MEN IN WHITE
Now, almost at the end of my journey through life, searching back fifty years and meeting the young man who was myself—who wrote these plays—I hardly recognize him in myself or me in him. There is so much that he did and said that I would gladly disown. However, I must say I admire in that young man his prophetic vision and the passion to follow truth wherever it leads.

Now I am in my eighties and looking back with some sense of wonder at the young man who wrote Men in White. I worked and spent an enormous amount of time in the hospitals of New York and was so impressed with the study of the history of medicine and the achievements made in the previous decade. At that time (the 1930s), there was no further research being done in surgery. It was generally felt in medical circles that surgery had gone as far as it could. Examining the progress it had already made in the previous fifty years, I was convinced, being young and optimistic, that it had a great way yet to go, and thus I made the figures in my play about medicine two surgeons engaged in research. In the first scene, I refer to the great strides that had been made within the lifetime of the two doctors. And in the very last scene, when my young protagonist expresses despair and helplessness at the death of the young nurse, the older surgeon voices my own youthful hopes and vision of the future.

Only some six years after the play was written, research began again in surgery, and today the enormous strides in that art and the development of almost miraculous surgical techniques have justified my optimism. A number of my friends have, from time to time, suggested that this play, at the time of its production noted and reviewed in medical journals at home and abroad, played a part in renewing interest in surgical research. When we
look at the wonders that such investigations have developed, I would like to believe that my friends are correct and that in some small way, perhaps, *Men in White* encouraged the research that began again soon after the play was produced.

In a way, *Men in White* began in my early years, however, with two terrifying ghosts who haunted me as a child. I remember leaving New York for a miserable stay in Philadelphia, where my sister May and I were operated on for tonsils and adenoids, an operation that was a particularly traumatic experience. As the chloroform coming through the cones clamped over my nose began to take effect, I was still conscious of the doctors working over me.

After a brief convalescence, we moved to Schenectady, where my father found a nice, but haunted, house—an old-fashioned, two-story, wooden-framed structure in the suburban countryside. The first night there, something so horrendous happened as to influence my entire life. As I was about to fall asleep, two chalk-white, luminescent figures slowly appeared, floating high near the ceiling and then moving across the room and descending, ominously reaching for my throat. I began to scream! My father and mother and some guests they were entertaining came rushing up the stairs, and, as they entered the room, the ghosts vanished. My parents finally quieted me and tried to assure me it was a dream, but I was sure it was not. My mother turned up the lights and sat with me until I fell asleep. The next night, the ghosts reappeared, I screamed again, and, as my parents rushed upstairs to me, again the spectral figures reaching for me vanished. I thought it was the house, but several years later, when we moved back to New York, the ghosts came with me.

On the ground floor opposite us was a physician, Dr. Singer, who would bring out a chair and sit on the stoop and talk with my mother. He had the sweetest smile and gentlest manner I have ever known, and he was fond of me. He would gently pat me on the head and laughingly call me “Little Nemo”—a character in the comics of a Sunday newspaper, drawn in vivid colors, a boy who had the most horrendous and incredible dreams from which, at a horrifying climactic moment, he would awaken half out of bed in a tangle of sheets.

I had a similar assortment of wild dreams, sleeping and waking, which I carried around in my eyes, and Dr. Singer was a sharp enough physician to see them. One evening he took me aside, asked me many questions, and finally said, “You know, there are doctors who might help you, but that’s a long, expensive process; and, in the long run, you have to help yourself. Some night, when you feel real strong and brave, turn out the light, let them come at you, and you take them by the throat, and you’ll see, they’ll disappear.”
Several years later, old enough to be ashamed of my fears of the dark, I decided to try his advice. I turned out the lights and waited for the ghosts, and they came—closer and closer. When they came close enough, instead of screaming, I cursed them and reached out to hit them, and then in a flash I recognized them—they were the faces with the surgical masks of the anesthetist and the surgeon who had operated on me. I had to repeat that challenge again and again before they would go away. Occasionally, they came back and the hair of my neck bristled. That odd chill still ran up my spine, but I didn't scream. At last they grew dimmer and dimmer, and finally they left me forever . . . or almost. Those two ghosts came back to play an important, if now benign, role in my play.

A pal of mine, a young intern at Beth Israel Hospital, knowing I was deeply interested in medicine, encouraged me. Had the times been different, I think I might have well chosen to become a physician. But I had already picked one very difficult profession, and there were doctors then standing on the street corners selling apples to make a living.

I would visit my friend at the hospital, eat with the interns, sleep over at the hospital, double-date with nurses, drink a special brew the interns concocted with alcohol from the pathology lab, ginger ale, lemon, and a sprinkling of sugar (remember, those were the days of Prohibition). On many occasions I would go on rounds with the medical staff, wearing a white jacket, and sometimes a patient would call me over and describe his ailments. I would nod sympathetically and refer him to another “specialist.” I read all the books I could find on the history of medicine.

Then, as part of the search for a play, I witnessed an operation and again experienced André Malraux's seminal idea—in the “scrub-up,” the elaborate ritualistic, aseptic preparation for an operation, but more—much more: the tingling spine, the bristling of my hair, the urge to scream, but this time with delight, for suddenly my ancient ghosts became benign and shook me by both shoulders.

Edward Gordon Craig's pronouncement had already become my credo: that of all the arts that combine to make the theatre, the most important is the art of dance, the mise-en-scène. Now it was happening before me. There in the operating room were groups of men and women being helped into white masks and caps and gowns in a ritualistic, rhythmic pattern, against a surreal background lit by a great saucer of lights overhead, composing a ballet. Even more, this ballet was a demonstration of the history of surgery. What more could a playwright ask? I jotted down and made sketches of every movement; here was the ballet around which my play was to be designed.

The rhythmic scrubbing-up and the raising of their hands, some of them almost at the same time, others repeating it later as they allowed the soap-
suds to dribble down the elbows—all part of the sterilization process; the entire procedure, with the unsterile nurses picking up the towels from the floor where they were thrown after being used, and the sterile nurses helping the doctors so carefully into the robes and sterilized gloves, the white caps and masks, the lighting—all to a choreographed rhythm—all so bizarre that I saw it clearly as a ballet. The same surgical caps and masks that in my childhood had created my own two ghosts and surrounded me in fear for so many years now heightened this spectral quality. The history of the “scrub-up” ritual I forecast in the play’s first scene in a library, wherein the progress of medicine is discussed by one very old veteran and presented as a kind of prelude to the play.

Another searing first experience in my research was an autopsy I witnessed at the Bellevue morgue, when I saw a young girl who had died of a septic abortion being butchered for the autopsy. She had been a beautiful young girl. Subsequently in my studies, I was horrified to learn there were more than a million abortions being performed every year in this country—all illegal and mostly done by incompetents in septic, crude circumstances. Consequently, how many women died or were crippled by this, nobody could calculate, although certainly women who could not or did not want to have a child and were forced into abortions performed under such conditions often suffered those fates. It was the sight of that autopsy that provided me again with Malraux’s seminal idea and led me to write a play espousing legalized abortion. Finally, forty years later, the laws were amended to correct this situation; however, to this day, these laws are being contested fiercely, in some cases paradoxically by asserting the right to life by indiscriminate murder.

In addition to the Pulitzer Prize, *Men in White* had another honor: the Nazis forbade both the play and the film with Clark Gable and Myrna Loy from being shown in Nazi Germany. It was, they said, “not consistent with the Nazi philosophy,” and I quite agreed with them. I regarded that as a very special, if lopsided, honor.

S.K.
 MEN IN WHITE

DEDICATION
To the men in medicine who dedicate themselves, with quiet
dereliance, to man.

"I swear by Apollo, the physician, and Aesculapius, and Hygieia,
and Panacea and all the gods and all the goddesses—and make them
my judges—that this mine oath and this my written engagement I will
fulfill as far as power and discernment shall be mine. . . .

"I will carry out regimen for the benefit of the sick, and I will keep
them from harm and wrong. To none will I give a deadly drug even if
solicited, nor offer counsel to such an end; but guiltless and hallowed
will I keep my life and mine art.

"Into whatsoever houses I shall enter I will work for the benefit of
the sick, holding aloof from all voluntary wrong and corruption. What-
ssoever in my practice, or not in my practice, I shall see or hear amid
the lives of men which ought not to be noised abroad—as to this I will
keep silent, holding such things unfitting to be spoken.

"And now, if I shall fulfill this oath and break it not, may the fruits
of art and life be mine, may I be honored of all men for all time; the op-
posite if I transgress and be foresworn."

—Excerpts from the Hippocratic oath, to which physicians
have bound themselves since the days of antique Greece.

Produced by The Group Theatre, and Sidney Harmon and James R. Ullman
at the Broadhurst Theatre, New York, September 26, 1933, with the follow-
ing cast:

Dr. Gordon         Luther Adler
Dr. Hochberg       J. Edward Bromberg
Dr. Michaelson     William Challee
Staged by Lee Strasberg
Setting by Mordecai Gorelik

*Although the role of Dr. Larrow does not appear in some early versions of the script, the character is included in published editions and later revisions of the play.

ACT ONE Scene 1: Staff Library, St. George's Hospital
Scene 2: Mr. Hudson's Room
Scene 3: Children's Ward
Scene 4: George Ferguson's Room

ACT TWO Scene 1: Board Room
Scene 2: Staff Library
Scene 3: Corridor
Scene 4: Operating Room
ACT THREE Scene 1: George Ferguson's Room

Scenes

The entire action takes place within the walls of St. George's Hospital.
MEN IN WHITE

The GROUP THEATRE

and

SIDNEY HARMON, JAMES R. ULLMAN

present

MEN IN WHITE

by

SIDNEY KINGSLEY

staged by

LEE STRASBERG

settings by

MORDECAI GORELIK

with the

GROUP THEATRE

ACTING COMPANY

BROADHURST THEATRE

44th St. West of B'way. Matinees Wednesday and Saturday

ACT ONE

Scene 1

The library of St. George's Hospital. The staff of the hospital gather here to read, to smoke, and to discuss many things—primarily Medicine.

This is a large, comfortable room flanked on the left by tall windows, on the right by ceiling-high bookcases crammed with heavy tomes. There is a bulletin board in one corner, on which various notices, announcements, advertisements, schedules, etc., are tacked; there is a long table, an abandon of professional magazines and pamphlets strewn upon it; there are many plump, leather club chairs, some of which are occupied at the moment by members of the staff. In a series of stalls against the back wall are a number of phones.

Nitched high in the wall is a marble bust of Hippocrates, the father of Medicine, his kindly, brooding spirit looking down upon the scene. At the base of the bust is engraved a quotation from his Precepts: “Where the love of man is, there also is the love of the art of healing.”

A number of the staff are smoking and chatting in small groups, the nucleus of each group being an older man in civilian clothes—an attending physician; the young men, interns, recognizable by their white short-sleeved summer uniforms, are doing most of the listening, the older ones most of the talking, the hush of the room on their voices.

One elderly, white-haired physician, seated well to the right, is straining his eyes over a thick medical volume. A number of other books and pamphlets are on a stool beside him. A middle-aged physician, his back to us, is searching the bookcase for a desired volume. A younger practitioner is standing by the window, looking out into the street.

Through a wide, glass-panelled double door, set in the rear wall, we see a section of the corridor alive with its steady cavalcade of nurses, interns, etc., all hurrying by to their separate tasks. The quick activity of the hospital outside contrasts noticeably with the classical repose of the library. The loudspeaker at the head of the corridor calls: “Dr. Ramsey! Dr. Ramsey! Dr. Ramsey!”

Phone rings. An intern crosses to the phones, picks one up, talks in low tones.

Enter DR. HOCHBERG, a short, vital man, whose large head is crowned by a shock of graying hair. He carries himself with quiet, simple dignity. There is strength in the set of his jaw; but the predominating quality expressed in his face is a sweet compassion—a simple goodness. That he is a man of importance is at once apparent in the respectful attention bestowed on him by the others.
GORDON (the middle-aged physician, who has just found his book), sees
Hochberg: Ah, Dr. Hochberg! I've been waiting for you. He quickly replaces the volume and goes to Hochberg.
The young practitioner by the window wheels round at the mention of Hochberg's name.
Gordon: There's a patient I want you to see.
Hochberg: Certainly, Josh. We'll look at him in a minute. I just—His eye sweeps the room. George Ferguson isn't here, is he?
Michaelson (one of the interns seated), looks up from his reading: No, Dr. Hochberg. Shall I call him?
Hochberg, nods: Please.
Michaelson rises and goes to a telephone.
Vitale (the young practitioner), leaves the window and approaches
Hochberg: Er... Dr. Hochberg.
Hochberg: Good morning, Doctor.
Vitale: I sent a patient of mine to your clinic yesterday. Did you have a chance to...?
Hochberg, recollecting: Oh—yes, yes. Reassuringly, knowing that this is perhaps Vitale's first private patient, and most likely a relative at that. No rush to operate there. You try to cure him medically first.
Vitale, relieved: I see. All right, Doctor. Thank you. Thank you.
Hochberg: Not at all. Keep in touch with me. Let me know what progress you make.
Vitale: I will.
Hochberg: If we have to, we'll operate. But I think if we wait on nature this case will respond to expectant treatment.
Vitale: Right! He goes.
Gordon, shakes his head, kidding Hochberg: Fine surgeon you are—advising against operation!
Hochberg, smiles and shrugs his shoulders: Why not give the patient the benefit of the doubt? You can always operate! That's easy, Josh.
Michaelson, returning from the phone: Dr. Ferguson'll be right down, sir.
Hochberg: Thanks.
Gordon: I hear you've some interesting cases at your clinic.
Hochberg: Yes, yes—er—suppose you have dinner with me tonight. We'll talk, hm? I discovered a little place on Eighty-fourth Street where they serve the most delicious schnitzel and a glass of beer—Measuring it with his hands—that high!... But beer!
Gordon: Sounds good. I'll just phone my wife and—
Hochberg: It won't upset her plans?
Gordon: Oh, no! He crosses to the phone.
ACT ONE, Scene 1

Hochberg, approaches the white-haired physician and places a hand gently on his shoulder: And how is Dr. McCabe today?

McCabe: My eyes are bothering me! He indicates the pyramid of books beside his chair. Trying to read all of this new medical literature. It certainly keeps piling up! He shakes his head. Has me worried!

Hochberg: But, why?

McCabe, nods toward interns: These young men today—how can they ever catch up with all this?

Hochberg: These young men are all right. They’re serious—hard-working boys. I’ve a lot of faith in them.

McCabe: But there’s so much. He shakes his head. We’ve gone so far since I was a boy. In those days appendicitis was a fatal disease. Today it’s nothing. These youngsters take all that for granted. They don’t know the men who dreamed and sweated—to give them anesthesia and sterilization and surgery, and X-ray. All in my lifetime. I worked with Spencer Wells in London, and Murphy at Mercy Hospital. Great men. None of these youngsters will equal them. They can’t. There’s too much! I’m afraid it will all end in confusion.

Hochberg: Where the sciences in general are going to end, with their mass of detail—nobody knows. But, good men in medicine . . . we’ll always have. Don’t worry, Dr. McCabe . . . one or two of these boys may surprise you yet, and turn out another Murphy or another Spencer Wells.

McCabe, shaking his head: Not a Spencer Wells! No! Not a Spencer Wells! Hochberg helps him rise. Chilly in here, isn’t it? He walks slowly to the door. I’m always cold these days. He shakes his head. Bad circulation!

Gordon finishes his phone call, hangs up and crosses to Hochberg.

Hochberg: All right for dinner, Josh?

Gordon: Oh, of course. Certainly!

An intern, George Ferguson, and an attending physician, Dr. Wren, come up the corridor engaged in discussion. The intern stops outside the door to give some instructions to a passing nurse, who hastens to obey them.

He pauses in the doorway of the library, still talking to Dr. Wren.

George Ferguson is about twenty-eight; handsome in an angular, manly fashion, tall, wiry, broad-shouldered, slightly stooped from bending over books and patients; a fine sensitive face, a bit tightened by strain, eager eyes, an engaging earnestness and a ready boyish grin.

Ferguson: If we used Dakin tubes it might help. . . .

Wren: They’re worth a trial!

Ferguson: And, this afternoon, first chance I have, I’ll take him up to the O.R. and debride all that dead tissue.

Wren: Good idea! And he marches on down the corridor.
Dr. McCabe reaches the door. Ferguson holds it open for him. McCabe returns Ferguson’s smile and nod. McCabe goes on. Ferguson enters and approaches Hochberg.

Michaelson: They’ve been ringing you here, George.

Ferguson: Thanks, Mike! To Dr. Hochberg. Good morning, Doctor Hochberg.

Hochberg: Good morning, George.

Ferguson: I was down in the record room this morning. He takes a pack of index-cards out of his pocket. The first forty-five cases seem to bear you out.

Hochberg, smiles: Uh, hm!

Ferguson: Some three hundred more charts to go through yet, but...

Gordon: What’s this?

Hochberg: Oh, Ferguson and I are doing a little research. I have some crazy notions about modern surgical technique. Ferguson, here, is writing a paper to prove that I’m right!

Ferguson: As a matter of fact, Dr. Hochberg is writing the paper. I’m just helping collect the data and arrange it.

Hochberg: Ah! You’re doing all the hard work! How’s 217?

Ferguson: Pretty restless during the night, but her temperature’s down to normal now.

Hochberg: Good! And Ward B—bed three?

Ferguson: Fine! Asked for a drink of whiskey.

Hochberg, smiles: He’ll be all right.

Ferguson: He is all right! He grins. I gave him the drink.

Hochberg, laughs: Won’t hurt him. . . .

Ferguson, becomes serious, turns to Dr. Gordon: I wish you’d have another look at 401, Doctor.

Gordon: Any worse today?

Ferguson: I’m afraid so. He’s putting up a fight, though. He may pull through.

Gordon, shaking his head dubiously: Mm, I don’t know.

Ferguson: I hope so. He’s a fine fellow. He’s planning great things for himself—when he gets out of here.

Gordon, significantly: When he gets out. . . .

The phone rings. A short intern crosses to phones and picks one up.

Hochberg: Oh, by the way, George, we’re sending Mr. Hudson home Tuesday.

Ferguson, suddenly excited: Tuesday? Great! Does Laura know, yet?

Hochberg, nods: I phoned her this morning.

Ferguson: She happy?
ACT ONE, Scene 1

HOCHBERG: Naturally!
FERGUSON: I wish you had let me tell her.
HOCHBERG, twinkling: Ah—I should have thought of that!
SHORTY, at phone: One second. Calls. Ferguson! For you.
HOCHBERG: Go on! Call for you. FERGUSON goes to phone. HOCHBERG beams at GORDON. Good boy! Lots of ability! We're going to be proud of him some day.

Enter a lean, shabby man who at first glance appears out of place here. His coat is rusty, and rough weather has left its stain on the hat he carries so deferentially. Tucked under one arm is a large envelope of the type used for X-ray pictures. He has a timid, beaten manner. He is a fairly young man, but worry has lined his forehead and prematurely grayed his hair, making him seem years older. He hesitates at Dr. HOCHBERG's elbow, and finally ventures to touch it.

HOCHBERG, turns, looks at him. Politely, as to a stranger: Yes? Suddenly he recognizes the man. Why . . . Levine!
LEVINE, nods and smiles sadly: I know.
HOCHBERG: Dr. Gordon! You remember Dr. Levine?
GORDON, hesitates a moment: Why, of course. They shake hands.
HOCHBERG: Such a stranger! Where have you been hiding all this time? Why it must be . . . five years since . . .
LEVINE: Six!
HOCHBERG: Six? My! Mm . . . To GORDON. We're getting old. Then, affectionately. Ah! It's good to see you again.
LEVINE: It's nice to get back, but . . . He looks around. Things here seem pretty much the same. New faces—that's all.
GORDON: Nothing much changes in a hospital.
LEVENE: Only people! We change . . . get old . . . break up so quickly. The tragic quality in his voice affects the others. Pause.
GORDON: Well . . . To HOCHBERG. I'm going up to look at that boy in 401.

HOCHBERG nods. GORDON turns to LEVINE. I'm glad to have seen you again. Exit GORDON.

HOCHBERG: Tell me . . . how are things with you?
LEVINE: Oh . . . He shrugs his shoulders. Just about getting along.
HOCHBERG: And how is Katherine?
LEVINE, his brow wrinkles: Not so well.
HOCHBERG, concerned: What seems to be the trouble?
LEVINE: Her lungs. . . . She has a slight persistent cough! Some X-rays here. . . . He opens the large envelope he is carrying and from it takes two
X-ray plates. Hochberg holds up the plates to the window and examines them.

Ferguson hangs up and returns to Hochberg.

Hochberg, holds the plates so that Ferguson can see them: George . . . ?

Ferguson: That shadow there! The right apex.

Levine: Yes—I was afraid of . . .

Hochberg: Now, don't be an alarmist! Sees something. Mm! Squints at the plate, and asks, gravely. Have you examined the sputum? Pause.

Levine: I brought a specimen. He takes out a bottle, wrapped in paper, and explains apologetically: My microscope is broken.

Hochberg: We'll look at it here!

Ferguson: Certainly! He takes the bottle. I'll have the path lab check up on this. Is it anything important?

Levine: My wife.

Ferguson: Oh.

Hochberg: Er . . . Dr. Ferguson, Dr. Levine! They shake hands and exchange greetings.

Ferguson: I'll tend to this at once, Doctor.

Levine: Thanks. Do you think if I came back this evening—?

Ferguson: Oh, yes, the report will be ready then. Drop into my room—106.


Ferguson: You interned here? Are you the—Oh, of course. Bellevue, aren't you?

Levine, nods: '23!

Ferguson: Professor Dury mentions you quite often.

Levine: Dury? To Hochberg. He still remembers me . . .

Ferguson: He thinks a great deal of you.

Hochberg: George, here, is one of his prize pupils, too.

Levine: And does he want you to study abroad?

Ferguson: Yes. I planned to go with Sauerbruch, but he has been forced to leave Germany. So, instead of that, I'm going to study under von Eiselsberg in Vienna.

Hochberg: Hm! I remember when I was a student in Berlin, one of my classmates came to an examination in military uniform . . . sabre and all. Virchow looked at him, and said, "You! What are you doing here in that monkey suit? Your business is with death! Ours is with life!" Virchow was a man of science. He knew. He shakes his head. I wonder what he would say to our beloved Germany today.

Levine: Yes . . .
FERGUSON, to HOCHBERG: Well, Laura prefers Vienna, anyway, so ... To LEVINE. I’m going on my honeymoon too, you see.
LEVINE: You’ll find it difficult mixing the two. I know von Eisselsberg.
HOCHBERG: It’s going to be very difficult. You don’t know Laura.
FERGUSON: After a year in Vienna I’m working with Dr. Hochberg. So the real labor won’t begin till I come back from Europe.
HOCHBERG: Oh, I’ll drive you, George! With a whip, eh?
LEVINE: —Lucky! Retrospectively. Yes. ... I once looked forward to all that. He sighs.
HOCHBERG: Well, come, Levine. We’ll go down to X-ray and read these pictures properly.
FERGUSON, holds up bottle: And don’t worry about this.
LEVINE: Thank you ... thank you. Exit HOCHBERG. LEVINE turns to FERGUSON. Remember, there’s only one Hochberg. Every minute with him is precious.
FERGUSON: I won’t miss a second of it.
LEVINE goes. FERGUSON crosses to a long table at which MICHAELSON and Shorty are seated.
MICHAELSON, who has been watching LEVINE and FERGUSON: He’s telling you, huh? FERGUSON nods, smiles, and looks for a particular book in the shelves. Say, there’s a damned interesting article on Hochberg in this week’s A.M.A.
FERGUSON: I know. He finds the magazine and hands it over to SHORTY, a small, chubby, good-natured, irresponsible, wise-cracking fellow, who takes life in his stride. Here it is. You want to read this, Shorty.
SHORTY sits down to read it.
MICHAELSON: Yep. I wish I could get in with him for a year. ... FERGUSON, to SHORTY: What do you think of that first case? The way he handled it? Beautiful job, isn’t it? Beautiful!
Pete, intern, a tall, gawky lad, slow-moving and casual about everything but food, enters, fixing his stethoscope. He drawls: Say, George. ... SHORTY: Pete! Sweetheart! You’re just the man I’ve been looking for.
Pete, drily: The answer is no.
SHORTY: Will you lend me your white tux vest for tonight? I’ve got ... Pete, abruptly: The answer is still no. He turns to FERGUSON. That little—SHORTY, sits down again: Thanks!
Pete: You’re welcome. To FERGUSON again. The little girl we just operated on is coming out of her ether nicely. I was kind of worried about that pre-op insulin.
FERGUSON: Why? How much did you give her?
Pete: Forty units.
Ferguson: Twenty would have been enough.
Pete: I know.
Ferguson: Then why the hell did you give her forty? You might have hurt
the kid.
Pete: Dr. Cunningham ordered it.
Shorty: That dope—Cunningham!
Ferguson: You should have told me before you gave it to her. I'm not going
to have any patients go into shock on the operating table! Understand?
Pete: O.K.
Ferguson, good-naturedly, slapping Pete on the head with a pamphlet:
If this happens again, Pete, you get your behind kicked in . . . and not
by Cunningham!
Pete: O.K.
Nurse Jamison, passing by, carrying a tray of medication, halts in the door-
way, looks in and calls: Oh, Doctor Ferguson, that drink worked won-
ders. Bed three is sitting up and taking notice.
Ferguson, laughs: A new school of therapy!
Shorty: Say, Jamison, you're not looking so hot. You ought to stay home
one night and get some sleep.
Jamison: Oh, I'm doing all right. She laughs and goes.
Shorty: Yeah? I'll bet you are.
      The loudspeaker starts calling, “Dr. Bradley! Dr. Bradley!”
Pete: Say, I'm hungry! Somebody got something to eat?
Shorty: What, again? Pete looks at him with scorn. Lend me your white
vest for tonight, will you, Pete? I'll fix up a date for you with that redhead.
Phone rings.
Pete, nodding at Ferguson: Fix him up.
      Ferguson laughs.
Shorty: It'd do him good. That's the trouble with love—it kills your sex-
life. . . . Indicates the phone. Pete! Phone!
Pete: I was once in love, myself. He starts for phone. But when it began to
interfere with my appetite . . . Hell! No woman's worth that!
      They laugh.
Ferguson: Thing I like about you, Pete, is your romantic nature.
Pete, on phone: Dr. Bradley! O.K. I'll be right up! He hangs up. Yep. At
heart I'm just a dreamer.
Shorty: At heart you're just a stinker!
Pete: Thanks!
Shorty, quickly: You're welcome!
      Pete goes toward the door.
FERGUSON: Going upstairs, Pete?
PETE: Yep.
FERGUSON, *gives him the bottle of sputum*: Will you take this to the path lab? Ask Finn to examine it and draw up a report.
PETE: O.K.

*Enter Dr. Gordon.*
FERGUSON: Tell him to give it special attention! It’s a friend of Hochberg’s.
SHORTY, *follows Pete to door*: I take back what I said, Pete. You’re a great guy, and I like you. Now, if you’ll only lend me that white vest . . .
PETE: No!
SHORTY: Stinker! *They exit.*

GORDON comes over to FERGUSON.
GORDON, *his face grave*: Well . . . I just saw 401. He’s a mighty sick boy. He may need another transfusion.
FERGUSON: We’ll have to go pretty deep to find a good vein.
GORDON: That’s what I’m worried about. If it comes up tonight I want you to be here to do it.
FERGUSON: Tonight?
GORDON: There are three donors on call.
FERGUSON: This is my night out. . . . My fiancée has made arrangements. . . . So I’m afraid I won’t be here.
GORDON: I’m sorry, Ferguson. When the House needs you . . .
FERGUSON: I’d like to, Doctor, but the same thing happened last week. I can’t disappoint my fiancée again . . . or—*He smiles.* —I won’t have any.
MICHAELSON: Er—Dr. Gordon, couldn’t I do that transfusion?
GORDON: I’m afraid not—the superficial veins are all thrombosed. Ferguson has followed the case from the start; he knows the veins we’ve used.
FERGUSON: Laidlaw knows the veins. . . .
GORDON: Frankly, I don’t trust any of the other men on this case. I know I’m imposing, but I want this boy to have every possible chance. . . . *Pause.* He’s a sick boy, Ferguson. What do you say?
FERGUSON: All right! I’ll stay.
GORDON: Thanks! *He starts to go—turns back.* And if your sweetheart kicks up a fuss, send her around to me. I’ll tell her about my wife. Up at 4:30 this morning to answer the phone. Somebody had a bellyache. . . . *He laughs, nods and goes.* FERGUSON remains, dejected.
FERGUSON: Damn it! I wanted to be with Laura tonight.
MICHAELSON: That’s tough, George. I’m sorry I couldn’t help you out.
*The loudspeaker starts calling*: “Dr. Manning! Dr. Manning!”
FERGUSON, *rises and walks about*: Laura’s going to be hurt. You’d think they’d have a little . . .
Nurse, comes quickly down the corridor, looks in, and calls, a bit breathless: Dr. Ferguson? She sees him. Dr. Ferguson, a woman just came in on emergency with a lacerated throat. She's bleeding terribly! Dr. Crane told me to tell you he can't stop it.

FERGUSON: Get her up to the operating room. He snaps his fingers. Stat. She hurries off. He turns to Mac. Drop that, Mac, and order the O.R.! Come on! MAC goes to a phone. To MICHAELSON. Call an anesthetist, will you? And locate Dr. Hochberg! Try the X-ray room!

MICHAELSON: Right! He jumps to a phone. Exit FERGUSON.


MICHAELSON: Find Dr. Hochberg! Right away! Emergency! . . . simultaneously changes to a louder and more persistent, “Dr. Hochberg! Dr. Hochberg, Dr. Hochberg!” Well, try the X-ray room! . . . And locate the staff anesthetist!

In the back corridor we catch a glimpse of an orderly hurriedly pushing a rolling stretcher on which the emergency patient is lying, crying hysterically. An intern on one side and the nurse at the other are holding pads to her throat and trying to calm her.

FADE OUT

ACT ONE

Scene 2

The largest and the most expensive private room in the hospital. It is luxuriously furnished in the best of taste and tries hard to drive all clinical atmosphere out into the corridor. What the room can't eliminate, it attempts to disguise; not, however, with complete success. For there, behind a large, flowered screen, the foot of a hospital “gatch” bed peeps out, and in the corner we see a table with bottles of medication on it.

MR. HUDSON, a large man, haunched, paunched, and jawed, clad in pajamas and a lounging robe, is sitting up on a divan being shaved by the HOSPITAL BARBER. He is talking to one of his business associates, a Mr. MOONEY, who is a smaller, nattier, less impressive, and, at the moment, highly nervous edition of HUDSON.

HUDSON, through a face full of lather: We'll get that property, Mooney! And we'll get it now . . . on our own terms.
ACT ONE, Scene 2

MOONEY, marching impatiently to and fro: How are you going to break that Clinton Street boom?

HUDSON: You get in touch with the real estate editor of every paper in town. Tell them we’ve decided to change the location of Hudson City from Clinton to . . . say Third Street. Map out a territory! Make it convincing!

A nurse enters with a bowl of flowers, places it on a small table, arranges the flowers, and departs.

MOONEY, hesitantly: Think they’ll believe it?

HUDSON: Sure. . . . Got a cigar?

MOONEY, produces one, then hesitates: You’re not supposed to smoke, you know.

HUDSON: I’m all right! Can’t think without a cigar! He takes it. The Barber gives him a light. He puffs once or twice with huge relish. Start negotiations with every realty owner in the new territory. Buy options! They’ll believe that!

The Barber finishes, starts to powder Hudson’s face, but is waved away.

MOONEY: Oh yes. . . .

HUDSON: In the meantime sell ten of our houses on Clinton Street—including corners. Sell low!

MOONEY: Hey! We want that stuff!

HUDSON: Get Henderson! Form two dummy corporations—and sell to them.

MOONEY: Oh! . . . Yes, I think it’ll work . . . that ought to bring down those prices.

The Barber packs his shaving kit and exits.

HUDSON: We’ll wait till they’re ready to take nickels . . . then our dummy corporations can grab all that property . . . . Mooney, we’ll be excavating this Spring, yet.

Enter Dr. Hochberg. He sees Hudson smoking, frowns, goes to him, takes the cigar out of his mouth, and throws it away.

Hochberg: Didn’t Dr. Whitman say no more cigars?

HUDSON, startled, his first impulse one of extreme annoyance: Hochberg, please. . . . He controls himself, turns to Mooney.

MOONEY, glances at Hochberg, picks up his coat and hat: Well, I’ll be going now.

HUDSON, helps him into his coat: Phone me!


Hochberg watches Mooney go, then turns to Hudson and shakes his head.
HUDSON: Whitman's sending me home Tuesday, isn't he? What do you want to do? Make an invalid of me? He goes to the phone. Operator! Get me Vanderbilt 2-34—He gasps, an expression of pain crosses his face, his free hand goes to his breast.

HOCHBERG, nods grimly: Uh, huh! HUDSON glances at HOCHBERG guiltily, controls himself, continues on the phone.

HUDSON: 3471!
HOCHBERG, goes to him, takes the phone out of his hand, puts it down, with an abrupt nod of the head toward the bed: You better lie down!

HOCHBERG, softly: I know. Get into bed.

HUDSON shakes his head and smiles to himself at HOCHBERG's persistence. Then he goes to the bed and lies down. HOCHBERG feels his pulse.

HUDSON: I tell you, I'm all right!
HOCHBERG: I don't understand people like you, John. Whitman is the best cardiac man in the country, but he can't give you a new heart! Don't you know that? Are you such a fool?

Enter LAURA, a spirited, chic young lady; lithe, fresh, quick, modern, a trifle spoiled perhaps, but withal eminently warm, lovable, and human.

LAURA: What's he done now, Hocky?

HUDSON: Hello, honey!
HOCHBERG: Laura!
LAURA, kissing HUDSON: How's my dad, today?

HUDSON: I'm fine, dear, just fine.

LAURA, takes HOCHBERG's hand: And Hocky, wie gehts?

HOCHBERG: Laura, my dear, can't you do anything with him?

LAURA: Why? . . . Smoking again?

HOCHBERG: Yes.

LAURA: Oh, Dad!

HUDSON: Now, don't you start, Laura!

LAURA: But it's so foolish.

HUDSON: I have an important deal on, honey. Besides I'm all right. Whitman's sending me home Tuesday.

LAURA: I know, dear, and that's great! But it isn't going to do any good if you act this way. Can't you forget the office? Close it up! I mean that.

HOCHBERG: She's right, John—absolutely.

LAURA: What good is your money, damn it! if you can't enjoy it?

HUDSON: Well, it can still buy my little girl a honeymoon.

LAURA: I could spend my honeymoon right here! And have a swell time. As long as it's with George. . . . To HOCHBERG. Where is that man?

HOCHBERG: Upstairs—busy!
LAURA: Oh! To her father. So, are you going to behave yourself, Dad?
HUDSON, smiles and pinches her cheek: Don't worry about me! I'm all right.... I'll live. Deliberately changing the subject. How was Doris's party last night?
LAURA: Noisy.
HUDSON: Not much fun, eh?
LAURA: Not much.
HUDSON: Too bad George couldn't be there.
LAURA: I spent most of the time upstairs with Doris's baby. It woke and wanted some attention. Babies are awfully human that way, aren't they? Do you know that Doris was going to let him cry himself to sleep? Can you imagine?.... Believe me, when I have my baby, it's going to get all the care and love and attention it can use.
HOCHBERG, chuckles: You have the right instincts, Laura.
LAURA: Have I? Rises. I haven't had a real kiss in days.... Can I get George on the phone, Hocky?
HOCHBERG: He'll be down soon.
LAURA, goes to phone: I want to see that man! She picks up the phone.
HOCHBERG, brusquely: Better wait! Laura looks at him, a bit resentfully. He's in the operating room.
LAURA: Oh!
HUDSON: Er... while you're there, Laura, will you call the office like a good girl, and ask Henderson if...
LAURA: No! She hangs up sharply.
HUDSON: But this is on my mind.
HOCHBERG: Again? John, you're a madman!
LAURA, quickly, with a tinge of bitterness: And he's not the only one, Dr. Hochberg.
HUDSON, looks up at her quizzically, sees what's eating her, then turns to Hochberg: God, they make a slave of that boy. And he doesn't get a dime! I can't see it.
HOCHBERG, smiles at that one: He's not here for the money! He's here to learn. The harder he works, the more he learns. If he wanted to make money he wouldn't have chosen medicine in the first place. You know, when he comes with me, his pay is only going to be $20 a week, but there's a chance to work. The man who's there with me now works from sixteen to eighteen hours a day. He even has a cot rigged up in one of the laboratories, where he sleeps sometimes.
HUDSON: For $20 a week?
HOCHBERG, nods vigorously: Yes, yes.... He turns to Laura. George is a fine boy with great promise. The next five years are crucial years in that
boy’s life. They’re going to tell whether he becomes an important man or not.

LAURA: George is an important man right now, Hocky, to me.

HOCHBERG: To you. . . .

LAURA: Well . . . I don’t count?

HOCHBERG: Of course you do, dear!

LAURA, controls herself, turns to her father, abruptly changing the conversa-
tion: What time shall I call for you Tuesday?

Hudson, to HOCHBERG: When can I get out of here?

HOCHBERG: In the morning. Eight—nine o’clock.

Hudson: Good! To Laura. Have Martha prepare a big juicy steak—they’ve been starving me here.

HOCHBERG: No big steaks!

Hudson groans.

Ferguson enters, tired and upset.

LAURA: George! She goes to him.

Ferguson: Hello, darling! He kisses her.

LAURA: Why so glum, dear—toothache?

Ferguson, grins—looks at her hat: Where did you get that hat?

LAURA: Don’t you like it?

Ferguson: Looks like a sailboat! Laura wrinkles her face, pretending to be on the verge of tears. No, it’s becoming! You look beautiful . . . doesn’t she, Dr. Hochberg?

HOCHBERG, disparagingly: Hm—she looks all right.

LAURA, laughs: I’ll kill that man.

HOCHBERG: You should have seen the brat when I delivered her. The recol-
clection is too much for him. He looks at Laura, shakes his head, and chuckles.

Ferguson, goes to the bedside: And Dad—I guess we’re going to lose our best patient Tuesday.

LAURA: Isn’t it marvelous?

Ferguson: Did you ever see him look so healthy?

Hudson: I feel fine, George! Good enough to eat a big steak!

HOCHBERG, grunts: Mm!

Hudson: Oh, by the way, George, my secretary’s tending to the wedding invitations. Better get your list in to him. And see him about your visas, too. He’ll tend to all that.

Ferguson, to Laura: You know—I still can’t believe it’s going to happen!

I mean just happen!

LAURA: Neither can I.

Ferguson: Vienna’s going to be lots of fun.

LAURA: Fun? You don’t know. Wait till you’ve seen the Prater. It’s Coney
ACT ONE, Scene 2

Island with a lift! Lights all over . . . and those lovely people all laughing and happy . . . and the whole place just tinkling with music.

FERGUSON: I've always had a yen to hear Strauss on his home grounds.

Hochberg, softly: When I visited von Eiselsberg his students spent all their time working—with an occasional glass of beer for relaxation. That's what George's Vienna is going to be, Laura.

George and Laura are brought up sharp. Enter a Nurse with a wheelchair.

NURSE: Time for your sunbath, sir.

Hudson: Oh—go away!

Hochberg: Come on, Mr. Hudson, no nonsense.

Hudson: Aw, hell, I can walk, I'm no cripple!

Laura: Sit down, Dad.

Hudson sits in the chair. The Nurse tucks a blanket around him.

Hudson, grumbles to himself: Treat me like a goddamned baby! . . . To Nurse. Get me that report, will you?

Hochberg: John . . .

Hudson: I can read, can't I? There's nothing the matter with my eyes. . . . For God's sake. . . . He turns to George and Laura. Don't you listen to that old fogey! You kids enjoy yourselves. You're only young once.

The Nurse wheels him out. Hochberg watches him go and nods.

Hochberg: Yes, that's true enough! He looks at Ferguson and Laura, a twinkle in his eyes, and sits down as if he were there to stay.

Ferguson: You don't need me yet, Dr. Hochberg, do you?

Hochberg: Why not?

Laura, threateningly: Hocky!

Hochberg, rises, grinning like a little boy who's had his joke: All right! To Ferguson. I'll call you when I want you. He goes.

Laura, softly: Sweetheart! She holds out her hands to him.

Ferguson, taking them: Darling! He draws her up out of the chair to him.

Laura: How's my boy?

Ferguson, stares at her in adoration. He almost whispers: You're lovely. . . . Lovely, Laura.

Big hug.

Laura: If you knew how I've been aching for this. Silence for a moment, as she clings to him. Three months! She sighs deeply. I don't know how I can live till then.

Ferguson, tenderly: Sweet! They're going to be long—those three months—terribly.

Laura: Yes, I know—I hate to think of them! She takes his hand, leads him to a huge easy-chair. Come here and—

Ferguson: Ah!
LAURA: Sit down! *She pushes him down into the chair and curls up on his lap. Then she takes his head in her hands and scrutinizes his face. Let me look at you. She shakes her head. You’re getting thin, young man! And your eyes are tired.*

FERGUSON: I didn’t have much sleep last night. It was a pretty sick house.

LAURA: You’re overworked. . . . *Pulls his head over on her shoulder. And I don’t like it one bit. Pause. You know, you’ve spoiled everything for me. FERGUSON raises his head, LAURA pushes his head back. I was thinking last night, all the music and noise and fun . . . didn’t mean a thing without you. I don’t seem to get a kick out of life any more, unless you’re around. She pauses. And that’s not very often, is it?* FERGUSON: Darling, we’ll make up for it all . . . later on. Honestly.

LAURA: I don’t know if we can, George. Last night, for instance. If you had been there—perfect! Now’s it’s—gone. You see, dearest, the way I feel, if I had you every minute from now on, it wouldn’t be enough. FERGUSON starts to speak, she puts her hands over his lips. I wish I’d lived all my life with you. I wish I’d been born in the same room with you, and played in the same streets.

FERGUSON, smiles: I’m glad you missed them. They were ordinary and gloomy. They might have touched you . . . changed you. . . . *He cups her face in his hands and looks at her. About seven months ago there was a boy here who’d been blind from birth. We operated on him—successfully. One night I showed him the stars—for the first time. He looked at them a moment and began to cry like a baby, because, he said, they were so lovely, and—he might never have seen them. When I look at you, Laura, I get something of that feeling. I . . . I can’t tell you how large a part of me you’ve become, Laura! You’re . . . The loudspeaker is heard calling, “Dr. Ferguson! Dr. Ferguson . . . ” Oh, damn it! . . . Laura: Don’t move! She clutches him tightly.

FERGUSON: It’s no use, Laura! That’s my call! Let me up!

LAURA: No!

FERGUSON: Come on! He rises, lifting her in his arms, kisses her, sets her on her feet.

LAURA: Oh! You spoiled it.

    *He goes to the phone, picks up the receiver. LAURA finds her vanity case . . . powder and lipstick.*

FERGUSON: Dr. Ferguson! . . . Yes! . . . Oh! Yes, sir! . . . Yes, Doctor! I’ll be ready. . . . I’ll tend to all that. Right! He hangs up—turns to LAURA.

LAURA: All right, go on—go to work!

FERGUSON: I won’t be needed for half an hour yet.

LAURA: Well, I have to go to my hairdresser’s and make myself beautiful for tonight.
ACT ONE, Scene 2

FERGUSON: Laura, dear, I...
LAURA: And what a night we’re going to have! Doris asked us over there, but I want you to myself. I want to go to that cute little roadhouse where the food and the music were so good—then a long drive up the Hudson—and, darling, there’s a full moon tonight!
FERGUSON: Laura, I’ve some bad news. You won’t be upset, will you?
LAURA: Why?
FERGUSON: I can’t make it tonight. I have to stay in. . .
LAURA, almost in tears: Again?
FERGUSON: I’m so sorry, dear. I tried to duck out of it, but I couldn’t. There’s a transfusion I have to do.
FERGUSON: Better not! It depends on the patient. I’ve just got to be around and ready!
LAURA: Are you the only one here who can do that transfusion?
FERGUSON: Dr. Gordon seems to think so!
LAURA: George! They’re overworking you. It’s not fair. . .
FERGUSON: I don’t mind it so much for myself . . . only. . .
LAURA, dully: No? Well, I do. Pause. Then LAURA continues in a low voice, suddenly hoarse. I was planning so much on tonight.
FERGUSON: Don’t you think I was, Laura? All week I’ve been looking forward to it.
LAURA: Sure. I know.
FERGUSON: You’re not sore?
LAURA: It’s not your fault. I don’t imagine it’s much fun for you, either—
FERGUSON: Fun! If you knew how fed up I can be with this place sometimes . . .
LAURA: George, I’m so low—I’ve been this way for weeks.
FERGUSON: Damn Gordon! Laidlaw could have done that transfusion.
LAURA: Oh, George, what’s our life going to be like?
FERGUSON, gently: Pretty grand, I should say.
LAURA: How can it be? How can it?
FERGUSON: Dear . . . we’ll go out tomorrow instead. Mac promised to take my floor. And we’ll have a swell time. Saturday’s more fun anyway.
LAURA: It’s not just tonight! It’s all the nights.
FERGUSON: Darling! You’re exaggerating! You’re . . .
LAURA: No, I’m not.
FERGUSON: What do you expect me to do? I want to get out . . . I want to enjoy myself . . . but I can’t, that’s all. I can’t.
LAURA: George, I know this is important to you . . . and if it’s going to help you . . . I can go on like this for another three months . . . for another year and three months; but when we come back to New York, let’s arrange our
lives like human beings. You can open up an office and have regular hours . . . specialize!

FERGUSON: If I work with Hochberg, darling, I won't have the time to go into practice.

LAURA: That's just it. I know Hocky. I'll never see you then, George.

FERGUSON: But, Laura . . . He laughs nervously. I've plugged all my life just in the hope that some day I'd have a chance to work with a man like Hochberg. . . . Why . . .

LAURA: I couldn't go on this way. I just couldn't. . . . I'd rather break off now, and try to forget you. . . .

FERGUSON: Laura! Don't ever say a thing like that!

LAURA: I mean it—it would kill me. But I'd rather die quickly than by slow torture. I can't . . . The loudspeaker is calling him. FERGUSON and LAURA stand there, both in anguish. They're calling you.

FERGUSON: I know. He hesitates a moment . . . goes to the phone. Dr. Ferguson! Yes . . . who? South 218 . . . yes? . . . well, call Dr. Cunningham. It's his case . . . let him. Suddenly his voice becomes brittle. When? What's her temperature? . . . Pulse? . . . Is she pale? . . . Perspiring? . . . Did she ask for food before she became unconscious? . . . No! No more insulin! Absolutely. I'll be right down. He hangs up. I have to go now, Laura. And please—please don't worry. He bends down to kiss her. She turns her face away. He straightens up and regards her with a worried expression.

FERGUSON: As bad as that?

LAURA, in a low voice—a bit husky with emotion: Yes.

FERGUSON, forcing a smile: Things will straighten themselves out.

LAURA: No, they won't.

Pause. FERGUSON pulls himself together, looks towards the door.

FERGUSON: I'll see you tomorrow night, dear? Right?

LAURA: Yes. She puts on her hat. Think it over, George! We'll have to come to some decision!

FERGUSON: Oh Laura, will you please . . .

LAURA: I mean it! Absolutely!

FERGUSON, pauses for a moment in the doorway: All right . . . all right!

FERGUSON goes. LAURA stands there a moment, the picture of frustration and woe, then she walks in a little circle, crying quietly.

BLACK OUT
ACT ONE
Scene 3

A bed, screened off from the others, in a corner of the children's ward. The entire wall, separating ward from corridor, is framed in glass panels, so that the nurse on duty out there can always keep a watchful eye over the youngsters.

A little girl of ten is lying back, eyes closed, skin pale and clammy. Her father stands at the foot of the bed, gazing fearfully at his little daughter. He is wan and unkempt, his hair disheveled, his eyes sunken, his collar open, tie awry—the picture of despair. His wife is standing beside the child, weeping.

At the phone is a young student nurse, BARBARA DENNIN. She is speaking rapidly into the phone.

BARBARA: South 218! . . . Calling Dr. Ferguson! At once!

MRS. SMITH: She's so pale, Barney. . . . She's so pale!

MR. SMITH: Where's Cunningham? . . . Why isn't he here? To BARBARA.

Miss Dennin! Can't you do something?

BARBARA: Dr. Cunningham will be right here, sir!

Enter DR. CUNNINGHAM, a dignified, impressive-looking gentleman, immaculately attired, goatee, pince-nez, throaty voice—just a bit too much of the "professional manner," arrived at in this instance by a certain false philosophy which one occasionally finds in the profession. CUNNINGHAM believes that nine patients out of ten will be cured by nature anyway, and the tenth will die no matter what the physician does for him. This system of logic concludes that impressing the patient and assuaging his fears are more important than keeping up with medical journals and the march of treatment. The sad part of it is that CUNNINGHAM is a successful practitioner—successful, that is, in terms of bank account. True, most of his colleagues look down on him with scorn, but he has a magnificent Park Avenue office, with all the impressive equipment, wealthy patients, and political influence—which, although he is not a member of the staff, has gained him the "courtesy" of the hospital—meaning that he may bring his patients here for hospitalization.

BARBARA: Dr. Cunningham! Thank God you're here!

MRS. SMITH: Dr. Cunningham! My baby! She's fainted! She's . . .

CUNNINGHAM: Now please . . . please, Mrs. Smith! He takes off his coat, turns to BARBARA. What's happened here?

BARBARA: Complete collapse . . . about two minutes ago. . . .

CUNNINGHAM: Let's see the chart! She hands him the chart. He looks at it, frowns, shakes his head. Hm! This is bad! He takes DOROTHY'S wrist and feels the pulse, closing his eyes.
NURSE: Pulse is barely . . .
CUNNINGHAM: Sh! Quiet, please! . . . Silence. Hm! . . . Let me have my stethoscope! She takes his stethoscope out of his bag and hands it to him. He listens to DOROTHY’s heart. His frown deepens. Diabetic coma!
MRS. SMITH: Doctor! . . . you’ve got to save her!
MR. SMITH: Rose . . . come here!
CUNNINGHAM: Miss Dennin— He indicates MRS. SMITH with a gesture of the head.
BARBARA, takes MRS. SMITH’s arm: You’ll have to wait outside. . . . Just a moment. . . .
MRS. SMITH: Oh, my God!
BARBARA leads them out, then returns.
CUNNINGHAM: Prepare some insulin! At once . . . forty units . . . with fifty grams of glucose.
BARBARA: But, sir, Dr. Ferguson advised against insulin. . . .
CUNNINGHAM: Ferguson? You please take your orders from me . . . forty units! Quick!
BARBARA: Yes, sir.
FERGUSON enters the room. DR. CUNNINGHAM glances at him, nods curtly, and turns to BARBARA.
CUNNINGHAM: Please, hurry that!
FERGUSON, looks at the patient, shakes his head: I was afraid of shock!
CUNNINGHAM: This isn’t shock! It’s diabetic coma!
FERGUSON, his brow wrinkled, looks at the patient again: Her temperature’s subnormal?
CUNNINGHAM, impatiently: Yes! To BARBARA. Is that insulin ready yet?
FERGUSON: I beg your pardon, Doctor, but isn’t insulin contraindicated here?
CUNNINGHAM: No. It’s our last chance.
FERGUSON bites his lips to restrain himself. CUNNINGHAM takes the hypo from BARBARA and presses out the air bubbles.
FERGUSON: Doctor, I mean no offense, but I’ve studied this case history, and it looks like shock . . . not coma!
CUNNINGHAM, pauses—looks at the patient, shakes his head: No . . . no . . .
FERGUSON: But, the clinical picture is so clear-cut. . . . Look at the patient! She’s pale, cold, clammy, temperature subnormal. She’s complained of hunger! Sudden onset!
CUNNINGHAM, angrily: Suppose you let me handle this case, young man.
To BARBARA. Prepare that arm!
BARBARA swabs the arm. CUNNINGHAM leans over the patient. FERGUSON hesitates a moment, then goes to CUNNINGHAM, puts his hand on CUNNINGHAM’s arm.
FERGUSON: Please, Doctor! Call in one of the other men! . . . Ask them! Anybody!
CUNNINGHAM: There's no time! Take your hand off!
FERGUSON: That insulin's going to prove fatal.
CUNNINGHAM, wavers a moment, uncertain, hesitant, then he turns on FERGUSON: Get out of here, will you? I don't want any interruption while I'm treating my patient! He shakes FERGUSON's arm off. . . . Bends to administer the hypo, hesitates a moment, then straightens up . . . confused and worried. FERGUSON, with sudden resolve, takes the hypo from CUNNINGHAM's fingers and squirts out the insulin. Here! What are you . . . Why did you do that, you fool?
FERGUSON, ignores him, turns to BARBARA, his voice crisp and cool: Shock position! BARBARA goes to the foot of the bed, turns the ratchet that elevates the foot of the bed. FERGUSON dashes to the door, looks out, calls down the corridor. Nurse! Nurse!
A Nurse, answers from down the corridor: Yes, sir?
FERGUSON: Sterile glucose! Quick! And a thirty-cc syringe.
BARBARA: Some glucose here, sir, all ready!
FERGUSON: How much?
BARBARA: Fifty grams!
FERGUSON: Good! Half of that will do! Apply a tourniquet . . . right arm!
BARBARA: Yes, sir!
FERGUSON, calls down the corridor: Never mind the glucose—a hypo of adrenalin!
THE Nurse's voice answers: Yes, sir.
FERGUSON, turns up the corridor: Nurse, Nurse! Some hot packs . . . and blankets! Quick . . . come on . . . hurry! He starts to return to the patient, but Dr. CUNNINGHAM, who has sufficiently recovered from his shock, blocks FERGUSON's path.
CUNNINGHAM: What do you think you're doing? I'll have you brought up before the medical board. . . . I'll have you thrown out of this hospital . . . you can't . . .
FERGUSON: All right! Have me thrown out! I don't give a damn! I don't care! I really don't . . . pardon me! He brushes CUNNINGHAM aside and hurries to patient.
CUNNINGHAM, flustered and impotent: I never heard of such a thing . . . why . . .
FERGUSON: Ready?
BARBARA: Yes, sir!
FERGUSON, quickly: Let's have that glucose. BARBARA gives it to him. Swab that arm! Never mind the iodine! Just the alcohol! BARBARA swabs the arm. Thank God! A good vein! He administers the hypo.
CUNNINGHAM: You'll pay for this, young man! . . . That patient's life is on your hands. . . .
   Nurse enters with blankets and hot packs.
Nurse: Blankets and hot packs, Doctor!
FERGUSON: Yes. . . . He and BARBARA place the hot packs on DOROTHY, then BARBARA covers her with the blankets.
   Enter another Nurse.
SECOND NURSE: A hypo of adrenalin!
FERGUSON: Here! He takes it from her, administers it. Then straightens up, sighs, turns to two nurses. That's all. Thank you! They go. FERGUSON, BARBARA, and CUNNINGHAM watch the patient intently. There is no change in her condition.
FERGUSON: That's about all we can do!
CUNNINGHAM: You report downstairs . . . at once!
   They watch the patient, strained, tense. After a long moment DOROTHY's arm, which has been hanging limp over the bedside, moves. She raises her hand to her forehead, opens her eyes. She looks at FERGUSON.
DOROTHY, faintly: Dr. George . . .
FERGUSON: Yes, baby?
DOROTHY: I'm thirsty. . . . I want a drink . . .
FERGUSON: You bet, sweetheart. To BARBARA. Water!
   BARBARA gives the child a glass of water; DOROTHY sits up and sips it, still rubbing her eyes sleepily.
DOROTHY: I feel so funny . . . Dr. George! Dizzy-like. . . .
FERGUSON: Drink that!
DOROTHY: What happened?
FERGUSON: Nothing! You just fell asleep, that's all. DOROTHY has stopped sipping her water to stare at FERGUSON with huge blue eyes, wide open now. He grins at her and points to the glass. Come on! Bottoms up! She smiles back at him, and drains the glass. Atta girl!
   BARBARA lowers foot and raises head of bed.
DOROTHY: Barbara!
BARBARA: Yes, dear?
DOROTHY: I want Mother. Where's Mother?
BARBARA: She's just outside, dear.
DOROTHY: I want Mother . . .
BARBARA: I'm bringing her right in.
   FERGUSON meanwhile has turned to face CUNNINGHAM, who is nervously fidgeting with his pince-nez.
DOROTHY: Dr. George . . . my operation hurts me here . . .
FERGUSON, sympathetically: Oh! We'll fix that up in a minute! To CUNNINGHAM. An opium suppository, doctor?
ACT ONE, Scene 3

CUNNINGHAM: No! To BARBARA. Morphine! A twelfth!
BARBARA: Yes, sir. She goes.
CUNNINGHAM, turns his glance on FERGUSON: I ought to report you, of course! You're a damned, meddling young puppy... He hesitates a moment. However... under the circumstances, I guess I can afford to be lenient... this time. But if you ever dare interfere again in any of my cases...!

MR. AND MRS. SMITH enter. They rush to the bedside.

MRS. SMITH, crying and laughing: Dorothy, my darling.
MR. SMITH: Dots! Dots!
MRS. SMITH: Are you all right, my baby? She kisses DOROTHY. My baby!
DOROTHY: Oh!... my operation, Mother... CUNNINGHAM: Careful, Mrs. Smith....
MR. SMITH: Careful, Rose!
MRS. SMITH: Yes... yes... of course. Did I hurt my darling?
CUNNINGHAM: Now, the child's been through quite an ordeal. You mustn't excite her. I want her to have some rest... you'd better... Indicating the door with his hand.
MR. SMITH: Yes, come, Rose.... She's weak.... To DOROTHY. Go to sleep, darling.
MRS. SMITH: Goodbye, dear! She kisses her. Is there anything Mother can bring you, darling?
DOROTHY, sleepily: No, Mama....
MR. SMITH kisses the child, takes his wife's arm and leads her away.
CUNNINGHAM, turns to FERGUSON: Order a blood sugar! If there are any new developments, phone my secretary at once!
MRS. SMITH, to CUNNINGHAM: She'll be all right, Doctor?
CUNNINGHAM: Yes... yes... You call me tonight!

DR. CUNNINGHAM, MR. AND MRS. SMITH start to go.

MRS. SMITH, as they exit, to CUNNINGHAM: Doctor, how can I ever thank you enough for this?
FERGUSON, goes to DOROTHY: Well, young lady, how about getting some sleep?
DOROTHY: O.K., Dr. George!
FERGUSON: Close your eyes!
DOROTHY: But don't go away!
FERGUSON, sits on bedside: No.... I'll sit right here! Come on! DOROTHY takes his hand, shuts her eyes, and dozes off. Enter BARBARA with hypo.
FERGUSON whispers. She won't need that!
BARBARA: Did Dr. Cunningham say anything to you?
FERGUSON: No. He stares down at DOROTHY. Pretty kid, isn't she?
BARBARA: I was scared we were going to lose her.
FERGUSON, touches the sleeping child’s hair, and murmurs: She has hair like Laura’s.

BARBARA: What, Doctor?


BARBARA: I think it was wonderful of you to stand up against Dr. Cunningham that way! I . . .

FERGUSON, annoyed, turns to hypo, etc., and says a bit curtly: Better clean up that mess.

BARBARA: Yes, sir. She puts hypos, etc., on trays. Suddenly her trembling fingers drop the hypo. It splinters with a crash.

FERGUSON, angrily: Here! Glances over at the sleeping child. What’s the matter with you?

BARBARA: I’m sorry. I was just... nervous, I guess.

FERGUSON, looks at her a moment. She is a soft, feminine girl. . . . Her jet black hair and serious, large brown eyes are set off to pretty advantage by the blue and white student-nurse uniform. She has a simple, naive quality that lends her an air of appealing wistfulness. He sees how genuinely nervous she is... and smiles to reassure her: Has Cunningham been treating you too?

BARBARA, smiles: No, sir. This is my first case with a sick child and I got to like her an awful lot. I guess that was...

FERGUSON: I see. What’s your name?

BARBARA: Barbara Dennin.

FERGUSON: You’re going to be a swell nurse, Barbara!

BARBARA: Thanks!

FERGUSON: Now, take my advice! I know just how you feel—nerves all tied up in a knot... want to yell! Feel the same way myself. . . . You get as far away from here as you can, tonight. Have a good time! Relax! Forget hospital! Tomorrow you’ll be all right.

BARBARA: I... I can’t. I have an exam in Materia Medica tomorrow.

FERGUSON: Materia Medica? . . . Hm! . . . I think I have some notes that may help you. . . . I’ll leave them with the orderly on the first floor, and you can get them on your way down.

BARBARA: Thanks.

FERGUSON: May help you a bit. You won’t have to cram all night, anyway.

The loudspeaker is calling “Dr. Ferguson.” MARY, another and much older nurse, enters with a basin, etc.

MARY: Your call, Dr. Ferguson?

FERGUSON, listening: Yes. Are you on duty here now?

MARY: Yes, sir.

FERGUSON: If she wakes with any pain, give her an opium suppository! If her temperature goes below normal, call me! I’ll be in.
MARY: Tonight, too?
FERGUSON, almost savagely: Yes, tonight, too! *His name is called louder, more insistently. He turns to the door, mutters to the loudspeaker:* All right! All right! I'm coming! He goes. MARY turns to stare after him, her eyebrows raised in surprise.
MARY: Gee! Ain't he snappy today?
BARBARA simply stares after him.

BLACK OUT

ACT ONE
Scene 4

A tiny, sombre, austere, cell-like room, with hardly enough space for its simple furnishings—a cot-bed, a bureau, a desk, a chair, a small bookcase, and a washbasin. On the bureau is a small radio—the one luxury in the room. On the walls are two framed diplomas—the sole decorations. The room is untidy—as all interns' rooms are; the bed is messed, it being customary for interns to use it as a lounge; the books are piled irregularly on the bookshelves, on the desk, on the bureau, and on the floor. A moonlit night filters in through a single square window. FERGUSON, wearing spectacles, is at his desk, reading, by the light of a desk lamp, a ponderous medical tome. Occasionally he jots down a note.
A knock at the door.
FERGUSON, without looking up, in a tired voice: Come in!
Enter SHORTY in a stiff-bosom shirt, collar, white vest.
SHORTY, triumphantly: Well, I got the vest....
FERGUSON: That's good.
SHORTY: Can you lend me a tie, George? Mine is—er—
FERGUSON rises and wearily goes to his dresser, finds a tux bow tie, hands it to SHORTY.
FERGUSON: Here you are, Shorty. *He sits down again to his book.*
SHORTY: Thanks! Say, do you mind making a bow for me? I can never get these things straight.
FERGUSON: Come here! I'll try. *He starts to tie SHORTY's bow.*
SHORTY: Drink in my room... if you want one.
FERGUSON: I don't think so, Shorty!
SHORTY: Good drink!... Ginger ale, sugar and alcohol... out of the large jar in the path lab....
FERGUSON: Stand still, will you? *After fumbling nervously with the tie, he*
makes a bad job of it. Oh, hell! I can't do it! Sorry! He undoes the tie. Ask Laidlaw!

SHORTY, looks askance at FERGUSON: Nerves, young fellow! . . . Better see a doctor about that!

PETE, pokes in his head: Anything to eat in here?

FERGUSON: Some chocolate!

PETE: Good! Enters—comes up to desk.

FERGUSON: Here! Gives him a chunk. SHORTY starts to go. Have a good time, Shorty!

SHORTY, confidently: I will.

PETE, stands there, eating chocolate: Hope she gives in without a struggle.

SHORTY: No fun, you dope—without a struggle. Exits.

PETE: Oh yeah? Calls after him. Well, take off my vest before you start. I don't want any stains on it. He returns to the desk and points to the chocolate. Now can I have some of that myself? He reaches over and breaks off a piece of chocolate.

FERGUSON, smiles: Who was the first piece for?

PETE: Oh that? That was for my tapeworm. He holds up the chocolate. This is for me. Pops it into his mouth. FERGUSON laughs a tired laugh, and hands him the rest of the large bar, anxious to get rid of him.

FERGUSON: Here, take it all, Pete!

PETE: Thanks! What a lousy dinner we had tonight! Fish! . . . Oh, how I hate fish!

FERGUSON: Friday night.

PETE: Yeah! Say! What are you doing in?

FERGUSON: 401 may need a transfusion. . . .

PETE: A lot of good that'll do him! Stuffs his mouth with chocolate. For Christ's sake . . . he passed out. . . .

FERGUSON: No?

PETE: About ten minutes ago.

FERGUSON, slowly: Gee, that's too bad!

PETE, jamming in a huge chunk of chocolate: Yeah! Say, I'm hungry. . . . I'm going to run out to Fleischer's and grab a sandwich. Will you keep an eye on my floor till I get back?

FERGUSON: All right! Hurry it, will you? . . . I may be going out myself.

PETE: Be right back! Exits.

FERGUSON sits there a moment, staring blankly at the wall. Finally he sighs, wearily closes the book, pushes it away, takes off his spectacles, puts them in a case, and reaches for the phone.

FERGUSON: Outside wire, please! . . . Atwater 9-0032. . . . Yes. . . . Hello! Hello! Is Miss Hudson there? Dr. Ferguson calling. . . . Yes. . . . Hello,
ACT ONE, Scene 4

Laura! . . . How are you dear? . . . Feeling better? . . . Oh! . . . Well, look dear, I can make it tonight, after all. What? . . . Oh, don't be silly! . . . But darling . . . we'll work that out! We'll find some . . . It's so far away, yet . . . Why talk about . . . ? Listen, Laura! That chance to work with Hochberg is one of the best breaks I've ever had! You don't expect me to throw it over, like that, at a moment's notice, simply because you have some crazy idea that . . . No, no! I don't want to even talk about it, tonight. I'm tired, Laura. It's been a hell of a day! Three operations and . . . I can't think! I can't make an important decision tonight . . . in a minute! Oh, Laura! What the hell are you doing? Punishing me? . . . All right, Laura. A knock at the door. All right. . . . I'll see you tomorrow night! . . . Yes . . . yes . . . goodbye! He hangs up, somewhat sharply, then wearily goes to the door, opens it. DR. LEVINE is standing there.

LEVINE: I'm sorry if I . . .

FERGUSON: Oh, no! Come on in, Dr. Levine!

DR. LEVINE, murmurs a hardly audible thanks and enters. He looks about, touches the desk, smiles, nods, and murmurs almost to himself: Yes. . . . Yes . . . it certainly is nice! Six years . . . like yesterday. Looks at his watch. Think that report is ready?

FERGUSON: I'll see. Takes phone.

LEVINE: Oh, don't trouble!

FERGUSON: That's . . . Into phone. Hello! Path lab, please! To Dr. Levine.

What did Dr. Hochberg find?


LEVINE, nods: Poor Katherine! She's had so much. Things were so different when I was here . . . before I married.

FERGUSON: Yes . . . Professor Dury told me.

LEVINE: Dury? I know just what he says: Levine—the fool!—wealthy mother—chance to work with Hochberg—to be somebody. Threw it all away . . . for a pretty face. He laughs to himself, sadly. —Hm . . . Dury!

FERGUSON: Your mother? Hasn't she . . . ? DR. LEVINE shakes his head. Not yet? . . . Well, she'll come around to your way.

LEVINE, shakes his head again: No. When I married Katherine, a gentle, and my mother disowned me . . . it must have broken her heart. But still, she was doing the right thing from her point of view. . . . He sighs. Poor Katherine! I didn't count on that! East side! Tenements! Fifty-cent patients! Poverty! Dirt! Struggle! He shakes his head. I don't know. Maybe
it would have been better for her the other way... maybe. *He smiles sadly at Ferguson.* Burnt offerings! Jehovah and Aesculapius! They both demand their human sacrifice... *Pauses.* Medicine! Why do we kill ourselves for it?

FERGUSON: I don't know. I often wonder, myself, whether it was worth the grind of working my way through college and med school... 

LEVINE: Med school, too?

FERGUSON: Yes.

LEVINE: I don't see how you kept up with classes.

FERGUSON: I managed.

LEVINE: Terrific grind!

FERGUSON: It wasn't much fun... but, still... I guess it's the only thing I really want to do... *Pause.* My dad used to say, "Above all is humanity!"

He was a fine man—my dad. A small-town physician—upstate. When I was about thirteen, he came to my room one night and apologized because he was going to die. His heart had gone bad on him. He knew if he gave up medicine and took it easy he could live for twenty years. But he wanted to go right on, wanted to die in harness... And he did. *Pause.* Above all else is humanity—that's a big thought. So big that alongside of it you and I don't really matter very much. That's why we do it, I guess.

LEVINE: You're right, of course! Ah... it's not good—too much suffering! Kills things in you... A doctor shouldn't have to worry about money! That's one disease he's not trained to fight. It either corrup... or it destroys him. *He sighs.* Well... maybe someday the State will take over Medicine... 

FERGUSON: Before we let the State control medicine, we'd have to put every politician on the operating table, and cut out his acquisitive instincts.

LEVINE, laughs: That, I'm afraid, would be a major operation!

FERGUSON, smiles: Yes... *Then he becomes serious again, working himself up, thinking of Laura.* But, it is a danger! We can't allow outside forces, or things... or people to interfere with us... We can't! And, if they do, we've got to bar them out... even if we have to tear out our hearts to do it... *LEVINE looks puzzled. He can't quite follow this. FERGUSON suddenly realizes the personal turn his thoughts have taken, sees LEVINE's bewilderment, and stops short. He laughs, a bit self-conscious. I'm sorry. I guess that's a bit off the track... just something personal.*

LEVINE, smiles: Oh! Yes... *A knock at the door. FERGUSON goes to the door. An orderly is there.*

ORDERLY: Dr. Ferguson?

FERGUSON: Yes?

ORDERLY: Dr. Finn sent this down! *He hands FERGUSON a printed report.*
FERGUSON: Oh, yes, thanks! Orderly goes. FERGUSON is about to hand it to LEVINE. Doctor . . . FERGUSON glances at it and suddenly stiffens. One second!

LEVINE, suddenly becomes tense, too: Dr. Ferguson! Is that . . . ?

FERGUSON, in a strained, brittle voice: Wait! He goes to the phone. Path lab!

LEVINE: Is that for me?

FERGUSON doesn’t answer him.

FERGUSON: Path lab? . . . Dr. Finn . . . Ferguson! That report you just sent me . . . are you positive? . . . Make sure! Look again . . .

LEVINE: IS that the finding on my . . . ?

FERGUSON, over the phone: Yes. . . . Yes. . . . Clear as that? Slowly. I’m afraid you’re right. He hangs up slowly, turns to LEVINE, hands him the card in silence.

LEVINE, takes it, reads it. He droops. His fingers tremble, the card falls to the ground. After a moment’s silence he wets his lips and murmurs, almost inaudibly: I knew it. . . . I knew it. . . .

FERGUSON: Gee, I wish I could tell you how sorry I . . .

LEVINE: Tuberculosis! Oh, my poor Katherine! He sits down on the bed and stares vacantly ahead. What are we going to do, now?

FERGUSON, goes to the bed, sits down next to him, tenderly puts a hand on his shoulder: She’ll come through all right! You’ll see. A silence. DR. LEVINE pulls himself together. Perhaps if you took her to a drier climate . . .

LEVINE: Maybe . . . maybe! He rises. That means . . . giving up the little practice I have . . . means starting all over again. I don’t know if we can do it. We’re not young, any longer. I don’t know . . .

DR. LEVINE turns toward the door.

FERGUSON: Is there anything I can do?

LEVINE: No, thanks! Thanks! Exit DR. LEVINE.

FERGUSON stands there a moment, staring after him. Enter PETE.

PETE, sucking his teeth with great gusto: Boy, what a roast-beef sandwich I had! Mm! He sucks his teeth louder. Have you got a . . . oh, yeah! He reaches over and takes a tongue-depressor out of FERGUSON’s breast pocket. PETE splits the depressor and, using one of the splinters as a toothpick, continues to make an even greater noise with his lips. FERGUSON, pretty near the cracking point, turns his back on PETE. PETE goes to the radio, and tunes in on a loud jazz number. He flops down onto the bed—sucks his teeth. Going out?

FERGUSON: No!

PETE: Change your mind?

FERGUSON: Yes.

PETE: Boy, you know that Miss Simpson down in the X-ray lab—She was
over at Fleischer's. Next table to mine. Say—she's swell all dressed up in street clothes. I looked at her for ten minutes without recognizing her. I guess maybe it was because I wasn't looking at her face. Sucks his teeth. Luscious! She had one of those tight black silk dresses . . . absolutely nothing else on underneath—you could see that. And a pair of mammaries! Mm!

FERGUSON, tensely: Pete! I want to do some reading. Will you get the hell out?

PETE, sits up, looks at FERGUSON, rises quickly: Sure! With a puzzled, backward glance at FERGUSON, he goes. FERGUSON switches off the radio, walks up and down the room, almost frantic, then throws himself face down on the bed. There is a timid little knock at the door.

FERGUSON: Come in! The knock is repeated. FERGUSON rises, calling impatiently. Come in. Come in! BARBARA opens the door and slips in, breathless with the adventure. What . . . er?

BARBARA: I came down for those notes . . .

FERGUSON: Oh! Of course. I forgot . . . stupid of me. Let's see—what was it? Materia Medica?

BARBARA: Yes.

FERGUSON, looks through drawer in his desk: I had them here someplace.

BARBARA: I suppose I oughtn't to have come in.

FERGUSON, sorting notes: Pathology, Histology—no—no.

BARBARA: I hope nobody saw me.

FERGUSON, sorting notes: Materia Medica. Here! He takes a notebook out of the drawer, glances through it, hands it to her. There you are!

BARBARA: Thanks!

FERGUSON: Not at all! . . . Hope they're some help. He goes to the window, looks out—dismissing her. Still in his old mood.

BARBARA, stands there a moment, waiting. Finally, she asks timidly: Is there . . . anything wrong?

FERGUSON: What?

BARBARA: Anything wrong?

FERGUSON: Oh! No! No! He turns to the window again. BARBARA hesitates a moment—sees that he has already forgotten her in the intensity of his mood. She slowly turns, opens the door, looks out, and suddenly shuts it with an exclamation of fright. What—

BARBARA, breathless . . . frightened: Head nurse! Outside!

FERGUSON: See you? Wait a minute! She'll be gone! Better sit down!

BARBARA: Thanks! She watches him a moment. Are you sure Dr. Cunningham didn't—FERGUSON shakes his head. Because . . . if it would mean anything . . . I'd go right down and tell them all—everybody—just what happened . . .
FERGUSON: No, it's not Cunningham—
BARBARA: What is it, then?
FERGUSON: It's just— *With an effort he shakes off his mood. Don't mind me tonight.*
BARBARA: You work very hard, don't you?
FERGUSON, *almost savagely*: Work? Sure! What else is there *but* work—
and work! He suddenly realizes BARBARA is staring at him. He pulls himself together. Let's see those notes! *She brings them to him. He places the book on the desk, leans over it, and turns the pages. There!* BARBARA is next to him, leaning over the notes, her head near his. *These pages synop-size the whole business. Read through the notes carefully; memorize these pages—and you've got it! I think you'll find it lots easier that way.*
BARBARA, *pointing to a word*: What's this?
FERGUSON: Calomel!
BARBARA, *her head almost touching his*: Oh, of course! It's a C.
FERGUSON, *hands her the book*: Clear?
BARBARA: Yes. *As she reaches for the book, her hand meets his, and she clings to it.* You know, when I thought Dots was going to die ... I got the feeling like I ... I ... God! ... I can't put it into words!
FERGUSON: I know. I know that feeling....
BARBARA: You, too?
FERGUSON: Me, too? *Clutching his throat. Up to here, Barbara! Right now! Christ! I'm tired of work, and blood and sweat and pain! And the chap in 401 is dead! And Levine's wife is going to die ... and one begins to wonder where in Heaven's God, and what in Hell's it all about, and why on earth does anything make any difference.*
BARBARA, *clutches his arm with her hand*: Yes, that's the feeling ... and you get so lonely ... and you feel ... tomorrow it's me ... and the only thing that matters is just being alive ... just being alive. Now! ... Isn't it?
FERGUSON, *looks at her sympathetically*: You kids have a pretty tough time of it, don't you? Grind all day and lights out at ten o'clock.
BARBARA: And only one night out till twelve-thirty ... and I haven't taken mine in two months. There's just nobody ... They are very close, now. *She almost whispers the last words to him.*
FERGUSON: You're a sweet girl, Barbara. *Suddenly he takes her in his arms and kisses her. She clings to him for a moment. Then they separate. He is confused and upset. I'm sorry, Barbara ... I ... He goes to the notes, opens them—*after a pause.* These diagrams here go with this page. Aside from that, I guess they'll be pretty clear. *He gives the book to her ... grips her shoulder.* Please don't feel that I ... just ...
BARBARA: Oh! No! No!
FERGUSON: Thanks. Goes to the door... opens it... looks out. I'm going up to Ward C, to look around for a few seconds. The coast is clear—you'd better go now. Exit FERGUSON.

BARBARA takes up the notes... walks slowly to the door... hesitates there a moment... is about to go out, suddenly stops... decides to stay. For a moment she leans against the door, breathless, then she goes back into the room, slowly drops the notes on the table, goes to the bed, sits down, takes off her cap, throws it on the bed, and sits there... waiting.

CURTAIN
ACT TWO, Scene 1

Scene 1

Three months later.
A softly lit room, the main feature of which is a long table. Seated about it are the members of the Joint Committee—three laymen representing the Lay Board, and four doctors representing the Medical Board. Beyond them, we see mahogany panels, a huge fireplace and an oil portrait hanging over it, dark plush portieres drawn to conceal windows and doors—in effect, a rich boardroom of the same general conspiratorial appearance as the boardroom of a railroad, a steel, oil, banking, or other big business institution.

At rise: Mr. HOUGHTON, short, stodgy, aggressive . . . the economist, has just finished reading a report.

HOUGHTON: . . . 28,000—19,000—33,500, which adds up to a total deficit of 163,000 dollars so far, doctors. He shakes his head. You'll have to cut down those expenses, doctors.

GORDON: How?

WREN: We're to the bone, already. We've cut—

SPENCER, presiding, gray-templed, sure, suave, six generations of Harvard! He gives Dr. Wren the floor. Dr. Wren!

WREN, rises: Everything—our staff, nurses, technicians, salaries, meals—telephones even! Our interns are allowed only two outside calls . . .

HOCHBERG: An absurd economy!

HOUGHTON, taking some papers out of his briefcase: Mm! . . . It seems to me we've a lot of people in our laboratories. Couldn't we reduce—

HOCHBERG: No, no—To the chairman. Mr. Spencer!

SPENCER, giving Hochberg the floor: Dr. Hochberg.

HOCHBERG, rises, and explains, very patiently: Those laboratories, Mr. Houghton, are the hospital. Most of our real work is done in them. He smiles and shakes his head. Without that pathology lab and the chemistry lab and the X-ray lab we're helpless.

RUMMOND, rather old and dim-witted, trying very hard to be a constructive part of this business, but not quite able to grasp it: You are? . . . Really?

HOCHBERG: Absolutely.

RUMMOND: Hm. Interesting. I didn't realize they were that important.

HOCHBERG: Oh, yes.

GORDON: I should say so.

HOUGHTON: Well, then . . . He looks at his papers, and shakes his head. I don't know. 163,000 dollars—these days! The Board of Trustees is—

SPENCER: Er . . . we'll come back to that later, Mr. Houghton. I want to
clear away all . . . er . . . Dr. Gordon! Any reports from the Medical Board to this joint committee?

GORDON: Appointments! Two-year internships, gentlemen—recommended on the basis of competitive examinations. Starts looking through some papers for the list. Interns . . . Ah, yes. Finds his list and reads from it. Aubert, Dickinson, Flickers, Frankey, Gordon, Kern, Monroe! The Medical Board awaits your approval of these men.

HOUGHTON, quickly: Where's Ten Eyck?

SPENCER: You still can't do anything for Ten Eyck?


HOUGHTON: Senator Ten Eyck's going to be sore as hell. . . .

LARROW, pompous pedant, cut pretty much from the same pattern as Dr. Cunningham: I met the boy. Seems well-bred. Good family. . . .

WREN: He doesn't know anything. I gave him his oral in medicine. An ignoramus.

LARROW: Examinations! Bah! He graduated at an approved medical school, didn't he?

WREN: How he managed it is a mystery to me.

Together GORDON: We gave him special consideration, Mr. Spencer. But he just won't do.

SPENCER: Well—his uncle's kicking up a fuss, but if the boy's that bad. . . . After all, you know best. The appointments are in your hands. Which brings me to the real purpose of this special meeting. He organizes his papers, clears his throat, and looks at them a moment. Then portentously.

Mr. Houghton has just . . . er . . . read the bad news.

WREN: We usually run up a much larger deficit.

SPENCER, smiles at this naïveté, so typical of the doctor in business: Yes . . . but these are unusual times, Doctor. As you, no doubt, have heard, there has been a depression.

GORDON: Has been? I like that. You try and collect some of my bills.

LARROW: Yes. People are too poor to get sick these days.

Hochberg: That's something no matter how poor a man is he can always get—sick!

Gordon and Wren enjoy a laugh at Larrow's discomfiture.

SPENCER: Er . . . Doctors! Please! This is a very important matter! They quiet down, and lean forward. There is no escaping the note of impending ill news in Spencer's manner. Two of our Trustees are very shaky, and may
not be able to meet their usual subscription at all. They've already spoken to me about resigning. The doctors look at each other. This is bad. And so, I've been looking around carefully for a new Trustee—and believe me, doctors, it was a mighty hard search. But, finally—He smiles.—I found someone to underwrite our deficit. *Sighs of relief and approval from the doctors.* A man well known for his philanthropies, his generous soul, his civic and social services—John Hudson—the real estate Hudson. *Hochberg grunts.* A friend of yours, I believe, Doctor!

**Hochberg:** Yes. But I didn't recognize him by the description. *Mr. Spencer laughs.* He'll be useful. The only real estate man I heard of who's made money the last few years. Good business head. He'll put St. George's on a paying basis.

**Spencer, laughs:** If he can do that, he's a wizard. Mr. Houghton will resign in favor of him tomorrow.

**Houghton:** With pleasure.

**Spencer:** I've talked the matter over with him, and he's definitely interested.

*Chorus of approval from the committee.*

**Houghton:** If we can get him to subscribe for . . .

**Spencer:** Mr. Houghton! Please!

**Houghton:** Sorry!

**Spencer:** Now, it happens that one of our interns is marrying John Hudson's daughter—in a few weeks, I believe. Of course, Doctors, appointments lie completely in your hands, but we feel here is an opportunity. We suggest the Medical Board offer Dr. Ferguson an associateship. . . .

**Hochberg:** What? Impossible!

**Spencer:** Impossible? A serious student, capable, going to study a year abroad under a well-known man—why impossible?

**Hochberg:** He won't be ready for the job!

**Spencer:** Have you any personal prejudice against the boy?

**Hochberg, annoyed:** No . . . no! *He rises.* As a matter of fact, I'm very fond of that boy. I think he has promise of becoming a good surgeon, someday. But not overnight. He has years of intensive study ahead of him. I don't care what strength of character is native to a man—he will not work for something he can get for nothing—and Ferguson's no exception. An associateship here now simply means he'll go into practice and drop his studies.

**Larrow:** And why shouldn't he? He's marrying well. . . . With his wife's connections, he ought to . . . er . . . do very nicely.

**Hochberg:** If he doesn't continue his studies, he'll never be worth a damn as far as medicine goes.
SPENCER: After all, Dr. Hochberg, that's his concern, not ours.

LARROW: Oh! Dubiously. He's all right. . . . But—with conviction—he's no infant Cushing by any means.

Together SPENCER: We must think of the hospital, Doctors!
That's our job.

HOCHBERG, losing his temper. To DR. LARROW: You're wrong, Doctor. That boy has unusual ability. Yes, yes—another Cushing, perhaps! Controls himself—to MR. SPENCER quietly. Exactly, Mr. Spencer! The hospital! Do you realize the responsibility in precious human life that lies in an associate's hands? Ferguson doesn't know enough, yet; he's apt to make mistakes that will hurt not only himself, but the integrity of St. George's Hospital.

SPENCER: Oh, come now, Dr. Hochberg!

Together Houghton: Oh, for Christ's sake. . . .

RUMMOND: Nothing to be thrown away so lightly!

SPENCER: What do you think, Dr. Wren?

WREN, slowly: Well . . . he won't be ready for it, of course, but—er—we could see to it that he'd always be covered by an older man!

HOCHBERG: And give him nothing to do! Make a figurehead of him. Fine!
That's fine!

HOUGHTON: What of it?

GORDON: Of course, we don't exactly approve of the appointment, however . . .

HOUGHTON, exploding: Approve! Approve!

SPENCER, irritably: Mr. Houghton! Please! HOUGHTON subsides with a grunt. Dr. Gordon! Go on!

GORDON: Of course, we don't exactly approve the appointment for such a young man; however, we do need Hudson. And Ferguson's not a fool, by any means.

SPENCER: Exactly, Dr. Gordon.

HOCHBERG: But, Josh, don't you see—?

GORDON: Leo, we've got to face the facts. There's hardly a hospital in this city that hasn't shut down on its charity wards. I know a dozen that have completely closed off entire floors and wings! If we have to economize any more, our wealthy patients will take care of themselves, but who's going to take care of all your charity cases? The wards upstairs are full, right now.

HOUGHTON: It takes money to run a hospital, Doctor!

Together HOCHBERG, to GORDON: You're right, Josh . . . you're . . . To HOUGHTON. I know, Mr. Houghton, I know.

And, believe me, we're deeply grateful to you gentlemen for your help.
Together

RUMMOND: A good cause.

SPENCER: I only wish I could subscribe more, Doctor! I would.

HOCHBERG: Yes. Deeply grateful. . . . Although it's a social crime, gentlemen, that hospitals should depend on the charity of a few individuals.

The trustees look at each other, not quite sure whether they've been attacked or flattered.

LARROW: The fact remains that we can't afford to refuse Hudson's help.

HOCHBERG: I don't say that.

LARROW: We need him.

HOCHBERG: We do. And till hospitals are subsidized by the community and run by men in medicine, we'll continue to need our wealthy friends. I realize that. I say by all means make Hudson a Trustee. Take all the help he can give. And promise Ferguson an associateship as soon as he's ready to go into practice.

SPENCER: And that'll be—when?

HOCHBERG: In five or six years.

HOUGHTON: Oh, for Christ's sake! You're dealing with a businessman there, not a child!

Together

RUMMOND: You can't expect the man to—

SPENCER, smiling wryly: I'm very much afraid Hudson will tell us to come around ourselves in five or six years.

HOCHBERG, to SPENCER: How do you know?

SPENCER: He wants the boy to open an office and settle down.

HOCHBERG: He does? That's nice. Well, Ferguson won't be ready.

SPENCER: If we don't appoint the boy we can't expect Hudson to be interested.

WREN: There you are right, probably.

SPENCER: Well, that's—er—the important thing, after all, isn't it? Hudson's interest.

HOUGHTON: I should say it was his capital! HOUGHTON roars with laughter at his own quip.

SPENCER: Then you'll submit our recommendation to the Medical Board?

WREN: Yes. And they'll O.K. it, too. I'm pretty sure it'll go through.

DR. HOCHBERG throws up his hands.

SPENCER: Fine! Fine! After all, Dr. Hochberg, as you say, we're here in a common cause—the hospital. He smiles. Looks over his papers. Mm! . . . Guess that's about all! He glances around. Anything else, gentlemen? Mr. Houghton? HOUGHTON gathers his papers, shakes his head "No," puts papers in portfolio. Dr. Wren?

WREN, looks at his watch: No. Nothing!
RUMMOND: What time have you there? *Compares watches, nods, rises, and gets his coat.*
SPENCER: Anybody? Then the meeting is—
GORDON: One second, Mr. Spencer! Since you're discussing this with Mr. Hudson, I think it would be a fine thing if we could extend our X-ray therapy department.
SPENCER: First give him the associateship, then we'll talk about equipment.
HOCHBERG, *rises*: Don't count your chickens, Josh!
GORDON: Oh, he'll get the appointment!
HOCHBERG: Yes. But he won't accept it.
SPENCER, *smiles*: What makes you say that?
HOCHBERG: I know the boy! He's too honest, too wise, to sacrifice his career for a nice office and an easy practice. Besides, he won't have the time. He's going to work with me! And . . . er . . . well . . . *He laughs.* It was perhaps a bit foolish to waste so much energy arguing the matter. *He starts for the door.*
SPENCER, *laughs*: As a matter of fact—I had dinner last night at the Hudsons' and I spoke to Ferguson about the appointment. He's delighted with the idea. . . .
HOCHBERG, *stops—returns—incredulous*: He said that?
All except HOCHBERG move toward the door. *He stands there, stock-still, palpably hit.*

BLACK OUT

ACT TWO
Scene 2

The library.

DR. MCCABE is sitting in an armchair, reading. MICHAELSON is seated at the long table. Nearby, SHORTY is swinging an imaginary golf club.

SHORTY: My stance was all wrong, see? That's one reason I sliced so much.

MCCABE looks up, grunts, and goes back to his book.
MICHAELSON: I wouldn't even know how to hold a club any more.
SHORTY: You'd be surprised. A couple of games, and you're right back in form. Look at Ferguson! He hasn't played tennis in years—since high
ACT TWO, Scene 2

school, I think he said—and yet, last week he beat Laura two sets in a row. And that girl swings a mean racquet.

PETE, enters, sour-faced: That patient in 310! Boy, I'd like to give him two dozen spinal taps and bite the point off the needle to make sure he feels them.

MICHAELSON: Whoa! Laughs. Your gallbladder needs draining, Pete!

PETE: Ah! The smart alec! He invited me to share this special lunch with him. When I heard lunch, I accepted— he snaps his fingers —like that! Then, morosely. Smart alec!

SHORTY: Well, what's the matter with that?

PETE: Do you know what 310's here for? Shrilly. Rectal feeding!

The others laugh.

MICHAELSON, looks up, annoyed: Sh! Sh! Quiet!

They glance over at him and quiet down. He goes back to his books.

SHORTY: Do you know what 310's here for?

PETE: Rectal feeding!

The others laugh.

McCABE, looks up, annoyed: What's that?

PETE: Sh! Sh! Quiet!

They glance over at him and quiet down. He goes back to his books.

They kid PETE in an undertone, muffling their laughter.

CUNNINGHAM, enters—looks around irritably: Where's Ferguson?

SHORTY: Not here, Doctor.

CUNNINGHAM: I've been trying to find him since twelve o'clock. What kind of house-service is this? Where is he?

MICHAELSON: Why, you see, Doctor—Ferguson's being married next week, and he's at a ceremony rehearsal or something.

CUNNINGHAM: I told him not to let 327's bladder become distended.

MICHAELSON: 327? Ferguson catheterized him this morning.

CUNNINGHAM: Well, he needs another.

SHORTY: I'll get one of the juniors to do it, right away.

CUNNINGHAM: Never mind! I'll do it myself. He goes to the door, grumbling. Fine house-service you get around here. 327 is full of urine.

PETE: And so are you.

McCABE, looks up: What's that?

PETE: I'm sorry, Doctor.

McCABE: What for? You're quite right. He is. The interns grin. McCABE looks at them quizzically. He turns to SHORTY. Young man! How would you treat the different forms of acute pancreatitis?

SHORTY, a study in blankness: Er . . . acute pancrea . . . mm . . . Why, the same way. I'd—

McCABE: Wrong! Pause, he shakes his head at SHORTY. You play golf, huh? He tosses a pamphlet to SHORTY. Read that, and find out something about pancreatitis. He suddenly draws his shoulders together and looks over at the windows. There's a— He turns to MICHAELSON. Will you see if that window's open? There's a draft in here, someplace. MICHAELSON crosses to the window.
Through the glass-paned door, we see Ferguson, in civilian clothes, and Laura coming up the corridor. They are in high spirits, joking and laughing. Ferguson starts to enter the library, but Laura hesitates in the doorway.

PETE: How was it?
Ferguson, grinning: Terrible.
Michaelson, to Ferguson and Laura: Ho’ there! To McCabe. They’re all closed, Doctor.
Ferguson, to Laura: Come on in!
Laura: Well—is it all right for me to—?

The interns assure her in chorus that it’s quite all right. Ferguson takes her arm and pulls her into the room.
Ferguson: Sure. Come on! To others. Any calls for me?
Michaelson: Yes. Quite a few, George.
Laura: You should have seen my hero! He was scared to death.
Ferguson: Who wouldn’t be?
SHORTY: What was it like?
Ferguson: Every step a major operation. Next time I take spinal anesthesia first. SHORTY SINGS A FUNERAL WEDDING MARCH. Exactly, Shorty! The last mile.

They laugh. McCabe looks up, very much annoyed. He snorts, shuts his book with a bang. The others stop laughing and glance at him. McCabe reaches for his cane, rises rustily, and goes out mumbling.
Laura, watches him go, then turns to the others, who grin: Perhaps I shouldn’t have come in here.
SHORTY: Nonsense!
MAC: It’s perfectly O.K.
PETE: Don’t mind old Doc McCabe! He thinks the world ended in 1917 when he retired.
Laura: Retired!
Ferguson: Yes, but he still comes around to talk, read, watch operations. Gives us hell for not knowing anything. Medicine’s not just his profession—it’s his life. He shakes his head admiringly. Great guy! If I live to be eighty, that’s the way I want to grow old!
Laura: Not I. When I’m too old to enjoy life firsthand I want to lie down, and say, “Laura, it was good while it lasted. Now, fini!”
SHORTY: My idea exactly. Why sit around and listen to your arteries hardening?
PETE: Don’t worry, sweetheart! The chances are none of us will live to grow that old. To Laura. Most doctors die pretty young, you know.
Laura looks pained.
Michaelson: That’s right. The strain gets them around forty-five. Heart goes bad.
LAURA, glances at FERGUSON and grimaces: There’s a pleasant thought.
FERGUSON, laughs: Cheerful bunch!
PETE: So I say—eat, drink and be merry—for tomorrow you . . . With a gesture. Pht!
MICHAELSON: George! Better phone in! Cunningham’s been looking for you!
FERGUSON: What’s he want now?
SHORTY: His shoes shined, or something. I don’t know.
PETE: 327 catheterized!
FERGUSON: Again? He’ll wind up by—Goes to phone.—giving that patient a urethritis. Picks up the phone. Dr. Ferguson! I just came in. Any calls for me? Find him, will you? Library!
PETE: He’s certainly been giving you all the dirty work lately.
MICHAELSON: Yes!
SHORTY: What’d you do? Kick his mother?
FERGUSON: What’s the difference? Four more days and I’ll be aus intern.
LAURA: Who is this charming fellow?
FERGUSON: He doesn’t matter, darling! Nothing matters, now—except Vienna!
MICHAELSON: I bet you’ll have a swell time over there.
FERGUSON: You bet right! The phone rings. FERGUSON goes to it. On phone.
Yes, Dr. Cunningham? . . . Yes, Dr. Cunningham! . . . Yes . . . Oh, you’re quite right! . . . Yes . . . Yes . . . He winks at the boys, who smile and shake their heads. Uh, huh! . . . Yes . . . yes . . . All right, Doctor! Sure.
MAC: Will you have lunch with us, Laura?
PETE: A lousy lunch.
LAURA, laughs: Just had one, thanks! George and I dropped into Rumpelmayer’s after the rehearsal!
SHORTY: Rumpelmayer? At the St. Moritz?
LAURA: Yes.
PETE, hungrily: How was the food? Good?
LAURA: Delicious!
PETE: Oh? Sighs enviously, then in a resigned tone. Well—guess I’ll go down and eat slop.
MAC: Sure we can’t coax you?
LAURA: I’m full up to here! Thanks!
MAC: Sorry. So long.
MAC, SHORTY, and PETE go.
FERGUSON, still on the phone: Yes . . . Absolutely right, Doctor. I’ll tend to it. He hangs up, wrings the phone as if it were CUNNINGHAM’s neck, and grins at LAURA.
LAURA: Can I smoke in here?
FERGUSON: Sure.
LAURA, puts a cigarette in her mouth and waits for a light: Well?
FERGUSON: What? She points to her cigarette. Oh! He laughs, fishes out a packet of matches and lights her cigarette.
LAURA: Darling! You're marvelous this way. I've never seen you so high.
FERGUSON: I've never been so high! You know, dear, I love this old place, and yet, my God, I can't wait to get out of here.
LAURA: I was worried last night, after Mr. Spencer spoke to you—you looked so glum. I was afraid you might change your mind.
FERGUSON: Not a chance!
LAURA: Not bothered about that appointment?
FERGUSON: No. That'll be all right—if I get it.
LAURA: You'll get it.
FERGUSON: What do you know about it?
LAURA: I know you, you fish!
FERGUSON, grins, then suddenly becomes serious: I wonder if... Mr. Spencer spoke to the committee, yet?
LAURA: If he did, it's quick work.
FERGUSON: I hope he hasn't yet.
LAURA: Why?
FERGUSON: Well, I—want to talk to Dr. Hochberg first.
LAURA, laughs: Why are you so afraid of Hocky? He won't bite you! Or, do you think by delaying it you can change my mind—and work with Hocky when we come back?
FERGUSON: No, that's not it.
LAURA: Because if you do, I'm warning you! I'll just drop out of the picture, George. Even if we're married—you'll come home one day, and I just won't be there.
FERGUSON, takes her in his arms. Tenderly: Shut up, will you? It's just that I don't want to seem ungrateful.
LAURA: Oh, he'll probably find somebody else.
FERGUSON: Of course he will. Smiles, somewhat wistfully. There isn't a man I know who wouldn't give a right eye for the chance to work with Dr. Hochberg. You don't realize it, dear, he's an important man. He...
LAURA, impatiently: The important man, George, is the man who knows how to live. I love Hocky, I think an awful lot of him. But he's like my father. They have no outside interests at all. They're flat—they're colorless. They're not men—they're caricatures! Oh, don't become like them, George! Don't be an important man and crack up at forty-five. I want our lives together to be full and rich and beautiful! I want it so much.
Ferguson, fervently: Oh, my dear, so do I. . . . And believe me, that's the way it's going to be. He looks at her fondly. And I once thought I could live without you.

Laura: What? When?

Ferguson: Never! He kisses her. Nurse Jamison enters, smiles, embarrassed. Ferguson turns around, sees her, grins. Yes?

Jamison: Mrs. D'Andrea—the mother of that boy—the automobile accident that came in this morning—she's outside, raising an awful rumpus. Wants to see you.

Ferguson: Take her to Michaelson!

Jamison: I did! She wants to see you!

Ferguson: There's nothing I can tell her now.

Jamison: I know, Doctor, but she insists on seeing you.

Ferguson: What for? We won't know till tomorrow whether he'll live or die. Mrs. D'Andrea tries to enter. Nurse Jamison restrains her. All right! Let her in, Jamison! Let her in!

Mrs. D'Andrea: Dottore. . . . Dottore. . . . Heeza all right? Yes? Heeza all right?

Ferguson: I'm sorry! There's nothing I can tell you now.

Mrs. D'Andrea: Heeza gonna . . . live? Dottore?

Ferguson: Tomorrow! Tomorrow! You come back tomorrow! We'll know then—tomorrow.

Mrs. D'Andrea: Tomorrow?

Ferguson: Yes.

Mrs. D'Andrea: Mamma mia! Tomorrow! . . . Oh, Dottore! Pleeza! Pleeza! Don't let my boy die! Pleeza! . . .

Ferguson: I'll do everything I can, Mother. And you, try not to worry too much.

Nurse: Come! You'd better . . .

Mrs. D'Andrea to Nurse Jamison: Oh, lady, heeza my boy. . . . To Laura. Heeza my boy! Heeza besta boy I got. Heeza besta boy in the world. If he's gonna die I'm gonna die, too. . . . She prays in Italian.

Nurse: Come! Come! She leads out Mrs. D'Andrea.

As they go to the door, Dr. Hochberg enters, passing them. He pauses to watch them go, then turns to Ferguson.

Laura: Hello, Hocky!

Hochberg: Hello, Laura! To Ferguson. Who was that?

Ferguson: Mrs. D'Andrea, mother of that case . . . automobile accident . . . this morning.

Hochberg: Oh, yes, yes, yes, I know—you gave him a shot of tetanus antitoxin?
FERGUSON: Dr. Michaelson took care of that.
Hochberg: He did? Good! Glances at his watch. Where have you been since twelve o'clock?
FERGUSON: I was gone a little longer than I expected to be.
Laura: It was awfully important, Hocky.
Hochberg: It must have been.
FERGUSON: I left Michaelson in charge to cover me. I only meant to be gone half an hour. . .
Hochberg: In the meantime it was two.
FERGUSON: Sorry, Doctor! This won't happen again.
Hochberg: I hope not. He relaxes—becomes the old familiar again. Watch it! A few more days to go. Your record is clean. Keep it that way! There is a pause. Hochberg looks at George steadily for a moment. George becomes self-conscious and uneasy. Finally Dr. Hochberg speaks. George . . . I heard something this morning—I didn't know quite what to make of it. Pause. You still want to accomplish something in medicine?
FERGUSON: Certainly.
Hochberg: You mean that?
FERGUSON: Yes.
Hochberg, to Laura: You love George, don't you, Laura?
Laura: You know I do.
Hochberg: Of course you do and you want to help him—but that's not the way, Laura. Believe me, nobody can help George but himself—and hard work! He cannot buy this; he must earn it. To Ferguson. That appointment they talked to you about, George . . . you won't be ready for it. . . .
FERGUSON: After a year with von Eiselsberg, I thought . .
Hochberg: One year? He shakes his head.
FERGUSON: It's not as if I were going to drop my studies. I intend to keep on.
    Hochberg shakes his head.
Laura: I don't see why not!
Hochberg, to Laura: My dear child. . .
Laura: After all, George has worked so terribly hard till now, Hocky. If it's going to make things easier . . .
Hochberg: There are no easy roads in medicine.
FERGUSON: I didn't expect it to be easy. I counted on work. Hard work!
Hochberg: Ten years of it! Then . . . yes.
Laura: I can't see how it's going to hurt George.
Hochberg: There are a great many things you can't see, Laura.
Laura: If he goes into practice, we'll have some time for ourselves, Hocky.
Hochberg: Time? How? There are only twenty-four hours in a day. He's
working with me and if—He suddenly stops short as the truth strikes him. Or is he? To Ferguson. Are you?

Ferguson: Doctor Hochberg, I haven't loafed yet, and I don't intend to start now. But Laura and I are young, we love each other. I want a little more out of life than just my work. I don't think that's asking too much.

Hochberg: I see. I see. Pause. So, you've decided not to come with me next year.

There's a long silence. Finally Laura answers apologetically.

Laura: After all, Hocky, we feel that we'll be happier that way—and . . .

Hochberg: Of course, Laura. It's George's life and yours. You've a right to decide for yourselves—what you're going to do with it. I didn't mean to meddle. . . .

Laura: Oh, Hocky, you know we don't feel that way about you.

Hochberg: I'm glad you don't. . . . Pause. Trying to hide his hurt, he continues. How's Papa?

Laura: So-so. . . . He still has an occasional attack.

Hochberg: Still smokes, I suppose.

Laura, nods: When I'm not around. He's building again.

Hochberg: Well—don't let him work too hard!

Laura: As if I have anything to say about that! You know Dad! He usually has his way.

Hochberg, glances at Ferguson, then nods significantly: Yes. . . . Dr. Hochberg turns to George and says gently. You'd better get into your uniform, George. We may have to operate shortly. A new case just came in on the surgical service. One of our own nurses. What's her name? That nice little girl up in Pediatrics? Oh yes—Dennin! Barbara Dennin! You remember her? Pediatrics.

Ferguson, embarrassed: Oh, yes, yes. I remember her—an excellent nurse.

Hochberg: Poor child! Such a nice little girl, too. . . . Sepsis!

Ferguson, sympathetically: Oh! That's awful! She bad?

Hochberg: Temperature 105, blood count way up.

Ferguson: Tch! What was it—ruptured appendix?

Hochberg, shakes his head: Septic abortion!

Ferguson: Abortion?

Hochberg: Yes. Poor girl—it's a shame. Well, we'll see what we can do. Meet me up there. He starts towards the door.

Ferguson stands there, his brow wrinkling.

Michaelson, entering: That D'Andrea fellow is still unconscious. Seems to be something the matter with his lower jaw. . . .

Hochberg: What?

Michaelson: Protruding—somewhat rigid. Thought it might be tetanus.

Hochberg: No! Not so soon! Anyway, you gave him antitoxin, didn't you?
MICHAELSON: Why—er . . . He shoots a quick glance at FERGUSON. No!
HOCHBERG: What? Angrily. Don't you know yet that T.A.T. is routine in
this hospital?
MICHAELSON: Yes, sir . . . But I thought— To FERGUSON. You didn't tell
me. I thought you gave it!
HOCHBERG, to FERGUSON: Dr. Ferguson!
FERGUSON: I intended to . . . mention it to him. I guess—I—forgot. . . .
HOCHBERG: Forgot? Is that a thing to forget? You should have given the
antitoxin yourself!
LAURA: It's my fault, Hocky, I dragged him away—we were late.
HOCHBERG: That's no excuse. He's not supposed to leave the house at all!
And a very sick house, too. You know that, Dr. Ferguson!
FERGUSON: Yes, sir.
LAURA: Oh, Hocky—it was important! Terribly important! It was a re-
hearsal of our wedding.
HOCHBERG: A rehearsal? Yes, Laura, that's nice. A rehearsal of your wed-
ing. But do you realize, upstairs, there is a boy all smashed to bits. There'll be no wedding for him, if he develops tetanus. To FERGUSON.
Dr. Ferguson! Inject that antitoxin at once!
FERGUSON: Yes, sir! He goes.
HOCHBERG, turns to LAURA, looks at her a moment, then shakes his head
and says slowly: Laura, you deserve to be spanked! LAURA'S face becomes
angry and defiant. Her jaw tightens, but she says nothing. Don't you real-
ize what that boy's work means?
LAURA: Of course I do, Hocky.
HOCHBERG, very softly, almost to himself: No . . . no, you don't! Then,
lofter. Would you like to see, perhaps?
LAURA: Yes . . . why not? . . .
HOCHBERG, glances toward the corridor where MICHAELSON is standing,
talking to a nurse: Dr. Michaelson! MICHAELSON enters. Take Miss Hud-
son here upstairs, see that she gets a cap and gown, and have her in the
operating room in about—With a sharp jerk of his arm he bares his wrist
watch and looks at it.—twenty minutes! Without so much as another
glance at LAURA, he marches briskly out of the library.

BLACK OUT

ACT TWO
Scene 3

The end of the corridor. In the corner are the night desk and a medicine
cabinet. To the left of them is a room, numbered 401.
To the right are the elevator doors. A Woman and a Boy are waiting for the elevator.

A Nurse carrying a basin, some towels, etc., enters from the left. Mary comes out of 401, crosses to the night desk—takes a hypodermic needle and some bottles from the chest. The Nurse with the basin enters 401. The elevator whirs, and the doors open with a clang. An aged Couple step out first, then Ferguson. The Woman and the Boy enter the elevator. The doors clang shut, and the elevator whirs. The aged Couple cross to the left and disappear off. Ferguson starts to go into 401, stops, turns to Mary. Mary, who has been eyeing him, looks away.

Ferguson: How is she? Mary shakes her head. She is pale, grim, restrained. Temperature?
Mary: 106.
Ferguson: 106?
Mary: Yeah!
Ferguson: Delirious?
Mary: She was—before—Pause, as she lights a small alcohol lamp, and sterilizes a hypodermic needle by boiling it in a spoon held over the flame. She kept calling—for you.
Ferguson, suddenly rigid: For me?
Mary: Yeah!
Ferguson, stunned: Oh! He turns to enter the room.
Mary: Better wait! Dr. Hochberg's in there. She's quiet, now. If you went in she might start talking again.

The Nurse with the basin and towels comes out of the room, sees Ferguson, smiles at him, and as she crosses left, throws a cheery hello to him over her shoulder. He doesn't answer. Nurse, puzzled, exits left.
Ferguson: God! I never dreamed this would happen.
Mary: Men don't—usually . . .
Ferguson: Why didn't she come to me? Why didn't she tell me? Why did she keep away?
Mary: I guess that was my fault. Long time ago I saw she was falling for you. I told her you were in love with someone else, and engaged to be married—and to keep away from you. I didn't know then, that she already . . .
Ferguson: I see! I see! That's why she—I thought after that night . . . she'd just realized how crazy we'd both been. . . . Crazy! I thought she at least knew how to take care of herself. But when this happened . . . she should have told me! You should have told me! Why did you let her do this?
MARY: I didn’t know . . . till last night. It was . . . too late, then! She was just
a green kid! Didn’t realize what it was all about!
FERGUSON: God! I wouldn’t have let this happen! I wouldn’t have let this
happen . . .
MARY: I suppose you’d have helped her—
FERGUSON: Yes! Yes! Yes . . . rather than this . . .
HOCHBERG, pokes his head out the door of 401: Where’s that hypo?
MARY: In a second, Doctor!
HOCHBERG, to FERGUSON: Did you tend to D’Andrea?
FERGUSON: Yes, sir! Gave him the T.A.T. He’s conscious, now.
HOCHBERG: That business with his jaw?
FERGUSON, mechanically: Slight dislocation. Put it back into place. Band-
aged it! No further evidence of internal injury . . . Although there may be
a slight fracture of the tibia or the fibula of the left leg. I’ll have some X-
ray pictures taken this afternoon!
HOCHBERG: Uh huh! Pain?
FERGUSON: Complained of slight pain . . . general.
HOCHBERG: Did you give him some morphine?
FERGUSON: No, sir . . .
HOCHBERG: Why not?
FERGUSON: Accident case! Didn’t want to mask any possible internal in-
juries.
HOCHBERG: Ah! Yes. Very good, very good. To MARY. Er . . . tell me . . .
was this Miss Dennin a friend of yours?
MARY: Yeah . . . in a way. I sorta . . . liked her.
HOCHBERG: Well, she’s a mighty sick girl. You’d better notify her rela-
tives . . .
MARY: Ain’t none . . . that would be interested.
HOCHBERG: No? Her friends, then? MARY shakes her head. My . . . my! To
FERGUSON. What a pity! Tch, tch! He turns back into the room. Oh,
Wren, I want you to— He disappears into the room.
MARY: Nobody! Nobody to turn to!
FERGUSON: Her folks? Her people? At home! Surely there’s—
MARY: Yeah!—a stepfather! And to top it all, she’s going to be kicked out
of here!
FERGUSON: They wouldn’t do that!
MARY: Wouldn’t they, though? Ask Miss Hackett! And she won’t get into
any other hospital, either. They’ll see to that!
FERGUSON: Poor kid!
MARY: It might be a lucky break for her if she just passed out!
FERGUSON: What are you talking about? She can’t die! She’s got to pull
through! She’s got to!
ACT TWO, Scene 3

MARY: And then, what? . . . She hasn't got a dime to her name.

HOCHBERG and WREN come out of the room.

HOCHBERG: Tch! Poor girl! . . . Why do they go to butchers like that?

WREN: Well . . . she couldn't have come to us.

HOCHBERG: No. . . that's the shame! Ah, Wren, some of our laws belong to the Dark Ages! Why can't we help the poor and the ignorant? The others will always help themselves—law or no law.

FERGUSON: What are your findings on the case, Doctor?

HOCHBERG: Definite evidence of sepsis. . . . Better order the operating room, at once! A hysterectomy!

FERGUSON: Don't you think operation is contraindicated?

HOCHBERG: Not in this case.

FERGUSON: If we put her in Fowler's position and . . .

HOCHBERG: You see, the infection is localized in the uterus . . . and it's been my experience in cases like this . . . the only way to save the patient is to remove the focus of infection. Otherwise she hasn't a chance. . . .

FERGUSON: The girl was up in the children's ward. She asked to be put there, because she loves them. It seems a terrible shame to deprive her of the chance of ever having any of her own.

HOCHBERG: It is. It is a terrible shame—yes. But it's future life or her life.

We'll save hers . . . if we can. Order the operating room!

FERGUSON: Yes, sir.

HOCHBERG, to MARY: And, the man, who—was responsible—FERGUSON stiffens. Does he realize what's happened?

MARY: I suppose so.

HOCHBERG: Mmm, hmm! . . . Who is the man?

MARY: I don't know!

HOCHBERG: Well—if you can find out, he should be notified, at least. To FERGUSON. What are you waiting for? Order the operating room!

FERGUSON: Yes, sir. He goes to the phone. Operating room! . . . Hello! . . . How soon can you have the O.R. ready for a hysterectomy? Dr. Hochberg! Yes. . . . Turns to HOCHBERG. Ready now.

HOCHBERG: Good! To MARY. Patient prepared?

MARY: Yes!

HOCHBERG: Fine! Er—give her that hypo!

MARY: Yes, sir! Goes into BARBARA's room.

FERGUSON, into phone: Have her brought up at once.

FERGUSON, into phone: Patient ready! Send a rolling stretcher down to 401, at once! He hangs up.

HOCHBERG: Call the staff anesthetist!

WREN: I'll give the anesthesia, if you want me to, Hochberg.

HOCHBERG: There's no one I'd rather have.
WREN: General?
HOCHEB: No—no. I'm afraid to give her ether. . . . We can work better under spinal anesthesia.
WREN: Spinal?—Good!
HOCHEB: Come! I'd like to take a quick look at that D'Andrea boy.
WREN: I want to prepare my—
HOCHEB: A second! Come. To FERGUSON. You can start scrubbing, now.
Exit HOCHEB and WREN.

FERGUSON stands there a moment. MARY comes out. She puts the alcohol and iodine back on the emergency shelf.

MARY: Well, that's—
The elevator begins to whine. MARY and FERGUSON glance over at the indicator dial over the elevator door. It slowly comes round from O.R. to 3, where it stops. The door opens with a clang. An ORDERLY steps out, backward, pulling a rolling stretcher after him. He turns to MARY and grins.
ORDERLY: Well, here I am, sweetheart!
MARY, suddenly bursts into tears: Who the hell are you calling sweetheart?

She hurries into the room.
ORDERLY, puzzled: What the—He looks at FERGUSON, embarrassed, smiles, and shakes his head in bewilderment. Then he wheels the stretcher into the room.

THE ELEVATOR MAN who has kept the elevator door open, calls to FERGUSON in a monotone: Going down?
FERGUSON, slowly enters the elevator, then, in a low, harsh voice: Up! Operating room! The door clangs shut, the elevator whines siren-like, rising to a crescendo, as the indicator dial goes up.

BLACK OUT

ACT TWO
Scene 4

The Operating Room.
A feeling of sharp, white, gleaming cleanliness! Back center, the huge, hanging, kettledrum lamp, with its hundreds of reflecting mirrors, throws a brilliant, shadowless light on the chromium operating table. All the nooks and corners of the room are rounded off to facilitate cleansing, and to prevent the accumulation of dust.

To the right is the sterilizing room, with its polished nickel autoclaves, bubbling and steaming.

To the left is a long north skylight, double-paned.
There is one Sterile Nurse, wearing cap and gown, mask and long rubber gloves; there are two Unsterile Nurses, similarly clothed but wearing no gloves. They move to and fro like so many pistons, efficiently, quickly, quietly—ghostlike automata.

In the right-hand corner nearest us, stands a row of half a dozen sinks, the faucets in them turned on and off by means of knee-stirrups attached underneath. Above, a shelf holds cans of sterile brushes, pans of liquid soap, and eight-minute glasses—one to each sink. Well apart from these sinks, and to the right, are two basins in a white-enamel stand; one contains blue bichloride, the other alcohol. Beyond them again stands a foot-pedal gown drum, scarred from its purifying baths of steam.

To the left is a long glove table, on which are the gloves wrapped in canvas “books,” sterile powder can, and towels covered by a sterile sheet.

Wren, in cap and mask, is dipping his hands in the bichloride pan; Pete, at the washbasin, is cleaning his nails with an orange-stick, and Michaelson is scrubbing his hands with long, easy, rhythmic strokes of the brush. They are chatting quietly.

The Sterile Nurse goes to the glove table and folds over the sheet, uncovering the glove books, etc.

A Nurse comes from the sterilizing room, carrying a steaming tray of instruments to the instrument table at the foot of the operating table. The Sterile Nurse returns to the instrument table, and there is a clink of instruments as she arranges them.

Wren holds up his hands so that the bichloride rolls down the forearm and off the elbow; he repeats this once more in the bichloride, and twice in the alcohol pan, then walks away, holding his dripping hands high and away from him.

A Sterile Nurse gives him a sterile towel. He dries his hands, using the separate sides and ends of the towel for each hand, then he tosses the towel to the floor, and crosses to the glove table.

An Unsterile Nurse quickly crosses, picks up the towel, and takes it away. Wren powders his hands, opens a glove book, gingerly plucks out a glove, handling it by the cuff, careful not to touch the outside of the glove, as that might still soil it (since the hands themselves can never be completely sterilized) and slips it on. The second glove he slips on, careful not to touch his wrist with his already gloved hand. He then snaps the gloves over the cuffs of his jacket, wraps a sterile towel about his hands and walks over to the operating table.

Pete finishes scrubbing, goes to the bichloride basin, and dips his hands, using the same technique as Wren. When he is through with the alcohol, however, he turns to the gown drum. The Sterile Nurse crosses to the
drum, steps on the pedal, which raises the lid, and deftly extracts a folded gown, without touching the drum itself. She releases her foot, and the lid clunks back. She hands the folded gown to him; he takes a corner of it, unrolls it, and slips into it. An Unsterile Nurse comes up behind, careful not to touch him, and ties the gown for him.

The whole effect is that of a smooth, well-oiled machine, a routine so studied that the people in the operating room can afford to be casual—as they are.

One of the Unsterile Nurses enters with Laura, whom she has just helped into a cap and gown.

Nurse: All right?
Laura: Yes.
Michaelson, to Laura: Well, you're all set, now!
Laura, smiles nervously: Yes—thanks!
Michaelson: Not at all! A pleasure.
Laura, doubtfully: Oh! The pleasure's all mine!
Michaelson, laughs: I'll bet it is.
Laura: This gown seems awfully wrinkled.
Nurse: They're never pressed. That would unsterilize them.
Laura: Oh! I see. Enter Hochberg and Ferguson in operating pajamas.
They are putting on their masks. Hello!
Hochberg: Oh, hello! To Ferguson. We have a guest! He turns over the eight-minute glass and begins to scrub up.
Ferguson, stands stock-still for a moment: Laura! What? . . .
Laura: Surprise! She starts to go toward George.
Hochberg, warning her back with a quick gesture: Uh, uh! She stops.
Stand over there—in the corner! Don't come near us! We're getting clean!
You're full of contamination.
Laura: Oh—am I?
Ferguson begins to scrub up.
Hochberg: Yes. A long pause while they scrub. Hochberg, still scrubbing,
turns to Laura. Well—how do you feel?
Laura, trying to bluff off her nervousness: Great!
Hochberg: Mm, hm!
Laura: How do I look? She holds out her gown at both sides.
Hochberg: Very becoming!
Laura: Think so, George?
Ferguson: Yes—very!
Hochberg: You can look around, but keep out of the way! Don't touch
anything! Put your hands behind your back! A long silence, broken only by the rasping sound of scrubbing brushes. Laura stares, fascinated.

Hochberg: Oh, Nurse— A Nurse comes over. See that Miss Hudson here gets a mask before she goes in. Find a stool for her—and put it near the operating table! I don't want her to miss anything!

Laura, wryly: Thanks, Hocky!

Hochberg: Don't mention it, Laura!

Dr. Hochberg finishes scrubbing and goes through the same routine as the others. When he gets his gown he disappears to a corner of the operating room, hidden by the basins. Ferguson also goes through the routine of gown and gloves, etc.

Wren: Orderly! Orderly!

Orderly, enters from anesthesia room: Yes, sir?

Wren: Bring the patient in!

BARBARA is wheeled in by the Orderly. As she enters, Wren bends over to look at her. Ferguson comes over.

Ferguson: How is she, Doctor?

Barbara: George!

Ferguson: Yes?

Barbara: What are they going to do to me?

Ferguson: There's nothing to be afraid of, Barbara!

Barbara: You won't let them hurt me?

Ferguson: No, of course not.

Barbara: Will you be there? George, darling, please be there!

Ferguson: I'll be there.

Barbara: Thanks, dear.... I loved you.... I don't care.... Her head goes back.

Wren, looks at Ferguson, who is rigid. Then at Laura, who is equally rigid. He turns to Orderly and says, sharply: Come on! Come on!

The Orderly wheels Barbara to the operating table. Wren follows.

The patient is transferred to the operating table.

Laura: What was that all about?

Ferguson: Laura, I'm sorry as hell—I wish I...

Laura: George! Is it? She clutches his arm.

Ferguson, recoiling from her touch: Don't! You mustn't! Stand away! Over there! You've sterilized the gown! He tears off his gown and gloves, throws them on the floor, and calls into the sterilizing room. Nurse! Nurse! Sterile gown, gloves, towels! Quick! He turns to Laura, explains, apologetically. We've got to be very careful.... You know.... germs are...

A Nurse enters, picks up the gown and gloves. He dips his hands into
the bichloride pan, and then the alcohol pan. A Sterile Nurse brings him a sterile gown, he unfolds it and slides into it. And the Unsterile Nurse, behind him, ties it. In the meantime, another Nurse returns with a sterile towel. He dries his hands, and throws the towel on the floor. The Unsterile Nurse picks it up and takes it away. The Sterile Nurse powders his hands, brings him a sterile glove book and opens it. He plucks out a glove, and puts it on, the Nurse helping him, in approved aseptic technique, by thrusting her fingers under the cuff, and pushing home the glove. In the meantime, the patient, concealed by the people around her, has been anaesthetized, and is being draped. All the time, Laura has been staring at Ferguson. Ferguson, working the fingers of the gloves, looks at Laura. Exit the orderly with the rolling stretcher.

Laura: Did you... Did you have an affair with that girl—or what? Ferguson, almost inaudibly: Yes... Laura: Oh! A bitter little laugh. That's a funny one!

Hochberg, on a footstool, bends over the patient—calls: Dr. Ferguson!...

The call is taken up by a number of voices. A Nurse crosses to Ferguson.

Nurse: Dr. Ferguson! The patient is draped and ready!

Ferguson: All right! I'm coming! He goes to the operating table.

Nurse, to Laura: If you want to watch—you'd better go over. I'll get a stool for you—mask!

Laura: No, thanks!... I've had enough!... I've had enough!

A Second Nurse, enters: Here! Here! Get busy! Notices Laura. You!

What's the matter? You look so... Feel ill, dear? To First Nurse. Take her out! Near a window! Give her some water!

Laura: No!... No!... I'm... I'm fine!... Thanks! She tears off the tight cap, begins to sob, and exits.

The Nurses look at each other and grin.

First Nurse: Med student?

Second Nurse: Of course! First time! What else?

First Nurse: She's got a long way to go, yet! They laugh.

Nurse and doctors about the table turn and say, "Sh! Sh!" The Nurses immediately hush.

Hochberg: Ready, Dr. Wren?

Wren: All set!

Hochberg: Ready, Dr. Ferguson?

Ferguson: Ready!

Hochberg, reaching out his hand, without looking up: Scalpel!

The Operating Nurse hands over the scalpel, cutting a gleaming arc through the air, then she clumps it into Hochberg's hand. He bends over the patient. There is a sudden burst of activity and gleam of clamps about the table.
The Unsterile Nurses, hands behind their backs, stand on tiptoe, and crane their necks to see over the shoulders of the Assistant.

All lights dim down, except the operating light, which bathes the tableau in a fierce, merciless, white brilliance.

CURTAIN
ACT THREE
Scene 1

FERGUSON's room. The next morning. The shade is drawn, the room dark, except for the small lamp at the bed. FERGUSON is sitting on the bed, his head in his hands. His clothes are wrinkled—he hasn't changed them all night. His hair is mussed, his eyes red.
A knock at the door.
FERGUSON doesn't stir. The knock is repeated. FERGUSON still remains motionless. The door slowly opens. HOCHBERG enters.

HOCHBERG: Good morning, George.
FERGUSON: Oh. Good morning. HOCHBERG pulls up the shade. A great burst of sunlight streams in, blinding GEORGE. He turns his face away, rubs his eyes. What time? He picks up the clock. Oh—I didn't know it was so late.
HOCHBERG: Lovely out, isn't it?
FERGUSON: Yes... . He rises wearily, goes to the washbasin, washes himself, and combs his hair.
HOCHBERG, examining a brain in a jar on the desk: Hm... . That's a fine specimen. Ah... . yes... . you've been doing some study on brain surgery?
FERGUSON: Yes... .
HOCHBERG: Fascinating work. Miss Dennin's temperature is down this morning... .
FERGUSON: I know.
HOCHBERG: The nurse tells me you watched the case all last night. That's very nice... . Hm. Excellent book—this. You should read all of Cushing's reports. How is—er—D'Andrea?
FERGUSON: Examined those pictures. He did have a fracture of the tibia of the left leg. No further evidence of internal injury. He'll be all right, I guess.
HOCHBERG: Good. Good. He's a lucky boy. He looked badly hurt.
FERGUSON: Dr. Hochberg. There's something I've got to tell you... .
FERGUSON: You must think it was pretty low of me.
HOCHBERG: George... George!
FERGUSON: I didn’t know anything about it till yesterday. I wouldn't have let her... I swear I wouldn't have... .
HOCHBERG: It was a bad job... .
FERGUSON: Oh, that poor kid. God, I ought to be shot.
ACT THREE, Scene 1

HOCHBERG: Did you force her to have an affair with you; or did she come 
to you of her own free will? Then why do you blame yourself so?
FERGUSON: That has nothing to do with it.
HOCHBERG: That has everything to do with it!
FERGUSON: Dr. Hochberg, you don't know what she's up against.
HOCHBERG: I know.
FERGUSON: It's not as if she were just a tramp. . . . She's a fine, sensitive girl!
     God. What a mess I've gotten her into! She can't bear any children.
     Thrown out of the hospital—nowhere to go—no one to turn to. What's 
she going to do?
HOCHBERG: Don't worry. We'll find something for her.
FERGUSON: Just giving her a job—isn't going to help her very much. There's 
only one decent thing . . . I'm going to . . . marry her . . . if she'll have me.
HOCHBERG: George! Stop talking like an idiot! Pull yourself together! What 
about Laura?
FERGUSON: She's through with me, Dr. Hochberg.
HOCHBERG: She knows?
FERGUSON: Yes. I kept phoning her all day yesterday—all last night.
     She wouldn't come to the phone . . . wouldn't even talk to me, Dr. Hoch-
     berg.
HOCHBERG: Hm . . . that's too bad. Yet you know, George, in a way—that's 
not the worst that could have happened to you. . . .
FERGUSON: No! Don't say that!
HOCHBERG: Well, now there's work, my boy. Remember that's the master 
word—work.
FERGUSON: I'm going to marry that girl.
HOCHBERG: What for?
FERGUSON: I have to take care of her, don't I?
HOCHBERG: I see. You've saved some money then?
FERGUSON: Out of what?
HOCHBERG: Then how are you going to help her? How are you going to 
take care of her?
FERGUSON: I'm going into practice. . . .
HOCHBERG: Mid-Victorian idealism won't solve this problem, George. . . .
FERGUSON: That girl is human, isn't she? She needs me.
HOCHBERG: If you think you can provide for both of you by first starting 
practice—then you just don't know. . . .
FERGUSON: I'll manage somehow. I'm not afraid of that.
HOCHBERG: Remember Levine? I got a letter from him yesterday, Colorado. 
     He's trying to build up a practice. . . . The loudspeaker in the corridor 
starts calling “Dr. Hochberg.” They're starving, George. He begs me to 
lend him twenty dollars.
FERGUSON: I don't see what that has to do with me.
HOCHBERG: You didn't know him six years ago. He wouldn't let me help him, then. He was sure! So confident! And better equipped for practice than you are.
FERGUSON: Possibly!
HOCHBERG: I won't answer for Levine... at least he loved Katherine. But you don't love this girl. It was an accident—and for that you want to ruin yourself—the rest of your life—destroy your ambition, your ideals—fill yourself with bitterness, live day and night with a woman who will grow to despise you....
FERGUSON: Dr. Hochberg. Please—it's no use. I've thought of all that! It doesn't make any difference. There's only one decent thing to do—and I'm going to do it.
HOCHBERG, picks up the phone: Yes?... Dr. Hochberg.... Yes, hello.... That's all right. Wait for me down in the—no... Come up here to 106, 106. Yes. Is the man there at the desk? Yes. Hello, Arthur. Please ask one of the orderlies to show this young lady up to 106. Yes, thank you.
FERGUSON: Is that Laura?
HOCHBERG: Yes.
FERGUSON: I can't see her now! I can't talk to her.
HOCHBERG: Don't be a child! You've got to see her and have this out. Pause.
FERGUSON: Dr. Hochberg, I want you to know that... I appreciate all you've done for me.
HOCHBERG: What have I done?
FERGUSON: I mean yesterday. I... I must have seemed very ungrateful. But it's just because there are so many other things that I thought I wanted.
HOCHBERG: I know. It's our instinct to live, to enjoy ourselves. All of us.
FERGUSON: I love Laura so much. She's so full of life and fun, and all the things I've missed for so many years. I just didn't have the guts to give them up. I kidded myself that I could have that, and still go on. And last night, I realized I kidded myself out of the most important thing that ever happened to me, a chance to work with you....
HOCHBERG: Do you still want to? You can, if you do.
FERGUSON: No—not now.
HOCHBERG: But why? If you realize, now, what you really want....
FERGUSON: I'm going into practice, I told you....
HOCHBERG: Now, George, calm down. Give yourself a chance to think it over.
FERGUSON: I've thought it over.
HOCHBERG: I warn you, George. You'll be sorry.
FERGUSON: I can't just ignore this!
ACT THREE, Scene 1

Hochberg: In that case, you're through—you're finished—you're...
Ferguson: All right! Then I am. Why not? What good's a profession that can't give you bread and butter after you've sweated out ten years of your life on it? And if I can't make a go of practice, I'll find a job at something else—and to hell with medicine! I won't starve. I'll always make a living....

Laura appears in the doorway, accompanied by an orderly.

Orderly: Right here, miss.
Ferguson: Good morning, Laura.
Laura, deliberately ignoring George, looking only at Hochberg, clipping every word: Hello, Hocky.... Did you want me up here?
Hochberg: Yes. Come in, Laura.
Laura: Sorry to call you so early, but...
Hochberg: It isn't early for me, Laura.... She's still standing in the doorway, tense and hard. Impatiently. Come in, come in.... She wavers a moment, then enters. Sit down.
Laura: No. I'm in a hurry, Hocky. I just wanted to see you for a minute... alone.
Hochberg: Sit down, Laura.
Laura: I suppose you wondered why I disappeared, yesterday.
Hochberg: No.... I heard all about it....
Laura: Oh, you did? A laugh, isn't it?
Hochberg: Not particularly.
Laura: Oh, that's all right. Better now than later, Hocky.
Hochberg: Will you please sit down, Laura? Laura, suddenly limp, sits down. Hochberg, scrutinizing her face closely. Sleep much last night?
Laura: Sure. Why not? She puts a cigarette into her mouth, searches for a match. George's hand automatically goes to his pocket, to find a match for her. Light, Hocky? Hochberg gives her a light. She exhalles a huge puff of smoke. I'm washed up with the whole business, Hocky.
Hochberg: Yes, of course you are... of course.
Ferguson: I'm sorry you feel so bitter about it, Laura....
Laura: How did you expect me to feel?
Ferguson: I don't blame you. I....
Laura: Thanks. That's sweet of you.
Hochberg: Neither do I blame him, Laura.
Laura: There's no excuse for a thing like that—you know it, Hocky. None at all....
Hochberg: I know nothing—except the human body, a little. And I haven't met the wise man or woman, Laura, whom impulse couldn't make a fool of. . . .

Laura: If you want to reason that way, there isn't anything you couldn't justify.

Hochberg: I'm not trying to, Laura. It's so far beyond that. . . . Ferguson starts for the door. Where are you going?

Ferguson: Upstairs.

Hochberg: Wait, George! Wait a minute!

Ferguson: There's nothing more to be said, Dr. Hochberg. Laura's perfectly right.

Laura, rises: Don't leave on my account. I've got to go now, anyway. I've got to pack. I'm sailing on the Olympic, tonight. Going to get as far away from all this as I can. She laughs. Humph! I was making plans. I was worried all the time. . . . God! What a fool I was. . . .

Hochberg: Do you think he's having such an easy time of it?

Laura: Oh, he'll take care of himself.

Hochberg: Maybe you'd better go home now, Laura.

Laura: I think it was a pretty rotten trick.

Hochberg: Stop it! Laura, stop it!

Laura: He had no time for me—he was too busy for me—but he did find time to . . . That's what hurts, Hocky! Hurts like the devil!

Hochberg: Don't you think I know how you feel, Laura?

_The loudspeaker is calling, “Dr. Hochberg.”_

Laura: You think I still care? Well, I don't!

Hochberg: That's fine! Then it doesn't make any difference to you that right now he's throwing his life away. _Goes to the phone, picks it up, speaks into it._ Yes? Dr. Hochberg! To Laura. He's going to marry her, Laura.

Laura: No?

Ferguson: Dr. Hochberg! Please!

Hochberg: Yes. And go into practice, and starve, and give up his studies, and maybe get out of medicine altogether. The thing he's meant for! And worked so hard for. _Into the phone, suddenly tense._ Yes! What! Prepare a hypo of caffeine, and adrenaline, long needle! At once! He hangs up and hurries to the door.

Ferguson: Do you want me—?

Hochberg: No . . . no . . . no. . . . You stay here! _He hurries out._

Laura stands there a moment looking at George, then starts to go.

Ferguson: Laura!

Laura: What?

Ferguson: I don't want you to go away feeling like this. . . .
ACT THREE, Scene 1

LAURA: What difference does it make how I feel?
FERGUSON: A great deal... to me.
LAURA, pause: You love her, don't you?
FERGUSON: I love you, Laura.
LAURA, laughs bitterly: Yes, I'm sure you do.
FERGUSON, grasps both of LAURA's arms tightly: I don't care whether you
believe it or not, Laura, it just happens that I do.
LAURA: Let go—let go my arm! You're...
FERGUSON: Sorry! He turns from her and sinks down despondently on the
bed.
LAURA, after a pause: Then how? I don't quite understand... I didn't sleep
a wink last night, George. I was trying to figure this out. But it doesn't
make sense... except that... I don't know. If you cared for me, how
could you do that?
FERGUSON: I don't know myself, Laura. Everything had gone wrong that
day. Six long operations. I had a battle with Cunningham, I lost a pa-
tient... Things sort of kept piling up till I thought I'd bust... this kid
came to my room for some notes... she was sympathetic and lonely her-
self, and... well... But after that I didn't see her around, and... I just
forgot about it. You'd think she'd come to me when this happened. But
she didn't. I know I should have looked her up. I know I was pretty small
and rotten. I thought... I thought it didn't mean very much to her. But it
did, Laura! Now she's up against it, and...
LAURA: If we meant anything at all to each other, you'd have come to me. I
don't give a damn about ceremony! But the point is you didn't really care
about me, George. Not for a minute.
FERGUSON: I wanted you more than anything else in the world that night,
Laura. But we'd quarrelled and—you wouldn't even go out with me.
LAURA: It was that night?
FERGUSON: Yes.
LAURA: Oh!
FERGUSON: I didn't want to give up Hocky... and I didn't want to give you
up... and I was fighting you... and...
LAURA: Through her?
FERGUSON: Yes... .
LAURA, laughs bitterly: And you say you loved me!
FERGUSON: If I hadn't, I'd have called quits then and there, Laura. I'd have
gone to Vienna and worked my way through. That's what I was planning
to do... before I met you. Alone in Vienna I'd really accomplish some-
thing... .
LAURA: Well, why don't you go on? Go on and do it, now. If it's so important
to you. I won't be around to distract you! Go on! . . . But you're not, you see. You're going to marry a girl you say you don't care for. You're going to let a casual incident rob you of all the things you say are important.

FERGUSON: It's not a casual incident, any more, Laura.

LAURA: All right, make your beautiful gestures. Marry her!

FERGUSON: I'm going to.

LAURA: Go ahead! And inside of a year you'll be hating the sight of each other.

FERGUSON: That's a chance I'll have to take.

LAURA: You think you're being brave and strong, I suppose. But you're not. You're a coward. You're doing it because it's the easiest way out. Because you're afraid people'll say things about you. You have no backbone.

FERGUSON: Yes, Laura. You're right. I had no backbone when I let myself be talked out of a chance to work with Hocky. And maybe to do something fine someday. But right now I have no choice. I'm not doing this because I give a good Goddamn what anybody says or thinks; I'm doing it because that girl's life is smashed, and I'm responsible, and I want to try and help her pick up the pieces and put them together again. He stops short. Laura is weeping quietly. Oh, Laura! . . . Don't!

LAURA: I knew how you felt about Hocky and I shouldn't have . . . insisted. I've been selfish, but it was only because I loved you so much. And . . . I still do. That's the way I am, George. I can't help it. I . . .

Enter HOCHBERG, slowly, his face drawn and grave, something tragic written on it. He looks at FERGUSON.

FERGUSON, sensing HOCHBERG's look: What is it, Doctor?

HOCHBERG: Miss Dennin died.


LAURA: Oh, God!

HOCHBERG: A few minutes ago.

FERGUSON looks blankly at Dr. HOCHBERG, glances, as if for corroboration, at LAURA, and suddenly starts for the door. HOCHBERG catches his arm and holds it tightly.

HOCHBERG, softly: There's nothing you can do, George. Embolism! Went into collapse! Died instantly.

FERGUSON, almost inaudibly: Oh! He sinks down on the bed, his back to them.

HOCHBERG: George!

LAURA: Darling!

FERGUSON: Only a few hours ago . . . she was pleading with me for a chance to live. . . . She was so young. She didn't want to die. . . .

LAURA: Stop it, George! Stop torturing yourself. Please! These things happen. It might have happened to anybody.
FERGUSON: Couldn't you do anything, Dr. Hochberg?

HOCHBERG: I tried everything. Caffeine intravenously. Adrenaline directly into the heart. Useless! That little blood clot in the lung... and we're helpless. Forty years I've spent in medicine... and I couldn't help her.

FERGUSON: Then what's the use? What good is it all? Why go on? It takes everything from you, and when you need it most it leaves you helpless. We don't know anything... We're only guessing.

HOCHBERG: We've been doing a little work on embolism... getting some results. It's slow, though... slow. Maybe, someday, George...

FERGUSON: Someday?...

HOCHBERG: There isn't a man in medicine who hasn't said what you've said and meant it for a minute— all of us, George. And you're right. We are groping. We are guessing. But at least our guesses today are closer than they were twenty years ago. And twenty years from now, they'll be still closer. That's what we're here for. Mm... there's so much to be done. And so little time in which to do it... that one life is never long enough... He sighs. It's not easy for any of us. But in the end our reward is something richer than simply living. Maybe it's a kind of success that world out there can't measure... maybe it's a kind of glory, George. Pause. Yes, question as much as we will— when the test comes we know— don't we, George?

FERGUSON: Yes...

HOCHBERG, goes slowly to the door, pauses there: Er... we'll reduce that fracture at ten. Schedule the appendix at three... the gastric ulcer immediately afterwards.

FERGUSON: Yes, sir.

HOCHBERG goes. LAURA turns to FERGUSON.

LAURA: Oh, darling! I'm so sorry! Pause. George, let's get away from here. Let's go someplace where we can talk this thing over quietly and sanely.

FERGUSON: No, Laura. This is where I belong!

LAURA: Yes... Pause.

FERGUSON: You see...

LAURA: I understand. Pause. Well... when you come back from Vienna, if Hocky'll let you off for a night, give me a ring! I'll be around. And maybe someday we'll get together, anyway.

The loudspeaker is heard calling, "Dr. Ferguson!"

LAURA, smiles wryly: They're calling you.

FERGUSON: Yes.

LAURA: Work hard.

FERGUSON: So long, Laura. Laura tears herself away, and hurries out. FERGUSON Stares after her till she disappears. The loudspeaker calls lim back.
He goes to the phone, slowly, a bit stunned. He picks up the phone. Yes? Dr. Ferguson! ... Who? ... Oh, Mrs. D’Andrea? Sure! Your boy’s all right! Yes. Now, you mustn’t cry, Mother! You mustn’t! He’s all right! With his free hand he is brushing the tears from his own eyes and nose, for he is beginning to weep, himself. But you could never tell it by his voice, which is strong with professional reassurance. We’ll fix his leg this morning, and he’ll be home in a week. Yes ... he’s going to live ... don’t cry!

He is still reassuring her as the curtain descends.

CURTAIN