

SO MUCH REMAINS

(A Play by and about Katherine Mansfield)

by

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CHARACTERS:

There are multiple characters: one woman plays Katherine Mansfield throughout; four women and four men play multiple roles. While more than nine actors may be used, the duplicating of roles suggests that all the characters are at least in part a product of Mansfield's fertile brain.

SET:

The set must be flexible, with areas that may be used for various scenes. Simple set pieces will be brought on to help designate settings.

ACT I

(A brief, lively cello introduction, and KATHERINE practically bounces on, wearing a striking dove-grey dress with a single red flower and a gauze scarf of the same dove-grey color.)

KATHERINE

I'd like to talk to you about my life. Life is so lovely.

(The cello plays a showy measure or two and stops.)

When I was a girl, I thought I'd be a virtuoso on the cello.

(A few frivolous cello notes.)

More like Mozart.

(A bar or two of Mozart.)

No, not Mozart. He was thirty-six when he died. Almost thirty-seven. More like Bach. Sixty-five years.

(Music of Bach. She listens for a while.)

Bach. Thank you. That will be enough.

(Music stops.)

I lived thirty-four years. God, what I would have given to live till...fifty--even forty--and die suddenly after ten final healthy years.

(The music plays one or two somber notes.)

Stop that!

(Music stops mid-note.)

I enjoyed practicing the cello.

(Start of a scale. She looks toward the music and it stops.)

Hour after hour to get very, very good. But...with all that time spent practicing, when could I really **live**? Most of all I loved **life**. So I threw myself into life. I experimented with life.

I contracted gonorrhoea--and my joints stiffened and ached with fever when I moved. I contracted tuberculosis--and my lungs...just wouldn't do their job...when I...well, ever.

(Sentimental strain. KATHERINE looks sternly toward the cello. One note saying "sorry.")

All right. There are certain facts that I feel I need to tell you, but I want to tell them cleanly, honestly. I was born in New Zealand.

(Some of New Zealand's national anthem on the cello.)

(Over) Does that sound like New Zealand? Well it is. Our national anthem. *(She listens a bit.)* By John Joseph Woods. He lived to be eighty-four. *(She listens a bit more, then waves for the music to stop.)*

(The music stops.)

We lived in a big, rambling house. Mother, who wasn't very strong. Father, who was very...healthy. My sisters Vera and Lottie, and me. And Grandma, my favorite.

(GRANDMA enters with a hand-knit afghan. She approaches KATHERINE, stops and stares beyond her, approaches, and stops again and stares.)

KATHERINE

(Her voice now that of a little girl) Grandma, what are you looking at? Why do you keep stopping and sort of staring at the wall?

(No answer)

Tell me, Grandma.

(GRANDMA tucks the afghan around KATHERINE.)

GRANDMA
I was thinking of your Uncle William, darling.

KATHERINE
My Australian Uncle William?

GRANDMA
Yes, of course.

KATHERINE
The one I never saw?

(GRANDMA nods slightly.)

KATHERINE
Well, what happened to him?

GRANDMA
You know perfectly well.

KATHERINE
I want you to tell me again.

GRANDMA
He went to the mines, and he died there.

KATHERINE
Does it make you sad to think about him, Grandma?

(GRANDMA ponders for a while, then shrugs.)

KATHERINE
But why? Why did Uncle William have to die? He wasn't old.

GRANDMA
It just happened.

KATHERINE
Does everybody have to die?

GRANDMA
Everybody.

Me? KATHERINE

Some day, darling. GRANDMA

But, Grandma, what if I just won't? KATHERINE

We're not asked, Katie. It happens to all of us sooner or later. GRANDMA

(KATHERINE thinks for a while, then abruptly throws off the afghan.)

Grandma! KATHERINE

What, my pet? GRANDMA

You're not to die. KATHERINE

Ah, Katie, don't let's talk about it. GRANDMA

You're **not** to! You couldn't leave me. You couldn't not be here. Promise you won't ever do it, Grandma! KATHERINE

(GRANDMA picks up the afghan.)

Promise me! Say never! KATHERINE

(KATHERINE throws herself on GRANDMA and begins smothering her with kisses.)

Say never...say never...say never... KATHERINE

(GRANDMA begins tickling KATHERINE and they laugh lovingly, happily, together. Through her laughter:)

KATHERINE

say never...say never...say never...

GRANDMA

Come, that's enough, my squirrel! That's enough, you wild little pony! Now pick up that afghan and give it to me.

(KATHERINE does, and GRANDMA exits.)

KATHERINE

That's the way my life always comes back to me--a happy phrase that, isn't it?--as if your life really could 'come back to you.' In story form.

JACK

(Offstage) Your life 'came back to you' with advantages.

KATHERINE

My husband, Jack. *(To JACK:)* Of course.

JACK

(Good-heartedly) You even remember what never happened.

KATHERINE

He loves to tell me that. And I love to hear it. Shouldn't a writer be able to make something out of...very little? Come onstage, dear.

(JACK enters.)

I married Jack because he was the best editor around. John Middleton Murry--editor and critic. Bright, tough, honest, but sympathetic. Of course it doesn't hurt to be married to your critic--if you treat him right--to keep him sympathetic.

JACK

And I married Tig--

(She frowns at him. He grins lasciviously at her. Her frown breaks into an equally lascivious grin and she growls at him. He growls back, then immediately puts on a dignified face.)

JACK

I married Katherine because she was such a brilliant writer.

(She smirks a bit and blows him a kiss.)

KATHERINE

You still love me, don't you?

(He teases her by not answering.)

KATHERINE

Don't you, Tig?

JACK

I still love you, Tig. *(He blows her back a kiss.)*

KATHERINE

And he's rather cute, don't you think?

JACK

I dedicated my life to keeping Katherine and her work alive, long after she died.

KATHERINE

Thank you, Tig.

JACK

Now that I'm dead, I'm known—if at all—as Katherine Mansfield's husband.

KATHERINE

Alright now.

JACK

That's not entirely bad. But Katherine still holds on to life in her stories.

KATHERINE

Jack! That's enough. *(To the audience:)* As I said, I'd like to talk to you about my **life**. But there's a problem. Most of you have already lived longer than I did—and the rest of you are quite certainly **going** to live longer. Much longer. Much, much longer. *(Beat)* So mostly I'm going to talk to you about my writing—my stories—that I poured my life into.

(To JACK) Drag on the bench, will you; I think we should begin with "Violet."

(JACK drags on a park bench, places it, and turns to the audience.)

JACK

As the principle critic of this young writer, I'd say that this particular story illustrates her powers of observation more than her enthusiasm for life.

(He places the bench and exits.)

KATHERINE

You think so, do you? Well, just watch me!

(KATHERINE runs around several squares as if running up flights of steps.)

KATHERINE

There! The fifth floor!

VIOLET

Katherine
Violet
Stout Woman
Old Man

KATHERINE

I love to travel. **Love** it! I admit, it's because I'm a provincial little thing from New Zealand. I **love** to explore all those big wonderful destinations out there. Even though all those big wonderful destinations always turn out to be tiny little spots. But still wonderful!

Like in France. Nancy, in Alsace-Lorraine. I jump out of bed at the very first light of dawn and run over to the window and throw it wide open and lean out. Way out! Five stories down below in the avenue a wind shakes and swings the trees. The houses lining the avenue are small and white. Charming, tidy little houses, showing identical glimpses of lace. I begin to imagine an adorable little creature named Yvette who lives in every one of those little houses. She lolls away her morning in a white lace boudoir cap, sipping chocolate from a delicate Sevres cup with her dainty pink fingers. She languishes in the afternoons, curled up, a Persian kitten on her lap, while her lover leans over the back of the sofa, kissing and kissing again that fascinating dimple on her left shoulder. I'm **sure** I'll see Yvette, and suddenly, a balcony window near mine bangs open...

(A STOUT WOMAN in an apron pops out stage left, throws a rug out over a chair and beats it vigorously with a battered broom.)

Yvette no doubt dwells on the other side of the avenue.

(An OLD MAN in his underwear pops out stage right, coughs, and scratches himself. The WOMAN and MAN exit.)

My charming Yvette may be at the market.

JACK

No no no no no! That part is just wrong! A want to announce to the world that John Soandso Soandso, principle critic of this young writer, objects to the opening of this story. It's pure fantasy, childish imagination. There **is** no Yvette; there **never was** an Yvette. What's powerful in Miss Mansfield's stories is the **observation** that she takes onto herself and makes part of herself! And just that kind of observation is what this story is about.

KATHERINE

Oh yes? Well it's **my story**! So once again, **my charming Yvette** may be in the market. (*Highly charged:*) **Down** the five flights of stairs. One. Two. Three. Four. Five! **Out** to the city garden. (*Instant change of pace:*) It's autumn, the trees shine gold. On stone benches, ladies sit; about their feet, babies toddle. What pleasure it is to wander through a strange city and amuse oneself as a child does--all to oneself. Solitary. Quietly observing.

(*VIOLET enters.*)

VIOLET

Katherine! What on **earth** are **you** doing here?

KATHERINE

This is **not** Yvette. (*To VIOLET:*) Oh...! Extraordinary...! Violet.

VIOLET

But what are you **here** for?

KATHERINE

Nerves.

VIOLET

Impossible. I really can't believe that.

KATHERINE

It is perfectly true. (*To the audience:*) How annoying it is to have worked up a good case of nerves and to be suspected of having nerves of iron.

VIOLET

Well, you certainly don't **look** it.

KATHERINE

What are **you** here for?

VIOLET

I... (*She assumes an attitude.*) I came here to forget.... But...don't let's talk about that. Not yet. I can't explain. (*Very solemnly:*) Not until I am sure you are to be trusted.

KATHERINE

Oh, don't trust me, Violet! I'm not to be trusted. I wouldn't if I were you.

VIOLET

What a terrible thing to say. You can't be in earnest.

KATHERINE

Yes, I am. There's nothing I adore talking about so much as another person's secret.

VIOLET

I think it's awfully good of you to take me into your confidence like that. Awfully. And even if it were true...but it can't be; otherwise you wouldn't have told me. I mean it can't be true of the same nature to be frank and dishonorable at the same time. Can it? But then I don't know. I suppose it is possible. Don't you find that the Russian novelists have made an upheaval of all your conclusions? But let's sit down. On this bench near the fountain. I often come here; you can hear the fountain all the time--like weeping in the night. Isn't it wonderful!

KATHERINE

Violet, wonderful things don't weep in the night. They sleep like tops and know nothing more till day.

VIOLET

Why do you persist in denying your emotions? Why are you ashamed of them?

KATHERINE

I'm not. But I do keep them tucked away, and only produce them very occasionally, like special little pots of jam, when people I love come to tea.

VIOLET

There you are again! Emotions and jam! Now I'm **absolutely** different. I **live** on mine. Sometimes I wish I didn't--but then again I would rather suffer through them--suffer intensely, I mean; go down into the depths with them, for the sake of that wonderful upwards swing on to the pinnacles of happiness. (*Significant pause--then impressively:*) Now you know what I meant when I said I came here to forget.

KATHERINE

Well, no, I don't. How can you expect me to be so subtle? But then I quite understand that you don't wish to tell me. Quite.

VIOLET

I **have** told you! I mean--not straight out. Not in so many words. But then--how could I? But when I told you of my emotional nature, and that I had been in the depths and swept up to the pinnacles... surely, **surely** you realized that I **was** telling you, symbolically. What else can you have thought of?

KATHERINE

But...Violet...don't the depths also follow the pinnacles?

VIOLET

(Filled with gloom) They do. You see the depths, if you look, before and after.

(KATHERINE signals for moody cello music.)

VIOLET

It was in the summer. I had been most frightfully depressed. I don't know what it was. For one thing I felt as though I could not make up my mind to anything. I felt so terribly useless--that I had no place in the scheme of things; and worst of all, nobody who understood me.... It may have been what I was reading at the time...but I don't think...not entirely. Still, one never knows. Does one? And then I met...Mr. Farr, at a dance--

(KATHERINE signals for the music to stop.)

KATHERINE

Oh, Violet, call him by his Christian name. You can't go on telling me about Mr. Farr and you on the heights.

VIOLET

Very well...I met...Arthur. I think I must have been slightly mad that evening. There had been a bother about going. Mother didn't want me to, because she said there wouldn't be anybody to see me home. And I was frightfully keen. I must have had a presentiment, I think. Do you believe in presentiments? I don't know, we can't be certain, can we? Anyhow, I went. And **he** was there.

KATHERINE

Go on. **Do** go on.

VIOLET

We danced together seven times and we talked the whole time. The music was very slow--we talked of everything. You know...about books and theatres and all that sort of thing at first...then--about our souls.

(A momentous pause)

KATHERINE

What?

VIOLET

I said--about our souls. He understood me **absolutely**. And after the seventh dance... No, I must tell you the first thing he ever said to me. He said, "Do you believe in Pan?" Quite quietly. Just like that. And then he said, "I knew you did." Wasn't that **extra-or-din-ary!** After the seventh dance we sat out on the landing. And... Shall I go on?

KATHERINE

Please please do.

VIOLET

He said, "I think I must be mad. I want to kiss you"--and--I let him.

KATHERINE

Yes. Go on.

VIOLET

I simply can't tell you what I felt like. Fancy! I'd never kissed out of the family before. I mean--of course--never a man. And then he said, "I must tell you--I am engaged."

KATHERINE

Well?

VIOLET

What else is there? Of course I simply rushed upstairs and tumbled everything over in the dressing-room and found my coat and went home. And next morning I made Mother let me come to France. I thought I would have died of shame.

KATHERINE

Is that all? You can't mean to say that's all?

VIOLET

What else could there be? What on earth did you expect? How extraordinary you are--staring at me like that!

(Long silence as the light goes out on VIOLET and she exits. KATHERINE looks puzzled for a while, then takes out a small notebook and scribbles a few words.)

KATHERINE

(To the audience:) I wonder if I really understand Violet. Actually, I sometimes wonder if I really understand any of my characters.

JACK

(Entering) That story amazes me. I mean that you, the young lady who was known to have danced topless at parties--

KATHERINE

Don't get carried away listing my indiscretions.

JACK

could be so sympathetic to such an innocent.

KATHERINE

Were you hoping I'd dance that evening we met?

JACK

Am I a healthy young male?

(KATHERINE removes her flower and throws it to JACK. The cello plays a few bump beats. KATHERINE waves it to stop.)

JACK

Are you about to tell them of that evening when we met?

KATHERINE

Do you remember it?

JACK

Vividly. I remember your hands. Small. Beautiful. And the peculiar way you cupped them--as if to hold some precious liquid in your palms.

KATHERINE

Oh? What was I wearing?

JACK

(Pointing to her outfit) That.

KATHERINE

It's what color?

JACK

Grey.

KATHERINE

Uh-huh. Dove grey. Our next story: "Mr. and Mrs. Dove."

JACK

You can be such a conniving bitch.

KATHERINE

Uh-huh.

(JACK laughs it off and brings on a dressing table, in another area a large, solid chair, and in a third area a row of flowers. KATHERINE energetically brings a garden gate ornately decorated with roses on to a totally different area of the stage, then causes a garden swing to appear behind it and nearby a pair of make-believe doves in a cage. Meanwhile, the cello plays love-in-springtime music, over which they continue to talk.)

JACK

I rather thought the next story might be about you and me.

KATHERINE

Are you sure it isn't? Now please prepare to play Reggie.

JACK

Reggie?

(JACK mocks a pout and pulls out a checkered bow tie.)

KATHERINE

Thank you, dear.

JACK

(To the audience) You **must** understand: this is Katherine being **very** creative with my not-so-pliant personality.

(KATHERINE blows him a kiss.)

MR. AND MRS. DOVE

Reggie
The Mater
Anne

(THE MATER--probably played by the largest male in the cast--enters and sits solidly in the solid chair. She has a toy Pekinese by her on a leash. REGGIE sits at his dressing table facing an upstage mirror, trying to get his bow-tie on just right and alternately trying to smooth down his hair. ANNE enters, sits on the garden swing and is immediately bathed in cheery light. She is dressed in a frilly floral-patterned dress, with flowers in her hair, and is weaving flowers into the swing. In her garden is a cage with two doves--possibly hand puppets. REGGIE speaks to his image in the mirror.)

REGGIE

Just look at you! Are you handsome? No. Are you even healthy? Goodness no. You're riddled with Rhodesian rot. Still! After months recovering back here at home. Pale. Just look at you! And what are your prospects? Not much I'm afraid--after all, what can you expect from a man whose whole inheritance is a little fruit farm in--of all places--Rhodesia.

(REGGIE lights a cigarette. THE MATER immediately responds.)

THE MATER

Reginald! You aren't smoking in your room, are you?

(REGGIE immediately snuffs out the cigarette. Dragging the Peke behind her, THE MATER goes out in her garden and proceeds to snip off the heads of dead flowers with very large scissors.)

REGGIE

What would Anne--Anne Proctor--only child of Colonel Proctor, possibly want with you?

(REGGIE rises and gazes out a window.)

She's so clever. There's really nothing she can't do. She's by far the most popular girl in the neighborhood. *(Cello strain)* But I love her! I love her, I love her! There's nothing I wouldn't do for her!

(He grabs a frilly little pillow and cuddles it. Then he speaks to the pillow.)

REGGIE

You've been asleep, dear, through miles and miles of murky jungle. Are you all right? Would you care to...

(He carefully sets the pillow aside.)

"What impertinence!" she'll say. *(He rearranges the pillow.)* Well, I'm going back to Rhodesia tomorrow. I can only try my luck, that's all.

(REGGIE leaves his room and heads out through THE MATER's garden.)

THE MATER

You are not going out, Reginald?

REGGIE

I'll be back for tea, Mater.

(THE MATER vigorously snips a flower head.)

THE MATER

I should have thought you could have spared your mother your last afternoon. (*Snip!*)

REGGIE

Yes. Yes...well...

(He mumbles something more and dashes away.)

THE MATER

And where are you going, if your mother may ask?

(REGGIE mumbles something more as he exits. THE MATER snips again and drags the Pekinese offstage. REGGIE swiftly crosses the stage several times and halts abruptly at ANNE's garden gate. He raises his eyes in silent supplication. Cautiously, he rings the bell on the gate, which clatters loud and long. ANNE appears behind the gate.)

REGGIE

Oh!

ANNE

(Her voice is very soft and lilting.) Oh! *(Brief pause)* Reggie, it's you!

REGGIE

Yes!

ANNE

I'm so sorry, Father is out. And Mother is having a day in town, hat-hunting. There's only me to entertain you.

(ANNE laughs a tiny, musical laugh.)

REGGIE

As-as-as a matter of fact, I've only come...to say good-bye.

ANNE

Oh! What a **very** short visit.

(ANNE laughs an extended, lilting laugh, frequently accompanied by the cooing of her doves.)

ANNE

(Through her laughter) I'm so sorry to be laughing like this. I don't know why I do. It's just a bad ha-ha-habit.

(She stamps her foot and wipes her eyes with a frilly handkerchief.)

ANNE

I really must conquer it, it's too absurd.

REGGIE

Good heavens, Anne, I love to hear you laughing! I can't imagine anything more--

ANNE

It just seems that since we met--

REGGIE

(Taking up her laughter with her) Yes, I know--when we're together--

(ANNE makes an heroic effort to conquer her laughter, but it keeps bubbling out. After a long time, she leads him to the swing where she sits.)

ANNE

I don't know why I'm laughing. *(Unsuppressed laughter)* Do sit down. And smoke. I'll have one too.

(REGGIE lights a match, lights her cigarette and then his. They pay excessive attention to the cigarettes and the smoke for a while.)

ANNE

It's tomorrow that you're going, isn't it?

REGGIE

Yes, tomorrow as ever was.

ANNE

Tomorrow.

REGGIE

It's--it's frightfully hard to believe.

ANNE

Yes--isn't it.

(They study the cigarettes and the smoke for a while.)

ANNE

I feel you've been here for years.

REGGIE

It's ghastly, this idea of going back.

(The doves coo gently.)

ANNE

But you're fond of being there, aren't you? Father was saying only the other night how lucky he thought you were to have a life of your own.

REGGIE

I don't feel fearfully lucky.

(The doves coo.)

ANNE

You mean it's lonely.

REGGIE

Oh, it isn't the loneliness I care about. *(He savagely stumps out his cigarette.)* I could stand any amount of it, used to like it even. It's the idea of--of--of--of--

(REGGIE smiles wanly. The doves coo. ANNE jumps up.)

ANNE

Come and say good-bye to my doves. You do like doves, don't you, Reggie?

REGGIE

(Totally committed) Awfully!

ANNE

You see, the one in front, she's Mrs. Dove. She looks at Mr. Dove and gives that little laugh and runs forward, and he follows her, bowing and bowing. And that makes her laugh again. Away she runs, and after her comes poor Mr. Dove, bowing and bowing... And that's their whole life. They never do anything else.

REGGIE

Oh.

ANNE

When you think of them, out in Rhodesia, Reggie, you can be sure this is what they'll be doing...

(Long moment while they both study the doves. Then:)

REGGIE

Anne, do you think you could ever care for me?

(The doves coo, and the cello rises up softly in the background.)

ANNE

No. Never in that way.

(The doves and cello stop immediately. ANNE retreats across her garden, then abruptly stops and faces REGGIE.)

It isn't that I'm not awfully fond of you. I am. But-- *(Her face begins to quiver.)* not in the way *(A laugh starts to work its way up.)* one ought to be fond of-- *(She breaks fully into her lilting laughter.)* There, you see, you see, it's your check t-tie. E-e-even at this m-moment, when one would think one would be solemn, your tie reminds me fearfully of the bow-tie that cats wear in pictures! Oh, Reggie, please forgive me for being so horrid. Please!

(REGGIE catches her hand.)

REGGIE

There's no question of forgiving you. How could there be? And I do believe I know why I make you laugh. It's because you're so far above me in every way that I am somehow ridiculous. I see that, Anne. But if I were to--

ANNE

No. No! It's not that. That's all wrong. I'm not far above you at all. You're much better than I am. You're marvelously unselfish and...and kind. I'm not. You don't know me. I'm the most awful character. Please don't interrupt! And besides, that's not the point. The point is-- It's-- I couldn't possibly marry a man I laughed at. Surely you see that. The man I marry--

(The cello takes over. Possibly the shadow of a tall, debonair man crosses the stage.)

REGGIE

Yes. I see.

ANNE

Do you? Oh, I do hope you do. Because I feel so horrid about it. It's so hard to explain. You know I've never-- *(She smiles sweetly, honestly--directly at him.)* I can say anything to you. I always have been able to from the very beginning.

(REGGIE smiles wanly.)

I've never known anyone I like as much as you. I've never felt so happy with anyone.

(The doves coo.)

But I'm sure it's not what people and what books mean when they talk about love. Do you understand? Oh, if you only knew how horrid I feel. But we'd be like...like Mr. and Mrs. Dove.

(Very sad cello strain. The doves coo mournfully.)

REGGIE

I must be getting along. Mother will be waiting for me.

(He starts off. Suddenly, ANNE runs after him.)

ANNE

No, don't! You can't go yet. You can't possibly go away feeling like that.

REGGIE

Oh, that's all right. I'll-- I'll--

ANNE

But this is **awful**. Surely you do see how fatal it would be for us to marry. Don't you?

REGGIE

Oh, quite. Quite.

ANNE

How wrong, how wicked, feeling as I do. I mean, it's all very well for Mr. and Mrs. Dove. But imagine that in real life--imagine it!

REGGIE

Oh, absolutely.

(ANNE tugs at his sleeve and comes very close to tears.)

ANNE

Then why, if you understand, are you so un-unhappy? *(She breaks into tears.)* Why do you mind so fearfully? Why do you look so aw-awful?

REGGIE

(Also near tears) I can't help it. I've had a blow. If I cut off now, I'll be able to--

(ANNE stamps her foot furiously.)

ANNE

How can you talk of cutting off now? How can you be so cruel? I can't let you go until I know

for certain that you are just as happy as you were before you asked me to marry you. Surely you must see that! It's so simple!

(REGGIE looks very confused.)

ANNE

Even if I can't marry you, how can I know that you're all that way away with only that awful mother to write to and that you're miserable and that it's all my fault?

REGGIE

It's not your fault. Don't think that. It's just fate.

(REGGIE removes her hand from his sleeve and kisses it.)

Don't pity me, dear Anne.

(The doves coo almost triumphantly. REGGIE turns and goes through the garden gate.)

ANNE

(In tears) Reggie.

(REGGIE turns back.)

ANNE

(Her laugh bubbling up and taking over) Reggie! Reggie! Come back, Mr. Dove.

(Doves cooing and cello interspersed as REGGIE returns slowly; then they clasp each other in their arms, both of them blubbing and laughing simultaneously. They exit together to a slow fade, which stops as KATHERINE enters and takes JACK's hand.)

JACK

(To the audience) You understand, of course, that this piece is **not** about us.

((KATHERINE looks slyly at JACK and breaks into Anne's laugh. JACK frowns exaggeratedly; then they hug each other and laugh together.)

JACK

Now tell me honestly, if I'm Reggie aren't you Anne? A wee bit? And a wee bit Violet?

KATHERINE

(Noticeably changing the subject) I'd like to change the subject a wee bit.

JACK

Ah-hah!

(JACK, who will usually be foremost at setting the stage throughout the play--removes the set pieces. KATHERINE pulls her notebook from a pocket and recites to the audience.)

KATHERINE

I'm not sure the reason,
 Perhaps it's the season,
 But of late I've been feeling quite horrid.
 Been coughing and sneezing,
 Amazing loud wheezing.
 So I said, "Buck up, Kate. You're **so** morbid."
 Still for days now I've been
 (Pulse one sixteen
 Temperature one o three)
 Lying in bed
 With a wandering head
 And a weak, weak cup of tea.
 Injections, tres chere,
 In my cute derriere
 Driven into a muscular wad
 With a needle thick
 As a walking stick--
 How **can** one believe in God!
 Plus--pleurisy
 And--Oh Mercy!--
 A head that went off on its own
 Rode a circular race
 That embraced every place
 I ever shall know or have known.
 I landed in Spain
 Went to China by train
 And rounded Cape Horn in a gale
 Ate ice cream in New York
 Caught the boat for Majourke
 And went up the Nile for a sail.

That's my admission, mostly to myself, that I have a larger problem than just nerves. So after putting it off for a long time, I see a doctor. And then more doctors and more doctors. And I take medicines and treatments and more treatments, but I still can't breathe right. Eventually I go to a doctor who's supposed to be the best.

DOCTOR'S VOICE

Your condition is very serious, Miss Mansfield.

(Long moment, while KATHERINE fights determinately not to cough.)

DOCTOR'S VOICE

Advanced, I'm sorry to say.

KATHERINE

But there is hope?

DOCTOR'S VOICE

Have you been exposed--closely--to any person who might have tuberculosis?

KATHERINE

My husband and I shared living quarters with...

DOCTOR'S VOICE

Yes?

KATHERINE

D.H.Lawrence. He's a writer...full of life. There's so much **life** in his writing.

DOCTOR'S VOICE

Well?

KATHERINE

He has tuberculosis.

DOCTOR'S VOICE

You **must** not remain in England during the winter. I can recommend a health spa in Germany.

KATHERINE

Germany?

DOCTOR'S VOICE

Germany.

KATHERINE

Then maybe...?

DOCTOR'S VOICE

Well, perhaps.

(The cello begins some melancholy German music. KATHERINE stops it immediately.)

KATHERINE

No, damn it! No cello music now; cymbals! This is me fighting back. I'm going to get healthy!

(Loud clash of pots and pans falling.)

There! So I go to Germany where the German doctor tells me I'm too thin and to eat more. Especially meat.

GERMANS AT MEAT

Katherine
Herr Schmidt
Herr Hoffmann
Fraulein Stiegelauer
Frau Lehrer
Widow

(The GERMANS sit at a heavily laden table and raise their eating utensils. Strains of Wagner, played on a cello, are heard in the background.)

KATHERINE

(To the audience) Well, in Germany, of course we have cello music.

(She walks toward the table.)

I go to the dining room and the table is piled high with meat—Wiener schnitzel, sauerbraten, ham, roast pork in ponds of thick gravy, sausages, bratwurst. And bread. Heavy brown bread and mounds of butter. Cream. Sour cream. Sauerkraut. Next story: “Germans at Meat.”

(She sits.)

HERR SCHMIDT

Ah, this is what I need. My shtomach has not been in order for several days. Bread soup, and just the right consistency. I am a good cook myself.

(He turns to KATHERINE who attempts to answer with some enthusiasm.)

KATHERINE

How interesting.

HERR SCHMIDT

Oh yes--when one is not married it is necessary. As for me, I have had all I wanted from women

without marriage. Now at nine o'clock I make myself an English breakfast, but not much. Four slices of bread, two eggs, two slices of cold ham, one plate of soup, two cups of tea--that is nothing to you Englishmen.

(All turn toward KATHERINE.)

KATHERINE

I...just have a cup of tea...when I'm dressing.

(No one acknowledges what she said.)

HERR HOFFMAN

Nothing at all. Ach, when I was in England in the morning I used to eat! *(He turns up his eyes and hands.)*

FRAULEIN STIEGELAUER

Do they really eat so much? Soup and baker's bread and pig's flesh, and tea and coffee and stewed fruit, and honey and eggs, and cold fish and kidneys, and hot fish and liver? All the ladies eat, too, especially the ladies?

HERR SCHMIDT

Certainly. I myself have noticed it, when I was living in a hotel in Leicester Square. It was a good hotel, but they could not make tea.

KATHERINE

That's one thing I **can** do. I love tea, for me it's the essence of life. The great secret is to warm the teapot.

HERR SCHMIDT

Warm the teapot! What do you warm the teapot for? Ha! that's very good! One does not eat the teapot, I suppose?

(All stare at KATHERINE.)

HERR SCHMIDT

So **that** is the great secret of your English tea? All you do is to warm the teapot.

(All laugh at KATHERINE. Then all tuck in their napkins and fall to eating.)

FRAU LEHRER

I eat sauerkraut with great pleasure, but now I have eaten so much of it that I cannot retain it. I am immediately forced to--

KATHERINE

A beautiful day! *(To FRAULEIN STIEGELAUER:)* Did you get up early?

FRAULEIN STIEGELAUER

At five o'clock I walked for ten minutes in the wet grass. Again in bed. At half-past five I fell asleep, and woke at seven, when I made an 'overbody' washing! Again in bed. At eight o'clock I had a cold-water poultice, and at half-past eight I drank a cup of mint tea. At nine I drank some malt coffee, and began my 'cure.' Pass me the sauerkraut, please. You do not eat it?

KATHERINE

No, thank you. I still find it a little strong.

WIDOW

Is it true that you are a vegetarian?

KATHERINE

Why, yes; I have not eaten meat for three years.

WIDOW

Im-possible! Have you any family?

KATHERINE

No.

WIDOW

There now, **that's** what you're coming to! Who ever heard of having children upon vegetables? **Not** possible. But you never have large families in England now; I suppose you are too busy with your suffragetting. Now I have had nine children. Fine, healthy babies--though after the first one was born I had to--

KATHERINE

How **wonderful!**

WIDOW

Wonderful? Tush! A friend of mine had four at the same time. Her husband was so pleased he gave a supper-party and had them placed on the table. She was **very** proud.

FRAU LEHRER

Germany is the home of the Family.

(All drink.)

HERR SCHMIDT

How long are you remaining here?

KATHERINE

I don't know exactly. I must be back in London in September.

HERR SCHMIDT

Of course you will visit Munchen.

KATHERINE

I am afraid I shall not have time. You see, it is important not to break into my 'cure.'

HERR SCHMIDT

Not see **Munchen**? Not to see Munchen is not to see Germany! All the Exhibitions, all the Art and Soul, the **life** of Germany are in Munchen. The Wagner Festival, the Mozart, and the beer! You do not know what good beer is until you have been to Munchen. Why, I see fine ladies every afternoon; fine ladies, I tell you, drinking glasses **so** high.

HERR HOFFMANN

If I drink a great deal of Munchen beer I sweat. When I am here, in the fields or before my baths, I sweat, but I enjoy it; in the town it is not at all the same thing.

(He wipes his face and neck with his napkin, cleans his ears with it, and then tucks it back under his chin.)

FRAULEIN STIEGELAUER

Time for fruit! Fruit is so necessary to health. The doctor told me this morning that the more fruit I could eat the better.

FRAU LEHRER

(To KATHERINE) I suppose you are frightened of an invasion, eh? I've been reading your English newspapers.

KATHERINE

(Resolutely) I assure you we are **not** afraid.

HERR SCHMIDT

Well, then, you ought to be. You have got no army at all--a few little boys with their veins full of nicotine poisoning.

HERR HOFFMANN

Don't be afraid. We don't want England. If we did we would have had her long ago. We really do not want you.

KATHERINE

We certainly do not want **Germany**.

(Standoff. Then all eat fruit and wipe their mouths.)

WIDOW

What is your husband's favorite meat?

KATHERINE

I really do not know.

WIDOW

You really do not know? How long have you been married?

KATHERINE

Three years.

WIDOW

But you cannot be in earnest! You would not have kept house as his wife for a week without knowing that fact.

KATHERINE

I really never asked him; he is not at all particular about food.

(All shake their heads at KATHERINE.)

WIDOW

No wonder things are so dreadful in England. It's like Paris!

(KATHERINE storms off and slams a door after herself.)

WIDOW

How can a woman expect to keep her husband if she does not know his favorite food after three years?

(All remove their napkins, fold them precisely, set them assertively on the table, "Humph," and march out.)

JACK enters from one side and KATHERINE from the other. KATHERINE is wearing Grandma's afghan. From this point on she will dress increasingly warmer against an inner chill--especially a chill in her hands.)

JACK

Dammit, it's just too much! I try to pay the bills for the Atheneum and I can't. I try to pay my own bills and I can't. I try to send money to Katherine. To edit the journal. To work on my own books. I haven't touched Dostoevsky in weeks.

Tig! you're home early!

KATHERINE

I should say so. Let's have a good cup of tea. I'll make it. And then let's go to bed.

JACK

Then you're feeling better?

KATHERINE

Not particularly.

JACK

But good enough to go to bed?

KATHERINE

(Lasciviously) Yes-s-s. *(Then she adds:)* I **do** know how to keep a husband, don't I, Tig?

(JACK growls eagerly.)

JACK

(To the audience) This is where the Tig part comes in. *(To KATHERINE:)* Isn't it, Tig?

KATHERINE

We'll leave the audience to imagine the Tig part, Tig. This is a family show.

JACK

I'm going off to pout.

(JACK exits.)

KATHERINE

But first, it might help you understand the next story better if I take you back to New Zealand for a bit. When I was six, we had a miracle in our big, rather lonely house: the birth of my little baby brother Leslie. Chummie. Mother, of course, was too frail to care for him--or to care very much about him. And it's true, she did have more babies than she could handle. Four girls now, including the one who died, and Chummie.

(MOTHER enters, carrying a few flowers, accompanied by GRANDMA, carrying a chair. GRANDMA sets the chair in a sheltered nook aside, helps MOTHER to it, takes the afghan from KATHERINE and tucks it around MOTHER. GRANDMA exits. MOTHER admires a flower.)

KATHERINE

(Reading from a manuscript) The golden-eyed marigolds glittered. If only she had time to look at these flowers long enough, time to know them! Time to... But as soon as she paused to part the petals, to discover the underside of the leaf, along came Life and she was swept away.

Lounging in her chair, Mother felt so light; she felt like a leaf. Along came Life like a wind and

she was seized and shaken.

(GRANDMA enters with a bundled baby.)

GRANDMA

(Cheerily) Here he is. Here's your little darling.

(GRANDMA starts to hand the baby to MOTHER.)

MOTHER

Just set him down there, please.

(GRANDMA tenderly sets the bundle by MOTHER's feet and exits. MOTHER drops her flowers and studies the baby without moving toward him. She smiles slightly, then checks her smile.)

MOTHER

I don't like babies.

(She continues to look at him.)

MOTHER

Why do you keep on smiling? If you understood me, you wouldn't.

(Continuing to study the baby, she comes close to tears. Eventually, she pokes him gently with one finger.)

MOTHER

Hallo, my funny.

(She restrains herself, sits back up and stares off into the distance. GRANDMA enters, tenderly smooths MOTHER's hair, and picks up the baby.)

GRANDMA

Give Mummy a kiss, Chummie.

(GRANDMA holds the baby up to MOTHER. MOTHER barely responds. GRANDMA takes the baby to another nook and sits with him cradled in her arms.)

KATHERINE

For me, Life happened so simply then--without any preparation and without any shock. I remember when Grandma called me in to see my new baby brother.

(GRANDMA beckons to KATHERINE. Now a little girl, KATHERINE approaches GRANDMA on tiptoes. She studies the bundle.)

KATHERINE
Is it alive?

GRANDMA
Of course.

(KATHERINE slowly puts out a finger for the baby to grasp. Success. KATHERINE giggles.)

KATHERINE
Look at him holding my finger!

GRANDMA
Do you like him?

KATHERINE
Yes! Can he ride in my new wagon?

GRANDMA
By-and-by.

(KATHERINE runs once around the area in joy.)

GRANDMA
(Laughing) Hush now. His name is Leslie. We'll call him Chummie.

KATHERINE
Chummie. Chummie, Chummie, Chummie, Chummie, Chummie!

GRANDMA
You may kiss him.

(KATHERINE bends over very carefully to kiss him.)

GRANDMA
Now go and kiss your mother.

(MOTHER notices KATHERINE approaching, picks up her afghan and exits.)

KATHERINE
Can I hold him?

(GRANDMA holds Chummie out toward KATHERINE as JACK enters, his attention on some manuscripts. GRANDMA vanishes with Chummie as KATHERINE becomes an adult again.)

JACK

I **really** think you should keep these stories in the order you wrote them.

KATHERINE

Huh-uh. I'm trying for an underlying flow. *(To the audience:)* To be fair to Mother and Father, I want to tell you about them next. *(To JACK:)* We'll put "The Stranger" in here.

(JACK shrugs.)

JACK

"The Stranger"? Eh. We can always change the order.

(JACK puts on a nautical cap to become CAPT. JOHNSON. KATHERINE steps well to the edge of the stage.)

THE STRANGER

John Hammond
 Capt. Johnson
 Mrs. Scott
 Janey Hammond
 Bellhop
 Offstage voices

(Sounds of a waterfront: gulls, one-cylinder engines putting slowly, far-off steam whistles.)

JOHN HAMMOND, very well dressed, paces up and down, impatiently twirling his folded umbrella. With any others on hand, he is anxiously awaiting the docking of a steamship out in the harbor.)

JOHN

Curious thing, Mrs. Scott, that none of us thought of binoculars. Might have been able to stir 'em up. Might have managed a little signaling: "Don't hesitate to land. Natives harmless." Or: "A welcome awaits you."

CAPT. JOHNSON

Fine-looking ship. Fine-looking crew.

JOHN

Yes. Appears so. Did the job right, didn't they.

CAPT. JOHNSON

No doubt.

JOHN

Wish they'd put into shore now.

CAPT. JOHNSON

These things take time--sometimes.

JOHN

My wife's been in Europe for the last ten months. Tried to bring one of our daughters back home. *(He paces a bit, then pulls out his watch and snaps it open.)* Let me see now. It was two-fifteen when the doctor's launch went out to them. Two-fifteen. It is now exactly twenty-eight minutes past four. That is to say, the doctor's been gone two hours and thirteen minutes. Two hours and thirteen minutes! *(He snaps his watch shut and puts it away.)* I think we should have been told if there was anything up--don't you, Captain?

CAPT. JOHNSON

Oh yes, Mr. Hammond. Nothing to worry about--nothing... At the same time...

JOHN

Quite so! Quite so! Dashed annoying!

MRS. SCOTT

It's getting a bit dark too.

JOHN

Quite so. I expect you ladies will be wanting your tea.

MRS. SCOTT

That **would** be nice. A nice warm cup of tea.

JOHN

Perhaps Janey's having a last cup now while she's waiting out the delay.

MRS. SCOTT

Look! she's moving!

(The sound of a ship's horn reaches them. Gradually the sound of an approaching engine.)

JOHN

Why so she is! But so slowly!

CAPT. JOHNSON

These things take time, sir.

KATHERINE

With her bell ring-ringing, the thrum of her screw filling the air, the big liner bore down on them, cutting sharp through the dark water so that big white shavings curled to either side. John Hammond kept in front of the waiting crowd. He took off his hat; he raked the decks--they were crammed with passengers; he...

(JOHN waves his hat and bawls a loud "Hul-lo!" across the waters and then starts laughing boyishly.)

CAPT. JOHNSON

Seen her?

JOHN

No, not yet.

CAPT. JOHNSON

Takes time. These things take time.

JOHN

Steady--wait a bit! Thank God! There she is! There's Janey! Well, that's first class--first class! Well, well, well! *(He draws out a cigar case and offers a cigar to CAPT. JOHNSON.)* Have a cigar, Captain! They're pretty good. Have a couple! Here!

CAPT. JOHNSON

Thanks, Mr. Hammond.

KATHERINE

There she was, leaning on the rail, watching him, ready for him. It struck him, as the gulf of water closed, how small she looked on that huge ship. How little she looked to have gone all that long way and back by herself! Just like her, though. Just like Janey.

JOHN

The gangplank's being lowered! At last!

VOICES ALL AROUND

All well?

All well.

How's mother?
 Much better.
 Hullo, Chuck.
 Hullo, Aun' Emily!
 Had a good voyage?
 Splendid!
 Shan't be long now!
 Not long now.

(The engines stop.)

Make way!

CAPT. JOHNSON

Make way there--make way--make way!

(JOHN charges up the gangplank to JANEY. MRS. SCOTT and CAPT. JOHNSON exit.)

JOHN

Well, well, well! Yes, yes! Here we are at last!

JANEY

Well, darling! Have you been waiting long?

JOHN

No, not long. Ages! It doesn't matter now. It's all all right now.

JANEY

How are the children, John?

JOHN

(A gesture of "hang the children") Never better in their lives.

JANEY

Haven't they sent me letters?

JOHN

Yes, yes--of course. I've left them at the hotel for you to digest later. *(Taking her arm)* I've a man coming for your bags.

JANEY

We can't go quite so fast. I've got people to say good-bye to--and the Captain. If the Captain comes off the bridge I want you to thank him for having looked after your wife so beautifully.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Good-bye, **dear** Mrs. Hammond. And the next time you're in Sydney, I'll **expect** you.

JANEY

Darling, I need to settle with the stewardess.

(JANEY exits--while JOHN stands eagerly waiting.)

SECOND WOMAN'S VOICE

You won't forget to write me, will you, Mrs. Hammond?

MAN'S VOICE

Oh, Mrs. Hammond, thanks so much for all the help with our daughter.

(JANEY pops back onstage.)

JANEY

Darling--do you mind? I just want to go and say good-bye to the doctor.

JOHN

I'll come with you.

JANEY

No, no! Don't bother. I'd rather not. I'll not be a minute.

(She pops offstage. He paces, sits, checks his watch, fidgets with his umbrella. She pops back on.)

JOHN

Janey, have you been ill on this voyage? You have!

JANEY

Ill? *(She hugs him.)* Darling, of course I haven't! What makes you think I have? Do I look ill?

(He breaths deeply--calming down.)

JANEY

Stand still. I want to look at you. I haven't seen you yet. You look--younger, I think, and decidedly thinner. Bachelor life agrees with you.

JOHN

Agrees with me! *(He groans and grabs her close to him.)* For God's sake let's get to the hotel so we can be by ourselves!

(She takes his arm and they walk to the 'hotel.')

JANEY

It's a lovely room.

JOHN

Glad to be back again, dearie?

(She smiles at him.)

JOHN

Best room in the hotel. I wouldn't be put off with another. I asked the chambermaid to put in this fire in case you felt chilly. And I thought we wouldn't bother to go home tomorrow. Spend the day looking round and leave the morning after. Does that suit you? There's no hurry, is there? The children will have you soon enough.... I thought a day's sight-seeing might make a nice break in your journey--eh, Janey?

JANEY

Have you taken the tickets for the day after?

JOHN

I should say I have! *(He pulls the tickets from his wallet.)* Here we are! I reserved a first-class compartment to Cooktown. There it is--'Mr. **and** Mrs. John Hammond.' Thought we might as well do ourselves comfortably. Don't want other people butting in, do we? But if you'd like to stop here a bit longer--?

JANEY

Oh, no! Not for the world! The day after tomorrow, then--

(JOHN goes to hug JANEY. A BELLHOP knocks, and enters.)

BELLHOP

I'll have your bags in no time, Mr. Hammond. *(Exits)*

JOHN

So many cursed other people, Janey.

JANEY

Oh, now, John--

JOHN

Let's have dinner up here. If we go down to the restaurant we'll be interrupted, and then there's the confounded music. We shan't be able to hear each other speak. Let's have something up here in front of the fire. I'll order a little supper, shall I? How does that idea strike you?

JANEY

Do, darling! And while you're away--the children's letters--

JOHN

Later on will do!

JANEY

But then we'd get it over. And I'd first have time to--

JOHN

I needn't go down! I'll just ring and give the order...you don't want to send me away, do you?

(JANEY shakes her head and smiles.)

JOHN

But you're thinking of something else. Worrying about something. Come--and sit on my knee before the fire.

(JANEY gives a little cry.)

JOHN

What is it?

JANEY

I see the children's letters! That's all right. They'll keep. No hurry now.

(She tucks the letters into her blouse. He turns off the light so that they are illuminated only by the fire.)

JOHN

Let's get down to things. *(He gestures to her and she sits on his lap.)* Tell me--tell me you're really glad to be back, Janey.

JANEY

Yes, darling, I am glad.

JOHN

Janey...

JANEY

Yes, dear?

JOHN

Janey--

JANEY

What is it?

JOHN

Turn to me. Kiss me, Janey! You kiss me!

(After a tiny pause, she kisses him lovingly but lightly.)

JOHN

If you knew...what it's been like--waiting today. I thought the boat never would come in. What kept you so long?

(She looks away from him into the flames.)

JOHN

Not asleep, are you?

(He bounces her on his knees.)

JANEY

No. Don't do that, dear. No, I was thinking. As a matter of fact, one of the passengers died last night--a man. That's what held us up. We brought him in--I mean, he wasn't buried at sea. So, of course, the ship's doctor and the shore doctor--

JOHN

What was it?

JANEY

Oh, it wasn't anything in the least infectious! It was heart. Poor fellow. Quite young. *(She watches the flames flicker.)* He died in my arms.

JOHN

(Very quietly) What? What's that you say?

JANEY

The end was quite peaceful. He just *(She lifts her hand a bit.)* breathed his life away at the end. *(Her hand falls.)*

JOHN

Who--else was there?

JANEY

Nobody. I was alone with him.

(JOHN is near tears.)

I saw the change coming and I sent the steward for the doctor, but the doctor was too late. He couldn't have done anything, anyway.

JOHN

But--why **you**, why **you**?

(JANEY searches his face.)

JANEY

You don't **mind**, John, do you? You don't-- It's nothing to do with you and me.

(JOHN attempts a smile.)

JOHN

No--go--on, go on! I want you to tell me.

JANEY

But, John, darling--

JOHN

Tell me, Janey!

JANEY

There's nothing to tell. I saw he was very ill when he came on board.... But he seemed to be so much better until yesterday. He had a severe attack in the afternoon--excitement--nervousness, I think, about arriving. And after that he never recovered.

JOHN

But why didn't the stewardess--!

JANEY

Oh, my dear--the stewardess? What would he have felt? And besides...he might have wanted to leave a message...to--

JOHN

Didn't he? Didn't he say anything?

JANEY

No, darling, not a word. All the time I was with him he was too weak...he was too weak even to move a finger.

(JOHN tries to touch her face. She sets his hand aside and straightens his tie.)

JANEY

You're not--sorry I told you, John darling? It hasn't made you sad? It hasn't spoiled our evening--our being alone together?

(JOHN puts his face in her bosom and clings to her. After a bit, JANEY arises and walks to the fire.)

KATHERINE

Spoiled their evening? Spoiled their being alone together?

JOHN

Janey?

KATHERINE

They would **never** be alone together.

(JANEY and JOHN exit separate ways. After a pause, to the audience:)

KATHERINE

Haven't you found it difficult to be fair...**and** honest...to your parents?

(Moment)

I was not necessarily a model daughter. I know I caused Mother and Father heartache when I put on my best display of petulant little girl so they'd just **have** to let me leave home and sail to England. When Mother thought I was a lesbian and steamed all the way from New Zealand to "set me right" and I wouldn't answer her questions. When I married an older man I didn't love and left him the next day. When I invited Jack to move in with me and **didn't** marry him for years. When I kept insisting to Father that I needed more and more money for support because I needed to be a writer and couldn't live on my writing.

But I hope I was sympathetic to them in that story. I call it "The Stranger." Mother never had a chance to read it. And Father? I don't know. I do know that eventually--finally--he was proud of my writing—and of me.

Hustling, bustling, sociable Father--always underneath it all, always a lonely little boy. I can never think of Mother and Father without becoming a little sad. From them came three daughters, all of whom fled New Zealand. And Gwen who died very, very young. But then there was Chummie--the brightest, loveliest, sunniest boy you ever saw.

(A silver glow suffuses the stage. CHUMMIE enters as a boy.)

KATHERINE

(Reading from a manuscript) They are walking up and down the garden in Tinakori Road. The Michaelmas daisies are bright as feathers. From the old fruit-tree at the bottom of the garden--the slender tree rather like a poplar--there falls a round pear, hard as a stone.

CHUMMIE

Do you hear that, Katie? Another pear. Can you find it?

(KATHERINE sets the manuscript aside.)

KATHERINE

Their hands move over the thin moist grass. He picks up the pear, and polishes it on his shirt.

(CHUMMIE hands the pear toward KATHERINE. Becoming a girl again, she approaches him.)

CHUMMIE

There are ever so many pears there by the tree.

KATHERINE

In among the violets.

CHUMMIE

Let's pick up as many as we can hold.

KATHERINE

Mind now, hold one hand over your head so the falling pears don't brain you.

CHUMMIE

Look how far they're scattered! Under the violet leaves, down the steps, right down to the lily-lawn. Look, here's one with ants in it. See? a little round hole with a sort of fringe of brown pepper around it.

KATHERINE

Mind the ant on your hand.

CHUMMIE

The pears are so bright, canary yellow! Look, here's one that's ripe. *(He drops the other pears and eats one.)* First you must pull the stem out and suck on it. Then you must always eat the pear from the top. Core and all. Here, try.

(KATHERINE reaches toward CHUMMIE for a pear.)

CHUMMIE

The pips are delicious.

(CHUMMIE freezes. KATHERINE freezes; tears well up in her eyes.)

KATHERINE

You're cold.

CHUMMIE

Dreadfully cold.

(Suddenly he reaches for her, then stops.)

CHUMMIE

Good-bye, darling.

KATHERINE

Why do you say that!

CHUMMIE

Darling, good-bye, good-bye.

(Lights fade to one soft spot on KATHERINE as CHUMMIE drifts off. Simultaneously, a few measures of cello come up softly and die away.)

KATHERINE

All Europe is at war. Chummie went to War. And died immediately. Still just a boy. *(She draws a letter from inside her blouse and reads it.)* Dear Chummie, A musty, misty evening. I am not afraid of death--I welcome the idea of death. I believe in immortality because you are not here, and I long to join you. First, my darling, I've got things to do for both of us, and then I will come as quickly as I can. Dearest heart, I know you are there, and I live with you, and **I will write for you**. Indeed, I am always with you, and I feel that you know--that when I leave this place it will be with you. You're in my flesh as well as my soul. I give others my "surplus" love, but to you I give my deepest love. Katie.

(To the audience:) Now, if I could only post this letter. You've written letters to dead loved ones too, haven't you? Or talked with them? Sometimes it feels like it helps.

Please excuse me for a few minutes.

(KATHERINE exits. JACK enters.)

JACK

We'll need to have an intermission here.

(Blackout)

ACT II

(KATHERINE enters, trying to warm her hands around a cup of tea. She tries to speak, has trouble, sips her tea, draws a careful breath, and takes the small notebook from her pocket and reads to the audience.)

KATHERINE

The Tedious Brief Adventure of K. M.

A Doctor who came from Jamaica
Said: “This time I’ll mend her or break her.
I’ll plug her with serum;
And if she can’t bear ‘em
I’ll call in the next undertaker.”

His next in command, Doctor Byam,
Said: “Right-o, old fellow, we’ll try ‘em,
For I’m an adept-o
At pumping in strepto
Since I was a surgeon in Siam.”

The patient, who hailed from New Zealing,
Said: “Pray don’t consider my feeling,
Provided you’re certain
Twill not go on hurtin,
I’ll lie here and smile at the ceiling.”

These two very bloodthirsty men
Injected five million, then ten,
But found that the strepto
Had suddenly crept to
Her feet—and the worst happened then!

Any day you may happen to meet
Her alone in the Hampstead High Street
In a box on four wheels
And a wreath at her heels
Heading down down down-down full six feet.

(She finally gives in to a fit of coughing. Then:)

Don’t get me wrong. And **don’t feel sorry** for me. Bodily suffering such as I’ve known for years has changed everything—forever. Even the **appearance** of the world is not the same—there is something added. **Everything** has its shadow. I feel my suffering has been an immense

privilege. If we set out on a journey, the more wonderful the treasure the greater the perils to be overcome. And if someone rebels and says Life isn't good enough on those terms, well I say, "It is."

I believe the greatest failing of all is **to be frightened**.

So let's have another comic piece here. "The Modern Soul."

(She exits, but pops light-heartedly right back on.)

Of course I'll have to admit this is one where I go off to Switzerland to try to relieve my suffering.

JACK

(Entering) Wait, dear, it gets cold there. I want to give you this.

(JACK hands her a fox-fur muff. She beams joyously and gives him a big hug and kiss. JACK exits, discretely wiping his mouth with a handkerchief.)

THE MODERN SOUL

Katherine
Professor Windberg
Fraulein Sonia Godowska
Waiter
Frau Oberlehrer

(KATHERINE strolls across the stage and sits on the bench. She expects to relax by herself. Almost immediately PROFESSOR WINDBERG enters. He is carrying his wind instrument—ideally a trombone.)

PROFESSOR

Good evening, Fraulein, wonderful weather! I return from a party in the woods. I have been making music for them on my trombone. These pine trees provide most suitable accompaniment for a trombone! They are sighing delicacy against sustained strength, as I remarked once in a lecture on wind instruments in Frankfort. May I be permitted to sit beside you on this bench? *(With no encouragement, he sits immediately and pulls a small paper bag of cherries from his pocket.)* Cherries. There is nothing like cherries for producing free saliva after trombone playing, especially after Grieg's "Ich Liebe Dich." Those sustained blasts on "liebe" make my throat as dry as a railway tunnel. Have some?

KATHERINE

I prefer watching you eat them.

PROFESSOR

Ah, ha!

(He crosses his legs, sticking the bag between his knees. As he talks, he eats, salivating increasingly.)

PROFESSOR

Psychologically I understand your refusal. It is your innate feminine delicacy in preferring etherealized sensations...or perhaps you do not care to eat the worms. All cherries contain worms. Once I made a very interesting experiment with a colleague of mine at the university. We bit into four pounds of the best cherries and did not find one specimen without a worm. But as I remarked to him, it amounts to this: if one wishes to satisfy the desires of nature one must be strong enough to ignore the facts of nature. This conversation is not out of your depth? I have so seldom the time or opportunity to open my heart to a woman that I am apt to forget.

(KATHERINE looks at him impishly as the PROFESSOR digs into the bag.)

See what a fat one! That is almost a mouthful in itself; it is beautiful enough to hang from a watch-chain.

(He chews it up and spits the stone an incredible distance—with pride in his feat.)

The quantity of fruit I have eaten on this bench: apricots, peaches, and cherries. One day this garden bed will become an orchard grove, and I shall allow you to pick as much as you please, without paying me anything.

(KATHERINE good-naturedly registers her gratitude. Lavishly dressed, FRAU and FRAULEIN GODOWSKA enter. The PROFESSOR spruces himself.)

The Godowskas... Do you know them? A mother and daughter from Vienna. The mother has an internal complaint and the daughter is an actress. Fraulein Sonia is a very modern soul. I think you would find her most sympathetic. She is forced to be in attendance on her mother just now. But what a temperament! I have once described her in her autograph album as tigress with a flower in her hair. Will you excuse me? Perhaps I can persuade them to be introduced to you.

KATHERINE

I am going up to my room.

PROFESSOR

(Shaking his finger at her playfully) Na, we are friends, and, therefore, I shall speak quite frankly to you. I think they would consider it a little 'marked' if you immediately retired to the inn at their approach, after sitting here alone with me in the twilight. You know this world. Yes, you know it as I do.

(KATHERINE shrugs her shoulders. The GODOWSKAS approach, and the

PROFESSOR stands.)

FRAU GODOWSKA

Good evening. Wonderful weather! It has given me quite a touch of hay fever!

(Silently, FRAULEIN GODOWSKA stretches out her hand in a magnificent gesture to the PROFESSOR.)

PROFESSOR

This is my little English friend of whom I have spoken.

(FRAULEIN GODOWSKA repeats her gesture to KATHERINE.)

PROFESSOR

She is the stranger in our midst. We have been eating cherries together.

FRAU GODOWSKA

Cherries give me a touch of...brulures d'estomac.

(ALL seat themselves on the bench. FRAU GODOWSKA sneezes.)

FRAU GODOWSKA

I wonder if it is hay fever, or would it be the dew? Sonia, dear, is the dew falling?

FRAULEIN GODOWSKA

No, Mama, my face is quite warm. Oh, look, Herr Professor, there are swallows in flight; they are like a little flock of Japanese thoughts—nicht wahr?

PROFESSOR

Where? Ah-ha! Yes, by the kitchen chimney. But why do you say 'Japanese'? Could you not compare them with equal veracity to a little flock of German thoughts in flight? *(To KATHERINE:)* Have you swallows in England?

KATHERINE

I believe there are some at certain seasons. But doubtless they have not the same symbolical value for the English. In Germany—

FRAULEIN GODOWSKA

I have never been to England, but I have many English acquaintances. They are so cold! *(She shivers.)*

FRAU GODOWSKA

Fish-blooded. Without soul, without heart, without grace. But you cannot equal their dress materials. I spent a week in Brighton twenty years ago, and the traveling cape I bought there is not yet worn out—the one you wrap the hot-water bottle in, Sonia. My lamented husband, your

father, Sonia, knew a great deal about England. But the more he knew about it the oftener he remarked to me, "England is merely an island of beef flesh swimming in a warm gulf stream of gravy." Such a brilliant way of putting things. Do you remember, Sonia?

FRAULEIN GODOWSKA

I forget nothing, Mamma.

PROFESSOR

That is proof of your calling, dear Fraulein. Now I wonder—and this is a very interesting speculation—is memory a blessing or—excuse the word—a curse?

(FRAU GODOWSKA looks into the distance, her mouth drops, and she begins to shed tears.)

PROFESSOR

Ach Gott! Gracious lady, what have I said?

FRAULEIN GODOWSKA

(Taking FRAU GODOWSKA's hand) Mother dear, tonight it is stewed carrots and nut tart for supper. Suppose we go in and take our places.

(FRAULEIN GODOWSKA looks accusingly at the PROFESSOR and KATHERINE and leads FRAU GODOWSKA away.)

FRAU GODOWSKA

(Murmuring) Such a wonderful, beloved man. He used always to say...

(FRAU GODOWSKA's voice trails off, and she blows her nose in an elaborate handkerchief as they exit. The PROFESSOR shakes his head for quite a while, then offers his arm to KATHERINE and they exit.)

The WAITER enters with a sign:

A concert for the benefit of afflicted Catholic infants
will take place in the salon at 8:30 P.M.

Artists:

Fraulein Sonia Godowska, from Vienna

Herr Professor Windberg and his trombone, from Stuttgart

Frau Oberlehrer, and others.

The WAITER posts the sign.

The PROFESSOR and FRAULEIN GODOWSKA usher FRAU GODOWSKA and KATHERINE to seats in the audience.)

PROFESSOR

Fraulein Sonia and I will join you when our share of the concert is over. That will make you feel quite one of the performers. It is a great pity that the English nation is so unmusical. Never mind! Tonight you shall hear something—we have discovered a nest of talent. What do you intend to recite, Fraulein Sonia?

FRAULEIN GODOWSKA

(Shaking back her hair) I never know until the last moment. When I come on the stage I wait for one moment and then I have the sensation as though something struck me here!...and...words come!

FRAU GODOWSKA

Bend down a moment, Sonia love, your skirt safety-pin is showing at the back. Shall I fasten it properly for you?

FRAULEIN GODOWSKA

Mamma! Please don't say such things! You know how sensitive I am to the slightest unsympathetic impression at a time like this! I would rather my skirt dropped off my body—

FRAU GODOWSKA

Sonia—my heart!

(The WAITER enters, tinkles a bell, and pushes on a piano—or carries on an instrument for the PROFESSOR to accompany a singer—a trombone? a cello? The WAITER wipes the instrument with the grimy napkin he carries over his arm. The PROFESSOR marches onstage, readies himself for accompaniment, looking very important, as FRAU OBERLEHRER enters. After considerable ado, FRAU OBERLEHRER sings a brief but enthusiastic passage from “Die Walkure.” Following each act, the WAITER, with an absolute deadpan, holds up a sign “APPLAUSE.” At other times he stands aside and cleans his nails.)

FRAU GODOWSKA

Ach, how sweet, how delicate.

(FRAU GODOWSKA leads the applause, and FRAU OBERLEHRER acknowledges the justice of her triumph. The PROFESSOR leaves the instrument and drifts to where he can barely be seen offstage. There is an expectant pause as everyone looks at FRAULEIN GODOWSKA. The PROFESSOR urgently, but silently, indicates that it is her turn. FRAULEIN GODOWSKA rises grandly.)

FRAULEIN GODOWSKA

(Her hands to her temples) The moment is not... *(Significant pause)* not yet.

(She sits abruptly.)

PROFESSOR

Ach! Fraulein Sonia. What tem-per-ament! You are my inspiration. Tonight you shall be the soul of my trombone.

(The PROFESSOR plays Grieg's "Ich Liebe Dich," ending on a very long last note. Then he bows to FRAULEIN GODOWSKA, who marches gloriously onstage. The PROFESSOR drifts across stage from the WAITER and watches her with adoring attention.)

FRAULEIN GODOWSKA

(Gloriously reciting)

THE GREATNESS OF THE WORLD:

Through the world which the Spirit creative and kind
 First formed out of chaos, I fly like the wind,
 Until on the strand
 Of its billows I land,
 My anchor cast forth where the breeze blows no more,
 And Creation's last boundary stands on the shore.
 I saw infant stars into being arise,
 For thousands of years to roll on through the skies;
 I saw them in play
 Seek their goal far away—
 For a moment my fugitive gaze wandered on—
 I looked round me, and lo!—all those bright stars had flown!
 Madly yearning to reach the dark kingdom of night,
 I boldly steer on with the speed of the light;
 All misty and drear
 The dim heavens appear,
 While embryo systems and seas at their source
 Are whirling around the sun-wanderer's course.
 When sudden a pilgrim I see drawing near
 Along the lone path, "Stay! What seekest thou here?
 My bark, tempest-tossed,
 I sail toward the land where the breeze blows no more,
 And Creation's last boundary stands on the shore."
 "Stay, thou sailest in vain! 'Tis **Infinity** yonder!"
 "'Tis **Infinity**, too, where **thou**...pilgrim...wouldst wander."

(The PROFESSOR leads wild applause.)

PROFESSOR

What did I say? Tem-per-ament! She is a flame in the heart of a lily!

(The PROFESSOR goes to escort FRAULEIN GODOWSKA off the stage, but she breaks

forth, reciting both parts of a dialogue:)

FRAULEIN GODOWSKA

What? What is the matter?

(She is not talking to the PROFESSOR. After a moment's confusion, he beats a hasty retreat.)

You are so
Aloof and solemn. Can this be Don Manuel,
My beloved, my **husband**?

Beatrice!

No, do not speak! This is no time for words!
Every moment is precious—

Wait!

Away! Before those frantic men return.

Wait! Those men will not harm us.

O but they will, you do not know them! Come!

Protected by my arm, what can you fear?

Those men are men of power, O believe me.

Beloved, none more powerful than I.
Know now that they are **my** vassals, and I am their lord.

You are—a shudder courses through my soul!

Learn my name at last now, Beatrice.
For I am not the man I seemed to be.

Who are you? Are you not Don Manuel?

Don Manuel is my name—but—
I am Don Manuel, Don Cesar's brother!!!

Don Cesar is my brother.

Is **your** brother?

Does that frighten you? You know Don Cesar?

As—as—as...my brother!

O! O! O! O! O!

Woe! Woe! Woe! To you and me.

(She faints beautifully. Then arises gracefully. After acknowledging her triumph, she gestures to the PROFESSOR to join her and he plays "Deutschland Uber Alles" as she sings along.)

Somewhat peeved, FRAU OBERLEHRER hurries on after a few bars to join them. The show over, the WAITER takes down the signs and removes the instrument.)

FRAULEIN GODOWSKA

(To KATHERINE) Now I must put Mamma to bed. But afterwards I must free my spirit in the open air. Will you join me?

(All exit except KATHERINE, who takes up her muff and goes and sits on the bench. Soon, FRAULEIN GODOWSKA joins her.)

FRAULEIN GODOWSKA

It is so difficult here. There is...so little magic. Do you not feel it? There is none of that mysterious perfume which floats almost as an invisible spirit from the souls of the Viennese audiences. My spirit starves for that. Starves. Do you know that poem of Sappho about her hands in the stars? I am furiously Sapphic. And this is so remarkable—not only am I Sapphic, I find in all the works of all the greatest writers, some touch, some sign of...myself.

KATHERINE

But what a bother!

FRAULEIN GODOWSKA

I do not know what you mean by 'bother'; it is rather the curse of my genius. *(She pauses, then stares intently at KATHERINE.)* Do you know my tragedy?

(KATHERINE shakes her head.)

FRAULEIN GODOWSKA

My tragedy is my mother. Living with her I live with the coffin of my unborn aspirations. You heard that about the safety-pin tonight. It may seem to you a little thing, but it ruined my first three gestures. They were—

KATHERINE

Impaled on a safety pin?

FRAULEIN GODOWSKA

Yes! Exactly that. And when we are in Vienna I am the victim of moods, you know. I long to do wild, passionate things. And Mamma says, "Please pour out my mixture first." Once I remember I flew into a rage and threw a washstand jug out of the window. Do you know what she said?

(KATHERINE shakes her head.)

FRAULEIN GODOWSKA

"Sonia, it is not so much throwing things out of windows, if only you would—"

KATHERINE

Choose something smaller?

FRAULEIN GODOWSKA

No. "Tell me about it beforehand." Humiliating! And I see no possible light out of this darkness.

KATHERINE

Why don't you join a touring company and leave your mother in Vienna?

FRAULEIN GODOWSKA

What! Leave my poor, little, sick, widowed mother in Vienna! Sooner than that would I drown myself. My beloved Mother! Do you think it is impossible to love one's tragedy? "Out of my great sorrows I make my little songs"—that is either Heine or myself.

KATHERINE

Oh, well then, that's all right.

FRAULEIN GODOWSKA

But it is **not** all right!

KATHERINE

Well then, perhaps we should go in? The dew?

FRAULEIN GODOWSKA

Sometimes I think the solution lies in marriage. If I find a simple, peaceful man who adores me and will look after Mamma—a man who would be for me a pillow—for genius cannot hope to mate—I shall marry him.... You know the Herr Professor has paid me very marked attentions.

KATHERINE

Oh, Fraulein Sonia, why not marry him to your mother?

FRAULEIN GODOWSKA

(Stammering) You...you... The cruelty. I am going to faint. Mamma to marry again before I marry—the indignity. I am going to faint here and now.

KATHERINE

You can't! *(Shaking her)* Come back to the inn and faint as much as you please. But you can't faint here. There is nobody about. Please don't be so foolish.

FRAULEIN GODOWSKA

Here and here only!

(FRAU GODOWSKA faints beautifully.)

KATHERINE

Very well, faint away; but please hurry over it.

(As FRAULEIN GODOWSKA continues to lie still, KATHERINE runs crossly and finds the PROFESSOR.)

KATHERINE

Fraulein Sonia has fainted.

PROFESSOR

Du lieber Gott! Where? How?

KATHERINE

By the bench.

PROFESSOR

Has she no water with her? Nobody beside her?

KATHERINE

Nothing.

PROFESSOR

Where is my coat? No matter, I shall catch a cold on the chest. Willingly, I shall catch one. You are ready to come with me?

KATHERINE

No. You can take the waiter.

PROFESSOR

But she must have a woman! I cannot be so indelicate as to attempt to loose her corset.

KATHERINE

A modern woman shouldn't wear a corset.

(The PROFESSOR dashes to FRAULEIN GODOWSKA. Lights out on them as he helps her up and offstage. Lights up on KATHERINE as she speaks to the audience.)

KATHERINE

When I came down to breakfast next morning, there were two places vacant at the table. Fraulein Sonia and the Herr Professor had gone off for a day's excursion in the woods.

There now! Do you know how good it makes me feel to work? To finish another piece? Just watch. *(She walks around, looking for the right spot in the middle of the space, prepares to jump, wiggles like a cat about to pounce.)* No. Wait. Better have a bit of support. *(She goes to a chair and holds on to the back. Wiggles again. Then takes a small jump up, both feet barely getting off the floor.)* **That** was a Jump for Joy! Bet you didn't think I could do that. *(A sly grin, then a broad smile.)*

But to take you back to England, to the far end of Cornwall, where we thought we could escape the war hysteria and settle down and write. **However**, our 'friends'—D.H.Lawrence and his wife Frieda—had endless, disgusting fights and then he'd crawl back to her. It was all so humiliating. There's a story there, of course, but I could never bring myself to write it.

Soon, Jack and I are back in London, happily surrounded by painters and writers—Leonard and Virginia Woolf, who published one of my books—and E.M.Forster and Lytton Strachey and and and...

But there is the war, and Jack is in a war job because he's too nearsighted to see the end of a rifle. Which is good. He's one of the few young men I know who isn't sent to the war and killed. He's also trying to keep a literary magazine alive. A good one. Atheneum. He publishes my stories. And before long I'm in the South of France. For my health. That's where I write "Daughters of the Late Colonel." *(She calls offstage.)* Jack, let's forget our own problems for a while. Do you want to be the voice of the Colonel?

(JACK enters with a stage piece.)

JACK

No. He's dead.

KATHERINE

Cyril?

JACK

Fine. I'll play Cyril.

(KATHERINE takes a photo and places it on the set.)

KATHERINE

(To the audience) This is actually of picture of my Grandma. We'll use it as a photo of the girls' mother.

(KATHERINE moves back to her writing area.)

THE DAUGHTERS OF THE LATE COLONEL

Con (Constantia Pinner)

Jug (Josephine Pinner)

Mr. Farolles

Father (The Colonel—probably played only as a voice)

Cyril (played by Jack)

Kate (played by Katherine)

(Two areas are visible in the Pinner house: the sitting room and Father's bedroom. In the sitting room is Father's chair; in the bedroom his bed and wardrobe; all are draped in white sheets. In the sitting room is a faded photo of a woman. CON and JUG are in dressing gowns, with large fluffy slippers, at a writing desk intermittently writing letters. KATHERINE reads from a manuscript.)

KATHERINE

There was no getting over the fact that their serving girl, Kate, had been very kind to Father. She had nursed him day and night at the end. Indeed, both Constantia and Josephine felt privately she had rather overdone the not leaving him at the very last. For when they had gone in to say good-bye, Kate had sat beside his bed the whole time, holding his wrist and pretending to look at her watch. It couldn't have been necessary. It was so tactless, too. Supposing Father had wanted to say something—something private to them. Not that he had. Oh, far from it! He lay there, purple, a dark, angry purple in the face, and never even looked at them when they came in. Then, as they were standing there, wondering what to do, he had suddenly opened one eye. Oh, what a difference it would have made, what a difference to their memory of him, how much easier to tell people about it, if he had only opened both! But no—one eye only. It glared at them a moment and then...went out.

(CON and JUG both sigh.)

CON

Do you think Father would mind if we gave his top-hat to the porter?

JUG

The porter? Why ever the porter? What a very extraordinary idea!

CON

Because...he must often have to go to funerals. And I noticed at—at the cemetery that he only had a bowler. I thought then how very much he'd appreciate a top-hat. We ought to give him a present, too. He was always very nice to Father.

JUG

But Father's head! *(She suppresses a giggle. Then sternly:)* We can decide tomorrow. *(She sighs.)*

CON

(Sighs. Pause) Do you think we ought to have our dressing gowns dyed as well?

JUG

Black? Black!

CON

Well, what else? I was thinking—it doesn't seem quite sincere, in a way, to wear black out of doors and when we're fully dressed, and then when we're at home—

JUG

But nobody sees us.

CON

Kate does. And the postman very well might.

(They both study their slippers.)

JUG

Black. I don't think it's absolutely necessary.

(Silence. They sigh.)

CON

How many letters have we had up till now?

JUG

Twenty-three.

(They set to writing, moving their lips as they write. Presently, JUG speaks aloud.)

JUG

We miss our dear Father so much... *(She wipes a tear from the letter and wipes her eyes.)*

CON

Have you got enough stamps?

JUG

Oh! how can I tell?

(They sigh.

CON gives a slight start.)

CON

A mouse.

JUG

It can't be a mouse because there aren't any crumbs.

CON

But it doesn't know there aren't. *(She frets.)* I can't think how they manage to live at all.

JUG

What have mice got to do with it? You're delirious.

CON

I don't think I am.

(There is a knock on the door.)

CON and JUG

Oh dear! *(They pull their gowns tighter about them and tuck their slippers under them.)* Who is it?

MR. FAROLLES

It's Mr. Farolles. May I come in?

CON and JUG

(After taking deep breaths) Yes.

(MR. FAROLLES enters and bows.)

MR. FAROLLES

The end was quite peaceful, I trust?

JUG

Quite.

(CON and JUG both twitch slightly in one eye.)

JUG

Won't you sit down?

MR. FAROLLES

Thank you, Miss Pinner.

(He prepares to sit down on Father's Chair! Then quickly slides to another. He coughs.)

MR. FAROLLES

I want you to feel, Miss Pinner, and you, Miss Constantia, that I am trying to be helpful. I want to be helpful to you both, if you will let me. These are the times when God means us to be helpful to one another.

JUG and CON

Thank you very much, Mr. Farolles.

MR. FAROLLES

Not at all. *(He leans forward.)* And if either of you would like a little Communion, either or both of you, here **and** now, you have only to tell me. A little Communion is often very help— a great comfort.

(Fixing their eyes on Father's chair, CON and JUG are petrified.)

MR. FAROLLES

Perhaps you will send round a note by your good Kate if you would care for it later.

CON and JUG

Oh yes, thank you very much!

MR. FAROLLES

(Rising) And about the funeral...I may arrange that—as your dear father's old friend and yours, Miss Pinner—and Miss Constantia?

(A barrel organ is heard outside. CON and JUG register consternation. The noise passes off and CON and JUG rise.)

JUG

I should like it to be quite simple...and not too expensive. At the same time, I should like—

KATHERINE

a good one that will last, thought Constantia.

CON

Uh...uh...one suitable to our Father's position.

MR. FAROLLES

I will run round to our good friend Mr. Knight. I will ask him to come and see you. I am sure you will find him very helpful indeed. (*He exits.*)

KATHERINE

Well, at any rate, all that part of it was over, though neither of them could possibly believe that Father was never coming back. Josephine had had a moment of absolute terror at the cemetery, while the coffin was lowered, to think that she and Constantia had done this thing without asking his permission. What would Father say when he found out? For he was bound to find out sooner or later. He always did.

FATHER

Buried. You two girls had me **buried!**

KATHERINE

She heard his stick thumping. Oh, what would they say? What possible excuse could they make? It sounded such an appallingly heartless thing to do. Such a wicked advantage to take of a person because he happened to be helpless at the moment. The other people seemed to treat it all as a matter of course. They couldn't possibly understand that Father was the very last person for such a thing to happen to. No, the entire blame for it all would fall on her and Constantia. And the expense, she thought. When she had to show him the bills, **what would he say then?**

FATHER

Do you expect me to pay for this gimcrack excursion of yours?

JUG

(*Groaning*) Oh, we shouldn't have done it, Con?

CON

Done what, Jug?

JUG

Let them bu-bury Father like that. (*She blubbers and buries her face in her handkerchief.*)

CON

But what else could we have done? We couldn't have kept him, Jug—we couldn't have kept him unburied. At any rate, not in a flat this size.

(*JUG blows her nose. Finally.*)

JUG

I don't know. It is all so dreadful. I feel we ought to have tried to, just for a time at least.

To make perfectly sure. One thing's certain... (*She breaks down in tears.*) Father will never forgive us for this—never!

KATHERINE

Father would **never** forgive them. That is what they feel more than ever when, two mornings later, they enter his room to go through his things. They had discussed it quite calmly. It was even down on Josephine's list of things to be done: **go through Father's things and settle about them.** But that was a very different matter from saying after breakfast—

JUG

Well, are you ready, Con?

CON

Yes, Jug—when you are.

JUG

Then I think we'd better get it over.

(They rise and approach Father's bedroom.)

KATHERINE

It is dark in the hall. It had been a rule for years never to disturb Father in the morning, whatever happened. And now they are going to open the door without even knocking.

(JUG tries several times to put her hand on the doorknob, and finally succeeds.)

JUG

You—you go first.

CON

No, Jug, that's not fair. You're eldest.

CON

But...you're tallest.

(After much hesitation, they clutch to each other and enter the room.)

KATHERINE

Everything is covered. The blinds are down, a white cloth hangs over the mirror, a white sheet hides the bed; a huge fan of white paper fills the fireplace. Constantia timidly puts out her hand; she almost expects a snowflake to fall. Josephine feels a queer tingling in her nose, as if her nose is freezing. Then a cab klop-klops over the cobbles below, and the quiet seems to shake into little pieces.

JUG

(*Whispering*) I had better pull up a blind.

CON

(*Whispering*) Yes, it might be a good idea.

(*JUG timidly raises the blind, letting in a sudden rush of light.*)

CON

Don't you think—think we might put it off for another day?

JUG

It's got to be done. But I do wish you wouldn't whisper.

CON

I didn't know I was whispering.

JUG

And why do you keep on staring at the bed? There's nothing **on** the bed.

CON

Oh, Jug, don't say so! At any rate not so loudly.

(*JUG walks way around the bed and finds herself at the wardrobe.*)

JUG

Connie!

CON

Oh, Jug—what?

KATHERINE

Josephine can only glare. She has the most extraordinary feeling that she has just escaped something simply awful. But how can she explain to Constantia that Father is in the chest of drawers? He is in the top drawer with his handkerchiefs and neckties, or in the next with his shirts and pajamas, or in the lowest of all with his suits. He is watching there, hidden away—ready to spring.

JUG

I—can't open.

CON

No, don't, Jug. It's much better not to. Don't let's open anything. At any rate, not for a long time.

JUG

But—but it seems so weak.

CON

But why not be weak for once, Jug? If it is weak. Why shouldn't we be weak for once in our lives, Jug? It's quite excusable. Let's be weak—be weak, Jug. It's much nicer to be weak than to be strong.

(CON steps to the wardrobe and turns the key and removes it. She smiles archly.)

KATHERINE

She **knows** what she has done; she has deliberately risked locking Father among his overcoats. If the huge chest lurches forward, and crashes down on Constantia, Josephine will think it the only suitable thing to happen. But nothing happens. Only the room seems quieter than ever, and bigger flakes of cold air fall on Josephine's shoulders and knees.

CON

(Still smiling) Come, Jug.

(They exit the bedroom into their sitting room.)

JUG

I don't feel I can settle anything until I've had something. Do you think we could ask Kate for two cups of hot water?

CON

I really don't see why we shouldn't. *(She considers.)* I won't ring. I'll go to the kitchen door and ask her.

JUG

Yes, do. Tell her, just two cups, Con, nothing else—on a tray.

CON

She needn't even put the pitcher on, need she?

JUG

Oh no, certainly not! The pitcher's not at all necessary. She can pour it direct out of the kettle.

(They do not move.)

JUG

Dear brother Benjamin will expect us to send him something of Father's of course. As the only son... But it's so difficult to know what to send to Ceylon

CON

You mean things get unstuck so on the voyage.

JUG

No, lost. Out there in the jungle with no post.

CON

Only runners.

JUG

I think Father's watch would be the most suitable present.

CON

But, Jug.

JUG

No one would know it was a watch. I'd disguise it. Perhaps in that beautiful cardboard corset-box.

CON

The one with the violets on it and the letters: Medium Women's 28. Extra Firm Busks.

JUG

Perhaps not.

CON

It isn't as though it would be going—ticking, I mean. At least it would be very strange if after all that time it was.

JUG

Yes,

CON

Isn't it more usual for the only grandson to have the watch?

JUG

It would be so nice, when Cyril comes to tea, to know it is there in his waistcoat.

(Lighting and music cue to drift into unreality. CYRIL enters on the periphery. He is wearing a huge watch in his waistcoat.)

JUG

I see you've got on Grandfather's watch, Cyril.

CON

I'm sure your dear father would have loved to have it.

JUG

But we were quite right to give it to you.

CON

Yes, in Ceylon...

JUG

Sit down, Cyril.

CON

Yes, do sit down, dear.

JUG

You mustn't be frightened of our cakes. Your Auntie Con and I bought them at Buszard's this morning. We know what a man's appetite is. So don't be ashamed of making a good tea.

CYRIL

I say, Aunt Josephine, I simply can't. I've only just had lunch.

CON

Oh, Cyril, that can't be true! It's after four.

CYRIL

I had to meet a man at Victoria, and he kept me hanging about till...till there was only time to get lunch and to come on here. And he gave me—pew—a terrific feast.

JUG

But you'll have a meringue, won't you, Cyril? These meringues were bought specially for you. Your dear father was so fond of them. We were sure you are too.

CYRIL

I **am**, Aunt Josephine. Do you mind if I take half to begin with?

JUG

Not at all, dear boy; but we mustn't let you off with that.

CON

Is your dear father still so fond of meringues?

CYRIL

Well, I don't quite know, Auntie Con.

JUG

Don't know? Don't know a thing like that about your own father, Cyril?

CON

Surely.

CYRIL

(Laughing slightly) Oh, well, it's such a long time since—

(CON and JUG await the explanation.)

CYRIL

Wait a bit, Aunt Josephine. Wait a bit. What am I thinking of? *(He slaps his leg.)* Of course, it was meringues. How could I have forgotten? Yes, Aunt Josephine, you're perfectly right. Father's most frightfully keen on meringues!

(JUG and CON sigh, and beam with pleasure.)

JUG

Now, Cyril, you must come and see your grandfather. He knows you were coming today.

CYRIL

(Bolting up) Right. *(He checks his watch.)* Oh. I've got to meet a man at—at Paddington just after five.

JUG

Father won't expect you to stay **very** long.

(JUG takes CYRIL by the arm and leads him toward Father's bedroom. CON lags behind.)

CYRIL

Aren't you coming along, Auntie Con?

JUG

Of course. We shall all go. Come on, Con.

(They knock at Father's door.)

FATHER

Come on.

(They barely enter the room.)

FATHER

Don't hang about. What is it? What've you been up to?

JUG

It's Cyril, Father.

(FATHER pounds on the floor with his stick. JUG takes a hold of CYRIL and thrusts him in front of her toward FATHER.)

CYRIL

Good afternoon, Grandfather.

FATHER

Well *(Thump, thump, thump)* what have you got to tell me?

(CYRIL stands dumbfounded. JUG and CON remain sheltered behind him.)

JUG

(Brightly) Cyril says his father is still very fond of meringues, Father dear.

FATHER

Eh?

JUG

Cyril says his father is still very fond of meringues.

FATHER

Can't hear. *(To CYRIL:)* Tell me what she's trying to say.

CYRIL

(To himself:) Oh my God! *(To JUG:)* Must I?

JUG

Do, dear. It will please him so much.

FATHER

Come on, out with it! *(Thump, thump, thump, thump, thump)*

CYRIL

Father's still very fond of meringues.

FATHER

Don't shout! What's the matter with the boy? **Meringues!** What about 'em?

CYRIL

Oh, Aunt Josephine, must we go on?

JUG

It's quite all right, dear boy. He'll understand in a minute. He's getting a bit deaf, you know. *(She leans toward FATHER and shouts at him.)* Cyril only wanted to tell you, Father dear, that **his** father is still very fond of meringues.

(Dead silence)

FATHER

(Thump) What an esstrordinary thing! What an esstrordinary thing to come all this way here to tell me!

(CYRIL and FATHER drift off as the scene shifts back to reality.)

JUG

Yes, I shall send Cyril the watch.

CON

That would be very nice. I seem to remember last time he came there was some little trouble about the time.

(KATE bursts on.)

KATE

Fried or boiled?

JUG and CON

Fried or boiled what, Kate?

KATE

Fish.

CON

Well, why didn't you say so immediately?

JUG

How could you expect us to understand, Kate? There are a great many things in this world, you know, which are fried or boiled. *(Awkward pause while KATE does not answer.)* Which would you prefer, Con?

CON

I think it might be nice to have it fried. On the other hand, of course boiled fish is very nice. I think I prefer both equally well... Unless you... In that case—

KATE

I shall fry it.

(KATE exits, slamming the door.)

JUG

Constantia, I've something of great importance to discuss with you. Sit down.

(Both sit.)

JUG

Now the question is... *(Whisper)* shall we keep Kate or not?

CON

That is the question.

JUG

And this time, we must come to a definite decision.

CON

Yes, Jug.

JUG

You see, Con, everything is so changed now. I mean we're not dependent on Kate as we were. There's not Father to cook for.

CON

That's perfectly true. Father certainly doesn't want any cooking now...whatever else—

JUG

You're not sleepy, are you, Con?

CON

Sleepy, Jug?

JUG

Well, concentrate more. What it comes to is, if we did *(Whisper)* give Kate notice *(Normal voice)* we could manage our own food.

CON

Why not? *(Pause)* What should we live on, Jug?

JUG

Oh, eggs in various forms! *(Pause)* And, besides, there are all the cooked foods.

CON

But I've always heard they are considered so very expensive.

JUG

Not if one buys them in moderation. What we've got to decide now, however, is whether we really do need Kate or not.

CON

Isn't it curious, Jug, that just on this subject I've never been able to quite make up my mind?

(The barrel organ strikes up.)

JUG

Oh no! *(Beat)* Oh! The music won't wake up Father, will it?

CON

No, I don't suppose it will.

(They listen for a while. A ray of sunshine peeps in and lights the faded photo. The organ fades out and the cello adds an accompaniment.)

CON

I wonder if everything would have been different if Mother hadn't died.

(Sparrows start chirping on the window-ledge.)

JUG

Are those really sparrows? Or is that some queer little crying noise inside me?

CON

If Mother had lived, might we have married?

JUG

There had been nobody for us to marry.

CON

There had been only Father's friends before he quarreled with them.

JUG

After that, we never met a single man except clergymen.

CON

How did one meet men?

JUG

Even if we'd met them, how could we have got to know them well enough to be more than

strangers?

CON

One read of people having adventures, being followed...and so on.

JUG

Nobody ever followed us.

CON

There **had** been, one year, a mysterious man at the boarding-house who put that note on the pitcher of hot water outside our bedroom door. (*Pause*) But by the time I found it the steam had made the writing too faint to read...and we couldn't even make out to which of us it was addressed.

JUG

He left the next day.

CON

And that was all.

JUG

The rest had been looking after Father...and at the same time keeping out of Father's way.

CON

But now?

JUG

But now?

CON

I remember the times I came in here, creeping out of bed by the moonlight, and lay on the floor with my arms outstretched.

Why?

The big, pale moon made me do it.

I remember whenever we were at the seaside, I went off by myself and got as close to the sea as I could, and sang something...anything...something I made up while I gazed all over that restless water.

(Very, very long pause)

But there was always this other life: running out, bringing things home in bags, getting things on

approval, taking them back to get more things on approval, arranging Father's trays, trying not to annoy Father.

But it all seemed to have happened in a kind of tunnel. It wasn't real. It was only when I came out of the tunnel into the moonlight or by the sea or into a thunderstorm that I really felt myself.

What did it mean? What did it all lead to?

JUG

Don't you think perhaps...

CON

I was wondering if now...

(They wait for each other to speak.)

JUG

Go on, Con.

CON

No, no, Jug; after you.

JUG

No, say what you were going to say. You began...

CON

I...I'd rather hear what you were going to say first.

JUG

Don't be absurd, Con.

CON

Really, Jug.

JUG

Connie!

CON

Oh...**Jug**... *(Pause)* I can't say what I was going to say, Jug, because I've forgotten what it was...that I was going to say.

(Long pause)

JUG

I've forgotten too.

(CON and JUG drift off. JACK enters.)

JACK

(To the audience:) As her pain increased, Katherine seemed to need less from me. I suppose she knew I couldn't give her what she really needed. But because I could—can—never let go of her, I want to tell you of an exchange between us. I wrote to her in Switzerland: Tig, I wish I could come to you and hold you in my arms. I wish I could touch my fingertips to your lips and whisper to you, "It's all right." I wish I could put my head on your breast and have you whisper to me, "Yes, it's all **all** right."

And yet when the music plays, we **are** together. You way off there in that little town in the mountains writing your latest gem and me here in my tiny room laboring over the Athenaeum. Because we love each other, because we love life with all its pains, because we love the music, we **are** together. We will be together **always**.

And Tig wrote back to me:

KATHERINE

(Appearing in a dim, tight spot, well offstage) Yes. Yes! What we thought was cloud dissolves, lifts, and behind it there are mountains. You **have** come here. The ache of separation is over. I'm not alone. Of course I long for you here, sharing my daily life, but I do **not** say "come."

JACK

But are you all right? Are you sure...?

KATHERINE

Out 'salvation'—our 'future'—depends on holding on, keeping calm and leaving nothing in disorder, nothing undone. The Atheneum isn't really the journal; it's the battle of spirit we have to wage. I have the feeling, my darling, that 'holding on' we declare our faith in the future—our power to win through. **This** year is the important year for us. You ought, for our future, to keep the journal going one more year.

And, dear husband, if I am to be what I wish to be I must not be rescued. You and I have chosen each other for lovers in this world, and I believe absolutely in our choice. But I believe the reason we chose each other is because we feel **free** together. I know that, at the last, I do not put the lightest chain on you, nor you on me.

I live for you. I will prepare myself for our life. Look into my heart. Believe in me. Would I have you here now? No. But oh dear, oh dear. Come at Christmas with candles in your hair.

JACK

(Verging on tears) That Christmas was a long, long time ago. *(He exits.)*

KATHERINE

Put your arms round me—I want to hold you very tightly. I want to make you smile—I feel we are deathless. You **have** come, Tig; I say it again. You are here, and now I’m going to get up and work.

(KATHERINE enters the stage with her hands in the muff, turns to the audience, but immediately has a long coughing fit which she attempts to suppress with no success. She wipes her mouth with a handkerchief and attempts to hide the blood on it. Finally, she is able to speak.)

Late last evening the moon was **so** special. With that unearthly beauty it is not hard to realize how far one has to go. To write something that will be worthy of that rising moon, that pale light. To be ‘simple’ enough, as one would be simple before God.

(She stares at her memory of the moon a long time.)

We have such moons in New Zealand.

(Moment of recollection. Then, with bright energy, she sets her muff aside, and holds up a small notebook.)

I just finished a story. I wrote it in this exercise book and I’ll send it immediately to Jack. I haven’t been able to see Jack in so long. But I feel I’m taking the right treatment now. I’m almost well at present. Not the least an invalid, in any way. It’s a sunny, windy day—beautiful. There is a soft September roaring in the trees; little birds fly up into the air just for the fun of being tossed about. I would like to read you my story. “Miss Brill.”

MISS BRILL

Katherine

Miss Brill

Jack

Doubled Roles:

Elderly Woman

Elderly Man

Faded Woman

Gentleman

Elderly Male Invalid (offstage voice, possibly Jack)

Girl

Boy

KATHERINE

Although it was so brilliantly fine this Sunday, Miss Brill is glad that she decided on her fur.

(MISS BRILL lovingly removes her fox fur from its box. It is the same color as Katherine's muff. MISS BRILL brushes the fur and rubs dust from the eyes.)

MISS BRILL

Have you been lonely, little dear? All boxed up in the dark all summer? Poor little dear. Well, don't worry. It's autumn now, your time to... *(She straightens up and gasps for breath.)* It's nothing, little dear. Perhaps I was just bending over too long.

Now, let's brush this nasty moth powder off you. There, that's better, isn't it? Oh... Oh my, your nose isn't at all firm. I'm afraid you're showing your age, little rogue. Getting rather... Well, don't worry; I can patch your nose with a dab of black sealing wax...when the time comes.

(She drapes the fox over her shoulders. An ELDERLY WOMAN and ELDERLY MAN enter and sit on a long bench.)

KATHERINE

The day is so brilliantly fine—

(KATHERINE coughs and struggles for breath to continue. JACK enters and takes over the narrative.)

JACK

The day is so brilliantly fine—the blue sky powdered with gold and great spots of light like white wine splashed over the Public Garden. There are far more people out this afternoon than last Sunday; the band sounds louder and gayer.

(MISS BRILL sits on the end of the same bench as the ELDERLY WOMAN and ELDERLY MAN. MISS BRILL and the MAN both tap their feet to the music, but the WOMAN seems less responsive to the music.)

ELDERLY WOMAN

Is that the same conductor?

ELDERLY MAN

Yes.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Doesn't seem to be.

ELDERLY MAN

He has on a new coat, I believe. Special for the Season, I'd guess.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Oh. Perhaps.

ELDERLY MAN

Appears to have more gold braid than his other coat.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Well, I certainly can't see that. I need spectacles. I know I do.

(MISS BRILL is torn between listening to the music and the conversation.)

ELDERLY MAN

Well then get yourself fitted out with some.

ELDERLY WOMAN

It would be no use.

ELDERLY MAN

Well of course it would.

ELDERLY WOMAN

You know I'd just break them.

ELDERLY MAN

Oh come—

ELDERLY WOMAN

And they'd never keep on.

ELDERLY MAN

We could get you gold rims—look very nice on you.

ELDERLY WOMAN

They'd just slide down my nose.

ELDERLY MAN

No no. We could get the kind that curve round your ears—with little pads inside the bridge. Like here. Look at mine.

ELDERLY WOMAN

It's no use. They'd always be sliding down my nose.

(MISS BRILL is exasperated with her. The ELDERLY WOMAN and ELDERLY MAN exit. Slowly MISS BRILL gets re-involved with the music. Sounds of other people over the music—especially children playing.)

JACK

Behind the rotunda the slender trees with yellow leaves down drooping, and through them just a line of sea, and beyond the sea the blue sky with the gold-veined clouds.

(The band strikes up a particularly cheery passage.)

Two young girls in red come by and two young soldiers in blue meet them. Two peasant women with funny straw hats pass, gravely, leading beautiful smoke-colored donkeys. A beautiful woman comes along and drops her bunch of violets, and a little boy runs after to hand them to her, and she takes them and throws them away as if they'd been poisoned. Dear me! Miss Brill doesn't know whether to admire that or not!

(From opposite sides enter a FADED WOMAN, in various tones of faded yellow and wearing a faded ermine toque, and a stiffly dignified GENTLEMAN, all dressed in grey. As they cross toward each other, the WOMAN perks up to meet the GENTLEMAN; he clearly is not interested in meeting her.)

FADED WOMAN

I just **knew** I'd find you here this afternoon. Isn't it a **charming** day? I'm sure you find it so. I've been over by the shops, strolling through the flower market and admiring all the brilliant colors and the smell of all the marigolds—and roses and almost **every** September flower you can think of. Just gorgeous! And have you been down by the sea walk this afternoon?—the sea is so smooth and green and shining in the sunlight. With a few gulls floating so peacefully on the water. Would you perhaps care to join me for a stroll?

(The GENTLEMAN lights a cigarette.)

FADED WOMAN

After the concert of course.

(The GENTLEMAN blows smoke in her face—and exits. She coughs, trying to suppress it. KATHERINE and MISS BRILL also cough. The band responds with a brief minor passage and then changes and plays more quickly and cheerfully than ever as the FADED WOMAN raises her hand to wave at someone nicer just offstage and patters toward him, and offstage.)

Jack is about to narrate when KATHERINE indicates that she will take over. JACK steps behind KATHERINE.)

KATHERINE

Oh, how fascinating it is! How Miss Brill enjoys it! How she loves sitting here, watching it all!

And then a little brown dog trots on...

(MISS BRILL makes her fox respond to the dog.)

MISS BRILL

See? See the dog, little rogue? Isn't it exactly like a theatre dog? That's it! A theatre dog! Why we're all—you, me, the little dog—all of us, on stage. **All** of us are actors! Every Sunday we come here to play our part. And if any Sunday we didn't come, someone would notice!

KATHERINE

She thinks of the old gentleman to whom she reads the newspaper four afternoons a week while he sleeps in the garden. Suddenly he knows he is having the paper read to him by an actress!

ELDERLY MALE INVALID'S VOICE

An actress—are ye?

MISS BRILL

Yes, I have been an actress for a long time.

(The band swells slowly—but with just a tinge of sadness—toward a distant climax. [At this point, at the director's discretion, narration will be taken over by one actor and then another, eventually involving the entire cast.]

NARRATOR

It seems to Miss Brill that in another moment all of them, all the whole company, will begin singing. The young ones, the laughing ones who are moving together, they will begin, and the men's voices, very resolute and brave, will join them. And then she too, she too, and the others on the benches—they will come in with a kind of accompaniment—something low, that scarcely rises or falls, something so beautiful—moving And Miss Brill's eyes fill with tears and she looks smiling at all the other members of the company. Yes, we understand, we understand...

Just at that moment (*BOY and GIRL enter*) a boy and girl enter and sit down where the old couple had been. They are beautifully dressed; they are in love. The hero and heroine, of course, just arrived from his father's yacht. And still soundlessly singing, still with that trembling smile, Miss Brill prepares to listen.

(The BOY begins pawing the GIRL.)

GIRL

No, not now! Not here, I can't.

BOY

But why? Because of that stupid old thing at the end there? Why does she come here at all—who wants her? Why doesn't she keep her silly old mug at home?

GIRL

(Giggling) It's her fu-fur that's so funny. It's exactly like a fried fish.

BOY

A fried fish! *(He laughs with her.)* Tell me, ma petite cherie—

GIRL

No, not here. Not **yet**. Wait till she leaves!

(The BOY continues to paw the GIRL as MISS BRILL clutches her fox to her and leaves the bench. The music comes to a somber end.)

NARRATOR

Miss Brill returns to her little dark room—her room like a cupboard—

(MISS BRILL sits clutching the fox.)

NARRATOR

She sits in the dark for a long, long, time.

(Suddenly, without looking at it, MISS BRILL puts the fox in its box. She puts the lid on.)

NARRATOR

When she put the lid on, she thought she heard something crying.

(Lights fade on MISS BRILL as she exits. KATHERINE exits.)

JACK

Life became extremely difficult for Katherine. Well before the end, she wrote this about a little boy who was soon to die of tuberculosis.

KATHERINE'S VOICE

(From offstage) From Lennie's little box of a chest there came a sound as though something was boiling. There was a great lump of something bubbling in his chest that he couldn't get rid of. When he coughed the sweat sprang out on his head; his eyes bulged, his hands waved, and the great lump bubbled as a potato knocks in a saucepan. But what was more awful than all was when he didn't cough: he sat against the pillow and never spoke or answered, or even made as if he heard.

JACK

Katherine never finished that story.

As she approached **her** end, Katherine Mansfield did speak, did cry out, and never stopped searching eagerly, fanatically, for some desperate cure.

There was no cure.

But so much remains: that lovely brief life, that curiously lively ability to love...and something that always seems to harken back to home, to New Zealand so far across the waters...and to Chummie.

(Dim light up on KATHERINE, frail, but with a strange vitality, in a removed place upstage, bundled in Grandma's afghan. She is about to pour a cup of tea from a family heirloom teapot when there is the sound of wind and CHUMMIE enters in the darkness. JACK remains aside, watching KATHERINE.)

KATHERINE

Is that you, Chummie?

CHUMMIE

Come for a walk with me, Katie.

KATHERINE

Right-o. I'll put on my overcoat. *(She simply bundles tighter in the afghan.)* Isn't it an awful day!

CHUMMIE

Hook on to my arm. We'll walk to the waterfront together.

(She remains seated, and CHUMMIE remains barely visible.)

NARRATOR

(Again by various actors) They cannot walk fast enough. Their heads bent, their legs just touching, they stride like one eager person through the town and on toward the seaside. It is dusky—just getting dusky. The wind is so strong that they have to fight their way through it, rocking like two old drunkards.

CHUMMIE

Come on! Come on! Let's get near the water.

NARRATOR

Over by the breakwater the sea is very high. They pull off their hats and her hair blows across her mouth, tasting of salt. The waves thump against the rough stone wall and rush up the weedy, dripping steps. A fine spray skims from the water and chills their faces.

CHUMMIE

Katie! Look over there.

NARRATOR

A big black steamer with a long loop of smoke streaming, with the portholes lighted, with lights everywhere, is putting out to sea. The wind does not stop her; she cuts through the waves between the jagged rocks. (*Pause*) It's the light that makes her look so awfully beautiful and mysterious.

(A golden light suffuses the scene as KATHERINE rises and CHUMMIE walks over to her.)

They are on board, leaning over the rail—arm in arm.

(Another light shift, and the cello begins to play very low and slow.)

And now they are in New Zealand... walking up and down the garden in Tinakori Road. The Michaelmas daisies are bright as feathers. From the old tree at the bottom of the garden—the slender tree rather like a poplar—there falls a little round pear, hard as a stone.

(They stare at the spot where the pear fell. Lights fade out on JACK as he looks mournfully at KATHERINE—and then exits.)

CHUMMIE

Do you remember the enormous number of pears there used to be on that old tree?

KATHERINE

I've never seen pears like them since.

CHUMMIE

They were so bright, canary yellow—and small. And the peel was so thin and the pips jet—jet black. First we pulled out the little stem and sucked it. It was faintly sour, and then we ate them always from the top—core and all.

KATHERINE

The pips were delicious.

CHUMMIE

Do you remember sitting on the pink garden seat?

KATHERINE

Where is it now? Do you think we shall be allowed to sit on it in Heaven?

CHUMMIE

It always wobbled a bit.

KATHERINE

Sitting on that seat, swinging our legs and eating the pears...

CHUMMIE

Isn't it extraordinary how **deep** our happiness was—how positive—deep, shining, warm. I remember the way we used to look at each other and smile—do you?—sharing a secret... What was it?

(KATHERINE looks at CHUMMIE tenderly for a moment before she answers.)

KATHERINE

We were almost like one child.

(He puts his arm tenderly around her.)

CHUMMIE

We shall go back there.

KATHERINE

Yes, we shall go back there together.

CHUMMIE

And find everything—

KATHERINE

And find... *(Long pause)* Everything.

(Lights fade to one soft spot on KATHERINE and CHUMMIE. He holds out a small pear to her. She cups both her hands together to receive it; he places it in her cupped hands. She slowly closes her hands around the pear. Then KATHERINE and CHUMMIE walk slowly offstage. Simultaneously, the cello swells up just a bit for a few measures and dies away.)

Blackout.)