

hearths, furnace walls, and plumbing pipes. The middle area is a sound. The back of the stage is a beautiful shore with trees in foliage, piers (decorated with flags) to which white boats are tied; some of them have their sails hoisted, some not. Small Italian villas, pavilions, kiosks, marble statues can be seen among the foliage.)²⁰

QUARANTINE MASTER, in black[face, is walking on the shore.

OFFICER (comes up to him and shakes his hand): Well, if it isn't Ordström!²¹ So you've landed here?

MASTER: Yes, I'm here.

OFFICER: Is this Fairhaven?

MASTER: No, that's over there. This is Foulstrand!

OFFICER: Then we've come to the wrong place!

MASTER: We?—Aren't you going to introduce me?

OFFICER: No, it's not proper. (Softly) It's Indra's own daughter, you see.

MASTER: Indra's? I thought it was Waruna [the supreme god] himself! . . . Well, aren't you amazed my face is black?

OFFICER: My boy, I'm over fifty—at that age one doesn't get amazed any more—I assumed right away you were going to a masquerade this afternoon.

MASTER: Absolutely right! I hope you'll come along.

OFFICER: Most likely, for it . . . it doesn't look too attractive here . . . What sort of people live here?

MASTER: The sick live here; those who are healthy live over there.

OFFICER: I suppose there are only poor people here.

MASTER: No, old man, the rich are here. Look at the man on that rack! He has eaten too much goose liver with truffles and drunk so much burgundy that his feet have become malformed!

OFFICER: Malformed?

MASTER: Yes! . . . And the one lying on the guillotine over there; he has consumed so much Hennessy²² that his backbone has to be ironed out!

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DAUGHTER: Then I want to go there!

OFFICER: Come!

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LAWYER (comes in again): I'm returning to my first hell . . . this was the second . . . and the greatest! The most delightful is the greatest hell . . . Look at that—she has dropped hairpins on the floor again! . . . (Picks one up)

OFFICER: Imagine, he has discovered the hairpins, too!

LAWYER: Too? . . . Look at this one. It has two prongs but is one pin! There are two, but it's one! If I straighten it out, there's only one! If I bend it, there are two without ceasing to be one. That means: the two are one! But if I break it—here! Then they're two! Two! (Breaks the hairpin and throws the pieces away)

OFFICER: You've seen all this . . . But before you can break them off, the prongs have to diverge. If they converge, it holds up.

LAWYER: And if they're parallel—they never meet—it's neither one nor two.

OFFICER: The hairpin is the most perfect of all created things! A straight line that equals two parallel ones.

LAWYER: A lock that closes when it's open!

OFFICER: Open, closes—a braid of hair that remains open when it's bound . . .

LAWYER: It's like this door. When I shut it, I open the way out for you, Agnes! (Goes out, shutting the door)^{*}

DAUGHTER: So?

(Change on stage: the bed with its canopy becomes a tent; the stove remains; the backdrop is raised; to the right in the foreground one sees burned-over mountains with red heather and stumps black and white after a forest fire; red pigpens and out-houses. Below, an open gymnasium in which people are exercised on machines resembling instruments of torture. To the left in the foreground, part of the quarantine building's open shed with

OFFICER: That can't be good either!

MASTER: In general the ones who live on this side all have some form of misery to hide. Look at the one who's coming, for example!

(*An older FOR is wheeled in in a wheelchair, accompanied by a sixty-year-old coquette, dressed in the latest fashion and attended by HER FRIEND, who is forty.*)

OFFICER: It's the major! Our schoolmate!

MASTER: Don Juan! You see, he's still in love with the old wreck by his side. He doesn't see she has aged, that she's ugly, faithless, cruel!

OFFICER: Well, that's love! I'd never have believed that flighty soul capable of loving so profoundly and seriously.

MASTER: You do have a nice attitude!

OFFICER: I've been in love—with Victoria . . . yes, I still haunt the corridor waiting for her . . .

MASTER: Are you the one in the corridor?

OFFICER: Yes, I am.

MASTER: Well, have you got the door opened yet?

OFFICER: No, we're still in court about it . . . The billposter is out with his dip net, of course, so hearing testimony has been delayed . . . in the meanwhile the glazier has put in panes in the castle which has grown a half story . . . It has been an unusually good year this year . . . warm and wet.

MASTER: But you still haven't had it as warm as I have!

OFFICER: How warm do you keep the ovens?

MASTER: When we disinfect people who may have cholera, we keep them at 144 degrees.

OFFICER: Is cholera raging again?

MASTER: Didn't you know? . . .

OFFICER: Of course I knew, but I so often forget what I know!

MASTER: I often wish I could forget, myself mostly; that's why I like masquerades, dressing up, and amateur theatricals.

OFFICER: What have you been up to?

MASTER: If I tell, they say I'm bragging; if I keep still, I'm called a hypocrite!

OFFICER: Is that why you've blackened your face?

MASTER: Yes! A little blacker than I am!

OFFICER: Who's that coming?

MASTER: Oh, he's a poet. Who's going to have his mudbath! (*The POET enters with his eyes directed toward the sky and a pail of mud in his hand.*)

OFFICER: Heavens, you'd think he'd need a bath in light and air!

MASTER: No, he's always way up there in the heights so he gets homesick for mud . . . wallowing in dirt makes his skin as hard as a pig's. He doesn't feel the gadflies' stings after that!

OFFICER: What a strange world of contradictions this is!

*

POET (*ecstatically*): Of clay the god Ptah²³ created man on a potter's wheel, a lathe—(*skeptically*)—or what the hell have you!—(*Ecstatically*) Of clay the sculptor creates his more or less immortal masterpieces—(*skeptically*)—which most often are pure junk! (*Ecstatically*) Of clay are created these vessels so needed in the pantry, which have the name dishes in common, plates—(*skeptically*)—as far as that goes I don't care much what they're called! (*Ecstatically*) This is the clay! When it's mixed with water and flows, it's called mud—*C'est mon affaire!* (*Calls*) Lina!

*

LINA enters with a pail.

POET: Lina, let Miss Agnes see you! She knew you ten years ago when you were a young, happy, let's say pretty girl . . . [*To the*

DAUGHTER] See what she looks like now! Five children, drudgery, yelling, starving, beatings! See how her beauty has perished, how her joy has disappeared, while she has been doing her duty, which should have given her the inner satisfaction that reflects itself in the harmonious lines of a face and in the quiet glow of the eyes . . .

MASTER (*places his hand over the POET'S mouth*): Keep still! Keep still!

POET: That's what they all say! And if one keeps still, they say: speak! Perverse human beings!

*

DAUGHTER (*goes up to LINA*): Tell me your complaints!

LINA: No, I don't dare to—then I'd have it still worse!

DAUGHTER: Who is that cruel?

LINA: I don't dare to say—then I'll get a beating!

POET: That's how it can be! But I will tell you even if that black fellow wants to knock my teeth out! . . . I'll tell you that there is injustice sometimes . . . Agnes, daughter of God! . . . Do you hear music and dancing up there on the hillside? Fine! . . . It's Lina's sister, who has come home from the city where she went astray . . . you understand . . . Now they're butchering the fatted calf,²⁴ but Lina who stayed at home has to carry the pail to feed the pigs! . . .

DAUGHTER: There's rejoicing in her home because the one who has gone astray has given up her wickedness—not only because she has come home! Remember that!

POET: But then put on a dinner and ball every evening for this blameless woman who has never gone astray! Do that! . . . But people don't . . . instead when Lina has a little leisure, she has to go to church and get scolded because she isn't perfect. Is that justice?

DAUGHTER: Your questions are so hard to answer because . . . there are so many unknowns . . .

POET: The caliph Harun the Just²⁵ understood that, too! He sat quietly on his throne and never saw how they had it down below. The complaints finally reached his noble ear. Then one fine day he stepped down, disguised himself, and went about unrecognized among the crowds of people to see how it was with justice.

DAUGHTER: You surely don't think I'm Harun the Just?

OFFICER: Let's talk about something else . . . Company's coming!
(*A white dragon-shaped boat with a light blue silk sail with a golden yard and golden mast with a rose-red pennant glides forward on the sound from the left. At the helm with their arms about each other sit HE and SHE.*)

OFFICER: Look at that—perfect happiness, total bliss, the ecstasy of young love!

(*The stage becomes lighter.*)

HE (*stands up in the boat and sings*):

Hail thee, lovely bay,
where I spent my early years
where I dreamt my first dreams of love,
here you have me once again,
but not alone as then!
Groves and bays,
skies and sea,
hail her!

My true love, my bride!

My sun, my life!

(*The flags on the docks at Fairhaven dip in greeting, white handkerchiefs from villas and shores wave, and a chord played by harps and violins sounds over the water.*)

POET: See how they radiate light! Listen to the melody from across the water! Eros!

OFFICER: It is Victoria!

MASTER: What?

OFFICER: It's his Victoria; I have mine! And mine, no one else may see! . . . Raise the quarantine flag now; I'm going to pull in the net.

(*MASTER waves a yellow flag.*)

OFFICER (*pulls on a line so that the boat turns toward Foulstrand*): Hold it there!

(*HE and SHE now notice the ghastly landscape and express their horror.*)

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MASTER: Yes, yes! It's hard. But everyone, every last one who comes from an infected area has to come here.

POET: Imagine, being able to talk like that, being able to do that when one sees two human beings who have met in love. Don't touch them! Don't touch love! That's the greatest crime! . . . Poor souls! Everything beautiful has to go down, down into the mud!

(HE and SHE step ashore, sorrow-stricken and ashamed.)

HE: What have we done?

MASTER: You don't have to have done anything to be hit by the small discomforts of life.

SHE: That's how short happiness and joy are!

HE: How long do we have to stay here?

MASTER: Forty days and nights!²⁶

SHE: Then we'd rather drown ourselves!

HE: Live here, among the scorched hills and the pigpens?

POET: Love conquers all, even sulphur fumes and carbohc acid!

QUARANTINE MASTER (*lights the stove; blue sulphur vapors rise*):

Now I'm lighting the sulphur. Please step in!

SHE: My blue dress will lose its color!

MASTER: Yes, it'll turn white! Your red roses will turn white, too!

HE: And your cheeks as well! In forty days!

SHE (*to OFFICER*): *That will please you!*

OFFICER: No, it won't! . . . Your happiness did cause my suffering, but . . . that doesn't matter—I now have my degree and am tutoring over there . . . [*sighs*] . . . and this fall I'll have a place in a school . . . teaching boys the same lessons I had in all of my childhood, in all of my youth, and now I'm going to do the same lessons through all my years of maturity and finally through all of my old age . . . the same lessons: How much is two times two? How many times does two go into four? . . . Until I'm retired with a pension and have to go—without anything to do, waiting for my meals and the papers—until at last they bring me

to the crematory and burn me up . . . Don't you have anyone who's ready to be pensioned out here? I suspect that's the worst next to two times two is four. Starting school again just when one has received his degree; asking the same questions until he dies . . . (*An older man walks by with his hands behind his back*.) There goes a pensioner waiting to die! Probably a captain who didn't become a major or a law clerk who didn't get to be a judge—many are called, but few are chosen . . . He's waiting and waiting for breakfast . . .

PENSIONER: No, for the paper! The morning paper!

OFFICER: And he's only fifty-four years old; he can live for twenty-five more years waiting for his meals and his paper . . . Isn't that terrible?

PENSIONER: What isn't terrible? Tell me that!

OFFICER: Yes, let him who can tell us that! . . . Now I'm going to teach boys two times two is four: How many times does two go into four? (*He puts his hands to his head in despair*.) And Victoria, whom I love and for whom I wished the greatest happiness on earth . . . Now she has happiness, the greatest she knows, and I suffer . . . suffer . . . suffer!

SHE: Do you think I can be happy when I see you suffer? How can you think that? Maybe my being a prisoner here for forty days and nights will relieve your suffering a little. Does it?

OFFICER: Yes, and no. I can't be happy when you're suffering!

HE: And do you think my happiness can be built on your agony?

OFFICER: We are to be pitied—all of us!

(*ALL raise their hands toward heaven and utter a cry of pain resembling a dissonant chord*.)

DAUGHTER: Eternal God, hear them! Life is evil! Human beings are to be pitied!

(*ALL cry out as before*.)

*

The stage becomes pitch black for a moment, during which the actors leave or change places. When the lights come on again, the

that's why no one wants to dance with me, but you could quit reminding me about that! (EDITH begins to play Johann Sebastian Bach's Toccata and Fugue No. 10 on the piano.)

Adagio

etc.

(The waltz from the dance indoors can be heard softly at first, but then becomes louder as if competing with Bach's Toccata. EDITH plays the waltz down, however, and brings it to silence. Dancers appear in the door and listen to her music; everyone on stage stands listening with rapt attention.)

A NAVAL OFFICER (puts his arm about ALICE, one of the dancers, and leads her down to the dock): Come quickly!

(EDITH breaks off playing, stands up, and looks at the NAVAL OFFICER and ALICE with despair. Remains standing as if turned to stone)

*

The wall of the yellow house is lifted away. One can see three schoolbenches with boys on them; among them sits the OFFICER, looking uneasy and troubled. The SCHOOLMASTER with glasses, chalk, and cane is standing in front of them.

SCHOOLMASTER (to the OFFICER): Well, my boy, can you tell me how much two times two is?

(OFFICER remains seated, searching painfully in his memory without finding the answer.)

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shore of Foulstrand²⁷ can be seen at the back in shadow. The sound lies in the middle area, and Fairhaven in the foreground, both fully lighted up. To the right, a corner of the clubhouse with its windows open; couples can be seen dancing inside. On an empty box outside stand three MAIDS, their arms about each other, looking in at the dance. On the porch is a bench on which UGLY EDITH is sitting, bareheaded, depressed, with her heavy head of hair disheveled. In front of her an open piano.

To the left a yellow wooden house.

Two lightly clad CHILDREN are tossing a ball back and forth outside the clubhouse.

In the foreground a dock with white boats and flagpoles with flags waving. Out on the sound a warship rigged with cannon openings is anchored.

But the whole landscape is in its winter dress with snow on leafless trees and the ground.

The DAUGHTER and the OFFICER enter.

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DAUGHTER: Here there's peace and happiness during vacation time.

Work is over, there's a party every day; people are dressed in their holiday clothes; music and dancing even in the forenoon. (To the MAIDS) Why don't you go in and dance, children?

MAIDS: We?

OFFICER: Why, they're servants!

DAUGHTER: That's true! . . . But why is Edith sitting there instead of dancing?

(EDITH hides her face in her hands.)

OFFICER: Don't ask her! She has been sitting there for three hours without being asked . . . (He goes into the yellow house to the left.)

DAUGHTER: What a cruel pleasure!

MOTHER (comes out, wearing a low-cut dress, goes up to EDITH):

Why don't you go in as I've told you?

EDITH: Because . . . I can't ask for a dance. I know I'm ugly . . .