

Tales

Originals

A PILOT OF THE CROOKED

A Play

In Four Acts

by

Maurice Rowdon.

CHARACTERS

IN THE ORDER OF THEIR APPEARANCE.

HARRY BEINUM.

JACK MEADOWS.

NELL RAYNER.

JULIA MEADOWS.

The action is at present.

ACT ONE

SCENE: A room crowded with objects, few of which are pieces of comfortable furniture. There are doors to the left and right, and the wall facing us has a great window, which is both tall and wide. This looks out on to a brick wall only a few yards away; it is the wall of a factory, and quite blank. Nothing else can be seen through the window, only brick wall; no sky and no roof.

On the right there is a long desk with telephones, adjustable lamps and files. Under the window there is an operating table and above it a lamp which can be raised and lowered. On the wall to the right of the window there are graphs with steadily undulating lines in red ink. Near the desk is a small table on which is set a recording machine. To the left there is an armchair and a settle.

As the curtain rises we hear a man's voice shouting from a loudspeaker. The voice is distraught and uneven, and there are long pauses between each outburst.

HARRY BEINUM and JACK MEADOWS are listening to this voice from the recording machine. BEINUM is standing between the machine and his desk, watching the other man closely. He is tall, heavy in appearance, ungainly in his step. He is carefully, though not formally, dressed. MEADOWS is a younger man, and slighter; he is dressed now in overalls. He avoids BEINUM's gaze and stares down at the floor, frowning and shifting about in his seat.

THE VOICE: Oh, yes, I've heard all about Carson's job, and that Godfrey! They always make trouble for me, you can see them all talking about me, everybody from Godfrey down! I want to go. ~~She'd needn't~~ <sup>c</sup>  
~~come.~~ I want to get away from all that noise, and those eyes just as if they were inside the noise. It isn't right! I don't get the sleep, you see, and nobody here has any pity!... They'd put a dog out of its misery. Listen, Mr Beinum -!

BEINUM goes to the recording machine and switches it off. He stands over MEADOWS, who still has his head bowed.

BEINUM: Now is that the way to behave?

MEADOWS: You forced me.

BEINUM: Did I really force you?

MEADOWS: I'm ashamed of myself.

BEINUM: But I'm not trying to make you feel ashamed. No, look at me. Look up. (MEADOWS looks up at him, and seems terrified) I don't want you to feel any shame. But it sometimes does us good to hear ourselves.

MEADOWS: That voice...

quietly.

BEINUM: Carson's face is in plaster. There was nothing quiet about that.

MEADOWS: Where is the microphone?

BEINUM: Close to your chair.

MEADOWS: Where is it?

BEINUM: I shan't use it again.

MEADOWS: To think that was my voice...

BEINUM walks across to a small table at MEADOWS' side.

BEINUM: (bending down and putting his hand under the ledge of the table) There. You can feel it. (MEADOWS does so)  
(BEINUM returns to the machine) Come over here... Aren't you interested?

MEADOWS rises slowly from his chair and goes towards BEINUM. He walks wearily.

BEINUM: This is the switch. Whenever you come here I want you to have a look at this switch.

MEADOWS: It doesn't help, that sort of thing.

BEINUM: Yesterday, Meadows, I called you hysterical, and today I am giving you the proof. Why did you hit Carson?

MEADOWS: Because he was tormenting me.

BEINUM: Listen, I'm not a doctor. My job is to keep you working hard. You're one of our best engineers. No one else in this place could hit a foreman in the jaw and get away with it.

MEADOWS (yawning) I'm so tired these days. My fingers tremble at the instruments. (Turning to him)

Don't you ever feel uncomfortable, watching people like this?

BEINUM: Why should I?

MEADOWS: We're all alone. We're all children in one way or another. I mean, don't you ever shout at people?

BEINUM: I think a man should never give way, Meadows.

MEADOWS: Am I weak in your eyes?

BEINUM: Not weak.

MEADOWS: I don't mind a fight, you see, if -

BEINUM: Your job is engineering. Mine is to see that there aren't any fights.

MEADOWS: All right, it won't happen again.

BEINUM: And suppose the blood rushes to your head the moment you get downstairs?

MEADOWS: Fire me.

BEINUM: That isn't my job. My job is to keep you, because your work is excellent. (Going to the desk) Listen. This is written under your name. (Opening a file) John Frederick Meadows. Aged 34. Married. No criminal record. Health, good. A loyal and energetic worker.' Mr. Godfrey has added in red ink, 'Keep this man.'  
(Staring at him) Mr Godfrey... What do you think of him?

MEADOWS: Oh, come off the pedestal.

BEINUM: No, tell me. I really want to know: between ourselves.

MEADOWS: Why ask?

BEINUM: Oh, people talk.

There is silence.

MEADOWS: I'm here because I hit Carson in the face.

BEINUM: That was just a burst of anger. You're an unhappy man; why?

MEADOWS: We all suffer.

BEINUM: Oh, come, Meadows. This talk is all very well, but you work here and you live here, and there comes a time when your problems are our problems.

MEADOWS: How do people talk?

BEINUM: Like this: Jack Meadows' wife sleeps with Godfrey. That's how it runs. That's the tune we hear every day.

MEADOWS remains quite still.

BEINUM goes to the sideboard and pours a brandy.

He brings it to MEADOWS.

MEADOWS: No.

BEINUM: You don't mind a fight. Well, come out and fight with me. Don't be proud. Get drunk if you like. The doors are locked.

MEADOWS takes the drink and sips it.

MEADOWS: This place is a prison. And we're all here because of money.

BEINUM: You could get another job, couldn't you?

(MEADOWS does not reply) It has nothing to do with money. You're here because your wife refuses to leave.

MEADOWS: No. She doesn't refuse. But she might, so I daren't ask her.

MEADOWS: Then you believe what people say.

BEINUM: Ah, but, Meadows, I thought you were accepting the story. No, all I have is people's talk. No proof.

MEADOWS: I'm suspicious, then I blame myself for thinking badly about her. I'm absolutely tormented. She denies it.

BEINUM: You accused her, then.

MEADOWS: We fight. I tear at her dress. I smashed her dressing table. What do you think of that, you who like to keep so calm?

BEINUM: I've never had the experience.

MEADOWS: No, well, you can pray. (Drinks) She isn't a whore. She's clean and dignified. I think of her as a courtesan... But then, sometimes, I stop and think, Suppose all this is untrue? Suppose I'm wearing her down, wearing down her beauty, you see. Because she cries, - oh, my God, how she cries! Evening after evening, bitterly and hopelessly, like a child, until I know she was never unfaithful, and then I want to console her, and that feeling of tears on my shoulder where she has put her head is so familiar to me now.

BEINUM: Does Godfrey come to your house?

MEADOWS: No.

BEINUM: Where does she type his reports, then?

MEADOWS: At his house. But of course! Isn't it obvious? She goes there dressed as she never dresses for

me. How could they spend two hours together in a silent room every day, without him putting his hand on her arm and bending down perhaps, and moving towards her, and she leaning back her head, and - !

BEINUM (rising) Poor creature, you torment yourself.

(Walking away, then turning swiftly in his tracks)

But that's what happens when you don't love calm! That's what happens when you give way to the ghosts and the nightmares! All the lechery in the world, all the horror and pain, rise up in front of you and draw you on. And the farther you go, the more you are lost. Is she true to me? Yes! No! Yes! Which is it to be? You will never know, my friend. Only a calm man would know.

MEADOWS: Of course Godfrey wants to keep me. He wants to keep his lover.

BEINUM: And suppose your suspicions are wrong?

MEADOWS: Yes. Suppose! (Walking towards the window)

You say you're not a doctor. But here's an operating table. And this lamp...

BEINUM: I need them sometimes.

MEADOWS: Why?

BEINUM: People get hysterical. They faint. The machines make them nervous.

MEADOWS: Hysterical like me?

BEINUM (after a pause) No.

MEADOWS: I'm different, then?

BEINUM: Yes.

MEADOWS: Who comes here? We never hear about this downstairs.

BEINUM: I can't tell you.

MEADOWS: But how many a <sup>day</sup> ~~week~~?

BEINUM: Five or six perhaps.

MEADOWS: Engineers?

BEINUM: Engineers and operatives. Mostly operatives.

MEADOWS: And the engineers are more sophisticated, are they?

BEINUM: Well, they're better educated of course.

MEADOWS: And more difficult... They come and tell you their secrets, I suppose?

BEINUM: Sometimes.

MEADOWS: People like Barnes and Turner, Jock Murphy and Burbidge?

BEINUM: People like that.

MEADOWS: What are their secrets?

BEINUM: A grudge; or they complain about something, - the food, the loudspeakers in the assembly room, or the foremen.

MEADOWS: But secrets?

BEINUM: Can't you imagine for yourself?

MEADOWS: Secrets like mine, I mean: are their wives unfaithful?

BEINUM: (turning away) Perhaps most wives are unfaithful, Meadows. Why can't you be sophisticated about these things?

MEADOWS: Calm, you mean?

BEINUM: Calm, if you like. Your wife takes another man, why can't you take another woman?

MEADOWS: But another woman would not be my Julia.

He walks over to the recording machine and looks at the switch. He touches it, making sure that it is turned off.

MEADOWS: Have you used this on other people?

BEINUM: Once or twice.

MEADOWS: Are the secrets about love?

BEINUM: Yes.

MEADOWS: Love is the only problem.

BEINUM: For people without work!

MEADOWS: No, it cuts in on the work!

BEINUM: Yes, it attacks like a fever, Meadows.

MEADOWS (looking straight at him) What's your wife's name?

BEINUM: Nell.

MEADOWS: Suppose Nell - (he pauses, watching BEINUM) -  
 w<sup>1</sup>ant with another man and didn't love him?

BEINUM (smiling) I've let you go far enough.

MEADOWS: No. I just wanted to try and break that calm.

BEINUM: Scream the word Nell at me all day. Suggest the vilest lecheries in her name, if you like.

MEADOWS: I feel horrible, telling you my secrets.

BEINUM: Look at all this paraphernalia: an operating table, brandy for the weak, smelling salts, soft lights. I'm your nurse, man. A hundred years ago you would have beate<sup>n</sup>d your wife black and blue, or you wouldn't have cared. But in either case you would have refused to whine.

MEADOWS: Have I whined?

BEINUM: But, Christ, I've never heard so much whining.

MEADOWS: Six years.

BEINUM: You can't love a person for six years.

MEADOWS: I love Julia.

BEINUM: You love her in Godfrey's arms, Meadows.

You must break that idea. Look, we need new people to flatter us. A new lover is like a mirror held up to our faces. We grow big in flattery. We see ourselves new again. But six years... Eyes grow old after six years.

MEADOWS: It feels like a tomb here.

BEINUM: Yes, Meadows, (going to his desk) we baptise a place with our wounds. For a lot of people this room is like a tomb.

He opens a file and unclips a card. This he takes across to MEADOWS and throws it down on the table in front of him.

BEINUM: There is your card.

MEADOWS begins to rise. But BEINUM stops him.

BEINUM: You know Burbridge of course?

MEADOWS: Yes.

BEINUM: Do you know anything about his domestic life?

MEADOWS: No.

BEINUM: Well, I'm going to tell you one of those secrets you wanted to hear.

MEADOWS: You give yourself these calm airs. But you're in it, like everybody else. You're working for Godfrey, working to keep him in women. Is that a man's work?

BEINUM: My idea, Meadows, is to make those lines

So I have to choose between the heart and a good production rate.

MEADOWS: And you work for Godfrey's heart.

BEINUM: I'm trying to get you at work again. Nothing else.

MEADOWS: He could get a dozen better engineers than me. What use am I here? I hit Carson in the face. I'm lazy. I'm rude to people. I've been absent five times in a week.

BEINUM: I'm not in love with Godfrey, you know. But like you I have to keep body and soul together. He's my boss as well as yours.

MEADOWS: So tell me about Burbidge.

BEINUM: If I listened to the heart all the time we should be bankrupt in a week and people like you would be without a job. I want you to realise that before I say anything about Burbidge. I'm on your side, Meadows.

MEADOWS: Yes, go on: Burbidge is enslaved to a woman, and this is what he did...

BEINUM: No. The very reverse.

MEADOWS: A woman can enslave me just by turning her head. So it seems.

BEINUM: Burbidge and his wife are virtually separated. He has a lover, outside the grounds. Have you seen his wife?

MEADOWS: I've spoken to her.

BEINUM: She has no lover, Meadows. She is living with a man she despises. (There is a silence, during which they watch each other) Treat it like a

help.

MEADOWS: She comes here too?

BEINUM: She has her troubles, yes.

MEADOWS: And downstairs one has no idea, no idea at all. There are machines which work, everything has its place, the workshops are bright and airy.

BEINUM: I'm only showing you how to be wise. But if you want to go on tormenting yourself...

MEADOWS: Do you never feel jealousy, then?

BEINUM: No.

MEADOWS: Never?

BEINUM: I want to be free, Meadows. Perhaps freedom is a higher value for me than love.

MEADOWS: But if you found her with another man, lying in a bed at dawn, smiling into his eyes, her face, still sleepy, pale with the morning...

BEINUM: No. How astonishing, that two bodies rubbing together should cause so much agony in a man.

MEADOWS: But if one of these bodies happens to be the place where you worship, your only temple -

BEINUM: Then you destroy that temple.

MEADOWS: And betray Burbridge.

BEINUM: Betray, man? What kind of word is that? It's too big for the petty incidents of every day.

MEADOWS rises.

MEADOWS: Is it too big for what I go through? too big for sleepless nights, and a pain at the pit of the stomach, and one name in your head from one end of the day to the other? No.

BEINUM: I don't deny you suffer, Meadows. That's why you come here.

MEADOWS: I come here because I'm weak.

BEINUM: What shall I tell Godfrey, then? That you'll go back to work?

MEADOWS: Oh, I shall behave. It's no use, all this abouting.

They stand at the door.

BEINUM: Then I was wise to play that record over.

MEADOWS (with a shrug) You can afford to be wise.

BEINUM: Good bye, Meadows, and good luck.

They shake hands and MEADOWS goes out. BEINUM closes the door again. He walks across to the door leading out right and unlocks it. He puts a handkerchief up to his brow and sighs. He returns to his desk and presses an electric bell. He waits, staring down at one of the files.

The door on the right opens and NELL RAYNER enters. She is a well-built, erect young woman. But we notice something nervous about her.

NELL: Did you call?

BEINUM (turning) Yes. Come and talk to me. I'm exhausted.

NELL: Who was it?

BEINUM: Meadows.

NELL: Have I seen him?

BEINUM: I don't think so.

NELL: You work too hard. You're so pale.

BEINUM: What have you been doing?

NELL: Reading. (Coming to the desk) Let me see the file. (He shows her) Ah, this is Meadows.

BEINUM: He overstayed his welcome, as usual, babbling and babbling. If only he were a fool! But he's clever, decent and quite brave really.

(He picks up the telephone) Hello, get me Mr. Carson. (Turning to Nell) What do you say to some coffee? (She nods and starts to go. But he catches her arm and draws her back) No, stay and talk to me. I need your talk. (Into the mouthpiece) Hello, Carson. This is Beinum here. I've just sent Meadows downstairs. He should be all right now. Listen, I want you to put Burbidge on another belt... Burbidge... He works opposite Meadows. Do that today... Oh, give any excuse. Production rates. Good bye.

He puts the receiver down and goes to the recording machine. He glances at his watch, then runs the recording tape back a little.

BEINUM: This is what I've had to listen to. I feel so tired, Nell, so absolutely done up.

He begins the record.

THE VOICE: Oh, yes, I've heard all about Carson's job, and that Godfrey! They always make trouble for me, you can see them all talking ~~together~~ about me, everybody from Godfrey down! I want to go. I want to get away from all that noise, and those eyes just as if they were inside the noise! It isn't right! I don't get -

He cuts the machine off.

NELL: What poor creatures they all are.

NELL: It's funny. I think I'm more like all these creatures downstairs. I'm soft, like them. I could lose my head just like this Meadows. I'm not like you. All your life seems so well planned, Harry. And the rest of us are so untidy.

BEINUM: But when you're ill or worried, who do you come to — To me, or to one of those other creatures?

NELL: To you.

BEINUM: And do I make you feel more secure?

NELL: Yes.

BEINUM: For the last hour he has been dragging me further and further into his petty orbit. With the others it's so easy. They have no will, no thoughts, and no feelings to speak of. I simply put their faces together again and send them back to work. But this fellow's different. What he says is absolute true: I've no right to give him advice, because we equals. So we have a struggle. I feel I'm being sucked down. I don't know where I'm going. I want the light and the air, not all these dark feelings, which proliferate and writhe and mix together like dreadful tumours!

He goes to the sideboard and pours himself a brandy.

NELL: That's unusual for you.

BEINUM: He says, 'This place is like a tomb'. And it's quite true, Nell. It has lost that clinical air, the air of belonging nowhere. He turned it into a tomb.

NELL: Perhaps you both did.

BEINUM: But I shall win. The hysterical person always loses... How do you feel this morning?

NELL: The same.

BEINUM: Have you been sick?

NELL: A little, yes.

BEINUM: It's simply no good worrying. Why do you look at me like that?

NELL: Do you ever feel you're tired of me?

BEINUM: Tired?

NELL: Tired of my voice, the way I walk, the way I pick up things, the way I look at you, (almost in tears) the way I sit reading, waiting for you to talk to me.

BEINUM: My poor -

A bell rings. BEINUM glances at the door going out left, then at Nell. She turns her head away from him and hurries across the room to the other door.

NELL: Of course you don't want someone else like me!

BEINUM walks after her, waits for her to leave, then locks the door. He is troubled by her tears. He goes to the mirror and looks at himself, drawing himself up. He then goes to the door leading out left and opens it.

JULIA MEADOWS enters. Our first impression is of the utmost gentleness.

JULIA: Am I late?

BEINUM: Not at all, Mrs Meadows.

She stands looking about the room as he closes and locks the door.

JULIA: I never knew these rooms were here. Are you a doctor?

BEINUM: No. Will you sit down?

She sits at the armchair.

JULIA: Did we meet once?

BEINUM: Yes, at the jubilee celebrations. (Watching her)  
I was with Godfrey.

JULIA: Ah, yes.

BEINUM: You know your husband hit Carson in the face?

JULIA: Yes.

BEINUM: I wanted to talk to you about that.

JULIA: His behaviour is strange.

BEINUM: Do you mind talking about him?

JULIA: No.

BEINUM: He was here just now. He's very unhappy, as you know.

JULIA: What did he tell you?

BEINUM: Nothing real, nothing real at all.

JULIA: But why did he set on Carson?

BEINUM: Oh, he has nothing against Carson. (He turns to take up his drink again) I'm sorry. Will you drink?

JULIA: Thank you.

BEINUM: Brandy?

JULIA: Yes. It seems strange in the morning.

BEINUM (at the sideboard) Drinking?

JULIA: Yes.

BEINUM: It isn't usual for me. But your husband <sup>gave</sup> ~~has been~~  
~~giving~~ me a bad time.

JULIA: Then you know what I suffer.

BEINUM: Do you suffer?

JULIA: The real suffering's on his side. But it wears one out.

BEINUM: Just for an hour even, - yes. The sufferers draw us into their agony. And we have to fight them, which is unpleasant. It seems cowardly.

He gives her the drink.

JULIA: Why is it so dark here?

BEINUM: (indicating the window) It's the wall. We are only eight feet away.

JULIA: Do you live up here?

BEINUM: Yes.

JULIA: There are other rooms through there, I suppose. She indicates the door leading out right.

BEINUM: Yes, there are three other rooms.

JULIA: Is your wife there now?

BEINUM: Yes. Then you knew I was married.

JULIA: I assumed it. One can tell sometimes. What does she do while you're here?

BEINUM: She reads a <sup>lot</sup> ~~good book~~. She cooks. She rarely goes out, you know.

JULIA: Does she like it here?

BEINUM: She feels out off, perhaps.

JULIA: No one talks about this room downstairs. Your name is never heard.

BEINUM: Well, it means that people have nothing to lose when they tell me their secrets, I suppose.

JULIA: Did he mention me?

BEINUM: Yes.

JULIA: What did he say?

BEINUM: What people often say about their wives - nothing.

substantial.

JULIA: No, tell me.

BEINUM: People come here with their secrets. I can't betray them.

JULIA: Did he tell you whether he quarrelled with me?

BEINUM: Yes.

JULIA: And why he quarrelled with me?

BEINUM: Look, Mrs Meadows. We ought to be honest with each other. You know very well what people say here.

She drinks slowly, then looks up at him.

Julia: What do they say?

BEINUM: That you and Godfrey are lovers. (A pause)  
I don't care whether that's true or not. I'm not interested.

JULIA: Why not?

BEINUM: I don't want your secrets, Mrs Meadows. The point is that your husband has suspicions about you, and I've got to cure him of those suspicions.

JULIA: But I'm going to tell you the truth.

BEINUM: Then you do so freely. I've asked you for nothing.

JULIA: As you say, one has nothing to lose here. In any case, you know the truth. You know quite well that I sleep with Godfrey... Don't you?

(BEINUM does not reply) We agreed to be honest.

BEINUM: I do know, yes.

JULIA: Who told you?

BEINUM: Godfrey himself.

JULIA: I don't respect him at all, you know.

BEINUM: But you have to see him.

JULIA: Yes.

BEINUM: Why?

JULIA: Because I feel stifled with my husband.

BEINUM: And you need flattery now.

JULIA: Before, we were like one <sup>person</sup> creature. I became heavy and dull. We were cut off from the world, the two of us in our house near the generator. Do you know what I mean? We seemed to see with the same eyes, think with the same mind.

BEINUM: And now Godfrey has renewed you. I can understand all that.

JULIA: Not Godfrey. Anyone could have done it.

BEINUM (staring at her for a moment) Anyone?

JULIA: I only needed to touch another human being.

BEINUM: But when I saw you at the celebrations, - you remember when we shook hands? You seemed so very happy to be with Godfrey then, - I can't describe it, but I envied him, you know. I wondered, - such a beautiful woman.

JULIA: ~~Well, he was the man who gave me back my youth.~~

→ I was happy. I was so excited at those celebrations, knowing that there were other eyes in the world besides my husband's, eyes which could admire me, I mean.

BEINUM: So you don't love Godfrey?

JULIA: No.

BEINUM walks about the room in silence, pondering.

JULIA: Do you tell him all our secrets? Poor fishes we are. coming here with our secrets.

BEINUM: I tell Godfrey nothing. I had to explain to your husband, - I'm not exactly in love with the man. But he's my boss.

JULIA: You seem to know all about us before we come here.

BEINUM: Do I seem to have <sup>known</sup> known you?

JULIA: Yes.

BEINUM: Why, d'you think? Because there's no one like you in this camp. I hear you speak about by so many people. Godfrey talks to me about you, sometimes even an engineer you may never have seen, but who has seen you, passing the assembly hall, perhaps. Even when your husband shouts about you, he never breaks that single image of your strange - I don't know, a kind of wise gentleness you have, you see what I mean, wise isn't the right word, but you seem so very gracious, and therefore quite different from every other woman in the camp. Every day I hear something new about you, and it's always said in that awed way, and sometimes, you know, they nearly use the very same words.

JULIA: We say things here we would never say downstairs. So you must see right into us.

BEINUM: Do you know, Mrs Meadows, that in all my work I've never seen an unhappier man than you-

husband? He's going to kill you, or Godfrey, or himself, if you don't behave a little more cautiously.

JULIA: What can I do?

BEINUM: Listen to me, Mrs Meadows: I want you to give up working for Godfrey.

JULIA: I don't work for him.

BEINUM: What do you mean?

JULIA: I go there to see him. The work was only an <sup>excuse</sup> excuse.

BEINUM: But he pays you?

JULIA: He gives me money to show my husband, - yes.

BEINUM: Where did you see him first?

JULIA: At one of the dances. He called my husband over and told him how much he liked his work. Then we spoke to each other. Then he danced with me.

BEINUM: When did you make this arrangement about work?

JULIA: A week later.

BEINUM: But everyone in the camp knows about it! What made you so careless?

JULIA: I don't know, I seem to have been asleep during those five years. I was so happy to be awake again, I didn't think of anything else.

BEINUM: That was cruel for your husband. You can see how he suffers.

JULIA: Godfrey was as careless.

BEINUM: Godfrey doesn't care. He loves all the caring to me. That's what he pays me for. But to go and work for him, to go there every day dressed up as you never dress for your husband, - how did

you think that anyone here would fall to see what you were up to? And your husband...

JULIA: Yes, I'm wretched, it's wrong, I know.

BEINUM: (Stopping and looking at her) Wrong? I'm not here to decide between right and wrong. You can ~~be~~ talk that out downstairs. Here we deal only in plans of campaign, Mrs Meadows. And you were too excited with your Godfrey to think of a plan of campaign, weren't you? So tears and scandal everywhere...

JULIA: If I stay in that house all alone again, just waiting for Jack, I shall lose my looks, I shall die, you see.

BEINUM: You shall have all your pleasures, Mrs Meadows, and without any scandal, if only you're patient. Why were you so surprised to find you needed a lover? Did you really expect to be able to live with the same man for six years without getting dull? Did you really expect that?

JULIA: I think so. Well, I accepted it.

BEINUM: You thought you could be loyal to your husband for ever and ever. And when you found it was only possible at the expense of your beauty, indeed, your whole life, - when in other words you found that we are not gods, ~~but rather chargeable creatures~~ you were surprised. So you gave way to Godfrey like a prisoner the moment he made his first advance. Prisoners come up here every day, prisoners who build their own prison walls. Life caught you napping.

You fell in its clutches (making a sudden clutching movement)- like that! No time for a plan of campaign. So you gave way to a man for whom you have no respect, much less any love, a man for whose body you have even a little disgust.

JULIA: Perhaps.

BEINUM: You're the most distinctive woman in the camp, Mrs Meadows. And what is Godfrey? He's rich, he has a fast car, he knows one wine from another, but there's something unpleasant about the grip of his hand, isn't there? He's a little too well-kept. They say the women find him irresistible, perhaps they find his money irresistible, but just tell me, as your friend now, Mrs Meadows, not as your husband's male nurse, whether going to him wasn't just a frantic act of rebellion from your husband?

JULIA: I don't love him. I told you that.

BEINUM: But isn't it better to be prepared for life? to wait for these attacking fevers with a certain plan of campaign? Suppose you had never felt that surprise: then you could have chosen a lover quite calmly, a lover specially situated, Mrs Meadows, one who would cause your husband no suspicions, and above all a lover worthy of your intelligence, a lover who when he walked at your side would not look like <sup>dumb</sup> a pebble. You would have been loved by two men, and neither of them would have been suffering as your husband is suffering. That's the value of a plan of campaign.

*J. Stahl*

BEINUM: Oh, I can teach people, slowly. Can you spare me some time each week?

JULIA: I think so.

BEINUM: Come whenever you like at first, - I mean, just give me an hour's warning. You'll find it a rest from downstairs.

JULIA: How many people come here?

BEINUM: Well, in the last two years about eighty-nine percent of the personnel.

JULIA: Yet we never hear your name...

BEINUM: Are you likely to go downstairs now and tell Murphy's wife or Carson's wife about your visit here? They've all been here, you see, and they've all come with a terrible secret, Mrs Meadows. Look - (going to the window) - come over here. (She rises and goes to his side at the window) Look at them. Calm enough, from here. And you've no idea what horror comes to them in the night, what cruelties they heap on each other, you've no idea what very dreamy substances their lives really are.

JULIA: Isn't it terrible, knowing so much?

BEINUM: Look at that heavily-built chap. The one in overalls. There. Have you seen him before?

JULIA: No.

BEINUM: Well, I'm choosing one of all that crowd down there. He's irritable and fussy like an old woman, - nothing picturesque, you see, but think what his wife goes through, evening after

Much the same as all the others. It's got the same muteness, d'you see, the same nervous anxiety round here (pointing to his own brow).

JULIA: Jack hasn't got that look.

BEINUM: Ah, that's why we fight each other!... And those people down there are mothers and fathers, Mrs Meadows. It's a dirty world, down there. When they come up here they can shake off a little of that dirt. I wish you could see the way they sit in that armchair, the way they stretch out their legs, with their heads back, and talk as if they were half-asleep.

~~JULIA~~

~~BEINUM: I feel like that.~~

~~BEINUM: Now this is interesting. They always believe that other people are different; they think other people are as strong as they look.~~

~~JULIA: They behave so calmly.~~

BEINUM: ~~Look~~ Look at those faces down there, - who are they? They're operatives and engineers going from the assembly hall to the welding furnaces. But for me they're all men with the same broken, weeping souls.

JULIA: Aren't they afraid of you?

BEINUM: You might call it fear. They answer my questions in hushed voices.

JULIA: But you can't have been here long. Not even Godfrey talks about you.

BEINUM: I've been here two years. I came with Godfrey, you know.

JULIA: When this new wing was built?

BEINUM: Yes. We planned it together. Oh, Godfrey knows quite well that my name must never be mentioned downstairs, just as my face must never be seen.

JULIA: When you came to the jubilee celebrations, who did they think you were, - an engineer?

BEINUM: I came as an outsider, - really as Godfrey's friend. That's how I met you. I thought to myself when I saw you, "She'll never need to visit me."

JULIA: Why?

BEINUM: You hadn't quite that helpless look of the others. But Godfrey wasn't careful, so here you are.

JULIA: Does he know I'm here?

BEINUM: No. You need never be afraid, - whatever you say here goes back into the silence. (Jocularly) Unless I record it. Then I scrap it after a week. You notice how silent it is, of course?

JULIA: Yes, - all muffled.

BEINUM: You see, what I did was to plan every detail of this new wing. I sound-proofed this room. I put it on the third floor, out of the way. And through there - (pointing to the door leading out right)- I put another staircase. I'll show you.

He strides across to the door and opens it. She stares through, fascinated.

BEINUM: There. Can you see that swing-door? Behind it there's a sort of fire-escape. That leads straight out into the town. I can be right away from this camp in two minutes. I need never go across that quadrangle, you see. Now when I

planned this wing with Godfrey I made sure that not one single window overlooked that fire escape, just to shield myself from the eyes of suffering men and women.

JULIA: Are these your privaterooms, to the left?

BEINUM: Yes. (He closes the door again and goes towards the window) Now this window. I can see nearly the whole of the quadrangle from here. Yet coming from the welding furnaces you hardly see this room. That's because of the wall, you see. It means less light, but there...

JULIA: One feels quite different up here.

BEINUM: I have to make a place which nobody can connect with the machines downstairs, with the - the love downstairs: the mess. Oh, my God, you've no idea, but I've been <sup>here</sup> up so long now I fear downstairs: I think of it as a weird and groaning place where men are wounded as they pass their hands across their brows. So I never walk downstairs, even at night, when they lay their sufferings to sleep.

JULIA: Do you ever tell the others about how you planned these rooms?

BEINUM: The other patients, you mean?

JULIA: Yes.

BEINUM: No. The others don't even realise I've sound-proofed these walls. For them, I suppose, I'm surrounded by a silence like a god.

JULIA: And why am I the first?

BEINUM looks at her for a moment.

BEINUM: I don't think I could deceive you, Mrs Meadows.  
You aren't like the other fools.

CURTAIN.

ACT TWO

The same, a few days later. This time the sun is shining into the room, across the operating table and past BEINUM's desk.

MEADOWS is strolling about the room. He passes the door leading out right, then stops and looks back at it. He tries the handle. But the door is locked, and he continues strolling about the room. A pause.

The doorbell rings. At first he does nothing. But when it rings again he goes and opens it. JULIA enters the room. He is <sup>S</sup>astonished to see her, and stands quite still, staring at her as she comes in: neither has she expected to see him.

MEADOWS: Did he want to see you, then?

JULIA: Won't you even say 'hullo' first?

MEADOWS: I was amazed -

JULIA: You said you were going to work. What happened?

MEADOWS: Oh, he called me. He does that. He suddenly sends a message down.

She puts her bag on BEINUM's desk.

JULIA: It's so noisy downstairs today. The new generators are being connected. About fifty new hands have signed on, and the canteen's been crowded all morning. They asked me to help with the tea.

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(Looking at him) Do you know anything about these things? Did you even see them working at the generators?

MEADOWS: No.

JULIA: You're in a dream. You're young, good-looking, you're strong, - and yet you won't come out into the world.

MEADOWS: You've been here before...

JULIA: Yes.

MEADOWS: How many times?

JULIA: Three or four. More, perhaps.

MEADOWS (in a sudden burst of anger) But you didn't tell me!

JULIA (quietly) Ah, you're going to shout again.

MEADOWS (coming close to her, trembling with rage, as he mimicks her calm) Ah, you're going to shout again. You're going to feel something. Why can't you be calm like me? (She hides her face) We are so calm, we superior people.

JULIA: I shan't listen!

MEADOWS (turning away) They're like rock. You can't look into their eyes any more. There are only children left.

JULIA: Well, I'll go.

MEADOWS turns abruptly as she says this; she takes up her bag from the desk.

MEADOWS: Put that down.

She slowly and deliberately lifts the bag up from the desk, opens it, leans back against the desk and takes out her powder compact. She begins powering her face.

MEADOWS (hardly able to bear the sight of her doing this)

All right. You can go.

JULIA: I wanted to stay, but you shout so. You sneer. Other people are so nice with me.

MEADOWS: When a child comes out of your womb you don't expect it to shake hands with you. It's just you. (He sighs and begins walking about the room. She puts her bag back on the desk)

It feels funny here without him. The whole room seems to be waiting. (Looking at her) Why did you come here, - of your own accord, I mean?

JULIA: It's so quiet here.

MEADOWS: Quiet? It's dumb. I think that's what he wants to do to people, - he wants to strike them dumb.

JULIA: No. He really makes Godfrey seem grotesque. He stares at her and is silent.

MEADOWS: Beinum does that...

JULIA: By talking to me here, where it feels so safe.

MEADOWS: He makes all of us look grotesque.

JULIA: Yes, you as well, in a way.

MEADOWS: Are you still seeing Godfrey?

JULIA: I saw him this morning.

MEADOWS: But why?

JULIA: Because he's in love with me and I don't like to see him suffer, because he isn't the pink-faced nanny you think he is.

MEADOWS: And my suffering?

JULIA: Our children suffer in us, - just as you said.

MEADOWS (nodding, with sudden sympathy) Yes. I suffer in you.

JULIA: Where's Beinum now?

MEADOWS: He went away with the doctor.

JULIA: Why?

MEADOWS: God alone knows. He just said to me, 'I've been called away, stay here'. He said he's<sup>d</sup> phone ju<sup>t</sup>s before he came back. (He walks to the operating table. There is a blanket lying untidily on it. He picks it up) See this? (He drops it again) Can you smell the ether?

JULIA: Ether? No.

MEADOWS: When I came in there was a strong smell of ether.

JULIA: What do you think happened, then?

MEADOWS: Oh, another secret. This furniture won't tell us. It 's on his side. (Pointing at the sky) That thing up there doesn't belong to this room. It's a ball of flame. (It's a yellow nothing.) It's hanging up there without a name. Only downstairs is the sun shining.

JULIA: I don't understand your talk.

MEADOWS: You like coming up here?

JULIA: Well - (stopping). Are you going to understand what I want say, or do you want to start shouting again?

MEADOWS: No. I really want to know.

JULIA: Well, downstairs I'm just a woman, just a woman.

MEADOWS: Isn't that enough?

JULIA: I'm always in a mess downstairs, healing other people's wounds, yours or Godfrey's. I want a rest sometimes. There's no danger of love up here.

MEADOWS (looking at her with admiration) You come here to be clean again.

JULIA (running her finger along the tops of the files on the

desk) Look. All our lives are in those boxes. He knows all about us. But he doesn't come near us: he doesn't touch us.

MEADOWS: He touches me. I go near him. I won't be treated as a patient. We're all <sup>alone</sup> ~~people~~

JULIA: What do you mean?

MEADOWS: Oh, I can't explain. Sometimes I think you're a complete bloody fool. Yet you're the wisest woman in the world. (Pointing to the files) There are just brief reports in there, age, health, all that.

JULIA: No. There are pages and pages about all of us. He lives in us. He sits over these reports for days on end. And for himself he asks absolutely nothing.

MEADOWS: He wants to be God.

JULIA: You mean that's wrong?

MEADOWS: Impossible.

JULIA: So it's better to be Godfrey. He's terrified if he's alone for an hour. He needs brandy all the time. You prefer men to grovel.

MEADOWS: No.

JULIA: Let Beinum try to be God. Yes, like God, you see, he's in us all the time, and he blames us for nothing. You can see by the way he walks. Those long strides, with the head down. Taller than all the others. Quite alone. Like a great thinking rock. Really, like a visitor on the earth. He comes to us like a visitor, and we stare at him.

MEADOWS: Yet he has the look of a monster.

JULIA: If God walked on the earth, He'd look like a monster.  
This room feels like a temple.

MEADOWS: Pub!

He turns away, scoffing.

JULIA: You said it felt dumb. It's secluded and silent,  
because it belongs to God; not to any men. But our  
room, you can feel our quarrels sticking to the walls  
and armchairs, it's all hot and noisy - !

MEADOWS: No. Keep quite.

JULIA: It's true.

MEADOWS: I love our room.

JULIA: But -

MEADOWS (shrieking) Shut your mouth! (Pacing about, and  
speaking more quietly) I love our room. You keep  
your temple, and I'll keep mine. My temple is where  
I've loved somebody. And yours... A place where  
you can keep your hands clean! (He goes slowly to  
the window and stands there. He runs his fingers  
lightly over the glass, then pushes his hand against  
it two or three times. He looks up at the top of  
the window, where it joins the wall) Can't you open  
this thing?

JULIA: No. There are special ventilators.

MEADOWS (turning towards her again) Special ventilators, the  
doors locked, - how can you bear it? (Pointing  
through the window) They all look like ghosts down  
there, not the people we know. (As if it suddenly  
occurred to him) He can never hear the church-bells!  
He's deaf. And he's blind, too. He just staggers  
about inside his own thoughts.

JULIA: You say he staggers? My God!

MEADOWS: He can talk, though.

JULIA: And you really stagger. You shout and hit people in the face. Is a woman supposed to admire that?

MEADOWS (touching the window again) I want to go away from here.

JULIA: Where to?

MEADOWS: You wouldn't come. (He pauses, watching her)  
Would you?

JULIA: No.

MEADOWS: Why not?

JULIA: I'm just learning how to run my life.

MEADOWS: Who's the teacher?

JULIA: Beinta.

MEADOWS: Stay, then. Have you noticed how much calmer I am these days, downstairs, I mean?

JULIA: Yes.

MEADOWS: I looked at you last night and I thought to myself, 'Her body is only a landscape of memories for me now.' Memories of what I used to feel, you see. But I really don't care any longer. Habit, I suppose: habit makes me want you to come away with me, instead of going away by myself. Habit makes me shout at you.

She looks at him for some time, disturbed by what he has said.

JULIA: Will the feelings come back?

MEADOWS: Perhaps. Two weeks ago you could have turned my stomach over just by mentioning the name Godfrey. But now I don't care.

JULIA: Why the change?

MEADOWS (with a smile) Beinum.

JULIA: So you should stay here, too.

MEADOWS: I want my feelings back! So I want to get away.

JULIA: I can't -

MEADOWS (holding up his hand calmly) I know, I know. I was only telling you what I wanted.

JULIA (looking about her) You were right. It seems to be waiting for him. (Glancing at MEADOWS) <sup>1</sup>Does he frighten you sometimes?

MEADOWS: No.

JULIA: The moment I walk into this room I feel a kind of terror. Yet I know this is the safest place for me.

MEADOWS: I understand him too well.

JULIA (without malice) Yes, you come here like the devil, getting right inside him, spoiling his work.

MEADOWS: Who told you that? (She does not answer) He did.

JULIA: Yes.

MEADOWS (with pride) So he told you that! And who knows, I may bring him down! Or shall I leave it to time? Time has a slow kind of justice.

The telephone rings.

JULIA: That may be him.

MEADOWS picks up the receiver. She watches him after he says, 'Hallo', and goes nearer the desk, waiting to hear BEINUM's voice at the other end.

MEADOWS: Yes, it's Meadows... You -

JULIA: It's him!

MEADOWS: You'll be here when? ... Ah... I'll wait.

(He puts the receiver down) He's coming over in a few minutes.

JULIA: I'll go, then. (She goes quickly to the desk and takes her bag) Did you tell him I was here?

MEADOWS (with a laugh) You heard what I said to him. You had your ear glued to the 'phone. Look at you! All of a shiver! That dignity you're so famous for, - it's all gone now! (He runs to her and takes her hands) Come away with me!

JULIA (seeming dazed, unable to concentrate on what he says)

What?

MEADOWS: Let's go away together.

JULIA: Yes, but later.

MEADOWS: Decide when.

JULIA: How can - ?

MEADOWS: I know we've got to get away. This sunlight reminded me of - ! And when I talked to you about those church-bells... We could get back to all that, you see! We used to walk in the country.

JULIA (bowing her head) Yes.

MEADOWS: Well, we did, didn't we? What's the matter?

JULIA: I don't know.

MEADOWS: Weren't we happy then?

JULIA: Yes... I can't remember.

MEADOWS (lowering her hands) It's this place. I can't remember either. I forced myself to talk about it. But this room is so powerful. (Turning away) All right. You'd better go.

She turns to go but before she reaches the door leading out left he speaks to her again.

MEADOWS: Let's leave. I'm sorry.

JULIA: We'll talk about it tonight.

MEADOWS: Then we won't. Beirum has a hold over you.

JULIA: That's better than Godfrey, isn't it?

MEADOWS: Is it?

She opens the door and leaves without looking at him again. He continues to stand staring after her. There is a pause. He recollects himself and looks about the room. He goes to the recording machine and looks down at it. Then he walks to the table where the microphone is hidden. He puts his hand under the ledge and feels it there. He returns to the machine and puts on the switch, then he goes to the seat again. He bends down and speaks very quietly into the microphone. We do not hear what he says. We only see his lips move. He raises himself and stares at the table. He goes to the machine, runs back the tape, switches up the volume: we hear a scratching noise, then a hushed voice say, BEINUM IS GOD. He looks about the room when the voice speaks, as if watching for something to happen. He seems a little frightened. Then again, his mouth open, he runs the tape back and we hear the same words, louder now, and thus hoarser in tone, BEINUM IS GOD. He switches the machine off. He walks to the window and waits for BEINUM'S return.

We hear the lock turn in the right-hand door. There is a pause, and the door slowly opens. BEINUM enters. He is haggard and bowed. He stands in the doorway for a moment, looking about him without interest. He sees MEADOWS, who has been watching him, and nods silently.

MEADOWS: Are you ill?

BEINUM frowns for a moment as if he has not caught what MEADOWS said.

BEINUM: Ill? No. (He comes into the room and closes the door. He walks slowly to the centre of the room, his hands in his pockets. He peers at MEADOWS.)  
You're not going to shout?

MEADOWS: No.

BEINUM: Don't wear me out. (He walks to the desk and

and picks up several papers, though he does not seem to see any of them) Why are you here?

MEADOWS: You asked me to come.

BEINUM: Yes, but what was the trouble?

MEADOWS: The trouble...

BEINUM: You've not been absent these days, the reports are good. (He puts his hand up to his eyes and bows his head, trying to recollect). Then he looks up) Don't stand there watching me like that.

MEADOWS: I was waiting.

BEINUM: Yes, always waiting...

MEADOWS: You asked me - !

BEINUM: Yes, yes. Sit down. (MEADOWS stays where he is) Won't you sit down?

MEADOWS sits at one of the armchairs.

MEADOWS: I could come another time.

BEINUM: I must think. (He pauses, and sits down at the desk) Who else was here?

MEADOWS: When?

BEINUM: Just now.

MEADOWS: My wife.

BEINUM: Why?

MEADOWS: How did you know she was here?

BEINUM: I didn't. I just knew someone was here. By your voice on the telephone, perhaps.

MEADOWS: Ah, clairvoyant...

BEINUM: I claim no powers, Meadows, - only before fools, not before you, in all your intelligence.

MEADOWS: Thank you.

BEINUM: But it's a ~~sixteenth-century~~ lackey's intelligence. Something sly about it.

MEADOWS (leaning forward) Did - ?

BEINUM (quietly, his eyes down) We won't quarrel. (A  
pause) Why was she here?

MEADOWS: She wanted to see you.

BEINUM: We had no appointment.

MEADOWS: But she wanted to see you. To see you.

BEINUM (looking at him shrewdly) Aren't you jealous?

MEADOWS: No.

BEINUM: Good. I'm glad you realise what sort of man  
you're dealing with.

MEADOWS: Not quite a man, you mean?

BEINUM: If you like. (Pushing his face forward) But  
out of the running, Meadows.

MEADOWS: You've had a shock of some kind.

BEINUM: I have a shock every day. Do you think they  
bring me their wounds and leave no mark at all?  
They leave a fresh mark every day, and there's  
no time for healing. The stigmata, you know:  
they never leave a man.

MEADOWS: You suffer too, then - like the others.

BEINUM: Not like the others.

MEADOWS: Why not?

BEINUM: I put up a fight. And I win.

MEADOWS: You see, you can't predict anything! You're  
blind and dumb like the rest of us. You're  
plodding through the dark, and your words are  
just a lot of jumbled squeaks and roars addressed  
to the sky. You fall in love; nobody warned  
you. You suffer; nobody can heal you. You  
can't explain us, you can't explain (pointing  
out of the window) the silence of that sky,

and ... and like me and all the others you know damn-all,  
absolutely damn-all.

BEINUM (apathetically) I could try to learn. I won't give  
up like you. That's the difference between me  
and you: I won't give up.

MEADOWS: We're frightened by the sky. We're helpless like  
children. But we belong. And where we belong  
is God.

BEINUM looks at him for some time with eyes that  
neither analyse nor teach.

BEINUM: Do you think about such things? This word God...

MEADOWS: If you have nights when you don't sleep I suppose  
you begin to feel Him. He draws quietly to your  
side. All the silence brings Him.

BEINUM (staring at him) Draws quietly to your side, man...

MEADOWS (with a shrug) They're only words, - noises, - I can't  
tell you.

BEINUM (rising and beginning to pace the room) Here I've  
eliminated God. (MEADOWS smiles without any  
bitterness) Amusing?

MEADOWS: Mmm.

BEINUM (standing over him) You've got a religious face,  
Meadows. (Pointing to his cheeks) Flushed, •  
excitable, you see. And look at those eyes,  
so fallible and young. (MEADOWS does not move  
or look up) Eh? (MEADOWS is still silent, his  
chin in his hands) You're right about the sky.  
It never gives us any answers back. It only  
watches us, in that terrible silence. (Now  
altogether drawn into the discussion, and pacing  
about) Look. We're all here for the first time.

Do you get the importance of that? And we come only once. We're born, our eyes suddenly open on this strange world, - we had no hand in our coming. Then we <sup>we</sup> snatched away. Puff, - finished! No appeal, no explanation. The sky, this ~~dark~~ sky, the window, the sun outside, - they don't speak to us. We're orphans. We're exiles from the world which gave birth to us. (Suddenly confronting him) You accept all that? You just resign yourself to it?

MEADOWS: Yes.

BEINUM: I don't. No. We've got to shout out that silence, Meadows, fill the air with our voices, pinch ourselves alive, make the universe seem crowded with ourselves, so that we no longer belong to it, but it belongs to us. And how to shout away the silence? How to possess our world?

MEADOWS: It can't be done.

BEINUM: Oh, it can be done. It can be done by refusing the night, by keeping that God you talk of away during the sleepless hours, by turning our backs on the sky, by behaving as if we were all the world ourselves and more. ~~Listen~~ Listen. We must never do those things which plug us in to the empty night, to that huge brooding monster which doesn't use our language or understand our signs, and into whose dreadful arms we fall so easily if once we give way, as you and all the others like you downstairs give way from minute to minute of every hour. <sup>Rah!</sup> (Wrapped) in his argument, speaking a little breathlessly, staring at MEADOWS, standing quite still, bent

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c<sup>7</sup> forward) And there is one irresistible siren drawing us over to the fatal islands where that monster lives. Do you know what that one <sup>siren</sup> irresistible ~~monster~~ is?

MEADOWS: No.

BEINUM: That siren is love. It's love, the act of the dark, the act of whispers, the act of sighs, the act of gazes which go deeper than the world, the act of touch and brooding silence, the tender act in which two people are gripped in the claws of that monster on the rocky island, Meadows. Because when we love we're powerless, when we love we're surprised by life, when we love we're creatures of the silence, we're small, we look ridiculous, we suffer the world instead of having it by the throat. We belong, but we don't possess. Without <sup>her</sup> we're lonely. We yearn and dream. The ravages of love are marvellous, the claws bite deeper and deeper until we bleed and cry out, and -!

MEADOWS: Have you suffered all that yourself?

BEINUM: The dawn used to be a blessed time for me, certain places where I walked for <sup>(1944)</sup> always enchanted... (Why? Because SHE filled all my sleep with a holy gaze, -! I remember her shy half-smile, I remember her back always so erect as she sat by one of my windows. She went away. And the end of that ~~silver~~ sleep of love, like slow and ~~soft~~ steady waves, was agony, (bitterly, his hands trembling as he gesticulates) was tears in a room empty all and every day, was walking through street <sup>5</sup> after street, seeing nothing, wanting her, wanting her, for days and days, this darkness, this weeping like a child, with the head

buried in the pillow, in a kind of helpless wailing voice (for a moment screwing up his face, then whining slightly, in a passionate effort to convey to MEADOWS all he has suffered) and that poring over letters she had written months before, and then, most terrible of all, that walking across the room and by chance coming on a flower with the same kind of smell her hair had,- touching with my fingers the - !

He turns away, making a gesture of refusal with his hand, unable to go on.

MEADOWS: And you refuse all that again. Why?

BEINUM: Because it awakes us, Meadows. Because it brings the sky to our doorstep. I want to be the pilot. I want to stand on the earth as if I were its engineer. I want to be great. And I refuse that siren of love. I don't want to be your puny lover. Listen - (striding across to the wall where the production charts are) Godfrey is supposed to be my boss, but actually I'm his. D'you think I'm here to put up his production-rates? D'you think I'm here for a job of work, as your male nurse or something? (He turns and tears down the three charts from the wall one by one. As he does so he speaks the following very deliberately) I'm here to make a race of masters, men who will know that because they are spewed ~~into~~ into life from the silence and then swallowed up again by the silence when they die, the lives they live are an heroic choice. Oh, there can be affection between men and women, they can delight each other, they

can even prefer each other above all other people in the world, but no more of this slow brooding worship, no more of this helplessness, like beasts. And perhaps in the end my touch will be recognised, first throughout the land, then throughout the world, and then from generation to generation ~~to the end~~ until a great race of men, following my example, will - (He stares before him, then looks about) There, I'm giving you my dreams. They should be said to the stars, not men. (Giving MEADOWS a penetrating glance) What I shall do here, Meadows, is to turn the act of darkness into the act of light. Then there could be a kind of paradise.

He watches MEADOWS for some time. The latter has his head in his hands.

BEINUM: You saw Burbidge's wife, I understand. (MEADOWS does not answer or move) One day you'll learn my strength.

There is silence. MEADOWS pushes his knuckles against his brow as he begins to speak, still not looking up.

MEADOWS: Everything we do here is watched over, even our kisses. This is our darkness, this room. The sun makes no difference at all. I want to leave the camp. I want to exist again. I asked her <sup>to come away with me.</sup> to leave just now.

BEINUM: Your wife? (MEADOWS nods) Did she agree?

MEADOWS: No.

BEINUM: Why not?

MEADOWS looks up at him.

MEADOWS: You have a guess.

BEINUM (after a pause) She still needs Godfrey, perhaps.

MEADOWS: No. I told you at the beginning. She needs you.

BEINUM stares at him.

BEINUM (in a quieter voice) You mean she needs consultations.

MEADOWS rises and BEINUM goes to the desk to fetch his card.

MEADOWS: So I'm a prisoner to you, whichever way I turn.

BEINUM (as he hands him his card) Well, fight your way out.

MEADOWS (gazing at him) Perhaps I shall, you know.

MEADOWS opens the door and is about to walk out when he stops. He speaks to someone outside.

MEADOWS: Were you there all the time?

JULIA enters.

JULIA: I thought I'd wait.

BEINUM: Good morning, Mrs Meadows.

JULIA: Good morning.

They stand uneasily together.

JULIA: Did I interrupt? You both seem...

BEINUM: No. You must come whenever you feel like it.

(To MEADOWS) Will you come again?

MEADOWS: No. You cursed me. Goodbye.

He goes out and BEINUM shrugs. He closes the door and goes across to his desk again.

BEINUM: Your husband wants to leave the camp. I think he asked you about it.

JULIA: Yes.

BEINUM: Don't you think it might be best to get away?

JULIA: I can't go.

BEINUM: So Godfrey is still a power over your life.

JULIA: No.

BEINUM: Why, then?

JULIA: I need this room.

BEINUM: This room?

JULIA: To find myself again. I need time. That's reason enough to stay.

He stares at her, his mouth half-open.

BEINUM: You know I'm such a busy person...

JULIA: I shall try not to come every day.

BEINUM: No. No, there is no need to try. (Staring down at the ground) You must come here and solve your problems, in ~~my~~ your own time. Take your time.

He continues to stare down at the floor. There is silence between them. The curtain slowly falls.