ABSTRACT

SEMANTIC COMPATABILITY AMONG INTERPRETERS
DURING THE PRODUCTION OF AN ORIGINAL PLAY

By James Caleb Carver

The purpose of this study was to investigate the interpretations of dramatic characters by the playwright, director, and actors; to explore the changes in these interpretations during the rehearsal period; and to investigate the effects of these interpretations on an audience viewing a production of the play.

Chapter One discusses the design of the experiment including the selection of the semantic differential as the measuring device to be used in this experiment. The method of the D^2 analysis is explained as used in this study. Chapter One also describes the testing of the playwright, the director, the actors, and the audience.

Chapter Two includes an analysis of the data obtained in the testing. The interpretation of the characters by the playwright is examined first since he is their creator and his is the interpretation to which all others should be compared. The playwright's effectiveness in communicating to the director, actors, and audience was examined. Chapter Two also includes an investigation of the changes the director and actors made in their interpretations as they moved generally in closer agreement during the rehearsal period. This chapter also includes a discussion of the audience's

interpretation of the characters as compared to each of the other interpreters: the playwright, the director, and the actors.

The general conclusions drawn from this analysis indicate that while the playwright was effective in communicating less than 2/3 of all the personality traits, the director and actors moved closer together in their interpretation as they moved closer to the playwright's.

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By

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A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Speech

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Grateful acknowledgment is made to Dr. Malcom McLean for inspiring this study and for his guidance in the early stages of the analysis of the data.

Acknowledgment is made to Harry E. Oliver, the author of Ashes of Scarlet and to the other individuals who participated in this experiment: Allan C. Aiken, director, the Theta Alpha Phi cast members, and the individuals of the selected audience.

Recognition is also due to Dr. Frank C. Rutledge for his supervision and assistance in the completion of this study; and to Dr. E. C. Reynolds and Dr. James R. Brandon for their guidance during the writing of this thesis.

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CHAPTER I

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate conceptions of a dramatic character's personality based on the interpretations of the playwright, director and actor, and to investigate the effects of these interpretations on an audience viewing a production of the dramatic work.

Definitions

In this study "dramatic character" is meant to be a person in dramatic literature. "Interpretation" will mean the explanation of the meaning of a dramatic character's words and actions based on a study of the dramatic literature. By personality is meant the assemblage of physical and intellectual traits which give each person a distinct identity.

Scope and Limitations

Included in this study will be an investigation of the differences in interpretation between the individuals involved. This study will also investigate changes of interpretation by the director and the actors during the rehearsal period. This study will not include an investigation of personality traits for communicability.

Reasons

This study will explore further the variable of "semantic compatibility" on which Tannenbaum, Greenberg, and Leitner

have conducted tests previously.[1] The main purpose of their investigation was to measure "any systematic changes between the director and the performers in their perceptions of the play and its various roles."[2] This present study will go one step further in either direction - it will include the original source, the author, and it will include the final interpreters, the audience. Where the study by Tannenbaum, Greenberg, and Leitner was only interested in the communication between the director and actors, this present study will investigate how well the author communicated to the director and actors and, in turn, how well they communicated the author's intention (or their conception of it) to the audience.

The results of this investigation should prove helpful to playwrights giving them some evidence of what can happen to the characters they create when someone else interprets them.

Design of the Experiment

Selection of a Measuring Device

A device which could be used to measure the many traits of a character's personality was needed for this study. It was felt by this author that for ease of testing, the measuring

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[1]Percy H. Tannenbaum, Bradley S. Greenberg, and Margaret A. Leitner, "Changes In Semantic Compatibility During The Production Of A Play", Speech Monographs, (Vol. XXX, No. 4, November 1963), p. 340.

[2]Ibid., p. 341.

device should be in the form of a questionnaire which could be simply explained, easily understood, quickly completed, and should be one which would allow concrete comparisons of differences and similarities among those persons tested.

It was decided the questionnaires should take the form of a semantic differential based on one in The Measurement of Meaning.[3] This is a measuring device with which this author was familiar, having used it in previous experiments.

> The semantic differential is essentially a combination of controlled association and scaling procedures. We provide the subject with a concept to be differentiated and a set of bipolar adjectival scales against which to do it, his only task being to indicate, for each item (pairing of a concept with a scale), the direction of his association and its intensity on a seven-step scale.[4]

Selection of Scales to be Included on Questionnaire

Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum categorize these bipolar adjectival scales into 76 general categories with several near meanings below each category. For this study, the major categories, and some minor ones, were chosen which would apply to describing the personality of a person.

> The crux of the method, of course, lies in selecting the sample of descriptive polar terms. Ideally, the sample should be as representative as possible of the ways in which meaningful judgments can vary, and yet be small enough in size to be efficient in practice.[5]

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[3]Charles E. Osgood, George J. Suci, and Percy H. Tannenbaum, The Measurement of Meaning (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1957), pp. 53-61.

[4]Ibid., p. 20.

[5]Ibid.

It was felt that the Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum scales didn't cover the "semantic space".[6] Therefore Roget's Thesarus[7] was used in selecting terms for additional scales to correct this. Terms were selected which would apply to describing a character's personality. The final number of scales on each questionnaire totaled 74. It is felt by this author that the semantic space has been adequately covered.

The following is the semantic differential used in this study.

CONCEPT:

(1) Extremely
(2) Quite
(3) Slightly
(4) Neither or Equally
(5) Slightly
(6) Quite
(7) Extremely

1.	Optimistic	___: (1)	___: (2)	___: (3)	___: (4)	___: (5)	___: (6)	___: (7)	Pessimistic
2.	Altruistic	___: (1)	___: (2)	___: (3)	___: (4)	___: (5)	___: (6)	___: (7)	Egoistic
3.	Sociable	___: (1)	___: (2)	___: (3)	___: (4)	___: (5)	___: (6)	___: (7)	Unsociable
4.	Kind	___: (1)	___: (2)	___: (3)	___: (4)	___: (5)	___: (6)	___: (7)	Cruel
5.	Grateful	___: (1)	___: (2)	___: (3)	___: (4)	___: (5)	___: (6)	___: (7)	Ungrateful
6.	Graceful	___: (1)	___: (2)	___: (3)	___: (4)	___: (5)	___: (6)	___: (7)	Awkward
7.	Progressive	___: (1)	___: (2)	___: (3)	___: (4)	___: (5)	___: (6)	___: (7)	Regressive

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[6] Ibid., p. 78.

[7] P. M. Roget, Thesarus of English Words and Phrases (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd.), 1952.

8. Believing (1) : (2) : (3) : (4) : (5) : (6) : (7) : Skeptical

9. Wise (1) : (2) : (3) : (4) : (5) : (6) : (7) : Foolish

10. Severe (1) : (2) : (3) : (4) : (5) : (6) : (7) : Lenient

11. Tenacious (1) : (2) : (3) : (4) : (5) : (6) : (7) : Yielding

12. Serious (1) : (2) : (3) : (4) : (5) : (6) : (7) : Humorus

13. Masculine (1) : (2) : (3) : (4) : (5) : (6) : (7) : Feminine

14. Active (1) : (2) : (3) : (4) : (5) : (6) : (7) : Lazy

15. Excitable (1) : (2) : (3) : (4) : (5) : (6) : (7) : Calm

16. Fast (1) : (2) : (3) : (4) : (5) : (6) : (7) : Slow

17. Complex (1) : (2) : (3) : (4) : (5) : (6) : (7) : Simple

18. Stable (1) : (2) : (3) : (4) : (5) : (6) : (7) : Changeable

19. Rational (1) : (2) : (3) : (4) : (5) : (6) : (7) : Intuitive

20. Cautious (1) : (2) : (3) : (4) : (5) : (6) : (7) : Rash

21. Colorful (1) : (2) : (3) : (4) : (5) : (6) : (7) : Colorless

22. Subtle (1) : (2) : (3) : (4) : (5) : (6) : (7) : Blunt

23. Sensitive (1) : (2) : (3) : (4) : (5) : (6) : (7) : Insensitive

24. Aggressive (1) : (2) : (3) : (4) : (5) : (6) : (7) : Defensive

25. Competive	___ (1)	___ (2)	___ (3)	___ (4)	___ (5)	___ (6)	___ (7)	Cooperative
26. Naive	___ (1)	___ (2)	___ (3)	___ (4)	___ (5)	___ (6)	___ (7)	Sophisticated
27. Humble	___ (1)	___ (2)	___ (3)	___ (4)	___ (5)	___ (6)	___ (7)	Proud
28. Thrifty	___ (1)	___ (2)	___ (3)	___ (4)	___ (5)	___ (6)	___ (7)	Generous
29. Happy	___ (1)	___ (2)	___ (3)	___ (4)	___ (5)	___ (6)	___ (7)	Sad
30. Selfish	___ (1)	___ (2)	___ (3)	___ (4)	___ (5)	___ (6)	___ (7)	Unselfish
31. Affectionate	___ (1)	___ (2)	___ (3)	___ (4)	___ (5)	___ (6)	___ (7)	Hateful
32. Merciful	___ (1)	___ (2)	___ (3)	___ (4)	___ (5)	___ (6)	___ (7)	Merciless
33. Willing	___ (1)	___ (2)	___ (3)	___ (4)	___ (5)	___ (6)	___ (7)	Unwilling
34. Refined	___ (1)	___ (2)	___ (3)	___ (4)	___ (5)	___ (6)	___ (7)	Vulgar
35. Skillful	___ (1)	___ (2)	___ (3)	___ (4)	___ (5)	___ (6)	___ (7)	Bungling
36. Influential	___ (1)	___ (2)	___ (3)	___ (4)	___ (5)	___ (6)	___ (7)	Uninfluential
37. Honest	___ (1)	___ (2)	___ (3)	___ (4)	___ (5)	___ (6)	___ (7)	Dishonest
38. Virtuous	___ (1)	___ (2)	___ (3)	___ (4)	___ (5)	___ (6)	___ (7)	Sinful
39. Candid	___ (1)	___ (2)	___ (3)	___ (4)	___ (5)	___ (6)	___ (7)	Deceitful
40. Pious	___ (1)	___ (2)	___ (3)	___ (4)	___ (5)	___ (6)	___ (7)	Profane

41. Indiscriminate	___ (1)	: ___ (2)	: ___ (3)	: ___ (4)	: ___ (5)	: ___ (6)	: ___ (7)	: Critical
42. Gullible	___ (1)	: ___ (2)	: ___ (3)	: ___ (4)	: ___ (5)	: ___ (6)	: ___ (7)	: Incredulous
43. Educated	___ (1)	: ___ (2)	: ___ (3)	: ___ (4)	: ___ (5)	: ___ (6)	: ___ (7)	: Ignorant
44. Intelligent	___ (1)	: ___ (2)	: ___ (3)	: ___ (4)	: ___ (5)	: ___ (6)	: ___ (7)	: Unintelligent
45. Tough	___ (1)	: ___ (2)	: ___ (3)	: ___ (4)	: ___ (5)	: ___ (6)	: ___ (7)	: Fragile
46. Vigorous	___ (1)	: ___ (2)	: ___ (3)	: ___ (4)	: ___ (5)	: ___ (6)	: ___ (7)	: Feeble
47. Domineering	___ (1)	: ___ (2)	: ___ (3)	: ___ (4)	: ___ (5)	: ___ (6)	: ___ (7)	: Submissive
48. Brave	___ (1)	: ___ (2)	: ___ (3)	: ___ (4)	: ___ (5)	: ___ (6)	: ___ (7)	: Cowardly
49. Impulsive	___ (1)	: ___ (2)	: ___ (3)	: ___ (4)	: ___ (5)	: ___ (6)	: ___ (7)	: Deliberate
50. Motivated	___ (1)	: ___ (2)	: ___ (3)	: ___ (4)	: ___ (5)	: ___ (6)	: ___ (7)	: Aimless
51. Courteous	___ (1)	: ___ (2)	: ___ (3)	: ___ (4)	: ___ (5)	: ___ (6)	: ___ (7)	: Boorish
52. Witty	___ (1)	: ___ (2)	: ___ (3)	: ___ (4)	: ___ (5)	: ___ (6)	: ___ (7)	: Dull
53. Curious	___ (1)	: ___ (2)	: ___ (3)	: ___ (4)	: ___ (5)	: ___ (6)	: ___ (7)	: Indifferent
54. Dependent	___ (1)	: ___ (2)	: ___ (3)	: ___ (4)	: ___ (5)	: ___ (6)	: ___ (7)	: Independent
55. Belligerent	___ (1)	: ___ (2)	: ___ (3)	: ___ (4)	: ___ (5)	: ___ (6)	: ___ (7)	: Peaceful
56. Obstructive	___ (1)	: ___ (2)	: ___ (3)	: ___ (4)	: ___ (5)	: ___ (6)	: ___ (7)	: Helpful

57. Consistent	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	Inconsistent
58. Modest	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	Vain
59. Contented	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	Discontented
60. Retentive	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	Forgetful
61. Dependable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	Undependable
62. Broadminded	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	Narrow-minded
63. Patient	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	Impatient
64. Conservative	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	Adventurous
65. Responsible	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	Irresponsible
66. Alert	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	Dull
67. Moody	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	Stable
68. Sincere	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	Insincere
69. Conforming	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	Non-conforming
70. Mature	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	Immature
71. Gentle	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	Rough
72. Selfish	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	Generous

73. Neat ___(1) : ___(2) : ___(3) : ___(4) : ___(5) : ___(6) : ___(7) : Slovenly

74. Talkative ___(1) : ___(2) : ___(3) : ___(4) : ___(5) : ___(6) : ___(7) : Quiet

Completion of the Questionnaires

If the questionnaire is given to a rater (in this study - the playwright, director, actor, or audience member) for the purpose of judging a character's personality, and the rater judges the character on each of the 74 scales, we will have as a result a rather complete description of the character's personality as perceived by the rater. To explain further: using four of the scales shown above, a single character could receive these judgments on these scales:

Scale No.

3 - Sociable X(1) : ___(2) : ___(3) : ___(4) : ___(5) : ___(6) : ___(7) : Unsociable

4 - Kind ___(1) : ___(2) : X(3) : ___(4) : ___(5) : ___(6) : ___(7) : Cruel

5 - Grateful ___(1) : ___(2) : ___(3) : X(4) : ___(5) : ___(6) : ___(7) : Ungrateful

6 - Graceful ___(1) : ___(2) : ___(3) : ___(4) : ___(5) : X(6) : ___(7) : Awkward

Such a character in the example above would have the personality rating of being extremely sociable, slightly kind, neither grateful nor ungrateful, and quite awkward.

Analyzing Differences Between Raters

A rating by one rater can be compared with a rating by all other raters. Differences and similarities which are discovered will indicate the different perceptions the raters have given each character.

To continue the example above: Suppose that a second rater rates the same character as:

Scale No. 3 - (6) Quite Unsociable, Scale No. 4 (7) Extremely Cruel

Scale No. 5 - (6) Quite Ungrateful, Scale No. 6 (3) Slightly Graceful

In this example, it can be seen that nearly opposite interpretations exist for the same character.

To compare these ratings by the different raters it is necessary to place the ratings next to each other and note the numerical difference:

Scale No.	Rater A	Rater B	Difference D
3	1	6	5
4	3	7	4
5	4	6	2
6	6	3	3

The numerical difference is referred to as D. This difference D, is squared and referred to as D^2 or "the generalized distance statistic D^2, developed for just such a purpose."[8] This is the same method which Tannenbaum, Greenberg,

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[8]Tannenbaum, Greenberg, and Leitner, op. cit.

and Leitner used in their study and which is derived from a formula they refer to in The Measurement of Meaning.[9]

To continue the example:

Scale No.	D	D^2
3	5	25
4	4	16
5	2	4
6	3	9
	Total D^2	54

By totalling the D^2 for these four scales the total differences between these two raters can be compared with the total difference between any other two raters. Again the example: Suppose another rater (C) makes ratings of:

Scale No. 3 - (3) Slightly Sociable
Scale No. 4 - (1) Extremely Kind
Scale No. 5 - (1) Extremely Grateful
Scale No. 6 - (2) Quite Graceful

To compare rater (C) with (A) we again note the difference D and square it, D^2.

Scale No.	Rater A	Rater C	D	D^2
3	1	3	2	4
4	3	1	2	4
5	4	1	3	9
6	6	2	4	16
			Total D^2	33

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[9]Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum, op. cit., pp. 90-104.

Comparing the D^2 total of 33 for (A) and (C) to the D^2 total of 54 for (A) and (B) it can be seen that raters (A) and (C) were more nearly in agreement on the character's four personality traits represented on these four scales. The lower the D^2 total, the higher the agreement, or as Tannenbaum, Greenberg, and Leitner call it "the higher the degree of semantic compatibility."[10] The use of the D^2, then, is the basic tool for analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaires. There are some variations in the use of D^2 other than using only the total; these are explained in the analysis in Chapter II.

Control of Testing

To facilitate the control of the testing this author felt it necessary to confine the experiment to the campus of Michigan State University as much as possible. This would allow the author to explain personally to those involved, the purpose of the study and procedures to be followed. Confining it to Michigan State University would provide a more cooperative group to be tested since students in college are subjected to any number of experiments and testings. It was felt that students would be willing to participate readily in this study.

Undue discussion of the study among those involved in the testing could prove to have harmful effects on the study:

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[10]Tannenbaum, Greenberg, and Leitner, op. cit.

it would not be a typical play-production situation to have the director and actors more concerned with the questionnaires than the play or using the questionnaires as a basis for discussion concerning the playwright's intent.

The intent of the study was to study a typical play-production situation. To control this, the testing had to be done as unobtrusively as possible, and, necessarily, instructions would have to include a request to avoid discussion of the study with others being tested.

To further set up the study as a typical play-production situation, the author felt the audience to be tested should be composed of individuals on campus who normally attend theater events at Michigan State University. The ideal audience to be tested would contain a cross-section of students, faculty, and local residents.

Since a typical audience does not view a production of a play with the intent of answering specific questions about it afterward, it was decided not to disclose the nature of the experiment to the audience members.

Administration of Experiment

Selection of Play to be Studied

It was necessary to select a play to study that was going to be produced at Michigan State University in the spring term. The play Ashes of Scaret by Harry Oliver[11]

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was chosen as the playwright was available for testing and the cast of characters is limited to eight.

Test Playwright

The playwright was contacted and asked for his cooperation. He was asked to re-read his play and then answer the questionnaires that were sent to him. He was instructed to fill out the questionnaires quickly. The playwright was also asked to return the questionnaires before he attended a rehearsal.

Test Director

The director was contacted for his help in this project. He completed the questionnaires on the night of first rehearsal, but unfortunately he had had some conversation with the playwright regarding the play. However, nothing specific was discussed about the characters. The director was asked to keep to a minimum his remarks concerning the characters in the play before the first rehearsal.

Test Actors

At the first rehearsal the actors selected for the cast were given a questionnaire regarding their role. They were instructed to make no special study of the script, but answer the questions on the basis of their normal study of the part from their first reading until the first rehearsal. They returned the questionnaires the next day.

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Selection of Audience Members

Students at Michigan State University were asked to participate in this study as members of the audience. Of the thirty persons who volunteered, nineteen actually participated. Of these nineteen, ten were female, nine were male. The composition of the audience was fairly diverse. There were three speech majors, three non-speech students who were taking the "Introduction to Theater" course, one married couple, one wife of a graduate student, one graduate student in theater, and nine students (known play-goers) selected at random from the dormitories.

Testing the Audience

The selected audience gathered to view the final dress rehearsal of the play. There was to be an invited audience for this final rehearsal and the director indicated he would prefer the audience selected for the experiment to be in attendance at that time. The members of the audience were told nothing about the nature of the study. They had been told only that they would get a chance to see a dramatic production free for participating in an experiment.

The dress rehearsal was conducted exactly as a performance; there were no interruptions from beginning to end except for a ten minute intermission. During intermission,

the selected audience was given slips of blank paper and pencils to write down the characters names so they would be able to remember them afterwards. At the end of the rehearsal, the selected audience was moved to a room behind the studio theater as the director and cast were going to continue working. The questionnaires were handed out with instructions to complete them quickly, without skipping any scales, while keeping the character in mind. Each member of the selected audience was given a questionnaire about each character in the play. They were told they could not confer with any other member of the selected audience. Because of the lateness of the hour, it was not possible to complete the questionnaires that evening. The participants were asked to take them home and complete them. All the questionnaires were returned by eight o'clock the following morning.

Re-testing Director and Actors

After the audience received their questionnaires and instructions, the director and the actors were each given a re-test on the basis of their interpretation of the character at that time. The director and the actors returned their questionnaires the next morning.

CHAPTER II

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The Playwright

The Playwright as a Creator

The first individual tested was the playwright. Since this is where the play starts, it might seem the playwright could be the single authority to which all other tests should be compared. After all, he created the characters and he should know their personalities better than anyone. Lajos Egri spends a great deal of time discussing the care with which the "bone structure"[12] or the personality of a character must be created. A three dimensional character would have a personality that included physiology, sociology, and phychology. "You must know all of these...You must know what your character is in every detail...[13] Egri discusses the probable creation of the chief characters in Ibsen's Doll House:

> To begin with, Ibsen knew he needed two characters to prove his premise; a husband and a wife. But not any couple would do. He had to have a husband who would epitomize the selfishness of all men of all time, and a wife who would symbolize the subjugation of all women. He was looking for a self-centered man and a sacrificing woman.
>
> He chose Helmer and Nora, but as yet they were only names bearing the tags "selfish" and "unselfish". The next natural step was to round them out. The author had to be very careful in constructing his characters, because later, in conflict they would have to make their own decisions as to what to do or what not to do.[14]

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[12]Lajos Egri, The Art of Dramatic Writing (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), pp. 32-43.

[13]Ibid., p. 42.

[14]Ibid., p. 100.

From here Egri goes into a lengthy description of the creation of a three dimensional "Helmer" and "Nora". The point is, however, if the playwright does not go beyond this first step and does not give his characters dimension, they will appear flat, stilted, and lifeless. When characters are one dimensional or "thinly" written the director's interpretation and the actor's interpretation are "limited only by the function of the character in the play as a whole, the actual lines and business given by the playwright, and the combined imagination of director and actors."[15]

It can be seen then that where the director and actors have to imagine the dimensions of a character, the author loses control over his creation. It is the job of the director and acters to breathe life into the written characters. Unless the playwright is able to have a lengthy discussion with everyone concerned, or unless he can attend rehearsals, his only control over the production is well-written dialogue which reveals character. For "every speech should be the product of the speaker's three dimensions, telling us what he is, and hinting at what he will be."[16]

The Playwright As An Interpreter

In this study, there are seventy-four scales. It is

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[15]Marian Gallaway, The Director in the Theater (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1963), pp. 125-126.

[16]Egri, op.cit., p. 239.

probably reasonable to assume the playwright tested had given little or no thought to many of the personality traits as he was writing. Egri calls this coloring writing with "unconscious recollections."[17] When the playwright was tested, therefore, he was forced to make decisions about aspects of each character he may never have consciously thought of before. It is almost as though the playwright was interpreting his own characters.

The Playwright's Effectiveness As A Communicator

The scales on which there is a great deal of agreement among all the tested persons indicate there were definite clues to personality traits. If everyone agrees a character is, for example, extremely dishonest, it is probably safe to say the script makes a point of this.

To the contrary, if there is a wide difference of opinion on the exact nature of one aspect of a character's personality, it seems reasonable to assume there is conflicting, little, or an absence of evidence of this trait in the script.

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[17]Ibid., p. 48.

In this study, scales on which there was little agreement[18] with the playwright for each character were:

Nina:
14 ---------- Active - Lazy
17 ---------- Complex - Simple
23 ---------- Sensitive - Insensitive
26 ---------- Naive - Sophisticated
41 ---------- Indiscriminate - Critical
50 ---------- Motivated - Aimless
73 ---------- Neat - Slovenly

Ted:
74 ---------- Talkative - Quiet

Henry:
18 ---------- Stable - Changeable
23 ---------- Sensitive - Insensitive
58 ---------- Modest - Vain

Nell:
28 ---------- Thrifty - Generous
45 ---------- Tough - Fragile

Donald:
1 ---------- Optimistic - Pessimistic
17 ---------- Complex - Simple
54 ---------- Dependent - Independent

Mrs. Beers:
---------- None

Fanny:
9 ---------- Wise - Foolish
14 ---------- Active - Lazy
16 ---------- Fast - Slow
17 ---------- Complex - Simple
26 ---------- Naive - Sophisticated
39 ---------- Candid - Deceitful
52 ---------- Witty - Dull
54 ---------- Dependent - Independent
70 ---------- Mature - Immature

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[18]The author decided the breaking point for determining "little agreement" was a D^2 of 9. This selection of 9 seemed reasonable since a D^2 of 0, 1, or 4 could still be possible if the ratings were on the same side of the middle of the scale indicating at least some agreement. However, a D^2 of 9 would be, at best, a comparison of an Extreme rating with a rating of Neither or Equally, indicating "little agreement."

Mr. Beers:
10 ---------- Severe - Lenient
13 ---------- Masculine - Feminine

This does not mean that these are the only scales on which there was a large difference of interpretation. These are the scales on which everyone disagreed with the playwright.

There are some traits listed for more than one character:

Scales:
14 ---------- Active - Lazy
17 ---------- Complex - Simple
23 ---------- Sensitive - Insensitive
26 ---------- Naive - Sophisticated
54 ---------- Dependent - Independent

There does not seem to be any obvious correlation between these traits. It is easy to say a person who is lazy might also tend to be simple, insensitive, naive, and independent. But this is not necessarily true, for a lazy person might also be very sensitive, sophisticated and dependent.

About the only conclusion which can be drawn on all these scales is the traits are either not clearly indicated in the script or, if present, are difficult to communicate.

One interesting point in this connection is when the playwright rated the characters as simple, there was usually considerable disagreement with the other raters. Six of the eight characters were rated simple by the playwright. The characters may seem simple to him because he is their creator, he knows them better, or there are factors in his mind which make the character simple to him. However, maybe the character

is actually simple and the director and actors are wrong. It is possible these raters egotistically like to think of their characters as complex.

Table I illustrates the effectiveness with which the playwright communicated with the various interpreters receiving the communication.

The percentages are based on the "0"'s and "1"'s on the D^2 analysis of the differences. For example, the playwright's test for Ted was compared to the director's 2nd test for Ted. Through the D^2 method, it was determined there were 18 "0"'s which is 24% of the 74 scales. There were 29 "1"'s, which is 39%. Therefore, on 63% of the scales for Ted, the playwright and the director were in close agreement.

Table I reveals that the total percentages for any one of the characters varies little from the next character. The average agreement with the playwright was 64.8%.

There are a few exceptions to the pattern of percentages. The character of Beers seems to be the best communicated, for the percentages of agreement were 75%, 76%, and 79%. The lowest percentages of agreement occurred on the character of Fanny: 49%, 51%, and 48%. In the play on which this study was tested, the character of Fanny is the 86 year old grandmother living in the home. As described by the author in the script, "She is not a sweet old lady. Her voice is throaty, and her laugh a cackle." As the play unfolds, the

TABLE I

PERCENTAGE OF SCALES ON WHICH THE DIRECTOR, ACTORS, AND AUDIENCE AGREED EXACTLY OR CLOSELY WITH THE PLAYWRIGHT BASED ON THE D^2 ANALYSIS

	Ted	Nina	Henry	Nell	Donald	Jenny	Fanny	Beers	Average
Playwright-Director									
Exactly or D^2 Analysis of "0" --	24%	29%	15%	24%	21%	24%	18%	39%	
Closely or D^2 Analysis of "1" --	39%	40%	40%	45%	45%	44%	31%	36%	
Total Percentage of Scales Showing Considerable Agreement	63%	69%	55%	69%	66%	68%	49%	75%	64.2%
Playwright-Actor									
Exactly or D^2 Analysis of "0" --	28%	32%	51%	35%	37%	33%	18%	21%	
Closely or D^2 Analysis of "1" --	32%	31%	17%	32%	31%	41%	33%	55%	
Total Percentage of Scales Showing Considerable Agreement	60%	63%	68%	67%	68%	74%	51%	76%	65.8%
Playwright-Audience									
Exactly or D^2 Analysis of "0" --	22%	23%	24%	23%	24%	24%	23%	29%	
Closely or D^2 Analysis of "1" --	37%	43%	45%	45%	48%	32%	25%	50%	
Total Percentage of Scales Showing Considerable Agreement	59%	66%	69%	68%	72%	56%	48%	79%	64.6%
Total Overall Average -									64.8%

raucous, free-living past of Fanny is revealed. In fact, her wild past is one of the major points of the play. The character, Fanny, has less than 1/5 of the speeches of Ted, the leading character; yet in her 40 speeches she received more extreme ratings than Ted.

Her extreme behavior in relatively few speeches undoubtedly forced the raters to make extreme judgments on personality traits that had not been written into the script. These judgments then, were personal judgments and therefore, there is less agreement on Fanny's personality.

One other exception to the pattern of percentages in Table I concerns the character Henry. It is interesting to note the percentage of agreement for playwright and the director was somewhat below the average. However, the playwright and actor percentage is comparable to most of the other percentages, as is the playwright-audience percentage. Evidently, the actor communicated the playwright's intentions better than the playwright communicated his intentions to the director.

So far, we have considered only what the playwright did not adequately communicate. We should now look at a representation of what he did communicate. Those scales on which there was generally close agreement with the author[19] were:

Ted:

1	----------	Optimistic - Pessimistic
17	----------	Complex - Simple
23	----------	Sensitive - Insensitive
28	----------	Thrifty - Generous

---

[19]Here "generally close agreement" may be equated with "exactly or closely" indicated in Table I as a D^2 of "0" or "1".

31 ---------- Affectionate - Hateful
34 ---------- Refined - Vulgar
46 ---------- Vigorous - Feeble
59 ---------- Contented - Discontented
60 ---------- Retentive - Forgetful

Nina:
2 ---------- Altruistic - Egotistic
29 ---------- Happy - Sad
32---------- Merciful - Merciless
38 ---------- Virtuous - Sinful
39 ---------- Candid - Deceitful
58 ---------- Modest - Vain
63 ---------- Patient - Impatient
74 ---------- Talkative - Quiet

Henry:
13 ---------- Masculine - Feminine
15 ---------- Excitable - Calm

Nell:
4 ---------- Kind - Cruel
11 ---------- Tenacious - Yielding
20 ---------- Cautious - Rash
22 ---------- Subtle - Blunt
31 ---------- Affectionate - Hateful
41 ---------- Indiscriminate - Critical
65 ---------- Responsible - Irresponsible
70 ---------- Mature - Immature

Donald:
4 ---------- Kind - Cruel
13 ---------- Masculine - Feminine
22 ---------- Subtle - Blunt
25 ---------- Competitive - Cooperative
58 ---------- Modest - Vain
65 ---------- Responsible - Irresponsible
71 ---------- Gentle - Rough

Mrs. Beers:
13 ---------- Masculine - Feminine
25 ---------- Competitive - Cooperative
42 ---------- Gullible - Incredulous
50 ---------- Motivated - Aimless
69 ---------- Conforming - Non-conforming
73 ---------- Neat - Slovenly

Mr. Beers:

9 ---------- Wise - Foolish
24 ---------- Aggressive - Defensive

Fanny:

21 ---------- Colorful - Colorless
27 ---------- Humble - Proud
35 ---------- Skillful - Bungling
74 ---------- Talkative - Quiet

Here again there are some scales listed for more than one character:

4 ---------- Kind - Cruel
13 ---------- Masculine - Feminine
22 ---------- Subtle - Blunt
25 ---------- Competitive - Cooperative
31 ---------- Affectionate - Hateful
58 ---------- Modest - Vain
65 ---------- Responsible - Irresponsible
74 ---------- Talkative - Quiet

As before, there does not seem to be any obvious relationship between these scales. There are some points worth mentioning, however. On scale no. 22 "subtle-blunt", when the playwright made a rating of either "extremely blunt" or "neither subtle nor blunt" everyone agreed with him; but when he made any other rating, there was considerable disagreement. It seems as though this playwright found subtleness a hard quality to write into a character and the interpreters found it a hard quality to detect.

On scale no. 25 "competitive-cooperative", the playwright rated nearly every one of his characters as competitive to some degree. The one exception was his rating of Mr. Beers as "neither competitive nor cooperative". Mr. Beers was the subject of one other exception to the above scales. On

scale no. 74, the playwright rated Beers as "quiet", but rated all other characters as "talkative". The character Fanny had only nine more speeches and received a rating of "extremely talkative" from nearly every rater.

Table I indicates that there was a fairly high degree of agreement on what the character Beers was like. It might seem strange, then that there are only two scales on which everyone agreed. It became apparent in this study, however, that the less extreme characters caused less sizeable disagreement among the raters. That is, the raters did not agree entirely on every scale, but their differences were small.

Table II shows the total number of ratings of (3), (4), and (5) that each character received from each rater and points out which characters were less extreme than others.

TABLE II

TOTAL RATINGS OF "SLIGHTLY" OR "NEITHER" OR "EQUALLY" EACH CHARACTER RECEIVED FROM EACH RATER

	Ted	Nina	Henry	Nell	Donald	Jenny	Fanny	Beers	Average
Playwright-	39	38	17	29	48	45	36	38	36.2
Director --	52	40	53	38	34	54	24	37	41.5
Actor -----	37	42	9	29	42	39	29	68	36.8
Total -----	128	120	79	96	124	138	89	143	114.5

For example, the playwright gave Ted a total of 39 ratings of (3), (4), and (5) and a total of 17 for Henry. The purpose of this table is to indicate the tendency to rate a character toward the middle of the scale.

The playwright, it can be seen, tended to give nearly every character the same number of ratings in the middle of the scale. The one exception to this was the character of Henry who received only 17 ratings of (3), (4), and (5). The averages at the right of Table II indicate that the playwright tended to give the characters more extreme ratings than the director or the actors. The director tended to rate toward the middle more than other raters. It is the playwright, then, who felt his characters were more extreme, and this extremeness was not communicated.

The Director

Essentially, the previous section on the playwright demonstrated the effectiveness of the playwright's communication to the director. The next step is to investigate the changes the director made in his interpretation for each character during the period of his association with the play.

Table III illustrates the percentage of agreement between the director's two tests.

Again, the percentages refer to the number of "0"'s and "1"'s on the D^2 analysis of these two tests. The average agreement for the director was 83%. That is, the director made on the average, little or no change in his interpretation on 83% of the scales. One notable exception to the average is the director's agreement on the character of Donald. On 94% of the scales, the director made little or no change.

TABLE III

PERCENTAGE OF SCALES ON WHICH THE DIRECTOR SUCC[illegible]

TABLE III

PERCENTAGE OF SCALES ON WHICH THE DIRECTOR SHOWED NO CHANGE OR SHIFTED ONLY ONE SPACE ON HIS SECOND TEST

Director Changes	Ted	Nina	Henry	Nell	Donald	Jenny	Fanny	Beers	Average
No Change or D^2 Analysis of "0"	44%	40%	44%	43%	51%	35%	40%	39%	
Shifted One Space or D^2 Analysis of "1" ---------	37%	36%	35%	43%	43%	50%	36%	48%	
Total Percentage of Scales Showing Little or No Change ---------	81%	76%	79%	86%	94%	85%	76%	87%	83%

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Another method of comparing the changes made by the director is by using the totals of D^2, as outlined in the previous chapter. Table IV shows the D^2 totals for all tests compared.

By reading down Column #5, "Director No. 1 - Director No. 2", it is possible to see D^2 totals for the changes the director made on each character. Here again, it can be seen that the least change made by the director concerned the character of Donald. The next least change was made on Nell. It is interesting to note that though the director changed very little on these two characters, he got further away from the playwright's interpretation. It should also be noted that where the director made the greatest change, he also moved away from the playwright.

The grand total for all the changes by the director is 848. This figure in itself is meaningless, but compared to the actor's total changes, 1276, it can readily be seen the director made fewer changes than all the actors. There is, however, one circumstance which contributed the high total for the actors. This total is out of proportion since one actor, the one playing Henry, made a violent change and on the re-test, marked only at the extreme ends of the scales. Therefore, by subtracting the director's change for Henry from the director's grand total and subtracting the actor's

TABLE IV

TOTAL D^2 OF ALL TE
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PARED TO EACH OTHER SHOWING GENERAL MOVEMENT BY INTERPRETERS
ONVERGE) OR AWAY (DIVERGE) FROM EACH OTHER

	Column 1 Playwright's Test - Director's 1st Test		Column 2 Playwright's Test - Director's 2nd Test	Column 3 Playwright's Test - Actor's 1st Test		Colu Dire 1st Acto Test
Ted ---	176	diverge	251	228	diverge	24
Nina --	228	converge	184	281	converge	21
Henry -	260	converge	246	429	converge	33
Nell --	138	diverge	184	107	diverge	21
Donald-	191	diverge	226	218	converge	16
Jenny -	155	converge	143	199	converge	14
Fanny -	450	diverge	492	423	converge	39
Beers -	163	converge	133	211	converge	13
Totals-						
Adjusted Total -						

Column 5 Director's 1st Test - Director's 2nd Test	Column 6 Actor's 1st Test - Actor's 2nd Test	Column 7 Director's 1st Test - Actor's 1st Test		Column 8 Director's 2nd Test - Actor's 1st Test	Column 9 Playwright's Test - Audience's Test	Column 10 Director's 2nd Test - Audience's Test	Column 11 Actor's 2nd Test - Audience's Test
145	98	140	converge	124	194	196	181
100	129	190	converge	163	246	216	181
107	475	403	converge	299	189	147	352
77	111	125	diverge	156	177	119	217
62	108	165	converge	149	153	171	177
92	80	137	converge	99	245	178	189
177	178	208	diverge	293	355	332	126
88	97	153	converge	105	133	95	113
848	1276	1521		1378			
741	801	190 Avg.		173 Avg.			

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Donald -	
Jenny --	
Fanny --	
Beers --	
Average .	

change for Henry from the actors' grand total, the adjusted totals show a different proportion in the director's and actor's changes.

Director - 741 Actor's - 801

It still holds that the actor's generally made bigger changes than the director. On two characters: Ted and Jenny, the director made the biggest change in interpretation. On the rest of the characters, it was the actors who made the biggest change.

The director, by the very nature of his position is responsible for guiding the actor's efforts as he tries to achieve the playwright's original intention. Theoretically then, the director should influence the actor so that they both agree on what the character is like.

Table V shows the influence the director had on the actors:

TABLE V

PERCENTAGE OF SCALES ON WHICH THE ACTORS MOVED CLOSER TO, REMAINED IN THE SAME RELATIONSHIP WITH, OR MOVED FARTHER AWAY FROM THE DIRECTOR

	Closer	Same Relationship	Farther
Ted -------	28%	41%	31%
Nina ------	25%	36%	37%
Henry -----	34%	32%	34%
Nell ------	23%	41%	36%
Donald ----	22%	34%	44%
Jenny -----	34%	35%	31%
Fanny -----	34%	30%	36%
Beers -----	41%	35%	24%
Average ---	30%	33%	34%

On an average of 30% of the scales, the actors moved closer to the director's interpretation. On 33% of the scales, they remained in the same relationship and on 34% of the scales the actors moved farther away. The percentages seem in error when compared to Table VI.

TABLE VI

DIVERGENCE AND CONVERGENCE OF INTERPRETATIONS BASED ON D^2 TOTALS

	Playwright's Test Compared with Director's 1st and 2nd Test	Playwright's Test Compared with Actor's 1st and 2nd Test	Director's 1st and 2nd Tests Compared with Actor's 1st and 2nd Test
Ted ---	Diverge	Diverge	Converge
Nina --	Converge	Converge	Converge
Henry -	Converge	Converge	Converge
Nell --	Diverge	Diverge	Diverge
Donald-	Diverge	Converge	Converge
Jenny -	Converge	Converge	Converge
Fanny -	Diverge	Converge	Diverge
Beers -	Converge	Converge	Converge

Six of the eight actors moved closer to the director. Also the average of D^2 totals shows the director and actors converging. The percentages in Table V must indicate, then, that the amount of change away from the director was less than the change toward the director. For example, the actor playing Ted could have changed his ratings on 28% of the

scales from a rating of (1) to a (5) rating with the director rating (6), and at the same time on 31% of the scales moved away from the director by changing his ratings from (6) to (7).

Table V does indicate that most of the actors did get closer to the director in their interpretations, therefore it can be assumed that generally the director influenced his actors.

The Actors

The two previous sections of this chapter have already dealt with much of the material connected with the actors. Table I showed the actors were in agreement with the playwright on 65.8% of the scales. Table II indicated the actors tended to rate near the center of the scales on an average of 36.8% of the 74 scales. Table IV presents the actor's D^2 totals for the actor-playwright, the actor-director, the actor-audience, and the actor with himself. Table V illustrates how the actors reated to the director.

Table VII shows the percentage of agreement on the actor's two tests.

Again, this is based on the number of "0"'s and the number of "1"'s for the D^2 of the two tests. The average agreement for all actors was 79%. The actresses playing Nina and Nell were right on the average. The actress playing

TABLE VII

PERCENTAGE OF SCALES ON WHICH THE ACTORS SHOWED NO CHANGE OR SHIFTED ONLY ONE SPACE ON THE SECOND TEST

Actor Changes	Ted	Nina	Henry	Nell	Donald	Jenny	Fanny	Beers	Average
No Change of D^2 Analysis of "0"	50%	35%	55%	45%	43%	48%	39%	41%	
Shifted One Space or D^2 Analysis of "1" --------	32%	44%	7%	33%	40%	41%	35%	40%	
Total Percentage of Scales Showing Little or No Change --------	82%	79%	62%	78%	83%	89%	74%	81%	79%

Jenny had an extremely high percentage of 89%. The actor playing Henry, on the other hand, had "0" or "1" on only 62% of the scales.

There is an interesting point in connection with this percentage on Henry. Although the actor scored only 62% total, he scored "0" on 55% of the scales; higher than any actor and higher than the director for any character. The reason this has happened is the actor playing Henry marked at the extreme ends of the scale on 56 of 74 scales on the first test and 59 of 74 scales on the second. On 6 scales he changed from one extreme to the other. They were:

Scale	
18	Motivated - Aimless
50	Stable - Changeable
54	Dependent - Independent
57	Consistent - Inconsistent
62	Broad-minded - Narrow-minded
64	Conservative - Adventurous

Here, there seems to be a pattern. Most of the scales rate personality traits which are somewhat related. On the first test the actor rated Henry as <u>extremely</u> "stable", "consistent", "dependent", "conservative", "broad-minded", but "aimless". On the second test Henry was rated as <u>extremely</u> "changeable", "inconsistent", "independent", "adventurous", "narrow-minded", but "motivated". With the possible exception of the "broad-minded" scale, these are primarily personality traits. The actor had the wrong conception of his character at the beginning of rehearsals, for the changes he made on the six scales brought him generally

closer to the playwright and the director. Only on scale no. 57 "consistent-inconsistent" did the actor move away from both the playwright and the director.

The Audience

If the audience was the receiver of the message communicated by the playwright, then ideally, the audience should be in very close agreement with the playwright on every scale. This was not the case in this study.

Generally speaking, the director was in closest agreement with the audience. This was determined by two methods. First, the audience's test was compared to the author's test and then the re-tests of the actor and the director (taken the same night the audience viewed the production) for a D^2 total. For each character there are three audience D^2 totals; one for the audience-playwright, one for the audience-director, and one for the audience-actor.

As an example, the audience-playwright D^2 total for Ted was 210, the audience-director D^2 total was 196, and the audience-actor D^2 total was 181. The lower the total, the higher the agreement. In our example, the actor was in closest agreement with the audience.

By adding the audience-playwright D^2 total for Ted to the audience-playwright D^2 totals for all the other characters, and doing the same for the audience-director, and the audience-

actor, the three grand totals would indicate which was generally in closest agreement with the audience. In this study it was the director. The three grand totals were:

Audience-Playwright ---- 1701
Audience-Director ------ 1454
Audience-Adtor --------- 1536

In the process of analyzing all the data of this study, it seemed that the audience was influenced by one particular person on certain types of scales or traits. In order to organize the material so that it could be determined if this were true, the 74 scales were broken down by the author into three main types: those that measured the traits involving only the character's individual physical personality, those that measured the character's intellectual personality, and those that measured the character's social personality.

Individual			Social			Intellectual			
Scale No.	6 -	37	Scale No.	2 -	32 63	Scale No.	1 -	23 52	68
Scale No.	12 -	38	Scale No.	3 -	33 69	Scale No.	7 -	26 53	70
Scale No.	13 -	40	Scale No.	4 -	36 72	Scale No.	8 -	28 57	
Scale No.	14 -	45	Scale No.	5 -	39	Scale No.	9 -	41 58	
Scale No.	15 -	46	Scale No.	10 -	47	Scale No.	11 -	42 59	
Scale No.	16 -	66	Scale No.	24 -	51	Scale No.	17 -	43 60	
Scale No.	21 -	71	Scale No.	25 -	54	Scale No.	18 -	44 62	
Scale No.	29 -	73	Scale No.	27 -	55	Scale No.	19 -	48 64	
Scale No.	34 -	74	Scale No.	30 -	56	Scale No.	20 -	49 65	
Scale No.	35 -		Scale No.	31 -	61	Scale No.	22 -	50 67	

By totalling within the groups the number of scales on which each individual was closest to the audience, it could be determined if the playwright, or director, or actor had more influence on the audience on a particular type of trait.

The three totals for this study for all characters are:

	Individual	Social	Intellectual
Playwright ----	63	50	85
Director ------	70	74	116
Actor ---------	56	84	100

As shown here, the playwright is farthest from the audience in all three groups. The actor is closest on the scales grouped under social. The director was closest to the audience on the individual and the intellectual groups.

Since the actor is the only interpreter seen by the audience he would seem to be the one who would agree more closely with the audience on the individual traits, if none of the others. The results show the contrary. This may be true because, in a sense, the actor is rating himself, since he is so close to the character. This self-examination may not be easy and, egotistically, not accurate.

The director's second test is after a long rehearsal period during which he has observed closely the actor's character. In this way, he is like an audience. This may account for the audience-director agreement. And again, the director's interpretation is the guide for the actor.

The second method of comparison was shown in Table VII. The percentages were based on the number of "0"'s and "1"'s

from the D^2 for the tests involved. The averages show, again, the director agrees more with the audience than do the actor and the playwright. However, this is not a major point to be made in regard to the audience. What is important is how effective the playwright was in communicating his characters to the audience. To determine this, it was decided by this author that if the playwright felt the presence of a certain trait, no matter whether it was "slightly", "quite", or "extremely", he was effective in communicating this if the audience rated the character on the same side of the scale. If the playwright rated the character as "neither" or "equally", and the audience gave the same rating, then it is felt the playwright was effective in communicating his character's personality. For example, if the playwright rated Ted as "extremely wise" and the audience rated Ted as "slightly wise", the playwright was effective in communicating this trait. However, if the playwright rated the character as "slightly wise" and the audience rated him as "slightly foolish" or even "equally wise and foolish", then the playwright was not effective in communicating this trait though the ratings are the same distance apart on the scales as the preceeding example where it was determined he was effective.

Table VIII demonstrates the effectiveness with which the playwright communicated each character to the audience.

The average effectiveness of the playwright was 60%. The highest percentage was on the character Henry. It is interesting to compare this percentage with the D^2 totals for Henry in Table IV. Evidently the playwright was effective in

communicating Henry to the audience and director, but not the actor. The low percentages on the two characters Jenny and Fanny indicate the audience received less than 50% of the playwright's intention.

TABLE VIII

NUMBER OF SCALES AND THE PERCENTAGE ON WHICH THE PLAYWRIGHT AND THE AUDIENCE RATED ON THE SAME SIDE OF THE MIDDLE OF THE SCALE OR BOTH RATED "NEITHER" OR "EQUALLY"

	Number of Scales	Percentage of Total Scales
Ted ----------	48	65%
Nina ---------	48	65%
Henry --------	58	77%
Nell ---------	49	66%
Donald -------	41	55%
Jenny --------	31	41%
Fanny --------	35	46%
Beers --------	46	61%
Average ------	45	60%

Conclusions

Since it was the nature of this study to investigate only one play-producing situation with one playwright, one director, and one cast any conclusions drawn will necessarily have to be limited ones. A study of a proven play by an established playwright might tell an entirely different story and possibly another story if the cast and directors

were seasoned professionals instead of students. But within the limitations of this one play-producing situation there are some conclusions which can be drawn.

1. On an average of a little less than 2/3 of all the personality traits, the director and the actors agreed exactly or very closely with the playwright. The range was from less than 1/2 to over 3/4.

2. Generally the closer agreement between the director, the actors, and the playwright produced a higher percentage of agreement between the audience and the playwright.

3. The playwright was effective in communicating to the audience 60% of the personality traits of the characters.

4. From the first test at the beginning of the rehearsal period to the second test on the final dress rehearsal, the actors made bigger changes in their interpretations than the director and six of the eight actors moved closer to the director's interpretation. This conclusion is also substantiated by the study of Tannenbaum, Greenberg, and Leitner.

> ...a cursory analysis of the data indicates that both director and performers changed progressively as the production evolved. While the cast showed a somewhat greater degree of shift that [sic] did the director, the key point here is that both tended to move <u>toward one another</u>.[20]

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[20]Tannenbaum, Greenberg, and Leitner, op. cit., p. 343.

5. The less extreme characters were more readily agreed up.

6. The director made little or no change in his interpretation on 83% of the personality traits. Whether this is normal or not cannot be determined on this one experiment, however, it can be seen that a possible range is from 76% to 94%.

7. There are no significant statistics differentiating male actors interpreting their roles and female actresses interpreting theirs.

Practical Applications

It would seem that if a playwright felt that a character was extreme, the character's personality should be carefully written with definite indications of important personality traits.

Directors should be aware that while their actors tend to become more compatible with the director's interpretation, it is possible for actors to become less compatible.

One practical application derived from this study is only incidently related. This author, while functioning as a director working with actors, has found the semantic differential used in this study a valuable tool for arriving at a compatible interpretation of a character's personality.

This semantic differential has also been used to good advantage in teaching acting as a method of proving to students that different interpretations can and do exist.

APPENDIX

ASHES OF SCARLET

by Harry Oliver

DRAMATIS PERSONAE:

Fanny: Fanny is the mother of Mrs. Beers and she was about 85 years old when she died in 1934. In her final years she was unpleasingly plump, never combed her long, yellow-gray hair, and wore steel-rimmed glasses. She is not a "sweet" old lady. Her voice is throaty and her laugh a cackle.

Mrs. Beers (Jenny): About 65 in 1934. She perpetually wears a look of benign hauteur upon her face, and is handsome and well-preserved for her age. Her keynote is respectability. Plays piano fairly well.

Mr. Beers: Jenny's husband. About 70 in 1934. He is thin, gestures nervously, and blows his nose loudly when upset. His hair is heavy and snow-white. He has been a small-town druggist for fifty years.

Nina: About 40 in 1934. Once a pleasant blonde and still preserving traces of her rather vacant good looks. She is vaguely "arty" and once had ambitions to be a professional singer.

Nell: About 45 in 1934. Eldest daughter of the Beers'. She is dark and may have a slightly Semitic cast to her features. Not pretty, but a pleasant, comfortable woman. The family work-horse.

Henry Almond: Nell's husband. A one-time Ontario farm boy turned building contractor. He is of Irish descent, still handsome at 45. He is of slight build, given to sudden rages -- perhaps from the hypertension that has also caused his ulcers and asthma. His accent is Canadian, slightly clipped.

Ted: Eldest son of Nell and Henry Almond. About nine years old in Act 1 and nearly 30 in Act II. He is thin, introverted, and wears glasses. A "bookworm."

Donald: A year younger than Ted, his brother. Bland face. Will be fat when he is older. Extroverted personality.

ASHES OF SCARLET

A Two-Act Play by Harry E. Oliver

ACT I

(Pre-curtain music continues softly under as the curtain rises. Lights of TIME PRESENT are up on the lawn area, right, where the elder members of the family are gathered, heads bent, as if they were at an open grave. MR. and MRS. BEERS stand at the head of the grave, facing the audience. At their right is NINA. NELL AND HENRY ALMOND are standing at the other side of the grave. In the living room, DONALD is sitting cross-legged by the fireplace, playing with a toy automobile and making motor sounds with his mouth. TED is downstage on a footstool with a book of fairy tales in his hand. On the second level, FANNY is stretched out rigidly. Lights of TIME PRESENT up gradually on the living area. TED rises and walks downstage.)

TED: We got a holiday from school that day. It seemed like an enormous reward for a very little thing. --- I suppose her tears were genuine enough. Grandmother could always cry at the drop of a hat.

(MRS. BEERS, at the graveside, begins daubing at her eyes with a handkerchief.)

Aunt Nina came all the way from Sough Dakota. Max drove her into Sioux Falls ... or wherever she catches the train to Chicago. And then on to Michigan. The only reason we got to come was that we couldn't very well have been left all alone in Detroit. Anyway, they are burying Fanny ... my great-grandmother.

(Music out)

DONALD: Do you suppose they'll give me the pistol now she's dead?

TED: (Sitting on the footstool center) I hid the dream book under my pillow.

DONALD: Great-grandma <u>said</u> I could have the pistol.

TED: Well, she's dead. Momma said she had to comb her hair and she's been sleeping on it so long it was all full of rats.

DONALD: (Awed) Real rats?

TED: I don't think so. I think she meant another kind of rats.

DONALD: (Playing with his car a moment; looking up conspiratorially) I know a dirty word.

TED: What?

DONALD: You've got to promise. -- Not to tell Momma and Daddy.

TED: All right. Cross my heart.

DONALD: It's "fort."

TED: Oh, you're nuts! A fort's a place where you fight the Indians.

DONALD: I know it's dirty. I yelled it at a man when I was out roller skating.

TED: Yeah? ... What'd he do?

DONALD: He said I should have my mother wash my mouth out with soap. ... I told you it was dirty. ... I'm going to mow the lawn tomorrow.

TED: Go ahead.

DONALD: And I'll get a quarter and I won't give you any of it!

TED: I don't care. I got her dream book and you didn't get the pistol.

DONALD: Who wants an old dream book? Do you suppose she's going to hell?

TED: <u>That's</u> a dirty word.

DONALD: And fry?

TED: Daddy says there isn't any such place.

(Transition music to TIME PAST under. NINA steps downfront from the graveside, a spotlight on her face.)

NINA: Without the brandy in my purse, in the crystal bottle labelled Spirits of Witch Hazel, I don't know how I should get through the days; the days when the hot wind blowing over the Black Hills blasts the peonies and the dust spirals up and up, brown steam from the deadland.

(Spotlight out.)

TED: The dream book says that if you put four dots in a square, the pattern foretells the future. "If a princess sleeps on a pea, she will dream of the man she is to marry."

NELL: (Moving slowly towards living room, front, a spotlight on her face. Lights gradually dim on lawn and living room areas.) Nina was always the little princess. Her hair hung down almost to the middle of her back. But, when mother was in the hospital, I had to stop school, right in my senior year, to take care of Dad and Grandmother. Nina wouldn't do a thing. Just dress up in her pretty party dresses and play she was the princess in front of the long pier glass in the hall.

MRS. BEERS: (Sing-song) The girls are always fighting. I'm sure I don't know why. The minister says it's growing up but sometimes I think I'll lose my mind.

(NELL crosses living room at front. Lights of TIME PAST up on the stairway and FANNY'S room.)

NELL: And, of course, Grandmother wasn't any help at all. She slept all day. I remember the day she first came back from Chicago. She had a feather boa which she wrapped around her neck and Nina and I thought it was a real snake. -- I think the only thing Grandma ever liked was corn fritters. Nina was posing in front of the pier glass and I was in the kitchen making corn fritters.

(Transition music and spotlight out.)

FANNY: (Sitting bolt upright in bed, tapping her cane peremptorily on the floor.) Nellie!

NELL: (Running to the base of the stairway and yelling upstairs) What do you want, Grandmother?

FANNY: (Face turned to the door) Ain't your mother home yet, Nellie?

NELL: You know she's in the hospital, Grandma.

FANNY: Well, I don't see how she expects things to get done around here if she says in the hospital a whole month.

NELL: It was a very serious operation. You know that, Grandma.

FANNY: (To herself, but loudly) That's what she says. You couldn't never believe a word that Jenny said. -- And my own daughter.

NELL: Is that all you wanted, Grandma?

FANNY: I thought maybe we could have some corn fritters for supper. They ain't hard to make, Nellie, and I get sort of a hankering after them.

NELL: We just had them last night, Grandma.

FANNY: Well, if you don't care about your old Grandma.

NELL: All right, Grandmother, I'll make some for you.

FANNY: (To herself) That's very kind of you. (Voice raised) -- I hope Nina ain't out playing. It's a breeder.

NELL: What, Grandma?

FANNY: It's a breeder. Gonna blow up a cyclone, maybe. You can see them black clouds hangin' over the courthouse.

(Transition music under. Lights of TIME PAST begin fade. Lights of TIME PRESENT up slowly in living room)

NELL: Yes, Grandma. -- Why don't you read your dreambook? Or maybe that nice book with all the pictures about the Johnstown Flood?

FANNY: Remember them fritters.

(FANNY sighs and closes her eyes. Transition music and lights of TIME PAST out. Lights of TIME PRESENT up slowly in living room.)

TED: (To NELL) Donald thinks they were real rats in her hair.

NELL: (Laughing) No, they weren't real rats, Donald. You know better than that. They were snarls. In the last two years she never combed her hair.

DONALD: Why didn't Grandma comb it for her?

NELL: She didn't like having her hair combed. You know what a tartar she was.

TED: Is Aunt Nina going to stay for supper?

NELL: Why of course! --And you two behave yourselves! (To Ted) And don't drink five glasses of water with your meal. You don't have to wash every mouthful down.

TED: Do we have to chew every mouthful thirty times?

NELL: Now, we aren't here very often, and you know it makes your Grandfather happy.

DONALD: (Sing-song) Every day in every way I am growing better and better.

TED: But supposing he got it in his head that we had to chew every mouthful a hundred times? --Why we'd be at the table just ever and ever.

NELL: I said behave yourself. It's not a hundred. It's only thirty. --Where on earth is your father?

TED: He went down to pick up Grandpa at the drug store. --And to buy some shredded wheat. Grandpa said there wasn't going to be enough for breakfast. --Are we going to have corn fritters for supper?

NELL: What ever put that notion in your head? That's only on special days. --When there's corn left over.

DONALD: Tell us about how when you were in high school you had to cook for Great-grandma and she made you cook corn fritters for every meal.

NELL: No, there isn't time now. --When we get home and it's a rainy day and we've run out of stories.

(NELL exits through the dining room.)

TED: Where did you put the Orphan Annie code pin?

DONALD: Grandma put it up on the mantle. Behind the clock. She said you were wasting too much paper.

TED: (Standing on tiptoe to reach behind the clock.) It's almost time.

(The Atwater-Kent radio on the bookcase suddenly breaks forth in song.)

RADIO: "Who's that little chatterbox, the one with pretty auburn locks, who can it be, but Little Orphan Annie?"

(The boys gather in raptures. Ted finds a piece of blue notepaper in a drawer and a pencil stub)

The secret message for today, boys and girls, is --- get your pencils ready! ---DSMFU DSBRD SMMOR. Once more, for you slowpokes: DSMFU DSBRD SMMOR. --Now as the scene opens Annie is .....

(RADIO fades.)

DONALD: What does it say?

TED: Hold your horses. It takes a while. It says: "Sandy saves Annie."

DONALD: In the secret passage?

TED: That's where she is.

(Pause. TED is doing elaborate computations with the code pin.)

DONALD: What are you writing now?

TED: None of your business.

DONALD: I want to see it.

TED: Oh, go way!

DONALD: (Snatching the notepaper out of his hand.) Nyah!.. Nyah!.. Nyah!... I got your old paper!

TED: (Running after him) Give it back. It's secret.

DONALD: (Running up the stairs and holding off TED with some well placed kicks. Reading the note with difficulty.) JPMRDYU OD YJR...

TED: You think you're so smart! What does it say?

DONALD: (Obviously shamming.) It says... It says you're a fort!

NELL: (Entering quickly from dining room.) Can't I leave you two hyenas alone for even a minute? Now what's going on in here?

TED: (Pouting.) He stole my secret message.

NELL: All right, Donald, give him back his secret message. This is no way to behave on the day of a funeral. --You know how upset your Grandmother is and what a terrible headache she's had all day.

DONALD: What did she look like when she was dead?

NELL: Well, she looked... Well, just like she always looked.

TED: Did they bury her with her glasses on?

NELL: Well, now I don't know. Besides, what difference does it make?

DONALD: And did they put her pistol in beside her?

NELL: What pistol?

DONALD: The one the man gave her and it had real blood on the handle.

NELL: Oh, Donald! Are you making up stories again?

DONALD: Ask Ted!

NELL: I don't have to ask Ted. Your great-grandmother was just a plain old woman. What would she do with a pistol?

DONALD: Kill people?

NELL: Now you just put those ideas out of your head. And play quietly.

NINA: (In a high, wavering soprano from kitchen, offstage.) "Ah!...Ah!...Ah! Les filles de Cadix aiment assez cola..."

MRS BEERS: (Also offstage kitchen.) Nellie, when you come in, do you want to bring me the compoter off the chiffonier?

NELL: (Raising her voice.) Yes, mother, just a minute. (Lower, to the boys.) You'd think Nina could walk into the dining room but I suppose she's too busy telling mother about her contacts in Chicago. --Now you two behave your-

selves. If there's anymore fighting, you'll both go to bed without your supper.

(Nell exits through dining room.)

DONALD: There was too a pistol!

TED: Did I show you the secret hiding place I found?

DONALD: Where?

TED: (Kneeling in front of fireplace and lifting up a tile.) See!

DONALD: It's just a loose tile.

TED: But you can hide messages under it. ...And that's where I'm going to put this one.

DONALD: (Taunting.) I'll take it out and burn it.

TED: (Threatening.) You do!... (Dreamily.) And hundreds and hundreds of years from now when they tear down this house they'll find my message. ..And they'll have to have a Little Orphan Annie pin to decode it.

DONALD: Maybe they'll find the pistol, too.

TED: (Confidentially.) I bet Grandma knows where it is. I bet she hid it when Great-grandma died.

NINA: (Entering from kitchen, through dining room, singing.) "...Di-tes moi, voisin, si j'ai bon-ne mine. Et si ma bas..." --Well, what are my favoritest little nephews doing this bright afternoon?

DONALD: We're hiding secret messages.

NINA: (Coyly.) Like the Easter bunny hides his eggs, hippety-hoppety?

TED: (Stolidly.) Not like the Easter bunny.

NINA: (Chucking him under the chin.) You're such a sour little man. --And not one bit pretty. Now, Donald there favors the Beers'. I'll bet he sets all the girls' hearts fluttering when he grows up.

(NINA seats herself on davenport, down right.)

DONALD: (Seating himself on the floor nearby.) What are contacts, Aunt Nina?

NINA: Why, they're people you know, dear. People who are fond of you and can help you out. --Have you seen my purse, Ted?

TED: Momma put it up on the stairs. She said you were always leaving your things draped all over the house.

NINA: Your momma said that? Well, I suppose Nellie's right. --I think your mother's just an awful old fuss-budget, don't you? Ted, be a sweet boy and run and bring your poor, old Aunt Nina her purse. There's some medicine in it she's got to take.

(TED goes to the bend in the stairway.)

DONALD: Is it paregoric?

NINA: No, dear. It's just a little stimulant. Your poor auntie has to take it every now and then. --For her heart.

(TED returns with the purse.)

That's a dear, sweet boy. --I should think you boys would have on your best clothes today.

TED: We have got our best clothes on.

DONALD: Momma says we're very poor but that there are lots of orphans in Armenia who are poorer than we are and she's going to send them our oatmeal if we don't eat every bit of it in the morning.

TED: It's the gravel and the banks closing.

NINA: Gravel?

(NINA opens the bottle, takes a quick, lady-like sip, replaces it in her purse.)

TED: (Reciting.) Daddy was supposed to be paid fifty-nine cents a yard but he only got paid four cents on account of the depression.

NINA: Of course, dear. Everybody's poor. --You see this awful old fox piece? Max has promised for three years now to get me a new one. I think a little fur makes all the difference.

TED: You have to kill the foxes. Dead.

NINA: Well, of course, dear. You wouldn't want them around your neck snapping.

TED: I wouldn't want them around my neck at all. (Chin shaking a little.) And they kill the momma fox, and Reddy Fox and Silvertail are all alone in the nest, and it's winter without any food.

NINA: All right, dear. Don't be so sensitive. --Really, I have two little girls just your ages at home and they don't cry about foxes.

TED: They're probably just like you. They don't care!

NINA: All right, dear, all right. Aunt Nina won't get a new fur piece. --But is it all right if she keeps the one she's got? You wouldn't want your pretty Aunt Nina to look just like any old washerwoman? You want her to be pretty, don't you?

(MR. BEERS AND MR. ALMOND enter living room, up right.)

MR. BEERS: ...And if they think that old Roosevelt...

(TED and DONALD run to the doorway to greet him.)

Well, how are my little men this evening? I brought you each a present. (MR. BEERS reaches in his pocket.) But first you have to answer a riddle: If a hen and a half lays an egg and a half in a day and a half, how many eggs would six hens lay in seven days?

TED: I'm not doing division yet and Donald's just starting substraction.

MR. BEERS: Is that so, Ted? --Well, you'll be a man before your mother is, yet!

TED: My mother won't ever be a man.

MR. BEERS: (Winking at MR. ALMOND.) A pretty smart boy you've got there, Henry, I'll bet he runs his old man out of the contracting business.

(MR. BEERS reaches in his pocket and gives each of the boys a shiny penny.)

Now what do you say?

TED: Thank you very much, Grandpa.

DONALD: I thought maybe it was going to be a quarter.

MR. ALMOND: The little American capitalist.

MR. BEERS: You can have a quarter tomorrow after you mow the lawn.

NINA: I do hope, Henry, you're not bringing the children up with all those strange Canadian ideas of yours.

MR. ALMOND: I don't think it's strange not to think of money all the time. Donald, thank your grandfather properly.

DONALD: Thank you for the penny, Grandpa.

NINA: I should guess from the looks of those corduroy knickers, you might just think of money a little more often.

MR. ALMOND: Still at it, eh, Nina? (Starting towards the stairs.) Where's Nell? Upstairs?

NINA: Oh, she's in the kitchen with mother ... doing something completely improbable with hamburg. --When I dropped through Chicago, Johnny Macklin took me to the North Shore Club and we had the most delightful dinner. Lobster.

MR. BEERS: (Seats himself.) Little Johnny Macklin? Why I remember when he wasn't any bigger than knee-high to a grasshopper.

NINA: He's doing just extremely well. I think he's personnel manager for a whole section.

MR. BEERS: I thought he was in Nell's high school class.

NINA: Well, of course he was. But I heard he was living in Chicago so of course I had to look him up on the way through. They're building an enormous home up by Evanston. --You haven't told me how much you liked my dress, Henry. I bought it especially for the funeral.

MR. ALMOND: Uh...nice. I never notice women's clothes.

NINA: But you always had quite an eye for the ladies, if I remember.

MR. ALMOND: The pretty ladies, Nina. Only the pretty ones.

NINA: Do you remember, Dad, how shocked we all were when Nell brought Henry home that first time? --Well, she'd written she'd met this nice Canadian boy who was working for

the Highway Department up in Lansing and that he was awfully serious about her. Well, we just thought Nell was going to teach school all her life. And then you came down. I'll never forget that funny little tweed cap. --And you were handsome.

MR. ALMOND: The Irish are always handsome. Just not very intelligent.

NINA: And, when you were introduced to Mother, you made a little bow and said: "I've heard so much about you, Mrs. Beers, and my expectations have not been cheated even a little." --And Mother said, "I understand you were a Canadian farmer." --And you said, "Yes, madame, if you will look closely you may still see the dirt under my fingernails." --My, she hated you!

MR. ALMOND: A feeling which has not softened with the years.

MR. BEERS: Now, Henry, don't judge Jenny too harshly. It's just that she'd always been so dependent on Nell. She worried about her. --And you have got a tart tongue.

TED: (Hanging over MR. ALMOND's chair.) Did you know, Daddy, that Sandy is going to save Little Orphan Annie?

MR. ALMOND: Well, I never doubted it for a minute. --What did you boys do while we were at the funeral?

DONALD: We looked for bears in the basement.

NINA: Oh, those awful, steep stairs! I'd be afraid to go down there.

MR. ALMOND: And did you find any?

DONALD: (Rising, eyes wide.) We saw the tail of one going out the window.

MR. ALMOND: A big, brown, fuzzy tail?

DONALD: Uh-huh.

MR. ALMOND: With little, pink, polka dots on it?

DONALD: It was kind of dark, but I think so.

MR. ALMOND: That was Oswald. --Your great-grandmother's pet bear.

NINA: Henry! You shouldn't tell the children stories like that. They'll have nightmares.

MR. ALMOND: They have nightmares anyway. --And, if I were having a nightmare, I know I'd much rather dream about Oswald than about ... well, about Great-grandmother.

NINA: You're horrid! (To TED and DONALD, confidentially.) Isn't he horrid, boys?

DONALD: I love him. --Did you get the Shredded Wheat, Grandpa?

MR. BEERS: Yes-siree-bob. Had Shredded Wheat for breakfast every morning since 1898. Visited the Shredded Wheat factory on a business trip to Buffalo. I was converted, you might say.

TED: Don't you ever get tired of Shredded Wheat, Grandpa?

MR. ALMOND: (Laughing.) You know, I was thinking today when they were lowering Fanny into the ground about my first conversation with her.

NINA: A very stimulating conversation I'm sure.

MR. ALMOND: She was sitting right in the chair there.

MR. BEERS: She sat there for nearly thirty years. --Every day, all day.

MR. ALMOND: (Tells the following with animation, vigor and charm.) And Nell introduced us. She said, "Grandmother, I'd like you to meet Henry." Well, Fanny cackled like she always did and said, "I hear you're a farm boy --- always liked farm boys myself." --Well, then I looked down and noticed she had about nine inches of her leg showing there. Well, you know, back in 1922 you just didn't expect that sort of thing. So I said, "A mighty nice leg you've got there, Grandma! --I thought she was going to die laughing. She slapped her knee, and cackled, and she said, "You know Henry, there's <u>many</u> a man who's told me that!"

NINA: (Disapprovingly.) You never knew what Grandmother was going to say. I know I always used to hate to bring a new boy home. --What did Nell say?

MR. ALMOND: She just said, "Oh, Grandmother," ... like she'd say. But I thought of that today.

MR. BEERS: (Taking his handkerchief from his back pocket; blowing his nose.) Fanny was always a great trial. Nearly thirty years. I had my own mother for about ten, too. How those old girls did squabble!

MR. ALMOND: (Still story-telling.) I remember one day I dropped through the store and you were nearly at your wit's end. I don't think I ever heard you say a swear word before that. "Henry," you said, "if those old girls don't quit fighting, I'm going to rise up and, using both feet, kick 'em both in the ass at the same time."

NINA: Dad! You didn't!

MR. ALMOND: Don't let the D.A.R. hear about that, Nina.

MR. BEERS: My mother was a proud woman. She just wouldn't have a thing to do with Fanny. Called her "a lazy slut" once.

NINA: (Righteously.) I don't think you should use such words in front of the children.

MR. ALMOND: They might as well learn them at home. At least they'll pronounce them correctly.

MRS. BEERS: (Entering the dining room.) Where did you put the crumb-scraper, Nina?

NINA: It's on the chiffonier. Right behind the orange bowl.

MRS. BEERS: All right, dear, I've found it. --Why don't you come help me set the table?

NINA: (Shrugs, rises.) Duty calls.

(NINA exits to dimly lighted dining room and busies herself about the table with MRS. BEERS.)

MR. ALMOND: Well, what do you say, Dad, --- shall we go out in the yard and try some practice shots? There's still a little light. Donald, get the golf clubs, will you?

(DONALD goes up stage, by stairs, and picks up bag of golf clubs. MR. ALMOND, MR. BEERS, and DONALD exit left.)

Come on, Ted. Forget about your books and get a little fresh air.

(TED rises but tucks the book of fairy tales under his arm. The men exit up left. Simultaneously, NINA exits to kitchen. Transition music to TIME PAST under as MRS. BEERS enters living room. She

walks to davenport and straightens the pillows as lights fade to TIME PAST. Music out as she goes to stairway and calls.)

MRS. BEERS: Mother? --Are you asleep? (There is no answer. She passes her hand over her forehead, straightens her back, then crosses to rocker and sits. Calling to the dining room.) Nell? --come in here a minute, dear.

(NELL enters from the dining room. She plays the following scene in the manner of a young girl.)

Play something for me on the piano, dear. --But not too loud because your grandmother's asleep. Play the song about the willows. I think that's just awfully pretty. It makes me think of when I was a little girl like you.

(NELL sits down at the piano and plays "The Willow Song" arranged as a children's piece. She is not an accomplished pianist.)

That's just awfully pretty, dear! But don't play the bass so loud. You don't want to wake your grandmother.

(NELL continues playing, softly, under the following.)

--I remember the trees ... the willows hung down all around the lake. Why, land sakes, Nell, I don't imagine I was much older than three years old! There wasn't anyone to play with. Just a summer day and the willows like long, green hair.

NELL: (Seizing the excuse to talk, turning on the piano stool.) Where was that, Mamma?

MRS. BEERS: Well, I don't rightly know, Nell. --I just remember the willows and being so lonely. I suppose it was because there weren't any other children to play with.

NELL: But what about Uncle Ted? You could have played with him.

MRS. BEERS: Why, your Uncle Ted's nearly ten years younger than I am. He wasn't born until '83.

NELL: How long is Grandma going to stay with us?

MRS. BEERS: I don't know ... I don't know. I guess only the good Lord knows that.

NELL: --And he isn't telling.

MRS. BEERS: Why, that's blasphemy, Nell! I don't want to hear you talking like that ever again!

NELL: I'm sorry. I didn't mean anything. --Mamma, do you remember when I was only about six and Grandma came to visit us and how much younger she looked?

MRS. BEERS: Why, of course I remember! That's only six years ago. That's the summer both you and Nina broke your arms falling out of the apple tree.

NELL: And you had a sunstroke right after Grandma came.

MRS. BEERS: Well, it was really more overwork.

NELL: I remember her hair was bright red.

MRS. BEERS: Why, Nellie Beers, it was no such thing! It was gray, just like it is now.

NELL: But I was sure, Mamma, ---and her cheeks were all rosy and she smelled just like a whole lilac bush.

MRS. BEERS: You certainly have an imagination! --Now you try that piece over again. --And watch your fingering.

(NELL recommences. NINA comes slowly down the stairs.)

NINA: (Singing with the tune.) "...And the willows whisper come play with me, come stay with me and be my love!" --Mamma, look! (NINA pirouettes.) I'm all clean and I'm wearing my new dress.

MRS. BEERS: You go right back upstairs, young lady, and take that off!

NINA: (Coming into the room, laughing, and holding out her skirt.) No! I like my pretty dress. I'm the prettiest girl in the whole State of Michigan.

NELL: (Stopping her playing, screaming.) Mamma! She's got on my new silk stockings! The ones Daddy bought me for my birthday!

NINA: Nellie's mad and I'm glad...

MRS. BEERS: Now you stop that infernal rhyme! --She's not hurting your stockings, Nell, and I'm sure she'll be very careful with them. --You just go right on with your practicing.

(NELL reluctantly begins again. MRS. BEERS speaks to NINA.)

Come here, dear. If you're going to be the prettiest girl in the whole State of Michigan, you shouldn't let your hair fall down over your eyes like an old sheep dog. (Pushing NINA'S hair out of her eyes.) --There!

NELL: Mamma, I want her to take off my stockings. They're the only nice stockings I've got.

MRS. BEERS: She's not hurting the stockings. She's just going to sit there quietly and read her lesson for tomorrow.

NELL: I don't think it's fair!

NINA: (Pulling up the footstool, seating herself.) Mamma, what happens down at the train station?

(NELL is making deliberate and very loud mistakes at the piano.)

MRS. BEERS: Why, that's a stupid question. The trains come in and people get on and get off.

NINA: That isn't what I mean. What really happens? --Grandma says it's very exciting.

MRS. BEERS: Oh? --Well, you know, dear, Grandma has some strange notions. Maybe it was because her husband was a railroad man.

NINA: Did he work on the railroad?

MRS. BEERS: He was a telegrapher.

NINA: Is he drunk now?

MRS. BEERS: I'm sure I don't know. But anyway you know we don't talk about him. --Nellie! You stop that infernal racket and play that piece correctly.

NELL: (Turning, stopping playing.) I liked Grandfather. He bought me a whole bag of jelly beans and we walked all the way down Center Street. I was sort of frightened, though, of all those men with whiskers he knew.

MRS. BEERS: You just put it out of your mind. --Nellie, is it that you can't play that piece or were you making those mistakes deliberately? --Here, let me play it for you.

(NELL slides off the stool and MRS. BEERS sits.)

It's very simple. --Like this (MRS. BEERS plays well.)

NELL: Mamma, did you learn to play in the music store?

MRS. BEERS: No dear. I just worked there.

NELL: When I'm in high school can I play in the music store?

MRS. BEERS: I hope you don't have to, dear. Your father's drugstore is doing very nicely and I don't think there'll be any need to.

NINA: Did you have to?

MRS. BEERS: It was honest work. Your grandmother was in Chicago and ... well, the big city wasn't any place for a high school girl.

NINA: Well, I think it was just horrible. Princesses don't work in music stores pounding the piano all day long. ---And I'm a princess.

(There is a loud banging on the floor of the upper level as FANNY wakes and knocks with her cane.)

MRS. BEERS: (To NINA.) You run right up there quick and see what your grandmother wants, Nina. --Hurry, before the whole ceiling falls down.

(NINA rises, goes to stairway.)

NELL: --And take off my good stockings while you're up there!

(NINA sticks out her tongue at NELL as she runs up the stairs. Lights fade in the living room; fade up, still TIME PAST, in FANNY's room. characters in living room freeze in their positions.)

NINA: (Entering FANNY's room shyly.) What is it, Grandma?

FANNY: (Sitting up in bed, folding her arms tight over her abdomen.) Oh, Nina, I've got the wind just awful. I'm all bloated up like a hop-toad.

NINA: It's all those corn fritters you ate for supper, Grandma.

FANNY: Well, I don't think that's hardly possible. They ain't never disagreed with me afore. (Grimacing terribly.) --But, oh, them girdle pains! I got them girdle pains just something awful.

NINA: (Pulling the chair to FANNY's bedside.) I could read to you Grandma.

FANNY: Why, that'd be right sweet of you, Nina.

NINA: Do you want me to read you about the Johnstown flood?

FANNY: Well, just a mite. I don't seem to be able to keep my mind on things these days. --Was that Nell pounding on the pi-ano down there?

NINA: Yes, Grandma, I don't think she's ever going to play.

FANNY: She sure don't take after her mother. Why Jenny could play almost anything before she was ten. She used to sit right up to that melodian and bang out the Princess Irene Galop like she'd made it up herself. --Never cared for that heavy music myself. I liked them mechanical pi-anos. --Music the whole livelong day!

NINA: (Taking a heavy, olive-bound book from the top of the commode; opening it.) Oh'. --I think that's the most gruesome picture! All those poor women and children going over the dam. --Did they really wear dresses like that, Grandma, with those big bumps in the back?

FANNY: Why, they sure did, Nina. --And the gentlemen certainly appreciated the way a lady waled in them. --Oh, them blasted girdle pains!

(She sits up farther in bed and suddenly belches loudly.)

'Scuse me, Nina. But there ain't nothin' a body can do about the wind.

NINA: What was it like in Chicago? Tell me about Chicago during the Exposition.

FANNY: (Leaning back, reminiscing with half-closed eyes. Music can be heard from a far distance; a mechanical piano playing a ragtime variation of "Les Filles de Cadix.) My that was a lively town. Why, the train stations were just so clogged you couldn't hardly plow your way through them. And all them people from all over the world getting on and off them trains. Why, you'd see niggers with turbans... from Timbuctoo...big, black men all dressed in watered silk...and with a ruby as big as a goose's egg right in the center of the turban. --And farm boys from out west with their high boots with the colored tops and their spurs jingling...and them eastern fellows...they always looked so refined with their black suits---

(Music out.)

NINA: --But what about the ladies? Were there any princesses?

FANNY: Well, I don't rightly know about that. But there sure were a lot of mighty attractive ladies. --You know, Nina, they smoke cigarettes right out in the open there and use rouge on their cheeks. --I think a little rouge ain't sinful myself.

NINA: Grandma!

FANNY: Well, it's true, Nina. We ain't all been born with peaches and cream complexions.

NINA: But mamma says only...only <u>bad</u> women wear rouge. Like Mrs. Carpenter.

FANNY: There's many a tale I could tell you about Abby Carpenter! But bygones is bygones, I always say. --Besides, she hooked old Jim Carpenter and he's president of the bank.

NINA: But mamma says people only go to see her because he's president of the bank, and the ladies in the sewing circle at the Methodist Church don't even speak to her on the street.

FANNY: (Cackling.) Well, I don't suppose that upsets old Abby none. She always had better things to do with her time than sew up patchwork quilts.

NINA: --And she dies her hair bright red.

FANNY: I always thought it was mighty attractive myself. Besides, her ordinary hair was just dishwater. --I used to

be a blonde myself. In fact, Nina, honey, you're the spittin' image of me when I was a little girl.

NINA: Really, Grandma? --Were you a princess? Everybody says I look just like a little princess.

FANNY: And so you do, honey! ---The most important thing a girl can have is good looks. A girl without good looks ...well, you can be mighty sure them fellers ain't goin'ta be knockin' on her door with candy and roses.

NINA: (Confidentially.) Sometimes I feel awful sorry for Nell. When she grows up she won't have any boy-friends at all.

FANNY: She favors her father. --The Beers' were always a mighty "humly" lot..."humly" enough to eat snakes. --But you ain't readin' me much about the Johnstown flood.

NINA: If your stomach's better, maybe you'd just better lie back and try and get some sleep.

FANNY: What time is it by the clock?

NINA: It's nearly nine o'clock, Grandma, and you know you always like to be in bed by nine.

FANNY: I do?

NINA: That's what mamma says.

FANNY: Well, if that's what Jenny says, I suppose it's right. Jenny always knew what she wanted... (FANNY slides down in bed, head turned towards audience.) ...and she didn't want none of her poor, old mother.

NINA: (Rising.) Try and get some sleep, Grandma. In just a little while it'll be daylight and then you can come downstairs and sit in your rocker and watch the people going by the house. You know how you adore to watch the people.

FANNY: (Closing her eyes.) There just ain't many to watch out on this end of town. I keep telling Jenny she ought to move down by Center Street where things is a little more lively. Somethin' to watch out of a window there.

NINA: Now Grandmother, you know that <u>nobody</u> lives on Center Street but a lot of old drunks.

FANNY: Somethin' to watch. --An old lady's gotta have somethin' to watch. Why, in Chicago you could hear them train whistles night and day...

NINA: You just go to sleep, Grandma. I'll turn out the light.

(FANNY closes her eyes. The lights on the upper stage go down as NINA exits to the living room. Lights, still TIME PAST, gradually up in living room. Music, "The Willow Song" arranged as a march, under. MRS. BEERS walks to nearby table where she picks up her feathered, cloche hat and places it square on her head. If scrim is used stage left, fade in the image of an American flag. MRS. BEERS moves a chair, down front in living room, so she is facing audience. NELL and NINA stand behind her.)

MRS. BEERS: (Voice strident, clubwomanish.) Before I begin, ladies and gentlemen, I want you all to know that I consider it the highest honor that you have chosen me, the president of your local Red Cross chapter, to conduct these memorial services in honor of our soldiers.

(Background music out.)

It's nice to know that, on this second anniversary of the ending of the Great War, you haven't forgotten the great debt we owe to the boys of Chickasee County for all they did over there.

(A pleased smile; a pause for imaginary applause.)

--Thank you, thank you. When I think of all the bandages we rolled...and all the prayers we said...I know that, in your hearts, you share with me the pride of a job well done and that you say with me..."Forward America!" (MRS. BEERS pauses.) Thank you. (Gesturing.) I'm sure that all of you know my two daughters who are up on the stage with me but, just in case you don't, the pretty young lady on my right is Nina...and the scholarly girl on my left is my daughter, Nell, my gift to the school system of our capital city, Lansing. --Now you make a curtsey, girls.

(NELL nods shyly, obviously embarrassed, but NINA blows a kiss to the audience and makes an elaborate curtsey.)

Nell is teaching second grade and she's more at home with children than with a great big audience like this. The

girls are going to sing a little song for you. --Or, rather, Nina's going to sing a song for you. She's been studying singing down at Ann Arbor...and Nellie will accompany her. --All right, girls.

(A spotlight on the piano area. NINA arranges her fox furs as NELL plays the introductory music. NINA's voice, during the following, should be adequate for an amateur, but the actress playing the part should subtly parody all the home-grown sopranos of the period.)

NINA: (Singing "Les Filles de Cadix".) "Nour venions de voir le taureau...(A coy gesture, as if she were making the horns of the bull.) "...Trois garcons, fillettes; sur la pelouse il faisait beau... (Assuming the classic stance of a spanish dancer with castanets.) "...Et nous dansions un bolero au son des castagnetts. Dites moi, voisin... (Smiling to an imaginary lover.) "...Si j'ai bonne mine, et si ma basquine... (Lifting her skirt.)"...Va bien ce matin. Vous me trouvez la taille fine?... (Squeezing her waist to make it smaller.) "...Vous me trouvez la taille fine?... (Then giving the cadenzas and trills her all.) "...Ah!...Ah!...Ah!...Ah!... Les filles de Cadix aiment assez cela!... (At the conclusion, NINA throws back her head, an imaginary rose between her teeth. To imaginary applause, she curtseys and blows kisses.)

MRS. BEERS: That was wonderful, Nina. I bet you don't get heartfelt applause like that when you sing down in Ann Arbor, do you, dear?

(NINA blows a few more kisses. NELL suddenly rises from the piano, throws an arm over eyes in a gesture of complete embarrassment, and runs off right exit. NINA, still smiling, exits through dining room.

--And now, while the ushers are passing out the programs for the memorial services and the mothers -- Blue Star... (She gestures.)...to my right and Gold Star to this place of honor on my left -- while our honored mothers are making their way to the stage, I will play you all a piece of music I have composed 'specially for this occasion.. I call it "The March of Peace."

(She goes to the piano and plays "The Willow Song" arranged as a march. Lights of TIME PAST fade in living room. Lights of TIME PRESENT up on lawn area. TED is sitting, reading his book. MR. ALMOND

is holding a golf club and he and DONALD are watching with interest as MR. BEERS putts. MRS. BEERS continues playing in dark living room, but softly under.)

DONALD: Good one, Grandpa!

MR. BEERS: There's Jenny playing "The March of Peace" again. --She always plays it when her nerves are bad. (MR. BEERS picks up ball.)

MR. ALMOND: (Putting.) A very soothing piece of music.

MR. BEERS: (Blowing his nose.) Oh, it's not that. Well I guess it's because it reminds her of the proudest moment of her life. The day they chose her to conduct the memorial services for the Chickasee County veterans. Had both her daughters up there on the stage with her. Yes, sir, a mighty proud day. Whenever she gets feeling low, she'll sit down and dash off a few bars of it. --I never thought it was much of a piece of music myself. --Well, you know women.

(Music out. MRS. BEERS rises in darkened living room and exits through dining room.)

MR. ALMOND: My father used to say, "Let 'em work away."

TED: (Looking up from his book.) Was that the night Momma cried all night?

MR. BEERS: Well, I do remember she was upset about something.

TED: She always says Aunt Nina embarrassed her so much she cried all night.

MR. BEERS: I think you've got your story wrong there, my little man. I don't see how she could have embarrassed Nell. Nina looked like an angel up there...a real princess. (Handing TED the putter.) Here, you try putting this one.

TED: I don't like to play games.

DONALD: Let me! (Pushing in front of TED and jerking the club from MR. BEER's hand.) I'm the best athlete in the whole block, Grandpa.

MR. ALMOND: That's right, Donald, shove right in there! If you can hit your old grandfather in the eye, so much the better. That's the American way.

DONALD: (Not apologetic.) I just want to show you how well I can play.

MR. ALMOND: Just try to control your exuberant spirits, my boy!

(DONALD begins knocking the ball about the lawn area.)

MR. BEERS: I think you're a little hard on the lad, Henry.

MR. ALMOND: (Leaning on his club.) I was never meant to be a father. My curse is to have these two Yahoos. One of them who's bound he's going to beat the whole world every day, kick, scratch, bite, or kill if necessary,...and the other who's completely above it. What do you do with a boy who writes secret code letters to himself and, when he isn't doing that, has his nose in some damn book?

(TED is reading, paying no attention.)

MR. BEERS: You should make him play.

MR. ALMOND: Make him! Just how in hell do you <u>make</u> a child play? Every morning last winter Nell'd bundle <u>him</u> up and button up his leggings and push him out of the house. But did he play? He sat on the damn stoop, like a little Christian martyr, slowly turning blue in the face. You can't let one of your own children freeze to death on your own front porch.

MR. BEERS: Well, to tell you the truth, Henry, I think it's your own fault. --Watch out, Donald! You'll knock the ball down the grate in the curb there! --I've heard you. You can't deny it. Little things like, "Americans think sports are everything." and "Americans don't ever talk about anything but money." A boy hears a certain amount of that from his father and he'll begin believing he's right.

MR. ALMOND: Well, damnit, I <u>am</u> right! (MR. ALMOND knocks his club against the ground.) There're a lot of things wrong with this country. We're all starving to death right now. --And all these mealy-mouths screaming, "Prosperity is just around the corner," and "Let's have another cup of coffee." Just what in hell are we supposed to buy that cup of coffee with, and what damn corner?

MR. BEERS: Now, I know there're a lot of things wrong. All I'm saying is that you shouldn't be always singing "The Maple-leaf Forever" in front of the boys. They're going to have to grow up in this country and get along with the people in it.

MR. ALMOND: You know, I keep thinking about Fanny...your wife's mother, there. Now there was an American. Sat on her rear end in your house for more than thirty years, sure that somebody was going to take care of her. Thinking about that damn fair in Chicago. Like a big canker; a big sloppy spider! And you know it, damnit, your wife is just as simple minded about things, and -- and Nina, --God help us! going to turn the whole of South Dakota into a great big Chicago fair. Sometimes I even wonder about Nell. --I can't explain it. It's just a way of thinking, of being. It's like no other place in the world. It's American. The stars and stripes forever.

MR. BEERS: Now, you just control yourself, Henry, or that ulcer'll start acting up again, and you'll be back on the milk diet.

MR. ALMOND: It's acting up now. You know, Dad, I hate coming here. I'm sorry, but I hate like hell to come visit you. Your wife's always on my tail, "Why aren't you providing for my Nellie? ...Are the children getting decent food?...How's the business going?" ...when she knows damn well the business is shot to hell. "Are the boys going to church regularly?" --As if everything in the world could be fixed up by regular meals and regular church. --And Nell changes when she gets here. Gets just like her mother. Your wife's a fine woman, Dad, but I wish to hell she'd keep her damn mouth shut for awhile.

MR. BEERS: (Taking out his handkerchief and blowing his nose loudly.) You all finished now? Got it off your mind?

MR. ALMOND: (First contrite; then jokingly.) Yes. I'm sorry, Dad. --I start spewing off to Nell and she begins to cry and then the boys begin to cry and that just makes me madder and pretty soon you'd think, from the bawling and screaming coming out of the house, that I had them all hanging up by their thumbs. --Donald, gather up the clubs. It must be nearly supper time. --And Ted do your old daddy a favor and close that damn book.

TED: (Closing the book, rising.) Is it all right if I use my secret code pin?

MR. ALMOND: No dammit! Do something constructive.

TED: Like what?

MR. ALMOND: Why don't you climb the apple tree there and fall out of it and break your leg? --Like Donald, like the other boys.

TED: But I'm not like the other boys. I read it in a book.

MR. ALMOND: Just what did you read in a book?

TED: It said I was an in-tro-vert.

MR. ALMOND: (Laughing and throwing his arm about TED shoulder.) Oh, dammit, my boy,...just what in hell am I ever going to do with you?

(Lights fade on lawn area, up on dining room. The men enter the house, up right, and cross to dining room.)

MR. BEERS: (Seating himself at the table.) Ted, Donald, are all the lights turned off in the living room?

DONALD: Yes, Grandpa.

(DONALD and TED pull out their chairs noisily and seat themselves.)

MR. BEERS: That Detroit Edison Company sent me a bill for two dollars and seventy-three cents last month. Imagine that! Two dollars and seventy-three cents. It's the Jews that are ruining this country...along with that man Roosevelt, if you ask me!

NELL: (Entering with a platter of food.) Now, Dad, don't start that.

MR. BEERS: Well, somebody's to blame for this depression. You just listen to Father Coughlin.

NELL: Last time we were here you were screaming about the Catholics.

(MR. ALMOND helps NELL into chair; seats himself.)

MR. BEERS: (Darkly.) Somebody's to blame.

(NINA and MRS. BEERS enter from kitchen.)

NINA: Well, shall I sit beside my sweet little nephews or shall I sit next to you, Henry, ...my favoritest brother-in-law.

(NINA sits next to MR. ALMOND. MRS. BEERS seats herself at head of table.)

--Even though he does have a nasty, nasty tongue and doesn't treat his poor sister-in-law at all nicely.

(Positions now are: MR. BEERS, end of table. Right; NINA, HENRY, and NELL, facing audience, up left center; MRS. BEERS at end of table, near kitchen door, TED and DONALD, backs to audience, down left. During the following scene, MR. BEERS dishes up food and the meal is eaten.)

MR. ALMOND: Some women were made to be beaten.

NINA: Well, I've always told Max that if he ever laid a hand on I'd leave him.

MR. ALMOND: He must have laid a hand on you once or twice - you've got a couple of daughters.

NINA: Oh, Henry! --Did I tell you little Goo-Goo was learning to play the piano? Her teacher says she's just the most talented child she's ever run up against in all her years of piano teaching.

DONALD: Goo-Goo! What's that?

NINA: She's your little cousin, sweet. A regular little princess.

NELL: Oh, No!

NINA: Y ou're just jealous, dear, because you don't have any little girls.

NELL: I always wanted seven boys.

MR. ALMOND: Six will be enough for a hockey team.

TED: I won't play. You'll have to make seven.

MRS. BEERS: Ted! We don't talk about such things. --Particularly at the table.

MR. BEERS: Be sure to chew every mouthful thirty times.

MR. ALMOND: Sex is dirty, eh, Mother?

MRS. BEERS: Well, I should think so! --And in front of the children!

(There is a pause.)

NELL: (Breaking in, rather violently.) Well, I wish somebody had taken the trouble to talk about sex at the table when I was young. I might have had a little knowledge of -- well, life, before I got married.

MRS. BEERS: You know I always tried to do the right thing.

NELL: The right thing! Was it the right thing, when I was sixteen and came to you with questions to say, "Don't worry about it, dear. Babies are just like flowers. They open like beautiful blossoms in God's garden."

NINA: You should have come to me, dear.

NELL: With your gutter knowledge. Always whispering and giggling, you and your high school friends. Like love was something that happened in a dirty privy. --Why, when I think: There I was all alone up in Lansing, in a big city, and thinking that babies were flowers coming from God. Why, anything might have happened to me!

MR. ALMOND: Don't give yourself airs, dear. You may not have known what it was, but you guarded it with your life if I remember correctly.

MRS. BEERS: (Daubing her eyes with her napkin.) I tried to do my best. It wasn't easy. --I had so many things on my mind. And besides I was sure the minister would explain...

NELL: The minister! --Old Mr. Carmichel!

MR. ALMOND: (Winking at MR. BEERS.) Wasn't Mr. Carmichel the one you were telling me about, Dad? --Who had to be turned out because he was peeking up the girls' skirts during choir practice?

NINA: Well, I agree with Mother. This is nothing to discuss in front of children. --You don't pay any attention to all those nasty things your parents are saying, do you, Donald?

DONALD: Uh-uh. I'm going to mow the lawn tomorrow for Grandpa, and he's going to give me a whole quarter.

NINA: Well, I think that's real ambitious. What are you going to do with your quarter?

TED: He isn't going to do <u>anything</u> with it. He's going to save it and tell me I can't have any of it.

MRS. BEERS: Well, I'm glad to see that -- despite all this -- one of your children has the right idea.

TED: You just say that because Donald looks like your side of the family.

MRS. BEERS: Well, I never! --A nine year old talking back to his grandmother like that. Well, I always said you'd turn out just like your father: Mean, sullen, and sarcastic.

MR. ALMOND: (Laughing heartily.) That's telling him, Mother. --You forgot to add "poor."

MRS. BEERS: Well, it's your own fault. If you'd stayed with that nice Mr. Baxter you'd be able to buy your wife -- my Nellie -- a few decent clothes for her back and your children wouldn't be running around looking like ragamuffins and speaking like -- like anarchists.

MR. ALMOND: Anarchists! (Beginning to laugh almost uncontrollably) Remember that, m'boy. At the age of nine you were called an anarchist by your Grandmother. Not every nine year old in this great, wide, wonderful country can say that!

MR. BEERS: All right, all right. --I thought after we got Fanny buried this infernal squawking at the supper table would end.

MRS. BEERS: Really, dear, she <u>was</u> my mother.

MR. BEERS: She was indeed. --Who wants more potatoes? Ted? Donald?

NINA: None for me, thank you. --This hamburger loaf is really delicious, mother.

MRS. BEERS: I just had the butcher mix a little ham in with it. It makes all the difference.

NINA: Well, I wish I could serve something nice and simple like this at home. --But of course Max won't touch hamburger.

NELL: How is Max? You haven't even told us if he's still alive.

NINA: Why just doing awfully well, with all the foreclosures and everything...why, a lawyer is just terribly busy.

MR. ALMOND: Does Max actually put them out on the street? --Or is he the paperwork man?

NINA: You're just jealous, you handsome devil, because my Max is a professional man.

MR. ALMOND: Well, that's a new word for it.

NINA: Of course, he is on the road a lot, and I do get lonesome occasionally.

MR. ALMOND: Well, you can spend your spare time bringing culture to the natives. Is the D.A.R. chapter still running smoothly?

NINA: Why, of course. I had to resign as president, though. Just too many other commitments. (Confidentially.) --I don't suppose I should say anything about it, but well, since it's just family...

NELL: Well, what is it?

NINA: We're grooming Max for president!

MR. BEERS: President!

NINA: Of the American Legion. He's president of the local post now, you know, and the Bishop says that if he plays his cards right...

MRS. BEERS: I don't understand why the Bishop...

NINA: The Episcopal Bishop. I wrote you all about him, mother. I swear you don't read my letters! --Well, I had the Bishop to tea, and we spent the whole afternoon just talking about Max's possibilities. --After he's National President, why then maybe we could run him for Senator.

MR. ALMOND: You and the Bishop?

NINA: Of course not. The Bishop is just a very good friend of mine. He was advising me on what I could do with Max.

NELL: Have you told Max about your plans?

NINA: Well, you know Max. He does like that little town so. And it's going to have to be put to him just right.

MR. BEERS: You couldn't move that man with a load of dynamite. I don't know why you keep dreaming like this, Nina. When you got married, you were going to get Max to set up practice in Chicago, and you were going to spend all day hobnobbing with the bigwigs up on the North Shore. It's a long way from the North Shore to South Dakota.

NINA: (Grandly.) When I'm pouring tea in Washington, you'll all sing a different tune. --I'm sorry I even mentioned it.

NELL: --If you're through eating, boys, why don't you go out in the yard and play?

TED: (Rising.) I'm through now.

NELL: Well, wait until Donald finishes his prunes.

DONALD: I don't like prunes.

NELL: Well, then excuse yourselves, both of you.

TED and DONALD: Excuse us.

(The boys chase through the living room and exit through door, up right. NINA rises, dreamlike, a spotlight on her face. The others continue eating, oblivious of her speaking. Music, "Les Filles de Cadix", under very softly.)

NINA: Prunes and hamburger. Oh dear God, prunes and hanburger... and hamburger and prunes unto the end of time.

(NINA walks towards the living room, the spotlight following her.)

I try to remember when it all started and where it went wrong. How could I have started here and ended up where there are no trees and day after day, the sun only comes up to set. He <u>will</u> be president..but he's never home...and I sit there with the children looking at the sun over all that dead land. In Chicago it's gay. There's always something doing on Michigan Avenue. Even if you don't have very much, you can always find some very clever shops. I think the right underthings are very important -- you can always tell a lady -- and a little bit of fur makes all the difference.

(Lights of TIME PAST up to full in the living room as NINA enters; spotlight out. The dining room gradually blacks out.)

Grandma always said they'd come around with flowers and candy. And they did. Oh, so many of them. And I never liked any of them except the ones I couldn't have. Max was so stupid...so big and stupid...and I used to call him my little St. Bernard. --But he wasn't that. --An ox...a big, black ox. So I sit.

(She walks up right towards fireplace.)

But you can't turn it back because you can't be sure where it went wrong. It couldn't have been wrong from the beginning. Because I was pretty and, even though my voice wasn't top-flight, it was more than adequate...they all used to say that. But I missed it. Some excitement...some shivery excitement like we used to talk about in high school.

(All characters in dark dining room exit left except MR. ALMOND. Transition music to TIME PAST begins as "Les Filles de Cadix" fades. MR. ALMOND enters living room and NINA turns to meet him.)

NINA: (Archly.) Well, Henry! I thought you and Nell'd be out in the swing smooching, or petting, or whatever it is young lovers do these days.

(Transition music out.)

MR. ALMOND: (Seating himself in rocker.) She's out helping your mother with the dishes. --Does it only take a year of marriage before you get so sour? Just a year ago you were gushing all over the place about the delights of love.

NINA: (Pacing about.) Well, of course, one can get tired of anything. Blasé. --But I don't suppose you know any French.

MR. ALMOND: I know what blasé means.

NINA: Well, of course you do, Henry. That's my trouble. I always underestimate people. --Have you and our little Nellie set the wedding date yet?

MR. ALMOND: She seems to think sometime in July.

NINA: How perfectly delightful. --And so like our Nell. The hottest day of summer, I imagine. I can feel the hot stickiness of it all now.

MR. ALMOND: I don't think Nell thinks in those terms.

NINA: Ah, yes. Such naiveté. But she's really rather old to play that role don't you think. I mean after you pass twenty-five there's something just slightly...well, sordid...about being so ignorant, don't you think.

MR. ALMOND: (Bridling, but controlling his temper.) You seem to forget that I'm in love with your sister.

NINA: Are you really? Well, perhaps I just know her too well, --And, besides, well, let's face it, my poor sister isn't exactly a raving beauty.

MR. ALMOND: I think she's very pretty. --And even if she weren't, there are more important things.

NINA: (Posing by the mantle.) Tell me, I'm so curious. --You mean like a pure heart...and charity...and all that slop?

MR. ALMOND: No, that isn't what I meant. --I mean genuineness...something of the sort.

NINA: Well, you do have me there. Nellie is just as genuine as all hell. Like Max, just really genuine.

MR. ALMOND: Max isn't working out? Not the prince on the white charger?

NINA: (Violently.) He's a bore. --And a pig.

MR. ALMOND: Well, that's plain enough.

NINA: (Coyly.) I'm waiting for you to be as honest with me.

MR. ALMOND: (Surprised.) With you? --I've never been anything but honest with you.

NINA: (Walking towards him.) Oh, come now. Don't you find your prospective sister-in-law just a little bit attractive? Most men do.

MR. ALMOND: Well, now that you've asked...no. In fact, to put matters honestly, there's something about you I find just a little bit repulsive.

NINA: They say hate is very near to love. (She is by his chair, bending over his shoulder.) --And really, I have a number of charms which aren't obvious on the surface.

MR. ALMOND: (Annoyed.) You must give a public demonstration some time.

NINA: (Turning.) I think you're just undersexed. That's your trouble! Is that what you see in Nell? --A bird of the same feather.

MR. ALMOND: (Quietly, firmly.) Nina, I'm just here on a visit. I didn't come to seduce the whole family.

NINA: You know you could be very attractive with the right clothes. I suppose it's being Canadian, but you just don't have any flash.

MR. ALMOND: (Rising quickly.) All right, Nina. Just what exactly is on your little mind?

NINA: (Patting her hair) Well, I should think it was rather obvious.

MR. ALMOND: I understand you. (Rising his voice) No, I don't understand. Just what in hell is it in this house with you people? You talk in shocked whispers about all the facts of life and yet, now .... Do you realize what a really outrageous thing you're proposing?

NINA: (Shrugging, smiling) Outrageous? --You are a little boy. Simple minded, like our Nellie.

(She turns her back)

MR. ALMOND: (Going quickly to her, grabbing her arm and turning her to him) Listen, damn it! I'm not simple minded and I'm not undersexed. I'm an honorable man. Maybe it's a peasant virtue, something we learned down on the farm without any "flash" about it. --You people...the pillars of the small town...always mouthing respectability...and you can't go into these houses without smelling the dirt in the woodwork. How do you manage to turn everything that's decent in life into a cesspool? Cackling and pulling up your skirts over your knees and trying to pull the first man who comes into the house into your bedroom. (Shaking her) Why in hell don't you try practicing some of this respectability you're always yelling about?

NINA: (Disengaging herself.) You don't need to scream. Do you want Nell and mother in here?

MR. ALMOND: (Lowering his voice; heavily sarcastic.) That's right. We'll whisper. It's always more exciting if we whisper about it. --And we'll both go in the bedroom and

giggle for awhile. Maybe we could Fanny in. She enjoys that sort of joke. --But let me make myself plain. I love your sister ... but I think there's something wrong with your head. Maybe they filled it up with too many dreams and now that you're stuck out there on the plains and you see they aren't going to come true, maybe now you're getting desperate. --But don't try your desperation on me. I know your type.

NINA: (Eyebrows raised; the lady insulted.) Type? --Really!

MR. ALMOND: Yes, really. I was in the RCAF. I got into some big cities. You can see your type any night you've got a mind to, swinging their purses down the street, hanging over the porch railings. They all think they're princesses. --You know, you've got the mind of a whore.

NINA: (Furious. Coming to him, her hand raised to slap his face.) Why you dirty son of a bitch!

MR. ALMOND: (Standing his ground, fists clenched.) If you slap me, I'll knock you flat on your bleeding arse. I mean it. I'd really enjoy it. There're some people you can't handle any other way.

NINA: (With sullen violence) I hate you. God, I hate you.

MR. ALMOND: That's just fine. We'll keep it that way.

(NINA turns her back, MR. ALMOND faces front. Transition music begins as lights dim slowly to complete blackout and then slowly up again. Lights are still those of TIME PAST. Music out as MRS. BEERS enters from dining room carrying a vase of madonna lilies. NINA's expression is now one of sullen boredom; MR. ALMOND's of nervousness.)

MRS. BEERS: Are we all happy? --Oh, I'm so excited. --All the flowers. I'd never had guessed our Nell had so many friends. Now, Henry, don't be so nervous. It'll all be over in just a minute --Oh, it's so hot! It must be the hottest day of summer! Nina, dear, smile! It's your sister's wedding day. (Calling up the stairway.) Nell, dear, hurry! (To NINA and MR. ALMOND) Mr. Carmichel's been here for fifteen minutes and it's so hot out there in the yard. Why I wouldn't be surprised if old Mrs. Pinkney didn't pass out.

NINA: (Shrugging) It's cooler under the maple trees. Why didn't Mrs. Pinkney sit under the maple trees?

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(NELL comes slowly down the stairway, wearing a simple white dress, her face covered with a veil, and carrying a wedding bouquet. MR. ALMOND goes to her shyly and takes her hand to help her down the last few steps.)

NINA: (Sarcastically) There's just nothing like young love. --You haven't told her how sweet she looks, Henry, ---so virginal.

MR. ALMOND: (Looking at NELL) I don't have to, Nina, ...I'm sure she knows ... everything I feel.

NELL: (Kissing his cheek) Of course I do, darling. (Coming down front) (Sweetly pleading) But, Nina, please be nice ... just for me. --And be nice to Henry, too. After all, now he'll be a member of the family.

NINA: Oh, I will try to be nice to Henry. You've no idea how I've tried. Has she, Henry?

MR. ALMOND: (Raising his head; looking NINA square in the eyes) She may have just a bit of an idea. --You see I told her about your interesting ... suggestion. Right after it happened; three months ago.

NINA: (Outraged) Told her! --Oh you <u>are</u> smug and righteous. Both of you. You make me sick to my stomach with your "love" and your "honor."

NELL: Nina, please!

NINA: Please? Oh, yes, please, please, please! See what song you're singing tonight after you find out what men are like. Don't come to me with your sad stories.

NELL: (Looking up at MR. ALMOND) I'm sure they couldn't be sad.

MRS. BEERS: (Smoothing things over) Now let's not talk about sadness. You know how easily I cry. Take her arm now, Henry. Everybody's waiting. Nina, begin your song.

NINA: (Rising to the occasion; singing.) "...Oh promise me that someday you and I ..."

(They exit across lawn area. MR. ALMOND and NELL in a spotlight which grows increasingly brighter. NINA follows singing, MRS. BEERS with a handkerchief to her eyes. Lights on lawn area suddenly out. Transition music under. Lights of TIME PAST

up slowly to full in FANNY's room as TED and DONALD enter, first, the dining room, and then the living room. Both these areas are dimly lit.)

DONALD: (Whispering) Do you think she's asleep?

TED: She never sleeps. Even when she dies they won't be able to close her eyes.

DONALD: Do you think she's really a witch?

TED: (Bravely) Well, just sort of.

(FANNY climbs awkwardly out of bed, upstage side, and reaches for her cane. Her old gray-white hair hangs in loops and snarls over her shoulders. She gives the cane three resounding taps on the floor.)

FANNY: (Screaming) Ted! Donald! Come up here!

DONALD: (Frightened) Shall we go up there?

TED: I'm not afraid of her.

(TED and DONALD climb the stairs slowly, heads down, hanging to the bannister. They stand in the doorway to FANNY's room.)

FANNY: Well, come on in. Your old great-grandmother ain'ta gonta bite you. (Bracing herself on the commode. Ted and Donald enter and stand by the door.) It sure is a hot day, ain't it boys. It's a breeder. Gonta breed up a big storm and blow us all away.

TED: (Reciting) The radio report said fair and continued warm.

FANNY: You just don't pay no mind to them radios. They don't know everything that's goin' on. Why they don't know nothin' about dreams. I bet you boys didn't know you could forecast the future by dreams.

DONALD: (Proudly) I never have any dreams. But I talk in my sleep, don't I, Ted? I always talk about my wagon.

FANNY: It's all right here in my book. (She is rummaging through the top drawer of the commode.) Now just where in tarnation ... (Suddenly cackling) You know I seen you boys peeping at me through the keyhole when I was in the bathroom.

TED: How did ....?

FANNY: Your old great-granny's got eyes in the back of her head, that's how.

DONALD: (Awed) Really, grandma? Will you show them to us?

FANNY: (Displaying the dream book) Ah, here it is. Tucked in just like a bug in a rug next to my book about the Johnstown Flood. --Now we'll just look up "wagon." (Handing the book to TED) You look it up, Teddy. My eyes ain't so good today.

TED: (Searching through the book) I can't find it, Grandma.

FANNY: Well, you ain't lookin' in the back part. That's where the dreams are. --Be under "W" for "wagon". --Find it?

TED: (Reading like a second grader.) "To dream of a wagon means business success. Avoid spec-u-lation." --What does "speculation" mean?

FANNY: Why it means to --- speculate. You know, like we used to say, "I speculate that man'll be here any minute."

DONALD: (Who has been peeping in the drawer.) Grandma! There's a gun in there!

FANNY: That belonged to a gentleman friend of mine. (FANNY goes to the drawer and takes out a small pistol with a mother-of-pearl butt.) You see that red stain there, boys? (Displaying the butt of the pistol) That there's real blood.

TED and DONALD: (Eyes wide) Where? --Real blood!

FANNY: (Moving slowly down left, then turning. MUSIC softly under; a far-away mechanical piano playing a rag-time variation on "Les Filles de Cadix." Met this gentleman at the big fair in Chicago. My, he was a handsome feller with great wide shoulders. --And he had a solid gold watch-chain with a fob made out of a buffalo's tooth. Yes sir, a real buffalo's tooth. Carried this pistol tucked right under his belt. --Maybe you boys'd like to see some pictures of that fair. My, that was a real show. Got some postcards here somewhere.

(She returns to the commode, lays the pistol on top, and takes from the drawer an enormous stack of postcards -- the kind that opens like an accordian with a series of pictures.)

Right here now. Look't this here one. (She holds the postcard packet at eye level and opens the catch so it flaps to the floor like an unwinding snake before the amazed eyes of the boys.) Bet you never saw nothin' like that! (She continues undoing postcards during the following speech, draping the opened ones over the brass bedstead.) Yes, sir. We took the train all the way to Omaha, Nebraska, and then beyond that out to Salt Lake City. (Pointing to a postcard) That one there's a belly dancer, boys. Moved her whole belly around like it was a big plate! --And somewhere outside Salt Lake City, this other gentleman got on the train. A fine figure of a man in a black suit with little, teeny, white stripes. And, my lands, the look in his eye! (Pointing to another postcard) This here building's made of solid marble just like the train station. And all them people. --And somethin' happened so my gentleman friend and this other gentleman in the striped suit picked a fight and one of them killed the other one dead. I forget just which one it was now. Both mighty fine gentlemen, though. --But that's real blood. --You know, it's funny forgetting like that which one it was ... but there was so many gentlemen around the fair. And you get old, and you just plain don't recollect.

(She goes to the commode and picks up the pistol. MUSIC increases in volume.)

You know, it was breedin' Breedin' all the way out to Omaha. And somebody shot somebody in a fight about your old Grandmother. --But I just took the train back to Chicago. You could see them cyclones comin' up over the plains. But in Chicago the bands was playin' away ... and all them people. I always kept the pistol for a souvenier.

(The boys have backed to the door, thoroughly frightened. TED is clutching the dream book to his chest.)

Yes, sir, real blood. None of the rest of them had that.

(She throws the pistol on the bed.)

Now there ain't no reason to be feared of your old Grandma. Why you ain't seen a half of all my pretty postcards. Look't this here one! ---And this one!

(FANNY is in a mounting frenzy as she opens the accordian postcards. MUSIC increases to strident. The boys are framed at the door as she faces towards the audience.)

There just ain't never been a fair like that where you could have a real good time.

(She begins to laugh her high-pitched cackle.)

Yes, sir, a real good time.

(She opens a postcard that is five feet long, a regular streamer, and lets it shoot down into the room below.)

And real blood!

(The postcards grow longer and longer. She is holding five or six of them, all dangling like snakes into the living room - dining room.)

It was real lively. --And all them people. And all the time it was breedin'. But let them as will worry about what's comin', I always said. Let them as will worry.

(She is laughing in a crescendo and waving the postcards back and forth. MUSIC up and out as THE CURTAIN FALLS.)

END OF ACT 1

ACT II

(The setting is the same as the previous scene, except that the house should have an air of having been vacant for some time: It is untidy, some magazines are strewn about on the floor by the davenport, and a large and weathered steamer trunk has been placed up center, near the fireplace, and out of the general traffic routes. The trunk is open and the audience should be able to see part of a black-turned-green sealskin coat at the top. There is another funeral in progress in the lawn area. Gathered about the imaginary grave are NELL, MR. ALMOND, and NINA. They are costumed as in the previous act. Of the three, only MR. ALMOND seems to have aged noticeably. His carriage is that of a man beaten down by circumstance. He is supporting NELL by the arm. She is genuinely bereaved. NINA has been crying but her general attitude now is one of disorganized bewilderment. The second level, FANNY is asleep. TED enters down front left. His clothing is more or less conventional for that of a man in the 1950's, but his open-necked sports shirt and heavy tan hint that he may have just returned from a hot climate. He wears heavy, horn rimmed glasses. Lights are those of TIME PRESENT. Music under, the "Willow Song."

TED: In Rome, there were already roses, and, in Provence, rosemary and pink-purple heather. Here everything is still dead.

(NINA, at the graveside, unloosens her fox fur. she removes it and dangles it from her hand, like a child dragging an old doll by it's leg.)

Even when it falls apart, the feel of it here is the same: A brown mystery which time only makes more intense.

(MUSIC out)

NINA: (Vaguely, to no-one in particular) Spring always comes sooner in Michigan. On the road to Sioux City there are still snow banks. I mean, it's not really warm here yet, but there is a difference. I always told Goo-Goo that: "Marry a man from Michigan; marry a man from the east...." (To NELL and HENRY) Do we have to stay here any longer? I mean the service was just too much ---even

though he didn't do justice to mother --And it's getting cold. Do you suppose it's going to snow? --I mean there's nothing colder than a cemetary, particularly when it's snowing. Nell? ...

(NELL looks up, her face tragic in tears, and then bows her head. NINA walks slowly and idly up-stage around the grave, killing time.)

TED: --The compulsion to return, to leave the roses, because until you can be sure exactly <u>how</u> it started, you can never be sure exactly <u>who</u> you are.

NINA: ...Nothing colder in the whole world. Henry? Henry, you're so damned bright, why didn't she tell us that?

MR. ALMOND: What, Nina?

NINA: That there's nothing colder than a cemetery. All she ever talked about was the roses and the candy. --Oh Jesus, Jesus, stop crying, Nell, because I can't cry anymore over anybody but me. I'm not going to be blackmailed into any more tears.

MR. ALMOND: Why don't you go sit in the car, Nina. We'll be there in just a minute.

NINA: Because I don't want to sit in a car that isn't going any place. I'm nearly sixty. Do you realize that? Nearly sixty years old and I haven't got the time to sit in cars. --I thought the blanket of gladioluses was awfully pretty. It seemed a shame to cover it up. --Nell? Nell, it isn't any use crying, because there isn't any heaven. --Do you know how I know that?

(TED has walked into the living room and is examining the room with the silent amazement of one who has been a long time away from a place he knew well as a child.)

MR. ALMOND: Nina! Be quiet!

NINA: (Going up to MR. ALMOND) You know, that's just it. I'm afraid to be quiet. I'm afraid that if I stop for even a minute, I'll just stop myself. --Do you know how I know there isn't any heaven? Because I can't imagine any place that could hold all of us.

MR. ALMOND: Go sit in the car!

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(NINA shrugs and exits upstage with a casual walk. TED has moved to the fireplace in the living room. He puts one elbow on the mantle and then leans his head into his hand in the manner of one who has a severe headache.)

I think we'd best go, too. You know there isn't any point...

NELL: I know... I know that. I can't think of it as anything but relief. Sick and old and out of her mind. --But it doesn't mean anything ... all she tried to do. And look at Nina. And her grandsons! Ted and Donald couldn't be bothered ... not even for me.

MR. ALMOND: It's no use thinking about that.

NELL: She always seemed so strong. I know I used to hate how she managed everything; how everything went on around her: the church circle and the Red Cross. It seemed so permanent. Then ... just this.

MR. ALMOND: Don't think about it. You're worn out. Taking care of her the past year.

(MR. ALMOND is guiding NELL upstage, away from the grave.)

NELL: I'm worn out. --But it's more than that. (MUSIC, the "Willow Song", softly under.) It's just that everything is gone ... like the center had been cut out. I know you hated her, Henry, but she was a good woman ... I mean ... when we were little ... she was a good mother.

(Her back to the audience, she is wracked with convulsive sobs. MR. ALMOND puts his arm about her shoulders and guides her off up right. Lights down on graveside area, up full in living room. MUSIC out. TED raises his head, smiles to himself, and bends down to the loose tile at his feet. He lifts the tile, extracts the piece of paper he placed there in Act 1. He straightens up, evidently trying to decipher the code. Then, on impulse, he looks behind the clock. The code pin is there. He shakes his head in rueful amazement and then sits in the rocker, using the pin to decipher the message in his hand. NINA, NELL and MR. ALMOND approach the house from stage right. NINA is talking loudly. NELL is composed, although her voice is weary.)

NINA: ...So I said to her, "Really, Mrs. Flint, it was mother's express wish that she be buried in an inexpensive coffin. --So she could leave her family a little something." "Well," she said, "with only brass fittings..." --And then the old biddy asked if she could take that pot of gardenias home -- you know, the ones Johnny Macklin sent -- and I said, "Certainly not!" --Well, really!

MR. ALMOND: You should have given them to her. Maybe it would have embarrassed her.

NINA: I told the florist to deliver all the flowers right here to the house.

NELL: But we're only going to be here for a day or so. --And we're going to have enough to do, packing, without looking after flowers.

NINA: I just can't live without flowers in the house. You know that, Nell. --And besides I'd rather flush them down the toilet, one by one, than let that old hag get at them.

(NINA, NELL, and MR. ALMOND are at the door, up right. TED puts the note in his pocket and rises in nervous expectancy.)

NELL (Seeing TED) Darling! (NELL embraces TED and begins to cry) Henry, he came!

(TED, one arm about NELL, shakes MR. ALMOND's hand.)

NINA: I don't suppose you're going to say hello to me now that you're so cultured and well-travelled.

TED: Of course. It's good to see you, Aunt Nina.

NINA: How were the picture galleries? --And you did take pictures? We could look at them tonight. Oh Florence must be just beautiful. What's the name of that quaint little bridge?

(NINA seats herself on davenport, down stage.)

TED: The Ponte Vecchio (To his mother and father, with concern.) You're all right? --You both look worn out.

MR. ALMOND: (There is no self-pity in his voice) It's been a rough year.

TED: Yes, mother said in her letters....

MR. ALMOND: I told her not to keep bothering you with our troubles. You had enough on your mind.

TED: Donald didn't come up from Detroit?

NELL: Well, he's been awfully busy ...

TED (To MR. ALMOND) Bad as that, eh?

MR. ALMOND: We don't see much of him anymore.

NINA: Well, I think we should all celebrate. --The return of the prodigal. (NINA opens her purse and takes out a large bottle of brandy.) It's brandy. Christian Brothers'.

TED: Well, life in the provinces has improved. I remember when you used to hide it in an old witch-hazel bottle.

NINA: You naughty boy! You'll make me out an old souse.

MR. ALMOND: Well, it's all right as long as it's Christian Brothers.

NINA: You don't mind if I partake first. I mean the funeral was such a strain.

(NINA raises the bottle to her lips. TED looks at his father, eyebrows raised. MR. ALMOND shrugs.)

Apple brandy. I always think of springtime. You know, the apple blossoms out in the backyard. --Well, now it's your turn. (NINA hands the bottle to TED.)

TED: I think I'll have mine in a glass. --So I can savor the blossoms. Mother? Dad?

NELL: Well, I suppose one little glass. I might feel better. --But we've got to get supper.

(NELL seats herself at up stage end of davenport. TED exits to dining room for glasses.)

NINA: My, he's turned into a handsome man. I always said he would. He takes after the Beers'. --And so smart. I'm sure he's going to do something someday. Is it a Fullbright he's got in Italy?

MR. ALMOND: (Sitting in rocker) No, he just likes it there.

NINA: But what does he live on? I mean he must have a job.

MR. ALMOND: Not a regular one. I guess he sells a newspaper story every now and then. It doesn't take much to live over there.

NINA: It's so romantic! If I ----

TED: (Returning with four glasses) The best cut-glass in the house.

NINA: Mother always told me she wanted me to have the china and the crystal.

MR. ALMOND: Let's wait'll after supper to fight over that.

NINA: Really, Henry. I just mentioned it. (TED hands NINA a glass.) --Well, of course, I shouldn't. It does go to my head. But since it's a celebration. --I suppose you're used to candlelight and that wonderful imported champagne. --Of course, it wouldn't be imported over there, but you know what I mean. Did you take any pictures of the Forum?

TED: (Filling the other glasses) No. I didn't take any pictures. I don't have a camera.

NINA: How strange. But you did look at the ruins?

TED: (Attempting to quiet her; looking her in the eye.) I never pay any attention to ruins. (Sits on footstool; to NELL) I'm sorry I wasn't here for the funeral.

NELL: There was nothing you could have done.

TED: Well, I'm sorry anyway. Even if we didn't get along.

NELL: You did your best.

TED: I didn't really. I could have taken an earlier bus out of Detroit. But I don't like funerals. I always get furious.

NINA: Mrs. Flint complained to Nell about the casket ... right at the funeral parlor.

NELL: Well, she was an old neighbor. She probably thought she was protecting mother's best interests.

MR. ALMOND: Damn busybody! She should have talked to me. I'd have handled her.

NELL: All right, Henry. You always get asthma when you're upset.

MR. ALMOND: I'm upset now, damn it. They ought to just drop people into a big well and forget about it. More than a thousand dollars just to get somebody into the ground. Dust to dust ... it's a damn expensive proposition.

NELL: Henry!

NINA: (To TED) Did you notice the chiaroscuro in the Botticellis? I'm always fascinated by the chiaroscuro.

MR. ALMOND: Are you speaking English? --When I die, Teddy, you just sneak me out from under your mother's nose and put me through a sausage grinder. I ought to make good fertilizer for the roses. A man ought to be good for something after sixty years.

TED: Which rose? --Do you have any preference?

MR. ALMOND: Any rose. I've always like roses best.

NELL: You'd never guess it from the way you hacked at them this spring. --Only five wintered over and he killed three by pruning them right down to the ground.

MR. ALMOND: The survival of the fittest! Let'em fight like the rest of us.

NINA: But didn't you find the chiaroscuro fascinating?

TED: I didn't spend much time in the picture galleries, Aunt Nina.

NINA: But if you didn't look at the ruins, and you didn't look at the pictures, what did you do?

TED: I just looked, you might say. (He rises and pours himself another drink) Anybody else for a refill?

NELL: No, no. I've got to round up something for supper.

(MR. ALMOND shakes his head.)

TED: Aunt Nina?

NINA: Well, yes. The doctor says it's so soothing to a person of my temperament.

NELL: I think you drink too much.

NINA: Really, Nellie, I've been under a terrible strain. --You know that.

NELL: I'm sure it's not good for you.

MR. ALMOND: It's not good for anybody. But Nina's a big girl now.

(There is a pause in the conversation. Far away can be heard the melancholy wail of the train whistle. The whistle blows twice and each time, the lights of TIME PAST rise in FANNY's room -- but only slightly. With these pulses of light, FANNY stirs in her bed.)

TED: I'd forgot about the trains, ... how melancholy they sounded here.

NELL: You always used to like to watch the trains. Why, one of the first words you said was "choo-choo." --I had you on my lap once, up in mother's bedroom, -- you couldn't have been more than sixteen months old -- and then you used to be able to see out over the other side of the lake. I showed you the train winding around the lake and you said "choo-choo" just as plain as anything.

TED: I don't remember that. One night, though, --I don't know when it was ... but it was summer and we were staying here ... and I remember we were sleeping on the floor because it was cooler than it was in bed. I was looking out of the window, watching the heat lightning over the lake. Suddenly a steam engine came by, and I don't know whether the furnace door was open or not ... but there were flames shooting out of the engine and out of the smoke-stack ... And it whistled. And ... I don't know ... it was like hell going by. Hell going by on big steel wheels with the devil stoking.

NINA: You were such a dear, sensitive child.

TED: And you didn't like me a bit.

NINA: It wasn't that, dear. It's just that you were so difficult ... well, to do anything with.

MR. ALMOND: That is the understatement of the year. (To TED) One of the big surprises of my life has been that you grew up to look like anybody else. I always figured you'd dwindle away from T.B. --- like Camille --- with a novel in one hand and a box of chocolates in the other. The trouble we had getting you to go out and play....

TED: I never liked games or stupid children. I still don't. --What's in the old trunk there?

MR. ALMOND: Your aunt charmed the milkman into carrying it up from the cellar.

NINA: Well, it's so musty and dark down there. You just can't see a thing. --And we have to go through everything before we sell the house.

NELL: You should have just taken it out and burned it. All that moldy old clothing. It's been there ever since grandmother came back from Chicago. --Even the Salvation Army wouldn't take those clothes.

TED: It looks like Oswald lying there on top. --They opened Pandora's box and there was Oswald.

NINA: It used to be a very sealskin. It was your great-grandmother's best coat.

MR. ALMOND: You mean you remember Oswald?

TED: A fuzzy tail with pink polka-dots. --Donald believed in Oswald for years.

NINA: I told you you shouldn't have told those children so many frightening stories.

MR. ALMOND: You never believed a word I said, Ted. I never saw a more pompous, self-righteous child. But Donald's eyes used to get just as big as tea-cups, and he'd say, "Really, Daddy"? --And then he'd run into my arms and say, "I love you, Daddy. Don't let him get me!" --And I'd feel like I'd betrayed all the innocence in the world. It's funny how things turn out. ...

NELL: (Quickly) Well, I suppose everybody's hungry for some supper.

NINA: Don't hurry on my account. I'm feeling just utterly relaxed.

TED: I'm in no hurry either. (Looking about the room.) You know, even without her here, there's an air of gray respectability about this place. They must have built it in. I'd never realized how ugly it was.

NELL: It was the style. --I think this brandy's going to my head.

NINA: I feel just utterly relaxed. Like I was floating on a big bed of apple blossoms.

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MR. ALMOND: Good God!

NINA: You never did have an artistic bone in your body, Henry. --And neither did Nell for that matter. Mother must have given all her talent to me. And my girls are just terribly talented. Before she married that awful man and had her family, Goo-Goo was doing really brilliant paintings.

MR. ALMOND: How was her chiaroscuro?

NINA: Well, of course, as an amateur ... Is that some of your Canadian wit, Henry?

NELL: I'm sure I shouldn't have drunk any.

MR. ALMOND: (Gesturing to the trunk) I'll bet that's the coat in the photograph. (He begins to laugh) Do you know the one I mean, Nell? The four of them at the train station. Funniest damn picture I ever saw in my life.

NELL: (To NINA) You know the one he means. Grandmother and Mother and Uncle John and I don't know who else.

MR. ALMOND: There is a picture, Teddy, you ought to carry in your wallet at all times! Just in case you're feeling pompous. "Our American Cousins." Show the folks the kind of stock you sprang from. (He is laughing asthmatically and coughing.) There is a study. --You haven't seen it? (TED shakes his head. MR. ALMOND rises.) Well, Uncle John --your mother's great-uncle John --- is standing there like this: (He rolls his eyes upward and lets his jaw drop.) And this other man --unidentified --is sort of leering over at Fanny, like this: (He demonstrates) Well, I forgot to say, they all have on these big, long, shaggy coats like they'd just got back from Omsk or somewhere in Siberia. --And your grandmother is sort of looking the other direction as if she were embarrassed. And Fanny, now there is a picture!

(From the top of the trunk he pulls the floor-length coat and throws it over his shoulders.)

NELL: Put that musty old coat back, Henry! You'll be coughing all night!

MR. ALMOND: Fanny is standing there like the grande dame, like this: like Queen Maude or somebody welcoming the troops home from Siberia. --And wrapped around the shoulders of the coat is this ratty, old, feather boa, you know, the kind they used to wear.

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NINA: She always wore it when she went out. Of course, she never went out much after she got back from Chicago.

TED: I suppose everything was an anti-climax after that gun fight.

NELL: Oh, Ted! She was just a doddering old woman. You and Donald always believed everything she told you.

TED: Well, we saw the pistol. Real blood on the handle.

MR. ALMOND: The butt.

TED: Well, whatever the hell you call the end you hold. Mother-of-pearl and blood. --What did she do in Chicago?

(DONALD enters the room from rear right. He is dressed in an overly-loud business suit and has put on considerable weight about his waist. His voice is loud and his entire adult manner is one of nervous and nerve-wracking extroversion.)

DONALD: Well, what are we doing? Playing Goldilocks and the Three Bears?

(MR. ALMOND quickly removes the coat from his shoulder and then extends his hand which DONALD takes briefly without looking into his face.)

Mother. (He kisses NELL lightly on the cheek) Ted (He nods in TED's direction) Well, I haven't seen you for a long time, Aunt Nina.

NINA: Oh, Donald! --And how are your wife and those three adorable children?

DONALD: Only two, Nina. --Maybe she's got another in the hopper, but she hasn't told me about it yet.

(NINA snickers. DONALD belches loudly, making no attempt to cover it.)

The Doc told me to belch whenever I had to. Eases the pressure on the old ticker. --Sorry I didn't make it to the funeral, but I was up by Mackinac looking at a road job. How'd the funeral go?

TED: Just ginger-peachy.

DONALD: I'm glad to see Europe hasn't changed you any.

TED: No, we just get more so.

DONALD: I don't want to see any more of those damned colored slides. Don't bother to bring them over to show us.

TED: I'm crushed. You were at the top of my list.

DONALD: What're we drinking?

NELL: It's brandy. Some Nina brought. I should never have drunk it. I'm so light-headed I'll never be able to get dinner.

DONALD: Say, I've got some real stuff out in my car. Some Haig and Haig that was smuggled in from Canada. Bought it from this Indian up at the Straits for only five bucks a bottle. --Say, did you hear the joke about the constipated Indian and his tepee?

TED: It's been a rough day for all of us. I don't think anybody's up to jokes about constipated Indians.

NELL: (Shyly) How are your children, Donald?

DONALD: (Picking up the bottle of brandy) Where are the glasses?

NELL: In the chiffonier. Isn't that where you found them, Ted?

DONALD: They had runny noses all winter. --But you know kids.

NELL: We wish you'd bring them over sometime.

DONALD: (Exiting to dining room) Well, we mean to --but you know how busy the wife is --and with them having colds ... (He exits)

TED: You mean that bastard hasn't been to see you since last fall!

NINA: Goo-Goo never comes around either. --So I just write and tell them I'm coming.

TED: Goo-Goo doesn't just live across town. That dirty ---

DONALD: (From dining room) What shelf are they on?

NELL: Just keep looking. You'll find them.

MR. ALMOND: We haven't seen you for two years.

TED: But I was in Italy.

MR. ALMOND: And Donald was cross-town. I don't see the difference.

(There is a long pause. MR. ALMOND begins to cough rather violently.)

NELL: I told you not to get that musty old coat near you.

(DONALD re-enters with an over-size drinking glass.)

TED: Sounds like T.B. Have you been to a doctor?

MR. ALMOND: To hell with doctors! When I go, I intend to go by myself without being helped over by those charlatans. Besides, it's that damned coat. She polluted everything she touched.

NINA: She was just a simple, old lady.

MR. ALMOND: Simple, hell! Simple-minded! I don't care what they say, there's a lot to this heredity business.

NELL: Henry!

MR. ALMOND: Well, I've seen four generations of this family. I've had nearly forty years to watch the yeast fermenting. You can trace her right down through the lot of you. Whining, simple-minded, spineless! --I should have stayed on the farm with the Irish drunks.

(NELL begins to cry. NINA rises and walks to the window where she plays aimlessly with the edge of the window curtain. TED and DONALD are motionless; they have been through similar scenes before.)

Well, do you have to prove me right by crying? That's exactly what Fanny would have done. Tears like horse-turds running down her simple cheeks. (MR. ALMOND rises) I'm going to lie down. Call me for supper. (MR. ALMOND exits up stairs, coughing violently.)

NINA: Well, he always did have a violent temper! --At least he doesn't hit you, Nell. --Why, I remember one of the first times he talked to me he told me he was going to knock me down. Imagine!

NELL: (Recovering quickly from her tears) He had reason.

NINA: I'm sure I don't know what you're talking about. --Why, Donald, you naughty man, you've drunk up all your auntie's brandy.

DONALD: I'll bring the Scotch in.

NINA: Oh, no. No. I just have a little tipple before supper. For the digestion. --You know, I think I'll just stretch out too. A little beauty nap. That's how I've kept my face; little naps whenever I feel tired.

TED: Fanny used to sleep all day. I don't remember that it did much for her face.

NINA: Mother was right. You're just like your father: Mean, sullen, and sarcastic. (She exits upstairs.)

NELL: Well, that's one way of getting out of helping with supper. Beauty nap! She's nearly sixty. --You'd think it wouldn't matter anymore.

TED: I'll help you.

NELL: You never were any help. Besides we're just going to have meatloaf. Maybe you can set the table later. Just some paper plates like a picnic. --And besides you and Donald must have a lot to talk over. --It's so good to see you both together again.

(NELL exits to dining room and then to kitchen. There is a sizeable pause. TED wanders to the piano, and begins picking out the "Willow Song" with one finger. He repeats the melody a second time. DONALD is evidently annoyed by the song for a grimace comes to his face. DONALD finishes his drink in one swallow and slams the glass on to a nearby table.)

DONALD: Jesus! After twenty-five years, can't you play anything but that one finger exercise.

TED: I think it has the proper air of melancholy for the day of a funeral.

DONALD: Well, try two fingers. It grates my ass. --Reminds me of those summers we spent here.

TED: I always thought you liked it here. Just because you looked like the BEERS', they treated you like you were made out of ice cream. ...And you were always so busy mowing lawns,

and making quarters, and brown-nosing generally. (Crossing front) And you didn't like it here either? Well, it just shows how little we know about those closest to us.

DONALD: Just what do you mean by that?

TED: Just talking off the top of my head. Those ghastly summer weeks here. Hot, and you expected all the time the maple trees were closing in for the kill. And not a thought above the fifth grade level. The copy book mind.

(In a sing-song voice)

"Early to bed, early to rise...."

(Transition music to TIME PAST. Lights also begin to fade to TIME PAST.)

MRS. BEERS: (Faintly heard, off stage.) "....makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise."

TED: "Waste not ...."

MRS. BEERS: (Closer; she is entering from up-stage right.) "...want not."

TED: "I'll be a sunbeam for Him."

(Music out. Lights of TIME PAST up full.)

MRS. BEERS: (Entering the room at right.) I heard that, Ted, that's blasphemy.

TED: I was just singing.

MRS. BEERS: It's the way you sing. Just because you're in college now is no reason to think you can fool your old grandmother. (Going to DONALD) And how's my dear little man. (She kisses him on the forehead.) The garage is just beautiful. Why, I don't think it's been that clean since your poor grandfather died.

TED: Did you look behind it? --He just piled all the junk out behind it. You'll have a real party getting it out of there.

MRS. BEERS: Did you, Donald? --Well, anyway, the garage is clean. Your grandfather would be proud of you. (Seating herself.) --And besides, Donald's not sitting around the house moping about some girl. --I never did like that girl, Ted.

TED: Because she smoked?

MRS. BEERS: Well, yes. But that was only part of it. You can tell.

TED: Just what can you tell? I'm curious. Just what can you tell?

MRS. BEERS: Well... You always get so upset. You're <u>just</u> like your father.

TED: Just what could you tell about her?

MRS. BEERS: Well, she wouldn't have been right for you.

TED: Not that the question ever came up. "Right?" What would have been right for me?

DONALD: Calf love. You should have seen him. (He throws his eyes up to the ceiling and sticks out his tongue.) Moo---

TED: Why you damned--

MRS. BEERS: Ted Almond! Why your grandfather would turn over in his grave if he could hear that.

TED: What about her? Did you ever think what she was doing in her grave?

MRS. BEERS: Well, now dear, don't think about that.

TED: How can I help but think about it? Just three days. She was walking down the street with me and holding this hand...and three days later...I don't understand why she had to die.

MRS. BEERS: Now don't get upset all over again. It was nearly a year ago. When you're older and a little wiser, you'll understand that these things do happen. I mean lots of young people die like she did. --I think it was 1916, one of the Macklin boys got infantile paralysis. Just like that. (She snaps her fingers, and shakes her head.)

TED: What's 1916 got to do with it?

DONALD: He wasn't nearly so upset about her as he was about himself. Everytime he got a little pain he wanted somebody to call the ambulance. (Rather proudly.) I've been pall-bearer at three of my friend's funerals already, and you didn't see me moping around.

TED: You haven't got anything to mope with. You're just like all this family. --You got a big bag of gas where your heart should be.

MRS. BEERS: Well, I've had just about enough of this sort of talk! If you can't behave yourself, you can just get right on the next bus for Detroit and spend your vacation there. You'd think you'd have a little respect for your elders.

TED: All right, all right. (He goes to the piano and begins idly picking out the "Willow Song" with one finger.)

DONALD: Can't you make him stop that, Grandma?

MRS. BEERS: Now, Ted, you know that's very annoying.

TED: That's why I do it.

DONALD: See!

MRS. BEERS: Now, we're all going to be happy for the rest of the afternoon and there won't be anymore quarreling. Now, Ted, you just come over here and sit in the rocker and read a nice book or something. And we'll all be happy together just like we used to be when you were little.

TED: (Sitting down reluctantly.) I don't remember ever being very happy here.

MRS. BEERS: Well, it was your own fault. Donald was always happy. Weren't you, Donald?

DONALD: I'd be happier if you'd let me drive the Chevvy. It's just gathering dust in the garage. Why, the engine will just rot out.

MRS. BEERS: No, it won't. I had the garageman come up here to look at it just the other day and he told me that the way I was taking care of it, it ought to last at least a hundred years. Besides, I don't think you boys ought to be racing around in cars after dark. I'm sure Nellie wouldn't approve.

TED: Racing! That old heap never went more than thirty-five miles an hour in its life.

DONALD: That was plenty fast enough the way Grandpa drove it. It takes a real dare-devil to drive thirty-five down the wrong side of the road.

MRS. BEERS: Your grandfather was a very fine driver. Why, we drove to Texas twice and never had an accident.

DONALD: Did you ever look behind you? I'll bet they were piled up in heaps.

MRS. BEERS: Maybe, if you're good the rest of the afternoon and there isn't any more quarreling, we'll take a little ride after supper. We could drive out and visit Mrs. Pinkney. The poor thing is blind now and I know she'd just be awful happy if you boys came to see her. --She was at your mother's wedding, you know.

TED: (Pawing through the magazine rack.) Don't they let any magazine into this town except the Reader's Digest? --Why single out Mrs. Pinkney? Let's pack the car full of provisions and go visit every blind, old lady in the county. I'll bet there are more half-dead old ladies in this county than in any other single spot in the whole world.

MRS. BEERS: Mrs. Pinkney is very nice. --And a nice old family. The Pinkneys and the Macklins were the first settlers here.

TED: With Fanny close behind. The first camp-follower to enter Chickasee county.

MRS. BEERS: I'm sure you're trying to say something clever but I don't think young people should refer to their elders by their first names. --Would anyone like some lemonade?

DONALD: I've drunk so much it's coming out my ears!

(TED nods his head in dissent.)

MRS. BEERS: What on earth is a camp-follower?

DONALD: Just what it says: A person who follows camps.

(TED is smiling.)

MRS. BEERS: Well, I don't see why anybody would want to do that. Certainly not your grandmother. She always liked the city. Declared the country made her nervous. --You're a lot like her, Teddy. Around the eyes, particularly.

(There is a pause. MRS. BEERS rises and begins searching about the room for her glasses.)

Have either of you boys seen my glasses?

TED: You put them in the bag with your crocheting just before lunch.

MRS. BEERS: Well, land sakes! Sometimes I declare I'd lose my head if it weren't tacked on. That's what your grandfather used to say, may he rest in peace.

(She finds her crocheting bag, puts on her glasses, and begins to crochet. The two boys are looking aimlessly about the room, obviously bored to death.)

You know, it was such a comfort when your grandfather died to know that I'd always led a proper life and had never done a single thing to embarrass him. It <u>was</u> a comfort.

TED: Um-hmm.

MRS. BEERS: I mean so many women do such really terrible things and cause their husbands no end of trouble.

TED: What sort of terrible things?

MRS. BEERS: (Crocheting steadily, not looking up. She seems to be thinking aloud.) Well, you know. --Like smoking!

TED: Oh, no!

MRS. BEERS: Well, it's not that smoking is really evil, like some things. But I've never seen it fail. First smoking and then the bottle on the shelf and then... --Well we don't talk about <u>that</u>. But I've seen it happen too often. You just mark my words.

TED: Oh, what could you know about that?

MRS. BEERS: Well, you'd just be surprised what your old grandmother has seen. I've had a lot of chance to look about the world since 1872. There's a lot of evil in it. You've got to fight every minute of the way, because if you let down for just one minute... --Well, it's there, and it'll take you right over, and then it's hellfire and damnation sure. --No, you can just thank your lucky stars that girl died when she did.

TED: (Incredulously.) <u>What</u> did you say?

MRS. BEERS: Perhaps it sounds cruel now, but you can thank your stars---

TED: (Impotent in his rage.) How...? How...could anybody say a thing like that?

DONALD: Mooo...

MRS. BEERS: It must be college...

DONALD: Calf love!

TED: Damn it! I am going! (TED starts running towards the door, up right. Then, stops suddenly and turns.) But there's just one little thing first. (TED reaches in his pocket and takes out a package of cigarettes.) Do you see these? They're cigarettes. --A sure ticket to hell. (Hands shaking as he displays them,) And after I smoke this, will come the bottle, and after that....

(MRS. BEERS has turned away. TED puts a cigarette, inexpertly, into his mouth.)

Look at me! (With some difficulty, TED brings a lighted match to the cigarette.) I'm smoking. I'm going right to hell. (He begins to cry and choke.) --And maybe I'll die ...and somebody can come tell you that I'm better off dead ...because I was just going to hell anyway. (TED turns and runs from the room.)

DONALD: (Rising, cupping his hands and yelling after him.) Moooooo!

MRS. BEERS: (Drawing a deep breath, then beginning to collect her crocheting to replace in the bag.) Well, I never! --I hope his father whales him to within an inch of his life when he gets home. --It's the Irish in him, I suppose. They're always screaming about something. (Turning to DONALD) But let this be a lesson to you.

(Transition music under as she starts for door, right. Lights of TIME PAST begin fade.)

"Early to bed..."

(There is a pause but no reply. DONALD is facing square front, eyes half closed.)

"Haste makes...."

(MRS. BEERS exits. She is heard faintly from the wings.)

"Waste not...."

(DONALD stands still for a moment, then shrugs casually and goes over to the davenport to lie down. Lights of TIME PAST out in living room. Music out. Lights of TIME PRESENT up in dining room as NELL enters and quickly sets table with

paper plates.)

NELL: (To the kitchen) Just open the oven door, Ted, and see if that meat-loaf is done.

TED: (From kitchen) It looks black ... and it's bubbling.

NELL: Oh, dear, I hope it isn't ruined. I don't know how she could cook anything on that old stove... (NELL exits, returning quickly with a heavy pan of meat-loaf.) It's not very elegant, but I can't find a platter anywhere. She used to have a nice willow-ware one.

(NELL begins to exit again to kitchen. TED stops her at the doorway and puts his arm about her shoulders.)

TED: Mother....

NELL: (Looking up at TED quizzically.) It <u>is</u> good to have you home. I know a funeral's not much of a homecoming --

TED: It's not that, --Mother ... I'm afraid.

NELL: (Attempting good humor.) What on earth about? You're just being a little boy. There's nothing --

TED: Don't you see it, for God's sake? --I mean that there isn't anything for any of us. That it's all pretense. That we don't even like each other. --And if we can't like each other ... how in hell can we ever like anybody?

NELL: That's just foolishness, dear. You're just tired from the long trip. --And I know <u>I</u> love you all.

TED: I don't see how you can. --But that's only part of it. It's as if, all my life, everything was promising so much and now I find ... that instead of climbing up I was really falling down. --We're all falling ... only we don't know it. Don't you feel that? --That we've just about hit bottom ... the rocks at the bottom of the cliff?

NELL: You always made so much of everything. --But I'm glad you've come home and I do love you very much.

TED: I'll remember that. --When I'm stretched out on the rocks.

NELL: You go bring in the bread and butter and I'll get Henry and Nina up. I know he's going to have asthma all night and Nina ...

(NELL shakes her shoulders in a little gesture of despair, then enters living room, going to DONALD. TED exits to kitchen.)

Donald! Donald! --You've been sleeping for nearly an hour. --Wake up! Supper's ready. (At the foot of the stairs.) Henry! --Nina! (Murmers are heard in reply.) Supper's ready!

(DONALD rises and throws his arm heavily about NELL as they walk into dining room.)

DONALD: Well, how's everything going, princess? --This damn gas. I wish to hell the doc'd do something for this damn gas ...

(MR. ALMOND comes down the stairs, coughing. NINA follows, hanging onto the bannister. She is in that half tipsy, half doped condition of one who has drunk too much and then laid down for an hour. Without looking dishevelled, she should give the impression of being discomposed.)

NINA: You're just going to have to give me your hand, Henry. These stairs keep coming up to meet me. (MR. ALMOND reaches out his hand to help.) Thank you, kind sir. --Why I haven't been helped down these stairs since my first date. Well, what do you suppose Nellie has prepared for supper tonight? --Lobster thermidor? --And candlelight?

MR. ALMOND: Let's exercise some restraint, eh, Nina. Have a pleasant dinner. (NINA and MR. ALMOND enter dining room.)

NINA: Well, of course. --You know, Henry, you were so handsome and ... now ... --It just doesn't seem ... --Well, I guess none of us are as young as we were.

(NELL, TED, and DONALD have seated themselves. MR. ALMOND helps NINA into her chair. Positions are: MR. ALMOND, right; NINA, TED, and DONALD, in that order, up center; and NELL, left, near kitchen.)

--Well, we're just being terribly civilized this evening. And all the shining faces. --I'm going to be an awfully good girl at supper because my handsome brother-in-law has told me to behave.... Didn't you, Henry?

MR. ALMOND: Precisely.

NELL: You're going to have to dish up the meat-loaf, Henry, it's too hot to pass.

MR. ALMOND: (Standing) Well, hand me your plates.

(DONALD passes his first. MR. ALMOND works for a long moment trying to get the meat-loaf out of the pan.)

Now, just how in hell did you think anybody ---

NELL: Well, it is burned a little, and I suppose it's stuck. That oven....

(MR. ALMOND begins to cough rather violently.)

All right, dear, I'll do it. Don't get all upset. (NELL crosses and dishes out the meat-loaf. During the following, plates are filled. NELL returns to her place, and the dinner is eaten.)

TED: I guess if you're going to get ahead in this world, you've got to push right in, eh, Donald?

DONALD: I was hungry. Long trip from the straits. --If you're not feeling too delicate, could you pass the celery?

NINA: This meat-loaf is delicious. I always meant to ask mother for her recipe.

NELL: I'll write it out for you if you remind me. It has ham in it. --Henry, dear, do you want me to poach you an egg? I'd forgot you don't like meat-loaf.

MR. ALMOND: How could you forget? You know I detest anything thats mixed up.

NELL: Well, it was the simplest thing I could think of.

MR. ALMOND: After nearly forty years, I'm resigned.

NELL: I'll get you an egg.

MR. ALMOND: Forget it, for Christ's sake. Leave me alone.

NINA: (Brightly) Well, here we are all together again.

TED: Didn't you say that once? Or am I anticipating?

NELL: (To TED) You'd think, dear, at thirty you'd have gotten over that habit of washing everything down with water.

TED: It's second childhood. I'm chewing every mouthful thirty times, too.

DONALD: Where do you suppose they raised this celery? In somebody's septic tank? (He belches.)

TED: Well, you've certainly turned into a Class A pig, haven't you?

DONALD: My psychiatrist told me I shouldn't repress anything.

NINA: I called Johnny Macklin on the way through Chicago, but he was all tied up. He's just awfully important these days.

TED: Do you wallow in the muck every night before bedtime? --Or do you just push other people in?

DONALD: Just what in hell do you mean by that?

TED: Think about it awhile. That is if you can think about anything but your fat belly.

NELL: Boys! --Is Johnny Macklin still living in Evanston?

NINA: Oh, dear, no! Evanston's not the least bit fashionable these days. He's built himself a real mansion in Lake Forest.

MR. ALMOND: Onward and upward!

NINA: My mouth was just watering for one of those lobsters. He's always taken me to his club for dinner. I don't know, he's never been tied up before.

DONALD: Maybe he got tired of your free-loading.

NINA: I don't get to Chicago often. --Donald, dear, do you know what would go just awfully well with this meat-loaf? --Just a little glass of that Haig and Haig you said you had in your car. Don't you think?

DONALD: (Rising) Sure. I'll go get it. Make this a real party. (He exits.)

NELL: Now, Ted, you just leave him alone. He's come back. He's sorry.

TED: And that's going to be enough? After what he did to you and Dad ---

MR. ALMOND: If we forgive him ... And anyway it's none of your business.

TED: I think it's damn well my business when somebody screws my father out of every penny he's got!

NINA: Who did that? --There should always be candlelight at the dinner table. Nobody ever fights when there are candles on the table.

MR. ALMOND: (With firm intensity.) It's none of your business, Ted. Just keep out of it.

TED: I can hardly stand the sight of him. That pig ---

NELL: Your brother!

TED: That's why I can't forgive him.

NINA: Well, it's all very interesting, but I wish you'd tell me --

(DONALD enters, a bottle of HAIG and HAIG whiskey raised high in his right hand.)

Ah, my savior!

DONALD: We'll just use the water glasses. That way Mom won't have so many dishes to do.

TED: Always thinking of good old Mom. You should get a medal.

DONALD: Maybe you should have stayed over there with the Wops. (He is filling glasses. To TED) Do you want some?

TED: Sure. Why not. Let's all get stoned. That's about all there's left to do. (NELL and HENRY both refuse the whiskey. DONALD fills a glass and sits.) I want to propose a toast. (He raises his glass.) To all the happy families all over the world who have just now finished dinner. Too all the pretty families who love each other and respect each other and who are all going to heaven someday.

NINA: Why, that's very nice, Ted. I think you're really just a big old sentimentalist down deep. --Like your father.

MR. ALMOND: Leave me out of it.

NINA: That's what I told Max just the other day. There are a lot of happy families ... just lots and lots of them.

(She pauses) Aren't there? --I mean there must be ---

TED: Sure, Aunt Nina. The world's full of them. Like us. Never happier than when they're tearing at each other's throats. (He finishes his drink.) Come on, Fatso, let's not be so piggish with the booze. You can even tell us about the constipated Indian. This is the hour of the day when the table should rock with clever after dinner stories. --Give your auntie some, too.

DONALD: I don't know how I put up with you for twenty years. Give me your glass. (He fills it.) Nina?

NINA: Well, I shouldn't of course. But it is so soothing --

NELL: I think you should go just a little easy on that liquor. I mean I don't want to be a prude like mother, but ---

TED: Sure, just this glass. Just enough to blur things a little.

MR. ALMOND: You don't have to drink that stuff to blur things.

(There is a long pause.)

NELL: Well, you haven't told us a thing about Max yet, Nina.

NINA: Things just go along as usual. There's nothing really to tell.

NELL: Is he running for office this year?

NINA: He's just been terribly busy. And of course he's wondering if his work isn't more important. I mean he's on the road so much. I mean the Bishop says a man in his line of work has to be on the road a lot.

NELL: I don't see why a lawyer --

NINA: Well, trips down to Sioux City. You know -- (She suddenly buries her face in her hands,) Oh, God! I can't make excuses any more. He isn't living at home. Hasn't been for more than a year.

NELL: (Rising to comfort her.) Nina! Oh you poor thing!

NINA: (Viciously.) I don't want any of your pity. --It's the old story. --A pretty secretary ... I know ... I hired

a detective ... every cheap hotel in Sioux City. --I'm humiliated. I don't know how long --

NELL: I don't know what to say --

NINA: What is there to say? --You might say you were right all along. Why don't you say that? For twenty years now. Not just this secretary ... others. And when he comes home it's just to insult me. (She is crying copiously.) He's hit me too. Once right in front of the bridge club. Screamed that I was drunk. I, a charter member of the D.A.R. --Oh this is awful, in front of your boys. --But men! They might just as well know. They take a woman for what they can get. It's all candy and roses till they get what they want. --You pigs! (She rises quickly.) But I have my pride. I come from a respectable family. Why we go right back to Governor Brewster of the Plymouth colony. Did you know that, boys? Your great-grandmother was a Brewster. Fanny was a direct descendent. If those Swedes in South Dakota think they can laugh at me just because--

(The table napkin is in her hands, and she begins daubing at her eyes with it as she exits to the living room. Lights up that area; fade out in dining room.)

But the flowers? Whatever happened to the flowers?

(NELL has followed her.)

NELL: Why don't you just lie down and rest now?

NINA: Why? I've had twenty years to rest. I don't need any special care now. I think I'll have another drink. That's how I kill time in South Dakota. Just a little bottle; me and the full moon over all that empty land. And I think of the apple blossoms...

(MR. ALMOND, TED and DONALD enter from the dining room. DONALD is carrying the bottle and his glass.)

Why you darling boy, you've brought you auntie's glass.

(She goes to him and takes the glass from his hand. DONALD shrugs and puts the bottle on the mantle.)

Now, after my little scene, I'm going to ask your forgiveness for being a bad little girl. And then I'm going to sit down right here... (NINA sits in front of the trunk,

stretching out her legs and kicking off her pumps.) ... and be just as quiet as a tiny mouse and as busy as a bee. Why, there may be a fortune in diamonds right in this old trunk and then all our troubles would be over. --We'll pretend that it's Christmas and I'm Santa Claus.

(NELL is seated at upstage end of davenport, DONALD at the other. TED has one knee on piano stool. MR. ALMOND is standing by the stairs, left, coughing spasmodically.)

First, we have a beautiful sealskin coat for my favoritest brother-in-law.

NELL: Don't wave it around so, Nina. It'll give Henry more asthma. --First thing in the morning, Ted, you can help me burn that coat.

TED: The burning of Sodom and Gomorrah.

MR. ALMOND: "...and there shall be a weeping and a wailing and a gnashing of teeth..."

NINA: I just love to hear you quote the Bible, Henry. You make it sound so funny. --And for Donald--- (Pulling out a very dirty, pink, feather boa.) A lovely feather boa. Just the thing for your wife. (NINA throws it at DONALD.)

DONALD: It looks like a bunch of dead chickens.

NINA: But you have to model it, dear. Just drape it around your shoulders so we can see how it looks.

(DONALD rises and drapes the boa around his shoulders.)

DONALD: (Flapping his arms.) Cock-a-doddle-doo.

TED: (Crossing downstage.) I think you do cow and pig sounds better.

DONALD: You keep that up and you'll get strangled with this.

TED: <u>That</u> would be poetic justice: Strangled by his great-grandmother's boa. --The sins of the fathers...

(DONALD pulls the boa from his shoulders, rolls it quickly into a ball, and hurls it at TED. It falls considerably short of its mark.)

Good try, old man!

NELL: Now, just pick that up. It's going to be enough trouble getting this house ready for sale without having things strewn all over.

(TED kicks the boa upstage, near stairway.)

NINA: And the next present is for me. (She reaches blindly into the trunk.) Why, it's a little pistol! (She displays the pistol held by FANNY in Act I.) All my troubles are over!

TED and DONALD: The pistol!

NINA: (Playing the role of the grande tragedienne.) I can just put it to my temple like -- well, some heroine -- and go bang! bang! (She spreads open her arms in a melodramatic gesture.) "Goodbye...cruel world! --I'm going home..." (She puts the pistol to her temple.)

NELL: Nina!

(NINA pulls the trigger. There is only a loud click.)

NINA: (Laughing wryly.) It's not even loaded. I think this is the poorest Christmas present---

MR. ALMOND: Jesus, Nina! (MR. ALMOND runs to her and roughly pulls the pistol from her hand; puts it in his pocket.) What in hell are you trying to do?

NINA: I don't know. --It was just an idea.

MR. ALMOND: Well, put it out of your head! --I think you should go to bed. (MR. ALMOND tries to guide NINA to the stairs.)

NINA: No! Nell hasn't had her Christmas present yet. Santa Claus doesn't go back to the North Pole until every child in the world has had his Christmas present. (NINA bends over the trunk.) We've got a rhinestone clasp set in genuine, weathered brass...and a mysterious envelope. --I think Nell should have the mysterious envelope. (NINA pulls forth a large yellowed envelope and opens it.) Now, isn't this sweet, --And so appropriate for you two love-birds. Grandmother's wedding certificate. You can have it framed and hang it over your bed. "Married on the 28th of May 1876, Fanny..."

NELL: (With alarm.) 1876?

NINA: I'm not so drunk I can't read. --What's the matter?

NELL: Nothing, dear. --Now you just give me that envelope and pop up to bed.

(TED begins to laugh.)

TED: First the pistol and now the proof positive!

NELL: (Pleadingly.) Ted...

TED: Oh, I won't say a word. But I can laugh, can't I. It's one of the best jokes I've heard in a long time.

DONALD: Well, if it's so funny, you might tell us.

TED: Ask your mother. It's her family.

NELL: It's yours, too. --Oh, poor mother--

MR. ALMOND: Oh, for God's sake! Whose feelings are you trying to save anymore? It's not important. Fanny was married in 1876 and Jenny was born in 1872. It wasn't a particularly well-kept secret. Everybody in this town knew.

NINA: Are you standing there trying to tell me that my mother ... that my mother was ... illegitimate?

MR. ALMOND: I'm not trying to tell you anything. You've got the damned certificate in your hand. Look at it!

NINA: It's a mistake. It's somebody's idea of a joke. --I wouldn't put it beyond you, Henry, with that Canadian wit---

MR. ALMOND: Sure, I dreamed up the whole thing. Even that house in Chicago she ran.

NINA: House! It was a boarding house...for railroad men.

MR. ALMOND: Call it what you want. What do you think she was doing at the Chicago Fair? Playing tiddly-winks? And after she came back here to sponge off your mother, she still used to sneak off with her friend. Abby Carpenter, to meet the trains! It's about the first thing I learned when I came into this town. Fanny was the town's prize scandal.

NELL: Henry!

MR. ALMOND: You knew, didn't you, Nell, deep-down?

NELL: (Sadly.) Yes...yes...I guess I always knew. -- From what mother said about how lonely she used to be. All alone by the willows. --Poor mother!

MR. ALMOND: No, not "poor mother." There's nothing more respectable --more pompous and self-righteous -- than a prostitute's daughter.

NINA: I won't hear another word. It's all a mistake. Why the D.A.R. even checked! It's very easy to make a mistake in dates.

MR. ALMOND: Why does it matter so much? There's nothing you can do about it. It's done. It was long ago.

NELL: How lonely she must have been. Left all alone by the lake. --And having to play the piano... (NELL covers her eyes with her hands.)

TED: I can't understand how...if she'd ever been lonely...

NINA: Well, as for me, I'm putting it completely out of my mind. Completely.

(NINA dreamily tears up the envelope and the certificate. Then tosses the fragments lightly up in the air. Music, "Les Filles de Cadix", softly under.)

You see, it's gone. Like the snow. Like apple blossoms... (She takes the bottle off the mantle.) I think I'll just go out and get some air. (She is staggering.)

MR. ALMOND: You'd better put on your shoes.

NINA: I'm a princess. I'm the prettiest girl in the whole state of Michigan. Princesses wear slippers made out of white velvet and when they walk there isn't a sound. Like they were walking on rose petals. And their hair hangs down, golden, to the middle of their backs. (She raises the bottle high to her lips.) Because someday they'll come with roses...

(NINA exits. Music out.)

NELL: Nina!

MR. ALMOND: Let her go!

NELL: But she'll get run over or--

DONALD: Oh, hell. They never get run over.

TED: Such sympathy; such understanding.

NELL: Henry, shouldn't we go get her.

MR. ALMOND: What can you do? She'll come back.

(NINA has been seen stumbling off right, by the cypresses.)

TED: They always come back. All the bad pennies. --Like Donald, here.

DONALD: (Turning quickly, almost screaming.) Well, why the hell don't you say it? Why the hell don't you get it over with?

TED: Why should I say it? I'm not going to play father confessor. You can just live with your damn sins.

MR. ALMOND: (Coughing.) Ted! I told you it was none of your business...

TED: But that's not what I was going to talk about at all. I was going to tell you all about a very exciting discovery I made this afternoon. A secret message. In code. Orphan Annie's own special code. --Hidden under the tile there. (He takes the slip of paper from his pocket.) A message written by a nine-year-old. Do you know what it says, Donald? You wanted to know all the time? Don't you want to know now?

DONALD: (On the defensive.) Who cares about a kid's game?

TED: But this is funny. It's funnier than the joke about the Indian because we can all laugh about this for a long, long time.

NELL: We don't want to hear it, Ted. You mustn't ---

TED: But this is a joke, mother. I know Donald will like it especially. It's a simple message. (His voice hardens.) It says: "Honesty is the Best Policy." (There is a pause. DONALD turns away) Well, why aren't you all laughing? I thought you'd split your guts. Imagine! A simple nine-year-old writing that message ...in this house. (His voice breaks.) I think it's the funniest thing ...I've ever heard.

DONALD: (Coming downstage.) What do you want from me?

TED: (Not meeting DONALD's eyes.) Why should I want anything from you? --You're like the rest of this family: Thieves and trollops. (Turning.) Yes, damn it. I do want something from you. I want the same thing that nine-year-old wanted. I want a little honesty. Take your father's business away from him. Kick him out at the age of sixty. But be honest. --Admit that you liked doing it.

DONALD: It was just business. We had to re-incorporate. The books showed he was losing money ---

TED: "The books showed..." "Just business..."

DONALD: But I offered him a hundred a week to stay on. --Didn't I, Dad?

TED: How can you even speak to him? How can you stand there and look at him? --What about his pride? Why do you suppose he preferred to starve rather than take your generous offer?

DONALD: I didn't know he was starving --

TED: Why, of course not. You were way cross-town and the kiddies had runny noses --

DONALD: Well, it wasn't easy for me. I've got to live, too. I even had to see a psychiatrist. (His chin is trembling in self-pity.) He told me to stay away from my father. --That I couldn't stand being upset....

TED: ...And to belch regularly. (Imitating Fanny.) "Oh them blasted girdle pains!" --Oh, God! --And you're my brother! --Why in hell don't you just go away and never come back? (Moving towards him in a fury.) Quick, before I smash your dirty, fat face in!

NELL: Donald! Ted!!

DONALD: (Standing his ground for a long moment, then slowly bowing his head.) Maybe...maybe I am sorry. (Turning.) And maybe...I don't want to see any of you again either... ever again. (He nods slightly to NELL) Mother. (NELL reaches out her arms, but DONALD pushes past her.) Dad.

(DONALD does not look in MR. ALMOND's direction. MR. ALMOND is standing stiffly, immobile, as if he were made of stone. DONALD exits. There is a long, long pause. Finally TED turns towards the piano.)

MR. ALMOND: (Suddenly moving; coming quickly to TED.) Well, are you satisfied with your performance? Are you proud of yourself?

TED: (Surprised.) I don't understand--

MR. ALMOND: Now that you've driven our son away from us, aren't you pleased?

TED: I don't know what you mean. --I was just doing it for you. --A little honesty---

MR. ALMOND: You are pompous, aren't you, Teddy?

TED: But what he did to you!

MR. ALMOND: He did it to us. He didn't do it to you.

TED: But I'm your son. Somebody has to--

MR. ALMOND: Are you? Are you really our son? Would a son take what little his parents have left? Do you know what you've done?

TED: So he won't come back. --It's no great loss.

NELL: He was all we had. --And his children...never to see them--

TED: But how could forgive him? When the truth of the matter--

MR. ALMOND. The <u>truth</u> of the matter is that we <u>had</u> forgiven him.

TED: But I thought if we could be honest with each other--

MR. ALMOND: So we saw each other clearly...with all our faults? --How...how could we live with each other then?

TED: But if this family had only been honest. If Grandmother had admitted that Fanny was--

MR. ALMOND: What in hell should she have done? Collared people in the streets and told them she was illegitimate?

TED: But to raise Nina as a princess. --If she'd been honest--

MR. ALMOND: The truth! The truth! Always the goddamned truth! Can't you understand that even to live you've got to compromise with the truth! --Because there are some

things just too...too enormous to bear. --So Donald did take my business away from me, with his other partner, with his bookkeeper. Do you suppose I'd live very long if I sat up all night saying that over to myself? --There are a lot of days in a life, and maybe I'd rather remember some of the other things...like how he used to run into my arms...how he used to trust me. Maybe it's not honest; maybe it's a private deal with the truth. --But it might have worked out; gradually we might have been together again. --What have we left now...with your truth? Fifteen years of loneliness with Nell and I sitting together staring at the walls. The truth's going to be a consolation.

TED: But you've got me!

MR. ALMOND: Have we really? --And if we have, just what in hell have we got? How about trying a little of your honesty on yourself. What are you ever going to do that makes you so much better for us than Donald?

TED: (Turning away.) I don't know.

MR. ALMOND: Well, that's honesty! You don't know! --And what about the last ten years, since you graduated from college...with such high promise? What have you been doing? --You at least ought to know that.

TED: I've written you letters. --I've told you.

MR. ALMOND: Charming little travelogues. Your mother and I know all about New York and Paris and Rome -- all the sights. --Or do we?

NELL: Henry, please!

MR. ALMOND: Isn't the truth maybe that you've been playing the tart all around the world's capitals? Living off other people---on their sick pleasures. --I can guess now.

NELL: Henry, don't--

MR. ALMOND: Now I want the truth. --Aren't you just another Fanny?

TED: Dad... (TED goes to MR. ALMOND, falling on his shoulder.) Dad... --How can I tell you? (TED has gradually collapsed on the floor by MR. ALMOND's feet. His voice is coarse, a sad whisper.) --All the rooms with the dirty wallpaper. --And all the people. Tell me I don't have to tell you all...about that. --Don't make me--

MR. ALMOND: (Tenderly.) No. You don't have to tell me anything...I don't want to hear it. --But is it over? --What are you going to do now?

TED: I don't know...I just don't know.

MR. ALMOND: Are you going to come home and live with us? Like an idiot child? Like Fanny?

TED: --I wouldn't do that.

MR. ALMOND: What will you do?

TED: (In a whisper of revulsion.) Just what I've been doing...that's all I see...the honest truth.

(MR. ALMOND walks quickly away from him)

MR. ALMOND: Let's go to bed, Nell.

TED: Dad...Mother...Forgive me!

(NELL rises quickly, bends, and strokes TED's shoulders. TED looks at her briefly, but his arms are outstretched towards MR. ALMOND who has paused at the foot of the stairs.)

Forgive me! --For being...what I am.

MR. ALMOND: --I always have. --I always will, -- but I can't forgive you for not wanting to be more. (MR. ALMOND pauses, ascends a step.) --You'd better come to bed, too. We've got a lot to do in the morning. --Good night.

(MR. ALMOND exits up stairs. NELL bends, kisses TED, then, rather reluctantly, starts to climb the stairs.)

NELL: Good night, dear. (Suddenly remembering.) Oh, dear God! --Your Aunt Nina!

TED: (Rising to his feet.) --I'll find her. --Bring her in. Just a minute.

(TED's and NELL's eyes meet. NELL smiles shyly and exits up stairs. The lights dim as TED stubles to the couch. He throws himself upon it, face down. There is silence. Then a far-away train whistle is heard. Transition music under as lights of TIME PAST come gradually up, first in FANNY's room then in living room. The train

whistle is heard again and FANNY throws back the covers and steps out of bed. It is a much more youthful Fanny, wearing a frilly peignoir, hair neatly combed and piled on top of her head. She moves to the mirror over the bureau and begins applying powder to her face. MRS. BEERS shyly enters the living room, up right. She is costumed as an ingenue of the late 1880's; a soft veil over her face. She plays the following scene in a bland, youthful, and pleading voice.)

MRS. BEERS: (Calling to the level above.) Mother?

(FANNY hears her, straightens up momentarily, then bends back to the mirror.)

Mother! I'm going...I'm going back to Michigan.

(FANNY straightens her shoulders, finds a comb, and begins arranging her already well-dressed hair.)

I'm going to get married, mother...and raise a family. I'm not going to play the piano for you anymore. --Mother?

(FANNY is now applying rouge. She is growing younger as the make-up is applied.)

--Because it's not nice...it's not one bit nice. --And you don't really care whether I stay or not. --I'll show you, mother. I can do it. We'll be very proper and I'll be loved and respected by everyone in town.

(FANNY removes her pegnoir and steps quickly into an overly-elaborate dress of the period.)

Because, mother, all the books say that I'm right:

("Willow Song" on piano, softly under.)

Be proper. Be good, stay away from scarlet women. They do, Mother. --And all the nice children I'll have. I'll look after them and see they're brought up properly. --I won't leave them all alone in the willows...to cry all alone in the willows.

(FANNY is seated in the chair, chin high, examining her fingernails.)

--Won't you say goodbye? --Won't you even say goodbye? --Because I'm really all alone now.

(MRS. BEERS turns to exit.)

I can't be sure...though all my books say it: That haste... but does haste, really?... --And early to bed? ... --Won't you even tell me that?

(MRS. BEERS is at the door. She pauses and turns, a look of pathos on her face. Speaking softly.)

Mother? ...

(MRS. BEERS exits. Music out. FANNY looks over her shoulder to make sure she has gone. Then she throws back her head and laughs uproariously. As the laughter dies, the lights of TIME PAST dim out. Lights of TIME PRESENT up faintly in living room; night light on lawn area. NINA enters, very drunk. She is singing-humming-mouthing "Les Filles de Cadix." She stops, draws her chin up proudly.)

NINA: You hit me again, you ox, and I'll divorce you! --I'll drag your name through the mud! You wait!...

(She hums a few more bars of the song then with great elegance, music of "Les Filles de Cadix" lushly under.)

--But, really, Johnny. --Such an expensive lobster. --And the candlelight...so really elegant. I mean I'm glad I wore my fur piece...a little fur just makes all the difference. --You can always tell--

(She stubs her toe and falls to one knee. Music out.)

Damn! --No darling, don't cry...your mother just stubbed her toe. --Now, Goo-Goo, don't cry. Everything's going to be all right--

(TED suddenly sits up on davenport. Then goes to the door.)

TED: (Calling softly.) Nina! Nina!

NINA: (Getting to both feet, almost running to the door. Her voice breaking, passionate.) Oh, God, darling, there you are! --Help me! Help me, darling, because I just went for a little walk and I don't know how to get back home!

(TED is helping her into the living room. She is hanging around his neck.)

Oh, thank God! Thank God! --You don't know how I've dreamed and prayed--

TED: Okay. --Steady now. --We'll go upstairs and lie down.

NINA: I won't giggle...honestly I won't giggle. --Because now I know you were right--

(TED and NINA have reached the foot of the stairs.)

TED: All right, you won't giggle. Just don't make any more noise than you have to.

(NINA reaches out her arms and lays her hands on his cheeks, pulling his face slightly to her. Music under, a poignant variation of the "Willow Song.")

NINA: Because you don't know how I've prayed. --And all my dreams. Because I love you. Purely, really. As if you were a saint. Because you're good -- even though you have a sarcastic tongue. --Ever since that first day, Henry, in that absurd little tweed cap...and your handsome face... and your voice...

(TED draws away in horror. NINA collapses softly backwards on the staircase.)

--Don't go away. Show me that love is the light of the world. --Henry, don't leave me--

(NINA passes out, curled about the bannister. Music out. TED looks at Nina, then squeezes his eyelids tight and clenches his fists. A train whistle sounds, very near and very loud. Transition music to TIME PAST begins as he throws his hands over his eyes in agony and drops into a nearby chair. The lights go up quickly to TIME PAST. Then the train whistle is heard again, four times in succession. With each blast colored lights are added until the scene is a riot of glancing and reflecting color. The music of "Les Filles de Cadix" played on the mechanical piano comes under as FANNY rises quickly from her chair and throws open the bedroom door.)

FANNY: Girls! --Girls! Get on your best clothes. The trains are comin' in.

(FANNY sweeps down the stairs, oblivious of NINA. She walks down front and points to the dining room.)

--Get out all that there gin! --And don't sell none of it for less'n fifteen cents a glass.

(She moves upstage, towards the piano, stopping in front of TED to pick up the feather boa.)

--And a little music. --Can't have no fun less'n there's a little music around.

(Piano music increases to loud.)

Because that's what them gentlemen'll be comin' for. To have a little fun. To forget them screamin' wives and them screamin' kids...always screamin' about somethin'. --Girls! Hurry up!

(She drapes the boa elegantly about her shoulders.)

--Because there ain't never been a town like this to have a good time in...and we're goin' to have a real good time. --The ferris wheel...and the chute-the-chute...and the hall of mirrors...and after that the gin. --'Cause I always say we're all goin' ta have plenty of time to worry after we're dead. --Girls! Girls!

(An ear-shattering train whistle underscores her last word. Fast CURTAIN.)

THE END

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