

GALSWORTHY
JOHN

SIX SHORT
PLAYS

John Galsworthy

Six Short Plays

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John Galsworthy
Six Short Plays

THE FIRST AND THE LAST

A DRAMA IN THREE SCENES

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

KEITH DARRANT, K.C.
LARRY DARRANT, His Brother.
WANDA.

SCENE I. KEITH'S Study.
SCENE II. WANDA's Room.
SCENE III. The Same.

Between SCENE I. and SCENE II.—Thirty hours.
Between SCENE II. and SCENE III.—Two months.

SCENE I

It is six o'clock of a November evening, in KEITH DARRANT'S study. A large, dark-curtained room where the light from a single reading-lamp falling on Turkey carpet, on books beside a large armchair, on the deep blue-and-gold coffee service, makes a sort of oasis before a log fire. In red Turkish slippers and an old brown velvet coat, KEITH DARRANT sits asleep. He has a dark, clean-cut, clean-shaven face, dark grizzling hair, dark twisting eyebrows.

[The curtained door away out in the dim part of the room behind him is opened so softly that he does not wake. LARRY DARRANT enters and stands half lost in the curtain over the door. A thin figure, with a worn, high cheek-boned face, deep-sunk blue eyes and wavy hair all ruffled—a face which still has a certain beauty. He moves inwards along the wall, stands still again and utters a gasping sigh. KEITH stirs in his chair.]

KEITH. Who's there?

LARRY. [In a stifled voice] Only I—Larry.

KEITH. [Half-waked] Come in! I was asleep. [He does not turn his head, staring sleepily at the fire.]

The sound of LARRY's breathing can be heard.

[Turning his head a little] Well, Larry, what is it?

LARRY comes skirting along the wall, as if craving its support, outside the radius of the light.

[Staring] Are you ill?

LARRY stands still again and heaves a deep sigh.

KEITH. [Rising, with his back to the fire, and staring at his brother] What is it, man? [Then with a brutality born of nerves suddenly ruffled] Have you committed a murder that you stand there like a fish?

LARRY. [In a whisper] Yes, Keith.

KEITH. [With vigorous disgust] By Jove! Drunk again! [In a voice changed by sudden apprehension] What do you mean by coming here in this state? I told you— If you weren't my brother—! Come here, where I can we you! What's the matter with you, Larry?

[With a lurch LARRY leaves the shelter of the wall and sinks into a chair in the circle of light.]

LARRY. It's true.

[KEITH steps quickly forward and stares down into his brother's eyes, where is a horrified wonder, as if they would never again get on terms with his face.]

KEITH. [Angry, bewildered—in a low voice] What in God's name is this nonsense?

[He goes quickly over to the door and draws the curtain aside, to see that it is shut, then comes back to LARRY, who is huddling over the fire.]

Come, Larry! Pull yourself together and drop exaggeration! What on earth do you mean?

LARRY. [In a shrill outburst] It's true, I tell you; I've killed a man.

KEITH. [Bracing himself; coldly] Be quiet!

LARRY lifts his hands and wrings them.

[Utterly taken aback] Why come here and tell me this?

LARRY. Whom should I tell, Keith? I came to ask what I'm to do— give myself up, or what?

KEITH. When—when—what—?

LARRY. Last night.

KEITH. Good God! How? Where? You'd better tell me quietly from the beginning. Here, drink this coffee; it'll clear your head.

He pours out and hands him a cup of coffee. LARRY drinks it off.

LARRY. My head! Yes! It's like this, Keith—there's a girl—

KEITH. Women! Always women, with you! Well?

LARRY. A Polish girl. She—her father died over here when she was sixteen, and left her all alone. There was a mongrel living in the same house who married her—or pretended to. She's very pretty, Keith. He left her with a baby coming. She lost it, and nearly starved. Then another fellow took her on, and she lived with him two years, till that brute turned up again and made her go back to him. He used to beat her black and blue. He'd left her again when—I met her. She was taking anybody then. [He stops, passes his hand over his lips, looks up at KEITH, and goes on defiantly] I never met a sweeter woman, or a truer, that I swear. Woman! She's only twenty now! When I went to her last night, that devil had found her out again. He came for me—a bullying, great, hulking brute. Look! [He touches a dark mark on his forehead] I took his ugly throat, and when I let go—[He stops and his hands drop.]

KEITH. Yes?

LARRY. [In a smothered voice] Dead, Keith. I never knew till afterwards that she was hanging on to him—to h-help me. [Again he wrings his hands.]

KEITH. [In a hard, dry voice] What did you do then?

LARRY. We—we sat by it a long time.

KEITH. Well?

LARRY. Then I carried it on my back down the street, round a corner, to an archway.

KEITH. How far?

LARRY. About fifty yards.

KEITH. Was—did anyone see?

LARRY. No.

KEITH. What time?

LARRY. Three in the morning.

KEITH. And then?

LARRY. Went back to her.

KEITH. Why—in heaven's name?

LARRY. She way lonely and afraid. So was I, Keith.

KEITH. Where is this place?

LARRY. Forty-two Borrow Square, Soho.

KEITH. And the archway?

LARRY. Corner of Glove Lane.

KEITH. Good God! Why, I saw it in the paper this morning. They were talking of it in the Courts! [He snatches the evening paper from his armchair, and runs it over and reads] Here it is again. "Body of a man was found this morning under an archway in Glove Lane. From marks about the throat grave suspicion of foul play are entertained. The body had apparently been robbed." My God! [Suddenly he turns] You saw this in the paper and dreamed it. D'you understand, Larry?—you dreamed it.

LARRY. [Wistfully] If only I had, Keith!

[KEITH makes a movement of his hands almost like his brother's.]

KEITH. Did you take anything from the-body?

LARRY. [Drawing an envelope from his pocket] This dropped out while we were struggling.

KEITH. [Snatching it and reading] "Patrick Walenn"—Was that his name? "Simon's Hotel, Farrier Street, London." [Stooping, he puts it in the fire] No!—that makes me—[He bends to pluck it out, stays his hand, and stamps it suddenly further in with his foot] What in God's name made you come here and tell me? Don't you know I'm—I'm within an ace of a Judgeship?

LARRY. [Simply] Yes. You must know what I ought to do. I didn't, mean to kill him, Keith. I love the girl—I love her. What shall I do?

KEITH. Love!

LARRY. [In a flash] Love!—That swinish brute! A million creatures die every day, and not one of them deserves death as he did. But but I feel it here. [Touching his heart] Such an awful clutch, Keith. Help me if you can, old man. I may be no good, but I've never hurt a fly if I could help it. [He buries his face in his hands.]

KEITH. Steady, Larry! Let's think it out. You weren't seen, you say?

LARRY. It's a dark place, and dead night.

KEITH. When did you leave the girl again?

LARRY. About seven.

KEITH. Where did you go?

LARRY. To my rooms.

KEITH. To Fitzroy Street?

LARRY. Yes.

KEITH. What have you done since?

LARRY. Sat there—thinking.

KEITH. Not been out?

LARRY. No.

KEITH. Not seen the girl?

[LARRY shakes his head.]

Will she give you away?

LARRY. Never.

KEITH. Or herself hysteria?

LARRY. No.

KEITH. Who knows of your relations with her?

LARRY. No one.

KEITH. No one?

LARRY. I don't know who should, Keith.

KEITH. Did anyone see you go in last night, when you first went to her?

LARRY. No. She lives on the ground floor. I've got keys.

KEITH. Give them to me.

LARRY takes two keys from his pocket and hands them to his brother.

LARRY. [Rising] I can't be cut off from her!

KEITH. What! A girl like that?

LARRY. [With a flash] Yes, a girl like that.

KEITH. [Moving his hand to put down old emotion] What else have you that connects you with her?

LARRY. Nothing.

KEITH. In your rooms?

[LARRY shakes his head.]

Photographs? Letters?

LARRY. No.

KEITH. Sure?

LARRY. Nothing.

KEITH. No one saw you going back to her?

[LARRY shakes his head.]

Nor leave in the morning? You can't be certain.

LARRY. I am.

KEITH. You were fortunate. Sit down again, man. I must think.

He turns to the fire and leans his elbows on the mantelpiece and his head on his hands. LARRY Sits down again obediently.

KEITH. It's all too unlikely. It's monstrous!

LARRY. [Sighing it out] Yes.

KEITH. This Walenn—was it his first reappearance after an absence?

LARRY. Yes.

KEITH. How did he find out where she was?

LARRY. I don't know.

KEITH. [Brutally] How drunk were you?

LARRY. I was not drunk.

KEITH. How much had you drunk, then?

LARRY. A little claret—nothing!

KEITH. You say you didn't mean to kill him.

LARRY. God knows.

KEITH. That's something.

LARRY. He hit me. [He holds up his hands] I didn't know I was so strong.

KEITH. She was hanging on to him, you say?—That's ugly.

LARRY. She was scared for me.

KEITH. D'you mean she—loves you?

LARRY. [Simply] Yes, Keith.

KEITH. [Brutally] Can a woman like that love?

LARRY. [Flashing out] By God, you are a stony devil! Why not?

KEITH. [Dryly] I'm trying to get at truth. If you want me to help, I must know everything.

What makes you think she's fond of you?

LARRY. [With a crazy laugh] Oh, you lawyer! Were you never in a woman's arms?

KEITH. I'm talking of love.

LARRY. [Fiercely] So am I. I tell you she's devoted. Did you ever pick up a lost dog? Well, she has the lost dog's love for me. And I for her; we picked each other up. I've never felt for another woman what I feel for her—she's been the saving of me!

KEITH. [With a shrug] What made you choose that archway?

LARRY. It was the first dark place.

KEITH. Did his face look as if he'd been strangled?

LARRY. Don't!

KEITH. Did it?

[LARRY bows his head.]

Very disfigured?

LARRY. Yes.

KEITH. Did you look to see if his clothes were marked?

LARRY. No.

KEITH. Why not?

LARRY. [In an outburst] I'm not made of iron, like you. Why not? If you had done it—!

KEITH. [Holding up his hand] You say he was disfigured. Would he be recognisable?

LARRY. [Wearily] I don't know.

KEITH. When she lived with him last—where was that?

LARRY. In Pimlico, I think.

KEITH. Not Soho?

[LARRY shakes his head.]

How long has she been at this Soho place?

LARRY. Nearly a year.

KEITH. Living this life?

LARRY. Till she met me.

KEITH. Till, she met you? And you believe—?

LARRY. [Starting up] Keith!

KEITH. [Again raising his hand] Always in the same rooms?

LARRY. [Subsiding] Yes.

KEITH. What was he? A professional bully?

[LARRY nods.]

Spending most of his time abroad, I suppose.

LARRY. I think so.

KEITH. Can you say if he was known to the police?

LARRY. I've never heard.

KEITH turns away and walks up and down; then, stopping at LARRY's chair, he speaks.

KEITH. Now listen, Larry. When you leave here, go straight home, and stay there till I give you leave to go out again. Promise.

LARRY. I promise.

KEITH. Is your promise worth anything?

LARRY. [With one of his flashes] "Unstable as water, he shall not excel!"

KEITH. Exactly. But if I'm to help you, you must do as I say. I must have time to think this out. Have you got money?

LARRY. Very little.

KEITH. [Grimly] Half-quarter day—yes, your quarter's always spent by then. If you're to get away—never mind, I can manage the money.

LARRY. [Humbly] You're very good, Keith; you've always been very good to me—I don't know why.

KEITH. [Sardonically] Privilege of A brother. As it happens, I'm thinking of myself and our family. You can't indulge yourself in killing without bringing ruin. My God! I suppose you realise that you've made me an accessory after the fact—me, King's counsel—sworn to the service of the Law, who, in a year or two, will have the trying of cases like yours! By heaven, Larry, you've surpassed yourself!

LARRY. [Bringing out a little box] I'd better have done with it.

KEITH. You fool! Give that to me.

LARRY. [With a strange smile] No. [He holds up a tabloid between finger and thumb] White magic, Keith! Just one—and they may do what they like to you, and you won't know it. Snap your fingers at all the tortures. It's a great comfort! Have one to keep by you?

KEITH. Come, Larry! Hand it over.

LARRY. [Replacing the box] Not quite! You've never killed a man, you see. [He gives that crazy laugh.] D'you remember that hammer when we were boys and you riled me, up in the long room? I had luck then. I had luck in Naples once. I nearly killed a driver for beating his poor brute of a horse. But now—! My God! [He covers his face.]

KEITH touched, goes up and lays a hand on his shoulder.

KEITH. Come, Larry! Courage!

LARRY looks up at him.

LARRY. All right, Keith; I'll try.

KEITH. Don't go out. Don't drink. Don't talk. Pull yourself together!

LARRY. [Moving towards the door] Don't keep me longer than you can help, Keith.

KEITH. No, no. Courage!

LARRY reaches the door, turns as if to say something-finds no words, and goes.

[To the fire] Courage! My God! I shall need it!

CURTAIN

SCENE II

At out eleven o'clock the following night an WANDA'S room on the ground floor in Soho. In the light from one close-shaded electric bulb the room is but dimly visible. A dying fire burns on the left. A curtained window in the centre of the back wall. A door on the right. The furniture is plush-covered and commonplace, with a kind of shabby smartness. A couch, without back or arms, stands aslant, between window and fire.

[On this WANDA is sitting, her knees drawn up under her, staring at the embers. She has on only her nightgown and a wrapper over it; her bare feet are thrust into slippers. Her hands are crossed and pressed over her breast. She starts and looks up, listening. Her eyes are candid and startled, her face alabaster pale, and its pale brown hair, short and square-cut, curls towards her bare neck. The startled dark eyes and the faint rose of her lips are like colour-staining on a white mask.]

[Footsteps as of a policeman, very measured, pass on the pavement outside, and die away. She gets up and steals to the window, draws one curtain aside so that a chink of the night is seen. She opens the curtain wider, till the shape of a bare, witch-like tree becomes visible in the open space of the little Square on the far side of the road. The footsteps are heard once more coming nearer. WANDA closes the curtains and cranes back. They pass and die again. She moves away and looking down at the floor between door and couch, as though seeing something there; shudders; covers her eyes; goes back to the couch and down again just as before, to stare at the embers. Again she is startled by noise of the outer door being opened. She springs up, runs and turns the light by a switch close to the door. By the glimmer of the fire she can just be seen standing by the dark window-curtains, listening. There comes the sound of subdued knocking on her door. She stands in breathless terror. The knocking is repeated. The sound of a latchkey in the door is heard. Her terror leaves her. The door opens; a man enters in a dark, fur overcoat.]

WANDA. [In a voice of breathless relief, with a rather foreign accent] Oh! it's you, Larry! Why did you knock? I was so frightened. Come in! [She crosses quickly, and flings her arms round his neck] [Recoiling—in a terror-stricken whisper] Oh! Who is it?

KEITH. [In a smothered voice] A friend of Larry's. Don't be frightened.

She has recoiled again to the window; and when he finds the switch and turns the light up, she is seen standing there holding her dark wrapper up to her throat, so that her face has an uncanny look of being detached from the body.

[Gently] You needn't be afraid. I haven't come to do you harm— quite the contrary. [Holding up the keys] Larry wouldn't have given me these, would he, if he hadn't trusted me?

WANDA does not move, staring like a spirit startled out of the flesh.

[After looking round him] I'm sorry to have startled you.

WANDA. [In a whisper] Who are you, please?

KEITH. Larry's brother.

WANDA, with a sigh of utter relief, steals forward to the couch and sinks down. KEITH goes up to her.

He'd told me.

WANDA. [Clasping her hands round her knees.] Yes?

KEITH. An awful business!
WANDA. Yes; oh, yes! Awful—it is awful!
KEITH. [Staring round him again.] In this room?
WANDA. Just where you are standing. I see him now, always falling.
KEITH. [Moved by the gentle despair in her voice] You—look very young. What's your name?
WANDA. Wanda.
KEITH. Are you fond of Larry?
WANDA. I would die for him!
[A moment's silence.]
KEITH. I—I've come to see what you can do to save him.
WANDA, [Wistfully] You would not deceive me. You are really his brother?
KEITH. I swear it.
WANDA. [Clasping her hands] If I can save him! Won't you sit down?
KEITH. [Drawing up a chair and sitting] This, man, your—your husband, before he came here the night before last—how long since you saw him?
WANDA. Eighteen month.
KEITH. Does anyone about here know you are his wife?
WANDA. No. I came here to live a bad life. Nobody know me. I am quite alone.
KEITH. They've discovered who he was—you know that?
WANDA. No; I have not dared to go out.
KEITH: Well, they have; and they'll look for anyone connected with him, of course.
WANDA. He never let people think I was married to him. I don't know if I was—really. We went to an office and signed our names; but he was a wicked man. He treated many, I think, like me.
KEITH. Did my brother ever see him before?
WANDA. Never! And that man first went for him.
KEITH. Yes. I saw the mark. Have you a servant?
WANDA. No. A woman come at nine in the morning for an hour.
KEITH. Does she know Larry?
WANDA. No. He is always gone.
KEITH. Friends—acquaintances?
WANDA. No; I am verree quiet. Since I know your brother, I see no one, sare.
KEITH. [Sharply] Do you mean that?
WANDA. Oh, yes! I love him. Nobody come here but him for a long time now.
KEITH. How long?
WANDA. Five month.
KEITH. So you have not been out since—?
[WANDA shakes her head.]
What have you been doing?
WANDA. [Simply] Crying. [Pressing her hands to her breast] He is in danger because of me. I am so afraid for him.
KEITH. [Checking her emotion] Look at me.
[She looks at him.]
If the worst comes, and this man is traced to you, can you trust yourself not to give Larry away?
WANDA. [Rising and pointing to the fire] Look! I have burned all the things he have given me—even his picture. Now I have nothing from him.
KEITH. [Who has risen too] Good! One more question. Do the police know you—because—of your life?
[She looks at him intently, and shakes her head.]
You know where Larry lives?

WANDA. Yes.

KEITH. You mustn't go there, and he mustn't come to you.

[She bows her head; then, suddenly comes close to him.]

WANDA. Please do not take him from me altogether. I will be so careful. I will not do anything to hurt him. But if I cannot see him sometimes, I shall die. Please do not take him from me.

[She catches his hand and presses it desperately between her own.]

KEITH. Leave that to me. I'm going to do all I can.

WANDA. [Looking up into his face] But you will be kind?

Suddenly she bends and kisses his hand. KEITH draws his hand away, and she recoils a little humbly, looking up at him again. Suddenly she stands rigid, listening.

[In a whisper] Listen! Someone—out there!

She darts past him and turns out the light. There is a knock on the door. They are now close together between door and window.

[Whispering] Oh! Who is it?

KEITH. [Under his breath] You said no one comes but Larry.

WANDA. Yes, and you have his keys. Oh! if it is Larry! I must open!

KEITH shrinks back against the wall. WANDA goes to the door.

[Opening the door an inch] Yes? Please? Who?

A thin streak of light from a bull's-eye lantern outside plays over the wall. A Policeman's voice says: "All right, Miss. Your outer door's open. You ought to keep it shut after dark, you know."

WANDA. Thank you, air.

[The sound of retreating footsteps, of the outer door closing. WANDA shuts the door.]

A policeman!

KEITH. [Moving from the wall] Curse! I must have left that door.

[Suddenly-turning up the light] You told me they didn't know you.

WANDA. [Sighing] I did not think they did, sir. It is so long I was not out in the town; not since I had Larry.

KEITH gives her an intent look, then crosses to the fire. He stands there a moment, looking down, then turns to the girl, who has crept back to the couch.

KEITH. [Half to himself] After your life, who can believe—? Look here! You drifted together and you'll drift apart, you know. Better for him to get away and make a clean cut of it.

WANDA. [Uttering a little moaning sound] Oh, sir! May I not love, because I have been bad? I was only sixteen when that man spoiled me. If you knew—

KEITH. I'm thinking of Larry. With you, his danger is much greater. There's a good chance as things are going. You may wreck it. And for what? Just a few months more of—well—you know.

WANDA. [Standing at the head of the couch and touching her eyes with her hands] Oh, sir! Look! It is true. He is my life. Don't take him away from me.

KEITH. [Moved and restless] You must know what Larry is. He'll never stick to you.

WANDA. [Simply] He will, sir.

KEITH. [Energetically] The last man on earth to stick to anything! But for the sake of a whim he'll risk his life and the honour of all his family. I know him.

WANDA. No, no, you do not. It is I who know him.

KEITH. Now, now! At any moment they may find out your connection with that man. So long as Larry goes on with you, he's tied to this murder, don't you see?

WANDA. [Coming close to him] But he love me. Oh, sir! he love me!

KEITH. Larry has loved dozens of women.

WANDA. Yes, but—[Her face quivers].

KEITH. [Brusquely] Don't cry! If I give you money, will you disappear, for his sake?

WANDA. [With a moan] It will be in the water, then. There will be no cruel men there.

KEITH. Ah! First Larry, then you! Come now. It's better for you both. A few months, and you'll forget you ever met.

WANDA. [Looking wildly up] I will go if Larry say I must. But not to live. No! [Simply] I could not, sir.

[KEITH, moved, is silent.]

I could not live without Larry. What is left for a girl like me— when she once love? It is finish.

KEITH. I don't want you to go back to that life.

WANDA. No; you do not care what I do. Why should you? I tell you I will go if Larry say I must.

KEITH. That's not enough. You know that. You must take it out of his hands. He will never give up his present for the sake of his future. If you're as fond of him as you say, you'll help to save him.

WANDA. [Below her breath] Yes! Oh, yes! But do not keep him long from me—I beg! [She sinks to the floor and clasps his knees.]

KEITH. Well, well! Get up.

[There is a tap on the window-pane]

Listen!

[A faint, peculiar whistle.]

WANDA. [Springing up] Larry! Oh, thank God!

[She runs to the door, opens it, and goes out to bring him in. KEITH stands waiting, facing the open doorway.]

[LARRY entering with WANDA just behind him.]

LARRY. Keith!

KEITH. [Grimly] So much for your promise not to go out!

LARRY. I've been waiting in for you all day. I couldn't stand it any longer.

KEITH. Exactly!

LARRY. Well, what's the sentence, brother? Transportation for life and then to be fined forty pounds'?

KEITH. So you can joke, can you?

LARRY. Must.

KEITH. A boat leaves for the Argentine the day after to-morrow; you must go by it.

LARRY. [Putting his arms round WANDA, who is standing motionless with her eyes fixed on him] Together, Keith?

KEITH. You can't go together. I'll send her by the next boat.

LARRY. Swear?

KEITH. Yes. You're lucky they're on a false scent.

LARRY. What?

KEITH. You haven't seen it?

LARRY. I've seen nothing, not even a paper.

KEITH. They've taken up a vagabond who robbed the body. He pawned a snake-shaped ring, and they identified this Walenn by it. I've been down and seen him charged myself.

LARRY. With murder?

WANDA. [Faintly] Larry!

KEITH. He's in no danger. They always get the wrong man first. It'll do him no harm to be locked up a bit—hyena like that. Better in prison, anyway, than sleeping out under archways in this weather.

LARRY. What was he like, Keith?

KEITH. A little yellow, ragged, lame, unshaven scarecrow of a chap. They were fools to think he could have had the strength.

LARRY. What! [In an awed voice] Why, I saw him—after I left you last night.

KEITH. You? Where?

LARRY. By the archway.

KEITH. You went back there?

LARRY. It draws you, Keith.

KEITH. You're mad, I think.

LARRY. I talked to him, and he said, "Thank you for this little chat. It's worth more than money when you're down." Little grey man like a shaggy animal. And a newspaper boy came up and said: "That's right, guv'nors! 'Ere's where they found the body—very spot. They 'yn't got 'im yet."

[He laughs; and the terrified girl presses herself against him.]

An innocent man!

KEITH. He's in no danger, I tell you. He could never have strangled—Why, he hadn't the strength of a kitten. Now, Larry! I'll take your berth to-morrow. Here's money [He brings out a pile of notes and puts them on the couch] You can make a new life of it out there together presently, in the sun.

LARRY. [In a whisper] In the sun! "A cup of wine and thou." [Suddenly] How can I, Keith? I must see how it goes with that poor devil.

KEITH. Bosh! Dismiss it from your mind; there's not nearly enough evidence.

LARRY. Not?

KEITH. No. You've got your chance. Take it like a man.

LARRY. [With a strange smile—to the girl] Shall we, Wanda?

WANDA. Oh, Larry!

LARRY. [Picking the notes up from the couch] Take them back, Keith.

KEITH. What! I tell you no jury would convict; and if they did, no judge would hang. A ghoul who can rob a dead body, ought to be in prison. He did worse than you.

LARRY. It won't do, Keith. I must see it out.

KEITH. Don't be a fool!

LARRY. I've still got some kind of honour. If I clear out before I know, I shall have none—nor peace. Take them, Keith, or I'll put them in the fire.

KEITH. [Taking back the notes; bitterly] I suppose I may ask you not to be entirely oblivious of our name. Or is that unworthy of your honour?

LARRY. [Hanging his head] I'm awfully sorry, Keith; awfully sorry, old man.

KEITH. [sternly] You owe it to me—to our name—to our dead mother—to do nothing anyway till we see what happens.

LARRY. I know. I'll do nothing without you, Keith.

KEITH. [Taking up his hat] Can I trust you? [He stares hard at his brother.]

LARRY. You can trust me.

KEITH. Swear?

LARRY. I swear.

KEITH. Remember, nothing! Good night!

LARRY. Good night!

KEITH goes. LARRY Sits down on the couch and stares at the fire. The girl steals up and slips her arms about him.

LARRY. An innocent man!

WANDA. Oh, Larry! But so are you. What did we want—to kill that man? Never! Oh! kiss me!
[LARRY turns his face. She kisses his lips.]

I have suffered so—not seein' you. Don't leave me again—don't! Stay here. Isn't it good to be together?—Oh! Poor Larry! How tired you look!—Stay with me. I am so frightened all alone. So frightened they will take you from me.

LARRY. Poor child!

WANDA. No, no! Don't look like that!

LARRY. You're shivering.

WANDA. I will make up the fire. Love me, Larry! I want to forget.

LARRY. The poorest little wretch on God's earth—locked up—for me! A little wild animal, locked up. There he goes, up and down, up and down—in his cage—don't you see him?—looking for a place to gnaw his way through—little grey rat. [He gets up and roams about.]

WANDA. No, no! I can't bear it! Don't frighten me more!

[He comes back and takes her in his arms.]

LARRY. There, there! [He kisses her closed eyes.]

WANDA. [Without moving] If we could sleep a little—wouldn't it be nice?

LARRY. Sleep?

WANDA. [Raising herself] Promise to stay with me—to stay here for good, Larry. I will cook for you; I will make you so comfortable. They will find him innocent. And then—Oh, Larry! in the sun-right away—far from this horrible country. How lovely! [Trying to get him to look at her] Larry!

LARRY. [With a movement to free 'himself] To the edge of the world-and-over!

WANDA. No, no! No, no! You don't want me to die, Larry, do you? I shall if you leave me. Let us be happy! Love me!

LARRY. [With a laugh] Ah! Let's be happy and shut out the sight of him. Who cares? Millions suffer for no mortal reason. Let's be strong, like Keith. No! I won't leave you, Wanda. Let's forget everything except ourselves. [Suddenly] There he goes-up and down!

WANDA. [Moaning] No, no! See! I will pray to the Virgin. She will pity us!

She falls on her knees and clasps her hands, praying. Her lips move. LARRY stands motionless, with arms crossed, and on his face are yearning and mockery, love and despair.

LARRY. [Whispering] Pray for us! Bravo! Pray away!

[Suddenly the girl stretches out her arms and lifts her face with a look of ecstasy.]

What?

WANDA. She is smiling! We shall be happy soon.

LARRY. [Bending down over her] Poor child! When we die, Wanda, let's go together. We should keep each other warm out in the dark.

WANDA. [Raising her hands to his face] Yes! oh, yes! If you die I could not—I could not go on living!

CURTAIN

SCENE III

TWO MONTHS LATER

WANDA'S room. Daylight is just beginning to fail of a January afternoon. The table is laid for supper, with decanters of wine.

WANDA is standing at the window looking out at the wintry trees of the Square beyond the pavement. A newspaper Boy's voice is heard coming nearer.

VOICE. Pyper! Glove Lyne murder! Trial and verdict! [Receding] Verdict! Pyper!

WANDA throws up the window as if to call to him, checks herself, closes it and runs to the door. She opens it, but recoils into the room. KEITH is standing there. He comes in.

KEITH. Where's Larry?

WANDA. He went to the trial. I could not keep him from it. The trial—Oh! what has happened, sir?

KEITH. [Savagely] Guilty! Sentence of death! Fools!—idiots!

WANDA. Of death! [For a moment she seems about to swoon.]

KEITH. Girl! girl! It may all depend on you. Larry's still living here?

WANDA. Yes.

KEITH. I must wait for him.

WANDA. Will you sit down, please?

KEITH. [Shaking his head] Are you ready to go away at any time?

WANDA. Yes, yes; always I am ready.

KEITH. And he?

WANDA. Yes—but now! What will he do? That poor man!

KEITH. A graveyard thief—a ghoul!

WANDA. Perhaps he was hungry. I have been hungry: you do things then that you would not. Larry has thought of him in prison so much all these weeks. Oh! what shall we do now?

KEITH. Listen! Help me. Don't let Larry out of your sight. I must see how things go. They'll never hang this wretch. [He grips her arms] Now, we must stop Larry from giving himself up. He's fool enough. D'you understand?

WANDA. Yes. But why has he not come in? Oh! If he have, already!

KEITH. [Letting go her arms] My God! If the police come—find me here—[He moves to the door] No, he wouldn't without seeing you first. He's sure to come. Watch him like a lynx. Don't let him go without you.

WANDA. [Clasping her hands on her breast] I will try, sir.

KEITH. Listen!

[A key is heard in the lock.]

It's he!

LARRY enters. He is holding a great bunch of pink lilies and white narcissus.

His face tells nothing. KEITH looks from him to the girl, who stands motionless.

LARRY. Keith! So you've seen?

KEITH. The thing can't stand. I'll stop it somehow. But you must give me time, Larry.

LARRY. [Calmly] Still looking after your honour, KEITH!

KEITH. [Grimly] Think my reasons what you like.

WANDA. [Softly] Larry!

[LARRY puts his arm round her.]

LARRY. Sorry, old man.

KEITH. This man can and shall get off. I want your solemn promise that you won't give yourself up, nor even go out till I've seen you again.

LARRY. I give it.

KEITH. [Looking from one to the other] By the memory of our mother, swear that.

LARRY. [With a smile] I swear.

KEITH. I have your oath—both of you—both of you. I'm going at once to see what can be done.

LARRY. [Softly] Good luck, brother.

KEITH goes out.

WANDA. [Putting her hands on LARRY's breast] What does it mean?

LARRY. Supper, child—I've had nothing all day. Put these lilies in water.

[She takes the lilies and obediently puts them into a vase. LARRY pours wine into a deep-coloured glass and drinks it off.]

We've had a good time, Wanda. Best time I ever had, these last two months; and nothing but the bill to pay.

WANDA. [Clasping him desperately] Oh, Larry! Larry!

LARRY. [Holding her away to look at her.] Take off those things and put on a bridal garment.

WANDA. Promise me—wherever you go, I go too. Promise! Larry, you think I haven't seen, all these weeks. But I have seen everything; all in your heart, always. You cannot hide from me. I knew—I knew! Oh, if we might go away into the sun! Oh! Larry—couldn't we? [She searches his eyes with hers—then shuddering] Well! If it must be dark—I don't care, if I may go in your arms. In prison we could not be together. I am ready. Only love me first. Don't let me cry before I go. Oh! Larry, will there be much pain?

LARRY. [In a choked voice] No pain, my pretty.

WANDA. [With a little sigh] It is a pity.

LARRY. If you had seen him, as I have, all day, being tortured. Wanda,—we shall be out of it. [The wine mounting to his head] We shall be free in the dark; free of their cursed inhumanities. I hate this world—I loathe it! I hate its God-forsaken savagery; its pride and smugness! Keith's world—all righteous will-power and success. We're no good here, you and I—we were cast out at birth—soft, will-less—better dead. No fear, Keith! I'm staying indoors. [He pours wine into two glasses] Drink it up!

[Obediently WANDA drinks, and he also.]

Now go and make yourself beautiful.

WANDA. [Seizing him in her arms] Oh, Larry!

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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