

ECLIPSE

(A Play in Two Acts)

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CHARACTERS:

Woman

First Man

Second Man

Mother

Father

Act One

Scene One

(A wide twin bed with two white blankets with black stripes. An alarm clock starts ringing. It is not the usual continuous ringing, however, but rather a rhythmic, almost musical ring. Two people are tossing and turning under the blankets. The alarm clock becomes less insistent, sounding only intermittently. First Man and Woman struggle out from under the blankets. They have their backs to the audience the whole time. Their actions in the following moments are synchronised, as if performed by a single person and his reflection in a mirror. They kneel on the bed and reach over to the bed-side tables on each side. From these they take out two masks: a male mask for the man and a female mask for the woman. The expressions on the masks are neutral. They don the masks and then embrace. The Man obligingly offers the Woman his hand to help her slip out of the bed more easily. Then they make the bed. The Woman does it carefully, the Man sloppily. The Woman finishes making the bed and stands over the First Man. She waits calmly for him to finish. But he merely throws up his arms and then heads for the table. The Woman removes her mask.)

Woman: (To First Man.) Go back, Adam.

(She is clearly displeased. She points to places on the blanket where the stripes are not straight, but does not help him to align them. She waits as he bends over the bed. He adjusts the blanket until she is satisfied. Then the Woman throws a black and white striped dress over her nightgown. The First Man also puts on something striped. They jump into their shoes and then go to the table. Each puts on a lamp over their half of the table. There are two milk jugs on the table, but a mug only on First Man's half of the table. He starts to sit down and is about to slump into the chair when the Woman's voice makes him stand up again.)

Woman: You've done it again, Adam.

(First Man shrugs his shoulders.)

Woman: How many times does that make it?

(First Man does not answer.)

Woman: Why do you do it?

(First Man takes off his mask. He is beginning to feel angry and defiant.)

First Man: Is there anything I can do without you knowing about it? You've got eyes everywhere.

Woman: They're closed at night... Just like yours... When you

s l e e p, t h a t i s . . . O n l y, y o u w e r e n ' t s l e e p i n g .

F i r s t M a n : H o w d o y o u k n o w ? Y o u c a n ' t h a v e b e e n s l e e p i n g e i t h e r , t h e n .

W o m a n : I d o n ' t h a v e t o b e a w a k e t o k n o w t h e t r u t h .

F i r s t M a n : (*C o n t e m p t u o u s l y .*) S u p p o s i n g y o u w e r e j u s t d r e a m i n g ?

W h a t k i n d o f t r u t h i s t h a t y o u s e e w i t h y o u r e y e s c l o s e d ? I t ' s j u s t d a r k n e s s y o u c a n s e e t h e n , n o t t r u t h .

W o m a n : M a y b e i t ' s o n l y w h e n i t ' s d a r k t h a t I s e e w h a t s o r t o f m a n y o u r e a l l y a r e . Y o u o n l y s h o w y o u r t r u e s e l f w h e n y o u t h i n k n o o n e c a n s e e y o u .

F i r s t M a n : S o w h a t a m I l i k e , t h e n ? !

W o m a n : G r e e d y .

F i r s t M a n : A n y t h i n g e l s e ?

W o m a n : S e l f i s h .

T h e F i r s t M a n : (*T e n a c i o u s l y .*) G o o n .

W o m a n : A l i a r .

F i r s t M a n : A n y t h i n g e l s e ?

W o m a n : A s p o n g e r .

F i r s t M a n : (*W i t h u n e x p e c t e d v e h e m e n c e .*) A r e y o u f i n i s h e d ?

W o m a n : H a v e n ' t y o u h a d e n o u g h ?

F i r s t M a n : N o w i t ' s y o u r t u r n t o l i s t e n t o m e .

W o m a n : I ' m n o t i n t e r e s t e d . . . W h o ' s l i v i n g o f f w h o h e r e ? !

F i r s t M a n : W e s h a r e . . . e v e r y t h i n g .

W o m a n : S h a r e !

(*A b r u p t l y s h e g e t s u p a n d s t a n d s e r e c t o v e r t h e t a b l e . S l o w l y s h e g o e s o v e r t o t h e b e d a n d t a k e s a m u g o u t f r o m u n d e r i t . S h e l i f t s i t u p a b o v e t h e l e v e l o f h e r h e a d . I t i s t h e s a m e a s t h a t o n t h e t a b l e , o n l y a d i f f e r e n t c o l o u r : t h e o n e o n t h e t a b l e i s w h i t e , w h i l e t h i s o n e i s b l a c k . F i r s t M a n t u r n s a w a y f r o m t h e W o m a n .*) A n y t h i n g t o s a y ? (*R e t u r n s t o t h e t a b l e .*) I c a n ' t h e a r y o u .

F i r s t M a n : M a y b e y o u p u t i t t h e r e y o u r s e l f .

W o m a n : U n d e r y o u r b e d !

F i r s t M a n : Y o u w e r e c o n v i n c e d I w o u l d n ' t g o l o o k i n g f o r y o u r m u g u n d e r m y b e d . .

W o m a n : (*C u t s i n .*) Y o u w a n t t o k n o w h o w i t g o t t h e r e ? Y o u w e r e t h i r s t y d u r i n g t h e n i g h t . Y o u c h e c k e d t o m a k e s u r e I w a s a s l e e p . T h e n y o u g o t u p . . . w e n t t o t h e t a b l e . . . a n d f i l l e d i t w i t h m i l k . . . r i g h t t o t h e b r i m .

F i r s t M a n : (*M o c k i n g l y .*) S o I d r a n k i t o v e r a t t h e t a b l e a n d s h o v e d t h e e m p t y m u g u n d e r t h e b e d .

W o m a n : Y o u d i d n ' t h a v e t i m e t o d r i n k i t .

F i r s t M a n : B e c a u s e y o u o p e n e d y o u r e y e s a n d I w a s f r i g h t e n e d y o u c o u l d s e e m e .

W o m a n : T a k e a l o o k i n t h e j u g ! (*F i r s t M a n o b l i g i n g l y t a k e s h i s m i l k j u g a n d t i l t s i t o v e r t h e m u g . M i l k s p l a s h e s i n t o t h e m u g . H e r a i s e s i t t o h i s m o u t h . B u t h e b a r e l y h a s t i m e t o t a k e a s i p b e f o r e t h e W o m a n ' s v o i c e s t o p s h i m .*)

Y o u ' v e b e e n d r i n k i n g f r o m m i n e ! (*T h e W o m a n p i c k s u p h e r m i l k j u g . S h e t i l t s i t s l o w l y . N o t a d r o p o f m i l k h a s b e e n l e f t i n t h e j u g .*)

F i r s t M a n : (*P a s s e s h i s j u g o v e r t o t h e W o m a n . S h e d o e s n o t e v e n t o u c h i t . T h e F i r s t M a n i s i n s i s t e n t .*) T a k e a d r i n k ! I f y o u t h i n k I ' v e b e e n d r i n k i n g f r o m y o u r s . (*T h e W o m a n s h o v e s t h e m i l k j u g t o F i r s t M a n .*) Y o u c a n ' t ? ! Y o u c o u l d n ' t g e t i t d o w n y o u r t h r o a t , e h ? . . . S o s t o p m a k i n g u p s t o r i e s n e x t t i m e . I f y o u d o n ' t h a v e e n o u g h

with your own, you can share mine.

Woman: I should have a full jug. You've drunk from this one.

First Man: (*Losing patience, he drinks the milk himself and puts the empty mug on the table*). From now on I'm not having you telling me when I can drink and how much.

Woman: We agreed we'd leave the milk for the morning.

First Man: But I was thirsty during the night.

Woman: You've got to be disciplined about it. That's what you're always telling me. And then you go and do just as you please.

First Man: Who's the head of the family here?

Woman: You are.. But we've both got stomachs.

First Man: Drink something else instead.

Woman: (*Mockingly*) Water?!

First Man: Why not... if you like it.

(The Woman takes the mug to a bucket and fills it with water. Then she carries it to the table. She goes up to First Man. He grabs the hand holding the mug. As he does so the hand dips a little and shakes. Water splashes out of the mug. First Man wrenches the Woman's hand and water from the mug spills onto her legs. For a moment both seize up, petrified. Suddenly a factory siren is heard. First Man and the Woman hastily put on their masks. They run – each to their own side. A gain, their movements are synchronised. They put on bright gowns and go to the door. First Man waits for the Woman and offers her his arm. The Woman links arms with him. They leave in a stately manner, with broad smiles on their faces.)

Scene Two

(When the lights come up Second Man is moving near a wall with masks on it. He behaves as if he is at an exhibition, inspecting the masks like exhibits. He stops at one of them and examines it. Eventually, however, he dons the mask he has been carrying at his side. Now he can face the audience. His mask seems to have "grown" onto his face. It resembles, in fact, a face distorted by a stocking mask, a face that cannot be 'uncovered' and wishes to remain concealed the whole time. Second Man goes to a mirror and looks at his new face. The Woman enters.)

Woman: You're home?! (*She takes off her gown and mask.*)

What about work?... Have you been fired?... Or wasn't it good enough for Lord Muck? It's a good job you've got someone to slave away for you. You'd have given up the ghost by now if it wasn't for me.

(She looks expectantly at Second Man, who is greening her arrival with silence.) So, what got your

tongue... As usual when you can't think up an answer.

Second Man: My dear lady, I'm afraid you've mistaken me for someone else.

Woman: (*Coarsely*) Have you lost your marbles? Who'd you think you're talking to – the Queen?

Second Man: I'm not sure that's the way to talk to a stranger.

(The Woman is nonplussed. She goes right up to him and looks at him curiously.)

Woman: Who are you?

Second Man: My name won't mean anything to you.

Woman: How did you get in?

Second Man: The door was open.

Woman: You opened it.

Second Man: Was I supposed to wait outside the door?

Woman: That's what everybody else does... Until the people of the house come back.

Second Man: (*Ironic ally.*) From three o'clock?

Woman: (*Looks at her watch.*) It's only half past three now ... Was that too long to wait?

Second Man: It depends how you look at it.. We'll have it sorted out for next time.

Woman: Why should I have to sort anything out with you?

Second Man: All right, we don't have to if you don't want. (*Matter-of-factly.*) From now on I'll come at three.

Woman: You're mixing me up with someone else.. Haven't you got the wrong floor by any chance?

Second Man: Seventh floor.. flat no. 74.

Woman: You're a burglar, aren't you? You've come up with all this nonsense because I've come back and found you here... What's taken your fancy?... What have you swiped? Where's your bag?

Second Man: What would I need a bag for?

Woman: To put your loot in.

Second Man: I'm not a burglar.

Woman: (*She gestures to his face.*) What are you wearing that thing for then?... So I wouldn't be able to recognise you! Take it off!

Second Man: I never show my face.

Woman: Get out!

Second Man: It's started raining... And I don't have an umbrella.

Woman: Take mine.

Second Man: But then you'll be without.

Woman: I'm not going anywhere.

Second Man: Really?... You're already going weak at the knees. (*He starts to take the Woman over to the mirror. She is reluctant. She tries to free her hand from his grip but cannot. He makes her stand in front of the mirror. The Woman turns her head away from him. But the Second Man's hand turns it back to the mirror.*) Just take a look at yourself, darling.

Woman: Don't be so familiar.

Second Man: (*As if he has not heard.*) You've got fear in your eyes... Your mouth's twitching at the corners... And what's this see?... Beads of sweat.. You're scared of me! (*With a sudden movement she frees herself from his grip and runs to the wall with the masks on it. She tries to take one of them down, but her hand is shaking. The Second Man comes up to her. He yanks her hand away from the masks.*) You don't need a mask when you're at home.

Woman: And what about you? Why do you keep your face hidden?

Second Man: I'm not at home.. At least, I don't feel like I'm at home.

Woman: Well, you're certainly behaving as if you were here you are, barging into my home and doing whatever you please. If you don't get out of here this minute, I'll start screaming.

Second Man: Go ahead if you think it'll do you any good... Do

you know how many people scream fit to bring the house down? But no one comes running... You didn't go when you heard others screaming. You preferred to cover your ears. *(The Woman is getting more anxious.)* You told yourself it was just someone having a little tiff... *(Approaches the Woman.)* You knew very well it was n't... It's only people who are scared out of their wits who scream like that . *(The Woman is straining as if trying to scream. She opens her mouth repeatedly, but nothing is heard.)* Louder!... They can't hear you . I'm standing right next to you... I can see you're screaming, but I can't hear anything . *(Again the Woman tenses her throat . She opens her mouth as if she were screaming, but there is no sound.)* You're not stupid ; you're not going to waste your energy for nothing . *(After this ironic comment from the Second Man the Woman rushes to the telephone. She dials a number. The Second Man grabs hold of her hand.)* Or maybe I'm wrong?... What is it you want to tell them?... That you've found a stranger in your flat ? ... What if it's me they believe... and not you ?
Woman : What would you tell them?
Second Man: That I'm not a stranger. *(The Woman is about to object but he stops her.)* That we've known each other for a long time... For ages. *(The Woman tries to hit him but he grabs her hands.)* That you're fed up with me... You need to get rid of me... And that's why you screamed for them.
Woman : And what about the neighbours?... Aren't you forgetting about them, clever dick?... They'll back me up, they'll say they've never seen you here before.
Second Man: You're saying I'm a stranger here? So what's with the "clever dick"? What's with the familiarity?
Woman : Slip of the tongue.
Second Man: They're not going to swallow that .
Woman : Adam'll back me up... He'll be back.
Second Man: I would n't be so sure about that .
Woman : But I'm sure.
Second Man: I can tell that by your face... But they won't even look at your face . It's not part of their work . The worse they'll do is write a report and I'll be thrown out. But I'll be back.
Woman : I'll lock the door.
Second Man: Like you did this time, you mean?
Woman : I'll leave the key in the lock.
Second Man: Piece of cake!
Woman : What is it you want from me?
Second Man: I'm hungry and I want to get some sleep.
Woman : You'll have to find somewhere else.
Second Man: Get the bed ready for me. *(Yells.)* Get moving ! *(The Woman takes some food out of a bag and then throws it in front of the Second Man. While he digs into the food , she makes the bed for him. He looks at her.)* Smile!
Woman : What do you mean?
Second Man: Smile! *(The Woman attempts a smile, but it is*

more like a gri m a c e.) P r o p e r l y.

Wo m a n : I don't feel like smiling.

Second Man:Try !

Wo m a n : *(Reaches out for the mask she took off when she arrive d .*

The man stops eat i n g, t h r o w s the bread down on the table, jumps at the Woman and snatches the mask away from her. He goes up to the wall and hangs it alongside the rest. He looks with sat i s faction at how it stands out from the others masks with their relaxed or a n gry expressions). W h at have you taken it for?... In t h at case, you show me your face as we l l !

Second Man: No way. *(He goes back to the table and calmly resumes eat i n g.)*

Wo m a n : I can't look you in the fa c e . But you can see mine.

Second Man:Yo u ' ve got a pretty face... a regular fa c e .

Wo m a n : Fat lot you care... You want to see whether I'm scared or not. *(She tries to tear off his mask. He " p i n s " h e r hand to the table with his ow n .)* You want to have the upper hand.

Second Man:You bet... who wo u l d n 't ?

Wo m a n : Yo u ' ve got no ri g h t ...

Second Man: I hate plat i t u d e s. H ave you any idea how many times others have taken advantage of me. They unc overed my face and saw eve ry line in it. And I d i d n 't h ave the faintest idea what theirs looked like behind their masks. It felt like being naked at the opera... But in the end the whole situation got turned on its head... I swapped roles... with yo u . *(The Wo m a n rushes for the door, but he gets there firs t .He turns the key in the lock and then slowly and demonstrat i ve l y puts it into his coat pock e t .The Woman yanks at the door handle.)*

Wo m a n : Let me out!

Second Man: Just sit dow n . *(He takes a chair from the table and makes an ironic display of dusting it before shoving it towards the Wo m a n . But she ignores it.)*

Wo m a n : I'm leaving... And yo u 're not going to stop me.

Second Man:You wanted to stay.

Wo m a n : I ' ve changed my mind.

Second Man: *(T h r o w s the key on the table.)* Go on, then... But without the mask... Here it's only me who's looking at you... But out there it's them... You know how m a ny there are of them?... Streets full of them... Pushing and shoving eve rywhere... And they've all got a mask... You'll be without yo u rs... They'll all swa rm around you... Are you going to run away from them?... Where? Don't tell me yo u 're going to ru n back to your own flat! So why leave it in the firs t place? Go on if you want!... See for yo u rself if I'm right or not.

Wo m a n : I can't leave without the mask.

Second Man: T h at 's exactly what I told yo u .

Wo m a n : Yo u 're just being difficult. *(She makes for the mask.)* I'll take it my s e l f.

Second Man:You wo n 't so much as touch it. Not till I tell yo u . Just remember, from now on it's me who decides

about the masks... Me and only me!

Woman: So I'm supposed to stay here with you?

Second Man: There's nothing else you can do.

(He goes to the bed and slips himself under the blanket just the way he is: still dressed in his bright clothes. But he does not lie down as one would expect. He tucks a pillow behind his back and falls asleep sitting up. Or perhaps he is not sleeping. The Woman cannot tell whether he is looking at her from behind the "mask" or whether his eyes have succumbed to sleep. She plucks up her courage and eventually she goes over to the bed. She looks at him and waves her hands in front of his eyes. He squirms. The Woman makes herself comfortable at the side of the bed, rests her arms on her knees and cradles her head in her palms. Fade-out.)

Scene Three

(At the table, which now belongs to four people - the Second Man, the Woman, Father, and Mother - they are finishing their meal. To be precise, it is only three of them who are eating. The Woman is serving them. Mother gestures to her to take away the plates. As the Woman leans over Mother the latter puts a monocle to her mask. She scrutinises the Woman, who is the only one with her face uncovered.)

Mother: *(Still with the monocle to her eye.)* You're looking very serious. *(To the Second Man.)* Why isn't she smiling?

Second Man: She'll only smile if you order her to.

Woman: I don't have to obey her.

Second Man: She is my mother.

Woman: But what is she to me? *(She places the last plate on top of the pile.)*

Mother: *(Points to the stacked plates.)* She should take them away. *(The Woman leaves with the plates. No one turns in her direction.)* Are you sure you've made the right decision, my son?

Second Man: What are you getting at?

Mother: You really want to live with her?

Second Man: Why the sudden interest?... So far you couldn't care less what happened to me... He *(gesturing to Father)* was the only one you were interested in.

Mother: You're grown-up...

Second Man: So leave me in peace then.

Mother: Do you want me to leave?

Second Man: What ever you like... I'm not throwing you out. *(Father and Mother are sitting comfortably and seem to feel perfectly at home. Mother suddenly seems insecure.)*

Mother: What will she say if we stay?

Second Man: It's only you who'll be staying.

Mother: *(To Father, who is wriggling contentedly in the chair.)*

And what about him? Are you trying to split us up?

Second Man: Nothing will change between you. *(Father heads for the door.)*

Mother: *(To Father.)* You can stay... Tell him you want him to stay. *(She strokes Father affectionately, but he brushes her hand away and tears off his mask.)* Do I have to plead with you? *(Turns to the Second Man.)* He wants to tell you... *(A gain she takes Father by the*

h a n d .He breaks free from her and heads for the door. Mother tries desperately to hold onto him and gra b s him by the sleeve. But there is no need. Father is not s e rious about leav i n g. He goes to the wall with the masks on it.The one that the Woman had is hangi n g by the door. He strokes it. Mother tears off her mask. To Fat h e r.) I don't like it.

Fat h e r: Because I do.

M o t h e r: Just think what yo u 're say i n g .

Fat h e r: I'm only saying what I think... I know yo u .

M o t h e r: You know me?... You don't even know yo u r s e l f.

Fat h e r: (*A b ruptly turning away from the mask, to Mother*).

You know what I'd like? I'd like you to be air for me.

So I wo u l d n 't see you at all.Yo u 'd be thrusting yo u r s e l f in front of my ve ry eyes but the only thing I'd see *would be emptiness. I 'd touch you and I'd feel not h i n g .* And that air would get thinner around me...

Just like when you go up to a gr e at height... And in the end I'd see eve rything around me clearly. (*G e s t u r e in the direction of where the Woman left.*) And her... I'd see much more of her than I do now.

M o t h e r: I know the stor y. (*G e s t u ring towards the Second Man.*) And you don't have to tell him.

Second Man: Let him have his say... You can't hear him anyway.

He opens his mouth and I can't hear a thing...

He shouts because he thinks I've got something wrong with my ears.

Fat h e r: (*Yells into the Second Man's ear.*)Yo u 're a parasite!

Second Man: (*U n m oved.*) You know when it was I heard yo u last? When you were whispering in your sleep.

Fat h e r: I don't whisper in my sleep.

Second Man: You did then at any rate... You were scared of some deep water somewhere.

Fat h e r: I don't like water... I've never been into any wat e r ...

So how could I be frightened of any?

Second Man: (*Gesture towards Mother.*) She was in a ri ve r.

Fat h e r: T h at wo u l d n 't have wo rried me in the least.

Second Man: It was you who got her into it... You!... And then you panicked.

Fat h e r: Wo rried about her?... Hardly.

Second Man: You were shouting her name... I heard it quite d i s t i n c t l y.

M o t h e r: (*To the Second Man.*) D o n 't argue with him... He's telling the tru t h . H e 'd even hold my head underwater...

He'd tie a stone round my neck to make sure I wo u l d n 't come up again.

Fat h e r: You really do know me, I'll say that for yo u .T h at 's exactly what I'd do. (*The fo l l owing words are accompanied by g e s t u r e s.*) Head under the water... Then I'd find a rock... And that 'd be it.

M o t h e r: Yo u 're wrong... T h e r e 's no way anything like that could happen.When I'm with you I stay well clear of wat e r. I wo u l d n 't step even into a puddle - it could be d a n g e r o u s.

Fat h e r: And what about the bat h ?

M o t h e r: I only take a bath when yo u 're out.

Fat h e r: N ow that could be a mistake. In the water yo u 'd be as quiet as a fish. I 'd touch you and you wo u l d n 't be air.

M o t h e r: W h at are you blat h e ring on about? Yo u 're not making a bit of sense. *(The Woman is standing in the doorway.*

Mother and Father hastily put on their masks.

Their behaviour suddenly change s, as if at the stroke of a magic wa n d .They are once again dignified - in their wo r d s, m ove m e n t s, and ge s t u r e s. Mother to the Second Man.) Do you think we can break it to her, s o n ?

Second Man: T h e r e 's no need... She's been listening behind the door.

M o t h e r: I'm sure she's from a good fa m i l y. She wo u l d n 't do such a thing. *(Father lifts up his mask. Mother approaches him from behind. She holds the mask to stop him taking it off aga i n . He tries to thwa rt her effo r t s, but the strength has suddenly deserted his arm s, wh i c h are raised and twisted.)*

Fat h e r: M aybe she doesn't have a fa m i l y. *(The Woman is about to say something but the Second Man cuts in.)*

Second Man: Does it matter?... We 're here... We'll be her fa m i l y.

Fat h e r: *She'll be pleased about that .*

Second Man: *(Comes up to the Woman.)* She doesn't seem to be... W h at have you got against my family? *(The Woman is about to say something, but Mother gets in f i r s t .)*

M o t h e r: D o n 't be hard on her... W h at could be wrong?... We hardly know each other.

Second Man: For Heave n 's sake say something, will yo u . *(T h e Woman is not gi ven a chance to speak, Mother gets in f i r s t .)*

M o t h e r: And if there is anything she's not happy about, e ve rything'll get sorted out in time.

Fat h e r: We 're a fa m i l y, after all... Right, darling? *(He r e a c h e s his hand out across the table to Mother. She stretches her hand towards his. They touch. They make a perfe c t pretence of having wh at they both lack , namely emot i o n s. At the same time the Second Man stretches his hand out to the Wo m a n , who timidly places her hand into his. The Second Man grasps the Wo m a n 's hand, h u r t i n g her. Her eyes narr ow in pain. Father turns to the Wo m a n . He gets up and goes over to her.)* At last! At last yo u 're showing your feelings. So much happiness on your face... Just from him touching yo u r h a n d .

M o t h e r: *(Going up to the Second Man and the Woman.)* S h e l oves him... I knew it. But we have to be nice to her as we l l . We can't have her just putting up with us. *(To the Second Man.)* You'll see to that for us... wo n 't you? *(The Second Man does not respond to Mother's wo r d s.)* You'll do it for our sake, wo n 't yo u ?

Second Man: *(Letting go of the Wo m a n 's hand.)* T h e r e 's no need... She knows what her duty is... She'll get to like yo u . Just as she got to like me. It just needs time. G i ve her time.

M o t h e r: *(To the Woman.)* Is that all it is?

Second Man: (*To the Woman.*) Say something... Or else they'll think I'm just making it up.

Woman: Well, you are.

Second Man: Maybe you didn't understand me.

Woman: I did. You're lying. I haven't got used to you... And I never will.

(The whole family gathers round the Woman. Mother and Father take off their masks. They tear off the Woman's clothes. She is left in her slip. They put the mask of a happy bride over her face and put her into a wedding dress. Her mask is covered with a veil and a garland. The Second Man offers her his arm. The Woman links her arm in his. Then Father offers Mother his arm, which she takes in a dignified manner. The "happy" family leaves accompanied by an intense light and the sound of a ceremonial march. The light grows weaker, fade-out.)

Scene Four

(Bright light is streaming into the room through the window. The Woman tosses and turns in her bed. She touches the mask on her face, then goes to the window and draws the blind; the room becomes darker. The Woman goes to the light switch. The room is flooded with "artificial" light. The Woman notices the wedding dress and the garland and veil. Standing in front of the mirror, she presses them to her body, seemingly incredulous. She puts on the garland and veil. Then she tears them off again. She crumples the dress in her hands. She ponders where to "hide" it and then shoves it to the very bottom of the wardrobe. She slips the wardrobe key into the pocket of her gown and then hangs her mask with the others on the wall. Then she crouches by the bed. She puts on a black gown. She rests her head on her knees.

Meanwhile, the Second Man is waking up. He pats the bed next to his: first slowly, then with greater urgency, more nervously. He sits on his bed and looks around the room. He notices the Woman and moves to her bed to get nearer to her. He tries to touch her but is unable to reach her. He gets up and pulls up the blind; two lights now flood the room with light. He goes up to the Woman and slumps to the floor next to her.)

Second Man: (*Groffly, as if rather to distress her rather than please her with the knowledge that they are married.*)

I still can't believe it that you and me... *(The Woman gets up abruptly and moves away from him.)* ... that we'll be together forever. *(He gets up and goes up to her.)* It's exactly the way I've always imagined it...

You dressed all in white...

Woman: (*Avoiding his touch.*) But I'm in black. *(She brandishes her gown before his eyes.)* It's black... Can't you see?!... It's black!

Second Man: (*Calmly, determined not to let her make him lose his composure.*) Do you want to start rowing first thing in the morning? *(Magnanimously.)* OK... It's black... if that's what you think... But you were in white last night... Brides are always in white.

Woman: So it was a wedding last night, is that what you're saying?

Second Man: Maybe they have another name for it in some parts... But for me it was a wedding.

Woman: I'm not your wife... And I never will be.

Second Man: Having a hard time forgetting the other one?

Woman: He might have forgotten, but not me... I'll never stop waiting for him.

Second Man: (*Loosens the "mask" on his cheeks*). He ran out on you.

Woman: I drove him to it... I was always finding fault with him... We quarrelled all the time. (*After a while*.)

But he was to blame as well. He wasn't interested in what I wanted... He only thought of himself. (*Just as it seems as if the Second Man is about to take off his "mask" he abruptly puts it back on. Everything he does takes on the opposite meaning. As if he had loosened his "mask" only so that his shouting could be heard more better.*.)

Second Man: Where's your dress?

Woman: Are you saying I'm not dressed?

Second Man: Wear something white... the dress you walked out of this flat in yesterday... and crossed the street to the Registry Office in... and said your "Yes" in.

Woman: No! (*He approaches her menacingly. She is alarmed.*) I'm not putting it on.

Second Man: Maybe if you had it on you'd remember that we got married... that you're my wife.

Woman: I don't have it... I got it dirty... I've sent it to the cleaner's.

(*The Second Man comes up to the Woman. He searches one gown pocket and then the other, fumbling around in it. It seems he has not found the key. But just as the Woman looks relieved he brandishes his hand in front of her face, opening it to reveal the wardrobe key. He waves it in the air. The Woman turns away. But he continues to shove the key in her face.*.)

Second Man: Make your choice.

Woman: Have you been spying on me?

Second Man: Why would I do that?

Woman: So how did you know I put it there?

Second Man: Where else could it be?

Woman: Anywhere... But you knew for sure it was there... Because you keep an eye on me... You know about everything... About every movement I make.

Second Man: That should make you happy.

Woman: Have you ever seen anyone happy who's in a trap?

Second Man: Oh, come on... That's a bit strong, isn't it? (*He urges her.*) The dress!... Get it out. (*The Woman does not even stir. He takes her to the wardrobe. She resists, but to no avail. He drags her to the wardrobe, opens it and waits for her to bend down to get the dress.*.)

Woman: (*Appearsingly*.) OK... We got married... So what?

Second Man: Don't you know? (*Eventually he stoops for the dress himself and hands it to the Woman. She does not touch it.*) If you put it on, you might remember the rest.

Woman: (*Bushes aside the hand holding the dress.*) It's all creased. I'd look terrible in this.

Second Man: No one's going to see... Only me... And you needn't bother about me.

Woman: (*After a moment.*) It's torn... around the bottom...

and the waist too.

Second Man: (*M e n a c i n g l y.*) Are you trying my patience? Just get on with it.

Wo m a n : Stop threatening me... He'll come...

Second Man: No he wo n 't .

Wo m a n : (*T a k e n a b a c k b y h i s c e r t a i n t y.*) He might have been here already... You opened the door for him... W h o k n o w s w h a t h e m i g h t h a v e t h o u g h t... Those things you told him... You might have done something to him! (*T e r r i f i e d.*) Did you kill him?!

Second Man: I didn't lay a finger on him.

Wo m a n : (*W i t h c e r t a i n t y.*) He'll be back then.

Second Man: (*G r u f f l y.*) Get dressed!... And quick about it!

(*This time the Woman is scared. F i r s t s h e p u t s o n t h e b l a c k g o w n a n d b u t t o n s i t u p t o t h e v e r y t o p. T h e n s h e p u t s t h e w e d d i n g d r e s s o n o v e r t h e g o w n . T h e b l a c k o f t h e g o w n s h o w s t h r o u g h i n p l a c e s w h e r e t h e d r e s s i s r i p p e d . T h e g o w n a l s o s h o w s a t t h e n e c k a n d a r o u n d t h e s l e e v e s o f t h e w e d d i n g d r e s s.*) And the ve i l ...

W h e r e ' s y o u r v e i l ? Y o u c a n ' t b e a b r i d e w i t h o u t a v e i l !

(*The Woman bends down to get the ga r l a n d w i t h t h e v e i l . S h e p u t s i t o n o v e r h e r r u f f l e d h a i r. T h e S e c o n d M a n i n s p e c t s h e r a n d r o t a t e s h e r i n f r o n t o f h i m.*

B a r e f o o t , w i t h u n k e m p t h a i r a n d c r u m p l e d d r e s s , s h e o n l y r e m o t e l y r e s e m b l e s a b r i d e. H e w a i t s u n t i l s h e r e s p o n d s t o h i s a t t e n t i o n s a n d s t o p s f a c i n g a w a y f r o m

h i m . T h e s o u n d o f t h e w e d d i n g m a r c h o n l y h e i g h t e n s h i s e x p e c t a t i o n a n d h e b e c o m e s m o r e d e m a n d i n g .) A

w e d d i n g k i s s ! (A k i s s i s t h e l a s t t h i n g t h e W o m a n i s t h i n k i n g o f . S h e i s s c a r e d a n d t r e m b l i n g . S u d d e n l y h e

s t a r t s c a r e s s i n g h e r s o o t h i n g l y .) F o r g i v e m e , l o v e . I t ' s a l l m y f a u l t... I ' v e f o r g o t t e n t h e m o s t i m p o r t a n t

t h i n g . (H e g o e s t o t h e w a l l w i t h t h e m a s k s o n i t . O n e o f t h e m i s t h a t o f t h e h a p p y b r i d e . H e t a k e s i t o f f t h e w a l l a n d b r i n g s i t t o h e r. T h e W o m a n p u t s h e r h a n d s t o h e r f a c e a n d r e c o i l s f r o m h i m .)

Wo m a n : I'll do what e v e r y o u w a n t... B u t I ' m n o t p u t t i n g t h a t m a s k o n... I d o n ' t w a n t i t... M y f a c e g o e s a l l n u m b

u n d e r n e a t h i t... A n d t h e n I c a n ' t f e e l i t . (S h e g r a b s t h e m a s k a n d f l i n g s i t t o t h e f l o o r . H e g o e s o v e r t o t h e m a s k a n d p o i n t s a t i t .)

Second Man: Pick it up. (*T h e W o m a n d o e s n o t s t i r .*) I t o l d y o u t o p i c k i t u p !

Wo m a n : (*S l o w l y s h e g o e s t o t h e m a s k , p i c k s i t a n d p u t s i t o n h e r f a c e . A f t e r a w h i l e .*) W h a t d o y o u w a n t m e t o d o n o w ?

Second Man: N o t h i n g b y y o u r s e l f . F r o m n o w o n w e ' l l b e d o i n g e v e r y t h i n g t o g e t h e r . (*H e t a k e s h e r b y t h e a r m a n d t a k e s h e r t o t h e t a b l e a n d p u l l s t h e c h a i r b a c k .*

S h e s i t s d o w n . H e g o e s t o t h e d o o r , o p e n s i t , c l a p s h i s h a n d s a n d s h o u t s .) B r e a k f a s t ! (F a t h e r a n d M o t h e r a p p e a r i n t h e d o o r w a y . T h e y a r e w e a r i n g m a s k s o n t h e i r f a c e s a n d h o l d i n g t r a y s w i t h f o o d o n t h e m . T h e

S e c o n d M a n s i t s b y t h e W o m a n . F a t h e r a n d M o t h e r t r e a t h e r w i t h t h e g r e a t e s t s o l i c i t u d e .)

M o t h e r : D i d y o u h a v e a g o o d s l e e p , d e a r ?

Wo m a n : E x c e l l e n t... (*G l a n c i n g a t t h e S e c o n d M a n .*) I f h e

hadn't woken me up, I'd still be sleeping.

Father: *(Looking at the Woman's dress puzzled).* What about the dress?

Second Man: She can't get enough of it... I've been telling her to put something else on... But she won't hear of it...

Says it's the one she feels best in.

Mother: *(To the Second Man and the Woman.)* Why aren't you eating?

Father: You know how it is... They're living on love... They're not thinking about food. *(Mother takes the meal away from the Second Man and the Woman. They look at her baffled, knives and forks in their hands.)*

Mother: We won't force them to eat. *(Makes a gesture to Father.)* They want to be alone.

(Mother takes the cutlery from the couple's hands and leaves, taking the meal with her. Father follows her reluctantly. The Second Man bends forward to the Woman. He tries to kiss her but the mask is in his way. He tries to pull the mask aside. The happy bride's mask crumbles in his hands. The Woman avoids his kiss. Instead of it meeting her lips, his kiss "lands" in empty space. The Woman gets up from behind the table. She seeks refuge from him by the wall with the masks. He presses her firmly against it. But instead of showing signs of love, he starts putting the masks on her face. The first one is much too tight-laced: it covers the whole of her face. He is not satisfied with it and puts it aside. He takes another mask. The expression on this one is far too serious. He puts that aside as well. He reaches out for a third mask. It is big and slips off the Woman's face down on to her neck. Suddenly, just as he is about to put a fourth mask on her face, the Woman moves away from the wall. The Second Man seems to have become glued to the spot. Again the Woman comes up to him. She holds his head in her hands and kisses his mask all over. The Second Man is taken aback, but - surprised, surprised - is unresponsive to the kisses. The Woman comes up to the bed, takes the girdle with the veil from her head and tears off her wedding dress. She lies on the bed in the black gown she was wearing underneath. Her body is ready for love. The Second Man comes up to her. He takes a blanket from the second bed and throws it over her. Surprised, she struggles out from under the blanket, waiting for his explanation.)

Second Man: You've got the time wrong. Everything has its time. You'll wait for darkness... Like the others.

(He hangs the white wedding dress on the wall among the masks. It recalls an animal hide hung on the wall by hunters. He walks out. Fade-out.)

Scene Five

(Father comes in in the dark. When the stage is fully illuminated the audience sees him from the back. The Woman keeps back in g away from him. She backs into an object which stops her going any further. Father stops in front of her.)

Woman: *(In panic.)* Get out!

Father: This is my home.

Woman: I want to be alone.

Father: You just got scared... That's why you want me to go.

Woman: You're right. With you I'm always scared. I hardly remember a time I wasn't scared.

Father: You needn't be scared of me.

Wo m a n : You gi ve me the creeps... All of yo u .
 Fat h e r: Because you know we'll ruin you... Has it dawned on you why you can't stay here?
 Wo m a n : Yo u 're trying to sound like you wanted to protect me.
 Fat h e r: Because I care.
 Wo m a n : I can't see why you should care for me.
 Fat h e r: I do... Leave!... I'll look for you lat e r.
 Wo m a n : W h at for?... I've got someone else.
 Fat h e r: You'll forget him.
 Wo m a n : (*As if not hearing Fat h e r 's wo r d s .*) H ow 's he going to find out where I am?... M aybe we 'd never meet again.
 (*Father reaches out his hand to her fa c e. The gesture is kindly, tremulous and slow. She shrinks back to avoid the hand, and fo r a moment it flounders in the air. She backs away from him. H e t u rns to her, his face toward the audience. He is not we a ring a m a s k . His face is contorted by something that resembles sorr ow.*)
 Fat h e r: I shouldn't have revealed my face to yo u .
 Wo m a n : (*Tu rns away from the man.*) I didn't tell you to...
 Fat h e r: I thought...
 Wo m a n : I'm not interested in you... Neither you nor yo u r " s o n " .
 Fat h e r: (*As if suddenly wanting to change the topic.*) Ask him w hy he keeps hiding his face from yo u .
 Wo m a n : M aybe it's ugly.
 Fat h e r: He knows looks aren't important... It's because he d o e s n 't have the courage... It's not that easy to show your face... You might live to regret it.
 Wo m a n : W h at am I supposed to say?... People can look at my face whenever they feel like it. (*The Second Man and Mother come and stand in the doorway.*)
 Fat h e r: Because you allow it to happen... Leave!... W h i l e t h e r e 's still time...Yo u 're wasting your time wa i t i n g for your love... He wo n 't come. (*The Woman notices Mother and the Second Man, their faces cove r e d , i n the doorway. She tries to wa rn Father of their prese n c e , but he is much too engrossed in his thinking to notice the Wo m a n 's wa rn i n g.*) He hasn't sent any message... He doesn't want to see yo u .
 M o t h e r: (*To the Second Man, s u rp ri s e d .*) Was there some other man before yo u ?
 Second Man: (*E va s i ve l y.*) A fleeting acquaintance.
 Wo m a n : I lived with him for three ye a rs.
 M o t h e r: (*To the Second Man.*) There were two of yo u , t h e n ... S h e 's been unfaithful to you for ye a rs.
 Second Man: She forgot all about him the moment she met m e .
 M o t h e r: *T h at 's not what she's say i n g .*
 Second Man: Since when have you started listening to her?
 M o t h e r: B u t ...
 Second Man: (*Gesture towards Fat h e r.*) Yo u 'd be better off keep an eye on him... He'd like to change you swa p you for someone else. (*Father is silent.*)
 M o t h e r: He wanted her to leave .
 Second Man: So that he'd have both of you... One here and the other there... W hy would he run the risk of you finding out about her... It's important for him to have yo u

thinking you're the only one.

M o t h e r: (*To Fat h e r.*) It isn't true... is it?

Fat h e r: (*Tu rned away from her.*) You wanted to see for yo u rself...

T h a t 's why you stayed - though from what yo u said it looks like you were supposed to be somewhere e l s e .

Second Man: I made it all up... She didn't believe that yo u (*Gesture towards the Woman.*) and her... (*Father tri e s to put on the mask hanging at his wa i s t . His hands are trembling, he has difficulty with it. The mask fa l l s from his hands and stays on the floor.*)

M o t h e r: We l l , you had me believing yo u . (*She takes off her m a s k , like a fencer after a strenuous bout... Fat h e r bends down for the mask, t r ying to pick it up. But as he does so Mother's foot steps on it.*) M aybe he s h o u l d n 't even waste the effort on me... W hy all the pretence... He could run away with her... For eve r.

Second Man: W hy should he run away... He can leave any time he likes... And come back as we l l . I t 's comf o rtable here... He doesn't have to take care of anyt h i n g .

M o t h e r: (*N u d ges Fat h e r.*) And what about me?... Have n 't yo u thought of me?

Fat h e r: Of you?... W hy should I think of yo u ?

M o t h e r: We live together.

Fat h e r: But not like man and wife... We 're not married... I h ave n 't promised you a thing. (*Suddenly Mother hands the mask to Fat h e r. But he refuses it. She tri e s to put it on his face hers e l f. He snatches it from her, t h r ows it aside and tramples on it.*)

M o t h e r: (*I n d i c ating the Woman.*) And what about her?...

W h at have you promised her?... Or was it the other way round?... Eve rything!?... So go and fondle her, then... Don't you have the courage? (*Father does not s t i r .*)

Second Man: (*S t a rts laughing.*) He can't touch her... He love s her... (*A n gri l y.*) He loves her... and maybe she love s h i m .

(*Mother picks up the trampled mask and leaves the room with i t .The Second Man pushes the Woman to the bed. She stagge rs on the way. She tries to break free, but fa i l s.The Second Man lifts the striped blanket up high, as if the two of them were suddenly behind bars.The blanket in the Second Man's hands fa l l s s l o w l y. The light exposes Father without the mask. He move s away from the bed and goes up to the wall with the we d d i n g d r e s s.The music is transparently pure. It is heard as soon as the Second Man enters the beam of light.As if scared he touches the wedding dress. His mother, without the mask, comes up to him. The music fa d e s.The Second Man turns away from the wa l l .*)

The Second Man (*To Fat h e r .*) W h o 's that man?

M o t h e r: Your fat h e r.

The Second Man: I don't have a fat h e r.

M o t h e r: I 've just found him for yo u .

The Second Man: W h e r e 's he been till now ?

M o t h e r: H ow should I know?... We 've just met this morn i n g .

The Second Man: But I'm thirty... How can he be my fat h e r ?

M o t h e r: We ' ve known each other a long time.
 Second Man: T h at still doesn't mean I'm his flesh and blood.
 Fat h e r: L e ave blood out of it... Blood's not something yo u can see. Likeness is what counts.
 Second Man: Each of us is different.
 Fat h e r: Not any more... Look what I've brought yo u . (*H e holds a mask bearing his likeness.*)
 Second Man: (*To Mother.*) I t ' s like him!... He wants to change me to his likeness.
 M o t h e r: He wants to stay... He likes it here. (*Father tries to take the " m a s k " off the Second Man's face and replace it with his. But he fa i l s.*)
 Second Man: I don't look like you... I don't look... You aren't my fat h e r.
 Fat h e r: (*To Mother.*) Who did you have him with?
 M o t h e r: With yo u .
 Fat h e r: (*Glance at the Second Man.*) P r ove it to him.
 M o t h e r: I'm not going to show myself up.
 Fat h e r: H e ' s not going to believe it otherwise.
 Second Man: A father would have looked after me.
 M o t h e r: He didn't have time.
 Second Man: D i d n ' t he have time for yo u , either?... And now he has all of a sudden? Have the other women turn e d their backs on him?
 M o t h e r: D o n ' t talk about him like that .
 Second Man: W hy have you been hiding him away from me?
 M o t h e r: I didn't know he'd come back one day.
 Second Man: (*Sounds uncertain.*) You went looking for him...
 M o t h e r: I don't want to be alone.
 Second Man: And what about me?
 M o t h e r: You'll leave with your wife...
 The Second Man: Are you throwing me out?... Because of him?!... Just have a look at him!... He'll take you for e ve ry penny yo u ' ve got and then he'll be off.
 M o t h e r: I ' ve got yo u ...
 Second Man: W h at if I repudiate you... like yo u ' ve repudiat e d m e ?
 M o t h e r: You can't ... Yo u 're mine.
 Second Man: (*Ye l l i n g.*) Yo u rs!... Yo u rs !
 Fat h e r: Stop shouting!... You'll wake her up.
 (*Father moves closer to the bed where the Woman is sleeping. B u t the Second Man is fa s t e r. He straightens the blanket cove ri n g the Wo m a n . When Father tries to do the same thing, he shove s him roughly aside. Father loses his balance and ends up by the wall with the masks. Only with difficulty does he tear away himself away from the wa l l . Fa d e - o u t .*)

Scene Six
 (*The stage is gradually illuminat e d . The Woman and Father are in the room. Behind Fat h e r ' s back the Woman slowly sneaks to the door. Noiselessly she tries to depress the door handle. T h e door will not open. She tries aga i n . This time, t o o, she is unsuccessful and she starts pulling at the door-handle. Father turn s to her. He comes up to the Wo m a n .*)

Wo m a n : (*H e l p l e s s l y.*) We ' ve got to get out of here.
 Fat h e r: We could've left without any problem ye s t e r d ay ... But you didn't want to.

W o m a n : *H ow do you know?... Didn't you think that those two c o u l d ' ve been standing behind the door?... We wo u l d not have got far any way.*

F a t h e r : You knew that .

W o m a n : I suspected it.

F a t h e r : You must have known... Otherwise yo u 'd have at least gi ven it a try.

W o m a n : Was I supposed to risk it?

F a t h e r : And now?... A r e n 't you risking it now ?

W o m a n : I ' ve no other choice. *(She goes to the window. S h e leans out. Father pulls her back into the room.The Woman adjusts her dress.)* D o n 't touch me.

F a t h e r : I only wanted to keep you from fa l l i n g .

W o m a n : It makes my flesh creep when you touch me.

F a t h e r : I don't have to touch yo u .

W o m a n : W hy did yo u , t h e n ?

F a t h e r : *(E v a s i v e l y.)* You could've fallen out.

W o m a n : T h a t 's my bu s i n e s s .

F a t h e r : But... Oh, n o t h i n g . I only wanted to remind yo u yo u 're on the seventh floor... And that the staircase is the only way out.

W o m a n : ...Or flying out... as free as a bird.

F a t h e r : O n l y, you wo u l d n 't land like a bird.

W o m a n : Who cares... It would be wo rth the moment of freed o m .

F a t h e r : You'll get it back... They'll open up in just a while.

W o m a n : *(M o c k i n g l y.)* So they've locked us in just to let us out a g a i n .

F a t h e r : They didn't mean to do it... They were in a hurry.

They forgot we were in here... They turned the key...

and left... They'll remember we 're here.

W o m a n : *(C a r r i e d a w a y b y h e r i m a g i n a t i o n.)* They wo n 't ...

I'll never see them again... Eve rything will be restored

to its ori g i n a l s t a t e . *(She looks around. S h e*

goes to the wall and tears off the masks.) I'll forget

t h e m . I wo n 't even remember they were here. *(S h e*

find her hands touching the wedding dress. It is as if

it returns her to reality. There she stands, h e l p l e s s, w i t h

masks at her legs, tossing the wedding dress from one

hand to the other, as if it bu r n t h e r.)

F a t h e r : *(Hangs the masks on the wall.)* They'll be back for

the masks... T h e y 'd better find them all displaye d ...

Otherwise they'll get mad... and have us locked in

a g a i n . *(S n a t c h e s t h e w e d d i n g d r e s s f r o m t h e W o m a n ' s*

h a n d s.) Stop messing around!... Give me a hand...

They could be back any minute. *(He hangs the we d d i n g*

dress among the masks.The Woman goes to the

w i n d o w a g a i n . Father throws away the mask he is

h o l d i n g. He leaps to the window before the W o m a n

gets to it. He closes it and leans against it.) D o n 't let

me see you by this window again.

W o m a n : Stop ordering me around. *(She tries to shove F a t h e r*

a s i d e. But he is stronge r. He does not bu d g e.)

F a t h e r : D o n 't touch me. *(Helplessly the Woman slaps F a t h e r*

in the fa c e. At the same time steps are heard on the

stone floor.They are those of a woman and a man.T h e

Woman starts shaking.) Why are you shaking?...
You've no reason to... We haven't done anything wrong... We've each been in a different corner of the room... The whole time... (He shakes the Woman.)
Why are you looking at me like that? Smile... What are they going to think when they see you in that state? (The Woman seems to have no will of her own. She allows Father to touch her face and shape her lips into a smile. Then Father runs to the door. Two pairs of steps stop in front of the door. A moment of silence. Father stands upright. He expects a key to rattle in the lock, the doors to open and the two to be standing there. Instead, a hatch in the bottom section of the door starts to rise. A bowl of food appears in the opening, followed by a second. Two slices of bread are sent flying through the hatch... Incredulously Father looks at the opening. He bends down to it, then kneels. A hand appears in the opening bearing two spoons. It waits for them to take the spoons. Instead Father grabs at the hand and does not let it go.) Pass me the key.
Mother: (From behind the door.) How can I?... You're holding my hand.
Father: You've got another hand.
Mother: It's in the lock... I can't reach it.
Father: Get him to hand it to you.
Mother: He isn't in.
Father: He's standing behind you... I heard his footsteps.
Mother: Your ears were playing tricks on you.
Father: (After a while.) You won't trick me if I let you go, will you? Will you pass me the key? (He kisses the hand all over. His grip gets weaker. The hand makes use of the fact and slips free. A gain a moment of silence. Father is waiting by the hatch for the key to appear. Instead the hatch closes with a bang. A gain the sound of two sets of footsteps, disappearing. Father bangs on the door. His strength is fading. He stops banging. Meanwhile the steps cease. Father staggers away from the door. He comes up to the Woman who is still wearing "his smile" on her face. Father yells at the Woman.) Don't laugh!... They've made us prisoners... We shan't get out of here.
(The Woman's mouth is still contorted in a smile. All Father can do is straighten it up again. Slowly the Woman moves. She approaches the bowl, takes it, gazes at it, and turns it over. It is empty. She tries to bite into the slice of bread. It is as hard as stone. She puts it aside. Father does the same as the Woman. Then, slowly, they start moving one after another, disciplined and in a circle, like prisoners in their exercise yard.)
Fade-out.)

Interval

Act Two

Scene Seven

(Father and the Woman are sitting looking apathetic, far apart. The door opens. Light penetrates in two cones, it "reveals" the two. The Second Man enters. He leaves immediately. When he

e n t e r s the second time the space is flooded with light. The Second Man stops in front of the Woman . He offers her his arm .)

Second Man: *(To the Woman.)* Come on.

Woman : *(Sounds uncertain .)* I can't .

Second Man: We'll have a walk around the town . *(The Woman does not stir.)* Are you scared of going out without your mask? The streets are dark. No one'll see you . *(The Woman does not respond.)* How long am I supposed to wait ?

Woman : *I can't leave .*

Second Man: The door's open... It just takes a few steps... to get down the staircase... and open the front door...

(Father gets up as he hears the Second Man's words, mesmerised by them. He goes to the door. The Second Man notices Father leaving . He shouts after him.)

Not you!... You stay! *(He a rings this, Father stops. He looks at him baffled.)* You wanted to be here... Didn't you ?

Father : I didn't say anything of the sort .

The Second Man: But that 's what you were thinking.

Father : You can't keep me here for what I'm thinking... Anyway... How are you going to prove I was thinking of her ?

Second Man: I don't have to prove anything to you .

Father : So I needn't stay here, then . *(He does not stir.)*

Second Man: But you are staying .

Father : I want to be alone... I don't want to see anybody - at least for a few hours.

Second Man: You won't see anybody... She's leaving . *(He offers the Woman his arm , but she ignores him. She keeps him waiting . Father starts laughing. The Second Man lets his arm drop.)*

Father : See... She doesn't want to leave... I'm the one who has to go. *(A gain he does not stir. He is waiting for the Second Man's consent. When this is not forthcoming, he goes up to him meekly.)* You can't stop... I'm your father !

Second Man: Why are you reminding me now... Why at this particular moment?

Father : Because you keep forgetting the fact .

Second Man: There's nothing to forget... Because you aren't my father .

Father : Are you angry? *(Gesture towards the Woman.)* Because of her... I didn't mean it. It was just a joke. You can't disappoint me for that .

Second Man: We can't repudiate what we 've never had.

Father : Who is it who looks after you... and your mother?...

Me... So I'm the head of the family .

Second Man: A parasite is what you are... We should've kicked you out of here long ago.

Father : . Go on, then!... Well?... You'll feel better for it... Everybody'll feel better for it.

Second Man: No... You 're staying here... So we can keep an eye on you... That way you can't do us any harm .

(A gain he turns to the Woman and lifts her up from where she is sitting. She resists.)

W o m a n : T h e r e ' s no point calling me... I ' m not going with you... If he came...

Second Man: Yo u ' ve forgotten him.

W o m a n : With him I ' d go any w h e r e .

Second Man: There are days at a time when you don ' t gi ve him a thought.

W o m a n : I shan ' t ask him where he ' s taking me.

Second Man: I shan ' t tell you either.

W o m a n : You!... You!... It ' s you all the time!... I ' d leave with a nybody... But not with you... *(She bu ries her head in the wedding dress.)*

(While the Second Man is having this argument with the Wom a n , Father sneaks behind their backs to the door. Mother app e a r s in the doorway - without a mask. N ow the light is only on them.)

M o t h e r : Where are you rushing off to!?

Fat h e r : Out to get some fresh air.

M o t h e r : Open the window.

Fat h e r : I t ' s not the same.

M o t h e r : T h e r e ' s all kinds of things I ' m not too happy about... But I don ' t complain.

Fat h e r : *(Gesture towards the Second Man.)* Do you think h e ' s angry ?

M o t h e r : You wanted to get her away from him.

Fat h e r : I t ' s what you wanted me to... T h a t ' s why yo u ' ve locked me up with her.

M o t h e r : You stayed here with her so that you wo u l d n ' t do it...

W h a t have you been thinking of the whole time? Go

o n , tell me. H ow to get out of here... Yo u ' ve forgotten all about her... And the moment the door opened, you wanted to bugger off. H ave you ever thought of w h a t would become of her?

Fat h e r : W hy should I care. *(C o s i l y.)* Let ' s go... This place i s n ' t big enough for four.

M o t h e r : Go where?!... I don ' t have a thing... Yo u ' ve cheat e d me out of eve rything... Yo u ' ve squandered it all...

Fat h e r : I don ' t want to stay here.

M o t h e r : You know why? You don ' t trust yo u rself... You ' ll be on your own with her again...

Fat h e r : It ' ll come over me... I know that ' s what ' ll happen... So it doesn ' t scare me.

M o t h e r : Not that... Something else... You ' ll get to hate her...

Because she ' s depri ved you of your freedom. *(Fat h e r steps back from Mother.)* You aren ' t your own master a ny more. S h e ' s making decisions... She ' ll have yo u doing what e ver she wants... She doesn ' t even have to open her mouth and you already know what she n e e d s.

Fat h e r : *(To the W o m a n , who is together in a stream of light with the Man.)* Tell her it ' s not like that at all. *(H e d rags her by the hand. M e a n w h i l e , Mother disappears into the dark n e s s.)*

Second Man: W h a t ' s she supposed to say?... And who to?

Fat h e r : To her. *(He points to the door. Mother is not there. Father becomes hesitant.)* She was there... I was talking to her just a moment ago... She ' s left... But she ' ll

be back. (*Pulls the Woman by the hand.*) You've got to make her see that she's wrong. (*Panic, the Woman avoids him.*)

The Second Man: (*To the Woman.*) Do you still want to stay? ...

With him?... He's out of his mind... He's not making a bit of sense. Leave with me... You can't keep staying here with a nutter. (*The Woman keeps clear of him. He tries to touch her but avoids him. The man pauses. Appearingly.*) OK, then. I'm not going to force you. Do what you like. I'm leaving. But the door'll stay open. You can leave any time you want. I'll be in the kitchen. We'll wait till it gets dark. Then we'll go out and wander the streets till morning. (*He waits for the Woman to respond. But she says nothing.*)

Don't forget, you can just walk right out whenever you want. (*He walks out. The door stays open. The Woman and Father look at it, mesmerised. The Woman is the first to snap out of it.*)

Woman: Leave!... Before they change their minds and have us locked in again. (*Father does not stir.*) Or have you changed your mind?

Father: (*After a while.*) I wouldn't get far any way... He's there... He's eavesdropping behind the door.

Woman: Why don't you check for yourself? Maybe there's nobody there... You just think there's somebody there.

Father: Stop trying to talk me into it... You want them to get me?

Woman: What if you make it?... At least give it a try.

Father: I know why you want me get caught... To get your own back on me... Because you don't mean anything to me any more.

Woman: And what good would it be to me if I did?... Has it never occurred to you that you don't mean anything to me either?

Father: So why are you so keen on me getting out of here?

Woman: Stay for all I care... I shan't say another word.

Father: You know why?... Because you're scared... You know I hate you... Isn't that enough to make you run away?... It's all very simple... All you need to do is pluck up the courage and walk out of the room.

Woman: And what about him?... You think he'll let me go alone? I'd go looking for Adam... He knows I would... And that's something he'd never allow ...

He's got other plans for me... Otherwise he wouldn't be trying to tempt me out... But what plans?... How

can I go with him when I don't know what he wants? (*Father is about to say something, but the Woman gets in first.*)

Don't try to change my mind... I shan't listen to you any way.

Father: You're young ...

Woman: (*Cuts him off.*) And you're devious... Maybe the two of you are in cahoots and you're playing a trick on me... And there's just one thing you're after... Ruining me... (*As to wish, Father stiffens.*)

I shan't give up. I shan't listen to you. Not to you, not to them. (*Father tries to refute the Woman's accusation, but she*

covers her ears.) I can't hear you... I can't . *(The Woman crouches in the corner. Father's words seem to be drowned out by the music. Fade - out .)*

Scene Eight

(The stage is gradually illuminated . Father is standing over the Woman . Music gets quieter. The Woman takes her hands off her ears. Father's words get through to the Woman - first segments, then continuous speech.)

Father: Food... For you ... You've got to... Eat... You'll get weak... You can't go on like this for long. *(He goes to the table, picks up one of the bowls and takes it to her. He offers her the food, stretching out towards her the hand holding the bowl . The Woman does not touch the food . The music ceases completely. After a moment of silence in which the hand with the bowl is held vainly outstretched to the Woman .)* Is it that you don't want it from me? *(He places the bowl next to her.)*

Take it yourself, then . *(The Woman picks up the bowl . Then she goes to the table and places it among the other bowls. Father comes up to her and turns on her furiously .)* Who is it you're trying to punish?... Me?... Or is it yourself? Think up some other way if you want... But you're going to eat , that's for sure! You're not the only one who's had just about as much as he can take. But I'll get my own back in a different way... *Not by starving myself. (He points at the bowls .)* Take your pick... There must be something you like. Doesn't it make your mouth water?

Woman : *(Turns away.)* It stinks.

Father: You think it's going to smell good?... After a week? ... If you don't eat , we'll starve to death .

Woman : Why don't you eat it for me?

Father: I've got enough with what I've got.

Woman : Do you think it might be poisoned? *(She glances at Father. After a while he starts laughing nervously .)*

Father: Who'd want to poison you?

Woman : They would... maybe you would as well . *(She goes to the door. An intense light radiates from it.)*

Father: You can avoid it. *(When the Woman is close to the door .)* Run away from me... A few more steps and I'll lose sight of you . *(The Woman slows her pace.)* Don't stop!... If you do, you might not have the courage to continue .

(In the piercing light of the door appear the Second Man wearing his "mask" and Mother wearing the mask which once belonged to the Woman . The Woman stops abruptly . Father waves his hand in resignation . He ignores the Second Man and Mother, as if he does not see them. He goes to the bed and flops onto it face down . His legs hang limply off the bed, his arms are flung wide apart . The Woman moves back from the door. The Second Man and Mother enter the room. Mother goes up to the table with the bowls on it. She peeps into them and rubs her hands in satisfaction . The Second Man comes up and stands behind her.)

Second Man: *(To Mother.)* Satisfied?

Mother: Very.

The Second Man: There's another surprise waiting for you tomorrow.

Mother: What is it?

Second Man: It wouldn't be a surprise if I told you.

Mother: How long are you going to keep it up with these surprises of yours?

Second Man: As long as you enjoy them.

Mother: Or till I burst ... We've done nothing but eat for days now.

Second Man: And sleep.

Mother: All we do is eat and sleep... When I think of how silly

I used to be... *(She stares at the Woman.)* I wasn't

interested in food... There might've been piles of it...

I didn't even touch it... It was something else I was waiting for.

Second Man: Why didn't you tell me?

Mother: *(In a conciliatory tone.)* I guess it wasn't worth mentioning.

Second Man: Even so it's something I should've known

about... What good did all those secrets do? *(He*

reaches out for one of the bowls, picks up the food from it with his fingers and lifts it to the Woman's mouth.

The Woman opens her mouth, but the food misses and

falls to the floor. The Second Man bends down for it.

He tries again to put it into the Woman's mouth. But

she does not open her mouth. The Second Man understands

and throws the food away. He dips again into

the bowl. When he tries to give the Woman another bite

he finds she's no longer there. He puts the food back in

the bowl. He says irritably, as if talking to the Woman.)

All they did was coming between us... I want

you to tell me everything... I've got to know everything

thought you have.

Mother: I keep nothing to myself. *(She comes up to the Second*

Man.) I tell you everything... Just like you tell me

everything... You do, don't you? *(She becomes more*

persistent, but the Second Man shoves her aside.)

Second Man: I don't believe you. *(Incredulously, the Woman*

comes up to Mother, who is wearing a mask that had

belonged to her own face. She gives it a good look and

then suddenly she wrenches it off. Mother hides her

own mask by putting her hands in front of it. In disarray,

she hastens to the door. The Second Man's voice

stops her.) Wait!... You'll leave when I let you leave.

(Mother goes back to the Second Man.) When I want

you to, and not before.

Mother: I shan't take a step without you.

Second Man: *(Satisfied.)* We can go, then.

(Mother and the Second Man begin to leave. They walk out.

Again the Woman is in the doorway. The mask that she once

wore is at her feet. She picks it, her hands trembling. Slowly, she

buries it to her face. When it is almost touching her face she

throws it away and steps back from it. She is by the bed. Father

grabs the mask. He has been watching the Woman's anxious actions

at the door. The Woman stiffens at Father's touch. Slowly,

his hands pass from her waist to her thighs. The Woman tries

to remove his hands, but they are stronger.)

Woman: Let go!... Don't touch me!... Get those hands off me!... I'll call them.

Father: Go ahead. *(The Woman is silent. The tussle with Father has momentarily taken her strength away.*

Father presses her to him.) Let them see they didn't lock us in for nothing... that they've got cause to be angry with us.

Woman: What are you going to do?

Father: What any man would do in my place.

Woman: But you're not interested in me. *(Father's touches are less self-assured.)* You just wanted to wind him up...

Her as well... To show them you just had to lift your finger to get any woman you wanted... including me.

(Father's hands come to rest on the Woman's thighs.)

That's all it was. You're not interested in me... I'm not your type... *(Gesture towards the door.)* Just put me and her side by side... That's the kind of woman you like... I'm nothing like her. You couldn't find two women who were more different.

Father: What if she isn't my type at all?

Woman: *(Takes Father's hands from her thighs. To make doubly sure, she presses her own hands tightly around them to stop them straying back to her thighs.)* You need comfort...

You need her... She can help you get out of here... If you went to her maybe she'd make a bit of a song and dance about it for a while, but then...

Father: She'd reject me. *(He frees his hands from the Woman's and again starts touching her.)* I'll get you... to hurt her. *(Suddenly his touches are soft and tender. The Woman takes advantage of the fact to wrench herself away from him and runs to the window. She opens it wide. Father looks at her scared.)* What are you doing?

Woman: I need some air.

Father: Are you scared?

Woman: Of you?

Father: Are you going to... to jump out?... I wasn't serious...

You needn't be frightened... It'll never happen again.

(The Woman leans out of the window.) Don't lean out!... You'll fall out! *(The Woman leans against the*

window frame.) Don't worry... I shan't come near you. *(The Second Man enters with a black-painted grating for the window, a hammer and nails. He places the grating on the window and nails it in place. The banging of the hammer is heard as the lights go down.)*

Scene Nine

(The doorway is illuminated. The Second Man, carrying a hammer, enters a narrow cone of light. He wipes off sweat with his forearm. The Woman comes up to him from behind. The Second Man, with a "mask", turns to the Woman after the sound of his steps cease.)

Woman: Why did you do it?

Second Man: So you wouldn't be tempted... You've got to think of the door more.

Woman: There's a lot of light there.

Second Man: At least you won't trip and fall.

Woman: They'd see me.

Second Man: And what about you?... You still don't feel like seeing them?

Woman: I can look from the window.

Second Man: Isn't it too far for you?

Woman: I don't want to look at them from near to.

Second Man: You can't see everything from the window.

Woman: I don't want to see everything.

Second Man: It's because you're not used to people any more.

(Mother, smiling, stands in the doorway. In her hands she has an elegant man's coat spread open and a hat. She takes the hammer from the Second Man's hands and helps him into the coat. He puts on the hat.)

Mother: *(To the Woman.)* You'll let him leave on his own?

Woman: That's never worried you before... He went wherever he pleased... Why the change all of a sudden?

Mother: They've been inquiring about you.

Woman: Who could possibly be interested in me?

Mother: The neighbours... They say they haven't seen you for quite some time.

Woman: *(To the Second Man.)* Let her tell them the truth.

Second Man: *(Goes to fetch the Woman's coat. It is extremely big for the Woman. As if it did not belong to her or she had "shrunk". The Second Man holds it for the Woman and waits until she puts it on.)* You needn't tell

them anything. Just show yourself.

Woman: *(Snatches the coat from the Second Man's hands and throws it on the floor.)* So that's why you've unlocked the door. You're worried about people talking. You're not worried about me. It's you who's important...

Just you. *(Father laughs in the darkness.)*

Second Man: *(To Mother.)* Tell him to stop.

Mother: Tell him yourself.

Second Man: You're the one who's dragged him in here... So you sort it out with him.

Mother: Suddenly it's me who has to make decisions about him... So far you've been doing it for me. Have you got bored with it?

Second Man: I've been doing only what you wanted me to do.

Mother: *You weren't interested in what I wanted... Ever since I crossed the threshold of this house you've made all the decisions by yourself.*

Second Man: We're quits... You were doing the same... for years.

Mother: Because you hadn't a clue.

Second Man: So were you... ever since you met *(glances in Father's direction)* him.

Mother: It'll change.

Second Man: Nothing will change... There's nothing to change.

Mother: *(To Father and the Woman.)* You're saying that in front of them?

Second Man: They can't do me any harm... She doesn't want to be out among people and he can't be. *(To Mother.)*

And that 's where yo u 're lucky.

(The Second Man walks out. Mother stays alone with the couple. She takes several steps towards Fat h e r. But then she changes her mind and walks out. Father comes up to the Wo m a n .His face is s e r i o u s, without a trace of his past laughter.)

Fat h e r: (*To the Wo m a n .*) L e t 's scarper!... Now 's the ri g h t moment... She's alone. She can't take on the two of u s.

(When he sees that the Woman does not respond, h e s t a r t s leaving on his ow n . The Wo m a n 's voice stops h i m .)

Wo m a n : Be careful... Who knows what trick they've thought up for yo u .

Fat h e r: Wo rry about yo u r s e l f. D o n 't think he'll leave you in peace... He knows exactly what you'll do.

Wo m a n : He might have got it wrong this time.

Fat h e r: No way... He just has to look at you to see what yo u 're up to. *(He again makes to leave. A gain the Wom a n 's voice stops him.)*

Wo m a n : If you manage to get out of here...

Fat h e r: W h at can I do for you? *(The Woman turns away.)*

N o t h i n g, I'm afraid... I'll be steering well clear of this house.

(He walks out. The Woman goes to the door. She listens agi t at e dly to his footsteps fading into the distance. Then there is just silence beyond the door. Cautiously she steps over the threshold.

The front door to the house is shut. The Woman jumps away from the room door. The front door shuts for the second time. T h e Woman goes to the bed, crouches by it and rests her head on her k n e e s. F a d e - o u t .)

Scene Ten

(The stage is illuminat e d .The Second Man is leaning aga i n s t the door-post.)

The Second Man: (*To the Wo m a n .*)Where are they?! (*Wo m a n s t a r t s at the sound of the Second Man's vo i c e .*)

W h e r e ? !

Wo m a n : (*C a u t i o u s l y .*) H i m , you mean?

Second Man: Him... and her.

Wo m a n : (*E v a s i v e l y .*) H ow should I know?... I have n 't been out of the room.

Second Man: *(Comes up to the Wo m a n .)* Did you know they wanted to run away ?

Wo m a n : They didn't discuss it in front of me.

Second Man:Yo u 're lying.

Wo m a n : I know as much as you do.

Second Man: S h e 's let me dow n .

Wo m a n : ... M aybe she didn't want to go with him. (*U n c o n v i n c i n g l y .*) He made her.

Second Man: W hy didn't you stop him?... Yo u 've let me dow n as we l l .

Wo m a n : I 've stayer d .

Second Man: But not because you wanted to.

Wo m a n : I don't need to go looking for Adam anymore... I wo u l d n 't find him any way. And even if I did...What

use would I be to him after eve rything that 's happ

e n e d . *(She comes up to the wall from which the we dding*

dress is hanging. She tears it down and holds it in front of her. She has become a bride with a sad face.) Why don't you leave as well?

Second Man: *(Pulls the "mask" off his face.)* Because I've just come back. *(Sudde nly, standing before the Woman is the man seen at the beginning of the play - the First Man.)*

Woman: Why have you done that? Why have you shown your face?

First Man: It had to happen some day.

Woman: But why now?

First Man: *(Snatches the wedding dress from the Woman's hands).* Because we've been left on our own... Just you and me... Like in the beginning. *(The Woman covers her eyes so that she won't see him without his "mask".)* Look at me.

Woman: You can't make me.

First Man: Remember what I look like?

Woman: What's the point?... You'll soon hide under the mask again any way.

(The First Man lifts his "mask". He takes it to the window and squ ee zes the hand holding it through the bars. The blackness outside the window "cracks", light begins to show. Both the mask and the window bars fall to the floor, accompanied by sounds. Their falling to the bottom is accompanied by a sound. The Woman uncovers her eyes. The First Man comes up to her and looks at her.)

First Man: Open your eyes.

Woman: I can't... I'm not used to light anymore.

The First Man: You'll get used to it again... It was more difficult for you to get used to darkness... *(Insistently, as if wanting to control her actions.)* Open your eyes slowly... so the light doesn't blind you... First one eye... then the other... Give it a try... Eve.

Woman: I'm not Eve!

First Man: You are Eve!... You just haven't heard your name for a long time... You've forgotten that that's what they called you... Eve... *(The Woman is turned away from the First Man.)* You always looked round when they called out to you... Eve... *(More insistently.)* Eve!

(The Woman does not respond.) I know you heard me... Why don't you look round?

Woman: Why don't you look round?

Woman: What if I see those two?

First Man: They're gone.

Woman: Maybe you just want them not to be here.

First Man: That's for sure... Of course I want that.

Woman: Why did you get at me for letting them go? You want to let them to stay with us.

First Man: And what about you?... Why did you stick to this house? We could've gone away from them... I kept calling you... You can't deny that.

Woman: Why should I leave... Maybe for a while everything would be different... But only for a while... We'd come back and everything would be back the way it was.

First Man: How do you know we'd come back?... We could've found ourselves another place... You've got nothing

to criticise me for.

W o m a n : And yo u ' ve got nothing to hold against me. (*T h e F i r s t M a n f l i n g s t h e s t r i p e d b l a n k e t s o f f t h e b e d a n d t a k e s t h e W o m a n t o i t . F a d e - o u t .*)

Scene Eleven

(*The room is dimly lit. The Woman is squatting on the bed with her knees under her chin. The door creaks. Mother and Father enter. The Woman wakes the First Man, her eyes fixed on the couple. But the First Man merely turns over, still sleeping. Again the Woman tries to wake him up.*)

W o m a n : Get up!...They're back.

M o t h e r : L e a v e h i m a l o n e ! ... L e t h i m s l e e p . H e n e e d s i t . D o n ' t d e p r i v e h i m o f i t . (*F a t h e r a n d M o t h e r g o t o t h e t a b l e a n d c a l m l y s i t d o w n .*)

W o m a n : You want to stay?... T h a t ' s n o t v e r y s m a r t o f y o u ... You wo n ' t get away with it that easily... You ran away... You left this house without his consent.

F a t h e r : H e m i g h t ' v e k n o w n a b o u t u s l e a v i n g . (*T h e W o m a n s t i f f e n s .*)

M o t h e r : We agreed that today yo u ' d be alone... Just you and h i m .

W o m a n : (*Realises she is in her chemise. The wedding dress is the closest thing to hand. She puts it on.*) W h y d i d h e get so angry then... If you were telling the truth he wo u l d n ' t bother about you being gone.

F a t h e r : H e w a n t e d t o c o n f u s e y o u .

M o t h e r : I t m a d e i t e a s i e r f o r h i m .

W o m a n : Since when have the two of you seen eye to eye ?

M o t h e r : We always have .

W o m a n : And what about me?... (*To F a t h e r .*) You were making up to me.

F a t h e r : N o t t h a t I c a n r e m e m b e r .

M o t h e r : I t ' s j u s t t h e w a y y o u t h o u g h t i t w a s ... W h y w o u l d h e h a v e b e e n m a k i n g u p t o y o u ? Y o u a r e n ' t w o r t h i t ... I w a s s u r p r i s e d a t m y s o n a s w e l l ... H e s h o u l d n ' t h a v e a l l o w e d y o u t o s p o n g e o n h i m .

W o m a n : D i d h e (*gesture towards the First man*) t e l l y o u t h a t ?

M o t h e r : H e d i d n ' t h a v e t o s a y a n y t h i n g . I o n l y h a d t o l o o k a t t h e t w o o f y o u .

W o m a n : (*Pulling the First Man by the shoulder.*) G e t u p !

M o t h e r : (*Te a r i n g t h e W o m a n a w a y f r o m t h e F i r s t M a n .*)

L e a v e h i m a l o n e .

W o m a n : H e ' s g o t t o s t a n d u p f o r m e .

F a t h e r : A g a i n s t w h o ?

W o m a n : A g a i n s t y o u .

F a t h e r : I s a n y b o d y d o i n g y o u a n y h a r m ? ... N o t m e . (*To M o t h e r .*) A n d w h a t a b o u t y o u ? ... H a v e y o u d o n e a n y t h i n g t o h e r ?

M o t h e r : I h a v e n ' t s o m u c h a s t o u c h e d h e r .

(*The Woman flings herself at Mother and pulls the mask from her face. Before she manages to look at her face, Mother turns away. Then the Woman flings herself at Father and tears the mask from his face as well. Beneath it is now revealed the First Man's mask. The Woman looks at it, appalled. She moves back and bumps into Mother with her back, which stops her. The Woman turns to Mother slowly. Terrified, the Woman shrieks.*)

Mother is wearing a mask which bears her (the Woman's) likeness. The Woman has nowhere to back away to. The only way free is towards the window. The Woman leans against the window. At that moment Father and Mother cease going towards her.)

Woman: One more step and I'll jump out. (Though Father and Mother do not stir, the Woman jumps up onto the window ledge and stands there.) Don't touch me! (Father and Mother in petrified poses. Their eyes are riveted on the Woman.) Get your hands off!... Let me go! (Suddenly it is as if invisible hands have shoved the Woman. She totters in the window. She falls. As if nothing has happened, Father and Mother go up to the bed, in which the First Man is lying, from opposite sides. They stand over it for a while, and then each of them takes one end of the blanket covering the First Man and pull it up to his head. The head slowly disappears under the blanket. From now on the bed appears to be empty.)

(The light changes. As when getting up in the morning, Mother and Father make the bed. Mother does it properly, Father carelessly. Mother points to places where the stripes are not straight. Father bends over the blanket and continues straightening it until Mother is satisfied. They go to the table. Each of them switches on the lamp over their part of the table. On the table are jugs containing milk.

But there is a mug only on Father's side. Mother stands up and glowers over the table. Slowly she goes over to the bed and from underneath it takes out a mug. She lifts it up in front of her: it is identical to that on the table, just a different colour. She returns to the table. Father takes his milk jug and tilts it over the mug. Milk splashes into the mug. He lifts the mug to his mouth. The woman tilts her milk jug over her mug, but in vain: it is empty. Embarrassed, Father moves the mug from his mouth, but the next moment hastily gulps the milk down. Mother goes to a bucket of water and fills the mug with water. But with a sharp hand movement Father sends the mug's contents splatting on the floor.

The factory hooter sounds. Father and Mother run to their coats in synchronised motion. Then they pause in front of the wall with the masks, but not because they want to pick any of them.

It is as if they wanted to mimic the mask grimaces for their faces. Gradually they make their mouths fit them, which is made possible because the masks have a slot for the mouth.

Father is ready first. He offers Mother his arm. She hooks on to him. The two exit in a dignified manner.

The space is filled with silence as if a deep sleep prevails. But the bed is immersed in darkness.

An alarm clock starts ringing, but this time the sound is real, intimate and insistent. It belongs to reality, which cannot be said so categorically of that which preceded its ringing. The alarm clock rings in the darkness.)

The End