

O'Neill, Eugene



The Straw

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The Emperor Jones

The Straw, and 'Diff'rent

Three Plays by

Eugene O'Neill

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Characters

BILL CARMODY	
MARY	}
NORA	} <i>his children</i>
TOM	}
BILLY	}
DOCTOR GAYNOR	
FRED NICHOLLS	
EILEEN CARMODY,	<i>Bill's eldest child</i>
STEPHEN MURRAY	
MISS HOWARD,	<i>a nurse in training</i>
MISS GILPIN,	<i>superintendent of the Infirmary</i>
DOCTOR STANTON,	<i>of the Hill Farm Sanatorium</i>
DOCTOR SIMMS,	<i>his assistant</i>
MR. SLOAN	
PETERS,	<i>a patient</i>
MRS. TURNER,	<i>matron of the Sanatorium</i>
MISS BAILEY	}
MRS. ABNER	} <i>Patients</i>
FLYNN	}
OTHER PATIENTS OF THE SANATORIUM	
MRS. BRENNAN	

(The characters are named in the order in which they appear)

[Act One](#)

Scene One: The Kitchen of the Carmody Home—Evening.

Scene Two: The Reception Room of the Infirmary, Hill Farm Sanatorium—An Evening a Week Later.

[Act Two](#)

Scene One: Assembly Room of the Main Building at the Sanatorium—A Morning Four Months Later.

Scene Two: A Crossroads Near the Sanatorium—Midnight of the Same Day.

[Act Three](#)

An Isolation Room and Porch at the Sanatorium—An Afternoon Four Months Later.

Time—1910

The Straw

Act One

Act One: Scene One

The kitchen of the Carmody home on the outskirts of a manufacturing town in Connecticut. On the left, forward, the sink. Farther back, two windows looking out on the yard. In the left corner, rear, the icebox. Immediately to the right of it, in the rear wall, a window opening on the side porch. To the right of this, a china cupboard, and a door leading into the hall where the main front entrance to the house and the stairs to the floor above are situated. On the right, to the rear, a door opening on to the dining room. Further forward, the kitchen range with scuttle, wood box, etc. In the centre of the room, a table with a red and white cloth. Four cane-bottomed chairs are pushed under the table. In front of the stove, two battered wicker rocking chairs. The floor is partly covered by linoleum strips. The walls are papered a light cheerful colour. Several old framed picture-supplement prints hang from nails. Everything has a clean, neatly-kept appearance. The supper dishes are piled in the sink ready for washing. A saucepan of water simmers on the stove.

It is about eight o'clock in the evening of a bitter cold day in late February of the year 1912.

As the curtain rises, Bill Carmody is discovered sitting in a rocker by the stove, reading a newspaper and smoking a blackened clay pipe. He is a man of fifty, heavy-set and round-shouldered, with long muscular arms and swollen-veined, hairy hands. His face is bony and ponderous; his nose short and squat; his mouth large, thick-lipped and harsh; his complexion mottled—red, purple-streaked, and freckled; his hair, short and stubby with a bald spot on the crown. The expression of his small, blue eyes is one of selfish cunning. His voice is loud and hoarse. He wears a flannel shirt, open at the neck, criss-crossed by red braces; black, baggy trousers grey with dust; muddy brogues.

His youngest daughter, Mary, is sitting on a chair by the table, front, turning over the pages of a picture book. She is a delicate, dark-haired, blue-eyed, quiet little girl about eight years old.

CARMODY (*after watching the child's preoccupation for a moment, in a tone of half exasperated amusement*). Well, but you're the quiet one, surely! (*Mary looks up at him with a shy smile, her eyes still full of dreams.*) Glory be to God, I'd not know a soul was alive in the room, barrin' myself. What is it you're at, Mary, that there's not a word out of you?

MARY. I'm looking at the pictures.

CARMODY. It's the dead spit and image of your sister Eileen you are, with your nose always in a book; and you're like your mother, too, God rest her soul. (*He crosses himself with pious unction and Mary also does so.*) It's Nora and Tom has the high spirits in them like their father; and Billy, too,—if he is a lazy, shiftless devil—has the fightin' Carmody blood like me. You're a Cullen like your mother's people. They always was dreamin' their lives out. (*He lights his pipe and shakes his head with ponderous gravity.*) There's no good in too many books, I'll tell you. It's out rompin' and playin' with your brother and sister you ought to be at your age, not carin' a fig for books. (*With a glance at the clock.*) Is that auld fool of a doctor stayin' the night? If he had his wits about him he'd know in a jiffy 'tis only a cold has taken Eileen, and give her the medicine. Run out in the hall, Mary, and see if you hear him. He may have sneaked away by the front door.

MARY (*goes out into the hall, rear, and comes back*). He's upstairs. I heard him talking to Eileen.

CARMODY. Close the door, ye little devil! There's a freezin' draught comin' in. (*She does so and comes back to her chair. Carmody continues with a sneer.*) It's mad I am to be thinkin' he'd go without gettin' his money—the like of a doctor! (*Angrily.*) Rogues and thieves they are, the lot of them, robbin' the poor like us! I've no use for their drugs at all. They only keep you sick to pay more visits. I'd not have sent for this bucko if Eileen didn't scare me by faintin'.

MARY (*anxiously*). Is Eileen very sick, Papa?

CARMODY (*spitting—roughly*). If she is, it's her own fault entirely—weakenin' her health by readin' here in the house. This'll be a lesson for her, and for you, too. (*Irritably.*) Put down that book on the table and leave it be. I'll have no more

readin' in this house, or I'll take the strap to you!

MARY (*laying the book on the table*). It's only pictures.

CARMODY. No back talk! Pictures or not, it's all the same mopin' and lazin' in it. (*After a pause—morosely.*) It's the bad luck I've been havin' altogether this last year since your mother died. Who's to do the work and look after Nora and Tom and yourself, if Eileen is bad took and has to stay in her bed? I'll have to get Mrs. Brennan come look after the house. That means money, too, and where's it to come from? All that I've saved from slavin' and sweatin' in the sun with a gang of lazy Dagoes'll be up the spout in no time. (*Bitterly.*) What a fool a man is to be raisin' a raft of children and him not a millionaire! (*With lugubrious self-pity.*) Mary, dear, it's a black curse God put on me when he took your mother just when I needed her most. (*Mary commences to sob. Carmody starts and looks at her angrily.*) What are you sniffin' at?

MARY (*tearfully*). I was thinking—of Mamma.

CARMODY (*scornfully*). It's late you are with your tears, and her cold in her grave for a year. Stop it, I'm tellin' you! (*Mary gulps back her sobs.*)

(*There is a noise of childish laughter and screams from the street in front. The outside door is opened and slammed, footsteps pound along the hall. The door in the rear is pushed open, and Nora and Tom rush in breathlessly. Nora is a bright, vivacious, red-haired girl of eleven—pretty after an elfish, mischievous fashion—light-hearted and robust.*)

(*Tom resembles Nora in disposition and appearance. A healthy, good-humoured youngster with a shock of sandy hair. He is a year younger than Nora. They are followed into the room, a moment later, by their brother Billy, who is evidently loftily disgusted with their antics. Billy is a fourteen-year-old replica of his father, whom he imitates even to the hoarse, domineering tone of voice.*)

CARMODY (*grumpily*). Ah, here you are, the lot of you. Shut that door after you! What's the use in me spendin' money for coal if all you do is to let the cold night in the room itself?

NORA (*hopping over to him—teasingly*). Me and Tom had a race, Papa. I beat him. (*She sticks her tongue out at her younger brother.*) Slow poke!

TOM. You didn't beat me, neither!

NORA. I did, too!

TOM. You did not! You didn't play fair. You tripped me comin' up the steps. Brick-top! Cheater!

NORA (*flaring up*). You're a liar! You stumbled over your own big feet, clumsy bones! And I beat you fair Didn't I, Papa?

CARMODY (*with a grin*). You did, darlin', and fair, too. (*Tom slinks back to the chair in the rear of table, sulking. Carmody pats Nora's red hair with delighted pride.*) Sure it's you can beat the divil himself!

NORA (*sticks out her tongue again at Tom*). See? Liar! (*She goes and perches on the table near Mary, who is staring sadly in front of her.*)

CARMODY (*to Billy—irritably*). Did you get the plug for me I told you?

BILLY. Sure. (*He takes a plug of tobacco from his pocket and hands it to his father. Nora slides down off her perch and disappears, unnoticed, under the table.*)

CARMODY. It's a great wonder you didn't forget it—and me without a chew. (*He bites off a piece and tucks it into his cheek.*)

TOM (*suddenly clutching at his leg with a yell*). Ouch! Darn you! (*He kicks frantically at something under the table, but Nora scrambles out at the other end, grinning.*)

CARMODY (*angrily*). Shut your big mouth! What is the matter with you at all?

TOM (*indignantly*). She pinched me—hard as she could, too—and look at her laughin'!

NORA (*hopping on the table again*). Cry-baby! I owed you one.

TOM. I'll fix you. I'll tell Eileen, wait 'n' see!

NORA. Tattle-tale! I don't care. Eileen's sick.

TOM. That's why you dast do it. You dasn't if she was up. I'll get even, you bet!

CARMODY (*exasperated*). Shut up your noise! Go up to bed, the two of you, and no more talk, and you go with them, Mary.

NORA (*giving a quick tug at Mary's hair*). Come on, Mary. Wake up.

MARY. Ow! (*She begins to cry.*)

CARMODY (*raising his voice furiously*). Hush your noise, you soft, weak thing, you! It's nothin' but blubberin' you do be doin' all the time. (*He stands up threateningly.*) I'll have a moment's peace, I will! Off to bed with you before I get the strap! It's crazy mad you all get the moment Eileen's away from you. Go on, now! (*They scurry out of the rear door.*) And be quiet or I'll be up to you!

NORA (*sticks her head back in the door*). Can I say good-night to Eileen, Papa?

CARMODY. No. The doctor's with her yet. (*Then he adds hastily.*) Yes, go in to her, Nora. It'll drive himself out of the house maybe, bad cess to him, and him stayin' half the night. (*Nora waits to hear no more but darts back, shutting the door behind her. Billy takes the chair in front of the table. Carmody sits down again with a groan.*) The rheumatics are in my leg again. (*Shakes his head.*) If Eileen's in bed long those brats'll have the house down.

BILLY. Eileen ain't sick very bad, is she?

CARMODY (*easily*). It's a cold only she has. (*Then mournfully.*) Your poor mother died of the same. (*Billy looks awed.*) Ara, well, it's God's will, I suppose, but where the money'll come from, I dunno. (*With a disparaging glance at his son.*) They'll not be raisin' your wages soon, I'll be bound.

BILLY (*surlily*). Naw. The old boss never gives no one a raise, 'less he has to. He's a tight-wad for fair.

CARMODY (*still scanning him with contempt*). Five dollars a week—for a strappin' lad the like of you! It's shamed you should be to own up to it. A divil of a lot of good it was for me to go against Eileen's wish and let you leave off your schoolin' this year like you wanted, thinkin' the money you'd earn at work would help with the house.

BILLY. Aw, goin' to school didn't do me no good. The teachers was all down on me. I couldn't learn nothin' there.

CARMODY (*disgustedly*). Nor any other place, I'm thinkin', you're that thick, (*There is a noise from the stairs in the hall.*) Whisht! It's the doctor comin' down from Eileen. What'll he say, I wonder? (*The door in the rear is opened and Doctor Gaynor enters. He is a stout, bald, middle-aged man, forceful of speech, who in the case of patients of the Carmodys' class dictates rather than advises. Carmody adopts a whining tone.*) Aw, Doctor, and how's Eileen now? Have you got her cured of the weakness?

GAYNOR (*does not answer this but comes forward into the room holding out two slips of paper—dictatorially*). Here are two prescriptions that'll have to be filled immediately.

CARMODY (*frowning*). You take them, Billy, and run round to the drug store. (*Gaynor hands them to Billy.*)

BILLY. Give me the money, then.

CARMODY (*reaches down into his trousers pocket with a sigh*). How much will they come to, Doctor?

GAYNOR. About a dollar, I guess.

CARMODY (*protestingly*). A dollar! Sure it's expensive medicines you're givin' her for a bit of a cold. (*He meets the doctor's cold glance of contempt and he wilts—grumblingly, as he peels a dollar bill off a small roll and gives it to Billy.*)

Bring back the change—if there is any. And none of your tricks, for I'll stop at the drug store myself tomorrow and ask the man how much it was.

BILLY. Aw, what do you think I am? (*He takes the money and goes out.*)

CARMODY (*grudgingly*). Take a chair, Doctor, and tell me what's wrong with Eileen.

GAYNOR (*seating himself by the table—gravely*). Your daughter is very seriously ill.

CARMODY (*irritably*). Aw, Doctor, didn't I know you'd be sayin' that, anyway!

GAYNOR (*ignoring this remark—coldly*). Your daughter has tuberculosis of the lungs.

CARMODY (*with puzzled awe*). Too-ber-c'losis?

GAYNOR. Consumption, if that makes it plainer to you.

CARMODY (*with dazed terror—after a pause*). Consumption? Eileen? (*With sudden anger.*) What lie is it you're tellin' me?

GAYNOR (*icily*). Look here, Carmody! I'm not here to stand for your insults!

CARMODY (*bewilderingly*). Don't be angry, now, at what I said. Sure I'm out of my wits entirely. Eileen to have the consumption! Ah, Doctor, sure you must be mistaken!

GAYNOR. There's no chance for a mistake, I'm sorry to say. Her right lung is badly affected.

CARMODY (*desperately*). It's a bad cold only, maybe.

GAYNOR (*curtly*). Don't talk nonsense. (*Carmody groans. Gaynor continues authoritatively.*) She will have to go to a sanatorium at once. She ought to have been sent to one months ago. The girl's been keeping up on her nerve when she should have been in bed, and it's given the disease a chance to develop. (*Casts a look of indignant scorn at Carmody, who is sitting staring at the floor with an expression of angry stupor on his face.*) It's a wonder to me you didn't see the condition she was in and force her to take care of herself. Why, the girl's nothing but skin and bone!

CARMODY (*with vague fury*). God blast it!

GAYNOR. No, your kind never realises things till the crash comes—usually when it's too late. She kept on doing her work, I suppose—taking care of her brothers and sisters, washing, cooking, sweeping, looking after your comfort—worn out—when she should have been in bed—and—— (*He gets to his feet with a harsh laugh.*) But what's the use of talking? The damage is done. We've got to set to work to repair it at once. I'll write to-night to Dr. Stanton of the Hill Farm Sanatorium and find out if he has a vacancy. And if luck is with us we can send her there at once. The sooner the better.

CARMODY (*his face growing red with rage*). Is it sendin' Eileen away to a hospital you'd be? (*Exploding.*) Then you'll not! You'll get that notion out of your head damn quick. It's all nonsense you're stuffin' me with, and lies, makin' things out to be the worst in the world. I'll not believe a word of Eileen having the consumption at all. It's doctors' notions to be always lookin' for a sickness that'd kill you. She'll not move a step out of here, and I say so, and I'm her father!

GAYNOR (*who has been staring at him with contempt—coldly angry*). You refuse to let your daughter go to a sanatorium?

CARMODY. I do.

GAYNOR (*threateningly*). Then I'll have to report her case to the Society for the Prevention of Tuberculosis of this county, and tell them of your refusal to help her.

CARMODY (*wavering a bit*). Report all you like, and be damned to you!

GAYNOR (*ignoring the interruption—impressively*). A majority of the most influential men of this city are behind the Society. Do you know that? (*Grimly.*) We'll find a way to move you, Carmody, if you try to be stubborn.

CARMODY (*thoroughly frightened, but still protesting*). Ara, Doctor, you don't see the way of it at all. If Eileen goes to the hospital, who's to be takin' care of the others, and mindin' the house when I'm off to work?

GAYNOR. You can easily hire some woman.

CARMODY (*at once furious again*). Hire? D'you think I'm a millionaire itself?

GAYNOR (*contemptuously*). That's where the shoe pinches, eh? (*In a rage.*) I'm not going to waste any more words on you, Carmody, but I'm damn well going to see this thing through! You might as well give in first as last.

CARMODY (*wailing*). But where's the money comin' from?

GAYNOR (*brutally*). That's your concern. Don't lie about your poverty. You've a steady well-paid job, and plenty of money to throw away on drunken spree, I'll bet. The weekly fee at the Hill Farm is only seven dollars. You can easily afford that—the price of a few rounds of drinks.

CARMODY. Seven dollars! And I'll have to pay a woman to come in—and the four of the children eatin' their heads off! Glory be to God, I'll not have a penny saved for me old age—and then it's the poor-house!

GAYNOR (*curtly*). Don't talk nonsense!

CARMODY. Ah, doctor, it's the truth I'm tellin' you!

GAYNOR. Well, perhaps I can get the Society to pay half for your daughter—if you're really as hard up as you pretend. They're willing to do that where it seems necessary.

CARMODY (*brightening*). Ah, Doctor, thank you.

GAYNOR (*abruptly*). Then it's all settled?

CARMODY (*grudgingly—trying to make the best of it*). I'll do my best for Eileen, if it's needful—and you'll not be tellin' them people about it at all, Doctor?

GAYNOR. Not unless you force me to.

CARMODY. And they'll pay the half, surely?

GAYNOR. I'll see what I can do—for your daughter's sake, not yours, understand!

CARMODY. God bless you, Doctor! (*Grumblingly.*) It's the whole of it they ought to be payin', I'm thinkin', and them with bags of money. 'Tis them builds the hospitals and why should they be wantin' the poor like me to support them?

GAYNOR (*disgustedly*). Bah! (*Abruptly.*) I'll telephone to Doctor Stanton tomorrow morning. Then I'll know something definite when I come to see your daughter in the afternoon.

CARMODY (*darkly*). You'll be comin' again tomorrow? (*Half to himself.*) Leave it to the likes of you to be drainin' a man dry.

(*Gaynor has gone out to the hall in rear and does not hear this last remark. There is a loud knock from the outside door. The Doctor comes back into the room carrying his hat and overcoat.*)

GAYNOR. There's someone knocking.

CARMODY. Who'll it be? Ah, it's Fred Nicholls, maybe. (*In a low voice to Gaynor who has started to put on his overcoat.*) Eileen's young man, Doctor, that she's engaged to marry, as you might say.

GAYNOR (*thoughtfully*). H'mm—yes—she spoke of him.

(*As another knock sounds Carmody hurries to the rear. Gaynor, after a moments indecision, takes off his overcoat again and sits down. A moment later Carmody re-enters, followed by Fred Nicholls, who has left his overcoat and hat in the hallway. Nicholls is a young fellow of twenty-three, stockily built, fair-haired, handsome in a commonplace, conventional mould. His manner is obviously an attempt at suave gentility; he has an easy, taking smile and a ready laugh, but*

there is a petty, calculating expression in his small, observing, blue eyes. His well-fitting, ready-made clothes are carefully pressed. His whole get-up suggests an attitude of man-about-small-town complacency.)

CARMODY (*as they enter*). I had a mind to phone to your house, but I wasn't wishful to disturb you, knowin' you'd be comin' to call to-night.

NICHOLLS (*with disappointed concern*). It's nothing serious, I hope.

CARMODY (*grumblingly*). Ah, who knows? Here's the doctor. You've not met him?

NICHOLLS (*politely, looking at Gaynor, who inclines his head stiffly*). I haven't had the pleasure. Of course, I've heard

CARMODY. It's Doctor Gaynor. This is Fred Nicholls, Doctor. (*The two men shake hands with conventional greetings.*) Sit down, Fred, that's a good lad, and be talkin' to the Doctor a moment while I go upstairs and see how is Eileen. She's all alone up there.

NICHOLLS. Certainly, Mr. Carmody. Go ahead—and tell her how sorry I am to learn she's under the weather.

CARMODY. I will so. (*He goes out.*)

GAYNOR (*after a pause in which he is studying Nicholls*). Do you happen to be any relative to the Albert Nicholls who is superintendent over at the Downs Manufacturing Company?

NICHOLLS (*smiling*). He's sort of a near relative—my father.

GAYNOR. Ah, yes?

NICHOLLS (*with satisfaction*). I work for the Downs Company myself—bookkeeper——

GAYNOR. Miss Carmody—the sick girl upstairs—she had a position there also, didn't she, before her mother died?

NICHOLLS. Yes. She had a job as stenographer for a time. When she graduated from the business college course—I was already working at the Downs—and through my father's influence—you understand. (*Gaynor nods curtly.*) She was getting on finely, too, and liked the work. It's too bad—her mother's death, I mean—forcing her to give it up and come home to take care of those kids.

GAYNOR. It's a damn shame. That's the main cause of her breakdown.

NICHOLLS (*frowning*). I've noticed she's been looking badly lately. So that's the trouble? Well, it's all her father's fault—and her own, too, because whenever I raised a kick about his making a slave of her, she always defended him. (*With a quick glance at the Doctor—in a confidential tone.*) Between us, Carmody's as selfish as they make 'em, if you want my opinion.

GAYNOR (*with a growl*). He's a hog on two legs.

NICHOLLS (*with a gratified smile*). You bet! (*With a patronising air.*) I hope to get Eileen away from all this as soon as—things pick up a little. (*Making haste to explain his connection with the dubious household.*) Eileen and I have gone around together for years—went to Grammar and High School together—in different classes, of course. She's really a corker—very different from the rest of the family you've seen—like her mother. She's really educated and knows a lot—used to carry off all the prizes at school. My folks like her awfully well. Of course, they'd never stand for—him.

GAYNOR. You'll excuse my curiosity—I've a good reason for it—but you and Miss Carmody are engaged, aren't you? Carmody said you were.

NICHOLLS (*embarrassed*). Why, yes, in a way—but nothing definite—no official announcement or anything of that kind. It's all in the future. We have to wait, you know. (*With a sentimental smile.*) We've been sort of engaged for years, you might say. It's always been sort of understood between us. (*He laughs awkwardly.*)

GAYNOR (*gravely*). Then I can be frank with you. I'd like to be because I may need your help. I don't put much faith in any promise Carmody makes. Besides, you're bound to know anyway. She'd tell you.

NICHOLLS (*a look of apprehension coming over his face*). Is it—about her sickness?

GAYNOR. Yes.

NICHOLLS. Then—it's serious?

GAYNOR. It's pulmonary tuberculosis—consumption.

NICHOLLS (*stunned*). Consumption? Good heavens! (*After a dazed pause—lamely.*) Are you sure, Doctor?

GAYNOR. Positive. (*Nicholls stares at him with vaguely frightened eyes.*) It's had a good start—thanks to her father's blind selfishness—but let's hope that can be overcome. The important thing is to ship her off to a sanatorium immediately. Carmody wouldn't hear of it at first. However, I managed to bully him into consenting; but I don't trust his word. That's where you can be of help. It's up to you to convince him that it's imperative she be sent away at once—for the safety of those around her as well as her own.

NICHOLLS (*confusedly*). I'll do my best, Doctor. (*As if he couldn't yet believe his ears—shuddering!*) Good heavens! She never said a word about—being so ill. She's had a cold. But, Doctor—do you think this sanatorium will——?

GAYNOR (*with hearty hopefulness*). Most certainly. She has every chance. The Hill Farm has a really surprising record of arrested cases—as good as any place in the country. Of course, she'll never be able to live as carelessly as before, even after the most favourable results. She'll have to take care of herself. (*Apologetically.*) I'm telling you all this as being the one most intimately concerned. I don't count Carmody. You are the one who will have to assume responsibility for her welfare when she returns to everyday life.

NICHOLLS (*answering as if he were merely talking to screen the thoughts in his mind*). Yes—certainly. Where is this sanatorium, Doctor—very far away?

GAYNOR. Half an hour by train to the town. The sanatorium is two miles out on the hills—a nice drive. You'll be able to see her whenever you've a day off. It's a pleasant trip.

NICHOLLS (*a look of horrified realisation has been creeping into his eyes*). You said—Eileen ought to be sent away—for the sake of those around her——?

GAYNOR. That's obvious. T.B. is extremely contagious, you must know that. Yet I'll bet she's been fondling and kissing those brothers and sisters of hers regardless. (*Nicholls fidgets uneasily on his chair.*) And look at this house sealed tight against the fresh air! Not a window open an inch! (*Fuming.*) That's what we're up against in the fight with T.B.—a total ignorance of the commonest methods of prevention——

NICHOLLS (*his eyes shiftily avoiding the doctor's face*). Then the kids might have gotten it—by kissing Eileen?

GAYNOR. It stands to reason that's a common means of communication.

NICHOLLS (*very much shaken*). Yes. I suppose it must be. But that's terrible, isn't it? (*With sudden volubility, evidently extremely anxious to wind up this conversation and conceal his thoughts from Gaynor.*) I'll promise you, Doctor, I'll tell Carmody straight what's what. He'll pay attention to me or I'll know the reason why.

GAYNOR (*getting to his feet and picking up his overcoat*). Good boy! You've probably saved me a disagreeable squabble. I won't wait for Carmody. The sight of him makes me lose my temper. Tell him I'll be back tomorrow with definite information about the sanatorium.

NICHOLLS (*helping him on with his overcoat, anxious to have him go*). All right, Doctor.

GAYNOR (*puts on his hat*). And do your best to cheer the patient up when you talk to her. Give her confidence in her ability to get well. That's half the battle. And she'll believe it, coming from you.

NICHOLLS (*hastily*). Yes, yes, I'll do all I can.

GAYNOR (*turns to the door and shakes Nicholls' hand sympathetically*). And don't take it to heart too much yourself. There's every hope, remember that. In six months she'll come back to you her old self again.

NICHOLLS (*nervously*). It's hard on a fellow—so suddenly—but I'll remember—and—— (*Abruptly*). Good night,

Doctor.

GAYNOR. Good night.

(He goes out. The outer door is heard shutting behind him. Nicholls closes the door, rear, and comes back and sits in the chair in front of table. He rests his chin on his hands and stares before him, a look of desperate, frightened calculation coming into his eyes. Carmody is heard clumping heavily down the stairs. A moment later he enters. His expression is glum and irritated.)

CARMODY *(coming forward to his chair by the stove)*. Has he gone away?

NICHOLLS *(turning on him with a look of repulsion)*. Yes. He told me to tell you he'd be back tomorrow with definite information—about the sanatorium business.

CARMODY *(darkly)*. Oho, he did, did he? Maybe I'll surprise him. I'm thinkin' it's lyin' he is about Eileen's sickness, and her lookin' as fresh as a daisy with the high colour in her cheeks when I saw her now.

NICHOLLS *(impatiently)*. That's silly, Mr. Carmody. Gaynor knows his business. *(After a moment's hesitation.)* He told me all about Eileen's sickness.

CARMODY *(resentfully)*. Did he now, the auld monkey! Small thanks to him to be tellin' our secrets to the town.

NICHOLLS *(exasperated)*. I didn't want to learn your affairs. He only told me because you'd said I and Eileen were engaged. You're the one who was telling—secrets.

CARMODY *(irritated)*. Ara, don't be talkin'! That's no secret at all with the whole town watchin' Eileen and you spoonin' together from the time you was kids.

NICHOLLS *(vindictively)*. Well, the whole town is liable to find out—— *(He checks himself.)*

CARMODY *(too absorbed in his own troubles to notice this threat)*. To hell with the town and all in it! I've troubles enough of my own. So he told you he'd send Eileen away to the hospital? I've half a mind not to let him—and let him try to make me! *(With a frown.)* But Eileen herself says she's wantin' to go, now. *(Angrily.)* It's all that devil's notion he put in her head that the children'd be catchin' her sickness that makes her willin' to go.

NICHOLLS *(with a superior air)*. From what he told me, I should say it was the only thing for Eileen to do if she wants to get well quickly. *(Spitefully.)* And I'd certainly not go against Gaynor, if I was you. He told me he'd make it hot for you if you did. He will, too, you can bet on that. He's that kind.

CARMODY *(worriedly)*. He's a devil. But what can he do—him and his Sasiety? I'm her father.

NICHOLLS *(seeing Carmody's uneasiness, with revengeful satisfaction)*. Oh, he'll do what he says, don't worry! You'll make a mistake if you think he's bluffing. It'd probably get in all the papers about you refusing. Every one would be down on you. *(As a last jab—spitefully.)* You might even lose your job over it, people would be so sore.

CARMODY *(jumping to his feet)*. Ah, devil take him! Let him send her where he wants, then. I'll not be sayin' a word.

NICHOLLS *(as an afterthought)*. And, honestly, Mr. Carmody, I don't see how you can object for a second—after he's told you it's absolutely necessary for Eileen to go away. *(Seeing Carmody's shaken condition, he finishes boldly.)* You've some feeling for your own daughter, haven't you? You'd be a fine father if you hadn't!

CARMODY *(apprehensively)*. Whisht! She might hear you. But you're right. Let her do what she's wishful to, and get well soon.

NICHOLLS *(complacently—feeling his duty in the matter well done)*. That's the right spirit. I knew you'd see it that way. And you and I'll do all we can to help her. *(He gets to his feet.)* Well, I guess I'll have to go. Tell Eileen——

CARMODY. You're not goin'? Sure, Eileen is puttin' on her clothes to come down and have a look at you. She'll be here in a jiffy. Sit down now, and wait for her.

NICHOLLS *(suddenly panic-stricken by the prospect of facing her)*. No—no—I can't stay—I only came for a moment——

I've got an appointment—honestly. Besides, it isn't right for her to be up. She's too weak. It'll make her worse. You should have told her.

(The door in the rear is opened and Eileen enters. She is just over eighteen. Her wavy mass of dark hair is parted in the middle and combed low on her forehead, covering her ears, to a knot at the back of her head. The oval of her face is spoiled by a long, rather heavy Irish jaw contrasting with the delicacy of her other features. Her eyes are large and blue, confident in their compelling candour and sweetness; her lips, full and red, half-open over strong, even teeth, droop at the corners into an expression of wistful sadness; her clear complexion is unnaturally striking in its contrasting colours, rose and white; her figure is slight and undeveloped. She wears a plain black dress with a bit of white at the neck and wrists. She stands looking appealingly at Nicholls, who avoids her glance. Her eyes have a startled, stunned expression as if the doctor's verdict were still in her ears.)

EILEEN *(faintly—forcing a smile)*. Good evening, Fred. *(Her eyes search his face anxiously.)*

NICHOLLS *(confusedly)*. Hello, Eileen. I'm so sorry to— *(Clumsily trying to cover up his confusion, he goes over and leads her to a chair.)* You must sit down. You've got to take care of yourself. You never ought to have got up to-night.

EILEEN *(sits down)*. I wanted to talk to you. *(She raises her face with a pitiful smile. Nicholls hurriedly moves back to his own chair.)*

NICHOLLS *(almost brusquely)*. I could have talked to you from the hall. You're silly to take chances just now.

(Eileen's eyes show her hurt at his tone.)

CARMODY *(seeing his chance—hastily)*. You'll be stayin' a while now, Fred? I'll take a walk down the road. I'm needin' a drink to clear my wits. *(He goes to the door in rear.)*

EILEEN *(reproachfully)*. You won't be long, Father? And please don't—you know.

CARMODY *(exasperated)*. Sure who wouldn't get drunk with all the sorrows of the world piled on him? *(He stamps out. A moment later the outside door bangs behind him. Eileen sighs. Nicholls walks up and down with his eyes on the floor.)*

NICHOLLS *(furious at Carmody for having left him in this situation)*. Honestly, Eileen, your father is the limit. I don't see how you stand for him. He's the most selfish—

EILEEN *(gently)*. Sssh! You mustn't, Fred. He's not to blame. He just doesn't understand. *(Nicholls snorts disdainfully.)* Don't! Let's not talk about him now. We won't have many more evenings together for a long, long time. Did father or the Doctor tell you— *(She falters.)*

NICHOLLS *(not looking at her—glumly)*. Everything there was to tell, I guess.

EILEEN *(hastening to comfort him)*. You mustn't worry, Fred. Please don't! It'd make it so much worse for me if I thought you did. I'll be all right. I'll do exactly what they tell me, and in a few months I'll be back so fat and healthy you won't know me.

NICHOLLS *(lamely)*. Oh, there's no doubt of that. No one's worrying about your not getting well quick.

EILEEN. It won't be long. We can write often, and it isn't far away. You can come out and see me every Sunday—if you want to.

NICHOLLS *(hastily)*. Of course I will!

EILEEN *(looking at his face searchingly)*. Why do you act so funny? Why don't you sit down—here, by me? Don't you want to?

NICHOLLS *(drawing up a chair by hers—flushing guiltily)*. I—I'm all flustered, Eileen. I don't know what I'm doing.

EILEEN (*putting her hand on his knee*). Poor Fred! I'm so sorry I have to go. I didn't want to at first. I knew how hard it would be on father and the kids—especially little Mary. (*Her voice trembles a bit.*) And then the doctor said if I stayed I'd be putting them all in danger. He even ordered me not to kiss them any more. (*She bites her lip to restrain a sob—then coughs, a soft, husky cough. Nicholls shrinks away from her to the edge of his chair, his eyes shifting nervously with fright. Eileen continues gently.*) So I've got to go and get well, don't you see?

NICHOLLS (*wetting his dry lips*). Yes—it's better.

EILEEN (*sadly*). I'll miss the kids so much. Taking care of them has meant so much to me since mother died. (*With a half-sob she suddenly throws her arms about his neck and hides her face on his shoulder. He shudders and fights against an impulse to push her away.*) But I'll miss you most of all, Fred. (*She lifts her lips towards his, expecting a kiss. He seems about to kiss her—then averts his face with a shrinking movement, pretending he hasn't seen. Eileen's eyes grow wide with horror. She throws herself back into her chair, staring accusingly at Nicholls. She speaks chokingly.*) Fred! Why—why didn't you kiss—what is it? Are you—afraid? (*With a moaning sound.*) Oooh!

NICHOLLS (*goaded by this accusation into a display of manhood, seizes her fiercely by the arms*). No! What—what d'you mean? (*He tries to kiss her, but she hides her face.*)

EILEEN (*in a muffled voice of hysterical self-accusation, pushing his head away*). No, no, you mustn't! I was wrong. The doctor told you not to, didn't he? Please don't, Fred! It would be awful if anything happened to you—through me. (*Nicholls gives up his attempts, recalled to caution by her words. She raises her face and tries to force a smile through her tears.*) But you can kiss me on the forehead, Fred. That can't do any harm. (*His face crimson, he does so. She laughs hysterically.*) It seems so silly—being kissed that way—by you. (*She gulps back a sob and continued to attempt to joke.*) I'll have to get used to it, won't I?

The Curtain Falls

Act One: Scene Two.

The reception room of the Infirmary, a large, high-ceilinged room painted white, with oiled, hard wood floor. In the left wall, forward, a row of four windows. Farther back, the main entrance from the drive, and another window. In the rear wall left, a glass partition looking out on the sleeping porch. A row of white beds, with the faces of patients barely peeping out from under piles of heavy bedclothes, can be seen. To the right of this partition, a bookcase, and a door leading to the hall past the patients' rooms. Farther right, another door opening on the examining room. In the right wall, rear, a door to the office. Farther forward, a row of windows. In front of the windows, a long dining-table with chairs. On the left of the table, towards the centre of the room, a chimney with two open fireplaces, facing left and right. Several wicker armchairs are placed around the fireplace on the left in which a cheerful wood fire is crackling. To the left of centre, a round reading and writing table with a green-shaded electric lamp. Other electric lights are in brackets around the walls. Easy chairs stand near the table, which is stacked with magazines. Rocking chairs are placed here and there about the room, near the windows, etc. A gramophone stands near the left wall, forward.

It is nearing eight o'clock of a cold evening about a week later.

At the rise of the curtain Stephen Murray is discovered sitting in a chair in front of the fireplace, left. Murray is thirty years old—a tall, slender, rather unusual-looking fellow with a pale face, sunken under high cheek bones, lined about the eyes and mouth, jaded and worn for one still so young. His intelligent, large hazel eyes have a tired, dispirited expression in repose, but can quicken instantly with a concealed mechanism of mocking, careless humour whenever his inner privacy is threatened. His large mouth aids this process of protection by a quick change from its set apathy to a cheerful grin of cynical good nature. He gives off the impression of being somehow dissatisfied with himself, but not yet embittered enough by it to take it out on others. His manner, as revealed by his speech—nervous, inquisitive, alert—seems more an acquired quality than any part of his real nature. He stoops a trifle, giving him a slightly round-shouldered appearance. He is dressed in a shabby dark

suit, baggy at the knees. He is staring into the fire, dreaming, an open book lying unheeded on the arm of his chair. The gramophone is whining out the last strains of Dvorak's Humoresque. In the doorway to the office, Miss Gilpin stands talking to Miss Howard. The former is a slight, middle-aged woman with black hair, and a strong, intelligent face, its expression of resolute efficiency softened and made kindly by her warm, sympathetic grey eyes. Miss Howard is tall, slender and blonde—decidedly pretty and provokingly conscious of it, yet with a certain air of seriousness underlying her apparent frivolity. She is twenty years old. The elder woman is dressed in the all-white of a full-fledged nurse. Miss Howard wears the grey-blue uniform of one still in training. The record finishes. Murray sighs with relief, but makes no move to get up and stop the grinding needle. Miss Howard hurries across to the machine. Miss Gilpin goes back into the office.

MISS HOWARD (*takes off the record, glancing at Murray with amused vexation*). It's a wonder you wouldn't stop this machine grinding itself to bits, Mr. Murray.

MURRAY (*with a smile*). I was hoping the darn thing would bust. (Miss Howard *sniffs*. Murray *grins at her teasingly*.) It keeps you from talking to me. That's the real music.

MISS HOWARD (*comes over to his chair laughing*). It's easy to see you've got Irish in you. Do you know what I think? I think you're a natural born kidder. All newspaper reporters are like that, I've heard.

MURRAY. You wrong me terribly. (*Then frowning*.) And it isn't charitable to remind me of my job. I hoped to forget all about it up here.

MISS HOWARD (*surprised*). I think it's great to be able to write. I wish I could. You ought to be proud of it.

MURRAY (*glumly*). I'm not. You can't call it writing—not what I did—small town stuff. (*Changing the subject*.) But I wanted to ask you something. Do you know when I'm to be moved away to the huts?

MISS HOWARD. In a few days, I guess. Don't be impatient. (Murray *grunts and moves nervously on his chair*.) What's the matter? Don't you like us here at the Sanatorium?

MURRAY (*smiling*). Oh—you—yes! (*Then seriously*.) I don't care for the atmosphere, though. (*He waves his hand towards the partition looking out on the porch*.) All those people in bed out there on the porch seem so sick. It's depressing. I can't do anything for them—and—it makes me feel so helpless.

MISS HOWARD. Well, it's the rules, you know. All the patients have to come here first until Doctor Stanton finds out whether they're well enough to be sent out to the huts and cottages. And remember you're a patient just like the ones in bed out there—even if you are up and about.

MURRAY. I know it. But I don't feel as I were—really sick like them.

MISS HOWARD (*wisely*). None of them do, either.

MURRAY (*after a moment's reflection—cynically*). Yes, I suppose it's that pipe dream that keeps us all going, eh?

MISS HOWARD. Well, you ought to be thankful. You're very lucky, if you knew it. (*Lowering her voice*.) Shall I tell you a secret? I've seen your chart and you've no cause to worry. Doctor Stanton joked about it. He said you were too uninteresting—there was so little the matter with you.

MURRAY (*pleased, but pretending indifference*). Humph! He's original in that opinion.

MISS HOWARD. I know it's hard your being the only one up the week since you've been here, with no one to talk to; but there's another patient due to-day. Maybe she'll be well enough to be around with you. (*With a quick glance at her wrist watch*.) She can't be coming unless she got in on the last train.

MURRAY (*interestedly*). It's a she, eh?

MISS HOWARD. Yes.

MURRAY (*grinning provokingly*). Young?

MISS HOWARD. Eighteen, I believe. (*Seeing his grin—with feigned pique.*) I suppose you'll be asking if she's pretty next! Oh, you men are all alike, sick or well. Her name is Carmody, that's the only other thing I know. So there!

MURRAY. Carmody?

MISS HOWARD. Oh, you don't know her. She's from another part of the state from your town.

MISS GILPIN (*appearing in the office doorway*). Miss Howard.

MISS HOWARD. Yes, Miss Gilpin. (*In an aside to Murray as she leaves him.*) It's time for those horrid diets.

(She hurries back into the office. Murray stares into the fire. Miss Howard reappears from the office and goes out by the door to the hall, rear. Carriage wheels are heard from the drive in front of the house on the left. They stop. After a pause there is a sharp rap on the door and a bell rings insistently. Men's muffled voices are heard in argument. Murray turns curiously in his chair. Miss Gilpin comes from the office and walks quickly to the door, unlocking and opening it. Eileen enters, followed by Nicholls, who is carrying her suit-case, and by her father.)

EILEEN. I'm Miss Carmody. I believe Doctor Gaynor wrote——

MISS GILPIN (*taking her hand—with kind affability*). We've been expecting you all day. How do you do? I'm Miss Gilpin. You came on the last train, didn't you?

EILEEN (*heartened by the other woman's kindness*). Yes. This is my father, Miss Gilpin—and Mr. Nicholls.

(Miss Gilpin shakes hands cordially with the two men who are staring about the room in embarrassment. Carmody has very evidently been drinking. His voice is thick and his face puffed and stupid. Nicholls' manner is that of one who is accomplishing a necessary but disagreeable duty with the best grace possible, but is frightfully eager to get it over and done with. Carmody's condition embarrasses him acutely and when he glances at him it is with hatred and angry disgust.)

MISS GILPIN (*indicating the chairs in front of the windows on the left, forward*). Won't you gentlemen sit down? (*Carmody grunts sullenly and plumps himself into the one nearest the door. Nicholls hesitates, glancing down at the suit-case he carries. Miss Gilpin turns to Eileen.*) And now we'll get you settled immediately. Your room is all ready for you. If you'll follow me—— (*She turns toward the door in rear, centre.*)

EILEEN. Let me take the suit-case now, Fred.

MISS GILPIN (*as he is about to hand it to her—decisively*). No, my dear, you mustn't. Put the case right down there, Mr. Nicholls. I'll have it taken to Miss Carmody's room in a moment. (*She shakes her finger at Eileen with kindly admonition.*) That's the first rule you'll have to learn. Never exert yourself or tax your strength. It's very important. You'll find laziness is a virtue instead of a vice with us.

EILEEN (*confused*). I—I didn't know——

MISS GILPIN (*smiling*). Of course you didn't. And now if you'll come with me I'll show you your room. We'll have a little chat there and I can explain all the other important rules in a second. The gentlemen can make themselves comfortable in the meantime. We won't be gone more than a moment.

NICHOLLS (*feeling called upon to say something*). Yes—we'll wait—certainly, we're all right.

(Carmody remains silent, glowering at the fire. Nicholls sits down beside him. Miss Gilpin and Eileen go out. Murray switches his chair so that he can observe the two men out of the corner of his eye while pretending to be absorbed in his book.)

CARMODY (*looking about shiftily and reaching for the inside pocket of his overcoat*). I'll be havin' a nip now we're alone, and that cacklin' hen gone. I'm feelin' sick in the pit of the stomach. (*He pulls out a pint flask, half full.*)

NICHOLLS (*excitedly*). For God's sake, don't! Put that bottle away! (*In a whisper.*) Don't you see that fellow in the chair there?

CARMODY (*taking a big drink*). Ah, I'm not mindin' a man at all. Sure I'll bet it's himself would be likin' a taste of the same. (*He appears about to get up and invite Murray to join him, but Nicholls grabs his arm.*)

NICHOLLS (*with a frightened look at Murray who appears buried in his book*). Stop it, you—— Don't you know he's probably a patient and they don't allow them——

CARMODY (*scornfully*). A sick one, and him readin' a book like a dead man without a civil word out of him! It's queer they'd be allowin' the sick ones to read books, when I'll bet it's the same lazy readin' in the house brought the half of them down with the consumption itself. (*Raising his voice.*) I'm thinking this whole shebang is a big, thievin' fake—and I've always thought so.

NICHOLLS (*furiously*). Put that bottle away, damn it! And don't shout. You're not in a public-house.

CARMODY (*with provoking calm*). I'll put it back when I'm ready, not before, and no lip from you!

NICHOLLS (*with fierce disgust*). You're drunk now. It's disgusting.

CARMODY (*raging*). Drunk, am I? Is it the like of a young jackass like you that's still wet behind the ears to be tellin' me I'm drunk?

NICHOLLS (*half-rising from his chair—pleadingly*). For heaven's sake, Mr. Carmody, remember where we are and don't raise any rumpus. What'll Eileen say? Do you want to make trouble for her at the start?

CARMODY (*puts the bottle away hastily, mumbling to himself—then glowers about the room scornfully with blinking eyes*). It's a grand hotel this is, I'm thinkin', for the rich to be takin' their ease, and not a hospital for the poor, but the poor has to pay for it.

NICHOLLS (*fearful of another outbreak*). Sssh!

CARMODY. Don't be shshin' at me? I'm tellin' you the truth. I'd make Eileen come back out of this to-night if that devil of a doctor didn't have me by the throat.

NICHOLLS (*glancing at him nervously*). I wonder how soon she'll be back? The carriage is waiting for us. We'll have to hurry to make that last train back. If we miss it—it means two hours on the damn tram.

CARMODY (*angrily*). Is it anxious to get out of her sight you are, and you engaged to marry and pretendin' to love her? (*Nicholls flushes guiltily. Murray pricks up his ears and stares over at Nicholls. The latter meets his glance, scowls, and hurriedly averts his eyes. Carmody goes on accusingly.*) Sure, it's no heart at all you have—and her your sweetheart for years—and her sick with the consumption—and you wild to run away from her and leave her alone.

NICHOLLS (*springing to his feet—furiously*). That's a——! (*He controls himself with an effort. His voice trembles.*) You're not responsible for the idiotic things you're saying or I'd—— (*He turns away, seeking some escape from the old man's tongue.*) I'll see if the man is still there with the carriage. (*He walks to the door on left and goes out.*)

CARMODY (*following him with his eyes*). Go to hell, for all I'm preventin'. You've got no guts of a man in you. (*He addresses Murray with the good nature inspired by the flight of Nicholls.*) Is it true you're one of the consumptives, young fellow?

MURRAY (*delighted by this speech—with a grin*). Yes, I'm one of them.

CARMODY. My name's Carmody. What's yours, then?

MURRAY. Murray.

CARMODY (*slapping his thigh*). Irish as Paddy's pig! (*Murray nods. Carmody brightens and grows confidential.*) I'm glad to be knowin' you're one of us. You can keep an eye on Eileen. That's my daughter that came with us. She's got consumption like yourself.

MURRAY. I'll be glad to do all I can.

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