

The Naturewoman

Upton Sinclair

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CHARACTERS

Oceana: the Naturewoman.
Mrs. Sophronia Masterson: of Beacon Street, Boston.
Quincy Masterson, M.D.: her husband.
Freddy Masterson: her son.
Ethel Masterson: her younger daughter.
Mrs. Letitia Selden: her elder daughter.
Henry Selden: Letitia's husband.
Remson: a butler.

ACT I

[Scene shows a luxuriously furnished drawing-room. Double doors, centre, opening to hall and stairway. Grand piano at right, fireplace next to it, with large easy-chair in front. Centre table; windows left, and chairs.]

[At rise: ETHEL standing by table; a beautiful but rather frail girl of sixteen; opening a package containing photograph in frame.]

ETHEL. Oceana! Oceana! [She gazes at it in rapture.] Oh, I wonder if she'll be as good as she is beautiful! She must be! Oceana! [To REMSON, an old, white-haired family servant, who enters with flowers in vase.] No message from my brother yet?

REMSON. Nothing, Miss Ethel.

ETHEL. Look at this, Remson.

REMSON. [Takes photograph.] Is that your cousin, Miss Ethel?

ETHEL. That's she. Isn't she lovely?

REMSON. Yes, miss. Is that the way they dress in those parts?

ETHEL. The natives don't even wear that much, Remson.

REMSON. It must be right warm there, I fancy.

ETHEL. Oh, yes . . . they never know what cold weather is.

REMSON. What is the name of it, Miss Ethel?

ETHEL. Maukuri – it's in the South Seas.

REMSON. It seems like I've heard of cannibals in those parts, somewhere.

ETHEL. Yes, in some of the groups. But this is just one little island by itself . . . nothing else for a hundred miles and more.

REMSON. And she's lived there all this time, Miss Ethel?

ETHEL. Fifteen years, Remson.

REMSON. And no folks at all there?

ETHEL. Not since her father died.

REMSON. [Shakes his head.] Humph! She'd ought to be glad to get home, Miss Ethel.

ETHEL. She didn't seem to feel that way. [Takes book and seats herself by fireplace.] But we'll try to make her change her mind. Just think of it . . . she's been forty-six days on the steamer!

REMSON. Can it be possible, miss?

ETHEL. Wasn't that the street door just now, Remson?

REMSON. I thought so, Miss Ethel. [Moves to door.] Oh! Mrs. Masterson.

MRS. MASTERSON. [In doorway; a Boston Brahman, aged fifty, wearing street costume, black.] Any news yet, Remson?

REMSON. None, madam.

MRS. MASTERSON. Master Frederick is at the dock?

REMSON. Yes, madam.

DR. MASTERSON. [Enters; slightly younger than his wife, a dapper little man, bald and henpecked.] No news from the steamer, my dear?

MRS. MASTERSON. None.

REMSON. Anything further, madam?

MRS. MASTERSON. Nothing.

[Exit REMSON.]

DR. MASTERSON. It'll be too bad if Oceana has to spend this evening on the steamer.

MRS. MASTERSON. Have you taken to calling her by that ridiculous name also?

DR. MASTERSON. Surely she has a right to select her name!

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MRS. MASTERSON. I was present when she was christened; and so were you, Quincy. For ME she will remain Anna Talbot until the day she dies.

DR. MASTERSON. Anna or Oceana . . . there's not much difference, it seems. [Takes paper and sits by window; they do not see ETHEL.] Weren't Letitia and Henry to be here?

MRS. MASTERSON. Letitia was . . . but she's never on time. There's the bell now. [Looks at photograph.] Humph! So Ethel's had it framed! I declare . . . people ought not to be shown a photograph like that . . . it's not decent.

DR. MASTERSON. My dear! It's the South Sea Islands!

MRS. MASTERSON. [Severely.] This is Back Bay. Oh! Letitia!

LETITIA. [Enters; aged about twenty-eight, prim and decorous, Patterned after her mother; black street costume, with furs.] No news from the steamer, it seems! Dear me, such weather!

MRS. MASTERSON. You didn't walk, I hope?

LETITIA. No, but even getting into the stores! I'm exhausted.

DR. MASTERSON. [Looking from paper.] Henry coming?

LETITIA. He said he might drop in. He's curious to see the lady.

DR. MASTERSON. Humph! No doubt!

LETITIA. Mother, I wish you'd try to do something with Henry. He's so restless and discontented . . . he's getting to be simply impossible.

MRS. MASTERSON. I'm going to talk to him to-day, my dear.

LETITIA. Fancy my going out and burying myself in the country! And he means it . . . he's at me all the time about it!

MRS. MASTERSON. Well, don't go, my dear!

LETITIA. Don't worry yourself . . . I've not the least intention of going. Such things as we modern women have to endure! Only fancy, he's got an idea he wants to be where he can work with his hands!

MRS. MASTERSON. Henry ought to have discovered these yearnings before he married one of the Mastersons. As my daughter, you have certain social obligations to fill . . . your friends have a claim upon you, quite as much as your husband.

LETITIA. He says he wants to take the bungalow and make it over . . . wants to plan it and work at it himself. And with me and the children sitting out on the mountain-top in the snow until he finishes, I suppose!

MRS. MASTERSON. Quincy, do you know anything about this whim of Henry's for a day-laborer's life?

DR. MASTERSON. My dear, Henry's a big, active man, and he wants something to do.

MRS. MASTERSON. But hasn't he his business?

DR. MASTERSON. I dare say there are things more thrilling to a man than commercial law-cases. And Henry's been thinking for himself . . . he says the law's a cheat.

MRS. MASTERSON. Yes, I know . . . I've heard all that. And here we are, just at this critical moment, when the girl is coming, and when he ought to be advising us about that will.

DR. MASTERSON. It seems to me, my dear, you've managed to choose your course without his aid. [A pause.] I hope we shan't have to get into any quarrel with Oceana.

MRS. MASTERSON. We shall not if _I_ can help it, Quincy.

LETITIA. We simply intend to be firm, father.

MRS. MASTERSON. We intend to make it clear that we are going to stand by our legal rights. With no hard feelings for her personally . . .

ETHEL. [Rising from chair.] Mother!

MRS. MASTERSON. Ethel!

ETHEL. Mother, this has gone just as far as it can go! I've felt all along that something like this was preparing.

MRS. MASTERSON. My dear . . .

ETHEL. Mother, this concerns me as much as it concerns any one of you. And I tell you, you have simply got to let me know about that will.

MRS. MASTERSON. My dear . . .

ETHEL. Do I understand that it is your intention to threaten to go to law, unless Oceana gives us a part of

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grandfather's property?

MRS. MASTERSON. Ethel, I refuse . . .

DR. MASTERSON. You might as well tell the child, Sophronia. It's perfectly certain, Ethel, that your grandfather was not of sound mind when he made the will.

ETHEL. It's perfectly certain that he hated you and mother and Aunt Letitia and me and Freddy . . . every one of us; and that he had hated us for years and years; and that he left his money to Oceana to spite us all.

MRS. MASTERSON. That's precisely it, Ethel . . .

ETHEL. And I, for one, knowing that he hated me, don't want his money. And what is more, I refuse to touch his money.

DR. MASTERSON. Not being of age, my dear, you can't . . .

ETHEL. I am near enough of age to possess my self-respect. And I shall refuse to touch one penny.

DR. MASTERSON. My child, there are a good many pennies in a half million dollars.

MRS. MASTERSON. And when you are of age, Ethel, you'll appreciate . . .

ETHEL. I shall be of age two years from now, and then I shall return to Oceana every penny of grandfather's money that may have been gotten for me.

LETITIA. Ethel!

MRS. MASTERSON. It seems to me this is a strange way for a young girl to be speaking to her parents!

ETHEL. I can't help it, mother. I am meek and patient . . . I try to let you have your way with me in everything. But this is a matter of principle, and I can't let myself be sat on.

MRS. MASTERSON. Sat on! Is that your view of your mother's attitude towards you?

ETHEL. You know, perfectly well, mother; that it's impossible for anybody to preserve any individuality in contact with you . . . that as a matter of fact, neither father nor Letitia nor Freddy nor myself have preserved a shred of it. Grandfather said that to you himself, the last time you ever saw him . . . I know it, for I've heard father say it a hundred times.

DR. MASTERSON. Well!

MRS. MASTERSON. It seems to me there's more than a trace of individuality in this present outburst, Ethel.

ETHEL. Yes, but it's the first time, mother.

LETITIA. Some one is coming. [Turns to door.] Oh! Henry!

HENRY. [Enters; a handsome, powerfully-built man; smooth shaven, immaculate, reserved in manner.] Well, has the sea-witch arrived?

MRS. MASTERSON. Not yet.

DR. MASTERSON. Freddy's gone to meet her with the limousine.

HENRY. I see. And the steamer?

MRS. MASTERSON. It was to have docked two hours ago.

HENRY. Well, that means that I won't see her till tomorrow evening. I've got to run down to Providence to-night.

LETITIA. What's the matter?

HENRY. Nothing important . . . just a business matter that requires my presence. Make my apologies; and goodbye, my dear.

[Kisses LETITIA.]

LETITIA. Henry, I wish you'd wait a moment.

HENRY. What for, my dear?

LETITIA. Mother has something to say . . .

MRS. MASTERSON. I want to talk to you about this idea of going to the country in the winter-time.

HENRY. Oh! There's no use talking about that, Mrs. Masterson. I see I can't have my way, so there's no more to be said. I'm not the sort of man to sulk.

MRS. MASTERSON. But such an idea, Henry! For a delicate woman like Letitia . . .

HENRY. I know . . . I know. I'd have taken care of her . . . but that doesn't interest her. And, of course, I can't take the children away from her, and there's not much fun in the country alone. So what's the use? I give up . . . as I give up everything. Good-bye, all.

[Exit.]

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LETITIA. I declare – such a trial! A husband who's lost his interest in life!

MRS. MASTERSON. It's that new cook of yours, Letitia.

LETITIA. Every cook is worse.

MRS. MASTERSON. What he needs is some liver–pills. Quincy, you should attend to it! [Rises.] Well, I'm going upstairs. You'll stay to dinner, Letitia?

LETITIA. Yes, I want to lie down for a while.

DR. MASTERSON. And I'll beat myself a game of billiards.

[Exit With LETITIA and MRS. MASTERSON.]

ETHEL. [Drops her book to floor, springs up and paces the room.] Oh! If only I might change places with Oceana! If I could get away to some South Sea island, and be my own mistress and live my own life. [Takes photograph.] Oceana! I'm wild to see you! I want to see you dancing. Your Sunrise Dance . . . and to your own music! [Begins to hum the Sunrise Dance.] Oceana! Oceana!

[A step in the hall, she turns.]

FREDDY. [Enters briskly; a college boy, about twenty–one, overgrown, narrow– chested, good–natured and slangy.] Ethel!

ETHEL. [Starts.] Freddy! Where's Oceana?

FREDDY. She won't get here till morning.

ETHEL. Oh, Freddy!

FREDDY. They can't dock the steamer to–night . . . there's some tangle at the pier.

ETHEL. Did you go and see?

FREDDY. I telephoned about it. I didn't want to wait in this blizzard.

ETHEL. I'm so sorry!

FREDDY. Me, too. But there's no help for it.

ETHEL. So long as she doesn't miss to–morrow night! Did I read you what she said about that, Freddy? [Takes letter from pocket.] "I'll pray for fair weather, so that I may get there to see the beautiful dancing. There is nothing in all the world that I love more . . . my whole being seems to flow into the dance. I send you the music of my Sunrise Dance, that father composed for me. You can learn it, and I'll do it for you. I don't know, of course; but father used to think that I was wonderful in it . . . and he had known all the great dances in Europe. It was the last thing I heard him play, before he went out in the boat, and I saw him perish before my eyes." Don't you think that she writes beautifully, Freddy?

FREDDY. Yes; it's surprising.

ETHEL, Oh, yes. Her father was an extraordinary man, Henry says . . . a musician and a poet. They had books and everything, apparently. You'd think she's been living in Europe.

FREDDY. I see.

ETHEL. Listen to this: [Reads.] "About my name . . . I forgot to explain. You see, Anna sounds like England . . . or New England . . . and I am not the least like those places. Father used to see me, as a little tot, diving through the breakers, and floating out in the sea, with the snow–white frigate– birds flashing by overhead; and he said I was the very spirit of the island and the wild, lonely ocean. So he called me Oceana, and that's the name I've always borne."

FREDDY. It just fits my idea of her.

ETHEL. She goes on: "You mustn't be surprised at what I am. You may think it's dreadful . . . even wicked. But at least don't expect anything like you've ever known before. Fifteen years with only cocoa– palms and naked savages . . . the Boston varnish rubs off one. But I'm going to try to behave. I expect to feel quite at home . . . I have pictures of all of you, and a picture of the house . . . I even have father's keys, to let myself in with!"

FREDDY. Can you play her music, Ethel?

ETHEL. Play it? I could play it in my sleep. [Opens piano.] The Sunrise Dance! [She sits and plays.] Listen! [She plunges into the ecstatic part of the music. FREDDY leans by the piano, watching her; she plays, more and more enthralled. The door opens softly.]

[OCEANA enters; a girl of twenty–two, superbly formed, dark–skinned, a picture of glowing health. She is clad in a short skirt and a rough sailor's reefer with cap to match; underneath this a knitted garment, tight–fitting and soft – no corsets. She carries two extremely heavy suitcases, and with no apparent effort. She sets these down

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and stands listening to the music, completely absorbed in it. There is the faintest suggestion of the Sunrise Dance in her attitude.

[OCEANA is trusting, and yet with power of reserve. Throughout the action, however vehemently she speaks, she seldom really grows angry; she does not take the game seriously enough. On the other hand her enjoyment, however keen, never becomes boisterous. Her actions proceed from a continual overflow of animal health. She is like a little child, in that she cannot remain physically still for very long at a time; she moves about the room like an animal in a cage. Her speech proceeds from an overwhelming interest in the truth, regardless of all personality. She never conceals anything, and she never represses anything.]

ETHEL. [Finishes the music, then turns, and leaps up.] Oceana!

FREDDY. [Turns.] Oceana!

OCEANA. Ethel! [Embraces her.] Oh, my dear! How glad I am to see you!

ETHEL. Oceana! But how did you get here?

OCEANA. I came on the steamer.

FREDDY. But it isn't docked

OCEANA. They took us to another dock.

ETHEL. [Holds her at arm's length.] Oh, how fine you are!

OCEANA. And you—you can play my father's music! I'm so glad!

ETHEL. You liked the way I played it?

OCEANA. I liked it! And so I know I shall like you! And I'm so happy about it—I wanted to like you!

ETHEL. But how big you are!

OCEANA. [Laughing.] Oh, that's the clothes. I got them in Rio. They're queer, I guess, but I only had a couple of hours. And this is Freddy! [They shake hands.] It's so good to be here!

FREDDY. How did you get from the dock?

OCEANA. I walked.

ETHEL. Walked all the way?

OCEANA. Of course . . . I enjoyed it.

ETHEL. But in the storm!

OCEANA. I didn't mind that. It's all new to me, you see. My dear, think of it . . . I've never seen snow before. I was fairly crazy.

[She pulls off the coat and throws it on one of the suitcases.]

ETHEL. I must tell mother. And Letitia! [Opens door and calls.] Mother! Letitia! Oceana's here!

FREDDY. [Stoops to pick up the suitcases.] Why . . .

OCEANA. What is it?

FREDDY. [He moves them against the wall with a great effort.] You don't mean you CARRIED those!

OCEANA. Why, yes.

FREDDY. From the docks?

OCEANA. [Laughs.] Oh, dear me! I didn't mind that.

FREDDY. Well . . . I'll be blowed!

[He has fallen head over heels in love with her, and whenever he is in her presence he follows her about with his eyes, like one bewitched.]

OCEANA. You aren't strong as you ought to be! You stay too much in the house!

ETHEL. Here's mother!

OCEANA. Aunt Sophronia!

MRS. MASTERSON. [Enters.] My dear Anna! [Kisses her upon the cheek.] I am delighted to see you safe.

ETHEL. And Letitia!

OCEANA. Cousin Letitia!

LETITIA. [Enters.] My dear cousin! So glad you are here!

OCEANA. [Looking from one to the other, as they eye her critically.] Oh, are you really glad to see me? You must be, you know . . . for I've come so far. And you've no idea how homesick I've been.

MRS. MASTERSON. Homesick, my dear? For that wild place you left?

OCEANA. But Aunt Sophronia, that's my home! And it's God's own dream of beauty!

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MRS. MASTERSON. Yes, my dear . . . I dare say . . .

OCEANA. Ah, you've never been there, or you wouldn't feel that way! Picture it as it is at this moment . . . the broad white beach . . . the sun setting and the clouds aflame . . . the great green breakers rolling in . . . the frigate—birds calling . . . the palm trees rustling in the wind! And you don't have to wrap yourself up in clothes . . . you don't have to shut yourself up in houses! You plunge through the surf, you dance upon the beach . . . naked . . .

MRS. MASTERSON. [Aghast.] My dear girl!

OCEANA. Oh, oh! That's so! I beg your pardon!

MRS. MASTERSON. [Coldly.] It will take you, a little while to get used to civilized ways . . .

OCEANA. Oh, no, no, no! I know about that . . . I know how it is. Father told me about Boston.

MRS. MASTERSON. My dear . . .

OCEANA. Don't worry about me. I'm really going to try to behave myself . . . in every way. I want to get the right sort of clothes, you know. I couldn't get them on my trip . . .

MRS. MASTERSON. It's just as well, my dear. You'd best have us attend to that. You will need mourning for quite a while, you understand.

OCEANA. Mourning!

MRS. MASTERSON. Yes . . . for your grandfather.

OCEANA. But, my dear Aunt Sophronia, I couldn't possibly wear mourning! No, no! I couldn't do that!

MRS. MASTERSON. [Astonished.] Why not?

OCEANA. In the first place, I never mourn.

MRS. MASTERSON. But your own grandfather, my dear!

OCEANA. But I never knew him. Aunt Sophronia . . . I never saw him in my life!

MRS. MASTERSON. Even so, my dear! Hasn't he left you all his fortune?

OCEANA. But am I supposed to mourn over that? Why, I'd naturally be happy about that!

LETITIA. Oceana!

OCEANA. But surely . . . wouldn't you be happy about it?

MRS. MASTERSON. My child, one is not supposed to set so much store by mere money . . .

OCEANA. But Aunt Sophronia, money is power! And isn't anybody glad to have power? What else did I come here for?

MRS. MASTERSON. I had hoped you had come home for some other things . . . to see your relatives, for instance.

ETHEL. Here's father!

OCEANA. Uncle Quincy!

DR. MASTERSON. [Enters.] My dear girl! You have come! [Embraces her.] Why, what a picture you are! A very storm from the tropics! My dear Oceana!

OCEANA. I'm so glad to get here.

DR. MASTERSON. Yes, indeed! I can believe it! And a strange experience it must have been . . . your first plunge into civilization!

OCEANA. Yes, Uncle Quincy! It's been horrible!

DR. MASTERSON. Horrible, my dear? In what way?

OCEANA. It's been almost too much for me. Really . . . I could understand how it might feel to be sick!

DR. MASTERSON. Why, what did you see?

OCEANA. Everything! It rushed over me, all at once! The people . . . their dreadful faces! And such noises and odors and sights!

DR. MASTERSON. I hadn't realized . . .

OCEANA. And then the saloons! Rows and rows of them! It is ghastly!

LETITIA. My dear cousin, mother and I contribute regularly to a temperance society.

OCEANA. But that hasn't helped, has it? I'm almost wild about such things—they were the real reason I came home, you know.

MRS. MASTERSON. How do you mean?

OCEANA. They had got to my island! They are turning it into a hell!

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DR. MASTERSON. In what way?

OCEANA. Why, it's a long story. I didn't write . . . it would have taken too long. Two years ago there was a ship laid up . . . and the crew found, quite by accident, that our island rock is all phosphate; something very valuable . . . for fertilizer, it seems. So they bought land from the natives, and now there's a company, and a trading-post, and all that. And oh, my people are going all to pieces!

MRS. MASTERSON. The natives, you mean?

OCEANA. Yes . . . the people I have loved all my life. And I've tried so hard . . . I've pleaded with them, I've wept and prayed with them! But they're lost!

LETITIA. You mean rum?

OCEANA. I mean everything. Rum, and cocaine, and sugar, and canned food, and clothes, and missionaries . . . all civilization! And worse yet, Aunt Sophronia . . . ah, I can't bear to think of it!

MRS. MASTERSON. What?

OCEANA. You wouldn't let me tell you what. [In a low voice.] Imagine my people, my beautiful people, with the soft, brown skins and the big black eyes, and hair like the curtains of night. They are not savages, you understand . . . they are gentle and kindly. They ride the rushing breakers in their frail canoes, they fish and gather fruits in the forests, they dream in the soft, warm sunshine . . . they are happy, they are care-free, their whole life is a song. And they are trusting, hospitable . . . the wonderful white strangers come, and they take them into their homes, and open their hearts to them. And the strangers go away and leave them a ghastly disease, that rages like a fire in their palm-thatched cabins, that sweeps through their villages like a tornado. And the women's hair falls out . . . they wither up . . . they're old hags in a year or two. And the babies . . . I've helped bring them into the world . . . and they had no lips . . . their noses were gone! They were idiots . . . blind . . .

MRS. MASTERSON. [Wildly.] Anna Talbot! I must beg you to have a little discretion!

LETITIA. Why should we hear about these things, Oceana?

OCEANA. My dear, it comes from America. The ships came from here! There was one of them I saw . . . "The Mary Jane, of Boston, Mass."

MRS. MASTERSON. No doubt, among such low men . . . men of vile life . . . sailors . . .

OCEANA. No, Aunt Sophronia . . . you're mistaken! It's everywhere. Isn't it, Uncle Quincy? You're a doctor . . . YOU must know!

DR. MASTERSON. Why, to tell the truth . . .

OCEANA. TELL the truth! Am I not right?

FREDDY. Of course you're right!

MRS. MASTERSON. Freddy!

OCEANA. Ah! You know!

MRS. MASTERSON. This is outrageous!

OCEANA. You mean you don't teach your children about it? Why . . .

[She stares at them, perplexed.]

MRS. MASTERSON. You don't understand our ways, Anna . . .

OCEANA. No, no . . . I don't. I don't think I ever can. You'd let some man come and make love to Ethel . . . and you'd never warn her?

ETHEL. They warned me to turn my toes out when I walked, and not to eat fish with a knife.

MRS. MASTERSON. If this conversation is to go on, I insist that the children shall leave the room.

OCEANA. Oh, I'm awfully sorry, Aunt Sophronia! Why, I didn't mean any harm. It's all so real to me. [She gazes from one to the other, hoping for some sign of a thaw.] Just think . . . these were the people that I'd loved . . . that I'd grown up with all my life. I'd fished in their canoes, I'd hunted with them and basked on the beach with them. I'd watched the young men and girls dancing their love-dances in the moonlit glades . . . [She pauses again.] Oughtn't I to talk about THAT?

DR. MASTERSON. My dear girl . . .

OCEANA. [Stares at them; a sudden idea occurs to her.] Perhaps I ought to explain to you . . . you're no doubt wondering. I'm a virgin myself, you know.

MRS. MASTERSON. [Starting up.] OH!

LETITIA. Oceana!

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OCEANA. But weren't you thinking of that?

MRS. MASTERSON. Why, of course not!

OCEANA. But Aunt Sophronia! You know you were!

MRS. MASTERSON. [Sputters.] Oh! OH!

OCEANA. You were thinking to yourself, this girl's been playing around on the beaches with savages . . . and what's been happening to her?

DR. MASTERSON. My dear niece, I'm afraid you'll have to take some account of our civilized prejudices. We simply don't say everything that we think.

OCEANA. [Springing up.] Oh, dear me! I'm so sorry ! I didn't mean to make you unhappy! I was going to be so good. I was going to try to conform to everything. Why, just think of it, Aunt Sophronia . . . in Rio I actually bought a pair of corsets. And I tried to wear them. I . . . Oceana! Around my waist! Think of it! [She looks for sympathy.] I couldn't stand them . . . I climbed to the topmast and threw them to the sharks. But now it seems that you all wear corsets on your minds and souls. [A pause.] Never mind . . . let's talk about something else. I'm getting restless. You see . . . I'm not used to being in a room . . . it seems like a box to me . . . I can hardly breathe. The air in here is dreadful . . . hadn't any of you noticed? [Silence. Apparently nobody had.] Would you mind if I opened a window?

MRS. MASTERSON. It is storming outside, Anna.

OCEANA. Yes, but one can exercise and keep warm. just a minute . . . please. [She flings up a window; a gale blows in.] Ah, feel that!

[MRS. MASTERSON, LETITIA and DR. MASTERSON draw away from the window.]

MRS. MASTERSON. This is simply outrageous!

LETITIA. It is beyond all words!

DR. MASTERSON. My dear, consider . . .

MRS. MASTERSON. I won't have that creature in my house a minute longer.

DR. MASTERSON. My dear, be reasonable!

LETITIA. REASONABLE?

DR. MASTERSON. Consider what is at stake!

MRS. MASTERSON. But what hope have we to get anything out of such a woman?

DR. MASTERSON. We have some hope, I'm sure. If we . . .

MRS. MASTERSON. Didn't you hear her say she'd come home for nothing but the money?

DR. MASTERSON. Yes . . . but at least she's honest enough to say it, Sophronia. And she's here as our guest . . . she wants to be friendly . . . don't let it come to an open break with her!

LETITIA. But how can we HELP it, father?

DR. MASTERSON. It's just a matter of letting her talk. And what harm will that do us?

MRS. MASTERSON. But we can't lock her up in the house. And can we introduce her to our friends? Tomorrow night, for instance!

DR. MASTERSON. We must manage it somehow. When we've once had an understanding with her, it won't take long to get the papers signed, and after that we won't care. Control yourself, Sophronia, I implore you! Don't let your prejudices ruin us!

ETHEL. [Steals to them, in agitation.] Mother, CAN'T you be good to her? You don't understand her at all.

MRS. MASTERSON. [Coldly.] Thank you, Ethel . . .

ETHEL. [To FREDDY, who joins them.] Can't you say something to them, Freddy? They treat her so badly.

FREDDY. They hate her, Ethel! They couldn't understand her.

[OCEANA takes deep breaths, expelling them in short, sharp puffs.]

LETITIA. What in the world are you doing?

OCEANA. That's one of the Yogi exercises. Haven't any of you studied the Vedantas?

LETITIA. We are all Episcopalians here, Oceana.

OCEANA. Oh, I see!

[She takes a deep breath and then pounds her chest like a gorilla.]

MRS. MASTERSON. And pray, what is THAT?

OCEANA. I'm just getting some of the civilization out of my lungs.

The Naturewoman

[A furious gale blows.]

MRS. MASTERSON. Really, my dear, we shall have to leave the room. We'll all catch our death of cold.

OCEANA. My dear Aunt Sophronia, nobody ever caught a cold from winter air. Colds come from over-eating and bad ventilation. [She closes the window.] However, there you are! [Eagerly.] Now, let's have something beautiful – so that I can forget my blunders. Let's have some music. Will you play for me, Cousin Letitia?

LETITIA. I don't play, my dear.

OCEANA. What? Why, father told me you played all the time!

LETITIA. That was before my marriage.

OCEANA. Oh, I see! [Laughs.] The music has accomplished its purpose! [Stops, alarmed.] Oh! I've done it again! [Goes to LETITIA.] My dear cousin, believe me, I meant no offense. I'm never personal. I was simply formulating a principle of sociology!

MRS. MASTERSON. You have strange ways, my dear niece.

DR. MASTERSON. Are you always so direct, so ruthless?

OCEANA. That's the word, isn't it? That's what father taught me. Never to think about personalities . . . to go after the truth! He used to quote that saying of Nietzsche's: "To hunger after knowledge as the lion for his food!"

MRS. MASTERSON. Oh, you read Nietzsche, do you? How could you get such books?

OCEANA. We had a government steamer from New Zealand three times a year, you know. That brought our mail.

MRS. MASTERSON. And your father permitted you to read these improper things?

OCEANA. My father taught me to face the facts of my being. My father was a fighter, you know.

MRS. MASTERSON. [Grimly.] Yes, I knew that.

OCEANA. Life had hurt him. Some day you must tell me about it . . . what it was that happened to him here in Boston. He never would talk about it, but I've often wondered. It must have been my mother. What did she do to him before she died? [She pauses, expecting an answer.] Was it that she was just conventional like you? [She pauses again.] It must have been something dreadful . . . he felt so keenly about it. He burned it into my very soul . . . his fear of civilization. And here I am . . . right in the midst of it . . . I'm letting it get its claws into me! I'm wearing its clothes . . . [She tears at them.] I'm breathing its air! I don't believe I can stand it! [She paces the room restlessly.] My soul is suffocating, as well as my body. I must have something to remind me of the sky, and the open sea, and the great spaces. I must go back again to my home, to my island! [Stretches out her arms to them appealingly.] Ah, can't some of you understand about it? Can't some of you take pity on me? It's so strange to me . . . so different from everything I've been used to! Aunt Sophronia!

MRS. MASTERSON. [Takes a step reluctantly.] My dear!

ETHEL. [Springing forward.] No! No! They don't understand! They don't really care.

MRS. MASTERSON. Ethel!

OCEANA. But you! Ethel!

ETHEL. [Rushes and flings herself at OCEANA'S feet, clutching her dress.] Take me with you! Take me away to your island!

OCEANA. [Turning to FREDDY.] And you . . . won't you be my friend?

FREDDY. [Goes to her.] I will! [She holds out her hand to him; he hesitates, gazing at her awe-stricken.] May I . . . may I take your hand?

OCEANA. Why certainly!

FREDDY. [With fervor.] Oceana!

[CURTAIN]

ACT II

SCENE: Same as Act I.

[At rise: DR. MASTERSON in easy-chair near the window; opens newspaper, sighs, wipes glasses, prepares to read.]

MRS. MASTERSON. [Enters with LETITIA.] Well!

DR. MASTERSON. Home, are you?

MRS. MASTERSON. Yes! And such a day!

LETITIA. Shopping with Oceana!

DR. MASTERSON. Humph!

MRS. MASTERSON. Imagine buying clothes for a woman who won't squeeze her waist, and won't let her skirts touch the ground!

DR. MASTERSON. Why didn't you take her to the men's department?

LETITIA. Don't make a joke of it, father.

DR. MASTERSON. How did you make out?

MRS. MASTERSON. Well, we've got her so the police won't molest her.

LETITIA. We told Madame Clarice her trunks had been misplaced in the steamer hold.

DR. MASTERSON. Ingenious!

MRS. MASTERSON. Yes! Only she spoiled it all by telling the truth!

DR. MASTERSON. Where is she now?

MRS. MASTERSON. She's walking . . . she says she must have exercise.

LETITIA. The air in the limousine is close, it seems,

DR. MASTERSON. You got something she could wear to-night?

MRS. MASTERSON. Oh, yes, that part's all right. If I could only have selected the things she's going to SAY to-night!

[A pause.]

DR. MASTERSON. Well, and what are the signs?

MRS. MASTERSON. I don't know. I can't read her at all.

DR. MASTERSON. You haven't broached the subject yet?

MRS. MASTERSON. Not definitely. I've hinted at it. I said we were worried about the future of Freddy and Ethel.

DR. MASTERSON. And what did she say to that?

MRS. MASTERSON. She said that she'd take care of them, if I'd let her.

DR. MASTERSON. Why . . . that's promising.

MRS. MASTERSON. So I thought . . . till I found she meant taking them off to the South Seas!

DR. MASTERSON. Oh!

MRS. MASTERSON. I thought I'd wait till to-night . . . after the dancing. You see, she'll have met some company, and I thought she might be feeling more . . . more genial.

DR. MASTERSON. I understand. A good idea.

LETITIA. Miss Pilkington ought to put her in a good mood.

MRS. MASTERSON. She's passionately fond of fancy dancing, it seems. And Ethel's been writing her about to-night, so she's quite excited about it.

DR. MASTERSON. I see.

LETITIA. People are wildly jealous of us because we got Miss Pilkington to come here. Everybody's talking about it.

MRS. MASTERSON. You haven't heard any criticisms, I hope?

LETITIA. Nothing that amounts to anything.

The Naturewoman

MRS. MASTERSON. I wish I could feel comfortable about it. It seems so very daring. It's been only seven months since the funeral. To be sure . . . father and I hadn't spoken for ten years.

DR. MASTERSON. And everybody knows the entertainment is for charity.

LETITIA. And we've only asked the very best people.

DR. MASTERSON. And the date was arranged over a year ago.

LETITIA. And it isn't as if we were going to dance ourselves, mother. And then they are "Biblical Dances," too.

MRS. MASTERSON. I know – I know. But then, the world is so quick to gossip. They might say we were doing it because he left his fortune to a girl in the Cannibal Islands!

DR. MASTERSON. Perhaps it's just as well the girl's to be here.

MRS. MASTERSON. Yes, if we can keep her within bounds. I shall be on pins and needles till it's over.

LETITIA. Such a white elephant in one's home!

MRS. MASTERSON. And then the way Freddy and Ethel are behaving!

LETITIA. Freddy wanted to stay from college and Ethel from her music lesson – both of them to go and sit around in the stores while Oceana bought clothes!

DR. MASTERSON. Well, of all things!

MRS. MASTERSON. I hardly know Ethel any more!

LETITIA. And Freddy sits around and stares at her like a man out of his wits!

MRS. MASTERSON. That'll be the next thing, I suppose . . . she'll run off and marry him!

DR. MASTERSON. Well, mightn't that be a good way to solve the problem? To keep the money in the family?

MRS. MASTERSON. Quincy!

LETITIA. Besides—she mightn't marry him.

MRS. MASTERSON. Letitia!

LETITIA. Why not, mother?

MRS. MASTERSON. I'm sure, my child, you have no reason for saying anything like THAT.

LETITIA. I don't trust the minx!

[A pause.]

DR. MASTERSON. Has Henry got home?

LETITIA. He's probably there now.

MRS. MASTERSON. Is he coming here to dinner?

LETITIA. I'm not sure.

MRS. MASTERSON. You'd better take my advice and not let him.

LETITIA. Why not?

MRS. MASTERSON. Because, the first thing you know, we'll have Henry in love with her, too.

LETITIA. [Horried.] MOTHER!

MRS. MASTERSON. I mean it, my dear—quite seriously. What's the meaning of all this discontent of Henry's? I know him well enough . . . he's just the man to be taken in by the tricks of such a woman! SHE'D give him plenty of outdoor exercise! SHE'D go live in the country with him!

LETITIA. [Springing up.] Mother! How horrible!

MRS. MASTERSON. Forewarned is forearmed, Letitia. You listen to me, and let Henry see just as little of Anna Talbot as you can. And when he's with her, you be there, too.

LETITIA. [In great agitation.] I'll go home right now and see to him!

[Exit.]

DR. MASTERSON. [Sighs.] Oh, dear! And I was waiting for Henry to play billiards with!

MRS. MASTERSON. You might get Anna to play billiards with you. No doubt she's an expert.

[Exit right.]

[DR. MASTERSON sighs, shakes his head, and resumes reading.]

OCEANA. [Enters, radiant, clad in an ermine cloak.] Well, Uncle Quincy!

DR. MASTERSON. Oceana! Bless me! How gorgeous!

OCEANA. [Takes it off and throws it on the chair.] It's really too warm for walking.

The Naturewoman

DR. MASTERSON. I should have thought, coming from a tropical climate . . .

OCEANA. Ah, but my blood circulates, you see. [Sits opposite him.] Uncle Quincy, I want to have a talk with you.

DR. MASTERSON. Yes, my dear?

OCEANA. Uncle Quincy, why do you let Aunt Sophronia and Letitia frighten you the way they do?

DR. MASTERSON. My dear girl!

OCEANA. Take yesterday afternoon, for instance – what I said about syphilis. You know I was right, and yet you didn't dare say so.

DR. MASTERSON. Really, Oceana . . .

OCEANA. You are an educated man – a man of science. You know what modern ideas are. And yet you consent to be walked all over!

DR. MASTERSON. My dear . . .

OCEANA. Here are these women . . . they have leisure and opportunity . . . they ought to be doing some good in the world. And yet they haven't an idea except to act as other people think they ought to act!

DR. MASTERSON. Dear me! Dear me!

[Rises and begins to pace the room.]

OCEANA. Don't run away from me.

DR. MASTERSON. I'm not running away. But you are so disconcerting, Oceana . . .

OCEANA. I know; but that's only because you know that what I say is true, and you don't like to feel that anybody else knows it.

FREDDY. [Off.] Oceana!

OCEANA. Freddy!

FREDDY. [Enters.] Oh! Father's here!

OCEANA. Yes; we were having a chat.

FREDDY. [Hesitates.] Father, will you excuse me, please . . . I have something very important to say to Oceana. I've been waiting for her.

DR. MASTERSON. Why . . . what . . .

FREDDY. Don't ask me, please. I must have a talk with her right away. Please come, Oceana.

OCEANA. All right.

DR. MASTERSON. I was going to the billiard-room, anyway. Pray excuse me.

[Exit centre.]

OCEANA. [Smiles.] See him run! Well, Freddy, what is it?

FREDDY. [Intensely.] Oceana!

OCEANA. What's the matter?

FREDDY. You mustn't stay here!

OCEANA. Why not?

FREDDY. They'll ruin you, Oceana! They'll crush you, they'll spoil you forever! You must go away!

OCEANA. Why, my dear boy, how can they hurt me?

FREDDY. They will, they will! I've been thinking about it all day! I didn't go to college . . . I spent the whole day pacing the streets.

OCEANA. Why, Freddy!

FREDDY. And I want you to come away! Come away with me! I want you . . . [Wildly.] . . . I want you to marry me!

OCEANA. [Aghast.] Why, Freddy!

FREDDY. Oh, I know it's a fool way . . . to blurt it out at you like that. I thought up a hundred ways to say it to you. I had a fine speech all by heart, but I can't remember a word of it. When I see you I can't even think straight. I'm simply beside myself . . . I can't rest, I can't sleep, I can't do anything. I used to laugh at such ideas, but now I'm frightened at myself. Can't you understand me, Oceana? Oceana . . . I love you!

OCEANA. [Whispers.] My poor boy!

FREDDY. I don't ask you to say yes . . . I just ask you to give me a chance . . . a hope. If I thought I might win you, I'd do anything . . . anything! I'd wait for you . . . I'd work for you . . . I'd worship you! Oceana! [He

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stops.] May I . . . May I take your hand? [She does not give it.] Ah, no! I have no right! Oceana, listen to me! I have thought that I was in love before . . . but it was just childish, it was nothing like this. This has been a revelation to me . . . it makes all the world seem different to me. And just see how suddenly it's come . . . why, yesterday I was a boy! Yesterday I thought some things were interesting . . . and to-day I wonder how I could have cared about them. Nothing seems the same to me. And it all happened at once, it was like an explosion . . . the first instant I laid eyes on you I knew that you were the one woman I could ever love. And I said to myself, she will laugh at you.

[He hesitates.]

OCEANA. No, I won't laugh at you.

FREDDY. I tried to keep it to myself, but I couldn't . . . not if I were to be hanged for it. I'm just . . . just torn out of myself. I'm trembling with delight, and then I'm plunged into despair, and then I stop to think and I'm terrified. For I don't know what I can do. Everything in my life is gone — I won't know how to live if you send me away.

OCEANA. [Gravely.] Freddy, come sit down here. Be rational now.

FREDDY. Yes.

[He sits watching her, in a kind of daze.]

OCEANA. In the first place, Freddy . . . you must understand, it isn't the first time this has happened to me.

FREDDY. No, I suppose not.

OCEANA. The officers of the ships always used to fall in love with me. There were three on this last steamer.

FREDDY. Yes.

OCEANA. You say to marry you. But it's difficult for me to imagine myself marrying any man, no matter how much I loved him. One has to make so many promises, you know.

FREDDY. How do you mean?

OCEANA. You have to "love, honor and obey."

FREDDY. But, Oceana! That's a mere form.

OCEANA. No, no. It's written in the laws. All kinds of things . . . people don't realize it.

FREDDY. But surely . . . if you love a man . . . a decent man . . .

OCEANA. No decent man ought to ask a woman to sign away her self— respect.

FREDDY. [Bewildered.] But then . . . then . . . what would you do?

OCEANA. [Watches him, then laughs to herself.] Boston is such a funny place!

FREDDY. Hey?

OCEANA. Let us leave marriage out now . . . let us talk of love. Realize how much more serious it is to a woman than it is to a man. A man meets a woman and he finds her beautiful, and his blood begins to boil, and he says: "I adore you." And so she gives herself to him; and then, the next morning, he goes off and forgets all about it.

FREDDY. No, no!

OCEANA. I don't say you, Freddy. But it's happened that way. The woman, though . . . she doesn't forget. She carries a reminder. And it's not only that she has the burden of the child . . . the anguish of the birth . . . the task of suckling and rearing it. It's that she has a miniature of the man with her all the rest of her days. She has his soul there . . . blended with the thing she loves most of all in the world. And so, don't you see how careful she has to be, how desperately important the thing is to her? [She sits lost in thought.] I have never been in love, Freddy, not the least little bit. I have never felt that call in my blood. But some day I shall feel it; and when I do, I shall take that man as if before a court of judgment. I shall take him away with me. I shall ask myself not merely, "Is he beautiful and strong of body?" but, "Is he beautiful and strong in soul?" I would not ask that he be learned . . . he might not chance to be a cultured man. But he would be a man of power, he would be a man who could rule himself, he would be a soul without base alloy. And when I had satisfied myself as to that, I would have found my mate. I would say to him, "I wish you to be the father of my child." [She sits again, brooding.] I would not exact pledges of him. I would say to him, "I do not ask you to take care of me; I do not ask you to take care of my child. You may go away when you wish . . . that rests with you; but I wish the child." [She pauses.] Do you see?

FREDDY. Yes, I see. [He gazes at her, frightened.] And you . . . you do not feel that way about me?

OCEANA. Not the least little bit, Freddy.

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FREDDY. And if I waited ever so long?

OCEANA. I do not believe that I should ever feel it, [She puts her hand upon his arm.] My dear, dear boy! Learn to look at it as I do. Face it like a man. It is one of those things that we cannot help . . . that we do not even understand. It is the chemistry of sex; it is Nature's voice speaking to us. It means no disgrace to you that I do not love you . . . it means no inferiority, no defeat. It is the signal that Nature gives us, that we wait for, and dare not disregard. You dare not ask me to disregard it! [He is gazing into her eyes like one entranced.] You must let me teach you . . . you must let me help you. You must not let this mean misery and despair. Take hold of yourself. Perhaps you and Ethel can go back with me to my island . . . for I think that I am going. [He continues to gaze at her, speechless with admiration. She presses his arm.] Now promise me.

FREDDY. What?

OCEANA. That you will be a man.

[They gaze into each other's eyes.]

ETHEL. [Off.] Oceana!

OCEANA. Here is your sister. Let us not trouble her. [Aloud.] Ethel!

ETHEL. [Enters in street costume.] Oh, here you are! And your new clothes!

OCEANA. Do you like me?

ETHEL. No, they don't belong to you!

OCEANA. [Laughs.] Well, I shan't wear them long.

ETHEL. What are you going to do?

OCEANA. I'm going to design some for myself.

ETHEL. What kind?

OCEANA. I don't know yet. But it'll be something that will leave my legs outside.

ETHEL. And did you get something beautiful for tonight?

OCEANA. I got something that will do.

ETHEL. Oceana, when am I to see the dance?

OCEANA. I told you, when I have my costume.

ETHEL. But when will that be?

OCEANA. When my trunks have come.

FREDDY. They came this afternoon.

OCEANA. Oh! Then we'll have it to-morrow morning! And I'll show you my beautiful bridal-robe.

FREDDY. Bridal-robe?

OCEANA. Yes. Didn't I tell you? It was made for me by one of our King's sons. His name was Paukopi . . . that means, in our language, "Child of the Sea Foam." And he was in love with me.

ETHEL. Oh!

OCEANA. He was very sad and went away by himself. But he was a man . . . he did not go to pieces. [She looks at FREDDY.] He went into the forest and spent his time hunting wild birds; and he gathered their feathers and made them into this gorgeous robe . . . purple and gold and green and scarlet. He brought it and laid it at my feet, and said that it was my bridal-robe, that I must wear it at my feast.

ETHEL. Oh, how lovely!

FREDDY. [Rises and turns away in despair.] Oh!

ETHEL. Tell me a little about the Sunrise Dance.

OCEANA. It represents the worship of Nature. It portrays an awakening from slumber . . . you know the soft part of the music at the beginning . . .

ETHEL. Yes.

OCEANA. Then gradually I rise to my feet and gaze towards the light. There is the sun shining upon the waves of the sea, and upon the palm branches. All life is awakening and singing for joy . . . and so the music rises to an ecstasy.

ETHEL. And do you dance other things?

OCEANA. Oh, yes – lots of things.

ETHEL. Oh, Oceana! I'm just wild to see you!

OCEANA. And I'm wild to dance. I must have some vent pretty soon. You see, at home I was out of doors all

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the time. I hunted and fished, I swam and dived, I danced on the beach. And here . . . why, I walk down the street, and I daren't even so much as sing out loud. I have to remember that I'm a young lady, and have an ermine cloak on! Truly, I don't see how you ever stand it!

ETHEL. We were brought up that way.

OCEANA. Yes; and that's why you're undeveloped and frail. But tell me, don't you ever have an impulse to play? That beautiful snow out there – don't you want to tumble round in it and pelt each other with snowballs?

FREDDY. We did that when we were children.

OCEANA. Yes, that's the way. But I, you see . . . I'm a child still; and I expect to be always.

ETHEL. And are you always happy, Oceana?

OCEANA. Always.

ETHEL. You never . . . you never even start to feel sad?

OCEANA. Why yes, now and then. But I don't permit such moods. You see, I have the conviction that there is nothing beautiful or right about sorrow – never, under any circumstances.

ETHEL. You mean you would not mourn, even if some one you loved were to die?

OCEANA. I mean that I did not. [She pauses.] Yes, exactly . . . my father. He had been my life's companion, and they brought him home drowned; and yet I did not mourn.

ETHEL. Oceana!

OCEANA. I had trained myself . . . for just that. We had made ourselves what you might call soul-exercises; little ceremonies to remind ourselves of things we wished to hold by. The Sunrise Dance was one of those. And then, on the last day of each month, at sunset, we would sit and watch the shadows fade, and contemplate death. [She pauses, gravely.] We would say to ourselves that we, too, were shadows . . . rainbows in the sea-mist; that we held our life as a gift . . . we carried it in our hands, ready to give it up when we heard the call. [A pause.]

HENRY. [Opens door centre and enters. Sees OCEANA and halts.] Oh!

OCEANA. [Turns and sees him.] Why! Here's a man! [They gaze at each other, transfixed.] Ethel! Who is he?

ETHEL. Why, this is Henry. Letitia's husband.

OCEANA. Oh! Letitia's husband! [With a sudden, frank gesture, putting out her hand.] Henry!

HENRY. Oceana!

[As their hands meet, they stand looking into each other's faces.]

OCEANA. [Gripping his hand tightly.] You are strong! [Looks at his hand.] And you do not smoke, either! Let me see your eyes.

HENRY. [Perplexed.] My eyes?

OCEANA. Your eyes. [Turns him toward the light; studies his eyes.] They dosed you with quinine! Malaria, I suppose?

HENRY. Why . . . yes. But how can you tell?

OCEANA. I can tell many things. Let me see your tongue.

HENRY. [Bewildered.] My tongue?

OCEANA. Your tongue.

HENRY. But what for?

OCEANA. I can tell more about a man by looking at his tongue for a minute than by listening to it for a week.

HENRY. But, Oceana –

OCEANA. I am in earnest.

HENRY. [Laughs.] Why . . . really . . .

OCEANA. Are you afraid?

HENRY. Good heavens, no!

OCEANA. Put it out. [He pats his tongue out and she examines it.] So! A man with a red tongue! And in a civilized city!

HENRY. Oughtn't it to be red?

OCEANA. And he doesn't know what it ought to be! How delicious! [She steps back from him.] And so you are Letitia's husband. Tell me, are you happy with her?

HENRY. [Startled; stares at her intently.] No, no . . . you ought not to ask me that.

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OCEANA. Why not?

HENRY. [In a low voice.] Because you know.

OCEANA. Yes, that's true. [A pause; she changes the subject.] I have heard my father speak of you often.

HENRY. He remembered me, did he? I was only twenty when he went away.

OCEANA. He said that he taught you to play single-stick.

HENRY. Ah yes, to be sure!

OCEANA. He taught me also.

HENRY. You?

OCEANA. It was our favorite game.

HENRY. It's a rather rough game for a woman.

OCEANA. I love it. We'll have a bout.

HENRY. I'm afraid . . . I don't think I could.

OCEANA. Why not?

HENRY. [Laughs.] I should find it a psychical impossibility to hit a woman.

OCEANA. You might find it a physical impossibility in this case. [With sudden excitement.] Why, my trunks have come! We could have a go before dinner. Couldn't we, Freddy?

FREDDY. I suppose so.

OCEANA. Oh, it's just what I'm pining for! To get my blood stirring again! And you, too . . . surely you must be chafing, out of patience! [She stops abruptly.] Oh!

MRS. MASTERSON. [Enters left.] Henry!

HENRY. Yes?

MRS. MASTERSON. When did you get here?

HENRY. Just a minute ago.

MRS. MASTERSON. You've met Anna, I see.

OCEANA. Yes, Aunt Sophronia . . . we're getting along famously.

MRS. MASTERSON. Letitia's looking for you, Henry.

HENRY. Where is she?

MRS. MASTERSON. She went home to find you.

HENRY. Humph! I came here for her.

MRS. MASTERSON. She wants you at once.

HENRY. All right. Good-bye, Oceana.

OCEANA. Until later.

HENRY [exit centre with **MRS. MASTERSON.**]

OCEANA. So that is Henry! Tell me, Ethel, have they any children?

ETHEL. Yes . . . two.

OCEANA. How long have they been married?

ETHEL. Six years.

OCEANA. Six years! And is he really happy?

ETHEL. Why . . . you know Letitia.

OCEANA. Yes, but I don't know Henry.

ETHEL. [Laughs.] I guess he's so-so. Like most of us.

OCEANA. [Half to herself.] I'll find out for myself. ['Phone rings; **FREDDY** rises.] What's that? It's the 'phone. [Rises.] I hadn't noticed it before! How interesting!

ETHEL. That's so! You never saw one?

FREDDY. [At 'phone.] Hello! Yes, this is Mrs. Masterson's. This is her son. Can't I take the message? Oh, from Miss Pilkington. Oh! Why, that's too bad! Why no, of course not. Tell Miss Pilkington we're as sorry as can be! No, I'll attend to it. Good-bye. [Turns.] Miss Pilkington can't come!

ETHEL. What?

FREDDY. She's slipped in the snow and hurt her ankle.

ETHEL. Oh, Freddy!

OCEANA. What a shame!

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[They stare at one another.]

ETHEL. Was that she at the 'phone?

FREDDY. No, her maid. She's laid up.

ETHEL. What in the world will we do?

FREDDY. It's too late to notify people.

ETHEL. How perfectly beastly!

FREDDY. I'll go tell mother.

OCEANA. No, wait!

FREDDY. What is it?

OCEANA. I've an idea.

FREDDY. What?

OCEANA. Why not let ME take her place?

ETHEL. How do you mean?

OCEANA. Let me dance!

ETHEL. Oh!

OCEANA. Why not? I'd love to do it.

ETHEL. Oceana! You'd do the Sunrise Dance?

OCEANA. Yes; and then if they liked it, I could do some others.

ETHEL. Oh, Oceana! How perfectly lovely! But . . . but I wonder if it would be all right. I mean . . . it wouldn't shock them?

OCEANA. Why should it, my dear?

ETHEL. Is it what they'd call proper?

OCEANA. Why, of course, Ethel. How ridiculous! It isn't a sex-dance. It's religious.

FREDDY. And the costume?

OCEANA. Oh, the costume is beautiful.

ETHEL. Then I'll ask mother.

[Starts to go.]

OCEANA. Wait. Will Henry be there?

ETHEL. Of course.

OCEANA. Are you sure?

ETHEL. Of course.

OCEANA. [Eagerly.] Why ask your mother at all? Why not just go ahead and do it?

ETHEL. Oceana!

OCEANA. Why not? She'd only worry meantime. So let's just wait, and I'll go ahead.

ETHEL. Oh, would you dare?

OCEANA. Why, of course! She needn't know until almost time. Is this Miss Pilkington known here?

ETHEL. No, she's never been in Boston before.

FREDDY. Mother met her in London. She promised she'd do her famous Biblical Dances for mother's pet founding asylum.

OCEANA. Well, don't you see? Most of the people wouldn't know till it was all over! And oh, Ethel, it would be such a lark! [ETHEL and FREDDY gaze at each other dubiously.] Who was going to play for Miss Pilkington?

ETHEL. I was.

OCEANA. Well, then, you can play for me! You see, Ethel, I'm afraid to tell your mother . . . she mightn't be willing. She wants to suppress me, and oh, I just can't be suppressed! I must have something to do or I'll jump out of my skin, Ethel. Truly, my dear, if this goes on much longer, I'll go out and climb the telegraph pole in front of the house! And if I can only make an impression with my dancing, then I may choose that for my career. I've been thinking of it seriously . . . it's one way,

that people might let me preach joy and health to them. If I can't do that, I'll go off and turn into a suffragette, or join the Anarchists, or something worse!

ETHEL. Freddy, what do you say?

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FREDDY. I'll stand my share of the racket.

OCEANA. Oh, come on! I'm just wild for some kind of mischief! I could dance like the grandmother of all the witches! Come, let's practice some. Play for me, Ethel! Play! [Pushes her toward the piano; raises her hands in triumph; whispers.] Henry!

CURTAIN

ACT III

[Front part of stage shows an ante-room, with folding doors opening to rear part, which represents a portion of the Masterson parlor, curtained off to form a stage for the dance. Entrances down stage right and left. Up stage, at the left, are the curtains, which part in the middle; they are held by a cord which is fastened by the wall. OCEANA'S trunk stands near entrance, right. Also a couple of chairs.]

[At rise: FREDDY stands left, holding curtain cord. OCEANA lies up centre, covered with the "Bridal-robe," asleep. Music of Sunrise Dance begins softly. FREDDY draws back curtains, revealing part of audience, left. He steals off. OCEANA gradually awakens, raises her head, lifts herself to her knees, stretches out her hands in worship to the Sun-god. Then slowly she rises, rapt in wonder. The robe falls back, revealing a filmy costume, primitive, elemental, naive. She begins to sway, and gradually glides into an ecstatic dance, which portrays the joyful awakening of morning.]

MRS. MASTERSON. [Enters, left, in great agitation, stares at OCEANA, wrings her hands, paces about, signals to her frantically.] Oh! Oh!

[Rushes left and releases curtains, which fall.]

OCEANA. [Turns in consternation.] Why! What . . . [Sees MRS. MASTERSON.] Aunt Sophronia!

MRS. MASTERSON. How dare you! How dare you!

OCEANA. Why, what's the matter?

MRS. MASTERSON. You ask me? Oh, oh!

OCEANA. Aunt Sophronia, you stopped my dance!

MRS. MASTERSON. Hussy! Shameless wanton! You have disgraced me before all the world!

OCEANA. [Stares at her, slowly comprehending.] Oh! I see! [Goes to her with signs of distress.] Oh, Aunt Sophronia, I'm so sorry! I didn't mean to displease you!

MRS. MASTERSON. Such a humiliation!

OCEANA. Aunt Sophronia, you must believe me . . . I had a reason!

MRS. MASTERSON. A what?

OCEANA. A reason for doing it! I couldn't help it . . . believe me, believe me!

MRS. MASTERSON. But what . . . what reason? What do you mean?

OCEANA. I can't tell you, Aunt Sophronia. But truly . . . if you knew, you would understand. I simply had to do it.

MRS. MASTERSON. [Bewildered.] Is the girl mad?

OCEANA. Yes, I believe that is it! I am mad!

DR. MASTERSON. [Opens door and enters left.] Oceana !

MRS. MASTERSON. [Hurries to him.] Quincy! Don't come in here! It's not decent! [Pushes him towards door; to OCEANA.] Put something on you, girl!

OCEANA. Of course. [Puts on robe.]

MRS. MASTERSON. I can't comprehend you! Have you no sense of shame whatever?

OCEANA. I had a sense of shame.

MRS. MASTERSON. Naked! Almost naked! And in my home!

ETHEL. [Enters left.] Mother, what's the matter?

MRS. MASTERSON. Ethel! You knew of this outrageous plot . . .

OCEANA. One moment, Aunt Sophronia. The blame for this rests upon me alone. I told Ethel that the dance was all right.

MRS. MASTERSON. Ethel, leave the room. This is no place for you.

ETHEL. Mother! The people are waiting . . .

MRS. MASTERSON. Go at once! [To DR. MASTERSON.] Quincy, go out and make some apology to our guests. Explain to them that we had no idea . . . we were imposed upon . . .

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[Applause heard off left.]

OCEANA. Perhaps if your guests were consulted . . .

DR. MASTERSON. My dear Sophronia . . .

MRS. MASTERSON. [Pushes him off.] Go! Quickly! [Turns to OCEANA.] And as for you, Anna Talbot, there is no more to be said. You have overwhelmed me with shame.

OCEANA. Perhaps, Aunt Sophronia, you would prefer I should leave your house?

MRS. MASTERSON. [Stiffly.] I would make no objection.

OCEANA. I will go as soon as I dress.

MRS. MASTERSON. Very well. [Starts towards the door.] I will do what I can to atone for your wantonness.

OCEANA. One moment, Aunt Sophronia.

MRS. MASTERSON. Well?

OCEANA. Ethel tells me that you had something to say to me about grandfather's will.

MRS. MASTERSON. Oh! Ethel told you, did she?

OCEANA. Yes . . . she wished you to know that she had told me. Of course, feeling towards me as you do, you would hardly expect me to give up any rights that I may have.

MRS. MASTERSON. We will be content with what rights the law allows us.

OCEANA. What I wished to say was that I would be willing to give Ethel part of my inheritance.

MRS. MASTERSON. Oh!

OCEANA. I would not give it to Freddy, for he is a man, and I should be breaking the mainspring of his life. But I will give half my money to Ethel, provided that you will consent to let her go with me.

MRS. MASTERSON. Oh! So that is your idea! You have already weaned the child from me . . . you have made her a traitor to me; and now you wish to buy her altogether.

OCEANA. Aunt Sophronia!

MRS. MASTERSON. Your offer is declined. I have no more to say to you.

[She sweeps out.]

OCEANA. [Stands lost in thought; a smile grows upon her face.] Poor Aunt Sophronia!

[Begins to hum, and to sway as in the Sunrise Dance. She completes the dance from where she was interrupted, from an impulse of inner delight.]

FREDDY. [Steals in right; watches her, enraptured, as she stands with arms outstretched in ecstasy. He rushes towards her and flings himself at her feet, clasping her hand.] Oceana!

OCEANA. Freddy!

FREDDY. [Sobbing incoherently.] Oceana! I can't stand it!

OCEANA. Why . . . what's the matter?

FREDDY. I love you! I love you! I can't live without you! I can't give you up . . . Oceana, have mercy on me!

OCEANA. [Gravely.] Freddy! This won't do! No . . . let go of me, please! You must control yourself.

FREDDY. Don't send me away! How can you be so cruel to me?

OCEANA. But, Freddy, I have told you that I don't love you. [She stands, thinking.] Give me my robe. Now, come sit down here, and listen to me. I am going away, Freddy, and you won't see me any more. And that is for the best . . . for you must get me out of your mind. I don't love you, Freddy.

FREDDY. And you never would love me?

OCEANA. Never.

FREDDY. But why not . . . why not?

OCEANA. I can't tell you that.

FREDDY. Oh, you are pitiless to me!

OCEANA. One does not give love out of pity. That is a cowardly thing to ask. [She pauses.] I must be frank with you, Freddy. You have got to face the facts. When I give my love, it will be to a man; and you are not a man.

FREDDY. But I am growing up!

OCEANA. No; you don't understand me. You should have grown up years ago. You have been stunted. [She takes his hand.] Look! See the stains!

FREDDY. Why . . .

The Naturewoman

OCEANA. Cigarettes! And you want to be a man!

FREDDY. Is that so unforgivable?

OCEANA. It is only one thing of many, my dear cousin.

FREDDY. Oceana, you don't know what men are!

OCEANA. Oh, don't I! My dear boy, there is nothing about men that I don't know. I have read Krafft-Ebing and Havelock Ellis . . . I know it all. I know it as a physician knows it. I can read a man's diseases in his complexion . . . I can read his vices in his eyes. Don't you see?

FREDDY. [Drops his eyes.] I see!

OCEANA. Don't think that I am despising you, dear boy. I know the world you have lived in.

FREDDY. But what can I do?

OCEANA. You can go away, and make a man of yourself. Go West, get out into the open. Learn to ride and hunt . . . harden your muscles and expand your chest. Until then you're not fit to be the father of any woman's child!

FREDDY. Drop college, you mean?

OCEANA. Be your own college! The idea of trying to build a brain in a body that's decaying! How could you stand it? Don't you ever feel that you are boiling over . . . that you must have something upon which you can wreak yourself? Don't you feel that you'd like to tame a horse, or to sail a boat in a storm? Don't you ever read about adventures?

FREDDY. Yes, I read about them.

OCEANA. And don't you ever feel that you must experience them? That you must face some kind of danger . . . do something that you can look back on with pride? Why, see . . . six years ago there came to our island three war-canoes full of savages . . . cannibals they were. If father and I hadn't been there, they'd have wiped our people out. And do you think I'd give up the memory of that struggle?

FREDDY. What happened?

OCEANA. Fortunately they came in the daytime, so we soon drove them back to their boats. See . . . I'll show you. [She goes to trunk.] Here's one of them.

[She lifts up a human skull.]

FREDDY. Good Lord!

OCEANA. Notice that crack. That was done with a spear . . . by my prince, the one who made me this robe, you know. He cleaned the skull out for me.

FREDDY. Rather a ghastly sort of souvenir.

OCEANA. Oh, I don't mind that. Father and I found it useful . . . a sort of memento mori.

FREDDY. [Looking into trunk.] And what are those things?

OCEANA. They are some of my arrows. And these are what we used for bowls . . . turtle-shells, you see.

FREDDY. [Pointing.] But those?

OCEANA. Oh, my single-sticks. [Lifts them.] That's the game Henry and I were talking about. You ought to get him to teach it to you.

FREDDY. What's it like?

OCEANA. I'll show you. [She takes from the trunk two leather helmets and gloves.] Here you are! It's an old English game . . . didn't you ever read "Robin Hood"?

FREDDY. Oh, it's that? Why, they used to crack each other's heads!

OCEANA. The object was to draw first blood. But we used to wear these helmets. You see how we've dented them up? And these old cudgels . . . how they remind me of father!

FREDDY. Humph! They're heavy.

OCEANA. You take the stick this way; it's a kind of fencing. [She gives him a stick and illustrates the play.] No, so!

MRS. MASTERSON. [Enters.] What's this? Is this the way you get ready to leave?

OCEANA. [Imploring.] Oh, Aunt Sophronia, I beg your pardon! I got so interested . . .

MRS. MASTERSON. Is there no limit to your indiscretion?

DR. MASTERSON. [Enters hurriedly.] Sophronia, I beg of you . . .

MRS. MASTERSON. I will hear no more of this! I have spoken, once for all . . .

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DR. MASTERSON. But, my dear . . .

MRS. MASTERSON. No more!

DR. MASTERSON. But, Sophronia, the people don't understand why

MRS. MASTERSON. It was outrageous!

DR. MASTERSON. I know. But since it was begun . . . it's so difficult to explain . . .

MRS. MASTERSON. No more of this! I won't hear it!

HENRY. [Enters; stares about.] Mrs. Masterson, what have you done here?

MRS. MASTERSON. There is no reason why you should concern yourself with it.

HENRY. But I wish to know.

MRS. MASTERSON. What do you wish to know?

HENRY. Did you stop Oceana's dance?

MRS. MASTERSON. I did.

HENRY. And why?

MRS. MASTERSON. Because I saw fit to.

HENRY. But your guests . . .

MRS. MASTERSON. I will attend to my guests.

HENRY. But what is Oceana going to do?

MRS. MASTERSON. She is going to leave our house.

HENRY. This is a shame. Most of the people enjoyed the dance. They would like to see more . . .

MRS. MASTERSON. Henry, you will permit me to decide about what goes on in my home.

HENRY. You may decide for yourself. But if Oceana leaves tonight, I will leave also . . . and I will never return.

MRS. MASTERSON. Very well, Sir; as you please.

OCEANA. Henry, let me have a say. I am obliged to you, but I don't want to stay. It's absurd for me to be here . . . I don't belong here. I've lived all my life under the open sky; I've been free. I've swum several miles every day and run several more; I've hunted and fished and danced and played; and here they dress me up in long skirts and sit me in a corner and tell me I'm a lady! I can stand it just so long . . . I've stood it twenty-four hours, and I feel like a wild animal in a cage. If I don't find something to do . . . something real . . . something that is thrilling . . . truly, I'll murder some one. [She paces the room; DR. and MRS. Masterson shrink away from her.] Yes, I mean it! [With increasing vehemence.] Picture me at home. When I was hungry, I went out for game; and unless I got the game, I stayed hungry. Or I went fishing, and I had to get my canoe through the surf. I had the zest of danger . . . I had real struggle. But here I have nothing. They bring me my food on silver platters; they get up and give me their seats, they even push the doors open in front of me! And so I'm panting for something to do . . . for some opposition, some competition, some conflict. I'm spoiling for a fight! You, Henry, don't you know what I mean? A fight! [With a sharp, swift gesture.] I want to meet some wild animal again! Is there a wild animal in you? [They stare at each other; suddenly she springs and takes the other single-stick from FREDDY.] Here! You know this game! My father taught you! [She holds out one to him.] Come on!

HENRY. [Bewildered.] Oceana! This is not the place.

OCEANA. It's the place for me! Take it! [She forces it on him.] Now! Forget that I'm a woman! Ready!

HENRY. Oceana! No!

OCEANA. Are you afraid of your mother-in-law?

HENRY. Good heavens!

OCEANA. If you're not, you're the only man in the family that isn't. [She drops her robe.] Now!

MRS. MASTERSON. This is disgraceful!

DR. MASTERSON. Oceana, I beg of you . . .

OCEANA. Defend yourself! [She makes a feint at Henry's head, causing him to raise his stick.] Lay on! [She attacks him briskly. He defends himself. There is a swift rattle of the sticks and a vivid conflict.]

HENRY. [Laughing.] Oceana, for God's sake, stop!

MRS. MASTERSON. Oh, stop them!

DR. MASTERSON. Are you mad?

FREDDY. Oceana!

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OCEANA. [Wild with the excitement of the struggle.] Lay on! Ha, ha! Well played! Guard! Once again! Ah, this is what I like! This is what I've been looking for! [They leap here and there; the others dodge out of the way, protesting; the conflict grows more and more strenuous.]

LETITIA. [Enters left; screams in terror.] Henry! [They stop; a long pause.] Henry! What does this mean?

HENRY. My dear . . .

[Stops for lack of breath.]

OCEANA. Freddy, my robe.

[Wraps herself and sits in chair, smiling.]

LETITIA. What does this mean?

MRS. MASTERSON. Of all the shameless and insane procedures!

LETITIA. Are you mad, Henry?

OCEANA. No, no, Letitia. We know just what we're about. You see, your husband and I are considering whether or not we shall fall in love with each other.

LETITIA. [Wildly.] Oh!

MRS. MASTERSON. Monstrous!

DR. MASTERSON. Oceana!

LETITIA. How dare you?

OCEANA. He's interested, you know. I've got hold of him.

LETITIA. [Furiously.] Henry, you stand there and permit her to insult me . . .

HENRY. My dear, believe me . . .

OCEANA. [Sharply.] Stop, Henry! [A pause.] Look at me!

HENRY. Well?

OCEANA. Don't tell her a lie. A lie is the thing I never pardon.

HENRY. Why . . . why . . .

[Falls silent.]

MRS. MASTERSON. Henry!

FREDDY. Gee whiz!

LETITIA. Henry, I demand that you come home with me instantly.

OCEANA. Don't go.

LETITIA. [Almost speechless.] If you stay here, you stay alone!

OCEANA. [Rises, casts aside her robe, stretches wide her arms.] Letitia! Look at me! Am I the sort of woman that you can safely leave your husband alone with?

LETITIA. [Stares at her terrified, then bursts into tears and flings herself into HENRY'S arms.] Henry!

OCEANA. Ah, yes! That is safer!

HENRY. [Supports LETITIA.] My dear! My dear!

LETITIA. Come home with me!

OCEANA. God, man, how I pity you! Bound in chains to a woman like that! And with all the world conspiring to hold you fast! How can you bear it? Do you expect to bear it forever? What will become of your soul? Oh, I pity you! I pity you!

LETITIA. [Hysterically.] Henry, take me home! Take me home at once!

HENRY. Yes, my dear, yes!

OCEANA. What is the spell they've laid upon you? You make me think of Gulliver . . . a giant stretched out upon the ground, impotent, bound fast with a million tiny threads! Wake up, man . . . wake up! You've only one life to live. You act as if you had a thousand.

LETITIA. Mother!

MRS. MASTERSON. How long is this to continue?

LETITIA. Henry, won't you stop listening to her?

OCEANA. He's not listening to me, Letitia. He's listening to the voice of the universe, calling to him. The voice of unborn generations, clamoring, agonizing! What do you suppose it means, man . . . this storm that has shaken us? It is Nature's trumpet-call . . . it is the shout of discovery of the powers within us! For ages upon ages life has been preparing it . . . and now suddenly we meet . . . the barriers are shattered and flung down, the tides of

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being sweep us together!

MRS. MASTERSON. Oh! This is outrageous!

DR. MASTERSON. Oceana, Henry is married!

OCEANA. Married! Married! That is the sorcery with which you bind him! No longer a man at all, but some aborted thing . . . a relic! An eunuch! They mumble their incantations over you . . . the spell is done, and you sink back, cowed and whimpering! You are a machine, a domestic utensil! Never again are you to love and to dare to create No, there are other things in life for you . . . bread and butter, cooks and dinner parties, billiards and bridge-whist . . . that is your portion! A married man!

LETITIA. [Terrified.] Henry! For God's sake!

[He no longer returns her embraces, but stares at Oceana, fascinated.]

OCEANA. Don't you see, man? It's a dream! A nightmare! Rouse yourself, lift your head . . . and it's gone! Life is calling! Come away!

LETITIA. [Frantically.] Mother! Mother!

MRS. MASTERSON. Quincy, if you can't stop this outrage, I will! Call the servants.

[She starts toward Oceana.]

OCEANA. Call the police! Call your guests! Anything . . . bring the world down on him. Terrify him with conventions, beat him into subjection again!

MRS. MASTERSON. Wanton!

OCEANA. Wanton! Oh, how well you understand me! I, with my hunger for righteousness . . . I, who have disciplined myself as an anchorite, who have served as a priestess of life! And you, with your formulas and your superstitions . . . you pass judgment upon me! [With terrific energy.] See! This man and I, we are the gateway to the future! And you seek to bar it! By what right do you stand in the path of posterity . . . you tormentors of the ideal, you assassins of human hope!

MRS. MASTERSON. [Almost striking her.] Oh! Oh! And my children have to listen to this! [She whirls about.] Ethel! Freddy! Go out of the room!

ETHEL. I am going with Oceana.

MRS. MASTERSON. What?

ETHEL. Some day . . . if not now. She's perfectly right. Letitia has no business to keep him. She never would have got him if she hadn't played a part.

MRS. MASTERSON. Ethel Masterson!

LETITIA. Little vixen!

FREDDY. [Rushes to OCEANA and seizes her hand.] Oceana! Let me go with you, too!

DR. MASTERSON. What next!

OCEANA. No, Freddy . . . no! [She withdraws her hand and holds it out to Henry.] Henry! Come!

[A tense pause; all stare at Henry. He never takes his eyes from Oceana. Slowly, like one hypnotized, he draws away from his wife's embrace, and moves towards Oceana. He seizes her hand. All stand transfixed. Silence.]

[CURTAIN]

ACT IV

[The scene shows the living-room of a bungalow. Large stone fireplace centre; windows and window seats on each side; French windows leading to piazza right; piano between them; door left to another room; large mirror beside it. Centre table, rustic chairs, deer-heads and skins, Indian blankets, etc.]

[At rise: The stage is empty.]

OCEANA. [Laughs off.] Oh, say, but that was an adventure!

[Enters; glowing and exultant from a long mountain walk. She wears a "Rosalind" costume, brown, with soft boots, gauntlet gloves and light fur about the neck; carries a pair of snow-shoes, which she has taken off and from which she knocks the snow.]

HENRY. [Follows.] You like the mountains!

OCEANA. Oh, my dear! They are marvellous! I've never imagined anything like it . . . to be able to see so much of the world at once. It's the way you think of heaven.

HENRY. You don't mind the cold?

OCEANA. I find I prefer it. I think I shall stay here forever. It tunes you up so! It makes you quite drunk! [Looks at herself in the mirror.] I look cute in this, don't I?

HENRY. You look like a fairy-story!

OCEANA. I ought to have had sense enough to think of a theatrical costumer in the beginning. [Stretches her arms.] Oh, I feel so wonderful! Ha, ha, ha! I don't know whether it's the mountain air . . . or whether it's because I'm in love!

HENRY. [Seizes her hand.] Sweetheart!

OCEANA. [Stares at him.] How wonderful it is! Beyond all believing! I'm stunned by it . . . afraid of it. Tell me, Hal, were you ever drunk?

HENRY. [Laughs.] Once or twice.

OCEANA. [Seriously.] I never was. But I've watched my people sometimes and tried to understand it. And it's just that. Nature has made us drunk!

HENRY. And that is what frightens you?

OCEANA. She has her purposes, Hal; and I don't want to be her blind victim. But then, I look at you again, and wonder leaps up in me . . . love, such as I never conceived of before; power . . . vision without end. I seem to be a hundred times myself! It is as if barriers were broken down within me . . . I see into new vistas of life. I understand . . . I exult! Oh, Hal, I shall never be the same again!

HENRY. Nor I; I look back at myself as I was a week ago, and I can't believe it

OCEANA. With me it is like a great fountain inside. It surges up, and I cannot be still! I want to laugh . . . to sing! I have to dance it out of me! Do you know Anitra's Dance, Hal?

HENRY. Yes, of course.

OCEANA. [Begins to sing the music to herself and playfully to dance. The enthusiasm of it takes hold of her, and she dances more quickly.] Play it, Hal! Play!

[HENRY sits at piano and plays Anitra's Dance; she dances tumultuously, ending in a whirlwind of excitement.] Oh!

[As Henry rises, she flies to him and he clasps her passionately.]

HENRY. Sweetheart!

OCEANA. [Panting.] Oh, Hal, I'm so happy! So happy! [She sobs upon his shoulder, then looks at him through her tears.] Oh, if I only dared let myself go!

HENRY. Why not, dearest?

OCEANA. It sweeps me off my feet! And I have to hold myself in.

HENRY. Why? Don't I love you?

OCEANA. Yes, I know. But I'm terrified at myself; I'm losing my self-control. And I promised father.

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HENRY. What?

OCEANA. That I would never do it. "Never feel an emotion," he would say, "that you could not stop feeling if you wished to."

HENRY. But, sweetheart . . . why so much distrust? Why should we wait, when everything in us cries out against it?

OCEANA. Don't say that to me now, Hal!

HENRY. But why not?

OCEANA. This is not the time for such a thought. You know it!

HENRY. Dearest . . .

OCEANA. [Passionately.] Ah, don't put it all on me! Don't make it too hard for me!

HENRY. But if I only knew . . .

OCEANA. You will know before long. Ah, Hal, see how I'm situated. I've broken all the laws. I've no precedent to help me . . . I have to work it all out for myself. I shall have to bear the scorn of the world; and oh, think if I had to bear the scorn of my own conscience! Don't you see?

HENRY. Yes, I see. But . . .

OCEANA. I have chosen a certain course. I have forced myself to be calm, to think it out in the cold light of reason, to decide what is right for me to do. And now I must keep to my resolution. You would not want our love to lead me into shame!

HENRY. No!

OCEANA. Do you read Nietzsche, Henry?

HENRY. He is a mere name to me.

OCEANA. I will give you some lines of Nietzsche's. "Canst thou give thyself thy good and thine evil, and hang thy will above thee as thy law? Canst thou be thine own judge, and avenger of thy law? Fearful is it to be alone with the judge and the avenger of thy law. So is a stone flung out into empty space and into the icy breath of isolation."

HENRY. That's all right . . . but if you expect Letitia to face this problem in any such way, you will be sadly disappointed.

OCEANA. That's none of my affair. All I have to do is to give her a chance. If she cannot face the facts, she has passed sentence upon herself.

HENRY. [Laughs.] All right, my dear. It will certainly be a scene to watch!

OCEANA. You think she will come?

HENRY. Oh, she'll certainly come.

OCEANA. And she won't bring her mother?

HENRY. I can't tell about that.

OCEANA. If she does, we'll simply have to send her down to the village . . . I won't talk in Aunt Sophronia's presence.

HENRY. I was perfectly explicit on that point. [Takes paper from table.] Here's the telegram: "Come to the bungalow immediately, upon a matter of extreme urgency. Do not bring your mother."

OCEANA. Certainly that is clear enough.

HENRY. And bewildering enough. But I suppose they are prepared for anything by now.

OCEANA. It's past the time. [Looking from window.] We should be able to see a sleigh.

HENRY. No, the road turns behind that hillock there.

OCEANA. But look!

HENRY. What?

OCEANA. There's some one coming afoot.

HENRY. Where?

OCEANA. Round that side! By the path! Why, it's Ethel!

HENRY. Good Lord! Ethel!

OCEANA. She's come up from the village afoot.

HENRY. Well, of all the apparitions!

OCEANA. Run help her, Henry. She's running. [Opens window and calls.] Ethel! [HENRY exit hurriedly.]

The Naturewoman

Why, the poor, dear child! I wonder if she came in Letitia's stead! But then . . . why wouldn't she get a sleigh?

[Calls.] Ethel! What's the matter?

HENRY. [Off.] She says Letitia is coming!

OCEANA. Oh!

HENRY. She's just behind!

OCEANA. But, Ethel, what are you doing here?

ETHEL. [Off, breathless.] Wait!

OCEANA. Why, you poor child, you're exhausted. What in the world . . .

ETHEL. Wait.

[Enters, breathless, half carried by Henry.]

OCEANA. [Pounces upon her.] Ethel! Of all the surprises! You dear thing! [Embraces her, shakes snow from her.] What in the world has happened?

ETHEL. Oceana, I ran away!

OCEANA. You ran away?

ETHEL. To you! I couldn't stand it! I must be with you, Oceana—no matter how wicked it is, I must be with you!

OCEANA. [Breathlessly.] Ethel!

ETHEL. Yes, I'm desperate . . . I'll die if I have to stay at home.

OCEANA. My dear, dear girl! [Clasps her.]

ETHEL. You won't send me back?

OCEANA. Never!

ETHEL. [Wildly.] But, Oceana, Letitia is coming!

OCEANA. Yes?

ETHEL. I took a train from Boston. And when I saw her come aboard, imagine how I felt! I hid . . . she didn't see me. And I got off the train first and dodged out of sight. I ran all the way. I suppose she stopped to get a sleigh.

HENRY. It's all right, Ethel . . . we knew she was coming.

ETHEL. You knew it?

OCEANA. Yes, Henry sent for her. You see, Letitia and I have to talk things out.

ETHEL. Well, of all the . . .

[Stops, dazed.]

OCEANA. [Laughs.] That's all right, dear. We know what we're doing. But it was good of you to try to save us!

HENRY. Listen!

OCEANA. Ah!

HENRY. The sleigh—bells!

OCEANA. She's here!

ETHEL. [Clasping her.] Oceana!

OCEANA. What is it, dear?

ETHEL. Don't let her take me back home?

OCEANA. But how can she take you, dear, if you won't go?

ETHEL. She might persuade you.

OCEANA. Never fear, Ethel . . . we'll stand by you, won't we, Hal?

HENRY. Yes.

ETHEL. She'll threaten to make me go.

OCEANA. Her mind will be taken up with other things, Ethel.

ETHEL. But mother will come! And she'll command me to return. I'm not of age, you know.

OCEANA. But then, if you won't obey? Will she send for the police?

ETHEL. No . . . hardly that.

OCEANA. All right, then, dear. I'll save you . . . trust me. I mean to give you a chance for life.

ETHEL. And, oh, Oceana . . . what do you think? Freddy's run away, too!

The Naturewoman

OCEANA. What?

HENRY. Where to?

ETHEL. He's gone out West!

OCEANA. You don't mean it!

HENRY. What for?

ETHEL. He says he's going to be a cowboy. He's going to make a man of himself. He left a letter to father.

OCEANA. Why, the dear boy!

ETHEL. [Mysteriously.] Oceana, do you know what was the matter?

OCEANA. No . . . what?

ETHEL. I think I know. He was in love with you!

OCEANA. I shouldn't wonder, my dear. [Laughs.] But don't tell Henry . . . he'll be jealous!

[Sound of sleigh-bells louder.]

ETHEL. Here she is!

OCEANA. You go into the next room now. It wouldn't be considered proper for you to hear what we're going to say.

ETHEL. Of all the adventures!

[Exit.]

OCEANA. [Smiles at Henry.] Now then!

HENRY. You wanted it, my dear!

[They turn, gazing right. The sleigh-bells have come nearer, then stopped. Some one is heard to step upon the piazza and stamp the snow from the feet.]

LETITIA. [Enters right, stares at Oceana and screams.] Oceana!

OCEANA. Letitia . . .

LETITIA. [Gasps for breath.] Henry! How dared you bring me here to meet that woman?

OCEANA. Letitia . . .

LETITIA. Don't speak to me! Don't you dare to speak to me! [She sinks down by table and bursts into tears.] Oh, how horrible! How horrible! As if I had not humiliations enough already!

HENRY. [Taking step toward her.] Letitia . . .

OCEANA. [With a swift gesture.] Wait!

LETITIA. Oh, who would have thought it possible! To bring me 'way up here . . .

OCEANA. You might as well understand at the outset . . . the thing cannot be done that way.

LETITIA. [With concentrated hatred.] You dare!

OCEANA. We have sent for you . . .

LETITIA. WE have sent for you!

OCEANA. Because we wished to talk things out with you in a sensible way. And you'll have to make up your mind to control yourself.

LETITIA. [Sobbing.] Henry, you permit this shameful humiliation!

OCEANA. Henry has nothing to do with this affair, Letitia. It is I who have to talk to you.

LETITIA. [Bursts into hysterical weeping again.] Oh, that I should have lived to see this!

OCEANA. You will find out before you get through that I mean to deal with you fairly. But you cannot accomplish anything by hysterics.

LETITIA. Oh, oh, oh!

OCEANA. And you had best believe me; you injure your case by refusing to act rationally.

LETITIA. [Looks up, frightened.] What do you want with me?

OCEANA. [Quietly.] In the first place, Letitia, I want to convey to you the information that your husband's relationship and mine has so far been what you would call innocent.

LETITIA. What?

OCEANA. I was a virgin when I came to Boston, and I am a virgin still.

LETITIA. And you expect me to believe that?

OCEANA. My dear, I don't care in the least whether you believe it or not.

LETITIA. [Faintly.] But . . .

The Naturewoman

OCEANA. What reason would I have to fear you? He is mine, if I want him.

LETITIA. [Dazed.] Then what . . . why are you here? Why . . .

OCEANA. I came here because I wished to get acquainted with him. And what chance have a man and woman to get acquainted with each other in the conventional world?

LETITIA. [Stares at her; then, faintly.] But what . . .

OCEANA. I wished to try him out . . . in body, mind and soul. I wished to know if he was the man for me.

LETITIA. [Rushes to Henry.] Oh! Have you no decency left? Have you no mercy on me? What has come over you?

HENRY. Letitia . . .

OCEANA. Let me attend to this, Hal.

LETITIA. Hal!

OCEANA. That a woman could be married to a man for six years and continue to call him Henry, speaks volumes for the romance of their relationship!

LETITIA. [To Henry.] Where's your sense of shame?

OCEANA. You are taking the wrong line, Letitia. No such consideration has a moment's weight with us.

LETITIA. [Catches her breath.] Since it seems that I am here at your mercy, I ask to know your pleasure?

OCEANA. The reason that we have sent for you is that I might assure myself upon two points . . . first, as to whether your husband still loves you, and second, as to whether you still love him.

LETITIA. You doubt that I love him?

OCEANA. So far, Letitia, your actions have proceeded, not from love of him, but from hatred of me.

LETITIA. Oh! And if I fail to measure up to your tests of love . . .

OCEANA. [Triumphantly.] Then he is mine!

LETITIA. And the fact that he is my husband . . .

OCEANA. Is nothing!

LETITIA. The fact that he vowed to keep faith with me . . .

OCEANA. Is nothing!

LETITIA. That I am dependent upon him for support . . .

OCEANA. You have money of your own, Letitia.

LETITIA. Do you suppose I am thinking about money! I mean his protection.

OCEANA. A person who confesses to the need of protection has written himself down an inferior. [A pause.] You see, Letitia, times have changed; our ideas of marriage have changed. In the beginning a woman was a man's economic dependent; now that the man has become ashamed of that, he is made the woman's spiritual dependent. You play upon his sense of chivalry, his sympathy, his pity; and you prey upon him, you devour him alive. But the time has come when that must cease, Letitia . . . man will not always be a domestic appendage! And you will simply have to face this new situation. Do you still possess your husband's love? Do you really love him? Nothing else will count . . . none of your "rights" . . . we are not afraid of man or devil.

LETITIA. [Gasps.] Oh! [Turns to HENRY.] Henry, will you tell me what all this means? Can it be that you assent to these outrageous ideas?

HENRY. I assent to them, Letitia. It may be that you still love me, but you have given me few signs of it. You have been . . . you are . . . a selfish woman.

LETITIA. Henry!

HENRY. How often do you give a thought to me . . . to the needs of my nature? You think of your whims and your prejudices; you think of your social position . . . of your "world" and its conventions. You think of what your mother approves, of what your father approves, of what this person will say and what that person will say. And I follow you about . . . I play my part in the hollow show that you call life; but all the time my heart is crying out in me . . . I am starving . . . starving!

LETITIA. [Startled.] Henry!

OCEANA. Ah! She is beginning to see it!

LETITIA. [Stretches out her arms and totters towards him, weeping.] Henry! I love you! [Wildly.] Believe me! Believe me! I love you! Don't you remember when you were ill three years ago . . . how I nursed you and watched over you? You knew that I loved you then. Why, you said I'd worn myself to a shadow! You kissed me,

The Naturewoman

and told me I'd saved your life! And when I was ill myself, and you thought I was dying . . . didn't you realize that you loved me? And the children? Have you never given a thought to them? Are they nothing to you? And you to them? You know that you love them, Henry . . . you dare not deny it. Are they to be without a father all their lives? [Falls into his arms.] My husband!

HENRY. [Catches her, deeply moved.] Letitia!

OCEANA. [Has been watching them intently; now, startled and pained.] Ah I thought so! [She turns away; supports herself by the table; whispers.] That settles it!

LETITIA. Henry, if I have been selfish, I am sorry! I humble myself before you . . . I beg you for forgiveness! Henry, I do love you! Don't you believe me?

HENRY. [Faintly.] I believe you.

OCEANA. [Clenches her hands and turns resolutely.] You see, Hal, I knew it! [He bows his head.] You can't get away from her. [She pauses.] You understand it all now . . . what my instinct told me. You still love her, you still belong to her. You would have gone away with me, and you would still have been thinking about her--worrying about her. It would have been tearing your soul in half. [She waits; he does not look at her; she goes on, half to convince herself.] She is not big enough to give you up. She could not say, "Oceana is young and needs you; you love Oceana, and she will make you happy. Go with her." No, she would think of the world and its conventions . . . she would be jealous and bitter. She would eat her heart out . . . she would tear herself to pieces! And that would tear you to pieces . . . you could never forget it. And there are the children, Hal. It's true that you love them; you think about them all the time . . . I know, for you speak of them. And she could take them away from you, legally . . . how much chance would they ever have in life, if she and her mother had the bringing up of them? Don't you see, Hal? What can we do?

LETITIA. [Clinging to Henry's bosom.] Henry, I love you!

OCEANA. I want to play the game generously, Letitia; but it is all I can do not to despise you . . . because he loves you, and it has meant so little to you, you have done so little in return. That is the curse of this thing you call marriage. You say to yourself that you've got him . . . the law and the conventions will keep him for you . . . and so you can treat him as you please. You'll take him off with you now, and you'll set to work to get right back where you were before . . . yes, she will, Hal. She'll try to wheedle you into backing down from this position. She will weep and she will scold. But you stand firm . . . stand firm! What we did was right . . . it was noble and true, and if more married people did such things, it would be better for them.

LETITIA. [Clinging to Henry.] Henry, come home with me!

HENRY. All right, I'll come.

[He does not lift his head.]

OCEANA. Look at me. It's all right, Hal . . . it's all right.

[She speaks with intensity; they gaze into each other's eyes.]

HENRY. [Stretches out his hand to her.] Oceana . . . I'm sorry . . .

OCEANA. [With sudden emotion.] No, Hal! Go . . . go quickly! Please!

[He goes out, right, with Letitia; Oceana stands gazing straight ahead. Sound of sleigh-bells heard. Suddenly she sinks into a chair, bows her head upon the table, and bursts into tears.]

ETHEL. [Opens door, left, and stands gazing at Oceana in alarm, then runs to her and sinks upon her knees before her.] Oceana!

OCEANA. [Sobbing.] He's gone! Gone!

ETHEL. He left you?

OCEANA. I gave him up! I sent him away. Oh, Ethel, Ethel . . . what am I going to do?

ETHEL. Oceana!

OCEANA. Oh, how I loved him! I didn't realize how I loved him! The whole face of the world was changed . . . and now, now . . . how shall I bear it? [She stares ahead of her.] Oh, Ethel, tell me I did right to give him up.

ETHEL. Why did you do it?

OCEANA. I saw he loved her, and I had to give him up. It would have been to tear his soul in half! But now that he's gone, I don't see how I can bear it! [A pause; she is lost in thought; she whispers with great intensity.] There is a vision . . . it haunts me . . . it cries out in me in a voice of agony!

ETHEL. What?

The Naturewoman

OCEANA. A little child! You have no idea . . . how real it was to me! It fell out of the skies upon me! The thought never left me. I heard its voice . . . its laughter; I saw its smile. It called to me all day, and it played with me in my dreams; I felt its little hands upon me . . . its lips upon my breast. And it's gone!

ETHEL. Your child!

OCEANA. And his! And think . . . think of the awfulness of it . . . it was hovering at the gates of life! It wanted to be! And I trembled . . . I suffered; at any moment I might have said the word, and it would have come. But I did not say the word . . . and it is gone. And now it will never come! Never . . . never! I have murdered the child! My child!

ETHEL. No, no, Oceana!

OCEANA. God! I can't understand it! What does it mean? Did it exist when I thought of it? Does it exist now? Who can tell me?

ETHEL. I don't know, Oceana.

OCEANA. The strangeness of it! Sometimes my whole being rises up in revolt . . . I could tear the skies apart, to wrest the secret from them! You see, we don't know anything. We don't know what's right, we don't know what's wrong. We're in a trap! [She rises suddenly.] No, no, I mustn't talk that way. I've lost my self-control. I let myself go, and I had no right to. Now, what shall I do? Wait, dear . . . let me think, let me think calmly. [Stares about her.] I want to remember what father said to me; what I promised to do. See, Ethel . . . the sun is setting. Look at the sky! And it's the last day of the month, isn't it?

ETHEL. Yes.

OCEANA. If father had been here we should have sat us down to one of our services! Look here. [She goes to trunk, and takes out a human skull.] Ah, old friend!

ETHEL. [Shocked.] Oceana!

OCEANA. He came from the Marquesas, I think. And here's where he was hit with the spear. You see? Sit down. [She places the skull before her.] See, Ethel—he used to smile. And now and then he had the toothache . . . see that? He took himself very seriously; he was all wrapped up in the things that went on in this little cracked skull. But he lacked imagination. He never foresaw that somebody would carry him off to the New Hampshire mountains, and make him the text for a Hamlet soliloquy. Alas, poor Yorick! He did not know that he was immortal, you see; that life proceeded from him . . . unrolling itself for generation after generation without end; that all that he did would be perpetuated . . . that where he sinned we would suffer, and where he fought we would be strong. He did not know that he was the creator, the mystic fountain of an unexplored stream . . . the maker of an endless future . . . [She stops; a spasm of pain crosses her face.] Oh, Ethel! [Clasps her hand.] It is terrible to die young, is it not?

ETHEL. Yes.

OCEANA. Then how much worse is it to die before you are born! To be strangled in the idea . . . to be stifled by a cowardly thought!

ETHEL. What do you mean?

OCEANA. Oh, Ethel, stay by me, will you? Promise me you will stay by me.

ETHEL. I will!

OCEANA. I'm frightened, Ethel . . . frightened at myself. I've done wrong . . . I've committed a crime! I ought not to have let him go! I ought not to have let him go!

ETHEL. Henry?

OCEANA. No, we mustn't speak of him again. I can't bear to hear his name. I have failed . . . I have failed. I've been crushed by civilization ! [Starts up.] But there's my island! There's the white beach, shining in the moonlight, and the great breakers rolling in, and the palm trees rustling in the wind. Let us go together . . . to my island! Let us go back and get healed, before we try to face this world again!

[CURTAIN]