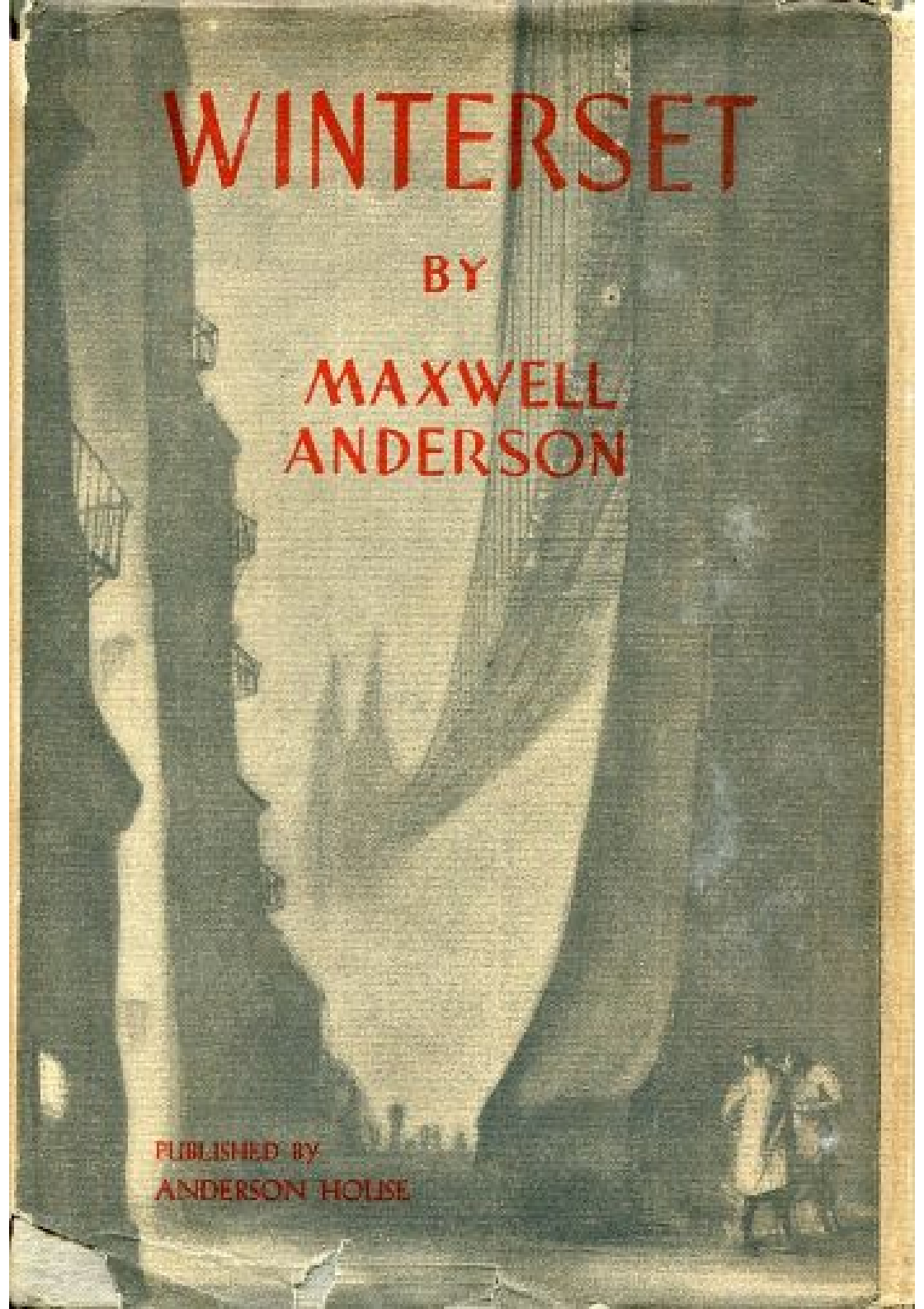


WINTERSET



BY

MAXWELL
ANDERSON

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ANDERSON HOUSE

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WINTERSET

Maxwell Anderson

Winterset

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WINTERSET

Winterset

TROCK	JUDGE GAUNT
SHADOW	CARR
LUCIA	MIO
PINY	HERMAN
MIRIAMNE	A SAILOR
GARTH	STREET URCHIN
ESDRAS	POLICEMAN
1ST GIRL	RADICAL
2ND GIRL	SERGEANT
THE HOBO	URCHINS
TWO YOUNG MEN	IN SERGE

Act One

SCENE 1

SCENE: The scene is the bank of a river under a bridgehead. A gigantic span starts from the rear of the stage and appears to lift over the heads of the audience and out to the left. At the right rear is a wall of solid supporting masonry. To the left an apartment building abuts against the bridge and forms the left wall of the stage with a dark basement window and a door in the brick wall. To the right, and in the foreground, an outcropping of original rock makes a barricade behind which one may enter through a cleft. To the rear, against the masonry, two sheds have been built by waifs and strays for shelter. The riverbank, in the foreground, is black rock worn smooth by years of trampling. There is room for exit and entrance to the left around the apartment house, also around the rock to the right. A single street lamp is seen at the left—and a glimmer of apartment lights

in the background beyond. It is an early, dark, December morning.

TWO YOUNG MEN IN SERGE *lean against the masonry, matching bills.* TROCK ESTRELLA *and* SHADOW *come in from the left.*

TROCK Go back and watch the car.
[*The TWO YOUNG MEN IN SERGE go out. TROCK walks to the corner and looks toward the city*]
You roost of punks and gulls! Sleep, sleep it off,
whatever you had last night, get down in warm,
one big ham-fat against another—sleep,
cling, sleep and rot! Rot out your pasty guts
with diddling, you had no brain to begin. If you had
there'd be no need for us to sleep on iron
who had too much brains for you.

SHADOW Now look, Trock, look,
what would the warden say to talk like that?

TROCK May they die as I die!
By God, what life they've left me
they shall keep me well! I'll have that out of them—
these pismires that walk like men!

SHADOW Because, look, chief,
it's all against science and penology
for you to get out and begin to cuss that way
before your prison vittles are out of you. Hell,
you're supposed to leave the pen full of high thought,
kind of noble-like, loving toward all mankind,
ready to kiss their feet—or whatever parts
they stick out toward you. Look at me!

TROCK I see you.
And even you may not live as long as you think.
You think too many things are funny. Well, laugh.
But it's not so funny.

SHADOW Come on, Trock, you know me.

Anything you say goes, but give me leave
to kid a little.

TROCK Then laugh at somebody else!
It's a lot safer! They've soaked me once too often
in that vat of poisoned hell they keep upstate
to soak men in, and I'm rotten inside, I'm all
one liquid puke inside where I had lungs
once, like yourself! And now they want to get me
and stir me in again—and that'd kill me—
and that's fine for them. But before that happens to me
a lot of these healthy boys'll know what it's like
when you try to breathe and have no place to put air—
they'll learn it from me!

SHADOW They've got nothing on you, chief.

TROCK I don't know yet. That's what I'm here to find out.
If they've got what they might have
it's not a year this time—
no, nor ten. It's screwed down under a lid.—
I can die quick enough, without help.

SHADOW You're the skinny kind
that lives forever.

TROCK He gave me a half a year,
the doc at the gate.

SHADOW Jesus.

TROCK Six months I get,
and the rest's dirt, six feet.

[LUCIA, *the street piano man*, comes in right from behind the
rock and goes to the shed where he keeps his piano. PINY, *the*
apple-woman, follows and stands in the entrance. LUCIA speaks
to Estrella, who still stands facing Shadow]

LUCIA Morning.

[TROCK and SHADOW go out round the apartment house without
speaking]

PINY Now what would you call them?

LUCIA Maybe someting da river washed up.

PINY Nothing ever washed him—that black one.

LUCIA Maybe not, maybe so. More like his pa and ma raise-a heem
in da cellar.

[He wheels out the piano]

PINY He certainly gave me a turn.

[She lays a hand on the rock]

LUCIA You don’ live-a right, ol’ gal. Take heem easy. Look on da
bright-a side. Never say-a die. Me, every day in every way I
getta be da regular heller.

[He starts out]

CURTAIN

Act One

SCENE 2

SCENE: A cellar apartment under the apartment buildings, floored with cement and roofed with huge boa constrictor pipes that run slantwise from left to right, dwarfing the room. An outside door opens to the left and a door at the right rear leads to the interior of the place. A low squat window to the left. A table at the rear and a few chairs and books make up the furniture. Garth, son of Esdras, sits alone, holding a violin upside down to inspect a crack at its base. He lays the bow on the floor and runs his fingers over the joint. MIRIAMNE enters from the rear, a girl of fifteen. GARTH looks up, then down again.

MIRIAMNE Garth—

GARTH The glue lets go. It's the steam, I guess.
It splits the hair on your head.

MIRIAMNE It can't be mended?

GARTH I can't mend it.
No doubt there are fellows somewhere
who'd mend it for a dollar—and glad to do it.
That is if I had a dollar.—Got a dollar?
No, I thought not.

MIRIAMNE Garth, you've sat at home here
three days now. You haven't gone out at all.
Something frightens you.

GARTH Yes?

MIRIAMNE And father's frightened.
He reads without knowing where. When a shadow falls
across the page he waits for a blow to follow
after the shadow. Then in a little while
he puts his book down softly and goes out
to see who passed.

GARTH A bill collector, maybe.
We haven't paid the rent.

MIRIAMNE No.

GARTH You're a bright girl, sis.—
You see too much. You run along and cook.
Why don't you go to school?

MIRIAMNE I don't like school.
They whisper behind my back.

GARTH Yes? About what?

MIRIAMNE What did the lawyer mean
that wrote to you?

GARTH [*Rising*] What lawyer?

MIRIAMNE I found a letter
on the floor of your room. He said, "Don't get me wrong,
but stay in out of the rain the next few days,
just for instance."

GARTH I thought I burned that letter.

MIRIAMNE Afterward you did. And then what was printed about the
Estrella gang—you hid it from me, you and father. What is it
—about this murder—?

GARTH Will you shut up, you fool!

MIRIAMNE But if you know
why don't you tell them, Garth?
If it's true—what they say—

you knew all the time Romagna wasn't guilty,
and could have said so—

GARTH Everybody knew
Romagna wasn't guilty! But they weren't listening
to evidence in his favor. They didn't want it.
They don't want it now.

MIRIAMNE But was that why
they never called on you?—

GARTH So far as I know
they never'd heard of me—and I can assure you
I knew nothing about it—

MIRIAMNE But something's wrong—
and it worries father—

GARTH What could be wrong?

MIRIAMNE I don't know.

[*A pause*]

GARTH And I don't know. You're a good kid, Miriamne,
but you see too many movies. I wasn't mixed up
in any murder, and I don't mean to be.
If I had a dollar to get my fiddle fixed
and another to hire a hall, by God I'd fiddle
some of the prodigies back into Sunday school
where they belong, but I won't get either, and so
I sit here and bite my nails—but if you hoped
I had some criminal romantic past
you'll have to look again!

MIRIAMNE Oh, Garth, forgive me—
But I want you to be so far above such things
nothing could frighten you. When you seem to shrink
and be afraid, and you're the brother I love,
I want to run there and cry, if there's any question
they care to ask, you'll be quick and glad to answer,
for there's nothing to conceal!

GARTH And that's all true—

MIRIAMNE But then I remember—
 how you dim the lights—
 and we go early to bed—and speak in whispers—
 and I could think there's a death somewhere behind us—
 an evil death—

GARTH [*Hearing a step*] Now for God's sake, be quiet!
 [*ESDRAS, an old rabbi with a kindly face, enters from the
 outside. He is hurried and troubled*]

ESDRAS I wish to speak alone with someone here if I may have this
 room. Miriamne—

MIRIAMNE [*Turning to go*] Yes, father.
 [*The outer door is suddenly thrown open. TROCK appears*]

TROCK [*After a pause*] You'll excuse me for not knocking.
 [*SHADOW follows Trock in*]
 Sometimes it's best to come in quiet. Sometimes
 it's a good way to go out. Garth's home, I see.
 He might not have been here if I made a point
 of knocking at doors.

GARTH How are you, Trock?

TROCK I guess
 you can see how I am.
 [*To Miriamne*] Stay here. Stay where you are.
 We'd like to make your acquaintance.
 —If you want the facts
 I'm no better than usual, thanks. Not enough sun,
 my physician tells me. Too much close confinement.
 A lack of exercise and an overplus
 of beans in the diet. You've done well, no doubt?

GARTH I don't know what makes you think so.

TROCK Who's the family?

GARTH My father and my sister.

TROCK Happy to meet you.
Step inside a minute. The boy and I
have something to talk about.

ESDRAS No, no—he's said nothing—
nothing, sir, nothing!

TROCK When I say go out, you go—

ESDRAS [*Pointing to the door*] Miriamne—

GARTH Go on out, both of you!

ESDRAS Oh, sir—I'm old—
old and unhappy—

GARTH Go on!

 [MIRIAMNE *and* ESDRAS *go inside*]

TROCK And if you listen
I'll riddle that door!
[SHADOW *shuts the door behind them and stands against it*]
I just got out, you see,
and I pay my first call on you.

GARTH Maybe you think
I'm not in the same jam you are.

TROCK That's what I do think.
Who started looking this up?

GARTH I wish I knew,
and I wish he was in hell! Some damned professor
with nothing else to do. If you saw his stuff
you know as much as I do.

TROCK It wasn't you
turning state's evidence?

GARTH Hell, Trock, use your brain!

The case was closed. They burned Romagna for it and that finished it. Why should I look for trouble and maybe get burned myself?

TROCK Boy, I don't know,
 but I just thought I'd find out.

GARTH I'm going straight, Trock.
 I can play this thing, and I'm trying to make a living.
 I haven't talked and nobody's talked to me.
 Christ—it's the last thing I'd want!

TROCK Your old man knows.

GARTH That's where I got the money that last time
 when you needed it. He had a little saved up,
 but I had to tell him to get it. He's as safe
 as Shadow there.

TROCK [*Looking at Shadow*] There could be people safer
 than that son-of-a-bitch.

SHADOW Who?

TROCK You'd be safer dead
 along with some other gorillas.

SHADOW It's beginning to look
 as if you'd feel safer with everybody dead,
 the whole goddamn world.

TROCK I would. These Jesus-bitten
 professors! Looking up their half-ass cases!
 We've got enough without that.

GARTH There's no evidence
 to reopen the thing.

TROCK And suppose they called on you
 and asked you to testify?

GARTH Why then I'd tell 'em

that all I know is what I read in the papers.
And I'd stick to that.

TROCK How much does your sister know?

GARTH I'm honest with you, Trock. She read my name
in the professor's pamphlet, and she was scared
the way anybody would be. She got nothing
from me, and anyway she'd go to the chair
herself before she'd send me there.

TROCK Like hell.

GARTH Besides, who wants to go to trial again
except the radicals?— You and I won't spill
and unless we did there's nothing to take to court
as far as I know. Let the radicals go on howling
about getting a dirty deal. They always howl
and nobody gives a damn. This professor's red—
everybody knows it.

TROCK You're forgetting the judge.
Where's the damn judge?

GARTH What judge?

TROCK Read the morning papers.
It says Judge Gaunt's gone off his nut. He's got
that damn trial on his mind, and been going round
proving to everybody he was right all the time
and the radicals were guilty— stopping people
in the street to prove it—and now he's nuts entirely
and nobody knows where he is.

GARTH Why don't they know?

TROCK Because he's on the loose somewhere! They've got
the police of three cities looking for him.

GARTH Judge Gaunt?

TROCK Yes. Judge Gaunt.

SHADOW Why should that worry you?
He's crazy, ain't he? And even if he wasn't
he's arguing on your side. You're jittery, chief.
God, all the judges are looney. You've got the jitters,
and you'll damn well give yourself away some time
peeing yourself in public.
[TROCK *half turns toward Shadow in anger*]
Don't jump the gun now,
I've got pockets in my clothes, too.
[*His hand is in his coat pocket*]

TROCK All right. Take it easy.
[*He takes his hand from his pocket, and SHADOW does the same*]
[*To Garth*] Maybe you're lying to me and maybe you're not.
Stay at home a few days.

GARTH Sure thing. Why not?

TROCK And when I say stay home I mean stay home.
If I have to go looking for you you'll stay a long time
wherever I find you.
[*To Shadow*] Come on. We'll get out of here.
[*To Garth*] Be seeing you.
[*SHADOW and TROCK go out. After a pause GARTH walks over to
his chair and picks up the violin. Then he puts it down and goes
to the inside door, which he opens*]

GARTH He's gone.
[*MIRIAMNE enters, ESDRAS behind her*]

MIRIAMNE [*Going up to Garth*] Let's not stay here.
[*She puts her hands on his arms*]
I thought he'd come for something—horrible.
Is he coming back?

GARTH I don't know.

MIRIAMNE Who is he, Garth?

GARTH He'd kill me if I told you who he is,

that is, if he knew.

MIRIAMNE Then don't say it—

GARTH Yes, and I'll say it! I was with a gang one time that robbed a pay roll. I saw a murder done, and Trock Estrella did it. If that got out I'd go to the chair and so would he—that's why he was here today—

MIRIAMNE But that's not true—

ESDRAS He says it
to frighten you, child.

GARTH Oh, no I don't! I say it
because I've held it in too long! I'm damned
if I sit here forever, and look at the door,
waiting for Trock with his sub-machine gun, waiting
for police with a warrant!—I say I'm damned, and I am,
no matter what I do! These piddling scales
on a violin—first position, third, fifth,
arpeggios in E—and what I'm thinking
is Romagna dead for the murder—dead while I sat here
dying inside—dead for the thing Trock did
while I looked on—and I could have saved him, yes—
but I sat here and let him die instead of me
because I wanted to live! Well, it's no life,
and it doesn't matter who I tell, because
I mean to get it over!

MIRIAMNE Garth, it's not true!

GARTH I'd take some scum down with me if I died—
that'd be one good deed—

ESDRAS Son, son, you're mad—
someone will hear—

GARTH Then let them hear! I've lived
with ghosts too long, and lied too long. Goddamn you
if you keep me from the truth!—

[*He turns away*]
Oh, goddamn the world!
I don't want to die!

[*He throws himself down*]

ESDRAS I should have known.
I thought you hard and sullen,
Garth, my son. And you were a child, and hurt
with a wound that might be healed.
— All men have crimes,
and most of them are hidden, and many are heavy
as yours must be to you.
[GARTH *sobs*]
They walk the streets
to buy and sell, but a spreading crimson stain
tinges the inner vestments, touches flesh,
and burns the quick. You're not alone.

GARTH I'm alone
in this.

ESDRAS Yes, if you hold with the world that only
those who die suddenly should be revenged.
But those whose hearts are cancered, drop by drop
in small ways, little by little, till they've borne
all they can bear, and die—these deaths will go
unpunished now as always. When we're young
we have faith in what is seen, but when we're old
we know that what is seen is traced in air
and built on water. There's no guilt under heaven,
just as there's no heaven, till men believe it—
no earth, till men have seen it, and have a word
to say this is the earth.

GARTH Well, I say there's an earth,
and I say I'm guilty on it, guilty as hell.

ESDRAS Yet till it's known you bear no guilt at all—
unless you wish. The days go by like film,
like a long written scroll, a figured veil
unrolling out of darkness into fire

and utterly consumed. And on this veil,
running in sounds and symbols of men's minds
reflected back, life flickers and is shadow
going toward flame. Only what men can see
exists in that shadow. Why must you rise and cry out:
That was I, there in the raveled tapestry,
there, in that pistol flash, when the man was killed.
I was there, and was one, and am bloodstained!
Let the wind
and fire take that hour to ashes out of time
and out of mind! This thing that men call justice,
this blind snake that strikes men down in the dark,
mindless with fury, keep your hand back from it,
pass by in silence—let it be forgotten, forgotten!—
Oh, my son, my son—have pity!

MIRIAMNE But if it was true
and someone died—then it was more than shadow—
and it doesn't blow away—

GARTH Well, it was true.

ESDRAS Say it if you must. If you have heart to die,
say it, and let them take what's left—there was little
to keep, even before—

GARTH Oh, I'm a coward—
I always was. I'll be quiet and live. I'll live
even if I have to crawl. I know.

[He gets up and goes into the inner room]

MIRIAMNE Is it better
to tell a lie and live?

ESDRAS Yes, child. It's better.

MIRIAMNE But if I had to do it—
I think I'd die.

ESDRAS Yes, child. Because you're young.

MIRIAMNE Is that the only reason?

ESDRAS The only reason.

CURTAIN

Act One

SCENE 3

SCENE: Under the bridge, evening of the same day. When the curtain rises Miriamne is sitting alone on the ledge at the rear of the apartment house. A spray of light falls on her from a street lamp above. She shivers a little in her thin coat, but sits still as if heedless of the weather. Through the rocks on the other side a TRAMP comes down to the riverbank, hunting a place to sleep. He goes softly to the apple-woman's hut and looks in, then turns away, evidently not daring to pre-empt it. He looks at Miriamne doubtfully. The door of the street piano man is shut. The vagabond passes it and picks carefully among some rags and shavings to the right. MIRIAMNE looks up and sees him but makes no sign. She looks down again, and the man curls himself up in a makeshift bed in the corner, pulling a piece of sacking over his shoulders. TWO GIRLS come in from round the apartment house.

1ST GIRL Honest, I never heard of anything so romantic. Because you never liked him.

2ND GIRL I certainly never did.

1ST GIRL You've got to tell me how it happened. You've got to.

2ND GIRL I couldn't. As long as I live I couldn't. Honest, it was terrible. It was terrible.

1ST GIRL What was so terrible?

2ND GIRL The way it happened.

1ST GIRL Oh, please—not to a soul, never.

2ND GIRL Well, you know how I hated him because he had such a big mouth. So he reached over and grabbed me, and I began all falling to pieces inside, the way you do—and I said, “Oh no you don’t mister,” and started screaming and kicked a hole through the windshield and lost a shoe, and he let go and was cursing and growling because he borrowed the car and didn’t have money to pay for the windshield, and he started to cry, and I got so sorry for him I let him, and now he wants to marry me.

1ST GIRL Honest, I never heard of anything so romantic!
 [She sees the sleeping Tramp]
 My God, what you won’t see!
 [They give the Tramp a wide berth, and go out right. The TRAMP sits up looking about him. JUDGE GAUNT, an elderly, quiet man, well-dressed but in clothes that have seen some weather, comes in uncertainly from the left. He holds a small clipping in his hand and goes up to the Hobo]

GAUNT *[Tentatively]* Your pardon, sir. Your pardon, but perhaps you can tell me the name of this street.

HOBO Huh?

GAUNT The name of this street?

HOBO This ain’t no street.

GAUNT There, where the street lamps are.

HOBO That’s the alley.

GAUNT Thank you. It has a name, no doubt?

HOBO That’s the alley.

GAUNT I see. I won’t trouble you. You wonder why I ask, I daresay.
 —I’m a stranger. Why do you look at me?
 [He steps back]

I—I'm not the man you think. You've mistaken me, sir.

HOBO Huh?

GAUNT Perhaps misled by a resemblance. But you're mistaken—I had an errand in this city. It's only by accident that I'm here—

HOBO [*Muttering*] You go to hell.

GAUNT [*Going nearer to him, bending over him*] Yet why should I deceive you? Before God, I held the proofs in my hands. I hold them still. I tell you the defense was cunning beyond belief, and unscrupulous in its use of propaganda—they gagged at nothing—not even—

[*He rises*]

No, no—I'm sorry—this will hardly interest you. I'm sorry. I have an errand.

[*He looks toward the street. ESDRAS enters from the basement and goes to Miriamne. The JUDGE steps back into the shadows*]

ESDRAS Come in, my daughter. You'll be cold here.

MIRIAMNE After a while.

ESDRAS You'll be cold. There's a storm coming.

MIRIAMNE I didn't want him to see me crying. That was all.

ESDRAS I know.

MIRIAMNE I'll come soon.

[*ESDRAS turns reluctantly and goes out the way he came. MIRIAMNE rises to go in, pausing to dry her eyes. MIO and CARR, road boys of seventeen or so, come round the apartment house. The Judge has disappeared*]

CARR Thought you said you were never coming East again.

MIO Yeah, but—I heard something changed my mind.

CARR Same old business?

MIO Yes. Just as soon not talk about it.

CARR Where did you go from Portland?

MIO Fishing—I went fishing. God’s truth.

CARR Right after I left?

MIO Fell in with a fisherman’s family on the coast and went after the beautiful mackerel fish that swim in the beautiful sea. Family of Greeks—Aristides Marinos was his lovely name. He sang while he fished. Made the pea-green Pacific ring with his bastard Greek chanties. Then I went to Hollywood High School for a while.

CARR I’ll bet that’s a seat of learning.

MIO It’s the hind end of all wisdom. They kicked me out after a time.

CARR For cause?

MIO Because I had no permanent address, you see. That means nobody’s paying school taxes for you, so out you go. [*To Miriamne*] What’s the matter, kid?

MIRIAMNE Nothing.
[*She looks up at him, and they pause for a moment*]
Nothing.

MIO I’m sorry.

MIRIAMNE It’s all right.
[*She withdraws her eyes from his and goes out past him. He turns and looks after her*]

CARR Control your chivalry.

MIO A pretty kid.

CARR A baby.

MIO Wait for me.

CARR Be a long wait?
[MIO *steps swiftly out after Miriamne, then returns*]
Yeah?

MIO She's gone.

CARR Think of that.

MIO No, but I mean—vanished. Presto—into nothing—prodigioso.

CARR Damn good thing, if you ask me. The homely ones are bad enough, but the lookers are fatal.

MIO You exaggerate, Carr.

CARR I doubt it.

MIO Well, let her go. This riverbank's loaded with typhus rats, too. Might as well die one death as another.

CARR They say chronic alcoholism is nice but expensive. You can always starve to death.

MIO Not always. I tried it. After the second day I walked thirty miles to Niagara Falls and made a tour of the plant to get the sample of shredded wheat biscuit on the way out.

CARR Last time I saw you you couldn't think of anything you wanted to do except curse God and pass out. Still feeling low?

MIO Not much different. [*He turns away, then comes back*] Talk about the lost generation, I'm the only one fits that title. When the State executes your father, and your mother dies of grief, and you know damn well he was innocent, and the authorities of your home town politely inform you they'd consider it a favor if you lived somewhere else—that cuts you off from the world—with a meat ax.

CARR They asked you to move?

MIO It came to that.

CARR God, that was white of them.

MIO It probably gave them a headache just to see me after all that agitation. They knew as well as I did my father never staged a holdup. Anyway, I've got a new interest in life now.

CARR Yes—I saw her.

MIO I don't mean the skirt.—No, I got wind of something, out West, some college professor investigating the trial and turning up new evidence. Couldn't find anything he'd written out there, so I beat it East and arrived on this blessed island just in time to find the bums holing up in the public library for the winter. I know now what the unemployed have been doing since the depression started. They've been catching up on their reading in the main reference room. Man, what a stench! Maybe I stank, too, but a hobo has the stench of ten because his shoes are poor.

CARR Tennyson.

MIO Right. Jeez, I'm glad we met up again! Never knew anybody else that could track me through the driven snow of Victorian literature.

CARR Now you're cribbing from some half-forgotten criticism of Ben Jonson's Roman plagiarisms.

MIO Where did you get your education, sap?

CARR Not in the public library, sap. My father kept a newsstand.

MIO Well, you're right again.
[*There is a faint rumble of thunder*]
What's that? Winter thunder?

CARR Or Mister God, beating on His little tocsin. Maybe announcing the advent of a new social order.

MIO Or maybe it's going to rain coffee and doughnuts.

CARR Or maybe it's going to rain.

MIO Seems more likely. [*Lowering his voice*] Anyhow, I found Professor Hobhouse's discussion of the Romagna case. I think he has something. It occurred to me I might follow it up by doing a little sleuthing on my own account.

CARR Yes?

MIO I have done a little. And it leads me to somewhere in that tenement house that backs up against the bridge. That's how I happen to be here.

CARR They'll never let you get anywhere with it, Mio. I told you that before.

MIO I know you did.

CARR The State can't afford to admit it was wrong, you see. Not when there's been that much of a row kicked up over it. So for all practical purposes the State was right and your father robbed the pay roll.

MIO There's still such a thing as evidence.

CARR It's something you can buy. In fact, at the moment I don't think of anything you can't buy, including life, honor, virtue, glory, public office, conjugal affection, and all kinds of justice, from the traffic court to the immortal nine. Go out and make yourself a pot of money and you can buy all the justice you want. Convictions obtained, convictions averted. Lowest rates in years.

MIO I know all that.

CARR Sure.

MIO This thing didn't happen to you.
They've left you your name
and whatever place you can take. For my heritage
they've left me one thing only, and that's to be
my father's voice crying up out of the earth
and quicklime where they stuck him. Electrocution
doesn't kill, you know. They eviscerate them

with a turn of the knife in the dissecting room.
The blood spurts out. The man was alive. Then into
the lime pit, leave no trace. Make it short shrift
and chemical dissolution. That's what they thought
of the man that was my father. Then my mother—
I tell you these county burials are swift
and cheap and run for profit! Out of the house
and into the ground, you wife of a dead dog. Wait,
here's some Romagna spawn left.
Something crawls here—
something they called a son. Why couldn't he die
along with his mother? Well, ease him out of town,
ease him out, boys, and see you're not too gentle.
He might come back. And, by their own living Jesus,
I will go back, and hang the carrion
around their necks that made it!
Maybe I can sleep then.
Or even live.

CARR You have to try it?

MIO Yes.
Yes. It won't let me alone. I've tried to live
and forget it—but I was birthmarked with hot iron
into the entrails. I've got to find out who did it
and make them see it till it scalds their eyes
and make them admit it till their tongues are blistered
with saying how black they lied!

[HERMAN, *a gawky shoe salesman, enters from the left*]

HERMAN Hello. Did you see a couple of girls go this way?

CARR Couple of girls? Did we see a couple of girls?

MIO No.

CARR No. No girls.

[HERMAN *hesitates, then goes out right*. LUCIA *comes in from the left, trundling his piano*. PINY *follows him, weeping*]

They've got no right to do it—

PINY All right, hell what, no matter, I got to put him away, I got to put him away, that's what the hell!

LUCIA [TWO STREET URCHINS *follow him in*]

PINY They want everybody on the relief rolls and nobody making a living?

LUCIA The cops, they do what the big boss says. The big boss, that's the mayor, he says he heard it once too often, the sextette—

PINY They want graft, that's all. It's a new way to get graft—

LUCIA Oh, no, no, no! He's a good man, the mayor. He's just don't care for music, that's all.

PINY Why shouldn't you make a living on the street? The National Biscuit Company ropes off Eighth Avenue—and does the mayor do anything? No, the police hit you over the head if you try to go through!

LUCIA You got the big dough, you get the pull, fine. No big dough, no pull, what the hell, get off the city property! Tomorrow I start cooking chestnuts
[He strokes the piano fondly. The TWO GIRLS and HERMAN come back from the right]
 She's a good little machine, this baby. Cost plenty—and two new records I only played twice. See, this one.
[He starts turning the crank, talking while he plays]
 Two weeks since they play this one in a picture house.
[A SAILOR wanders in from the left. One of the STREET URCHINS begins suddenly to dance a wild rumba, the others watch]
 Good boy—see, it's a lulu—it itches in the feet!
[HERMAN, standing with his girl, tosses the boy a penny. He bows and goes on dancing; the other URCHIN joins him. The SAILOR tosses a coin]

SAILOR Go it, Cuba! Go it!
[LUCIA turns the crank, beaming]

2ND GIRL Oh, Herman!

[She throws her arms round Herman and they dance]

URCHIN Hey, pipe the professionals!

1ST GIRL Do your glide, Shirley! Do your glide!

LUCIA Maybe we can't play in front, maybe we can play behind! *[The HOBO gets up from his nest and comes over to watch. A YOUNG RADICAL wanders in]*

Maybe you don't know, folks! Tonight we play good-bye to the piano! Good-bye forever! No more piano on the streets! No more music! No more money for the music man! Last time, folks! Good-bye to the piano—good-bye forever!

[MIRIAMNE comes out the rear door of the apartment and stands watching. The SAILOR goes over to the 1st Girl and they dance together]

Maybe you don't know, folks! Tomorrow will be sad as hell, tonight we dance! Tomorrow no more Verdi, no more rumba, no more good time! Tonight we play good-bye to the piano, good-bye forever!

[The RADICAL edges up to Miriamne, and asks her to dance. She shakes her head and he goes to Piny, who dances with him. The HOBO begins to do a few lonely curvets on the side above]

Hoy! Hoy! Pick 'em up and take 'em around! Use the head, use the feet! Last time forever!

[He begins to sing to the air]

MIO Wait for me, will you?

CARR Now's your chance.

[MIO goes over to Miriamne and holds out a hand, smiling. She stands for a moment uncertain, then dances with him. ESDRAS comes out to watch. JUDGE GAUNT comes in from the left. There is a rumble of thunder]

LUCIA Hoy! Hoy! Maybe it rains tonight, maybe it snows tomorrow! Tonight we dance good-bye.

[He sings the air lustily. A POLICEMAN comes in from the left and looks on. TWO OR THREE PEDESTRIANS follow him]

POLICE. Hey you!
[LUCIA goes on singing]
Hey, you!

LUCIA [Still playing] What you want?

POLICE. Sign off!

LUCIA What you mean! I get off the street!

POLICE. Sign off!

LUCIA [Still playing] What you mean?
[The POLICEMAN walks over to him. Lucia stops playing and the Dancers pause]

POLICE. Cut it.

LUCIA Is this a street?

POLICE. I say cut it out.
[The HOBO goes back to his nest and sits in it, watching]

LUCIA It's the last time. We dance good-by to the piano.

POLICE. You'll dance good-by to something else if I catch you cranking that thing again.

LUCIA All right.

PINY I'll bet you don't say that to the National Biscuit Company!

POLICE. Lady, you've been selling apples on my beat for some time now, and I said nothing about it—

PINY Selling apples is allowed—

POLICE. You watch yourself—

[He takes a short walk around the place and comes upon the Hobo]

What are you doing here?

[The HOB0 opens his mouth, points to it, and shakes his head]

Oh, you are, are you?

[He comes back to Lucia]

So you trundle your so-called musical instrument to wherever you keep it, and don't let me hear it again.

[The RADICAL leaps on the base of the rock at right. The 1ST GIRL turns away from the Sailor toward the 2nd Girl and Herman]

SAILOR Hey, captain, what's the matter with the music?

POLICE. Not a thing, admiral.

SAILOR Well, we had a little party going here—

POLICE. I'll say you did.

2ND GIRL Please, officer, we want to dance.

POLICE. Go ahead. Dance.

2ND GIRL But we want music!

POLICE. *[Turning to go]* Sorry. Can't help you.

RADICAL And there you see it, the perfect example of capitalistic oppression! In a land where music should be free as air and the arts should be encouraged, a uniformed minion of the rich, a guardian myrmidon of the Park Avenue pleasure hunters, steps in and puts a limit on the innocent enjoyments of the poor! We don't go to theaters! Why not? We can't afford it! We don't go to night clubs, where women dance naked and the music drips from saxophones and leaks out of Rudy Vallee—we can't afford that either!—But we might at least dance on the riverbank to the strains of a barrel organ—

[GARTH comes out of the apartment and listens]

POLICE. It's against the law!

- RADICAL What law? I challenge you to tell me what law of God or man—what ordinance—is violated by this spontaneous diversion? None! I say none! An official whim of the masters who should be our servants!—
- POLICE. Get down! Get down and shut up!
- RADICAL By what law, by what ordinance do you order me to be quiet?
- POLICE. Speaking without a flag. You know it.
- RADICAL [*Pulling out a small American flag*] There's my flag! There's the flag of this United States which used to guarantee the rights of man—the rights of man now violated by every third statute of the commonweal—
- POLICE. Don't try to pull tricks on me! I've seen you before! You're not making any speech, and you're climbing down—
- GAUNT [*Who has come quietly forward*] One moment, officer. There is some difference of opinion even on the bench as to the elasticity of police power when applied in minor emergencies to preserve civil order. But the weight of authority would certainly favor the defendant in any equable court, and he would be upheld in his demand to be heard.
- POLICE. Who are you?
- GAUNT Sir, I am not accustomed to answer that question.
- POLICE. I don't know you.
- GAUNT I am a judge of some standing, not in your city but in another with similar statutes. You are aware, of course, that the bill of rights is not to be set aside lightly by the officers of any municipality—
- POLICE. [*Looking over Gaunt's somewhat bedraggled costume*] Maybe they understand you better in the town you come from, but I don't get your drift.—[*To the Radical*] I don't want any trouble, but if you ask for it you'll get plenty. Get down!

RADICAL I'm not asking for trouble, but I'm staying right here.
 [The POLICEMAN moves toward him]

GAUNT [Taking the Policeman's arm, but shaken off roughly] I ask this for yourself, truly, not for the dignity of the law nor the maintenance of precedent. Be gentle with them when their threats are childish—be tolerant while you can—for your least harsh word will return on you in the night—return in a storm of cries!—
 [He takes the Policeman's arm again]

Whatever they may have said or done, let them disperse in peace! It is better that they go softly, lest when they are dead you see their eyes pleading, and their outstretched hands touch you, fingering cold on your heart!—I have been harsher than you. I have sent men down that long corridor into blinding light and blind darkness!

[He suddenly draws himself erect and speaks defiantly]

And it was well that I did so! I have been an upright judge! They are all liars! Liars!

POLICE. [Shaking Gaunt off so that he falls] Why, you fool, you're crazy!

GAUNT Yes, and there are liars on the force! They came to me with their shifty lies!
 [He catches at the Policeman, who pushes him away with his foot]

POLICE. You think I've got nothing better to do than listen to a crazy fool?

1ST GIRL Shame, shame!

POLICE. What have I got to be ashamed of? And what's going on here, anyway? Where in hell did you all come from?

RADICAL Tread on him! That's right! Tread down the poor and the innocent!

[There is a protesting murmur in the crowd]

SAILOR *[Moving in a little]* Say, big boy, you don't have to step on the guy.

POLICE. *[Facing them, stepping back]* What's the matter with you? I haven't stepped on anybody!

MIO *[At the right, across from the Policeman]* Listen now, fellows, give the badge a chance. He's doing his job, what he gets paid to do, the same as any of you. They're all picked men, these metropolitan police, hand-picked for loyalty and a fine upstanding pair of shoulders on their legs—it's not so easy to represent the law. Think what he does for all of us, stamping out crime! Do you want to be robbed and murdered in your beds?

SAILOR What's eating you?

RADICAL He must be a capitalist.

MIO They pluck them fresh from Ireland, and a paucity of headpiece is a prime prerequisite. You from Ireland, buddy?

POLICE. *[Surly]* Where are you from?

MIO Buddy, I tell you flat I wish I was from Ireland, and could boast some Tammany connections. There's only one drawback about working on the force. It infects the brain, it eats the cerebrum. There've been cases known, fine specimens of manhood, too, where autopsies, conducted in approved scientific fashion, revealed conditions quite incredible in policemen's upper layers. In some, a trace, in others, when they've swung a stick too long, there was nothing there!—but nothing! Oh, my friends, this fine athletic figure of a man that stands so grim before us, what will they find

when they saw his skull for the last inspection?
I fear me a little puffball dust will blow away
rejoining earth, our mother—and this same dust,
this smoke, this ash on the wind, will represent
all he had left to think with!

HOB0

Hooray!

[*The POLICEMAN turns on his heel and looks hard at the Hobo, who slinks away*]

POLICE.

Oh, yeah?

MIO

My theme
gives ears to the deaf and voice to the dumb! But now
forgive me if I say you were most unkind
in troubling the officer. He's a simple man
of simple tastes, and easily confused
when faced with complex issues. He may reflect
on returning home, that is, so far as he
is capable of reflection, and conclude
that he was kidded out of his uniform pants,
and in his fury when this dawns on him
may smack his wife down!

POLICE.

That'll be about enough from you, too, professor!

MIO

May I say that I think you have managed this whole situation
rather badly, from the beginning?—

POLICE.

You may not!

[*TROCK slips in from the background. The TWO YOUNG MEN IN SERGE come with him*]

MIO

Oh, but your pardon, sir! It's apparent to the least competent
among us that you should have gone about your task more
subtly—the glove of velvet, the hand of iron, and all that sort of
thing—

POLICE.

Shut that hole in your face!

MIO

Sir, for that remark I shall be satisfied with nothing less than an unconditional apology! I have an old score to settle with policemen, brother, because they're fools and fatheads, and you're one of the most fatuous fatheads that ever walked his feet flat collecting graft! Tell that to your sergeant back in the booby hatch.

POLICE. Oh, you want an apology, do you? You'll get an apology out of the other side of your mouth!

[He steps toward Mio. CARR suddenly stands in his path]

Get out of my way!

[He pauses and looks round him; the crowd looks less and less friendly. He lays a hand on his gun and backs to a position where there is nobody behind him]

Get out of here, all of you! Get out! What are you trying to do—start a riot?

MIO There now, that's better! That's in the best police tradition. Incite a riot yourself and then accuse the crowd.

POLICE. It won't be pleasant if I decide to let somebody have it! Get out!
[The onlookers begin to melt away. The SAILOR goes out left with the GIRLS and HERMAN. CARR and MIO go out right, CARR whistling "The Star Spangled Banner." The HOBO follows them. The RADICAL walks past with his head in the air. PINY and LUCIA leave the piano where it stands and slip away to the left. At the end the Policeman is left standing in the center, the Judge near him. Esdras stands in the doorway. Miriamne is left sitting half in shadow and unseen by Esdras]

GAUNT *[To the Policeman]* Yes, but should a man die, should it be necessary that one man die for the good of many, make not yourself the instrument of death, lest you sleep to wake sobbing! Nay, it avails nothing that you are the law—this delicate ganglion that is the brain, it will not bear these things—!

[The POLICEMAN gives the Judge the once-over, shrugs, decides to leave him there and starts out left. GARTH goes to his father—

a fine sleet begins to fall through the street lights. Trock is still visible]

GARTH Get him in here, quick.

ESDRAS Who, son?

GARTH The Judge, damn him!

ESDRAS Is it Judge Gaunt?

GARTH Who did you think it was? He's crazy as a bedbug and telling the world. Get him inside!

[He looks round]

ESDRAS *[Going up to Gaunt]* Will you come in, sir?

GAUNT You will understand, sir. We old men know how softly we must proceed with these things.

ESDRAS Yes, surely, sir.

GAUNT It was always my practice—always. They will tell you that of me where I am known. Yet even I am not free of regret—even I. Would you believe it?

ESDRAS I believe we are none of us free of regret.

GAUNT None of us? I would it were true. I would I thought it were true.

ESDRAS Shall we go in, sir? This is sleet that's falling.

GAUNT Yes. Let us go in.

[ESDRAS, GAUNT, and GARTH enter the basement and shut the door. TROCK goes out with his men. After a pause MIO comes back from the right, alone. He stands at a little distance from Miriamne]

MIO Looks like rain.

[She is silent]

You live around here?

[*She nods gravely*]

I guess

you thought I meant it—about waiting here to meet me.

[*She nods again*]

I'd forgotten about it till I got that winter

across the face. You'd better go inside.

I'm not your kind. I'm nobody's kind but my own.

I'm waiting for this to blow over.

[*She rises*]

I lied. I meant it—

I meant it when I said it—but there's too much black
whirling inside me—for any girl to know.

So go on in. You're somebody's angel child
and they're waiting for you.

MIRIAMNE Yes. I'll go.

[*She turns*]

MIO And tell them
when you get inside where it's warm,
and you love each other,
and mother comes to kiss her darling, tell them
to hang on to it while they can, believe while they can
it's a warm safe world, and Jesus finds his lambs
and carries them in his bosom.—I've seen some lambs
that Jesus missed. If they ever want the truth
tell them that nothing's guaranteed in this climate
except it gets cold in winter, nor on this earth
except you die sometime.

[*He turns away*]

MIRIAMNE I have no mother.
And my people are Jews.

MIO Then you know something about it.

MIRIAMNE Yes.

MIO Do you have enough to eat?

MIRIAMNE Not always.

MIO What do you believe in?

MIRIAMNE Nothing.

MIO Why?

MIRIAMNE How can one?

MIO It's easy if you're a fool. You see the words
in books. Honor, it says there, chivalry, freedom,
heroism, enduring love—and these
are words on paper. It's something to have them there.
You'll get them nowhere else.

MIRIAMNE What hurts you?

MIO Just that.
You'll get them nowhere else.

MIRIAMNE Why should you want them?

MIO I'm alone, that's why. You see those lights,
along the river, cutting across the rain—?
those are the hearths of Brooklyn, and up this way
the love nests of Manhattan—they turn their points
like knives against me—outcast of the world,
snake in the streets. I don't want a handout.
I sleep and eat.

MIRIAMNE Do you want me to go with you?

MIO Where?

MIRIAMNE Where you go.
[A pause. He goes nearer to her]

MIO Why, you goddamned little fool—
what made you say that?

MIRIAMNE I don't know.

MIO If you have a home

stay in it. I ask for nothing. I've schooled myself
to ask for nothing, and take what I can get,
and get along. If I fell for you, that's my lookout,
and I'll starve it down.

MIRIAMNE Wherever you go, I'd go.

MIO What do you know about loving?
How could you know?
Have you ever had a man?

MIRIAMNE [*After a slight pause*] No. But I know.
Tell me your name.

MIO Mio. What's yours?

MIRIAMNE Miriamne.

MIO There's no such name.

MIRIAMNE But there's no such name as Mio!
M.I.O. It's no name.

MIO It's for Bartolomeo.

MIRIAMNE My mother's name was Miriam,
so they called me Miriamne.

MIO Meaning little Miriam?

MIRIAMNE Yes.

MIO So now little Miriamne will go in
and take up quietly where she dropped them all
her small housewifely cares.—When I first saw you,
not a half-hour ago, I heard myself saying,
this is the face that launches ships for me—
and if I owned a dream—yes, half a dream—
we'd share it. But I have no dream. This earth
came tumbling down from chaos, fire and rock,
and bred up worms, blind worms that sting each other
here in the dark. These blind worms of the earth

took out my father—and killed him, and set a sign
on me—the heir of the serpent—and he was a man
such as men might be if the gods were men—
but they killed him—
as they'll kill all others like him
till the sun cools down to the stabler molecules,
yes, till men spin their tent-worm webs to the stars
and what they think is done, even in the thinking,
and they are the gods, and immortal, and constellations
turn for them all like mill wheels—still as they are
they will be, worms and blind. Enduring love,
oh gods and worms, what mockery!—And yet
I have blood enough in my veins. It goes like music,
singing, because you're here. My body turns
as if you were the sun, and warm. This men called love
in happier times, before the Freudians taught us
to blame it on the glands. Only go in
before you breathe too much of my atmosphere
and catch death from me.

MIRIAMNE I will take my hands
and weave them to a little house, and there
you shall keep a dream—

MIO God knows I could use a dream
and even a house.

MIRIAMNE You're laughing at me, Mio!

MIO The worms are laughing.
I tell you there's death about me
and you're a child! And I'm alone and half mad
with hate and longing. I shall let you love me
and love you in return, and then, why then
God knows what happens!

MIRIAMNE Something most unpleasant?

MIO Love in a boxcar—love among the children.
I've seen too much of it. Are we to live
in this same house you make with your two hands

mystically, out of air?

MIRIAMNE No roof, no mortgage!
Well, I shall marry a baker out in Flatbush,
it gives hot bread in the morning! Oh, Mio, Mio,
in all the unwanted places and waste lands
that roll up into the darkness out of sun
and into sun out of dark, there should be one empty
for you and me.

MIO No.

MIRIAMNE Then go now and leave me.
I'm only a girl you saw in the tenements,
and there's been nothing said.

MIO Miriamne.
[She takes a step toward him]

MIRIAMNE Yes.
[He kisses her lips lightly]

MIO Why, girl, the transfiguration on the mount
was nothing to your face. It lights from within—
a white chalice holding fire, a flower in flame,
this is your face.

MIRIAMNE And you shall drink the flame
and never lessen it. And round your head
the aureole shall burn that burns there now,
forever. This I can give you. And so forever
the Freudians are wrong.

MIO They're well-forgotten
at any rate.

MIRIAMNE Why did you speak to me
when you first saw me?

MIO I knew then.

MIRIAMNE And I came back
because I must see you again. And we danced together
and my heart hurt me. Never, never, never,
though they should bind me down and tear out my eyes,
would I ever hurt you now. Take me with you, Mio,
let them look for us, whoever there is to look,
but we'll be away.

[MIO *turns away toward the tenement*]

MIO When I was four years old
we climbed through an iron gate, my mother and I,
to see my father in prison. He stood in the death cell
and put his hand through the bars and said, My Mio,
I have only this to leave you, that I love you,
and will love you after I die. Love me then, Mio,
when this hard thing comes on you, that you must live
a man despised for your father. That night the guards,
walking in floodlights brighter than high noon,
led him between them with his trousers slit
and a shaven head for the cathodes. This sleet and rain
that I feel cold here on my face and hands
will find him under thirteen years of clay
in prison ground. Lie still and rest, my father,
for I have not forgotten. When I forget
may I lie blind as you. No other love,
time passing, nor the spaced light-years of suns
shall blur your voice, or tempt me from the path
that clears your name—
till I have these rats in my grip
or sleep deep where you sleep.
[*To Miriamne*] I have no house,
nor home, nor love of life, nor fear of death,
nor care for what I eat, or who I sleep with,
or what color of calcimine the government
will wash itself this year or next to lure
the sheep and feed the wolves. Love somewhere else,
and get your children in some other image
more acceptable to the State! This face of mine
is stamped for sewage!

[*She steps back, surmising*]

MIRIAMNE Mio—

MIO My road is cut
in rock, and leads to one end. If I hurt you, I'm sorry.
One gets over hurts.

MIRIAMNE What was his name—
your father's name?

MIO Bartolomeo Romagna.
I'm not ashamed of it.

MIRIAMNE Why are you here?

MIO For the reason
I've never had a home. Because I'm a cry
out of a shallow grave, and all roads are mine
that might revenge him!

MIRIAMNE But Mio— why here— why here?

MIO I can't tell you that.

MIRIAMNE No—but—there's someone
lives here—lives not far—and you mean to see him—
you mean to ask him—
[*She pauses*]

MIO Who told you that?

MIRIAMNE His name
is Garth—Garth Esdras—

MIO [*after a pause, coming nearer*] Who are you, then? You seem
to know a good deal about me.—Were you sent
to say this?

MIRIAMNE You said there was death about you! Yes,
but nearer than you think! Let it be as it is—
let it all be as it is, never see this place
nor think of it—forget the streets you came
when you're away and safe! Go before you're seen

or spoken to!

MIO Will you tell me why?

MIRIAMNE As I love you
I can't tell you—and I can never see you—

MIO I walk where I please—

MIRIAMNE Do you think it's easy for me
to send you away?

[She steps back as if to go]

MIO Where will I find you then
if I should want to see you?

MIRIAMNE Never—I tell you
I'd bring you death! Even now. Listen!

[SHADOW and TROCK enter between the bridge and the tenement house. MIRIAMNE pulls Mio back into the shadow of the rock to avoid being seen]

TROCK Why, fine.

SHADOW You watch it now—just for the record, Trock—
you're going to thank me for staying away from it
and keeping you out. I've seen men get that way,
thinking they had to plug a couple of guys
and then a few more to cover it up, and then
maybe a dozen more. You can't own all
and territory adjacent, and you can't
slough all the witnesses, because every man
you put away has friends—

TROCK I said all right.
I said fine.

SHADOW They're going to find this judge,
and if they find him dead it's just too bad,
and I don't want to know anything about it—
and you don't either.

TROCK You all through?

SHADOW Why sure.

TROCK All right.
 We're through too, you know.

SHADOW Yeah?
 [*He becomes wary*]

TROCK Yeah, we're through.

SHADOW I've heard that said before, and afterwards
 somebody died.
 [*Trock is silent*]
 Is that what you mean?

TROCK You can go.
 I don't want to see you.

SHADOW Sure, I'll go.
 Maybe you won't mind if I just find out
 what you've got on you. Before I turn my back
 I'd like to know.
 [*Silently and expertly he touches Trock's pockets, extracting a*
 gun]
 Not that I'd distrust you,
 but you know how it is.
 [*He pockets the gun*]
 So long, Trock.

TROCK So long.

SHADOW I won't talk.
 You can be sure of that.

TROCK I know you won't.

 [*SHADOW turns and goes out right, past the rock and along the*
 bank. As he goes the TWO YOUNG MEN IN SERGE enter from the
 left and walk slowly after Shadow. They look toward Trock as
 they enter and he motions with his thumb in the direction taken

by Shadow. They follow Shadow out without haste. TROCK watches them disappear, then slips out the way he came. MIO comes a step forward, looking after the two men. Two or three shots are heard, then silence. MIO starts to run after Shadow]

MIRIAMNE Mio!

MIO What do you know about this?

MIRIAMNE The other way,
Mio—quick!

[CARR slips in from the right, in haste]

CARR Look, somebody's just been shot.
He fell in the river. The guys that did the shooting
ran up the bank.

MIO Come on.

[MIO and CARR run out right. MIRIAMNE watches uncertainly, then slowly turns and walks to the rear door of the tenement. She stands there a moment, looking after Mio, then goes in, closing the door. CARR and MIO return]

CARR There's a rip tide past the point. You'd never find him.

MIO No.

CARR You know a man really ought to carry insurance living around
here.—God, it's easy, putting a fellow away. I never saw it done
before.

MIO *[Looking at the place where Miriamne stood]* They have it all
worked out.

CARR What are you doing now?

MIO I have a little business to transact in this neighborhood.

CARR You'd better forget it.

MIO No.

CARR Need any help?

MIO Well, if I did I'd ask you first. But I don't see how it would do any good. So you keep out of it and take care of yourself.

CARR So long, then.

MIO So long, Carr.

CARR [*Looking downstream*] He was drifting face up. Must be half-way to the island the way the tide runs.

 [*He shivers*]

 God, it's cold here. Well—

 [*He goes out to the left. MIO sits on the edge of the rock. LUCIA comes stealthily back from between the bridge and the tenement, goes to the street piano and wheels it away. PINY comes in. They take a look at Mio, but say nothing. LUCIA goes into his shelter and PINY into hers. MIO rises, looks up at the tenement, and goes out to the left*]

CURTAIN

Act Two

SCENE: The basement as in Scene 2 of Act One. The same evening. Esdras sits at the table reading, Miriamne is seated at the left, listening and intent. The door of the inner room is half-open and Garth's violin is heard. He is playing the theme from the third movement of Beethoven's Archduke Trio. ESDRAS looks up.

ESDRAS I remember when I came to the end
of all the Talmud said, and the commentaries,
then I was fifty years old—and it was time
to ask what I had learned. I asked this question
and gave myself the answer. In all the Talmud
there was nothing to find but the names of things,
set down that we might call them by those names
and walk without fear among things known. Since then
I have had twenty years to read on and on
and end with Ecclesiastes. Names of names,
evanid days, evanid nights and days
and words that shift their meaning. Space is time,
that which was is now—the men of tomorrow
live, and this is their yesterday. All things
that were and are and will be, have their being
then and now and to come. If this means little
when you are young, remember it. It will return
to mean more when you are old.

MIRIAMNE I'm sorry—I
was listening for something.

ESDRAS It doesn't matter.
It's a useless wisdom. It's all I have,
but useless. It may be there is no time,

but we grow old. Do you know his name?

MIRIAMNE Whose name?

ESDRAS Why, when we're young and listen for a step the step should have a name—

[MIRIAMNE, *not hearing, rises and goes to the window. GARTH enters from within, carrying his violin and carefully closing the door*]

GARTH [*As Esdras looks at him*] Asleep.

ESDRAS He may
sleep on through the whole night—then in the morning
we can let them know.

GARTH We'd be wiser to say nothing—
let him find his own way back.

ESDRAS How did he come here?

GARTH He's not too crazy for that. If he wakes again
we'll keep him quiet and shift him off tomorrow.
Somebody'd pick him up.

ESDRAS How have I come
to this sunken end of a street, at a life's end—?

GARTH It was cheaper here—not to be transcendental—
So—we say nothing?

ESDRAS Nothing.

MIRIAMNE Garth, there's no place
in this whole city—not one—
where you wouldn't be safer
than here—tonight—or tomorrow.

GARTH [*Bitterly*] Well, that may be.
What of it?

MIRIAMNE If you slipped away and took

a place somewhere where Trock couldn't find you—

GARTH Yes—
 using what for money? and why do you think
 I've sat here so far—because I love my home
 so much? No, but if I stepped round the corner
 it'd be my last corner and my last step.

MIRIAMNE And yet—
 if you're here—they'll find you here—
 Trock will come again—
 and there's worse to follow—

GARTH Do you want to get me killed?

MIRIAMNE No.

GARTH There's no way out of it. We'll wait
 and take what they send us.

ESDRAS Hush! You'll wake him.

GARTH I've done it.
 I hear him stirring now.

[*They wait quietly.* JUDGE GAUNT *opens the door and enters*]

GAUNT [*In the doorway*] I beg your pardon—
 no, no, be seated—keep your place—I've made
 your evening difficult enough, I fear;
 and I must thank you doubly for your kindness,
 for I've been ill—I know it.

ESDRAS You're better, sir?

GAUNT Quite recovered, thank you. Able, I hope,
 to manage nicely now. You'll be rewarded
 for your hospitality—though at this moment
 [*He smiles*]
 I'm low in funds.
 [*He inspects his billfold*]
 Sir, my embarrassment

is great indeed—and more than monetary,
for I must own my recollection's vague
of how I came here—how we came together—
and what we may have said. My name is Gaunt,
Judge Gaunt, a name long known in the criminal courts,
and not unhonored there.

ESDRAS My name is Esdras—
and this is Garth, my son. And Miriamne,
the daughter of my old age.

GAUNT I'm glad to meet you.
Esdras. Garth Esdras.
[*He passes a hand over his eyes*]
It's not a usual name.
Of late it's been connected with a case—
a case I knew. But this is hardly the man.
Though it's not a usual name.
[*They are silent*]
Sir, how I came here,
as I have said, I don't well know. Such things
are sometimes not quite accident.

ESDRAS We found you
outside our door and brought you in.

GAUNT The brain
can be overworked, and weary, even when the man
would swear to his good health. Sir, on my word
I don't know why I came here, nor how, nor when,
nor what would explain it. Shall we say the machine
begins to wear? I felt no twinge of it.—
You will imagine how much more than galling
I feel it, to ask my way home—and where I am—
but I do ask you that.

ESDRAS This is New York City—
or part of it.

GAUNT Not the best part, I presume?
[*He smiles grimly*]

No, not the best.

ESDRAS Not typical, no.

GAUNT And you—*[To Garth]*
you are Garth Esdras?

GARTH That's my name.

GAUNT Well, sir,
[To Esdras] I shall lie under the deepest obligation
if you will set an old man on his path,
for I lack the homing instinct, if the truth
were known. North, east, and south mean nothing to me
here in this room.

ESDRAS I can put you on your way.

GARTH Only you'd be wiser to wait a while—
if I'm any judge.—

GAUNT It happens I'm the judge—
[With stiff humor] in more ways than one. You'll forgive me
if I say
I find this place and my predicament
somewhat distasteful.
[He looks round him]

GARTH I don't doubt you do;
but you're better off here.

GAUNT Nor will you find it wise
to cross my word as lightly as you seem
inclined to do. You've seen me ill and shaken—
and you presume on that.

GARTH Have it your way.

GAUNT Doubtless what information is required
we'll find nearby.

ESDRAS Yes, sir—the terminal,—

if you could walk so far.

GAUNT

I've done some walking—
to look at my shoes.
[*He looks down, then puts out a hand to steady himself*]
That—that was why I came—
never mind—it was there—and it's gone.
[*To Garth*] Professor Hobhouse—
that's the name—he wrote some trash about you
and printed it in a broadside.
—Since I'm here I can tell you
it's a pure fabrication—lacking facts
and legal import. Senseless and impudent,
written with bias—with malicious intent
to undermine the public confidence
in justice and the courts. I knew it then—
all he brings out about this testimony
you might have given. It's true I could have called you,
but the case was clear—Romagna was known guilty,
and there was nothing to add. If I've endured
some hours of torture over their attacks
upon my probity—and in this torture
have wandered from my place, wandered perhaps
in mind and body—and found my way to face you—
why, yes, it is so—I know it—I beg of you
say nothing. It's not easy to give up
a fair name after a full half century
of service to a State. It may well rock
the surest reason. Therefore I ask of you
say nothing of this visit.

GARTH

I'll say nothing.

ESDRAS

Nor any of us.

GAUNT

Why, no—for you'd lose, too.
You'd have nothing to gain.

ESDRAS

Indeed we know it.

GAUNT

I'll remember you kindly. When I've returned,

there may be some mystery made of where I was—
we'll leave it a mystery?

GARTH Anything you say.

GAUNT Why, now I go with much more peace of mind—if I can call
you friends.

ESDRAS We shall be grateful
for silence on your part, Your Honor.

GAUNT Sir—
if there were any just end to be served
by speaking out, I'd speak! There is none. No—
bear that in mind!

ESDRAS We will, Your Honor.

GAUNT Then—
I'm in some haste. If you can be my guide,
we'll set out now.

ESDRAS Yes, surely.
[*There is a knock at the door. The four look at each other with
some apprehension. MIRIAMNE rises*]
I'll answer it.

MIRIAMNE Yes.
[*She goes into the inner room and closes the door. ESDRAS goes
to the outer door. The knock is repeated. He opens the door. Mio
is there*]

ESDRAS Yes, sir.

MIO May I come in?

ESDRAS Will you state your business, sir?
It's late—and I'm not at liberty—

MIO Why, I might say
that I was trying to earn my tuition fees
by peddling magazines. I could say that,

or collecting old newspapers—paying cash—
highest rates—no questions asked—

[He looks round sharply]

GARTH We've nothing to sell.
What do you want?

MIO Your pardon, gentlemen.
My business is not of an ordinary kind,
and I felt the need of this slight introduction
while I might get my bearings. Your name is Esdras,
or they told me so outside.

GARTH What do you want?

MIO Is that the name?

GARTH Yes.

MIO I'll be quick and brief.
I'm the son of a man who died many years ago
for a pay roll robbery in New England. You
should be Garth Esdras, by what I've heard. You have
some knowledge of the crime, if one can believe
what he reads in the public prints, and it might be
that your testimony, if given, would clear my father
of any share in the murder. You may not care
whether he was guilty or not. You may not know.
But I do care—and care deeply, and I've come
to ask you face to face.

GARTH To ask me what?

MIO What do you know of it?

ESDRAS This man Romagna,
did he have a son?

MIO Yes, sir, this man Romagna,
as you choose to call him, had a son, and I
am that son, and proud.

ESDRAS Forgive me.

MIO Had you known him,
and heard him speak, you'd know why I'm proud, and why
he was no malefactor.

ESDRAS I quite believe you.
If my son can help he will. But at this moment,
as I told you—could you, I wonder, come tomorrow,
at your own hour?

MIO Yes.

ESDRAS By coincidence
we too of late have had this thing in mind—
there have been comments printed, and much discussion
which we could hardly avoid.

MIO Could you tell me then
in a word?—What you know—
is it for him or against him?—
that's all I need.

ESDRAS My son knows nothing.

GARTH No.
The picture-papers lash themselves to a fury
over any rumor—make them up when they're short
of bedroom slops.—This is what happened. I
had known a few members of a gang one time
up there—and after the murder they picked me up
because I looked like someone that was seen
in what they called the murder car. They held me
a little while, but they couldn't identify me
for the most excellent reason I wasn't there
when the thing occurred. A dozen years later now
a professor comes across this, and sees red
and asks why I wasn't called on as a witness
and yips so loud they syndicate his picture
in all the rotos. That's all I know about it.
I wish I could tell you more.

ESDRAS Let me say too
that I have read some words your father said,
and you were a son fortunate in your father,
whatever the verdict of the world.

MIO There are few
who think so, but it's true, and I thank you. Then—
that's the whole story?

GARTH All I know of it.

MIO They cover their tracks well, the inner ring
that distributes murder. I came three thousand miles
to this dead end.

ESDRAS If he was innocent
and you know him so, believe it, and let the others
believe as they like.

MIO Will you tell me how a man's
to live, and face his life, if he can't believe
that truth's like a fire,
and will burn through and be seen
though it takes all the years there are?
While I stand up and have breath in my lungs
I shall be one flame of that fire;
it's all the life I have.

ESDRAS Then you must live so.
One must live as he can.

MIO It's the only way
of life my father left me.

ESDRAS Yes? Yet it's true
the ground we walk on is impacted down
and hard with blood and bones of those who died
unjustly. There's not one title to land or life,
even your own, but was built on rape and murder,
back a few years. It would take a fire indeed
to burn out all this error.

MIO Then let it burn down,
all of it!

ESDRAS We ask a great deal of the world
at first—then less—and then less.
We ask for truth
and justice. But this truth's a thing unknown
in the lightest, smallest matter—and as for justice,
who has once seen it done? You loved your father,
and I could have loved him, for every word he spoke
in his trial was sweet and tolerant, but the weight
of what men are and have rests heavy on
the graves of those who lost. They'll not rise again,
and their causes lie there with them.

GAUNT If you mean to say
that Bartolomeo Romagna was innocent,
you are wrong. He was guilty.
There may have been injustice
from time to time, by regrettable chance, in our courts,
but not in that case, I assure you.

MIO Oh, you assure me!
You lie in your scrag teeth, whoever you are!
My father was murdered!

GAUNT Romagna was found guilty
by all due process of law, and given his chance
to prove his innocence.

MIO What chance? When a court
panders to mob hysterics, and the jury
comes in loaded to soak an anarchist
and a foreigner, it may be due process of law
but it's also murder!

GAUNT He should have thought of that
before he spilled blood.

MIO He?

GAUNT Sir, I know too well

that he was guilty.

MIO Who are you? How do you know?
I've searched the records through, the trial and what
came after, and in all that million words
I found not one unbiased argument
to fix the crime on him.

GAUNT And you yourself,
were you unprejudiced?

MIO Who are you?

ESDRAS Sir,
this gentleman is here, as you are here,
to ask my son, as you have asked, what ground
there might be for this talk of new evidence
in your father's case. We gave him the same answer
we've given you.

MIO I'm sorry. I'd supposed
his cause forgotten except by myself. There's still
a defense committee then?

GAUNT There may be. I
am not connected with it.

ESDRAS He is my guest,
and asks to remain unknown.

MIO [*After a pause, looking at Gaunt*] The judge at the trial
was younger, but he had your face. Can it be
that you're the man?— Yes— Yes.— The jury charge—
I sat there as a child and heard your voice,
and watched that Brahminical mouth. I knew even then
you meant no good to him. And now you're here
to winnow out truth and justice—the fountainhead
of the lies that slew him! Are you Judge Gaunt?

GAUNT I am.

MIO Then tell me what damnation to what inferno

would fit the toad that sat in robes and lied
when he gave the charge, and knew he lied! Judge that,
and then go to your place in that hell!

GAUNT I know and have known
 what bitterness can rise against a court
 when it must say, putting aside all weakness,
 that a man's to die. I can forgive you that,
 for you are your father's son, and you think of him
 as a son thinks of his father. Certain laws
 seem cruel in their operation; it's necessary
 that we be cruel to uphold them. This cruelty
 is kindness to those I serve.

MIO I don't doubt that.
 I know who it is you serve.

GAUNT Would I have chosen
 to rack myself with other men's despairs,
 stop my ears, harden my heart, and listen only
 to the voice of law and light, if I had hoped
 some private gain for serving? In all my years
 on the bench of a long-established commonwealth
 not once has my decision been in question
 save in this case. Not once before or since.
 For hope of heaven or place on earth, or power
 or gold, no man has had my voice, nor will
 while I still keep the trust that's laid on me
 to sentence and define.

MIO Then why are you here?

GAUNT My record's clean. I've kept it so. But suppose
 with the best intent, among the myriad tongues
 that come to testify, I had missed my way
 and followed a perjured tale to a lethal end
 till a man was forsworn to death? Could I rest or sleep
 while there was doubt of this,
 even while there was question in a layman's mind?
 For always, night and day,
 there lies on my brain like a weight, the admonition:

see truly, let nothing sway you; among all functions there's but one godlike, to judge. Then see to it you judge as a god would judge, with clarity, with truth, with what mercy is found consonant with order and law. Without law men are beasts, and it's a judge's task to lift and hold them above themselves. Let a judge be once mistaken or step aside for a friend, and a gap is made in the dikes that hold back anarchy and chaos, and leave men bond but free.

MIO Then the gap's been made,
and you made it.

GAUNT I feared that too. May you be a judge
sometime, and know in what fear,
through what nights long
in fear, I scanned and verified and compared
the transcripts of the trial.

MIO Without prejudice,
no doubt. It was never in your mind to prove
that you'd been right.

GAUNT And conscious of that, too—
that that might be my purpose—watchful of that,
and jealous as his own lawyer of the rights
that should hedge the defendant!
And still I found no error,
shook not one staple of the bolts that linked
the doer to the deed! Still following on
from step to step, I watched all modern comment,
and saw it centered finally on one fact—
Garth Esdras was not called. This is Garth Esdras,
and you have heard him. Would his deposition
have justified a new trial?

MIO No. It would not.

GAUNT And there I come, myself. If the man were still
in his cell, and waiting, I'd have no faint excuse

for another hearing.

MIO I've told you that I read
the trial from beginning to end. Every word you spoke
was balanced carefully to keep the letter
of the law and still convict—convict, by Christ,
if it tore the seven veils! You stand here now
running cascades of casuistry, to prove
to yourself and me that no judge of rank and breeding
could burn a man out of hate! But that's what you did
under all your varnish!

GAUNT I've sought for evidence,
and you have sought. Have you found it? Can you cite
one fresh word in defense?

MIO The trial itself
was shot full of legerdemain, prearranged to lead
the jury astray—

GAUNT Could you prove that?

MIO Yes!

GAUNT And if
the jury were led astray, remember it's
the jury, by our Anglo-Saxon custom,
that finds for guilt or innocence. The judge
is powerless in that matter.

MIO Not you! Your charge
misled the jury more than the evidence,
accepted every biased meaning, distilled
the poison for them!

GAUNT But if that were so
I'd be the first, I swear it, to step down
among all men, and hold out both my hands
for manacles—yes, publish it in the streets,
that all I've held most sacred was defiled
by my own act. A judge's brain becomes
a delicate instrument to weigh men's lives

for good and ill—too delicate to bear
much tampering. If he should push aside
the weights and throw the beam, and say, this once
the man is guilty, and I will have it so
though his mouth cry out from the ground,
and all the world
revoke my word, he'd have a short way to go
to madness. I think you'd find him in the squares,
stopping the passers-by with arguments,—
see, I was right, the man was guilty there—
this was brought in against him, this—and this—
and I was left no choice! It's no light thing
when a long life's been dedicate to one end
to wrench the mind awry!

MIO By your own thesis
you should be mad, and no doubt you are.

GAUNT But my madness
is only this—that I would fain look back
on a life well-spent—without one stain—one breath
of stain to flaw the glass—not in men's minds
nor in my own. I take my God as witness
I meant to earn that clearness, and believe
that I have earned it. Yet my name is clouded
with the blackest, fiercest scandal of our age
that's touched a judge. What I can do to wipe
that smutch from my fame I will. I think you know
how deeply I've been hated, for no cause
that I can find there. Can it not be—and I ask this
quite honestly—that the great injustice lies
on your side and not mine? Time and time again
men have come before me perfect in their lives,
loved by all who knew them, loved at home,
gentle, not vicious, yet caught so ripe red-handed
in some dark violence there was no denying
where the onus lay.

MIO That was not so with my father!

GAUNT And yet it seemed so to me. To other men

who sat in judgment on him. Can you be sure—
I ask this in humility—that you,
who were touched closest by the tragedy,
may not have lost perspective—may have brooded
day and night on one theme—till your eyes are tranced
and show you one side only?

MIO I see well enough.

GAUNT And would that not be part of the malady—
to look quite steadily at the drift of things
but see there what you wish—not what is there—
not what another man to whom the story
was fresh would say is there?

MIO You think I'm crazy.
Is that what you meant to say?

GAUNT I've seen it happen
with the best and wisest men. I but ask the question.
I can't speak for you. Is it not true wherever
you walk, through the little town where you knew him well,
or flying from it, inland or by the sea,
still walking at your side, and sleeping only
when you too sleep, a shadow not your own
follows, pleading and holding out its hands
to be delivered from shame?

MIO How you know that
by God I don't know.

GAUNT Because one specter haunted you and me—
and haunts you still, but for me it's laid to rest
now that my mind is satisfied. He died
justly and not by error.

[*A pause*]

MIO [*Stepping forward*] Do you care to know
you've come so near to death it's miracle
that pulse still beats in your splotchy throat?
Do you know

there's murder in me?

GAUNT There was murder in your sire,
and it's to be expected! I say he died
justly, and he deserved it!

MIO Yes, you'd like too well
to have me kill you! That would prove your case
and clear your name, and dip my father's name
in stench forever! You'll not get that from me!
Go home and die in bed, get it under cover,
your lux-et-lex putrefaction of the right thing,
you man that walks like a god!

GAUNT Have I made you angry
by coming too near the truth?

MIO This sets him up,
this venomous slug, this sets him up in a gown,
deciding who's to walk above the earth
and who's to lie beneath! And giving reasons!
The cobra giving reasons; I'm a god,
by Buddha, holy and worshipful my fang,
and can I sink it in!
[He pauses, turns as if to go, then sits]
This is no good.
This won't help much.
[The JUDGE and ESDRAS look at each other]

GAUNT We should be going.

ESDRAS Yes.
[They prepare to go]
I'll lend you my coat.

GAUNT *[Looking at it with distaste]* No, keep it. A little rain
shouldn't matter to me.

ESDRAS It freezes as it falls,
and you've a long way to go.

GAUNT I'll manage, thank you.
[GAUNT *and* ESDRAS *go out*, ESDRAS *obsequious*, *closing the door*]

GARTH [*Looking at Mio's back*] Well?

MIO [*Not moving*] Let me sit here a moment.
[GARTH *shrugs his shoulders and goes toward the inner door*. MIRIAMNE *opens it and comes out*. GARTH *looks at her, then at Mio, then lays his fingers on his lips*. She *nods*. GARTH *goes out*. MIRIAMNE *sits and watches Mio*. After a little he *turns and sees her*]
How did you come here?

MIRIAMNE I live here.

MIO Here?

MIRIAMNE My name is Esdras. Garth
is my brother. The walls are thin.
I heard what was said.

MIO [*Stirring wearily*] I'm going. This is no place for me.

MIRIAMNE What place
would be better?

MIO None. Only it's better to go.
Just to go.
[*She comes over to him, puts her arm round him and kisses his forehead*]

MIRIAMNE Mio.

MIO What do you want?
Your kisses burn me—and your arms. Don't offer
what I'm never to have! I can have nothing. They say
they'll cross the void sometime to the other planets
and men will breathe in that air.
Well, I could breathe there,
but not here now. Not on this ball of mud.

I don't want it.

MIRIAMNE They can take away so little
with all their words. For you're a king among them.
I heard you, and loved your voice.

MIO I thought I'd fallen
so low there was no further, and now a pit
opens beneath. It was bad enough that he
should have died innocent, but if he were guilty—
then what's my life—what have I left to do—?
The son of a felon—and what they spat on me
was earned—and I'm drenched with the stuff.
Here on my hands
and cheeks, their spittle hanging! I liked my hands
because they were like his. I tell you I've lived
by his innocence, lived to see it flash
and blind them all—

MIRIAMNE Never believe them, Mio,
never.

[She looks toward the inner door]

MIO But it was truth I wanted, truth—
not the lies you'd tell yourself, or tell a woman,
or a woman tells you! The judge with his cobra mouth
may have spat truth—and I may be mad! For me—
your hands are too clean to touch me. I'm to have
the scraps from hotel kitchens—and instead of love
those mottled bodies that hitch themselves through alleys
to sell for dimes or nickels. Go, keep yourself chaste
for the baker bridegroom—baker and son of a baker,
let him get his baker's dozen on you!

MIRIAMNE No—
say once you love me—say it once; I'll never
ask to hear it twice, nor for any kindness,
and you shall take all I have!

[GARTH opens the inner door and comes out]

GARTH I interrupt
a love scene, I believe. We can do without
your adolescent mawkishness.
[*To Miriamne*] You're a child.
You'll both remember that.

MIRIAMNE I've said nothing to harm you—
and will say nothing.

GARTH You're my sister, though,
and I take a certain interest in you. Where
have you two met?

MIRIAMNE We danced together.

GARTH Then
the dance is over, I think.

MIRIAMNE I've always loved you
and tried to help you, Garth. And you've been kind.
Don't spoil it now.

GARTH Spoil it how?

MIRIAMNE Because I love him.
I didn't know it would happen. We danced together.
And the world's all changed. I see you through a mist,
and our father, too. If you brought this to nothing
I'd want to die.

GARTH [*To Mio*] You'd better go.

MIO Yes, I know.

[*He rises. There is a trembling knock at the door. MIRIAMNE goes to it. The Hobo is there shivering*]

HOB0 Miss, could I sleep under the pipes tonight, miss?
Could I, please?

MIRIAMNE I think—not tonight.

HOB0 There won't be any more nights—

if I don't get warm, miss.

MIRIAMNE Come in.

[The HOBO comes in, looks round deprecatingly, then goes to a corner beneath a huge heating pipe, which he crawls under as if he'd been there before]

HOBO Yes, miss, thank you.

GARTH Must we put up with that?

MIRIAMNE Father let him sleep there—
last winter.

GARTH Yes, God, yes.

MIO Well, good night.

MIRIAMNE Where will you go?

MIO Yes, where? As if it mattered.

GARTH Oh, sleep here, too.
We'll have a row of you under the pipes.

MIO No, thanks.

MIRIAMNE Mio, I've saved a little money. It's only
some pennies, but you must take it.
[She shakes some coins out of a box into her hand]

MIO No, thanks.

MIRIAMNE And I love you.
You've never said you love me.

MIO Why wouldn't I love you
when you're clean and sweet,
and I've seen nothing sweet or clean
this last ten years? I love you. I leave you that
for what good it may do you. It's none to me.

MIRIAMNE Then kiss me.

MIO [*looking at Garth*] With that scowling over us? No.
 When it rains, some spring
 on the planet Mercury, where the spring comes often,
 I'll meet you there, let's say. We'll wait for that.
 It may be some time till then.

 [*The outside door opens and ESDRAS enters with JUDGE GAUNT, then, after a slight interval, TROCK follows. TROCK surveys the interior and its occupants one by one, carefully*]

TROCK I wouldn't want to cause you inconvenience,
 any of you, and especially the Judge.
 I think you know that. You've all got things to do—
 trains to catch, and so on. But trains can wait.
 Hell, nearly anything can wait, you'll find,
 only I can't. I'm the only one that can't
 because I've got no time. Who's all this here?
 Who's that?

 [*He points to the Hobo*]

ESDRAS He's a poor half-wit, sir,
 that sometimes sleeps there.

TROCK Come out. I say come out,
 whoever you are.
 [*The HOBO stirs and looks up*]
 Yes, I mean you. Come out.
 [*The HOBO emerges*]
 What's your name?

HOBO They mostly call me Oke.

TROCK What do you know?

HOBO No, sir.

TROCK Where are you from?

HOBO I got a piece of bread.

[*He brings it out, trembling*]

TROCK Get back in there!
 [The HOBO *crawls back into his corner*]
 Maybe you want to know why I'm doing this.
 Well, I've been robbed, that's why—
 robbed five or six times;
 the police can't find a thing—so I'm out for myself—
 if you want to know.
 [*To Mio*] Who are you?

MIO Oh, I'm a half-wit,
 came in here by mistake. The difference is
 I've got no piece of bread.

TROCK What's your name?

MIO My name?
 Theophrastus Such. That's respectable.
 You'll find it all the way from here to the coast
 on the best police blotters.
 Only the truth is we're a little touched in the head,
 Oke and me. You'd better ask somebody else.

TROCK Who is he?

ESDRAS His name's Romagna. He's the son.

TROCK Then what's he doing here? You said you were on the level.

GARTH He just walked in. On account of the stuff in the papers. We
 didn't ask him.

TROCK God, we are a gathering. Now if we had Shadow we'd be all
 here, huh? Only I guess we won't see Shadow. No, that's too
 much to ask.

MIO Who's Shadow?

TROCK Now you're putting questions. Shadow was just nobody, you
 see. He blew away. It might happen to anyone.

[He looks at Garth]

Yes, anyone at all.

MIO Why do you keep your hand in your pocket, friend?

TROCK Because I'm cold, punk. Because I've been outside and it's cold as the tomb of Christ. *[To Garth]* Listen, there's a car waiting up at the street to take the Judge home. We'll take him to the car.

GARTH That's not necessary.

ESDRAS No.

TROCK I say it is, see? You wouldn't want to let the Judge walk, would you? The Judge is going to ride where he's going, with a couple of chauffeurs, and everything done in style. Don't you worry about the Judge. He'll be taken care of. For good.

GARTH I want no hand in it.

TROCK Anything happens to me happens to you too, musician.

GARTH I know that.

TROCK Keep your mouth out of it then. And you'd better keep the punk here tonight, just for luck.

[He turns toward the door. There is a brilliant lightning flash through the windows, followed slowly by dying thunder. TROCK opens the door. The rain begins to pour in sheets]

Jesus, somebody tipped it over again!

[A cough racks him]

Wait till it's over. It takes ten days off me every time I step into it.

[He closes the door]

Sit down and wait.

[Lightning flashes again. The thunder is fainter. ESDRAS, GARTH, and the JUDGE sit down]

GAUNT We were born too early. Even you who are young
 are not of the elect. In a hundred years
 man will put his finger on life itself, and then
 he will live as long as he likes. For you and me
 we shall die soon—one day, one year more or less,
 when or where, it's no matter. It's what we call
 an indeterminate sentence. I'm hungry.

 [*GARTH looks at Miriamne*]

MIRIAMNE There was nothing left
 tonight.

HOBO I've got a piece of bread.

 [*He breaks his bread in two and hands half to the Judge*]

GAUNT I thank you, sir.
 [*He eats*]
 This is not good bread.
 [*He rises*]
 Sir, I am used
 to other company. Not better, perhaps, but their clothes
 were different. These are what it's the fashion to call
 the underprivileged.

TROCK Oh, hell!

 [*He turns toward the door*]

MIO [*To Trock*] It would seem that you and the Judge know each
 other.

 [*TROCK faces him*]

TROCK I've been around.

MIO Maybe you've met before.

TROCK Maybe we have.

MIO Will you tell me where?

TROCK How long do you want to live?

MIO How long? Oh, I've got big ideas about that.

TROCK I thought so. Well, so far I've got nothing against you but your name, see? You keep it that way.

[He opens the door. The rain still falls in torrents. He closes the door. As he turns from it, it opens again, and Shadow, white, bloodstained and dripping, stands in the doorway. GARTH rises. TROCK turns]

GAUNT *[To the Hobo]* Yet if one were careful of his health, ate sparingly, drank not at all, used himself wisely, it might be that even an old man could live to touch immortality. They may come on the secret sooner than we dare hope. You see? It does no harm to try.

TROCK *[Backing away from Shadow]* By God, he's out of his grave!

SHADOW *[Leaning against the doorway, holding a gun in his hands]*
Keep your hands where they belong, Trock.
You know me.

TROCK Don't! Don't! I had nothing to do with it!

[He backs to the opposite wall]

SHADOW You said the doctor gave you six months to live—well, I don't give you that much. That's what you had, six months, and so you start bumping off your friends to make sure of your damn six months. I got it from you.
I know where I got it.
Because I wouldn't give it to the Judge.
So he wouldn't talk.

TROCK Honest to God—

SHADOW What God?
The one that let you put three holes in me
when I was your friend? Well, He let me get up again
and walk till I could find you. That's as far as I get,
but I got there, by God! And I can hear you
even if I can't see!
[He takes a staggering step forward]

A man needs blood
to keep going.—I got this far.—And now I can't see!
It runs out too fast—too fast—
when you've got three slugs
clean through you.
Show me where he is, you fools! He's here!
I got here!
[He drops the gun]
Help me! Help me! Oh, God! Oh, God!
I'm going to die! Where does a man lie down?
I want to lie down!

[MIRIAMNE starts toward Shadow. GARTH and ESDRAS help him into the next room, MIRIAMNE following. TROCK squats in his corner, breathing hard, looking at the door. MIO stands, watching Trock. GARTH returns, wiping his hand with a handkerchief. MIO picks up and pockets the gun. MIRIAMNE comes back and leans against the door jamb]

GAUNT

You will hear it said that an old man makes a good judge,
being calm, clear-eyed, without passion. But this is not true.
Only the young love truth and justice. The old are savage,
wary, violent, swayed by maniac desires, cynical of friendship
or love, open to bribery and the temptations of lust,
corrupt and dastardly to the heart. I know these old men.
What have they left to believe, what have they left to lose?
Whorers of daughters, lickens of girls' shoes, contrivers of
nastiness in the night, purveyors of perversion, worshipers
of possession! Death is the only radical. He comes late, but he
comes at last to put away the old men and give the young
their places. It was time.

[He leans]

Here's one I heard yesterday:

Marmaduke behind the barn
got his sister in a fix;
he says damn instead of darn;
ain't he cute? He's only six!

HOBO

He, he, he!

GAUNT

And the hoot owl hoots all night,

and the cuckoo cooks all day,
and what with a minimum grace of God
we pass the time away.

HOBO He, he, he—I got ya!
 [*He makes a sign with his thumb*]

GAUNT [*Sings*]
 And he led her all around
 and he laid her on the ground
 and he ruffled up the feathers of her
 cuckoo's nest!

HOBO Ho, ho, ho!

GAUNT I am not taken with the way you laugh. You should cultivate
 restraint.
 [*ESDRAS re-enters*]

TROCK Shut the door.

ESDRAS He won't come back again.

TROCK I want the door shut! He was dead, I tell you!
 [*ESDRAS closes the door*]
 And Romagna was dead, too, once! Can't they keep a man
 under ground?

MIO No. No more! They don't stay under ground any more, and they
 don't stay under water! Why did you have him killed?

TROCK Stay away from me! I know you!

MIO Who am I, then?

TROCK I know you, damn you! Your name's Romagna!

MIO Yes! And Romagna was dead, too, and Shadow was dead, but
 the time's come when you can't keep them down, these dead
 men! They won't stay down! They come in with their heads

shot off and their entrails dragging! Hundreds of them! One by one—all you ever had killed! Watch the door! See!— It moves!

TROCK [*Looking, fascinated, at the door*] Let me out of here!
 [*He tries to rise*]

MIO [*The gun in his hand*] Oh, no! You'll sit there and wait for them! One by one they'll come through that door, pulling their heads out of the gunny sacks where you tied them—glauming over you with their rotten hands! They'll see without eyes and crawl over you—Shadow and the paymaster and all the rest of them—putrescent bones without eyes! Now! Look! Look! For I'm first among them!

TROCK I've done for better men than you! And I'll do for you!

GAUNT [*Rapping on the table*] Order, gentlemen, order! The witness will remember that a certain decorum is essential in the courtroom!

MIO By God, he'll answer me!

GAUNT [*Thundering*] Silence! Silence! Let me remind you of courtesy toward the witness! What case is this you try?

MIO The case of the state against Bartolomeo Romagna for the murder of the paymaster!

GAUNT Sir, that was disposed of long ago!

MIO Never disposed of, never, not while I live!

GAUNT Then we'll have done with it now! I deny the appeal! I have denied the appeal before and I do so again!

HOB0 He, he!—He thinks he's in the moving pictures!
 [*A flash of lightning*]

GAUNT Who set that flash! Bailiff, clear the court! This is not Flemington, gentlemen! We are not conducting this case to make a journalistic holiday!

[The thunder rumbles faintly. GARTH opens the outside door and faces a solid wall of rain]

Stop that man! He's one of the defendants!

[GARTH closes the door]

MIO Then put him on the stand!

GARTH What do you think you're doing?

MIO Have you any objection?

GAUNT The objection is not sustained. We will hear the new evidence.
Call your witness.

MIO Garth Esdras!

GAUNT He will take the stand!

GARTH If you want me to say what I said before I'll say it!

MIO Call Trock Estrella then!

GAUNT Trock Estrella to the stand!

TROCK No, by God!

MIO Call Shadow, then! He'll talk! You thought he was dead, but
he'll get up again and talk!

TROCK *[Screaming]* What do you want of me?

MIO You killed the paymaster! You!

TROCK You lie! It was Shadow killed him!

MIO And now I know! Now I know!

GAUNT Again I remind you of courtesy toward the witness!

MIO I know them now!
Let me remind you of courtesy toward the dead!
He says that Shadow killed him! If Shadow were here

he'd say it was Trock! There were three men involved
in the new version of the crime for which
my father died! Shadow and Trock Estrella
as principals in the murder—Garth as witness!—
Why are they here together?—and you—the Judge—
why are you here? Why, because you were all afraid
and you drew together out of that fear to arrange
a story you could tell! And Trock killed Shadow
and meant to kill the Judge out of that same fear—
to keep them quiet! This is the thing I've hunted
over the earth to find out, and I'd be blind
indeed if I missed it now!

[*To Gaunt*] You heard what he said:

It was Shadow killed him! Now let the night conspire
with the sperm of hell! It's plain beyond denial
even to this fox of justice—and all his words
are curses on the wind! You lied! You lied!
You knew this too!

GAUNT [*Low*] Let me go. Let me go!

MIO Then why
did you let my father die?

GAUNT Suppose it known,
but there are things a judge must not believe
though they should head and fester underneath
and press in on his brain. Justice once rendered
in a clear burst of anger, righteously,
upon a very common laborer,
confessed an anarchist, the verdict found
and the precise machinery of law
invoked to know him guilty—think what furor
would rock the state if the court then flatly said:
all this was lies—must be reversed? It's better,
as any judge can tell you, in such cases,
holding the common good to be worth more
than small injustice, to let the record stand,
let one man die. For justice, in the main,
is governed by opinion. Communities
will have what they will have, and it's quite as well,

after all, to be rid of anarchists. Our rights
as citizens can be maintained as rights
only while we are held to be the peers
of those who live about us. A vendor of fish
is not protected as a man might be
who kept a market. I own I've sometimes wished
this was not so, but it is. The man you defend
was unfortunate—and his misfortune bore
almost as heavily on me.—I'm broken—
broken across. You're much too young to know
how bitter it is when a worn connection chars
and you can't remember—can't remember.

[He steps forward]

You

will not repeat this? It will go no further?

MIO

No.

No further than the moon takes the tides—no further
than the news went when he died—
when you found him guilty
and they flashed that round the earth. Wherever men
still breathe and think, and know what's done to them
by the powers above, they'll know. That's all I ask.
That'll be enough.

[TROCK has risen and looks darkly at Mio]

GAUNT

Thank you. For I've said some things
a judge should never say.

TROCK

Go right on talking.
Both of you. It won't get far, I guess.

MIO

Oh, you'll see to that?

TROCK

I'll see to it. Me and some others.
Maybe I lost my grip there just for a minute.
That's all right.

MIO

Then see to it! Let it rain!
What can you do to me now when the night's on fire
with this thing I know? Now I could almost wish

there was a god somewhere—I could almost think
there was a god—and he somehow brought me here
and set you down before me here in the rain
where I could wring this out of you! For it's said,
and I've heard it, and I'm free! He was as I thought him,
true and noble and upright, even when he went
to a death contrived because he was as he was
and not your kind! Let it rain! Let the night speak fire
and the city go out with the tide, for he was a man
and I know you now, and I have my day!

*[There is a heavy knock at the outside door. MIRIAMNE opens it,
at a glance from Garth. The Policeman is there in oilskins]*

POLICE. Evening.
[He steps in, followed by a SERGEANT, similarly dressed]
We're looking for someone
might be here. Seen an old man around
acting a little off?
[To Esdras] You know the one
I mean. You saw him out there. Jeez! You've got
a funny crowd here!
[He looks round. The HOBBO shrinks into his corner]
That's the one I saw.
What do you think?

SERGEANT That's him. You mean to say
you didn't know him by his pictures?
[He goes to Gaunt]
Come on, old man.
You're going home.

GAUNT Yes, sir. I've lost my way.
I think I've lost my way.

SERGEANT I'll say you have.
About three hundred miles. Now don't you worry.
We'll get you back.

GAUNT I'm a person of some rank
in my own city.

SERGEANT We know that. One look at you
and we'd know that.

GAUNT Yes, sir.

POLICE. If it isn't Trock!
Trock Estrella. How are you, Trock?

TROCK Pretty good,
Thanks.

POLICE. Got out yesterday again, I hear?

TROCK That's right.

SERGEANT Hi'ye, Trock?

TROCK O.K.

SERGEANT You know we got orders
to watch you pretty close. Be good now, baby,
or back you go. Don't try to pull anything,
not in my district.

TROCK No, sir.

SERGEANT No bumping off.
If you want my advice quit carrying a gun.
Try earning your living for once.

TROCK Yeah.

SERGEANT That's an idea.
Because if we find any stiffs on the riverbank
we'll know who to look for.

MIO Then look in the other room!
I accuse that man of murder! Trock Estrella!
He's a murderer!

POLICE. Hello. I remember you.

SERGEANT

Well, what murder?

MIO It was Trock Estrella
that robbed the pay roll thirteen years ago
and did the killing my father died for! You know
the Romagna case! Romagna was innocent,
and Trock Estrella guilty.

SERGEANT [*Disgusted*] Oh, what the hell!
That's old stuff—the Romagna case.

POLICE. Hey, Sarge!
[*The SERGEANT and POLICEMAN come closer together*]
The boy's a professional kidder. He took me over
about half an hour ago. He kids the police
and then ducks out!

SERGEANT Oh, yeah?

MIO I'm not kidding now.
You'll find a dead man there in the next room
and Estrella killed him!

SERGEANT Thirteen years ago?
And nobody smelled him yet?

MIO [*Pointing*] I accuse this man
of two murders! He killed the paymaster long ago
and had Shadow killed tonight. Look, look for yourself!
He's there all right!

POLICE. Look, boy. You stood out there
and put the booby sign on the dumb police
because they're fresh out of Ireland. Don't try it twice.

SERGEANT [*To Garth*] Any corpses here?

GARTH Not that I know of.

SERGEANT I thought so.
[*MIO looks at Miriamne*]
[*To Mio*] Think up a better one.

MIO Have I got to drag him
 out here where you can see him?
 [He goes toward the inner door]
 Can't you scent a murder
 when it's under your nose? Look in!

MIRIAMNE No, no—there's no one—there's no one there!

SERGEANT *[Looking at Miriamne]* Take a look inside.

POLICE. Yes, sir.
 [He goes into the inside room. The SERGEANT goes up to the door. The POLICEMAN returns]
 He's kidding, Sarge. If there's a cadaver
 in here I don't see it.

MIO You're blind then!
 [He goes into the room, the SERGEANT following him]

SERGEANT What do you mean?
 [He comes out, MIO following him]
 When you make a charge of murder it's better to have
 the corpus delicti, son. You're the kind puts in
 fire alarms to see the engine!

MIO By God, he was there!
 He went in there to die.

SERGEANT I'll bet he did.
 And I'm Haile Selassie's aunt! What's your name?

MIO Romagna.
 [To Garth] What have you done with him?

GARTH I don't know what you mean.

SERGEANT *[To Garth]* What's he talking about?

GARTH I wish I could tell you.
 I don't know.

SERGEANT He must have seen something.

POLICE. He's got
the Romagna case on the brain. You watch yourself,
chump, or you'll get run in.

MIO Then they're in it together!
All of them!
[*To Miriamne*] Yes, and you!

GARTH He's nuts, I say.

MIRIAMNE [*Gently*] You have dreamed something—isn't it true?
You've dreamed—
But truly, there was no one—
[*MIO looks at her comprehendingly*]

MIO You want me to say it.
[*He pauses*]
Yes, by God, I was dreaming.

SERGEANT [*To Policeman*] I guess you're right.
We'd better be going. Haven't you got a coat?

GAUNT No, sir.

SERGEANT I guess I'll have to lend you mine.
[*He puts his oilskins on Gaunt*]
Come on, now. It's getting late.
[*GAUNT, the POLICEMAN, and the SERGEANT go out*]

TROCK They're welcome to him.
His fuse is damp. Where is that walking fool
with the three slugs in him?

ESDRAS He fell in the hall beyond
and we left him there.

TROCK That's lucky for some of us. Is he out this time
or is he still butting around?

ESDRAS He's dead.

TROCK That's perfect.
[*To Mio*] Don't try using your firearms, amigo baby,
the Sarge is outside.
[*He turns to go*]
Better ship that carrion
back in the river! The one that walks when he's dead;
maybe he'll walk the distance for you.

GARTH Coming back?

TROCK Well, if I come back,
you'll see me. If I don't, you won't. Let the punk
go far as he likes. Turn him loose and let him go.
And may you all rot in hell.

[*He pulls his coat around him and goes to the left. MIRIAMNE
climbs up to look out a window*]

MIRIAMNE He's climbing up to the street,
along the bridgehead.
[*She turns*]
Quick, Mio! It's safe now! Quick!

GARTH Let him do as he likes.

MIRIAMNE What do you mean? Garth! He means to kill him!
You know that!

GARTH I've no doubt Master Romagna
can run his own campaign.

MIRIAMNE But he'll be killed!

MIO Why did you lie about Shadow?
[*There is a pause. GARTH shrugs, walks across the room, and
sits*]
You were one of the gang!

GARTH I can take a death if I have to! Go tell your story, only watch
your step, for I warn you, Trock's out gunning and you may not
walk very far. Oh, I could defend it but it's hardly worth-while.
If they get Trock they get me too.

Go tell them. You owe me nothing.

ESDRAS This Trock you saw,
no one defends him. He's earned his death so often
there's nobody to regret it. But his crime,
his same crime that has dogged you, dogged us down
from what little we had, to live here among the drains
where the water bugs break out like a scrofula
on what we eat—and if there's lower to go
we'll go there when you've told your story. And more
that I haven't heart to speak—

MIO [*To Garth*] My father died
in your place. And you could have saved him!
You were one of the gang!

GARTH Why, there you are.
You certainly owe me nothing.

MIRIAMNE [*Moaning*] I want to die.
I want to go away.

MIO Yes, and you lied!
And trapped me into it!

MIRIAMNE But Mio, he's my brother.
I couldn't give them my brother.

MIO No. You couldn't.
You were quite right. The gods were damned ironic
tonight, and they've worked it out.

ESDRAS What will be changed
if it comes to trial again? More blood poured out
to a mythical justice, but your father lying still
where he lies now.

MIO The bright, ironical gods!
What fun they have in heaven! When a man prays hard
for any gift, they give it, and then one more
to boot that makes it useless.
[*To Miriamne*] You might have picked

some other stranger to dance with!

MIRIAMNE I know.

MIO Or chosen
some other evening to sit outside in the rain.
But no, it had to be this. All my life long
I've wanted only one thing, to say to the world
and prove it: the man you killed was clean and true
and full of love as the twelve-year-old that stood
and taught in the temple. I can say that now
and give my proofs—and now you stick a girl's face
between me and the rites I've sworn the dead
shall have of me! You ask too much! Your brother
can take his chance! He was ready enough to let
an innocent man take certainty for him
to pay for the years he's had. That parts us, then,
but we're parted anyway, by the same dark wind
that blew us together. I shall say what I have to say.
[He steps back]
And I'm not welcome here.

MIRIAMNE But don't go now! You've stayed
too long! He'll be waiting!

MIO Well, is this any safer?
Let the winds blow, the four winds of the world,
and take us to the four winds.
[The three are silent before him. He turns and goes out]

CURTAIN

Act Three

SCENE: *The riverbank outside the tenement, a little before the close of the previous act. The rain still falls through the street lamps. The Two Young Men in Serge are leaning against the masonry in a ray of light, concentrating on a game of chance. Each holds in his hand a packet of ten or fifteen crisp bills. They compare the numbers on the top notes and immediately a bill changes hands. This goes on with varying fortune until the tide begins to run toward the 1st Gunman who has accumulated nearly the whole supply. They play on in complete silence, evidently not wishing to make any noise. Occasionally they raise their heads slightly to look carefully about. Luck begins to favor the 2nd Gunman, and the notes come his way. Neither evinces the slightest interest in how the game goes. They merely play on, bored, half absorbed. There is a slight noise at the tenement door. They put the bills away and watch. TROCK comes out, pulls the door shut and comes over to them. He says a few words too low to be heard, and without changing expression the YOUNG MEN saunter toward the right. TROCK goes out to the left, and the 2ND PLAYER, catching that out of the corner of his eye, lingers in a glimmer of light to go on with the game. The 1ST, with an eye on the tenement door, begins to play without ado, and the bills again shift back and forth, then concentrate in the hands of the 1st Gunman. The 2ND shrugs his shoulders, searches his pockets, finds one bill, and playing with it begins to win heavily. They hear the door opening, and putting the notes away, slip out in front of the rock. MIO emerges, closes the door, looks round him, and walks to the left. Near the corner of the tenement he pauses,*

reaches out his hand to try the rain, looks up toward the street, and stands uncertainly a moment. He returns and leans against the tenement wall, MIRIAMNE comes out. Mio continues to look off into space as if unaware of her. She looks away.

MIO This rather takes one off his high horse.—What I mean, tough weather for a hegira. You see, this is my sleeping suit, and if I get it wet—basta!

MIRIAMNE If you could only hide here.

MIO Hide?

MIRIAMNE Lucia would take you in. The street piano man.

MIO At the moment I'm afflicted with claustrophobia. I prefer to die in the open, seeking air.

MIRIAMNE But you could stay there till daylight.

MIO You're concerned about me.

MIRIAMNE Shall I ask him?

MIO No. On the other hand, there's a certain reason in your concern. I looked up the street and our old friend Trock hunches patiently under the warehouse eaves.

MIRIAMNE I was sure of that.

MIO And here I am, a young man on a cold night, waiting the end of the rain. Being read my lesson by a boy, a blind boy— you know the one I mean. Knee-deep in the salt marsh, Miriamne, bitten from within, fought.

MIRIAMNE Wouldn't it be better if you came back in the house?

MIO You forget my claustrophobia.

MIRIAMNE

Let me walk with you, then. Please. If I stay beside you he wouldn't dare.

MIO And then again he might.—We don't speak the same language, Miriamne.

MIRIAMNE I betrayed you. Forgive me.

MIO I wish I knew this region. There's probably a path along the bank.

MIRIAMNE Yes. Shadow went that way.

MIO That's true, too. So here I am, a young man on a wet night, and blind in my weather eye. Stay and talk to me.

MIRIAMNE If it happens—it's my fault.

MIO Not at all, sweet. You warned me to keep away. But I would have it. Now I have to find a way out. It's like a chess game. If you think long enough there's always a way out.—For one or the other.—I wonder why white always wins and black always loses in the problems. White to move and mate in three moves. But what if white were to lose—ah, what then? Why, in that case, obviously black would be white and white would be black.—As it often is.—As we often are.—Might makes white. Losers turn black. Do you think I'd have time to draw a gun?

MIRIAMNE No.

MIO I'm a fair shot. Also I'm fair game.
[*The door of the tenement opens and GARTH comes out to look about quickly. Seeing only Mio and Miriamne he goes in and comes out again almost immediately carrying one end of a door on which a body lies covered with a cloth. The HOBO carries the other end. They go out to the right with their burden*]
This is the burial of Shadow, then;
feet first he dips, and leaves the haunts of men.
Let us make mourn for Shadow, wetly lying,
in elegiac stanzas and sweet crying.
Be gentle with him, little cold waves and fishes;
nibble him not, respect his skin and tissues—

Must you say such things?

MIRIAMNE

MIO

My dear, some requiem is fitting over the dead, even for Shadow. But the last rhyme was bad.

Whittle him not, respect his dying wishes.

That's better. And then to conclude:

His aromatic virtues, slowly rising will circumnamb the isle, beyond disguising. He clung to life beyond the wont of men.

Time and his silence drink us all. Amen.

How I hate these identicals. The French allow them, but the French have no principles anyway. You know, Miriamne, there's really nothing mysterious about human life. It's purely mechanical, like an electric appliance. Stop the engine that runs the generator and the current's broken. When we think the brain gives off a small electric discharge—quite measurable, and constant within limits. But that's not what makes your hair stand up when frightened.

MIRIAMNE

I think it's a mystery.

MIO

Human life? We'll have to wear veils if we're to keep it a mystery much longer. Now if Shadow and I were made up into sausages we'd probably make very good sausages.

MIRIAMNE

Don't—

MIO

I'm sorry. I speak from a high place, far off, long ago, looking down. The cortege returns.

[GARTH and the HOBO return, carrying the door, the cloth lying loosely over it]

I hope you placed an obol in his mouth to pay the ferryman? Even among the Greeks a little money was prerequisite to Elysium.

[GARTH and the HOBO go inside, silent]

No? It's grim to think of Shadow lingering among lesser shades on the hither side. For lack of a small gratuity.

[ESDRAS comes out the open door and closes it behind him]

ESDRAS

You must wait here, Mio, or go inside. I know

you don't trust me, and I haven't earned your trust.
You're young enough to seek truth—
and there is no truth;
and I know that—
but I shall call the police and see that you
get safely off.

MIO It's a little late for that.

ESDRAS I shall try.

MIO And your terms? For I daresay you make terms?

ESDRAS No.

MIO Then let me remind you what will happen.
The police will ask some questions.
When they're answered
they'll ask more, and before they're done with it
your son will be implicated.

ESDRAS Must he be?

MIO I shall not keep quiet.
[*A pause*]

ESDRAS Still, I'll go.

MIO I don't ask help, remember. I make no truce.
He's not on my conscience, and I'm not on yours.

ESDRAS But you
could make it easier, so easily.
He's my only son. Let him live.

MIO His chance of survival's
better than mine, I'd say.

ESDRAS I'll go.

MIO I don't urge it.

ESDRAS No. I put my son's life in your hands.
When you're gone,
that may come to your mind.

MIO Don't count on it.

ESDRAS Oh,
I count on nothing.
*[He turns to go. MIRIAMNE runs over to him and silently kisses
his hands]*
Not mine, not mine, my daughter!
They're guilty hands.
[He goes out left. Garth's violin is heard within]

MIO There was a war in heaven
once, all the angels on one side, and all
the devils on the other, and since that time
disputes have raged among the learned, concerning
whether the demons won, or the angels. Maybe
the angels won, after all.

MIRIAMNE And again, perhaps
there are no demons or angels.

MIO Oh, there are none.
But I could love your father.

MIRIAMNE I love him. You see,
he's afraid because he's old. The less one has
to lose the more he's afraid.

MIO Suppose one had
only a short stub end of life, or held
a flashlight with the batteries run down
till the bulb was dim, and knew that he could live
while the glow lasted. Or suppose one knew
that while he stood in a little shelter of time
under a bridgehead, say, he could live, and then,
from then on, nothing. Then to lie and turn
with the earth and sun, and regard them not in the least
when the bulb was extinguished or he stepped beyond

his circle into the cold? How would he live
that last dim quarter-hour, before he went,
minus all recollection, to grow in grass
between cobblestones?

MIRIAMNE Let me put my arms round you, Mio.
Then if anything comes, it's for me, too.

[She puts both arms round him]

MIO Only suppose
this circle's charmed! To be safe until he steps
from this lighted space into dark! Time pauses here
and high eternity grows in one quarter-hour
in which to live.

MIRIAMNE Let me see if anyone's there—
there in the shadows.

[She looks toward the right]

MIO It might blast our eternity—
blow it to bits. No, don't go. This is forever,
here where we stand. And I ask you, Miriamne,
how does one spend a forever?

MIRIAMNE You're frightened?

MIO Yes.
So much that time stands still.

MIRIAMNE Why didn't I speak—
tell them—when the officers were here? I failed you
in that one moment!

MIO His life for mine? Oh, no.
I wouldn't want it, and you couldn't give it.
And if I should go on living we're cut apart
by that brother of yours.

MIRIAMNE Are we?

MIO Well, think about it.

A body lies between us, buried in quicklime.
Your allegiance is on the other side of that grave
and not to me.

MIRIAMNE No, Mio! Mio, I love you!

MIO I love you, too, but in case my life went on
beyond that barrier of dark—then Garth
would run his risk of dying.

MIRIAMNE He's punished, Mio.
His life's been torment to him. Let him go,
for my sake, Mio.

MIO I wish I could. I wish
I'd never seen him—or you. I've steeped too long
in this thing. It's in my teeth and bones. I can't
let go or forget. And I'll not add my lie
to the lies that cumber his ground. We live our days
in a storm of lies that drifts the truth too deep
for path or shovel; but I've set my foot on a truth
for once, and I'll trail it down!

[*A silence. MIRIAMNE looks out to the right*]

MIRIAMNE There's someone there—
I heard—

[*CARR comes in from the right*]

MIO It's Carr.

CARR That's right. No doubt about it.
Excuse me.

MIO Glad to see you. This is Miriamne.
Carr's a friend of mine.

CARR You're better employed
than when I saw you last.

MIO Bow to the gentleman,
Miriamne. That's meant for you.

MIRIAMNE Thank you, I'm sure.
Should I leave you, Mio? You want to talk?

MIO Oh, no,
we've done our talking.

MIRIAMNE But—

CARR I'm the one's out of place—
I wandered back because I got worried about you,
that's the truth.— Oh—those two fellows with the hats
down this way, you know, the ones that ran
after we heard the shooting—they're back again,
lingering or malingering down the bank,
revisiting the crime, I guess. They may
mean well.

MIO I'll try to avoid them.

CARR I didn't care
for the way they looked at me.—No luck, I suppose,
with that case history? The investigation
you had on hand?

MIO I can't say. By the way,
the stiff that fell in the water and we saw swirling
down the eddy, he came trudging up, later on,
long enough to tell his name. His name was Shadow,
but he's back in the water now. It's all in an evening.
These things happen here.

CARR Good God!

MIO I know.
I wouldn't believe it if you told it.

CARR But—
the man was alive?

MIO Oh, not for long! He's dunked
for good this time. That's all that's happened.

CARR Well,
 if you don't need me—

MIRIAMNE You had a message to send—
 have you forgotten—?

MIO I?— Yes, I had a message—
 but I won't send it—not now.

MIRIAMNE Then I will—!

MIO No.
 Let it go the way it is! It's all arranged
 another way. You've been a good scout, Carr,
 the best I ever knew on the road.

CARR That sounds
 like making your will.

MIO Not yet, but when I do
 I've thought of something to leave you. It's the view
 of Mount Rainier from the Seattle jail,
 snow over cloud. And the rusty chain in my pocket
 from a pair of handcuffs my father wore. That's all
 the worldly goods I'm seized of.

CARR Look, Mio—hell—
 if you're in trouble—

MIO I'm not. Not at all. I have
 a genius that attends me where I go,
 and guards me now. I'm fine.

CARR Well, that's good news.
 He'll have his work cut out.

MIO Oh, he's a genius.

CARR I'll see you then.
 I'll be at the Grand Street place. I'm lucky tonight,
 and I can pay. I could even pay for two.

MIO Thanks, I may take you up.

CARR Good night.

MIO Right, Carr.

CARR [*To Miriamne*] Good night.

MIRIAMNE [*After a pause*] Good night.
[*CARR goes out to the left*]
Why did you do that? He's your genius, Mio,
and you let him go.

MIO I couldn't help it.

MIRIAMNE Call him.
Run after him and call him!

MIO I tried to say it
and it strangled in my throat. I might have known
you'd win in the end.

MIRIAMNE Is it for me?

MIO For you?
It stuck in my throat, that's all I know.

MIRIAMNE Oh, Mio,
I never asked for that! I only hoped
Garth could go clear.

MIO Well, now he will.

MIRIAMNE But you—
It was your chance!

MIO I've lost
my taste for revenge if it falls on you. Oh, God,
deliver me from the body of this death
I've dragged behind me all these years! Miriamne!
Miriamne!

Yes!

MIRIAMNE

MIO

Miriamne, if you love me
teach me a treason to what I am, and have been,
till I learn to live like a man! I think I'm waking
from a long trauma of hate and fear and death
that's hemmed me from my birth—and glimpse a life
to be lived in hope—but it's young in me yet, I can't
get free, or forgive! But teach me how to live
and forget to hate!

MIRIAMNE

He would have forgiven.

MIO

He?

MIRIAMNE

Your father.

[*A pause*]

MIO

Yes.

[*Another pause*]

You'll think it strange, but I've never
remembered that.

MIRIAMNE

How can I help you?

MIO

You have.

MIRIAMNE

If I were a little older—if I knew
the things to say! I can only put out my hands
and give you back the faith you bring to me
by being what you are. Because to me
you are all hope and beauty and brightness drawn
across what's black and mean!

MIO

He'd have forgiven—
Then there's no more to say—I've groped long enough
through this everglades of old revenges—here
the road ends.—Miriamne, Miriamne,
the iron I wore so long—it's eaten through
and fallen from me. Let me have your arms.
They'll say we're children—Well—the world's made up

of children.

MIRIAMNE Yes.

MIO But it's too late for me.

MIRIAMNE No.
[*She goes into his arms, and they kiss for the first time*]
Then we'll meet again?

MIO Yes.

MIRIAMNE Where?

MIO I'll write—
or send Carr to you.

MIRIAMNE You won't forget?

MIO Forget?
Whatever streets I walk, you'll walk them, too,
from now on, and whatever roof or stars
I have to house me, you shall share my roof
and stars and morning. I shall not forget.

MIRIAMNE God keep you!

MIO And keep you. And this to remember!
if I should die, Miriamne, this half hour
is our eternity. I came here seeking
light in darkness, running from the dawn,
and stumbled on a morning.
[*One of the TWO YOUNG MEN IN SERGE strolls in casually from the right, looks up and down without expression, then, seemingly having forgotten something, retraces his steps and goes out. ESDRAS comes in slowly from the left. He has lost his hat, and his face is bleeding from a slight cut on the temple. He stands abjectly near the tenement*]

MIRIAMNE Father—what is it?
[*She goes toward Esdras*]

ESDRAS Let me alone.
 [*He goes nearer to Mio*]
 He wouldn't let me pass.
 The street's so icy up along the bridge
 I had to crawl on my knees—he kicked me back
 three times—and then he held me there—I swear
 what I could do I did! I swear to you
 I'd save you if I could.

MIO What makes you think
 that I need saving?

ESDRAS Child, save yourself if you can!
 He's waiting for you.

MIO Well, we knew that before.

ESDRAS He won't wait much longer. He'll come here—
 he told me so. Those damned six months of his—
 he wants them all—and you're to die—you'd spread
 his guilt—I had to listen to it—

MIO Wait—
 [*He walks forward and looks casually to the rights then returns*]
 There must be some way up through the house and out
 across the roof—

ESDRAS He's watching that. But come in—
 and let me look.—

MIO I'll stay here, thanks. Once in
 and I'm a rat in a deadfall—I'll stay here—
 look for me if you don't mind.

ESDRAS Then watch for me—
 I'll be on the roof—
 [*He goes in hurriedly*]

MIO [*Looking up*] Now all you silent powers
 that make the sleet and dark, and never yet
 have spoken, give us a sign, let the throw be ours

this once, on this longest night, when the winter sets
his foot on the threshold leading up to spring
and enters with remembered cold—let fall
some mercy with the rain. We are two lovers
here in your night, and we wish to live.

MIRIAMNE Oh, Mio—
if you pray that way, nothing good will come!
You're bitter, Mio.

MIO How many floors has this building?

MIRIAMNE Five or six. It's not as high as the bridge.

MIO No, I thought not. How many pomegranate seeds
did you eat, Persephone?

MIRIAMNE Oh, darling, darling,
if you die, don't die alone.

MIO I'm afraid I'm damned
to hell, and you're not damned at all. Good God,
how long he takes to climb!

MIRIAMNE The stairs are steep.
[A slight pause]

MIO I'll follow him.

MIRIAMNE He's there—at the window—now.
He waves you to go back, not to go in.
Mio, see, that path between the rocks—
they're not watching that—they're out at the river—
I can see them there—they can't watch both—
it leads to a street above.

MIO I'll try it, then.
Kiss me. You'll hear. But if you never hear—
then I'm the king of hell, Persephone,
and I'll expect you.

MIRIAMNE

Oh, lover, keep safe.

MIO

Good-by.

[He slips out quickly between the rocks. There is a quick machine gun rat-tat. The violin stops. MIRIAMNE runs toward the path. MIO comes back slowly, a hand pressed under his heart]
It seems you were mistaken.

MIRIAMNE

Oh, God, forgive me!

[She puts an arm round him. He sinks to his knees]
Where is it, Mio? Let me help you in! Quick, quick,
let me help you!

MIO

I hadn't thought to choose—this—ground—
but it will do.

[He slips down]

MIRIAMNE

Oh, God, forgive me!

MIO

Yes?

The king of hell was not forgiven then,
Dis is his name, and Hades is his home—
and he goes alone—

MIRIAMNE

Why does he bleed so? Mio, if you go
I shall go with you.

MIO

It's better to stay alive.

I wanted to stay alive—because of you—
I leave you that—and what he said to me dying:
I love you, and will love you after I die.
Tomorrow, I shall still love you, as I've loved
the stars I'll never see, and all the mornings
that might have been yours and mine. Oh, Miriamne,
you taught me this.

MIRIAMNE

If only I'd never seen you
then you could live—

MIO

That's blasphemy—Oh, God,
there might have been some easier way of it.

You didn't want me to die, did you, Miriamne—?
You didn't send me away—?

MIRIAMNE Oh, never, never—

MIO Forgive me—kiss me—I've got blood on your lips—
I'm sorry—it doesn't matter—I'm sorry—

[ESDRAS and GARTH come out]

MIRIAMNE Mio—
I'd have gone to die myself—you must hear this, Mio,
I'd have died to help you—you must listen, sweet,
you must hear it—

[*She rises*]

I can die, too, see! You! There!

You in the shadows!—You killed him to silence him!

[*She walks toward the path*]

But I'm not silenced! All that he knew I know,
and I'll tell it tonight! Tonight—
tell it and scream it

through all the streets—that Trock's a murderer
and he hired you for this murder!

Your work's not done—

and you won't live long! Do you hear?

You're murderers, and I know who you are!

[*The machine gun speaks again. She sinks to her knees. GARTH runs to her*]

GARTH You little fool!

[*He tries to lift her*]

MIRIAMNE Don't touch me!

[*She crawls toward Mio*]

Look, Mio! They killed me, too. Oh, you can believe me
now, Mio. You can believe I wouldn't hurt you,
because I'm dying! Why doesn't he answer me?
Oh, now he'll never know!

[*She sinks down, her hand over her mouth, choking. GARTH kneels beside her, then rises, shuddering. The HOBO comes out.*]

LUCIA *and* PINY *look out*]

ESDRAS It lacked only this.

GARTH Yes.
[ESDRAS *bends over Miriamne, then rises slowly*]
Why was the bastard born? Why did he come here?

ESDRAS Miriamne—Miriamne—yes, and Mio,
one breath shall call you now—forgive us both—
forgive the ancient evil of the earth
that brought you here—

GARTH Why must she be a fool?

ESDRAS Well, they were wiser than you and I. To die
when you are young and untouched, that's beggary
to a miser of years, but the devils locked in synod
shake and are daunted when men set their lives
at hazard for the heart's love, and lose. And these,
who were yet children, will weigh more than all
a city's elders when the experiment
is reckoned up in the end. Oh, Miriamne,
and Mio—Mio, my son—know this where you lie,
this is the glory of earthborn men and women,
not to cringe, never to yield, but standing,
take defeat implacable and defiant,
die unsubmitting. I wish that I'd died so,
long ago; before you're old you'll wish
that you had died as they have. On this star,
in this hard star-adventure, knowing not
what the fires mean to right and left, nor whether
a meaning was intended or presumed,
man can stand up, and look out blind, and say:
in all these turning lights I find no clue,
only a masterless night, and in my blood
no certain answer, yet is my mind my own,
yet is my heart a cry toward something dim
in distance, which is higher than I am
and makes me emperor of the endless dark
even in seeking! What odds and ends of life

men may live otherwise, let them live, and then
go out, as I shall go, and you. Our part
is only to bury them. Come, take her up.
They must not lie here.

[LUCIA *and* PINY *come near to help*. ESDRAS *and* GARTH *stoop to*
carry Miriamne]

CURTAIN

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

[The end of *Winterset*, by Maxwell Anderson.]