

NARRATOR: Welcome to By Mouth...bringing classic plays to sonic life...in their essence.

By Mouth presents: The Father by August Strindberg.

The year: Yesterday. The setting: The country estate of an army Captain and his wife.

We're in the sitting room of a well-appointed and comfortable, country house.

In the middle of the room, standing over a large, round table covered with newspapers and magazines, is the CAPTAIN.

At left, atop a roll-top desk, is a clock.

At right, sitting on a leather-covered sofa, is the PASTOR.

On opposites sides of a back wall adorned with gamebags, weapons and a rack of military coats are two wood doors. The left door leads to an inner room--and the right door leads to the entryway, the stairs and the front door.

Moving to the right door, the Captain opens it and leans out.

CAPTAIN: Nana?! [He gets no answer--more insistent] Nana?!

NANA: [running up--as to a small child]: Yes, yes... I'm here.

CAPTAIN: [Suddenly she's next to him] Oh. I just wanted to know if Matts was with you.

NANA: No he's in the kitchen.

CAPTAIN: In the kitchen again, is he? Send him in--will you, Nana?

NANA: Yes Dolphie dear. [acknowledging him warmly] Pastor.

PASTOR: What's the matter now.

CAPTAIN: Oh he's been foolin' around with the servant girl again--the rascal.

PASTOR: Wasn't he in the same trouble the year before last?

36 CAPTAIN: You remember. How about you give him a friendly
37 talking to--make an impression on him. I've cursed him--
38 and flogged him, too--but it hasn't had the least
39 effect.

40 PASTOR: So you want me to preach to him, do you?
41 What effect do you suppose the word of God will have
42 on a such a--rogue?

43 CAPTAIN: It had no effect on me.

44 PASTOR: I know that well enough.

45 CAPTAIN: But try it anyway.

46 [Right Door opens/closes/footsteps]

47 MATTS [very deferential]: Captain--sir. Pastor.

48 CAPTAIN: What have you been up to now, Matts?

49 MATTS: Well, sir-- You see--I can't talk about it with
50 the Pastor here, sir.

51 PASTOR: Don't be afraid of me, my boy.

52 CAPTAIN: Out with it or you know what'll happen!

53 MATTS: Well, sir, it was like this--we were at a dance
54 at Gabriel's sir--and then--then Soren said--

55 CAPTAIN: What's Soren have to do with it! Stick to the
56 facts!

57 MATTS: Yes, and Emma said "Let's go the barn--"

58 CAPTAIN: Oh, so it was Emma who led you astray, was it?!

59 MATTS: Well, sir. You see--unless the girl is willing,
60 sir, nothing ever happens.

61 CAPTAIN: Never mind all that! Are you the father of the
62 child or not?

63 MATTS: I don't know, sir.

64 CAPTAIN: What's that--you don't know?

65 MATTS: One can never be sure, sir.

66 CAPTAIN: Were you the only one?

67 MATTS: That time, sir.

68 CAPTAIN: Are you trying to blame Soren--is that
69 what you're up to?!

70 MATTS: It's not easy knowing who's to blame, sir.

71 CAPTAIN: But you told Emma you'd marry her!

72 MATTS: A fella's always got to say that, sir.

73 CAPTAIN [to the Pastor]: This is terrible, isn't it?!

74 PASTOR: It's an old story. See here, young man, you surely
75 ought to know whether you're the father or not?

76 MATTS: I was with the girl--of course--but you know
77 yourself, Pastor, that it needn't come to anything for
78 all that.

79 PASTOR: Look here--we're talking about you now. Surely
80 you won't leave the girl alone with the child. I suppose
81 we can't compel you to marry her--but you should provide
82 for the child -- that you shall do!

83 MATTS: Then shouldn't Soren, too---sir.

84 CAPTAIN: Ah, the courts'll have to settle it! Perhaps
85 they can ferret out the truth. I don't like it, let me
86 tell you!

87 MATTS: No, sir!

88 CAPTAIN: Well--be off with you now!

89 PASTOR: One moment, son. Hmm--don't you think it
90 dishonorable to leave a girl destitute like that with
91 her child? Don't you see that such conduct--hmm--hmm?

92 MATTS: If I only knew for sure I was the father--but one
93 can't be sure, Pastor--and I don't see much fun in
94 slaving all my life for another man's child. You can
95 see that, can't you, sir?

96 CAPTAIN: Off with you!

97 [Footsteps]

98 CAPTAIN: And stay out of the kitchen, you hear me?

99 MATTS: Yes, sir!

100 [Right Door opens/closes]

101 CAPTAIN: Why didn't you get after him?

102 PASTOR: What do you mean?

103 CAPTAIN: Why you only sat there--and mumbled something
104 or other.

PASTOR: To tell you the truth, I didn't know what to say. It's a pity about the girl, yes--but it's a pity about the lad, too. For what if he's not the father. The girl can nurse the child for four months at the orphanage, and then it'll be permanently provided for. But it'll be different for him. The girl can get a good place afterwards in some respectable family--but the lad's future may be ruined if he's dismissed from the regiment.

CAPTAIN: I should like to be in the judge's shoes and hear this case. The lad's hardly innocent--but we do know that the girl's guilty, if there's any guilt in the matter.

PASTOR: Well, well--I judge no one. But what were we talking about when this silly business interrupted us? It was about your child and her confirmation, wasn't it?

CAPTAIN: Not in particular but about her whole welfare. This house is full of women who all want to have their say about my child. My mother-in-law wants to make a Spiritualist out of her. My wife wants her to be an artist--dear old Nana wants her to be a good Baptist--and the servant-girls want her to join the Salvation Army! It won't do to try an' stitch her soul in patches like that. I, who have the chief right to try an' form her character, am constantly opposed in my efforts. That's why I have decided to send her away from home.

PASTOR: You have too many women trying to run this house.

CAPTAIN: You're right--it's like going into a cage full of tigers--and if I didn't hold a red-hot iron under their noses they'd tear me to pieces at any moment.

PASTOR [laughs]:

CAPTAIN: And you laugh, you rascal--wasn't it enough that I married your sister, without your palming off your old stepmother on me?

PASTOR: One can't have a stepmother in one's own house!

CAPTAIN: Hmmph.

PASTOR [smiling]: Well, we all have our burden in life.

143 CAPTAIN: Yes well mine's rather heavy, don't you think?
144 There's old nanny, who treats me as if I still wear a
145 bib. She's a good old soul, to be sure, but...

146 PASTOR: You must keep a tighter rein on the women folks.
147 You let them run things too much!

148 CAPTAIN: Please inform me how I'm to keep better order
149 among the women folk.

150 PASTOR: My sister was brought up with a firm hand--but I
151 must admit she was pretty troublesome.

152 CAPTAIN: She certainly has her faults--but with her it
153 isn't so serious.

154 PASTOR: Come on--I know her.

155 CAPTAIN: She was brought up with romantic ideas--and
156 it's been hard for her to find herself--but she is my
157 wife--

158 PASTOR: And because she's your wife she's the best of
159 wives, is that it? No, my dear fellow, it is she who
160 wears on you the most.

161 CAPTAIN [frustrated]: She won't let my little girl
162 leave her--and I can't allow her to remain in
163 this...bedlam.

164 PASTOR: She won't, will she? Well then I'm afraid you
165 are in for trouble. When she was a child, if she set her
166 mind on something she used to play dead till she got it
167 --and then she would give it back, saying it wasn't the
168 thing she wanted, but having her own way.

169 CAPTAIN: So she was like that even then? Hmm--she really
170 gets into such a state sometimes that--I'm anxious about
171 her and afraid she's not well.

172 PASTOR: But what do you want to do with the child that
173 is so unpardonable? Can't you compromise?

174 CAPTAIN: I have no desire to make her a prodigy out of
175 her--or an image of myself. Nor do I want to educate her
176 exclusively for marriage, for then if she's left
177 unmarried she might have bitter days. On the other hand,
178 I don't want to steer her towards a career that requires
179 a long course of training which would be entirely thrown
180 away if she does marry.

181 PASTOR: What do you want then?

182 CAPTAIN: I want her to be a teacher. If she doesn't
183 marry she'll be able to support herself at least--and at
184 any rate she won't be any worse off than a male teacher
185 who must share his salary with a family. If she does
186 marry, she can use her knowledge in the education of her
187 children. Am I right?

188 PASTOR: Quite right. But, on the other hand, hasn't she
189 shown such talent for painting that it'd be a great pity
190 to crush it?

191 CAPTAIN [adamantly]: No! I've shown her sketches to a
192 prominent painter, and he says they're only the kind of
193 thing that can be learned at school. But then a young
194 fool came here in the summer who, of course, understood
195 much better, and he declared she had colossal genius,
196 and so that settled it--at least in my wife's mind.

197 PASTOR: He was quite taken with the child then?

198 CAPTAIN: That goes without saying.

199 PASTOR: Then God help you, man, for in that case there's
200 no hope. Yes, this is pretty bad--and, of course, my
201 sister has her supporters--the women!

202 CAPTAIN: You can be sure of that! The whole house is up
203 in arms--and, between you and me, it's not exactly a
204 noble conflict that's being waged from that quarter.

205 PASTOR: Don't you think I know it?

206 CAPTAIN: You do?

207 PASTOR: I do.

208 CAPTAIN: The worst of it is, it strikes me that the
209 child's future is being decided from spiteful motives.
210 They hint that men better be careful, because women can
211 do this or that now-a-days. All day long, incessantly,
212 it's a conflict between man and woman. [Brief pause]
213 You're not going, are you? Stay for dinner. I've no
214 special dishes to offer, but stay. You know I'm
215 expecting the new doctor. Have you met him?

216 PASTOR: I caught a glimpse of him on the way over.
217 He looked pleasant and--reliable.

218 CAPTAIN: That's good. You think it's possible he might
219 take my side in this?

PASTOR: Depends on how much time he spends with the women.

CAPTAIN [laughs]: Yes! [Pause] You'll stay, won't you?

PASTOR: No thanks--I promised to have dinner with the wife--she gets uneasy if I'm late, you see.

CAPTAIN: Angry, you mean.

PASTOR/CAPTAIN [chuckle]:

CAPTAIN: Well...Let me help you with your coat.

[Footsteps]

PASTOR: It is rather cold tonight. Thanks. You must take care of your health, man--you seem rather nervous.

CAPTAIN [incredulous]: Nervous? Has your sister put that in your head? For twenty years she's treated me like I'm on the verge of death.

PASTOR [laughs]: Anway...Good-bye--and sorry we didn't get to discuss the confirmation.

CAPTAIN [smiling]: Not at all--that's on your conscience--I'm a unbeliever--remember?

[Right Door opens/closes]

NARRATOR: Retreating to the roll-top desk, the Captain opens it, sits down and busies himself with his accounts.

CAPTAIN [figuring]: Thirty-four and nine, forty-three--and eight, fifty-one--

[Left Door opens/closes/footsteps]

LAURA: Would you be kind enough to--

CAPTAIN: Just a moment! [to himself] Sixty-six--seventy-one, eighty-four, eighty-nine. [to her] I'm sorry.

LAURA: Am I distrubing you?

CAPTAIN: Not at all. Housekeeping money, I suppose.

LAURA: Yes, housekeeping money.

CAPTAIN: Put the bills over there and I'll go over them.

LAURA: The bills?

CAPTAIN: Yes, the bills.

254 LAURA: Am I to keep books now?

255 CAPTAIN: Of course you should keep books. Our affairs
256 are in a rather precarious condition--and, in case of
257 insolvency, books are necessary. Being careless could be
258 dangerous.

259 LAURA: It's not my fault our affairs are in a precarious
260 condition.

261 CAPTAIN: That's what the books will decide.

262 LAURA: It's not my fault our tenant doesn't pay.

263 CAPTAIN: And who recommended this tenant so warmly?
264 Why recommend a good-for-nothing, eh?

265 LAURA: And why did you rent to this good-for-nothing?

266 CAPTAIN: Because I wasn't allowed to eat or work or sleep,
267 till you women got that man here. You wanted him so your
268 brother the Pastor could be rid of him, your mother wanted
269 him because I didn't, and old Nana because she'd known
270 his grandmother--that's why he was taken, and if he hadn't
271 been taken, I'd be in a madhouse by now or lying in my
272 grave--however, here is the housekeeping money--you can
273 give me the books later.

274 LAURA [sardonically]: Thank you very much. Do you keep
275 books of the personal money you spend?

276 CAPTAIN: That doesn't concern you.

277 LAURA: That's true--just like my daughter's education
278 doesn't concern me. Have you gentlemen come to a decision
279 after this evening's conference?

280 CAPTAIN: I'd already come to a decision. It remained only
281 for me to talk it over with the one friend you and I have
282 in common. Jule will go to boarding school in town--
283 she starts in two weeks.

284 LAURA: Which boarding school, if I may be so bold?

285 CAPTAIN: Professor Hanson's.

286 LAURA: That free thinker!

287 CAPTAIN: According to the law, children are to be brought
288 up in their father's faith.

289 LAURA: And the mother has no voice in the matter?

290 CAPTAIN: None whatsoever. She's forfeited her rights in a
291 legal transaction, in return for the man's being
292 responsible for taking care of her and the children.

293 LAURA: You mean to say she has no rights concerning her
294 child?

295 CAPTAIN: None at all. Once one's sold one's goods,
296 one can't have them back and still keep the money.

297 LAURA: But if both mother and father agree?

298 CAPTAIN: You think that could ever happen? I want her to
299 board in town--you want her to stay at home. A compromise
300 would mean that she stay at the railway station midway
301 between! [Pause] No, this is a knot that can't be untied.

302 LAURA [half to herself]: Then it must be broken. [Pause]
303 What did you want with Matts earlier?

304 CAPTAIN: That's a secret.

305 LAURA: Which the whole kitchen knows.

306 CAPTAIN: Good--then so do you.

307 LAURA: I do.

308 CAPTAIN: And have you come to a judgement?

309 LAURA: My judgement is the judgement of the law.

310 CAPTAIN: But it's not written in the law who the child's
311 father is.

312 LAURA: No but one usually knows that.

313 CAPTAIN: Wise minds claim one can never know.

314 LAURA: Is that so? One can't ever know who a child's
315 father is?

316 CAPTAIN: No--so they claim.

317 LAURA: How extraordinary! How can the father have such
318 control over the children then?

319 CAPTAIN: Only when he's assumed the responsibilities--
320 or had them forced upon him. In a marriage, of course,
321 typically there's no doubt about the fatherhood.

322 LAURA: Typically. [Brief pause] You have no doubt then.

323 CAPTAIN: I should hope not.

324 LAURA: But what if the wife's been unfaithful?

CAPTAIN: Then that's another matter. Was there anything else you wanted to talk about?

LAURA: Nothing.

CAPTAIN: Then I'll go upstairs. Let me know when the Doctor arrives.

LAURA [after a short pause]: Yes.

CAPTAIN: As soon as he comes--I don't want to seem rude, you understand?

LAURA: I understand.

[Footsteps--then Left Door opens/closes]

LAURA [counting the money]: Five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. [knock on Right Door is heard] Come in!

[Right Door open.]

NANA [through open door]: It's Doctor Norden, Mistress.

LAURA: Let him come in. [footsteps] Welcome, Doctor! Please come and take a seat! The Captain's out but he'll be back soon.

DOCTOR: I hope you shall excuse my coming so late, but I was called upon to pay some professional visits.

LAURA: Of course. I do hope you'll like it here. For us country people living in such isolation it's of great value to find a doctor so interested in his patients--and I hear so many nice things about you, Doctor, that I hope we shall be the best of friends.

DOCTOR: You are too kind--I hope for your sake my visits shall not often be due to necessity. Your family is, I believe as a rule, in good health?

LAURA: Yes, but...well, things are not altogether as they should be.

DOCTOR: Indeed.

LAURA: Not altogether as one would wish.

DOCTOR: Really, you alarm me.

LAURA: There are...circumstances in a family which--owing to honor and conscience--one is forced to conceal from the world--

DOCTOR: Except one's doctor.

LAURA: Exactly. Therefore, it's my...painful duty to tell you the whole truth...immediately.

DOCTOR: Shouldn't we postpone this meeting until I've had the honor of being introduced to the Captain?

LAURA: No! [then a smile to downplay her obvious scheming] You must hear me first.

DOCTOR: It pertains to him then.

LAURA: Yes! To him--my poor, dear husband.

DOCTOR: You alarm me, indeed. Believe me, I sympathize with your misfortune.

LAURA [making a show of using a handkerchief to wipe away a tear]: Ah! You see my husband's mind is affected. Now you know all--and may judge for yourself when you see him.

DOCTOR: Are you certain? Why I've read the Captain's excellent treatise on mineralogy with admiration--and found it to display a clear and powerful intellect.

LAURA [flirting]: Oh, Doctor, you don't know how happy I'd be if we should prove to be mistaken.

DOCTOR [under the influence of her charms]: Of course it is possible his mind might be affected in...other directions.

LAURA: That's what we fear, too. You see sometimes he has the most extraordinary ideas which, of course, one might expect in a learned man, if they didn't have a such a disastrous effect on the welfare of his whole family. For instance, one of his obsessions is buying things.

DOCTOR: That could be serious--what does he buy?

LAURA: Whole boxes of books he never reads.

DOCTOR: There's nothing strange about a scholar buying books.

LAURA: You don't believe me?

DOCTOR: I believe you believe what you're saying.

LAURA: Tell me: is it reasonable to think that one can see what is happening on another planet by looking through a microscope?

DOCTOR: Does he say he can do that?

397 LAURA: That's what he says.

398 DOCTOR: Through a microscope?

399 LAURA: Through a microscope, yes.

400 DOCTOR: If that's so, this is serious.

401 LAURA: If that's so! You have no faith in me, Doctor--
402 and here I sit confiding to you a deep family secret--

403 DOCTOR: My dear I'm honored by your confidence, but as a
404 physician I must investigate and observe before giving an
405 opinion. Has the Captain ever shown symptoms of indecision
406 or instability of will?

407 LAURA: Has he! We've been married twenty years, and he's
408 never yet made a decision without changing his mind
409 afterwards.

410 DOCTOR: Is he obstinate?

411 LAURA: He always insists on having his own way--but once
412 he's got it he drops the whole matter and asks me to
413 decide.

414 DOCTOR: This is serious--and demands close observation.
415 The will, you see, is the mainspring of the mind--and if
416 it's affected the whole mind can go to pieces.

417 LAURA: God knows how I've taught myself to humor him all
418 these years. Oh, if you knew what I've endured with him
419 --if you only knew.

420 DOCTOR: Your misfortune touches me deeply--and I promise
421 to see what can be done. I pity you with all my heart,
422 and implore you to trust me completely. After what I've
423 heard, I must ask you to avoid suggesting any ideas that
424 might make a deep impression on the patient, for in a weak
425 brain they can develop rapidly and quickly turn to
426 monomania or fixed ideas.

427 LAURA: You mean I should avoid arousing suspicious?

428 DOCTOR: Exactly. One can make the insane believe anything,
429 because they are receptive to everything.

430 LAURA: Is that so? Then, yes, I understand. Yes--yes.
431 [Right Door opens/closes] Ah, here is the Captain.

432 CAPTAIN: Oh--you're here already. You're very welcome,
433 Doctor.

DOCTOR [overdoing it to cover fact he's been scheming]:
Captain! It's a great pleasure to make the acquaintance
of so celebrated a man of science.

CAPTAIN: Oh, nonsense! The duties of service don't allow
me to make any very profound investigations--but I do
believe I'm now on the track of a real discovery.

DOCTOR: Indeed?

CAPTAIN: I've submitted meteoric stones to spectrum
analysis--with the result that I have found carbon, which
is to say, a clear trace of organic life. What do you say
to that?

DOCTOR: Can you see that with a microscope?

CAPTAIN: God no--with a spectroscope!

DOCTOR: A spectroscope--pardon me. Then you'll soon be
able to tell us what's happening on Jupiter.

CAPTAIN: Not what's happening, but what has happened.
If only the confounded booksellers in Paris would send me
the books! I believe all the booksellers in the universe
have conspired against me. For the last two months not a
single one has answered any of my communications, neither
letters nor abusive telegrams. I shall go mad over it,
and I can't imagine what's the matter.

DOCTOR: I suppose it's the usual carelessness--you mustn't
let it vex you so.

CAPTAIN: The devil of it is I won't be able get my latest
paper done in time--and I know they're working along the
same lines in Berlin. But enough about me--how about you?
Should you like to live here we have rooms for you in the
old cottage--or perhaps you'd rather live in town?

DOCTOR: It's up to you.

CAPTAIN: Really, Doctor, it's up to you. Which
will it be?

DOCTOR: You must decide that, Captain.

CAPTAIN: It's not for me to decide. Which do you prefer?
I have no preference in the matter, none at all.

DOCTOR: Oh, but I really can't decide.

CAPTAIN: For heaven's sake, Doctor, say which you prefer.
I have no choice, no opinion, no wishes. Haven't you got

character enough to know what you want? Answer me, or I'll become angry.

DOCTOR: Well, if it rests with me, I'd prefer to live here.

CAPTAIN: Thank you. Forgive me but nothing annoys me so much as to see people undecided about something. [Right Door opens/closes.] Oh, there you are, Nana. Do you happen to know whether the rooms in the old cottage are in order for the Doctor?

NANA [to the Doctor]: Yes, Master, they are.

CAPTAIN: Good--then I won't detain you--you must be tired. Good-night--and welcome again--we'll see you tomorrow.

DOCTOR: Good evening, Captain.

CAPTAIN: I'm sure my wife explained conditions here to you a little--so you have some idea how the land lies?

DOCTOR: Yes, your excellent wife has given me a few hints about this and that--such as was necessary to a stranger. Good evening, Captain.

[Footsteps/Right Door opens/closes]

CAPTAIN: What do you want, old dear? What is it?

NANA: Now, Master, just listen--

CAPTAIN: Yes, Nana dear--you're the only one I can listen to without having spasms.

NANA: Now, listen, Dolphie dear--don't you think you should go half-way and come to an agreement with the Mistress in this fuss over the child? Just think of a mother--

CAPTAIN: Think of a father, Nana dear.

NANA: There, there. A father has something besides his child--but a mother has nothing but her child.

CAPTAIN: Just so--but she has only one burden, I have three, and I have her burden too. Don't you think I would've achieved a higher rank had I not had her and the child?

NANA: That isn't what I came to talk about.

CAPTAIN: I can believe that--for you want nothing more than to make it appear I am in the wrong.

NANA: Don't you believe, dear Dolphie, that I wish you well?

CAPTAIN: I do but--it isn't enough for me to have given the child life--I want to give her my soul, too.

NANA: Only God can gift one a soul. But I do think that you two ought to be able to agree.

CAPTAIN: You're not my friend, dear Nana.

NANA: Oh, Lord, what are you saying! You think I can forget you were Nana's child when you were little?

CAPTAIN: You think I've forgotten? You've been like a mother to me--and always stood by me when I had everybody against me--but now, when I really need you, you desert me and go over to the enemy.

NANA: The enemy?!

CAPTAIN: Yes, the enemy! You know very well how things are in this house! You've seen everything from the beginning.

NANA: Yes, I've seen! But, God knows, why two people should torment the life out of each other--two people who are otherwise so good and treat others so well. Mistress is never like that to me--

CAPTAIN: Only to me, I know. But let me tell you, Nana--if you desert me now, you'll do wrong. For now they've begun to weave a plot against me, and that doctor is not my friend.

NANA: Oh, Dolphie dear, you believe evil about everybody. That's because--well, you haven't the true faith--that's what it is.

CAPTAIN: Yes--you and the Baptists have found the only true faith--you're lucky!

NANA: Anyway, your Nana's not unhappy like you. Humble your heart and you'll see: God'll make you happy in your love for your neighbor.

CAPTAIN: You know it's funny--the minute you speak of God and love your voice becomes hard and your eyes fill with hate. No, Nana, you haven't the true faith.

NANA: You go on being proud and hard in your learning--but it won't amount to much when it comes to the test.

547 CAPTAIN: Why how mightily you talk, dear heart. But I know
548 very well that knowledge is of no use to you women.

549 NANA: You ought to be ashamed! Yet, in spite of
550 everything, old Nana cares most for her great big boy--
551 and he will come back to the fold when it's stormy weather.

552 CAPTAIN: Nana! Forgive me--but believe me when I say
553 there's no one here who wishes me well as much as you.
554 Help me--for I feel something's going to happen here.
555 I don't know what it is, but something evil's on the way.
556 [Scream from within.] What's that? Who's that screaming?
557 [Right Door quickly yanked open]

558 JULE: Father! Father! Help me--save me.

559 CAPTAIN: My dear, what is it? Tell me!

560 JULE: Help me--she wants to hurt me.

561 CAPTAIN: Who wants to hurt you?

562 JULE: Grammy. But it's my fault for deceiving her.

563 CAPTAIN: What did you tell her?

564 JULE: You can't say anything about it--do you promise?

565 CAPTAIN: Yes--now what did you say?

566 JULE: Before bed she sometimes turns down the lamp and
567 makes me sit at a table holding a pen over a piece of
568 paper. And then she says: let the spirits write.

569 CAPTAIN: Why have you never mentioned this before?

570 JULE: I didn't dare--for Grammy says the spirits take
571 revenge if one talks about them. And then the pen writes,
572 but I don't know whether I'm doing it or not. Sometimes
573 it goes well, but sometimes when I'm tired, nothing comes
574 --but she wants it to come just the same. And tonight, I
575 thought I was writing beautifully, but then Grammy said
576 it was from reading Frankenstein, and that I'd deceived
577 her, and then she got terribly angry.

578 CAPTAIN: Do you believe in spirits?

579 JULE: I don't know.

580 CAPTAIN: Well I know--there are none.

581 JULE: But Grammy says you don't understand--that you do
582 much worse things--that you can see to other planets.

583 CAPTAIN: Does she say that? What else does she say?

584 JULE: She says you can't do witchcraft.

585 CAPTAIN: Who said I could. You know what meteoric rocks
586 are--rocks that fall from other heavenly bodies?
587 I examine them and learn whether they contain the same
588 elements as our world. That's all.

589 JULE: But Grammy says there are things she can see that
590 you can't.

591 CAPTAIN: Then she lies.

592 JULE [innocently]: Grammy doesn't lie.

593 CAPTAIN: Why not?

594 JULE: Then Mother lies, too.

595 CAPTAIN: Hmph!

596 JULE: And if you say Mother lies, [petulantly] then I
597 can't believe you ever again.

598 CAPTAIN: I didn't say that. I just say...it's for your
599 own good that you should leave home. [Brief pause]
600 Will you? Will you go to town and learn something useful?

601 JULE: Oh, I'd love to go to town! Away from here, anywhere!
602 If I can only see you sometimes--often. Oh, it's so gloomy
603 and awful here all the time, like a winter night, but when
604 you come home Father, it's like morning in spring when
605 they open the double windows!

606 CAPTAIN: My dear child!

607 JULE: But you'll be good to Mother, won't you, Father?
608 She cries so often.

609 CAPTAIN: Hmm--then you want to go to town?

610 JULE: Yes, yes!

611 CAPTAIN: But if Mother doesn't want you to go?

612 JULE: She's got to let me!

613 CAPTAIN: But if she won't?

614 JULE: Well, then, I don't know. She's got to! She's
615 got to!

616 CAPTAIN: Will you ask her?

617 JULE: You've got to ask her--very nicely--she won't pay
618 attention to my asking.

619 CAPTAIN: Hmm! If you want it--and I want it--but she
620 doesn't want it, what shall we do then?

621 JULE: Oh, then it'll all be in such a tangle!
622 Why can't you both-- [Right Door opens/closes]

623 LAURA: Oh Jule--here you are. Perhaps now we may have
624 your opinion--the question of your future must be decided.

625 CAPTAIN: How can she have any well-grounded opinion about
626 what a young girl's life should be--while you and I, on
627 the other hand, have seen many young girls grow up.

628 LAURA: But as we differ, Jule must cast the deciding vote.

629 CAPTAIN: No--I'll let no one usurp my rights--neither
630 woman nor child. Jule, dear--leave us.

631 [Footsteps/Right-Door Open/Close]

632 LAURA: You were afraid of hearing her opinion--because
633 you thought it would be to my advantage.

634 CAPTAIN: I know she wants to live away from home--but I
635 also know you possess the power to instantly dissuade
636 her by putting her in the middle.

637 LAURA: Am I so powerful?

638 CAPTAIN: You have a fiendish power of getting your own
639 way--but so has anyone without scruples. How did you get
640 the last Doctor away, for instance--the one who sided with
641 me--and how did you get this new doctor here?

642 LAURA: Yes, how did I manage that?

643 CAPTAIN: You insulted the other one so much he left
644 --then you made your brother recommend this fellow.

645 LAURA: That was quite direct and legitimate. [Brief pause]
646 Is Jule to leave home now?

647 CAPTAIN: Yes, in two weeks.

648 LAURA: That's your decision?

649 CAPTAIN: Yes.

650 LAURA: Then I must try to prevent it.

651 CAPTAIN: You can't.

652 LAURA: Can't I? Do you really think I would entrust my
653 daughter to wicked people who will tell her everything
654 her mother's taught her is foolishness? Why she'd despise
655 me the rest of her life!

656 CAPTAIN: You think a father should allow ignorant and
657 conceited women to convince his daughter he's a charlatan?

658 LAURA: It means less to the father.

659 CAPTAIN: Why?

660 LAURA: Because the mother is closer to the child--as it's
661 well known no one can tell for certain who a child's
662 father is.

663 CAPTAIN: How does that apply here?

664 LAURA: You don't know whether you are Jule's father or
665 not.

666 CAPTAIN: I don't?

667 LAURA: No man knows--so surely you can't.

668 CAPTAIN: Are you joking?

669 LAURA: No--I'm only making use of your own teaching.
670 How do you know that I haven't been unfaithful?

671 CAPTAIN: I believe you capable of most anything, but not
672 that--nor would you talk about it if it were true.

673 LAURA: Suppose I was prepared to bear anything--even being
674 despised and driven out--for the sake of being able to
675 keep and control my child--and that I'm truthful now when
676 I declare that Jule is my child, but not yours. Suppose--

677 CAPTAIN: Stop it!

678 LAURA: Just suppose. In that case your power would be at
679 an end.

680 CAPTAIN: When you'd proved I wasn't the father.

681 LAURA: That would not be difficult--would you like me to
682 prove it?

683 CAPTAIN: Stop it.

684 LAURA: I would only need to state the name of the real
685 father--list the details of time and place. For instance
686 --when was Jule born? In the third year of our marriage.

687 CAPTAIN: Stop now--or else!

688 LAURA: Or else what? Think carefully about all you say
689 and do and decide--and whatever you do, don't make
690 yourself look ridiculous.

691 CAPTAIN: I consider this whole business to be...
692 sad...terribly sad.

693 LAURA: Which makes you all the more ridiculous.

694 CAPTAIN: And you?

695 LAURA: Oh we women are clever.

696 CAPTAIN: That's why one can't contend with you.

697 LAURA: Then why provoke a superior enemy?

698 CAPTAIN: Superior?

699 LAURA: Yes. I've never looked at a man without knowing
700 I'm superior.

701 CAPTAIN: Then you'll be made to know your superior for
702 once--so you'll never forget it.

703 LAURA: That'll be interesting.

704 [Right Door opens.]

705 NANA: Dinner is served. Won't you come in?

706 LAURA: Very well.

707 NARRATOR: The Captain lingers--sitting down with a
708 newspaper in an armchair near the table.

709 LAURA: Aren't you coming in?

710 CAPTAIN: No thanks--I'm not hungry.

711 LAURA: Come--or they'll ask unnecessary questions.
712 [Pause] You won't? [Brief pause] Al'right--stay there
713 then.

714 NANA: What is this all about--Dolphie dear?

715 CAPTAIN: I don't know what it is. Can you explain to me
716 why you women treat a grown man as if he were a child?

717 NANA: It must be because all you men--great and small--
718 are women's children--every one of you.

719 CAPTAIN: Yes--but I am Jule's father. [Brief pause]
720 Tell me, Nana--you believe it--don't you?

NANA: Lord, how silly you are! Of course you're your own child's father. Come and eat now--don't just sit there and sulk. There, there--come now.

CAPTAIN: Get out, woman. To hell with the hags!

NANA: Dolphie, now listen to me!

CAPTAIN: OUT! ALL WOMEN--AT ONCE!

NARRATOR: The Captain moves quickly to the rack on the wall and puts on his hat and coat.

NANA [in a low voice to herself]: Good Lord--what's going to happen now?

CAPTAIN: Don't expect me before midnight.

NANA [to herself]: Lord preserve us--what will be the end of this!

[Musical interlude.]

NARRATOR: We remain in the sitting room. A lighted lamp is on the table. It is night.

Laura and the Doctor are seated.

DOCTOR: From what I gathered during my conversation with him, the case is not fully proved. In the first place you made a mistake in saying he'd arrived at these astonishing results about other heavenly bodies by means of a microscope. Now that I have learned it was a spectroscope, not only is he cleared of any suspicion of insanity, but he has rendered a great service to science.

LAURA: But I never said that.

DOCTOR: Madam, I made careful notes of our conversation--and I remember I asked about this very point--because I thought I had misunderstood you. One must be very careful in making such accusations when a certificate of lunacy is in question.

LAURA: A certificate of lunacy?

DOCTOR: Yes, you must surely know that an insane person loses both civil and family rights.

LAURA: No, I didn't know that.

DOCTOR: There was another matter that seemed suspicious. He spoke of his communications to his booksellers not being answered. Perhaps--through motives of mistaken kindness--you have...intercepted them?

LAURA: Yes--it was my...duty to guard the interests of the family--and I couldn't let him ruin us without some intervention.

DOCTOR: Pardon me but I don't think you've considered the consequences of such an act. If he discovers your interference in his affairs, he will become suspicious, and it will grow like an avalanche. And besides, you will have thwarted his will and irritated him still more. You must have felt yourself how the mind rebels when one's deepest desires are thwarted and one's will is crossed.

LAURA: Haven't I!

DOCTOR: Think, then, what he must have gone through!

[She rises from chair]

LAURA: It's midnight--and he hasn't come home. I fear the worst.

DOCTOR: Tell me exactly what happened this evening after I left. I must know everything.

LAURA: He raved in the wildest way and had the strangest ideas. For instance, that he is not the father of our child.

DOCTOR: That is strange. How did he get such an idea?

LAURA: I can't imagine--unless it was because he had to question one of his men about supporting a child, and when I tried to defend the girl, he grew excited and said no one could tell who was the father of a child. God knows I did everything to calm him--but now I believe there's no help for him. [Cries.]

DOCTOR: But this cannot go on. Something must be done--without, of course, arousing his suspicions. Tell me, has the Captain ever had such delusions before?

LAURA: Six years ago things were in much the same state. He confessed in a letter to the doctor that he feared for his reason.

DOCTOR: Yes, yes, yes--this is a story that has deep roots--and concerns the sanctity of the family--

and so on--of course I cannot ask about everything, but must limit myself to appearances. What is done can't be undone, that's the pity, yet the remedy must be based on all of the past. [Pause] Where do you think he is now?

LAURA: I have no idea--he has such wild streaks.

DOCTOR: Would you like me to stay until he returns? To avoid suspicion, I could say that I had come to see your mother who is not well.

LAURA: Yes, that will do nicely. [Quickly putting mask back on] Don't leave us, Doctor--if you only knew how troubled I am! [Brief pause] But wouldn't it be better to tell him outright what you think of his condition?

DOCTOR: We must not do that unless the patient mentions the subject himself--and very seldom even then. It depends entirely on the case. But we mustn't sit here--perhaps I'd better go into the next room--it will look more natural.

LAURA: Yes that'll be better--and Nana can sit here. She always waits up for him when he's out--and she's the only one who has any power over him. [Footsteps] Nana, Nana! [Footsteps]

NANA: Yes, Mistress. Has the Master come home?

LAURA: No, but I'd like you to sit here and wait for him. My mother's caught a cold and that's why the doctor's here. [Footsteps] In fact, I think I'll go check on her.

NARRATOR: Nana sits herself at the table, takes up a hymn book and puts on her spectacles.

NANA: Ah, yes, ah yes! [Reads half aloud] Ah woe is me, how sad a thing Is life within this vale of tears, Death's angel triumphs like a king, And calls aloud to all the spheres. Vanity, all is vanity. Yes, yes! Yes, yes! [Reads again] All that on earth hath life and breath To earth must fall before his spear, And sorrow, saved alone from death, Inscribes above the mighty pedestal. Vanity, all is vanity. Yes, Yes.

NARRATOR: Jule enters with a coffee-pot on a tray and some embroidery.

JULE [in a low voice]: Nana, may I sit with you? It's so lonely upstairs.

834 NANA: For goodness sake, are you still up, Jule dear?

835 JULE: I wanted to finish Father's Christmas present.
836 And here's some hot coffee.

837 NANA: Bless your soul, child--but this won't do. You must
838 be up in the morning--and it's after midnight now.

839 JULE: What does it matter? I can't sit up there alone--
840 there are spirits up there.

841 NANA: You see--just what I said. Mark my words--this house
842 was not built on a lucky spot. What did you hear?

843 JULE: I heard someone singing in the attic!

844 NANA: In the attic? At this hour?

845 JULE: It was such a sorrowful, melancholy song! I never
846 heard anthing like it. It sounded as if it came from the
847 store-room, where my old cradle is--you know, to the left
848 of the--

849 NANA: Dear me, Dear me! And such a fearful night. It seems
850 as if the chimneys would blow down. "Ah, what is then,
851 this earthy life, But grief, affliction and great strife?
852 E'en when fairest it has seemed, Nought but pain it can
853 be deemed." Ah, dear child, may God give us a good
854 Christmas!

855 JULE: Nana, is it true Father is ill?

856 NANA: I'm afraid he is, dear child.

857 JULE: Will we still have Christmas Eve? How can he be up
858 and around if he's ill?

859 NANA: My child, the kind of illness he has doesn't
860 keep him from being up. [Sound in hallway] Hush, there's
861 someone out in the hall. Go to bed now and take the coffee
862 with you or your father will be angry.

863 JULE: Good-night, Nana.

864 NANA: Good-night, child--God bless you.

865 [Right Door opens/closes--a coat is hung up]

866 CAPTAIN [inebriated]: Is that you, Nana--are ya
867 still up? Go to bed!

868 NANA: I was only waiting until--

NARRATOR: The Captain lights a candle, opens his desk, sits down at it and takes letters and newspapers out of his pocket.

NANA [affectionately disappointed]: Dolphie, dear...

CAPTAIN: What do you want?

NANA: The Old Mistress is ill and the Doctor's here.

CAPTAIN: Anything dangerous?

NANA: No--just a cold.

CAPTAIN: Hmph. [Pause] Nana--who was the father of your child?

NANA: You know that--I've told it to ya many, many a time: Scamp Johnson.

CAPTAIN: Are you sure it was him?

NANA: Of course I'm sure--he was the only one.

CAPTAIN: Yes, but was he sure he was the only one? No, he couldn't be. But you could be sure. There's a difference, you see?

NANA: I can't see any difference.

CAPTAIN: Do you think Jule looks like me?

NANA: Of course! Why, you're as alike as two peas.

CAPTAIN: Did Johnson confess he was the father?

NANA: He was forced to!

CAPTAIN: How terrible! [Right Door opens] Here's the Doctor. [Right Door closes, footsteps] Good evening, Doctor. How's my mother-in-law?

DOCTOR: Oh, it's nothing serious--a slight sprain of the left ankle.

CAPTAIN: Nana here said it was a cold. There seem to be different opinions about the same case. Go to bed, Nana. [Footsteps] Sit down, Doctor.

DOCTOR: Thanks.

CAPTAIN: Is it true you get striped foals if you cross a zebra and a mare?

DOCTOR [astonished]: Perfectly true.

903 CAPTAIN: Is it true foals continue to be striped if
904 they're bred with a stallion?

905 DOCTOR: Yes that's true, too.

906 CAPTAIN: Which is to say, under certain conditions a
907 stallion can be sire to striped foals or to the opposite?

908 DOCTOR: Yes, so it seems.

909 CAPTAIN: Therefore an offspring's likeness to the father
910 proves nothing.

911 DOCTOR: Well--

912 CAPTAIN: That is to say paternity can't be proven.

913 DOCTOR: Hmmm...well...

914 CAPTAIN: You're a widower, aren't you--you've had
915 children?

916 DOCTOR: Ye-es.

917 CAPTAIN: Didn't you ever feel ridiculous as a father?
918 I know of nothing so ludicrous as to see a father leading
919 his children by the hand around the streets, or to hear a
920 father talk about his children. "My wife's children," he
921 ought to say. Did you ever feel how false your position
922 was? Weren't you ever afflicted with doubts, I won't say
923 suspicious, for, as a gentleman, I assume your wife was
924 above suspicion.

925 DOCTOR: I believe it was Goethe who said: a man must take
926 his children on faith.

927 CAPTAIN: It's dangerous to take anything on faith where a
928 woman is concerned.

929 DOCTOR: Oh, there are so many kinds of women.

930 CAPTAIN: The Modern Age has shown us there's only one
931 kind! Lately I'm reminded of two instances that illustrate
932 this. When I was young, I was strong and, if I may boast,
933 handsome. Once--when I was making a trip on a steamer and
934 sitting with a few friends in the saloon, the young
935 hostess came and flung herself down beside me. Bursting
936 into tears, she told us her sweetheart had drowned. We
937 sympathized with her, and I ordered some champagne. After
938 the second glass I touched her foot-- after the fourth
939 her knee, and before morning I had ...consolated her.

940 DOCTOR [excusing it]: Ah that was a summer fling--

941 CAPTAIN: Yes well now comes the second instance--I was at
942 the seaside--there was a young married woman staying there
943 with her children--her husband was in town. She was
944 religious, had extremely strict principles, preached
945 morals to me, and was, I believe, entirely honorable.
946 I lent her a book--two books--and when she was leaving,
947 she returned them! Well, three months later, in one of
948 those very books I found her card with a declaration on
949 it. It was innocent--as innocent as a declaration of love
950 can be from a married woman to a strange man who never
951 made any advances. The moral of the story? Don't have too
952 much faith.

953 DOCTOR: Or too little either.

954 CAPTAIN: You see, Doctor--that woman was so unconsciously
955 dishonest she talked to her husband about the fancy she'd
956 taken to me. That's what makes it dangerous, this
957 unconsciousness of their instinctive dishonesty.

958 DOCTOR: Captain, your thoughts are taking a morbid turn,
959 and you ought to control them.

960 CAPTAIN: Look here--steam boilers, as you know, explode
961 at a certain pressure--but the same pressure is not
962 required for all boiler explosions. You understand?
963 Now, you're here to watch me. If I were not a man,
964 I'd have the right to make accusations or complaints, as
965 they are so cleverly called, and perhaps I should be able
966 to give you the whole diagnosis, and--what is more--the
967 history of my disorder. But unfortunately, I am a man,
968 and there is nothing for me to do but, like a Roman, fold
969 my arms across my breast and hold my breath until I die.

970 DOCTOR: Captain, if you are ill, it will not reflect upon
971 your honor as a man to confide in me. In fact, I ought to
972 hear the other side.

973 CAPTAIN: The other side! The other side, eh? [Brief pause]
974 When I heard Mrs. Alving in Ghosts saying words over her
975 dead husband, I thought to myself: what a damned pity it
976 was the man who was dead! What do you suppose he would
977 have said had he had been alive? You suppose if any of
978 the dead husbands came back they'd be believed?
979 Good night, Doctor. You see I am calm, and you can retire.

980 DOCTOR: Good night then, Captain. I'm afraid I can be of
981 no further use in this case.

982 CAPTAIN: Are we enemies?

DOCTOR: Far from it. But it is too bad we cannot be friends. Good night.

[Footsteps then Right Door opens/closes--then footsteps again and Left Door yanked open]

CAPTAIN: Ah ha! I knew you were listening. You might as well come in and we'll talk. It's late, but we must come to a decision. Sit down. [Pause.] I've been to the post office to get my letters. It appears you've been intercepting my mail, both coming and going. The result is: the loss of time has as good as destroyed any result I might've expected from my work.

LAURA: It was an act of kindness on my part--for you neglected your commission for this other work.

CAPTAIN: Hardly--you were just afraid that someday I might win more honor from that than from the service--and you were particularly anxious that I not win such honors, for then your own insignificance would be accentuated. In response, I've intercepted letters addressed to you.

LAURA: That was a noble act.

CAPTAIN: Yes, you have, as you might say, a high opinion of me. It appears from these letters that, for some time, you've been enlisting my old friends against me by spreading reports about my mental condition. And you've succeeded in your efforts--for now--not more than one person, from the Colonel to the cook--believes that I am sane. Now, these are the facts: my mind is sound, as you know, so that I can take care of my duties in the service as well my responsibilities as a father--my feelings are more or less under my control, as my will has not been completely undermined--but you have gnawed and nibbled at it so that it will soon slip the cogs, and then the whole mechanism will slip and go to hell. [Brief pause] I will not appeal to your feelings, for you have none--that is your strength so I will appeal to your interests.

LAURA: Tell me.

CAPTAIN: You've succeeded in arousing my suspicions to such an extent that my judgment's no longer clear--and my thoughts begin to wander. This is the approaching insanity you've been waiting for, which may come at any moment. So you are face to face with the question: whether it's more in your interest that I should be

sane or insane. Consider: if I crack up, I shall lose the service, and where will you be then? If I die, my life insurance will fall to you --but if I take my own life, you will get nothing. Consequently--it's in your interest I'm neither a suicide nor am I incapacitated.

LAURA: Is this a trap?

CAPTAIN: Obviously. But it's up to you whether you'll run around it or stick your head in it.

LAURA: You threaten to kill yourself--you won't do that!

CAPTAIN: You sure? You think a man can live with nothing and no one to live for?

LAURA: You surrender then?

CAPTAIN: No--I offer peace.

LAURA: The conditions?

CAPTAIN: That I keep my reason. Free me from my suspicions and I'll give up the battle.

LAURA: What suspicions?

CAPTAIN: About Jule's parentage.

LAURA: Are there any doubts about that?

CAPTAIN: Yes--and you've awakened them.

LAURA: Me?

CAPTAIN: You've dropped them like henbane in my ears, and circumstances have strengthened them. Free me from doubt--tell me outright she's mine and I'll forgive you beforehand.

LAURA: How can I acknowledge a sin I haven't committed?

CAPTAIN: What does it matter when you know I won't divulge it. You think a man would spread around his own shame?

LAURA: If I say it isn't true, you won't be convinced--but if I say it is, then you'll be convinced. You seem to hope it's true!

CAPTAIN: Strangely enough--yes! It must be! Because the first conclusion can't be proved--but the last can be.

LAURA: Have you any grounds for your suspicions?

1060 CAPTAIN: Yes--and no.

1061 LAURA: I believe you want to prove me guilty, so you can
1062 get rid of me and have absolute control over the child.
1063 But you won't catch me that way.

1064 CAPTAIN: You think I'd want to be responsible for
1065 another man's child?

1066 LAURA: I'm sure you wouldn't--that's what makes me know
1067 you lied just now when you said that you'd forgive me
1068 beforehand.

1069 CAPTAIN: You don't seem to understand--if the child's
1070 not mine, I have no control over her and don't want any
1071 --and that's precisely what you want, isn't it? But
1072 perhaps you want even more--to have power over the child
1073 but still have me to support you.

1074 LAURA: Power, yes! What's this whole life and death
1075 struggle been for but power?

1076 CAPTAIN: It's more than that to me. I don't believe in a
1077 hereafter--the child was my future life--my bit of
1078 immortality--perhaps the only bit that's real. If you
1079 take that away from me, you take my life.

1080 LAURA: Why didn't we separate--in time?

1081 CAPTAIN: Because the child bound us together--but the
1082 link became a chain. [Pause] I've never thought about
1083 this, but now the memories--they come back. We'd been
1084 married two years--but had no children. I was sick--on
1085 the verge of death, remember? In a moment of
1086 consciousness, I heard voices outside the room. It was
1087 you and the lawyer talking about the money I had saved.
1088 He explained that you could inherit nothing because we
1089 had no children--and he asked you if you were expecting.
1090 I didn't hear your reply. Then I recovered and we had a
1091 child. [Pause] Who is the father?

1092 LAURA: You.

1093 CAPTAIN: No I'm not. This is a crime that's been buried
1094 and is starting to stink! You women have been
1095 compassionate enough to free the black slaves, but
1096 you've kept the white ones. I've worked and slaved for
1097 you and your child and your mother and the servants--
1098 I've sacrificed promotions and my career--I've endured
1099 torture, sleeplessness, worry for your sake, until my
1100 hair's grown gray--and all so you might enjoy a life

without care--and when you grew old, enjoy life again in your child. I have borne everything without complaint, because I thought myself the father of your child. This is the lowest kind of theft, the most brutal slavery I've had in seventeen years of penal servitude while being innocent. What can you give me in return for that?

LAURA: You are quite mad.

CAPTAIN: That's what you hope! I see now how you've worked to conceal your crime. I sympathized with you because I didn't understand. I thought I was helping you--to drive away disturbing thoughts--but I was lulling your conscience to sleep. Remember the night before last--Jule's birthday--it was three in the morning, and I was up reading--you shrieked, "Don't, don't!" as if someone were strangling you--I knocked on the wall--I didn't want to hear. Well, I've had my suspicions for a long time but I didn't want to hear. [Brief pause] Now what will you do?

LAURA: What can I do? I swear by God and all I hold dear that you are Jule's father.

CAPTAIN: What use is that when you've sworn a mother can and ought to commit any crime for her child? I beg you as a wounded man begs for a death blow to come clean. Don't you see I'm as helpless as a child? Forget that I'm a man--a soldier who can tame men and beasts with a word. I ask only for the compassion you'd give a sick man. I lay down my arms and beg you to have mercy on me.

NARRATOR: Laura approaches him and puts her hand on his forehead.

LAURA: What! You're crying!

CAPTAIN: Yes--don't men cry? Don't we have eyes! Don't we have limbs, senses, thoughts, passions? Are we not fed with same food, hurt by the same weapons, warmed and cooled by the same summer and winter as a woman? Why shouldn't a man complain, a soldier weep? Is it unmanly? Why? Why?

LAURA: Do you remember when I first came into your life? I was like a second mother. Your great strong body needed nerves--you were a giant child who'd come too early into the world--and perhaps was not wanted at all.

1142 CAPTAIN: Yes, my mother was against my coming into the
1143 world--so I was born without a will. I thought I was
1144 completing myself when you and I became one--and so I
1145 allowed you to rule--and I, the commander at the
1146 barracks and of the troops, became obedient to you,
1147 grew through you, looked up to you as to a more
1148 gifted being, listened to you as if I had been your
1149 undeveloped child.

1150 LAURA: Yes you were my child. But you must have seen,
1151 when your feelings changed and you became my lover,
1152 that I blushed--and your embraces were met with remorse
1153 because I was ashamed. The mother had become the
1154 mistress--ugh!

1155 CAPTAIN: I saw it, but I didn't understand. I thought
1156 you despised me for my unmanliness--I wanted to win you
1157 as a woman--by being a man.

1158 LAURA: That was your mistake. The mother was your
1159 friend--but the woman--she was your enemy--and love
1160 between the sexes?--why that, my dear, is called WAR.
1161 You think I gave myself?--I didn't--I took--what I
1162 wanted. But you had one advantage--I felt that, and I
1163 wanted you to feel it.

1164 CAPTAIN: You've always had the advantage. You could
1165 hypnotize me when I was wide awake--so that I couldn't
1166 see or hear--only obey. You'd give me a raw potato and
1167 convince me it was a peach--you'd force me to admire
1168 your foolish notions as though they were strokes of
1169 genius--you could have influenced me, yes! even to
1170 crime!--but you lacked intelligence, so instead of
1171 carrying out my rational ideas, you acted on your
1172 intuition. When at last I woke, I realized my honor had
1173 been corrupted--and I wanted to blot out the memory with
1174 a great deed, an achievement, a discovery. I wanted to
1175 go to war, but there was none--so I threw myself into
1176 science. And now--when I'm about to reach out my hand to
1177 gather in the fruits, you chop off my arm. Now I'm
1178 dishonored--and a man can't live without his honor.

1179 LAURA: Can I?

1180 CAPTAIN: Yes--you have a child. And when you grow old
1181 and cease to be a woman, you'll grow a beard on your
1182 chin--but what do men get when they grow old and cease
1183 to be men?--when we're no longer the cock that crows but
1184 poultry--when we think the sun's about to rise but

find ourselves in the bright moonlight among the ruins--
that it's all been a dream--and that there's--
no awakening.

LAURA: You should've been a poet.

CAPTAIN [after a pause]: Do you hate me?

LAURA: Sometimes--when you're a man.

CAPTAIN: Well if it's true that we're descended from
monkeys, it must be from two separate species.

LAURA: What do you mean?

CAPTAIN: That one of us must lose.

LAURA: Who?

CAPTAIN: The weaker, of course.

LAURA: And the stronger will be in the right?

CAPTAIN: He has the power.

LAURA: Then I'm in the right.

CAPTAIN: You have the power then?

LAURA: Yes, the legal power--to put you under control of
a guardian.

CAPTAIN: A guardian?

LAURA: And then I shall educate my child without having
to listen to your stupid notions.

CAPTAIN: And who shall pay for the education when I am
no longer here?

LAURA: Your pension will pay for it.

CAPTAIN [dismissively]: How can you have me put under a
guardian?

[She takes out a letter]

LAURA: With this letter--a signed copy of which is in
the hands of the Board of Lunacy.

CAPTAIN: What letter?

NARRATOR: She moves backwards towards the left door.

LAURA: Yours! Your decaration to the doctor that you
are insane.

1218 CAPTAIN: What?

1219 LAURA: Now that you've fulfilled your function as a
1220 father and as a breadwinner, you're no longer needed--
1221 and you must go. You must go, since you now know my
1222 intellect is as strong as my will, and since you won't
1223 stay and acknowledge it.

1224 NARRATOR: The Captain rushes to the table, seizes the
1225 lighted lamp and hurls it violently at Laura, who
1226 barely dodges it and disappears backwards through the
1227 left door.

1228 [Musical Interlude]

1229

1230 NARRATOR: Later. In the same room. Another lamp's on the
1231 table. The left door has been barricaded with a chair.

1232 LAURA: Did he give you the keys?

1233 NANA: To me!--no!--Lord help me but I took 'em from the
1234 Master's clothes Matts had out to brush.

1235 LAURA: Oh, Matts is on duty today.

1236 NANA: Yes, Matts.

1237 LAURA: Give me the keys.

1238 NANA [pained]: Ah, this seems like downright stealing.
1239 You hear him walking up there, Mistress? Back and forth,
1240 back and forth.

1241 LAURA: Is the door well barred?

1242 NANA: Oh it's barred well enough!

1243 LAURA: Control your feelings, Nana. We must be calm if
1244 we're to be saved. [Right Door knock--firmly] Who is it?

1245 [Quick footsteps/Right Door opens]

1246 NANA: It's Matts.

1247 LAURA: Bring him in.

1248 MATTS: A message from the Colonel, Ma'am.

1249 LAURA: Give it to me! [Reads] Ah!...Matts, have you taken
1250 all the cartridges out of the guns and the pouches?

1251 MATTS: Yes, Ma'am.

LAURA: Good. Wait outside while I answer the Colonel's letter. [Quick footsteps. Drawer open, paper grab, pencil scribble.]

NANA: Listen. What in the world's he doing up there now?

LAURA: Be quiet while I write.

NANA [Half to herself]: Oh, Lord have mercy on us all! Where will this end!

LAURA: Here, give this to Matts. And my mother must not know anything about this--do you hear?

NANA: Yes, Mistress.

NARRATOR: As Nana goes out, Laura opens several desk drawers and takes out papers.

The Pastor enters. He takes a chair and sits near Laura by the desk.

PASTOR: Good evening, sister. I've been away all day and only just got back. Terrible things have been happening here.

LAURA: Yes, never have I gone through such a night and such a day.

PASTOR: I see you're none the worse for it though.

LAURA: No, God be praised--but think what might have happened!

PASTOR: Tell me: how did it begin? I've heard so many different versions.

LAURA: It began with his wild idea of not being Jule's father. And it ended with his throwing a lighted lamp in my face.

PASTOR: But that's dreadful! So it is insanity. What's to be done now?

LAURA: We must try to prevent further violence. The Doctor has sent out for a straightjacket--in the meantime, I've sent a message to the Colonel--and am now trying to straighten out the affairs of the household, which he's mishandled in a most disgraceful manner.

PASTOR: This is absolutely deplorable--but I've always expected something of the sort. Fire and powder must end

1288 in an explosion. [Drawer pulled out] What have you got in
1289 the drawer there?

1290 LAURA: Look, he's hidden everything here.

1291 PASTOR: Good Heavens, here's your doll--and here's your
1292 christening cap and Jule's rattle--and your letters--and
1293 a locket. [Brief pause] He must have loved you very much,
1294 sister. I never kept such things!

1295 LAURA: He used to love me--but time--time changes so many
1296 things.

1297 PASTOR: What is this paper? The receipt for a grave! Well,
1298 better a grave than a lunatic asylum! [Brief pause]
1299 Sister, tell me, are you blameless in all this?

1300 LAURA: Why is it my fault when a man goes out of his mind?

1301 PASTOR: Well...I shan't say anything. After all, blood is
1302 thicker than water.

1303 LAURA: How dare you!

1304 PASTOR: Now listen--

1305 LAURA: Yes?!

1306 PASTOR: You can hardly deny it suits you pretty well to
1307 be able to educate your child as you wish?

1308 LAURA: I don't understand you.

1309 PASTOR: Oh, how I admire you!

1310 LAURA: Me? Hmph!

1311 PASTOR: And to think: I will become the guardian of that
1312 free-thinker! Do you know--I've always looked on him as a
1313 weed in our garden.

1314 LAURA [laughs a short laugh then half-heartedly serious]
1315 How dare you say that to me--his wife?

1316 PASTOR: You're strong, Sister, incredibly strong. You're
1317 like a fox in a trap--you'd rather gnaw off your own leg
1318 than let yourself be caught! Like a master thief--
1319 no accomplice, not even your own conscience. Look at
1320 yourself in the mirror! I dare you!

1321 LAURA: I never look in the mirror.

1322 PASTOR: Of course not. Let me see your hand. Not a
1323 blood stain on it, not a trace of poison! A little

innocent murder that the law cannot reach--an unconscious crime--[scoffs] unconscious! What an idea! Do you hear how he's moving up there? Take care! If that man gets loose he'll make short work of you.

LAURA: You talk too much. You must have a bad conscience. Accuse me--if you dare.

PASTOR: You know I can't.

LAURA: You see! You can't--and therefore I'm innocent. You take care of your ward--and I'll take care of mine! [Right door opens/closes] Here's the Doctor. Good evening, Doctor. You at least will help me, won't you? But unfortunately there's not much that can be done. Do you hear how he's carrying on up there? Are you convinced now?

DOCTOR: I am convinced an act of violence has been committed--but the question now is whether that act of violence can be considered an outbreak of passion--or of madness.

PASTOR: Apart from the actual outbreak though--you must acknowledge he has "fixed ideas."

DOCTOR: I think your ideas, Pastor, are much more fixed.

PASTOR [irked]: Why my settled views about the highest things are--

DOCTOR: We'll leave settled views out of this, shall we? [Brief pause] Madam, it rests with you to decide whether your husband is guilty to the extent of imprisonment and fine--or should be placed in an asylum! How do you class his behavior?

LAURA: I can't answer that now.

DOCTOR: That is to say you have no decided opinion as to what will be most advantageous to the interests of the family. What do you say, Pastor?

PASTOR: It'll be a scandal in either case--it's not easy to say.

LAURA: But if he's only sentenced to a fine, he'll be able to repeat the violence.

DOCTOR: And if he's sent to prison he'll soon be out again. Therefore, we consider it most advantageous for all parties that he immediately be treated as insane! [Brief pause] Where is his old nanny?

1363 LAURA: Why?

1364 DOCTOR: It is she who must put the straightjacket on him!
1365 Once, of course, I have talked to him and given the order.
1366 But not before! I have--the garment--right here. Please
1367 ask the old nanny to come in now.

1368 [Bell is rung]

1369 PASTOR: Dreadful! Dreadful!

1370 [Right door opens/closes--quick footsteps]

1371 NANA: You rang, Mistress?

1372 DOCTOR: See this? We want you to slip this jacket on the
1373 Captain, from behind, you understand--when I find it
1374 necessary to prevent another outbreak of violence. You
1375 notice it has very long sleeves to prevent his moving and
1376 they are to be tied at the back. See here--there are a
1377 pair of straps that go through buckles which are then
1378 fastened to the arm of a chair or a table or whatever is
1379 convenient. You understand?

1380 NANA: No, Doctor, I can't do that--I can't.

1381 LAURA: Why don't you do it yourself, Doctor?

1382 DOCTOR [annoyance covering cowardice]: Because the
1383 patient distrusts me. You, Madam, should be the one to
1384 do it, but I fear he distrusts even you. [Brief pause then
1385 encouragingly] Perhaps you, Pastor?

1386 PASTOR [terrified]: Me? No, I must ask to be excused.

1387 [Right door opens/closes/footsteps]

1388 LAURA: Matts, have you delivered my message to the
1389 Colonel?

1390 MATTS: Yes, Ma'am.

1391 DOCTOR: You know the circumstances here--you know that
1392 the Captain is out of his mind and you must help us to
1393 take care of him.

1394 MATTS: If there's anything I can do for the Captain, you
1395 can be sure I'll do it.

1396 DOCTOR: You must put this jacket on him--

1397 MATTS: I don't--

NANA: No! Matts shan't touch him. He might hurt him. I'd rather do it myself--very, very gently. But Matts can wait outside and help me if necessary. He can do that.

[Loud, continuous knocking on the Left Door]

DOCTOR [whispers]: There he is! Now put the jacket under your shawl on the chair--and you must all go out--the Pastor and I will receive him--that door won't hold long! Now go!!

NANA: The Lord help us!

NARRATOR: Suddenly, the left door is broken down with such violence that the lock is broken and the chair is thrown into the middle of the room. The Captain enters with a pile of books under his arm, which he puts on the table.

CAPTAIN: The whole thing is here, in every book. I wasn't out of my mind after all! Here it is in the Odyssey, book 1, verse 215--Telemachus is speaking to Athene. "My mother maintains that he, Odysseus, is my father, but I myself know it not, for no man yet hath known his own origin." And here we have the prophet Ezekiel: "The fool saith--behold here is my father, but who can tell whose loins engendered him." That's quite clear! And what have we here? In the History of Russian Literature, Puschkin, Russia's greatest poet, died of torture from reports circulated about his wife's unfaithfulness rather than by a bullet in his breast from a duel. You see, I read my books. [Brief pause] Ah, Pastor, you're here? And the Doctor, of course. Have you heard what I answered when an English lady complained about Irishmen who used to throw lighted lamps in their wives' faces? "God, what women!" I cried. "Women," she gasped. "Yes, of course," I answered. "When things go so far that a man who's loved and worshipped a woman, takes a lighted lamp and throws it in her face, then one may KNOW."

PASTOR: Know what?

CAPTAIN: Nothing. One never knows anything. One only believes. Isn't that true, Pastor? One believes and then one is saved! Yes, well I know that one can be damned by his faith. I know that well.

DOCTOR: Captain!

CAPTAIN: Silence! I won't listen to you repeating their female chatter, like a telephone! That's right--you know! Look here, Pastor--do you believe you're the father of your children? I remember you had a tutor in your house who had a handsome face--and the people gossiped--what about him?

PASTOR [disappointedly intimate]: Captain--take care.

CAPTAIN: Feel under your toupee--and tell me if there are not two bumps. By my soul, I believe he's gone pale! Ach! We're a lot of ridiculous dupes, we married men. Isn't that true, Doctor? How was your marriage bed? Didn't you have a lieutenant in the house, eh? Wait a moment and I'll make a guess-- his name was--

NARRATOR: He whispers in the Doctor's ear.

CAPTAIN: You see, he turns pale, too! Don't be upset--she's dead and buried--what's done can't be undone. I knew him well, by the way, and he's now--look at me, Doctor--No, straight in my eyes--a major in the cavalry! [to Pastor] By God, if he doesn't have horns, too!

DOCTOR [tortured]: Captain, won't you talk about something else?

CAPTAIN: He wants to talk of something else when I mention horns [laughs]

PASTOR: Do you know, Captain, that you are insane?

CAPTAIN: Yes, I know. If only I had the use of your illustrious brains for awhile I'd soon have you shut up! I'm mad, yes--but how did I become mad? That doesn't concern you, no--that doesn't concern anyone--you want to talk about something else!

NARRATOR: He takes a framed photograph from the table.

CAPTAIN: Good Lord, that's my child! Mine? How can I know? You know what we'd have to do to make sure? First, we'd have to marry--and then divorce--and then become lovers--and finally adopt a child. Then one could be sure. Isn't that right? But how can all that help me now? Now that you've taken my immortality from me-- what use is science now that I have nothing to live for--what can I do with it now I'm dishonored? I grafted my right arm, half my brain, half my marrow onto another's trunk--for I believed we'd knit ourselves together and grow into a more perfect tree--and then someone came with a knife and cut below

the graft--and now I'm only half a tree. But the other half goes on growing, while I wither and die--for they were the best parts, the ones I gave away. Now I want to die. Do with me what you will, "gentlemen".

NARRATOR: As the Captain sits and buries his head on his arms on the table, the Doctor whispers to the Pastor, and they go out. Soon after, Jule comes in.

JULE: Are you ill, Father?

CAPTAIN [dazed]: Me?

JULE: Do you know what you've done? You threw the lamp at Mother.

CAPTAIN: Yes.

JULE: Just think if she'd been hurt.

CAPTAIN: Would that have mattered?

JULE: You're not my father when you talk like that.

CAPTAIN: I'm not your father? How do you know that? Who told you that? Who's your father, then? Who?

JULE: Not you at any rate.

CAPTAIN: That I should live to have my child come and tell me to my face I'm not her father! Don't you know you disgrace your mother when you say that? Don't you know it's her fault if this is so?

JULE: Don't say anything bad about Mother--do you hear?

CAPTAIN: No--you women stick together, every one of you, against me! You've always done that.

JULE: Father!

CAPTAIN: Don't use that word!

JULE: Father, Father!

NARRATOR: He suddenly draws her to him.

CAPTAIN: Jule, my dear, dear child--you are my child! Those were only sickly thoughts that come on the wind like pestilence and fever. Look at me so that I can see my soul in your eyes! [Brief pause] But I see her soul, too! You have two souls--you love me with mine but hate me with hers. You must only love me! You must have one soul, or you'll never have peace--me neither. You must have

only one mind, which is the child of my mind and one will,
which is my will.

JULE: But I don't want to--I want to be--myself.

CAPTAIN: No--please--you see--I'm a cannibal--and I must
eat you. Your mother wanted to eat me, but she couldn't.
To eat or be eaten--that's the question. If I don't eat
you, you will eat me--and you've already shown your
teeth! But don't be frightened my dear child--I won't
harm you.

NARRATOR: He goes and takes a revolver from the wall.

JULE: Help, Mother, help, he wants to kill me.

[Right Door thrown open]

NANA: Dolphie, what's happening?!

[He opens the gun's chamber]

CAPTAIN: Have you removed the cartridges?

NANA: Yes--I put them away when I was tidying up--but
sit down and be quiet and I'll get them out again!

NARRATOR: She takes the Captain by the arm and gets him
into a chair, into which he sinks feebly. Then she
takes the straitjacket out from under her shawl and
moves behind the chair.

Jule slips out left.

NANA: Dolphie dear, do you remember when you were my
dear little boy and I tucked you in at night and used
to sing: "God who holds his children dear" to you, and
do you remember how I used to get up in the night and
give you a drink--how I would light the candle and tell
you stories when you had bad dreams and couldn't sleep?
Do you remember?

CAPTAIN: Go on talking, Nana, it soothes my head. Tell
me more.

NANA: Yes--but you must listen then. Do you remember
when you took the big kitchen knife and wanted to cut
out boats with it, and how I came in and had to get the
knife away by fooling you? You were just a little child
who didn't understand, so I had to fool you, for you
didn't know it was for your own good. "Give me that

snake," I said, "or it will bite you!" and then you let go of the knife?

NARRATOR: She gently takes the revolver out of the Captain's hand.

NANA: And then--when you had to be dressed and didn't want to, I had to sweet-talk you by saying you should have a coat of gold and be dressed like a prince--and then I took your little blouse that was made of green wool and held it in front of you and I said: "In with both arms," and then I said, "Now sit nice and still while I button it down the back"...

NARRATOR: She puts the straightjacket on him.

NANA: ...and then I said, "Get up now, and walk across the floor like a good boy so I can see how it fits."

NARRATOR: She leads him to the sofa.

NANA: And then I said, "Now you must go to bed."

CAPTAIN: What did you say? How can I go to bed when I'm dressed--damn! What have you done to me? [Tries to get free.] Ah! you cunning devil of a woman! Who would have thought you had it in you. [Lies down on sofa.] Trapped, cut off, outmaneuvered--not even able to die--and by a woman.

NANA: Forgive me, Dolphie--forgive me--but I had to keep you from killing your child.

CAPTAIN [chuckles morbidly]: But you say life is hell--and death is the kingdom of heaven--and children belong in heaven.

NANA: How would you know, dear, what comes after death?

CAPTAIN: That's the only thing we do know--of life we know nothing! Oh, if I'd only known from the beginning.

NANA: Oh, Dolphie, humble your hard heart and cry to God for mercy--it's not too late. It was not too late for the thief on the cross, when the Saviour said, "Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

CAPTAIN [suddenly angry]: Are you wailing for a corpse already, you old crow?

NARRATOR: Nana takes a hymnbook out of her pocket.

CAPTAIN [calls]: Private Matts? Are you there?

1590 [Door opens/closes/footsteps]

1591 CAPTAIN: Private Matts, throw this woman out! She wants
1592 to suffocate me with her hymn-book. Throw her out the
1593 window, or up the chimney, or anywhere.

1594 MATTS: Heaven help me, Captain, I can't do that--
1595 I can't. If it were six men--but a woman!

1596 CAPTAIN: Can't manage one woman, eh, Private?

1597 MATTS: Of course I can, sir--but--well, you see--
1598 one never wants to lay hands on a woman.

1599 CAPTAIN: Haven't they laid hands on me?

1600 MATTS: I just can't, Captain, sir. It's as if you
1601 asked me to strike the Pastor. It's second nature,
1602 I just can't!

1603 NARRATOR: Laura comes in and motions Matts to go.

1604 LAURA: Captain, look at me. Do you believe I'm your
1605 enemy?

1606 CAPTAIN: I believe you're all my enemies! My mother was
1607 my enemy when she didn't want to bring me into the
1608 world--and made a weakling out of me. My sister was my
1609 enemy when she taught me I must be obedient to her.
1610 The first woman I embraced was my enemy for giving me
1611 ten years of sickness in return for the love I gave her.
1612 My own child became my enemy when she had to choose
1613 between her father and her mother. And you, my dear
1614 wife, have been my arch enemy, because you'll never let
1615 up on me until I lay here dead.

1616 LAURA: I've never even thought--must less intended--what
1617 you think I did. Sure, at the very bottom--there may
1618 have been a vague desire to remove you--as an obstacle
1619 but--I wasn't conscious of it. Rather, this entire thing
1620 is the result of a course you yourself laid out--and
1621 before God and my conscience, I feel I'm innocent, even
1622 if I'm not. Your existence has been like a stone on my
1623 heart - so heavy I tried to shake it off many times but
1624 couldn't. This is the truth--and if I've unconsciously
1625 struck you down, I ask your forgiveness. [Brief pause]
1626 And as for your suspicions about the child, they are
1627 absolutely groundless.

1628 CAPTAIN: That's what makes it so horrible. If there were
1629 any grounds, that would be something to cling to. But

there are only shadows that hide themselves in the
bushes--and stick out their heads and grin--it's like
fighting the air--or firing blank cartridges. [Brief
pause] Ach, my skull! Put a pillow under my head and
throw something over me. I'm cold--I'm terribly cold!

NARRATOR: Laura takes her shawl and spreads it over him.
Nana goes to get a pillow.

CAPTAIN I feel your shawl against my mouth--it smells of
vanilla, like your hair when you were young! When we
walked through the birch woods, with the primroses and
the thrushes! Glorious...glorious! Remember how
beautiful life was? What happened? How did it come to
be this way?

LAURA: God's will, I suppose.

CAPTAIN [with disgust]: God's will! God--dess more like
it. [Sound of being suffocated] What's this feline
lying on me. Shoo it away--shoo it away!

NARRATOR: Nana brings him a pillow and takes away the
shawl.

CAPTAIN: Bring me my army coat! Throw that over me!

NARRATOR: Nana gets the coat and places it over him.

CAPTAIN: What've you given me for a pillow, Nana?
It's so hard--and so cold--so very cold. Come and sit
near me. There. Put my head on your knee. There, that's
warm! Bend over me so that I can feel your breast!
Oh, it's sweet to sleep against a woman's breast, a
mother's, or a mistress's--but a mother's is sweetest.

LAURA: Would you like to see your child?

CAPTAIN: My child? A man has no children--it is only a
woman who has children--and the future is female, you
hear!--while we--we men--are childless. [frightened]
Oh god!

NANA: Listen, he's praying to God!

CAPTAIN: No--to you--to put me to sleep--I'm so tired--
so very...tired. Good night, my dear Nana--

NARRATOR: He struggles to raise himself.

CAPTAIN: --May you be blessed among--blessed among--

NARRATOR: Suddenly he falls--as if from a blow--
back into Nana's lap.

Laura rushes out and calls the Doctor.

The Doctor rushes in--trailed by Laura and the Pastor.

LAURA: Help us, Doctor, if it's not too late. Look, he's
stopped breathing.

NARRATOR: The Doctor feels his pulse.

DOCTOR: It's a stroke.

PASTOR: Is he dead?

DOCTOR: Not yet. He may wake up--I just don't know.

NANA: Ah, Pastor, with his last breath he prayed to God.

PASTOR: Sister, is that true?

LAURA [somberly]: It is.

DOCTOR [abruptly]: In that case--as I understand little
of the cause of his illness--my skill is at an end.
[sardonically] You try yours now, Pastor.

LAURA: Is that all you have to say, Doctor?

DOCTOR: That is all! I know no more. Let him speak who
knows more.

[Footsteps rushing in]

JULE: Mother...Mother!

LAURA: My own child...my own child!

PASTOR: Amen.

THE END