

PROUD FLESH

by

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The Characters in Order of Appearance:

- A chorus of surgeons and the Chorus Leader.
- Al Suggs, a State highway patrolman and a bodyguard of the Governor.
- Dr. Keith Amos, a surgeon.
- Dr. Shipworth, Professor of Clinical Pathology at the State University.
- Governor Willie Talos.
- Joe (Tiny) Harper, State Highway Commissioner.
- Sue Parsons, confidential secretary of Governor Talos.
- Dr. Fairbanks.
- Other physicians at the Governor's conference.
- Anne Amos, the sister of Dr. Keith Amos.
- Benet Pillsbury, a politician.
- Taillifero Meeks, a politician.
- Jack, a reporter, and boyhood friend of Dr. Keith Amos.
- Other reporters.
- Another patrolman and body guard of the Governor.
- Lieutenant of the State Highway Patrol.
- Young man.
- Football player.
- Gummy Satterfield, a lawyer and financier.
- Cheer leader.
- Clara Talos, estranged wife of the Governor.
- Page.
- Negro Orchestra leader.
- Doris, a friend of Clara Talos.
- Nurse in the office of Dr. Keith Amos.
- Man who meets Dr. Amos in the corridor of the Capitol.
- Other men in the corridor of the Capitol.
- Nurse at the hospital.

*SEMINARIO MULTIDISCIPLINARI
JOSEMILO GONZALEZ
MADE IN PUERTO RICO
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recursos c1

(A blue, concentrated light, blue like the light of an operating room, reveals the Chorus, which is composed of surgeons with white robes, rubber gloves, caps, and some of the incidental paraphernalia of their profession. Except the Chorus Leader, who is free to move about, they are inside of a little raised, and railed-in, enclosure, with seats--somewhat like the cross section of the benches in an operating theatre. The surgeons are always present during the play, interested spectators of all events, commenting, conferring together, agitated or complacent as the occasion dictates. The box of the Chorus is situated at the right of the stage, and forward, the position retained throughout the play. It is placed at an angle that permits the members of the Chorus to watch the events of the play and to turn toward the audience at will.

Now the members of the Chorus have their attention fixed on a man who is facing the audience, on a little circular platform, stage right. The man wears the natty uniform of a highway patrolman, black leather boots, goggles over eyes, cap set jauntily back, revolver at hip. He has his hands on the control-grips of a motorcycle. His position is rigid, while the Chorus Leader moves about him inspecting him, like a specimen, occasionally referring to a card in his hand.)

CHORUS LEADER: (Turning to the Chorus) Yes, gentlemen, a very fine specimen. A very fine specimen of that delicate and beautiful mechanism, the human being. Our only concern, is, of course, with how this marvelous mechanism works, but sometimes we are all human enough to wonder why this mechanism works and to wonder -

PATROIMAN: (Speaking with body unmoving, eyes fixed out over audience.)
 What hand flings the white road before me?
 What hand over hills and the swamplands,
 Over the highlands and damplands,
 Gulley and bayou? And flings me
 Fast as the slug from the gun-mouth,
 Hard as the word from his own mouth --
 I was nameless, but he has now named me.
 And aimless, but he has now aimed me,
 And flung me, and flings me -- I am an error
 Blind with the glittering blindness of light!

CHORUS LEADER: (Continuing his examination of the specimen, referring to his filing card.)
 Yes, yes, homo sapiens. But for non-scientific purposes known as -- as -- (Consulting card) -- as Al Suggs; sex, male; race, white --

PATROIMAN:

(Suddenly relaxing into a slouching natural position, shoving up his goggles, speaking in an easy, ruminative tone.)

Yeah, that's me. Al Suggs. Yeah, I'll tell you how 'twas. When I wasn't not more'n a kid, they put that-air highway past pappy's place, then hit wasn't not time till the Big Boss begun to take hold in this-here state, and they give hit a concrete top, first class. I'd be worken in the field, and I seen the highway cops go by on them motorcycles, burnen the road. I got so I could ride one of them things. And I always was right handy with a gun. So I got on the highway force. One day I was hangen round up to the Capitol, and the Big Boss was standen thar, and he said: "Boy, what's yore name?" And I said, Al Suggs, And he thumped me on the chest and said: "Damn if you ain't a likely looken specimen. Reckon I'll put you on my personal detail." And God damn -- (He strikes his right fist into the palm of his left hand with a gesture of boyish excitement.) -- Damn, if he didn't go and do hit!

CHORUS LEADER: (Consulting card) -- age, twenty-six; occupation, member state constabulary --

PATROIMAN:

Let me praise now the wheel, for he gave it.
 Let me praise now the wheel, for it knows no
 End and no ending, and knows no
 Beginning, no crossed aims, distractions,
 Confusion, or sick heart. It knows only
 The suction of distance, the hunger
 Of time out of Time whirled, the wind-roar.
 In your swift ear, the speech of the speed-roar:

Road-roarer
 Way-wailer
 Light-dazzler
 Space-eater
 Time-cheater
 Distance-betrayer

(Just as the Chorus concludes there is the sound of a siren offstage, and the light reveals an automobile parked at the edge of a highway. It is a roadster with top down. In the car two men are seated. The man at the wheel is about thirty-five years old, with a dark, brooding, unsatisfied face. He is Keith Amos, a surgeon. The other man, Dr. Shipworth, is older, with a full-fleshed, rather round, face, a blond mustache, and glasses. Al Suggs lunges toward the car.)

Al:

For Christ sake!

(Almost at the car, he stops, puts his hand on his hips, and scrutinizes the two men. Then he sets his foot on the running board of the car, with a scruffing sound, and speaks again, aggrievedly.)

Al: For Christ sake, what do you think this is? What do you think this is anyhow? Seventy-five miles an hour and on them curves--

Amos: (Restrainedly.) I wasn't aware that there is a highway speed limit in this State.

Al: Reckless drive-en, thar's reckless drive-en, all right. Seventy-five miles an hour, and on them curves, and passing a car. Buddy, I'm doen you a favor, hit's a favor--

Amos: All right, officer. Let me have the ticket if that's what you're getting ready to do. I'm in a--

Al: Keep yore shirt on, buddy, just keep yore shirt on. You'll git a ticket, don't you worry.--(He has taken out a pad and pencil and begins to write laboriously.)-- You'll git a--

(Shipworth has leaned toward the patrolman, putting his hand restrainingly on his companion's arm. He speaks in a controlled, purring voice quiet and insulting.)

Shipworth: Officer, do you happen to know why we're in such a hurry?

Al: I don't give a toot.

Shipworth: Officer, as I was preparing to say, we happen to be hurrying to keep an appointment with Governor Talos. You know--you must have heard of him--even if you don't read the papers.

Al: Oh, yeah? In a pig's twat. But me--(He leans forward, almost confidingly, a boyish, stupid pleasure on his face.) --I am. I'm keepen an appointment with him this mornen. He's come-en in from New York this mornen, and I'm a-meetin him.--(He taps himself on the chest.)--I'm on the Big Boss' personal detail.

Shipworth: You won't be, you know, if you finish that ticket.

Amos: Hurry up!

Shipworth: You won't be on the Governor's detail. You won't be on the Patrol. You'll be busted, my boy.

Al: Oh, yeah? You and how many more's gonna bust me?

Shipworth: I think I can manage quite nicely, thank you. I am Dr. Shipworth, Professor of Clinical Pathology at the State University Medical School. You don't know what Clinical Pathology is, but take my word for it that Governor Talos will listen to me when I tell him why we are delayed.-- (He presents his card to Al.)

Al: Gee, doc--(He speaks with respect, and comradeliness.)--gee, why didn't you go and tell me right off you was worken fer the Big Boss, too? Why didn't you say you was on the pay-roll?

Shipworth: And my friend here--

Al: Doc, thar wasn't no way fer me to know. They wasn't--

Amos: Officer, you say I was driving seventy-five miles an hour?

Al: (Cunningly) Yeah, but that ain't nuthen, that ain't--

Amos: And on those curves?

Al: Yeah, but--

Amos: And I passed a car at that speed? On the curve?

Al: Yeah, but I never seen hit. I ain't seen a thing, did I, doc? (He leers cunningly, connivingly, at Shipworth.)
(Amos gets out of the car.)

Amos: All right. Fill out that ticket. Now.

Shipworth: Hell, Keith, leave the kid alone.

Al: (To Shipworth.) Doc, I never knowed--

Amos: Know! You knew I was breaking the law. That's all you're supposed to know. Now--(His voice rises, taking on a vindictive quality.)--give me that ticket!

Al: I can't give you no ticket. Not and him on the payroll. You ain't gonna ketch me that a-way. I didn't mean no harm.

Amos: Harm? You fool. I want you to do your sworn duty. For once. Give me that ticket!

Al: Naw, naw. I can't--

Amos: (Quietly.) All right. What's your name?

Al: (Sullenly.) Al Suggs.

Amos: All right, Suggs. I'm reporting--

Shipworth: (To Al.) You better get along. Now.

Al: (To Shipworth.) Sure, doc, sure.--(He steps back from the car, and moves to the motorcycle.)

Amos: Officer!

Shipworth: (To Al.) You go on!

Amos: Officer!

(But Al only gives a wave of his hand, as the motorcycle starts. The motor roars into the distance. Dr. Amos stands staring after it.)

Shipworth: (To Amos.) Come on!--(When his friend does not move, he speaks with more asperity.)--What's eating on you, anyway?

Amos: Nothing.

Shipworth: Nothing?

Amos: Nothing. Only a man gets tired, no matter what he touches, of having his fingers get a stink on them.

Shipworth: Nuts! Come on!

Amos: (Suddenly swinging to Shipworth.)
A stink, and on a man's fingers,
Whatever he lays hand to, it's there,
And the stink climbs the multitudinous sweetness of air,
It lovingly lingers,
And fouls the nostril's secret stair--
Smell it, it's there
On your fingers, and mine--
Whatever you touch--

Shipworth: Come on!

Amos: The flower you pluck and the door knob
Kind to your fingers, and accustomed, or the door,
Which opens to the innermost room where love lies.

Shipworth: (Somewhat amusedly.) Aw, things aren't all that bad.
Talos is a tough baby, sure, but he gets something done.
This meeting now-- I wouldn't be surprised if we don't
get a bang-up medical center.

Amos: All right, all right. Patch 'em up. A healthier people.
Better babies. Apple week. Jesus Christ.

Shipworth: That's what we're supposed to think about. You and me.

Amos: (He leans to seize Shipworth by the lapel.)
If the stink's all, why bother?
Think?
But we don't, you and I, rag-pickers and patchers of
Rag-pickers and patchers of remnants,
For what?
To get the wind out of a worn-out gut?

Shipworth: Forget it! Power is power, whatever you call it.
Or whoever has it. Somebody had it before Talos.
It's just that he's tougher than the whole damned pack,
And has licked 'em

Amos: No. No--(He steps back a little from Shipworth.)
We touch only the surface, and our fingers
Stink. Whiff only the breath breathed out,
And it stinks.
But he lies inside.
He is deep inside.
(The light begins to fade.)
He is growing,
A cancerous growth which now grows proud in the dark,
He is irridescent in darkness, the flesh's final pride
Thriving on flesh; and the sluggish blood now sways
And swags to his mass, like sway of the sea's tide.
He burns, he is peacocked in flame, but utters no light.
Eastern and mogul, his mass savagely drowns,
His coils stir. Our name in him is essential.
How swollen that nomenclature! How splendid
And inward is that apple. It is the fat fruit which gleams
On the bough of our own darkness, till dark itself is
rescinded,
Till the night is ended
Till the dark
He is in the dark

(The light has faded out and there is only the voice.
Then, after an instant there is the sound, in the distance,
of a patrolman's siren, approaching. The bluish light,
again focussed on the Chorus, reveals Al, who takes out
his revolver and examines it while the Chorus regards him.)

Patrolman: And name now this other, and praise it--
The steel husk wherein sleeps amazement,
Steel pod where the dark drowns darkly
Like seed locked, like light locked in darkness,
Like love locked, like flame locked in stone;
Like death locked, which will blossom in bone.
What wind will fumble the pod-latch?
And catch it, and take it, and shake it,
What wind rise to break it and shatter
The pod-chamber?--What wind which will scatter
The cold seed to blossom in blindness of light?
The cold seed whose name is the silence:
Far-speaker
Fire-darter
Light-quencher
Slug-hurler
Flesh-plugger
Brain-darkener.
What wind? What pod-shaker?

(The scene is a conference room in the Capitol. A little toward the left of the stage, not quite as far forward as the Chorus, is a long table, about which some eight or ten men are seated. At the end to the right, a man is lounging back in his chair, in profile to the audience, seeming to be almost asleep. The arm toward the audience lies on the arm of the chair, and a cigarette, apparently forgotten, smoulders in the fingers. The smoke rises steadily from it. The man's face is, in repose, rather coarse and dull. His hair is unkempt, and his vest is unbuttoned. He is the Governor, Willie Talos.)

At the other end of the table, facing the Governor, is standing a very large man, tall and paunchy, with thinning, dark hair combed glossily over his round skull. He is dressed in obviously expensive dark clothes, and a very large diamond glitters on the little finger of his left hand. He is in the act of speaking, and he gestures with his left hand, in which he holds and unlighted cigar. He is Joe (Tiny) Harper, the State Highway Commissioner.

A woman is sitting in a chair back from the table, near the Governor, with a stenographer's pad on her knees. She is, at first glance, a plain woman, with loosely done dark hair and sallow complexion, but her eyes are large and intense. She wears a cheap, baggy tweed suit. She is the Governor's confidential secretary, Sue Parsons. When she rises, it can be observed that she walks with a slight limp.

On the long table, a little toward the Governor, is a bulging brief case; and several big rolls of blue-prints lie near the center of the table.)

Tiny: (Discovered in the act of speaking.)-- and you gentlemen, who are the leaders of the noble profession of medicine in our progressive State, you have just heard me give you the message from our Governor, Willie Talos;--

(Dr. Amos and Dr. Shipworth slip in and find seats at the table.)

Tiny: --Yes sir! Eight million dollars for a medical center right here. Now ain't that something, gentlemen? But that's just Governor Willie for you. He aims to increase the health and happiness of the people of our progressive State. That's what we're all working for, now ain't it, parties regardless? Now we'd like to hear how you gentlemen feel about this fine message.--(He looks at the Governor, who, lying back in the chair, pays no attention.)--How about you, Dr. Fairbanks? Haven't you got a few words to say?

(Tiny lets his bulk sink into a chair, and looks about as though for applause. He exhales heavily through his meaty lips, and wipes his face on a large white-silk handkerchief, which he then rearranges in the breast pocket of his coat. Meanwhile, a large, pompous man gets to his feet, and clears his throat with an air of authority.)

Your pals don't want you,
But never say die!
Tho' life may taunt you,
Don't ever say die.
Don't let it daunt you,
No, never say die!
The old world is going,
The new world is nigh.

(JOHN D. gives the money to WILLY with a slap on the back, and WILLY pops out as the curtain falls.)

CURTAIN.

- Fairbanks: This announcement is a great surprise, gentlemen. But this is not the first time, I must say, that Governor Talos has surprised his--his--er--
- Talos: Constituency, doc. That's the word.--(He simply utters the word as to the empty air, not looking at the doctor and not moving.)
- Fairbanks: Thank you, sir.--(He clears his throat.)--Speaking for myself--I shall be happy to give the benefit of my training and experience in such a worthy cause. And I admit there is need for further hospitalization facilities in our State. Yes, we need--
- Talos: (Not moving.) You got 'em three in a bed.
- Fairbanks: A considerable need, I say. But eight million? Now, I am sure, we can manage on something a little more modest--less, shall I say, spectacular. We could have a very nice little annex for charity cases, for, perhaps, about seven hundred thousand. This is poor State, Governor, you must remember. A very poor State.
- Talos: There's a passel of pore folks living in it, doc. And that's why your nice little annex wouldn't be more'n ham-hock on a holiday.
- Fairbanks: I repeat, Governor, a poor State: Statistics show it. And with our--elaborate--improvements of late years--now, I don't want to be misunderstood, I don't mean to infer ther was no need--but without improvements, our resources are somewhat--er--depleted.
- Talos: Nuts, doc.
- Fairbanks: (Shocked, for a moment, from his attitude of conciliation, he falls back on his dignity.) I beg your pardon!
- Talos: (Amiably, off-handedly, not looking at Fairbanks.) Nuts. This State's got plenty of resources. It's just a question of who's got his front feet in the trough when slopping time comes--(As Fairbanks seems to hesitate, baffled, Governor Talos, not looking at him, closes his eyes, and lets the cigarette smoke seep from his nostrils.) --Why, doc, we might even raise the income tax in your bracket again. Yep! And utilities. Now all that stock you got in Acme Electric.-- Let's see, the utility problem -
- (With his eyes fixed on Governor Talos, Fairbanks leans forward and his hand moves slowly, almost surreptitiously, toward the roll of blue-prints, the full length of his immaculately gleaming cuff showing beneath his sleeve. The other men watch the hand.)

Talos: (Suddenly, his tone patronizing and ironical.) Atta boy, doc!
(Fairbanks stops guiltily, wets his lips as though about to speak, and then boldly finishes the action of drawing the rolls toward him.)

Talos: Atta boy! and don't you worry your pretty head where the money's coming from. There's ways to raise money, and what's more, I can make folks like it when election day rolls round. You let Tiny get back down there across the tracks with those micks where he came from before he decided to devote his talents to the public weal, and he can still rally 'em round for four bits and old times' sake. And the red-necks up the country where I was raised-- No, don't you worry, I can make folks like it, all right. Except--(He grins suddenly.)--you!

Sue: (Leaning forward and speaking softly to the Governor.) Governor, it's ten-thirty.

Talos: Be right with you, Sue.

(The doctors begin to rise. The man sitting next to Fairbanks picks up the briefcase and one of the rolls.)

Talos: You all just look over those specifications and stuff, and let me know about the details. So we can get down to rendering lard pretty quick.--(He rises.)-- If it suits you. If any of you don't want to play ball, there's other pitchers in the league. Well, so long, and thanks for coming around.--(He steps back, as though to retire.)

Sue: Governor, aren't you forgetting something?

Talos: Oh, yes. If Dr. Amos, Dr. Keith Amos, is here and can spare a minute, I'd like to speak to him.

Amos: I'm Dr. Amos.

Talos: (Nodding.) I picked you for him.--(He moves toward Dr. Amos, who stands his ground, his hands hanging loosely at his sides, even after Governor Talos has extended his hand.)-- Yep, I picked you for him.--(He approaches, grinning, his hand outstretched, and after hesitation, Dr. Amos shakes hands. The Governor, releasing the hand-clasp, grins again.)--See, boy, it wasn't nearly as bad as you figured on.--(As Dr. Amos steals a glance at his own hand, Governor Talos regards him amusedly.)--If you can stick around a minute, Dr. Amos, there's something I'd like to say to you.

(The group of doctors are going out at the left. Sue Parsons has already disappeared at the right. But Tiny is propped back in one of the chairs at the table, with the unlighted cigar in his mouth. The Governor discovers him.)

Talos: Beat it, Tiny!

(Tiny rises slowly, and for an instant a shade of confusion and resentment appears on his face before being supplanted by an unconvincing, somewhat apologetic grin. The grin is directed at Dr. Amos, and seems to imply a tolerant apology for the Governor's lack of decorum.)

Talos: Get the lead out, Tiny! I want to talk to the doc, here. You'll find some pictures to look at in my office.

Tiny: (Moving toward the right, rapidly now.) So long, Boss.-- (He wags his head at Dr. Amos.)--I'll be seeing you.-- (He goes out.)

Amos: Well?

Talos: Well, boy, what do you think of it?

Amos: I think that the people of the State will get some good out of it. More than from some other recent public works. And you will get your publicity and your votes. And the crooks will get their graft.

Talos: (Studying the doctor's face.) Dr. Amos, I want you to be director.--(As Dr. Amos seems to be collecting himself for a reply, the Governor raises his hand sharply and commandingly.)--Listen here, you're going to say, no. Just think about it a minute.

Amos: Think?

Talos: I know what you are thinking. You think I would interfere with you. Listen here! I might fire you, boy, but I wouldn't interfere with you. And when I fired you it would be for incompetence.--(His voice sinks to a harsh whisper.)-- You got that straight?

Amos: (Detachedly.) Yes.

Talos: And listen here, I know what your political opinions are, and I'm not trying to buy you off. Boy, if you think so, you flatter yourself. I can run this State. Shoot your mouth off, so long as you do your job, I don't give a toot.

Amos: I see.

Talos: (A little more expansively) Well, the kind I do give a ~~tt~~ a toot about when they start shooting off their mouth and trying to turn on the heat--well, I know more'n one way to skin a cat. Take the late Governor of this State, where is he now? He's not Governor. He couldn't be elected sergeant-at-arms in an institution for the feeble-minded.-- (He hesitates, grinning.)--He'll be peddling fish to niggers before I'm through. And Senator Crosby, where is he?

Amos: He's dead. He shot himself. You know that.

Talos: Sure, dead as a doornail! But he ought never taken that cut on building those municipal docks twenty years ago when he was a bright young man just getting a start. And then to sign his name to things!--(He shakes his head comiseratingly.)--Twenty years, but you know--the Good Book says a man's sins will find him out. If he signs his name to things. A man ought to live so that when his summons comes to join the innumerable caravan that throngs the silent halls--(He stops, leering amiably, and slaps Dr. Amos on the shoulder. He suddenly becomes serious.)--About that hospital, you directing it, I want to know pretty quick. But don't answer off-hand. Hang around a minute or two and think about it.--(He looks at his watch, a heavy, old-fashioned instrument.)--Damn it, I've got to get the lead out! Sue'll be pawing the earth in there. She'll be giving the stenographers heart failure. See you in a minute.--(He bolts away to the right, turning once to wave as he goes.)--So long!

Amos: (Slowly, looking after the Governor.)
He has hands and feet, and face, and the face smiles.
I do not see the human reality, but the face smiles.
And I would have scarcely thought so, but I have seen
Sun glint the rotten water under the tangle.
But I'll not smile, or drink it, lap it, take it in,
For I think I know how the mire is black beneath it,
Velvet, and it heaves, and in dark utters the bubble.
It is black, and it has no name but, his vanity--
It has no name--
And the bubble bursts on the black surface.
It has no name--

Chorus: There is no name but the fact,
 And the creator has no name but the thing created, nor
 definition,
 And definition is the act.
 Do you ask if a liar compounded the precocious medicant,
 an adulterer whetted the scalpel?
 And would good be any less good from the hand of Talos
 as giver?
 And you--
 Have you named what crouches uncrystalled in steel's cold
 Intenseness, sleepless in stone-dark, eye lidless,
 What is ambient, flowing, unwinking in atom, and sure?
 From namelessness, all name unfolds, all admiration lifts,
 fulfilled.
 And have you thought that what you call moral good may
 simply be a random by-product of historical process?

Amos: But I have seen, and seen him blob-blind in the shell.
 He is a mollusk enormous, and he uncoils slime into stone.
 But think, think how in the center dark how soft,
 Sick-soft and slime-slack, eyeless, nameless, he
 Would quiver, jerk from a finger--Ah, see him!
 See, see how the slime jerks, poor blob unfended,
 I see you--Hi-spy!--I spy you, Governor!--
 I will not--
 I will not, whatever I am--

Chorus: Whatever you are, you are not other than he, and the common
 Fulfilment unfathers pride. The boulder groans in the
 stream,
 Hope is not easy, nor its discipline easy, ever.
 Hope wears a double face, and one is secret, which you
 never
 Have met in the mirror at morning, after a good dream.
 And would you set pride in a definition of virtue
 Above the natural development of a natural good?

(Anne Amos has entered noiselessly, and stands looking
 at her brother. She is about thirty years old, quietly
 but fashionably dressed, dark-haired, attractive in a
 rather tense way. Amos turns and peers at her
 incredulously. Then, suddenly, as though just
 recognizing her, he moves toward her with arms
 outstretched.)

Anne: Keith!

Amos: Why, Anne!--(He seizes her hands, and pleasure lights
 up his face.)--You're the very person, Anne--the person
 I wanted to see. I wanted to talk to you, to ask you,
 to--(He stops suddenly, the pleasure draining from his
 face.)--What are you doing here?

- Anne: I'm here to see the Governor. What else would I be doing here?--(She speaks with playful defiance.)
- Amos: Do you know him?
- Anne: (Laughing.) Sure, I know him.
- Amos: You know him?
- Anne: Sure, I--
- Amos: (Interrupting.) Why do you know him?
- Anne: Orphans.
- Amos: (Momentarily satisfied.) Oh, those homes.
- Anne: (Pressing an advantage.) That's it. Money, State Money. We got some, but I'm after more.
- Amos: Somebody else could come up here. You don't have to--
- Anne: Oh, Keith, don't be silly! It doesn't kill you to shake hands with the man.--Besides, I have to spend my time some way, doing something. I'm getting on, Keith, I'm almost thirty, and I don't do anything. I'm not worth anything. It's the only sort of thing I can do. I don't want to just play bridge--
- Amos: (Interrupting as though struck by a sudden thought.) Is that why you are here now?
- Anne: (Hesitantly.) Yes.
- Amos: The only reason? (With a faint air of suspicion.) The only one?
- Anne: No.
- Amos: (Accusingly.) All right--you knew I was here. How did you know?
- Anne: (Playfully.) Oh, I hear things.
- Amos: How?
- Anne: Oh, Amos, don't be an idiot. Everybody in town knew the Governor was going to offer you the job! Everybody but you.
- Amos: (Meditatively.) So you knew that, and you--
- Anne: --And want you to take it! (She steps to him, and takes his arm, urging him.)--It's what you've wanted. A hospital like that. What is needed. You said that. That's what you used to say.

- Amos: (Harshly.) Yes, I said that.
- Anne: Well, here it is, now! And you--you can run it right--
(Searching his face.)--What's the matter?--Oh, Keith,
I don't know what you think anymore. I never see you
any more. You are different, it used to be different--
- Amos: Different? No, I'm not different. And you, you aren't
different.
Don't you remember, remember what we were?
Don't you remember how we were? Those summers
At Maxwell Shore. It was August, I think--
- Anne: Then it was different--
- Amos: (Ignoring her.)
We ran among the pines. I can remember
Your voice calling, the echo in the high pine boughs.
We came to the beach. And on the beach, you remember--
- Anne: Yes?
- Amos: We lay on the sand--
- Anne: (Almost musingly.) We lay on the sand.
- Amos: And the sea was blue, and the sound it made was steady,
But it was not loud, and steady the light that stood
Over all, and the fish-hawk rose, he rose into light,
He was lost in light, the last gleaming wing-wink
Of whiteness lost. And our eyes burned after him.
- Anne: We were blind, it was so bright!
- Amos: Blind in that brightness, but the blood-throb in eyelid
was light.
Light was in us, like breath, and we were light.
We swam in light, like the swell--it seemed true.
- Anne: True?
- Amos: Yes, true--
- Anne: (Shaking her head.) Then, Keith, not now.
- Amos: True now! Why not true now? Why stranded, shored,
Bitched-up and bogged, flapping some mud-flat foul
With the sewer-stink, slime-licked--why should I be?
- Anne: Be? You are only asked to be what you are, to do what
You want to do, can do, to help those that need help,
Your help--

- Amos: (Leaning toward her.)
Listen:
I have held a heart, alive, in my own hand,
Beating, a tremulous blood-blob--it did
Not speak, it did not say a word, it said
Nothing--
- Anne: Oh, it said that it needed you, and that is enough, and
you will--
- Amos: (Interrupting, momentarily seeming to withdraw within
himself.) Perhaps I needed it.
- Anne: --and you will do what is to be done, what ought
To be done, for you are what you are, and you have accepted
Your obligation, what ought to be done.
- Amos: (Bitterly.) That's the bribe--that's it!
- Anne: The bribe?
- Amos: To yourself, that's it.
To keep you from knowing what you know, to keep
Truth quiet--oh, the pap for conscience, the old sugar-tit
For coo and slobber while the world wags.
- Anne: But Keith, it's true!
- Amos: True?
- Anne: But it's still true--
If it's good, it's good, good in itself, Keith,
No matter what Talos is, or the world is.
- Amos: Whatever it is, I would like one corner clean,
At least, and would keep what definition I can,
And be as we were, and know that you are with me--

(She slowly shakes her head.)
Why, Anne! Anne!
- Anne: Hush--I was with you once,
And on that shore, but the summer was there, and no longer,
And the bathers are gone and the cottages boarded, and
Heaves from the bay to foam there the insane pines.
I tell you no you cannot warm your hands
By those black sticks where the picnic fire was,
For we were children, and you're no child now.
- Amos: Or a dog he can whistle in, or a hog to his holler.
- Anne: What? You mean what?

- Amos: To be precise, if you can't understand,
This: I'll be no tool. And I'm no rag
To scrub and sop what muck his feet track in--
For who would squeeze me, wring me, wash me clean?
Who? You?
- Anne: If you'll only stop.
Just stop for a moment and listen quietly,
Just listen to me till I can say something, can say
What I have to say,
If you'll only be quiet,
If only--
- Amos: I can be very quiet, I've learned to be very quiet,
For there's nothing to words but wind, and the wind's sawing,
(He puts his hand to his throat.)
In and out, in and out--all the incalculable
Adaptation, the white cords cunningly fluttering in
darkness,
The resonant chamber, all--wind in the alley;
In the gut, in the creek-canes, the wind's transit.
But this much: I'll not be
Glove to his hand, haft to his grip, or be
Whatever slime it is he spins to cradle
His vanity's softness, and worm-fatness--
- Anne: (Slowly, with an air of dawning discovery.)
I begin to see.
I begin to see you,
And see what was precious and cuddled, and puled in the
dark,
For no one would come, for no one was there.
- Amos: What? What?
- Anne: (Staring at him.)
It lies in the dark alone, it has no speech, it has no--
- Amos: (Reaching out to touch her.) Anne!
- Anne: (Jerking back from him.) Not his vanity. But yours,
Yours now!
- Amos: Mine?
- Anne: Yours--for you'd make the world one thing and the one
Thing you, only the mirror's icy dream, and in darkness;
But the world is warm, and you in your ice-ease,
Which you call virtue but is only your pride, after all.
And all you said you had lived for is only the lie's ice,
And the lie--
- Amos: Lie?
- Chorus: (Beginning with a detached and reasonable tone.)
But think and the issue will be very simple: contusions,
Bone-cankers, tumors, infections--they do not
Have politics, or only the old politics
Of pain, pus-caucus, the secret ballot of cocci,

The apirochete-poll, and the vote, the vote is always
 Sure, is always for one name, and the name
 Is Death.

Anne: And you--there's a death in you, though it walks and it
 talks,
 For you have taken it in, is in you like bread,
 Or like breath, and is your name, and your name is nothing.

Amos: Nothing?

Chorus: Nothing, for by definition life is against death,
 And by your refusal you are of death, which is nothing,
 And no sentimental compunction or sophisticated sloth
 Will lock that little door.
 For the eyes on the bed turn slow,
 Turn at you, and in them is nothing, and the nothingness
 Devours, devours you, gray gullet, enormous, void--
 And effortless that ingurgitation, and you
 Defenseless--

Anne: Oh, Keith, you have stood by the bed--

Amos: I have stood by the bed.

Anne: And you--you are what you are, see what you are!

Amos: What man can name it, what he is? Who can name
 The flame that at center does not bend, the essence
 Who has named it? unending?

Anne: (Scornfully.) Only children try.

Amos: Oh, Anne,
 There's a tooth that gnaws, and gnaws our definitions--

Anne: There is.

Amos: A current in things, we look and their shapes alter
 And falter, we falter, doors bang, bang open
 On dark and the wet: cold gust at the ankle, the flame
 Jerks from the wick, the wick stinks in darkness.

Anne: (Seeing her opportunity, seizing him.) Say you will, now!

Amos: We have lived in the house, have heard the rustle at night.
 I'll say nothing.

Anne: Say you will!

(Sue Parsons appears from stage-right. Both Amos and his
 sister turn to stare at her for a moment. Anne Amos
 recovers herself first.)

Anne: Oh, howdy-do

Sue: (Studying Anne distantly before she answers.) The Governor can see you now, Miss Amos.

Anne: Thank you.

Sue: You can come this way.

Anne: (To her brother.) I'll call your office. You'll do it?

Amos: (Harshly.) Go ahead. You have an appointment.

(Anne goes out, leaving Sue Parsons, who looks speculatively at Dr. Amos.)

Amos: You are Miss Parsons, aren't you? I've heard of you.

Sue: I've heard a few things about you, doctor. (She seems about to go.)

Amos: You can tell the Governor-- (He hesitates, his attention straying from her.)

Sue: Yes?

Amos: You can tell him I said, all right.

Sue: (staring him.) That's what you want me to tell him? All right?

Amos: (Sharply.) Yes. That's what I said.

Sue: (Beginning to smile tolerantly at him.) Well, that costs me five bucks, doctor.

Amos: Five dollars?

Sue: Yes, I bet the Big Boss five bucks he wouldn't hook you. (She goes out quickly.)

The scene is the bedroom of the Governor's hotel suite. At stage-left is a bed, and by it, on the side toward the audience, a table on which are two telephones, a small radio, and three bottles of whiskey, one of scotch and two of bourbon. A large bowl of ice and a couple of siphons of soda and a pitcher of water are on the floor by the bed. Books and newspapers are scattered about and stacked on chairs.

Governor Talos, in shirt sleeves and with his vest unbuttoned but with shoes on, is propped on pillows against the head of the bed. One heel is dug down into the pale blue bed-spread; the other foot dangles loosely off the bed on the side toward the audience. The Governor holds a high-ball glass in one hand. His hair is rumpled, but he does not seem to be affected by the liquor.

Eight other men are in the room. In each of the two chairs which flank a door in the rear wall, is a uniformed highway patrolman; the man to the right is Al Suggs. They sit with their chairs propped back against the wall, their booted legs dangling, their hands lying idly on their laps, their faces impassive.

Tiny Harper is seated in an easy chair, toward the front, with his back to the Chorus. He does not lie back comfortably, but sits forward, now and then shifting his bulk uneasily. Occasionally he inspects the large diamond on the little finger of his left hand. He is not drinking.

The other politicians are in the group. One of them, Benet Pillsbury, sits in a straight chair near the foot of the bed. He is a medium-sized, bald-headed man, and has a pale, splotchy skin. He wears a stiff, high collar, a black tie with a pearl pin, and a black suit, meticulously pressed but very loosely cut. The pince-nez set low on his nose helps to give the impression of a small-town banker or city preacher. He holds his glass primly and takes small, finicking sips; but he takes them often. The other politician, Taillifero Meeks, is a gaunt, raw-boned man, with sun-burned, wind-roughened face, like a farmer. He wears a shiny blue serge suit, like a farmer's Sunday clothes. With an air of abstraction, he slowly moves his jaws, working his quid of tobacco; now and then he decorously lets fall a blob of juice into the big brass spittoon at his feet. He is sitting on a little stool near Pillsbury, whom he obviously admires.

The other men are newspaper reporters, one of them middle-aged, shabby, colorless and fawning or aggressive by turns, the others young and cocky, as though aware of the theatricality of their profession. They all have glasses in their hands. They lean over the foot of the bed, wander about the room, or perch on the arms of chairs.)

Pillsbury: --and sister, he says, sister--(He speaks with a confidential, smirking air, fingering his glass.)--
sister, did you ever see anybody try to play a trombone in a telephone booth?

(The reporters laugh in an arbitrary, practiced fashion, nodding at the narrator in approval. Tiny Harper emits one or two nervous wheezes, scarcely laughter, and glances at the door. A slow, brotherly, admiring grin spreads over the face of Meeks.)

- Meeks: Durn!--(He obviously shifts his gird.)--Durn, a trombone, one of them things.
- Old Reporter: (To the Governor.) He's a card, ain't he, Boss? (The smile suddenly fades from his face as he sees no response from the Governor.)
- Talos: Hell, no--(He speaks amiably, then turns with a casual air to Pillsbury.)--You know, Pill, you could be teaching the Lord's prayer to small children and out of your mouth it'd sound like something written on a back fence.
- Pillsbury: (With the air of a man trying to pass over a compliment paid to him.) Now, Boss--
- First Young Reporter: (Picking up a book from the bed.) What have you been reading, Boss?
- Talos: A book.
- Meeks: The Boss, he sets up nights reading them things.
- Old Reporter: Don't you ever sleep?
- Talos: Too damned much. Somebody's got to keep an eye on these birds. (He nods toward Tiny and the other politicians.)
- Old Reporter: Aw, Boss, you get your out.
- Talos: Sure, but you try and pin it on me. Pin it on me, and that damned yellow sheet you work for would raise you ten bucks a week. They love my guts.
- (There is a knock at the door. Talos jerks up to a sitting position, and nods at Al Suggs, who opens the door, but without getting up. A middle-aged man in the uniform of the Patrol enters and the two patrolmen leap to their feet. Talos leans forward eagerly.)
- Talos: Got anything? Got anything yet, Lieutenant?
- Lieutenant: No--(He looks significantly at the reporters, then back at the Governor.)

- Talos: Spill it! These fellows won't print it. Or it'll be the last news they ever get up here.
- Lieutenant: Not a thing, Boss. We've combed the State, for fair. He left the University in a car, just after supper last night. We've been trying everywhere. Everything but a general alarm, and you said--
- Talos: I still say it. I don't want it to get out. I don't want it in the papers this time. These bastards won't print it-- (He nods at the reporters.)--but somebody else might. Don't try a general alarm until tomorrow. Keep in touch with me. That's all.
- Lieutenant: Goodnight, Boss. (He goes out and the two patrolmen sit down.)
- Tiny: He'll be all right, Boss. There ain't a thing to worry about.
- Talos: Who said I was worrying? Sure, he's all right. He can take care of himself--
- Meeks: What's up, Boss?
- Talos: Nothing. Just that damn boy of mine is off raising hell somewhere, and a game coming up in three days. Breaking training, and him the best back in the Conference.
- Old Reporter: Hell, nothing'll faze that kid. Chip off the old block, huh, Boss?
- Talos: He'll be all right. (He takes a deep drink, dismissing the subject.)
- First Young Reporter: Come on, Boss, come on and spill something about this hospital business.
- (Before the Governor can answer, there is a knock at the door, and he again rises on the pillows.)
- Talos: Come in!
- (A young man, timorous and apologetic, enters.)
- Young Man: Excuse me, I just have a message for the Commissioner, please.
- Talos: Come on in, boy.--(As the young man hesitates on the threshold, the Governor turns toward Tiny, who is leaning forward nervously in his chair.)--Hey, Tiny, somebody wants to confide in you!
- Tiny: Yes. Yes.

(He goes to the door, where the young man says something in a low tone; then the young man retires, closing the door. Tiny turns back into the room, goes around the bed to the little table where the bottles are.)

Tiny: I reckon I will take a drink, Boss. I reckon I'll take me a little scotch.

Talos: Help yourself.--(He watches while Tiny picks up the bottle.)--But I wouldn't take scotch, if I were you.

Tiny: Huh?

Talos: It's foreign. What would the voters think if they could see you reach for a bottle of foreign likker? You better stick to the domestic product. Like me.--(He inspects the glass in his hand, turning it.)-- I attribute my success to the domestic product. I stick to old red-eye.--(As Tiny hesitates, then picks up the bottle of scotch, with an air of bravado, Talos shakes his head.)--That's just my personal advice, Tiny. Take it or leave it.--(While Tiny adds the soda, Talos turns to Meeks.)--How about you, Meeks? Want a little foreign fire-water?

Meeks: I done had me some red-eye, Boss. I reckon I'll finish my chaw, then I'll take me another little toot.

Tiny: Boss--

Talos: Yeah?

Tiny: (After taking a long gulp of the drink, as though to brace himself.) Boss, there's a fellow out there wants to see you.

Talos: Bring him in. Give him a drink.

Tiny: (He hesitates, rolling his eyes significantly at the others.) Well, you see, Boss,--he's--

Talos: Why, hell, Tiny, it's all friends here. Bring him in and tell him to speak up like a man. No secrets here. Never had a secret in my life.

Tiny: Well, Boss--Maybe he'll just wait a little while--he's been waiting, and he's come quite a ways, but maybe he'll wait a little more--you see--

Talos: Aw, buck up, Tiny, get the phlegm out of your throat.

Tiny: Boss--

Talos: Who the hell is this pal of yours, anyway?

Tiny: It's--it's Satterfield.

Talos: (Gaily.) Never heard of the son-of-a-bitch.

Tiny: (Reproachfully.) Why, Boss--

Pillsbury: (Excited.) Satterfield, Satterfield! Old Bob Satterfield!

First Young Reporter: Old Gummy Satterfield! Like a blue-bottle buzzing round buttermilk. If he's dragged his up here, boys, it's churning time!

Tiny: (Trying to smile.) Boss, you know Gummy. You've seen him a hundred times.

Pillsbury: Slickest lawyer in the South.

Old Reporter: Hell, he never made his in the courts, he--

First Young Reporter: He made his keeping out of the courts.

Another Reporter: Yeah, tight now he owns more'n half interest in the Morton Bridge and Construction Company. For a fact--

Tiny: (With difficulty controlling his fury and confusion.) I wouldn't be sure, I wouldn't say off-hand--

Another Reporter: Acme Electric, too--

Talos: (Blandly.) I never heard of the son-of-a-bitch.

Tiny: (Pleading.) Boss, he's come a long way, and--

Talos: If he's on his uppers, tell him I said to try the Salvation Army flop-house.

Tiny: Boss, he's setting out there, he's--

Talos: The Son of Man had not a place to lay his head.

Tiny: Can he see you tomorrow?

Talos: No.

Tiny: Can I make an appointment?

Talos: Sure. Four-thirty, next year.

Tiny: Boss--

Talos: Go tell him what I said. Every damn word.
(Tiny goes out ponderously.)

Old Reporter: (Awed.) Old Gummy Satterfield!

First Young Reporter: Boss, everybody knows something's up. Everybody knows about that hospital business. Come on, tell us what your program is.

Talos: My boy, program is the mother of dissension.

Another Reporter: Aw, spill it, Boss--
(Tiny enters and stands beyond the bed.)

Old Reporter: Aw, Boss--

One of the telephones rings, and the Governor rolls over and picks it up.)

Talos: Hello--yeah, Lieutenant?--No.--Well, keep it up. And call me back.--So long.--(He racks up the phone and shoves himself, slowly, back to his former position.)

Meeks: Not nuthen?
(The Governor shakes his head.)

Old Reporter: He'll be all right, that kid. He's a package--

Talos: Sure, he's all right.

Old Reporter: Now, about that hospital business, Boss, come on, and spill it.

(The Governor does not appear to be listening, sunk in his own thoughts.)

Old Reporter: Spill it, Boss. Aw, Boss, come on Boss--

Talos: (Violently, starting up.) Say that once more and I'll jerk your God-damned tongue out!

(There is a sudden hush in the room, and the Governor sinks back. At a knock on the door, Al, reaching up without rising from the chair, opens it. The same timorous and apologetic young man enters.)

Young Man: There's a lady out there wants to see the Governor.

Talos: What's her name?

Young Man: I don't know. She didn't tell me. She just said she had to see you, and you'd see her.

Talos: Find out who it is.

(The young man goes out.)

Pillsbury: Yes, sir, the gals sure do like the Governor. She said she just had to see you. (He renders this last in a mimicking falsetto.)

Tiny: I bet it's that Amos bag. That doctor's sister. She's hanging--

(As Tiny begins to speak, Talos, apparently paying no attention, is lifting his glass to his lips. Suddenly, without turning his head, he dashes the contents into Tiny's face. Then, still not paying any attention to Tiny, he rolls his body forward to the side of the bed toward the audience, and reaches for one of the bottles of bourbon. He begins to prepare himself a fresh drink. At the instant of the impact, Tiny seems about to hurl himself upon the Governor, his arms lifting with fists clenched. But Al Suggs, who had seemed so detached from the scene, is instantly on his feet, crouching to spring. Tiny, who has not, however, seen Al, lets his arms sink.)

Tiny: (Plaintively.) Boss, now God damn it--

Old Reporter: (Reverently.) Far sweet Jesus sake.

Tiny: --Boss, what made you go and do that?

Talos: (Preparing his drink, and not turning.) It just struck me as a good thing to do. Something I'd sort of neglected in the past.

Tiny: (Mopping his face with his handkerchief, and then trying to pass the matter off as a joke.) Well, Boss, you sure got me wet. For a fact--

(The door opens and the young man returns.)

Talos: Well, boy, who is she?

Young Man: She didn't say. She just said give you this.

(He hands the Governor a note. The Governor glances at it, then scribbles something on the back of it and puts it back into its envelope. He holds it out to the boy.)

Talos: Give this to her.--(As the young man leaves, the Governor rises from the bed.)--Goodnight, gents. The boys here-- (He indicates the patrolmen.)--will take you home. There's a couple of patrol cars downstairs.

Tiny: Don't bother, boys, I stay just round the corner, I'll walk.

Talos: (To the patrolmen.) I said take 'em home. Now. Take him home and see that he doesn't come prowling back round here tonight.--(He swings his gaze around the room, letting it rest fleetingly on each man. The men go slowly to the door. Then Talos grins.)--Goodnight, gents!

Men: So long, Boss! Goodnight, Boss. So long.

(After they go out, Talos stands by the bed, freshening up his drink. He takes two long draughts, then, as the door opens, sets it on the little table by the bed. Anne Amos enters, and stands just inside the door. She is wearing a loose tweed coat, and a felt hat, pulled down. Governor Talos starts toward her, then halts.)

Talos: (Surprise, satisfaction, and insinuation in his tone.) Hello--why--hello.--Come on in. This is shore-God a surprise.

Anne: I have come because I have something important to tell you, and it can't wait. I was at my brother's tonight and a man came to get him to use his influence about a contract for building the New Medical Center. I don't have to tell you how that sort of thing affected my brother. Or have to tell you what that sort of thing will probably mean to the hospital itself. And means to me. And ought to mean to you.

Talos: (Reflectively.) So that's why you came. You left and came right up here? Past the room clerk and the elevator boy and the bell-hop and the fat guy sitting next to the big brass spittoon.--(He has begun to examine her narrowly.)--And so you came up here, huh?

(She seems embarrassed for a moment under his inspection. Then she appears to collect herself for an answer, but the Governor breaks in with a sudden change of tone.)

Talos: What was that fellow's name?

Anne: His name was Tully--

(On the name, Talos swings about, takes a long stride to the little table by the bed, picks up one of the telephones, and dials a number, apparently paying no attention to Anne, who continues to speak.)

Anne: Max Tully, I think. He came just as I was getting ready to go over to my apartment, but my brother told me to wait, so I--

Talos: (Speaking into the telephone.) Hey, Tiny!--Yes, I'll say it is something. Get this. You be at your office early tomorrow. Fire Tully. Before eight-thirty. Before he can drop his fanny in his chair.--Yes, God damn it! I said fire him.--Why? Oh, he'll know, all right. And you better thank God you don't know why.--You heard what I said.--And send his books over to my office before he gets there.--Hell, you can get another Assistant Commissioner. Just like I could get me another Commissioner.

(He racks up the telephone, glances quickly through the directory, and puts his finger on the page as though to mark a number. Meanwhile, even before he has ceased speaking to the Commissioner, Anne has taken several steps toward him, slowly.)

Anne: Willie--That settles what I came up here for, Willie, I'm glad.

Talos: Glad? I'm glad to find out about that Tully. I told the doc when he took the hospital job he wouldn't be bothered, and I meant it. And, furthermore and by God, I'm not gonna have any of these tail-dragging, lop-eared, pot-bellied, barber shop cuties in my organization start thinking they can get gay on their own. That Tully--he may think I'm through with him when I fire him.--(His tone changes to one of meditative relish.)--But--I'll just be starting on that baby--(He cuts himself off short, turns, and dials a number. While waiting for the reply, he repeats the words again, as though to himself.)--Yep, I'll just be starting on that baby.--Hello! Dr. Amos?--Governor Talos--No, you wait, I've got something to tell you, too. One of the local heels came to see you tonight. A bird named Tully. Well, he's fired.--I said, he's fired!--How did I know? Oh, I got ways of knowing. The Gestapo never sleeps. Hell, didn't you know about the Cheka? Sure, doc.--And by the way you might just as well tear up that resignation you been writing. I wouldn't read it anyway.--So long.--(He hangs up the phone, and turns to face Anne.)--Well, how's that?

Anne: I'm glad, Willie.--(She pauses, a shade of preoccupation crossing her face.)--But--

Talos: --but did your brother guess you'd told me? Is that on your mind?

(She seems about to speak, then nods.)

- Talos: You heard what I told him. Sure, he'll think it's the secret police. He'd like to believe the worst of me. He's romantic. And--it'll sure be easier for him to believe that than that you came up here. If that's what's on your mind.
- Anne: (For an instant she is startled, then laughs.) That's not the prettiest way to put it.
- Talos: It's the truth, huh?
- Anne: (Quickly and seriously.) The truth, but not all the truth. It's not just that. You know what my brother's like. I helped get him into this. I talked him into taking the job. I made him think it was all right. And now--
- Talos: (Cutting in.) And now you don't want him to think you have to keep it clean?
- Anne: (Defiantly.) All right.
- Talos: All tight. I know what your brother's like. He's a man all right, and I know that. Listen here--(He laughs, moves toward her, almost casually, then takes her by the arms just above the elbows.)--I'll take charge of him and I'll keep him just the way you turned him over to me. See? We'll put him in his little box and we'll seal it up so tight not a thing can touch him. Air tight. Hermetically sealed. Constant temperature. Keep the flavor fresh. Untouched by human hands. But remember this--(His voice becomes serious, dropping harshly, as he tightens his grip on her arms.)--there's always somebody down in the ditch. Even if your brother isn't. What do you make bricks of? Mud. To make bricks, somebody's got to get down and paddle in the mud. Do you understand?
- Anne: (She disengages herself from him and steps back.) Yes, I see.
- Talos: See!--(He holds his hands up, grinning, and spreads his fingers.)--Potty--black!
- Anne: You are different. You--
- Talos: It's not good enough for him. But it's good enough for me, huh? And--(He takes one step toward her, and again grasps her by the arms.)--for you?
- Anne: No.
- Talos: Not for you either, huh?
- Anne: (Making an effort to release herself.) No.

- Talos: No?
- Anne: No, nor for you.--(She steps back from him, for he has let her go.)--You may think it's good enough but it's not. That's the reason I--
- Talos: Look here, don't go giving me the goo-goo. I haven't ~~asked~~ asked for anything different from what I've got. And I don't call it something else. When I put my little mitts down in the mud and the mud goes squ-ush (He holds one hand out, the fingers spread, and then closes it.)--I never think that Little Willie is attending a taffy-pull. I know what I'm doing.
- Anne: I know that you know. But you know why, too.
- Talos: I know that I don't kid myself.
- Anne: You know why, and that's the difference.--(Approaching him.) That's all the difference in the world. If you put your hand down in the mud it's because you know what has to be done with it. You don't do it because you like it, and want to. But you're strong enough to take the responsibility--if it has to be done. Oh, Willie--(She reaches out and touches him on the sleeve.)--it's not good enough for you, unless--
- Talos: (He puts his arm around her.) Unless?
- Anne: Unless you do something with it. And that--that's what you've got to do. Can do. Willie--
- (One of the telephones on the table by the bed rings. Talos releases her quickly and steps to it.)
- Talos: Tom--I'll bet it's Tom!
- Anne: Tom?
- Talos: (Into the telephone.) Hello--hello, Lieutenant.--Found him!--(He turns from the phone to Anne, jubilant, and speaks to her.)--By God, they've found him! And he's all right. I knew he was all right. He'll take care of himself--
- Anne: I don't un--
- Talos: (Talos has turned back to the phone.) That's fine, Lieutenant!--Hell, what did they lock him up for? Why didn't they take him home and strap him in bed?--Oh, he wouldn't give his name on account of the newspapers?--They found out anyway? Well, Lieutenant, that's sure smart on somebody's part, letting 'em find out.-- Aw, hell, it doesn't matter a damn. Put Tom on the phone, and if he starts to hang up on me, you club him over the right ear, with your own hands.-- (He turns back to Anne.)--It's Tom!

Anne: But what was the matter?

Talos: Tom, the lug. That boy of mine, he goes out and gets in a row at a nightspot out on the highway, and this the middle of the football season.--(He turns back to the telephone.)--Tom!--No, shut up, and listen to me. This is the middle of the season and you're out raising hell. And a game in three days. One more time and I'll have the coach throw you off the squad.--Yes, I mean it! And you won't get your hands on another football, no matter if you're a Burbank cross between Red Grange and Jesus Christ multiplying loaves and fishes. Now go to bed!--(He slams the phone up, and turns back to Anne, grinning.)--He didn't come in last night, and they been combing the State for him, on the quiet, and he's sitting mum in the jailhouse over at a little joint called Johnsville. They picked him up for getting in a fight--Well, they picked him up--but hell, you can read about it in the papers tomorrow. On the front page. The bastards.

Anne: Will it be bad? For you? The papers, I mean.

Talos: Hell no. Not really. A little thing like that. Folks don't care. All kids take on a couple too many once in a while, and throw their mitts. If they got anything to 'em.-- He's got a nice left, that kid.--But right in the season, and a big game coming up. But he's all right. I knew he was all right.

Anne: Suppose, Willie -- suppose it hadn't been all right?

Talos: Nuts. I knew he was all right. All the time. He's tough, slick and tough. Didn't you ever see him play?

Anne: Suppose it hadn't been all right?

Talos: But it was. It was bound to be. And you--you've sure missed something, not seeing that boy in action. The best back in the Conference!

Anne: Is that what he is, Willie--to you? Just that? The best back in the Conference. Just that, Willie?

Talos: (Jovially.) Well, that's something, ain't it?

Anne: I suppose so.--(She turns away; then, as though struck by a thought, swings toward him.)--And that's why you were the way you were when the call came--when they said he was all right. That's the reason your face was the way it was. Because he's the best back in the Conference? Was that why?

- Talos: (Laughing embarrassedly, showing the same pleasure, however, as when the news came.) Nuts! --(He takes her by the arm, shaking her a little, laughing)-- All right, you win. You win.
- Anne: (When he first touches her, she stiffens as though to resist him, looking at his face; then as though satisfied by what she reads there, she accepts his embrace for a moment.)--Willie--(She steps back from him.)--Willie, I've got to go.
- Talos: Not yet. Wait. Wait a minute.
- Anne: Now, Willie.
- Talos: I'm taking you home, then.
- Anne: No--
- Talos: How you gonna stop me?--(He picks up his coat from the foot of the bed, gets his hat and a raincoat from a chair, jams his hat on, and seizes her by the arm.)--Come on!
- Anne: No, Willie--
- Talos: Hey, come on!--(He pulls her arm and she moves with him, toward the door.)--Tom, now--you sure ought to see him on the field, you sure--(They go out together.)
- Chorus: (Singing)
Hormones and chromosomes, a pocketful of rye!
Four-and-twenty blackbirds baked within a pie!
And when the pie is opened, they all begin to sing,
Now isn't that a dainty dish--(Explosion of brasses from orchestra.)
- Chorus
Leader: Not that any irreverence is intended. No, we have reverence for that marvelous and subtle mechanism, the human body. And reverence for the act of love, for I might say--without offense, I hope-- that the beauty of what is termed passion is, in a sense, its own fundamental sacrament.
- Chorus: ~~There will be the debits and debates,~~
And ~~of course~~ the midnight casuistry and the dry-lipped hour.
There will be evasions and the secret assessment of power.
And that protozoic deity, which is not male or female,
lifts its slow lids to smile.
It knows how to wait.
For the taxi's lurch, the whisper in the hall,

The cold latch-key and the muffled foot-fall,
Conspire
To flush the maiden's cheek and make shallow the respiration;
For the hooded lamp and the last flicker of the fire
Reveal nothing familiar, though the old objects are there,
And the old identity falls away when the pin is plucked from the hair.

End I-iii

(Near the Chorus, on which the blue light is focussed, as in the first scene of the play, stands a football player, in uniform, with helmet on. He is a big, powerful, hulking fellow, a line man. The Chorus Leader, a file card again in his hand, approaches the specimen and inspects him.)

Chorus:

What is enough? The ^ethaw, the swiftness, the cunning.
 To live by? The piston-like impact, the act, the sly ~~running~~
 running.
 To love by? The thud, and the punt climbs the tall gold
 light.
 The ends follow like hounds; or the snap and the plunge
 and the tight
 Heart tighter, and blood in the mouth; and the stands quiet.
 To live by, to love by? In its secret is the flesh's fiat.

(The player lunges forward, confidentially, more into the light, grins, removes his helmet, which he dangles in his hand.)

Player:

Now, I tell you, it ain't fair the way some folks talks about us players, saying we git too much outer it, like we didn't have no feelings. It ain't what we git, I'm here to state. We fight for our school, for ain't she our Alma Mater? But ain't we entitled to some consideration? The Big Boss, now he understands how it is. That time we was trailing Stafford at the half, and those bastards had a little back, name of Burke, what was slicker'n the inside of a second-hand banana, and the Big Boss, he come down to the lockers, and what he called us, God-a-mighty, names I wouldn't call no nigger, and then he said: "You let the old school down, and them out there pulling for you! You let them Stafford softies run over you! Stafford, and them pretty little pukes' pappas paying big tuition so their little boys can play football, and I go out and give you an education and fix you up, and you let them pretty pukes out you down! By God, I'll put you back to chopping cotton! What you got on your chest--hair or peach fuzz? Blow your God-damned noses and get in there and stop that Burke. Stop Burke, and see what Santy Claus puts in your stocking!" Well, I'll say I stopped that Burke. I stopped his clock. He came knifing in--well, did you ever git some feller's knee where your kidney used to be? I ain't a-saying I'd done it unless I had to, but a man's got to think of his Alma Mater, ain't he? Even if some folks don't appreciate it. But the Big Boss, now he sure showed some appreciation. I mean to say, it was Christmas.

Off-stage
Cheers:

Rah, rah, rah! Rah for State!
 Our Alma Mater, she is great!
 We will fight and die for State!
 Rah! rah, rah! Governor, Governor, Governor!
 Hooray for Willie!

(This is followed by undifferentiated cheering, as the light becomes more diffuse. A little to the left and farther back than Chorus, is a railed box, like a box in a football stadium. It is hung with streamers and pennants. Before it, is a long bench, placed, like the box, at an obtuse angle to the audience, facing toward the left. On the bench are seated several men in the uniforms of football players. As the cheers rise, the Governor, followed by Tiny Harper, moves into the lighted area, and mounts into the box. He waves his hat to acknowledge the cheering. Meanwhile the player who was with the Chorus has been prancing and working his arms and squatting, as though warming up for a game. Now he disappears toward the left, jogging, dangling his helmet.)

- Talos: By God, we take this game, and it's the championship!
- Tiny: All of 'em put out like your boy, and we'll take it. Hell, that Tom Talos, he'll take it himself, he's hell on wheels, he's--
- Talos: (Turning to Tiny as a friend, warmth and pleasure on his face.) He's that for a fact!
- Tiny: What I was saying the other day to the fellers, yes, sir, I said, I'll give them bastards twenty points. With that Tom Talos to carry the mail. That's what I said. You ask any of them fellers down at the Highway office, you ask 'em.
- Off-stage
Announcer: State will receive the kick-off. It is the kick-off!
- Talos: (Leaping to his feet.) Look! it's Tom by God! He took it! He's getting away. No--no--(He sinks back.)--but it's thirty yards.
- Cheers: Talos, Talos, Talos!
- Talos: He almost got away that time, now!
- Tiny: He can sure pick a hole. Smart and slick, he ain't just beef and beller. He can sure pick a hole, like I always say. Like his old man--(Covertly, he inspects the Governor's face.)--Just like his old man.-- And, Boss--
- Talos: (Watching the field.) Huh?
- Tiny: Boss--there's a hole you can pick over in the Fourth Congressional--

Talos: Huh?

Tiny: We ain't never carried it before, but there's a hole, this time. If you pick it, Boss--

Announcer: First down for State!

Tiny: It'll be a deal, Boss.

Talos: We'll cough up.

Tiny: You see, somebody's got next to the big boys over in the Fourth. There's sure a hole, Boss. (Behind the Governor's Back, Tiny makes a signal.)

Talos: Who got next to 'em?

(Before Tiny can answer, a man enters the box from stage right. He is a small man, swathed in a heavy overcoat buttoned to the chin, although neither of the other men wears an overcoat. He carries a hat in his gloved hands. His head is bald and his features are nondescript. His manner is excessively deferential and oily. He seems always about to bow. He is Gummy Satterfield, a lawyer and financier.)

Tiny: Why, it's Mr. Satterfield!

Gummy: (Bowling and hunching his shoulders.) Howdy-do, howdy-do.

Tiny: (Appealingly to the Governor.) Why, Boss, you remember Mr. Satterfield.

Talos: Who could ever forget him. How's tricks, Gummy?-- (Tiny seems appalled at the use of the name, and Gummy winces.)

Talos: You still cold, huh?--(He reaches out and plucks the overcoat unbuttoned, just under the chin.)

Tiny: Now, Mr. Satterfield -- The Boss and me -- we was just discussing, sort of in general--I mean not mentioning any names--just before you dropped down--

Talos: Well, Tiny, do you think I'M blind? You did everything but whistle to the guy. Didn't he, Gummy?

Gummy: Well--

Announcer: State's ball on the Stafford forty. Talos carried the ball.

Talos: (Looking off at the field.) Come on, Gummy, talk turkey quick, I want to watch this game.

Gummy: It just so happens, Governor--you see, it's this way--

Talos: You've got the Fourth Congressional sewed up. Or think you have. You got next to some of those bastards and bought 'em out. And now you want to horse-trade with me, huh?--(As Satterfield hesitates)--Spill it Gummy, spill it!

Gummy: I just thought, with all this building program that's been going on in the State, and this new hospital and all, a little more equitable distribution of contracts--(Cheering off stage)
--and there's a concern hasn't had its share, you might say, a very worthy concern, and I happen to have a friend connected with it--

Talos: The best friend you ever had. Yourself, Gummy. You're the Morton Bridge and Construction.

Gummy: Well, now--

Talos: Spill it, spill it!

Gummy: (With effort) The hospital contract--

Talos: You better have a reasonable figure.

Gummy: As far as I can make out, Governor-- with the rising costs of material--it will probably be a little more than you have anticipated.

Talos: Thirty grand for sweetening, Gummy. That's all. Every cent.

Gummy: Why, Governor, you don't understand--I refer to actual construction costs--

Talos: Nuts. You heard what I said. Tiny can work out with you the matter of handling bids. He's a crook, too. Just like you, Gummy. You heard me, twenty-five grand--

Gummy: You said thirty--

Talos: I said twenty-five grand! And look here, any funny stuff and I start investigating utilities in this State. You know, the Acme Electric. You got a good friend in that, too, huh?

Gummy: I'll have to think--

Talos: Well, do your thinking somewhere else. And think about this: take it or leave it. And get this: every window latch isn't exactly like those specifications read and you address will be the State pen. Now, I'm gonna watch this game.

- Announcer: State's ball on the Stafford six, Second down and six yards for a touchdown!
(The Governor leaps up as the cheers rise.)
Touchdown for State! The ball was carried by Tom Talos.
(The Governor swings and slaps Tiny on the shoulder, then waves his arms.)
- Announcer: Tom Talos was injured on the play, but it does not appear to be serious.
- Talos: Hell, he just got the breath knocked out.--(He turns again to Tiny, his face shining) --Now, did'nt that boy carry the mail!
- Tiny: That's a fact, Boss!
- Announcer: Tom Talos was, apparently, struck on the head. He has not regained consciousness.
- Cheers: Rah! rah! rah! Talos, Talos, Talos!
- Talos: He just got the breath knocked out.
- Tiny: Sure, Boss, sure.

(The player who has appeared with the Chorus runs toward the Governor's box, and the Governor leans forward to wait for him.)
- Player: Boss--Boss, the doc says it don't look like nuthen, as far as he can tell. He'll be coming round, Boss. Just a minute. Boss, and he'll be jake--
- Talos: Sure, sure. He just got the breath knocked out. He's tough--
- Player: Old Tom--yeah, he's tough. Old Tom, now--
- Tiny: Sure, Boss.
- Player: Look, Boss--they're carrying him to the field house. --But it ain't nuthen, not old Tom.
- Talos: Sure, Sure.
- Player: (Suddenly jerking away.) Boss, I'm a-going over there. Boss--I'm--(He runs across the stage to left.)
- Tiny: Hell, it ain't anything, not that kid and him tough. Naw, like I was saying--old Tom, now, he--

(The Governor has not been listening, but staring after the player. Suddenly he leaps the rail of the box and runs across the stage. Tiny and Gummy watch him speculatively.)

- Gummy: He is, I must say, a very difficult man to understand.
- Tiny: (With a touch of bravado.) Well, I reckon I got his number.
- Gummy: But you and I, Mr. Harper--you and I -- I believe we understand each other?
- Tiny: That's a fact. Mr. Satterfield--(He gathers courage to slap Gummy on the back.)
- Gummy: This Talos, now-- if you find you cannot work comfortably with him, Mr. Harper, there would be a place for you with the Morton Bridge and Construction--an executive position--(coughing)--for a man of your wide experience.
- Tiny: Thanks, Mr. Satterfield, thanks.
- Gummy: Or you might prefer to remain in politics--but with a broader field of usefulness than has--(coughing)--been yours in the past. This Talos--conservative opinion, business opinion, will not accept his eccentricities for an indefinite period. The people will come to their senses. Then Mr. Harper--(His voice trails off.)
- Announcer: The kick is good. The score is seven to nothing. Tom Talos, we regret to report, has not regained consciousness.
- (While Tiny and Gummy have been speaking together, the stage has gradually been filled with confused but soundless movement. Students weave back and forth across it. A young man dressed as a cheerleader, with a megaphone in his hand, capers among them, and waves his arms. Two white-clad men, carrying a stretcher, run across the stage. Now and then, an ambulance bell clangs, now near, now far off. The football player who appeared with the Chorus makes his way through the confusion to the front of the stage and faces the audience. He begins to speak, but all the while Gummy and Tiny, untroubled by the movements about them, continue to confer in whispers.)
- Player: (Obviously shaken and on the verge of tears.) Old Tom, I seen him layin there and not saying nuthen. He give his all for State. He fought and fell fer State, just like the song says we all oughta do. I seen him laying there, and I'm free to admit it, I just bellered like a spot. Something just sorta come over me. It was like I'd seen something. It was like--like--it was--
- (The player fumbles for words, then leaning a little toward the audience speaks with gathering certainty, in a different voice.)

--yeah, like it was--

An instant window which, though blurred
 And cracked and bleared, from the shuttered room
 Of the heart's indignity and doom,
 Gives on a scene none had inferred
 In our confusion--wide waters stern
 And measured to the sun's wide eye;
 White wings under that uncontrollable sky,
 Astonishing, in the distance, yearn.

Oh, let our ignorance be lit
 By that bold moment's rift and gleam,
 That accident and fragment may seem
 Fulfilled and for the pattern fit;
 That we may mark out our measure full;
 That all our days, like straw, may burn
 In sudden flare before we must learn
 The mule's shuffle, the hog's drool.

(He is suddenly overcome by emotion, and puts his head
 in the crook of his arm, like a child. The cheerleader
 rushes to him, and puts an arm in comfort about his
 shoulders and pats him. Then, struck by an idea, he
 jumps up, waves his megaphone, and calls out.)

Cheer Leader: Come on! Sing! Everybody sing. Sing so good old Tom
 can hear it!
 Let him know we're pulling for him!

Off stage
 Voices: For good old State we'll give our all!
 For good old State we'll fight and fall!
 Give our all,
 Fight and --

(The voices fade out. Meanwhile, the members of the
 Chorus have been looking confusedly here and there,
 and whispering together. Now, almost before the song
 has faded out, the Chorus speaks and addresses the
 player.)

Chorus: Just take a good shower and get outside of a steak,
 And a good long sleep will fix all this belly-ache;
 For it's simply a symptom of your over-exerted state,
 Of lactic acid and the hydrogen ion concentrate,
 And such metabolic embalances naturally find
 Appropriate echo in your confusion of mind.
 And your friend's sad condition--his recklessness
 is the cause.
 The fact he broke training and tampered with physical laws.
 You can't be too careful, for one body is all you've got,
 And the frivolous excess may mean the serious blood-clot.
 This recklessness, now, it looks like a family trait.

(More)

Like father, like son-- that's a good definition of fate.
For the father, of course, is far too inclined to neglect,
In his political organism, the trivial defect--
This Harper, this Gummy--a cold little knot in the skin;
But you never can tell when real trouble will begin,
So the sins of the father are visited on the child,
And visited on us, on him, on you,
While under the ground, the mouths that you never knew,
That never kissed you through their nicotined beards,
Speak, and their utterance is louder than words.
O, it's no zombie, it's not the bugaboo,
It's just grandpa's glands crawling in bed with you!

End II-1

(The scene is the Governor's bedroom in the hotel, as in I-iii. He is in the process of dressing to go to the football dance. He wears the trousers of a tuxedo, somewhat shabby and baggy, and his suspenders trail down behind him. He holds a shirt in his hand, trying to insert the studs. On a table by the bed, a bottle of whiskey and a half-filled glass stand beside a small radio. There is a knock, but the Governor, intent upon the shirt, does not look up.)

Talos: Come in!

(Clara Talos, the Governor's estranged wife, enters and stands just inside the door. She is in early middle age, rather drably dressed, a quiet woman with a thoughtful face. The Governor glances up casually, then is obviously struck by surprise at her presence.)

Talos: For Christ sake, Clara!--What do you want?

Clara: I want to talk to you, Willie.

Talos: I didn't reckon we had much to say, any more.

Clara: I shan't say anything for myself, for I am nothing. Or rather, I am all I need to be, for I need nothing. And since I need nothing, I can give all, which is my love, for I love you--

Talos: I thought we'd settled all that stuff.

Clara: That is settled for me, for I have earned my knowledge. That love is its own fulfillment, not the whore's peace, or the capsule at twilight, easy--

Talos: Sure, it's settled --(He takes up his glass, and drinks.)

Clara: But there is one thing, and it must be settled.

Talos: What?

Clara: Had you thought--

Talos: Thought what?

Clara: Our son may die.

Talos: He will not! I tell you, that boy is perfectly all right. I've just seen him. At the hospital. He's all right. The doctors say --

Clara: He may die.

- Talos: Hell, you're crazy! He's tough. What the hell are you saying, you're crazy as hell, he's --
- Chorus: (Somewhat impatiently.) Now, now, my dear woman, the prognosis is extremely favorable. How many times must we tell you? Very favorable. Now if you will just take a sodium amytol, if you will just --
- Clara: He may die.
(The Governor takes a step toward her, almost as though he is going to strike her, then stops.)
- Clara: He may die. But if he should die, I could face that, For I have had him, and past any abrogation--
- Talos: He will not!
- Clara: For Death has many faces, and some smile.
- Talos: What?
- Clara: O, it's what he is, what he thinks, because he can run, Can kick, catch, throw a ball, and is hollow, Is hollow, is blown like a bladder, a child's balloon, And their spittle is on him. Oh, he is their darling, their daisy,
Till -- pop! And he is our son.
- Talos: A chip off the old block!
- Clara: O, Willie!
- Talos: (Defiantly.) Off the old block!
- Clara: O, you can save him--in humbleness I ask it.
- Talos: Save him!
- Clara: From what he will become, and time's eye unwinking--
O, are you so blind? Can't you let him be what he may be?
O, can't you see, see what he is, see what you are,
For you were different once -- you were --
- Talos: (Bitterly) You never could understand.
- Clara: I tried, I tried --
- Talos: Listen:
It was a house set on the bare ground,
A bare house, bony, set on the chunks of stone,
And it was night.
The boy lay, tick-straw harsh to the bare side, and heard
The oaks utter under the wind's long drag.
And I lay in the dark, and I saw him across the Dakotas,
The icy and pearl-blind plain, the Ozarks, the wind
Came, and did not stop, and I did not know
The name of what was big in me, but I knew
It--

- Chorus: It has no name but the act, not being in the bland
Intermission of blood between the stroke and stroke,
But its combustion fuses all the mind to clarity,
As the whistling-white blast of the furnace fuses sand
to glass,
For the world fulfills itself, for the perched stone
Throbs for the depth --
- Talos: (Interrupting, to Clara)
And I say I will be no cut boar grunting for slop,
Or fat dog in the sun. Which you, no doubt, admire
As exemplifying some superior principle
Lacking to me, and to, thank God, my son.
- Clara: O, be what you are, and I love you, but let our son
Now be what he is, and no preposterous mirror
To what you are, no peg to hang your old coat on --
- Talos: What I am, I am, and perhaps do not see it.
But I see this, what men are, and what
Is to be done, and am not afraid of names
Of things that must be done: and the fact --
- Clara: O, that is the last delusion, it's the gut-gnaw
Of those born empty, who have no inward answer --
- Chorus: In action only is answer, and a way of knowing,
And the tender eyeball makes mountains, and the loving
fist
Is father and mother, to the essential adversary,
For contact only is real, and the outward limit means
definition.
- Clara: O, the only answer worth having is the answer that's
inward.
- Talos: I reckon I've got all the answers I need.
- Clara: Blind, blind all these years, and the gray film grows,
It curdles on your eyeball, which does not wink in the
sunlight.
Bat-blind, head down in the daylight or mole-blind, you
move
And I see you--I see like an eye in the dark earth --
You move now, grind earth, heave sod, and the green roots
scream.
I see you-- the tooth enormous on the green root.
- Chorus: Necessity flows downhill only, and has no name.
- Clara: You cause, they say, a general weakness, a failing,
A falling-off, and the slackness of principle,
Fear among friends and distrust on the street-corner--
But I do not know--
- Talos: Yeah, that's what I do!

Talos: What do you expect me to do? Put rats in the pork-barrel?

Clara: But I do not know, or care now, it is not
the outward corruption of power, the people's connivance--
O, I know sugar dotes on the tooth's rotten spot--

Talos: (Drunkenly.) Hell, the peepul is like a girl in her first
She may squeal, but she loves it--the peepul, the peepul!
^{hot,}

Clara: What happens to them-- that is only the accidental
Corruption of power, but is essence, not accident, in you
For slavery corrupts the master more than the slave,
And what in society is a relative defect,
Is in you absolute, and darkness swims, and choice
Drools like an idiot --

Chorus: Necessity flows downhill only, and has no name.
Necessity stands up from the wick, and the fat feeds the
flame.
What has happened before will happen again, but it will not
be the same.

Clara: But if you loved them, if you had loved me, if you loved
him--

Talos: For Christ sake! -- (He takes a deep gulp from his glass,
and sits on the bed, drunkenly.)

Clara: If you loved him, if you loved our son--

Talos: Our son! Our son! -- (He lurches up violently, saving
his glass.) --My son! Do you hear? My son! Do you
hear? Mine!

(She retreats from him slowly, her fixed on his
face. She goes to the door, turns to him again, and
pauses, as though about to speak. He bursts into
laughter. She goes out, closing the door. He laughs
again, drinking. He looks about him, sets down his
glass, and locates the shirt he has dropped. Again
he begins fumbling with the stud, still laughing. He
drops the shirt, and turns to the little table to
prepare another drink. He sees the little radio
there and switches it on; then he finishes fixing the
drink. He takes a drink, sets the glass on the floor,
and sitting on the bed, fumbles with the shirt.)

Radio: -- no doubt one of the most interesting political
phenomenon in the country today. His spectacular rise
to power within the last few years has been almost without
precedent. He is resourceful and ruthless. His sense
of political strategy has been, to date, impeccable.
And he has an insatiable appetite for power. Where will
this lust for power lead him? That question today concerns
all political observers. It is said --

(He leaps from the bed, and tears the radio from its wires and hurls it to the floor. Then he drops across the bed, face down. After a moment, the radio, which is lying on the floor, disconnected, resumes.)

Radio:

But voices are gathered, and gather, and the congregations
of whisperers
Nod like sedge with a dry sound.
And the July-fly, or the cricket, has made his heart stop,
and in the summer
Noonday, the blood stemmer.
But not in fear, who fears nothing as men fear.
He fears nothing not himself, but fears the emptiness of
self the cricket names and calls to
He fears nothing but self, but since he knows the horrible
nothingness of self, he fears only nothing, therefore.
But yet fears all the more.
Whence the inimical sibilance -- the chuckle of rushes,
windless, the cricket's dry glee?
Or do those things demand, "What do your works of hand
commemorate?
What fact the fitted stone?"
The bubble of pride in the belly, like wind, the itch in
the brain-pan,
The lonely
Name of a transient incertitude
Which had a name.
Which walked upright and had a name --

(The Chorus meanwhile has become very agitated, whispering and gesticulating together. The Chorus Leader turns suddenly to the audience, breaking in on the radio.)

Chorus
Leader:

Is there a psychiatrist in the house? Is there a psychia-
trist in the house? Is there a psychiatrist in the house!

End II-ii

(At extreme stage right, and forward, Sue Parsons sits at an office desk, on which are piles of papers, filing boxes, and a telephone. The glow of a little desk lamp falls on her face as she studies a paper. At the extreme left, in a corresponding position, Clara Talos sits in a white chair beside a white table on which are bottles and glasses. Beyond her is a hospital bed, on which a figure lies. At the back of the stage, in shadow, couples are moving in a dance to muted music.)

Chorus: O, Love, sweet Love, like the world, it is every man's oyster,
 Though he lounge in the drug store or punish his knees in a
 cloister;
 Though it loll on the plate with catsup, or pulse in the deep,
 Thinking only of you awake, dreaming of you asleep.
 Whoever you are, where ever it is, it is yours,
 And is humble, and weeps inside of its little doors,
 That what you are after is really its pearl, not it.
 Oh, Love would like to be a whale and wallow in the sea
 Like a big featherbed when the counterpane's kicked free.
 Would like to be an elephant and stamp the jungle glade
 And snake the earth like jello with the trumpeting it made.
 Or be a healthy tigress and make hideous the night
 While the small neurotic monkeys hid their eyes from the sight
 But for some Love's therapeutic, for many just a bore,
 And very few love Love for love, and nothing more.
 Love knows a secret you will never tell,
 And Aphrodite grieves upon half-shell.

Chorus Leader: Which is simply another way of saying that the healthy and
 disarming candor of pure appetite is very rare.

Clara: I reached and plucked, and I have eaten.
 And I know the moment-kissing deceit in
 Which multiple bland dexterity
 Eyes blink.--Then let no more
 Occasion breed necessity,
 For the vision lives not in surrender but labor,
 Now yet in the instancy of passionate conquest, which is the
 fury's affirmer,
 But in purgatorial knowledge: I would touch
 With flicker of friendliness their fingers
 Who peer from the interstices of the personal shadow:
 I would do this, though it is not much.
 In these woods there are only the late, and few, singers.

Sue: Yeah, when I took that boy in hand, that bat-sense wife of
 his had him so hopped to the eyebrows he believed what the
 Fat boys say on the Fourth of July. Well, I put him in the
 big-time and he knows it. Aw, let him have all the little
 fly-by-nights and all the little Oh-it's-must-be-grand-to-be-
 so-big-girls, and help-the-people-too. He's had 'em, the
 whores. But he knows where to come when it's not taffy he
 craves. He always comes back.

(While Sue Parsons is speaking, Anne Amos appears from the moving shadows in the rear. Governor Talos, wearing a shabby and ill-fitting tuxedo, also emerges into the light and rushes toward Anne, with a burst of brassy music, triumphant and exciting, just as Sue finishes her speech. The Governor greets Anne in pantomime, and they dance a few steps. He suddenly stops, takes out a handkerchief, and mops his brow.)

- Anne: I'd think you'd want to dance, just dance your head off tonight--
- Talos: It's my night, for a fact!
- Anne: --you'd be so relieved your son's not really hurt.
- Talos: Now didn't he pour it into 'em this afternoon! And the championship, it's in the bag. Baby, it's my night, and you don't know the half of it!
- Anne: Yes?
- Talos: I made a little deal today.
- Anne: A deal?
- Talos: Sure, I've made 'em before.
- Anne: What is it?
- Talos: I've bought the Fourth Congressional. They're in the bag!
- Anne: (Puzzled.) Tim Cass and those people?
- Talos: Sure--but I have not, I may say, as yet soiled my lily fingers in direct contact --
- Anne: (Still puzzled.) Well--
- Talos: Satterfield--you know, Gummy--that pretty plug of ear-wax, fair and without blemish--he's bought 'em, and he's selling 'em to me.
- Anne: And you've done it?
- Talos: Listen here, why does a man buy him a snout? Not for a pet. He buys it to fatten till hog-killing time. Well, the next election over there, and by God, there's gonna be hog-killing weather. I mean me a real meat-frost.
- Anne: What do you have to give those people, Willie?
- Talos: Nothing. It's what I give Satterfield.
- Anne: What?

Talos: (With a hint of defiance.) The Medical Center contract.

Anne: You gave him that contract.

Talos: Don't take me for a sucker. Not till he delivers.

Anne: It's the same.

Talos: And--now hold your hat--it'll cost about twenty-five grand for sweetening.

Anne: Oh, Willie!

Talos: Hell, it'll look all right.--(He grins.) On the books. Bids and everything. And--(Suddenly serious.)--it's a bargain for the taxpayers. To clean out those bastards.

Anne: But the Medical Center contract--

Talos: Buck up! The place'll be built right or I'll take Gummy apart. And hell! It doesn't matter who builds it. You know how things are.

Anne: (She looks directly at him.) All right. I'm not a child.

Talos: Well, buck up, and help me celebrate.

Anne: All right, Governor.

Talos: Well, the best way would be to promise to marry me.

Anne: Marry you! (Confused and astonished.)

Talos: Sure.

Anne: And what--(She takes a bantering tone, not entirely convincing.)--made you think of that?

Talos: It's my big night! I want you to help me celebrate.

Anne: (She regards him appraisingly.) You know, to judge from your looks and your record, I simply wouldn't put you down as the marrying kind.

Talos: It'd be a hell of a lot more convenient. Than this hole-in-a-corner stuff.

Anne: (She wags her head at him.) Governor, Governor, what a thing to call my high romance!

Talos: Well, it's damned inconvenient.

- Anne: From what my operatives report you have put up with considerable inconvenience for a good many years. With -- (She becomes grim)-- of course, other ladies.
- Talos: To hell with them.
- Anne: Now don't be ruthless. Though -- (She shakes her head sadly.) -- that's what I read about you in the paper. Ruthless.
- Talos: Will you?
- Anne: Willie, you are married. And don't you know a divorce would ruin you? Politically. It would ruin --
- Talos: Ruin? Ruin me! Listen, baby, I can run this State. I know how to run this State. And I know what people like. And one thing they like is a man who knows what he wants and doesn't give a damn who knows it. Yeah, and I want you and I don't give a damn who knows, and don't you worry, I can run this State. Or any State-- (He pauses, and leans toward her and speaks banteringly, but with an undertone of seriousness.)--Baby, I'll put you in the White House.
- Anne: No, thanks.
- Talos: You're a big girl now, you ought to get a hope chest. You ought to think of your future.
- Anne: Future?
I have never asked anything from you, though I have asked something from myself. For I am no haggler, and I am not biddy-hearted to brood and fluff on opportunities like eggs.
You'll admit that?
- Talos: Yes.
- Anne: I've wanted nothing. What do you want from me?
- Talos: You are the seal on my success. (Banteringly)
- Anne: What do you really want from me?
- Talos: (With sudden seriousness.)
Something I had thought that I would never need. But nothing you cannot give, and I need it, and it is a thing which I had never surmised in daylight, or heard like a word sudden in the half-light of dawn, or defined in the sleepless and grit lidded hour before dawn; for I need--
- Anne: If you are fragmentary, what of us others? What of me, for my need by your needlessness only is answered? How what sick and dry-lipped conjecture--

- Talos: Is it a sickness for me to entertain a need?
Yes, sickness, perhaps. But now I know only
The young necessity, and its poor tongue twists
A little, and blurs. But I know some necessity
To live in the house, to hold with myself a familiar
Conversation, to knit the eye to the responsible instant,
And not blinkered move like the old mule at the cane-mill.
- Anne: Do you know what you are saying?
- Talos: I would like to be still for a little while, be still.
I would like to be still beside you for the devoted day.
- Chorus: Well I'd scarcely believe what I read in the papers,
And pictures before taking, and after: "Dear Sirs,
I have taken three bottles of your special emulsion of love,
And find I am much improved, can do my housework,
I no longer experience that old pain in the chest,
Especially when fall came on, or before rain,
And I want to thank you, Sincerely yours, (Signed)
The Lonely Heart-- which is shaped like an apple, and has
A small worm at the core, and the worm has
A small tooth, familiar and hideously soft.
- Anne: Do you know why I first came to love you?
- Talos: I do not know, but I know you said you loved me --
- Anne: I loved you, and love you, but I tell you love is not
A patented fix-it, a household cement to patch pieces,
The putter and piddle of cupboards, or a little plug
To stop some leak where the old force drips a way.
- Talos: You said you loved me--
- Anne: But I have asked
Nothing, and contrive nothing, and my hope contrives
Nothing but not to live in a junk-shop.
- Talos: But Anne--Anne--

(Commissioner Harper approaches from the shadows,
breathless, his hand outstretched.)
- Tiny: Boss! Boss, I been hunting you all over. There's a call--
- Talos: Yes? Yes?
- Tiny: The hospital. They say for you to come. They--
- Talos: (Turning to Anne) You'll come, you'll come with me--

- Talos: Is it a sickness for me to entertain a need?
Yes, sickness, perhaps. But now I know only
The young necessity, and its poor tongue twists
A little, and blurs. But I know some necessity
To live in the house, to hold with myself a familiar
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- Anne: I loved you, and love you, but I tell you love is not
A patented fix-it, a household cement to patch pieces,
The putter and piddle of cupboards, or a little plug
To stop some leak where the old force drips a way.
- Talos: You said you loved me--
- Anne: But I have asked
Nothing, and contrive nothing, and my hope contrives
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- Talos: But Anne--Anne--

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breathless, his hand outstretched.)
- Tiny: Boss! Boss, I been hunting you all over. There's a call--
- Talos: Yes? Yes?
- Tiny: The hospital. They say for you to come. They--
- Talos: (Turning to Anne) You'll come, you'll come with me--

- Anne: (Slowly.) No -- no --
- Talos: (Seizing her arm.) You've got to --
- Anne: No--(She draws back from him.)
- Talos: (He suddenly releases her.) -- Goodbye.--(He hurries away.)
- Anne: (Looking after him, calling.) I'm sorry! I hope--(Her words trail off as he disappears in the shadows, not turning back.)
- Chorus: He goes in the street and his head is swollen like a cloud. To his unravelled senses the furious traffic is not loud. Under his feet the pavement twitches like a dog's hide. There are snickers in alleys and in shadows, and from windows voices that deride --
- Chorus Leader: (To audience.) Catch him! Stop him and tell him!
- Chorus: You must stop him and tell, tell him to pull himself together! Tell him that he must realize there is always a margin of error, error, There is always a margin of error --
- Chorus Leader: But it in no way affects the scientific principle. You must no think for a moment that it prejudices the basic scientific principle.
- Tiny: (Looking toward the shadows where the Governor has disappeared.) Gee, it's sure tough. But --(He turns, brightly, with an air of discovery, to Anne.)--there ain't a thing we can do about it.
- Anne: No. No. (Abstractly)
- Tiny: Let's dance. Let's trip one of the light fantastic.
- Anne: (She mechanically lifts her arms toward him for the dance, as he steps to her. They take a few steps, as the music grows louder. Suddenly, she stops, and almost violently withdraws from him.)--I can't. Right now. I'm sorry, but I can't --
- Tiny: Aw, come on.--(He tries to slip his arm around her again.)
- Anne: I'm sorry. I can't--not now--
- (Dr. Amos appears from the shadows, and hurries toward them.)
- Amos: (With exaggerated formality.) Will you dance with me, Anne?
- Anne: No, Keith. Thanks. Just now--you see-- I was just saying to Mr. Harper here, I didn't feel like dancing--
- Amos: That was what I assumed.

- Tiny: (Mincingly.) Oh, don't mind me. I'm just waiting for a street car.
- Anne: Mr. Harper--I--
- Tiny: (Bowing with ponderous irony.)--Toodle-oo.--(He walks away.)
- Anne: Why did you have to insult him?
- Amos: Why do you have to put up with him? Talos is bad enough, but you don't have to drink the scum off the pot.
- Anne: I can take care of myself. You don't have to bother about me.
- Amos: I'm not. I'm bothering about myself.
- Anne: Oh, Keith, Keith, let's don't be this way. Let's be like we were, like we used to be. Before--oh, Keith --(A page-boy enters from the rear, stage-right, and approaches.)
- Page: Dr. Amos, there's a call from the hospital for you. Urgent, they say. About the Governor's boy.
- Amos: Thanks, thanks.--(To Anne)--Probably a consultation. You can go to your place in a taxi.--
(He hurries off, the page with him.)

(For a moment Anne stands as in meditation, while the music grows louder. The orchestra is playing "I Can't Give You Anything But Love." Then the music fades away, and she speaks.)

- Anne: If it was for strength, I cannot take him in weakness.
If for decision, it cannot be in concession.
I lived in the clutter of time, and I found no reason.
Therefore, I said: If, at all, there is reason,
It lives in the affirmative instant out of time,
For the past is dead and the future in it like maggots.
I said, I will look steady at the heart of flame.
Therefore, I say that in my conduct has been
No accident, no casual remission of will.
But for once--and after I had seen my time
Untwist, gather like lint under a bureau--
At last, at last, the attempt at unblinking acceptance.
And not to betray myself, I'll not sit and pick
The hangnail of speculation, at any late hour.

Chorus
Leader:

My dear young lady, certainly we can sympathize with your refusal to accept Governor Talos' proposal of marriage, if you feel that he makes it because he is floundering, because he has some sentimental notion of marriage as a spiritual therapeutic. But we are inclined to think, my dear young lady, that your own attitude is not untainted by sentimentality

consider

--though, perhaps, a very predictable sentimentality. There you were, a vigorous, attractive young woman, brought up in restricting surroundings and somewhat dominated by your brilliant, though, in our opinion, erratic brother, who, however, withdrew more and more from you into his work and his private dogmatism. There you were, nearly thirty, and you had never had an emotional experience of any fundamental intensity. It is scarcely surprising that felt life to be meaningless, and sought some violent solution. But have you ever thought why you turned to Governor Talos-- a man who is the very antithesis of your brother? Well, you might, that a little. Just don't fly off at a tangent, and don't attach more importance to your recent, and tardy, sexual experiences than is inherent in them. Don't try to get more out of love than there is in it. That isn't healthy, that--

(Interrupting the Chorus Leader, a negro man, dressed in evening clothes, steps briskly on to the stage, carrying in one hand and orchestra leader's baton and in the other a microphone on an upright. The music suddenly becomes loud. He sets down the microphone and begins to croon into it, while he conducts, mechanically, with the baton. The music sinks a little.)

Crooner: I can't give you anything but love, Baby,
That's the only thing I've plenty of, Baby,
Dream a while,
Scheme a while,
We're sure to find
Happiness

And I guess
And I guess
All those things you've always pined for,
Gee, I'd like to see you looking swell, Baby,
Diamond bracelets Woolworth doesn't sell, Baby --

What if worlds and cultures fall today, Baby?
If Democracy is in decay, Baby,
Crumbling now,
Tumbling now?
Yet though you find
Values shot
You've still got
Love, love, love, love, love, love, loving!

(At the first love, the music bursts into hysterical violence, and the leader waves his baton wildly; then the music trails off, and the words are rendered as in recitation.)

Though the maggots now are in the cheese, Baby,
And constellations drift like falling leaves,
Glimmering, and by short wave, when the weather's good,
We hear the inspired idiot's harangue, the shout,
The frantic burst of applause, like hail on a tin roof.
But sometimes we can only get the local stations.

(The scene is the living room in the house of Clara Talos. A fire is smouldering in a grate at the rear. At the left, in an easy chair, which is set almost at right angles to the audience, Governor Talos is slumped down, with his head thrown back so that his eyes are almost directed at the ceiling above him. A cigarette is burning between the fingers of the arm toward the audience, but he makes no motion to bring it to his lips. His position and manner suggest his first appearance in I-ii. Now he is wearing a black suit and black tie, and an overcoat and hat lie on his knees.)

Toward the right, and somewhat forward, Clara Talos stands in the act of removing a black cloth coat. Beside her another woman stands, solicitously helping her. This is a friend, Doris.)

Doris: Now, Clara, you sure you don't want me to stay tonight? And aren't you going to let me fix you a bite to eat?

Clara: No, Doris, thank you.

Doris: I'd want to stay, Clara. Somebody ought to stay.

Clara: I ought--(She hesitates, then begin, slowly to remove her hat.)--I ought to be by myself.--(She holds the hat in her hand, abstractly, for a moment.)--I ought--(Suddenly she drops the hat, and makes a blind, groping motion toward her friend.) --by myself. He's dead, Doris, he's dead!

(Doris puts an arm about Clara Talos' shoulder, supporting her, but Governor Talos does not move. He does not even seem to notice.)

Doris: Oh, darling, you've been so brave.

Clara: (Almost in a matter-of-fact tone.)--He's gone.

Doris: Don't think of it that way. Think what the preacher said. That Tom was an ideal for boys all over the State, a fine, clean ideal, and now he'll be an ideal for years to come. That he gave his life--

Clara: (As to herself.) The fool!

Doris: I'm sure he meant to say something that would be-- a comfort. About Tom--and all--

Clara: He was my boy, and he was playing a game and got hit on the head-- and he's gone.

Doris: (At a loss for a reply.) --Darling! --(She strokes Clara's shoulder. Then, like one changing a subject, she straightens up and speaks.) -- You're sure you don't want me to stay?

Clara: No, Doris.

Doris: I'll be going then, I'll come by in the morning.-- (She looks across at the Governor, who has not moved.) --Willie, I'll drive you to your hotel, if you want.

Talos: Thanks, Doris. I'm going to walk.

Doris: It's coming up a rain.

Talos: I think I'll walk, anyway.

(Doris moves to the right, preparing to go, but she hesitates, looking curiously from one to the other.)

Doris: Goodbye.-- (She goes out.)

(Clara looks about the room with a housewifely glance, picks up her coat from a chair, then turns toward the Governor.)

Clara: I'm going up and try to sleep now. I haven't slept for a long time.
(Governor Talos does not look at her, or answer.)

Goodbye, Willie.

(He looks at her, but does not change his position in the chair, while she moves toward the right. Just as she seems about to leave the room, he speaks.)

Talos: Clara!

Clara: (Turning, startled.) Yes?

Talos: I do not know what happened, or when, but it happened,
And happened long ago, and in darkness,
And I have thought of
The termite's powerful tooth set to the sill
We walked on, but can walk on no longer now.
But now I know one thing.--Come closer--

(She takes a few steps toward him, then stops, just at the right of the fireplace.)

Clara: Yes?

Talos: You said you loved me, still --

Clara: I said that.

Talos: But I do not cuddle the hope that even your words
Could revoke the seminal assurance of time--

Clara: I said it, but--

Talos: And from time's compunctionless sorites, I do not
Expect concession--O, I've seen the leaf whirled,
Heard my knee creak on the stair--but I ask, and humbly,
Some charity of your excess, the slosh
Of what fulness you are, and my lips are dry.

(She seems about to move toward him, lifting her right hand;
but she doesn't go.)

Chorus: He wiped his hand across his lips, like sand.
He heard in the gutter the rain murmur, and remembered
The snug weevil, and under dead leaf the beardless
Form, where no face comes. He saw it which suffers
Only the consultation of grasses; and he thought,
O! to be now small, clean-furred, the feet small
And folded together, asleep in some rock cranny, no tread
there,
The season winter; or be some other small thing.
And his lips were dry.

Chorus
Leader: These symptoms are, I should say, some cause for alarm.

(Governor Talos has risen suddenly from his chair, spilling the
coat and hat from his lap. With a violent gesture he flings the
cigarette butt into the fire and takes a step toward her.)

Talos: I want to come back to you.

Clara: I did love you,
And I do still, but what was once possible
Is not now possible--at least, not now--

Talos: Not now?

Clara: For darkness ticks like a watch, for I remember
You said he was your son, not mine, and you laughed.

Talos: Clara!

Clara: And now you have your son, the son you asked for!

Talos: O, Clara!

(For a moment, looking into his face, she seems appalled
by what she has said.)

Clara: I had not meant to say that, not even now.
For I had thought it was over, my heart dry like a raisin.
And now, I would unsay it now, my weakness.

Talos: (With a hint of artificial excitement, as when an adult makes a promise to a child.) -- I tell you, Clara, what I'm going to do. That new hospital, it's going to be the Tom Talos Medical Center. That's what it'll be!

(Her hand, which has been lifted toward him, falls abruptly.)

Clara: That's what it will be --
And the sport-page and pulpit will utter their greasy gibberish
Like a tube of patented salve, when you squeeze it,
And the faces will be all around on that day, and the manly
Tear, misting the lens, will aggravate catarrh,

Talos: (He tries to draw her.) Clara, listen--

Clara: O, you will have your son, but you cannot have mine,
For he does not belong to the public lie or the leering
Monument or easy emotion, for he has withdrawn.
He participates now in the innocent ambition of the nameless.

(He makes a movement to protest.)

O, you will have yours, and use him, but than have such a son,
I'd rather forget like the restless bitch with her dugs
swollen,

But you--

You have your son, and rain is on the ground.
Where is my son?

Talos: Why, Clara!--(He takes her by the wrist, shaking her.)--
Clara, stop it! Why you talk like I had done it. Had done
something. Like I had killed him!

Clara: No, I did not say that, and have not thought that you willed
it,
But I know that your will is like death,
And I know that responsibility has slept
Under carpets, and hovers like vapor in drains--

Talos: Listen to me, Clara!--(He tries to draw her to him.)

Clara: O, can't you understand?

Talos: Listen to me, I love you.

Clara: But love ought ot will a world that love could live in,
Not gnaw its own foot like the fox trapped,
And even desire needs belief,
And the arrogance gutters and bends, and the bestial
Enthusiasm will lift its weak hands--
As we did once-- and once--

Talos: Give me your hand, Clara.

Clara: It is not dark, or if it were just dark and the dark
was not boxed by the darkness and the dark

Clara: If it were not dark, or if it were just dark and the dark
Were not vexed by ambiguities and if
I could know the nature of dark, not feel its uneven
Breath--

Talos: Give me your hand.

(Slowly, she extends her hand to him, and then, as he
takes it, she sinks into the chair besides him.)

Talos: I have come a long way and--

(He drops to his knees beside her.)

O, Clara! I've heard in my mind
Blunt horrors lurch and grind, like street-cars.
I hear doors creak on their hinges. Shoes creak, approaching.
(He lets his face sink into her lap.)

Clara: (After a moment, in which she lays her free hand on his head.
He was a good baby, even when he was little. He never cried.

Chorus: His period of usefulness has clearly come to an end--
We regret to admit it, for he was, in a sense, our friend,
And he took an almost scientific view,
Of the mechanism with which he had to do,
But there was a defect, the flaw, the taint in the blood,
The one little thing in himself which he never understood:
The secret need at last to justify himself by the abstraction
of Good.
Few are betrayed by appetite, but many are betrayed
Because early or late, too soon or too late, they have laid
themselves down in the dark to clutch, not flesh, but the
cold phantasm
Which dents no pillow and smiles past cunning endearment or
the poor spasm.

End II-iv

(Tiny is revealed in a spot of light at stage left, under the scrutiny of the Chorus. He blows on his diamond ring, polishes the gem on his coat sleeve, admires it again. He breaks into a few steps of a lumbering elephantine dance, and sings.)

Tiny: What puts the hop in the big grasshopper?
 What makes the sweetie-pie say Poppa?
 It's not what you think, it's the dollar.

What puts the doddle in the bug
 And puts the spark in the old spark-plug?
 What puts the grunt in the honey's hug?
 It's not what you think, it's the dollar.

(As the light grows more diffuse, Tiny stops singing, takes one last caper, straightens his vest, and walks into the area now revealed as the Governor's office. Sue Parsons sits at a desk at one side. Tiny tips back his derby and leers at her.)

Tiny: Yes, sir, I knew he'd take it on the chin. And not give a blink. That's what I said to the boys yesterday out at the cemetery. The Boss, he'll just take it on the chin, he'll be right back in harness. Yeah, it'd be a shame for the Boss to let anything prey on his mind right now, and him about to buy out Gummy and fix things up--

Sue: Oh, don't you worry, he won't let anything prey on his mind. It's just his boy died.

Tiny: It was sure sad, now. But what that preacher said. It was beautiful sentiment if I ever heard one. And you take them flowers from the Fifth Ward! That's what I call a real floral tribute! And I was saying--

Sue: You better say it to the Boss, where it'll help your case. There he comes now.

(Governor Talos enters from stage left. The others study him, as he throws his coat and hat into the chair.)

Tiny: How do you feel, Boss?

Talos: I'm all right.-- (He turns to Sue.) -- Sue, I want you to get together all the stuff you can on the Morton Bridge and Construction, and on the Acme Electric. Start digging. And get anything you can on Gummy Satterfield--

Tiny: What, Boss? What?

Sue: I thought you were buddies with Gummy these days.

Talos: Sure, I love old Gummy. I just wonder whether he's gonna love me when he hears the news.

Sue: I had just forgotten your sunny nature.

Talos: Sure, I love, but he's Tiny's special pal, ain't he Tiny?

Tiny: Well, now, I wouldn't say that exactly. He admires you, Boss, he was saying to me --

Talos: Oh, no, Tiny, it's you he feels close to. It's beautiful, that mutual confidence and perfect understanding. And it's only proper that the nearest and dearest -- that's you -- Tiny -- should break the sad news to him. You can put your hand on his shoulder.

Tiny: (Apprehension in his tone.) Huh? Huh? Boss?

Talos: (Almost gaily.) The deal's off, Tiny!

Tiny: (In horror.) Boss!

Talos: Yep!

Tiny: Boss, Gummy's all right.-- (His tone becomes wheedling, sweetly reasonable.) -- You just don't know him, he's --

Talos: I don't know his softer side, huh? The side the flies get stuck on?

Tiny: He's all right. And he's got everything fixed up too. To deliver like he promised.

Talos: Maybe he won't want to unfix it either. Now with Sue dropping her terriers down the rat-hole and a special session of the legislature going right up through election day.-- (He turns to Sue.) -- Call a special session in three days. Start the hog-calling!

Tiny: Boss, you can't do it!

Talos: Who the hell's gonna stop me?

Tiny: Gummy's got 2 slices of this State sewed up. We oughta cooperate. You can't tell what'll happen you dump it in the Legislature. Some of the boys won't like it --

Talos: Look here! Gummy may think, or you may think, that he's bought up some of the boys. But it won't stick. He may give 'em twenty bucks, but I'll give 'em galloping paralysis. They get gay and there'll be a bear market on farmhands and barbers come the next election, for if there's anything cheap around here it's sweet potatoes and statesmen. They both grow on pore ground. And as for you -- (He suddenly whips out his finger, pistol-like, at the Commisioner's chest.)

Tiny: Boss -- I --

Talos: --you may be wearing a hundred dollar suit and a diamond ring, but on the hoof you're crow-bait, and boy! I can strip you to the blast.

Tiny: Boss --

Talos: Now get out.

(The Commisioner goes out quietly and quickly, with an agility notable in one of his bulk. Sue studies the Governor, shaking her head slightly. The Governor has turned his back, and is looking out the window, backstage, left.)

Sue: You sure like to do things the hard way. The Medical Center contract and twenty-five grand -- it'd be cheap at the price.--

(She pauses, as though waiting for an answer, but the Governor does not turn.) -- It wouldn't be the first time, you know --

(Tiny is standing disconsolately to one side out by the office area. He pulls himself together, looks at his ring, tries to whistle a bar of his tune, then sings, as before.)

Tiny: What makes the salmon swim upstream?
What makes the school-girl smile in her dream?
It's not what you think. It's the dollar.

~~What~~
What puts the Welcome on the doormat
And makes the Madame take your hat
And puts the purr in the pussy-cat?
It's not what you think, it's the dollar.

(While Tiny sings, Sue continues to regard the Governor with the air of one adept at patience and calculation. As Tiny ceases singing, Talos turns slowly to face her.)

Talos: Sue --

Sue: Yes?

Talos: I'm going away. I'm going to my place up in the country. Until the special session. Send the ^{stuff} on the investigation up to me when you get the first batch.

Sue: How about me coming? I can bring it up. I'm getting fed up with city life, and I haven't been up since --

Talos: No, Sue.

Sue: Still craving the taffy? Still got your mind on that Amos bag?

Talos: No, Sue.

Sue: You don't have to kid me. You never did have to. I guess I can wait. I've waited before.-- (A mixture of humor and bitterness.)

Talos: It's over, Sue.

Sue: You and that Amos bag?

Talos: Yes. -- (He pauses and seems to stiffen himself.) -- And you and me, too, Sue.

Sue: Boss - (She starts toward him solicitously.) -- you feeling all right, you're not --

Talos: (He lifts his hand, and she stops, looking at him.) I am going back to my wife, Sue.

Sue: To that screw-ball! Hah! Don't make me laugh.

Talos: I am going back to her.

Sue: (Slowly and almost incredulously.) To that sewing-circle? And dump me. -- (Suddenly.) -- I'll be damned if you --

Talos: If she will have me.

Sue: Have you? I wish to Christ I'd never had you! And where would you be now? Janitor in the City Hall. Listen here, I made you, and you know it. And what did I ever get? A couple of hand-me-down kisses and a pinch on the ear and "That's-a-good-girl-Sue!" On a wet night or when you're too tired to go on the prowl.-- And what you were when I took you! Jesus, what you were--

Talos: What I was then I scarcely know now, or guess,
 For I have peered in the cistern of Time's stagnation
 At that drowned, the glimmer-fractured face--and I winked,
 Like the hotel-drunk at the wash-room mirror's stranger --
 Sue: Stranger is right!

Talos: Whatever he was, I'd like to see him again.
 I would like to know what he would say to me.

Sue: He was a crummy little wide-eyed snot! And you --

Talos: (He holds up his hand to stop her violence.)
 I want to tell you, therefore, if it is possible
 To tell you what is to tell -- O, who has not
 Lipped the common cup, swapped spit, who has not stood
 In the noisy crowd, or slyly relished the society of the
 corrupter?
 I have, and I see it. I say it, now. I have come
 By alleys where the foot slews, but I should like to go
 In some hope now, and I hope to have whatever
 Friendship may be from what we were, and are.

(He advances toward her, extending his hand. She regards
 him, not moving a muscle until he is directly in front
 of her. Then with a quick flickering motion, she slaps
 him across the face. Very slowly, he lets his hand sink;
 she steps back from him, almost as though expecting a
 blow, then, under his gaze, retreats, step by step,
 toward the right. Just as she seems about to go, he
 speaks in a detached tone.)

Talos: You will please send those materials up as soon as
 possible.

(She seems about to answer, then goes out quickly.
 Governor Talos begins to speak meditatively, pauses,
 moves toward his desk at the left, sits down, and
 resumes.)

Talos: The deed, plunged into the bath of Time, dissolves;
 In that cynic transparency loses the intrinsic structure,
 Is of Time, of the time; and the indifferent light revolves
 Its smile through that perjured innocence of tincture.
 And history spat, shifts its slow quid.
 The deed, in Time, dissolves; but past the shudder, and past
 The spasm of no conviction, and conviction and spasm undid,
 The deed, out of Time, takes the crystalline form, at last;
 For the coiling atoms and nursed their geometric secret;
 As the human experience nurses its truth in secret,
 Though the lip on the day's dug can always forget, or regret.

(The Chorus replies. The light begins to dim, with a focus on Governor Talos, but by the end of the speech of the Chorus, it has left him in darkness, and Tiny and Sue become visible at stage right.)

Chorus: We have no interest in your present muttering,
Or domestic tangles or conscience-buttering.
If you'd boss the boys and collect the taxes,
We'd provide the moral prophylaxis,
For we never cared what your motives were --
Who eats the chesnut must peel the burr.
But now to keep your little hands clean
You're too dainty to deal with Gummy's machine.
Aside to (O, he wants to keep his little hands clean!
Audience) At this stage of the game he wants them clean!)
And admiring your moral navel, you would
Immorally risk the general good.
For if you lose, Gummy runs the show,
And the tumor will bloom, and the abcess blow,
And you'll sit in your sitting-room with your wife
And mope together on the meaning of life.
But think: in corner or corridor,
Avarice and price, rebuked, confer.
They lean now, kiss, couple, and the enormous
Limbs of history, sleeping, twitch in the dark house.

(Tiny and Sue, standing close together, become visible in a patch of light surrounded by darkness.)

Sue: Sure, he'll ruin us. He'll ruin us! But listen. Listen to me! He's throwing that Amos girl over.

Tiny: Huh?

Sue: She may not know it yet, but it's true.

Tiny: (Leering ponderously at her and offering his hand.) Allow me to be the first--

Sue: Shut up! -- He's going back to his wife.

Tiny: Sweet Jesus!

Sue: Listen! -- (She seizes Tiny's lapel.) -- Do you think that Dr. Amos knows he's rolled Little Sister in the hay?

Tiny: Well?

Sue: Hell, no, he doesn't know it. Or know that people -- (She becomes sly, insinuating.) -- are putting two-and-two together about how he got to be head of the hospital and all, when everybody knew he was against the Big Boss in politics. Or know why Little Sister is getting her spare chemise cleaned out of the Boss' bureau drawer --

Tiny: Huh?

Sue: Because that Amos killed his boy. Operated on him and killed him. And that's why he's gonna fire Amos out of the hospital. As soon as the session gets started.

Tiny: Is that a fact? a fact?

Sue: Hell, no, it's not a fact, but does that matter a God-damn? Amos will think it's a fact. Every word. When -- (She comes closer to him, tugging at the lapel) --

Tiny: Huh?

Sue: When you tell him.

Tiny: Jesus! -- (His face lights up.) -- Sure, I'll get one of the boys --

Sue: Sure -- Put it in the paper. You fool!

Tiny: Well, now --

Sue: Sure, you're afraid of him when you tell him. I don't blame you, not if he's what I figure -- and pray to Christ -- he is. But maybe you'll escape with your life. And then--

Tiny: Huh?

Sue: And then! -- (She jerks at his lapel, then releases him suddenly, and turns indifferently away.) -- Take it or leave it. It's all your funeral, anyway. If Talos lives, you're through.

Tiny: (Almost whispering, wetting his lips.) All right. All right.

Sue: (Distantly and indifferently.) All right.

Tiny: (Enthusiastically, waving his arms, as the full import dawns upon him.) Gee, you sure got something on the ball! Satterfield, he'll fix you up!

Sue: I don't want anything he's got. If I'd wanted to, I could have been rich a long time back, panning in this muck.

Tiny: (He goes to her, and pats her on the shoulder, then rubs the palm of his hand between her shoulder-blades.) All the same--ee, Baby, a friend don't never hurt. And Baby, I ain't never gonna forget you. We might --

Sue: (Not moving, she stands rigid under the motion of his hand, and speaks through stiff lips.) Take your God-damned greasy hands off me.

(The stage goes dark.)

(The scene is the consultation room of Dr. Keith Amos, with cabinets of instruments, book cases, etc. A table is toward the center, with a chair besides it. Dr. Amos is leaning over the table, not seated, studying some papers, as a nurse enters.

Nurse: Doctor, there's a man to see you.

Amos: Who is it?

Nurse: Well -- he didn't give his name. He just said, he was a friend. That it was something important.

Amos: All right -- (He glances again at the papers on the table)--send him in. But my sister is coming almost any minute now.

Nurse: Oh, I'm sorry! I almost forgot. She just called, and said she would be a little late.

(The secretary goes out, leaving the door ajar. After a moment, Commissioner Harper enters, and the secretary, who has ushered him in, shuts the door as she retires. The Commissioner, despite an air of bravado, seems strained and nervous.)

Tiny: How-do, Doctor.

Amos: Making no movement to greet his visitor.) Good afternoon.

Tiny: (Approaching Dr. Amos slowly, almost warily) I just had something to tell you, Doctor. I hope I ain't intruding, but it's sort of important, it's -- (He lets his voice trail off, and stops his slow approach, but when Dr. Amos gives no sign of response, he resumes.) --You know--You know, the Boss--

Amos: I presume you refer to the Governor.

Tiny: -- The Governor--well, you know he's back in town. He'll be up at the Capitol this evening, running the special session. That utility investigation--

Amos: Well?

Tiny: Yeah, he'll be up there. And when -- (He wets his lips.) --When the session's over, you know what he's gonna do?

Amos: I am scarcely in the confidence of the -- the Gang.

- Tiny: (Leaning toward Dr. Amos, he lets his voice sink.)
He's gonna fire you! Out of the hospital job.
- Amos: It is of no interest to me. My resignation is prepared. It was prepared twenty-four hours after I had accepted the appointment, and was dated and notarized that day. It is a very full statement. In it I made my position very clear. My attorney has held it since that time, with complete instructions as to its release. It is prepared in duplicate. One copy for the -- Boss. And one for the press.
- Tiny: Huh?
- Amos: And you can tell your friend, who, I assume, sent you, that the resignation can be had at any time.
- Tiny: Listen, you got me wrong--(Hurriedly)-- You sure got me wrong. I just thought you'd want to know. And all. I just didn't like to stand by and see nothing rough-- you know, nothing unethical, you might say--
- Amos: Naturally.
- Tiny: Yeah, yeah, and you know why he's gonna do it? -- (He leans closer.) -- Because, he says you killed his boy!
- Amos: Yes, that is one way to say it. I operated, and the boy did not survive the operation. Perhaps some other surgeon might have saved him. I can't say. I operated at the insistence of the boy's father and of the attending physician. I did what I was capable of doing. And--(He suddenly flares up.)-- I do not care to discuss the matter with you.
- Tiny: (Recoiling) That's what he says--I ain't saying it-- that you killed him. That's why he's firing you.
- Amos: My professional reputation, I believe, can survive the aspersion.
- Tiny: And that's why he's throwing--throwing her over, too. And her a sweet kid too. You know --(He leans over again, wetting his lips.) --the confiding kind-- (He tries to read the other man's face, which is expressionless.) --Yeah, the kind that gives her all.-- (He watches narrowly, but there is no change in Dr. Amos except an almost imperceptible stiffening of posture.) -- Yeah, yeah. And--and you know why they say you got that job, the hospital job? What they're saying? On account of--of--
- Amos: (His voice distant and grating) What?

Tiny: Your si--

(Before the word can come from his lips, Dr. Amos has leaped upon him, seizing him by the throat and tie, driving him back against the table.)

Amos: Say it, and I'll--

Tiny: (He puts his hands ineffectually against the doctor's shoulder, and speaks gurglingly.) I did ~~n~~^ot say nothing-- nothing. Not a thing.-- It ain't me, it's them saying it. -- It ain't my fault--

(Dr. Amos slowly releases his grip on Harper's throat, with a thrusting motion as though to free his hands from a sticky substance. Harper, pantingly, begins to recover his composure, and retreats a little. Dr. Amos holds his hands at the level of his waist, looking at them)

Amos: Fault? Fault-- and the swollen fly sips garbage, Then blunders to bread --and the infection spangles The palate and spores in the intricate blood -- and it Is guiltless -- Go away -- for it lacks judgment, Lacking knowledge, lacking --Go away, quickly --

(Each time Dr. Amos says "go away" -- which is rendered as a soft parenthesis in contrast to the general vehemence of the speech, the Commissioner retreats a little. But he keeps his eyes fixed upon Dr. Amos' hands, as though hypnotized. When, at the end of the above speech, Dr. Amos suddenly looks up at the Commissioner, the Commissioner goes hurriedly out.)

Amos: For what choice lives, or judgment, in the tendon's twitch?
In the precious secretion, in the bubble of mire?
And we should have walked softly, and more carefully have
fumbled
In darkness the wall's protuberances, have listened
For the sound of breathing in darkness--but no one had told us,
Nobody said, "Listen! But I --

(After a light knock, Anne Amos, very white in the face, enters. She and her brother regard each other a moment before she speaks.)

Anne: (Tiredly) I'm sorry I'm late.

Amos: (Looking searchingly at her.) Yes.

Anne: You aren't angry, Keith?

Amos: No.

Anne: What's the matter--

Amos: Matter? -- (He approaches her) -- This. I know now.

Anne: Know?--

(She moves to the table, drops her coat across it, and puts her hand to the table as though to steady herself)

Amos: I know--That Harper--he has been here. And I know now. About you. You and Talos.

Anne: ~~Stop!~~ (She lifts her hand as to ward off a blow) *stop!*

Amos: Oh, yes, I know.--(Taking another step toward her.) --And I know you.

Anne: (Not defiantly, but wearily) There is nothing to know.

Amos: Nothing! You say that you've fondled the foul hump
And not for luck--fondled the essential deformity
Wherein all rectitude of nature is reviled--

Anne: (Interrupting)
What I attempted there is no use to name now,
For we have no language at last; and there is no
Utterance for the great distance now, and ice on the wires.

(She sinks into a chair by the table)

I had thought that it would be different, I had thought to be
stronger--

Amos: And I had thought--

Anne: --But knowledge is secret, it comes gum-shoe in alleys, and all
Our betrayals our own--and the liquor is spilled, and the
And whatever irreplaceable preciousness life had is unbunged.
staves surprised,

Amos: Finger the scab, it's nothing to me --

Anne: How can you say it, Keith! And we what we were?

(She starts up from the table, then sinks back.)

Amos: But this: I'll never be the happy pimp --

(She leaps up, seizes him, and tries to put her arms about him)

Anne: No! No, Keith!

(For a moment he seems about to succumb to her, putting one arm about her shoulder. Then gently, he disengages himself, but still holds her upper arm on the side of the audience, with his own arm outstretched. He begins to speak in a low tone which gradually alters.)

Amos: For I had understood there was something to live by,
Not that ~~sack~~ ^(-sack) of sad belly we live by, glut and purge,
Or the other sack, slung secret, the sly purse of pleasure,
For the mechanic twitch of which throats have been slit,
And I've stood in districts of degradation where
Vile boys have stoned the windows of warehouses,
And the sore's gilt spangles the corner of the mouth,
And I stood and said, "There is an answer, there is
A word, a way." And I stood there. But there is
Not--

(At the word not he thrusts her sharply from him, so sharply that she reels back against the table.)

Anne: O, Keith! not after all--

Amos: What's it to you? -- And when did virtue lurk
In the rubber glove? or the enemy conveniently restrict
His householding to some small knot in the side?

Anne: (After a pause.)

I have no enemy. And if I had
I should love him, for he would not leave me alone,
But would pursue, and like the unstumbling wind
Be my companion in the night's enormity.
He would name my name. I would hover under that wing.

Amos: But I have an enemy, and I know his foot in the street,
And I know him and at last know myself, therefore, and know
That his merds are found in the green wood-path, and he loves
To lean over bridge-rails and spit in the clear water --

Anne: (Raising her hand in protest.) No, no! It's not true--
(She again tries to seize him.)

Amos: And why should the whole unsmear'd and wide world be
A back-fence for him to scrawl on? Tell me that!
But I -- (He flings her off) -- But I --

(He rushes out at stage left. There is the sound of a door being slammed in a farther room. Anne Amos sinks into the chair by the table, and lets her head droop until it is in contact with the surface of the table. After a moment, the nurse enters, hesitates, then quietly withdraws. During the scene the members of the Chorus have been whispering together, becoming more and more concerned. Now there seems to be a serious debate among them. When the nurse enters, they gesture wildly at her, and the Chorus Leader calls out.)

Chorus
Leader:

Nurse, nurse! O, nurse!

(But the nurse does not seem to hear.)

End III-11

(The scene is a corridor of the Capitol, as in lengthwise cross-section. Groups of men are moving back and forth through the corridor, the usual types found about hotel lobbies and barber shops in a state capital. They gesticulate soundlessly together, passing and repassing. At the front of the stage, at extreme stage left, opposite the Chorus, Dr. Amos stands. His hat and clothing are dripping wet, and mud is splashed on his trousers. He does not have an overcoat or raincoat.)

Amos: Now is the hour of the osprey's long glide home.
 Now high in the last sun-flash the hawk hangs over the iron
 Wyoming,
 But he will stoop.
 Now all those humans who are drivelled and disoriented turn
 at the unravellable hour of homing.
 The mother turns to her child,
 And is fulfilled.
 And I- O motherly to the darling disaster!
 I bore it under my heart.
 It was of me the sacred part
 While I slept, or was sluggard in sun, and a waster.
 But now--
 I feel the irreconcilible sweetness of its fingers clutch at my hem;
 I shall lean and in my own hand take them.

(One of the men in a passing group pauses, and speaks to Dr. Amos, while he obviously examines the wet and disorderly clothing.)

Man: Hello, doc!

Amos: Hello.

Man: Gee, what you been doing? Swimming?

Amos: No. No.

Man: Well, by God, you oughta be in there at that special session tonight. You're sure missing something. The Boss is on a tear, I'm here to tell you. He's like a one-legged man tromping out a prairie-fire.

Amos: Yes.

Man: You can hear the squawking a mile. It's like a hoot-owl got in the hen-house.

Amos: Yes.

Man: I'm telling you, the air is full of feathers.

Amos: Yes.

(Man goes out. As Amos stands wrapped in himself, a second man enters, sees the doctor, and approaches him, full of excitement.)

Second Man:

Gee, doc, I'm telling you. The Boss near tore up that legislature. Gonna bust the Acme Electric. Gonna bust the Morton Bridge and Construction. Doc, he's gone nigh crazy. Out on the balcony now talking to the crowd. Listen -- listen at 'em roar!

(Sound of offstage cheers and roars of crowd, swelling, falling away to wrapt silence. At the silence, light fades on Amos and man and picks up Talos high on a balcony, facing the audience as though it were the crowd under a balcony of the Capitol.)

Talos:

-----and what else I have done, and done for you already. And there will be education for all that a child may not grow up ignorant like you--and, by God, like me! And there will be my hospital where any man may go and be made well. And not as charity. No, by God, not as charity. As a right. Do you hear me? As his right!

(Roar of crowd. Talos lifts his arms to still the crowd. Then speaks quietly.)

There is something I must tell you. You have heard that I have made deals. My enemies have said that I have used pressure. Threat. Bribery. Corruption. Do you believe it? Corruption?

Crowd:

No! No! NO!

Talos:

(Lifting his arms again for silence.) But it is true. (In the stunned silence, he continues, still quietly.) It is true. I had thought it was the only way. But now I ask you, is it the only way? From the bottom of my heart, and from the secrecy of my soul, I ask it? Is it the only way?

(He pauses as for an answer, but there is no sound from the crowd. In the silence, he resumes.)

I will tell you one more accusation. My enemies say that I love power. All right, I have loved power. And let them beware. For I will use all power to strike down any man, friend or foe, who would prevent me from doing what I will do, and who would prevent me from standing up to look you in the eye. I'll strike him!

(Voice rising, to crescendo.)

I'll strike him with anything. Anyhow! Above the belt, below the belt, solar plexus, rabbit-punch, kidney-punch. I'll strike him! I'll shed his blood. Blood! Look! --

(He flings one arm to point at the sky.)

~~Look, blood on the moon!~~

Look, blood on the moon! Blood on the moon!

(He reaches out before him as though to seize something offered him.)

Gimme that meat-axe! Gimme that meat-axe!

(The crowd roars, with a guttural, blood-thirsty intensity. Talos, after a moment, lifts his arms for silence, then speaks simply and quietly.)

For your will is my law. For your good is my good. For your hope is my hope. I would live to be able to look you in the eye.

(The light goes slowly off of Talos, and the faint sound of cheering fades away. The light discovers Amos in the same location as before, alone now. He is apparently listening to the roar of the crowd, for as that sound dies away, he begins to speak musingly.)

Amos:

I have labored for innocence but to learn
That innocence is easy.
Is ~~easy~~ as the late tide's turn.
Is easy. And the environment is breathless
In the powerful unfecundity of all farewell; but you are
farewell-less.
Is easy : and there is not even to remember
The hand which glimmers from any white veranda,
Between the jonquils, under the reasonable maples.

(A man approaches from the opposite end of the corridor, somewhat shabbily and loosely dressed, with a sheaf of papers stuck in the side pocket of his coat and his hat stuck jauntily on the back of his head. He carries a rain-coat. He is one of the reporters who appeared in I-111. His name is Jack and he is a boyhood friend of Dr. Amos.)

Jack:

Well, I'll be damned if it ain't Keith! Damned if I've seen you in a generation. How you been?

Amos:

(His face lights up for a moment.) Fine, Jack! How are you making it?--(He puts out his hand to his friend, who takes it and at the same time seizes Dr. Amos' shoulder and playfully shakes him.)--How you making it?

Jack: Oh, I'm getting along. Dishing out the dirt for the gentle reader. Covering the special session.--But you--I always knew you'd be a big-shot someday!

Amos: Not exactly.

Jack: Come on, come on! I read about you in the papers.

Amos: Well--

Jack: Sure, I read the papers. When I ain't working for 'em. Yeah, old big-shot director of the Medical Center. Yeah, folks say you put that bug in the Big Boss' ear. He got an idea that time, all right. Yeah, I used to say all he needed was somebody to tell him how to heave his strength.

Amos: I didn't.

Jack: But, boy he's sure heaving it tonight. He's God's gift to us reporters for a fact. Well--(He steals a glance at his wrist watch.)--I got to shove. I got to be back in half an hour. But say, why don't you come out with me some time? Come out and r'ar round with the boys, huh? We used to have some pretty good times, you and me, a thousand years ago when we were kids.

Amos: I'd like to, but I'm--

Jack: Busy. Sure, you're busy. But you ought to knock off some night. Give me a ring. You used to be human before you were twelve years old. Well,--(He seizes Dr. Amos' hand, and shakes it abruptly)--I'll be seeing you--

(As Jack is about to go, Dr. Amos, not releasing the handclasp, reaches out with his other hand and takes Jack by the arm, preventing him from going.)

Amos: Wait--I--

Jack: Huh?--Sure--(Uneasily)--What is it?

Amos: (Slowly releasing his friend) Nothing.

Jack: (Puzzled.) Well--so long! (He hurries away and Dr. Amos stares after him.)

Amos: Try to remember, try, if there is time,
To remember all our uninvolved delight,
All arborescent afternoons and the sun's slow slant,
And how thin was the shout across the long water,
Before --

(He pauses.)

But the tooth is now set through the thick rind.

(The reporter has disappeared. From the right, beyond the Chorus, Governor Talos enters, flanked on each side by a highway patrolman. The patrolmen carry sub-machine guns. The nearer patrolman is Al Suggs. Dr. Amos, at first, does not seem to be aware of the presence of the group, nor does the Governor notice him. Then, seeing the Governor, Amos stiffens. The Governor sees him, and lifts one hand in a salute.)

Talos: Hello, doc.

Amos: Hello.

Talos: What you been do--

(As the Governor speaks, Dr. Amos takes one step forward, almost deliberately, then, jerking a pistol from the side pocket of his coat, leaps toward the Governor and fires twice. Almost simultaneously with the last report, there is a burst from the machine guns. Dr. Amos, with arms outstretched, spins several times, as though suspended on a string, and then, as though the string has been snipped, collapses heavily to the floor. Meanwhile, Governor Talos has stood motionless, with his hands laid across his chest and upper abdomen, an expression of puzzled and introspective concern on his face. Then he staggers slightly. The body of Dr. Amos has scarcely struck the floor before Al Suggs, dropping his weapon, swings toward the Governor to support him.)

Al: Boss, Boss! He's done shot you!

Talos: (Very soberly and detachedly.) Yes--he shot me--Al.
(The Governor's knees sag, and Al Suggs prevents him from falling.)

Al: Boss, Boss! Does it hurt much, Boss?

(Governor Talos' head falls forward on his chest. People are running toward the spot. The other patrolman is standing over the body of Dr. Amos, with the machine gun trained upon it, as though waiting for any sign of vitality.)

Al: Boss, Boss! Does it hurt much? Does it hurt much?

End III-111

(The Chorus is revealed by the blue spot. The rest of the stage is dark.)

Chorus:

We do not envy them.
 Not the colonel, mahogany-phiz, unswaying in saddle and grim,
 Though his mount foot the roses, while the crowd's roar appl
 applauds him;
 He will make work for us.
 Not the capitalist, who shivers and smiles while they gawk
 through limousine glass,
 And box-cars and freighters and empires rattle like beads of
 a rebus;
 His money goes to a Foundation.
 Not the statesman, who stirs so profoundly the moral pulse
 of the nation,
 And lingers under the bunting to define the historic mission;
 He, too, is our lackey.
 Colonel, capitalist, statesman, all the nameless great who
 glide
 Under the flung flags and confetti, and are richly eyed:
 they, iridescent like scum on the disorder of the human tide.
 They are tangential.
 But we--
 We have moved among hands and the lips that move,
 Have pattered among blossoms more precious than dahlias.
 We are familiar to the room which is small and white
 Where all come at the twilight hour of worship.
 They worship the twilight and featureless god of No-pain.
 We have hung him up, in his muscular and metabolic perfection.
 They long to see his face, which is featureless, white, and
 shaven like an egg.

Chorus
 Leader:

I shall not conceal from you that the patient's condition is critical. The x-ray has revealed that one bullet has passed through the anterior chest wall and is lodged in the mediastinum, just above the heart. His survival may, in fact, hinge on such an imponderable as the "will to live." Yes, even as men of science, we are forced, at times, to admit this factor into our calculations. But let us make no hasty generalization, certainly not one of a metaphysical nature, from this. The phrase, the will to live, we may take simply as a metaphor, the will to live--or will in any connection whatever--being, as it were, a function of certain subtle biologic processes which have, thus far, eluded precise definition. But--(He hesitates.) --I cannot refrain from making at this moment a comment of a more personal nature. Whatever we may have thought, as citizens, of the policies and methods of the patient during his incumbency as Governor of this State, we are bound in candor to confess that he did advance the cause of medicine and has provided more adequate facilities for the practice of humanitarian zeal.

(There is applause from the Chorus. During the remarks of The Chorus Leader, the light has gradually been diffused over the stage, revealing the waiting room outside of an operating room. There are benches along the rear wall, and a door in the middle. Toward the left, there is a table on which magazines are piled, and the table is flanked by two chairs. Above one of the benches hangs a printed sign: No loud conversation -- Please. Clara Talos is seated, very rigid in her posture, on the bench on which Anne Amos is seated. Just in the middle of the applause from the Chorus, Commissioner Harper enters, followed by Jack, the reporter; they take the chairs by the table.)

Jack: (Leaning toward the Commissionees, and speaking in a loud whisper.) Thanks for getting me in.

Tiny: Sure, I'm always glad to do anything for the boys.

Jack: That's a fact, Commissioner, you always cooperate.

Tiny: That's what I always want to do, cooperate.

(Jack picks up one of the magazines from the table and begins to thumb through.)

Chorus: There is no dismay. No voice. Dubiety,
Gust-screamer, rides like a gull the drowsy swell,
Latched beak on bosom, tidy. And no mouth news
Like a kitten at night, lost in the terrible grass.
And you--
You should try to attend the wintry palm at the window:
Its old blades rattle thinly and only as,
Nocturnal and despised, some recollection.
Tomorrow its blades will gleam in the sun, like tin.
Tomorrow is always a new day, and the different, undiffident
faces.
Remember, you will always outlive your grief.

Chorus
Leader: It is difficult to name the year of dispensation.

(During the speech of the Chorus, the spot has again been focussed upon the Chorus, very gradually. At the end, from the right, between the Chorus and the audience, appears a wheeled stretcher, pushed by a Negro, who wears the white costume of a hospital orderly. On the stretcher a figure lies, draped with a sheet except for the face. It is the face of Governor Talos. He appears to be asleep, or drugged. The rubber soles of the orderly's shoes make no sound, but the wheels of the stretcher squeak a little as it moves in a slow, ceremonial pace. As it passes the Chorus, the surgeons descend and form a ritualistic procession behind the orderly. The stretcher moves slowly across the stage, the blue spot remaining upon it. Just as the stretcher disappears, the light is again diffused over the stage.)

(Jack is still looking at his magazine, Commissioner Harper is examining his nails, toying at them with a pearl-handled knife and polishing them gently on his trousers. Anne Amos, after a moment of obvious hesitation, moves across the room and sits on the bench besides Clara Talos, but a little distance from her. It is not long before, with a quick, decisive movement, she reaches out to lay her hand on the hands of the other woman, which has folded on the lap. Sue Parsons seems to be sunk in herself.)

The door at the rear opens, and a nurse appears.)

Nurse: (Softly) Mrs. Talos! Please.

Clara: Yes?

(The nurse beckons to her. She rises and goes to the door. The nurse steps forward and aside. A surgeon appears at the door, his robe disordered and stained. He speaks to Mrs. Talos, but his words are not audible. The nurse steps to her side, and makes as to support her, but this does not seem necessary. Then slowly, with the nurse beside her, Clara Talos moves toward the left, and disappears. Anne Amos follows her, apparently trying to overtake her. The Commissioner and Jack watch the women curiously.)

Tiny: Well, I'll be darned! You seen that? That special brace of biddies loving up together? Well, I guess they both lost something out of the same place.

Jack: Yeah, I guess so.

(Sue Parsons rises, and moves, slowly, toward the exit at the left. After she has passed the table, the Commissioner gestures to her, and calls in an excited whisper.)

Tiny: Sue! Hey, Sue!

(Sue Parsons turns toward him with a white and convulsed face, and apparently tries to speak. But no words come. She, too, goes out. Meanwhile, Jack has extracted from the side pocket of his coat a pencil and a pad of paper. He turns to the Commissioner.)

Jack: Well, Commissioner, I'd appreciate it if you can make a statement. You know, something--some expression for the occasion.

Tiny: (After a moment in which he stares out over the heads of the audience as into space.) You know--you know, there ain't much for a man to say! Just this, I don't know what us boys is gonna do, now the Big Boss is gone.

Jack: Thanks, Commissioner.

The END.

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