

ACT II

The stage is dark. A spark is seen, a flame fires up. When the stage illuminates, Quentin is discovered lighting his cigarette—no time has passed. He continues to await the Listener's return, and walks a few steps in thought, and as he does, a jet plane is heard, and the garbled airport announcer's voice: ". . . from Frankfurt is now unloading at gate nine, passengers will please . . ." It becomes a watery garble, and at the same moment Holga, beautifully dressed, walks onto the upper level with an airport porter who leaves her bags and goes. She looks about as in a crowd—then seeing "Quentin," stands on tiptoe and waves.

HOLGA. Quentin! Here! Here! (*She opens her arms as he evidently approaches.*) Hello! Hello! (*He turns from her to the returned Listener at front, and comes to him D.*)

QUENTIN. Oh, that's all right, I didn't mind waiting. How much time do I have? (*He sits at the forward edge of the stage, looks at his watch. Maggie appears on the second platform, in a lace wedding dress, Lucas, a designer, is on his knees, finishing the last hem. Carrie, a Negro maid, stands by holding her veil. Maggie is nervous, on the edge of life, looking into a mirror. Quentin to Listener.*) I think I can be clearer now.

MAGGIE. (*In an ecstasy of fear and hope.*) All right, Carrie, tell him to come in!— (*As though trying the angular word.*) . . . My husband!

CARRIE. (*Walking a few steps to a point, halts.*) You can see her now, Mister Quentin. (*They are gone. Quentin continues to the Listener.*)

QUENTIN. I am bewildered by the death of love. And my responsibility for it. (*Holga moves into light again, looking about for him at the airport.*) This woman's on my side; I have no doubt of it. And I wouldn't want to outlive another accusation. Not hers. (*Holga waves and exits. He stands, agitated.*) I suddenly wonder why I risk it again. Except that . . . (*Felice and Mother*

appear.) sometimes I feel I saw the process of my life—for one split second, with Maggie, I think—a man stepped through this fog of praise and blame, all good and evil fell away, and neither justified nor damned I saw myself. I've lost the way back to that vision; it's as though I had armed myself against it. As though I cling to some power I fear to lose, and must, if I am ever to see that truth again. (*Felice approaches, about to remove the bandage.*) Maybe that's why she sticks in my mind. (*He walks around her, peering.*) —Well, that's power isn't it? To influence a girl to change her nose, her life?—It does, yes, it frightens me, and I wish to God . . . (*Felice raises her arm.*) . . . she'd stop blessing me! (*Mother exits on upper platform. He laughs uneasily, surprised at the force of his fear.*) —Well I suppose because there is a fraud involved; I have no power to save anyone. (*Maggie suddenly appears, talking into a "phone," coming down to the "bed," c.*)

MAGGIE. (*With timid idolatry.*) Hello? Is . . .? How'd you know it's me! (*Laughs.*) You really remember me?—Maggie? From that park that day? Well 'cause it's almost four years ago I . . . (*He comes away from her as she lies on the "bed." She continues talking unheard.*)

QUENTIN. (*Halts near the "chair", and glances toward Felice, and he says to the Listener.*) I do, yes, I see the similarity. (*Laughter is heard as Holga appears at a "cafe table," an empty "chair" beside her, the music of a cafe fiddle in the air.*)

HOLGA. (*To an empty seat beside her.*) I love the way you eat! You eat like a Pasha, a grand duke!

QUENTIN. (*He looks toward her, and to Listener.*) —Yes, adored again! But . . . there is something different here. (*As he moves toward Holga, he says to Listener.*) Now keep me to my theme, I spoke of power. (*He sits beside her. As he speaks now, Holga's aspect changes, she becomes moody, doesn't face him, seems hurt. And sitting beside her he tells the Listener.*) We were in a cafe one afternoon in Salzburg, and quite suddenly, I don't know why—it all seemed to be dying between us. And I saw it all happening again. You know that moment, when you begin desperately to talk about architecture?

HOLGA. 1535. The Archbishop designed it himself.

QUENTIN. Beautiful.

HOLGA. (*Distantly.*) Yes.

QUENTIN. (*As though drawing on his courage he suddenly turns*