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ACT ONE: JULIE

Cast of Characters

AUGUST STRINDBERG, 40 / JOHN, 35

JULIE, 25

CHRISTINE, 23

VOICES OF GUESTS

VOICE OF JULIE'S FATHER

Setting

The action takes place on New Year's Eve and the following morning of the present year, in the kitchen of a townhouse in Natchez, Mississippi.

ACT TWO: GHOST MUSIC

Cast of Characters

STRINDBERG \ HUMMER

ARTIE

GENERAL

GENERAL'S WIFE, a mummy

GENERAL'S DAUGHTER

A WOMAN IN BLACK

Time

The present.

Place

Savannah, Georgia.

STRINDBERG: MISS JULIE AND THE GHOST SONATA

adapted by Romulus Linney

BASED ON THE PLAYS BY AUGUST STRINDBERG

ACT ONE: JULIE

(Scene: the ground floor kitchen of a very old and stately but newly renovated house in Natchez, Mississippi.)

At right is an entrance from the outside. At left is an entrance to the stairs, the servant's quarters and the rest of the house.

The kitchen is very high tech modern, with all the latest conveniences and gadgets: oven above the stove, gleaming counters, etc. In front of it is a butcherblock. There is also a table, and two chairs.

At left, built into the far wall, is a workout bar, a padded exercise mat and a hot tub, sunk into the floor. Open shelves hold thick towels and terry cloth robes.

By the door to the stairs is the telephone and speaker of a house communications system.

A servant's jacket is on a chair.

The house lights go down, leaving the kitchen lit by general accent lights.

Enter, from the outside door, AUGUST STRINDBERG, at 40, his age when he wrote "Miss Julie."

He is a strange figure, dressed in British tweeds with knickers and a cape, carrying a large thorny walking stick. His hair is a tousled pile on his head, his moustache and beard give him a ferocious look and his body is large and sturdy. His eyes and face, however, are sensitive and almost feminine. He is a very unusual man.

STRINDBERG looks at the audience, nods at them. Then he turns around and slowly takes in the 20th century high tech kitchen.

He turns to the audience.)

STRINDBERG. The scene is an old fashioned kitchen of a Swedish country estate in the eighteen eighties?

(STRINDBERG at the audience, then smiles.)

Let me tell you something about the theatre.

(STRINDBERG *sees the servant's jacket, and moves toward it.*)

It contains the three primal hungers of mankind. Food, sex, and re-writing somebody else's play. Evidently that is what is happening here to mine.

(STRINDBERG *takes off his coat.*)

What a machine. Looks efficient. Something cooking.

(*He opens a pot, recoils.*)

Ugh! I forgot! The potion for the dog. Ugh. Well, at least that's the same.

(STRINDBERG *holds up the servant's jacket.*)

I was an actor before I was a playwright. And since the play *is* being performed, I suppose some distortion is a fair price for immortality. That helps. Fame is the sun of the dead, I believe Madame de Stael said somewhere. Will this fit?

(STRINDBERG *puts on the jacket.*)

Perhaps you'd like to know how this play was first received. It was obscene. An act of sexual intercourse, during the action! Offstage, but still. I was a maniac, undermining my country's moral fiber. But Miss Julie and some of my other plays were read and played abroad. Many were the voices that praised them. This fits.

(STRINDBERG *licks down his hair with water from the tap, and combs it close to his head. He works on his moustache.*)

So why did my countrymen hate my plays with such self-righteous fury? The old story. They saw themselves. They heard in my voice, the voice of the future, their future. This made my government livid, my critics apoplectic, and my country—my beloved home—call me morally degenerate. Really. Who among us is ignorant of the basic experience of life, which we all either enjoy, dislike, hate, or endure, or have at least heard of, since we were children? I wrote about men, women, and sex. The righteous saw themselves in bed, sometimes in the kitchen, and couldn't stand it. Familiar? I doubt if that has changed.

(STRINDBERG *looks at himself in a mirror. He practices walking here and there, picking up things and setting them down like a servant, moving about like a younger man.*)

Now she is alive, the politics are dust. Miss Julie outlived her persecutors, even if tonight I must see her in another language in another country, everything no doubt all changed about. You can always, in your libraries and bookstores, find her for yourself, as she is for-

ever, untouched and untouchable, where neither enemies, friends or modern theatrical productions can change her.

(STRINDBERG takes his coat over his arm and goes to the door. Sounds, faint, of a New Year's Eve party are heard from the upper floors—the thump of a rock band, some cheers and laughter.)

I wasn't a very good actor as a young man. I would like to try again. There are lots of things I would do if I had the chance. One of them, I can tell you, is put back in the sex I had to cut out. That's worth something. I will see you later.

(STRINDBERG leaves the stage.)

Enter CHRISTINE, going to the stove, where she is cooking something in a gleaming brass pot, moving slightly, in rhythm to the faint party music. She pushes a button on the phone communications system and the party sounds are amplified.

A sudden silence. CHRISTINE lifts her head and listens. Then the muted sound of voices doing a count-down.)

VOICES. 8—7—6—5—4—3—2—1!! HAPPY NEW YEAR!

(A loud cheer. It is the first minute of the new Year. The VOICES sing "Auld Lang Syne," braying it as drunken party-goers can. CHRISTINE smiles.)

The song over, the Rock music begins again.

Enter JOHN, played by STRINDBERG, from the party upstairs.

Over the communications system MISS JULIE is heard calling down to the kitchen.)

MISS JULIE. *(Voice from speaker:)* John! John! Are you down there? Come on back, now! You hear?

JOHN. Oh, God! She's up the wall!

(He wears his butler's uniform and carries a big silver tray, which he stores in a cupboard, slamming its door shut. Then he gets out two bottles of wine, from a cupboard.)

CHRISTINE. What's she doing now?

JOHN. She broke open the whiskey cabinet in the study! Passed it out! Hundred year old brandies, to fools she hardly knows. Then she swept the glass coffee table clean, and they started sniffing lines with hundred dollar bills.

(JOHN inspects the wine, and approves of it.)

She hauled me out onto the floor and made me dance with her.

CHRISTINE. *(Smiling:)* Did she? *(Thinks.)* How?

JOHN. Something like this.

(He makes a few very stiff motions of dancing. They both laugh.)

CHRISTINE. Julie? With you!

JOHN. What else could I do?

(He puts one bottle in a cupboard, takes the other to the table, sits, and opens it with a corkscrew. A loud cheer from upstairs.)

Nobody's up there but trash.

CHRISTINE. *(Giving him a wine glass:)* What happened to Richard Parmalee?

(JOHN pours himself just a big of very good wine.)

JOHN. Long gone. *(Laughs.)* She didn't hit him, what I heard. He hit her.

CHRISTINE. Hit Julie?

(CHRISTINE turns off the loudspeaker system. The party sounds are muted.)

JOHN. Last Monday, in the lobby of the Forest Hotel, she pointed at a glass of water she wanted him to hand her. He picked it up and threw it in her face and walked out. That ended *that* romance. Yum! This is *good* medoc!

CHRISTINE. *(Relieved:)* What about the engagement?

JOHN. Off. She says to hell with everybody and throws this tacky New Year's Party with nothing up there but trash. They'll tear the place up, with her father gone.

CHRISTINE. And leave us to pick up the pieces.

(CHRISTINE is cutting up liver with the meat cleaver.)

JOHN. What in the world are you cooking in that thing? It stinks.

CHRISTINE. Tell me about it. This here is some kind of something awful for animals. Julie's own recipe. You don't want to know what's in it.

JOHN. What's it for?

CHRISTINE. Her poodle Yvette got out of the house long enough to find herself a bunch of strays. They pumped it to her, now she's pregnant. Julie wants an abortion.

JOHN. How you gonna get Yvette to eat the stuff?

CHRISTINE. God and Miss Julie can figure that out. Yvette ain't no poodle of mine. Gimme some of that.

(JOHN pours her some wine. CHRISTINE gulps it down.)

Ugh. Hateful. Gimme some more.

JOHN. All right, but a little at a time.

(Pours again.)

This is French Medoc, best year in 50. The Old Man said so. Now what you do is, you sip it, Christine. You roll it around on your tongue, like this, see?

CHRISTINE. Sure.

(She gulps it again.)

JOHN. What am I going to do with you?

CHRISTINE. Get yourself married to me, that's what!

JOHN. I could do worse.

(JOHN holds out one hand affectionately. CHRISTINE sits on his lap. They kiss, briefly, but in satisfaction with each other.)

CHRISTINE. We can have a good life together, John.

JOHN. Yeah. Trouble is, I been here too long. I have outgrown this situation. (Pause.) That dress she's got on. It's all dirty around the cuffs. There's stains on it, and rips and tears in places. And around her neck that diamond necklace the Old Man gave her, worth God knows how much. Up there, she pushed me on the dance floor, and started snapping her fingers and wiggling her hips, but she couldn't find the beat. She can't dance. She just jumps around. But she's special, anyway. Those shoulders and that neck and body. She's a rare item, and I don't know, something—choice.

CHRISTINE. Well, I'm glad to know you approve of our employers, John. But what about me?

JOHN. Number One, honey, you're number one.

CHRISTINE. Then how bout a dance down here?

JOHN. If we can drink this at the same time.

CHRISTINE. Sure.

(CHRISTINE gets off his lap as he stands up. She turns on the loudspeaker system again, and we hear rock music from upstairs. They dance, JOHN jumping around awkwardly, imitating the rhythm-less Julie, and they laugh. The music changes: slow rock. Holding their wine and sipping from time to time, they do a slow

dance moving around each other. They put one arm around each other's neck and slowly rub their bodies together. They are very graceful and admirably sensual.

JOHN *kisses* CHRISTINE. *They each put their wine glass down. They heat up quickly, with their tongues down each other's throats, still moving to the music.*

Enter MISS JULIE, from the party above. She watches them a moment.)

JULIE. You didn't dance with me like that.

(JOHN and CHRISTINE jump apart.)

JOHN. Oh, Miss Julie!

CHRISTINE. Oh! Hello, Miss Julie!

(JULIE comes into the kitchen, smiling. She wears an old fashioned dress over black stockings and boots, mixing old with brassy new. She carries a tall glass dark with whiskey. JOHN turns off the button again.)

JULIE. Is it done yet?

CHRISTINE. Just about, I think, Miss Julie.

JULIE. Smells right, anyway. Ugh. Put it in a mason jar and I'll pour it on Yvette's food when I feed her.

JOHN. Poor Yvette!

JULIE. What did you say?

JOHN. Poor Yvette.

(JULIE slaps JOHN in the face.)

JULIE. Wise ass.

JOHN. Thank you.

JULIE. For what?

JOHN. For slapping me in the face, and leaving the smell of your perfume in my nose.

JULIE. You are a little boy *and* a wise ass. What do you know about French perfume?

(CHRISTINE holds up a large and small mason jar.)

The small one, Christine. *(To JOHN:)* I mean, do you know as much about perfume as you do about dancing?

(CHRISTINE carefully pours the abortion brew into the smaller mason jar and sets it down to cool. She exits into the wine cellar with other jar.)

JOHN. A little about both. Do you know any other witches brews?

JULIE. Suppose I do.

JOHN. I could use one. For the New Year. Something like crystals and tarot cards, to tell my fortune. Or show me my lucky star. Or let me see who will be the love of my life.

JULIE. You need luck and sharp eyes for that, not Tarot Cards. Come back up and dance with me. For real, this time.

JOHN. Ah, no ma'am.

JULIE. No??

JOHN. I don't mean to be rude, Miss Julie, but it just isn't right.

(CHRISTINE re-enters.)

JULIE. Oh, I see. I have to ask permission. Christine, may I borrow your young man for a dance or two upstairs. Please?

CHRISTINE. Of course you can, Miss Julie. John, go dance with her, and take it as a compliment!

JULIE. There. Let's go.

JOHN. I'm afraid not.

JULIE. Now what is it?

JOHN. It's just not smart, Miss Julie, any way you look at it, for you to dance with me again. Those people up there will think it's just one thing.

JULIE. What thing? Speak plainly, will you?

JOHN. All right. They'll say you fuck your servants.

CHRISTINE. John!

JULIE. Never mind, Christine. Young man, this party is mine, and I will do what I please at it. I want you to dance with me because everybody else up there is either drunk, wired, spaced, or hanging out a window. You are the only man I've danced with tonight who doesn't make me feel ridiculous.

JOHN. In that case, I will take it as a compliment, as Christine says and do my best for you.

JULIE. And have some fun yourself. We're all friends tonight and who cares who's working for who? Oh, Christine, take the cover off the jacuzzi. We may want to use it later. *(To JOHN:)* So, come on!!

(JULIE holds out her hand. JOHN takes it.)

Don't worry, Christine. I'll bring your beautiful boy back to you!

(She runs out, JOHN following her hand-in-hand.)

CHRISTINE stands still a moment, listening. She punches the button and listens to the party again. She hears a shout of welcome from upstairs, then the rock music blaring forth much louder.

CHRISTINE smiles. She goes about her kitchen chores slowly and patiently, yawning now and then, and humming to the music. She cleans off the table. She sets the dog medicine aside. She corks the wine bottle and washes the glasses. She takes the cover off the hot tub. She turns on the jets. The water hisses and bubbles. **CHRISTINE** smiles and turns the hot tub off. She wipes off the kitchen counter, throws down her rag, looks up at the ceiling and listens for a moment to the dancing. Then she yawns, stretches, and goes offstage to her room.

Pause. Music. A sense of time passing.

The music upstairs stops. A cheer. Then it starts up again. JOHN bursts into the room, turns the system off.)

JOHN. Christine! Christine!

CHRISTINE. *(Coming out of her room:)* What?

JOHN. What are you doing?

CHRISTINE. Going to bed, for God's sake! Leave me alone!

(She goes back into her room. JOHN follows her and leans against the door.)

JOHN. The woman's crazy! Those people laughing at us. Horrible!

CHRISTINE. You seem to have survived.

JOHN. You're not mad at me?

CHRISTINE. You couldn't help it. Come on in and lie down.

(Exit CHRISTINE. JOHN starts into the room.)

Enter MISS JULIE.)

JULIE. There you are! I turn my back once and you run away from me!

(JOHN closes the door to Christine's room.)

JOHN. I didn't think you'd need me any more.

JULIE. You were going into Christine's room?

JOHN. Yes.

JULIE. You sleep in there often?

JOHN. Sometimes. We're going to get married, Miss Julie. Soon.

JULIE. Charming. You know, when you were dancing, so well, I wondered why you kept your jacket on. Nobody else did.

JOHN. I thought I should.

JULIE. Well, you don't have to now. Gimme.

(JOHN starts to take off his jacket.)

No, let me.

(JULIE stands behind him and takes off his jacket, tosses it onto a chair.)

JULIE. Turn on the hot tub.

JOHN. What for?

JULIE. I want you to tell me if it's hot enough.

JOHN. All right.

(He turns on the jets of the hot tub, and swishes his hand around in it.)

It's about right.

JULIE. Then get in.

JOHN. Miss Julie—

JULIE. You heard me. Here, let's take off your shirt.

(She helps him off with his shirt and undershirt.)

My goodness. How do you keep your body all tight like that?

JOHN. I work hard, Miss Julie.

JULIE. So take off your shoes and socks and your pants. You can keep your shorts on. I wouldn't want to embarrass you.

JOHN. Miss Julie, I'm not going to do that.

JULIE. Then when my father gets back from *his* New Year's Eve Party, I'll tell him you got drunk and tried to dance with me, in front of my guests.

(JOHN takes off his shoes and socks, then his pants, while JULIE enjoys herself looking at his very handsome and muscular body.)

So get in.

(JOHN *lowers himself into the hot tub. JULIE slips off her shoes.*)

JOHN. It's just fine.

(*He starts to get out again. JULIE puts a foot on his shoulder.*)

JULIE. Stay right there. Kiss me. Now.

(JOHN *kisses JULIE's foot.*)

Good. You're learning.

(JULIE *quickly takes off her old fashioned dress, and strips down to her slip, beneath which she is wearing nothing.*)

Help me down.

(JOHN *helps JULIE get into the hot tub.*)

JULIE. Thank you very much. Now you, over there and me, right here. Ahhhh, good. Like it?

JOHN. Yes. Very much.

(*They both lean their heads against the edge of the hot tub and let the water swirl around them.*)

Miss Julie, what if some of your guests come down here and see this.

JULIE. I couldn't care less about my guests. You know what they are.

JOHN. Scum.

JULIE. Nobody else is any fun on New Year's Eve. Let's talk.

(JOHN *doesn't answer.*)

JULIE. You really are a beautiful man. You don't act like a servant at all. Oh, you say the right words, but behind them is—something else. What?

JOHN. Let's say, as indebted as I am to your father, I don't intend to work here forever.

JULIE. You have plans for a different life?

JOHN. I want to go to New Orleans, with Christine, and work hard enough to get us a little restaurant, then maybe a bigger one.

JULIE. Why just a restaurant? Why not a hotel, in the French Quarter. Parlez vous Francais?

JOHN. Oui, petit peu. Vous voulez plaisanter, Madame.

JULIE. Ad-me-RA-ble. Where did you learn French?

JOHN. I only know a little. Taught myself.

JULIE. The movies?

JOHN. Yeah, and a woman helped.

JULIE. I'll bet she did. (*Pause.*) Farmer's boy, right?

JOHN. Yes.

JULIE. So how did you get here?

JOHN. I was about fourteen. I was helping my Daddy plow. Your Daddy, he came by and started talking, and next thing I knew I was sent off to school in Georgia, and then made part of his Atlanta staff. Been so ever since.

JULIE. So?

JOHN. So I owe him a lot.

JULIE. That means you owe me something, too. Get us something to drink—not that wine—a beer. One for you and one for me. Go on, now.

(JOHN lifts himself out of the hot tub, goes to a refrigerator, gets two bottles of beer, opens them, gets back in with JULIE. As he does, they continue their conversation.)

And tell me when you saw me first.

JOHN. You mean here?

JULIE. I mean anywhere.

JOHN. Oh, I don't remember.

JULIE. Yes, you do. I remember when I first saw you. One summer, long time ago. You were cleaning the swimming pool, and I was watching you from the window of my room. You walked around the pool with that net on the end of a long metal pole, and dipping all the bugs out of it, but graceful, my God. You walked around our pool like you owned it.

JOHN. I didn't mean to.

JULIE. Every now and then you'd look around to see if anybody was watching, then dive in, just beautifully, swim the whole length of the pool underwater, then swish, come up out of it and up onto the side in one motion, like you were flying. Very impressive.

JOHN. Here's your beer.

JULIE. Good. (*She drinks.*) Ohhh, that's wonderful! Now, how about you!

JOHN. What about me, Miss Julie?

JULIE. When did you first see me.

JOHN. Well, that was a little different.

(JOHN sits on the side of the hot tub, legs in the water. He drinks his beer.)

The first time I saw you, I was working in the gardens. I was uh, breaking some beds, spreading fertilizer, and well, to tell the truth, I was shoveling shit.

JULIE. (*Delighted:*) Were you really?

JOHN. You came out of the house with your father. Dressed in white taffeta and silk, it looked like, and lace. White gloves. I turned around when your father called my name, and there you both were. He stopped you from coming too close to me, because I stank. You gave me a glance, and he said do this and don't do that, and that was all.

JULIE. What did you think about me?

JOHN. I was wondering which way the wind was blowing and how much of me you could smell.

(*They both laugh.*)

JULIE. My father thinks a lot of you. He's always telling me so.

JOHN. I think a lot of him, too.

JULIE. The cat's meow. A kind of aristocrat of butlers.

JOHN. I won't lie to you. I do think there is more to me than to most people.

JULIE. Is that why I'm flirting with you? I'm slumming with a poseur?

JOHN. Whatever I am, Miss Julie, let me give you a little advice. Don't talk about slumming with people. It degrades you, not them.

JULIE. You're too sensitive.

JOHN. And you're too weird.

JULIE. (*Laughing:*) Yes, I am. You, too, and everything else. Weird, strange, unreal. Life and men. Everything. Just a kind of shrinking scum floating on the water a moment, before sinking.

JOHN. You ought not to stay in hot water so long at one time.

JULIE. Help me up.

(JOHN gets out of the hot tub, goes to JULIE and helps her out of it. From shelves, he gets towels and thick terry cloth robes. She holds on to his arms, and rubs herself against him. She sits on the side of the tub and pulls him down to sit beside her. He dries her off.)

John, I have a recurring dream. Over and over. Do you care?

JOHN. Yes. I have one, too. What's yours?

(JOHN gives her a robe, helps her on with it.)

JULIE. I have somehow gotten on a tall Roman column with a sort of square on it. The kind of thing holy men sit on for life, in India and places. But I don't belong there and I don't know how to get down from it. I look over, get dizzy, and I'm afraid to jump. I want to fall, but I can't. Life is torture on that thing. I have to get my feet on the ground again. And even more than that. I have to get my feet *into* the ground, as once when I was a little girl I dug a hole with a spade and went to sleep in it, peacefully, in the good earth.

(JOHN smiles and shakes his head, then laughs.)

JULIE. What are you laughing at?

JOHN. I dream over and over I'm lying under a tree in a dark forest. I want to climb it, get to the topmost branch, where I can see for miles the beautiful country all around me. There is nest there, of some fabulous bird, who lays golden eggs and I can steal them and be rich. But the trunk of the tree is so huge. It's thick and smooth, and hard to climb, and the first branch is so far above me. I know if I can just get to it, that first branch, I can climb the rest of the tree like going up a ladder, and reach the top. I never have yet, but some night, in some dream, I will.

JULIE. How very eloquent. Is it true?

JOHN. Cross my heart and hope to die.

JULIE. I'm coming down and you're going up?

JOHN. Guess so.

JULIE. Let's hope not.

(She slips into the hot tub again, and pulls him in with her.)

JOHN. Ow! Ow, just a minute, Miss Julie!

JULIE. What's the matter?

JOHN. Something in my eye! Ow!

JULIE. Jump out. I'll get it.

(They both get out of the hot tub. JULIE turns off the jets, and gets a towel from a rack on the wall.)

Get down, so I can see. Which eye is it?

JOHN. This one.

(JOHN gets on his knees. JULIE makes a tip of one end of the towel. She pushes on the skin under JOHN's left.)

JULIE. Look up now. Look up! Oh, I see it. Just—a—minute and—there!

(She holds out the tip of the towel, which as lifted a small splinter of wood out of JOHN's eye.)

Ohh, look at it. Huge.

JOHN. Yeah. Thank you.

JULIE. You're shaking. Little boy. With such a body. Such arms and legs. My goodness.

JOHN. Miss Julie?

JULIE. Yes, John?

(She kneels with him facing him.)

JOHN. I'm a man. And only a man.

(JULIE caresses his arms and shoulders.)

JULIE. A very handsome man. Conceited beyond description, who thinks he's Atlanta's Don Juan, no doubt.

JOHN. Do you think so?

JULIE. Yes, I think I do.

(JOHN puts his hands on her shoulders and kisses her. Pause. JULIE slaps him gently in the face.)

JOHN. That's the second time you've done that.

JULIE. No. That was a love tap.

JOHN. I don't believe you. You're just humiliating me.

(He gets another towel and begins to dry himself.)

I'm a little tired of this now. You are a formidable tease, Miss Julie. But you don't balance it quite right, between playing and loving. And I have to get up early in the morning to take care of your father when he wants me. I'd like to go to bed now.

JULIE. What do you know about love?

JOHN. I'm not your god damned playmate! I'm above that!

JULIE. You respect yourself, and that's good. I envy you. Have you ever been in love. Really, fantastically in love?

JOHN. I don't think about it like that. I keep it simple. There's sex which is fine, and getting married to Christine, which is all right, too, but practical. I can't let you upset me.

JULIE. I already have.

JOHN. Yes, you already have!

JULIE. Never, ever really in love?

JOHN. Oh, once. There was a girl I couldn't have and it made me sick. You know, like in fairy tales.

JULIE. Wonderful. Get another towel, tell me about it, and dry me off.

JOHN. For God's sakes!

JULIE. Please. Pretty please.

(JOHN gets another towel. JULIE turns around and he dries her back.)

So who was she?

JOHN. I can't tell you.

JULIE. I'm just another girl, no better than any of them, and your friend. Tell me.

JOHN. When I turned around, with that shovel in my hands. You had picked some roses, the sun was shining on your dress and hair, and I thought, oh my God, why have I been put in heaven with this angel I can't ever touch!

(JULIE leans back against him and he holds her with his arms wrapped around her.)

JULIE. Poor boy.

JOHN. Sure! Oh, Miss Julie! Your dog can put his head in your lap! Your father's horses feel you stroking them! Until tonight I was dirt under your feet! Now you're in my arms, teasing me!

(JULIE turns around, takes his hands holding the towel and presses them against her body, drying her arms and throat.)

JULIE. No. No.

JOHN. I know better. Just like that man you were going to marry.

JULIE. He was a fool. You aren't.

JOHN. That's what you'll say about me, too!

JULIE. No, I won't.

(She holds his hand and the towel against her breasts, and leans forward to be kissed.)

(JOHN suddenly pushes her away from him.)

JOHN. Listen!

JULIE. What?

JOHN. The music up there. It's stopped. What are they doing?

(He turns on the system.)

JULIE. I don't care. Kiss me!

(They embrace and kiss, this time both eager and passionate.

Amplified sounds of GUESTS singing loudly.)

GUESTS. *(Singing:)*

OH THIS IS NUMBER ONE AND THE FUN HAS JUST BEGUN,
ROLL ME OVER, LAY ME DOWN, AND DO IT AGAIN.
ROLL ME OVER IN THE CLOVER,
ROLL ME OVER, LAY ME DOWN AND DO IT AGAIN,
DO IT AGAIN!

(JULIE and JOHN listen. The VOICES OF THE GUESTS get louder.)

OH THIS IS NUMBER TWO, JUST ESPECIALLY FORYOU,
ROLL ME OVER, LAY ME DOWN, AND DO IT AGAIN.
ROLL ME OVER IN THE CLOVER,
ROLL ME OVER, LAY ME DOWN AND DO IT AGAIN,
DO IT AGAIN!

JOHN. They're coming down here!

JULIE. No, they're not.

JOHN. The hell they're not!

JULIE. Why should they?

JOHN. They're looking for their hostess and they know just where to find her!

JULIE. Well, let them! They're my friends!

JOHN. They are not. They'll make you a dirty joke! They'll drink your liquor, call you darling, and tomorrow you're a whore!

GUESTS. *(Singing, closer:)*

OH THIS IS NUMBER THREE AND IT'S GETTING GOOD
FOR ME,
ROLL ME OVER, LAY ME DOWN AND DO IT AGAIN.
ROLL ME OVER IN THE CLOVER,
ROLL ME LAY ME DOWN AND DO IT AGAIN.
DO IT AGAIN!

JOHN. You see!

JULIE. You're such a coward. Afraid of a few drunks?

GUESTS. *(Singing, closer:)*

OH THIS IS NUMBER FOUR AND I'M CRAWLING ON THIS
FLOOR,
ROLL ME OVER, LAY ME DOWN AND DO IT AGAIN.
ROLL ME OVER, IN THE CLOVER,
ROLL ME OVER, LAY ME DOWN AND DO IT AGAIN!
DO IT AGAIN!

JULIE. Well, aren't you?

JOHN. What are you talking about?

JULIE. Coward. Sissy. You never had a woman in public?

JOHN. As a matter of fact, I have.

JULIE. Played Russian Roulette?

JOHN. I've done that, too.

JULIE. Well?

GUESTS. *(Singing, closer:)*

OH THIS IS NUMBER FIVE AND I'M HARDLY ALIVE,
ROLL ME OVER, LAY ME DOWN AND DO IT AGAIN.
ROLL ME OVER, IN THE CLOVER,
ROLL ME OVER IN THE CLOVER AND DO IT AGAIN.
DO IT AGAIN!

JULIE. WELL?

JOHN. You're driving me crazy.

JULIE. That's what I want!

(JOHN grabs JULIE brutally, kissing her, backing up against the kitchen table. She responds.)

GUESTS. *(Singing, closer:)*

OH THIS IS NUMBER SIX AND WE ARE IN A FIX.
ROLL ME OVER, LAY ME DOWN AND DO IT AGAIN.
ROLL ME OVER, IN THE CLOVER,
ROLL ME OVER, LAY ME DOWN AND DO IT AGAIN.
DO IT AGAIN!

(JOHN turns JULIE around, so that she faces us. He pushes her face down on the table, and throws up her skirts. JULIE is both frightened and thrilled.)

JOHN. Let them come in, then! What the hell lady!

(Behind her, he opens his pants and enters her. She screams. JOHN has sex with JULIE, who becomes at first shocked, then aroused, then deeply shaken.)

The GUESTS move off to another part of the house, their song becoming fainter as the sex is more and more brutal.)

GUESTS. *(Singing:)*

OH THIS IS NUMBER SEVEN AND WE'RE RISING UP TO
HEAVEN,
ROLL ME OVER, LAY ME DOWN AND DO IT AGAIN.
ROLL ME OVER, IN THE CLOVER,
ROLL ME OVER IN THE CLOVER AND DO IT AGAIN.
DO IT AGAIN!

(JOHN uses JULIE with greater and greater brutality. JULIE responds first with passion, then with panic and pain.)

As JOHN approaches sexual climax, he pulls JULIE's head back by her hair. We see her face.)

GUESTS. *(Singing, fainter:)*

OH THIS IS NUMBER NINE AND I'M FEELING REALLY
FINE,
ROLL ME OVER, LAY ME DOWN AND DO IT AGAIN.
ROLL ME OVER, IN THE CLOVER,
ROLL ME OVER, LAY ME DOWN AND DO IT AGAIN.
DO IT AGAIN!

(JOHN reaches climax with a cry, as JULIE almost faints. He stands behind her, gasping.)

GUESTS. *(Singing, very faintly:)*

OH THIS IS NUMBER TEN AND THERE ISN'T ANY END,
ROLL ME OVER, LAY ME DOWN, AND DO IT AGAIN.
ROLL ME OOO-VER IN THE CLOOO-VER,
ROLL ME OVER, LAY ME DOWN AND DO IT AGAIN.
DO IT AGAIN!

(Silence.)

JOHN. Yes, that's it.

(JOHN backs away, taking himself out of JULIE. He buttons up his trousers. He stares at her. She buries her head in her arms on the kitchen table.)

Long pause. Time passes. A faint light comes through the windows.)

JOHN. So that's that. What you wanted. I hope you enjoyed it, such as it was.

(JULIE pulls herself away from the table, stands shivering, in shock. She is wet from the table and her blouse is stained.)

JOHN. Wait a minute.

(Exit JOHN. JULIE shivers, tries to pull herself together but she can't. JOHN comes back with a clean shirt of his.)

JOHN. Take off that wet blouse. Put this on.

(Numbly, JULIE does.)

JOHN. You did want it. You said you did. Can't say it was rape, can we?

JULIE. *(Quietly:)* No.

JOHN. Here.

(He gives her a comb. She puts herself together as well as she can. JOHN watches her, sleek with satisfaction and very pleased with himself.)

JULIE. Hold me.

JOHN. I just did.

JULIE. Tell me you love me.

JOHN. Stop. You know that.

JULIE. Julie. I love you, Julie.

JOHN. Yes. Julie. Of course. Still hard for me to say that in this house. God, what a flunkey I am! See let's get out of here, and find our better selves! Leave all this behind us!

JULIE. All right. Leave it behind us. But tell me you love me. Otherwise what am I?

JOHN. I'll tell you I adore you! A thousand times, if you need it. But right now, we've got to think straight. And look at our situation in cold blood, like sensible people.

(JOHN lights a cigar and sits at the kitchen table.)

So. Getting out of here.

JULIE. You mean taking a trip?

JOHN. Permanently. I'll go with you!

JULIE. Where?

JOHN. Anywhere! Use your head! New Orleans, New York. California. Mexico. No, Hawaii!

JULIE. Hawaii?

JOHN. Where it's beautiful all the time. Sunshine! Orchids! Eternal summer!

JULIE. But what could we do in Hawaii?

JOHN. Buy a hotel. Not a big one, just a middle sized place. Not on Oahu, on one of the other islands. Kauai, maybe, or—or—Lanai—where the tourist business is just starting. Make it perfect and choice! Like you!

JULIE. Run a hotel, us?

JOHN. Why not? New faces all the time, new languages to learn. No time to be neurotic or depressed. We'd have to work, but good work, taking care of our own place in that wonderful weather! And the tourists and the money coming in! How about that for a new life!

JULIE. A new life? Yes, for you. But what about me?

JOHN. You'll be the Queen of the place. Wear those mumu dresses and flowers in your hair! Greet the guests like they were visiting a palace. Your own table at dinner, like the Captain's table on a great ship! Have a royal time with everybody, and charge them double for it! But we have to do it now! Atlanta to San Francisco to Honolulu to Lanai. That's it!

JULIE. Yes, I see it. But it scares me. Give me some of your courage, John.

JOHN. Sit down with me and let's plan this out, just like nothing has happened.

JULIE. Nothing? Cold blood? While I'm a wreck? Don't you have any tender feelings at all?

JOHN. Nobody has feelings more tender than mine! But now is not the time for them. I have to stay in control of myself.

JULIE. Have you forgotten? A minute ago, was it, you were kissing my feet?

JOHN. That was then, this is now. Stop it!

JULIE. Don't be mean to me.

JOHN. I'm just being objective. We lost our heads. Your father will be home any minute. We have things to settle first. Like Hawaii. What do you think?

JULIE. I'm sure Hawaii is wonderful. But what you describe, even a small hotel, means lots of capital. Do you have it?

JOHN. Sure I do! I have my youth, and my health, my knowledge of how a wealthy household works and my common sense. That's plenty of capital.

JULIE. Pan Am won't think so, if you try to buy a plane ticket with it.

JOHN. That's why I need somebody to advance me the money.

JULIE. And who would that be?

JOHN. That's for you to figure out, if you want to be my partner.

JULIE. I don't have that kind of money, not yet.

JOHN. Oh. Well, in that case, things will just go on as they have, I suppose.

JULIE. And I live here as your—thing. With everybody laughing at me? My father? No, get me out of here! You have to! Oh, God, what have I done?

JOHN. "Oh, God, what have I done?" What a million other rich women have done before you. Queen Victoria, I read it somewhere, slept with her coachman. If she could do it, why can't you?

JULIE. Now you're ridiculing me.

JOHN. If you'll let me, I'll lift you up, to the stars! Pacific stars!

JULIE. Why did I let you mesmerize me? Just your strength—paralyzing weakness? One rising while the other falls? Or was it—is it—real passion: love. Do you know what that is?

JOHN. I've been there once or twice. What do you think?

JULIE. You don't know anything about love, at all.

JOHN. Well, as the twig is bent, my dear. I don't romanticize fucking. I can't afford to. Don't play Princess with me. I am just as good as you are. Here, let's see if there's anything left.

(JOHN looks into the back of a cabinet.)

Here we are, in the olive oil can, where nobody would look.

(JOHN brings out a bottle of wine and opens it.)

JULIE. Let me see that.

JOHN. *(Like a waiter:)* Madame approves?

JULIE. That's my father's good Medoc! Where did you get it?

JOHN. From the cellar. Your father trusts me!

JULIE. Thief!

JOHN. Or future son-in-law. Which?

JULIE. My husband's a butler, and I help him steal! It's a nightmare, what I'm doing!

JOHN. Why? You've made a conquest. You beat out Christine. Don't you think she'll have feelings, too?

JULIE. I used to think servants had feelings but I don't anymore. A servant is a servant!

JOHN. And a slut is a slut!

(*JULIE stares at him, speechless.*

JOHN relights his cigar.)

I feel sorry for you. You really will believe almost anything. Like me with my shovel, dizzy with a grand passion for you. Truth is, when I first saw you, I just got a hard on.

JULIE. Liar!

JOHN. I had to tell you something romantic.

JULIE. You didn't mean any of it!

JOHN. I said it like I did. It's almost the same thing. Women have to be told they're adored, if you want to get them where you want them.

JULIE. Bastard!

JOHN. Man!

JULIE. Servant! Flunkey! Stand up when I talk to you!

JOHN. (*Jumping up:*) Servant's slut! Flunkey's fuck! Shut up and get out and to hell with you! Who do you think you are, telling me I'm beneath you? Go sell yourself on the street, where you belong! If anyone will have you!

JULIE. All right. Hit me, beat me up. I deserve it. But I'm miserable, John! Can't you help me as well as hurt me?

JOHN. I won't pretend I wasn't trying to get you in bed. But the invitation did come from you. I'm still dumbfounded about that.

JULIE. And proud of it.

JOHN. Sure, why not? You were just too easy, that's all.

JULIE. God. Hit me again.

JOHN. Yeah. (*Pause.*) It's been fun to find your pure gold only tarnished brass, and too much make up, with handkerchiefs dirty while they smell of perfume. What hurts me is finding out what you really are. A flower in the mud, beneath your own cook!

JULIE. And you're above us both?

JOHN. Yes, I am. Listen, Julie. You are a magnificent woman. But even so, you got hot pants for me, you gave in to it, and now you want to make yourself believe you're in love with me, or something

crazy like that. You're not, unless it's with my body, in which case you're no better than I am. Don't lie to yourself. I don't. I know that well enough. I could never make you really love me.

JULIE. Are you so sure?

JOHN. You're saying it's possible? I could really love you? Yes, I could. You're beautiful, educated, sensitive, a darling when you take a mind to it. Once on fire for you, who can forget you? I can't. Those kisses. What we did last night. It was good!

(JOHN *has moved in on* JULIE. *She pushes him away.*)

JULIE. You can't have me like that again.

JOHN. How then? Not by touching you and loving you. Not by concern for your future, and escape from a scandal. How then?

JULIE. How? I don't know! My God, I hate you but I can't get away from you!

JOHN. Get away *with* me!

JULIE. Yes. That's right. We have to get out of here. We will. Give me some of that wine.

(JOHN *pours her a glass of wine, watching her with concern.*

At the windows, light brightens as the morning comes on.)

We still have time. It's early. And I have something I want to tell you.

(JULIE *drinks the whole glass of wine, and holds out the glass for more.*)

JOHN. Don't drink like that. You'll get drunk again.

JULIE. Will I? Who cares?

JOHN. I care! You won't be able to function! Come on!

JULIE. Yes, all right but now I have to talk to you. You've told me all about yourself, and you think you know all about me, but you don't. We have to be honest with each other, if we're going to Hawaii together, right?

JOHN. Think a minute, Julie, before you tell me things nobody should know but you. You can give up a big part of yourself like that, and regret it.

JULIE. Now you sound like a friend. My real friend. Are you?

JOHN. I want to be, yes, but—don't count on it.

JULIE. My mother was the daughter of a high school teacher, way out in the country. She was brought up by her mother to believe in

women's equality and independence, but of course had to live quite differently. In the best tradition of the South, she won a beauty contest she hated and my father, a rich man, saw her. She told him she would never marry, and then married him anyway. When I was born, she didn't want me. She used me to prove that a girl could be just as good as a boy. I dressed like a boy, learned how to groom and harness a horse, how to hunt from one like a man. But then I'd have to go to school, and be a girl, in dresses again. A boy one day, a girl the next. They fought, of course, over everything, but me, mostly. My father tried to get a divorce—after all, they both had lovers—but my mother wouldn't give him one. They just kept on fighting, over me.

(JULIE pours herself another glass of wine and drinks a lot of it.)

JOHN. No more, after that. All right?

JULIE. What difference does it make? Once my mother tried to burn down the house. My father put her in a clinic. Shock treatments, I think. She came back broken, and my father was king. The only victory over him left, had to be me. I love my father, but I learned to hate and suspect all men, just as she did. When she died, of cancer and rage, I promised her I would never be any man's slave. I would dominate them.

JOHN. Is that why you were going to marry Richard Parmalee?

JULIE. Yes.

JOHN. Ah. Was being dominated all right with him?

JULIE. He loved it. I just got tired of him.

JOHN. (*Laughs.*) Sure you did.

JULIE. I said goodbye. He was terribly hurt.

JOHN. Don't hand me that. People saw him throw water in your face.

JULIE. Yes, but I had already broken the engagement.

JOHN. Sure. So you hate men?

JULIE. Yes, I do. Then, when I want one, I let myself go, as I did with you.

JOHN. You hate me, too?

JULIE. (*Smiling.*) Beyond description! I wish I could pull a trigger and blow you to pieces!

JOHN. Since you don't have a gun and murder is against the law, what are we going to do?

JULIE. Go away, like you said.

JOHN. So we can drive each other crazy, in your family's tradition?

JULIE. No. Just enjoy ourselves as long as we can. A month, a week, a few days, whatever. Then—

JOHN. Then what?

JULIE. Go somewhere else.

JOHN. But where? (*Pause.*) Oh. You mean die?

JULIE. Yes.

JOHN. I'll tell you what. Let's don't die. Let's open a hotel instead. You didn't act like you hated what we were doing in bed. You were very—

JULIE. Stop it!

JOHN. Very—uh—single-minded, let me say.

JULIE. Oui. Je veux m'encanaille.

JOHN. "I want to make a dog of myself"?

JULIE. Charming that you speak French. No doubt you will learn Hawaiian, if that's a language. And we'll be a great success at Waikiki Beach, where the sun is always shining, with the blue Pacific as a swimming pool, and coconut trees to eat from.

JOHN. You're better at sex than sarcasm. I know very well that Waikiki Beach is jammed packed with condominiums, and the blue Pacific is riddled with coral reefs, climbing coconut trees is for boys and monkeys. Nothing's paradise. But a hotel, out of the way, perfected, with—uh—out of the way cottages, could be a haven for discriminating tourists, for honeymoons and affairs. Loving couples often pay double, triple.

JULIE. Oh, they do not.

JOHN. If you make them rent by the month. Most of them get sick of each other and leave early, and you rent the same place again.

JULIE. How do you know that?

JOHN. Lovers quarrel, my dear. All of them, sooner or later. But, of course, they can't stop loving either, so there's always another marriage or affair or whatever to fill up the bedrooms, for awhile.

JULIE. You know a great deal about life.

JOHN. Yes, I do.

JULIE. And you don't want to die, with me?

JOHN. I don't want to die with, for, or instead of, anyone! I like being alive! It suits me fine! Anyway, suicide is a crime against God.

JULIE. God? *You*, believing in God?

JOHN. Absolutely. I go to church regularly, every other Sunday. I have my values securely in place. And, when a long time from now comes around, and I'm dead, God will say, "That man knew how to live."

JULIE. You are the most arrogant man in the history of conceit. Suppose we do leave? We go somewhere and get married. Escape. Then what? We get a divorce.

JOHN. Nope.

JULIE. Why not?

JOHN. I am above that. I come from better people than you do.

JULIE. *What?*

JOHN. Nobody in my family ever tried to burn down their house! Every child in my family was wanted! And men stayed men and women stayed women!

JULIE. How do you know?

JOHN. My family keeps in touch, thank you. And, I could find a few entries in some police files now and then. But whole books have been written about your folks.

JULIE. Both sides.

JOHN. Both sides. I've seen them in the library. Read them, even. You grand American aristocrats came off the streets of London, my dear, out of the bogs of Ireland and the jails of Wales. So don't hand me—any more—of that shit!

JULIE. (*Quietly:*) What did I do? Go to bed with you? Describe my mother to you?

JOHN. I told you not to drink that wine.

JULIE. I'm a fool for having anything to do with you! At least I thought you loved me!

JOHN. Oh, please, what the hell does that mean? Pick things up for you, like Richard Parmalee! What do you expect? I'm going to cover you with kisses, and leave my job and take you off to New York or somewhere? I'm sick to death of you already! Women!!

JULIE. Ahhh!

(*Pause.*)

JOHN. Julie. I can see how miserable you are. I know it's real. You're not kidding. But I can't really understand it. I don't have hysterics, like you do. I don't hate any woman, and no woman I know, even some I treated badly, hate me. For me, love is—playing. That's what I want to do when my job gives me a chance. That's what all normal people do. We don't have time for all this suffering over love. You do. All night and all day. That's why you're sick.

JULIE. You could be good to me, couldn't you? For the first time I hear—civilization—in your voice. You're talking like a human being.

JOHN. Fine. *You* do that, too, please! You spit at *me* and that's all right, but if *I* do, impossible, vulgar! So we both stay dirty!

JULIE. John, help me! What am I going to do with myself?

JOHN. I wish I knew.

JULIE. Sometimes I think I'm really crazy. I'm harsh, and mean, and arrogant and all that, but I don't mean anyone harm, really. I'm just looking for a way out.

JOHN. In that case, just stay in. Stay right here and don't say a word. That door was closed. Nobody knows a thing.

JULIE. Of course they do. My awful friends. Christine.

JOHN. They can't prove it. Not to your father. You're free and clear.

JULIE. Except for one thing.

JOHN. What's that?

JULIE. I did—as much as I hate it—like that with you. It could happen again.

JOHN. Well, yeah.

JULIE. You didn't have any protection. What will my father do, if I get pregnant, by you?

JOHN. Don't even think about it. Get hold of as much money as you can, and leave. Now. I'll stay.

JULIE. Go alone? I couldn't do it!

JOHN. You have to. You know what will happen to us. You get started and then it's all the time. Again and again and again!

JULIE. I won't go unless you come with me!

JOHN. And we can stop off downtown at the newspapers and give them the story: Miss Julie runs away with her father's houseboy?

JULIE. I can't leave! And I can't stay! I'm stuck in a swamp! My head hurts. John, do what you think best! Tell me what to do and I will. Give me orders!

JOHN. Give you orders? My God, see what kind of trash you really are? You strut about and stick up your nose at other people! Miss Got Rocks! Miss Social Register! All right, I'll give you some orders. Go upstairs. Get together all the cash and financial credit you can. Get dressed for the road and come back down here.

JULIE. Come upstairs with me.

JOHN. And help you dress? Get upstairs. Right now!

JULIE. Be kind to me.

JOHN. Orders are tough. Now you know how it feels to take them. Upstairs.

(Slowly, JULIE exits.)

JOHN gives a huge sigh of relief.)

JOHN. *(To himself:)* Hardest work I've ever done in my life!

(He sits at the table, takes a pad and a pencil from a bowl there, and writes down some figures, muttering to himself.)

Light brightens at the windows.

CHRISTINE comes out of her room. She is dressed for Church.)

CHRISTINE. What happened to this place?

JOHN. You slept through *all* of it?

CHRISTINE. Last I remembered, some drunk was coming into my room, then he wasn't. Everybody was singing, then they left. I went back to sleep.

JOHN. Ready for Church now?

CHRISTINE. Today's Sunday, of course I'm ready for Church. You should be, too. Get dressed.

JOHN. I don't think I could listen to a sermon this morning. John the Baptist getting his head chopped off. All those little loaves and fishes. *(Yawns.)* God, I'm sleepy!

CHRISTINE. So what kept you up all night?

JOHN. Just talking with Miss Julie. Right here, at the table.

CHRISTINE. Oh, Miss Julie!

(JOHN laughs.)

What are you laughing at?

JOHN. It is comical, when you really think about it!

CHRISTINE. What is?

JOHN. (*Laughs.*) All of it! Everything!

(*CHRISTINE picks up the two glasses from the table.*)

CHRISTINE. You were both drinking out here?

JOHN. Yep.

CHRISTINE. For Christ's sake!

JOHN. Yep.

CHRISTINE. Did you?

JOHN. Yep.

CHRISTINE. Ugh!

JOHN. Jealous?

CHRISTINE. Anybody else, yes. Not her.

JOHN. You're not mad at her?

CHRISTINE. I'm mad at you, you bastard! Poor woman. Well, we'll have to leave.

JOHN. Why?

CHRISTINE. You expect me to go to bed early so you can screw Miss Julie? Or are you saying, "Oh, darling, I'm sorry, it will never happen again?" I have to respect the people I work for!

JOHN. Well, I don't. I feel just fine when I know they are no better than we are.

CHRISTINE. Miss Julie. So proud and mean to men. Wanting me to cook that mess, just because her dog got pregnant. What must she really be like, inside? So, we find other work, then we get married. Right?

JOHN. I could never find a job as good as this. Not in Atlanta.

CHRISTINE. Then we'll move. You can get work.

JOHN. As a janitor? Digging on the roads? Short order cook? Slave my life away for the wife and kids? No thank you. I've got other ideas.

CHRISTINE. Don't try to drop me, John.

JOHN. I didn't say that. Just leave all this to me.

(They hear sounds over the communication system.

A light signaling it is ON has stayed lit.)

CHRISTINE. Listen! The light's on! Is that her father?

JOHN. What? No. He would have called down for me. It's her.

CHRISTINE. All right. Get yourself ready for church. We have ten minutes.

(CHRISTINE goes to the door to the outside.)

I'm taking a walk. And forgetting this!

(Exit CHRISTINE, into the now bright early morning.

In a moment, JOHN closes the door after her.

Light outside brightens the room. It is quite harsh.

Enter MISS JULIE. She is dressed in a very simple dress and jacket for traveling, but is disheveled, having dressed nervously and hastily. She carries a flight bag and a small bird cage, covered with a towel, which she sets down on the kitchen table.)

JOHN. What were you doing up there, walking around talking to yourself?

JULIE. Nothing. I'm ready to go now. Has Christine gone?

JOHN. She went out for a walk. You have to move quickly, before she comes back.

JULIE. I left Yvette upstairs. I know we can't take her. You talked to Christine?

JOHN. Yes. She doesn't know a thing. You look terrible.

JULIE. I do?

JOHN. Pale as a ghost. And your face is dirty.

JULIE. I'll wash it.

(She goes to the kitchen sink and washes her face and hands.)

Give me a towel.

(JOHN does.)

Oh, the sunlight! It's so bright!

JOHN. Hurry up!

JULIE. There. Now I'm all right. I have all of my credit cards, my stocks, some of my father's, and the book to the savings account he

keeps for me. It's a lot of money, John, if that's what you want. And I can get more. Lots more. Will you come with me now?

JOHN. Well—

JULIE. I can't go alone. New Year's Day, the planes full and the trains jammed with people! I won't make it. I'll get halfway to somewhere and think of my home and who I am, and what I know I'm not strong enough to do. Even if I do get on a plane, my awful memories will fly right behind me! You have to come with me!

JOHN. All right, I will! We just go! Buy everything new!

JULIE. All right.

JOHN. What's this?

JULIE. My canary. I can't leave her behind.

JOHN. The hell you can't!

(JULIE picks up the cage.)

JULIE. This is the only living thing I can take. Just a little bird, but she means a lot.

JOHN. Put the damned thing down. It stays here.

(JULIE puts the cage down.)

JULIE. No. Singing for other people? I'd rather you killed it.

JOHN. Give it here.

JULIE. All right, but painlessly.

JOHN. Sure.

(JULIE opens the cage and takes the bird out. She holds it in her hands and kisses it.)

JULIE. My little songbird.

(JOHN takes a meat cleaver from a drawer.)

JOHN. Don't be stupid! Give me that thing!

(In one swift movement, he takes the bird from JULIE, lays it on the butcherblock table, and with one blow, decapitates it. Blood spurts onto the table.)

JULIE. OH!!

(She turns away, and leans against a wall.)

JOHN. *(Wiping his hands:)* If you'd been taught how to kill a chicken instead of riding horses, like a country club snob, you wouldn't worry about a little blood.

JULIE. You can chop off a bird's head without a thought! Oh, I hate and despise you! Damn you! Damn the both of us!

JOHN. Forget it! Let's go!

JULIE. The sight of blood! You think I am just a stupid weak woman who can't stand it! Well, I want to see *your* blood on that table! I want to drink it out of your skull! Wash my feet in it! Eat your heart raw! I want to see your balls and your cock swimming in blood, like that thing there! God damn you to hell!

(They stare at each other, over the bloody table.)

Enter CHRISTINE, from outside.)

CHRISTINE. My God, what are you doing now?

(JULIE runs to CHRISTINE.)

JULIE. Help me, Christine.

(CHRISTINE goes to the table.)

CHRISTINE. What is this mess?

JOHN. Nothing.

(JOHN swiftly takes the bird's body, throws it into a bin under the sink, and wipes the table with a towel.)

JULIE. Be my friend, Christine.

JOHN. While you're deciding my fate, I'll get my coat and hat.

(He goes into his room. CHRISTINE looks at Julie's bag.)

CHRISTINE. You're going somewhere with him?

JULIE. Just listen to me, Christine.

CHRISTINE. No, I don't think I will!

JULIE. You have to.

CHRISTINE. I do not! Lots of things I have to do here, but that's not one of them! And if you think you're taking him away with you, well, no, you're not!

JULIE. Listen to me, Christine. I can't stay here any more and John can't stay here any more. We must leave, together!

CHRISTINE. Never.

JULIE. *(Quickly.)* But you know—yes—we could take you with us! How about that? All three of us—to Hawaii—and open a beautiful hotel on the island of Lanai!

CHRISTINE. Do what?

JULIE. Where there are palm trees, and orchids all year round, and the trade winds cooling us off! In the hotel, I'll greet the Guests and John will see to the grounds and keep the books, and you'll have a beautiful kitchen all your own, with servants to work for you! Yes!

(JULIE is breathing heavily. She slows down.)

And some day—you'll catch a fine husband and we'll take him in with us! And—we'll be rich and—build us wonderful modern houses with glass walls and thatched roofs! Christine?

CHRISTINE. You poor woman. Do you really believe all that?

JULIE. *(Weakly.)* Do I believe it?

(Pause. JULIE sits at the kitchen table.)

I don't know. It's hard, right now, to believe in anything!

(JULIE puts her head on her hands, on the table.)

There's nothing, really. Nothing.

(Enter JOHN, dressed for travel.)

CHRISTINE. You were running away from me? With her!

JOHN. Changing positions, not running away. You heard what she said. Maybe you don't believe it but I do. It can happen!

CHRISTINE. But it won't!

JOHN. Why won't it?

CHRISTINE. I won't let it!

JOHN. What can you do about it?

CHRISTINE. All kinds of things!

JOHN. No, you can't! Who are you? The cook!

CHRISTINE. And who are you? The lackey!

JOHN. A man! Who can take her away from here!

CHRISTINE. You're not a man! You're a put together thing, made out of dirt and no money and a little privilege. You'll stay here and marry me, because I'm exactly the same. But I know it and you don't!

JOHN. You don't know anything! Come on, Julie, let's go!

(A football game march is heard, over the communications system.)

CHRISTINE. Didn't you hear him come in?

JOHN. What?

CHRISTINE. Her father's in the house! That's his TV on upstairs!

JOHN. What?

CHRISTINE. And he'll want breakfast!

JOHN. He's here? He's here?

CHRISTINE. After you see him, come on to Church. I'll be waiting for you.

(JULIE lifts her head and gazes at CHRISTINE.)

JULIE. Church, Christine?

CHRISTINE. Yes, Miss Julie. And I will bring back with me enough forgiveness for God to give you peace again. Our Lord suffered, too, and died on the cross for these sins of ours. If we go to him with a trusting heart, and ask his forgiveness, he will take those sins on himself.

JULIE. Will he, Christine?

CHRISTINE. That is my faith and the faith of my childhood, and I will not change it. Where there is much sin, Miss Julie, there is much forgiveness.

JULIE. Teach me how to believe that.

CHRISTINE. I don't know the secrets of God's abounding grace. It's just there when He sends it to us, with no lookout for who you are or where you live or anything. There are those who are last who shall be first.

JULIE. And God cares for those who are last?

CHRISTINE. That's it, Miss Julie. It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than a rich man enter into heaven. Now I'm going to church. I'll expect you soon, John. If you run away with her, I'll tell her father. He will stop you before you get over the state line.

(Exit CHRISTINE.)

JOHN. Well. Damn.

JULIE. No way out, John.

JOHN. Not that I can see.

JULIE. There is, though.

(She goes to the table and picks up the meat cleaver.)

JOHN. Oh, come on! You're not serious about that.

JULIE. My mother tried to burn down the house. That was her revenge. She's still doing it, through me.

JOHN. And you love your father?

JULIE. I adore him. I hate him, at the same time. Who's fault is it, what has happened to me? My father's? My mother's? My own? There's nothing really mine that's my own. My thoughts from my father. My feelings from my mother. But how can this misery I live in be their fault, or mine? Can Jesus help? No. My father at least taught me to think. Christine's rich people not getting into heaven are just lies because there isn't any heaven to get into. And what does it matter whose fault it is?

(JOHN stares at her, finally realizing how desperate she really is. Her FATHER'S VOICE comes out of the system loudspeaker.)

FATHER. John! I'm gonna take a shower, then I want you up here with my Sunday shoes. You down there, John?

(With reflex action, JOHN grabs a phone off its hook.)

JOHN. Yes, sir, right here. Coming up!

FATHER. All right.

(JOHN hangs up.)

JOHN. It's no good, Miss Julie. Christine is right. Your father would make me wish I'd never been born.

JULIE. What are you going to do?

JOHN. First thing he ever asked me, out on his farm when I was a boy, was, "Can you shine shoes?" And I said, Yes, sir."

(He picks up the Father's shoes, very well shined, and stands there holding them.)

JULIE. Before you go. Do something for me.

(JOHN waits.)

Have you ever seen a movie where someone was hypnotized?

JOHN. Yes.

JULIE. Something bright swings on a chain. Just move your hand, back and forth, like that.

JOHN. All right.

(He does. JULIE follows his hand, with her eyes. She takes off her coat.)

JULIE. The hypnotist says: "Get the broom." And the subject gets it. He says, "Now sweep." And the subject sweeps.

JOHN. But you got to be in a trance.

JULIE. Oh, I am. I always have been.

(She presses the heels on her hands into her eyes and holds them there.)

The room is so dark now. It's filled with smoke. You look like a stove in the shape of a man—dark clothes and a hat and your eyes burning like coals just before they go out. And your face is ashes.

(Sunlight through the door to the outside. MISS JULIE takes her hands away from her eyes.)

Oh! How bright! How warm it is, how lovely.

(She tilts up her face and rubs her hands, as if to a fire.)

The light. It's peaceful.

(Her FATHER'S VOICE comes out of the speaker on the wall.)

FATHER. John! Get up here!

(JOHN grabs the phone.)

JOHN. Yes, sir! Right away, sir!

(He goes to the door, shoes in his hands.)

JULIE. John, tell me that God cherishes all sinners. They too receive His grace. Say it, even if you don't believe it.

JOHN. I do believe it.

JULIE. Now say, "Get the broom and sweep the floor."

(JOHN nods.)

JOHN. If that's what you have to do.

JULIE. It is. Say it.

JOHN. Get the broom and sweep the floor.

JULIE. Thank you.

(Exit JOHN.)

JULIE has been slowly removing her clothes. She now stands up, goes to the hot tub and turns on the jets. They send hot water out in spurts.

JULIE removes her clothes.

She goes to the kitchen table, where the meat cleaver still lies. She takes it with her to the hot tub and gets in. Her body disappears beneath the swirl of bubbles, leaving only her head, neck and shoulders showing.

She gasps, as under the water, she rips herself open with the meat cleaver.

Her blood comes up mixing with the water, swirling around her.

JULIE watches her blood swirl around her.)

JULIE. Oh.

(She lies back in the tub. She tries to smile. One arm hangs out of the tub. She closes her eyes.

Enter STRINDBERG, dressed as himself now. He goes to the tub, stares down at JULIE. He holds her hand, sits beside the hot tub on a stool, and waits.

Light closes around JULIE and STRINDBERG, then goes out.)

End of Act One

ACT TWO: GHOST MUSIC

(The set has been changed during intermission.)

"The Swan," by Saint-Saens, for cello and piano plays.

Down stage an open area, indicating a street. Upstage, a platform, indicating a house. It represents a large imposing home in downtown Savannah, Georgia. It is covered now by closed black Venetian blinds.

Onstage lights find STRINDBERG, sitting in a wheelchair, in a white suit, with a light blanket over his legs. He is reading a newspaper. It is early Sunday morning. Music ends. Birds sing.)

STRINDBERG. Nobody who saw this play knew what to say. Except of course impossible, ridiculous, boring, morbid, degrading and profoundly silly. One comment, meant to be scathing, called it music of the dead, played in a dream. Exactly right. I like it so much I am going to act in it. Name's Hummer.

(Enter ARTIE, a young man. He is handsome but high strung. He is unshaven and unkempt. He stands staring at the house.)

STRINDBERG checks something in his newspaper, looks at us, and smiles.)

That young man is fascinated with that house. Why?

(One section of the Venetian blinds go up, revealing a beautiful young woman, the DAUGHTER, looking out at the city.)

ARTIE. *(To DAUGHTER:)* Could you give me a drink of wadder?

(The DAUGHTER does not look at him.)

HUMMER. Wadder.

ARTIE. I'm a bit rattled. I spent all night bandaging victims of a slum that collapsed. Whole building, fell right down. People died. Blood everywhere. Could you please do something for me? My eyes are red but my hands maybe have germs all over them from the corpses I handled. Shouldn't get them near my eyes.

(The blinds are lowered.)

HUMMER. Excuse me.

ARTIE. What?

HUMMER. You were staring at that house, and talking to someone.

ARTIE. Did it bother you? Sorry.

HUMMER. I've been reading my newspaper, which has you in it. Here's your picture, see?

ARTIE. Really? Yes, that's me.

HUMMER. They don't know your name. You disappeared.

ARTIE. Yes, I suppose I did.

HUMMER. Are you a doctor?

ARTIE. No, a male nurse. I work at hospitals.

HUMMER. A hero it says. Who were you talking to?

ARTIE. You saw her.

HUMMER. No, I didn't.

ARTIE. Really?

HUMMER. Just the house. Could I ask you—what is your name?

ARTIE. What do you care? I'm not trying to be a hero. I don't want a reward.

HUMMER. Rich?

ARTIE. No, poor.

HUMMER. You and your family, always poor?

ARTIE. No.

HUMMER. But you are now?

ARTIE. I told you I'm a male nurse. How rich can I be?

HUMMER. Listening to you talk to whoever it was you were talking to, I thought you said certain words in a certain way. I knew a man once who said wadder for water. Is your name Holt?

ARTIE. Yes.

HUMMER. Any relation to Arthur Holt, who ran a furniture store downtown?

ARTIE. His son, Artie.

HUMMER. Artie Holt. Life is like this. I knew you when you were a little boy. In a difficult hour.

ARTIE. Who are you?

HUMMER. I am Richmond Hummer.

ARTIE. Oh.

HUMMER. You've heard the name? From your family?

ARTIE. My mother, not my father.

HUMMER. She told you I was the one who ruined him? Drove him into bankruptcy?

ARTIE. She did.

HUMMER. People who can't fool others, and lose their money in stupid investments, they often say others fooled them and ruined them. No?

ARTIE. Yes, that's what he said.

HUMMER. These are the facts. Look them up. New York Stock exchange, microfilm newspapers. March, 1976. Your father invested one hundred and twenty thousand dollars for me, and lost it all. Everything I had. Then he accused me of ruining him, when he lost his own money with mine.

ARTIE. I know the story, but told another way.

HUMMER. You don't believe me?

ARTIE. I believe my father.

HUMMER. I'm a father, too. Believe me.

ARTIE. What about you?

HUMMER. I stepped in. Loans at once. Reinvestment quickly. Saved your father and myself. For this he hated me. The kind of man, do him a favor, and he will get you for it. He taught you to hate me, too.

ARTIE. He said you made him crawl.

HUMMER. When you save someone, you humiliate them, true.

ARTIE. I don't want to hear it. What do you want with me?

HUMMER. You're a Southern gentleman. Written all over you. You may be a male nurse who talks to people who aren't there, but you're a Southern gentleman anyway. Look at what you did for all those bloody victims. I'll call the affair with your father settled. All right?

ARTIE. I don't know.

HUMMER. Look at me. I'm a cripple. Why? Some say I deserve it. I say life did it, maliciously, to me. If it isn't one hole you fall in, it's another, but who digs the holes? Anyway, I can't climb stairs or ring doorbells. I want to get into that house. So do you.

ARTIE. What do you want?

HUMMER. In the paper. A road company of "My Fair Lady," downtown theater. Sunday matinee today. The General and his daughter—

ARTIE. A general?

HUMMER. Retired.

ARTIE. She's a General's daughter?

HUMMER. And you're a male nurse. But don't worry. The General has a subscription to road company productions. He takes his daughter. Here's my credit card. There's a pay phone around that corner. Call the theater, buy seat F-6. You go. You sit next to them. You all meet. They will recognize you from the papers. The hero, the celebrity. You'll be very happy. It will come true, what you were imagining just now. She will bathe your wounds, and comfort you.

ARTIE. This is crazy.

HUMMER. Which of us is crazy is a topic for considerable discussion. Can't you take a chance?

ARTIE. I do, all the time, and lose.

HUMMER. Do it now, and win.

ARTIE. All right.

(ARTIE takes the paper and the card and exits.)

HUMMER turns his wheelchair away from the house, as if afraid.

Music. Behind him a different section of the black blinds slowly rise, revealing a very old white-haired WOMAN IN BLACK. She stares at him with hatred, as he keeps his back turned to her in fear. The blinds descend. The music ends.

Enter ARTIE.)

ARTIE. Done.

HUMMER. Good. You're staring at the house again.

ARTIE. Yesterday, the sun was all over it. The white pillars, the windows shining. A Savannah town house, God, how elegant. How wonderful to must live there! And then I saw the General's daughter go into the house. She was so beautiful! Think of living there, I thought, with a wife like that and the money to keep such a woman and such a house!

HUMMER. I like the house, too.

ARTIE. Why?

HUMMER. I know the people who live in it.

ARTIE. You do?

HUMMER. Every one of them. At my age, you know everyone in Savannah, and their mothers and fathers and grandmothers and grandfathers, and who was who to who way way back. We're all

related somehow. I am eighty years old, and I know them but they don't know me, not exactly. More than anything else, I love what really, what finally happens to people. Knowing makes up for everything.

(A section of blinds go up. The GENERAL is seen, wearing a conservative suit, holding at arm's length a life-size photograph of a young woman, 1930s. It is in a large wooden frame, on wheels.)

ARTIE. Is that the General?

HUMMER. Is what the General?

ARTIE. There! Don't you see him?

HUMMER. No.

ARTIE. He's holding a life size photograph of a woman. Very pretty.

HUMMER. If what you're seeing is the General, that's the man you'll sit by this afternoon. Say hello, all that.

ARTIE. This is like a fairy tale.

HUMMER. My life is like fairy tales, if you remember they have some horrible events in them. There are many fairy tales in my long life. They may be different, but like everyone else, I know they are joined by one underlying reality. I seek that reality. I seek it in what happens to others.

ARTIE. Who's the blown-up photograph?

HUMMER. He's holding a photograph?

ARTIE. Yes, by her clothes I'd say taken in the 1930's.

HUMMER. That's his wife.

ARTIE. You knew her, too?

HUMMER. Of course.

ARTIE. Was she as good as she was beautiful?

HUMMER. Well, yes.

ARTIE. She looks like their daughter. Tell me about her.

HUMMER. Judge not, young man. She left the General, when they were young. He was a Major then, I think. He beat her, and she came back, married him for the second time around. She's in the house now, but she doesn't look like that. She looks like a mummy.

ARTIE. A what?

HUMMER. You know, Egyptian, all wrapped up in ancient brown bandages, like horror movies, like that.

ARTIE. Horror movies? I don't understand.

HUMMER. You will.

(The blinds descend.)

ARTIE. I do have second sight.

HUMMER. Really?

ARTIE. How do you think I have been seeing all these people you can't?

HUMMER. I've been telling you about them.

ARTIE. Only after I see them.

HUMMER. True.

ARTIE. Yesterday, I don't know why I turned into that little street. I just did. I was walking along without knowing why when I saw a building I didn't know was there. I stopped to look at it. I saw this crack running up its wall. I heard boards inside creaking and then whole floors breaking and the building started crashing down. I ran to it and grabbed a little boy who was playing with a toy dog in front of it, smash, down it all came, with me jumping just barely free, safe. But there was no little boy in my arms. I'm not sure now what I saw and what I didn't but the building did fall. People were hurt and I was a male nurse and did my best for them. I'm not sure when what I see is real and when it isn't.

HUMMER. That's second sight, all right. Some call it schizophrenia. I don't have it.

(A section of the blinds go up, revealing the WOMAN IN BLACK who was glaring at HUMMER.)

ARTIE. Oh! Someone else!

HUMMER. What does she look like?

ARTIE. An old woman, in her seventies. She's not happy. She's glaring at you.

HUMMER. Does she wear black? Does she have a little watch on a chain around her throat?

ARTIE. Yes. Do you know her, too?

HUMMER. I was engaged to be married to her, years ago. I was twenty. She was eighteen.

ARTIE. She doesn't like you now.

HUMMER. That's just what you see. The truth is we see each other in the parks all the time and she never knows me. But once we said we would love each other forever.

ARTIE. That's stupid. I'd never say that to a woman today, and if I did, she wouldn't believe me. People can get along but they can't love forever.

HUMMER. We didn't know any better. We were young. We said things like that. The old woman, do you think she was beautiful when she was young?

ARTIE. I can't tell. There's a sparkle in her eyes, or maybe it's just dislike for you.

(The blinds go down. The front door opens by itself. No one is there.)

Ah!

HUMMER. What's the matter now?

ARTIE. The door just opened. But no one's there!

HUMMER. You do have second sight! It's a dead man leaving the house. Even you couldn't see that. He was a terrible creature. Let him go. Dead and buried weeks ago but his spirit still comes out and goes.

ARTIE. Who was he?

HUMMER. A lawyer. A dreadful man. Forget about him. They have.

ARTIE. But did he live here?

HUMMER. Yes and no. It's all too complicated otherwise, although it seems very simple.

ARTIE. A bad man?

HUMMER. Sometimes. Sometimes good. Did people a lot of favors, was elected State Senator, years ago. Go to the back door, and you'll find poor people stopping by to pay their respects, even though the funeral was weeks ago.

ARTIE. He was a kind person then?

HUMMER. Sometimes, and sometimes the devil, like you and like me. Just push my chair a little into the sun, will you? I get terribly cold, even here.

(ARTIE moves Hummer's wheelchair so he is more in the sun.)

When you can't move, your blood stops moving. I've lived so long. Made people miserable and they've punished me for it. Sins that

cancel each other out. I'm through with everything, except that house. And I want you to be happy, before I die. Because of your father, our lives bind us together. Tragically, until now. Here, shake hands.

(HUMMER *takes ARTIE's hand.*)

ARTIE. All right. Oh!

(HUMMER *holds ARTIE, smiling.*)

HUMMER. What's the matter?

ARTIE. Your hand! It's like ice!

HUMMER. Is it?

ARTIE. Let go! You're freezing! I'm ice cold! What are you doing to me? Let go!

HUMMER. Have patience! You'll see!

(HUMMER *lets go of ARTIE.*)

There! Look!

(*Enter GENERAL'S DAUGHTER, walking up the street, wearing boots and a riding habit.*)

ARTIE. It's her! But she was in the house!

HUMMER. You saw her in the house. Now she isn't. You see things. Perhaps you're schizophrenic. No matter. She's had her morning ride. Then church. Then "My Fair Lady." The perfect Sunday.

DAUGHTER. Good morning.

ARTIE. Good morning.

(*The DAUGHTER goes into the house.*)

Oh.

HUMMER. Have you ever seen a more beautiful woman?

ARTIE. Never. She's like that photograph the General held.

HUMMER. That's her mother.

ARTIE. I want to marry her.

HUMMER. So be it.

ARTIE. To marry her? To live in a beautiful house like that? I'm so poor, working in a hospital. I get confused sometimes. I see things. She would never marry a man like me.

HUMMER. I can change all that. I can open doors. I can open souls and hearts, too, if only I have somebody to help me, be my legs. Do what I tell you and you'll have her and all this, I promise.

ARTIE. Faust and the Devil? You want my soul?

HUMMER. Keep your soul. Just listen to me. In life, there are people who give and people who take. I took, always. Now, half dead, I want to give and give and give, but no one wants to take. I am rich, very, but I have no heirs, except one fool who torments me with his avarice and will get nothing. No, you will be my son! You can inherit the best I can give while I am alive and can see it!

ARTIE. What do you want me to do?

HUMMER. "My Fair Lady."

ARTIE. I'll be there. What else?

HUMMER. This evening, be in that house.

ARTIE. How?

HUMMER. At the theatre, get yourself and me, *and me*, invited to supper.

ARTIE. Did you plan this? You couldn't!

HUMMER. Of course I could! I have been thinking about you all these years, your father's little boy. It was just a matter of time before all these things came together.

(Blinds raise.)

ARTIE. Ah!

HUMMER. What do you see?

(The DAUGHTER holds a vase of flowers and a watering can.)

ARTIE. She is watering some flowers. They are beautiful, and so is she.

HUMMER. That's my girl. Are the flowers blue hyacinths?

ARTIE. Yes, they are. She's so gentle, in spite of those riding clothes. She's talking to the flowers.

HUMMER. It does them good. She loves blue hyacinths because I gave them to her when she was a baby.

(The GENERAL enters with a newspaper.)

ARTIE. Now her father has come in. He's showing her something in the newspapers.

HUMMER. Your picture. You see? And he's not her father. He thinks he is but he isn't. So there. All set. Three cheers for the noble young man who risked his own life to save others and did so in a bloody and heroic action! I will see you there tonight!

(*HUMMER wheels himself off.*)

ARTIE. Wait! There are so many things I don't understand.

(*He is gone. The blinds come down on the GENERAL and the DAUGHTER reading the paper together. The door opens. The WOMAN IN BLACK stands there, looking at ARTIE.*)

WOMAN IN BLACK. Young man.

ARTIE. Yes?

WOMAN IN BLACK. That man in the wheelchair. How well do you know him?

ARTIE. Not very. Just met him today.

WOMAN IN BLACK. I've known him for many years. Watch out.

ARTIE. Why?

WOMAN IN BLACK. He is too many things.

ARTIE. Is that good?

WOMAN IN BLACK. Sit on the steps.

(*ARTIE sits on the steps. The WOMAN IN BLACK sits a step or two above him.*)

He wants power over others. That's all he lives for. All day long he rides around in that wheelchair like it's a chariot and he's Agamemnon home from destroying Troy. Real Estate is his business and he's made millions. Down the street, buy this house, sell that one, break open this one, remodel that one, let's have an apartment house here, let's get a tax write-off with a little park there.

ARTIE. But that's good, isn't it?

WOMAN IN BLACK. There are people connected to all those buildings. He doesn't care. He levels his enemies like his houses, interferes with human beings he knows nothing about, throws them into chaos and changes their lives forever. And once, once, if you can believe it, this mean old cripple, he was a Don Juan, a Lady Killer, who first won then always lost every woman he loved.

ARTIE. How did he do that?

WOMAN IN BLACK. Like many men, when he was through with a woman, he provoked them so they would leave him. He's a coward, too. You saw that, I hope.

ARTIE. I beg your pardon, but how do you know that?

WOMAN IN BLACK. I almost married him myself, but I didn't. He never forgave me. I never forgave him. He steals people. He probably just stole you.

ARTIE. Did he steal you?

WOMAN IN BLACK. He tried. I was young, in trouble. He hired a lawyer he also stole somewhere and they got me off. Then I was his slave. His wife he said, but he wouldn't marry me. We did terrible things to people together. Then I left him, and he never forgave me for it. We despise each other.

ARTIE. What's he going to do in this house?

WOMAN IN BLACK. I don't know. Whatever it is, it's too complicated for words. Get away from him! Don't do anything he says.

ARTIE. What if I do?

WOMAN IN BLACK. Well, then we'll see.

(The WOMAN IN BLACK goes into the house and closes the door. ARTIE runs off. Lights fade on the house.)

"The Swan" plays again. In darkness all the blinds are raised. The living room of the house, very elegant and tasteful, with a long, slim dining table, is discovered. At the center of the table is a bowl of blue hyacinths. The framed life-size photograph of the beautiful woman is on its own stand. A brocaded oriental shawl hangs on a clothes tree.

Lights up on the WOMAN IN BLACK and the DAUGHTER.)

WOMAN IN BLACK. I'll serve tea, while you take their coats.

DAUGHTER. Ghost suppers. My father talks. Silence. My father talks. Silence. We eat crackers, and sound like rats in the walls.

WOMAN IN BLACK. Ghost suppers?

DAUGHTER. You haven't lived with us long enough to know. It's what they look like, and have for twenty years. Now I'm a ghost, too. And to our ghost suppers come the same other ghosts from their other ghost worlds, all saying the same things to each other, or just eating crackers because they're afraid of what they might say.

WOMAN IN BLACK. Where is your mother?

DAUGHTER. In the cupboard, hiding the light from her eyes. All wrapped up for the day. Here.

(The DAUGHTER opens a door to a closet. A MUMMY is seen, the General's wife, wrapped in mummy cloth. She carries a pack of crackers, eating from time to time.)

MUMMY. Don't open that door! Keep it shut!

DAUGHTER. No, now, Mamma. Be a nice Mamma and you'll get something nice to eat. *(Whistles.)* Pretty Polly!

MUMMY. Polly wants a cracker! Are you there, Ritchy? *(Whistles.)*

WOMAN IN BLACK. Your mother thinks she's a parrot.

DAUGHTER. Maybe she's right. Whistle for us, Polly.

(The DAUGHTER whistles. The MUMMY whistles back.)

WOMAN IN BLACK. When a house ages, it can fall apart, held together by mould and cobwebs. When people age, too long together, they drive each other crazy. The Lady of the House—

MUMMY. *(Whistles. Eats a cracker.)*

WOMAN IN BLACK. Shut up, Polly. Living here for fifty years. Same husband. Same furniture. Same relatives. Same friends.

DAUGHTER. Hush. Have mercy on her.

(DAUGHTER closes the door on the MUMMY.)

WOMAN IN BLACK. And look at that photograph. She was young and beautiful.

DAUGHTER. A parrot now. She can't stand me. Or cripples or anybody who's sick. Because she's old, and crippled and sick herself.

WOMAN IN BLACK. But so are you.

DAUGHTER. Yes. She doesn't want to hear about it.

WOMAN IN BLACK. Your father does.

DAUGHTER. He pretends to. Sends me to doctors, but he doesn't care either. As long as I go to the theater with him, go to parties with him, to church with him, to the park with him, he's happy.

WOMAN IN BLACK. How old is your mother now?

DAUGHTER. No telling. I always heard that when she was forty she looked twenty. That's how she married my father, making him think she was much younger. Then she turned into a mummy.

WOMAN IN BLACK. And a parrot.

DAUGHTER. And a parrot. Do you see those Oriental shawls hanging there? She put them there for me, today. My mother.

WOMAN IN BLACK. Very beautiful.

DAUGHTER. Oh it's expensive all right.

WOMAN IN BLACK. What's it for?

DAUGHTER. When you die.

WOMAN IN BLACK. What?

DAUGHTER. When I die, actually. It's like a screen around you in a hospital. You put it on and no one sees you, no one wants to look at you, so you can die leaving them in peace. Someone told my mother it was a Buddhist custom and she believed them, but it isn't. It's just a made-up convenience. Getting rid of grown children with no fuss.

WOMAN IN BLACK. Parents should be sorry when their children die. I would be, if I'd had any.

DAUGHTER. Well, mine won't be.

WOMAN IN BLACK. That young man who sat in front of the house yesterday, looking at it with such longing. If he only knew. Why did I come to this house?

DAUGHTER. Because your husband was a fool and my father seduced you.

WOMAN IN BLACK. How long have you known that?

DAUGHTER. As long as I've known my father, I've known what he does with women. You moved in here with your imbecile husband, and he died, and you stayed and I knew why.

WOMAN IN BLACK. Not exactly.

DAUGHTER. I thought there was more to it.

WOMAN IN BLACK. I knew your father before I married my husband.

DAUGHTER. I thought so. They'll be coming soon.

WOMAN IN BLACK. The young man?

DAUGHTER. And a Mr. Hummer he wants us to meet.

WOMAN IN BLACK. The man in the wheelchair, out front yesterday?

DAUGHTER. I think so.

WOMAN IN BLACK. I know him. Knew him.

DAUGHTER. My father and I met this young man at “My Fair Lady.” He is really very nice, but crazy. Really crazy. But he saved all those people when that house collapsed. People cheered him at the theatre, and shook his hand. He was so eager to meet us and he talked about our house and his friend in a wheelchair so much, my father invited them to dinner.

(Enter HUMMER, hobbling down the street on steel crutches. He carries a large manila envelope.)

WOMAN IN BLACK. Was anything said about me?

DAUGHTER. I don’t think so, no.

WOMAN IN BLACK. When they come, there will be.

DAUGHTER. Do you know them, too?

WOMAN IN BLACK. I know the man in the wheelchair. Watch out for him.

(HUMMER is at the door. He knocks on a brass knocker.)

You’ll have to answer it. I can’t.

(Exit WOMAN IN BLACK, into the rear of the house. The DAUGHTER opens the door.)

HUMMER. Good evening.

DAUGHTER. You must be Mr. Hummer.

HUMMER. Richmond Hummer. Yes.

DAUGHTER. Please come in. I am—

HUMMER. I know who you are. You don’t have to tell me a thing.

DAUGHTER. Really?

HUMMER. I know all about you. I have since you were born. Is Mr. Holt here yet?

DAUGHTER. Not yet.

HUMMER. Then I’ll wait for him.

(HUMMER turns to go outside again.)

DAUGHTER. No, no, do come in. Make yourself comfortable.

(HUMMER enters the house, looking about.)

HUMMER. This house, this house. I thought I’d never see it inside.

DAUGHTER. I’ll get my father. Won’t you sit down?

HUMMER. No, I’ll stand.

DAUGHTER. I can help you.

HUMMER. No, my dear, you can't. I, perhaps, can help you, but you can't help me at all. Go get your father. Now, please, and give him this.

(HUMMER hands the DAUGHTER the manila envelope.)

DAUGHTER. Very well, sir.

(Exit DAUGHTER. HUMMER hobbles about, looking at everything. When he gets to the photograph, he wheels it around and gazes at it.)

HUMMER. Amy!

(From the closet, the MUMMY whistles.)

MUMMY. Polly wants a cracker!

HUMMER. What's that? Sounded like a parrot.

MUMMY. *(From closet. Whistles.)* Cracker! Polly wants a cracker! *(Whistles.)*

HUMMER. Who's there?

MUMMY. *(From closet:)* Is that you, Ritchy?

HUMMER. A haunted house?

MUMMY. Ritchy?

HUMMER. Ritchy? That nickname? Years ago? What secrets of mine are in this house? I'm getting scared.

(Behind HUMMER the closet door opens. The MUMMY comes out and puts her hand on HUMMER's shoulder.)

Ahhhh!

(HUMMER, clumsily on his crutches, gets himself turned around.)

MUMMY. *(Whistles.)* Is it you, Ritchy? *(Whistles.)*

HUMMER. God Almighty! Who are you?

(The MUMMY points to the photograph.)

Amy?

MUMMY. Yes, it's me. Are you Richmond Hummer?

HUMMER. I am.

MUMMY. Hello, Ritchy. This is Amy speaking.

HUMMER. Oh, my God, no!

MUMMY. This is how I look now. That is how I looked then. When I met you and we were young. Life is full of surprises. Now I live mostly in that cupboard closet, hiding from the world, and from memories like you. What do you want in this house, Ritchy?

HUMMER. I want my child. I want our child.

MUMMY. She's here. Take her if you want her.

HUMMER. And your husband, the General? What will he say?

MUMMY. I told him you were her father years ago. He didn't believe me. He said, "That's what a wife tells a husband when she wants to kill him." But he knew it was true. To him it was a terrible crime, because, you see, it spoiled his precious family tree. No man alive is more proud of all his ancestors than my husband. But he has a bastard daughter and there's nothing he can do about it.

HUMMER. He deserved it, when he took my fiancée away from me!

MUMMY. Yes, she's here, too.

HUMMER. What?

MUMMY. She and her husband rented a part of the house. My husband made her his mistress and her husband his footstool. He died, recently. They keep on being lovers. Your daughter is sick. I live in the cupboard.

HUMMER. My daughter, sick?

MUMMY. Very. She looks well, but it's an unhealthy beauty. You are to blame for all of it.

HUMMER. I am not! Your husband committed the first crime, enslaving my wife to be, and taking her away from me. I don't let people do that. Sooner or later, I arrive, with my bill. I am here now.

MUMMY. Richmond, what do you think you can do in this house? How did you get in? What do you want? My daughter? Leave her alone, for God's sake.

HUMMER. I am going to help her.

MUMMY. Then leave her father alone.

HUMMER. No.

MUMMY. Then *you* will die. In this house. In my closet. I'll kill you, Ritchy.

HUMMER. So be it. But once I get my teeth into something, I can't let go. I've waited years for this day.

MUMMY. How do you want to help my daughter.

HUMMER. Our daughter. A young man is coming to dinner. A brave fellow, a public hero, in fact. I want them to get married.

MUMMY. What does he do?

HUMMER. He's a male nurse.

MUMMY. Then he's nothing and has nothing. Disgraceful!

HUMMER. I will make him rich.

MUMMY. Such a lovely supper. With a lover of yours, taken away from you by my husband.

HUMMER. A special few.

MUMMY. God. If we could die. Solves everything, why not?

HUMMER. Why did you stay with him?

MUMMY. Brutality, guilt, revenge, they bind us together. We break all our promises, do what we please, and abandon each other, over and over again, but we always come back, pulled back, together again.

HUMMER. Someone's coming.

MUMMY. I'll hide.

(The MUMMY goes back into her closet.)

Enter the GENERAL, immaculately dressed, but in a dark civilian suit. He carries the manila envelope, opened. His face is ice.)

GENERAL. This will take some time. Please sit down.

HUMMER. All right.

(HUMMER gets himself seated, waits.)

GENERAL. This is your letter?

HUMMER. It is.

GENERAL. These documents you obtained?

HUMMER. I did.

GENERAL. As I understand them, you have demanded my dismissal as Chairman of the Board of the Millburn Foundation.

HUMMER. You will be notified tomorrow.

GENERAL. You have taken over three corporations in which I hold stock.

HUMMER. Your life savings will soon be worthless.

GENERAL. I can only admit I am at your mercy. What do you want from me?

HUMMER. Pay my bill.

GENERAL. How?

HUMMER. Very simple. Forget your money. You can have it all back, if I feel like giving it to you. But first, let me be a guest in your house today.

GENERAL. That is a very small request.

HUMMER. Maybe not. Agreed?

GENERAL. Yes.

HUMMER. Thank you.

GENERAL. What else?

HUMMER. Dismiss your valet.

GENERAL. Why should I do that? One of them has been with my family for three generations. Like a member of my family.

HUMMER. Either he goes or you do.

GENERAL. Very well. The cook, too?

HUMMER. The cook came to work for you a few years ago. I sent her. She stays.

GENERAL. Will you run my house in my place?

HUMMER. I will, since it is no longer yours, but mine. Everything here now belongs to me. You are in receivership. Curtains, dinner plates, furniture, linen, everything, mine.

GENERAL. So be it, since I am helpless. You take from me everything but my good name.

HUMMER. That, too. A genealogical investigation shows that your great-grandparents were thieves and liars. Read the documents concerning ancestral descendance. The family name you have used died out a hundred years ago, and was in fact mine. You no longer belong to anything of any distinction.

GENERAL. Impossible. (*Reads:*) My God. True. You are correct. I no longer belong to it.

(GENERAL *takes off his ring, hands it to HUMMER.*)

This must be yours, too.

(HUMMER *takes it, puts it on his finger.*)

HUMMER. Thank you. You no longer hold the title of General of the Army, retired.

GENERAL. That you can't take away!

HUMMER. Court Martial proceedings based upon your fraudulent misuse of Army funds, your interference in the promotion of officers, your persecution of certain soldiers and officers until they left the Army, these and many other abuses are being now investigated. Read the materials.

GENERAL. I believe you. Who are you, and why are you taking away from me everything that's mine?

HUMMER. Let's put it this way. Who are you?

GENERAL. What?

HUMMER. A soldier's bearing, a General's responsibilities, a distinguished man in retirement from a successful life, is that what you see in the mirror? Look again. You will see the petty criminal you were as a child, the ruthless criminal you were as a boy, and the thief of other men's women you were as a man. Don't call for your servants. If you do, I'll call the police and have you thrown out of what was your own house.

(ARTIE arrives at the front door and uses a brass knocker.)

There is your other guest. Be yourself, as once you were, and we will pretend I simply came a little early. Nothing has happened, understand?

GENERAL. Yes.

(The GENERAL goes to the door and opens it.)

ARTIE. Good afternoon, sir.

GENERAL. *(Shaking hands:)* Mr. Holt. Please come in. Welcome to—my house. Your heroism yesterday has done you great credit. It's a pleasure to have you in my home.

ARTIE. Thank you very much, General.

GENERAL. You know Mr. Hummer.

HUMMER. Yes, he does.

ARTIE. Hello.

HUMMER. Is your daughter joining us?

GENERAL. Of course. Have you met her, sir?

HUMMER. No, but I know Mr. Holt has, and looks forward to getting to know her very well.

GENERAL. My daughter, too?

HUMMER. Of course.

(Enter the WOMAN IN BLACK.)

GENERAL. May I introduce Miss Beatrice Sevier, who lives with us. Miss Sevier, Mr. Hummer and Mr. Holt.

WOMAN IN BLACK. Gentlemen.

GENERAL. *(Calling:)* Polly!

(The closet door opens. The MUMMY comes out.)

MUMMY. Polly wants a cracker! *(Whistles, then speaks naturally:)* Is it time for dinner?

(Enter the DAUGHTER.)

DAUGHTER. Good evening.

GENERAL. Mr. Hummer, Mr. Holt, my daughter.

HUMMER. Let me shake your hand, my dear.

DAUGHTER. How do you do, Mr. Hummer. *(Shakes his hand.)* Oh!

HUMMER. I am a little cold for a young woman. But here is a more suitable hand for you to shake.

ARTIE. Hello again.

DAUGHTER. Hello. I'm glad you could come.

ARTIE. So am I.

GENERAL. Well. Be seated.

(They all turn to the dinner table and sit. HUMMER and the GENERAL at each end, the MUMMY, HUMMER, and the WOMAN IN BLACK on side, ARTIE and their DAUGHTER on the other.)

(Pause.)

Mr. Hummer, shall I ring for the food?

HUMMER. The servants are already gone. I saw to that. None of us is hungry anyway.

MUMMY. Polly wants a cracker. *(Whistles.)*

HUMMER. Fine. Crackers. Now.

(In a terrible silence, the MUMMY passes around her pack of crackers. Everybody takes one. They look at HUMMER.)

Dinner. Supper of Ghosts. Eat.

(All but HUMMER eat crackers.

A dreadful munching, in an awful silence.)

GENERAL. But what shall we talk about?

HUMMER. The weather! Do we know what that will be? Our health? Do we know what that will be? No, that silence, that's what I like. We can hear each other's thoughts through the crunch crunch of crackers, and look into the past. Words hide everything. Silence reveals it. Do you know, a book on anthropology I read yesterday says why languages are different. Early man spoke the same language once, but one tribe after another changed their language to keep secrets from the others. That's what language does, keeps secrets, like codes. He who finds the key in silence can understand every language in the world, completely without words. Of course, secrets can be exposed in other ways. For instance, when proof of genetics, in a paternity lawsuit, for instance, is concerned, experts can be bribed. False witnesses can appear. When money talks, more than one expert makes juries believe anything, with absolute certainty. Oh, we begin well enough. People are by human nature often modest and well meaning. They hide what really should be hidden, to keep from hurting others, but that can lead even the most well meaning of families into terrible places. Finally, by accident even, the most awful secrets have accumulated. Then by accident they are exposed. Marks are torn from faces which become, as life moves on, first foolish deceivers. Then real fakes, idle and inept. And they hide their incompetence by seizing more and more power, more and more incompetence. Judgment Day comes at last. The awful faces of liars, thieves, villains and murderers are all there in plain sight.

(Pause.)

How quiet it is. What can I mean? Why, here, in this beautiful house of generations of honor and privilege, where envious beauty, cultural sensitivity, great wealth, all go together—well.

(Silence.)

You all know who you are. Do I have to tell you? And you know who I am, though you pretend not to. You are my daughter, not his. You ride horses and look healthy, but you have lost your way, no longer know what to do with your beautiful life, and in fact, want to die. You were shriveling up in the dead air of your family, where unknown crimes and hidden deceits poison the air you breathe. That is why I have brought a young man into his house. He is brave and good, and he will save you.

(Silence.)

As for the rest of you, I came to pull up weeds of the soul, uncover swamps of the heart, clear the underbrush of deceit away, so these young people can start again, cleansed, breathing fresh air in this house. It will be my gift to them.

(Silence. HUMMER takes out an old pocket watch.)

This was my father's watch, and his father's before him. If you listen, you can hear it ticking. It is an honest, well made instrument. It measures time accurately, and when it chimes, as in just a moment, it will, time for deceit in his house will be over. It will strike, and I will strike, and justice will come home at last!

(The MUMMY stands up.)

MUMMY. Time can be stopped, just like that. Sins of the past can be wiped away, and what was done can be undone. But not with threats, not with force, not with money, not with hatred, not with evil. That only makes everything worse. Time can be stopped only with our pain, our suffering and our sorrow. Richmond Hummer, we loved each other once. We almost married. Then I did what I did. Yes, I know it. We are all miserable human creatures, and we do terrible things, we know that. Yes, we are not what we pretend, and seem much worse. But that is because at the bottom of our souls, we are all better than we seem to be, if we suffer our own understanding of our own sins. But when you, Richmond Hummer, which isn't your real name at all, when you judge us like a savage God, you are the worst of us. You steal souls. You stole me with lies, deceit and the death of false happiness. The man who died in this house was in fact murdered by you, choked to death by debts you engineered. You stole this suggestible and unstable young man, claiming his father owed you something, when he did not, not a penny! No?

(HUMMER stands up.)

I'm not through. Sit down.

(HUMMER sits down, frightened.)

There is something else about your life. I don't know what it is, but my friend says she does. She, whose husband you killed, whose body you enslaved, but whose past life of suffering and misfortune you so self-righteously expose. Let her speak.

(The MUMMY sits down. The WOMAN IN BLACK stands up. As she speaks, HUMMER shrinks back from her in fear.)

WOMAN IN BLACK. I know this awful man, very well. Things change, up and down. I was his slave but once he was mine. For two years he worshipped me, and I think really did care for me, but all

the time I knew what he was. A crook, a swindler, a man who left families of women and children to starve, a vampire who drank the blood of his financial victims. Yes, I would have married him once, even when I knew he might kill me. (*To HUMMER:*) You know this, you have always known it, and since you are bringing everyone to justice, you can come there yourself.

HUMMER. No, stop! It isn't true!

WOMAN IN BLACK. I saw you kill that girl. I knew why. She caught you stealing. How do I know? I helped you, remember? You killed her. I said nothing, and God help me, would have married you! I got away from you, later married well and lived well until my husband and I moved into this house, for our own shameful reasons, yes, but we were punished for it because then you had us all together. You began by killing him, and now you want all of us under your wheel, especially your own daughter, about whom you know nothing, and care nothing, and whose marriage to a stranger you pick off the street gives you pleasure. But I saw you kill that girl, the whole thing can be re-opened, and I can see that it is. I can do to you exactly what you have done to us.

(The MUMMY stands up, puts her bandaged hands on HUMMER's shoulders, passes one hand over his face.)

Give up.

(The MUMMY strokes HUMMER's face.)

You're beaten. Evil destroys us all but also itself, in turn.

MUMMY. Are you there, Ritchy?

(In HUMMER's hands, his watch begins chiming.)

Your father's watch is ringing for us and for you.

HUMMER. (*Whistles.*) Ritchy wants a cracker. (*Whistles.*)

MUMMY. Here.

(The MUMMY feeds HUMMER a cracker. She goes to the closet door.)

Get up, Richmond Hummer. Go into this closet where I have spent thirty years, repenting in anguish crimes of the human soul we committed. There is a rope in that closet. I kept it for myself until I could find the courage to use it. Pretend it is rope you used to kill your victims and use it on yourself. Your watch has struck. It sentences you, and that is the real reason you came to this house.

(HUMMER gets to his feet, takes his crutches, bows his head. The MUMMY goes to her closet and opens the door. HUMMER goes into the closet and the MUMMY closes the door.)

WOMAN IN BLACK. All over. Finished.

MUMMY. God have mercy on his soul.

ALL. Amen.

DAUGHTER. Oh!

ARTIE. Don't be afraid. I will take care of you always.

DAUGHTER. You can't.

ARTIE. I can! I will!

(The "Swan" plays. Lights shift, with the GENERAL, the MUMMY and the WOMAN IN BLACK sitting at the dining table in shadow, and the light finding ARTIE and the DAUGHTER, who sit in two chairs below them. STRINDBERG in his original clothes, enters and stands behind them.)

STRINDBERG. I saw the sun, like a golden entrance
Into the mind of God.

We must become what we have done,

So let us do good.

Acts of anger and revenge

Will never bring us peace.

Kindness and mercy will make us well.

Hurt no one, have no fear,

Innocence is beauty.

(The GENERAL, the MUMMY, and the WOMAN IN BLACK sit in a row behind the table. ARTIE and the DAUGHTER sit in two chairs in front of it, with STRINDBERG behind them, listening. The DAUGHTER holds the bowl of blue hyacinths in her lap.

Lights up. Music ends.)

DAUGHTER. These colors have been bred into hyacinths for five hundred years. Do you like them?

ARTIE. Better than any other flower.

DAUGHTER. Why?

ARTIE. They are yours.

DAUGHTER. Close your eyes. See the colors. Now what?

ARTIE. Some snow-white, double-flowered. Then hollyhocks, deep pick, surrounded by white windflowers. Then the crown, the Royal

Blue Hyacinth, an immense flower burying its stem and bulb in a profusion of health and beauty, blessed with a perfume that is my favorite fragrance on earth. Such flowers are deep as the eyes of children filled with faith and trust. They bloom, like you, in a profusion of beauty and a radiance of health.

DAUGHTER. You do love flowers.

ARTIE. Since I was a child. But flowers, beautiful as they are, and good for most all of mankind, don't love me.

DAUGHTER. What?

ARTIE. Their beauty confuses me. They deafen my senses. They smell like spring winds blowing fresh over spring snows. They burst into such sunbright colors of life, when put in my room, they run me out of it. Flocks of poisoned arrows fly from them, descend into my heart and burn my mind. Do you know the legend of the Hyacinth?

DAUGHTER. No.

STUDENT. It is a bulb flower. That bulb is the earth, its water, its dirt. From it rises the stalk, straight as if from the center of the world, into a top of six-pointed star-flowers.

DAUGHTER. The earth and the stars. You see wonderful things.

STUDENT. I see them in your eyes. So, you hold in your lap, a flower image of the Universe, where a poor bulb-like earth can become a paradise. It's for this that all gods and all humans wait.

DAUGHTER. Beautiful. Who thought that up?

STUDENT. You did. I did. We did.

DAUGHTER. Ours, such thoughts?

STUDENT. We created it together. Like a beautiful child. We are married already.

DAUGHTER. Not yet we aren't.

STUDENT. What else do we have to do?

DAUGHTER. Many things.

STUDENT. Put me to the test.

DAUGHTER. Hush. I may have to.

STUDENT. Why do your mother and father and the Woman in Black sit there like that? They don't talk. They don't move. What's the matter with them?

DAUGHTER. What can they say to each other, when neither will believe what the other tells them? They know they all lie. My father says, "Why talk, when nobody can fool anybody."

STUDENT. What a cynical thing to say.

DAUGHTER. You wanted to live in this beautiful house and marry its beautiful daughter. Here's the Cook.

STUDENT. Where?

DAUGHTER. You can't see her. She watches us, from a hole in the pantry, while stirring something dreadful in a pot. Rich people always complain about their cooks. You know that.

STUDENT. How can you see her?

DAUGHTER. I can't, but in a rich man's house, things must happen every day at the same time. Cook is making lunch now. When lunch is over she will ask me about dinner. I do the housekeeping, while my mother lives in her parrot closet. We have to eat. She's a monster, our cook, a vampire. She eats us.

STUDENT. Dismiss her.

DAUGHTER. She won't go. She's a punishment over which we have no control. Can't you see that we are all unwell? Shriveled. Wasting away?

STUDENT. She doesn't give you enough to eat?

DAUGHTER. Oh, a million dishes, elegantly prepared, but there is no nourishment in them. She boils the essence out of the meat and the vegetables until they taste like cardboard. Then she drinks the juices and gives us colored water. Everything she makes loses its flavor. It is like she sucks the coffee up with her eyes and leaves us the grounds. She drinks all the wine and gives us bottles filled with water.

STUDENT. Just throw her out.

DAUGHTER. She won't go. She's a part of us. We can't control her. You don't understand rich people. She is only one of the awful things about this house. We have a maid and a butler, too. We have to clean up after them! This room looks beautiful but it has a lot wrong with it.

STUDENT. Nothing serious. Well, it is a little drafty.

DAUGHTER. In a storm, wind whistles through cracks like it was a shed. See that writing desk in the hall?

STUDENT. Beautiful thing.

**THIS PLAY IS
NOT OVER!**

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