could understand his characters well enough to know what they would order for breakfast each morning. If one knew the characters as well as this, many of the problems in plot and dialogue would solve themselves, because a character would then act in a situation in a manner consistent with his personality, and, in addition, his lines would seem natural. Lajos Agri presents somewhat the same approach. It is necessary to

understand a character in his three dimensions: physiological, sociological, and psychological. If we wish to understand a person we must know everything which will activate and compel him to do the things he does.³¹

Before any further attempt was made to revise the play, a biography for each of the characters, Lina Lorinda, Michael Courtwright, Annabelle, and Peter was written. At the time this tedious job seemed somewhat a waste of effort; but when it was finished the characters could be approached with an entirely new outlook, and the play became one in which the characters began to take on the aspects of being real flesh and blood people. Probably no other one recommendation affected the play as much as the writing of the biographies.

It now seemed possible to answer many of the questions the first draft had left to the imagination of the audience. Annabelle's refusal to marry Peter because she did not know anything about her parents seemed a bit shallow. But if we understood her as being a person who was brought up by someone paid for that purpose, and whose life had been a constant shift from girl's schools to summer camps with no one taking a personal interest in her as an individual, then we could conceive the reason her search for some kind of father parents had become an obsession.

We must also understand why Courtwright would desire to bring about Lorinda's downfall. We must know that he was her lover, and that he had looked after Lorinda's child when Lorinda ran away after killing her father. It must be shown that Lorinda was going to marry

31. Lajos Egri, The Art of Dramatic Writing, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1946, pp. 33-34.

Richard and tell him nothing of her child. Richard admired her father very much, and when he discovers what she has done, he cannot be satisfied until he has seen Lorinda suffer for her sins. In his mind, she must pay for deserting her child and destroying her father.

With the approach to the play from a character standpoint, the entire third act was not in harmony with the new version. If we were to understand Annabelle, we had to know what she would do when she actually found out the kind of a person her mother was. She must have suspected there was a reason she was never told of her parents, and that the knowledge was withheld because the reason was too terrible for her to learn. Knowing Annabelle, and realizing she could never be happy if she learned the truth about her mother, it was decided to keep the truth from her. A new third act was written which allowed Annabelle to find her mother, but Lorinda's suicide happens before Annabelle is able to discover her mother's secret. Annabelle is made to realize that it is best she not learn the secret of her mother's past.

The second draft of the play attempted revision through understanding character and endeavored to follow Baker's formula for presenting people on the stage. "A play which aims to be real in depicting life must illustrate character by characterization which is in character."³² It is impractical in this discussion to follow through the play and point out each change in minor plot structure necessitated by keeping the characters consistent. There were many. By the end of this revision, the plot began to take some shape of its final

32. Baker, op. cit., p. 308.

form; it did, however, follow a similar pattern in scenic division to the original draft. Act One opened in Peter Murray's office; Act Two, Scene 1 presented the scene between Miss Lorinda and Mr. Courtright in the hotel suite; Act Two, Scene 2 resolved in the hotel corridor with Peter and Annabelle trying to get in to see Miss Lorinda; and Act Three found Annabelle, Peter and Mr. Courtright in Miss Lorinda's room confronted with the discovery of Annabelle as Miss Lorinda's daughter.

3. The Third Draft: Theatrical Revision.

The play had reached a stage where the characters seemed plausible and the plot was clear. And now the problem was to change the play from one which could be read with interest to one which could be presented on the stage by living actors and convey the ideas to the audience. The main criticism made of the play at this stage was that too much was told rather than presented by action. Everything that had happened to Lorinda Spencer and Richard Courtright before Lorinda had run away to live at the hotel was told through exposition. This gave many scenes in which there was much talk and very little action. Perhaps the fault lay in the opening of the play.

John Howard Lawson points out that the opening scene should "show the setting up of a goal under conditions which make the setting up of such a goal seem necessary.....The setting up of a goal at the beginning of the play must have been caused by the same real forces which dominate the climax.....The opening of the play is the point at which these forces have their maximum effect on the will player

it the direction which is sustained throughout the play."³³

It was suggested by Donald Buell, Director of Drama at Michigan State College, that the opening of the play might better present the scenes which show Courtright's relationship with Lorinda twenty-eight years ago. And in the same scene it might be possible to show the events which culminated with the death of her father.

On the basis of this suggestion a new first act was written which was not too different from the play in its final form, other than that it started with the entrance of Lorinda rather than the opening scene between Courtright and Mr. Spencer. The writing of a new first act to take place in 1919 presented several problems. It was necessary to show both Lorinda and Richard as young people and to introduce a new character in the person of Adam Spencer. It was also imperative that no expressions of language used today but not found in 1919, were present in the dialogue. It was also necessary to set the time by making references to actual events which took place in that year. Not only did the new act help eliminate much of the expository material, but it also gave an interesting touch to the new play by presenting the characters in period costume.

With the addition of a new first act, the play was entirely too long and one of the scenes had to be eliminated. The scene which seemed to do the least to help the play reach its final goal was the one in the corridor of the hotel. This scene accomplished two purposes: it showed the difficulty one would have in trying to get in to see Miss Lorinda, and it gave an excuse to have Mr. Courtright help

33. John Howard Lawson, Theory and Technique of Playwriting, G. P. Putnam and Sons, New York, 1908, pp. 205-206.

Peter and Annabelle enter Miss Lorinda's rooms. If this action could be presented in some other point in the play, the scene could be eliminated. The feeling the author experienced upon cutting an entire scene from the play is adequately described by W. Somerset Maugham. "However brilliant a scene may be, however witty a line or profound a reflection, if it is not essential to the play the dramatist must cut it.....The pure dramatist looks upon it as something of a miracle that he should be able to put words on paper at all, and when they are there, out of his own brain, if not straight from heaven, he looks upon them as sacred. He cannot bear to sacrifice one of them."³⁴

The corridor scene contributed little toward the progression of plot and action in the play. It could well be discarded, for most of the action is now described in three of Peter's speeches to Mr. Courtright in Act Two, Scene 1. It was also decided that it would be more effective for Annabelle's entrance in the hotel suite to come as a surprise to Mr. Courtright, rather than have him assist her to get in to see the women. The motivation for this action had always seemed weak in the corridor scene. Since Mr. Courtright had kept Annabelle and her mother apart for so many years, he would be inconsistent if he still did not do everything he could to keep them from meeting each other; and to have him help Annabelle just so he would not have to answer questions concerning his knowledge of her, had always seemed a rather poor reason. The new approach gave an interesting conflict by having Courtright insist that Annabelle leave before she has a chance to see her mother. This action heightened the scene when Annabelle and Lorinda do meet a bit later in the act.

34. W. Somerset Maugham, The Running Up, Penguin Books, Inc., New York, 1938, p. 86.

Not unlike most new plays, "Polted Doors" had been plagued with "third act trouble". Lorinda's suicide had always seemed nothing more than a way to solve the problem of getting rid of the undesirable character. William Archer says, "A very great play may, and often must, end in death; but you cannot make a play great by simply killing off your protagonist. Death is, after all, a very inexpensive means of avoiding anticlimax."³⁵ The previous revision had attempted to present Lorinda's death as a sacrifice to prevent her daughter from discovering the secret of her past. The incongruous person in this scene was Richard Courtright. He had been presented as a man who so strongly hated Lorinda that he would stop at nothing to cause her downfall, and even if Lorinda did take her life to keep her secret, there was no way she could be sure Courtright would not tell her daughter all he knew. Her sacrifice must mean something or it was useless. To be consistent, Lorinda's death must free Anabelle from all her fears concerning her family. It did not.

But before the third act could be rewritten there was another fundamental problem which had to be solved. It had to be decided whether the sympathy of the audience at the end of the play would be with Lorinda or with Courtright. And on the basis of making the characters consistent with their actions previously presented in the play, it was determined that the sympathy should go to Courtright.

Lorinda had never been able to solve her problems. Her action had always been to run away from them. But now in the third act she is faced with a problem from which there is no escape; she could no longer

35. Archer, op. cit., p. 353.

run away because there was no place to go. If she were to escape again her only alternative was death. Her reason for taking her own life would not be to protect her daughter, for there was no reason why she should be too greatly concerned with her daughter's feelings. She had never cared for her, and there was little reason she should change. But she knew she was trapped. She could not face those who knew what she was, and, knowing Lordick, she must escape even if it meant taking her own life.

The decision to keep Annabelle from finding out about her father is then left entirely up to Courtlandt, and he is a strong enough character to allow Annabelle to think her father was an honorable person. Although it seems Annabelle will think he has been the cause of her mother's death and the person who drove her to a life of solitude, he is willing to accept this unfair judgment to insure Annabelle's happiness.

By the end of the third revision, the construction of the play was not greatly different from the acted version. It had gone through several major changes; it had acquired a complete new first act, the third act was almost entirely rewritten, and the hotel corridor scene had been eliminated. The purpose of the revision had been to make the play ready to be tried out by actors on the stage. There had been many minor changes too numerous to mention which attempted to give action to the lines - to give the actors something to do, rather than show the crises and conflicts only through the lines themselves. The approach had been from a Director's standpoint and the play was rewritten to make the actors do the action in addition to speaking it. When this revision was finished the task was now to give the play to

the actors and see what happened to it on the stage.

4. Fourth Revision: The Play in Rehearsal.

The revision of the play during rehearsal developed into a very mechanical approach to the script. It was impossible to foretell just what would happen to a play until the lines and action were coordinated for a stage presentation. Before the play went into rehearsal each line had been read aloud by the author in an attempt to hear the audible sound the line produced. But this method was far from being satisfactory because many of the lines as read by the actors did not produce anything near the effect desired. The result, of course, meant that numerous lines had to be rewritten again.

Writing dialogue had been the most difficult task of any in the development of the play. It is disheartening to recall the many hours spent writing and rewriting lines throughout the numerous revisions, only to find that when the lines are given to the actor to speak, they still do not sound natural for the character he is portraying. This may stem from two causes: first, the actor does not interpret the lines exactly as the playwright had intended when they were written; and second, the lines themselves are not suited to the character.

Dialogue is conversation and it must seem to the listener to be authentic conversation. Ideal dialogue must be so natural to the character that it is unobtrusive in itself; it must be as much a part of him as physical existence; and, as George Pierce Baker puts it, "When a dramatist works as he should, the emotion of his characters gives him the right words for carrying their feelings to the audience, and every word counts."³⁶ In writing the dialogue, the approach had

36. Baker, op. cit., p. 344.

been to ask the question, "What could the character say to convey his emotion?" But after listening to the beginning rehearsals it was determined that, in addition, the approach should have been, "What can one put into a line to show the actor the emotion he is to convey?" Dialogue has to do more than stem from character; it has to show character. Perhaps Logos Agri has come nearer the method one should pursue in the writing of dialogue when he observes, "Dialogue must reveal character. Every speech should be the product of the speaker's three dimensions, telling us what he is, hinting at what he will be."³⁷

Not only did many of the lines in the script have to be changed because they did not fit the character, but many additional lines were altered because they did not fit the situation. Some attempt had been made to write lines of shorter length in the emotional scenes,³⁸ but there were many more which had to be shortened. When the actor reached a peak in some of the emotional scenes, the speeches seemed inconsistent with the situation.

There were some minor lines which did not have to be rewritten; these were cut altogether. A number of times the same thought had been repeated, not in the same words perhaps, but conveying the same idea. These lines could be cut without serious loss to the action of the play, and one can draw the conclusion that if an idea is stated well the first time there is no need to repeat it. It was also found that in many instances there was too much given in a speech; not necessarily that the thought was repeated, but the thought was dressed up too elaborately, and the idea could be expressed more easily and

37. Agri, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

38. Baker, *op. cit.*, p. 338.

clearly in fewer words. "Unnecessary detail should be cut from dialogue both because it is usually the chief offender in making a play unduly long, and because it weakens the dialogue of which it is a part."³⁹ Occasionally the word order had to be changed within a sentence, and also the order of sentences within a speech had to be altered. Clearness of thought was the determining factor in most of the changes in dialogue. Occasionally the writer found that the actor did not understand a line. When this occurred, naturally the line was cut or changed. If the actor did not understand a line, there was a strong possibility some of the audience would also fail to comprehend it.

One source of change in dialogue came from the actors themselves. While they were learning their lines, frequently some of the speeches would become impromptu and the lines would express the same idea as the script in a different manner. Occasionally the new speech would sound better than the original, and if this were true it became the dialogue of the play. However, the process also worked in the opposite manner. The night the play was produced several speeches which the author did not feel were quite as good as the original became the actors' lines even though they were not in the script.

It was also found that many long speeches had to be broken up into shorter versions. If the line which is used to divide a speech is spoken by another character, it makes the longer speech seem more natural and effective.

There were times when it was necessary to change a line similar to another, especially if it were a cue. Similar cue lines have a

39. Baker, op. cit., p. 261.

tendency to lead actors into the wrong reply and may disrupt the entire scene.

Another serious fault in the dialogue was discovered after the play went into rehearsal. There were times when too many ideas were given in one speech which made the thought of the lines obscure. When this condition was found, either part of the line had to be cut or each idea had to be written in a separate line. One idea to a speech is a good rule to follow.⁴⁰

One can easily see by this discussion that when the script was given over to the actors in rehearsal there were many changes made in dialogue. It must be realized, however, that the actors were not professionals, and some of the changes may have been prompted because of their lack of experience in reading the lines. It must also be stated that there comes a point in rehearsal when changing dialogue, as well as action, would hamper the production. After the actors have learned the lines, especially when one is dealing with an amateur group, out of consideration for them and the production, further changes in dialogue must be kept to a minimum. This does not mean that in the acted version of the play some of the lines could not be revised, but rather the play has reached a point where the production took precedence over the revision.

Dialogue was not the only part of the play affected by placing it on the stage. It was noted the first time the actors attempted to coordinate the action with the lines that frequently there were not enough lines to complete the action required. For example, in the

40. Baker, op. cit., p. 401.

scene in Act Ito, Scene 2 between Miss Lorinda and the waiter, it is necessary for the waiter to put her chair away, move the table, and clear up the dishes. It was physically impossible for him to complete these tasks in the time it took to speak the lines covering this action, with the result that new lines had to be written in order to cover the time for him to complete his work. It is impossible to know before a play goes into rehearsal just how much time some of the action will take, because much depends upon the size of the stage, the actor, and the set.

There were many changes made in the stage movements of the characters after the play went into rehearsal. It is very difficult to imagine, while one is writing a play, the picture the actors will make on the stage in their various positions. The action which is required by the play will remain essentially the same, but the movements of the actors depend upon the director. In the acted version of the script, the characters' movements are shown, but they are the movements adapted to an individual stage and a particular set, and they are the ideas of one director.

Finally, the revision of the script in rehearsal had to be terminated. It had reached a point where no more changes could be made because a date had been set for its production and that date had arrived. There were still lines to be rewritten, scenes to be rearranged, and new ideas for character, but it was too late now for any further alteration. Opening night had arrived.

D. The Production

For the playwright with a first play the experience of production is a compressed education in three hours. Through rehearsal one has judged the relative strength or weakness of the play, but the judgment has been flavored with an intense knowledge of each scene from its germ idea to the acting script. However, a play is written for an audience of mixed background, interest, and imagination, and the author is unable to foretell the feeling of this group until he can observe its reaction during production.

It is felt, on the whole, that the new play sustained interest, and the audience was genuinely concerned with the eventual outcome of the struggle. The characters were definite personalities. They appeared to be real people on the stage, and each an individual. It was expected that one would find places in the play that would seem weak, and if the play were to be produced at some future date, changes in some scenes would have to be made. The playing time of the production was approximately two hours and twenty-five minutes. Therefore, it would be possible to delete certain parts of the play and still remain within the running time of the average three act performance. In general, the material of the play had proved playable and the characters had appeared to be well rounded individuals.

If one were to begin to revise the play, most of the changes would be made in the first act. One had the impression that some members of the audience did not know just what kind of a play they were to expect during the opening part of the first act. The theme of the play was not introduced soon enough. The forces of emotion which bring the play to its ultimate conclusion must be realized

from the very beginning of the first act.

There were several factors which led to a mixed feeling on the part of the audience. The play, opening in 1919 with the costumes of the period, gave rise to many associations with the style of that period. Modern audiences have a tendency to view high shoes, narrow trousers, and tight skirts with a tongue-in-check attitude. They have seen characters in other plays dressed in the same manner and most of these plays have been either comedy or melodrama. They expect the same when they are suddenly confronted with similarly dressed characters. It therefore seems necessary to establish immediately the idea that the play is a serious one and not old fashioned melodrama.

In addition to the pictorial elements, there were other factors which associated the play with melodrama. The events which took place in the first act have long been related to plays of this nature. If one uses ideas dealing with an illegitimate child, the father threatening to drive his daughter from her home, the play seems to present the same situations apparent in melodramatic plays at the turn of the century, and it is difficult for the audience to accept those ideas as divorced from melodrama.

At times there can be a very narrow dividing line between the situation in serious drama and melodrama. "Characteristic of most serious dramas are tense situations, moments in which conflict between opposing forces is brought vividly to a head."⁴¹ However, if the language and emotion become overemphasized, the situation

41. Marx, op. cit., p. 174.

may have a melodramatic effect. There seemed times, not only in the first act but in other parts of the play, when this effect was noticed. To some extent the cause can be found in the lines themselves. A certain amount of change in the writing to "tone down" the emotional impact would help in these scenes. Another reason for the effect can be traced to the actor. It is possible that an actor can give a melodramatic style to a scene through his interpretation, especially if he has a tendency to force emotion into his playing. Many amateur actors find the only way they are able to project emotion is through forcing their voices and actions to a point of exaggeration, and by this manner of playing they change a serious dramatic scene into one of bombastic melodrama. A more experienced player could act the same scene in a restrained manner and keep the serious intent.

The first appearance of Lorinda in Act One brought out a problem that had not been anticipated. The audience was not ready to accept a Jezebel of her temperament, and they were surprised. One could solve this problem by planting an indication of her character preceding Lorinda's first entrance; or the lines of her first scene might be rewritten to show a more human quality. It is also possible that an actress of greater experience could give a subtle baseness to the character, and thus make Lorinda more acceptable and less of a surprise to the audience.

The soliloquy in which Adam Spencer talks to the picture of his dead wife seemed unnecessary and out of place. In some other part of the scene it would be far better to give this information regarding the problem of raising his daughter. Perhaps this infor-

mation is what is needed to give a description of Lorinda prior to her first appearance.

In the sequence of acts in the play, the question arose whether Act One might be presented in some other position in the play; it might be treated as a "flash back". If the events in Act One were conveyed after the woman had been seen in the hotel suite as a recluse, as in Act Two, Scene 2, then the significance of the action which takes place in 1919 might be clearer to the audience. There would be less chance of misunderstanding the type of play in the initial scene.

Act Two, Scene 1 performed satisfactorily. The fish pole episode between Peter and Annabelle brought a good response from the audience. In the entire scene there was much exposition, but most of it seemed to be accepted without it becoming too apparent that the scene was presenting information. However, one might delete some of the lines which gave exposition, especially those concerning Annabelle's life, and leave more to the imagination of the audience.

The opening of Act Two, Scene 2, with only one character on stage appeared to be protracted. It is necessary to have Miss Lorinda alone on stage to show the feeling of her solitude, but the action can be carried by pantomime. The reading of the poem was incongruous. A modern audience is not prone to accept soliloquies. The ensuing short scene between Lorinda and the waiter proved to be one of the best in the play. During Act Two, Scene 2, a great amount of suspense was created and was sustained consistently. At the very end of the scene the burning of the checks proved effective. Some of the dialogue between Richard and Lorinda seemed a bit labored at times.

No doubt much of the strain came from the actors who tried to show emotion by vocal volume. However, some of the lines could very well be revised and made less emotional.

The suspense established in Act Two, Scene 2, not only carried over into Act Three but grew in intensity. Apparently the audience was definitely interested in the outcome of the meeting between the mother and daughter. The scene in Act Three during which Annabelle finds out about her parents held up very well, even though Lorinda remained on stage for a long period without speaking. Lorinda's suicide seemed motivated and it did not come as a surprise to the audience. Perhaps no one realized the exact moment it would happen, but when it did, her action was not unlooked for.

The production, however, revealed a weakly motivated exit in the third act. Peter's belligerency when he bullies Courtright out of the room, even though it is done at Miss Lorinda's insistence, seemed inappropriate. In order to remove Mr. Courtright from the scene, some other device might have been more effective.

The ending of the play was well received. It had been a wise move to have the curtain fall at the moment when the audience was in sympathy with Courtright.

The production had provided the test needed by the new play. It gave the playwright a chance to see the effect produced by the drama upon an audience. It disclosed the weak moments as well as the scenes with power, and encouraged the author to plan revisions of the play in an effort to create something better than the version of this production.

PART IV. MISCELLANEOUS

Bibliography

Books

- Archer, William, Play-Making; A Manual of Craftsmanship, Dodd, Mead and Co., New York, 1934.
- Baker, George Pierce, Dramatic Technique, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1919.
- Bentley, Eric, The Playwright as Thinker, Reynal and Hitchcock, New York, 1946.
- Cooper, Lane, The Poetics of Aristotle: Its Meaning and Influence, Longmans, Green and Co., New York, 1927.
- Davies, Hugh S., Realism in the Drama, Cambridge University Press, London, 1934.
- Egri, Lajos, The Art of Dramatic Writing, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1946.
- Gassner, John, Producing the Play, The Dryden Press, New York, 1941.
- Harris, Mark, The Case for Tragedy, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1932.
- Hewitt, Barnard, Art and Craft of Play Production, J. B. Lippincott Co., New York, 1940.
- Lawson, John Howard, Theory and Technique of Playwriting, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1936.
- Marx, Milton, The Enjoyment of Drama, F. S. Crofts and Co., New York, 1940.
- Maugham, W. Somerset, The Summing Up, Penguin Books, Inc., New York, 1938.
- Nicoll, Allardyce, An Introduction to Dramatic Theory, T. X. Crowell, New York, 1931.
- Selden, Samuel, An Introduction to Playwriting, F. S. Crofts and Co., New York, 1946.
- Thompson, Alan Reynolds, The Anatomy of Drama, University of California Press, Los Angeles, 1942.
- Weaver, John V. A., "Sonnet", Turning Point, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1930.

Newspaper

"Her Universe - A Hotel Suite", Detroit Free Press, March 6, 1947.

ROOM USE ONLY

Oct 25 '48

Oct 13 '49

Nov 8 '49

May 6 '50

ROOM USE ONLY

Nov 8 '50

May 15 '54

Oct 15 '55

May 15 '58

~~DEC 12 1961~~

~~OCT 20 1962~~

~~NOV 10 1962~~

~~NOV 27 1962~~

~~JAN 7 1966~~

~~JUL 20 1966~~

~~JAN 9 1971~~ 8

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES



3 1293 03085 4362