TINA HOWE grew up three blocks from the Metropolitan Museum of Art back in the days when it was free. It's where she and her brother went to play on rainy weekends. Her plays include The Nest, produced Off-Broadway in 1970; Birth and After Birth, published by Vintage Books in the anthology, The New Women's Theatre: Museum,* presented at the Los Angeles Actors Theatre with a cast of 44 in 1976 and subsequently restaged at the New York Shakespeare Festival in 1978 with a cast of 18; The Art of Dining,* co-produced by and at the Kennedy Center and the New York Shakespeare Festival in 1979-80; Painting Churches,* which premiered at The Second Stage in February, 1983, and then reopened in November at the Lambs Theatre under the banner of McCann-Nugent; Approaching Zanzibar,* and Coastal Disturbances,* which also premiered at The Second Stage, in the spring of 1986, transferring later to the Circle in the Square on Broadway for a lengthy run and a Tony nomination. In 1983, Miss Howe was swept off her feet by winning a Rosamond Gilder Award for Outstanding Creative Achievement in the Theatre, an Obie for Distinguished Playwriting, and a Rockefeller Playwright-in-Residence award which she chose to use at The Second Stage. In 1984, she was the recipient of the Outer Critics' Circle John Gassner Award for Outstanding New American Playwright. Avon Books has published a trilogy of her plays, *Museum, The Art of Dining,* and *Painting Churches.* Miss Howe teaches playwriting at N.Y.U., is married to the novelist, Norman Levy, and has two children, Eben, and Dana.

*Also published by Samuel French, Inc. Consult our Basic Catalogue of Plays for details.
THE SECOND STAGE
A Non-Profit Theatre Organization

Robyn Goodman and Carole Rothman
Artistic Directors

Presents

PAINTING CHURCHES

by
TINA HOWE
Directed by
CAROLE ROTHMAN

Starring

FRANCES CONROY DONALD MOFFAT MARIAN SELDES

Set Design HEIDI LANDESMAN Lighting Design FRANCES ARONSON

Costume Design NAN CIBULA

Sound Design GARY HARRIS Hair Design ANTONIO SODDU

Production Stage Manager LORETTA ROBERTSON Stage Manager NANCY KOHLBECK

Production Supervisor for The Second Stage: KIM NOVICK

CAST
(In order of appearance)

Fanny Church ........................................ MARIAN SELDES
Gardner Church ..................................... DONALD MOFFAT
Margaret Church .................................... FRANCES CONROY

PLACE: Bescon Hill—Boston, Mass.

TIME: A few years ago.

ACT I Scene 1: A bright spring morning
Scene 2: 2 days later
Scene 3: 24 hours later

ACT II Scene 1: 3 days later
Scene 2: The last day

There will be one intermission

The Second Stage is a member of the Alliance of Resident Theatres—NY

This production is made possible in part with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts and the
National Endowment for the Arts.
LAMB'S THEATRE

ELIZABETH I. MCCANN  NELLE NUGENT  RAY LARSEN
LEE GUBER  SHELLY GROSS

present

THE SECOND STAGE PRODUCTION

of

PAINTING CHURCHES

by

TINA HOWE

starring

GEORGE N. ELIZABETH MARIAN
MARTIN  McGOVERN  SELDES

Setting by  Costumes by  Lighting by
HEIDI LANDESMAN  LINDA FISHER  FRANCES ARONSON

Directed by

CAROLE ROTHMAN

PAINTING CHURCHES opened at the Lamb's Theatre on November 22, 1983.

CAST
(in order of appearance)

Fanny Church .................................................. MARIAN SELDES
Gardner Church .................................................. GEORGE N. MARTIN
Margaret Church ................................................. ELIZABETH McGOVERN

PLACE: Beacon Hill  — Boston, Mass.

ACT I
Scene 1: A bright spring morning
Scene 2: 2 days later
Scene 3: 24 hours later

ACT II
Scene 1: 3 days later
Scene 2: The last day

THERE WILL BE ONE INTERMISSION.

STANDBYS
Standbys never substitute for listed players unless a specific announcement for the appearance is made at the time of the performance.
Standbys for Fanny Church—Lily Lodge; Standby for Gardner Church—Wyman Pendleton; Standby for Margaret Church—Frances McCormand.
CHARACTERS

FANNY SEDGWICK CHURCH—A Bostonian from a fine old family, in her 60's.
GARDNER CHURCH—Her husband, an eminent New England poet from a finer family, in his 70's.
MARGARET CHURCH (Mags)—Their daughter, a painter, in her early 30's.

Painting Churches

ACT ONE

SCENE 1

The living room of the Church's townhouse on Beacon Hill. One week before everything will be moved to Cape Cod. Empty packing cartons line the room and all the furniture has been tagged with brightly colored markers. At first glance it looks like any discreet Boston interior, but on closer scrutiny one notices a certain flamboyance. Oddities from second hand stores are mixed in with the fine old furniture and exotic hand made curios vie with tasteful family objets d'art. What makes the room remarkable though, is the play of light that pours through three soaring arched windows. At one hour it's hard-edged and brilliant, the next, it's dappled and yielding. It transforms whatever it touches giving the room a distinct feeling of unreality. It's several years ago, a bright spring morning.

FANNY is sitting on the sofa wrapping a valuable old silver coffee service. She's wearing a worn bathrobe and fashionable hat. As she works, she makes a list of everything on a yellow legal pad. GARDNER can be heard typing in his study down the hall.

FANNY. (She picks up a coffee pot.) God, this is good looking! I'd forgotten how handsome Mama's old silver was! It's probably worth a fortune. It certainly weighs enough! (calling out) GARRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRDD- NERRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR . . . ? Well, it should bring us a
pretty penny, that's for sure. (Wraps it, places it in a carton and then picks up the tray that goes with it. She holds it up like a mirror and adjusts her hat; louder in another register.) OH GARRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR...? (He continues typing. She then reaches for a small box and opens it with reverence.) Grandma's Paul Revere tea spoons...! (She takes several out and fondles them.) I don't care how desperate things get, these will never go! One has to maintain some standards! (She writes on her list.) "Grandma's Paul Revere tea spoons, Coutil!!!... WASN'T IT THE AMERICAN WING OF THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART THAT WANTED GRANDMA'S PAUL REVERE TEA SPOONS SO BADLY...? (She looks at her reflection in the tray again.) This is a very good looking hat, if I do say so. I was awfully smart to grab it up. (silence) DON'T YOU REMEMBER A DISTINGUISHED LOOKING MAN COMING TO THE HOUSE AND OFFERING US $50,000 FOR GRANDMA'S PAUL REVERE TEA SPOONS...? HE HAD ON THESE MARVELOUS SHOES! THEY WERE SO POINTED AT THE ENDS WE COULDN'T IMAGINE HOW HE EVER GOT THEM ON AND THEY WERE SHINED TO WITHIN AN INCH OF THEIR LIVES AND I REMEMBER HIM SAYING HE CAME FROM THE... AMERICAN WING OF THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART!... HELLO...? GARDNER...? ARE YOU THERE! (The typing stops.) YOO HOOOO-OOO... (like a fog horn) GARRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR...?  
GARDNER. (offstage: from his study) YES DEAR... IS THAT YOU...? 

FANNY. OF COURSE IT'S ME! WHO ELSE COULD IT POSSIBLY BE...? DARLING, PLEASE COME HERE FOR A MINUTE. (The typing resumes.) FOR GOD'S SAKE, WILL YOU STOP THAT DREADFUL TYING BEFORE YOU SEND ME STRAIGHT TO THE NUT HOUSE...? (in a new register) GARRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR...? (He stops.) 
GARDNER. (offstage) FANNY. I SAID... WHAT'S THAT?  
MAGS IS BACK  
FROM THE NUT HOUSE...? (brief silence) I'LL BE WITH YOU IN A MOMENT, I DIDN'T HEAR HER RING. (He starts singing) the refrain of "Nothing Could be Finer."** 

(Silence. GARDNER enters, still singing. He's wearing mis-matched tweeds and is holding a stack of papers which keep drifting to the floor.) 

GARDNER. Oh, don't you look nice! Very attractive, very attractive! 
FANNY. But I'm still in my bathrobe. 
GARDNER. (looking around the room, licking more papers) Well, where's Mags?

*Note: Permission to produce Painting Churches does not include permission to use this song, which ought to be procured from the copyright owner.
FANNY. Darling, you're dropping your papers all over the floor.

GARDNER. *(spies the silver tray)* I remember this! Aunt Alice gave it to us, didn't she? *(He picks it up.)* Good Lord, it's heavy. What's it made of? Lead?!

FANNY. No, Aunt Alice did not give it to us. It was Mama's.

GARDNER. Oh yes ... *(He starts to exit with it.)*

FANNY. Could I have it back, please?

GARDNER. *(hands it to her, dropping more papers)* Oh, sure thing ... Where's Mags? I thought you said she was here.

FANNY. I didn't say Mags was here, I asked you to come here.

GARDNER. *(papers spilling)* Damned papers keep falling ... 

FANNY. I wanted to show you my new hat. I bought it in honor of Mags' visit. Isn't it marvelous?

GARDNER. *(picking up the papers as more drop)* Yes, yes, very nice ... 

FANNY. Gardner, you're not even looking at it!

GARDNER. Very becoming ... 

FANNY. You don't think it's too bright, do you? I don't want to look like a traffic light. Guess how much it cost?

GARDNER. *(A whole sheaf of papers slides to the floor, he dives for them.)* OH SHIT!

FANNY. *(gets to them first)* It's alright, I've got them, I've got them. *(She hands them to him.)*

GARDNER. You'd think they had wings on them ...

FANNY. Here you Gardner ... damned go ... 

GARDNER. ... damned things won't hold still!

FANNY. Gar ... ?

GARDNER. *(has become engrossed in one of the pages and is lost reading it)* Mmmmm?

FANNY. HELLO?

GARDNER. *(startled)* What's that?

FANNY. *(in a whisper)* My hat. Guess how much it cost.

GARDNER. Oh yes. Let's see ... $10?

FANNY. $10? ... IS THAT ALL ... ?

GARDNER. 20?

FANNY. GARDNER, THIS HAPPENS TO BE A DESIGNER HAT! DESIGNER HATS START AT $50 ... 75!

GARDNER. *(jumps)* Was that the door bell?

FANNY. No, it wasn't the door bell. Though it's high time Mags were here. She was probably in a train wreck!

GARDNER. *(looking through his papers)* I'm beginning to get fond of Wallace Stevens again.

FANNY. This damned move is going to kill me! Send me straight to my grave!

GARDNER. *(reading from a page)*

"The mules that angels ride come slowly down The blazing passes, from beyond the sun. Descensions of their tinkling bells arrive. These muleteers are dainty of their way ... " *(pause)* Don't you love that! "These muleteers are dainty of their way ... !?"

FANNY. Gar, the hat. How much? *(GARDNER sighs.)*

FANNY. Darling ... ?

GARDNER. Oh yes. Let's see ... $50? 75?

FANNY. It's French.

GARDNER. 300!

FANNY. *(triumphant)* No, 85¢
GARDNER. 85¢! ... I thought you said ...  
FANNY. That's right ... eighty ... five ... cents!  
GARDNER. Well, you sure had me fooled!  
FANNY. I found it at the Thrift Shop.  
GARDNER. I thought it cost at least $50 or 75. You know, designer hats are very expensive!  
FANNY. It was on the mark-down table. (She takes it off and shows him the label.) See that? Lily Daché! When I saw that label, I nearly keeled over right into the fur coats!  
GARDNER. (Handling it) Well, what do you know, that's the same label that's in my bathrobe.  
FANNY. Darling, Lily Daché designed hats, not men's bathrobes!  
GARDNER. Yup ... "Lily Daché" ... same name ...  
FANNY. If you look again, I'm sure you'll see ...  
GARDNER. ... same script, same color, same size. I'll show you. (He exits.)  
FANNY. Poor lamb can't keep anything straight anymore. (Looks at herself in the tray again) God, this is a good looking hat!  
GARDNER. (Returns with a nondescript plaid bathrobe; he points to the label.) See that ...? What does it say?  
FANNY. (Refusing to look at it) Lily Daché was a hat designer! She designed ladies' hats!  
GARDNER. What ... does ... it ... say?  
FANNY. Gardner, you're being ridiculous.  
GARDNER. (forcing it on her) Read ... the label!  
FANNY. Lily Daché did not design this bathrobe, I don't care what the label says!  
GARDNER. READ! (FANNY reads it.) ALL RIGHT, NOW WHAT DOES IT SAY ... ?
PAINTING CHURCHES

(a pause; dashing out of the room, colliding into GARDNER) GOOD GOD, LOOK AT ME! I'M STILL IN MY BATHROBE! FANNY. (offstage) MAGS IS HERE! IT'S MAGS... SHE'S FINALLY HERE!

(GARDNER exits to open the front door. MAGS comes staggering in carrying a suitcase and enormous duffle bag. She wears wonderfully distinctive clothes and has very much her own look. She's extremely out of breath and too wrought up to drop her heavy bags.)

MAGS. I'm sorry... I'm sorry I'm so late... Everything went wrong! A passenger had a heart attack outside of New London and we had to stop... It was terrifying! All these medics and policemen came swarming onto the train and the conductor kept running up and down the aisles telling everyone not to leave their seats under any circumstances... Then the New London fire department came screeching down to the tracks. sirens blaring, lights whirling, and all these men in black rubber suits started pouring through the doors... That took two hours...

FANNY. (offstage) DARLING... DARLING... WHERE ARE YOU...?

MAGS. Then, I couldn't get a cab at the station. There just weren't any! I must have circled the block 15 times. Finally I just stepped out into the traffic with my thumb out, but no one would pick me up... so I walked...

FANNY. (offstage) Damned zipper's stuck...

GARDNER. You walked all the way from the South Station?

MAGS. Well actually, I ran...

GARDNER. You had poor Mum scared to death.

MAGS. (finally puts the bags down with a deep sigh) I'm sorry... I'm really sorry. It was a nightmare.

FANNY. (Re-enters the room, her dress over her head. The zipper's stuck, she staggers around blindly.) Damned zipper! Grr, will you please help me with this?

MAGS. (squeezing him tight) Oh Daddy... Daddy!

GARDNER. My MAGS!

MAGS. I never thought I'd get here!... Oh, you look wonderful!

GARDNER. Well, you don't look so bad yourself!

MAGS. I love your hair. It's gotten so... white!

FANNY. (still lost in her dress, struggling with the zipper) This is so typical... just as MAGS arrives, my zipper has to break! (FANNY grunts and struggles.)

MAGS. (waves at her) Hi, Mum...

FANNY. Just a minute, dear, my zipper's...

GARDNER. (picks up MAGS' bags) Well, sit down and take a load off your feet...

MAGS. I was so afraid I'd never make it...

GARDNER. (staggering under the weight of her bags) What have you got in here? Lead weights?

MAGS. I can't believe you're finally letting me do you.

FANNY. (flings her arms around MAGS, practically knocking her over) OH, DARLING...

GARDNER. (lurching around MAGS, practically in circles) Now let's see... where should I put these...?
AT LAST

FANNY. I was sure your train had derailed and you were lying dead in some ditch!

MAGS. (pulls away from FANNY to come to GARDNER's rescue) Daddy, please, let me... these are much too heavy.

FANNY. (finally noticing MAGS) GOOD LORD, WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO YOUR HAIR?

MAGS. (struggling to take the bags from GARDNER) Come on, give them to me... please? (She sets them down by the sofa.)

FANNY. (as her dress starts to slide off one shoulder) Oh, not again!... Gar, would you give me a hand and see what's wrong with this zipper. One minute it's stuck, the next it's falling to pieces. (GARDNER goes to her and starts fussing with it.)

MAGS. (pacing) I don't know, it's been crazy all week. Monday, I forgot to keep an appointment I'd made with a new model... Tuesday, I overslept and stood up my advanced painting students... Wednesday, the day of my meeting with Max Zoll, I forgot to put on my underwear...

FANNY. GODDAMNIT, GAR, CAN'T YOU DO ANYTHING ABOUT THIS ZIPPER?!

MAGS. I mean, there I was, racing down Broome Street in this gauzy Tibetan skirt when I tripped and fell right at his feet... SPLATT! My skirt goes flying over my head and there I am... everything staring him in the face...

FANNY. COME ON, GAR, USE A LITTLE MUSCLE!

MAGS. (laughing) Oh well, all that matters is that I finally got here... I mean... there you are....

GARDNER. (struggling with the zipper) I can't see it, it's too small!

FANNY. (whirls away from GARDNER, pulling her dress off altogether) OH FORGET IT! JUST FORGET IT!... The trolley's probably missing half its teeth, just like someone else I know. (to MAGS) I grind my teeth in my sleep now, I've worn them all down to stubs. Look at that! (She flings open her mouth and points.) Nothing left but the gums!

GARDNER. I never hear you grind your teeth...

FANNY. That's because I'm snoring so loud. How could you hear anything through all that racket? It even wakes me up. It's no wonder poor Daddy has to sleep downstairs.

MAGS. (looking around) Jeez, look at the place! So, you're finally doing it... selling the house and moving to Cotuit year round. I don't believe it. I just don't believe it!

GARDNER. Well, how about a drink to celebrate Mag's arrival?

MAGS. You've been here so long. Why move now?

FANNY. Gardner, what are you wearing that bathrobe for...?

MAGS. You can't move. I won't let you!

FANNY. (softly to GARDNER) Really darling, you ought to pay more attention to your appearance.

MAGS. You love this house. I love this house... This room... the light.

GARDNER. So, Mag, how about a little... (He drinks from an imaginary glass) to wet your whistle?

FANNY. We can't start drinking now, it isn't even noon yet!

MAGS. I'm starving. I've got to get something to eat...
before I collapse! (She exits towards the kitchen.)

FANNY. What have you done to your hair, dear? The color's so queer and all your nice curl is gone.

GARDNER. It looks to me as if she dyed it.

FANNY. Yes, that's it. You're absolutely right! It's a completely different color. She dyed it bright red! (MAGS can be heard thumping and thudding through the ice box.) NOW MAGS, I DON'T WANT YOU FILLING UP ON SNACKS . . . I'VE MADE A PERFECTLY BEAUTIFUL LEG OF LAMB FOR LUNCH!

HELLO? . . . DO YOU HEAR ME . . . ? (to GARDNER) No one in our family has ever had red hair, it's so common looking.

GARDNER. I like it. It brings out her eyes.

FANNY. WHY ON EARTH DID YOU DYE YOUR HAIR RED, OF ALL COLORS . . . ?!

MAGS. (returns, eating saltines out of the box) I didn't dye my hair, I just added some highlight.

FANNY. I suppose that's what your arty friends in New York do . . . dye their hair all the colors of the rainbow!

GARDNER. Well, it's damned attractive if you ask me . . . damned attractive! (MAGS unzips her duffle bag and rummages around in it while eating the saltines.)

FANNY. Darling, I told you not to bring a lot of stuff with you. We're trying to get rid of things.

MAGS. (pulls out a folding easel and starts setting it up) AAAAAHHHHHHH, here it is. Isn't it a beauty? I bought it just for you!

FANNY. Please don't get crumbs all over the floor. Crystal was just here yesterday. It was her last time before we move.

MAGS. (at her easel) God, I can hardly wait! I can't believe you're finally letting me do you.

FANNY. "Do" us? . . . What are you talking about?

GARDNER. (reaching for the saltines) Hey, MAGS, could I have a couple of those?

MAGS. (tosses him the box) Sure! (to FANNY) Your portrait.

GARDNER. Thanks. (He starts munching on a handful.)

FANNY. You're planning to paint our portrait now? While we're trying to move . . . ?

GARDNER. (mouth full) Mmmmm, I'd forgotten just how delicious saltines are!

MAGS. It's a perfect opportunity. There'll be no distractions, you'll be completely at my mercy. Also, you promised.

FANNY. I did?

MAGS. Yes, you did.

FANNY. Well, I must have been off my rocker.

MAGS. No, you said, "You can paint us, you can dip us in concrete, you can do anything you want with us, just so long as you help us get out of here!"

GARDNER. (offering the box of saltines to FANNY) You really ought to try some of these, Fan, they're absolutely delicious!

FANNY. (taking a few) Why, thank you.

MAGS. I figure we'll pack in the morning and you'll pose in the afternoons. It'll be a nice diversion.

FANNY. These are good!

GARDNER. Here, dig in . . . take some more.

MAGS. I have some wonderful news . . . amazing news! I wanted to wait til I got here to tell you. (They eat their saltines, passing the box back and forth as
MAGS speaks.) You'll die! Just fall over into the packing cartons and die! Are you ready ... ? BRACE YOURSELVES ... OK, HERE GOES ... I'm being given a one woman show at one of the most important galleries in New York this fall. Me, Margaret Church, exhibited at Castelli's, 420 West Broadway ... Can you believe it?! ... MY PORTRAITS HANGING IN THE SAME ROOMS THAT HAVE SHOWN RAUSCHENBURG, JOHNS, WARHOL, KELLY, LICHTENSTEIN, STELLA, SERRA, ALL THE HEAVIES ... It's incredible, beyond belief ... I mean, at my age ... Do you know how good you have to be to get in there? It's a miracle ... an honest-to-God, star-spangled miracle! (pause)

FANNY. (mouth full) Gardner. (likewise)
Oh, darling, that's wonderful. We're so happy for you!

MAGS. Through some flukes, some of Castelli's people showed up at our last faculty show at Pratt and were knocked out ...

FANNY. (reaching for the box of saltines) More, more ...

MAGS. They said they hadn't seen anyone handle light like me since the French Impressionists. They said I was this weird blend of Pierre Bonnard, Mary Cassatt and David Hockney ...

GARDNER. (swallowing his own mouthful) I told you they were good.

MAGS. Also, no one's doing portraits these days. They're considered passé. I'm so out of it, I'm in.

GARDNER. Well, you're loaded with talent and always have been.

FANNY. She gets it all from Mama, you know. Her miniature of Henry James is still one of the main attractions at the Athenaeum. Of course no woman of breeding could be a professional artist in her day. It simply wasn't done. But talk about talent ... that woman had talent to burn!

MAGS. I want to do one of you for the show.

FANNY. Oh, do Daddy, he's the famous one.

MAGS. No, I want to do you both. I've always wanted to do you and now I've finally got a good excuse.

FANNY. It's high time somebody painted Daddy again! I'm sick to death of that dreadful portrait of him in the National Gallery they keep reproducing. He looks like an undertaker!

GARDNER. Well, I think you should just do Mum. She's never looked handsomer.

FANNY. Oh, come on, I'm a perfect fright and you know it.

MAGS. I want to do you both. Side by side. In this room. Something really classy. You look so great. Mum with her crazy hats and everything and you with that face. If I could just get you to hold still long enough and actually pose.

GARDNER. (walking around, distracted) Where are those papers I just had? God damn, Fanny . . .

MAGS. I have the feeling it's either now or never.

GARDNER. I can't hold on to anything around here. (He exits to his study.)

MAGS. I've always wanted to do you. It would be such a challenge.

FANNY. (pulling MAGS next to her onto the sofa) I'm so glad you're finally here, Mags. I'm very worried about Daddy.
MAGS. Mummy, please. I just got here.
FANNY. He's getting quite gaga.
MAGS. Mummy . . . !
FANNY. You haven't seen him in almost a year. Two
weeks ago he walked through the front door of the Cod-
man's house, kissed Emily on the cheek and settled
down in the maid's room, thinking he was home!
MAGS. Oh come on, you're exaggerating.
FANNY. He's as mad as a hatter and getting worse
every day! It's this damned new book of his. He works
on it around the clock. I've read some of it, and it doesn't
make one word of sense, it's all at 6s and 7s . . .
GARDNER. (poking his head back in the room, spies
some of his papers on a table and grabs them) Ahhh,
here they are. (and exits)
FANNY. (voice lowered) Ever since this dry spell with
his poetry, he's been frantic, absolutely . . . frantic!
MAGS. I hate it when you do this.
FANNY. I'm just trying to get you to face the facts
around here.
MAGS. There's nothing wrong with him! He's just as
 sane as the next man. Even saner, if you ask me.
FANNY. You know what he's doing now? You couldn't
guess in a million years! . . . He's writing criticism!
Daddy! (She laughs.) Can you believe it? The man
doesn't have one analytic bone in his body. His mind is a
complete jumble and always has been! (There's a loud
crash from GARDNER's study.)
GARDNER. (offstage) SHIT!
MAGS. He's abstracted . . . That's the way he is.
FANNY. He doesn't spend any time with me anymore.
He just holes up in that filthy study with Toots. God, I
hate that bird! Though actually they're quite cunning
together. Daddy's teaching him Grey's Elegy. You ought
to see them in there, Toots perched on top of Daddy's
head, spouting out verse after verse . . . Daddy, tap tap
tapping away on his typewriter. They're quite a pair.
GARDNER. (pokes his head back in) Have you seen
that Stevens' poem I was reading before?
FANNY. (long suffering) NO, I HAVEN'T SEEN
THAT STEVENS' POEM YOU WERE READING
BEFORE . . . ! Things are getting very tight around
here, in case you haven't noticed. Daddy's last Pulitizer
didn't even cover our real estate tax, and now that he's
too dodderly to give readings anymore, that income is
gone . . . (suddenly handing MAGS the sugarbowl
she'd been wrapping) MAGs, do take this sugarbowl.
You can use it to serve tea to your students at that
wretched art school of yours . . .
MAGS. It's called Pratt! The Pratt Institute.
FANNY. Pratt, Platt, whatever . . .
MAGS. And I don't serve tea to my students, I teach
them how to paint.
FANNY. Well, I'm sure none of them has ever seen a
sugarbowl as handsome as this before.
GARDNER. (reappearing again) You're sure you
haven't seen it . . .?
FANNY. (loud and angry) YES, I'M SURE I HAVEN'T
SEEN IT! I JUST TOLD YOU I HAVEN'T SEEN IT!
GARDNER. (retreating) Right you are, right you are.
(He exits.)
FANNY. God! (silence)
MAGS. What do you have to yell at him like that for?
FANNY. Because the poor thing's as deaf as an adder!
(MAGS sighs deeply; silence.)
FANNY. (suddenly exuberant, leads her over to a
lamp) Come, I want to show you something!
MAGS. (looking at it) What is it?
you could sell this in a store!

RIGHT ON TOP OF MY DESK THE WHOLE TIME. (He crashes into a table.)

OOOOOWWWW!

FANNY. LOOK OUT, LOOK OUT!

MAGS. (rushing over to him) Oh, Daddy, are you all right?

FANNY. WATCH WHERE YOU'RE GOING, WATCH WHERE YOU'RE GOING!

GARDNER. (hopping up and down on one leg) GODDAMNIT! ... I HIT MY SHIN!

FANNY. I was just showing Mags my lamp...

GARDNER. (limping over to it) Oh yes, isn't that something? Mum is awfully clever with that kind of thing... It was all her idea, the whole thing. Buying the engraving, coloring it in, cutting out all those little dots.

FANNY. Not "dots"... lights and windows, lights and windows!

GARDNER. Right, right... lights and windows.

FANNY. Well, we'd better get some light back in here before someone breaks their neck. (She zaps the shades back up.)

GARDNER. (puts his arm around MAGS) Gee, it's good to have you back.

MAGS. It's good to be back.

GARDNER. And I like that new red hair of yours. It's very becoming.

MAGS. But I told you, I hardly touched it...

GARDNER. Well, something's different. You've got a glow. So... how do you want us to pose for this grand
portrait of yours...? (*He poses self-consciously.*)
Mags. Oh Daddy, setting up a portrait takes a lot of time and thought. You've got to figure out the background, the lighting, what to wear, the sort of mood you want to...
Fanny. OOOOH, LET'S DRESS UP, LET'S DRESS UP! (*She grabs a pretty blanket, drapes it around herself and links arms with Gardner, striking an elegant pose.*) This IS going to be fun. She was absolutely right! Come on, Gar, look distinguished!
Mags. Mummy please, it’s not a game!
Fanny. (*more and more excited*) You still have your tuxedo, don’t you? And I’ll wear my marvelous long black dress that makes me look like that fascinating woman in the Sergeant painting! (*She strikes the famous profile pose.*)
Mags. MUMMY...?! Fanny. I’m sorry, we’ll behave, just tell us what to do. (*They settle down next to each other.*)
Gardner. That’s right, you’re the boss.
Fanny. Yes, you’re the boss.
Mags. But I’m not ready yet, I haven’t set anything up.
Fanny. Relax, darling, we just want to get the hang of it...

(*They stare straight ahead, trying to look like suitable subjects, but they can’t hold still. They keep making faces; lifting an eyebrow, wriggling a nose, twitching a lip, nothing grotesque, just flickering little changes; a half smile here, a self-important frown there. They steal glances at each other every so often.*)

Gardner. How am I doing, Fan?
FANNY. (seated on the sofa; clutches an old pair of galoshes to her chest) Look at these old horrors, half the rubber is rotted away and the fasteners are falling to pieces. . . . GARDNER. . . . ? OH GARRRRRRRRRDRNERRRRR . . . ?

MAGS. (ripping out the table cloth with shorter snapping motions) Have you ever seen such a color . . . ?

FANNY. I'VE FOUND YOUR OLD SLEDDING GALOSHES IN WITH THE POTS AND PANS. DO YOU STILL WANT THEM?

MAGS. It's like something out of a Rubens . . . ! (She slings it over a chair and then sits on a footstool to finish the Sara Lee banana cake she started. As she eats, she looks at the table cloth making happy grunting sounds.)

FANNY. (lovingly puts the galoshes on over her shoes and wiggles her feet) God, these bring back memories! There were real snow storms in the old days. Not these pathetic little two inch droppings we have now. After a particularly heavy one, Daddy and I used to go sledding on the Common. This was way before you were born . . . God, it was a hundred years ago . . . ! Daddy would stop writing early, put on these galoshes and come looking for me, jingling the fasteners like castanets. It was a kind of mating call, almost . . . (She jingles them.) The Common was always deserted after a storm, we had the whole place to ourselves. It was so romantic . . . We'd haul the sled up Beacon Street, stop under the State House, and aim it straight down to the Park Street Church, which was much further away in those days . . . Then Daddy would lie down on the sled, I'd lower myself on top of him, we'd rock back and forth a few times to gain momentum and then . . .

WHOCCCC OOOSSSSSSSSHHHHH . . . down we'd plunge like a pair of eagles locked in a spasm of love making. God, it was wonderfull . . . The city whizzing past us at 90 miles an hour . . . the cold . . . the darkness . . . Daddy's hair in my mouth . . .

GAR . . . REMEMBER HOW WE USED TO GO SLEDDING IN THE OLD DAYS . . . ? Sometimes he'd lie on top of me. That was fun. I liked that even more. (in her fog horn voice) GARRRRRRRRRRDDNERRRR . . . ?

MAGS. Didn't he say he was going out this afternoon?

FANNY. Why, so he did! I completely forgot. (She takes off the galoshes.) I'm getting just as bad as him. (She drops them into a different carton.) Gar's galoshes, Coutul. (a pause)

MAGS. (picks up the table cloth again, holds it high over her head) Isn't this fabulous . . . ? (She then wraps FANNY in it.) It's the perfect backdrop. Look what it does to your skin.

FANNY. MAGS, what are you doing?

MAGS. It makes you glow like a pomegranate . . . (She whips it off her.) Now all I need is a hammer and nails . . . (She finds them.) YES! (She climbs up the stepladder and starts hammering a corner of the cloth into the moulding of one of the windows.) This is going to look so great . . . ! I've never seen such a color!

FANNY. Darlin', what is going on . . . ?

MAGS. Rembrandt, eat your heart out! You 17th Century Dutch has seen, you. (She hammers more furiously.)

FANNY. MARGARET, THIS IS NOT A CONSTRUCTION SITE . . . PLEASE . . . STOP IT . . . YOO HOOOOGO . . . DO YOU HEAR ME . . . ?

(GARDNER suddenly appears, dressed in a raincoat.)
FANNY. MARGARET, WILL YOU PLEASE STOP THAT RACKET?!

GARDNER. YES,
DEAR, HERE I AM. I
I JUST STEPPED OUT
FOR A WALK DOWN
CHESTNUT STREET.
BEAUTIFUL
AFTERNOON,
ABSOLUTELY
BEAUTIFUL!

MAGS. (Is done, she stops.) There!

GARDNER. WHY
THAT LOOKS VERY
NICE, MAGS, very nice
indeed . . .

MAGS. (steps down, stands back and looks at it)
That's it. That's IT!
FANNY. (to GARDNER, worried) Where have you been?

(MAGS kisses her fingers at the backdrop and settles back into her banana cake.)

GARDNER. (to FANNY) You'll never guess who I ran into on Chestnut Street . . . Pate Baldwin! (He takes his coat off and drops it on the floor. He then sits in one of the posing chairs MAGS has pulled over by the window.)

MAGS. (mouth full of cake) Oh Daddy, I'm nowhere near ready for you yet.

FANNY. (picks up his coat and hands it to him) Darling, coats do not go on the floor.

GARDNER. (rises, but forgets where he's supposed to go) He was in terrible shape. I hardly recognized him.

Well, it's the Parkinson's disease . . .

FANNY. You mean, Hodgkin's disease . . .

GARDNER. Hodgkin's disease . . . ?

MAGS. (leaves her cake and returns to the table cloth)
Now to figure out exactly how to use this gorgeous light . . .

FANNY. Yes, Pate has Hodgkin's disease, not Parkinson's disease. Sammy Bishop has Parkinson's disease. In the closet . . . your coat goes . . . in the closet!

GARDNER. You're absolutely right! Pate has Hodgkin's disease. (He stands motionless, the coat over his arm.)

FANNY . . . and Goat Davis has Addison's disease.

GARDNER. I always get them confused.

FANNY. (pointing towards the closet) That way . . . (GARDNER exits to the closet; FANNY, calling after him.) GRACE PHELPS HAS IT TOO, I THINK. Or, it might be Hodgkin's, like Pate. I can't remember.

GARDNER. (returns with a hanger) Doesn't the Goat have Parkinson's disease.

FANNY. No, that's Sammy Bishop.

GARDNER. God, I haven't seen the Goat in ages! (The coat still over his arm, he hands FANNY the hanger.)

FANNY. He hasn't been well.

GARDNER. Didn't Happy . . . die?!

FANNY. What are you giving me this for? . . . Oh, Happy's been dead for years. She died on the same day as Luster Bright, don't you remember?

GARDNER. I always liked her.

FANNY. (gives him back the hanger) Here, I don't want this.

GARDNER. She was awfully attractive.
FANNY. Who?
GARDNER. Happy!
FANNY. Oh yes, Happy had real charm.
MAGS. (keeps experimenting with draping the table cloth) Better... better...
GARDNER. ... which is something the Goat is short on, if you ask me. He has Hodgkin's disease, doesn't he? (puts his raincoat back on and sits down)
FANNY. Darling, what are you doing? I thought you wanted to hang up your coat?
GARDNER. (after a pause) OH YES, THAT'S RIGHT!
(He goes back to the closet; a pause.)
FANNY. Where were we?
GARDNER. (returns with yet another hanger) Let's see...
FANNY. (takes both hangers from him) FOR GOD'S SAKE, GAR, PAY ATTENTION!
GARDNER. It was something about the Goat...
FANNY. (takes the coat from GARDNER) HERE, LET ME DO IT...! (under her breath to MAGS) See what I mean about him? You don't know the half of it!
(She hangs it up in the closet.) Not the half.
MAGS. (still tinkering with the backdrop) Almost... almost...
GARDNER. (sitting back down on one of the posing chairs) Oh Fan, did I tell you, I ran into Pate Baldwin just now. I'm afraid he's not long for this world.
FANNY. (returning) Well, it's that Hodgkin's disease... (She sits in the posing chair next to him.)
GARDNER. God, I'd hate to see him go. He's one of the great editors of our times. I couldn't have done it without him. He gave me everything, everything!
MAGS. (makes a final adjustment) Yes, that's it! (She stands back and gazes at them.) You look wonderfull...!

FANNY. Isn't it getting to be... (She taps at an imaginary watch on her wrist and drains an imaginary glass.)... cocktail time?!
GARDNER. (looks at his watch) On the button, on the button! (He rises.)
FANNY. I'll have the usual, please. Do join us, Mags! Daddy bought some Dubonnet especially for you!
MAGS. Hey. I was just getting some ideas.
GARDNER. (To MAGS, as he exits for the bar.) How about a little... Dubonnet to wet your whistle?
FANNY. Oh Mags, it's like old times having you back with us like this!
GARDNER. (offstage) THE USUAL FOR YOU, FAN?
FANNY. I wish we saw more of you... PLEASE!... Isn't he darling? Have you ever known anyone more darling than Daddy...?
GARDNER. (offstage; singing from the bar) "You Made Me Love You",* etc. MAGS, HOW ABOUT YOU?... A LITTLE... DUBONNET...?
FANNY. Oh, do join us! MAGS. (to GARDNER) No, nothing, thanks!
FANNY. Well, what do you think of your aged parents picking up and moving to Cotuit year round? Pretty crazy, eh what?... Just the gulls, oysters and us!
GARDNER. (returns with FANNY's drink) Here you go...
FANNY. Why thank you, Gar. (to MAGS) You sure you won't join us?
GARDNER. (lifts his glass towards FANNY and

*Note: This song is still under copyright protection. Permission to use it in productions of Painting Churches ought to be procured from the copyright owner.
"MAHS) Cheers! (GARDNER and FANNY take that first life-saving gulp.)

FANNY. Aaaahhh! GARDNER. Hits the spot, hits the spot!

MAHS. Well, I certainly can’t do you like that!

FANNY. Why not? I think we look very ... comme il faut! (She slouches into a rummy pose, GARDNER joins her.) WAIT ... I'VE GOT IT! I'VE GOT IT!

(She whispers excitedly to GARDNER.)

MAHS. Come on, let’s not start this again!

GARDNER. What’s that? ... Oh yes ... yes, yes ... I know the one you mean. Yes, right, right ... of course. (a pause)

FANNY. How’s ... this ... ?! (FANNY grabs a large serving fork and they fly into an imitation of Grant Wood’s “American Gothic.”)

MAHS. . . . and I wonder why it’s taken me all these years to get you to pose for me. You just don’t take me seriously! Poor old MAHS and her ridiculous portraits . . .

FANNY. Oh darling, your portraits aren’t ridiculous! They may not be all that one hopes for, but they’re certainly not . . .

MAHS. Remember how you behaved at my first group show in Soho? ... Oh, come on, you remember. It was a real circus! Think back ... It was about six years ago ... Daddy had just been awarded some presidential medal of achievement and you insisted he wear it around his neck on a bright red ribbon, and you wore this . . . huge feathered hat to match! I’ll never forget it! It was the size of a giant pizza with 20 inches of red turkey feathers shooting straight up into the air ... Oh come on, you remember, don’t you . . . ?

FANNY. (leaping to her feet) HOLD EVERYTHING! THIS IS IT! THIS IS REALLY IT! Forgive me for interfering, MAHS darling, it’ll just take a minute. (She whispers excitedly to GARDNER.)

MAHS. I had about eight portraits in the show, mostly of friends of mine, except for this one I'd done of Mrs. Crowninshield.

GARDNER. All right, all right . . . let’s give it a whirl. (A pause, then they mime Michelangelo’s “Pieta” with GARDNER lying across FANNY’s lap as the dead Christ.)

MAHS. (depressed) “The Pieta.” Terrific!

FANNY. (jabbing GARDNER in the ribs) Hey, we’re getting good at this.

GARDNER. Of course it would help if we didn’t have all these modern clothes on.

MAHS. AS I WAS SAYING . . .

FANNY. Sorry, MAHS . . . sorry . . . (Huffing and creaking with the physical exertion of it all, they return to their seats.)

MAHS. . . . As soon as you stepped foot in the gallery you spotted it and cried out, “MY GOD, WHAT’S MILLICENT CROWNINSHIELD DOING HERE?” Everyone looked up what with Daddy’s clanking medal and your amazing hat which I was sure would take off and start flying around the room. A crowd gathered . . . Through some utter fluke, you latched on to the most important critic in the city, I mean . . . Mr. Modern Art himself, and you hauled him over to the painting, trumpeting out for all to hear, “THAT’S MILLICENT CROWNINSHIELD! I GREW UP WITH HER. SHE LIVES RIGHT DOWN THE STREET FROM US IN BOSTON. BUT IT’S A VERY POOR LIKENESS, IF YOU ASK ME! HER NOSE ISN’T NEARLY THAT LARGE AND SHE DOESN’T HAVE SOMETHING QUEER GROWING OUT OF HER CHIN! THE CROWNINSHIELDS ARE REALLY QUITE GOOD
LOOKING, STUFFY, BUT GOOD LOOKING NONE-THELESS!"

GARDNER. (suddenly jumps up, ablaze) WAIT, WAIT... IF IT'S MICHELANGELO YOU WANT... I'm sorry, Mags... One more... just one more... please?

MAGS. Sure, why not? Be my guest.

GARDNER. Fanny, prepare yourself! (He whispers into her ear.)

FANNY. THE BEST!... IT'S THE BEST! OH MY DEAREST, YOU'RE A GENIUS, AN ABSOLUTE GENIUS! (more whispering) But I think you should be God.

GARDNER. Me?... Really?

FANNY. Yes, it's much more appropriate.

GARDNER. Well, if you say so...

(FANNY and GARDNER ease down to the floor with some difficulty and lie on their sides; FANNY as Adam, GARDNER as God, their fingers inching closer and closer in the attitude of Michelangelo's "The Creation." Finally, they touch.)

MAGS. (cheers, whistles, applauds) THREE CHEERS... VERY GOOD... NICELY DONE, NICELY DONE! (They hold the pose a moment more, flushed with pleasure, then rise, dust themselves off and grope back to their chairs.) So, there we were...

FANNY. Yes, do go on...!

MAGS. ...huddled around Millicent Crowninshield, when you whipped into your pocketbook and suddenly announced, "HOLD EVERYTHING! I'VE GOT A PHOTOGRAPH OF HER RIGHT HERE, THEN YOU CAN SEE WHAT SHE REALLY LOOKS LIKE!"... You then proceeded to crouch down to the
FANNY. (wearing a different hat and dress, holds up a ratty overcoat) What about this gruesome old thing?

GARDNER. (Is wearing several sweaters and vests, a Hawaiian holiday shirt, and a variety of scarves and ties around his neck. He holds up a pair of shoes.) God... remember these shoes? Pound gave them to me when he came back from Italy. I remember it vividly.

FANNY. Do let me give it to the Thrift Shop! (She stuffs the coat into the appropriate carton.)

GARDNER. He bought them for me in Rome. Said he couldn't resist, bought himself a pair too since we both wore the same size. God, I miss him! (pause) HEY, WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH MY OVERCOAT?!

FANNY. Darling, it's threadbare!

GARDNER. But that's my overcoat! (He grabs it out of the carton.) I've been wearing it every day for the past 35 years!

FANNY. That's just my point: it's had it.

GARDNER. (puts it on over everything else) There's nothing wrong with this coat!

FANNY. I trust you remember that the cottage is an eighth the size of this place and you simply won't have room for half this stuff! (She holds up a sports jacket.) This dreary old jacket, for instance. You've had it since Hector was a pup!

GARDNER. (grabs it and puts it on over his coat) Oh no you don't...

FANNY. ...and this God-awful hat...

GARDNER. Let me see that. (He stands next to her and they fall into a lovely frieze.)

MAGS. (suddenly pops out from behind a wardrobe carton with a flash camera and takes a picture of them) PERFECT!

FANNY. (hands flying to her face) GOOD

GARDNER. (hands flying to his heart)
MAGS. I'm sorry, I just couldn't resist. You looked so...

FANNY. WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO DO...

BLIND US?!?

GARDNER. Really, Mags, enough is enough...

(GARDNER and FANNY keep stumbling about, kidding.)

FANNY. Are you still there, Gar?

GARDNER. Right as rain, right as rain!

MAGS. I'm sorry, I didn't mean to scare you. It's just a photograph can show you things you weren't aware of. Here, have a look. (She gives them to FANNY.) Well, I'm going out to the kitchen to get something to eat. Anybody want anything? (She exits.)

FANNY. (looking at the photos, half amused, half horrified) Oh, Gardner, have you ever...?

GARDNER. (looks at them and laughs) Good grief...

MAGS. (offstage from the kitchen) IS IT ALL RIGHT IF I TAKE THE REST OF THIS TAPIOCA FROM LAST NIGHT?

FANNY. IT'S ALL RIGHT WITH ME. How about you, Gar?

GARDNER. Sure, go right ahead. I've never been that crazy about tapioca.

FANNY. What are you talking about, tapioca is one of your favorites.

MAGS. (enters, slurping from a large bowl) Mmmmmmmmm...

FANNY. Really, Mags, I've never seen anyone eat as much as you.

MAGS. (takes the photos back) It's strange. I only do this when I come home.

FANNY. What's the matter, don't I feed you enough?

GARDNER. Gee, it's hot in here! (starts taking off his coat)

FANNY. God knows, you didn't eat anything as a child! I've never seen such a fussy eater. Gar, what are you doing?

GARDNER. Taking off some of these clothes. It's hotter than Toft in here! (shedding clothes to the floor)

MAGS. (looking at her photos) Yes, I like you looking at each other like that...

FANNY. (to GARDNER) Please watch where you're dropping things, I'm trying to keep some order around here.

GARDNER. (picks up what he dropped, dropping even more in the process) Right, right...

MAGS. Now all I've got to do is figure out what you should wear.

FANNY. Well, I'm going to wear my long black dress, and you'd be a fool not to do Daddy in his tuxedo. He looks so distinguished in it, just like a banker!

MAGS. I haven't really decided yet.

FANNY. Just because you walk around looking like something the cat dragged in, doesn't mean Daddy and I want to, do we, Gar? (GARDNER is making a worse and worse tangle of his clothes.) HELLO...?

GARDNER. (looks up at FANNY) Oh yes, awfully attractive, awfully attractive!

FANNY. (to MAGS) If you don't mind me saying so, I've never seen you looking so forlorn. You'll never catch a husband looking that way. Those peculiar clothes, that God-awful hair... Really, Mags, it's very distressing!

MAGS. I don't think my hair's so bad, not that it's terrific or anything...

FANNY. Well, I don't see other girls walking around like you. I mean, girls from your background. What would Lyman Wigglesworth think if he saw you in the street?
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MAGS. Lyman Wigglesworth?! ... Uuuuuughhh-hhhh! (She shudders.)

FANNY. Alright then, that brilliant Cabot boy ... what is his name?

GARDNER. Sammy.

FANNY. No, not Sammy ...

GARDNER. Stephen.

FANNY. Oh, for God's sake, Gardner ...

GARDNER. Stephen ... Stanley ... Stuart ... Sheldon ...

FANNY. Sherlock ... Sherlock. It's Sherlock!

MAGS. Spence!

FANNY. SPENCE, GARDNER. THAT'S IT THAT'S IT! HIS NAME ... SPENCE! SPENCE IS SPENCE! CABOT!

FANNY. Spence Cabot was first in his class at Harvard.

MAGS. Mum, he has no facial hair.

FANNY. He has his own law firm on Arlington Street.

MAGS. Spence Cabot has six fingers on his right hand!

FANNY. So, he isn't the best looking thing in the world. Looks isn't everything. He can't help it if he has extra fingers. Have a little sympathy!

MAGS. But the extra one has this weird nail on it that looks like a talon ... it's long and black and (She shudders.)

FANNY. No one's perfect, darling. He has lovely handwriting and an absolutely saintly mother. Also, he's as rich as Croesus! He's alot more promising than some of those creatures you've dragged home. What was the name of that dreadful Frenchman who smelled like sweaty socks? ... Jean Duke of Scriptor?

MAGS. (laughing) Jean-Luc Zichot!

FANNY. ... and that peculiar little Oriental fellow with all the teeth! Really, Mags, he could have been put on display at the circus!

MAGS. Oh yes, Tsu Chin. He was strange, but very sexy ...

FANNY. (shudders) He had such tiny ... feet! Really, Mags, you've got to bear down. You're not getting any younger. Before you know it, all the nice young men will be taken and then where will you be? ... All by yourself in that grim little apartment of yours with those peculiar clothes and that bright red hair ...

MAGS. MY HAIR IS NOT BRIGHT RED!

FANNY. I only want what's best for you, you know that. You seem to go out of your way to look wanting. I don't understand it ... Gar, what are you putting your coat on for? ... You look like some derelict out on the street. We don't wear coats in the house. (She helps him out of it.) That's the way ... I'll just put this in the carton along with everything else ... (She drops it into the carton, then pauses.) Isn't it about time for ... cocktails?

GARDNER. What's that? (FANNY taps her wrist and mimes drinking. GARDNER looks at his watch.) Right you are, right you are! (exits to the bar) THE USUAL ... ?

FANNY. Please!

GARDNER. (offstage) HOW ABOUT SOMETHING FOR YOU, MAGS?

MAGS. SURE WHY NOT ... ? LET 'ER RIP!

GARDNER. (offstage) WHAT'S THAT ... ?

FANNY. SHE SAID MAGS. I'LL HAVE YES. SHE SAID YES! SOME DUBONNET!

GARDNER. (poking his head back in) How about a little Dubonnet?

FANNY. That's just what she said ... she'd like some ... Dubonnet!

GARDNER. (goes back to the bar and sings a Jolson tune) GEE, IT'S GREAT HAVING YOU BACK LIKE
THIS, MAGS... IT'S JUST GREAT! (more singing)
FANNY. (leaning closer to MAGS) You have such potential, darling! It breaks my heart to see how you've let yourself go. If Lyman Wigglesworth...

MAGS. Amazing as it may seem, I don't care about Lyman Wigglesworth!
FANNY. From what I've heard, he's quite a lady killer!
MAGS. But with whom?... Don't think I haven't heard about his fling with... Hopie Stonewall!
FANNY. (begins to laugh) Oh God, let's not get started on Hopie Stonewall again... ten feet tall with spots on her neck... (to GARDNER) OH DARLING, DO HURRY BACK! WE'RE TALKING ABOUT PATHETIC HOPIE STONEWALL!
MAGS. It's not so much her incredible height and spotted skin, it's those tiny pointed teeth and the size 11 shoes!
FANNY. I love it when you're like this!

(MAGS starts clomping around the room making tiny pointed teeth nibbling sounds.)

FANNY. GARDNER... YOU'RE MISSING EVERYTHING! (still laughing) Why is it Boston girls are always so... tall?
MAGS. Hopie Stonewall isn't a Boston girl, she's a giraffe. (She prances around the room with an imaginary dwarf-sized Lyman.) She's perfect for Lyman Wigglesworth!

GARDNER. (returns with FANNY'S drink which he hands her) Now, where were we...?
FANNY. (trying not to laugh) HOPIE STONEWALL!...

GARDNER. Oh yes, she's the very tall one, isn't she? (FANNY and MAGS burst out laughing.)
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as a pitchfork, as inarticulate as mud, but it doesn't matter because you're completely concealed: your body, your face, your intentions. Just as you make your most intimate move, throw open your soul ... they stretch and yawn, remembering the dog has to be let out at five . . . To be so invisible while so enthralled . . . it takes your breath away!

GARDNER. Well put, Mags. Awfully well put!

MAGS. That's why I've always wanted to paint you, to see if I'm up to it. It's quite a risk. Remember what I went through as a child with my great masterpiece ... ?

FANNY. You painted a masterpiece when you were a child . . . ?

MAGS. Well, it was a masterpiece to me.

FANNY. I had no idea you were precocious as a child. Gardner, do you remember Mags painting a masterpiece as a child?

MAGS. I didn't paint it. It was something I made!

FANNY. Well, this is all news to me! Gar, do get me another drink! I haven't had this much fun in years! (She hands him her glass and reaches for MAGS'.) Come on, darling, join me . . .

MAGS. No, no more, thanks. I don't really like the taste.

FANNY. Oh come on, kick up your heels for once!

MAGS. No, nothing . . . really.

FANNY. Please? Pretty please . . . ? To keep me company?!

MAGS. (hands GARDNER her glass) Oh, all right, what the hell . . .

FANNY. That's a good girl!

GARDNER. (exiting) Coming right up, coming right up!

FANNY. (yelling after him) DON'T GIVE ME TOO

MUCH NOW. THE LAST ONE WAS AWFULLY STRONG . . . AND HURRY BACK SO YOU DON'T MISS ANYTHING . . . ! Daddy's so cunning, I don't know what I'd do without him. If anything should happen to him, I'd just . . .

MAGS. Mummy, nothing's going to happen to him . . . !

FANNY. Well, wait 'til you're our age, it's no garden party. Now . . . where were we . . . ?

MAGS. My first masterpiece . . .

FANNY. Oh yes, but do wait 'til Daddy gets back so he can hear it too . . . YOO HOOOOO . . . GARRRRRRRDER. NERRRRRRRR . . . ARE YOU COMING . . . ? (silence) Go and check on him, will you?

GARDNER. (Enters with both drinks; he's shaken.) I couldn't find the ice.

FANNY. Well, finally!

GARDNER. It just up and disappeared . . . (hands FANNY her drink) There you go. (FANNY kisses her fingers and takes a hefty swig.) MAGS. (hands her hers)

MAGS. Thanks, Daddy.

GARDNER. Sorry about the ice.

MAGS. No problem, no problem. (GARDNER sits down; silence.)

FANNY. (to MAGS) Well, drink up, drink up! (MAGS downs it in one gulp.) GOOD GIRL! . . . Now, what's all this about a masterpiece . . . ?

MAGS. I did it during that winter you sent me away from the dinner table. I was about nine years old.

FANNY. We sent you from the dinner table?

MAGS. I was banished for six months.

FANNY. You were . . . ? How extraordinary!

MAGS. Yes, it was rather extraordinary!

FANNY. But why?

MAGS. Because I played with my food.
FANNY. You did?
MAGS. I used to squirt it out between my front teeth.
FANNY. Oh, I remember that! God, it used to drive me crazy, absolutely . . . crazy! (pause) "MARGARET, STOP THAT OOZING RIGHT THIS MINUTE, YOU ARE NOT A TUBE OF TOOTHPASTE!"
GARDNER. Oh yes . . .
FANNY. It was perfectly disgusting!
GARDNER. I remember. She used to lean over her plate and squirt it out in long runny ribbons . . .
FANNY. That's enough, dear.
GARDNER. They were quite colorful, actually; decorative almost. She made the most intricate designs. They looked rather like small, moist Oriental rugs . . .
FANNY. (to MAGS) But why, darling? What on earth possessed you to do it?
MAGS. I couldn't swallow anything. My throat just closed up. I don't know, I must have been afraid of choking or something.
GARDNER. I remember one in particular. We'd had chicken fricassee and spinach . . . She made the most extraordinary . . .
FANNY. (to GARDNER) WILL YOU PLEASE SHUT UP?!! (pause) MAGS, what are you talking about? You never choked in your entire life! This is the most distressing conversation I've ever had. Don't you think it's distressing, Gar?
GARDNER. Well, that's not quite the word I'd use.
FANNY. What word would you use, then?
GARDNER. I don't know right off the bat, I'd have to think about it.
FANNY. THEN, THINK ABOUT IT! (silence)
MAGS. I guess I was afraid of making a mess. I don't know, you were awfully strict about table manners. I was always afraid of losing control. What if I started to choke and began spitting up over everything . . .?
FANNY. Alright, dear, that's enough.
MAGS. No, I was really terrified about making a mess, you always got so mad whenever I spilled. If I just got rid of everything in neat little curly-cues beforehand, you see . . .
FANNY. I SAID: THAT'S ENOUGH! (silence)
MAGS. I thought it was quite ingenious, but you didn't see it that way. You finally sent me from the table with, "When you're ready to eat like a human being, you can come back and join us!" . . . So, it was off to my room with a tray. But I couldn't seem to eat there either. I mean, it was so strange settling down to dinner in my bedroom . . . So I just flushed everything down the toilet and sat on my bed listening to you: clinkity clink, clatter clatter, slurp slurp . . . but that got pretty boring after awhile, so I looked around for something to do. It was wintertime because I noticed I'd left some crayons on top of my radiator and they'd melted down into these beautiful shimmering globs, like spilled jello, trembling and pulsing . . .
GARDNER. (eyes closed) "This luscious and impeccable fruit of life Falls, it appears, of its own weight to earth . . ."
MAGS. Naturally, I wanted to try it myself, so I grabbed a red one and pressed it down against the hissing lid. It oozed and bubbled like raspberry jam!
GARDNER. "When you were Eve, its acrid juice was sweet, Untasted, in its heavenly, orchard air . . ."
MAGS. I mean, that radiator was really hot! It took incredible will power not to let go, but I held on, whispering, "Mags, if you let go of this crayon, you'll be run
over by a truck on Newberry Street, so help you God!"
... So I pressed down harder, my fingers steaming and
blistering ... 

FANNY. I had no idea about any of this, did you, Gar?

MAGS. Once I'd melted one, I was hooked! I finished
off my entire supply in one night, mixing color over
color until my head swam ... ! The heat, the smell, the
brilliance that sank and rose ... I'd never felt such ex-
hilaration! ... Every week I spent my allowance on
crayons. I must have cleared out every box of Crayolas
in the city!

GARDNER. (gazing at MAGS) You know, I don't
think I've ever seen you looking prettier! You're awfully
attractive when you get going!

FANNY. Why, what a lovely thing to say.

MAGS. AFTER THREE MONTHS THAT RADIA-
TOR WAS ... SPECTACULAR! I mean, IT
LOOKED LIKE SOME COLOSSAL FRUIT CAKE,
FIVE FEET TALL ... !

FANNY. It sounds perfectly hideous.

MAGS. It was a knockout; shimmering with pinks and
blues, lavenders and maroons, turquoise and golds,
oranges and creams ... For every color, I imagined a
taste ... YELLOW: lemon curls dipped in sugar ... 
RED: glazed cherries laced with rum ... GREEN: tiny
peppermint leaves veined with chocolate ... PUR-
PLE: ...

FANNY. That's quite enough!

MAGS. And then the frosting ... ahhhh, the frost-
ing! A satiny mix of white and silver ... I kept it hid-
en under blankets during the day ... My huge ...
(Sh e starts laughing.) ... looming ... teetering
sweet ...

FANNY. I ASKED YOU TO STOP! GARDNER,
WILL YOU PLEASE GET HER TO STOP!
thrower at my confection... my cake... my tart... my strudel... "IT'S GOT TO BE DESTROYED IMMEDIATELY! THE THING'S ALIVE WITH VERMIN!... JUST LOOK AT IT!... IT'S PRACTICALLY CRAWLING ACROSS THE ROOM!"

... Of course in a sense you were right. It was a monument of my cast-off dinners, only I hadn't built it with food... I found my own materials. I was languishing with hunger, but oh, dear Mother... I FOUND MY OWN MATERIALS...!

FANNY. Darling... please?!

MAGS. I tried to stop you, but you wouldn't listen...

OUT SHOT THE FLAME!... I remember these waves of wax rolling across the room and Daddy coming to, wondering what on earth was going on...

Well, what did you know about my abilities...? You see, I had... I mean, I have abilities... (struggling to say it) I have abilities. I have... strong abilities. I have... very strong abilities. They are very strong... very very strong... (She rises and runs out of the room overcome as FANNY and GARDNER watch, speechless.)

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT TWO

SCENE 1

Three days later. Miracles have been accomplished. Almost all of the Church's furniture has been moved out and the cartons of dishes and clothing are gone. All that remains are odds and ends. MAGS' tableau looms, impregnable. FANNY and GARDNER are dressed in their formal evening clothes, frozen in their pose. They hold absolutely still. MAGS stands at her easel, her hands covering her eyes.

FANNY. All right, you can look now.

MAGS. (removes her hands) Yes...! I told you you could trust me on the pose.

FANNY. Well, thank God you let us dress up. It makes all the difference. Now we really look like something.

MAGS. (starts to sketch them) I'll say... (A silence as she sketches.)

GARDNER. (Recites Yeats' "The Song of Wandering Aengus" in a wonderfully resonant voice as they pose.)

"I went out to the hazel wood,
Because a fire was in my head,
And cut and peeled a hazel wand,
And hooked a berry to a thread,
And when white moths were on the wing,
And moth-like stars were flickering out,
I dropped the berry in a stream
And caught a little silver trout.

When I had laid it on the floor
I went to blow the fire a-flame,
But something rustled on the floor,
And someone called me by my name:  
It had become a glimmering girl  
With apple blossoms in her hair  
Who called me by my name and ran  
And faded through the brightening air.

Though I am old with wandering  
Through hollow lands and hilly lands,  
I will find out where she has gone,  
And kiss her lips and take her hands;  
And walk among long dappled grass,  
And pluck till time and times are done,  
The silver apples of the moon,  
The golden apples of the sun."

(silence)

FANNY. That’s lovely, dear. Just lovely. Is it one of yours?
GARDNER. No, no, it’s Yeats. I’m using it in my book.

FANNY. Well, you recited it beautifully, but then you’ve always recited beautifully. That’s how you wooed me, in case you’ve forgotten... You must have memorized every love poem in the English language! There was no stopping you when you got going... your Shakespeare, Byron, and Shelley... you were shameless... shameless!

GARDNER. (eyes closed)
“I will find out where she has gone,  
And kiss her lips and take her hands...”

FANNY. And then there was your own poetry to do battle with; your sonnets and quatrains. When you got going with them, there was nothing left of me! You could have had your pick of any girl in Boston! Why you chose me, I’ll never understand. I had no looks to speak of and nothing much in the brains department...

... Well, what did you know about women and the world...? What did any of us know...? (silence)
GOD, MAGS, HOW LONG ARE WE SUPPOSED TO SIT LIKE THIS...? IT’S AGONY!

MAGS. (working away) You’re doing fine... just fine...

FANNY. (breaking her pose) It’s so... boring!

MAGS. Come on, don’t move. You can have a break soon.

FANNY. I had no idea it would be so boring!

GARDNER. Gee, I’m enjoying it.

FANNY. You would...! (a pause)
GARDNER. (begins reciting more Yeats, almost singing it)

“He stood among a crowd at Drumahair;  
His heart hung all upon a silken dress,  
And he had known at last some tenderness,  
Before earth made of him her sleepy care;  
But when a man poured fish into a pile,  
It seemed they raised their little silver heads...”

FANNY. Gar... PLEASE! (She lurches out of her seat.) God, I can’t take this anymore!

MAGS. (keeps sketching GARDNER) I know it’s tedious as first, but it gets easier...

FANNY. It’s like a Chinese water torture...! (crosses to MAGS and looks at GARDNER posing) Oh darling, you look marvelous, absolutely marvelous! Why don’t you just do Daddy!?

MAGS. Because you look marvelous too! I want to do you both!

FANNY. Please...! I have one foot in the grave and you know it! Also, we’re way behind in our packing. There’s still one room left which everyone seems to have forgotten about!
GARDNER. Which one is that?
FANNY. You know perfectly well which one it is!
GARDNER. I do . . . ?
FANNY. Yes, you do!
GARDNER. Well, it's news to me.
FANNY. I'll give you a hint. It's in . . . that direction.
(She points.)
GARDNER. The dining room.
FANNY. No.
GARDNER. The bedroom.
FANNY. No.
GARDNER. Mags' room.
FANNY. No.
GARDNER. The kitchen.
FANNY. Gar . . . ?!
GARDNER. The guest room?
FANNY. Your God awful study!
GARDNER. Oh, shit!
FANNY. That's right, "oh shit!" It's books and papers up to the ceiling! If you ask me, we should just forget it's there and quietly tip toe away . . .
GARDNER. My study . . . !
FANNY. Let the new owners dispose of everything . . .
GARDNER. (gets out of his posing chair) Now, just one minute . . .
FANNY. You never look at half the stuff in there!
GARDNER. I don't want you touching those books!
They're mine!
FANNY. Darling, we're moving to a cottage the size of a handkerchief! Where, pray tell, is there room for all your books?
GARDNER. I don't know. We'll just have to make room!
MAGS. (sketching away) RATS!

FANNY. I don't know what we're doing fooling around with Mags like this when there's still so much to do . . .
GARDNER. (sits back down, overwhelmed) My study . . . !
FANNY. You can stay with her if you'd like, but one of us has got to tackle those books! (She exits to his study.)
GARDNER. I'm not up to this.
MAGS. Oh good, you're staying!
GARDNER. There's a lifetime of work in there . . .
MAGS. Don't worry, I'll help. Mum and I will be able to pack everything up in no time.
GARDNER. God . . .
MAGS. It won't be so bad . . .
GARDNER. I'm just not up to it.
MAGS. We'll all pitch in . . .

(GARDNER sighs, speechless. A silence as MAGS keeps sketching him. FANNY comes staggering in with an armload of books which she drops to the floor with a crash.)

GARDNER. WHAT . . . !
MAGS. GOOD GRIEF!
WAS THAT . . . ?!
FANNY. (sheepish) Sorry, sorry . . . (She exits for more.)
GARDNER. I don't know if I can take this . . .
MAGS. Moving is awful . . . I know . . .
GARDNER. (settling back into his pose) Ever since Mum began tearing the house apart, I've been having these dreams . . . I'm a child again back at 16 Louisberg Square . . . and this stream of moving men is carrying furniture into our house . . . van after van of tables and chairs, sofas and love seats, desks and bureaus . . . rugs, bathtubs, mirrors, chiming clocks, pianos, ice boxes,
China cabinets... but what's amazing is that all of it is familiar... (FANNY comes in with another load which she drops on the floor. She exits for more.) No matter how many items appear, I've seen every one of them before. Since my mother is standing in the midst of it directing traffic, I ask her where it's all coming from, but she doesn't hear me because of the racket... so finally I just scream out... "WHERE IS ALL THIS FURNITURE COMING FROM?"... Just as a moving man is carrying Toots into the room, she looks at me and says, "Why, from the land of Skyel!... The next thing I know, people are being carried in along with it... (FANNY enters with her next load, drops it and exits.)... people I've never seen before are sitting around our dining room table. A group of foreigners is going through my books, chattering in a language I've never heard before. A man is playing a Chopin Polonaise on Aunt Alice's piano. Several children are taking baths in our tubs from Cotuit...

MAGS. It sounds marvelous.

GARDNER. Well, it isn't marvelous at all because all of these perfect strangers have taken over our things...

(FANNY enters, hurls down another load and exits.)

MAGS. How odd...

GARDNER. Well, it is odd, but then something even odder happens...

MAGS. (sketching away) Tell me, tell me!

GARDNER. Well, our beds are carried in. They're all made up with sheets and everything, but instead of all these strange people in them, we're in them...

MAGS. What's so odd about that...?

GARDNER. Well, you and Mum are brought in, both sleeping like angels... Mum snoring away to beat the band...

MAGS. Yes... (FANNY enters with another load, lets it fall.)

GARDNER. But there's no one in mine. It's completely empty, never even been slept in! It's as if I were dead or had never even existed... (FANNY exits.) "HEY... WAIT UP!" I yell to the moving men... "THAT'S MY BED YOU'VE GOT THERE!" but they don't stop, they don't even acknowledge me... "HEY, COME BACK HERE... I WANT TO GET INTO MY BED!" I cry again and I start running after them... down the hall, through the dining room, past the library... Finally I catch up to them and hurl myself right into the center of the pillow. Just as I'm about to land, the bed suddenly vanishes and I go crashing down to the floor like some insect that's been hit by a fly swatter!

FANNY. (staggering in with her final load, drops it with a crash and then collapses in her posing chair) THAT'S IT FOR ME! I'M DEAD! (silence) Come on, Maggs, how about you doing a little work around here.

MAGS. That's all I've been doing! This is the first free moment you've given me!

FANNY. You should see all the books in there... and papers! There are enough loose papers to sink a ship!

GARDNER. Why is it we're moving, again...?

FANNY. Because life is getting too complicated here.

GARDNER. (remembering) Oh yes...

FANNY. And we can't afford it anymore.

GARDNER. That's right, that's right...

FANNY. We don't have the... income we used to!

GARDNER. Oh yes... income!

FANNY. (assuming her pose again) Of course we have our savings and various trust funds, but I wouldn't dream of touching those!

GARDNER. No, no, you must never dip into capital!
FANNY. I told Daddy I'd be perfectly happy to buy a
gun and put a bullet through our heads so we could
avoid all this, but he wouldn't hear of it!

MAGS. (sketching away) No, I shouldn't think so.
(pause)

FANNY. I've always admired people who kill them-
selves when they get to our stage of life. Well, no one
can touch my Uncle Edmond in that department . . .

MAGS. I know, I know . . .

FANNY. The day before his 70th birthday he climbed
to the top of the Old North Church and hurled himself
face down into Salem Street! They had to scrape him up
with a spatula! God, he was a remarkable man . . .
state senator, President of Harvard . . .

GARDNER. (rises and wanders over to his books)
Well, I guess I'm going to have to do something about
all of these . . .

FANNY. . . . Come on, Mags, help Daddy! Why don't
you start bringing in his papers . . .

(GARDNER sits on the floor, picks up a book and
soon is engrossed in it. MAGS keeps sketching,
oblivious. Silence.)

FANNY. (to MAGS) Darling . . . ? HELLO . . . ?
(They both ignore her.) God, you two are impossible.
Just look at you . . . heads in the clouds! No one would
ever know we've got to be out of here in two days. If it
weren't for me, nothing would get done around here . . .

(She starts stacking GARDNER's books into piles.)

GARDNER. (looks up) What do you mean, maroon
ones . . . ?!

FANNY. All your books that are maroon are in this

pile . . . and your books that are green in _that_ pile . . .!
I'm trying to bring some order into your life for once.
This will make unpacking so much easier.

GARDNER. But my dear Fanny, it's not the color of a
book that distinguishes it, but what's _inside_ it!

FANNY. This will be a great help, you'll see. Now what
about this awful striped thing? (_She picks up a slim,
aged volume._) Can't it go . . . ?

GARDNER. No!

FANNY. But it's as queer as Dick's hat band! There are
no others like it.

GARDNER. Open it and read. Go on . . . open it!

FANNY. We'll get nowhere at this rate.

GARDNER. I said . . . READ!

FANNY. Really, Gar, I . . .

GARDNER. Read the dedication!

FANNY. (_opens and reads_) "To Gardner Church, you
led the way. With gratitude and affection, Robert
Frost." (_She closes it and hands it to him._)

GARDNER. It was published the same year as my
"Salem Gardens."

FANNY. (_picking up a very dirty book_) Well, what
about this dreadful thing. It's filthy. (_She blows off a
cloud of dust._)

GARDNER. Please . . . please?!

FANNY. (_looking through it_) It's all in French.

GARDNER. (_snatching it away from her_) Andre Mal-
raux gave me that . . . !

FANNY. I'm just trying to help.

GARDNER. It's a first edition of Baudelaire's "Fleurs
du Mal."

FANNY. (_giving it back_) Well, pardon me for living!

GARDNER. Why do you have to drag everything in
here in the first place . . . ?
Fanny. Because there's no room in your study. You ought to see the mess in there! ... Wake up, Mags, are you going to pitch in or not ... ?!

Gardner. I'm not up to this.

Fanny. Well, you'd better be unless you want to be left behind!

Mags. (stops her sketching) Alright, alright ... I just hope you'll give me some more time later this evening.

Fanny. (to Mags) Since you're young and in the best shape, why don't you bring in the books and I'll cope with the papers. (She exits to the study.)

Gardner. Now just a minute . . .

Fanny. (offstage) We need a steam shovel for this!

Mags. O.K., what do you want me to do?

Gardner. Look, I don't want you messing around with my ... (Fanny enters with an armful of papers which she drops into an empty carton.) Hey, what's going on here ... ?

Fanny. I'm packing up your papers. Come on, Mags, let's get cracking! (She exits for more papers.)

Gardner. (plucks several papers out of the carton) What is this ... ?

Mags. (exits into his study) Good lord, what have you done in here ... ?!

Gardner. (reading) This is my manuscript. (Fanny enters with another batch which she tosses on top of the others.) What are you doing ... ?!

Fanny. Packing, darling ... packing! (She exits for more.)

Gardner. See here, you can't manhandle my things this way! (Mags enters, stag-
things... you don't just throw them around every
which way... It's tricky trying to make sense of
poetry, it's much easier to write the stuff... that is, if
you've still got it in you...

MAGS. Here, let me help... (taking some of the
papers)

GARDNER. Criticism is tough sledding. You can't just
dash off a few images here, a few rhymes there...

MAGS. Do you have these pages numbered in any
way?

FANNY. (returning to her posing chair) HA!

GARDNER. This is just the introduction.

MAGS. I don't see any numbers on these.

GARDNER. (exiting to his study) The important stuff
is in my study...

FANNY. (to MAGS) You don't know the half of it
... Not the half...!

GARDNER. (offstage; thumping around) HAVE YOU
SEEN THOSE YEATS POEMS I JUST HAD...?

MAGS. (reading over several pages) What is
this...? It doesn't make sense. It's just fragments...

pieces of poems.

FANNY. That's it, honey! That's his book. His great
critical study! Now that he can't write his own poetry,
he's trying to explain other people's. The only problem
is, he can't get beyond typing them out. The poor lamb
doesn't have the stamina to get beyond the opening stan-
zas, let alone trying to make sense of them.

GARDNER. (thundering back with more papers which
keep falling) GOD DAMNIT, FANNY, WHAT DID
YOU DO IN THERE? I CAN'T FIND ANYTHING!

FANNY. I just took the papers that were on your desk.

GARDNER. Well, the entire beginning is gone. (He ex-
its.)
When small birds sighed, she would sigh back at them;  
Ah, when she moved, she moved more ways than one:  
The shapes a bright container can contain! ..."

FANNY. (hands him another) And ...  
GARDNER. Ah yes, Frost ... (reads)  
"Some say the world will end in fire,  
Some say ice.  
From what I've tasted of desire  
I hug with those who favor fire."

FANNY. (under her breath to MAGS) He can't give up  
the words. It's the best he can do. (handing him another)  
Here you go, here's more.  
GARDNER.

"Far boys wild to couple  
With anything with soft-wooded trees  
With mounds of earth mounds  
Of pinestraw will keep themselves off  
Animals by legends of their own ..."

MAGS. (eyes shut) Oh Daddy, I can't bear it ... I ...  
FANNY. Of course no one will ever publish this.  
GARDNER. Oh, here's a marvelous one. Listen to this!

"There came a Wind like a Bugle—  
It quivered through the Grass  
And a Green Chili upon the Heat  
So ominous did pass  
We barred the Windows and the Doors  
As from an Emerald Ghost—"

The Doom's electric Moccasin ..."

SHIT. WHERE DID THE REST OF IT GO ...?  
FANNY. Well, don't ask me.
PAINTING CHURCHES

GARDNER. Oh yes . . . the Dickinson. (He shuts his eyes, reciting from memory, holding the book against his chest.)

"There came a Wind like a Bugle—
It quivered through the Grass
And a Green Chill upon the Heat
So ominous did pass
We barred the Windows and the Doors
As from an Emerald Ghost—"
(opens the book and starts riffling through it) Let's see now, where's the rest . . . ? (He finally finds it.) Ahhh, here we go . . . !

FANNY. (re-enters, drink in hand) I'm back! (takes one look at GARDNER and bursts out laughing again)

MAGS. I don't believe you! How you can laugh at him . . . ?!

FANNY. I'm sorry, I wish I could stop, but there's really nothing else to do. Look at him . . . just . . . look at him . . . !

(This is all simultaneous as MAGS gets angrier and angrier.)

MAGS. It's so cruel . . . you're so . . . incredibly cruel to him . . . I mean, YOUR DISDAIN REALLY TAKES MY BREATH AWAY! YOU'RE IN A CLASS BY YOURSELF WHEN IT COMES TO HUMILIZATION . . . !

GARDNER. (reading)
"The Doom's electric Moccasin
That very instant passed—
On a strange Mob of panting Trees
And Fences fled away
And Rivers where the Houses ran

Those looked that lived—that Day—
The Bell within the steeple wild
The flying tidings told—
How much can come
And much can go,
And yet abide the World!"
(He shuts the book with a bang, pauses and looks around the room, confused.) Now, where was I . . . ?

FANNY. Safe and sound in the middle of the living room with Mags and me.

GARDNER. But I was looking for something, wasn't I . . . ?

FANNY. Your manuscript.

GARDNER. THAT'S RIGHT! MY MANUSCRIPT! My manuscript!

FANNY. And here it is all over the floor. See, you're standing on it.

GARDNER. (picks up a few pages and looks at them) Why, so I am . . .

FANNY. Now all we have to do is get it up off the floor and packed neatly into these cartons!

GARDNER. Yes, yes, that's right, Into the cartons.

FANNY. (kicks a carton over to him) Here, you use this one and I'll start over here . . . (She starts dropping papers into a carton nearby.) . . . BOMBS AWAY . . . !

Hey . . . this is fun . . . !

GARDNER. (picks up his own pile, lifts it high over his head and flings it down into the carton) BOMBS AWAY . . . This is fun . . . !

FANNY. I told you! The whole thing is to figure out a system!

GARDNER. I don't know what I'd do without you, Fan. I thought I'd lost everything.

FANNY. (makes dive bomber noises and machine gun
explosions as she wheels more and more papers into the
carton) TAKE THAT AND THAT AND THAT . . . !

GARDNER. (joins in the fun, outdoing her with dips,
dives and blastings of his own) BLAM BLAM BLAM
BLAM! . . . ZZZZZZZZZAAAAAA FOOM! . . .
BLATTY DE BLATTY DE BLATTY DE KA-
BOOOOOOOOM . . . ! WHAAAAAA . . . DA
DAT DAT DAT DAT . . . WHEEEEEEEE-
AAAAAAAAAAAAA . . . FOOOOOO . . . (They get
louder and louder as papers fly every which way.)

FANNY. (mimes getting hit with a bomb) AEEEEEE-
IIIIIIIIIIIIIIII! YOU GOT ME RIGHT IN THE GIZ-
ZARD! (She collapses on the floor and starts going
through death threes, having an absolute ball.)

GARDNER. TAKE THAT AND THAT AND THAT
AND THAT . . . (a series of explosions follow)

MAGS. (furious) This is how you help him . . . ?
THIS IS HOW YOU PACK HIS THINGS . . . ?

FANNY. I keep him company. I get involved . . .
which is a hell of a lot more than you do!

MAGS. (wild with rage) BUT YOU'RE MAKING
A MOCKERY OF HIM . . . YOU TREAT HIM LIKE A
CHILD OR SOME DIM-WITTED SERVING BOY.
HE'S JUST AN AMUSEMENT TO YOU . . . !

FANNY. (Fatigue has finally overtaken her. She's calm
to the point of serenity.) . . . and to you who see him
once a year, if that . . . What is he to you? . . . I mean,
what do you give him from yourself that costs you some-
thing . . . ? Hmmmmmm . . . ? (imitating her) "Oh, hi
Daddy, it's great to see you again. How have you been?
. . . Gee, I love your hair. It's gotten so . . . white!"
. . . What color do you expect it to get when he's this age . . . ?
I mean, if you care so much how he looks, why don't
you come and see him once in a while? . . . But oh no . . .

you have your paintings to do and your shows to put on.
You just come and see us when the whim strikes. (imitat-
ing her) "Hey, you know what would be really great?
. . . To do a portrait of you? I've always wanted to paint
you, you're such great subjects!" . . . Paint us . . . ?!
What about opening your eyes and really seeing us . . . ?
Noticing what's going on around here for a change! It's
all over Daddy and me. This is it! "Finita la commedia!"
. . . All I'm trying to do is exit with a little flourish,
have some fun . . . What's so terrible about that? . . .
It can get pretty grim around here, in case you haven't
noticed . . . Daddy, tap, tap tapping out his nonsense
all day; me traipsing around to the thrift shops trying to
entertain myself . . . He never keeps me company any-
more, never takes me out anywhere . . . I'd put a bullet
through my head in a minute, but then who'd look after
him? . . . What do you think we're moving to the cottage
for . . . ? So I can watch him like a hawk and make
sure he doesn't get lost. Do you think that's anything to
look forward to? . . . Being Daddy's nursemaid out in
the middle of nowhere? I'd much rather stay here in
Boston with the few friends I have left, but you can't
always do what you want in this world! "L'homme pro-
pose, Dieu dispose!" . . . If you want to paint us so
badly, you ought to paint us as we really are. There's
your picture . . . ! (She points to GARDNER who's
quietly playing with a paper glider.) . . . Daddy spread
out on the floor with all his toys and me hovering over
him to make sure he doesn't hurt himself! (She
goes over to him.) YOO HOO . . . GAR . . . ? . . .
HELLO! . . .

GARDNER. (looks up at her) Oh, hi there, Fan.
What's up?

FANNY. How's the packing coming . . . ?
GARDNER. Packing . . . ?
FANNY. Yes, you were packing your manuscript, remember? *She lifts up a page and lets it fall into a carton."
GARDNER. Oh yes . . .
FANNY. Here's your picture, Mags. Face over this way . . . turn your easel over here . . . *(She lets a few more papers fall.)* Up, up . . . and away . . .

**BLACKOUT**

**Scene 2**

*The last day. All the books and boxes are gone. The room is completely empty except for MAGS' backdrop. Late afternoon light dapples the walls; it changes from pale peach to deeper violet. The finished portrait sits on the easel covered with a cloth. MAGS is taking down the backdrop.*

FANNY. *(offstage to GARDNER)* DON'T FORGET TOOTS!
GARDNER. *(offstage from another part of the house)* WHAT'S THAT . . . ?
FANNY. *(offstage)* I SAID: DON'T FORGET TOOTS! HIS CAGE IS SITTING IN THE MIDDLE OF YOUR STUDY! *(silence)*
FANNY. *(offstage)* GARDNER. *(offstage)* HELLO . . . ? ARE I'LL BE RIGHT WITH ARE YOU THERE . . . ? YOU, I'M JUST GETTING TOOTS!
GARDNER. *(offstage)* WHAT'S THAT? I CAN'T HEAR YOU?
FANNY. *(offstage)* I'M GOING THROUGH THE

ROOMS ONE MORE TIME TO MAKE SURE WE DIDN'T FORGET ANYTHING . . . KITTY'S PICKING US UP IN 15 MINUTES, SO PLEASE BE READY . . . SHE'S DROPPING MAGS OFF AT THE STATION AND THEN IT'S OUT TO ROUTE 3 AND THE CAPE HIGHWAY . . .

GARDNER. *(enters, carrying Toots in his cage)* Well, this is it. The big moment has finally come, eh what, Toots? *(He sees MAGS.)* Oh hi there, Mags, I didn't see you . . .
MAGS. Hi, daddy. I'm just taking this down . . . *(She does and walks over to Toots.)* Oh Toots, I'll miss you.
*(She makes little chattering noises into his cage.)*
GARDNER. Come on, recite a little Grey's Elegy for Mags before we go.
MAGS. Yes, Mum said he was really good at it now.
GARDNER. Well, the whole thing is to keep at it every day. *(slowly to Toots)*
"The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea . . ."

Come on, show Mags your stuff!
*(slower)*
"The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea." *(Silence; he makes little chattering sounds.)* Come on, Toots, old boy . . .
MAGS. How does it go?
GARDNER. *(to MAGS)*
"The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea . . ."
MAGS. *(slowly to Toots)*
"The curfew tolls for you and me,
As quietly the herd winds down . . ."
GARDNER. No, no, it's: "The curfew tolls the knell of parting day...!"
MAGS. (repeating after him) "The curfew tolls the knell of parting day..."
GARDNER. ... "The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea..."
MAGS. (with a deep breath)
"The curfew tolls at parting day,
The herd low slowly down the lea... no, knell!
They come winding down the knell...!"
GARDNER. Listen, MAGS... listen! (a pause)
TOOTS. (loud and clear with GARDNER's inflection)
"The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me."
MAGS. HE SAID IT... HE SAID IT!... AND IN YOUR VOICE!... OH DADDY, THAT'S AMAZING!
GARDNER. Well, TOOTS is very smart, which is more than I can say for a lot of people I know...
MAGS. (to TOOTS) "Polly want a cracker? Polly want a cracker?"
GARDNER. You can teach a parakeet to say anything, all you need is patience...
MAGS. But poetry... that's so hard...
FANNY. (Enters carrying a suitcase and GARDNER's typewriter in its case. She's dressed in her travelling suit wearing a hat to match.) WELL, THERE YOU ARE! I THOUGHT YOU'D DIED!
MAGS. (to FANNY) He said it! I finally heard TOOTS recite Grey's Elegy. (leaning close to the cage) "Polly want a cracker? Polly want a cracker?"
FANNY. Isn't it uncanny how much he sounds like

Daddy? Sometimes when I'm alone here with him, I've actually thought he was Daddy and started talking to him. Oh yes, TOOTS and I have had quite a few meaty conversations together!

(FANNY wolfwhistles into the cage, then draws back.
GARDNER covers the cage with a travelling cloth.
Silence.)

FANNY. (looking around the room) God, the place looks so bare.
MAGS. I still can't believe it... Cotuit, year round. I wonder if there'll be any phosphorus when you get there?
FANNY. What on earth are you talking about? (spies the backdrop on the floor, carries it out to the hall)
MAGS. Remember that summer when the ocean was full of phosphorus?
GARDNER. (carrying TOOTS out into the hall) Oh yes...
MAGS. It was a great mystery where it came from or why it settled in Cotuit. But one evening when Daddy and I were taking a swim, suddenly it was there!
GARDNER. (returns) I remember.
MAGS. I don't know where Mum was...
FANNY. (re-enters) Probably doing the dishes!
MAGS. (to GARDNER) As you dove into the water, this shower of silvery-green sparks erupted all around you. It was incredible! I thought you were turning into a saint or something, but then you told me to jump in too and the same thing happened to me...
GARDNER. Oh yes, I remember that... the water smelled all queer.
MAGS. What is phosphorus, anyway?
What’s that over there? Don’t tell me we forgot something!

Mags. It’s your portrait. I finished it.

Fanny. You finished it? How on earth did you manage that?

Mags. I stayed up all night.

Fanny. You did? . . . I didn’t hear you, did you hear her, Gar . . . ?

Gardner. Not a peep, not a peep!

Mags. Well, I wanted to get it done before you left. You know, see what you thought. It’s not bad, considering . . . I mean, I did it almost completely from memory. The light was terrible and I was trying to be quiet so I wouldn’t wake you. It was hardly an ideal situation . . . I mean, you weren’t the most cooperative models . . . (She suddenly panics and snatchesthe painting off the easel. She hugs it to her chest and starts dancing around the room with it.) Oh God, you’re going to hate it! You’re going to hate it! How did I ever get into this? . . . Listen, you don’t really want to see it . . . it’s nothing . . . just a few dabbs here and there . . . It was awfully late when I finished it. The light was really impossible and my eyes were hurting like crazy . . . Look, why don’t we just go out to the sidewalk and wait for Kitty so she doesn’t have to honk . . .

Gardner. (snatchesthe painting out from under her) WOULD YOU JUST SHUT UP A MINUTE AND LET US SEE IT . . . ?

Mags. (laughing and crying) But it’s nothing, Daddy . . . really! . . . I’ve done better with my eyes closed! It was so late I could hardly see anything and then I spilled a whole bottle of thinner into my palette . . .

Gardner. (sets it down on the easel and stands back to look at it) THERE!
Mags. (dancing around them in a panic) Listen, it's just a quick sketch. It's still wet. I didn't have enough time. It takes at least 40 hours to do a decent portrait.

(Suddenly it's very quiet as Fanny and Gardner stand back to look at it.)

Mags. (more and more beside herself, keeps leaping around the room wrapping her arms around herself, making little whimpering sounds) Please don't. Don't. Oh please! Come on, don't look... Oh God, don't... please... (An eternity passes as Fanny and Gardner gaze at it.)

Gardner. Well...

Fanny. Well... (more silence)

Fanny. I think it's... Gardner. Awfully perfectly dreadful! clever, awfully clever!

Fanny. What on earth did you do to my face...?

Gardner. I particularly like Mum!

Fanny. Since when do I have purple skin...?!

Mags. I told you it was nothing, just a silly Gardner. She looks like a million dollars!

Fanny. And will you look at my hair... It's bright orange!

Gardner. (viewed from another angle) It's really very good!

Fanny. (pointing) That doesn't look anything like me! Gardner. first rate!

Fanny. Since when do I have purple skin and bright orange hair...?!

Mags. (trying to snatch it off the easel) Listen, you don't have to worry about my feelings... really...

Gardner. (blocking her way) Not so fast...

Fanny... and look at how I'm sitting! I've never sat like that in my life!

Gardner. (moving closer to it) Yes, yes, it's awfully clever...

Fanny. I have no feet!

Gardner. The whole thing is quite remarkable!

Fanny. And what happened to my legs, pray tell?

. . . They just vanish below the knees! At least my dress is presentable. I've always loved that dress.

Gardner. It sparkles somehow...

Fanny. (to Gardner) Don't you think it's becoming?

Gardner. Yes, very becoming, awfully becoming...

Fanny. (examining it at closer range) Yes, she got the dress very well, how it shows off what's left of my figure... My smile is nice too.

Gardner. Good and wide.

Fanny. I love how the corners of my mouth turn up...

Gardner. It's very clever...

Fanny. They're almost quivering...

Gardner. Good lighting effects!

Fanny. Actually, I look quite... young, don't you think?

Gardner. (to Mags) You're awfully good with those highlights.

Fanny. (looking at it from different angles) And you look darling...!

Gardner. Well, I don't know about that...

Fanny. No, you look absolutely darling. Good enough to eat!

Mags. (in a whisper) They like it... They like it! (A silence as Fanny and Gardner keep gazing at it?)

Fanny. You know what it is? The whispy brush
strokes make us look like a couple in a French Impressionist painting.

**GARDNER.** Yes, I see what you mean . . .

**FANNY.** . . . a Manet or Renoir . . .

**GARDNER.** It's very evocative.

**FANNY.** There's something about the light . . . *(They back up to survey it from a distance.)* You know those Renoir café scenes . . . ?

**GARDNER.** She doesn't lay on the paint with a trowel; it's just touches here and there . . .

**MAGS.** They **like** it . . . !

**FANNY.** You know the one with the couple dancing . . . ? Not that we're dancing. There's just something similar in the mood . . . a kind of gaiety, almost . . . The man has his back to you and he's swinging the woman around . . . **OH GAR, YOU'VE SEEN IT A MILLION TIMES! IT'S HANGING IN THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS! . . . They're dancing like this . . . *(She goes up to him and puts an arm on his shoulder.)*

**MAGS.** They like it . . . they like it!

**FANNY.** She's got on this wonderful flowered dress with ruffles at the neck and he's holding her like this . . . that's right . . . and she's got the most rhapsodic expression on her face . . .

**GARDNER.** *(getting into the spirit of it, takes FANNY in his arms and slowly begins to dance around the room)*

Oh yes . . . I know the one you mean . . . They're in a sort of haze . . . and isn't there a little band playing off to one side . . . ?

**FANNY.** Yes, that's it!

*(Kitty's horn honks outside.)*

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**MAGS.** *(is the only one who hears it)* There's Kitty! *(She's torn and keeps looking towards the door, but finally can't take her eyes off their stolen dance.)*

**FANNY.** . . . and there's a man in a dark suit playing the violin and someone's conducting, I think . . . And aren't Japanese lanterns strung up . . . ? *(They pick up speed, dipping and whirling around the room. Strains of a far-away Chopin waltz are heard.)*

**GARDNER.** Oh yes! There are all these little lights twinkling in the trees . . .

**FANNY.** . . . and doesn't the woman have a hat on . . . ? A big red hat . . . ?

**GARDNER.** . . . and lights all over the dancers too. Everything shimmers with this marvelous glow. Yes, yes . . . I can see it perfectly! The whole thing is absolutely extraordinary! *(The lights become dreamy and dappled as they dance around the room. MAGS watches them, moved to tears and . . .)*

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**THE CURTAIN FALLS**