



Complete Plays 1920-1931

EUGENE O'NEILL

COMPLETE PLAYS
1920-1931



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DIFF'RENT

A Play in Two Acts

CHARACTERS

CAPTAIN CALEB WILLIAMS

EMMA CROSBY

CAPTAIN JOHN CROSBY, *her father*

MRS. CROSBY, *her mother*

JACK CROSBY, *her brother*

HARRIET WILLIAMS, *Caleb's sister (later Mrs. ROGERS)*

ALFRED ROGERS

BENNY ROGERS, *their son*

SCENES

ACT I

Parlor of the Crosby home on a side street of a seaport village in New England—mid-afternoon of a day in late spring in the year 1890.

ACT II

The same. Late afternoon of a day in the early spring of the year 1920.

Diff'rent

ACT ONE

SCENE—Parlor of the Crosby home. The room is small and low-ceilinged. Everything has an aspect of scrupulous neatness. On the left, forward, a stiff plush-covered chair. Farther back, in order, a window looking out on a vegetable garden, a black horse-hair sofa, and another window. In the far left corner, an old mahogany chest of drawers. To the right of it, in rear, a window looking out on the front yard. To the right of this window is the front door, reached by a dirt path through the small lawn which separates the house from the street. To the right of door, another window. In the far right corner, a diminutive, old-fashioned piano with a stool in front of it. Near the piano on the right, a door leading to the next room. On this side of the room are also a small bookcase half filled with old volumes, a big open fireplace, and another plush-covered chair. Over the fireplace a mantel with a marble clock and a Rogers group. The walls are papered a brown color. The floor is covered with a dark carpet. In the center of the room there is a clumsy, marble-topped table. On the table, a large china lamp, a bulky Bible with a brass clasp, and several books that look suspiciously like cheap novels. Near the table, three plush-covered chairs, two of which are rockers. Several enlarged photos of strained, stern-looking people in uncomfortable poses are hung on the walls.

It is mid-afternoon of a fine day in late spring of the year 1890. Bright sunlight streams through the windows on the left. Through the window and the screen door in the rear the fresh green of the lawn and of the elm trees that line the street can be seen. Stiff, white curtains are at all the windows.

As the curtain rises, Emma Crosby and Caleb Williams are discovered. Emma is a slender girl of twenty, rather under the medium height. Her face, in spite of its plain features, gives an impression of prettiness, due to her large, soft blue eyes which have an incongruous quality of absent-minded romantic dreaminess about them. Her mouth and chin are heavy, full of a self-willed stubbornness. Although her body is slight and thin, there is a quick, nervous vitality about all her movements that reveals an underlying constitution of reserve power and health. She has light

brown hair, thick and heavy. She is dressed soberly and neatly in her black Sunday best, style of the period.

Caleb Williams is tall and powerfully built, about thirty. Black hair, keen, dark eyes, face rugged and bronzed, mouth obstinate but good-natured. He, also, is got up in black Sunday best and is uncomfortably self-conscious and stiff therein.

They are sitting on the horsehair sofa, side by side. His arm is about her waist. She holds one of his big hands in both of hers, her head leaning back against his shoulder, her eyes half closed in a dreamy contentedness. He stares before him rigidly, his whole attitude wooden and fixed as if he were posing for a photograph; yet his eyes are expressively tender and protecting when he glances down at her diffidently out of the corners without moving his head.

EMMA—(*sighing happily*) Gosh, I wish we could sit this way forever! (*then after a pause, as he makes no comment except a concurring squeeze*) Don't you, Caleb?

CALEB—(*with another squeeze—emphatically*) Hell, yes! I'd like it, Emmer.

EMMA—(*softly*) I do wish you wouldn't swear so awful much, Caleb.

CALEB—S'cuse me, Emmer, it jumped out o' my mouth afore I thought. (*then with a grin*) You'd ought to be used to that part o' men's wickedness—with your Pa and Jack cussin' about the house all the time.

EMMA—(*with a smile*) Oh, I haven't no strict religious notions about it. I'm hardened in sin so far's they're concerned. Goodness me, how would Ma and me ever have lived in the same house with them two if we wasn't used to it? I don't even notice their cussing no more. And I don't mind hearing it from the other men, either. Being sea-faring men, away from their women folks most of the time, I know it just gets to be part of their natures and they ain't responsible. (*decisively*) But you're diff'rent. You just got to be diff'rent from the rest.

CALEB—(*amused by her seriousness*) Diff'rent? Ain't I a sea-farin' man, too?

EMMA—You're diff'rent just the same. That's what made me fall in love with you 'stead of any of them. And you've

got to stay diff'rent. Promise me, Caleb, that you'll always stay diff'rent from them—even after we're married years and years.

CALEB—(*embarrassed*) Why—I promise to do my best by you, Emmer. You know that, don't ye? On'y don't git the notion in your head I'm any better'n the rest. They're all good men—most of 'em, anyway. Don't tell me, for instance, you think I'm better'n your Pa or Jack—'cause I ain't. And I don't know as I'd want to be, neither.

EMMA—(*excitedly*) But you got to want to be—when I ask it.

CALEB—(*surprised*) Better'n your Pa?

EMMA—(*struggling to convey her meaning*) Why, Pa's all right. He's a fine man—and Jack's all right, too. I wouldn't hear a bad word about them for anything. And the others are all right in their way, too, I s'pose. Only—don't you see what I mean?—I look on you as diff'rent from all of them. I mean there's things that's all right for them to do that wouldn't be for you—in my mind, anyway.

CALEB—(*puzzled and a bit uneasy*) Sailors ain't plaster saints, Emmer,—not a darn one of 'em ain't!

EMMA—(*hurt and disappointed*) Then you won't promise me to stay diff'rent for my sake?

CALEB—(*with rough tenderness*) Oh, hell, Emmer, I'll do any cussed thing in the world you want me to, and you know it!

EMMA—(*lovingly*) Thank you, Caleb. It means a lot to me—more'n you think. And don't you think I'm diff'rent, too—not just the same as all the other girls hereabouts?

CALEB—'Course you be! Ain't I always said that? You're wo'th the whole pack of 'em put together.

EMMA—Oh, I don't mean I'm any better. I mean I just look at things diff'rent from what they do—getting married, for example, and other things, too. And so I've got it fixed in my head that you and me ought to make a married couple—diff'rent from the rest—not that they ain't all right in their way.

CALEB—(*puzzled—uncertainly*) Waal—it's bound to be from your end of it, you bein' like you are. But I ain't so sure o' mine.

EMMA—Well, I am!

CALEB—(*with a grin*) You got me scared, Emmer. I'm scared you'll want me to live up to one of them high-fangled heroes you been readin' about in them books. (*He indicates the novels on the table.*)

EMMA—No, I don't. I want you to be just like yourself, that's all.

CALEB—That's easy. It ain't hard bein' a plain, ordinary cuss.

EMMA—You are not!

CALEB—(*with a laugh*) Remember, I'm warnin' you, Emmer; and after we're married and you find me out, you can't say I got you under no false pretenses.

EMMA—(*laughing*) I won't. I won't ever need to. (*then after a pause*) Just think, it's only two days more before you and me'll be man and wife.

CALEB—(*squeezing her*) Waal, it's about time, ain't it?—after waitin' three years for me to git enough money saved—and us not seein' hide or hair of each other the last two of 'em. (*with a laugh*) Shows ye what trust I put in you, Emmer, when I kin go off on a two year whalin' vige and leave you all 'lone for all the young fellers in town to make eyes at.

EMMA—But lots and lots of the others does the same thing without thinking nothing about it.

CALEB—(*with a laugh*) Yes, but I'm diff'rent, like you says.

EMMA—(*laughing*) Oh, you're poking fun now.

CALEB—(*with a wink*) And you know as well's me that some o' the others finds out some funny things that's been done when they was away.

EMMA—(*laughing at first*) Yes, but you know I'm diff'rent, too. (*then frowning*) But don't let's talk about that sort o' ructions. I hate to think of such things—even joking. I ain't like that sort.

CALEB—Thunder, I know you ain't, Emmer. I was on'y jokin'.

EMMA—And I never doubted you them two years; and I won't when you sail away again, neither.

CALEB—(*with a twinkle in his eye*) No, even a woman'd find it hard to git jealous of a whale!

EMMA—(*laughing*) I wasn't thinking of whales, silly! But there's plenty of diversion going on in the ports you touched, if you'd a mind for it.

CALEB—Waal, I didn't have no mind for it, that's sartin. My fust vige as skipper, you don't s'pose I had time for no monkey-shinin', do ye? Why, I was that anxious to bring back your Pa's ship with a fine vige that'd make him piles o' money, I didn't even think of nothin' else.

EMMA—'Cepting me, I hope?

CALEB—O' course! What was my big aim in doin' it if it wasn't so's we'd git married when I come to home? And then, s'far as ports go, we didn't tech at one the last year—'ceptin' when that durn tempest blowed us south and we put in at one o' the Islands for water.

EMMA—What island? You never told me nothing about that.

CALEB—(*growing suddenly very embarrassed as if some memory occurred to him*) Ain't nothin' to tell, that's why. Just an island near the Line, that's all. O'ny naked heathen livin' there—brown colored savages that ain't even Christians. (*He gets to his feet abruptly and pulls out his watch.*) Gittin' late, must be. I got to go down to the store and git some things for Harriet afore I forgets 'em.

EMMA—(*rising also and putting her hands on his shoulders*) But you did think of me and miss me all the time you was gone, didn't you?—same as I did you.

CALEB—'Course I did. Every minute.

EMMA—(*nestling closer to him—softly*) I'm glad of that, Caleb. Well, good-by for a little while.

CALEB—I'll step in again for a spell afore supper—that is, if you want me to.

EMMA—Yes, of course I do, Caleb. Good-by. (*She lifts her face to his.*)

CALEB—Good-by, Emmer. (*He kisses her and holds her in his arms for a moment. Jack comes up the walk to the screen door. They do not notice his approach.*)

JACK—(*peering in and seeing them—in a joking bellow*) Belay, there! (*They separate with startled exclamations. Jack comes in grinning. He is a hulking, stocky-built young fellow of 25. His heavy face is sunburned, handsome in a coarse, good-natured*

animal fashion. His small blue eyes twinkle with the unconsciously malicious humor of the born practical joker. He wears high seaboots turned down from the knee, dirty cotton shirt and pants, and a yellow sou'wester pushed jauntily on the back of his head, revealing his disheveled, curly blond hair. He carries a string of cod heads.)

JACK—(*laughing at the embarrassed expression on their faces*) Caught ye that time, by gum! Go ahead! Kiss her again, Caleb. Don't mind me.

EMMA—(*with flurried annoyance*) You got a head on you just like one of them cod heads you're carrying—that stupid! I should think you'd be ashamed at your age—shouting to scare folks as if you was a little boy.

JACK—(*putting his arm about her waist*) There, kitty, don't git to spittin'. (*stroking her hair*) Puss, puss, puss! Nice kitty! (*He laughs.*)

EMMA—(*forced to smile—pushing him away*) Get away! You'll never get sense. Land sakes, what a brother to have!

JACK—Oh, I dunno. I ain't so bad, as brothers go—eh, Caleb?

CALEB—(*smiling*) I reckon you'll do, Jack.

JACK—See there! Listen to Caleb. You got to take his word—love, honor, and *obey*, ye know, Emmer.

EMMA—(*laughing*) Leave it to men folks to stick up for each other, right or wrong.

JACK—(*cockily*) Waal, I'm willin' to leave it to the girls, too. Ask any of 'em you knows if I ain't a jim-dandy to have for a brother. (*He winks at Caleb who grins back at him.*)

EMMA—(*with a sniff*) I reckon you don't play much brother with them—the kind you knows. You may fool 'em into believing you're some pumpkins but they'd change their minds if they had to live in the same house with you playing silly jokes all the time.

JACK—(*provokingly*) A good lot on 'em 'd be on'y too damn glad to git me in the same house—if I was fool enough to git married.

EMMA—“Pride goeth before a fall.” But shucks, what's the good paying any attention to you. (*She smiles at him affectionately.*)

JACK—(*exaggeratedly*) You see, Caleb? See how she misuses

me—her lovin' brother. Now you know what you'll be up against for the rest o' your natural days.

CALEB—Don't see no way but what I got to bear it, Jack.

EMMA—Caleb needn't fear. He's diff'rent.

JACK—(*with a sudden guffaw*) Oh, hell, yes! I was forgittin'. Caleb's a Sunday go-to-meetin' Saint, ain't he? Yes, he is!

EMMA—(*with real resentment*) He's better'n what you are, if that's what you mean.

JACK—(*with a still louder laugh*) Ho-ho! Caleb's one o' them goody-goody heroes out o' them story books you're always readin', ain't he?

CALEB—(*soberly—a bit disturbed*) I was tellin' Emmer not to take me that high.

JACK—No use, Caleb. She won't hear of it. She's got her head sot t'other way. You'd ought to heard her argyin' when you was gone about what a parson's pet you was. Butter won't melt in your mouth, no siree! Waal, love is blind—and deaf, too, as the feller says—and I can't argy no more 'cause I got to give Ma these heads. (*He goes to the door on right—then glances back at his sister maliciously and says meaningly*) You ought to have a talk with Jim Benson, Emmer. Oughtn't she, Caleb? (*He winks ponderously and goes off laughing uproariously.*)

CALEB—(*his face worried and angry*) Jack's a durn fool at times, Emmer—even if he is your brother. He needs a good lickin'.

EMMA—(*staring at him—uneasily*) What'd he mean about Jim Benson, Caleb?

CALEB—(*frowning*) I don't know—ezactly. Makin' up foolishness for a joke, I reckon.

EMMA—You don't know—*exactly*? Then there is—something?

CALEB—(*quickly*) Not as I know on. On'y Jim Benson's one o' them slick jokers, same's Jack; can't keep their mouths shet or mind their own business.

EMMA—Jim Benson was mate with you this last trip, wasn't he?

CALEB—Yes.

EMMA—Didn't him and you get along?

CALEB—(*a trifle impatiently*) 'Course we did. Jim's all right. We got along fust rate. He just can't keep his tongue from waggin', that's all's the matter with him.

EMMA—(*uneasily*) What's it got to wag about? You ain't done nothing wrong, have you?

CALEB—Wrong? No, nothin' a man'd rightly call wrong.

EMMA—Nothing you'd be shamed to tell me?

CALEB—(*awkwardly*) Why—no, Emmer.

EMMA—(*pleadingly*) You'd swear that, Caleb?

CALEB—(*hesitating for a second—then firmly*) Yes, I'd swear. I'd own up to everything fair and square I'd ever done, if it comes to that p'int. I ain't shamed o' anything I ever done, Emmer. On'y—women folks ain't got to know everything, have they?

EMMA—(*turning away from him—frightenedly*) Oh, Caleb!

CALEB—(*preoccupied with his own thoughts—going to the door in rear*) I'll see you later, Emmer. I got to go up street now more'n ever. I want to give that Jim Benson a talkin' to he won't forget in a hurry—that is, if he's been tellin' tales. Good-by, Emmer.

EMMA—(*faintly*) Good-by, Caleb. (*He goes out. She sits in one of the rockers by the table, her face greatly troubled, her manner nervous and uneasy. Finally she makes a decision, goes quickly to the door on the right and calls*) Jack! Jack!

JACK—(*from the kitchen*) What you want?

EMMA—Come here a minute, will you?

JACK—Jest a second. (*She comes back by the table, fighting to conceal her agitation. After a moment, Jack comes in from the right. He has evidently been washing up, for his face is red and shiny, his hair wet and slicked in a part. He looks around for Caleb.*) Where's Caleb?

EMMA—He had to go up street. (*then coming to the point abruptly—with feigned indifference*) What's that joke about Jim Benson, Jack? It seemed to get Caleb all riled up.

JACK—(*with a chuckle*) You got to ask Caleb about that, Emmer.

EMMA—I did. He didn't seem to want to own up it was anything.

JACK—(*with a laugh*) 'Course he wouldn't. He don't 'preciate a joke when it's on him.

EMMA—How'd you come to hear of it?

JACK—From Jim. Met him this afternoon and me and him had a long talk. He was tellin' me all 'bout their vige.

EMMA—Then it was on the vige this joke happened?

JACK—Yes. It was when they put in to git water at them South Sea Islands where the tempest blowed 'em.

EMMA—Oh. (*suspiciously*) Caleb didn't seem willing to tell me much about their touching there.

JACK—(*chuckling*) 'Course he didn't. Wasn't I sayin' the joke's on him? (*coming closer to her—in a low, confidential tone, chucklingly*) We'll fix up a joke on Caleb, Emmer, what d'ye say?

EMMA—(*tortured by foreboding—resolved to find out what is back of all this by hook or crook—forcing a smile*) All right, Jack. I'm willing.

JACK—Then I'll tell you what Jim told me. And you put it up to Caleb, see, and pretend you're madder'n hell. (*unable to restrain his mirth*) Ho-ho! It'll git him wild if you do that. On'y I didn't tell ye, mind. You heard it from someone else. I don't want to git Caleb down on me. And you'd hear about it from someone sooner or later 'cause Jim and the rest o' the boys has been tellin' the hull town.

EMMA—(*taken aback—frowning*) So all the town knows about it?

JACK—Yes, and they're all laffin' at Caleb. Oh, it ain't nothin' so out o' the ordinary. Most o' the whalin' men here-about have run up against it in their time. I've heard Pa and all the others tellin' stories like it out o' their experience. On'y with Caleb it ended up so damn funny! (*He laughs.*) Ho-ho! Jimminy!

EMMA—(*in a strained voice*) Well, ain't you going to tell me?

JACK—I'm comin' to it. Waal, seems like they all went ashore on them islands to git water and the native brown women, all naked a'most, come round to meet 'em same as they always does—wantin' to swap for terbaccer and other tradin' stuff with straw mats and whatever other junk they got. Them brown gals was purty as the devil, Jim says—that is, in their heathen, outlandish way—and the boys got makin' up to 'em; and then, o' course, everything happened like it always does, and even after they'd got all the water

they needed aboard, it took 'em a week to round up all hands from where they was foolin' about with them nigger women.

EMMA—(*in anguish*) Yes—but Caleb—he ain't like them others. He's diff'rent.

JACK—(*with a sly wink*) Oho, is he? I'm comin' to Caleb. Waal, seems 's if he kept aboard mindin' his own business and winkin' at what the boys was doin'. And one o' them gals—the purtiest on 'em, Jim says—she kept askin', where's the captain? She wouldn't have nothin' to do with any o' the others. She thought on'y the skipper was good enough for her, I reckon. So one night jest afore they sailed some o' the boys, bein' drunk on native rum they'd stole, planned to put up a joke on Caleb and on that brown gal, too. So they tells her the captain had sent for her and she was to swim right out and git aboard the ship where he was waitin' for her alone. That part of it was true enough 'cause Caleb was alone, all hands havin' deserted, you might say.

EMMA—(*letting an involuntary exclamation escape her*) Oh!

JACK—Waal, that fool brown gal b'lieved 'em and she swum right off, tickled to death. What happened between 'em when she got aboard, nobody knows. Some thinks one thing and some another. And I ain't sayin' nothin' 'bout it—(*with a wink*) but I know damn well what I'd 'a done in Caleb's boots, and I guess he ain't the cussed old woman you makes him out. But that part of it's got nothin' to do with the joke nohow. The joke's this: that brown gal took an awful shine to Caleb and when she saw the ship was gittin' ready to sail she raised ructions, standin' on the beach howlin' and screamin', and beatin' her chest with her fists. And when they ups anchors, she dives in the water and swims out after 'em. There's no wind hardly and she kin swim like a fish and catches up to 'em and tries to climb aboard. At fust, Caleb tries to treat her gentle and argy with her to go back. But she won't listen, she gits wilder and wilder, and finally he gits sick of it and has the boys push her off with oars while he goes and hides in the cabin. Even this don't work. She keeps swimmin' round and yellin' for Caleb. And finally they has to p'int a gun at her and shoot in the water near her afore the crazy cuss gives up and swims back to home, howlin' all the time.