

'HELLEBORE'

IV

IV

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Scene 1: Hellelone's apartment at the Hotel de la Rigue on the morning of Easter Saturday, 1920. About fifteen minutes to ten.

The curtains were still drawn in Hellelone's bedroom, and he lay asleep on his bed. He was still fully dressed, and his overcoat was torn from ~~the~~ the shoulder down to the middle of his back. He lay on his stomach, breathing very deeply. On the floor, at the foot of the bed, was an eiderdown.

Albert Lorraine entered the drawing room and looked about him. He wore a dark morning suit with a carnation in his button-hole. He called out "Jack!" then went across to the bedroom. He opened the door and gasped with surprise when he caught sight of Hellelone in the darkness. He quickly pulled the curtains back and sat down on the bed at Hellelone's side. He bent forward to have a better look at his face. He noticed the torn overcoat and gazed at it with horror. He then went into the bathroom and returned with a tumbler of water. He flicked the water gently into Hellelone's eyes, and after a few moments Hellelone started up and stared about him, almost knocking the tumbler out of his hand.

Lorraine (in a soft voice) Shall I call the nurse?

Hellelone shook his head.

Lorraine: Our own, I mean.

Hellelone: No, Albert.

Lorraine gave him a towel ~~and he wiped~~ his eyes slowly for his face. He pulled up the eiderdown from the floor and put it round Hellelone's shoulders.

~~Lorraine: You look very ill, Jack.~~

~~Hellelone (sitting back on the pillow) Did the porter see us?~~

~~Lorraine: Yes, he saw you go out. He brought me up last night and told~~

~~me you had gone and left the hotel.~~

Horaine: The hall porter rang me last night and told me you'd left the hotel. You look very ill, Jack.

Hellclaw lay back on his pillow with a groan and put his hand to his head.

Hellclaw: Did the porter see me?

Horaine: Yes, he saw you go out.

Hellclaw (irritated) No. Did he see me come back?

Horaine: No. You must have been very drunk. Look at your overcoat.

He lifted a piece of the torn overcoat which lay under Hellclaw's shoulder.

Hellclaw (peering at Horaine) Look at you, with your glasses. You look like a tallyman's ink-bottle.

Horaine: Well, I had this morning planned. But now we shall have to postpone.

Hellclaw: Have you any tablets for my head?

Horaine: I want to see you in a bath, Jack, then we must go to the theatre. Postponements are complicated. There is a great deal to be ~~done~~ done. Conference have got to be called, and contracts prolonged, and a new show has got to be rehearsed at short notice.

Hellclaw: Help me down, then.

He put one foot over the side of the bed, then the other. He sat for a moment on the edge with his head in his hands.

~~Horaine: A postponement of two weeks is fair because that will give you time to get ready and get used to the theatre.~~

Horaine: A postponement of two weeks would be fair. Let me help you to the bathroom.

Hellclaw put an arm round his shoulder and together they went to the bathroom.

Horaine: Now you must tell me what happened.

Hellclaw sat huddled at the side of the bath, and Horaine ran the hot water.

Hellclaw: A young fellow called. Was just knocking into bed.

His name was Sampson. Have you heard about him? He's a friend of my son's. (Glancing up drowsily) No, I look drunk?

Horaine: Your eyes are very bloodshot, and you look paler than I've

ever seen you. I ought to call a nurse, I really ought to.

Hellélope: No, I shall do a night.

Lorraine: Where did you go?

Hellélope: Where what?

Lorraine: Where were you off to when the porter saw you?

Hellélope: A club called Les Anges in the Rue St. Honoré.

Lorraine: I know it. Business people go there. Is your young friend in commerce, then?

Hellélope: No, he's a jeweller's assistant.

Lorraine: Shall I help you in?

Hellélope shook his head and began taking off his clothes. When he was naked he leaned onto the side of the bath. He stayed there for a moment with his eyes closed. Then he got into the water.

Hellélope: I met an Italian jeweller and his wife. Giordano and Maria were their names. I forget their surnames.

Lorraine (watching him closely) How long have you known this young man?

Hellélope took a sponge and pressed ~~on~~ ~~his~~ some water over his forehead, ~~and began~~

Hellélope: Is there a ~~towel~~ towel handy?

Lorraine put a towel into his outstretched hand.

Lorraine: How long have you known him?

Hellélope: I told you. I saw him for the first time last night. I've never seen him before in my life.

Lorraine (a little disturbed by this) But you said he was a friend of your son's.

Hellélope: So he was. They were soldiers together.

Lorraine: But I thought you meant he was a friend of the family.

Hellélope: What family?

~~Lorraine (at a loss) Oh, Jeanne, what used to be your family? Why did she come and see you last night?~~

Lorraine (at a loss) A friend of Jeanne's, perhaps. But why did he come last night?

Hellclaw: I don't know. He talked about the War. That's all I remember. He's a good talker.

Lorraine watched him in silence while he washed. After a few minutes Hellclaw lay back in the bath, exhausted. He closed his eyes.

Hellclaw: It's lovely here.

Lorraine (glancing at his watch) You ought to jump out now.

Hellclaw: Jump. Listen to that.

He sat up, put his hands on the bottom of the bath knuckles downwards and heaved himself up to a kneeling position. Lorraine laid the bath-mat across the

floor and went to stand in the doorway. Hellclaw drew one of the chairs nearer to the bath. With one hand he clung to the rim of the bath and with the other he ~~held~~ held the chair. He lifted himself <sup>up</sup>, but as he did so the chair slipped back, he lost his grip and fell downwards, hitting his chin on the side of the bath. The water splashed across the room, and there was a booming noise from the bath as he struck it. Instantly Lorraine ran forward and took him by the arm. Hellclaw clung

to his shoulder and gradually pulled himself out of the bath. As he did so he drenched Lorraine's jacket.

Lorraine: Oh, my goodness, look.

He stared at his ~~saturated~~ ~~soaked~~ wet sleeve and went into Hellclaw's bedroom. With a look of distaste he took the jacket off and laid it over the hot water pipes, ~~at the side of the~~

Hellclaw dried himself and came into the bedroom to dress.

Lorraine: Where do they all live?

Hellclaw: Who?

Lorraine: This young man and these jewellers people.

Hellclaw: I've no idea.

Lorraine: Isn't that an odd hour to call?

Hellclaw: He happened to hear about your dinner-party —

Lorraine: Who from?

Hellene: Oh, these things get around Paris.

Lorraine: How is it if the hall-porter failed to see him?

Hellene: Perhaps he did see him.

Lorraine: No, he didn't. He has instructions to 'phone me if you receive strange visitors.

Scene 2. The Théâtre de la Fête in the Rue de Champs Elysées, an hour later.

Behind the dress circle of the Théâtre de la Fête a door led into a wide lounge with mirror-panelled walls. It was customary for the artistes to use this room during rehearsals, and among ...

Continued P. 5 ... among them it was known...

IV Albert's Bottomless Pit.

them it was known as the Crimson Tower, because its balustrade skirted an immense dome of stained glass over the foyer. ~~Hellelone~~ ~~drank two cups of thick Turkish coffee.~~ Horraine and Hellelone sat drinking coffee by one of the windows.

Hellelone: When are I seeing Bénédict?

Horraine: Seeing Bénédict for what?

Hellelone: For the rehearsals.

Horraine stared at Hellelone.

~~Hellelone~~ Hellelone: Well?

Horraine: Which rehearsals?

Hellelone: The rehearsal this morning, — what's the matter with you? The rehearsal for tonight's performance.

Horraine (quietly and deliberately) Now I am postponing, Jack. I told you I was postponing. I thought we agreed. I am postponing.

~~Hellelone (too exhausted to protest loudly)~~

Hellelone: You are not.

Horraine: I thought all our difficulties were over, and that for once we had agreed with each other. Why must you open the question up again?

Hellelone: Because tonight is First Night, and we are not postponing.

Horraine: Look at you, Jack, with your head in your hands: you won't be fit for a First Night before the end of next week. I have everything ready for a postponement. You heard me tell you I was postponing at the hotel and you said not a word. Why open the question up again?

Hellelone: I felt ill. Now I feel better.

Horraine: You look, if anything, worse.

Hellelone: That won't show under powder and a wig.

Horraine: It will show in your movements. I won't leave you falling off the wire simply ~~in order~~ to gratify your pride. I shall call a conference at half-past eleven, and there'll be no performance tonight. I have made my mind up.

Hellelone: You are going to turn a couple of thousand people away from the door tonight?

Horraine: Oh yes, and more if <sup>you</sup> wish. But I won't leave you throwing away your career, and also my money. I shall call a conference at half-past eleven, and meanwhile I shall show <sup>you</sup> round the new wing. You have all the time in the world. I am the one who'll be busy

Today. Sit here and rest for half-an-hour if you wish. Or let me take you round the new wing, ~~as you wish~~. Do whichever you want.

Hellclow (with a yawn, rubbing his eyes) I shall ~~still~~ see Bénédicte.

horraine: We shall all see Bénédicte at half-past eleven. Shall I

~~Hellclow~~: I show round the new wing?

Hellclow: Show me my dressing-room. That's all I want to see.

I want to see my paints and ~~my~~ costumes and the Virgin; and I want to be left alone with them. Call a conference if you like,

Albeit, call a dozen, but we won't postpone.

horraine: I have made my mind up.

Hellclow: And I have made up mine.

~~They left the lounge, walked along a carpeted gallery under the glass dome, and then down the foyer staircase to the entrance doors of the auditorium. They walked along the back of the dark pit to a corridor which ~~led~~ led to the stage and the dressing-rooms.~~

They left the lounge and walked along a carpeted gallery under the glass dome, then down the foyer staircase to one of the entrance doors of the auditorium. A corridor went from the back of the pit along the whole length of the theatre to the dressing-rooms, passing underneath the stage. ~~A~~ horraine led.

~~Hellclow~~ Outside ~~Hellclow's~~ <sup>the</sup> dressing-room horraine

~~Hellclow's~~ took ~~him~~ <sup>Hellclow's</sup> arm and drew him back.

horraine: Look. I just want you to see that.

Hellclow looked up and above the framed door saw in gilt and flavoured letters the words: le Salon Hellclow.

Hellclow: Was that your idea?

horraine: Yes.

~~Hellclow: Then you have a little respect for me~~

Hellclow: What are you going to do now, scrub it out?

horraine: No, that won't be at all necessary. ~~Provided you are sensible.~~

~~Hellclow: Then you'd do better scrub it out.~~

Hellclow: You'd better scrub it out.

horraine: Why?

Hellclow: Because you don't think I am worthy of it.

horraine: Oh, you'll be worthy of it and more in a week, provided you are sensible.

Hellclow: Get a man up to scrub it out, then. Shall we go in?

horraine opened the wide double doors and they went in. It was a long room, its ceiling high and ~~fringed~~ coved: much more a drawing-room than a dressing-room. Two wall-length windows faced the door, and between them stood Hellelone's dressing-table. On the left, behind a table, there was a wide couch which could serve as a bed, and beyond it a ~~heavy~~ curtain drawn <sup>to conceal me</sup> ~~across~~ the corner of the room, on the right there was a tapestried screen and beyond this wardrobe furniture, a sewing table and a wicker chair. On the walls there were ink portraits of the two Grimaldi's, and of \_\_\_\_\_.

Hellelone: All this is new. Was it your idea again?

horraine: No, this time Charpentier helped me in the design. We spent many hours together over it.

Hellelone: When I was last here I had a room fifteen feet by ten: this is a change from that. It must have cost you money.

horraine (earnestly) Oh, money...

Hellelone walked towards his dressing-table but then stopped in the middle of the room and stared before him.

Hellelone: Albert. I want to be rich.

horraine: You what?

Hellelone: I want to be rich.

horraine: There's a sink, then, quickly!

horraine ran to the corner <sup>of the room</sup> ~~of the room~~ on the left of Hellelone's dressing-table and pulled back the curtain: behind it was a wash-basin and a mirror. Hellelone went <sup>to</sup> ~~towards~~ it, his head over his mouth. horraine turned away as he vomited thickly into the basin. He retched three or four times; then turned both taps on. ~~He washed his face and combed his hair.~~ He leaned over the basin with his eyes closed, and horraine supported his arm with the palm of his hand.

horraine: Look, that's only for a quick wash. I'll show <sup>you</sup> the bathroom and lavatory.

He led Hellelone to the opposite side of the room

and thrust him ~~the~~ door behind the screen and wardrobe furniture.

Horaine: I expect you could use it.

~~While Hellelone was in the bathroom Horaine~~  
~~took <sup>used</sup> up the telephone on ~~the~~ <sup>his</sup> dressing-table.~~

~~Horaine: Where is Providence Amuroatt?... If you do, send him up to my office.~~

Hellelone shook his head and turned back into the room again.

~~Hellelone <sup>(hoarsely)</sup> I can't make use of that couch over there, though.~~

Horaine: May I use the telephone on your table?

Hellelone <sup>(hoarsely)</sup> I didn't know I had one.

Horaine: ~~I~~ I want to call the conference. You'll be well enough by that time, no doubt.

Hellelone: Go to hell with your conferences. Help me to get better.

Horaine: Lie down on the couch, Jack. Don't talk. Lie back.

Put your head back—(as Hellelone lay down) that's right. My God, you look washed <sup>right</sup> out. I'll call the Virgin up. rid of

Hellelone (with effort) No, leave her alone. I want to get <sup>rid of</sup> this burning ~~out~~ <sup>feeling</sup> ~~out~~ <sup>in</sup> my throat. ~~that's~~

Horaine took a white handkerchief from one of the drawers in the dressing-table, sprinkled Eau de Cologne over it and took it to Hellelone: he laid it across his brow, and Hellelone closed his eyes.

Hellelone (almost inaudibly) I'm sick to death of all this. I want to go away. I'm sick of the job.

Horaine (turning swiftly) What's that?

Hellelone: I'm sick of the job. I want to go away.

Horaine: Well, exactly, so would anyone in the world, and that's why I decided to postpone.

Hellelone: I do want to go away for good. To hell with your postponements.

Horaine: I simply don't understand you.

Hellelone: I'd like to break all these walls down, all these thick walls. I'd like to set fire to them and go away for good.

Horaine: Would you include this room, Jack?

Hellelone: Yes; oh, I'd include this room, I'd start with it. I'd

smash the mirrors first —

horraine (with distaste) The mirrors the dressing table?

Hellelone: Yes.

horraine: Well, that would be a good beginning, they are worth quite a little fortune in themselves. What else?

Hellelone: Oh, I'd set a match to the curtains. That screen —

horraine: I thought you'd go for that screen. The tapestry is one of the rarest things in this theatre.

Hellelone: Burn it, burn it. I'm sick to death of it all. You can't me keep me walled up in this place. I've finished with everything, and I'm glad I've finished.

horraine: I don't understand that. Whose wants to keep you walled up? That's the talk of a sick man.

Hellelone: I'm glad, then, glad.

horraine: Glad about what?

Hellelone: Well, it's all over. I've been sick down the sink, and that's the end of Hellelone.

horraine: Why should that be the end of Hellelone?

Hellelone: Why, why... Hellelone was only a dead carcass, anyway, so good riddance.

horraine: Listen to me, Jack. You are a sick man, and you heedly burn what you are saying. I shall postpone the show for a week, and then you'll have your First Night, and the best one of your career.

Hellelone: So I don't mean what I say, then?

horraine: You mean it, but tomorrow you'll feel better.

Hellelone: ~~I told you~~

Hellelone: Do you think I don't mean what I say?

horraine: You mean it, my dear fellow, but tomorrow you will mean something ~~just~~ different. Meanwhile I shall call a conference and postpone the show.

Hellelone: ~~But I told you we must postpone the show.~~ Shall I tell you what we'll do? We'll cancel the show, we'll tear the contract up — this morning. I said I've finished with everything.

horraine: What?

Hellelone raised himself and leaned forward on his elbow, opening his eyes.

Hellelone: There, that's what I mean. And that's what I say.

horraine (turning away) No, no.

Hellelone: I am finished, I am not fit to go on a stage again. That's the bare truth of the matter. Your instincts were right last night; I'm not fit to go on a stage again. So let me go away. I've finished with Hellelone. Bring the contract here and we'll tear it up, go on.

horraine (awed and pale) This is a different tune, Jack.

Hellelone: I tell you, Hellelone is finished, so see him decently buried. ~~You can't keep me walled up here.~~

horraine (with compassion) What have these people <sup>been doing</sup> ~~done~~ to you?

Hellelone: What people?

horraine: These jewellers <sup>and</sup> this young man of yours.

Hellelone: I'm old enough to look after myself. Didn't I cancel the contract out of my own free will last night?

horraine: How?

Hellelone: I walked out of the hotel after midnight and there wasn't a war or revolution on. That was a breach of contract, wasn't it?

~~horraine:~~ horraine shrugged his shoulders and pouted glumly.

horraine: Those are very serious words, Jack.

Hellelone: The whole world's changed. I can't find <sup>a</sup> footing again...

horraine: ~~Stop~~ I shall postpone the show for a week, and I'll leave you to think the matter over. It can't be true. Those are very

serious words, Jack. They mean the end of a career, <sup>and</sup> ~~except that~~

I won't allow it.

Hellelone: They are true. Hellelone's dead, so give him a decent burial.

horraine (stupefied) ~~of this~~ Are they true?

Hellelone: Yes.

horraine: My poor, dear old fellow. What a right you are, lying there. I could never have predicted it. What I said last night was due to bad nerves —

Hellelone: Bah —

horraine: It was due to bad nerves.

Hellelone still leaning forward on one elbow, groped in his pocket <sup>for</sup> something.

Hellelone: Here, take this bloody swine's away.

He drew horraine's rosary from his pocket and threw it viciously at horraine's feet. It clattered against the

leg of his chair.

Lorraine: I've seen them behave like that before.

Hellclow: Them? Them? What do you mean, — them?

Lorraine: The celebrities like yourself. ~~I imagine it is~~ <sup>its</sup> a form of hysteria that comes with middle-age. You are forty-five, aren't you?

Hellclow: My name is Jack Finstanley. Aren't I more to you than them?

Lorraine: You appal me.

Lorraine, pale and trembling, bent down and picked up his sash from the floor. He then rose and walked to the door without glancing at the couch. Having opened the door, he turned.

Lorraine (deliberately) Very well, I shall ~~contract~~ cancel the contract.

He left the room and Hellclow lay back on the couch again with a long sigh.

Lorraine went swiftly to his own office. This was on the floor above the dressing rooms. One of its windows doors communicated with a wooden gallery running across the stage high above it in the flies; its windows overlooked a small park which adjoined the theatre at the rear wall, behind the stage.

He slammed the door and went straight to his desk, his lips pursed together and his eyes narrowed. Carpenter's rose from an armchair by one of the windows.

Carpenter: The entire theatre has been ringing you for the last hour. You look troubled.

Lorraine: I have just come from Jack. Something very nasty has been going on.

Carpenter: Where is he, then?

Lorraine: Where is Jack Finstanley? I'll tell you where Jack

Finstanley is. He is lying on his backside in his dressing room: his face is green and he has been behaving like a madman.

Carpenter: No.

Lorraine: He has been most dreadfully sick. Some young adventures came up to his room at midnight and the worst happened: they filled him with drink and seal him back at five in the morning.

Carpenter: Who were these people?

Lorraine:

Carpenter: Who?

Lorraine: I leave my mepicrains, but no more. Listen to me, Bernard: I shall need your help, because I think this will be our busiest day since the Armistice.

Charpentier: Why?

Lorraine: Listen to me, Bernard: I am going to run an entirely new show. I am cancelling tonight's performance. And I am tearing up Jack's contract.

Charpentier (with a laugh) Oh, Albert, come, come!

Lorraine: I am going to tear up his contract. But that will take time.

Charpentier: You ~~cannot~~ <sup>can't</sup> tear up a contract signed by Hellebore. Any manager who tears up a contract signed by Hellebore is a fool or a madman: which are you?

Lorraine: But, Bernard, I have just come from his dressing room. For the last five minutes I have been listening to him telling me that he is finished for good, <sup>that he wants to leave Paris and</sup> that he would like to burn his dressing-room and then the entire theatre down; and I know when Jack is in earnest. ~~tell you, Bernard, his face is green~~

~~Charpentier: Oh, but you must understand, — that is the way such people behave~~

~~Charpentier: But you say he is ill, and if he is ill he can't be in earnest.~~

Charpentier: He got drunk, I suppose?

Lorraine: ~~Yes~~ <sup>Drunk?</sup> I found <sup>him</sup> lying on his bed with all his clothes on, and the shoulder of his jacket torn. He had two hours sleep.

Charpentier: ~~No worse than that?~~ No worse sin than that?

Lorraine: Oh, that was enough, but he's ill and mad as well.

Charpentier (with a shrug) It doesn't sound like the end of the theatrical world to me.

Lorraine: Pay him a visit yourself, then.

Charpentier: But, my dear Albert, you must understand — that is the way such people behave at times. Usually you are not of hearing when it happens, but producers and stage-managers suffer that kind of behaviour every day of their lives. Ask Bénédicte.

Lorraine: Jack has always been rather obstinate and pugnacious, but I've never seen him behave like this before, — like a wild

Charpentier: Yes. You see, Albert, if you intend to destroy Jack you won't do it by tearing his contract up.

Horaine: Why should I want to destroy him?

Charpentier: Now face your notices like a man, Albert. If you refuse to sign him up you are obliged to destroy him, or at least ~~to~~ <sup>to</sup> try to destroy him. How can you afford to let him strike bargains with other managers in France? You must know that quite half of <sup>all</sup> business enterprise consists in thwarting other people's. You can't destroy him by tearing his contract up. But you can destroy him by letting him go on the stage tonight and deserve his cat-calls. In that case he will be his own enemy; he will destroy himself. And that is the best you can hope for: that he will destroy himself. In that case not another manager between here and Tokyo would touch him.

Horaine: I don't like it put in that way.

Charpentier: Therefore either postpone the show —

Horaine: But he refuses to postpone.

Charpentier: Very well, then, get him back on the stage, let him have his First Night and let it be his last.

Horaine: That would lose me a lot of money.

Charpentier: But ~~not~~ <sup>no</sup> money at all compared with what his contracts with other managers would cost you. And should he recover: suppose this First Night were <sup>his</sup> best? Who were he the gainer then?

Horaine: I can't forget those bloodshot eyes.

Charpentier: Send him a message that Bénédicte is waiting for him on the stage.

Horaine: No, I must think about it.

Charpentier: Well, the time is already sixteen minutes past eleven.

Horaine: <sup>And already</sup> I feel ~~utterly~~ worn out.

Francine Dupont, ~~the young manager~~ <sup>the young manager</sup> dressed in a white surgical overall, knocked on the door of Hellebore's dressing room and walked in. ~~The~~ <sup>She</sup> ~~was~~ <sup>she</sup> closed the door the moment she saw him. One of his arms hung down at the side of the couch, his eyes were closed and his mouth open: across his chin there was a dark blue bruise. She closed the door and went to him; she knelt and listened to his breathing. Then she pulled him by both armpits further onto the

creature from under the earth. Go downstairs and try him yourself. He'll frighten you out of your wits. I imagine it. His eyes are bloodshot. His hair's all over the place. His face is swollen, there's a bruise the size of your finger on his chin, his hands are trembling. If that is the Jack Kinstanley I knew yesterday and the Jack Kinstanley I signed up ~~with~~ a month ago then I have nothing more to say: but it isn't.

That caged object in Hellelove's dressing room could no more become Hellelove tonight than you or I could. And he realizes that. He sees it very clearly. He said it very slowly and plainly to me, I am finished, he said, Hellelove is finished. And he asked me to give him a decent burial by tearing the contract up.

Charpentier: Do you intend to take that seriously?

Lorraine: If you don't <sup>take</sup> it seriously go down to his dressing room and have a look at him yourself.

Charpentier: Oh, he needs a little rest after a night out. But, God above, to tear up his contract without another thought, even if he does ask you to do it himself — I don't know how you can contemplate such a thing. Get him down onto the stage and see how he makes; postpone the show until next week —

Lorraine: ~~He refuses to hear about a postponement~~

Lorraine: He refuses to hear a word about postponement. No, I can't have dealings with the fellow. I have other shows waiting to see the light of day. He is quite impossible.

Charpentier: It may be that he's only trying out your loyalty, and it may be that after a little rest he'll be himself again.

Lorraine: And it may be that he's, as he himself says, finished.

Charpentier: Well, it would be most amusing if you tore up his contract and he then recovered and fell straight into the arms of another manager. It would be most amusing to see him sign up with another manager.

Lorraine: Oh, that can't be helped.

Charpentier: Still, it would be amusing.

Lorraine went to the window and looked down at the ~~garden~~ <sup>park</sup> in silence.

Lorraine: Would you back him with your last franc in his present state?

in silence. She then replaced the smelling salts in her pocket and rose.

Francine  
Vergine: What are we to do, then? It is so odd, you lying there at this time. You are usually up on the stage.

Hellelone: I shall be going up soon. I want you to leave me here to rest a little. Just leave me a little and I shall give you a ring when I'm ready.

Francine  
Vergine: Shall I draw the curtains? Will that help?

Hellelone: Yes.

Francine  
Vergine: You must not get drunk on important occasions.

She took the wet flannel <sup>from</sup> off her forehead and wrung it out in the basin. She then drew the curtains across both windows and left the room.

Hellelone slept again, then stirred and looked about him. The room was in half darkness. There was not a sound from the stage or the other dressing-rooms.

He pushed himself lower down the couch so that his head would lie at the same level as his body. He lay absolutely straight, with his arms firmly at his side: ~~when he had found a comfortable position~~ he began breathing deeply and regularly, ~~in and out~~, expanding his chest to the utmost each time. He continued this exercise for some minutes. Then he turned himself to a position at right angles with the length of the couch, so that only his trunk lay across it, while ~~the~~ <sup>his</sup> calves <sup>on</sup> one side and his head on the other were unsupported. He raised his arms and ~~caught~~ <sup>drew</sup> them in

a circle over his head so that they touched the floor under him palm downwards; then gradually he began lowering his head and shoulders to bring them nearer the floor. At the same time <sup>so strained</sup> straining upward with his hips and thighs, ~~trying to attain~~ he reeled, he began to sweat, but gradually his legs came up. When they were clear of the couch he swung himself up into a vertical hand-stand. On the instant he was there, balanced on his head and the palms of his hands, a pain seemed to strike his middle, and he flung his legs down to find a sitting position. As his right leg descended it caught the side of his dressing table, and a glass jar fell and smashed on the floor.

He went to the dressing table and set down

couch so that he would lie more securely. He gasped and shook his head limply as she undressed him.

Hellelme: What's the matter?

Francine: You are in your dressing room.

Hellelme: I know. What's the matter with you, I mean? <sup>what</sup> ~~why~~ do you want to move me for?

Francine: I thought you looked uncomfortable. When I came in I thought there had been a tragedy. I thought someone had killed you. May I get something to cool your head? You look so ill.

She went to the wash-basin and made up a strip of wet flannel.

Francine: Tell me what happened.

Hellelme: I think I was drunk last night, but I'm not sure what happened. I was sick a little while ago, so I feel better than I did.

Francine: What about the bruise on your chin? You must have had an accident.

Hellelme: I hit it on the side of the bath this morning. This is an unlucky day.

Francine: Oh, don't say that. Remember tonight.

She laid the strip of cold wet flannel across his brow.

Francine: I have been waiting in my room since ten o'clock. Everyone was looking for Horraine. Has he seen you?

Hellelme: Oh, yes, we've seen each other. We've certainly seen each other.

Francine: I cannot remember you drunk at the hotel last night.

Hellelme: No. Someone called on me shortly before midnight. We went out together.

Francine: This was a friend of yours, I suppose?

She took from one of her pockets a bottle of smelling salts and held it under his nose.

Hellelme: No, a stranger.

Francine: What was his name?

Hellelme: Sangson.

He became quite still and stared at him

horraine: You understand my faith in Michelon, don't you?

Elija: Yes.

horraine: You don't think it's laughable?

Elija: No, Albert.

horraine: Well, I wrote to him about that very question of death some weeks ago. Would you like to see what he wrote back? I've never shown <sup>you</sup> one of his letters. Would <sup>you</sup> like to see it?

He opened one of the drawers in his desk and took from it a sheaf of papers ~~secured~~ <sup>secured</sup> ~~fastened~~ by a clip onto an oblong piece of three-ply wood. All these papers were numbered, beginning with number one at the top. On the wooden board <sup>itself</sup> there was a subject-index. He pushed back the sheaf of papers and ran his finger down this index until he found under the letter D the word Death, No. 57. He turned to No. 57 of the lot papers and withdrew it from the sheaf. He ~~then~~ handed it to Elija.

Elija: How careful you are with your things. Fancy keeping an index.

horraine: Is that foolish?

Elija: No, it's clever.

She read the letter to ~~herself~~ <sup>while</sup> and horraine

looked over her shoulder:

"How miserable a life everlasting on earth would be. Death is not your melancholic thoughts about it. It is not dark, empty, dark, loathsome. It is peace. It is the door by which you go out. Try to cast away these memories of funerals, these devils of the mind: they have to do only with the living death, with the ~~death~~ <sup>hell</sup> that is inside us <sup>now</sup>, not with the real death, that is everlasting peace. Every melancholic thought you have is a temptation from the devil, and you must treat it as such. Do not pity yourself. Be heartless to yourself, and in this you will be heartless to the devil. Self-pity is a pleasure indulged most by melancholic people: it is their sin and shame, and it is no more forgivable than the most heinous crime.

In Jesus Christ,  
Father Michelon."

Hellene entered the pit by a door at the side

before the mirrors. He leaned close to the mirrors in the half darkness and peered hard into them. He dabbed rose-water on his temples and along his upper lip. He widened first one eye and then the other by holding back the lids. He took a pair of nail scissors from the table and carefully cut the hairs in his nose, drawing his upper lip down over his teeth. He rubbed cold cream into the crease on his chin, and combed his hair. He then went behind the screen; from the chest of drawers he took a silk blouse, a pair of cloth trousers secured with elastic at the ankle, and a pair of slippers.

He changed into these and left the room.

Eliya Manning entered Lorraine's office just as Charpentier rose from his chair.

Eliya: Hello, what's the matter with everyone? <sup>down</sup> Bénédicte has been on the stage for the last hour.

Charpentier: Albert will tell you everything. I'm glad to see Jack.

Charpentier left the room. Eliya Manning went across to Lorraine and kissed him lightly on the forehead.

Eliya: Well, what's the matter? You look nervous again.

Lorraine (averting his gaze) Oh, Jack's been playing the fool. But I refuse to talk about it now. Sit down.

He indicated a chair next to his own.

Lorraine: We had a little disagreement, and I want to forget about it. I promised to see you at ten o'clock, my treasure, and I wasn't here. That was due to Jack. I am sorry. Let me kiss your hand.

He drew his hand across the arm of his chair, smiled at her sadly and gently kissed <sup>it</sup> ~~the knuckles of her hand~~.

Lorraine: You looked pert and handsome last night. I would have given you a permanent contract if I could, just to keep you in Paris... Did I disgust you by talking about death?

Eliya: You must never worry about what I think.

Lorraine: Do I disgust you?

Eliya: No, my dear.

He looked at her for a few moments, then sighed.

\* INSERT N: P. 12½

Nidok came into the foyer from the street. He wore a black overcoat with a fur collar. He was a tall, slim man, with a dark mustache and watchful eyes. He stood still in the foyer for a moment; listening. There were footsteps along one of the corridors above, and they were coming nearer the foyer. He walked niftly behind one of the pillars near the entrance and waited. The footsteps died away. He walked out into the foyer again, listened, then entered the dark auditorium.

Hellclown's costumes one by one, ~~on a table under the window.~~

Hellclown put one hand on the conductor's rostrum to support himself and closed his eyes.

Elija: — death soon enough!

Hellclown (starting back) Elija!

Elija: It's Jack!

Lorraine (behind her in the darkness) Jack?

Elija: What on earth ~~were~~ <sup>are</sup> you ~~doing~~ ~~there~~? Standing here for?

Lorraine: Ah, so you got my message. We've just come down from the office.

Hellclown: What message?

Lorraine: To say that Bénédict was waiting on the stage for you.

Bernard went down to tell you.

Hellclown: No, I never had it.

Lorraine: Then you got into tickets —? (Peering) Those are tickets, aren't they?

Hellclown: Yes, I'm in tickets.

Lorraine: Well, I've never known such behaviour. First you will <sup>a pair of</sup> jump into tickets  
now go on the stage again and then you jump

Hellclown: Wait and see, perhaps I am finished.

Lorraine: What were you doing, — trying me out?

Hellclown: No, I spoke my mind.

Lorraine: ~~Those were very serious words, a little too drastic for a man of your abilities.~~

Lorraine: But you have changed it now.

Hellclown: No, I haven't.

Lorraine: Why are you in tickets, then?

Hellclown: Out of habit.

Lorraine (crossly) Habit...

Elija: What has been the trouble, Jack? Albert wait tell me.

Hellclown: Oh, I was drunk last night.

Elija: What, in the lounge during the party?

Hellclown: No, afterwards.

Elija: Well, that isn't a ~~terrible~~ <sup>Albert</sup> crime, ~~is it~~, is it?

Lorraine: <sup>Oh,</sup> No, ~~but~~ wait until you see his face. That is. He went off with a bunch of ne'er-do-wells. They released him at five o'clock

of the stalls. Grey dust sheets covered all the seats. The curtain was up and there were noises of hammering and shouting in the wings. Only a dim blue light came from the stage. Subdued red stars were alight in the domed ceiling of the auditorium, twenty or thirty in number, and from the centre of this dome hung a huge silver chandelier. In the pit itself, where Hellelone stood, the air was hot, but now and then a swift cold wind blew down from the wings. There were only cables, ropes, ladders and chairs on the stage, and no backcloth, so that the dark brick wall behind it was visible.

Someone in the wings shouted "Voilà!" and two powerful arc-lamps were switched on. Hellelone turned away, for the moment blinded. He watched Bénédict Amurat walk across the stage, then he went up the centre gangway to the back of the pit. He pushed open one of the doors marked SORTIE and peeped into the wide carpeted ~~passage~~ <sup>foyer</sup>; this was the same door through which Lorraine had led him on their way from the Grimon Tower to the dressing room. Someone passed across the foyer outside: <sup>Hellelone</sup> he quickly took his hand from the door and returned down the gangway. He stood behind the conductor's rostrum and waited. The arc-lamps were switched down and the auditorium was once more in darkness. \* INSERT N: P. 12 1/2

<sup>Francine Dupont</sup> ~~Vergnes Bergeres~~ returned to Hellelone's dressing room and after glancing at the coach pulled the curtains back. She immediately caught sight of the smashed glass and powder at the foot of his dressing-table. She passed over it with a frown, then went to the coach and tidied <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ cover. He stood listening for a moment; then she went to the door, opened it, took the key from the outside, closed the door again and locked <sup>it</sup>. He went straight to the dressing-table and set down before his mirrors. She pulled out all the drawers of his table one by one, and <sup>he</sup> scrutinised closely every article and scrap of paper <sup>within</sup> ~~in~~ them.

He replaced ~~them~~ <sup>the things</sup> with a sigh and opened the door again. He then went behind the screen and began laying out

Charpentier: From the pit, yes, but never backstage, to touch with my own fingers. ~~For sequin jacket~~ When does he wear this sequin jacket?

Remind me.

Francine  
~~Virginia~~: I don't think he used it for his last two shows in Paris, but before then he did his trapeze work in it.

Charpentier: It used to make those flashes, — of course. And the big shoes — I remember them well. (Taking one of them up) It must be two feet

long?  
Francine:  
~~Virginia~~: I know exactly how long they are, — in French measurements: twenty centimetres. But that part (pointing out the toe) is stuffed with a very lighty material, so that it can flap up and down. It makes a smacking noise when he walks.

Charpentier: And where are the removable tails?

Francine:  
~~Virginia~~: Here, look.

20 cm = 24"?

~~She picked up from~~

She brought up the tails of a morning jacket from under the sequin suit, then the jacket itself — like a Spanish jacket — onto which the tails clipped.

Charpentier: Yes, yes, I remember that clearly. I remember him tumbling me and over.

Francine:  
~~Virginia~~: Feel for the little water-tank. Can you feel it?

She handed a pair of black trousers, and he felt in the right hand pocket.

Charpentier: Yes, I can feel it. Those are his tears?

Francine:  
~~Virginia~~: Yes.

Charpentier: And I can remember the outside check suit. He used it for the shooting parties. But no gun. No gun this year?

Francine:  
~~Virginia~~: No. Perhaps he won't use it this season.

Charpentier: And why the cowles-hat and this horse-whip?

He lifted up first a tiny cowles-hat, no more than six inches wide, and then a long horse-whip of the type used in circuses.

Francine:  
~~Virginia~~: I have never seen them before. But these they were, among his other costumes. It is something new, I dare say.

Charpentier: But I know what these are for. Don't you?

He took from a <sup>deep</sup> box on the table two or three white ~~china~~ china eggs.

This morning.

Hellelme: Released...

Eliza: Stop biting at each other.

Hellelme: Take him for a walk, Eliza. Make him say his beads.

Just as <sup>Francine Dupont</sup> ~~Virginie~~ ~~Borges~~ laid Hellelme's sequin suit across the table Charpentier entered. He glanced at the couch.

<sup>Francine</sup> ~~Virginie~~ (turning) I suppose you are looking for Jack?

Charpentier: Yes, and the bird appears to have flown.

<sup>Francine</sup> ~~Virginie~~: He must have gone up to the stage, but God knows what he has been doing with himself.

Charpentier: Have you seen him, then?

<sup>Francine</sup> ~~Virginie~~: Yes, and he needs looking after. He is really ill.

Charpentier: Oh, he was only a little drunk last night.

<sup>Francine</sup> ~~Virginie~~: I came back just now and found one of his pocket-jaws on the floor?

Charpentier: Broken, you mean? How?

<sup>Francine</sup> ~~Virginie~~: Perhaps he fell against the table. ~~He is sick, tell you~~ That comes smells of vomit. What chance will he stand this evening?

Charpentier: Only he himself knows.

Virginie went behind the screen to her sewing table.

Charpentier: Ah, so these are the legendary accoutrements!

He approached the table where Hellelme's costumes lay.

Charpentier: Let us touch them. May I?

<sup>Francine</sup> ~~Virginie~~ (from behind the screen) By all means.

Charpentier (lifting <sup>a pirotto's dress</sup> ~~the sequin suit~~ with awe) It is like touching ancient parchments. I can already see them in museum exhibits. ~~The~~

~~pirotto's dress, with pom-pom and neck-fills - how he will what~~  
I remember these pom-poms and neck-fill - what will he use this pirotto's dress <sup>for</sup> ~~Virginie~~ <sup>Francine</sup>?

~~Virginie~~: He always used it for his entrance, but I don't know what he means to do with it tonight.

Charpentier: Yes, I remember those sudden entrances in white.

<sup>Francine</sup> ~~Virginie~~: Onto an empty stage

Charpentier: Yes.

<sup>Francine</sup> ~~Virginie~~ (joining him) Haven't you seen his stuff before?

level: and ~~when~~ a girl danced <sup>down</sup> at the floor or the footlights, he ran forward and scolded her.

During the dance Benédic Amurat entered the stage, peered down into the pit, saw Hellebore and then descended. Hellebore walked along the gangway to meet him and they shook hands.

Nidok watched Eliya from the other side of the stage, then walked behind the clowns to where she stood with horraine. As he passed her he turned slightly to speak, after the briefest smile at horraine.

Nidok: Do you happen to know where Helen is?

Eliya (ridiculous) Don't you? Surely you know?

He immediately drew back in surprise; he looked at her appalled for a moment, then smiled.

Nidok: No. I am afraid I do not.

He bowed slightly to them both and left the stage. Horraine put his arm in Eliya's and drew her closer to him.

horraine: Now, Eliya, now...

Eliya: Now what?

horraine: You are so rude to him, my dear.

Eliya: I can't hear a thing with this piano!

horraine (in her ear) Why are you so rude to Sisakharin? He hasn't the right nature to deal with your rudeness. Why do you do it?

Eliya: Well, why do you quarrel with Jack?

horraine: Yes, I suppose we all have our reasons.

Eliya: What has been <sup>the trouble between you?</sup> ~~happening~~ I still want to know, and I shall worry you until you tell me.

horraine: There are always disagreements in the first week, Eliya. They are a form of First Night nerves. They help to brace one up -

Eliya: Tell me the truth. (Fixing her eyes on him) Have you been talking <sup>to him</sup> about postponement again this morning?

horraine (uncomfortably) No. Not yet.

Eliya: Have you?

horraine: We talked about cancelling his contract, you see.

Eliya: Cancelling? You have both gone mad.

horraine: But he is no fit state to give a performance today at even tomorrow. You saw his face yourself, didn't you, when the lights came on again?

Eliya: Then I can't understand why the rehearsals are going on. Look

Francine (with a nod)  
Vergil: Yes. So does Eiselheim, I fear.

Charpentier: Yes, there may be a little trouble about that. Where are the kerchiefs, the top-hats and the other incriminating articles?

Francine  
Vergil: In the cupboard. I dare not put them out on the table lest Eiselheim or Helen should come in.

Charpentier: Eliya would love the idea, of course.

Francine  
Vergil: Oh, Eliya — she is disloyal.

Charpentier: Do you think so? (Replacing the china eggs slowly, then going towards the door) Your English is remarkably fluent now. Where did you learn it?

Francine  
Vergil: That is my secret.

Charpentier: You are a relentless woman... Adieu.

The chorus of fifteen girls filed into the stage, and Jaques, the dancing master, was behind them. He trotted nimbly downstage and stood with his back to the footlights; he was a small man, quick and loud-voiced. He made a peremptory signal <sup>with his hand</sup> and bowed, and his girls moved quickly into line before him. He told them in French, pronouncing his words slowly and clearly, to keep their heads up, their backs straight and their eyes level. He told them to keep their eyes fixed on the lowest part visible to them of the Dress Circle, and to smile within as well as without, not mechanically.

Horame was standing with Vergil by one of the arc-lamps in the wings, while Hellebore <sup>was still</sup> ~~remained~~ behind the conductor's rostrum and visible from the stage. Jaques continually danced obliquely to his right, at Horame, then to his rear, at Hellebore; as he talked he made secret little signs to his chorus — his eyebrows raised urgently — so that they should impress their special audience.

The dance began and Jaques clapped his hands to the rhythm of the piano. He went among the girls as they danced; he pressed one girl's head further down as she bent forward, and lifted higher another girl's head as she danced on one foot. Continually throughout the dance he ~~started~~ cried out, to the rhythm of the music: "Heads up, backs straight, eyes

at the time, it's already half-past eleven. You should be at work now if you want to postpone.

Lorraine: ~~(Angrily)~~ We shall have to see how he goes this morning.

Eliya: By the time you have discovered that it will be too late to do anything. (Shaking Lorraine's arm) What do you intend to do?

Lorraine (paranoidly) I don't know, I simply don't know. (Kicking her lightly on the temple) I must leave you now.

Lorraine went to the very back of the stage and climbed the steep wooden stairs which led to ~~the~~ <sup>his</sup> gallery in the pier: he leaned over the rail of the gallery and waved to Eliya far below, then he turned and entered his office. He was about to go to his desk when he heard ~~on the knock~~ <sup>someone's</sup> knock on the ~~other~~ <sup>which</sup> door & communicating with the corridor in the new wing. ~~for dressing rooms~~ He opened it and saw Jean Duloi-Bordeau. He did not invite Duloi-Bordeau into the office but walked into the office corridor and closed the door behind him.

~~Jean Duloi-Bordeau: I wanted to see <sup>you</sup> before the show is under way.~~

Jean Duloi-Bordeau: I tried to see you alone all day yesterday. The Troupe's tired, Albert, and we would like to know whether you could drop us out of the next show, when Jack goes <sup>for</sup> to Spain. It will only be for a fortnight, and we should be fresher, <sup>it</sup>.

Lorraine smiled and patted Duloi-Bordeau's shoulder.

Lorraine: The season will be finished in a couple of months.

Jean Duloi-Bordeau: But we must have a rest. We are tired.

Lorraine: Listen, my dear fellow, I am not your family doctor, I am your manager. If you want to be somebody in the theatre you must be prepared to fight out your problems alone. I am alone, Jack is alone, Eiselheim is alone, you are alone — and the Théâtre de la Fête would collapse in a nice tomorrow if we all tried to lean on each other's shoulders. If you want to drop out of the contract, come and tell me so, but that will be your last chance to sign up with me, or indeed with any manager <sup>or</sup> in France and England. <sup>(of my standing)</sup> I told you at the beginning — didn't I? — how terrible success can be.

Duloi-Bordeau: My sister is a sick woman. She has to go on every night with that ulcer of hers —

Lorraine (with a gentle laugh) I am in love with a young lady, Jean, and

and that young lady refuses to take me as a husband. What will you do about that? What could you do about that? And the audience doesn't care one way or the other.

He gazed into Duloi-Bordeau's eyes, then returned to his office and closed the door, while Duloi-Bordeau remained standing in the corridor.

Elija and Charpentier met in the corridor not far from Hellebore's dressing room, on the ground floor of the new wing.

Charpentier: Have you seen Jack, my dear?

Elija: Yes, I saw him standing in the stalls just now. What has been the trouble, — you must tell me, Bernard.

Charpentier: All I know is what Albert told me, that Jack was drunk last night and sick this morning. He suspects a plot, an attempt at blackmail or larceny or some such thing, but then he usually does the day before an opening.

Elija: What was this about cancelling the show?

Charpentier: Cancelling the contract, dearest, not just the show. That was Albert at the end of ~~the~~ <sup>his</sup> patience. I pleaded for Jack, and he agreed to give <sup>him</sup> a few hours' grace.

Elija: But ~~how~~ <sup>how</sup> can you cancel a contract just before the tables <sup>are</sup> due to go up?

Charpentier: Well, of course, Albert is quite helpless. So you have seen

Jack: how does he look?

Elija: Dreadful, the poor dear. His face has swollen in all the wrong places.

Charpentier: I've just come from his dressing room. He fell onto his table and smashed a glass jar while the Virgin was away.

Elija: Has she been missing him, then?

Charpentier: She has been trying, but he evades her.

Elija: Who wouldn't?

Charpentier: Exactly.

Elija: The first thing Albert talked about in the office this morning was Michelon. He showed me one of his letters on death.

Did you know that Albert keeps all those letters clipped together into a book, with a neat index of all the subjects?

Charpentier: No, he rarely mentions Michelon to me.

Elija: I was astonished; it showed me another side of his character altogether.

Charpentier (with a chuckle) was Albert will never confess to Michelon is that he finds doing good tedious, and evil both exciting and lucrative.

Bénédict Amurat pulled back the grey dust-sheet from the first row of seats in the stalls, and with Helleclow he sat down. While Helleclow talked Amurat made notes in a long green file, and when the dancing of the chorus was over they went up to the stage. Two scene-shifters wheeled one piano off the stage and another in from the wings: this they aligned with a chalk-mark made on the boards by Amurat and the stage manager. Helleclow played a few casual notes. He touched a lever at the side of the piano and the keyboard lid fell with a bang. He nodded to the scene-shifters and they once more wheeled it into the wings. He turned to Amurat.

Helleclow: I forget to ask the Virgin for my books hat.

Amurat: Look out a moment.

He drew Helleclow by the sleeve further upstage, and they both looked up as a trapeze descended slowly from the flies at the point where Helleclow had been standing. When the lower bar was at a level with Helleclow's middle it stopped. He poised himself and made a leap forward onto it, so that he lay across its bar as if he had fallen there. He nodded to Amurat, and Amurat raised his hand as the operator in the flies: the trapeze promptly ascended again with Helleclow lying across it, — slumped forward. But suddenly he was no longer firm. He yelled out and the trapeze stopped just in time, wire feet along the boards, to prevent him falling ~~down~~ <sup>from it</sup> head first ~~down to the ground.~~

The trapeze returned to the stage and he jumped off, perspiring and <sup>shivering</sup> ~~his mouth open~~. Amurat patted him on the shoulder, and <sup>the operator</sup> ~~someone~~ in the flies shouted down: "Qu'y a-t-il?"

Helleclow: That would have been a nice fall. Let me try again. I'll leave it still this time.

Amurat shook up Helleclow's instructions in French to the flies, and Helleclow once more jumped forward onto the trapeze. He set himself <sup>firmly</sup> on the cross-bar, turning this way and that to make sure of his balance. He ~~once more~~ <sup>once</sup> nodded to Amurat, and Amurat shouted up: "Vas-y!" The trapeze went swiftly up behind the proscenium arch, with Helleclow secure on it:

then it returned to the stage and he jumped off with a smile.

In the wings Virginia handed the stage manager a tiny bowler-hat, then departed. He brought it onto the stage and attached it to a scarcely visible ~~string~~ thread which had been lowered from the flies.

The producer made a signal to someone in the wooden gallery above and the bowler-hat swung into the air: he pointed to the right and it swung to the right, then to the left and it swung to the left, upwards and it soared upwards, to the boards and it came down to rest. He consulted with Hellelone and then mounted the steps up to the wooden gallery. ~~Once there~~ He called down to Hellelone when he was ready. Hellelone stood a few paces from the

bowler-hat. He contemplated it and then approached it stealthily, and immediately it moved away from him, as if of its own accord. He tried to ~~grasp~~ grab it, but immediately it ~~flew~~ <sup>slid</sup> away and then swung upwards and away from him. It came to rest and again he plunged forward and made as if to grab it. Anurat operated the thread from one side to the other, and with pickering impatience Hellelone chased ~~the~~ <sup>it</sup> ~~bowler~~ across and around the stage.

Then he held up his hand and the hat came to a halt: it was pulled back into the flies and Hellelone, panting heavily, found a small arm-chair in the wings under the electrical switchboard.

While he sat there the producer and the stage manager supervised the erection on the stage of a taut steel wire nine or ten feet from the ground, supported between steel stays on either side of the stage and out of view to the auditorium. Each stay had a ladder, and at the top of these

ladders were little square platforms leading onto the wire. When it had been tightened sufficiently by the stagelands Hellelone mounted the ladder on the right hand side and then, standing on the platform, began chalking the soles of his slippers. He leaned back against

the platform-rest for a moment and held his lead as though it hurt him; then he stepped forward and slid his right foot along the wire. Without hesitation he walked quickly onto the wire and with tiny steps attained the other side of the stage.

There he jumped straight down from the platform. He murmured to Anurat "Too loose", and Anurat instructed two of the stagelands to tighten the wire further.

Anurat: You're trembling. Is that alright?

report and a cloud of white smoke burst from the key board and enveloped the piano, rolling and turning across the stage. The producer jumped down into the pit and when the piano was once more visible to him he pressed his stop-watch.

Amurat: That was twenty.

Hellolone: Ample, ample. We'll try it.

An electrician dismantled<sup>ed</sup> the front box from under the piano ledge and inserted a new one. Again Hellolone went to the piano and again at a sign from Amurat he began playing wildly. At the tenth second Amurat nodded to ~~the~~ an electrician in the wings, and again there was a loud report: the piano and Hellolone were enveloped in the white smoke, and his playing ceased abruptly. Out of sight from the auditorium he jumped quickly to the back of the piano near the wings and went through several actions in mime: he went through the action of taking off his shoes, then his trousers ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> his jacket, then of receiving from a stagehand in the wings another jacket and pair of trousers, then of tugging something from his right temple — all in the course of a few seconds. Now he reeled and stumbled across the stage through the smoke-cloud until he was once more in view from the auditorium: the moment he saw Amurat in the pit below he ceased miming, and Amurat ~~stopped~~ <sup>pressed</sup> his stop-watch again.

Amurat: You had ten seconds to spare. So there should be no trouble about that.

Hellolone: It's the trousers will be the trouble.

Amurat: Perhaps you could leave the others on after all.

Hellolone: No. I must have the torn ones.

Nidok went to one of the windows in Lorraine's office and gazed down at the park, quite still.

Lorraine: Are you sure?

~~Nidok: There are very seldom misunderstandings between us.~~

~~Nidok: There are seldom misunderstandings between us. On the other hand, she has a headstrong nature. I accept it.~~

Nidok: Quite sure. There are very seldom misunderstandings between us. She has a headstrong nature, ~~but~~ <sup>but</sup> I accept it.

Lorraine: I was thinking, you see, of asking her to take some permanent

Hellelone: Well, it will be.

This time he mounted the platform on the left hand side. Again he slid his right foot onto the wire and again he walked mightily along it. But this time he stopped in the middle, poised himself and jumped directly upwards with his arms outstretched. He landed back on the wire with his feet splayed outwards, so that the wire went across his insteps. Several times he repeated this, his hands on his lips, each time jumping higher, testing the wire for tautness. Then he leapt from the wire, ~~waddled to the producer~~ and the stagehands began dismantling the stage.

A garlanded staircase, ending in a vertical drop at the highest step, was next wheeled onto the stage. Its exact place was decided between Hellelone and Anurat. ~~The~~ Hellelone ran quickly up and down it. He went to the top and made a jumping somersault backwards to land upright on the fourth step down.

While it was being wheeled backstage again ~~Hellelone~~ <sup>he</sup> performed two or three cartwheels near the footlights, looked at the palms of his hands, ~~rubbed~~ rubbed his calf muscles and, with his hands on his lips, took deep and long breaths. The piano was now wheeled back onto the left-hand side of the stage, and the producer called ~~Hellelone~~ <sup>him</sup> over.

Hellelone: I shall want ten seconds.

Anurat took out a stop-watch. Hellelone stood in front of the piano and at a signal from Anurat bent his trunk forward, hit the keys with <sup>the</sup> palms of both hands to make a chaotic discordance, then began playing wildly and furiously snatches of several tunes. At the tenth second Anurat raised his hand and Hellelone ceased playing.

Producer: Ten seconds. Bang. Good.

Two scenerylifters brought a small box from the wings with a wire attached to it. This they inserted under the ledge of the piano above the keyboard, then they ran its wire along <sup>out of sight</sup> ~~the~~ the ledge, down a leg of the piano and thus ~~to~~ to a detonator mechanism operated in the wings. Hellelone and Anurat walked across to the other side of the stage. An electrician in the wings pressed a detonator button and instantly there was a loud

## IV Albert's Bottomless Pit

work in this theatre.

Nidok: Yes, but she isn't unhappy with me. You must allow for her temperament: suddenly she will turn on someone, — then it's all over. Believe me. I have known her many years.

horraine: Well, she did talk last night as if she were a little discontented.

Nidok: But do you think it is safe to judge any woman by her words?

horraine: She is usually sincere with me.

Nidok: Try, then. Ask her to take some permanent work here. But I don't ~~not~~ think <sup>she</sup> ~~you~~ will <sup>hear</sup> ~~succeed~~ of it.

horraine: Would you be willing to let her go if she did agree?

Nidok: Yes, certainly. But I know she won't hear of it. (Chattering his gage) Of course, I do understand your concern for Eliza. I am not trying to interfere with that.

horraine: Of course not.

They said no more to each other for some time. Then Nidok turned from the window and faced horraine.

Nidok (secretively) How is Mr Finstanley this morning?

horraine looked down quickly and blinked, with Nidok's dark, narrow eyes upon him.

horraine: We must give him time to find his feet again, you know.

Nidok: I saw him slip on the trapeze this morning. I thought that was unusual.

There was a knock on the door and Charpentier entered. Charpentier: Jack has been rehearsing for the last half-hour. Good morning, Heinrich.

Nidok (without a smile) Good morning, Mr Charpentier.

horraine (watching Nidok as he rose) Well go down together, then, and have a look at him.

The conductor played several dances on the piano and during each of them Hellelove danced a few steps so that between them they could determine the speed at which the music should be taken. The conductor marked his score according to Hellelove's instructions.

Nidok left horraine and Charpentier in the

in the corridor: they walked together down to the stage and crossed it while Helleose was leaning over the conductor's shoulder to look at a score. They found Anurat with an electrician in the wings, and all three descended to the first row of the stalls.

Horaine: I heard he slipped on the trapeze.

Anurat: Oh, that was nothing to speak of. But he does seem to be trembling a great deal this morning.

Horaine (restlessly) How is everything going to be coordinated at such short notice? What are the chances of an utter fiasco tonight?

Anurat (with surprise) Well, Jack is under-rehearsed, but he isn't the entire show.

Horaine: No, he is the heart and purpose of it. Only that!

Anurat (with surprise) Well, only Jack is under-rehearsed; everything else is alright.

Horaine: Only Jack! Isn't he the heart and purpose of the entire show?

Anurat: You misunderstand me. I meant that since ~~everything~~ <sup>everything</sup> else in the show was well rehearsed and coordinated, Jack could be left to himself. I meant that everything ~~else~~ <sup>apart from Jack</sup> in the show was well rehearsed

Horaine: Do you think so? and coordinated, and that <sup>as for</sup> Jack <sup>himself</sup> could be

Anurat: Don't you? depended on to look after himself.

Horaine: Do you think so?

Anurat (impatiently) Bernard, what is the matter with our manager this morning?

Charpentier: A severe attack of First Night nerves. You must always watch his lips on these occasions: they are a true barometer of his feelings.

Charpentier: First Night nerves, my dear chap. He hears your words but not your meaning.

Horaine (more wildly) What's he up to now?

Anurat: He's making one his dances with the conductor.

Horaine:

in the corridor: they walked together down to the stage and crossed it <sup>18 ii)</sup> while Hellewell was leaning over the conductor's shoulder to look at a score. They found Anurat with an electrician in the wings, and all three descended to the first row of the stalls.

Horraine: I heard he slipped on the trapeze.

Anurat: Oh, that was nothing to speak of. But he does seem to be trembling a great deal this morning.

Horraine (tetchily) How is everything going to be coordinated at such short notice? What are the chances of an utter fiasco tonight?

Anurat (with surprise) Well, only Jack is under-rehearsed; everything else is all right.

Horraine: Only Jack! Only the heart and purpose of the entire show!

Anurat: You misunderstand me. I mean that everything in the show apart from Jack was well rehearsed and coordinated, and that as for Jack he could be depended on to look after himself.

Horraine: Do you think so?

Anurat (impatiently) Bernard, what is the matter with our manager this morning?

Carpentier: First Night leaves, my dear chap. He hears your words but not your meaning.

Horraine: All I am asking is whether anybody, anybody in the world, can expect to give a performance which looks to the audience with a patched-up or improvised (or half-a-day's rehearsal) Remember this, Benedict: that Jack hasn't seen a theatre this size for five years.

Anurat (pestered) Of course, that is a consideration, but a consideration for you, not for me. You sign the people up, I don't. And <sup>you</sup> laid this plan before me a month ago. You called me into your office and told me that everything else in the show must be prepared in such a way that Jack could slip into it with perfect ease on the very day of the opening performance. Do you deny it? Do you deny that what you are witnessing this morning is the unfolding of your own plan as you laid it before me a month ago?

Horraine: I am denying nothing, and I am not apportioning blame. ~~But~~ I ~~am~~ <sup>am</sup> ~~being~~ asking a question. What are the chances of a fiasco tonight?

Anurat: And all I can say is ~~that~~ what I have said, that the show apart from Jack is thoroughly coordinated and rehearsed. Its success now rests with one man, and that man is Jack. I know my tasks, the stage manager knows his, the conductor knows his, and so do

the electricians and the stagehands. The chorus dances better than it has  
ever done before; Nilok is of fine mettle, the Deli-Bordeaux's  
have rehearsed until now they can barely stand up. But for  
Helleore I cannot vouch: ~~at~~ I can <sup>only</sup> vouch for ~~my~~ my own faith  
in him and my own quite private <sup>Expectations</sup>. Everything has been  
prepared for him, and the success of the show is now between himself  
~~and divine providences and the gods.~~ Perhaps he is under-rehearsed,  
perhaps not; but only he is the judge of that. Such men defy  
prediction. For my part I can do no more than what I have done: from  
now on our eyes are on him alone. What happens in this theatre  
to-night only he can decide. ~~He sets out on his journey alone the~~  
~~moment my work is finished.~~ From beginning to end he is <sup>his</sup> own master.  
All I can do is to prepare the way for him and give him help when  
he asks for it.

noname:

They turned and looked at the stage.

Chapenter: There you are, look at that. He's still a showman.

Hellelove performed a number of very fast cartwheels, flinging his body over with an immense force.

Horaine: When they reach that age — Now you look at that.

On the rebound from his last cartwheel Hellelove slipped backwards: he managed to right himself, but not without pulling one of his calf-muscles painfully. He limped to the armchair in the wings and sat down.

Horaine: ~~This is one of my most tempting dreams made real, Bernard.~~ It is an exact repetition, <sup>of my most fearful dream,</sup> even to the point of the strange intruder in the dead of night. Even I was not superstitious enough to believe that my worst fears could materialise in such close detail. In future I shall pay more attention to those foolish fears of mine; apparently there is less folly in them than you or I or anybody else thought.

Chapenter: But I'm afraid that if you begin taking note of your fears and premonitions, Albert, you will never float another show or take another business risk as long as you live, and you will end a pauper.

Scene 3:  
~~Step 2~~ The same, two hours later.

At noon each day during rehearsals the Common Tower became a dining room for the artists and members of the orchestra: the armchairs and cocktail-tables were moved back to the walls, and round mahogany tables and stiff-backed chairs were brought in.

Helen Eugenie, Nidok's second stage assistant, was taller and older than Eliya. She was somber, her hands were long <sup>collar</sup> <sup>at ear</sup> and she was <sup>always</sup> dressed in black, with a black lace high in the neck. ~~She sat with Hellelove, and Eliya~~ <sup>and Helen Eugenie sat</sup> ~~near one of the windows of the Common Tower, talking after their lunch.~~ <sup>at a little after two</sup>

The clouds were still low, but up and again there was a sharp ray of sunlight from between them which lit up the lounge suddenly and then died quickly down. Hellelove was dressed in a light country-tweed suit.

Helen: You haven't said a kind word <sup>to him</sup> since we arrived in Paris, and goodness knows what you've been saying behind his back. If he makes you so unhappy why don't you leave him and find other work?

Eliya: What other work?

Helen: Oh, my dear girl, Horaine would <sup>surely</sup> find something for you.

Eliya: Yes, with certain conditions attached.

the electricians and the stagehands. The chorus dances better than it has ever done before; Midok is in fine fettle; the Duloi-Bordeaux's have rehearsed until now they can barely stand up. But for Hellebore I cannot vouch: I can only vouch for my own faith in him and my own quite private expectations. Everything has been prepared for him, and the success of the show is now between himself and the gods. Perhaps he is under-rehearsed, perhaps not: but only he is the judge of that. Such men defy prediction. For my part I can do no more than what I have done: from now on our eyes are on him alone. What happens in this theatre tonight only he can decide. From beginning to end he is his own master. All I can do is to prepare the way for him and give him help when he asks for it.

Lorraine: Has he been on the wire yet?

Amurat: Yes, about twenty minutes ago.

Lorraine: He didn't slip, — he only slipped on the trapeze, I understand?

Amurat: On the wire he was perfectly steady, though, as I say, he has been trembling <sup>rather strangely</sup> ~~more than usual~~ this morning. But try as you may

you won't be able to predict his performance tonight from his rehearsals this morning: it can never be done. All you have to go on are your own predictions.

Bénédict!

Chapentier: For the lord's sake don't leave him alone with those, ~~They~~ <sup>they</sup> are notoriously dismal.

A voice in the wings called out for Amurat and he returned to the stage. Lorraine and Chapentier walked slowly up the centre gangway.

Chapentier: Are you persuaded yet that he isn't after all finished?

Lorraine: Almost, yes, but I find it difficult to forget his own words. You know I shall blame you if anything goes wrong tonight, don't you?

Chapentier: <sup>Lorraine</sup> (with a smile) Of course, my dear Albert; you are a master of retort and recrimination.

Lorraine: Well, forewarned is forearmed.

Chapentier: When are we meeting for our traditional little conference?

Lorraine (uncomfortably) Which conference?

Chapentier: Oh, not the conference you were going to call this morning.

Divine providence took charge of that. No, I mean the one we always have — you, Jack and myself — on the day of the opening performance.

Lorraine: At three o'clock this afternoon.

on the stage thirty-four years ago. He loves silence; I have seen him stand in some of those Bavarian valleys as if <sup>he</sup> were listening to their silence. I know exactly how he would feel if you tried to talk to him, — you must trust my knowledge of him. He would be sly and tongue-tied; he would feel as if he were stuck fast in a terrible mire and being sucked down. His only thought would be to get himself free, to find himself again in silence and solitude. He would be like a caught animal, and your own pity and compassion would make you set him free again. You would see for yourself what I mean, but I want you to trust what I say and not even try to see him; I do my best to protect him, you see, Jack. When he is allowed to be alone for hours on end and to go through the day without a lot of words, he feels free and clean and wholesome; his eyes look rested and calm, and one feels very secure in his company. But I know exactly when he has been troubled with long conversations with people, because his eyes are no longer clear, he looks a little Jewish, his walk is uncertain, his mouth is less resolved, he moves his arms about awkwardly, — he is no longer master of himself; a ghastly fever has got the better of him.

Eliya: But in any case he hates Jack.

Helen: Oh, Eliya... You say these rash things, but do you think whether they are true or not?

Eliya: I know that's true. I can use my own eyes. (Turning to Hellebore) They both hate you. If she could put an end to your career tomorrow she'd do it, for Heinrich's sake. She'd lay the whole world waste for Heinrich's sake. Everything she does is for Heinrich —

Helen (near tears) No, Eliya, no!

Eliya: She goes everywhere with that horrible set suite of lies; it means she's thinking about Heinrich. Dear Heinrich —

Hellebore (disgusted) Oh, shut up. What the ~~body~~ hell's it got to do with me? Wine?

He held the wine bottle diagonally before Helen, and she shook her head. He held it before Eliya, and she merely averted her eyes without uttering a word. He filled his own glass and laid the bottle down meditatively.

Helen (to Hellebore) Forgive her. She is only acting out her little melodrama.

Hellebore: No, she isn't acting anything.

Helen: Still, it might make you see Heinrich in a better light. Never has he once done you an unkindness. Never once has he even snapped at you —

Eliya <sup>(bitterly)</sup> No. He never talks, that's why. It's the silence I can't bear.

Helen: Well, I should try noisier work if I were you, and then perhaps you'd call his silence peace of mind, and run back to it like a naughty child. I suppose you have noticed that he never answers your rudeness?

Eliya: Yes, but I wish he would answer me just once; I wish he'd smack my face or call me a slowwly little litch. Imagine Heinrich calling me a slowwly little litch, Jack!

Helen: I dare say you could find cruel and foul-mouthed employes enough; there are plenty of them in our profession. Why don't you go out and look for one?

Eliya: Because I am lazy and stupid. I want a husband and I want children. There is nothing Heinrich can do about that, but you'd think that if he were as holy as you say he is he would try to give me a little comfort. A little comfort, I don't know what, but a holy man would know, — so you would think, wouldn't you? Yes, Jack, one called him holy the other day. She worships him.

Hellclaw (shyly, to Helen) Do you think I ought to have a word with him about Eliya? She isn't happy —

Eliya: Yes, tell him I've been in love with you for the last ten years; what could his business do about that?

Helen (perhaps a little panic-stricken by Hellclaw's proposal) It wouldn't be wise, Jack. You would only hurt him and achieve nothing for Eliya.

Hellclaw: How would I hurt him?

Helen (with difficulty) All I can tell you is that he would become quite silent. He would stand there as if he were paralysed and dumb.

At the best of times he is shy with men — whereas with women he relies on his instincts. How can I explain it? He hates putting his feelings into words. They seem insufficient to him; they always belie his feelings and get him into trouble. Words hurt him. He told me once ~~that~~ he would like to go through life in an unbroken silence; all his communications with other people would be in silence, ~~and therefore deeper~~. That is why he has never once uttered a word during one of his acts since he first went

Helen: Isn't it possible that he advises Jack, and watches him with awe?

Elija: Don't degrade yourself, Helen! Watch him with awe! Why, whenever I mention Jack in his company he jumps out of his shoes.

Helen: Well, I'm glad you say all this to me and not to his face. If only you'd take the trouble to understand him, as I have...

Elija: I'm even tired of talking about him. You can give me some wine now, Jack.

Hellelone filled her glass and winked at her: she took a sip of her wine, looked pained, as if the taste displeased her, then set her glass down again.

Elija: I don't know why I drink this yellow piss. I loved Campenchy Bay last year because they had all those beautiful fruit drinks. You can keep your vintage wine.

Helen: You can't forgive Heinrich his strangeness, can you? You want everyone to be hail-fellow-well-met.

Elija (with bitter gaiety) Yes, I do.

Helen: But since you spend so much time with him don't you think you ought to try and understand him?

Elija: Does he try and understand me?

Helen: He knows you as a mother knows the fruit of her own womb. You hate his strangeness, but he has always been strange. (Coolly determined to vindicate Eiselheim) He <sup>even</sup> believes in fairies, like a child.

Why don't you laugh?

Elija: I don't want to laugh.

Helen: Most people would, and I thought you preferred most people to me so unique and strange. Yes, he believes in fairies, and he adores birds. (Her eyes fixed on Elija) I have seen him talking to birds in the Piaggia Catalina in Barcelona, with all the Spaniards staring at him. He can speak to birds, you know, and make them understand. And shall I tell you something about his childhood? He was the son of an officer in the Prussian army. He never knew family life in the proper sense. ~~He seldom saw~~

~~his father, and most of his childhood was spent among his~~  
~~with a circle of officers' wives in any case his father was killed~~  
when he was five, and before that he had only seen him three or four times. With his mother he travelled from one town to another and one country to another incessantly year after year. He was a dreaming child, and his dreams were what he could carry from one place to another without damaging them. He spent his childhood among

Helen: He's so considerate, Jack; she has nothing at all to complain of.

Hellelone: I think he is fond of him, Helen, but there, he never addresses a word to her...

Helen: That's his nature, which God gave him. I'm used to it, because I've taken the trouble to know and understand him. She would never take that trouble.

Hellelone: She isn't the nicest kind. She enjoys talking. She behaves very naturally. The two of you are driving her out of her mind. I never say I wouldn't like to spend my life with people who sat and stared at me and never said a word. You've aged her in the last five years. I can see that, having been away for five years. She's so touchy now.

Helen: ~~You say <sup>you</sup> 'the two of you' as if Heinrich and I~~

Helen: You say "the two of you" as if Heinrich and I were in a conspiracy together.

Eliza (quietly, her eyes lovingly on Hellelone) You are. I'm sure you do horrible things together, like putting spells on people.

Helen (with pity) ~~seems to make the suggestion indications~~ You don't believe that, do you, Eliza?

Eliza: Yes, I do; you told me yourself that you believed in his spells.

Helen (devoutly) I believe in a certain power he has to change natural events. I believe some very rare and extraordinary human beings have that power.

Eliza: Well, then, I say he tries to practice spells on people, and with your help. When he looks at me sometimes with those holy eyes of his which never move he terrifies me. I'm not saying that I believe in his power or take his spells seriously, but — yes, that's the right word, you two are in a conspiracy. If you could do it by spells you'd murder Jack in his bed.

Helen: Do you think Heinrich is professionally so incompetent that he would have to, much less want to, resort to these methods?

Eliza: It always hurts him to think of Jack's position in the theatre.

Helen (with calm logic) Why does he accept a contract in one of Jack's most important shows?

Eliza: Because Jack fascinates him. I can feel him watching Jack all the time, trying to discover his secret, measuring him with that holy coolness of his.

the women friends of his mother, most of them officers' wives. These women were restless. They would do anything to ~~disturb themselves~~ kill time. They played games of hypnosis with professional hypnotists, they were always finding new card-tricks, and they were all enthusiastic astrologers. In effect Heinrich was bred and educated by these restless and superstitious women, some of whom were German, others Poles, others French, and others Rumanian. From them he learned his silence, his separateness and his dark powers. Already as a child he dreamed his way silently through each day; and no doubt he was already as a child making enemies like yourself, enemies whose hatred he never <sup>ought to</sup> provoke, and therefore never deserved. (Glancing at Helene, then at Eliya)

And shall I tell you how old he is,? — this young man who is so full of spite and murderousness? He is fifty-four years old, Eliya.

Helene and Eliya looked at him <sup>with surprise.</sup> ~~in amazement~~ Helene: Yes, he was born just after the outbreak of the Austro-Russian War. But there, he doesn't need my defence. He is so sufficient to himself, and he was probably no less <sup>so</sup> when he was four years old.

Helene wiped the sweat from his upper lip with a handkerchief and pulled one of his windows down. For a few minutes he stood still by the window and watched three children playing in the park below, ~~all of them under ten years old~~ then he returned with a sigh to his desk. He rubbed his right ear and shifted in his chair. There was not a sound in the office. He put his hand on the telephone receiver but immediately withdrew it. He took a memorandum book from the edge of his desk and began writing: "You said that everything in the world was my responsibility so long as I thought about it, and that the more I think about the more I am responsible for, I must have this clear, when I am face to face with you I <sup>feel</sup> am empty. I want the strength to say what is in my mind, or rather the strength to bring back to my mind the thoughts which your presence frightened away. I have a lot to tell you about pride. You said that a man can also sin by failing to do good. What did I fail to do? What am I failing to do now?"

He went to <sup>the</sup> windows and looked out again. The three children were no longer visible. The telephone bell rang and he disregarded it. He returned to his desk and wrote the

following words: "If only I could be granted a moment of innocence."

Virginie Dupont's private room was on the ground floor of the new wing, behind the stage end at the very back of the theatre. Its one window gave out onto the park, the same area of park that could be seen, two floors above, from the windows of Albert Lorraine's office. It was a very small room, and an elm-tree immediately outside the window made it dark at all times of the day. ~~As we entered the room there was a deep violet divan bed under the window, a dressing table against the wall nearest the door, two armchairs and in the middle of the room, on the Persian carpet, a very light crimson. Most of its gaudy furniture had at one time been stage properties. Under the window there was a violet divan <sup>and</sup> with large, plump satin-covered cushions, on it a Persian carpet, cut from a much larger one which had been used for the stage, covered all the floor; against the wall by the door there was a dressing-table with an <sup>inlaid</sup> top. Most of its <sup>the</sup> gaudy furniture had <sup>clearly</sup> ~~at one time~~ been stage properties <sup>at one time</sup> ~~with the result~~ that each piece stood <sup>at</sup> ~~of~~ <sup>the window</sup> ~~the other~~. Under <sup>the</sup> ~~these~~ was a violet divan with satin-covered cushions, and against the wall near the door there was a ~~heavy black~~ dressing-table with an <sup>ebony-inlaid</sup> ~~inlaid~~ <sup>on</sup> ~~marble~~ <sup>top</sup>. In the middle of the room, on a fragment of rich Persian carpet, stood a <sup>ll</sup> ~~long~~ <sup>of</sup> ~~of~~ (a ~~very~~ light crimson). Nailed <sup>onto</sup> ~~into~~ the walls ~~there~~ were tinkets, gold-framed medallions bearing the portraits of past actors and actresses, cuttings from old newspapers, a silver-plated concifix, signed visiting cards with signatures on them, and, near the dressing-table, a long polished cutlass with a blue ribbon and tassel at its handle. In the hearth there was a gas-fire, and at this moment it was alight.~~

Francine Dupont  
~~Virginie's~~ ~~Dupont~~

Virginie lay on the divan dressed in a white working smock, and in the armchair next to the gas-fire, facing the window and the divan, sat Henry Sampson. Francine Virginie (turning her head towards the window, gazing at the elm-tree) You killed people when you were a soldier, and now you're ashamed of it. That's why you are always talking about murder, because you yourself are a murderer.

Sangson: Yes, perhaps you are right.

He leaned forward to warm his hands at the gas-fire. Neither spoke for a few moments.

~~Francine~~ <sup>Francine</sup> ~~Virginia~~: What made you go and see him?

Sangson: Edgar Finstanley asked me to. And I wanted to on my own account.

~~Francine~~ <sup>Francine</sup> ~~Virginia~~: But why?

Sangson: Well, I told you long ago how important he was to both of us. We lived among the dead, and death seemed the worst either of us could look forward to. We lived among dead things, everything we touched was dead, every noise denoted the nearness of death. ~~We were~~

~~everything with a dead hand laid out in~~ In our world the worst always happened. We were young. I still am young. (bitterly) Naturally, I wanted to see

Hellelwe. I needed to see him. I wanted to get back a little warmth into my frozen fingers.

~~Francine~~ <sup>Francine</sup> ~~Virginia~~: But you made him ill. Did that make you feel warmer? This morning he was sick, and this evening he'll be unfit to go on the stage. If he makes a mess of it you'll be to blame. (leaning

forward on her elbows, frowning at him) What made you call on him so late at night? What made you take him along to that club?

Sangson (lowering his eyes) You told me he kept late hours and I expected to find him with his guests.

~~Francine~~ <sup>Francine</sup> ~~Virginia~~ (lying back angrily) Well, he needs to <sup>protecting</sup> ~~be~~ <sup>protected</sup>

against people like you. I don't know how he can possibly get through his act tonight; I've never seen him look so ill. You've a fine one to talk about murder.

Her cheeks were a little flushed as she spoke. Sangson looked at her in silence.

Sangson: You feel warmer towards him than you do towards me. I can see that.

<sup>Francine</sup> ~~Waggoner~~ (losing her patience) But you've been thinking about yourself all the time! You called on him to get back a little warmth into your fingers, — into your fingers. And now you are wanting more warmth out of me.

Sangson (disturbed) No, I didn't mean that. I think you are right to feel more warmly towards him. I wasn't asking for pity. (with a smile) If you think I was, you aren't a good judge of men.

<sup>Francine</sup> ~~Waggoner~~ (more agreeably) But you were wrong to go there at midnight and upset him, my dear. You make the mistake of talking too plainly to people. You don't realize how all this miserable talk about murder and death and emptiness may affect some of them. You shouldn't have called on him at midnight, and you shouldn't have talked to him about his own son. (Shaking her head in perplexity) I don't know, — you seem to ~~just~~ go along like a blind man. ~~sometimes~~ You behave <sup>sometimes</sup> as if you were soft in the head. ~~sometimes~~ Even now you don't seem to realize what you did last night: you don't seem to realize that Jack may make a mess of everything tonight.

just because of you. You don't seem to realise you may have murdered a great career.

Sampson (warming his hands again) Perhaps I don't think I have murdered a great career.

Virginia: We shall see tonight. Look at you, — even now you don't seem to be grasping what I say.

Sampson shrugged his shoulders, and they said nothing for some time.

Virginia (coldly) If you were a self-sufficient person you would never have called in him and upset him like that. You only did it because you ~~can't stand~~ can't stand on your own feet. You have to suck other people to death in order to live. You aren't self-sufficient, not as Jack must have been when he was your age.

Sampson (with resignation) Oh, come, — you're only trying to be cruel.

Virginia: Your job is jewel-cutting, but you aren't interested in it as other men are interested in their work. You aren't capable of leading your own life: that's why you called in Jack last night. ~~When you were a soldier~~ <sup>During the war</sup> you killed

people like every other soldier, but now you won't forget it, and <sup>you</sup> won't let other people forget it. (with sudden

anger) Why couldn't you have gone off to war like everybody else and done your job, <sup>like everybody else,</sup> and come back to your old life with just a few more stories to tell? ~~Without~~

~~their fuss??~~ and then come back without all this fuss and bother?

Sampson: Don't the others make any fuss?

Virginia: No.

Sampson: The fools don't, I agree.

Virginia: Well, where <sup>an answer</sup> your nodon get you? No further than  
a jeweller's shop (Turning her head towards him) Suppose there had  
never been a war? What would have happened to you?

Sampson: I think I <sup>would</sup> ~~should~~ have taken up a teacher's certificate  
and taught in a country school. I'd ~~have married, no doubt,~~  
and I'd ~~have read my books on archaeology and the English~~  
~~churches. I <sup>would</sup> ~~should~~ have wanted, and I think I would have~~  
~~followed up my archaeological interests ~~that~~~~ I would have married,  
no doubt. And I would have joined an archaeological society.  
But the point is ~~that~~ I ~~shouldn't~~ have watched myself living,  
as I do now. The War taught me to do that.

Virginia: ~~That only means~~

Virginia: You haven't found the friends proper to you

Francine: You haven't found your proper friends, — that's all  
you mean. You are with the wrong people. The Celida's aren't  
your kind, nor am I, really.

Sampson: But <sup>where</sup> ~~are~~ are the right people? Nowhere.

Francine  
Virginia: Exactly. You aren't self-sufficient.

Sampson rose and went to the window. He  
stood at the end of the divan where Virginia lay. He looked  
across the lawn of the park.

Sampson: You must try to understand what I tell you. War was  
a kind of religious experience for me: it is holy for me.  
I went out to Flanders to suffer, not to kill people. I went  
to die rather than to kill. War was a crucifixion for  
me. I went out to be crucified. (looking down at her)  
And somehow — I can't tell you why — I expected to suffer my  
crucifixion without dying. And that was my terrible error,  
to believe that I was inviolate. How did I expect to

Charpentier: From the pit, yes, but never backstage, to touch with my own fingers. ~~For sequin jacket~~ When does he wear this sequin jacket?

Remind me.

Francine  
~~Virginia~~: I don't think he used it for his last two shows in Paris, but before then he did his trapeze work in it.

Charpentier: It used to make those flashes, — of course. And the big shoes — I remember them well. (Taking one of them up) It must be two feet

long?  
Francine:  
~~Virginia~~: I know exactly how long they are, — in French measurements: twenty centimetres. But that part (pointing out the toe) is stuffed with a very lighty material, so that it can flap up and down. It makes a smacking noise when he walks.

Charpentier: And where are the removable tails?

Francine:  
~~Virginia~~: Here, look.

20 cm = 24"?

~~She picked up from~~

She brought up the tails of a morning jacket from under the sequin suit, then the jacket itself — like a Spanish jacket — onto which the tails clipped.

Charpentier: Yes, yes, I remember that clearly. I remember him tumbling one and over.

Francine:  
~~Virginia~~: Feel for the little water-tank. Can you feel it?

She handed a pair of black trousers, and he felt in the right hand pocket.

Charpentier: Yes, I can feel it. Those are his tears?

Francine:  
~~Virginia~~: Yes.

Charpentier: And I can remember the outside check suit. He used it for the shooting parties. But no gun. No gun this year?

Francine:  
~~Virginia~~: No. Perhaps he won't use it this season.

Charpentier: And why the cowles-hat and this horse-whip?

He lifted up first a tiny cowles-hat, no more than six inches wide, and then a long horse-whip of the type used in circuses.

Francine:  
~~Virginia~~: I have never seen them before. But these they were, among his other costumes. It is something new, I dare say.

Charpentier: But I know what these are for. Don't you?

He took from a <sup>deep</sup> box on the table two or three white china eggs.

This morning.

Hellelme: Released...

Eliza: Stop biting at each other.

Hellelme: Take him for a walk, Eliza. Make him say his beads.

Just as <sup>Francine Dupont</sup> ~~Virginie~~ ~~Borges~~ laid Hellelme's sequin suit across the table Charpentier entered. He glanced at the couch.

<sup>Francine</sup> ~~Virginie~~ (turning) I suppose you are looking for Jack?

Charpentier: Yes, and the bird appears to have flown.

<sup>Francine</sup> ~~Virginie~~: He must have gone up to the stage, but God knows what he has been doing with himself.

Charpentier: Have you seen him, then?

<sup>Francine</sup> ~~Virginie~~: Yes, and he needs looking after. He is really ill.

Charpentier: Oh, he was only a little drunk last night.

<sup>Francine</sup> ~~Virginie~~: I came back just now and found one of his pocket-jobs on the floor?

Charpentier: Broken, you mean? How?

<sup>Francine</sup> ~~Virginie~~: Perhaps he fell against the table. ~~He is sick, tell you~~ That comes smells of vomit. What chance will he stand this evening?

Charpentier: Only he himself knows.

Virginie went behind the screen to her sewing table.

Charpentier: Ah, so these are the legendary accoutrements!

He approached the table where Hellelme's costumes lay.

Charpentier: Let me touch them. May I?

<sup>Francine</sup> ~~Virginie~~ (from behind the screen) By all means.

Charpentier (lifting <sup>a pirotto's dress</sup> ~~the sequin suit~~ with awe) It is like touching ancient parchments. I can already see them in museum exhibits. ~~The~~

~~pirotto's dress, with pom-pom and neck-fills - how he will what~~  
I remember these pom-poms and neck-fill - what will he use this pirotto's dress <sup>for</sup> ~~Virginie~~ <sup>Francine</sup>?

~~Virginie~~: He always used it for his entrance, but I don't know what he means to do with it tonight.

Charpentier: Yes, I remember those sudden entrances in white.

<sup>Francine</sup> ~~Virginie~~: Onto an empty stage

Charpentier: Yes.

<sup>Francine</sup> ~~Virginie~~ (joining him) Haven't you seen his stuff before?

level: and ~~when~~ a girl danced <sup>down</sup> at the floor or the footlights, he ran forward and scolded her.

During the dance Benedict Anurov entered the stage, peered down into the pit, saw Hellebore and then descended. Hellebore walked along the gangway to meet him and they shook hands.

Nidok watched Eliza from the other side of the stage, then walked behind the clowns to where she stood with horraine. As he passed her he turned slightly to speak, after the briefest smile at horraine.

Nidok: Do you happen to know where Helen is?

Eliza (ruddy): Not you? Surely you know?

He immediately drew back in surprise; he looked at her appalled for a moment, then smiled.

Nidok: No. I am afraid I do not.

He bowed slightly to them both and left the stage. horraine put his arm in Eliza's and drew her closer to him.

horraine: Now, Eliza, now...

Eliza: Now what?

horraine: You are so rude to him, my dear.

Eliza: I can't hear a thing with this piano!

horraine (in her ear): Why are you so rude to Sisallarin? He hasn't the right nature to deal with your rudeness. Why do you do it?

Eliza: Well, why do you quarrel with Tack?

horraine: Yes, I suppose we all have our reasons.

Eliza: What has been <sup>the trouble between you?</sup> ~~happening~~? I still want to know, and I shall worry you until you tell me.

horraine: There are always disagreements in the first week, Eliza. They are a form of First Night nerves. They help to brace one up -

Eliza: Tell me the truth. (Fixing her eyes on him) Have you been talking <sup>to him</sup> about postponement again this morning?

horraine (uncomfortably): No. Not yet.

Eliza: Have you?

horraine: We talked about cancelling his contract, you see.

Eliza: Cancelling? You have both gone mad.

horraine: But he is no fit state to give a performance today at cau Tausmas. You saw his face yourself, didn't you, when the lights came on again?

Eliza: Then I can't understand why the rehearsals are going on. Look

Francine (with a nod)  
Vergil: Yes. So does Eiselheim, I fear.

Charpentier: Yes, there may be a little trouble about that. Where are the kerchiefs, the top-hats and the other incriminating articles?

Francine  
Vergil: In the cupboard. I dare not put them out on the table lest Eiselheim or Helen should come in.

Charpentier: Eliya would love the idea, of course.

Francine  
Vergil: Oh, Eliya — she is disloyal.

Charpentier: Do you think so? (Replacing the china eggs slowly, then going towards the door) Your English is remarkably fluent now. Where did you learn it?

Francine  
Vergil: That is my secret.

Charpentier: You are a relentless woman... Adieu.

The chorus of fifteen girls filed into the stage, and Jaques, the dancing master, was behind them. He trotted nimbly downstage and stood with his back to the footlights; he was a small man, quick and loud-voiced. He made a peremptory signal <sup>with his hand</sup> and bowed, and his girls moved quickly into line before him. He told them in French, pronouncing his words slowly and clearly, to keep their heads up, their backs straight and their eyes level. He told them to keep their eyes fixed on the lowest part visible to them of the Dress Circle, and to smile within as well as without, not mechanically.

Horame was standing with Vergil by one of the arc-lamps in the wings, while Hellebore <sup>was still</sup> ~~remained~~ behind the conductor's rostrum and visible from the stage. Jaques continually danced obliquely to his right, at Horame, then to his rear, at Hellebore; as he talked he made secret little signs to his chorus — his eyebrows raised urgently — so that they should impress this special audience.

The dance began and Jaques clapped his hands to the rhythm of the piano. He went among the girls as they danced; he pressed one girl's head further down as she bent forward, and lifted higher another girl's head as she danced on one foot. Continually throughout the dance he ~~started~~ cried out, to the rhythm of the music: "Heads up, backs straight, eyes

at the time, it's already half-past eleven. You should be at work now if you want to postpone.

hormaine: ~~(Angrily)~~ We shall have to see how he goes this morning.

Eliya: By the time you have discovered that it will be too late to do anything. (Shaking hormaine's arm) What do you intend to do?

hormaine (paranoidly) I don't know, I simply don't know. (Kicking her lightly on the temple) I must leave you now.

hormaine went to the very back of the stage and climbed the steep wooden stairs which led to ~~the~~ <sup>his</sup> gallery in the pier: he leaned over the rail of the gallery and waved to Eliya far below, then he turned and entered his office. He was about to go to his desk when he heard ~~on the knock~~ <sup>someone's</sup> knock on the ~~other~~ <sup>which</sup> door & communicating with the corridor in the new wing. ~~for dressing rooms~~ He opened it and saw Jean Duloi-Bordeau. He did not invite Duloi-Bordeau into the office but walked into the office corridor and closed the door behind him.

~~Jean Duloi-Bordeau: I wanted to see you before the show is under way.~~

Jean Duloi-Bordeau: I tried to see you alone all day yesterday. The Troupe's tired, Albert, and we would like to know whether you could drop us out of the next show, when Jack goes to Spain. It will only be for a fortnight, and we should be fresher <sup>for</sup> it.

hormaine smiled and patted Duloi-Bordeau's shoulder.

hormaine: The season will be finished in a couple of months.

Jean Duloi-Bordeau: But we must have a rest. We are tired.

hormaine: Listen, my dear fellow, I am not your family doctor, I am your manager. If you want to be somebody in the theatre you must be prepared to fight out your problems alone. I am alone, Jack is alone, Eiselheim is alone, you are alone — and the Théâtre de la Fête would collapse in a nice tomorrow if we all tried to lean on each other's shoulders. If you want to drop out of the contract, come and tell me so, but that will be your last chance to sign up with me, or indeed with any manager <sup>or</sup> in France and England. (of my standing) I told you at the beginning — didn't I? — how terrible success can be.

Duloi-Bordeau: My sister is a sick woman. She has to go on every night with that ulcer of hers —

hormaine (with a gentle shove) I am in love with a young lady, Jean, and

and that young lady refuses to take me as a husband. What will you do about that? What could you do about that? And the audience doesn't care one way or the other.

He gazed into Duloi-Bordeau's eyes, then returned to his office and closed the door, while Duloi-Bordeau remained standing in the corridor.

Eliya and Charpentier met in the corridor not far from Hellebore's dressing room, on the ground floor of the new wing.

Charpentier: Have you seen Jack, my dear?

Eliya: Yes, I saw him standing in the stalls just now. What has been the trouble, — you must tell me, Bernard.

Charpentier: All I know is what Albert told me, that Jack was drunk last night and sick this morning. He suspects a plot, an attempt at blackmail or larceny or some such thing, but then he usually does the day before an opening.

Eliya: What was this about cancelling the show?

Charpentier: Cancelling the contract, dearest, not just the show. That was Albert at the end of ~~the~~ <sup>his</sup> patience. I pleaded for Jack, and he agreed to give <sup>him</sup> a few hours' grace.

Eliya: But ~~how~~ <sup>how</sup> can you cancel a contract just before the tables <sup>are</sup> due to go up?

Charpentier: Well, of course, Albert is quite helpless. So you have seen

Jack: how does he look?

Eliya: Dreadful, the poor dear. His face has swollen in all the wrong places.

Charpentier: I've just come from his dressing room. He fell onto his table and smashed a glass jar while the Virgin was away.

Eliya: Has she been missing him, then?

Charpentier: She has been trying, but he evades her.

Eliya: Who wouldn't?

Charpentier: Exactly.

Eliya: The first thing Albert talked about in the office this morning was Michelon. He showed me one of his letters on death.

Did you know that Albert keeps all those letters clipped together into a book, with a neat index of all the subjects?

Charpentier: No, he rarely mentions Michelon to me.

Eliya: I was astonished; it showed me another side of his character altogether.

Chapartier (with a chuckle) was Albert will never confess to Michelon is that he finds doing good tedious, and evil both exciting and lucrative.

Bénédict Amurat pulled back the grey dust-sheet from the first row of seats in the stalls, and with Helleclow he sat down. While Helleclow talked Amurat made notes in a long green file, and when the dancing of the chorus was over they went up to the stage. Two scene-shifters wheeled one piano off the stage and another in from the wings: this they aligned with a chalk-mark made on the boards by Amurat and the stage manager. Helleclow played a few casual notes. He touched a lever at the side of the piano and the keyboard lid fell with a bang. He nodded to the scene-shifters and they once more wheeled it into the wings. He turned to Amurat.

Helleclow: I forget to ask the Virgin for my books hat.

Amurat: Look out a moment.

He drew Helleclow by the sleeve further upstage, and they both looked up as a trapeze descended slowly from the flies at the point where Helleclow had been standing. When the lower bar was at a level with Helleclow's middle it stopped. He poised himself and made a leap forward onto it, so that he lay across its bar as if he had fallen there. He nodded to Amurat, and Amurat raised his hand as the operator in the flies: the trapeze promptly ascended again with Helleclow lying across it, — slumped forward. But suddenly he was no longer firm. He yelled out and the trapeze stopped just in time, wire feet along the boards, to prevent him falling ~~down~~ <sup>from it</sup> head first ~~down to the ground.~~

The trapeze returned to the stage and he jumped off, perspiring and <sup>shivering</sup> ~~his mouth open~~. Amurat patted him on the shoulder, and <sup>the operator</sup> ~~someone~~ in the flies shouted down: "Qu'y a-t-il?"

Helleclow: That would have been a nice fall. Let me try again. I'll leave it still this time.

Amurat shook up Helleclow's instructions in French to the flies, and Helleclow once more jumped forward onto the trapeze. He set himself <sup>firmly</sup> on the cross-bar, turning this way and that to make sure of his balance. He ~~once more~~ ~~nodded~~ to Amurat, and Amurat shouted up: "Vas-y!" The trapeze went swiftly up behind the proscenium arch, with Helleclow secure on it:

then it returned to the stage and he jumped off with a smile.

In the wings Virginia handed the stage manager a tiny bowler-hat, then departed. He brought it onto the stage and attached it to a scarcely visible ~~string~~ thread which had been lowered from the flies.

The producer made a signal to someone in the wooden gallery above and the bowler-hat swung into the air: he pointed to the right and it swung to the right, then to the left and it swung to the left, upwards and it soared upwards, to the boards and it came down to rest. He consulted with Hellelone and then mounted the steps up to the wooden gallery. ~~Once there~~ He called down to Hellelone when he was ready. Hellelone stood a few paces from the

bowler-hat. He contemplated it and then approached it stealthily, and immediately it moved away from him, as if of its own accord. He tried to ~~grasp~~ grab it, but immediately it ~~flashed~~ <sup>slid</sup> away and then swung upwards and away from him. It came to rest and again he plunged forward and made as if to grab it. Anurat operated the thread from one side to the other, and with pickering impatience Hellelone chased ~~the~~ <sup>it</sup> ~~bowler~~ across and around the stage.

Then he held up his hand and the hat came to a halt: it was pulled back into the flies and Hellelone, panting heavily, found a small arm-chair in the wings under the electrical switchboard.

While he sat there the producer and the stage manager supervised the erection on the stage of a taut steel wire nine or ten feet from the ground, supported between steel stays on either side of the stage and out of view to the auditorium. Each stay had a ladder, and at the top of these

ladders were little square platforms leading onto the wire. When it had been tightened sufficiently by the stagelands Hellelone mounted the ladder on the right hand side and then, standing on the platform, began chalking the soles of his slippers. He leaned back against

the platform-rest for a moment and held his lead as though it hurt him; then he stepped forward and slid his right foot along the wire. Without hesitation he walked quickly onto the wire and with tiny steps attained the other side of the stage.

There he jumped straight down from the platform. He murmured to Anurat "Too loose", and Anurat instructed two of the stagelands to tighten the wire further.

Anurat: You're trembling. Is that alright?

report and a cloud of white smoke burst from the key board and enveloped the piano, rolling and turning across the stage. The producer jumped down into the pit and when the piano was once more visible to him he pressed his stop-watch.

Amurat: That was twenty.

Hellclaw: Ample, ample. We'll try it.

An electrician dismantled<sup>ed</sup> the front box from under the piano ledge and inserted a new one. Again Hellclaw went to the piano and again at a sign from Amurat he began playing wildly. At the tenth second Amurat nodded to ~~the~~ an electrician in the wings, and again there was a loud report: the piano and Hellclaw were enveloped in the white smoke, and his playing ceased abruptly. Out of sight from the auditorium he jumped quickly to the back of the piano near the wings and went through several actions in mime: he went through the action of taking off his shoes, then his trousers ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> his jacket, then of receiving from a stagehand in the wings another jacket and pair of trousers, then of tugging something from his right temple — all in the course of a few seconds. Now he reeled and stumbled across the stage through the smoke-cloud until he was once more in view from the auditorium: the moment he saw Amurat in the pit below he ceased miming, and Amurat ~~stopped~~ <sup>pressed</sup> his stop-watch again.

Amurat: You had ten seconds to spare. So there should be no trouble about that.

Hellclaw: It's the trousers will be the trouble.

Amurat: Perhaps you could leave the others on after all.

Hellclaw: No. I must have the torn ones.

Nidok went to one of the windows in Lorraine's office and gazed down at the park, quite still.

Lorraine: Are you sure?

~~Nidok: There are very seldom misunderstandings between us.~~

~~Nidok: There are seldom misunderstandings between us. On the other hand, she has a headstrong nature. I accept it.~~

Nidok: Quite sure. There are very seldom misunderstandings between us. She has a headstrong nature, ~~but~~ <sup>but</sup> I accept it.

Lorraine: I was thinking, you see, of asking her to take some permanent

Hellelone: Well, it will be.

This time he mounted the platform on the left hand side. Again he slid his right foot onto the wire and again he walked mightily along it. But this time he stopped in the middle, poised himself and jumped directly upwards with his arms outstretched. He landed back on the wire with his feet splayed outwards, so that the wire went across his insteps. Several times he repeated this, his hands on his lips, each time jumping higher, testing the wire for tautness. Then he leapt from the wire, ~~waddled to the producer~~ and the stagehands began dismantling the stage.

A garlanded staircase, ending in a vertical drop at the highest step, was next wheeled onto the stage. Its exact place was decided between Hellelone and Anurat. ~~He~~ Hellelone ran quickly up and down it. He went to the top and made a jumping somersault backwards to land upright on the fourth step down.

While it was being wheeled backstage again ~~he~~ Hellelone performed two or three cartwheels near the footlights, looked at the palms of his hands, ~~rubbed~~ rubbed his calf-muscles and, with his hands on his lips, took deep and long breaths. The piano was now wheeled back onto the left-hand side of the stage, and the producer called ~~Hellelone~~ <sup>him</sup> over.

Hellelone: I shall want ten seconds.

Anurat took out a stop-watch. Hellelone stood in front of the piano and at a signal from Anurat bent his trunk forward, hit the keys with <sup>the</sup> palms of both hands to make a chaotic discordance, then began playing wildly and furiously snatches of several tunes. At the tenth second Anurat raised his hand and Hellelone ceased playing.

Producer: Ten seconds. Bang. Good.

Two scenerylifters brought a small box from the wings with a wire attached to it. This they inserted under the ledge of the piano above the keyboard, then they ran its wire along <sup>out of sight</sup> ~~the~~ the ledge, down a leg of the piano and thus ~~to~~ to a detonator mechanism operated in the wings. Hellelone and Anurat walked across to the other side of the stage. An electrician in the wings pressed a detonator button and instantly there was a loud

## IV Albert's Bottomless Pit

work in this theatre.

Nidok: Yes, but she isn't unhappy with me. You must allow for her temperament: suddenly she will turn on someone, — then it's all over. Believe me. I have known her many years.

horraine: Well, she did talk last night as if she were a little discontented.

Nidok: But do you think it is safe to judge any woman by her words?

horraine: She is usually sincere with me.

Nidok: Try, then. Ask her to take some permanent work here. But I don't ~~not~~ think <sup>she</sup> ~~you~~ will <sup>hear</sup> ~~succeed~~ of it.

horraine: Would you be willing to let her go if she did agree?

Nidok: Yes, certainly. But I know she won't hear of it. (Chattering his gage) Of course, I do understand your concern for Eliza. I am not trying to interfere with that.

horraine: Of course not.

They said no more to each other for some time. Then Nidok turned from the window and faced horraine.

Nidok (secretively) How is Mr Finstanley this morning?

horraine looked down quickly and blinked, with Nidok's dark, narrow eyes upon him.

horraine: We must give him time to find his feet again, you know.

Nidok: I saw him slip on the trapeze this morning. I thought that was unusual.

There was a knock on the door and Charpentier entered. Charpentier: Jack has been rehearsing for the last half-hour. Good morning, Heinrich.

Nidok (without a smile) Good morning, Mr Charpentier.

horraine (watching Nidok as he rose) Well go down together, then, and have a look at him.

The conductor played several dances on the piano and during each of them Hellelove danced a few steps so that between them they could determine the speed at which the music should be taken. The conductor marked his score according to Hellelove's instructions.

Nidok left horraine and Charpentier in the

in the corridor: they walked together down to the stage and crossed it while Hellelouse was leaning over the conductor's shoulder to look at a score. They found Anurat with an electrician in the wings, and all three descended to the first row of the stalls.

Horaine: I heard he slipped on the trapeze.

Anurat: Oh, that was nothing to speak of. But he does seem to be trembling a great deal this morning.

Horaine (restlessly) How is everything going to be coordinated at such short notice? What are the chances of an utter fiasco tonight?

Anurat (with surprise) Well, Jack is under-rehearsed, but he isn't the entire show.

Horaine: No, he is the heart and purpose of it. Only that!

Anurat (with surprise) Well, only Jack is under-rehearsed; everything else is alright.

Horaine: Only Jack! Isn't he the heart and purpose of the entire show?

Anurat: You misunderstand me. I meant that since ~~everything~~ <sup>everything</sup> else in the show was well rehearsed and coordinated, Jack could be left to himself. I meant that everything ~~else~~ <sup>apart from Jack</sup> in the show was well rehearsed

Horaine: Do you think so? and coordinated, and that <sup>as for</sup> Jack <sup>himself</sup> could be

Anurat: Don't you? depended on to look after himself.

Horaine: Do you think so?

Anurat (impatiently) Bernard, what is the matter with our manager this morning?

Charpentier: A severe attack of First Night nerves. You must always watch his lips on these occasions: they are a true barometer of his feelings.

Charpentier: First Night nerves, my dear chap. He hears your words but not your meaning.

Horaine (more wildly) What's he up to now?

Anurat: He's making one his dances with the conductor.

Horaine:

in the corridor: they walked together down to the stage and crossed it <sup>18 ii)</sup> while Hellebore was leaning over the conductor's shoulder to look at a score. They found Anurat with an electrician in the wings, and all three descended to the first row of the stalls.

Lorraine: I heard he slipped on the trapeze.

Anurat: Oh, that was nothing to speak of. But he does seem to be trembling a great deal this morning.

Lorraine (tetchily) How is everything going to be coordinated at such short notice? What are the chances of an utter fiasco tonight?

Anurat (with surprise) Well, only Jack is under-rehearsed; everything else is all right.

Lorraine: Only Jack! Only the heart and purpose of the entire show!

Anurat: You misunderstand me. I mean that everything in the show apart from Jack was well rehearsed and coordinated, and that as for Jack he could be depended on to look after himself.

Lorraine: Do you think so?

Anurat (impatiently) Bernard, what is the matter with our manager this morning?

Carpentier: First Night leaves, my dear chap. He hears your words but not your meaning.

Lorraine: All I am asking is whether anybody, anybody in the world, can expect to give a performance which looks to the audience with a patched-up or improvised (or half-a-day's rehearsal) Remember this, Benedict: that Jack hasn't seen a theatre this size for five years.

Anurat (pestered) Of course, that is a consideration, but a consideration for you, not for me. You sign the people up, I don't. And <sup>you</sup> laid this plan before me a month ago. You called me into your office and told me that everything else in the show must be prepared in such a way that Jack could slip into it with perfect ease on the very day of the opening performance. Do you deny it? Do you deny that what you are witnessing this morning is the unfolding of your own plan as you laid it before me a month ago?

Lorraine: I am denying nothing, and I am not apportioning blame. ~~But~~ I ~~am~~ <sup>am</sup> ~~being~~ asking a question. What are the chances of a fiasco tonight?

Anurat: And all I can say is ~~that~~ what I have said, that the show apart from Jack is thoroughly coordinated and rehearsed. Its success now rests with one man, and that man is Jack. I know my tasks, the stage manager knows his, the conductor knows his, and so do

the electricians and the stagehands. The chorus dances better than it has  
ever done before; Nilok is of fine mettle, the Deli-Bordeaux's  
have rehearsed until now they can barely stand up. But for  
Helleore I cannot vouch: ~~at~~ I can <sup>only</sup> vouch for ~~my~~ my own faith  
in him and my own quite private <sup>Expectations</sup>. Everything has been  
prepared for him, and the success of the show is now between himself  
~~and divine providences~~ and the gods. Perhaps he is under-rehearsed,  
perhaps not; but only he is the judge of that. Such men defy  
prediction. For my part I can do no more than what I have done: from  
now on our eyes are on him alone. What happens in this theatre  
to-night only he can decide. ~~He sets out on his journey alone the~~  
~~moment my work is finished.~~ From beginning to end he is <sup>his</sup> own master.  
All I can do is to prepare the way for him and give him help when  
he asks for it.

noname:

They turned and looked at the stage.

Chapenter: There you are, look at that. He's still a showman.

Hellelone performed a number of very fast cartwheels, flinging his body over with an immense force.

Horaine: When they reach that age — Now you look at that.

On the rebound from his last cartwheel Hellelone slipped backwards: he managed to right himself, but not without pulling one of his calf-muscles painfully. He limped to the armchair in the wings and sat down.

Horaine: ~~At~~ This is ~~one of my most tempting dreams made real,~~ <sup>of my most fearful dream.</sup> Bernard. It is an exact repetition, even to the point of the strange intruder in the dead of night. Even I was not superstitious enough to believe that my worst fears could materialise in such close detail. In future I shall pay more attention to those foolish fears of mine; apparently there is less folly in them than you or I or anybody else thought.

Chapenter: But I'm afraid that if you begin taking note of your fears and premonitions, Albert, you will never float another show or take another business risk as long as you live, and you will end a pauper.

Scene 3:  
~~Step 2~~ The same, two hours later.

At noon each day during rehearsals the Common Tower became a dining room for the artists and members of the orchestra: the armchairs and cocktail-tables were moved back to the walls, and round mahogany tables and stiff-backed chairs were brought in.

Helen Eugenie, Nidok's second stage assistant, was taller and older than Eliya. She was somber, her hands were long <sup>collar</sup> <sup>at ear</sup> and she was ~~always~~ <sup>always</sup> dressed in black, with a black lace high in the neck. ~~She sat with Hellelone, and Eliya~~ <sup>and Helen Eugenie sat</sup> ~~near one of the windows of the Common Tower, talking after their lunch.~~ <sup>at a little after two</sup>

The clouds were still low, but up and again there was a sharp ray of sunlight from between them which lit up the lounge suddenly and then died quickly down. Hellelone was dressed in a light country-tweed suit.

Helen: You haven't said a kind word <sup>to him</sup> since we arrived in Paris, and goodness knows what you've been saying behind his back. If he makes you so unhappy why don't you leave him and find other work?

Eliya: What other work?

Helen: Oh, my dear girl, Horaine would <sup>surely</sup> find something for you.

Eliya: Yes, with certain conditions attached.

the electricians and the stagehands. The chorus dances better than it has ever done before; Midok is in fine fettle; the Duloi-Bordeaux's have rehearsed until now they can barely stand up. But for Hellebore I cannot vouch: I can only vouch for my own faith in him and my own quite private expectations. Everything has been prepared for him, and the success of the show is now between himself and the gods. Perhaps he is under-rehearsed, perhaps not: but only he is the judge of that. Such men defy prediction. For my part I can do no more than what I have done: from now on our eyes are on him alone. What happens in this theatre tonight only he can decide. From beginning to end he is his own master. All I can do is to prepare the way for him and give him help when he asks for it.

Lorraine: Has he been on the wire yet?

Amurat: Yes, about twenty minutes ago.

Lorraine: He didn't slip, — he only slipped on the trapeze, I understand?

Amurat: On the wire he was perfectly steady, though, as I say, he has been trembling <sup>rather strangely</sup> ~~more than usual~~ this morning. But try as you may

you won't be able to predict his performance tonight from his rehearsals this morning: it can never be done. All you have to go on are your own predictions.

Bénédict!

Chapentier: For the lord's sake don't leave him alone with those, ~~They~~ <sup>they</sup> are notoriously dismal.

A voice in the wings called out for Amurat and he returned to the stage. Lorraine and Chapentier walked slowly up the centre gangway.

Chapentier: Are you persuaded yet that he isn't after all finished?

Lorraine: Almost, yes, but I find it difficult to forget his own words. You know I shall blame you if anything goes wrong tonight, don't you?

Chapentier: <sup>Lorraine</sup> (with a smile) Of course, my dear Albert; you are a master of retort and recrimination.

Lorraine: Well, forewarned is forearmed.

Chapentier: When are we meeting for our traditional little conference?

Lorraine (uncomfortably) Which conference?

Chapentier: Oh, not the conference you were going to call this morning.

Divine providence took charge of that. No, I mean the one we always have — you, Jack and myself — on the day of the opening performance.

Lorraine: At three o'clock this afternoon.

on the stage thirty-four years ago. He loves silence; I have seen him stand in some of those Bavarian valleys as if <sup>he</sup> were listening to their silence. I know exactly how he would feel if you tried to talk to him, — you must trust my knowledge of him. He would be sly and tongue-tied; he would feel as if he were stuck fast in a terrible mire and being sucked down. His only thought would be to get himself free, to find himself again in silence and solitude. He would be like a caught animal, and your own pity and compassion would make you set him free again. You could see for yourself what I mean, but I want you to trust what I say and not even try to see him; I do my best to protect him, you see, Jack. When he is allowed to be alone for hours on end and to go through the day without a lot of words, he feels free and clean and wholesome; his eyes look rested and calm, and one feels very secure in his company. But I know exactly when he has been troubled with long conversations with people, because his eyes are no longer clear, he looks a little feverish, his walk is uncertain, his mouth is less resolved, he moves his arms about awkwardly, — he is no longer master of himself; a ghastly fever has got the better of him.

Eliya: But in any case he hates Jack.

Helen: Oh, Eliya... You say these rash things, but do you think whether they are true or not?

Eliya: I know that's true. I can use my own eyes. (Turning to Hellebore) They both hate you. If she could put an end to your career tomorrow she'd do it, for Heinrich's sake. She'd lay the whole world waste for Heinrich's sake. Everything she does is for Heinrich —

Helen (near tears) No, Eliya, no!

Eliya: She goes everywhere with that horrible set suite of lies; it means she's thinking about Heinrich. Dear Heinrich —

Hellebore (disgusted) Oh, shut up. What the ~~body~~ hell's it got to do with me? Wine?

He held the wine bottle diagonally before Helen, and she shook her head. He held it before Eliya, and she merely averted her eyes without uttering a word. He filled his own glass and laid the bottle down meditatively.

Helen (to Hellebore) Forgive her. She is only acting out her little melodrama.

Hellebore: No, she isn't acting anything.

Helen: Still, it might make you see Heinrich in a better light. Never has he once done you an unkindness. Never once has he even snapped at you —

Eliya <sup>(bitterly)</sup> No. He never talks, that's why. It's the silence I can't bear.

Helen: Well, I should try noisier work if I were you, and then perhaps you'd call his silence peace of mind, and run back to it like a naughty child. I suppose you have noticed that he never answers your rudeness?

Eliya: Yes, but I wish he would answer me just once; I wish he'd smack my face or call me a slowwly little litch. Imagine Heinrich calling me a slowwly little litch, Jack!

Helen: I dare say you could find cruel and foul-mouthed employes enough; there are plenty of them in our profession. Why don't you go out and look for one?

Eliya: Because I am lazy and stupid. I want a husband and I want children. There is nothing Heinrich can do about that, but you'd think that if he were as holy as you say he is he would try to give me a little comfort. A little comfort, I don't know what, but a holy man would know, — so you would think, wouldn't you? Yes, Jack, one called him holy the other day. She worships him.

Hellclaw (shyly, to Helen) Do you think I ought to have a word with him about Eliya? She isn't happy —

Eliya: Yes, tell him I've been in love with you for the last ten years; what could his business do about that?

Helen (perhaps a little panic-stricken by Hellclaw's proposal) It wouldn't be wise, Jack. You would only hurt him and achieve nothing for Eliya.

Hellclaw: How would I hurt him?

Helen (with difficulty) All I can tell you is that he would become quite silent. He would stand there as if he were paralysed and dumb.

At the best of times he is shy with men — whereas with women he relies on his instincts. How can I explain it? He hates putting his feelings into words. They seem insufficient to him; they always belie his feelings and get him into trouble. Words hurt him. He told me once ~~that~~ he would like to go through life in an unbroken silence; all his communications with other people would be in silence, ~~and therefore deeper~~. That is why he has never once uttered a word during one of his acts since he first went

Helen: Isn't it possible that he advises Jack, and watches him with awe?

Elija: Don't degrade yourself, Helen! Watch him with awe! Why, whenever I mention Jack in his company he jumps out of his shoes.

Helen: Well, I'm glad you say all this to me and not to his face. If only you'd take the trouble to understand him, as I have...

Elija: I'm even tired of talking about him. You can give me some wine now, Jack.

Hellelone filled her glass and winked at her: she took a sip of her wine, looked pained, as if the taste displeased her, then set her glass down again.

Elija: I don't know why I drink this yellow piss. I loved Campenchy Bay last year because they had all those beautiful fruit drinks. You can keep your vintage wine.

Helen: You can't forgive Heinrich his strangeness, can you? You want everyone to be hail-fellow-well-met.

Elija (with bitter gaiety) Yes, I do.

Helen: But since you spend so much time with him don't you think you ought to try and understand him?

Elija: Does he try and understand me?

Helen: He knows you as a mother knows the fruit of her own womb. You hate his strangeness, but he has always been strange. (Coolly determined to vindicate Eiselheim) He <sup>even</sup> believes in fairies, like a child.

Why don't you laugh?

Elija: I don't want to laugh.

Helen: Most people would, and I thought you preferred most people to me so unique and strange. Yes, he believes in fairies, and he adores birds. (Her eyes fixed on Elija) I have seen him talking to birds in the Piaggia Catalina in Barcelona, with all the Spaniards staring at him. He can speak to birds, you know, and make them understand. And shall I tell you something about his childhood? He was the son of an officer in the Prussian army. He never knew family life in the proper sense. ~~He seldom saw~~

~~his father, and most of his childhood was spent among his~~  
~~with a circle of officers' wives in any case his father was killed~~  
when he was five, and before that he had only seen him three or four times. With his mother he travelled from one town to another and one country to another incessantly year after year. He was a dreaming child, and his dreams were what he could carry from one place to another without damaging them. He spent his childhood among

Helen: He's so considerate, Jack; she has nothing at all to complain of.

Hellelone: I think he is fond of him, Helen, but there, he never addresses a word to her...

Helen: That's his nature, which God gave him. I'm used to it, because I've taken the trouble to know and understand him. She would never take that trouble.

Hellelone: She isn't the nicest kind. She enjoys talking. She behaves very naturally. The two of you are driving her out of her mind. I never say I wouldn't like to spend my life with people who sat and stared at me and never said a word. You've aged her in the last five years. I can see that, having been away for five years. She's so touchy now.

Helen: ~~You say <sup>you</sup> 'the two of you' as if Heinrich and I~~

Helen: You say "the two of you" as if Heinrich and I were in a conspiracy together.

Eliza (quietly, her eyes lovingly on Hellelone) You are. I'm sure you do horrible things together, like putting spells on people.

Helen (with pity) ~~seems to make the suggestion indications~~ You don't believe that, do you, Eliza?

Eliza: Yes, I do; you told me yourself that you believed in his spells.

Helen (devoutly) I believe in a certain power he has to change natural events. I believe some very rare and extraordinary human beings have that power.

Eliza: Well, then, I say he tries to practice spells on people, and with your help. When he looks at me sometimes with those holy eyes of his which never move he terrifies me. I'm not saying that I believe in his power or take his spells seriously, but — yes, that's the right word, you two are in a conspiracy. If you could do it by spells you'd murder Jack in his bed.

Helen: Do you think Heinrich is professionally so incompetent that he would have to, much less want to, resort to these methods?

Eliza: It always hurts him to think of Jack's position in the theatre.

Helen (with calm logic) Why does he accept a contract in one of Jack's most important shows?

Eliza: Because Jack fascinates him. I can feel him watching Jack all the time, trying to discover his secret, measuring him with that holy coolness of his.

the women friends of his mother, most of them officers' wives. These women were restless. They would do anything to ~~disturb themselves~~ kill time. They played games of hypnosis with professional hypnotists, they were always finding new card-tricks, and they were all enthusiastic astrologers. In effect Heinrich was bred and educated by these restless and superstitious women, some of whom were German, others Poles, others French, and others Rumanian. From them he learned his silence, his separateness and his dark powers. Already as a child he dreamed his way silently through each day; and no doubt he was already as a child making enemies like yourself, enemies whose hatred he never <sup>ought to</sup> provoke, and therefore never deserved. (Glancing at Helene, then at Elija)

And shall I tell you how old he is,? — this young man who is so full of spite and murderousness? He is fifty-four years old, Elija.

Helene and Elija looked at him <sup>with surprise.</sup> ~~in amazement~~ Helene: Yes, he was born just after the outbreak of the Austro-Russian War. But there, he doesn't need my defence. He is so sufficient to himself, and he was probably no less <sup>so</sup> when he was four years old.

Helene wiped the sweat from his upper lip with a handkerchief and pulled one of his windows down. For a few minutes he stood still by the window and watched three children playing in the park below, ~~all of them under ten years old~~ then he returned with a sigh to his desk. He rubbed his right ear and shifted in his chair. There was not a sound in the office. He put his hand on the telephone receiver but immediately withdrew it. He took a memorandum book from the edge of his desk and began writing: "You said that everything in the world was my responsibility so long as I thought about it, and that the more I think about the more I am responsible for, I must have this clear, when I am face to face with you I <sup>feel</sup> am empty. I want the strength to say what is in my mind, or rather the strength to bring back to my mind the thoughts which your presence frightened away. I have a lot to tell you about pride. You said that a man can also sin by failing to do good. What did I fail to do? What am I failing to do now?"

He went to <sup>the</sup> windows and looked out again. The three children were no longer visible. The telephone bell rang and he disregarded it. He returned to his desk and wrote the

following words: "If only I could be granted a moment of innocence!"

Virginie Dupont's private room was on the ground floor of the new wing, behind the stage end at the very back of the theatre. Its one window gave out onto the park, the same area of park that could be seen, two floors above, from the windows of Albert Lorraine's office. It was a very small room, and an elm-tree immediately outside the window made it dark at all times of the day. ~~As we entered the room there was a deep violet divan bed under the window, a dressing table against the wall nearest the door, two armchairs and in the middle of the room, on the Persian carpet, a very light crimson. Most of its gaudy furniture had at one time been stage properties. Under the window there was a violet divan <sup>and</sup> with large, plump satin-covered cushions, on it a Persian carpet, cut from a much larger one which had been used for the stage, covered all the floor; against the wall by the door there was a dressing-table with an <sup>inlaid</sup> top. Most of its <sup>the</sup> gaudy furniture had <sup>clearly</sup> ~~at one time~~ been stage properties <sup>at one time</sup> ~~with the result~~ that each piece stood <sup>the window</sup> ~~at its~~ <sup>the window</sup> ~~the other~~ Under <sup>the window</sup> there was a violet divan with satin-covered cushions, and against the wall near the door there was a ~~heavy black~~ dressing-table with an <sup>ebony-inlaid</sup> ~~inlaid~~ <sup>on</sup> ~~marble~~ <sup>top</sup>. In the middle of the room, on a fragment of rich Persian carpet, stood a ~~low~~ <sup>low</sup> ~~table~~ <sup>table</sup> of a ~~very~~ light crimson). Nailed <sup>onto</sup> the walls ~~there~~ were tinkets, gold-framed medallions bearing the portraits of past actors and actresses, cuttings from old newspapers, a silver-plated concifix, signed visiting cards with signatures on them, and, near the dressing-table, a long polished cutlass with a blue ribbon and tassel at its handle. In the hearth there was a gas-fire, and at this moment it was alight.~~

Francine Dupont  
~~Virginie's~~ ~~Dupont~~

Virginie lay on the divan dressed in a white working smock, and in the armchair next to the gas-fire, facing the window and the divan, sat Henry

Sampson. <sup>Francine</sup> ~~Virginie~~ (turning her head towards the window, gazing at the elm-tree) You killed people when you were a soldier, and now you're ashamed of it. That's why you are always talking about murder, because you yourself are a murderer.

Saugson: Yes, perhaps you are right.

He leaned forward to warm his hands at the gas-fire. Neither spoke for a few moments.

~~Francine~~ <sup>Francine</sup> ~~Virginia~~: What made you go and see him?

Saugson: Edgar Finstanley asked me to. And I wanted to on my own account.

~~Francine~~ <sup>Francine</sup> ~~Virginia~~: But why?

Saugson: Well, I told you long ago how important he was to both of us. We lived among the dead, and death seemed the worst either of us could look forward to. We lived among dead things, everything we touched was dead, every noise denoted the nearness of death. ~~We were~~

~~everything~~ ~~with~~ ~~dead~~ ~~and~~ ~~and~~ ~~in~~ ~~our~~ world the worst always happened. We were young. I still am young. (bitterly) Naturally, I wanted to see

Hellelwe. I needed to see him. I wanted to get back a little warmth into my frozen fingers.

~~Francine~~ <sup>Francine</sup> ~~Virginia~~: But you made him ill. Did that make you feel warmer? This morning he was sick, and this evening he'll be unfit to go on the stage. If he makes a mess of it you'll be to blame. (leaning

forward on her elbows, frowning at him) What made you call on him so late at night? What made you take him along to that club?

Saugson (lowering his eyes) You told me he kept late hours and I expected to find him with his guests.

~~Francine~~ <sup>Francine</sup> ~~Virginia~~ (lying back angrily) Well, he needs to <sup>protecting</sup> ~~be~~ ~~protected~~

against people like you. I don't know how he can possibly get through his act tonight; I've never seen him look so ill. You've a fine one to talk about murder.

Her cheeks were a little flushed as she spoke. Sangson looked at her in silence.

Sangson: You feel warmer towards him than you do towards me. I can see that.

<sup>Francine</sup> ~~Waggoner~~ (losing her patience) But you've been thinking about yourself all the time! You called on him to get back a little warmth into your fingers, — into your fingers. And now you are wanting more warmth out of me.

Sangson (disturbed) No, I didn't mean that. I think you are right to feel more warmly towards him. I wasn't asking for pity. (with a smile) If you think I was, you aren't a good judge of men.

<sup>Francine</sup> ~~Waggoner~~ (more agreeably) But you were wrong to go there at midnight and upset him, my dear. You make the mistake of talking too plainly to people. You don't realize how all this miserable talk about murder and death and emptiness may affect some of them. You shouldn't have called on him at midnight, and you shouldn't have talked to him about his own son. (Shaking her head in perplexity) I don't know, — you seem to ~~just~~ go along like a blind man. ~~sometimes~~ You behave <sup>sometimes</sup> as if you were soft in the head. ~~sometimes~~ Even now you don't seem to realize what you did last night: you don't seem to realize that Jack may make a mess of everything tonight.

just because of you. You don't seem to realise you may have murdered a great career.

Sampson (warming his hands again) Perhaps I don't think I have murdered a great career.

Virginia: We shall see tonight. Look at you, — even now you don't seem to be grasping what I say.

Sampson shrugged his shoulders, and they said nothing for some time.

Virginia (coldly) If you were a self-sufficient person you would never have called in him and upset him like that. You only did it because you ~~can't stand~~ can't stand on your own feet. You have to suck other people to death in order to live. You aren't self-sufficient, not as Jack must have been when he was your age.

Sampson (with resignation) Oh, come, — you're only trying to be cruel.

Virginia: Your job is jewel-cutting, but you aren't interested in it as other men are interested in their work. You aren't capable of leading your own life: that's why you called in Jack last night. <sup>During the war</sup> When you were a soldier you killed

people like every other soldier, but now you won't forget it, and I won't let other people forget it. (with sudden

anger) Why couldn't you have gone off to war like everybody else and done your job, <sup>like everybody else,</sup> and come back to your old life with just a few more stories to tell? ~~Without~~

~~their fuss??~~ and then come back without all this fuss and bother?

Sampson: Don't the others make any fuss?

Virginia: No.

Sampson: The fools don't, I agree.

Virginia: Well, where <sup>an answer</sup> your nodon get you? No further than  
a jeweller's shop (Turning her head towards him) Suppose there had  
never been a war? What would have happened to you?

Sampson: I think I <sup>would</sup> ~~should~~ have taken up a teacher's certificate  
and taught in a country school. I'd ~~have married, no doubt,~~  
and I'd ~~have read my books on archaeology and the English~~  
~~churches. I <sup>would</sup> ~~should~~ have wanted, and I think I would have~~  
~~followed up my archaeological interests ~~that~~~~ I would have married,  
no doubt. And I would have joined an archaeological society.  
But the point is ~~that~~ I ~~shouldn't~~ have watched myself living,  
as I do now. The War taught me to do that.

Virginia: ~~That only means~~

Virginia: You haven't found the friends proper to you

Francine: You haven't found your proper friends, — that's all  
you mean. You are with the wrong people. The Celida's aren't  
your kind, nor am I, really.

Sampson: But <sup>where</sup> ~~are~~ are the right people? Nowhere.

Francine  
Virginia: Exactly. You aren't self-sufficient.

Sampson rose and went to the window. He  
stood at the end of the divan where Virginia lay. He looked  
across the lawn of the park.

Sampson: You must try to understand what I tell you. War was  
a kind of religious experience for me: it is holy for me.  
I went out to Flanders to suffer, not to kill people. I went  
to die rather than to kill. War was a crucifixion for  
me. I went out to be crucified. (looking down at her)  
And somehow — I can't tell you why — I expected to suffer my  
crucifixion without dying. And that was my terrible error,  
to believe that I was inviolate. How did I expect to

to survive? How did I expect to be nailed to the cross and have my side pierced, and yet survive? How did I expect to survive just the exposure and the loss of blood? But of course I had to die. And now I can no longer feel the life in my fingers, as I am always telling you. So you mustn't begrudge me my little midnight adventure.

\* ABI, P.27 INSERTION IP.

Lorraine put down his pen and switched on the desk-lamp. Outside the clouds were dark and low, and a violent wind was now blowing across the park. He sealed an envelope and wrote the words "Father Michel's note. Nothing ~~could~~ could be heard from the stage below.

There was a knock on the door, and Helene entered <sup>by the gallery-door.</sup> Lorraine looked up, then rose with a smile and went towards him.

Helene: I just wanted to see how you were.

Lorraine nodded and ~~with one hand on his shoulder~~, conducted him to a chair. Took his arm, then led him to a chair in silence.

Lorraine: I had to put the light on. Were you caught in the

~~Helene: Yes, the rain's just started.~~ storm?

Helene: No, I was in the Crimson Tower.

Lorraine sat down and put ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> envelope ~~to~~ <sup>to</sup> Father Michel's in one of the top drawers of his desk.

Lorraine: I was frightened this morning. You looked very ill, Jack. I thought that was the end of tonight's show.

Helene: ~~With a smile~~ Yes, I was still shaking like a leaf during rehearsals. But I had a good lay-down afterwards,

and I feel steady enough now. Have you anything to drink

Horvaine: How do you feel otherwise? ~~in yourself?~~

Hellclove: Thirsty.

Horvaine (with cheer) Let me give you

these? I'm parched.

Horvaine (rising and taking a key from his waistcoat pocket) By

all means. What shall I give you?

Hellclove: Anything as long as it isn't cognac.

Horvaine (with a smile) Will water do?

Hellclove: I prefer it.

Horvaine unlocked a corner cupboard behind his desk and took out a tumbler. He bent down and looked along the bottom shelf, then brought out an earthenware flagon, which he put down on the desk. He broke its seal with a heavy paper-knife and drew out the cork. Hellclove watched him closely.

Hellclove: Is that water?

Horvaine: Yes.

Hellclove: What's it doing in there, then?

Horvaine: It's Lourdes water.

Hellclove: What, - a kind of spa water?

Horvaine: No, no, - holy water. (with a sly smile) I wanted God to be on your side tonight.

Hellclove (playfully) Well, I hope it does me good.

Horvaine: It comes from the holy spring at Lourdes.

He filled the tumbler and handed it to Hellclove, who drank it swiftly, and smacked his lips.

~~Hellclove: Cheers.~~

~~He drank the glass empty and put it~~

~~back on the desk, smacking his lips loudly.~~

Hellelone: That was refreshing, Albert. Thank you <sup>of the window</sup> at the park.  
Hormaine looked out ~~of the window~~ <sup>of the window</sup> ~~the~~

It <sup>the</sup> park was now in half-darkness; raindrops were flying against the window-panes, and occasionally the <sup>window</sup> windows rattled. The elm-trees <sup>close to the theatre wall</sup> ~~near the wall of the theatre~~ were no longer visible.

Hormaine: Where did you eat?

Hellelone: In the Crimson Tower, with Helen and Eliza.

Hormaine: How was Eliza?

Hellelone: She certainly isn't happy, you know.

Hormaine (with a sigh) No, I'm anxious about her. I don't think Eiselheim understands her well enough. Of course, she's still in love with you.

Hellelone: She'd like me to marry her, but I don't think it amounts to more than that, though it did before the War.

Hormaine (quietly, with assurance) Oh, yes, it amounts to very much more than that.

The wind suddenly dropped, <sup>for a moment</sup> and not a sound could be heard, ~~in the room~~ ~~After a few~~ ~~moments~~ ~~it~~ gradually started <sup>up</sup> again and the rain ~~became~~ ~~heavier~~ grew heavier.

Hellelone: Will you be coming down this afternoon?

Hormaine: Yes, I shall be down. I'm only sitting here now because I feel so sleepy. This is the time of day when I feel a sleepless night most. And I usually feel sad

at this time of day. I prefer the evenings. I find them exciting.

He took the tumbler and earthenware flagon, and without rising from his chair he ~~replaced~~ put them back in the cupboard behind him. He did this slowly and thoughtfully.

Monsieur: I'm glad we let things take their course. We shall see a fine performance from you tonight. (Glancing at Helldore hesitantly) Suppose we'd cancelled your contract? They smiled at each other.

Helldore: We could have drawn up another one.

Helldore rose and went towards the door.

Helldore: Well, thank you for the holy water. I'm ~~still~~ going down ~~not~~ to change. ~~time~~ I told Louis Anuroat two-fifteen.

Monsieur: Can you manage our little conference with Bernard at three?

Helldore: Yes, I'll slip in at three.

Monsieur: I shall be down at the stage in a few minutes. ~~then~~ I'm very anxious to see the new stuff, Jack.

Helldore: I think it will please you.

Helldore left the ~~room~~ <sup>office</sup> and returned to his own dressing-room. From the stage there was the sound of hammering and shouting. On his dressing-table, pinned to the white cover, there was a letter addressed to "Monsieur F. Stanley ("Helldore")." He switched on the mirror lights and read it:

"Please come without fail to her Ange"

this evening at seven o'clock. I shall keep you only for a very few minutes. I should be happier if ~~Sampson~~ ~~were not to hear of~~ ~~the~~ Sampson were not told about this. Forgive the scribble.

Mania Celida."

He screwed the letter up and walked towards the ~~fire~~ <sup>hearth</sup>. He was about to throw it into the flames, ~~when~~ <sup>but</sup> he stopped and opened it out again. He looked at it <sup>a second time,</sup> ~~then~~ <sup>he</sup> ~~threw it~~ <sup>beat down and set</sup> ~~into the fire.~~ <sup>light to it.</sup>

\* AB.1., from P. 25

INSERTION.

~~Nidok~~ ~~walked~~ ~~hurriedly~~

Nidok walked swiftly across the stage towards the wings. Only a part of a battery of lights in the flies was switched on, so that the light was weak. Just as he reached the centre of the stage he seemed to hear something and stopped. He turned and peered at some flats <sup>close to</sup> ~~near~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~very~~ <sup>rear</sup> ~~back~~ <sup>wall</sup> of the stage, where at present the light was weakest. Standing ~~beside~~ <sup>by</sup> these flats in the darkness were Hellelone and Eliya Manning. Nidok stopped back in his astonishment. They were talking to each other, but what they <sup>said</sup> ~~said~~ was <sup>made</sup> ~~in~~audible from the front of the stage ~~on account of~~ <sup>because</sup> ~~of~~ the <sup>rear</sup> flats behind them. Hellelone nodded to her, then put his arm on her shoulder and kissed her brow gently. She smiled and seemed from the distance to look deep into his eyes. Hellelone went towards the gait staircase leading up to

horraine's office, and Eliya turned towards the wings on the right hand side.

Didak walked into the darkness on his left and leaned against the proscenium arch. He closed his eyes and <sup>sighed.</sup> ~~breathed deeply, as if he were exhausted.~~

The stage was now lightly lit, and stagelands were hurriedly clearing ladders, cables and flats from the back. The garlanded staircase was brought in well upstage, and a section of the stage raised to form a first landing. A curtain <sup>coloured light blue</sup> was then lowered in front of it.

The stage was now lightly lit, and stagelands were hurriedly clearing ladders, cables and flats from the back. The garlanded staircase was brought in well upstage, and a section of the stage was raised to a height of ten or fifteen feet to make a first landing. A plain light blue curtain was then lowered in front of this structure, concealing it from the stalls and leaving the front part of the stage empty.

Three sceneshifters wheeled in the ramsheadle piano from the left, and ~~at the same~~ simultaneously side-curtains were lowered to conceal the wings. A trapeze was lowered from the flies so that it hung half-way between the boards and the proscenium arch, and a chest of drawers was placed ~~on stage~~ on the right near the footlights. The trapeze hook-<sup>hat</sup> descended from the flies, and a sceneshifter guided it towards the top of the chest of drawers, where it remained. Meanwhile the steel wire was drawn taut between the stays, which, being on the wings, were invisible which were

offstage. A white skipping-rope was laid on the piano, and two chairs were placed near the ~~back~~<sup>back-drop.</sup> curtain.

Two arc-lamps were switched on from each side, and the ~~front~~ front curtain was swiftly lowered and raised again.

Hellclaw left his dressing-room and went up to the stage. He wore his white pianist's costume with the pom-pom buttons, but no wig or make-up. ~~He was~~ ~~hair~~ Anurat ~~in~~<sup>stood</sup> the wings waiting for him, hair Anurat was standing in the wings, and Hellclaw went to his side. He glanced ~~at~~<sup>across</sup> the stage ~~at~~ at the light blue curtain.

Hellclaw: Where's my own backdrop?

Anurat: You'll see it tonight, Jack. This one came from the old stage. I believe you used it in 1912.

Hellclaw nodded and walked onto the stage. He somersaulted to the centre, just as the last scene-shifters ~~were~~<sup>were going</sup> into the wings. He stood on the tips of his toes for a moment, then cartwheeled rapidly towards the footlights. He seemed not of breath when he rose. He threw himself onto his hands and hand-walked from one side of the stage to the other, his legs curled over so that the soles of his feet were parallel with the floor.

The orchestra began taking their places and tuning up, and a faint light was turned on at the conductor's rostrum.

~~Two electricians began fixing the smoke-box and wire to the ledges of the the keyboard of the piano.~~ Two electricians ~~emerged~~<sup>under</sup> in a fresh smoke-

-box and fixed it to the piano.

hms Conte went over to Hellelone, who was standing upstage with his hands on his hips, breathing heavily.

Conte: Albert homaine would like to see you down in the stalls.

Hellelone: Is he ~~down~~ there now?

Conte: He was on his way there when I saw him.

Hellelone: We ought to be away by now. The orchestra was late. What's the time?

Conte: Nineteen minutes past two.

Hellelone: Yes, well I was down here by two-fifteen.

He went between the footlights and the procession arch to the wooden steps leading down to the stalls. The dust-covers had now been removed, and homaine was sitting in the front row, alone. He called to Hellelone as he came down.

~~Hellelone (sitting at homaine's side) I may be a little late for the conference. The orchestra's holding us up.~~

Hellelone (sitting at homaine's side) Is the storm over?

homaine: The wind has dropped, but it's still raining. I like seeing you in that costume again. (Glancing at him) But your breathing is still none too good.

The conductor climbed ~~up~~ to his rostrum and sat down. The curtain was lowered, and now only the footlights remained to illuminate the stalls where homaine and Hellelone sat.

homaine: You feel safe now, do you?

Hellelone: Safe?

homaine: I mean, you'll be giving all your mind to the work from

now or, will you? This morning in the dressing-room you said you were sick of the work. (Uncomfortably) I wanted to know if you are still even a very little sick of it.

Lorraine gazed at the curtain, waiting for an answer. For a few moments Hellelone did not speak; then she ~~sighed~~ <sup>I have to think about</sup>

Hellelone: ~~I have to think about~~ Every step I take on that stage <sup>I can't</sup>

My arms ache, my legs ache, <sup>I</sup> ~~don't seem to be able to get~~ my breath properly. I was never like this before the war. And I'm not an old man.

Lorraine (watching him alertly in the shadows) what's the trouble, Jack? I thought you were back in the old style thirty minutes ago.

Hellelone (quietly) I am sick of the work.

Lorraine (frightened) But I can't postpone or cancel now, Jack.

It's too late. You ought to have spoken sooner. I don't believe

it: I don't believe a man like you can get sick of his work. You wait until you're up on the stage.

Hellelone: I've just been up on the stage.

Lorraine: But this morning you insisted on getting into your tight, — what has come over you <sup>since then</sup> ~~again~~? Anurat told me you were perfectly coherent during <sup>this morning,</sup> the rehearsals <sup>and solid</sup> and I

believe your act is full of new ~~stuff~~ <sup>stuff</sup> stuff. ~~It's~~

~~come over you?~~

Hellelone (with a yawn) ~~forming~~ forming. The conductor tapped the

Hellelone: music-stand lightly with his baton, and the orchestra ceased tuning up.

Lorraine: Are you seeing that young man this afternoon?

Hellelone: Yes, at four o'clock, in my dressing-room.

Lorraine: ~~That's it~~ ~~him~~ who brought this news

maine: Has he brought you all this misery? Is it true?

The orchestra struck up into a quick waltz.

horraine (shouting above the music, moving closer to Hellelone) I've never seen you like this before, Jack!

~~Hellelone sat deep in his seat, his legs~~

~~crossed and his chin in his hand~~

~~Hellelone sat low in his seat, staring at~~

~~his outstretched legs. He did not speak until the music was over and the <sup>auditorium</sup> theatre was once more silent.~~

~~Hellelone: He told me about the War. These things shouldn't be allowed to happen to lots of kids. Now his life's finished. They knocked him about too much.~~

Hellelone sat low in his <sup>seat</sup> chair, staring at his outstretched legs. He did not speak until the music was over and the auditorium once more silent.

Hellelone: I should have answered my son's letters. He wrote me ~~a great many~~ letters, ~~you know~~ during the War, and to me they looked <sup>were much</sup> like all the other begging letters. <sup>I got</sup> It was in my hands to save his life.

horraine (sceptically) How?

Hellelone: These things happen to lots of kids because of people like me, I suppose.

horraine: What things?

Hellelone: Oh, war, war... He turned my room into an <sup>He</sup> 'undertaken' with all his talk about war. ~~that's~~ ~~sure~~ ~~he~~ blamed me.

horraine (perplexed) But what could you have done? What were these letters you should have answered? What was it you did wrong <sup>to</sup> to your son?

Hellelone: It's too long a story, Albest.

~~Albert:~~ But

horraine: But what does this young man complain about? (Watching Hellelone suspiciously) I want <sup>you</sup> to tell me, Jack, - what was he after? Why did he call you up so late? Why did he take you out to a club and introduce you to the Italian couple? Tell me what you think his motives were, because it's him who has got under your skin. I've never seen you worry like this before. Until now I have thought you had a conscience for anything ~~outside~~ <sup>outside</sup> ~~but~~ your work.

Hellelone: He just wanted to see me, and cheer himself up a bit. He's finished. The War finished him. He's a boy without a future. He really didn't survive the War at all. (Turning to horraine) I want to help him. I could take him in hand, you know, like my own son.

The orchestra <sup>is second time, -</sup> began <sup>two-step.</sup> a loud military ~~the step.~~ Hellelone (shouting above the music) I wish to God I could go back to that hotel now and forget <sup>dress rehearsal</sup> this ~~finale!~~ <sup>two-step</sup> I don't want other people ~~to sit down.~~ ~~I don't want to think~~ watching me, ~~I want to sit down and watch them: do you understand that feeling? can you sympathise with that?~~

horraine stared at him in astonishment.

horraine: Don't see anything more of <sup>those</sup> ~~these~~ people, Jack.

Hellelone <sup>(bitterly)</sup> I shall see Saupson at four o'clock this afternoon, and this evening I shall <sup>see</sup> the Italian woman at her Apres.

horraine: Not just before the performance?

Hellelone: Yes, at seven o'clock.

horraine <sup>(helplessly, touching Hellelone's white sleeve)</sup> What are they up to, these people? What are they up to?

~~horraine~~ <sup>Benedict</sup> Amurat pulled back the curtain

and peered down into the dark stalls. The moment he saw  
Anwarat's head Hellelone rose.

Hellelone: We're ten minutes late starting.

~~He walked swiftly to the side of~~  
~~the stage~~  
stage. The footlights changed colour, and the music ~~ended~~  
~~on end~~ Hellelone sat staring before him, ~~and~~ sitting his  
lip. ~~At~~ Just the curtain ~~rose~~ he jumped up and  
went hurriedly to the Exit door at the side of the  
stage.

~~He left Hellelone and returned to the stage.~~  
He left Hellelone and returned to the  
stage. The music ended, and Hellelone remained sitting in  
the stalls, staring before him. Just as the curtain began  
to rise he jumped up and walked to <sup>a small</sup> ~~the~~ ~~Exit~~ door at  
the side of the stage.

He walked along a narrow corridor,  
then ascended some steps into the wings at the very  
back of the stage. He walked past the jaded  
staircase and behind a silver backdrop to the stairs  
leading up to his own office. Just as he reached  
the gallery outside his door there was a smart  
explosion from the stage below and he turned nervously  
and looked down. A cloud of white smoke issued from  
the grand piano, and he watched it wave slowly  
from right to left of the stage. He looked at the  
taut steel wire ~~above it~~ and the hanging trapeze,  
then he entered the office.

He took up the telephone.

hormaine (into the mouthpiece) Get me Monsieur Charpentier. (A pause, until Charpentier answered) Bernard, postpone our little conference until four o'clock ... Well, a number of things ... Four o'clock, then.

~~He put the receiver down and switched out his desk-lamp. The sky was no longer dark, though it was still raining. He sat thoughtfully.~~

The sky was no longer dark, though it was still raining. He leaned across his desk and switched off the lamp, then picked the telephone up again.

hormaine (into the mouthpiece) Get me the stage ... Monsieur Jean Dubois-Bordeaux ... His dressing-room, then ... Jean, listen to me: I want you to visit me now in my office

hormaine (into the mouthpiece) Get me Monsieur Jean Dubois-Bordeaux ... <sup>(listening)</sup> His dressing-room, I think <sup>(listening)</sup> Hello, Jean. Listen to me. I want you to come up to the office immediately <sup>(listening)</sup> k. Albert <sup>(listening)</sup> hormaine ~~k~~ ... And, Jean, I want you to bring your brother. But you must both come immediately.

He walked across to the gallery-door, then out onto the gallery. As he opened the door a gas-drum sounded at from the stage below, then a clown's yell of dismay. He looked down. Hellelone had just fallen onto his back near the chest-of-drawers, and one of the drawers was open. His white pincot's costume was ~~now~~ now in rags, ~~his vest~~ and his vest and combinations were) ~~now~~ visible. hormaine leaned on the gallery-bannister, gazing at the <sup>a</sup> battery of lights above the stage and at the ~~far~~ top of the proscenium arch, his lips pursed. He

remained there until, a few minutes later, there was a knock on the other door of his office. He went quickly back and closed the jockey-door, then admitted Jean and Pierre Dula-Bordeau.

Jean wore a dark suit with a high starched collar of the kind no longer in vogue, while Pierre was in tight and blouse. Pierre Dula-Bordeau was taller and thinner than his clothes: ~~and~~ he moved about ~~awkwardly~~ <sup>and</sup> ~~in~~ <sup>in</sup> ~~reference~~ <sup>reference</sup> to the other he ~~took a chair~~ <sup>took a chair</sup> near the window, a little apart from them. ~~He~~

hormaine (quietly, his eyes on the desk) A young man is going to visit Jack this afternoon whom I suspect of trying to blackmail him, ~~or at least of trying to undermine him, I suspect him before tonight's performance.~~ Have you noticed anything wrong with Jack today?

Jean (a little startled) No.

hormaine: Did you watch this morning's rehearsal?

Jean (thinking slowly, with effort) Yes. I saw Jack rehearse. I thought he was a bit slow of the work, but ~~that~~ <sup>I'd</sup> no idea he was in trouble.

hormaine: Well, he was a sick man. He vomited in his dressing-room, and I don't think he had more than a couple of hours' sleep <sup>last night</sup>. I found him <sup>in his bed</sup> with his jacket torn: that was after nine this morning.

Pierre leaned forward inquisitively.

Jean: What had happened?

hormaine: A young man called a Lim at midnight. They left the hotel together and went to a club. At the club Jack was introduced to an Italian couple they were joined by an

IV Albert's Bottomless Pit

Italian couple. Jack came back to the hotel at five o'clock this morning, and he was very drunk and ill. ~~And he was quite apart from his being sick,~~ And these people have disappointed him.

Somelhow they have broken his will. (Glancing up at Jean) He's sick at heart. He lost a son during the War, - I believe it all has something to do with that. Somelhow these people have played on his compassion. I've no grounds for saying they intend blackmail; I simply don't know what they are up to. All I can tell you is that today Jack is a miserable, listless, sick man, whereas last night, before these people came on the scene, he was <sup>happy enough</sup> ~~just as before~~. You talked to him last night, didn't you?

Jean: Yes. He was his old self.

Horaine: Exactly.

He leaned back in his chair, still gazing at the desk.

Horaine: In any case, whether they are up to mischief or not, we mustn't take risks. I am determined to stop that young man visiting Jack this afternoon. I simply cannot afford to take a risk.

He glanced at Pierre, then at Jean.

Horaine: I want your help, you understand. I want you to prevent that young man entering this theatre. ~~As I know~~ ~~on that~~ <sup>All</sup> I can tell you is that he's an Englishman. He has arranged to see Jack in this theatre at four o'clock this afternoon. <sup>One of you must wait for him in the foyer, the other at the stage door.</sup> You must ~~not~~ tell him that Jack's dress rehearsal has been cancelled and that he has left

~~instructions~~ wishes to see the young man at his hotel. You will have my car, but not the chauffeur. You must then offer to drive him down to Jack's hotel. Drop him there and tell him to await Jack in the lounge. But he must be kept away from this theatre. Of course, it's possible that this a harmless young man. It's possible that Jack wanted a night out last night and took more than was good for him. But I'm not prepared to take a risk: and if the young man offers you violence run him to the nearest police station and call me up immediately. Perhaps ~~that~~ he did after all soldier with Jack's son, as he claims ~~but~~ he did: but I'm not prepared to take any risk.

Pierre (shyly) I was watching Jack this morning from the wings, and he slipped once. But he seemed alright in himself.

Lorraine: We've got to be careful precisely because this immense show — it's the most important <sup>one</sup> in my career, perhaps in yours —

He raised his eyebrows, and Jean Dulvi-Bordeaux nodded.

Lorraine: — depends on Jack being able to give his mind to his work. Now I don't want you to talk to anyone else about this.

He picked up the telephone.

Lorraine (into the mouthpiece) Get me the stage... Hello. I want Monsieur Anurov and Monsieur Conte to visit me in my office immediately. Deliver that message, please... Monsieur Lorraine.... Hello... Yes... I'm not the slightest concerned about

the dress rehearsal. I wish to see benédic and houis at once. I shall keep them for a little time as possible. Tell ~~me~~<sup>them</sup> that... Thankyou.

He replaced the receiver and once more turned to Jean and Pierre.  
 homaine: We are protecting Jack, you see, against people who want to break his will. (Rising) Very well, I shall call you up again at half-past three.

He walked towards the door, and Jean and Pierre rose.

homaine: Please stay in your dressing-room until I call you again.

He held the door open for them, and they walked past him into the corridor. Jean still seemed a little startled, and in the corridor he turned, waiting for homaine to say something more. But homaine only nodded and smiled at him, then closed the door silently behind them.

He returned to the desk and took from one of his drawers the file containing Father Michelon's letters. He pushed back the sheaf of letters and looked at the subject-index. He turned to the fifth letter, ~~and read it:~~

"You ask for innocence. But that is a very tall demand for a man over forty. It is an even taller demand for a business-man over forty. And how much taller a demand is it for a business-man over forty in the theatre!"

I shall come and see you.

Father Michelon."

He laid the file down and went to the window. He gazed out across the park for a moment, though

the thick rain. Then he returned to the desk and took from a drawer the letter he had not long before addressed to Father Michelin. He sat down and drew the waste-paper basket nearer to him, then tore the letter up into tiny fragments.

There was a knock on the gallery-door, and Lorraine pushed the basket away from him. Louis Comte entered the room, and then Anurov.

Anurov: You wanted us?

Lorraine: Yes.

Anurov: ~~Is~~ <sup>With</sup> the dress rehearsal on?

Lorraine (rising): Yes. The matter's urgent, you see.

He went across to the gallery-door, which Anurov had left ajar, and closed it tight. The orchestra could be heard from the stage below playing slow, melancholy music.

~~Lorraine~~ <sup>He</sup> returned to his desk and put the file containing Father Michelin's letters back into one of the drawers.

Comte and Anurov watched him in silence.

Lorraine (glancing up at Anurov): How is Jack going?

Anurov: He's a little slow, Albest. I noticed that this morning. But he'll pull back into his old style tonight.

Lorraine: You think so?

Anurov: Yes. He's saving himself up perhaps.

Lorraine: I expect you noticed that he was a sick man this morning. He was trembling a little. You must have noticed that.

I'm afraid, Benedict, that he has got himself into a bit of trouble.

Both Anurov and Comte looked at him in surprise.

Lorraine: I'm very anxious about him, and I'm afraid that a catastrophe

tonight is possible. That's why I called you up here. I want you to arrange an alternative programme.

Amurat (laughed by this) But he's down there performing now, Albert. Come and watch him yourself. He can't be so ill.

horraine (gloomily) I happen to know, Bénédict, ~~that~~ he was very reluctant to go on that stage this afternoon. And I happen <sup>person</sup> to know ~~that~~ there is someone in Paris - perhaps worse than ~~any~~ <sup>whose object</sup> is to break his will. ~~to try to break his will.~~

Amurat (with a frown) What for?

horraine: It may be a case of blackmail, - another case of blackmail. <sup>whatever it is,</sup> But, I'm not prepared to take risks. Something may go wrong at the last minute. I'm doing everything I can to protect Jack against these people, but I may not succeed. ~~He's still a sick~~

~~man, you see: his will is half broken, his mind's troubled~~  
~~his mind's troubled, and, believe me,~~ He's still a sick man, you see. He has lost his spirit. It was as much as I could do to get him ~~to~~ along to this theatre this morning.

Conte: We heard he took too much to ~~drink~~ last night.

horraine: There was more to it than that. Believe me, he's not saving himself up for tonight, <sup>at this moment.</sup> he's using every bit of strength in his body down on that stage. Naturally, he looks slow, but he'll be slower tonight. I don't believe ~~he~~ <sup>he</sup> will pull back into his old style, Bénédict.

Amurat: Well, I didn't expect this. (Turning to Conte) Have you heard about it downstairs?

Conte: No. Everyone knew he was on the loose, of course.

horraine (sitting higher in his chair) Now I'm not telling you this

is a case of blackmail. I say I have my suspicions, and I'm not prepared to take risks. ~~I want to you to arrange an alternative programme, but I want you to do it quietly.~~ Therefore I want you to arrange an alternative programme which can be used at a moment's notice. But arrange it as quietly as you can: I don't want to discourage Jack, and he'd ~~not~~ never forgive me if he got word of this. (hauling his gaze) There's no need to tell everyone that an alternative programme is being arranged. Let that be an understanding between the three of us. All the others need be told is that the time of Jack's performance may be altered and that they must be ready to play out of schedule. I shall <sup>see</sup> Nidobe myself later this afternoon, since he would be the mainstay of my alternative programme.

He paused and touched the edge of his desk.  
Lorraine: I don't see why Jack, Bernard or the Virgin should get to hear of this. (More loudly) But I do hope to God ~~that~~ these isn't going to be trouble. My business interests in Paris — and all over Europe — have a lot to gain if the show fails tonight. And I have many, many rivals. I don't expect either of you know much about my early days in the ~~theatre~~ business when I bought my first theatre, but I haven't always been on top of the market and I haven't always been able to outbid my rivals. The show tonight is the biggest I've ever attempted, and I'm not prepared to take unnecessary risks. If the show goes down we all go down.  
Answered (quietly) But an alternative programme wouldn't save the

Mr Albert's Bottomless Pit.

show. It means nothing without Jack.

hormaine: Yes, Bénédict, but the least we can do is to save our faces, and an alternative programme would help us do that.

(Rising) ~~that's~~ I won't keep you any longer because of the rehearsal. This will mean a very busy two hours before the curtain goes up, I'm afraid.

Amurat <sup>thoughtfully</sup> got up and walked to the gallery-door. ~~thoughtfully~~ There he turned.

Amurat: I hope you're not exaggerating.

hormaine: Whether I am or not, we can't afford to take risks.

Amurat: Well, I hope you're wrong. I've put a lot of blood into this show.

hormaine nodded and patted him on the shoulder. They all went out into the gallery.

hormaine: <sup>I want you to visit</sup> ~~visit~~ me again at half-past four, ~~please~~

Counte: Me as well?

hormaine (watching them descend the staircase) Yes, both of you.

~~The orchestra was now playing a bold and loud march. hormaine looked down at the stage, and Hellebore was now on the steel wire, springing higher and up and down on his feet to the tune of the music higher and higher on his feet, until ~~finally~~ he somersaulted in the air.~~

~~The orchestra was now playing a bold bold and loud march. hormaine looked down at the stage, and Hellebore was now <sup>performing</sup> on the steel wire. He sprang higher and higher from the wire, then somersaulted in the air and returned ~~in the~~ to a sitting position; sprang higher and~~

~~Higher again, and assaulted a second time.~~

The orchestra was playing a bold and loud march. Hellebore looked down at the stage. He was now performing on the steel wire. He sprang higher and higher to the tune of the music, then rolled head over heels in the air and returned feet first to the wire; sprang higher and higher again, and rolled head ~~and~~ <sup>over</sup> heels a second time. He now wore only his vest and combinations.

Hellebore returned to the office and closed the gallery-door. He sat behind his desk for several minutes, his eyes closed. The music ceased, and there was a noise from outside the gallery-door of ropes and pulleys moving in the flies.

Scene 4: The same, at a few minutes before four o'clock.

~~Hellebore, wearing his sequin costume and white stockings, walked hurriedly through the pass-door from the stage towards his dressing-room. Virginie Dupont followed close behind him, carrying his~~

Hellebore jumped clear of the grand piano, which the stagehands were wheeling offstage, and ran towards the pass-door. He was dressed in his sequin costume, with the white stockings to his knee, and his face and hair were saturated with sweat. He went straight to his dressing-room and began undressing behind the screen. A moment later Virginie Dupont entered, carrying his giant's shoes, his spotted coat, his yellow shirt and his outsize tweed suit. While Hellebore took a bath she laid out his costumes side by side for the evening performance.

The orchestra was still rehearsing, but the stage was now more bare, lit only by one arc-lamp in the wings. None of the sceneshifters remained.

At ten minutes past four Hellebrand left his dressing-room and went up to the Crimson Tower by means of a corridor which ran along by the amphitheatre. He was now in ordinary clothes. The Crimson Tower was empty and once more furnished as the circle lounge. He walked across to one of the French windows, opened it and ~~walked~~ stepped down onto the balcony ~~which skirted the~~ ~~the~~ ~~skirted-glass door over the foyer~~ which skirted the foyer dome. He went to the edge of the balcony and looked down into the street. A hansom-cab and two motor-cars were standing outside the theatre doors, but there were no pedestrians near them. (It was no longer raining, and the sky was thick with white cloud.)

He went back into the Crimson Tower, then across the Dress Circle to the foyer-balustrade which led round to the amphitheatre and boxes. The foyer was empty and dark: none of ~~the~~ the lustres were yet alight. He walked slowly down the wide carpeted staircase to the box office and knocked twice on the side-door. There was no reply. He knocked again, waited for a moment, then went to the glass doors leading into the street. He tried them one by one, and found the last one open. He walked out onto the pavement, frowning and very pale. He looked up and down the street,

which was a little less deserted than before. The limousine-car and motor-car were still there. He waited until a number of people had passed by him, then he ~~returned~~ went back inside. He walked down the steps to the door leading into the pit. The light of the street had blinded him and he could not find his way down the centre gangway to the stage. The front curtain was now down, and only a few of the footlights were on. The orchestra had departed, and nothing could be heard throughout the auditorium. He walked slowly down the centre gangway, his left arm extended, feeling for one of the pillars which supported the circle above. Half way down to the stage he quickened his pace and immediately ~~stumbled.~~ <sup>stumbled.</sup> ~~He put his arms out and slipped heavily forward.~~ He slipped forward and hit his thigh, then his stomach, on <sup>one of the</sup> ~~an~~ arm-rests on the left-hand side. He steadied himself by looking onto the back of ~~the~~ a seat, then he sat down and rested. He waited until his eyes were accustomed to the light, then he went slowly up to the stage, through the pass-door and back again to his dressing-room.

Francine ~~Virginia~~ turned and looked at him anxiously when he entered the room. He sighed, ~~and then~~ ~~back his hand~~ and went to the divan, where he lay down. He walked across to him and looked down ~~into his eyes,~~ at him, then wiped the sweat from his nose and brow with a handkerchief.

Francine  
~~Helene~~: You're still ill, aren't you?

Helene (his eyes closed) ~~Yes~~ I can't keep steady on my feet. It's no good, I'll never be able to do it tonight.

Francine  
Virginie: But what's the matter? Tell me what's the matter!

Helene (shaking his head) I'll come a cropper tonight; you see. He opened his eyes <sup>drowsily</sup> and looked at her, then touched her chin with his hand.

Helene: Now you keep quiet about that, Judy.  
The telephone bell rang, and Virginie

answered it.  
Francine  
Virginie (into the ~~mouthpiece~~ <sup>listening</sup>) Very well... I shall tell him.

She laid the receiver down and turned ~~towards~~ to Helene.  
Francine  
Virginie: Albert's house asks you to go up immediately. You are twenty minutes late.

He sighed and rubbed his eyes. Virginie brought over a small cloth saturated with Eau de Cologne and rubbed <sup>it</sup> over his brow and neck, then he <sup>got up and</sup> went to the dressing-table. He gazed at his face in the mirror, first at his drooping, bloodshot eyes, then at his mouth. He <sup>raised</sup> ~~lifted~~ his eyebrows and moved his mouth a little, ~~to make~~ his expression less gloomy. ~~He combes White Uggine Crested~~ ~~the shaft~~ so as to make his expression appear less gloomy. He was still pale.

He went to the door and opened ~~it~~ it.  
Helene (turning) Virginie Did anyone call while I was away

just now?

Francine  
Virginie (her face averted) No.

Hellelne: And there wasn't a 'phone message?

Francine  
Virginie: No.

Hellelne: How does the time stand?

Virginie looked at the alarm clock  
on the chest-of-drawers behind the screen.

Francine  
Virginie: Twenty-five minutes past four.

~~Hellelne nodded sadly and left the room.~~  
~~He walked up to Hornsby's office and <sup>went in</sup> ~~walked in~~ without knocking.~~  
~~Bernard Chapelet, wearing a black coat of the previous century~~  
~~was seated behind Hornsby's desk, and Hornsby himself stood~~  
~~nearby at the window looking out.~~

~~Chapelet: Well, there we are, Jack Budding. Do sit down.~~

~~Hornsby (with a swift glance at Hellelne as he sat down) He's been at~~  
~~the Grandy affair, Jack.~~

~~Hellelne (distastefully) Why, this time of day?~~

~~Chapelet~~ Chapelet smiled at Hellelne and leaned  
back in his chair, stretching out his legs.

~~Chapelet: It helps me at any time of the day. (Gazing at~~  
~~Hellelne, his eyes half-closed) In half an age, Jack. I can see perhaps~~  
~~one tiny kind of case in your face that didn't exist five years ago.~~  
~~Time is God's ~~the~~ finger marking people's faces, which indicates~~  
~~that He's on your side. How long ago was it we all three sat~~  
~~together in this room?~~

~~Hornsby: Don't seven. Wasn't it 1913, Jack?~~

~~Hellelne: The end of 1913, yes.~~

~~Chapelet: This theatre is Hellelne's church, and I'm your acolyte.~~

Hellclow nodded sadly and left the room. He walked up to Morraine's office and went in without knocking. Bernard Charpentier sat behind the desk, and Morraine himself was standing nervously by the window.

Charpentier: Come in, Jack Pudding. We are twenty-five minutes late, so is it enough if I give you a little summary of what I shall tell them?

Hellclow (sitting down) Of course. I'm in a hurry, too.

Morraine went to the wall-cupboard and took out a brandy bottle and a glass. He half-filled the glass and put it down on the desk in front of Charpentier.

Charpentier: Thank you, Albert.

He took a long drink, then got up and began pacing the room.

Charpentier: Very well. Morraine Hellclow...etc. [as continued p. 39.]



~~Hellclaw entered Lorraine's office.~~ Bernard

Charpentier, wearing a black cloak of the previous century, was seated behind Lorraine's desk, and Lorraine himself stood nervously at the window.

Charpentier: Well, here we are, Jack Pudding, - so to work.

Lorraine: He has been at the brandy again.

Hellclaw: At this hour?

Charpentier: It helps me at this hour. Sit down, Jack. Ha!

Looked at you closely last night I realised that time had only recorded one wrinkle on your brow since we saw you five years ago. (P) Do you see it, Albert? (Pointing at Hellclaw's brow) Between the eyes there, which only indicates that God is on your side, Jack, because ~~God~~<sup>time</sup> is God's finger marking people's faces, and He has used you well since ~~the~~<sup>to</sup> three of us sat together in this very room five years ago.

Lorraine: Six.

Charpentier: Six years ago. Yes, God is on your side, Jack; and this theatre is your church, tonight's performance a divine service. And as for myself, I'm your acolyte. (Turning) Fill me up, Lorraine, please, please.

With a wink at Hellclaw Lorraine went to a corner wall-cupboard and took down the brandy. He came to the desk and ~~he~~ began filling Charpentier's glass.

Charpentier: Hell in the belly, heaven in the head, - my eternal bifurcation. (Restraining Lorraine) Easy, easy. Hell is yellow, and she lums the tongue.

Charpentier took two gulps of his brandy neat, coughed, and laid his <sup>black</sup> glass on the table.

Charpentier: What's to be said, Jack?

Hellclaw: That's your game, Bernard.

Charpentier (<sup>with dash</sup> ~~to Hellclaw~~) Well, you have a certain eminence now. Old reputations are enhanced by war; they are ~~made mellow~~<sup>mellowed</sup> by it. That is ~~the~~<sup>with</sup> peculiar feature of modern war: you enter it a scavenger and you emerge a bon bourgeois.

He rose from his chair and began studying back and forth across the room, his head bent forward, frowning.

### III Albert's Bottomless Pit

at Versailles.

40.

The new Cirque d'Opéra in Toulouse. ~~Reopened Paris's Théâtre de la Fête~~  
~~After~~ Albert Lorraine - in private life his intimate friend -  
promised the theatrical world at the beginning of the War that one day  
Hellebreque would return to the stage of the Théâtre de la Fête, and it  
is entirely to him that we owe the present visit. So easy is the  
understanding between them that M<sup>r</sup> Finstanley could arrive in Paris  
from Willesden only twenty-four hours before the curtain was due to  
go up.

~~He went to the desk and drank a little brandy.~~

Chapentier: Advanced booking was already ~~up~~ to capacity a month ago.  
This first show is in the nature of a send-off for a long  
continental tour across Spain, Germany and perhaps Scandinavia,  
and it is to be hoped that, the tour once over, M<sup>r</sup> Finstanley  
will again visit Paris for a run at the same theatre, lasting  
at the very least six weeks. Later in the year Albert Lorraine  
will probably ask him to undertake a tour of French towns including  
Rouen, Amiens, Arras, Orleans, Bordeaux, Toulouse and Perpignan.  
Of these towns only two - Rouen and Toulouse - will remember  
former visits from Hellebreque, both of them in 1908. How far  
other theatrical managers than Albert Lorraine will make  
arrangements with Hellebreque is a matter open to speculation, but  
it is unlikely that during the next two or three years ~~either~~  
he will want to enter fresh contracts.

Hellebreque ~~stared~~ <sup>raised his eyebrows</sup> ~~at~~ Lorraine.

Chapentier: It was largely with Hellebreque's visit in mind that a year ago  
Albert Lorraine made certain alterations in the structure of the Théâtre  
de la Fête. The roof above the stage was lifted to make more  
flying space, and the stage itself was built back to give it  
twice the previous depth. More space is now available in the  
wings, the lighting system has been overhauled and brought up to  
date, and there are twenty new dressing-rooms and offices. There  
is now a modified revolving-stage system and twice as much  
space as hitherto in front and underneath the stage. These  
alterations favour the extravagant shows, and Albert Lorraine intends  
henceforward to use the Théâtre de la Fête for pantomimes, large-  
scale music-hall programmes from London, and for circuses. It will

Be remembered that he opened the theatre in its new state with Monty Braue's Circus: elephants, tigers, seals, horses, dogs, trapeze-artists and jugglers performed quite comfortably on this stage, though six years before the same troupe found it now almost impossible for lack of amenities and space. The present show, like Monty Braue's Circus, takes every advantage of the alterations. Thus Hellelone's visit is, as it were, a christening for the new Théâtre de la Fête. And so on. Ah: the

supporting cast includes Nidok, the great illusionist, who recently returned from Belgium, where he ~~lost~~ <sup>lost</sup> thousands of innocent men, women and children on successive occasions at Liege, Namur, Ghent and Brussels.

Hellelone: I nearly knocked him down this afternoon.

Korvaine (startling) How?

Hellelone: Cartwheeling.

Korvaine: How do you mean, -cartwheeling?

Hellelone: Well, I came ~~rolling~~ <sup>running</sup> across the stage and I nearly knocked him down.

Korvaine: What happened?

Hellelone: ~~He~~ Nothing. He's ~~a~~ a polite ~~and~~ fellow, so there ~~would be~~ <sup>was</sup> no danger of ~~falling off~~ a rough-house.

Korvaine: Why should there be anyway?

Hellelone: Be what?

Korvaine: Any danger of ~~falling off~~ <sup>falling off</sup> a rough-house?

Chapentier: Oh, come, come, they certainly ~~clash~~ <sup>clash</sup> each other, <sup>and</sup> you ought to know that by now. Your business theories on these

detestations: Jack and Wilhelm vie with each other, and you know it.

Korvaine (uncomfortably) I don't like too many of these disagreements.

There should be cohesion, cohesion.

Hellelone: You and your cohesion.

Chapentier: Nidok is quite plainly jealous of Jack, and he never could cohere with anything, even his manager. I am sure he calls

me nasty names, too.  
Korvaine (turning from him) Oh, pah, pah, pah.

Chapentier: Yes, pah, pah, pah, I fear these thin and silent men: they walk about like my conscience. He blames the infidel in me, perhaps that's it.

Korvaine: Well, it could do with Shamius.

V There's Blood on Your Fingers.

CROSSFIRE. 4.

~~Francine~~ ~~Virginia~~: I must speak with you about tomorrow.

She took a light wicker chair from behind the screen and sat ~~at the side~~ <sup>by</sup> of the dressing table, facing Hellelone. In her hand was a small appointment book.

~~Francine~~ ~~Virginia~~: When will you see the mannequin?

Hellelone: I won't.

~~Francine~~ ~~Virginia~~ (with surprise): He is expecting to come.

Hellelone: I don't need — (indicating her book impatiently) all that.

~~Francine~~ ~~Virginia~~: But you usually have the mannequin ~~on the second morning~~.

Hellelone: Not tomorrow, though, on the next day.

~~Francine~~ ~~Virginia~~: Very well. (with a glance at her book) Also the doctor usually calls on the second morning.

Hellelone: I don't need a doctor. Cancel him.

Virginia laid the book down on her knee and looked at him with a frown.

~~Francine~~ ~~Virginia~~: There are thirty appointments for you in this book. Are you going to cancel every one of them? What is the matter with you?

Hellelone continued to powder his face.   
 When I'm off the ~~stage~~ <sup>stage</sup> my time is my own.

~~Francine~~ ~~Virginia~~: It did not use to be.

Hellelone: ~~Well, it is now~~ I won't have a retinue of mannequins and doctors. I won't have these appointments. They make me feel dead, they make me feel a prisoner.

Virginia closed her book and smiled.

~~Francine~~ ~~Virginia~~: Very well. That will surprise some people.

Hellelone: Yes, a few people are going to catch a cold over that.

~~Francine~~ ~~Virginia~~: I thought a full appointment book made you feel proud.

Hellelone: It used to, sweetheart. But that was before the War.

Virginia went behind the screen and Hellelone began painting in his immense red lips.

Hellelone: Listen to me, Virginia. I don't want to use this room again. This is the last time I dress in it.

Virginia came to the edge of the screen and looked at him in silence for a moment.

~~Francine~~ ~~Virginia~~: Why is that?

Hellelone (leaning back from the mirror, studying his lips) I don't feel at home here; I don't feel myself. It gives me nasty feelings. (Hunching his shoulders up as if cold) That sort of feeling. So

You must tell Lorraine about my little fancy, and then you must find me another dressing room before tomorrow night's performance.

Osterise: I'll dress in the corridor.

~~V. Francine:~~ ~~V. Francine:~~ But this is such a beautiful room.

Hellelone: Yes, it's like a mortuary.

~~V. Francine:~~ ~~V. Francine:~~ Lorraine will be best. ~~You know.~~

Hellelone: It will teach him not to build me a mortuary and call it the Salon Hellelone.

~~V. Francine:~~ ~~V. Francine:~~ (peering at him) You have changed, you know.

Hellelone (touching up his lips) I've had too much of it. I built myself a gymnasium during the War, in the garden of my house.

I think I'll burn it down when I go back; that would give me pleasure, you know. I even had Japanese <sup>cherry</sup> trees planted

along the sides of the path leading down from the house. And at night there were fairy lights hanging from them. Fairy lights...

~~V. Francine:~~ ~~V. Francine:~~ Do you regret it now?

Hellelone: I no longer need it, so I say to hell with it. I told

Lorraine this morning that I'd like to burn this room down and I'd begin with the curtains.

~~V. Francine:~~ ~~V. Francine:~~ They are the loveliest things in the room.

Hellelone: I'm going to travel from now on and I shall <sup>go on</sup> travelling until I wear myself out. But I'm not going to be stuffed alive by Lorraine or anybody else.

~~V. Francine:~~ ~~V. Francine:~~ Your secretary arrived from England this afternoon. What about her?

Hellelone: I don't need her, sweetheart. What's the use of a secretary when there are no appointments to keep and no letters to write?

VI There's Blood on Your Fingers.

and you'd suffer worse than you are suffering now by my refusing you. It would make you hate yourself, or else you'd come to hate me, and I won't risk that, because as I say I love you as a friend.

Horaine: We don't know that until ~~we've tried...~~ <sup>we've tried...</sup> You may be wrong. You might grow to love me, or does that sound absurd to you?

Elija: No. I wish it could be true.

Horaine: Perhaps a child would bring us love. You can't tell unless you take the plunge.

Elija: I can tell. You must trust the woman to know.

Horaine: ~~You sound as though~~ <sup>He glanced at her.</sup> Your mind is made up, isn't it?

Elija: ~~Arzirk~~ Yes.

Horaine (warily): So I need never ~~ask~~ <sup>ask</sup> you again. ~~?~~

Elija: No, my dear.

Horaine (in hopeless gloom): I thought you would have agreed. I truly thought this time that you'd agree. Of course, you are in love with Jack still.

Elija: That was a dream I had ten years ago. Now and again it comes back. I can't forget him, that's true, but I have been without him so long that I take it for granted and I no longer worry him. The trouble he had with me was exactly the trouble I am having with you. He wanted to help <sup>me</sup> and couldn't, he loved me as a friend. So I do know what it is like to be you at this moment, and it's a torment for me knowing that I'm the cause of it and can do nothing about it.

~~and sobbed, then, began to weep with long helpless cries. Horaine moved his hand down to her's and murmured, "Elija, Elija," his eyes averted from her and narrowed to prevent tears.~~

She bent her head forward and sobbed, then with long helpless cries she began to weep. Horaine moved his hand down to her's and murmured, "Elija, Elija," his eyes averted from her and narrowed to prevent tears.

(Cont. Crossfire 4. "Francie: I must...")

VI There's Blood on Your Fingers.

CROSSFIRE 2.

horraine turned the key in the lock of his office door and ~~returned~~ <sup>went back</sup> to ~~the~~ <sup>his</sup> desk. He sat down beside Eliya, his own chair touching hers at the arm. ~~She~~ <sup>she</sup> was dressed for the street in a black cloche hat and a simple coat with a collar of black fur. Nothing could be heard from the corridors outside or from the stage.

horraine laid his hand on ~~Eliya's~~ <sup>her</sup> arm without turning his head. ~~He spoke in almost a whisper~~ <sup>(Almost in a whisper)</sup>

horraine / You aren't contented with Eiselheim. You won't be young eternally. You are thirty-four, my dear, and you want children. You do want children, you need them, a strong and clean girl like yourself— Eliya, <sup>I'm so miserably sad when you're away from me.</sup> ~~by misery / when I am without you is so hard to bear.~~

I love just to be with you, simply to touch your arm like this. I want your smells, I want to feel you close to me, I want to look at you and look at you, I want to bathe and saturate myself in you. I wish I could be worthy of you, I wish I ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> better-looking. I wish I ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> cleverer with my tongue. (Persuasively)

But you see, my dear Eliya, you'd ~~change~~ <sup>change</sup> me. If you took me you'd ~~change~~ <sup>change</sup> me into another man, you would give me a new life and will, whereas now I am helpless, I feel old, and I am always sad nowadays, and it seems to me I have no future, nothing new or warm for me between now and my death. You have the power to give me a future.

Without you I'm so miserable. I enjoy nothing, except thinking about you. I yearn for you, Eliya, hours after hours, waking and sleeping, day after day. All my dreams are about you. ~~Every flower and scent and whiff of hair seems to~~

~~remind me of you.~~ I dream and dream and dream about loving you, and again and again I imagine to myself what I would tell you and how I would touch your body if you took me. ~~Disgusting to myself / your / words / and / for / the /~~

~~that / I /~~ I dream of you lying in your bed and the lamp coming across the room. But if you refuse me what you really do is to condemn me to death, and I shall go through the rest of my life like a corpse; I shall be alone, a ~~fatigued~~ <sup>fatigued</sup> batchelor ministering to himself. I want to

offer you everything I have, for you to destroy if you wish.

He clasped her arm tighter but still <sup>he</sup> did not glance towards her.

horraine: Help me, Elyia. ~~I am~~ <sup>I'm</sup> so deeply in love with you.

Elyia (close to tears) I can't bear you to talk like that. It's a terrible torment for both of us. It makes us feel so helpless. ~~But the cause, but there's nothing I can do. But~~

~~you, yet I've committed no crime, so there's nothing I can atone for.~~ I never tried to make you fall in love with me? I didn't, did I?

horraine: ~~No, but that's half why I fell in love with you.~~ <sup>horraine shook his head.</sup>

Elyia: ~~I never tried to attract you in any way.~~ I never tried to be with you more than with anyone else in this theatre. I haven't been more claiming to you than to other people.

I can't bear you to talk like that; it tears my inside open, and I feel so helpless. And it doesn't serve any purpose, it doesn't alter either of us when you say these things. At the end of it we are still ~~alone~~ <sup>and</sup> separate from each other, and I can still do nothing to help you.

I wish with all my heart and soul I could help you, <sup>darling,</sup> because I do love you as a friend, and my pity for you is like a real pain. I could sleep with you, my dear,

but that would't not <sup>make me love you:</sup> ~~bring you any love~~ I can do nothing to give you love, there is nothing <sup>anybody</sup> ~~anyone~~ in the world could do to make me love you.

~~I could have slept with you, that's only a matter of putting my hands in a certain place; but that would't bring love to either of us.~~

~~Do you understand me?~~ Do you understand me? horraine smiled tenderly and nodded.

Elyia: ~~I do understand that all my will is on your side~~ ~~and that I would~~ <sup>I'd</sup> do anything to be able to help you. <sup>if</sup> I could be made to love you as a lover and wife <sup>simply</sup> by saying a word I would say that word, ~~or all day with~~ ~~to my sister.~~ <sup>And I'd</sup> ~~not~~ ~~worry~~ worry you tomorrow if I didn't know quite well that it would make me wretched and miserable, and that you would realise my wretchedness and then blame yourself for causing it: that would be an insult to you, a beastly insult I could never undo,

Scene 1: The Théâtre de la Fête a little later.

<sup>Francine</sup>  
~~Virginia~~ Berger entered Helhelme's dressing-room. She went across to his table and began arranging his cream-pots, brushes, rouge-sticks, powder-puffs and scissors. Beside them she put a large napkin and an alarm clock.

Some minutes before eight o'clock Helhelme came in. He smiled at her, and she helped him off with his overcoat. He went behind the screen and took off his jacket, then he washed his face and hands. He sat down at the dressing-table and, with the napkin tucked round his neck, began creaming his face.

Francine answering it) The telephone bell rang.  
~~Virginia~~ (into the multipiece) Yes, he has just this minute arrived.  
(listening) He appears to be, (listening) I shall ask him.

She put her hand over the multipiece and turned to him.

<sup>Francine</sup>  
~~Virginia~~: It's ~~about~~ Albert Lorraine. He wishes to know if you'd like the mouse to come in and see you.

Helhelme (impatently) No.

<sup>Francine</sup>  
~~Virginia~~ (at the telephone) He says so, but thank you. (listening)

Making up at the moment. Very well.

She put the receiver down, and Helhelme creamed his cheeks ~~or~~ briskly.

Helhelme: What else did he have to say?

~~Francine~~: He asked what time it was when you arrived and whether you seemed well.

Helhelme: He has been a proper ~~fidget-arse~~ <sup>fidget-arse</sup> today. He has done nothing but worry.

<sup>Francine</sup>  
~~Virginia~~: Well, ~~what~~ do you ~~wonder~~ wonder at it? You were drunk last night and this morning you were too ill to move. It would make any managers in Europe worry; especially when you always used to be so good and reliable.

The foyer was empty and dimly lit. Two of the entrance doors were suddenly pushed open, and Jean and Pierre Duboi-Bordeau entered breathlessly from the street. They ran down the centre gangway of the stalls and made for the dressing-rooms. At the conductor's rostrum Jean suddenly stopped and turned about: he called to Pierre to go on, then he returned to the foyer. He walked across to the box office and knocked on the side-door.

[Continued Crossfire 2.  
"Lorraine turned ..."]

\_\_\_\_\_

∇

\_\_\_\_\_

never had a son. You're too selfish. You're too fussy to have a  
 child of your own. You don't understand the young. You make them  
 feel awkward, you make them go silent and sly. I've noticed  
 it. All you think about is your business. You sit on your money  
 like an old black beetle.

hervine (turning away) what a comfort your conversation is.

went slowly back to his desk.

Hellclaw went down to the foyer <sup>again</sup> and found it empty. He again knocked on the box-office door, and there was no reply. He ~~walked~~ visited the Crimson Tower, and that also was empty. He returned to his dressing-room and looked in.

Hellclaw: Has anybody been?

Francine: Not a soul, Jack.

He returned toorraine's office. rorraine was again standing at the window.

Hellclaw (in a low voice) He didn't come.

rorraine (guiltily) Who?

Hellclaw: Saugron. I must see him again, — what shall I do, Albert?

rorraine walked towards him, his eyes on the floor.

rorraine: Tell me, Jack. What makes you want to see him so badly?

Hellclaw (~~eager~~ <sup>eagerly</sup>) I feel sorry for him, — that's the trouble.

rorraine: Yes, we're all at our weakest in our compassionate moments.

Hellclaw: Sometimes a look came into his eyes as if he thought you were going to be cruel to him. (seeing rorraine's smile) I should have made a few sacrifices for Edgar, — at the right time.

rorraine: Why not make a sacrifice of your whole career, — now? It looks to me as if that's what your young friend wants.

Hellclaw shook his head, as if this were too absurd to think about.

rorraine: After a life like yours, Jack, failure is going to be a very bitter thing. You could never survive it.

He gazed at Hellclaw for a moment under his eyelids.

rorraine: He was afraid to come. He smelt a rat. I have had experience of such people.

Hellclaw looked at him sleepily.

Hellclaw: When all is said and done I did murder Edgar. You've

He went to the desk and drank the rest of his brandy.

Charpentier: And you're quite certain, Jack, that nothing ought to be said about your retirement during the War?

Hellelone: No, leave that out of it.

Charpentier (taking his cloak from the chair) It's a shame, Jack. I had a lot of little lies to tell about that. They'll be told in time, of course - by the other journalists.

He walked to the door, and turned.

Charpentier: I shall be there tonight in the second row of the stalls as usual, Jack. (with a smile) I feel excited: a good sign.

He ~~left the room~~ bowed to each of them in turn and left the room.

hormaine glanced hesitantly at Hellelone.

hormaine: How did the rehearsal go?

Hellelone: I was steadier on my feet (non-committally) But you'd better ask Anurov.

He got up and seemed about to leave the room,

but then lingered.

Hellelone: I'm glad we agreed with each other in the end. You've been good to me, Albert. ~~I should stress all this parting~~ I won't

let you down.

hormaine looked at him wretchedly.

hormaine (in embarrassment) How do you feel now?

Hellelone: Steadier, as I said.

He went to the door, and hormaine followed

him.

hormaine: Is there anything I can do for you? I'll take you back to the hotel in my car. I'll call in at the dressing-room just before I leave. Shall I send the nurse up to your rooms this evening?

Hellelone: Why?

hormaine: Just to have a look at your temperature.

Hellelone: Alright, then. I must go. I've got this appointment in the Crimson Tower.

hormaine gazed at him helplessly, <sup>as with open</sup> as he left the room. I immediately the door closed he went towards it quickly, as if to call Hellelone back, then he stopped and

I'd visit you.

Hellelove: He asked you to?

Sampson: Yes.

Hellelove (ill at ease) Was that his dying wish?

Sampson (with a smile) Oh, no! But I felt under a special obligation to him because we were <sup>intimate</sup> friends, and because when he asked me to come and see you he asked me in a specially serious way.

Hellelove: Why?

Sampson: I don't know why.

They both gazed into the fire.

Sampson: He worshipped you.

Hellelove: Did he?

Sampson: It was a kind of religious worship. The thought of you consoled him. He never connected you with the ~~the~~ war. Among your theatres and circuses you were holy and immaculate. As for himself, he thought he was exactly the kind who ought to suffer it. So there was a kind of mercy in it for him, — the mercy that it wasn't being inflicted on you. If you had put on a uniform and gone out to Flanders he would have lost faith, because the only thought that made it bearable to him ~~that there~~ was the thought that there was something in the ~~same~~ universe unconnected with war, — namely, you.

He looked about the room with a smile.

Sampson: I feel like a child who has just come into a palace. And like a child I don't really believe you exist. After a ~~the~~ time Edgar and I ceased to think of you in the flesh. You have a beautiful room here.

Hellelove: I hadn't really noticed it.

Sampson: It's the kind of room I expected you to have. Edgar told me about the extraordinary houses you ~~bought~~ used to buy in England. He told me you decorated them fabulously, then got tired of them in a few weeks and sold out.

Hellelove: Oh, those are stories people pick up. I wasn't used to money, that's true. But don't believe all those stories.

Sampson: He used to tell me about your retinue of doctors,

secretaries, gymnasts and masseurs in the old days. He used to tell me about your little daily rituals: massage at ten o'clock in the morning, a ride in the afternoon, a coffee-party before each performance. He told me about the banquets in your honour, your crowds at the stabledoors, your magnificent clothes, your opening of charity bazaars, your statements to the press, your signature under the forewords of books, the gymnasium you built in Wiltshire during the War which could be turned into a little theatre with a seating capacity of a hundred. There were so many things, and I've forgotten most of them. I never expected to know you in the flesh, and now, with you in front of me, I can't bring the two together <sup>in my mind,</sup> you and Hellelone. He told me about your tours from country to country, and how half the world never realised what nationality you were. The French claimed you as French, the Hungarians claimed you as Hungarian. He told me about the little royal processions of limousin carriages you used to take out of London to see the dawn come up, and the Brandy you served from a tray just before the return journey. (Watching Hellelone with awe) When you came into this room from your bedroom just now it was rather like seeing God for the first time.

Hellelone (puzzled, staring at the young man) Was it?

Sungson: ~~to~~ A porter at the door downstairs has instructions to keep out visitors. A banquet is given in your honour. Legends fly about that you keep late hours and perform every evening on two or three hours sleep. A special hush falls on people at the Théâtre de la Fête when your name is mentioned.

Hellelone: What people?

Sungson: I was thinking of Francine Berger. She is a lady-in-waiting of the court. A kind of sacredness surrounds you. That's how Edgar and I used to think of you. We felt we had a special claim on your attention because he was your son and I was your son's best friend. We seemed to possess you. We could carry you like a father in our caps,

\*INSERT from P. 3. AB "... in him... We used to talk about you in the dug-outs, and between bombardments, and when it was cold and raining, and when we were going up for an attack, and when a patrol had turned out badly. (Awkwardly)...."

Hellelove: Well, it's possible, ~~so I suppose~~, they notified me, I suppose. I moved about a lot in 1916. The letter was probably passed on from place to place, and then lost. I didn't have a settled address in 1916, you see. It's possible they notified me and I never got the letter. Was it a bad wound?

Sampson: It was a schrapnel wound in the thigh from a heavy German shell. I thought it must get him his discharge from the Army, because of the damage to his thigh-bone. But it healed and within six months he was fit again.

Hellelove (looking at the roofs opposite) I might have been able to see him, then.

Sampson: Being an officer — ~~A~~ You knew he was an officer?

Hellelove (with a frown, lowering his head a little) No, I didn't realize.

Sampson: Being an officer he knew what was expected of him, so he went back to the line in 1917, and a few weeks after that he was killed. Had his nerve not been broken when he was wounded he would never have been killed, I'm sure of that. He was killed in the ~~few~~ fiercest battles of the War. He could no longer bear to hear men scream. He was always on the point of running away, he was always panic-stricken, though his face looked determined enough. A terrified man in battle is like a vulnerable. ? ~~He~~ Usually he sees his own death in advance.

(Turning his head to look at Hellelove) The knowledge gives him a grey, condemned, mute, beseeching look about the eyes.

~~Then~~ Neither of them spoke for a few moments.

Sampson: The authorities should have seen at the end of 1916 that his ~~nerve~~ nerve was going. But these...

He shrugged his shoulders and there was silence again.

Sampson: He wrote you a letter, I think, at the end of 1915 or in January, 1916. It was to tell you he had joined the Army and

11

and sometimes you made us feel immune to danger.

Hellelme (glancing down) I'm glad.

Saugson: He was always proud when people told him he was like you. And sometimes he annoyed me by appearing to have a secret too good for other men, too good even for me. The secret was you. It annoyed me to think that you were more his possession than mine, being his father. But I used to console myself with the thought that after all he was very unlike you: he had none of the ~~same~~ clown in him. \* INSERT OVERLEAF AB (awkwardly) When he was killed the world he had made for both of us - out of you - fell to pieces, and I was left in its ruins. You see, he should never have been allowed to come back to the front after he was wounded the first time.

Hellelme: Wounded? Was he wounded?

Saugson: Yes, in the spring of 1916. Didn't you know?

Hellelme (mumbling) No, I didn't know that.

Saugson: But you must have known.

Hellelme (a little impatiently) No, I tell you I didn't.

Saugson: I say that because the authorities must have notified you.

Hellelme: I never heard a word about it.

Saugson: But he was sent back to England, and he was in an English hospital for two months. It was a hospital in Herefordshire. He came back to my company the following year.

Hellelme (quietly) Well, I was never told about that.

Saugson: But the War Office must have notified you.

Hellelme shrugged his shoulders, ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> shivered a little. He got up, rubbing his hands together, and went to his bedroom. There he put on a dressing-gown of white towelling and a pair of bedroom slippers. He walked back to the fire without looking at the young man and warmed his hands. He then went to one of the windows. ~~He pulled the curtain aside and looked out.~~ He pulled the curtain aside and looked out.

Hellelme: When was he wounded, did ~~he~~ you say?

Saugson: Early in 1916.

11

Scene: Hellelone's apartment in the Hotel de la Reine. Fifteen minutes before midnight on Good Friday, 1920.

On the mantel in Hellelone's drawing room stood a slim damask vase with a handle on each side. He took Horraine's rosary from his pocket and laid it over the neck of this vase, so that it was supported by the two handles. A large and hot log-fire burned in the hearth.

He sat down and for some time gazed into the fire, then he began to doze. His head fell very slowly to the back of the chair, his mouth opened and his right hand became limp on his knee. He breathed deeply, as though exhausted.

A church-bell near the hotel struck midnight, and he woke up with a ~~start~~ <sup>snore</sup> and sharp snore and stared about him. Then he went to the bedroom and undressed in the dark. He fell asleep instantly.

At ten minutes past midnight there was a knock on his drawing room door, then silence again. The door opened and closed. Someone took two or three steps into the room, and the lights went up. A male voice called out softly: "Mr. Finstanley." It was an Englishman's voice, precise and educated.

~~Hellelone opened his eyes. Hellelone remained  
Hellelone: Who is that? To sleep, and said the visitor called  
Hellelone: "Mr. Finstanley, are you there?" Hellelone opened  
his eyes.~~

Hellelone: Who is that?

Visitor (in confusion): I'd no idea you'd be in bed.

Hellelone: Who is it?

Visitor: My name is Henry Sangson.

Hellelone crossed, and he went to the bedroom door and opened it. He stood on the threshold in his pyjamas, his hair tumbled, frowning and peering into the ~~room~~ lighted drawing-room.

Henry Sangson stood before the log-fire.

He was a slim young man, no taller than Hellelone. He had a sharp, pale face.

Hellelone: I'm sorry. We haven't met before.

Saugson: My name is Saugson. I knew your son, - Edgar.

Hellelone walked into the drawing room, staring at the young man.

Saugson: We were in the army together.

Hellelone shook hands with him absently. They watched each other speaking.

Saugson (lowering his eyes) I was told you kept late hours, otherwise I should never have come.

Hellelone: Were you with him when he was killed?

Saugson: Yes.

Hellelone nodded, then yawned.

Hellelone: You must give me time to wake up.

Saugson (anxiously) Let me see you tomorrow.

Hellelone: Now that I'm up you may as well stay a few minutes. Who told I kept late hours, - Edgar?

Saugson: Yes.

Hellelone: You are about his age, I expect.

Saugson: A little older.

Hellelone indicated a chair by the fire, and they sat down.

Hellelone: I have nothing to offer you here. And I can't ring for anyone, because that might worry my managers. I'm a prisoner here, young man. I'm insured down to my finger-tips. Did Edgar tell you that?

Saugson (watching him thoughtfully) Yes, he was always talking about you. ~~He talked about you and you were always there. He looked at~~  
~~the way. He would have been proud to hear that.~~

Hellelone: How did you come by the name of this hotel? But perhaps you were at the dinner-party downstairs?

Saugson: No, I wasn't. Mademoiselle Dupont told me.

Hellelone: You know her?

Saugson: A little.

Hellelone: She was there tonight.

Saugson: She told me when you'd be arriving in Paris and when your dinner-party was likely to end. I promised Edgar that