ACT III

SCENE: The same evening.

*The room has been cleaned. Everything is in its proper place. The curtains bave been drawn, the lamps are lighted, table is set for one. Bessie is sitting on sofa, fold- ing and arranging articles which she had taken out of cupboards last night for the inventory. Laura enters from bedroom.*

LAURA. *(Crosses to below steps c.)* Hello, Bessie.

BESSIE. Oh! You're up. My!

LAURA. *(Crosses to L. C.)* Why'd you let me sleep so long? Is there any coffee? I'm still unconscious.

BESSIE. You don't look it. Dinner's been ready for an hour, but you were sleeping so good I just hated to wake you. Wouldn't you rather start with the soup instead? *(Bessie crosses toward kitchen with armful of winter clothes. Laura crosses to liquor cabinet, arranges flowers.)*

LAURA. I don't think I'm up to dinner. Just get me some black coffee.

BESSIE. It's awful good. Nothing like a plate of soup to give you strength. *(Stopping in doorway*.)

LAURA. Coffee, Bessie.

BESSIE. *(With resignation.)* All right. But you'll spoil your dinner. *(Starts out again, comes back.)* Oh, that Mr. McPherson called.

LAURA. What'd he want?

BESSIE. He called twice. But he said not to disturb you if you was sleeping. (*Bessie exits to kitchen. Laura starts D. C., then crosses to window.*)

LAURA. (*Calls to Bessie.)* Is that detective still down there?

BESSIE. *(Calls.*) The red-faced one left at six. The Swede's back again. *(Enters with coffee, hands coffee to Laura.)*

LAURA. Thanks.

BESSIE. You know, I think he likes you.

LAURA. *(Crosses to below steps c., about to drink.)* Who? The Swede?

BESSIE. *(Crosses to L.)* No, that Mr. McPherson. He liked

your looks even when you was dead. He was always looking at your picture. *(Laura crosses to chair L., drinks. Bessie crosses to*

*L.)* You still thinking of marrying Mr. Carpenter?

LAURA. *(Crosses to L. sofa R.)* I don't know.

BESSIE. *(Crosses to L.)* I like him better.

LAURA. Who? Mr. Carpenter?

BESSIE. Mr. McPherson, he's a man. Now take Mr. Lydecker. Sherry in the cream sauce. Nothing but an old maid. Mr. Carpenter's all right but when you come right down to it, what is he but a big overgrown baby?

LAURA. Madame, I left home because my mother talked to me

like that. (*Crosses to front coffee table.)*

BESSIE. She's probably looking down and shaking her head over

you now, God rest her soul.

LAURA. *(Crosses to coffee table, puts cup down, sees shawl.)* What's that?

BESSIE. *(Crosses to back sofa.)* Some of the stuff I took out yesterday when Mr. Carpenter and me was going over the effects. A beautiful thing, this shawl.

LAURA. *(At fireplace.)* I thought I got rid of it years ago.

BESSIE. Seems a shame to keep it hid away in a closet.

LAURA. *(Distressed.)* I hate the thing! If you want it you can

have it.

BESSIE. Thanks. (*The doorbell rings. Bessie crosses to door, eagerly.*) Maybe it's him. (*She opens door, eagerly. Danny is there. Disappointed.)* Oh, it's you.

DANNY. *(Holding record behind him.)* I'm only going to stay a minute. I came to bring you something. Guess what?

LAURA. Do I have to?

DANNY. *(Grins and holds up phonograph record. Crosses to L. sofa R.)* Jelly Roll Morton! The one I broke.

LAURA. Where'd you get it? *(Bessie closes door.)*

DANNY. *(Starts across to phonograph*.) New place. Mr. McPherson told me about it. Do you know he's a hot fan? (*Crosses back to L. sofa.)*

BESSIE. Everybody's got some faults. *(Exits kitchen.)*

DANNY. *(Crosses to phonograph, puts record on.)* I don't feel so bad about breaking the other one now. Must've gone through about a thousand records before I found it.

LAURA. *(Crosses to table u. R.*) Thanks, Danny. How much was it? (*Takes cigarette.)*

DANNY. It's on me. Like to hear it?

LAURA. Well, I...

DANNY. Just this once.

LAURA. All right. (*Lights cigarette.)*

DANNY. (*Turns volume up*.) Billy Cato on the sliphorn. Like it? *(Crosses to R. liquor cabinet.)*

LAURA. Solid. Danny, how'd you like your pick of my hot records? *(Crosses to R. back sofa.)*

DANNY. *(Crosses a step, stops.)* What for?

LAURA. I meant what I said this morning.

DANNY. *(Crosses to L. back sofa R.)* That won't happen again, Laura, I promise. I just lost my head. I didn't know what I was doing-

LAURA. I still think it'd be better.

DANNY. Why?

LAURA. For one thing, because of your mother. For another, you're much too serious about it.

DANNY. *(Crosses closer to Laura.*) Just to come up here! Just to listen to your records. You said you enjoyed talking to me about music. That's all I'm asking. Why can't it be the same as it was before? *(Crosses still closer to Laura.)*

LAURA. *(Compassionately.)* No. No, Danny. (*Crosses to fire- place.)*

DANNY. *(Furious.*) O. K.! Only don't try to brush me off with

any records. I don't want your records!

LAURA. Don't you see, Danny, this is just what I mean.

DANNY. No, I don't see. But if that's what you want, I suppose I've got to take it. (*Crosses to below steps c. Doorbell rings*.) Well, I'm sorry I bothered you. *(Bessie enters, crosses to door.)*

BESSIE. Now what? (*Opens door. Mark is there*.) Oh, it's you. *(Mark stands in doorway.)*

LAURA, Come in.

MARK. *(Crosses to back sofa, takes bat off.)* Have a good sleep?

LAURA. Yes, thanks. *(Bessie closes door, exits to kitchen.)*

MARK. *(Quietly.)* Mind turning that thing off, kid?

DANNY. What's the matter? Don't you like it?

MARK. Sure, only turn it off.

DANNY. *(Crosses to door.)* Turn it off yourself! (*Exits slams door.)*