Anna Christie - Act III

di Eugene O'Neill (1921)

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Scene: The interior of the cabin on the barge, "Simeon Winthrop" at dock in Boston --a narrow, low-ceilinged compartment the walls of which are painted a light brown with white trimmings. In the rear on the left, a door leading to the sleeping quarters. In the far left corner, a large locker-closet, painted white, on the door of which a mirror hangs on a nail. In the rear wall, two small square windows and a door opening out on the deck toward the stern. In the right wall, two more windows looking out on the port deck. White curtains, clean and stiff, are at the windows. A table with two cane-bottomed chairs stands in the center of the cabin. A dilapidated, wicker rocker, painted brown, is also by the table.

It is afternoon of a sunny day about a week later. From the harbor and docks outside, muffled by the closed door and windows, comes the sound of steamers' whistles and the puffing snort of the donkey engines of some ship unloading nearby.

As the curtain rises, CHRIS and ANNA are discovered. ANNA is seated in the rocking-chair by the table, with a newspaper in her hands. She is not reading but staring straight in front of her. She looks unhappy, troubled, frowningly concentrated on her thoughts. CHRIS wanders about the room, casting quick, uneasy side glances at her face, then stopping to peer absentmindedly out of the window. His attitude betrays an overwhelming, gloomy anxiety which has him on tenter hooks. He pretends to be engaged in setting things ship-shape, but this occupation is confined to picking up some object, staring at it stupidly for a second, then aimlessly putting it down again. He clears his throat and starts to sing to himself in a low, doleful voice: "My Yosephine, come aboard de ship. Long time Ay wait for you."

ANNA: *Turning on him, sarcastically.* I'm glad someone's feeling good. *Wearily.* Gee, I sure wish we was out of this dump and back in New York.

CHRIS: *With a sigh.* Ay'm glad vhen ve sail again, too. *Then, as she makes no comment, he goes on with a ponderous attempt at sarcasm.* Ay don't see vhy you don't like Boston, dough. You have good time here, Ay tank. You go ashore all time, every day and night veek ve've been here. You go to movies, see show, gat all kinds fun--[His eyes hard with hatred.] All with that damn Irish fallar!

ANNA: *With weary scorn.* Oh, for heaven's sake, are you off on that again? Where's the harm in his taking me around? D'you want me to sit all day and night in this cabin with you--and knit? Ain't I got a right to have as good a time as I can?

CHRIS: It ain't right kind of fun--not with that fallar, no.

ANNA: I been back on board every night by eleven, ain't I? *Then struck by some thought--looks at him with keen suspicion--with rising anger.* Say, look here, what d'you mean by what you yust said?

CHRIS: *Hastily.* Nutting but what Ay say, Anna.

ANNA: You said "ain't right" and you said it funny. Say, listen here, you ain't trying to insinuate that there's something wrong between us, are you?

CHRIS: *Horrified.* No, Anna! No, Ay svear to God, Ay never tank dat!

ANNA: *Mollified by his very evident sincerity--sitting down again.* Well, don't you never think it neither if you want me ever to speak to you again. *Angrily again.* If I ever dreamt you thought that, I'd get

the hell out of this barge so quick you couldn't see me for dust.

CHRIS: *Soothingly.* Ay wouldn't never dream--[Then, after a second's pause, reprovingly.] You vas gatting learn to svear. Dat ain't nice for young gel, you tank?

ANNA: *With a faint trace of a smile.* Excuse me. You ain't used to such language, I know. *Mockingly.* That's what your taking me to sea has done for me.

CHRIS: *Indignantly.* No, it ain't me. It's dat damn sailor fallar learn you bad tangs.

ANNA: He ain't a sailor. He's a stoker.

CHRIS: *Forcibly.* Dat vas million times vorse, Ay tal you! Dem fallars dat vork below shoveling coal vas de dirtiest, rough gang of no-good fallars in vorld!

ANNA: I'd hate to hear you say that to Mat.

CHRIS: Oh, Ay tal him same tang. You don't gat it in head Ay'm scared of him yust 'cause he vas stronger'n Ay vas. *Menacingly.* You don't gat for fight with fists with dem fallars. Dere's oder vay for fix him.

ANNA: *Glancing at him with sudden alarm.* What d'you mean?

CHRIS: *Sullenly.* Nutting.

ANNA: You'd better not. I wouldn't start no trouble with him if I was you. He might forget some time that you was old and my father-- and then you'd be out of luck.

CHRIS: *With smouldering hatred.* Vell, yust let him! Ay'm ole bird maybe, but Ay bet Ay show him trick or two.

ANNA: *Suddenly changing her tone--persuasively.* Aw come on, be good. What's eating you, anyway? Don't you want no one to be nice to me except yourself?

CHRIS: *Placated--coming to her--eagerly.* Yes, Ay do, Anna--only not fallar on sea. But Ay like for you marry steady fallar got good yob on land. You have little home in country all your own--

ANNA: *Rising to her feet--brusquely.* Oh, cut it out! *Scornfully.* Little home in the country! I wish you could have seen the little home in the country where you had me in jail till I was sixteen! *With rising irritation.* Some day you're going to get me so mad with that talk, I'm going to turn loose on you and tell you--a lot of things that'll open your eyes.

CHRIS: *Alarmed.* Ay don't vant--

ANNA: I know you don't; but you keep on talking yust the same.

CHRIS: Ay don't talk no more den, Anna.

ANNA: Then promise me you'll cut out saying nasty things about Mat Burke every chance you get.

CHRIS: *Evasive and suspicious.* Vhy? You like dat fallar--very much, Anna?

ANNA: Yes, I certainly do! He's a regular man, no matter what faults he's got. One of his fingers is worth all the hundreds of men I met out there--inland.

CHRIS: *His face darkening.* Maybe you tank you love him, den?

ANNA: *Defiantly.* What of it if I do?

CHRIS: *Scowling and forcing out the words.* Maybe--you tank you-- marry him?

ANNA: *Shaking her head.* No! *CHRIS' face lights up with relief. ANNA continues slowly, a trace of sadness in her voice.* If I'd met him four years ago--or even two years ago--I'd have jumped at the chance, I tell you that straight. And I would now--only he's such a simple guy--a big kid--and I ain't

got the heart to fool him. *She breaks off suddenly.* But don't never say again he ain't good enough for me. It's me ain't good enough for him.

CHRIS: *Snorts scornfully.* Py yiminy, you go crazy, Ay tank!

ANNA: *With a mournful laugh.* Well, I been thinking I was myself the last few days. *She goes and takes a shawl from a hook near the door and throws it over her shoulders.* Guess I'll take a walk down to the end of the dock for a minute and see what's doing. I love to watch the ships passing. Mat'll be along before long, I guess. Tell him where I am, will you?

CHRIS: *Despondently.* All right, Ay tal him. *ANNA goes out the doorway on rear. CHRIS follows her out and stands on the deck outside for a moment looking after her. Then he comes back inside and shuts the door. He stands looking out of the window--mutters-- "Dirty die davil, you." Then he goes to the table, sets the cloth straight mechanically, picks up the newspaper ANNA has let fall to the floor and sits down in the rocking-chair. He stares at the paper for a while, then puts it on table, holds his head in his hands and sighs drearily. The noise of a man's heavy footsteps comes from the deck outside and there is a loud knock on the door. CHRIS starts, makes a move as if to get up and go to the door, then thinks better of it and sits still. The knock is repeated-- then as no answer comes, the door is flung open and MAT BURKE appears. CHRIS scowls at the intruder and his hand instinctively goes back to the sheath knife on his hip. BURKE is dressed up-- wears a cheap blue suit, a striped cotton shirt with a black tie, and black shoes newly shined. His face is beaming with good humor.*

BURKE: *As he sees CHRIS--in a jovial tone of mockery.* Well, God bless who's here! *He bends down and squeezes his huge form through the narrow doorway.* And how is the world treating you this afternoon, Anna's father?

CHRIS: *Sullenly.* Pooty goot--if it ain't for some fallars. BURKE--[With a grin.] Meaning me, do you? *He laughs.* Well, if you ain't the funny old crank of a man! *Then soberly.* Where's herself? *CHRIS sits dumb, scowling, his eyes averted. BURKE is irritated by this silence.* Where's Anna, I'm after asking you?

CHRIS: *Hesitating--then grouchily.* She go down end of dock.

BURKE: I'll be going down to her, then. But first I'm thinking I'll take this chance when we're alone to have a word with you. *He sits down opposite CHRIS at the table and leans over toward him.* And that word is soon said. I'm marrying your Anna before this day is out, and you might as well make up your mind to it whether you like it or no.

CHRIS: *Glaring at him with hatred and forcing a scornful laugh.* Ho-ho! Dat's easy for say!

BURKE: You mean I won't? *Scornfully.* Is it the like of yourself will stop me, are you thinking?

CHRIS: Yes, Ay stop it, if it come to vorst.

BURKE: *With scornful pity.* God help you!

CHRIS: But ain't no need for me do dat. Anna--

BURKE: *Smiling confidently.* Is it Anna you think will prevent me?

CHRIS: Yes.

BURKE: And I'm telling you she'll not. She knows I'm loving her, and she loves me the same, and I know it.

CHRIS: Ho-ho! She only have fun. She make big fool of you, dat's all!

BURKE: *Unshaken--pleasantly.* That's a lie in your throat, divil mend you!

CHRIS: No, it ain't lie. She tal me yust before she go out she never marry fallar like you.

BURKE: I'll not believe it. 'Tis a great old liar you are, and a divil to be making a power of trouble if you had your way. But 'tis not trouble I'm looking for, and me sitting down here. *Earnestly.* Let us be talking it out now as man to man. You're her father, and wouldn't it be a shame for us to be at each other's throats like a pair of dogs, and I married with Anna. So out with the truth, man alive. What is it you're holding against me at all?

CHRIS: *A bit placated, in spite of himself, by BURKE'S evident sincerity--but puzzled and suspicious.* Vell--Ay don't vant for Anna gat married. Listen, you fallar. Ay'm a ole man. Ay don't see Anna for fifteen year. She vas all Ay gat in vorld. And now ven she come on first trip--you tank Ay vant her leave me 'lone again?

BURKE: *Heartily.* Let you not be thinking I have no heart at all for the way you'd be feeling.

CHRIS: *Astonished and encouraged--trying to plead persuasively.* Den you do right tang, eh? You ship avay again, leave Anna alone. *Cajolingly.* Big fallar like you dat's on sea, he don't need vife. He gat new gel in every port, you know dat.

BURKE: *Angry for a second.* God stiffen you! *Then controlling himself--calmly.* I'll not be giving you the lie on that. But divil take you, there's a time comes to every man, on sea or land, that isn't a born fool, when he's sick of the lot of them cows, and wearing his heart out to meet up with a fine dacent girl, and have a home to call his own and be rearing up children in it. 'Tis small use you're asking me to leave Anna. She's the wan woman of the world for me, and I can't live without her now, I'm thinking.

CHRIS: You forgat all about her in one veek out of port, Ay bet you!

BURKE: You don't know the like I am. Death itself wouldn't make me forget her. So let you not be making talk to me about leaving her. I'll not, and be damned to you! It won't be so bad for you as you'd make out at all. She'll be living here in the States, and her married to me. And you'd be seeing her often so--a sight more often than ever you saw her the fifteen years she was growing up in the West. It's quare you'd be the one to be making great trouble about her leaving you when you never laid eyes on her once in all them years.

CHRIS: *Guiltily.* Ay taught it vas better Anna stay avay, grow up inland where she don't ever know ole davil, sea.

BURKE: *Scornfully.* Is it blaming the sea for your troubles ye are again, God help you? Well, Anna knows it now. 'Twas in her blood, anyway,

CHRIS: And Ay don't vant she ever know no-good fallar on sea--

BURKE: She knows one now.

CHRIS: *Banging the table with his fist--furiously.* Dat's yust it! Dat's yust what you are--no-good, sailor fallar! You tank Ay lat her life be made sorry by you like her mo'der's vas by me! No, Ay svear! She don't marry you if Ay gat kill you first!

BURKE: *Looks at him a moment, in astonishment--then laughing uproariously.* Ho-ho! Glory be to God, it's bold talk you have for a stumpy runt of a man!

CHRIS: *Threateningly.* Vell--you see!

BURKE: *With grinning defiance.* I'll see, surely! I'll see myself and Anna married this day, I'm telling you! *Then with contemptuous exasperation.* It's quare fool's blather you have about the sea done this and the sea done that. You'd ought to be shamed to be saying the like, and you an old sailor yourself. I'm after hearing a lot of it from you and a lot more that Anna's told me you do be saying to her, and I'm thinking it's a poor weak thing you are, and not a man at all!

CHRIS: *Darkly.* You see if Ay'm man--maybe quicker'n you tank.

BURKE: *Contemptuously.* Yerra, don't be boasting. I'm thinking 'tis out of your wits you've got with fright of the sea. You'd be wishing Anna married to a farmer, she told me. That'd be a swate match, surely! Would you have a fine girl the like of Anna lying down at nights with a muddy scut stinking of pigs and dung? Or would you have her tied for life to the like of them skinny, shrivelled swabs does be working in cities?

CHRIS: Dat's lie, you fool!

BURKE: 'Tis not. 'Tis your own mad notions I'm after telling. But you know the truth in your heart, if great fear of the sea has made you a liar and coward itself. *Pounding the table.* The sea's the only life for a man with guts in him isn't afraid of his own shadow! 'Tis only on the sea he's free, and him roving the face of the world, seeing all things, and not giving a damn for saving up money, or stealing from his friends, or any of the black tricks that a landlubber'd waste his life on. 'Twas yourself knew it once, and you a bo'sun for years.

CHRIS: *Sputtering with rage.* You vas crazy fool, Ay tal you!

BURKE: You've swallowed the anchor. The sea give you a clout once knocked you down, and you're not man enough to get up for another, but lie there for the rest of your life howling bloody murder. *Proudly.* Isn't it myself the sea has nearly drowned, and me battered and bate till I was that close to hell I could hear the flames roaring, and never a groan out of me till the sea gave up and it seeing the great strength and guts of a man was in me?

CHRIS: *Scornfully.* Yes, you vas hell of fallar, hear you tal it!

BURKE: *Angrily.* You'll be calling me a liar once too often, me old bucko! Wasn't the whole story of it and my picture itself in the newspapers of Boston a week back? *Looking CHRIS up and down belittlingly.* Sure I'd like to see you in the best of your youth do the like of what I done in the storm and after. 'Tis a mad lunatic, screeching with fear, you'd be this minute!

CHRIS: Ho-ho! You vas young fool! In ole years when Ay was on windyammer, Ay vas through hundred storms vorse'n dat! Ships vas ships den--and men dat sail on dem vas real men. And now what you gat on steamers? You gat fallars on deck don't know ship from mudscow. *With a meaning glance at BURKE.* And below deck you gat fallars yust know how for shovel coal--might yust as veil vork on coal vagon ashore!

BURKE: *Stung--angrily.* Is it casting insults at the men in the stokehole ye are, ye old ape? God stiffen you! Wan of them is worth any ten stock-fish-swilling Square-heads ever shipped on a windbag!

CHRIS: *His face working with rage, his hand going back to the sheath-knife on his hip.* Irish svine, you!

BURKE: *Tauntingly.* Don't ye like the Irish, ye old babboon? 'Tis that you're needing in your family, I'm telling you--an Irishman and a man of the stokehole--to put guts in it so that you'll not be having grandchildren would be fearful cowards and jackasses the like of yourself!

CHRIS: *Half rising from his chair--in a voice choked with rage.* You look out!

BURKE: *Watching him intently--a mocking smile on his lips.* And it's that you'll be having, no matter what you'll do to prevent; for Anna and me'll be married this day, and no old fool the like of you will stop us when I've made up my mind.

CHRIS: *With a hoarse cry.* You don't! *He throws himself at BURKE, knife in hand, knocking his chair over backwards. BURKE springs to his feet quickly in time to meet the attack. He laughs with the pure love of battle. The old Swede is like a child in his hands. BURKE does not strike or mistreat him in any way, but simply twists his right hand behind his back and forces the knife from his fingers. He throws the knife into a far corner of the room--tauntingly.*

BURKE: Old men is getting childish shouldn't play with knives. *Holding the struggling CHRIS at arm's*

length--with a sudden rush of anger, drawing back his fist. I've half a mind to hit you a great clout will put sense in your square head. Kape off me now, I'm warning you! *He gives CHRIS a push with the flat of his hand which sends the old Swede staggering back against the cabin wall, where he remains standing, panting heavily, his eyes fixed on BURKE with hatred, as if he were only collecting his strength to rush at him again.*

BURKE: *Warningly.* Now don't be coming at me again, I'm saying, or I'll flatten you on the floor with a blow, if 'tis Anna's father you are itself! I've no patience left for you. *Then with an amused laugh.* Well, 'tis a bold old man you are just the same, and I'd never think it was in you to come tackling me alone. *A shadow crosses the cabin windows. Both men start. ANNA appears in the doorway.*

ANNA: *With pleased surprise as she sees BURKE.* Hello, Mat. Are you here already? I was down--[She stops, looking from one to the other, sensing immediately that something has happened.] What's up? *Then noticing the overturned chair--in alarm.* How'd that chair get knocked over? *Turning on BURKE reproachfully.* You ain't been fighting with him, Mat--after you promised?

BURKE: *His old self again.* I've not laid a hand on him, Anna. *He goes and picks up the chair, then turning on the still questioning ANNA--with a reassuring smile.* Let you not be worried at all. 'Twas only a bit of an argument we was having to pass the time till you'd come.

ANNA: It must have been some argument when you got to throwing chairs. *She turns on CHRIS.* Why don't you say something? What was it about?

CHRIS: *Relaxing at last--avoiding her eyes--sheepishly.* Ve vas talking about ships and fallars on sea.

ANNA: *With a relieved smile.* Oh--the old stuff, eh?

BURKE: *Suddenly seeming to come to a bold decision--with a defiant grin at CHRIS.* He's not after telling you the whole of it. We was arguing about you mostly.

ANNA: *With a frown.* About me?

BURKE: And we'll be finishing it out right here and now in your presence if you're willing. *He sits down at the left of table.*

ANNA: *Uncertainly--looking from him to her father.* Sure. Tell me what it's all about.

CHRIS: *Advancing toward the table--protesting to BURKE.* No! You don't do dat, you! You tal him you don't vant for hear him talk, Anna.

ANNA: But I do. I want this cleared up.

CHRIS: *Miserably afraid now.* Vell, not now, anyvay. You vas going ashore, yes? You ain't got time--

ANNA: *Firmly.* Yes, right here and now. *She turns to BURKE.* You tell me, Mat, since he don't want to.

BURKE: *Draws a deep breath--then plunges in boldly.* The whole of it's in a few words only. So's he'd make no mistake, and him hating the sight of me, I told him in his teeth I loved you. *Passionately.* And that's God truth, Anna, and well you know it!

CHRIS: *Scornfully--forcing a laugh.* Ho-ho! He tal same tang to gel every port he go!

ANNA: *Shrinking from her father with repulsion--resentfully.* Shut up, can't you? *Then to BURKE--feelingly.* I know it's true, Mat. I don't mind what he says.

BURKE: *Humbly grateful.* God bless you!

ANNA: And then what?

BURKE: And then--[Hesitatingly.] And then I said--[He looks at her pleadingly.] I said I was sure--I told him I thought you have a bit of love for me, too. *Passionately.* Say you do, Anna! Let you not destroy me entirely, for the love of God! *He grasps both her hands in his two.*

ANNA: *Deeply moved and troubled--forcing a trembling laugh.* So you told him that, Mat? No wonder he was mad. *Forcing out the words.* Well, maybe it's true, Mat. Maybe I do. I been thinking and thinking--I didn't want to, Mat, I'll own up to that--I tried to cut it out--but--[She laughs helplessly.] I guess I can't help it anyhow. So I guess I do, Mat. *Then with a sudden joyous defiance.* Sure I do! What's the use of kidding myself different? Sure I love you, Mat!

CHRIS: *With a cry of pain.* Anna! *He sits crushed.*

BURKE: *With a great depth of sincerity in his humble gratitude.* God be praised!

ANNA: *Assertively.* And I ain't never loved a man in my life before, you can always believe that--no matter what happens.

BURKE: *Goes over to her and puts his arms around her.* Sure I do be believing ivery word you iver said or iver will say. And 'tis you and me will be having a grand, beautiful life together to the end of our days! *He tries to kiss her. At first she turns away her head--then, overcome by a fierce impulse of passionate love, she takes his head in both her hands and holds his face close to hers, staring into his eyes. Then she kisses him full on the lips.*

ANNA: *Pushing him away from her--forcing a broken laugh.* Good- bye. *She walks to the doorway in rear--stands with her back toward them, looking out. Her shoulders quiver once or twice as if she were fighting back her sobs.*

BURKE: *Too in the seventh heaven of bliss to get any correct interpretation of her word--with a laugh.* Good-bye, is it? The divil you say! I'll be coming back at you in a second for more of the same! *To CHRIS, who has quickened to instant attention at his daughter's good-bye, and has looked back at her with a stirring of foolish hope in his eyes.* Now, me old bucko, what'll you be saying? You heard the words from her own lips. Confess I've bate you. Own up like a man when you're bate fair and square. And here's my hand to you--[Holds out his hand.] And let you take it and we'll shake and forget what's over and done, and be friends from this out.

CHRIS: *With implacable hatred.* Ay don't shake hands vith you fallar--not vhile Ay live!

BURKE: *Offended.* The back of my hand to you then, if that suits you better. *Growling.* 'Tis a rotten bad loser you are, divil mend you!

CHRIS: Ay don't lose--[Trying to be scornful and self-convincing.] Anna say she like you little bit but you don't hear her say she marry you, Ay bet. *At the sound of her name ANNA has turned round to them. Her face is composed and calm again, but it is the dead calm of despair.*

BURKE: *Scornfully.* No, and I wasn't hearing her say the sun is shining either.

CHRIS: *Doggedly.* Dat's all right. She don't say it, yust same.

ANNA: *Quietly--coming forward to them.* No, I didn't say it, Mat.

CHRIS: *Eagerly.* Dere! You hear!

BURKE: *Misunderstanding her--with a grin.* You're waiting till you do be asked, you mane? Well, I'm asking you now. And we'll be married this day, with the help of God!

ANNA: *Gently.* You heard what I said, Mat--after I kissed you?

BURKE: *Alarmed by something in her manner.* No--I disremember.

ANNA: I said good-bye. *Her voice trembling.* That kiss was for good-bye, Mat.

BURKE: *Terrified.* What d'you mane?

ANNA: I can't marry you, Mat--and we've said good-bye. That's all.

CHRIS: *Unable to hold back his exultation.* Ay know it! Ay know dat vas so!

BURKE: *Jumping to his feet--unable to believe his ears.* Anna! Is it making game of me you'd be? 'Tis a quare time to joke with me, and don't be doing it, for the love of God.

ANNA: *Looking him in the eyes--steadily.* D'you think I'd kid you now? No, I'm not joking, Mat. I mean what I said.

BURKE: Ye don't! Ye can't! 'Tis mad you are. I'm telling you!

ANNA: *Fixedly.* No I'm not.

BURKE: *Desperately.* But what's come over you so sudden? You was saying you loved me--

ANNA: I'll say that as often as you want me to. It's true.

BURKE: *Bewilderedly.* Then why--what, in the divil's name--Oh, God help me, I can't make head or tail to it at all!

ANNA: Because it's the best way out I can figure, Mat. *Her voice catching.* I been thinking it over and thinking it over day and night all week. Don't think it ain't hard on me, too, Mat.

BURKE: For the love of God, tell me then, what is it that's preventing you wedding me when the two of us has love? *Suddenly getting an idea and pointing at CHRIS--exasperatedly.* Is it giving heed to the like of that old fool ye are, and him hating me and filling your ears full of bloody lies against me?

CHRIS: *Getting to his feet--raging triumphantly before ANNA has a chance to get in a word.* Yes, Anna believe me, not you! She know her old fa'der don't lie like you.

ANNA: *Turning on her father angrily.* You sit down, d'you hear? Where do you come in butting in and making things worse? You're like a devil, you are! *Harshly.* Good Lord, and I was beginning to like you, beginning to forget all I've got held up against you!

CHRIS: *Crushed--feebly.* You ain't got nutting for hold against me, Anna.

ANNA: Ain't I yust! Well, lemme tell you--[She glances at BURKE and stops abruptly.] Say, Mat, I'm s'prised at you. You didn't think anything he'd said--

BURKE: *Glumly.* Sure, what else would it be?

ANNA: Think I've ever paid any attention to all his crazy bull? Gee, you must take me for a five-year-old kid.

BURKE: *Puzzled and beginning to be irritated at her too.* I don't know how to take you, with your saying this one minute and that the next.

ANNA: Well, he has nothing to do with it.

BURKE: Then what is it has? Tell me, and don't keep me waiting and sweating blood.

ANNA: *Resolutely* I can't tell you--and I won't. I got a good reason--and that's all you need to know. I can't marry you, that's all there is to it. *Distractedly.* So, for Gawd's sake, let's talk of something else.

BURKE: I'll not! *Then fearfully.* Is it married to someone else you are--in the West maybe?

ANNA: *Vehemently.* I should say not.

BURKE: *Regaining his courage.* To the divil with all other reasons then. They don't matter with me at all. *He gets to his feet confidently, assuming a masterful tone.* I'm thinking you're the like of them women can't make up their mind till they're drove to it. Well, then, I'll make up your mind for you bloody quick. *He takes her by the arms, grinning to soften his serious bullying.* We've had enough of talk! Let you be going into your room now and be dressing in your best and we'll be going

ashore.

CHRIS: *Aroused--angrily.* No, py God, she don't do that! *Takes hold of her arm.*

ANNA: *Who has listened to BURKE in astonishment. She draws away from him, instinctively repelled by his tone, but not exactly sure if he is serious or not--a trace of resentment in her voice.* Say, where do you get that stuff?

BURKE: *Imperiously.* Never mind, now! Let you go get dressed, I'm saying, *Then turning to CHRIS.* We'll be seeing who'll win in the end--me or you.

CHRIS: *To ANNA--also in an authoritative tone.* You stay right here, Anna, you hear! *ANNA stands looking from one to the other of them as if she thought they had both gone crazy. Then the expression of her face freezes into the hardened sneer of her experience.*

BURKE: *Violently.* She'll not! She'll do what I say! You've had your hold on her long enough. It's my turn now.

ANNA: *With a hard laugh.* Your turn? Say, what am I, anyway?

BURKE: 'Tis not what you are, 'tis what you're going to be this day--and that's wedded to me before night comes. Hurry up now with your dressing.

CHRIS: *Commandingly.* You don't do one tang he say, Anna! *ANNA laughs mockingly.*

BURKE: She will, so!

CHRIS: Ay tal you she don't! Ay'm her fa'der.

BURKE: She will in spite of you. She's taking my orders from this out, not yours.

ANNA: *Laughing again.* Orders is good!

BURKE: *Turning to her impatiently.* Hurry up now, and shake a leg. We've no time to be wasting. *Irritated as she doesn't move.* Do you hear what I'm telling you?

CHRIS: You stay dere, Anna!

ANNA: *At the end of her patience--blazing out at them passionately.* You can go to hell, both of you! *There is something in her tone that makes them forget their quarrel and turn to her in a stunned amazement. ANNA laughs wildly.* You're just like all the rest of them--you two! Gawd, you'd think I was a piece of furniture! I'll show you! Sit down now! *As they hesitate--furiously.* Sit down and let me talk for a minute. You're all wrong, see? Listen to me! I'm going to tell you something--and then I'm going to beat it. *To BURKE--with a harsh laugh.* I'm going to tell you a funny story, so pay attention. *Pointing to CHRIS.* I've been meaning to turn it loose on him every time he'd get my goat with his bull about keeping me safe inland. I wasn't going to tell you, but you've forced me into it. What's the dif? It's all wrong anyway, and you might as well get cured that way as any other. *With hard mocking.* Only don't forget what you said a minute ago about it not mattering to you what other reason I got so long as I wasn't married to no one else.

BURKE: *Manfully.* That's my word, and I'll stick to it!

ANNA: *Laughing bitterly.* What a chance! You make me laugh, honest! Want to bet you will? Wait 'n see! *She stands at the table rear, looking from one to the other of the two men with her hard, mocking smile. Then she begins, fighting to control her emotion and speak calmly.* First thing is, I want to tell you two guys something. You was going on's if one of you had got to own me. But nobody owns me, see?--'cepting myself. I'll do what I please and no man, I don't give a hoot who he is, can tell me what to do! I ain't asking either of you for a living. I can make it myself--one way or other. I'm my own boss. So put that in your pipe and smoke it! You and your orders!

BURKE: *Protestingly.* I wasn't meaning it that way at all and well you know it. You've no call to be

raising this rumpus with me. *Pointing to CHRIS.* 'Tis him you've a right--

ANNA: I'm coming to him. But you--you did mean it that way, too. You sounded--yust like all the rest. *Hysterically.* But, damn it, shut up! Let me talk for a change!

BURKE: 'Tis quare, rough talk, that--for a dacent girl the like of you!

ANNA: *With a hard laugh.* Decent? Who told you I was? *CHRIS is sitting with bowed shoulders, his head in his hands. She leans over in exasperation and shakes him violently by the shoulder.* Don't go to sleep, Old Man! Listen here, I'm talking to you now!

CHRIS: *Straightening up and looking about as if he were seeking a way to escape--with frightened foreboding in his voice.* Ay don't vant for hear it. You vas going out of head, Ay tank, Anna.

ANNA: *Violently.* Well, living with you is enough to drive anyone off their nut. Your bunk about the farm being so fine! Didn't I write you year after year how rotten it was and what a dirty slave them cousins made of me? What'd you care? Nothing! Not even enough to come out and see me! That crazy bull about wanting to keep me away from the sea don't go down with me! You yust didn't want to be bothered with me! You're like all the rest of 'em!

CHRIS: *Feebly.* Anna! It ain't so--

ANNA: *Not heeding his interruption--revengefully.* But one thing I never wrote you. It was one of them cousins that you think is such nice people--the youngest son--Paul--that started me wrong. *Loudly.* It wasn't none of my fault. I hated him worse 'n hell and he knew it. But he was big and strong--[Pointing to Burke]-- like you!

BURKE: *Half springing to his feet--his fists clenched* God blarst it! *He sinks slowly back in his chair again, the knuckles showing white on his clenched hands, his face tense with the effort to suppress his grief and rage.*

CHRIS: *In a cry of horrified pain.* Anna!

ANNA: *To him--seeming not to have heard their interruptions.* That was why I run away from the farm. That was what made me get a yob as nurse girl in St. Paul. *With a hard, mocking laugh.* And you think that was a nice yob for a girl, too, don't you? *Sarcastically.* With all them nice inland fellers yust looking for a chance to marry me, I s'pose. Marry me? What a chance! They wasn't looking for marrying. *As BURKE lets a groan of fury escape him--desperately.* I'm owning up to everything fair and square. I was caged in, I tell you--yust like in yail--taking care of other people's kids--listening to 'em bawling and crying day and night-- when I wanted to be out--and I was lonesome--lonesome as hell! *With a sudden weariness in her voice.* So I give up finally. What was the use? *She stops and looks at the two men. Both are motionless and silent. CHRIS seems in a stupor of despair, his house of cards fallen about him. BURKE's face is livid with the rage that is eating him up, but he is too stunned and bewildered yet to find a vent for it. The condemnation she feels in their silence goads ANNA into a harsh, strident defiance.* You don't say nothing--either of you--but I know what you're thinking. You're like all the rest! *To CHRIS--furiously.* And who's to blame for it, me or you? If you'd even acted like a man--if you'd even been a regular father and had me with you--maybe things would be different!

CHRIS: *In agony.* Don't talk dat vay, Anna! Ay go crazy! Ay von't listen! *Puts his hands over his ears.*

ANNA: *Infuriated by his action--stridently.* You will too listen! *She leans over and pulls his hands from his ears--with hysterical rage.* You--keeping me safe inland--I wasn't no nurse girl the last two years--I lied when I wrote you--I was in a house, that's what!--yes, that kind of a house--the kind sailors like you and Mat goes to in port--and your nice inland men, too--and all men, God damn 'em! I hate 'em! Hate 'em! *She breaks into hysterical sobbing, throwing herself into the chair and hiding her face in her hands on the table. The two men have sprung to their feet.*

CHRIS: *Whimpering like a child.* Anna! Anna! It's lie! It's lie! *He stands wringing his hands together and begins to weep.*

BURKE: *His whole great body tense like a spring--dully and gropingly.* So that's what's in it!

ANNA: *Raising her head at the sound of his voice--with extreme mocking bitterness.* I s'pose you remember your promise, Mat? No other reason was to count with you so long as I wasn't married already. So I s'pose you want me to get dressed and go ashore, don't you? *She laughs.* Yes, you do!

BURKE: *On the verge of his outbreak--stammeringly.* God stiffen you!

ANNA: *Trying to keep up her hard, bitter tone, but gradually letting a note of pitiful pleading creep in.* I s'pose if I tried to tell you I wasn't--that--no more you'd believe me, wouldn't you? Yes, you would! And if I told you that yust getting out in this barge, and being on the sea had changed me and made me feel different about things,'s if all I'd been through wasn't me and didn't count and was yust like it never happened--you'd laugh, wouldn't you? And you'd die laughing sure if I said that meeting you that funny way that night in the fog, and afterwards seeing that you was straight goods stuck on me, had got me to thinking for the first time, and I sized you up as a different kind of man-- a sea man as different from the ones on land as water is from mud--and that was why I got stuck on you, too. I wanted to marry you and fool you, but I couldn't. Don't you see how I'd changed? I couldn't marry you with you believing a lie--and I was shamed to tell you the truth--till the both of you forced my hand, and I seen you was the same as all the rest. And now, give me a bawling out and beat it, like I can tell you're going to. *She stops, looking at BURKE. He is silent, his face averted, his features beginning to work with fury. She pleads passionately.* Will you believe it if I tell you that loving you has made me--clean? It's the straight goods, honest! *Then as he doesn't reply--bitterly.* Like hell you will! You're like all the rest!

BURKE: *Blazing out--turning on her in a perfect frenzy of rage-- his voice trembling with passion.* The rest, is it? God's curse on you! Clane, is it? You slut, you, I'll be killing you now! *He picks up the chair on which he has been sitting and, swinging it high over his shoulder, springs toward her. CHRIS rushes forward with a cry of alarm, trying to ward off the blow from his daughter. ANNA looks up into BURKE'S eyes with the fearlessness of despair. BURKE checks himself, the chair held in the air.*

CHRIS: *Wildly.* Stop, you crazy fool! You vant for murder her!

ANNA: *Pushing her father away brusquely, her eyes still holding BURKE'S.* Keep out of this, you! *To BURKE--dully.* Well, ain't you got the nerve to do it? Go ahead! I'll be thankful to you, honest. I'm sick of the whole game.

BURKE: *Throwing the chair away into a corner of the room-- helplessly.* I can't do it, God help me, and your two eyes looking at me. *Furiously.* Though I do be thinking I'd have a good right to smash your skull like a rotten egg. Was there iver a woman in the world had the rottenness in her that you have, and was there iver a man the like of me was made the fool of the world, and me thinking thoughts about you, and having great love for you, and dreaming dreams of the fine life we'd have when we'd be wedded! *His voice high pitched in a lamentation that is like a keen* Yerra, God help me! I'm destroyed entirely and my heart is broken in bits! I'm asking God Himself, was it for this He'd have me roaming the earth since I was a lad only, to come to black shame in the end, where I'd be giving a power of love to a woman is the same as others you'd meet in any hooker-shanty in port, with red gowns on them and paint on their grinning mugs, would be sleeping with any man for a dollar or two!

ANNA: *In a scream.* Don't, Mat! For Gawd's sake! *Then raging and pounding on the table with her hands.* Get out of here! Leave me alone! Get out of here!

BURKE: *His anger rushing back on him.* I'll be going, surely! And I'll be drinking sloos of whiskey will wash that black kiss of yours off my lips; and I'll be getting dead rotten drunk so I'll not remember if 'twas iver born you was at all; and I'll be shipping away on some boat will take me to the other end of the world where I'll never see your face again! *He turns toward the door*

CHRIS: *Who has been standing in a stupor--suddenly grasping BURKE by the arm--stupidly* No, you don't go. Ay tank maybe it's better Anna marry you now.

BURKE: *Shaking CHRIS off--furiously* Lave go of me, ye old ape! Marry her, is it? I'd see her roasting in hell first! I'm shipping away out of this, I'm telling you! *Pointing to Anna-- passionately* And my curse on you and the curse of Almighty God and all the Saints! You've destroyed me this day and may you lie awake in the long nights, tormented with thoughts of Mat Burke and the great wrong you've done him!

ANNA: *In anguish* Mat! *But he turns without another word and strides out of the doorway. ANNA looks after him wildly, starts to run after him, then hides her face in her outstretched arms, sobbing. CHRIS stands in a stupor, staring at the floor.*

CHRIS: *After a pause, dully.* Ay tank Ay go ashore, too.

ANNA: *Looking up, wildly.* Not after him! Let him go! Don't you dare--

CHRIS: *Somberly.* Ay go for gat drink.

ANNA: *With a harsh laugh.* So I'm driving you to drink, too, eh? I s'pose you want to get drunk so's you can forget--like him?

CHRIS: *Bursting out angrily.* Yes, Ay vant! You tank Ay like hear dem tangs. *Breaking down--weeping.* Ay tank you vasn't dat kind of gel, Anna.

ANNA: *Mockingly.* And I s'pose you want me to beat it, don't you? You don't want me here disgracing you, I s'pose?

CHRIS: No, you stay here! *Goes over and pats her on the shoulder, the tears running down his face.* Ain't your fault, Anna, Ay know dat. *She looks up at him, softened. He bursts into rage.* It's dat ole davil, sea, do this to me! *He shakes his fist at the door.* It's her dirty tricks! It vas all right on barge with yust you and me. Den she bring dat Irish fallar in fog, she make you like him, she make you fight with me all time! If dat Irish fallar don't never come, you don't never tal me dem tangs, Ay don't never know, and every tang's all right. *He shakes his fist again* Dirty ole davil!

ANNA: *With spent weariness.* Oh, what's the use? Go on ashore and get drunk.

CHRIS: *Goes into room on left and gets his cap. He goes to the door, silent and stupid--then turns.* You vait here, Anna?

ANNA: *Dully* Maybe--and maybe not. Maybe I'll get drunk, too. Maybe I'll--But what the hell do you care what I do? Go on and beat it. *CHRIS turns stupidly and goes out. ANNA sits at the table, staring straight in front of her.*

The Curtain Falls

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

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