

back platform. Some sit at once, others come further downstage, seem to recognize each other, still others move alone and in total separateness, in short, a totally random congeries of movements in a slow but not dreamlike rhythm. One of them, Quentin, a man in his forties, moves out of this mass and continues down the depth of the stage to the "chair." This chair faces front, the audience. A sharp light now envelops it. All movement ceases. Quentin reaches forward over the chairback toward the Listener, who, if he could be seen, would be sitting just beyond the edge of the stage itself.

QUENTIN. Hello! God, it's good to see you again! I'm fine, I just wanted to say hello, really. Thanks. *(He sits on invitation. Slight pause.)* Actually, I called you on the spur of the moment this morning; I have a bit of a decision to make. You know—you mull around about something for months and all of a sudden there it is and . . . *(Interrupted he turns back to Listener, surprised.)* I've quit the firm, didn't I write you about that? Really! I was sure I'd written. Oh, about fourteen months ago; a few weeks after Maggie died. *(Maggie stirs on the second platform.)* It just got to where I couldn't concentrate on a case any more; I felt I was merely in the service of my own success. Although I do wonder sometimes if I am simply trying to destroy myself.—Well, I have walked away from what passes for an important career.—Not very much, I'm afraid; I still live in the hotel, see a few people, read a good deal, *(Smiles.)* stare out the window. *(Again, interrupted, he looks surprised.)* God, I wrote you about that, didn't I? Maybe I dream these letters.—Mother died. Oh, it's four, *(Airplane sound is heard behind him.)* five months ago, now. Yes, quite suddenly; I was in Germany at the time and . . . it's one of the things I wanted *(Holga appears on upper platform looking about for him.)* to talk to you about. I . . . met a woman there. *(He grins.)* In fact, she's arriving tonight, for some conference at Columbia . . . she's an archeologist. I'm not sure, you see, if I want to lose her, and yet it's outrageous to think of committing myself again.—Well, yes, but look at my life. A life, after all, is evidence, and I have two divorces in my safe-deposit box. *(Turning to glance at Holga.)* I tell you frankly, I'm a little afraid.—Well, of who and what I'm bringing to her. I'm hung up, I don't

know what to think of myself. Just the other night, for instance—I ran into a girl on the street. . . .

FELICE. *(Having entered.)* You do remember me, don't you? Two years ago in your office, when you got my husband to sign the divorce paper?

QUENTIN. I'm not sure why I bring her up; maybe it's that she was so full of hope. . . .

FELICE. I always wanted to tell you this:—you changed my life!

QUENTIN. There's something about that girl unnerves me.

FELICE. You see, my husband was always so childish, alone with me; but the way you talked to him; it made him act so dignified . . . I almost began to love him! And when we got out in the street he asked me something. Should I tell you or do you know already?

QUENTIN. He asked to go to bed with you one last time?

FELICE. But wouldn't it be funny the same day we agreed to divorce?

QUENTIN. Honey, you never stop loving whoever you loved. Why must you try? *(Louise starts down toward him, and Maggie appears in gold dress among anonymous men.)*

MAGGIE. Quentin!

QUENTIN. Why do I make such stupid statements! These god-damned women have injured me! Have I learned nothing?

HOLGA. *(Appearing under the Tower with flowers as Maggie and men go dark.)* Would you like to see Salzburg? I think they play "The Magic Flute" tonight.

QUENTIN. *(Of Holga.)* I don't know what I'd be bringing to that girl. *(Holga exits. Louise has moved down in front of him and he glances at her.)* I don't know how to blame with confidence, except myself. *(Louise exits.)*

FELICE. *(As Louise moves u. and exits.)* But I finally got your point! It's that there is no point, right?—No one has to be the blame!

QUENTIN. *(To Listener.)* God, what excellent advice I give!

FELICE. And as soon as I realized that, I started to dance better! I almost feel free when I dance now! Sometimes I only have to think high and I go high! I get a long thought and I fly across the floor. *(She flies out into darkness.)*

QUENTIN. And on top of that she came back again the other

night, flew into my room . . . reborn! She made me wonder how much I believe in life.

FELICE. (*Rushing on.*) I had my nose fixed! Could I show it to you? The Doctor took the bandage off. But I put it back because I wanted you to be the first! Do you mind?

QUENTIN. No. But why me?

FELICE. Because . . . remember that night I came up here? I was trying to decide if I should have it done. 'Cause there could be something insincere about changing your nose; I wouldn't want to build everything on the shape of a piece of cartilage. You don't absolutely have to answer me, but . . . I think you wanted to make love to me that night. Didn't you?

QUENTIN. I did, yes.

FELICE. I knew it! And I felt it didn't matter what kind of nose I had!—So I might as well have a short one! Could I show it to you?

QUENTIN. I'd like very much to see it.

FELICE. Close your eyes. (*He does. She lifts the bandage.*) Okay. (*He looks. She raises her arm in blessing.*) I'll always bless you. Always! (*He slowly turns to the Listener as she walks into darkness.*)

QUENTIN. And I even liked her first nose better. I feel like a mirror in which she somehow saw herself as glorious. (*Two pall bearers in the distance carry an invisible coffin.*) It's like my mother's funeral. (*Mother appears on upper platform.*) She's under the ground, but I still hear her voice in the street sometimes, loud and real, calling me. I don't seem to know how to grieve for her. (*Ike appears, a blanket over him, two nurses tend him.*) Or maybe I don't believe that grief is grief unless it kills you! (*Dan appears talking to a nurse.*) Like when I flew back and met my brother in the hospital. (*The nurse hurries out, and Dan speaks to the air.*) DAN. I'm so glad you got here, kid; I wouldn't have wired you but I don't know what to do. You have a good flight?

QUENTIN. (*To Listener.*) He couldn't bear to tell my father. Why did he know I could? Why is that?

DAN. (*To Quentin who comes to him.*) But he was only operated on this morning. How can we walk in and say, "Your wife is dead"? It's like sawing off his arm. Suppose we tell him she's on her way; then give him a sedative?

QUENTIN. Dan I feel it as much as you, but don't you think after fifty years you owe one another a death?

DAN. Kid, the woman was his right hand—he'll fall apart.

QUENTIN. You want me to tell him?

DAN. (*Unwillingly: afraid but challenged.*) I'll do it.

QUENTIN. I think it belongs to him, Dan, as much as his wedding.

DAN. You tell him. If you don't mind. (*They turn together toward Ike in the bed. He does not see them yet. They move with the weight of their news. Quentin turns as he walks.*)

QUENTIN. Or is it simply that I am crueller than he? (*Now Ike sees them and raises up his arm.*)

DAN. Dad, look. . . .

IKE. For cryin' out loud! Look who's here! I thought you were in Europe!

QUENTIN. Just got back. How are you?

DAN. You look wonderful, Dad.

IKE. What do you mean, "look"!—I am wonderful! I tell you, I'm ready to go through it again! (*They laugh proudly with him.*) I mean it—the way that doctor worries, I finally told him, "Look, if it makes you feel so bad you lay down and I'll operate!" Very fine man. I thought you'd be away couple months more.

QUENTIN. (*Hesitantly.*) I decided to come back and . . .

DAN. (*Breaking in, his voice turning strange.*) Sylvia'll be right in. She's downstairs buying you something.

IKE. Oh, that's nice! I tell you something, fellas—that kid is more and more like Mother. Been here every day. . . . Where is Mother? I been calling the house. (*The slightest empty, empty pause.*)

DAN. One second, Dad, I just want to . . . (*Crazily, without evident point, he starts calling, and moving u. toward the nurse. Quentin is staring at his father.*) Nurse! Ah! Ah . . . could you call down to the gift shop and see if my sister . . .

IKE. Dan! Tell her to get some ice; when Mother comes you'll all have a drink! I got a bottle of rye in the closet! (*To Quentin.*) I tell you, kid, I'm going to be young.—Mother's right; just because I got old I don't have to act old. I mean we could go to Florida, we could . . .

QUENTIN. Dad.

IKE. What? Is that a new suit?