

BEWARE WOMEN
(the hurting business)

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ACT I

shove off, masher

Lights. The MIDDLETON home.

MARIA and ROGER enter. He is laughing. As she takes off her going-out clothing, hat and gloves and such, he puts on several lights.

MARIA

I watched that man from the moment he stepped onto the streetcar. When he boarded there was one seat remaining, but the two women on either side so occupied it with skirts and bags and enormous hats that there was no room left for any honest person. O, yet he walked with a cane--somebody might have made room for him.

ROGER

Somebody in a civil city might have made room for him. Toronto, Cleveland, Pittsburgh. No, in Chicago it's assumed he walks with a limp because he stepped on his own cock.

MARIA

He crammed himself between the two ladies like a worm between the pages of a closed book. And he seemed content to sit there, squeezed, polishing the head of his cane with his handkerchief.

ROGER

And then?

MARIA

Then the streetcar rounded a corner, bucking once like a kicked horse, and the lady to his left swayed and drove her hatpin straight through his ear! And into the meat of his neck!

He stood to pull away, but he couldn't get free. He and his neighbor swayed and rocked against each other until she could finally steady him. The second lady got between them and extracted the hatpin, quite gently, like a farmhand pulling a thorn from a wounded snout.

But after this extraction the blood shot from the wound like water from a thumbed hose, ruining the nearest half-dozen outfits. The people cried out and wrestled him to the front. And the operator cried: "Shove off, masher, you're making a mess!" and pushed him out onto the street without stopping. We laughed. We all laughed.

(CONTINUED)

ROGER

Ah, and then they thought he had done something to upset the lady, and she had skewered him on purpose?

MARIA

Something especially bad.

She demonstrates with her own hatpin--a sleek, deadly-looking and well-kept thing, distinct from her shabby hat.

MARIA

(cont.)

Most cases of undistinguished streetcar groping are easily rewarded with a only little stick in the thigh or the forearm--somewhere that heals, but scars. They'd have assumed him exceptionally serpentine to deserve a wound like that.

ROGER

You wouldn't kill the offender straight off?

MARIA

Punishment scale to crimes. There are men with darker intents than a pinch on the streetcar, Roger. Imagine yourself a young working girl:

ROGER

Must I?

MARIA

Come, you must.

She takes her hat and coat and dresses him up. He's not that much fun, but he can be sporting for MARIA.

MARIA

(cont.)

Imagine it with me.
It's a spring night. Late, but warm and clear and beautiful--so you're in no hurry to make it back home. Where are you coming from?

ROGER

Work?

MARIA

No--it's later than that. You went out somewhere after work. You went to a committee meeting for the city marchers, the suffragette society. You spent a few hours collating and packaging pamphlets with your comrades. You agreed to walk home in a group, dropping off each other along the way, but you, Miss Roger--

(CONTINUED)

No, you need a working girl's name.

ROGER

No, no, I don't.

MARIA

Hush. Roger, Roger, Randi, Roberta... Regina.

Yes. You, Miss Regina, happen to live the farthest from the meeting hall, and you have to walk the last stretch all alone.

She puts out the first light.

MARIA

(cont.)

So you stick close to the lamps. They're burning bright, and it's not too far from one to the next. You feel your pulse; you feel how the heart hammers the blood into your fingertips. How it seems to strike harder and more rapidly when you cross the widening straits of darkness between one island of light and the next.

But you live far from the well-kept city center. Eventually those lights count fewer, and fewer, and none.

She puts out more lights.

ROGER

Yes, I think I see what you mean.

MARIA

There's no moon out, Miss Regina. You don't "see" a thing.

She puts out the last light. Darkness.

MARIA

(cont.)

But you walk this street often enough. You can follow it home in any light or weather. You're not scared, are you?

Are you?

ROGER

No.

MARIA

We'll stop if you're scared.

(CONTINUED)

ROGER

I told you I'm not scared.

MARIA

(turning the lights off and on,
signifying day and night)

Good. Because the catastrophe may not come tonight. Or tomorrow. Or the night after. The fear would be wasted. But maybe the one after that--

Darkness.

MARIA

(cont.)

The way is familiar; the solitude, familiar, and the darkness is its own comfort. You're almost thankful to return to it, like to your warm bed after stirring in the small hours. It welcomes you. You had no fear, so you had a glass of punch at the committee meeting. You had another.

That's why the man at the end of the alley looks like two men. Or maybe the two look like three.

They move quick. They know the darkness is indifferent. I was not your friend; now it's his; and there's a hand in your hair, and steel in your back--

ROGER cries out. Then MARIA does.

ROGER

Maria? Maria?

He finds the lights. She's cut and bleeding from the cheek. He has the hatpin in his hand.

MARIA

So you were frightened.

ROGER

Why did you do that? I felt the knife-point!

MARIA

This knife-point?

She holds up the weapon: an umbrella.

ROGER

It wasn't that. I know I felt--

She levels it at him and he touches the point with his thumb.

(CONTINUED)

MARIA

And how many nights did you manage to walk home alone?
Just two?

ROGER

You're bleeding!

MARIA

No matter. The bad blood runs first.

ROGER

Let me look at that. This is why you shouldn't keep
these pins--they're dangerous.

MARIA

Two nights, Roger. O, the young woman Regina is one to
be feared! Quick to draw, and true.

ROGER

That's enough.

MARIA

You can take it, can't you? I'm only making fun.

ROGER

Well I'm not having fun, and you're not either. See how
you're bleeding.

MARIA

Having a nasty memory? Shades of the bigger and meaner
boys at the prep school?

ROGER

It's true they were unkind. That's enough, now.

MARIA

Not like you, though. Gentle, thoughtful Roger. Well,
not so gentle. Not so gentle.

ROGER

That's quite a lot of blood.

MARIA

It's nothing compared to that poor dumb masher on the
streetcar.

ROGER

That's why women ought to find another way to decorate
their heads.

MARIA

All the women in the marching society wear them. They
swear upon 'em. They don't go out bareheaded. Two of

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MARIA (cont'd)
 them have had to stab mashers. One even had her story
 in the Tribune.

ROGER
 Well, I don't want you wearing one. You'll hurt
 yourself.

MARIA
 Like I have just now?

ROGER
 If you hadn't startled me with your talk of--of--

MARIA
 Of what, Roger? Rape? Nobody said the word.

ROGER
 You startled me.

MARIA
 No, I frightened you.
 I need to lie down.

ROGER
 O, let me get you--Hell, I don't know. Water? Food?

MARIA
 Brandy.

ROGER rushes off.

ROGER
 (off)
 Where is it?

MARIA
 In the highest cupboard.

ROGER
 Perhaps water would serve you better.

MARIA
 I'm sure it wouldn't.

ROGER
 Or let me get you a bandage.

MARIA
 It'll stop bleeding when it needs to. When it's done
 the body the most good. No bandage. Just bring the
 brandy once you've found it, hurry.

(CONTINUED)

ROGER exits. MARIA kicks off her other shoe. He makes obnoxious searching noises.

ROGER

(off)

You're quite sure your father didn't--

MARIA

Hell with it, Roger, come back.

ROGER

If it's here like you say I intend to find it for you.

MARIA

No, Roger, I fear it may be too late.

ROGER

Too late?

MARIA

The absolute end. Come back and hold me in those arms while I breathe out my last, love, it's too late, too late, too late.

ROGER rushes back. He's still dressed as a lady. She laughs.

MARIA

(cont.)

You'd pull down the moon if I asked it.

ROGER

You would ask just to see me struggle for your amusement. If you did that, I'd keep it for myself.

MARIA

Not for my amusement. To see if you could fly.

ROGER

And when you saw I couldn't?

MARIA

Then I'd bring it down myself and present the moon to you.

ROGER

So you never wanted it anyway.

MARIA

Whether I did or didn't.

second in this play the prologue comes

*TURNER and FLETCHER are distributing pamphlets.
A man approaches.*

FLETCHER

Sir, do you have a moment to spare?

OSWALD

Why, sure.

TURNER

To speak with us about freedom, justice, and the
American Dream.

FLETCHER

About the simple fact that those governed by the law
out to have a say in making the law.

OSWALD

Oh, is this about voting?

TURNER

Of course, sir.

FLETCHER

Don't you vote, sir?

OSWALD

Hell, I think one candidate's as good or bad as
another, especially in Chicago. I keep to my family, my
Bible, and my work. Politics is trouble.

TURNER

If I may, what do you do for work?

OSWALD

I put cigarettes into packages. I can count to twenty
faster than anyone you've ever seen.

FLETCHER

Well, sir, we're quite good at counting, ourselves.

TURNER

We sort mail at Ford & Shipley's Stapler Corporation.

OSWALD

Working girls!

TURNER

Working women.

(CONTINUED)

OSWALD

A fitting job for a lady, too--not too hard on the wrists.

FLETCHER

On the contrary. It's quite taxing.

TURNER

The stapler company gets a great deal of mail. Though it's usually the same platitudes again and again.

OSWALD

All the same, I'd sure like to hear more about those "platitudes."

He leans ingratiatingly (and does not know the meaning of the word "platitudes").

FLETCHER

Sir, we're here to discuss the future of this nation. I'm starting to sense you might not be here for the same reasons.

OSWALD

Dear, we can talk about anything you'd like. Try me, I'm quite a listener.

He leers awkwardly.

TURNER

Hear this, then: have a nice day. Goodbye now, sir.

OSWALD

What?

FLETCHER

(louder)

Goodbye now, sir!

TURNER

Please just move along so we can talk to those who are interested.

OSWALD

Don't mistake me, miss, I'm interested.

He leers a little more.

FLETCHER

Alright, sir. Come here. No politics, no hogwash, just a little something you might remember us by.

(CONTINUED)

OSWALD

Duck soup!

She beckons him close, and he leads with his lips. It's disgusting. When he closes his eyes, she draws her hatpin and passes it behind him to TURNER, who spears him in the ass cheek.

OSWALD

Hie, help! I'm killed, I'm killed!

TURNER

Get along, now!

FLETCHER

How about that to remember us, you filthy masher!

He scurries off, blubbering. FLETCHER takes the hatpin and makes to stick it back in her hat.

TURNER

Wait now, there's still blood on there.

She has a handkerchief. So does FLETCHER. They both polish the hatpin daintily.

TURNER

It slipped in my hand a touch.

FLETCHER

Did it?

She pricks her own finger lightly.

FLETCHER

O, I suppose it could be sharpened. They say a dull knife is more dangerous than a sharp one. Trying to force it, you might make mistakes.

TURNER

I have heard that.

FLETCHER

Look at me.

TURNER

What's the matter?

FLETCHER

(examining TURNER)

Would you prefer to head home and rest?

TURNER

I'd rather not leave you by yourself.

FLETCHER

But you must be properly shaken by all that.

TURNER

O, no. A normal trauma is no trauma at all. Let's continue.

FLETCHER

Continue?

TURNER

Just as we were. Just as if it never happened.

Silence.

TURNER

What a pleasant day. All things seem possible. We'll make the best of it.

Tightrope History

Roger is straightening out the doilies and dusting the lamp-shades. The doorbell rings. He keeps futzing.

ROGER

It's unlocked.

BAULER

(off)

I've got my hands full. Come open it.

ROGER opens it. BAULER enters and strikes him ("playfully") in the groin with his cane. He is jolly. He is bandaged heavily across the ear and neck.

BAULER

Hello, cousin!

You never learn, do you? It's one of my favorite things about you.

ROGER

(weakly, trying to recover)

Hello.

HARRIET

Is this every time you greet your cousin?

(CONTINUED)

BAULER

Sometimes it's in the belly.

ROGER

Sometimes across the top of the head.

BAULER

But I always strike where he's unready to defend. We have fun. We're having fun, are we not? You're okay. Take Harriet's coat, Roger.

HARRIET

I've got it, thank you.

BAULER

No, no--

ROGER

It's no trouble.

ROGER takes HARRIET's coat. BAULER throws him his own coat.

BAULER

You're going to ask, aren't you? I can always tell what you're about to say. Always the most obvious thing.

ROGER

O, no--but you're about to tell me; you fear we might begin to talk about something other than you.

BAULER

I never fear that.

ROGER

Wine?

BAULER

I brought some, open this. Yes. Let's not discuss it. Nothing better than to set this day aside and have a glass, or several.

HARRIET

Roger.

ROGER

Yes?

HARRIET

I'd heard so little of you before today.

(CONTINUED)

ROGER

We aren't as close as we used to be. Herman is a busy man.

BAULER

You could show a little gratitude. It's no short ride here from River North, and I know what you keep in your own cellar.

ROGER

I'm the last cousin who tolerates you. Don't whine yourself blue about the expense of the car, you'd blow your nose in a fifty-dollar bill if all else you had was a one.

BAULER

I'm not too good to wipe my nose on a one.

HARRIET

God forbid you would ever have to.

BAULER

You've been seeing less of me than usual, cousin, because I've been considering the Hatpin Peril.

ROGER

O, good. Let's get to it.

HARRIET

Yes. We're talking politics now.

BAULER

And most of the time, in politics, things sort of run their way, you know? Any well-crafted machine simply rolls on.

ROGER

I follow.

BAULER

But! Sometime the machine can be turned in another direction. So we decide: are we a civil society, governing ourselves by law and order, or are we animals pretending?

You read the papers, don't you? New York, a crowded Woolworth's, a fellow lost an eye in a gaggle of behatted ladies. In Pittsburgh a young woman picked up a man and threw him through a shop window. In Philadelphia two women met in the street and circled each other like duellists, blades in hand, over the love of some double-crossing man.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BAULER (cont'd)

When so much is happening, one is almost tempted to think it means something.

HARRIET

Herman Has devoted an entire wall of his study to these clipped stories. Red pencil lines connect one to another in a spiderweb.

ROGER

And what have you found? Does it mean something?

BAULER

It doesn't mean nothing.

ROGER

You're an alderman. What's power without imagination?

BAULER

I don't know, what?

ROGER

It's not a joke, man.

BAULER

Good. I don't like jokes. Listen: I was concerned before it happened to me.

HARRIET

You started clipping the stories well before you had a red line to draw to yourself.

BAULER

You see? I'm concerned for the city and the country. My self is secondary. Collateral.

ROGER

Then you're a brave man. If I see you in the forest fighting a bear,

HARRIET

Or in the city fighting a woman,

ROGER

Or in the city fighting a woman. I'll be sure to help your opponent.

ROGER

Yes, I've heard what a fright a late walk alone in this city can be.

(CONTINUED)

HARRIET

If you aren't prepared.

BAULER

Harriet wears one of the infernal hair-swords herself.

HARRIET

Not so.

BAULER

No?

HARRIET

I thought as a favor I would forgo the accessory for now. In light of your incident.

BAULER

Now mark me--I've told you I won't let fear choose for me, and I won't have you acting on fear's behalf. I am fine. I am happy, healthy, and confident as ever.

HARRIET

O, yes. Because I've never made adjustments to spare your sensitivities before?

ROGER

He is a politician. Kindnesses are useful in exchange or in performance. To my cousin, a kind thing done for's own sake is crocodile dentistry.

BAULER

Look: I promise you, it's not necessary. You insult me.

ROGER & HARRIET

Woah! Hey! Wow! (noises of feigned shock, etc.)

ROGER

Then you had better do as before, Harriet.

HARRIET

I had better. No consideration from me. Good thing, too. A lie told hurts the liar most.

ROGER

My mother said that.

BAULER

What lie?

HARRIET

I thought it was from the Bible.

ROGER

It may have been. We had one in our house but nobody ever opened it.

BAULER

What lie?

ROGER

Actually, she used it as a doorstep for our kitchen, but as we put wear on it, the cover came unglued from the pages, and the door would become stuck halfway open. So she taped the book shut. I wonder if it's still there, holding open the door between two dark and empty rooms.

HARRIET

When I was twelve I set it in my mind to read the family Bible--after a girl I knew told me it was the only way to be a good person.

The family Bible was a good deal higher on the shelf than I could reach, so I stacked a footstool on top of a chair and stretched up on my tippy-toes as best I possibly could. When my father came in, he saw the arrangement and he was terrified for me, or aghast at my foolishness, or both. "HARRIET!" he cried, "You get those two feet back here on the Earth where they belong." And I was so startled I reached up to steady myself, got one hand on the spine of the book, and my little tower came all undone from underneath me. I fell flat on my back. All the breath was knocked right out of my body, and the book came straight down on my head.

"That'll learn you," said my father, "pain's a better teacher than parents." But he never explained what it was I was supposed to learn. He never had much mind for metaphor; probably it was: "Don't stack a footstool on a chair."

ROGER

And did this make you a good person?

HARRIET

You won't catch me climbing after forbidden things with my back to the door.

BAULER

Amen.

ROGER

Do her a kindness, cousin, and fill your home with Bibles.

(CONTINUED)

BAULER

Do you think I don't have one?

ROGER

Do you?

BAULER

I think you're insinuating that I'm not a virtuous man myself.

ROGER

You have a big house. We live in America. Even I can do that math.

*HARRIET moves BAULER's cane out of reach.
The men laugh again.*

ROGER

I can do this math too, cousin. I know who meets the serious end of a hatpin. Mashers, crooks, and city rats, Herman, and you may not want to share but I am dying to hear the real story.

BAULER

They go hither-thither in a crowded city wearing naked daggers at eye level. There are accidents. I'm a victim.

ROGER looks at HARRIET.

HARRIET

Yes?

ROGER

Unless he fed you that same pathetic line...?

HARRIET

The best liars don't only lie. A man like Herman tells the truth when he has to. But what do I know? It was crowded; there was jostling; it's nobody's fault.

BAULER

So be satisfied, Roger. Pour me another.

ROGER

It thins the blood.

HARRIET

Bad blood runs first.

ROGER

Another, then, and another til we're satisfied.

(CONTINUED)

ROGER pours drinks.

BAULER

I'm not. What lie?

HARRIET pulls a hatpin from some concealed place.

BAULER

I'm not concerned. I'm not betrayed. I'm relieved.

HARRIET

I am too. Sometimes a weapon is a comfort. When it's hidden, it's a burden, isn't it?

BAULER

Well, I wouldn't know.

HARRIET

No? You're too modest.

BAULER

And you're too honest.

HARRIET

I've already said why.

ROGER

So you've got nothing to fear. See how prepared she is to protect you.

HARRIET

Would you trust me with the charge?

BAULER

Until you gave me a reason not to.

HARRIET

I don't believe you're quite so fearless. You grip your walking stick with white knuckles even while you sleep. You count the weapons you can see and double the number for those you can't.

BAULER

Here I am. Out of doors and unarmed.

HARRIET

Are we impressed? Are we relieved?

BAULER

Should you feel better if I locked myself indoors and drew the curtains closed and cowered the days away? Because I will if you want that.

(CONTINUED)

ROGER

We only want you to be careful.

BAULER

Fine.

He takes the hatpin and puts it on himself (in his tie or his lapel or whatever).

BAULER

(cont.)

There. I fear no woman now.

ROGER

Not even Harriet?

any other night - rev 8/18

Lights.

MARIA and EDWARD in their home.

MARIA is picking apart her hat. She rearranges the various sequins and feathers and such, but can't find an order that pleases her. She undoes and redoes it again and again.

EDWARD is drinking whiskey. The bottle is at hand but he keeps pouring it into a glass.

EDWARD

You might have done it any other night.

MARIA

I know it. I know it, I know it. Pour me some of that.

EDWARD

With water?

MARIA

No.

He gives her the glass. She takes an ambitious gulp. She coughs and sputters.

EDWARD

Feel better?

MARIA

He's still down there in the street. I can feel him. If he could spite me any further, this is how he'd do it: to lie there and torment me and make everything worse.

He takes the glass back.

(CONTINUED)

EDWARD

Is he face-up or face-down?

MARIA

What does it matter?
Face-up.

EDWARD

And his eyes open or closed?

MARIA

Closed. I wish they had been open, for the dogs to gather and eat the eyeballs from the sockets. Piss in the gaping holes.

EDWARD

Better not say such a thing in front of reporters. Or police. Or me, if you can help it, if you don't mind.

MARIA

The man's dead. Cruel words can't kill him and kind ones can't raise him.

EDWARD

But your conduct now can still save or finish you.

MARIA

I'm a murderer.

EDWARD

You're a woman. You did what you had to and someone got hurt. How many times has that story run in the Tribune?

MARIA

It's cute no longer.

EDWARD

The papers have been kind, and therefore the judges have been kind. We'll thread one needle after another with careful words and tomorrow be none the worse.

MARIA

No, no. It was amusing, it was fashion, it was popular. It quickly became too popular. They are alarmed. They say Something Must Be Done.

EDWARD

Who says?

MARIA

The papers. Then the people. Then city council.

(CONTINUED)

EDWARD

And tonight?

MARIA

The aldermen voted 'aye' while we cried 'shame' from the gallery. They strutted and gaveled and made outlaws of us. His cousin is an alderman. Reporters, police, or dogs, the alderman will beat them here.

EDWARD

Roger's cousin?

MARIA

Yes.

EDWARD

I'm calm. I'm still at ease. His bloodline doesn't make him innocent.

MARIA

Yes, it does; now someone has to be guilty, and I'm the one holding the weapon.
I didn't want to leave him there. I took his wrists and tried to pull him, but my feet slipped and I fell on my ass. I tried to lift him under the arms but he was simply too heavy. The dead are so heavy.

EDWARD

You shouldn't touch dead things.

MARIA

What, because he couldn't give his permission? Didn't stop him.

EDWARD

Don't talk any more of that.

MARIA

Why?

EDWARD

You wouldn't hear me when I said. He's dead, it's past, and if he's well connected it isn't going to matter.

MARIA

Are you afraid to hear it?

EDWARD

Yes. Everyone is.

MARIA

Then you don't have to. You can stay in while I tell the papers and the police and the aldermen and everyone just what kind of fellow he was.

(CONTINUED)

EDWARD

For what? Justice, truth? Clarity? Here's clarity. If they can change a law, they can change a newspaper story. You said it; you know it; the truth is too heavy and misshapen to wield as a weapon now.

MARIA

I know it.

EDWARD

It's run or fight, and a blade won't do in this fight.

MARIA

Will they put me in prison?

EDWARD

I doubt it. Prison's an institution; you've made this personal.

MARIA

What, then?

EDWARD

Somewhere there's a long list of lepers, kept by all men with money and suits, and all their flunkies too. They remember it. They keep it up to date without paper or ink. Tomorrow you will lose your job and never find another. You'll discover the bank has lost their records of you. You can try the church for charity but even they already know who you are, and even they are already looking through you.

MARIA

What then?

EDWARD

To a nunnery go. But even there, you see? Prison without walls, everyone a guard. A few months til our money runs out, and after that as far as our wits can take us. This Chicago won't have us, and its meaner, tougher mirror-side shall quickly prove too tough. It won't be pretty.

There's something, yet. There's something, though I don't know what it is, there's something. Anything. If we can satisfy the alderman and keep your photo out of the papers.

MARIA

(indicating the bottle)

Maybe it's in there. Pour me another.

(CONTINUED)

EDWARD

Water?

MARIA

No. This time I'm ready for it.

*They have a drink.*Pinprick Scar

ROGER, ALDERMAN BAULER, HARRIET.

ROGER is bleeding from the chest. HARRIET is tending to him. BAULER is not helping.

ROGER

And then she said: 'Do it again and I'll give you another to match!' I reached out--no, no, I remember now, I held up one hand to protect my face--she had raised her arm again, see, she had this flame in her head, casting firelight from her eyes and ears and mouth, as though she had dined on matches--I held up a hand to protect myself, but then I fell backwards, and blackness dropped across my vision like a curtain.

HARRIET

You're lucky. She just barely missed your heart. I don't think it was anything serious that caused you to black out. Fear and shock only. Yes, a few weeks and you'll have nothing left of this night but a bar-room story and a pinprick scar.

ROGER

My ears filled up with the sound of Lake Michigan violently folding itself. The waves crashing on the rocks. But--it was her voice, wasn't it? Her warnings, her voice, followed by mine, babbling and yammering as I died.

HARRIET

Now, I'll never be able. I'll never be able again, I'm afraid. No, I'm sure of it. I'll simply never be able.

HARRIET

Be able to what?

ROGER

At all, at all, never be able at all.

BAULER

Hurts, does it?

(CONTINUED)

ROGER

I felt the blade on my heart, you understand? I felt the metal touch the surface of my heart!

HARRIET

I believe he meant the emotional aspect: you must be very unhappy.

ROGER

O. O! Yes--very. Of course, of course, that too.

HARRIET

You really require prompting, sir?

ROGER

I'm sorry?

HARRIET

O--no! Do you think, in spite of what you did--that you and Miss Middleton are still engaged?!

ROGER

Are you saying--
You mean to say--
That we--

*ROGER lets this sink in. It actually hadn't occurred to him.
He howls in misery and anguish.*

BAULER

Middleton? Miss Middleton?

ROGER makes another loud, sad noise at this.

BAULER

Maria Middleton?

HARRIET

Did you not know?

ROGER

The very same, sir, that shrew, that magician, that same Maria!

BAULER

Hell. Hell!
Harriet, it's worse than we thought.
See how the suffragettes are in arms.
It's not hard to divine where this leads: I mean alliances with the unions, the anarchists, hatpins for the women and handguns for the men, the streets filling up with blood like a baby's bath under the the kitchen tap!

(CONTINUED)

HARRIET

Who will put a stop to it? They won't be inspired by the death of a man like Roger.

ROGER

I'm not dead.

BAULER

O please, we know. Now listen.

BAULER puts out his hand. ROGER takes it, unsure quite why.

BAULER

(cont.)

You clasp the hand of Chicago's next mayor.

ROGER bursts into tears.

ROGER

(tearfully)

Maria--trouble?

HARRIET

Good Lord, man.

BAULER

Hell! The lady did her damndest to kill you not two hours ago, sir--she needs your support now less than ever!

HARRIET

Aside from the wound beside your heart, sir, just what the in the hell is wrong with you?

ROGER

One night long ago we went down to a place on the southern edge of the city--a construction site overlooking the water. She climbed over a fence and under a barrier and I followed. We gazed out onto the black waters, which whispered so, and the black sky, which was silent. We could not tell the difference between the one and the other. She found an access ramp and a staircase and a ladder, and a plywood plank and a crane and a steel beam, and she climbed them all faster than I could follow. We sat there, suspended between the sky and the water, for hours, without speaking. I saw heavens reflected in her eye, the stars both farther and nearer, and I saw the waves which would start as a ripple in the distance, growing in power and momentum until they were certain they could wreck and drown all this feeble city architecture--but those same, those waves break, and fail, recede, and regroup to start again--

(CONTINUED)

When I could no longer bear it I took her hand. She started like a racehorse at the gun. I threw my arms around her waist to stop her slipping away. Do you know why she was startled? She had forgotten I was there. You understand? There is nothing wrong with me. Even this [wound]. If I had not been carried away--then, then there'd be something wrong. Then I'd have an answer.

He slumps backward.

BAULER

Don't you die, now. Hey.

BAULER slaps him. A few times.

ROGER

(slumped)

I won't. I've survived death twice now. I don't think I could die even if I wanted to.

BAULER

That's what I like to hear.

HARRIET

She'd like to prove you wrong. She'll kill you if she sees you.

ROGER

She doesn't need a weapon for that. Just a look.

BAULER

O, enough, enough from you. Tell me, Harriet, do you like balls?

HARRIET

Herman!

BAULER

How about you, Roger?

ROGER

I guess so. Why?

BAULER

We're having the biggest, grandest spectacle this city has seen since the fire. And it'll do everything we need to get this campaign moving.

ROGER

I don't see what that has to do with Maria.

(CONTINUED)

BAULER
Maria?

HARRIET
Miss Middleton.

BAULER
Hell, who's still talking about Miss Middleton?

ROGER
I am, Herman, and we'll have done when I say so.

BAULER
Listen here, cupcake. She knew. I saw that little chickadee in the gallery chanting shame when the votes came. She knows well it's a crime in this city to bear a hatpin, and it's nothing new that murder's a crime as well. See?

ROGER
Perhaps if I came along I might help.

BAULER
How?

HARRIET
How?

ROGER
If she sees I'll be okay. Like it wasn't such a big deal after all.

HARRIET does a spit-take.

BAULER
Can't you picture tomorrow's paper? Activist murders beau in wake of hatpin ban--more drastic measures necessary! And my picture, above the fold!

ROGER
Let me come along.

HARRIET
O, you noodle of a man. You're holding out hope she loves you yet.

ROGER
I'm man enough to hope.

HARRIET
Well, it's late, and cold, and that won't do you any good.

(CONTINUED)

BAULER

If he thinks he's up to it.

HARRIET

As for you, you'll need more than your cane. She's armed and cornered and her father's lived in Chicago a long time. You'd better bring more than your cousin.

BAULER

Well, of course I know that.

HARRIET

I know two guys. Give them hats and pencils and they'll do for reporters.

BAULER

Reporters? Better we go alone than bring along those nerds.

HARRIET

No. "Reporters." You follow?

ROGER

O!

BAULER

Ah.

HARRIET

You'll both have to be quicker. Maria's proved she's worth fearing.

BAULER

The Bauler boys are just as well. We're up to it! The story's coagulating! Thick and grave as the wounds on my cousin here, and I shall be there to add my blood to the tale. We're going out! And if you design on falling to little pieces again, stay here! Leave your balls in a teacup and steep them in your tears!

ROGER

I'll be with you, sir.

BAULER

Yeah?

ROGER

See.

He stands. He wobbles. HARRIET catches him.

(CONTINUED)

HARRIET

O, we see. Herman, lend the man your walking-stick.

BAULER

Must I?

HARRIET

What use is he like this?

BAULER

What use is he anyway? Lie down.

ROGER

No. I'm ready. I'm with you. Keep your walking-stick.

BAULER

So he's a man.

ROGER

So he is! How about it?

BAULER

Good enough. Harriet, your friends?

HARRIET's on the phone. It's one of those old-timey candlestick phones, unless this is a good place for a sight gag.

HARRIET

They'll meet you. They'll know who you are.

BAULER

Of course they will. Come on.

As they exit, BAULER feints a jab at ROGER with his walking-stick; but ROGER puts his hands up and stands ready to defend himself. BAULER appraises him. He approves. They exit.

any other night (ii)

TURNER and FLETCHER down below in murky darkness.

TURNER

This must be where he fell. Tripped on the curb, clutching his chest, head's the first thing to hit the ground.

FLETCHER

Dumb bastard.

TURNER

You don't know. Maybe he was in the right.

FLETCHER

We got it from Harriet, she got it from the guy himself. Of course he'd like to put it that way.

TURNER

You think it was okay for her to stick him?

FLETCHER

If it's half so bad as I imagine, I wouldn't have gotten between them, yeah. I wouldn't have stopped her arm.

TURNER

But they're engaged. That makes a difference, doesn't it?

FLETCHER

Well. I don't know. If they were married it'd be a different thing. I don't know about engaged.

TURNER

You see those stories in the Tribune. Bet you a dollar he didn't even hardly do anything and she saw fit to put him in the ground. Drunk or hysterical.

FLETCHER

Bet you a dollar he did worse than they'd dare to print in the Tribune. You ask the lady when she comes. But it doesn't matter. Don't think too much about it. The Alderman. The money's the thing.

TURNER

You're right. You're right. The money's the thing.

FLETCHER

Not a dollar in this city that hasn't found its way through him. And most find their way back. We'll play it slow.

ROGER and BAULER appear.

BAULER

You'll do.

BAULER

(giving each of them money)
We'd prefer it if nobody got hurt.

(CONTINUED)

ROGER

Nobody else.

TURNER

Yes, we heard about that.

BAULER

Things got a little heated; we're only here to make sure everything's cool. The city, my family, my self, I like them all better peaceful, don't you? Now, Roger, lie down and pretend to be dead.

ROGER

Pretend to be dead?

BAULER

Yes. Pretend to be dead. I hate repeating myself. She killed you. Lie down where you fell, and you can be alive again later.

ROGER

Hell.

*He lies down.**EDWARD appears.*

EDWARD

You in charge?

BAULER

Yes.

EDWARD

Cops?

BAULER

No.

EDWARD

Reporters?

BAULER

Not me, just these two.

EDWARD

Right. "Reporters," I hear you. You must be the alderman.

Handshake.

BAULER

Herman Bauler. It's a relief we're all so level-headed. This might go more smoothly than I thought.

(CONTINUED)

EDWARD

What might?

BAULER

I'm here to speak with Maria. Don't fuck me around,
now. I don't like repeating myself.

EDWARD

The two of you have that in common.

MARIA appears.

BAULER

Miss Middleton.

*TURNER and FLETCHER doff their caps in unison.
BAULER extends a hand. She's still.*

BAULER

(cont.)

O, please. A man is dead. There's been rudeness enough.

*She lets him take her hand. He raises it to his
lips. She pulls it back sharply.*

MARIA

That's close enough.

BAULER

I understand. You're serious about your personal space.

TURNER and FLETCHER put their caps back on.

MARIA

What's with the goons? You need that kind of muscle to
come collect fifty dollars, Bauler?

FLETCHER

We're reporters.

EDWARD

Right. Fifty dollars is the hatpin fine, is it? Plus
something for your troubles, Alderman.

TURNER

Our, I should think.

EDWARD

Naturally. Yes. Everyone's.

BAULER

That's fair. That's something. That's a start.

(CONTINUED)

MARIA

Ask for more and I should hate to see what you get.

BAULER

We're speaking civilly, aren't we? Hell. You might have done it any other night. Almost unbelievable how fragile he was. It was such a little wound.

MARIA

His offense was not so little.

BAULER

O?

MARIA

You're from the paper. You'd like to hear, wouldn't you?

TURNER

I'd like to know. Settle a bet.

BAULER

O, enough. Let's not speak of it. It can't be so bad. A man in 1910 can't look in the direction of a lady without meeting some violent development.

MARIA

It may have been a little wound but it was not enough. The fury burns. I'll prove it, I will.

She has her haptin. She makes to attack ROGER's body. EDWARD holds her back. TURNER gives FLETCHER a dollar.

BAULER

I guess there's your answer.

MARIA

Sit him upright. I'll eat his eyes from the sockets.

BAULER

Enough! He had drunk some wine and so had you. You had a jest; you were having fun; nobody did anything wrong. An accident blossomed. It's simply one of those pointless calamities that happens sometimes in the city. You could see it our way, couldn't you?

EDWARD

I think we could, if it meant no trouble after. Maria?

BAULER

And if anyone asked you could tell it our way, couldn't you?

(CONTINUED)

EDWARD

Couldn't you?

MARIA

I think they'd like to hear another story; that Roger Bauler was a drunk, and a masher, and worse. Henceforth I don't believe in accidents.

FLETCHER

See, Turner? I wouldn't have gott between them.

BAULER

We have to do it this way?

MARIA

I can think of one other, but there's been rudeness enough.

EDWARD

Easy.

BAULER

Fine. Explain it my way for the papers. I'll see your old man set up with a little official capacity. A little city paycheck, a little public pension, something he'd hardly even have to work for.

TURNER

We didn't hear an offer like that.

MARIA

Because he doesn't have such a thing to offer. But he will. He thinks he will. This man's going to run for mayor. See how he sweats? He's campaigning already.

BAULER

It's a fair offer. If not, he can take his chances begging at the church doorstep with the other cripples.

He signals to FLETCHER, who kneecaps EDWARD rather brutally.

MARIA

You scum. You fucking scum!

TURNER holds her back.

BAULER

I wanted this to go differently.

MARIA

You don't know what this will cost you.

(CONTINUED)

BAULER
Me?

MARIA
I'm going to the papers. I'm going to the police.

EDWARD
Won't be good for nothing.

BAULER
That's right. I wanted to put this quickly behind us and proceed in peace. If you want to make a game of it you'll have one, but I won't play fair, and it'll finish quickly.

EDWARD
Maybe give us some time to think it over.

MARIA
Is it money? Say a number, we'll get it. We don't have much but we'll get it.

BAULER
Don't joke with me. It's not the time for jokes. I don't like jokes.

MARIA
Support, then? I can talk to my people. I can rally them behind you.

BAULER
Why would I need them? You might have used your head before you killed a good man. A decent man. An okay man.

One of you take him inside and clean him up. The other guard the door.

TURNER takes EDWARD off. FLETCHER follows.

BAULER
I want you out of the city tonight.

MARIA
I'm not afraid of you.

BAULER
No, but your father should be. Get you gone. Don't come back.

MARIA
No promises. Chicago has gravity. I could fall.

(CONTINUED)

*She turns and runs.
ROGER sits up.*

BAULER

Good. I was afraid you might have died.

ROGER

You see what I mean. She could make the sun blink first.

BAULER

You can stop the flattery. She's clearly not having you back, dead or not.

ROGER

Now I wish I were, and yet I'm not.

BAULER

You should be pleased. We've got work to do. I'm going to let you help me. Come.

*BAULER uses his walking stick to help up ROGER.
They go.*

The Russian Giantess

TURNER and FLETCHER.

TURNER

I don't know if I can. Can't you?

FLETCHER

I got hit in the eye with a tennis ball when I was seven years old. Ever since, I've been totally unable to cry.

TURNER

Can't you cry out of the other side?

FLETCHER

I got hit with another tennis ball when I was eight. The first accident wasn't good for my game, the second all the worse, and now I can neither play tennis nor cry. Come on--you can do it. Think about your parents.

TURNER

Yes, I'll try that.

*TURNER tries to cry, but it's highly artificial
and unconvincing.*

(CONTINUED)

TURNER

(cont.)

You see? I can't do it.

FLETCHER

It's crucial. You can because you have to.

TURNER

Perhaps if you say something cruel to me.

FLETCHER

You're awfully sensitive. I wouldn't want to damage our friendship.

TURNER

I'm positive I can take it. It's crucial, as you say. Be cruel, more cruel than I can expect, or it won't work.

FLETCHER

Okay. You, Miss Turner, are a garbage sack of raisin cunts.

TURNER

It has to make sense!

FLETCHER

When you wear a corset you look like a pastry bag squeezed from the middle.

TURNER

And it can't be about how I look.

FLETCHER

Are you sensitive about that? Hm?

TURNER

I said pick something else!

FLETCHER

Alright. Try this: you, dear Turner, are wasting your life in the company of dickshits and cunt-puppets because you think you deserve no better company. Your family so convinced you of your own worthlessness that you now broadcast that message and to the world. It is your only competence. You are a useless accomplice, and a bad friend, and you'd be my fall guy in this scheme if I didn't suspect you were too stupid even to fall straight.

TURNER gapes for a moment and then bursts into tears.

(CONTINUED)

FLETCHER

(cont.)

That'll do. Here he comes.

ALDERMAN BAULER strolls in, futzing with his necktie.

BAULER

Do you know how to tie one of these? Harriet usually does it for me but she went out early, and the portrait-painter is already here.

FLETCHER

O, sir, I'm afraid this isn't the time for anything like that.

BAULER

Hell, what's the matter?

TURNER blubbers unintelligibly.

BAULER

I can't understand a word.

FLETCHER

I've some experience with this. I'll interpret.

TURNER

(unintelligible blubbering)

FLETCHER

Turner has crucial news.

BAULER

Indeed.

FLETCHER

(translating)

Not just to your campaign efforts, but to your personal safety.

BAULER

Indeed?

FLETCHER

(translating)

Last night she was out at a meeting of the Temperance Society, there to spread campaign literature and ask about for volunteers--and she discovered a plot on your life!

(CONTINUED)

BAULER

Heavens! By the temperance ladies?

FLETCHER

(translating)

And there's one in particular: a Russian. An anarchist! A giantess, six feet and eight inches tall, with arms big 'round as redwood trunks and so long that she can touch her toes without bending over. Her hands are so strong and large that she can crush a pumpkin as you would an egg.

BAULER

Did you see her demonstrate?

TURNER nods vigorously.

FLETCHER

And this Russian giantess threatened to do that very thing--to your head!

BAULER

Heavens!

FLETCHER begins to tie BAULER's necktie. TURNER weeps and blubbers and goes to pieces, exhausted, and FLETCHER explains as she ties BAULER's necktie.

FLETCHER

She has friends. Plotters! A conspiracy that crosses Chicago's neighborhoods like weeds sprouting on every side of a garden. Turner is in total despair. I have a touch more psychological fortitude, but I admit I'm frightened too. Because the Russian giantess with the anvil hands is coming to crush your head like a egg.

FLETCHER cinches up BAULER's tie, much too tightly. He yelps.

BAULER

Well, hold now. Let's all have a breath and walk it back. Walk it back. Despair is not a game plan.

They have a shared breath. TURNER takes in an enormous, shuddering, end-of-a-crying-spell heave.

BAULER

(cont.)

Alright. Both of you: get close to the Russian giantess. Get close and keep close. Begin building our case against them, so we might lock up the lot from the mayor's office. Report back with every development.

(CONTINUED)

FLETCHER

We could start tonight. I heard some of them say they were going to the theatre.

TURNER

And supper after.

BAULER

Good, yes. I like this: we've got our spirits up. Forward action banishes despair.

He gives them each a big wad of money.

BAULER

(cont.)

Now: how do we look?

TURNER

Wonderful.

FLETCHER

Executive.

TURNER

Positively presidential.

BAULER

O, I am fortunate to have such friends. Don't take notes, don't use your real names, and say whatever you need to say about me. I know I tend to be sensitive, but the impulse to stay alive sometimes outweighs my need to be kindly spoken of. And! Try to make that money last, understand?

TURNER

Understood.

BAULER

Where's my cane?

TURNER has it. She gives it to him.

BAULER

Tops.

He goes out.

TURNER

My part in that was by far the harder. You ought to give me another five dollars.

(CONTINUED)

FLETCHER

Not at all! Imagine how it hurts me to say such things to you! Don't forget, Turner, that all cruelty hurts the perpetrator, all violence harms the doer. And how!

TURNER

I don't think you ever played tennis.

FLETCHER

I certainly did! I played tennis every day between the ages of four and nine. O, I loved tennis, and mourn daily that my playing career was ended by my injuries. Why?

TURNER

Yes. It's a mystery that innocent people like yourself have to suffer so.

FLETCHER

I know it. But there's no suffering too great for a little cash to soothe.

TURNER

And what shall we do with the money?

FLETCHER

We can't attend Bauler's debut in these.

Shopping montage & fashion show.

I've Sold My Last Stapler,

Motherfucker

MARIA in the bar alone. TURNER working.

MARIA

As you would for a man.

TURNER

A normal man, or a man like you?

MARIA

Whatever.

*TURNER pours a drink. MARIA gestures for more.
TURNER obliges.*

TURNER

You look like trouble. Let's not have trouble.

(CONTINUED)

MARIA

I'm not. We won't.

TURNER

Promise?

MARIA

Promise.

TURNER

Then what's Tegan Rowley looking at you for?

MARIA

Who?

TURNER

Tegan Rowley.

MARIA

Sorry.

TURNER

You really don't know?

MARIA

Sounds like I ought to.

TURNER

She knows you and you don't her, too late already.
Tegan Rowley won't give you three guesses. With her
it's hammer, cap, powder, ball, all at once, you better
be sure you're on the right end of that gun.

MARIA

I think I know which is the right end, sir.

TURNER

Ah! You don't. Between Rowley and a weapon there isn't
one. Likely you're already dead, just haven't had the
good sense to close your eyes.

MARIA

Well, a look never killed, so let her.

TURNER

She's the one detonated the shipyard after the strike
broke. Management cleaned out. Half arrested, half
killed. Two nights later, four explosions consumed the
dock, the office, and the two barges present. Three
Pinkerton men were tailing her that night. None was
ever found. No bodies. Not a fingernail. Nothing.

(CONTINUED)

MARIA

And everyone knows she did it?

TURNER

The police had her place surrounded within the hour. But she opened the door. The captain and his lieutenant went in. She kept the curtains open the whole time they were in there, eight minutes. They sat, they talked, they drank tea; they stood, they shook hands. And the two officers stepped outside, and Tegan Rowley closed the door and drew the curtains and never made trouble again.

MARIA

You were there to see it?

TURNER

And there when the captain called off his men. These days? Maybe one day in a hundred she comes outside. She comes here, the post office; then back home, for months at a time, behind shut doors and drawn curtains.

MARIA

Waiting?

TURNER

Maybe.

MARIA

What did she say to the captain?

TURNER

Now, nobody knows the full story. But I think--

There she is, right behind MARIA.

ROWLEY

Thank you, Turner.

TURNER

I'll leave you to it.

TURNER retreats.

ROWLEY

He give you much trouble?

MARIA

Not too much.

ROWLEY

He sees a woman alone, it seems to be an invitation. You sit there and he thinks you've been waiting all this time for him to talk to you.

(CONTINUED)

MARIA

He means well.

ROWLEY

Most people do.

MARIA

Not in my experience.

ROWLEY

Well, I suppose that's true too. But sometimes you like to sit in a place like this and not be bothered by strangers, don't you agree?

MARIA

I do, madam.

ROWLEY

This is just the right type of place for that. Even violent conflict takes place at a reasonable volume.

MARIA

You know what would make Joliet even better?

ROWLEY

What's that?

MARIA

If it were Chicago.

ROWLEY

Joliet is the grave that Chicago stepped out of. Quiet as one.

MARIA

And a good place to sit unmolested by strangers.

ROWLEY

You and I are no strangers. I'm sure Mr. Turner told you all about me already; and I read the papers. The Chicago papers. You photograph better, Maria Middleton.

MARIA

You mistake me for somebody else.

ROWLEY

No mistake.

MARIA

I'd have liked to get away from politics a while.

(CONTINUED)

ROWLEY

Get away from politics?

MARIA

Yes.

ROWLEY

What did you imagine I would say? 'O, what are you crying for? At your age, you're far too young to be cynical!' Is that what you expected?

MARIA

Yes.

ROWLEY

Have you heard that line before?

MARIA

From my father.

ROWLEY

He must have been saying it all your life. A baby weeps the instant it finds it has to breathe.

MARIA

Are they too young to have grievances, or to grow weary of them?

ROWLEY

Of course not. What do they grasp in that first instant of contact with the world? Everything is cruel, everything is monstrous They cry to shame us. But look at us: we've mostly stopped by now. Why? Are we so suited to the world that used to horrify us? Then the fault is with us. The fault is with us. Are you tired of howling and waving your fists? So am I.

MARIA

If you're about to sell me something--

ROWLEY

We can talk here. Turner's a friend.

MARIA

I was right to worry.

ROWLEY

You caused a remarkable stir back home, but you kept busy even before that. Politics was your sport, your liquor, your food and more.

(CONTINUED)

MARIA

It was.

ROWLEY

For what?

MARIA

A woman can do anything a man can.

ROWLEY

Yes?

MARIA

Work a job. Cast a ballot.

ROWLEY

Swing a blade, too?

MARIA

So can he, so can I, I wanted that world, I thought.

ROWLEY

You thought? Do you not think that now?

MARIA

I guess. Yes, I do.

ROWLEY

Lord. Is that all? "A woman can do anything a man can."
I had hoped you might have some original idea about
your world or your city or your life. But no, if you
want to speak in pamphlet platitudes, we've got nothing
more to say. Have another drink. Maybe write a book.
Unbelievable.

MARIA

I'm sorry if I've let you down, but I don't know what
you want--or even who you are.

ROWLEY

My name is Tegan Rowley.

MARIA

So?

ROWLEY

And I read the papers, as I've said.

MARIA

Yes?

(CONTINUED)

ROWLEY

And I read your story and I believe there's a page missing. What are you doing in Joliet?

MARIA

I told you: it's quiet. No politics.

ROWLEY

Did you venture this way, or did they send you?

MARIA

They sent me. I'm learning to like it anyhow.

ROWLEY

But it isn't home.

MARIA

It'll have to do. I can't go back.

ROWLEY

You're right about that. Bauler's going to win mayor in the fall. If you go back to the city he'll crucify you.

MARIA

And my father, too.

ROWLEY

Your father. So that's it.

MARIA

There are two cops at our door twenty-four hours a day. For my father's protection, they say, after a mugger cornered him in the alley and broke his leg. If I were to go back--

ROWLEY

He might find himself mugged again. Maybe worse. I hear you. Bauler plays a mean game. He is like a wave upon Lake Michigan, bringing himself down upon the shore believing he can swallow all the city. He crests and fails and retreats into the distance, but he always starts again. This time he's taller than ever. Taller and better-funded.

MARIA

I just have to wait until November. If Bauler wins, they'll let my father go. We'll set up in Joliet. Joliet, or wherever. Whatever grave.

ROWLEY

That's a long time to sit and drink. Do you have that kind of money?

(CONTINUED)

MARIA

No.

ROWLEY

Turner, you give charity in this establishment?

TURNER

You want charity, you can line up at the church door with the cripples and the orphans.

ROWLEY

Well, you're neither of those things, but you've seen how quickly circumstances change. Our lives are short, our wings are weak. We are tossed from day to day like butterflies in a gale, sometimes tossed all the way back to Chicago.

He filed the papers yesterday. Next week Herman Bauler will announce his campaign for mayor of Chicago. He'll do it in his home in River North, with a host of minor characters. He'll project a dollar figure onto the rear wall of the ballroom--yes, he has the audacity to ask for money in his house which has a ballroom--and say that such-and-such is the price of a safe and civil Chicago. With one hand he'll point to the number; with the other he'll summon up the ghost of his dead cousin Roger.

MARIA

He'll need both hands for that.

ROWLEY

However he does it, they expect to raise it all in one night: money, ghost, and all. After that, what can obstacle his victory? A qualified challenger? Please. You've lived in Chicago all your life. What happens to qualified challengers? What becomes of the principled candidates?

MARIA

I don't know, what?

ROWLEY

It's not a joke. Nobody knows. They lose, they vanish. They return to normal, happy lives, doing... well, I don't know.

MARIA

Selling staplers.

ROWLEY

Exactly. Selling staplers.

(CONTINUED)

MARIA

It's what I've done since I was fifteen.

ROWLEY

You sound as if that were decades ago.

MARIA

Centuries. Or lifetimes.

ROWLEY

Have you had more than one?

MARIA

Seems I'm on my second.

ROWLEY

Many don't even get one.

MARIA

And what about you?

ROWLEY

I can draw one single unbroken line from my earliest memory right to this day, this place, this seat beside you. Like Ariadne's thread it emerges from the place beyond the labyrinth, to lead me out after I have slain the Minotaur. But I can't do it alone, Maria: he has the head of a bull. That's why they love him in that reprehensible city. But without a Minotaur, a labyrinth is not such a bad place to live.

MARIA

If we can speak here, speak plainly.

ROWLEY

He could be retired.

MARIA

Retired?

ROWLEY

With our encouragement, retired.

MARIA

That's more your style. Violence makes me anxious. No thanks.

She rises to leave.

MARIA

If I see you around... well, I probably won't.

ROWLEY

Do you expect him to keep his word?

MARIA

Excuse me?

ROWLEY

You think he'll ever let your father free? You were a fright and a storm, Maria, but look how quiet you've gotten now. You think Bauler would give that leverage up?

MARIA

What, then?

ROWLEY

The best time to stop him has already passed. The next best time must be now. Today his regime is still a maybe, and his victims are all hypothetical. I intend it to go no further.

MARIA

What will I do?

ROWLEY

What won't you do?

The Etymology of the Word "Fair"

ROGER, TURNER, FLETCHER, HARRIET.

ROGER is holding a floral centerpiece which the others contemplate.

FLETCHER

They're nice, but are they centerpiece nice?

ROGER

The thing here is tasteful excess. A wealth that's luxurious and a little condescending. But only a little.

TURNER

It's... consummate.

FLETCHER

I quite agree. It's the most consummate of the lot so far.

HARRIET

It's shit!

(CONTINUED)

ROGER

Well, let me call your attention to the way that the orchid draws the eye along this contour and toward--

HARRIET

I've pronounced. We're through with this one. Fetch another.

ROGER

Ah, but you haven't seen it from the rear angle--

HARRIET

The chairs are arranged in circles. Every angle is the front. Anybody who can put up two hundred dollars for a plate and a chair deserves as good as anybody else. This is America, you understand?

TURNER

That's quite a good point.

ROGER primps the centerpiece.

HARRIET

Stop fussing with it. Fetch another.

ROGER

I'll keep it near in case you change your mind.

He exits with it. BAULER enters, polishing the head of his cane with his handkerchief.

BAULER

Has it gotten too dingy? I do love this cane, but O, I've had it so awfully long. Since I was a junior clerk. Perhaps a new one would better bespeak the mayoral office.

HARRIET

If that's so, get a new one when the race is won. The new Pope receives his golden scepter from the Church--he doesn't commission it before the conclave meets.

BAULER

Well, communiques from power always obscure 'first' and 'next', and 'because' and 'therefore.' Who knows; perhaps they chose this or that Pope because he already has the best golden scepter, purchased from the goldsmith who has the conclave's ear...

He takes another long look at the cane, at his reflection in the pommel.

(CONTINUED)

BAULER

(cont.)

Eh, fuck it.

How's this happy horseshit?

HARRIET

I'd like to have some floral centerpieces picked before November.

FLETCHER

I'm having fun.

TURNER

They're all beginning to look the same to me, like criminals in a lineup. Fuck it, we'll take 'em all and hang 'em.

HARRIET

Roger!

BAULER

He's doing his best. Better do his damage on this project than somewhere it might last. Roger!

ROGER enters with another floral centerpiece.

HARRIET

Come, let's get a better look at this one.

ROGER gives it to TURNER, then gets down on all fours. TURNER sets it on his back. They scrutinize the centerpiece. It looks rather like the last one.

TURNER

I say it looks the same as the last one.

All protest at once.

ALL

What!

The same?

It's nothing like the last one!

See how these ribbons are affixed crossways--*Etc.*

HARRIET

Hush!

BAULER

I like it. Turn round, so I can see it on all sides.

(CONTINUED)

ROGER slowly rotates.

HARRIET

Now you must understand. You understand?

ROGER

It's America, yes, I understand.

BAULER

Harriet, will this one do?

HARRIET

It bespeaks a host who wipes the blood from his
knuckles with a monogrammed silk handkerchief;
who shakes hands with his right and stops throats with
his left;
who stares down the barrel of the gun in his face and
affrights the weapon to blink.

ROGER

And that, Herman, is precisely why I saved this one for
last. She knows. These two--

BAULER

Roger, lay off.

This is the one. Put in an order for three dozen.

HARRIET

Four dozen.

ROGER

Right away.

ROGER begins to remove the load from his back.

BAULER

No. As you are. Fletcher, help him.

HARRIET

Fletcher, don't help him.

*ROGER crawls away with the centerpiece on his
back. TURNER and FLETCHER follow.*

HARRIET

(cont.)

Don't get rid of the cane. Win or lose, don't get rid
of it.

BAULER

It would be for you as much as me: a little sparkle, a
little pizazz. I should look like a man you're proud to
stand beside.

(CONTINUED)

HARRIET

I'd be proud of a man who knows what holds him up; what he leaned on; what stops him falling.

BAULER

It's not as if I'd just be rid of it. It means too much.

HARRIET

What if, for the public and the papers, you need something more fitting? Is there anything you think can't be traded for something else? I'm no walking-stick. I don't need to be held up to stand tall.

BAULER

Hell. Harriet, that won't happen.

HARRIET

How do you know that?

BAULER

You're not just a walking-stick. You're my spine, my right hand, half my soul.

HARRIET

Pretty words. You haven't had to live them out yet.

BAULER

No matter what anyone thinks, no matter what anyone says--

HARRIET

That's not all. That's not all we have to fear. There are darker threats, more savage motivations, snarling people who don't share your... progressive vision.

BAULER

Then I'm your fortress. Let them snarl, let them come.

HARRIET

You have no idea what you're doing.

BAULER

Yet it'll go my way; things always do. I need you. Stay.

HARRIET

In Chicago a friend is like anything else you leave behind. Come back looking when you need it most, it's long gone already.

(CONTINUED)

BAULER

I hear it; I know it. I won't have to be warned twice.

HARRIET

Good. You won't be.

SmartsThings That Count for More than

*ROWLEY's home.
It's bleak.*

*MARIA is writing. ROWLEY is sharpening a hatpin
with a whetstone. MARIA stops.*

MARIA

I can't write another word.

ROWLEY

Is your hand cramping?

MARIA

My hand is fine.

ROWLEY

Your eyes straining?

MARIA

My eyes are fine.

ROWLEY

Sounds as if you're okay, then. Keep to it.

MARIA

I can't. It's my head, my brain, my mind. Worn down.
Needs a rest.

ROWLEY

Bound to tire out. This isn't a stapler factory.

MARIA

I haven't felt so worn out since. Ever.

ROWLEY

The university studies confirm it. The brain is a
muscle: made strong by use, and weak without.

MARIA

I'm not stupid.

ROWLEY

Be that as it may, there are plenty of things that
count for more than smarts.

(CONTINUED)

MARIA

If it's effort you're speaking of, I've done plenty of organizing in Chicago.

ROWLEY

Have you?
Stapling pamphlets for a mailing list?
Wearing a sandwich board in Grant Park?

MARIA

If I did?

ROWLEY

Yes, the brain turns weak if it goes unused. You're likely to tire when the real work starts again.

MARIA

If you continue to insult me I shall have to leave you to pursue your campaign alone.

ROWLEY

If you continue to complain, I might be happy to see you go.

MARIA

You won't be able to pull this together without my help. I could stand and walk away this instant.

ROWLEY

Then what? You're still an exile. What shall you do, ask the postman to draw a line down the center of Joliet, and we'll each agree to stay on our own respective sides?
And you'll do what: wait it out in Turner's bar, picking through Chicago newspapers waiting for your father's obituary?
Please.
In this town, Maria Middleton, a woman like you would tear every hair off her head just to have something to do.

MARIA

I'll go to the authorities.
What's here is half a dozen crimes already.

ROWLEY

Joliet police and I have a long-settled understanding, and this place would be clean by the time you got word to Chicago.
I suggest this.
Chin up. Heart strong. Maybe don't take everything I say so personally, or our friendship may not develop into the righteous coalition it might become.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ROWLEY (cont'd)

Take a break. I ought to remember your age. Have a cigarette.

ROWLEY's having one.

MARIA

I don't smoke.

ROWLEY

You don't smoke? What else don't you do? Piss from the place between your legs? Have a cigarette, it won't fuckin' kill you.

MARIA

It hurts my throat and chest, it makes the clothes stink, I simply find it vulgar. I don't see why on earth it's so popular.

ROWLEY

What do you do with your hands?

MARIA makes a show of folding her hands in her lap.

ROWLEY

And you just leave them there?

MARIA

(shifting her hands)

I might set them like this, or like this.

ROWLEY

Such posturing is for decorative women. Have one.

MARIA

No thank you.

ROWLEY

Alright, well, you have to do something with your hands.

MARIA

I'm perfectly fine like this.

ROWLEY

No, you aren't. You need to do something with your hands, for decorum's sake. Else you look like a child, arrived in a scene where she has no business being. Here. I'll show you a game I learned in Moscow. You put your hand out like this.

She lays her hand flat on the table with the fingers spread wide.

(CONTINUED)

ROWLEY

(cont.)

And you need something sharp.

She has her just-honed hatpin.

MARIA

They didn't really.

ROWLEY

Didn't what.

MARIA

That's a game children made up to scare each other with. It's never really played, but by bored children with butter knives.

ROWLEY

So certain.

She twirls the blade in her fingers. She takes a second to zone in, and begins briskly stabbing the desk between her fingers. It's good.

MARIA

And I don't see what it's supposed to prove.

ROWLEY stops at this interruption.

ROWLEY

I'll tell you what they would say in Moscow. "The bad blood comes out first." After the first wound, you're free.

ROWLEY closes her eyes and continues, faster and more wonderfully than before.

ROWLEY

(cont.)

You're only scared when you don't know how much it will hurt, and in what particular way. After you find out, you realize it's not so bad.

MARIA

It doesn't hurt?

ROWLEY

It hurts. O, of course it hurts. But you free yourself from the imagining. The world will hurt you. Make it work to do so. Don't do the hurting business for it.

(CONTINUED)

MARIA

Aren't we making it our business?

ROWLEY

Did you think you could come all this way, this journey and high desire, and remain yourself? Remain yourself, without even knowing who that is?

MARIA

You don't know.

ROWLEY

It's not my business to know. It's yours.

*She stops and presents the hatpin to MARIA.
MARIA spreads her fingers on the table.
She begins tentatively.*

MARIA

I can't with my eyes closed.

ROWLEY

At first nobody can. Always try before you're ready.

MARIA looks at ROWLEY. Then she closes her eyes.

She raises the hatpin, hesitates, and brings it down. You can hear the blade punching through the flesh. She picks up her hand and the blade comes with it.

ROWLEY presses her hand down on the table and pulls the pin out, then wraps a scarf or something around it. It soon turns red.

ROWLEY

Hold that tight and put your hand up high. Keep it higher than your heart.

MARIA

Yes? And? I'm not so sure I learned anything.

ROWLEY

You did.

MARIA

Now my hand hurts.

ROWLEY

From writing?

MARIA

Let me try it again. I must have willed myself to fail.
I could do it this time. Let me try again.

ROWLEY

Not yet; but you will, you will, you will.

nothing but cake

TURNER & FLETCHER.

They pick through shopping bags in despair.

TURNER

I can see you sweating from here.

FLETCHER

It runs in the family. We all sweat like beef in
August. It's why there are so many divorces in my
family.

TURNER

I thought you were Catholic.

FLETCHER

We were.

*They pick through the packages, almost in
despair.*

TURNER

Can one have too many pretty things?

FLETCHER

No, of course not.

TURNER

I'm beginning to feel as if I've been eating nothing
but cake for some weeks.

FLETCHER

I feel that as well. Let's make an agreement to brush
more carefully.

TURNER

No, I mean to say--

*TURNER examines her teeth with her tongue and
finds them almost painfully sugar-coated.*

TURNER

Perhaps. But mark me: I don't want to take any more of
the Alderman's money. It's exhausting. Look how my
hands are callused from the shopping bags. Is this how

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

TURNER (cont'd)

Herakles felt, waiting for Atlas to return and take back the burden of the world?

FLETCHER

Don't you bone our good time now, Turner. Don't you bone this for me.

TURNER

Today the alderman gave me fifty dollars and I had nowhere to put it. I had jewelry and money in every possible storing-place already, Fletcher, you understand? Every possible one, crammed so full I simply couldn't fit another bill.

FLETCHER

You're disgusting.

TURNER

I had to put the money in my mouth.

FLETCHER

What does money taste like?

TURNER

Not good.

FLETCHER gets out a wrinkled bill.

FLETCHER

I bet that the alderman's money is particularly noxious. I'd like to compare the flavors and mouth-feels of money he has and hasn't touched.

TURNER

How? You won't find a bill in Chicago that hasn't passed through his turgid grasp at least once.

FLETCHER puts the bill in her mouth and screws up her face at the foul taste of it.

TURNER

(cont.)

You see? It's horrid.

FLETCHER nods.

TURNER

(cont.)

This can't go on.

FLETCHER thinks.

(CONTINUED)

TURNER

(cont.)

I'm coming clean.

*TURNER goes for the door to BAULER's office.
FLETCHER blocks. They go back and forth like
wrestlers.*

*HARRIET enters singing. She sees them and abruptly
stops enjoying herself.*

HARRIET

Oh, it's you two.

TURNER

Hello, Harriet!

HARRIET

Hello, cock-holsters.

TURNER

Hello!

FLETCHER waves. HARRIET hates this moment.

HARRIET

Well? Is that all?

TURNER

That's all.

HARRIET

Grand. Goodbye.

TURNER

Goodbye!

HARRIET turns to go.

HARRIET

Oh, there was one thing, slap-dicks. Do you have the
necessary evidence? The Russian giantess, the
temperance society? Herman's been asking.

TURNER

No.

FLETCHER shakes her head.

TURNER

We do not.

(CONTINUED)

HARRIET

I should have known not to leave it up to you.

TURNER

Hey, it's a tricky business.

HARRIET

And not cheap, either.

TURNER

Do I know it. We're lucky they're teetotalers, or can you imagine the bar tabs?

HARRIET

I couldn't imagine this business would take so long, and so many steps.

TURNER

Promise you we're getting close. We just need a little time.

HARRIET

Do we have time to spare? Or are the many bullets in flight already, marked with the Alderman's name? Even if you had the time, would you know what to do with it? Could you manage to deliver your suspects? Hell. Useless, the both of you, useless.

TURNER

We aren't useless. You said so.

HARRIET

Did I?

TURNER

If I can prove it.

HARRIET

Be very clear with what you mean to prove.

TURNER

Only that Fletcher and I are not useless, and that you yourself have already said so. If I do it, two more days.

HARRIET

Two more days? But we thought all the necessary dirt was dug. You were so close to the root.

TURNER

These things are delicate. We need a little more time. Observe my logic.

(CONTINUED)

HARRIET

With pleasure. Proceed.

TURNER

What did you call us when you first came in?

HARRIET

Idiots.

TURNER

And every wrong guess is another day.

HARRIET

Come off it.

TURNER

Not "idiots." Something else.

HARRIET

Was it "slap-dicks"?

TURNER

No.

HARRIET

Or "fuck-mugs"?

FLETCHER and TURNER shake their heads.

TURNER

Cock-holsters.

HARRIET

So it was.

TURNER

A holster. A sturdy, dependable place to put something.
Like a flashlight, or a handgun. Or, in this case,
cock. Thus: not useless.

FLETCHER

Well done!

(FLETCHER has swallowed the money.)

TURNER

Cover for us.

HARRIET

He's going to ask.

(CONTINUED)

TURNER

Make it work.

HARRIET

It's borrowed time. Interest is accumulating. Better prepare to pay it back, somehow.

FLETCHER

We'll be prepared. You'll be satisfied. We all will.

HARRIET

Good. We're restless to meet the Russian giantess and her many marauders, and privateers, and so on.

FLETCHER

So are we.

TURNER

Again, she means. Meet her again, at the tavern, later.

FLETCHER

That's where we're going now.

HARRIET

Good. That's what I thought. Good.

TURNER

Goodbye, now.

TURNER and FLETCHER leave.

HARRIET

Farewell, you... shitbuckets.

BAULER appears suddenly.

BAULER

Still nothing?

HARRIET

They're off to unravel sundry and lethal plots against you.

BAULER

Still more? What do they say they'll find?

HARRIET

They couldn't find their own assholes with two mirrors and a selfie stick.

BAULER

Beg pardon?

(CONTINUED)

HARRIET

The two of them are slippery schemers. They've just about got one over on you, Herman.

BAULER

There's no plot?

HARRIET

There's no plot.

BAULER

And in all those dingy backrooms and basements? All those nights they were going out making connections and compiling evidence?

HARRIET

They've robbed you.

BAULER

Wasted my money and my time.

HARRIET

Each more valuable than the other. But we've caught them in the lie. Steady the hunt. Circle and close. Punish and demand your satisfaction. Soon.

BAULER

The quality of henchmen is not tied to the prestige of the office.

HARRIET

No.

BAULER

It's fuck-mugs and cock-holsters all the way up. Perhaps it's something in our water. Or our blood. Or our history books.

HARRIET

Or all three. One finds a faithful ally, one does what is necessary to keep them.

BAULER

One does.

HARRIET

Especially here. There's no grudge like a Chicago grudge. And from coast to coast, no revenge like ours.

*They gaze fearlessly into the future.
Lights.
End of act one.*

ACT IIjaws unseen and infinitely wide

MARIA and ROWLEY are preparing for the event in silence.

ROWLEY stows a hatpin at her waist.

MARIA

Assume they'll pat us down.

ROWLEY

Is he really such a boor as that?

Ah, no, of course he is. Chivalry and honor, when they cease to function, shall cease to be.

She puts the hatpin somewhere else, somewhere more deftly concealed.

MARIA

Don't you get tired of that? Speaking that way?

Professing your superior outlook to all present, at all times?

ROWLEY

You forget I've hardly spoken to a soul in twelve years, bricked up inside my little house with only my plants and my books. Have some sympathy for a batty old maid.

MARIA

O, what a gambit. Sympathy? From the mouth of the one who laughs at charity and spits on weakness, sympathy.

ROWLEY

Feel or don't feel, change your attitude or don't, but know that the aloneness changes one.

MARIA

Worth it?

ROWLEY

(suddenly defensive)

Worth what?

MARIA

Your... whatever happened that night. With the police captain. The drawn curtains and tea. The Pinkerton man.

ROWLEY

Worth it or not, the sum is the sum. Everything is cost and benefit, risk and reward, profit and expense. Calculus. Reckoning.

(CONTINUED)

MARIA

Everything?

ROWLEY

If you say, "What about love," I'll stab you myself.

MARIA

So. Everything.

ROWLEY

Especially that. Of all things, especially that. You're not thinking of him, are you?

MARIA

No.

ROWLEY

Or missing him?

MARIA

Hell no.

ROWLEY

Good. Think this instead: pursue the alderman. Polite distance. Wait to catch him alone. Be patient. I'll be looking for your father.

MARIA

Why would he be there?

ROWLEY

Just a guess but I think of two reasons. First, the man loves to be seen, especially winning, especially by those he's bested; and second, he may want bargaining power. He may want a tender hostage close at hand, in case.

MARIA

In case of what?

ROWLEY gives her an are-you-kidding-me look.

MARIA

(cont.)

He knows we're coming?

ROWLEY

I can't say that, but he is paranoid. And savvy. A wicked combination, I would know.

MARIA

Paranoid. Is that what kept you locked up and alone so many years?

(CONTINUED)

ROWLEY

Who said that door locked from the inside?

Everything I touched turned to ash.

I didn't know he was tailing me that night. I knew they were around. When I walked across the park on my way to Turner's bar, there to hear the updates and talk reading lists with my comrades, I passed a bench which daily hosted one of those ramshackle Pinkerton men, always peering absurdly at me over the top of a newspaper. I was used to them and I let their presence keep me quiet for the moment. One day I crossed the park and the bench was empty. That was the day I proposed to burn the shipping yard.

When the right night came, I itched to do it. I tingled. I run out of suitable physical descriptors for the intensity of my anticipation. It was like waiting for a man to come home, a good man, a good, good man, and it was like already having him there.

My friend had told me the minimum safe distance from which to observe the detonation. I stood in the clear and watched. I had encountered nobody on my way in, nor anybody on my way back out; I figured she had exaggerated the number, by half, and stood in the clear at a hundred meters.

As fire chewed the building, and the timber crunched and snapped inside its mighty teeth, I went closer. I wanted it as close as I could bear. Then I saw him, trapped with a burning beam cross his middle. In one hand he gripped his metal badge, so tightly the edges cut his flesh and the blood ran.

MARIA

What did you do?

ROWLEY

I moved the beam. It wasn't easy. I took him by the wrists. The Pinkerton sheidl, so heated by the fire, burned its image into my arm. He wouldn't let go. I pulled him out of the crackling outskirts of the fire and dragged him back into its roaring center. He choked and pleaded with me as I did it. But he had no say. I don't think he could move his legs.

MARIA

Hell.

ROWLEY

I took him into the blaze as far as I could stand and left him there. I took his clutching hand and palced it upon his chest. If there are any just gods on the other

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ROWLEY (cont'd)

side of the scrim, they'll see it when he meets them, and send him to the appropriate torments. Why he wouldn't let it go, who can say. Only him. Now, nobody.

MARIA

But it had grown hot, and melted the flesh. There was no letting it go.

ROWLEY

If he had really wanted.
I mean really wanted.
I watched as long as I could, then headed home. There to stay. Twelve long years.

MARIA

Why did they let you? Why not prison? Why not the chair? Too uncivil to execute a woman?

ROWLEY

No. Like I said, civility ends at the boundary of pragmatism and domination. I promised two things. First, if they punished me, that Joliet would answer to my comrades. Myriad and hidden. Second, if I ever caused trouble again, to forfeit my life.

Most of us don't have the decency to die well. We hang around like alley dogs, whining when we're hungry until we're too sick even to make a sound.

MARIA

Then why this? Why Bauler, why tonight?

ROWLEY

I've waited too long already. Last chance to make a sound.

The Christian Business

*TURNER and BAULER preparing for the event.
TURNER is tying BAULER's necktie.*

BAULER

(undoing the knot)

Again. This is an everyday knot. I need something distinguished. Again!

TURNER

You're certain to win them over with your substantive proposals. Your fixation on appearances is redundant if not debilitating.

(CONTINUED)

BAULER

Not a peep. Not a whit. Not a fucking peep-whit out of you.

TURNER

I'm only joking. I'll tie a knot fit to hang an angel.

BAULER

That's the way.

Look. I'm glad I've got you alone. I wanted to commend you on all your investigations, and thank you personally.

TURNER

It wasn't just me, sir. Fletcher's done a great much of the work as well.

BAULER

No false modesty when it's just is two, friend. It's unnecessary, and unbecoming besides. You and I know the real deal.

TURNER

The real deal?

BAULER

Come now. You don't fool me, shitbucket. The real deal.

TURNER is much unsettled.

BAULER

I've had a read on this from the very beginning.

TURNER

Really, sir? All this time?

BAULER

Sure sure, all this time. All this time, sure sure.

TURNER

O, sir, I'm sure I don't follow.

BAULER

The hell you don't. I know it, you know it. You know I know it.

TURNER

Know... that...

BAULER

Know that you're the real brains of your Siamese duo! You're the star, kid. That Fletcher is second fiddle, if she's in the band at all. More likely it's

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BAULER (cont'd)

bucket-drums. Or spoons. Something percussive and utterly piteous. You run that show, and you've been doing it from the start. Don't let your modesty belie you. That's what I know. That's what you can't hide.

TURNER

O! O. O, I'm caught. Yes, my modesty does protect her, and oft outweigh my clearer judgment. She's had a tough time of it. I hate to imagine where she might be without my guidance and protection.

BAULER

Are you proud of yourself?

TURNER

How?

BAULER

For your kindness. For your charity.

TURNER

I'm only doing the Christian business.

BAULER

Have done. The Christian business. What did Jesus get for all his kindness? Arrested, tortured, nailed to a plank and left to die in the sun among common criminals. Who comes out ahead? The Romans do pretty well. They still have Rome, which is no Chicago, but it's nothing to wave your dick at. You know who else? Judas does okay.

TURNER

Fletcher and I have been friends practically since birth. The Judas treatment would be unthinkable.

BAULER

She'll become a liability. You I want for my team. A little city paycheck. A little public pension. Her? Forget about it.

TURNER

Dear me. Dear, dear me.

BAULER

You ever have an automobile?

TURNER

I open my wallet in my dreams and there's still not enough in there to consider it.

(CONTINUED)

BAULER

Personal driver to the mayor, how's it sound?

TURNER

Duck soup!

BAULER

But wouldn't Fletcher be terribly envious? You'd better sever your partnership sooner than later. Before a promotion even becomes an issue.

TURNER

What's in that for you?

BAULER

Her incompetence is sure to become a liability. Get rid of her.

TURNER

Well, I don't have the authority to hire and fire, for you, sir. Do I?

BAULER

Not "fire." I need you to be a bit more emphatic.

TURNER

Come again?

BAULER

O, spare me. I don't care how you do it, the wet-and-red details of the endeavor, but the fact is she knows too much and it's time to have done with her and there's a prize in it for you so get to it, the sort of nasty thing I hired you for.

TURNER

Christ!

BAULER

Him again?

TURNER

You must think me a real scoundrel.

BAULER

Are you not?

TURNER

Do I seem so greedy? So corruptible? Fletcher's been faithful to us both.

(CONTINUED)

BAULER

Faith, lacking competence, is worse than treachery.

TURNER

"Lacking competence?" Hell, what about your own cousin? There's a fellow of unusually limited competence. You seem happy to keep him near; you must know something of good faith and virtue and familial obligation. It's that same which keeps me and Fletcher united.

BAULER

O, Roger? Believe me, Roger shall get what he deserves. Blood does not make him innocent.

TURNER

What?

BAULER

I say I'll deal with Roger when the time comes. And if you want to keep what pretty things you've got, much less add to them, you'll do the same for Fletcher.

TURNER

When the time comes?

BAULER

I've weighed the question, and I say: tonight.

TURNER

So soon?

BAULER

Remember what's important, Turner, remember, what have I been saying these past two weeks?

TURNER

Feels as if it's only been a matter of hours.

BAULER

What have I been saying?

TURNER

The... important thing is...

BAULER

(leading)
Getting Herman Bauler elected.

TURNER

(following, cluelessly)
Getting Herman Bauler elected! O!

(CONTINUED)

BAULER

If tragedy and mystery should strike here, on this triumphant night, after all we've been through already, it should only prove that Chicago's criminal element is agitated at the prospect of my victory. And that it's all the more crucial for the fine, law-abiding people of Chicago, whoever they are, to pledge, to donate, to vote.

TURNER

That seems awful risky.

BAULER

How come?

TURNER

Simply that with so much bloodshed around one man, somebody will arrive at the simplest explanation: that he's the one shedding all the blood.

BAULER

If they figure that out, all the better. The criminal vote is probably better play than the upstanding-citizen one.

TURNER

True, we have high rates of participation. Last November Fletcher and I cast forty votes between us.

BAULER

That's the thinking that makes you a winning advisor.

TURNER

Thank you.

BAULER

And all the better reason for you to do it. Yes? City paycheck. Motorcar. Consider the alternatives, what I do to those who fail me.

TURNER

Okay.

BAULER

"Okay"?

TURNER

I won't spell it out any further. "Okay."

BAULER

Okay. Yes. Good.

(CONTINUED)

TURNER

I have just the thing.

TURNER has a walking-stick identical to BAULER's.

BAULER

Is that--how did--

TURNER

I thought it suited colleagues to collaborate on fashion. With this I'll break knees and stop throats, starting with--well, starting with my best and only friend's.

TURNER demonstrates, holding the walking-stick across her own throat and pretending to struggle. Then she puts it down and laughs.

BAULER

Yes, we'll talk about that later. You go on, and carry out. Go on.

TURNER

Tops.

*TURNER salutes and goes out.
HARRIET enters.*

BAULER

Where's Roger?

HARRIET

In the back, keeping Edward company.

BAULER

Bring them both.

HARRIET goes.

BAULER

O, hear me, you prism of my city; you glass-and-iron, you smokestack Rome, you Eden, you velvet Hell. You know how that story goes.

ROGER, EDWARD, and HARRIET enter.

ROGER

I've been wanting to ask you something, cousin.

BAULER

What.

(CONTINUED)

ROGER

I can tell when you're not really listening. Please, after so much I've done for you, at least give me a full minute now.

BAULER

Fine. What is it, cousin? More than cousin--brother--what is it?

ROGER

It concerns this ruse of my death and disguise. I'm worried. I'm sure to be recognized.

BAULER

Not tonight. Only my powerful friends are here tonight, and they'll have no idea who you are.

ROGER

If not to night, someday, sometime, they'll realize I was never dead, and that you trumped-up the murder charge to exile Maria.

BAULER

O, you Secretary of Worrying, what's your problem? We've done fine so far.

ROGER

You can hide and cower at home because you fear every crowded place that might conceal a gunman and every church and club and tavern which might happily furnish one. You may be pleased to lock yourself in your fortress, but you shall not imprison the rest of us. Especially me.

EDWARD

Especially him.

HARRIET

Indeed.

ROGER

I'm family. I'm blood. You don't need to cage me, my loyalty runs beneath the skin.

BAULER

So what is it you'd like?

ROGER

Come clean. Announce me living and absolve Maria.

BAULER

Back to this, are we?

(CONTINUED)

HARRIET

Good Lord, man.

EDWARD

Back to this or never left it off.

ROGER

It's good politics. The people need their heroes to be all things, as well as all their opposites. Be the avenger who forgives, and who could not but love you?

BAULER

I'm surprised at you, fellow. No doubt you're speaking out of self-interest--deeply, deeply misguided self-interest, at that--but you make a quality case.

ROGER

That's politics. It runs in families.

BAULER

So it does. I'll think it over, Roger, I promise you. For tonight, though, wear that whole ensemble.

ROGER

But you said there was no risk of being recognized tonight.

BAULER

There could be reporters. Photographers. You know how pesky those press types can be.

ROGER

Look, Herman, what other course do you have? Am I to live in disguise forever? False name, false beard, eye-patch and all, is that what you envision?

BAULER gives a shrug and a nod like, "Actually, yeah."

ROGER

Hell, hell, three times hell.

BAULER

O come now, I told you I'll think it over and I meant it. I will! You could do one thing for me though, buy a little favor on your way.

ROGER

Pray tell.

BAULER

Take charge of Edward for tonight. Keep watch.

(CONTINUED)

ROGER

Baby-sitting.

BAULER

I was going to have Harriet do it. That should indicate the seriousness of the endeavor.

ROGER

Indeed. Then I accept; and I'll do you proud.

BAULER

I know it. Go on, then, do so.

ROGER and EDWARD go out.

HARRIET

Really?

BAULER

Why not?

HARRIET

You're a man of impeccable judgment, usually. Have you been drinking?

BAULER

The caterers brought Grand Obituary. It's a twelve-year.

HARRIET

You think he can handle even that assignment?

BAULER

We'll have to give him the chance. He'll do us proud. I think.

HARRIET

You're seeming unusually magnanimous.

BAULER

I'm in an unusually good mood.

HARRIET

Something's afoot.

BAULER gives the same shrug, nod, kinda, yeah.

HARRIET

Well, you'll deal me in at the right time.

BAULER

Of course I will.

(CONTINUED)

HARRIET

I hope you're not becoming sentimental. Cousin or not,
Roger's as useful as a glass gun.

BAULER

I'm sentimental about only two things.

HARRIET

One is Chicago. The other... well, I have a guess.

BAULER

Wouldn't you rather enjoy the party than babysit
Edward?

HARRIET

You were only saying that to stop Roger bothering you.

BAULER

I hope it works.
Shall we?

They go out to join the party.

Civil Men with Dignity

ROGER and EDWARD, among the party.

ROGER

Do you vote? Or are you one of those
"I-don't-believe-it-matters" types?

EDWARD

I don't believe it matters. But you bet I'll be voting
come November.

ROGER

Ah! Well, Herman will be pleased to hear that.

EDWARD

I'm not voting for him. I'll vote for anybody who will
oppose him.

ROGER

He'll take that as some kind of compliment, anyway.

EDWARD

It could be Judas himself, raised by the Lord to add
further corruption and scandal to this second Rome. Not
that man, though. Not that Herman Bauler, ever.

ROGER

O, because of the leg?

(CONTINUED)

EDWARD

I'm glad my daughter didn't marry you.

ROGER

(trying to be sporting)

Ha ha, yeah.

So you're not going to try anything, right?

EDWARD

"Try anything"?

ROGER

Like, fighting-wise. Or escaping-wise. I know I'm not as physically capable as Bauler, or Turner, or Fletcher--

EDWARD

Or, Harriet, or Maria, or most children of ten--

ROGER

But! You heard me with him. I need this to go right for me, or there's no answer, no Roger, no going back to the proper way things used to be.

EDWARD

I understand you've got friends and weapons and I've got none. I may be an American, but even I'm not tempted to try that heroism tonight.

ROGER

Good. I'm glad I can count on you to play your role.

EDWARD

Like I said, I don't know what choice there is.

ROGER

If this goes off right, I'll be your advocate. And you'll get more than your passage; Maria can come back.

EDWARD

You think she would want to?

ROGER

Have you ever been to Joliet?

EDWARD

True.

ROGER

So she'll want to come back, won't she?

(CONTINUED)

EDWARD

For what? You? Me? Seems like this city's made its position clear. She'll have no trouble leaving it behind. If I get a letter now and then, that's plenty, and she'll be better elsewhere.

ROGER

I'm asking you to do one more thing.

EDWARD

Do tell.

ROGER

I'm going to arrange for this pardon. Find her. Write to her, call her, whatever. Bring her back to the city.

EDWARD

Let it go, man.

ROGER

No, it's not that anymore. I know I can't unring that bell, I can't unsmoke that cigarette, but I want to--I don't know--apologize?

EDWARD

Hell.

If you care about her, Roger, you'll never, ever do such a thing.

ROGER

Why?

EDWARD

First, it won't give back everything you took; it won't repair everything you broke; any word you say won't do anything but echo in the empty space between your ears and suggest to yourself that you're not the monster everyone says you are.

And second, she'd certainly kill you again if she could, and be more thorough, and be punished. So spare her all that trouble and keep your distance, understand?

ROGER

Stupid, incompetent, heartbroken Roger, crawling about, pining, making a fool of himself at all times and with all parties. I've had enough of it. There'll be no more, Edward.

EDWARD

"Sorry?"

(CONTINUED)

ROGER

Your word. Your word that you'll get her back here.

EDWARD

You think we're bound by word in this city? Look at who your friends are, Roger.

ROGER

You and I are different. You and I are civil men, with dignity and charity, and you'll do this for me.

EDWARD

Or what?

ROGER steps on EDWARD's injured leg.

ROGER

I should hate to know, "or what."

EDWARD

This is civility? This is dignity?

ROGER

Relatively, yes. Your word, or we'll explore alternative negotiations.

EDWARD

You've really been spending too much time with your cousin.

ROGER steps down harder.

EDWARD

(cont.)

Okay, okay. My word.

ROGER

To what?

EDWARD

To contact Maria and get her back to Chicago so you can try to atone, you have my word on it.

ROGER relents.

ROGER

I don't like act this way, okay? So try to behave, the rest of the night.

EDWARD

Believe me, I will.

(CONTINUED)

ROGER

And we're all going to get what we want.

EDWARD

I know it.

Demos

BAULER.

EDWARD and ROGER seated.

All others visible in the wings. ("All" meaning cast, crew, staff, etc.)

Audio of one person clapping.

BAULER

Thank you.

Clapping stops.

BAULER

(cont.)

Hello, Chicago, you prism of a city, you glass and iron Eden, you second Rome.

Thank you, to the people, but this has not been our city. We have been made strangers to it. After the death of my cousin I stayed in, for a long time. Fear, simply.

I was made a stranger to my home.

I feared a long walk at night.

I feared the lingering shapes of idle people, just beyond the streetlights; I imagined everyone a predator, and a dotted line marked around my throat to cut along.

No more.

I am coming home. I am returning to call my city home, and call my home your home. It would be a pleasure and an honor if you joined me: with a dollar, a vote, even a kind word. No gift too modest.

I am ready for you.

I thought that this office, this politics, this city were all about power. No. It isn't about power; it's about love. Here is my love; share in it. Declare your own. Bauler for Chicago and vice versa. Thank you.

Sound of clapping. Darkness.

Civil Men With Dignity (ii)

*ROGER and EDWARD.
ROGER is applauding.*

*ROGER glares at EDWARD, who then claps
begrudgingly.*

ROGER
I said I was sorry.

EDWARD
Pay attention. Like I said, it doesn't solve everything, and often it makes things worse. Doctors have caused one death by ineptly trying to thwart another.

Silence.

ROGER
Well, we can't just sit here in silence.

EDWARD
Can't we?

ROGER
If my presence offends, please, leave. No, I mean it, please. Go on.

*EDWARD seethes.
ROWLEY joins them.*

ROWLEY
Good speech.

ROGER
Have we met?

ROWLEY
No, but I'd like to. What's your name, dear?

ROGER
Roger. That's my cousin. He's my cousin. And this is--

ROWLEY
No matter. Roger. I'm Tegan.

ROGER
Tegan.

ROGER takes her hand and doesn't know what to do with it, so she raises it to his face and he finally catches on and kisses it.

(CONTINUED)

ROWLEY

You ask me, this party was set up all kinds of wrong. Whatever excitement these slap-dicks have to offer is at the bottom of all those liquor bottles, and I'm not interested in waiting around while they find it.

ROGER

You're awfully forward.

EDWARD

I think I'll go to the bathroom.

ROGER

Stay put, shitpants, you know why.

ROWLEY

Let him go. So you and I can talk.

ROGER

I really shouldn't. He's cracked in the head. We brought him as a sort of special occasion, but he could be a danger if he goes off alone.

ROWLEY

Well, why don't we all go somewhere? Maybe for a walk around the grounds. You and I can find a quiet place, a dark place, and leave him somewhere you can keep an eye on him. And him on us.

ROGER

That's pretty weird. How old are you?

ROWLEY

Old enough to know a few things.
I'm going to walk away now. I'm going to get one more drink, and then I'm going out the west door.

ROGER

Should I come?

ROWLEY

That's where I'm going, if you happen to be looking.

She goes.

EDWARD

Hell.

ROGER grabs him by the arm and they follow.

Old Civility

A little walk-in closet. The music and hubbub of the party are audible, off. FLETCHER.

FLETCHER

(off)

Yes--one moment, I'll be with you, I'm just going to step out for---

FLETCHER enters, drawing a hidden flask.

FLETCHER

For a spot of the medicine that makes these people tolerable. Hello, gin.

She has a conversation with the flask, playing both parts.

FLETCHER

"Hello, Fletcher. How's the party?"

I've hardly seen Turner. They've been making me shuttle drinks between the kitchen and the lounge and the ballroom for hours. What is it about the wealthy? Why can they put away one cocktail after another, all night long, and never fall down, or throw up, or even be compelled to dance? And I mean truly dance--to dance dance. Why?

"That's the price of wealth, old friend. If those are your pleasures, you know where to find them."

Back on the other side. Back before all this?

"You know the answers you want to hear. Or else you'd be talking to a person, not a flask."

O, don't get smart with me.

FLETCHER takes a generous gulp.

I wish Turner were here.

TURNER gets in the closet. She has her walking stick.

TURNER

Hello, friend.

FLETCHER

O, good. O, good, good.

FLETCHER throws her arms around TURNER and buries her face in her shoulder.

(CONTINUED)

TURNER

What is it? What's the matter?

FLETCHER explains her distress, muffled. TURNER pulls her away, so that they face each other.

TURNER

(cont.)

What?

FLETCHER

My gin told me what to do, Turner.

TURNER

Why did you bring a flask? There's an open bar.

FLETCHER

Gin is the wisest drink of them all. We don't fucking belong here, Turner, we just don't.

TURNER

Hey. Don't cry. It's a momentary difficulty. It will pass.

FLETCHER

It won't. It'll only get worse, and worse, and we'll come completely unmoored from our pasts and our dreams and each other, and we'll totally unrecognize ourselves.

TURNER

This was the dream, Fletcher. Tonight is the premiere of the dream. Rags to riches. The gutter to the throne. Look where you are! Look what you're wearing!

FLETCHER

Why does it all make me cry? I miss my rags. I miss the gutter.

TURNER

You don't believe that. They want you to think you were happier poor and starved. I once saw you trail a man, on foot, for seventeen blocks so you could snatch up the butt of his cigarette after he tossed it. We were cold and hungry, slaves to our stomachs, it wasn't fucking cute or glamorous or fun. Don't forget it.

FLETCHER

Okay.

TURNER

You had never seen a fifty dollar bill before. Now we can blow our noses on them if we like. We can have a motorcar if we like.

(CONTINUED)

FLETCHER

One of the new ones, fresh off Ford's assembly line, available for seven weeks' wages?

TURNER

No. One from fifteen years ago. One from before they were "affordable." When the very thing was a preposterous luxury. Tailored.

FLETCHER

Custom.

TURNER

Not all this plastic nonsense.

FLETCHER

That does sound nice. The carved wooden controls, the little dials with numbers, 0.

TURNER

You change your tune?

FLETCHER

It's a song for two, friend. We can drive to the club and play tennis.

TURNER

Anywhere you want. Anywhere at all.

FLETCHER

I feel a little better. You want some gin?

TURNER

What is it?

She sniffs it. It is vile.

TURNER

(cont.)

Are you really drinking Old Civility?

FLETCHER

I knew you'd remember.

TURNER

They're serving good stuff here. You should enjoy it. Have some Grand Obituary. It's a twelve-year.

FLETCHER

No, I'm enjoying this. Have some.

(CONTINUED)

TURNER

I'm good.

FLETCHER

Come, like we used to, when we could afford only half a pint between us, and had to pass it back and forth in some dank alleyway wriggling with rats. Just like we used to!

TURNER

No thanks, Fletcher. You drink it. You drink it all.

Silence.

FLETCHER

I'll leave some, in case you change your mind.

TURNER

O, why are you doing this? Fletcher, you are much too clever. Much too clever, O, why do you torment me?

FLETCHER

Torment you? My friend, but how?

TURNER

"My friend"? Stop. You've proven your point. I cannot do it. Stop. No more. By heart alone you've won. My chill resolve to wrong you melts in the warmth of kind words.

FLETCHER

Wrong me? Wrong me how?

TURNER

You know. Don't you know? You are too clever. With a wit like yours we could defeat the alderman at his own game in his own house this very night; yes, let us craft a new plot, Fletcher, sister, and wreck the star at the center of our erratic orbit.

TURNER reaches for the flask, but FLETCHER withdraws it.

FLETCHER

Turner, hold. I really don't know what you mean.

TURNER

I thought you did--somehow you did--else why did you reminisce and manipulate me so? The Alderman asked me--asked me to eliminate you.

(CONTINUED)

FLETCHER

And you were going to do it?

FLETCHER looks in horror at the flask.

TURNER

No--I didn't--look!

TURNER snatches it and takes a gulp. Then she coughs and sputters. It is revolting booze.

FLETCHER

You were going to do it! Really do it!

TURNER

But I'm not now! You're right. You've bested me. I won't.

FLETCHER

You were going to. You have a price. I bid higher tonight; but someone could buy you again.

TURNER

No. You're my friend. My sister. I'll never betray you.

FLETCHER

How can I trust you? Sister or stranger, how can I ever believe you?

TURNER

You'll have to. I've disappointed the alderman. It will take us both to beat him now.

FLETCHER

You're lying again. I won't be fooled.

TURNER

What else can I say? I need you. I love you.

FLETCHER

I say I won't be fooled!

*FLETCHER draws a hatpin.
They fight.*

FLETCHER scores a few blows, but TURNER beats her back with her walking-stick. Soon FLETCHER is done.

TURNER

I would never have betrayed you, Fletcher, O, sister, please.

(CONTINUED)

FLETCHER

You might as well do it, now. You've earned whatever he promised you. Finish it.

She offers TURNER her hatpin.

TURNER

I can't.

FLETCHER

It's too late to be moral, you fucking pussy.

TURNER stabs FLETCHER.

FLETCHER dies.

TURNER

(calling)

It's done, Herman. It's done.

TURNER takes FLETCHER's flask and drinks it down.

The closet vanishes into the larger room.

BAULER appears.

BAULER

Looks like she landed her share of blows.

TURNER

Nothing that can't heal with time, money, gin.

BAULER

You'll have all three. You've earned them.

HARRIET appears with BAULER's walking-stick.

BAULER helps TURNER to a seat; she leans heavily on her duplicate walking-stick.

BAULER

You surprise me, though. I didn't think you could do it. I had thought that you would lose your nerve.

HARRIET

How do you know she didn't?

BAULER

Well, that is a possibility.

HARRIET

You must be a real scoundrel to betray your dearest friend.

TURNER

She was a sister.

(CONTINUED)

BAULER

A real scoundrel.

TURNER

Still the least of the three in this room.

TURNER tries to stand.

HARRIET holds out BAULER's walking-stick.

Also, it's a sword cane.

*He draws, turns, and spears TURNER, who falls.
He gives the weapon back to HARRIET. She sheathes it.*

BAULER

Listen. When there are plots to brew, I'll brew them.
Nobody steals from me. Nobody swindles me. I'm not the
punch-line, and nobody laughs.

TURNER

We did everything you wanted.

HARRIET

Then that should have been enough for you. You're
ruining the chair.

BAULER hauls TURNER out of the chair.

HARRIET picks up TURNER's duplicate walking-stick.

TURNER

You owe me. I did it, everything you wanted.

BAULER

She's a scoundrel to the last. Let me leave a mark,
willing any just god to know your feeble heart. Then to
deliver you to appropriate torments.

*With his finger, BAULER draws an X over TURNER's
heart.*

TURNER

Fuck-mug.

TURNER dies.

BAULER

I want Roger and Edward here, now.

HARRIET

Why?

BAULER

Let the party go on, but these are some uncomfortable developments. They had hands on checkbooks already, I'd prefer to wait it out here with you, and them, and a big fucking glass of Old Civility 12-year. This business has me on edge, like I'm sliding headlong down a tilted blade. Please, do me this kindness, go and find them.

*ROWLEY enters with ROGER bound and beaten.
EDWARD follows.*

BAULER

Fuck.

ROWLEY

You have no idea.

ROGER

I don't know how she did it, they took me somewhere dark and there were fists and feet with sharp heels coming at me from all sides. There could have been a dozen of them. I don't know what happened. Do something, Herman, do something!

BAULER

Do what? Why? Why help you now? If she wants to cut your throat, she can, you've absolutely declared the outer borders of your competence tonight. Go ahead. Spear him. Just don't let him bleed too much on my carpet.

HARRIET

No more whiskey. You make sentimental decisions and see where it gets you. Promising favors for those who can't deliver.

BAULER

That's right. You think I'm going to pardon Maria now? Seeing all this, no, I'll never let that busy little chicken inside the city gates. You wouldn't be able to handle it, that's clear.

ROGER

Herman, no, please.

BAULER

We'll see what you get, cock-boil, but she stays banished.

MARIA enters.

(CONTINUED)

MARIA

Everyone's alive.
Even the ones who were dead.

EDWARD

When good men die, they go to Chicago. When men like
Roger die, we go to Chicago.

MARIA

I wonder what you'll get, Alderman.

HARRIET

I'm going to make a phone call.

ROWLEY blocks her exit.

HARRIET

It can wait.

ROGER

Hello.

ROWLEY

Based on what you missed, Maria, I think we're all
happy to look the other way for this part. They just
don't want him to bleed on that chair.

MARIA

What do you mean?

BAULER

Are you here for revenge? There's your man. Take him.
Heaven knows he's no use to me.

MARIA

This man?

*She goes to ROGER and looks at him for a long
time.*

MARIA

I've already killed this man. He didn't die because
he's got no sense. I don't need to do it again.

ROGER

Maria, please, I was wrong about all of it. I want to
go with you. I've been spending far too much time with
my cousin. Take me somewhere far from here.

MARIA

If anyone else wants, though, now's the time.

(CONTINUED)

*She looks away.
After a moment, BAULER leaps up and knocks ROGER
to the ground. He pulls on ROGER's hair and
necktie. ROGER struggles.*

*ROGER draws a tiny gun and fires. EDWARD falls.
MARIA rushes to his side.*

*HARRIET crosses to ROGER and puts her foot on his
throat until he ceases to struggle.*

EDWARD
Fuck.

Coalition Politics

*Suddenly they are outside the house, in view of
the stars and Lake Michigan, and the city seems
very small in the distance. It is just a low,
miserly constellation. The landscape is alien and
menacing and desolate.*

MARIA cradles EDWARD.

EDWARD
Someday there will be no stars.

MARIA
Because of all the city light?

EDWARD
They wanted you as soon as you were gone. They needed
you back as soon as you were out of reach.

MARIA
They? Who's they?

EDWARD
Me, I guess. Just me. He's not the city. You are.

MARIA
I'm not.

EDWARD
Not the city light, no. The stars will all be washed
out by the fires rising from below.

MARIA
We'll get you help.

EDWARD
Don't waste their time.

(CONTINUED)

MARIA

I'm sorry.

EDWARD

No apologies. You've got nothing to be sorry for. Life is a violent thing, usually by accident, and it won't ever be solved until we're solved all the way into that eternal, starless night.

MARIA

You mean I didn't have a choice?

EDWARD

Sorry doesn't unspill the blood; and it's easier to draw a blade than to sheathe it. Don't put it away too soon. That's what they're waiting for.

Where's Tegan?

MARIA looks around. ROWLEY is gone.

EDWARD dies.

The fires burn below, then burn a little higher.

The stage is still for a long time.

Some of the furniture from the Alderman's house begins to appear in the space. The previous bodies appear in their positions, too.

BAULER appears.

He has his walking-stick.

BAULER

You think we can still talk this over?

MARIA

Your politics is violence with cuff-links. I'm only following your procedure.

BAULER

It isn't the only way. Want a pardon? Keep your friends close, you know? Want a job?

MARIA

Blood. That's all I want; that's all that's left.

BAULER

Even if you get it, there'll be something worse than exile this time.

MARIA

I was exiled from Chicago, Bauler. There is no punishment worse.

(CONTINUED)

BAULER

Finally, Miss Middleton, we agree.

She draws a hatpin. Her hair comes loose.

*BAULER raises his walking-stick.
He tries to draw the blade and discovers he can't.
He tries and tries, but it's no use, because he's
holding TURNER's duplicate.*

HARRIET appears, distant.

BAULER and MARIA fight.

*They fight and fight and then she lands the
crucial blow.*

BAULER

It may be Paradise, but it's Hell as well. Farewell, my
city, I'm coming home.

*BAULER dies.
HARRIET draws near. She's holding BAULER's
walking-stick, the real one.*

MARIA

Why do you have that?

HARRIET

You wouldn't strip me of my arms.

MARIA

I don't throw good sins after bad.

HARRIET

What, then? You want it? Come take it.

MARIA

I don't want to, I don't want that, not tonight. Not
one more battle, I don't have the stomach or the heart
or the balls for another.

HARRIET

We live in Chicago. We live in America, Maria. If not
tonight, someday.

MARIA

It's a big city. You and I could stay out of each
other's ways.

HARRIET

How do you mean? Draw a line across the middle and
we'll keep to opposite sides?

(CONTINUED)

MARIA

That's not what I meant.

HARRIET

I know much too well what you meant. I wasn't taking it for myself, Miss Middleton. It's for you.

She gives MARIA the sword cane.

MARIA

Don't.

HARRIET

You've had your revenge. Where's mine? Arm yourself.

MARIA

Why is it against me?

HARRIET

I loved a man and you killed him. You can empathize. Now come to. Arm yourself and face me, and let's close the coffin lid on all this nasty business. Besides. If I don't stop you, what else will you do? What won't you do? I'd be doing this city justice. You must understand.

MARIA

I'm no Bauler.

HARRIET

You're right about that. He had a plan. He was artillery: pointed. You're wildfire: purposeless, aimless, hunger and sorrow with force, but no body. You could never be like him.

They fight.

They're both dreadfully wounded.

They both give up.

HARRIET

There you go. You'll do anything if you're pushed. There's the city, our Chicago, out there in the distance and receding fast. That's where we're pushing you now. Better run home, fool, better run.

She arranges herself beside BAULER. She pulls her hatpin from BAULER's tie, where he put it so long ago, and slits her wrist.

HARRIET dies.

MARIA

(roaring, howling to the distant city)

So I will.

I will then, my city, my enemies, my men.

I'll run, and always catch you; whether you're
vanishing into the future or the past, and whether you
be consumed by lightning from above or hellfire from
below, I'll run, and catch you. I'll run and catch you
and sink claws and teeth into the flesh of all your
necks, no matter my wounds, no matter this violence;
I'll run quicker than the blood pours.

*She struggles to rise.**She doesn't.*

MARIA

(cont.)

I'm rising up to chase you. I'm rising for the hunt.
Await me, my city, await.

ROWLEY appears.

MARIA

Drag me into the fire. Throw yourself in after.

ROWLEY

I will. You won't be alone long, Maria Middleton. I
will.

*MARIA dies.**ROWLEY holds her.**Lights out.**End of play.*