

THROUGH  
THE GARDEN WALL

*A Play by*

PETER HOWARD

*London*

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## *Characters*

FERNANDA STONE

ROD ALLWAYS

FRED ALLWAYS

UNCLE EASY

MRS. ALLWAYS

MAID

DR. GOLD

SAMOVAR STONE

SILAS STONE

### ACT ONE

The garden of the Allways' house

### ACT TWO

The garden of the house next door

### ACT THREE

The gardens of both houses

Time: The present

THROUGH THE GARDEN WALL was first produced in London at the Westminster Theatre, opening on 20 March 1963 with the following cast:

FERNANDA STONE	Angela Halley
ROD ALLWAYS	David Cole
FRED ALLWAYS	Bryan Coleman
UNCLE EASY	Oliver Johnston
MRS. ALLWAYS	Phyllis Konstam
MAID	Paula Loring
DR. GOLD	Anthony Dawes
SAMOVAR STONE	Richard Warner
SILAS STONE	Vic Wise

Directed by Howard Reynolds

Settings by Hutchinson Scott

## ACT ONE

*It is the back of the Allways' house. There is a garden with a table, several garden chairs, a bench, flowerbeds and a small summerhouse. As the curtain rises a young man and a young woman are watching the house. The young man's mother, Mrs. Allways, comes to the large window, looks out of it and then with a resolute movement pulls down the blind. The girl, Fernanda Stone, turns to the young man, Rod Allways.*

FERNANDA That settles it.

ROD Settles what?

FERNANDA That was your mother, wasn't it, at the window? (*Rod nods*) She's pulled down the blinds. People pull down blinds when somebody is dead. It must mean your grandmother is dead.

ROD I hope you're right, Fernanda. But I doubt it.

FERNANDA Why?

ROD Mother for years has gone on the principle that anything she wants is bound to happen. It's wonderful how well it works. She gets her way in most things. She wants to see my grandmother dead. So she pulls down the blinds.

FERNANDA You're joking, Rod.

ROD Indeed I'm not. My mother and father have been arguing about whether the old girl is dead or alive ever since breakfast. She lies there in her bed, the Bible open beside her, staring at the ceiling the way I've seen

her look a hundred times before. Her mouth is open. The one thing unusual is that she is not snoring. My father loves her. He's always been fonder of her than of my mother. He refuses to believe she can die. My mother hates her. She's wanted her out of the way for years. She's pulled down the blinds three times already since breakfast. My father pulls them up again. There. Look!

*(Fred Always in his shirtsleeves is pulling up the blind. He makes the thumbs up sign to his son. He calls)*

FRED She's perfectly all right. Just a touch of indigestion. Nothing more, I promise you. She always sleeps longer in this weather. She'll be up later. *(He goes)*

ROD There you are!

FERNANDA My people next door always say your family are mad. I'm beginning to believe it. Why not get a doctor to look at her?

ROD They fought that out at breakfast. Mother and Father are both afraid of a doctor. That's the truth. Mother's afraid that he might save the old lady. Father won't face the possibility of her being ill at all and is afraid the doctor might tell him she is in danger. All the same, a doctor's coming.

FERNANDA It sounds as if your mother and father need the doctor.

ROD There's something in that. Anyway, they agreed to get this man Dr. Gold to see her. He's coming this morning.

FERNANDA I never heard of him.

ROD Haven't you? He's one of these new men. A foreigner of some kind, I think.

FERNANDA What's wrong with that, Rod?

ROD Nothing! I love foreigners, especially when they're called Fernanda.

FERNANDA (*Avoiding him*) What about this doctor?

ROD Everybody says he's brilliant because he has no particular qualification. He was a refugee from some place or other before he took a degree. Some rich, sick women took pity on him in this country, and said that he had cured them. Then he became fashionable. My father is happy for him to come because he says a quack like that can't do anyone any harm. My mother says that if he gets a go at Grandma and there's any life left in her, he'll probably finish her off. So he's coming. I'm looking forward to it.

FERNANDA Why are you?

ROD Oh God, I look forward to anything new happening around this place. And I hope Gold will finish Grandma.

FERNANDA You sound as if you hate her.

ROD I don't. That's the hell of it. I like her a lot really. But ever since I can remember she's always been there, like God in a room upstairs, hearing everything, seeing everything, spoiling everything. When I stole pennies out of Mother's purse as a kid, Mother never noticed, Father just laughed, but Grandma looked at me with her

great eyes over her spectacles until I rushed off blubbing and told Mother all about it. When I was caught cheating at school, Mother and Father were furious. But Grandma simply said, "You must be a perfect fool, boy, to be caught by a man as stupid as that headmaster of yours." Somehow it made me feel much worse. She's always so sensible and so right. I just can't hate her. I only want never to see her again.

FERNANDA I'd like to see her.

*(Mrs. Always once more appears at the window and bangs down the blind)*

ROD No, you can't. Not if Mother's right, anyway. I think the old girl must have gone this time. It will be a mercy. Really it will. She's been ailing for years. Anyway, I don't want you to see her. She'd never understand about us.

*(Rod picks a rose from a bush and hands it to her. Fernanda takes it)*

FERNANDA And what exactly is there to understand about us?

ROD You know what I mean. You know that I love you.

FERNANDA I know nothing of the kind.

ROD I've told you hundreds of times.

FERNANDA You've often tried to paw me and to hug me and to kiss me. You'd have got into bed with me if you had half a chance and if you weren't afraid of my having a baby. You've never said you love me as if you really meant it.



ROD What a rotten thing to say.

FERNANDA It's true, isn't it? You're just like the rest. Bed without a baby is your aim with me.

ROD You know that's a lie.

FERNANDA I know it's the truth. So do you if you're honest. And it doesn't worry me really, because I'm very much the same.

ROD (*Going towards her*) You mean? Fernanda . . .

FERNANDA (*Moving swiftly away*) I don't mean what you mean. You keep your distance. I only mean that you want bed without baby. I wouldn't mind baby without bed. I've always wanted a child. I hope I'll have one one day. But the idea of going through all the motions of love-making with a man like yourself, a man who makes me sick with his gutlessness, a man who only wants what he can get, a man who daren't even ask a girl to marry him . . .

ROD You *know* I can't.

FERNANDA I know you won't.

ROD Look, listen to me, will you? Please . . .

FERNANDA Well?

ROD I do love you. I love you very much. I want to marry you. But I simply can't talk to my family about it.

FERNANDA Why not?

ROD They don't want me to marry you. They don't want me to marry anybody. They want me to stay at home for years and years and years and earn what they

call an honest living and to settle down one day with some nice girl that Mother likes.

FERNANDA Doesn't she like me?

ROD She doesn't know you and I don't believe she would like you at all. We don't think much of your family.

FERNANDA Well, my family don't think much of you. The Stones think the Allways are just about finished.

ROD Why?

FERNANDA You're on the way out. You're all half dead, like your grandmother.

ROD Oh, we are, are we? I suppose you people never die?

FERNANDA Practically never. We have my Great-Uncle Joe. Never had a day's illness in his life. Strong as a horse.

ROD And stubborn as a mule, from all I hear.

FERNANDA You leave Great-Uncle Joe alone.

ROD Willingly. I only hope he leaves us alone. Oh hell, I'm sorry darling. Our families are like the world, glaring at each other over the garden wall and gossiping either side of it. The truth is, I can't ask my family about it. They think your people are so hard and un-neighbourly—and, furthermore, lacking in background, intelligence, experience or the rest of it.

FERNANDA And we *know* you are stupid, selfish, lazy hypocrites. That's what Father said at breakfast only this morning. Just social scavengers, he said. And he's right.

ROD How dare you say that?

FERNANDA How dare you say what you've just been saying to me? You don't love me.

ROD I do.

FERNANDA No, you don't. And I certainly don't love you. I hate you, hate you, hate you. What you say about my family is filthy. I never want to see you again. *(As Rod moves towards her saying, "Darling")* No, you don't. Keep your hands to yourself. And don't you "darling" me. I never want to see you again. Never.

*(She runs off)*

ROD Be careful, darling! Be careful!

*(During the last bit of this conversation Uncle Easy has come out of the summerhouse. He is Mrs. Allways' brother. He stands listening, with a bottle in his hand)*

UNCLE EASY Very hopeful, Rod.

ROD What is hopeful about it?

UNCLE EASY Mind you, you didn't handle her at all well.

ROD Uncle Easy. Were you in the summerhouse? How long have you been there?

UNCLE EASY All the time.

ROD How much did you hear?

UNCLE EASY Everything.

ROD You won't tell Mother and Father, will you?

UNCLE EASY Won't tell Mother and Father? Of course I won't. I haven't told the truth to either of 'em for years. But how old are you?

ROD Twenty-three.

UNCLE EASY Twenty-three. And still so scared of your parents that you're afraid of them knowing you're in love with a girl and she's in love with you.

ROD She's not.

UNCLE EASY Oh yes, she is. You can be sure of that. Has all the symptoms. Pouting and shouting. Bad temper. Saying no when she means yes. Rushing off hoping you'll follow her. Quite clever, too. She knows the only hope of making a man out of someone like you is to get you angry. Cowards will only come to the point when they are cross. Really, you were hopeless, absolutely hopeless the way you handled her—or rather the way you didn't.

ROD What do you know about women?

UNCLE EASY Everything. You can't stay single to my time of life without having studied the ways of womanhood with care. It started with my sister, your mother. I saw very soon that the only way to have any peace with her was to agree with her. She's a carpet-beater type.

ROD What do you mean by that?

UNCLE EASY There are two types of women—carpets and carpet-beaters. Some are never happy unless they are being trodden on. The others want to beat everyone they meet. That's your mother. I've never disagreed with her for years. I think she's a perfect fool, mind you. But I agree with her all the time.

*(At that moment the blind goes up again. There is Mr. Always at the window. Again he gives the thumbs-up sign. He calls)*

FRED She's looking much better. Really she is. The doctor will have her up by teatime. *(He goes)*

UNCLE EASY Your poor father. He *never* agrees with her.

ROD Their rows nearly kill me. Why Father doesn't stand up to her, I do not know.

UNCLE EASY For just the same reason you don't stand up to either of them. He prefers surrender to struggle. He enjoys retreat. He loves it. It makes him feel a martyr—and he enjoys martyrdom. He's a man who never can stand up to anybody unless he gets angry. And he doesn't believe in getting angry. His mother wouldn't like it. He hasn't lost his temper for years.

ROD He's a coward. Damn it. He's a coward. And so am I.

UNCLE EASY You may be. He's certainly not. He's one of the bravest men I ever met. He knew just what he was taking on. And he went into it with his eyes open. He told me beforehand that he knew he'd never get his own way again. Our parents were dead. He asked my consent to marry my sister. Of course, I consented. Otherwise I'd have lived alone with her the rest of my life. The one thing he said was that they'd have to live with his mother. My sister agreed. She thought she could handle the old lady the way she could handle your father and me. That's where she made her mistake.

ROD What do you really think of Grandma?

UNCLE EASY She's the pick of the bunch. She disapproves strongly of me. And she's dead right. She doesn't like this sort of thing, you know. (*Holds up the bottle*) And she's dead right. (*He takes a swig*) She thinks I do it on the sly and she's dead right. (*Takes another swig*) Far too much of it to be good for me. If we all lived the way she'd wanted we'd be far, far happier. But none of us do. Confidentially, I'm not sure the old lady does herself. My sister insisted on my coming with her if your father had his mother in the house. So I've been here ever since. I sit in the summerhouse, sipping and sympathizing. I agree with your mother. I agree with your father. I even agree with your grandmother. Not too difficult, that. Because she is dead right. So right it's revolting. I get my meals. I get my bed and my board. I earn my keep by agreeing with everything everybody says and doing what everybody wants. It's democracy of a kind, I suppose. (*He takes another swig*) But don't be worried about your father and mother's rows, Rod. They love it. They'd be lost without 'em. It's fulfilment for them both. It's the carpet-beater and the carpet. A perfect love match.

ROD It's the most cynical thing I ever heard. Don't you believe in anything? My God, you're like me. Sometimes I hate it all so much, the hypocrisy, the smugness, the smallness, I just want to run away.

UNCLE EASY Over the garden wall, eh?

ROD Yes. I'd go to her if I were sure she'd have me.

UNCLE EASY She'll have you all right. No chance at all of her refusing you, I'm afraid.

ROD If I really believed you, I'd go to her now.

UNCLE EASY (*Dropping his voice, bringing Rod forward out of earshot of the house and talking very earnestly for the first time*) Now look here. I'm going to break the habit of a lifetime. I'm going to tell you what I really feel. Only you must promise not to tell your mother and father what I said. They'd kick me out of this house. Promise?

ROD I promise.

UNCLE EASY I'm going to give you advice. It won't do you any harm, because the young never take advice. And the only harm advice does is when people take it.

ROD What is your advice, Uncle?

UNCLE EASY Run if you have to do it. Run over the garden wall. Run fast. Run far. Keep running. Run a million miles away from the prison of what is expected of you, what will be approved or disapproved, what is done and is not done.

ROD Go on.

UNCLE EASY But before you run, make an honest try to do things the way your family would like to have them done. Speak to your father and mother. Speak to your grandmother, too, about the girl, if she is still alive and kicking. Give them their chance to be a real family. Give it them for their sake as well as for your own. If they refuse, then maybe you should run. That's up to

you. But don't make the mistake I made when I was your age.

ROD What did you do?

UNCLE EASY I came to terms with the second best in life. I did it deliberately and I've been faithful to the second best ever since. The second best is a very attractive mistress, always available, always comfortable, always cheap. If you decide to go to bed with the second best, you forget everything for ever except your own bedroom. Your bedroom becomes your world. I've been living with that mistress ever since. It was easier for me to make a home with your father and mother than to make a life for myself. I was too selfish to argue, too lazy to try and change the situation I was in, and too cowardly to run for it. I've just become part of a life of easy-going, apathetic, appeasing pettiness. And I love it. And your grandmother hates me for it, bless her old heart and damn her old hide.

ROD You've never said things like this to me before. You're a bit drunk, aren't you?

UNCLE EASY. A bit. Just a bit. Just a teeny little bit. Just enough to be fool enough to tell the truth. Your grandmother *does* hate me because I see through her. She says all the right things. She doesn't always do them. But she has drugged herself with a sense of her own decency. She carries things off with such an air that she fools almost everyone.

ROD I've never known quite what to make of her.



UNCLE EASY She's the best of our past and the worst of it. *(He strikes an attitude and declaims, waving the bottle)* She is the spirit that made our country great. The free way of life, the grand old truths our forefathers believed in. She's the Old and New Testaments, the Establishment, the trade unions and Madame Tussaud's all rolled into one. She is indeed democracy. No wonder your father and mother can't agree whether she's alive or dead. Nobody can quite make up their minds about her.

ROD If she's democracy, she's certainly been dead in this house a long time.

UNCLE EASY Only because people like us choose to be cowards. *(He sees Mr. and Mrs. Allways coming out of the house)* Anyway, I don't think the old girl is dead at all. Nor does your father. But you won't tell them what I've been saying, will you? They wouldn't like it even if they understood it. Perhaps you'd better forget all about it.

ROD I don't think I can, Uncle.

*(Mr. and Mrs. Allways join them. She strides ahead. He follows behind)*

MRS. ALLWAYS Haven't you two anything more useful to do than gossip in the garden? Oh well, it's better, I suppose, than having you drink all morning, which you seem to do most days.

*(This to her brother, Uncle Easy, who has hidden the bottle behind his back when he sees the Allways coming and who,*

*during the following speeches, slips into the summerhouse and returns without the bottle)*

UNCLE EASY Yes, my dear, far better.

MRS. ALWAYS (*To Rod*) I thought I saw that Stone girl in our garden just now.

ROD She was here.

MRS. ALWAYS (*To her husband*) Fred, you'll just have to make that garden wall higher.

FRED Yes, dear.

MRS. ALWAYS I'm not going to have those people from next door coming into our garden all the time unannounced. I don't like them. They even steal the flowers.

ROD That's nonsense, Mother. I was here all the time this morning. She never took one flower. Never looked at them.

MRS. ALWAYS Maybe. Maybe not. All I can say is that last night I saw on that bush a perfect rose. I had my eye on it. Now it's gone.

*(She points at the bush where Rod picked the rose which he gave to Fernanda)*

ROD Oh Lord, I forgot.

MRS. ALWAYS What did you forget?

ROD I picked the rose myself, Mother.

MRS. ALWAYS Where is it, then? (*Rod makes no answer.*)  
There you are, you see. Even lying to protect your precious friends next door. I won't have it, do you

hear? (*To her husband.*) We must get that wall higher, Fred, as soon as the funeral is over.

FRED It won't be for some time yet.

MRS. ALLWAYS Nonsense. We'll bury her as soon as we can.

FRED She's not dead yet.

MRS. ALLWAYS Oh, yes, she is. (*Sees the window of the house with the blind up*) There now. Look at that window. You've let the blind of her room up again. It's perfectly indecent. (*She rushes back into the house*)

FRED (*Hurrying after her*) Do wait until the doctor's seen her.

UNCLE EASY Don't fuss, Fred. If the old girl is alive, she won't mind having the blind down. She always enjoys the chance of an extra nap.

FRED You're right there. But it's so tiresome of Aggie. She's never got on with Mother. It's been one of the greatest trials of my life. And now she wants to bury her alive. She's perfectly all right, you know. I've seen her this way often before. So dead asleep that people think she can't possibly last. And suddenly she's her old self again.

UNCLE EASY (*To Rod*) What did I tell you, my boy? The spirit of democracy. That's the old lady.

(*Mrs. Allways appears at the window, gazes with purpose and meaning at them all and then pulls the blind down again*)

FRED The spirit of democracy? I don't know about that.

But I tell you this: my mother stands for the best that I believe in.

ROD What about my mother, your wife, Father?

FRED She's different. I love her, of course. But she's different. My mother is an idealist. Yours is a realist. My mother is interested in what is right and what is wrong. Yours is interested in where she's right and where I'm wrong. It's inevitable, I suppose, in a woman married to a man like me. (*He laughs sadly*)

UNCLE EASY You're the very man for my sister, Fred.

FRED That's probably true. She couldn't get on without somebody to look down on. I couldn't get on without someone to look up to. That's why my mother's got to live. She's simply got to live.

(*Mrs. Allways has come bustling in*)

MRS. ALLWAYS You'll have to say it louder than that to make any difference to her now.

FRED I wish that doctor would come.

MRS. ALLWAYS He won't do anything for her.

ROD Is he a good doctor?

MRS. ALLWAYS Good enough to tell your father the facts of life—or rather the facts of death—and put some sense in him.

FRED The sooner he comes, the better. I'm only worried about one thing. Is he . . .? (*Hesitates*)

MRS. ALLWAYS Is he what?

FRED Well, er . . .

MRS. ALLWAYS For heaven's sake, say what you mean, Fred.

FRED Well, what I mean is, is Gold his *real* name?

ROD Why shouldn't it be?

UNCLE EASY Your father means that he wonders if Dr. Gold was once called Goldenstein or Rosencrantz, or some such name.

MRS. ALLWAYS What's that got to do with it? He came from some other country originally. He probably changed his name when he came here.

ROD But you don't mean just his name?

FRED Oh well, I don't want to make any awkwardness of any kind, but I wondered if by any chance he was Jewish.

MRS. ALLWAYS What's that got to do with it? A doctor's a doctor. You don't ask for a man's birth certificate before you try to save his life. And you don't ask for a doctor's birth certificate if you want him to save yours.

FRED It was you who raised the point with me at breakfast, dear.

MRS. ALLWAYS Nothing of the kind, dear.

FRED Sorry, dear, I must have misunderstood you.

*(A maid comes through into the garden)*

MAID Excuse me, madam, a gentleman called Dr. Gold is here.

MRS. ALLWAYS Bring him out here, will you? *(Maid goes)* I'd like to have a look at him before he goes up to her room.

FRED Don't let's hold him up too long. I want him to see Mother as soon as possible.

MRS. ALWAYS Don't be silly, Fred. She won't run away from him.

ROD I'll bet we shan't be any the wiser after we have seen him. (*Maid brings in Dr. Gold, a dark middle-aged man, very matter-of-fact, very neat, very ordinary, carrying a doctor's bag*)

MAID Dr. Gold, Madam. (*Maid goes*)

MRS. ALWAYS (*Shaking his hand*) It was good of you to come so quickly, Doctor. I am Mrs. Always—this is my husband—my brother—my son, Rod.

DR. GOLD (*After shaking hands and greeting them all*) Which is the patient? (*He scans them all with care. Fixes his eye on Uncle Easy*) You, I presume.

UNCLE EASY Me? Not at all. Never needed a doctor in my life. I never felt better, I assure you.

DR. GOLD Delusion, my dear sir. Sheer delusion. You certainly need a doctor. Need one very badly indeed. One look at you and I can see that.

UNCLE EASY (*Turning to his sister with heat*) Look here, did you tell him about . . .

MRS. ALWAYS About what?

UNCLE EASY Well, about—oh, never mind.

DR. GOLD Your sister told me nothing, sir. But I suppose you mean about the bottle that you have hidden some-

where around the place. (*As Uncle Easy looks sulkily at the summerhouse*) Ah, in the summerhouse, is it?

UNCLE EASY I don't know what you're talking about.

MRS. ALWAYS Oh, yes, you do. (*She goes into the summerhouse and comes out with the bottle. She holds it up to the light*) Three-quarters gone. So that's where you keep it. That's where you do your sozzling.

UNCLE EASY I *don't* sozzle.

MRS. ALWAYS Yes, you *do*.

UNCLE EASY Do you mind if I sit down? I'm not feeling too well this morning. (*Sits*)

ROD You said you never felt better.

UNCLE EASY (*Pointing at Dr. Gold*) It's that doctor who made me ill. How did he know about the bottle?

DR. GOLD It's my business to know things like that. One look at you was enough. But it's not the bottle that worries me. It's what lies behind the bottle.

MRS. ALWAYS (*Looking at it*) Nothing behind it that I can see.

DR. GOLD Yes, there is. Fatty degeneration of the spirit. Far more deadly than fatty degeneration of the liver. People take to spirits in a bottle to cure it. Only makes it worse. Far worse. (*To Uncle Easy*) You'd better stop running away from yourself or you'll kill yourself.

UNCLE EASY You know nothing about me. Anyway, I'm not your patient.

DR. GOLD You ought to be. Somebody needs to look

after you. But don't trouble. I'll make no charge. It's good advice. I give it free. Take it. Anyway, I know as much about you all as you know about me.

ROD Yes—well do we? That's just the point.

FRED Careful, Rod, careful.

DR. GOLD What point?

ROD What we were all talking about when you came in.

FRED Not now, Rod, for heaven's sake, not now.

DR. GOLD Don't worry, Rod. You won't upset me. People don't. I've got quite used to them. If you allow somebody to upset you or shock you or flatter you, you'll never cure them. I suppose you were all talking about me when I came in.

FRED Not exactly.

MRS. ALWAYS Yes, we were. Why not say so?

DR. GOLD Why not? It's quite natural. You've never met me before. You hear of me. You send for me. Then you start wondering what sort of man a doctor with the name of Gold really is. I suppose you were asking each other whether I was a Jew or not.

UNCLE EASY The man's a magician, not a doctor.

DR. GOLD I'm not, I assure you. I'm very down to earth. I just face facts. So few people do. And they think you're either mad or a magician if you face them yourself.

MRS. ALWAYS Well, are you?

DR. GOLD Am I what?



FRED Jewish.

DR. GOLD I don't know.

FRED You must know.

DR. GOLD Must I? Do you know?

FRED Know what?

DR. GOLD Whether you're Jewish.

FRED I certainly am not.

DR. GOLD Think about it. You can't be sure. You have to take your parents' word for it. Hearsay evidence. No cross-examination allowed, and the witnesses often highly prejudiced. So when I tell you I don't know whether I am a Jew or not, it's an honest answer. But I think I am. I believe I am. Jewish to the cuticles. As Jewish as Jesus, or Paul, or Nebuchadnezzar, or Dreyfus, or Charlie Chaplin. Do you mind?

MRS. ALWAYS No. I don't mind. I flatter myself I'm not that kind of person.

*(The others look at each other in disbelief—but say nothing)*

DR. GOLD Don't be afraid of saying if you mind. I don't mind your minding. It doesn't worry me at all.

MRS. ALWAYS It's only that my mother-in-law is a bit prejudiced.

FRED Indeed, she's not.

MRS. ALWAYS Indeed, she is. But my husband is a bit upset with it all, Doctor. He doesn't want to face the facts about his mother's old-fashioned prejudice, with her lying there dead.

FRED She's not dead. I assure you, Doctor. She's very far from it.

UNCLE EASY If you don't let Dr. Gold see the old lady it'll be too late anyway.

FRED Yes. It's my mother we want you to see. She's in that room there.

*(They look at the room with the blind down)*

DR. GOLD It looks as if you think I have come too late.

FRED Not at all. She likes to doze. She's not as young as she was, and the strong light upsets her. I'm sure you'll find nothing seriously wrong with her.

MRS. ALWAYS I pulled down the blinds. You go in and look at her, Doctor. You'll know why.

DR. GOLD Before I go, there's one question I want to ask. A very important question.

ROD What is it?

DR. GOLD Do you want her to live or to die?

MRS. ALWAYS What an extraordinary question.

FRED Of course, we want her to live.

UNCLE EASY What's it matter to you what any of us want? I thought doctors were meant to cure people, not kill them.

DR. GOLD Did you? I thought you said just now that I was the person who had made you ill. But I'm not exactly an ordinary doctor. Some people call me a quack. I pay very great attention to what the people who pay me want. I find that the hopes of the family,

the real hopes, have a profound effect on the health of my patients. What *do* you want of me? Do you really want her to live?

FRED (*To his wife*) I don't like this at all. I don't trust this man. I don't think he should see Mother.

DR. GOLD Well, you've answered my question anyway. You actually love her. You want her living.

MRS. ALWAYS Let's stop this nonsense. It's a waste of time. Quack or not, you're the only doctor we've got. Go in and look at her. You'll soon know the position. You can't do anything for her now.

(*Dr. Gold looks at her. Then he says*)

DR. GOLD Thank you for your confidence in me.

MRS. ALWAYS What do you mean by that?

DR. GOLD Only that you trust me to do what you feel best for her.

UNCLE EASY He understands you, my dear sister. By God he understands you, too.

MRS. ALWAYS The only one he understands is you.

DR. GOLD I'll see the patient now.

MR. and MRS. ALWAYS (*Together*) Shall I come with you?

DR. GOLD No. I must insist on seeing her without either of you.

ROD Honestly, Dr. Gold, I don't know whether I want her to die or to live. But I'm keen to see what'll happen.

DR. GOLD No, Rod. You stay here with your parents.

UNCLE EASY Let me escort you to her room, Doctor. I'd like to do it. I may get some more free advice from you on the way. Maybe you have a cure for fatty degeneration of the spirit—I think you said? (*To his sister*) Shall I take the bottle and put it in the sideboard? (*She holds it away from him*) Don't worry. I shall be quite all right with Dr. Gold. (*He takes the bottle and motioning Dr. Gold ahead of him, they go*) This is the way, Doctor.

FRED He's the oddest doctor I ever met. I hope he won't harm Mother.

MRS. ALWAYS He won't. Nobody can. She's past harming.

ROD He certainly shook Uncle Easy.

MRS. ALWAYS High time, too, with that unending bottle. How did he really know your uncle kept it in the summerhouse? I've been trying to find his hiding-place for weeks.

*(Dr. Gold pulls up the blind of the room. He looks out of the window. Then he calls)*

DR. GOLD I've got to let in the light if you don't mind. Otherwise I can't see what I'm doing. (*Dr. Gold goes*)

FRED I did not like the way he refused to allow us to go with him to see her. I did not like it at all.

MRS. ALWAYS Very sensible, I thought. He'd only have had a scene on his hands in the bedroom if he told you the truth.

FRED If there's one thing you've taught me, dear, in life, it's not to make a scene when I am told what you call the truth.

MRS. ALLWAYS Life is one long scene, Fred, with you. I never make them. You can't seem to help them.

ROD I don't want to make a scene either. But I've got to talk to you both. It's something important.

FRED Can't it wait, Rod? I'm not up to thinking about much else with your grandmother so ill.

MRS. ALLWAYS That's so like you, Fred. You're more interested in your old mother than your young son. *(She sits)* We've always time to listen to you. Sit down, Fred.

FRED As you say, dear. *(Sits)*

ROD It's about the girl next door.

MRS. ALLWAYS That Stone girl? What's she been up to this time?

ROD Nothing, Mother.

MRS. ALLWAYS That will take some believing.

FRED I must say, Rod, that I hope you won't press that point just now. It's not the right time.

ROD *(With violence)* Why is it you two always make it impossible for me to say anything to either of you that really matters? Why, why, why? Mother you're always happy so long as you get your own way with me. If I do or say or think anything that doesn't suit you, you want to turn me into a doormat—like Father.

MRS. ALWAYS Fred, are you going to sit there and hear your son insult me like that? The boy's gone out of his mind.

FRED You mustn't be rude to your mother, Rod. I won't have it.

ROD I thought calling you a doormat was being rude to you, Father. I don't want to be rude to either of you. But you make it so hard to be honest with you. You are both such shams.

MRS. ALWAYS (*Standing up*) I'm not going to listen to another word of this.

ROD (*To his father*) You've been pretty decent to me, Father. But all the time at the back of your mind you're worrying whether your own mother upstairs will approve of me, whether I'll be a credit to you in her eyes, or whether she'll look down on me the way she looks down on my mother. You want to use me all the time to prove something about yourself to Grandma. You're not really interested in me as me at all.

MRS. ALWAYS (*Sitting down again*) This sounds interesting. Go on.

FRED It's a pack of lies. I never thought I'd hear you speak like this. What's it got to do with the girl next door anyway?

ROD It's only that for so long I've been a coward. I've not dared to tell you what I've really been like, Mother, for fear of upsetting you. I've not dared to

tell you what I really believe and disbelieve, Father, for fear of upsetting Grandma. I'm sorry, because I should have told you about the girl long since. I love her. I love her very much. I want to ask her to marry me.

MRS. ALWAYS No. Never. I will *not* listen to another word. She's quite unsuitable. Fred, why do you stick there with your mouth open like a fish? Can't you speak to your son? Put an end to this nonsense.

FRED I opened my mouth to try and speak to him, dear. But you got your word in first.

MRS. ALWAYS Don't be rude, Fred.

FRED No, dear.

MRS. ALWAYS Well, say something then.

FRED Yes, dear.

MRS. ALWAYS Yes, what!

FRED I mean no. We can't have it.

ROD Why ever not? What have you got against the girl? You don't even know her.

MRS. ALWAYS We know about her family. They've got a shocking record. For one thing, they're foreigners.

ROD There seem to be a good many foreigners about in the modern world, Mother.

MRS. ALWAYS Don't be impertinent. Fred, I simply cannot understand your letting the boy talk to me like this. Do something.

FRED Yes, dear. Now look here, old chap. That family next door are no good to you, no good to us, no good to anybody. There's an uncle there, or something, who was in trouble with the police.

MRS. ALWAYS Something violent.

FRED They locked him up for years.

ROD I know all about that. But what's it got to do with Fernanda?

MRS. ALWAYS Fernanda. So that's the little hussy's name, is it? Anybody could guess that a girl with a foreign name like that would be after a boy like you.

ROD Oh, rubbish. Nothing of the kind. She won't have anything to do with me.

FRED Have you tried?

MRS. ALWAYS Tried what? Don't be disgusting, Fred. Our son's not that kind of boy. (*Awkardly*) Are you, Rod?

ROD I've not been to bed with her, if that's what you mean, Mother.

MRS. ALWAYS Oh! To think a son of mine should say such things to me. I never meant anything of the sort. I've not got that sort of mind. Fred, talk to him. Talk to him.

FRED The truth is, Rod, that none of us want to have anything to do with the Stones. We don't like their ideas. We don't like their attitudes. We just don't like them. I don't think they like us either. We have



to live next door to them. But neither your mother nor I will think of allowing you to marry one of them. Your grandmother strongly disapproves of them.

MRS. ALWAYS Well done, Fred. That's the first time I've approved of you and your mother for a long, long time.

FRED You scarcely know the girl, anyway.

ROD That's true. I haven't had much chance, thanks to you.

FRED What do you see in her?

ROD Look. This is the most important thing in the world to me. I must try and make you understand. Weren't you two ever in love? Really in love? Was there never a time when you listened to Father, Mother, just because you wanted to hear what he wanted to say? When you, Father, were always so eager to give pleasure to Mother that you didn't care even what your own mother thought about it? Wasn't there a time when you felt that *together* you could do something worth while, go somewhere worth going, be something worth being—and even if you were disappointed still take joy in each other? Wasn't there a time when you felt helpless, happy, sure that even if you grew old the world would stay young and beautiful and above all interesting, so long as you were together? Well, anyway, that's how I feel about Fernanda. And I wanted you both to know.

MRS. ALWAYS Does she feel the same about you?

ROD No. She doesn't. At least I don't think she does. It's funny really. She says her family disapproves of us.

MRS. ALWAYS (*Standing up*) Well, that settles it. Fred, it's time we went inside to see Dr. Gold. We've been here quite long enough. Too long if you ask me.

FRED I agree. Let's go in, dear. I'm sure the Doctor will have good news of Mother.

MRS. ALWAYS We'll say no more about this, Rod. And I don't want to hear any more about it from you. You're young. You're excitable. You're talking about things quite beyond you. Your father and I have always been in love, ever since we met, haven't we Fred?

FRED It's good of you to say so, dear. Very good.

MRS. ALWAYS We must have a clear understanding that in no circumstances whatsoever will we agree to your seeing the Stone girl again. That's final. Come, Fred. (*She goes*)

ROD You feel the same, Father?

FRED Yes, Rod. It's one of those rare occasions where I genuinely agree with your mother. My mother would say the same. The Stones are everything I was brought up to believe was wrong. We just can't have it.

(*As he goes, Rod calls after him*)

ROD If you can't have it, then you can't have me, Father.

FRED (*Looking back*) You'll get over it, Rod. You'll get over it. (*He goes*)

*(Rod stands for a moment looking at the door through which they have departed. Then he turns and stares at the place where Fernanda left to climb back over the wall)*

ROD Yes, I'll get over it. By God, I will get over it—and never come back again.

*(As he moves towards the wall, Uncle Easy, who has come in during Rod's last speech and watched him, speaks)*

UNCLE EASY Are you thinking of leaving us, Rod?

ROD Yes. I'm going.

UNCLE EASY Did you talk to them?

ROD Yes. I did.

UNCLE EASY Well done.

ROD Do you think so? It's like talking a different language. They don't understand me at all.

UNCLE EASY Maybe they don't understand anyone at all. They passed me in the hall looking like a couple of peacocks with their tail feathers plucked. They never even asked me how Grandma was.

ROD How is she?

UNCLE EASY I don't know. But if anyone can get the old lady galloping around again, that doctor will. An amazing fellow. You ought to talk to him.

ROD I don't need a doctor.

UNCLE EASY That's what I thought. But you remember when he spotted that little business of the bottle, and said something to me about it?

ROD Fatty degeneration of the spirit.

UNCLE EASY Something of the sort, I dare say. Anyway, as soon as we got inside the door he turned to me and said, "I don't know about the old lady upstairs. But you're dead." I had to laugh. I said, "You haven't got me yet, Doctor. I feel very much alive." He said, "You're dead. You've used what brain you have to kill what conscience you used to have years ago. Haven't you?" Now the trouble was that it was true. I knew it. So I said, "You'd better get along upstairs, Doctor." He said, "I'd better deal with the corpse I've got on my hands right here." Then he said, quite matter of fact, "A dead conscience putrifies the spirit. It stinks. I could smell it in you as soon as I saw you. Your conscience is dead. You can't see straight what is going on around you. You can't hear straight what other people say. You try to kill the consciences of other people around you to make yourself more comfortable. You just die though you keep on walking. I'm beginning to think that the only live person in this house may be the old lady upstairs." Now, I ought to have been angry with him. But I wasn't. It was all so extraordinary. Yet all quite natural.

ROD What did he say then?

UNCLE EASY He said nothing. So I asked, "What's the cure?" He said, "Do you really want to be cured?"

ROD Just the thing he asked us about Grandma.

UNCLE EASY I didn't know what to say. In a way, the last

thing I wanted was to change anything. I'm very comfortable here. I've trimmed life down to the place where it fits me perfectly. But all the same, though I didn't understand everything he said, I understood some of it. I knew I was not the man I could be. I knew I had chosen less than the best for years. So I said, "Yes. If you can help me, Dr. Gold, I really want to be cured."

ROD What then?

UNCLE EASY Nothing. Absolutely nothing. He just looked at me and said, "Then you are cured." And he walked upstairs.

ROD He's a nut.

UNCLE EASY Maybe he is. The odd thing is that I've felt quite different the last minute or two. There's only one thought in my mind, and I like it.

ROD What's that?

UNCLE EASY "Tell the truth and shame the devil." I'm never going to tell lies again, even to that beloved mother of yours, my dear sister. What a relief it will be. I feel better already. (*Much surprised*) Far better. And I haven't had one drink. Even a little one.

ROD Telling the truth doesn't work. I tried it. They wouldn't listen.

UNCLE EASY They looked as if they'd listened to something when they passed me in the hall.

ROD I've got to go to Fernanda.

UNCLE EASY Still determined to run?

ROD It's the only thing I can do. I've got to do it.

UNCLE EASY Sure it's right?

ROD Sure I must.

UNCLE EASY (*More to himself*) Well, it may be the only way they'll come to their senses. (*To Rod*) Are you running towards something or away from something?

ROD A bit of both.

UNCLE EASY That's good. That's honest. Now promise me one thing.

ROD What?

UNCLE EASY If you run now, and find things aren't quite what they seem, you won't be too proud to come back again.

ROD I'll never come back.

UNCLE EASY Never is a long time, Rod.

ROD Well, I am proud. But I'll promise.

UNCLE EASY Then run, Rod, run.

*(Rod turns, turns back and shakes his uncle's hand, and runs off towards the wall)*

*(Looking after him)* Good luck. There you are. Over the wall in a flash. Run, Rod, run. And if you run far enough in the right direction, you may find yourself at last.

*Curtain*

## ACT TWO

*It is the garden of the Stones' house next door. The houses are semi-detached. It is a place far tidier, but lacking the charm of the Allways. A table and chairs for use, not ease. Vegetables grow. No flowers. In the window which corresponds to the one where Grandma lies the blind is half drawn. The stage is empty as the curtain rises. Then Silas Stone, Fernanda's uncle, comes outside and looks up at the window. As he looks Samovar Stone, Fernanda's father, comes from the garden wall which divides the two houses.*

SAMOVAR I thought I told you to look after Fernanda—to stay with her. Where is she?

SILAS She's in her room. She's locked the door. She won't let me in nor answer when I call.

SAMOVAR That's bad. All her life I've locked her in her room to punish her. It's the one thing she hated. I always used it to get my way with her. Now she starts locking herself in. Why do you think she does it?

SILAS (*Shrugging his shoulders*) She's your daughter, not mine, brother. But if you are asking me a serious question, I'd say it's because she wants to keep us out.

SAMOVAR Hard to believe. After everything we've driven into the girl. She's been trained all her life to put the family first, and she's never given us a day's trouble until that boy next door came along. She's

been slipping over the garden wall to see him. It's easy. I've just been to look. She was there this morning.

SILAS Boys and girls do have a way of meeting each other. It's been happening a long time.

SAMOVAR It won't happen here if I decide to stop it.

SILAS Fathers and mothers have been saying that a long time.

SAMOVAR Not the way I say it.

SILAS Is she in love with him?

SAMOVAR She says she hates him.

SILAS That sounds bad to me.

SAMOVAR Me, too. I think I'll have to make that garden wall higher. We've got to live next door to these people. We've done it all our lives. But the less I see of them the better. They'd ruin us if they could. Once they nearly did, as you know.

SILAS How?

SAMOVAR They've always been well off, always on the get, always had more than their fair share of everything.

SILAS That's true.

SAMOVAR Ever since we bought the house and moved in, they've looked over that wall at us as if we were a bad smell. We hadn't been in the place a week before the old grandmother was complaining that we made too much noise on a Sunday.

SILAS Yeah, I remember.



SAMOVAR If they practised one quarter of what they preached with their Church and their Christian rules which they wave in the face of the world like flags, while they march in the opposite direction, they'd be a hundred times better neighbours.

SILAS That's true, Sam.

SAMOVAR I don't believe in their rules on Sundays or anything else, and I told them straight to mind their business.

SILAS It's annoying, but not ruinous.

SAMOVAR That came later. As you know, Uncle worked hard and made such a success of the business that we even started trading with them. They may turn up their noses at us and refuse to meet us socially, but it doesn't prevent them from trading with us if they think they can get their hand in our pocket and make a pound or two. You remember that time, down in the City, when Uncle lost his temper, had one of his really violent outbursts and hit the office boy, and the office boy fell against the filing cabinet and was hurt badly. Well, the boy would have been all right. It could all have been hushed up, if one of *them* hadn't been in the place at the time and told the police about it, and before you could say a word, they were taking notes and Uncle got in bad trouble, and ever since then they've taken care to hint and nod and whisper about him as if he were a murderer. He's become known all over town. We're almost as rich as they are now. But they still do it. They're jealous of us.

SILAS Look, Sam, you're always talking about co-existence. You seem to have a good chance of making a practice of it with your next-door neighbours.

SAMOVAR Co-existence is one thing. Marriage is another. One's easier to drop than the other.

SILAS The boy might catch our way of looking at things.

SAMOVAR Fernanda might catch his.

SILAS You don't have much faith in her. I thought you were so proud of the way you had trained her, and brought her up.

SAMOVAR Until this boy-girl business started, I'd have bet my life on her as an obedient daughter and a reliable member of the family. She's always done as she's been told. It's the only thing she understands. She likes it. Now I'm not so sure.

SILAS Had you thought of the money?

SAMOVAR What do you mean by that?

SILAS If Fernanda marries him, it may help our business.

SAMOVAR We don't need that kind of help any more. So long as the old grandmother was around and active she kept Fred Allways on the beam. But since she retired we've had no trouble. Fred's run by his wife. And she's a fool. We've taken most of their trade away. People in the City seem to like us more and more and like them less and less. They've turned lazy. The boy would get more out of marrying Fernanda than she would out of marrying him. That's another reason why I'm against it.

SILAS Will he (*Pointing to the window*) affect the business?

SAMOVAR Not if we handle the thing properly. He's been past his best for a long time. The thing is, do we make a big thing of it or keep it quiet?

SILAS How can you keep death quiet?

SAMOVAR I've been thinking about it. That's why I haven't done any telephoning until I had the chance of a word with you. And this business of Fernanda put it out of my mind.

SILAS Is Fernanda upset that Uncle's gone?

SAMOVAR No. She never liked him. And she's not in the mood to think about him anyway.

SILAS She knows?

SAMOVAR Yes, I told her.

SILAS Look here. Uncle's dead. You can't get over that. We both saw him lying there this morning. If we're honest, we're not sorry. We're glad. He's left everything to you and me. It's the chance we've always wanted since we were boys together. Now let's find someone to make the proper arrangements and let's get on with life.

SAMOVAR Wait a bit. Uncle was a well-known man. We've got two alternatives. We can have a big funeral, have the Press in, and have that crowd next door using it as an excuse to rake up all the old stories about him and about us. Or we can have him cremated, do it all quietly with as little disturbance as

possible, and avoid any awkward discussion or transition period with our customers.

SILAS I like funerals. I like big funerals. Uncle would want it like that. And although it would be expensive, it would be first-rate advertisement.

SAMOVAR No, I don't like that sort of thing at all. I don't want any fuss. And especially . . . *(He pauses)*

SILAS Especially what?

SAMOVAR His death was very sudden.

SILAS What of it?

SAMOVAR He was perfectly all right last night.

SILAS He's perfectly all wrong this morning.

SAMOVAR You were alone with him for nearly an hour last night.

SILAS So were you.

SAMOVAR Exactly.

SILAS What the devil do you mean?

SAMOVAR Only that we neither of us know what he died of. Both of us are happy to see him out of the way. Both of us were alone with him last evening. You trust me, brother. I trust you. We both loved Uncle. We know we are incapable of anything like that. But the world is a suspicious world and our neighbours are God-fearing gossips—and that's the worst kind, in my opinion. We've got to face facts. And I really think that a quiet cremation with as little publicity as possible

may be better than the sort of funeral Uncle might have hoped for.

SILAS (*After a long pause*) Yes. I see what you mean. But we need a medical certificate before he can be cremated. We need a reliable doctor. Tell me, *do* you have any idea what he did die of, brother?

SAMOVAR No, brother. Do *you*?

*(The men look at each other. Rod, who has come over the garden wall and enters during the last few speeches, breaks the silence)*

ROD Do you have somebody dead here, too?

SAMOVAR What the devil are you doing here?

SILAS How did you get into our garden?

ROD I came over the wall. And I couldn't help overhearing you speaking as if somebody was dead indoors. It's odd, because that's all my family can talk about this morning too.

SAMOVAR Is somebody dead in your place?

ROD It's Grandma. Nobody seems to be able to decide whether she's dead or alive. But they're all trying.

SILAS You'd better get right back over that wall again. You're trespassing. We don't want you here.

SAMOVAR (*To Silas*) Wait a bit. Don't hurry. (*To Rod*) You say your grandmother's ill? Do you have a doctor in your place?

ROD Yes. At least, I suppose he is a doctor. He says he is. But he seems like a nut to me.

SAMOVAR We need a doctor here. Could you ask him to come to us after he's finished with your grandmother?

ROD No. I couldn't. But why not telephone yourself? He'll come, I'm sure, if you don't mind that kind of doctor.

SILAS He sounds just the kind we want. I'll telephone, Sam, if you agree?

SAMOVAR Yes, do that, Silas. Ask him to come round here as quick as possible. (*Samovar nods. Silas goes indoors*)

What have you come here for?

ROD To see Fernanda. Where is she?

SAMOVAR Indoors. Does she know you are coming to see her?

ROD No. And I'm not sure if she'll want to see me either.

SAMOVAR What do you want her for?

ROD I'm going to ask her to marry me'

SAMOVAR She won't look at a young man like you.

ROD Why not? What do you know about it?

SAMOVAR I'm her father.

ROD Of course. How silly of me. Things have been happening so quickly today that I'd quite forgotten she had a father. I'm sorry, Mr. Stone. You must think it strange having young men climbing over your garden wall, saying they're going to marry your daughter.

SAMOVAR You're the first young man who has done it.

ROD I suppose I ought to ask your permission first.

SAMOVAR I suppose you ought.

ROD Have I your leave to ask Fernanda to be my wife?

SAMOVAR No.

ROD Why not?

SAMOVAR Because yours is the last family in the world I'd want my daughter to marry into. You're just a bundle of oafish snobs. I've brought up Fernanda strictly. You'd ruin her. We've had to fight every inch of the way. You and your people have had to fight for nothing. You get life with its sauces and savours, securities and successes, served up to you on a hot plate—and all you give people like myself is the cold shoulder. You please yourselves, and please nobody else. I have a respect for your grandmother, though I dislike her. At least she stands for something. The rest of you stand for nothing. Your father is a jellyfish. Your mother is a shark—more like a man than a woman. And you're a regular mermaid—more like a woman than a man. No, thanks. I don't want you for a son-in-law. Not likely.

ROD Perhaps it will make a difference if I tell you that I left my family just now and never mean to return to them again.

SAMOVAR Did they kick you out?

ROD No. I left. What they said about you all was the last straw.

SAMOVAR What they said about *us*?

ROD Yes. You see, I love Fernanda. I hope she loves me—though she says she doesn't. I want her to marry me. She told me she'd never marry a man without the guts to tell his family what he was going to do. She was quite right, you know. I've always felt about them very much as you feel. But I've always been afraid of them.

SAMOVAR Afraid of that bunch? I'd never be afraid of people like that.

ROD You don't have to live with them. Anyway, I told them about Fernanda and me.

SAMOVAR What did they say?

ROD They said they'd never allow me to marry your daughter. They seemed to think she wasn't good enough for me.

SAMOVAR Not good enough? They've got a nerve. They look at themselves through a magnifying-glass and everyone else through the wrong end of a telescope.

ROD Oh, I know it's all rot. I'm not anything like good enough for Fernanda. But I've come here to ask her to marry me, just the same.

SAMOVAR And now I've said no?

ROD I'll still ask her.

SAMOVAR Suppose she says no? You'll go scrambling back over that wall again with your lip wobbling and begging for the sugar-sympathy dose, I guess.



ROD No. I'm not going back. If Fernanda does say no, I'll just stick around until she says yes.

(*Silas comes in, followed by Fernanda*)

SILAS I telephoned. I spoke to Dr. Gold. He asked if anybody was seriously ill. I told him "No". Before I could utter another word he said, "Then I'll be round in just a minute", and rang off. He is certainly an odd doctor.

FERNANDA (*To Rod*) Uncle Silas told me you were here. What do you want?

ROD You.

FERNANDA Well, I don't want you.

SAMOVAR That's plain enough, isn't it?

ROD I told my family I mean to marry you.

FERNANDA What did they say?

ROD They wouldn't hear of it.

SILAS Why not?

ROD They said damnable things about you all. They talked as if you were all Commies or crooks or something. They told me about how one of you had been to gaol.

SAMOVAR Did they tell you how they were responsible for sending him there?

FERNANDA He's dead now. What's it matter?

ROD I didn't know he was dead. But it didn't matter to me either. I told them that you were all that mattered to me, Fernanda. They told me they'd never hear of it. So I came over the wall. Your father has already said

he's against us. Everybody seems to be against us. But I *do* love you, Fernanda. You must believe that.

SAMOVAR You needn't stay, Fernanda. You needn't listen to any more of this. I'll deal with him.

FERNANDA But I want to stay. I want to listen.

SILAS The young fellow seems to be running a revolution against his family. Now you've got one on your hands here, Sam.

SAMOVAR Nonsense. She'll do what she's told. She always has. Fernanda, go!

FERNANDA Father, no.

ROD Oh, Fernanda, I really believe you do care for me.

FERNANDA Don't start gushing, Rod. I don't like it. I can't stand soap and syrup. But if you are interested enough to stand up to your own family, you become interesting. And I'll certainly stand up to mine. They've bullied me far too long.

*(She goes over to Rod's side)*

SAMOVAR *(Moving towards her)* Look here, my girl. . .

FERNANDA Rod! Uncle Silas!

*(Rod stands in front of Fernanda)*

SILAS *(To Rod)* Be sensible. You'll only get hurt. He'll kill you.

*(Dr. Gold has come in during the row. He stands for a moment or two watching and listening. Then he steps forward)*

DR. GOLD Not if he hits you in the right place, I assure

you. You may hurt his fist as much as he hurts your face. And the fact that a doctor is right here on the spot should prevent some of the more serious damage.

SAMOVAR Who the hell are you?

DR GOLD I'm Dr. Gold. Somebody telephoned for me to come. I rang the bell, but nobody answered. So in I came. It sounded an urgent matter.

SILAS I could swear that door was locked.

SAMOVAR That doesn't matter. Tell me, Doctor, is the old lady next door dead?

DR. GOLD I never discuss professional matters with other patients. I see the son of the house is here. Can't he tell you?

SILAS He says he doesn't know.

SAMOVAR He doesn't know much about anything. He's going to learn something new now. (*Again moves towards Rod*)

DR. GOLD If you insist on fighting each other, there's nothing I can do to stop you. But I warn you as a doctor that there is the very greatest danger for you in that sort of physical exertion. I can see it in your complexion. Your colour tells a tale. Your eyes and cheeks and forehead tell a story. Beware, I beg you. Any sudden shock might prove fatal.

SAMOVAR Do you mean *me*?

ROD Surely you don't mean me?

FERNANDA Are you serious?

DR. GOLD Deadly serious. Indeed, deadly is just the word I want. Deadly serious. Go ahead, gentlemen. I have done my duty. (*To Silas*) I call you to witness I did my very best to warn him.

ROD (*To Samovar*) Which of us does he mean?

FERNANDA I don't care which he means. I won't have my father or my—(*To Rod*) well, whatever it is you are, risking themselves in a fight that's perfectly silly. Rod, come inside. Come at once. I want to talk to you.

SAMOVAR Don't take him into the house. I won't have him inside the place.

FERNANDA Nonsense, Father. Come, Rod. (*She goes in. Rod follows*)

SAMOVAR I'd never have believed my own daughter would disobey me like that.

SILAS I'd never have believed she could start ordering that young man about so soon. She's exactly like you, Sam.

DR. GOLD That's why he loves her.

SAMOVAR What do you mean by that?

DR. GOLD In a long and not uninteresting career I have noticed that sons who hate being bossed by their mothers usually marry bossy wives. It makes them feel secure. They know where they are.

SILAS I'm beginning to wonder where I am.

DR. GOLD Perhaps it would help if you told me why you telephoned for me. You said nobody was seriously ill.

Usually someone who telephones a doctor saying it's urgent and at the same time that nobody is seriously ill has something to hide.

SAMOVAR (*Recovering himself at once and becoming the purposeful personality that he was when this act began*)  
Quite a simple matter, doctor. Our Uncle Joseph died in the night. He went to bed as hale and hearty as ever he could be. When I went to call him today, I found him dead. We want you to see him and certify the death for us.

DR. GOLD Did he not have a regular doctor?

SILAS Uncle Joe never had a day's illness before.

DR. GOLD Remarkable that he should go so suddenly.  
Any idea what caused his death?

SAMOVAR I'd say that's your business, not ours, doctor?

DR. GOLD Mistaken. Mistaken, I assure you. Most people insist on telling doctors what is wrong with themselves or their relatives and getting angry if we disagree with them. They talk so much that it's hard to find out what the trouble is. I've seen many a healthy appendix cut out, I assure you. Surgery to satisfy some mother who was convinced her child had appendicitis. Nothing but an operation will satisfy them. Adenoids by the gross, tonsils by the ton, simply to keep parents cheerful. Millions of pounds are spent every year on coloured water that does no harm and on mineral oils or drugs in capsules that go off like a bomb inside you and do plenty of harm, simply to satisfy the craving most people have to be ill and interesting. I can't

pretend we doctors do much to cure people. Often they'd get better far more quickly without us. But at least we keep them happy, because we usually prescribe what they most desire.

SAMOVAR Never mind all that "secrets of the surgery" stuff, Doctor. Will you see our uncle and certify the death? He always wished to be cremated. He had a horror of burial, and made us promise the flames not the worms would be entrusted with his body.

DR. GOLD You want to cremate him. That's difficult. Very difficult, I'm afraid. I'll have to ask you one or two questions. (*He pulls out a notebook*) Now, what sort of man was your uncle?

SILAS What's that got to do with it?

DR. GOLD It's got everything to do with it. If I'm asked to certify a death for the purpose of cremation, I always have to know whether the people with the person when he died loved him or hated him, what they really felt about him. You never can tell nowadays. My impression is that hundreds of people get murdered every year, and are duly certified and burned to cinders without anyone except some member of the family being any the wiser.

SAMOVAR Are you suggesting we killed our uncle?

DR. GOLD Not at all. Somebody else may have done it. Who else lives in the house?

SILAS Fernanda.

DR. GOLD No. Not Fernanda. She's not the type.

SAMOVAR You can't tell what sort of person somebody is by meeting them for a mere moment.

DR. GOLD Yes. You can. A doctor can recognise a fellow executioner in a flash. Fernanda is not the type to do away with somebody quietly. Knife or gunfire, possibly. Poison never.

SAMOVAR Meaning that we are the type?

DR. GOLD Frankly, yes. But that doesn't mean you did anything. I'd know more if you told me what sort of man you truly think your uncle was.

SILAS He was wonderful. Kind, generous, honest, the most unselfish person I ever met in my life.

SAMOVAR He was the very best a man can be. We owe him everything. He was my childhood hero and he never did, said or thought anything to spoil that picture of him.

DR. GOLD (*Busily taking notes*) H'm. Bad. Very bad indeed. Looks terribly serious to me. We may have some difficulty over that certificate, I'm afraid.

SAMOVAR Why?

DR. GOLD You're both so full of his praises. Now, if you'd said he was a thief, and an extortioner, and a murderer and a bully, I'd have felt much happier. It's always the best of humanity who get crucified or killed, or persecuted, you know. You seem to have thought so highly of your uncle and there's something in the human heart that seems to make it hate the highest when it sees it. Your uncle sounds suspiciously like a saint.

SILAS You've got us wrong, Doctor. Really you have. It's not a thing we like to talk about much, but Uncle had been in prison.

DR. GOLD So have a good many saints. The thing is, people seem to rub along quite happily with sinners, but if they come across a saint, they're never happy until they've rubbed him out.

SAMOVAR Uncle wasn't a saint, Dr. Gold. Very far from it. You must have misunderstood us.

SILAS He was a regular dictator at times.

DR. GOLD Not the first dictator who has died suddenly. I'm afraid I'll have to look into it all very carefully before I give a certificate. Do you still want me to go indoors? (*Samovar and Silas look at each other*) Take your time, gentlemen. It's not an easy question to answer. If you say "No", my suspicions will be confirmed. If one says "No" and the other "Yes", I shall of course assume that the one who says "Yes" has nothing to hide.

SAMOVAR and SILAS (*Emphatically and together*) Yes.

DR. GOLD Thank you, gentlemen. I'll go inside at once. That room, I imagine? (*He points to the window with the blind half drawn*) Don't bother to show me the way. I can easily find it. (*He goes*)

SAMOVAR I don't like that man. Why did you ask him here?

SILAS Because you told me to do it.

SAMOVAR I wonder if it's all a trick of some kind? It



was that young Rod Allways who put us on to the doctor. We'd better have a word with him.

*(Mr. and Mrs. Allways come in, followed by Uncle Easy, from the direction of the garden wall)*

FRED I say, where's our boy? What have you done with him?

SAMOVAR What the devil are you doing here?

MRS. ALLWAYS Fred, leave this to me.

FRED Very well, dear.

UNCLE EASY *(To Fred)* I guarantee they won't have anything to teach my sister about dictatorship.

MRS. ALLWAYS Be quiet. Where is our boy? What have you done with him? Send him back immediately or we'll inform the police.

*(Dr. Gold's head appears through the window. He has pulled the blind fully up)*

DR. GOLD Excuse me. Did I hear somebody say "Police"? It's premature yet. I am about to make my examination. I just have to let in more light, so I can see what I am doing.

FRED It's that doctor chap. Hey, Doctor! You never said what you made of my mother. How is she?

DR. GOLD You were all so busy shouting at each other. I couldn't get any of you to pay attention. I felt it best to come at once to this urgent case next door. I'll come back in a few minutes and report. A very interesting case. Very. *(Dr. Gold disappears)*

FRED That man's a fool.

MRS. ALWAYS A lunatic.

UNCLE EASY The best doctor I ever met in my life.

MRS. ALWAYS Rubbish. But we've no time for that now. (*To Silas and Samovar*) Where's our son? You enticed him away. He's never given us one day of trouble. Always done just as we've said.

UNCLE EASY. Just as *you* said, sister.

MRS. ALWAYS Be quiet. (*To Samovar*) It's that girl of yours, sneaking into our garden uninvited, flaunting herself in front of our son's inexperience, luring him, out to grab him, body and soul.

SILAS You don't know Fernanda.

MRS. ALWAYS Fernanda? Just the queer, fancy, foreign name a girl of her type would have. I know her. I know her type well. She's the type who are on the make with every man they meet. I know you and your godless way in this house. It's the talk of the neighbourhood. You're nothing but a crowd of jumped-up, vulgar, sharp Communistic no-goods. But I'm not standing for it. If you don't give me back my son at once, I'll telephone the police station.

SAMOVAR Slut!

MRS. ALWAYS What?

SAMOVAR I said, "Slut". Let me tell you something. My daughter is worth fifty of your son. And I'd no more agree to her marrying him than I agree to your staying

one more minute in this garden. You asked yourselves in. Now ask yourselves out. Over the wall or any other way. Go. Or I'll send for the police myself.

MRS. ALWAYS I shall not go till I see my son.

SAMOVAR Silas, telephone the police station.

SILAS Do you think it's wise, Sam? (*Nodding towards Uncle's window*)

SAMOVAR No. You're right. Wait a bit while I think.

MRS. ALWAYS Go ahead. Telephone. It won't be the first time the police have been to call on you, I hear, and without being invited. It won't be the last either.

SAMOVAR Look here. I've had enough of this. I've put up with you too long, you pious hypocrite. You talk about the way we live, but you bully that poor husband of yours till he's nothing but a tape recording of your views. Look at him now. Shaking like a blancmange. Waiting for you to spoon another bit out of him. And as for your son, let me tell you this. He's after my daughter in a way that will make the neighbours lock their doors at night when they know of it. I'll see they do know. He's nothing better than an animal in the moonlight. The wall between us needs to be three times as tall with spikes and glass and nails on it to keep my daughter safe from him. It's all the way you brought him up. You've been a prison guard for your husband and a perverter of your son. You've made all the wrong things in him come at the wrong time in the wrong way. Harpy! Slut! Hypocrite!

*(Samovar has spoken with such force and venom that Mrs. Allways recoils and stands in the corner of the garden with Fred and Uncle Easy behind her)*

MRS. ALLWAYS Listen to me.

*(Samovar pulls off his shoe and bangs on the table with it)*

SAMOVAR You listen to me. I don't want one more word from you.

*(He bangs with his shoe again on the table)*

MRS. ALLWAYS *(Retreating behind Fred and Uncle Easy)* Fred, I'm frightened. Can't you do something? That man's going to attack me. If you're a man at all, you'll do something.

UNCLE EASY Fred, now's your chance. Lose your temper and find your soul.

FRED *(To Mrs. Allways and Uncle Easy)* He's talked to my wife the way I've always wanted to talk to her. The way I should have talked to her long ago. But I'm damned if I'll allow anyone but her husband to speak to my wife like that.

*(Snatches off his own shoe, rushes to the table and bangs furiously on it)*

Two can play at that game. You leave my wife out of this. *(He bangs on the table again)*

SAMOVAR You get out of our garden.

*(Samovar bangs back. Dr. Gold appears at the window. Rod and Fernanda at the door)*

DR. GOLD *(Shouting)* Quiet! Quiet! It's enough to waken the dead.

SILAS It'll take more than noise to waken Uncle Joe.

DR. GOLD It'll alarm the neighbourhood. If you go on like that, the police will be here in no time. (*He goes*)

FERNANDA What's all the shouting and the banging about?

ROD We've come to tell you our news.

MRS. ALWAYS Rod. Come home.

FRED Leave this to me.

MRS. ALWAYS Very well, dear.

UNCLE EASY Now I've heard everything—and seen everything.

SAMOVAR What is this news?

ROD You tell them, Fernanda.

FERNANDA It's your job.

ROD We've talked things over. We've got things clear. Fernanda has made me very, very happy. She's agreed to be my wife.

MRS. ALWAYS No, Rod, no. (*Begins to cry*)

SAMOVAR (*Raising his shoe*) Fernanda, I forbid it. I absolutely forbid it.

ROD (*To Samovar*) It's a poor way to start being one of your family, Mr. Stone. But if you come one step nearer to Fernanda I'll do my best to knock you down.

SAMOVAR (*To Silas*) Did you hear what he said?

UNCLE EASY Good for you, Rod. I didn't know you had it in you.

ROD Nor did I. It's that doctor. I met him inside there. He told me I was in danger of losing my life if I didn't stand up and come right out with what I really believe. I'm trying it. It's wonderful. It works.

SAMOVAR You shrimp.

ROD You shark.

FERNANDA You mustn't call my father that.

ROD Sorry, dear. It just slipped out unconsciously.

SAMOVAR I tell you all you'd better slip out of this garden consciously or unconsciously. I don't care how—but go now. I want to talk to Fernanda.

FRED I think it's best to go.

MRS. ALLWAYS Don't let's go without Rod.

FRED Certainly not. I'd like to talk to you Rod. Will you come, my boy?

*(Rod and Fernanda look at each other)*

FERNANDA It's up to you.

ROD He won't harm you, will he? *(Pointing to Samovar)*

FERNANDA. No. He bangs with his shoe. But he bangs the table, not me. I can handle him.

ROD All right, I'll go with them.

FERNANDA I'm so happy you'll go with them. I want you to be sure of yourself, Rod. If you hadn't gone, I'd have known it was my backbone, not your own, that held you upright. I never want to be like your mother.

ROD You won't be, dear.

FRED Rod!

ROD I'm coming—but I'll be back.

SAMOVAR Yes. Go on. And none of you come back again. I say none of you.

MRS. ALLWAYS We won't. None of us. Rod, come at once.

*(The Allways party, with Rod, move off towards the wall. Rod turns and looks at Fernanda. Then he comes back and kisses her, mid-stage, watched by both families. Dr. Gold appears at the window. He begins to clap. All look at him)*

DR. GOLD That's the most sensible thing I've seen any of you do. Does it mean a declaration of peace?

SAMOVAR No.

MRS. ALLWAYS Never.

FRED What about Grandma?

SILAS Can you help with Uncle?

UNCLE EASY He's helped me already.

SILAS I meant *our* Uncle Joseph.

DR. GOLD Two very interesting questions. I'm glad you have not forgotten my patients. Yes. Fascinating cases, both of them. I'm coming down now. I'll be able to advise you both. To be honest, there's been so much excitement in these houses, I'd almost forgotten Uncle and Grandma myself.

*(He is smiling out of the window as the Allways party, joined by Rod, looking back at Fernanda, move towards the garden wall)*

*Curtain*

## ACT THREE

*A few hours later. The scene is the back of the two houses. A big wall now divides them. The blinds of both windows are down. As the curtain opens, the wall runs diagonally, from mid-stage towards stage left, so that you can see the whole of the Allways' garden, and you only know of the Stones' side of things because Silas's head appears over the top of the wall, soon after the curtain rises. He is laying bricks on top of the wall to build it higher. Uncle Easy comes out of the summer-house and watches him. In the Allways' garden is arranged a TV set, a washing machine, a refrigerator, a pile of cushions.*

UNCLE EASY What on earth are you doing up there?

SILAS (*Disappears at once out of sight. Then cautiously reappears, puts a finger to his lips*) Sh! Sh!

UNCLE EASY (*Looking around*) Nobody's here but us. Why shush me?

SILAS Samovar! My brother, Sam. He's watching me. He's in a terrible rage. It would be dangerous if he heard me talking.

UNCLE EASY I feel flattered to think anybody would believe it dangerous to talk to me. Most people talk at me. I don't find that dangerous. Just dull. What are you doing?

SILAS Building the wall higher.

UNCLE EASY Higher! How high do you want it?

SILAS Samovar says as high as the sky. Sam wants bars



from the earth to the stars. Sam says the wall is to go up to the clouds and beyond them, to shut out the light and sound and air, to smother you all.

UNCLE EASY If you build it like that, it'll smother your place, too.

SILAS What Sam says is good enough for me. It's interesting you should say it, all the same. Because I asked Sam whether we were building the wall to keep you out or to keep us in. He lost his temper. He told me, "To keep them out, of course. They've been trying to get in here for years. They call us Commies. The truth is that they're filthy Imperialists. They're out to get us." You see, we had a lot of trouble with Fernanda earlier on today. She locked the door of her room to keep us out, and we'd always locked her in to punish her before. Funny in a way, because I went off at the double to fetch some bricks and mortar and when I came back, there was Fernanda lying at the bottom of the wall crying. She'd been trying to get out all right. She was hurt. She had fallen trying to climb over, to get away.

UNCLE EASY So that's why the doctor doesn't come.

SILAS Yes. He's been with Fernanda ever since.

UNCLE EASY My people have telephoned three times saying there's been an accident. All Dr. Gold says is, "If it's the sort of accident I think it is, there's no hurry", and rings off.

SILAS But we've had the accident.

UNCLE EASY We've had one, too.

SILAS Who's hurt?

UNCLE EASY Rod. He came out and saw the wall was getting high. He panicked and tried to scramble over to see Fernanda. Just as he was balanced on the top, his mother came and yelled at him. He jumped with fright and he tumbled—back on his own side, unluckily for him.

SILAS Why do you say unluckily? I thought you all hated us. I thought you'd want to stay just where you are and as you are.

UNCLE EASY He loves Fernanda.

SILAS I wouldn't say this to Samovar, but I think you are right.

UNCLE EASY I wouldn't say this to my sister Aggie, but much of our hate is hypocritical. We hate anything that might interfere with our comfort. The truth is we know very little about you—and you know nothing about us.

SILAS You know, we think you are mad.

UNCLE EASY Odd. That's what we think of you.

SILAS (*Noticing the TV set, fridge and washing machine*)  
What are those things doing in your garden?

UNCLE EASY They are new. We are buying them on the never-never. We could afford to pay cash, but Aggie always feels she's getting a bargain if something expensive is delivered for the first down payment.

SILAS But what are they doing in the garden?

UNCLE EASY It was Aggie's idea. She said that if Fernanda and you and Samovar saw all the nice things we had, you'd stop your growling and your suspicions of the decent people that we feel we are and want to live like us.

SILAS (*Laughs*) We know more about you than you suppose. We've always said that in spite of all your talk of Church and God and right and wrong, you'd rather pay than pray. You think you can buy Samovar's friendship with a bigger TV set, a colder refrigerator or a washing machine that gets out more grease faster. You don't know Samovar.

UNCLE EASY What price Fernanda? The young want more than tighter belts and bellicose talks, you know. You old folk may find it harder to fix the young in truths you have always believed in. We do on our own side of the wall.

SILAS There are two differences. We have lived what we believe in. Your lot have not. We've sacrificed ourselves. You've sacrificed others whenever it's suited you.

UNCLE EASY That's a lie.

SILAS Is it? You're all trying to sacrifice Rod's happiness now to save your own pride.

UNCLE EASY What's the other difference?

SILAS We are making better TV sets, icier fridges, cleaner washing machines ourselves. Before long we may be able to put things in our garden that will make Aggie

Allways jealous as hell. Come to think of it, if you really believe you can persuade us to sell our souls for a lot of new machinery and soft cushions . . .

UNCLE EASY I thought you didn't believe in souls.

SILAS Well, everybody's got something that makes them tick. Something that makes them suddenly willing to do the most difficult things for the thinnest reasons—to fight with bare arms against steel and dynamite for the sake of an idea, to die for their country. On a lesser level, something that makes us willing to sweat and swear and sacrifice to show we are just as good as people who think they are better than us. If that's soul we've got our share of it. And it's *not* for sale.

UNCLE EASY Soul's not that. Soul's something that goes on living when your body is dead.

SILAS Aggie Allways talks about souls all the time. If her soul is everlasting and still can talk, I'm glad I don't believe in that sort of thing.

*(Mr. and Mrs. Allways come in, Aggie leading the way. Silas who has seen her coming bobs down out of sight)*

MRS. ALLWAYS *(To Uncle Easy)* Who are you talking to?

UNCLE EASY Him, my dear sister. *(Pointing to the top of the wall)*

MRS. ALLWAYS I don't see anyone there. *(She goes up close to Easy)* Have you been at it again? I don't smell anything in your breath.

UNCLE EASY Dr. Gold cured me of that.

MRS. ALLWAYS You and that precious doctor. He

couldn't cure a dog of fleas. You'll never stop the bottle. You'll always be the same. Always. (*As Uncle Easy is about to say something, she puts up her hand*) No. Don't talk back, I'm tired of it.

(*Uncle Easy shrugs and moves towards the summerhouse*)

Wait a minute. I'm sorry. What were you going to say?

UNCLE EASY Only that when you remarked I would always, always, always be the same, I thought to myself that your name is Allways—not mine.

MRS. ALLWAYS Don't be rude. It doesn't help.

UNCLE EASY No, it doesn't. But Dr. Gold advised me on medical grounds to come out with what I thought and many of the things I think, at least in the house, seem to be rude. Dr. Gold said if I uncorked more myself it would mean uncorking the bottle less. Fred, I suppose you'd rather have me rude than tight?

FRED If it's my drink, yes, I would.

MRS. ALLWAYS (*To Easy*) I don't want you rude or tight. I suppose the next thing you'll say is that it's people like me who made you drink—that it's not your own fault at all. (*Unexpectedly*) Well, there may be something in it. Now do me a favour will you? Go along indoors. Telephone that Dr. Gold again and ask him to come at once to see Rod. I don't think anything's broken. But the boy's in pain.

UNCLE EASY Rude or not, I must say that I thought you had lost the art of surprising me, Sister Aggie. I thought I would know everything you were going to say and

how you were going to say it for the rest of your life, and beyond it, too, if there's any truth in all that stuff. But you astound me. You amaze me. You even interest me. Thank you. (*He goes in*)

(*The Allways sit. There is a moment of silence*)

MRS. ALLWAYS Fred, I want to talk to you.

FRED (*Resignedly*) Yes, dear.

MRS. ALLWAYS No. Fred. I don't mean that sort of talk. I've done too much of it. I want you to talk to me. Fred, what do you really think of me?

FRED (*Jumping up*) Are you feeling all right, dear? Can I get you something?

MRS. ALLWAYS (*In her old martial tones*) Sit down, Fred. (*Fred meekly moves back towards his seat*)

FRED Yes, dear.

MRS. ALLWAYS No. That's not the way. I'm sorry, Fred. (*With warmth*) Do please sit down. I must talk things over with you.

FRED What things?

MRS. ALLWAYS I seem to have done most of the talking all through our lives.

FRED You've always got more sensible things to say than me.

MRS. ALLWAYS No, Fred, no, no, *no*. I see it all so clearly now. I'm not like that at all. But I've made more and more of myself and less and less of you. I've grown big. You've grown small. It's awful.

FRED You're upset, dear. Let me get you something to steady you. (*He begins to get up*)

MRS. ALWAYS Fred Always, sit down. (*Fred sits with a plop that the sharp tones demand*) Heavens, you even like it when I talk to you like that.

FRED It's the You I recognise. I know where I stand, and when I have to sit. That new you was beginning to alarm me. I wondered what had come over you.

MRS. ALWAYS Fred, when that awful man said those awful things to me next door and you stood up to him and almost looked as if you would hit him, I felt proud of you.

FRED That was foolish. I was frightened.

MRS. ALWAYS You didn't show it. Then something happened that hurt me. It was like a needle in my heart. I thought I was going to be physically sick. For I suddenly remembered how much I used to love you. It swept over me like a wave of youth and hope and longing after the staleness of the years. I think, Fred, for a moment there in that grim garden I fell in love with you again. I fought it down at once. For years now I've fought down every uncomfortable thought I've had, anything that would interfere with my way of doing things. I seem to have got everything and everybody under my own control, including my thoughts.

FRED You're talking nonsense. You've always loved me, in spite of our little differences, and I've loved you.

MRS. ALWAYS That's a lie, Fred, and you know it. Oh,

to be honest is our one hope. And I have a funny feeling it's a great hope. (*The maid enters with a tray of tea*) Thank you, Alice. (*Maid exits*)

FRED What on earth started you off like this?

MRS. ALLWAYS That Dr. Gold. I didn't like him a bit at first. I'm not sure I like him now. I don't trust him as a doctor. But he talked in such an odd way, and he looked at me so straight it made me feel uncomfortable.

FRED Me, too.

MRS. ALLWAYS Then, although I was amazed at the way he knew where Easy's bottle was, I didn't show it. But you know, something's happened to Easy. He is different.

FRED Yes, I noticed it, too.

MRS. ALLWAYS Well, we came back home and I went upstairs and Rod fell off the wall and we bandaged him up and I telephoned Dr. Gold to come, and I was in my room and suddenly there was nothing to do but think. And I started thinking. Very clear thoughts. Very painful thoughts. The first one was, "If you knew what Fred really felt about you, it would surprise you."

FRED I admire you so much.

MRS. ALLWAYS The Germans admired Hitler. But he destroyed them.

FRED (*Angry*) Don't say things like that.

MRS. ALLWAYS Why are you so angry? Is it because you've often thought of me as a sort of female Hitler when I've been ordering you here and there and then



blaming you if things go wrong? Putting you into a concentration camp with my moods and tears and tantrums?

FRED Not very often, Aggie. Perhaps just once in a while.

MRS. ALWAYS (*Laughing*) Well, at least I'm beginning to know what you really feel about me. It comes out in spite of you. Fred, when we first met I fell in love with you. Deeply, deeply in love. I felt for you as Rod feels for that Fernanda. As girls have felt for boys ever since the Garden of Eden.

FRED I've done so little for you.

MRS. ALWAYS I didn't want anything—except you. I thought I could be happy scrubbing floors, washing dishes, raising children, going short of anything so long as we were together. But after we got married I found I didn't have you. There was a part of you that wasn't mine at all. That's where the trouble began.

FRED Whatever do you mean?

MRS. ALWAYS Your mother was critical of everything I did, Fred. My cooking, my sewing, my housekeeping, my clothes—everything. Very nice about it in those early days—but very critical. She was quite right. I was only a child. I didn't know how to look after a man—or even to look after myself. But I came to hate her, Fred. And because I couldn't have you, because so much of you still belonged to her, I demanded more and more from you. More money, more place. More of everything. I was so jealous of

her. I wanted to get all of you from her. I demanded from you things no man can or should give to any woman. I demanded everything I wanted, to satisfy me for the part of you that had already been given to your mother, not to me. Then Rod grew up. I wanted to get from him what I couldn't have from you. I had to be the centre of somebody's life. I had to be the sun round which somebody revolves. A poor sort of sun, because all I wanted was warmth for myself. But I ran that boy's life for him until he rebelled. And now that he's rebelled I've realised how for years and years and years my bitterness has run my life—and his—and yours. Bitterness against you, Fred, the man I loved so much, and am beginning to love again if he'll let me. I'm terribly sorry, Fred. Terribly, terribly sorry.

FRED I won't listen to any more of this. It's bad for you and for me. It's nonsense.

MRS. ALWAYS No! It's not nonsense. It's God's truth.

FRED God's truth? It's what Mother always says. It's strange to hear you say it. (*Fred looks at her for a moment*) There I go, comparing you with her again.

MRS. ALWAYS Which of us wins?

FRED All of us lose, it seems to me. But I've never heard you use that phrase "God's truth" before. Why did you do it?

MRS. ALWAYS That's the funny thing. I sat in my room with all these thoughts racing through my mind—and half of me wanting desperately to run and find you,

Fred, like a child that's hurt itself, because you'd been so brave with Samovar, and I hoped you could do something, or say something to make me feel better; the other half of me hating the idea and wanting to get up and rush downstairs, and be busy and boss folk around and give people orders—the way I've started *doing* something in order not to *think* about anything that hurts, a hundred times a day for years and years. Then it was almost as if somebody shouted at me, "Listen to me, you fool. If you don't listen now you'll wreck the life of your son, the way you've wrecked the life of your husband. This is God's truth." It seems a crazy thing to say, Fred, but I had the idea that God Himself was trying to talk to me and shouting so hard, because I've talked Him down for so long. I used to pray to Him when I was younger. I suppose if He listens to us, it's not too impossible to think we might be able to listen to Him, is it?

FRED (*Smiling*) Well, I've listened to Mother and I've listened to you since I can remember. I've had to. It certainly would be a change to listen to somebody new of my own accord.

MRS. ALWAYS Fred, I've made so many mistakes. I'm only just beginning to see some of it. But I do love you, Fred. I think I've always loved you. I think I always will. Only it's like a plant that hasn't been watered, that's been kept in a cupboard under the stairs, that's been forgotten. Can we try again? Will you give me another chance?

*(She holds out her arms. Fred is about to embrace her when Uncle Easy comes in)*

UNCLE EASY What are you doing? Got something in your eye? Here, let me lend you a handkerchief. *(He bustles forward, pulling out his handkerchief)*

MRS. ALWAYS What do you want? We were talking.

UNCLE EASY Dr. Gold is on his way. He's just left the house next door. I thought you'd want to meet him.

*(The Always get up. They move towards the house)*

MRS. ALWAYS At last. Let's go, Fred. *(She goes in)*

UNCLE EASY If she's got something in her eye, that doctor fellow will get it out. He's an extraordinary fellow. You know, Fred, when I came into the garden, just for a second I thought Aggie was going to kiss you. Absurd wasn't it? *(He laughs)*

FRED *(Smiling, too)* What's absurd about it?

UNCLE EASY You two? Kissing? *(He laughs again—and the men go out together)*

*(After a pause Silas pokes his head once more above the wall. He looks around and calls out, "All clear." Samovar, on another ladder, sticks his head up beside him)*

SAMOVAR Nobody around?

SILAS They've all gone indoors.

SAMOVAR Now's our chance.

SILAS What are you going to do?

SAMOVAR I'll show you. We simply can't afford to be boxed in by these people. They'll drive us out of the

neighbourhood if they can. We must push them back somehow. Come with me.

*(They disappear. In a minute they appear again pushing the wall into the Always' garden, until it stands at an angle from mid-stage towards stage right, revealing the Stone's garden. Silas is pushing manfully. Samovar pushes at first. But as soon as possible takes his hands off the wall and does no more, leaving the dirty work to Silas. As the wall is pushed, Samovar speaks)*

That's right. Heave away. We'll push the wall back every time they are not looking. They won't notice until it's too late. We'll get the whole of their garden—perhaps the house, too—before we are through. They are too busy quarrelling with each other. They notice very little. *(He brushes the dust ostentatiously off his hands to impress Silas with all he has been doing.)* Heavy work for us, of course. But worth it. I must say, Silas, you may not always be the best of businessmen, but you do know how to push a wall.

SILAS Thanks, Sam. The wall seemed to get heavier the more we pushed.

SAMOVAR We'll have another heave at it tomorrow.

SILAS Has that doctor gone yet?

SAMOVAR I think so. I was told he left for next door a few minutes ago. He was busy with Fernanda. I'm glad to be rid of him. I don't trust him at all. I don't like him around the place.

SILAS Neither do I. There's something fishy about him.

SAMOVAR He looks at me as if he thought I was a fish. He's out to catch me rather than cure me of anything I've caught. We might go and see Fernanda. I've got a thing or two to ask that young lady.

*(As they move towards the door Fernanda comes out of it. She looks well and radiant. No bandages. No trace of the accident)*

FERNANDA What have you got to ask me, Father?

SAMOVAR What are you doing here? Get back to bed at once. You'll kill yourself.

FERNANDA No. I'm all right. I'm up and about. Doctor's orders.

SILAS He's no doctor. He couldn't cure anything.

FERNANDA He cured me.

SILAS Has he really gone next door?

FERNANDA I don't know. He left me upstairs to change my dress. I came straight out when I'd done it.

SILAS He's probably prowling around the study. I wouldn't put anything past him. I'll go and see. *(He runs indoors)*

SAMOVAR Are you really all right?

FERNANDA Perfectly. I was never really all wrong.

SAMOVAR Nonsense. I saw you at the bottom of the wall, dirty, half unconscious. I thought you'd broken every bone in your body.

FERNANDA I was dirty. None of my bones were broken. And if you thought I was half unconscious, it shows

what a good actress I am. I was watching you all the time when you came rushing out of the house with Silas.

SAMOVAR You're joking.

FERNANDA I'm not. I put some dirt on myself, ruffled my hair, tore my skirt and my stockings, then lay at the bottom of the wall and started to groan and cry as hard as I could until you came.

SAMOVAR Why?

FERNANDA I wanted to make you feel so sorry for me for trying to climb over the wall to see Rod that you'd stop all this nonsense and make friends with the people next door and let me marry him.

SAMOVAR It's not nonsense. The people next door hate me. They tried to ruin us once and they'd do it again if they had the chance. I will not have you marry that young man, understand?

FERNANDA I understand. But I'm going to marry him. Look here, Father, we've always thought that crowd next door are wrong. I've been brought up to think they are phoney and Fascists. Rod had the guts to stand up to them. I don't say he agrees with us in everything. He doesn't. But at least he's tried to put right some of the things that are wrong over there. If he stands up to them, I'll stand up to you. So there!

SAMOVAR What's got into you? You've never spoken to me like that before.

FERNANDA It was Dr. Gold. I lay on the bed and when

he came in, I shut my eyes and groaned a little. I felt him looking at me quite carefully. Next thing I felt a great smack on my bottom. It hurt. I was so startled I sat up and said, "How dare you do that?" He grinned and said, "It's the latest cure for chronic Thespianism—and you've got a bad case of it. One of the worst I've seen." Naturally I asked him what it was. I'd never heard of it before. He said, "Don't worry about that. My cure has worked. You look different already. If you feel it coming on again, just send for me."

SAMOVAR (*Moving towards the door*) Just let me get my hands on that doctor. I'll break his neck.

FERNANDA That's what he's afraid of.

SAMOVAR (*Stopping*) What do you mean?

FERNANDA Well, he sat down in my room and said, "You may fool that father of yours, but you can't fool me. There's nothing wrong with you at all." So, of course, I asked him to tell you that I was badly hurt so you would agree to my seeing more of Rod, but he said, "No fear. That father of yours might kill me if I tried to fool him like that." I told him you were the kindest man in the world.

SAMOVAR Oh, no, I'm not.

FERNANDA He didn't seem to believe it either. He said, "Look what happened to your Uncle Joseph." Do you know, I'd quite forgotten about Uncle Joe, so I asked, "What did happen to him? What did he die of?" He laughed and said, that's what he'd like to know.



And then he said, "If I were you I'd get up, have a wash, brush your hair, change your clothes and go and tell your father the truth." I told him you didn't always like the truth.

SAMOVAR I beg your pardon!

FERNANDA He said, "It'll shake him as much as a good slap on the bottom shook you". I told him not to be vulgar, but he said, "Tell him the truth. It's another cure for chronic Thespianism. Your father's got a bad case of it too. In fact, you probably caught it off him." Then he went away. It was all so odd. It didn't make sense at first. But the more I thought of it the more commonsense it seemed to be. So I got up and came to see you. I like that doctor, Father.

SAMOVAR I don't. Why didn't you tell me the truth at first? Why try to fool me?

FERNANDA I was going to marry Rod, Father. I *am* going to marry him.

SAMOVAR No! Never!

FERNANDA But you're so grumpy about it all, I knew you'd never agree to it as things were. And I didn't want to disobey you.

SAMOVAR You never have, until now.

FERNANDA Exactly. You've been such a security to me, Father. You see, I'm like millions and millions and millions of people. I love being told what to do. It saves bothering too much about other people, or thinking of anything I can't understand, or troubling

about the past or the future. If anything goes wrong there's always someone to blame, and you can't stop people having a good grumble inside their guts, so long as it doesn't come out of their mouth, however hard you try. I didn't want to spoil all that. I wanted to have someone I could go on obeying. Rod won't order me around when I marry him. I rather wish he would. But he won't. So I thought it simpler to try and get you to agree to the marriage than to have to shake your own confidence in yourself by disobeying you.

SAMOVAR You impudent baggage! As if your disobeying me would shake my confidence.

FERNANDA It would. You know it would. Why, you can't bear anybody to contradict you. You've got to be in control. That's why you don't like the Allways. That's why you want to drive them out of the place, because they won't do as you tell them—isn't it?

SAMOVAR Not at all. They are trying to drive *me* out. They're pressing in on me all the time.

*(As he speaks the wall starts to move. Behind it can be seen the Allways and Uncle Easy pushing it away from their own front door and towards the Stones)*

Look! There they come!

*(He rushes to the wall and starts to push against the Allways)*

Help! Help!

*(Fernanda comes and helps him, but they are still pushed backwards)*

Silas, Silas! Come quickly. Those bloody imperialists next door are trying to trespass against us again.

MRS. ALWAYS Trespass! I like that. You nearly took over our whole garden when we weren't looking.

*(Silas rushes out of the house)*

SAMOVAR Fascists!

FRED Commies!

MRS. ALWAYS Well done, Fred.

SILAS You keep your nose out of this.

SAMOVAR Well done, Silas.

FRED Invaders!

SAMOVAR Fascists!

*(They are all heaving and struggling. The wall still moves slowly towards the Stones. Silas plants his back against it and the wall is at last halted in a central position. All stand strained against each other for a moment, then relax as they realise the wall, left to itself, will stay still. Samovar puts his finger to his lips, picks a big cabbage and tosses it over the wall. It hits the Always, who are still poised ready for any further push against them)*

FRED Look out! Look out! What are you doing?

SILAS Look out yourself!

MRS. ALWAYS Two can play at that game. *(She goes to the fridge, opens it, brings out a ripe tomato and flings it over the wall)*

SAMOVAR I'll show 'em. Tomato! I'll give 'em tomato. *(He tosses another cabbage over the wall)*

FRED That wasn't a tomato. That was a cabbage.

*(Mrs. Allways hurls another tomato across the wall)*

MRS. ALLWAYS We've got bigger than that to throw.

SILAS Not so big as ours. *(Throws another cabbage)*

*(Fred rushes to the fridge and takes out two more tomatoes)*

UNCLE EASY Careful, Fred. Three bob a pound, you know.

FRED I don't care how much it costs. We can't afford to let them get away with it.

*(Lobs the two tomatoes over. Silas picks up another cabbage and is about to heave it. Samovar gestures him to wait. Both sides of the wall wait. Both listen. As they are doing so, Dr. Gold comes out of the Allways' door. He stares at them for a moment)*

DR. GOLD What's going on here?

*(All the Allways signal him to be silent)*

MRS. ALLWAYS We're listening.

DR. GOLD Very well. Very excellent. A refreshing change for many of us. Good exercise for the eardrums, good for the jaw muscles, too. It's amazing how many people's jaw muscles start aching with the strain of keeping their mouths shut after a few minutes of it. How's Rod?

*(As he speaks, Rod comes out of the house)*

FRED Was he badly hurt!

ROD I wasn't hurt at all, Father. I just bandaged my arm after I fell off the wall to make you realise how I really

meant what I said and would risk everything for Fernanda. Dr. Gold took one look at me and said I had a bad case of D.T.

MRS. ALWAYS D.T.s? My son? (*To Uncle Easy*) Did you teach him to drink?

UNCLE EASY If I wanted to be smart, dear sister, I'd say that's one art about which young men nowadays need no teaching. If I want to be honest, the answer is, No.

MRS. ALWAYS Surely, Doctor, you were mistaken?

DR. GOLD I was not. D.T. It's one of the oldest ailments in the world. Deliberate Trickery. Rod wasn't hurt at all. He just wanted me to think so.

MRS. ALWAYS But you can't fall off a wall like that without being hurt.

DR. GOLD I don't think anyone with common sense would get hurt falling off that wall. It's so silly to keep on breaking bones and bursting blood-vessels over it. Much better disregard it.

FRED It's easy to say that, if you don't live with it right through your garden and being pushed nearer to you every day if you don't watch it.

DR. GOLD Oh, I don't know. Most of the barriers people put up are put up by themselves. They go up long before walls are built. Why do you imagine the Stones put up the wall?

ROD They did it to keep us out. They don't like the way we live.

DR. GOLD Well, do you?

UNCLE EASY Do we what?

DR. GOLD Like the way you live?

ROD As a matter of fact, I don't.

FRED Look here, Rod, what do you mean by that?

MRS. ALLWAYS Let him be, Fred. He may be right.

*(As the Allways look at each other and begin to argue, Dr. Gold walks through the wall. He goes unconsciously as if it were not there. He finds the Stones all glued to the wall, with their ears against it listening)*

DR. GOLD Hello there, what are you doing?

SAMOVAR Where have you come from?

DR. GOLD The Allways.

FERNANDA How is he?

DR. GOLD Rod? Very well, indeed. As well as you are.  
Never better.

SAMOVAR How did you get into our garden? I never saw you come. Never heard a thing either. And all of us were listening.

DR. GOLD I just walked in. Nobody was around. So I just walked in.

SILAS That wall isn't high enough. We must make it higher.

SAMOVAR More likely you just left the door of the house open, you careless devil. Go and look. *(Silas prepares to go)*

DR. GOLD I assure you I didn't come through the house. I just walked in from the other garden. Fernanda and

Rod both told me these tales about the wall between your places. All I can say is, it wasn't in the place where I came through.

SAMOVAR There must be a secret way in.

SILAS I'm more worried about a secret way out. Fernanda will be off if we don't stop her.

FERNANDA That wall sounds very like my injuries, Dr. Gold—only there if you want it to be there.

DR. GOLD Maybe. I wouldn't know about all that sort of thing. I just take life very much as I find it. Death, too, for that matter.

SAMOVAR What precisely do you mean by that?

DR. GOLD I mean Uncle Joe. I had a look at him. He's as dead as you want him to be, neither more nor less. As dead as the old lady next door.

SILAS The point is—what killed him?

DR. GOLD Do you think so? The point seems to me to be what brought him to life in the first place. Somebody made him the sort of man you wanted to get rid of. Who?

SAMOVAR There he goes, insinuating that we did in Uncle Joe.

SILAS Well, Sam, to tell you the truth, I'd like to know what did happen.

*(Samovar and Silas start to talk earnestly together. Dr. Gold walks straight back through the wall. Fernanda watches him go)*

DR. GOLD That brings me to the very point I want to make to you over here.

*(The Allways are still in a huddle talking. They jump apart as he comes back)*

MRS. ALLWAYS Dr. Gold, forgive us. You startled us. I'm afraid we were just a bit upset by one thing and another. We must have neglected you.

DR. GOLD Not at all, dear lady. I am having a most interesting morning.

FRED What is the point you want to make to us, Doctor?

DR. GOLD It's about your mother. She's dead, I'm afraid. Quite dead.

MRS. ALLWAYS Fred, I'm terribly, terribly sorry.

FRED The amazing thing is, I really think you are. But much as I loved her, I'm glad she's at rest. There's so much going on in the modern world that she'd never have understood. The miracle is I don't think I'm going to miss her as much as I feared.

UNCLE EASY You can say that word again.

ROD What word?

UNCLE EASY Miracle. I never thought I'd see you two happy, and Grandma in her grave.

ROD She's not there yet—God rest her soul.

DR. GOLD Don't say things like that. Don't mention that word I beg of you.

ROD What word?

DR. GOLD God. *(He comes to the front of the stage and leans*



*quite nonchalantly against the wall, stage centre, looking out at the audience. Both the Stones and the Allways can look at him and talk with him and do so now until the play ends)*  
I never talk about God. I never mention Him in any patient's presence unless they mention Him first. Far better say nothing.

SAMOVAR Don't you believe in Him, then? Nor do we.

DR. GOLD I never said that, my dear fellow. I simply said, don't talk about Him. He's very unpopular nowadays. Only the pious, the phoney and the impure seem to say much about Him. You and your crowd have promised to do Him in—just the same as you did in Uncle Joseph. (*Silas and Samovar come forward to protest. Dr. Gold holds up his hand*) Not a word, I beg you. It's too obvious, really. You're far too intelligent to waste my time and yours with needless lies. Of course you did in Uncle. I won't tell anyone. I'm not that sort of doctor. (*Turning to the Allways*) I do believe in Him. Very much, as a matter of fact. Look what He's done around here this morning. Cured Uncle Easy of fatty degeneration of the soul and of massive soaking of the spirits. Ended Fernanda's chronic Thespianism and made some sort of a woman out of a pouting, spoiled minx.

ROD She wasn't.

FERNANDA (*From her side of the wall*) I was.

DR. GOLD (*To Rod*) You weren't any better. Look what's happened to you. A man so much in love with himself—

ROD I was in love with Fernanda.

DR. GOLD Only if she joined in your worship of you. But that changed; I agree with you. You're becoming a man, now. Some people nowadays say, "Better dead than red." Your grandma would have said, "Better dead than yellow."

UNCLE EASY I'll say this for the old girl—she never was yellow.

ROD No. But she is dead. How *did* she die?

DR. GOLD You killed her, all of you.

*(Stones and Allways are all transfixed by this remark, addressed to the Allways)*

FRED What?

DR. GOLD Of course you did. You put her to death as surely as your neighbours killed Uncle Joe. She was too uncomfortable for you. She stood for something—for character, for manhood, for Godliness, for all-out honesty, for daylight purity, for the unselfishness that makes a nation move towards greatness instead of towards decadence. She stood for the best of the family, so you voted her out of date and down to hell. You killed the thing that was best in her long before she stopped breathing. Soul assassination is as bad as any other sort of murder, don't you think?

FRED It's a horrible thing to say.

DR. GOLD It's a horrible thing to do.

FRED It's not true. I did everything I could to keep her alive. I believed in her.

DR. GOLD Yes, I think you wanted her to live, but the way *you* lived helped to finish her.

FRED The way I . . .

DR. GOLD But you began to bring her back to life again this morning. The way you stood up to Samovar was like her at her best. It must have made her very happy.

SAMOVAR It *did* astonish me.

SILAS It scared me.

DR. GOLD You've wanted to do it yourself for years, Silas. You know you have, but you never had the guts. We establish dictators—or destroy them. We build patriots or debunk them. That's the truth.

FRED Truth is a prickly thing to handle. It's got a lot of sides, and all of them are sharp.

MRS. ALLWAYS I've talked about God. But I never thought He could do much about anything. I thought *you* were responsible for all that had been happening around here, Dr. Gold.

DR. GOLD Me? I've done nothing. I've not needed to do anything except let things work out right.

ROD I wish God or somebody would pull down this damned wall. It blocks out so much for all of us.

*(Samovar and Silas both rush to hold the wall firm.)*

*As Dr. Gold makes his next speech Fernanda just walks through the wall as Dr. Gold had done and joins Rod the other side of it)*

DR. GOLD There's always a way through walls. I don't

believe in the things myself. The real ones are not made of iron or bamboo. They are the steel which separates heart from heart and all human hearts from heaven. We build them up. We can pull them down. We can end them whenever we decide to do it.

ROD Fernanda!

SILAS Fernanda's gone!

SAMOVER We'll get her back!

DR. GOLD She may come back—but you'll never force her back. You men can't treat everybody the way you treat each other.

MRS. ALLWAYS Dr. Gold, you seem to me to treat all this too lightly. Walls are walls. Cabbages are cabbages. Tomatoes are tomatoes. Fear is fear.

SAMOVER Yes, Mrs. Allways, walls are walls. But they don't seem to work.

MRS. ALLWAYS They do if they are high enough.

SAMOVER If we built a wall as high as heaven, which I don't believe in, and deep as hell, where you hope I'm going, it wouldn't alter one thing.

MRS. ALLWAYS What's that?

SAMOVER You and I are very much alike.

MRS. ALLWAYS That's the end! Fred, did you hear it? That man insulted me.

FRED Yes, dear, but don't get so excited. The truth is I am very interested. I have often thought how like him you were.

MRS. ALWAYS Fred, don't! I can't bear it.

FRED I said "were", dear, not "are".

SAMOVAR Well, I said "are". For years we've despised you because of your traditions and the way you do things, and you've criticised us for what we believe in and for what we are. And the end of it is that your son and my daughter, our children, are fed up. They don't like the way either of us does things. They're in revolt.

MRS. ALWAYS I still don't see how that makes us alike. In any case, I want to point out that your daughter is now on our side of the wall, not yours.

FERNANDA It was for Rod I came, not for his family.

FRED (*To Samovar*) Look here, we've all of us spent time, money, skill, building walls, lying, spying, bullying, throwing things at each other. But none of us change and nothing changes.

SILAS We don't seem to have the power to convince each other.

FRED (*Thoughtfully*) Yet our children have got together.

SAMOVAR I think I know why.

FRED You do?

SAMOVAR You were brought up to despise men like me because we were not born into the same pattern, the same manners, the same class as yourselves. Reactionary, I call it.

FRED Reactionary?

SAMOVAR Yes—and now I have brought up my daughter to despise people like you for being different from us, and I've called it revolutionary. I always thought it natural to look down on people who spoke with your kind of accent.

FRED Yes, and I thought it natural to look down on people who spoke with your kind of accent. It's not only reactionary but plain stupid. Snobbery is snobbery, and hate is hate—and our children have joined in a rebellion against both.

ROD Yes—Fernanda and I want something better than that to live for.

SAMOVAR (*To Silas*) Some way out might be found—if *they* could be trusted.

MRS. ALLWAYS Us!

FRED (*Sternly*) Now, Aggie.

SAMOVAR Well, us too—maybe.

DR. GOLD (*To the Allways and the Stones*) That is the most sensible thing any of you have said yet.

MRS. ALLWAYS Sensible? Why, Dr. Gold, you can't be serious.

(*Samovar throws up his hands. Fred turns in annoyance towards Mrs. Allways*)

DR. GOLD I am dead serious. More serious than both of you, and more sensible. More serious than the people who use their brains to plan to blow the whole place into smithereens. More serious than the people who go

on howling and heaving and buying and bribing to force everyone into their camp, so that sooner or later the other lot are bound to try and stop them. Insanity. Insanity. Insanity. I just look at things differently, that's all. To me life is more important than death—and lasts longer. Bridges are more important than walls—and you cross them easier. Change is more practical than chaos—and it's cheaper. It's for everybody. It doesn't try to keep anyone out. It's not exclusive.

FRED What do you suggest we do, Doctor?

DR. GOLD I think it's time you people learned to live under a new authority.

UNCLE EASY You mean we need a sort of universal boss, don't you, Doctor? Like it or not, I suppose only God Almighty could take on that job—if He's there at all.

DR. GOLD You said it. I didn't. But now you come to mention it, it *is* His job. Always has been. It's about time we let Him have His way and get on with it. "For He is our peace Who hath made both one and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us."

MRS. ALWAYS Who said that?

DR. GOLD Somebody. Maybe one of my patients. I don't remember who it was. But I know it's important. It's the most important thing in the world just now.

*Curtain*