

CORPORAL MILLAR

A Play in Three Acts

by

Robert Traver

Written by:
John D. Voelker
Woolworth Building
Ishpeming, Michigan

C H A R A C T E R S

David Millar, an ex-Marine

Lucille, his wife

Prosecutor Lott

Warden

Sam, a prison guard

Stanley Zaborski, a convict

Paulson, the baker

Judge, Radio Announcer, Doctor, Bailiff,
Clerk, Policemen, Guards, Jurors,
Convicts, etc.

ACTION

(Three acts, six scenes, four sets)

ACT ONE

Scene I: A city apartment. Time: A December morning, 1946.

Scene II: The same. Time: The afternoon of the same day.

ACT TWO

Scene: A courtroom. Time: Seven years later.

ACT THREE

Scene I: Warden's office. Time: Nighttime. Three months later.

Scene II: Prison bull pen. Time: Ten minutes later.

Scene III: Warden's office. Time: One week later.

B U S Y F I N G E R S

A C T O N E

S C E N E I

SCENE:

The living room of the apartment occupied by David Millar and his wife, two young Americans. The room is deserted as the curtain rises. It is a sparsely and cheaply furnished room, in its orthodox drabness typical of thousands of small apartments in any city, anywhere.

A frail set of dinette furniture, left, and a colorless combination studio couch and bed, right wall, from which the white edge of a bed sheet protrudes, indicate that the room is also used for eating and sleeping.

An exotic array of artificial flowers lushly blooming from a bowl on the table. An open newspaper. Some soiled breakfast dishes. A few small child's toys scattered about the floor. Articles of night clothing draped over some of the chairs. Cheap prints adorning the walls, such as that authentic chain-store classic--the one depicting the drooping Indian sitting on a drooping horse, both about to be blown away.

The entrance door is on the rear wall, middle right. On the floor near the door stand several empty milk bottles. To the left center is a small radio. Over this hangs a trade calendar dated December, 1946. To the right of the hall door there is a battered, well-filled bookcase upon which stands a clock. It is eleven-thirty in the morning.

LUCILLE MILLAR enters the room from a door at the left, on her tiptoes, quietly closing the door. She stands for a moment listening at the door. She is a slender, almost frail,

young woman, in her simple house dress looking little more than a girl. She walks to the dining table and scans the classified ads in the open newspaper, checking some of them with a pencil. She glances over at the studio couch, sees the offending bit of bed clothing, and goes over and tucks it in. She crosses and again listens at the bedroom door. Then she moves to the radio, turns the switch, standing there until it speaks.

RADIO
ANNOUNCER:

--so Atkin's advises you to do your holiday buying now. Only eleven more shopping days till Christmas. (Pause) We continue with our morning musicale, bringing you the studio string ensemble, sponsored on this program by Atkin's Department Store. (Dramatically) It pays to buy from Atkin's!

(The string ensemble obediently plays some nice soft music for Mr. Atkin's customers. Lucille goes and resumes her study of the want ads, shaking her head, pursing her lips, biting the end of her pencil. The hall door opens and DAVID MILLAR slowly enters. He limps slightly. He stands looking at his young wife, who is not aware that he has come in.

David Millar is a tall young man in his middle twenties. In repose his face has a thoughtful, almost brooding, expression. He is wearing a checkered cap and a worn marine jacket. He wears a large ornate ring. Smiling slightly, he drops his cap on the floor and tiptoes over behind his wife, watching her for a moment. Raising his hands he swiftly blinds her eyes. Startled, she exclaims "Oh, David!" and they embrace.)

MILLAR:

How's the baby, Lucille? (He starts toward the bedroom.)

LUCILE:

David, don't disturb him. He's finally fallen asleep.

MILLAR:

(Frowning)

Poor little Davey--I guess his real trouble is--his old man

isn't bringing home the proper food for tiny tots. I should have saved some "K" rations. (Savagely) Damn it to hell!

LUCILLE:

Oh, David! Please don't start that again. (Cheerfully, trying to change the subject. She takes up the want ads and reads them brightly, with simulated enthusiasm) Look, David, they want an elevator operator over at the Krohl Building! (Millar stands watching her, half smiling, half frowning, his hands on his hips) And here! (Reading) "Wanted: Seven alert good-looking young men--" (Smiling up at her husband)--you've got enough good looks for a dozen bright young men--(she reads again) "--for an exceptional business opportunity. See Mr. Spitzer, Room 702, Peebles Building, between two and four." (She frowns and looks again) But oh, David, it says you must have a car. (Continuing rather lamely) And then out at the Morton plant they--

(Millar suddenly grabs the newspaper from her and crumples it into a ball. He is about to throw it from him when he smiles wryly, relaxing, speaking rather wearily) Oh, Lou. It's the same old crap. Can't you picture your great big handsome Davey, the ex-Marine, the proud possessor of the Purple Heart and the Silver Star--can't you see him all dressed up in gold braid, running an elevator in a building he once helped to build! Well, they've only got girl operators over there, anyway--pretty babes, like you. (Mockingly) Perhaps you'd better go and apply. Nice middle-aged building manager with nice fat tummy (He imitates one) would like to pinch Lucille's pretty little fanny. (He reaches over to pinch his wife, but she evades him.)

MILLAR:

LUCILLE:

(White-faced, tense)

Please, David, Don't! (Then, trying to laugh it off) I'm

glad Lucille's Davey still notices something nice about her.
(Pouting) He hasn't paid much attention to her lately.

MILLAR:

(Going on, his voice rising)

And little Mr. Spitzer over at room 702! What'll he want!
Just a seventy-dollar cash deposit for the deathless privilege of peddling his goddam vacuum cleaners or nylon hose-- now that they're off the black market. (Shouting) It's all crap, I say. Crap! (He looks down at his crippled leg)
Nobody wants a step-and-a-half marine with a plastic leg creaking around the place. (Ironically) It reminds them of rationing and buying bonds 'til it hurts... It makes 'em nervous. (Wonderingly, lowering his voice) Yeah, a guy just yesterday told me these overseas veterans all make him nervous. A nice guy, too. It--it seems we brood too much...

(Lucille stands facing her husband. They stare at each other. The radio has now switched to hill-billy music, accompanying a voice which sounds like a file. Millar glares at the radio.)

MILLAR:

Shut that damn thing off! You've got it on all the time. It's driving me nuts! Naw-huts, I say!

(Millar hunches up his body, clutches out his hands, contorts his face, and begins to lurch over to the radio like a movie monster fatally bent upon mischief. Lucille runs to the radio and switches it off. Millar instantly regains his composure. She turns and faces her husband.)

LUCILLE:

(Quietly)

I'm sorry, David, if it annoys you. (Smiling wanly) It gets pretty bad sometimes, doesn't it? (Frowning) It--I get so lonely, so frightened, when you're out looking for--when you're away. It's kind of company for me. But I guess it

won't be here to bother you much longer. Yesterday the credit man from Atkin's came and said he was afraid they'd have to take the radio away. We haven't made a payment in--

MILLAR:

(Savagely)

Over my dead body he will! (He raises his arm) I'll shoot the bastard first. I didn't mangle and pulverize a lot of unknown Japanese farmers and fishermen out on Iwo and the rest of those stinking islands so that Billy Atkin's old man--remember brave Billy and his flat feet?--he tried to date you when I was away (pointing at the radio)--so that Billy Atkin's old man could snatch away that obsolete dispenser of laxatives and hill-billy laments. Why, I--I'll... (He pauses and stares at the crumpled ball of newspaper he holds in his hand. Then gently he goes and places it on the table and walks to his wife, putting his arm about her.)

Oh, Lou, I'm such a heel--forgive me. You've been swell. I guess this things is finally getting me down. You know--you know, Lou--ever since I came back I've had a feeling--it's so hard to explain--a feeling that I am a stranger here--in this city, in this state, in this land...that somehow I don't belong here anymore...a feeling that the earth is about to burst into flame...that the whole bloody mess of a war was a futile rehearsal for nothing...that I should have stayed out on that last island--just stayed on until I was an old man, looking at the sea and tending the graves of Riley and Boback and all the rest. It--it's as though those lost boys out there are the only real things left in the world for me--that all the rest is only dream and shadow. (Shaking his head, bewildered) I don't think anybody knows, can understand...

(Still hugging her, he walks her to the studio couch where they both sit, silent and dejected, staring ahead. After a long pause, quietly, musingly)

I rode into this war like a shining knight astride a white charger... And I guess, Lou, I've slunk out of it like a bewildered bum on a spavined army mule...

LUCILLE: (Slowly, in a flat voice)

It will be all right. Our baby, David--it's got to be all right.

MILLAR: (Laughing bitterly, ironically)

I thought things like this only happened in cheap novels and the double-features. (Dramatically) Proud ex-Marine hero scorns government charity! Ex-Marine hero husband out of work--ex-Marine hero's baby is sick--ex-Marine hero's cupboard is bare--and his pet bill collectors are battering down the door. (Holding up a warning finger he pretends to listen) Hark! Methinks I hear Billy Atkin's ^{flat feet} pattering without. (Pause) But it's really happening, Lou--it's happening to us. All the bum novels and movies are coming true. (Throwing up a hand) All we need to make it perfect--so there isn't a dry seat in the house--is for me to start swiggling gin out of a tin dipper. (In a high falsetto, mocking a child reciting a piece) "Oh, father, dear father..."

LUCILLE: (Dully)

Why do you dwell on it, David? It doesn't help either of us for you to torture yourself so.

MILLAR: (Going doggedly on)

Last night I dreamed--Lucille, listen--I dreamed that there were too many people in the world--like you and me and our poor little kid in there--and that's why we'll always have

wars and depressions and more wars--so that crafty hag, Mother Nature, can quietly rid herself of all the culls and throwouts and misfits like me--that same disorderly she-bitch, Mother Nature, who tricked us into bringing poor little Davey into the world to share out joys! And now she has the atom bomb to hasten the job... (Rubbing his hands) Boy oh boy oh boy! That'll be good...

LUCILLE: (Trying to soothe him)

All we can do is wait, dear. I'm not complaining. Please try to be patient. (Simply) I love you. That's all I know or care about---

MILLAR: (Interrupting, bitterly, scornfully)

Wait! The meek shall inherit the earth! Balls! Age old soothing-syrup the poor and disinherited have obediently swallowed for centuries. Inherit indeed! Don't you see, Lou! That means when the rich, the strong have perished. The seekers and grabbers... For someone must die for one to inherit. (Pause) And they'll never die! Greed seems to have become man's dominant instinct on earth...

LUCILLE: (Raising her head, anxiously listening)

I think I hear--The baby just cried out, David.

MILLAR: (Rising)

I'll go and see.

LUCILLE: No, no, I will.

(Lucille hurries across the room and into the bedroom. Millar slowly paces the floor, limping, muttering inaudible curses to himself and savagely kicking out his artificial leg. He finally goes to the bookcase, abstractedly selects a volume, and returns to the couch, where he attempts to read. He glances up every few moments at the bedroom door.)

He arises, letting the book fall to the floor, as his wife emerges from the bedroom, closes the door, and stands, white-faced, looking at her husband.)

LUCILLE: (In a frightened voice)

David, we've got to have a doctor. Baby's been sick again. (Millar starts pacing the floor.) Oh, David, I'm afraid-- I'm afraid...

MILLAR: (Crossing the room)

Let me see him. Look! We'll take him to the clinic right away. They'll have to take him in.

LUCILLE: No, David, he is too sick. The baby is terribly sick now. I know--I know. (Half hysterically) Hurry, David. You must hurry! (Wildly) Oh why don't you let the veteran's bureau help you? (Almost wailing) How can you be so proud, so selfish? We need it, we need it...

(Millar puts his arms about his wife, and they silently stand there. His expression is hard and defiant. Suddenly he breaks away, speaking rapidly, excitedly, as he strides limping across the room, snatching up his cap.)

MILLAR: I'll get a doctor if I have to kidnap the bastard! And I won't have to sign a million government forms, either. There'll be no goddam public charity for Corporal Millar! (Clenching his fists) They --they can't do this to us. I can't stand it! (At the door he stoops and picks up two of the empty milk bottles. He turns to his wife.) I'll be back soon, darling. Don't you worry. (Awkwardly, tenderly) You--you play Mr. Atkin's radio while I'm gone--play it for you and little Davey. I don't mind it, really. (He turns and leaves.)

(Lucille leans against the wall, her hand to her head, numbly staring at the hall door as the curtain falls.)

CURTAIN

A C T O N E

SCENE II

SCENE:

The Millar apartment the early afternoon of the same day. It is nearing two-thirty. The radio is playing tremulous organ music, wrung from the console by the local station's ^{claimant of} candidate for the title of America's-beloved-poet-of-the-organ. The local "poet" is just concluding a throbbing rendition of Kilmer's "Trees," squeezing the last tear, the very last drop of sap, from the stricken "Trees."

Then--with a lightning change in mood which is at once the cause for joy and utter dismay over that fascinating, vulgar, amazing, beautiful, chaotic phenomenon, the American radio--there comes from the instrument the haunting opening measures of the second movement of Sibelius' First Symphony.

Lucille has in the meantime quietly come out of the bedroom and gone over and looked at the clock on the bookcase. She stands staring at the clock for a moment. It is nearly two-thirty. Then she goes and looks out the hall door, listening. She returns and finds a dust cloth and aimlessly starts to dust the apartment.

With brutal suddenness the radio chops off the music and sounds a chimes. It is two-thirty. Sibelius must perish promptly on the half hour.

RADIO
ANNOUNCER:

It is now two-thirty o'clock. The temperature is, unofficially, forty-eight degrees. At this time we bring you the latest news summary. (Pause)

Washington, D. C.: The President will confer with congressional leaders today to discuss the acute veterans' unemployment problem, which, it is reported, is now reaching

the highest peak since the end of the War. (The announcer rattles his dispatches. Lucille continues with her aimless dusting.)

Local News Flash: A daring armed robber held up Paulson's Bakery today at the peak of the noon hour rush and fled with one hundred and seventeen dollars. (Pause)

Olaf Paulson, proprietor, age 44, told police that the robber was about six feet tall, slender, and appeared to be in his middle twenties. (Pause. Lucille stands still, staring at the radio) He wore a checkered cap, an ornate ring on his left hand, and a worn military jacket. He walked with a pronounced limp. (Lucille, horrified, stares at the radio, which hums during the announcer's pause. The announcer continues)

Mothers, attention! Santa Claus will appear in person at the toy department at Fruehoff's commencing -- --

(Lucille runs and switches off the radio. She stands staring at the instrument. Then she slowly, absently starts to dust the radio, like one in a dream.

The hall door opens. Her husband, smiling broadly, enters laden with provisions. He is followed by a timid-appearing, thick-spectacled little doctor, who nervously closes the door and stands uncertainly looking about, shifting his medical kit from hand to hand. Lucille, fascinated, follows her husband with her eyes.

Millar limpingly strides to the dining-room table and begins to unload the provisions with a great, bountiful flourish, talking brightly, rapidly, as he does so.)

MILLAR:

Well, Lou, this is Doctor Curtis, the baby doctor--the best what's in the land--my wife, Doctor--Well, we're in luck, Honey--I'm bringing home the bacon--Your little Davey's beginning to get the breaks. Yup! (He holds up a bottle of

milk, views it with an appraising eye, and puts it down.)
--Doctor, the baby's in there, (He points) Wait a minute--
I want to see him a moment before you go in. Little old
Davey...

(Millar stalks to the bedroom and enters. Lucille still stands by the radio staring at the bedroom door. She has neither moved nor spoken. The doctor, bewildered, clears his throat and speaks in a timid, kindly voice.)

DOCTOR: What seems to be the trouble, Mrs. Millar?

(Lucille slowly turns her head, and her eyes finally focus on the doctor's. She speaks in a curiously flat, toneless voice.)

LUCILLE: Trouble. (It is not a question.)

DOCTOR: Is it the baby's stomach?--how old is the child?

LUCILLE: (Slowly pointing)

My baby is in there. His name is David. He is dying.
My baby is dying...

(The bewildered doctor hurries, trots, to the bedroom, meeting Millar coming out. Millar winks broadly at the doctor and closes the door after him. Smiling, he limps over to his wife and hugs her. She is stiff and unyielding.)

MILLAR: (Brightly)

Davey's lying there with his eyes open, Honey. His eyes are so still and bright--he looks better already. (Then soothingly) Oh, come on, Lou darling. Let's forget about this morning. (He reaches into his pocket and presses a bill into her hand. She lets it drop to the floor. She stares down at the money. Then she looks up at her husband and speaks in the same flat tone of voice.)

LUCILLE:

Where did you get all this? (She indicates the food and the money) Where did you get these things?

MILLAR: ✓

(glibly, airily)

We're getting the breaks, I tell you, Lou. Listen to the good news. When I left here this morning--boop!--I ran right into Charlie Young--you know, good old Charlie--we were in the same outfit in the Marines--it was like a miracle--and he says he thinks they can put me to work soon--right after the holidays, anyway. And the job's right down my alley. Why, Honey, Charlie was so sure he loaned me twenty-five bucks as an advance. Good ol' Charlie... What a break! (He tries to embrace her, but, retreating, she fends him off) Why, Lou, what's the mat-- --

LUCILLE:

Stop, David! You told me only last month Charlie Young is dying in the Marine hospital in Detroit. You even showed me a letter from him. Stop lying to me! (Pause) You've stolen, David--You've robbed! Your hateful radio just told me so--All the world will soon know that David Millar is a thief! (Scornfully) Corporal Millar, late of the United States Marines!

(Millar has knelt to retrieve the fallen bill.

He seems to shrink, grow smaller, at her words. He bows his head. Lucille quickly goes to him. She presses his head against her body. His checkered cap falls to the floor. She gently strokes his hair.)

LUCILLE:

Oh, my poor child. You've done this thing now. Oh, my poor, lost child. (Pause. Then she talks quickly) David, listen to me--They'll be here for you--Where did you put the money? And the--the gun? Speak to me. Oh, I must save you. Did

you hide them? (He nods his head) Good. Here, give me that hideous Japanese ring. (Distractedly) Why would you want to wear a dead man's ring!

(She wrests the ring from his finger and puts it in the pocket of Millar's jacket. There is a loud knock on the hall door. Lucille pushes David from her, and tears the jacket from his back. She motions him to sit at the dining-room table, where he goes dejectedly pretending to read the paper. Lucille, running to him, tilts his chin up and slaps his face. Millar sits up, admiringly smiling. Still running, she grabs up the cap and hides both it and the jacket behind the couch. There is another loud knock. Lucille snatches up her dust cloth and, humming a current tune, runs to open the door. Two police officers enter, one in plain clothes, accompanied by Paulson, the baker, still in his apron.)

LUCILLE: (Smiling calmly)

I'm sorry, gentlemen, I didn't hear you. Were you-- --

PAULSON: (Excitedly pointing at Millar)

Dere is da feller, Mister Police. *Ay followed him.* Dere is da vun. Ay would know him out of vun million odders--even vitout his cap and yacket. Ya, he has dose burning eyes.

MILLAR: (Laughing, but without too much mirth)

What've you got, officers?--an escape?

PAULSON: Search out his pockets! Ay can tell my money--dere vere little marks on dem.

OFFICER: (Quietly)

Is your name David Millar?

MILLAR: (Seemingly puzzled)

Why-- --yes, it is. Can I-- --

OFFICER:

We've come to arrest you for the armed robbery of the Paulson Bakery at twelve-forty-five this noon. You'll have to come with us. Where's your gun? (The uniformed officer has his hand on his holster.)

MILLAR:

(Arising and advancing, trying manfully not to limp, laughing)
Gun! Of course not. You may search me if you like. This is funny...

LUCILLE:

(Running between her husband and the police, talking gaily)
I'm afraid you've made a mistake, officers. Of course you've got your work, I know. But my husband has been home all morning--he just left here a little while ago to get the doctor. You know, our baby's been quite upset. Hasn't he, David?

(The officers look questioningly at Paulson, who stands accusingly sighting along his finger at Millar, squinting, vigorously nodding his head.)

✓
PAULSON:

Dere vere da ^hotief, Ay tell you. Dere vere da ^hotief!

✓
(The bedroom door slowly opens, and the doctor, with his shirtsleeves rolled up, timidly emerges, blinking, gingerly holding an automatic pistol in one hand and a wadded roll of currency in the other. Lucille runs toward him, but it is too late.)

PAULSON:

(Croaking hoarsely with excitement, wagging his finger, shaking his head)
Dere are my money! Dint Ay tell you, Shief. Dint Ay tell you!

DOCTOR:

(To Lucille, apologetically)
I--I beg your pardon, Mrs. Millar--ah--but I just found these things under the mattress of the baby's crib--ah--and I thought--(he laughs lamely) they'd be safer somewhere else. (He appears to see the officers for the first

time) Oh, I am intruding. There--I must get back to the baby. Very sick--very sick...

OFFICER: (Advancing)

I'll take those, Doctor. Just a minute!

PAULSON: (Yelling now)

Okay, okay, okay! Dere vere little marks on dat money, Shief. Ay put dem dere myself, Ay did.

OFFICER: (Taking the money and the pistol from the doctor)

What time did Millar call for you, Doctor?

DOCTOR: (Looking around, perplexed and greatly distressed)

I'm so sorry, Mrs. Millar--(to the officer) Why let's see, it was, let's see--

OFFICER: ✓ Your office girl told us you left at two. Come now, think Doctor! How was Millar dressed?

MILLAR: Cut out the buffoonery, men--you've got me. You'll get front page notices for this. Don't pile it on 'til you see the reporters. Let's get out of here and let the doctor work. My kid is sick as hell.

LUCILLE: Oh, David, David! (Millar limps to the couch and retrieves his cap and jacket. He puts them on. Paulson, triumphant, points at Millar, looks at the officers, gulping and nodding speechlessly all the while. Millar steps up to the officers, and they fall in at his side. They open the door.) Wait! (Lucille goes over near the radio, retrieves the fallen bill and takes it to Paulson, handing it to him. Quietly) This is yours.

PAULSON: (Blinking, holding the bill in his hand)

Ay am sorry, Girly. (Widening his hands) But Ay need my money, too. Ay got small shildren, too, Ay got. (Softly, slowly) An' Ay hope your baby hurry up an' get better real quvick, Ay do. (Pause.)

MILLAR:

Thanks, Doc, for coming here with me. Please try and save the kid--save him for Lucille. (He swallows) Don't let him croak, Doc. (He looks at his wife) Goodbye, Lou girl. I guess you're getting the breaks at last--getting rid of me. (In a low voice) I'm sorry, kid. I love you and I'm sorry. (Pointing at the food on the table, smiling wanly) You might just as well eat it, Lou. It came plenty high.

(As they turn to leave, Lucille, sobbing, runs and throws her arms about her husband as the curtain falls.)

CURTAIN

B U S Y F I N G E R S

A C T T W O

S C E N E I

SCENE:

A courtroom, seven years later. The second act opens in the midst of the trial of DAVID MILLAR, a convict, for the murder of a fellow prison inmate, Joe Krause. Millar is already serving a sentence of life imprisonment for armed robbery.

As the curtain rises everyone is in his place except the JUDGE. The young prosecutor, LOTT, is seated at his counsel table in whispered conference with the WARDEN of the Prison. The Warden is a large, thick-necked, square-jawed man who wears horn-rimmed spectacles. Sitting behind the Warden, in uniform, is SAM, the Warden's personal bodyguard, a fat man.

The state's star witness, STANLEY ZABORSKI, an inmate, is seated in the witness chair. Clad in gray denim, wearing steel-rimmed spectacles, he sits there, disdainfully indifferent to all about him. He is a thin, long-faced, monk-like looking individual of about forty-five.

The jury is seated in the jury box fronting the audience, in the middle and rear of the courtroom. The judge's bench is to the right, at a right angle to the jury box, but nearer the front than the jury. The witness stand is between the judge's bench and the jury.

The two counsel tables are considerably in front of the jury, at opposite oblique angles. Prosecutor Lott is sitting at the right of the right table. On his table is a mass of papers, photographs, brief cases, some law books, a large pair of shears, scratch pads, a water pitcher and several tumblers.

The defendant, DAVID MILLAR, is seated alone at the left of the left table. His head is resting in his right hand, elbow on the table, his face turned toward the jury. He is clean shaven, with a shock of unruly dark hair, streaked with grey, which he keeps pushing out of his eyes. He is clad in a gray denim shirt, tieless, and buttoned at the throat, trousers of the same material, and is wearing a pair of clumsy, heavy-soled work shoes.

On his table is a pitcher of water, a drinking glass, a large pad of note paper and a pencil. Arranged near him, on his table, are a number of paper dolls, flowers, hats and paper gliders that he has folded, made, during the course of the trial.

The JUDGE comes swishing out of his chambers, from a door at the rear of the stage, between the jury box and the bench, slowly ascends the bench and stands before his chair. The BAILIFF, who sits below him, near the witness stand, ^{arises and} pounds his gavel and everyone arises. The bailiff intones: "Hear ye, hear ye, hear ye! This honorable court is now in session." Everyone is seated. The CLERK announces: "Continuing with the trial of People versus David Millar. The charge: Murder."

The Judge wipes his pinch-glasses with a handkerchief, carefully adjusts them, and consults some notes before him. Looking at PROSECUTOR LOTT, he clears his throat and speaks.

JUDGE: When we adjourned this noon the People had just called the witness Stanley--ah--Stanley-- --

LOTT: Zaborski, your Honor.

JUDGE: Thank you, Mr. Prosecutor. Are the People ready to proceed?

LOTT: We are, your Honor. (Lott walks up near the witness, standing between him and the Judge's bench, so that he is facing both the witness and the jury. He turns and speaks to the clerk.) Was this witness sworn this morning? (The clerk nods yes, and Lott turns to the witness.) Your name, please?

WITNESS: Stanley Zaborski. (He has a somewhat affected voice, with considerable lip movement, elaborately enunciating each word.)

LOTT: Where do you reside?

WITNESS: (Drawing back, hurt, offended)

Why, as you know--in the prison of course. (Pointing at the Warden) The Warden there can tell you--I'm one of the most trusted inmates of the institution. (He basks in the light of the Warden's nodding agreement.)

LOTT: Do you know the defendant, David Millar?

(For the first time, MILLAR seems to take some interest in the proceedings. He takes his hand from his head and sits up facing the WITNESS. The witness takes one quick look at him and hurriedly glances away.)

WITNESS: I do.

LOTT: Did you know the deceased inmate, Joseph Krause, during his lifetime?

WITNESS: (Confidently)

I did. He was a very valued friend--a true gentleman.

LOTT: Were you working in the prison overall factory the afternoon Krause was killed?

WITNESS: I was.

LOTT: Were Krause and Millar working in the same factory that afternoon?

WITNESS: They were.

LOTT: What time did you leave the factory?

WITNESS: About four o'clock, post meridian.

LOTT: In the afternoon?

WITNESS: I have just told you so.

LOTT: How did the men leave the factory?

WITNESS: In single file.

LOTT: How many inmates were in the line?

WITNESS: (Reprovingly)
As the prison authorities testified here this morning,
there were seventeen.

LOTT: (Looking at the Judge)
Will his Honor please speak to the witness?

JUDGE: Proceed, Mr. Lott.
(The WITNESS smirks at LOTT.)

LOTT: Where were you in the line?

WITNESS: I was in the rear, Millar was ahead of me, and Mr. Krause
was about five men ahead of him.

LOTT: Will you tell the jury what you saw take place after the
men left the overall factory?

WITNESS: (Drawing back)
You mean, all the horrible details? Everything?

LOTT: (Through his teeth, restraining himself)
Will you please tell the jury what you saw, Mr. Zaborski?

WITNESS: (Looking at the Warden, then smiling)
I should be delighted. Delighted, indeed, Mr. Prosecutor.
(As ZABORSKI turns and sits facing the jury,
LOTT resumes his seat at his table. The defendant, MILLAR,
leisurely takes a drink of water and then quietly proceeds
to make another paper hat.)

JUDGE: The witness will proceed.

WITNESS: (Glancing. Smiling)

Yes, your Honor. (Turning again to the jury) You see, gentlemen, it was this way. (Clearing his throat, he immediately assumes a tragic tone of voice, beginning in a low voice and gradually mounting in pitch, speed, and volume. His big moment has arrived.) As I have told you, we were leaving the rag-house--(glancing quickly at the Warden)--I mean the overall factory. I was behind Millar, and he was behind Mr. Krause. We were crossing the prison yard. A flock of pigeons flew over us. (Like a radio poet) The shadows of the sinking sun. The hush of eventide. At peace with the world.

(Pause. Then rapidly)

Suddenly Millar dropped out of line, on his hands, on his knees. (Faster) He scuttled, turtle-wise, up to Mr. Krause. I saw him raise his arm--the gleam of shining metal--(low-voiced) and then--(shrilly) and then--he plunged a long metal object into the side of poor Mr. Krause! (Pause) Ah, it was horrible. Horrible! (He shakes his head at the memory. Then rapidly) I ran up to my dying comrade--there was a pair of pulsing overall shears protruding from his side. (Voice rising) Shears swathed in gray denim--and in blood! The guards were running up, but, alas! before they arrived my poor friend gurgled (he gurgles, clutching his side and his throat) and was gone. Gone!

(The WITNESS bows his head, closing his eyes.

His grief is boundless. The JURY coughs and shifts restlessly. There is a long pause. The plump juror on the corner, nearest the witness, has sat open-mouthed during this recital. He now

feverishly mops his head and neck. The witness finally raises his head, entirely composed, and sits smiling, facing the WARDEN. PROSECUTOR LOTT comes forward, carrying a pair of shears.)

LOTT: (Handing the shears to the witness)

I show you People's Exhibit A, a pair of metal shears. Do you recognize them?

WITNESS: (Minutely examining the shears)

Yes, I certainly do.

LOTT: Where did you last see them?

WITNESS: (Almost sobbing)

In the side of my poor, poor friend, Joseph Krause.

(He puts his hand to his brow.)

LOTT: (Turning to Millar)

Do you have any questions? (Millar slowly shakes his head no. Lott faces the Judge) Your Honor, the People rest.

(The WITNESS stalks from the stand and takes a seat near SAM, the Warden's guard.)

JUDGE: (To Millar)

David Millar, the People have now concluded their case, and it now devolves upon you to call such witnesses as you may have. While you may take the stand in your own behalf, I should warn you that if you do, anything you say may be used for or against you. Do you understand that? (Millar gravely nods his head.) And do you still insist upon acting as your own attorney, instead of having a public defender appointed by the court? (Again Millar nods.) Then you may proceed.

(MILLAR stands up. He looks thoughtfully down at the paper flowers and things he has made. During the seven years in prison he has grown pale and slightly stooped. He slowly limps over to the Prosecutor's table, bows slightly, and takes up the shears. He walks a little forward and stops before the Judge. He bows low. Then he turns to the jury. It has grown very quiet in the courtroom.)

MILLAR:

(Slowly)

May it please your Honor, and gentlemen of the jury. My name is David Millar. I am thirty-three years old. I have spent the last seven years of a life sentence in this same county with you--and none of you has heard of my existence until now. (His rich low voice, a sort of hollow, resonant baritone, sounds as though he were speaking in an empty chamber.)

How I came to be in prison probably will not interest any of you. By now you have heard far too much of those war veterans who could not seem to resume their places in their communities when they came back--I think psychic maladjustment is the current sixty-four dollar word for it; ^{men} who appear to live in a sort of dream world; who no longer seem to be able to work with their hands (flexing his fingers); of young wives and sweethearts who can no longer understand the quiet madness of these strangers who ^{have had come home} ~~came back~~ to them.

Yes, you have greatly wearied of hearing of these men--our soldiers and sailors; our marines and all the rest--some of whom left home as mere boys--you have wearied of hearing of their desperation, their brooding, their sense of unreality and utter aloneness, and of their fierce, foolish

pride that has made many of them scornfully refuse the money and assistance ^{that} you would so gladly give them... How these same men--who had never wronged or stolen in their lives--^{now} calmly go out and rob and ^{thieve} and batter their fellows, and take a wild delight in it. (Pause)

Such a man (indicating himself) stands before you today. (Bowing his head) God help me, I am one of them...

(Millar pauses, and looks gravely around at young Prosecutor Lott, as though to see if he is listening. Then he faces the jury again, taking a few steps forward.)

Yes, I am a common jail-bird, a convict. But I still like to suppose, to hope, that the only real difference between us is: I am behind the bars. And you?--that the strange forces of environment, of life--of war!--have not put you there--yet! (Lowering his voice, as though musing to himself) As I stand here now you see everything I possess in this world. My wife and child are gone. (Pause) I have nothing. Not even a decent excuse for being here today.

What you may decide here, then, will scarcely affect my lot. (Earnestly) Believe me, my fellowmen, I do not care what you think of me, or what your verdict is, so long as you--you free ones--feel right about it in your hearts! It is the heart that must count, or we are all lost... (While Millar has been saying this last he has been balancing the shears, and feeling the grip; opening and closing them and feeling the blade.) The People say I killed a man--a fellow prisoner--with these shears. I think I can show you they have not proven it. (Turning slightly toward the Judge) I should like to call Stanly Zaborski as my witness.

LOTT: (Leaping to his feet)
I object, your Honor. The defendant has just refused to examine this witness.

JUDGE: (To Lott, in a kindly voice)
But the defendant may make him his own witness. A young attorney so recently out of law school should surely still remember that. (Smiling slightly) You have just momentarily forgotten, that is all.

LOTT: (Gamely)
Why yes, your Honor. I guess I was too--too anxious.
(LOTT sits down and gulps a glass of water.
The witness ZABORSKI stalks to the stand, making a wide arc, however, around MILLAR, who is still holding the shears. He takes his seat and defiantly faces Millar.)

MILLAR: (In a low voice)
Now, Stan, you wouldn't mind telling us more about yourself, would you?

WITNESS: (Snapping his reply)
Not a bit!

MILLAR: (Easily)
What did you use to do before you came to--to live with us?

WITNESS: (Trying to look around Millar at the Warden. The Warden whispers to Lott. Lott shakes his head no.) Ah-- --

JUDGE: (Sharply)
The witness will answer.

WITNESS: (Evasively)
I--I don't remember the question?

JUDGE: (To reporter)
Read the question.

REPORTER: (Reading his notes)
"What did you use to do before you came to live with us?"

WITNESS: (Defiantly again)
Oh, that. Why, I was a kind of a priest.

MILLAR: (Softly, in mock surprise)
Just a kind of a priest?

WITNESS: I was a priest.

MILLAR: (In wonderment)
Oh! A real honest-to-God priest?

WITNESS: (Scowling)
You heard me.

MILLAR: And how was it they came to put you in prison, Father?

WITNESS: (Loftily)
Only a little trouble with a young lady--all a great misunderstanding. (Shrugging) A matter of little moment, really.

MILLAR: (Leaning forward)
And how old was this little lady, Father?

LOTT: I object!

JUDGE: (Still looking at the witness)
Take the answer.

WITNESS: (Fawning up at the Judge)
Must I really answer that, Judge? All this is so kind of personal.

JUDGE: (Grimly)
You must answer.

WITNESS: (Facing Millar. Stumbling)
Why a-- --they a-- --they said she was only fourteen.
(Brightly blinking and nodding to the Judge) But she was

a big girl, really she was. (Closing his eyes, wetting his lips. Softly, slowly) Ah, such a fine big girl...

MILLAR: (Looking quickly around at Lott, faintly smiling. Then back at the witness)

At your trial you claimed you were insane, did you not, Father?

WITNESS: (Smiling)

Yes, I did. (The smile vanishes) I mean, they told me later I did.

MILLAR: (Softly)

And that didn't work, did it, Father?

WITNESS: (Angrily)

No. You know it didn't. I've told you many times it didn't. You're violating a gentleman's confidence.

MILLAR: (Going swiftly, quietly on)

Now the real fact is, the whole case against you was a pack of lies, wasn't it? They framed you, didn't they, Father?

WITNESS: (Brightening, in surprised agreement, considerably relieved)

Why, yes, Mill--yes--that's just what they did. (He frowns and sighs at the thought of his injustice.)

MILLAR: (Slowly backing up towards his table)

Just as they're trying to frame me here today, isn't that right?

WITNESS: (Defiantly again)

You killed Joe Krause.

MILLAR: (Low voiced. Balancing the shears, shut)

Father, you say I drove these shears into Joe?

WITNESS: Yes.

MILLAR: (The shears now open)

You say I ran out of the line and punctured Joe--with these very shears?

WITNESS:

(Loudly)

Yes--yes.

MILLAR:

Father, what were some of Joe's other names?--little pet nicknames, you know.

(The WITNESS looks at the WARDEN and then at the enchanted fat juror, whose mouth is open, rapt.)

WITNESS:

(In a low voice)

Sometimes they called him The Wolf. Those who didn't like him. He was greatly misunderstood. Vastly.

MILLAR:

And what else?

WITNESS:

Joe the Squealer.

MILLAR:

Why did they call him that, Father?

WITNESS:

(Nervously)

He'd run to the screws--hah--the guards, with everything.

MILLAR:

And someone killed poor old Joe?

WITNESS:

(Breathing deeply)

Yes-- --you killed Joe-- --I saw you--I saw you!

(MILLAR slowly walks back to his table and leisurely pours and drinks a glass of water. The WITNESS, breathing deeply, sits with his white knuckles gripping and gripping his chair, staring at MILLAR. MILLAR walks back, moving close to the witness.)

MILLAR:

(Swiftly)

Poor old Joe. It was bad they got him, wasn't it?

WITNESS:

(Louder, quicker)

No--no. He was a lousy stool. But you killed him.

(Pointing) You limped. You were the only one that limps. I saw you--I saw you...

MILLAR:

(His voice is low, like a lullaby, a caress)

Now put yourself back there that afternoon, Father.
The pigeons flying--the setting sun slanting against
the prison walls. And poor old Joe up there ahead,
all red-necked and unsuspecting; me back of him; and
you behind me. (Pause) Have you got it, Father?

WITNESS:

(His chin has nearly sunk to his chest)

Yes, yes, yes.

MILLAR:

(Louder. Full, rich, passionate. An aria.)

Father, how did I kill Joe? Did I twist the shears in
him this way--(illustrating)--or did I drive them straight
in!--right up to the hilt! (Millar had somehow lurched,
stumbled toward the witness.)

WITNESS:

(Shrilling like a pig)

No, no, no! (Chattering) It wasn't you, Mill. No,
no. I made it all up. It's all a goddamned lie.
(Stammering) You--you didn't get Joe--the dirty lousy
squealer. I--I-- --I don't know who did. (Wailing)
Mill, I don't know! I don't know...(His open jaw quivers.
With his two hands he pushes his jaw shut. He sits there
sobbing, cowering, quivering)

(MILLAR walks back and places the shears on
Lott's table. He grins down at Lott, quickly winking
at him. Then, swiftly composing his expression, he takes
a few steps back, and turns to the JURY, pointing at the
abject ZABORSKI trembling in the witness chair.)

MILLAR:

(Softly)

They don't know the poor old Father like I do. They
haven't lived with him. To know him is to love him.
They don't know that he sometimes gets sick here(tapping

his head) and dreams--and dreams...

(Louder) And why should I kill Krause with a scissors!
Why should an old devil Marine like me be so messy when our government took such great pains to teach me so many lovely ways to kill a man with my bare hands. (He stares down at his hands.) Neat but not gaudy ways. (Slowly) No, like ^{so} many of you back here, the poor Father has led too sheltered a life. He doesn't know about the modern improvements to murder... (Musingly) He doesn't know how easy it is to snap the slender thread of life. He doesn't know how little a mere individual counts anymore... He doesn't know... (Millar bows his head. Then he stands straight, half facing the Judge, low voiced, throwing his hands out from his side.) That is all. That is my case.

(A profound sigh whistles throughout the courtroom, like escaping steam--a coughing, a mopping of brows, and much shifting in seats. The fat juror is in great distress. MILLAR takes his seat, drinks some water, and then quietly starts making a paper glider, showing no apparent interest in the rest of the proceedings. SAM, the guard, comes and leads the terrified ZABORSKI, by the arm, out the rear door.)

JUDGE:

(Looking at Prosecutor Lott)

Is there any rebuttal?

(The WARDEN leans over and whispers earnestly to LOTT, nodding his head vigorously.)

LOTT:

Yes, your Honor. I should like to call the Warden of the Prison. (The Warden is sworn and takes the stand. Millar continues folding his paper.) You're the warden of the state penitentiary located in this county?

WITNESS:

(Firmly)

I am.

LOTT:

And as such did you have occasion to cause a large number of witnesses, all inmates, to be brought here today, at the subpoena and request of the defendant, Millar?-- to testify for him?

WITNESS:

I did. (Waving out at the audience) There are over forty of them back there now, under heavy guard. Millar said they were all eye witnesses. (Then triumphantly, looking significantly from the Judge to the jury) And, mind you, there were only seventeen men in that line that day--the day Millar murdered Mr. Krause, and he has not called even one of them! (He looks accusingly at Millar, who does not look up.)

LOTT:

How was Millar's general conduct in prison?

WITNESS:

(Eagerly and rapidly)

I consider him the most vicious, dangerous man in the entire institution!

MILLAR:

(Quietly. Not looking up)

I beg to object, your Honor--and move that the question and answer be stricken. My reputation and character have not been properly put in issue at this trial.

JUDGE:

(Looking severely at the Prosecutor and the witness)

The objection is most certainly sustained! (To the reporter) You will strike the question and answer.

(To the jury) And the jury will entirely disregard the question and the answer. (To Lott) Mr. Lott, do you have any further relevant rebuttal?

(The WARDEN smiles falsely up at the JUDGE and then glares malevolently over at MILLAR, who is placidly folding his papers.)

LOTT:

(Flustered)

Yes--I mean-- --I guess that's all. No, no further rebuttal, you Honor.

JUDGE:

(To Millar)

Do you have any questions?

MILLAR:

(After a pause, looking up surprised)

Why no, your Honor. (Shaking his head) I have said all I have to say.

JUDGE:

The prosecuting attorney will then proceed with his argument.

(Young PROSECUTOR LOTT, obviously flustered, motions the WARDEN to leave the stand. They hold a hurried whispered conference at Lott's table, Lott snatching up papers, keeping some, discarding others. He grabs the shears and rapidly walks up before the JURY and begins his argument.)

LOTT:

Your Honor and gentlemen of the jury: It was difficult for me to try this case with a man who would not have an attorney--who is not trained in the law. (Several of the jurors grin openly at this, and most of them look at Millar, who is calmly rearranging his exhibit of paper flowers, hats, and what not.)

I submit that the evidence clearly shows that the defendant, David Millar, deliberately murdered Joseph Krause on the day in question. (The curtain starts slowly to descend.) Why, we have the sworn testimony of a man of the cloth against the mere word of this man (pointing with the shears) who has blandly admitted to you that he once robbed his fellows to live. (Millar shifts a paper hat for a glider. Lott turns back to the jury.)

4 (Earnestly) I was in the military service, too. I was overseas, too--just a kid. I saw men kill and be killed. But I came back and went on with my law course. I don't make paper hats and dolls. And I don't feel desperate and alone-- (Wavering) I--I don't think I do... (Pause, then oratorically) I don't think the world owes me a living because I once fought for my country... (Lott pauses and continues rather wildly)

We must have justice! We must not let an injustice go unpunished. (The curtain drops still lower. Millar is now calmly looking at Lott, half smiling. The entire jury is watching Millar now, absorbed.) We cannot, must not, let men decide for themselves when they may kill their fellows. (The curtain has nearly fallen. Lott is shouting, waving the shears, now, rushing on frantically.) We must have justice-- --must preserve ^Nsac_Xtity of human life-- --justice-- --law-- -- order--Must have justice! --Justice! -- ^{Justice!} Justice! -- -- (The curtain has fallen. Lott's voice can still be heard.)

CURTAIN

B U S Y F I N G E R S

A C T T H R E E

S C E N E I

SCENE:

The WARDEN'S office, three months later. It is nighttime. The Warden is alone, sitting at his desk, anchored to a fat cigar. He is examining a large key through a reading glass. There are several black-jacks and a crudely made pistol lying on the desk. On one side of the desk stands a tall brass cuspidor. The Warden pauses occasionally, removes his cigar, and casually directs some target practice at this object, with indifferent success. In the background are a number of steel filing cabinets, on one of which stands the model of a sailing ship.

On the walls are photographs of prison baseball and football teams. There is a picture of the President and one of Abraham Lincoln. On the Warden's desk is a large silver-framed photograph, presumably of the governor, on which there are scrawled in big letters some appropriate words of endearment that politicians employ, one to the other. At the rear is a large panelled wooden door on which are printed the words: TO CELL BLOCKS.

PROSECUTOR LOTT comes in from the left, carrying two books. He is accompanied by SAM, the guard. Sam bustles over and takes a position near the Warden, importantly shifting his holster, so that the Warden is flanked on one side by Sam and on the other by the brass cuspidor. Lott and the Warden shake hands, the Warden remaining seated.

WARDEN:

(Briskly)

I'm sorry to have to call you down here this late at night, Mr. Prosecutor, but we've got to get to the bottom of this plot at once. And you can help us.

LOTT: (Smiling)
What plot is that?

WARDEN: A plot to escape. (He lowers his voice and his head, glancing furtively from left to right. Sam glances with him.) And the dope is they were going to get me on the way out.

LOTT: H'm. That is bad. Why, of course, I'll help if I can.
(Pointing at the desk) What's that?

WARDEN: Nearly completed pistol made of a tobacco tin and lead foil.

LOTT: And these? (He weighs one in his hand.)

WARDEN: Black-jacks. (He reflectively rubs the back of his head.)
Made from the foil of shaving and toothpaste tubes.

LOTT: (Picking up the large key and holding it up to the light)
What's the key for?

WARDEN: Fits Millar's cell-block. Same stuff.

LOTT: Millar!

WARDEN: Yes, Millar. We caught the bastard cold turkey this time-- found all these things on him. (Lott starts back.) No, no. Don't be alarmed, I won't ask you to try to convict him for it. But I thought you could help us.

LOTT: Millar? How can I help you?

WARDEN: We're trying to find out if he was alone in this deal. He won't talk to us. But the bastard likes you--he told us so after the jury came out and said "NOT GUILTY."
(Grinning) You remember that little trial we had, don't you?

LOTT: (Smiling ruefully) Can I ever forget it?

WARDEN: Well--we thought you could help us. He'll talk to you.

LOTT: (Uncertainly)
Why-- --it's funny it should be Millar....
(Holding out the two books he is carrying) I had brought these down for him-- -- --

WARDEN:

(Interrupting)

Fine. Fine! That'll give you an in--gain his confidence.
(Grinning slyly. Sam grins with him.) You see how it is?
You see how it is, Mr. Lott? (Sam the guard has been
gradually inching over until he is very close to the Warden.
The Warden suddenly turns on Sam, exclaiming petulantly) For
Christ's sake, Sam, don't sit on my lap! (Sam, crushed,
bounces back, re-arranges his artillery, slowly composes
his ruffled dignity.)

LOTT:

(Slowly, still uncertainly, to no one in particular)

Yes...I would like to see the man...this man, Millar.

(To the Warden) How did you know--how did you catch him?

WARDEN:

(Wagging his finger at Lott, grinning)

You lawyers are always asking questions.

LOTT:

(Somewhat sharply)

Well, if you don't want to-- --

WARDEN:

(Interrupting, placatingly)

There, there, Mr. Prosecutor. Sometimes the tender little
shoots of the prison grapevine--(He points, grinning, at
the door into the prison)--come trailing right in that
door.

LOTT:

(Frowning, and more sharply)

Cut out the riddles! Who squealed on Millar?

WARDEN:

(Still slyly grinning)

You see, this is a place of lasting friendships. For
example, there is that beautiful friendship that exists
between Millar and our friend Stanley Zaborski, the ex-
clergyman...

LOTT:

(Relaxing, and smiling somewhat)

So old sourpuss squealed on Millar?

WARDEN: (In mock reproof)
If you must employ such harsh words--yes.

LOTT: Where's Millar?

WARDEN: (Briskly)
Been in solitary confinement-- --since our basket-luncheon up in court.

LOTT: Why do you keep him in the bull pen?

WARDEN: (Smilingly shocked)
You will call a spade a spade, won't you? (Seriously)
Lott, we must discipline the bastard. He's smart and dangerous. We've got to break him. (Smiling again, and tilting back in his chair) And as dean of this exclusive finishing school I must sustain the morale of my other little charges. And their morals, too. Got to watch their development through the three stages: adolescence, puberty, adultery, you know. Impressionable little fellows.

(SAM grins broadly and appreciatively over this exchange, again edging close to the WARDEN, who sends him scuttling with a frown. LOTT stands half perplexed, half scowling, through this proceeding.)

LOTT: (Slowly, in a low voice)
I'd like to see this man, Millar. (Louder) Yes, I'll see him. Can I see him alone, tonight?

WARDEN: (Turning to Sam)
Sam! Take Mr. Lott out to the Pen to see Millar.

SAM: (Electrified, bustling like an old woman herding geese)
Yes, Sir. Right away, Sir, Mr. Warden. (Sam shoos Lott over to the door marked: TO CELL BLOCKS. Sam pushes a button on the side of the door. Lott stands, with his

back to the Warden and Sam, waiting, looking at one of the photographs on the wall by the door. The Warden silently beckons Sam back to his desk and, still sitting, whispers in his ear, unseen by Lott. Sam nods his head vigorously.)
Yes, Sir, Mr. Warden, I'll listen to every -- -- -- (The Warden jabs Sam in the ribs, as Lott, hearing Sam's voice, turns and looks at them wonderingly, but uncomprehendingly.)

WARDEN:

(To Sam, blandly)

And have the big car at my door at nine in the morning.

SAM:

Car? (The fog lifts.) Yes, of course, at nine in the morning.

(The door is opened by a uniformed and armed guard, from the other side, revealing a steel barred second door which the first door has hidden. *At* LOTT and SAM are about to pass into the prison proper, the WARDEN speaks to LOTT.)

WARDEN:

(Smiling)

By the way, Mr. Prosecutor--(Lott turns)--after the trial, after Millar's acquittal, on the way back to the institution, Millar told one of the guards there were four Methodists and two Baptists on the jury. *

LOTT:

(Wonderingly)

Methodists? Baptists? (Then smiling wryly) Was he right?

WARDEN:

(Gleefully)

Hell, no. The bastard missed one Baptist--I checked it later myself.

(The WARDEN laughs uproariously as LOTT, waving goodbye and smiling ruefully, passes into the prison, followed by SAM and the other GUARD, who slowly closes the door. The Warden stands there alone, laughing uncontrollably, holding his belly.)

CURTAIN

A C T T H R E E

SCENE II

SCENE:

The prison bull pen, ten minutes later. The entire stage is the bull pen, a high, dark stone chamber. Out of the right wings immerges the comparatively low cell block, like a series of connected cages set in the large room. The cell block runs out to about the center of the bull pen. The cells are very narrow. Millar's cell is the corner one at the left end, in the center of the stage. It has open bars in the front and around the corner. The third and fourth walls of his cell are covered with steel plates.

A strong spotlight plays on Millar's cell. The cell to the right of his is completely covered with canvas. There is also a spotlight playing on the steel-plated door into the bull pen, situated on the right wall, in front of the cell block. The large chamber is a violent contrast of light and shadow.

MILLAR can be seen lying face down in his cell, his head on his arm, resting on some wooden planks. The only other objects in his cell are a galvanized water pail and a seatless toilet. Intermittent snores, yawns, groans and coughs of unseen inmates can be heard during the entire scene.

The door into the bull pen is opened and SAM enters, followed by LOTT. They stand there silently. The place is throbbingly quiet, like a forest hush at night. The entrance spotlight accompanies Lott and Sam as they slowly walk to Millar's cell. The moving spotlight momentarily discloses the entire cell block as they

walk along. Most of the cells are covered with canvas. As Sam and Lott advance, the moving spotlight discloses an inmate clinging to the bars of his cell, high up, arms and legs spread, like a great bat. He stares the visitors out of sight. Lott does not see him. This inmate remains thus during the entire scene. Most of the other inmates are lying down. One of them, the third cell from Millar's, can be seen noiselessly pacing rapidly back and forth in his cell. He pays no attention to the visitors. He can be dimly seen padding back and forth, catlike, during the entire scene.

Millar does not move as Sam and Lott reach his cell. Sam carefully looks in at Millar. Then Sam, whispering to Lott, gesticulating, pointing at Millar, Lott, himself, and behind Millar's cell, tiptoes around the rear of Millar's cell and out of sight. Lott stands there, tightly holding the books he brought for Millar.

LOTT: (Softly)

Millar. (Millar does not move. Louder.) Millar!

(MILLAR stands up, blinks his eyes, but otherwise does not seem surprised. The man has changed. He has a straggly beard and moustache. He is thinner, paler, and seems at once taller and more stooped. He is dressed in a one-piece skin-tight buttonless gray denim coverall, which fits him like a suit of underwear. The sleeves and legs are too short. A portion of his artificial leg is exposed. Millar comes limping forward and thrusts both hands through the bars of his cell, clasping LOTT'S hand warmly.)

MILLAR: (Smiling, speaking in his low rich baritone voice)
Hello, Lott. I'm so glad you came. I've been expecting you.

LOTT: How long you been here?

MILLAR: (Still smiling)
Ninety-one days. Ever since that day, Lott, the day we met.

LOTT: Yes, Millar, I've wanted to ask you--why did you subpoena all those inmates as your witnesses--and then not use any of them?

MILLAR: (Grinning broadly)
Oh, hell, Lott. I knew there were only seventeen men in the line that day, so I subpoenaed over twice as many because I knew that was the only way the Warden'd let any of them come--thinking he would trap them into perjury, the swollen fox.

LOTT: (Laughing)
I believe you're a rascal, Millar. But why subpoena any of them?

MILLAR: (Soberly, reminiscently)
Yes, it was a great day for us; for the boys and for me. (Smiling) You see, Lott, we needed the change--they needed the outing. That's why.

LOTT: (Indicating Millar's clothing)
That's quite a garment you're wearing. Seems a little snug even for you--and I wouldn't say you've grown any fatter.

MILLAR: (Slowly looking down at his thin legs, smiling faintly, then back at Lott. He speaks slowly)
It seems, Lott, that in this state, where you--the free ones--think that death is the worst punishment which may

be visited on man...(more slowly) it seems, Lott, that you won't even give us the option of choosing death to this (widening his hands at his surroundings). That is why they dress us in these monkey suits--so we can't take them off and use them for a hangman's noose. (Millar is staring intently at Lott. Lott looks away. Millar continues, more brightly.) Yes, Lott, the only choice they give us, in this room, is to wear these or go naked. (Smiling slightly) And it does get a little drafty at times--me being on the corner of the principal intersection.

LOTT: (Nervously, changing the subject)

It is drafty--Oh say, Millar--I brought some books for you.

MILLAR: Thanks, Lott, What are they? (He takes the books.)

LOTT: "Plutarch's ^aLives." "Madame Bovary."

MILLAR: Fine. They're favorites of mine. Especially the latter. Whose translations?

LOTT: Yes, damn good books.

MILLAR: Flaubert--a truly great writer. (He looks at Lott with a half smile.)

LOTT: Yes, Flaubert is a master. He's got Hemingway beat a mile.

MILLAR: (Smiling broadly)

Didn't you like the way Emma left her three children, at the end--and ran away with the clown in the circus?

LOTT: (Uncertainly, nervously)

Say, that was sure great. Marvellous delineation there. Great guy, this Flaubert. One hot book.

MILLAR: (Laying the books on his wooden bed. Then, soberly)
Lott, you're a pretty good fellow yourself. (Pause.
Then smiling) Maybe when you get to be governor you'll
give me ^{my old} a job in the prison library--or even pardon me.

LOTT: (Shaking his head)
No, I'll never be governor, Millar. (Pause) But maybe
there is a chance to parole you. You're serving life
for robbery armed? (Millar nods) As I recall, your
record wasn't so bad.

MILLAR: (Quietly)
There is the one robbery. I got caught at the only job
I ever tried. Beginner's luck, I guess.

LOTT: How come you got such a severe sentence--why, the judge
must have thrown the book at you.

MILLAR: Maybe he had a bad liver that morning. Or maybe it was
because I was the only one that was caught out of a half
dozen robberies about that time--it was around Christmas.
And they all seemed to be jobs pulled by veterans. (Shrugging)
Someone had to pay.

LOTT: Down in the city?

MILLAR: Yes.

LOTT: (Confidently)
Why listen, Millar, I don't see why you're not eligible
for a parole hearing.

MILLAR: (Shaking his head, smiling)
No, Lott, I'll never leave here alive--out of all the
uncertainties, that's one thing I'm sure of.

LOTT: Why do you say that?

MILLAR: Not after they said I killed Joe Krause. The Warden would
blackball me. (Slowly) You know--the Warden hates me--you
know that, of course, Lott.

LOTT:

(Warmly)

Why nothing of the kind, Millar. No one hates you.
You must put those kind of thoughts out of your mind.

MILLAR:

(Simply, quietly)

Yes, Lott, he hates me. He--his ego--will never forgive me for defeating him up there in court. (Shaking his head) Never, Lott.

LOTT:

We'll see about that. (There is an awkward pause. He again changes the subject.) What do you do here all day? Where's your bed? Your bedding?

MILLAR:

(Looking at the wooden planks on the cement floor)

This is the bridal suite; the wrestling mat. The beast is purged; they don't even trust me with nails now. They seem to have grown afraid of ol' devil dog Millar...

(Millar's long fingers are playing on the bars, like on an awkward harp. He points up at the spotlight.) So they put those beautiful goddamn lights up there to watch me day and night. And a man to manipulate them, all for me...I call him Saint Peter... These lights are my sun--my moon and stars. (Smiling) And I'm their featured player.

LOTT:

(Drawing closer, in a low voice)

Did you make those things the Warden just showed me?

MILLAR:

(Brightening)

Why yes, sure. I can make lots of things.

LOTT:

How did you make the key?

MILLAR:

(Grinning)

Watched the guard. He used to wear the key hanging at his belt, passing by. (Pause. His face clouds. Then, slowly, looking at Lott) If you watch anything long enough, Lott, you can pretty well measure it.

LOTT: (Looking nervously around, then back at Millar, and in a low voice)
Tell me, Millar--you were alone in this business, weren't you?

(SAM can now be seen peering around the rear of the cell. There is a long pause. MILLAR and LOTT stand looking at each other.)

MILLAR: (Deliberately winking at Lott)

No, Lott, there was another person in this. He was really the brains, the leader. His name was--- --

LOTT: (Shouting)

Don't tell it! Don't -- --

MILLAR: His name was Stanley Zaborski! (Lott is silent. Sam is almost falling down, leaning over, listening. Millar, still looking at Lott, cups his hand to his mouth, back at Sam and repeats) I say, Lott--the name is Stanley Zaborski--- --a kind of a crackpot clergyman.

LOTT: (Almost petulantly)

I heard you. I heard you. (Lott starts pacing in and out of the path of the light.)

MILLAR: (In an awed voice, winking at Lott, shaking his head.)

Yup. A very dangerous man, this Zaborski. Swears he'll get the Warden yet. Says he's got his confidence, already. Shouldn't be allowed out of this rest-room for a single moment!

(SAM can be seen nodding his head wisely, like one receiving important information. He retires behind the cell, out of sight.)

LOTT: (Standing before Millar again. He speaks in a low voice.)

Please, Millar. Do be serious. I want to talk with you, man.

MILLAR: (Seriously)

Yes, Lott, it's fine to talk with you. You'll never know how fine it is.

LOTT: (Quietly)

Did you kill Joe Krause?

MILLAR: (Looking searchingly at Lott. There is a long pause. Then, in a low voice)

Yes, Lott, I did. You knew that.

LOTT: (Lott) Why? (His voice rising) Tell me, Millar--why?

MILLAR: (Very quietly)

He needed killing, Lott. Squealing was the least of his troubles. You know-- --you know something of what goes on in prisons. (Lott nods.) In the prison Joe Krause was known as The Wolf. He posed as the comforting friend, the father, of young first-termers. (His voice rising) It was unclean. Unclean! I couldn't stand to see it go on! (Shrugging his shoulders, spreading his hands) So I killed him, that's all. (Pause. Lott says nothing. Millar, quickly, anxiously) You understand me, don't you, Lott?-- You understand what I am saying?-- (Lott still says nothing. Millar rushes on, in a veritable spate of words) You and I went to war to rid the world of evil, didn't we? Tell me, Lott--tell me that you'd have done the same--don't lie to me! I haven't lied to you. Tell me it's only an accident that I am here and that you--you are there. Oh, give me that, Lott--tell me you understand. (Millar is nearly sobbing.)

LOTT: (Half hysterically)

O, Christ, I would, I would have! I understand, Millar, I do so clearly see and understand. (He puts his arm across his eyes. They stand there silently. Then Lott, more composed, continues) Please, Millar, tell me what you do, man? The days? The nights?

MILLAR:

(Still deeply moved)

In here--most of the fellows....They're crazy. In the night it is worse. Laughing and chattering. Wailing and barking...Yes, Lott, some of them bark. In the nighttime some of them bark.

LOTT:

(Softly)

It's nighttime now, Millar. It's past midnight. Didn't you know?

MILLAR:

(Drawing his hand across his eyes. Hesitatingly, uncertainly)

Why, yes-- --I guess you're right....(Very slowly) I guess--I guess I am beginning to forget, to forget-- It's all I had left...

LOTT:

(Still softly)

But what do you do, Millar?

MILLAR:

(Smiling)

I pray, Lott. Do you know the Lord's Prayer?

LOTT:

Yes, Millar. I know that. Of course. Do you?

MILLAR:

(Looking up to the light, clasping the bars, his eyes shining, his lips smiling)

I say that, over and over, and think about it. It is a beautiful thing. The thought is beautiful--so full of the simple dignity of human life. Then I get thinking of so many people saying that--all over the world, all of the time--and I know it is because they have found it so beautiful, they have forgotten about us, here, in this prison, in this room...

(MILLAR closes his eyes and stands there. LOTT'S voice sounds muffled and choked when he speaks.)

LOTT:

Oh, Millar, can't I bring you something more?

MILLAR:

(After a pause, smiling slyly)

You might bring me a beautiful woman. After all it's been such a long time...

LOTT: Must she be beautiful?

MILLAR: (No longer smiling)

A veritable princess of beauty--I have been starved so *very* long...

LOTT: (Smiling)

I'll smuggle her down in the next batch of books. (Pause)
Your wife?--in court you said you once had a wife and child.
What became of them?

MILLAR: (Airily)

Oh, Lucille--that's my wife, Lott--she divorced me. Yup.
Lucille finally divorced her great big Davey. (Smiling)
And little Davey died. (Nodding) Big Davey and little
Davey up and died--that's a good one.

LOTT: Millar, I'm so sorry, man. Didn't she--didn't you ever see
her while you were here?

MILLAR: (Glibly, with a fixed grin)

Sure, sure, Lott. The very first Christmas I was here--
I'd been here nearly a year. That's how it happened,
Lott. (Millar pauses. His face suddenly clouds, becomes
distorted with the grief of things remembered. He con-
tinues with difficulty) Oh, Lott, what a goddam^med fool
I am--I made her do it. I did, I did. (Looking up at
the light) Oh, Lou girl, I'm so sorry--I love you so. I
did it because I love you so--I think, I guess...(He is
nearly sobbing)

LOTT: (Incredulously)

You made her divorce you, Millar?

MILLAR: (Composing himself somewhat)

Yes, Lott. She came to see me that first Christmas--she
got a room in town. And then--then Lucille came down here
to see me--that's my wife.

LOTT:

(Quietly)

Yes, Lucille is your wife.

MILLAR:

(Rapidly)

She was here for five days. They'd let us see each other for a few minutes each day in a bare room of cement and steel--in a room stinking, like this one, of disinfectant and rotting men. An armed guard was always present-- watching us, watching us--we could never see each other alone. (Pause) How does the line go? Oh yes..."Twas there that the young lovers met."

LOTT:

Why, Millar, I can't believe-- --

MILLAR

But it happened, Lott. So many of these things you people can't believe are happening all the while.

LOTT:

(Slowly, in a low voice)

I'm beginning to see...

MILLAR:

It got so we couldn't bear to touch each other, to kiss each other--it became so unutterably degrading, so incredibly obscene--with him there watching and watching. (Pause) She finally went away. The next year I almost went mad when I learned she was again coming to see me. When she came to the prison I--I sent out word--(very slowly)--I sent out word I didn't want to see her any more--for her to divorce me--that I didn't love her any more.

LOTT:

Millar, Millar.

MILLAR:

(Shaking his head, wonderingly, musingly)

Yes...I told Lucille--that's my wife, Lott--to go away. (Pause) She stayed here a week, coming back every day. You see, she loved me--we love each other. (Simply) Then she went away...

LOTT:

(In a low voice, after a long silence)

Let me bring you something more, Millar. Yes, I must bring you something to occupy you until I can get you out of this--this room.

MILLAR:

(Echoing)

Get me out of here? Get me out of here. (There is a long pause) Why, yes...All right, Lott. I'd like to make something for you. (Looking at his hands, flexing his fingers) I always liked to work with my hands. You send me some raffia--like we used to weave when we were kids--and something to write with.

LOTT:

Yes?

MILLAR:

(Brightly)

You square all that with the Warden, and I'll make you a fine belt. And I'll write down for you how I did it; and some other thoughts that have come to me in here.

LOTT:

Fine. Yes. Of course, Millar. I'll send those to you.

(The top half of the canvas covering the cell next to Millar's is suddenly lifted, disclosing the naked head and torso of a huge NEGRO, who stares up at the light, unseeing.)

NEGRO

(Chanting)

Quiet am requested, gennemen, foh de benefit ob doze what hab retahed! (The Negro drops the canvas.)

LOTT:

(Quickly clasping Millar's hand)

Goodbye, Millar.

MILLAR:

(Millar quickly pulls off the large ring he is wearing and thrusts it at Lott) Please take this ring, Lott. (Lott shakes his head, no) Please! I want you to wear it. It belonged to a Jap who one might tried to set up housekeeping in my foxhole.

It was his good luck ring. The only good luck it brought him was that he died instantly...from an acute attack of trench knife. (In an eager burst of reminescence) God, Boback was still alive then. How he carried on! He called me "Killer-Diller" Miller after that... (Uncertainly) It all seems a million years ago. What did they ever do with you, Boback? I wonder where you are... (Millar swims back to the present) Take it, Lott! It's about time it was lucky for someone. Please take it! (Lott now quickly takes the ring and places it on his finger. Again he grasps Millar's hand.)

LOTT: Goodbye, Millar. Good luck. Keep your chin up. I swear I'll get you out of here.

MILLAR: Lott, goodbye. I'm sure you will. You're a fine fellow. Goodbye, Lott.

(Then quickly, almost sobbing, MILLAR turns and flings himself face down on his cot of boards. LOTT moves out of the path of light as SAM comes tiptoeing elaborately around from behind the cell. As Sam tiptoes past the front of Millar's cell, watching Lott, Millar rolls over and grins at his retreating figure. His face suddenly ^{clouds} ~~clouds~~ again, and he buries his head in his arms, and his shoulders shake. ^{One of the} ~~The~~ spotlight follows Lott and Sam back to the door, briefly exposing to view the pacing inmate and the other one still clinging there, spreading at the bars of his cell. As they leave the bull pen there is a burst of wild gobbling laughter from an unseen inmate.)

CURTAIN

A C T T H R E E

SCENE III

SCENE: The Warden's office, a week later. The scene is the same as Scene I of Act Three. The WARDEN and SAM are playing checkers, sitting very still. Sam, with a flourish of inspiration, finally makes a move, whereupon the WARDEN, with a shrill of delight, hops a king around the board, and the game is ended. The WARDEN looks at his watch.

WARDEN: Adjust your girdle. He'll be here any minute.

(SAM arises and struggles to get into his Sam Browne holster. The WARDEN puts away the checkers, carefully sniffs, snips, blows, mouths, and ignites a cigar. A CLERK comes in and timidly interrupts this ritual.)

CLERK: Mr. Lott is outside, Sir. Says you are expecting him, Sir.

WARDEN: Wait till Sam gets into his truss. (Sam is still wrestling with himself. The clerk bows and waits. The Warden finally has to help Sam into his harness. The Warden speaks, with jocular gravity) Sam, one of these days I'm going to send you back on wall patrol. You're getting so damned pregnant you couldn't proctor a girls' school. Or maybe that's where you belong.

SAM: (Grinning fatuously)

Aw, Warden, you wouldn't do that!

WARDEN: (To clerk)

Send Mr. Lott in.

(LOTT comes in, dressed in a light suit, a jaunty felt hat. There is a flower in his lapel. He is wearing Millar's ring. He is carrying a large bundle of books, secured by a leather belt.)

LOTT:

(Cheerfully)

Hello Warden, Sam. I just ^{got} ~~caught~~ ^{received} your call. What's up this time--another escape?

(LOTT places the books on the desk, shakes hands with the WARDEN and nods at SAM.)

WARDEN:

(After a pause.)

No, not an escape this time. (Cryptically) Or is it?

LOTT:

(Brightly)

How's our friend, Millar? I have some more books for him. And some hopeful news about getting him a parole hearing-- I've written the chairman of the Parole board. (Pause) Did he finish weaving the belt he was going to make me?

(The WARDEN and SAM look at each other, smiling faintly. Lott is rubbing Millar's ring)

WARDEN:

Yes, he's finished, Mr. Lott. And there are some other things for you, too. Sam! (Sam, the alert, bustles over to one of the steel filing cabinets and takes out a large Manila envelope and smiling broadly, hands it to Lott. Lott reaches into the envelope and pulls out a long belt woven of raffia. He stands there holding the belt somewhat uncertainly.) There's something else in there for you. Look! (Lott reaches into the envelope and draws out a pair of rusted shears.) And here's a note for you. Take it! (The Warden thrusts a piece of paper at Lott. Lott stands there holding the note and the shears and belt, looking bewilderedly from one to the other.) Read the goddamn thing!

LOTT:

Yes--yes, of course. (He reads out loud)

"Dear Lott,

The belt and the shears--Joe Krause's shears--are for you. Think of me occasionally when you use them. And when you say the beautiful Lord's Prayer--think about that, too. Try reading 'Madame Bovary' sometime. It's fine when you get into it.

Millar"

(The note flutters to the floor. There is a long pause, after which Lott speaks, wearily, in a low, listless voice)

Where's Millar? What have you done with David Millar?

WARDEN AND SAM: (In gleeful unison. They must have rehearsed it.)

Hung, Lott, hung!

SAM: With that Chink belt you're holdin' there.

WARDEN: They cut him down this morning.

SAM: He's colder than a witch's tit!

WARDEN: We've already moved that bastard Zaborski in his place.

(There is a long silence, as LOTT looks at one and then the other.)

LOTT: (In a ringing voice)

The word, gentlemen is "hanged." David Millar has been hanged!

(LOTT turns away from them, facing the audience, while the WARDEN and SAM gesticulate and grin at each other. Lott, holding the shears in one hand and the raffia belt in the other, steps forward and half raises both hands, palms up, like an offering. His lips are silently phrasing the Lord's Prayer as the curtain falls.)

CURTAIN