

THE LITTLE FOXES

BY LILLIAN HELLMAN

ACTING EDITION



PLAY IN THREE ACTS



DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.



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Copy of program of the first performance of *The Little Foxes* as produced at the National Theatre, New York City, February 15, 1939

HERMAN SHUMLIN

presents

TALLULAH BANKHEAD

in

THE LITTLE FOXES

BY LILLIAN HELLMAN

WITH PATRICIA COLLINGE AND FRANK CONROY

Staged by Mr. Shumlin

Settings Designed by Howard Bay

Costumes Designed by Aline Bernstein

CAST

(In order of appearance)

ADDIE	Played by	Abbie Mitchell
CAL	" "	John Marriott
BIRDIE HUBBARD	" "	Patricia Collinge
OSCAR HUBBARD	" "	Carl Benton Reid
LEO HUBBARD	" "	Dan Duryea
REGINA GIDDENS	" "	Tallulah Bankhead
WILLIAM MARSHALL	" "	Lee Baker
BENJAMIN HUBBARD	" "	Charles Dingle
ALEXANDRA GIDDENS	" "	Florence Williams
HORACE GIDDENS	" "	Frank Conroy

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

The scene of the play is the living-room of the Giddens House, a small town in the South.

ACT I: The spring of 1900, evening.

ACT II: A week later, early morning.

ACT III: Two weeks later, late afternoon.

There has been no attempt to write Southern dialect. It is to be understood that the accents are Southern.

THE LITTLE FOXES

ACT I

SCENE: *The living-room of the Giddens house, a small town in the deep South, the spring of 1900. Upstage is a staircase leading to the second story. U. R. are double doors to the dining-room. When these doors are open we see a section of the dining room and the furniture. U. L. is an entrance hall with a coat-rack and umbrella stand. There are large lace-curtained windows on the L. wall. The room is lit by a center gas chandelier and painted china oil lamps on the tables. Against the wall is a large piano. D. R. is a high couch, a large table, several chairs. Against the L. back wall is a table and several chairs. Near the window there is a smaller couch and tables. The room is good-looking, the furniture expensive, but it reflects no particular taste. Everything is of the best, and that is all.*

AT RISE: ADDIE, a tall, nice-looking Negro woman of about fifty-five, is closing the u. s. windows. From behind the closed dining-room doors there is the sound of voices. After a second CAL, a middle-aged Negro, comes in from the entrance L. hall, carrying a tray with 10 glasses and a bottle of port wine. ADDIE crosses, takes the tray from him, puts it on table, begins to arrange it.

ADDIE. (Pointing to bottle.) You gone stark out of your head?

CAL. No, smart lady, I ain't. Miss Regina told me to get out that bottle (points to bottle), that very bottle for the mighty honored guest. When Miss Regina changes orders like that you can bet your dime she got her reason.

ADDIE. (Points to dining-room—not looking.) Go on. You'll be needed. (She arranges glasses and pours wine.)

CAL. (*Looking at ADDIE while wiping glasses.*) Miss Zan she had two helpings frozen fruit cream and she tell that honored guest, she tell him that you make the (*steps down to ADDIE*) best frozen fruit cream in all the South.

ADDIE. (*Smiles, pleased.*) Did she? Well, see that Belle saves a little for her. She like it right before she go to bed. Save a few little cakes, too, she like — (*Dining-room doors are opened and quickly closed again by BIRDIE HUBBARD. BIRDIE is a woman of about forty, with a pretty, well-bred, faded face. Her movements are usually nervous and timid, but now, as she comes running into the room, she is gay and excited. CAL turns to BIRDIE.*)

BIRDIE. Oh, Cal. (*Closes door.*) I want you to get one of the kitchen boys to run home for me. He's to look in my desk drawer and — (*Crosses D. to back of chair R. C. to ADDIE.*) My, Addie. What a good supper. Just as good as good can be.

ADDIE. You look pretty this evening, Miss Birdie, and young.

BIRDIE. (*Laughing.*) Me, young? (*Turns back to CAL.*) Maybe you better find Simon and tell him to do it himself. He's to look in my desk, the left drawer, and bring my music album right away. Mr. Marshall is very anxious to see it because of his father and the opera in Chicago. (*To ADDIE.*) Mr. Marshall is such a polite man with his manners, and very educated and cultured, and I've told him all about how my Mama and Papa used to go to Europe for the music — (*Laughs. To ADDIE.*) Imagine going all the way to Europe just to listen to music. Wouldn't that be nice, Addie? Just to sit there and listen and — (*Turns and takes step to CAL.*) Left drawer, Cal. Tell him that twice because he forgets. And tell him not to let any of the things drop out of the album and to bring it right in here when he comes back. (*Dining-room doors are opened and quickly closed by OSCAR HUBBARD. He is a man in his late forties.*)

CAL. Yes'm. But Simon he won't get it right. (*Crossing to door L.*) But I'll tell him.

BIRDIE. Left drawer, Cal, and tell him to bring the blue book and —

OSCAR. (*Sharply.*) Birdie.

BIRDIE. (*Turning nervously.*) Oh, Oscar. I was just sending Simon for my music album.

OSCAR. (*To CAL, who has stopped at door L. to listen.*) Never mind about the album. Miss Birdie has changed her mind.

BIRDIE. But, really, Oscar. Really I promised Mr. Marshall. I ——
(CAL looks at them, exits L.)

OSCAR. Why do you leave the dinner table and go running about like a child? (ADDIE crosses around sofa to D. S. window, closes windows.)

BIRDIE. (*Trying to be gay.*) But, Oscar, Mr. Marshall said most specially he *wanted* to see my album. I told him about the time Mama met Wagner and Mrs. Wagner gave her the signed program and the big picture. (OSCAR moves away D. C.) Mr. Marshall wants to see that. (BIRDIE moves to him.) Very, very much. We had such a nice talk and ——

OSCAR. (*Taking step to her.*) You have been chattering to him like a magpie. You haven't let him be for a second. I can't think he came South to be bored with you. (*He turns away, crosses D. R.*)

BIRDIE. (*Quickly, hurt.*) He wasn't bored. I don't believe he was bored. He's a very educated, cultured gentleman. (*Her voice rises.*) I just don't believe it. (ADDIE moves up to back of sofa.) You always talk like that when I'm having a nice time.

OSCAR. (*Turning to her, sharply.*) You have had too much wine. Get yourself in hand now.

BIRDIE. (*Drawing back, about to cry, shrilly.*) What am I doing? I am not doing anything. (ADDIE crosses U. back of sofa.) What am I doing?

OSCAR. (*Taking a step to her, tensely.*) I said get yourself in hand. Stop acting like a fool. (ADDIE crosses to U. S. windows, closes them.)

BIRDIE. (*Moves up, then turns to him, quietly.*) I don't believe he was bored. I just don't believe it. Some people like music and like to talk about it. (LEO enters from dining-room. REGINA in dining-room rings bell.) That's all I was doing. (LEO HUBBARD comes hurrying through the door. He is a young man of twenty, with a weak kind of good looks.)

LEO. Mama! (BIRDIE turns sharply to him.) Papa. They are coming in now.

OSCAR. (*Softly, stepping up to BIRDIE.*) Sit down, Birdie. Sit down now. (OSCAR crosses D. R. LEO crosses D. L. to piano. BIRDIE sits down in chair L. C., bows her head as if to hide her face. Dining room doors are opened by CAL. We see people beginning to rise from the table. REGINA GIDDENS comes in with WILLIAM MARSHALL. REGINA is a handsome woman of forty. MARSHALL is forty-five,

pleasant looking, self-possessed. Behind them comes ALEXANDRA GIDDENS, a very pretty, rather delicate looking girl of seventeen. She is followed by BENJAMIN HUBBARD, fifty-five, with a large jovial face and the light graceful movements that one often finds in large men. REGINA, after a sharp look at BIRDIE and OSCAR, crosses to sofa R. MARSHALL crosses C. to chair R. C. ALEXANDRA crosses D. L. to settee and sits.)

REGINA. Mr. Marshall, I think you're trying to console me. Chicago may be the noisiest, dirtiest city in the world but I should still prefer it to the sound of our horses and the smell of our azaleas. I should like crowds of people, and theaters, and lovely women — (REGINA sits on sofa, smiles at MARSHALL and indicates for him to sit next to her.) Very lovely women, Mr. Marshall? (BEN crosses to back of settee L.)

MARSHALL. (Crossing to sofa R.) In Chicago? Oh, I suppose so. But I can tell you this: I've never dined there with three such lovely ladies. (He sits on sofa to R. of REGINA. ADDIE comes down to table, takes bottle off tray and serves wine.)

BEN. (Crossing to C., nods.) Our Southern women are well favored.

LEO. (Stepping in, laughs.) But one must go to Mobile for the ladies, sir. Very elegant worldly ladies, too. (ADDIE is serving REGINA, who hands a glass to MARSHALL, then takes one for herself.)

BEN. (Looks at him very deliberately.) Worldly, eh? Worldly, did you say? (ADDIE serves BEN.)

OSCAR. (Hastily, to LEO.) Your Uncle Ben means that worldliness is not a mark of beauty in any woman.

LEO. (Steps up to above settee L. Quickly.) Of course, Uncle Ben. I didn't mean — (BEN crosses R. to chair R. C., sits.)

MARSHALL. Your port is excellent, Mrs. Giddens. (ADDIE serves BIRDIE, who catches OSCAR'S look at her, and refuses the drink.)

REGINA. Thank you, Mr. Marshall. We had been saving that bottle, hoping we could open it just for you.

ALEXANDRA. (As ADDIE comes to her with tray.) Oh. May I really, Addie?

ADDIE. Better ask Mama.

ALEXANDRA. May I, Mama?

REGINA. (Nods, smiles.) In Mr. Marshall's honor.

ALEXANDRA. (*Smiles.*) Mr. Marshall, this will be the first taste of port I've ever had. (*ADDIE serves LEO.*)

MARSHALL. (*Leaning forward.*) No one ever had their first taste of a better port. (*He lifts his glass in a toast, she lifts hers, they both drink. Sits back. Looks around the room, smiles. ADDIE crosses to OSCAR U. R., serves him.*) Well, I suppose it is all true, Mrs. Giddens. (*OSCAR crosses D. R.*)

REGINA. What is true? (*ADDIE crosses to table for bottle, takes the tray to table U. C., places it there, then exits L.*)

MARSHALL. That you Southerners occupy a unique position in America. You live better than the rest of us, you eat better, you drink better. I wonder you find time, or want to find time, to do business.

BEN. (*Laughs.*) A great many Southerners don't.

MARSHALL. Do all of you live here together?

REGINA. Here with me? (*Laughs.*) Oh, no. My brother Ben lives next door. My brother Oscar and his family live in the next square.

BEN. (*Sitting forward.*) But we are a very close family. We've always wanted it that way.

MARSHALL. That is very pleasant. Keeping your family together to share each other's lives. My family moves around too much. My children seem never to come home. Away at school in the winter; in the summer, Europe with their mother — (*BEN sits back.*)

REGINA. (*Eagerly.*) Oh, yes. Even down here we read about Mrs. Marshall in the society pages.

MARSHALL. I dare say. She moves about a great deal. And all of you are part of the same business? Hubbard Sons?

BEN. (*Motions to OSCAR.*) Oscar and me. (*Motions to REGINA.*) My sister's good husband is a banker.

MARSHALL. (*Looks at REGINA, surprised.*) Oh.

REGINA. I am so sorry that my husband isn't here to meet you. He's been very ill. He is at Johns Hopkins. But he will be home soon. We think he is getting better now.

LEO. (*Crosses to above chair L. C.*) I work for Uncle Horace. (*REGINA looks at him.*) I mean I work for Uncle Horace at his bank. I keep an eye on things while he's away.

REGINA. (*Smiles.*) Really, Leo?

BEN. (*Looks at him, then to MARSHALL.*) Modesty in the young is as excellent as it is rare. (*Looks at LEO again.*)

OSCAR. (*To LEO.*) Your Uncle means that a young man should speak more modestly.

LEO. (*Hastily, taking a step to BEN.*) Oh, I didn't mean, sir —

MARSHALL. Oh, Mrs. Hubbard. Where's that Wagner autograph you promised to let me see? My train will be leaving soon and — (*LEO crosses U. to table U. C., pours himself a drink.*)

BIRDIE. The autograph? Oh. Well. Really, Mr. Marshall, I didn't mean to chatter so about it. Really I — (*Nervously, looking at OSCAR.*) You must excuse me. I didn't get it because, well, because I had—I—I had a little headache and —

OSCAR. My wife is a miserable victim of headaches. (*Crosses U. R. to above sofa R.*)

REGINA. (*Quickly.*) Mr. Marshall said at supper that he would like you to play for him, Alexandra.

ALEXANDRA. (*Who has been looking at BIRDIE.*) It's not I who play well, sir. It's my aunt. She plays just wonderfully. She's my teacher. (*Rises, eagerly.*) May we play a duet? May we, Mama?

BIRDIE. (*Taking ALEXANDRA'S hand.*) Thank you, dear. But I have my headache now. I —

OSCAR. (*Sharply.*) Don't be stubborn, Birdie. Mr. Marshall wants you to play.

MARSHALL. Indeed I do. If your headache isn't —

BIRDIE. (*Hesitates, then gets up, pleased.*) But I'd like to, sir. Very much. (*She and ALEXANDRA go to piano. ALEXANDRA brings chair from U. L. corner to piano for herself. BIRDIE moves stool D. S., then takes some music from top of piano. They talk about the music for a second, then study it. OSCAR slowly crosses L. to chair L. C.*)

MARSHALL. It's very remarkable how you Southern aristocrats have kept together. Kept together and kept what belonged to you.

BEN. You misunderstand, sir. Southern aristocrats have not kept together and have not kept what belonged to them.

MARSHALL. (*Laughs, indicates room.*) You don't call this keeping what belongs to you? (*OSCAR sits chair L. C.*)

BEN. But we are not aristocrats. (*LEO slowly crosses R. to D. R.—listening. Points to BIRDIE at piano.*) Our brother's wife is the only one of us who belongs to the Southern aristocracy. (*BIRDIE selects a book of music. She opens it as ALEXANDRA sits down. She is*

stopped by "our brother's wife," looks toward BEN. ALEXANDRA looks up at her.)

MARSHALL. (Smiles.) My information is that you people have been here, and solidly here, for a long time. (BIRDIE turns back and goes through the pages.)

OSCAR. And so we have. Since our great-grandfather.

BEN. (Smiles.) Who was not an aristocrat, like Birdie's.

MARSHALL. (A little sharply.) You make great distinctions. (BIRDIE has found page, and looks up again on "like Birdie's." ALEXANDRA turns head a little to them. BIRDIE turns back to music. LEO is D. R.)

BEN. Oh, they have been made for us. And maybe they are important distinctions. (Leans forward, intimately.) Now you take Birdie's family. When my great-grandfather came here they were the highest tone plantation owners in this state. (BIRDIE looks at them. ALEXANDRA looks back to her, takes her hand, pats it.)

LEO. (Steps to MARSHALL. Proudly.) My mother's grandfather was governor of the state before the war. (BIRDIE turns back to ALEXANDRA.)

OSCAR. They owned the plantation, Lionnet. You may have heard of it, sir?

MARSHALL. (Laughs.) No, I've never heard of anything but brick houses on a lake, and cotton mills.

BEN. Lionnet in its-day was the best cotton land in the South. It still brings us in a fair crop. (Sits back.) Ah, they were great days for those people—even when I can remember. They had the best of everything. (BIRDIE turns to them.) Cloth from Paris, trips to Europe, horses you can't raise any more, niggers to lift their fingers —

BIRDIE. (Suddenly.) We were good to our people. Everybody knew that. We were better to them than — (MARSHALL looks up at BIRDIE.)

REGINA. (A quick look at MARSHALL, then to BIRDIE.) Why, Birdie. You aren't playing. (MARSHALL has been looking curiously at BIRDIE.)

BEN. But when the war comes these fine gentlemen ride off and leave the cotton, and the women, to rot.

BIRDIE. My father was killed in the war. He was a fine soldier, Mr. Marshall. A fine man.

REGINA. Oh, certainly, Birdie. A famous soldier.

BEN. (To BIRDIE.) But that isn't the tale I am telling Mr. Marshall.

(*To MARSHALL.*) Well, sir, the war ends. (*BIRDIE goes back to piano, puts down music, sits and is ready to play.*) Lionnet is almost ruined, and the sons finish ruining it. And there were thousands like them. Why? (*Leans forward.*) Because the Southern aristocrat can adapt himself to nothing. Too high-toned to try.

MARSHALL. Sometimes it is difficult to learn new ways. (*BIRDIE and ALEXANDRA begin to play. MARSHALL leans forward, listening.*)

BEN. Perhaps, perhaps. (*All listen to music. He sees that MARSHALL is paying attention to the music. Irritated, he turns to BIRDIE and ALEXANDRA at piano, then back to MARSHALL.*) You're right, Mr. Marshall. It is difficult to learn new ways. But maybe that's why it's profitable. Our grandfather and our father learn the new ways and learned how to make them pay. They work. (*Smiles nastily.*) They are in trade. Hubbard Sons, Merchandise. Others, Birdie's family for example, look down on them. (*Settles back in chair.*) To make a long story short, Lionnet now belongs to us. (*BIRDIE stops playing and turns to them.*) Twenty years ago we took over their land, their cotton, and their daughter. (*BIRDIE rises and stands stiffly by piano. MARSHALL, who has been watching her, rises.*)

MARSHALL. May I bring you a glass of port, Mrs. Hubbard?

BIRDIE. (*Softly.*) No, thank you, sir. You are most polite. (*She turns away and sits. ALEXANDRA tries to soothe her and asks her to play again. She pantomimes that she cannot, and for ALEXANDRA to play alone.*)

REGINA. (*Sharply, to BEN.*) You are boring Mr. Marshall with these ancient family tales.

BEN. I hope not. I hope not. I am trying to make an important point—(*Bows to MARSHALL.*) for our future business partner. (*MARSHALL sits.*)

OSCAR. (*To MARSHALL.*) My brother always says that it's folks like us who have struggled and fought to bring to our land some of the prosperity of your land.

BEN. Some people call that patriotism.

REGINA. (*Laughs gaily.*) I hope you don't find my brothers too obvious, Mr. Marshall. I'm afraid they mean that this is the time for the ladies to leave the gentlemen to talk business.

MARSHALL. (*Hastily.*) Not at all. We settled everything this afternoon. (*ALEXANDRA starts to play, alone. MARSHALL looks at his*

watch.) I have only a few minutes before I must leave for the train. *Smiles at her.*) And I insist they be spent with you.

REGINA. *And with another glass of port.*

MARSHALL. Thank you. (REGINA looks at him, smiles, gets up, takes his glass and crosses to table U. C. MARSHALL rises when she does, then sits.)

BEN. (To REGINA as she passes him.) My sister is right. (To MARSHALL.) I am a plain man and I am trying to say a plain thing. (Sitting forward.) A man ain't only in business for what he can get out of it. It's got to give him something here. (Puts hand to his breast. REGINA pours MARSHALL'S drink.) That's every bit as true for the nigger picking cotton for a silver quarter, as it is for you and me. (REGINA hands MARSHALL glass, then sits.) If it don't give him something here, then he don't pick the cotton right. (Sits back. REGINA crosses D. to sofa.) Money isn't all. Not by three shots.

MARSHALL. Really? Well, I always thought it was a great deal. (Drinks.)

REGINA. And so did I, Mr. Marshall.

MARSHALL. (Leans forward. Pleasantly, but with meaning.) Now you don't have to convince me that you are the right people for the deal. I wouldn't be here if you hadn't convinced me six months ago. You want the mill here, and I want it here. It isn't my business to find out *why* you want it.

BEN. To bring the machine to the cotton, and not the cotton to the machine.

MARSHALL. (Amused.) You have a turn for neat phrases, Hubbard. Well, however grand your reasons are, mine are simple: (LEO crosses U. C. to table—pours drink.) I want to make money and I believe I'll make it on you. (As BEN starts to speak, he smiles.) Mind you, I have no objections to more high minded reasons. They are mighty valuable in business. It's fine to have partners who so closely follow the teachings of Christ. (Gets up.) And now I must leave for my train. (Puts his glass on table. All except BIRDIE rise. ALEXANDRA stops playing.)

REGINA. I'm sorry you won't stay over with us, Mr. Marshall, but you'll come again, any time you like.

BEN. (Motions to LEO, indicating bottle.) Fill them up, boy, fill them up. (LEO moves around, filling glasses as BEN speaks.) Down here, sir, we have a strange custom. We drink the last drink for a

toast. That's to prove that the Southerner is always still on his feet for the last drink. (*Picks up his glass.*) It was Henry Frick, your Mr. Henry Frick, who said, "Railroads are the Rembrandts of investments." Well, I say, "Southern cotton mills will be the Rembrandts of investments." So I give you the firm of Hubbard Sons and Marshall, Cotton Mills, and to it a long and prosperous life. (*They all pick up their glasses. MARSHALL looks at them, amused. Then he, too, lifts his glass, smiles.*)

OSCAR. The children will drive you to the depot. (*Crosses to table U. C.—puts down glass.*) Leo! Alexandra! You will drive Mr. Marshall down.

LEO. (*Eagerly, looks at BEN who nods.*) Yes, sir. (*To MARSHALL.*) Not often Uncle Ben lets me drive the horses. And a beautiful pair they are. (*Starts for hall.*) Come on, Zan. (*Exits.*)

ALEXANDRA. (*Crosses to BEN.*) May I drive tonight, Uncle Ben, please? I'd like to and —

BEN. (*Shakes his head, laughs.*) In your evening clothes? Oh, no, my dear.

ALEXANDRA. But Leo always — (*Stops, exits quickly.*)

REGINA. I don't like to say good-bye to you, Mr. Marshall.

MARSHALL. Then we won't say good-bye. You have promised that you would come and let me show you Chicago. Do I have to make you promise again?

REGINA. (*Looks at him as he presses her hand.*) I promise again. (*BEN crosses to hall.*)

MARSHALL. (*Touches her hand again, then moves to BIRDIE.*) Good-bye, Mrs. Hubbard. (*BIRDIE rises, crosses C.*)

BIRDIE. (*Shyly, with sweetness and dignity.*) Good-bye, sir. (*He bows, starts toward entrance hall. REGINA crosses to C.*)

MARSHALL. (*As he passes REGINA.*) Remember.

REGINA. I will.

OSCAR. We'll see you to the carriage. (*MARSHALL exits followed by OSCAR. For a second REGINA and BIRDIE stand looking after them. Then REGINA throws up her arms, laughs happily.*)

REGINA. And there, Birdie, goes the man who has opened the door to our future.

BIRDIE. (*Surprised at the unaccustomed friendliness.*) What?

REGINA. (*Turning to her.*) Our future. Yours and mine, Ben's and Oscar's, the children's — (*Looks at BIRDIE'S puzzled face, laughs.*) Our future! (*After a second crosses D. L. to BIRDIE.*)

You were charming at supper, Birdie. Mr. Marshall certainly thought so.

BIRDIE. (*Pleased.*) Why, Regina. Do you think he did?

REGINA. Can't you tell when you're being admired?

BIRDIE. Oscar said I bored Mr. Marshall. (*Then quickly.*) But he admired you. He told me so.

REGINA. What did he say?

BIRDIE. He said to me, "I hope your sister-in-law will come to Chicago. Chicago will be at her feet." He said the ladies would bow to your manners and the gentlemen to your looks.

REGINA. (*Crossing R. to sofa.*) Did he? He seems a lonely man. Imagine being lonely with all that money. I don't think he likes his wife.

BIRDIE. Not like his wife? What a thing to say.

REGINA. (*Sits sofa R.*) She's away a great deal. He said that several times. And once he made fun of her being so social and high-toned. But that fits in all right. (*Sits back, arms on back of sofa, stretches.*) Her being social, I mean. She can introduce me. It won't take long with an introduction from her.

BIRDIE. (*Bewildered.*) Introduce you? In Chicago? You mean you really might go? (*Crosses R. to table.*) Oh, Regina, you can't leave here. What about Horace?

REGINA. Don't look so scared about everything, Birdie. I'm going to live in Chicago. I've always wanted to. And now there'll be plenty of money to go with.

BIRDIE. (*Sits chair R. C.*) But Horace won't be able to move around. You know what the doctor wrote.

REGINA. There'll be millions, Birdie, millions. You know what I've always said when people told me we were rich? I said I think you should either be a nigger or a millionaire. In between, like us, what for? (*Laughs. Look at BIRDIE.*) But I'm not going away tomorrow, Birdie. (*Takes her arms down.*) There's plenty of time to worry about Horace when he comes home. If he ever decides to come home.

BIRDIE. Will we be going to Chicago? I mean, Oscar and Leo and me?

REGINA. You? I shouldn't think so. (*Laughs. Leaning forward.*) Well, we must remember tonight. It's a very important night and we mustn't forget it. We shall plan all the things we'd like to have

and then we'll really have them. Make a wish, Birdie, any wish. It's bound to come true now. (BEN and OSCAR enter.)

BIRDIE. (*Laughs.*) Well. Well, I don't know. Maybe. (REGINA turns to look at BEN.) Well, I guess I'd know right off what I wanted. (BEN crosses to above REGINA. OSCAR stands by upper window, waves to departing carriage.)

REGINA. (*Looks up at BEN, smiles. He smiles back at her.*) Well, you did it. (*Grasps his hand.*)

BEN. Looks like it might be we did.

REGINA. (*Springs up, laughs.*) Looks like it! Don't pretend. (*Rises, crossing U. C.*) You're like a cat who's been licking the cream. (*Crosses to wine bottle on table U. C.*) Now we must all have a drink to celebrate. (BEN crosses to table U. C.)

OSCAR. (*From window.*) The children, Alexandra and Leo, make a very handsome couple, Regina. (REGINA does not look at him. BEN and REGINA drink. OSCAR steps in.) Marshall remarked himself what fine young folks they were. How well they looked together.

REGINA. (*Sharply.*) Yes. You said that before, Oscar. (*She puts drink down, crosses D. to chair L. C.—sits.*)

BEN. Yes, sir. (*Crossing D. R.*) It's beginning to look as if the deal's all set. I may not be a subtle man—but—— (*Turns to them. After a second.*) Now somebody ask me how I know the deal is set.

OSCAR. What do you mean, Ben?

BEN. You remember I told him that down here we drink the last drink for a toast?

OSCAR. (*Thoughtfully.*) Yes. I never heard that before.

BEN. Nobody's ever heard it before. (*Turns chair D. R. to face room. Stands in front of it.*) God forgives those who invent what they need. (*Holding up his glass.*) I already had his signature. But we've all done business with men whose word over a glass is better than a bond. Anyway it don't hurt to have both. (*He sits.*)

OSCAR. (*Turns to REGINA. Crosses L. to above sofa.*) You understand what Ben means?

REGINA. (*Smiles.*) Yes, Oscar. I understand. I understood immediately.

BEN. (*Looks at her admiringly.*) Did you, Regina? Well, when he lifted his glass to drink, I closed my eyes and saw the bricks going into place.