

The Star-Wagon

by
Maxwell Anderson

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THE STAR-WAGON

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A Play in Three Acts

By

MAXWELL ANDERSON



ANDERSON HOUSE

Washington, D.C.

1937

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THE STAR-WAGON had its first performance on any stage in the Erlanger Theatre, Buffalo, N.Y., on Thursday, September 16, 1937, when the drama was produced by Guthrie McClintic, with this cast:

HANUS WICKS	<i>Russell Collins</i>
MARTHA MINCH	<i>Lillian Gish</i>
STEPHEN MINCH	<i>Burgess Meredith</i>
PARK	<i>Whitner Bissell</i>
RIPPLE	<i>Alan Anderson</i>
ANGELA	<i>Muriel Starr</i>
APFEL	<i>Howard Freeman</i>
CHARLES DUFFY	<i>Kent Smith</i>
1ST THUG	<i>Barry Kelley</i>
2ND THUG	<i>Charles Forrester</i>
MISTY	<i>John Philliber</i>
HALLIE ARLINGTON	<i>Jane Buchanan</i>
MR. ARLINGTON	<i>J. Arthur Young</i>
MRS. RUTLEDGE	<i>Mildred Natwick</i>
PAUL REIGER	<i>Edmond O'Brien</i>
CHRISTABEL	<i>Evelyn Abbott</i>
DELLA	<i>Edith Smith</i>
OGLETHORPE	<i>William Garner</i>
THE HERB WOMAN	<i>Muriel Starr</i>

THE STAR-WAGON
ACT ONE

ACT ONE

SCENE I

SCENE: *The dining-room of a cottage somewhere in the suburbs of a manufacturing town in eastern Ohio. The room is clean, neat, bare and sunny. It is seen in the morning of a spring day, not long ago. There is an inner door at the right; another at the rear leads to the kitchen. At the left there are an outside door and an eastern window. The table is set for breakfast.*

HANUS, *an elderly workman, comes in from the right wiping his face and ears with a towel. He stops short with the towel in his hands, looks at it, and tries to think what to do with it.*

Hanus.

[Muttering to himself, as is his wont.]

Must have picked this up somewhere. Always finding something in my hands, not knowing where I got it.

[He hangs the towel on the door-knob and goes to the window.]

Fine sunny day, they'll say. Sure, I'll say, fine sunny day. No use trying to tell 'em you hate a fine sunny day and wish it would rain once in a while. "Wish it would rain," you say. "Huh," they say. "There goes Hanus, says he wishes it was going to rain.—He's screwy," they say. Why can't a man like rain? Everybody else likes what he likes.

[He turns to the table.]

By the Jumping Jiminy Whosis she's got that scrap-iron set out for breakfast again. I can't eat scrap-iron. Roughage, they call it. That's a mild word for it, roughage. It's got a cutting edge like a diamond drill.

[MARTHA, an elderly housewife, enters from the kitchen, carrying a pan.]

Martha. He's not here yet?

Hanus. No, ma'am.

Martha. The car goes in fifteen minutes.

Hanus. I know it does, ma'am. I'll call him.

[He starts out.]

Martha. Hanus!

Hanus. Yes, ma'am.

Martha. Did you leave that towel on the door-knob?

Hanus. I? No, ma'am.

Martha. No?

Hanus. Yes, ma'am, I think I did.

Martha. Haven't I told you ten thousand times to leave the towels in the bath-room?

Hanus. I wasn't sure where I got it.

Martha. You weren't sure—for God's sake, Hanus, where would a person get a towel?

Hanus. Yes, ma'am.

[He takes the towel and starts out. As he goes he mutters again.]

Anyway Steve was in the bath-room. That's what happened. Steve must have been in the bath-room so I just couldn't think what to do with the towel—

Martha. Hanus!

Hanus. Yes, ma'am.

Martha. Quit talking to yourself! I can't stand it the way you talk to yourself! You do it all the time. It drives people crazy. We'll all be as crazy as you if you keep on.

Hanus. Do you think I'm crazy, ma'am?

Martha. Will you quit talking to yourself?

Hanus. Yes, ma'am.

[He picks up the towel, looks at it, and starts nervously to put it in his pocket.]

Steve was in the bath-room, that's it.

Martha.

[Going into the kitchen.]

I give up.

Hanus. You shouldn't scare a man to death. A man can't—can't think when he's scared. You get me so scared I don't know what you say, and then you say you give up. G. Whosis, I gave up away back in 1915.

[He takes out the towel and contemplates it. STEPHEN, a pleasant, gentle, submissive little man of more than fifty, enters. He is also carrying a towel.]

Stephen. Good morning, Hanus.

Hanus. You better put that towel back in the bath-room.

Stephen. Towel? Oh, yes.

[He starts to hang it on the knob, then crams it into his pocket.]

No time. Sorry.

[He sits.]

Sit down, Hanus.

[HANUS does so, hiding his towel on his lap. MARTHA enters with toast.]

Do you mind if I don't eat my bran this morning, Martha? It's twenty-five past.

Martha.

[Taking the towel from his pocket and the other from HANUS' knees.]

Eat anything you like, both of you.

[She goes out with the towels.]

Stephen. This is not one of our best mornings, Hanus.

Hanus. No, Steve. We're low this morning. We're away down.

Stephen. Beautiful morning, birds in the trees, sun out, dandelions looking right back at him, but the wife's under a cloud.

Hanus. I wish it would rain.

Stephen. There's going to be a bad storm. I can feel it in my bones.—I guess I'll go. I don't want any breakfast.

[He starts to rise. MARTHA re-enters.]

Is something the matter, Martha?

Martha. If we must live in the same house with a complete half-wit you might at least try to teach him something instead of picking up his half-wit tricks! You're more like Hanus every day.

Stephen. What have I done? What have I done now?

Martha. Hanus! Must you dunk your toast in your coffee?

[HANUS drops his toast.]

Stephen. And you're wrong about Hanus! He's smarter than most people. I tell you I couldn't get along without him in the laboratory.

Martha. Just the same I can't get along with him here.

Stephen. More than that, didn't he save my life?

Martha. Yes, tell me all about that again. You'll have just time before the street-car goes. Tell me about the picnic and how you fell in the water and hit your head on a rock and went down for the third time. And how all your life went before your eyes in a flash—only Hanus pulled you out, so you lived. Wasn't that how it was?

Hanus. It wasn't anything. The water was just taking him round the bend, and I reached in and got him by the hair. That's all it was.

Martha. Thirty-five years ago?

Hanus. Yes, 'm.

[*He eats.*]

On the Fourth of July. The same Fourth of July when you got engaged to Stephen.

Martha. It's nice to know gratitude lasts so long. I can't think of any other emotion that hangs on that way.—He saved your life thirty-five years ago, so he still eats off you and cadges off you and has a bed in your house. If you cared half as much for me as for him you'd have told him long since I couldn't stand it and he'd have to board somewhere else.

Hanus. I—I didn't know—

Stephen. He wouldn't have anywhere to go, Martha. Besides, you don't know what Hanus does in the laboratory—

Martha. Oh, yes, I do.—

Stephen. No, you don't. We work together, and he earns his share—

Martha. Then why doesn't he get paid?

Stephen. Because they don't understand about him. When I'm working at something I get stuck sometimes, and just don't know what to try next. And Hanus works right along with me, not saying a word—

Martha. Oh, not saying a word?

Stephen. Well, just talking to himself, you know, the way he does. Only when I'm really stuck, he'll put his head into whatever I'm supposed to be doing, and then he'll say, "Why don't you try this?" And it'll be some fool thing I never thought of, and probably no good, only it'll

make me think of something that is good, so then I'll go ahead—and maybe figure it out.

Martha. Oh, that's what Hanus does in the laboratory? Why couldn't you think of it for yourself?

Stephen. I don't know. Only I couldn't.

Martha. You'd better eat your breakfast.

[*She goes toward the kitchen.*]

Stephen. I don't want any breakfast.

Hanus. I don't want any, either.

Martha. Then you'd better wipe the egg off your chin.

Stephen.

[*Mildly*]

Martha.

[*MARTHA returns.*]

Martha. Look, Stephen—we've been married thirty-five years—and every year of that thirty-five you've told me you had to have Hanus with you to help with inventions. And every year I've hoped and waited, hoped and waited, till my hope's worn thin, and I'm worn thin. Every year you invent something, and every year I think maybe it's going to mean something to you and me. Maybe we'll be able to have an apartment in town, and a servant, and I won't have to cook and wash and make my own garden. And every time an invention comes along what happens? It belongs to the company. And do you get a raise in salary, so we could live a little better, and I could have some clothes and play bridge in the afternoons, or even go to a concert—? No, the company makes the money, and you're still in the laboratory at \$27.50 a week, and a barnacle called Hanus star-boarding with us.

Stephen. Martha.

Martha. Can't you get angry? If you got angry with me just once it might mean there was some hope of your getting mad enough to stand up for your rights at the factory! Twenty-seven fifty a week, a man of your ability, a man with your record! You invented one of the first automobiles, and sold it, and it's made so many millions they don't know what to do with the money! You invented a washing-machine that everybody else in the world can afford except me. You built a

piano action, but I haven't any piano. The best-selling vacuum-cleaner in the world is the one you put together to clean Hanus up after the near-beer exploded! I don't know anything you haven't invented except a way to make money! And everybody makes money out of you, and takes the credit away from you, and steals the patents—and nobody's ever seen you angry—nobody's ever heard you complain—or ask for a raise!

Stephen. But I'm working for the company, Martha. They pay for my services.

Martha. Do they? How many times a millionaire is Mr. Charley Duffy? And what did he ever do?

Stephen. I guess I can't explain to you, Martha.

Martha. I don't want you to explain it to me. I want something to happen.

Stephen. Maybe I'll get a raise.

Martha. You know you won't, though, because you'll never have the gumption to ask for it.

Stephen. No, I—I guess not.

Hanus. We've got to go, Stephen.

Stephen. I'm sorry, Martha.

Martha. It doesn't matter. It's too late to do anything about it now.

Stephen. Aren't we still in love with each other, Martha?

Martha. Are we? Being in love doesn't last forever on \$27.50 a week.

Stephen. I thought we were.

Martha. You haven't thought about it. You haven't thought about me for so many years I can't believe it ever happened. You think about inventions, and Hanus, and the company, and the rights of man, and the war in Spain, but not about me. You should have married someone else.

Stephen. It's not much good saying things like that.

Martha. No, but I mean it. You might have been somebody if it hadn't been for me. And I might have been somebody, too.

Stephen. You can't say you've kept me back, Martha.

Martha. Oh, yes. You sold the car engine patent so we could get married, and then you took a job in the factory, and we've never had any money since. You should have married Hallie.

Stephen. Hallie who?

Martha. Hallie Arlington. She wanted you.

Stephen. I can't remember her much. That was away back.

Martha. Well, I remember. You should have married her and I should have married—someone else.

Stephen. Who?

Hanus. We have to go, Stephen.

Stephen. Who?

Hanus. We'll be late to the factory.

Stephen. You mean the banker boy—the one with the long neck?

Martha. He's in New York now. He owns a whole steel company. You should have married her and I should have married him. We'd both be rich now.

Stephen. I wish I knew what to do, Martha.

Martha. Go to work.

Stephen. There's something I meant to tell you this morning. I've been working on something, sort of on the side, that—that—oh, they'll have to give me a raise if I finish this one, won't they, Hanus? And I'll be somebody.

Hanus. If this one works you own the earth.

Martha. Another invention?

Stephen. That's it.

Martha. On company time?

Stephen. In a way—

Martha. Then the company will own the earth, not you.

Stephen. But you don't know what this one is; Martha, it takes your breath away. It—it's so incredible I don't dare talk about it. You know how it makes me feel? As if I'd written a poem, a great—sort of poem—all in symbols and lines of light—

Hanus. Like Berton Braley—

Stephen. Only much better—as if I'd happened on the—the equation they're all looking for—by accident, sort of—because I never would have dared to look for it—only it's there—and I found it—

Martha. No doubt they'll make a lot of money out of it—

Stephen. And there's another thing I think—Martha. It's that—just working at it, just trying to find it—is better than the money. Sometimes I think they can have the money—because I have the best part.—They can have all the money, if they'll let me work there at things and find them.—That's the best part—it's so good if they knew I had it they'd take it away from me.

Martha. You'd better tell your employers. Maybe you're holding out on them.

Stephen. I am. I'm holding out the best thing in the world.—Do you see what I mean, Martha?

Martha. No. I'm an old woman and I've never had anything. And now I'll never have anything. If people are crazy enough, like you two, they can imagine they have something, but I'm not crazy enough. I've never had a car, I've never had a house, I've never had pretty clothes, nothing but the satisfaction of doing my own work—and it's no satisfaction, not any more. When I had a piano we couldn't keep up the payments and they took it away.

Stephen. You wish you'd married that tenor with the high collar?

Martha. Yes, I do. For both of us.—Look—here we are—old people—and what have we had?

Stephen. Just each other. Because we were in love.

Martha. Yes. People fall in love when they're young, and they think that's all there is, and they'll never want anything else. But that wears out after a while—the living on nothing and worshipping each other—that wears out. And then the rest's work. Maybe it's fun for you.

[*A street-car passes with the bell clanging.*]

Hanus. That was our car.

Stephen. Yes, I know.

Hanus. We'll be late now.

Stephen. Yes, we'll be late.—I wish you could see it, Martha.

Martha. I wish I could.

Stephen. Good-bye.

Martha. Good-bye.

[HANUS *and* STEPHEN *go out.*]

CURTAIN

ACT ONE

SCENE II

SCENE: *A room in the laboratory wing of the Arlington-Duffy factories. It is practically unfurnished except for a number of stools along the bench and sink that line the right wall, underneath shelves and cabinets. There is a door in the right wall down stage from the bench. In the rear there are two windows, and on the sill of one of them a small letter file. At the left stands a peculiar apparatus, looking much like a time safe, only taller, narrower, having many dials on its face, a rail or handle on each side, and a silver dome on top. It is set on high casters, so that a mechanic may crawl under it to make adjustments. A clock on the rear wall points to 9:30.*

Old ANGELA, a scrub-woman with a dark, brooding face, is finishing the floor under the windows. PARK and RIPPLE, two young chemists, enter. Both wear aprons.

Park. Not here yet, I guess. You can take a look at it.

Ripple. Funniest looking contraption I ever saw. What are these?

Park. Pretty hard to say, since he doesn't put any marks or numbers on 'em.

Ripple. Looks like a safe.

Park. That's my guess, too.

Ripple. How long's he been working on it?

Park. Quite a while.

Ripple. On the company's time.

Park. Sure. Uses company materials, too.

Ripple. They don't give me that much leeway.

Park. They don't give anybody that much leeway. He's been here a long time, of course.

Ripple. They say he knows more about rubber than anybody in the business.

Park. Maybe he does. He's worked on it plenty. He's supposed to be working on it now.

Ripple. Turning out that new tire?

Park. Yeah.

Ripple. I hear that's good.

Park. Oh, he knows his stuff. Never had any education; one of these so-called intuitive guys.

Ripple. That means trial and error method. Wastes more time than anything else in research.

Park. Sure it does. Only what are you going to do? Once in a while they hit on something. Just often enough to keep going.

[To ANGELA]

Aren't you pretty late in here?

Angela. I always do this one last. He never complains. Not a word. Not a word. Everybody else complains. Him, not a word.

Park. I see.

Ripple.

[At the bench]

What's he doing with the rubber?

Park. Just trying it out. You know, same old business, trial and error.

Ripple. They can take all these trial and error guys and use 'em to putty the windows.

Park. That's what I say.

[APFEL, a bustling executive, enters.]

Apfel. Steve's wanted in the office, boys. Will you tell him?

Park. Steve? He's not here yet.

Apfel. Not here! Cripes, the old man's just about ready to detonate now. He'll take the roof off the administration building. What's the matter with Steve?

Park. I don't know. Just didn't come in.

Apfel. The old man came down early to see him, and came in boiling, too. When he hears this it'll affect the seismographs in Tokio. Send Steve over when he comes in, will you?

Park. Sure. How about Hanus?

Apfel. No, thanks. We don't need Hanus.

[APFEL goes out.]

Park. Well, well.

Ripple. Wrong day to be late, evidently.

Park. Yeah.

[He walks over to the machine.]

How long's Steve been working at this thing, Angela?

Angela. That? I don't know, sir.

Park. You must know how long it's been here.

Angela. Maybe four or five years.

Park. You don't know what it is?

Angela. No, sir.—Yes, sir—he said it was a safe. He said he was making himself a safe.

Duffy.

[Outside]

What do you mean he's not here? Good God, Apfel, if I can get here at nine in the morning the employees can get here at nine in the morning, and you'll see they do!

Apfel.

[Outside]

Yes, sir.

Duffy.

[Opening the door]

I gave up my golf to get here at nine, and the God-damn staff wanders in when they God-damn please! One of the penalties of responsibility, no doubt—well, by the Almighty, I'll see to a few penalties for other people around here! Park!

[APFEL follows DUFFY in.]

Park. Yes, sir.

Duffy. What in hell's the matter with Steve Minch?

Park. I don't know, sir.

Duffy. Well find out, somebody, find out and get him here! Is this company run for the convenience of a lot of God-damn communistic employees or are we in business by any chance? Who are you?

Ripple. My name's Ripple, sir.

Duffy. New man, huh? Well, dig in, dig into that carbon idea, and maybe you'll get somewhere. What's that?

Apfel. Something Steve Minch has been working on, sir. Looks like a safe.

Duffy. Looks like a safe? Don't you get reports? Don't you know what it is?

Apfel. No, sir. Steve doesn't always make reports.

Duffy. I thought he was working on that rubber analysis!

Apfel. He is. He's supposed to be.

Duffy. Well, isn't he?

Apfel. Well, yes, he is, but he seems to put some time on that thing, too.

Duffy. I've had enough. I've had enough right now. Who else knows about rubber around here?

Apfel. Ripple's studied it, of course.

Park. I specialized in it over at the Brook plant.

Duffy. Have you followed this stuff Steve's been doing?

Park. In a general way, yes.

Duffy. Could you handle his work, that's what I want to know? And mind you, I want quick results!

Park. I think I could. I'm certain I could. I'd like Ripple to help me.

Duffy. Then you'll get a chance. By God, you'll get a chance! Tell Minch to report to me when he comes in!

[He goes out, slamming the door so hard that a pane falls out and breaks on the floor.]

Apfel. Hell and high water.

[*He goes to the door, looks out through the broken pane, salutes the two chemists and goes out gently.*]

Ripple. Boy, I know about as much about rubber—as you do.

Park. I know enough.

Ripple. Why do you want me in on it?

Park. Just for fun.

Ripple. You want to get us both fired?

Park. Listen. Steve has all the possible formulae for rubber worked out and put away in a card index. I've seen them.

Ripple. What good does that do us?

Park. They're in that letter file over there.

Ripple. He'll take them with him if he goes.

Park. They belong to the company.

Ripple. He'd leave 'em here?

Park. He would.

Ripple. He's that honest?

Park. He is. It's painful.

Ripple. Jeez. It's criminal.

Park. Well, there it is.

[*STEPHEN and HANUS come in.*]

Stephen. 'Morning, boys.

Park. 'Morning, Stephen.

Ripple. 'Morning.

Park. We were supposed to tell you the boss wants to see you at once, Steve.

Stephen. Thanks. I'll go right over. Apfel told me. We'll put a couple of tubes on to boil and go right over. Late as the devil this morning.

Hanus.

[*Rushing*]

Let me at these, will you?

[PARK and RIPPLE move away from the bench.]

Park. I guess a fellow like you can afford to be late.

Stephen. Why?

Park. Oh, you're needed around here. You've got a lot under your hat.

Stephen. Doesn't make a damn bit of difference. I've seen too many boys come out of college and go right up to the top, over my head. I've seen seven generations of 'em, green as grass, dumb as goats, going up over my head like sparks on the wind. You'll do it yourselves.

[He fits a tube to a tester.]

Park. Oh, no.

Stephen. Oh, yes. They all do.

Park. Well, I guess you're pretty busy. We'll blow.

Stephen. O.K. boys. Thanks.

[PARK and RIPPLE go out.]

Set?

Hanus. Who's been messing with my stuff? I laid a tube down here, and it's been moved!

Stephen. Angela?

Angela. I never touch the bench. Mr. Park was looking at it.

Hanus. I knew he was, the college snoop.

[He talks while they work.]

Barging in here with their arms full of diplomas, trying to last long enough so they can date all the stenographers in the outer office. No more brain than a lightning-rod.

Stephen. You can work faster if you talk less.

Hanus. Pawing over the test-tubes, looking at our machine.—It's working.

[He starts for the door, still holding a beaker in his hand.]

Stephen. You know what I think, Hanus?

Hanus. No.

Stephen. I think maybe there's something we'd rather do than talk to the old man this morning. You know what it is?

Hanus. We better not.

Stephen. We ought to see him now?

Hanus. You're damn right we ought to see him now.

Stephen. You know what I think? In ten minutes we'd have it done. Charley can wait.

Hanus. Done so it works?

Stephen. Done so it works.

[He caresses the machine lovingly.]

And then what's he going to say?

Hanus. We better not.

Stephen. Watch the dials a minute.

[He crawls under the machine.]

Hanus. I don't want to have to go home and say we got fired—

Stephen.

[Under the machine]

What do you get now?

Hanus. Sixteen hundred.

Stephen. A.D.?

Hanus. That's right.

Stephen. Now what?

Hanus. Seventeen fifty.

Stephen. Month?

Hanus. April.

Stephen. Hour?

Hanus. Seven P.M.

Stephen. It's a little off somewhere. Reach in and turn the set-screw one notch.

[HANUS tips the silver dome and reaches inside.]

The other way. That's it. That's enough.

Hanus. Why did you build this thing, Steve?

Stephen. Why?

Hanus. Yeah, why?

Stephen. Because I—sort of happened on it—and it was a great idea.

Hanus. You weren't thinking of using it?

Stephen. We might try it out.

Hanus. I wouldn't want to get stuck—somewhere away back.

[*HANUS replaces the dome.*]

Stephen. Keep your mind on your work. Now what do you get?

Hanus. December fifteenth, 1878.

Angela. Does it tell fortunes?

Stephen. Why?

Angela. That's my birthday.

[*She goes toward the door.*]

Hanus.

[*Scornfully*]

Does it tell fortunes.

Angela. I can tell your fortune, Mr. Hanus.

Hanus. What do you mean?

Angela. You're going to be fired today.

Hanus. Don't say that. Don't say it!

Angela. You're going to be fired, and Park and Ripple are going to take over the rubber. They've got it worked out to use the figures in your file there.

Stephen. What's that?

[*He gets out from under.*]

Angela. So that's your fortune. You better do something quick.

Stephen. How do you know?

Angela. They were in here talking about it.

[*She goes out.*]

Hanus. I knew it—the college graduates! The dumb B.A.’s.

Stephen. We’ll go see Charley, Hanus. I’ll tell him about this machine. Maybe that’ll fix it up.

[*The door opens and DUFFY enters with APFEL. STEPHEN is still on the floor. HANUS finds the beaker in his pocket, where he thrust it to work on the machine, pulls it out, drops it, saves it with his toe, and retrieves it, embarrassed. STEPHEN gets up, dusting himself.*]

Duffy. Sorry to interrupt you, I’m sure. Buried in work this morning, aren’t you?

Stephen. We were just—

Duffy. Did you get my message?

Stephen. We were just coming.

Hanus. Yeah, we were just coming.

Duffy. Oh, were you? Well, that’s a concession. A couple of giant intellects like yours taking time off to communicate with the president of the company. I shouldn’t have expected it. No, no, let me come to you. Don’t let me take you from your work.

[*HANUS finds a towel in his pocket and surreptitiously thrusts it back again.*]

Who the hell do you think you are?

Stephen. We—we were late this morning.

Duffy. That explains everything. You were late this morning. Well, I wasn’t late. I came in early to see you. I came in early because that tire you turned out for the spring models will have to be redesigned, and we have only seven days to do it!

Stephen. I see. Well, that can be done—

Duffy. Oh, it can? Dies, molds, presses, formulae—the whole damn set-up to be readjusted, and ten thousand sample tires scrapped—all in a week. That’s easy—and who got us into the jam? Who gave us the formula for that tire?

Stephen. Was there something wrong with it?

Duffy. Wrong with it? We can't wear it out, you dumb cluck! We've worn out two cars on one set of those tires! They've gone a hundred and thirty thousand miles on the proving track, and we can't wear the tread off on the rear wheels!

Stephen. But—you asked me to increase the mileage.

Duffy. I asked you to increase the mileage by about five thousand miles! I asked you for a twenty-two thousand mile tire! I didn't ask you for a hundred and thirty thousand mile tire! Do you want to wreck the tire business—all over the United States?

Stephen. I should think the better the tire was—the more miles you could get—would be fine—

Duffy. Now look, Stephen—you're not as stupid as you let on. I've known you forty years—and you know as well as I do the profit in the tire business comes from replacements. If we equip our car with tires that won't wear out we stand to lose seven millions a year! What's more we're pledged to the Rubber Association not to make a tire that'll do better than thirty thousand miles! You knew that, and you slipped over a formula that'd wreck our business and get us in Dutch with all our competitors! It'll never wear out—never! They've been going crazy with it out on the proving ground, and I've been going crazy in the office! Because the squawk comes back to me! And you knew it would!

Stephen. No, sir. No, I didn't. I guess I didn't quite understand.

Duffy. Didn't understand what?

Stephen. I thought you wanted as good a tire as I could make—

Duffy. But I told you, didn't I?

Stephen. I guess I didn't believe you. It didn't look quite honest to me, not to make it as good as we could make it.

Duffy. Well, now you know, don't you—? Now you understand?

Stephen. Yes, sir.

Duffy. When can I have the formula for a twenty-two thousand mile tire?

Stephen. Tomorrow.

Apfel. I thought I told you to work out a whole series, from fifteen thousand miles to fifty.

Stephen. Yes, sir. I haven't got it all yet. Not the low mileage ones.

Duffy. Why not? You've had time enough!

Stephen. I—I've been doing something else.

Duffy. What? Something more important, no doubt?

Stephen. Yes, sir, much more important.

Duffy. More important than your job?

Hanus.

[*Muttering*]

What a sweetheart, son-of-a-bitch, what a sweetheart—

Duffy. What are you saying—

Hanus. I wasn't saying anything—son-of-a-bitch of a sweetheart—

Duffy. Who lets that crank in here? Apfel, is he on the payroll?

Apfel. No, sir.

Hanus. I'll be a son-of-a . . .

Duffy. They're both fired! Go get his check for him—and never mind about tomorrow. We'll get along—

[*APFEL goes out.*]

Stephen. But about this machine, Mr. Duffy—if you knew what it was—

Duffy. I don't care what it is!

Stephen. You will, though. You will when you hear about it.

Duffy. All right—what is it?

Stephen. It's something nobody would believe. It's like the radio was when it first came out—you couldn't believe it. It's like the airplane was—the papers wouldn't even report it because they thought it couldn't be true.

Duffy. I say all right, what is it?

Stephen. I can't even tell you the principle of it, because I don't really know what it is. I just know it acts the way it does. It's like radio that way—nobody knows why the waves work the way they do; they just know how they work. Marconi didn't know why the wireless worked. He said he didn't. But it worked just the same. This is a machine that

picks up waves, too—only it picks them up anywhere—a year ago or two years ago—

Duffy. You mean it picks up old programs? That's not much good.

Stephen. Oh, no, it picks up anything, anywhere. The kind of thing we used to think was a miracle.

Duffy. Can you give it a name?

Stephen. We call it the—Star-Wagon.

[*DUFFY steps back a little.*]

You don't really ride in it. We just call it that.

Duffy. That's very interesting—and it picks up—that's very interesting—
[*He begins to edge toward the door.*]

Stephen. You see, they always thought time was a sort of string with beads on it, as if we were all beads on a string, but it's not that way at all—

Duffy. No, I can see that—Jesus—beads on a string—

Stephen. It's more like a moving platform, but you can get on it anywhere, and off it anywhere—it's hard to explain—you don't have to be in one place or time—you can change it—

Duffy. Yeah? Write it down—make a report.

[*He turns and finds HANUS between him and the door, which is closed.*]

You hear, Hanus, have him make a report—

Stephen. Some people understand it better if you say time is like the banks of a canal, and we're canal boats moving between the banks.—Now the banks are always there—they don't change, but we move on, and if we have a way of making our boats go back and forth in the canal—

Hanus. With this you just press a button, and there you are.

Duffy. Why you poor fish—I always knew you were crazy, but I thought you were harmless. What's that door shut for?

Hanus. So they won't listen out there.

[*He turns the key in the lock.*]

Duffy.

[*He mutters.*]

Give me that key! Canal boats! Canal boats!

[*HANUS puts the key in his mouth and begins to search his pockets in confusion.*]

Stephen. First you set it for place and time, then you press the button and keep hold of the railing on the side. Then you don't move and the machine doesn't move, but everything else moves. Time and place. It all goes past you like a shot and leaves you where you want to be.

Duffy. Damn it.—Where do you think I want to be?

Stephen. I don't know.

Duffy. I want to be in my own office—

Stephen. When?

Duffy. When? Why half an hour ago, you lunatic—or last year, if it suits you better!

Stephen. I'll make it last year.

[*He sets the dials.*]

Duffy. Give me that key!

[*He snatches the key from HANUS' mouth.*]

Move!

[*He opens the door and steps into the doorway.*]

As I said before, you're fired, and before you go home you'd better have your head examined!

Stephen. I assure you you're making a mistake—

Duffy. And before you get your last check you'll turn in your rubber analyses. They belong to the company. Apfel!

Apfel.

[*Outside*]

Yes, sir.

[*He enters.*]

Duffy. Have that nut-machine scrapped for the materials. God knows what they've poured into it.

Apfel. They requisitioned thirteen pints of mercury and three pounds of platinum wire.

Duffy. That's five thousand dollars tied up in the mess. Rip it out.

Apfel. Yes, sir. I'll have it scrapped tomorrow.

Hanus.

[*Striding up to him*]

I'll rip your—yes, by God, I'll rip your—

Duffy. What?

Hanus.

[*Collapsing*]

You mustn't do this, Mr. Duffy.

Duffy. Why?

Stephen. Don't you see we've happened on the one thing everybody's looking for, Charley—?

Duffy. Don't Charley me—

Stephen.

[*Gulping*]

Mr. Duffy—the one thing they've all said we'd find.—Up to now it's all been theory about the fourth dimension.—Everybody said it was there—the mathematicians said it was there—the physicists said it was there, only when they quit writing their books they went right back into Euclid again, and they couldn't find any way out. But Euclid's nothing but an illusion, honest he is—you can walk right through him. There aren't any right angles in space, and there aren't any straight lines—and there's nothing positive about time or space—everything that ever happened is happening all the time—and matter isn't solid—materials aren't any more solid than a wave of light from the sun—. I've got it all set down here, but it's in symbols—

[*He stops in despair.*]

Duffy. Treat 'em gently, Apfel. They're raving—! Raving mad!

Apfel. Yes, sir.

[*DUFFY disappears.*]

Stephen. Mr. Apfel, I don't know how to put things in words—I've never had to use words—but don't take it apart—I'd never have the heart to build another—and I'll pay for it when I can—and it's a thing that's never been in the world before—it's a key to all the great things men are trying to say in all the laboratories there are—it's the alchemists' secret—there's nothing to it but a series of mathematical relations—but when you know them they build up into the mystery of how things happen—clear out into the constellations—of the whole world—like a chord—in music—

[He stops again, looking at APFEL's face.]

Apfel. Here's your check.

Stephen. Yes, sir.

[APFEL ushers them out.]

Hanus. Sweetheart—

CURTAIN

ACT ONE

SCENE III

SCENE: *The laboratory after midnight, in complete darkness except for a flash light which someone is manipulating outside the window. The place is seen in glimpses, then the window opens to the pressure of a jimmy and STEPHEN puts his head inside, shouldering up the frame. He crawls in, HANUS following him. They turn on a light.*

Hanus. Is the machine all right?

Stephen. I'll look it over. You open the outside door for 'em.

Hanus. Listen, Steve. Those fellows aren't mechanics. They're burglars.

Stephen. Well, let 'em in.

Hanus. In here?

Stephen. Yes, in here.

Hanus. Are you going to steal the wagon, Steve?

Stephen. I couldn't go home and tell Martha we were fired and the company smashed my invention. I'm going to take it away before they bust it up.

Hanus. Well, I'll let 'em in, but they look too professional to suit me.

[HANUS goes out. STEPHEN examines the machine carefully.
HANUS re-enters with two evil-looking THUGS.]

1st Thug. When does the watchman come round again?

Stephen. Not till half past one.

1st Thug. Only got an hour.

Stephen. Sometimes he's late.

2nd Thug. Sometimes.

Stephen. Now if you gentlemen will let me explain—this probably isn't the kind of work you're used to—

1st Thug. What do you mean it's not the kind we're used to—?

Stephen. I—I beg your pardon—I’m afraid I assumed that—I took it for granted—

1st Thug. Well, you watch yourself, what you take for granted, see?

Stephen. Yes, sir.

1st Thug. Well—get rolling. Is that it?

Stephen. Yes, that.

2nd Thug. How do we move it?

Stephen. Has to go out the window.

1st Thug.

[*Looking out*]

Out there?

Stephen. Only about seven feet to the ground.

1st Thug. We could drop it out.

Stephen. Good God, no!

1st Thug. Why not? You can’t hurt a safe, can you?

Stephen. There’s things in it that would break.

1st Thug. What?

Stephen. And it’d make more noise than a fire-alarm, falling in the court.

Hanus. Did the company wreck it?

Stephen. No. It’s just the way we left it.

1st Thug. Now listen, baby, what do you want us to do? And make it fast.

Stephen. We’ll have to slide it out the window. I thought we could use planks.

1st Thug. I don’t see any planks.

Hanus. There’s a truck gangway in the basement.

1st Thug. Let’s see it.

Stephen. That’s it. That’s the thing. It’s down this way.

[*He goes toward the door.*]

1st Thug. You two fetch it. We had our exercise for today.

[STEPHEN and HANUS pause, looking uncertainly at the THUGS.]

Stephen. All right, fine. We'll—we'll fetch it.

Hanus. Oh, we do the work, huh? And the ugly mugs get paid to sit around on their cans. I don't like those two; I don't like anything about 'em.

1st Thug. What's that you said?

Hanus. Me? Nothing.—Couple of WPA workers, that's what they are.

[STEPHEN and HANUS go out.]

1st Thug. Let 'em work. If they think I'm going to bust a gut hoisting a safe out the window they're cuckoo.

2nd Thug. I don't like this job.

1st Thug. The only thing to do with a safe is open it or blow it.

2nd Thug. Want to beat it?

1st Thug. Don't go into a panic. I'm here because I want to eat tomorrow. So are you.

2nd Thug. Who is this guy?

1st Thug. All I know is he come up to me in the skoff-house and says, "Want a little job?" and I says, "Money in it?" and he says, "I'll give you twenty bucks. It's all I got." "Give it to me now," I says. "Oh, no," he says, "I'll give it to you when it's done." "Tough," I says. "What is this blankety-blank job?" thinking he was a parson. "I want to move a safe," he says, "and it'll take anyway two men." "I got a friend," I says, thinking of you, see?

2nd Thug. Yeah.

1st Thug. So I says how far's this safe being moved and he says out a window. So here we are and there's the safe and there's the window.

2nd Thug. Yeah.

1st Thug. But I don't move any safe out any window. I got other ideas.

2nd Thug. I get you.

1st Thug. Sure.

[The door opens and STEPHEN and HANUS enter, breathing heavily as they lug in the truck gangway. They set the thing down to get their breath.]

Stephen. Think that'll do it?

1st Thug. Sure. That's fine.

Stephen. Want to help run it out the window?

1st Thug. No. You two do that part of it. I got a weak heart.

[STEPHEN and HANUS pause again, looking at the THUGS, then shove the window up farther and proceed to slide the gangway out to the court below. The THUGS calmly investigate the contents of the shelves and cabinets, helping themselves to a few odds and ends.]

Hanus.

[While he works]

We wouldn't want you to spoil your hands doing rough work, of course. A crook has to keep his fingers delicate so he can feel the tumblers dropping in a lock. You might take up something light, like croquet or dominoes.

Stephen. We'll get along faster if you don't talk so much.

1st Thug. I certainly like to watch a couple of good men work. It does me good just to see it.

[STEPHEN and HANUS finish, and sink down, wiping their brows.]

That's just about the whole job. What's this?

[He opens the letter file and takes out the cards.]

Stephen. Oh, those aren't mine!

1st Thug. What are they?

Stephen. Rubber formulae all worked out for the company. Don't—don't mix them up—they're—

1st Thug. What?

Stephen. Well, they're very valuable, and they're all in order.

1st Thug.

[Putting them in his pocket]

Well, now they're mine, see, very valuable and all in order.

[STEPHEN and HANUS again stand looking at the THUGS.]

What's the matter?

Stephen. You can't do that.

1st Thug. I guess I can. Don't mind about us, you two. You go right on with your work.

[He continues to paw things over.]

Stephen. But—

1st Thug. I say go right on with your work!

Stephen. I don't know how we're going to get it up to the window.

1st Thug. I don't either. You're both pretty light.

[He lights a cigarette.]

Hanus. Boy Scouts.

[The THUGS make no move to help, and STEVE and HANUS try to adjust the gangway. It falls with a crash and the THUGS jump to their feet.]

1st Thug. What are you trying to do?

Stephen. It fell. The gangway fell.

1st Thug. You let it fall.

2nd Thug. There's somebody coming.

[Footsteps are heard.]

1st Thug. Say the right thing, brother.

[The door opens and MISTY, the watchman, enters tentatively.]

Misty. Is everything all right here?

1st Thug. Sure, everything's all right.

Misty. I don't know you.

1st Thug. What the hell! He thinks we're robbing the laboratory! Speak to the guy, professor.

Stephen. It's all right, Misty.

Misty. You didn't put your name down, Mr. Minch. You didn't put your name down when you come in.

Stephen. I forgot it.

Misty. Now look. You fellows are always doing something like that. How was I to know it wasn't burglars in here?

Ist Thug. Yeah, how was he to know? You might have got me in trouble, too, see?

Misty. So you put your names in the book after this.

[*He goes out.*]

Ist Thug. Jesus, are you all like that here?

Stephen. You better give us a hand with this now.

Ist Thug. You're certainly amateurs, aren't you?

Stephen. Amateurs?

Ist Thug. At safe-cracking?

Stephen. We're not cracking any safe.

Ist Thug. Looks like a damn funny business to me.

Hanus. What's funny about it?

Ist Thug. If you're moving a safe, you do it by daylight. If you're cracking it, you do it at night.

Stephen. Not always.

Ist Thug. Absolutely.—What's in it?

Stephen. It's my own.

Ist Thug. How about going shares?

Stephen. Shares? On what?

Ist Thug. On what's in it.

Stephen. But there's nothing—there's nothing you'd want.

Ist Thug. I'll know better after I see it.

Stephen.

[*After a pause*]

We'd better see if we can get it up to the window.

Ist Thug. O.K.

Stephen. We'll all have to help.

Ist Thug. I don't get the philosophy of this, boys. We got a safe here with something in it we want. We hoist it out the window and run it into the

court. What's the sense of it? You can open it here and save yourself all that exertion.

Stephen. I'm not going to open it!

1st Thug. Are you taking it home for a keep-sake? Don't you know if you start wheeling that box through the streets you'll be stopped by every cop between here and where you're going?

Stephen. But you see, really, I'm just paying you to help me. I didn't ask you to tell me what to do.

1st Thug. Only I'm telling you. I'm telling you now. Give me the twenty bucks.

Stephen. It isn't yours yet.

1st Thug.

[*Taking out a gun*]

Take it from him, Cully.

[*The 2nd THUG goes to STEPHEN.*]

This is in case we get hungry tomorrow.

Stephen. It's in the bill-fold.

[*The 2nd THUG extracts it.*]

1st Thug. Now we're going to help you. And you're going to do just as I say. Go over there and manipulate them dials.

Stephen. I can't.

1st Thug. Why not?

Stephen. It's—it's a time-set.

1st Thug. Then—just to be helpful—we'll blow it.

Stephen. Blow it! You mean—smash it open?

1st Thug. This is soup, professor. It takes the lid off anything.

Stephen. You—wouldn't do that—

1st Thug. Not if you open it up—no.

Stephen. It can't—it can't be done—

1st Thug. Then we drill it for soup.

Stephen. Well, I say you won't!

1st Thug. Oh, you say I won't! Well, your woman's going to have a lot of patching to do if I start taking you apart.

[HANUS *makes up his mind and rushes the 1st THUG, who calmly knocks him down.*]

Want any more?

Hanus.

[*From the floor*]

You keep your hands off him or I'll murder you!

1st Thug. Shut up! Come on, Cully, this one gets the same.

Stephen. Listen, Mr.—I don't know your name—

1st Thug. Never mind my name—

Stephen. I just want to tell you—I work here, you see—I'm an inventor—and this is something I made—something extra that's my own—only now the company says it belongs to them and I'm fired.—It's not stealing to take it—because they're taking it from me to smash it, and I've worked all these years, and it's the best thing I ever hit on—it's better than anybody knows—better than you know.—If I could only tell you—

1st Thug. The longer you stand there the harder you hit the floor, see?

Stephen. You must have wanted something, back before you—got this way—and it seemed as if you couldn't go on if you didn't get it—

1st Thug. You're certainly asking for something, bo! And you won't go far after you get it.

Stephen. And when I asked you to come here it was because I was desperate, don't you see? I didn't care if they shot me for it, I had to try to save this thing I made—even if I was to die for it—

1st Thug. Are you talking about that safe?

Stephen. Yes—that.—I don't care if you kill me—I'll fight for it—

2nd Thug. Ah, let him have his little machine—

1st Thug. Now what's the matter with you—?

2nd Thug. Come on; we got the twenty dollars—let's get out of here—

1st Thug. Now you're belly-aching! For Christ's sake, what do you think he's putting up the song and dance for if there's nothing in it? I'll play

fair with you, professor. I'll give you half. You trust me.

Stephen. You got your twenty dollars, and you didn't do anything for it, now you get the hell out!

2nd Thug. He's crying, big boy, why don't you let him have his machine?

1st Thug. I'll make hash out of all three of you, you bunch of mushheads! Get out of the way before I fracture your dome!

[He shoves STEPHEN aside and goes to the machine.]

Where in hell's the lid of this?

Stephen. There isn't any.

1st Thug. Well, we'll make one. We haven't got much time, and it's going to make a noise, but we're going to see the inside of it if I have to shoot the watchman.

[He takes out a hand drill.]

Hanus. You better do something with it, Steve.

1st Thug. That's the idea, baby. The quickest way's to open it.

Hanus. You better push the button, Steve.

1st Thug. What button?

Hanus. It's something you have to do with the machine.

Stephen. It's out of sync, Hanus. I never had time to true it up. I don't think it'll work.

1st Thug. Well, if it don't work you don't lose anything.

Stephen. No, there's nothing to lose now. And maybe a lot to gain. I'll try it.

[He goes to the machine. The THUGS stand back.]

You're going to smash it if I don't do this, aren't you?

1st Thug. I'll say I am.

Stephen. All right. You help me, Hanus. Slide under a minute, will you?

[HANUS gets underneath the machine.]

Hanus. What do you want?

Stephen. One.

Hanus. Yeah.

Stephen. Nine.

Hanus. Yeah.

Stephen. 0.

Hanus. Yeah.

Stephen. Two.

Hanus. Check.

Stephen. July 4th.

Hanus. Yeah.

Stephen. Nine A.M.

Hanus. Right.

Stephen. The bicycle shop. It's on the map at the left.

Hanus. The bicycle shop? On the Fourth of July? Look, Stephen, you've got the whole world to pick from, and you pick a Fourth of July in a bicycle shop.

Stephen. That's the Fourth where everything happened, Hanus—when you saved my life, and Martha and I fixed it up together.

Hanus. I see.

Ist Thug. What kind of a funny business is this—?

Stephen. It's a time-set—see—like I told you.

Ist Thug. It better work.

Stephen. Oh, it'll work. Maybe it won't work the way it should, but it'll work.

Hanus. O.K. I got it. The bicycle shop. July fourth.

Ist Thug. If that's a combination, I'm a Vassar girl.

Stephen. It's all right. Just give me a minute. Let me check the platinum a minute.

[*He tips the dome, looks inside, and puts it back.*]

Grab the other handle now, and help me swing it.

[*HANUS climbs out and takes the handle opposite STEPHEN.*]

I don't know what's going to happen, so hang on everybody!

[He looks up at the clock.]

One o'clock. Here goes.

[He pushes the button. The lights dim sharply, there is the noise of an electric motor and the Two THUGS go backward out of the room, through the door that opens of itself. The lights go out entirely. There is a crash outside, and a terrific explosion.]

Hanus. What's that?

Stephen. He must have dropped the nitroglycerin.

CURTAIN

THE STAR-WAGON
ACT TWO

ACT TWO

SCENE I

SCENE: *The interior of a bicycle shop in eastern Ohio in the year 1902. The place is a large one-room shell, formerly a blacksmith shop, with a window at the rear, large doors to the right and small door at the left. A few bicycles are ranked at the left rear. At right rear a repair bench is set against the wall under the window. At the extreme right stands a horseless carriage, with an engine under the seat. Tires are hung on a stanchion overhead, and a few*

accessories of the period are piled on shelves above the bench. There is a small mirror over a shelf on the rear wall, a calendar beside it. In the left corner stands the Star-Wagon.

HANUS and STEPHEN are revealed still clinging to the handles as the lights come up. Their voices are heard from semi-darkness for a few moments.

Hanus. He couldn't have dropped the nitroglycerin.

Stephen. Why?

Hanus. Because he didn't drop it coming in.

Stephen. Maybe what we heard was the last time he blew a bank.

Hanus. Look, Steve, look where we are. There's the car you built. And there's the calendar you figured out—

Stephen.

[Seeing the calendar]

July 3rd. I told you it was out of sync. It was set for the fourth.

Hanus. I never thought I'd see the old bicycle shop again.

Stephen. No.—I thought it was larger.

Hanus. So did I.—Gee, it's a peach of a little shop.

[The lights come up full, and they are revealed as young men.]

That's big Minnie's bicycle. She ran into a hydrant and bent the front fork. I'm supposed to be working on it.

Stephen. Now I'll tell you what I think, Hanus. When we let go the handles we'll go right back into the old groove.—So we better figure what we're going to do.

Hanus. Jeez, it scares you.—Look in that mirror, Steve.

Stephen. What's the matter?

Hanus. Look.

Stephen.

[Gazing]

Who is it? Did I look like that?

Hanus. And look at me. No wonder I never got married.

Stephen. Maybe it'll be different this time.

Hanus. What are you going to do—now you're back here, Steve?

Stephen. I'm going to change everything. Martha can marry the celluloid collar boy, the way she wanted to. I'm going to marry the other one.

Hanus. Do you think you can do it?

Stephen. I'm going to try.

Hanus. Did you remember there was a whip socket on the dash-board?

Stephen. Sure. That's so if the engine stops and you have to use a horse you'll have a whip to drive with.

Hanus. Isn't that the prettiest little car you ever saw?

Stephen. I never liked any other car as much as that one.

Martha.

[*Outside*]

Stephen—Stephen—will you pump up a tire for me?

Stephen. It's Martha. Sure, Martha.

[STEPHEN and HANUS leave the machine and come forward.
MARTHA, a young girl in black bloomers, wheels her bicycle
into the shop.]

Oh, oh—oh oh—what the—

[HANUS takes the bicycle from MARTHA.]

Martha. How do you like them?

[*She turns about.*]

Steve. Fine—fine.

Martha. No you don't.

Steve. I never thought I'd see you in things like that.

Martha. We're all going to get them—all the girls in the choir. Don't you think they're nice, Steve?

Steve. Well—they—they—they don't leave much to the imagination, do they?

Martha. You're horrid! You're perfectly horrible.

[*She sidles behind a chair, blushing.*]

Steve.

[*Fascinated in spite of himself*]

No, they're all right. They're very—fetching.

Martha. I thought you'd like them anyway. They're just to ride a bicycle in.

Steve. I know.

[*HANUS is busy pumping up the tire.*]

Martha. And if people want to look, they can just look.

Steve. They'll certainly look, all right.

Martha. I'd better go, I guess—

Steve. I mean, a fellow's pretty funny if he doesn't look at you, no matter what you've got on.

Martha. Stupid.

[*But she smiles.*]

Steve. Did I say something wrong?

Martha. If I stood here all day, and waited, you'd never think of the right thing to say.

Steve. I like you just as much as if I did. Maybe more.

Martha. There's choir practice tonight, you know.

Steve. I was coming.

Martha. Mrs. Rutledge says you have a really good voice if you'd work at it.

Steve. How does a person work at his voice?

Martha. Takes lessons, silly.

Steve. I'd feel pretty silly taking lessons in how to sing. Anybody can sing.

Martha. She says you have an excellent natural placement, but you're a perfect innocent about phrasing.

Steve. I don't know anything about placement, either.

Martha. It's where you place your voice, singing in your mouth and not back in your throat.

Steve. It doesn't sound like a thing you'd need to take lessons for.

Martha. Some people never can learn it. It's awfully hard for me, but you do it without trying.

Steve. What's phrasing?

Martha. Meanings. Bringing out the meanings by where you breathe and things like that.

Hanus. Every time a person goes to Europe he comes back with a lot of foreign notions. Now they're teaching you how to sing. What I always say if you want to sing, sing, and if you don't, play the piano.

Martha. I guess if you pump up that tire you'll be doing all that's expected of you.

Hanus. I pump the organ for you, don't I?

Martha.

[To STEVE]

You probably haven't even looked at the solo she wants you to sing.

Steve. Yes, I have. I learned it by heart. But there wasn't anybody to play the music for me.

Martha. We could stay after choir practice tonight.

Steve. All right.

[*There's an awkward squawk outside, and STEVE looks out over her head.*]

It's Arlington's White Steamer.

Martha. If they're coming in, I'm going.

Steve. Oh, don't go.

Martha. Maybe you think I don't know what Hallie Arlington's up to. She's got her cap all set to marry you.

Steve. Oh now, say, Martha—what in the world would she want to marry me for?

Martha. I don't know, but I'll bet her family's relieved to have her running after you after some of the specimens she's run after.—Give

me my machine.

Arlington.

[*Outside*]

Now you want a bicycle, I suppose?

Hallie Arlington.

[*Outside*]

Oh no; I wouldn't think of riding one of those common things.

Martha. Maybe you couldn't learn, dear. It's pretty simple, but after all—

Hallie.

[*Entering with her father*]

Why, Martha—I didn't know you in that outlandish—why it isn't even a skirt!

[*HALLIE wears a duster and goggles.*]

Martha. No, it's bloomers. Good-bye.

[*She trundles the bicycle out.*]

Hallie. But isn't that—almost immoral—? I mean, aren't there laws—?

Arlington. As a matter of fact there are. It's illegal for a girl to wear pantaloons.

Hallie.

[*Hopeful*]

Will she be arrested?

Arlington. She ought to be.

Hallie. The sheriff might see her going up the street.

Arlington. Hank? Yes, he might.

Hanus.

[*Muttering*]

Probably Hank likes a pair of legs as much as anybody in town. You don't lose your taste for legs by being sheriff.

Hallie. What did you say?

Hanus. Ma'am? I wasn't saying anything.

Arlington. Tell you what I came in for, Steve. No use beating around the bush. That expert that looked over your automobile made a very interesting report. Very interesting.

[They all look at the carriage.]

He says for a young man you've done a most unusual job.

Hallie. It's much prettier than our car.

Steve. Oh, no. It's just made out of odds and ends.

Arlington. What I wanted to ask you was, is it patented?

Steve. Why no, I just made it for fun—to ride around in. Not much use trying to patent it. Anyway it'd cost a lot.

Arlington. Should be done, though.

Steve. To tell the truth, it's not really original. I read about the engine in the papers.

Arlington. Well, I don't want to over-praise it, but that expert said it had some remarkable features—the way the valve's set, for example. And the way it started—he said that's unique.

Steve. That's nothing. That's nothing but a strap around the drive shaft.

Arlington. It saves cranking, doesn't it?

Steve. Oh, you don't have to crank it. Hardly ever.

Arlington. I wonder if you'd start it for us.

Steve. Sure thing. Open those doors, will you, Hanus?

[He picks up a pint bottle and looks through it.]

Gasoline's running pretty low.

[HANUS opens the end doors. STEPHEN empties the bottle into the fuel tank.]

Hallie. I'm so excited! I can't breathe!—Will it go?

Steve. Once in a while she's balky.

[He climbs in.]

It's going to make a lot of noise, you know. So brace yourselves for it.

Arlington. Burns gasoline?

Steve. That's right.

[He pulls a strap on the foot-board, pulls it again, again and again.]

Hallie. I'm going to be so disappointed if it doesn't go.

Steve. Looks like this was one of its bad days.

[He pulls the strap again, and is rewarded by a terrific concussion. Just one, but it blows HALLIE backward.]

Hallie. I'm all right! It didn't hit me!

Steve. It won't hurt you.

[He gets another explosion.]

Hanus. Has she got power! Land o' Goshen, has she got power!

Steve. This time.

[Another pull and the engine starts. STEVE lets in the clutch and the car moves.]

Hallie. Wait! Wait! I want to ride in it!

[She climbs in beside STEVE, and they drive out the door.]

Arlington. I wonder if the thing's safe.

Hanus. With him, it is. He can spin it on a four-leaf clover. He can do anything with it.

Arlington. Do you know much about it?

Hanus. I helped him build it.

Arlington. Why did he put the valve on the top?

Hanus. Saves fourteen moving parts, setting it there.

Arlington. How'd you like a little job over in the carriage factory?

Hanus. Me? Maybe I'm better off here.

Arlington. He can't pay you much.

Hanus. I like it here.

Arlington. I see.

[The car is heard approaching outside, and now suddenly re-enters with a roar, stopping abruptly where it was.]

Hallie. That wasn't far enough, Steve! You only went round the yard!

Steve. We'll go some other time.

Hallie. That's a promise.

Steve. When I have more gasoline. It's almost empty.

Hallie. Tomorrow?

Steve. Tomorrow's the picnic, you know.

[*He helps her down.*]

Hallie. Are you coming?

Steve. The Fourth of July? Certainly.

Hallie. I'll make up a specially good basket—if you'll carry it.

Steve. Wait till I see which is the heaviest.

Hallie. I'll put bricks in mine.

Hanus. Oh, oh.

Arlington. Now I'll tell you, Steve; no use beating around the bush. Just for the fun of it I'd like to buy that car—as she stands—including all future rights, patents and so on.

Steve. You can use it any time.

Arlington. I'd like to buy it.

Steve. It's not much to buy.

Arlington. I'll give you five hundred.

Steve. Five hundred! For that!

Arlington. Is it a fair price?

Steve. Fair! It's robbery!

Arlington. I wouldn't want to go any higher.

Steve. Good Lord, no! I'd be robbing you.

Arlington. Well, I'll take a chance.

Steve. I don't really want to sell it, you know. It's been a lot of fun, and I like to have it around, but—

Arlington. I just made an offer, that's all. Take it or leave it.

Steve. I suppose I'd be crazy not to take it.

Arlington. Think it over if you want to—

[*A pause*]

Steve. No. I'll take five hundred.

Arlington. Good.

[*He offers a hand.*]

Call it done.

Steve.

[*Shaking with him*]

Yes, sir.

Arlington. And I hope it won't be the last business we do, either. In fact, I'll give you a chance to put that five hundred right back into my carriage factory with me, if you like, and it'll start earning for you from the word go. Only not if you'd rather do something else, mind you. You do just as you please.

Steve. Yes, sir.

Arlington. Hallie there's taken quite a fancy to you, and maybe you two could hit it off, and we could sort of make a little combine. I wouldn't mind it a bit.

Steve. Yes, sir.

Hallie. Why, papa, what are you talking about?

Arlington. Just trouble to come, that's all; trouble to come. No harm in looking ahead a little and anticipating your grandchildren. If she doesn't have 'em with one she'll have 'em with another, so it might as well be a good one.—As a matter of fact, Steve, I wouldn't advise you to sell that machine unless we can sort of work out a combination.

Steve. Yes, sir.

[*There is a sound of escaping steam outside.*]

Arlington. Well, come on, puss—our boiler's blowing off out here. Tomorrow's the Fourth. See you the fifth—and we'll fix it all up.

Steve. Yes, sir.

Hallie. Au revoir.

Steve. 'Bye, Hallie.

[*HALLIE and ARLINGTON go out.*]

Hanus. Jeez, I hate to see it go.

Steve. We can make another one, and make it better. You know what I ought to do?

Hanus. No.

Steve. I ought to hook up with her, and put the money in his business the way he said.

Hanus. You won't do it.

Steve. Yes, I will.—I feel a little hollow, though.

[He walks back to the window, looks out, then, turning, touches the Star-Wagon as if by accident. He takes one of the handles.]

Hanus?

Hanus. Yeah.

Steve. Come here a minute.

[HANUS goes to him.]

Take hold of this thing. This is a hell of an afternoon. I didn't like it the first time and I don't like it any better now. I want to move on a little.

Hanus. Why don't you do something different? You're doing exactly what you did before. You tried to marry Hallie that time, but you didn't.

Steve. I know. I'll fix it all up tomorrow.

Hanus. Well, if you're going to press that button I wish you'd pick some time before a meal, and not after. I hate to be full of food and not know where I got it.

Steve. Martha said something about choir practice. I guess I could see Martha just once more.

[He tips the dome, then replaces it.]

Push the button, will you, Hanus?

[HANUS does so. The lights darken—then go out entirely.]

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE II

SCENE: *Faintly and far away, so that you can't be sure you hear it at all, the strains of Handel's "Largo" creep into the theatre, played on a pipe organ. As it approaches the last chord the lights begin to seep in, and the scene is found to be a choir loft in a small church.*

MARTHA *sits at the organ, playing; a choir of eight, including STEVE and HALLIE, are seated just in front of the manuals, and MRS. RUTLEDGE, elegant in black lace, stands before them. HANUS has opened the little door behind which he sits to pump the organ. The pump handle is visible across his knees. The others in the choir are REIGER, DUFFY, OGLETHORPE, CHRISTABEL, and DELLA.*

Mrs. Rutledge. That's excellent, Martha. I have no criticism of your playing. I might only suggest that it would be as well to omit some of the deep pedal notes which require a rather unlady-like extension of the lower limbs.

Martha. I love the low notes on the pedals.

Mrs. Rutledge. I know, dear. But one occasionally sacrifices art to what one might call the decencies. I've hesitated to speak of this, but there are men in every congregation who might be distracted from their devotions by the vision of feminine proportions in more or less athletic attitudes. The playing of the pipe organ requires the use of the feet, but a woman of refinement will instinctively confine herself to the middle register, easily accessible without—without—uh—without —

Hanus. She means without spreading the legs apart.

Mrs. Rutledge. You may close your door, Hanus.

Hanus. Yes, ma'am.

[He does so, concealing himself.]

Mrs. Rutledge. Easily accessible, as I say, without extravagant motion under the skirt.

Martha. I could wear my bicycle bloomers, of course—

[*There is a little smiling in the choir.*]

Mrs. Rutledge. That will do, Martha. You must accept my criticism seriously, and in the spirit in which it is given, or I shall refuse to continue longer in my position as leader.

[*A silence*]

It's growing late, and we have one more hymn to prepare for the evening service, also Mr. Minch's solo. Turn to 172 in the Victory Songs.

[*The CHOIR rises, exhibiting the styles of the period, and holding hymn-books open. MARTHA plays a three-chord prelude, and they sing, MRS. RUTLEDGE beating time.*]

The Choir:

Hark, 'tis the Shepherd's voice I hear,
Out on the desert dark and drear,
Calling the sheep who've gone astray,
Far from the shepherd's fold away.

CHORUS—Bring them in, bring them in,
Bring them in from the fields of sin;
Bring them in, bring them in,
Bring the wand'ring ones to Jesus.

Mrs. Rutledge. Third stanza, please.

The Choir:

Out in the desert, hear their cry,
Out on the mountains wild and high,
Hark! 'tis the Master speaks to Thee—
"Go find my sheep where'er they be."

CHORUS—Bring them in, bring them in,
Bring them in from the fields of sin;
Bring them in, bring them in,
Bring the wand'ring ones to Jesus.

Mrs. Rutledge. Now the chorus again very softly. Very, very softly.

[*She beats time.*]

The Choir:

[*Pianissimo*]

Bring them in, bring them in,
Bring them in from the fields of sin;
Bring them in, bring them in,
Bring the wand'ring ones to Jesus.

Mrs. Rutledge. Very, very moving. There's nothing so affecting as a delicate nuance of tone—a thing for you all to remember. And now—

[*She snaps open the gold watch, worn on a long chain at her waist, and gives a little gasp.*]

Oh, dear, and I must be at the foreign missions meeting before nine. I fear I'll have to omit the solo after all.—Dear, dear, it's vexing—

Martha. I could stay and play for Mr. Minch.

Mrs. Rutledge. Not without proper chaperoning, of course. I fear it's out of the question.

Hanus.

[*Opening his door*]

I'm here.

Mrs. Rutledge. You may close your door, Master Hanus.

[*He does so.*]

Your presence would hardly suffice. No, we'll dismiss now.

[*The CHOIR begins to move away.*]

But I am vexed. If Mr. Duffy and Miss Arlington could remain—

Hallie. Yes, of course, Mrs. Rutledge.

Hanus.

[*Opening his door again*]

The janitor's out there. And if you knew how hot it was in this coffin you'd let me leave the lid off.

Mrs. Rutledge. Will you be quiet, and draw the door to? You have no sense of propriety! I suffer through every service in this church, suffer in terror lest you lose control and reveal yourself, a veritable gargoyle, staring out at the congregation from the bowels of the instrument!

Hanus. That's not a nice word.

[*He closes up again.*]

Mrs. Rutledge. And now you take it upon yourself to correct me!

Hallie. We could stay, Mrs. Rutledge. I'd like to stay.

Martha. And Mr. Minch and I haven't the least interest in each other, have we, Stephen?

Steve. No'm, I mean—

Mrs. Rutledge. My dear Martha—it isn't that I don't trust you implicitly—it's only that there are certain civilized usages.—However, in this case—. I shall instruct the janitor to close the church within half an hour.

[She turns to go.]

And I shall be gratified if some one of you will convey my displeasure to—Master Hanus—and inform him that he will not be expected to join us on our picnic tomorrow—nor in any future merry-makings—

[She bites her lip.]

until he can take an entirely different attitude.

Reiger. Yes, ma'am.

Mrs. Rutledge. Good night.

The Choir.

[In scattering chorus]

Good night, Mrs. Rutledge.

[MRS. RUTLEDGE has taken a step or two toward the exit when HANUS' door opens, showing him poised like a bird on his bench, his arms drawn up to imitate wings.]

Hanus.

[Flapping]

Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo!

[His door shuts. MRS. RUTLEDGE pauses, biting her lip again, then thinks better of it and goes out.]

Reiger. Good Lord!

Steve. Well, she had it coming.

Martha. Stephen! How can you encourage such actions?

Steve. Well, but, Martha—

Martha. How can you!

Hallie. She really likes you, Hanus. That's why she says all those things.

Hanus. I'll bet it is. I like you, too.

Reiger. Thought maybe I could see you home, Martha.

Martha. You'd have to wait half an hour, Paul. Don't bother.

Reiger. Oh, I'll wait.

Martha. You won't need to. Stephen will see me home.

Reiger. Well, in that case who's going to Schmid's for ice-cream?

Several. I am!

Reiger. Come on then.

Oglethorpe. So long, all you cuckoos.

Reiger. See you at Schmid's.

Steve. Fine.

[*They all leave except STEVE, MARTHA, DUFFY, HALLIE, and HANUS.*]

Duffy. Do I have to wait around while the bicycle man makes noises like "Jerusalem The Golden?"

Steve. It's no pleasure to have you here.

Duffy. It'll be punishment to me.

Hallie. Oh, please stay; Mrs. Rutledge would be furious if we didn't.

Duffy. She'll never know.

Hallie. I want to hear Stevie sing.

Duffy. I don't, and can you blame me?

Martha. We'll come over for ice-cream afterward.

Hallie. Will you, Steve?

Steve. Right away—as soon as this is over.

Hallie. All right—

[*She flutters away.*]

Don't let her keep you, now.

[DUFFY and HALLIE go out.]

Martha. Maybe you'd rather have somebody else play for you.

Steve. What's the matter?

Martha. Oh, nothing. Where's the music?

Steve. Here.

Martha. Tell him to pump.

Steve. Give it air, Hanus.—I don't know this very well, you know. I just picked it out with one finger.

Martha. It doesn't matter. Some people just sing, you know. They don't need any instruction. They just sing like birds.

Steve. If you don't want to play for me—

Martha. You come in here, see. I'll play the prelude.

[She plays the opening bars, STEVE watching her nervously. When she reaches the solo he begins to sing, at first tentatively, then with more confidence till at the end he is doing his excellent best. The song is "Jerusalem The Golden," and both the organist and the singer are moved by it as they proceed.]

The Song.

I—Jerusalem the golden!
With milk and honey blest,
Beneath thy contemplation
Sink heart and voice opprest.
I know not—oh, I know not
What joys await me there,
What radiancy of glory,
What bliss beyond compare!

II—They stand, those halls of Zion,
All jubilant with song,
And bright with many a loved one
And all the angel throng.
There lifts the throne of David,
And there, from toil released,
The shout of them that triumph,
The song of them that feast.

[As STEVE finishes, MARTHA puts her head down on the music-rest and begins to sob.]

Steve. What is it, Martha?

Martha. It's so beautiful, that's all. And you do sing like an angel.—I'm sorry—I said what I did.

[He puts out a hand toward her. She starts up.]

Don't touch me. We have to go.

Steve. Not yet.—Please.

Martha. Why?

Steve. I can't go just yet.—The music—does something to you—so that you want—I don't know—so that you want—more music—only so much greater—

Martha.

[Taking his hand suddenly]

Do you feel that, too?

Steve. I do right now.

Martha. Oh. I thought nobody felt that but me. Only I could never say it—so well—

Steve. I never say anything well.

Martha. Wouldn't it be marvellous if we could be great people—and I could play and you could sing—? Somewhere—I could almost imagine it—

Steve. That would be wonderful.

Martha. Only—there's nobody that knows enough to teach us—out here.—We'd have to be where people love music—where a whole nation loves music—not here—

Steve. Doesn't Mrs. Rutledge know?

Martha. No, she really doesn't, Steve.

Steve. Isn't she kind of a fake, Martha?

Martha. Maybe she is. No, it isn't fair to say that. She does as well as she can.

Steve. I guess an old maid never could be much.

Martha. She's not an old maid. She's a widow.

Steve. Well, she acts like an old maid.

Martha. Yes, she does act like one.

Steve. You're marvellous, Martha.

Martha. No, I'm not. I don't like to hear you say that. I'm silly, and all I know is just what I could learn in high school, and probably I'll never get any farther—

Steve. But I do think you're marvellous. Don't you like to hear me say it?

Martha. No.

Steve. Why?

Martha. Because I had a glimpse of something—in the music—that was better than just somebody saying you're marvellous—and—wanting to kiss you.

[She takes her hand away.]

I want to love someone—that's much too good for me—and a person like that—never would love me—but that's why I'd love him.

Steve. Who is it, Martha?

Martha. Nobody I ever saw. But you might be like that—some time.

Steve. I wonder if I could.

[HANUS opens his little door softly, sees them close together, and half closes it again.]

Martha. Does it seem to you as if we said all this once before, once long ago?

Steve. Yes.

Martha. Maybe we did. Away back when the earth wasn't the same—and even the north star wasn't the north star at all.

Steve. When you were a queen and I was a slave?

Martha. No. I wouldn't want you to be a slave.

[He puts out a hand again.]

Don't touch me. It makes me feel as if you're like the others.

Steve. Maybe I am.

Martha. I guess so. I guess we both are. Only I like to think, just tonight
—that there's something we can have—that's like the music—nobler
than we are—

Steve. I know.

Martha. Do you mind if I play a little more—to see if it will come back?

Steve. No, Martha.

*[HANUS begins to pump, and MARTHA touches the keys, playing
the Largo again. The lights dim and go out.]*

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE III

SCENE: *The picnic ground is at the edge of a cliff. Above one can see the party gathering with baskets on the grass. Beneath them a shallow cave hollows into the rock, hidden from those on the upper level. A ledge from the side affords an entrance to the cave.*

MRS. RUTLEDGE *and the members of the choir are arriving at the picnic site. As they come in STEVE is carrying HALLIE's basket, REIGER is carrying MARTHA's. HANUS brings up the rear.*

Mrs. Rutledge. Before anything is unpacked it becomes my duty to say again the few words with which I prefaced our last year's outing. Your attention, please, Master Hanus. It is, of course, incumbent on all of us to conduct ourselves at all times like ladies and gentlemen. At all times, but even more when an occasion arises which places a certain amount of responsibility upon us. I am here, as you know, in the thankless capacity of chaperon. You will make my duties easier, and my day pleasanter, by conforming to certain rules of decorum, rules of which you are all aware. It is, no doubt, more largely incumbent on the young ladies of our company than on the gentlemen to maintain the standards of society, for women are in general the civilizing and restraining influence. But I shall expect complete cooperation from the young men as well.—Hallie! Miss Arlington! That is exactly the kind of thing I mean! A lady does not put her hand into a gentleman's pocket! For any purpose!

Hallie. I was taking a piece of candy, Mrs. Rutledge.

Mrs. Rutledge. If Mr. Minch wishes to offer you candy he will do so.

Hallie. But he wouldn't give me any. He said if I wanted it I could help myself.

Mrs. Rutledge. Stephen?

Steve. Yes, ma'am.

Mrs. Rutledge. Is that cooperation?

Steve. No, ma'am.

Hanus. She wanted to put her hand in his pocket, that's what she wanted.

Mrs. Rutledge. Hanus, be quiet.

Hanus. Yes, ma'am.—Only what you think a fellow carries candy for except for bait?

Mrs. Rutledge. For what?

Hanus. Nothing.

Reiger. He said for bait.

Mrs. Rutledge. Master Hanus was not invited to this outing. He is here on sufferance only. The less attention paid to him the better.

Hanus. Yes, ma'am.

Mrs. Rutledge. Now, shall we spread our cloth near the rock, as usual? Always remembering that I must keep you all within sight at all times. The girls will understand my reasons for that request, and will obey implicitly, I am sure. I am responsible to your parents.

[*She steps out to the right.*]

Martha and Della, if you'll help me for a moment.

[*MARTHA, DELLA, REIGER and OGLETHORPE follow her out.*]

Hallie.

[*Reaching into Steve's pocket*]

Um—candy corn—I love it.

Hanus. Chicken feed.

Hallie. Hanus doesn't like me.

Steve. Who cares? He's just jealous.

Hallie. He ought to go home anyway. He wasn't invited.

Steve. Oh, Hanus can stay.

Hallie. You always have Hanus around.

Steve. Sometimes he's useful.

Hallie. You think more of him than you do of me, don't you?

Steve. It's different.

Hallie. What are we going to do after we have lunch?

Duffy. Mrs. Rutledge said something about playing Sacks to the Mill and Farmer in the Dell.

Hallie. Let's all go down under the ledge.

Steve. What good's that?

Hallie. She won't know where we are.

Steve. Oh.

Hallie. Would you go, Charley?

Duffy. Sure, I'm game. It's better than Sacks to the Mill.

Hallie. Would you, Christabel?

Christabel. We really shouldn't, Hallie.

Hallie. I know, but just for fun—oh, Steve, please, pretty please.

Steve. All right.

Hallie. And then afterward we could slip away and go swimming.

Christabel. Oh, Hallie!

Hallie. It's oceans of fun to go swimming.

Hanus. Take her out and drown her.

Hallie. Anyway, it's not very nice of you not to do what we girls want to do when we're on a picnic, is it, Christabel?

Christabel. Well, if they don't want to—

Hallie. Oh, if they don't want to we'll get somebody else.—I brought a towel.

Steve. Where is it?

Hallie. In my basket. You can sneak it out when she isn't looking.

Steve. Gee, you're a hell-bender, aren't you?

Hallie. I wouldn't go in with just everybody, but I would with you.

Duffy. Ah, come on, Christabel—say you'll get wet.

Christabel. I never did such a thing—but if Hallie does—

Hallie. It's oceans of fun—and won't the old hen be furious—!

Mrs. Rutledge.

[*At right*]

Lunch is ready, everybody!

Hallie. Um—am I hungry—come on, Stevie!

[*She runs out to the right, beckoning. STEVE is about to follow her.*

MARTHA comes in from right with REIGER. DUFFY and CHRISTABEL go out toward the lunch.]

Reiger.

[*To MARTHA*]

Let's sit over here.

Martha.

[*To STEVE*]

I brought you something, Steve.

Steve. Thanks, Martha.

Martha. Want to sit with us?

Steve.

[*Torn*]

I guess so.

[*MARTHA, STEVE and REIGER sit down together.*]

Martha. Isn't this a heavenly day?

Steve. I guess I hadn't noticed. Getting pretty hot, isn't it?

Hanus. Why doesn't it ever rain?

Martha. Listen to Hanus. Wishing it would rain.

Steve. That's his idea of a picnic.

Hanus. I like rain! Can't you ever get the idea a fellow might like rain?

Same as you like this darn hot weather!

Martha.

[*To STEVE*]

It is warm, but then it's July. You could open the top button of your shirt. This way.

[She does it for him.]

Reiger. I'm beginning to feel like a crowd.

[He gets up.]

Steve. Just the right kind of day to go swimming.

Martha. Boys have most of the fun, don't they?

Steve. Why?

[REIGER goes out right. CHRISTABEL runs in past him and out to the left. DUFFY enters and looks round for her.]

Martha. Oh, they can swim and everything.

Steve. Can't girls swim?

Martha. I suppose they could.—Did Hallie ask you to go swimming?

Steve. Maybe. How did you know?

Martha. Oh, she always does. Why did you carry her basket?

Steve. She asked me to.

Martha. Didn't I tell you?

[HALLIE comes in with two plates of food, sees STEVE occupied, bites her lip, and goes up to DUFFY, who is about to follow CHRISTABEL.]

Hallie. It's awfully good, Charley. Pâté de foie gras.

Duffy. Is it? The way I look at it, it's liver.

Hallie. You always say the most delightful things! I brought it for you.

Duffy.

[Taking it]

Thanks. If I put two together maybe they'll amount to something.

Hallie. A big strong man like you ought to eat more than a girl.

Duffy. Oh, I keep up my strength, don't worry.

Hallie. I love to see men eat; you know, putting away great portions of red meat and pounds and pounds of things. I just sit and watch them and think how extraordinary they are.

Duffy. In that case I could show you a good time every day, and no charge at all. This is woman's food.

Hallie. That's what I always say. Sandwiches are just woman's food.

[*She looks at STEVE and MARTHA, then whispers to DUFFY.*]

Duffy. Why not?

[*HALLIE and DUFFY start out left, HALLIE looking back a moment. STEVE glances at them as they go out.*]

Martha. It's a free country, you know.

Steve. What do you mean?

Martha. If you want to see how she looks in the completely, now's your time.

Hallie.

[*Outside, shrieking*]

Oh, Charley—the things you think of to say! Charley!

Steve. I can live without.

Martha. You'll be the first ever refused.

Steve. Well, that's something.

Martha. Do you think I'm catty, Steve—I mean just vilely catty?

Steve. I never noticed.

Martha. I am, though.

[*She rises.*]

Oh, I can't bear it—and I won't! Why should I care whether you like me or not? Why does a girl have to care whether anybody likes her or not? It's disgusting—to care. It's a curse—and we carry it with us everywhere—just like the curse of Eve! There shouldn't be men and women! There should be just—people.

Steve. Why, Martha. I never heard you talk that way.

Martha. You're a man. You wouldn't understand.

Steve. Where are you going?

Martha. Anywhere! Nowhere! Only don't come with me unless you want to. I won't play any game for anybody. It's not worth it!

[*She goes out left. STEVE starts after her, and then pauses.*]

Steve. Hanus.

Hanus. Yeah, Steve.

Steve. It's no use. I can't do it alone. I'm going right straight ahead and marry Martha again. And she'll hate me for it—all over again.

Hanus. Well, if that's the way it is—that's the way it is.

Steve. We came back to get another chance, and we can't go all through it again. Only—I'm falling for her again, Hanus. I'm in love with her all over again—and I just can't quit.—

Hanus. What can I do?

Steve. You'd better jam the machine, Hanus. Don't spoil it too much. Just fix it so it doesn't work for a couple of minutes.

Hanus. I guess I can do it.

Steve. Lift the wire off the wheel. Don't break anything. Lift it off and then put it back on again.

Hanus. I'll go back to the shop now.

Steve. All right. And afterward you'd better find me and tell me.

Hanus. Yeah, I will, Steve.

[STEVE goes out left.]

Mrs. Rutledge.

[Calling from the right]

Hallie! Charley! Martha! Stephen! Mr. Oglethorpe!

[She enters from the right.]

Where are they?

Hanus.

[On his way out]

I don't know, ma'am.

[HALLIE and DUFFY, out of sight of MRS. RUTLEDGE, go softly along the ledge to the right.]

Mrs. Rutledge. I was gone only a moment—one moment, and when I returned there was no one, not one of them—after all I said about the behavior to be expected of ladies and gentlemen! Is there no such thing as honor among young people? Is the whole world changing—so that there's no principle left, so that girls don't care what's said of them—or—or what they do? Hallie! Martha!

[*She peers over the ledge, then sits.*]

Hanus. They just went away by themselves to spoon. They don't like anybody to see them when they're spooning.

[*HALLIE and DUFFY catch hands and laugh silently.*]

Mrs. Rutledge. And you—you unspeakable person—you're the only one left here to tell me.—Oh, I shall die of shame and rage! What use am I, what good am I in this world? When I wanted to be so kind to them, and they have so little respect for me—

[*She breaks down and cries.*]

I want to die, I want to die and be out of it all—alone in the world—and nobody but these nasty children—

Hanus. Why, Mrs. Rutledge—

Mrs. Rutledge. Don't call me Mrs. Rutledge! I'm human as much as they are—and they've no right to—oh, what good am I? I want to die—

Hanus. Gee, I'm sorry—

Mrs. Rutledge. I don't hate you, Hanus. I don't hate anybody. Only you say such unspeakable things—and I'm so alone—

[*She pauses and wipes her eyes.*]

Would you—would you sit here with me—so it won't be so embarrassing if somebody comes—?

[*HALLIE and DUFFY gape at each other, listening.*]

Would you please?

Hanus. Me?

Mrs. Rutledge. Never mind.

Hanus. I've got to go back to the bicycle shop.

Mrs. Rutledge. Very well, Hanus. I'll tell them.

[*HANUS goes to the right. MRS. RUTLEDGE rises and looks around.*]

Hallie! Martha!

[*DUFFY and HALLIE slip out to the left along the ledge below her. MARTHA and STEPHEN come in along the ledge from the right.*]

Charley! Stephen! Mr. Ogleshorpe!

[*She goes out to the left.*]

Stephen!

Steve. She was calling me.

Martha.

[*Seating herself on the rock*]

Don't go.

Steve. She seemed pretty excited.

Martha. I know, but—we're not children—and I want you here.

Steve.

[*Sitting beside her*]

Then I won't answer anything but a fire-alarm.

Martha. Are you glad you sold the automobile?

Steve. Yes.

Martha. Why?

Steve. Because I'll have some money to put into the shop. And when I have a real place—I have some ideas—things I want to make—

Martha. Automobiles?

Steve. Maybe—oh lots of things.

Martha. I thought you might think of going in with Mr. Arlington.

Steve. I don't know.

[*MARTHA leans back and closes her eyes.*]

Let me put my coat under your head.

Martha. Would you?

[*He does so, is tempted to kiss her, then refrains.*]

Steve. Do you want to talk about music?

Martha. If you do.

Steve. I don't know enough. You're lovely, leaning back there.

Martha. You know, Stephen, a girl that tries to be good is always at a disadvantage.

Steve. How?

Martha. I've never let anybody kiss me, except in games. Some girls let you kiss them, don't they?

Steve. Only I'd never expect you to. I wouldn't ask it.

Martha. Why, Stephen?

Steve. I wouldn't dare.—It was true, what you said last night, about wanting something better than just being like the others.

Martha. Only today—I don't mind at all—

Steve.

[*Incredulous*]

You mean—if I touch you?

Martha.

[*Her eyes still closed*]

Yes.

Steve.

[*Taking her hand reverently*]

I thought you'd—be angry.

Martha. Some days a girl wants—just that—only she doesn't dare—tell you—

[*A pause*]

Steve.

[*Leaning over to kiss her lips lightly*]

You're sweeter than honeysuckle.

Martha. It's sweet—but it's terrible—and tragic, too.

Steve. Is it?

Martha. Because we're alone here—in this world—and so many things could happen—but when I let you kiss me then only one thing can happen—and it's frightening—because if you make a mistake—there's never any way out—

Steve. It wouldn't be a mistake, Martha.

Martha. Men are always so sure. It's like a man to be sure. But a girl. She sees so many things that could happen—and she has just this one life—and when she's tired and lonely and hungry for something—

maybe she lets the wrong person kiss her—and then she's a slave—to what he wants to do. All her life long.

Steve. Do you think I might be the wrong one?

Martha. Oh, Stephen—would you always be good to me?

Steve. Always.

Martha. But you don't know. None of us know what we'll be.

Steve. I know I'd always be good to you.

Martha. Men are so sure.

Steve. Could I kiss you again, Martha?

Martha. Yes.—

[*He does so.*]

There's nothing we can do. There's no use trying to be wise.

Steve. You mean we just have to fall in love—and—and take our medicine?

Martha. Oh, you poor Stephen—is it as bad as that?

Steve. It's what I want—that's all I know—the only thing I want.

Martha. You say the most blundering, stupid things—and then you say just the right thing—and oh, you darling, you never know which is which—

Steve.

[*Taking her in his arms*]

Anyway I have the five hundred now, and we can get married.

Martha. Oh, but you'll need that—to put in the shop—

Steve. Only a little of it.

Martha. Stephen, Stephen—I don't want to spoil your chances—

Steve. My chances—! I'm going to be a great man, Martha.

Martha. And I won't make it more difficult?

Steve. You'll make it possible.—I don't care about a lot of money; I just care about the things I want to do. Inventions and mathematics and machines.

Martha. But if you don't care about money they'll always take it away from you.

Steve. Maybe. But they can't take away the things I do. I don't want to put money into Arlington's business. I'd rather you had some furniture—for our house.

Martha. You mean we could start out with—real silver, and real linen—

Steve. Everything real. Especially you and me.

Martha. Then we will.

[She sits up.]

And I'll make an end to being afraid of it. You are the one, and you always have been.

Steve. God knows you're the one, and always will be.

Martha. And, Stephen, I have kept myself for you, just for you—and I know people said I was a prude and a blue-stocking—but now—now it's decided—I could even go swimming with you.—I wouldn't care if you saw me. I'd be proud.

Steve. Let's go. Let's slip away and go.

Martha. Stephen—over and over again I have such a strange feeling—didn't we sit here before, and say all these things?

Steve. Did we, Martha?

Martha. Every word, just as we said it now.

[There is a sudden, dramatic darkness, as if a veil had been pulled over the sun. They look up.]

Martha. It must be going to storm. Hanus was wishing it would rain.

Steve. I've never seen it so dark, in the middle of the day.

Martha. As if somebody'd cut off the lights.

Steve. It must be Hanus, fixing the machine.

[He rises.]

Martha. Now, darling, I know you think a lot of Hanus, but don't get him mixed up with the Creator.

[It grows even darker, a frightening dark.]

Steve. Yes, Hanus must have got back to the shop.

Martha. He won't get wet, then, will he, even if we do?

[Off to the right HALLIE can be heard calling.]

Hallie. Stevie! Stevie! Aren't you coming?

Martha. It's Hallie. Well, perhaps she can wait.

Steve. Yes, it's Hallie.

[He takes a step to the right.]

Martha. What is it, Stephen? I'm frightened. What is this darkness?

Steve. I don't want to go, Martha. I want to stay and say I love you. But I asked Hanus to fix it, so we'd be happier—so you won't be so terribly unhappy—and I won't—

Martha. Stephen!

Steve. Yes.

Martha. What are you saying? I love you, Stephen.

Steve. It'll be better. Better for both of us.

Hallie.

[Outside]

Stevie! Stevie!

Steve. I'll—I'll have to go. That's part of it.

Martha. Part of what, Stephen? Your face is hidden, and I'm frightened!

Steve. You'll know, Martha. You'll know when it happens.

Hallie.

[Outside]

Stevie!

Steve. Yes, I'm coming.

[He goes out to the right. The lights go out entirely.]

Martha.

[From the darkness]

Stephen, darling—Stephen!

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE IV

SCENE: *While the stage is still in darkness HALLIE can be heard calling sharply.*

Hallie. Quick, somebody! Hurry! He doesn't come up, and I think he's drowning! Hanus! Please, Hanus! Where are you?

Hanus. Who is it?

Hallie. It's Stephen! Here, under the bank!

Hanus. Get out of the way!

[There is a pause.]

Hallie. Oh, I'll never forgive myself! Never!

Hanus. Will you shut up?—You'll be all right, Steve. You'll be all right. You've got to be.

[The lights come up gradually and STEVE is seen standing alone, feeling his way blindly.]

Steve. Where am I, then? The river was just beyond; I was going toward it, and I seemed to fall and stepped into cloud. This is nowhere, I'd say, nowhere at all.

[The circle of light extends a little, and an OLD WOMAN is seen to be kneeling with her back to him.]

If it's someone I know

I could ask where I am. I know who it is.

It's Angela. No, it couldn't be Angela—

it's the herb woman. She told fortunes too.

She used to spend the summer pulling ginseng

for her witches' tea.—Out along hedge-rows mostly,

that's where you'd find her. Can you tell me where we are?

I'm lost here. You must know the path to town.

[The OLD WOMAN shifts on her knees and looks up at him. Her face is like Angela's. She turns away again.]

That time the boys threw stones
and one of them cut your face, I wasn't there.
I never threw at you—I tried to stop it
when I was with them.

[*She turns toward him again.*]

Once when I was sick
you brought your kettle and brewed medicine
over the fire,—and then you sat with me
all night—and I'd have died, my mother said,
only for you. Don't you remember?

The Herb Woman.

[*Chuckling*]

Huh, huh!

You were a pretty boy. Oh, you were a goner,
if it hadn't been for me and my old basket,
eh, a goner.

[*She peers at him.*]

I don't see well today,
but what I see I don't care for.

Steve. Can you tell me
how to get back to the picnic?

The Herb Woman. Oh, that's it.

Lost from his picnic. Wanting to get back.
Nothing will do but picnics when we're young;
picnics and boys and girls. Ribbons and trousers,
that's what it is.

Steve. Well, keep it to yourself.
I'll find it alone.

Herb Woman. So hot, my little man?

Aye, you'll follow a ribbon far enough,
back through the stars, and forward through your time
till you come back to the land's end. When you have one
you must have t'other. When you have t'other to kiss
she's not the one.

Steve. How do you know?

Herb Woman. But bide and wait,

your own will come to you. What a man asks
that he shall have; the bitter will be sweet
upon his tongue, the sweet be bitter. Ask
and you shall have, and that's your punishment,
along with your reward.

Steve. Tell me my way.

Herb Woman. Forth from this place a myriad ways go out
as the rays go from a candle in the night,
and you shall walk them all, and never done;
you shall return and walk them to the end
and never rest, but try them still, path by path,
numberless paths, forever, each a dream.
What have you wished now?

Steve. Never mind what I wished.

Herb Woman. I can tell your fortune.

Steve. I don't want it.

Herb Woman. Give me your hand.

Steve. Well, tell it.

Herb Woman. God, what a paw!
Would you wish to know the secret, why it is
I can tell fortunes?

Steve. What is it?

Herb Woman. There are no fortunes,
good or bad. All fortunes are alike.
Tell one and you've told all. Now when you're young
you think, "What a glad go up this gentleman
was born to—but this lad, what a sorry go down
his mother brought him forth to." Then you're old,
and you mind it's not so merry to go up,
and mind it's not so sorry to come down,
because there's nor up or down, nor good or evil,
nor wrong or right—for it all comes round again,
even our dying, even our being born,
on this ferris wheel.

Steve. Read me my destiny.

Herb Woman. Your destiny's your shadow on your path,
falling before you where you want to go.
Where are you going now?

Steve. Back to find Hallie. Not that I want to, though.
Only I have to.

Herb Woman. Then it's your destiny,
too much of it. Aye, you shall have your Hallie;
be wary what you wish for when you're young
for when you're old you'll get it. Still it's no matter,
for while you like you'll have your try again;
coming to many ways and choosing one
you'll learn to choose another. Though what you'll learn's
but how it takes more than a palace to make a king,
yet there's many a king with no palace.

Steve. How do I get back?
Where am I now?

Herb Woman. This is no place or time.
What happens here has never happened before,
isn't happening now, can't be, yet it's more real
than all that happens.

Steve. God, that's a beautiful answer.
That's a honey.

Herb Woman. There's Hanus. Ask it of him.
[HANUS is seen standing in the rear.]

Steve. Hanus?

Hanus. You're all right, Stephen. You'll be all right.

Steve. Where are they all?

Hanus. Not far. I jammed the wagon,
and the sky went so black I lost the path,
but I got back in time.

[*He points.*]

Over this way.

Steve. Why, sure, it's easy. Where's the old woman?

Hanus. Who?

Steve. The herb Woman. You know. She was out picking ginseng.

Hanus. I didn't see her.

[She has disappeared.]

Steve. She had me scared for a minute,
gabbling about my fortune. "No place or time"
and "It never happened".

[The figures disappear.]

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE V

SCENE: *On the ledge.*

STEPHEN is lying face down over a rolled-up coat, HANUS bending over him. HALLIE runs in bare-foot, buttoning her dress, her hair down. STEPHEN's clothes are dripping from the water. The sun is still under a cloud.

Hanus. The water's out of him. He's coming to.

[He turns STEPHEN over.]

Hallie. Is he going to live?

[She stands at a little distance.]

Hanus. Oh, shut up.—Yes, he'll live.

Hallie. I didn't mean to do it.

Hanus. You did it.—Come here and hold his head up, will you?

Hallie.

[Reluctant]

I'm afraid he's dead.

Hanus. No, he's not dead, you crawfish, no thanks to you.

Hallie. All right.

[She kneels and takes STEPHEN's head on her knees.]

Hanus. Don't let go now.

[He takes a bottle from his pocket and forces a few drops into STEPHEN's mouth.]

Hallie. Oh, Hanus, do you carry liquor?

Hanus. Shut up.

Hallie. He's—he's alive.

Steve.

[Opening his eyes]

Is it Martha?

Hallie. No, it's me. It's Hallie.

Steve. Hallie? Oh, yes. Down at the pool. I must have—what happened to me?

Hallie. You fell in—I—I pushed you backwards—

Steve. I must have hit my head on the rock—

Hallie. I didn't mean to, Stephen.—He's going to be alive, Hanus!—You didn't want to go swimming, and I thought if you were all wet you'd have to.

Steve. I certainly got—all wet. Inside and out.

[HANUS gives him another drink. STEPHEN chokes.]

God, what's that?

Hanus. Fire-water.

Steve. Let me have the rest. I need it.

[He gulps down a long draught.]

That's better, if it stays where I put it.

[He shivers.]

I'm getting you all wet.

Hallie. I hope nobody comes.

Steve. Why?

Hallie. I'm a sight. Don't look at me.

Steve. You look fine. Anyway you're warm.

[He snuggles his head back.]

Hallie. Ooh—you cold beast!

[She puts her arms round him and brushes back his hair.]

Now I'll have to marry you, won't I?

Steve. Why?

Hallie. For what I did.

Steve. Yeah, I guess so.

Hanus. You couldn't do worse.

Hallie. Do you mean it, Stephen?

Steve. Sure.

Hallie. Oh, you darling.

[She leans down and kisses him.]

Steve. Do you mind? I've been drinking.

Hallie. I love it.

[She kisses him again.]

Hanus. I'm getting out of here.

Hallie. Will you bring me my shoes and stockings, Hanus?

Hanus. Why not? I always have to wait on his women.

[He goes out right.]

Hallie. Why did you run away from me all day, Stevie?

Steve. I didn't.

Hallie. Yes, you did. It looks as if you had to be hit over the head before you could like me, doesn't it?

Steve. Let's make it the last time.

Hallie. All right.

[She seals her promise with a kiss. DUFFY looks in from the left along the ledge, and beckons to CHRISTABEL, who slips up behind him. She puts her fingers to her lips and they retreat.]

Steve. How did I get here?

Hallie. Hanus carried you.

Steve. Good old Hanus. He always rescues me.

Hallie. You mean he rescued you before?

Steve. Yes—all the same. Only it was a different girl that time.

Hallie. What are you talking about?

Steve. I don't know.

Hallie. Maybe it will all come out the way papa said, Stevie.

Steve. Maybe it will—this time.

Hallie. Aren't you happy?

Steve. Yes.

[DUFFY and CHRISTABEL come back along the ledge, bringing
OGLETHORPE and DELLA. DUFFY lifts his hand for a baton and
they all sing.]

The Quartet.

I'm dreaming now of Hallie;
Sweet Hallie, sweet Hallie;
I'm dreaming now of Hallie,
For the thought of her is one that never dies.

Hallie. I don't know what you think's so funny.

The Quartet.

She's sleeping in the valley,
The valley, the valley,
She's sleeping in the valley,
And the mocking-bird is singing where she lies.

Duffy.

[*Imitating MRS. RUTLEDGE*]

Now something dulcet, something really dulcet and tender!

The Quartet.

Listen to the mocking-bird,
Listen to the mocking-bird.
The mocking-bird is singing o'er her grave.
Listen to the mocking-bird,
Listen to the mocking-bird,
Still singing where the weeping willows wave.

[*They burst into laughter.*]

Duffy.

[*Still imitating*]

And now tomorrow evening, nothing preventing, bring the little red
hymnal after prayer-meeting, and we'll all—oh, I'm sorry, I'm late—I
must rush—foreign missions—so sorry—the young ladies will
remember in my absence—propriety please—in all things—

[*MRS. RUTLEDGE enters. The laughter is suddenly hushed.*]

Hallie. I'm glad if you think it's amusing, because I don't. I've heard it
too often.

Mrs. Rutledge. I shall remember this, Mr. Duffy.

[*She passes the QUARTET and sees HALLIE and STEPHEN.*]

So this is where you are. Within easy distance of my call, where you must have heard me. Hallie, have you been in swimming?—You have.

Hallie. What if I have?

[*HANUS enters with Hallie's shoes and stockings; also a chemise.*]

Duffy. He fell in and she pulled him out.

[*STEVE sits up.*]

Mrs. Rutledge. Very likely. Hanus, what are you doing with Hallie's shoes and stockings?

Hanus.

[*Dropping them*]

This always happens to me—always.

[*He stuffs the chemise in his pocket.*]

Mrs. Rutledge. I'm quite grateful to you. You bring in exactly the evidence I need.

Hallie. If you mean you think I've been in swimming with Stephen, why certainly I have, and I don't care!

Mrs. Rutledge. Hallie!

Hallie. I don't care, because we're going to be married, Stephen and I.

Mrs. Rutledge. Married! You and Stephen! But that makes it all so different! Oh, my dear children, what a perfect day this has been, with such a happy ending! Let me embrace you both!

[*She goes up to them.*]

But you're wet, Stephen—your clothes—

Steve. I fell in—but it was Hanus pulled me out.

Mrs. Rutledge. Hanus? Why Hanus, why didn't you tell me? You've been a hero!

Hanus. It's a good thing he wears his hair long.

[*MARTHA runs in from the right.*]

Martha. Stephen—oh, Stephen—they told me you were drowned!

[*REIGER follows her in.*]

Steve. Not quite. I'm fine now.

[*She kneels beside him.*]

Martha. Where did you go? I looked for you everywhere.

Christabel. Did you know, Martha? Stephen and Hallie are going to be married.

Martha. Stephen and—Hallie?

Christabel. Isn't it marvellous?

Martha. Is it true, Stephen?

Steve.

[*Miserable*]

Yes, Martha.

Martha. Was it all a mistake? What we said?

Steve. Yes, Martha.

Martha. Yes, it's—it's marvellous.—

[*She steps back.*]

I must have sounded pretty tragic.

[*She turns to Reiger.*]

Here we come dashing to the rescue, and it's—it's a wedding announcement! I hope you'll be—

[*She turns away to hide her face.*]

happy.

Hallie. You mustn't mind too much, Martha. We were so much in love it just had to happen.

Martha. Oh, I can see that! and I don't mind at all. It makes everything so easy.

[*She runs out. REIGER follows her.*]

Mrs. Rutledge. And now if you'll all give them a few moments to make themselves more presentable—please.

[*The CHOIR starts out.*]

Give me the shoes and stockings, Hanus, and the underthings.

[*He does so.*]

If you don't mind, Hallie, we'll find a covert where you may dress with some privacy.

[*The CHOIR has made its way off stage.*]

Hallie. Yes, ma'am.

[*She follows MRS. RUTLEDGE out.*]

Hanus. Well, it was all back here, just like we thought it was.

Steve. Yes, it was all here. Everything that ever happened is right back here, happening all the time.

Hanus. And everything that's going to happen?

Steve. I don't know what's going to happen.

Hanus. What do we do now?

Steve. We're not traveling the same direction this time. We went all the way back to the depot, and took another train. Only I guess people don't learn much by experience.

Hanus. Why do you say so?

Steve. I still want Martha—the worst way.

Hanus. Don't you want to be rich?

Steve. I'm not thinking about that part of it.

Hanus. Well, I am. What are you thinking about?

Steve. What we came back here for. Martha was sorry she married me. And now she won't have to.

CURTAIN

THE STAR-WAGON
ACT THREE

ACT THREE

SCENE I

SCENE: *The drawing-room of Stephen Minch's house, a smugly palatial affair, existing in the false future of his marriage with Hallie, say about 1937. There's a front door at the right, a rear door at the left, a staircase winding down from the upper floor, a grand piano and any amount of Middle Western pictures and furniture.*

A small man in a dress suit sits with his back to the

audience, a full cocktail tray beside him, drinking alone. He finishes one glass, takes another and downs it. He rises and wanders to the piano, and is seen to be STEPHEN MINCH, an old man. He sits at the piano, studies it, puts out a hand to the keys, glances upstairs and refrains. He has taken a third cocktail with him, and still carries it. HANUS, not so young as he was, comes down the stairs in his old clothes but wearing a stiff collar.

Hanus. I don't know what the women do to a man to get him into one of them monkey-suits. Dress 'em up like so many movie ushers and drive 'em past a grand-stand full of butlers—in formation—every woman holding the reins on her own gelding. I couldn't stand it, so I left home. Not much home to leave, with that anthem-croaking old prissie hiding my tobacco behind the toilet-seat, but what there was of it I left. Looks difficult before you do it, but after you do it you wouldn't go back for money.

Stephen. Are you going to live here now, Hanus?

Hanus. Am I invited?

Stephen. Not by Hallie. Personally I wouldn't want to send you back to Mrs. Rutledge.

Hanus. I never should have married her, Steve, never should have married anybody.

Stephen. We're not eating at home tonight. You'll have it all to yourself here.

Hanus. Then this comes off, and the butler can choke to death watching my Adam's apple.

[He takes off his collar and tie, and pockets them.]

That butler of yours never should 'a' gone through Harvard. Every time he looks at me he suffers concussion of the brain.

Stephen.

[Setting down his empty glass and rising]

There's something I want to tell you about, Hanus.

[He pauses.]

Hanus. I'm waiting. I'm all braced and waiting.

Stephen. You haven't got a chance, Hanus. You don't give yourself a chance.

Hanus. What's it about? More about my clothes and general deportment? You weren't born in one of those things yourself, you know. I've seen you bare, and you're human as I am. Hell, I used to know you when you were honest.

Stephen. Oh, the hell with it.

Hanus. What is it, Steve?

Stephen. It's no use.

Hanus. I'd go quite a distance for you, Steve. Further'n you go for me probably. I'll put the damn thing back on again.

[He reaches for his collar.]

Stephen. No, that's not it. It's nothing. Nothing I can do.

Hanus. O.K.

[He helps himself to a cocktail.]

Humming-bird poison. Made up to tickle the women into sleeping with the wrong men. Hits 'em right between the legs.

Stephen. For Christ's sake, turn off the record, will you, and stop bleeding around like a stuck pig! Do you think I like the place any more than you do—or the clothes I wear, or the company I keep? I haven't been in the laboratory for ten years! I've done nothing but sit in an office figuring out how to out-smart somebody out of his money! And all you can think of is how to make it tougher for me! I've been trying to make it easier for you! I've been trying to warn you to fit in and play the game, but if you won't learn you won't!

Hanus. Maybe I'm too dumb to learn.

[HALLIE, growing old hysterically, descends the stairs in evening dress, and crosses to the cocktail tray.]

Hallie.

[To STEPHEN]

When we're having guests for cocktails you might at least wait till the guests arrive.

Hanus. Jeez, I thought I was a guest.

Hallie. As for Hanus, his dinner's ready, and he may as well eat it now.

[*She eyes HANUS with distaste.*]

Hanus. You don't want me out of the room any faster'n I want to go.

[*He goes out into the dining-room.*]

Hallie. This can't go on, you know.

Stephen. What?

Hallie. Hanus staying here.

Stephen. I never said it could.

Hallie. But he's here, and he drives me insane, completely insane. His room's a sty, he never changes his clothes, he insults me every time I see him, and he takes it for granted he has as much right in this house as I have!

Stephen. When it comes to value received, maybe he has.

Hallie. And what does that mean?

Stephen. Anything you like.

Hallie. You've been drinking.

Stephen. You'll be drinking, yourself, in a couple of minutes.

Hallie. That's cheap.

Stephen. We're all cheap. The whole gang of us, except maybe Hanus.

Hallie. Well, I warn you, I won't put up with Hanus much longer.

Stephen. I guess you won't have to put up with him much longer.

Hallie. I'm glad to hear it.—I forgot to tell you—you won't have to bring me home from the Melton dinner. Mr. Duffy's going to be there.

Stephen. If you're going to sleep at the club you'd better pack some street clothes. It makes the neighbors talk to see you coming home in a dinner dress around noon.

Hallie. I have a perfect right to sleep at the club.

Stephen. So has my old pal Charley Duffy. And you have a perfect right, under the Constitution, to be a tramp.

Hallie. I'm not a tramp, but if I can find a little consideration and a little feeling for beauty away from home I shall take it.

Stephen. That's what I said. If you can find a little consideration and a little feeling for beauty away from home you have a right to go after it. And when it comes to Charley, he certainly goes around feeling for beauty, right and left.

Hallie. I don't know why I live with you!

Stephen. You don't.—But I can tell you why you don't divorce me.

Hallie. I've wondered for a long while.

Stephen. Because you're afraid the alimony might be less than your present allowance, and Duffy wouldn't marry you any more than I'd do it again myself.

Hallie. Maybe I know more about that than you do.

Stephen. I hope you do.

[*The door-bell rings and DUFFY's voice is heard in the hall.*]

Duffy.

[*Outside*]

Oh, walk in, folks. Enter the palace of Stephen Minch and behold our guzzling host with his fair consort!

[*DUFFY enters, followed by REIGER and MARTHA, dressed for dinner. They are, of course, older, except for DUFFY, who is much as before.*]

What, no butler!

[*He poses as one.*]

Mr. and Mrs. Paul Reiger, of West Terrace, Reigerville, Ohio! Mr. Charles Duffy, pirate, unattached, slightly squiffed, but able to drive! Sorry to be late, Hallie, but the triffic was teraffic as they say in New York. God, aren't you beautiful? How do you like my new tails?

[*He revolves before her.*]

Hallie. Gorgeous.

Duffy. Gimme a drink.

[*She does so.*]

Reiger. Hello, Steve.

Stephen. Hello, Paul. Hello, Martha.

Martha. Hello, Stephen.

Duffy. Where's Hanus?

Stephen. Eating his dinner.

Duffy. We've got to get it over with tonight, you know.

Stephen. All right, get it over with.

Duffy. You girls go upstairs.

Hallie. I don't know why.

Martha. Something disreputable, no doubt.

Hallie. What do I get to go upstairs?

Duffy. Diamonds, darling—pearls and rubies. Also affection.

Hallie. If Hanus is being fired I want to watch.

Duffy. Well, he is.

Hallie. From what?

Duffy. We turned over part of that holding company to him—you know, to avoid income tax—and now we've got it all fixed to do a little merry-go-round with the stocks and he won't play ball.

Hallie. You mean he won't turn over the stock? But that's dishonest!

Duffy. I'll say it's dishonest!

Martha. Why do you need him?

Duffy. We haven't got a majority without him.

Martha. It looks as if Master Hanus was in control of the situation.

Duffy. That's what he thinks.

Hallie. Why isn't he?

Duffy. Never mind why—only he isn't.

Reiger. I thought his old woman was coming over.

Duffy. She is.

Hallie. Coming here? Now Charley!

[*MARTHA turns to the book-case and takes down a book.*]

Duffy. Had to be done. She ought to be here now. Call him in, will you, Steve?

[STEPHEN *goes into the dining-room.*]

Hallie. You were pretty silly to trust Hanus.

Reiger. He's no thief, you know—just a plain fool.

[STEPHEN *and* HANUS *come in from the dining-room, HANUS carrying his napkin.*]

Duffy. Now listen, Hanus. We're asking you to do only one thing—and that's to vote your stock for the reorganization. That's all we want.

Hanus. You don't get it.

[*He tries to put the napkin in his pocket, discovers his collar and tie, and thrusts them all in together.*]

Reiger. What's in the other pocket? Rabbits?

Hanus. You don't get it.

Duffy. Then I'll tell you what we're going to do. You're crazy, and you've been crazy ever since I first saw you. We're going to have you declared crazy, have you put away and let your wife vote the stock for you.

Hanus. You can't do it.

Duffy. The alienation officer says I can. He's outside waiting.

[*There's a ring at the door.*]

That's your wife now.

[STEPHEN *goes to the door and brings in the woman we remember as* MRS. RUTLEDGE, *now only a little older, it seems, than the others.*]

Stephen. Come in, Mrs. Wicks. Hanus is here.

[*She comes slowly forward.*]

Mrs. Wicks. Oh, Hanus, you've been cruel leaving without a word! Oh, he's been terribly cruel to me.

Duffy. He's crazy.

Mrs. Wicks. Yes, I think he is. I honestly think he is.

Duffy. Would you swear to it?

Mrs. Wicks. Oh, I'd have to, wouldn't I? Doesn't it seem as if I'd have to?

Duffy. If you want the stock in your name you'd have to.

Mrs. Wicks. Yes, indeed I think I would.

Hanus. Look, Charley, I don't mind cheating the government. That's what you put the stock in my name for, and nobody minds that. But when it comes to wrecking the holding company to clean out the investors and swipe the whole kit and kaboodle for yourselves, I can't figure it. It's a dirty steal of twenty million dollars from people that can't afford it, and I'm not voting.

Duffy. Here's something you might consider. You can keep the stock. Take it as a gift. Only vote our way this once.

Hanus. I don't want it. Why are you so hot about reorganizing? You don't need that twenty million.

Reiger. As a matter of fact, we do, Hanus. We pooled our assets in the new company, and we'll come out plucked if it doesn't go through.

Hanus. Maybe you'd be better off without so much money.

Duffy. We'll get it anyway, you know. Only one way'll be unpleasant for you, and the other you'll be on easy street.

Hanus. You can't do anything to me.

Duffy. Why not?

Hanus. Because Steve won't let you.

Duffy. Oh, won't he?

Hanus. No, he won't.

Duffy. I think he will. Steve?

Stephen. As a matter of fact, I won't! You can all get the hell out of here! All of you! And take your five cent alienist with you!

Duffy. How will you look when I begin to squeeze the tire company, Steve? About as flat as Hanus, I should judge.

Stephen. Oh, it's me now. I'm tagged.

[He walks across to the piano, sits down as if to play, strikes one violent chord, then turns to HANUS.]

Stephen. Vote your stock for them, Hanus.

Hanus. I can't do it, Steve.

Stephen. I say vote your stock for 'em, the crooks!

Hanus. Well, I won't.

Stephen. Oh, you won't!

[*He leaps up.*]

Then you can go sit in a padded cell for a while! I wash my hands of you! Maybe you think you're a little tin Jesus being crucified—all right, be a tin Jesus and get yourself crucified!—What difference does it make? The world's made up of crooks and thieves, and if you want to do business and eat regular meals you have to be one of them! We can't afford to lose all we've got, and that officer out there takes orders like a stenographer! You can vote the stock the way they want it or else! For all I know you are crazy! I know I am!

Martha. Stephen—you'd put Hanus away?

Stephen. I'm doing it.

[HANUS *sits.*]

Duffy.

[*To HANUS*]

Well, say something. We're going to dinner with the tin-plate king and his collection of Titians, whatever that is.

Reiger. Blondes, probably.

Duffy.

[*Looking at his watch*]

So, say something.

[HANUS *is silent.*]

Martha.

[*With a book in her hands*]

Did you ever read any Dryden, Paul?

Reiger. I heard of him in school.

Martha. Listen to this:

All, all of a piece throughout:
Thy chase had a beast in view;
Thy wars brought nothing about;
Thy lovers were all untrue.
'Tis well an old age is out,

And time to begin a new.

Reiger.

[Watching HANUS, not listening]

It rhymes.

Martha. Yes, it rhymes.

Hanus. All right. Have it any way you like.

Duffy.

[Handing him a paper]

Sign the proxy then, and it's all over.

[HANUS signs. STEPHEN plays a few wild chords on the piano.]

Reiger. Are we going?

Duffy. Come on, let's get out of here.

Hallie. A very good idea.

Stephen. I'm staying home.

Hallie. Very well. I'll manage.

Reiger. Good night.

[But nobody answers him.]

Martha. You're better than all of them, Hanus. Anyway, you believe in something.

Hanus.

[Looking up]

Not any more.

[They all go out, but MARTHA, HANUS and STEPHEN.]

Martha. You're changed, Stephen. You're like the others, bitter and cruel. You've never done anything like this before.

Stephen. What of it? It had to be done.

Martha. I can remember a time when you'd have lost everything, and never given it a thought, before you'd betray Hanus.

Stephen. It's Hanus' funeral, not mine.

Martha. No, I think it's yours. Your—funeral.

Stephen. It all went wrong a long time ago, Martha—when I married Hallie and not you. But it's done with and gone and there's nothing to do now. I know what I am, and I don't like it. I'm not real. And you're not real. We're all a big sham—but there's no changing it. Too much has gone under the bridge.

Martha. Why did you marry Hallie then?

Stephen. Because you wanted me to.

Martha. I never said so.

Stephen. Oh yes, you did. Yes, you did! Don't you remember? Don't you—no, you wouldn't! Go on—go with the others! They're waiting for you—and it's all too late! Go on!

[*MARTHA goes out. After a pause STEPHEN makes up his mind and goes to HANUS.*]

Now forget it.

[*HANUS looks up at him.*]

Hanus, I'm a—

Hanus.

[*Hard*]

Yeah, you're everything you can say.

Stephen. Because you're my only friend, Hanus—except for Martha. You're the only one I care about, or that cares about me. They'd all cut my throat for a quarter of one per cent of almost anything.

Hanus. Well, you'd do the same to me.

Stephen. Maybe I would—but—

Hanus. But what?

Stephen. Hanus—where's that machine we used to have?

Hanus. Up in my room.

Stephen. What kind of shape's it in?

Hanus. I don't know. It's just sitting there. It wouldn't work a couple of years ago when I tried it.

Stephen. You tried it?

Hanus. Yeah. I got desperate. But it wouldn't work.

Stephen. We might be stuck here—forever.

Hanus. We are stuck.

Stephen. Let's go tinker with it. It's got to work.

Hanus. You think you can fix it?

Stephen. Might as well be dead as here.

Hanus. Sure, let's tinker with it.

[They clasp hands.]

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE II

SCENE: *The lights go up slowly, revealing the dining-room of Stephen's cottage as in the first scene of the play. The table is set for breakfast again. In the corner at the left STEPHEN and HANUS have just let go of the Star-Wagon and are looking at the table.*

Hanus. She's set it for breakfast. How long have we been away?

Stephen. Twenty-four hours.

Hanus. I don't figure in hours any more. They don't mean a thing.

Stephen. I still get hungry.

Hanus. No scrap-iron today. Maybe she ran out of scrap-iron.

Stephen. Maybe she remembered you didn't like it.

Hanus. Would she know about—all that—that happened?

Stephen. I don't know. She was there.

Hanus. Look what I'm wearing.

Stephen. Look what I'm wearing.

Hanus. Might as well sit down.

Stephen. I don't know where Martha is. We've been gone all night, you know.

Hanus. All night? How do you mean?

Stephen. From her point of view. It's just a matter of the point of view, time is.

[*He goes into the inner room. HANUS sits at the table.*]

Hanus. From my point of view it was thirty-five years. And do you know how long thirty-five years is, boy? It comprises the entire Triassic period, including the Pleistocene, whatever that is. It goes back to before God made the earth, and all I can think of to want now is breakfast.

[*MARTHA comes in from the street, wearing a hat and coat.*]

Martha. Oh, Hanus—where's Stephen?

Hanus. In there looking for you.

Martha. Oh. Is he all right?

Hanus. He's fine.

[*STEPHEN re-enters.*]

Stephen. 'Morning, Martha.

Martha. 'Morning, Stephen. I—do you want breakfast?

Stephen. I guess so.

Martha. It's all ready. Where have you been?

Stephen. When?

Martha. All night.

[*STEPHEN is silent.*]

Where were you, Hanus?

Hanus. Why, I'll tell you—some other time.

Martha. What's that?

[*She looks at the Star-Wagon.*]

Stephen. We were—trying out a new machine.

Martha. I wish you'd told me.

Stephen. We didn't know.

Martha. I'll bring your breakfast.

[*She goes into the kitchen.*]

Hanus. She doesn't know.

Stephen. Yes, she does.

Hanus. Oh, my God!

Stephen. What?

Hanus. I'm not married any more!

[*He jumps up.*]

Yipee! Yipee! Yipee! Give me something to break! Give me my hat! I want to jump on my hat! You better hold me, Stephen, before I shy a plate through the window!

Martha.

[Entering with a pan in her hand]

If there's any cause for celebration you haven't told me about it! I don't know where you were last night or what you were doing, but whatever it was you left me sitting here all night without a word of explanation! I suppose there were no telephones where you were—and surface transportation broke down all over the city! I suppose you can't remember that yesterday was payday and you left me without a cent of money in the house—

Stephen.

[Softly]

Martha.

Martha. What is it?

Stephen. Didn't you sleep last night?

Martha. No, I didn't sleep. I sat in the chair by the window.

Stephen. Did you want me to come back?

Martha. I think you stayed away just to frighten me.

Stephen. Martha—did you ever read any of Dryden?

[MARTHA goes slowly to the table and sets the pan down.]

Your wars brought nothing about;
Your lovers were all untrue.
It's well the old age is out,
And time to begin a new.

Martha. Did you have the same dream?

Stephen. Yes.

Martha. What does it mean?

Stephen. It means I like it better here. And Martha—when you didn't like it—it was all my fault.

[There is a knock at the door. HANUS opens it and DUFFY enters.]

Duffy. Good morning.

Stephen. Good morning, Charley.

Duffy. Good morning, Martha.

Martha. Good morning.

Duffy. How are you, Hanus?

Hanus. Did you speak to me?

Duffy. I did—I said how are you?

Hanus. I'm fine. How are you, Charley?

Duffy. Up a little earlier than I like, but able to get around. You boys have a way of getting me up early these days.

Stephen. We have?

Duffy. Who else? When you can't think of anything else to do you rob the plant. Oh, it's all in the day's work. I don't mind. But it does get us out of bed.

Martha. Who robbed what plant?

Duffy. These boys. But it's all right—a little matter between friends. As a matter of fact I wasn't going to talk about that at all. I came over to make you an offer.

Martha. Tell me what happened, please.

Duffy. Well, the watchman called me up this morning to say there was a window forced in the laboratory last night and somebody'd run a truck gangway out a window and made off with Steve's contraption there.

[*He looks at the Star-Wagon.*]

Now I know pretty well who it was, and I didn't give a damn, but pretty soon it turned out there was something else missing.

Hanus. That's all we took.

Duffy. And now we can prove you took it, because there's the contraption. If you took one you took the other.

Stephen. But that's all we took.

Duffy. Think a minute. Nothing else?

Stephen. Not a thing. I didn't have time—that is, I didn't want anything else.

Duffy. Now, look, Stephen. After you left yesterday I had a little talk with Park and What's-his-name, the fellows who were going to take over the rubber. When I pinned them down it turned out they didn't know much about rubber, but they did know where you kept your analysis. They were all filed away in that little case on your window-sill. And we didn't have brains enough to put those cards away for safe-keeping. That filing case was empty this morning. We were slow in the head, Stephen, and you pulled a fast one.

Hanus. The burglar lifted them.

Duffy. What burglar? I mean which burglar? Because I happen to know who two of them are.

[STEPHEN *and* HANUS *exchange glances.*]

Now I need those cards. And I could put you boys in jail. Where are they?

Stephen. I don't know.

Duffy. Give 'em back, and we pass the whole thing over, nothing said.

Stephen. We don't know where they are.

Duffy. They're no good to you, Stephen. If you keep 'em it's only to get back at me. But it hurts you worse.

Stephen. They got lost—in the shuffle.

Duffy. Is that your last word?

Stephen. I can't do anything about it.

[DUFFY *claps on his hat and strides to the door; then turns on his heel.*]

Duffy. You're smarter than I knew you were, Steve. It's the first time I ever knew you to pull anything crooked, and I thought you didn't know how, but you win. It won't help me to put you in jail. I've got to have the dope on that tire by tomorrow afternoon. And I don't know where else I can get it. Are you coming back to the lab. or not?

Stephen. We're fired.

Duffy. Forget it.

Stephen. I've got something else I want to do.

Duffy. What is it?

Stephen. You wouldn't understand it, Charley. There's a lot of things you wouldn't understand. And one of them is that I'll never take orders any more. It's not worth it. I might do you a favor if I liked you, but I won't be threatened and I won't take orders.

Duffy. What's come over you?

Stephen. I know now there's no good or bad fortune. Fortunes are all alike.

Duffy. I can walk out this door and fetch you more bad fortune than you could shake a stick at.

Stephen. No, Charley, you couldn't. And you don't even know what I mean.

Duffy.

[Sitting down and taking off his hat]

I don't know, Steve. Maybe you're bluffing and maybe you're not, but if you're bluffing you ought to play poker. You'd be good.—This is the way I've run the firm, Steve. When a man's too good to lose and you can't keep him any other way I make him a partner. You should have been a partner long ago, only you didn't make any play for it. A partnership carries two hundred shares with an income of about seventeen thousand. What do you say?

Stephen. Do I have to do it, Martha?

Martha. No. He doesn't want a partnership.

Duffy. Martha?—What is this, anyway?

Martha. I don't want him to have a partnership. I don't want him to be like you or Reiger or any of the others. I want him the way he is. No matter how little we have to live on.

Duffy. It doesn't hurt a man to be a partner.

Martha. I've known it to.—

Duffy. How about a salary as consulting engineer, no regular hours, just to look in on us when we're in a jam like this one?

Stephen. But nobody gives me orders?

Duffy. Nobody gives you orders.

Stephen. Would it be all right, Martha? We could buy a piano then.

Martha. I don't need a piano, Stephen.

Duffy. Say two hundred a week. And Hanus rates fifty.

Stephen. All right.

[*To Martha*]

You're going to have one anyway.

[*To Duffy*]

All right.

Duffy. God, you had me sweating there for a minute.

[*He rises.*]

You don't dislike me, do you, Steve?

Stephen. No.—After all, you married Hallie.

Duffy. That's right, you were sweet on Hallie yourself, weren't you?

Stephen. But I got over it.

Duffy. Yeah, you got over it.—You—yeah, you got over it.

[*He pauses, thinking.*]

Sometime you might do a little more work on that string-of-beads, lines-of-light, time-like-a-canal idea, Stephen. There might be something in that.

Stephen. What makes you think so?

Duffy. As a matter of fact—you know, I had a funny—well, never mind. Funny thing about last night—well, never mind.—We'll get along better now.

Stephen. Yes, we will, Charley.

Duffy. And I'll get that rubber formula?

Stephen. Don't worry.

Duffy. I'm leaving it to you. Good-bye.

Stephen and Martha. Good-bye.

Duffy. So long, Hanus.

Hanus. So long, Charley.

[*DUFFY goes out.*]

Stephen. Is everything all right, Martha?

Martha. Yes, Stephen.

[She comes over and sits beside him.]

Hanus. Do you want me to live somewhere else?

Martha. Do you still believe in Stephen?

Hanus. Yes, I do, Martha.

Martha. Then I want you to live here.

Stephen. I guess you want us to tell you about—the machine.

Martha. That? What is it?

Stephen. It's a sort of radio, for picking up—old programs.

Martha. Didn't I see it once, long ago, in a bicycle shop—when we were young?

Stephen. Did you? Maybe.

Hanus. We call it the Star-Wagon—and it runs along on a thread of time, like a cash-basket on a wire. Anywhere. Let me show you.

[He goes to the machine.]

Martha. You don't need to, Hanus, not now.

Hanus. But just an easy one, like half an hour ago, before Duffy was here.

[He pushes the button.]

Nothing happens.

Stephen. No?

[He goes over to it.]

It's set. It should work. Something's gone wrong.

Hanus. But it did work, Martha.

Stephen. It's hard to believe, isn't it?

Martha. You don't have to prove it to me. I know it's true. I was there.

Stephen. Were you, Martha?

Martha. Yes. I don't know how.

Stephen. What do you remember?

Martha. All of it. I liked the choir practice best.—And now you are a great man—the way you wanted to be.

Stephen. No, Martha. If I'm a great man then there aren't any great men. I found out that much.

Martha. But suppose you build more of these so people can go anywhere—back and forth—and it changes the whole world?

Stephen. That's another thing I found out, Martha. It wouldn't change the world. Nothing changes it. Every new thing we find just makes it more mysterious. And maybe more terrible.

Martha. But the people would change.

Stephen. Do you think so? I don't. They'd just take it for granted after a while, and they'd be the same. All these new inventions come along, and we think the whole world will be different, but pretty soon they're on the market for a dollar down and two dollars a week, and people go on living as usual. And the inventors aren't any wiser than the others. Look at me, Martha. I worked for years, and studied, and maybe I had a gift for mathematics and things like that. And finally I put my finger on something—partly by accident—and I saw through the veil—and there was something nobody'd known about.—But I'm not different. I'm just a little man, like the rest, only more stupid about most things.—I looked through the veil and saw a mystery, and pretty soon everybody can look through and see it. But they won't know what it means, and I don't. It's a way of remembering better than we used to, and maybe that'll make us a little wiser, maybe not. But I hope so.

Martha. It made me wiser. I don't want to go back any more. And I don't want to change anything.

Stephen. We were right all the time, weren't we?

Martha. Yes. All the time.—Let's not go anywhere else. It's too sad. But let's have a piano—and sing sometimes.

Stephen. I don't know whether I can any more.

Martha. It'll all come back when I play for you. I know it will.

[*She hums a little and moves her fingers on the table as if pressing the keys. STEPHEN sings very softly, then with more assurance as he proceeds.*]

Stephen.

[*Singing*]

They stand, those walls of Zion,
All jubilant with song,
And bright with many a loved one
And all the angel throng.

[*As STEPHEN sings, HANUS leans to pump the imaginary organ.*]

There lifts the throne of David,
And there, from toil released,
The shout of them that triumph,
The song of them that feast.

I never believed much in a golden city
back there in the choir. I don't believe it now.
But they were right about one thing, the old prophets—
there is a holy city, somewhere. A place
we hunt for, and go toward, all of us trying
and none of us finding it. And it's no wonder
we don't find it yet. Because our lives
are like the bird (you remember) in the old reader
that flew in from a dark night through a room
lighted with candles, in by an open window,
and out on the other side; we come out of dark,
and live for a moment where it's light, and then
go back into dark again. Some time we'll know
what's out there in the black beyond the window
where we came in, and what's out there in the black
on the other side, where it all seems to end.

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 *The Star-Wagon* by Maxwell Anderson]