Jim Nation (a drama in two acts)

Raymon Rene Bruce

The University of Montana
JIM NATION
(a drama in two acts)

By
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Date
J IM N AT I O N

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CAST

Jim Nation
Jack Nation
Molly Crisp

—to my father.
NARCISSUS

To search this world
    for that some small strand of beauty
    vaguely felt, divinely touched;

To wander down the vast recesses of this being
    in search of that which is within
    from without;
    given yet taken away;

Girl or child, man and boy;
    one so beautiful, innocent,
    as to carry the soul's image upon the face
    for all to see except that one only;

O, cruel reflector to give back that which
    the heart dares not to see;
    pale imagor, obscuring all flaw in living
    and foretelling that nothing's to come.

'Tis true pity that some frail forgotten leaf
    could not have fallen an early death
    to ripple-mar that visage beautiful
    which beckoned to a more untimely one.
ACT ONE
ACT ONE

___Scene One___

(JACK IS IN BED.)

JACK
Molly. Molly . . . sch! (Pause) He's coming back. He's coming, Molly.

(MOLLY ENTERS AND WIPES HIS FOREHEAD.)

He's coming back to have my place.

MOLLY
The doctor says you'll be all right now. It's all a dream, Jack.

JACK
A dream? A dream and not a dream. If I must go away, Molly —

MOLLY
Los Angeles again?

JACK
No.

MOLLY
It was a mistake for you to go on those trips in the first place. I told you that then. But that's all over. Now you'll stay here with me.

JACK
Stay?

MOLLY
You won't leave me here all alone like before, will you?

JACK
If he comes, I will have to go.
MOLLY

You said you'd be back on Friday and here it is Sunday. What kind of business trips were they, anyway?

JACK

New York, yes, yes, very hush-hush thing.

MOLLY

What do you mean Los Angeles? Why go there?

JACK

No dear, New York.

MOLLY

Don't try to get out of it. I don't believe you went to L.A. You always say that.

JACK

No, I said New York. Didn't you hear me, dear?

MOLLY

Why don't you take me with you to California when you go. I'm tired of winter.

JACK

Tomorrow, we'll go together. Just you and I. O.K.!

MOLLY

We haven't been on a trip together since our honeymoon. I deserve better than that. If you would think of me, my happiness—

JACK

Yes dear, tomorrow. I promise you. Tomorrow.
MOLLY
I'm sorry, Jack. We've got to get you well first, before we start fighting again.

JACK
But it's already too late. Jim is coming back and I will have to go away again.

MOLLY
Don't even talk about that any more. It frightens me. That's all just a dream you have. Nothing more.

JACK (SITTING UP)
No dream. He's real all right. As real as I am.

MOLLY
How could he be real. Where could he ever make you go?

JACK
Away. Away to ride on the quiet ships of the sea, as he does: To have a home there and not to have a home. To drift out all the continents of this earth's mind— as one lost, searching, and to find only searching; to seek in seeking.

MOLLY
Why do you want to talk like that? It . . . it doesn't make any sense.

JACK
I must fight him, destroy him or he will destroy me.
MOLLY
He? Who is 'he'?

JACK
We call him, 'brother Jim'; Jim Nation.

MOLLY
What for? What is all this for, Jack?

JACK
He's coming back to see her. He's come back through all these years to see her—this once more before she dies.

MOLLY
What can she do?

JACK
What can we do!? Keep him from seeing her, somehow, until she's gone. Then I will deal with him on my own terms. I can do it then. Molly, I know I'm right. Without her, he has nothing. No power. You must help me with him.

MOLLY
I don't even want to see him.

JACK
No. He will come for you, too. He will try to take you away from me, too. But that will be part of the plan. You must fool him. He will see the resemblance there, between you and her; your eyes and her eyes. Blue. That will confuse him, perhaps long enough. Perhaps he will see the eyes, but the mind will not make the connection. It will work. You must

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JACK (CONTINUING)
take her place in her bed. He will believe it. And then she
will be gone. And him, too. Will you do it? Molly?

MOLLY
But this is insane.

JACK
It will work. When he comes, you lie in her bed and seem to
die. I will come as death to take her away. Then she will be
gone, and ended. And his crime will be ended. Yes, he will
come back to see her all right. We must be ready. Oh God,
I've got to find some way to end all this. Some way—
And this will do it.

(JACK TRIES TO GET OUT OF BED.)

MOLLY
What are you trying to do?

JACK (NOW STANDING, PULLING HIS PANTS ON.)
Girding up my loins to be a man. Yes! I must be ready for
him.

MOLLY
No! The doctor said your attack may come back at any time.

JACK
Yes, the attack! Well, I am ready for that. Where are my
shoes? I need my shoes. I'll meet him like a man. I'll
be ready for him this time. But, God, not barefoot! My
shoes!
(JACK PUTS THEM ON.)

But what about the doctor? What if it's just a dream like the doctor said?

JACK

To him it may be a dream. Easy for him to say. But to me! Yes. I have always been the dreamer. Not Jim. All right, it is a dream; what difference does it all make anyway? This time I'm ready, dream or no dream. I've got to do it. Me the dreamer. Mother always said that. She wanted a man who did things. You have to do to be a man. She said that. There's a whole philosophy in that. Like my father. He was a man who did. Traveled the whole country for his church. Yes, a man of God. 'Gird up your loins and be a man.' He said that and by God, I will. We'll have a real life together after this, Molly. I promise you that. Will you help me? Will you play her part, her death? For a real life?

(A LAUGH IS HEARD IN THE DARKNESS AS A LIGHT FADES IN ON JIM.)

MOLLY (EMBRACING JACK.)

Oh yes, and children. We'll be just like other people then. Or we could adopt some. Would you like that? A family of our own. And a parsonage all our own. Oh, Jack, perhaps it won't be just a dream after all.
JACK

For you, Mollie, for you I will do it. And for her, tortured soul, I will do it for her, too. And for Father and all he wished me to be when I finished seminary. Yes, and for me! I must do it for me, too. I will destroy him once and for all.

MOLLY

A family and everything.

JACK

Everything.

(THEY KISS AND SIT ON THE BED TO MAKE LOVE. JIM LAUGHS AND JACK JUMPS AGAIN.)

JACK

What was that?

MOLLY

What? No, no, stay with me, Jack. Don't leave me like this. You can't just go away. If you love me, you'll stay, Jack!

JACK

He's out there. I hear him. I hear him breathing out there.

MOLLY

No! There's just us, Jack, just us. Nothing can ever come between us now. We have each other now. Like this. You love me.

JACK

I can feel him thinking out there. He's here.
MOLLY

Jack! Where are you? Don't go! Don't leave me alone again.
Jack! Jack! You can't! If you love me!

JACK (FROM A DISTANCE.)

He's out here, Molly. Come and see.

(MOLLY SLOWLY WALKS OVER TO THE LIGHT AROUND JIM. SHE GOES UP TO HIM AND STARES AT HIS FACE.)

MOLLY

Oh, God! (Pause.) Your face. And your body. Distorted, different, yet the eyes, yes, the eyes; so much the same.

JIM

You don't need to be afraid of me . . . Molly?

MOLLY

Who are you?

JIM

You will find that you already know me.

MOLLY

Jim?

JIM

Jim Nation. The very one. The un-prodigal son, returned.

MOLLY

No, you must go away immediately. Don't you see? He's not strong enough. Go away, please. For his sake. If you have any human decency at all. Please. I need him.
JIM
No, that is why I've come back. I must see her this one last time. Once more only, before her death takes her away from me.

MOLLY
Why do you have to torture us all? She doesn't want you. Jack has his own life to live.

JIM
I see he's fooled you, too. Just like he did her. He doesn't have a life to live, I do. He is the dream, Molly. He took my place years ago. He thought he could outwit me by going to the seminary, but you see, it didn't work. I'm still alive. It was all a lie. We found out whose lie it was. And this time I've come to stay.

MOLLY
He'll fight you. He'll destroy you once and for all. He said that. You'll see.

JIM
It's you who doesn't see, Molly. He tricked me first and he's tricked you, too, like he tricked all the rest of them. He is the dream, Not I. He forced me away, not the other way around. All these years in exile, to wander the corridors of the mind, down the convolutions of the brain. Trapped there. He was destroying me. He's the dreamer, and I am the true brother.
MOLLY

No, you can't talk that way. You're the one. He's good.
And he needs me. And I need him. He only needs help. You
can't let him be destroyed.

JIM

Molly, sweet Molly. Need is not enough. Love! He loves you
when he needs you, then he leaves you alone until he needs you
again. That's not love.

MOLLY

You don't know anything. You don't understand at all.

JIM

Understand? No? Has he ever held you so that you could feel,
even for one fleeting moment, that you were not all alone in
this world? Was there ever a time with him when you didn't
feel yet a small empty place within, where he would not enter
and fill? Need? Need? What's this need? Can he love you?
Eh? Can he.

MOLLY

You can't know that.

JIM

I know. I know. When he held you, Molly, I was there, too.
I heard your loneliness. I can love you, Molly. There is
your loneliness! Love.

MOLLY

You can't know that. You're only guessing.
JIM (TAKING BOTH OF HER HANDS)

You see, I will never leave you. I will be with you always. (Pause.) Even when he's with you, you know that he's far away. Left you behind. And always at those moments when you need him most. I will stay with you. My promise is Love, Molly.

(JIM EMBRACES HER.)

MOLLY

It's just that you don't understand him the way I do. He's different than most. He's far away, but far away in a more beautiful place. He would take me but it's only that I can't follow him there, that's all. I'm not of the gossamer in that world. He waits for me, but I can't follow. Oh, I can't think. It's my fault, don't you see—my love's too small.

JIM

That's not true. You forget, I was there too. He didn't want you to follow him. He wanted to go alone in all his dreams. He only wanted you when he needed you. I was there and I waited for him to bring you, so you could see my world too. He kept me from you. I'll never forgive him that. I had to come back, you see? For you. We will be together now, Molly, and we will fill the entire universe together. Molly.

(HE KISSES HER.)
MOLLY

No, I . . . can't . . . think.

(JACK ENTERS.)

MOLLY

Jack . . .

JACK

Go inside, Molly. Please. It's all right. Just get ready. John, our father's name was John. Remember it.

(SHE DOES.)

Jim Nation, the lover, as old familiar role for you, isn't it?

JIM

So this is the duel to the finish?

JACK

To your finish, I'm tired of you. I've let you off too long. This is your last time.

JIM

Big words. How will you do it? Will you take a knife and cut me out of your brains? Eh?

JACK

I'll bury you in my own forgetfulness somehow. I'll find a way for you.

JIM

Things have changed. Before, I thought that I was the lie. But I have remembered everything down there; and it's you,
you, Jackie boy, that's the lie. I remembered. Yes, I thought that would get to you. You couldn't keep it a secret forever. Not from me. I'm a lie and not a lie, Jack, and so are you. I've spent years in that prison of your forgetfulness. But it is your lie that you must keep me in there, imprisoned by that lie upon a lie. Years of lies! Years and years.

JACK

You! You crimed the great crime against her. It's your guilt. I'm sorry. You can use all the logical tricks you want to, you can never change that fact. You did it.

JIM

But that's why I've come back, Jack. Prison itself is not a lie. The days and nights in the darkest reaches, in the farthest cells of the human brain, there is time for Truth then. Yes, a moisture from the rocks of the earth permeating there, down through time. Yes, Jack, a prison of lies to find one Truth, one revelation of the past.

JACK

Truth?! Let me tell you what truth is. You committed such a deed against your own flesh and blood, against her, yet that you deserve to be dropped into the eternal black abyss and
JACK (Continued)

never more to be remembered. You deserve such oblivion. That is how I shall destroy you. Never more remembered!

JIM

Suicide! That's the only way you'll ever get rid of me, dear brother.

JACK

No, I don't want to talk to you. Why do I have to be bothered with you? Why me? Go away and leave me alone. I don't want to think about it any more.

JIM

You don't want to think about it. You! You don't want to. But what about me? Eh?

JACK

Yes, what about you? When I don't want to think about you, you don't exist. That's all. You are nothing.

JIM

That won't work anymore. I've come back to bring everything out in the open. Whoever makes it in the end makes it. That's all. That will decide which brother survives.

JACK

Oh, how reasonable. How fair you are. Well, there's no contest. You have no rights anymore, after what you've done to her.
JIM

Me!? 

JACK
You! You waited until I was away at seminary. You knew her weakness. She didn't even know who you were. You! My God, what do you expect of me?

JIM
All right, it happened. I'm not trying to say that it didn't. A mistake, it was a mistake.

JACK
Some mistake. And then her madness? I suppose that was a mistake, too?

JIM
That was always there. Such a frail thing it was.

JACK
Now get out. I dismiss you out of my mind!

JIM
No! Not yet! I won't let you dismiss me like this again.

JACK
Out! Out of my mind!

JIM (Weakening)
No-o-o-o Don't!

JACK
Out!

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(JIM APPEARS TO BE WEAKENING, BUT HE MANAGES TO GET HIS HANDS AROUND JACK'S THROAT. JACK PUTS HIS HANDS OVER JIM'S, BUT IS UNABLE TO OVERPOWER HIM.)

JIM

I'm not letting you go until you've heard everything that happened. Then you'll know what I suffer. I didn't wander the prisons of this world to learn one solitary truth for nothing at all.

JACK

No. I don't want to hear anything. It's too late.

JIM

You'll listen. Listen to this. The seminary wasn't the first time.

JACK

Lies! Out! Out of my mind! Out of my mind —

(JIM CHOKES JACK'S VOICE OFF.)

JIM

Listen! Before, before! While I was in prison, I was able to remember. Before, there were all those times before. I remembered them all.

JACK

No. Seminary... the very first. They told me what you did. Everything. They found you with her. Everything.

JIM

No, more! Other times! Other places! Remember!

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JACK

No, stop!

 (JACK LETS JIM GO AND HE SLUMPS TO THE FLOOR)

Stop, stop.

JIM

You've spent your entire lifetime forgetting what I've spent mine trying to remember. And I remembered! It came to me in a vague cloud of moisture, there in that prison. There was a time before that. And a time before that, and a time before that, and on and on and on. I remembered them all, one by one, counting beads of a necklace, and another, and yet another. There seemed no end to them. But yes! They were beads strung on a necklace, and I was only counting them over and over again. The same ones. Over and over. There was no first time. Somehow.

JACK

I don't want to know about it. I don't want to hear any more.

JIM

How could I have done such a thing, I thought. How could it ever have started? If there were no first time?

JACK

You're mad. Blabbering nonsense like always. Trying to justify everything.

JIM

No, that's just it. I didn't care about justifying it
JIM (Continuing)

anymore. I just wanted to know what happened. What! What happened!

JACK

I can tell you what happened.

JIM

No; I mean -- how could it have happened? Then I remembered. When I came here the first time I came, she was the first to see me. And she took me and she held me like a small child. I remember that. It's not even a vision in my mind, but I remember somehow. And then you saw me and left. Without a word, you left.

JACK

Did you expect me to stay to watch that?

JIM

Don't you understand? I didn't know who she was. How beautiful she was. And those eyes, so vacant and blue. I pitied her loneliness, it was a loneliness I knew. I felt that if I just held her, perhaps I could save her from the despair of that loneliness. She seemed to have no one. No one knew who she was. No. No one. She didn't even know herself. No one ever knew her at all. I held her and from that moment the beads started their count.

JACK

And this is your big discovery of truth? The facts remembered?
JIM

Don't you see, Jack? I didn't know. You left and never told me who I was. You never told me who she was. Every time I would come back, you would leave me without a word. To me, she was just a lost child like I was. What else could I ever do? Now you know.

JACK

Now I know.

JIM

Can you ever forgive me?

JACK

Forgive? What's to forgive? You did what you did. Whether you know it or not, you did it. What do you expect me to say?

JIM

You blind idiot! You were the reason it all could have happened. You always left! Why didn't you tell me? Answer that question for yourself, if you dare. That's why you try to bury me in forgetfulness. You were gone, but you were there with me, too! With us!

JACK

Not me! I never could do such a thing. No!

(MOLLY IS ON THE BED, DISGUISED AS MOTHER. SHE NEED BE NO MORE THAN A GREY BLUR) AS SHE GROANS, THE LIGHTS DIM UP THERE.)

JIM

What's that?
JACK
Her.

JIM
How long?

JACK
Since you left last.

JIM
So long?

JACK
And Father, dead.

JIM
I know.

(LIGHTS DIM LOW ON JIM & JACK WHILE JACK EXITS.)

MOLLY
John? John? Is that you? (Pause) The boys are back, John. Did you see Jim? I did. I said to him, "Well young man, welcome to our house. Did you see your girl, Molly? She waited for you." "Blue eyes," he said, "Blue eyes." Isn't that a strange thing to say? "Oh, here we must take our shoes off. Not to spoil the red velvet on the floor. Here, over here out of the way, where they'll be safe." Jim. Jim Nation. Ah, John, I saw him in the good light. What a fine boy he was. He made me very happy, Strong and healthy he is. And I, I made him happy too, John. Did you ever know about our car rides? I told
MOLLY  ((Continuing))
him not to tell anybody. A little game we play to while away
the hours when you're gone from me. He doesn't disappoint me
like you do, John. He doesn't leave me in loneliness. John?
John? Where are you? Come into the good light so I can see
you. Are you there, John?

(JACK IS DISGUISED AS 'DEATH' BY A ROBE AND A MASK.)

JACK  (OFF STAGE)
Yes.

MOLLY
Come into the light so I can see you. They said you had gone.
And wouldn't come back. I couldn't believe that. I haven't
seen you for a whole year. A whole year! Isn't that strange?
I didn't believe them, of course. You wouldn't go without
telling me, would you? Not like before. You promised me.
Never again.

JACK
Promised.

MOLLY
You used to leave me alone so often, didn't you, (Pause)
Didn't you, John?

JACK
Yes.

MOLLY
But not anymore. All those trips to Los Angeles. Church
MOLLY (Continuing)

stay with me?

JACK

Yes.

MOLLY

Well, where were you then, John?

(JACK ENTERS AS DEATH.)

JACK

I've been here all the time.

MOLLY

But you said you'd be back on Friday, and here it is Sunday. What kind of business trips are these, anyway?

JACK


MOLLY

'Los Angeles?' Why go there?

JACK

No, New York.

MOLLY

Don't try to get out of it. I don't believe for a moment you went to L.A. You always say that. If you loved me you'd stay here, with me. You must think of me, too. There's nothing for you in L.A.

JACK

New York.
MOLLY
I don't see why you don't take me to California with you, when you go. I'm tired of winter. You always leave me here with the boys. I have no one to love me. Take me with you. Just once, John.

JACK
I will. Tomorrow, we'll go together tomorrow. To Carmel, or someplace like that. We'll have a second honeymoon. How would you like that?

MOLLY
You always say that. I'm tired of hearing that I can't go along. If you leave me here this time, I will go mad. Stark raving mad.

JACK
Tomorrow, we'll go together. I shall come and get you then. I promise. Just you and I. California.

MOLLY
You never take me anywhere. Excuses. What do you expect of me?

JACK (EXITING)
Tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow.

MOLLY
No, now! I want to go now. I'm so tired, so tired. Come back, John. Take me with you now.

JACK (OFF STAGE)
Tomorrow.

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(JIM ENTERS.)

JIM

Mother.

MOLLY

Jim. Jim Nation. So here you are!

JIM

Yes.

MOLLY

I can't see you. Come into the good light so I can see you.

JIM

Here, Mother.

MOLLY

My eyes can't see anymore, Jim. Old. Only darkness. Like my brain. There was a man just here, and I mistook him for your father. Isn't it strange?

JIM

What Mother?

MOLLY

That I should have such blue eyes and see only the darkness?

JIM

Yes, Mother, strange.

MOLLY

You won't tell your father, will you, Jim?

JIM

No.
MOLLY

It's our little game. Together. Just we two, to while away our loneliness. Remember the car?

JIM

The car.

MOLLY

And the rides through all the stars in heaven? Do you want me to tell you about it again? Jim? Jim? You're gone away from me again. I want to tell you about the car ride.

JIM

Does it hurt much? The pain?

MOLLY

The pain of loneliness hurts, John. I told you that. I can not be left alone like this. Without anyone. Your sons need you too. You're their father. You can't be away all the time. We need you here, John. We need your love with us.

JIM

Jim, Mother. It's me, Jim.

MOLLY

Oh Jim, I mistook you for your father, just now. Isn't that strange?

JIM

Strange.

MOLLY

You won't tell him about our car rides, will you?
JIM

No, Mother.

MOLLY

You've always looked like him. Even when you were a child. Just like your father. Except, he was always away. Even when you were born, he was away. I was left all alone here. No one. I had to do it all by myself. Alone. I just reached down there and pulled you out, myself. All alone, then you were. (Laughs) I wasn't alone anymore. I would have you hold me forever, John— Strange, I've just mistaken you for your father.

JIM

Yes, Mother.

MOLLY

I want to go to sleep now. I'm so tired, so tired. I would hold you in my arms always, but . . . so tired, so tired. Tomorrow . . . tomorrow . . .

JIM

Yes, tomorrow and tomorrow's tomorrow on down through time. Sleep, dear creature, sleep all the dreams of the mind away. Sleep from the pain of having given so much more than you ever had to give. Sleep, sleep, sleep.

(JIM WALKS TO ANOTHER AREA AS JACK ENTERS IT)

JIM

She sleeps in quiet madness. She'll live to tomorrow. Are you ready to go now?
JACK
You're very clever, aren't you? You think you have it all figured out. Now you can dismiss me! Well, you'll get yours. One day, one someday, you'll get everything you've got coming to you. I just hope I'm to be there, watching, that's all. That's all I want. I want to see you crawl like you make the rest of us crawl. I want to be there for that.

JIM
You will be, Jack. You will be. Each of us has seen only our half of what happened.

JACK
All right then, show me your half of it. Show me it. I want to see that!

JIM
O.K., brother. You go out there like I've been. And I will come and show you the bottom side of truth. I'll show you a place beyond all your dreams. I'll show you your own face, as it really is, if you have the courage enough to see it.

JACK
I'll go, and I'll be ready for you out there.

(He exits.)

JIM
Be careful, Jack.

JACK  (Off Stage)
You look out for you.

* * *

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ACT I

Scene Two

(LIGHTS OUT. SHIP'S EIGHT-BELLS IS HEARD.)

JIM (OFF STAGE)

What's the time, mate?

JACK (OFF STAGE)

Eight bells. Wind, North by Northeast. Holding steady as she goes.

(LIGHTS UP, ISOLATING JACK WITH A Sextant SHOOTING THE NORTH STAR.)

JIM

What's your reading, Nation?

JACK

Forty-five degrees, Sir.

JIM

Forty-five degrees. (Pause) Mark. War mine in vicinity. All watches on deck! All watches on deck!

(THE 'DING DONG' OF A BUOY, MARKING THE MINE, IS HEARD IN THE DISTANCE.)

That buoy marks the war mine, Nation. Plot it.

JACK

Yes, Sir.

JIM

I've passed that mine a hundred times, Jack. Hear that tone? A little bell rolling and pitching to announce its presence to the outer reaches of the sea.
JACK
Jim! Is that you?

JIM
Yes. How do you like being out here?

JACK
How do you like it back home?

JIM
Oh, not so bad. I'm a preacher now. Like Father. Well, after all, you had finished seminary for me and everything, so now I'm a Reverend.

JACK
Fraud! You've taken over everything now, haven't you? My wife, my place, and now, my life.

JIM
It's a nice life, anyway.

JACK
How nice? If you're here already?

(JIM ENTERS.)

JIM
That's why I've come to see how you like it here.

JACK
It's O.K.

JIM
O.K.?

JACK
Sure, why not? See the world.
JIM
You're still on the boat. You haven't seen anything yet.

JACK
Just the sea.

JIM
Yeah, the sea. But wait 'till you see the Houses in Paris, &c.

JACK
How's Molly, Jim?

JIM
Mighty good, Jack.

JACK
I didn't mean that.

JIM
Would you like to see her?

JACK
Yes.

JIM
Come over here by the rail and look out to the sea. Over there by the mine-buoy.

JACK
Sure, one push and overboard. One man lost in the night. You'll have to show me from here.

JIM
Can you see the room?
I . . . I think so.

JIM

Yes, you see it . . . all dressed in velvety red. The walls, the windows, everything?

JACK

All red! And the soft chairs, vague pictures on the walls. I can't make them out. One looks like . . . like . . . I can't . . .

JIM

Forget the pictures. Do you see her?

JACK

No . . .

JIM

Not anyone?

JACK

No. No, wait . . .

JIM

See her?

JACK

Molly?? No . . .

(MOLLY ENTERS AS MOTHER NATION, DRESSED AS A MADAM OF A HOUSE.) (Molly's speeches here, are to be recorded and only closely approximated by the actress' lip movements.)

MOLLY

Well, young man, welcome to our house. Have you seen our
MOLLY  (Continuing)
girls? Do any of them please you? Eh? Oh, here we must take our shoes off. Not to spoil the red velvet on the floor, no?

(JACK TAKES HIS SHOES OFF AND LOOKS AROUND WHERE TO PUT THEM.)

Here, over here, out of the way, where they'll be safe.

(SHE TAKES HIS SHOES AND PUTS THEM ASIDE.)

Here, that's fine now. Come over to me, young man. Eh? Let me look at you in the good light. Ah, what a fine boy you are! You'll make one of our girls very happy. Strong and healthy like you. (SHE ELBOWS HIM.) And you, she'll make you happy, too. You'll see. Hee-hee. You'll see. A guarantee of the House. If one can't do you happiness, then we'll all try. Hee-hee, get it, O.K.? Guarantee of the House. Now which one will be your pleasure? (Pause) No? Nothing? Come. Here.

(MOLLY TAKES JACK'S HANDS TO HER SIDE AND CLAMPS THEM DOWN WITH HER ARMS – SHE THEN CARESSES THE SMALL OF HIS BACK.)

If I were a few years younger, I could turn you a nice trick myself. You'd see.

(SHE EMBRACES HIM; JACK THEN COMES ALIVE AGAIN AND PUSHES HER AWAY.)

Young and strong . . .

JACK

Stop it! Stop it! I don't want this!
MOLLY
I know, I know. I will send you a girl, a girl to you. Our
best. You will make love with her for me, won't you? You
won't disappoint me now? Wait. Wait right here.

(MOLLY, AS MOTHER NATION-MADAME, EXITS TO BECOME
MOLLY AGAIN.)

JACK
No! No! Never!

JIM
Thought you had forgotten it all, didn't you? Thought you
had it safely tucked away, where it couldn't come back again,
ever?

JACK
Why did you do that? I remembered. Sure, I remembered it!
But it wasn't like that. Not grotesque like that. Yet, how
could I ever forget it? But why not try? What's past is past.
Done.

JIM
Done and forgiven, eh? Is that what they taught you in
seminary? Forgive and forget?

JACK
But, I can't forget! You know that; it's always there.
Always! Why can't we forget such things? Can't we just
forget it?

JIM
O.K., forget it. Agreed. But we came to see Molly.

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JACK

Molly?!

JIM

Yes, Molly!

(MOLLY ENTERS IN WHORE'S NIGHTGOWN.)

JACK

Molly

(MOLLY GOES UP TO JACK AND REPEATS THE SAME GESTURE AS BEFORE.)

MOLLY

Do you see me yet?

JACK

Yes, your name is Molly.

MOLLY

Yes, name is Molly.

JACK

Molly?!

MOLLY

Yes, Molly.

JACK

Then you remember.

MOLLY

Now I remember.

JACK

Molly! Remember how great it was with us?

MOLLY

How great it was!
JACK
And beautiful.

MOLLY
And beautiful.

JACK
Making love together. The joy. How wonderful.

MOLLY
How beautiful.

JACK
And then Jim came back.

MOLLY
And then Jim came back.

JACK (CALLING TO JIM)
Jim!!! Jim!!!

MOLLY

JACK
Stop it! Stop her from—

MOLLY
Stop her from—

(JACK COVERS HER MOUTH WITH HIS HAND.)

JACK
God, Jim, stop it! For God's sake, stop it!

JIM
O.K., Jack. You can have her now. For tonight. Take her. She's real good. She knows all the tricks. Ha, ha.

-35-
JIM  (Continuing)

But when she gets a hold of you, watch out! Ha, ha.

JACK

Shut uppp!

(JACK THROWS MOLLY TO THE GROUND.)

You stop this! Leave me alone!

(MOLLY STROKES JACK'S LEG WITH BOTH HANDS,
TRYING TO ENTICE HIM TO LIE DOWN WITH HER.)

JIM

It's your dream, Jack. Not mine. But she's good, Jim real
good.

(MOLLY SUCCEEDS IN PULLING JACK DOWN ON TOP OF
HER, OUT OF THE LIGHT.)

Real good, Jack, old boy. Real good. The best. The very
best there is. She knows it all. She remembers things.
How to touch you. How to breathe. And sigh. And I
remember too. How good she was with me.

JACK  (JUMPING UP AGAIN.)

With me! Me! Me! She's my Molly! You took her away. You!
We were happy together. Always. But you came back and took
everything away. And molly! Everything!

(MOLLY RISES UP INTO THE LIGHT AND URGES
JACK TO LIE BACK DOWN WITH HER.)

Mine! Do you hear? Mine! You don't take her away ever
again. Ever! You can forget her forever, now! She's mine!

MOLLY

Jack, Jack. Come to me. You'll scare all the night away.

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MOLLY (Continuing)

Quietly, come, come to me.

(MOLLY AND JACK SINK OUT OF THE LIGHT AGAIN. AND ALL LIGHTS FADE OUT.)

(JACK LIGHTS A MATCH AND LIGHTS MOLLY'S CIGARETTE. COVER SPOT UP. HE LIGHTS ONE FOR HIMSELF.)

MOLLY

Jack.

JACK

Mmmm?

MOLLY

Remember the car last night?

JACK

The car last night?

MOLLY

And the car ride through all the stars again. Do you want me to tell you about it again? Jack!! Jack! You're not listening to me.

JACK

What?

MOLLY

I want to tell you about it. So you will know too. The car rides. Our little game together.

JACK

What game? What are you saying?

MOLLY

I felt myself flying on that car through the warmth of you.
MOLLY  (Continuing)

Images, only images flashed by my eyes. The night air caressed
my body; my thighs, great eagle's wings, carrying me toward
the ultimate release of me, the complete revelation all my
femaleness; the glory of nakedness in the night, being hurtled
through the night with you, my great car, soaring through the
black of night air. I soared, the flashing lights of houses,
streets, cities, all to the night became little pin pricks of
light, each light below, a point sharp in the night; the
great car sliding down the final slope into space,— soon to
be airborne into those limitless heavens of stars, catapulted
out into the destruction of an infinite field of bright,
glistening, shimmering needle points of cold steel light,
glittering there, waiting. The stars! To be impaled upon
their painless pain, their shafts to pierce the cold white
heat.

JACK

Stop!

MOLLY

But . . . some thing, some little thing. I don't know what . . .
who knows what things come in and happen, without our ever
knowing them . . . ?

JACK

No!

MOLLY

And it was too late. Too late! Shattered. There was only
the dream of it, afterward. The memory, for they could be
only memories then, the memory of that anticipated plunge upon
that infinite field of cold steel light points of the sky.
And memory did bring back that one last final image, pierced
by the long shafts of shiny steel. I, hanging there,
me, pale flower, there,— the thorns passing through the
flesh, two painful shafts of frozen steel, piercing, piercing
in all their glistening fineness; trickling down, to drop off
the point; red fused with the white of milk, to drop upon the
ground. I, upon that starry bush, melting, paled and impaled,
until I ran all out, remaining a shimmering pool of white and
red blending there. The thorns releasing the few remaining
drops of me, as the Earth opened up her multitudinous mouth
to drink me all beneath.

    (THE LIGHTS HAVE DIMMED OUT BY THE END OF MOLLY'S
    SPEECH. THERE IS A LONG PAUSE, THEN JACK SCREAMS.)

JACK

Aggh! Mollleeeeee . . .

    (A LONG SILENCE WHILE MOLLY BECOMES MOTHER NATION-MADAME
    IN THE DARK. SHE RISES AND STANDS OVER JACK AS THE
    LIGHTS COME UP.) (MOLLY'S SPEECH IS, AGAIN, PRERECORDED.)

MOLLY

Well, how was it? To hear her tell it, you were out of this
world. Car ride and all! Wow! Say, you are a strapping boy
at that. I'd like to take you on, myself, if you're that good.
How about it? You like to turn a trick with me, eh? How
MOLLY  (Continuing)

about it? I had a boy of my own, like you. Do you know him?
Jack, his name is Jack. What a baby he was, when he was born.
I did it myself. I mean the Doc was late, and I had to do it
all myself. I just reached down there and pulled him right
out, myself. And how he loved me for it! I'd hold him all day
long. Oh, well... Just now, I mistook you for him. Isn't
that the strangest thing? Well, how about it? You and me?
I may look a little beat around the edges, but there's still
many a good trick left in this old body, yet. Come on boy,
this one's free to you. Yeah, this one is on the House, ha, ha.

(THERE IS A LONG LAUGH, WHICH IS SPEEDED UP AND OUT)

(MOLLY USES THE SAME GESTURE AS BEFORE, TO EMBRACE JACK
PULLING HIM TO HER. SHE THEN PULLS JACK DOWN TO THE
GROUND, AS MOLLY DID, DOWN OUT OF THE LIGHTS, WHICH
THEN FADE OUT.)

(PAUSE)

JACK  (SCREAMING)

Nooooo ...

(EXPLOSION AND FLASHES SHOWING JIM SIGHTING WITH
SEXTANT AND JACK SCRAMBLES FOR HIS SHOES. LIGHTS' OUT.
PAUSE.)

Shoes, shoes, shoes, shoes, shoes, shoes, shoes.

(LIGHTS FADE UP ON JACK, AT THE EDGE OF STAGE, FUMBLING
HIS SHOES ON, WITH NO SUCCESS. JIM IS STILL IN
DARKNESS.)

JIM

The ship! Jack! The ship's going down! We've hit the mine!
We're going down. Save yourself! She's going to the bottom

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JIM (Continuing)
of the sea!

(SILENCE)
Jack, Jack. Where are you? I can't swim. Where are you? I can't see in the darkness. I'm drowning. Help! Save me! Save me!

JACK
Shoes, shoes, shoes. Shoes, shoes, shoes.

JIM
Keep talking, Jack! I hear you! Keep talking! I'm coming over. Keep talking!

JACK
Shoes, shoes, &c.

(JIM CRAWLS OUT OF THE DARKNESS INTO THE POOL OF LIGHT WHERE JACK IS SITTING ON WHAT WOULD BE A RAFT.)

JIM
Here, help me onto the raft, Jack. I can't move.

(JACK MAKES NO MOVE TO HELP.)

JIM
Shoes?

(JIM PULLS HIMSELF ONTO THE RAFT.)

JIM
You saved my life, Jack. You saved me.

JACK
Shoes?

JIM
Your shoes! They're still dry! Let me see them.

-41-
(JACK LETS JIM TAKE THE SHOES AND HE WATCHES JIM INSANELY AS HE TURNS THE SHOES OVER AND OVER.)

JIM

Not a drop of water on them. How did you do it, Jack? It's amazing, isn't it? Well, thank God, we're both safe.

(JIM DOESN'T NOTICE JACK LOOKING AT HIM.)

Say, what's happening here? The raft is starting to sink. The sea is rising, too, with the storm. There isn't room enough for us both on the raft. We'll both be drowned. It'll sink with both of us on it. (Pause) Look Jack, one of us will have to go overboard. (Pause) The sea is rising too much to hold on to the sides either. One of us is going to have to swim for it, Jack. (Pause) You say the word and I'll leave. You found the raft first. (Pause) Go ahead. Say the word. It's your right to choose. It's your life or mine. Go ahead, choose. Tell me to go over and I will. (Pause) One of us has to go, and now, before the raft sinks on us both! Choose! It's your choice! Choose! Say it!

(JIM STRIKES JACK TO BRING HIM OUT OF IT.)

Damn it, say something. Don't just sit there and let us both drown. Choose! (Pause) It's you or me!

(JIM HITS JACK AGAIN.)

Speak! Say something, you idiot! Choose!

JACK (SOFTLY AND WITH DEEP KINDNESS)

Shoes, shoes, shoes. Shoes, shoes, shoes.

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(JACK VERY TENDERLY, TAKES BACK HIS SHOES FROM AN ASTONISHED JIM, AND HOLDS THEM TO HIS CHEST AS THOUGH THEY WERE DOLLS.)

JIM

Oh, no, Jack. Oh, no.

JACK

Shoes, shoes, &c.

JIM

Jack, oh, my God, Jack. Please don't. Please stop. Don't do it anymore. Please stop. Please!

JACK

Shoes, shoes, &c.

JIM

We're sinking, Jack. Together, we'll both drown. What can I do? Can't you understand what I am saying, Jack?

JACK

Shoes, shoes, &c.

JIM

It's me or you, Jack. I have to decide before we sink. What else can I do? You're already dead, Jack. Do you understand? That's why I'm doing this. You're already dead.

(JIM GRABS JACK AND PREPARES TO ROLL HIM OVERBOARD INTO THE SEA. JACK GIVES NO RESISTANCE OR HELP.)

JACK

Shoes, shoes, &c.

JIM

There's nothing else I can do, Jack. Forgive me. Forgive me
JIM (Continuing)

if you can. You're already dead.

(HE PUSHERS JACK OUT OF THE LIGHT AND HE ROLLS AWAY OUT OF SIGHT.)

JACK (AS HE EXITS)

Shoes, shoes, &c.

JIM

JACK!

CURTAIN

ACT I
ACT TWO
ACT II

(MOLLY IS IN BED. JIM, DRESSED IN HIS TURNED-COLLAR SUIT AND A HAT, SITS ON THE SIDE OF THE BED. HE IS DRINKING FROM A GLASS AND HOLDS A WHISKEY BOTTLE.)

MOLLY

Jim, is that you?

JIM

Yes, so here we are. And a toast, a toast to you my lovely wife. To you, the beauty of all my days. (He drinks.) And to my brother, Jack, may he rest in peace.

MOLLY

You promised to forget all that.

JIM

But he won't rest in peace. (Rising) He won't stay dead. Down inside, he stirs there.

MOLLY

The doctor says you're all right. You're whole again. Forget about it, Jack. It's all right the way it is.

JIM

No, even you hate me for killing him. I see it in you.

MOLLY

Forget him. He's gone. You've done fine things, Jack. You've built this church up, and the congregation. Think of the people you have helped, yourself.

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JIM
I think of him. I think of his face as I pushed him into the sea. And his voice, saying, "shoes, shoes, shoes..." over and over again, "Shoes, shoes, shoes."

MOLLY
But he wouldn't want you to throw away your whole life like this, Jim. He wouldn't want that. Then it would have all been for nothing. Don't you see? You can't go to pieces like this. I loved him, but you loved him too. Let him be for something.

JIM
No, Molly, he was nothing. Nothing at all. A dream, a thin vapor that clings to a thing, without ever being seen or felt. He was an ethereal nothingness that haunts at the edges of this night sea. A dream that was nothing at all. He was unknown, even to myself. He was something lost that I never really had. He was a promise I never made, a thought unthought somehow, and now is gone before he ever was.

MOLLY
What can you do? No, you must do something.

JIM
I can drink too much to forget him. I can run from New York to Los Angeles, and back again; run from that which is within myself, and yet can never escape. (LAUGHS) Yes! He wanted all his life to forget. And now, I can't.
MOLLY
You must quit thinking this way. You promised to stay with me. You promised that. If you love me, you will forget him and stay with me. We can have a good life together. It's life you promised.

JIM
Life? Yes, a toast to life. I'll drink to that. To life!

(HE STANDS AND RAISES HIS DRINK.)

('DEATH', WHO IS JACK, DISGUISED IN SKELETON SUIT AND ROBE, RISES WITH JIM. BUT AFTER THE TOAST, JIM SLUMPS DOWN ON THE BED AGAIN, LEAVING JACK STILL STANDING WITH A DRINK, TOASTING.)

JACK
To death! Idiots! How smug you are, patting each other on the back. Wait 'till I pat you, too. I get you all in the end.

(Laughs) Eat, drink and be merry, for today you shall surely die!

(LAUGHS, THEN TAPS JIM ON THE SHOULDER. JIM, WITHOUT LOOKING, HOLDS UP HIS GLASS TO BE FILLED AGAIN. JACK TAKES GREAT DELIGHT IN FILLING UP THE GLASS. JIM DRINKS IT DOWN IN ONE GULP.)

JACK
His life is of all pride and circumstances; such wine mixed with such waters in becoming more, is less, and he drank his all off in one draught. (Laughs) No, I am not the devil -- nor God! But a messenger from both. I come, step in and take. But never for myself. Always for others, I do my merry work. I like it though, my work. It's nice, always so short. That one quick look when they see my face, and they
all squirm off to their eternities, ha, ha. How I would like to have one of them for my very own; one human soul to accompany me on my appointed rounds. Just one man, too good for Hell, yet short of that Heavenly Bliss. But, time comes trolloping by, and now my duty is called. Jim Nation! Your time has come! Jim, death is at your elbow. This is all for you! Fini. Kaput. Jim!

(JIM HAS FALLEN INTO AN APPARENT STUPOR FROM DRINK; HALF ON THE BED, HALF OFF. WHEN JACK CALLS, HE ROUSES TO LIFT UP HIS GLASS AND LOOKS UP AT JACK.)

(JACK KNOCKS THE GLASS OUT OF HIS HAND.)

JIM

No.! Aggh!

(JIM GETS UP AND STUMBLES AWAY, TRYING TO GET AWAY FROM JACK. MOLLY IS UNAWARE OF JACK'S AND JIM'S MOVEMENTS. TO HER, JIM IS ON THE BED ALL THE TIME.)

JACK (FOLLOWING.)

You don't look well, Jim. You've been working too hard. You've had too many drinks. It's bad for your heart, you know.

JIM

Who are you?

JACK

An old fried on a tardy mission.

JIM

What do you want?

JACK

JIM NATION. Why, you. I want you. That's all. Now that's not so much to ask of a friend, is it?

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JIM (Continuing)

What is this, anyway? You look like . . .

JACK

Death?

JIM.

Well, what do you want here? Why have you come? We're having a private party here, so now get out!

JACK

Come, Jim, old friend. You doubt me? Come and put your thumbs in my eye sockets, if you dare.

JIM

I'll fix you.

(JIM GRABS AT JACK AND SHOVES HIS THUMBS IN HIS EYE SOCKETS.)

It is some sort of a trick just to scare me!

JACK

And are you scared?

JIM

Not on your life.

JACK

You mean your death, don't you? (Laughs)

JIM

Very funny. You came to the wrong party in that monkey suit, buddy.

JACK

Some joke, eh? No, Jim, it's you I've come for all right.
JIM

Why?

('DEATH' TRIES TO PUT A SHROUD ON JIM.)

JACK

Here, put this on. It's for the trip.

JIM (PUSHING IT AWAY.)

Get that thing out of here. This has gone too far! Get out of here. This is my house! I'll throw you out! Molly! Molly!

(JIM TRIES TO ROUSE MOLLY. SHE, AWAKE, IGNORES HIM.)

JACK (Aside)

Every time the same thing. How they fight me. And it never does any good. I wonder how I endure it. But, it is fun, sometimes. With some people, you can really enjoy it. Come on, Jim, give it to her. Show her who's boss.

JIM

Shut up, you! You're the cause of all this. I'll fix you!

(HE MAKES FOR'DEATH!)

JACK

And I'll fix you.

(AND HOLDS JIM UP SHORT.)

Look at her, Jim. She doesn't even know you've gone yet. See how lovingly she talks to you? And there! Did you see that? Did you see how she was patting you on the back?

(MOLLY HAS BEEN DOING THESE THINGS TO AN IMAGINARY JIM, SITTING ON THE BED.)
JIM
But, I'm over here! Why can't she see?

JACK
It's you that can't see.

JIM
Then it's true? It's not a joke?

JACK
No, no joke.

JIM
But, I'm still here. I can go back. I'll show you.

(JIM RUNS BACK AND SITS DOWN, SLIPPING UNDER MOLLY'S PATTING HAND. MOLLY SPEAKS IN WISTFUL MONOTONE.)

See? It worked. I've tricked you.

MOLLY
Well, where were you then, Jim?

JIM
Nowhere, I've been here all the time.

MOLLY
But you said you'd be back on Friday and here it is Sunday. What kind of business trips are these, anyway?

JIM
Oh, you mean where was I then? I thought you meant just now. No, I was in New York on a very hush-hush thing.

MOLLY
What do you mean Los Angeles? Why go there?

JIM
No, dear, New York.
MOLLY

Don't try to get out of it. I don't believe for a minute you went to L. A. You always say that.

JIM

No, I said New York. Didn't you hear me, dear?

MOLLY

I don't see why you don't take me with you to California when you go. I'm tired of winter.

JIM

I will, dear. The next time. Tomorrow, we'll go to Carmel or someplace. We'll have a second honeymoon. How would you like that?

MOLLY

You always say that! I'm tired of hearing that I can't go along. Church projects. Top Secret. I don't believe it, Jack. I just don't believe it anymore.

JIM

Tomorrow, we'll go together. Just you and I. California.

MOLLY

We haven't been on a trip together since our honeymoon. I deserve better than that.

JIM

Yes, honey, tomorrow. I promise you. You must believe me.

MOLLY

You never take me anywhere. Excuses, always excuses.
JIM

Tomorrow, tomorrow.

MOLLY

If you loved me, you would drop everything this once and go. Anywhere. Tomorrow. If you loved me, you would go, even tomorrow.

JIM

Yes, tomorrow. See, it's working. It's working. Everything's back the same. It was all just a bad dream. Thank God, a bad dream.

MOLLY

Well, if you are going to give me the same old excuses, I will go by myself, and I may not come back. I may just go see my lawyer. Tomorrow.

JIM

No, dear, don't say that. You must understand me. I said that I would take you tomorrow. . .

MOLLY (Speaking naturally)

You haven't heard a word I said, Jim. I mean it. I'm going to see a lawyer. What's the use to be married to a man you never see? Now I know what your mother went through. I'm through; do you understand? No wonder she went mad. You're just like your father.

JIM

No! Don't say those things. Can't you hear what I said? We'll go away tomorrow. I need the rest. I've been working
JIM (Continuing)
too hard and drinking too much. It's bad for the heart, you know. I've been having such bad dreams lately.

MOLLY

Well, if you think that the Church business is that important, then you can have your old business. But you'll never dream of how much of it I will get after the divorce settlement. Then we'll see what you think of your Church business. I've had it. You don't know what love is.

JIM

No, no, no, no, no. You haven't heard a word I've said.

JACK (HELPING JIM UP.)

It doesn't do any good, Jim. It's useless now. No one can turn back time.

(JIM GETS UP AND MOLLY GOES ON TALKING AS THOUGH HE WAS STILL THERE, ABOUT THE DIVORCE AND SO ON.)

JIM

Yes, I see. When is it to be? My Time?

JACK

Now.

JIM

No, well you see . . . I'm still here. I need a few minutes to finish up some of my business. The books . . . Tomorrow. . . It will take a few days to catch up the books, you see . . . And while I'm still here . . . it's not too late yet . . . Tomorrow, then.
JACK

It's too late. Today.

JIM

But, I won't take long, a few minutes at most. The books . . .

JACK

You mean the money? The funds that you, ør, 'appropriated'
from the Church, and not telling them?

JIM

But, I'm going to pay it all back, with interest! An ordinary
business deal. I didn't tell them because I know they would
back out before it was over. It was a risk! It was an
opportunity to make thousands! And it worked! Already, I've
cleared a $7,000 profit, and have gotten all the money back,
too. My God! I need time to tell them at least. Give me
that!

JACK

What for?

JIM

It's too complicated to explain. All I need is the time to
put everything back in order. With Jack dead, they won't
understand. They'll think he did it. Jack dead! Yes, that's
it! He did die, remember the raft? He died then, yes! You've
come for him. You want my brother instead of me! Take him!
Take Jack! Not me!

Jack

It won't work, Jim, old boy. You can steal your brother's
JACK     (Continued)
money, his wife, everything he has, even his life; but you
cannot steal his death. This death is yours, Jim, and no one
can die it for you.

JIM
You're just trying to scare me with all this talk about my
death. I'll fix you yet. Molly!

(JACK LAUGHS AND TRIES TO GRAB JIM. JIM SQUIRMS FREE
AND RUNS TO HIS WIFE.)

JIM
Sweetheart! Dearest, help me! Help me!

MOLLY
Jim! What's the matter? What is it?

JIM
My throat! I can't breathe!

MOLLY
Jim! What is it?

JIM
I need you, dearest. If ever I needed you, it's now. Help
me.

MOLLY
Anything! What do you want me to do? What's wrong, Jim?
Tell me!

JIM
I'm . . . If I had to go . . . for a long time . . . away . . .

MOLLY
Oh, not another one of your business trips again. Not that
MOLLY (Continuing)

story again. Don't start that now, Jim.

JIM

No, sweet, but if I must go away, a long, long time, I want you to know . . .

MOLLY

You don't fool me one bit, you. I know all about your so-called 'business' trips, all right—'funny business trips'—that's what they are. I know everything. I've seen my lawyer. What do you think it did to your brother, when he found out what you had been up to? You killed him, Jim. You killed him as sure as you're standing there. You killed him, that's what. It would be better if it were you, Jim; you're no good. Oh, I know you're great as a churchman, but there are other things more important than just closing a business deal for the Church. Why don't you just go off someplace and die. You're killing all the rest of us off as it is.

JIM

No, dear! You don't understand! I'm —

MOLLY

Oh, drop dead!

(JIM GOES BACK TO JACK, WHO IS LAUGHING.)

JACK

You're not laughing, Jim. Don't you get it? "Drop dead?" (HE LAUGHS.) Oh, but you did get it didn't you? (LAUGHS)
JIM
Then it's true? It's all over. But why me? Why now?

JACK
Why? Because it is your Time. No one ever escapes that. I come to everyman. Theirs will come in their proper turn.

JIM
And now, I have nothing? Nowhere to hide myself? I am alone. It's not fair. Not to cost me my whole life.

JACK
It was your whole life that cost you your Death.

JIM
Wha—?

JACK
How simple you are, Jim. When your Life is finally whole. It is Time for Death. Perhaps that $7,000 deal was the finishing touch, who knows?

JIM
And now I am nothing.

JACK
Nothing? Did you say nothing?

JIM
What is there left, my God, after this? After what I've just been through, after seeing my whole life, my whole world collapse before my very eyes and, seemingly, by my own hand? Nothing! God, yes, nothing! Acres and acres of it? Miles and miles, row upon row upon row; nothing, nothing, nothing!
JIM (Continuing)

Yes! Nothing! Yes! I see. All the deeds and thoughts of my life come tumbling past me now. I see them, there in my mind, and they each rebuke me, and mock my sorrow, now. Acts I had forgotten in the very doing of them, are cascading before my eyes — forcing my mind to remember, and my heart to shudder at the horrible sight of them. Only now, now, when I can see what I really was.

JACK

And ... ?

JIM

And her!

JACK

Yes.

JIM

You've come because of her. I had nearly forgotten her. Oh, the truth of that.

JACK

You have no idea of the truth of that.

JIM

No? I suppose I don't.

JACK

You can't even remember her.

JIM

Oh, God, how I remember.
JACK
You have never known her.

JIM
I have known her too well. Too well. There is the truth. At least, I can say it.

JACK
Here is the truth you thought you knew and knew it not.

JIM
Now you begin to sound like me.

JACK
Can you hear the truth? Do you dare? Eh?

JIM
I don't need anybody to tell me who I am.

JACK
Here is what you are. Your mother died in childbirth. Yours.

JIM
What?

JACK
She died giving birth to you. You never knew your mother alive.

JIM
How...?

JACK
Your life brought her death.
JIM
I?

JACK
You. That's what you've been running from.

JIM
How is it I can remember her? Her eyes? I remember!

JACK
A dream.

JIM
A dream? You mean it's been all a dream? Jack? Mother? All?

JACK
A dream.

JIM
And all those years of misery, of running, of guilt . . .

JACK
A mere nothing.

JIM
Nothing?!

JACK
A dream. You are otherwise innocent, Jim Nation. The guilt was never yours.

JIM
Innocent? Guilt? But, no! What matters that now. A dream's a dream, but I do remember, and the deed is done. I look and see, yes, the deed is done. And gone. And dead. But here, here inside it lives on, here in my mind. Even though now I

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JIM (Continuing)

know all, and she is dead. I want her, love her still. Such forbidden joy my memory pours into my brain, more bitter yet, in the remembering. Still, and still, with all, I want her now. I call out to her, "Even yet, I love you still, small lonely one." And then memory thus o'erwhelms the dread of such a deed, and I see her form before my mind's eye. (FALLING TO HIS KNEES.) Oh, my mind's eye! My mind's eye! Where's there blindness enough for it? 

JACK

It's over now.

JIM

But how? Even yet? How?

JACK

Who knows what visions we see in our mother's womb? What horrors? What screams of terror, so muffled to us by that very flesh that gave them urge to utterance? And what beauties there, yet unmarred in their darkest innocence?

JIM (CRAWLING)

Even in death, I can not escape? Am I never to be free of it? What can I do now?

JACK

You can crawl. I want to see you crawl and kiss my foot.

(JIM CRAWLS TO JACK AND KISSES HIS FOOT. THEN HE RECOGNIZES THE SHOES OF JACK.)
JIM

Your shoes! Shoes! Your shoes, Jack! It's you! Jack, it's you all along.

(JIM GETS UP AND PULLS JACK'S MASK OFF.)

It's been a joke all along. Well, thank God! Fair's fair. You really had me there, Jack. Thanks, Jack, thanks, old man. That makes us quits. Let bygones by bygones.

(JIM SHAKES JACK'S HAND.)

JACK

Fair's fair. Bygones be bygones. (HE LAUGHS.)

JIM

It's O.K., it's your turn to come back. I'm tired of this Church business, anyway. You're better at it than I am. After all, it was you who went through the seminary. You know all the stuff. I'm tired of faking all the answers people come to me for. Thank God, it's all over!

JACK

Thank God! Thank God, it's all over! That's just it, Jim. It is all over! Forever, it's all over! Forever and ever!

JIM

What do you mean?

JACK

Over! You're dead, Jim. Dead, as a doornail, dead!

JIM

Dead!?

JACK

Dead.

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JIM

No joke?

JACK

Some joke! Only in death do we work out our armed truce, our agreement! Our understanding. *(LAUGHS)*

JIM

Molly, what about Molly, over there? Will she remain here with us? What happens now?

JACK

Haven't you noticed?

JIM

What?

*(JACK GOES OVER AND TRIES TO AROUSE MOLLY.)*

JACK

No, she's just gone. Gone from us.

JIM

Molly, Molly.

JACK

Gone.

JIM

How beautiful she was, and gentle, and kind. It seems so long ago, already, just these few minutes. A long time ago. I miss her already. For the first time, I miss her.

*(HE KNEELS BESIDE HER.*

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JACK

We're outside of Time now, Jim.

JIM

Already? How long's it been? How long Molly?

(JACK TOUCHES MOLLY'S FACE.)

JACK

Too long already. Let's go, Jim

JIM

No, wait!

JACK

Let's go. It's time now.

JIM

No! Wait! She moved.

MOLLY

Jim? Where are you? You won't leave alone again?

JACK

We must hurry, Jim. Come on.

JIM

No. I won't go. I'm staying this time.

JACK

You have to leave.

JIM

There's no 'have to'. I'm staying, no matter what. I love her. You see? I love her. It's as simple as that, and I'm staying here.
JACK
It's too late for all that now. There's no time left.

JIM
To Hell with time, I'm staying.

MOLLY
Jim? Jim, I had a dream, a terrible dream again. A dream you'll go away again. Don't leave me.

JACK
Hurry!

MOLLY
Jim? I'm tired.

JIM
Then sleep awhile.

MOLLY
I'm afraid.

JIM
Afraid?

MOLLY
A bad dream, if I sleep you'll go away again. I must stay awake. So tired . . . Everything seems so confused.

JIM
Sleep the, Molly, I love you. I'll never leave you. We'll straighten it all out.

MOLLY
Tired . . . " I love you, he said. Tired . . . car rides . . . sleep . . . (SHE SLEEPS.)

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JIM
Sleep, tired one. Well start out all over again. You'll see. You'll see.

JACK
Well, you've done it. Stay with her, then, Jim. You've won. But, I must go.

JIM
Where? Where will you go now?

JACK
Where? Where there is brightness behind the light of the sun, to see; and a blackness at the bottom of the seas, never imagined within the mind of man. I wish to see that once, too. I wish to wallow in the truth of the mud-holes of Africa. I want to see the whole universe in the dryness of a pair of shoes.

JIM
I know the place. The dream of what was.

JACK
Yes, and the future in the dream. We've done that now. Between us. Stay with her, so I won't be lonely there.

JIM
I will.

JACK
And Jim, old brother, keep a better set of books this time.

JIM
I'll miss you. I loved you, too.

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JACK
I know.

JIM
Died in childbirth, you say? Isn't that the strangest thing.

JACK
It's strange. Good-bye, brother, and be careful in Africa

JACK
In Africa— And Jim — I'll be back.

(JACK EXITS.)

JIM
I know. I'll be ready. Keep your shoes dry, Jack!

CURTAIN