

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

3 By Mouth presents: The Father by August Strindberg.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

26 NANA: No he's in the kitchen.

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

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

31 PASTOR: What's the matter now.

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

34 PASTOR: Wasn't he in the same trouble the year before
35 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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

136 PASTOR [laughs]:

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

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

141 CAPTAIN: Hmmph.

142 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?

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

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

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

225 CAPTAIN: Angry, you mean.

226 PASTOR/CAPTAIN [chuckle]:

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

228 [Footsteps]

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

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

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

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

238 [Right Door opens/closes]

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

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

244 [Left Door opens/closes/footsteps]

245 LAURA: Would you be kind enough to--

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

248 LAURA: Am I disturbing you?

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

250 LAURA: Yes, housekeeping money.

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

252 LAURA: The bills?

253 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?
9.

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

327 LAURA: Nothing.

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

330 LAURA [after a short pause]: Yes.

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

333 LAURA: I understand.

334 [Footsteps--then Left Door opens/closes]

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

337 [Right Door open.]

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

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

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

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

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

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

354 DOCTOR: Indeed.

355 LAURA: Not altogether as one would wish.

356 DOCTOR: Really, you alarm me.

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

360 DOCTOR: Except one's doctor.

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

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

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

367 DOCTOR: It pertains to him then.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

388 LAURA: Whole boxes of books he never reads.

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

391 LAURA: You don't believe me?

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

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

396 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 suspicions?

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.

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

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

440 DOCTOR: Indeed?

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

445 DOCTOR: Can you see that with a microscope?

446 CAPTAIN: God no--with a spectroscope!

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

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

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

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

463 DOCTOR: It's up to you.

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

466 DOCTOR: You must decide that, Captain.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

484 DOCTOR: Good evening, Captain.

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

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

490 [Footsteps/Right Door opens/closes]

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

492 NANA: Now, Master, just listen--

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

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

499 CAPTAIN: Think of a father, Nana dear.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

522 NANA: The enemy!?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

547 CAPTAIN: Why how mightyly 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?

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

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

725 NANA: Dolphie, now listen to me!

726 CAPTAIN: OUT! ALL WOMEN--AT ONCE!

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

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

731 CAPTAIN: Don't expect me before midnight.

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

734 [Musical interlude.]

735

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

738 Laura and the Doctor are seated.

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

746 LAURA: But I never said that.

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

752 LAURA: A certificate of lunacy?

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

755 LAURA: No, I didn't know that.

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

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

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

770 LAURA: Haven't I!

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

772 [She rises from chair]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

832 JULE [in a low voice]: Nana, may I sit with you? It's so
833 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 anything 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 earthly 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--

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

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

873 CAPTAIN: What do you want?

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

875 CAPTAIN: Anything dangerous?

876 NANA: No--just a cold.

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

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

881 CAPTAIN: Are you sure it was him?

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

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

886 NANA: I can't see any difference.

887 CAPTAIN: Do you think Jule looks like me?

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

889 CAPTAIN: Did Johnson confess he was the father?

890 NANA: He was forced to!

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

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

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

899 DOCTOR: Thanks.

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

902 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 suspicions, 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 ...consoled 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?

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

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

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

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

996 CAPTAIN: Hardly--you were just afraid that someday I might
997 win more honor from that than from the service--and you
998 were particularly anxious that I not win such honors, for
999 then your own insignificance would be accentuated.
1000 In response, I've intercepted letters addressed to you.

1001 LAURA: That was a noble act.

1002 CAPTAIN: Yes, you have, as you might say, a high opinion
1003 of me. It appears from these letters that, for some
1004 time, you've been enlisting my old friends against me by
1005 spreading reports about my mental condition. And you've
1006 succeeded in your efforts--for now--not more than one
1007 person, from the Colonel to the cook--believes that I am
1008 sane. Now, these are the facts: my mind is sound, as you
1009 know, so that I can take care of my duties in the
1010 service as well my responsibilities as a father--my
1011 feelings are more or less under my control, as my will
1012 has not been completely undermined--but you have gnawed
1013 and nibbled at it so that it will soon slip the cogs,
1014 and then the whole mechanism will slip and go to hell.
1015 [Brief pause] I will not appeal to your feelings, for
1016 you have none--that is your strength so I will appeal to
1017 your interests.

1018 LAURA: Tell me.

1019 CAPTAIN: You've succeeded in arousing my suspicions to
1020 such an extent that my judgment's no longer clear--and
1021 my thoughts begin to wander. This is the approaching
1022 insanity you've been waiting for, which may come at any
1023 moment. So you are face to face with the question:
1024 whether it's more in your interest that I should be

1025 sane or insane. Consider: if I crack up, I shall lose
1026 the service, and where will you be then? If I die, my
1027 life insurance will fall to you --but if I take my own
1028 life, you will get nothing. Consequently--it's in your
1029 interest I'm neither a suicide nor am I incapacitated.

1030 LAURA: Is this a trap?

1031 CAPTAIN: Obviously. But it's up to you whether you'll
1032 run around it or stick your head in it.

1033 LAURA: You threaten to kill yourself--you won't do that!

1034 CAPTAIN: You sure? You think a man can live with nothing
1035 and no one to live for?

1036 LAURA: You surrender then?

1037 CAPTAIN: No--I offer peace.

1038 LAURA: The conditions?

1039 CAPTAIN: That I keep my reason. Free me from my
1040 suspicions and I'll give up the battle.

1041 LAURA: What suspicions?

1042 CAPTAIN: About Jule's parentage.

1043 LAURA: Are there any doubts about that?

1044 CAPTAIN: Yes--and you've awakened them.

1045 LAURA: Me?

1046 CAPTAIN: You've dropped them like henbane in my ears,
1047 and circumstances have strengthened them. Free me from
1048 doubt--tell me outright she's mine and I'll forgive you
1049 beforehand.

1050 LAURA: How can I acknowledge a sin I haven't committed?

1051 CAPTAIN: What does it matter when you know I won't
1052 divulge it. You think a man would spread around his own
1053 shame?

1054 LAURA: If I say it isn't true, you won't be convinced--
1055 but if I say it is, then you'll be convinced. You seem
1056 to hope it's true!

1057 CAPTAIN: Strangely enough--yes! It must be! Because the
1058 first conclusion can't be proved--but the last can be.

1059 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

1101 without care--and when you grew old, enjoy life again in
1102 your child. I have borne everything without complaint,
1103 because I thought myself the father of your child. This
1104 is the lowest kind of theft, the most brutal slavery
1105 I've had in seventeen years of penal servitude while
1106 being innocent. What can you give me in return for that?

1107 LAURA: You are quite mad.

1108 CAPTAIN: That's what you hope! I see now how you've
1109 worked to conceal your crime. I sympathized with you
1110 because I didn't understand. I thought I was helping
1111 you--to drive away disturbing thoughts--but I was
1112 lulling your conscience to sleep. Remember the night
1113 before last--Jule's birthday--it was three in the
1114 morning, and I was up reading--you shrieked, "Don't,
1115 don't!" as if someone were strangling you--I knocked on
1116 the wall--I didn't want to hear. Well, I've had my
1117 suspicions for a long time but I didn't want to hear.
1118 [Brief pause] Now what will you do?

1119 LAURA: What can I do? I swear by God and all I hold dear
1120 that you are Jule's father.

1121 CAPTAIN: What use is that when you've sworn a mother
1122 can and ought to commit any crime for her child? I
1123 beg you as a wounded man begs for a death blow to come
1124 clean. Don't you see I'm as helpless as a child? Forget
1125 that I'm a man--a soldier who can tame men and beasts
1126 with a word. I ask only for the compassion you'd give a
1127 sick man. I lay down my arms and beg you to have mercy
1128 on me.

1129 NARRATOR: Laura approaches him and puts her hand on his
1130 forehead.

1131 LAURA: What! You're crying!

1132 CAPTAIN: Yes--don't men cry? Don't we have eyes? Don't
1133 we have limbs, senses, thoughts, passions? Are we not
1134 fed with same food, hurt by the same weapons, warmed and
1135 cooled by the same summer and winter as a woman?
1136 Why shouldn't a man complain, a soldier weep? Is it
1137 unmanly? Why? Why?

1138 LAURA: Do you remember when I first came into your life?
1139 I was like a second mother. Your great strong body
1140 needed nerves--you were a giant child who'd come too
1141 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

1185 find ourselves in the bright moonlight among the ruins--
1186 that it's all been a dream--and that there's--
1187 no awakening.

1188 LAURA: You should've been a poet.

1189 CAPTAIN [after a pause]: Do you hate me?

1190 LAURA: Sometimes--when you're a man.

1191 CAPTAIN: Well if it's true that we're descended from
1192 monkeys, it must be from two separate species.

1193 LAURA: What do you mean?

1194 CAPTAIN: That one of us must lose.

1195 LAURA: Who?

1196 CAPTAIN: The weaker, of course.

1197 LAURA: And the stronger will be in the right?

1198 CAPTAIN: He has the power.

1199 LAURA: Then I'm in the right.

1200 CAPTAIN: You have the power then?

1201 LAURA: Yes, the legal power--to put you under control of
1202 a guardian.

1203 CAPTAIN: A guardian?

1204 LAURA: And then I shall educate my child without having
1205 to listen to your stupid notions.

1206 CAPTAIN: And who shall pay for the education when I am
1207 no longer here?

1208 LAURA: Your pension will pay for it.

1209 CAPTAIN [dismissively]: How can you have me put under a
1210 guardian?

1211 [She takes out a letter]

1212 LAURA: With this letter--a signed copy of which is in
1213 the hands of the Board of Lunacy.

1214 CAPTAIN: What letter?

1215 NARRATOR: She moves backwards towards the left door.

1216 LAURA: Yours! Your declaration to the doctor that you
1217 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.

1252 LAURA: Good. Wait outside while I answer the Colonel's
1253 letter. [Quick footsteps. Drawer open, paper grab, pencil
1254 scribble.]

1255 NANA: Listen. What in the world's he doing up there now?

1256 LAURA: Be quiet while I write.

1257 NANA [Half to herself]: Oh, Lord have mercy on us all!
1258 Where will this end!

1259 LAURA: Here, give this to Matts. And my mother must not
1260 know anything about this--do you hear?

1261 NANA: Yes, Mistress.

1262 NARRATOR: As Nana goes out, Laura opens several desk
1263 drawers and takes out papers.

1264 The Pastor enters. He takes a chair and sits near Laura
1265 by the desk.

1266 PASTOR: Good evening, sister. I've been away all day and
1267 only just got back. Terrible things have been happening
1268 here.

1269 LAURA: Yes, never have I gone through such a night and
1270 such a day.

1271 PASTOR: I see you're none the worse for it though.

1272 LAURA: No, God be praised--but think what might have
1273 happened!

1274 PASTOR: Tell me: how did it begin? I've heard so many
1275 different versions.

1276 LAURA: It began with his wild idea of not being Jule's
1277 father. And it ended with his throwing a lighted lamp in
1278 my face.

1279 PASTOR: But that's dreadful! So it is insanity. What's to
1280 be done now?

1281 LAURA: We must try to prevent further violence. The Doctor
1282 has sent out for a straightjacket--in the meantime, I've
1283 sent a message to the Colonel--and am now trying to
1284 straighten out the affairs of the household, which he's
1285 mishandled in a most disgraceful manner.

1286 PASTOR: This is absolutely deplorable--but I've always
1287 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

1324 innocent murder that the law cannot reach--an unconscious
1325 crime--[scoffs] unconscious! What an idea! Do you hear how
1326 he's moving up there? Take care! If that man gets loose
1327 he'll make short work of you.

1328 LAURA: You talk too much. You must have a bad conscience.
1329 Accuse me--if you dare.

1330 PASTOR: You know I can't.

1331 LAURA: You see! You can't--and therefore I'm innocent.
1332 You take care of your ward--and I'll take care of mine!
1333 [Right door opens/closes] Here's the Doctor. Good evening,
1334 Doctor. You at least will help me, won't you? But
1335 unfortunately there's not much that can be done. Do you
1336 hear how he's carrying on up there? Are you convinced now?

1337 DOCTOR: I am convinced an act of violence has been
1338 committed--but the question now is whether that act of
1339 violence can be considered an outbreak of passion--or of
1340 madness.

1341 PASTOR: Apart from the actual outbreak though--you must
1342 acknowledge he has "fixed ideas."

1343 DOCTOR: I think your ideas, Pastor, are much more fixed.

1344 PASTOR [irked]: Why my settled views about the highest
1345 things are--

1346 DOCTOR: We'll leave settled views out of this, shall we?
1347 [Brief pause] Madam, it rests with you to decide whether
1348 your husband is guilty to the extent of imprisonment and
1349 fine--or should be placed in an asylum! How do you class
1350 his behavior?

1351 LAURA: I can't answer that now.

1352 DOCTOR: That is to say you have no decided opinion as to
1353 what will be most advantageous to the interests of the
1354 family. What do you say, Pastor?

1355 PASTOR: It'll be a scandal in either case--it's not
1356 easy to say.

1357 LAURA: But if he's only sentenced to a fine, he'll be able
1358 to repeat the violence.

1359 DOCTOR: And if he's sent to prison he'll soon be
1360 out again. Therefore, we consider it most advantageous
1361 for all parties that he immediately be treated as insane!
1362 [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--

1398 NANA: No! Matts shan't touch him. He might hurt him.
1399 I'd rather do it myself--very, very gently. But Matts can
1400 wait outside and help me if necessary. He can do that.

1401 [Loud, continuous knocking on the Left Door]

1402 DOCTOR [whispers]: There he is! Now put the jacket under
1403 your shawl on the chair--and you must all go out--the
1404 Pastor and I will receive him--that door won't hold long!
1405 Now go!!

1406 NANA: The Lord help us!

1407 NARRATOR: Suddenly, the left door is broken down with
1408 such violence that the lock is broken and the chair is
1409 thrown into the middle of the room. The Captain enters
1410 with a pile of books under his arm, which he puts on the
1411 table.

1412 CAPTAIN: The whole thing is here, in every book. I wasn't
1413 out of my mind after all! Here it is in the Odyssey, book
1414 1, verse 215--Telemachus is speaking to Athene. "My mother
1415 maintains that he, Odysseus, is my father, but I myself
1416 know it not, for no man yet hath known his own origin."
1417 And here we have the prophet Ezekiel: "The fool saith--
1418 behold here is my father, but who can tell whose loins
1419 engendered him." That's quite clear! And what have we
1420 here? In the History of Russian Literature, Puschkin,
1421 Russia's greatest poet, died of torture from reports
1422 circulated about his wife's unfaithfulness rather than by
1423 a bullet in his breast from a duel. You see, I read my
1424 books. [Brief pause] Ah, Pastor, you're here? And the
1425 Doctor, of course. Have you heard what I answered when an
1426 English lady complained about Irishmen who used to throw
1427 lighted lamps in their wives' faces? "God, what women!"
1428 I cried. "Women," she gasped. "Yes, of course,"
1429 I answered. "When things go so far that a man who's loved
1430 and worshipped a woman, takes a lighted lamp and throws
1431 it in her face, then one may KNOW."

1432 PASTOR: Know what?

1433 CAPTAIN: Nothing. One never knows anything. One only
1434 believes. Isn't that true, Pastor? One believes and then
1435 one is saved! Yes, well I know that one can be damned by
1436 his faith. I know that well.

1437 DOCTOR: Captain!

1438 CAPTAIN: Silence! I won't listen to you repeating their
1439 female chatter, like a telephone! That's right--you know!
1440 Look here, Pastor--do you believe you're the father of
1441 your children? I remember you had a tutor in your house
1442 who had a handsome face--and the people gossiped--what
1443 about him?

1444 PASTOR [disappointedly intimate]: Captain--take care.

1445 CAPTAIN: Feel under your toupee--and tell me if there are
1446 not two bumps. By my soul, I believe he's gone pale! Ach!
1447 We're a lot of ridiculous dupes, we married men. Isn't
1448 that true, Doctor? How was your marriage bed? Didn't you
1449 have a lieutenant in the house, eh? Wait a moment and I'll
1450 make a guess-- his name was--

1451 NARRATOR: He whispers in the Doctor's ear.

1452 CAPTAIN: You see, he turns pale, too! Don't be upset--
1453 she's dead and buried--what's done can't be undone. I knew
1454 him well, by the way, and he's now--look at me, Doctor--
1455 No, straight in my eyes--a major in the cavalry! [to
1456 Pastor] By God, if he doesn't have horns, too!

1457 DOCTOR [tortured]: Captain, won't you talk about
1458 something else?

1459 CAPTAIN: He wants to talk of something else when I mention
1460 horns [laughs]

1461 PASTOR: Do you know, Captain, that you are insane?

1462 CAPTAIN: Yes, I know. If only I had the use of your
1463 illustrious brains for awhile I'd soon have you shut up!
1464 I'm mad, yes--but how did I become mad? That doesn't
1465 concern you, no--that doesn't concern anyone--you want to
1466 talk about something else!

1467 NARRATOR: He takes a framed photograph from the table.

1468 CAPTAIN: Good Lord, that's my child! Mine? How can I know?
1469 You know what we'd have to do to make sure? First, we'd
1470 have to marry--and then divorce--and then become lovers--
1471 and finally adopt a child. Then one could be sure. Isn't
1472 that right? But how can all that help me now? Now that
1473 you've taken my immortality from me-- what use is science
1474 now that I have nothing to live for--what can I do with
1475 it now I'm dishonored? I grafted my right arm, half my
1476 brain, half my marrow onto another's trunk--for I believed
1477 we'd knit ourselves together and grow into a more perfect
1478 tree--and then someone came with a knife and cut below

1479 the graft--and now I'm only half a tree. But the other
1480 half goes on growing, while I wither and die--for they
1481 were the best parts, the ones I gave away. Now I want to
1482 die. Do with me what you will, "gentlemen".

1483 NARRATOR: As the Captain sits and buries his head on his
1484 arms on the table, the Doctor whispers to the Pastor,
1485 and they go out. Soon after, Jule comes in.

1486 JULE: Are you ill, Father?

1487 CAPTAIN [dazed]: Me?

1488 JULE: Do you know what you've done? You threw the lamp at
1489 Mother.

1490 CAPTAIN: Yes.

1491 JULE: Just think if she'd been hurt.

1492 CAPTAIN: Would that have mattered?

1493 JULE: You're not my father when you talk like that.

1494 CAPTAIN: I'm not your father? How do you know that?
1495 Who told you that? Who's your father, then? Who?

1496 JULE: Not you at any rate.

1497 CAPTAIN: That I should live to have my child come and
1498 tell me to my face I'm not her father! Don't you know
1499 you disgrace your Mother when you say that? Don't you know
1500 it's her fault if this is so?

1501 JULE: Don't say anything bad about Mother--do you hear?

1502 CAPTAIN: No--you women stick together, every one of you,
1503 against me! You've always done that.

1504 JULE: Father!

1505 CAPTAIN: Don't use that word!

1506 JULE: Father, Father!

1507 NARRATOR: He suddenly draws her to him.

1508 CAPTAIN: Jule, my dear, dear child--you are my child!
1509 Those were only sickly thoughts that come on the wind like
1510 pestilence and fever. Look at me so that I can see my soul
1511 in your eyes! [Brief pause] But I see her soul, too!
1512 You have two souls--you love me with mine but hate me with
1513 hers. You must only love me! You must have one soul, or
1514 you'll never have peace--me neither. You must have

1515 only one mind, which is the child of my mind and one will,
1516 which is my will.

1517 JULE: But I don't want to--I want to be--myself.

1518 CAPTAIN: No--please--you see--I'm a cannibal--and I must
1519 eat you. Your mother wanted to eat me, but she couldn't.
1520 To eat or be eaten--that's the question. If I don't eat
1521 you, you will eat me--and you've already shown your
1522 teeth! But don't be frightened my dear child--I won't
1523 harm you.

1524 NARRATOR: He goes and takes a revolver from the wall.

1525 JULE: Help, Mother, help, he wants to kill me.

1526 [Right Door thrown open]

1527 NANA: Dolphie, what's happening!?

1528 [He opens the gun's chamber]

1529 CAPTAIN: Have you removed the cartridges?

1530 NANA: Yes--I put them away when I was tidying up--but
1531 sit down and be quiet and I'll get them out again!

1532 NARRATOR: She takes the Captain by the arm and gets him
1533 into a chair, into which he sinks feeble. Then she
1534 takes the straitjacket out from under her shawl and
1535 moves behind the chair.

1536 Jule slips out left.

1537 NANA: Dolphie dear, do you remember when you were my
1538 dear little boy and I tucked you in at night and used
1539 to sing: "God who holds his children dear" to you, and
1540 do you remember how I used to get up in the night and
1541 give you a drink--how I would light the candle and tell
1542 you stories when you had bad dreams and couldn't sleep?
1543 Do you remember?

1544 CAPTAIN: Go on talking, Nana, it soothes my head. Tell
1545 me more.

1546 NANA: Yes--but you must listen then. Do you remember
1547 when you took the big kitchen knife and wanted to cut
1548 out boats with it, and how I came in and had to get the
1549 knife away by fooling you? You were just a little child
1550 who didn't understand, so I had to fool you, for you
1551 didn't know it was for your own good. "Give me that

1552 snake," I said, "or it will bite you!" and then you let
1553 go of the knife?

1554 NARRATOR: She gently takes the revolver out of the
1555 Captain's hand.

1556 NANA: And then--when you had to be dressed and didn't
1557 want to, I had to sweet-talk you by saying you should
1558 have a coat of gold and be dressed like a prince--and
1559 then I took your little blouse that was made of green
1560 wool and held it in front of you and I said: "In with
1561 both arms," and then I said, "Now sit nice and still
1562 while I button it down the back"....

1563 NARRATOR: She puts the straightjacket on him.

1564 NANA: ...and then I said, "Get up now, and walk across
1565 the floor like a good boy so I can see how it fits."

1566 NARRATOR: She leads him to the sofa.

1567 NANA: And then I said, "Now you must go to bed."

1568 CAPTAIN: What did you say? How can I go to bed when I'm
1569 dressed--damn! What have you done to me? [Tries to get
1570 free.] Ah! you cunning devil of a woman! Who would have
1571 thought you had it in you. [Lies down on sofa.] Trapped,
1572 cut off, outmaneuvered--not even able to die--and by a
1573 woman.

1574 NANA: Forgive me, Dolphie--forgive me--but I had to
1575 keep you from killing your child.

1576 CAPTAIN [chuckles morbidly]: But you say life is hell--
1577 and death is the kingdom of heaven--and children belong
1578 in heaven.

1579 NANA: How would you know, dear, what comes after death?

1580 CAPTAIN: That's the only thing we do know--of life we
1581 know nothing! Oh, if I'd only known from the beginning.

1582 NANA: Oh, Dolphie, humble your hard heart and cry to God
1583 for mercy--it's not too late. It was not too late for
1584 the thief on the cross, when the Saviour said, "Today
1585 shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

1586 CAPTAIN [suddenly angry]: Are you wailing for a corpse
1587 already, you old crow?

1588 NARRATOR: Nana takes a hymnbook out of her pocket.

1589 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 suspicious 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

1630 there are only shadows that hide themselves in the
1631 bushes--and stick out their heads and grin--it's like
1632 fighting the air--or firing blank cartridges. [Brief
1633 pause] Ach, my skull! Put a pillow under my head and
1634 throw something over me. I'm cold--I'm terribly cold!

1635 NARRATOR: Laura takes her shawl and spreads it over him.
1636 Nana goes to get a pillow.

1637 CAPTAIN I feel your shawl against my mouth--it smells of
1638 vanilla, like your hair when you were young! When we
1639 walked through the birch woods, with the primroses and
1640 the thrushes! Glorious...glorious! Remember how
1641 beautiful life was? What happened? How did it come to
1642 be this way?

1643 LAURA: God's will, I suppose.

1644 CAPTAIN [with disgust]: God's will! God-dess more like
1645 it. [Sound of being suffocated] What's this feline
1646 lying on me. Shoo it away--shoo it away!

1647 NARRATOR: Nana brings him a pillow and takes away the
1648 shawl.

1649 CAPTAIN: Bring me my army coat! Throw that over me!

1650 NARRATOR: Nana gets the coat and places it over him.

1651 CAPTAIN: What've you given me for a pillow, Nana?
1652 It's so hard--and so cold--so very cold. Come and sit
1653 near me. There. Put my head on your knee. There, that's
1654 warm! Bend over me so that I can feel your breast!
1655 Oh, it's sweet to sleep against a woman's breast, a
1656 mother's, or a mistress's--but a mother's is sweetest.

1657 LAURA: Would you like to see your child?

1658 CAPTAIN: My child? A man has no children--it is only a
1659 woman who has children--and the future is female, you
1660 hear!--while we--we men--are childless. [frightened]
1661 Oh god!

1662 NANA: Listen, he's praying to God!

1663 CAPTAIN: No--to you--to put me to sleep--I'm so tired--
1664 so very...tired. Good night, my dear Nana--

1665 NARRATOR: He struggles to raise himself.

1666 CAPTAIN: --May you be blessed among--blessed among--

1667 NARRATOR: Suddenly he falls--as if from a blow--
1668 back into Nana's lap.

1669 Laura rushes out and calls the Doctor.

1670 The Doctor rushes in--trailed by Laura and the Pastor.

1671 LAURA: Help us, Doctor, if it's not too late. Look, he's
1672 stopped breathing.

1673 NARRATOR: The Doctor feels his pulse.

1674 DOCTOR: It's a stroke.

1675 PASTOR: Is he dead?

1676 DOCTOR: Not yet. He may wake up--I just don't know.

1677 NANA: Ah, Pastor, with his last breath he prayed to God.

1678 PASTOR: Sister, is that true?

1679 LAURA [somberly]: It is.

1680 DOCTOR [abruptly]: In that case--as I understand little
1681 of the cause of his illness--my skill is at an end.
1682 [sardonically] You try yours now, Pastor.

1683 LAURA: Is that all you have to say, Doctor?

1684 DOCTOR: That is all! I know no more. Let him speak who
1685 knows more.

1686 [Footsteps rushing in]

1687 JULE: Mother...Mother!

1688 LAURA: My own child...my own child!

1689 PASTOR: Amen.

1690

1691 THE END

1692