

FALL ADULT PLAY: Picnic by William Inge

Auditions: Tuesday, August 26th from 5-8pm

Callbacks: Wednesday, August 27th 5-8pm

Read-Thru: Thursday, August 28th from 6:30-8:30pm

Rehearsals:

2-4 September 6:30-8:30pm

9-11 September 6:30-8:30pm

16-18 September 6:30-8:30pm

23-25 September 6:30-8:30pm

30 September – 2 October 6:30-8:30pm

7-9 October 6:30-8:30pm

14-16 October 6-9pm 6:30-8:30pm

19 October 2-7pm 6:30-8:30pm

20-23 October 5:30-9pm

Performances:

October 24 & 25 @ 7pm, October 26 @ 3pm

November 1 @ 3 & 7pm, November 2 @ 3pm

AUDITION DETAILS: Auditions will be located at Bavaria Performing Arts, BLDG 124.

Please (1) [Fill out the audition form online](#), including schedule conflicts. You will be assigned a 5 minute slot between 5 and 7pm. Walk-ins are welcome from 7-8pm. (2) Prepare a monologue from this packet memorized, please. (3) Look over the scenes and be familiar with them. These are the scenes we will be using for CALLBACKS on WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 27.

SYNOPSIS: 7W, 4M

The play takes place on Labor Day weekend in the joint backyards of two middle-aged widows. One house belongs to Flo Owens, who lives there with her two awakening young daughters, Madge and Millie, and a boarder who is a spinster school teacher. The other house belongs to Helen Potts, who lives with her elderly and invalid mother. Into this atmosphere comes a young man named Hal Carter, whose animal vitality upsets the entire group. Hal is a most-interesting character, a child of parents who ignored him, self-conscious of his failing and his hard luck. Flo is sensitively wary of the temptations Hal poses for her daughters. But Madge, bored with being merely a beauty, sacrifices her chances for a wealthy marriage for the excitement that Hal promises.

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN:

Madge Owens (Female, 18-25, to play age 18) The most beautiful girl in town, but feels that is all people see in her. Works in a dime store, not book smart, but warm and charming. She yearns for and is searching for an escape from small town life. Her sensuality is just below surface and is awakened by a stranger to town, Hal. There must be strong, palpable and immediate chemistry and physical attraction between Madge and Hal.

Hal Carter (Male, 25-30) A good looking, masculine, sexy, well-built vagabond. Has led a rough life as a drifter. Can be a braggart, but is lonely and wants desperately to fit in somewhere, with someone. There must be a very strong chemistry and physical attraction between Hal and Madge, as it is essential to the play.

Millie Owens (Female, 16-21, to play age 16) Madge's younger sister. Very intelligent, boisterous, assertive and smart-mouthed tomboy. Likeable and tries to hide her basic shyness. Developing into a young woman with conflicting feelings. A wonderful role that calls for a very strong and versatile young actress.

Flo Owens (Female, 40-50) Faded beauty, hard exterior, fiercely protective mother. Loves her daughters very much and wants better lives for them than she has had.

Rosemary (Female, 35-50) A spinster schoolteacher. Bawdy, outrageous, boastful, and self-righteous on the outside, but it is a façade. Inside is a desperate, lonely, and frightened woman with a fragile spirit. She is at a point in her life where she must change her circumstances and will do anything to get married. An outstanding character role for a very strong mature actress.

Howard Bevans (Male, 40-55) Rosemary's longtime boyfriend, a local business owner. Meek, mild-mannered, a good friend and neighbor. Enjoys a drink and a pretty girl. He is satisfied with not being married, but genuinely cares about Rosemary.

Helen Potts (Female, 50-65) An older widow whose past is filled with heartache from long-lost love. Pleasant, warm, friendly, kind and a true romantic.

Alan Seymour (Male, 25-30) Madge's home-town boyfriend who wants to marry her. Nice looking, smart, wealthy and polished, a good guy. Awestruck by Madge, can't get past her beauty to see any deeper.

Irma Kronkite (Female, 35-55) Spinster schoolteacher, a loud, funny jokester who enjoys her single life.

Christine Schoenwalder (Female, 35-55) Spinster schoolteacher, quiet and shy, a follower

Bomber (Male, 16-21, to play a teenager) A newsboy and smart-mouthed bully who picks on Millie, but worships Madge.

MONOLOGUES/SCENES

Female Monologue Options:

(1) Madge, how do you talk to boys? How do you think of things to say? I think he's a big showoff. You should have seen him this morning on the high diving board. He did real graceful swan dives and a two and a half gainer, and a back flip... the kids stood around clapping. He just ate it up. And he was braggin' all afternoon about how he used to be a deep-sea diver off Catalina Island. And he says he used to make hundreds of dollars doin' parachute jumps out of a balloon. Do you believe it? Madge, I think he's... er... girl crazy, too. Alan took us into the Hi Ho for cokes and there was a gang of girls in the back booth – Juanita Badger and her gang. When they saw him, they started giggling and tee-heeing and saying all sorts of crazy things. Then Juanita Badger comes up to me and whispers, "I think he's the cutest thing I ever saw." Is he Madge? Madge, do you think he'll like me? I don't really care. I just wonder.

(2) He told me that he didn't love me, and that his sole relationship to me was simply a marital one. What he means is that I am to keep this house, and he is to provide for it. That's what he said. That explains why he treats me the way he treats me. I never understood why he did, but now it's clear. He doesn't love me. I thought he loved me and that he stayed with me because he loved me and that's why I didn't understand his behaviour. But now I know, because he told me that he sees me as a person who runs the house. I never understood that because I would have never- if he had said, "Would you marry me to run my house even if I don't love you." I would have never- I would have never believed what I was hearing. I would have never believed that these words were coming out of his mouth. Because I loved him.

Male Monologue Options:

(1) I always worry that maybe people aren't going to like me when I go to a party. Isn't that crazy? Do you ever get kind of a sick feeling in the pit of your stomach when you dread things? Gee, I wouldn't want to miss a party for anything. But every time I go to one, I have to reason with myself to keep from feeling that the whole world's against me. See, I've spent almost my whole life in military academies. My mother doesn't have a place for me, where she lives. She... she just doesn't know what else to do with me. But you mustn't misunderstand about my mother. She's really a very lovely person. I guess every boy thinks his mother is very beautiful, but my mother really is. She tells me in every letter she writes how sorry she is that we can't be together more, but she has to think of her work. One time

we were together for two whole days. Just like we were sweet hearts. It was the most wonderful time I ever had. And then I had to go back to the old military academy. Every time I walks into the barracks, I get kind of a depressed feeling. It's got hard stone walls. Pictures of generals hanging all over... oh, they're very fine gentlemen, but they all look so kind of hard-boiled and stern... you know what I mean. Well, gee! I guess I've bored you enough, telling you about myself.

(2) Now hear this, Willy, this is me. You know why I had no address for three months? I stole a suit in Kansas City and I was jailed. I stole myself out of every good job since high school. And I never got anywhere because you blew me so full of hot air I could never stand taking orders from anybody! That's whose fault it is! It's goddamn time you heard that! I had to be boss big shot in two weeks, and I'm through with it! Willy! I ran down eleven flights with a pen in my hand today. And suddenly I stopped, you hear me? And in the middle of that office building, do you hear this? I stopped in the middle of that building and I saw- the sky. I saw the things that I love in the world. The work and the food and the time to sit and smoke. And I looked at the pen and said to myself, what the hell am I grabbing this for? Why am I trying to become what I don't want to be? What am I doing in an office, making a contemptuous, begging fool of myself, when all I want is out there, waiting for me the minute I say I know who I am! Why can't I say that, Willy? Pop! I'm a dime a dozen, and so are you! I am not a leader of me, Willy, and neither are you. You were never anything but a hard-working drummer who landed in the ash-can like all the rest of them! I'm a dollar an hour, Willy! I tried seven states and couldn't raise it! A buck an hour! Do you gather my meaning? I'm not bringing home any prizes any more, and you're going to stop waiting for me to bring them home!

START

~~A bicycle bell rings off u. l. Millie hears it and moves more quickly to the front steps, grabbing her cap from a nail by the kitchen door. She sits on the r. side of the steps and gets a cigarette and matches out of her bidding place by the step and lights up as Bomber, a newsboy, rides in from alley u. l., throws a paper on Mrs. Potts' porch, parks his bike u. r. of the alley gate and taking a paper with him crosses down to the c. of the lawn, looking up at Madge Owens' window. Bomber slams the paper down on the porch, trying to attract attention. He succeeds.)~~

MILLIE. Hey, Crazy, you want to knock the house down?

BOMBER. I don't hear you.

MILLIE. If you ever break a window you'll hear me!

BOMBER. (Crosses d. to c.) Go back to bed and tell your pretty sister to come out. It's no fun lookin' at you! (Millie ignores him. Bomber crosses to steps, right foot up.) I'm talkin' to you, Goon-face!

MILLIE. (Jumping up and poisoning herself for a fight. Bomber jumps back just out of reach.) You ornery bastard, take that back!

BOMBER. Listen to her! She cusses just like a man!

MILLIE. (Goes after him with doubled fists.) I'll kill you, you ornery bastard! I'll kill you! (Bomber ducks the first blow which is aimed at his head and takes the rest on his arms as he jeers.)

BOMBER. Lookit Mrs. Tar-zan! Lookit Mrs. Tar-zan!

MADGE. (Comes on to porch from front door. She is eighteen and very beautiful. She is drying her hair with a towel. She sits on the porch corner.) Who's making all this noise? (Bomber looks up seeing Madge and the fight stops.)

BOMBER. (Crosses to Madge.) Hi, Madge!

MADGE. Hi, Bomber.

BOMBER. I hope I didn't wake you, Madge, or bother you or anything. (Millie crosses u. to paper which Bomber threw on porch.)

MADGE. Of course not.

BOMBER. Hey, Madge, a bunch of us guys are chippin' in on a hot-rod—radio and everything. I get it every Friday night. (Millie crosses d., sits on chair in c. of yard, opens paper as she crosses.)

MADGE. I'm not one of those girls that jump in a hot-rod every time you boys turn a corner and honk.

MILLIE. Alan Seymour sends her flowers every time they go out.

BOMBER. (To Madge.) I can't send you flowers, Baby—but I can send you!

MILLIE. Listen to him braggin'.

BOMBER. (Squat at Madge's l. on step.) Lemme pick you up some night after Seymour brings you home.

MADGE. That wouldn't be fair to Alan, would it? We go steady.

MILLIE. (To Bomber.) Don't you know what "steady" means, stupid?

BOMBER. (Ignoring Millie.) I seen you riding around in his Cadillac like you was a Duchess. (He turns away to c. Hal enters from d. l. and gets rake from the shed.) Why do good looking girls have to be so stuck on themselves?

MADGE. (Jumps up, furious.) I'm not stuck on myself! You take that back, Bomber Gutzel!

BOMBER. (Turning back to her.) Lemme pick you up some night!

MADGE. (Walks u. to kitchen door, disgusted.) Bomber!

BOMBER. (Following her.) We'll get some cans of beer —

MILLIE. Why don't you leave her alone! (Madge crosses d. on porch to front door, Bomber following. Hal, growing interested, leans rake against trellis and ambles to c.)

BOMBER. (Grabbing Madge's arm.) Aw, c'mon, Madge! Give a guy a break!

HAL. (To Bomber. Crosses to c.) On your way, lover boy!

BOMBER. (Crosses l. to meet Hal.) Who're you?

HAL. (Smiling.) What's that matter? I'm bigger'n you are. (Bomber realizes this is true, and after a moment of indecision, starts off hurriedly.)

MILLIE. (Calling after Bomber.) Go peddle your papers! Ok—ok—ok—ok! (Bomber crosses u. c. to bicycle and quickly rides off r. alley. Hal watches him go then turns to Millie. Madge sits on porch, feet on c. of top step.)

HAL. Hey, kid, got a smoke?

MILLIE. (Taking out cigarette.) You workin' for Mrs. Potts?

HAL. (Feeling pockets for matches.) Yeah, I'm doin' a few odd jobs around the yard.

MILLIE. (Hands him matches.) She give you breakfast?

HAL. (Embarrassed about it.) Yah.

MADGE. (Disapprovingly.) Millie!

HAL. (Turning to Madge—quick smile.) Hi.

MADGE. (Returning smile.) Hi.

HAL. Not me. I wouldn't go on picnics. I was too busy shooting craps or stealing milk bottles.

ALAN. You went on the steak fries in the fraternity, didn't you?

HAL. Yeah, and you know what they turned out to be.

ALAN. Well, Mrs. Potts' picnic won't be quite as primitive.

HAL. That's what I mean. I wouldn't know how to behave in front of all these . . . women.

ALAN. Sure you would.

HAL. But, Seymour, these are . . . nice women. What if I say the wrong word or what if my stomach growls—or——

ALAN. You're a psycho! Run along—I'll be there in a minute. *(Hal starts out D. R. Alan crosses U. to U. R. lawn. Hal stops.)*

HAL. Hey, hurry it up, will you? *(He exits D. R. Alan stops, looks back at Hal in disgust then crosses to U. C. lawn.)*

ALAN. I'll see you tonight, Madge.

MADGE. All right, Alan.

ALAN. *(He takes her hands.)* Madge, after we have supper to-night maybe you and I can get away from the others and take a boat out on the river.

MADGE. All right, Alan.

ALAN. I want to see if you look real in the moonlight.

MADGE. Alan! Don't say that!

ALAN. Why? I don't care if you're real or not. You're the most beautiful thing I ever saw.

MADGE. Just the same, I'm real. *(As Alan starts to kiss her, we hear several blasts of an automobile horn off R.)*

HAL. *(Offstage R.)* Hey, Seymour—get the lead outa your pants! *(Alan goes off, irritated. Madge crosses to C. lawn, watches them as they drive away, waving to them.)*

FLO. *(Inside house.)* Madge! Come on in, dear!

MADGE. All right, Mom. *(As she starts in kitchen door, we hear a train whistle in the distance. Madge hears it and leans against D. S. kitchen porch post, looking off D. L. listening to the whistle.)*

CURTAIN

ACT II

It is late afternoon, the same day. The sun is beginning to set and fills the atmosphere with radiant orange. When the curtain goes up, Millie is in the front doorway, holding the screen door open. She has permitted herself to "dress up" and wears a becoming, feminine dress in which she cannot help feeling a little strange. She is quite attractive. Piano music can be heard offstage, somewhere past Mrs. Potts' house, and Millie stands listening to it for a moment. Then she begins to sway to the music and in a moment is dancing a strange, impromptu dance over the porch and yard. The music stops suddenly and Millie's mood is broken. She rushes upstage and calls off L.

START

MILLIE. Don't quit now, Ernie! *(She cannot bear Ernie's reply.)* Huh? *(Madge enters from kitchen. Millie turns to Madge.)* Ernie's waiting for the rest of the band to practice. They're going to play out at the park tonight.

MADGE. I don't know why you couldn't have helped us in the kitchen.

MILLIE. *(Lightly, giving her version of the sophisticated belle.)* I had to dress for the ball.

MADGE. *(Crosses D.—sits C. chair in yard.)* I had to make the potato salad and stuff the eggs and make three dozen bread-and-butter sandwiches. *(Puts her feet up on stump.)*

MILLIE. *(In a very affected accent. She crosses D. to U. L. of stump.)* I had to bathe . . . and dust my limbs with powder . . . and slip into my frock.

MADGE. Did you clean out the bath tub?

MILLIE. Yes, I cleaned out the bath tub. *(She becomes very self-conscious.)* Madge, how do I look? Now tell me the truth.

MADGE. You look very pretty. I always knew you could.

MILLIE. I feel sorta funny.

MADGE. You look wonderful in the dress. You can have it if you want to.

MILLIE. Thanks. (*A pause.*) Madge, how do you talk to boys?

MADGE. (*Takes feet down.*) Why, you just talk, silly.

MILLIE. How d'ya think of things to say?

MADGE. I don't know. You just say whatever comes into your head.

MILLIE. Supposing nothing ever comes into my head?

MADGE. You talked with him all right this morning.

MILLIE. (*Moves close to stump.*) But now I've got a date with him, and it's different!

MADGE. You're crazy.

MILLIE. (*Crosses to R. of Madge.*) I think he's a big show-off. (*Turns to Madge.*) You should have seen him this morning on the high diving board. He did real graceful swan dives, and a two and a half gainer, and a back flip . . . the kids stood around clapping. He just ate it up.

MADGE. (*Her mind elsewhere.*) I think I'll paint my toenails to-night and wear sandals.

MILLIE. And he was braggin' all afternoon how he used to be a deep-sea diver off Catalina Island.

MADGE. Honest?

MILLIE. And he says he used to make hundreds of dollars doin' parachute jumps out of a balloon. (*She crosses to L. of porch corner.*) Do you believe it?

MADGE. I don't see why not.

MILLIE. You never hear Alan bragging that way.

MADGE. Alan never jumped out of a balloon.

MILLIE. (*Sits on porch corner.*) Madge, I think he's . . . er . . . girl crazy, too.

MADGE. You think every boy you see is something horrible.

MILLIE. Alan took us into the Hi Ho for cokes and there was a gang of girls in the back booth—Juanita Badger and her gang. (*Madge groans at hearing this name.*) When they saw him, they started giggling and tee-heeing and saying all sorts of crazy things. Then Juanita Badger comes up to me and whispers, "I think he's the cutest thing I ever saw." Is he, Madge?

MADGE. (*Not willing to go overboard.*) I wouldn't say he was "the cutest thing I ever saw."

MILLIE. Juanita Badger's an old floozy. She sits in the back row

at the movie so the boys that come in will see her and sit with her. One time she and Rubberneck Krauss were asked by the management to leave—and they weren't just kissin', either!

MADGE. (*Laughing.*) I never even speak to Juanita Badger.

MILLIE. Madge, do you think he'll like me?

MADGE. If you give him a chance, he will.

MILLIE. I don't really care. I just wonder. (*Turns away, attempting unconcern.*)

MADGE. Why ask me all the questions? You're supposed to be the smart one.

MILLIE. Not when it comes to boys. I'm absolutely ignorant.

FLO. (*Coming out of kitchen to lawn c.*) Now I tell myself I've got two beautiful daughters.

MILLIE. (*Embarrassed.*) Be quiet, Mom!

FLO. (*Crosses D. to U. of Madge.*) Doesn't Millie look pretty, Madge?

MADGE. When she isn't picking her nose.

FLO. Madge! (*Crosses to U. of Millie on porch corner.*) She doesn't want anyone to be pretty but her.

MILLIE. You're just saying I'm pretty because you're my Mom.

FLO. (*Leans down patting her shoulders fondly.*) Does that keep it from being true? Run over and show Helen Potts how nice you look.

MILLIE. (*Crosses to C. lawn and announces herself with broad gestures and loud voice.*) Here comes Millie Owens, the great beauty of all times! Be prepared to swoon when you see her! (*She climbs up over the side of Mrs. Potts' porch and disappears.*)

FLO. (*Sits on armchair on porch, leans back, exhausted.*) Whatever possessed me to let Helen Potts ask that young hoodlum to take Millie on the picnic?

MADGE. Hal?

FLO. Yes, Hal, or whatever his name is. He left every towel in the bathroom black as dirt.

MADGE. It won't hurt anyone just to be nice to him.

FLO. Madge, if there's any drinking tonight, I want you to put a stop to it.

MADGE. I'm not going to be a wet blanket.

FLO. (*Changing the subject.*) Well, you'd better start getting dressed, darling. And don't spend the whole evening admiring yourself in the mirror.

FLO. Go upstairs and change, this minute. I mean it! You come with Rosemary and Howard! (*Madge runs inside front door.*)

MRS. POTTS. Let's go. All the tables will be taken.

FLO. Alan, help me with Millie. Millie, darling, are you feeling better? (*Ho and Millie go off alley R.*)

MRS. POTTS. Young man, you follow their car —

ALAN. Oh, Mr. Bevans, will you tell Madge I'll see her out there. (*He exits alley R.*)

MRS. POTTS. —I mean our car. Oh, dear. (*Mrs. Potts follows the others off alley R. We hear the Cadillac drive off. Hal is sitting silent and beaten on the edge of the porch. Howard and Rosemary are by the shed.*)

HOWARD. He's just a boy, Rosemary. You talked awful.

ROSEMARY. (*Crosses below stump then u. to u. c. lawn.*)

Howard, what made me do it? What made me act that way?

HOWARD. You gotta remember, men have got feelings, too—same as women. (*To Hal, crosses to above stump.*) Don't pay any attention to her, young man. She didn't mean a thing.

ROSEMARY. I don't want to go on the picnic, Howard. This is my last night of vacation and I want to have a good time.

HOWARD. (*Crosses u. for the bottle.*) Anything you say, dear.

ROSEMARY. I wanta go for a ride, Howard. I want to drive into the sunset! I want to drive into the sunset! (*She runs off towards the car, through alley R., Howard following. Howard's car drives away. Hal starts to rise. Madge comes out front door. She is wearing another dress. Hal quickly sits again. She sits on the bench on the porch and finally speaks in a gentle voice.*)

MADGE. Don't feel bad. Women like Miss Sydney make me disgusted with the whole female sex. (*Recalling something, smiling.*) Last year she and some of the other teachers made such a fuss about a statue in the library. It was a gladiator and all he had on was a shield on his arm. Those teachers kept hollering about that statue, they said it was an insult to them every time they walked into the library. Finally, they made the principal—I don't know how to say it, but one of the janitors got busy with a chisel and then they weren't insulted any more. The next day there was a sign hanging on the statue—"Miss Sydney was here." I know you're not in the mood for funny stories, but you just have to laugh at Miss Sydney.

HAL. What's the use, Baby? She saw through me like an X-ray

START

machine. I'm a bum! There's just no place in the world for a guy like me.

MADGE. I know how you feel. Millie's so smart and talented. I get to feeling so jealous of her and worthless when I try to be like her. Then I tell myself that I'm not Millie—I'm me! And I feel lots better.

HAL. I'm me.

MADGE. Sure!

HAL. Sure. But what's that?

MADGE. (*Rises—crosses to u. L. of Hal.*) Well, you're very entertaining. I mean . . . I think you say all sorts of witty things. And you're a wonderful dancer.

HAL. What good's dancin'?

MADGE. Oh, I can tell a lot about a boy by dancing with him.

HAL. You can?

MADGE. Some boys, even though they're very smart, when they take a girl in their arms to dance, they're kind of awkward and she feels sort of uncomfortable.

HAL. She does?

MADGE. (*She sits at his L.*) But when you took me in your arms to dance, I had the most wonderful feeling you knew exactly where you were going and I could follow every step of the way. So you're not so bad. I don't care what you say.

HAL. Oh, yeah? (*He turns to face her.*) Look, kid, lemme level with you. When I was fourteen I spent a year in a reform school. How do you like that?

MADGE. What for?

HAL. I stole a guy's motorcycle. Yeah, I stole it. I got no excuses. I stole it 'cause I wanted to get on the damn thing and go so far away, so fast, that nothin' would ever catch up with me.

MADGE. Sure.

HAL. Then my old lady went to the authorities. "I've done everything I can with the boy," she says. "I can't do another thing with him." So off I go to the damn reform school. And the old lady's real happy 'cause my Dad's always loaded and she's got a new boy friend and I'm in the way.

MADGE. (*She turns away.*) Gee . . .

HAL. Well, there you are. And I never told anybody about that—not even Seymour—'cause Seymour's Seymour and I'm . . . me. So if you want to get sick or run inside and lock your door or

faint . . . go ahead. I ain't gonna stop you 'cause — (*Madge suddenly kisses him. After the kiss he looks at her a moment.*)

Gee, baby, you come out here on the porch lookin' like a pretty little doll, but you're a real woman, aren't you?

MADGE. I want to be.

HAL. You are.

MADGE. Am I? (*Now Hal kisses her. After a moment Madge breaks away and walks over near Mrs. Potts' steps. Hal follows to her R., turns her to him.*) We gotta go on the picnic.

HAL. Do we? There's other places . . . with not so many people. (*He pulls her to him and kisses her passionately. He releases her, then goes upstage and looks off R. and L. to see that no one is around. He turns to Madge and holds out his hand to her. After a moment she gives him her hand and they walk off slowly together through alley R.*)

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE 1

It is after midnight. A great harvest moon shines in the sky, a deep, murky blue. The moon is swollen and full and casts a pale light on the scene below. The light on Flo's porch is burning. A stick lies on the lawn at R. near the porch. Off R. we hear Howard's Chevrolet chugging to a stop by the house, then Howard and Rosemary come on R. through alley, Rosemary first. Wearily, a groggy depression having set in, she makes her way to the doorstep and drops there, sitting on porch corner. Howard enters quickly as she sits. He crosses D. to D. C. lawn. She seems preoccupied at first and her responses to Howard are mere grunts.

HOWARD. Here we are, Honey. Right back where we started from.

ROSEMARY. (*Her mind elsewhere.*) Uhh.

HOWARD. (*Sits at her L. on porch edge.*) You were awful nice to me tonight, Rosemary.

ROSEMARY. Uhh.

HOWARD. Do you think Mrs. Owens suspects anything?

ROSEMARY. I don't care if she does.

HOWARD. (*Rises, crosses L. to C.*) A business man's gotta be careful of talk. And after all, you're a schoolteacher. (*Fumbling to get away.*) Well, I guess I better be gettin' back to Cherryvale. I gotta open up the store in the morning. (*Crosses to her.*) Good night, Rosemary. Good night. (*He kisses her cheek.*) Maybe I should say, good morning. (*He starts off—crosses to U. C. lawn.*)

ROSEMARY. (*Just coming to.*) Where you goin', Howard?

HOWARD. (*Crosses D. a bit.*) Honey, I gotta get home.

ROSEMARY. You can't go off and leave me.

HOWARD. (*Crosses D. to D. C. lawn.*) Honey, talk sense.

ROSEMARY. You can't go off without me. Not after tonight. *That's sense.*

HOWARD. (*A little nervous.*) Honey, be reasonable.

ROSEMARY. Take me with you.

HOWARD. What'd people say?

ROSEMARY. (*Almost vicious.*) To hell with what people'd say!

HOWARD. (*Shocked—looks around to see if this is overheard.*) Honey!

ROSEMARY. What'd people say if I thumbed my nose at them? What'd people say if I walked down the street and showed 'em my pink panties? What do I care what people say?

HOWARD. (*Crosses D. to R. of stump.*) Honey, you're not yourself tonight.

ROSEMARY. Yes I am. I'm more myself than I ever was. Take me with you, Howard. If you don't, I don't know what I'll do with myself. I mean it.

HOWARD. (*Crosses to her, leans over her.*) Now look, Honey, you better go upstairs and get some sleep. You gotta start school in the morning. We'll talk all this over Saturday.

ROSEMARY. (*Grabs his arms.*) Maybe you won't be back Saturday. Maybe you won't be back ever again.

HOWARD. (*Pulling away a step.*) Rosemary, you know better than that.

ROSEMARY. (*Front.*) Then what's the next thing in store for me? To be nice to the next man, then the next . . . till there's no one left to care whether I'm nice to him or not. Till I'm ready for the grave and don't have anyone to take me there.

HOWARD. (*Crosses L. to C. ridge.*) Now, Rosemary!

ROSEMARY. (*Looking him in the eyes.*) You can't let that happen to me, Howard.

HOWARD. I don't understand. When we first started going together, you were the best sport I ever saw, always good for a laugh.

ROSEMARY. I can't laugh any more.

HOWARD. (*Starts u. s.*) We'll talk it over Saturday.

ROSEMARY. We'll talk it over now.

HOWARD. (*Stops, crosses D., sits on stump. Squirming.*) Well . . . Honey . . . I . . .

ROSEMARY. (*Looking at him.*) You said you were gonna marry me, Howard. You said when I got back from my vacation, you'd be waitin' with the preacher.

HOWARD. Honey, I've had an awful busy summer and . . .

ROSEMARY. Where's the preacher, Howard? Where is he?

HOWARD. Rosemary, I'm 42 years old. A person forms certain ways of livin', then one day it's too late to change.

ROSEMARY. (*Rises, crosses to C.*) I'm no spring chicken either. Maybe I'm a little older than you think I am. I've formed my ways, too. But they can be changed. (*Turns, crosses R. to steps.*) They gotta be changed. It's no good livin' like this, in rented rooms, meetin' a bunch of old maids for supper every night, then comin' back home alone.

HOWARD. (*Rises, crosses to C.*) I know how it is, Rosemary. My life's no bed of roses either.

ROSEMARY. (*Turning to him.*) Then why don't you do something about it?

HOWARD. I figure . . . there's some bad things about every life.

ROSEMARY. There's too much bad about mine. Each year, I keep tellin' myself, is the last. Something'll happen. Then nothing ever does . . . except I get a little crazier all the time.

HOWARD. (*Hopelessly.*) Well . . .

ROSEMARY. A well's a hole in the ground, Howard.

HOWARD. I wasn't tryin' to be funny, Rosemary.

ROSEMARY. All this time you just been leadin' me on.

HOWARD. (*Vehement.*) Rosemary, that's not so! I've not been trying to lead you on.

ROSEMARY. I'd like to know what else you call it.

HOWARD. Well . . . can't we talk about it Saturday? I'm dead tired and I got a busy week ahead, and . . .

ROSEMARY. (*Runs to him, embraces him desperately.*) You gotta marry me, Howard.

HOWARD. (*Tortured.*) Well . . . I can't marry you now.

ROSEMARY. (*Looking at him.*) You can be over here in the morning.

HOWARD. Sometimes you're unreasonable.

ROSEMARY. You gotta marry me.

HOWARD. What'll you do about your job?

ROSEMARY. (*Encouraged.*) Alvah Jackson can take my place till they get someone new from the agency.

HOWARD. I'll have to pay Fred Jenkins to take care of the store for a few days.

HAL. *(A lump in his throat.)* You almost got me doin' it.

MADGE. It's not 'cause I'm unhappy, really.

HAL. Same here. I'm not unhappy.

MADGE. *(Pulls away to c.)* It's just that —

HAL. *(Crosses to her L.—hand on her arm.)* Baby, kiss me good night.

MADGE. It'd just start things all over again.

HAL. Well . . . kiss me good night anyway, will you?

MADGE. If you promise not to hold me?

HAL. Yah. I promise. I'll keep my hands at my side. See?

MADGE. Now I'll kiss you. *(Tenderly she takes his face in her hand and kisses him on the mouth. The kiss is extended. Then Hal's hands become nervous. They fidget at his sides and finally begin to find their way around her. He pulls away then begins to lose ground again—finally embraces her fiercely. For a moment their passion is revived. Then Madge tears herself away from him, and runs inside the front door. Hal stands looking after her, breathless. The stage darkens until we cannot see him.)*

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE 2

It is very early the next morning. Millie sits on the doorstep, smoking her after-breakfast cigarette. Flo comes out front door almost immediately. She is a near-hysterical woman now. She has not even taken the time to dress, and wears a long robe over her night dress.

FLO. *(Sits in armchair on porch.)* Madge has still got her door locked. I holler in but I can't get her to answer. I can't understand why I didn't hear her come in last night. I was sitting right there. I thought I was awake.

MILLIE. I bet I know what happened.

FLO. *(Vindictive.)* You don't know anything, Millie Owens! And if anyone should say anything to you, you just —

MRS. POTTS. *(Comes out of her house on her porch.)* Is Madge all right?

FLO. *(Suspiciously.)* What do you mean?

MRS. POTTS. *(Comes down steps.)* I just mean, did she get home all right?

FLO. Of course she got home all right! She told me everything! *(Mrs. Potts crosses to D. R. lawn.)* It seems that hoodlum just abducted her! She finally had to fight him off and walk home. The next time you take in tramps, Helen Potts, I'll thank you to keep them on your side of the yard!

MRS. POTTS. Have you heard from Alan?

FLO. No.

MRS. POTTS. Where's the young man?

FLO. I know where he should be—in the penitentiary! And that's where he's going if he shows up around here again! *(Rosemary enters from front door.)*

ROSEMARY. *(In front doorway.)* Has anyone seen Howard?

FLO. Howard?

MRS. POTTS. *(Surprised.)* Why, no, Rosemary!

ROSEMARY. *(Nervous and uncertain—comes out on porch.)* He said he might be around this morning. *(Starts in—stops.)* Mrs. Potts, I'm . . . er . . . storing my summer clothes in the attic. . . . Could you help me a minute?

MRS. POTTS. Of course, Rosemary. *(She looks at Flo, then starts in front door.)*

ROSEMARY. *(Darting back inside front door.)* Besides, I'd like someone to talk to.

FLO. She's been running around the house all morning like a chicken with its head cut off. Something's up! *(She crosses to Millie, gives a little signal to Millie to keep quiet about Madge.)* Millie! *(She exits through front door. Now we hear the morning voices of Irma and Christine, coming by for Rosemary.)*

IRMA. *(Coming on from L. alley.)* Girl, I hope Rosemary is ready. I promised the principal that I'd be there early to help with registration. *(She crosses D. to R. C. lawn.)*

CHRISTINE. *(Follows Irma on from L. alley, stops at L. C. lawn.)* How do I look, Irma?

IRMA. It's a cute dress. Let me fix it in the back. *(Irma adjusts the hang of the dress as Christine turns her back.)*

CHRISTINE. I think a teacher should dress up first day of school, to give the students a good first impression.

IRMA. (Crosses to porch.) Good morning, Millie! (Christine follows to U. L. of armchair.)

MILLIE. Hi.

IRMA. (Opens front door.) Is Rosemary ready?

MILLIE. Go on up if you want to. (Irma starts in front door and is stopped by Christine saying:)

CHRISTINE. (To Millie.) We missed seeing Madge on the picnic last night. (Millie does not answer.)

IRMA. (Gives Christine a significant look.) Come on, Christine. (They go inside front door. Bomber rides on, from L. alley, gets off his bicycle, throws a paper on Mrs. Potts' steps, then on Flo's back porch. Then he climbs up on Mrs. Potts' porch so he can look across into Madge's room.)

BOMBER. Hey, Madge! Wanta go dancin'? Let me be next, Madge!

MILLIE. You shut up, crazy.

BOMBER. (Jumps down—crosses D. C.) My brother seen 'em parked under the bridge. Alan Seymour was lookin' for 'em all over town. I knew she liked guys. (He sees Alan approaching off beyond the Owens house, and leaves quickly out L. alley.)

MILLIE. (Not aware that Alan is approaching.) Some day I'm really gonna kill that ornery bastard. (Alan enters D. R. She turns and sees him.) Hi, Alan! Madge got home all right. She finally had to walk all the way. (Alan crosses L. to C. Millie rises, crosses L. to D. L. of steps.)

ALAN. Hal drove her home. Could I see her, Millie?

MILLIE. (Crosses U. to R. C. lawn. Calls up to Madge's window.)

Madge! Alan's here! (Back to Alan.) It'll probably take her a few minutes.

ALAN. Sure. (Crosses and sits on porch corner.)

MILLIE. (She sits on the stump facing him.) I . . . I always liked you, Alan. Didn't you know it?

ALAN. (With some surprise.) Like me?

MILLIE. (Nods her head.) It's awfully hard to show someone you like them, isn't it?

ALAN. (With just a little bitterness.) It's easy for some people.

MILLIE. (Turns away.) It makes you feel like such a sap. I don't know why.

ALAN. (Crosses to her R. Rather touched.) I . . . I'm glad you like me, Millie.

MILLIE. I don't expect you to do anything about it. I just wanted to tell you. (Howard comes bustling on through the gate, from R. alley, very upset. He addresses Millie.)

HOWARD. (To D. C. lawn.) I got to see Rosemary. Is she up in her room?

MILLIE. Hi, Howard. (Rises, crosses D. L. of stump. Alan crosses U. by Mrs. Potts' steps.)

HOWARD. (Just one thing on his mind. Crosses D.) Uh . . . I'd like to see her, please. I think she's expecting me. (Crosses U. on porch to front door.)

MILLIE. (Crosses to C.) You better holler at the bottom of the stairs—(Howard is about to go in the front door, but turns back at this.) 'cause all the others are up there, too.

HOWARD. The others?

MILLIE. Mrs. Potts and Miss Kronkite and Miss Schoenwalder.

HOWARD. Oh. I was gonna telephone her but then I thought I better come over, because you see, this is the beginning of my busy season and —

ROSEMARY. (Calling from inside house.) Howard!

HOWARD. Huh?

ROSEMARY. (Inside, to all the women.) He's here! (We hear a joyful babble of women's voices from inside. Howard gives one last pitiful look at Millie, then goes in front door. Millie follows him in and Alan is left alone in the yard. After a moment, Madge comes out the kitchen door.)

MADGE. (By bench.) Hello, Alan. (Her face is sad and she looks a little guilty.)

ALAN. (Very moved by seeing her.) Madge!

MADGE. I . . . I'm awfully sorry.

ALAN. (Crosses R.) Madge, whatever happened . . . it wasn't your fault. I know what Hal's like when he's . . . But I've got Hal taken care of now! He won't be bothering you any more! (Crosses D. L. to D. L. of stump.)

MADGE. (Crosses to him.) Alan? What do you mean?

ALAN. I didn't feel like telling your mother about it yesterday, but at school I spent half of my life getting him out of jams. I knew he'd had a few tough breaks, and I tried to feel sorry for

ALAN. (Rises, comes down Mrs. Potts' stairs to bottom step.) Girls have always liked Hal. Months after he left the fraternity, they still called. "Is Hal there?" "Does anyone know where Hal's gone?" Their voices always sounded so forlorn.

FLO. (Crosses u. to c.) Alan, come and have supper tonight. I'll make all the things you like—sweet potato pie —

ALAN. (Crosses D. and R. to stump.) I'll be gone, Mrs. Owens.

FLO. Gone?

ALAN. (Crosses R. to D. L. of steps.) Dad's been wanting me to take him up to Michigan on a fishing trip. I've been stalling him, but now I —

FLO. You'll be back before you go to school, won't you?

ALAN. I'll be back Christmas, Mrs. Owens.

FLO. Christmas! Alan, go inside and say good-bye to Madge!

ALAN. Madge is beautiful. Did I think I could spend the rest of my life just looking at her?

FLO. Alan, see her one more time!

ALAN. (His mind is made up.) No! I'll be back Christmas. I'll stop in and . . . say hello. (He runs off D. R.)

FLO. (A cry of loss.—She crosses D. to L. of steps.) Alan!

MILLIE. (Running to u. of beach chair.) Good-bye, Alan! (She waves.) Good-bye, Alan! (Mrs. Potts crosses L. to below stump.)

FLO. (In a flat voice.) Millie, you'll be late for school.

MILLIE. Gee, I almost forgot. (Picks up her notebook from beach chair. Crosses to u. of steps.) I'm never going to fall in love.

MRS. POTTS. Wait till you're a little older, Millie-girl, before you say that.

MILLIE. When I get out of college I'm going to New York, and I'll write novels that'll shock people right out of their senses. I'll become so great and famous . . . I'll never have to fall in love.

FLO. You be just as great and famous as you want to be. Now go on to school. (Millie starts out R.—stops R. of steps.)

BOY'S VOICE. (Off R.) Hey, Goon girl!

MILLIE. (Looking off R.) Poopdeck McCullough! He thinks he's so smart.

FLO. Keep peace and let him think so.

BOY'S VOICE. (Off R.) Hey, Goon girl! Come kiss me! I wanna be sick! Ha! Ha! Ha!

MILLIE. If he thinks he can get by with that, he's crazy! (Looks around for a weapon, runs up on lawn, finds a stick by porch,

runs down to corner of porch, stops, looks at the stick, changes her mind, throws the stick down disdainfully and as she exits gracefully.) See you this evening. (Millie exits D. R.)

FLO. (After a moment.) Helen, you liked the young man, didn't you?

MRS. POTTS. With just Mama and me in the house I'd got so used to things as they were—occasionally a hairpin on the floor . . . and the smell of Mama's medicines. Then he walked through the door and clomped through the tiny rooms as if he was still outdoors. There was a man in the house, and it seemed good.

FLO. I know, but —

MRS. POTTS. And that reminded me, I'm a woman. And that seemed good, too. (Flo turns away abruptly. Madge enters from front door. She has changed her dress, carries a coat and a small suitcase.)

MADGE. Mom!

FLO. (Without turning.) You'd better hurry, darling. You don't want to be late to work.

MADGE. Mom, please don't get mad. I'm not doing this for spite but —

FLO. (Turns.) Madge!

MADGE. I'm going to Tulsa, Mom.

FLO. What?

MADGE. I know how you feel, but I don't know what else to do.

FLO. (Crosses to steps.) Madge—Alan's coming back at Christmas time. He's going to take you to the dance at the Country Club. He's going to forget the whole thing and —

MADGE. I have to go, Mom.

FLO. (Frantic.) Madge!

MRS. POTTS. (Restraining Flo.) Now, Flo . . .

FLO. Now, Madge, listen to what I've got to say!

MADGE. My bus leaves in a few minutes, Mother.

FLO. Maybe you think you love him now, but in a few years you'll hate the day he set foot on our porch!

MADGE. He needs me, Mom.

FLO. He needs you because he's no good! He'll never be able to support you. And when he does have a job he'll spend all his money on drink! I know! And after a while there'll be other women!

MADGE. I guess you don't love someone because he's perfect.