



LIZZIE BORDEN OF FALL RIVER

By Tim Kelly



 **Pioneer**
DRAMA SERVICE

LIZZIE BORDEN OF FALL RIVER

A DRAMA IN TWO ACTS

By Tim Kelly

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For preview only

LIZZIE BORDEN OF FALL RIVER

BY TIM KELLY

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(In Order of Appearance)

of lines

| | | |
|----------------------------|---|-----|
| LIZZIE..... | a young woman, clever, intelligent, accused of a brutal murder | 266 |
| ANDREW BORDEN | Lizzie's father | 120 |
| BRIDGET..... | a hired girl | 75 |
| ABBY..... | Andrew's wife, Lizzie's stepmother | 29 |
| EMMA | Lizzie's younger sister | 197 |
| VINNIE..... | Lizzie's aunt | 75 |
| SOUSA | a handyman | 18 |
| ALICE | Lizzie's friend | 46 |
| REVEREND JUBB | a clergyman in Fall River | 51 |
| MRS. CHURCHILL..... | a neighbor, Lizzie's enemy | 40 |
| PATROLMAN HARRINGTON | a policeman | 14 |
| JENNING..... | Lizzie's lawyer | 44 |
| MARSHAL | a city official | 17 |
| AMY ROBSART | a newspaperwoman | 43 |
| CARLOTTA | Sousa's young wife | 19 |



SYNOPSIS

PLACE: Living room of the Borden family, Fall River, Massachusetts

TIME: Before the turn of the century

ACT ONE

Scene One: A morning in August

Scene Two: That evening

Scene Three: The following day

ACT TWO

Scene One: One month later

Scene Two: Weeks later

Scene Three: An afternoon in late Spring

LIZZIE BORDEN OF FALL RIVER

ACT ONE

Scene One

SETTING: Living room of the Borden family, Fall River, Massachusetts. Setting works nicely in drapes, or with a few scenery flats. **DOWN RIGHT** is the exit that leads to the rooms on the second floor. **DOWN LEFT** is the exit into the kitchen. **RIGHT** there is a fireplace, **LEFT** a serving table or buffet set against the wall. Entrance from outside is **UP CENTER**. There is a bookcase with volumes **UP RIGHT CENTER**. A table is **DOWN RIGHT CENTER** with three chairs. A jigsaw puzzle is atop the table. A sofa is **DOWN LEFT CENTER** with a man's coat over the back. This describes the basic set and stage properties required for blocking the play. To these, at director's discretion, should be added a few lamps, rugs, pictures, an odd chair or table. The Borden house is rather austere, no frills, simple and functional.

TIME: Before the turn of the century.

AT RISE: An oppressively hot August morning. The stage is empty but from the kitchen come the angry voices of two men. One voice, as we will soon learn, belongs to the house's owner, **ANDREW JACKSON BORDEN**. The other voice belongs to an **UNKNOWN**.

ANDREW'S VOICE: . . . and I'll thank you never to threaten me!
I don't take threats lightly!

MAN'S VOICE: I want my money!

ANDREW'S VOICE: I owe you nothing!

MAN'S VOICE: My money!

ANDREW'S VOICE: Get off my property!

MAN'S VOICE: Because you're rich you think you can get away with anything!

ANDREW'S VOICE: I'll have the police after you!

MAN'S VOICE: I'm not afraid of you, Mr. Borden!

ANDREW'S VOICE: I'll have to see what I can do about that!
(During the argument LIZZIE BORDEN ENTERS DOWN RIGHT. She's a strong-willed young woman with a spine like a whalebone, possessed of a sharp tongue and often biting wit. She hears the fierce arguing, strains to listen after CROSSING to the table.)

MAN'S VOICE: I won't warn you again!

ANDREW'S VOICE: I have nothing further to say on the matter!

MAN'S VOICE: Then I won't be responsible! *(Alarmed, LIZZIE moves to the sofa, listens.)*

ANDREW'S VOICE: Get out of my house!

MAN'S VOICE: Gladly! *(Sound of door slamming from OFF LEFT. LIZZIE stiffens, moves behind sofa to enter kitchen. Her father ENTERS DOWN LEFT, preventing this. He wears a vest over his shirt and tie. He eyes her critically.)*

ANDREW: Elizabeth, were you listening?

LIZZIE: I didn't mean to, Father. But your voice is so strong. Who was that man?

ANDREW: It's no concern of yours.

LIZZIE: Was it Mr. Sousa?

ANDREW: I've already told you that it's a matter that doesn't concern you.

LIZZIE: I could hear you in my room. I was frightened.

ANDREW: Where's your sister? *(He picks up the coat on the back of the sofa, puts it on.)*

LIZZIE: Emma went to the train to meet Aunt Vinnie. *(He grunts.)* She knows you don't like her, Father. Please try to make her welcome.

ANDREW: I don't need you, Elizabeth, to remind me of manners. *(She looks at the jacket.)* Why are you staring?

LIZZIE: That coat. It's so heavy and the heat's so pressing.

ANDREW: You don't look well. Didn't you have breakfast?

LIZZIE: I can't eat mutton-broth for breakfast. Besides, it looked to me as if it had turned. When we had it for supper last night, I thought it tasted sour.

ANDREW: What if it did?

LIZZIE: I heard Mrs. Borden up and moving about. Did it make her ill?

ANDREW: She had a stomach complaint, yes. So did I. I spent a bad night.

LIZZIE: The mutton. I'm sure of it. Let me throw it out.

ANDREW: Have Bridget warm it for my lunch. Waste not, want not. And I'll ask you once again, Elizabeth, not to refer to your mother as "Mrs. Borden."

LIZZIE: She's not my mother. She's your wife. My mother is dead.

ANDREW: *(He sighs. Obviously it's a matter they've been over many times in the past.)* You're a strange girl. So much spite in you. *(He moves to EXIT UP CENTER.)*

LIZZIE: Father.

ANDREW: *(He stops, turns.)* HmMMMM?

LIZZIE: Father, I would like to have a party here at the house.

ANDREW: You know my feelings about frivolity.

LIZZIE: I have a position in Fall River.

ANDREW: Don't give yourself airs, my girl.

LIZZIE: Some college students from Boston will be in church this weekend. I'd like to invite them to visit. You needn't worry about the expense. Emma and I will share in that.

ANDREW: My house is not a recreation hall.

LIZZIE: You're being unreasonable, Father.

ANDREW: Perhaps when you've learned to address my wife as "Mother", we can consider the matter. *(Icy.)* Good morning, Elizabeth. *(He EXITS UP CENTER. The tension between father and daughter is obvious. LIZZIE stares after him coldly, speaks more to herself than to him.)*

LIZZIE: Good morning, Father. *(She takes a handkerchief from her dress and dabs perspiration from her forehead.)* So hot . . . *(She sits on the sofa, fanning herself with the handkerchief as BRIDGET, the family maid, ENTERS DOWN LEFT.)*

BRIDGET: Do you want me to set out a pitcher of ice water, Miss Lizzie?

LIZZIE: No. The more I drink the thirstier I get.

BRIDGET: You didn't eat anything for breakfast. There's plenty left.

LIZZIE: I was afraid there would be.

BRIDGET: Your father does like mutton.

LIZZIE: He wants you to heat up what's left for lunch.

BRIDGET: I was hoping we could throw it out.

LIZZIE: So was I.

BRIDGET: *(Distastefully.)* It's all lumpy, and there's a scum on top.

LIZZIE: Serve it extra hot. My father's wife won't notice.

BRIDGET: *(Critical.)* Never a scrap of food goes to waste in this house. *(Brightens.)* Last place I worked had eggs for breakfast. Every morning. I could fix you some.

LIZZIE: Don't trouble. Besides, if my father's wife saw me, she'd only use it against me. She would tell my father I was too grand to eat what everyone else did.

BRIDGET: It isn't as if your father can't afford to eat better. *(LIZZIE and BRIDGET are "allies" in the house. Both resent Mr. and Mrs. Borden's miserly ways. Conversation is open and friendly.)*

LIZZIE: My father and his wife don't understand that life can be enjoyed. He has only two diversions . . . making money and keeping it.

BRIDGET: That's a sore point with Mr. Sousa. *(She plucks a dust cloth from an apron pocket and sets to work dusting the side table, some chairs, lamps . . . working her way to the bookcase.)*

LIZZIE: How do you mean?

BRIDGET: You know how your father is. Never a day late when it comes to my pay, but with people from the other side of town it's different. Says if you give them all their money at once, they'll spend it foolishly.

LIZZIE: *(Dabs at her neck, fighting a losing battle to get cool. She stands, CROSSES to the table, sits, busies herself with the jigsaw puzzle.)* You mean foreign people. Father is always afraid they're going to do something he won't approve of. Was that who he was arguing with . . . Mr. Sousa?

BRIDGET: I haven't seen Mr. Sousa this morning.

LIZZIE: Weren't you in the kitchen?

BRIDGET: When?

LIZZIE: Few moments ago.

BRIDGET: No. I just came in from the barn.

LIZZIE: Didn't you see someone leave the house?

BRIDGET: No.

LIZZIE: From the back?

BRIDGET: No, I didn't.

LIZZIE: *(Shift in mood.)* I don't know why I fool with jigsaw puzzles. I don't like them. *(ABBY, LIZZIE'S stepmother ENTERS DOWN RIGHT, wearing a long robe. The dislike between LIZZIE and ABBY is obvious.)*

BRIDGET: Feeling better, Mrs. Borden.

ABBY: Never mind how I'm feeling. It was probably your bad cooking that turned my stomach. Good morning, Elizabeth.
(LIZZIE pointedly ignores her. ABBY sighs. Her stepdaughter is like stone.)

BRIDGET: You've never complained of my cooking before.

ABBY: It never made me sick before.

(BRIDGET stiffens at the insult. ABBY sits at the table. LIZZIE gets up and moves to the sofa, sits. This sort of rudeness on LIZZIE'S part is so common, ABBY pays it no mind.)

BRIDGET: I'll need your keys.

ABBY: Why?

BRIDGET: You've got a guest coming. Miss Emma's bringing her back from the station.

ABBY: I forgot.

LIZZIE: *(Sotto.)* Not likely. *(The remark is meant to be heard, but ABBY ignores it.)*

ABBY: You'd better air out the room. It's probably stuffy. Turn the mattress, and set out fresh sheets.

BRIDGET: I know, I know.

ABBY: *(She pulls a ring of keys from the pocket of her robe, checks them, selects one, holds it up.)* Don't open any of the other rooms, and when you're through, give me back the keys.

BRIDGET: I always do, don't I? *(BRIDGET takes the ring of keys, EXITS DOWN RIGHT.)*

ABBY: I'm getting rid of her. Too much mouth. Let her go to Boston or Lawrence and sweat in the shoe factories. See how she likes that.

LIZZIE: You won't get anyone to work as hard as she does for three dollars a week.

ABBY: She gets her meals.

LIZZIE: *(Wrinkles her nose.)* Mutton-broth.

ABBY: I don't know why you remain in this house, Elizabeth.
You hate it so.

LIZZIE: It isn't this house I hate.

ABBY: *(This time ABBY does take offense.)* You have no reason
to speak to me the way you do.

LIZZIE: I'd prefer it if I had no reason to speak to you at all.

ABBY: You make things so difficult for your father. And
yourself. *(LIZZIE fans herself with the handkerchief, a gesture
that irritates ABBY.)* I can't change your feelings to me, but I
wish you would stop trying to turn your sister against me.

LIZZIE: I'm sure I don't know what you mean.

ABBY: You know perfectly well what I mean. I won't put up
with your ways much longer. *(She rubs her forehead as if
experiencing some pain.)* I mean what I say, Elizabeth.

LIZZIE: Not feeling well?

ABBY: I spent a bad night. Don't concern yourself.

(Voices from OFFSTAGE, UP CENTER.)

EMMA'S VOICE: Hurry up, Aunt Vinnie.

VINNIE'S VOICE: I have to pay the driver.

EMMA'S VOICE: I've already taken care of that.

ABBY: I'd better go upstairs and dress.

LIZZIE: That's a good idea. You wouldn't want Aunt Vinnie to
think you were slovenly. *(ABBY shakes her head at LIZZIE'S
remark, stands, EXITS DOWN RIGHT. Sound of voices moving
closer.)*

EMMA'S VOICE: Lizzie is so pleased you're paying us a visit.

VINNIE'S VOICE: *(A laugh, then;)* I'm pleased that she's pleased.

(LIZZIE stands, faces the door. A moment passes and EMMA, the younger sister of LIZZIE by a year or two ENTERS. She's pretty, sweet, and absolutely no match for LIZZIE when it comes to dominance. She carries VINNIE'S suitcase.)

EMMA: She's here, Lizzie.

(AUNT VINNIE ENTERS. She's an intelligent woman, pleasant, out-going, but with an undercurrent of tension always threatening to break through. LIZZIE opens her arms and moves to embrace the guest.)

LIZZIE: Aunt Vinnie!

VINNIE: Hello, Lizzie, hello.

(NOTE: Now we see one of the many changes that make up the complex personality of LIZZIE BORDEN. With her aunt, she's warm, sincere, altogether likable. They embrace, CENTER. EMMA sets the suitcase down by the fireplace, stands RIGHT.)

LIZZIE: Are you tired?

VINNIE: Not in the least, but I will sit down. *(Quite at home, she moves to the sofa, sits, looks around.)* Place hasn't changed much.

EMMA: Father likes it this way. If you try to put up a new picture or move a chair, it upsets him terribly.

VINNIE: *(To LIZZIE.)* Andrew is as set in his ways as the everlasting hills of Zion. That reminds me . . . how is your Sunday school coming along?

EMMA: Didn't you know? The church fellowship has put Lizzie in charge of all the classes.

VINNIE: All?

LIZZIE: I'm to supervise.

VINNIE: They must think a great deal of your abilities.

LIZZIE: I do my best.

EMMA: Don't listen to her, Aunt Vinnie. She's being modest. You know how she is. Lizzie can do anything she sets her mind to.

LIZZIE: In all fairness, I must say the Sunday school situation hasn't been all it might be. I think it's awfully important to keep the children's interest, make Sunday school something they look forward to.

VINNIE: When I was a little girl, I always had trouble staying awake in Sunday school, but I didn't have a teacher like Lizzie Borden.

LIZZIE: How long are you staying? I long time, I hope.

VINNIE: *(Serious.)* I have some business matters to discuss with your father.

LIZZIE: *(Curious.)* Oh?

VINNIE: That shouldn't take long and, then, the three of us will have a nice visit. *(Thinks.)* Where's Abby?

LIZZIE: My father's wife will be down later. She isn't feeling well.

VINNIE: I'm sorry to hear that.

EMMA: I think it's the heat. *(BRIDGET ENTERS DOWN RIGHT.)*

LIZZIE: I don't think Bridget was with us the last time you were here, Aunt Vinnie.

VINNIE: No, it was a girl named Maggie.

EMMA: Maggie went to Vermont. She's working in a cannery.

LIZZIE: *(To BRIDGET.)* This is my dear mother's sister. Mrs. Morse.

BRIDGET: *(Awkward curtsie.)* Welcome ma'am. I just turned your mattress.

VINNIE: Thank you, Bridget. *(She stands.)* I'll go to my room and wash off some of the grime. Trains are so dirty.

LIZZIE: *(Nods to luggage.)* There's the suitcase.

BRIDGET: *(Picks it up.)* I opened the windows, but there's not much fresh air upstairs. *(BRIDGET EXITS DOWN RIGHT, VINNIE follows.)*

VINNIE: *(EXITING.)* I hate August. The heat always makes me feel as if something's hanging over me that I can't throw off.

EMMA: It's going to be such fun having Aunt Vinnie with us.

LIZZIE: I wonder what business she has with Father?

EMMA: Probably something about Mother's estate.

LIZZIE: Yes, but what?

EMMA: You're always so concerned about estates and wills and business. You and Father make a pair.

LIZZIE: Watch out for the pennies, Emma, and the dollars will take care of themselves.

EMMA: *(Excited, moves to LIZZIE.)* Did you ask him?

LIZZIE: Who?

EMMA: Father, of course. Did you ask him about the party?

LIZZIE: Yes.

EMMA: *(Eager.)* What did he say?

LIZZIE: *(Evasive.)* He said . . . he said he'd think about it.

EMMA: *(Interprets this as a hopeful sign.)* Oh, Lizzie, I'd never have dared ask. Father frightens me so.

LIZZIE: You let me worry about father.

EMMA: It would be such fun to have a party. And it won't cost him anything.

LIZZIE: I explained that you and I would bear the expense. *(Grins.)* Ready for your surprise?

EMMA: Surprise?

LIZZIE: *(Takes a locket on a chain from her pocket, holds it up.)*
I saw this in the jeweler's window. The gem in the center is your birthstone.

EMMA: Lizzie, you're so good and kind. I think you're the most thoughtful person I've ever known.

LIZZIE: Go on. Take it. *(EMMA takes the locket, admires it.)*

EMMA: I'll wear it at the party.

LIZZIE: You'd better see if you can make Aunt Vinnie comfortable. Too bad we don't have a garden of our own. If only our father's wife didn't consider fresh flowers a foolishness. Run along, see to Aunt Vinnie.

(Still admiring the locket, EMMA EXITS DOWN RIGHT. LIZZIE looks about the room, sighs with the heat, sits at table, picks up a piece to the jigsaw puzzle.)

SOUSA'S VOICE: *(From kitchen.)* Sousa!

LIZZIE: *(Without looking up.)* Come in, Mr. Sousa. It's quite all right.

SOUSA: *(A moment passes and SOUSA, a handyman, ENTERS cautiously. He's ill-at-ease. In servile fashion, he takes off his cap.)* Your father said he wanted to have the roof on the barn patched up.

LIZZIE: *(Still doesn't look up.)* He isn't here now. He'll be back for lunch.

SOUSA: I don't think I can start 'til next week. Mrs. Churchill wants me to cut down some dead trees. That's hard work, takes a few days.

LIZZIE: *(Bored.)* You can discuss that with my father.

SOUSA: You've got a dead tree out back of the barn. It ought to come down, too.

LIZZIE: I'm sure my father will be agreeable if the price is right.

SOUSA: I've got a new one that'll do the trick.

LIZZIE: (*Attention on the puzzle.*) New what?

SOUSA: (*Fast, EXITS DOWN LEFT, RETURNS immediately with a chopping axe, the blade glistens. He holds it in both hands.*) See. (*LIZZIE turns. SOUSA holds the axe as if he were offering some gift of rare value.*) Nice, huh? (*He grins proudly at his new acquisition. LIZZIE stares at the blade.*)

CURTAIN



ACT ONE

Scene Two

AT RISE: That evening. LIZZIE is conducting an "educational seminar" on the question of women's rights. She stands between the sofa and the table, an open book in hand. EMMA and VINNIE sit on the sofa. BRIDGET sits at the table, as does a friend of LIZZIE'S, ALICE RUSSELL, a pleasant sort of young woman. Just before curtain, we hear the sound of applauding, the women responding to some comment made by LIZZIE.

LIZZIE: . . . wait, wait, there's more. (*She reads.*) "We face the future fortified only with the lessons we have learned from the past. It is today that we must create the world of the future, in the very real sense." (*Sighs, contented.*) I derive a great deal of strength from the writings of Miss Anthony. She is a true pioneer.

EMMA: What do you think of women's rights, Aunt Vinnie?

VINNIE: I must confess I haven't given the matter much thought.

LIZZIE: That's the problem. If women don't give the matter much thought, we can hardly expect men to do so.

ALICE: Your niece has been an inspiration to us all, Mrs. Morse. Oh, that isn't to say there hasn't been some criticism.

LIZZIE: (*Moves behind ALICE.*) There are always people who want to hold back progress. I agree wholeheartedly with the aims of the woman's suffrage movement. Like Susan B. Anthony I feel the American woman is close to being accepted as equal under the laws of our land.

BRIDGET: (*Perplexed.*) She isn't now?

LIZZIE: Certainly not. Bridget, you ask the same questions every time we discuss this topic.

BRIDGET: It's hard to understand. What good's a vote to me?

ALICE: There's more to it than that. Surely you have aspirations.

BRIDGET: I have.

ALICE: What are they?

BRIDGET: I would like to get another fifty cents a week.

VINNIE: *(Laughs. To LIZZIE.)* I'm afraid you and Miss Anthony have a rough road ahead.

BRIDGET: The way I look at it, another fifty cents is as good as a vote any day.

LIZZIE: *(Slams the book shut, moves RIGHT, laughs, stands by fireplace.)* My aunt is quite right. You're hopeless.

BRIDGET: I suspect I am.

(EMMA and ALICE laugh good-naturedly, then VINNIE. BRIDGET beams at the light spirit. ANDREW and ABBY ENTER UP CENTER, take in the scene, frown. LIZZIE sees them, freezes. Slowly the others turn around. ABBY wears a bonnet.)

ANDREW: I thought you'd be finished with your seminar by now, Elizabeth.

LIZZIE: We're almost finished, Father.

(He takes out a pocket-watch and studies the time. BRIDGET takes the hint, stands.)

BRIDGET: I'll finish up in the kitchen. *(BRIDGET EXITS DOWN LEFT.)*

ALICE: It was especially interesting tonight, Mrs. Borden. You should join us one evening.

ABBY: *(Takes off her bonnet, CROSSES DOWN RIGHT, turns.)*
Emma, if you and your sister stay up late, make sure you lock all the doors. *(She EXITS.)*

ANDREW: *(Continues to hold the pocket-watch, making the women uncomfortable.)* I didn't realize how late it is. Must be close to nine o'clock.

VINNIE: *(Hint of sarcasm.)* Imagine.

ALICE: *(Stands.)* I must be getting along. *(To LIZZIE.)* It is a shame Reverend Mr. Jubbs didn't make it.

ANDREW: Mr. Jubb? I didn't know he shared my daughter's enthusiasm for woman's suffrage.

VINNIE: Lizzie is a persuasive speaker.

ANDREW: Don't tell me she's persuaded you?

VINNIE: She's set me to thinking.

ANDREW: I credited you with more sense, Vinnie.

VINNIE: No need to be rude, Andrew. I believe Lizzie is quite right. Women don't share equally in our society.

ANDREW: Why should they? They're sheltered, cared for, protected.

LIZZIE: Yes . . . at the insistence of men.

ANDREW: Stuff 'n nonsense. I hope you don't preach any of this rubbish in your Sunday school classes.

LIZZIE: I am a God-fearing woman, Father. I would never preach anything I didn't feel was right and good for all.

ANDREW: I'm glad to hear it.

ALICE: It was a pleasure meeting you, Mrs. Morse.

VINNIE: I hope we'll see more of each other, my dear.

ALICE: So do I.

EMMA: Good night, Alice.

ALICE: I'll see you tomorrow, Emma. Don't forget our little shopping trip.

LIZZIE: She won't.

ALICE: *(Moves to exit.)* Good evening, Mr. Borden.

ANDREW: *(Pockets the watch.)* Alice.

(She starts to EXIT just as REV. JUBB, a young clergyman, appears at the door.)

ALICE: *(Turns to others.)* It's Reverend Jubb.

JUBB: *(ENTERING.)* I am sorry for being late. I had to visit the hospital, and before I was through the time had slipped away. Good evening, Mr. Borden.

ANDREW: *(A barely civil nod.)* Mr. Jubb.

LIZZIE: Would you like something hot to drink, Father?

ANDREW: I would. But I'll let Bridget get it. That's what she's paid for. *(He EXITS into the kitchen.)*

JUBB: Have I come at a bad time?

LIZZIE: *(Indicates a chair at the table.)* You should be used to Father and his ways by now. He doesn't mean anything by his curtness. *(JUBB moves to the table. LIZZIE steps in.)*

ALICE: I'll be on my way now.

EMMA: *(Stands.)* Wait. I'll walk you to the corner. *(EMMA CROSSES UP CENTER, EXITS with ALICE. JUBB looks to VINNIE.)*

JUBB: I don't believe I've had the pleasure.

VINNIE: I'm Mrs. Morse, Lizzie's aunt.

LIZZIE: I am sorry, Aaron. I thought you two had met.

VINNIE: Do sit down.

JUBB: Thank you. *(He sits.)* How did the seminar go?

LIZZIE: Mrs. Churchill didn't show up.

JUBB: *(Thoughtfully.)* I was afraid she wouldn't.

LIZZIE: Oh? *(JUBB looks to VINNIE, meaning what he has to say might be considered "private." VINNIE takes the hint.)*

VINNIE: I could do with some warm milk. Helps me sleep.

LIZZIE: Don't let us run you off.

VINNIE: *(Stands.)* I'll only be in the kitchen. Mr. Jubb, may I get something for you?

JUBB: *(Stands.)* No. Thank you. You're very kind. *(VINNIE nods, EXITS into kitchen.)*

LIZZIE: You're acting rather mysterious. What's the trouble?

JUBB: It's Mrs. Churchill.

LIZZIE: What about her? *(LIZZIE CROSSES behind the table to sofa, sits.)*

MR. JUBB: I'm afraid she's behaving badly.

LIZZIE: How do you mean?

JUBB: You know she's taught the senior Sunday school class for many years.

LIZZIE: I'm not likely to forget it. She reminds me of that fact every chance she gets.

JUBB: Yes . . . she is rather possessive about the post, isn't she?

LIZZIE: I believe she feels she has the post for life.

JUBB: *(Embarrassed.)* The point is . . . what I mean to say . . . let me see how I can best express it . . .

LIZZIE: *(LIZZIE watches him with an understanding smile. She is genuinely fond of him.)* Poor Aaron . . . what a task you have. Trying to keep everyone in the fellowship happy. I think I know what you're trying to say. *(Direct, professional.)* Mrs. Churchill is upset that she wasn't appointed supervisor. That's it, isn't it?

JUBB: I admire the way you go right to the heart of any problem.

LIZZIE: I'm not exactly a diplomat, am I?

JUBB: I wouldn't say that. I've never doubted your abilities. You're so clever and dependable. Intelligent.

LIZZIE: These are the virtues, I presume, that make me qualified to supervise.

JUBB: Absolutely.

LIZZIE: (*Lightly.*) Mrs. Churchill doesn't see it that way, and she's making things rather unpleasant for you?

JUBB: Exactly.

LIZZIE: I'll see what I can do to unruffle her feathers. It's difficult enough having her for a neighbor. I don't want her for an adversary.

JUBB: You seem to have solved my problem with a minimum of effort. (*Smiles.*) As usual, Miss Borden.

LIZZIE: (*Smiles.*) Leave Mrs. Churchill to me, Mr. Jubb.

JUBB: Don't think me rude, but I must be on my way. I promised to stop off at the city jail. Seems there's need of a clergyman there, as well as at the hospital.

LIZZIE: (*Stands.*) I'll walk part of the way with you.

JUBB: I'd like that.

LIZZIE: Aunt Vinnie! (*LIZZIE and JUBB MOVE CENTER, VINNIE ENTERS from kitchen.*)

VINNIE: Yes?

LIZZIE: Mr. Jubb is leaving. I'll walk with him to the corner.

VINNIE: It was a pleasure meeting you, Reverend.

JUBB: Will you be staying long in Fall River?

VINNIE: That . . . that depends.

LIZZIE: I'll be back shortly.

JUBB: Goodnight, Mrs. Morse.

VINNIE: Goodnight, Reverend Jubb. (*They EXIT. VINNIE moves to the table, sits. BRIDGET ENTERS with a mug of warm milk.*)

BRIDGET: I put in a dash of cinnamon. (*She CROSSES to the table, sets down the mug.*)

VINNIE: Thank you, Bridget. It looks good.

BRIDGET: It's nice 'n hot. That's the main thing. (*Looks around.*) Miss Lizzie gone out?

VINNIE: With Reverend Jubb.

BRIDGET: He didn't stay long, did he?

VINNIE: I suspect he preferred to be alone with my niece.

BRIDGET: I'll be up in my room if you need anything. Mr. Borden will double check to see that the doors are locked.

VINNIE: He certainly worries about locking up, doesn't he?

BRIDGET: Every door in the house has a lock and key.

VINNIE: What's he afraid of?

BRIDGET: There've been robberies in the neighborhood.

VINNIE: None here, I trust.

BRIDGET: Someone got into the barn and stole a harness.

VINNIE: Didn't anyone see them?

BRIDGET: Happened early in the morning. Before anyone was up. (*EXITS DOWNSTAGE RIGHT.*) Goodnight, Mrs. Morse.

VINNIE: Night, Bridget. (*VINNIE sips her hot milk. ANDREW ENTERS DOWNSTAGE LEFT.*)

ANDREW: Reverend Mr. Jubb gone?

VINNIE: You didn't exactly make him welcome, Andrew.

ANDREW: If he wants to visit my house, let him come at a decent hour.

VINNIE: Nine o'clock in the evening isn't exactly the hour before dawn.

ANDREW: Might as well be as far as I'm concerned. He shouldn't encourage Elizabeth in her wild ideas.

VINNIE: From the little I saw of him, I got the impression he was rather taken with your daughter.

ANDREW: Elizabeth can be quite charming when she chooses. Where are they?

VINNIE: Gone for a walk. Lizzie said she'd be back shortly.

ANDREW: *(Sits on sofa.)* I'll wait up for her.

VINNIE: There's no need, Andrew. She's a young woman capable of taking care of herself.

ANDREW: I prefer to wait until everyone's in.

VINNIE: So you can lock up.

ANDREW: Yes.

VINNIE: You haven't changed much over the years. You never were what some people might term "a trusting man."

ANDREW: *(Coldly, direct.)* Why are you here?

VINNIE: *(Now VINNIE begins a subtle change in character. Her words take on a somewhat hard edge, as if she were playing a desperate game.)* For a visit.

ANDREW: That's all?

VINNIE: There's no sense in trying to deceive you, is there?

ANDREW: Say what you have to say.

VINNIE: *(Stands, takes a step toward sofa.)* Andrew, before my sister died, she made it clear that the property she owned in New Hampshire should come to me. *(He doesn't answer, and this makes VINNIE uneasy.)* I've never pressed the point. Until now I've never felt the need.

ANDREW: Not legal, you know, unless it's in black and white.

VINNIE: We both heard her say it. You promised her that you'd see to her wish.

ANDREW: She was a sick woman.

VINNIE: We both know that. She knew it, too. What of it?

ANDREW: What you're saying is . . . you want to hold me to the wish of a dying woman. She didn't know what she was saying half the time.

VINNIE: I've suffered some financial setbacks. The truth of the matter is . . . I'm penniless.

ANDREW: You should learn to live frugally.

VINNIE: *(Her temper flashes.)* We can't all live the way you do, Andrew. It takes talent to be a successful miser. *(He gives her a withering look. VINNIE realizes she made a mistake.)* Forgive me. I shouldn't have said that.

ANDREW: It's the sort of thing I'd expect from Elizabeth. You both have much in common.

VINNIE: I would like the property. I would like for you to honor my sister's wish.

ANDREW: You have no claim on the property.

VINNIE: Legally, perhaps not. Morally, I am most assuredly entitled to it.

ANDREW: Why have you waited all this time?

VINNIE: Hoping that you would give me the deed without my asking. Having to come to you like this . . . it's humiliating. I haven't pressed the issue before because I didn't need help until now.

ANDREW: I will give you a small sum.

VINNIE: I have no wish to sell the property.

ANDREW: The property is not yours to sell, Vinnie. It's mine legally . . . which is the only right that matters.

VINNIE: You can't believe that.

ANDREW: It's more important that you believe it. There is a certain "nuisance value" to your claim and with the money I shall give you, I trust even that will cease.

VINNIE: *(Stunned.)* Nuisance value?

ANDREW: I shall, of course, require you to sign a paper that the sum I pay relieves me of any financial responsibility toward you.

VINNIE: I can't believe what I'm hearing.

ANDREW: Be sensible, Vinnie. I'm a businessman. I have no time for sentiment. What I propose is fair and just.

VINNIE: Sometimes I wonder what my sister ever saw in you.

ANDREW: That needn't concern you.

VINNIE: You were never this cold before, never so grasping, never so selfish. I always thought you a man without much heart, but to deny your dead wife's wish . . . it's cruel, wicked. Don't think I don't know what's made you the way you are . . . *(Turns, points DOWNSTAGE RIGHT.)* Abby. She's done it. She's told you to hold on to every bit and piece of land, hasn't she?

ANDREW: *(Stands.)* I've never seen you this way, Vinnie. I don't understand you at all.

VINNIE: *(She has been outspoken, almost uncontrolled. She breathes deeply.)* I'll ask you again, Andrew. Will you honor my sister's dying wish? Will you deed me the New Hampshire farm?

EMMA: *(ENTERS UPSTAGE CENTER.)* Night time is as hot as daytime in Fall River. Not a hint of a breeze.

ANDREW: *(To VINNIE.)* We'll talk about this later.

(VINNIE forces herself to hold back tears. She's put off by EMMA'S arrival, doesn't want her to see the tension, picks up the mug, EXITS into the kitchen.)

EMMA: Is anything the matter with Aunt Vinnie?

ANDREW: Family business. Don't concern yourself.

EMMA: I'm family, aren't I? *(She moves DOWNSTAGE CENTER, stands beside her father.)*

ANDREW: *(Gently.)* Why trouble your pretty little head with business affairs?

EMMA: Father, you play right into Lizzie's hands. Is it any wonder she fights for women's rights when you supply wood for the fire?

ANDREW: You're fond of your sister, aren't you, Emma?

EMMA: *(Sincerely.)* I think Lizzie is the most remarkable woman I've ever known. Maybe that's because after Momma died, she was the only female close by I could trust and love. I guess I've always put Lizzie in the role of mother on a pedestal.

ANDREW: But you have a mother again. Abby.

EMMA: *(Ignores this.)* I wish we could all be happy together. I wish you and Lizzie didn't quarrel so much.

ANDREW: *(He puts his hands on her shoulders, the first genuinely human gesture he's made to another person since we first met him.)* You're a good daughter, Emma. Go to bed.

EMMA: *(Smiles.)* You see. You treat me like a child and don't even know it.

ANDREW: You'll always be a child to me, Emma. You're my baby. *(He kisses her on the forehead as LIZZIE ENTERS UP-STAGE CENTER.)*

EMMA: Father, you can be so kind at times.

LIZZIE: *(Moves DOWNSTAGE CENTER, stands by table.)* Poor Aaron. He has such a good heart. People take advantage.

ANDREW: *(Sits on sofa.)* You have a good heart, too, Elizabeth. You should be careful people don't take advantage of you.

LIZZIE: *(Surprised by this observation.)* I'll try to see that it doesn't happen.

EMMA: Are you sure I can't get you something from the kitchen? There's johnny-cake.

(He holds out a hand to EMMA, indicates she should sit beside him. She does. With the other hand he motions LIZZIE behind the sofa. It's a "family portrait.")

ANDREW: No, I've had quite enough of Bridget's cooking for a while. That's why your mother and I ate out this evening. What would you say if I told you I was planning on selling this house?

EMMA: Selling it?

ANDREW: Uh-huh.

LIZZIE: *(Excited.)* Emma would disapprove, but I wish we could get rid of it. I've always hated it.

EMMA: Where would we move?

ANDREW: I have no idea. Only a passing thought.

LIZZIE: Father, there are some wonderful new houses being built on the hill above the harbor. Let me show them to you. They even have indoor plumbing. I HATE the outhouse.

(EMMA and LIZZIE laugh. ANDREW follows. If we were just meeting the Borden family we would assume this trio was happy together. ABBY, in her long robe, ENTERS DOWNSTAGE RIGHT. She has overheard the last bit of Lizzie's dialogue.)

ABBY: Indoor plumbing is new-fangled, expensive, unnecessary.

(Instantly the jovial mood fades. LIZZIE and EMMA frown, stiffen.)

LIZZIE: Some of us are better suited to the farmyard than others.

ANDREW: That's enough.

LIZZIE: We were having such a pleasant time until you came downstairs.

ABBY: I live here, too, Elizabeth. I try not to get in your way. Why must you dislike me so? *(LIZZIE folds her arms, doesn't answer.)*

ANDREW: *(Sighs.)* It's not easy for a man living in a house of women. *(He stands.)*

ABBY: Did you lock up?

ANDREW: I'll tend to it later.

ABBY: Go around and see to the barn door. We don't want to lose another harness. (*ANDREW moves UPSTAGE CENTER.*)

EMMA: Father . . . (*He stops, turns.*) Thank you for letting Lizzie and me have our party. (*He lets this sink in, decides not to get into another argument, grunts, EXITS.*)

LIZZIE: (*Nods to ABBY.*) Why doesn't father stand up to that peasant?

EMMA: I think he's weary of arguing.

LIZZIE: How could he marry such a woman after mother? She's petty and dull. Stupid.

ABBY: I've never known anyone who could get so much pleasure from being so unpleasant.

LIZZIE: Remember your promise . . . you will never call her mother.

EMMA: (*Embarrassed by all this.*) Lizzie, please.

LIZZIE: (*Insistent.*) You'll never call her mother.

EMMA: (*Submits.*) I never have, have I?

ABBY: Why must you badger Emma? Let her alone.

(*VINNIE ENTERS from kitchen, wipes away a tear.*)

LIZZIE: Aunt Vinnie, what's wrong?

EMMA: You've been crying.

VINNIE: (*Breaks down, takes out a handkerchief.*) Forgive me. I don't mean to. I can't help myself.

EMMA: (*Gets up, goes to her.*) What is it?

LIZZIE: (*Pats back of sofa.*) Sit here, dear.

VINNIE: (*CROSSES to the sofa, sits, gets her story out through sobs.*) I asked your father to help me . . . I asked him to give me the farm in New Hampshire.

LIZZIE: (*Confirms.*) The one mother wanted you to have.

VINNIE: Yes . . . he won't do it.

EMMA: That was mother's dying wish.

VINNIE: The stocks I counted on for dividends have gone down to nothing. I don't know what I'm going to do.

LIZZIE: Why didn't you come to Emma and me?

EMMA: We have some money mother left us. Our trust funds.

VINNIE: I could live at the farm. I could rent out land. I wouldn't have to depend on charity.

LIZZIE: You say father refused? (*ABBY stiffens.*)

VINNIE: Yes. He refused.

EMMA: Why would he turn his back on mother's wish?

VINNIE: (*Points an accusing finger at ABBY.*) There's your answer. She's turned your father against me. She's the one.

(*EMMA and LIZZIE look to ABBY, their expressions hard and hostile. ABBY doesn't flinch.*)

CURTAIN

ACT ONE
Scene Three

AT RISE: Next day. ANDREW sits on the sofa reading the morning paper.

SOUSA'S VOICE: (*From kitchen.*) Sousa! (*ANDREW looks DOWNSTAGE LEFT, back to his paper, doesn't answer.*) Sousa!

ANDREW: You may come in, Sousa. (*SOUSA ENTERS from kitchen, doffs his cap, nods humbly.*) Well, what is it?

SOUSA: I chopped down the dead tree.

ANDREW: Good. (*ANDREW continues to read. SOUSA nervously shifts his weight from foot to foot.*)

SOUSA: Mr. Borden . . . Sir . . .

ANDREW: Hmmm? What is it?

SOUSA: Uh . . . I wonder, Mr. Borden . . . Sir . . . uh . . . could I have my money?

ANDREW: (*ANDREW sighs, puts aside the paper.*) Sousa, if I give you people too much money all at once, you'll only spend it foolishly.

SOUSA: I did the work fast. I did a good job.

ANDREW: I would expect no less. A true workman is worth his hire. Always remember that.

SOUSA: Then I can have my money?

ANDREW: (*ANDREW dips into a pocket, comes out with a coin.*) Here you are.

SOUSA: (*CROSSES, takes coin. Glum.*) Where is the rest of it?

ANDREW: Each week I will give you a certain amount. That way you'll be protected against yourself.

SOUSA: You owe me from last month, too.

ANDREW: You people don't understand money. You will get

what you are owed, but in a sensible, businesslike fashion.
Trust me, Sousa. It's for your own good.

SOUSA: *(Stares at him angrily, trying to control his temper, then:)*
I do not wish to be treated like a child, Mr. Borden.

ANDREW: *(Stunned by this declaration.)* Don't take that tone
with me.

SOUSA: I want the money. Now!

ANDREW: *(Stands.)* You'll get your money when I decide you
deserve it. Get out!

SOUSA: *(Bitterly.)* Don't talk to me as if I was a dog.

ANDREW: I'll send for the police. You know what they do to
you people when there's a complaint. *(They glare at each other,*
SOUSA EXITS UPSTAGE CENTER.) No. Sousa, the back door.

SOUSA: *(Turns.)* No, "Borden", the FRONT door. *(SOUSA*
EXITS UPSTAGE CENTER, almost bumping MRS. CHURCHILL
aside. She was about to knock.)

MRS. CHURCHILL: *(Indignant.)* Mr. Sousa, watch what you're
doing. *(She ENTERS cautiously, a middle-aged woman, prim and*
proper, closes the door.) Did you see that, Mr. Borden?

ANDREW: I apologize, Mrs. Churchill. I suspect he's been drinking.
You know how these foreigners are. I ran him off. He won't be
working around here again. Sit down.

MRS. CHURCHILL: *(She moves to sofa, sits. ANDREW folds his*
paper, tucks it under his arm.) Not safe to walk across the street
anymore.

ANDREW: I'll deal with Sousa in my own way.

LIZZIE: *(ENTERS from kitchen.)* Stifling in the barn. *(She wipes*
her forehead with the back of her hand.)

ANDREW: What are you doing in the barn?

LIZZIE: *(Eyeing MRS. CHURCHILL.)* I want to go fishing. I was
looking for a sinker. *(Smiles.)* Good morning, Mrs. Churchill.

MRS. CHURCHILL: *(Coolly.)* Good morning, Elizabeth.

ANDREW: You two probably want to talk about church matters.
If you'll excuse me, Mrs. Churchill.

MRS. CHURCHILL: Of course.

ANDREW: I apologize again for Sousa.

MRS. CHURCHILL: It's already forgotten. (*ANDREW EXITS
DOWNSTAGE RIGHT.*)

LIZZIE: (*Moving behind sofa.*) What about Mr. Sousa?

MRS. CHURCHILL: He almost knocked me down.

LIZZIE: Doesn't sound like him. Mr. Sousa is usually so quiet
about everything he does.

MRS. CHURCHILL: I didn't make it up.

LIZZIE: I'm sure you didn't. May I offer you a cup of coffee?

MRS. CHURCHILL: No, thank you.

LIZZIE: Tea?

MRS. CHURCHILL: Nothing.

LIZZIE: (*Moves DOWNSTAGE CENTER.*) I've been meaning to
pay you a visit for some time.

MRS. CHURCHILL: I realize your time is valuable, and I do live
so far away. Such a great distance to travel. Right across the
street.

LIZZIE: I've been so busy.

MRS. CHURCHILL: Not too busy to plan a day's fishing.

LIZZIE: What did you want to talk about?

MRS. CHURCHILL: You know perfectly well, Elizabeth.

LIZZIE: (*Friendly.*) Won't you call me Lizzie?

MRS. CHURCHILL: (*Thoughtful pause, then:*) No.

LIZZIE: Can't we be friends?

MRS. CHURCHILL: That depends on you. (*LIZZIE and MRS. CHURCHILL eye each other like birds of prey.*)

LIZZIE: You're upset because the church fellowship has appointed me in charge of the Sunday School classes.

MRS. CHURCHILL: You head so many other committees. You have so many other interests. I've devoted many years to my Sunday teaching. I was teaching long before you got interested. The fellowship owes me something. I deserve the position you've taken from me.

LIZZIE: I haven't taken anything from you. I was offered the post. I accepted.

MRS. CHURCHILL: Of course, I don't contribute as heavily to the church as you do. I'm not wealthy.

LIZZIE: Nor am I.

MRS. CHURCHILL: You're not exactly penniless.

LIZZIE: Are you suggesting that I "bought" the post?

MRS. CHURCHILL: I'm not as clever as you. I can't twist people around my finger. You have a champion in Reverend Mr. Jubb.

LIZZIE: What you've suggested is both inaccurate and insulting.

MRS. CHURCHILL: I should be in charge of the Sunday school department.

LIZZIE: Well, you're not. I am. What would you suggest I do?

MRS. CHURCHILL: Resign.

LIZZIE: (*Stunned.*) You can't be serious.

MRS. CHURCHILL: (*Adamant.*) I am.

LIZZIE: I see. (*Direct.*) I'll be just as candid with you. I believe I was selected because, for some time, the results in the classes have been less than admirable. I've observed your methods and, frankly, I consider you a poor teacher.

MRS. CHURCHILL: *(Incensed.)* How dare you.

LIZZIE: Not only will I keep my new post, but I shall do everything in my power to persuade Mr. Jubb to retire you to some "less taxing" position with the Fellowship.

MRS. CHURCHILL: You'd take away the one thing that means everything to me?

LIZZIE: I'm concerned for the children, not for you. I know your feelings towards me. It would be impossible for us to work together.

MRS. CHURCHILL: *(Weakening.)* If you take away my teaching . . . what will I do?

LIZZIE: Have you considered becoming a Quaker?

(Furious, MRS. CHURCHILL rises, turns on her heel, EXITS UPSTAGE CENTER. LIZZIE laughs. ABBY ENTERS from kitchen carrying a bowl of fruit, CROSSES to sidetable and sets it down.)

ABBY: Why, hello, Mrs. Churchill. I didn't know you were here. *(MRS. CHURCHILL EXITS, slamming the door.)* What's the matter with her?

LIZZIE: She's thinking of becoming a Quaker.

ABBY: A Quaker? *(LIZZIE laughs again, sits at the table.)*
Why are you laughing?

LIZZIE: Must be the heat. I can feel it baking my brain.

ANDREW: *(ENTERS DOWNSTAGE RIGHT.)* I'll be off now, Abby.

ABBY: *(Looks to LIZZIE.)* Did you tell her?

ANDREW: Later.

LIZZIE: Tell me what?

ANDREW: It's not important.

ABBY: Tell her, Andrew. (*LIZZIE looks from ABBY to ANDREW, sensing something's up.*)

ANDREW: Elizabeth, your mother and I . . .

LIZZIE: (*Fast.*) She's not my mother.

ANDREW: Your mother and I think it would be best if you . . .

LIZZIE: If I what, Father?

ANDREW: (*Hesitates.*) If you . . .

ABBY: (*Cuts in.*) If you lived somewhere else.

LIZZIE: (*Shocked, can't believe what she's heard.*) Live somewhere else?

ANDREW: You're not happy here.

LIZZIE: (*Her eyes wild, repeats mechanically.*) Live somewhere else?

ABBY: Never a kind word from you. You've turned Emma against me.

LIZZIE: I was born in this house. My mother lived and died in this house.

ANDREW: Elizabeth, it's pointless to argue. You've money of your own. You don't have to depend on me.

LIZZIE: (*Stands impulsively.*) No!

ANDREW: It has to be.

LIZZIE: No! (*She EXITS into kitchen.*)

ANDREW: Be reasonable, Elizabeth.

LIZZIE: (*From kitchen.*) Never!

ANDREW: (*Disturbed.*) Are you satisfied, Abby?

ABBY: I won't be satisfied until I can call this house my own. You've been a good father to her, Andrew. If she can't see that, more's the pity for Elizabeth Borden. *(She CROSSES DOWNSTAGE RIGHT.)*

ANDREW: Where are you going?

ABBY: To send the other one on her way. That one's up to no good. *(She EXITS DOWNSTAGE RIGHT.)*

ANDREW: *(Weary with all the tension, ANDREW sighs, looks DOWNSTAGE LEFT, shakes his head.)* A sad house when the hens do all the crowing. *(He moves DOWNSTAGE LEFT.)* Elizabeth, come back. Be reasonable. We'll work out something. *(Calls out.)* Elizabeth? *(Opens DOWNSTAGE LEFT door, or EXITS DOWNSTAGE LEFT.)* Elizabeth, why won't you answer me? *(Pause, then from OFF STAGE.)* Elizabeth?

(EMMA ENTERS DOWNSTAGE RIGHT, putting on a pair of gloves. ANDREW RETURNS.)

EMMA: You still at home, Father?

ANDREW: *(Wondering where LIZZIE has gone.)* Hmmm?

EMMA: I thought you'd be at the bank by now.

ANDREW: I've a few things to attend to here. Where are you off to?

EMMA: Alice and I are going shopping. Maybe I'll find something extra special and buy it for you.

ANDREW: *(His thoughts are still on Lizzie.)* That would be thoughtful, Emma. You run along and say hello to Alice for me. *(ANDREW is being unusually solicitous, surprising EMMA.)*

EMMA: Yes, Father, I will. You seem preoccupied. Are you all right?

ANDREW: Yes, yes. Go along.

EMMA: Awfully hot, isn't it?

ANDREW: It is, yes.

EMMA: I'll be back in time for lunch. *(EMMA EXITS UPSTAGE CENTER.)*

VINNIE: *(A moment passes and VINNIE, suitcase in hand, ENTERS DOWNSTAGE RIGHT.)* I'll be leaving now, Andrew.

ANDREW: There's no need.

VINNIE: You've made the need.

ANDREW: I'll be happy to give you the small sum I mentioned.

VINNIE: I'm not one to be grateful for small favors.

ANDREW: Aren't you going to say goodbye to the girls?

VINNIE: They're not girls, Andrew. They're women. I prefer to write to my nieces. Less awkward.

ANDREW: I'll get out the buggy and drive you to the station.

VINNIE: *(Moves UPSTAGE CENTER.)* No need. *(Turns.)* Do you believe in The Almighty?

ANDREW: What a strange question. Most certainly I do. I always have, I always shall.

VINNIE: Then you must realize you'll be punished. Good day, Andrew. *(She EXITS UPSTAGE CENTER.)*

ANDREW: *(Calls after her.)* Be sensible, Vinnie. Take my offer.

LIZZIE: *(ENTERS from the kitchen, composed, icy.)* Where is Aunt Vinnie going?

ANDREW: *(Turns.)* Oh, there you are, Elizabeth. Where were you?

LIZZIE: Outside.

ANDREW: Didn't you hear me call to you?

LIZZIE: No. You didn't answer me. Where is Aunt Vinnie going?

ANDREW: She's leaving Fall River.

LIZZIE: When?

ANDREW: Now.

LIZZIE: Without saying goodbye?

ANDREW: She's angry with me. She'll come to her senses in time. She said she'd write to you girls.

LIZZIE: More of your wife's doing.

ANDREW: Abby is right. You've never given her a chance.

LIZZIE: *(Moves UP CENTER.)* I'll go to the station with Aunt Vinnie.

ANDREW: Do as you please. I'm out of patience with all of you.

(LIZZIE EXITS UP CENTER. ANDREW moves to the side table, takes an apple, lost in thought. He bites, spits it out.)

ANDREW: Tasteless. Like everything else in this house. *(He CROSSES DOWN RIGHT, calls out.)* Abby, come down, will you? *(No response.)* Abby? *(Still no response.)* Abby, can you hear me? Abby! *(Sound of outside door to kitchen slamming. ANDREW turns on the sound.)* Bridget, is that you? *(No answer.)* Bridget! *(Silence. ANDREW is utterly bewildered, calls upstairs one more time.)* Abby? *(Another sound from the kitchen, like someone moving a chair or table.)* Who is it? Who's out there? *(Sensing something's amiss, ANDREW moves cautiously toward the kitchen. He stops as he gets to the doorway.)* Whoever it is . . . answer me. *(Nothing. ANDREW ENTERS the kitchen. Silence, then:)* No . . . don't . . . no . . . NO!!!

(Again and again comes the sound of "something" hitting the body of ANDREW . . . like a sledgehammer hitting a sack of potatoes. Louder sound of body dropping to the floor and then . . . sound of kitchen door to yard slamming. Seconds pass, the stage remains empty. Sound of LIZZIE'S VOICE from UP CENTER, outside.)

LIZZIE: *(OFFSTAGE.)* Can I help you . . . hello . . . *(She ENTERS, still calling OFFSTAGE.)* Do you want something? *(Turns.)* Father, who was that running from the yard? *(Looks around, sees she's alone.)* Father? *(She moves DOWN RIGHT, calls upstairs.)* I couldn't see her anywhere, Father. Did Aunt Vinnie say what train she'd be taking? *(Silence.)* Father?

BRIDGET: *(ENTERS UP CENTER with a carton of groceries.)*
I forgot my key to the back. Sorry, Miss Lizzie. This heat is awful, isn't it?

LIZZIE: *(MOVES to BRIDGET.)* You look so pale. I'll take the groceries into the kitchen for you. Better go upstairs and rest.

BRIDGET: Oh, thank you. I shouldn't walk in the morning sun. It always makes me feverish.

LIZZIE: *(Takes the carton.)* Go along. A nap will do you good. *(She moves to the kitchen. ENTERS. BRIDGET wipes sweat from her face, moves DOWN RIGHT. Sound of muffled groan from LIZZIE, followed by sound of carton and groceries dropping to the kitchen floor. BRIDGET, startled, turns.)*

BRIDGET: Miss Lizzie, what is it? *(She starts across the room. LIZZIE ENTERS staring at her hands, her eyes distant, mirroring horror. BRIDGET is alarmed.)* What's happened? What's the matter with you?

LIZZIE: *(Speaks her words in awe and controlled revulsion.)*
Run and get help. Someone's murdered Father. *(BRIDGET covers her mouth to suppress a gasp. LIZZIE turns her palms open to the audience.)*

BRIDGET: *(Horried, points.)* There's blood on your hands.

LIZZIE: *(LIZZIE stares at the horrible sight. Dazed, shocked.)*
Someone's . . . murdered . . . Father . . .

CURTAIN

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

Scene One

AT RISE: One month later. Morning. BRIDGET is at the bookcase, taking out volumes and dusting the shelving. She hums. Door to the kitchen opens and a young policeman, OFFICER HARRINGTON, sticks his head in.

HARRINGTON: Psssst.

BRIDGET: *(Turns.)* Are you a snake, Patrolman Harrington?
Snakes hiss. Men do not. *(She smiles flirtatiously.)*

HARRINGTON: *(Steps into room.)* I didn't want to come in if Miss Borden was about.

BRIDGET: She's in her room. Anyway, you come and go as you please, don't you? *(She finishes up at the bookcase, moves DOWN CENTER.)*

HARRINGTON: Such a fine lady, she is. How could anyone think she could do such a thing?

BRIDGET: People have wicked minds.

HARRINGTON: I admire the way she's kept her calm.

BRIDGET: The doctor gives her medicine. That helps.

HARRINGTON: How about you helping me to a cup of coffee?

BRIDGET: The pot's on the stove.

HARRINGTON: I like company.

LIZZIE: *(OFFSTAGE.)* Bridget, who are you talking with?

(BRIDGET and HARRINGTON look DOWN RIGHT. LIZZIE ENTERS . . . stately, composed. The only thing that betrays her calm is the nervous habit she has of washing one hand with the other from time to time. She wears a different dress from Act One.)

BRIDGET: It's Patrolman Harrington.

LIZZIE: I imagine this past month has been dull duty for you, Mr. Harrington.

HARRINGTON: Not at all, miss.

LIZZIE: Many curious people on the sidewalk this morning?

HARRINGTON: Only a few.

LIZZIE: Can't imagine why they come. Nothing to see but the outside of this house. Number 92, Second Street, Fall River, Massachusetts.

HARRINGTON: I suspect they're hoping to catch a glimpse of you.

LIZZIE: Why?

HARRINGTON: Curiosity.

LIZZIE: Not that. They think I murdered my father and his wife. They want to tell their grandchildren they once saw a famous "axe-murderess". Never mind if she's innocent.

BRIDGET: Now, now, Miss Lizzie, it's wrong of you to think and talk that way. They'll catch whoever done it.

LIZZIE: *(Sits at table.)* When? *(BRIDGET doesn't know how to answer this, looks bewilderedly to HARRINGTON.)*

HARRINGTON: Soon, Miss Borden. Soon.

LIZZIE: It would be comforting if I could believe that.

HARRINGTON: I'll go outside and see that they don't come into the yard. *(He EXITS DOWN LEFT.)*

BRIDGET: Are you going to have breakfast?

LIZZIE: No.

BRIDGET: You eat so poorly.

LIZZIE: Not surprising, is it?

BRIDGET: It's good we've got police about. Those first days, when the mob gathered outside, I was frightened out of my skin.

LIZZIE: So was I. Terrified would be more like it. *(Sound of knocking UP CENTER.)* See who it is.

BRIDGET: Are you up to seeing anyone?

LIZZIE: I'm fine.

BRIDGET: *(Goes UP CENTER, opens door. MR. JENNING, a lawyer, stands outside.)* It's Mr. Jennings.

LIZZIE: *(Stands.)* Come in, Mr. Jennings. *(JENNING ENTERS, crosses down to table and sets a briefcase atop.)*

BRIDGET: You've brought good news, haven't you, Mr. Jennings?

JENNING: All in good time, all in good time.

LIZZIE: Go along, Bridget.

BRIDGET: Let me know if you need anything.

LIZZIE: I will. *(BRIDGET EXITS DOWN LEFT.)*

JENNING: Feeling better today?

LIZZIE: One day is like another. *(She sits on sofa.)*

JENNING: *(Opens his briefcase.)* You've seen the latest papers?

LIZZIE: I haven't seen the newspapers in over a week. Half seem to think I'm guilty as sin, the others see me as a victim of circumstances.

JENNING: You're quite a celebrity, Miss Borden.

LIZZIE: I wish only to be left alone.

JENNING: We must be prepared.

LIZZIE: For what?

JENNING: In case the tide should turn against us.

LIZZIE: Is that likely?

JENNING: We must consider the possibility.

LIZZIE: Mr. Jennings, don't think me ungrateful, but I find your services premature. You're here because the Reverend Mr. Jubb feels I need legal assistance.

JENNING: He is quite right.

LIZZIE: I understood his concern. It's common knowledge my father and his wife were not on the best terms with me. Nor I with them. Therefore the popular assumption is that I murdered them. In rage, in revenge, in cold blood.

JENNING: Assumption is not proof of guilt, Miss Borden. If you are charged . . .

LIZZIE: *(Cuts in.)* Don't be absurd.

JENNING: If you are charged, the prosecution will bring up a far more damaging motive than that which you have suggested.

LIZZIE: Oh?

JENNING: Your father was a wealthy man.

LIZZIE: My sister and I are independent. We have money from a trust fund set up by my mother.

JENNING: *(Checks some paper.)* Your father's estate is valued at close to half a million dollars. His will states that it is to be divided into three equal parts. Wife and two daughters. Since Abby Borden is deceased, her share falls to you and your sister, Emma. You are the two wealthiest women in Fall River. If you are charged, the burden of proof of innocence will be on you. And me as your legal counsel.

LIZZIE: You think it will come to that?

JENNING: I can only repeat that I think we should be prepared. *(Another document.)* In your deposition to the City Marshall, you state you saw a man running from the backyard before you discovered your father's body.

LIZZIE: Yes. I called after him, but he kept on running.

JENNING: Did anyone else see this "man" ?

LIZZIE: How many times must I go over this?

JENNING: As many times as I think necessary. These are the same questions the prosecutor will present.

LIZZIE: , Mrs. Churchill was sitting on her front porch. She must have seen him.

JENNING: She says not.

LIZZIE: She's lying.

JENNING: Why would she lie? (*LIZZIE'S mind wanders. She doesn't seem to hear, repeats that odd "hand washing" gesture.*) Miss Borden?

LIZZIE: Hmmm?

JENNING: Why would Mrs. Churchill lie about a thing like that?

LIZZIE: I don't know.

JENNING: (*Sighs.*) We'll let that pass for the time being. You came into the house. Bridget Sullivan, your hired girl, entered through the front door . . .

LIZZIE: . . . she forgot her key to the back . . .

JENNING: . . . you suggested she take a nap . . .

LIZZIE: . . . I took the carton of groceries from her . . .

JENNING: . . . went into the kitchen . . .

LIZZIE: . . . that's when I found father . . .

JENNING: . . . you stooped down to examine the body . . .

LIZZIE: . . . that's how I got blood on my hands.

JENNING: If worst comes to worst, our strongest point will be that there was no blood on your dress.

LIZZIE: Is that important?

JENNING: My dear Miss Borden. One can hardly murder two people with an axe . . . brutally . . . without some blood splashing onto the killer's garments.

LIZZIE: Axe? How do they know it was an axe?

JENNING: They don't. It could be any hard-edged weapon. Side of a shovel, an iron . . . almost anything. Whatever the weapon, they haven't found it.

LIZZIE: But you said axe.

JENNING: Only because Mr. Sousa said he left his axe in the yard after chopping down a dead tree. The axe has never been found.

EMMA: (*ENTERS DOWN RIGHT.*) *She, too, looks distraught.* I thought I heard you, Mr. Jennings.

JENNING: I'm glad you're here. Would you sit down, Miss Emma. (*He indicates the table. She sits.*)

LIZZIE: You're not going to bother her?

EMMA: It's all right, Lizzie. I want to help.

JENNING: (*Checking statements.*) You've sworn you heard an argument early the morning of the murders.

EMMA: I did.

JENNING: Your father arguing with some man.

EMMA: Yes. The man sounded terribly angry.

JENNING: But you couldn't identify that man as Sousa?

EMMA: I'm sure it wasn't Mr. Sousa.

JENNING: How can you be so positive?

EMMA: I think I'm able to recognize the sound of Mr. Sousa's voice.

LIZZIE: Father was always arguing with someone. He had a morbid fear of foreigners.

JENNING: You mention that repeatedly.

LIZZIE: To father, anyone south of Fall River was a foreigner.

JENNING: If we could find that man, we might be able to end this ugly business immediately. *(Stuffs papers back into his briefcase.)* They've received your aunt's statement from New York.

EMMA: Poor Aunt Vinnie. She would have to fall and break her hip just when we need her. I really should go to her.

JENNING: Your place is here, Miss Borden.

EMMA: Yes. yes. You're right.

JENNING: Your aunt's statement confirms that your father was alive when she left this house.

LIZZIE: Why not? It's true.

JENNING: We must convince the jury that what you say is true.

LIZZIE: Ah, yes . . . the jury. Twelve men. Also, a male judge, a male prosecutor.

JENNING: And a male defense lawyer.

LIZZIE: I am at the mercy of men it would seem.

JENNING: I must warn you against that sort of talk. It can only do you harm. *(Busy with his briefcase.)* I shall be on my way. Let me caution you against speaking to the reporters. They'll twist what you say.

EMMA: I'll see that she doesn't meet them.

JENNING: Good day, ladies. I'll show myself out.

EMMA: Good day, Mr. Jennings. *(He EXITS without closing door. EMMA turns to LIZZIE who is looking distant and preoccupied. EMMA stands, moves behind sofa.)* Would you like me to get your medicine? The doctor said you could take it as often as you like.

LIZZIE: The doctor's a quack. Thinks by doping me foolish, I'll sit quietly and behave.

EMMA: It might help.

LIZZIE: I'd rather stay alert and feel pain. When I feel pain, at least I know I'm alive. *(Takes EMMA'S hand.)* Oh, Emma, I don't know what I'd have done without you. You've been such a comfort.

EMMA: Try not to worry. Trust in providence.

(REVEREND JUBB ENTERS UP CENTER, excited. ALICE is with him.)

JUBB: Lizzie, I've some wonderful news.

LIZZIE: They've found the man?

JUBB: Well, no, not that. *(He moves down to the table.)*

EMMA: What, then?

JUBB: The Fellowship has passed a motion of support. We reaffirm our faith in you.

LIZZIE: That is good news, Aaron. I wish I were more myself. Thoughts are racing in my head.

ALICE: Is it any wonder?

LIZZIE: Please convey my appreciation to the Fellowship elders.

JUBB: The idea that you could have done such an awful thing . . . it's unthinkable.

LIZZIE: You've all been so kind. I don't know what I can do to repay you.

JUBB: I'm giving an interview to the press, but I had to stop by and tell you about the elders' decision.

LIZZIE: Yes, it is wonderful. I thank you again, Aaron.

JUBB: Don't despair. We're all praying for you. *(He EXITS UP CENTER, closes door.)*

ALICE: *(Moves to table.)* He worked so hard to get that motion passed.

LIZZIE: Aaron is a friend, a true friend. I'm so fortunate to have so many. Like you, Alice. (*LIZZIE stands, moves DOWN RIGHT.*) I'm going upstairs for a moment. (*She EXITS DOWN RIGHT.*)

EMMA: Poor thing. She's exhausted.

ALICE: (*Steps to table.*) It's all the town is talking about. The murders. Even the New York papers are full of it. There was a rumor they were going to charge Mr. Sousa.

EMMA: Because he quarreled with father?

ALICE: Yes.

EMMA: In that case, they'd have to arrest half the workmen in Fall River. Father fought with them all. Usually over money.

ALICE: Mrs. Churchill hasn't been much help. She's spreading all sorts of gossip.

EMMA: I'm not surprised.

ALICE: She says if they bring Lizzie to trial, she'd buy her way out.

EMMA: That's contemptible.

ALICE: I'm afraid there are a lot of people who don't like the Borden name.

EMMA: Father and Abby weren't exactly likable people, and Lizzie has offended so many with her manner. People that don't understand her.

ALICE: If only she could get away for a rest.

EMMA: I've suggested that, but the City Marshall forbids it.

ALICE: What kind of justice is that? Lizzie isn't charged with anything, and yet, they treat her like a common criminal.

EMMA: The officials have been more than courteous. I don't think they want anything to do with the case. Fall River has never accused a woman of murder in all its history.

(*LIZZIE ENTERS DOWN RIGHT, her ACT ONE dress in her arms.*)

ALICE: What have you got there?

LIZZIE: *(CROSSES to kitchen.)* Just an old dress. I spilled ink on it. I can't get the stains out. *(She ENTERS kitchen.)*

EMMA: She says she doesn't take the medicine the doctor gives her, but she does. It makes her muddled.

ALICE: Wasn't that the dress Lizzie wore the day of the murders?

EMMA: I didn't notice.

ALICE: I'm sure it's the same dress.

EMMA: What if it is?

ALICE: *(Alarmed.)* I don't think she should take out any stains.

EMMA: *(Worried.)* Oh, Alice, it can't be the same dress. Lizzie! Lizzie!

LIZZIE: *(ENTERS.)* Why are you shouting?

EMMA: That dress! It isn't the same one you wore on the day of the murders?

LIZZIE: *(Recalls.)* Yes, it is. I've never liked it. The ink's ruined it.

EMMA: Where have you put it?

LIZZIE: I'm burning it in the stove. *(EMMA and ALICE react in horror.)*

EMMA: Lizzie, you didn't! *(Darts into kitchen.)*

LIZZIE: What's the matter?

ALICE: Lizzie, did the patrolman see you put the dress into the stove?

LIZZIE: Yes, he was standing right outside the screen door.

ALICE: *(Weak from shock, she sinks to a chair at the table. Moaning.)* What have you done?

LIZZIE: *(Steps in front of the sofa.)* What's wrong?

EMMA: *(Returning from kitchen.)* I couldn't pull it out. Most of it is smothered in flame.

LIZZIE: Why is my dress so important?

EMMA: Don't you know?

LIZZIE: I'm so confused.

EMMA: Lizzie, Mr. Jennings stressed it not more than a few minutes ago. He said the strongest defense you have is the fact there is no blood splattered on your dress.

ALICE: You've destroyed that defense. Lizzie, what could you have been thinking of?

LIZZIE: *(Suddenly the impact hits. She sits on the sofa, face in her hands.)* What have I done?

EMMA: Yes, what have you done?

LIZZIE: *(Trying to get control of herself.)* They'll find the man you heard arguing with father. They've got to.

HARRINGTON: *(ENTERS DOWN LEFT.)* The City Marshal's coming to the house. There's a crowd following him.

(HARRINGTON moves UP CENTER, opens the door. LIZZIE looks nervously to EMMA and then to ALICE.)

ALICE: I'm sure it's something routine.

EMMA: More questions, perhaps.

LIZZIE: I'm sick of questions.

HARRINGTON: *(Calls back.)* The City Marshal, Miss Borden.

(CITY MARSHAL ENTERS UP CENTER, nods to HARRINGTON who tosses a lax salute, closes the door. LIZZIE doesn't turn.)

MARSHAL: *(Nods hello.)* Ladies. *(ALICE stands, moves to fireplace.)*

LIZZIE: Good of you to drop by, Marshal.

(MARSHAL moves DOWN CENTER, HARRINGTON stands by bookcase.)

MARSHAL: This isn't a social call.

LIZZIE: I didn't think it was.

ALICE: You've found the man Lizzie saw running from the house?

MARSHAL: No.

EMMA: Question Mrs. Churchill. Ask her why she's lying.

MARSHAL: She insists she saw no one running from the yard.

LIZZIE: (*Temper flaring.*) What does it matter? What does any of it matter!

(*EMMA moves to LIZZIE, sits beside her, puts a comforting arm around her shoulder.*)

MARSHAL: I didn't mean to upset you, Miss Borden.

LIZZIE: (*Calms down.*) I'm sure you didn't. Forgive me . . . my nerves . . . I've been under such a strain . . .

ALICE: Is it any wonder?

MARSHAL: You must understand this is a most peculiar case. Y'see, the "killer" had to be familiar with the house.

LIZZIE: Why?

MARSHAL: You were nearby, your hired girl was about to return, your aunt had just left the premises. The house wasn't exactly deserted. The killer had to strike down your mother . . .

LIZZIE: She wasn't my mother. She was my father's wife.

MARSHAL: . . . strike her down without making a sound. The same with your father, then escape without being seen.

LIZZIE: I saw him.

MARSHAL: All this in broad daylight. Timed to the second, no margin for error.

LIZZIE: Am I . . . the "prime" suspect?

MARSHAL: I wish it didn't point in that direction.

LIZZIE: I want to know the truth.

MARSHAL: Well, Miss Borden, yes; you are the prime suspect.

ALICE: *(Shocked.)* Oh, no. *(BRIDGET ENTERS from kitchen, stands DOWN LEFT.)*

EMMA: But the man father fought with? I heard him so clearly.

MARSHAL: We will continue our search. You see, it isn't a question of the actual killings alone.

LIZZIE: I don't understand.

MARSHAL: The autopsy. The findings were brought before the Grand Jury. There were some traces of arsenic poisoning.

LIZZIE: *(Stunned.)* Arsenic?

MARSHAL: Not enough to kill, unless given in sufficient doses over a prolonged period.

ALICE: You're saying someone tried to poison the Borden?

MARSHAL: A woman visited the pharmacy about two months ago. The pharmacist remembers. She made a fuss about signing the register.

EMMA: What woman?

LIZZIE: *(Calmly.)* I bought the arsenic for tree rats. They infest the barn.

BRIDGET: That's right. They're all over the barn. I hate to go in there. You mustn't take Miss Lizzie. You can't.

LIZZIE: Shhhhhh, Bridget. *(Stands regally.)* Am I to go with you?

MARSHAL: Yes.

LIZZIE: I am innocent, Marshal. *(He doesn't answer. BRIDGET and ALICE look as if they might break out into tears. EMMA stands.)*

EMMA: I'll come with you.

MARSHAL: I'm afraid that's not allowed. Harrington. *(HARRINGTON steps UP CENTER, opens door.)*

LIZZIE: *(Soft laugh.)* I feel like Marie Antoinette walking to the guillotine. *(No one answers. LIZZIE sees their tense expressions.)* I'm sorry. The joke was in poor taste, wasn't it? *(LIZZIE EXITS UP CENTER.)*

CURTAIN

ACT TWO
Scene Two

AT RISE: Weeks later. BRIDGET is showing in a reporter, AMY ROBSART, UP CENTER.

BRIDGET: Miss Emma is in the kitchen. I'll tell her you're here . . . uh, what was your name again?

AMY: Robsart. Amy Robsart. I'm with the New York Sun.

BRIDGET: I should have remembered. Make yourself at home.

(BRIDGET EXITS into kitchen. AMY looks about the room, moves DOWN CENTER. She sets her bag on the table and takes out a pencil and notebook. EMMA ENTERS from kitchen, wiping flour from her hands.)

EMMA: Miss Robsart. *(AMY turns, extends her hand.)* I've been baking. My hands are sticky. Won't you sit down.

AMY: Thank you. *(AMY sits at table. EMMA moves in front of sofa.)* I was afraid you wouldn't see me.

EMMA: You've been most sympathetic to my sister. I appreciate that.

AMY: I believe it's a question of empathy. I know of your sister's work in the woman's rights movement.

EMMA: One of Lizzie's favorite causes.

AMY: I'm quite active in the movement myself. Did you know that?

EMMA: No.

AMY: I feel it's important that we stick together.

EMMA: Yes.

AMY: All the attention has flowed to your sister.

EMMA: I don't feel as if I've been ignored.

AMY: I didn't mean it like that. I would like to hear what you have to say.

EMMA: You mean about the murders?

AMY: I'm sure you'll agree that the police investigation was sloppy. Even the Boston papers admit that.

EMMA: I wouldn't know if the investigation was sloppy or not.

AMY: Whoever murdered your father and stepmother had ample time to do away with evidence and heaven knows what else.

EMMA: That's what people are saying.

AMY: That could work in Lizzie's favor. She has many friends.

EMMA: Many enemies, too.

AMY: Why do you suppose the authorities dared arrest your sister? I mean, considering the lack of hard evidence, her social position in Fall River . . .

EMMA: I believe I can answer that.

AMY: Please do. *(She is ready to write.)*

EMMA: You must understand what I say is only a theory. My own.

AMY: Go on.

EMMA: I believe the police had to find a "murderer" to save face. After all, this case is the most . . . how shall I put it? . . . "spectacular" . . . they've ever had. They couldn't find the man father was arguing with that morning, and if they didn't come up with something, they would look foolish.

AMY: You're saying your sister was chosen because she was available?

EMMA: I'm not sure I would put it quite that way, but I do think the police made an assumption and did everything in their power to make the facts fit.

AMY: May I quote you?

EMMA: If you wish.

AMY: You and your sister were close. Very close.

EMMA: Yes.

AMY: Your mother died when you were quite young.

EMMA: Yes. Lizzie brought me up.

AMY: You admired her.

EMMA: Very much. There wasn't anything Lizzie couldn't do once she set her mind to it. If I had a problem, she solved it. If I was ill, she played nurse. If I was lonely, she took away the loneliness with companionship. Ever since I can remember, Lizzie has been there when I needed her.

AMY: You share handsomely in your father's will.

EMMA: I wish I'd never heard of it. If the will didn't exist, the authorities wouldn't have the one motive they can understand. Murder for profit.

AMY: Is it true you and your sister took your meals separately from your father and stepmother?

EMMA: We never ate at the table with my stepmother.

AMY: By choice?

EMMA: That was the way Lizzie wanted it.

AMY: You didn't dispute the point?

EMMA: No.

AMY: Did you hear that the Y.W.C.A. has established a fund to help in your sister's defense?

EMMA: Yes, I knew that. So many have been so kind.

AMY: Men hate admitting they're wrong.

EMMA: The police have had things pretty much their own way. However, they've been considerate. I've taken many of Lizzie's personal things to her cell. Even her vanity and dressing screen.

AMY: You make it sound as if she were an actress preparing for a role. *(Pause, then . . .)* What will you do if the jury finds your sister . . .

EMMA: Guilty?

AMY: Innocent.

EMMA: I'll thank heaven.

AMY: Will you remain here in Fall River?

EMMA: I haven't given much thought to anything beyond each day and what it brings.

(AMY nods thoughtfully, writes. MRS. CHURCHILL ENTERS UP CENTER without knocking, tense, excitable.)

MRS. CHURCHILL: I must speak with you, Emma.

EMMA: I didn't hear you knock, Mrs. Churchill.

MRS. CHURCHILL: Now.

AMY: *(Senses the tension, decides to leave, stands.)* Perhaps we can finish this later in the day.

EMMA: Please stay, Miss Robsart. Can't you see I'm busy, Mrs. Churchill?

MRS. CHURCHILL: *(Folds her arms defiantly.)* I'm not leaving.

EMMA: *(To AMY.)* Perhaps another time will be better.

AMY: You've already been more than helpful. Thank you again, Miss Borden. *(She nods to EMMA, EXITS UP CENTER.)*

EMMA: You have no right to come into this house.

MRS. CHURCHILL: *(Moves CENTER.)* People are turning away from me in the street. They think I'm deliberately lying about not seeing a man running from the yard. Oh, Emma, you've known me for a long time. Do you think I would lie about something as serious as that?

EMMA: I know you hate my sister.

MRS. CHURCHILL: I don't hate her. I admit Lizzie and I didn't get along. I admit we had harsh words. I admit I was angry about her new position in the Fellowship.

EMMA: A position you wanted.

MRS. CHURCHILL: Yes, I admit that, too. But that has nothing to do with the murders. I saw no one. I'm being punished for what I didn't see.

EMMA: Why don't you tell the truth?

MRS. CHURCHILL: I am telling the truth.

EMMA: Why don't you tell me you hate Lizzie so much you'd do anything to see her hurt, punished.

MRS. CHURCHILL: *(Explodes.)* All right, I do hate her! I hate her! *(Emotionally exhausted, MRS. CHURCHILL sits at the table.)* There. You heard me say it. *(Pause.)* Odd.

EMMA: What?

MRS. CHURCHILL: Seeing you standing there with your back so straight, so smug, so composed . . . you remind me of your sister.

EMMA: People change.

MRS. CHURCHILL: I hate Lizzie, but I am not lying, I swear to you. I saw nothing.

EMMA: Is that what you wanted to tell me?

MRS. CHURCHILL: Emma, I have to live in this town. I have no place else to go. I'm being treated as an outcast.

EMMA: What can I do about that?

MRS. CHURCHILL: *(Stands, steps to EMMA.)* If you would only speak to me in public, where people could see you aren't against me. If you would only say something in my favor to your friends, then people wouldn't treat me the way they do. I can't live with their accusing stares. Will you help me, Emma?

EMMA: *(Softly.)* Impossible.

MRS. CHURCHILL: I'm not asking, I'm begging.

EMMA: You'd have it all your own way, wouldn't you, Mrs. Churchill? Lizzie would be gone. You'd have your revenge and, most likely, the position you've always wanted with the Fellowship. I'd be the frosting on your cake.

MRS. CHURCHILL: It wouldn't be like that at all.

EMMA: Wouldn't it? *(Hard.)* I'm not fooled by you, Mrs. Churchill. I know how strong your hate is.

BRIDGET: *(ENTERS DOWN LEFT.)* Carlotta's here. She brought fresh eggs. Shall I buy some?

EMMA: Mrs. Churchill is leaving.

(BRIDGET moves UP CENTER, opens door. MRS. CHURCHILL and EMMA stare at one another.)

MRS. CHURCHILL: Yes . . . you've changed, Emma. You've become hard, cold.

EMMA: *(Low.)* Don't come back.

MRS. CHURCHILL: You needn't worry about that. *(She EXITS UP CENTER, BRIDGET closes the door.)*

EMMA: I don't want her in this house again, Bridget. Do you understand?

(EMMA sits, BRIDGET moves DOWN RIGHT, as if she were trying to avoid EMMA.)

BRIDGET: Miss Emma?

EMMA: What is it?

BRIDGET: Some people say it's not going well with your sister.

EMMA: Some people will say anything.

BRIDGET: What they found with the . . . autop . . . autop . . .

EMMA: Autopsy.

BRIDGET: The traces of the arsenic . . . that's damaging evidence, isn't it?

EMMA: It's one of the prosecution's strongest points. That and Lizzie burning the dress.

BRIDGET: What I mean is . . . if they didn't find those arsenic traces . . . it wouldn't look so bad for Miss Lizzie, would it?

EMMA: What are you driving at, Bridget? You haven't been yourself for weeks.

BRIDGET: (*Visibly upset, gets her words out in an impulsive gush.*) I don't want anything to happen to Miss Lizzie because of me . . . she was always my friend . . . I didn't know they'd be murdered . . . I didn't know it would come to that . . . you have to believe me, Miss Emma.

EMMA: (*Looks at Bridget bewildered, stands.*) Bridget . . . what are you saying?

BRIDGET: I . . . put the arsenic in their food, not Miss Lizzie.

EMMA: Bridget!

BRIDGET: (*Sinks into a chair at the table.*) I only wanted to make them a little sick. Your stepmother was always threatening to discharge me, and your father never had a kind word. It was wrong of me, I know. God will punish me. I shouldn't have done it.

EMMA: (*Moves to table.*) You said nothing to the police. Why?

BRIDGET: I was afraid. I was afraid they'd think I did the killing. (*She begins to sob.*)

EMMA: (*Controlled.*) You did a terrible thing, Bridget.

BRIDGET: I know, I know.

EMMA: Too late to worry about that.

BRIDGET: What am I going to do?

EMMA: You must go to Mr. Jenning at once. Tell him exactly what you've told me.

BRIDGET: I can't! They'll think I did it.

EMMA: If you don't do it, they'll hang my sister.

BRIDGET: No!

EMMA: You have nothing to fear.

BRIDGET: They'll put me in prison.

EMMA: I'll see that they don't. Do as I tell you, Bridget.

BRIDGET: *(Stands, hesitant.)* You don't hate me, Miss Emma.

EMMA: Never mind about that. What are you standing there for?
Go to Mr. Jennings. I'll go to the jail.

BRIDGET: Yes, yes. I'm going. *(She hurries out UP CENTER.)*

EMMA: *(Stands at the table trying to sort out her thoughts. To herself, aloud.)* I must get Reverend Jubb . . . must be careful
how we break the news to Lizzie . . .

(CARLOTTA ENTERS cautiously from the kitchen. She's young, dark-complexioned, fiery, dressed poorly.)

CARLOTTA: I put the eggs on the table.

EMMA: *(Turns.)* Oh, Mrs. Sousa. I forgot you were waiting.

CARLOTTA: She tried to kill them with poison, huh?

EMMA: Listening at the door?

CARLOTTA: I heard.

EMMA: She didn't try to kill them. She wanted to make them
ill. A stupid, childish prank. You'd better keep quiet about
what you heard.

CARLOTTA: *(Steps in.)* Why do you buy things from me?

EMMA: What are you talking about?

CARLOTTA: You buy eggs from me when you have chickens in
the barn. You let me take your laundry when Bridget could do
it.

EMMA: If you'd rather not have my business, I suppose I can find someone else. I just thought with all the trouble your husband's had, it would be a neighborly thing to do.

CARLOTTA: We're not your neighbors. We live on the other side of the tracks. Foreigners. No one wants to help us.

EMMA: That's not true.

CARLOTTA: You know what saves his neck? You. Other people say it was "Sousa," "Sousa." But you say the man you heard arguing with your father was NOT Sousa. You save his life, Miss Emma.

EMMA: All I did was tell the truth.

CARLOTTA: Did you? (*Nervous, EMMA moves DOWN RIGHT CENTER washing one hand with the other.*) You know what the little children sing? (*Sing/song.*)

"Lizzie Borden took an axe
And gave her Mother forty whacks;
When she saw what she had done . . ."

EMMA: (*Flat.*) "She gave her Father forty-one."

CARLOTTA: I warn you, Miss Emma . . .

EMMA: Warn me?

CARLOTTA: I think you wait and then . . . change your story.

EMMA: Why would I do something like that?

CARLOTTA: Because people in this town don't want your sister to hang. You stick together. She's one of you. They'll grab at anything that helps prove her innocent.

EMMA: You resent that?

CARLOTTA: I've watched you carefully, Miss Emma. You've become so quiet. You can even say a line from that song the children sing and not choke.

EMMA: That doesn't mean I don't loathe it.

CARLOTTA: Like a cat. That's you. When it looks as if there's no escape for your sister, you'll change your story. Everyone in Fall River will be grateful. After that, they'll come for my husband.

EMMA: Why would I wait so long to change my story?

CARLOTTA: Because you're clever. People believed it was your sister. At first. Now they're not so sure. They'd like to blame someone else.

EMMA: You think I'll hand them your husband.

CARLOTTA: Yes.

EMMA: *(Calmly.)* Get out.

CARLOTTA: Know something else I think?

EMMA: I told you to get out.

CARLOTTA: I think you know things you haven't told the police.

EMMA: Get out, I say.

CARLOTTA: Why do you do that?

EMMA: Do what?

CARLOTTA: Wash one hand with the other . . . without soap or water? *(EMMA stops the gesture, not realizing what she's been doing.)* Some things you can't wash away, Miss Emma. Like murder. *(EMMA stares at her hands.)*

CURTAIN

ACT TWO
Scene Three

AT RISE: An afternoon in late Spring. ALICE stands in the open doorway UP CENTER, REVEREND JUBB sits at the table going over a stack of mail. AMY stands DOWN LEFT checking material in her reporter's notebook.

JUBB: . . . all these telegrams and letters. Did you ever see so many?

AMY: Lizzie Borden is a celebrity, Reverend Jubb. You'll have to remember that.

JUBB: I'm not likely to forget.

AMY: *(To ALICE.)* Any sign of them?

ALICE: Not yet. *(Steps CENTER.)* Maybe we should have met her at the courthouse.

AMY: Too many people. Mr. Jennings said it would be better if we waited here.

JUBB: He put up a masterful defense.

AMY: When you come right down to it, they had nothing against Lizzie but circumstantial evidence. Might have been easier if the killer had robbed the house. That way, Lizzie would never have been suspected.

ALICE: The important thing is that she's free. Found not guilty.

JUBB: It hasn't been easy for Emma, either.

ALICE: She's held up amazingly.

AMY: Sometimes people find a reservoir of strength during trying times.

JUBB: I'm afraid Emma always stood a bit in the shadow of Lizzie. Younger sister and all.

ALICE: Lizzie has such a strong personality.

AMY: I think I might do an article on the two of them. Loving Sisters Standing Together . . . that sort of thing.

JUBB: I suppose such articles will go on forever.

AMY: Unavoidable. The public has a thirst for sensationalism.

JUBB: More's the pity.

AMY: I'm certain there are some people who won't approve of the not guilty verdict.

JUBB: Some people are vindictive. However, Lizzie and Emma can't waste time with them.

ALICE: I hope there won't be any unpleasantness.

AMY: People forget quickly. In time, Fall River will forget, too.

JUBB: *(Doesn't think so.)* Perhaps.

ALICE: It will seem strange for Lizzie . . . coming back here.

JUBB: We must all try to get things back to normal. She'll need our help. She's been through a terrible time.

ALICE: How she's held up all these months is beyond me. I would have had a nervous breakdown.

AMY: *(Moves in front of sofa.)* I wonder if they'll ever find the real killer?

JUBB: I'm sure they will, and when they do the authorities will have to make a public apology to Lizzie. They hounded her as if she were a Salem witch.

ALICE: But they couldn't convince the jury.

JUBB: Luckily.

EMMA: *(ENTERS from DOWN RIGHT.)* Would anyone like some tea?

JUBB: Not for me, thank you, Emma.

ALICE: No. *(AMY shakes her head.)*

EMMA: Without Bridget I'm at a loss. I didn't realize how much I relied on her.

JUBB: I think she could have stayed until Lizzie got settled in.

EMMA: I couldn't persuade her. She's convinced my sister will never forgive her.

JUBB: That's not true. Lizzie has a most forgiving nature.

EMMA: I don't think Bridget could look her in the face. Anyway, she's gone. Packed up this morning and took the train to Boston. I'll miss her.

ALICE: Why are they taking so long?

JUBB: Technicalities.

EMMA: That's what the law is . . . a mass of technicalities.
(*Looks at the table.*) This morning's mail?

JUBB: Yes. All expressing the hope she'll be acquitted.

EMMA: All?

JUBB: Well, there are the usual one or two hateful letters.

EMMA: Unsigned naturally.

AMY: Naturally.

EMMA: I've grown weary answering the mail. Lizzie can deal with this batch herself.

JUBB: I trust she'll plan a long holiday.

ALICE: Do you think she'll travel, Emma?

EMMA: I never try to second-guess my sister.

JENNING: (*From OFF-UP CENTER.*) They're inside waiting for you, Miss Borden.

LIZZIE: (*From OFF-UP CENTER.*) I'm hurrying.

ALICE: They're here!

JUBB: *(Stands.)* We must try not to mention the ordeal.

EMMA: That won't be easy, Aaron.

(All face UP CENTER. JENNING ENTERS UP CENTER.)

JENNING: She's home safe. *(A moment passes for dramatic effect.)*

LIZZIE: *(ENTERS.)* Emma!

EMMA: *(Moves to her.)* Welcome home, Lizzie. *(They embrace.)*

JUBB: *(CROSSES to LIZZIE.)* Welcome home.

LIZZIE: *(Takes his hand.)* Thank you, Aaron. You've been such a source of strength. Such a friend. I don't know what I'd have done without your support.

ALICE: Oh, Lizzie, we've missed you so.

LIZZIE: *(Steps to ALICE, embraces her.)* I've missed you, too.

AMY: You'd better sit down. You must be exhausted.

LIZZIE: I am. Completely. *(LIZZIE sits on sofa. Positions at this point should be as follows: JUBB DOWN RIGHT, JENNING behind the table. ALICE RIGHT of sofa, AMY LEFT of sofa. EMMA is CENTER.)* I can't believe I'm home. You don't know the nights I've spent tossing on my cot wondering if I would ever see this place again.

JUBB: Try not to think about it.

LIZZIE: You mustn't spare my feelings, Aaron. I'll never be able to put this nightmare out of my mind.

ALICE: But you must, Lizzie. You must try.

AMY: These things take time.

LIZZIE: You've been most kind, Miss Robsart. I've read every word you've written. I shall never be able to thank you properly, either.

AMY: Your acquittal is my thanks.

LIZZIE: Nor you, Mr. Jennings.

JENNINGS: We owe a great deal to Bridget. If she hadn't come forth and confessed to her part in the food poisoning . . .

LIZZIE: *(Interrupts.)* Where is Bridget? *(Silence.)* Something wrong?

EMMA: She's gone, Lizzie.

LIZZIE: Gone?

EMMA: This morning. She took the early train to Boston.

LIZZIE: Why?

EMMA: I couldn't stop her. She was afraid you wouldn't forgive her.

LIZZIE: Where in Boston? Did she leave an address?

EMMA: No, nothing.

LIZZIE: Poor Bridget.

JENNINGS: The question is . . . will they find the man you heard arguing with your father.

EMMA: In time.

JUBB: I pray so. *(To others.)* We must let her rest.

LIZZIE: Would you mind terribly? In a few days I'll be quite myself, I'm sure.

ALICE: We wanted to be here for a moment when you came home.

JUBB: To say welcome.

LIZZIE: I appreciate that. So very much. *(Touches her forehead.)* All I seem to hear are the words the clerk said to the jury. I can't get them out of my head. "To each count of which indictment Lizzie Andrew Borden, the prisoner at the bar, has heretofore pleaded and said that thereof she is not guilty . . ." Such archaic wording. One would think Massachusetts was medieval England.

JENNING: I think we should allow Miss Borden some privacy.

JUBB: You're quite right.

JENNING: There are some matters I must speak to you about, Miss Borden, but they can wait.

LIZZIE: Thank you, Mr. Jennings.

JUBB: Come along, Alice, Miss Robsart.

AMY: A victory, total victory, Miss Borden. Nothing less.

JUBB: *(Motions all OUT UP CENTER.)* Come along, come along.
(JENNING, ALICE, AMY EXIT UP CENTER, followed by JUBB.)

LIZZIE: *(Looks to EMMA.)* It's a wonderful feeling to know one has friends.

EMMA: Do you want anything to eat?

LIZZIE: No. Bridget can fix me something later . . . oh, I forgot.

EMMA: There's no one here but the two of us, Lizzie. We're alone.

LIZZIE: *(Conscious that EMMA is staring at her.)* Why are you staring at me?

EMMA: Don't you know?

LIZZIE: If I knew I wouldn't ask. Sit beside me.

EMMA: No.

LIZZIE: Why?

EMMA: I don't want to.

LIZZIE: Emma, these last months . . . you've acted so strangely.

EMMA: Have I?

LIZZIE: I owe you so much. Your testimony was the key factor in my defense. Mr. Jennings said we'd have been lost without it. You were so wonderful on the stand. You never wavered.

EMMA: I felt I owed you that.

LIZZIE: *(Doesn't understand.)* Owed me? You told the truth, that's all.

EMMA: Did I tell the truth?

LIZZIE: Yes, of course you did. You heard someone arguing with father that awful morning.

EMMA: No, Lizzie. I did not.

LIZZIE: *(Stunned.)* What are you saying?

EMMA: I made up that story.

LIZZIE: No, you didn't! I've heard father argue with many people.

EMMA: I know. So have I. But I didn't hear anyone that morning. Don't you understand? I made it up. I lied.

LIZZIE: *(Impressed.)* Oh, Emma . . . then I owe you even more than I thought. You lied to help me . . . you lied because you knew I was innocent . . . in your heart.

EMMA: No, Lizzie. *(EMMA goes to the fireplace, reaches up into the chimney and takes out Sousa's axe which has been hidden there. LIZZIE tenses. EMMA holds the axe in her hands, moves DOWN CENTER. SEE PRODUCTION NOTES.)* Remember how we used to hide things when we were girls? In the space in the chimney. Our secret place. No one knew about it but you and I. I found the axe the day of the murder.

LIZZIE: And you think I did it. There was no blood on my dress.

EMMA: You changed your dress between the time you sent Bridget for help and it arrived. Bridget didn't notice.

LIZZIE: You have changed.

EMMA: Yes. I'm no longer innocent about life. I never want to see or hear from you again.

LIZZIE: I tell you, you're wrong.

EMMA: I don't want any of the money. You can have it all. This house, too.

LIZZIE: (*Emotion building.*) This house? I'll sell it!

EMMA: No, you won't, Lizzie. I know you too well for that. You'll keep this house and live in it, if only to show Fall River you've nothing to hide. Isn't it funny the way things work out? I've always liked this house, but I'm leaving it. You've always hated it, but it will become your prison.

LIZZIE: You can say these things to me and mean them?

EMMA: (*Puts axe on table.*) Mrs. Churchill said I had become like you. Cold and hard. I'll never forgive you for that, Lizzie. I'm not taking anything with me. I'm going to Aunt Vinnie.

LIZZIE: You lied because you knew I was innocent.

EMMA: (*Moves UP CENTER.*) I lied because I knew you were guilty and I had to save you. Goodbye, Lizzie. (*EXITS UP CENTER.*)

LIZZIE: (*Without turning.*) Emma? (*Softly.*) Emma, don't leave me alone. I'm frightened. (*Pause.*) Emma? (*She turns, sees she is quite alone in the house. Her eyes move to the axe. She stands, CROSSES to the table, picks it up, sits. She speaks as if in a trance, out to the audience, recalling the words of the clerk.*) "To each count of which indictment Lizzie Andrew Borden, the prisoner at the bar . . ." (*She breaks off, forces herself to continue.*) "If she is guilty you are to say so, and if she is not, you are to say so, and no more. Good men and true, stand fast together and harken to your evidence . . ."

(*The lights have faded, leaving LIZZIE in SILHOUETTE, the axe in her lap. As her voice trails off into the shadows.*)

CURTAIN

PROPERTIES

STAGE:

Serving table, bookcase and books, table with three chairs, pieces of jigsaw puzzle, (set prior to Act One curtain), sofa with Andrew's coat, (set prior to Act One curtain), lamps, pictures, rugs, etc., as desired.

BROUGHT ON: (ACT ONE):

Handkerchief (LIZZIE), dust cloth (BRIDGET), ring of keys (ABBY), suitcase (EMMA), locket on chain (LIZZIE), axe (SOUSA), book (LIZZIE), pocketwatch (ANDREW), mug of milk (BRIDGET), handkerchief (VINNIE), bowl of fruit (ABBY), gloves (EMMA), coin (ANDREW), carton with groceries (BRIDGET), newspaper (ANDREW).

BROUGHT ON: (ACT TWO):

Dust cloth (BRIDGET), legal papers and briefcase (JENNING), dress (same as worn in Act One) (LIZZIE), handbag, paper, pencil (AMY), mail (set prior to Scene Three), reporter's notebook (AMY).

SOUND:

Man's VOICE offstage, (can be done by any male member of cast or crew), door slam, noises from kitchen.

COSTUMES:

There's a wide range of styles that easily fit the period. The essential thing is that the dresses and skirts of the women be floor-length and that the male characters don't wear anything that's too modern. Mentioned here are only costumes that figure somehow as important to the plot: vest, shirt and tie (ANDREW), apron (BRIDGET), long robe (ABBY), cap (SOUSA), bonnet (ABBY), new ACT TWO dress for LIZZIE, shabby dress (CARLOTTA).

PRODUCTION NOTES:

If a grandfather's clock can be managed, director may wish to conceal the axe inside, instead of in the fireplace. Altering a few lines is all that's necessary. Some blood on Lizzie's hands for the closing of ACT

(PRODUCTION NOTES: continued.)

ONE will prove effective and give the audience an added chill. Actress portraying the role of EMMA will have to pay special attention to the way in which she "changes" . . . from the sweet girl in the beginning of the play to the strong woman who challenges LIZZIE at the thriller's conclusion. Also, pauses are important, they say as much as dialogue in some scenes . . . and remember the actual murder sequence will require timing and exact blocking. The important thing is to keep the audience guessing.

THE AUTHOR



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