

The Tavern

A Play in Two Acts

by George M. Cohan

Suggested by a play entitled
The Choice of a Super-Man
by Cora Dick Gantt

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



New York Hollywood London Toronto

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Program of "The Tavern," as presented at the
Fulton Theatre, New York:

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(In the order of their appearance)

THE TAVERN KEEPER'S SON....*Theodore Newton*
THE HIRED GIRL *Kathleen Niday*
THE TAVERN KEEPER *Robert Middlemass*
THE HIRED MAN *Joseph Allen*
THE VAGABOND *George M. Cohan*
THE WOMAN *Mary Philips*
THE GOVERNOR *Jack Leslie*
THE GOVERNOR'S WIFE *Lida MacMillan*
THE GOVERNOR'S DAUGHTER *Isabel Baring*
THE FIANCE *Douglas MacPherson*
THE SHERIFF *Edward F. Nannery*
THE SHERIFF'S MEN { *Jack Williams*
 *Dan Carey*
 *Manuel Duarte*
THE ATTENDANT *Harold Healy*

The play is in two acts.

(Intermission 12 minutes.)

*The action of the play takes place in ZACCHEUS
FREEMAN'S Tavern.*

CHARACTERS
(In the order of their first appearance)

ZACH, the Tavern Keeper's son.

SALLY, the hired girl.

FREEMAN, the Tavern Keeper.

WILLUM, the hired man.

THE VAGABOND.

VIOLET, the woman.

LAMSON, the Governor.

MRS. LAMSON, the Governor's wife.

VIRGINIA, the Governor's daughter.

TOM ALLEN, the fiance.

THE SHERIFF.

EZRA, the Sheriff's man.

JOSHUA, the Sheriff's other man.

TONY, the Sheriff's third man.

STEVENS, the attendant.

The play is in two acts

The action takes place in Freeman's Tavern.

COSTUMES

- THE VAGABOND:** *High tan boots, corduroy pants, white shirt open at the throat; dark vest; long heavy patched coat; large dark brown hat; long dark green cape; staff.*
- THE GOVERNOR:** *Patent leather shoes; tan trousers strapped under the shoes; double breasted vest; velvet coat (Southern period); soft black hat; long black cape; white shirt and black stock tie.*
- THE FIANCE:** *Grey trousers and coat (Southern period); patent leather shoes; soft black hat; white ruffled sleeves and shirt front; black stock; long cape.*
- THE HIRED MAN:** *Old tan boots; short brown trousers; old green coat; colored shirt; brown vest; soft brown hat.*
- TAVERN KEEPER:** *Slippers; grey woolen stockings; short white apron; white ballet shirt; long, brown square-cut great coat; large black soft hat; blue knickerbockers; black vest; boots (to wear when he goes out).*
- ZACH:** *Rough boots; short ballet shirt; short red coat; heavy brown coat; soft hat; grey pants.*
- THE SHERIFF:** *Black pants; white ballet shirt; dark pea jacket; rough coat; large black hat; high boots; sheriff's badge.*
- HIRED GIRL:** *Brown dress, white lace collar; blue apron; black stockings and slippers.*

GOVERNOR'S WIFE: *Dress and cape; lace veil to throw over head. Changes to evening dress; not modern.*

THE WOMAN: *Plain grey dress and dark cape.*

ATTENDANT: *Black pants, black coat, long black cape; soft brown hat; high black boots.*

SHERIFF'S MEN: *Tan and brown pants; white shirts; short jackets; black capes; brown hats; rough boots.*

GOVERNOR'S DAUGHTER: *Italian peasant style dress; black stockings and slippers.*

THE TAVERN

ACT ONE

SCENE: *The interior of ZACCHEUS FREEMAN'S Tavern. Clock is set at 12.*

THUNDER started about 10 seconds before Curtain rises. At rise CRASH is heard. (CRASH consists of Pistol SHOT, THUNDER and WIND machines and LIGHTNING.)

As the Curtain rises the stage is bare. A furious STORM is raging outside. Whenever the door is opened during the action of the play, a CRASH is heard. The door upstage c. is unbarred at rise.

After about 8 seconds the door up c. flies open and ZACH, the Innkeeper's son, enters, his arms filled with logs of wood. (CRASH.)

He slams the door shut, bars it and stands leaning against it trembling with fright. He places the logs in a wood-box near the fireplace and stands looking at window up l. at back.

(LIGHTNING.)

After a few seconds, he goes up to the window and peers out, listening for some sound. He then takes off his hat and coat and hangs them on a peg R. of door c. He again goes to the window (LIGHTNING) and looks fearfully out into the night; then turns front,

thinking. After a second's thought he crosses to the stairs and calls softly:

ZACH. (*At foot of stairs*) Hist! Hist! (*Looking nervously toward window, he again calls*) Sally! Sally!

SALLY. (*Entering at head of stairs R.*) Is that you, Zach?

ZACH. (*Quieting her; his back to the audience, still looking in fright toward the window up L.*) Hush!

SALLY. (*She comes down R.C., staring at ZACH as he tries to "hush" her*) What frightened you, Zach?

ZACH. I'm not frightened. I never get frightened.

SALLY. You're as white as a sheet.

ZACH. (*Trembling*) Am I? Then it's the storm.

SALLY. You're trembling. What's the matter?

ZACH. It's the cold. (*Crossing to L.C.*) It's bitter outside.

SALLY. Don't lie, Zach; something frightened you; what is it?

ZACH. Hush! (*Motions her to be quiet; goes to door C. and listens, then returns to her*) There's someone out there—hiding—crouching down and hiding. (*SALLY moves closer to him, frightened now.*) I went to the woodshed for logs. I heard something moving. I could almost swear I heard the breathing.

SALLY. (*Grabbing ZACH in her fright*) It might have been the wind.

ZACH. So I thought at first, but I struck a match and saw a creeping shadow on the wall as plainly as I see you now. (*He looks over his shoulder nervously.*)

SALLY. (*Pause; she moves closer to ZACH*) Someone seeking shelter from the storm.

ZACH. Then why in the woodshed? Why not here in the tavern?

SALLY. (*Pause; looks toward window*) Who could it be?

ZACH. (*Up to L. side of the window*) No friend, that's sure; someone with an evil mind and bad thoughts. I feel it, Sally.

SALLY. Zach!

ZACH. They do say that nights such as this bring courage to the blackest hearts.

SALLY. (*Moving slightly R.*) I'll call your father.

ZACH. (*Crosses and stops her*) No, no; he'll say I'm frightened.

SALLY. (*After a slight pause*) You are.

ZACH. Think so? (*Gathers his courage, goes to L.U. corner and gets a shotgun and comes back to SALLY.*)

SALLY. (*Screams*) Zach! (*He turns to her*) What are you going to do?

ZACH. If it's a murder they're going to play at I'll take a hand in the game myself. (*CRASH. SALLY screams and falls on her knees up c. They hold the picture a moment.*)

FREEMAN. (*Pause; off, upstairs*) What was that? (*He enters on stairs and stands on landing, looking down at ZACH and SALLY. Finally he notices the shotgun ZACH is still holding*) Did you fire a shot, Zach?

ZACH. No, Father, 'twas a clap of thunder.

FREEMAN. (*Coming downstairs to c.*) Egad, I thought the world had come to an end. (*Goes to SALLY, who is still on her knees, mumbling.*) Sally, what is this? (*Turns to ZACH*) And you, Zach, with a shotgun. Come, an explanation at once.

ZACH. She's frightened, Father.

FREEMAN. Frightened? At what, the storm? There have been worse nights than this.

SALLY. (*Gets to her feet*) No, no, no; it's not

the storm, Master, it's the creeping shadow on the wall.

FREEMAN. A creeping shadow? (*Pause*) What is this tomfoolery?

SALLY. Tell him, Zach.

FREEMAN. Come, boy, what is this? Has the girl gone mad?

ZACH. No, it's the truth, Father. There *was* a creeping shadow on the wall of the woodshed. I just came from there with the logs.

FREEMAN. What did you see?

ZACH. A figure crouched behind the woodpile.

FREEMAN. A figure crouched behind the—
Are you sure?

ZACH. I'd swear it.

FREEMAN. (*Looks toward the window; then turns to ZACH*) Did he answer when you called?

ZACH. I didn't call. (*Lowers his head*) I thought it best to wait and—

FREEMAN. Simpleton! You were afraid.

ZACH. Afraid? No!

SALLY. (*To FREEMAN*) He was—he trembled like a leaf, Master.

ZACH. It's not the truth.

FREEMAN. Enough of this! Come, the weapon. (*ZACH hands him the gun and steps back.*) I'll soon rid the shed of shadows. (*Takes a step upstage c.* THUNDER.)

ZACH. The storm is raging, Father.

FREEMAN. (*Stops; turns to SALLY*) My great-coat, Sally, quick! (*He puts the shotgun on table L.C.; gets his boots R. of table near window up L.*)

SALLY. Yes good Master. (*She rushes upstairs and off R. FREEMAN sits at table L.C.; takes off his slippers and puts on his boots.*)

ZACH. (*Pause; stands at father's R.*) Give me the gun, Father; let me do the thing if it must be done. It may mean a fight to the death.

FREEMAN. Then better my old life than your youth.

ZACH. But I have the strength for a struggle.

FREEMAN. There is no struggle when both are armed; it's think fast and shoot straight. *(He rises and puts his slippers R. of table up L.)*

ZACH. *(Coming to front of table L.C.)* Father, I implore you not to go.

FREEMAN. Don't waste words.

ZACH. Then I go, too.

FREEMAN. I forbid it. *(Takes his hat from peg R.C.; puts in on and calls up the stairs to SALLY)* Be quick, Sally, my coat. *(Comes down c.)*

SALLY. *(Rushing on with FREEMAN'S coat)* I'm coming, good Master.

FREEMAN. *(Donning coat)* Dead or alive, I'll take him, whoever he is. *(Pause)* Should he prove to be of the band that held up the coach a fortnight ago, the fat reward will help to pay the debts that weigh me down. 'Twill be a good night's work, my lad, if that comes true. *(He crosses; picks up gun from table L.C. and moves upstage a step.)*

ZACH. Take me along, Father, please.

FREEMAN. I've said no. *(Quite a lot of THUNDER.)* My mind is set. *(He goes upstage c.)*

ZACH. *(Up with FREEMAN)* The storm is blinding.

FREEMAN. I'll grope my way. *(CRASH. He stands c., motioning to ZACH to unbar door. ZACH unbars the door and throws it open. FREEMAN lowers his head and fights his way out against the wind and rain. ZACH slams the door shut, but does not bar it.)*

SALLY. You shouldn't have let him go, Zach.

ZACH. *(Crosses and peers out of the window)* He'd have it that way. His word is law.

SALLY. Do you think the shadow is armed?

ZACH. *(Crossing to SALLY)* Of course. Would

an honest man be prowling about on a night like this?

SALLY. Your father might be killed.

ZACH. (*Crossing to SALLY*) Killed! Sally, I'd die of grief. (*Starts up c.*)

SALLY. Then what would become of me? I couldn't live without you, Zach. (*Clings to him, sobbing*) I love you so, Zach. You know I do.

ZACH. (*Pushing her from him*) Don't do that; this is no time for lally-gagging. (*Pause*) There's danger near. (*Goes R., facing front*) I feel there is (*One pistol SHOT. SALLY is sobbing. SALLY screams; hugs ZACH for protection. They cling to each other, SALLY sobbing hysterically.*) Hush! Be quiet!

SALLY. (*Sobbing*) I'm afraid, Zach; I'm afraid!

ZACH. Hush! One shot—he must have got his man. (*Pause; another SHOT offstage. SALLY screams.*) That's the reply. It's a duel, Sally.

SALLY. (*Hugging close to ZACH*) Zach!

WILLUM. (*Runs on from stairs and comes to landing*) What's the shootin' for? (*ZACH goes to window up L. SALLY to R.*) Who's a-shootin' that way?

ZACH. Be quiet, Willum.

WILLUM. (*Comes down to SALLY, raising his voice*) What's the shootin' for? (*ZACH comes down below table L.C.*)

SALLY. Go to bed, Willum. Go to bed, there's danger near.

WILLUM. (*Over to ZACH*) What's all the shoot-in' for?

ZACH. Be quiet, Willum.

WILLUM. (*Back to SALLY*) What's all the shoot-in' for?

SALLY. Be quiet, Willum.

WILLUM. (*Goes to the stairs; mounts two or three; returns; then back to a position between*

ZACH and SALLY) Ah, you two together ag'in, eh? Caught you at it ag'in, eh? Didn't I? Crept down to spoon, I suppose, when you thought we were all asleep. (*Crossing to SALLY*) The Master told you to keep away from his boy, didn't he? (*Goes back to ZACH*) Your father warned you not to spark with that gal. I heard him when he said it. I'm a-goin' to tell him, do you understand? I'm a-goin' to tell him, that I caught you here alone in the dead of night. (*Goes to the foot of stairs and yells*) Master—Master—Master Freeman.

ZACH. (*Rushes to WILLUM: grabs him by the throat, and brings him to his knees*) Damn you, Willum, I'll choke you till you hush. (*Tightens his grip on WILLUM's throat.*)

SALLY. (*Goes to ZACH's R., pleadingly*) Don't, Zach, don't, you'll kill him.

WILLUM. (*After ZACH has released him, and thrown him to the ground*) Tryin' to take her away from me, wasn't you?

ZACH. Hold your tongue, Willum. (*Crosses L., away from WILLUM.*)

WILLUM. (*Arising to his feet*) You know she's all I care about. She knows it, too, I've told her a thousand times.

SALLY. You're a crazy man, Willum.

WILLUM. I'm a-goin' to tell the Master. He'll put an end to your sparkin', see if he don't. (*He goes up to the stairs. SALLY down back of arm-chair.*) Master! Master! Master Freeman! (*ZACH goes up L.*)

FREEMAN. (*Enters c., blinded by the storm. CRASH. He leans against the door; shakes the raindrops from his hat; places it on table up L.; closes and bars the door*) Who calls me? (*He comes down c. WILLUM crosses to FREEMAN on his entrance and now follows him down. ZACH moves to L. of table.*)

WILLUM. (*Down with FREEMAN*) It's I, Willum. I caught 'em again, Master, they were here alone.

FREEMAN. (*Looking sternly at ZACH*) What?

WILLUM. You remember you warned them. They didn't obey. They were here alone.

ZACH. Be quiet, Willum.

WILLUM. (*Blubbing*) He tried to choke me when I swore I'd tell.

FREEMAN. To your room, Willum. (*Goes to fireplace, putting gun in lower corner.*)

WILLUM. (*Going to FREEMAN*) You warned them, but they didn't obey.

FREEMAN. (*Taking off his outer coat*) To your room, I said. (*Stands, warming his hands.*)

WILLUM. (*Starts upstairs; comes down above armchair R.*) I caught them. They were in each other's arms—like the lovers you read about. (*He goes up to foot of stairs. FREEMAN looks at him.*) Nice carryings on for a respectable tavern. Watch out, good Master, they'll bring dishonor on your name. (*He looks meaningfully at SALLY.*)

SALLY. (*To WILLUM*) To your room, the Master said. (*She gets FREEMAN's coat and hangs it on the peg R. of door C..*)

WILLUM. (*Back to FREEMAN*) I heard the shots. What was the shootin' for?

FREEMAN. In the morning you'll know. Good-night, Willum.

WILLUM. Goodnight, sir. (*He goes upstairs; turns and addresses ZACH*) You keep away from that gal, that's all I ask. I love that gal.

FREEMAN. To your room, Willum.

WILLUM. But I love that gal. (*Sticks his tongue out at SALLY and "bahs."* *Exits at upstairs to R.*)

ZACH. (*Goes down in front of table L.C.*) What happened, Father? Did you see the man?

FREEMAN. Yes, he returned fire and fled into the

night. Some harmless fool, no doubt, who ran to cover from the storm.

SALLY. (*Coming down R.C.*) Then he's gone?

FREEMAN. Yes, he's gone. (*Turns on SALLY*) Now you go; I want a word with my son.

SALLY. Yes, Master. (*Goes to foot of stairs. ZACH turns, facing her.*)

FREEMAN. In the morning I'll have my say to you, my lass.

SALLY. (*Coming down R.*) What Willum said was not true, Master. He only imagined that Zach and I were——

FREEMAN. (*Interrupts*) To your room. We'll discuss this in the morning. (*FREEMAN turns to fire and warms his hands. Back to the fire.*)

SALLY. (*As she goes upstairs*) Yes. Good Master.

FREEMAN. (*Has crossed up R. to door; then down C.*) Shall I go on forever forbidding this affair, or must I turn the girl out for good and all?

ZACH. (*Crossing C. to FREEMAN*) We weren't sparking, Father, so help me.

FREEMAN. Then, how came the girl downstairs?

ZACH. I called to her to come.

FREEMAN. And why?

ZACH. I'd just seen the crouching figure in the shed and——

FREEMAN. —and trembled like a leaf. What Sally said, then, was true. My son is a coward.

ZACH. No. No. Father.

FREEMAN. Then, why did you call to her?

ZACH. To warn her of danger.

FREEMAN. Ah, she was first in your mind.

ZACH. No, Father, she wasn't.

FREEMAN. Don't lie, son. I can read your very thoughts. (*ZACH lowers head.*) You're at the petti-coat age—slavey or queen—no choice in your desire, I know. (*Crosses R. to fireplace.*)

ZACH. You're wrong, Father.

FREEMAN. Perhaps. But for fear I'm right, we'll bundle her off, bag and baggage, in the morning.
(*Turns from ZACH.*)

ZACH. (*Taking look at the stairs*) That would be cruel, she's a homeless child.

FREEMAN. (*Turns to ZACH*) Aha! There's pity in your heart.

ZACH. Only pity.

FREEMAN. First symptoms. Next will come infatuation. Beware, son. Don't buckle on to a beggar to give a squalling kid a name.

ZACH. Father, don't say such things.

FREEMAN. (*Places his hand affectionately on ZACH'S shoulder*) 'Tis for your own good that I speak. There are wealthy wives to be had. Get lands and cattle in trade for your name. It can be done, my son.

ZACH. (*Very earnestly. Looking forward*) Perhaps—but when I marry, 'twill be for love.

FREEMAN. Ah. You've said enough. I know now that the wench has wheedled you into the very thought. Out of the tavern she goes at dawn.
(*Crosses R. to fireplace.*)

ZACH. Then I go with her.

FREEMAN. (*Turns to ZACH*) Oh, so my guess was right, you love the brat.

ZACH. She's not a brat.

FREEMAN. Take care what you say to me.

ZACH. Take care what you say to her.

FREEMAN. I'm your father.

ZACH. Don't make me forget that fact.

FREEMAN. (*Threateningly*) Weakling—ingrate.

ZACH. Call me what you like, but I'm damned if I'll have her slurred on my account.

FREEMAN. You dare defy me?

ZACH. Yes.

FREEMAN. To your room. (*They stand staring at*

each other defiantly throughout the CRASH and THUNDER. As it subsides, FREEMAN speaks)
I told you to go to your room.

ZACH. *(Slowly making his way toward stairs)*
I'm a-goin'. *(After reaching foot of stairs)* I'm a-goin'.

(VAGABOND KNOCKS on c. door. ZACH and FREEMAN look wonderingly at each other. VAGABOND after a pause repeats the KNOCK. FREEMAN has gone to fireplace to get shotgun and holds it in readiness, facing the door. There is a roll of THUNDER preceding first knock, until FREEMAN speaks. Then it is resumed.)

FREEMAN. See who it is? *(ZACH moves upstage; unbars and opens c. door. CRASH.)*

VAGABOND. *(Enters and comes downstage c. ZACH moves over L. to R. of L.C. table.)* Greetings, my friends. 'Tis a glorious storm, is it not? By God, gentlemen, it was worth being born to have lived on a night like this.

FREEMAN. Throw up your hands.

VAGABOND. What?

FREEMAN. Throw up your hands.

VAGABOND. What a childish idea.

FREEMAN. Throw up your hands, or I'll shoot.

VAGABOND. Shoot and be hanged. If you shoot, you'll kill, if you kill, you'll hang. That's the penalty, I believe, and so, my dear sir, if you have the insane desire to rid yourself of the responsibilities of this life, by a spectacular climb to the gallows, why not shoot someone worth while? It's who you murder that counts. That is—if you'd have the world celebrate the date of your execution. *(He turns up and leisurely surveys the room. ZACH drops down L. of table.)*

FREEMAN. *(After a pause)* Who are you?

VAGABOND. (*Turns to FREEMAN with a laugh*) Ha, ha, that's just it! Who *am* I? Who *was* he and why did the madman kill him? Those questions would be on everybody's lips. It would be a waste of time and ammunition. (*He takes gun from his pocket and throws it in the armchair R. FREEMAN raises his gun.*) Don't be alarmed, it's the only weapon I ever carried—the only one. You may search me if you think I'm cheating.

FREEMAN. (*After a pause*) What is it you want?

VAGABOND. A smile and a kind word, that is all I ask of any man.

FREEMAN. What sort of a man *are* you?

VAGABOND. A fugitive.

FREEMAN. A fugitive—from the law?

VAGABOND. No—from my own thoughts.

FREEMAN. *Where* are you bound for?

VAGABOND. I've arrived.

FREEMAN. Where do you think you are?

VAGABOND. Ah, 'tis well I know where I am. I'm at the beginning—and end of the earth.

FREEMAN. The beginning and end of the *earth*!

VAGABOND. The beginning and end of the earth. Wherever I am it's just that, for I never return to any spot until I've circled the globe, and so you see, my starting point is really my destination. (*Indicates with circling motion of stick*) Do you follow me?

FREEMAN. Are you crazy?

VAGABOND. Yes—as crazy as you think I am—and as sane as you think you are.

FREEMAN. I don't understand you at all.

VAGABOND. I never met the man who did. (*Going to c.*) But don't be alarmed, I'm harmless, quite harmless—I'm as harmless as the little orphan girl that you threatened to turn from your door at dawn. (*ZACH moves to R. of table L.C.*)

FREEMAN. What do you mean?

VAGABOND. That I've had my ear glued to the crack of that door for the last few minutes listening with delight to the manly protests of your son against the suggestion that he trade his name for lands and cattle. (*He turns to ZACH*) I congratulate you, my boy. No man could put into words a more noble expression than the romantic, heroic, time-worn, old-fashioned utterance: "When I marry 'twill be for love." I burst out laughing when you said it. 'Twas then I made up my mind to have a look at you both. (*Turns to FREEMAN*) And so I knocked and when you—(*Indicating ZACH*)—lifted the bar, I knew well enough I was walking into the muzzle of a shotgun, but I had no fear—no fear, for I knew our friend was no expert aim, having already witnessed a rather poor exhibition of marksmanship in the woodshed.

ZACH. (*After a pause*) Then it was *you* hiding in the shed?

VAGABOND. (*Turns to ZACH*) 'Twas I—slumbering peacefully in the loft when you stumbled over a load of logs and ran away. (*Laughs*) How I laughed at your clumsiness. (*Laughs*) And then the thought that you'd scraped your shins amused me the more and I laughed again. (*Laughs*) And then your father came—your father came with his famous shotgun. And oh, Lord, how I laughed at him! (*Laughs. Moves R.C., to FREEMAN*) What a damn poor judge of distance you are, my friend. (*Laughs.*)

FREEMAN. (*After a pause*) But I shot in the air. Can you say as much when you missed me on the return fire?

VAGABOND. Ah, you judge me wrongly. I did not return the fire. (*Pointing to the gun in the arm-chair*) That weapon is not mine. No. 'Twas the shot that missed you as you dashed through the door out into the open that made me realize for the

first time that I was not the *only occupant* of the woodshed.

ZACH. (*Slight pause*) Another man in the shed?

VAGABOND. No—a woman.

FREEMAN. *A woman!*

VAGABOND. What I say is true, my friend. 'Twas a woman shot at you. She missed. She missed and was aiming for another try at your fleeing figure when I leaped from the loft and wrested the weapon from her grasp. (*Raises clenched hand aloft and shakes it*) So you see, if life means anything at all to you, you owe me a debt—owe me a debt of gratitude that can only be repaid with a drink of brandy.

FREEMAN. So, this is your way of begging a drink.

VAGABOND. Come, surely, I've earned a gill of the stuff—if all I've said be true.

FREEMAN. So, 'tis the craving for drink that's driven you mad.

VAGABOND. No, no, my craving for drink is satisfied at any running stream or babbling brook. (*Indicates with stick*) I need neither stimulant for mind nor body. 'Tis for a woman I appeal. (*Turns to ZACH*) Come, boy, the brandy. If your father fails me I'll look to you to be the same gallant young man you were in your stand for the little slavey.

ZACH. Is the woman ill?

VAGABOND. Tired, weary, exhausted, driven from the roads by the downpour of rain and the sting of the hail; drenched to the skin and trembling with fear and cold.

ZACH. Father, this may be so.

FREEMAN. What of that—'tis not a charity shop.

VAGABOND. Would you see the woman die?

FREEMAN. It's a trick; there is no woman.

VAGABOND. No woman? You doubt my word?

Very well. (*Starts upstage c.*) Come, see for yourself.

FREEMAN. (*Levelling the gun at the VAGABOND*) Stop! (*The VAGABOND stops and turns to FREEMAN*) You'll not leave this tavern until I say the word.

VAGABOND. Oh, am I to be a lodger? Ah, 'tis well. (*Comes downstage*) But do see for yourself that there is a woman, an almost prostrate woman in the shed.

FREEMAN. (*Picks up the VAGABOND's gun from the armchair; crosses and hands it to ZACH*) I'll go alone. (*He goes upstage, followed by ZACH.*)

VAGABOND. (*Going up r.*) So be it.

FREEMAN. (*Puts his shotgun r. of c. door; gets his overcoat on peg r. of the door and puts it on*) Keep him covered, son, there may be a reward for this—braggart.

VAGABOND. (*Laughs lightly*) Suspicious even of me. Do I look like a bandit?

FREEMAN. You do—and I think you *are* one.

VAGABOND. A compliment, my friend. To be thought of as anything but a vagabond is indeed a most decided compliment. (*He makes FREEMAN a sweeping bow.*)

FREEMAN. Keep him covered, son, till I return.

VAGABOND. (*Mockingly*) Keep him covered, son, till I return.

ZACH. Trust me, Father. (*FREEMAN unbars the door and goes out into the storm. ZACH closes and bars the door; turns and covers the VAGABOND with the revolver. CRASH.*)

VAGABOND. (*Puts his hat and cloak on table up r.; moves down to the fireplace; turns and sees ZACH pointing the gun at him. Does a step; weaves body; makes mock rush as though to attack ZACH and laughs.*) Lower your gun, lower your gun, my boy. Don't strain your nerves.

ZACH. (*With determination*) I must obey my father. (*He comes down c. a step.*)

VAGABOND. Yes. And yet you defied him but a moment ago. Come, Zach, now, you're a better judge of character than he. A fair question; beneath this somewhat shabby exterior—(*Indicates attire*)—can you not trace something unmistakably refined and genteel?

ZACH. I could almost swear you were a gentleman.

VAGABOND. (*Curtsies*) I thank you.

ZACH. Yet you act and look like a vagabond.

VAGABOND. (*Curtsies*) Again I thank you. (*He moves over to the fire.*)

ZACH. Which are you?

VAGABOND. (*Going R.C., looking about the room*) Neither—both. (*Shouts word "both."* ZACH backs away as the VAGABOND comes to c.) But what does it matter so long as I promise you that I'll not attempt to escape? As a matter of fact, I rather like this old tavern. It has atmosphere, great dramatic possibilities, and besides—(*Going to R.C.*)—it's far more comfortable than the loft of the shed. (*He drops into chair R.*)

ZACH. (*After a pause he goes to the VAGABOND*) Is the woman really there?

VAGABOND. She *was*—I imagine she is. I hardly think she'd venture out in such a wonderful storm.

ZACH. Where is she from?

VAGABOND. Heaven, perhaps—(*SALLY enters on stairs and looks over bannisters at VAGABOND.*)—on her way to Heli, no doubt. That's the itinerary of most women, I believe. Get the brandy, boy, she'll be here presently.

ZACH. (*Backing away to L.C.*) No, I must stand guard till Father returns.

SALLY. (*At head of stairs*) Zach—

ZACH. Go to your room, Sally. (VAGABOND rises.)

SALLY. (*Comes downstairs, staring in wonderment at VAGABOND*) What does it mean?

ZACH. (*To SALLY*) Go to your room before Father returns.

VAGABOND. Oh, so this is Sally, the apple of your eye? Greetings, my good girl. You should be proud of your champion.

SALLY. (*Comes downstage a bit*) Who is this man?

VAGABOND. Congratulations, my boy. Hearty congratulations. I admire your good taste. Not so fair to gaze upon. No, not so fair to gaze upon, but what could be more beautiful than the gentleness and timidity of an innocent, ugly maid?

SALLY. Does the man call me ugly?

VAGABOND. (*Crosses and takes her hands*) Sally, there's a woman in distress. A gulp of brandy might save her life. Take the gun and hold me safe while he draws a glass. (*Drops her hands and turns to ZACH*) What say you, my boy? Come, 'tis for a woman I appeal.

SALLY. Where's the woman, Zach?

ZACH. In the shed—if there is one.

VAGABOND. (*Walks away*) Ha! He doubts my word, you see.

ZACH. (*To SALLY*) Father's gone to fetch her. Here— (*He hands the pistol to SALLY*) Aim at his heart and shoot if he makes a move. (*SALLY points the gun at the VAGABOND.*) I'm not sure of the man. (*He backs to front of table L.C.*)

VAGABOND. (*At fireplace*) Crack me dead at the wink of an eye—it's my own request. Get the brandy, boy.

ZACH. (*Going up to door L.*) Be on the alert, Sally.

SALLY. I'll hold the man, go on. (*ZACH exits L. SALLY stands covering the VAGABOND with the pistol. The VAGABOND takes three steps toward SALLY. She backs three steps away from him, moving with him. He then backs three steps to R. SALLY advancing with him.*)

VAGABOND. (*Laughs as he moves to the fire*) Lower the gun, my girl, don't strain your nerves.

SALLY. No tricks—I'll shoot to kill.

VAGABOND. (*Amused*) Come, Sally, you're a better judge of character than Zach. A fair question: beneath this somewhat shabby exterior can you not trace something unmistakably refined and genteel?

SALLY. I don't care who you are, I'll shoot you down if you make a move.

VAGABOND. Bravo, my lass! (*Claps his hands*) By gad, such courage is a credit to your sex. (*Three KNOCKS on outside door c.*)

SALLY. Who's there?

FREEMAN. (*Off c.*) Unbolt the door.

SALLY. It's the Master.

VAGABOND. (*Starts up c.*) Shall I lift the bar?

SALLY. (*Goes up to door c., shifting the gun to her left hand*) Stay still, I'll attend to that.

VAGABOND. As you will, fair captor—'tis the natural politeness of my nature, nothing more. (*SALLY lifts the bar with her right hand, watching the VAGABOND, the pistol trained on him. The door swings open and FREEMAN enters—(CRASH)—carrying the apparently lifeless form of VIOLET in his arms. SALLY closes and bolts the door. VAGABOND goes quickly to FREEMAN*) Right here by the fire, sir. Right here, Mr. Landlord. I will take care of that, Mr. Landlord. Yes, right by the fire, sir. (*VAGABOND goes to R. of chair, kneels, takes VIOLET's hand, which he pats.*)

FREEMAN. (*At L. of chair, takes off hat and great-coat, which he hands to SALLY, who has come down L. of him*) Where is my son?

SALLY. Gone for the brandy.

FREEMAN. And what are *you* doing downstairs?

SALLY. Keeping guard till Zach returns.

FREEMAN. That will do—go.

SALLY. Who's the woman, Master? (*Hands the pistol to FREEMAN.*)

FREEMAN. Never mind. Go. (*SALLY hangs FREEMAN'S coat on peg R. of door C. and goes upstairs, watching the VAGABOND and VIOLET.*)

VAGABOND. (*Still working over VIOLET*) And you doubted my every word. Did you find her in a faint?

FREEMAN. (*Crossing to fire*) Stretched over a log. I thought her dead at first.

VAGABOND. (*Chafing VIOLET'S hands*) No, no. She's far from dead. The brandy will bring her to.

FREEMAN. I wonder who she is.

VAGABOND. What does it matter who she is? We know *what* she is.

FREEMAN. *What* is she?

VAGABOND. A woman.

FREEMAN. Have you ever seen her before?

VAGABOND. Once.

FREEMAN. Where?

VAGABOND. In the woodshed.

FREEMAN. I know that.

VAGABOND. Then why the question?

FREEMAN. Don't be facetious. Is she your friend?

VAGABOND. She's not my enemy, I hope.

FREEMAN. You play on words.

VAGABOND. (*Seriously*) I answer direct. Ask me if I've met her before tonight—if that's what you mean—and I'll say no. I never set eyes on this woman till she fired at you in self-defense. (*VIOLET*

moves slightly, beginning to regain consciousness. Impatiently) My God, has the boy gone to *Spain* for the brandy?

FREEMAN. Hurry, Zach!

ZACH. (*Off L.*) I'm coming, Father. (*He enters from L. with a glass of brandy. FREEMAN takes glass from ZACH. VAGABOND takes glass from FREEMAN.*)

VAGABOND. That's my job, Mr. Landlord, if you please. My job, sir. My duty, Mr. Landlord. I'll take it, if you please, sir. There you are, you see. (*Goes to R. of armchair, kneels, moves glass to and fro underneath VIOLET's nose.*)

FREEMAN. Why should she be out on a night like this? (*VIOLET stirs slightly.*)

VAGABOND. We'll soon know that. She's opening her eyes.

ZACH. (*L.C., staring at VIOLET*) Oh, then, the story of the woman was true!

VAGABOND. (*Arising*) Yes, my boy, stories of women are more apt to be true than the women of whom the stories are told. (*Going to R. of VIOLET*) Take a sip of this, my lass. The engine pumps more freely when the oil is squirted on. (*FREEMAN crosses to C., watching the VAGABOND.*)

ZACH. (*To FREEMAN, after a pause*) Who is she, have you learned?

FREEMAN. No, she's a riddle to me—so is the man.

VAGABOND. (*To VIOLET, as she sips some of the brandy*) That's the way! That's it! Take courage, plenty of courage; take courage. You'll need it for the inquisition you're about to face. (*Sarcastically. He places the brandy glass on mantelpiece. The THREE MEN stand watching VIOLET as she struggles back to consciousness.*)

VIOLET. (*At first stares blankly, then seemingly finds herself. She looks searchingly at the man,*

takes a sweeping glance around the room, then looks directly front) In what part of God's world am I?

VAGABOND. What does it matter? It's *all* God's world.

VIOLET. *(To VAGABOND)* And who are you?

VAGABOND. I am one of God's creatures.

VIOLET. *(Indicating ZACH and FREEMAN)* And these two men—who are they?

VAGABOND. *(Shakes his head after a look at the Two MEN)* Doubtless they'll answer for themselves. *(VIOLET looks at FREEMAN.)*

FREEMAN. *(To VIOLET)* My name is Freeman. I'm master here. *(Indicates ZACH)* This is my son.

VIOLET. I see. *(Looks front, puzzled)* And what am I doing here?

FREEMAN. Ah, that's what we'd like to know.

VIOLET. My mind isn't clear.

VAGABOND. Think back to the storm, my lass, and then perhaps you'll get your bearings.

VIOLET. The storm——! *(Leans forward as her memory slowly returns)* Yes, yes, the storm! *(Her face lights up as recollection comes to her.)*

VAGABOND. Show her the weapon, Freeman. Perhaps that may help.

FREEMAN. *(Crosses and shows VIOLET the pistol)* Ever see this before?

VIOLET. *(Recognizing the weapon, she reaches for it)* My pistol!

FREEMAN. *(Draws back quickly out of reach)* Ah, then it was *you* who fired the shot?

VIOLET. Fired a shot? *(Pause; then recollection returns)* Oh, yes, yes, I remember now. I ran to cover from the storm. I fell asleep and *dreamed* I was being shot at. I awoke with a start and fired at what seemed to be a ghost. *(VAGABOND gestures as though to say "You see.")* I was attacked from behind. *(VAGABOND points to himself.)* I tried to scream, but my throat went dry. *(VAGABOND points*

to his throat.) My limbs sank from under me—and all went black.

VAGABOND. (*Pushes hands, palms downward, toward floor, then extends hands, palms up, as though to say, "You see." To FREEMAN*) Confirming the story I told, you see; and yet you doubted my every word.

FREEMAN. Wait. (*To VIOLET*) You say you ran to cover from the storm?

VIOLET. Yes, I remember now.

FREEMAN. Then what were you doing on the lonely road in the dead of night? Answer me that?

VIOLET. (*Looks at FREEMAN, then turns front*) The lonely road in the dead of night? I must think. (*Her mind is not clear. She is confused.*)

FREEMAN. Think fast and speak the truth. I'm not sure you're not in league with this man who begged the brandy.

VAGABOND. (*Laughing and singing*) "Ha, ha, ha—ha, ha, ha, ha, ha—ha, ha!"

VIOLET. (*To VAGABOND*) What does the man intimate?

VAGABOND. (*Laughs*) That we're a pair—that we're a pair, and that together we'd planned to rob the tavern of its golden plate and precious jewels. (*Laughs heartily*) There's a laugh in that for me. You've nothing but debts—— (*Laughs*) You said so yourself.

FREEMAN. (*Angrily*) Enough from you. (*To VIOLET after a pause*) Answer my question. Where were you bound for when the storm broke?

VIOLET. (*Leaning forward, her hands tightly grasping the arms of her chair*) Bound for? (*Thinking hard*) Oh, yes, yes, I remember now. I was on my way to the Capitol.

FREEMAN. To the Capitol! On foot?

VIOLET. On foot.

VAGABOND. Which proves she's not a horsethief, at least.

FREEMAN. (*Sarcastically, as he moves to L. of ZACH*) Huh! To the Capitol on foot! (*Turns to VIOLET.*)

ZACH. It can't be true, Father. It's fifty-two miles.

VIOLET. Fifty-two miles!

FREEMAN. From where do you hail?

VIOLET. Thirty miles south.

FREEMAN. Eighty-two miles.

ZACH. On foot.

FREEMAN. And why to the Capitol?

VIOLET. To see—the Governor.

FREEMAN. The Governor! You?

VIOLET. I.

FREEMAN. By appointment?

VIOLET. No—but to demand a hearing.

FREEMAN. (*Leaning over her*) What about? (*VIOLET cowers down in the chair.*) I must know. Answer my question. (*She cringes.*)

VIOLET. (*Turns to VAGABOND. Frightened*) Am I on trial for my life—or what does it mean?

VAGABOND. Why, the man's suspicious. Having trespassed on his property, naturally enough he wishes to satisfy himself that you did so with no dishonest purpose. Convince him if you can, but tell him only that which you feel he has the right to know. (*Looks over at FREEMAN.*)

FREEMAN. (*To VIOLET, after a look at the VAGABOND*) Answer me, woman! (*He yells the line. VIOLET cringes.*)

VAGABOND. Don't shout so, Freeman.

FREEMAN. Keep out of it, you! This is *my* roof over your head. *I* stand in judgment here.

VAGABOND. This is a tavern, not a court of law.

FREEMAN. I wish it were—that's where the case *should* be. Huh! Tramping to the Capitol, armed

to the teeth and set to force herself upon the Governor. (*Goes to VIOLET*) Ha, an attempt at assassination! Aha!

VAGABOND. (*Amused*) Very well put together, cleverly thought out, beautifully dramatized, damned amusing. (*Laughs*) There's a laugh in it all for me, Freeman.

FREEMAN. Take care. I'm not a man to be laughed at.

ZACH. (*Warningly*) Be careful, Father.

FREEMAN. (*To ZACH*) Be quiet, you.

VIOLET. (*To VAGABOND*) Why does the man say such things? (*FREEMAN turns to ZACH, undecided what to do. ZACH pantomimes to his father to be careful, then crosses R. of table L.C.*)

FREEMAN. (*Moves up c., keeping his eye on VIOLET and VAGABOND*) Neither one of you leaves this tavern until I have satisfactory accounts of you both.

VAGABOND. What? (*Crossing to FREEMAN*) Come, come, it's creeping on to midnight. The woman is footsore, weary and dazed. In God's name, be human. Offer her a place to sleep and a bit to eat.

FREEMAN. And who's to pay for these accommodations?

VAGABOND. I beg pardon?

FREEMAN. I ask, who's to pay for these accommodations?

VAGABOND. (*To VIOLET*) Have you the money, Miss? (*She makes no reply. He turns to FREEMAN*) Come, Freeman. Now surely the weapon in your hand is well worth the price of lodging and a crust of bread. (*Pause, then he goes to VIOLET, pats her hands comfortingly, his eyes fixed on FREEMAN. FREEMAN stands looking at pistol in his hands, undecided what to do.*)

ZACH. (*After a pause he calls to his father*)

Father. (FREEMAN gives the VAGABOND a look, then goes L., followed by VAGABOND. As FREEMAN turns on him, the VAGABOND goes back to VIOLET and takes her hands in his. FREEMAN goes R. of table L.C. *Aside*) It's the best way. Have Sally watch the woman's room while I guard the man. Willum can get the sheriff. (FREEMAN thinks a second, takes a good look at the VAGABOND, suddenly decides on his course of action, and moves to the stairs. VAGABOND pats VIOLET's hand.)

FREEMAN. (Calling upstairs) Sally! (He comes down C. ZACH rises.)

SALLY. (Appearing at head of stairs) Yes, Master?

FREEMAN. (As SALLY comes down to R. of him) This woman goes to the cot in Number Three.

SALLY. Yes, Master. (ZACH goes above table L.C.)

FREEMAN. Serve tea and bread if she asks for food.

SALLY. (Moving up to R. side of stairs) Yes, Master.

VAGABOND. (Goes to FREEMAN) Bravo, friend Freeman. May you live a thousand years. More power to you, my friend. (VIOLET rises, tries to get to fire, but staggers. VAGABOND crosses quickly to VIOLET) Let me assist you, Miss. (Puts his hand out to steady her.)

VIOLET. (Going to fireplace) I'm all right, thank you. I'm quite myself. I—— (She sways and falls in a dead faint in VAGABOND'S arms. SALLY screams.)

FREEMAN. (To SALLY) Be quiet, you fool!

ZACH. (Rushes to VIOLET, picks her up in his arms and stands motionless momentarily, shouting meanwhile) I'll take her, sir. I'll take her, sir.

VAGABOND. Take her, my boy. Take her, my boy.

FREEMAN. Number Three, Son. Number Three. The cot in Number Three. Hurry up, my boy.

ZACH. I understand, Father. I understand. (*ZACH goes to first landing with VIOLET in his arms. SALLY stands at the newel post. FREEMAN C. stage. VAGABOND at L. of armchair, pointing upward.*)

VAGABOND. At last, at last my dream's come true. All my life I've longed to be a hero. First I save the landlord's life and now I see the deserted maiden placed upon her downy couch where she may dream her dreams of vengeance sweet. (*Crosses to foot of stairs*) By gad, what a night. It's a story book night for me. (*CRASH.*) What a storm! What a glorious storm! What a damn fool any man is to be in-doors on a night like this. (*CRASH.*) Lead on, my boy. Oh, what a night! What a storm! Lead on, my boy. (*ZACH and VAGABOND exit upstairs.*)

FREEMAN. Sally—— (*SALLY goes to R. of him.*) Listen to me, my girl. Sleep at the woman's door. If she makes a move to escape, scream and warn the house. Do you understand? (*Crosses to window.*)

SALLY. Yes, Master. Shall I make the tea?

FREEMAN. Don't waste the stuff. She may sleep through the night without waking. (*Crosses R. to fireplace.*)

SALLY. (*Going toward the stairs*) Very well, Master.

WILLUM. (*Appearing at head of stairs*) Zach said you wanted me, Master Freeman. Is it true, or is he making game of me again?

FREEMAN. (*Looking front*) Hurry, Willum, be quick!

WILLUM. (*Runs down to foot of stairs*) Yes, Master. (*Pinches SALLY's cheek*) Ah, my little darling!

SALLY. (*Slaps WILLUM's face*) Keep your hands off me.

WILLUM. (*Nursing his cheek*) Rotten little spit-fire.

SALLY. Idiot! (*She runs upstairs and off.*)

WILLUM. (*Down to R. of FREEMAN, holding his cheek*) Did you see what she did, Master?

FREEMAN. Shut up and listen to me! Get to the barn, stride the mare and ride as fast as God will let you to the Sheriff's house. Tell him we've made a round-up and to rush here without delay.

(*THUNDER.*)

WILLUM. (*Goes upstage, then comes back to FREEMAN*) Ride through a storm like this!

FREEMAN. It's the Master speaking. Do as I say.
(*LIGHTNING.*)

WILLUM. Yes, Master. (*Goes up c., then back to FREEMAN*) If the mare is struck by lightning, don't blame me. (*Again goes up c. and again comes back*) What do you want the Sheriff for?

FREEMAN. Shut up, you fool, and go get him.

WILLUM. Yes, Master. (*As he goes up to pegs and puts on overcoat*) What sort of a night is this, anyway? Thunder, lightning, shootin', screamin'—(*Puts on his hat and comes down to FREEMAN*) And tell me, Master, who's the faintin' woman and the stranger I passed in the hall? Why are they in the tavern? When did they come?

FREEMAN. Damn you for your questions! Hurry, I say.

WILLUM. (*Buttoning coat*) Keep that stranger away from Sally, that's all I ask. I love that gal and I'll kill any man that tries to come between us.

FREEMAN. (*Yells*) Shut up and go, you fool!

(*CRASH.*)

WILLUM. (*Goes to window*) No man can ride through a storm like this.

FREEMAN. You can and must.

WILLUM. (*His hand on doorknob*) If you don't care for my life, think of the horse.

FREEMAN. (*Strides upstage in a rage. WILLUM opens door*) To hell with the horse! Go, I say! (*CRASH.*) (*He pushes WILLUM out c., closes and bars the door and comes down in front of table L.C., facing front. The VAGABOND and ZACH enter down-stairs. ZACH crosses R.*)

(*Rolling of THUNDER until VAGABOND comes.*)

VAGABOND. (*Down to FREEMAN*) Friend Freeman, to my mind the ceremony of shaking hands has always been more or less of an asinine idea, but I can think of no other way of expressing my thanks for your generous action toward the woman upstairs—and so I bend to custom—I bend to custom. (*Bows and extends his hand*) Your hand, sir.

FREEMAN. (*Pause. He makes no move to take hand*) I must always know with whom I'm shaking hands. What's your name?

VAGABOND. My name? Well, if I knew I'd tell you. That's fair enough, I hope.

FREEMAN. Who *are* you?

VAGABOND. I've been trying to find that out for years.

FREEMAN. Are you a fool, or do you think me one?

VAGABOND. If I were fool enough to say I thought you a fool, you'd think me a fool for saying it. (*Again offers his hand*) You still refuse to shake my hand?

FREEMAN. No, I refuse to allow you to shake mine.

VAGABOND. (*Laughs*) Cutting, but well put. Whether you believe it or not, I still have my first man's hand to shake. Thank God, my record's clean.

FREEMAN. And so is my hand.

VAGABOND. (*Laughs*) A dirty dig, but clever—damned clever. (*Pokes FREEMAN in the ribs, laughs, looks around, thinks, decides to act, and starts up R.*) Well, there's nothing to keep me here, nothing

more, so I think I'll bid you both goodnight. (*Picks up hat, cloak and staff and prepares to go.*)

FREEMAN. (*R. of table, raises his gun as VAGABOND starts up c.*) Stop! Another step and you're a dead man.

VAGABOND. And am I to understand that I'm to be detained?

FREEMAN. You're my prisoner, Mr. Stranger.

VAGABOND. Yes? And might I ask with what authority you make that statement?

FREEMAN. This weapon authorizes me to speak. You don't leave here until I know why you came and who you are.

VAGABOND. (*Putting hat, cloak and staff on table up R.*) So be it. (*Coming down c.*) But, if I'm to be denied the privilege of the great outdoors and the beauties of the storm, I demand refreshment. Come, I'm famished. What say you, Mr. Jailer? (*He comes to R. of table. ZACH L. of table. FREEMAN laughs.*) He laughs! He laughs! 'Tis an encouraging sign, I hope.

FREEMAN. (*Laughing*) I'm laughing at your monumental nerve. Egotism 'tis thy name.

VAGABOND. You're going to like me after all, and you'll admire me later on. I was sure you had a sense of humor. Let's get properly acquainted, eh? (*Mocks FREEMAN's laughter*) Bring on the food while the landlord laughs. A biscuit and a mug of beer and I'll tell you the tale of a fool's career. Come, stand treat this once and I'll ask nothing more than a pipe and tobacco leaf to top it off. What say you, Mr. Jailer?

FREEMAN. Zach!

ZACH. Yes, Father.

FREEMAN. Fetch the beggar the order he gave.

ZACH. Yes, Father. (*Goes out L.*)

VAGABOND. Aha! Again I proclaim you a most generous gentleman.

FREEMAN. (*After a pause*) Sit down. (*He sits L. of table L.C.*)

VAGABOND. (*Sits at table, opposite FREEMAN*) You see now we're as thick as thieves. I knew it. I was sure we'd be friends before the night was over. (*Leans back comfortably in his chair.*)

FREEMAN. Well, proceed—I'm anxious to hear.

VAGABOND. Hear what?

FREEMAN. The story of your life.

VAGABOND. The story of *my* life?

FREEMAN. Was not that the agreement? In exchange for the biscuit and the mug of beer you're to tell me the tale of a fool's career. 'Twas your own suggestion.

VAGABOND. No, no. No, you misunderstood, my friend. 'Twas not to myself I referred—'tis of another fool I would tell—another fool. Shall I begin? (*Pause*) Once upon a time—a long time ago——

FREEMAN. (*Rises in anger, bangs the table and yells*) Stop! I've heard enough. (*Calls*) Zach!

ZACH. (*Enters from L. and comes above table, L.C.*) Coming, Father.

FREEMAN. No food or drink—the man's a trickster.

VAGABOND. Choose your words, Freeman.

FREEMAN. I repeat, you're a trickster. You're worse than that. You're a blackguard.

VAGABOND. You're a liar—I'm not.

FREEMAN. (*Pointing his pistol at VAGABOND*) Take that back.

VAGABOND. I'm damned if I will.

FREEMAN. (*Leans over table, pointing pistol*) Take that back or I'll kill you.

VAGABOND. You're a liar, you won't. You haven't the nerve of a child. I *dare* you to shoot.

FREEMAN. (*Taken aback*) You're a brave man whoever you are.

VAGABOND. Well, not necessarily brave, for I

happened to know that the gun was empty, you see. I saw to that before I tossed it to you when I disarmed myself a while ago. (FREEMAN *laughs*.) I was sure it would amuse you. (FREEMAN *opens chamber of gun and finds it empty*. BOTH MEN *laugh*.) Damned silly, my pretended bravado, but I loved the drama of the thing. Really, I loved the drama of the thing even though 'twas only make-believe. Come, rescind that cancellation. Bring on the banquet and when I've finished I'll entertain you till you roar. By gad, sir, I'll do a trick with cards that will amaze you, or perhaps you would rather—I'd dance—— (*Crosses c., does a few steps and returns to chair*) Or perhaps you would rather I should sing. More of my accomplishments. My repertoire of ballads is well worth the hearing. (*Sings*)

"As big as a cow, as tame as a calf,

She settles the problems of life with a laugh."
Chuh-chuh-chuh, chuh-chuh-chuh-chuh.

(*The Two MEN laugh uproariously. The GOVERNOR KNOCKS on door c. ALL listening. FREEMAN crosses c., pocketing gun. Another KNOCK. VAGABOND rises, crosses L. a few paces, wheels, faces door; motions FREEMAN to open door. FREEMAN indignant.*)

GOVERNOR. (*Off c.*) Open the door!

FREEMAN. (*After a pause*) Who would enter?

GOVERNOR. (*Commandingly*) Open the door.

(*FREEMAN opens the door. GOVERNOR LAMSON, MRS. LAMSON, VIRGINIA and TOM ALLEN enter.*) (CRASH.)

(*Come down stage in line, and stand motionless. There is a few moments' silence as ALL stand looking around the room, then VIRGINIA no-*

tices the fire and calls her mother's attention to it. The TWO WOMEN cross to fireplace, the VAGABOND moving toward VIRGINIA as she crosses. FREEMAN remains at door, which he has barred. VAGABOND crosses to front of table L.C., facing front.)

(The WOMEN remove their outer wraps. ALLEN puts his hat and cloak on table up R., then comes down to VIRGINIA and puts her cape on chair R. of fireplace. The GOVERNOR stands watching the VAGABOND. After a pause the GOVERNOR crosses and puts his hat on chair up R.; takes off his cloak, folds it and places it on L. bannister and comes down C. After eyeing the VAGABOND closely for a few seconds, the GOVERNOR goes to his wife and daughter at fireplace, puts his arms about them and talks to them in undertones, then returns to C. stage.) (CRASH.) (ZACH watches VAGABOND intently. VAGABOND turns quickly to ZACH, and ZACH jumps back, frightened.)

GOVERNOR. *(After a pause he turns to FREEMAN and VAGABOND)* Which of you is the landlord? *(VAGABOND moves to L. and upstage.)*

FREEMAN. *(Crosses to GOVERNOR)* Right here, sir; at your service.

GOVERNOR. *I am Governor Lamson.*

FREEMAN. *(Astonished)* Governor Lamson! *(Bowing)* Your Excellency! *(VAGABOND becomes interested.)*

GOVERNOR. *(Turns to VAGABOND)* My wife and daughter, gentlemen. *(The introduction is acknowledged)* And my daughter's intended husband, Mr. Tom Allen.

ALLEN. *(Haughtily)* How do you do, gentlemen? *(The THREE MEN bow. VAGABOND saunters up and down stage, flirting with VIRGINIA.)*

GOVERNOR. We must lodge here, landlord. Can you take care of us for the night?

FREEMAN. (*Bowing low*) An honor, Your Excellency. (*MRS. LAMSON sits in armchair at fireplace.*)

GOVERNOR. My coach is in the yard. Your stable is locked. Will you have your men see that my horses are well cared for and that my driver finds a place to sleep?

FREEMAN. (*Bowing low*) At once, Your Excellency. (*Calls to ZACH as he goes up*) Zach—

ZACH. (*Going up c. The GOVERNOR crosses to fireplace*) I understand, Father. (*He picks up lantern and puts on overcoat.*)

ALLEN. (*To ZACH*) And boy, the luggage. (*FREEMAN unbars and opens door for ZACH.*)

ZACH. Yes, sir. (*He goes out c.*) (*CRASH.*) (*FREEMAN closes and bars door; comes downstage to GOVERNOR.*)

GOVERNOR. Oh, landlord.

FREEMAN. (*Coming down c.*) Yes, Your Excellency.

GOVERNOR. Hot toddies, quickly, we're perished.

FREEMAN. (*Bowing*) Hot toddies at once, Your Excellency. (*Bows again, looks at VAGABOND and exits L.*)

(*There is a pause. The GOVERNOR removes coat, pats his wife's hand, then goes upstage, eyeing VAGABOND. VIRGINIA goes to her mother, talks a moment in undertones, then returns to fire. The GOVERNOR looks up the stairs, then at VAGABOND. ALLEN crosses to GOVERNOR, touches him on arm. As the GOVERNOR turns, ALLEN whispers to him. When the GOVERNOR shakes his head, ALLEN returns to fire above VIRGINIA.*)

GOVERNOR. A bad storm, young man.

VAGABOND. Huh?

GOVERNOR. A bad storm.

VAGABOND. (*Rises*) Oh, no, a good storm; as glorious a storm as I've ever seen. (*Sits again on table, looking front. ALL turn and watch him.*)

GOVERNOR. (*After a look at his wife and daughter*) Well, that's one way of looking at it, I dare say. (*Eyeing the VAGABOND, he moves up c. and then down to his wife.*)

MRS. LAMSON. (*Seated R.*) Are your nerves still on edge, Robert, or have you quieted down?

GOVERNOR. (*Patting her hand*) I'm all right, perfectly all right, dear. (*He goes up c.*)

ALLEN. (*Crosses upstage*) Come over and get warm, Governor.

VIRGINIA. Yes, do, please, Dad. It's a wonderful fire.

VAGABOND. It is indeed. It is indeed—a *most* wonderful fire. But another log will make it even more so. (*Bowing low to VIRGINIA*) With your permission, Miss Virginia. (*Takes mincing steps R., picks up log, exhibits it, puts on fire; kneels, places log, rises, bows, minces L. to table L.C.; faces front; strikes attitude.*)

VIRGINIA. Oh, thank you so much. (*Sits down*) There's something so perfectly romantic about a log fire, don't you think so, Tom? (*She looks at VAGABOND as she says this. VAGABOND returns VIRGINIA'S look, then glances over at ALLEN, who is glaring at him.*)

ALLEN. (*To VIRGINIA*) If you do, dear. Are you still frightened?

VIRGINIA. Not a bit now. How are you feeling, Dad?

GOVERNOR. (*Going to L. of MRS. LAMSON*) My nervousness is gone. I'm worried about your mother now.

MRS. LAMSON. Don't worry about me, dear. I'm as right as rain.

VIRGINIA. Don't mention rain, Mother, after what we've been through. (ALL "ssh" heavily.)

GOVERNOR. Remember, Tom, there must be no publicity given to this affair. (*Goes up c.*)

ALLEN. With election coming on? I understand your position. (*Crosses L.*) Governor, not a word out of me. (*The GOVERNOR paces moodily up and down stage.*)

MRS. LAMSON. Take it easy, Robert. Do please sit down and rest.

GOVERNOR. (*Coming down to L. of his wife*) All right, dear, if it will please you I'll sit down and rest. (*Sits R. of his wife.*) (CRASH.)

MRS. LAMSON. That's better, dear. (*VIOLET is heard screaming from upstairs. There is a startled pause, then ALL rise.*)

VIRGINIA. What was that?

SALLY. (*Runs on from upstairs, calling excitedly*) Master! Master Freeman!

VAGABOND. (*Crosses to SALLY*) What is it, Sally, what's wrong?

SALLY. The sick woman—she jumped out of bed. She's afraid of the storm!

VAGABOND. Quiet her down, Sally; you know how to do it.

SALLY. I'll try, sir. (*She looks in surprise at the strangers and exits upstairs.*)

MRS. LAMSON. (*Crosses to VAGABOND*) Is someone ill?

VAGABOND. (*Comes down a step*) Yes, a stranger. A stranger driven in by the storm.

VIRGINIA. (*Over to the VAGABOND*) A woman?

VAGABOND. A woman. She's very tired, very weak.

GOVERNOR. Too bad. Perhaps you could help her, dear.

MRS. LAMSON. I'd be only too glad.

VAGABOND. No, no. (*Halts MRS. LAMSON*) She needs rest more than attention—rest more than attention—rest more than attention. (*There is a pause. MRS. LAMSON comes down above armchair R. VAGABOND moves upstage; looks upstage; looks upstairs; comes downstage and looks at VIRGINIA, who turns away.*)

ALLEN. Virginia.

VAGABOND. Well, Governor. On your way to the Capitol?

GOVERNOR. Yes, left Burtonville at seven o'clock. We should have been in the mansion an hour ago.

VAGABOND. You were held up by the storm, I suppose?

GOVERNOR. Yes, held up by the storm. (*Looks warningly at ALLEN.*)

VIRGINIA. Yes, held up. Lord—— (*ALL "ssh."*) What an experience!

MRS. LAMSON. Hush, dear; you heard what your father said, a while ago. (*VAGABOND moves over to table L.C.*)

VIRGINIA. I'm sorry, Dad, I—— (*Stops short as VAGABOND looks at her.*)

(*VAGABOND moves around to L. upper corner of table as FREEMAN enters from L. with a trayful of toddies. As he passes VAGABOND he gives him a sour look. FREEMAN passes tray first to MRS. LAMSON, who declines with a shake of her head, then to the GOVERNOR.*)

FREEMAN. (*As he serves GOVERNOR*) Here you are, Your Excellency. I'm so sorry to have kept you waiting.

GOVERNOR. (*Taking a toddy from the tray*) Not at all, landlord. Quick service, I should say.

FREEMAN. (*Passing tray to ALLEN, who helps*

himself) My man is out. I mixed them myself. I hope they're good. (*Goes to c.*)

VIRGINIA. (*Crosses and takes a glass from tray*) Anything hot is good right now no matter how it tastes.

FREEMAN. (*To MRS. LAMSON*) Can't I persuade you?

MRS. LAMSON. No, thanks; not for me.

GOVERNOR. (*Crosses to VAGABOND*) Won't you join us, young man? My wife does not imbibe. (*FREEMAN scowls at VAGABOND.*)

VAGABOND. (*With a low bow*) It would be an honor, Governor—(*GOVERNOR gives office to FREEMAN.*)—a great honor. Though seldom does liquor pass my lips, I can hardly refuse the chance to drink a toast to Governor Lamson, his most helpful wife, and his extremely charming daughter. (*He bows to GOVERNOR and LADIES in turn, then orders FREEMAN to him with the stamp of his foot and the snap of his fingers. FREEMAN crosses unwillingly and presents the tray to the VAGABOND, who picks up a spoon; stirs the toddy; drops the spoon on the tray with a great clatter; picks up his drink and nods a dismissal to FREEMAN, who moves down to L. of table. The VAGABOND raises his glass for a toast. The OTHERS also raise their glasses. Holds glass aloft*) To Governor Lamson! May the rogue who held up your coach between Burtonville and here come to no good, and within the year. Divine, delicious, superb nectar of the gods. (*ALL drink. Crosses up c.; puts glass on tray on R. table.*)

FREEMAN. (*Drops the tray on the L.C. table in his astonishment*) Held up by a highwayman, Your Excellency!

ALLEN. (*To VAGABOND as he comes down R.*) How did you know that?

GOVERNOR. Yes, how did you know that?

VAGABOND. Come, Governor, come. I'd be a poor

hand at word gathering if I failed to guess what Miss Virginia meant a while ago when she laid so much significance upon the words "held up."
(FREEMAN crosses to GOVERNOR.)

MRS. LAMSON. Virginia, I warned you.

GOVERNOR. Gentlemen, not a word of this. I swear you both to secrecy.

FREEMAN. (*Raising his right hand*) I take a solemn oath, Your Excellency.

GOVERNOR. (*To VAGABOND*) And you, young man?

VAGABOND. My word is all I have—I give it.

FREEMAN. (*After a suspicious look at VAGABOND*) Where did it happen, Your Excellency, and how long ago?

GOVERNOR. Less than half an hour ago, a few miles south, just as we were turning off the pike. The driver tried to speed up the horses, but——

ALLEN. Why discuss it with these men, Governor? (*Takes glass from VIRGINIA*) They've pledged themselves to silence, that's enough.

GOVERNOR. You're right, Tom; we'll forget the matter. Gentlemen, you've given your word.

ALLEN. (*Puts VIRGINIA'S glass on mantel*) Come, come, gentlemen, it's late. We'll retire if you'll show us to our quarters.

GOVERNOR. Yes, we must be on our way by early morn. (*Hands his glass to ALLEN, who puts it on mantel.*)

FREEMAN. (*Crossing to stairs, bowing low*) Right this way, Your Excellency. (*VAGABOND goes below table L.C.*) There are plenty of rooms to choose from at this time of the year. I'll have my wench, Sally, take good care of the ladies. Follow me, please, Your Excellency, follow me. (*FREEMAN remains on upper landing. The GOVERNOR goes up-stage, gets his hat and cloak, stands aside and allows his wife to pass on up the steps. She re-*

mains on landing. ALLEN stays below the fireplace. VAGABOND at c. stage. VIRGINIA follows her mother. VAGABOND meanwhile flirts with VIRGINIA. GOVERNOR sees him and shoots him indignant look.)

GOVERNOR. (*At L. of newel post, to VAGABOND*) Goodnight, young man.

VAGABOND. Goodnight, Governor, goodnight, and good luck to you always. (*Crosses over L.*) May your re-election, which I predict, make you as happy as this meeting has made me tonight; this meeting with Governor Lamson, his most helpful wife, and his extremely charming daughter. (*He makes the THREE a sweeping bow. The GOVERNOR crosses to MRS. LAMSON.*)

VIRGINIA. (*Goes up the stairs, stops on the third step and turns to the VAGABOND. To ALLEN, as she looks down at VAGABOND*) Isn't he the quaintest man you ever met? (*VAGABOND smiles at her, advances and bows.*)

ALLEN. (*Impatiently*) Yes, yes! Go along, Virginia.

VIRGINIA. (*To VAGABOND*) Goodnight.

VAGABOND. (*Advances few paces*) Goodnight, Miss Virginia. Sweet dreams to you tonight, tomorrow night, and ten thousand nights to come.

VIRGINIA. Goodnight.

ALLEN. (*After a scowling look at VAGABOND*) Go along, Virginia. (*GOVERNOR and MRS. LAMSON go upstairs, followed by VIRGINIA and ALLEN. VIRGINIA turns and smiles down at VAGABOND before she exits at head of stairs.*)

VAGABOND. Goodnight, Miss Virginia; goodnight, Miss Virginia. (*Stands watching them off, then turns front, smiling delightedly. After a moment he goes upstage, peers through the window, then comes down to c., giving an imitation of the manners and speech of the other characters*) "I mixed them myself, Your Excellency." "I take a solemn

oath, your Excellency." "Right this way, your Excellency." "Why discuss it with these gentlemen, Governor? They've pledged themselves to silence, that's enough." (*Sings*)

As big as a cow, but as tame as a calf,

She settles the problems of life with a laugh.

"Isn't he the quaintest man you ever met?" (*He looks toward stairs, goes up to L. of them, and stands looking pensively off in the direction VIRGINIA has gone. Comes downstage*) "Isn't he the quaintest man you ever met?" (*ZACH KNOCKS on the C. door. The VAGABOND drops to knee, listens intently, unbars and opens door just a crack to see who it is, then opens it wide and admits ZACH—(CRASH)—who enters with the travellers' luggage. He does not see VAGABOND, who has moved back of door. ZACH puts luggage down R.C. and hangs his coat and hat on the peg on the landing. As he turns to come down he sees VAGABOND for the first time and stands staring at him in astonishment, surprised to find the man alone and unguarded. He comes downstage about chair R.*) Ah, Zach, my lad, and did you put the knighted coachman to bed?

ZACH. He's all right; he's comfortable. Where's father?

VAGABOND. (*Going to newel post on stairs*) Showing his celebrated guests to their various chambers.

ZACH. And left you here alone—unguarded?

VAGABOND. Alone and unguarded. And do you suppose I'd run away—run away and try to escape from what I've just seen? No, my lad, the royal horses you just stabled could not drag me from this spot. Not till I get another look at Virginia will I stray one inch from the tavern. (*Stands, looking upstairs.*)

ZACH. You've no right to say such things about His Excellency's daughter. Besides, she's engaged.

VAGABOND. (*Coming down c. Takes ZACH by hand*) Ah, but the engagement is going to be broken off.

ZACH. When?

VAGABOND. In the morning.

ZACH. What do you mean?

VAGABOND. It must be splendid to be engaged, eh, Zach?

ZACH. (*Dreamily*) Yes, it must be.

VAGABOND. You're really in love with Sally, aren't you, Zach?

ZACH. (*On the defensive*) What if I am?

VAGABOND. Supposing—suppose your father should give his consent?

ZACH. Oh, there's no chance of that.

VAGABOND. You're wrong. There is—and he will.

ZACH. When?

VAGABOND. (*Slight pause*) In the morning.

ZACH. Why should all these things happen in the morning?

VAGABOND. Wait and see. (*Goes L.*) Wait and see.

ZACH. (*Pause*) What kind of a man *are* you?

VAGABOND. Would you really like to know, Zach?

ZACH. I would.

VAGABOND. Then I'll tell you. (*Takes ZACH by hand. Down c. stage*) But not now, not now—in the morning. (*Goes to position at newel post, looks up-stairs*) Virginia—Virginia—— (*Prances a bit and sings*)

As big as a cow and as tame as a calf,

She settles the problems of life with a laugh.

(*He goes to L. of L.C. table, places chair; admonishes ZACH to be silent, yawns, stretches, places both feet on table; puts lips to fingers to warn ZACH to be silent, closes his eyes and is ostensibly asleep.*)

(*ZACH watches him closely for a while, takes two*

grips in his hands, cautiously backs away. FREEMAN comes downstairs, motions ZACH to take bags away. ZACH exits upstairs. FREEMAN comes down to VAGABOND, peers at him, thinks, makes a decision, lights lamp. Sees ZACH coming downstairs and calls him over to armchair in which he sits. ZACH kneels at his R.)

FREEMAN. Take the lantern and wait on the road for Willum; head him off and tell him to hide the Sheriff in the barn.

ZACH. Hide the Sheriff in the barn? Why, Father? *(Warn CURTAIN.)*

FREEMAN. I can't bring him into the tavern until the Governor goes.

ZACH. When is he going?

FREEMAN. In the morning.

ZACH. But, Father, must I wait in the road in a storm like this?

FREEMAN. It's your father speaking.

ZACH. Yes, Father. *(ZACH puts on his hat and coat as FREEMAN goes to C. door. ZACH lights lantern and exits, his father opening the door for him.)*
(CRASH.)

FREEMAN. *(Closes and bars door, comes down to the sleeping VAGABOND, shakes him by the foot to waken him)* Come, stranger, I'll show you where you're going to sleep.

VAGABOND. Oh, am I to sleep? Well, I had no idea of sleeping—— Tired, weary, exhausted, driven from the roads by the downpour of the rain and the sting of the hail. Drenched to the skin and trembling with fear and cold. However, I had no idea of sleeping, but—but—if you insist. *(VAGABOND sings couplet as he rises to his feet)*

As big as a cow and as tame as a calf,
She settles the problems of life with a laugh.