

# **THE DOUBLE NEGATIVE**

A Play For Stage

3 Acts, 8 Characters

**by**

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## **THE DOUBLE NEGATIVE**

Two brothers take very different approaches to post-war life in Europe. Pen Hartzog, a decorated fighter, works hard in his tailor shop and tries to forget the violence; Martin Hartzog rails publicly against oppressive thugs haunting their small town. Their affections for the same woman and one's consuming secret make for an epic drama of flawed human choices.

**THE CHARACTERS**

MARTIN HARTZOG, *a man in his late 20s*

PEN (PENDLETON) HARTZOG, *a man in his early 30s*

TILLY HARTZOG, *a woman in her late 20s*

SAMPSON ODESTERS, *a man in his 60s*

CONRAD ZEIGLER, *a man in his 50s*

BRESKY, *a man*

FOLMANN, *a man*

MARGARET SHERKIS, *a woman, 20 years old*

**THE SETTING**

The mid-20<sup>th</sup> century in an unnamed European country.

**THE SCENES**

The tailor shop of Pendleton and Martin Hartzog and various locations.

**THE STAGE**

Short racks of clothes, a sewing machine, a dressing screen, a mirror, and other tailor shop accoutrements are placed. There is one door and one large window with the reversed letters HARTZOG & HARTZOG stenciled in the center.

Other sets include a government office, a street, a small apartment, a home, a jail cell, a café, and a hotel room.

ACT I

SCENE 1

(MARTIN HARTZOG stands center stage.)

MARTIN

I hope that you take my warnings not as dire and deadly inevitabilities, but as a course that may be reversed. I'm just a siren. These are times where they enter your home! No key, no knock, but a shoulder to the door and a shout up the stairs. "Get your clothes and what you can carry!"

(Disappointed)

I've failed. I can tell by your faces. Are you strong enough to make a stand? Are you strong enough to come to a rescue? Double up, my friends, my brothers, my kin, my kind. Double up for safety and security, though it is not our doors tonight that are battered down -- no -- not *our* doors, the doors that we've tripled-bolted, but the doors of others. So sleep. Safe.

(Pause)

That's not the country I know. It's 1946; the war is over but the fight has changed. Make your stand for our country and the safety of our countrymen. To not be infected by madness.

(Dim lights rise on the tailor shop.)

MARTIN walks behind a rack of clothes, as if hiding.

Outside the window, people pass by quickly, with lamps. Martin waits until the commotion quiets.

Lights rise to daytime.

TILLY HARTZOG enters through the tailor shop door, shivering in her coat. She doesn't notice MARTIN until she is seated behind the sewing machine.)

TILLY

Good morning, Martin. How was the church?

MARTIN

On fire.

TILLY

So they liked your speech?

MARTIN

By "on fire," I mean burned to the ground. Set ablaze two hours after we filed out. A warning, I'm sure. To not listen to me.

TILLY

So what does this mean for us?

MARTIN

They won't touch us. You forget: Pen is the golden man.

(TILLY begins to sew.)

TILLY

His position isn't irrevocable.

(Pause)

The bills are due.

(Pause)

If we were to have a fire--

MARTIN

Darling Tilly. Not to worry. A little heat, but no flame.

(MARTIN curls up on a chair, as if to sleep.)

TILLY

You should clear these speeches with Pendleton.

MARTIN

He'd just say no.

TILLY

You underestimate him.

MARTIN

He underestimates himself.

TILLY

If they think these things might work, they--

MARTIN

Ah! Ah! That's it, you said it, the key. "If they think those things might work."

(TILLY waves him off and goes to work on a gown.)

MARTIN (Continued)

You know what they did? Max Dochét's men?

(Pause)

Go to the home of an elderly couple -- the Smarzarms, you know them? Went to their home -- two of his men, oh not Dochét himself, he's too much the coward -- goes to these people and ask, "How long have you lived in this house?" Mr. Smarzarm tells the truth. "Six years." Dochét's men force in the door but old Mr. Smarzarm holds his ground. Has a pistol in a drawer. Says, "Out or you'll get a bullet." Dochét's men retreat and come back an hour later. Two *more* men this time. They hold the old man down and shave Mrs. Smarzarm bald with a pair of rusty clippers. "How much is your rent?" Dochét's thugs demand when the deed is done. "Eight hundred," lies Old Smarzarm. "Well now it's double." Poor old man doesn't know if these men have true stakes, as all his papers were lost when the surveyor's was burned and no one can prove a thing. They made him sign papers as they held the clippers to the man's penis. The Smarzarms' will loose their home eventually.

TILLY

That's a terrible story. Don't you fear they'll come here, too? I don't want my head shaved.

(MARTIN touches her hair then smiles.)

MARTIN

I don't want your pretty head shaved either. Trouble finds you in this village whether you seek it or not.

(Enter PEN HARTZOG, in a coat. He nods to both TILLY and MARTIN and then disappears into the back room.)

MARTIN sits back in the chair and shuts his eyes.)

MARTIN (Continued)

Stop worrying. Let me have a nap. I'll be right in an hour. Sew. The sound of the machine will put me to sleep. Sew, my dear. Sew.

(With a suspicious face, she starts the machine, powered by her feet, and hems the gown.)

After a short moment, PEN enters, measuring tape around his neck. He lifts his chalk to begin marking fabric.)

PEN

(To TILLY)

What's first?

TILLY

Mr. Caston's double-breasted.

(PEN finds the suit on the rack and begins to examine the seams.)

PEN glances to his brother, asleep in the chair.)

PEN

(To TILLY)

Is he working today?

TILLY

Soon.

(Work continues.)

PEN

Because there are others that are being collected today.

TILLY

He knows. Just one hour. He didn't sleep.

(Pause)

Can I get a kiss?

(Seemingly bothered, PEN leans over and kisses  
TILLY on the mouth.)

PEN

I'm sorry I forgot.

TILLY

Did you finish your errand this morning?

PEN

Yes. We're all set.

TILLY

(Excited)

Wonderful! The hotel?

PEN

"The Electra."

(MARTIN opens his eyes and sits up suddenly.)

MARTIN

Are you going on a trip?

PEN

Maybe.

TILLY

Yes!

MARTIN

What kind of trip?

TILLY

A place by the sea.

MARTIN

That must cost.

PEN

A special rate. Friend from the fighting you don't know.  
Has a job in the city as a bellman.

TILLY

Think. A chance to be away from the shop.

PEN

Don't go plotting my overthrow, Martin. It's just a few  
days.

MARTIN

Safe as houses, my brother. Safe, safe, safe.

PEN

(Considering)

Maybe I should just close the doors for that time.

MARTIN

(Weary)

Pendleton.

PEN

You could get a rush of business and not know how to--

MARTIN

I can manage.

PEN

Not if you're sleeping.

(SAMPSON ODESTERS enters the shop, bringing with  
him a cold wind.

TILLY rises and shuts the door.)

TILLY

Good morning, Mr. Odesters!

PEN

Hello, Sampson.

SAM

It's a bitter day. Yes, bitter cold and bitter sad. Have you heard about the church? Burned to the ground in the night. The whole street full of Dochét's thugs carrying lamps, some thrown, no doubt, through the 48-year-old windows of our fine architecture.

PEN

Burned?

SAM

In a fire, yes, a terrible fire. Didn't you hear the bells?

PEN

No. The distance.

SAM

And last night's wind, Pendleton. A howling. I've come for my wool pants. The grey ones. The ones that were too long.

(TILLY rises to pull the pants from a nearby rack.)

TILLY

I've bonded the cuffs. That will hold better for you.

SAM

Thank you, my dear.

(SAMPSON inspects the pants.)

SAM (Continued)

Fine work. Fine.

TILLY

The cost is on the ticket.

SAM

Oh, yes.

(SAM pays PEN in coins then looks to MARTIN,  
still in his chair.)

SAM (Continued)  
Martin. Have you fallen into a deep depression?

MARTIN  
Not a wink, I'm afraid.

SAM  
The shop all night?

MARTIN  
I saw Max Dochét's men in the street.

SAM  
That's odd. Wolski was at the grocer's this morning. He mentioned seeing you at the café across from the church an hour after the close, alone. He wondered if your words' reception by the men had dimmed your lights.

MARTIN  
(Disputing)  
I felt well received.

SAM  
Did you now?

MARTIN  
Is there something else you've heard?

SAM  
No. Just the general appearance from the back of the room.

MARTIN  
You left in the middle.

SAM  
Not because I didn't like your commentary. I had my business. It was time to light the lamps. You went a bit long.

(SAM places the pants into his bag.)

SAM (Continued)  
(Over his shoulder)  
So you...you were at the café, Martin?

(MARTIN sits up.)

MARTIN  
Oh. I was. I'd forgotten that. I was to be meeting friends. But neither showed.

SAM  
Did you, by chance...see anything? Anything suspicious?

TILLY  
That's a *good* question, Mr. Odesters. Did you see anybody, Martin?

MARTIN  
No. At least I don't think.

SAM  
What time did you get back to the shop here?

MARTIN  
I didn't look at my watch. What time was the commotion in the street?

SAM  
Bah -- that was after the fire started.

MARTIN  
Then about an hour before that.

SAM  
No, no. That's wrong. Wolski was pretty certain about seeing you before the fire. But, no matter, you're safe...  
(Melodramatic)  
Oh, it's such a shame to be born at these coordinates!  
Doomed, as vanquished souls to dangerous woods.

(SAM goes toward the shop exit.)

SAM (Continued)

And out into this weather I must go. Thank you, fair Hartzogs, for your talents. All of them.

(SAM gives an odd look to MARTIN as he is waved goodbye, to exit.)

MARTIN slumps back down in the chair.)

MARTIN

Does he think I set the fire?

PEN

I don't understand.

MARTIN

He thinks I've set the fire.

TILLY

Don't be ridiculous.

MARTIN

You saw that look. He'll check the time with the café. That's his next stop. Thinks because he walks the streets and lights our lamps that he's the police.

TILLY

You should go and catch him, explain to him that it couldn't be you.

PEN

This could put the shop in an awkward place. A rumor like that.

MARTIN

It's possible.

PEN

That you were involved?

MARTIN

No, that you'll be put in an awkward place.

PEN

There are *two* Hartzog names on this window. You didn't make any money from your ill-conceived speaking engagement, now did you?

MARTIN

Ill-conceived?

PEN

You should have had me make the arrangements.

MARTIN

You mean: you could explain away my mission, and tell them I'm not a threat.

TILLY

Oh, that's unfair, Martin, you know it is.

(MARTIN again shuts his eyes.)

MARTIN

An hour...and the rumor shall be spread...

(Lights dim.)

ACT I

SCENE 2

(A government office.

PEN HARTZOG waits impatiently, alone.

Enter CONRAD ZEIGLER.)

ZEIGLER

Pendleton!

PEN

Mr. Zeigler. Thank you for meeting with me this afternoon.

(ZEIGLER gestures to a chair. They sit.)

ZEIGLER

You're a friend to me.

PEN

I don't even know your Christian name.

ZEIGLER

It's Conrad. Nut?

(ZEIGLER offer PEN a bowl of nuts.)

PEN

Conrad. No thank you.

ZEIGLER

Your message contained little information. When you get such an urgent communiqué from your tailor, you do wonder. Here is a man: Pendleton Hartzog. A businessman. Son of a man of the town. Rest his soul. A hero who has saved this town. Invading armies. You put down your chalk and pick up a rifle. I heard...and this may be just a story...that you alone fired from our bell tower and drove away the advancing hordes. You alone. Is your aim that good?

(PEN tips his head, shy.)

ZEIGLER (Continued)

So it's true. When I arrived, your name was the first on people's tongue. Coming to this assignment, I seek out pillars such as you. It helps.

PEN

I never met the last two Prefects.

ZEIGLER

Well. I'm here to stay. I shall not be so easily...removed. Now tell me about that bell tower.

PEN

I wasn't alone. There were several men. We all had rifles.

ZEIGLER

But it's your name that's remembered.

PEN

The others are dead.

ZEIGLER

You survived. I believe in reasons. To save us another day, is it? To...to what? To stitch my suits?

PEN

I was married.

ZEIGLER

To your brother's girl. I know that, too. Tilly. Isn't that her name? She's lovely.

PEN

Thank you...

ZEIGLER

She's from the village?

PEN

Yes. We've known each other for a long time.

ZEIGLER

How did you steal her?

PEN (Continued)

Steal her? That's a bit... Well. Martin went to university at the start of the war and it would have been dangerous for him to return. He missed everything. Including Tilly, who helped me restore the town, along with hundreds of other good men and women. It really does seem a long time ago. I've forgotten all the details.

ZEIGLER

Have you?

(Pause)

Now this business...your note. It seems such a simple and sober request. A friendship like ours. Look at this--

(ZEIGLER holds out the sleeve of his jacket.)

ZEIGLER (Continued)

(Appreciative)

This is your work. This is quality work. Every day I wear some article of clothing that you have touched.

PEN

It's not always me.

ZEIGLER

Look at the stitching. Look at the fine thread-work. I couldn't get that craft in the city. Only at Hartzog and Hartzog.

PEN

I'm pleased that you are satisfied.

ZEIGLER

A friendship like ours. You have no history of disappointment. Can I say that? Your sniper and stitching abilities have made a reputation.

PEN

You'll do it then?

ZEIGLER

Not directly. The friends your brother was to meet at the café are on Max Dochét's pay. But you know that.

PEN

Bresky and Folmann have been Martin's friends since they were little boys.

ZEIGLER

I'm the police. I'm to solve crimes.

PEN

I'm helping you shorten your list of suspects. Martin could not have caused the fire. That's our father's church. I'm just asking: clear the rumor. Ignore it.

ZEIGLER

Do you trust your brother?

PEN

I do. Father didn't. But I do.

ZEIGLER

Are you smarter than your late father? Do you see more?

PEN

Certainly not. I see only my brother. It just that sometimes Martin ties himself in knots when he doesn't intend to.

ZEIGLER

That's a bad quality for a tailor.

PEN

I'll agree to that. It is. So will you help me?

ZEIGLER

Yes. Why not? But...you must help me, too...agreed?

(Lights dim.)

ACT I

SCENE 3

(A village street. Wind howls.)

Enter BRESKY and FOLMANN.

Enter TILLY HARTZOG, in a hurry,  
carrying a satchel too heavy for her.)

BRESKY

Well, well, well. Need help, missus?

(TILLY keeps her eyes down.)

TILLY

I'm fine, thank you.

BRESKY

Folmann, grab a'hold of the handle there, give a hand.

FOLMANN

It'd be my hon'r.

(FOLMANN tries to get the satchel.)

TILLY

No, please. Thank you. I'm fine.

FOLMANN

We'll walk you home. Bresky and me, we--

TILLY

I'm not going home. I've got a donation for the church.

(BRESKY takes firm hold of the handle but TILLY  
still does not let go.)

BRESKY

Christian of you. Where did you get these clothes?

TILLY

What do you care?

BRESKY

You run a shop. We want to make sure the donations are up-and-up. Not stealing your goods out the back?

TILLY

(Offended)

*Of course* it's legitimate.

(BRESKY takes the satchel with force and opens it, spilling the contents onto the ground.)

FOLMANN

Your clothes are all dirty.

(Angry, TILLY begins to collect her clothes and stuff them in the bag.)

BRESKY

Folmann and me are in charge of the streets.

TILLY

I should kick you both. The streets were fine until I came across the two of you.

BRESKY

Nothin' -- I mean nothin' -- gets through without inspection. Even our friend's former lovers.

(TILLY stops and stares hard at BRESKY.)

TILLY

While you were hiding in cellars, my husband kept this town safe and sane. And for what? For thugs.

(TILLY stands again with her bag.)

TILLY (Continued)

I'm going to the church. I'm going to give them these clothes. And I'm going to tell them you made them dirty.

FOLMANN

They'll do nothing.

TILLY

Yes.

(Pause)

Yes. But I'll tell them just the same.

(TILLY leaves them and they drift offstage.)

Sound: a kicked can, movement.

TILLY stops.

A shadow of a man against the wall.

Lights out.)

ACT I

SCENE 4

(The tailor shop. PEN and MARTIN work.  
It is dark outside.)

PEN

Are you done with the cuffs?

MARTIN

Not quite. Let me guess: the Prefect.

(Pause)

I can tell by the wide circumference of the neck.

(PEN holds up the suit but does not comment, then  
returns to cutting.)

MARTIN (Continued)

You owe him nothing. What would be the results, I wonder,  
of ignoring his discounts? His deep, deep cuts into our  
profits.

(Pause)

He's not your friend. You don't owe our public officials a  
tribute. In fact, it's *you* that they should be paying.  
They wouldn't even have jobs. Instead, all of our services  
-- security, repairs, Sampson's lamps, would all be in the  
hands of foreign nationals. They owe you their entire  
livelihood. Consider that.

PEN

No one owes me anything. If it's just sewing, I'm happy to  
do it.

(SAMPSON ODESTERS enters, panting.)

SAM

Pen, Martin, come quickly! It's Tilly. I think she's been  
attacked.

(Lights down.)

ACT I

SCENE 5

(MARTIN, at the front of the stage, at podium.)

MARTIN

Crimes continue. A woman. A fine woman. A woman who has served this village in all its triumphs, and strife, and quietest hours, with patience and an understanding of human nature. We are being fueled by gasoline. I think most of you know what happened the last time I spoke. Is this building any safer? Is this fine glass, these, these well carved posts, strong enough to withstand attack? This civic hall is made of no better substance than the church - what makes me, you, anyone, think that it will burn any less quickly? But I know THIS. They may burn every home and building in the village and they may beat and intimidate every man, woman, and child, but they will not own us.

(Lights rise on the tailor shop.

MARTIN takes a seat, feet up. After a moment, enter BRESKY and FOLMANN.

The three do not speak for a long moment, only eye each other in the dimly lit shop.)

MARTIN (Continued)

I'm angry with you.

BRESKY

Us? We're your pals. And you speak so badly of us.

MARTIN

Get out of my shop.

FOLMANN

We thought this was your brother's shop.

MARTIN

There are two "Hartzogs" painted on that window.

BRESKY

Don't kid yourself. That's Pen and your father. That's not you.

MARTIN

It is now.

BRESKY

Ah, come on. You make us laugh with your insincerity. You don't wanna be no tailor. You just want to give speeches. You've spent too long away. Your brother was here long before your boots.

MARTIN

There was a war, you know.

FOLMANN

No one woulda killed you, Martin. No one killed us.

MARTIN

You're cockroaches. You can't be killed.

BRESKY

That hurts. You keep two cockroaches for friends?

MARTIN

You're not my friends. You just never disobey anyone, and that can be valuable. Except your disobedience two nights past.

FOLMANN

It wasn't us, see, that did that bit of business to Till. When we left her, she was all right. Not a worry. Someone got her afterwards.

MARTIN

The job has your fingerprints all over it.

BRESKY

(Knowing)

And whose fingerprints are on that church fire?

(Pause.)

MARTIN

I told you to leave my brother and his wife alone.

BRESKY

She was out on the street at night.

MARTIN

Leave the street to Odesters and his lamps.

BRESKY

Him. He thinks he owns the very fire. He's nothing. A speck. I don't think he even does what he's paid to do.

FOLMANN

I've seen him sleeping.

MARTIN

He's old. It's cold.

BRESKY

You make excuses for everyone but us.

MARTIN

You shouldn't have hurt her!

BRESKY

(Friendly)

I tell you that wasn't our work, M., not ours at all. There's another violence in the night. We helped her on her way, clothes for the church. Ask her yourself.

MARTIN

I plan to. I've not been allowed to see her yet. I've hired for a nurse who's locked me out.

BRESKY

Was she pregnant?

MARTIN

No. Count yourself lucky.

BRESKY

It wasn't *us*, dear Martin. We work for many, and those "many" can be less discreet than either of us, and far more violent. Folmann and me have to make a penny, too, you know. We have mouths just like you and your brother. Our

(MORE)

BRESKY (Continued)

customers don't need stitches in their shirts. They need ears to the cobbles. We do odd jobs of information and thistle removal. Right now, you're a bit of a thorn. Not for the reasons you think. Not for what you've shouted about in speeches. But for what cards you've played. There are trumps in your white sleeves.

MARTIN

Is this a warning?

BRESKY

This is a visit. You invited us in. Questions about events.

(Pause. MARTIN considers.)

MARTIN

You didn't harm Tilly Hartzog? But you know who has. How about a few coins to know?

FOLMANN

The other side is paying us to keep shut.

MARTIN

You're witnesses?

BRESKY

We're observers. There's a difference.

MARTIN

I'll do my own footwork. Tilly has a memory.

BRESKY

C'mon, Martin. You don't care about who attacked the girl. All you care about is your competition.

MARTIN

I keep you close for sentimental reasons, but those are wearing thin.

FOLMANN

You keep us close 'cos ya need us.

(A knock comes on the tailor shop door.)

MARTIN rises and answers.

At the door stands a young NURSE. This is MARGARET SHERKIS. She is very pretty.

MARTIN lets her inside. MARGARET enters with trepidation. MARTIN takes her coat and hangs it on the post.)

MARTIN

(Gesturing to BRESKY and FOLMANN)

Don't mind them. They're just about to leave.

BRESKY

It's only fair we should stay. Hear the report.

MARGARET

Do they know Mrs. Hartzog, sir?

MARTIN

They know nothing and no one. They claim to be the eyes and ears when in fact they're the anus.

FOLMANN

(Cautioning)

The lady, Martin. The lady.

(BRESKY takes MARGARET's arm, as a gentleman.)

BRESKY

Your name, pretty flower?

MARGARET

Margaret Sherkis.

BRESKY

I've always found women in white attractive. Particularly ones with such--

(BRESKY gestures to MARGARET's bosom.)

MARTIN

Enough, Bresky.

BRESKY

Both pretty women and speeches can be bad for the country's health.

(BRESKY removes his arm from MARGARET. He eyes her figure once more, and then, with FOLMANN, exits smiling.)

MARTIN

Has Tilly said anything?

MARGARET

Not about last night.

MARTIN

Pen?

MARGARET

He's with her now.

MARTIN

How's her health?

MARGARET

There's a cut -- here -- at the cheek, but not deep. A bruise on her arm has turned blue. Around. As so. She'd been yanked to the ground. And. And. Her ankle. She's twisted it. In the fall.

MARTIN

Was she raped?

MARGARET

No.

MARTIN

What did they want from her, then?

MARGARET

I believe it was just one person. She used a pronoun. "His". "His hands." Not "their hands." Around her throat.

MARTIN

Strangler--?

MARGARET

Oh, but he didn't mean to kill her. Just to get her to the ground. I'm sorry, Mr. Hartzog. I don't know any more details.

(Pause. MARTIN offers MARGARET a chair. She takes it. She undoes her scarf. Standing above her, MARTIN eyes her bosom.)

MARTIN

Have we met?

MARGARET

No, sir.

MARTIN

What's your age?

MARGARET

Twenty.

MARTIN

Where are you from?

MARGARET

The hills. The hospital. Mr. Odesters fetched me.

MARTIN

Do you know Sam?

MARGARET

Not before tonight.

MARTIN

Do you live at the hospital? It's becoming more and more common to draft ladies into noble professions. Room, board, and education. But I assume you like it.

MARGARET

I do. I do. Do you like...being a tailor?

MARTIN

I like a thing or two about it. Say, you are pretty.

MARGARET

(Uncomfortable)

Thank you, Mr. Hartzog.

MARTIN

Have you got a beau?

MARGARET

Yes. I'm engaged to a doctor at the hospital.

MARTIN

So it's not just room and board and education. How's the treatment?

MARGARET

Fine. Good.

MARTIN

Have you ever been raped?

MARGARET

What? Heavens no, sir.

MARTIN

Not too many pretty women who dodged that bullet during the fighting.

MARGARET

I was only 12 at the start.

MARTIN

That age hardly made you safe. Perhaps you're not being honest with me. Keep it safe from the doctor. Maybe tell him ten years in. Lord knows, people of this town have kept quiet about worse. Maybe that doctor of yours has a few black marks on his record, too, no? Some special surgeries at the request of the former Prefect. There were rumors, you know, of hospitals being used for torture. Oh, not the one on the hill. No. Not that one. But perhaps it was farmed out. This business. Perhaps the doctor traveled. You should ask him, if you haven't already.

MARGARET

Finn wouldn't have--

MARTIN

In this world, in this place, it's good to know who your friends are. Who your enemies are. What happened during the bad times. It seems to have a significant impact on whom they are today. And what they stand for.

MARGARET

I've seen your speeches. The schoolhouse. The church.

MARTIN

That's why you look familiar. I remember pretty faces.

MARGARET

I had the impression you were a crusader.

MARTIN

You're right; I am.

MARGARET

I came to help.

MARTIN

So did I. Different methods. I want to break things apart. You and fair Finn want to put them back together. Hopefully better this time than in the hasty patchwork after the shooting had stopped. There are leaks in our good fortune. The tub has not been properly sealed.

(Pause.)

MARGARET

I wasn't raped.

(MARTIN hovers, touches her shoulder.)

MARTIN

What has happened to you, then? It will be our secret.

(Lights down.)

ACT I

SCENE 6

(PEN and TILLY HARTZOG's home. PEN sits beside TILLY, who rests in her bed. She sits up, but seems weak.)

PEN

How were your dreams?

TILLY

I slept but not well.

PEN

A face?

TILLY

Yours. I dream about you every night. Have I told you that?

PEN

I wish I had gone with you to the church. I'll talk to the Prefect.

TILLY

I don't want everyone to know. I don't think he meant to hurt me.

PEN

That's ridiculous. Look at you.

TILLY

I think it was a mistake.

PEN

It's retribution -- for Martin. Dochét can't get to me, so he goes for you. I'll talk to my brother. Get him to shut his mouth.

TILLY

No--

PEN

Zeigler can help me. He likes the way I do his suits. You're a reason for that reputation. My secret weapon. You and your fingers. Oh, if that man had hurt your fingers, I'd, I'd--

TILLY

I don't think a thug will be the end of me.

PEN

A pickpocket can be as deadly as a war. You never know what will kill you.

(PEN falls into his wife's arms.)

PEN (Continued)

I think Martin is in trouble. He did this a lot when we were boys. Get in over his head. And he digs himself out in ways not right.

TILLY

He should trust you. You can help him.

PEN

He's not like that. He'll go out on a limb until it snaps. And I can't help him. I need the Prefect.

TILLY

At what price? Trust only me.

PEN

I'll give him another free suit.

(A knock.)

PEN

Come in.

(Enter MARGARET SHERKIS.)

MARGARET

How are you feeling?

TILLY

Better.

MARGARET

Would you like some soup? I can go to the kitchen--

PEN

I'll get it. You tend the patient.

(PEN exits. MARGARET takes off her coat and starts to tend to TILLY.)

TILLY

He's so concerned. He makes me laugh.

MARGARET

I'm glad to see you sitting up. I think I should be able to leave you soon. Finn will be worried that it's taken two days.

TILLY

Finn?

MARGARET

My fiancé. A doctor.

TILLY

Men of medicine have strong character.

(Pause, the nurse's checks continue.)

MARGARET

(Subtle)

What do you...think of Mr. Hartzog's character, miss?

TILLY

Pen?

MARGARET

No, his brother.

TILLY  
Martin?

MARGARET  
That's right.

TILLY  
Have you seen him speak?

MARGARET  
Yes. But that's one side.

TILLY  
You mean you want to know about the private side.

MARGARET  
He...he just struck me differently, that's all, today, when I called on him at the tailor shop. He was just as serious as before, but...it's hard to describe.

TILLY  
Martin used to be different with women, when he was a boy. I think pretty girls scared him.

(TILLY touches MARGARET's face. The NURSE stops tending.)

TILLY (Continued)  
You have beautiful eyes.  
(Pause)  
Did he kiss you?

MARGARET  
No!  
(Softer)  
No.  
(Pause)  
He wants me to come to town. Once a week. He says he has a medical problem.

TILLY  
Once a week?

MARGARET

He's paid me.

TILLY

Don't let that money settle too deep in your apron pockets.  
Money in this town is very rarely without...obligation.

(Pause)

How close are you to your doctor? Keep your engagements.  
All of them. Tell Martin I'm aware of the visits. That  
will preserve his behavior.

MARGARET

You haven't answered. Is he of good character?

TILLY

Sometimes...he sees more than the rest of us do about this  
world. And I think it frightens him. And it makes for  
foolish choices.

(Lights down.)

ACT I

SCENE 7

(The office of the Prefect.)

CONRAD ZEIGLER sits opposite SAMPSON ODESTERS.)

ZEIGLER

What have you witnessed? You should leave the exposed seams to the tailors. I have left you with your job because it's a job you do well. There's nothing ancillary in the task. Light the lamps. You act as though you're the police.

SAM

No, no, I know that I'm not. It's you. You can make arrests.

ZEIGLER

Only of those sanctioned.

SAM

And who gives *you* approval?

ZEIGLER

A wind. From afar.

SAM

It was Max Dochét. The walk. The gait. The hat. I don't think there's another man built as such. Heavy steps. The boots. Oh, and those hands. The knuckles. I remember these traits from long ago, from when the man was more than a ghost, but a living, breathing presence in this village.

ZEIGLER

What reason would he have for strangling an innocent?

SAM

I didn't say he was strangling her.

ZEIGLER

But you said his hands were around her neck.

SAM

It didn't appear to be violence. He was struggling to get her to hold still, and she kept twisting and twisting until it was a strange tangle.

ZEIGLER

Or tango? Had he planned to kiss her? Did you interrupt a rendezvous? He was simply framing her face, about to put his distinct Max Dochét lips to those of a married woman whom, I assume, was consenting, is that it?

SAM

Don't you want to at least ask questions?

ZEIGLER

No.

SAM

He's too slippery to be caught in our village. He's letting your eyes fall on his muscle -- Bresky and Folmann, on others, those dozen men he keeps in his hushed pockets. I'd call them henchmen, but that's a title too good for these. They're more like tentacles. At times, playing good citizen and then rising as a private army. Cancerous.

ZEIGLER

Calm yourself, Sampson.

SAM

Why? I light the lamps. I light the lamps and walk the street and help damaged girls. Married women. Mowed down in our street like blades of grass.

ZEIGLER

You lose your job with the lamps and you leave this town. Don't you? Can you sew? Are you...a...tailor? Will you cut into the Hartzog profits as you make claims? "I lost my job defending Tilly Hartzog's honor. Please put me on your rosters." Or will you tell them the truth? That you blamed a phantom and annoyed the Prefect.

SAM

Who...who can help me?

(No answer.)

SAM (Continued)

Is your wind from afar...the same thing I accuse?

(ZEIGLER stands suddenly.)

ZEIGLER

(Low boil)

Get out.

(Pause)

Get out. Tend to your oil and matches. I don't ally with thugs. I'm a man of importance. Get out.

(Pause)

And do not come back here unless you've seen a murder.

(Lights down.)

ACT I

SCENE 8

(MARTIN HARTZOG's apartment.)

MARTIN, on the bed, waits as MARGARET, searches the contents of her bag.)

MARTIN

Should I roll up my shirt?

MARGARET

All right.

(MARTIN rolls up his shirtsleeve, exposing his arm. From the bag, MARGARET extracts a needle. She speaks as she draws his blood.)

MARGARET (Continued)

A sample should show little. The hospital microscope is very poor. Finn always complains. Hold still. I will be gentle.

(MARGARET finishes and puts the vile into her bag.)

MARGARET (Continued)

Can you be clearer about your symptoms?

MARTIN

Blackouts. Sleeplessness.

(MARTIN rolls down his sleeve, rebuttoning.)

MARTIN (Continued)

I see you've worn a different dress.

MARGARET

It's not a dress. I have three uniforms.

MARTIN

Heavier fabric. I notice such things. I could make you a new uniform, if you like.

MARGARET

What's wrong with this one?

MARTIN

It's too high in the neck.

MARGARET

(Pleasant)

That's on purpose. I chose this above the other two for that very reason.

MARTIN

How's your doctor these days, anyhow?

MARGARET

Busy, but well. Thank you for asking.

MARTIN

Does he know you come here?

MARGARET

He knows I have a private patient.

MARTIN

Oh, is that what you call me?

MARGARET

What else would I call you? You are my private patient. I'll bring him to see you soon. Once the results of the blood are in I'll have him explain them to you. He can make a better diagnosis if he sees you.

MARTIN

I don't want him. I want you.

MARGARET

I'm just temporary. You need expertise.

MARTIN

Maybe I'm dying of loneliness.

MARGARET  
I don't think so. Lay down.

(MARTIN obeys. MARGARET conducts an examination.)

MARTIN  
Should I undress?

MARGARET  
That's not necessary.

(Pause)  
I heard about the window. To your shop.

MARTIN  
Bricks cause damage when thrown through windows.

MARGARET  
Did you have a blackout around that time?

MARTIN  
Shortly after, yes.

MARGARET  
Then it's probably stress. Do you drink?

MARTIN  
Yes.

MARGARET  
Much?

MARTIN  
Lots. I've got bottles stashed all over the shop. In reams of fabric. In spools of thread. The cellar. It's a secret.

MARGARET  
(Suddenly stiff)  
Don't mention those.

MARTIN  
(Sanguine)  
All right. I won't.

MARGARET

Breath in. Now out. I don't think there's any fluid. Do you cough?

MARTIN

When I have to.

MARGARET

Do you cough more than normal?

MARTIN

No.

MARGARET

Not in the night?

MARTIN

No.

MARGARET

Do you have bad dreams?

MARTIN

Constantly.

(MARGARET finishes. She stays on the bed.)

MARGARET

Maybe that's the cause of your sleeplessness.

MARTIN

One of many.

(MARTIN sits upright.)

MARTIN (Continued)

Tell me. Tell me, Margaret. What do you dream of?

MARGARET

Um. The hospital. The patients. Finn. Where I've been, what I've done, where I will go and what I will do. My sister--

MARTIN

Oh, you have a sister?

MARGARET

Anne-Alyse.

MARTIN

Older or younger?

MARGARET

Older.

MARTIN

As pretty?

MARGARET

Oh, much, much prettier. She could have won competitions.

MARTIN

Where is she now?

MARGARET

I'm not sure. Before the fighting, she went into hiding. I haven't heard from her since the peace. She's alive, though, as I received a letter from a friend saying Anne-Alyse had been spotted, on the road, between towns, with a well-to-do gentleman. That's my sister all right.

MARTIN

I never wrote my brother. Never. Not once. But...he's a survivor. I suppose you were safe in the hospital.

MARGARET

I didn't begin my training as a nurse until eighteen months ago.

MARTIN

I've hired a novice.

MARGARET

Don't worry. I'm within my training.

(MARGARET stands, begins to gather her things.)

MARGARET (Continued)

Well, that's all the help I can administer this week.

MARTIN

Haven't you got any pills or potions?

(MARGARET pulls a bottle from her bag.)

MARGARET

These. Finn gave me a bottle. They might help settle your nerves a bit.

MARTIN

Will they let me sleep?

MARGARET

Only you can do that. It's the pressure of the days. Max Dochét. The world. Your smashed shop window. These are the things that are keeping you up nights. Have they got any suspects? The window?

MARTIN

Probably the congregation, angry for dragging them into it. Business will go on as usual. Maybe I'll start tomorrow on your newest uniform.

(MARTIN stands and approaches her, closely.)

MARTIN (Continued)

One that best displays your attributes.

(MARTIN touches the high collar of her current uniform.)

MARGARET

I've quizzed Mrs. Hartzog on your character.

MARTIN

Have you now?

MARGARET

I suggest we stay professional. I'm to be married, and at the rate you go, you might be dangerous for a girl. You shouldn't be making *anything* for me.

MARTIN

Finn. The doctor.

MARGARET

Let's not accelerate your anxiety.

(MARGARET puts on her coat and crosses to exit, stopping.)

MARGARET

Have a good evening, Mr. Hartzog.

MARTIN

What did Tilly say about my character?

MARGARET

She said you weren't in your right mind when around pretty girls.

MARTIN

(Smiling)

I'll stay away from your sister then.

MARGARET

(Smiling back)

Yes. My sister.

(She exits.)

Lights down.)

ACT I

SCENE 9

(The tailor shop.

PEN HARTZOG surveys the repaired window, now covered in white paper.

SAMPSON ODESTERS sits in a corner chair.)

SAM

I have a friend who makes recombined glass from windows shot out during the war.

PEN

I don't want a piece with a bullet hole.

SAM

He'll cut around that. You'll never know it came from violence. You will, however, need to find a stenciler.

(PEN steps from the window and begins to fold clothes.)

PEN

I can do that myself. When father and I redid the window after the fighting, he had me do the names and the lacework. We used melted tar and brushes we found on the other side of the railroads.

SAM

Camouflage. Road Signs... It was that which bothered me most, Pen. The enemy seemed to come into our towns and re-*Christen* all of the roads and towns with names their tongues might say a little *better*, with no regard for our history. These things were named so for a reason.

(Proudly)

But we got it all back, didn't we, Pen? We *took* it back. Oh, it was beautiful to see them shrink at each defeat until they became smaller and smaller dots in the distance, to vanishing. Beautiful, beautiful.

PEN

I was glad to see them gone.

SAM

(Dour)

But I suppose now they've been replaced. One set of villains for another. Your window. Twice ruined in two years. First, by external evil, then again by-

PEN

It will be all right.

SAM

Don't be so certain, Pen. Someone harmed Tilly.

PEN

That was a thief.

SAM

No. It wasn't.

PEN

Someone after her purse.

SAM

She carried no purse.

PEN

He didn't know that.

(SAMPSON slams his fist on the sewing table.)

SAM

No! Not a thief!

(Low)

It was Max Dochét.

(SAMPSON scans the shop as if there are listeners.)

SAM (Continued)

I was the first to find your lovely wife, remember? And whom did I see running? Whom did I see, for a flash as I turned the corner?

PEN

Max Dochét?

SAM

(Low)

The very same.

PEN

That's...not possible. Martin rails against Dochét, but it's empty. The head has been removed from the body.

SAM

Oh, Pendleton. You can be so naïve, Pen Hartzog. We're that man with the rifle.

PEN

He died in the war.

SAM

Heroism does not spring from blindly following a path. When Dochét was a resident, who was the most important person in the world to Martin Hartzog? Hmmm? You? No. A man always chooses a woman over his brother. They were affiliated, in a sense, and if it's Dochét's wish to do Martin harm, why not harm what would be the sharpest pain point? The girl, now a woman, forget whom she is married to! She's a vulnerable heel.

PEN

Well clearly his...strategy...didn't work. Martin's to speak again tonight.

SAM

Think on this: there are connections. Martin's speeches, Zeigler's runarounds, the window, your wife, threats against my job, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. I am making myself a *watchman*. Though I have not been tapped with the power. Do you object to my investigation?

PEN

No. No, why should I?

SAM

As it might involve your brother.

PEN

Martin's just stretching his university idealism.

SAM

No. Pen Hartzog...take this advice, if you will...find that man with the rifle. He is not dead.

PEN

I don't want to find him.

SAM

You must. You must.

(Lights down.)

ACT I

SCENE 10

(MARTIN HARTZOG, in spotlight, speaks.)

MARTIN

If a man comes into my home, I kill him. If a man harms my friends, I seek retribution. If a man interrupts my business, I ruin his. If an injustice is done to this good village...I proclaim it. Two people, extorted, threatened, in broad daylight. Who puts a foot down? The Prefect? Your appointed hand in these matters? No. The police? There are no police -- only the given favors of deputization, a political handout. Despicable. Who controls the authority when authority does not earn respect?

(Spotlight fades. MARTIN drifts from his place to a corner, behind jail bars. He paces.)

CONRAD ZEIGLER enters, opposite.)

ZEIGLER

Your speeches grow tiresome. And, from the side, they appear to be rather hollow. It sounds like a mission, but it is just a drift. I'm not as easily fooled as your factory men.

(Pause)

Face it. You're not smart enough for this.

(Pause)

I'm really trying to help you, you know? I thought you'd like this move. The arrest. Did you expect it?

MARTIN

It was on my mind.

ZEIGLER

It was? Hmmm. Well, you'll make a good martyr.

MARTIN

Has my brother come?

ZEIGLER

He's waiting in the cold with his wife.

MARTIN

I want to speak with him.

ZEIGLER

In a moment.

(Pause)

You talk and talk...but you do not organize. That's very strange. And your speeches drone about Dochét and evil deeds without a single actionable sentence. You seem more a puppet than a leader.

MARTIN

I was thinking the same of you.

ZEIGLER

I am! I *am* a puppet! But those at my strings are masters. Not some...some...dumb-show with a hand up your ass. What's in it for Martin Hartzog, to be such an obvious decoy. Your persona is in direct contrast to your brother's -- now there's a man. A man who fights when he should, and, conversely, lays down his arms when that's required.

(Pause)

I hear that a nurse visits you regularly.

(ZEIGLER smiles, drifts away.)

ZEIGLER (Continued)

I could put you in a hospital. Mental disease. But I won't. I can be gracious. I am very good with connecting dots.

MARTIN

I'll speak when it will help my cause.

ZEIGLER

And what cause is that?

(Long pause.)

ZEIGLER (Continued)

I'll retrieve your brother, then. If you think you'll convince him that the town is worse now than when he took up arms, I will set you free.

(ZEIGLER exits.)

MARTIN bangs his jail bars. At last, he falls to the floor. After a pause, PEN enters the jail. MARTIN does not rise.)

PEN

The Prefect is releasing you. No charges. You're awful lucky. Martin. Conrad Zeigler is not your enemy. He has a difficult job. He is, in his own way, helping. He's letting you go, isn't he? That's very reasonable.

MARTIN

He wants me to hang myself.

PEN

You're doing a good job of it. Can't we just...can't we just mend these times...as we would a pair of torn trousers?

MARTIN

Oh, brother, brother. Where has your fight gone?

PEN

These troubles are not necessary.

MARTIN

A battle is still a battle. Just because there are no bullets --

PEN

Yet! The gun's empty, but easily loaded.

MARTIN

You bury your heads in the sand, like good little ostriches.

(Lights down.)

ACT I

SCENE 11

(The street. SAMPSON ODESTERS does rounds in the night.

He whistles. Stops. Whistles again.

A second mouth joins the call.

In shadows, BRESKY appears.)

SAM

Bresky?

BRESKY

Yeah, old man. It's me.

SAM

Come out. I don't see you.

(BRESKY steps forward.)

SAM (Continued)

Have you a weapon?

BRESKY

Yes.

SAM

Do you plan to use it?

BRESKY

Eventually.

SAM

Come closer.

(BRESKY obeys.)

BRESKY

What did you want?

SAM

I want to speak with you.

BRESKY

Then come to my home. It's cold. I don't like bein' summoned by your scrawl.

SAM

We mustn't be seen together.

BRESKY

I'm no leper.

SAM

To some, to some. I have a favor.

BRESKY

I don't like the sound of this.

SAM

I want you to tell me where I can find Max Dochét.

BRESKY

What makes you think I know?

SAM

He has paid you.

BRESKY

Prove it.

SAM

I can't. But this isn't a trial. It's a favor.

BRESKY

Ask Folmann.

SAM

You've got the intelligence for such a question.

BRESKY

Oh, flattery. That's a good start.

SAM

I've known you since you were a scamp, a boy in torn clothes, sifting through the piles of rocks for anything resembling a toy. I know you, not as the man you are today, but as a child.

BRESKY

My past is mine. Not yours.

SAM

Oh, no, no, it's shared. My son and you. Remember?

BRESKY

I remember. Good lad. But in a war someone's got to die.

SAM

Yes, yes. And someone must live. You survived to *help me*. I want to find Dochét.

BRESKY

Why?

SAM

I want help. I want a post. I can't light lamps forever. The cold affects my joints.

BRESKY

See the Prefect.

SAM

I need an *influencer*.

BRESKY

How much money you got? 'Cos that's the only thing that sways types I know. Good jobs aren't just handed out 'cos you're bones are creaky. The best way is money in the pocket.

SAM

Is that how you got yours?

BRESKY

He doesn't need old men beggin' for help.

(Pause, a bit guilty)

Look, I'd help you if I could.

SAM

Are you frightened?

BRESKY

No. But the less I know the better. So I can stop a sort like you from askin' a question I can't answer. As I said,

(Deliberate)

*check with Folmann.*

SAM

Check with, check with Folmann? It's Folmann who knows?

BRESKY

Goodnight.

(Lights down.)

ACT I

SCENE 12

(MARTIN's apartment. He is dressing and there's a knock at the door. MARTIN checks his watch.)

MARTIN

(Suspicious)

Who is it?

TILLY

(Through door)

It's Tilly.

(MARTIN opens the door.)

TILLY enters slowly.)

MARTIN

What are you doing here?

TILLY

It's early, I know.

(MARTIN holds. He senses something.)

TILLY (Continued)

I know what you're doing. You're pushing him.

MARTIN

He needs pushed. When does you leave?

TILLY

Soon.

MARTIN

Sour time for a holiday.

TILLY

I want to be far away from here. So does Pen.

MARTIN

You've got it wrong.

TILLY

He's earned these years. Why do you want to wreck them? What do you care about the Smarzarms, or any other family? If you cared, you would have stayed.

MARTIN

Are you saying I'm a liar? That I lie in public—

TILLY

Yes. I hope you're lying. Because no rational man would bring this on me.

MARTIN

On you?

TILLY

Pen just wants to be a tailor.

MARTIN

He's not satisfied with it. I can tell.

TILLY

Oh, what do *you* know?

(MARTIN takes her arms.)

TILLY

Let go.

MARTIN

I know I didn't witness it, but I see no signs of a hero in a bell tower. How can you love that shadow, that scared little boy who sews the Prefect's suits.

TILLY

He's never uttered a single bad word against you.

MARTIN

And he won't, he won't ever. He'll just take what's given to him.

TILLY

Pen saved my life, Martin.

MARTIN

He should have been saving you for *me*!

(TILLY breaks away, wipes her eyes.)

MARTIN (Continued)

I left for very real reasons. I left because of what you said.

TILLY

No. No, you didn't.

MARTIN

Yes. You told me I frightened you.

TILLY

You -- Martin, you have a side to you. I don't know where it comes from. It does things... Yes. It scared me. You're scaring me now.

(Pause)

Why didn't you come back during the fight?

MARTIN

You've never asked me this.

TILLY

Why didn't you come back! Why, why only, only at the end. Why when I was lost? Why, when I was married. There was nothing for you here. Tell me. Tell me, Martin. Every day. Every night. I thought Pen and I would be killed. There were explosions, and tanks, and snipers. But you choose to come back when we're safe, only to wreck it again. I thought you were a ghost. It had been years. Had I changed? Was I deathly thin and ugly?

MARTIN

Not ugly.

TILLY

What was changed? How different did I look?

MARTIN

You looked like you hadn't slept.

(Pause)

We'd both changed.

(Pause)

And you had a husband.

TILLY

I did. I do.

(Pause)

I want you to stop what you're doing. If it weren't for the Prefect's relationship with your brother, you would have been exiled by now.

MARTIN

The Prefect and I are not so different. One day, I'll need him and he'll need me.

TILLY

I can see it. I see it every day you work in the shop. You're afraid of being discovered, that you're not that brave. You're not *that man* who gives speeches. I don't know why you're doing or what you're doing. But it scares me. Just like before.

MARTIN

This from the woman who's pretending to love my brother.

(TILLY slaps him.)

TILLY

That's for lying. I do love Pen.

MARTIN

If I had stayed, you wouldn't have looked at my brother twice.

(MARTIN pushes her away, gets his coat.)

MARTIN (Continued)

Go to your hotel and make love like a wife! Run away and pretend you're both romantics, like we were, like it was! Go ahead!

TILLY

If Pen ever thought I cared for you...

MARTIN

He knows! Tilly, he knows! He knows it every day we work together. He put me to work so he could keep an eye on me, on both of us! Don't think he couldn't run that one-room shop on his own. He didn't even need my father, whose fingers were so brittle he could hardly make a stitch. Pen's a one-man army, or haven't you read the engraving in the bell tower!

TILLY

He hates that thing. That's the difference between him and you.

MARTIN

I'm not after publicity.

TILLY

No. You're right. You're after something else.

(TILLY crosses to the door and opens it, to flee.  
MARTIN pursues her across the floor.)

MARTIN

Think what you like! You know nothing!

(She leaves, in tears.)

When she's gone, he collapses against the door, then turns.

Hastily, he gathers the last of his things for the day then checks his face in the mirror.

Lights down.)

ACT II

SCENE 1

(The tailor shop. TILLY arrives, hiding her tears.)

PEN is already working, his back to his wife.)

PEN

I went to catch you this morning, but you had already left.

TILLY

(Tight)

I had an errand.

(PEN looks to TILLY, hanging up her coat, and then turns back to his own work.)

PEN

I got worried. It was still dark this morning when you left.

TILLY

I'm fine.

(TILLY starts working.)

PEN

Any word from Martin?

TILLY

He won't be in today.

PEN

Well he has to! I have to leave him instructions before we leave a midday.

TILLY

Just close the shop. Close it. We'll reopen when we return.

PEN

Is he ill? I heard that a nurse has been--

TILLY

That's Margaret. The one who tended me.

PEN

I didn't know they knew each other.

(PEN turns to see his wife.)

PEN (Continued)

Tilly?

(Pause)

Tilly? Are you crying?

TILLY

No.

(PEN crosses to her.)

PEN

Did you visit him?

TILLY

He's being difficult.

PEN

Why did you see him? Doesn't he want to mind the shop?

TILLY

It's not that.

PEN

Wh...Did he say anything about us?

TILLY

I, I think he might be in trouble.

PEN

Trouble? Why do you--?

TILLY

He's changed. I think he's gotten himself into something.  
He won't talk about it.

PEN

Maybe I should--

TILLY

I want you to stay out of it.

PEN

But he's my brother.

TILLY

Please *swear* you'll stay out of it.

PEN

I won't swear.

TILLY

I shouldn't have mentioned anything. I shouldn't have gone  
to see him.

PEN

We should cancel.

TILLY

Please, no, please. Get me out of here.

PEN

All right, all right.

(Pause)

I'll have the nurse stay with him.

TILLY

No, not the nurse.

PEN

Why not--?

TILLY

Not her.

PEN

Then Sampson.

TILLY

Yes. Sam.

(PEN stands over TILLY, still not satisfied.)

PEN

Do you think he'll be arrested again?

(TILLY shakes her head.)

PEN (Continued)

He's not giving any more speeches?

TILLY

I don't know.

PEN

I'll have a chat with him before we set off.

TILLY

No! Have Sam talk to him.

PEN

Tilly, I've got to see Martin before we depart.

TILLY

Take Sam with you.

PEN

(Confused)

Why?

TILLY

He's... Just go with Sam.

(PEN watches TILLY return to sewing.)

Lights fade.)

ACT II

SCENE 2

(MARTIN's apartment, at night. It is empty and low lit.

There is a series of knocks at the door. At last, PEN enters, switching on a brighter light.

Seated on the bed is MARGARET SHERKIS.)

PEN  
Apologies, it was open.

MARGARET  
I didn't know if I should answer it.

PEN  
Where's my brother?

MARGARET  
He went out for cigarettes.

PEN  
Mind if I wait?

(PEN paces.)

MARGARET (Continued)  
You can sit on the bed if you like.

PEN  
That's all right.

MARGARET  
How's your wife?

PEN  
She's...fine, recovered.

MARGARET

I liked her.

(Pause.)

PEN

Is it wrong of me to ask you a question?

MARGARET

That depends on the question.

PEN

What ails my brother?

MARGARET

Oh. I don't think I should talk about his condition.

PEN

You don't have to give the details. Just a yes or no. Should I be worried?

MARGARET

That's two questions.

(Smiles)

I don't believe it's serious. But I worry. I don't know why.

PEN

Tilly worries, too. She didn't think I should come to visit him alone.

MARGARET

Aren't you going on a holiday?

PEN

Yes. In an hour.

(Hesitant)

I wonder. My brother. And you...

MARGARET

I'm engaged. Remember?

PEN

Oh, that's right. When's the happy occasion?

MARGARET

When the weather breaks. In the spring.

PEN

Tilly and I were married in winter. And it's rotten then.

MARGARET

(Suddenly energized)

Tell me about your wedding. I'm always looking for ideas.

PEN

Don't go modeling yours on ours.

MARGARET

Please. I want to hear.

(PEN awkwardly sits on the bed.)

PEN

Again, don't use any of this for inspiration. You'll be disappointed. I should start at the top. Or, I suppose, the bottom. Under our shop, the tailor shop, there's a small cellar. It's...quite dark and...not very pleasant. I don't make a habit of visiting there. In fact, I don't think I've been down there in the last six months. Martin's been down occasionally to read, since it's quiet. Well, during the fighting, the heaviest of it, a few of us marksmen would take turns ducking down into the cellar to avoid being picked off. We had worked out a...um, a system, you see, where we could move between landmarks of the town. Confuse the enemy.

MARGARET

Who thought of this system?

PEN

Me. It was me. So we're doing our rotation and...it's dead of night, and, and make it to the cellar -- just in time, I might add, as I am out of bullets and, I lift the cellar door. Who do I see? It's...her. Tilly. She's there with two others. Uh, a man named Wolff, who was later killed, and a priest. A witness and an officiator. "Marry me," she says. I'm covered in mud. My arm had been grazed, so there's...blood all down my right side. And

(MORE)

PEN (Continued)

she's wearing white, a dress she'd made from scrounging.

(Pause)

So we were married.

(Pause)

And then we kissed and I got her out with Wolff and the priest, back across the bridge, into the woods.

MARGARET

(Fascinated)

Did you return to the battle?

PEN

Yes, I had to. I'm firing from an attic, behind a stack of sandbags, and I think, "If I'm killed, no one will know that I'm a married man." I didn't have a ring. No one would know that someone loved me. So I was extra careful that night. And I made it home, and through it all, until the end, and people stopped killing.

MARGARET

That's incredible.

PEN

As I said, don't get any ideas.

MARGARET

You must have been so much in love. I'm terribly jealous.

PEN

Of what?

MARGARET

That. I suppose you don't really know what two people mean to each other until they're tested.

PEN

I suppose that's one way of looking at it.

MARGARET

(Pointing finger inward, nodding)

Jealous.

(Sound: footsteps.)

PEN stands.

MARTIN enters with a cigarette box under his arm.)

PEN

Hello, Martin.

MARTIN

What have we here?

(PEN hands a note to his brother.)

PEN

I've brought you a list. You don't need to do any mending, but if you could open for an hour each midday, there are some pickups. I've contacted all of the customers. Is there anything else you need?

MARTIN

No. Sounds very simple. Safe journey.

(Clumsily, PEN departs.)

MARTIN (Continued)

(To MARGARET)

Was he here long?

MARGARET

Not very.

MARTIN

What did you two have to talk about?

MARGARET

He told me the most lovely story.

MARTIN

Oh, really? About shirt collars?

MARGARET

About his wedding day.

MARTIN

How did that come up?

MARGARET

I asked. It was about him and his wife in the cellar of the tailor shop, saying their vows to always love one another. Very romantic.

(MARTIN, as if deciding something, puts down the note and the cigarettes and leans against the dresser.)

MARTIN

I want to see you without your clothes.

MARGARET

Beg pardon?

MARTIN

I'm not romantic like my brother. But it's what I want.

MARGARET

Well. You can't. I'm engaged.

(A look passes.)

MARTIN

Why do you come here, Margaret?

MARGARET

Because you need medical attention.

MARTIN

You know I'm lying. You always have. I'm healthy as a horse. I lie so I can see you. And you lie to him to see me.

MARGARET

I don't lie, I--

MARTIN

You'll never get a lovely story with Finn.

MARGARET

You don't even *know* him.

(MARTIN steps closer to the bed.)

MARTIN

I will know him better than you think.

(MARGARET rises from the bed and MARTIN takes her firmly.)

MARTIN (Continued)

I want to see you undressed.

(He kisses her lips. She trembles.)

MARTIN (Continued)

Open your mouth.

(They kiss again, more passionately.)

MARGARET

(Low)

Don't.

(Small pause, then softly)

Don't tell Finn.

(Lights down.)

ACT II

SCENE 3

(A café. FOLMANN and SAMPSON stand at a table, over drinks.)

SAM

Patterns. The patterns. That makes all the difference in the light. The way the glass is cut can have a staggering effect on what hits what. They've designed them, you see, to be tall, certainly, to get the greatest range of the spray. But they've also designed them that way to raise the flames out of the reach of children. Or animals. Or anything that could be burnt. I use a special tool. It's like a long hammer and I stamp at the gas, like this...

(Makes a movement)

...and it causes friction. You do know about friction, don't you?

FOLMANN

(Not paying attention)

Friction. Oh, ya. Friction.

SAM

This movement causes heat, the heat flame, the flame, light, the light...knowledge.

FOLMANN

Knowledge?

SAM

I see more than people think.

FOLMANN

I don't understand.

SAM

You're a man who has thoughts.

FOLMANN

Ya, I'm a thinker.

SAM

Bresky agrees.

FOLMANN

Ah. Bresky likes to bark. I never get a word in.

SAM

Uh huh. Yes, yes. Listen -- another drink?

(SAMPSON signals to someone "2.")

SAM (Continued)

My friend Folmann, I want you to do the talking tonight.

FOLMANN

Friend?

SAM

Yes, of course, friend. Consider me that. I need to see a certain man. An elusive man. A man whose ear I'd like to bend. You don't like Conrad Zeigler, do you?

FOLMANN

Bresky and me, we applied to be deputized but he stamped us 'no good.' Our reputation. Past employers. We're perfection, though. We work for the money, doesn't matter the side. We could easily be *his* men.

SAM

I don't like Zeigler either.

(FOLMANN slaps SAMPSON on the back.)

SAM (Continued)

I'd like to go *around* him, you see. What I'd like is to connect with a certain Max Dochét. Yes. The invisible man. And Bresky, he's no good. You're the man with the tether, I can tell. You're a man of importance in these circles. People listen to you and trust you.

FOLMANN

They do?

SAM

Absolutely, absolutely. I've got an ear to the cobbles, I hear the talk, I know the town, I understand human *nature*, and what I want is to just rub, rub your sleeve, just a little bit, and have some of that same reputation take onto me. This is the favor I need: where is Max Dochét?

FOLMANN

You'll think it's funny.

SAM

Will I?

FOLMANN

It's a little joke.

SAM

Do tell, do tell.

FOLMANN

Dochét's right here!

SAM

In town!

FOLMANN

Yeah. *Here*. Can you believe it? Under our noses.

SAM

I thought he controlled things from afar. Counties over. Minions about.

FOLMANN

Nope. *Here*.

SAM

Ah, this is beginning to make a lot of sense. I had suspicions he was near. Call it instinct. So where *exactly*, friend Folmann, where *exactly*.

(FOLMANN grows quiet.)

FOLMANN

Secret.

SAM

(Soothing)

Won't tell, won't tell. I'm old. I'm not a gossip. This is a...personal matter. The Prefect; Zeigler; around the middleman. You can *trust* me, Folmann. I'm practically a confessional. What is said...stays.

FOLMANN

I suppose ya got no influence, bein' old.

SAM

That's right. Harmless old Sampson Odesters. And if I said a word, you'd know it. You'd find me quick, step on me quicker.

FOLMANN

I might!

SAM

Under my wooly hat.

FOLMANN

Give me the money in your wallet.

(SAMPSON smiles, shakes his finger.)

SAM

I knew you to be quick. The mind behind the operation.

(SAMPSON takes out his wallet and empties it before FOLMANN, who pokes through the money with his finger, displeased.)

FOLMANN

Not much here.

SAM

I'm a lowly *em-ploy-ee*. But there can be more, for a man of your good character.

(FOLMANN pockets the money, checks over his shoulder.)

FOLMANN

*Secret.* I'll feed you to the fucking dogs...

(Long pause.)

FOLMANN (Continued)

Max Dochét doesn't exist.

(SAMPSON is confused.)

SAMPSON

But you said he was here.

FOLMANN

You heard me. He doesn't exist. Not anymore.

SAM

What? He roams the streets and incites terror.

FOLMANN

He doesn't exist. He's dead. But he's here. He's here in name alone. I tol' you, old man, that you'd find this funny. The name. The name. The power is in the name, not in the body. And there's someone here who knows it. And he's got it.

SAM

The name. The name. Who's using the name?

FOLMANN

(Low)

It's that tailor. Martin.

(FOLMANN finishes his drink. SAMPSON is in shock.)

FOLMANN

Sometimes I think it's real funny, and sometimes I don't. But, I'm in. I take the money. Rule: You should always...take the money. And that tailor pays. And we rile him. And he pays more. But he's got more money than someone who cuts cloth. He's got more money than someone who lights lamps. I don't know where it's coming from. But he's got it.

SAMPSON

I don't believe it.

FOLMANN

Yeah. Don't. It's better. Old man.

(FOLMANN dramatically pockets SAMPSON's money, finishes his beer.)

FOLMANN (Continued)

Keep your mouth SHUT!

(Pause)

Friend.

(FOLMANN stumbles out.)

SAMPSON remains at the table, his face a mess.

Lights rise on BRESKY, hidden in the corner.)

BRESKY

I told you Folmann would know.

SAM

You knew all along.

BRESKY

I did. But you didn't hear it from me; you heard it from someone who will be dead in a year. He's not as smart as you compliment.

SAM

It doesn't make any *sense*.

BRESKY

Max Dochét's return was same month as Martin Hartzog's.

SAM

But *why*? Why stir up trouble and then rail against it?

BRESKY

Ask that of Hartzog himself. I mean Max.

SAM

You're no help. What am I to do with all this?

BRESKY

Maybe you're not supposed to do anything with it.

(Pause)

Is this really your concern, old man?

SAM

(Softly)

It is. It is.

(Pause)

Isn't it?

BRESKY

I'll tell you what...come and tell me when you've figured it out. I mulled it over for a time. Then I stopped. But I keep my mind on the money.

(BRESKY vanishes.)

Lights hold on SAMPSON.)

SAM

Oh, Martin. Martin. What have you done?

(Lights fade.)

ACT II

SCENE 4

(The tailor shop, daytime.)

MARTIN enters, hangs his coat, and turns on the lights.

SAMPSON enters, hesitant.)

MARTIN

Hello, Sam. You're my first customer of the day.

SAM

(Distracted)

Oh yes, yes. I was looking for Pen.

MARTIN

The holiday.

SAM

Right, right. I was, was confused...you, you opened so late. This week?

MARTIN

Appointment only.

SAM

Ah, yes, yes. Yes...

(MARTIN starts to search the racks.)

MARTIN

What do you have, Sam? Another pair of trousers? I'm sure it's here somewhere.

SAM

No, no.

(Softer)

No.

MARTIN

What color?

SAM  
I'm not here for trousers. Martin. I'm--

MARTIN  
Please. Sit down. You look unwell.

(MARTIN helps SAMPSON into a chair.)

MARTIN (Continued)  
Have you eaten? I think there's some--

SAM  
No. Martin.

(MARTIN stands helpless. The two hold  
uncomfortably.)

SAM  
Who are you?

MARTIN  
What?

SAM  
Answer me. Because the Martin Hartzog I knew before the war, he was different. Did you switch on the battlefields of the university? Did you...did you take possession of this body...as a spirit haunts. Did you?

MARTIN  
I don't understand.

SAM  
Martin. Martin, Martin. I'm old. Look at my eyes. I see strange things at night. The lamps. I reach up to light their wicks and, and they're gone. Phantoms. I have to count them. Memorize them. What I mean to say is that I can be tricked.

MARTIN  
I'm Martin, Sam. That's who I am.

SAM

And who else?

(Pause)

You see, I started on a mission. It was...to occupy me, I suppose, at first. Got me out of bed. Then I met with Conrad Zeigler. But I stayed at it. The facts. Bit by bit. Step by step. I'm not the police.

MARTIN

That's right, you're not.

SAM

I wish to God I hadn't asked a single question! It's a terrible thing, Martin, to want to be useful. Corrupting. I should have stayed with the lamps. My phantom lamps.

(MARTIN kneels before SAMPSON.)

MARTIN

What are you saying, Sam?

SAM

(Dead-on)

I know it's you. Martin. I know it is you.

(MARTIN rises.)

SAM (Continued)

You're Max Dochét.

MARTIN

Who have you been speaking with, Sam?

SAM

Does it matter?

MARTIN

If it's liars, then it matters.

SAM

Not lies. It makes sense now.

MARTIN

Of course they're lies.

SAM

*Martin.* I suppose I knew. All along I knew. When you came back to town. The threats, the rumors...all at the same time. Max Dochét must have been killed in the war. And now you're using his name.

(MARTIN backs to the sewing machine.)

SAM (Continued)

But for what purpose? Why create such chaos? After what we've all been through?

MARTIN

It's lies, it's smear, you--

SAM

No! You! I can see it in your *face*. You're acting out a game in this town. What's it for? What's the result? Ay? Don't you *shame* the reputation of your brother. He'll be heartbroken when he learns it. Duplicity! Terrible, terrible games!

(SAM rises from his chair and moves towards MARTIN.)

SAM (Continued)

And then to *rail* against it! To give *speeches*.

MARTIN

You don't understand, Sam.

SAM

You're right! I don't! I don't understand a thing. To hire men to hurt fellow countrymen. To bribe and extort. To burn. And for what? What? And the money. All the money I've heard about. You've got to confess it. You've got to come with me to the city, to Pen, where he's staying. You know the spot. Pen will know what to do. He will. He always knows what to do--

(MARTIN's hand goes into Sampson's stomach, and then retracts.

MARTIN now holds an open and bloody pair of scissors.

SAM falls, dead.

MARTIN drops the scissors. He locks the shop door and closes the drapes, then stands over the body.

Lights fade.)

ACT II

SCENE 5

(A hotel room.

PEN stands, shaving.

TILLY lies on a bunk.)

TILLY

Do you enjoy yourself, Pen?

PEN

Any time with you I enjoy. That's all I need.

TILLY

Every day you see me.

PEN

And that's the way I want it. Every day until I die.

(PEN wipes his face and sits on the bed.)

PEN (Continued)

Does your stomach hurt again? Should I call for the hotel doctor?

TILLY

No.

PEN

We'll have that nurse...Margaret... She can take a look at you when we're home.

TILLY

I don't want to see that nurse ever again.

(Seeing PEN's look)

I just don't.

PEN

She was over at Martin's.

(PEN packs his shaving kit.)

PEN (Continued)

What if I weren't around?

TILLY

Come here.

(Pause)

Take my hand.

PEN

I'm foolish.

TILLY

I'm sick.

PEN

I'll go fetch you something.

TILLY

No, don't go. Let's never leave this room.

(Lights down.)

ACT II

SCENE 6

(The street at morning.

PEN wears a coat and walks. MARTIN intercepts him.)

MARTIN

Pen!

PEN

I trust everything went all right while we were away.

MARTIN

When did you get back?

PEN

We stayed a day longer. Tilly was ill.

MARTIN

You have to tell him you returned Saturday.

PEN

Tell whom?

MARTIN

The Prefect. In the shop, waiting. He won't believe you stayed an extra day.

PEN

Believe me? Maybe he's just come with a question about his clothes.

PEN

How did he get in the shop?

MARTIN

I don't know. I saw him through the window and waited for you outside. Say you got home Saturday.

PEN

Why would he even ask? I'm sure it's nothing. Come on. Not to worry, brother. He's here about his suits.

(PEN and MARTIN enter the shop.)

CONRAD ZEIGLER sits in the chair, in scarf and hat. Nosing around the shop are BRESKY and FOLMANN, who wear badges on their coats.

ZEIGLER stands. PEN goes to shake ZEIGLER's hand, but ZEIGLER dusts him.)

PEN  
Mr. Zeigler. A pleasure.

ZEIGLER  
Maybe not.

PEN  
How did you get in my store?

ZEIGLER  
I have a key to all the locks in town. Or didn't you know?

PEN  
I'm honestly surprised.

ZEIGLER  
The lock man. He's under obligation to provide the city with duplicates. It's within my rights.

PEN  
Is it?

ZEIGLER  
In an investigation.

PEN  
Investigation?

(PEN looks to MARTIN.)

PEN (Continued)  
What are they doing here?

BRESKY

We're deputized.

PEN

I don't believe it.

FOLMANN

O-fficial.

ZEIGLER

I felt I might need a little help. These men were available and...within my price range. I hope you don't mind.

PEN

What kind of investigation?

ZEIGLER

I understand you were on a holiday.

PEN

Yes.

ZEIGLER

When did you make your reservations?

PEN

A month back.

ZEIGLER

And when did you return?

(PEN glances to MARTIN.)

PEN

Saturday.

ZEIGLER

(Frowning)

Oh. That doesn't bode well for your wife.

PEN

My wife?

ZEIGLER

Or you, for that matter.

PEN

Wait a moment. What's going on?

ZEIGLER

I've been learning things over the past week that should make you very nervous. First, these two men, Bresky and Folmann, here, have come forward as witnesses. The man who attacked your wife. We now know his name.

PEN

You do?

ZEIGLER

Why it was the very man who found her.

PEN

Sampson?

(Pause)

No, that's not possible.

ZEIGLER

Odesters came to my office, very upset. This was about a week ago. He didn't sing every note, but I had the *distinct* impression it was a confession.

MARTIN

Why would he attack Tilly?

ZEIGLER

Odesters was an old and frustrated type. He's caused some offenses on the streets before. He's been caught sleeping on duty. Others had seen him behaving erratically, lighting lampposts that were not there. I don't think he was of sound mind.

FOLMANN

Yah. Bats.

ZEIGLER

Saturday night, a woman was seen leaving your store. It was very late.

PEN

A woman?

ZEIGLER

Sampson Odesters had not been at work these past two nights. Early today, I decided to investigate. I don't suppose this is a shock to you.

PEN

It is, it is. Where's he gone?

ZEIGLER

Not far. Actually, right under our feet. Your cellar.

PEN

He's hiding in our cellar?

ZEIGLER

Not hiding. Dead.

PEN

Dead?

ZEIGLER

Murdered.

(ZEIGLER holds up a pair of bloodstained scissors.)

ZEIGLER (Continued)

We found these on the floor of your shop, apparently dropped. It gave us cause to search further.

PEN

Martin, what's going on?

MARTIN

I starting to think...that these men...believe it's Tilly, Pen. That *she's* killed Sam Odesters.

PEN

(To ZEIGLER)

Do you? Do you think that?

(ZEIGLER nods.)

PEN

No! No, it's not her.

MARTIN

Where's your proof, Mr. Zeigler?

PEN

Yes. So you saw a woman leave the shop on Saturday night. Well, that could be any woman. Maybe someone who knows the lock maker. After all, you said it yourself -- he's got the keys. And it wasn't Saturday that we returned, it was Sunday, Tilly and me, we--

ZEIGLER

Sunday?

(ZEIGLER signals his deputies.)

ZEIGLER (Continued)

Why did you lie to me just now?

PEN

(Looking to MARTIN)

I don't know, I-- Tilly was sick. We stayed an extra day.

ZEIGLER

I suppose you can prove that.

PEN

Yes. Yes, I think we could. The hotel, they could--

(BRESKY and FOLMANN take PEN by his arms.)

ZEIGLER

We'll get the details later. I'll have my men follow up. Would you please come with us?

PEN

Sampson was our friend.

ZEIGLER

I hope you don't count me in his same company. Sampson attacked your wife in the night and attempted to strangle her, and you still call him a friend?

PEN

Tilly didn't kill anyone!

ZEIGLER

Then perhaps you?

MARTIN

Mr. Zeigler, you can't--

PEN

(Struggling)

Martin, Martin.

MARTIN

Why aren't *I* a suspect? Why not take me?

FOLMANN

Safe, you is.

ZEIGLER

We've been thorough. A nurse from the hospital confirms she administered to you on Saturday night. The blood in the cellar is fresh. The murder was most certainly Saturday night. You have an alibi.

(With a nod from ZEIGLER, BRESKY and FOLMANN pull PEN to the outside street.)

MARTIN

Mr. Zeigler, Mr. Zeigler. Pen: tell him. It was me who told you to say, "Saturday night." It was my idea.

ZEIGLER

Too late, I'm afraid, to try and cover for your brother and his wife.

MARTIN

No! You've got it wrong!

PEN

(To MARTIN)

Get Tilly. We'll have this cleared up soon.

MARTIN

Right. I will.

ZEIGLER

Yes, get her to surrender peaceably. The court will go easier on her.

(The two men pull PEN offstage.

Blackout.)

ACT II

SCENE 5

(The jail.

PEN waits alone.

MARTIN enters.)

MARTIN

It's me.

(PEN springs to the bars.)

PEN

What's happening? It's been hours. Where's Tilly?

MARTIN

She's here. They've kept her in a room.

PEN

I must see her, Martin.

MARTIN

I know, I know.

PEN

Haven't they any other leads?

MARTIN

No. None.

PEN

Who do you think killed Sam?

MARTIN

I have only suspicions.

PEN

Who?

MARTIN

I think we're being blamed for a crime because of my speeches. You were right. You and Tilly were right. They have no *real* evidence, not anything that would stick in any court. But here, in this town, in these times, it might just be enough to get all of us hanged.

PEN

Those speeches, those damn speeches, Martin!

MARTIN

I know, but these are their tactics.

PEN

They kill our friend, they, they separate us, get us to trip ourselves up. But why? I'm not a danger to them, they know that. She's--

(Sudden stop, thinking)

They're not trying to hurt *me*. They're trying to hurt *you*.

(MARTIN nods.)

PEN (Continued)

What else have they got, Martin?

(Long pause)

What else? They have something more than a body.

MARTIN

Yes.

PEN

Tell me.

MARTIN

Propaganda. Leaflets. Crates of them in the cellar of the shop. To give to the workers.

PEN

Someone's put them there.

(Long pause, realizing)

Are they...are they yours?

MARTIN

Pen, I'm in over my head. I don't know which way is up. I know. I know this. This puts you in a terrible place. Zeigler's stance against the party is steadfast. He'd rather slice his eye than let the workers get a hand. Even though I'm nothing. A spot. A dot. A negative, in this grand scheme, I should have destroyed those crates months ago. I never intended to distribu-- I was just keeping them for some friends.

PEN

I'm not going to ask where you got them. It's best that I don't know.

MARTIN

Pendleton, I --

PEN

Be quiet. I'm thinking.

(Long pause.)

MARTIN

There's something else you should know. Folmann's come back from the city. He's found no record of your stay-over at the hotel.

PEN

It's lies.

MARTIN

It's what they've learned.

PEN

(Suddenly breaking)

It's the end. They've got our necks. All three.

MARTIN

No, no. Not all of us. I'll tell them the boxes are mine.

PEN

But the murder! You've got an alibi on record and I don't. They'll use the chink in our armor to do us all in--

MARTIN

Not if I confess to it.

PEN

If you confess to being an infiltrator they'll hang you for certain. They'll get Tilly for the murder and they'll get me as an accomplice. It's their plot, don't you see? To wipe us all out.

MARTIN

I see it now.

(A long, heavy doom sets in.

PEN turns his back.)

PEN (Continued)

I'll confess.

MARTIN

What, Pen?

PEN

I'll confess to the propaganda. And the murder. Then they'll just get one of us.

MARTIN

But it's not right! You know Dochét's behind all this. He's got the Prefect in his pocket. And those two thugs as deputies. The town won't stand for it.

PEN

Doesn't matter, it doesn't matter. I have to save Tilly.

MARTIN

No more speeches. No more. I'll tell them I'm mute. They've won. I'll leave town.

PEN

It's too late.

MARTIN

But if they hang you, Pen, they've won. The whole town won't know what *really* happened. That they killed you to get to me.

PEN

Yes. That's their plan. They'll have the whole town without firing a shot. Like me, the people of this town...they just wanted to get on with their lives, turn their backs. And they will here, too.

(MARTIN reaches his hands through the bars. The two men give a tender shake.)

MARTIN

It may come to nothing. This could be an empty threat.

PEN

I'll take it by days, but I know this is the course.

MARTIN

(Weeping)

It's wrong. It's wrong.

PEN

It's the world.

(PEN breaks from his brother. Regretful, MARTIN exits the jail, returning into the Prefect's administrative office.

There, ZEIGLER stands waiting with BRESKY and FOLMANN.)

MARTIN

He's going to confess to everything.

(ZEIGLER breathes out.)

ZEIGLER

You know him so well.

MARTIN

And your part of the bargain?

ZEIGLER

I might hang you just for cleanliness.

MARTIN

You won't get paid. And you know whom I'm with now. You'd be swinging next to me, without your money and an eventual better assignment.

ZEIGLER

(Smiling)

I don't like you... But you know which way the wind is blowing. As do I.

(MARTIN begins to exit.

He's stopped by ZEIGLER.)

ZEIGLER

You've done everything right, haven't you, Martin? In a month the town will be yours, and the Communists. The workers won't stand for a thing in this town once your brother hangs. Your Max Dochét can disappear. You'll be their golden man. Won't you?

(ZEIGLER shakes MARTIN's hand.)

MARTIN

I don't like you either.

ZEIGLER

I know. I know... The only man I truly like in this town I'm about to have killed.

(ZEIGLER gives a humph, a laugh. He exits.

Lights down.)

ACT II

SCENE 6

(The empty street.

PENDLETON HARTZOG is hanged.

Lights fade.)

ACT II

SCENE 7

(The tailor shop at dusk.

The window has been repaired. Now it just reads one "HARTZOG."

TILLY and MARTIN work in silence. MARTIN is attempting a stitch, but pokes his finger, wincing.)

MARTIN

I'm no good at it.

(TILLY ignores him.)

MARTIN (Continued)

The double negative. The stitch. A Papa Hartzog invention. The stitch that cannot be seen. A blind stitch. Nothing on one side, nothing on the other.

(Pause)

Do you know it?

TILLY

(Quiet, aside)

Yes.

MARTIN

Show it to me.

(TILLY rises and shows him the stitch.

As she does, MARTIN touches her side, in a slightly intimate way.

TILLY moves away, looks at him, and returns to work.)

MARTIN (Continued)

I'm sorry.

(Pause)

It's been two months.

TILLY

Why couldn't I see him? Why didn't they let me talk with him?

MARTIN

I don't know.

TILLY

You do. You do. He confessed. Why?

MARTIN

For one, we're rid of Zeigler. And Dochét. All his men, including Bresky, Folmann. That kind's not welcome here anymore. Pen's a hero. Again. There's finally the rule of the people.

(MARTIN drifts then tries the stitch again.)

MARTIN (Continued)

It's no good. I can't do it. Would you show me again?

(TILLY stands, but doesn't approach. She's hesitating.)

MARTIN (Continued)

Come. One more demonstration.

TILLY

Didn't you learn it from your father?

MARTIN

It was a long time ago. I left the more complicated things to Pen.

(TILLY crosses to MARTIN. Again, she takes the garment and demonstrates the stitch.)

MARTIN leers as she finishes and tucks back the fabric.)

MARTIN (Continued)  
Perfect. You're amazing. Thank you.

TILLY  
Have you got it?

MARTIN  
Yes. I think.

TILLY  
Once more?

MARTIN  
Yes. Please.

(She demonstrates a third time.)

MARTIN touches her side, only she doesn't move.)

TILLY  
What do you want, Martin?

MARTIN  
I'm lonely.

(TILLY pulls back, but not entirely.)

MARTIN (Continued)  
Aren't you lonely, too?

TILLY  
What about that Margaret?

MARTIN  
She's my nurse.

TILLY  
I don't believe you.

MARTIN

She's not mine to have.

TILLY

I am?

MARTIN

(Attempting sincerity)

Tilly. He's gone. I can't...I can't work beside you every day. When I'm here, I'm sad for you, for us, but I remember how it was before the fighting...

TILLY

Those times were short.

MARTIN

I've never stopped caring for you. And I want to care for you now. I'm here, Tilly.

(The clock chimes. MARTIN looks up to the clock-face, then stands, taking TILLY by the waist.)

MARTIN (Continued)

The meeting. There's a vote. I can't be late.

(MARTIN kisses TILLY's cheek then puts on his coat.)

MARTIN (Continued)

I think we should move in together. The town will understand, the past being what it is. And it will save us money. Business has gone down. But not to worry. The party will help us. Come at nine o'clock.

(MARTIN exits.)

TILLY wanders the shop, aimless. She touches the clothes, the suits, and begins to weep.

Lights fade.)

ACT II

SCENE 8

(MARTIN's apartment. MARGARET arrives.)

MARGARET

Oh, Martin, Martin. I missed you so much.

(They kiss. He does not return her enthusiasm. She falls onto the bed.)

MARGARET (Continued)

Did you notice? See? No uniform tonight. Aren't you going to ask why? Well, I don't care who sees. I wanted to wear *this* dress instead. Do you like it?

(Pause)

Yes. I bought it yesterday. A splurge. You kept saying you were going to make me one. But I decided to stop waiting. Now don't rip it. I want you to help me out of it gently tonight. I had to fix three buttons last week. Finn almost asked a question.

(Pause)

Oh, but he didn't.

MARTIN

Did he see you leave tonight? In your new dress?

MARGARET

No. I haven't seen him today. I think he's occupied at the hospital, but I left early. To get ready. He would have just missed me. And, this being Wednesday, and not a Thursday, he'll assume I'm doing my shopping instead of visiting you. I'll pick up a bag from the bodega on the way home. So, can't stay long. But I got your message.

(MARGARET pats the bed.)

MARGARET (Continued)

Join me. Ravish me...

(MARGARET lays back on the bed and bids him over.  
MARTIN crosses and sits rigid on the bed.)

MARTIN  
There'll be none of that tonight.

(MARGARET notices his face.)

MARGARET  
What's wrong, Martin?

MARTIN  
I've spoken with Finn.

MARGARET  
What?

MARTIN  
Yes. About two hours ago. I went to the hospital to see him.

MARGARET  
Why would you do that?

MARTIN  
I thought that he should know. About us.

MARGARET  
Please. Please tell me you didn't.

MARTIN  
You are to be married. A week from Saturday. I wanted him to know your character.

MARGARET  
(Through tears)  
No, no. Tell me you're joking. Please. Martin, please.  
It's a joke, isn't it?

MARTIN  
He was upset to say the very least. The things he said.

MARGARET

Tell me he didn't believe you!

MARTIN

Oh, he was a little weary of me. But I mentioned your secret, the one you confessed to me, from your past, and that he should check the files of the hospital. He'd get a whiff of your character.

MARGARET

No!

MARTIN

He even dragged me down to the records office with him. We found it together. Just like you said in the beginning.

MARGARET

Martin. Oh, God, Martin.

MARTIN

You had been *fourteen*, two years younger than you had told me you were. Abortions shouldn't have any paperwork. You should have destroyed the records, Margaret. That was stupid of you. Or, since the area was restricted to all but the doctors, you should have had Finn do it for you. He may have forgiven the one offense, but knowing about me made your crimes plain.

MARGARET

You've ruined me. Why, Martin? Why would you do this? I loved...

MARTIN

Leave. Leave the town. I've got a new reputation to forge. Seems the party has certain plans and I can't have a twenty-year-old girl at my heels, now can I? I'm going to take a respectable wife. You've cured me, dear girl. I can finally sleep. And I suggest you leave the town. Go far away. You might find a new Finn if you hurry.

(MARGARET exits in tears.)

Lights down.)

ACT II

SCENE 9

(The street.)

MARGARET hides her face and crosses.  
She runs into a man, who is revealed to  
be BRESKY.)

BRESKY

Hold on, hol' on.

(MARGARET pushes past him, but BRESKY grabs her  
arm.)

BRESKY (Continued)

Never seen a girl so sad.

MARGARET

Let me go!

BRESKY

Not until you tell me where I can find a woman named Tilly  
Hartzog. I went to her place, but everything packed in  
boxes.

MARGARET

I don't know, I don't know!

(MARGARET breaks free, leaving BRESKY in the  
street. He thinks a minute then starts to pursue  
her, calling.)

BRESKY

Wait! Wait!

(BRESKY exits.)

MARTIN enters the stage, to applause. He takes to a corner of the stage and stops, at a podium.)

MARTIN

Our time has come. We enter this decade fully renewed. Vanquished are the former generals, the former villains, the former conspirators. Your sons, and their sons, and *their* sons, will thank you for the efforts you have made. The sacrifice. All of us have lost someone dear in the struggles. Times when our so-called leaders would commit unspeakable atrocities and blame it on the innocents. My brother died such a death. He was given no counsel, no justice, just the noose! Those things we could not see are now in the light. We are but babies. We will be full-grown and we will walk under our own power. Thank you for your trust. Thank you for your ballots. I will not let you down. Not I.

(MARTIN salutes the crowd.

Lights down.)

ACT II

SCENE 10

(MARTIN's apartment.)

In the dark, BRESKY sits.

TILLY HARTZOG enters and shivers. In her hand is an umbrella. She settles and turns on a lamp, revealing BRESKY.)

BRESKY

Terrible night.

(Pause)

Don' you remember me?

TILLY

Get out of here.

BRESKY

Don' send me into the rain just yet. It'll be a while before Martin Hartzog returns. I've just left the hall where it's all congratulations, congratulations.

TILLY

I thought you were gone forever. I hope you are caught and killed, like you should have been before.

BRESKY

Hol' on now, miss.

TILLY

That's *missus*.

BRESKY

I like your new apartment. I went to your house yesterday, but you were not home. Must really care for your new husband to give your house to the workers.

(Pause)

I need to know. Were you involved, too?

TILLY

What?

BRESKY

Did you help Pen Hartzog into the grave?

TILLY

(Suddenly emotional)

No, no, no, no. I *loved* Pen.

BRESKY

Then *why* are you *here*!

TILLY

I don't know, I don't know.

BRESKY

You do! You must!

TILLY

Why did Pen do it? Why did he let them hang him! Without a trial, without a fight! If, if Pen loved me, he would have fought. He wouldn't have let them just take his life. He left me with nothing but Martin!

BRESKY

He did what he had to do. I know this.

TILLY

No! He didn't have to do anything. He was innocent.

BRESKY

He did it...to save you. Yah. He got hung and we went away. It was an...arrangement.

TILLY

(Stunned)

What?

BRESKY

Me. The Prefect. We all lied so that Pen Hartzog could be hanged, and were paid well for it.

TILLY

You're lying to me now. Again.

BRESKY

I know who attacked you last winter. I know his name.

TILLY

You'd have the courts believe it was Sam Odesters. But no one ever asked me that question. All they had to do was ask, and the entire lie against my husband would have unraveled. But no one listened. I stood outside that Prefect's office for days. Right up until the noose. And...no one listened.

BRESKY

That's 'cos no one wanted to listen. I had my eye on you the whole time. They played me like they played you.

TILLY

They?

BRESKY

Alls I wanted was a respectable job. Do you think I liked wanderin' the streets doing dirty work? No, but we was rejected, me and Folmann. So, we play a different role. One where we pull the church clothes from your satchel. One where we go into homes and cut the elderly, make them sign. When Zeigler comes to us and says he's makin' us deputies, just like that, I figure I'm turnin' a corner. My skills have been recognized. But it seems the other side of the fence is just as muddy.

(Right hand out)

Those in charge,

(Left hand out)

and those causing chaos,

(Hands together)

be the same. I'm going to tell you certain things. You're not going to like them. But I come back for a reason. I saw you in that Prefect's office and I thought, "This woman'll never know how deep the lie goes." She's not got the money or the fight to find it. Well, my money's spent...and all that's left is the damage I done. Sit down, *missus*. Sit down. I have a lot to say and little time to say it.

(Lights fade.)

ACT II

SCENE 11

(MARTIN's apartment.)

MARTIN is seated at a table, waiting for dinner. TILLY ladles soup into a bowl in front of him. MARTIN eats. TILLY sits in silence.)

MARTIN

Aren't you going to eat? The meeting's in half-an-hour. You look pale. I want you pretty if you're sitting beside me.

TILLY

I'm not hungry.

MARTIN

Suit yourself.

(MARTIN eats a few spoonfuls then stops.)

MARTIN (Continued)

Tilly. I know it's been hard. I've been working so long, between the shop and the party. I just want to acknowledge that. The care you've taken has been noted.

(Pause)

I didn't mean to say you were pale.

TILLY

Eat your soup.

(MARTIN eats, still distracted.)

MARTIN

Are you sick?

TILLY

I went to the hospital today.

MARTIN

What for?

TILLY

I met with a man named Finn.

(MARTIN slows his eating.)

MARTIN

What did he say? I mean about your health.

TILLY

He said that his fiancé had run off. He and Margaret never did get married.

MARTIN

That's a shame. Did he say why?

TILLY

He knows where she is, though. I think he'll go and find her now.

MARTIN

You haven't answered my question. Are you sick?

TILLY

Not anymore. He gave me a potion.

MARTIN

That's good. Any other comments from the good doctor?

TILLY

I know who attacked me last winter.

(MARTIN narrows his gaze.)

TILLY (Continued)

It was Conrad Zeigler. He put his hands around my throat, nodded, and looked like he wanted to ask me a question.

(In a daze)

About you. He said your name. He covered my eyes and said, "If you still love Martin Hartzog, you'll get him to

tell me who he's working for." And Sampson arrived and scared him away.

(Pause)

I should have told that to everyone. Everyone. I should have said something. Things may have turned out different.

MARTIN

(Acting)

This is incredible! Did you just *remember* these details? Is that why you're better? We must go to the police at once. This news will help clear Pen's name even further. Zeigler was *lying* when he told us Sampson was your attacker.

TILLY

But I kept it to myself. I couldn't tell Pen the story without being asked the questions. "*If you still love...*" And, with that, I should have known that you weren't alone in your speechmaking.

(Distant)

I loved you, Martin. For one year. Who did you meet when you were away at school?

MARTIN

We must go to the police with this news!

TILLY

You met members of the Party, didn't you? At university. And they took you in, and kept you out of the fighting, and you promised them something. You promised them us.

MARTIN

Tilly. That potion's going to your head.

TILLY

No. It's going to yours.

(TILLY points to the soup bowl.)

TILLY (Continued)

You were hoping to come back and find us all dead, weren't you, Martin? That would have made the takeover of our little county easier. But instead you found Pen and I

(MORE)

TILLY (Continued)

married and everyone happy. Lucky for you, you found a newly elected but highly greedy Prefect. And the ghost of Max Dochét.

MARTIN

(Panicked)

What have you done to me? What have I eaten?

(MARTIN rises. As he moves, he stumbles, spilling the bowl, leaning against the table.)

TILLY

It's poison, Martin.

MARTIN

No, Tilly, no. You're wrong. You're wrong.

TILLY

Bresky came back.

MARTIN

You're going to kill me for a lie!

TILLY

He told me about Margaret. They met on the street the night you turned her out. Her beloved Finn confirmed the kind of *man* you are. I've learned all about your *character*.

MARTIN

Fetch a doctor.

(MARTIN falls to the ground and struggles to get back up.)

MARTIN (Continued)

(Desperate)

Please, what have you given me? I don't want to die. Please.

(Struggling)

I'm paralyzed. Tilly. I, I can't feel my legs.

TILLY

(Angry)

How could you watch him HANG?

MARTIN

If papa were alive you'd know the truth. He taught Pen *everything* and only wanted me to be gone. I hated them both. Hated. What was so wrong with me?

TILLY

You killed him for NOTHING!

(MARTIN crawls towards the door.

TILLY crosses and latches the bolt.)

MARTIN

Killing *me* is nothing. You'll be all alone.

TILLY

(Vicious)

Oh, you're wrong, Martin. Killing you is *everything*. And I'm not alone. I'm not the only one who wants you dead.

(MARTIN gasps, his throat closing.)

MARTIN

I love you, Tilly. I love you.

(Making fun of himself)

I love you, Tilly.

(MARTIN dies.

Long pause.

TILLY unbolts the door.)

TILLY

(Calling out to those unseen)

You can come in now.

(Blackout

Final curtain.)