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James W. Eisenhardt

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THEOPHILUS NORTH

by

Thornton Wilder

As Adapted by

James W. Eisenhardt

for the stage

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ARCHIVES

THEOPHILUS NORTH by Thornton Wilder as adapted
for the stage by James W. Eisenhardt in partial
fulfillment of the Master of Arts degree.

NONCIRCULATING

Julia Curtis
Julia Curtis

Glen Newkirk
Glen Newkirk

Douglas Paterson
Douglas Paterson

December 1983

We are such stuff as dreams are made on.

--Shakespeare

I was born an identical twin, and the twin only lived a few hours, but he would have been called Theophilus; so this is my other self. The framework is the same as mine, but he's a very different fellow from me; so it's how my life might have been had I been born that other fellow. It's first autobiography and then fiction, but I don't know of any other work where the author was imagining himself as his anti-self. I'm dutiful, I'm conscientious, I'm school masterish, but Theophilus is a helluva fella. A liar, but also a very good man--and I'm not as altruistic as he is--he's that mixture of the scoundrel and the frustrated saint. (Theophilus North is) a comedy with very solemn underground.

Thornton Wilder in The Guardian

The approach to the development of Thornton Wilder's novel Theophilus North into a Chamber Theatre script is based on the author's own conception cited above. The intent of the script is to show that Ted North is, indeed, "a helluva fella."

Critics have interpreted Theophilus North, the character, in a number of ways. Granville Hicks in The New York Times Book Review likened him to both Jesus Christ and Dolly Levi, a character from one of Wilder's earlier works. The critic for America, Elizabeth Woods, compared him to Shakespeare's masterful magician, Prospero. It seems odd, noting the aforementioned colorful characterizations of North, that Phyllis Rice of The Christian Science Monitor would demean Ted as merely a "bored schoolteacher." Geoffrey Wagner's criticism of Wilder's critics in the National Review seems appropos in that "these seem to be vulgarizations stemming from the kind of symbol-hunting criticism in which everything is invariably what it was not for the author." Since the author's interpretation of his hero is expressed in The Guardian interview, that is the

the interpretation used in this particular Chamber Theatre adaptation.²

I first became aware of the power of Chamber Theatre when I spent the summer of 1979 at Northwestern University as a graduate fellow in the School of Speech. There I had the opportunity to view the work of and meet with Robert Breen, the originator of the concept of Chamber Theatre, and Frank Galatti, a protege of Breen's and refiner of the idea. Northwestern presents annually a series of Chamber Theatre adaptations entitled "Food and Fiction." The season of 1979 included: Heaven's My Destination, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and Miss Lonelyhearts. Both Breen and Galatti were free with their advice and urged all of the graduate fellows to try their hands at this under-utilized dramatic form.

Professor Breen stated in an article entitled "Chamber Theatre":

Chamber Theatre may be defined simply as a method of presenting undramatized fiction for the stage, as written, the only changes being those to accommodate the limitation of time, physical stage set-up, or number of actors. These changes are made by deleting chapters, parts of chapters, paragraphs, etc. from the piece of literature, retaining narrative passages as well as dialogue, with care never to destroy the author's point of view.

Chamber Theatre also involves a particular technique of acting. It is the technique of telling a story dramatically on the stage through the use of a narrator or narrators. The uniqueness of Chamber Theatre does not lie in having a narrator however, but rather in having the narrator become dramatically involved, in having him be a spokesman for the author, in having him be a controlling factor in representing the author's point of view.³

In choosing to do a project in Chamber Theatre, I intend to show the legitimate value Chamber Theatre gives to the stories of great writers in terms of theatrical form, not in opposition to original plays, but rather in an alliance with good writing.

Chamber Theatre bears no resemblance to Readers' Theatre.

Through misconceptions arising from the knowledge that both forms stem from oral interpretation, Readers' Theatre and Chamber Theatre have been wed in many students' thoughts. Readers' Theatre, however, lacks the heightened "theatricality" of Chamber Theatre, which is totally produced with sets, costumes, blocking and "acting." Readers' Theatre is simply the oral interpretation of a carefully-cut script according to Margaret Nielsen of the University of Oregon. Usually the interpretation involves a maximum of five readers who, from scripts and without the benefit of special effects, props or costumes, portray a variety of characters in a highly formal manner.⁴

For precisely these reasons, Chamber Theatre opens a plethora of literature to actors which Readers' Theatre cannot offer. Additionally, the audience relates to the author who presumably is embodied by the actor portraying the narrator. This convention provides the simultaneity of speech and action of a play and the added advantage, for the audience, of being able to hear what a character or characters are thinking or feeling. The use of a narrator also provides Chamber Theatre with a cinematic flavor by dictating what picture the audience sees. For example, the line: "The dusty traveller inched his way down the long, hot road," would indicate a long shot in cinematic terms. In cases like this, the narrative description far exceeds any scenery in creating a picture or illusion. One of the joys of Chamber Theatre is the return to the stage of an author. Wilder has written:

Many dramatists have regretted the absence of the narrator from the stage, with his point of view, his powers of analyzing the behavior of the characters, his ability to interfere and supply further facts about the past, about simultaneous actions not visible on the stage; and above all his function of pointing the moral and emphasizing the significance of the action.⁵

Chamber Theatre is an extraordinary asset to any high school theatre program simply because it utilizes literature as varied as that of Thomas Hardy and Alfred E. Newmann. There have been countless times when students have come to me excitedly and suggested that we do a play about The Illustrated Man, or Black Like Me or even Silas Marner. I have always had to answer that these works of literature are books, not plays. Chamber Theatre allows me to say instead that there is a wealth of material in the story they name and suggest that we write the script. For students and teachers as well, this becomes an exercise in good literature, good writing techniques, and good drama. They will examine the literature closely, study the writing technique of a given author, and set the words on a stage.

It should be noted that it is through good literature that high school students learn. Too often in recent years, the literature provided by the publishing world has not been challenging to young readers or it has been exploitative in terms of hot cars, fast sex or drugs.

A high school drama teacher is always searching for good dramatic literature that falls within the scope of students' artistic abilities, is acceptable to the "political" sensibilities of a school board, and yet is entertaining and educational. Above all, a play for high school students and their audiences must have educational integrity. Chamber Theatre provides an alternative to the usual high school repertoire of Our Hearts Were Young and Gay, and Oklahoma!

Theophilus North, when published in 1973, received both censure and praise for its optimistic approach to life. Rice felt the hero's "superhuman stunts tend to strain credulity," while Hicks called

the story "extraordinarily entertaining." But despite being both condemned and praised for its optimism, Theophilus North was almost universally recognized as a masterpiece of dialogue and storytelling.

Why is Theophilus North good literature? It is because of the optimism which Ted exudes, his "joi de vivre," while dealing with some of the darker aspects of the human condition which include the figurative cannibalization of Dr. Bosworth and Persis by their family and of Charles' self-cannibalization, that prevents Theophilus North from becoming a masculine version of Pollyanna. Ted's unfailingly positive outlook on life permeates the very fabric of the tale. It is an optimism which borrows from the Greek philosophy that man is responsible for his own destiny. While Greek in nature, Ted's optimism is also firmly planted in the Judeo-Christian belief that mankind can rise above adversity. Indeed, mankind must succeed in defeating the harbingers of doom which confront it daily. North's approach to life, then, is grounded on the great philosophies of humankind. He constantly helps loosen the bonds weighing down the lives of others. These bonds, whether internal or external, are unshackled through kind words and actions, tomfoolery, and even harshness, for Theophilus North is a man with a multitude of talents.

Additionally, it is for the dialogue and the storytelling that Wilder's novel is so readily adaptable and appropriate for high school audiences. Nothing makes a high school student fidget more than being "talked at." Attention spans are limited to fifteen to twenty minutes on a given subject. Consequently Theophilus North with its vignettes, scenes-within-scenes, and short episodes deals with that problem handily. The dialogue is vivid, colorful, and filled with humor; and the stories

involve adolescent characters and issues which touch their lives: Charles faces the sexual inhibitions and complexion problems of adolescence; Bosworth experiences fears about his own mortality, a concern of a surprising number of teenagers; and Theo wants to "find himself." Each of these issues are important to teenagers. Given these intrinsic and extrinsic considerations, Theophilus North is of particular merit and, therefore, is an excellent selection for adaptation to Chamber Theatre.

The question of a narrator is now reintroduced. Wilder said:

The novel is a past reported in the present. On the stage it is always now. This confers upon the action an increased vitality which the novelist longs to incorporate into his work.

In the theatre we are not aware of the intervening storyteller. The speeches arise from the characters in an apparently pure spontaneity.

A play is what takes place.

A novel is what one person tells us took place.

A play visibly represents pure existing. A novel is what one mind, claiming to omniscience, asserts to have existed.⁶

The question becomes that of how the adaptor affects a hybridization of the novel and theatre, without the destruction of the one--whichever it is. Luckily, Wilder himself has demonstrated how the adaptation may be accomplished. To some degree Sabina, in The Skin of Our Teeth, serves as a storyteller. But we see more evidence of the author/storyteller in Our Town with the Stage Manager weaving a tale of Grover's Corners, New Hampshire, while assuming various roles throughout Wilder's dramatic masterpiece.

The role of the narrator further complicates the adaptation by creating a dramatic dilemma for the adaptor. Is the narrator portrayed as an old raconteur reflecting upon the activities of his youth while a second actor assumes the role of the young Theophilus? Or is the narrator like the Stage Manager in Our Town who functions as a chorus or a raisonneur while acting as Theophilus? Or maybe the narrator is Theophilus speaking for and acting as himself. Arguments can be made for any of these methods, but the third approach seems most appropriate for this adaptation. It seems less static and confusing.

As in any high school production, casting is a problem. High school actors simply do not have the range necessary to assume some roles. No matter how talented the young actors are, their age comes through, particularly when an adolescent attempts to create the role of an adult approaching his "three-score and ten." Two of these roles are present in this adaptation of Theophilus North. Both Mrs. Cranston and Dr. Bosworth are elderly, but some creative casting of a fellow teacher or community actor could provide the director with the type and age needed to successfully utilize the characters. A panoply of other roles will provide adolescent actors with a variety and scope of characters which can stretch even the most talented performer. Multiple casting can be used in all but the most substantive or remarkable roles. For instance, while the role of Henry might be a small one in terms of speeches, the role is significant enough that he must be instantly recognizable as only Henry.

While intelligent casting is possibly the most important problem a director faces, the concepts concerning the "look" of the production are also very important. At a lecture offered by Breen in 1979, he emphasized that "the integrity of the novel is paramount to a successful adaptation. Always be aware of the point of view of the author. The design (of both

the script and visual elements) must be appropriate to the novel and to its performance." The designs are intended to reflect Wilder's concept of Newport in 1926 where people would build \$16,000,000 homes in which to spend six weeks out of the year and then refer to the opulent mansions as "cottages."

The visual approach to Theophilus North will reflect the era and the societal differences within Wilder's "Nine Cities." In keeping with the spectacle and social aspects of post-World War I Newport "Society," costumes should be reproductions of the period. Laces and hats would dominate the attire of the grande dames and formal livery would prevail among the servants. While they are not specifically names, the Astors, Vanderbilts, Coopers and Whitneys were the names to be reckoned with and an invitation to The Breakers for tea or the Marble House for cocktails was the key to acceptance by society and servants alike. Consequently, the costuming of the characters must allow the audience to recognize their "station" immediately. The richness of the costuming must show the societal differences.

I envision a unit set made up of a central Victorian tower with a front staircase and a back staircase used by the appropriate characters to emphasize societal differences. In front of the unit set wagons would glide on and off stage equipped with appropriate properties to represent a variety of settings. Period transparencies could be projected onto screens located on the tower in order to aid in the change of settings. The only real "set" piece would be the tower with every other scene being represented by properties and lighting changes.

Music would be used throughout the adaptation to evoke the period and enhance societal differences separating the "Nine Cities."

The music would establish mood and create an awareness in the audience of the changing of scenes by reflecting the society it represented. Songs reminiscent of Manhattan speakeasies would precede scenes of the "upper crust;" gentle chamber music or art songs would accompany the servants' scenes; Italian fiesta music would enhance the merchants' arrivals and of course "The Blue Danube" would invite the audience to the Servants' Ball.

The goal is to create a synthesis of the intrinsic values of Wilder's novel, the extrinsic needs of a high school audience and the educational experiences of the participants. But nothing must be allowed to interfere with the author's words. As Simon Blow said of Wilder in The Guardian:

His writing implies a vastness. The novels and plays are full of reference to the size and number of all civilization. To know that is to accept its diversity. "History is one tapestry. No eye can venture to compass more than a hand's breadth," he writes in The Eighth Day. But there are certain universal "conditions" and it is their mystery that intrigues Wilder.⁷

END NOTES

¹"This is my other self...", The Manchester (England) Guardian, 13 July 1974, p. 22.

²Granville Hicks, review of Theophilus North, by Thornton Wilder, in The New York Times Book Review, 21 October 1973, p. 1; Elizabeth Woods, review of Theophilus North, by Thornton Wilder, in America, 15 December 1973, p. 472; Phyllis Rice, "The Return of Thornton Wilder," review of Theophilus North, by Thornton Wilder, in The Christian Science Monitor, 14 November 1973, p. 17; Geoffrey Wagner, "Newport Redivivus," review of Theophilus North, by Thornton Wilder, in National Review, 7 December 1973, p. 1368.

³Theatre Arts at the Secondary School Level, 1977 ed., s.v. "Chamber Theatre," by Robert Breen.

⁴Theatre Arts at the Secondary School Level, 1977 ed., s.v. "Readers Theatre," by Margaret Nielsen.

⁵Bernard F. Dukore, ed., Dramatic Theory and Criticism, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1974), p. 257.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Blow, The Guardian, p. 22.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

Theophilus North

The Sixth City

Eloise Fenwick
Mrs. Fenwick
Charles Fenwick

Sarah Bosworth
Dr. Bosworth
Persis Tennyson

Baron Egon Bodo Von Stams
Mary Leffingwell
Cassius Leffingwell

The Seventh City

Toinette/Edweena
Henry Simmons
Mrs. Cranston

Nurse
Tante Liselotte

Willis
Pool Players
Servants

The Ninth City

Josiah
Bill
Jo O'Halloran
Doris

Police Driver
Joe
Police Chief

Ada
Doctor

Edgar Montgomery
Martha Montgomery
Sergeant Major Sykes
Corporal Wilkins
Soldiers

Bar Man
Passengers
Sailor
Eddie

PROLOGUE

(At rise a youthful 30-year-old man dressed in a doughboy's uniform watches multimedia presentation of U.S. circa 1910-1920 from a position downstage. He turns to address the audience.)

THEO In the fall of 1918 I was twenty-one years old, a soldier stationed at Fort Adams in Newport. On my advancement to the grade of corporal I was given a seven-day leave to return to my home to show my new-won stripe to my parents. I returned to my station via New York and embarked on a boat of the Fall River Line for Newport. Old-timers still remember those boats with sighs of deep feeling. They offered all that one could imagine of luxury and romance. (Theo moves to a group of tables where other passengers are seated)

At the table next to mine was an elegantly-dressed couple quarreling. The chair of the woman was back to back with mine. I have no compunction about overhearing conversations in public places and this one I could not fail to overhear without moving to another table.

EDGAR You've been at the back of it all for years. You've been trying to put them against me the whole time.

MARTHA Edgar!

EDGAR All this talk about my having ulcers. I haven't got ulcers. You've been trying to poison me. You're in cahoots with the whole family.

MARTHA Edgar! The few times I've seen your mother and brothers during the last three years have always been in your presence.

EDGAR You telephone them. When I leave the house you telephone them by the hour. You got me blackballed at that damned club.

MARTHA I don't know how a woman could do that.

EDGAR You're sly. You could do anything.

MARTHA You lost your temper at Mr. Cleveland himself. The vice-president of the club--in front of everybody.-- Please go to bed and get some rest. We have to get off this boat in seven hours. I'll sit here quietly for a while and slip into the cabin when you're asleep. You can go to bed, Toinette. I shan't need you until the ship whistles for landing. (Toinette rises to leave. Toinette is Martha's personal maid.)

TOINETTE I have some sewing to do, madam. The light is better here. I shall be sitting by the bandstand for an hour. I heard them say there might be some bad weather tonight. I shall be in Cabin 77, if you should need me.

EDGAR That's right, Toinette. Tell the whole boat your cabin number.

MARTHA Tomorrow, Edgar, I shall ask you to apologize to Toinette. You forget that you were brought up to be a gentleman--and the son of Senator Montgomery!

EDGAR Women's voices! Women's voices! Insinuations, innuendoes! Nagging! I can't stand any more. You can sit here quietly until the boat sinks. I'm going to bed and I'm going to lock the door. I'll put your dressing-case in the corridor. You can bunk with Toinette.

MARTHA Toinette, here's my key to the cabin. Will you kindly pack my necessaries in my dressing-case. --Edgar, please remain at this table until Toinette has collected my things. I shall not say a word.

EDGAR Where's that waiter? I want to pay the bill. Waiter! Waiter! (Martha takes wallet out of Edgar's hand.) What are you doing with my purse?

MARTHA If I'm to arrange for another cabin I shall need some money. I'm your wife. I shall pay your bill here too. (Martha removes money from billfold.)

EDGAR Stop! How much are you taking?

MARTHA I may have to bribe the purser for a cabin.

TOINETTE Madam, I'd be very happy if you used my cabin. It's not for long and I've often sat up the night.

MARTHA I wouldn't think of it, Toinette. Will you sit here by the dressing-case while I go down to the purser's office? The trip was a mistake. Both the doctor and I thought he was so much better. Toinette, don't give a thought to me. You go to bed when you're ready. (Edgar starts toward her, changes his mind and exits up the stairs. Toinette turns and whispers in her mistress' ear.)

That's all right, Toinette. I did as the doctor told me. I emptied the things and put some blank cartridges in the chambers. (Martha sits in silence a moment before she turns to Theo.)

Sergeant, have you a cabin to yourself? (Mistaking Theo's rank.)

SERGEANT Yes, madam.
(Theo)

MARTHA I'll give you thirty dollars for it.

SERGEANT Madam, I'll clear out at once and give you the key, but I'll take no money for it. I'll get my gear and be back in a moment.

MARTHA Stop! I won't accept it. (Martha exits)

THEO Madam. If I give you the key to my cabin, I think she'd accept yours. I have some friends on the boat. They're sitting up all night and have asked me to play cards with them. I've often sat up all night playing cards.

TOINETTE Corporal, we must let these people work things out in their own way.

THEO It's hard to believe that Mr. Montgomery is a grown-up man.

TOINETTE Rich boys never really grow up--or seldom.

THEO Madam, what was that I heard about guns?

TOINETTE May I ask your name, sir?

THEO North, Theodore North.

TOINETTE My name is Mrs. Wills. May I take you into my confidence, Mr. North?

THEO Yes, madam.

TOINETTE Mr. Montgomery has always played with guns. Though I have never heard of his firing one except at cardboard targets. He thinks he has enemies. He keeps a revolver always in the drawer by his bedside table. All rich boys do. Mr. Montgomery has little nervous breakdowns from time to time. Mrs. Montgomery was advised by his doctor last week to substitute blank cartridges for real bullets. He's a little disturbed tonight--that's the way we put it. If Mrs. Montgomery insists on sitting up all night, I shall sit up too.

THEO I'll sit up too. Excuse me, Mrs. Wills--what do you think will happen?

TOINETTE Well, I know he's not going to sleep. Maybe in half an hour he's going to come to his senses and be ashamed of himself for throwing his wife out of his cabin. Anyway, he'll come out to see the effect of his big noise. Sooner or later he'll break down--tears, apologies.--They're dependent, men like that. He'll consent to take a pique. Do you know what a pique is?

THEO A puncture--I mean, an injection.

TOINETTE All those words have soothing names around here. We call it a little sleeping aid.

THEO Who gives it to him?

TOINETTE Mrs. Montgomery, mostly.

THEO It must be an exciting life for you, madam.

TOINETTE Not any more. I've given Mr. Montgomery notice that I'm leaving in two weeks. While we were in New York I arranged for some new work.

THEO I'm going to sit here where I can see him come out of that door on the balcony. If he's as what you call disturbed as that, we may see some action. I wish you'd sit where you could see it too and where I could catch your eye.

TOINETTE I will. You're a planner, aren't you, Corporal?

THEO I never thought of it that way, ma'am. Perhaps I am. Now I am when I see you mixed up in a thing like this. Even dummy bullets can cause a bit of trouble. Mr. Wills must be glad that you're resigning from an unpleasant situation like this.

TOINETTE Mr. Wills? That's another piece of business I did in New York this last week. I put my husband on a ship for England. He was homesick for London. He didn't like America and took to drinking. The mistakes we make don't really hurt us, Corporal, when we understand every inch of the ground.

THEO There are all night card games at Fort Adams every Saturday night. I've often joined them.

MARTHA Would you like to play cards?

THEO Very much. There are some friends of mine in the next room. If Mrs. Wills would play with us we'd only need one of them.

TOINETTE I don't play cards, Corporal North.

THEO There are two soldiers there that play well and would appreciate playing with a lady.

MARTHA Corporal, my name is Mrs. Montgomery. My husband has had many things to worry him lately. When I find that he's moody I often leave him alone to rest.

THEO I'll get the cards and the men, Mrs. Montgomery. We'd better play bridge for low stakes. When men return from leave they generally have very little money in their pockets.

MARTHA You're very kind, Corporal.

THEO (Theo leads her to a table where the soldiers are seated and begins to deal.) Low stakes, fellas--just to pass the time. Lady's husband's a little off his head but not dangerous.-- Mrs. Montgomery, this is Sergeant Major Norman Sykes. He was wounded overseas and has been sent back to build up cadres over here. This is Corporal Wilkins. He's a librarian in Terre Haute, Indiana.

MARTHA From what state do you come, Sergeant Major Sykes?

SERGEANT I'm a Tennessee wildcat, ma'am. I had only a short lick of schooling, but I was reading the Bible at six. I'm in the Army for life. I got a bit of steel in my shoulder, but the Army's found work for me to do. I've got three little wildcats of my own. Young children take a lot of feeding, as you may know, ma'am...I had the good fortune to marry the brightest, prettiest schoolteacher in Tennessee.

MARTHA I think the good fortune was equally divided, Sergeant.

SERGEANT That was very pleasant-spoken, ma'am. We have a good number of Montgomerys in Tennessee and I've noticed they're all pleasant-spoken.

MARTHA That is not always true of the Montgomerys of Newport, I'm sorry to say.

SERGEANT Well, civil manners come hard to some folks.

MARTHA How true!

 Three no trumps! Sergeant, we must pull ourselves together!

SERGEANT Ma'am, I'm a slow warmer-upper. We'll take their shirts yet. Pardon the expressions.

 (Ship's bell rings.) Midnight.

 (Edgar re-enters.)

THEO Midnight.

MARTHA It's your play, Corporal North.

 (Sees her husband.) Excuse me, gentlemen, I must speak to my husband. (Edgar raises gun in a daze and aims at Theo.)

 Edgar! (Edgar fires. Theo falls backwards over chair.)

TOINETTE Corporal! He's wounded! Corporal! Corporal! Can you hear me? (Theo feigns being wounded while the Sergeant examines the gun.)

SERGEANT Duds! Goddamned DUDS!

TOINETTE Corporal, can you hear me?

THEO I guess it was just the shock, ma'am.

MARTHA Edgar, you're tired. We're both tired. It's been a very pleasant trip, hasn't it?--but wearing. You've been simply splended. Now I think you might have a very small sleeping-aid. We'll have forgotten all about it by tomorrow. Say good night to all these friends. Barman, will five dollars cover my husband's bill? Here, Sergeant, take this for my share in our losses; if it's too big, give the rest to your church.

EDGAR What happened, Martha? Was anybody hurt?

MARTHA Corporal North, will you take Mr. Montgomery's other arm? I can carry the dressing-case, Toinette. I won't need you. Edgar, don't stop for the flask now. Let's leave it for these gentlemen who kindly asked me to join their game.

EDGAR Please go away from me, sir...Martha, what happened?

MARTHA You and your schoolboy jokes! You made us laugh.

...Turn right, Edgar...No, the next door. Good night, gentlemen. Thank you all.

SERGEANT I don't want his gun or his liquor neither. I took the Pledge.

CORPORAL So did I.

TOINETTE I'll give them to him in the morning.

CORPORAL Let's get out of here before they start asking questions.

BARMAN What was that fracas that was going on over there?

THEO Oh, you mean that! One of the passengers played a schoolboy's joke. Had a black bat made of rubber. Tried to scare the ladies.--Barman, can I have two soda-water set-ups?

BARMAN Every night something crazy.

THEO Please, what color are your eyes?

TOINETTE Some people say they're blue in the morning and hazel at night.

THEO Excuse me asking questions.--Are you English?

TOINETTE I think so. I was found.

THEO Found?

TOINETTE Yes, found in a basket.

THEO Do you have any idea--?

TOINETTE Theodore, do come to your senses. I was less than a week old. Do you know Soho?

THEO It's a part of London where there are foreign restaurants and where artists live. I've never been there.

TOINETTE I think I'm part Jewish and part Irish.

THEO That's a great situation for an orphan; you get all the good of it without having to listen to the advice. The blight of family life is advice. Can I ask what new work you're going into.

TOINETTE I'm going to open a shop in New York--and maybe in Newport later. Things for ladies to wear, not dresses, not hats, but just pretty things. It will be a great success.

THEO What are you going to call it?

TOINETTE I don't know. I'm going to change my name. Maybe I'll choose a simple name like Jenny. Everything in the shop is going to be simple but perfect. Maybe for the first weeks nobody will buy anything, but they'll come back and look again.

What do you do, Mr. North?

THEO I'm a college student. When the War's over I'm going back to college.

TOINETTE What do you study most?

THEO Languages.

TOINETTE You have nice friends. Are many of the men at Fort Adams like that?

THEO Yes. For one reason or another the Army hasn't given us orders to go overseas. My eyes are all right, but they're just below the grade for overseas duty.

TOINETTE After you've learned those languages what are you going to do?

THEO In New York day before yesterday I had a narrow escape. A cousin of my mother's is in the business of importing silk from China. Big office. Typist girls tiptoeing around like whipped mice. He offered me a job when I graduate. He says the War is going to end in a month, so I'd graduate in 1920. He's a Scotchman and doesn't say a word he doesn't mean. He

promised me that I'd be making five thousand dollars a year in five years. I wrestled with temptation for three minutes flat. Then I thanked him properly and got out. On the street I frightened the New Yorkers by shouting, "AN OFFICE! AN OFFICE!!" No, I can make money without sitting in a chair for forty years.

TOINETTE Theodore, not so loud!

THEO I'm going to be an actor or a detective or an explorer or a wild animal tamer. I can always make money. What I want to see is a million faces. I want to read a million faces.

TOINETTE Sh-sh!

THEO I guess I've read a million and so have you.

But you're a new face, Miss Jenny. If a man travels enough he'll run into the Bay of Naples or Mount Chimborazo or something. He'll run into a surprise like Mr. Edgar Montgomery... or a great surprise like Miss Jenny.

BARMAN The bar's closing in about five minutes, ladies and gentlemen. We don't want that kind of business in here, soldier. You heard me say "ladies and gentlemen" and I meant it.

THEO Barman, I don't like your tone of voice. This lady and I have been married for three years. I wish you to apologize to my wife at once or I shall report you to Mr. Pendleton, passenger agent of this line and my own cousin.

BARMAN I didn't mean no offense, ma'am, but I'm ready to tell Mr. Pendleton or anybody else that wherever your husband is, some peculiar things start to happen. He laid out dead here just twenty minutes ago.

TOINETTE Thank you, barman. Surely you know that soldiers must be given consideration on the short leave that's given them before they cross the sea to offer their lives for us.

My husband is a very distinguished man. He speaks twelve languages better than he speaks English.

THEO Iroquois! Choctaw!

TOINETTE Eskimo!

THEO Jabberwocky!

TOINETTE Mulligatawny!

CROWD Give 'em a drink!.....Sprekkenzy Doysh?....Me likee Chinee girl, she likee me!.....

SAILOR Ladies and gentlemen, quiet please! Word has just come over the wireless that the War has come to an end. The Arnstiss--the Armystiss--what they call it!--has been signed. The skipper has tole me to tell you in the saloon, but not to wake anybody up that's gone to bed. There's high seas runnin' and the boat will be delayed, maybe, dockin' at Newport and Fall River.--Tommy, the skipper says the Line offers a free drink to anybody that's sittin' up. I gotta go down to the engine room.

THEO Jenny,

TOINETTE What?

THEO Jenny, let's not separate.

TOINETTE I didn't hear what you said.

THEO Yes, you did! Yes, you did!

TOINETTE Why, wheredid you ever get such an idea!

THEO Jenny!

TOINETTE Well, we don't see a war come to an end every day. In about ten minutes come down to Cabin 77. I have an alarm clock set for five-thirty. (Toinette exits and Theo, almost mystically, addresses the audience.)

THEO 'Charmes d'amour, qui saurait vous peindre? Enchantments of love, what artist can picture you?" The generosity of the woman, the bold tenderness of the grown man--the fathomless gratitude to nature for its revelation of itself, yet with some reminder that death is the end of all, death accepted, death united with life in the chain of being from the primal sea to the ultimate cold. "Charmes d'amour, qui saurait vous peindre?"

(Slide-tape of World War I Armistice scenes and music swells as Theo disappears. Media segues to 1920's. Theo appears out of uniform and takes stage.)

ACT I

THEO In the spring of 1926 I resigned from my job.

The first days following such a decision are like the release from a hospital after a protracted illness. One slowly learns how to walk again; slowly and wonderingly one raises one's head.

I was in the best of health, but I was innerly exhausted. I had been teaching for four and a half years in a boys' preparatory school in New Jersey and tutoring three summers at a camp connected with the school. I was to all appearance cheerful and dutiful, but within I was cynical and almost totally bereft of sympathy for any other human being except members of my family. I was twenty-nine years old, about to turn thirty. It was not clear to me what I wanted to do in life.

Professions. Life careers. It is well to be attentive to successive ambitions that flood the growing boy's and girl's imagination. They leave profound traces behind them. During those years when the first sap is rising the future tree is foreshadowing its contour. We are shaped by the promises of the imagination.

At various times I had been afire with NINE LIFE AMBITIONS:

(As Theo proceeds through the ambitions the audience sees transparencies projected of Theo in costumes reminiscent of his ambitions.)

THE FIRST, the earliest, made its appearance during my twelfth to my fourteenth years. I record it with shame. I resolved to become a saint. I saw myself as a missionary among primitive peoples. I had never met a saint but I had read and heard a great deal about them. All I knew about sainthood was that the candidate must be totally absorbed in a relationship with God in pleasing Him, and in serving His creatures here on earth. Unfortunately I had ceased to believe in the existence of God in 1914 and I knew that I was incapable of meeting the strictest demands of selflessness, truthfulness, and celibacy.

THE SECOND--a secularization of the first--was to be an anthropologist among primitive peoples and all my life I have returned to that interest. The past and the future are

always present within us. Readers may observe that the anthropologist and his off-shoot the sociologist continue to hover about this book.

THE THIRD, the archaeologist.

THE FOURTH, the detective. In my third year at college I planned to become an amazing detective. Chief Inspector North would play a leading role among those who shield our lives from the intrusions of evil and madness lurking about the orderly workshop and home.

THE FIFTH, the actor, and amazing actor. This delusion could have been guessed at after a consideration of the other eight ambitions.

THE SIXTH, the magician. This aim was not of my seeking and I have difficulty in giving it a name. It had nothing to do with stage performance. I early discovered that I had a certain gift for soothing, for something approaching mesmerism--dare I say for "driving out demons"? The less said about it the better.

THE SEVENTH, the lover. What kind of a lover? An omnivorous lover like Cassanova? No. A lover of all that is lofty and sublime in women, like the Provencal Troubadours? No. Just a lover among men.

THE EIGHTH, the rascal. I have always been fascinated by the character who represents the opposite of my New England and Scottish inheritance--the man who lives by his wits, "one step ahead of the sheriff." I had read, enviously, the lives of many and had observed that they were often, justly or unjustly, in prison. I have occasionally approached the verge of downright rascality, but not without carefully weighing the risk. This eighth ambition leads me into my last and overriding one:

THE NINTH, to be a free man. I wanted no boss over me, or only the lightest of supervisions. All these aims, moreover, had to do with people--but with people as individuals.

All these aspirations continued to make claims on me.

I was now free after four and a half years of relative confinement.

From the moment I resigned, I discovered that several things were happening to me in my new state of freedom. I was recapturing the spirit of play--not the play of youth which is games but the play of childhood which is all imagination, which improvises. The spirit of play swept away the cynicism and indifference into which I had fallen. Moreover, a

readiness for adventure reawoke in me--for risk, for intruding myself into the lives of others, for extracting fun from danger.

I had bought a car from a fellow-master. I had known the car well for some time. Like all the masters we had taken turns in driving the students--usually in the larger vehicles--to church or to dances or to the motion pictures. This smaller car, known as "Hannah"--from the then popular song "Hard-hearted Hannah"--was used for short routine trips into the nearest village to the post office, to the grocery store, to the doctor, and occasionally to carry a few masters to a little applejack sociable. Hannah had known long service and was breaking up. (A prop piece suggestive of a touring car appears. Theo starts the car as projections are shown of New England backroads.)

Suddenly I saw a sign: "Newport, 30 miles."

Newport! I would revisit Newport where seven and eight years earlier I had served--modestly enough, from private to corporal--in the Coast Artillery defending Narragansett Bay. I had come to love the town, the bay, the sea, the weather, the night sky.

Oh, what a day! What promises of a still-retarded spring! What intimations that I was approaching the salt sea!

Hannah behaved pretty well until we got within the city limits when she started coughing and staggering. (Appropriate sound effects.) I brought her to a stop at "Josiah Dexter's Garage. Repairs." (Josiah enters.) A mechanic examined her long and thoughtfully and uttered some words that were unintelligible to me.

How much would that cost?

JOSIAH Fifteen dollars, looks like.

THEO Do you buy old cars? (Josiah nods.)

I'll sell you the car for twenty dollars, if you drive me and my luggage to the "Y".

JOSIAH Agreed.

THEO (Theo moves to the car and addresses it fondly.) Goodbye, Hannah. No hard feelings on either side--see what I mean? Old age and death come to all. Even the weariest river winds its way to sea. As Goethe said, "Balde ruhest du auch."

JOSIAH Had that car long?

THEO I have been the owner of that car for one hour and twenty minutes.

JOSIAH Do you get worked up about everything you own!

THEO Mr. Dexter, I was stationed at Fort Adams during the War. I'm back here. I've now been in Newport for a quarter of an hour. It's a beautiful day. It's a beautiful place. I'm a little light-headed. Sadness is just around the corner from happiness.

JOSIAH May I ask what it was you said to the car?

THEO "Soon, you too will rest." Those are commonplace remarks, Mr. Dexter, but I have come to see lately that if we shrink from platitudes, platitudes will shrink from us. I never sneer at the poems of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow who spent so many happy weeks in and near Newport.

JOSIAH I know that.

THEO Can you give me the address of an establishment that rents bicycles?

JOSIAH I do.

THEO Then I shall be at your garage in an hour to hire one...Mr. Dexter, I hope that my light-headedness has not offended you?

JOSIAH We New Englanders don't go in for light-headedness much, but I've heard nothing to be offended at...What were those words that German said again?

THEO In a poem he was talking to himself, late at night, in a tower room, a deep forest all around him. He wrote them with a diamond on a windowpane. They are the last words of the most famous poem in the German language. He was in his twenties. He got his rest at eighty-three.

JOSIAH I lost my wife five weeks ago tomorrow...She thought a lot of Longfellow's poetry.

Good day to you. (Josiah exits.)

THEO I wanted to walk some of the streets I had walked so often during my first stay in the city. In particular I wanted to see again the buildings of my favorite age--the eighteenth century--and to gaze again at the glorious trees of Newport--lofty, sheltering, and varied.

I found--or thought I found--that Newport, Rhode Island, presented nine cities. (Slides representing the nine cities of Newport are projected.)

THE FIRST CITY exhibits the vestiges of the earliest settlers.

THE SECOND CITY is the eighteenth-century town, containing some of the most beautiful public and private edifices in America.

THE THIRD CITY contains what remains of one of New England's most prosperous seaports.

THE FOURTH CITY belongs to the Army and the Navy.

THE FIFTH CITY was inhabited since early in the nineteenth century by a small number of highly intellectual families from New York, and Cambridge and Providence, who had discovered the beauties of Newport as a summer resort.

Then to make THE SIXTH CITY came the very rich, the empire-builders, many of them from their castles on the Hudson and their villas at Saratoga Springs.

In a great city the vast army of servants merges into the population, but on a small island and a small part of that island, the servants constitute a SEVENTH CITY. Those who never enter the front door of the house in which they live except to wash it become conscious of their indispensable role and develop a sort of underground solidarity.

THE EIGHTH CITY contains the population of camp-followers and parasites.

Finally there was, and is, and long will be the NINTH CITY, the American middle-class town, buying and selling, raising its children and burying its dead, with little attention to spare for the eight cities so close to it.

On the morning following my arrival I called for advice on a person with whom I dared to presume I had a remote connection--William Wentworth, superintendent at the Casino. Ten years before this my brother, while still an undergraduate at Yale, had played there in the New England Tennis Championship Tournament and had won high place. He had told me of Mr. Wentworth's congeniality and ever-ready helpfulness. (Theo enters the Casino and is greeted by Bill.)

BILL Good morning, sir. Sit down. What can I do for you?

THEO I told him of my brother's past in the Tournament.

BILL Let me see, now. Nineteen-sixteen. Here's his picture. And here's his name on the annual cup. I remember him well, a fine fellow and a top-ranking player. Where's he now?

THEO He's in the ministry.

BILL Fine!

THEO I told him of my four years of uninterrupted teaching, of my need of a change, and of a less demanding teaching schedule. I showed him the sketch for an advertisement I planned to put in the newspaper and asked him if he'd be kind enough to tack a copy on the Casino's bulletin board.

BILL Mr. North, it's early in the season, but we always have young people, home for one reason or another, who need tutoring. Generally, they call on the masters from the nearby schools, but those masters don't like to give the time as their term-end approaches. You'll get some of their pupils, I hope. But we have another group that might be eager for your services. Would you be ready to read aloud to older people with poor eyesight?

THEO Yes, I would, Mr. Wentworth.

BILL Everybody calls me "Bill." I call every man over sixteen "Mister." --Do you play tennis, too?

THEO Not as well as my brother, of course, but I passed a lot of my boyhood in California and everybody plays it there.

BILL Do you think you could coach children between eight and fifteen.

THEO I was coached pretty intensively myself.

BILL Until ten-thirty three courts are reserved for children. The professional coach won't arrive until the middle of June. I'll start collecting a class for you. One dollar an hour for each youngster. You can ask two dollars an hour for the reading aloud. --Did you bring any tennis gear with you?

THEO I can get some.

BILL There's a room back there filled with the stuff--discarded, lost, forgotten, and so on. I even keep a pile of flannels dry-cleaned so they won't foul up. Shoes and racquets of all sizes. I'll take you back there later. --Can you type-write?

THEO Yes, Bill, I can.

BILL Well, you sit down at this desk here and run up your advertisement for the paper. Better rent a box at the Post Office to receive your mail. Give them the "Y" for phone calls. I've got to go and see what my carpenters are doing. (Theo sits at typewriter and types. When finished he speaks)

THEO Kindness is not uncommon, but imaginative kindness can give a man a shock. I could occasionally be altruistic myself-- but as a form of play. It's easier to give than to receive. I wrote: (Theo leaves as lights come up on each speaker in succession.)

ELOISE T. Theophilus North. Yale, 1920. Master at the Raritan School in New Jersey, 1922-1926. Tutoring for school and college examinations in English, French, German, Latin, and Algebra.

SARAH Mr. North is available for reading aloud in the above languages and in Italian. Terms: two dollars an hour.

CRANSTON Address, Newport Post Office Box No. ---. Temporary Telephone, Room 41, the Young Men's Christian Association. (Theo reenters in tennis togs.)

THEO I ran the advertisement in only three successive issues of the paper.

Within four days I had pupils on the tennis courts and very enjoyable work it was.

Except for a few engagements to read aloud after dark, my evenings were free and I became restless. I looked into taverns on Thames Street and on the Long Wharf, but I had no wish to join those dim-lit and boisterous gatherings. (Billiard room appears. Men play pool as Theo continues.) Finally I came upon Herman's Billiard Parlor. The walls were lined with benches on two levels for onlookers and for players awaiting their turn. The game principally played at that time was pool. The habitues at Herman's were handymen on the estate estates, chauffeurs, a few store clerks, but mostly servants of one kind or another. I was occasionally invited to take a cue. But I became aware of an increasing coolness toward me. I was rescued from ostracism by being adopted by Henry Simmons.

HENRY You there, professor! How about three sets at two bits each, eh? ...What's your name, cully? Ted North? Mine's Henry Simmons. (They begin to play and after a few shots Henry continues.)

Now who are you, Ted, and are you happy and well? I'll tell you who I am. I'm from London--I never went to school after I was twelve. I was a bootblack and swept the barber's shop. I raised my eyes a bit and learned the trade. Then I went into domestic service and became a "gentleman's gentleman."

THEO In turn I told him the story of my life--Wisconsin, China, California, schools and jobs, Europe, the War, ending up with my reasons for being in Newport. When I concluded my story we struck our glasses together and it was understood that we were friends.

HENRY Cully, there's a lot of suspicion of newcomers in Newport. Distrust, do you see what I mean? There are a number of types we don't want around here. Let's pretend that I didn't know that you're all right. See? I'll ask you some questions. Mr. North, were you planted in Newport?

THEO How do you mean?

HENRY Do you belong to any organization? Were you sent here on a job?

THEO I told you why I came here.

HENRY I'm asking you these questions, like it was a game. Are you a flicker?

THEO A what?

HENRY Are you a detective?

THEO I swear to God, Henry, I've never had anything to do with such things.

HENRY When I saw in the newspaper that you were ready to teach Latin--that did it. There's no flicker ever been known that can handle Latin. --It's this way: there's nothing wrong with the job; there's lots of ways of earning a living. Once the season's begun there'll be scores of them here. Some weeks there's a big ball every night. For visiting celebrities and consumptive children, like that. Diamond necklaces. Insurance companies send up their men. Dress them up as waiters. Some hostesses even invite them as guests. Keep their eyes glued on the sparklers. Some families are so nervous, they have a flicker stay up all night sitting by the safe. Some jealous husbands have flickers watching their wives. A man like you comes to town--doesn't know anybody--no serious reason for being here. Maybe he's a flicker--or a thief. The first thing a regular flicker does is to call on the Chief of Police and get it straight with him. But many don't; they like to be very secret. You can be certain that you weren't three days in town before the Chief was fixing his eyes on you. It's a good thing you went to the Casino and found that old record about yourself--

THEO It was about my brother, really.

HENRY Probably Bill Wentworth called up the Chief and told him he had confidence in you.

THEO Thanks for telling me, Henry. But it's your confidence in me that's made all the difference here at Herman's.

HENRY There are some flickers in the crowd at Herman's, but what we can't have there is a flicker who pretends he isn't. Time after time flickers have been known to steal the emeralds.

THEO What are some of the other types I was suspected of being?

HENRY I'll tell you about them, gradual. You talk for a while.

THEO I told about what I had found out and "put together" about the glorious trees of Newport. I told him about my theory of "The Nine Cities of Newport" (and of Schliemann's Troy).

HENRY Edweena should hear this! Edweena loves facts and pulling ideas out of facts. She's always saying that the only thing people in Newport talk about is one another.

You might talk with a friend of mine in town named Mrs. Cranston. I've told her about you. She's said she wants to meet you. That's a very special honor, professor, because she don't make many exceptions: she only likes to see servants in the house.

THEO But I'm a servant, Henry!

HENRY Let me ask you a question: all these houses where you've got students--do you go in the front door?

THEO Well, yes....

HENRY Do they ever ask you to lunch or dinner?

THEO Twice, but I've never....

HENRY You're not a servant. Mrs. Cranston knows a lot about you, but she says that she would be very happy if I brought you to call. (Poolroom disappears.)

THEO "Mrs. Cranston's" was a large establishment within the shadow of Trinity Church, consisting of three houses that had been so adjoined that it had required merely making openings in the walls to unite them into one. The summer colony at Newport was upborne by almost a thousand servants; Mrs. Cranston's was a temporary boardinghouse for many and a permanent residence for a few. In addition Mrs. Cranston harbored a considerable number of "extra help," a sort of labor pool for special occasions.

Mrs. Cranston ran her establishment with great decorum; no guest ever ventured to utter an inelegant word and even gossip about one's employers was kept within bounds.

It was a rule of the house that all the ladies--with the exception of Mrs. Cranston and Edweena--withdrew for the night at a quarter before eleven, either to their rooms upstairs or to their domiciles in the city. Gentlemen retired at midnight. (Mrs. Cranston's parlor appears with Mrs. Cranston herself seated on a wingback chair as if it were a throne.)

It was during this closing hour that Henry presented me to Mrs. Cranston.

HENRY Mrs. Cranston, I should like you to make the acquaintance of my friend Teddie North. He works at the Casino and has some jobs reading aloud to some ladies and gentlemen whose eyesight is not what it used to be.

CRANSTON I'm very pleased to make your acquaintance, Mr. North.

THEO Thank you, ma'am, I feel privileged.

HENRY Teddie has only one fault, ma'am, as far as I know, he minds his own business.

CRANSTON That recommends him to me, Mr. Simmons.

THEO Henry does me too much credit, Mrs. Cranston. That has been my aim, but even in the short time I've been in Newport I've discovered how difficult it is not to get involved in situations beyond one's control.

CRANSTON Mr. Simmons, you'll excuse me if I ask you to go into the bar for two minutes while I tell Mr. North something he should know.

HENRY Yes, indeed, gracious lady. (Henry exits.)

CRANSTON Mr. North, this town has an excellent police force and a very intelligent Chief of Police. It needs them not only to protect the valuables of some of the citizens but to protect some of the citizens from themselves; and to protect them from undesirable publicity. If some such complication should present itself to you, I hope you will get in touch with me. I have done some helpful things for the Chief of Police and he has been kind and helpful to me and to some of the guests in my house. Will you remember that?

THEO Yes, indeed, Mrs. Cranston. I thank you for letting me know that I can trouble you, if the occasion arises.

CRANSTON Mr. Simmons! Mr. Simmons! (Henry reappears with a tray of drinks.)

HENRY Yes, ma'am.

CRANSTON Please rejoin us and let us break the law a little bit.

THEO As a sign of good fellowship we were served what I remember as gin-fizzes.

CRANSTON Mr. Simmons tells me that you have some ideas of your own about the trees of Newport and about the various parts of the town. I would like to hear them in your own words.

THEO I did so--Schliemann and Troy and all. My partition of Newport was, of course, still incomplete.

CRANSTON Well! Well! Thank you. How Edweena will enjoy hearing that. Mr. North, I spent twenty years in the Bellevue Avenue City, as most of my guests upstairs have; but now I am a boarding-house keeper in the last of your cities and proud of it.... Henry Simmons tells me that the gentlemen in Herman's Billiard Parlor thought that you might be some kind of detective.

THEO Yes, ma'am, and some other undesirable types that he was not ready to tell me.

HENRY Ma'am, I didn't want to put too heavy a burden on the chap in his first weeks. Do you think he's strong enough now to be told that he was suspected of being a jiggala, maybe, or a smearer?

CRANSTON Oh, Henry Simmons, you have your own language! The word is "gigolo." Yes, I think he should be told everything. It may help him in the long run.

HENRY A smearer, Teddie, is a newspaperman after dirt--a scandal hound. During the season they're thick as flies. They try to bribe the servants to tell what's going on. If they can't find any muck they invent some. It's the same in England--millions and millions read about the wicked rich and love it. "Duke's daughter found in Opium Den--Read all about it!" An now it's Hollywood and the fillum stars. Most of the smearers are women, but there's plenty of men, too. We won't have anything to do with them, will we, Mrs. Cranston?

CRANSTON They aren't entirely to blame.

HENRY Now that Teddie's wheeling up and down the Avenue he'll begin to get feelers. Have you been approached yet, old man?

THEO No.

CRANSTON And the gigolo, Mr. Simmons?

HENRY Just as you wish, ma'am. I know you'll forgive me if I call our young friend by one nickname or another. It's a way I've got.

CRANSTON And what are you going to call Mr. North now?

HENRY It's those teeth, ma'am. They blind me. Every now and then I've got to call him "Choppers."

Choppers, old fellow, the men at Herman's thought for a while that you might be one of these--?

CRANSTON Gigolos.

HENRY Thank you, ma'am. That's French for dancing partners with ambitions. Next month they'll be here like a plague of

grasshoppers--fortune-hunters. So at first we thought you were one of them.

CRANSTON Thank you, Henry.

HENRY Nevertheless, Mrs. Cranston, we wouldn't think the worse of Mr. North here, if he found a sweet little thing in copper mines or railroads, would we?

CRANSTON I advise against it, Mr. North.

THEO I have no intention of doing so, Mrs. Cranston, but may I ask your reasons against it?

CRANSTON The partner who owns the money owns the whip and a girl brought up to great wealth thinks she has great brains too. I'll say no more. By the end of the summer you will have made your own observations. (Lights dim, Cranston and Henry leave on set as Theo takes stage.)

THEO My favorite among the pupils in the early morning tennis classes at the Casino was Eloise Fenwick. (Eloise enters.) She was fourteen--that is, as the spirit moved her--of any age between ten and sixteen. In addition, she was intelligent with breathtaking surprises; she was deep and kept her counsel; she was as beautiful as the morning and showed no sign that she was aware of it. At first we had few opportunities for desultory conversation, but we were acknowledged friends without that. Friendship between one of Shakespeare's heroines at the age of fourteen and a man of thirty is one of life's fairest gifts, only occasionally available to parents.

Eloise bore a burden on her shoulders.

ELOISE I wish my brother Charles would take lessons with you, Mr. North.

THEO I had observed him for some time. He was, I assumed, about sixteen; he was always alone. There was something defensively arrogant about him. His face was covered with pimples and discolorations usually associated with late puberty.

Tennis lessons, Eloise? Mr. Dobbs teaches students of that age.

ELOISE He doesn't like Mr. Dobbs. And he wouldn't take lessons from you because you teach children. He doesn't like anybody. No--I just wish you would teach him something.

THEO Well, I can't until I'm asked, can I?

ELOISE Mamma's going to ask you. (Mrs. Fenwick enters while Eloise takes Theo to greet her and then withdraws.)

FENWICK Mr. North, may I speak with you for a few moments? Please sit down. Your name is well known in our house and in the houses of a number of my friends with whom you read. Eloise admires you very much.

THEO I had not dared to hope so.

FENWICK I wanted to talk to you about my son Charles. Eloise tells me that you know him by sight. I was hoping that you could find time to coach him in French. He has been accepted for school in the fall. He has lived in France and speaks the language, after a fashion, but he needs to apply himself to the grammatical constructions. He admires everything that is French and I have the impression that he really wishes to bring it up to a higher standard. It embarrasses him that Eloise speaks much more correctly than he does.

THEO Mrs. Fenwick, for four years and three summers I have taught French to students most of whom would prefer to do anything else. It is like dragging loads of stones uphill. During the summer I resolved not to work so hard. I have already rejected a number of students who are required to improve their French, German, and Latin. I must have the student's own expression of readiness to study French and to work on it with me. I would like to have a short talk with your son and hear him make such a commitment.

FENWICK That is a good deal to ask of Charles Fenwick...I find it difficult to say what I must. I'm not a bashful woman, I'm not a bashful-minded woman at all, but I find it very hard to describe certain tendencies--or traits--in Charles.

THEO Perhaps I can help you, Mrs. Fenwick. In the school where I've been teaching the Headmaster has got into the way of calling my attention to any boys who don't fit into the pattern of the "All-American Boy" he wants in the school--boys who seem to have what he calls "problems." My parish comprises sleepwalkers, bedwetters, boys who are so homesick that they cry all night and can't hold down their food.

FENWICK Thank you, Mr. North...I wish you had room in your parish for Charles. He has none of those problems. Perhaps he has a worse one: he has a disdain, almost a contempt, for everyone he has come into contact with, except perhaps Eloise, and several priests whom he has come to know in his religious duties...He is far closer to Eloise than to his parents.

THEO What are the grounds for Charles's low opinion of the rest of us?

FENWICK Some posture of superiority...I have found the courage to give it a name: he is a snob, an unbounded snob. He has never said "Thank you" to a servant, or even raised his eyes to one.

If he thanked his father or myself when we have taken some pains to please him, the thanks are barely audible. At meal-times when the family is alone (for he refuses to come downstairs when there are guests) he sits in silence. He takes no interest in any subject but one: our social standing. Neither his father nor I care one iota about that. We have our friends and enjoy them--here and in Baltimore. Charles is intensely anxious as to whether we are invited to what he regards as important occasions; whether the clubs his father belongs to are the best clubs; whether I am what the papers call a "social leader." He is driving his father mad with questions about whether we have more means than the So-and-sos. Charles has a low opinion of us because we don't stretch every nerve to--oh, I can't go on with this--

THEO Please go on a moment more about this, Mrs. Fenwick.

FENWICK As I said we are Roman Catholics. Charles is serious about his religious life. Father Walsh, who is in our home quite often, is fond of Charles and pleased with him. I have talked over with him this...this preposterous worldliness. He does not see it as of much importance; he thinks Charles will outgrow it soon.

THEO Will you tell me something of Charles's education?

FENWICK Oh!--At the age of nine Charles developed a form of heart trouble. Baltimore and Johns Hopkins Medical School is a center for many distinguished doctors. They treated him and cured him; they tell me he is completely well. But at that time we took him out of school and ever since his education has been with entirely in the hands of private tutors.

THEO Does that explain why he has so few friends, why he seems to be always alone?

FENWICK Somewhat--but there is always his disdainful manner too. The boys don't like him and he thinks the boys are coarse and vulgar.

THEO Do the blemishes in his complexion have a part in this self-isolation?

FENWICK That condition has only developed in the last ten months. He has been under treatment by the best dermatologists. His attitude to us is of long standing.

THEO Do you think he can be persuaded to come over here and talk to me?

FENWICK Eloise can persuade him to do anything. You can imagine our gratitude to God that that little girl of fourteen is so helpful and so wise.

THEO Then I will go inside and cancel my next appointment. Please ask Eloise to persuade him to come to this table and talk with me. Could you and Eloise leave us alone together for half an hour on some pretext? (Eloise reenters with Charles, a pimply-faced adolescent somewhat too sure of himself. He begins mime of hitting tennis balls against a wall.)

FENWICK Yes, we have shopping to do.

THEO Mr. Fenwick--I shall call you that at the beginning of our conversation, then I shall call you Charles--Eloise tells me that you have spent much time in France and have had several years of tutoring. Probably all you need is a few weeks putting some polish on the irregular verbs. As you probably know, French people of real distinction refuse to have anything to do with Americans who speak their language incorrectly. They think we're savages. Eloise and your mother have told me a number of things about you: aren't there some questions you'd like to put to me about myself?

CHARLES Did you go to Yale...is it true that you went to Yale?

THEO Yes.

CHARLES If you went to Yale, why are you working at the Casino?

THEO To make some money.

CHARLES You don't look...poor.

THEO Oh, yes, I'm very poor, Charles--but cheerful.

CHARLES Did you belong to any of those fraternities..and clubs they have there?

THEO I was a member of the Alpha Delta Phi fraternity and of the Elizabethan Club. I was not a member of any one of the Senior Societies.

CHARLES Did you try to get into one?

THEO Trying had nothing to do with it. They did not invite me.

CHARLES Did you feel very badly about it?

THEO Maybe they were wise not to take me in. Maybe I wouldn't have suited them at all. Clubs are meant for men who have a lot in common. What kind of clubs would you like to be a member of Charles? The best clubs are built around hobbies. For instance there's a club in your own town Baltimore--a hundred years old--that I think must be the most delightful in the world and the hardest to get into.

CHARLES What club is that?

THEO It's called the "Catgut Club." It's always been known that there's a close affinity between medicine and music. In Berlin there's a symphony orchestra made up of physicians alone. Around your Johns Hopkins Medical School there are more great doctors than in any place of its size in the world. Only the most eminent professors belong to the "Catgut," but they're also pianists, violinists, violists, cellists, and possibly a clarinetist. Every Tuesday night they sit down and play chamber music.

CHARLES What?

THEO Chamber music. Do you know what that is?

Suddenly I remembered--with a bang--that to very young Americans the word "chamber," through association with chamber pots, was invested with the horror and excitement and ecstasy of the "forbidden"--of things not said openly; and every "forbidden" word belongs to a network of words far more devastating than "chamber." Charles Fenwick at sixteen was going through a phase that he should have outgrown by the age of twelve. I explained what chamber music was and then I laid another trap for him to see if my conjecture was right.

There's another club, also very select, at Saratoga Springs, whose members own racehorses and bet on races, but seldom ride them. There's an old joke about them; some people call it the "Horses and Asses Club"--the members don't sit on their horses, they sit on their asses.

It worked.

Which club would you rather belong to?

CHARLES What?

THEO The Baltimore doctors wouldn't give a pin to get into the millionaires' club at Saratoga Springs and the horseowners wouldn't be caught dead listening to a lot of chamber music... But I'm wasting your time. Are you ready to say that you'd be willing to work with me on the finer points of the French language? Be perfectly frank, Charles.

CHARLES Yes, sir.

THEO Fine! When next you're in France you and Eloise may be asked to some noble's country house for a pleasant weekend and you'll want to feel secure about the conversation and all that...

I'll sit here and wait until your mother returns. I don't want to interrupt your practice any longer. Don't tell that little story about Saratoga Springs where it might cause any embarrassment; it's all right just among men. (Charles runs off as Eloise and Mrs. Fenwick reenter opposite.)

Charles feels that he'd like to try a little coaching,
Mrs. Fenwick.

FENWICK Oh, I'm so relieved!

THEO I think Eloise had a large part in it.

ELOISE Can I come to the classes, too?

THEO Eloise, your French is quite good enough. Charles wouldn't open his mouth if you were there. But you can be sure that I'll miss you. Now I want to discuss some details with your mother. (Eloise sighs and drifts away.)

Mrs. Fenwick, have you ten minutes? I want to lay a plan before you.

FENWICK Oh, yes, Mr. North.

THEO Ma'am, are you fond of music?

FENWICK As a girl I seriously hoped to become a concert pianist.

THEO Who are your favorite composers?

FENWICK It used to be Bach, then it was Beethoven, but for some time I have become fonder and fonder of Mozart. Why do you ask?

THEO Because a little-known aspect of Mozart's life may help you to understand what is making life difficult for Charles.

FENWICK Charles and Mozart!

THEO Both suffered from an unfortunate deprivation in their adolescence.

FENWICK Mr. North, are you in your senses? (Mrs. Fenwick gasps as she frantically searches her purse for a handkerchief. Theo addresses the audience.)

THEO I must now interrupt this account for a brief declaration. I, Theophilus, did not hesitate to invent fabulous information for my own amusement or for the convenience of others. I am not given to telling either lies or the truth to another's disadvantage. The passage that follows concerning Mozart's letters is the easily verifiable truth. (Theo returns to his conversation.)

Ma'am, half an hour ago you assured me that you were not a bashful-minded woman. What I am about to say requires my discussing what many people would regard as vulgar and even distasteful matters. Of course, you may draw this conversation to a close at any moment you wish, but I think it will throw some light on why Charles is a closed-in and unhappy young man.

FENWICK Go on.

THEO Readers of Mozart's letters have long known of a few that he addressed to a cousin living in Augsburg. Those that have been published contain many asterisks indicating that deletions have been made. These letters to his Basle are one long chain of childish indecencies. It is all "bathroom humor." They were written in the composer's middle and late teens. Boys pass through a phase when all these "forbidden" matters obsess them--are excruciatingly funny and exciting and, of course, alarming. They give vent to the anxiety surrounding the tabu by sharing it in the herd. But Mozart--if I may put it figuratively--never played baseball in a corner lot, never went swimming on a boy scout picnic. Your son Charles was cut off from his contemporaries and all this perfectly natural childish adjustment to our bodily nature was driven underground; and has festered.

FENWICK My son Charles has never uttered a vulgar word.

THEO Mrs. Fenwick, that's the point!

FENWICK How do you know that something is festering?

THEO By sheer accident. In our conversation he gave me pretty hard treatment. He asked me if I had belonged to certain extremely exclusive clubs at Yale, and when I told him I had not, he tried to humiliate me.

Mrs. Fenwick, you may remember Macbeth's question to the doctor concerning Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking: "Canst thou not... Cleanse the stuffed bosom of that perilous stuff Which weighs upon the heart?"

FENWICK But you are not a doctor, Mr. North.

THEO No. What Charles needs is a friend with a certain experience in these matters. You cannot be sure that doctors are also potential friends.

FENWICK You believe that Mozart outgrew his "childishness?"

THEO No. No man does. He outgrows most of his anxiety; the rest he turns into laughter. I doubt that Charles even knows what it is to smile.

FENWICK Oh, Mr. North, I've hated every word you've said. But I think I can see that you are probably right. Will you accept Charles as a pupil?

THEO I must make a proviso. You must discuss it with Mr. Fenwick and Father Walsh. I could teach French syntax to Tom, Dick, and Harry, but now that I have glimpsed Charles's predicament,

I cannot spend all those hours without trying to help. I want your permission to do a thing that I would not dream of doing without your permission. I want to introduce into each lesson a "dynamite word" or two. If I had a student whose mind and heart was absorbed with birds, I would build French lessons about ostriches and starlings. Learning takes wings when it's related to what's passing in the student's inner life. Charles's inner life is related to a despairing effort to grow up into a man's world. His snobbery is related to this knot inside him. He won't realize it, but my lessons would be based on these fantasies of his--of social grandeur and of the frightening world of the tabu.

FENWICK Excuse me; what is it you want?

THEO A message from you that I may occasionally use low earthy images in the lessons. I want you to trust me not to resort to the prurient and the salacious. I don't know Charles. He may develop an antagonism against me and report to you and to Father Walsh that I have a vulgar mind. You probably know that ailing patients also cling to their illnesses.

FENWICK Mr. North, this has been a painful conversation for me. I must think it all over. You will hear from me....Good morning.

THEO If you agree to my proviso, I can meet Charles in the blue tea room behind us for an hour every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at eight-thirty. (Charles re-enters and joins his family.)

ELOISE Mr. North won't let me come to classes, too; but I forgive him. I'm so glad Charles is going to have them.

CHARLES Au revoir, monsieur le professeur!

FENWICK Are you ready to go to the car, dears? (Fenwicks exit.)

(Mozart motet is played while audience views some ribald slides of 18th Century paintings. Eloise enters at end.)

ELOISE Aren't you going to read it?

THEO I'll wait. Just now I'd rather take you to the La Forge Tea Rooms for a hot fudge sundae...Do you think this note engages me or dismisses me? (Theo and Eloise proceed to a soda fountain which has glided on.)

ELOISE I shan't tell you.

Oh, Mr. North, is this really our last class? Shall I never see you again?

THEO I was hoping that you'd have a hot fudge sundae with me every Friday morning at exactly this time--just when I finish my lesson with Charles.

You really do know a lot about what's been going on, don't you, Eloise?

ELOISE Well, no one ever tells a young girl anything so she has to be a sort of witch. She has to learn to read people's thoughts, doesn't she? When I was a little girl I used to listen at doors, but I don't do that any more...You grown-ups suddenly woke up about Charles. You saw that he was all caught in... a sort of spider's web; he was afraid of everything. You must have told Mother something that made her frightened, too. Did you tell her to ask Father Walsh to dinner? He came to dinner last night and after dinner Charles and I were sent upstairs, and they went into the library and had a council of war. And way upstairs, miles away, we could hear Father Walsh laughing. Mother's voice sounded as though she had been crying, but Father Walsh kept shouting with laughter.--Please read the letter, Mr. North--not to me, of course, but to yourself.

THEO "Dear Mr. North, Reverend Father says to tell you that when he was young he had worked as a counselor at a boys' camp, too. He told me to tell you to go ahead--that he'll do the praying and you do the work. It comforts me to think of the lady in Salzburg for whom things worked out so well. Sincerely, Millicent Fenwick."

THEO Eloise, read the letter, but don't ask me to explain it to you yet.

ELOISE Thank you. Wasn't Beethoven born in Salzburg? We went there when I was about ten and visited his house.

THEO Is it hard to be a witch, Eloise? I mean: does it make living harder?

ELOISE No! It keeps you so busy. You have to be on your toes.... It keeps you from growing stale.

THEO Oh, is that one of your worries?

ELOISE Well, isn't it everybody's?

THEO Not when you're around. --Eloise, I always like to ask my young friends what they've been reading lately. And you?

ELOISE Well, I've been reading the Encyclopaedia Britannica--I discovered it when I wanted to read about Heloise and Abelard. Then I read about George Eliot and Jane Austen and Florence Nightingale.

THEO Some day turn to B and read about Bishop Berkeley, who lived in Newport, and go and visit his house. Turn to M and read about Mozart, who was born in Salzburg.

ELOISE Oh, how boring it must be for you to talk to young girls who are so ignorant!

THEO Let me be the judge of that, Eloise. Please go on about the Encyclopaedia.

ELOISE For another reason I read about Buddhism and glaciers and lots of other things.

THEO Forgive me asking so many questions, but why do you read about Buddhism and glaciers?

ELOISE So that I'll have something to talk about at table. When Papa and Mama give luncheons or dinner parties Charles and I eat upstairs. When relatives or old friends are invited we are invited, too; but Charles never comes to table if anyone else is there--except Father Walsh, of course. When just the four of us are there he comes to table but he scarcely says a word...Mr. North, I'm going to tell you a secret: Charles thinks he's an orphan; he thinks Papa and Mama adopted him. I don't think he really believes that, but that's what he says. He thinks he is a prince from another country--like Poland or Hungary or even France.

THEO And you're the only one who knows that?

ELOISE So you see how hard it is for Papa and Mama to make conversation--and in front of the servants!--with a person who acts as though he were so far away from them.

THEO Does he think that you are of royal birth also?

ELOISE I don't let him.

THEO So at mealtimes you fill in about Buddhism and glaciers and Florence Nightingale?

ELOISE Yes...and I tell them the things you've told me. About the school you went to in China. That filled a whole lunchtime--I embroidered it a little. Do you always tell the truth, Mr. North?

THEO I do to you. It's so boring to tell the truth to people who'd rather hear the other thing.

ELOISE I told how in Naples the girls thought you had the Evil Eye. I made it funny and Mario had to leave the room he was laughing so.

THEO Now I'm going to tell you something. Dear Eloise, if you see that Charles is cutting his way out of that spider's web a little, you can tell yourself that it's all due to you. Because when you love someone you communicate your love of life; you keep the faith; you scare away dragons.

ELOISE Why, Mr. North--there are tears in your eyes!

THEO Happy tears. (Eloise lightly kisses Theo's cheek and skips out. Fountain glides off too as Charles enters.)

So I met Charles at eight-thirty on the following Monday. In the intervening time he had relapsed somewhat into his haughty distrust; but he deigned to sit in his chair facing me.

Charles, what are these odd-looking kiosks in the streets called--these constructions for the convenience of men only?

CHARLES: "Pissoirs."

THEO Yes, they also go by a more elegant and more interesting name "vespasiennes," after the Roman emperor to whom we are indebted for the happy idea. Now that you're older and will be circulating more with maturer persons over there you will be astonished at the lack of embarrassment with which ladies and gentlemen of even the most refined sort refer to such matters. So be prepared for that, will you?

CHARLES Yes, sir.

THEO Charles, I hope that you will be a student in Paris in your twenties, as I was. We were all poor, but we had a lot of fun. Be sure that you live on the Left Bank, and pretend that you're poor.

May I tell you in confidence, Charles, that my work carries me into many cottages in Newport and I've met a number of the admired hostesses in this town. In confidence, not one can hold a candle to your mother for distinction and charm and what the French call race. I'd always heard that the ladies of Baltimore belonged to a class apart and now I know it to be true. You're a lucky man, Charles. I hope you live up to that privilege. You do, don't you, Charles?

CHARLES Oui...oui, monsieur le professeur.

THEO But there was still much work to be done.

Bonjour, Charles.

CHARLES Bonjour, monsieur le professeur.

THEO Today we're going to work with the conditional mood, with verbs ending in ir, and with the second person singular tu. You use tu to children, to your very old friends, and to members of your family, though I've been told that until about 1914 even husbands and wives addressed one another as vous. You notice that I always address you as vous; if we haven't quarreled in the meantime, I might address you as tu five years from now. Often in French, and always in Spanish, God is addressed as Tu, capital T. Of course, lovers call each other tu; all such conversations in bed are in this

second person singular.

Now for some practice in conversation. Today we're going to have some man-to-man conversation. We'd better move to that table in the corner where we won't be overheard.

Charles, you've been in Paris. After dark you must have often seen certain women of the street strolling singly or in couples. Or you've heard them addressing passing gentlemen in a low voice from the doorways and alleys--what do they usually say?

CHARLES Voulez-vous coucher avec moi?

THEO Good! Since you're very young they may say, "Tu es seul, mon petit? Veux-tu que je t'accompagne?" Or you're sitting alone at a bar and one of these petites dames slides up beside you and puts her arm through yours: "Tu veux m'offrir un verre?" How do you answer these questions, Charles? You're an American and a gentleman and you've had some experience with these encounters.

CHARLES Non, mademoiselle...merci. Pas ce soir.

THEO Tres bien, Charles! Could you make it a little more charming? These poor souls are earning their living. They're not exactly beggars, are they? They have something to sell. They're not contemptible--not in France, they aren't. Can you try again?

CHARLES I...I don't know.

THEO At the school where I've been teaching there's a master who teaches French. He loves France and goes to France every summer. He hates women and is afraid of them. He prides himself on his virtue and righteousness and he's a really dreadful man. In Paris he goes for strolls in the evening just so that he can humiliate these women. He told the story to us fellow-masters to illustrate what a tower of Christian morality he was. When he's spoken to by one of these women, he turns on her and says "vous me faitea ch---!" That's a very vulgar expression; it's far worse than saying "You make me vomit." He told us that the girl or girls sprang back from him aghast crying, "Pourquoi? Pourquoi?" He's had his little triumph. What do you think of that?

CHARLES It's....awful.

THEO One of the most attractive aspects of France is the universal respect for women at every level of society. At home and in public restaurants a Frenchman smiles at the waitress who's serving him, looks her right in the eye when he thanks her. There's an undertone of respectful flirtation between every man and woman in France--even when she's a woman of ninety,

even when she's a prostitute.--Now let's act a little one-act play. You go out of the room and come in the door as though you were strolling in one of those streets behind the Opera. I'm going to pretend I'm one of those girls. (Theo becomes a Parisienne street tart while Charles goes scarlet.)

Bonsoir, mon chou.

CHARLES Bonsoir, mademoiselle.

THEO Tu es seul? Veux-tu t'amuser un peu?

CHARLES Je suis occupe ce soir...Merci!

Peut-etre une sutre fois. Tu es charmante.

THEO A-o-o! A-o-o!...Dis donc: une demi-heure, cheri. J'ai une jolie chambre avec tout confort americain. On s'amusera a la folie!

CHARLES How do I get out of this?

THEO I suggest you make your departure quick, short, but cordial: "Mademoiselle, je suis en retard. Il faut que je file. Mais au revoir." And here you pat her elbow or shoulder, smile and say, "Bonne chance, chere amie!" (Charles begins hesitantly then gets into the spirit of the phrase.)

(Eloise enters and stands off not wishing to interrupt.)

Charles, at our next class I'm going to give you the examination for those who have completed three years of French. I'm sure you'll pass it splendidly and our lessons will be over.

CHARLES Over!

THEO Yes, Teachers are like birds. The moment comes when they must push the young out of the nest. Now you must give your time to American history and physics which I can't teach you. (Charles exits. Eloise re-enters, a vision in white. She and Theo move to table.)

On the following Friday I met Eloise for our visit to the tea room. On this morning she was neither the ten-year-old nor the Countess of Aquidneck and the Adjacent Isles. She was dressed all in white, not the white of the tennis courts but the white of the snow. She was someone else--not Juliet, not Viola, not Beatrice--perhaps Imogen, perhaps Isabella. She did not put her hand in mine but she left no doubt that we were true friends. She walked with lowered eyes. We sat down at our removed table.

ELOISE I'll have tea this morning.

Last night there were no guests. At table Charles brushed away Mario and held the chair for Mother. He kissed her on the forehead. When he sat down he said, "Papa, tell me about your father and mother and about when you were a boy."

THEO Eloise! And you were all ready to tell them about the Eskimos.

ELOISE No, I was all ready to ask them about the Fenwicks and the Conovers.

THEO Oh, Eloise, you are a child of Heaven!

ELOISE Why did you say that?

THEO It just sprang to my lips.

Eloise, how do you see your life as it lies before you?

ELOISE You're very strange this morning, Mr. North.

THEO Oh, no, I'm not. I'm the same old friend.

ELOISE I'm going to answer your question. But you must promise not to say one word about it to anyone.

THEO I promise, Eloise Fenwick.

ELOISE I want to be a religious, a nun.

I'm so grateful to God for my father and mother...and brother, for the sun and the sea, and for Newport, that I want to give my life to Him. He will show me what I must do.

THEO Eloise, I'm just an old Protestant on both sides of my family. Forgive me if I ask you this: couldn't you express your gratitude to God while living a life outside the religious order?

ELOISE I love my parents so much...and I love Charles so much, that I feel that those loves would come between me and God. I want to love Him above all and I want to love everybody on earth as much as I love my family. I love them too much.

Father Walsh knows. He tells me to wait; in fact I must wait for three years. Mr. North, this is the last time we'll meet here. I am learning how to pray and wherever I am in the world I shall be praying for Papa and Mama and Charles and for you and for as many of the children of Heaven as I can hold in my mind and heart. (Eloise drops her guard, embraces Theo and runs off. She stops, turns and waves as Theo moves down.)

End of Act One

ACT II

(At rise Theo watches slides of Newport cottages as slow rag plays. As music fades he turns and addresses the audience.)

THEO One of my first summonses to be interviewed came in the form of a note from Sarah Bosworth (Mrs. McHenry Bosworth), "Nine Gables." The writer's father, Dr. James McHenry Bosworth, it said, had employed many readers, a number of whom had proved to be unsatisfactory. Could Mr. North present himself at the above address at eleven o'clock on Friday morning to be interviewed by Mrs. Bosworth on this matter?

The Honorable Dr. James McHenry Bosworth was seventy-four years old, a widower, father of six and grandfather of many. He had served his country as attache, first secretary, minister, and ambassador to several countries on three continents. Mrs. McHenry Bosworth was his daughter, divorced and childless, who had resumed her maiden name under this form.

On that Friday morning in late April--the first radiantly springlike day of the year--I drove my bicycle to the door and rang the bell.

(Willis enters.)

WILLIS Err...You are Mr. North? In general sir, this door is not used in the morning. You will find the garden door around the corner of the house at your left. (Theo slowly pulls back his sleeve and glances at his watch.)

THEO Mrs. Bosworth asked me to call at this address at this hour.

WILLIS This door is not generally used....

THEO (Theo lowers voice and begins talking nonstop which forces Willis to become louder and more distraught deliberately.) Thank you, Mr. Gammage...Mr. Kammage. I assume that you are expecting the piano-tuner, or--

WILLIS What?

THEO Or the chiropodist. What a lovely day, Mr. Gammage! Kindly tell Mrs. Bosworth that I have called as she requested.

WILLIS (Growing louder and more impatient.) My name is not...Sir, take your bicycle to the door I have indicated.

THEO Good morning. I shall write Mrs. Bosworth that I called. Irasci celerem tamen ut placabilis essem.

WILLIS Sir, are you deaf or insane? (A maid enters followed by Persis on the staircase, curious at the commotion.)

THEO Dr. Bosworth--I knew him well in Singapore--Raffles Hotel, you know. We used to play fan-tan. Temple bells and all that. Punkahs swaying from the ceiling-- (Mrs. Bosworth enters.)

WILLIS I've...I've...'ad enough of you. Go away. (Mrs. Leffingwell and her husband come rushing in.)

SARAH Willis, I am expecting Mr. North...Persis, this is none of your affair. (Persis exits.) Mr. North, will you follow me into my sitting room. (Theo follows as do the Leffingwells.)

 I am Mrs. Bosworth. Will you sit down, please.

 My father's eyes are easily tired. For one reason or another his readers have proved unsatisfactory. I know his tastes. In order to save your time, might I ask you to commence reading at the top of this page.

THEO Certainly Mrs. Bosworth. (Theo reads from Gibbon's History of Civilization.)

SARAH Thank you. (Whispered conversation between Sarah and the Leffingwells.) Your reading has much to recommend it. I am sorry to have to tell you that my father finds a reading with intermittent emphasis very tiring. I don't think I should waste your time any longer. (Bosworth calls from off-stage as Sarah leads Theo to the door.)

BOSWORTH Sarah! Sarah!

SARAH Thank you, Mr. North. Good morning! (Willis opens door.)

BOSWORTH Sarah! Sarah! (Persis appears on staircase.)

SARAH Willis go about your work. Persis, this is none of your affair. (Bosworth enters.)

BOSWORTH Send that young man in to me, Sarah. Finally we have found someone who can read. The only readers you've ever found are retired librarians with mice in their throats, God help us! (A nurse enters and clucks about him like a mother hen, to Bosworth's great irritation.)

SARAH Father, I will send Mr. North in to you directly. You go back to your desk at once. You're an ill man. You mustn't get excited. Nurse, take my father's arm.

In the event that Dr. Bosworth approves of you as a reader, there are some things you should know. My father is an old man; he is seventy-four. He is not a well man. His health has caused us great concern. In addition, he has a number of idiosyncrasies to which you must pay no attention. He tends to make large promises and to enter into extravagant projects. Any interest in them on your part could only lead you into serious difficulties.

BOSWORTH Sarah! Sarah!

SARAH I want you to remember what I have said. Have you heard me?

THEO (Amiably.) Thank you, Mrs. Bosworth.

SARAH (Nonplussed by Theo's response.) Any further trouble from you and you go out of this house at once. Father, this is Mr. North.

BOSWORTH Please sit down, Mr. North. I am Dr. Bosworth. You may have heard my name. I have been able to be of some service to my country. (Bosworth waves his daughter out.)

THEO Indeed, I know of your distinguished career, Dr. Bosworth.

BOSWORTH Hm...very good...May I ask where you were born?

THEO In Madison, Wisconsin, sir.

BOSWORTH What was your father's occupation?

THEO He owned and edited a newspaper.

BOSWORTH Indeed! Did your father also attend a university?

THEO He graduated from Yale and obtained a doctorate there.

BOSWORTH Did he?...Vous parlez francais, monsieur?

THEO J'ai passe une annee en France.

(Theo turns to the audience.) There followed: what occupation had I been engaged in since leaving school?...my age?... my marital status?...what plans I entertained for later life, et cetera, et cetera.

(To Bosworth) Dr. Bosworth, I came to this house to apply for a position as a reader. I was told that you have had many unsatisfactory readers. I foresee that I shall disappoint you also. Good morning.

BOSWORTH What? What?

THEO Good morning, sir.

BOSWORTH (Theo has greatly astonished Dr. Bosworth, who regains his composure in time to stop Theo from leaving.) Mr. North! Mr. North! Kindly let me explain myself.

Please sit down sir. I did not intent to be intrusive. I ask your apology. I have not left this house for seven years except to visit the hospital. We who are shut in tend to develop an excessive curiosity about those who attend us. Will you accept my apology?

THEO Yes sir. Thank you.

BOSWORTH Thank you...Are you free to read to me this morning until twelve-thirty?

THEO (To the audience.) I was. He placed before me an early work of George Berkeley.

It was arranged that I was to read for two hours on four days of the week. George Berkeley is not easy reading and neither of us had been trained in rigorous philosophical discussion, but we allowed no paragraph to be left behind without thorough digestion.

Two days later he interrupted our reading to whisper to me conspiratorially.

BOSWORTH You know that Bishop Berkeley lived three years in Newport? I am planning to buy his house "Whitehall" and fifty surrounding acres. There are many difficulties about it. It is still a great secret. I plan to build an Academy of Philosophers here. I was hoping that you would help me draft the invitations to the leading philosophers in the world.

THEO To come and lecture here, Dr. Bosworth?

BOSWORTH Sh!...Sh!...(Bosworth looks to see if anyone is eavesdropping.) No, to come and live here. Each would have his own house. Alfred North Whitehead and Bertrand Russell. Bergson. Benedetto Croce, and Gentile. Wittgenstein--do you know if he is still alive?

THEO I am not sure, sir.

BOSWORTH You must help me draft the letters. The Masters are to have full liberty. They may teach or not teach, lecture or not lecture. They would not even be required to meet one another. Newport would become like a great lighthouse on a hill-- a Pharos of Mind, of elevated thought. There is so much planning to be done! Time! Time! They tell me I am not well. (Bosworth exits as Theo continues to the audience.)

THEO

I was not comfortable at "Nine Gables." I had come to Newport to observe without becoming deeply involved. Among the Bosworths I felt obscurely that I was in danger of becoming extremely involved in some imbroglio out of late Elizabethan drama. I had already made two enemies in the house: Willis loathed me; when I passed Mrs. Bosworth in the hall, she lowered her head slightly but her glance said, "Beware young man, we know what your game is..." Day after day I planned to throw up the job. Yet I enjoyed the readings in Bishop Berkeley; I enjoyed Dr. Bosworth's constantly recalling the Newport of the eighteenth century half a mile from where we were working. (Persis reappears, a rather lonely character, quite winsome, but regal of stature.)

I was deeply interested in Persis, Mrs. Tennyson, though I had never been presented to her. She seemed to regard me with puzzled distrust. I wondered how she was able to live the year round in a house governed by her vindictive "Aunt Sall." Above all I had been exalted by my employer's preposterous vision of gathering together here the greatest living thinkers--a vision he could only communicate in whispers.

(Bosworth re-enters and assumes his spot in a comfortable chair.) It was I who unwittingly opened the next door into a deeper involvement. We had been reading aloud from Dr. Bosworth's own work, Some Eighteenth Century Houses in Rhode Island. When we finished the chapter that contained a detailed description of Bishop Berkeley's "Whitehall" I expressed my admiration for the art with which it was written; then I added,

Dr. Bosworth, I think it would be a great privilege to visit the house in your company. Would it be possible to drive out some afternoon and see the house together?

BOSWORTH

Indeed, I wish we could. I thought you understood...I have this disability. I am unable to leave this house for more than a quarter of an hour. I can walk in the garden for a short time. I shall never leave this house. I shall die here. (Bosworth turns back to Theo who is rather puzzled by this revelation.)

THEO

To myself I thought, He's crazy. He's around the bend. We had often sat uninterruptedly in his study for almost three hours, after which he had accompanied me unhurriedly to his front door.

My next engagement at "Nine Gables" was on the following Sunday morning. Dr. McPherson had suddenly decided that the late-hour sessions were inadvisable. I was surprised to see Dr. Bosworth fully dressed to go out. He was arguing with his nurse.

BOSWORTH We shall not need your company, Mrs. Turner.

NURSE But, Dr. Bosworth, I must obey Dr. McPherson's orders. I must be near you at all times.

BOSWORTH Will you leave the room and close the door, Mrs. Turner?

NURSE Oh, dear! I don't know what to do.

BOSWORTH Listening! Always listening!

Mr. North, will you climb up on that chair and see if there's some kind of gramophone up there listening to what's said here?

THEO No, Dr. Bosworth. I was engaged to read aloud here. I am not an electrical engineer.

BOSWORTH She's telephoning all over the house. (They begin to read when the Leffingwells suddenly appear.)

MARY Good morning, Papa dear. Good morning, Mr. North. We're all coming over to lunch. I came early to see if Sally wanted to go to church. She can't make up her mind. But I'd much rather listen to the reading. Mr. North, do persuade my father to let me join you. I'll be as quiet as a mouse.

BOSWORTH You too, Mary? Our discussion would not interest you. Run off to church and enjoy yourselves. We are going to the beech grove, Mr. North. (As lights change Bosworth and Theo walk to a garden bench opposite.)

Mr. North, I think I should explain my disability to you. I suffer from a disorder of the kidneys which the doctors tell me may be related to a far more serious illness--to a fatal disease. I find this very strange because--apart from certain local irritations--I have experienced no pain. But I am not a medical man; I must rely on the word of certain specialists.

As a side aspect of this wretched business, I suffer from a compulsion to urinate--or try to urinate--every ten to fifteen minutes.

THEO Why, Dr. Bosworth, you and I have sat in your study for hours at a time without your leaving the room once.

BOSWORTH That's the ridiculous part about it. Perhaps it's in the mind--as Bishop Berkeley is constantly insisting! As long as I'm in my own house--keeping quiet, so to speak--I am not inconvenienced. I am assured that it is not the usual old man's affliction; it is not prostate trouble. It's something far graver.

For many years I served my country in the diplomatic life. Public functions tend to be long drawn out. State funerals, weddings, christenings, openings of parliament, national holidays. Unforeseen delays! Snowstorms in Finland, hurricanes in Burma!...Waits at railway stations, waits on grandstands. I was the head of my delegation...I have always been a healthy man, Mr. North, but I began to get a dread of that--that little necessity. Now I know that it's all in the mind. Bishop Berkeley! Doctors laugh at me, I know, behind my back. One doctor fitted me out with a sort of goat's udder.

I shall die in this house or in their wretched hospital.

The worst of it is that the idea is getting around that I'm crazy. Do you think I'm crazy?

THEO Dr. Bosworth, none of this is new to me--this kidney trouble. I know all about it.

BOSWORTH What's that you say? What's that you say, boy?

THEO One summer I left Yale and went to Florida and got work as a swimming and sports director at a resort. One of the hurricanes came along. The tourists canceled their bookings. I was out of a job. So I became a truck driver. Now the three things that truck drivers think about are: the bonus for speed of delivery, falling asleep at the wheel, and kidney trouble. There's something about sitting all day in that shaking truck that upsets a man's waterworks--irritates it. Driving is hell on the kidneys. Some men get the fear of retention--afraid that they'll never piss again. Others have what you have--the constant itch. Of course, they can get down when they want to, but nothing comes. Now I have an idea.

BOSWORTH An idea? What...what idea?

THEO I have very few pupils tomorrow. I'll cancel them. I'll go to Providence to the truck drivers' stop. They sell stay awake pills and a certain gadget. It's got a very vulgar name that I won't repeat to you. I'll bring it back to you and one of these days we'll drive to "Whitehall" and try it out.

BOSWORTH If you do that, Mr. North, if you do that, I'll believe there's a God. I will. I will.

THEO I have three pupils in the morning. I shall have to charge you for the cancelled lessons, as well as for the cost of the trip to Providence and for the gadget I hope to find. I live on a strict budget, Dr. Bosworth. I think I can do the whole thing for twenty dollars. Maybe the gadget costs more. I shall submit an itemized account. Shall I send it to you or to Mrs. Bosworth?

BOSWORTH What?

THEO I have sent Mrs. Bosworth a bill for our readings every two weeks, but so far I have received no payment whatever. She has the bills.

BOSWORTH What? I don't understand it!

THEO I shall need some money to go to Providence.

BOSWORTH Come in the house. Come in the house at once. (They move quickly to the study.) I am shocked. I am grieved, Mr. North. (Bosworth rings his calling bell rather violently until Willis appears.)

 Willis, tell Mrs. Bosworth to bring my checkbook to my study and Mr. North's bills also! (Persis enters.)

PERSIS What is it, Grandfather?

BOSWORTH I wish to speak to your Aunt Sarah.

PERSIS I think she may be at church.

BOSWORTH Hunt for her. If she's out of the house, go to her desk and bring me my checkbook or her checkbook. She has failed to pay Mr. North's bills.

PERSIS Grandfather, she has given strict orders that no one may open her desk. May I write a check for you?

BOSWORTH It's my checkbook. I shall open her desk.

PERSIS I'll see if I can find her, Grandfather. (Bosworth continues to fume until Sarah enters.)

SARAH Father, you directed me to keep the accounts of this house.

BOSWORTH Then keep them! Pay them!

SARAH I assumed that a monthly payment for Mr. North would be sufficient.

BOSWORTH Here is your checkbook for the household accounts. I have paid Mr. North for our readings and for some errands he is doing for me. Kindly return to me my own checkbook for my own private use.--Mr. North, it is agreeable to you, if we return to our former evening schedule?

THEO Yes, Dr. Bosworth.

SARAH Father, Dr. McPherson is convinced that the late hours are harmful to you.

BOSWORTH My compliments to Dr. McPherson...Let me see you to the door, Mr. North. I am too agitated to continue our work this morning. May I expect you Tuesday evening?

Perhaps I shall live again.

THEO (Theo moves toward the audience talking while adding the costumes.) The next morning I fitted myself with a dirty sweater and a battered hat. I was a truck driver. At the truck drivers' stop in Providence I bought some stay-awake pills and asked where was the nearest drugstore frequented by us road men. It was across the street. "O'Halloran's." I bought some more stay-awake pills and had an intimate conversation with Joe O'Halloran about some inconveniences I suffered on the road. (Theo whispers to Joe.)

JOE Let me show you something, Jack. First they invented this for babies. Then they made 'm bigger for hospitals and insane asylums, see what I mean? Lots of incontinence in insane asylums.

THEO Mr. O'Halloran, I get a kind of ache in my wrists and forearms. Have you some mild--real mild--pain killer? Nothing potent, you know. I've gotta drive over four hundred miles a day.

How many should I take?

JOE Driving like you do, not more than one an hour.

THEO Was I taking a great risk? I weighed the matter thoroughly. The risk I was taking was a risk for me, not for him. I was in a condition to assume a risk and to relish it.

I was back in Newport at four in the afternoon. I'd swallowed two of the red pills, very bitter with little effect--perhaps a slight numbness in the neck. I telephoned my employer.

BOSWORTH (On telephone opposite.) Yes, Mr. North? Yes, Mr. North?

THEO I have a message for you. Can I give it to you on this line?

BOSWORTH Wait a minute. (Bosworth makes sure no one is listening.)

Yes, Mr. North?

THEO Dr. Bosworth, in a quarter of an hour a telegraph boys is going to call at your house with a parcel for your hands only and for your signature. Don't let anyone intercept it. I think you'll want to use what's inside. You take a walk around the garden at five, you told me. When you start out take one of those red pills. Thousands of men take them on the road every day. After about ten minutes you may feel a

little itching, but it'll go away. Ignore it. The other thing is just a safeguard. You'll be able to throw it away after a week or two.

BOSWORTH I don't know what to say. I'll be at the front door... I'll report to you on Tuesday night.

THEO When I entered his study Tuesday night he clutched me excitedly.

BOSWORTH First afternoon, half an hour! This morning, half an hour! This afternoon, forty-five minutes!

THEO That's fine.

BOSWORTH Fine? Fine? Mr. North, can you drive with me to "Whitehall" next Sunday morning or afternoon.

THEO I am sorry I am engaged with Colonel Vanwinkle on Sunday mornings. I would feel it to be a great privilege to go with you on Sunday afternoon.

BOSWORTH Yes, I shall take my granddaughter with me this Sunday.

(Sarah knocks at the door.) Come in!

SARAH Forgive me interrupting you, Father. I must discuss our dinner Tuesday week. The Thayers have been called to New York. Whom would you like in their place.

I'm sorry, Father, but I must know whether you prefer the Ewings or the Thorpes.

BOSWORTH Sarah, how many times must I tell you not to disturb me when I am at work?

SARAH Father, you have been behaving very strangely lately. I think these readings and those walks have overexcited you. Shouldn't you say good night to Mr. North and--?

BOSWORTH Sarah, you have your car and driver. I do not interfere with your life. Tomorrow I want you to arrange for the rental of a car and a driver for my use. I wish to go for a drive tomorrow after my nap--at four-thirty.

SARAH You are not going to--?!

BOSWORTH What you take for my strange behavior is an improvement in my health.

SARAH A drive! Without Dr. McPherson's permission! Your doctor for thirty years!

BOSWORTH Dr. McPherson is your doctor. I do not now feel the need of one. If I do, I shall call in that young Dr. What's-his-name that Forebaugh was telling me about....I wish now to return to my studies.

SARAH But the children...

BOSWORTH Edward? Mary? What have they to do with it?

SARAH We are all deeply concerned. We love you!

BOSWORTH Then you'll be glad to hear that I feel much better. I would like to speak to Persis. (Persis quickly appears.)

Persis, can you arrange to take a short drive with me in my car every afternoon after my nap?

PERSIS I'd love to, Grandfather.

BOSWORTH The Sunday after next we will take Mr. North with us and show him "Whitehall."

THEO (To audience.) A storm was gathering about my head.

I enjoyed the flashes of lightning.

A few nights later I found a note waiting for me.

CRANSTON (Cranston enters and reads the note to the audience.)
Dear Mr. North, I have heard that a member of a family--where you read--has been talking wildly all over town--about doing you harm. A friend of mine--you met him--has arranged to have a car call for you at midnight Friday. Do not leave the house until you are told that a car and driver are waiting for you at the door. A Friend on Spring Street.

THEO There was no dinner party on Friday. Dr. Bosworth and I read Benedetto Croce on the subject of Giambattista Vico. It gave him pleasure to believe that the author would soon be his guest and neighbor in the Academy of Philosophers. I forgot that I was to be called for.

PERSIS (Persis knocks and enters.) Grandfather, I wish to drive Mr. North home in my car tonight. Please let him leave a little early because it's late.

BOSWORTH Yes, my dear. Do you mean now? (Sarah enters.)

PERSIS Yes, Grandfather, please.

SARAH That will not be necessary, Persis. It is unsuitable that you drive about town at this hour. I've arranged for Dorsey to drive Mr. North home in my car.

BOSWORTH Well, my friend, everybody wants to see that you get home safely tonight. (A knock is heard. After a moment Willis enters.)

SARAH What car is that, Willis--mine?

WILLIS No, madam, a car called for by Mr. North.

PERSIS Well, let's all go and see Mr. North to the door...

MARY (Mary enters rather frantically.) Sally, I can't find Cassius anywhere. I think he's out of the house. Please help me find him. If we can't find him I shall drive Mr. North home in my own car. --Willis, have you seen Mr. Leffingwell anywhere?

WILLIS Yes, madam.

MARY Where is he?

WILLIS Madam, he is in the bushes.

PERSIS Yes, Aunt Mary, I saw him lying in the bushes. That's why I asked to drive Mr. North home. He had something in his hand.

SARAH Persis, that will do. Hold your tongue. Go to your room.

WILLIS Madam, may I speak to you at one side for a moment.

BOSWORTH Talk up, Willis. What are you trying to say. What is it that Mr. Leffingwell has in his hand?

WILLIS A gun, sir.

MARY Cassius is playing with guns again. He will kill himself.

DRIVER Not at present, madam. We have taken the gun from him.

SARAH And who are you?

BOSWORTH God bless my soul!

SARAH And, what authority have you for trespassing on this property? (The driver who had called for Theo steps forward.)

DRIVER Mr. Loft...Mr. Left...the gentleman in the bushes...has been overheard in three places threatening to kill Mr. North. We can't have that, madam. Is Mr. Leveringwall a resident of Newport?

SARAH Mr. Leffingwell lives in Jamestown.

DRIVER The Chief told us not to press charges, if the gentleman lives outside Aquidneck County. But he must agree not to appear in this township for six months. Felix, call him in.

MARY Officer, please do not call him in now. I am his wife and I will stand guarantee that he will not return here. We have a farm in Virginia, also, where a man may carry a gun in self-defense wherever he goes.

DRIVER If Mr. North is ready to go, the car is waiting for him. We have a call to the Daubigny cottage. Good night, ladies and gentlemen, we are sorry to have been an inconvenience to you. (He exits as Theo steps down to address the audience.)

THEO If I'd had a grain of decent feeling in me, I'd have resigned the next morning: but what's a little family unpleasantness compared to discovering Bishop Berkeley, Croce, Vico, and letting one's eyes rest on Persis Tennyson?

 When the hour arrived for the Sunday drive to "Whitehall" Dr. Bosworth and his granddaughter were waiting at the door.

PERSIS I shall sit in front with Jeffries. Mr. North, will you sit with Grandfather. He likes to drive slowly and I know he wants to talk to you.

THEO Mrs. Tennyson, I have never had the pleasure of being introduced to you?

BOSWORTH What?

THEO We have exchanged greetings.

PERSIS Let us shake hands, Mr. North.

BOSWORTH Never met! Never introduced! What a house I live in! Cassius lying in the bushes--policemen passing around guns--Sarah and Mary behaving like...Makes an old man feel like King Lear.

PERSIS Let's forget all about it, Grandfather.

THEO Yes. (They all enter the car.)

BOSWORTH There are some beautiful houses all over town--going to rack and ruin. Nobody appreciates them.

THEO Dr. Bosworth, I've discovered a resident in Newport who could have helped us with those metaphysical passages in Bishop Berkeley?

BOSWORTH Who's that?

THEO Someone you know well--Baron Stams. He has a doctorate from Heidelberg in philosophy.

 (Bodo appears opposite Theo and preens as Theo describes him to the audience.)

This was the Baron Egon Bodo von Stams whom I had met many times at the Casino and who used to enjoy conversations in my enthusiastic hit-and-miss German. He was known as "Bodo" to everyone. He was an attache at the Austrian Embassy in Washington on early leave for his second summer at Newport; a houseguest of the Venables at "Surf Point." He was the most likeable fellow in the world. Two years older than I, endowed with a forthrightness and candor that approached naivete

BOSWORTH Bodo? God bless my soul! Does Bodo know anything?

THEO He also has a doctorate from Vienna in political history.

BOSWORTH Do you hear that, Persis? He's a pleasant fellow, but I thought he was just one of these dancing-partners that Mrs. Venable collects for her parties. You always found him rather empty-headed, didn't you, Persis?

PERSIS Not empty-headed, Grandfather. Just difficult to talk to.

BOSWORTH Yes, I remember your saying that. Surprised me. He seems to be able to talk easily to everybody he sits by except you. A regular gigolo. Your Aunt Sally always seats him by you and Mrs. Venable always seats him by you, I hear?

I always thought he was one of those fortune hunters, if you know what I mean--title, good looks, and nothing else.

Why are you laughing, Mr. North?

You find something droll about it, Mr. North?

THEO Well, Dr. Bosworth, it's Baron Stams who has the fortune.

BOSWORTH Oh? He has money, has he?

THEO A fortune: excellent brains, excellent character, a distinguished family, an assured career. He has been decorated by his country for bravery in battle and he almost died of his wounds. His castle at Stams is almost as beautiful as the famous monastery at Stams--which you must know. In addition, he's lots of fun. That's what I call a fortune.

(Lights dim as Theo moves to audience and others exit.) The events recounted here took place after the drive with Dr. Bosworth and Persis to Bishop Berkeley's "Whitehall" and before my last visit to "Nine Gables."

I had no classes on Monday nights. After supper in town on a certain Monday evening I returned about eight. The desk clerk gave me a letter which I saw resting in my pigeon-hole.

PERSIS (Persis reads from opposite.) Dear Mr. North, I often take a late drive. I hope you will not be too tired to join me tomorrow night when you've finished reading with my grandfather. You can place your bicycle in the back seat of my car and I can return you later to your door. There is something urgent I should tell you. This needs no answer. I shall be at the door of "Nine Gables" when you leave. Sincerely yours, Persis Tennyson.

CLERK Mr. North, there's a gentleman over there who's been waiting to see you.

THEO (Bodo enters.) Gruss Gott, Herr Baron.

BODO Lobet den Herrn in der Ewigkeit. Theophilus, I've come to say goodbye. Have you time to talk for an hour. I want to get a little bit drunk.

THEO I'm ready.

BODO I have two flasks of Schnapps.

THEO Where are we going?

BODO To Doheney's, down at the Public Beach. We need ice. Schnapps is best when it's very cold.

I shall never come to Newport again if I can help it.

THEO When do you go?

BODO The Venables are giving a small dinner for me tomorrow night. When the guests are gone, I'll start driving to Washington and shall drive all night.

THEO His unhappiness was like a weight and a presence. I remained silent. Doheney's was a "straight" bar, that is to say no illegal liquor was sold there. The curtains at the windows were not drawn. Guests could bring their own. It was as friendly as Mr. Doheney himself and it was almost empty. We sat at a table by an open window and ordered two teacups and a small pail of ice. We embedded the flasks and the teacups in the ice. (Doheney brings cups and ice.)

At last he spoke.

BODO I called at "Nine Gables" this afternoon to say goodbye. I had the foolish notion that I might--just possibly might--ask Persis to be my wife. She showed a little more animation than usual, but we're all relieved when someone who bores us to death comes to say goodbye. Her grandfather, however, showed a real interest in me for the first time; he wanted to talk about philosophy and philosophers; wouldn't let me

go...I don't understand her...I can understand a woman not liking me, but I can't understand a total absence of any reaction whatever--just politeness, just evasive good manners... We've spent so many hours together. We've been thrown at one another--by Mrs. Venable and Mrs. Bosworth and half a dozen others. We have had to make talk. Of course, I've asked her out to dinner, but there's no place on this island to go to dinner except the damned Muenchinger-King and she says that she doesn't like dining in public places. So we make talk at formal dinners. Each time, I'm knocked over by the fact that she's not only a very beautiful woman, but a superior one. She knows all about music and art and even Austria. She speaks three languages. She's reading all the time. She dances like Adeline Genée--I'm told that she sings beautifully. What's more, my instinct tells me that she has great capacity for life and love...and life. I love her. I love her. But she gives me no sign of recognizing that I am a living, breathing, possibly loving, human being. All that talk and nothing catches fire.

I look around the dinner tables; she's the same with every man...Perhaps she's grieving for her husband--but she's out of mourning; perhaps she's in love with someone else; perhaps she's in love with you. Don't interrupt yet! So, I'm leaving Newport forever. I'm erasing Persis from my mind and heart. I'm renouncing something that I was never offered. (He pours Schnapps and they drink.)

BOTH Zum Wohl.

BODO This is the situation: I am the head of my family. My father was aged and broken by the War. My older brother went off to Argentina and is selling automobiles. He has renounced his title and taken Argentine citizenship to help him in his business. He has a family of his own and cannot send back much money to the Schloss and my parents don't want him to. My mother's a wonderful manager. During the summer and especially during the winter she takes in paying guests. More and more people are interested in the winter sports resorts nearby. But it's hard work and the profits are small. The castle needs repairs all the time--roof, drainage, heating. Try and imagine all that. I have three sisters--angels every one of them. They have no dots and I must and will see them married comfortably and happily in their own class. Legally, the castle is mine; morally the family is mine.

(Another drink.) Zum Wohl, Bruder!

THEO Zum Wohl, Bod'!

BODO I shall marry within a year. In Washington young women are pushed at me all the time--attractive, charming girls. I've selected two, either one of whom I could come to love and whom I could make happy. I'm old for marriage. I want to

have children who will know my parents; I want my parents to know my children. I want a home...

THEO Bodo, don't laugh at what I'm about to say. It's a hypothetical case, but I'm trying to make a point of urgent importance.

BODO Go on! What's on your mind!

THEO Suppose--just suppose--that two and a half years ago there had been a hushed-up scandal in your Foreign Affairs Office. Some secret documents had disappeared and it was thought that someone in the Foreign Office had sold them to the enemy. And suppose that a shadow of suspicion rested on you, just a shadow. There was of course a very thorough inquiry and you were completely cleared. There was no trial, because there were no charges--but there was talk. Everything damaging about you--real or imagined--was kept alive decade after decade. You'd be a "man under a cloud" wouldn't you?

BODO Why are you asking me these questions?

THEO What would you do about it?

BODO Ignore it.

THEO Are you sure? You have a very delicate sense of honor.

BODO Theophilus, what are you driving at?

THEO Maybe Persis Tennyson is a "woman under a cloud." You know and I know and God knows that she could not have been capable of anything dishonorable. But as Shakespeare says somewhere, "Be thou as ...pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny."

I'm not trying to torment you, Bodo. I'm trying to think of some way that you and I can help that splendid unhappy young woman locked up in that "Nine Gables," that spiteful, loveless house...Isn't that just the way a woman of impeccable feeling would behave toward any man she respected--maybe loved--who approached her as a suitor; she wouldn't want to bring a suspicion of malodor into his family. Think of your mother! (Theo pauses.)

You know that her husband killed himself?

BODO All I know is that he was a crazy gambler. He shot himself over some debts.

THEO That's all I know. We must know more. But we do know that the town is busy with hateful gossip. "There's more in that case than meets the eye." "The Bosworths have enough money to hush anything up."

BODO Oh, Theophilus! What can we do?

THEO I know the urgent thing she wants to talk to me about. She wants to warn me that there are Bosworths who are planning to do me harm. I know that already. But maybe what she wants to do is to tell me the story of her husband's death--the true full story--so that I'll put it in circulation. Take heart and hope, old Bodo. We know that Mrs. Venable admires and loves her. She does everything she can to shield and protect Persis. But it's possible that Mrs. Venable hasn't enough imagination to see that it's not enough to take Persis under her wing. She thinks that silence is the best defense; but it isn't...Bodo, I have a hard day tomorrow. I must ask you to drive me home. Can I propose something?

BODO Yes, of course.

THEO What time is your dinner over tomorrow night when you start driving for Washington?

BODO Oh--about eleven-thirty, I should think.

THEO Could you postpone your departure for two hours? Persis will drop me at my door about one-thirty. Could you be waiting in your car up around the corner? I may have the facts to tell you. We'll have something to go on. Don't you think that to rescue a damsel from injustice is one of the noblest jobs a young man can have?

BODO Yes! Yes!

THEO Well, you fall asleep in the car. I hope to have something for you to think about as you drive through the night.

We're sure Archer Tennyson didn't kill himself because of any imperfection in his wife's behavior, aren't we?

BODO Yes! Yes, we are!

THEO Well, take heart! Take hope!--What were Goethe's dying words?

BODO Mehr Licht! Mehr Licht!

THEO What we're looking for is more light. Thanks for the Schnapps. See you tomorrow night. (They embrace warmly and Bodo exits. Theo addresses the audience.)

The next day held a crowded schedule. I hadn't come to Newport to work so hard, but I checked up fourteen dollars before supper. Then I took a short nap and wheeled out to "Nine Gables" for my ten-thirty appointment.

What followed was something more than a conversation: it was a military foray, a diplomatic maneuver, with some of the character of a chess game. I put myself on the alert.

BOSWORTH Mr. North, September is the most beautiful month in the year in Newport. I hope you are not planning to leave the island then, as so many do. I would be very sorry to hear it, I would miss you very much.

THEO Thank you, Dr. Bosworth.

BOSWORTH Moreover, I have some projects involving yourself that could most profitably occupy you here. I wish to employ you on the planning staff of our Academy. You have a quick apprehension and grasp that would be invaluable to me. During the winter months my circle of friends narrows. Now that I am able to drive about there is much that I can explore--we could explore--in this part of New England. It is a great joy to me that my granddaughter takes pleasure in these drives also. I have begun to share with her some aspects of what I call my "Athens-in-Newport." Mrs. Tennyson strikes some people as a "reserved" person. She is, but I assure you that she is a woman of marked intelligence and wide culture. She is also an accomplished musician--did you know that?

THEO No, Dr. Bosworth.

BOSWORTH On winter nights, I shall hear much fine music. Does music appeal to you, Mr. North.

THEO Yes, sir.

BOSWORTH Oh, yes. Up to the time of her husband's tragic death she continued to take lessons of the best teachers in New York and abroad. Since that unhappy occasion she refuses to sing for my guests or for Mrs. Venable's. Had you heard of the unfortunate circumstances of Mr. Tennyson's death?

THEO I know only that he took his own life, Mr. Bosworth.

BOSWORTH Archer Tennyson was a very popular man. He derived great enjoyment from living. But there was also in her, perhaps, an element of eccentricity. The whole unhappy business is best forgotten. On winter evenings the three of us could make rapid progress on the design for our Academy.

THEO Sir, do you think that Mrs. Tennyson has put out of her mind any intention of marrying again?

BOSWORTH Oh, Mr. North, she is a superior woman. What younger men are there around here--or even in New York!--who could interest her? We have a few yachtsmen; we have a few of that type that is

"the life of the party"--tiresome quips and gossip. She is all I have--I would be happy if she married anyone, wherever he came from.

THEO She must have many admirers, Dr. Bosworth. She's an exceptionally beautiful and charming woman.

BOSWORTH Isn't she? And, of course, very well off.

THEO Is she?

BOSWORTH Her father left her a large fortune and her husband another.

THEO But if the lady gives no sign of encouragement, there's not anything a gentleman can do. I have the impression that Baron Stams is most deeply and sincerely interested in Mrs. Tennyson.

BOSWORTH Oh, I've thought of that. Especially since you opened my eyes to his excellent qualities. He called on us here to say goodbye yesterday. I've never been so mistaken in a man in my life...To think that he knows so much about philosophy and philosophers. But I must tell you something: Persis became quite cross with me--quite firm--when I spoke of him, last night, with high commendation. I couldn't understand it. Then I remembered that there have been a number of disappointments among our friends in the matter of international marriages--especially with European aristocrats. I don't think a foreigner would be very welcome, Mr. North.

THEO I wouldn't know anything about such obstacles, Dr. Bosworth. I'm just a Wisconsin peasant. I have been engaged to be married for some time, but I must tell you in confidence that I am slowly and painfully dissolving that engagement. A young man cannot be too careful. Even in my walk of life a man would hesitate to marry a woman whose former husband took his life in her presence.

BOSWORTH It wasn't in Persis's presence! It was on a ship. He shot himself in the head on the top deck of a ship. I told you he was eccentric. He was eccentric. He enjoyed playing with firearms. No reproach was brought up against dear Persis. Ask anyone, Mr. North. Ask Mrs. Venable--ask anyone...some insane person sent around those anonymous letters--wicked letters. I think they broke my dear child's heart.

THEO A very tragic situation, sir.

BOSWORTH Oh, Mr. North, that's what life is--tragic. I am almost eighty years old. I look about me. For thirty years I served my country, not without recognition. My domestic life was all that a man would wish for. And then one misfortune followed upon another. I won't go into details. What is

life? What is life? Can you see why I wish to found an Academy of Philosophers? Why are we placed on earth? How rich this book of Bergson's is!...Alas time is passing and there is so much to read! (Persis knocks and enters.)

PERSIS Grandfather, it is a quarter past midnight. You should be in bed.

BOSWORTH We've been having a very good talk, dear Persis. I shall not go to sleep easily.

PERSIS Mr. North, I was wondering if you were in the mood for a short drive before retiring. I can deliver you at your door. The night air has a wonderful way of clearing the head after a difficult day.

THEO That's very kind of you, Mrs. Tennyson. I would enjoy it very much. (Sarah overhears from the top of the staircase.)

SARAH Persis, it is most unsuitable for you to drive at this hour. Say good night to Mr. North. He must be tired. Good night, Mr. North. (She moves down the stairs.)

PERSIS Get a good rest, Aunt Sally. (Persis and Theo go out door to car.) Climb in, Mr. North.

SARAH (Sarah opens the door and calls out.) Persis! Did you hear what I said?

PERSIS I am twenty-eight years old, Aunt Sally. Mr. North has spent forty hours in learned talk with Grandfather and can be regarded as an established friend of the family. Get a good rest, Aunt Sally.

SARAH Twenty-eight years old! And so little sense of what is fitting!

(Sounds of car starting and leaving.)

PERSIS I thought we'd go and sit on the sea wall by the Budlong place.

THEO At the end of the day I'm usually too tired to drive anywhere. But I don't need much sleep. I get up early and ride out there to see the sun rise. It's still quite dark, of course. At first the police used to think I was on some nefarious business and would follow me. Gradually they came to see that I was merely eccentric and now we wave our hands at one another.

PERSIS I often take a late drive at this hour and the same thing happens to me. The police still feel they must keep an eye on me. But I've never been out at dawn. What's it like?

THEO It's overwhelming.

PERSIS Mr. North, what magic did you use to bring about such a change in Grandfather's health?

THEO No magic at all, ma'am. I saw that Dr. Bosworth was under some kind of pressure. I've been under pressure too. Gradually we discovered that we shared a number of enthusiasms. Enthusiasms lift a man out of himself. We both grew younger. That's all.

PERSIS I think there must have been more to it than that...We feel deeply indebted to you. My grandfather and I would like to give you a present. We have been wondering what you would like. We wondered if you would like a car? Or the copy of Alciphron that Bishop Berkeley presented to Jonathan Swift? It was written at "Whitehall."

THEO Many thanks to you both for your kind intention. I try to live with as few possessions as possible. Like the Chinese a bowl of rice...like the ancient Greeks a few figs and olives.

PERSIS But, surely, some token of our gratitude?

THEO Mrs. Tennyson, you did not invite me to join you on this ride to talk about presents but to give me an urgent message. I think I know what that is: There are some persons in and near "Nine Gables" who wish me out.

PERSIS Yes. Yes. And I am sorry to say that there is something more than that. They are working on a plan to do you harm. There are some very rare first editions on the shelves behind my grandfather's chair. I overheard a plan to remove them gradually and replace them with later editions of the same works. These last years you are the only person who has come into the house who would realize their value. Their idea is that the suspicion will fall on you.

THEO Thrilling!

PERSIS I anticipated their project and substituted the volumes. The originals are in my jewel safe. If some unpleasant talk starts up about you I shall produce them.--Why did you say "thrilling?"

THEO Because they are coming into the open. They are beginning to make mistakes. I thank you for removing those volumes, but even if you hadn't, I'd have enjoyed the showdown. I'm not a fighting man, Mrs. Tennyson, but I hate slander and malicious gossip--don't you?

PERSIS Oh, I do. How I do! People talk--people talk hatefully. Oh, dear Mr. North, tell me how a person can defend himself?
(Sounds of the car slowing and stopping.)

THEO Here we are at the Budlong place.--Let's get out and sit on the sea wall. (Stars appear on the screen while the sound of waves and gulls are faintly heard.)

PERSIS Don't forget what you were about to tell me.

THEO No.

PERSIS You will find a lap robe in the back seat to throw over the stone parapet. (Theo grabs it and they spread it on the stage and sit.)

THEO You advise me to resign from the work at "Nine Gables?"

PERSIS You have brought us great benefit. All that is left for you is the danger of certain persons' ill will.

THEO You inherit it--conspicuously.

PERSIS Oh, it doesn't matter about me. I can bear it.

THEO With that spitefulness? You have your small boy to think of. Excuse my question, but why have you continued to live in that house?

PERSIS Two reasons: I love my grandfather and he loves me.--insofar as he can love anyone. And--where would I go? I hate New York. Europe? I have no wish to go to Europe for a while. My mother left my father long ago--before his death--and has been living in Paris and at Capri with a man to whom she is not married. She seldom writes letters to any of us. Mr. North, I often think that a large part of my life is over. I am an old widow-lady living only for my son and grandfather. The humiliations I am sometimes subjected to and the boredom of the social life do not touch me. They merely age me... You were going to tell me how to get the better of malicious tongues. Did you mean it?

THEO Yes...Since we are talking about matters that concern you closely, may I-- just for this hour--call you Persis?

PERSIS Oh, yes.

THEO Have you reason to believe that in some quarters you have been the object of slander?

PERSIS Yes, I know I am.

THEO I have no idea what these people are saying. I was told that your husband took his own life, alone, on the top deck of a ship at sea. I am convinced that nothing discreditable could ever be attributed to you. You asked me how one would go about defending oneself against slander. My first principle would be to state all the facts--the truth. If there is someone involved whom you feel you must shield, then one must resort to other measures. Is there such a person involved in this case?

PERSIS No. No.

THEO Persis, do you wish to drop the whole subject and talk of other things?

PERSIS No, Theophilus. I have no one to talk to. Please let me tell you the story.

THEO I don't like secrets--unhappy family secrets. If you place me under an oath not to repeat a word of this, I must ask you not to tell it to me.

PERSIS But Theophilus, I want all those talkers and letterwriters and...to know the simple truth. I loved my husband, but in a moment of utter thoughtlessness--of madness really--he left me under a cloud of suspicion. You can tell the story to anyone, if you thought it would do any good.

THEO Begin.

PERSIS When I left school I was, as they say, "presented to society." Dances, balls, tea-dances, debutante parties. I fell deeply and truly in love with a young man, Archer Tennyson. He had not been in the War because he had had tuberculosis as a boy and the doctors wouldn't pass him. I think that was at the bottom of it all. We were married. We were happy. Only one thing disturbed me; he was reckless and at first I admired him for it. He drove his car at great speeds. On ship-board once he waited until after midnight to climb the masts. The captain rebuked him for it in the ship's bulletin. I gradually came to see that he was a compulsive gambler--not only for money; that, too, but that did not matter--for life itself. He gambled with his life--skiing, motorboat racing, mountain climbing. And all the time he betted on everything--horses, football games, Presidential elections. He'd sit in his club window on Fifth Avenue and bet on the types of automobiles that happened to pass. All his friends begged him to take a position in his father's brokerage office, but he couldn't sit still that long.

THEO Continue, please.

PERSIS He was not seriously a drinking man, but he spent a great deal of time in bars where he could play the role of dare-

devil and--I'm sorry to say--could swagger. The story is almost over.

THEO May I interrupt a moment? I don't want the story hurried. I want to know what was going on in your mind during those years.

PERSIS In me? I knew that in a way he was a sick man. I loved him still, but I pitied him. But I was afraid. Do you see that he needed an audience for all this show of daring and risk? I had a front seat at the show; a large part of it--but not all of it--was to impress me. A wife can't scold all the time. I did not want to put a gulf between us...He thought of it as courage; I thought of it as foolishness and...cruelty to me. One night we were standing on the deck of a ship going to Europe and we saw another ship approaching us in the opposite direction. We had been told that we would pass close to our sister-ship. He said, "Wouldn't it be glorious if I dived in and swam over to her?" He kicked off his dancing pumps and started to undress. I slapped him hard--very hard--on one cheek and then on the other. He was so shocked that he froze. I said "I have loved you more than you love me. You love defying death more than you love me. You are killing my love for you." I shouldn't have been weeping but I was, terribly. He put his arms around me and said, "It's just games, Persis. It's fun. I'll stop whatever I'm doing any time you say."... (Persis weeps softly before composing herself.) Now I'll finish my story. It was bound to happen that he'd meet someone with the same madness, someone even madder.

It was two days later. Of course, he met him in the bar. It was a War veteran with a wild look in his eye. I sat with them for an hour or two while that man crushed my husband with the narrow escapes he'd been through in combat. What fun it had been, and all that! I kept trying to persuade Archer to come to bed, but he had to keep up with this man, drink for drink. This other man's wife had gone to bed and finally, in despair, I went to bed, too.

Archer was found on the top deck with a revolver in his hand and a bullet through his head...There was an inquiry and an inquest...I testified that on several evenings my husband and this Major Michaelis had talked about Russian roulette, as though it were a joke. But nothing of that came out in the serious newspapers and very little, as far as I know, even in "sensational" papers. My grandfather was greatly respected. He knew personally the publishers of the better papers. Even then I begged my grandfather to see that my testimony was published; but the Michaelises also belong to those old families that move heaven and earth to keep their names out of the papers. And it was that silence that's done me so much harm. It was closed with the verdict that my husband had committed suicide in a state of depression.

I had no one to advise me or help me--least of all the Bosworth family. Mrs. Venable has been a dear and close friend to me since I was a child. She joined the family in soothing me: "If we don't say anything it will soon be forgotten." She knows the Michaelises. She stays with cousins near them in Maryland. She knows the stories about him down there--that the neighborhood complains of his carrying on revolver practice at three in the morning and bullying the men at his country club about Russian roulette...

THEO Mrs. Venable knows this? Really knows it?

PERSIS She confided it to my grandfather and to my Aunt Sally--to comfort them, I suppose.

THEO Why didn't she confide it to everybody--to her famous Tuesday "at homes?"...Oh, I hate the cliquishness and the timidity of your so-called privileged class. She hates unpleasantness. She hates to be associated with anything unpleasant, is that it?

PERSIS Theophilus, I'm sorry I told you the whole story. Let's forget it. I'm under a cloud. There's nothing that can be done about it now. It's too late.

THEO Oh, no, it's not. Where are the Michaelises now?

PERSIS The Major's in a sanatorium in Chevy Chase. I suppose Mrs. Michaelis is in their home nearby in Maryland.

THEO Persis, Mrs. Venable is a kind woman at heart, isn't she?

PERSIS Oh, very.

THEO Heaven knows she's influential and likes being influential. Can you explain to me why she hasn't used her kindness and her knowledge and her sense of justice to clear this fog about you long ago.

PERSIS You don't know Newport, Theophilus. You don't know what they call the "Old Guard" here. In those houses nothing disturbing, nothing unpleasant, may ever be mentioned. Even the grave illness or death of old friends can be alluded to only in a whisper and a pressure of the hand when saying good-bye.

THEO Cotton wool. Cotton wool.--Someone told me that she invites the heart of the "Old Guard" to luncheon every Thursday. Some people call it "The Sanhedrin" or "The Druids' Circle"--is that so?--Are you in it?

PERSIS Oh, I'm not old enough.

THEO Persis!

PERSIS Yes?

THEO We need an ambassador to persuade Mrs. Venable and "The Sanhedrin" that it's their responsibility and their Christian duty to tell everybody what undoubtedly happened on that ship... They should do it for your son's sake. I think our ambassador should be a man--one for whom Mrs. Venable has a particular regard and who has the authority of an acknowledged social position. I have come to know the Baron Stams much better. He is a man of far solidier character than you and your grandfather first believed, and let me assure you he hates injustice like the devil. For parts of two summers he has been Mrs. Venable's house guest. Have you observed that she has a real esteem and affection for him?

PERSIS Yes.

THEO Moreover, he has a very real and deep admiration for you. Do you give me permission to tell him the whole story and to urge him to be this ambassador?--But you don't like him.

PERSIS Don't...don't say that! Now you understand why I had to be so cold and impersonal. I was under a cloud. Don't talk about it...Do--do what you think best.

THEO He was leaving Newport today. He is staying over. He will have half an hour talk with Mrs. Venable tomorrow morning. You should hear him talk when he's on fire with a subject. It's late. I must ask you to drive me home. I'll drive as far as my door.

PERSIS I am not accustomed to agitations of hope. (They get in the car and after a moment of silence she continues.)

 Theophilus, I made you cross earlier this evening when I suggested a choice of presents from Grandfather and from myself as an expression of our appreciation. Will you explain that to me?

THEO You mean it?

PERSIS Yes.

THEO Well, as this is to be a soothing little lecture I shall address you as Mrs. Tennyson. Let me explain that each of us is conditioned by our upbringing. I am a member of the middle class--in fact, of the middle of the middle classes--from the middle of the country. We are doctors, parsons, teachers, small-town newspaper editors, two-room lawyers. When I was a boy, each house had a horse and buggy and our mothers were assisted in running the house by a "hired girl." All the sons and many of the daughters went to college. In

that world no one ever received--and, of course, never gave--elaborate presents. Such presents were obscurely felt to be humiliating--perhaps I should say, ridiculous. If a boy wanted a bicycle or a typewriter he earned the money for it by delivering the Saturday Evening Post from door to door or by cutting his neighbors' lawns. Our fathers paid for our education, but for those incidentals so necessary at college--such as a "tuxedo" or trips to dances at the girls' colleges--we worked during the summer on farms or waited on table at summer hotels.

PERSIS Did nothing unpleasant ever happen in the middle classes?

THEO Oh, yes. People are the same everywhere. But some environments are more stabilizing than others.

PERSIS Are you telling me all this to explain to me why you were displeased about the present we wished to make you?

THEO No. No. I'm thinking about your son Frederick.

PERSIS Frederick?

THEO In 1918 a woman who worked on Bellevue Avenue--and whom I think you know well--said to me, "Rich boys never really grow up--or seldom."

PERSIS Oh, that's...superficial. That's not true.

THEO Have you heard Bodo describe his home--his father and mother and sisters? Provincial nobility. Where the castle is part farmhouse--where the servants have stayed with them generation after generation. Now they take in paying guests. Everybody is busy all day. Austrian music and laughter in the evening. Mrs. Tennyson, what an environment for a fatherless boy!

PERSIS Did he send you to tell me these things?

THEO No,--on the contrary. He told me he was leaving Newport in despair and that he would never again set foot on this island if he could help it. (The sound of a car slowing and stopping.)

PERSIS Until that cloud of suspicion is lifted I have no word to say. Thank you for coming with me on this drive. Thank you for listening to my story. Is one permitted to exchange a friendly kiss in the middle class?

THEO If no one is looking. (They tenderly kiss. She drives off as Theo moves down to Bodo.)

Bodo, could you possibly stay in Newport until tomorrow noon?

BODO I have already received permission.

THEO Could you possibly have a private conversation with Mrs. Venable tomorrow morning?

BODO We always have Viennese chocolate together at ten-thirty.

THEO I told him the whole story, and ended up with the job which was now on his shoulders.

Can you do that?

BODO I've got to and, by God, I'll succeed--but Theophilus, you idiot, we still don't know if Persis can love me.

THEO I can vouch for it.

BODO How?...How?...How?

THEO Don't ask me! I know. And one thing more: You will be back in Newport on August twenty-ninth.

BODO I can't.--Why?...What for? How do you know?

THEO Your Chief will send you. And bring an engagement ring with you. You've found your Frau Baronin.

BODO You're driving me crazy.

THEO I'll write you. Get a good rest. Don't forget to say your prayers. I'm dog-tired. Good night. (Bodo exits as Theo turns to the audience.)

I walked back to my door. I had an inspiration.

Hell! Damnation! (Theo runs off.)

End of Act Two

ACT III

(A group of youngsters mime a tennis drill.)

THEO Every once in a while it rains in Newport. Sometimes a shower would fall during those two early hours when I was coaching tennis at the Casino. I never had more than four pupils at a time; my other pupils would be playing against one another on courts nearby. And we would all run for shelter to one of the social rooms behind the spectators' gallery.

When the shower was over there was a great dragging of me to return to the courts. And one child after another claimed to discover that I had "electric" hands, that my hands gave off sparks. I took a severe attitude toward this. I forbade such remarks. "That's silly! I don't want to hear any more about that." Then one day things got out of bounds. In the tumultous rush to the courts, Ada Nicols, aged nine, was flung to one side; striking her head against a post she lost consciousness. I leaned over her, parting her hair where the bruise seemed to be and repeating her name. She opened her eyes, then closed them again. The whole group was staring down at her anxiously. She pulled my hands to her forehead murmuring.

ADA More! More!

THEO She was smiling vacantly. Finally she said happily,

ADA I'm hypmertzized. I'm a angel.

THEO I picked her up and carried her to Bill Wentworth's office which was frequently called upon to serve as a first-aid station. From that hour I became a far sterner and more matter-of-fact coach.

But Ada's story spread.

I rejoiced in my apartment, but I was seldom there. My daily work became more and more difficult and I spent many evenings at the People's Library preparing for my classes. At midnight I found notes under my door from my good landlady.

DORIS "Three ladies and a gentleman called for you. I let them wait for you until ten in my sitting-room, but I had to ask them to go home at ten. They did not wish to leave their names and addresses. Mrs. Doris Keefe."

THEO On another night, the same message speaking of eight people.

DORIS "I cannot have more than five strangers waiting in my sitting-room. I told them they must go away. Mrs. Doris Keefe."

THEO Finally on Thursday evening I was at home and received a telephone call from Joe, the supervisor at the Y.M.C.A.

JOE Ted, what's going on? There are twelve people--mostly old women--waiting for you in the visitors' room. I told them you didn't live here any more. I couldn't tell them your new address because you never gave it to me...There are some more coming in the door now. What are you doing--running an employment agency? Please come over and send them away and tell them not to come back again. There've been a few every night, but tonight beats everything. This is a young men's Christian association, not an old ladies' home. Come on over and drive the cattle out.

THEO I hurried over.

SERVANT 1 Oh, Mr. North, I suffer from rheumatism something terrible.

SERVANT 2 Oh, Mr. North, my back hurts so I can't sleep nights, not what you'd call sleep.

SERVANT 3 Mr. North, look at my hand! It takes me an hour to open it in the morning.

THEO Ladies and gentlemen, I am not a doctor. I don't know the first thing about medicine. I must ask you to consult a regular practicing physician.

SERVANT 1 Oh, sir, they take your money and do nothing for you.

SERVANT 4 Mr. North, put your hand on my knee. God will reward you.

SERVANT 5 Sir, my feet. It's agony to go a step.

THEO What could I do? First I must clear the lobby. I rested my hand here and there; I grasped an ankle or two; I drew my hand firmly down some spines. I gave particular attention to the napes of necks. I made a point of hurting my patients (they yelped, but were convinced that that was the "real thing")... Gently propelling them to the front door, I planted the heels of my hands on some foreheads, murmuring the opening lines of the Aeneid. Then I said, "This is the last time I can see you. Do not come back again. You must see your own doctors. Good night, and God bless you all."

DORIS Oh, Mr. North, I can't stand this much longer. When I lock the door they wander around the house knocking on the window-panes like beggars I've shut out in a snow storm. Here is a letter for you that was brought by hand.

CRANSTON "Dear Mr. North, it would give me much pleasure to see you this evening at ten-thirty, your sincere friend, Amelia Cranston."

(Theo moves to the Cranston sitting room.)

Thank you for coming, Mr. North.

THEO Forgive me for being absent so long. My schedule gets heavier every week.

CRANSTON So I have been informed...bicycling up and down the Avenue at two in the morning and feeding the wild animals, I presume.

You are in trouble, Mr. North?

THEO Yes, I am, ma'am. Thank you for your letter.

CRANSTON Well, you have become a very famous man in certain quarters. My visitors Thursday night and tonight talked of little else. Somehow or other you put new life in Dr. Bosworth and now he's bounding about the country like a lad of fifty. Servants watch their employers very closely, Mr. North. How many patients were waiting for you tonight?

THEO Over twenty-five in one place and a dozen in the other.

CRANSTON Next week the waiting line will stretch around the block.

THEO Help me, Mrs. Cranston. I love Newport. I want to stay until the end of summer. I haven't got "electric hands." I'm a fake and a fraud. I couldn't drive them out of the building. You should have seen their eyes. It's better to be a fake and a fraud than to be...brutal. I didn't do them any harm, did I?

CRANSTON Put your hands down on the table, palms upward. (She examines his hands with great intensity.)

I always knew you had something.

Mr. North, even the happiest and healthiest of women--and there are very few of us--have one corner of their mind that is filled with a constant dread of illness. Dread. Even when they're not thinking about it, they're thinking about it. This is not true of most men--you think you'll live forever. Do you think you'll live forever, Mr. North?

THEO No, ma'am. I'll say, "I've warmed both hands before the fire of life; It sinks and I am ready to depart."

CRANSTON Let's say one more word about your new situation in Newport. Women never put their full confidence in doctors. Women are both religious and superstitious. They want nothing less than a miracle. You are the latest miracle man. There are

many masseurs and manipulators and faith-healers in this town. They have licenses and they take money for their services. Your fame rests on the fact that you take no fees. That inspires a confidence that no doctor can inspire. If you pay a doctor you buy the right to criticize him as though he were any other huckster. But everybody knows that you can't buy miracles and that's why you are a miracle man. There is no sign that Dr. Bosworth gave you an automobile or even a gold watch--and yet look what you did for them! You still go about on a bicycle.

THEO Please forgive me, Mrs. Cranston, for having been away so long. I'm indebted to you for so much.

CRANSTON In this envelope is a document. It's not official, but it looks official. It has a ribbon and some sealing-wax and is on the stationery of a health organization that has long since been absorbed by others.

THEO She took it out and laid it before me.

DOCTOR (At side of stage.) To whom it may concern: Mr. T. Theophilus North, resident in Newport, Rhode Island, has no license to provide medical service of any kind or manner unless the patient appears before him with the written permission of a physician duly registered in this city. Office of the Superintendent of Health, this day the ___ of August, 1926.

THEO Oh, Mrs. Cranston!

CRANSTON Wait, there is another document in this envelope.

DOCTOR (At opposite side.) Mr. T. Theophilus North, resident in Newport, Rhode Island, is hereby given permission to make one visit, not lasting longer than thirty minutes, to Miss Liselotte Muller, and to furnish her such aid and comfort as seems fitting to him.

THEO This was signed by an esteemed physician in the city and bore the date of the previous day.

CRANSTON Could you see her now? This building is really three buildings. The third and fourth floors of the building on this side have been fitted out to be an infirmary for very old women. They have spent their lifetimes in domestic service and many of them have been well provided for by their former employers. Most of them cannot negotiate even one flight of stairs, but they have a terrace where they can sun themselves in good weather and social rooms for all weather. You will see sights and smell smells that will distress you, but you have told us of your experiences in China and you are prepared for such things. You have accepted the truth that much of life is difficult and that the last years are particularly so. You

are not a green boy, Mr. North. Few men pay calls in that infirmary--occasionally a doctor, a priest, a pastor, or a relative. It is a rule of the house that during such calls the door into the sickroom is left ajar. I am sending you upstairs with my assistant and friend, Mrs. Grant.

THEO Will you tell me something about Miss Muller?

CRANSTON Tante Liselotte was born in Germany. She was the eleventh child of a pastor and was brought to this country at the age of seventeen by an employment agency. She has been the nanny in one of the most respected houses here and in New York for three generations. She has bathed and dressed all those children, spent the entire day with them, paddled and powdered and wiped their little bottoms. I have selected her for your visit because she was kind and helpful to me when I was young, lonesome, and frightened. She has outlived all the members of her family abroad who would take any interest in her. She has been much loved in her station, but she is a strict rigid woman and has made few friends except myself. She is sound of mind; she can see and hear; but she is racked by rheumatic pains. I believe them to be excruciating because she is not a complaining woman.

THEO And if I fail, Mrs. Cranston?

CRANSTON I suspect that your fame has preceded you upstairs. The guests in this house have many friends in the infirmary. News of miracles travels fast.

THEO Mrs. Cranston, after these meetings I am sometimes very weak. If Henry Simmons returns before I come down, will you ask him to wait for me and walk home with me.

CRANSTON Oh, yes--I think both Edweena and Henry Simmons will be here. Your visit to Tante Liselotte is also Edweena's wish. (Theo is astonished by this revelation. A servant arrives to take Theo upstairs.)

SERVANT Tante Liselotte, Mr. North has come to call on you.

THEO Guten Abend, Fraulein Muller.

TANTE Guten Abend, Herr Doktor.

THEO I am neither a doctor nor a pastor--merely a friend of Mrs. Cranston and of Edweena. May I ask where you were born, Tante Liselotte.

TANTE Near Stuttgart, sir.

THEO Ah! A Swabian! In a moment I want to look at all these photographs on the walls. Forgive me if I put my hands on yours.

I speak German so badly, but what a wonderful language it is! Aren't Leiden and Liebe and Schnsucht more beautiful words than "sufferings" and "love" and "longing?" And your name Liselotte for Elizabeth-Charlotte! And the diminutives: Mutterchen, Kindlein, Engelein. I think of the German hymns I know through Bach's music: "Ach, Gott, wie manches Herzeleid" and "Halt im Gedächtnis Jesum Christ." "Gleich wie der Regen und Schnee vom Himmel fällt..." They can translate the words, they cannot translate what we hear who love the language.

TANTE I want to die...Why does God not let me die?

THEO Oh, Tante Liselotte, you know the old hymn and Bach's music for it, "Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit." (They sing.)

TANTE Ja...Ja...Ich bin mude. Danke, junger Mann.

(Music swells under scene--time passes with Theo holding Tante Liselotte's hand. He suddenly awakens to another presence.)

THEO Edweena. (He turns to hear her as she speaks.)

EDWEENA Theophilus, you go downstairs. I will stay here a little longer. Henry is waiting for you. Can you find your way? (Theo nods and starts down the stairs as Edweena ministers to Tante.)

Where is the pain, dear Tante?

TANTE There is none...none. (Lights dim as Theo sinks to stairs. After a time Edweena rouses him.)

EDWEENA Do you feel better?

THEO Oh, yes.

EDWEENA It is nearly midnight. They'll be hunting for us. We'd better go downstairs. Can you walk all right? Are you yourself?

THEO Yes, I think I had a long nap. I'm all rested. (They start down.)

EDWEENA Can you bear a bit of good news?

THEO Yes, Edweena.

EDWEENA About five minutes after you left, Tante Liselotte died.

I understand a little German. "Ich bin mude. Danke, junger Mann."

CRANSTON Well, you've been quite a while. Mrs. Grant has told me about the ending. You've performed your last miracle, Dr. North.

HENRY I'll walk you home, cully.

CRANSTON Mr. North, you've forgotten your envelope.

THEO And thank you, ladies. (They exit and Theo turns again to the audience.)

When in Tante Liselotte's room my eyes fell on Edweena and the tears rolled down my cheeks, my relief sprang not only from seeing a replacement; I was also seeing an old and loved friend. I knew Edweena--I had known her in 1918 as Toinette and as Mrs. Wills. During all the week at Mrs. Cranston's when she had been referred to so often--Henry's fiancee and Mrs. Cranston's "star boarder" in the garden apartment--she had never gone under any other name than Edweena. Yet I knew at once that my old friend must be the long expected Edweena.

So it was that--almost eight years later--it was not Toinette, not Jenny, but Mrs. Edweena Wills who followed me downstairs from Tante Liselotte's room and found me asleep against the wall between the second and third floors.

I saw Edweena and Henry almost every day. They were engaged to be married as soon as Mr. Wills in far-off London had drunk himself to death on the allowance his wife continued to send him. I loved Edweena and I loved Henry and I'm proud to say they loved me. Never for a moment, in company or alone, did Edweena and I make any reference to having met previously. Even Mrs. Cranston, whom little escaped, had no inkling of it. Edweena had prospered. Her shops, first in New York, then in Newport, were a great success. She continued to insist that she was a lady's maid, but she turned down all invitations to serve as maid to any one lady; how far that designation falls short of the role she played in New York and Newport. No ball, no dinner of great occasion was imaginable without Edweena's presence in the boudoir reserved for the ladies. It was her sternly upheld doctrine of nothing too much that had changed the modes of dress. She proffered counsel only when she was asked.

This is the Edweena I encountered in the middle of August.

When I was beginning to feel that my summer tasks were coming to an end I was confronted with the nearest and weightiest of them all: the matter of Persis and Bodo.

What had I meant when I said to Bodo, "You will be back in Newport on August twenty-ninth?" I don't know. That's the kind of irrational impulse to which I am prone. I knew that

something had to be done quickly and if it had to be done, it could be done.

From the moment Bodo left Newport my imagination began groping for a solution; it continued to grope even while I slept. I began to feel that somewhere there must be public confirmation of Major Michaelis's obsession with Russian roulette. I began to be visited with images of Bodo's return to Newport to create a divertissement at the Servants' Ball in Mrs. Venable's own cottage. I began to see that in some way, somehow, Edweena could help me.

The very day after Bodo left I appeared punctually at the "garden apartment" for tea. (Edweena enters with "tea things.")

EDWEENA We're going to have a visitor today, Teddie...Yes, a most respected one--Chief of Police Diefendorf. Mrs. Cranston and I have a little matter to discuss with him.

THEO Masters and servants live under one roof in a close symbiosis, a forced intimacy. A woman's jewels are the outward and visible symbol that someone loves her, even if it's only God. A number of the ladies on Bellevue Avenue no longer trusted the safes in their own bedrooms. They had what Edweena called "the squirrel complex." When they returned from a ball they hid their emeralds and their diamonds in old stockings or behind picture frames or in electric light sconces and then forgot where they'd hidden them. The next morning they'd be frantic. Chief Diefendorf then telephoned "Miss Edweena" who was permitted to enter and who, with transcendental tact, was permitted to join the searching party. In many ways the Chief was deeply indebted to Edweena and treated her with an old-world admiring deference as he did Mrs. Cranston.

Edweena lowered her voice to tell me that this expected visit of the Chief did not have to do with a supposed theft but with another problem that appears from time to time in this Seventh City.

EDWEENA It concerns a housemaid Bridget Trehan who is being persecuted by the master of the house where she is employed. She has resigned from her position, but the Chief and I have ways of extorting from her former mistress--who is furious--an excellent letter of recommendation!

THEO Golly, Edweena, can I ask you what your plans are for the Servants' Ball this year.

EDWEENA You know in general what it's like, don't you?

THEO I only know that Mrs. Venable lends her ballroom for the occasion and that you and Henry are chairwoman and chairman of the committee. And I know that you and Henry made the

rule two years ago that no one from the summer colony can come and look down on you from the balcony as they used to.

EDWEENA Teddie, I have no plans. I have no ideas. We're all tired of fancy-dress balls. We've had enough pirates and gypsy flower girls. We've had enough of the "Gay Nineties" and the gas-lit era. There are fewer and fewer young people among the domestic servants. We all have a good time, but we need a fresh idea. Couldn't you think up some idea, Teddie?

THEO Well, I haven't an idea...but I have a dream. The trouble with your ball and many of the balls I hear about is that the same people step out on the same floor with the same people they stepped out with the last time. In Vienna the most enjoyable ball is called the "Fiaker Ball"--the ball for the cabmen of the city. And the people from the highest society enjoy going to it and they mingle together...My dream is this: that you begin gradually and invite two guests of honor from Bellevue Avenue--a young man and a young woman--good-looking and charming and particularly admired for their friendly appreciation of servants. Honor them and they will feel honored. Tactfully make it clear to them that you would be much pleased if they wore their most elegant ballroom dress.

EDWEENA Teddia, you're crazy. Would they want to come? Why?

THEO Because that's the kind of persons they are. They've long wanted to know the servants better. I know just such a gentleman who often comes to dinner at a house where I have a pupil. My pupil and I aren't in the dining room, but I can hear him when he arrives at the front door chat with the man who takes his coat. I can hear him exchanging comradely greetings with all the staff. He's never accepted a barrier between employer and employee.

EDWEENA Who is it, Teddie?

THEO I know a young lady who dines twice a week at the very house where you're holding your ball. The household staff has known her since she was a child. She calls them all by name and asks after their relatives. Edweena, she knows you well and loves you. She doesn't call you "Miss Edweena"--at least not to me; she calls you affectionately "Edweena." Who--together with you--is the most attractive woman on Aquidneck Island?

EDWEENA Who is it, Teddie? Teddie, you're like a child blowing soap-bubbles. Whoever they are, they wouldn't think of accepting the invitation. Henry, ask Teddie who he has in mind.

HENRY Teddie, speak up. Who do you have in mind?

THEO Baron Stams and Persis Tennyson.

HENRY God help me, he's right! I thought he meant Colonel Vanwinkle, but his wife wouldn't let him come, and I thought he meant young Mrs. Granberry, but she's expecting a baby. I don't think the Baron and Mrs. Tennyson would come, but that's the most happy-barmy dream I ever heard.

THEO Do you give me permission to sound them out or must you consult your committee?

EDWEENA Oh, we're the committee. You should remember that servants--as individuals or as a class--have very little experience in taking the initiative. They're glad to leave all of that to us. But, Teddie, isn't Persis--whom I love dearly and whom I practically introduced into society--isn't dear Persis a ghost of herself since that tragic death of her husband?

THEO Mrs. Cranston, have I your permission to break a rule of the house and to name names while telling a story? The lady in question expressly asked me to tell the truth about something that had been unwisely hushed up.

CRANSTON Mr. North, I trust you.

THEO I told them of Archer Tennyson's desperate compulsions and of their unhappy consequence. When I had finished they were silent a moment.

CRANSTON So, that's what happened!

EDWEENA Oh, the unhappy child! She'll receive no proposals of marriage except from the wrong kind of man. Mrs. Cranston, I want to see Chief Diefendorf. I think there's something that can be done about this.

CRANSTON Edweena, you forget. He'll be here in a minute when he can get away from his office. (The Chief enters.)

EDWEENA Chief, are you in a hurry or might we consult you on a matter we think you should know?

CHIEF I'm completely at your disposal.

CRANSTON Chief, Mr. North has come across some very interesting light on the tragic death of Mr. Archer Tennyson. He wants you to know about it because you're so resourceful and because you helped him so splendidly once before. Mr. North, will you tell the Chief what you learned?

THEO I told him the whole story.

CHIEF May I do what I would do if the whole thing had happened to my own daughter?

CRANSTON We hope you will, Chief.

CHIEF May I use your telephone?...I shall make a long-distance call using the code number reserved for the police. The rest of you can go on talking or remain silent as you wish.

Lieutenant, Chevy Chase, Maryland, is on the border of the District of Columbia. Will you find for me the nearest station-house to Chevy Chase, its telephone number, and the name of the Chief of Police.

Chief, I'm sorry to call you so late in the afternoon. I hope I have not caused you inconvenience...A problem that has arisen in Newport requires my asking you what you can tell me of Major James Michaelis.

Thank you again, Chief Ericson, and forgive me for intruding on you at this hour. If you will send me as much of that material as was rendered available for the public record, I shall be very indebted to you. Good evening, sir.

Ladies and gentlemen, two years ago Major Michaelis was asked to resign from the Chevy Chase Country Club, popularly known as the "golf club of Presidents." He had brandished a revolver in the billiard room and attempted to induce a number of the club members to engage in a game of Russian roulette with him. His resignation was also required of him by the Army and Navy Club in Washington. He was obviously becoming more and more unbalanced. He comes of an influential family and no reference to this appeared in the Washington papers. Last year his wife instituted a suit for divorce. She was interviewed by the reporter of a Takoma Park paper published near her home. Among the grounds for her suit she specifically mentioned her husband's obsession with that desperate game. Official and unofficial copies of that material will be in my hands in a few days. I hope that will take a load off Mrs. Tennyson's mind.

EDWEENA Yes, and take her out of Coventry, Chief.

THEO (Theo addresses the audience.) Three mornings later I telephoned "Nine Gables" and asked Willis, who answered, if I might speak to Mrs. Tennyson.

(Persis appears opposite.) Good morning, Mrs. Tennyson.

PERSIS Good morning, Theophilus.

THEO This morning I am leaving some documents at your door. Might I call on you this afternoon about five to discuss them?

PERSIS Yes, indeed. Will you give me a hint as to what I may find in them?

THEO Is Frederick well?

PERSIS Oh, yes--very well.

THEO Some day he will be glad to know that there is official evidence that his father did not take his own life in a fit of depression but in one of foolish but hopeful high spirits.

PERSIS Ah!...

THEO At five o'clock I drove my bicycle to her door. The door was open and Persis came forward to greet me.

PERSIS Let us have a cup of tea first and then discuss the surprising material you left at my door.

Mr. North, this is Miss Karen Jensen and Miss Zabett Jensen.

THEO Good afternoon, good afternoon.

JENSENS Good afternoon, sir.

PERSIS Your name is very well known in this house, Mr. North.

THEO I think I have had the pleasure of meeting the Miss Jensens at Mrs. Cranston's.

ZABETT Yes, sir. We have had that pleasure.

PERSIS Please tell me what I am to think about these clippings and documents.

THEO Mrs. Tennyson, you will soon become aware that the climate that surrounds you is undergoing a change. Those who enjoyed--enjoyed--putting a malicious interpretation on your situation at the time of your husband's death must find some other victim for their spite. You are no longer a woman who drove her husband to desperation: you are a woman whose husband was imprudent in the choice of his friends. Mrs. Venable has received a copy of these papers; Miss Edweena, who is in and out of many cottages these days and who has always been your devoted champion, is hard at work clearing the air. You are in the situation of many women a century and a half ago whose husbands were killed in duels over foolish quarrels about racehorses or card games. Do you feel that the climate is changing within yourself?

PERSIS Oh, yes, Theophilus, but I can scarcely believe it. I must have time.

THEO Let us not talk about it any more. We can be certain that a considerable number of people are talking about it at this very moment. There is something else I want to talk to you about. But first I am incapable of seeing music on a music rack without wanting to know what has been studied or played.

There is very little good music on the island of Aquidneck. I'm starved for it. Could you try these on me?

PERSIS Oh, yes, if you wish it.

What else did you want to discuss with me?

THEO A notion.--I have become a close friend of Edweena Wills and Henry Simmons. Just now because of Edweena's delayed return from that almost disastrous cruise in the Caribbean they are very busy with their plans for the Servants' Ball. They've engaged the Cranston High School Band again. They've sold many cards already, but they're searching for a novel idea that will make the thing take on new life. I suggested they invite some guests of honor, beginning with the Chief of Police and six gallant young members of his force and Chief Dallas and six gallant young firefighters. They certainly are public servants.

PERSIS What a good idea!

THEO Then I told them about Vienna's famous "Fiaker Ball" where all levels of society mingle happily together. Then it occurred to us to begin gradually with an idea like this: to invite a young gentleman and a young lady of the summer colony--the best-looking, the most charming, and particularly those who had shown themselves most appreciative of the servant community. They didn't have much confidence about this, but they took a straw vote in their committee for such a gentleman and the votes were unanimous: Baron Stams. Have you noticed how his beautiful manners include everyone?

PERSIS Indeed, I have.

THEO Well, I sounded him out. Did he feel it was beneath his dignity to be such a guest, or did he think it would bore him? On the contrary! He said he'd long wanted to meet the staff at Mrs. Venable's, socially, and the staff at "Nine Gables" and at Mrs. Amis-Jones's and those other houses where he's dined so often. But he didn't see how he could get away. His Chief couldn't spare him from the embassy. Edweena laughed at that. Edweena and Mrs. Venable are not only valued friends but are often fellow-workers on projects that make Newport a congenial place for those who both work and play here. She is sure that she has only to suggest that she call the Ambassador. "Dear Ambassador, could I ask a small favor of Your Excellency? We wish to institute a sort of Fiaker Ball here. Could you lend us Baron Stams who has been chosen as the most popular guest of the summer season? Vienna-in-Newport, that kind of thing?" Don't you think that could be done.

PERSIS It's a charming idea.

THEO Then the committee cast votes for the young lady guest of honor. They chose you.

PERSIS Me?...Me? But that's impossible. I hardly go out to dinner at all! They don't know I exist.

THEO Persis, you know better than I do that the domestic servants in Newport seldom change from year to year. They are like a silent spellbound audience watching the brilliant world they werve. How often you "great folk" are astonished at all they know. They have long memories and deep sympathies, as well as deep resentments. The misfortune that happened to you happened to them also. They remember you in your happiest years--so few years ago. They remember that you and Mr. Tennyson won the cup for the best dancers at the benefit ball for the Newport Hospital. But most of all they remember your graciousness--you may have seemed removed and impersonal to your fellow-guests, but you were never impersonal to them.

PERSIS But I'd disappoint them so. I can understand their admiring Bodo, but as I told you, I'm just a dreary old widow-lady "under a shadow."

THEO Well, I told them it was doubtful that you would wish to accept their invitation; that your Aunt Sarah would feel that you were degrading yourself, and all--

PERSIS No! No! Never!

THEO May I present their ideas a little further? The grand march is set for midnight. Henry and Edweena would advance down the center of the hall to a march by John Philip Sousa, followed by the members of the committee, two by two. Then Chief Diefendorf and his six gallant men in their dashing uniforms. Then you and Bodo in your finest clothes, smiling to right and left. When you reached the head of the line Henry would raise his staff (with all those ribbons) as a signal to the band which would start playing softly the "Blue Danube Waltz." You two would make a tour of the room dancing. Then the band would fall silent; Miss Watrous would take her place at the piano and you two would encircle the room first with the polonaise, then the polka, then the varsoviennne, dancing like angels. Then the band would come in again with the "Blue Danube Waltz" and you two would pick a succession of partners from right and left. Finally you would bow to the assembly, shake hands with Henry and Edweena--and then you could go home...No one would ever forget it.

(Theo turns away.) There were tears in my eyes. I am never so happy as when I'm inventing. Bodo had not yet heard a word of this. The Ambassador had not yet received the request.

Just sheer soap-bubbles.

Just sheer kite-flying.

But that's what finally happened.

Edweena and Henry and Frederick and I were invited to attend one morning a dress rehearsal of those dances at "The Larches."

HENRY Edweena, my love, that show could have gone on at the Queen's Jubilee in the Crystal Palace, I swear it could.

Now, Teddie, old Choppers, couldn't you tell a little lie just once and say that you were a servant? We'll give you a card and let you into the show tomorrow night.

THEO Oh, no, Henry. You made the rule: There are those who go in the front door of the house and those who don't. I can picture you all in my mind's eye and shall do so many times.

EDWEENA I think you're trying to say something, Teddie.

THEO I always find it hard to say goodbye.

EDWEENA So do I.

THEO For some weeks I had felt intimations of autumn in the air. Some of the leaves of Newport's glorious trees were changing color and falling. I found myself murmuring the words of Glaukos in the Iliad: "Even as are the generations of leaves so are those of men; the wind scatters the leaves on the earth and the forest buds put forth more when spring comes around; so of the generations of men one puts forth and another ceases." The summer of 1926 was coming to an end. I had called at Mr. Dexter's garage and had paid the two final installments on my bicycle, up to and including the last day of my stay. In addition I had bought from him a jalopy at a price somewhat higher than I had paid for "Hard-hearted Hannah"--who in the meantime had been restored to further usefulness and was watching this transaction. (Josiah enters.)

JOSIAH I only use her myself. I know what to do. Did you want to say a few words to her?

THEO No, Mr. Dexter. I'm not so light-headed as I was.

JOSIAH I heard you had some troubles. Everything gets around in Newport.

THEO Yes. True or false, it gets around.

JOSIAH I heard you had a theory that Newport was like Troy--nine cities. When I was a boy our baseball team was called the Trojans.

THEO Did you mostly win or lose, Mr. Dexter?

JOSIAH We won mostly. In boys' schools Trojans were always the favorite team because in the story they didn't win. Boys are like that.

THEO What years were those?

JOSIAH Ninety-six, ninety-seven. All of us took Latin and some of us took Greek...When would you like to pick up your car?

THEO After supper next Thursday night. If you could give me the key now I could drive off without disturbing you.

JOSIAH Now, professor, this isn't a new car and it isn't an expensive car; but it'll give you a lot of miles if you handle it right. I'd like to go on a short drive with you and give you some pointers.

THEO That's very good of you. I'll be here at eight and turn in my bicycle. Then we can drive to Mrs. Keefe's and pick up my baggage and go for that ride. Will you put in a big can of gasoline, because I'll be driving to Connecticut all night.

(Theo turns to the audience.) Lessons began at once. He showed me how to start and how to stop; how to back as smoothly as nodding to a neighbor; how to save gas, how to spare the brakes and the batteries. As in violin-playing, there are secrets you can learn only from a master. When we had returned to his garage, I paid for the additional gasoline and put it in the car.

JOSIAH You must be in a hurry to be off, professor.

THEO No, I have nothing to do until a few minutes before midnight when I want to pass under the windows of Mrs. Venable's house to hear the grand march at the Servants' Ball.

JOSIAH Since my wife's death I have a second home down here. Could we sit and have a little old Jamaica rum while you're waiting? (Theo assents and Josiah pours.)

Have there been any more cities at Troy since the nine that Schliemann found?

THEO Seems not. He found a scrubby village called Hissarlik and that's all there is still. You'd think it might have prospered being only four miles from the mouth of the Dardanelles, but it didn't. Probably no underground water left.

JOSIAH Started me thinking about what changes might take place here-- give a hundred or a thousand years. Likely the English language would be almost unrecognizable...The horse is almost

extinct already; they're thinking about pulling up the train tracks to Providence...People will come and go on wings like umbrellas. A thousand years is a long time. Likely we'll be a different color...We can expect earthquakes, cold, wars, invasions...pestilences...Do ideas like that trouble you?

THEO Mr. Dexter, after I graduated from college I went to Rome for a year to study archaeology. Our professor took us out into the country for a few days to teach us how to dig. We dug and dug. After a while we struck what was once a much traveled road over two thousand years ago--ruts, milestones, shrines. A million people must have passed that way...laughing...worrying...planning...grieving. I've never been the same since. It freed me from the oppression of vast numbers and vast distances and big philosophical questions beyond my grasp. I'm content to cultivate half an acre at a time.

JOSIAH I went to Brown University for two years before I came back here and got in the livery stable business. I've read Homer and Herodotus and Suetonius--and still do. Written between twenty-eight hundred and eighteen hundred years ago. Mr. North, one thing hasn't changed much--people.

THEO Sir, I came to this island a little over four months ago. You were the first person I met. You may remember how light-headed I was, but underneath I was exhausted, cynical, and aimless. The summer of 1926 has done a lot for me. I'm going on to some other place that may be unrecognizable three hundred years from now. There'll be people in it, though at this moment I don't know a soul there. Thank you for reminding me that in all times and places we find much the same sort of people. Mr. Dexter, will you do a favor for me? Do you know the Materas? and the Wentworths? Well, I'm a coward about saying goodbye. When you meet them will you tell them that among my last thoughts on leaving Newport was to send them my grateful affection?

JOSIAH I'll do that.

THEO Five persons that I love will be at the Servants' Ball tonight. They got the message already. Tonight, sir, will be among my happy memories.

JOSIAH I'll see you down to your car.

THEO Good night, Josiah, and thank you.

JOSIAH Drive carefully, Theophilus. (Theo sits in the car and addresses the audience.)

THEO I didn't wait under the trees outside Mrs. Venable's cottage to hear the Sousa march and the "Blue Danube Waltz." (The Blue Danube is faintly heard and we begin to see swirling silhouettes.)

Imagination draws on memory. Memory and imagination combined can stage a Servants' Ball or even write a book, if that's what they want to do.

(Music swells as the lights fade on Theo at center.)

Curtain