

QUENTIN. (*Going toward Mother in her longing.*) —Yes, yes! But I know that treason! And my own complicity with her discontent; yes, and not to be unworthy of these loyal, failing men!? But where is Quentin! Instead of taking off my clothes, this . . . posture! (*Turning to Maggie on her knees.*) Maggie—

MAGGIE. Okay. Maybe when I get back. . . .

QUENTIN. You . . . have to tear up that will. (*To Listener.*) Can't even go to bed without a "principle"!—What fraud! She had the truth that day, I brought the lie—that she had to be "saved"! From what! except my own contempt!—

MAGGIE. (*To the empty space where Quentin was.*) But even my analyst said it was okay. 'Cause a person like me, has to have somebody.

QUENTIN. Maggie . . . honest men don't draw wills like that.

MAGGIE. But it's just for temporary. . . .

QUENTIN. Darling, if I went to Andy, and this advisor, and the analyst too, perhaps . . . I think they'd offer me a piece, to shut up. They've got you on a table, Honey, and they're carving you. . . .

MAGGIE. But . . . I can't spend all that money anyway! I can't even think over twenty-five dollars!

QUENTIN. It's not the money they take, it's the dignity they destroy. You're not a piece of meat; you seem to think you owe people whatever they demand!

MAGGIE. I know. (*She lowers her head with a cry, trembling with hope and shame.*)

QUENTIN. (*Tilting up her face.*) But Maggie, you're somebody! You're not a kid any more running around looking for a place to sleep! It's not only your success or that you're rich—you're straight, you're serious, you're first-class, people mean something to you; you don't have to go begging shady people for advice like some . . . some tramp! (*With a sob of love and desperation, she slides to the floor and grasps his thigh, kissing his trousers. He watches, then suddenly lifts her and with immense pity and hope.*) Maggie, stand up! (*The music flies in now, and she smiles strangely through her tears, and with a kind of statement of her persisting nature begins unbuttoning her blouse. Maggie's body writhes to the beat within her clothing. And as soon as she starts her dance, his head shakes. And to the Listener . . .*) No, not love; to stop impersonating, that's all! To live . . . (*Groping.*)

. . . to live in good faith if only with my guts! To . . . (*To Dan and Father.*) Yes!—To be "good" no more! Disguised no more! (*To Mother.*) Afraid no more to show what Quentin, Quentin, Quentin . . . is!

LOUISE. You haven't even the decency to . . . (*A High Tribunal appears, and a flag, a Chairman bangs his gavel once, he is flanked by others looking down on Quentin from on high.*)

QUENTIN. That decency is murderous! Speak truth not decency—I curse the whole high administration of fake innocence! (*To the Chairman.*) I declare it, I am not innocent!—Nor good!

CHAIRMAN. But surely Reverend Barnes cannot object to answering whether he attended the Communist-run Peace Congress in Prague, Czechoslovakia. No—no, counsel will not be allowed to confer with the witness, this is not a trial! Any innocent man would be. . . .

QUENTIN. And this question—innocent! How many Negroes you allow to vote in your patriotic district! And which of your social, political, or racial sentiments would Hitler have disapproved of? And not a trial? You fraud, your "investigators" this moment are working in this man's church to hound him out of it!

HARLEY BARNES. (*Appears rising to his feet, has a clerical collar.*) I decline on the grounds of the First and Fifth Amendments to the Constitution.

QUENTIN. (*With intense sorrow.*) But are we sure, Harley—I ask it, I ask it—if the tables were turned, and they were in front of you—would you permit them not to answer? Hateful men that they are? (*Harley looks at him indignantly, suspiciously.*) I am not sure what we are upholding any more—are we good by merely saying no to evil? Isn't it necessary . . . to say . . . (*Harley is gone and the Tribunal. Maggie is there, snapping her fingers, letting down her hair.*) to finally say yes . . . to something? (*Turning toward Maggie.*) Yes, yes, yes.

MAGGIE. Say anything to me.

QUENTIN. A fact, . . . a fact, . . . a fact, a thing.

MAGGIE. Sing inside me. (*Quentin crosses to Listener.*)

QUENTIN. Even condemned, unspeakable like all truth!

MAGGIE. Become happy.

QUENTIN. Contemptible like all truth.

MAGGIE. That's all I am.

QUENTIN. Covered like truth with slime: blind, ignorant.

MAGGIE. But nobody ever said to me, stand up!

QUENTIN. The blood's fact, the world's blind gut . . . yes!

MAGGIE. Now.

QUENTIN. To this yes.

MAGGIE. Now . . . now. Quentin? (*Light finds her prone on a bed, a sheet partly covering her naked body. Her chin rests languidly on her hands. She glances toward a point, off.*) Quenny? That soap is odorless, so you don't have to worry. (*Slight pause.*) It's okay!—Don't rush; I love to wait for you! (*Her eye falls on his shoe on the floor. She picks it up, strokes it.*) I love your shoes. You have good taste! (*She moves u. wrapped in a blanket.*) Scuse me I didn't have anything for you to eat, but I didn't know! I'll get eggs, though, case maybe in the mornings. And steaks!—Case at night. I mean just in case. You could have it just the way you want, just any time. (*She turns looking front.*) Like me? (*Holga appears above in the airport, looking about for him as Maggie vanishes.*)

QUENTIN. It's all true, but it isn't the truth. It all comes back too cheap; I loved that girl. My bitterness is making me (*Glancing up at Holga.*) a stranger to my life. Until I dare not make a promise any more. I saw clearly only when I saw with love. (*Holga moves off.*) Or can one ever remember love? It's like trying to summon up the smell of roses in a cellar. You might see a rose, but never the perfume. And that's the truth of roses, isn't it?—The perfume? (*On the second platform Maggie appears in light in a wedding dress, Carrie, a colored maid, is just placing a veiled hat on her head, Lucas, a designer, is on his knees hurriedly fixing the last hem, as before. Maggie is turning herself wide-eyed in a mirror. Quentin begins to rise.*)

MAGGIE. Hurry, Lucas, please, but I don't want him to wait any more, the ceremony is for three! Hurry, please! (*Lucas sews faster.*)

QUENTIN. I want to see her with . . . that love again! Why is it so hard! Standing there, that wishing girl, that victory in lace.

MAGGIE. (*Looking ahead on the edge of life as Lucas bites off the last threads.*) You won't hardly know me any more, Lucas! He saved me, I mean it! I've got a new will and I even changed my analyst. I've got a wonderful doctor now! And we're going to do all my contracts over, which I never got properly paid. And Ludwig Reiner's taking me! And he won't take even opera singers

unless they're you know, like artists! No matter how much you want to pay him. I didn't even dare but Quentin made me go—and now he took me, Ludwig Reiner, imagine! (*Now she turns seeing Quentin entering. An awe of the moment takes them both, Lucas goes. Carrie lightly touches Maggie's forehead and silently prays.*)

QUENTIN. Oh my darling. How perfect you are.

MAGGIE. (*Descending toward him.*) Like me? (*Clergyman and woman enter on second platform.*)

QUENTIN. Good God!—To come home every night—to you! (*He starts for her open-armed, laughing, but she touches his chest, excited and strangely fearful.*)

MAGGIE. You still don't have to do it, Quentin. I could just come to you whenever you want.

QUENTIN. You just can't believe in something good really happening. But it's real, darling, you're my wife!

MAGGIE. (*With a hush of fear in her voice.*) I want to tell you why I went into analysis.

QUENTIN. Darling, you're always making new revelations, but . . .

MAGGIE. But you said we have to love what happened, didn't you? Even the bad things?

QUENTIN. (*Seriously now, to match her intensity.*) Yes, I did. (*Clergyman and woman exit.*)

MAGGIE. I . . . was with two men . . . the same day. (*She has turned her eyes from him. Group of wedding guests appears on second platform.*) I mean the same day, see. (*She almost weeps now, and looks at him, subservient and oddly chastened.*) I'll always love you, Quentin. But we could just tell them we changed our mind. . . .

QUENTIN. Sweetheart . . . an event itself is not important; it's what you took from it. Whatever happened to you, this is what you made of it and I love this! (*Quickly to Listener, rapidly.*) —Yes!—That we conspired to violate the past, and the past is holy and its horrors are holiest of all! (*Turning back to Maggie.*) And . . . something . . . more. . . .

MAGGIE. (*With hope now.*) Maybe . . . it would even make me a better wife, right?

QUENTIN. (*With hope against the pain.*) That's the way to talk! (*Elsie enters and joins group of guests.*)