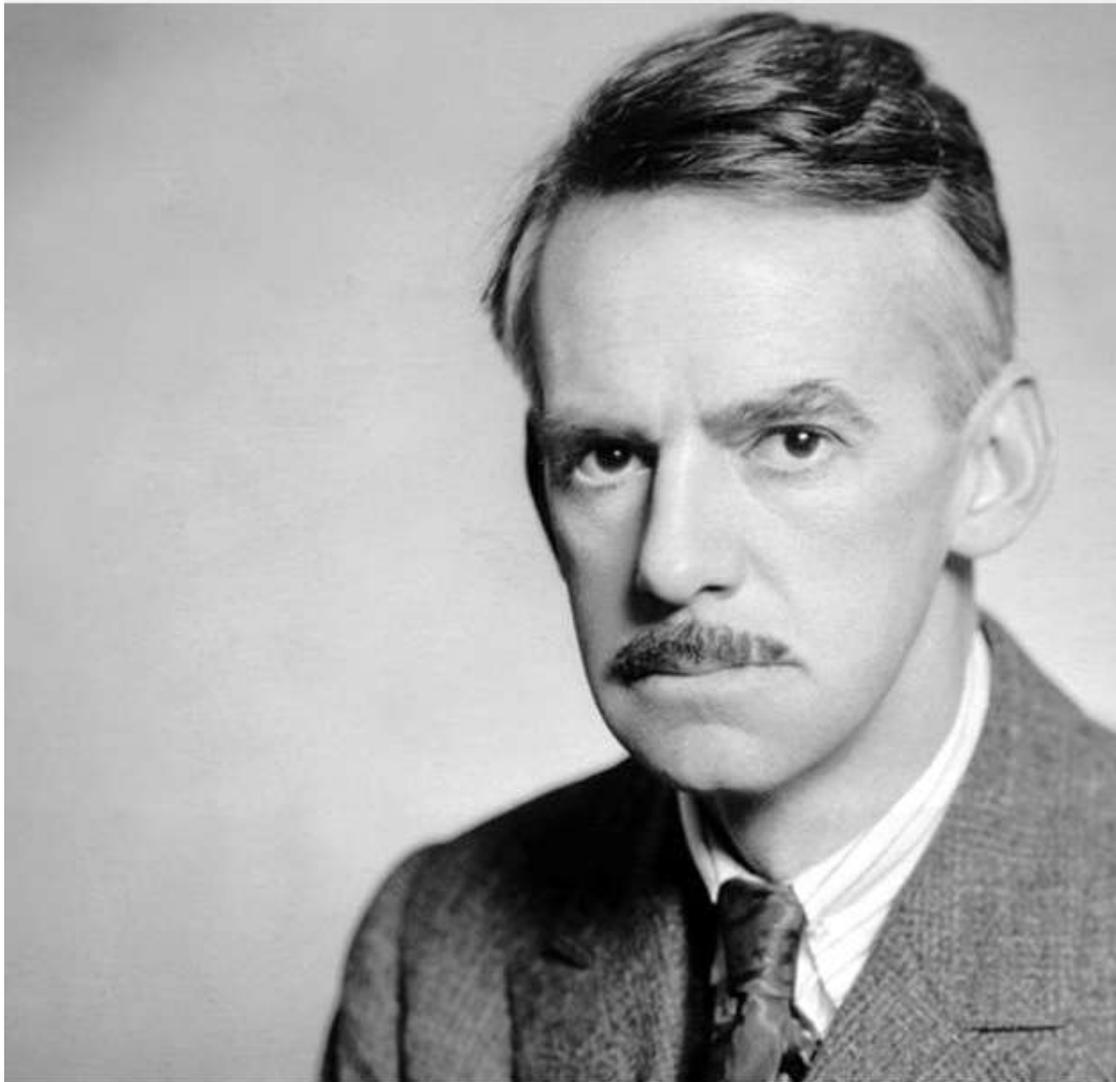




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Eugene O'Neill

Complete Works



Series Fourteen

The Complete Works of
EUGENE O'NEILL

(1888-1953)



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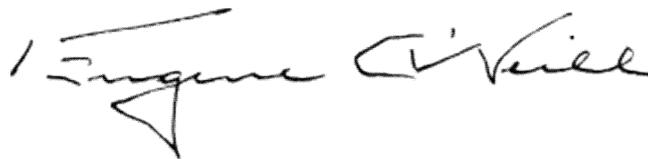
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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eugene O'Neill". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "E" and a long, horizontal stroke for the "l" in "O'Neill".

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Version 1

The Complete Works of
EUGENE O'NEILL



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Complete Works of Eugene O'Neill



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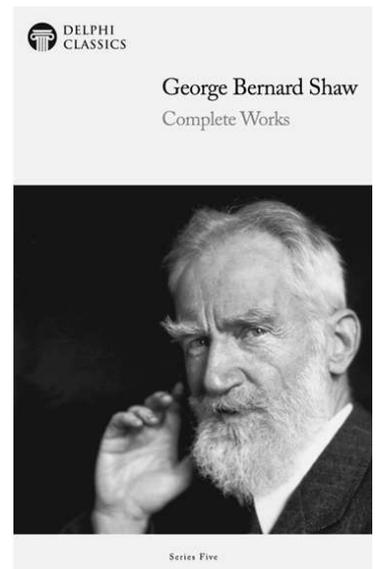
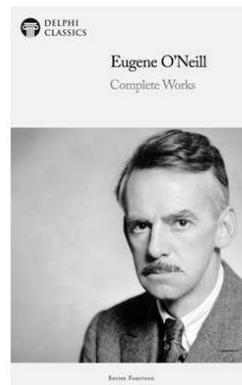
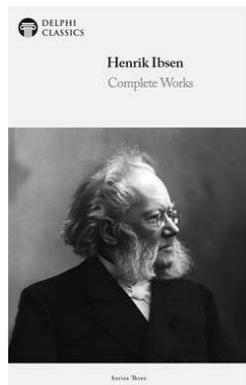
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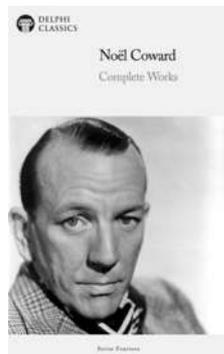
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The Full-Length Plays



Broadway, north from 43rd Street, 1896 — Eugene O’Neill was born on 16 October 16, 1888, in the Barrett House hotel (the building in the left background), at Broadway, on what was then Longacre Square (now Times Square).



The site of the birthplace today



O'Neill as a child, c. 1893

Bread and Butter (1914)



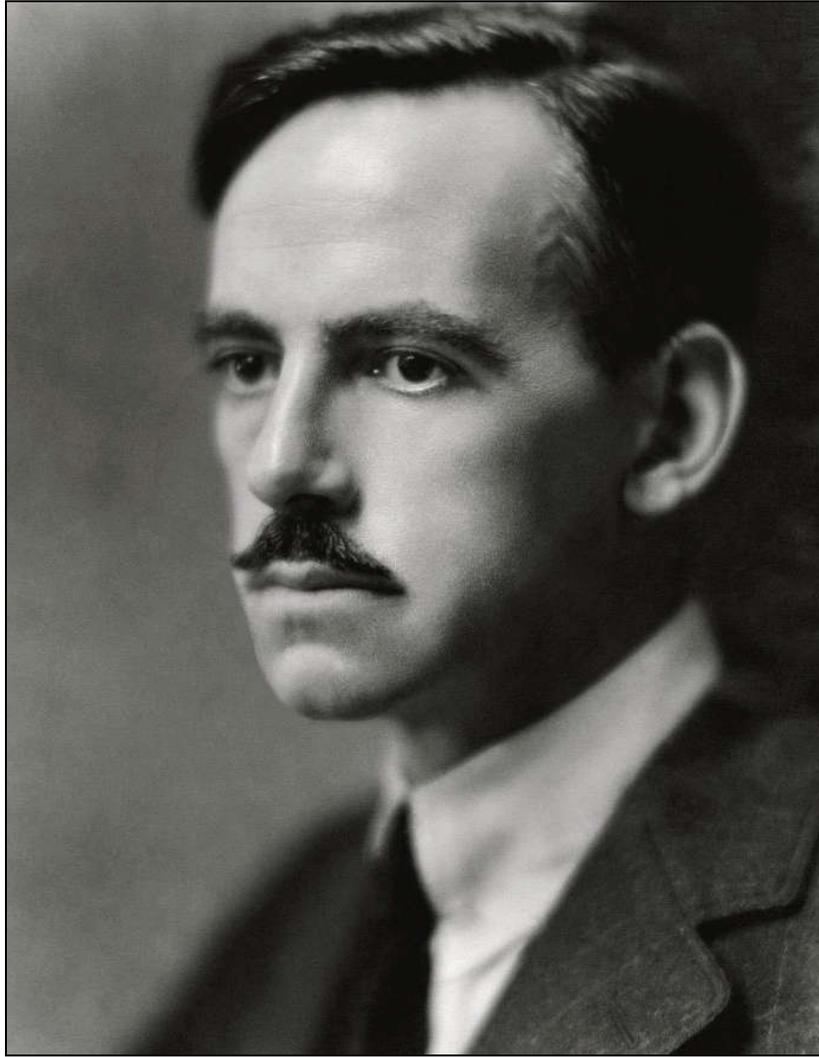
America's foremost playwright, Eugene O'Neill was fittingly born in the heart of Broadway, New York City. He was the son of Irish immigrant actor James O'Neill and Mary Ellen Quinlan, who was also of Irish descent. His father suffered from alcoholism and his mother from addiction to morphine. As his father was often on tour with a theatrical company, accompanied by Mary, the child was sent to St. Aloysius Academy for Boys, a Catholic boarding school in the Bronx. In 1900, he became a day student at the De La Salle Institute on 59th Street in Manhattan.

After spending time at a sanatorium in 1912, where he was recovering from tuberculosis, O'Neill decided to devote himself full-time to writing plays. He had previously been employed by the *New London Telegraph*, writing poetry as well as reporting. In the fall of 1914, he entered Harvard University to attend a course in dramatic technique given by George Pierce Baker, but left after one year.

Bread and Butter is his earliest full-length play known to have survived. He wrote it in 1914, when he was twenty-six years old, but it was never published or performed during his lifetime. It was first publicly available as one of the works featured in *Children of the Sea and Three Other Unpublished Plays* in 1972 by NCR Microcard Editions. The playwright never wanted his earliest plays to be released, as he viewed them with disdain. Generally, critics consider *Bread and Butter* to be juvenile, crudely structured and melodramatic. It possesses little of the mastery and skill displayed in his most acclaimed works, but it is useful in showing the development of O'Neill's craft, as well as introducing themes that frequently and recur in his dramas.

The plot centres on John Brown, an aspiring young artist from Bridgetown, Connecticut, who wishes to study art and lead a creative life. His ambitions are opposed by most of his family, particularly his father, whose sole concern is John's financial success and his fiancée, Maude, the daughter of a wealthy businessman. John concedes to their desires, but soon finds himself sinking into a state of despair, as he finds life unbearable.

The play was first staged, more than eighty years after it had been written, in September 1998 by The Playwrights Theater at Provincetown Playhouse in New York. The reviews were mixed as critics acknowledged the strength of the performances, while highlighting the drama's shortcomings.



O'Neill as a young man

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CHARACTERS

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CHARACTERS



EDWARD BROWN, *hardware merchant of Bridgetown, Conn.*

MRS. BROWN, *his wife*

EDWARD, *their son, a town alderman*

HARRY, *their son*

JOHN, *their son*

MARY, *their daughter, a school-teacher*

BESSIE, *their daughter, a stenographer*

RICHARD STEELE, *dry goods merchant of Bridgetown*

MAUD, *his daughter*

STEVE HARRINGTON, *an art student*

“BABE” CARTER, *an art student*

TED NELSON, *a writer*

EUGENE GRAMMONT, *Master of the Art School*

HELENE, *a cloak and suit model*

Act First

The sitting-room of Edward Brown’s home in Bridgetown, Conn. on a hot evening in August of the present day.

Act Second

The studio in New York in which John is living — about a year and a half later.

Act Third

The same — four months later.

Act Fourth

The living-room of John’s home in Bridgetown — two years later.

Period — The Present Day.

ACT 1



SCENE *THE SITTING-ROOM* of Edward Brown's home in Bridgetown, Conn. To the left in the foreground a door leading into the dining room. Farther back a book-case and two windows looking out on the back yard. In the corner an expensive Victrola machine with cabinet for records. In the middle of the far side of the room is a huge old fashioned fire place with brass andirons. On either side of the fire place a window opening on the garden. In the right hand corner near the window a Morris chair. Farther forward a large doorway leading to the parlor with two sliding doors which are tightly drawn together, it being neither Sunday nor a holiday. Still farther in the foreground a smaller door opening on the hallway.

Above the fire place a mantel on the center of which is a Mission clock with a bright brass pendulum. The remainder of the mantel is taken up by cigar boxes, a skull-and-cross-bones tobacco jar, a brass match safe, etc. A square table with four or five easy chairs grouped around it stands in the center of the large sober-colored rug which covers all but the edge of the hard-wood floor. On the table a stack of magazines and a newspaper, also an embroidered center-piece, the fringe of which can be seen peeking out from under the shining base of an electric reading lamp wired from the chandelier above. Two stiff looking chairs have been used to fill up floor spaces which must have seemed unduly bare to the mistress of the household. The walls are papered a dull blurred crimson. This monotony of color is at well-regulated intervals monotonously relieved by pretentiously stupid paintings of the "Cattle-at-the-Stream", "Sunrise-on-the-Lake" variety. These daubs are imprisoned in ornate gilt frames.

The room is sufficiently commonplace and ordinary to suit the most fastidious Philistine. Just at present it's ugliness is shamelessly revealed by the full downward glare of the reading lamp and the searching stare of all four bulbs on the chandelier.

It is about eight o'clock on a hot evening in September of the present day. All the windows are open.

Mr. and Mrs. Brown and their eldest son, Edward, are discovered seated by the table. Mrs. Brown is a small grey-haired, tired-looking woman about fifty years old, neatly dressed in black. Her expression is meek and when she speaks the tone of her voice apologizes for the unseemly indulgence.

Brown himself is a tall, lean old man with a self-satisfied smile forever on his thin lips. He is smooth-shaven, a trifle bald, fifty-eight years old, and dressed as becomes a leading citizen.

Edward is tall and stout, pudgy faced, dark-haired, small of eye, thick of lip and neck. He is dressed exactly as a small-town alderman should be dressed and is thirty years old.

BROWN (*laying aside the newspaper he has been reading*) I don't think much of that "ad" you've got in here, Ed.

EDWARD (*solemnly deferential*) What's the matter with it, Father? (*with dignity*) I wrote it myself.

BROWN (*dryly*) I know you did. I can see you sticking out all over it. It's too wordy and solemn — lifeless, in other words.

EDWARD My desire was to appeal to the better class of people in the town — the people whose patronage is really worth while and —

BROWN Stop right there. You're running a hardware store, not a cotillion. The people you've got to appeal to are the people who want something we've got and have the money to pay for it. No other distinction goes in our business.

EDWARD But I thought it would be an asset to get and hold the trade of the best people.

BROWN It isn't as much of an asset as getting and holding the trade of the working people. They pay cash. While the others — I'd never have to hire a collector if it wasn't for those same best people. Keep your social high-flying out of the store. It's no place for it. (*with asperity*) Remember I haven't retired yet and, although God knows I've earned it, I never will be able to if you mess things up this way. Please consult me after this before you appeal to the best people.

EDWARD (*sullenly*) I'll have the "ad" taken out tomorrow and you can write another yourself.

BROWN (*more kindly*) No, write it yourself. You know how to do it when you want to. (*with a sly smile*) Forget you're an alderman for a few minutes. Keep your speeches for the Board of Common Council. Remember your father was a working man and a farm hand, and all the education he's got beyond grammar school he picked up along the way. Write an "ad" which would appeal to him if he had five dollars and needed some kitchen utensils.

EDWARD (*shocked — considering his father's acknowledgement of his humble origin a grave social error*) You have risen beyond all such comparisons.

BROWN Don't be so sure of me. Well, don't forget about that "ad." Anything else new?

EDWARD N — no; but there is another matter not directly connected with the store which I would like to talk over seriously with you.

BROWN Fire away. You've got the floor, Alderman.

EDWARD (*ponderously*) It's about John.

BROWN What's John done?

EDWARD Well, it's like this, Father. Harry and I, and I am sure the girls will agree with us, think it is rather hard John should so obviously be made the pet of the family. High school was good enough for any of us but you sent him through four years at Princeton. You have always told us you considered a college education more of a

hindrance than a help to a man's success in life, and yet you allowed John to take up a classical course — a gentleman's course, as they call it, which will certainly be of little use to him if he goes into business.

BROWN (*frowning*) And who said he was to go into business? I always clearly stated I intended John for one of the professions. We've got enough business men in the family already.

EDWARD I never heard him speak of taking up a profession.

BROWN (*hesitatingly*) It's been sort of a secret between your mother, John, and myself, but since you bring the matter up I might as well tell you I've decided he shall go to law school. There's plenty of opportunity here for a young lawyer with position and money to back him up — of that I'm certain. Thanks to you and Harry the business I've built up will be well taken care of if anything should happen to me, and I see no reason for placing John in it; especially as his talents seem to run in another direction.

EDWARD (*suppressing the indignation he feels at this fresh favor shown his younger brother*) Perhaps you are right, sir. I confess I am no judge of what future would best suit John. He never speaks of himself or his plans to me, or, for that matter, to any of us except Bessie, and she seems to treat whatever he tells her as confidential. What appeared strange to Harry and me was the fact that you had never asked John to work during any of his vacations.

(While he is speaking Harry enters from the hall. He is a tall, dark, pleasant-looking young fellow of twenty-five with the good-natured air and breezy manners of a young-man-about-small-town. A bit of a sport, given to beer drinking, poker parties and kelly pool, if the foppish mode of his light check clothes be any criterion.)

HARRY (*who has caught his brother's remark about vacations*) Good evening people. Go to it, Ed. *(He goes over and takes a chair near the table.)*

EDWARD (*not relishing the interruption*) I was just explaining to Father how we feel about John not helping us in any way.

HARRY I got part of what you said. On the level, Father, it isn't square for us to toil and sweat while our fair young brother pulls that lily of the field stuff. *(He says this with the air of getting off something clever.)*

BROWN (*severely*) Keep your vulgar slang for your barroom companions and don't play the fool when you come home. You perform well enough outside without any rehearsals. If you can't talk sense, don't say anything. *(Harry accepts this reprimand with a smile.)* What was it you were saying, Ed?

EDWARD I was saying that while Harry and I and the girls, too, have been working at something ever since we left high school, you have never even suggested that John help in any way.

BROWN I intend to put him in some law office during the summers in which he's in law school.

HARRY Law school?

EDWARD (*bitterness in his tones*) Yes, John is going to law school this fall. Father just told me.

HARRY Why be peeved? Every family in town has a lawyer in it that can afford the luxury. Why not us? But you'll have a hard time making John approve of your scheme. He doesn't want to be a lawyer. You'll find out he wants to be a painter.

EDWARD (*stolidly*) There is room for a good painting business in this town with all the new summer homes being built along the shore.

HARRY (*with a laugh*) Not that kind of a painter, you nut. He's too much high-brow for houses. Portraits of the Four Hundred would be more in his line.

BROWN I tell you he wants to be a lawyer. His painting's only something to take up spare time.

HARRY All his time is spare time. (*His father looks at him angrily and Harry hastily changes the subject.*) Where is the subject of this elevating discussion this evening?

MRS. BROWN (*looking up from her knitting*) You mean John? He's over at the Steele's for dinner. (*Edward looks glum and Harry glances meaningly at him with a tantalizing smile.*)

HARRY Romeo and Juliet had nothing on those two. Why so pensive, Edward?

EDWARD I was thinking —

HARRY You surprise me, Alderman.

EDWARD You — You, — you're a damned ass, Harry.

HARRY (*meekly*) Thank you, dear brother. (*He turns to his mother.*) Mother, when are the glad tidings to be made public? You ought to be in the secret.

MRS. BROWN You mean about Maud and John?

HARRY Yes; Ed and I are anxious to know in time to dust off the old frock coats and not disgrace ourselves.

MRS. BROWN I wish I could tell you. I do hope it will come about, I'm sure. Maud is such a nice sensible girl, she would make a lovely wife.

HARRY Not forgetting the fact that her dear daddy is over-burdened with coin and she's an only child; and remembering that the Steeles are socially spotless. Ask Edward if I speak not truth. He doped it all out for himself once, didn't you, Ed? (*in tones of great sadness*) But that was long, long ago — almost a year. And, alas, she tied the can to him.

EDWARD (*enraged*) Father, I appeal to you to inform Harry there are feelings he should respect and not make the butts of his vulgar jokes. My — er — former

affection for Miss. Steele is one of them. Though I have never told anyone but this (*glaring at Harry*) would-be humorist, — and that in a moment of foolish confidence I shall never cease to regret —

HARRY (*interrupting him with soft approach*) Oh, Edward! You forced the confidence on me. You were in liquor, Edward. You had been drinking heavily. I can remember vividly to this day how grieved I was to see you in such a state — you — a pillar of the church!

MRS. BROWN Harry!

BROWN What!

EDWARD (*his face red with shame*) I must acknowledge to my shame that what Harry says about my — er — condition at the time is not wholly unwarranted. He exaggerates, greatly exaggerates, but —

HARRY You were so sad. You wept on my shoulder and ruined a new silk tie I had just bought.

MRS. BROWN Oh, Harry! (*Brown is smiling.*)

EDWARD I have to confess I had a great deal too much to drink. (*pompously*) It was the first time in my life such a thing has happened and I promise you it will be the last.

HARRY That's what they all say. (*Edward glowers at him.*) All right, I'm going. (*He turns round at the door to hurl a parting shot.*) My feelings are too much for me. I cannot bear to hear the harrowing tale of my elder brother's shame a second time. I will go out in the garden and weep a little. (*He goes out. Edward wears an expression of patient martyrdom. Brown with difficulty hides his impulse to laugh outright.*)

BROWN Tut, tut, don't be so serious. You know Harry. What if you were a bit under the weather? It's a good man's fault — once in a great while. I can remember a good many times in my life when I was three sheets in the wind celebrating one thing or another.

EDWARD (*stiffly*) I have never approved of intoxicants in any form. It was a shocking deviation from my principles. (*firmly*) It shall never happen again. (*Brown cannot hide a smile. Edward is piqued.*) I beg of you, Father, to believe what I say. My one lapse — er — I was upset, terribly upset, by Miss. Steele's refusal to become my wife and —

BROWN (*in amazement*) You asked Maud to marry you!

MRS. BROWN Good gracious!

EDWARD (*nettled that they should think such a thing strange*) Why do you seem so surprised? I flatter myself I was in a better position to take care of a wife than my brother John is now.

BROWN I wasn't thinking about that. I was surprised neither your mother nor I had ever suspected anything of the kind. Now that I come to think of it you did used to be over at the Steele's a lot of the time.

MRS. BROWN (*flabbergasted by this piece of news*) Who'd ever dream of such a thing!

EDWARD Maud — Miss. Steele did not definitely refuse me. She said she was too young to marry. However she gave me to understand she had already bestowed her affections on someone else.

BROWN Did old man Steele know anything of all this?

EDWARD Certainly. I thought it my duty to inform him of my intentions before I spoke to his daughter. He did not seem displeased with the idea but left the matter entirely to Maud — er — Miss. Steele, with the result I have just made known to you.

MRS. BROWN (*not able to recover from her astonishment*) You're the last one I ever thought would fall in love, Ed.

EDWARD Please do not harp on that point, Mother. I am quite human though you do not appear to think so.

BROWN (*thoughtfully*) So that's how the land lies, is it? That explains a lot of things.

EDWARD I do not understand you.

BROWN I mean your sudden interest in John and your desire to see him improving his time at the store instead of at the Steele's.

EDWARD (*flushing*) Do you mean to accuse me of vulgar jealousy because I still take enough interest in Miss. Steele's welfare to be unwilling my brother should compromise her? (*While he is speaking his two sisters, Mary and Bessie, enter from the hall. Mary is a thin, angular woman with a long face and sharp features. She is twenty-eight years old but looks older, wears spectacles, and is primly dressed in a plain, black gown as unfashionable as she considers respectable.*

(*Bessie is as attractive as Mary is plain. Small, plump, with a mass of wavy black hair and great hazel eyes, a red, pouting, laughing mouth, glowing complexion, and small restless hands and feet, Bessie is quite adorable. She is twenty-three years old, one year older than John, but she only looks about nineteen.*)

BROWN I said nothing about jealousy, Ed. It must have been your conscience you heard. (*Edward grows confused.*)

BESSIE (*goes over to her mother and kisses her saying*) We walked up to the post-office. (*Mary sits down in one of the straight-backed chairs near Edward and breaks right into the subject in discussion.*)

MARY (*her voice raspy and monotonous*) I must say I agree with Ed, Father. It's the talk of the town the way John is tagging after Maud Steele.

BROWN Bosh! The town's always gossiping about something.

MARY And I do think it's high time John put his education to some use. We all have to work at something — even Bessie is a stenographer — and I don't see why he shouldn't.

BESSIE Goodness, why don't you leave John alone? He's been working all summer at his painting. (*Edward gives a scornful grunt.*) You don't think that's work because he gets no regular salary for it. I should think you'd be ashamed, Ed, running him down the way you do. Your real reason is just jealousy because Mauds in love with him. You ought to be more of a man.

EDWARD You are very unjust, Bessie, and you don't know what you're talking about. I merely want to see John do the right thing for all our sakes.

MARY I don't think Mr. Steele will ever consent to Maud's being married so young. I know if I were he I would never approve of it. A young girl of twenty is altogether too young to think of marriage.

HARRY (*entering suddenly from the hall — mockingly*) But it's better to be married too soon than not at all, isn't it, Sister? (*Mary favors him with a terrible look. He grins back at her.*) Still holding the inquest? Then allow me to announce that the subject of this debate has just entered the house. (*He turns around and shouts into the hall*) Come on, John! Don't keep the court waiting. (*Bessie giggles.*) Thanks, Bessie. Thank God, I am not wholly unappreciated.

(John enters, smiling bashfully, his face flushed and excited. They all greet him in embarrassed tones. He is an altogether different type from the other members of the family; a finer, more sensitive organization. In appearance he is of medium height, wiry looking and graceful in his flannel clothes of unmistakable college cut. His naturally dark complexion has been burnt to a gold bronze by the sun. His hair, worn long and brushed straight back from his forehead, is black, as are his abnormally large dreamer's eyes, deep-set and far apart in the oval of his face. His mouth is full lipped and small, almost weak in its general character; his nose straight and thin with the nostrils of the enthusiast. When he experiences any emotion his whole face lights up with it. In the bosom of his own family and in the atmosphere of their typical New England fireside he seems woefully out of place.)

HARRY (*in a nasal drawl*) Prisoner at the bar, you are accused —

BROWN For God's sake, stop your chatter for a moment. Sit down, John. (*John takes a chair by the table.*)

JOHN (*in pleasant tones — to Harry*) Well, what am I accused of?

HARRY Mary and Edward accuse you of being a flagrant member of the Idle Rich Class.

(protests from the court)

MARY Oh!

EDWARD A joke's a joke but —

BROWN Be still, sir!

MRS. BROWN Harry!

JOHN (*clasping and unclasping his hands nervously*) I suppose it would be hopeless to enter a plea before this court that trying to express oneself in paint is a praiseworthy occupation which should be encouraged. I have to acknowledge being salaryless and I guess the best thing to do to save the court's time is plead guilty.

EDWARD (*ponderously*) I think this joke has gone far enough and we ought to explain to John —

HARRY (*bellowing*) Silence! (*Edward jumps in his chair.*) Alderman, you are liable to fine for contempt.

EDWARD (*sputtering*) Harry — you are a fool!

HARRY You made that remark once before, Alderman. Don't repeat your statements. You're not running for office now.

EDWARD I — I — I (*He looks as if he meditated assault and battery.*)

JOHN (*nervously, not relishing this form of entertainment*) Come back to me, Harry. What else am I accused of?

HARRY Mother accuses you of contemplated theft. (*John is puzzled and embarrassed. The others raise a storm of protest.*)

BROWN (*severely*) You shouldn't say such a thing even if you are only joking. Explain what you mean.

HARRY How can I when you make so much noise? Prisoner, Mother insists that you are planning to purloin from one of our most respected citizens — his only daughter! (*All laugh except Edward. John grows red with confusion and smiles foolishly.*) What have you to say on that charge?

JOHN I'm afraid I'll have to plead guilty to that, too — not only to the intention but to the actual deed itself.

MARY (*sharply*) You mean Maud has accepted you?

JOHN Yes. (*They all crowd around him showering him with congratulations. The women kiss him, Harry claps him on the back, Brown shakes his hand. Edward mutters a few conventional phrases but is unable to hide his mortification.*)

EDWARD (*coldly, taking his watch out and looking at it*) I am sorry to have to leave all of you on such a joyful occasion but (*importantly*) I have an engagement at the club with Congressman Whitney which I cannot very well ignore. (*swelling out with dignity*) He said he wished to confer with me on a matter of grave importance. So I

hope you will excuse me. Good night, everyone. (*He bows gravely and goes toward the door to the ball.*)

HARRY (*imitating Edward's pose*) I beg of you not to plunge your country into any bloody war, Edward. You have a terrible responsibility on your shoulders. (*Edward glares at him for a moment as if meditating a retort but thinks better of it and goes out.*)

BESSIE If he isn't the original Mr. Gloom!

MARY (*intent on finding out all the facts of John's romance*) John, does Mr. Steele know about Maud's accepting you?

JOHN (*fidgiting*) Yes, we both told him tonight. He seems quite reconciled to our news. Of course, it is understood the engagement will have to be a long one, as I have my way to make and my future —

HARRY Stop! What has an engaged man to say about his own future? Speaking of futures shall I communicate to you the reverend judge's (*indicating his father*) sentence regarding yours? He has sentenced you to a lifetime of delightful idleness — You are condemned to be a lawyer.

BESSIE What? You're joking.

MARY A lawyer?

BROWN (*gravely*) What Harry says is the truth. I have decided John shall go to law school this fall. He fully agrees with me that the practice of law opens up the land of opportunity to a young man of position. (*John's miserable expression contradicts this sweeping statement.*)

BESSIE (*impetuously turning to her father*) But John doesn't want to be a lawyer.

HARRY Just exactly what I said.

BROWN You hear how cock-sure they are, John. You better tell them the truth.

JOHN (*falteringly*) I'm afraid what Bessie said is the truth, Father.

BROWN (*frowning*) What!

JOHN I don't want to be a lawyer. When you spoke to me about this before you didn't really give me a chance to say what I thought. You decided it all for me. I have been intending to tell you how I felt ever since but you never mentioned it again and I thought you had discovered my unfitness and given up the idea. (*There is a pause during which all eyes are fixed on Brown who is staring at John in angry bewilderment.*)

BROWN Given up the idea? Why, I supposed the thing settled! That's why I never spoke of it.

JOHN (*simply*) I'm sorry, Father. It has been a misunderstanding all around.

BESSIE How could you imagine John a lawyer, Daddy!

BROWN (*gently*) We're not all gifted with your insight, my dear. (*turning to John rather severely*) Young man, this is a sad blow to all my plans for you. I'm sure this decision of yours is a hasty one and you will reconsider it when you've looked more thoroughly into the matter.

JOHN I think not, Father. I am certain of my own mind or I wouldn't trouble you so.

BROWN May I ask what your objections are?

JOHN Just this, Father: I simply am not fitted for it. The idea is repugnant to me, and it's useless for me to try and live a lie. As a lawyer I would be a failure in every way. In later years you, yourself, would be the first to regret it. My interest in life is different, and if I wish to be a man I must develop the inclinations which God has given me — not attempt to blot them out.

BESSIE Hear! Hear!

BROWN Why are you so sure you wouldn't learn to like the law? You know very little about it on which to base such a pronounced dislike.

JOHN (*in great nervous excitement*) Oh, I have seen and met all the lawyers in town — most of them at any rate — and I don't care for them. I don't understand them or they me. We're of a different breed. How do I know I wouldn't learn to like law? In the same way a man knows he cannot love two women at the same time. I love, really love in the full sense of the word, something else in life. If I took up law I would betray my highest hope, degrade my best ambition.

BROWN (*staggered by this outburst*) And what is this — er — love of yours?

JOHN (*his large eyes glowing with enthusiasm*) Art! I am an artist in soul I know. My brain values are Art values. I want to learn how to express in terms of color the dreams in my brain which demand expression. (*Harry gives a comic gasp and winks at Mary who is regarding John as if he were a lunatic. In fact, it is plain there is a suspicion in the minds of all of them except Bessie that perhaps John has been drinking.*)

BROWN (*stupefied*) Do I understand you to say you wish to make painting pictures the serious aim of your life?

JOHN (*his fiery ardor smothered under this wet blanket*) I wish to become an artist, yes, if that's what you mean. I want to go to art school instead of law school, if you will permit me to choose my own career.

HARRY (*triumphantly*) I'm a bad prophet, I guess!

JOHN A course in art school will be very inexpensive. You remember Babe Carter, my room-mate at Princeton? The fellow who came up here to spend last Thanksgiving holidays with us? (*Brown nods.*)

HARRY (*mischievously*) Ask Bessie if she remembers. (*Bessie looks confused.*)

JOHN Well, he's going to art school in New York this Fall; has made arrangements to take a studio with two other fellows and wants me to come in with them. With four in the studio the living expenses would be reduced to almost nothing; while on the other hand the cost of sending me to law school would be pretty heavy, as you know.

BROWN (*impatiently*) But heavens, boy, what money is there in art? From all I've ever read about artists it seems the only time their pictures sell for a big price is after they're dead.

JOHN There are plenty of artists in the world today who are painting and making their living at it. (*eagerly*) But money is not the important point. Think of the work they're doing — the beauty and wonder of it! (*He stops realizing the hopelessness of trying to make them understand this side of the question.*)

BROWN It seems to me a young man who is engaged to be married ought to make money the important point.

MARY (*severely*) Does Maud know of this craze of yours?

JOHN Yes, Maud knows of this craze of mine, as you are pleased to call it, and approves of it in every way. She realizes I would not be worthy of her love if I were not true to myself.

MARY (*sneeringly*) Love must be blind. And I suppose you told Mr. Steele all about your intended career?

JOHN I talked it all over with him this evening.

MARY (*sarcastically*) And of course he approved!

JOHN He certainly did!

BROWN What!

HARRY Aw, what'a you giving us!

MARY I don't believe it.

BESSIE Bully for old Steele! I never thought he had so much sense.

BROWN Bessie! I'm not disputing your statement, John, but it seems impossible a practical, hard-headed business man like my friend Steele could approve of this idea of yours. Are you sure he understood this was to be your whole occupation, not just a side issue? Now I, myself, think you'd be foolish to drop painting altogether when you've such a talent and liking for it. But as a means of living I can't see it.

JOHN I laid emphasis on that point in my conversation with Mr. Steele. I told him quite frankly I was painting my life work. He said it was a good idea and told me he didn't think much of your law school plan.

BROWN Well! (*The others are all equally astonished.*)

JOHN He'll be here in a few minutes and verify my statement; he said he'd be over tonight to have a talk with you.

BROWN I'll be very glad to hear his views on this matter. His opinions are always sound and sensible — but in the present case —

MARY (*rising stiffly from her chair*) Well, if Mr. Steele is coming over we'd better make ourselves a little more presentable. Come Bessie! You, too, Mother.

MRS. BROWN (*going toward hall door with Bessie and Mary*) Goodness, Johnnie, why couldn't you have told us before? The house is in a nice state. (*They go out with Mrs. Brown fuming and fretting.*)

HARRY (*beckoning to John*) A word with you. (*whispering*) Have you got a real cigarette? (*John produces a box.*) Thanks, I'll take a couple. The week is waning and in the latter end of weeks I'm usually confined to a diet of self-mades. (*puts cigarette in mouth*) Stringency of the paternal money market, you know. (*lights cigarette*) And now I'll say farewell. I want to get away before old Steele comes. He detests me, and with all due respect to your future father-in-law I think he's the prize simp of the world. It would only ruffle his good nature to find me here. (*then seriously*) John, I didn't get some of that high-brow stuff you pulled. It sort of soared over my sordid bean — some phrase, that, what? — but volplaning down from your lofty artistic ozone I want to say I'm for you. Do what you want to do, that's the only dope. I can't wish you any better than good luck. (*He holds out his hand which John clasps heartily, his face lighting up with gratitude. The door bell rings.*) There he is now. I'll blow out the back way; be good; s'long, Father. (*He goes out by the door to left leading to the dining room, carefully closing it after him.*)

BROWN You better go out and meet him, John. (*John hurries into the hall and returns a moment later with Steele. Steele is a tall, stout, vigorous looking man of about fifty-five, with the imposing air of one who is a figure of importance in the town and takes this importance seriously. He has grey hair and a short-cropped grey mustache; a full florid face with undistinguished features, and small, shrewd, grey eyes. He is carefully dressed in a well-fitting light suit and looks the part of the prosperous small-town merchant. He comes over to Brown, who has risen to greet him, and they shake hands after the manner of old friends.*)

STEELE Good evening, Ed.

BROWN Glad to see you, Dick. Sit down and make yourself at home. (*They both take chairs by the table. A confused babble of women's voices and laughter is heard from the hallway.*) Maud come over with you?

STEELE Yes. (*with a wink at Brown*) And that being the case I guess we can excuse the young man here, don't you think so, Ed?

BROWN (*laughingly*) Oh, I guess we can manage. (*John gives an embarrassed laugh and hurries out.*)

STEELE Well, Ed, I hate to think of losing Maud. (*feelingly*) She's all I've got, you know; but if it has to be someone I'm mighty glad it's one of your boys. For a time I

sort of thought it would be Edward. He spoke to me once about the matter and I wished him luck. I like Edward very much. He's a good solid business man and bound to succeed; but Maud didn't love him and there you are. I guess she and John were pretty thick even then, although I never suspected what was in the wind until just lately.

BROWN I can't say I was wholly unprepared for John's announcement. He hasn't much of a faculty for hiding his feelings — too nervous and high-strung. (*with a chuckle*) Of course his mother has known right along. You can't fool a woman on those things.

STEELE (*sadly*) I wish Maud's mother were alive today. (*briskly*) Well, well, what can't be, can't be. John's an awful likable chap, and Maud says she loves him, so I'm sure I'm satisfied. As long as she's happy I'm contented. She's the boss.

BROWN John's got his way to make yet, but as long as they're willing to make it a long engagement —

STEELE (*interrupting him laughingly*) I'm selfish enough to like the idea of the marriage being a long ways off; I'll have Maud so much longer.

BROWN Speaking of John's future, he told me tonight you fully approved of this artistic notion of his — going to art school and all that. I found it pretty hard to believe, knowing you the way I do.

STEELE John was perfectly right. I think it's the real thing for him.

BROWN You know I was intending to send him to law school.

STEELE Don't be foolish, Ed. The supply of lawyers already is ten times greater than the demand. Take this town for example. Nearly every family I know of any importance has a lawyer in it or is going to have one. Where will they all get cases? Why, do you know, I actually think some families get into suits just to give their sons a job.

BROWN I'll have to admit there's an abundance of legal talent in Bridgetown; but in a broader field —

STEELE Same thing all over the country — too many lawyers and doctors. Besides, John would never make a lawyer — too sensitive and retiring. You have to have push and gall to burn. On the other hand he's got an undoubted talent for painting. I've seen sketches he made for Maud and those drawings he did for the college magazine. They're great! And look at those posters he did for the Fair last month — finest things of the kind I ever looked at. John's bound to succeed. I'm sure of it.

BROWN (*dubiously*) But where does the money end of it come in?

STEELE Money? Why, Ed, there's loads of money in it. Look at advertising. I know of a young fellow in New York who paints those high-toned fashion plates. He makes between ten and twelve thousand dollars a year; has his own business and everything. He's only been at it a few years, too. (*Brown is evidently impressed but shakes his head doubtfully.*) Look at the magazines. (*He picks one from the table and points to*

the picture on the outside cover — a girl's head.) How much do you think that fellow got for that? Not less than a couple of hundred dollars, I'll bet. John could draw a prettier girl than that in half an hour. With new magazines coming out every month the demand for that sort of stuff is tremendous. There's all kinds of opportunity for a young fellow with the goods; and John has the goods. I tell you, Ed, you don't appreciate the talent your own son has.

BROWN But he wants to go to art school.

STEELE Well, let him; he's young; if he thinks he's got any rough edges that need polishing off, why let him have a year or so of schooling. He looks as good to me right now as any of them, but he's a better judge than we are on that point. He can't be too good and while he's studying he can be looking around New York getting the lay of the land. He'll meet a lot of people in the same line who can put him on to the ropes.

BROWN But listen here! I never heard him mention the advertising or magazine end of it. His ideas on the subject of painting are very lofty. He may consider such things beneath him. You've never seen any of his big oil paintings, have you?

STEELE No.

BROWN You'd hardly call those a salable product. *(with a smile)* It's hard to make out what some of them are.

STEELE *(laughingly)* They must be some of those Impressionistic pictures you hear so much about. But don't worry. John'll get over all that. Give him a year in New York and don't allow him any more money than is absolutely necessary, and I'll guarantee at the end of that time he'll have lost his high-fangled notions. He's just an enthusiastic kid and there's nothing like a year in New York to make him realize the importance of a bank account and settle down to brass tacks. He'll get in with the others who are making money and want to fall in line. But don't let on about this to him. There's no use in offending the young man's dignity. Encourage him to go to the city and paint his head off. He'll come gradually to see the commercial aspects of the case — especially if you keep a tight hand on the pocket-book.

BROWN *(his face clearing)* You've convinced me, Dick. I'll let the boy go his own road.

STEELE *(complacently)* That's the idea. Biggest mistake in the world to force a boy into something he's not interested in.

BROWN *(in a stage whisper)* And now what do you say to a wee drop to celebrate this joyful occasion?

STEELE *(in the same tone)* Your proposition tickles me to death.

BROWN Then follow me. *(They go into the dining room, shutting the door after them. A moment later John appears in the doorway leading to the hall. He looks quickly around to make sure the room is empty; then beckons to someone in the hall behind him, and walks softly over to the table. Maud Steele, giggling and flushed with excitement, tiptoes after him. She is a remarkably pretty girl of twenty with great blue*

eyes, golden brown hair, and small delicate features. Of medium height her figure is lithe and graceful. She is dressed in a fluffy white summer frock and wears white tennis shoes. Her rather kittenish manner and the continual pout of her small red mouth indicate the spoiled child even before one hears the note of petulance in her soft, all-too-sweet voice.)

MAUD I gave them the slip. *(She comes over to John who takes her in his arms and kisses her passionately.)*

JOHN Oh, Maudie dear, I can't realize it. It all seems too good to be true.

MAUD Don't. *(He releases her. She speaks with soft reproach.)* You've got my dress all mussed up. What will your sisters think. *(makes a face at him)* Rough thing.

JOHN *(making a motion as if to take her in his arms again)* Dear!

MAUD *(moving out of reach — mockingly)* I said just one. Aren't you ever satisfied?

JOHN With kissing you? Each one is sweeter than the last and I eternally long for the next one.

MAUD Thank you. You do say such sweet things, Johnnie dear. We'll be caught if we stay in here much longer. Where are the two fathers?

JOHN In the dining room, I guess. We can hear them coming.

MAUD Is it all settled — about us?

JOHN *(trying to catch her)* Yes, dearest girl. *(She evades him.)* Yes, cruel one, it's all settled. All I'm afraid of is father won't let me go to art school. He can't understand. None of them can but you and Bessie.

MAUD *(stamping her foot)* He must; I won't have you a horrid old lawyer. *(with a confident smile)* Papa'll persuade him. I'm sure of it. He thinks you'll just make oodles and oodles of money in New York when you get started.

JOHN *(frowning)* The money part will take a long time, I'm afraid. *(turning to her with deep emotion)* But you'll wait for me, won't you, dear? You'll have faith in me, won't you? — no matter what they say? It's going to be a long hard struggle.

MAUD Of course I will, silly boy! *(She goes to the table. The magazine with the pretty girl cover catches her eye. She holds it up with a flourish.)* Look! Papa says he gets a couple of hundred dollars apiece for those. *(She smiles at him roguishly.)* I know whose name is going to be down in the corner there in a year or so. *(John makes a gesture of annoyance.)* Oh, I'll be so proud then! I'll carry a copy with me all the time and show it to everyone I meet.

JOHN *(contemplating the picture on the cover with a contemptuous smile reads the title disdainfully)* The September Girl, eh?

MAUD Isn't she just too sweet for anything?

JOHN Too sweet for anything human. (*In sudden impatience he takes the magazine from her hand and drops it into the waste paper basket. Maud looks at him in pained astonishment, her large eyes filling with tears at his rudeness. John takes her in his arms in a passion of repentance.*) Forgive me, Maudie! I only meant I want to do much finer things than that, don't you understand?

MAUD (*winking her tears away and smiling up into his face*) Of course I do! (*He kisses her again as*

The Curtain Falls)

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End of Sample