Anna Christie - Act I

di Eugene O'Neill (1921)

ACT I

ACT I

Scene: "Johnny-The-Priest's" saloon near South Street, New York City. The stage is divided into two sections, showing a small back room on the right. On the left, forward, of the barroom, a large window looking out on the street. Beyond it, the main entrance--a double swinging door. Farther back, another window. The bar runs from left to right nearly the whole length of the rear wall. In back of the bar, a small showcase displaying a few bottles of case goods, for which there is evidently little call. The remainder of the rear space in front of the large mirrors is occupied by half- barrels of cheap whiskey of the "nickel-a-shot" variety, from which the liquor is drawn by means of spigots. On the right is an open doorway leading to the back room. In the back room are four round wooden tables with five chairs grouped about each. In the rear, a family entrance opening on a side street.

It is late afternoon of a day in fall.

As the curtain rises, Johnny is discovered. "Johnny-The-Priest" deserves his nickname. With his pale, thin, clean-shaven face, mild blue eyes and white hair, a cassock would seem more suited to him than the apron he wears. Neither his voice nor his general manner dispel this illusion which has made him a personage of the water front. They are soft and bland. But beneath all his mildness one senses the man behind the mask--cynical, callous, hard as nails. He is lounging at ease behind the bar, a pair of spectacles on his nose, reading an evening paper.

Two longshoremen enter from the street, wearing their working aprons, the button of the union pinned conspicuously on the caps pulled sideways on their heads at an aggressive angle.

FIRST LONGSHOREMAN: *As they range themselves at the bar.* Gimme a shock. Number Two. *He tosses a coin on the bar.*

SECOND LONGSHOREMAN: Same here. *Johnny sets two glasses of barrel whiskey before them.*

FIRST LONGSHOREMAN: Here's luck! *The other nods. They gulp down their whiskey.*

SECOND LONGSHOREMAN: *Putting money on the bar.* Give us another.

FIRST LONGSHOREMAN: Gimme a scoop this time--lager and porter. I'm dry.

SECOND LONGSHOREMAN: Same here. *Johnny draws the lager and porter and sets the big, foaming schooners before them. They drink down half the contents and start to talk together hurriedly in low tones. The door on the left is swung open and Larry enters. He is a boyish, red-cheeked, rather good-looking young fellow of twenty or so.*

LARRY: *Nodding to Johnny--cheerily.* Hello, boss.

JOHNNY: Hello, Larry. *With a glance at his watch.* Just on time. *LARRY goes to the right behind the bar, takes off his coat, and puts on an apron.*

FIRST LONGSHOREMAN: *Abruptly.* Let's drink up and get back to it. *They finish their drinks and go out left. The POSTMAN enters as they leave. He exchanges nods with JOHNNY and throws a letter on the bar.*

THE POSTMAN: Addressed care of you, Johnny. Know him?

JOHNNY: *Picks up the letter, adjusting his spectacles. LARRY comes and peers over his shoulders. JOHNNY reads very slowly.* Christopher Christopherson.

THE POSTMAN: *Helpfully.* Square-head name.

LARRY: Old Chris--that's who.

JOHNNY: Oh, sure. I was forgetting Chris carried a hell of a name like that. Letters come here for him sometimes before, I remember now. Long time ago, though.

THE POSTMAN: It'll get him all right then?

JOHNNY: Sure thing. He comes here whenever he's in port.

THE POSTMAN: *Turning to go.* Sailor, eh?

JOHNNY: *With a grin.* Captain of a coal barge.

THE POSTMAN: *Laughing.* Some job! Well, s'long.

JOHNNY: S'long. I'll see he gets it. *The POSTMAN goes out. JOHNNY scrutinizes the letter.* You got good eyes, Larry. Where's it from?

LARRY: *After a glance.* St. Paul. That'll be in Minnesota, I'm thinkin'. Looks like a woman's writing, too, the old divil! JOHNNY--He's got a daughter somewheres out West, I think he told me once. *He puts the letter on the cash register.* Come to think of it, I ain't seen old Chris in a dog's age. *Putting his overcoat on, he comes around the end of the bar.* Guess I'll be gettin' home. See you to-morrow.

LARRY: Good-night to ye, boss. *As JOHNNY goes toward the street door, it is pushed open and CHRISTOPHER CHRISTOPHERSON enters. He is a short, squat, broad-shouldered man of about fifty, with a round, weather-beaten, red face from which his light blue eyes peer short-sightedly, twinkling with a simple good humor. His large mouth, overhung by a thick, drooping, yellow mustache, is childishly self-willed and weak, of an obstinate kindliness. A thick neck is jammed like a post into the heavy trunk of his body. His arms with their big, hairy, freckled hands, and his stumpy legs terminating in large flat feet, are awkwardly short and muscular. He walks with a clumsy, rolling gait. His voice, when not raised in a hollow boom, is toned down to a sly, confidential half-whisper with something vaguely plaintive in its quality. He is dressed in a wrinkled, ill-fitting dark suit of shore clothes, and wears a faded cap of gray cloth over his mop of grizzled, blond hair. Just now his face beams with a too-blissful happiness, and he has evidently been drinking. He reaches his hand out to JOHNNY.*

CHRIS: Hello, Yohnny! Have drink on me. Come on, Larry. Give us drink. Have one yourself. *Putting his hand in his pocket.* Ay gat money--plenty money.

JOHNNY: *Shakes CHRIS by the hand.* Speak of the devil. We was just talkin' about you.

LARRY: *Coming to the end of the bar.* Hello, Chris. Put it there. *They shake hands.*

CHRIS: *Beaming.* Give us drink.

JOHNNY: *With a grin.* You got a half-snootful now. Where'd you get it?

CHRIS: *Grinning.* Oder fallar on oder barge--Irish fallar--he gat bottle vhiskey and we drank it, yust us two. Dot vhiskey gat kick, by yingo! Ay yust come ashore. Give us drink, Larry. Ay vas little drunk, not much. Yust feel good. *He laughs and commences to sing in a nasal, high-pitched quaver.*

To the accompaniment of this last he waves his hand as if he were conducting an orchestra.

JOHNNY: *With a laugh.* Same old Yosie, eh, Chris?

CHRIS: You don't know good song when you hear him. Italian fallar on oder barge, he learn me dat. Give us drink. *He throws change on the bar.*

LARRY: *With a professional air.* What's your pleasure, gentlemen?

JOHNNY: Small beer, Larry.

CHRIS: Vhiskey--Number Two.

LARRY: *As he gets their drinks.* I'll take a cigar on you.

CHRIS: *Lifting his glass.* Skoal! *He drinks.*

JOHNNY: Drink hearty.

CHRIS: *Immediately.* Have oder drink.

JOHNNY: No. Some other time. Got to go home now. So you've just landed? Where are you in from this time?

CHRIS: Norfolk. Ve make slow voyage--dirty vedder--yust fog, fog, fog, all bloody time! *There is an insistent ring from the doorbell at the family entrance in the back room. Chris gives a start--hurriedly.* Ay go open, Larry. Ay forgat. It vas Marthy. She come with me. *He goes into the back room.*

LARRY: *With a chuckle.* He's still got that same cow livin' with him, the old fool!

JOHNNY: *With a grin.* A sport, Chris is. Well, I'll beat it home. S'long. *He goes to the street door.*

LARRY: So long, boss.

JOHNNY: Oh--don't forget to give him his letter.

LARRY: I won't. *JOHNNY goes out. In the meantime, CHRIS has opened the family entrance door, admitting MARTHY. She might be forty or fifty. Her jowly, mottled face, with its thick red nose, is streaked with interlacing purple veins. Her thick, gray hair is piled anyhow in a greasy mop on top of her round head. Her figure is flabby and fat; her breath comes in wheezy gasps; she speaks in a loud, mannish voice, punctuated by explosions of hoarse laughter. But there still twinkles in her blood-shot blue eyes a youthful lust for life which hard usage has failed to stifle, a sense of humor mocking, but good-tempered. She wears a man's cap, double-breasted man's jacket, and a grimy, calico skirt. Her bare feet are encased in a man's brogans several sizes too large for her, which gives her a shuffling, wobbly gait.*

MARTHY: *Grumblingly.* What yuh tryin' to do, Dutchy--keep me standin' out there all day? *She comes forward and sits at the table in the right corner, front.*

CHRIS: *Mollifyingly.* Ay'm sorry, Marthy. Ay talk to Yohnny. Ay forgat. What you goin' take for drink?

MARTHY: *Appeased.* Gimme a scoop of lager an' ale.

CHRIS: Ay go bring him back. *He returns to the bar.* Lager and ale for Marthy, Larry. Vhiskey for me. *He throws change on the bar.*

LARRY: Right you are. *Then remembering, he takes the letter from in back of the bar.* Here's a letter for you--from St. Paul, Minnesota--and a lady's writin'. *He grins.*

CHRIS: *Quickly--taking it.* Oh, den it come from my daughter, Anna. She live dere. *He turns the letter over in his hands uncertainly.* Ay don't gat letter from Anna--must be a year.

LARRY: *Jokingly.* That's a fine fairy tale to be tellin'--your daughter! Sure I'll bet it's some bum.

CHRIS: *Soberly.* No. Dis come from Anna. *Engrossed by the letter in his hand--uncertainly.* By golly, Ay tank Ay'm too drunk for read dis letter from Anna. Ay tank Ay sat down for a minute. You bring drinks in back room, Larry. *He goes into the room on right.*

MARTHY: *Angrily.* Where's my lager an' ale, yuh big stiff?

CHRIS: *Preoccupied.* Larry bring him. *He sits down opposite her. LARRY brings in the drinks and sets*

them on the table. He and MARTHY exchange nods of recognition. LARRY stands looking at CHRIS curiously. MARTHY takes a long draught of her schooner and heaves a huge sigh of satisfaction, wiping her mouth with the back of her hand. CHRIS stares at the letter for a moment--slowly opens it, and, squinting his eyes, commences to read laboriously, his lips moving as he spells out the words. As he reads his face lights up with an expression of mingled joy and bewilderment.

LARRY: Good news?

MARTHY: *Her curiosity also aroused.* What's that yuh got--a letter, fur Gawd's sake?

CHRIS: *Pauses for a moment, after finishing the letter, as if to let the news sink in--then suddenly pounds his fist on the table with happy excitement.* Py yiminy! Yust tank, Anna say she's comin' here right avay! She gat sick on yob in St. Paul, she say. It's short letter, don't tal me much more'n dat. *Beaming.* Py golly, dat's good news all at one time for ole fallar! *Then turning to MARTHY, rather shamefacedly.* You know, Marthy, Ay've tole you Ay don't see my Anna since she vas little gel in Sveden five year ole.

MARTHY: How old'll she be now?

CHRIS: She must be--lat me see--she must be twenty year ole, py Yo!

LARRY: *Surprised.* You've not seen her in fifteen years?

CHRIS: *Suddenly growing somber--in a low tone.* No. Ven she vas little gel, Ay vas bo'sun on vindjammer. Ay never gat home only few time dem year. Ay'm fool sailor fallar. My voman--Anna's mother--she gat tired vait all time Sveden for me ven Ay don't never come. She come dis country, bring Anna, dey go out Minnesota, live with her cousins on farm. Den ven her mo'der die ven Ay vas on voyage, Ay tank it's better dem cousins keep Anna. Ay tank it's better Anna live on farm, den she don't know dat ole davil, sea, she don't know fader like me.

LARRY: *With a wink at MARTHY.* This girl, now, 'll be marryin' a sailor herself, likely. It's in the blood.

CHRIS: *Suddenly springing to his feet and smashing his fist on the table in a rage.* No, py God! She don't do dat!

MARTHY: *Grasping her schooner hastily--angrily.* Hey, look out, yuh nut! Wanta spill my suds for me?

LARRY: *Amazed.* Oho, what's up with you? Ain't you a sailor yourself now, and always been?

CHRIS: *Slowly.* Dat's yust vhy Ay say it. *Forcing a smile.* Sailor vas all right fallar, but not for marry gel. No. Ay know dat. Anna's mo'der, she know it, too.

LARRY: *As CHRIS remains sunk in gloomy reflection.* When is your daughter comin'? Soon?

CHRIS: *Roused.* Py yiminy, Ay forgat. *Reads through the letter hurriedly.* She say she come right avay, dat's all.

LARRY: She'll maybe be comin' here to look for you, I s'pose. *He returns to the bar, whistling. Left alone with MARTHY, who stares at him with a twinkle of malicious humor in her eyes, CHRIS suddenly becomes desperately ill-at-ease. He fidgets, then gets up hurriedly.*

CHRIS: Ay gat speak with Larry. Ay be right back. *Mollifyingly.* Ay bring you oder drink.

MARTHY: *Emptying her glass.* Sure. That's me. *As he retreats with the glass she guffaws after him derisively.*

CHRIS: *To LARRY in an alarmed whisper.* Py yingo, Ay gat gat Marthy shore off barge before Anna come! Anna raise hell if she find dat out. Marthy raise hell, too, for go, py golly!

LARRY: *With a chuckle.* Serve ye right, ye old divil--havin' a woman at your age!

CHRIS: *Scratching his head in a quandary.* You tal me lie for tal Marthy, Larry, so's she gat off barge quick.

LARRY: She knows your daughter's comin'. Tell her to get the hell out of it.

CHRIS: No. Ay don't like make her feel bad.

LARRY: You're an old mush! Keep your girl away from the barge, then. She'll likely want to stay ashore anyway. *Curiously.* What does she work at, your Anna?

CHRIS: She stay on dem cousins' farm 'till two year ago. Dan she gat yob nurse gel in St. Paul. *Then shaking his head resolutely.* But Ay don't vant for her gat yob now. Ay vant for her stay with me.

LARRY: *Scornfully.* On a coal barge! She'll not like that, I'm thinkin'.

MARTHY: *Shouts from next room.* Don't I get that bucket o' suds, Dutchy?

CHRIS: *Startled--in apprehensive confusion.* Yes, Ay come, Marthy.

LARRY: *Drawing the lager and ale, hands it to CHRIS--laughing.* Now you're in for it! You'd better tell her straight to get out!

CHRIS: *Shaking in his boots.* Py golly. *He takes her drink in to MARTHY and sits down at the table. She sips it in silence. LARRY moves quietly close to the partition to listen, grinning with expectation. CHRIS seems on the verge of speaking, hesitates, gulps down his whiskey desperately as if seeking for courage. He attempts to whistle a few bars of "Yosephine" with careless bravado, but the whistle peters out futilely. MARTHY stares at him keenly, taking in his embarrassment with a malicious twinkle of amusement in her eye. CHRIS clears his throat.* Marthy--

MARTHY: *Aggressively.* Wha's that? *Then, pretending to fly into a rage, her eyes enjoying CHRIS' misery.* I'm wise to what's in back of your nut, Dutchy. Yuh want to git rid o' me, huh?--now she's comin'. Gimme the bum's rush ashore, huh? Lemme tell yuh, Dutchy, there ain't a square-head workin' on a boat man enough to git away with that. Don't start nothin' yuh can't finish!

CHRIS: *Miserably.* Ay don't start nutting, Marthy.

MARTHY: *Glares at him for a second--then cannot control a burst of laughter.* Ho-ho! Yuh're a scream, Square-head--an honest-ter- Gawd knockout! Ho-ho! *She wheezes, panting for breath.*

CHRIS: *With childish pique.* Ay don't see nutting for laugh at.

MARTHY: Take a slant in the mirror and yuh'll see. Ho-ho! *Recovering from her mirth--chuckling, scornfully.* A square-head tryin' to kid Marthy Owen at this late day!--after me campin' with barge men the last twenty years. I'm wise to the game, up, down, and sideways. I ain't been born and dragged up on the water front for nothin'. Think I'd make trouble, huh? Not me! I'll pack up me duds an' beat it. I'm quittin' yuh, get me? I'm tellin' yuh I'm sick of stickin' with yuh, and I'm leavin' yuh flat, see? There's plenty of other guys on other barges waitin' for me. Always was, I always found. *She claps the astonished CHRIS on the back.* So cheer up, Dutchy! I'll be offen the barge before she comes. You'll be rid o' me for good--and me o' you--good riddance for both of us. Ho-ho!

CHRIS: *Seriously.* Ay don' tank dat. You vas good gel, Marthy.

MARTHY: *Grinning.* Good girl? Aw, can the bull! Well, yuh treated me square, yuhself. So it's fifty-fifty. Nobody's sore at nobody. We're still good frien's, huh? *LARRY returns to bar.*

CHRIS: *Beaming now that he sees his troubles disappearing.* Yes, py golly.

MARTHY: That's the talkin'! In all my time I tried never to split with a guy with no hard feelin's. But what was yuh so scared about--that I'd kick up a row? That ain't Marthy's way. *Scornfully.* Think I'd

break my heart to lose yuh? Commit suicide, huh? Ho-ho! Gawd! The world's full o' men if that's all I'd worry about! *Then with a grin, after emptying her glass.* Blow me to another scoop, huh? I'll drink your kid's health for yuh.

CHRIS: *Eagerly.* Sure tang. Ay go gat him. *He takes the two glasses into the bar.* Oder drink. Same for both.

LARRY: *Getting the drinks and putting them on the bar.* She's not such a bad lot, that one.

CHRIS: *Jovially.* She's good gel, Ay tal you! Py golly, Ay calabrate now! Give me vhiskey here at bar, too. *He puts down money. LARRY serves him.* You have drink, Larry.

LARRY: *Virtuously.* You know I never touch it.

CHRIS: You don't know what you miss. Skoal! *He drinks--then begins to sing loudly.*

He picks up the drinks for MARTHY and himself and walks unsteadily into the back room, singing.

MARTHY: *Grinning, hands to ears.* Gawd!

CHRIS: *Sitting down.* Ay'm good singer, yes? Ve drink, eh? Skoal! Ay calabrate! *He drinks.* Ay calabrate 'cause Anna's coming home. You know, Marthy, Ay never write for her to come, 'cause Ay tank Ay'm no good for her. But all time Ay hope like hell some day she vant for see me and den she come. And dat's vay it happen now, py yiminy! *His face beaming.* What you tank she look like, Marthy? Ay bet you she's fine, good, strong gel, pooty like hell! Living on farm made her like dat. And Ay bet you some day she marry good, steady land fallar here in East, have home all her own, have kits-- and dan Ay'm ole grandfader, py golly! And Ay go visit dem every time Ay gat in port near! *Bursting with joy.* By yiminy crickens, Ay calabrate dat! *Shouts.* Bring oder drink, Larry! *He smashes his fist on the table with a bang.*

LARRY: *Coming in from bar--irritably.* Easy there! Don't be breakin' the table, you old goat!

CHRIS: *By way of reply, grins foolishly and begins to sing.* "My Yosephine comes board de ship--"

MARTHY: *Touching CHRIS' arm persuasively.* You're soused to the ears, Dutchy. Go out and put a feed into you. It'll sober you up. *Then as CHRIS shakes his head obstinately.* Listen, yuh old nut! Yuh don't know what time your kid's liable to show up. Yuh want to be sober when she comes, don't yuh?

CHRIS: *Aroused--gets unsteadily to his feet.* Py golly, yes.

LARRY: That's good sense for you. A good beef stew'll fix you. Go round the corner.

CHRIS: All right. Ay be back soon, Marthy. *CHRIS goes through the bar and out the street door.*

LARRY: He'll come round all right with some grub in him.

MARTHY: Sure. *LARRY goes back to the bar and resumes his newspaper. MARTHY sips what is left of her schooner reflectively. There is the ring of the family entrance bell. LARRY comes to the door and opens it a trifle--then, with a puzzled expression, pulls it wide. ANNA CHRISTOPHERSON enters. She is a tall, blond, fully- developed girl of twenty, handsome after a large, Viking-daughter fashion but now run down in health and plainly showing all the outward evidences of belonging to the world's oldest profession. Her youthful face is already hard and cynical beneath its layer of make-up. Her clothes are the tawdry finery of peasant stock turned prostitute. She comes and sinks wearily in a chair by the table, left front.*

ANNA: Gimme a whiskey--ginger ale on the side. *Then, as LARRY turns to go, forcing a winning smile at him.* And don't be stingy, baby.

LARRY: *Sarcastically.* Shall I serve it in a pail?

ANNA: *With a hard laugh.* That suits me down to the ground. *LARRY goes into the bar. The two women size each other up with frank stares. LARRY comes back with the drink which he sets before ANNA and returns to the bar again. ANNA downs her drink at a gulp. Then, after a moment, as the alcohol begins to rouse her, she turns to MARTHY with a friendly smile.* Gee, I needed that bad, all right, all right!

MARTHY: *Nodding her head sympathetically.* Sure--yuh look all in. Been on a bat?

ANNA: No--travelling--day and a half on the train. Had to sit up all night in the dirty coach, too. Gawd, I thought I'd never get here!

MARTHY: *With a start--looking at her intently.* Where'd yuh come from, huh?

ANNA: St. Paul--out in Minnesota.

MARTHY: *Staring at her in amazement--slowly.* So--yuh're--[She suddenly bursts out into hoarse, ironical laughter.] Gawd!

ANNA: All the way from Minnesota, sure. *Flaring up.* What you laughing at? Me?

MARTHY: *Hastily.* No, honest, kid. I was thinkin' of somethin' else.

ANNA: *Mollified--with a smile.* Well, I wouldn't blame you, at that. Guess I do look rotten--yust out of the hospital two weeks. I'm going to have another 'ski. What d'you say? Have something on me?

MARTHY: Sure I will. T'anks. *She calls.* Hey, Larry! Little service! *He comes in.*

ANNA: Same for me.

MARTHY: Same here. *LARRY takes their glasses and goes out.*

ANNA: Why don't you come sit over here, be sociable. I'm a dead stranger in this burg--and I ain't spoke a word with no one since day before yesterday.

MARTHY: Sure thing. *She shuffles over to ANNA'S table and sits down opposite her. LARRY brings the drinks and ANNA pays him.*

ANNA: Skoal! Here's how! *She drinks.*

MARTHY: Here's luck! *She takes a gulp from her schooner.*

ANNA: *Taking a package of Sweet Caporal cigarettes from her bag.* Let you smoke in here, won't they?

MARTHY: *Doubtfully.* Sure. *Then with evident anxiety.* On'y trow it away if yuh hear someone comin'.

ANNA: *Lighting one and taking a deep inhale.* Gee, they're fussy in this dump, ain't they? *She puffs, staring at the table top. MARTHY looks her over with a new penetrating interest, taking in every detail of her face. ANNA suddenly becomes conscious of this appraising stare--resentfully.* Ain't nothing wrong with me, is there? You're looking hard enough.

MARTHY: *Irritated by the other's tone--scornfully.* Ain't got to look much. I got your number the minute you stepped in the door.

ANNA: *Her eyes narrowing.* Ain't you smart! Well, I got yours, too, without no trouble. You're me forty years from now. That's you! *She gives a hard little laugh.*

MARTHY: *Angrily.* Is that so? Well, I'll tell you straight, kiddo, that Marthy Owen never--[She catches herself up short--with a grin.] What are you and me scrappin' over? Let's cut it out, huh? Me, I don't want no hard feelin's with no one. *Extending her hand.* Shake and forget it, huh?

ANNA: *Shakes her hand gladly.* Only too glad to. I ain't looking for trouble. Let's have 'nother. What d'you say?

MARTHY: *Shaking her head.* Not for mine. I'm full up. And you-- Had anythin' to eat lately?

ANNA: Not since this morning on the train.

MARTHY: Then yuh better go easy on it, hadn't yuh?

ANNA: *After a moment's hesitation.* Guess you're right. I got to meet someone, too. But my nerves is on edge after that rotten trip.

MARTHY: Yuh said yuh was just outa the hospital?

ANNA: Two weeks ago. *Leaning over to MARTHY confidentially.* The joint I was in out in St. Paul got raided. That was the start. The judge give all us girls thirty days. The others didn't seem to mind being in the cooler much. Some of 'em was used to it. But me, I couldn't stand it. It got my goat right--couldn't eat or sleep or nothing. I never could stand being caged up nowheres. I got good and sick and they had to send me to the hospital. It was nice there. I was sorry to leave it, honest!

MARTHY: *After a slight pause.* Did yuh say yuh got to meet someone here?

ANNA: Yes. Oh, not what you mean. It's my Old Man I got to meet. Honest! It's funny, too. I ain't seen him since I was a kid--don't even know what he looks like--yust had a letter every now and then. This was always the only address he give me to write him back. He's yanitor of some building here now--used to be a sailor.

MARTHY: *Astonished.* Janitor!

ANNA: Sure. And I was thinking maybe, seeing he ain't never done a thing for me in my life, he might be willing to stake me to a room and eats till I get rested up. *Wearily.* Gee, I sure need that rest! I'm knocked out. *Then resignedly.* But I ain't expecting much from him. Give you a kick when you're down, that's what all men do. *With sudden passion.* Men, I hate 'em--all of 'em! And I don't expect he'll turn out no better than the rest. *Then with sudden interest.* Say, do you hang out around this dump much?

MARTHY: Oh, off and on.

ANNA: Then maybe you know him--my Old Man--or at least seen him?

MARTHY: It ain't old Chris, is it?

ANNA: Old Chris?

MARTHY: Chris Christopherson, his full name is.

ANNA: *Excitedly.* Yes, that's him! Anna Christopherson--that's my real name--only out there I called myself Anna Christie. So you know him, eh?

MARTHY: *Evasively.* Seen him about for years.

ANNA: Say, what's he like, tell me, honest?

MARTHY: Oh, he's short and--

ANNA: *Impatiently.* I don't care what he looks like. What kind is he?

MARTHY: *Earnestly.* Well, yuh can bet your life, kid, he's as good an old guy as ever walked on two feet. That goes!

ANNA: *Pleased.* I'm glad to hear it. Then you think's he'll stake me to that rest cure I'm after?

MARTHY: *Emphatically.* Surest thing you know. *Disgustedly.* But where'd yuh get the idea he was a janitor?

ANNA: He wrote me he was himself.

MARTHY: Well, he was lyin'. He ain't. He's captain of a barge--five men under him.

ANNA: *Disgusted in her turn.* A barge? What kind of a barge?

MARTHY: Coal, mostly.

ANNA: A coal barge! *With a harsh laugh.* If that ain't a swell job to find your long lost Old Man working at! Gee, I knew something'd be bound to turn out wrong--always does with me. That puts my idea of his giving me a rest on the bum.

MARTHY: What d'yuh mean?

ANNA: I s'pose he lives on the boat, don't he?

MARTHY: Sure. What about it? Can't you live on it, too?

ANNA: *Scornfully.* Me? On a dirty coal barge! What d'you think I am?

MARTHY: *Resentfully.* What d'yuh know about barges, huh? Bet yuh ain't never seen one. That's what comes of his bringing yuh up inland--away from the old devil sea--where yuh'd be safe--Gawd! *The irony of it strikes her sense of humor and she laughs hoarsely.*

ANNA: *Angrily.* His bringing me up! Is that what he tells people! I like his nerve! He let them cousins of my Old Woman's keep me on their farm and work me to death like a dog.

MARTHY: Well, he's got queer notions on some things. I've heard him say a farm was the best place for a kid.

ANNA: Sure. That's what he'd always answer back--and a lot of crazy stuff about staying away from the sea--stuff I couldn't make head or tail to. I thought he must be nutty.

MARTHY: He is on that one point. *Casually.* So yuh didn't fall for life on the farm, huh?

ANNA: I should say not! The old man of the family, his wife, and four sons--I had to slave for all of 'em. I was only a poor relation, and they treated me worse than they dare treat a hired girl. *After a moment's hesitation--somberly.* It was one of the sons--the youngest--started me--when I was sixteen. After that, I hated 'em so I'd killed 'em all if I'd stayed. So I run away--to St. Paul.

MARTHY: *Who has been listening sympathetically.* I've heard Old Chris talkin' about your bein' a nurse girl out there. Was that all a bluff yuh put up when yuh wrote him?

ANNA: Not on your life, it wasn't. It was true for two years. I didn't go wrong all at one jump. Being a nurse girl was yust what finished me. Taking care of other people's kids, always listening to their bawling and crying, caged in, when you're only a kid yourself and want to go out and see things. At last I got the chance--to get into that house. And you bet your life I took it! *Defiantly.* And I ain't sorry neither. *After a pause--with bitter hatred.* It was all men's fault--the whole business. It was men on the farm ordering and beating me--and giving me the wrong start. Then when I was a nurse, it was men again hanging around, bothering me, trying to see what they could get. *She gives a hard laugh.* And now it's men all the time. Gawd, I hate 'em all, every mother's son of 'em! Don't you?

MARTHY: Oh, I dunno. There's good ones and bad ones, kid. You've just had a run of bad luck with 'em, that's all. Your Old Man, now--old Chris--he's a good one.

ANNA: *Sceptically.* He'll have to show me.

MARTHY: Yuh kept right on writing him yuh was a nurse girl still, even after yuh was in the house, didn't yuh?

ANNA: Sure. *Cynically.* Not that I think he'd care a darn.

MARTHY: Yuh're all wrong about him, kid, *Earnestly.* I know Old Chris well for a long time. He's talked

to me 'bout you lots o' times. He thinks the world o' you, honest he does.

ANNA: Aw, quit the kiddin'!

MARTHY: Honest! Only, he's a simple old guy, see? He's got nutty notions. But he means well, honest. Listen to me, kid--[She is interrupted by the opening and shutting of the street door in the bar and by hearing CHRIS' voice.] Ssshh!

ANNA: What's up?

CHRIS: *Who has entered the bar. He seems considerably sobered up.* Py golly, Larry, dat grub taste good. Marthy in back?

LARRY: Sure--and another tramp with her. *CHRIS starts for the entrance to the back room.*

MARTHY: *To ANNA in a hurried, nervous whisper.* That's him now. He's comin' in here. Brace up!

ANNA: Who? *Chris opens the door.*

MARTHY: *As if she were greeting him for the first time* Why hello, Old Chris. *Then before he can speak, she shuffles hurriedly past him into the bar, beckoning him to follow her.* Come here. I wanta tell yuh somethin'. *He goes out to her. She speaks hurriedly in a low voice.* Listen! I'm goin' to beat it down to the barge--pack up me duds and blow. That's her in there-- your Anna--just come--waitin' for yuh. Treat her right, see? She's been sick. Well, s'long! *She goes into the back room--to ANNA.* S'long, kid. I gotta beat it now. See yuh later.

ANNA: *Nervously.* So long. *MARTHY goes quickly out of the family entrance.* LARRY--[Looking at the stupefied CHRIS curiously.] Well, what's up now?

CHRIS: *Vaguely.* Nutting--nutting. *He stands before the door to the back room in an agony of embarrassed emotion--then he forces himself to a bold decision, pushes open the door and walks in. He stands there, casts a shy glance at ANNA, whose brilliant clothes, and, to him, high-toned appearance awe him terribly. He looks about him with pitiful nervousness as if to avoid the appraising look with which she takes in his face, his clothes, etc--his voice seeming to plead for her forbearance.* Anna!

ANNA: *Acutely embarrassed in her turn.* Hello--father. She told me it was you. I yust got here a little while ago.

CHRIS: *Goes slowly over to her chair.* It's good--for see you-- after all dem years, Anna. *He bends down over her. After an embarrassed struggle they manage to kiss each other.*

ANNA: *A trace of genuine feeling in her voice.* It's good to see you, too.

CHRIS: *Grasps her arms and looks into her face--then overcome by a wave of fierce tenderness.* Anna lilla! Anna lilla! *Takes her in his arms.*

ANNA: *Shrinks away from him, half-frightened.* What's that-- Swedish? I don't know it. *Then as if seeking relief from the tension in a voluble chatter.* Gee, I had an awful trip coming here. I'm all in. I had to sit up in the dirty coach all night-- couldn't get no sleep, hardly--and then I had a hard job finding this place. I never been in New York before, you know, and--

CHRIS: *Who has been staring down at her face admiringly, not hearing what she says--impulsively.* You know you vas awful pooty gel, Anna? Ay bet all men see you fall in love with you, py yiminy!

ANNA: *Repelled--harshly.* Cut it! You talk same as they all do.

CHRIS: *Hurt--humbly.* Ain't no harm for your fader talk dat vay, Anna.

ANNA: *Forcing a short laugh.* No--course not. Only--it's funny to see you and not remember nothing. You're like--a stranger.

CHRIS: *Sadly.* Ay s'pose. Ay never come home only few times ven you vas kit in Sveden. You don't remember dat?

ANNA: No. *Resentfully.* But why didn't you never come home them days? Why didn't you never come out West to see me?

CHRIS: *Slowly.* Ay tank, after your mo'der die, ven Ay vas avay on voyage, it's better for you you don't never see me! *He sinks down in the chair opposite her dejectedly--then turns to her-- sadly.* Ay don't know, Anna, vhy Ay never come home Sveden in ole year. Ay vant come home end of every voyage. Ay vant see your mo'der, your two bro'der before dey vas drowned, you ven you vas born--but--Ay--don't go. Ay sign on oder ships--go South America, go Australia, go China, go every port all over world many times-- but Ay never go aboard ship sail for Sveden. Ven Ay gat money for pay passage home as passenger den--[He bows his head guiltily.] Ay forgat and Ay spend all money. Ven Ay tank again, it's too late. *He sighs.* Ay don't know vhy but dat's vay with most sailor fallar, Anna. Dat ole davil sea make dem crazy fools with her dirty tricks. It's so.

ANNA: *Who has watched him keenly while he has been speaking--with a trace of scorn in her voice.* Then you think the sea's to blame for everything, eh? Well, you're still workin' on it, ain't you, spite of all you used to write me about hating it. That dame was here told me you was captain of a coal barge--and you wrote me you was yanitor of a building!

CHRIS: *Embarrassed but lying glibly.* Oh, Ay work on land long time as yanitor. Yust short time ago Ay got dis yob cause Ay vas sick, need open air.

ANNA: *Sceptically.* Sick? You? You'd never think it.

CHRIS: And, Anna, dis ain't real sailor yob. Dis ain't real boat on sea. She's yust ole tub--like piece of land with house on it dat float. Yob on her ain't sea yob. No. Ay don't gat yob on sea, Anna, if Ay die first. Ay swear dat, ven your mo'der die. Ay keep my word, py yingo!

ANNA: *Perplexed.* Well, I can't see no difference. *Dismissing the subject.* Speaking of being sick, I been there myself--yust out of the hospital two weeks ago.

CHRIS: *Immediately all concern.* You, Anna? Py golly! *Anxiously.* You feel better now, dough, don't you? You look little tired, dat's all!

ANNA: *Wearily.* I am. Tired to death. I need a long rest and I don't see much chance of getting it.

CHRIS: What you mean, Anna?

ANNA: Well, when I made up my mind to come to see you, I thought you was a yanitor--that you'd have a place where, maybe, if you didn't mind having me, I could visit a while and rest up--till I felt able to get back on the job again.

CHRIS: *Eagerly.* But Ay gat place, Anna--nice place. You rest all you want, py yiminy! You don't never have to vork as nurse gel no more. You stay with me, py golly!

ANNA: *Surprised and pleased by his eagerness--with a smile.* Then you're really glad to see me--honest?

CHRIS: *Pressing one of her hands in both of his.* Anna, Ay like see you like hell, Ay tal you! And don't you talk no more about gatting yob. You stay with me. Ay don't see you for long time, you don't forgat dat. *His voice trembles.* Ay'm gatting ole. Ay gat no one in vorld but you.

ANNA: *Touched--embarrassed by this unfamiliar emotion.* Thanks. It sounds good to hear someone--talk to me that way. Say, though-- if you're so lonely--it's funny--why ain't you ever married again?

CHRIS: *Shaking his head emphatically--after a pause.* Ay love your mo'der too much for ever do dat,

Anna.

ANNA: *Impressed--slowly.* I don't remember nothing about her. What was she like? Tell me.

CHRIS: Ay tal you all about everytang--and you tal me all tangs happen to you. But not here now. Dis ain't good place for young gel, anyway. Only no good sailor fallar come here for gat drunk. *He gets to his feet quickly and picks up her bag.* You come with me, Anna. You need lie down, gat rest.

ANNA: *Half rises to her feet, then sits down again.* Where're you going?

CHRIS: Come. Ve gat on board.

ANNA: *Disappointedly.* On board your barge, you mean? *Dryly.* Nix for mine! *Then seeing his crestfallen look--forcing a smile.* Do you think that's a good place for a young girl like me--a coal barge?

CHRIS: *Dully.* Yes, Ay tank. *He hesitates--then continues more and more pleadingly.* You don't know how nice it's on barge, Anna. Tug come and ve gat towed out on voyage--yust water all round, and sun, and fresh air, and good grub for make you strong, healthy gel. You see many tangs you don't see before. You gat moonlight at night, maybe; see steamer pass; see schooner make sail--see everytang dat's pooty. You need take rest like dat. You work too hard for young gel already. You need vacation, yes!

ANNA: *Who has listened to him with a growing interest--with an uncertain laugh.* It sounds good to hear you tell it. I'd sure like a trip on the water, all right. It's the barge idea has me stopped. Well, I'll go down with you and have a look--and maybe I'll take a chance. Gee, I'd do anything once.

CHRIS: *Picks up her bag again.* Ye go, eh?

ANNA: What's the rush? Wait a second. *Forgetting the situation for a moment, she relapses into the familiar form and flashes one of her winning trade smiles at him.* Gee, I'm thirsty.

CHRIS: *Sets down her bag immediately--hastily.* Ay'm sorry, Anna. What you tank you like for drink, eh?

ANNA: *Promptly.* I'll take a--[Then suddenly reminded-- confusedly.] I don't know. What'a they got here?

CHRIS: *With a grin.* Ay don't tank dey got much fancy drink for young gel in dis place, Anna. Yinger ale--sas'prilla, maybe.

ANNA: *Forcing a laugh herself.* Make it sas, then.

CHRIS: *Coming up to her--with a wink.* Ay tal you, Anna, we calabrate, yes--dis one time because we meet after many year. *In a half whisper, embarrassedly.* Dey gat good port wine, Anna. It's good for you. Ay tank--little bit--for give you appetite. It ain't strong, neider. One glass don't go to your head, Ay promise.

ANNA: *With a half hysterical laugh.* All right! I'll take port.

CHRIS: Ay go gat him. *He goes out to the bar. As soon as the door closes, Anna starts to her feet.*

ANNA: *Picking up her bag--half--aloud--stammeringly.* Gawd, I can't stand this! I better beat it. *Then she lets her bag drop, stumbles over to her chair again, and covering her face with her hands, begins to sob.*

LARRY: *Putting down his paper as CHRIS comes up--with a grin.* Well, who's the blond?

CHRIS: *Proudly.* Dat vas Anna, Larry.

LARRY: *In amazement.* Your daughter, Anna? *CHRIS nods. LARRY lets a long, low whistle escape him and turns away embarrassedly.*

CHRIS: Don't you tank she vas pooty gel, Larry?

LARRY: *Rising to the occasion.* Sure! A peach!

CHRIS: You bet you! Give me drink for take back--one port vine for Anna--she calabrate dis one time with me--and small beer for me.

LARRY: *As he gets the drinks.* Small beer for you, eh? She's reformin' you already.

CHRIS: *Pleased.* You bet! *He takes the drinks. As she hears him coming, ANNA hastily dries her eyes, tries to smile. CHRIS comes in and sets the drinks down on the table--stares at her for a second anxiously--patting her hand.* You look tired, Anna. Veil, Ay make you take good long rest now. *Picking up his beer.* Come, you drink vine. It put new life in you. *She lifts her glass--he grins.* Skoal, Anna! You know dat Svedish word?

ANNA: Skoal! *Downing her port at a gulp like a drink of whiskey-- her lips trembling.* Skoal? Guess I know that word, all right, all right!

The Curtain Falls

Le note di scena sono tra parentesi *quadre* o *(tonde).*

Fonte: Wikisource *(en),* CC BY-SA 4.0: https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Anna_Christie

Scaricato da Progetto Teatro: https://www.progettoteatro.it/copioni/copione.php?id=655