

Tom's final speech. The narrator is an undisguised convention of the play. He takes whatever license with dramatic convention as is convenient to his purposes.

Tom enters dressed as a Merchant sailor from alley, stage L. (stage R. if L. alley is omitted), and strolls across the front of the stage to the fire-escape. There he stops and lights a cigarette. (This is the fire-escape landing shown in diagram on p. 83. Tom may lean against grillwork of this as he lights cigarette.) He addresses the audience.

START →

TOM. I have tricks in my pocket—I have things up my sleeve—but I am the opposite of the stage magician. He gives you illusion that has the appearance of truth. I give you truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion. I take you back to an alley in St. Louis. The time, that quaint period when the huge middle class of America was matriculating from a school for the blind. Their eyes had failed them, or they had failed their eyes, and so they were having their fingers pressed forcibly down on the fiery Braille alphabet of a dissolving economy.—In Spain there was revolution.—Here there was only shouting and confusion and labor disturbances, sometimes violent, in otherwise peaceful cities such as Cleveland—Chicago—Detroit... That is the social background of this play... The play is memory.

MUSIC CUE #2.

Being a memory play, it is dimly lighted, it is sentimental, it is not realistic.—In memory everything seems to happen to music.—That explains the fiddle in the wings. I am the narrator of the play, and also a character in it. The others characters in the play are my mother, Amanda, my sister, Laura, and a gentleman caller who appears in the final scenes. He is the most realistic character in the play, being an emissary from a world that we were somehow set apart from.—But having a poet's weakness for symbols, I am using this character as a symbol—as the long-delayed but always expected something that we live for.—There is a fifth character who doesn't appear other than in a photograph hanging on the wall. When you see the picture of this grinning gentleman, please remember this is our father who left us a long time ago. He was a telephone man who fell in love with long distance—so he gave up his job with the

telephone company and skipped the light fantastic out of town. ... The last we heard of him was a picture postcard from the Pacific coast of Mexico, containing a message of two words—"Hello—Goodbye!" and no address. * END

LIGHTS UP IN DINING-ROOM. Through the scrim—gauze curtains—we see Amanda and Laura seated at the table in the upstage area. Tom exits R. He goes off downstage, takes off his sailor overcoat and skull-fitting knitted cap and remains offstage by dining-room R. door for his entrance cue. Amanda and Laura are seated at a drop-leaf table. Amanda is sitting in C. chair and Laura in L. chair. Amanda faces the audience. Eating is indicated by gestures without food or utensils. Amanda's voice becomes audible through the portières.

~~AMANDA.~~ You know, Laura, I had the funniest experience in church last Sunday. The church was crowded except for one pew way down front and in that was just one little woman. I smiled very sweetly at her and said, "Excuse me, would you mind if I shared this pew?" "I certainly would," she said, "this space is rented." Do you know that is the first time that I ever knew that the Lord rented space.

Dining-room gauze curtains open automatically.

These Northern Episcopalians! I can understand the Southern Episcopalians, but these Northern ones, no.

Tom enters dining-room R., slips over to table and sits in chair R.

Honey, don't push your food with your fingers. If you have to push your food with something, the thing to use is a crust of bread. You must chew your food. Animals have secretions in their stomachs which enable them to digest their food without mastication, but human beings must chew their food before they swallow it down, and chew, chew. Oh, eat leisurely. Eat leisurely. A well-cooked meal has many delicate flavors that have to be held in the mouth for appreciation, not just gulped down. Oh, chew, chew—chew!

At this point the scrim curtain—if the director decides to use it—suggesting exterior wall rises here and does not come down again until just before the end of the play.

Don't you want to give your salivary glands a chance to function?