

The Great God Brown by Eugene O'Neill, 1926

Characters

WILLIAM A. BROWN

HIS FATHER, a contractor

HIS MOTHER

DION ANTHONY

HIS FATHER, a builder

HIS MOTHER

MARGARET

HER THREE SONS

CYBEL

TWO DRAFTSMEN

CLIENT

THREE COMMITTEEMEN

POLICE CAPTAIN

PROLOGUE

SCENE--A cross section of the pier of the Casino. In the rear, built out beyond the edge, is a rectangular space with benches on the three sides. A rail encloses the entire wharf at the back.

It is a moonlight night in mid-June. From the Casino comes the sound of the school quartet rendering "Sweet Adeline" with many ultra-sentimental barber-shop quavers. There is a faint echo of the ensuing hand-clapping--then nothing but the lapping of ripples against the piles and their swishing on the beach--then footsteps on the boards and Billy Brown walks along from right with his mother and father. The mother is a dumpy woman of forty-five, overdressed in black lace and spangles. The father is fifty or more, the type of bustling, genial, successful, provincial business man, stout and hearty in his evening dress.

Billy Brown is a handsome, tall and athletic boy of nearly eighteen. He is blond and blue-eyed, with a likeable smile and a frank good-humored face, its expression already indicating a disciplined restraint. His manner has the easy self-assurance of a normal intelligence. He is in evening dress.

They walk arm in arm, the mother between.

MOTHER--(always addressing the father) This Commencement dance is badly managed. Such singing! Such poor voices! Why doesn't Billy sing?

BILLY--(to her) Mine is a regular fog horn! (He laughs.)

MOTHER--(to the air) I had a pretty voice, when I was a girl. (then, to the father, caustically) Did you see young Anthony strutting around the ballroom in dirty flannel pants?

FATHER--He's just showing off.

MOTHER--Such impudence! He's as ignorant as his father.

FATHER--The old man's all right. My only kick against him is he's been too damned conservative to let me branch out.

MOTHER--(bitterly) He has kept you down to his level--out of pure jealousy.

FATHER--But he took me into partnership, don't forget--

MOTHER--(sharply) Because you were the brains! Because he was afraid of losing you! (a pause)

BILLY--(admiringly) Dion came in his old clothes on a bet with me. He's a real sport. He wouldn't have been afraid to appear in his pajamas! (He grins with appreciation.)

MOTHER--Isn't the moonlight clear! (She goes and sits on the center bench. Billy stands at the left corner, forward, his hand on the rail, like a prisoner at the bar, facing the judge. His father stands in front of the bench on right. The mother announces, with finality) After he's through college, Billy must study for a profession of some sort, I'm determined on that! (She turns to her husband, defiantly, as if expecting opposition.)

FATHER--(eagerly and placatingly) Just what I've been thinking, my dear. Architecture! How's that? Billy a first-rate, number-one architect! That's my proposition! What I've always wished I could have been myself! Only I never had the opportunity. But Billy--we'll make him a partner in the firm after. Anthony, Brown AND SON, ARCHITECTS and builders--instead of CONTRACTORS and builders!

MOTHER--(yearning for the realization of a dream) And we won't lay sidewalks--or dig sewers--ever again?

FATHER--(a bit ruffled) I and Anthony can build anything your pet can draw--even if it's a church! (then, selling his idea) It's a

great chance for him! He'll design--expand us--make the firm famous.

MOTHER--(to the air--musingly) When you proposed, I thought your future promised success--my future--(with a sigh)--Well, I suppose we've been comfortable. Now, it's his future. How would Billy like to be an architect? (She does not look at him.)

BILLY--(to her) All right, Mother. (then sheepishly) I guess I've never bothered much about what I'd like to do after college-- but architecture sounds all right to me, I guess.

MOTHER--(to the air--proudly) Billy used to draw houses when he was little.

FATHER--(jubilantly) Billy's got the stuff in him to win, if he'll only work hard enough.

BILLY--(dutifully) I'll work hard, Dad.

MOTHER--Billy can do anything!

BILLY--(embarrassed) I'll try, Mother. (There is a pause.)

MOTHER--(with a sudden shiver) The nights are so much colder than they used to be! Think of it, I once went moonlight bathing in June when I was a girl--but the moonlight was so warm and beautiful in those days, do you remember, Father?

FATHER--(puts his arm around her affectionately) You bet I do, Mother. (He kisses her. The orchestra at the Casino strikes up a waltz.) There's the music. Let's go back and watch the young folks dance. (They start off, leaving Billy standing there.)

MOTHER--(suddenly calls back over her shoulder) I want to watch Billy dance.

BILLY--(dutifully) Yes, Mother! (He follows them. For a moment the faint sound of the music and the lapping of waves is heard. Then footsteps again and the three Anthonys come in. First come the father and mother, who are not masked. The father is a tall lean man of fifty-five or sixty with a grim, defensive face, obstinate to the point of stupid weakness. The mother is a thin frail faded woman, her manner perpetually nervous and distraught, but with a sweet and gentle face that had once been beautiful. The father wears an ill-fitting black suit, like a mourner. The mother wears a cheap, plain, black dress. Following them, as if he were a stranger, walking alone, is their son, Dion. He is about the same height as young Brown but lean and wiry, without repose, continually in

restless nervous movement. His face is masked. The mask is a fixed forcing of his own face--dark, spiritual, poetic, passionately supersensitive, helplessly unprotected in its childlike, religious faith in life--into the expression of a mocking, reckless, defiant, gayly scoffing and sensual young Pan. He is dressed in a gray flannel shirt, open at the neck, sneakers over bare feet, and soiled white flannel trousers. The father strides to the center bench and sits down. The mother, who has been holding to his arm, lets go and stands by the bench at the right. They both stare at Dion, who, with a studied carelessness, takes his place at the rail, where young Brown had stood. They watch him, with queer, puzzled eyes.)

MOTHER--(suddenly--pleading) You simply must send him to college!

FATHER--I won't. I don't believe in it. Colleges turn out lazy loafers to sponge on their poor old fathers! Let him slave like I had to! That'll teach him the value of a dollar! College'll only make him a bigger fool than he is already! I never got above grammar school but I've made money and established a sound business. Let him make a man out of himself like I made of myself!

DION--(mockingly--to the air) This Mr. Anthony is my father, but he only imagines he is God the Father. (They both stare at him.)

FATHER--(with angry bewilderment) What--what--what's that?

MOTHER--(gently remonstrating to her son) Dion, dear! (then to her husband--tauntingly) Brown takes all the credit! He tells everyone the success is all due to his energy--that you're only an old stick-in-the-mud!

FATHER--(stung, harshly) The damn fool! He knows better'n anyone if I hadn't held him down to common sense, with his crazy wild-cat notions, he'd have had us ruined long ago!

MOTHER--He's sending Billy to college--Mrs. Brown, just told me-- going to have him study architecture afterwards, too, so's he can help expand your firm!

FATHER--(angrily) What's that? (suddenly turns on Dion furiously) Then you can make up your mind to go, too! And you'll learn to be a better architect than Brown's boy or I'll turn you out in the gutter without a penny! You hear?

DION--(mockingly--to the air) It's difficult to choose--but architecture sounds less laborious.

MOTHER--(fondly) You ought to make a wonderful architect, Dion. You've always painted pictures so well--

DION--(with a start--resentfully) Why must she lie? Is it my fault? She knows I only try to paint. (passionately) But I will, some day! (then quickly, mocking again) On to college! Well, it won't be home, anyway, will it? (He laughs queerly and approaches them. His father gets up defensively. Dion bows to him.) I thank Mr. Anthony for this splendid opportunity to create myself--(he kisses his mother, who bows with a strange humility as if she were a servant being saluted by the young master--then adds lightly)--in my mother's image, so she may feel her life comfortably concluded. (He sits in his father's place at center and his mask stares with a frozen mockery before him. They stand on each side, looking dumbly at him.)

MOTHER--(at last, with a shiver) It's cold. June didn't use to be cold. I remember the June when I was carrying you, Dion--three months before you were born. (She stares up at the sky.) The moonlight was warm, then. I could feel the night wrapped around me like a gray velvet gown lined with warm sky and trimmed with silver leaves!

FATHER--(gruffly--but with a certain awe) My mother used to believe the full of the moon was the time to sow. She was terrible old-fashioned. (with a grunt) I can feel it's bringing on my rheumatism. Let's go back indoors.

DION--(with intense bitterness) Hide! Be ashamed! (They both start and stare at him.)

FATHER--(with bitter hopelessness. To his wife--indicating their son) Who is he? You bore him!

MOTHER--(proudly) He's my boy! He's Dion!

DION--(bitterly resentful) What else, indeed! The identical son! (then mockingly) Are Mr. Anthony and his wife going in to dance? The nights grow cold! The days are dimmer than they used to be! Let's play hide-and-seek! Seek the monkey in the moon! (He suddenly cuts a grotesque caper, like a harlequin and darts off, laughing with forced abandon. They stare after him--then slowly follow. Again there is silence except for the sound of the lapping waves. Then Margaret comes in, followed by the humbly worshipping Billy Brown. She is almost seventeen, pretty and

vivacious, blonde, with big romantic eyes, her figure lithe and strong, her facial expression intelligent but youthfully dreamy, especially now in the moonlight. She is in a simple white dress. On her entrance, her face is masked with an exact, almost transparent reproduction of her own features, but giving her the abstract quality of a Girl instead of the individual, Margaret.)

MARGARET--(looking upward at the moon and singing in low tone as they enter) "Ah, moon of my delight that knowest no wane!"

BILLY--(eagerly) I've got that record--John McCormack. It's a peach! Sing some more. (She looks upward in silence. He keeps standing respectfully in back of her, glancing embarrassedly toward her averted face. He tries to make conversation.) I think the Rubáiyát's great stuff, don't you? I never could memorize poetry worth a darn. Dion can recite lots of Shelley's poems by heart.

MARGARET--(slowly takes off her mask--to the moon) Dion! (a pause)

BILLY--(fidgeting) Margaret!

MARGARET--(to the moon) Dion is so wonderful!

BILLY--(blunderingly) I asked you to come out here because I wanted to tell you something.

MARGARET--(to the moon) Why did Dion look at me like that? It made me feel so crazy!

BILLY--I wanted to ask you something, too.

MARGARET--That one time he kissed me--I can't forget it! He was only joking--but I felt--and he saw and just laughed!

BILLY--Because that's the uncertain part. My end of it is a sure thing, and has been for a long time, and I guess everybody in town knows it--they're always kidding me--so it's a cinch you must know-- how I feel about you.

MARGARET--Dion's so different from all the others. He can paint beautifully and write poetry and he plays and sings and dances so marvelously. But he's sad and shy, too, just like a baby sometimes, and he understands what I'm really like inside--and--and I'd love to run my fingers through his hair--and I love him! Yes, I love him! (She stretches out her arms to the moon.) Oh, Dion, I love you!

BILLY--I love you, Margaret.

MARGARET--I wonder if Dion--I saw him looking at me again tonight-- Oh, I wonder . . . !

BILLY--(takes her hand and blurts out) Can't you love me? Won't you marry me--after college--

MARGARET--Where is Dion now, I wonder?

BILLY--(shaking her hand in an agony of uncertainty) Margaret! Please answer me!

MARGARET--(her dream broken, puts on her mask and turns to him-- matter-of-factly) It's getting chilly. Let's go back and dance, Billy.

BILLY--(desperately) I love you! (He tries clumsily to kiss her.)

MARGARET--(with an amused laugh) Like a brother! You can kiss me if you like. (She kisses him.) A big-brother kiss. It doesn't count. (He steps back crushed, with head bowed. She turns away and takes off her mask--to the moon) I wish Dion would kiss me again!

BILLY--(painfully) I'm a poor boob. I ought to know better. I'll bet I know. You're in love with Dion. I've seen you look at him. Isn't that it?

MARGARET--Dion! I love the sound of it!

BILLY--(huskily) Well--he's always been my best friend--I'm glad it's him--and I guess I know how to lose--(he takes her hand and shakes it)--so here's wishing you all the success and happiness in the world, Margaret--and remember I'll always be your best friend! (He gives her hand a final shake--swallows hard--then manfully) Let's go back in!

MARGARET--(to the moon--faintly annoyed) What is Billy Brown doing here? I'll go down to the end of the dock and wait. Dion is the moon and I'm the sea. I want to feel the moon kissing the sea. I want Dion to leave the sky to me. I want the tides of my blood to leave my heart and follow him! (She whispers like a little girl) Dion! Margaret! Peggy! Peggy is Dion's girl--Peggy is Dion's little girl--(She sings laughingly, elfishly) Dion is my Daddy-O! (She is walking toward the end of the dock, off left.)

BILLY--(who has turned away) I'm going. I'll tell Dion you're here.

MARGARET--(more and more strongly and assertively, until at the end she is a wife and a mother) And I'll be Mrs. Dion--Dion's

wife-- and he'll be my Dion--my own Dion--my little boy--my baby!
The moon is drowned in the tides of my heart, and peace sinks deep
through the sea! (She disappears off left, her upturned unmasked
face like that of a rapturous visionary. There is silence again, in
which the dance music is heard. Then this stops and Dion comes in.
He walks quickly to the bench at center and throws himself on it,
hiding his masked face in his hands. After a moment, he lifts his
head, peers about, listens huntedly, then slowly takes off his mask.
His real face is revealed in the bright moonlight, shrinking, shy and
gentle, full of a deep sadness.)

DION--(with a suffering bewilderment) Why am I afraid to dance,
I who love music and rhythm and grace and song and laughter?
Why am I afraid to live, I who love life and the beauty of flesh and
the living colors of earth and sky and sea? Why am I afraid of love,
I who love love? Why am I afraid, I who am not afraid? Why must
I pretend to scorn in order to pity? Why must I hide myself in self-
contempt in order to understand? Why must I be so ashamed of my
strength, so proud of my weakness? Why must I live in a cage like a
criminal, defying and hating, I who love peace and friendship?
(clasping his hands above in supplication) Why was I born without
a skin, O God, that I must wear armor in order to touch or to be
touched? (A second's pause of waiting silence--then he suddenly
claps his mask over his face again, with a gesture of despair and his
voice becomes bitter and sardonic.) Or rather, Old Graybeard, why
the devil was I ever born at all? (Steps are heard from the right.
Dion stiffens and his mask stares straight ahead. Billy comes in
from the right. He is shuffling along disconsolately. When he sees
Dion, he stops abruptly and glowers resentfully--but at once the
"good loser" in him conquers this.)

BILLY--(embarrassedly) Hello, Dion. I've been looking all over
for you. (He sits down on the bench at right, forcing a joking tone)
What are you sitting here for, you nut--trying to get more
moonstruck? (a pause--awkwardly) I just left Margaret--

DION--(gives a start--immediately defensively mocking) Bless
you, my children!

BILLY--(gruffly and slangily) I'm out of it--she gave me the gate.
You're the original white-haired boy. Go on in and win! We've
been chums ever since we were kids, haven't we?--and--I'm glad it's

you, Dion. (This huskily--he fumbles for Dion's hand and gives it a shake.)

DION--(letting his hand fall back--bitterly) Chums? Oh no, Billy Brown would despise me!

BILLY--She's waiting for you now, down at the end of the dock.

DION--For me? Which? Who? Oh no, girls only allow themselves to look at what is seen!

BILLY--She's in love with you.

DION--(moved--a pause--stammers) Miracle? I'm afraid! (He chants flippantly) I love, thou lovest, he loves, she loves! She loves, she loves--what?

BILLY--And I know damn well, underneath your nuttiness, you're gone on her.

DION--(moved) Underneath? I love love! I'd love to be loved! But I'm afraid! (then aggressively) WAS afraid! Not now! Now I can make love--to anyone! Yes, I love Peggy! Why not? Who is she? Who am I? We love, you love, they love, one loves! No one loves! All the world loves a lover, God loves us all and we love Him! Love is a word--a shameless ragged ghost of a word--begging at all doors for life at any price!

BILLY--(always as if he hadn't listened to what the other said) Say, let's you and me room together at college--

DION--Billy wants to remain by her side!

BILLY--It's a bet, then! (forcing a grin) You can tell her I'll see that you behave! (turns away) So long. Remember she's waiting. (He goes.)

DION--(dazedly, to himself) Waiting--waiting for me! (He slowly removes his mask. His face is torn and transfigured by joy. He stares at the sky raptly.) O God in the moon, did you hear? She loves me! I am not afraid! I am strong! I can love! She protects me! Her arms are softly around me! She is warmly around me! She is my skin! She is my armor! Now I am born--I--the I!-- one and indivisible--I who love Margaret! (He glances at his mask triumphantly--in tones of deliverance) You are outgrown! I am beyond you! (He stretches out his arms to the sky.) O God, now I believe! (From the end of the wharf her voice is heard.)

MARGARET--Dion!

DION--(raptly) Margaret!

MARGARET--(nearer) Dion!

DION--Margaret!

MARGARET--Dion! (She comes running in, her mask in her hands. He springs toward her with outstretched arms but she shrinks away with a frightened shriek and hastily puts on her mask. Dion starts back. She speaks coldly and angrily.) Who are you? Why are you calling me? I don't know you!

DION--(heart-brokenly) I love you!

MARGARET--(freezingly) Is this a joke--or are you drunk?

DION--(with a final pleading whisper) Margaret! (But she only glares at him contemptuously. Then with a sudden gesture he claps his mask on and laughs wildly and bitterly.) Ha-ha-ha! That's one on you, Peg!

MARGARET--(with delight, pulling off her mask) Dion! How did you ever--Why, I never knew you!

DION--(puts his arm around her boldly) How? It's the moon--the crazy moon--the monkey in the moon--playing jokes on us! (He kisses her with his masked face with a romantic actor's passion again and again.) You love me! You know you do! Say it! Tell me! I want to hear! I want to feel! I want to know! I want to want! To want you as you want me!

MARGARET--(in ecstasy) Oh, Dion, I do! I do love you!

DION--(with ironic mastery--rhetorically) And I love you! Oh, madly! Oh, forever and ever, amen! You are my evening star and all my Pleiades! Your eyes are blue pools in which gold dreams glide, your body is a young white birch leaning backward beneath the lips of spring. So! (He has bent her back, his arms supporting her, his face above hers) So! (He kisses her.)

MARGARET--(with overpowering passionate languor) Oh, Dion! Dion! I love you!

DION--(with more and more mastery in his tone) I love, you love, we love! Come! Rest! Relax! Let go your clutch on the world! Dim and dimmer! Fading out in the past behind! Gone! Death! Now! Be born! Awake! Live! Dissolve into dew--into silence--into night--into earth--into space--into peace--into meaning--into joy--into God--into the Great God Pan! (While he has been speaking, the moon has passed gradually behind a black cloud, its light fading out. There is a moment of intense blackness and

silence. Then the light gradually comes on again. Dion's voice, at first in a whisper, then increasing in volume with the light, is heard) Wake up! Time to get up! Time to exist! Time for school! Time to learn! Learn to pretend! Cover your nakedness! Learn to lie! Learn to keep step! Join the procession! Great Pan is dead! Be ashamed!

MARGARET--(with a sob) Oh, Dion, I am ashamed!

DION--(mockingly) Sssshh! Watch the monkey in the moon! See him dance! His tail is a piece of string that was left when he broke loose from Jehovah and ran away to join Charley Darwin's circus!

MARGARET--I know you must hate me now! (She throws her arms around him and hides her head on his shoulder.)

DION--(deeply moved) Don't cry! Don't--! (He suddenly tears off his mask--in a passionate agony) Hate you? I love you with all my soul! Love me! Why can't you love me, Margaret? (He tries to kiss her but she jumps to her feet with a frightened cry holding up her mask before her face protectingly.)

MARGARET--Don't! Please! I don't know you! You frighten me!

DION--(puts on his mask again--quietly and bitterly) All's well. I'll never let you see again. (He puts his arm around her--gently mocking) By proxy, I love you. There! Don't cry! Don't be afraid! Dion Anthony will marry you some day. (He kisses her.) "I take this woman--" (tenderly joking) Hello, woman! Do you feel older by aeons? Mrs. Dion Anthony, shall we go in and may I have the next dance?

MARGARET--(tenderly) You crazy child! (then, laughing with joy) Mrs. Dion Anthony! It sounds wonderful, doesn't it? (They go out as

The Curtain Falls)

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

SCENE--*Seven years later.*

The sitting room of Mrs. Dion Anthony's half of a two-family house in the homes section of the town--one of those one-design districts that daze the eye with multiplied ugliness. The four pieces of furniture shown are in keeping--an armchair at left, a table with a

chair in back of it at center, a sofa at right. The same court-room effect of the arrangement of benches in Act One is held to here. The background is a backdrop on which the rear wall is painted with the intolerable lifeless realistic detail of the stereotyped paintings which usually adorn the sitting rooms of such houses. It is late afternoon of a gray day in winter.

Dion is sitting behind the table, staring before him. The mask hangs on his breast below his neck, giving the effect of two faces. His real face has aged greatly, grown more strained and tortured, but at the same time, in some queer way, more selfless and ascetic, more fixed in its resolute withdrawal from life. The mask, too, has changed. It is older, more defiant and mocking, its sneer more forced and bitter, its Pan quality becoming Mephistophelean. It has already begun to show the ravages of dissipation.

DION--(suddenly reaches out and takes up a copy of the New Testament which is on the table and, putting a finger in at random, opens and reads aloud the text at which it points) "Come unto me all ye who are heavy laden and I will give you rest." (He stares before him in a sort of trance, his face lighted up from within but painfully confused--in an uncertain whisper) I will come--but where are you, Savior? (The noise of the outer door shutting is heard. Dion starts and claps the mocking mask on his face again. He tosses the Testament aside contemptuously.) Blah! Fixation on old Mama Christianity! You infant blubbing in the dark, you! (He laughs, with a bitter self-contempt. Footsteps approach. He picks up a newspaper and hides behind it hurriedly. Margaret enters. She is dressed in stylish, expensive clothes and a fur coat, which look as if they had been remodeled and seen service. She has grown mature and maternal, in spite of her youth. Her pretty face is still fresh and healthy but there is the beginning of a permanently worried, apprehensive expression about the nose and mouth--an uncomprehending hurt in her eyes. Dion pretends to be engrossed in his paper. She bends down and kisses him.)

MARGARET--(with a forced gayety) Good morning--at four in the afternoon! You were snoring when I left!

DION--(puts his arms around her with a negligent, accustomed gesture--mockingly) The Ideal Husband!

MARGARET--(already preoccupied with another thought--comes and sits in chair on left) I was afraid the children would disturb you, so I took them over to Mrs. Young's to play. (A pause. He picks up the paper again. She asks anxiously) I suppose they'll be all right over there, don't you? (He doesn't answer. She is more hurt than offended.) I wish you'd try to take more interest in the children, Dion.

DION--(mockingly) Become a father--before breakfast? I'm in too delicate a condition. (She turns away, hurt. Penitently he pats her hand--vaguely) All right. I'll try.

MARGARET--(squeezing his hand--with possessive tenderness) Play with them. You're a bigger kid than they are--underneath.

DION--(self-mockingly--flipping the Bible) Underneath--I'm becoming downright infantile! "Suffer these little ones!"

MARGARET--(keeping to her certainty) You're my oldest.

DION--(with mocking appreciation) She puts the Kingdom of Heaven in its place!

MARGARET--(withdrawing her hand) I was serious.

DION--So was I--about something or other. (He laughs.) This domestic diplomacy! We communicate in code--when neither has the other's key!

MARGARET--(frowns confusedly--then forcing a playful tone) I want to have a serious talk with you, young man! In spite of your promises, you've kept up the hard drinking and gambling you started the last year abroad.

DION--From the time I realized it wasn't in me to be an artist--except in living--and not even in that! (He laughs bitterly.)

MARGARET--(with conviction) But you CAN paint, Dion--beautifully!

DION--(with deep pain) No! (He suddenly takes her hand and kisses it gratefully.) I love Margaret! Her blindness surpasseth all understanding! (then bitterly)--or is it pity?

MARGARET--We've only got about one hundred dollars left in the bank.

DION--(with dazed surprise) What! Is all the money from the sale of the house gone?

MARGARET--(wearily) Every day or so you've been cashing checks. You've been drinking--you haven't counted--

DION--(irritably) I know! (a pause--soberly) No more estate to fall back on, eh? Well, for five years it kept us living abroad in peace. It bought us a little happiness--of a kind--didn't it?-- living and loving and having children--(a slight pause--bitterly)-- thinking one was creating before one discovered one couldn't!

MARGARET--(this time with forced conviction) But you CAN paint-- beautifully!

DION--(angrily) Shut up! (a pause--then jeeringly) So my wife thinks it behooves me to settle down and support my family in the meager style to which they'll have to become accustomed?

MARGARET--(shamefacedly) I didn't say--still--something's got to be done.

DION--(harshly) Will Mrs. Anthony helpfully suggest what?

MARGARET--I met Billy Brown on the street. He said you'd have made a good architect, if you'd stuck to it.

DION--Flatterer! Instead of leaving college when my Old Man died? Instead of marrying Peggy and going abroad and being happy?

MARGARET--(as if she hadn't heard) He spoke of how well you used to draw.

DION--Billy was in love with Margaret at one time.

MARGARET--He wanted to know why you've never been in to see him.

DION--He's bound heaven-bent for success. It's the will of Mammon! Anthony and Brown, contractors and builders--death subtracts Anthony and I sell out--Billy graduates--Brown and Son, architects and builders--old man Brown perishes of paternal pride--and now we have William A. Brown, architect! Why his career itself already has an architectural design! One of God's mud pies!

MARGARET--He particularly told me to ask you to drop in.

DION--(springs to his feet--assertively) No! Pride! I have been alive!

MARGARET--Why don't you have a talk with him?

DION--Pride in my failure!

MARGARET--You were always such close friends.

DION--(more and more desperately) The pride which came after man's fall--by which he laughs as a creator at his self-defeats!

MARGARET--Not for my sake--but for your own--and, above all, for the children's!

DION--(with terrible despair) Pride! Pride without which the Gods are worms!

MARGARET--(after a pause, meekly and humbly) You don't want to? It would hurt you? All right, dear. Never mind. We'll manage somehow--you mustn't worry--you must start your beautiful painting again--and I can get that position in the library--it would be such fun for me working there! . . . (She reaches out and takes his hand--tenderly) I love you, dear. I understand.

DION--(slumps down into his chair, crushed, his face averted from hers, as hers is from him, although their hands are still clasped-- in a trembling, expiring voice) Pride is dying! (As if he were suffocating, he pulls the mask from his resigned, pale, suffering face. He prays like a Saint in the desert, exorcizing a demon.) Pride is dead! Blessed are the meek! Blessed are the poor in spirit!

MARGARET--(without looking at him--in a comforting, motherly tone) My poor boy!

DION--(resentfully--clapping on his mask again and springing to his feet--derisively) Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit graves! Blessed are the poor in spirit for they are blind! (then with tortured bitterness) All right! Then I ask my wife to go and ask Billy Brown--that's more deadly than if I went myself! (with wild mockery) Ask him if he can't find an opening for a talented young man who is only honest when he isn't sober--implore him, beg him in the name of old love, old friendship--to be a generous hero and save the woman and her children! (He laughs with a sort of diabolical, ironical glee now, and starts to go out.)

MARGARET--(meekly) Are you going up street, Dion?

DION--Yes.

MARGARET--Will you stop at the butchers' and have them send two pounds of pork chops?

DION--Yes.

MARGARET--And stop at Mrs. Young's and ask the children to hurry right home?

DION--Yes.

MARGARET--Will you be back for dinner, Dion?

DION--No. (He goes, the outer door slams. Margaret sighs with a tired incomprehension and goes to the window and stares out.)

MARGARET--(worriedly) I hope they'll watch out, crossing the street.

(Curtain)

SCENE TWO

SCENE--*Billy Brown's Office, at five in the afternoon. At center, a fine mahogany desk with a swivel chair in back of it. To the left of desk, an office armchair. To the right of desk, an office lounge. The background is a backdrop of an office wall, treated similarly to that of Scene One in its over-meticulous representation of detail.*

Billy Brown is seated at the desk looking over a blue print by the light of a desk lamp. He has grown into a fine-looking, well-dressed, capable, college-bred American business man, boyish still and with the same engaging personality.

The telephone rings.

BROWN--(answering it) Yes? Who? (this in surprise--then with eager pleasure) Let her come right in. (He gets up and goes to the door, expectant and curious. Margaret enters. Her face is concealed behind the mask of the pretty young matron, still hardly a woman, who cultivates a naïvely innocent and bravely hopeful attitude toward things and acknowledges no wound to the world. She is dressed as in Scene One but with an added touch of effective primping here and there.)

MARGARET--(very gayly) Hello, Billy Brown!

BROWN--(awkward in her presence, shakes her hand) Come in. Sit down. This is a pleasant surprise, Margaret. (She sits down on the lounge. He sits in his chair behind the desk, as before.)

MARGARET--(looking around) What lovely offices! My, but Billy Brown is getting grand!

BROWN--(pleased) I've just moved in. The old place was too stuffy.

MARGARET--It looks so prosperous--but then, Billy is doing so wonderfully well, everyone says.

BROWN--(modestly) Well, to be frank, it's been mostly luck. Things have come my way without my doing much about it. (then, with an abashed pride) Still--I have done a little something myself. (He picks the plan from the desk.) See this? It's my design for the

new Municipal Building. It's just been accepted-- provisionally--by the Committee.

MARGARET--(taking it--vaguely) Oh? (She looks at it abstractedly. There is a pause. Suddenly) You mentioned the other day how well Dion used to draw--

BROWN--(a bit stiffly) Yes, he certainly did. (He takes the drawing from her and at once becomes interested and squints at it frowningly.) Did you notice that anything seemed lacking in this?

MARGARET--(indifferently) Not at all.

BROWN--(with a cheerful grin) The Committee want it made a little more American. It's too much of a conventional Greco-Roman tomb, they say. (laughs) They want an original touch of modern novelty stuck in to liven it up and make it look different from other town halls. (putting the drawing back on his desk) And I've been figuring out how to give it to them but my mind doesn't seem to run that way. Have you any suggestion?

MARGARET--(as if she hadn't heard) Dion certainly draws well, Billy Brown was saying?

BROWN--(trying not to show his annoyance) Why, yes--he did--and still can, I expect. (A pause. He masters what he feels to be an unworthy pique and turns to her generously.) Dion would have made a cracking good architect.

MARGARET--(proudly) I know. He could be anything he wanted to.

BROWN--(a pause--embarrassedly) Is he working at anything these days?

MARGARET--(defensively) Oh, yes! He's painting wonderfully! But he's just like a child, he's so impractical. He doesn't try to have an exhibition anywhere, or anything.

BROWN--(surprised) The one time I ran into him, I thought he told me he'd destroyed all his pictures--that he'd gotten sick of painting and completely given it up.

MARGARET--(quickly) He always tells people that. He doesn't want anyone even to look at his things, imagine! He keeps saying they're rotten--when they're really too beautiful! He's too modest for his own good, don't you think? But it is true he hasn't done so much lately since we've been back. You see the children take up such a lot of his time. He just worships them! I'm afraid he's becoming a

hopeless family man, just the opposite of what anyone would expect who knew him in the old days.

BROWN--(painfully embarrassed by her loyalty and his knowledge of the facts) Yes, I know. (He coughs self-consciously.)

MARGARET--(aroused by something in his manner) But I suppose the gossips are telling the same silly stories about him they always did. (She forces a laugh.) Poor Dion! Give a dog a bad name! (Her voice breaks a little in spite of herself.)

BROWN--(hastily) I haven't heard any stories--(he stops uncertainly, then decides to plunge in)--except about money matters.

MARGARET--(forcing a laugh) Oh, perhaps they're true enough. Dion is such a generous fool with his money, like all artists.

BROWN--(with a certain doggedness) There's a rumor that you've applied for a position at the Library.

MARGARET--(forcing a gay tone) Yes, indeed! Won't it be fun! Maybe it'll improve my mind! And one of us has got to be practical, so why not me? (She forces a gay, girlish laugh.)

BROWN--(impulsively reaches out and takes her hand--awkwardly) Listen, Margaret. Let's be perfectly frank, will you? I'm such an old friend, and I want like the deuce to. . . . You know darn well I'd do anything in the world to help you--or Dion.

MARGARET--(withdrawing her hand, coldly) I'm afraid I--don't understand, Billy Brown.

BROWN--(acutely embarrassed) Well, I--I just meant--you know, if you needed--(A pause. He looks questioningly at her averted face-- then ventures on another tack, matter-of-factly.) I've got a proposition to make to Dion--if I could ever get hold of him. It's this way: business has been piling up on me--a run of luck--but I'm short-handed. I need a crack chief draftsman darn badly--or I'm liable to lose out. Do you think Dion would consider it--as a temporary stop-gap--until he felt in the painting mood again?

MARGARET--(striving to conceal her eagerness and relief--judicially) Yes--I really do. He's such a good sport and Billy and he were such pals once. I know he'd be only too tickled to help him out.

BROWN--(diffidently) I thought he might be sensitive about working for--I mean, with me--when, if he hadn't sold out to Dad he'd be my partner now--(earnestly)--and, by jingo, I wish he was!

(then, abruptly) Let's try to nail him down right away, Margaret. Is he home now? (He reaches for the phone.)

MARGARET--(hurriedly) No, he--he went out for a long walk.

BROWN--Perhaps I can locate him later around town somewhere.

MARGARET--(with a note of pleading) Please don't trouble. It isn't necessary. I'm sure when I talk to him--he's coming home to dinner--(getting up) Then it's all settled, isn't it? Dion will be so glad to be able to help an old friend--he's so terribly loyal, and he's always liked Billy Brown so much! (holding out her hand) I really must go now!

BROWN--(shakes her hand) Good-by, Margaret. I hope you'll be dropping in on us a lot when Dion gets here.

MARGARET--Yes. (She goes.)

BROWN--(sits at his desk again, looking ahead in a not unsatisfying melancholy reverie. He mutters admiringly but pityingly) Poor Margaret! She's a game sport, but it's pretty damn tough on her! (indignantly) By God, I'm going to give Dion a good talking-to one of these days!

(Curtain)

SCENE THREE

SCENE--*Cybel's parlor. An automatic, nickel-in-the-slot player-piano is at center, rear. On its right is a dirty gilt second-hand sofa. At the left is a bald-spotted crimson plush chair. The backdrop for the rear wall is cheap wall-paper of a dull yellow-brown, resembling a blurred impression of a fallow field in early spring. There is a cheap alarm clock on top of the piano. Beside it her mask is lying.*

Dion is sprawled on his back, fast asleep on the sofa. His mask has fallen down on his chest. His pale face is singularly pure, spiritual and sad.

The player-piano is groggily banging out a sentimental medley of "Mother--Mammy" tunes.

Cybel is seated on the stool in front of the piano. She is a strong, calm, sensual, blonde girl of twenty or so, her complexion fresh and healthy, her figure full-breasted and wide-hipped, her movements slow and solidly languorous like an animal's, her large eyes dreamy with the reflected stirring of profound instincts. She chews gum like

a sacred cow forgetting time with an eternal end. Her eyes are fixed, incuriously, on Dion's pale face.

CYBEL--(as the tune runs out, glances at the clock, which indicates midnight, then goes slowly over to Dion and puts her hand gently on his forehead) Wake up!

DION--(stirs, sighs and murmurs dreamily) "And He laid his hands on them and healed them." (Then with a start he opens his eyes and, half sitting up, stares at her bewilderedly.) What--where--who are you? (He reaches for his mask and claps it on defensively.)

CYBEL--(placidly) Only another female. You was camping on my steps, sound asleep. I didn't want to run any risk getting into more trouble with the cops pinching you there and blaming me, so I took you in to sleep it off.

DION--(mockingly) Blessed are the pitiful, Sister! I'm broke--but you will be rewarded in Heaven!

CYBEL--(calmly) I wasn't wasting my pity. Why should I? You were happy, weren't you?

DION--(approvingly) Excellent! You're not a moralist, I see.

CYBEL--(going on) And you look like a good boy, too--when you're asleep. Say, you better beat it home to bed or you'll be locked out.

DION--(mockingly) Now you're becoming maternal, Miss Earth. Is that the only answer--to pin my soul into every vacant diaper? (She stares down at his mask, her face growing hard. He laughs.) But please don't stop stroking my aching brow. Your hand is a cool mud poultice on the sting of thought!

CYBEL--(calmly) Stop acting. I hate ham fats. (She looks at him as if waiting for him to remove his mask--then turns her back indifferently and goes to the piano.) Well, if you simply got to be a regular devil like all the other visiting sports, I s'pose I got to play with you. (She takes her mask and puts it on--then turns. The mask is the rouged and eye-blackened countenance of the hardened prostitute. In a coarse, harsh voice) Kindly state your dishonorable intentions, if any! I can't sit up all night keeping company! Let's have some music! (She puts a plug in the machine. The same sentimental medley begins to play. The two masks stare at each other. She laughs.) Shoot! I'm all set! It's your play, Kid Lucifer!

DION--(slowly removes his mask. She stops the music with a jerk. His face is gentle and sad--humbly) I'm sorry. It has always been such agony for me to be touched!

CYBEL--(taking off her mask--sympathetically as she comes back and sits down on her stool) Poor kid! I've never had one, but I can guess. They hug and kiss you and take you on their laps and pinch you and want to see you getting dressed and undressed--as if they owned you--I bet you I'd never let them treat one of mine that way!

DION--(turning to her) You're lost in blind alleys, too. (suddenly holding out his hand to her) But you're strong. Let's be friends.

CYBEL--(with a strange sternness, searches his face) And never nothing more?

DION--(with a strange smile) Let's say, never anything less! (She takes his hand. There is a ring at the outside door bell. They stare at each other. There is another ring.)

CYBEL--(puts on her mask, Dion does likewise. Mockingly) When you got to love to live it's hard to love living. I better join the A. F. of L. and soap-box for the eight-hour night! Got a nickel, baby? Play a tune. (She goes out. Dion puts a nickel in. The same sentimental tune starts. Cybel returns, followed by Billy Brown. His face is rigidly composed, but his superior disgust for Dion can be seen. Dion jerks off the music and he and Billy look at each other for a moment, Cybel watching them both--then, bored, she yawns.) He's hunting for you. Put out the lights when you go. I'm going to sleep. (She starts to go--then, as if reminded of something--to Dion) Life's all right, if you let it alone. (then mechanically flashing a trade smile at Billy) Now you know the way, Handsome, call again! (She goes.)

BROWN--(after an awkward pause) Hello, Dion! I've been looking all over town for you. This place was the very last chance. . . (another pause--embarrassedly) Let's take a walk.

DION--(mockingly) I've given up exercise. They claim it lengthens your life.

BROWN--(persuasively) Come on, Dion, be a good fellow. You're certainly not staying here--

DION--Billy would like to think me taken in flagrante delicto, eh?

BROWN--Don't be a damn fool! Listen to me! I've been looking you up for purely selfish reasons. I need your help.

DION--(astonished) What?

BROWN--I've a proposition to make that I hope you'll consider favorably out of old friendship. To be frank, Dion, I need you to lend me a hand down at the office.

DION--(with a harsh laugh) So it's the job, is it? Then my poor wife did a-begging go!

BROWN--(repelled--sharply) On the contrary, I had to beg her to beg you to take it! (more angrily) Look here, Dion! I won't listen to you talk that way about Margaret! And you wouldn't if you weren't drunk! (suddenly shaking him) What in hell has come over you, anyway! You didn't use to be like this! What the devil are you going to do with yourself--sink into the gutter and drag Margaret with you? If you'd heard her defend you, lie about you, tell me how hard you were working, what beautiful things you were painting, how you stayed at home and idolized the children!--when everyone knows you've been out every night sousing and gambling away the last of your estate. . . . (He stops, ashamed, controlling himself.)

DION--(wearily) She was lying about her husband, not me, you fool! But it's no use explaining. (then, in a sudden, excitable passion) What do you want? I agree to anything--except the humiliation of yelling secrets at the deaf!

BROWN--(trying a bullying tone--roughly) Bunk! Don't try to crawl out! There's no excuse and you know it. (then as Dion doesn't reply--penitently) But I know I shouldn't talk this way, old man! It's only because we're such old pals--and I hate to see you wasting yourself--you who had more brains than any of us! But, damn it, I suppose you're too much of a rotten cynic to believe I mean what I've just said!

DION--(touched) I know Billy was always Dion Anthony's friend.

BROWN--You're damn right I am--and I'd have proved it long ago if you'd only given me half a chance! After all, I couldn't keep chasing after you and be snubbed every time. A man has some pride!

DION--(bitterly mocking) Dead wrong! Never more! None whatever! It's unmoral! Blessed are the poor in spirit, Brother! When shall I report?

BROWN--(eagerly) Then you'll take the--you'll help me?

DION--(wearily bitter) I'll take the job. One must do something to pass away the time, while one is waiting--for one's next incarnation.

BROWN--(jokingly) I'd say it was a bit early to be worrying about that. (trying to get Dion started) Come along, now. It's pretty late.

DION--(shakes his hand off his shoulder and walks away from him-- after a pause) Is my father's chair still there?

BROWN--(turns away--embarrassed) I--I don't really remember, Dion-- I'll look it up.

DION--(taking off his mask--slowly) I'd like to sit where he spun what I have spent. What aliens we were to each other! When he lay dead, his face looked so familiar that I wondered where I had met that man before. Only at the second of my conception. After that, we grew hostile with concealed shame. And my mother? I remember a sweet, strange girl, with affectionate, bewildered eyes as if God had locked her in a dark closet without any explanation. I was the sole doll our ogre, her husband, allowed her and she played mother and child with me for many years in that house until at last through two tears I watched her die with the shy pride of one who has lengthened her dress and put up her hair. And I felt like a forsaken toy and cried to be buried with her, because her hands alone had caressed without clawing. She lived long and aged greatly in the two days before they closed her coffin. The last time I looked, her purity had forgotten me, she was stainless and imperishable, and I knew my sobs were ugly and meaningless to her virginity; so I shrank away, back into life, with naked nerves jumping like fleas, and in due course of nature another girl called me her boy in the moon and married me and became three mothers in one person, while I got paint on my paws in an endeavor to see God! (He laughs wildly--claps on his mask.) But that Ancient Humorist had given me weak eyes, so now I'll have to foreswear my quest for Him and go in for the Omnipresent Successful Serious One, the Great God Mr. Brown, instead! (He makes him a sweeping, mocking bow.)

BROWN--(repelled but cajoling) Shut up, you nut! You're still drunk. Come on! Let's start! (He grabs Dion by the arm and switches off the light.)

DION--(from the darkness--mockingly) I am thy shorn, bald, nude sheep! Lead on, Almighty Brown, thou Kindly Light!

(Curtain)

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

SCENE--*Cybel's parlor--about sunset in spring seven years later. The arrangement of furniture is the same but the chair and sofa are new, bright-colored, costly pieces. The old automatic piano at center looks exactly the same. The cheap alarm clock is still on top of it. On either side of the clock, the masks of Dion and Cybel are lying. The background backdrop is brilliant, stunning wallpaper, on which crimson and purple flowers and fruits tumble over one another in a riotously profane lack of any apparent design. Dion sits in the chair on left, Cybel on the sofa. A card-table is between them. Both are playing solitaire. Dion is now prematurely gray. His face is that of an ascetic, a martyr, furrowed by pain and self-torture, yet lighted from within by a spiritual calm and human kindness.*

Cybel has grown stouter and more voluptuous, but her face is still unmarked and fresh, her calm more profound. She is like an unmoved idol of Mother Earth.

The piano is whining out its same old sentimental medley. They play their cards intently and contentedly. The music stops.

CYBEL--(musingly) I love those rotten old sob tunes. They make me wise to people. That's what's inside them--what makes them love and murder their neighbor--crying jags set to music!

DION--(compassionately) Every song is a hymn. They keep trying to find the Word in the Beginning.

CYBEL--They try to know too much. It makes them weak. I never puzzled them with myself. I gave them a Tart. They understood her and knew their parts and acted naturally. And on both sides we were able to keep our real virtue, if you get me. (She plays her last card--indifferently) I've made it again.

DION--(smiling) Your luck is uncanny. It never comes out for me.

CYBEL--You keep getting closer, but it knows you still want to win-- a little bit--and it's wise all I care about is playing. (She lays out another game.) Speaking of my canned music, our Mr. Brown hates that old box. (At the mention of Brown, Dion trembles as if

suddenly possessed, has a terrible struggle with himself, then while she continues to speak, gets up like an automaton and puts on his mask. The mask is now terribly ravaged. All of its Pan quality has changed into a diabolical Mephistophelean cruelty and irony.) He doesn't mind the music inside. That gets him somehow. But he thinks the case looks shabby and he wants it junked. But I told him that just because he's been keeping me so long, he needn't start bossing like a husband or I'll--(She looks up and sees the masked Dion standing by the piano--calmly) Hello! Getting jealous again?

DION--(jeeringly) Are you falling in love with your keeper, old Sacred Cow?

CYBEL--(without taking offense) Cut it! You've been asking me that for years. Be yourself! He's healthy and handsome--but he's too guilty. What makes you pretend you think love is so important, anyway? It's just one of a lot of things you do to keep life living.

DION--(in same tone) Then you've lied when you've said you loved me, have you, Old Filth?

CYBEL--(affectionately) You'll never grow up! We've been friends, haven't we, for seven years? I've never let myself want you nor you me. Yes, I love you. It takes all kinds of love to make a world! Ours is the living cream, I say, living rich and high! (A pause. Coaxingly) Stop hiding. I know you.

DION--(taking off his mask, wearily comes and sits down at her feet and lays his head in her lap--with a grateful smile) You're strong. You always give. You've given my weakness strength to live.

CYBEL--(tenderly, stroking his hair maternally) You're not weak. You were born with ghosts in your eyes and you were brave enough to go looking into your own dark--and you got afraid. (after a pause) I don't blame your being jealous of Mr. Brown sometimes. I'm jealous of your wife, even though I know you do love her.

DION--(slowly) I love Margaret. I don't know who my wife is.

CYBEL--(after a pause--with a queer broken laugh) Oh, God, sometimes the truth hits me such a sock between the eyes I can see the stars!--and then I'm so damn sorry for the lot of you, every damn mother's son-of-a-gun of you, that I'd like to run out naked into the street and love the whole mob to death like I was bringing you all a new brand of dope that'd make you forget everything that ever was

for good! (then, with a twisted smile) But they wouldn't see me, any more than they see each other. And they keep right on moving along and dying without my help anyway.

DION--(sadly) You've given me strength to die.

CYBEL--You may be important but your life's not. There's millions of it born every second. Life can cost too much even for a sucker to afford it--like everything else. And it's not sacred--only the you inside is. The rest is earth.

DION--(gets to his knees and with clasped hands looks up raptly and prays with an ascetic fervor) "Into thy hands, O Lord," . . . (then suddenly, with a look of horror) Nothing! To feel one's life blown out like the flame of a cheap match . . . ! (He claps on his mask and laughs harshly.) To fall asleep and know you'll never, never be called to get on the job of existence again! "Swift be thine approaching flight! Come soon--soon!" (He quotes this last with a mocking longing.)

CYBEL--(pats his head maternally) There, don't be scared. It's born in the blood. When the time comes, you'll find it's easy.

DION--(jumps to his feet and walks about excitedly) It won't be long. My wife dragged in a doctor the day before yesterday. He says my heart is gone--booze--He warned me, never another drop or-- (mockingly) What say? Shall we have a drink?

CYBEL--(like an idol) Suit yourself. It's in the pantry. (then, as he hesitates) What set you off on this bat? You were raving on about some cathedral plans. . . .

DION--(wildly mocking) They've been accepted--Mr. Brown's designs! My designs really! You don't need to be told that. He hands me one mathematically correct barn after another and I doctor them up with cute allurements so that fools will desire to buy, sell, breed, sleep, love, hate, curse and pray in them! I do this with devilish cleverness to their entire delight! Once I dreamed of painting wind on the sea and the skimming flight of cloud shadows over the tops of trees! Now . . . (He laughs.) But pride is a sin--even in a memory of the long deceased! Blessed are the poor in spirit! (He subsides weakly on his chair, his hand pressed to his heart.)

CYBEL--(like an idol) Go home and sleep. Your wife'll be worried.

DION--She knows--but she'll never admit to herself that her husband ever entered your door. (mocking) Aren't women loyal--to their vanity and their other things!

CYBEL--Brown is coming soon, don't forget.

DION--He knows too and can't admit. Perhaps he needs me here--unknown. What first aroused his passion to possess you exclusively, do you think? Because he knew you loved me and he felt himself cheated. He wanted what he thought was my love of the flesh! He feels I have no right to love. He'd like to steal it as he steals my ideas--complacently--righteously. Oh, the good Brown!

CYBEL--But you like him, too! You're brothers, I guess, somehow. Well, remember he's paying, he'll pay--in some way or other.

DION--(raises his head as if starting to remove the mask) I know. Poor Billy! God forgive me the evil I've done him!

CYBEL--(reaches out and takes his hand) Poor boy!

DION--(presses her convulsively--then with forced harshness) Well, homeward Christian Soldier! I'm off! By-bye, Mother Earth! (He starts to go off right. She seems about to let him go.)

CYBEL--(suddenly starts and calls with deep grief) Dion! (He looks at her. A pause. He comes slowly back. She speaks strangely in a deep, far-off voice--and yet like a mother talking to her little son.) You mustn't forget to kiss me before you go, Dion. (She removes his mask.) Haven't I told you to take off your mask in the house? Look at me, Dion. I've--just--seen--something. I'm afraid you're going away a long, long ways. I'm afraid I won't see you again for a long, long time. So it's good-by, dear. (She kisses him gently. He begins to sob. She hands him back his mask.) Here you are. Don't get hurt. Remember, it's all a game, and after you're asleep I'll tuck you in.

DION--(in a choking, heart-broken cry) Mother! (Then he claps on his mask with a terrible effort of will--mockingly) Go to the devil, you sentimental old pig! See you tomorrow! (He goes, whistling, slamming the door.)

CYBEL--(like an idol again) What's the good of bearing children? What's the use of giving birth to death? (She sighs wearily, turns, puts a plug in the piano, which starts up its old sentimental tune. At the same moment Brown enters quietly from the left. He is the ideal

of the still youthful, good-looking, well- groomed, successful provincial American of forty. Just now, he is plainly perturbed. He is not able to see either Cybel's face or her mask.)

BROWN--Cybel! (She starts, jams off the music and reaches for her mask but has no time to put it on.) Wasn't that Dion I just saw going out--after all your promises never to see him! (She turns like an idol, holding the mask behind her. He stares, bewildered--stammers) I--I beg your pardon--I thought--

CYBEL--(in her strange voice) Cybel's gone out to dig in the earth and pray.

BROWN--(with more assurance) But--aren't those her clothes?

CYBEL--Cybel doesn't want people to see me naked. I'm her sister. Dion came to see me.

BROWN--(relieved) So that's what he's up to, is it? (then with a pitying sigh) Poor Margaret! (then with playful reproof) You really shouldn't encourage him. He's married and got three big sons.

CYBEL--And you haven't.

BROWN--(stung) No, I'm not married.

CYBEL--He and I were friends.

BROWN--(with a playful wink) Yes, I can imagine how the platonic must appeal to Dion's pure, innocent type! It's no good your kidding me about Dion. We've been friends since we were kids. I know him in and out. I've always stood up for him whatever he's done--so you can be perfectly frank. I only spoke as I did on account of Margaret--his wife--it's pretty tough on her.

CYBEL--You love his wife.

BROWN--(scandalized) What? What are you talking about? (then uncertainly) Don't be a fool! (a pause--then as if impelled by an intense curiosity) So Dion is your lover, eh? That's very interesting. (He pulls his chair closer to hers.) Sit down. Let's talk. (She continues to stand, the mask held behind her.) Tell me--I've always been curious--what is it that makes Dion so attractive to women--especially certain types of women, if you'll pardon me? He always has been and yet I never could see exactly what they saw in him. Is it his looks--or because he's such a violent sensualist--or because he poses as artistic and temperamental--or because he's so wild--or just what is it?

CYBEL--He's alive!

BROWN--(suddenly takes one of her hands and kisses it--
insinuatingly) Well, don't you think I'm alive, too? (eagerly)
Listen. Would you consider giving up Dion--and letting me take
care of you under a similar arrangement to the one I've made with
Cybel? I like you, you can see that. I won't bother you much--I'm
much too busy--you can do what you like--lead your own life--
except for seeing him. (He stops. A pause. She stares ahead
unmoved as if she hadn't heard. He pleads) Well--what do you say?
Please do!

CYBEL--(her voice very weary) Cybel said to tell you she'd be
back next week, Mr. Brown.

BROWN--(with queer agony) You mean you won't? Don't be so
cruel! I love you! (She walks away. He clutches at her, pleadingly)
At least--I'll give you anything you ask!--please promise me you
won't see Dion Anthony again!

CYBEL--(with deep grief) He will never see me again, I promise
you. Good-by!

BROWN--(jubilantly, kissing her hand--politely) Thank you!
Thank you! I'm exceedingly grateful. (tactfully) I won't disturb
you any further. Please forgive my intrusion, and remember me to
Cybel when you write. (He bows, turns, and goes off left.)

(Curtain)

SCENE TWO

SCENE--*The drafting room in Brown's office. Dion's drafting
table with a high stool in front is at center. Another stool is to the
left of it. At the right is a bench. It is in the evening of the same
day. The black wall drop has windows painted on it with a dim,
street-lighted view of black houses across the way.*

*Dion is sitting on the stool in back of the table, reading aloud from
the "Imitation of Christ" by Thomas à Kempis to his mask, which is
on the table before him. His own face is gentler, more spiritual,
more saintlike and ascetic than ever before.*

DION--(like a priest, offering up prayers for the dying) "Quickly
must thou be gone from hence, see then how matters stand with
thee. Ah, fool--learn now to die to the world that thou mayst begin
to live with Christ! Do now, beloved, do now all thou canst because
thou knowst not when thou shalt die; nor dost thou know what shall

befall thee after death. Keep thyself as a pilgrim, and a stranger upon earth, to whom the affairs of this world do not--belong! Keep thy heart free and raised upwards to God because thou hast not here a lasting abode. 'Because at what hour you know not the Son of Man will come!'" Amen. (He raises his hand over the mask as if he were blessing it, closes the book and puts it back in his pocket. He raises the mask in his hands and stares at it with a pitying tenderness.) Peace, poor tortured one, brave pitiful pride of man, the hour of our deliverance comes. Tomorrow we may be with Him in Paradise! (He kisses it on the lips and sets it down again. There is the noise of footsteps climbing the stairs in the hallway. He grabs up the mask in a sudden panic and, as a knock comes on the door, he claps it on and calls mockingly) Come in, Mrs. Anthony, come in! (Margaret enters. In one hand behind her, hidden from him, is the mask of the brave face she puts on before the world to hide her suffering and disillusionment, and which she has just taken off. Her own face is still sweet and pretty but lined, drawn and careworn for its years, sad, resigned, but a bit querulous.)

MARGARET--(wearily reproving) Thank goodness I've found you! Why haven't you been home the last two days? It's bad enough your drinking again without your staying away and worrying us to death!

DION--(bitterly) My ears knew her footsteps. One gets to recognize everything--and to see nothing!

MARGARET--I finally sent the boys out looking for you and came myself. (with tired solicitude) I suppose you haven't eaten a thing, as usual. Won't you come home and let me fry you a chop?

DION--(wonderingly) Can Margaret still love Dion Anthony? Is it possible she does?

MARGARET--(forcing a tired smile) I suppose so, Dion. I certainly oughtn't to, had I?

DION--(in same tone) And I love Margaret! What haunted, haunting ghosts we are! We dimly remember so much it will take us so many million years to forget! (He comes forward, putting one arm around her bowed shoulders, and they kiss.)

MARGARET--(patting his hand affectionately) No, you certainly don't deserve it. When I stop to think of all you've made me go through in the years since we settled down here . . . ! I really don't

believe I could ever have stood it if it weren't for the boys! (forcing a smile) But perhaps I would, I've always been such a big fool about you.

DION--(a bit mockingly) The boys! Three strong sons! Margaret can afford to be magnanimous!

MARGARET--If they didn't find you, they were coming to meet me here.

DION--(with sudden wildness--torturedly, sinking on his knees beside her) Margaret! Margaret! I'm lonely! I'm frightened! I'm going away! I've got to say good-bye!

MARGARET--(patting his hair) Poor boy! Poor Dion! Come home and sleep.

DION--(springs up frantically) No! I'm a man! I'm a lonely man! I can't go back! I have conceived myself! (then with desperate mockery) Look at me, Mrs. Anthony! It's the last chance! Tomorrow I'll have moved on to the next hell! Behold your man--the sniveling, cringing, life-denying Christian slave you have so nobly ignored in the father of your sons! Look! (He tears the mask from his face, which is radiant with a great pure love for her and a great sympathy and tenderness.) O woman--my love--that I have sinned against in my sick pride and cruelty--forgive my sins--forgive my solitude--forgive my sickness--forgive me! (He kneels and kisses the hem of her dress.)

MARGARET--(who has been staring at him with terror, raising her mask to ward off his face) Dion! Don't! I can't bear it! You're like a ghost! You're dead! Oh, my God! Help! Help! (She falls back fainting on the bench. He looks at her--then takes her hand which holds her mask and looks at that face--gently) And now I am permitted to understand and love you, too! (He kisses the mask first--then kisses her face, murmuring) And you, sweetheart! Blessed, thrice blessed are the meek! (There is a sound of heavy, hurrying footsteps on the stairs. He puts on his mask in haste. The three sons rush into the room. The eldest is about fourteen, the two others thirteen and twelve. They look healthy, normal likeable boys, with much the same quality as Billy Brown's in Act One, Scene One. They stop short and stiffen all in a row, staring from the woman on the bench to their father, accusingly.)

ELDEST--We heard someone yell. It sounded like Mother.

DION--(defensively) No. It was this lady--my wife.

ELDEST--But hasn't Mother come yet?

DION--(going to Margaret) Yes. Your Mother is here. (He stands between them and puts her mask over Margaret's face--then steps back.) She has fainted. You'd better bring her to.

BOYS--Mother! (They run to her side, kneel and rub her wrists. The eldest smooths back her hair.)

DION--(watching them) At least I am leaving her well provided for. (He addresses them directly.) Tell your mother she'll get word from Mr. Brown's house. I must pay him a farewell call. I am going. Good-by. (They stop, staring at him fixedly, with eyes a mixture of bewilderment, distrust and hurt.)

ELDEST--(awkwardly and shamefacedly) Honest, I think you ought to have . . .

SECOND--Yes, honest you ought . . .

YOUNGEST--Yes, honest . . .

DION--(in a friendly tone) I know. But I couldn't. That's for you who can. You must inherit the earth for her. Don't forget now, boys. Good-by.

BOYS--(in the same awkward, self-conscious tone, one after another) Good-by--good-by--good-by. (Dion goes.)

(Curtain)

SCENE THREE

SCENE--*The library of William Brown's home--night of the same day. A backdrop of carefully painted, prosperous, bourgeois culture, bookcases filled with sets, etc. The heavy table at center is expensive. The leather armchair at left of it and the couch at right are opulently comfortable. The reading lamp on the table is the only light.*

Brown sits in the chair at left reading an architectural periodical. His expression is composed and gravely receptive. In outline, his face suggests a Roman consul on an old coin. There is an incongruous distinction about it, the quality of unquestioning faith in the finality of its achievement.

There is a sudden loud thumping on the front door and the ringing of the bell. Brown frowns and listens as a servant answers. Dion's voice can be heard, raised mockingly.

DION--Tell him it's the devil come to conclude a bargain.

BROWN--(suppressing annoyance, calls out with forced good nature) Come on in, Dion. (Dion enters. He is in a wild state. His clothes are disheveled, his masked face has a terrible deathlike intensity, its mocking irony becomes so cruelly malignant as to give him the appearance of a real demon, tortured into torturing others.) Sit down.

DION--(stands and sings) William Brown's soul lies moldering in the crib but his body goes marching on!

BROWN--(maintaining the same indulgent, big-brotherly tone, which he tries to hold throughout the scene) Not so loud, for Pete's sake! I don't mind--but I've got neighbors.

DION--Hate them! Fear thy neighbor as thyself! That's the leaden rule for the safe and sane. (then advancing to the table with a sort of deadly calm) Listen! One day when I was four years old, a boy sneaked up behind when I was drawing a picture in the sand he couldn't draw and hit me on the head with a stick and kicked out my picture and laughed when I cried. It wasn't what he'd done that made me cry, but him! I had loved and trusted him and suddenly the good God was disproved in his person and the evil and injustice of Man was born! Everyone called me cry-baby, so I became silent for life and designed a mask of the Bad Boy Pan in which to live and rebel against that other boy's God and protect myself from His cruelty. And that other boy, secretly he felt ashamed but he couldn't acknowledge it; so from that day he instinctively developed into the good boy, the good friend, the good man, William Brown!

BROWN--(shamefacedly) I remember now. It was a dirty trick. (then with a trace of resentment) Sit down. You know where the booze is. Have a drink, if you like. But I guess you've had enough already.

DION--(looks at him fixedly for a moment--then strangely) Thanks be to Brown for reminding me. I must drink. (He goes and gets a bottle of whisky and a glass.)

BROWN--(with a good-humored shrug) All right. It's your funeral.

DION--(returning and pouring out a big drink in the tumbler) And William Brown's! When I die, he goes to hell! Skoal! (He drinks

and stares malevolently. In spite of himself, Brown is uneasy. A pause.)

BROWN--(with forced casualness) You've been on this toot for a week now.

DION--(tauntingly) I've been celebrating the acceptance of MY design for the cathedral.

BROWN--(humorously) You certainly helped me a lot on it.

DION--(with a harsh laugh) O perfect Brown! Never mind! I'll make him look in my mirror yet--and drown in it! (He pours out another big drink.)

BROWN--(rather tauntingly) Go easy. I don't want your corpse on my hands.

DION--But I do. (He drinks.) Brown will still need me--to reassure him he's alive! I've loved, lusted, won and lost, sang and wept! I've been life's lover! I've fulfilled her will and if she's through with me now it's only because I was too weak to dominate her in turn. It isn't enough to be her creature, you've got to create her or she requests you to destroy yourself.

BROWN--(good-naturedly) Nonsense. Go home and get some sleep.

DION--(as if he hadn't heard--bitingly) But to be neither creature nor creator! To exist only in her indifference! To be unloved by life! (Brown stirs uneasily.) To be merely a successful freak, the result of some snide neutralizing of life forces--a spineless cactus--a wild boar of the mountains altered into a packer's hog eating to become food--a Don Juan inspired to romance by a monkey's glands--and to have Life not even think you funny enough to see!

BROWN--(stung--angrily) Bosh!

DION--Consider Mr. Brown. His parents bore him on earth as if they were thereby entering him in a baby parade with prizes for the fattest--and he's still being wheeled along in the procession, too fat now to learn to walk, let alone to dance or run, and he'll never live until his liberated dust quickens into earth!

BROWN--(gruffly) Rave on! (then with forced good-nature) Well, Dion, at any rate, I'm satisfied.

DION--(quickly and malevolently) No! Brown isn't satisfied! He's piled on layers of protective fat, but vaguely, deeply he feels at his heart the gnawing of a doubt! And I'm interested in that germ

which wriggles like a question mark of insecurity in his blood, because it's part of the creative life Brown's stolen from me!

BROWN--(forcing a sour grin) Steal germs? I thought you caught them.

DION--(as if he hadn't heard) It's mine--and I'm interested in seeing it thrive and breed and become multitudes and eat until Brown is consumed!

BROWN--(cannot restrain a shudder) Sometimes when you're drunk, you're positively evil, do you know it?

DION--(somerly) When Pan was forbidden the light and warmth of the sun he grew sensitive and self-conscious and proud and revengeful--and became Prince of Darkness.

BROWN--(jocularly) You don't fit the rôle of Pan, Dion. It sounds to me like Bacchus, alias the Demon Rum, doing the talking. (Dion recovers from his spasm with a start and stares at Brown with terrible hatred. There is a pause. In spite of himself, Brown squirms and adopts a placating tone.) Go home. Be a good scout. It's all well enough celebrating our design being accepted but--

DION--(in a steely voice) I've been the brains! I've been the design! I've designed even his success--drunk and laughing at him--laughing at his career! Not proud! Sick! Sick of myself and him! Designing and getting drunk! Saving my woman and children! (He laughs.) Ha! And this cathedral is my masterpiece! It will make Brown the most eminent architect in this state of God's Country. I put a lot into it--what was left of my life! It's one vivid blasphemy from sidewalk to the tips of its spires!--but so concealed that the fools will never know. They'll kneel and worship the ironic Silenus who tells them the best good is never to be born! (He laughs triumphantly.) Well, blasphemy is faith, isn't it? In self-preservation the devil must believe! But Mr. Brown, the Great Brown, has no faith! He couldn't design a cathedral without it looking like the First Supernatural Bank! He only believes in the immortality of the moral belly! (He laughs wildly--then sinks down in his chair, gasping, his hands pressed to his heart. Then suddenly becomes deadly calm and pronounces like a cruel malignant condemnation) From now on, Brown will never design anything. He will devote his life to renovating the house of my Cybel into a home for my Margaret!

BROWN--(springing to his feet, his face convulsed with strange agony) I've stood enough! How dare you . . . !

DION--(his voice like a probe) Why has no woman ever loved him? Why has he always been the Big Brother, the Friend? Isn't their trust--a contempt?

BROWN--You lie!

DION--Why has he never been able to love--since my Margaret? Why has he never married? Why has he tried to steal Cybel, as he once tried to steal Margaret? Isn't it out of revenge--and envy?

BROWN--(violently) Rot! I wanted Cybel, and I bought her!

DION--Brown bought her for me! She has loved me more than he will ever know!

BROWN--You lie! (then furiously) I'll throw her back on the street!

DION--To me! To her fellow creature! Why hasn't Brown had children--he who loves children--he who loves MY children--he who envies me MY children?

BROWN--(brokenly) I'm not ashamed to envy you them!

DION--They like Brown, too--as a friend--as an equal--as Margaret has always liked him--

BROWN--(brokenly) And as I've liked her!

DION--How many million times Brown has thought how much better for her it would have been if she'd chosen him instead!

BROWN--(torturedly) You lie! (then with sudden frenzied defiance) All right! If you force me to say it, I do love Margaret! I always have loved her and you've always known I did!

DION--(with a terrible composure) No! That is merely the appearance, not the truth! Brown loves me! He loves me because I have always possessed the power he needed for love, because I am love!

BROWN--(frenziedly) You drunken bum! (He leaps on Dion and grabs him by the throat.)

DION--(triumphantly, staring into his eyes) Ah! Now he looks into the mirror! Now he sees his face! (Brown lets go of him and staggers back to his chair, pale and trembling.)

BROWN--(humbly) Stop, for God's sake! You're mad!

DION--(sinking in his chair, more and more weakly) I'm done. My heart, not Brown--(mockingly) My last will and testament! I

leave Dion Anthony to William Brown--for him to love and obey--
for him to become me--then my Margaret will love me--my children
will love me-- Mr. and Mrs. Brown and sons, happily ever after!
(staggering to his full height and looking upward defiantly) Nothing
more--but Man's last gesture--by which he conquers--to laugh! Ha--
(He begins, stops as if paralyzed, and drops on his knees by Brown's
chair, his mask falling off, his Christian Martyr's face at the point of
death.) Forgive me, Billy. Bury me, hide me, forget me for your
own happiness! May Margaret love you! May you design the
Temple of Man's Soul! Blessed are the meek and the poor in spirit!
(He kisses Brown's feet--then more and more weakly and childishly)
What was the prayer, Billy? I'm getting so sleepy. . . .

BROWN--(in a trancelike tone) "Our Father who art in Heaven."

DION--(drowsily) "Our Father." . . . (He dies. A pause. Brown
remains in a stupor for a moment--then stirs himself, puts his hand
on Dion's breast.)

BROWN--(dully) He's dead--at last. (He says this mechanically
but the last two words awaken him--wonderingly) At last? (then
with triumph) At last! (He stares at Dion's real face
contemptuously.) So that's the poor weakling you really were! No
wonder you hid! And I've always been afraid of you--yes, I'll
confess it now, in awe of you! Paugh! (He picks up the mask from
the floor.) No, not of you! Of this! Say what you like, it's strong if
it is bad! And this is what Margaret loved, not you! Not you! This
man!-- this man who willed himself to me! (Struck by an idea, he
jumps to his feet.) By God! (He slowly starts to put the mask on.
A knocking comes on the street door. He starts guiltily, laying the
mask on the table. Then he picks it up again quickly, takes the dead
body and carries it off left. He reappears immediately and goes to
the front door as the knocking recommences--gruffly) Hello! Who's
there?

MARGARET--It's Margaret, Billy. I'm looking for Dion.

BROWN--(uncertainly) Oh--all right--(unfastening door) Come
in. Hello, Margaret. Hello, Boys! He's here. He's asleep. I--I was
just dozing off too. (Margaret enters. She is wearing her mask. The
three sons are with her.)

MARGARET--(seeing the bottle, forcing a laugh) Has he been
celebrating?

BROWN--(with strange glibness now) No. I was. He wasn't. He said he'd sworn off tonight--forever--for your sake--and the kids!

MARGARET--(with amazed joy) Dion said that? (then hastily defensive) But of course he never does drink much. Where is he?

BROWN--Upstairs. I'll wake him. He felt bad. He took off his clothes to take a bath before he lay down. You just wait here. (She sits in the chair where Dion had sat and stares straight before her. The sons group around her, as if for a family photo. Brown hurries out left.)

MARGARET--It's late to keep you boys up. Aren't you sleepy?

BOYS--No, Mother.

MARGARET--(proudly) I'm glad to have three such strong boys to protect me.

ELDEST--(boastfully) We'd kill anyone that touched you, wouldn't we?

NEXT--You bet! We'd make him wish he hadn't!

YOUNGEST--You bet!

MARGARET--You're Mother's brave boys! (She laughs fondly--then curiously) Do you like Mr. Brown?

ELDEST--Sure thing! He's a regular fellow.

NEXT--He's all right!

YOUNGEST--Sure thing!

MARGARET--(half to herself) Your father claims he steals his ideas.

ELDEST--(with a sheepish grin) I'll bet father said that when he was--just talking.

NEXT--Mr. Brown doesn't have to steal, does he?

YOUNGEST--I should say not! He's awful rich.

MARGARET--Do you love your father?

ELDEST--(scuffling--embarrassed) Why--of course--

NEXT--(ditto) Sure thing!

YOUNGEST--Sure I do.

MARGARET--(with a sigh) I think you'd better start on before--right now--before your father comes--He'll be very sick and nervous and he'll want to be quiet. So run along!

BOYS--All right. (They file out and close the front door as Brown, dressed in Dion's clothes and wearing his mask, appears at left.)

MARGARET--(taking off her mask, gladly) Dion! (She stares wonderingly at him and he at her; goes to him and puts an arm around him.) Poor dear, do you feel sick? (He nods.) But you look--(squeezing his arms)--why, you actually feel stronger and better already! Is it true what Billy told me--about your swearing off forever? (He nods. She exclaims intensely) Oh, if you'll only--and get well--we can still be so happy! Give Mother a kiss. (They kiss. A shudder passes through both of them. She breaks away laughing with aroused desire.) Why, Dion? Aren't you ashamed? You haven't kissed me like that in ages!

BROWN--(his voice imitating Dion's and muffled by the mask) I've wanted to, Margaret!

MARGARET--(gayly and coquettishly now) Were you afraid I'd spurn you? Why, Dion, something has happened. It's like a miracle! Even your voice is changed! It actually sounds younger, do you know it? (then, solicitously) But you must be worn out. Let's go home. (With an impulsive movement she flings her arms wide open, throwing her mask away from her as if suddenly no longer needing it.) Oh, I'm beginning to feel so happy, Dion--so happy!

BROWN--(stifledly) Let's go home. (She puts her arm around him. They walk to the door.)

(Curtain)

ACT THREE

SCENE ONE

SCENE--*The drafting room and private office of Brown are both shown. The former is at left, the latter at right of a dividing wall at center. The arrangement of furniture in each room is the same as in previous scenes. It is ten in the morning of a day about a month later. The backdrop for both rooms is of plain wall with a few tacked-up designs and blue prints painted on it.*

Two draftsmen, a middle-aged and a young man, both stoop-shouldered, are sitting on stools behind what was formerly Dion's table. They are tracing plans. They talk as they work.

OLDER DRAFTSMAN--W. B. is late again.

YOUNGER DRAFTSMAN--Wonder what's got into him the last month? (A pause. They work silently.)

OLDER DRAFTSMAN--Yes, ever since he fired Dion. . . .

YOUNGER DRAFTSMAN--Funny his firing him all of a sudden like that. (A pause. They work.)

OLDER DRAFTSMAN--I haven't seen Dion around town since then. Have you?

YOUNGER DRAFTSMAN--No, not since Brown told us he'd canned him. I suppose he's off drowning his sorrow!

OLDER DRAFTSMAN--I heard someone had seen him at home and he was sober and looking fine. (A pause. They work.)

YOUNGER DRAFTSMAN--What got into Brown? They say he fired all his old servants that same day and only uses his house to sleep in.

OLDER DRAFTSMAN--(with a sneer) Artistic temperament, maybe--the real name of which is swelled head! (There is a noise of footsteps from the hall. Warningly) Ssstt! (They bend over their table. Margaret enters. She does not need to wear a mask now. Her face has regained the self-confident spirit of its youth, her eyes shine with happiness.)

MARGARET--(heartily) Good morning! What a lovely day!

BOTH--(perfunctorily) Good morning, Mrs. Anthony.

MARGARET--(looking around) You've been changing around in here, haven't you? Where is Dion? (They stare at her.) I forgot to tell him something important this morning and our phone's out of order. So if you'll tell him I'm here--(They don't move. A pause. Margaret says stiffly) Oh, I realize Mr. Brown has given strict orders Dion is not to be disturbed, but surely. . . . (sharply) Where is my husband, please?

OLDER DRAFTSMAN--We don't know.

MARGARET--You don't know?

YOUNGER DRAFTSMAN--We haven't seen him.

MARGARET--Why, he left home at eight-thirty!

OLDER DRAFTSMAN--To come here?

YOUNGER DRAFTSMAN--This morning?

MARGARET--(provoked) Why, of course, to come here--as he does every day! (They stare at her. A pause.)

OLDER DRAFTSMAN--(evasively) We haven't seen him.

MARGARET--(with asperity) Where is Mr. Brown?

YOUNGER DRAFTSMAN--(at a noise of footsteps from the hall--sulkily) Coming now. (Brown enters. He is now wearing a

mask which is an exact likeness of his face as it was in the last scene--the self-assured success. When he sees Margaret, he starts back apprehensively.)

BROWN--(immediately controlling himself--breezily) Hello, Margaret! This is a pleasant surprise! (He holds out his hand.)

MARGARET--(hardly taking it--reservedly) Good morning.

BROWN--(turning quickly to the draftsmen) I hope you explained to Mrs. Anthony how busy Dion . . .

MARGARET--(interrupting him--stiffly) I certainly can't understand--

BROWN--(hastily) I'll explain. Come in here and be comfortable. (He throws open the door and ushers her into his private office.)

OLDER DRAFTSMAN--Dion must be putting over some bluff on her.

YOUNGER DRAFTSMAN--Pretending he's still here--and Brown's helping him. . . .

OLDER DRAFTSMAN--But why should Brown, after he . . . ?

YOUNGER DRAFTSMAN--Well, I suppose--Search me. (They work.)

BROWN--Have a chair, Margaret. (She sits on the chair stiffly. He sits behind the desk.)

MARGARET--(coldly) I'd like some explanation. . . .

BROWN--(coaxingly) Now, don't get angry, Margaret! Dion is hard at work on his design for the new State Capitol, and I don't want him disturbed, not even by you! So be a good sport! It's for his own good, remember! I asked him to explain to you.

MARGARET--(relenting) He told me you'd agreed to ask me and the boys not to come here--but then, we hardly ever did.

BROWN--But you might! (then with confidential friendliness) This is for his sake, Margaret. I know Dion. He's got to be able to work without distractions. He's not the ordinary man, you appreciate that. And this design means his whole future! He's to get full credit for it, and as soon as it's accepted, I take him into partnership. It's all agreed. And after that I'm going to take a long vacation--go to Europe for a couple of years--and leave everything here in Dion's hands! Hasn't he told you all this?

MARGARET--(jubilant now) Yes--but I could hardly believe . . . (proudly) I'm sure he can do it. He's been like a new man lately, so

full of ambition and energy! It's made me so happy! (She stops in confusion.)

BROWN--(deeply moved, takes her hand impulsively) And it has made me happy, too!

MARGARET--(confused--with an amused laugh) Why, Billy Brown! For a moment, I thought it was Dion, your voice sounded so much . . . !

BROWN--(with sudden desperation) Margaret, I've got to tell you! I can't go on like this any longer! I've got to confess . . . ! There's something . . . !

MARGARET--(alarmed) Not--not about Dion?

BROWN--(harshly) To hell with Dion! To hell with Billy Brown! (He tears off his mask and reveals a suffering face that is ravaged and haggard, his own face tortured and distorted by the demon of Dion's mask.) Think of me! I love you, Margaret! Leave him! I've always loved you! Come away with me! I'll sell out here! We'll go abroad and be happy!

MARGARET--(amazed) Billy Brown, do you realize what you're saying? (with a shudder) Are you crazy? Your face--is terrible. You're sick! Shall I phone for a doctor?

BROWN--(turning away slowly and putting on his mask--dully) No. I've been on the verge--of a breakdown--for some time. I get spells. . . . I'm better now. (He turns back to her.) Forgive me! Forget what I said! But, for all our sakes, don't come here again.

MARGARET--(coldly) After this--I assure you . . . ! (then looking at him with pained incredulity) Why, Billy--I simply won't believe--after all these years . . . !

BROWN--It will never happen again. Good-by.

MARGARET--Good-by. (then, wishing to leave on a pleasant change of subject--forcing a smile) Don't work Dion to death! He's never home for dinner any more. (She goes out past the draftsmen and off right, rear. Brown sits down at his desk, taking off the mask again. He stares at it with bitter, cynical amusement.)

BROWN--You're dead, William Brown, dead beyond hope of resurrection! It's the Dion you buried in your garden who killed you, not you him! It's Margaret's husband who . . . (He laughs harshly.) Paradise by proxy! Love by mistaken identity! God! (This is almost a prayer--then fiercely defiant) But it IS paradise! I

DO love! (As he is speaking, a well-dressed, important, stout man enters the drafting room. He is carrying a rolled-up plan in his hand. He nods condescendingly and goes directly to Brown's door, on which he raps sharply, and, without waiting for an answer, turns the knob. Brown has just time to turn his head and get his mask on.)

MAN--(briskly) Ah, good morning! I came right in. Hope I didn't disturb . . . ?

BROWN--(the successful architect now--urbanely) Not at all, sir. How are you? (They shake hands.) Sit down. Have a cigar. And now what can I do for you this morning?

MAN--(unrolling his plan) It's your plan. My wife and I have been going over it again. We like it--and we don't--and when a man plans to lay out half a million, why he wants everything exactly right, eh? (Brown nods.) It's too cold, too spare, too like a tomb, if you'll pardon me, for a liveable home. Can't you liven it up, put in some decorations, make it fancier and warmer--you know what I mean. (looks at him a bit doubtfully) People tell me you had an assistant, Anthony, who was a real shark on these details but that you've fired him--

BROWN--(suavely) Gossip! He's still with me but, for reasons of his own, doesn't wish it known. Yes, I trained him and he's very ingenious. I'll turn this right over to him and instruct him to carry out your wishes. . . .

(Curtain)

SCENE TWO

SCENE--*The same as Act Two, Scene Three--the library of Brown's home about eight the same night. He can be heard feeling his way in through the dark. He switches on the reading lamp on the table. Directly under it on a sort of stand is the mask of Dion, its empty eyes staring front.*

Brown takes off his own mask and lays it on the table before Dion's. He flings himself down in the chair and stares without moving into the eyes of Dion's mask. Finally, he begins to talk to it in a bitter, mocking tone.

BROWN--Listen! Today was a narrow escape--for us! We can't avoid discovery much longer. We must get our plot to working! We've already made William Brown's will, leaving you his money

and business. We must hustle off to Europe now--and murder him there! (a bit tauntingly) Then you--the I in you-- I will live with Margaret happily ever after. (more tauntingly) She will have children by me! (He seems to hear some mocking denial from the mask. He bends toward it.) What? (then with a sneer) Anyway, that doesn't matter! Your children already love me more than they ever loved you! And Margaret loves me more! You think you've won, do you--that I've got to vanish into you in order to live? Not yet, my friend! Never! Wait! Gradually Margaret will love what is beneath--me! Little by little I'll teach her to know me, and then finally I'll reveal myself to her, and confess that I stole your place out of love for her, and she'll understand and forgive and love me! And you'll be forgotten! Ha! (Again he bends down to the mask as if listening--torturedly) What's that? She'll never believe? She'll never see? She'll never understand? You lie, devil! (He reaches out his hands as if to take the mask by the throat, then shrinks back with a shudder of hopeless despair) God have mercy! Let me believe! Blessed are the merciful! Let me obtain mercy! (He waits, his face upturned--pleadingly) Not yet? (despairingly) Never? (A pause. Then, in a sudden panic of dread, he reaches out for the mask of Dion like a dope fiend after a drug. As soon as he holds it, he seems to gain strength and is able to force a sad laugh.) Now I am drinking your strength, Dion-- strength to love in this world and die and sleep and become fertile earth, as you are becoming now in my garden--your weakness the strength of my flowers, your failure as an artist painting their petals with life! (then, with bravado) Come with me while Margaret's bridegroom dresses in your clothes, Mr. Anthony! I need the devil when I'm in the dark! (He goes off left, but can be heard talking.) Your clothes begin to fit me better than my own! Hurry, Brother! It's time we were home. Our wife is waiting! (He reappears, having changed his coat and trousers.) Come with me and tell her again I love her! Come and hear her tell me how she loves you! (He suddenly cannot help kissing the mask.) I love you because she loves you! My kisses on your lips are for her! (He puts the mask over his face and stands for a moment, seeming to grow tall and proud--then with a laugh of bold self-assurance) Out by the back way! I mustn't forget I'm a desperate

criminal, pursued by God, and by myself! (He goes out right, laughing with amused satisfaction.)

(Curtain)

SCENE THREE

SCENE--*Is the same as Scene One of Act One--the sitting-room of Margaret's home. It is about half an hour after the last scene. Margaret sits on the sofa, waiting with the anxious, impatient expectancy of one deeply in love. She is dressed with a careful, subtle extra touch to attract the eye. She looks young and happy. She is trying to read a book. The front door is heard opening and closing. She leaps up and runs back to throw her arms around Brown as he enters from right, rear. She kisses him passionately.*

MARGARET--(as he recoils with a sort of guilt--laughingly) Why, you hateful old thing, you! I really believe you were trying to avoid kissing me! Well, just for that, I'll never . . .

BROWN--(with fierce, defiant passion, kisses her again and again) Margaret!

MARGARET--Call me Peggy again. You used to when you really loved me. (softly) Remember the school commencement dance--you and I on the dock in the moonlight?

BROWN--(with pain) No. (He takes his arms from around her.)

MARGARET--(still holding him--with a laugh) Well, I like that! You old bear, you! Why not?

BROWN--(sadly) It was so long ago.

MARGARET--(a bit melancholy) You mean you don't want to be reminded that we're getting old?

BROWN--Yes. (He kisses her gently.) I'm tired. Let's sit down. (They sit on the sofa, his arm about her, her head on his shoulder.)

MARGARET--(with a happy sigh) I don't mind remembering--now I'm happy. It's only when I'm unhappy that it hurts--and I've been so happy lately, dear--and so grateful to you! (He stirs uneasily. She goes on joyfully.) Everything's changed! I'd gotten pretty resigned to--and sad and hopeless, too--and then all at once you turn right around and everything is the same as when we were first married--much better even, for I was never sure of you then. You were always so strange and aloof and alone, it seemed I was

never really touching you. But now I feel you've become quite human-- like me--and I'm so happy, dear! (She kisses him.)

BROWN--(his voice trembling) Then I have made you happy-- happier than ever before--no matter what happens? (She nods.) Then--that justifies everything! (He forces a laugh.)

MARGARET--Of course it does! I've always known that. But you--you wouldn't be--or you couldn't be--and I could never help you--and all the time I knew you were so lonely! I could always hear you calling to me that you were lost, but I couldn't find the path to you because I was lost, too! That's an awful way for a wife to feel! (She laughs--joyfully) But now you're here! You're mine! You're my long-lost lover, and my husband, and my big boy, too!

BROWN--(with a trace of jealousy) Where are your other big boys tonight?

MARGARET--Out to a dance. They've all acquired girls, I'll have you know.

BROWN--(mockingly) Aren't you jealous?

MARGARET--(gayly) Of course! Terribly! But I'm diplomatic. I don't let them see. (changing the subject) Believe me, they've noticed the change in you! The eldest was saying to me to-day: "It's great not to have Father so nervous, any more. Why, he's a regular sport when he gets started!" And the other two said very solemnly: "You bet!" (She laughs.)

BROWN--(brokenly) I--I'm glad.

MARGARET--Dion! You're crying!

BROWN--(stung by the name, gets up--harshly) Nonsense! Did you ever know Dion to cry about anyone?

MARGARET--(sadly) You couldn't--then. You were too lonely. You had no one to cry to.

BROWN--(goes and takes a rolled-up plan from the table drawer--dully) I've got to do some work.

MARGARET--(disappointedly) What, has that old Billy Brown got you to work at home again, too?

BROWN--(ironically) It's for Dion's good, you know--and yours.

MARGARET--(making the best of it--cheerfully) All right. I won't be selfish. It really makes me proud to have you so ambitious. Let me help. (She brings his drawing-board, which he puts on the

table and pins his plan upon. She sits on sofa and picks up her book.)

BROWN--(carefully casual) I hear you were in to see me today?

MARGARET--Yes, and Billy wouldn't hear of it! I was quite furious until he convinced me it was all for the best. When is he going to take you into partnership?

BROWN--Very soon now.

MARGARET--And will he really give you full charge when he goes abroad?

BROWN--Yes.

MARGARET--(practically) I'd pin him down if I could. Promises are all right, but--(she hesitates) I don't trust him.

BROWN--(with a start, sharply) What makes you say that?

MARGARET--Oh, something that happened today.

BROWN--What?

Margaret--I don't mean I blame him, but--to be frank, I think the Great God Brown, as you call him, is getting a bit queer and it's time he took a vacation. Don't you?

BROWN--(his voice a bit excited--but guardedly) But why? What did he do?

MARGARET--(hesitatingly) Well--it's really too silly--he suddenly got awfully strange. His face scared me. It was like a corpse. Then he raved on some nonsense about he'd always loved me. He went on like a perfect fool! (She looks at Brown, who is staring at her. She becomes uneasy.) Maybe I shouldn't tell you this. He simply wasn't responsible. Then he came to himself and was all right and begged my pardon and seemed dreadfully sorry, and I felt sorry for him. (then with a shudder) But honestly, Dion, it was just too disgusting for words to hear him! (with kind, devastating contempt) Poor Billy!

BROWN--(with a show of tortured derision) Poor Billy! Poor Billy the Goat! (with mocking frenzy) I'll kill him for you! I'll serve you his heart for breakfast!

MARGARET--(jumping up--frightenedly) Dion!

BROWN--(waving his pencil knife with grotesque flourishes) I tell you I'll murder this God-damned disgusting Great God Brown who stands like a fatted calf in the way of our health and wealth and happiness!

MARGARET--(bewilderedly, not knowing how much is pretending, puts an arm about him) Don't, dear! You're being horrid and strange again. It makes me afraid you haven't really changed, after all.

BROWN--(unheeding) And then my wife can be happy! Ha! (He laughs. She begins to cry. He controls himself--pats her head--gently) All right, dear. Mr. Brown is now safely in hell. Forget him!

MARGARET--(stops crying--but still worriedly) I should never have told you--but I never imagined you'd take it seriously. I've never thought of Billy Brown except as a friend, and lately not even that! He's just a stupid old fool!

BROWN--Ha-ha! Didn't I say he was in hell? They're torturing him! (then controlling himself again--exhaustedly) Please leave me alone now. I've got to work.

MARGARET--All right, dear. I'll go into the next room and anything you want, just call. (She pats his face--cajolingly) Is it all forgotten?

BROWN--Will you be happy?

MARGARET--Yes.

BROWN--Then it's dead, I promise! (She kisses him and goes out. He stares ahead, then shakes off his thoughts and concentrates on his work--mockingly) Our beautiful new Capitol calls you, Mr. Dion! To work! We'll adroitly hide old Silenus on the cupola! Let him dance over their law-making with his eternal leer! (He bends over his work.)

(Curtain)

ACT FOUR

SCENE ONE

SCENE--*Same as Scene One of Act Three--the drafting room and Brown's office. It is dusk of a day about a month later. The two draftsmen are bent over their table, working. Brown, at his desk, is working feverishly over a plan. He is wearing the mask of Dion. The mask of William Brown rests on the desk beside him. As he works, he chuckles with malicious glee-- finally flings down his pencil with a flourish.*

BROWN--Done! In the name of the Almighty Brown, amen, amen! Here's a wondrous fair capitol! The design would do just as well for a Home for Criminal Imbeciles! Yet to them, such is my art, it will appear to possess a pure common-sense, a fat-bellied finality, as dignified as the suspenders of an assemblyman! Only to me will that pompous façade reveal itself as the wearily ironic grin of Pan as, his ears drowsy with the crumbling hum of past and future civilizations, he half-listens to the laws passed by his fleas to enslave him! Ha-ha-ha! (He leaps grotesquely from behind his desk and cuts a few goatish capers, laughing with lustful merriment.) Long live Chief of Police Brown! District Attorney Brown! Alderman Brown! Assemblyman Brown! Mayor Brown! Congressman Brown! Governor Brown! Senator Brown! President Brown! (He chants) Oh, how many persons in one God make up the good God Brown? Hahahaha! (The two draftsmen in the next room have stopped work and are listening.)

YOUNGER DRAFTSMAN--Drunk as a fool!

OLDER DRAFTSMAN--At least Dion used to have the decency to stay away from the office--

YOUNGER DRAFTSMAN--Funny how it's got hold of Brown so quick!

OLDER DRAFTSMAN--He was probably hitting it up on the Q.T. all the time.

BROWN--(has come back to his desk, laughing to himself and out of breath) Time to become respectable again! (He takes off the Dion mask and reaches out for the William Brown one--then stops, with a hand on each, staring down on the plan with fascinated loathing. His real face is now sick, ghastly, tortured, hollow-cheeked and feverish-eyed.) Ugly! Hideous! Despicable! Why must the demon in me pander to cheapness--then punish me with self-loathing and life-hatred? Why am I not strong enough to perish--or blind enough to be content? (to heaven, bitterly but pleadingly) Give me the strength to destroy this!--and myself!--and him!--and I will believe in Thee! (While he has been speaking there has been a noise from the stairs. The two draftsmen have bent over their work. Margaret enters, closing the door behind her. At this sound, Brown starts. He immediately senses who it is--with alarm) Margaret! (He grabs up both masks and goes into room off right.)

MARGARET--(She looks healthy and happy, but her face wears a worried, solicitous expression--pleasantly to the staring draftsmen) Good morning. Oh, you needn't look worried, it's Mr. Brown I want to see, not my husband.

YOUNGER D.--(hesitatingly) He's locked himself in--but maybe if you'll knock--

MARGARET--(knocks--somewhat embarrassedly) Mr. Brown! (Brown enters his office, wearing the William Brown mask. He comes quickly to the other door and unlocks it.)

BROWN--(with a hectic cordiality) Come on, Margaret! Enter! This is delightful! Sit down! What can I do for you?

MARGARET--(taken aback--a bit stiffly) Nothing much.

BROWN--Something about Dion, of course. Well, your darling pet is all right--never better!

MARGARET--(coldly) That's a matter of opinion. I think you're working him to death.

BROWN--Oh, no, not him. It's Brown who is to die. We've agreed on that.

MARGARET--(giving him a queer look) I'm serious.

BROWN--So am I. Deadly serious! Hahaha!

MARGARET--(checking her indignation) That's what I came to see you about. Really, Dion has acted so hectic and on edge lately I'm sure he's on the verge of a breakdown.

BROWN--Well, it certainly isn't drink. He hasn't had a drop. He doesn't need it! Haha! And I haven't either, although the gossips are beginning to say I'm soused all the time! It's because I've started to laugh! Hahaha! They can't believe in joy in this town except by the bottle! What funny little people! Hahaha! When you're the Great God Brown, eh, Margaret? Hahaha!

MARGARET--(getting up--uneasily) I'm afraid I--

BROWN--Don't be afraid, my dear! I won't make love to you again! Honor bright! I'm too near the grave for such folly! But it must have been funny for you when you came here the last time--watching a disgusting old fool like me, eh?--too funny for words! Hahaha! (Then with a sudden movement he flourishes the design before her.) Look! We've finished it! Dion has finished it! His fame is made!

MARGARET--(tartly) Really, Billy, I believe you are drunk!

BROWN--Nobody kisses me--so you can all believe the worst!
Hahaha!

MARGARET--(chillingly) Then if Dion is through, why can't I see him?

BROWN--(crazily) See Dion? See Dion? Well, why not? It's an age of miracles. The streets are full of Lazaruses. Pray! I mean--wait a moment, if you please.

(Brown disappears into the room off right. A moment later he reappears in the mask of Dion. He holds out his arms and Margaret rushes into them. They kiss passionately. Finally he sits with her on the lounge.)

MARGARET--So you've finished it!

BROWN--Yes. The Committee is coming to see it soon. I've made all the changes they'll like, the fools!

MARGARET--(lovingly) And can we go on that second honeymoon, right away now?

BROWN--In a week or so, I hope--as soon as I've gotten Brown off to Europe.

MARGARET--Tell me--isn't he drinking hard?

BROWN--(laughing as Brown did) Haha! Soused to the ears all the time! Soused on life! He can't stand it! It's burning his insides out!

MARGARET--(alarmed) Dear! I'm worried about you. You sound as crazy as he did--when you laugh! You must rest!

BROWN--(controlling himself) I'll rest in peace--when he's gone!

MARGARET--(with a queer look) Why Dion, that isn't your suit. It's just like--

BROWN--It's his! We're getting to be like twins. I'm inheriting his clothes already! (then calming himself as he sees how frightened she is) Don't be worried, dear. I'm just a trifle elated, now the job's done. I guess I'm a bit soused on life, too! (The Committee, three important-looking, average personages, come into the drafting room.)

MARGARET--(forcing a smile) Well, don't let it burn YOUR insides out!

BROWN--No danger! Mine were tempered in hell! Hahaha!

MARGARET--(kissing him, coaxingly) Come home, dear--please!

OLDER DRAFTSMAN--(knocks on the door) The Committee is here, Mr. Brown.

BROWN--(hurriedly to Margaret) You receive them. Hand them the design. I'll get Brown. (He raises his voice.) Come right in, gentlemen. (He goes off right, as the Committee enter the office. When they see Margaret, they stop in surprise.)

MARGARET--(embarrassedly) Good afternoon. Mr. Brown will be right with you. (They bow. Margaret holds out the design to them.) This is my husband's design. He finished it today.

COMMITTEE--Ah! (They crowd around to look at it--with enthusiasm) Perfect! Splendid! Couldn't be better! Exactly what we suggested!

MARGARET--(joyfully) Then you accept it? Mr. Anthony will be so pleased!

MEMBER--Mr. Anthony?

ANOTHER--Is he working here again?

THIRD--Did I understand you to say this was your husband's design?

MARGARET--(excitedly) Yes! Entirely his! He's worked like a dog-- (appalled) You don't mean to say--Mr. Brown never told you? (They shake their heads in solemn surprise.) Oh, the contemptible cad! I hate him!

BROWN--(appearing at right--mockingly) Hate me, Margaret? Hate Brown? How superfluous! (oratorically) Gentlemen, I have been keeping a secret from you in order that you might be the more impressed when I revealed it. That design is entirely the inspiration of Mr. Dion Anthony's genius. I had nothing to do with it.

MARGARET--(contritely) Oh, Billy! I'm sorry! Forgive me!

BROWN--(ignoring her, takes the plan from the Committee and begins unpinning it from the board--mockingly) I can see by your faces you have approved this. You are delighted, aren't you? And why not, my dear sirs? Look at it, and look at you! Hahaha! It'll immortalize you, my good men! You'll be as death-defying a joke as any in Joe Miller! (then with a sudden complete change of tone--angrily) You damn fools! Can't you see this is an insult--a terrible, blasphemous insult!--that this embittered failure Anthony is hurling in the teeth of our success--an insult to you, to me, to you, Margaret--and to Almighty God! (in a frenzy of fury) And if you

are weak and cowardly enough to stand for it, I'm not! (He tears the plan into four pieces. The Committee stands aghast. Margaret runs forward.)

MARGARET--(in a scream) You coward! Dion! Dion! (She picks up the plan and hugs it to her bosom.)

BROWN--(with a sudden goatish caper) I'll tell him you're here. (He disappears, but reappears almost immediately in the mask of Dion. He is imposing a terrible discipline on himself to avoid dancing and laughing. He speaks suavely.) Everything is all right--all for the best--you mustn't get excited! A little paste, Margaret! A little paste, gentlemen! And all will be well! Life is imperfect, Brothers! Men have their faults, Sister! But with a few drops of glue much may be done! A little dab of pasty resignation here and there--and even broken hearts may be repaired to do yeoman service! (He has edged toward the door. They are all staring at him with petrified bewilderment. He puts his finger to his lips.) Ssssh! This is Daddy's bedtime secret for today: Man is born broken. He lives by mending. The grace of God is glue! (With a quick prancing movement, he has opened the door, gone through, and closed it after him silently, shaking with suppressed laughter. He springs lightly to the side of the petrified draftsmen--in a whisper) They will find him in the little room. Mr. William Brown is dead! (With light leaps he vanishes, his head thrown back, shaking with silent laughter. The sound of his feet leaping down the stairs, five at a time, can be heard. Then a pause of silence. The people in the two rooms stare. The younger draftsman is the first to recover.)

YOUNGER DRAFTSMAN--(rushing into the next room, shouts in terrified tones) Mr. Brown is dead!

COMMITTEE--He murdered him! (They all run into the little room off right. Margaret remains, stunned with horror. They return in a moment, carrying the mask of William Brown, two on each side, as if they were carrying a body by the legs and shoulders. They solemnly lay him down on the couch and stand looking down at him.)

FIRST COMMITTEEMAN--(with a frightened awe) I can't believe he's gone.

SECOND COMMITTEEMAN--(in same tone) I can almost hear him talking. (As if impelled, he clears his throat and addresses the mask importantly.) Mr. Brown--(then stops short)

THIRD COMMITTEEMAN--(shrinking back) No. Dead, all right! (then suddenly, hysterically angry and terrified) We must take steps at once to run Anthony to earth!

MARGARET--(with a heart-broken cry) Dion's innocent!

YOUNGER DRAFTSMAN--I'll phone for the police, sir! (He rushes to the phone.)

(Curtain)

SCENE TWO

SCENE--*The same as Scene Two of Act Three--the library of William Brown's home. The mask of Dion stands on the table beneath the light, facing front.*

On his knees beside the table, facing front, stripped naked except for a white cloth around his loins, is Brown. The clothes he has torn off in his agony are scattered on the floor. His eyes, his arms, his whole body strain upward, his muscles writhe with his lips as they pray silently in their agonized supplication. Finally a voice seems torn out of him.

BROWN--Mercy, Compassionate Savior of Man! Out of my depths I cry to you! Mercy on thy poor clod, thy clot of unhallowed earth, thy clay, the Great God Brown! Mercy, Savior! (He seems to wait for an answer--then leaping to his feet he puts out one hand to touch the mask like a frightened child reaching out for its nurse's hand-- then with immediate mocking despair) Bah! I am sorry, little children, but your kingdom is empty. God has become disgusted and moved away to some far ecstatic star where life is a dancing flame! We must die without him. (then--addressing the mask--harshly) Together, my friend! You, too! Let Margaret suffer! Let the whole world suffer as I am suffering! (There is a sound of a door being pushed violently open, padding feet in slippers, and Cybel, wearing her mask, runs into the room. She stops short on seeing Brown and the mask, and stares from one to the other for a second in confusion. She is dressed in a black kimono robe and wears slippers over her bare feet. Her yellow hair

hangs down in a great mane over her shoulders. She has grown stouter, has more of the deep objective calm of an idol.)

BROWN--(staring at her--fascinated--with great peace as if her presence comforted him) Cybel! I was coming to you! How did you know?

CYBEL--(takes off her mask and looks from Brown to the Dion mask, now with a great understanding) So that's why you never came to me again! You are Dion Brown!

BROWN--(bitterly) I am the remains of William Brown! (He points to the mask of Dion.) I am his murderer and his murdered!

CYBEL--(with a laugh of exasperated pity) Oh, why can't you ever learn to leave yourselves alone and leave me alone!

BROWN--(boyishly and naively) I am Billy.

CYBEL--(immediately, with a motherly solicitude) Then run, Billy, run! They are hunting for someone! They came to my place, hunting for a murderer, Dion! They must find a victim! They've got to quiet their fears, to cast out their devils, or they'll never sleep soundly again! They've got to absolve themselves by finding a guilty one! They've got to kill someone now, to live! You're naked! You must be Satan! Run, Billy, run! They'll come here! I ran here to warn--someone! So run away if you want to live!

BROWN--(like a sulky child) I'm too tired. I don't want to.

CYBEL--(with motherly calm) All right, you needn't, Billy. Don't sulk. (as a noise comes from outside) Anyway, it's too late. I hear them in the garden now.

BROWN--(listening, puts out his hand and takes the mask of Dion--as he gains strength, mockingly) Thanks for this one last favor, Dion! Listen! Your avengers! Standing on your grave in the garden! Hahaha! (He puts on the mask and springs to the left and makes a gesture as if flinging French windows open. Gayly mocking) Welcome, dumb worshippers! I am your great God Brown! I have been advised to run from you but it is my almighty whim to dance into escape over your prostrate souls! (Shouts from the garden and a volley of shots. Brown staggers back and falls on the floor by the couch, mortally wounded.)

CYBEL--(runs to his side, lifts him on to the couch and takes off the mask of Dion) You can't take this to bed with you. You've got to go to sleep alone. (She places the mask of Dion back on its stand

under the light and puts on her own, just as, after a banging of doors, crashing of glass, trampling of feet, a squad of police with drawn revolvers, led by a grizzly, brutal-faced captain, run into the room. They are followed by Margaret, still distractedly clutching the pieces of the plan to her breast.)

CAPTAIN--(pointing to the mask of Dion--triumphantly) Got him! He's dead!

MARGARET--(throws herself on her knees, takes the mask and kisses it--heart-brokenly) Dion! Dion! (Her face hidden in her arms, the mask in her hands above her bowed head, she remains, sobbing with deep, silent grief.)

CAPTAIN--(noticing Cybel and Brown--startled) Hey! Look at this! What're you doin' here? Who's he?

CYBEL--You ought to know. You croaked him!

CAPTAIN--(with a defensive snarl--hastily) It was Anthony! I saw his mug! This feller's an accomplice, I bet yuh! Serves him right! Who is he? Friend o' yours! Crook! What's his name? Tell me or I'll fix yuh!

CYBEL--Billy.

CAPTAIN--Billy what?

CYBEL--I don't know. He's dying. (then suddenly) Leave me alone with him and maybe I'll get him to squeal it.

CAPTAIN--Yuh better! I got to have a clean report. I'll give yuh a couple o' minutes. (He motions to the policemen, who follow him off left. Cybel takes off her mask and sits down by Brown's head. He makes an effort to raise himself toward her and she helps him, throwing her kimono over his bare body, drawing his head on to her shoulder.)

BROWN--(snuggling against her--gratefully) The earth is warm.

CYBEL--(soothingly, looking before her like an idol) Ssshh! Go to sleep, Billy.

BROWN--Yes, Mother. (then explainingly) It was dark and I couldn't see where I was going and they all picked on me.

CYBEL--I know. You're tired.

BROWN--And when I wake up . . . ?

CYBEL--The sun will be rising again.

BROWN--To judge the living and the dead! (frightenedly) I don't want justice. I want love.

CYBEL--There is only love.

BROWN--Thank you, Mother. (then feebly) I'm getting sleepy.
What's the prayer you taught me--Our Father--?

CYBEL--(with calm exultance) Our Father Who Art!

BROWN--(taking her tone--exultantly) Who art! Who art!
(suddenly--with ecstasy) I know! I have found Him! I hear Him
speak! "Blessed are they that weep, for they shall laugh!" Only he
that has wept can laugh! The laughter of Heaven sows earth with a
rain of tears, and out of Earth's transfigured birth-pain the laughter
of Man returns to bless and play again in innumerable dancing gales
of flame upon the knees of God! (He dies.)

CYBEL--(gets up and fixes his body on the couch. She bends
down and kisses him gently--she straightens up and looks into
space-- with a profound pain) Always spring comes again bearing
life! Always again! Always, always forever again!--Spring again!--
life again!--summer and fall and death and peace again!--(with
agonized sorrow)--but always, always, love and conception and
birth and pain again--spring bearing the intolerable chalice of life
again!--(then with agonized exultance)--bearing the glorious,
blazing crown of life again! (She stands like an idol of Earth, her
eyes staring out over the world.)

MARGARET--(lifting her head adoringly to the mask--triumphant
tenderness mingled with her grief) My lover! My husband! My
boy! (She kisses the mask.) Good-by. Thank you for happiness!
And you're not dead, sweetheart! You can never die till my heart
dies! You will live forever! You will sleep under my heart! I will
feel you stirring in your sleep, forever under my heart! (She kisses
the mask again. There is a pause.)

CAPTAIN--(comes just into sight at left and speaks front without
looking at them--gruffly) Well, what's his name?

CYBEL--Man!

CAPTAIN--(taking a grimy notebook and an inch-long pencil from
his pocket) How d'yuh spell it?

(Curtain)

EPILOGUE

SCENE--*Four years later.*

The same spot on the same dock as in Prologue on another moonlight night in June. The sound of the waves and of distant dance music.

Margaret and her three sons appear from the right. The eldest is now eighteen. All are dressed in the height of correct Prep-school elegance. They are all tall, athletic, strong and handsome-looking. They loom up around the slight figure of their mother like protecting giants, giving her a strange aspect of lonely, detached, small femininity. She wears her mask of the proud, indulgent Mother. She has grown appreciably older. Her hair is now a beautiful gray. There is about her manner and voice the sad but contented feeling of one who knows her life-purpose well accomplished but is at the same time a bit empty and comfortless with the finality of it. She is wrapped in a gray cloak.

ELDEST--Doesn't Bee look beautiful tonight, Mother?

NEXT--Don't you think Mabel's the best dancer in there, Mother?

YOUNGEST--Aw, Alice has them both beat, hasn't she, Mother?

MARGARET--(with a sad little laugh) Each of you is right. (then, with strange finality) Good-by, boys.

BOYS--(surprised) Good-by.

MARGARET--It was here on a night just like this your father first-- proposed to me. Did you ever know that?

BOYS--(embarrassedly) No.

MARGARET--(yearningly) But the nights now are so much colder than they used to be. Think of it, I went in moonlight-bathing in June when I was a girl. It was so warm and beautiful in those days. I remember the Junes when I was carrying you boys--(A pause. They fidget uneasily. She asks pleadingly) Promise me faithfully never to forget your father!

BOYS--(uncomfortably) Yes, Mother.

MARGARET--(forcing a joking tone) But you mustn't waste June on an old woman like me! Go in and dance. (as they hesitate dutifully) Go on. I really want to be alone--with my Junes.

BOYS--(unable to conceal their eagerness) Yes, Mother. (They go away.)

MARGARET--(slowly removes her mask, laying it on the bench, and stares up at the moon with a wistful, resigned sweetness) So long ago! And yet I'm still the same Margaret. It's only our lives

that grow old. We ARE where centuries only count as seconds and after a thousand lives our eyes begin to open--(she looks around her with a rapt smile)--and the moon rests in the sea! I want to feel the moon at peace in the sea! I want Dion to leave the sky for me! I want him to sleep in the tides of my heart! (She slowly takes from under her cloak, from her bosom, as if from her heart, the mask of Dion as it was at the last and holds it before her face.) My lover! My husband! My boy! You can never die till my heart dies! You will live forever! You are sleeping under my heart! I feel you stirring in your sleep, forever under my heart. (She kisses him on the lips with a timeless kiss.)

(Curtain)

THE END