

BAD SEED

BY MAXWELL ANDERSON
DIR. EZRA DULIT-GREENBERG & SIMON WOLFE
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*****CALLBACK PACKET*****

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 3:15 PM
LITTLE THEATRE

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Side 1 Kenneth + Rhoda

and den doors on the platform is a desk, with a telephone, and a desk chair. A small radio is shelf above the desk and a waste basket is D. S. of desk. There is a large chandelier banging from the g in the C. of the room and a smaller one banging the front door which serve as general lighting at

Denmark, a neat, quaint and pretty little girl of sits seriously reading a book on the chair R. She a red and white dotted Swiss dress and red shoes metal pieces on the heels. She turns a page care-absorbed in the story. Colonel Kenneth Penmark, d looking officer of thirty-five or so, comes in from trying two fairly new suitcases.

entering.) Why, 'morning, Rhoda!
ning, Daddy.

.. of chair.) Up and dressed and ready for the day!
best perfume?

king her place.) Yes, I am, Daddy.

rossing R. to door.) That's right, this is the day
hope there's a breeze off the water. (He sets bags
front door.)

Fern says there always is.

rossing to Rhoda, examining plane ticket which
breast pocket.) She says it never rains on the first
n't count on it.

you leaving today, Daddy?

tops L. of Rhoda.) My plane goes in an hour.
gton and the Pentagon and a climate that coddles

coddled eggs.

u like everything. You're just too good to be true.
aids, and she smiles up at him.)

long will you be gone? (Puts her book on chair.)

urns away from Rhoda, looking at watch.) Sealed

All I know is I'll be home as soon as I can. (He

and holds out his arms to Rhoda.) Now what will

give you a basket of kisses?

RHODA. (Rises.) I'll give you a basket of hugs. (Rhoda jumps into father's arms and hugs him.)

KENNETH. (He stands bolding her in his arms.) I like your hug
RHODA. I like your kisses. Daddikins! You're so big and stron
KENNETH. I'll miss you. The general doesn't have one pret
girl on his whole staff!

RHODA. I wish he didn't have my daddy! I'll miss you every day.
KENNETH. Will you write to me? (Puts her down.)

RHODA. Do you want me to?

KENNETH. Of course I want you to.

RHODA. Then I'll write to you every day.

KENNETH. Every time I write to Mother I'll put in a note fo
you!

RHODA. Will you really?

KENNETH. Really and truly. And every time the general tells
good joke I'll send you an official report!

RHODA. Oh, Daddy, that won't be very often! You'd better
send me the bad ones too!

KENNETH. (Kisses top of her head.) Sweetheart, I will! (Mrs
Penmark comes in from the den U. L. She is somewhat under
thirty, a very pretty, gentle and gracious woman, quite obviously
dedicated to her husband and child. The kind of woman whose
life is given meaning by the affection she gives and receives. Ken-
neth kisses Christine, his wife, who has brought his briefcase and
she goes into his arms without a word. They have said good-bye
previously, but she can't let him go without another embrace.) I
shall write daily to both my sweethearts, unless somebody makes
a mistake and starts a shooting war and we all have to go under-
ground.

RHODA. (Seated in chair R.) Would you go underground if there
was a war?

KENNETH. (To Rhoda.) Yes, I would, and, by gum, I'd go fast!

RHODA. You said "by gum" because I was here.

KENNETH. That's right, I did.

KENNETH. (To Kenneth.) Darling, take care.

KENNETH. (To Christine.) I will. Every minute I'm away. I'll
wire you the minute we're on the ground. Take care of each other,
you two.

CHRISTINE. We will. (The doorbell L. rings a delicate little

all the annals of homicide. She was doomed – doomed to
commit murder after murder till somehow or other she
was found out. She'd been better off if she'd died young.
And society would. And yet sometimes I wonder whether
these malignant brutes may not be the mutation that
survives on this planet in this age. This age of technology
and murder-for-empire. Maybe the sofies will have to go,
and the snake-hearted will inherit the Earth. Now, I'm
betting on the democracies. But we're living in an age of
murder. In all history, there have never been so many
people murdered as in our century. Add up all the
murders from the beginning of history to 1900, and then
add the murders after 1900, and our century wins. All
alone — [*Silence*] And on that merry note, I think I
should take my leave, for I meant not to bother you and
I've been lecturing.

3 Christine Monica

Emory Tasker

ACT I

SCENE 2

is 2:30 p.m. the same day. Christine has served lunch
her apartment to Emory Wages (seated chair L. of ta-
e) and his sister Monica (seated c. window seat), also
Reginald Tasker (seated r. of Monica on window
at), a friend of theirs who writes detective stories and
is made himself a minor expert in the history of crime.
be luncheon dishes have mostly been removed, and the
ests still linger over their iced tea, cheese and fruit.
he men have taken off their coats, Tasker's is on
indow seat, and Emory's is on back of D. L. chair. As
ertain goes up—Tasker and Emory are laughing as
hristine enters from kitchen with pitcher of iced tea,
hich she puts on coffee table.

(To Christine.) But I did meet him. Nobody ever be-
when I tell them I met Sigmund Freud — (Christine
ir r. of table.)
Come now—they believe you —
. You mean it's automatic flattery. They know I'm old
at they voice doubts to make me feel better — Well,
t wasn't Dr. Freud who analyzed me, it was Dr. Kettle-
ondon.

(Eating grapes.) Now we're off.

. And this was my choice, too. Not that I minimize
rofessional standing, for I still consider him the great
our time—but Dr. Kettlebaum was more—more sim-
you know what I mean, Reggie.

(To Tasker.) It means simpatico if you know what that

.. Freud loathed American women.

NE. Oh?

.. Especially the ones that talked back to him, and I

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loathed his Germanic prejudice against feminine independence,
which he couldn't conceal.

CHRISTINE. Was Freud prejudiced?

MONICA. Indeed he was. Not consciously, you know. He just
bristled when I suggested that women had more sense than men.
Now Dr. Kettlebaum believed in the power of the individual soul,
and considered sex of only trivial interest. His mind was less
literal, more mystic, like my own.

CHRISTINE. (Eating bit of cheese.) Oh, Monica, really! Did the
analysis do you any good, actually?

MONICA. Well, it broke up my marriage. (Christine and Tasker
laugh.) I looked into the very bottom of my soul. What a spec-
tacle! When I came back I asked Mr. Breedlove for a divorce and
he didn't oppose it. So then I decided that what I'd always really
wanted was to make a home for my brother—and so I did. I don't
think dear Emory appreciates it, but what woman —

EMORY. (Tired of bearing the story for the hundredth time.)
I can stand anything except talk about your analysis—and analyz-
ing of your friends—and me. I don't want to look into the bottom
of my soul.

MONICA. (To Emory.) I can understand that perfectly. (To
Christine and Tasker.) We're all so sensitive about these things.
The truth absolutely disgusts us. Now I've come to the conclusion
that Emory is a 'larvated homosexual' —

CHRISTINE. (Christine chokes on her iced tea.) Whaaa!

EMORY. (Exploding.) Thank you. What does larvated mean?

MONICA. It means covered as with a masque—concealed.

TASKER. It means something that hasn't come to the surface—as
yet.

EMORY. (Leaning back in chair.) You can say that again. If I'm
a homosexual, they'll have to change the whole concept of what
goes on among 'em.

TASKER. Where do you get that idea, Monica?

MONICA. Pure association, the best evidence of all. Emory's
fifty-two years old, and he's never married. I doubt if he's ever
had a serious love affair.

EMORY. (Defending himself.) How would you know if they're
serious?

MONICA. Please, let's look at things objectively. (Emory rises
impatiently, crosses L. to U. L. of sofa and takes cigar from shirt

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it are Emory's deepest interests in life? They are—er mysteries in which housewives are dismembered, ball games, and singing in male quartets. How does Sundays? He spends them on a boat with Reggie and fishing. And are there ladies present on these occasions? Not a one.

—(Uttering end of cigar.) You're damned right there are

guess you are all shocked, aren't you? But you actually, homosexuality is triter than incest. (Christine exchanges a glance.) Dr. Kettlebaum considered matter of personal preference. Now I'm perfectly myself. (To Emory.) Subconsciously I have an inclination on Emory. (To Christine.) It's not normal, but why it is.

—(To L. end of sofa.) Thanks a million, little sister. (To Monica.) Can't we talk about something normal, something anybody mind if I smoke a cigar? (He turns and goes to D. L. chair.)

—(What are you trying to prove, Emory? (Emory stopped work, turns to answer—but decides it's useless. He comes to D. L. chair and takes matches from his coat which he puts back and sits.)

—(Rises, takes tea and glass, crosses to sofa, sits at table.) Relax away from the table and have our tea over

(Rises, crosses L. back of sofa, hands her glass to D. L. continues around sofa.) Yes, we've run through sex. (Points to Tasker.) Reggie, you're the expert. (Points to Tasker and crossing D. R.)

—(Seated in D. L. chair.) Any change is for the better. (At table near D. R. chair, taking cigarette.) All right, we've been collecting data on Mrs. Allison lately. (Monica points to Christine.) (News article on her, but I can't say she's a very flaming lesbian fighter from pocket.) Just an unimaginative nurse and she was in a position to kill folks off for their life and ran through quite a list before anybody suspected she was; cigarette.)

—(Lighting cigar.) Was this recent?

TASKER. Well, last year and the year before. (Crosses up to dining table for his glass.) She'd be going still only she was too stupid to vary her poisons, with the result that all her victims had similar symptoms—(Crosses down to R. end of sofa.) nausea, burning throat, intestinal pain and convulsions—(Christine fills his tea glass.) to say nothing of the conventional life insurance policies made out to the old girl with the arsenic. (He sits on stool.)

CHRISTINE. (Shuddering a little as she puts pitcher of tea on coffee table.) Please, I don't like to hear about such things.

MONICA. (Interested.) You don't?

CHRISTINE. (Picks up her glass.) No.

MONICA. Now that's an interesting psychic block. (Puts glass on coffee table.) Why would Christine dislike hearing about murders?

CHRISTINE. I don't know—I have an aversion to violence of any kind. I even hate the revolver Kenneth keeps in the house.

MONICA. Oh, do you dislike the revolver more than the poisons?

CHRISTINE. I hate them both.

MONICA. Hmm, maybe if you'll try saying the first thing that comes into your mind, we can get at the root of the anxiety. Just say it, no matter how silly it seems to you! Tell your story, Reggie, and Christine will associate.

EMORY. Oh, nonsense, Monica.

CHRISTINE. What do you mean "associate"?

MONICA. Oh. (Monica points to Tasker to go on with the story, as she listens closely.)

TASKER. Well, the end of the story was like this. Toward the middle of May, last year, Mrs. Allison visited her sister-in-law's family. She got there in time for lunch, and her niece Shirley reminded her that she had promised to bring a present for her birthday. Mrs. Allison was so upset about forgetting the present that she went to the neighborhood store and bought candy and soft drinks for the family.

MONICA. (Eagerly.) Do you think of anything? (Christine doesn't respond. Monica pokes her L. arm.)

CHRISTINE. (Turns to Monica.) Oh, absolutely nothing. (Monica points to Tasker to continue.)

TASKER. Actually, Mrs. Allison had brought her niece a present. It was ten cents' worth of arsenic. (Tasker and Emory)

Side 4 Fern + Christine

ERN. Yes.
TINE. I hadn't realized — (*Christine rises, crosses and
id of sofa.*)
ERN. About an hour after we arrived at the estate one of
r pupils came on Rhoda and the Daigle boy at the far end
rounds. The boy was upset and crying, and Rhoda was
in front of him, blocking his path. The older girl was
e trees, and neither child saw her. She was just about to
when Rhoda shoved the boy and snatched at his medal,
roke away and ran down the beach in the direction of the
f where he was later found. Rhoda followed him, not
just walking along, taking her time, the older girl said.
TINE. Has it occurred to you that the older girl might not
n telling the truth?

ERN. That isn't at all likely. She was one of the monitors
ointed to keep an eye on the younger children. She's
ad has been with us since kindergarten days. No, Mrs.
she was telling precisely what she saw. We know her

~~ERN.~~ And this was the last time Claude was seen?

ERN. ~~A~~ A little later—it might have been about noon—
ie guards saw Rhoda coming off the wharf. He shouted a
but by then she was on the beach again and he decided
the matter. The guard didn't identify the girl by name,
was wearing a red dress, he said, (*Christine looks toward
r.*) and Rhoda was the only girl who wore a dress that
ristine rises slowly, looking toward door.) At one o'clock
i bell rang and Claude was missing when the roll was
u know the rest, I think.

TINE. (*Turns, crosses below coffee table to dining table
ut window.*) Yes. But this is very serious—if Rhoda was
harf —

ERN. Not serious, really, when you've seen as much of
dren behave as I have. Children conceal things from
Christine crosses slowly D. C.) Suppose Rhoda did follow
e child onto the wharf—so many things could have hap-
ite innocently. He may have concealed himself in the old
e, and then, when discovered, may have backed away
da and fallen in the water.
TINE. Yes, that could have happened.

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MISS FERN. Now, Claude, although he looked frail, was an ex-
cellent swimmer—and, of course, Rhoda knew that. Once he was
in the water she would have expected him to swim ashore. How
could she know that the treacherous pilings were at the exact spot
where he fell?

CHRISTINE. No, she couldn't possibly . . .

MISS FERN. Perhaps the thought in Rhoda's mind when he fell
in the water was that he'd ruin his new suit and she'd get a scold-
ing for causing it. When he didn't swim ashore at once she may
have thought, with the logic of childhood, that he'd hidden under
the wharf to frighten her—or to escape her. Later on, when it was
too late to do anything, she was afraid to admit what had hap-
pened.

CHRISTINE. Then you think Rhoda knows something she isn't
admitting?

MISS FERN. Yes. I think that, like many a frightened soldier, she
deserted under fire. (*Christine starts to reply.*) This is not a
serious charge. Few of us are courageous when tested.

CHRISTINE. She has lied, though.

MISS FERN. Is there any adult who hasn't lied? Smooth the lines
from your brow, my dear. You're so much prettier when smiling.

CHRISTINE. I shall question Rhoda.

MISS FERN. I wish you would, though I doubt that you'll learn
more than you know.

CHRISTINE. (*Crosses, sits on stool.*) Miss Fern, there's something
I want to ask you. There was a floral tribute at Claude's funeral
sent by the children of the Fern School. I suppose the children
shared in the expense—but I haven't been asked to pay any part
of it.

MISS FERN. The tribute wasn't nearly so expensive as the papers
seemed to think. The money has been collected, and the flowers
paid for.

CHRISTINE. Perhaps you telephoned me, and I was out.

MISS FERN. No, my dear. We thought perhaps you'd want to
send flowers individually.

CHRISTINE. But why should we have sent flowers individually?
Rhoda wasn't friendly with the boy, and my husband and I had
never met the Daigles.

MISS FERN. (*Flustered.*) I don't know, my dear. I really —

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re three of us, you know, and in the hurry of making

— (She pauses.)

INE. You make excuses for Rhoda—and then you admit didn't ask me to help pay for the flowers—and the reason I give for not asking are obviously specious. (Rising and slow stool.) Does this mean that in your mind, and the

your sisters, there is some connection between the Daigle

with and Rhoda's presence on the wharf?

INE. I refuse to believe there is any connection.

INE. And yet you have acted as if there were.

INE. Yes, perhaps we have.

INE. This is a terrible tragedy for Mrs. Daigle, as you has lost her only child. But if there were any shadow of a—
da—from what has happened—I shall have to live under my husband, too. As for Rhoda—she would not be happy school next year. (Turns u. s. toward window.)

INE. No, she would not. (Christine stops and turns to Mrs. Fern.) And since she would not, it would be as well to our minds now that she will not be there.

INE. (Crosses D. C.) Then there is a shadow over her—have already decided not to invite her back?

INE. Yes. (Rises and faces Christine.) We have made

sion.

INE. But you can't tell me why?

INE. (Crosses to Christine.) I think her behavior in the fair play. She's a poor loser. She doesn't play the game.

INE. But you're not saying that Rhoda had anything to do with the Daigle boy's death.

INE. Of course not! Such a possibility never entered our minds. (Turns to Christine.)

INE. I'd better answer.

INE. Of course, my dear. (Christine goes to the front door, looks back at Miss Fern who has crossed to chair and opens front door. Mr. and Mrs. Daigle come in, he looks at Christine.)

INE. Yes.

INE. (She barges in—stops and turns to Christine.) We're Mrs. Daigle and Mr. Daigle. You didn't have to tell me you know. (Jo Miss Fern as she crosses C.) You realize

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we followed you. We shouldn't have done it. I'm a little drunk. (Jo Christine.) I guess you never get a little drunk.

CHRISTINE. You're quite welcome, both of you. (Christine closes door—after Mr. Daigle gives her apologetic look and he slowly crosses—L. of L. chair.)

MRS. DAIGLE. (At u. r. end of sofa.) Oh, pay no attention to him. He's all for good breeding. He was trying to stop me. Now, you, Mrs. Penmark. You've always had plenty. You're a superior person.

CHRISTINE. No, I'm not. (Crosses and stands in front of sofa.)

MRS. DAIGLE. Oh, yes. Father was rich. Rich Richard Bravo. I know. Me, I worked in a beauty parlor. Miss Fern used to come there. (Crosses R. to Miss Fern.) She looks down on me.

MISS FERN. Please, Mrs. Daigle. (Sits in chair R.)

MRS. DAIGLE. I was that frumpy blonde. Now I've lost my boy and I'm a lush. Everybody knows it. (Crosses C.)

MR. DAIGLE. We're worried about Mrs. Daigle. She's under a doctor's care. She's not herself.

MRS. DAIGLE. (Jo Mr. Daigle.) But I know what I'm about just the same. Just the same. (Crosses above stool to R. end of sofa.)

May I call you Christine? I'm quite aware that you come from a higher level of society. You profligate made a debut and all that. I

always considered Christine such a gentle name. Hortense sounds flat—that's me, Hortense. "My girl Hortense," that's what they used to sing at me, "hasn't got much sense. Let's write her name on the privy fence." Children can be nasty, don't you think?

MR. DAIGLE. Please, Hortense.

MRS. DAIGLE. You're so attractive, Christine. You have such exquisite taste in clothes, but of course you have amplexes of money to buy 'em with. (Crosses D. L. to Christine in front of sofa.)

What I came to see you about, I asked Miss Fern how did Claude happen to lose the medal, and she wouldn't tell me a thing.

MISS FERN. I don't know, Mrs. Daigle. Truly.

MRS. DAIGLE. (Turns and crosses quickly to Miss Fern.) You know more than you're telling. You're a sly one—because of the school. You don't want the school to get a bad name. But you

know more than you're telling, Miss Butter-Wouldn't-Melt Fern.

(Turns to cross L.—to stool.) There's something funny about the whole thing. I've said so over and over to Mr. Daigle. He married quite late, you know. In his forties. 'Course I wasn't exactly

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Side 5 Christine + Rhoda

(*Taking off her other shoe.*) It was real early. When

E. Why did you go on the wharf? You knew it was

(*Picks up her shoes and looks at them.*) One of the big here were little oysters that grew on the pilings. I wanted they did. (*Rhoda bits the heels of her shoes together—rubs them from her.*)

E. One of the guards said he saw you coming off the he says it was just a little before lunch time. don't know why he says that. He's wrong, and I told he was wrong. He hollered at me to come off the wharf went back to the lawn and that's where I saw Claude. bothering him.

E. What did you say to Claude?

(*Pause.*) I said—if I didn't win the medal, I was glad

E. (*Rises, crosses C., turns back to Rhoda.*) Please, da. I know you're an adroit liar. But I must have the

Takes shoes, rises, crosses to Christine.) But it's all F. Every word.

E. One of the monitors saw you try to snatch the Claude's shirt. Is that all true? Every word?

Crosses below Christine to her cupboard and puts her elf and takes out her slippers.) Oh, that big girl was Musgrove. She told everybody she saw me. Even Leroy saw me. (*She opens her eyes wide, and smiles as though complete candor.*) You see, Claude and I were just me we made up. (*Crosses to chair R., sits and puts on he said if I could catch him in ten minutes and touch with my hand—it was like prisoner's base—he'd let me medal for an hour. How can Mary Beth say I took the In't.*)

E. (*Crosses to Rhoda.*) She didn't say you took the said you grabbed at it. And that Claude ran away ach. (*She sits on L. arm of chair R.*) Did you have the then?

O, Mommy. Not then. (*She turns to her mother and denily. This time Christine is the passive one.*)

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CHRISTINE. Rhoda, how did you get the medal?
RHODA. (*Crosses to stool.*) Oh, I got it later on.
CHRISTINE. How?

RHODA. (*Sits on stool.*) Claude went back on his promise and followed him up the beach. Then he stopped and said I could wear the medal all day if I gave him fifty cents. (*She clicks her heels together.*)

CHRISTINE. Rhoda, stop that! (*Rises.*) Is that the truth?

RHODA. (*With slight contempt.*) Yes, Mother. I gave him fifty cents and he let me wear the medal.

CHRISTINE. Then why didn't you tell this to Miss Fern when she questioned you?

RHODA. (*Rises and runs to her mother.*) Oh, Mommy, Mommy! (*She whimpers a little.*) Miss Fern doesn't like me at all! I was afraid she'd think bad things about me if I told her I had the medal!

CHRISTINE. (*Kneels and holds Rhoda by the arms.*) Rhoda, you knew how much Mrs. Daigle wanted the medal, didn't you?
RHODA. Yes, Mother, I guess I did.

CHRISTINE. Then why didn't you give it to her?—(*Rhoda says nothing.*) Mrs. Daigle is heart-broken over Claude's death. It's destroyed her. I don't think she'll ever recover from it. Do you know what I mean?

RHODA. Yes, Mother, I guess so.

CHRISTINE. No. (*Christine takes her arms away from Rhoda.*) You don't know what I mean.

RHODA. But it was silly to want to bury the medal pinned on Claude's coat. Claude was dead. He wouldn't know whether he had the medal pinned on him or not. (*She senses her mother's sudden feeling of revulsion, and bugs her mother. Then gently strokes her neck.*) I've got the sweetest mother. I tell everybody I've got the sweetest mother in the world!—If she wants a little boy that bad, why doesn't she take one out of the Orphans' Home?

CHRISTINE. Rhoda! Get away from me! Don't talk to me. We have nothing to say to each other.

RHODA. Okay. Okay, Mother. (*She turns away and starts to den.*)

CHRISTINE. (*Rises.*) Rhoda! (*Rhoda stops and slowly turns*

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n we lived in Baltimore, there was an old lady up-
Clara Post, who liked you very much.
s. (*Crosses slowly down to back of sofa.*)
: You used to go up to see her every afternoon. She
i, and liked to show you all her treasures. The one
most was a crystal ball, in which opals floated. The
mised this treasure to you when she died. One after-
the daughter was out shopping at the super-market,
e alone with the old lady, she somehow managed to
e spiral backstairs and break her neck. You said she
n mewling outside and went to see about it and some-
er footing and fell five flights to the courtyard below.
t back of sofa.) Yes, it's true.

(*Up c.*) Then you asked the daughter for the crystal
e it to you, and it's still hanging at the head of your
s, Mother.

(*Crosses, sits on stool.*) Rhoda, did you have any-
anything at all, no matter how little it was, with
g drowned?
turns to Christine.) What makes you ask that,

Come here, Rhoda. (*Rhoda crosses to Christine.*)
ie eyes and tell me. I must know.
, Mother. I didn't.

(*Pause.*) You're not going back to the Fern School
ey don't want you any more.

ay. (*Turns away and plays with pillow on sofa.*)

(*Crosses to telephone. Sits in desk chair, dials the
call Miss Fern and ask her to come over.
unning to her mother.*) She'll think I lied to her.
You did lie to her.

not to you, Mother! Not to you!

Hello, Fern School. (*Rhoda crosses slowly to stool.*)
Fern, please. No. No message. (*She hangs up and
u. s.*) She's not home yet.

urns, looks at Christine.) What would you tell her,

(*She looks at Rhoda a moment—then slowly shakes*

ber head and crosses toward Rhoda.) No! It can't be true. (*She
sits on stool facing u. s. and takes Rhoda in her arms.*) It can't be
true. (*Rhoda puts her arms around Christine and looks over
Christine's shoulder toward the audience with a very self-satisfied
look as the curtain falls.*)

CURTAIN

a Rhoda Christine

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ACT II

SCENE I

SCENE: *The same apartment. Late afternoon, the next day.*

Rhoda is seated in chair R. at her little table putting a jigsaw puzzle together. She works with intense concentration, trying, rejecting, considering sizes and angles. As the curtain rises there is a knock on the front door and Monica enters carrying a cardboard box.

A. Anybody here?

A. Hello, Aunt Monica!

A. Hi, honey. (Closes door.)

A. (Hollering off R.) Mother!

A. (Crossing and meeting Christine C. stage as she enters H R.) Oh, Christine! You said I might have Rhoda for a while there's a package for you.

A. (Above stool.) Thank you, Monica. You're always generous of gifts. (She takes the carton from Monica and C.)

A. (Crosses between sofa and stool D. C.) This is from my else. It was in the package room.

A. (Looking at package.) Oh—for Rhoda, from

A. (Up at once and crosses to Christine.) For me?

A. Oh, not yet. (Reading from top of box.) "In anticipation of her ninth birthday."

A. What does anticipation mean?

A. Looking forward to it.

A. "Not to be opened till —"

A. Oh. It's a long time to wait. But I will. (She shrugs her shoulders and goes back to her chair.)

A. Isn't she the perfect old-fashioned girl? She'll wait!

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CHRISTINE. No—there's more in daddy's writing—"Open when you get it—there'll be a real one later."

RHODA. (Rises eagerly, crosses to them.) But then he wants me to open it now!

CHRISTINE. Yes. All it needs is to be slit down this side with the scissors.

RHODA. (Pulling excelsior out of end of box.) There's excelsior—I can see it.

CHRISTINE. (Picks up excelsior and bands it to Rhoda.) Rhoda, it should be opened in the kitchen.

RHODA. Okay. (She takes the package to the kitchen. Christine crosses to Rhoda's puzzle.)

MONICA. (Watching Rhoda, waiting till she's out of earshot.) I wish she were mine! Every time I look at her I wish I had just such a little girl.

CHRISTINE. She's not wanted in the Fern School next year. MONICA. Why?

CHRISTINE. She doesn't fit in, doesn't play the game. She's a poor sport. (She sits in chair R. toying with jigsaw puzzle.)

MONICA. Honestly, the longer I live, the more I see, the less I'm able to understand the tight little minds of people like the Fern girls. (Crosses to table near R. chair for cigarette.) The truth of the matter is, Rhoda is much too charming, too clever, too unusual for them! (Picks up cigarette.) She makes those others look stupid and stodgy by comparison! (Offers one to Christine.) Have one? CHRISTINE. I seem to have quit.

MONICA. Seem to have! Good God, if I were to quit you'd hear the repercussions in New Orleans! (Picks up matches.) I string along with St. Paul— (Lights match.) It's better to smoke than to burn. (Monica lights cigarette. Christine laughs, rises, crosses to desk. Monica follows her a step or two.) By the way could Rhoda stay up and have dinner with me tonight?

CHRISTINE. (Standing above desk writing on pad.) Yes, she could. I've asked Reginald Tasker over for cocktails and to talk to me about some writing I want to try.

MONICA. Fine, there's no reason why Rhoda should hear about his strychnines and belladonnas. (Rhoda comes from the kitchen with a large pasteboard box in her hands and sits in chair R. Crosses to Rhoda.) Rhoda, you're to have dinner with me tonight.

RHODA. I am? May I bring my new puzzle?

MONICA. You surely may. 43

7 Bravo + Christine

INE. (*Slowly.*) Did she have an enchanting smile?
R. Dazzling, by all accounts.
INE. She was—doomed?
R. Absolutely. Doomed to commit murder after murder—how or other she was found out.
INE. She'd been better off if she'd died young.
R. (*Seated R. arm of sofa.*) And society would. And yet as I wonder whether these malignant brutes may not be a nation that survives on this planet in this age. (*Turns to Christine.*) This age of technology and murder-for-empire. Maybe the world will have to go, and the snake-hearted will inherit the earth. (*In chair R.*) I'm betting on the democracies.
INE. And so am I. But we're living in an age of murder. In my time there have never been so many people murdered as in your time. Add up all the murders from the beginning of history and then add the murders after 1900, and our century alone— (*Puts drink on coffee table, rises—crosses R.*) And on that merry note I think I should take my leave, not to bother you and I've been lecturing.
(*Rises.*) You've got a highly questionable theory there—redity.
INE. I'd like to go into that with you when there's more time. (*They shake hands.*) Let's do that next time I'm in town.
R. Right. (*Crosses to Christine—shakes hands.*) And now good-evening, Mrs. Penmark—I'm afraid the pleasure's mine.
INE. (*Precedes him to door.*) Not at all. I'll call you when I'm in town.
(*At platform.*) I'm always about. (*Jo Bravo.*) Good-night, Mr. Tasker.
INE. Good-night. (*Tasker goes out, Christine closes door.*) Are you really planning to write something?
INE. I was just asking questions. (*Crosses and meets Christine.*) You saw Kenneth in Washington?
INE. Yes. He's looking well. As well as possible when a man is sticky, tired and most of all, lonesome.
INE. We'd counted on going somewhere this summer. It was a sudden change of orders.

BRAVO. (*Takes her by the shoulders.*) Am I looking too close, or is there something heavy on your mind?
CHRISTINE. Does something show in my face?
BRAVO. Everything shows in your face. It always did.
CHRISTINE. I'm not sure I'm worried about anything—now that you're here. (*Takes his hands in hers.*) I always felt so safe and comfortable when you were in the room. And you have the same effect now.

BRAVO. To tell you the truth you did a magic for me. I'd always wanted a little girl and you were everything lovely a little girl could be for her old dad. But, Christine. What did you want to ask me—that night you phoned?

CHRISTINE. (*Hesitates.*) Let me think a minute— Would you like another drink? (*Crosses up to bar.*)

BRAVO. Yes, I guess I will. (*He gets his glass off dining-table.*) Let me fix something. Will you have more gin and tonic? (*He mixes drinks at the bar.*)

CHRISTINE. (*Crossing L. around sofa.*) No, thank you.

BRAVO. And speak up, darling. It's between us, whatever it is.

CHRISTINE. (*She sits L. end of sofa.*) My landlady here is—is a sort of amateur psychiatrist—a devotee of Freud, constantly analyzing.

BRAVO. I know the sort. (*Crosses D. S. R. of sofa.*)

CHRISTINE. Her name is Breedlove. You'll meet her, because she's offered a wonderful room for you to stay in while you're here. Rhoda's having dinner with her tonight.

BRAVO. You were going to come out with something.

CHRISTINE. Yes. Well, what I was going to ask reminded me of her. I confessed to her the other day that I had always worried about being an adopted child—had always been afraid that mommy wasn't really my mother and the daddy I love so much wasn't really my daddy.

BRAVO. What did she say?

CHRISTINE. She said it was one of the commonest fantasies of childhood. Everybody has it. She had it herself.

BRAVO. (*Sits R. end of sofa.*) It certainly is common.

CHRISTINE. But that doesn't help me. I still feel, just as strongly as ever, that old fear that you're not really mine.

BRAVO. Has something made you think of this lately?
CHRISTINE. Yes.

What is it?

E. My little girl, Rhoda.

What about her?

E. She terrifies me. I'm afraid for her. I'm afraid of what she has inherited from me.

What could she have inherited?

E. Father—daddy—whose child am I?

line.

E. Daddy, dear, don't lie to me. It's gone beyond what I can help. I've told you about a dream I have—and I'm sure it's all a dream. Whose child am I? (She looks away.) My father? (Bravo is silent. He rises, crosses slowly up to the dining table.) This is a strange question to greet you with, being so long away from you—but I—I have to ask it. (Sits to Bravo.) And for Rhoda's sake—and mine—you

see.

What has Rhoda done?

E. I don't know. But I'm afraid.

It cannot be inherited. It cannot. (He draws a deep breath and takes a step and staggers slightly, putting out a hand to the table.)

E. Father, you're not well! (She goes to him. He sinks down to the dining table.)

Perfectly well, just get me a glass of water. (She gets one and Perfectly well. A trace of fibrillation once in a while, I at my age. (Christine hands drink to Bravo. He takes it—box and drinks.) Thank you. And with fibrillation and dizziness, also normal. (She takes glass, puts it on the table.) U. R.) I'm all right now.

E. (Up and L. of Bravo.) I won't ask any more questions. I'm sorry.

Why?

Think that's better. Let's just close the book.

E. (After a pause.) Only I have the answer now. I don't have an answer?

E. Yes.

(With her hands on his R. shoulder.) I've always been sure of you, Christine. I could tell you a long history of me in the nick of time, of lost money found, of friends up to pay old debts just when I had to have the very main turning-point in my life some good fairy has

seemed to intervene to flip things my way. And the biggest piece of luck I ever had—the luck that saved my reason and kept me going—was a little girl named Christine. (Looks up at her.) You were the only child I ever had. My life was futile and barren before you came, but you were magic for me, as I said, and you made life bearable. I changed my way of life—I wrote about other things, but I kept on—because of you.

CHRISTINE. You don't have to say any more.

BRAVO. I don't, do I?

CHRISTINE. You found me somewhere.

BRAVO. Yes. In a very strange place—in a strange way.

CHRISTINE. (Crosses down to back of chair R.)

place.

BRAVO. I don't think you could. You were less than two years old. CHRISTINE. I either remember it or I dreamed it.

BRAVO. What kind of dream?

CHRISTINE. (Above chair R.) I dream of a bedroom in a farmhouse in a countryside where there were orchards. I share the room with my brother, who is older than I—and my—is it my mother?—comes to take care of him. She is a graceful, lovely woman, like an angel. I suppose my brother must have died, for afterward I'm alone in the room. One night I awake feeling terrified and for some reason I can't stay in that house. It is moonlight and I somehow get out the window, drop to the grass below and hide myself in the tall weeds beyond the first orchard. I don't recall much more except that toward morning I'm thirsty and keep eating the yellow pippins that fall from the tree—and when the first light comes up on the clouds I can hear my mother some distance away calling my name. I hide in the weeds and don't answer because I'm afraid. Is this a dream? Is it only a dream? BRAVO. What name did she call?

CHRISTINE. It isn't Christine. It—it is—could it be Ingold?

BRAVO. You remember that name? (Rises, crosses D. S.)

CHRISTINE. Yes, it comes back to me. "Ingold! Ingold Denker,"

she . . . Denker!! Oh, daddy, you've concealed something from me all these years, haven't you? (Crosses to Bravo L. of R. chair.) I came out of that terrible household. You found me there.

BRAVO. The neighbors found you after your mother vanished. Where she went I never knew, nor did they, but she had quite a fortune by that time, and something had panicked her . . . so she

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(Crosses to chair R.) There was ice on the steps—and I fell against her, and—and that was all.

JE. That was all?

(Pause.) No. I slipped on purpose.

JE. Take the shoes and put them in the incinerator! Hurry! Rhoda. Put them in the incinerator! Burn them Rhoda picks up the shoes and starts off L. Stops, returns
ber.)

What will you do with the medal, Mother?

JE. I must think of something to do.

You won't give it to Miss Fern?

JE. No, I won't give it to Miss Fern. (Rhoda smiles—walks slowly off L. as the CURTAIN FALLS.)

ACT II

SCENE 2

After breakfast in the apartment, the next morning. At the stage is empty and the phone ringing. The portable bar has been wheeled offstage to the kitchen. Leroy enters front door. He is carrying a garbage can.

Leroy. (He looks at phone, starts toward kitchen and answers phone. Goes back and takes it off the book and As he goes into the kitchen the phone rings again.)
Leroy answers that phone. (Rhoda emerges from kitchen carrying ashtrays—puts one on dining table. She stands in kitchen door with garbage can.)

Leroy. Hello—no, Mr. Bravo isn't here. He's upstairs. Yes, I'll take down a number. (Writing on pad.) Yes, sir.—I'll tell you. (She leaves one ashtray on desk. Crosses c. to moving L. s. At dining table.) I found out about you told. There's no such thing as a "stick blood-

—crosses in front of her.) I'm not supposed to talk to you. You're goody-goody.

Leroy. (Turns to her.) Where's your Mama?

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RHODA. (Crosses—puts ashtray on table near chair R.) Upstairs. Leroy. (Crosses to her.) For your own sake, though, I'll tell you as much. There may not be any stick bloodhounds, but there's a stick. And you better find that stick before they do, because it'll turn blue and then they'll fry you in the electric chair.

RHODA. There wasn't any stick any more than there was any stick-bloodhounds.

Leroy. You know the noise the electric-chair makes? It goes z-z-z-z, and then you swivel all up the way bacon does when your mother's frying it.

RHODA. Go empty the garbage. (She crosses D. L., clicking her heels as she goes. Puts ashtray on coffee table. Picks up book from sofa and sits down to read.) They don't put little girls in the electric chair.

Leroy. (Crosses D. C.) They don't? They got a little blue chair for little boys and a little pink one for little girls. I just remembered something. Just the morning of the picnic I wiped off your shoes with the cleats on 'em. You used to go tap-tap-tap on the walk. How come you don't wear 'em any more?

RHODA. You're silly. I never had a pair of shoes like that.

Leroy. (Crosses behind sofa.) They used to go tap-tap when you walked and I didn't like it. I spilled water on 'em and I wiped 'em off.

RHODA. They hurt my feet and I gave them away.

Leroy. You know one thing? (Puts garbage can on platform near desk—leans over back of sofa.) You didn't hit that boy with no stick. You hit him with them shoes. Ain't I right this time?

RHODA. (Ignoring him.) You're silly.

Leroy. (Crosses to R. end of sofa.) You think I'm silly because I said about the stick. All I was trying was to make you say "No, it wasn't no stick. It was my shoes." Because I knew what it was.

RHODA. You lie all the time. All the time.

Leroy. How come I've got those shoes then?

RHODA. (Looks up quickly.) Where did you get them?

Leroy. I came in and got them right out of your apartment.

RHODA. (Looking at book.) It's just more lies. I burned those shoes. I put them down the incinerator and burned them. Nobody's got them.

Leroy. (After a pause.) I don't say that wasn't smart. That was. (Sits on stool.) Only suppose I heard something coming rattling

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ncinerator and I says to myself, "It sounds to me like a
res with cleats." (Rhoda closes book slowly.) Oh, I'm
you didn't burn 'em a little, but you didn't burn all of
you wanted to.
puts book down. Waits with a new frightening stillness
y.) Yes? —

ow listen to this and figure out which of us is the silly
the basement working, and I hear them shoes come
in the pipe. I open the door quick and there they is on
coals only smoking the least little bit. I grab them out.
scorched some, but there's plenty left to turn blue and
the blood was. There's plenty left to put you in the
ir! (He laughs a foolish little laugh of triumph.)
Calmly.) Give me those shoes back.

o, no. I got them shoes hid where nobody but me can
'ou'd better give me those shoes. They're mine. Give
o me.

ises, in delight.) I'm not giving them shoes back to
?

hem back and stares at Leroy with cold fury.) You'd
back to me, Leroy.

laughing.) I'm keeping them shoes until — (His
s under her fixed, cold stare. He begins to be afraid of
longer wants to play this game.) Who said I had any
mine?

ou did. You get them and give them back.

ow, listen, Rhoda, I was just fooling and teasing you.
t any shoes. I've got work to do. (He starts around
front door. Rhoda quickly moves up to door cutting

ive me back my shoes.

aven't got nobody's shoes. Don't you know when any-

g you?

ive them back!

and practice your piano lesson! I haven't got 'em, I
you. (Rhoda turns, locks the door and whirls around.
stare points at him.)

ill you bring them back!

ras just fooling at first, but now I really believe you

killed that little boy. I really believe you did kill him with your
shoes.

RHODA. You've got them hid, but you'd better get them and
bring them back here! Right here to me! (She shouts the last as
footsteps are heard on the stairs off L.)

LEROY. Quit talking loud, there's someone in the hall. (He stops
as if interrupted. Picks up the garbage can as Rhoda unlocks the
door and runs to sofa, picks up book and sits reading.)

CHRISTINE. (Enters front door. She is wearing a sweater over
her dress.) What was Leroy saying to you?

RHODA. Nothing.

CHRISTINE. I heard you say, "Bring them back here."

RHODA. He said he had my shoes.

LEROY. (At sofa below platform.) I got nobody's shoes but my
own. There's a number for Mr. Bravo to call. (Indicates pad on
desk.)

CHRISTINE. You may go, Leroy.

LEROY. Yes, ma'am. (He exits through front door. Christine
moves u. s. to corner of desk, watching Rhoda. Bravo enters front
door, Monica following closely behind. She carries Rhoda's locket.)
CHRISTINE. Daddy, there is a message for you.

BRAVO. Thank you, sweetheart. (Crosses up to desk, looks at
pad.) Oh yes! (He takes the phone and dials.)

MONICA. (Crosses to Rhoda.) Look what I have for you, Rhoda?
Turquoise!

RHODA. (Stands.) Thank you, Aunt Monica.

MONICA. And here's the garnet too. (Rhoda takes them, crosses
R. to mirror and stands admiring the locket which she holds at her
neck. Monica crosses to window seat and sits reading magazine
she finds there. Christine crosses to D. L. chair, stands watching
Rhoda.)

BRAVO. Hello. Listen, Murry, I know I ran out on you but this
was imperative. Just wouldn't wait.—When does it leave?—Yes,
I've had breakfast. (Christine turns and looks at Bravo.) If I get a
taxi now I could just make it.—Yes, I've never been on the rig. I'd
like to see it. And remember I've never missed a deadline. Think
nothing of it. (He bangs up. Jo Christine.) I'll be gone a couple of
days.—(Crossing to Monica, offering his hand.)—but I plan
to make this my headquarters the next few weeks if I may —
MONICA. (They shake hands.) As long as you can stand us —

9 Daigle Christine Rhoda

urns and calls Rhoda.) Rhoda.
runs to him c. s.) Yes, Granddaddy. (He bends down
r forehead. She gives him her most enchanting smile.)
ought to patent your smile. It does unfair things to
(Christine, unable to bear watching, turns and goes up
da turns away from Bravo and goes back to put the
stone in her drawer. Bravo crosses above sofa to
really have to go, dear. I'll pick up the taxi at the
puts his arms on Christine's shoulders.) You are the
in my life, Christine. It was you I lived for. You I
tter what happens I want you to remember that. (He
ek.) Don't worry. It will come out well.

Come back soon.
ill, sweetheart. My bag's upstairs. Don't come along.
r. (He goes out front door.)

That a trouper! (Sound of ice-cream bells off L.) Ah,
man.

What, could I have a popsicle?

(Closes door—answers as though in a trance.) Yes.
ney from my purse. (Rhoda runs into the kitchen.
ses R., takes off her sweater and throws it in chair R.
around it.) It is hot today.

Rises, looking out L. bay window.) Yes, the streets
1. (Rhoda coming out of kitchen picks up matches
kitchen. Christine observes this and stops her.)

Rhoda, what have you got those for?

(Taking match box.) I guess I just wasn't thinking.
I'll take them, please. (Rhoda hands the matches to
o replaces them on stove in kitchen. Rhoda starts off
as she gets to coffee table she stops—looks to see if
looking and quickly grabs the matches off the coffee
ns out the door. Christine comes wearily in from
mica turns from the window.)

Christine, you won't mind too much if I'm nosey and
t you haven't been yourself lately. It's as if some-
ag you down.

(Sitting in R. dining chair.) Does it show to other

mean you feel it?

Yes.

MONICA. Do you take vitamins regularly?

CHRISTINE. No.

MONICA. You should. That's one of the things we know. I have
an awfully good combination, and I'll bring some down if I may.
(Sitting in L. dining chair.)—And now you must really forgive
me. Have you and Kenneth come to a parting of the ways? Is his
secretary more to him than an expert on politics? Does she make
a nest for him among the office buildings?

CHRISTINE. No, it's nothing like that, Monica. I wish I were as
sure of other things as I am of Kenneth.

MONICA. Do you suspect some disease—something like cancer,
for example? If you do we must face it and do everything that can
be done. And a lot can be.

CHRISTINE. I'm perfectly healthy and sound as far as I know.

MONICA. Do you sleep enough?

CHRISTINE. Well, no. Not always.

MONICA. You must have some sleeping pills. That much we can
do. And now I won't bully you any more, Christine. I'm only going
to say that I love you truly and deeply, my dear, as though you
were my own; in fact Emory feels that same way about you, but I
needn't tell you that, for you know it already. (Christine puts her
head down on the table and cries.) Tell me what it is, dear. You
can trust me. (Monica gets up, puts her arms around Christine,
who weeps without restraint.) Dear, dear Christine. You'll feel
better now. Perhaps you can get some sleep. (The doorbell chimes
and Christine stirs herself slowly to answer it.) Damn, I'll get rid
of who ever it is. (Monica goes to the front door and opens it.
Mrs. Daigle stands in the door. Christine is near chair R., trying
to get up.)

MRS. DAIGLE. Well, Mrs. Breedlove. Hi. (Enters and crosses R.
to front of sofa.) You don't want me here, and I don't want to be
here, but I can't stay away. So I got a little drunk and came over.

(To Monica.) Excuse it, please.

~~Monica~~ (Closing door.) You're very welcome. (But the words
come hard.)

MRS. DAIGLE. Like a skunk. I know. (To Christine.) Mrs. Breed-
love knows everybody. Knows even me. (Monica crosses to L. chair
and sits.)

CHRISTINE. How are you, Mrs. Daigle?

MRS. DAIGLE. I'm half seas over, as the fellow ——— (Crossing

ol.) I just want to talk to your sweet little girl. She he last to see my Claude alive.

: Yes, I know.

LE. (*Looking about the room.*) Where do you keep little lady that was the last to see Claude? I thought her in my arms and we'd have a nice talk and maybe ber something. Any little thing.

. (*Steps u. s., indicating window.*) She's out playing.

LE. (*To Monica.*) I'm just unfortunate, that's all.

inf fortunate. (*To Christine.*) Only she was right out-

ame by, ladies and gentlemen.

. (*Going to the window.*) She isn't there now. I don't

she couldn't for ber life, call Rhoda.)

LE. She's a perfect little lady, never gives any trouble, heard. Have you got anything to drink in the house?

all. (*Christine goes to the kitchen.*) I'm not the fussy

Daigle crosses toward kitchen.) I prefer bourbon and

yt thing will do. (*Christine wheels bar out of kitchen*

ebind sofa.) Oh, ain't we swank? Really Plaza and

ses, takes the top off the bottle, picks up a glass and

to sofa.) What I came here for was to have a little

oda, because she knows something. I've called Miss

telephone a dozen times, but she just gives me the

knows something, all right. (*She sits rather clumsily*

(*Crosses around to R. end of sofa.*) Oh, are you

e?

LE. (*To Christine.*) I'm not intoxicated in the slightest

ly don't talk down to me, Mrs. Penmark. I've been

igh, without that. (*Starts pouring ber drink as the*

pens and Rhoda enters, with ber popside. As Mrs.

er she puts the glass and bottle on the coffee table

Rhoda. Monica rises.)

rought back change, Mother. (*Puts change in asbtray*

e.)

Very well. Mrs. Daigle wants to see you.

LE. (*Looking at Rhoda.*) So this is your little girl?

of you so often, and in such high terms. You were

arest friends, I'm sure. He said you were so bright in

u're Rhoda.

RHODA. Yes.

MRS. DAIGLE. Come let me look at you, Rhoda. Now how about giving your Aunt Hortense a big kiss? (*Rhoda gives ber popside to Monica and goes dutifully to be kissed. Mrs. Daigle takes Rhoda in ber arms and pulls ber down on the sofa and kisses ber.*) You were with Claude when he had his accident, weren't you, dear? You're the little girl who was so sure she was going to win the penmanship medal, and worked so hard. (*Christine, unable to bear watching this, crosses up to dining table, facing the window.*) But you didn't win it after all, did you, darling? Claude won the medal, didn't he? Now tell me this: would you say he won it fair and square or he cheated? These things are so important to me now he's dead. Would you say it was fair Claude had the medal? Because if it was fair why did you go after him for it?

RHODA. (*Reaching toward Monica.*) I want my popside. (*Monica takes Rhoda's arms, trying to get ber away from Mrs. Daigle who holds tight.*)

MONICA. Rhoda, if you're going shopping with me, you'll have to come now. Mr. Pageson is going to show us his collection. (*Mrs. Daigle rises with Rhoda, hanging on to Rhoda's waist.*)

MRS. DAIGLE. Right now? (*Monica disengages Rhoda from Mrs. Daigle and ushers ber out of the room through front door.*)

MONICA. We're a little late as it is. Bring your popside, Rhoda. You can wash upstairs.

MRS. DAIGLE. (*Standing by sofa.*) Well, I must say!

CHRISTINE. (*Turns and crosses D. C.*) They do have an appointment.

MRS. DAIGLE. I'm sure they do, or practically sure. (*Sits on sofa, pours drink.*) Of course. I didn't know Rhoda had all these social obligations. I thought she was like any little girl that stayed home and minded her mother, and didn't go traipsing all over town with important appointments. I'm sorry I interfered with Rhoda's social life. I'm sorry, Christine, and I offer my deepest apologies. I'll apologize to Rhoda too when I can have an interview with her. (*Drinks.*)

CHRISTINE. You haven't interfered at all. (*The telephone rings. Christine crosses above sofa and answers it.*)

MRS. DAIGLE. (*While Christine goes to the phone.*) I wasn't going to contaminate Rhoda in the slightest degree, I assure you.

