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Never was the man put out

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NEVER WAS THE MAN PUT OUT

by

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Approved by:

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Chairman, Board of Examiners

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Date
NEVER WAS THE MAN PUT OUT

CHARACTERS

Jan                 Brian's wife, age 25
Stella              Brian's step-mother, age 34
Victor              Brian's father, age 55
Brian               Age 23
Mark Temple         A Novelist
Marge Temple        His wife

Place: A large city in America; Time: The Present

Act I               Early morning
Act II, Scene 1 Two o'clock the afternoon of the same day
                     Scene 2 An hour and a half later
Act III             That evening
ACT ONE

(As the curtain opens the stage is in half light. Sun seeps in through the blinds. Stella is pouring a cup of coffee. She leaves the pot on the stove and carries the cup to the table. She sits making no attempt to drink the coffee. Jan enters.)

JAN: There is a moment between the cold floor and the first cup of coffee that is interminable.

STEL: There is another moment—considerably shorter—between the top of the stairs and the bottom wherein you'll break your neck unless you slow down.

JAN: My moments are never so violent. A turned ankle, perhaps, but nothing broken. My bones are blessed—my moments guarantee it.

STEL: Never trust a moment. My father did and he was in no position to support a family. There's grapefruit in the refrigerator.

JAN: No thanks. A grapefruit is beligerent at seven in the morning. I'd like some sun though. (She opens the blinds. Stella rises quickly and faces her—a moment:) But there's a morning outside. I knew it before I was out of bed. I saw it follow the sun through the Venetian blinds and watched it walk to Brian's pillow and spill everything right by his nose. And there he lay—just an inch away from morning.

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STEL: Why didn't you push him in?
JAN: Because he's still dragging the night, and he wouldn't have let it go—I know. (Pause) But mornings have happened before today. Maybe another will happen tomorrow—or some of this one will be left over.
STEL: Only if you stay drunk for twenty-four hours.
JAN: I don't drink.
STEL: Then don't chase after the morning. To be optimistic and sober when you're over twenty-five is to be well on the road to catatonic schizophrenia.
JAN: But I'm not far over—no farther than the sun from Brian's nose. Oh, if only it were more vain!
STEL: Brian's nose?
JAN: The sun. It might have been blinded by its reflection in the mirror and tripped on a chair, or—or it might have sneezed. The sun does that, you know. Makes things sneeze, I mean. It would have waked Brian.
STEL: Brian likes mornings when they happen at ten o'clock.
JAN: No, he doesn't! Not really—-not always. Not until mornings began to be the end. Not too many mornings ago—not too many—they happened because there was a day to follow—not a night to end.
STEL: Brian always looked to the night...
JAN: But not away from the day. (She turns away) He found me in the light. Why does he move away?
STEL: (Pause) Brian...move away?
JAN: Tell me, Stella. What happened to the guy with an eye for a morning? When did he get wrapped up in a motion that couldn't carry me? You may see—I've thought you might...

STEL: He's helping to rebuild a city. And a man can't lean really hard in two directions at once. If you can't feel his weight...

JAN: That doesn't have to be true. Men are stronger than that. He fought a war and he loved me all in the same moment. It's not the city. It's not the city, Stella.

STEL: Then he's growing. Men do, you know. Sporadically, they lurch toward fifty, or sixty, or some such unlikely age. Tomorrow he'll rest, then he'll remember.

JAN: He remembers now. Tomorrow there will be more to remember, and it doesn't help—it makes his mornings darker.

STEL: Then don't try to part the blinds. If he needs the dark he'll scream at the light.

JAN: Then it's better to scream! It has to be!

STEL: Better for him?

JAN: It has to be.

STEL: No! Leave him alone! (During the last six lines the tension has increased and Stella speaks too loudly)

JAN: (Pause) What?

STEL: A man grows outside of woman. And then he rests—and then he'll come to you.
JAN: Do you know this?
STEL: Only leave him alone.
JAN: I don't think so. I watch him move alone in the shadows—deeper and darker—until I can't see him. I don't know where he'll come out and I'm afraid I won't be there when he does. I try to follow but I don't know how. I ask to be dragged after him, but he can't hear me—and there is no place to hold on. So I feel him move until I'm numb—and I wait—and think: it doesn't have to change just because it moves. But it's dark, and I can't see, and I don't feel lucky.
STEL: You're tired.
JAN: Nothing so heroic. I'm pregnant.
STEL: You're not!
JAN: You won't convince me. I've got inside information.
STEL: Since when?
JAN: Since two months ago—for sure.
STEL: Then you're safe.
JAN: Safe?
STEL: There are good doctors.
JAN: Abortion?
STEL: Certainly.
JAN: No.
STEL: Brian wants the child?
VIC: (From off-stage) Stel!
STEL: Does he?
JAN: He must!
STEL: Then he doesn't! You know it!

VIC: Stella, I'm lost (Speaking as he enters). And so is everything else it seems. A packet containing at least a thousand letters has taken upon itself the ruination of my day by refusing to be found.

STEL: On the table in the hall.

VIC: Impossible. I refuse to be the victim of anything so simple. It must at least be under the table. Where did you find it?

STEL: In the bathtub.

VIC: The bathtub!

STEL: The bathtub.

VIC: Well, it could have been worse—then I would have had to spend the morning dragging the river. Good morning, Jan.

JAN: Hi. When did you learn to get dressed before coffee?

VIC: I was up at the crack of 7:10. The first six minutes I spent fruitlessly shaving and getting dressed—somewhat simultaneously. Since then I've been floundering about the library in search of my epistolic biography. In the bathtub, you say! Incredible! How did you find them?

STEL: I bathed.

VIC: Good Lord! They must be drenched!

STEL: Only around the edges—hardly perceptible.

VIC: And you?

STEL: Thoroughly.
VIC: Fine. I like my women wet. It makes me hungry.
JAN: You're vulgar. Eggs did you say?
VIC: No, women I said.
JAN: Boiled?
VIC: Wet.
JAN: I mean for breakfast.
VIC: No thanks. No time. Brian down yet?
STEL: He's rubbing noses with a sunbeam.
JAN: No, not yet. He...he sleeps...
VIC: What? He sleeps? My son sleeps when worlds are about to crumble. Today we let contracts for demolition. Today a packet of letters has resolved itself into sixteen square miles of destruction. And my son sleeps.
JAN: He sleeps...
VIC: Well, he's tired. He needs sleep.
JAN: Yes...
VIC: And you too. You'd be better off if you'd spend less time at the university.
JAN: I've got to learn what a sociologist is. It's my husband's profession, remember?
VIC: I can teach you everything we both know, and it won't take nearly so long.
JAN: You're too humble. Besides I think I need another point of view.
VIC: You may be right. You've followed Brian through some long months. Well, it won't be long now. Soon I'll give him back to you.
JAN: Can you?

VIC: I can do anything. This is the one time in my life when I feel justified in boasting. Today hyperbole becomes literal analysis. Hasn't Brian told you?

JAN: When? I've scarcely seen him since...since this thing began.

VIC: This thing, my dear, is now on the verge of ending. I'm surprised Brian didn't tell you. The mayor called last night. He put the pressure on, and with the help of the boys on the city council we got every building between 86th and 92nd streets condemned. The entire area will be leveled within two months. The tenements are going—the tin cans and the garbage—all of it. And when you see the new buildings going up you'll know why you haven't seen much of your man.

JAN: It's going through then?

VIC: It has gone through—as of last night. Despite everything it has gone through. And Brian has had as much to do with it as anyone.

JAN: Then it is his work. His work...he's had to...

STEL: (Heating his coffee) Drink your coffee, dear.

VIC: And it's not only Brian I have to thank. It's all of you. (Taking Stella's arm) You, my dear. I'd never have been able to move if it weren't for you. Don't forget, Stella. Don't forget what you are to me.

BRIAN: (Enters from upstairs. Jan rushes to embrace him.)
He is severely congenial, strained, anxious) Hey, what's this?
JAN: You're my hero.
BRIAN: And do all your heroes fair so favorably?
JAN: Only the ones I'm married to. Want some grapefruit?
BRIAN: No. Just coffee, thank you. Good morning, Vic.
(Jan makes a move for the coffee but Stella has been waiting)
VIC: 'Morning, Son. Say...(Looking through his inside pockets)
STEL: (Delivering his coffee) Good morning, Brian.
VIC: Have you got the papers from the Craw Firm? I thought I had them in my pocket.
BRIAN: In my brief case. You gave them to me last night.
VIC: There is a deliberate conspiracy afoot designed to convince me that I am not the efficiently running sociologist that I know myself to be.
BRIAN: Conspiracies before breakfast? You give mankind too much credit.
VIC: My wife recovered my letters from the bathtub—the bathtub, mind you. I knew the milkman, or some such unlikely person, had absconded with them and now...
JAN: The bathtub incident could be avoided by converting it into a filing cabinet.
STEL: Or—forgive the absurdity—reserving your work
for the library and the bathroom for...

VIC: For shaving, I know. But how obvious. On the other hand, with belief in the project and a will to succeed, I dare say I could learn to read at the same time—an accomplishment perhaps not extraordinary but unique.

JAN: And practical. Consider the time he'll save.

STEL: Consider the blood he'll lose.

VIC: Progress demands sacrifice.

BRIAN: Do you want to take the Craw Firm papers with you?

VIC: They have to be at the mayor's office by 1:30. Can you manage it?

JAN: Can I take them? I have a two o'clock class. I can drop them off on my way to unravel the Social Organization of Primitive Peoples—Anthropology 167, Professor Dean.

VIC: Do you think Dean would approve?

JAN: Of unravelling?

VIC: Of the mayor. He's a Republican, isn't he?

JAN: The mayor?

VIC: Professor Dean.

JAN: No. You're thinking of Professor Wateaux—Dutch and Flemish Masters from Van Eyck to Peter Brueghel—Art History and Criticism 142. Straight Republican since the mixup over the Tennessee border question in 1906. But the class meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays so
there's nothing to fear. Today is Wednesday and Dean is a Democrat.

BRIAN: It's getting late.

JAN: I'll take the papers to the mayor.

VIC: Fine. I'll get my brief case.

STEL: You'll be home early, dear? Remember you're driving me to the country.

VIC: Today? Good Lord, I forgot. Impossible today, dear. I'll be fortunate to get home before dark. I'm sorry.

STEL: I wish you could. I've some things to pick up. You could help me. Besides the break would do you good.

JAN: Brian can go.

BRIAN: What?

JAN: With Stella.

VIC: Good idea. It's time he relaxed a bit.

JAN: And you can give Stella a hand.

BRIAN: No. Wait. I've got...

JAN: It's your duty as a gentleman. Besides, wasn't it John Dewey who said, "All paths lead to a lady in need."

BRIAN: Jan...

JAN: Well, if he didn't, he should have.

VIC: There's no way out, son. You've been appropriated.

BRIAN: I can't...I've an appointment with Dr. Gallagher this afternoon.

JAN: Not until 4:30. I looked on your calendar.
BRIAN: I'd like to. (Too loudly he repeats) I'd like to.

JAN: Fine. Then it's settled.

BRIAN: (Weakly) I'd like to.

JAN: Then do it.

BRIAN: No! Leave me alone! Can't you leave me alone!
(The last few speeches have forced him into a corner.
For a moment he is frantic—belligerent. Everyone is frozen. Slowly Jan turns to her cup of coffee and picks it up. Stella rises suddenly and makes a quick move to the door—exits left)

VIC: What's happening? All of a sudden I've got a house full of temperamental people. (Exits after Stella)

BRIAN: Maybe I should have gone to bed earlier—or better yet, stayed there later. (Jan tries to speak—it doesn't work) I should leave you, Jan.

JAN: Leave me...

BRIAN: You...this house...everything...

JAN: Darling, you've left me already—weeks ago. You look past me into the dark. You move in the shadows. Why, Brian?

BRIAN: (Quickly violent) I don't know! I can't say.
(Slowly lost) I don't know.

JAN: But something, darling, something you know.

BRIAN: Leave me alone. I ask you, don't look to me.

JAN: You ask everything of me.

BRIAN: It's all I know. I dwell on it.
JAN: There's more, Brian. I know because you taught it to me. And you can't forget—not now—because I remember. There was a time, perhaps, before you looked where I had been waiting...

BRIAN: But we can't remember what is now—not together we can't. And it is now that the sun rises or falls, and now that it asks to be seen, and you look to it—but you look alone.

JAN: But why? Must now be apart from what has been, and us from each other? It isn't real, Brian. It can't be. Moments are one in time. The mind may dislocate and distort, but nothing happens to time—only to the mind.

BRIAN: The mind...?

JAN: The mind, yes. Ask of it and you will remember.

BRIAN: There is too much of the present in my mind to make remembering a moment ago bearable.

JAN: A moment ago? That is when we were, Brian. Then it is me.

BRIAN: No, Jan...

JAN: Not your work nor anything else...but me.

BRIAN: Stop it! Will you stop it!

JAN: Then what are you doing? Why do you wait?

BRIAN: Because I don't know! I don't know...not what nor how...I can't move.

JAN: You move away from me.

BRIAN: Because I remember you from a moment ago--
a beautiful moment. The moment has changed but not your beauty...
JAN: Then hold to the beauty. Don't let go.
BRIAN: And I moved in the beauty, and we remember...
JAN: We remember...
BRIAN: But what is me now does not belong to what was us then...
JAN: Nor what is me...
BRIAN: Your past and present are one. Mine are not.
JAN: No, Brian...
BRIAN: I'm ugly! Can't you see it? My time is ugly!
JAN: I can't see...
BRIAN: Because you're blind...
JAN: Because I love you. That hasn't changed. Why must the beauty?
BRIAN: Why must the beauty...
JAN: Unless what you found in me is gone. Unless I no longer...
BRIAN: No, Jan! Don't look to yourself. Don't look...
JAN: Then you look to me! Look to me again, Brian--then I'll know.
BRIAN: Listen...listen to me...then you'll know...
JAN: Brian...
VIC: (Entering) Am I to late to catch the second round?
BRIAN: Vic...
VIC: She's all right. Hates to see you kids spat, that's
all.

BRIAN: Vic, listen to me. I...

VIC: Let's have that second cup of coffee than we'll hit the road. Can't wait all...

BRIAN: Stop it, damn it, will you stop it! (Vic stops half way to the coffee pot. Jan is watching Brian. Nobody moves for a long moment.) Dad...(He chokes--sinks into the chair) God, what am I doing?

VIC: (Coming to him, places his hand on Brian's shoulder) You do need a break. (Brian begins slowly shaking his head) Too much of one thing never did anybody any good. All work and no play--you know the story. Stay home today, Son...

BRIAN: No! No, I...I guess I should be quarantined. I'm beginning to rub off.

JAN: No, darling, it's me. I...well, I...I guess I just don't give you room to grow.

BRIAN: (Rising) I don't need any room! I don't need anything. (Jan has moved to him on her last speech and when Brian speaks he moves away from the close confinement with father and wife.) Look, I've got some kind of bug this morning. (Apologetic, turning to them) It's persistent as hell. Let's get this day in the braces, huh? Things have to be moved.

JAN: Drink that coffee, honey. I'll go upstairs and get your stuff together. (Exits)

VIC: (Without moving) Coffee?
BRIAN: Vic, let's get going.

VIC: Do you remember when you were in the sixth grade and you took that bicycle? For two days you kept it hid—for two days you worried—before you told me. But you did tell me, and we managed to do something about it. (Brian is silent) Son?

STEL: (Entering with Vic's brief case and coat) Victor, you're late already. You can continue this conversation in the car.

VIC: The big advantage you have over an alarm-clock is that you follow me around...

STEL: Get into your coat...

VIC: And you keep my feet warm...

STEL: (Pushing him toward the door) Get the car started. Brian will be there in a minute.

VIC: And I could never love an alarm-clock.

STEL: And don't forget Mark Temple.

VIC: Temple? Did I leave him here?

STEL: You're going to remind them to come over for drinks tonight.

VIC: Oh, certainly. Now you really don't imagine I could forget a thing like that, do you?

STEL: (To the door with him) Hurry home, dear. (Victor exits. Stella takes two slow steps toward Brian)

STEL: (Softly) Why do you insist on acting like a child?

BRIAN: A child? That would put you in sort of a peculiar light, wouldn't it.
STEL: (Angry) Listen to me!

BRIAN: No! Don't ask of me, Stella--nothing! Nothing--not yet. In a moment, perhaps--but not yet.

STEL: Brian, you're talking like an idiot.

BRIAN: Not an idiot--something else, something akin perhaps, but not so comfortable.

STEL: Why do you avoid me--avoid everything?

BRIAN: Because I don't belong to anything...

STEL: You belong to my bed, Brian! We've wanted it and we belong to it.

BRIAN: My father's bed! His bed! Can't you remember? His moments I have had--crawled for--in order to touch beyond my reach.

STEL: So that's it. Your conscience isn't wearing well. (She begins to laugh) A conscience suddenly blooming out of an otherwise sterile five years. (Laughing)

BRIAN: Shut up! Shut up, Stella! There's more to come, do you hear? And you're a part of it. Yes, a conscience, if you will. But it's a product of our bed--our bed! And it's growing...so laugh, Stella--laugh and watch it grow.

STEL: You're out of your mind!

BRIAN: I'm out of my life--and my wife's and Victor's. So very far out that it seems incredible. There's something to laugh at, Stella. A man who walks out of his life. Incredible...impossible...and yet...(He begins to laugh slowly, softly)
(Jan enters)

JAN: (Quietly) Brian...

BRIAN: My life is watching a world go by...(He turns and sees Jan) My life.

JAN: Don't go today, dear. Stay here--rest--sleep. You can. Today you can.

BRIAN: Sleep! Jan, dearest Jan, you speak of sleep. Speak of sleep to a child, Jan. Men have to watch worlds move--and crumble. Men have to grow--in the sun they have to grow. (He takes his coat and brief case from Jan) Thank you....Forgive me, darling--I've some sort of work to do. (Exits)

(A moment's pause, Jan moves to the door)

STEL: Leave him alone!

(Jan stops and looks sharply at Stella as the lights fade out)
ACT TWO
Scene One

(The scene is the library of the house about 2 o'clock in the afternoon of the same day. Light reveals Stella standing by a globe of the world, her hand tracing an outline on its surface. She stops, perfectly still and intense. She takes a few steps, a body movement of helpless frustration. Brian appears and stands without making a sound—a moment—Stella turns quickly—hesitates—walks slowly left to the desk.)

STEL: (Not quite maliciously) The hero returns. You really are courageous—after all. (Pause) I didn't suppose you would be back—not this afternoon anyway. Too busy, or too tired—or what?

BRIAN: (Standing in the doorway watching her, not moving)

STEL: Perhaps you felt some sort of obligation. (She walks slowly in front of him to right of center) Obligations seem to be the fad this season, and among the intellectuals particularly. Here I thought they only invented them—for the needy.

BRIAN: (On the preceding speech he has taken a few steps toward the desk left. He faces away from Stella.)

STEL: Or perhaps the return amid silence is a bashful attempt to express a change of heart. (She has moved to his up-stage shoulder) Are changes of heart also in vogue?
BRIAN: (He jerks around and slaps Stella hard on the face. She is forced backward by the blow--begins to fall but Brian grabs her.) Because you're too goddamn smart! Because you walk outside and look in and feel nothing but satisfied and clever! Because you stand on a pyre and live like it was on a pedestal.

STEL: Brian...

BRIAN: Be careful, Stella--cautious! Don't move quickly. You might make a mistake. (A pause--he lets her go, moves to above desk) You wanted to go to the country?

STEL: Brian, listen to me...

BRIAN: Or talk? Or--what?

(Stella turns away in exasperation, Brian breaks to the door)

STEL: (Quickly) Where are you going?

BRIAN: Why, to the country. It sounded like such a wonderful idea this morning. Au revoir.

STEL: You'll stay right here!

BRIAN: Softly, Stella. Take big steps, any place you like, but don't walk over me.

STEL: (Desperate) Brian, what are you doing?

BRIAN: Doing?

STEL: Please...

BRIAN: Are you worried, Stella?

STEL: Brian, will you stop it!

(Once again Brian starts for the door, slowly this time. Stella meets him almost pleading in attitude. Brian
pauses and slowly raises his hand to touch her face.)

BRIAN: Poor, dear, Stella. You have to follow me. No matter how much it hurts—you have to follow me.

STEL: Stay, Brian, not long—a moment...

BRIAN: (Coming back into the room—away from her) And nothing can be done about it—not by you, nor me—nor anyone. I've a power, Stella, and I can't get rid of it.

STEL: Sit down, Brian. (He waits a moment and collapses into a chair) I've waited for you. You know that.

BRIAN: What time is it?

STEL: She's gone—half an hour ago.

BRIAN: I know. I watched her leave the house. She walked to the car and drove away—down the street.

STEL: She might have seen you.

BRIAN: (Smiling) She might.

STEL: Brian...

BRIAN: And if she did she'll wonder—and if she wonders she'll be back. Think of it. Caught—talking to one another in the library.

STEL: Why did you come back?

BRIAN: I knew you would be here; I knew Jan would be gone.

STEL: And then?

BRIAN: And then...I don't really know. You see, Stella, I'm in an impossible position. I've got to make a choice, and I don't know how to choose.

STEL: Are you certain you have to choose? Maybe...
BRIAN: That is the only thing I'm certain of.
STEL: Is that why you've been avoiding me?
BRIAN: I really haven't been avoiding you. To avoid you would be to make a choice. And if I could do that my position would at least be tolerable.
STEL: Perhaps I've imagined your shying away when I enter the room—when I speak to you...
BRIAN: Oh, no, you're right. But it's only a by-product—an accident that results from not being able to choose.
STEL: Brian, this is ridiculous...
BRIAN: Yes, isn't it? (He breaks away) So damn ridiculous, I could cry...Listen, Stella...A cloud descends. An image appears out of the mist and says, "I am here before you, but you do not know that I am here. I am speaking to you but you cannot hear me. Even if you could hear me you could not understand the language. From a form that you cannot see and with a voice that you cannot hear and in a language that is unintelligible, I say, 'Here are the alternatives. You must choose and your choice is a matter of eternal significance...'."
And then the formless image and the unheard voice speaking gibberish goes back where it came from. Even if the image had said within itself what it had begun to say, I couldn't have heard it, and if I had heard I couldn't have understood. So what isn't doesn't say anything—and yet, I feel the necessity of it all. (Pause) It
is silly isn't it?

STEL: Of course it is. (Sort of laughing) Where do you get such fantastic thoughts?

BRIAN: They descend.

STEL: (Trying to be playful) From the great somewhere.

BRIAN: No, from self. This is real inspiration, Stella.

STEL: Inspiration? At times you're very much of your mother.

BRIAN: Of course...my mother! You remember her.

STEL: Five years of her I remember.

BRIAN: The five when she died. And even those were out of the time that allows for imagination.

STEL: And inspiration?

BRIAN: She read to me. Even when I was too old to be read to.

STEL: E. T. A. Hoffmann...

BRIAN: She read well...

STEL: From the public library. Victor thought him from another world...

BRIAN: And the Old Testament. Into the night sometimes...

STEL: Phantasy...

BRIAN: And Hans Andersen. I remember...

STEL: Fairy tales.

BRIAN: She read well.

STEL: From whence cometh your inspiration?

BRIAN: Inspiration?

STEL: Your phantasies.
BRIAN: Not phantasy, Stella—self.

STEL: You mean the little tongue-tied image who wasn't there?

BRIAN: (Pause) Yes.

STEL: And that is where you seek your council? Brian, dear, no wonder you talk in circles.

BRIAN: Yes. No wonder.

STEL: And from this you suddenly learn that you have a problem. I think you were ill-advised.

BRIAN: Not suddenly, Stella. The problem was there. I was born into it.

STEL: And what accounts for your being so favored?

BRIAN: (Laughing) Oh, Stella, we're all favored. You needn't feel slighted—nor Victor, nor Jen—not anyone. It's a universal legacy—inevitably distributed equally from the first awkward moment in man's time. Don't feel neglected, Stella. You'll get your share.

STEL: I'm certain of that—as long as you feel such a distressing obligation to provide me with it.

BRIAN: Obligation...?

STEL: That's what you've been doing during the past weeks, isn't it? Graciously providing me with a problem? Well, I appreciate your concern, but I feel no necessity. Will you tell that to the little man from the mist?

BRIAN: And then?

STEL: Come back to me.
BRIAN: And that would solve everything?

STEL: What is there to solve? There never was a problem, and nothing has changed. How can there be one now?

BRIAN: I have changed.

STEL: Then you have made a problem where none exists. You force yourself to choose when a choice isn't necessary. I know what I am to you, Brian. You have shown me many times. And there is no need for you to walk away.

BRIAN: Stella, you understand so little...

STEL: I understand what I want—and what you want too. I don't see any necessity for creating a vast complication. You already know the way. Why deliberately get lost?

BRIAN: Everyone is lost. The difference lies in the fact that some people aren't aware of it.

STEL: But you are.

BRIAN: Yes.

STEL: And now what happens?

BRIAN: Now...

STEL: Let me tell you. You get unpleasant and begin acting like a spoiled child. You think you've got hold of something that makes you different from anyone else. But you don't like to be different so you try to drag a few people after you.

BRIAN: Don't get clever, Stella.

STEL: Do you think Victor doesn't know something is the matter—and Jan? Do you think they haven't seen
how you avoid me?

BRIAN: I'm sure they have.

STEL: Then why? Why do you act like this? Can't you see that what you are doing does nothing?

BRIAN: That's just it. What I am doing does nothing—nothing! That is why I think I must...I must...perhaps I'll go away, leave everything and go.

STEL: But why?

BRIAN: Because then I'll be moving anyway. I've got to do something. I can't just hang suspended—treading water...

STEL: Then do it! Go away for a few days—by yourself...

BRIAN: For a few days?

STEL: Yes. The project is on its feet and Victor can get along without you for awhile. He'd want you to do it. Rest, Brian. Go away—then come back.

BRIAN: To you.

STEL: Yes, to me. It's what we've both wanted. You know it. And we still want it. So come back, Brian. Come back to me.

BRIAN: Stella...

STEL: Don't stay away. It wouldn't work, Brian. You know it wouldn't.

BRIAN: No, you're right. It wouldn't work. Nothing would change. Going away doesn't seem to be the answer. Perhaps you can help, Stella.

STEL: I know I can if you'll let me.
BRIAN: All right, I'll give you a chance. First, what do you suggest I do with you?
STEL: That's easy...
BRIAN: No, wait a minute. I don't know where you fit anymore. I don't know where anybody fits—and least of all myself. I shave every other day now—perhaps you've noticed—so I can avoid my reflection in the glass. But I believe that not shaving isn't going to solve anything—no more so than going away would.
STEL: Brian, remember. Remember the first days—before you went to the army, before...yes, before. They were before everything. And they worked for us, Brian. Remember them...
BRIAN: No, no, Stella, not remembering. Not again. Why is it that women consider remembering an all-time all-purpose cure? It's because you're naive. You're convinced that the present is an improvement over the past, and if you remember the unwholesome past in the light of the purged present—you feel secure and comfortable. But I know better. No thank you. No recollections.
STEL: No recollections. You're hard to please—especially so now that I discover you're not consistent with the rest of mankind.
BRIAN: Let consistent mankind revel in memory. To me it is anathema.
STEL: And, if I understand you correctly, the present
is worse?

BRIAN: If it weren't, I could live with an offering of memory.

STEL: Excluding the past and the present doesn't leave a great deal to work with—not practically anyway.

BRIAN: You're right. So what must I do? I must take the time that is available and do with it what the time allows.

STEL: Which is what?

BRIAN: That's precisely what we're trying to decide.

STEL: Are we getting anywhere?

BRIAN: Certainly. Already I know that something has to happen. And further—I know that I don't like myself very well.

STEL: I'm beginning to think you show good taste.

BRIAN: And I know that it is you who started me knowing...I watch you, Stella. I look at you—hard—thinking maybe you understand something that I am not even aware of, maybe you have a direction in all this, maybe...

STEL: Brian, do we have to...

BRIAN: But you haven't. Nothing has changed there. You look exactly as you did when I first saw you.

STEL: Because that's the way I've wanted it. And you, too, Brian. This much is the same. Why do you look to change?

BRIAN: I don't really know. All I know is that I
can no longer stand where I have stood all my life. 
I've been wrapped up in a process that keeps growing and 
growing and never gets outside of itself. It doesn't 
belong anyplace. It doesn't mean anything. It's just mine.

STEL; You're making absolutely no sense.

BRIAN: I've told you--I have to make a choice. I 
ever have before--not really. I ride on the crest of a 
thousand generations--decisions through the centuries. 
And now--when it's up to me--I don't know how--I sink. 
This much I do know; I've been wrong all my life. I 
don't know why I'm wrong or what it is that makes me wrong...

STEL: If you're talking like this to amuse yourself...

BRIAN: You haven't the slightest idea of what is hap­pening all around you, and yet you're right in the mid­dle of it.

STEL: Nothing is happening! What sort of fiction are you living with?

BRIAN: Fiction? Then it's my imagination that recalls being in bed with my father's wife?

STEL: Ah, the belated conscience again--rearing its awkward head.

BRIAN: That's it, Stella. And save the wit. It belongs to another time.

STEL: No, no, no, Brian. It's more than appropriate here. What's the procedure now? Tell me. Abstenance
and then repentance...?

BRIAN: Shut up, Stella! Shut up!

STEL: Perhaps you would like me to secure Victor's permission. (Brian breaks away--there is a pause)

All right. Amuse yourself with your silly little pastime. Walk around me for awhile. But you'll be back to me. You can't stay away. Not you, Brian. You know too well what we've meant to each other.

BRIAN: (Pause) No, Stella. I won't come back. Not this time. Because it's going to be impossible. I'm going to make it impossible.

STEL: You will come back. You will remember, and soon--very soon, you'll come to me.

BRIAN: I'm going to tell them, Stella. Victor and Jan--I'm going to tell them everything.

STEL: You're going to what?

BRIAN: I'm going to tell them.

STEL: (Laughing, disbelief) Brian...

BRIAN: I'm going to tell them, Stella.

STEL: Tell them? How? You can't--you couldn't

BRIAN: I can, Stella. I will.

STEL: But why?

BRIAN: I must.

STEL: Why?

BRIAN: Because it's a chance--a chance that can't happen again. A chance to belong to something outside of myself--to do something real--to...to begin.
STEEL: To begin! Oh, Brian, this is a chance to be completely senseless. What are you trying to do? What's supposed to happen?

BRIAN: I know what will happen—part of it anyway.

STEEL: Do you? Then tell me about it. Tell me about Victor—and Jan. Tell me what you think you know.

(Brian is silent) We are all right, Brian. You know we are. You remember. (Softly, surely) Take me upstairs, Brian. Now.

BRIAN: You had better go, Stella...

STEEL: Brian, don't do this to me! You don't have to. This is a dream. It's not real.

BRIAN: Isn't it real? You remember, too, don't you? Isn't everything that has happened a fact? Didn't I come to this house and two weeks later find my way to your bed? In mid-afternoon, with my father—your husband, not two hours away? Was it only a dream?

STEEL: It's what we wanted...

BRIAN: But why so simply?

STEEL: It was for you and I—no one else. It had nothing to do with anyone but you and I. That's why it was simple.

BRIAN: That's why it was wrong, because it wasn't true. The whole world went to bed with us, Stella...

STEEL: Nobody else knows anything, so what difference can it possibly make? Everything is just as it has always been.
BRIAN: No everything is not just as it has always been. That's just it. My father isn't just the professor anymore. He's a man who can still be half-way happy because he's being deceived. And every time I look at him—every time he talks to me about his plans—I think how I've got him in my power. I think how with just a few words I can change his entire life. I can ruin his happiness, his belief, his plans—with the tip of my tongue. And you say we are alone in this.

STEL: But we are. You're talking about something that doesn't exist. Everything is just as we have made it. Nothing is different. And that's all there is—what you and I have made. Victor has nothing to do with what is ours. Why do you talk about him!

BRIAN: I talk about him because he's my father, and because he is I'm shackled with the power. I have a chance to be honest—really honest. This is new to me too, you know, and it comes as quite a shock. So very new—and I can't explain it....I don't like it, but it is there—and it stays. Even when my mind explains and justifies the whole thing—it remains—persistent.

STEL: Honest? Honest you say? To whom? Have I asked you for this? Has Victor—has Jan? They ask for comfort and you shake the foundations. Is this honest? Grapes they ask for and you offer wormwood. Honest? Tell me how, Brian! Tell me how!

BRIAN: I've tried to tell you. You can't see...you
can't see what it means to me.

STEL: Yes, to you! That's all you're thinking of. You get a silly notion in your head and right away you want to wreck everything.

BRIAN: Get out, Stella!!

STEL: What about me? Have I asked you for this? Is this your offering of honesty—to hurt...

BRIAN: Leave me...

STEL: Yes, leave you with your phantasy. Leave you so I can quick find a ring-side seat. Mustn't miss your tearing Victor to pieces with a whim. Schoolboy startles the world—experimenter with a fancy makes a house crumble...

BRIAN: Stella...

STEL: Amuse yourself while everything collapses down around your shoulders.

BRIAN: Don't you think I know what will happen? Don't you think I know? Lord, I've been through it a thousand times—until I know every word, every gesture—the faces, the expressions...

STEL: Then why, Brian? Why?

(Brian turns away. He knows, but the vague, persistent "feeling" is just as real although he can't explain it. In fact, more real because it exists without an explanation.)

STEL: You can't do anything. If you speak nothing will change that will help you. You will destroy, and that
is all. Your havoc won't help you—it can't. (Pause) Brian... Brian, let the world move around you. Don't interfere.

BRIAN: If I could...

STEL: You can. I need you, Brian. You know what it means. (She goes to him) Come to me.

BRIAN: Jan will be home soon.

STEL: Oh, you fool! You simple, adolescent fool!

BRIAN: Get out, Stella!

STEL: And what about Jan? Do you think she'll hold your little boy's hand and kiss your little boy's mouth and tell you how proud she is of her little boy's courage?

BRIAN: Don't do this, Stella...

STEL: No, because she won't recognize your dream—she won't understand it. She'll see a lie and deception—nothing more. The dream you brandish isn't real, and your gyrations and gestures will look to be the contortions of an idiot. She'll hate, she'll be afraid, Brian—she'll shrink away...

BRIAN: Stella...

STEL: Already it has begun. Do you know what she thinks now? Do you know that she is afraid?

BRIAN: Shut up! How do you talk about Jan?

STEL: She needs protection from an idiot child.

BRIAN: That's very touching. The concern of a whore
for a customer's wife. (Stella reacts) Save the social consciousness, Stella. It's inconsistent with the tenets of the profession.

STEL: (Pause) You're a coward! Oh, Brian, you're a coward. Listen to yourself. Is this the manifestation of conscience? May your son be spared his father's truth.

BRIAN: My son?

STEL: It might be. Jan is pregnant.

BRIAN: You're lying.

STEL: Does it frighten you?

BRIAN: You're lying!

STEL: Perhaps you're safe, Brian. Perhaps you weakness extends your masculinity. Perhaps...

BRIAN: (Grabbing her hard) Bitch!

STEL: Perhaps your potency is limited to destroying—never to creating.

(Brian slaps her)

STEL: What then, Brian? What then? (She begins to laugh) Your son? (Laughing) The product of a dream...

BRIAN: (He slaps her again) I'll kill you! I'll kill you! (He is about to hit her again, but instead he takes her hard and kisses her on the mouth as the lights fade out)
scene two

(The lights stay out long enough to indicate the passing of time. The lights come up on the down-right stage area—the kitchen. Jan enters from the outside, listens for a moment, then exits upstairs. As she moves into position, the lights in this area—upstage center—are brought up. The kitchen is still lighted. After a moment Brian enters from the left into the light of the kitchen. He, too, waits for a moment, as if listening. The lights begin to dim and he moves through the darkness toward the light containing Jan.)

JAN: (As Brian enters) I was coming to look for you.
BRIAN: Why?
JAN: I saw the car out front. I thought you would be here.
BRIAN: I just arrived. I was in the library. (Pause) No...no I...
JAN: Then I would have found you. The library falls off the hall from the kitchen. See, I do know where it is.
BRIAN: Are you early?
JAN: Early?
BRIAN: From the university.
JAN: An hour late. Your work makes time anachronistic.
BRIAN: What were you doing?
JAN: I had to get some material from the library.
BRIAN: For an hour?

JAN: They have constructed an unbelievably efficient espionage whereby they discover my library needs and promptly hide everything I can use. Gee, I sound just like your father.

BRIAN: You have a lot in common.

JAN: Only you, Brian.

BRIAN: You need no more to make it a fact. (Pause)

No more.

JAN: (Pause) I'm glad you're home.

BRIAN: You wanted to see me—tell me something?

JAN: Why?

BRIAN: You were looking for me.

JAN: You were home. I thought to gather your pipe and slippers—or something.

BRIAN: How did you know?

JAN: What?

BRIAN: That I was home.

JAN: I saw the car out front.

BRIAN: Did you leave the papers at the mayor's office?

JAN: I left them, and maintained my schedule, too. A city hall is more difficult to hide than a book.

BRIAN: At least part of the day has conformed to what you have asked of it.

JAN: The sun was shining this morning. If the day offers any more it's gratuity. (Pause) That's not true. I ask beyond the sun. (Pause) Did Stella find her way
to the country? (Pause) Brian...?
BRIAN: I don't know.
JAN: Is she down stairs?
BRIAN: I don't know.
JAN: Would you like coffee? I can't seem to uncover your slippers, but the trend is toward coffee anyway--so why not...? (She starts to leave)
BRIAN: How did your class go today?
JAN: Wonderful. It's really fantastic how much that man knows.
BRIAN: Professor Dean, isn't it?
JAN: Do you know him?
BRIAN: Rather young man isn't he?
JAN: Forty-five, I think. He wrote the book, you know?
BRIAN: The text?
JAN: He's spent fifteen years in the field. His stuff he knows first-hand. If you've heard him lecture you know what that means. I don't believe I've ever know a man who seems to belong so very much to what he's doing--unless it's Victor. As a matter of fact they've a lot in common.
BRIAN: (Quickly) What do you mean by that?
JAN: Well, they...I don't know exactly. You feel the world belongs to them, and they know it, and they know it is precious. And they want it to grow, tall and green--and in the sun. So they invest it. All the time they try to invest the world in people and people are dubious
and say it's a bad risk and point to history. But his-
tory is men like Prof Dean and Victor who can't help
 risking the world, because--because it means the world
to them.

BRIAN: Might they not be naive?

JAN: Sure. Naive, gullible, all sorts of green things.
But it takes a certain amount of courage to be green in
a world that's over-ripe.

BRIAN: And Dean is courageous.

JAN: I think so.

BRIAN: And you like that.

JAN: Sophistication finds too many answers that aren't
there. This is a weakness. It might even be cowardice.
There are a lot of things Dean doesn't know.

BRIAN: Is he a democrat?

JAN: I don't know, really. I think so.

BRIAN: This morning you told Victor he was.

JAN: What?

BRIAN: This morning at breakfast.

JAN: (Not quite not laughing) We were joking. He...

BRIAN: (Too serious) Why would you joke about a thing
like that?

JAN: Why not?

BRIAN: Answer me!

JAN: Brian...Oh, Brian, talk to me. Please, darling,
talk to me...

BRIAN: No, Stella, you talk to me! You must have
something to say.

JAN: Stella?

BRIAN: How is it you know his age?

JAN: Who?

BRIAN: Professor Dean. You said he was forty-five years old. How do you know?

JAN: Brian...

BRIAN: How do you know!

JAN: I don't know. I think. I said I think he's forty-five.

BRIAN: Why? Does he look forty-five? act forty-five? did somebody tell you he was forty-five?

(Jan moves toward him as she might toward a frightened and bewildered child—a child she felt she could help.)

BRIAN: Did he tell you he was forty-five?

JAN: Darling...

BRIAN: When did he tell you? Where are the books you got at the library?

JAN: I saw you were home. I hurried. I left them in the car.

BRIAN: His car? Is that where you talked to him? In the back seat perhaps—beyond the city limits...

JAN: Brian, don't--don't, don't...

(She falls into a chair. Brian is immobile and silent for a very long moment. Slowly he reaches toward her and then moves to where she has collapsed. He touches her hair—a moment—he begins to cry...)
BRIAN: (Pause) I am here....This is no dream...I say these things to you.

JAN: Oh, Brian, tell me! Tell me...

BRIAN: And I can't speak to you because I lie. I can't speak to anyone. I can't be heard and the sounds I make cause pain. I beat against the world like a moth on a window pane--but I can't get in. I can't get in!

JAN: Dear...

BRIAN: Talk to me, Jan. Tell me--tell me something...

JAN: I love you. (Brian contracts almost perceptibly) I do love you, Brian. I don't know where to go from there. I can only be what my loving you asks of me. But beyond that I don't know. Beyond that I can't touch you. (Brian moves away) I'm clumsy, Brian--very awkward. I know only one direction and the steps I take are faltering. I watch you move carefully--carefully I watch to find the moment when your movement is toward me. But I'm dull. I can't see or feel where you are. And when I guess, I stumble. Forgive me, darling...I stumble.

BRIAN: You could have known my mother. You could have learned from her. She stumbled for fifteen years--crawled for five. But she never reached Victor. She never reached him. All the world may belong to him, but never my mother--never me...

JAN: We walked straight for a time, Brian--straight and together. The floundering is new--new and from outside.
You know this. You remember.

BRIAN: (Quickly violent) Remember! Why? Why remember! If there is a world, it is now. This I know.

JAN: And it hangs suspended from a million years...

BRIAN: By a glass thread that men have shattered...

JAN: Then why do you run? The present is in-born. You can't run from the present.

BRIAN: I'm not running! I'm... I'm... Oh, Jan. Jan, Jan...

JAN: What is it, Brian: What are you looking for? Don't turn away from me—not now. Give me a place to stand—a small place—only look to it—look to it, Brian, so I can know it is there. Now there is no place. You leave no room. I can find no way into your time because...

BRIAN: Because you look to the past.

JAN: I look to my husband and he doesn't belong to time.

BRIAN: No! No, that's not true! It's not true! I do belong... I belong!

JAN: Then don't move away. Move toward time and make it yours.

BRIAN: How, Jan? Teach me to understand the dimensions I walk in.

JAN: Teach me your desire. I can find the way.

BRIAN: My desire? Show me a way to stop the Earth's rolling until it will carry me. Instruct me in the physics that will force fantasy into formula... Can you teach a lie the truth?

JAN: Lies can belong, Brian.
BRIAN: The world looks for nine when it sees three times three. A fraction to the right or left belongs to another universe.

JAN: I don't believe in another universe, and I know there are lies.

BRIAN: Then lies are real and there is nothing to distinguish them from truth and my problem is solved.

JAN: Brian...

BRIAN: One has only to abide by the momentum provided at birth, accept the direction and offer no resistance, and remember that to retard or accelerate disrupts the laws of the universe...

JAN: Brian, don't...

BRIAN: Remember that form is constant and eternal and that there is only one evil—to impose aberration. Don't ask that there be a significant difference between lies and truth. Indeed, don't ask for significance. The flow of time is lethargic. It resents nervous inhabitants. Relax, let go, and ride with men on the tide of time...I try. I try to let go. I know I must. I make the necessary mental motions—but nothing happens. What I grip so frantically isn't really there to let go of—so I must hold fast to what isn't. My problem, it seems, resolves itself into finding something to let go of. That is my desire. Can you find the way?

JAN: Oh, Brian, Brian, darling, if you love me we can
make a pattern that all the world must conform to. If you love me...

BRIAN: Are you asking the world to conform to love? The world may ask of you and love, Jan, but never you and love of the world. (Jan covers her face with her hands) Besides, I do love you—very dearly—and loving you I ask for distinctions and the world rebels.

JAN: Brian...Brian, I...I stumble. I...Brian, dear, I don't know where to go...I can't find my way alone—not alone, not any more. I need your help—I need...

(She is close to hysteria)

BRIAN: Jan. Are you pregnant?

JAN: Dear....Yes.

BRIAN: (Long pause) You couldn't tell me.

JAN: I couldn't...

BRIAN: How long would you have waited?

JAN: I don't know. I wanted to find you first.

BRIAN: But you would have told me?

JAN: Yes. Or...or you would have seen.

BRIAN: Would I?

JAN: Brian...Brian, will...will it change anything?

BRIAN: What do you mean?

JAN: I...all of me is changing. I can't help feeling it must be happening to the whole world. That every­thing—everything will be somehow a little bit different because I have a baby growing inside me. And you, Brian...

BRIAN: Jan...
JAN: I have looked to you. I wanted to see, but you have been far away. I wanted to see a sign—a movement that would tell me here was something you would look to...
BRIAN: I tell you I love you—and loving you I offer nothing.
JAN: Is there more?
BRIAN: But it can't be—to love you and to move away. You are showing me—you can't believe them both. It can't be.
JAN: If you tell me it can be, I will believe it.
BRIAN: Jan...
JAN: Have I asked so very much?
BRIAN: Your being asks beyond me every moment. And every moment I must be conscious of my denial.
JAN: Then show me how to be less than I am.
BRIAN: That is what I ask for? Yes, of course. Now, within yourself, you are more than you have ever been before. And I stand at a distance so that I might see you the less.
JAN: I grow because of you. It is you who can make me more or less than you see.
BRIAN: I can do nothing.
JAN: No, Brian. That can't be true. You have brought new motions. They remain static unless you are there. Everything your life has touched bends in your direction. I lean to you—if you are not there, I fall...If you would see me less tell me what to do. I can't see. I
try to feel—and now my feeling fogs.

BRIAN: You're strong, Jan. Patient and strong.

JAN: I can be. I can wait and be strong if you tell me there is still a place for us.

BRIAN: (He is silent)

JAN: Tell me, Brian. Please...

BRIAN: How can I tell you!

JAN: (Pause) Then you won't?

BRIAN: Jan...

JAN: All right. Then there isn't a place. I won't look any more.

BRIAN: (Erupting) Why do you talk like that!

JAN: You taught it to me, Brian! You leave me in the dark and ask me to see.

BRIAN: I ask nothing.

JAN: Why? Why, Brian? Ask of me! Now, Brian! Now! (Brian: frantic gesture and head movement) Don't be afraid, darling. Ask of me. Please, Brian! Please...

BRIAN: Stop it! You don't understand...

JAN: Then make me understand! You can, Brian. Only now—now!

BRIAN: Stop it, Stop it, Stella, Stop it... (He suddenly hears Stella's name. He turns away) Jan...no...

JAN: Does Stella know?

BRIAN: She...no. She knows nothing.

JAN: She might. You talked to her this afternoon.

(No response) No one else knew I was going to have a
baby. You had to learn from her.

BRIAN: No...

JAN: Why couldn't you tell me?

BRIAN: Will you leave me alone! Can't you see? I don't know! I don't know!

JAN: What don't you know? Tell me what has to be, but tell me. Surely this much you can do. Surely...

(Nothing from Brian) All right. All right, Brian.

(She starts for the door)

BRIAN: (Facing away) I saw her—for a moment—I saw her. (He turns slowly, faces Jan, a pause as if trying to deny or justify "for a moment." Still standing his head bends slowly into his hands—he begins to shake violently.)

JAN: (Still helpless but seeing a possible foothold, she moves to him. She doesn't touch him.) Brian.

Oh, Brian....

BRIAN: I only want to sleep--tired, Jan. I...should have stayed in bed...help me...

(The lights remain on this scene as Stella enters into the dim light coming up on the kitchen area. She takes a step toward the stairs leading to Brian and Jan. At this moment the above scene darkens completely and the light comes up on the kitchen as Victor enters:)

VIC: I'm glad you're here. (He kisses her) I thought you might not be back yet.

STEL: I'll heat the coffee.
VIC: Good. (Pause) I'm sorry about today.

STEL: You're home early.

VIC: I'm never sure what's going to happen. I could have gone with you. Would have been a fast trip but we'd have got out together.

STEL: It's all right, dear. I know the problems you have.

VIC: I'm sure of that. That's about all you see of me—my problems twenty-four hours a day. Not a very compatible bed-fellow I'm certain. But then incompatibility is inherent in any relationship with a problem.

STEL: I'm content. I won't ask you to divorce your problems and marry me.

VIC: (Laughing) My problems have a way of multiplying.

STEL: I'll know who to blame.

VIC: But they're extremely fertile. I have only to be in the same room—nay, the same city—and they propagate, like pollen in a strong wind...

STEL: A likely story.

VIC: Pollen everywhere, sweeping across the countryside...

STEL: Victor...

VIC: Did you get your things done?

STEL: What?

VIC: In the country. Did everything go all right?

STEL: Of course. Did you expect some sort of opposition?

VIC: Problems are more potent beyond the city limits.
STEL: Then you've no cause to worry. I didn't quite make it to the city limits.

VIC: Flat tire—or did you forget the car?

STEL: I didn't get farther than the mail box. I put the contents on your desk.

VIC: Didn't you see Brian?

STEL: No.

VIC: His car is out front.

STEL: That's comforting.

VIC: He must have gone upstairs.

STEL: He must have.

VIC: Stella, you're not still upset about what happened this morning, are you?

STEL: What happened this morning?

VIC: The boy is on edge. The project has taken a lot out of him.

STEL: Can't you leave the project down town just once!

VIC: There I knew it. Didn't I tell you my problems multiply. Now they're invading the house—competing for my wife...

STEL: I didn't mean that, Victor, I miss you, that's all.

VIC: Of course, dear, I understand. I'm only amazed that you manage to take things as well as you do.

STEL: I'm not very nice sometimes.

VIC: Nonsense. You're all I could ask for, Stella. I wouldn't be getting anything done without you.
STEL: Vic...

VIC: No, listen. There is nothing hazy about what we are to one another. This means a lot to me, you know that. I don't have to ask questions. Everything is concrete—nothing floating shapelessly about. I can say what I mean without worrying about imagination concocting a fantasy. You're real, Stella. Real and young.

STEL: Victor, are you making love to me?

VIC: Why, yes. I guess I am. And in the kitchen too.

STEL: That shows real imagination.

VIC: I thought it was passion.

STEL: The two are synonymous in some schools—at least co-existent.

VIC: I think we consult different dictionaries.

STEL: That's possible.

VIC: Does it make a difference?

STEL: Hardly perceptible.

VIC: Good. Then my love will pass for passion?

STEL: Proceed.

VIC: First, you're going to have to get used to me stripped of my problems—starting tonight.

STEL: Did everything go well today?

VIC: Everything's coming my way. But don't get me started talking. When I think of the potential in this project—well, it's exciting, Stel, and I bring that excitement home with me, and that's all you hear.

STEL: It's all right, dear.
VIC: For me, perhaps. But there is more and I know it. So stop me, Stel, when I let things go by.

STEL: You let nothing go by...

VIC: Nonsense. When was the last time I took you out to dinner? You see, you can't remember, and that's precisely what I mean. Well then, tonight's the night. Tonight I begin to supplement my sources of excitement. Tonight...

STEL: Mark Temple and his wife are coming, aren't they? You did call them?

VIC: They're not coming until 9:30. We'll be back before then. And perhaps they'd like to go out some place. We'll make a night of it.

STEL: All right. Incidentally, we had another caller--just after you left this morning.

VIC: Oh?

STEL: He wanted to see you. He said his name was Joe Smith.

VIC: Smith. Here?

STEL: Yes. You hear about them all the time but you never really expect to meet one.

VIC: It's his real name, dear--Joe Smith.

STEL: It's possible. He had the sort of face that looked to be the property of public domain.

VIC: I've talked to him before. Last time he had a committee with him.

STEL: How formidable.
VIC: It really was in a way. At times there seems to be a direct relationship between ignorance and determination. These people haven't the slightest idea of what's going on around them and yet they resist what they don't even understand.

STEL: More problems?

VIC: Not really. There is a group--"representatives" they say--people who live in the section we're tearing down--who are incapable of seeing the necessity of the project--not to mention the good that will result. They simply can't accept change. They can't understand, and there is bound to be a little trouble. Joe Smith is one of the more determined ones.

STEL: And what can he do?

VIC: Nothing. He's helpless. The project is too big--far too big.

STEL: He seems persistent.

VIC: Yes. He has a small world he's fighting for. But then so has everyone, and progress of any kind demands looking beyond them....But it's Brian who can tell you about this Smith fellow. He's handled most of it. I ran him out of my office a couple of months ago and since then he's been working on Brian. Brian's not quite so tough. He puts up with it...Say, we're going to be late if we don't get started. (He goes to the foot of the stairs and yells:) Brian...Brian, come down here a minute. (To Stella) Is Jan up there too?
STEL: I don't know.
VIC: Brian—ho!
STEL: You'll wake the baby with all that shouting.
VIC: Good. The more the merrier...Are you sure they're here?
STEL: I'm not sure of anything but the baby.
VIC: Freud would say you've got a sub-liminal hankerin'.
STEL: My hankerin's are too boisterous to be sub-liminal.
VIC: Then we must give proper vent to them. Get ready.
Tonight's the night. (She starts to leave and Jan enters. Stel is standing apart as the scene begins.)
Ah, there you are. Is Brian upstairs?
JAN: Yes.
VIC: Jar him loose, will you? I'm taking you all out
to dinner. We'll make a night of it.
JAN: He's sleeping.
VIC: In bed?
JAN: Yes.
VIC: Well, there's only one thing to do—wake him up.
He'll ruin my reputation. He's in a rut—needs a change.
A night on the town is just the ticket.
JAN: I don't think so.
VIC: Really?
JAN: Yes. I think...
VIC: A good dinner, some place quiet—a couple of drinks...
VIC: Well, we...

STEL: Nonsense. Is he feeling bad?

JAN: No...no, Stella--not bad.

STEL: Then let him sleep. We'll eat something here, and maybe he'll be ready to get up when the Temples arrive.

JAN: No, Stella.

VIC: She's right, Jan. A celebration wouldn't make sense without Brian.

JAN: Celebration?

VIC: Sort of, yes. Jim Temple and his wife are coming over, you know. We thought to have dinner out some place--to start things off.

STEL: But that will wait.

JAN: Wait for what?

STEL: For Brian.

JAN: Don't wait for Brian, Stella.

VIC: We certainly will. We'll go no place without that boy. Not tonight--not on an occasion like this.

BRIAN: (Entering) That boy? But you can't mean me.

JAN: Brian...

BRIAN: But you must. I'm the only one who really qualifies. Strange. Boys would be born men if it weren't for parents.

VIC: Are you up for the evening--or just taking a break between naps?

BRIAN: Oh, I'm up for the evening. I heard something
about an occasion. Are we due for another?

JAN: Brian...

BRIAN: Brian—you keep saying Brian. What strange fascination compels it to the tongue? I think the whole world is saying it. I think...

JAN: Why are you doing this?

BRIAN: Doing what: Oh, you mean barging in on the— the occasion. Well, I'm just not tired any more. Frankly, I don't think I ever was. Now what's all this business about an occasion.

VIC: We thought we would go out to dinner some place— come back here, meet the Temples and then—well, who knows? Maybe make a night of it.

BRIAN: Make a night of it? Good idea. I think I can help.

JAN: Brian, are you sure...

STEL: We'd better hurry. We haven't much time.

VIC: By George, you're right—not much time...(Vic and Stella exit left)

BRIAN: (He follows them slowly to the door—a moment— he turns to Jan and speaks as if suddenly realizing) There isn't much time.

fade out
(Everyone has returned from dinner. It has been a strange, disjointed evening thus far. Brian has been peculiarly inconsistent, vague, jovial--unreal. The scene opens on Brian in the library. Victor enters:)

VIC: I think we're due for some rain. To look at the sky this morning you would have thought there was never to be another cloud. (Lighting a cigar)

BRIAN: I couldn't say. To look at the sky any morning is beyond me.

VIC: Now that is a strange thing to say.

BRIAN: Why strange? To me it is expressive.

VIC: Ah, yes. But incomprehensible. It doesn't mean anything really.

BRIAN: You mean you don't understand.

VIC: That's true enough. You tell me you can't look at the sky in the morning which is an absurdity unless you have a broken neck--or refuse to go out of doors. And neither being the case with you, I'm forced to conclude simply that you don't make sense.

BRIAN: Simply? Really.

VIC: Why not? You say something ridiculous and suggest that it should be understood. This is absurd--simply absurd.

BRIAN: Ah, Victor, therein lies the tragic flaw of the modern world. We see complexity only in the obvious
and manage to conclude simply from the ridiculous. Now that's an absurdity if ever I heard one.

VIC: (Laughing) I make a simple comment about the weather and end up hearing a rather complex condemnation of the modern world. Now that's...

BRIAN: Which only goes to prove my point.

VIC: Prove! (Still laughing) Why that's the sort of proof you were famous for at the age of twelve. You learned it from your mother, and she had it down to a science—if you'll permit the contradiction.

BRIAN: My mother...?

JAN: (Entering) I'm making coffee. Shall we have it in here?


BRIAN: No. No, I don't think I care for any.

JAN: Nothing's wrong, dear?

BRIAN: No, nothing...I...I thought I'd be getting upstairs...

VIC: But the party is downstairs. We're celebrating, remember?

BRIAN: (He looks at his father for a long moment) I keep forgetting. Mustn't do that. (Changing to an almost sincere gaity) Tonight's the night—that's what you said, wasn't it, Victor. Then I shall certainly offer my contribution to the celebration...

VIC: And it will be most cordially accepted.

BRIAN: I hope so—because I owe it to you. I'm obligated.
VIC: There! Always conscious of the fine points of honor. It makes me proud to have sired that boy.

JAN: (Dubiously happy) You'll stay, Brian?

BRIAN: Despite pressing duties on the outside, I'll remain—for coffee.

VIC: What a happy lack of discipline.

JAN: The greatest accomplishments of the modern age are the progeny of caffeine—not discipline. (She starts to exit—turns at the door—to Brian) And if you're not here when I return everything goes out the window—pot, coffee, cups—the works. Time will be set back twenty years. (Exit)

BRIAN: (He has moved upstage to the window) There is lightning in the sky.

VIC: There's going to be a storm.

BRIAN: That's an abiding truth. (He sits by the window)

VIC: The sky was clear until dusk. You could have used up a lot of country in that time. (Brian reacts) I mean, I think it's just what you need.

BRIAN: I think Stella would have balked. I barked too loud this morning.

VIC: Not at all. She was upset for a minute—that's all. But only because she can't stand to see anything that looks like dissension; she thinks the world of you kids—if anything goes wrong she takes it as a personal challenge. She takes a lot of pride in keeping things on an even keel. And this morning—because she wanted to
go to the country—you and Jan had your tiff. That's the way she figures. If anything goes wrong she thinks it's her fault. That's the way it is—with me—my work, and you and Jan too...(Brian is silent) I believe she is the finest thing that ever happened to me. I loved your mother, Brian, you know that. But this is something different. Stella doesn't just fit into my life in a few places. She covers everything I am—everything I need. Why she...(Brian rises and moves) I don't have to tell you all this. I think you know what it was like for me when your mother died. We were together a long time—almost twenty-five years. When she was gone Stella was there—had been there—all the time. She filled a space what I hadn't even known was empty. When you went into the army, she cried—remember. She knew what your leaving meant to me. And always she was asking about you—how you were—what you were doing—just like you were her own. Then when you wrote and said you were getting married—well, I guess that did it. The next thing I knew we were walking down the aisle. She said I needed her. Lord knows I did. And she took care of that just like she takes care of everything—quickly, effectively, efficiently...

JAN: (She enters as if continuing with her exit line) ...And if time is set back twenty years it will mean I am living in sin. We haven't been married half that long.

VIC: Speaking of marriage—where's my wife?
JAN: Did we leave her in the rain?
VIC: Is it raining?
JAN: Not yet.
VIC: Then which rain were you referring to?
JAN: When was the last downpour?
VIC: Not likely. I've seen her frequently since then, the last time being not over fifteen minutes ago.
JAN: Then the rain is out?
VIC: It has to be.
JAN: Then she must be doing woman stuff.
VIC: Does that locate her?
JAN: Usually.
BRIAN: (Interrupting quickly) She's in the bedroom.
VIC: Oh? I didn't see her go.
BRIAN: I did.
VIC: (Pause) Our party is struggling to survive. People keep trying to disappear.
JAN: Then let's get started before we're beat. Coffee is appropriate between dinner and drinks, isn't it?
VIC: I don't think so.
JAN: Let's do it anyway.
VIC: Good. I feel reckless.
JAN: At your age?
VIC: And what's the matter with my age?
JAN: Oh, nothing. I think it far better for you to be reckless at your age than at somebody else's.
(Brian makes a quick, almost violent movement. This silly badinage frustrates him. He wants to get on with the "celebration" wherever it may be going.)

VIC: Then we'll not only drink coffee—we'll drink a toast with it. Where is that woman? (He calls off-left, "Stella!") Can't neglect the instigating inspiration behind our success.

BRIAN. There's more coffee. I mean, I think the occasion deserves more than one toast. Let's get started. She can catch us at the first turn.

JAN: Why all the fuss? We can drink the coffee and save the toasts 'til later. Besides the Temples seem to be a little late too.

VIC: At the rate things are going they'll probably arrive in time for breakfast. Perhaps we should save the coffee too.

JAN: Victor, you're getting discouraged. With the foe vanquished and nothing remaining but toasting the victory—you're getting discouraged.

VIC: Discouraged! (Laughing) If I was a man to get discouraged we would find little cause to celebrate anything.

BRIAN: At least not the same thing.

JAN: That's true, Brian. If the project is a success, it's mainly due to Victor—no one else.

BRIAN: Yes, yes, you're right. But the—the project is such a big thing. Maybe what I think to be deserv-
ing of celebration isn't what you have in mind—or Victor—or the people in the slums we're destroying—or anyone, for that matter. Maybe when it's all over and everybody is celebrating—everybody who feels like celebrating at any rate—maybe everybody will be celebrating something a little bit different.

VIC: Call it anything you like, it's still the project. Let a thousand people think about it a thousand different ways—it's still the project. And you're right. No one will ever see it the way I see it—no one can. No one can look beyond the pieces—the parts that make it whole. But it is still the project, even if they can't see it. And that's what we're celebrating—even if no one else really knows what it is.

JAN: Yes, Victor. You've done it, and I guess only you can know what it really means.

VIC: Yes, what it really means...to look beyond the project, to think of the potential—of what might happen as a result of what we're doing. That's the big thing—not what is but what might be. I tell you it's all damned exciting...

JAN: It's an experiment I can't follow...

VIC: That's it, Jan. It's an experiment—an experiment that history has carried so far, and we're trying to take a bit farther...(The doorbell rings off-stage right) The Temples. Well, they're too early for breakfast, but we won't have any trouble finding plenty of
cold coffee. (Jan starts to answer the door) I'll get it, Jan. See if you can find that wife of mine, will you? (Vic exits off-right and Jan off-left)

(Brian is alone on stage. He moves quickly to the left exit and looks off and up. He moves slowly back and turns suddenly toward the muffled sounds coming from off-right. There has been a tension building within him and now it seems as if it shakes his whole body. His mouth opens almost involuntarily—a choked, restrained scream, "God..." He breaks down-stage—a spastic, uncontrolled movement: "God...God...God," ending in an almost imperceptible sob. The voices off-stage grow louder and Brian moves quickly up-stage with his back to the audience—controlling himself. He waits until he's spoken to before facing the group. Mark and Marge Temple enter followed by Victor:)

VIC: There's something about going through college together that creates an indissoluble bond.

MARGE: In this case it must be because you two rarely agree on anything.

MARK: You're probably right. Victor, I've got to talk to you at least once a year to see if you're still in business.

VIC: Don't you read the papers?

MARK: You know how I feel about journalism.

MARGE: Brian! I thought you were part of the furniture.

MARK: Now that's a hell of a thing to say.
MARGE: You're looking fine. A bit harassed but approximately normal.
MARK: Normal? You say he looks like a piece of furniture--how does that make him normal? How've you been, son?
VIC: He's been busy making his father a success.
BRIAN: I'm all right, Mark. Nice to see you again, Marge.
VIC: I'm thinking of sending him to Florida. That boy hasn't had a let-up for six months.
MARK: And you feel you can spare him now?
VIC: The project is moving and gaining momentum every day.
MARK: You mean that notion of yours is really going through?
MARGE: Mark...
MARK: I had an idea it wouldn't work.
VIC: You mean you hoped it wouldn't work. And then you could say you had been right all the time.
MARGE: You're right, Victor. He dreams about the day when he can come to you with a phoney tear in his eye and say, "Sorry, old man, to hear the project folded," and then pat you on the back and be a knowing friend in need.
MARK: Just a friendly rivalry, dear.
MARGE: You talk as if you were competition.
MARK: Only in spirit.
VIC: Well, it's going to take something a bit more tangible than spirit to destroy what we've accomplished. Contracts for demolition went out today.
MARK: Demolition...?
VIC: In a matter of days you'll see the whole area leveled to the ground.
BRIAN: And it's too big...
VIC: Huh...
BRIAN: That's what you say, isn't it, Victor. The project is big and real and once something with the proportions of the project gets underway it provides its own momentum. It finds its own direction. And to talk of spirit in connection with the project--well, Mark, I'm afraid you chose the losing team.
MARGE: You see, dear, everyone is excited about the project except you.
MARK: Oh, I'm excited all right. I'm just not too sure I know what's happening.
BRIAN: There are approximately 76,000 people I know of who feel the same way.
MARK: In the slums?
VIC: If you would come down out of your tower of fiction in the daytime you might get a picture of what is really happening.
MARK: My tower is real enough to know you're casting aspersions on my chosen profession.
VIC: You can't mean you write novels because you want to.
MARGE: He wanted to write the first one...
MARK: That's true. The first one I really wanted to write. After that I couldn't quit. I kept remembering things I'd forgotten to say.
VIC: And people are still interested?
MARK: In what I remember? At the risk of sounding successful, let me say they are.
VIC: You mean you're making money. Capitalizing on a memory. And think how little risk is involved in making the investment.
BRIAN: (Softly) Investing in memory is no small risk... I think you must have courage, Mark.
MARGE: I remember something, too. Does that make me brave?
MARK: Does it make you rich? That seems to be the question for the moment.
MARGE: No, but it makes me curious. I remember the last time we were guests of yours, Victor. But I seem to recollect a couple of women around the house too. Is this a fiction?
VIC: No, you're quite right, Marge. Up until twenty minutes ago there were two women visibly occupying this household. If you hadn't arrived I'd soon be alone, I'm convinced. Brian, would you try and locate the rest of my family...
MARGE: I don't think you'd better take the chance. There seems to be a premium on hosts. (She moves toward exit left) If I'm not back in five minutes send my husband. (Facing him) He has a way with strayward women. (Exit)

MARK: My wife has a way of wandering around a house--any house--just so long as it has more than one room.

VIC: I'm glad my house qualifies.

MARK: It qualifies in more ways than one, Victor. Really, it's good to see you again--and you too, Brian. I've been hearing big things about you.

BRIAN: Big...

MARK: Rumor has it that it's just a matter of time before you outgrow your father's prowess in the world of sociology.

VIC: Probably less time than you think.

MARK: I read your article in the Sociology Review. You caused some talk in several circles.

VIC: How can you go wrong with a subject like truth in society?

MARK: It wasn't so much the subject. People will buy statistics. They always figure there is unlimited research behind them. But they balk at theorizing, particularly when it doesn't happen to agree with their prejudices.

BRIAN: Statistics don't ordinarily agree with prejudices either.
MARK: True, but statistics are figures—a long column of numbers that nearly anyone can add up. And no matter what the result is, people will thank you for giving them something so concrete to believe in.

BRIAN: That another set of statistics will change? If men get a minute behind in their research they won't know what they believe.

MARK: And that's just where they are now--where they have to be. Men can never catch up with what they would like to believe.

VIC: But that's the object, isn't it--to believe in something that will be here tomorrow? Then...

MARK: Sure. (To Brian) And your article in the Review didn't help things even a little bit. When you tell people that honesty exists in society because most men haven't the capacity to be otherwise--well, there are going to be a lot of honest people who will prefer thinking it's a matter of choice.

BRIAN: Preference, unfortunately, doesn't make it true.

MARK: Then how do you account for the persistent existence of honesty?

BRIAN: I don't try to account for it because I don't believe it.

MARK: But you said...

BRIAN: I said honesty exists in society. I didn't say at what level, and I certainly didn't say it was persistent.
MARK: What you didn't say seems to be the essence of the article.

BRIAN: What isn't said happens to be the essence of truth.

VIC: I suppose what you're saying is that the truth simply isn't known.

BRIAN: Simply? (Pause) I suppose so—except at certain levels.

MARK: The statistical level, for instance?

BRIAN: Perhaps.

VIC: Then this is man's fate—leaping from one truth to the next as his life progresses?

MARK: Like a man crossing a stream—from rock to rock. But supposing a man misses one? Isn't he lost?

BRIAN: It doesn't make any difference because they aren't important anyway. All that happens is the man realizes the rocks aren't there—that they never have been there...

MARK: It must leave him in a rather awkward position.

BRIAN: Awkward? Yes...helpless.

MARK: He falls from a non-existent rock into the torrent and realizes that that is where he has been all the time...

VIC: Then what happens?

BRIAN: (He looks at Victor for a long moment) Nothing—ordinarily.

VIC: (Laughing) I think it's a senseless procedure—
like a squirrel on a treadmill.

BRIAN: There is nothing you can do about it...nothing...
only sometimes--someone--looks for a rock that will be here tomorrow.

MARK: And do you think the project can be one of those rocks?

VIC: Ah, now we're getting to a level that makes sense--
one that we can work with. Why, the project...

BRIAN: The project is a stone that isn't there.

VIC: It's one that will be there tomorrow.

BRIAN: Tomorrow! What kind of tomorrow are you thinking of?

VIC: What tomorrow is there other than the one that ends when a man dies?

BRIAN: Men died two thousand years ago, but I seem to recall an existence after them.

VIC: Tell me about the existence you remember two thousand years after us.

BRIAN: In terms of the project? I'm afraid I can't.

VIC: In any terms that are reasonable. Good Lord, Brian, did you learn all your arguments from your mother?

BRIAN: (Exploding) Why do you talk about my mother?
Is she the eternal excuse for something you can't understand?

MARK: (Long pause) This must be the time to ask about those drinks somebody promised me.

VIC: (Still looking at Brian) Yes...Yes, of course...
MARK: (Pause) Well, I can't just leave--my wife is still here. Besides I like it when people raise their voices. It shows enthusiasm.

BRIAN: (Breaking away) You're right, Mark. We're supposed to be celebrating--though there seems to be some confusion as to just exactly what. Well, we'll celebrate the confusion. Maybe if we get drunk enough we'll find a name for it.

(Marge, Stella, and Jan enter)

MARGE: If I get drunk enough I can find anything, or, conversely, can't find anything--depending on what we're looking for...What are we looking for?

MARK: Scotch. (Looks at Vic) Scotch? (Vic smiles) We might even have a choice. Hello, Stella.

STEL: Hello, Mark. I'm sure we have. What would you like?

MARGE: Surprise me. If I know what's coming I get frightened.

STEL: All right. Anybody courageous enough to place an order? (She goes to Brian) We two will graciously bend to the bar.

JAN: Why, that's Victor's province. His is the talent for mixing drinks. (To Victor) Surely you're not going to let your son usurp your position.

VIC: It looks as if he has already been drafted.

JAN: Besides you can't subject our guests to the risk. Have you ever tasted a drink he's mixed?
MARGE: Is he really that bad?
JAN: No, but Victor's better.
MARGE: Then I'm all for it.
BRIAN: All right, Victor, I concede to popular opinion and to the better man. From this night on what is yours shall be yours.
JAN: And henceforth you relinquish all rights to the liquor cabinet?
BRIAN: I relinquish all rights.
MARGE: Hurray for Victor!
MARK: Speech! Speech!
VIC: (Trying to play the game) I humbly accept what is bestowed upon me...
BRIAN: Humbly? Oh, no, Victor. This is an occasion for pride. The dethroned nomarch regains his power. Agamemnon returns to gather Clytemnestra...
MARK: Ho, wait a minute. Your image won't stand the strain. From a liquor cabinet to Clytemnestra—even Aeschylus couldn't have managed that.
BRIAN: Then supposing we substitute Stella for the liquor cabinet?
MARGE: I'm going to get awfully thirsty.
MARK: Now we need a third character and the tragic trio will be complete.
BRIAN: But we already have him.
MARK: You?
BRIAN: Of course. And I can't even remember his name.
MARGE: Is it necessary in order to drink to his health?
BRIAN: Before the evening is out we'll all remember it.
JAN: There, Victor, we've won. You are from this moment rightfully reestablished.
VIC: It is an unexpected honor. I shall do my best to fulfill the demands of the position.
MARGE: Beginning right now?
VIC: Beginning right now.
MARGE: Thank heavens! I was afraid we had traded off the liquor cabinet for keeps.
VIC: (To Stella) All right, wife, we're in business. There was a long moment there when I thought the Greeks had taken over...They were Greeks weren't they?
BRIAN: Eternally Greeks.
VIC: Theirs is a history I could never manage to get straight. (Mixing drinks) Too many names involved in too many myths.
BRIAN: The names are the myths. What they did is history and it's still being made.
MARK: Spoken like a true sociologist. However, there is an implication that myth is fact. This I choose to ignore on the grounds that you're anticipating a highball.
BRIAN: Oh, but that's a mistake, Mark. I mean, to ignore the implication. You see, therein lies the significance.
MARGE: Isn't it a little late in the day to be looking for significance, or, conversely, early in the day,
depending...

MARK: I know, dear. Depending on how much you’ve had to drink.

MARGE: Or conversely, haven’t had to drink—which seems to be more appropriate to the occasion.

MARK: Dear friends, if my wife seems to reflect derogatorily concerning the integrity of the host, it’s only because she is thirsty. This is Wednesday, I believe, and Wednesday is her day for posing as a drunkard.

JAN: Oh, Mark, you needn’t apologize. We all have our poses, and your wife should be commended for scheduling hers.

BRIAN: Now there is something really worth toasting—at least to begin with. Think of it, Mark—to be able to predict that every Wednesday a certain reaction in your wife will take place, to know that all of her motivations will be inspired by a desire that you can anticipate. Think of the relief from anxiety...

MARK: Relief? To know that no matter where we are, at a certain time she will be able to think of nothing but the satisfaction of a craving for alcohol...

MARGE: You could keep me locked up.

MARK: Nothing doing. Then I’d have to buy your liquor.

(Victor laughs)

MARGE: You could become addicted too—then at least our desires would be mutual. If we had the same craving in common our marriage would be much more compatible.
VIC: Two desires are inevitably more potent than one.
(Giving them drinks) Here you are Marge...Mark...My contribution to your compatibility.
MARGE: Now that I've got my drink, you'll see, I can talk about something else. (She moves over to Stella who is still at the liquor cabinet)
MARK: Stella, if she persists in this monomania, we'll give her a bottle and send her to bed.
STEL: What a happy way to spend an evening.
MARGE: And I'd stay out of trouble. My mother would be proud of me.
JAN: For staying in bed?
MARGE: In a way, yes. Then I would be consistent with the family tradition. As far as I can figure that is where the women in my family for the past six generations have spent most of their time. I am the eighth of twelve children and it gets worse the further back you go.
VIC: You see, monomania has its advantages. I've always said if you really want to produce--so to speak--a single-minded devotion will pay off every time.
MARGE: Well, I'm still not content--not until you've got a drink in your hand too.
STEL: We'll make it complete. Brian, here's yours.
(Since the dialogue about "mother" began Brian has been staring at nothing--not a part of the party) Brian...
(She goes to him) I mixed the drink. I suppose that
could make me obligated to serve it. Here...

BRIAN: (He looks at her for a long moment) Obligated? (He begins to laugh) That's funny—so very funny. I think it deserves a toast. Ah, but there are so many things—where to begin? Scheduled poses, obligations—and, of course—the project—the project...

MARGE: Perhaps we could lump everything together in one great big toast—with one great big drink.

MARK: Ah, she's still not content.

BRIAN: But the purpose of a toast is to distinguish something. If we were to drink to everything in a lump we would have to think of poses in the same breath with the project—for example. Certainly that is absurd.

MARGE: Of course. You're right. He is right, isn't he, Mark? I hope so. Having reconsidered, a lot of little drinks have an effect that lingers, and what purpose is there in satisfying a craving if the satisfaction doesn't linger? We'll start with the biggest items and work our way down.

BRIAN: And there is nothing bigger than the project. So if I may, being somewhat involved in the endeavor myself, I offer a toast to the project—to the project... and to Victor. (As he brings his glass up for the toast—perhaps he strikes Stella's arm—he drops it) Now what do you suppose would account for my doing that? (He looks at them) Well, go on—drink! Certainly you're not going to let such an insignificant accident deter
the movement of progress. (There is nervousness accom­
panied by laughter of a sort but nobody drinks. Brian
picks up the empty glass) Very well. Now I've my glass--
albeit somewhat empty--we can continue. To the project--
to Victor. (He drinks from the empty glass. The others
still don't quite know what to do. As Brian finishes
his "drink" he begins to laugh)
MARK: (Pause) To Victor and the project. (He drinks
his drink and the others follow)
BRIAN: (Pause) Well, Victor?
VIC: Thank you. That's very nice.
BRIAN: And the empty glass made almost no difference at
all, isn't that right? After all, toasting is a gesture
that actually doesn't have any real significance outside
the heart. (He touches his heart--enjoying his cliche)
If the heart is in the right place--that's what really
counts. Then we can shatter all the glasses in the
world and it won't make a splinter of difference. Am I
right, Mark?
MARK: Absolutely. (Playing with the cliche) It's the
principle of the thing that counts.
MARGE: Is that true--even when liquor is involved?
MARK: Especially when liquor is involved. Ask any
abstainer.
MARGE: Can we trust their reliability?
MARK: Of course, when they're not drinking. Ask any
alcoholic when he's sober--he'll tell you the same thing.
MARGE: I'm convinced. It's the principle of the thing that counts.

BRIAN: Now the problem becomes--how to discover the principle.

MARGE: Maybe we can vote on that, too.

BRIAN: (Bursts into laughter) Good! Another toast--to the majority who determine our principles.

STEL: Here, Brian, I'll fill your glass.

BRIAN: No, thank you, Jan. (Jan turns when she hears her name, but Brian is talking to Stella) I'll drink for awhile from an empty one. We've such a long way to go yet. Next--to our principles, which determine how we vote...

JAN: Brian...

BRIAN: A moment, dear. I think I have detected a difficulty.

MARK: It's an age old problem--which came first, the vote or the principle?

MARGE: It must be more complicated than that.

MARK: Sure, but that's the beauty of a democracy. We have representatives whose job it is to make our lives less complicated.

STEL: Some of them have other ideas.

MARK: That's only human--and after the next election they will be looking for another job.

STEL: Not if they represent a minority.

MARK: In which case it doesn't make any difference anyway.
STEL: Not even to Joe Smith?

MARK: To whom?

STEL: He's a representative—and the way things are going it would seem he is a representative of a minority.

MARK: Forgive me, but Joe Smith seems to have complicated things. I'm lost. Who is he?

BRIAN: He's the people—and invariably a minority.

MARGE: And you know him? How magnanimous of you.

STEL: From what I hear, it's an imposition that can't be avoided.

MARGE: People named Joe Smith are like that.

MARK: Victor, have you any idea what's being said here?

VIC: Yes, but it's an unfortunate subject.

BRIAN: Oh, no, Victor. What could be more appropriate on your day of victory than drinking a toast to your opposition?

MARK: You mean Joe Smith is real?

BRIAN: He's trying to be.

VIC: It's really an amazing phenomenon, when one stops to think about it.

MARK: Joe Smith?

VIC: What he represents, yes.

BRIAN: What does he represent, Victor?

VIC: You should know that far better than I. I've barely seen the man these past two months.

STEL: You mean chasing him out of your office discouraged him?
VIC: Well, I really...
BRIAN: No, Stella, he wasn't discouraged.
VIC: Perhaps I was too hard on him. But if you don't put a stop to that sort of thing somewhere, you'll soon be examining personally the complaints of several thousand people.
MARK: Aha! So everything isn't running smoothly after all. Joe Smith is objecting.
VIC: Yes, he's objecting, but it doesn't change anything.
MARGE: Thanks to Brian apparently. I think it was a dirty trick to chase him out of your office and into his.
MARK: Where did you chase him to, Brian?
BRIAN: There was no place else for him to go.
STEL: And you say he wasn't discouraged?
BRIAN: I talked to him. I spent a lot of time talking to him.
STEL: And that helped no doubt.
VIC: What on earth could you say to him? The whole thing was ridiculous from the beginning. I never heard such crazy ideas.
MARK: He doesn't like the idea of the project, is that it?
BRIAN: That's it, and we can't understand why...
VIC: We can't understand! Listen, I gave that man every possible consideration. I told him exactly what we were doing and why. It was like talking to a street
lamp.

BRIAN: He thinks differently than we do.

VIC: Thank God for that!

BRIAN: And he's probably right too. The project isn't going to do him any good.

VIC: (Laughing) Is this Joe Smith's idea?

BRIAN: Who's in a better position to say?

VIC: (Irritated) Almost anybody. Particularly men who have studied the situation.

BRIAN: Yes, from the outside. But the truth is on the inside and the inside your students can never know.

STEL: Including you, Brian?

VIC: (Trying to be amused) It would sound as if all of us have been wasting our time.

BRIAN: Maybe we have.

VIC: (Not amused) And maybe we should give the whole thing up. Maybe we should invite Joe Smith in to handle things the way he sees fit.

BRIAN: That would be a mistake.

VIC: (Chuckling) Really! Then maybe we know what we're doing after all. Maybe the project...

BRIAN: The project! What do you mean when you talk about the project--when you get so damned excited about letting contracts for demolition? All you think about are the buildings--they're what's being destroyed. And about this, I admit, you know all there is to know. But what about Joe Smith? What do you know about him?
VIC: I know all I need to know.

BRIAN: Sure, you checked because you thought he might cause you trouble. You know where he works, how much money he makes—he's got a wife and four kids and he's thirty-eight years old...

VIC: Thirty-seven.

BRIAN: He had a birthday three weeks ago. You're behind the times even with the statistics.

VIC: (To Mark) I suppose we'd better organize a special committee to keep track of birthdays. Something like that might upset the entire project.

MARK: Birthdays can be important.

VIC: Birthdays can be out of the question—especially when everybody has them.

BRIAN: Listen to me! Do you know his daughter is going to have a baby?

VIC: So?

BRIAN: And that she's not married?

VIC: I am aware of the statistics on illegitimate babies in the area.

BRIAN: Then tell me about this one. (Victor directs a little laugh to his guests) Tell me all about promiscuity and how the project will diminish the tendency by 38%. You must have the figures down on paper some place.

VIC: I have some figures, yes.

BRIAN: Do they tell you that Joe Smith's daughter was raped? That she's nearly out of her mind because a small
religious sect on the East Side convinced her that pre-marital sex relations under any circumstances is an unpardonable sin? That she's tried to kill herself twice and that there is every indication she will succeed if she's left alone for more than two minutes?

VIC: And what's the point?

BRIAN: The point is that all the big new buildings in the world aren't going to do Joe Smith and his daughter a damn bit of good. You'll wrap the project up in a neat little package and never really know anybody in it. And you'll probably remember the construction specifications for the rest of your life. (He turns and moves away)

VIC: (Pause) I'm a sociologist, Brian. Not a psychiatrist.

STEL: The way things are going it might not hurt if you were a psychiatrist.

MARGE: Yes, and then maybe you could explain this conversation to me.

MARK: It's really not so complicated, dear. All that's been said is that a writer is worth talking about only if he's a sociologist.

JAN: It's raining outside.

MARK: It's good for the grass but it doesn't do a thing for the conversation.

JAN: I thought everybody was interested in the rain.

I'm sorry.
MARK: Not at all. It's only that I have very few techniques for switching the conversation to writing and I haven't yet devised one for coping with the weather.

STEL: You see, Victor--and you too, Brian--you've been boring our guests and they haven't had the courage to object.

MARGE: Oh, the courage is there; it just needs fortifying. May I mix myself another drink.

VIC: I'll get it for you. It seems to be about all I can do toward stimulating your evening.

STEL: And you'd better mix one for Brian too. He's way behind.

JAN: I'll do it.

VIC: Good idea. (Laughing) Maybe a little alcohol will revive his memory. I think he's forgotten what business we're in.

BRIAN: He may have been lying.

JAN: Would you like some ice, Brian?

BRIAN: He could have been lying all the time.

JAN: Brian...

BRIAN: Maybe he was lying to me about his daughter and her religious devotion. He could have been.

VIC: What difference does it make?

BRIAN: To be lied to? (Pause--laughing) I think it can make all the difference.

VIC: It can't change the facts. The facts remain the same no matter what people know about them.
BRIAN: But what happens to the people when they know about the facts? I think that's what we're concerned with—or is it?
MARK: Brian has a point, Victor. Knowledge of facts changes people. In fact knowledge of any kind changes people.
VIC: I don't think anyone will disagree with that. But the point is, the fact is there regardless of an individual's attitude toward it.
BRIAN: Is that the point?
VIC: That is the point. The object is for a person to distinguish between the facts and the attitudes. And, incidentally, Joe Smith doesn't qualify.
MARK: Because he doesn't have the facts?
BRIAN: That's it exactly. Only when you have a big enough collection of facts are you qualified to—to let contracts for demolition.
MARK: What about the truth that might be contained outside the realm of fact?
VIC: You're simply suggesting that a man can't know everything. All a man can do is seek the truth and be grateful when he finds it.
BRIAN: But there are times when you don't know. I think I've got a fact about Joe Smith. But if he was lying to me...
VIC: (Laughing) Brian, what are you trying to do? Indict Smith on a perjury Charge? If he was lying to
you and you don't know it, it makes no difference. If you do know it—if you find it out—then you've gained from having discovered a truth. You should be grateful. You should celebrate.

BRIAN: Celebrate? Why, yes! That's really a cause for celebration isn't it? Jan, I thought you were mixing me a drink.

JAN: Here you are, Brian. (He looks at her for a moment) Brian, let's go for a walk—in the rain. (To the Temples) You wouldn't mind, would you? (To Brian) Just around the block...the wind is blowing. We've liked the wind, remember?

BRIAN: I remember...

VIC: Now just a minute. The last time I let two people out of my sight...

STEL: Maybe we could all go—put on our swimming suits and romp on the lawn.

MARGE: Fortunately I don't look well in a swimming suit. I never wear one.

JAN: Let's go, Brian. Only for a moment.

BRIAN: Before long, Jan. Before long we'll go... (He pauses for a moment and then speaks, still looking at Jan) I wish to make an announcement...perhaps even drink a toast.

MARGE: It's a far better idea than walking in the rain. I much prefer being wet on the inside.

STEL: Jan, it looks as if the rain will have to wait.
BRIAN: My wife is going to have a baby.

JAN: Brian...

BRIAN: (Watching Jan) I'm going to be a father.

MARK: It deserves more than congratulations....I'm glad, Brian.

MARGE: Jan, dear, why have you been saving it? If you'd told us an hour ago we could have been talking about something that even I understand. I'm happy--very happy for you.

VIC: Is this a fact, Jan, or has that man of yours concocted another dream. (Brian breaks away from the group--Stel takes a step toward him)

JAN: It's true, Victor.

BRIAN: And there we have cause to be grateful--to celebrate. A truth that we're all willing to believe.

MARGE: (To Vic) Well, grandfather--it's true, you're a grandaddy--you started all this. What have you to say for yourself?

VIC: (Goes to Brian) I've been proud of you, Brian--very proud--but never more so than at this moment. I had no idea--not the slightest...I...

BRIAN: Supposing the whole thing is a joke, Victor--a lie--you're not going to have a grandson.

JAN: Brian, don't...

VIC: (Brian's theorizing is out of place) You'd choose another subject to experiment with...

BRIAN: Experiment? If I say I lied about the baby, it
may be the truth. How do you know?

VIC: Jan knows.

BRIAN: And if it is the truth, don't you think it would make just a little bit of difference to you? (Victor gestures impatiently) And what about me! Supposing twenty years from now I discover that my wife was lying to me—had been lying to me all the time?

VIC: (Cold) I don't think it will take twenty years to discern that.

BRIAN: I will never know whether the child is really mine.

VIC: (Angry) Brian, you don't have any right to...

BRIAN: We've all a right to the truth, haven't we! All we can do is search for it and be grateful when we find it—you said that, Victor—just a moment ago. Has something changed since then? Or is it just some truth we're after?

VIC: Brian, you're simply asking...

BRIAN: (Exploding) Why simply! Why do you continually use that word...?

JAN: Darling, come with me! Please, come with me now!

BRIAN. Not now, Stella! (He turns to Jan. This is the second time he is aware of his mixing up the names. He speaks and is confused:) Jan...

VIC: I'm sorry, Mark. I think we'd better postpone the evening...

BRIAN: (Quickly) Don't be sorry, Father...
VIC: Father? (It is the first time Brian has called him "father")

BRIAN: Be grateful. We're after the truth. Come on, Mark, perhaps you can help with this simple problem.

MARK: Brian, I really think...

BRIAN: Maybe the reason the problem is so simple, Father, is that you're not close enough to it—not really involved.

MARK: I think we'll say goodnight.

BRIAN: No, wait! Don't go. Why does everyone suddenly shy away from the all-hallowed search for truth.

VIC: Because you're being unpleasant, and you know it. You don't have to say the things you're saying. I don't know what your idea is but it seems singularly lacking in consideration.

BRIAN: If one must be honest and considerate at the same time, I fear that some sacrifice will have to be made. All right—which do we prefer—consideration or honesty? We can't have both. That's something else you said, father. We must distinguish between the facts and the attitudes. I'm being unpleasant you said. I'm not considerate. These are attitudes on your part that inhibit our search for truth. Not very scientific, father.

STEL: Victor, you know better than to stand in the way of a man bent on discovery. All right, Brian, supposing you're not the father?

BRIAN: (Pause) Can you tell me, Jan? Can you convince me that you're not carrying another man's child?
JAN: Brian, don't...
BRIAN: Listen to me! (He grabs her by the shoulders)
Is there anyway you can prove that Professor Dean isn't the father?
JAN: (She drops her head and begins to cry—shaking her head back and forth) Brian, Brian, Brian...
BRIAN: Stop crying, Stella! Listen to me...
STEL: Don't be a fool, Brian.
VIC: Now see here! This has gone too far! You can't...
BRIAN: What can't I do, Father?
VIC: (He puts his hand on Brian's shoulder) Now listen, Son. If you want...
BRIAN: Don't touch me! You feel so almighty secure in your facts. Well let me tell you that you don't know anything—your facts tell you nothing. Do you know for sure what your wife does with her time while you're so busy getting buildings demolished? (Victor doesn't answer. He is dumbfounded. Brian takes a step toward Stella)
Look at her! Can you look at her and know for sure that she's yours—only yours?
STEL: Don't do this, Brian! You're destroying—nothing more.
BRIAN: Answer me, Father! Can you know?
VIC: Please, Mark, you'd better go now. I'm sorry.
BRIAN: (Softly) You're a fool, Father. Your whole life revolves around what you believe, and you can never know if it is a fact or not. But this is one time I can really
help you. I can give you a truth. I can...I can give you something to be grateful for.

STEL: (Following Victor's cue--to the Temples) I am sorry. I don't know what's happened to him. He's simply not himself.

BRIAN: (Standing in three-quarter position away from the group) Simply, Stella?

STEL: Please go now.

BRIAN: Yes, please go now. These moments are rare. They must be kept silent and in shaded rooms.

MARK: (Long pause) Well...

BRIAN: Father! (Pause) I've slept with your wife. (Silence--he turns to them) With Stella! (Silence. He screams:) Can't you hear me! Don't you know what I'm saying! For years--today--in your bed--your wife--eight hours ago! Do you understand!

JAN: (Taking him by the arm) Take me upstairs, Brian. Now!

BRIAN: (He whirls around and strikes Jan) No, Stella, not again! (Taking a step to her) I don't need you, do you hear! Not any more, Stella! (Still looking at Jan--realizing) Stella...(He backs slowly away and then suddenly, violently he turns) Jan! Jan, I can't find you! (He falls to his knees as he screams, "Maaaaaah"--some sound that may connote mother. He sobs as Jan moves slowly toward him. Victor stands silent, frozen, watching Brian. Mark makes a movement as if to speak
or do something, but Stella ushers him into the hall. Marge looks at Brian, then at Victor—she disappears into the hall. Some muffled sounds are heard off-stage as the Temples leave. The outer door is heard closing. A moment—Stella reappears in the doorway. She hesitates and then moves about half the distance to Brian.)

STEL:  Brian!  Brian, get up!  (She takes another step toward him)

JAN:  Leave him alone!  (At the sound of Jan's voice Brian clutches her around the legs)

VIC:  We'd better call a doctor.

STEL:  There's no need for a doctor. He's acting like a child—a spoiled child. I think a whipping would be more to the point.

VIC:  (Quickly)  Do you, Stella?

STEL:  Victor!

VIC:  What's happened to him?

BRIAN:  (Trying to rise, clumsily)  Joe Smith...It was too big, Joe. We tried but it was too big. I'm sorry. There is nothing bigger than the project...

JAN:  Help me, Victor, please!

BRIAN:  (Only for an instant regaining control of himself) Don't touch me!  (He backs away from them, turns slowly up-stage:)

        There were a thousand men
        In a fox's den,
        But never was the fox put out.
VIC: Brian! My boy!

BRIAN: The den wasn't hollow,
       Now only he can follow
       The fleeting faster wren.

STEL: He's sick, Victor.

VIC: I'm going for a doctor. (He exits. Brian is upstage center of the two women. Brian continues mumbling.

The two women look at each other as the lights fade out)