

SCENE 2

Scene is the same. Lights dim up on living-room. Laura discovered by menagerie, polishing glass. Crosses to phonograph, plays record. She times this business so as to put needle on record as MUSIC CUE #4 ends.*

Enter Amanda down alley R. Rattles key in lock. Laura crosses guiltily to typewriter and types. (Small typewriter table with typewriter on it is still onstage in living-room L.) Amanda comes into room R. closing door. She has on one of those cheap or imitation velvety-looking cloth coats with imitation-fur collar. Her hat is five or six years old, one of those dreadful cloche hats that were worn in the late twenties, and she is clasping an enormous black patent-leather pocket-book with nickel clasps and initials. This is her full-dress outfit, the one she usually wears to the D.A.R. She crosses to armchair, putting hat, purse and gloves on it.

Something has happened to Amanda. It is written in her face: a look that is grim and hopeless and a little absurd. She purses her lips, opens her eyes very wide, rolls them upward and shakes her head. Seeing her mother's expression, Laura touches her lips with a nervous gesture.

START → LAURA. Hello, Mother, I was just...

AMANDA. I know. You were just practicing your typing, I suppose.
(Behind chair R.)

LAURA. Yes.

AMANDA. Deception, deception, deception!

LAURA. (Shakily.) How was the D.A.R. meeting, Mother?

AMANDA. (Crosses to Laura.) D.A.R. meeting!

LAURA. Didn't you go to the D.A.R. meeting, Mother?

AMANDA. (Faintly, almost inaudibly.) No, I didn't go to any D.A.R. meeting. (Then more forcibly.) I didn't have the strength—I didn't

* While *Dardanella* was used in the professional production, any other popular record of the '20s may be substituted. It should be a worn record.

have the courage. I just wanted to find a hole in the ground and crawl in it and stay there the rest of my entire life.

Amanda tears type charts, throws them on floor.

LAURA. (*Faintly.*) Why did you do that, Mother?

AMANDA. (*Sits on R. end of day-bed.*) Why? Why? How old are you, Laura?

LAURA. Mother, you know my age.

AMANDA. I was under the impression that you were an adult, but evidently I was very much mistaken.

She stares at Laura.

LAURA. Please don't stare at me, Mother!

Amanda closes her eyes and lowers her head. Pause.

AMANDA. What are we going to do? What is going to become of us? What is the future?

Pause.

LAURA. Has something happened, Mother? Mother, has something happened?

AMANDA. I'll be all right in a minute. I'm just bewildered—by life...

LAURA. Mother, I wish that you would tell me what's happened!

AMANDA. I went to the D.A.R. this afternoon, as you know; I was to be inducted as an officer. I stopped off at Rubicam's Business College to tell them about your cold and to ask how you were progressing down there.

LAURA. Oh...

AMANDA. Yes, oh—oh—oh. I went straight to your typing instructor and introduced myself as your mother. She didn't even know who you were. "Wingfield?" she said. "We don't have any such scholar enrolled in this school." I assured her she did. I said my daughter Laura's been coming to classes since early January. "Well, I don't know," she said, "unless you mean that terribly shy little girl who dropped out of school after a few days' attendance?" No, I said, I don't mean that one. I mean my daughter, Laura, who's been coming here every single day for the past six weeks! "Excuse me," she said. And she took down the attendance book and there was your name, unmistakable, printed,

and all the dates you'd been absent. I still told her she was wrong. I still said, "No, there must have been some mistake! There must have been some mix-up in the records!" "No," she said, "I remember her perfectly now. She was so shy and her hands trembled so that her fingers couldn't touch the right keys! When we gave a speed-test—she just broke down completely—was sick at the stomach and had to be carried to the washroom! After that she never came back. We telephoned the house every single day and never got any answer." (*Rising from day-bed, crosses R. C.*) That was while I was working all day long down at that department store, I suppose, demonstrating those— (*With hands indicates brassiere.*) Oh! I felt so weak I couldn't stand up! (*Sits in armchair.*) I had to sit down while they got me a glass of water!

Laura crosses up to phonograph.

Fifty dollars' tuition. I don't care about the money so much, but all my hopes for any kind of future for you—gone up the spout, just gone up the spout like that.

Laura winds phonograph up.

Oh, don't *do* that, Laura!—Don't play that Victrola!

LAURA. Oh!

She stops phonograph, crosses to typing table, sits.

AMANDA. What have you been doing every day when you've gone out of the house pretending that you were going to business college?

LAURA. I've just been going out walking.

AMANDA. That's not true!

LAURA. Yes, it is, Mother, I just went walking.

AMANDA. Walking? Walking? In winter? Deliberately courting pneumonia in that light coat? Where did you walk to, Laura?

LAURA. All sorts of places—mostly in the park.

AMANDA. Even after you'd started catching that cold?

LAURA. It was the lesser of two evils, Mother. I couldn't go back. I threw up on the floor!

AMANDA. From half past seven till after five every day you mean to tell me you walked around in the park, because you wanted to make me think that you were still going to Rubicam's Business College?

LAURA. Oh, Mother, it wasn't as bad as it sounds. I went inside places to get warmed up.

AMANDA. Inside where?

LAURA. I went in the art museum and the bird-houses at the zoo. I visited the penguins every day! Sometimes I did without lunch and went to the movies. Lately I've been spending most of my afternoons in the Jewel-box, that big glass house where they raise the tropical flowers.

AMANDA. You did all that to deceive me, just for deception! Why? Why? Why? Why?

LAURA. Mother, when you're disappointed, you get that awful suffering look on your face, like the picture of Jesus' mother in the museum! *(Rises.)*

AMANDA. Hush!

LAURA. *(Crosses R. to menagerie.)* I couldn't face it. I couldn't. * END

MUSIC CUE #5.

~~AMANDA. *(Rising from day-bed.)* So what are we going to do now, honey, the rest of our lives? Just sit down in this house and watch the parades go by? Amuse ourselves with the glass menagerie? Eternally play those worn-out records your father left us as a painful reminder of him? *(Slams phonograph lid.)* We can't have a business career.~~

END MUSIC CUE #5.

No, we can't do that—that just gives us indigestion. *(Around R. day-bed.)* What is there left for us now but dependency all our lives? I tell you, Laura, I know so well what happens to unmarried women who aren't prepared to occupy a position in life.

She crosses L., sits on day-bed.

I've seen such pitiful cases in the South—barely tolerated spinsters living on some brother's wife or a sister's husband—tucked away in some mousetrap of a room—encouraged by one in-law to go on and visit the next in-law—little birdlike women—without any nest—eating the crust of humility all their lives! Is that the future that we've mapped out for ourselves? I swear I don't see any other alternative. And I don't think that's a very pleasant alternative. Of course—some girls *do* marry. My goodness, Laura, haven't you ever liked some boy?