



ABORTION

BY: EUGENE O'NEILL

CATEGORY: LITERATURE – THEATER AND PLAYS

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CHARACTERS— JACK TOWNSEND
JOHN TOWNSEND, *his father*
MRS. TOWNSEND, *his mother*
LUCY TOWNSEND, *his sister*
EVELYN SANDS, *his fiancée*
DONALD (BULL) HERRON, *his room-mate*
JOE MURRAY, *a machinist*
STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY

The action takes place in the study of the suite of rooms occupied by Townsend and Herron on the ground floor of a dormitory in a large eastern university in the United States.

Time—The Present.

SCENE—*The study of the suite of rooms occupied by Jack Townsend and Donald Herron on the ground floor of a dormitory in a large eastern university of the United States. The left wall is composed almost entirely of a large bow-window looking out on the campus, and forming a window seat which is piled high with bright colored cushions. In the middle of the far side, a door opening into a hallway of the dormitory. On either side of the door, leather covered divans with leather cushions. In the right corner to the rear, a writing desk with an electric drop-light hanging over it. In the middle of the right wall, a fireplace. In the extreme right foreground, a door opening into a bedroom. In the center of the room, a table with an electric reading-lamp wired from the chandelier above. Books, periodicals, pipes, cigarette boxes, ash-trays, etc., are also on the table. The walls of the room are hung with flags, class banners, framed photographs of baseball and football teams, college posters, etc. Two Morris chairs and several rockers are grouped about the table.*

It is about eight o'clock in the evening of a warm day in June. At first the windows on the left are gray with the dim glow of the dying twilight but as the action progresses this slowly disappears.

A sound of voices comes from the hall. The door in the rear is opened and Mrs. Townsend and Lucy enter, escorted by Herron. Their figures can be vaguely made out in the dusk of the room.

LUCY—*(feeling her way toward the table)* Do put on the lights, Bull! I know I'm going to break my neck in a minute. *(Mrs. Townsend remains standing by the doorway.)*

HERRON—*(cheerfully)* One minute, one minute! *(strikes his shin against the corner of the divan—wrathfully)* Oh—*(bites his tongue just in time)*

LUCY—*(with a gurgling laugh)* Say it! Say it!

HERRON—*(leaning over the divan and feeling on the wall for the electric switch—softly)* Oh darn!

LUCY—Hypocrite! That isn't what you were going to say.

HERRON—Oh gosh, then. *(finds the switch)* There! *(turns on all the lights except the drop-light)* Let there be light!

LUCY—*(She is a small, vivacious blond nineteen years old, gushing with enthusiasm over everything and everybody. She wears an immense bouquet of flowers at the waist of her dark blue dress and carries a flag.)* Don't stand there posing, Bull. *(flings herself into one of the Morris chairs)* You look much more like a God of darkness than one of light.

MRS. TOWNSEND—*(a sweet-faced, soft-spoken, gray-haired lady in her early fifties. She is dressed in dark gray. She turns to Lucy with smiling remonstrance.)* Lucy! *(to Herron who clumsily arranges a cushion at the back of a rocking chair for her)* Thank you, Donald. *(Herron winces at the "Donald.")*

LUCY—*(contemptuously)* Donald!

HERRON—*(chuckling—He is a huge, swarthy six-footer with a bull neck and an omnipresent grin, slow to anger and to understanding but—an All-American tackle. His immense frame is decked out in white flannels which make him look gigantic.)* I don't care much for the "Donald" myself.

LUCY—And I still claim, Mother, that Donald, alias Bull, resembles Pluto more than any other divinity. It is true, judging from the pictures I have seen, that Pluto was not as fat—*(as Herron slouches into a sitting position on the divan)* nor as clumsy, but—

HERRON—*(grinning)* What have I done today? What have I done? Didn't I purchase candy and beautiful flowers? And now I reap nothing but abuse. I appeal to you, Mrs. Townsend. She is breaking me on the wheel.

LUCY—Poor butterfly! *(convulsed with laughter)* Ha ha ha! Poor, delicate fragile butterfly!

HERRON—There you go again! *(appealingly)* You see, Mrs. Townsend? Every word of mine is turned to mockery. *(He sighs explosively.)*

MRS. TOWNSEND—*(smiling)* Never mind, Donald; you ought to hear the nice things she says behind your back. Lucy—*(indignantly)* Mother!

HERRON—I find it hard to believe.

LUCY—Mother is fibbing so as not to hurt your feelings. *(with a roguish smile)* I never, never in all my life said a good word about you. You don't deserve it.

MRS. TOWNSEND—Why, Lucy, what a thing to say! *(While she is speaking Joe Murray appears in the doorway to the rear. He is a slight, stoop-shouldered, narrow-chested young fellow of eighteen, with large, feverish, black eyes, thin lips, pasty complexion, and the sunken cheeks of a tuberculosis victim. He wears a shabby dark suit. He peers blinkingly around the room and knocks but they do not hear him.)*

LUCY—*(glancing toward the door and seeing him)* Someone to see you, Bull.

HERRON—*(turning to Murray)* Anything you want?

MURRAY—*(aggressively)* I wanta see Townsend, Jack Townsend.

HERRON—He's not here.

MURRAY—D'yuh know when he'll be in?

HERRON—Any minute; but I advise you not to wait. He won't have any time for you tonight. If you want to leave a message I'll give it to him.

MURRAY—*(truculently)* He'll find time for me all right.

HERRON—*(staring at him)* You think so? Suit yourself. *(pointedly)* You can wait for him outside. *(Murray's face pales with rage. He starts to say something then turns abruptly and disappears into the hallway.)*

HERRON—Pleasant little man!

LUCY—Don't you know who it was?

HERRON—Never saw him before; probably some fresh "townie" who thinks Jack's indebted to him because he recovered a stolen baseball bat or something, and wants to put the acid on him for a dollar or two. Jack's such a good-natured slob—

LUCY—*(with agile)* Listen to who is talking.

MRS. TOWNSEND—*(proudly)* Jack always has been so good-hearted.

HERRON—*(with a smile)* He's only stingy with base-hits. Great game he pitched today. Star players usually fall down when they're captains of teams and it's their last year in college; but not old Jack—only three hits off him.

MRS. TOWNSEND—This game we saw today decides the championship, doesn't it?

LUCY—Certainly, Mother. You don't suppose I'd have yelled my whole voice away if it wasn't, do you? I can hardly speak.

MRS. TOWNSEND—*(with a sly wink at Herron)* I hadn't noticed that, Lucy. *(Herron shakes with suppressed mirth.)*

LUCY—*(pouting)* Oh, Mother, how unkind!

MRS. TOWNSEND—I must confess I'm not much of a fan—Is that What you call it?—I do not understand the game and if it wasn't for Jack playing I'm afraid I Would find it rather wearisome.

HERRON—Jack is the big man of the college tonight, all right. The President is a mere nonentity beside him. Add to our list of athletic heroes one Jack Townsend, captain and pitcher.

MRS. TOWNSEND—How they carried him around the field after the game!

LUCY—And cheered him!

HERRON—You bet We did. I had a hold of one leg. But I agree With you Mrs.

Townsend. If Jack didn't play I Wouldn't take much interest in baseball myself. (*enthusiastically*) Football is the real game.

LUCY—Of course you'd say that.

MRS. TOWNSEND—That's beyond me, too. I've heard it's so rough, that so many players are injured. When John first entered college his father and I made him promise not to go in for it on any account.

HERRON—(*regretfully*) You spoiled a fine player. (*noise of voices from the hall*) Speaking of the—hm—angel. (*Evelyn Sands enters followed by Jack Townsend. Evelyn is a tall, darkhaired, beautiful girl about twenty years old. Her eyes are large and brown, her mouth full-lipped, resolute; her figure lithe and graceful. She is dressed simply but stylishly in white. Jack is a wellbuilt handsome young fellow about twenty-two years old, with blond hair brushed straight back from his forehead, intelligent blue eyes, a good-natured, self-indulgent mouth, and ruddy, tanned complexion. He has the easy confident air of one who has, through his prowess in athletics, become a figure of note in college circles and is accustomed to the deference of those around him. He wears a dark coat, white soft shirt with a bright colored tie, flannel trousers, and white tennis shoes.*)

LUCY—Hail to the hero! (*Evelyn comes over and sits on the arm of Lucy's chair. Jack stands beside his mother.*)

MRS. TOWNSEND—(*smiling fondly up at him*) Where is your father?

JACK—Right outside, talking to Professor Simmons. After dinner as we were following you out of the Inn we ran into the Prof and he walked down with us. Did you think we were lost?

LUCY—(*with a mischievous glance at Evelyn*) We thought you might have forestalled the forthcoming happy event by eloping. (*Evelyn blushes.*)

JACK—(*laughing*) With father for chaperon?

LUCY—Well, don't you dare do it! I'd never forgive you spoiling my chance to wear my gown. I'm going to be just the most stunning bridesmaid. Am I not, Mother?

MRS. TOWNSEND—Of course, dear. (*to Jack*) Why didn't you ask the professor to come in?

JACK—I did, Mother, but he's on his way somewhere or other.

HERRON—By the way, Jack, there was a "townie" in here asking to see you a few minutes ago.

JACK—(*starting nervously*) A "townie"? Did he give any name?

HERRON—No. A fresh little shrimp; said he'd wait. Wasn't he outside?

JACK—(*visibly uneasy*) I didn't see anyone.

HERRON—He'll be back probably; and look out for a touch. (*The singing of a distant quartet sounds faintly from the campus.*)

LUCY—(*springing up*) I hear them singing on the campus. I'm going out. Bull, when does the big P'rade start?

HERRON—Pretty soon; you can hear the clans gathering now.

LUCY—I'm going to march beside them all the way to the lake.

MRS. TOWNSEND—The lake?

LUCY—There's going to be a canoe carnival, and bonfires, and dancing, and

everything, Mother. You've simply got to come, all of you, in honor of hero Jack.

JACK—(*embarrassed*) Come, come, Sis, praise from you is rare indeed.

HERRON—(*emphatically*) Indeed!

LUCY—(*archly to Herron*) Indeed?

MRS. TOWNSEND—(*getting quickly from her chair—with a girlish laugh*) I'm going with you. I'll show you young people I can celebrate with the best of you.

JACK—Are you sure it isn't too much for you, Mother?

MRS. TOWNSEND—(*her face flushed with excitement*) Nonsense, Jack!

JACK—(*putting his arm around her affectionately*) Dear old mother—young mother, I should say.

LUCY—Come on everybody!

JACK—You people go on ahead and I'll catch up with you. (*Mrs. Townsend goes out.*)

LUCY—(*to Herron*) Come on, jumbo.

HERRON—(*groaning*) Jumbo! And Bull! Lucy thinks I'm a menagerie. (*He and Lucy go out. Evelyn starts to follow them but Jack stops her and takes her in his arms.*)

JACK—We won't be alone again for ages. (*kisses her*)

EVELYN—(*smiling up into his face*) I'm so proud of you, Jack, dear.

JACK—(*laughingly puts his fingers across her lips*) Ssshhh! You'll give me an awful attack of exaggerated ego if you go on talking like that.

EVELYN—But it's true, dear.

JACK—Then for the good of my soul don't tell me. Praise from Sis is wonder enough for one day.

EVELYN—(*moving a few steps away from him*) I wish I could tell you how proud I felt when I sat in the grandstand and watched you. (*with a laugh*) It was a horrid sort of selfish pride, too, for I couldn't help saying to myself from time to time: He loves me, me! He belongs to me; and I thought of how jealous all the girls around me who were singing his praises would be if they knew.

JACK—(*his face suddenly grown serious, as if at some painful memory*) Please Evelyn! You make me feel so mean—and contemptible when you talk like that.

EVELYN—(*astonished*) Mean? Contemptible? How foolish you are, Jack. (*excitedly*) I felt like standing on my seat and shouting to all of them: "What right have you to think of him? He is mine, mine!" (*laughing at her own enthusiasm, adds in a matter-of-fact tone*) Or will be in three months.

JACK—(*his voice thrilling with emotion*) In three months! (*jokingly*) Do you know those three months are going to seem like three years?

EVELYN—(*gaily*) Three centuries; but I was telling you how splendid you were this afternoon.

JACK—(*protestingly*) Sssshh, Evelyn! (*tries to put his arms around her*)

EVELYN—(*backing away and avoiding him*) You were so cool, so brave. It struck me as symbolical of the way you would always play, in the game of life—fairly, squarely, strengthening those around you, refusing to weaken at critical moments, advancing others by sacrifices, fighting the good fight for the cause, the team, and always, always, whether vanquished or victor, reserving a hearty, honest cheer for

the other side. (*breaking off breathlessly*) Oh, Jack dear, I loved you so!

JACK—(*a strong note of pain in his voice, puts his hands over his ears, and forces a laugh*) I won't listen any longer. I positively refuse.

EVELYN—(*smiling*) It's all over. I'm through. I simply had to tell you. (*She holds out both hands to him. He draws her into his arms and kisses her.*)

JACK—(*with deep feeling*) I shall try—with all my strength—in the future, Evelyn,—to live as you have said and become worthy of you. Today was nothing. One does one's best for the sake of the game, for the love of the struggle. Our best happened to be luckier, more skillful, perhaps, than the other fellow's—that's all.

EVELYN—It's so like you to say that. You're a dear. (*She kisses him. Jack's father, John Townsend, appears in the doorway. He is a tall, kindly old man of sixty or so with a quantity of white hair. He is erect,, well preserved, energetic, dressed immaculately but soberly. He laughs and shakes a finger at Evelyn.*)

TOWNSEND—Caught in the act. (*Evelyn smiles and blushes.*) Evelyn, they're waiting for you outside and Lucy threatens to come in and drag you out if my persuasive powers have no effect. They want to make a start for the Steps and see the P'rade form. It's due to start shortly. (*While he is speaking he comes forward, puts his straw hat on the table, and sits down in one of the Morris chairs.*)

EVELYN—(*eagerly*) I wouldn't miss it for worlds. (*She goes to the door; then turns and looks at Jack irresolutely.*) Aren't you coming with us, both of you? (*Jack looks at his father uncertainly.*)

TOWNSEND—We'll join you there; or, better still,—(*to Jack*) The P'rade passes right by here, doesn't it? They always used to in the old days.

JACK—Yes, Dad.

TOWNSEND—Then you go ahead with the others, Evelyn, and since Lucy tells me you're going to follow the P'rade, we'll be able to join you when you pass by. (*explanatively*) I've seen and taken part in so many of these affairs that their novelty has sort of worn off for me; and Jack,—if they were to discover the hero of the day at this stage of the game he wouldn't have a rag to his back, eh, Jack?

JACK—(*smiling*) I'm black and blue all over from their fond caresses this afternoon.

EVELYN—(*gaily*) I'm off, then. (*looking at Jack*) You'll surely join us when we pass?

JACK—Sure thing.

EVELYN—(*waving her hand*) Bye-bye. (*She goes out. Jack sits down near his father.*)

TOWNSEND—(*takes out a cigar and lights it. Jack watches him uneasily as if he foresees what his father is going to say and dreads it. Townsend avoids his eyes. There is an uncomfortable silence. Then Townsend begins vaguely*) It certainly removes the burden of the years from my shoulders to come out to the old college in the Spring and live the old days over in memory and hobnob with some of the old-timers who were young-timers with me. It becomes more difficult every year I find. All the old landmarks are disappearing one by one.

JACK—(*perfunctorily*) Yes, even in my time there have been great changes.

TOWNSEND—(*very palpably talking to gain time*) It gives me a painful heart-throb every time I come back and look for some old place and find it renovated or torn down.

JACK—(*shortly*) I can well understand that.

TOWNSEND—You don't realize what this college comes to mean to you in after years; how it becomes inseparably woven into the memories of one's lost youth until the two become identical.

JACK—(*impatiently*) Yes, I suppose so.

TOWNSEND—(*more and more vaguely*) Happiest days of my life, of anyone's life—

JACK—(*abruptly*) Come to the point, Dad.

TOWNSEND—(*confused*) What? Eh?

JACK—(*firmly*) You didn't send Evelyn away in order that you might wax reminiscent; you know that, Dad.

TOWNSEND—(*heaving a sigh of relief*) You are quite right, I did not; but what I ought to speak about is such a deuced painful subject for both of us that I hardly dare speak of it—especially on your day of triumph when I should be the last one to bring up any unpleasantness.

JACK—(*kindly*) Never mind that, Dad.

TOWNSEND—You see I didn't know when I'd have another opportunity of seeing you alone without arousing your mother's suspicions.

JACK—I understand.

TOWNSEND—And the thing has caused me so much worry. I simply had to hear from your own lips that everything was all right.

JACK—Then I will set your mind at rest immediately. Everything is all right.

TOWNSEND—(*fervently*) Thank God for that! Why haven't you written to me?

JACK—Until a few days ago I had nothing new to tell you.

TOWNSEND—When was the operation performed?

JACK—Last Monday.

TOWNSEND—And you've heard from her since?

JACK—I received a short note from her that night. It was all over and everything was all right, she said. She told me I needn't worry any longer.

TOWNSEND—That was five days ago. You haven't had any word since then?

JACK—No.

TOWNSEND—That's a favorable sign. If any further complications had cropped up she would surely have let you know, wouldn't she?

JACK—Yes, I think she would. I imagine she's frightened to death and doesn't want any more to do with me. I'm sure I hope so. And then, you see I never answered her letter or telephoned.

TOWNSEND—(*gravely*) You were wrong there, my boy.

JACK—(*excitedly*) I know it, I know it, Dad; but I had just received a letter from Evelyn telling me she was coming out for Commencement Week and the game, and—Oh, when I thought of her the other affair seemed so horrible and loathsome, I swore I'd never speak or write again. When I was certain she was in no danger I judged it best for both of us to break off once and for all.

TOWNSEND—Listen, my boy; Are you sure—you know one's vanity blinds one in such cases—are you sure, absolutely sure, you were the father of this child which would have been born to her?

JACK—(*emphatically*) Yes, I am certain of it, as certain as one can possibly be.

(*wildly*) Oh I wish to God I had grounds for some suspicion of the sort. What a salve it would be for my conscience! But no, no! To even think such is an insult to a sweet girl. (*defiantly*) For she is a sweet, lovely girl in spite of everything, and if I had loved her the least particle, if I had not been in love with Evelyn, I should certainly have married her.

TOWNSEND—Hm,—if you did not love this girl, why did you,—why, in the first place,—?

JACK—(*leaning toward his father and fixing his eyes upon him searchingly*) Why? Why? Who knows why or who, that does know, has the courage to confess it, even to himself. Be frank, Dad! Judging from several anecdotes which your friend Professor Simmons has let slip about your four years here, you were no St. Anthony. Turn your mind back to those days and then answer your own question: "Why, in the first place?"

TOWNSEND—(*staves at the floor in moody retrospection—a pause*) We've retained a large portion of the original mud in our make-up. That's the only answer I can think of.

JACK—(*ironically*) That's it! Do you suppose it was the same man who loves Evelyn who did this other thing? No, a thousand times no, such an idea is abhorrent. It was the male beast who ran gibbering through the forest after its female thousands of years ago.

TOWNSEND—Come, Jack, that is pure evasion. You are responsible for the Mr. Hyde in you as well as for the Dr. Jekyll. Restraint—

JACK—(*scornfully*) Restraint? Ah, yes, everybody preaches but who practices it? And could they if they wanted to? Some impulses are stronger than we are, have proved themselves so throughout the world's history. Is it not rather our ideals of conduct, of Right and Wrong, our ethics, which are unnatural and monstrously distorted? Is society not suffering from a case of the evil eye which sees evil where there is none? Isn't it our moral laws which force me into evasions like the one which you have just found fault with?

TOWNSEND—You're delving too deep, for me, my boy. Save your radical arguments for the younger generation. I cannot see them in the same light you do (*grumblingly*) and if I could, I wouldn't. What I cannot understand is how you happened to get in with this young woman in the first place. You'll pardon me, Jack, but it seems to me to show a lack of judgment on your part, and—er—good taste.

JACK—(*shrugging his shoulders*) Such things usually are errors in taste.

TOWNSEND—This young woman was hardly of the class you have been accustomed to associate with, I presume.

JACK—She is a working girl, a stenographer.

TOWNSEND—Has she any immediate relations who would be liable to discover the unfortunate termination of your (*sarcastically*) love affair?

JACK—Her father is dead. Her mother is a silly woman who would be the last to suspect anything. She has two sisters, both youngsters under ten, and one brother about eighteen, a machinist or something of the sort who is only home for week-ends.

TOWNSEND—And she and her brother support the others?

JACK—(*avoiding his father's eyes*) So I believe.

TOWNSEND—(*his expression stern and accusing, starts to say something but restrains himself*) Ah.

JACK—(*glancing at his father*) Yes, yes I know it, Dad. I have played the scoundrel all the way through. I realize that now. Why couldn't I have felt this way before, at the start? Then this would never have happened. But at that time the whole thing seemed just a pleasant game we were playing; its serious aspects appeared remote, unreal. I never gave them a thought. I have paid for it since then, I want you to believe that. I have had my glance into the abyss. In loss of confidence and self-respect, in bitter self-abasement I have paid, and I am sure the result of it all will be to make me a better man, a man more worthy to be Evelyn's husband.

TOWNSEND—(*huskily*) God grant it, my boy. (*gets to his feet*) I want to thank you for the confidence you placed in your father by making a frank appeal to me when you got in this trouble. It shows you regard me not only as a father but as a friend; and that is the way I would have it.

JACK—You have always urged me to come to you and be frank about everything; and I always have and always will. I had to have the money and I thought I owed it to you to be open and aboveboard and not start in deceiving you at this late day. I couldn't get it in any other way very well. Two hundred dollars is quite a sum for a college student to raise at a moment's notice.

TOWNSEND—(*restored to good humor*) The wages of sin are rather exorbitant.

JACK—He was the only doctor I could find who would do that sort of thing. He knew I was a college student and probably made inquiries about your financial rating,—and there you are. There was nothing for me to do but grin and pay. But as I said in my letter this money is a loan. It would be unfair for me to make you shoulder my—mistakes.

TOWNSEND—(*cheerfully*) Let's forget all about it. (*He holds out his hand to Jack who clasps it heartily.*) All's well that ends well. You've learned your lesson. (*The sound of a college cheer comes faintly through the open window.*) And now shall we join the others? That cheer wakens the old fever in me. I want to follow the band and get singed by the Roman candles. (*He picks his straw hat from the table.*)

JACK—(*eagerly*) Yes, let's do that. (*They are going toward the door in the rear when Joe Murray appears in the doorway. Jack cannot repress an exclamation of alarm and his face grows pale.*)

MURRAY—(*fixing his eyes on Jack with an expression of furious hatred*) Look here, Townsend, I gotta see yuh for a minute.

JACK—(*unwillingly*) All right, Murray. You join the others, Dad, and I'll catch you in a few minutes. (*Townsend, struck by the change in his son's voice looks questioningly at him, asking an explanation. Jack turns away from him.*)

JACK—Come in, Murray, and have a seat. (*Townsend goes out. Murray slouches to the middle of the room but does not sit down. His fingers fumble nervously at the buttons of his coat. He notices this and plunges his hands into his coat pockets. He seems endeavoring to restrain the hatred and rage which the spasmodic working of his features show to be boiling within him.*)

JACK—(*appears occupied in arranging the things on the table*) Well?

MURRAY—(*chokingly*) Well! (*He can go no further.*)

JACK—(*coldly, without looking at him*) Anything I can do for you?

MURRAY—(*in strangled tones*) Anything you can do for me!

JACK—(*hurriedly*) Yes; I'm in rather a hurry and if it's nothing very important I'd be just as well pleased if you'd come some other time.

MURRAY—Important? You mayn't think so. It's not important to you, yuh—(*He is stopped by a fit of violent coughing which racks his thin body.*)

JACK—(*irritably*) You've come here looking for trouble, Murray. You better wait until you've cooled off. (*then more kindly*) What is it you want to say to me? Out with it!

MURRAY—(*wiping his mouth on his coat sleeve—angrily*) I'll out with it, damn yuh!—standing there so cool—dressed in swell clothes—and all these other gods—(*choking*) and Nellie—and Nellie—

JACK—(*leaning toward him*) Yes, Nellie?

MURRAY—(*sobbing*) She's dead. (*in a transport of rage*) You killed her, yuh dirty murderer!

JACK—(*dully, as if he did not understand*) Dead? No, no, you don't mean that. She wrote to me everything was all right. Dead? (*As he speaks he backs away from Murray in horror and stumbles against one of the Morris chairs. He sits down in it mechanically.*)

MURRAY—(*shrilly*) She's dead—Nellie, my sister—she's dead.

JACK—(*half to himself*) No, it's impossible. (*fiercely*) It's a lie! What scheme is this of yours? You're trying to frighten me.

MURRAY—(*raging*) She's dead, I tell yuh, dead! She died this morning.

JACK—(*forced to believe*) She died this morning? (*in a dazed voice*) But why didn't she—I didn't know—(*stares straight before him*) God!

MURRAY—Why didn't she let yuh know, yuh mean? She wrote to yuh, she told me she did; and yuh knew she was sick and never answered it. She might'a lived if she thought yuh cared, if she heard from yuh; but she knew yuh were tryin' to git rid of her.

JACK—(*in agony*) Stop, for God's sake! I know I should have written. I meant to write but—

MURRAY—She kept sayin': "I wanta die. I don't wanta live!" (*furiously*) But I'll fix yuh! I'll make yuh pay.

JACK—(*startled, turns to him quickly*) What do you mean?

MURRAY—Don't give me any of that. Yuh know what I mean. Yuh know how she died. (*fiercely*) Yuh know who killed her.

JACK—(*his voice trembling—not looking at Murray*) How she died? Killed her? I don't understand—

MURRAY—Yuh lic! She was murdered and yuh know it.

JACK—(*horror-struck*) Murdered?

MURRAY—Yes, and you murdered her.

JACK—(*shuddering*) I? What? I murdered?—Are you crazy?

MURRAY—You and your dirty skunk of a doctor.

JACK—(*sinks back in his chair with a groan*) Ooh!

MURRAY—(*with fierce scorn*) Yuh thought yuh was safe, didn't yuh, with me away from home? Yuh c'd go out and pitch the champeenship game—and she lyin' dead! Yuh c'd ruin her and throw her down and no one say a word because yuh're a swell college guy and captain of the team, and she ain't good enough for yuh to marry. She's goin' to have a kid, your kid, and because yuh're too rotten to act like a man, yuh send her to a faker of a doctor to be killed; and she does what yuh say because she loves yuh; and yuh don't even think enough of her to answer her letter (*sobbing*) when she's dyin' on account of you!

JACK—(*speaking with difficulty*) She—told you—all this?

MURRAY—Not a word! (*proudly*) She died game; she wasn't no coward. I tried every way I knew how to git her to tell me but she wouldn't. Not a word outa her against you. (*choking with angry sobs*) And you—and you—yuh dirty coward!—playin' ball!

JACK—(*dully*) I did what I thought was best for her.

MURRAY—Yuh sneaked out like a coward because yuh thought she wasn't good enough. (*with a sneer*) Yuh think yuh c'n get away with that stuff and then marry some goil of your own kind, I s'pose,—some goil like I seen yuh come in with tonight. (*vindictively*) But yuh won't; not if I have to go to hell for it! (*A pause. Jack is silent, breathing hard. His eyes are haunted, full of despair, as he vainly seeks to escape from the remorse which is torturing him. The faint sound of the college cheer, then of the band, comes from the open window. From this point to the end these sounds are continuous, the band only being silenced to permit the giving of the cheer, and as the action progresses they become more and more distinct.*)

MURRAY—(*continues in the same vindictive tones*) I've always hated yuh since yuh first come to the house. I've always hated all your kind. Yuh come here to school and yuh think yuh c'n do as yuh please with us town people. Yuh treat us like servants, an' what are you, I'd like to know?—a lot of lazy no-good dudes spongin' on your old men; and the goils, our goils, think yuh're grand! (*Jack is staring at the floor, his head bowed, and does not seem to hear him.*)

MURRAY—I knew somethin' would happen. I told Nellie to look out, and she laughed. When the old lady sent for me and I come home and saw Nellie and she wouldn't leave me go for a doctor, I had a hunch what was wrong. She wouldn't say nothin' but I got our doc, not the one you sent her to, and he told me just what I thought and said she was goin' to die. (*raging*) If I'd seen yuh that minute I'd killed yuh. I knew it was you but I couldn't prove it. Then one of the kids got scared and told me Nellie'd sent her to your doc for medicine when she first took sick. I bought a gun and the kid showed me where he was. I shoved the gun in his face and he owned up and told me about you. He offered me money, lots of it, to keep my mouth shut, and I took it—the money he'd got from you—blood money! (*with a savage grin*) An' I'll keep my mouth shut—maybe!

JACK—(*his eyes lighting up with a gleam of hope, turns eagerly to Murray*) Listen, Murray! This affair is unspeakably horrible, and I am—everything you say; but I want you—you must believe I honestly thought I was acting for the best in having the operation performed. That it has turned out so tragically is terrible. You cannot realize how I am suffering. I feel as if I were what you called me—a murderer. (*brokenly*) It is horrible, horrible! The thought of it will torture me all my life.

MURRAY—That don't bring her back to life. Yuh're too late!

JACK—(*frenziedly*) Too late! What do you mean? You haven't told anyone? You haven't—

MURRAY—When I left his office I went home and—she was dead. Then I come up here lookin' for you. I wanted to kill yuh, but—I been thinkin'—yuh're not worth gittin' hung for. (*with a cruel grin*) I c'n see a better way of fixin' yuh,—one that'll get yuh right.

JACK—(*half to himself*) You haven't told anyone?

MURRAY—What's the difference? There's plenty of time. I know.

JACK—(*trying to steady his voice which is trembling with apprehension*) Murray, for your own sake, for your dead sister's good name, for your family's sake you must keep this thing quiet. I do not plead for myself. I am willing to have you punish me individually in any way you see fit; but there are others, innocent ones, who will suffer.

MURRAY—She was innocent, too, before you—

JACK—(*interrupting him*) My mother and father, my sister, Ev—(*bites back the name*) This would kill my mother if she knew. They are innocent. Do not revenge yourself on them.

MURRAY—(*inflexibly*) You killed my sister.

JACK—Why will you keep saying that? You know it was an accident; that I would gladly have given my own life rather than have it happen. And you must keep silent. I will do anything you want, I tell you! (*He goes close to Murray.*) You say the doctor gave you money? I'll give you ten times as much as he did. (*Murray's face grows livid.*) I'll see that you get so much a year for the rest of your life. My father is rich. We'll get you a good position, do everything you wish, (*breaking down*) only do not punish the innocent.

MURRAY—(*slowly*) You want—to pay me—for Nellie! (*With a terrible cry of rage he pulls a revolver from the pocket of his coat. Before he can pull the trigger Jack seizes his wrist. There is a short struggle. Jack takes the revolver away from him and lays it on the table. Murray has a violent attack of coughing. He recovers and is slinking toward the door when Jack suddenly picks up the revolver from the table and holds it out to him.*)

JACK—(*steadily*) Here, take it! I was a fool to stop you. Let the thing end with me and leave the innocent alone.

MURRAY—(*malevolently*) It's too good for yuh. (*He has edged stealthily nearer and nearer the door and with a final spring gains the safety of the dark hallway. He shouts back*) I'm goin' to the p'lice station. D'yuh hear, yuh dirty ba—rd! To the p'lice station! (*His quick footsteps can be heard as he runs out. Jack makes a movement as if to follow him but stops and sits down heavily by the table, laying the revolver on it. He hears the band and the cheers of the paraders who have evidently just invaded that section of the campus. He hurries to the windows, closes them, and pulls down the shades. The band is playing a march song and the students are singing. Jack groans and hides his face in his hands. The parade is about to pass by his windows. The glare of the red fire glows dully on the window shades. Jack springs up and rushes into his bedroom on the right. Several students crowd in the doorway from the ball.*)

ONE STUDENT—He's not here.

ANOTHER STUDENT—He ran away. (*All go out laughing and shouting. The band stops playing. Jack comes out from the bedroom, his face drawn with agony. The cheerleader's voice can be heard shouting "He ran away but if we give him a cheer, he'll hear us. A long cheer for Townsend, fellows! Hip! Hip!"*)

JACK—(*staggers toward the window crying brokenly*) No! No! For God's sake! (*The first part of the cheer booms out. He reels to the table and sees the revolver lying there. He snatches it up and presses it to his temple. The report is drowned by the cheering. He falls forward on his face, twitches, is still.*)

THE STUDENTS—(*winding up the nine long rahs*) Rah! Rah! Rah! Townsend! Townsend! Townsend! (*The band strikes up: "For He's A Jolly Good Fellow." The students commence to sing. The parade moves off again. Evelyn appears in the doorway to the rear.*)

EVELYN—Jack! It's all right now, dear. You can come out of hiding. (*She blinks for a moment blinded by the light; then comes into the room and sees the body—in terror*) Jack! What's the matter? (*She rushes over and kneels beside him; then faints as she sees the blood on his temples, the revolver still clutched in his right hand. She falls on the floor beside him.*)

THE STUDENTS—(*their voices growing gradually fainter*) For he's a jolly good fellow, which nobody can deny.

(*The Curtain Falls*)