

THE WAR WIDOW

BY HARVEY PERR

THE WAR WIDOW takes place in 1917. The action occurs in a small town in upstate New York, a summer beach house, and in New York City. The time of year is late spring.

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CAST BREAKDOWN

AMY: Mid Twenties--Married to Leonard  
BETH: Amy's daughter--six or seven years old  
SARAH: Amy's mother--Early 40's to Early 50's  
FANNY: Sarah's sister-in-law--Amy's Aunt--Early Fifties  
JENNY: Mid Twenties--early Thirties  
EMILY: Late Twenties--Early Thirties  
ANNIE: Late Thirties-Early Forties  
KATE: Late Thirties--early Forties  
LEONARD: Amy's husband--only his voice is heard throughout  
the play

THE WAR WIDOW

SCENE 1

(A MONTAGE OF PHOTOGRAPHS: THE FIRST SUFFRAGE PICKETS OUTSIDE THE WHITE HOUSE: WOMEN CARRYING BANNERS ASKING "MR. PRESIDENT, WHAT WILL YOU DO FOR WOMAN SUFFRAGE?" AND "HOW LONG MUST WOMEN WAIT FOR LIBERTY?")

MUSIC: OVER THERE (MUSIC PLAYED WITH DIRGE-LIKE SOLEMNITY BY PERHAPS NO MORE THAN THREE INSTRUMENTS: PIANO, VIOLIN, CELLO. THE PHOTOGRAPHS GRADUALLY BECOME MORE PERSONAL, MORE INSPIRED, MORE BEAUTIFUL: STEIGLITZ, STEICHEN, CLARENCE WHITE, GEORGE SEELEY)

(GERTRUDE KASEBIER. THE MANGER BLESSED ART THOU AMONG WOMEN. THE HERITAGE OF MOTHERHOOD. THE PICTURE BOOK. THE VISITOR. THE SKETCH. THE WAR WIDOW)

(WITH THIS LAST SERIES OF PHOTOGRAPHS (OR SLIDES) ARE CORRESPONDING IMAGES OF AMY, A YOUNG WOMAN OF DELICATE AND HAUNTED BEAUTY, THE IMPRESSION BEING ONE OF THE PHOTOGRAPHS LEAPING TO LIFE WITH AMY (AND SOMETIMES HER DAUGHTER BETH) THE SUBJECT OF THE PHOTOGRAPHS)

THE WAR WIDOW

SCENE 2

(AMY IS STANDING ALONE, BY A WINDOW, READING A LETTER. AS SHE SCANS THE PAGE, WE HEAR:)

LEONARD'S VOICE

Dear Amy. The mail is slower in arriving now than before. So it seems as if I hear from you less. When I do, it is good. I do hope you are well and that you and our little Beth and your mother, of course, are making do. There really isn't much to say; nothing I haven't said before, that is. I know you understand now how important this thing is, perhaps not so much because I've been telling you in most of my letters (what else, after all, is there to write about?), but because the United States has finally seen how important it is and has officially entered into this thing. That they didn't before this made me angry. Now the anger subsides. I hope you understand now why I went when I did, despite your reservations and your resistance. Why I went a whole year before enlistment became an official act of the government. Well, I should go now. I am fine and you need not worry about me. Please send my best to all. And give Beth a special hug from her daddy. And, of course, I look forward to hearing from you again soon. Yours, Leonard.

(THE SCENE IS A STUFFILY UPHOLSTERED, DARK BROWN LIVING ROOM OF AN ELEGANT HOUSE SOMEWHERE IN UPSTATE NEW YORK, A HOUSE WHICH STILL BEARS THE VESTIGES OF ITS VICTORIAN ORIGINS. THE ONLY REAL COLOR IN THE ROOM COMES FROM AMY'S DRESS (SHE ALWAYS WEARS PINK OR YELLOW) AND THE FRESH-CUT FLOWERS WHICH ARE NEATLY PLACED IN VASES AROUND THE ROOM. SARAH, AN ELEGANT MATRON WHO SEEMS OLDER THAN SHE ACTUALLY IS, AMY'S MOTHER, ENTERS. HER COLORS ARE DARK, AT ONE WITH THE FURNITURE SHE HAS CHOSEN TO LIVE WITH. WHEN SHE SPEAKS, SHE IS ALWAYS BUSY DOING SOMETHING: NOTHING IMPORTANT, BUT SOMETHING JUST THE SAME: REARRANGING FLOWERS, PUFFING A CUSHION, STRAIGHTENING A DOILY. SHE DOES THIS NOT FUSSILY OR

NEUROTICALLY BUT WITH A CERTAIN GRACE, EVEN STATELINESS. IT IS A  
KIND OF CONTRAST TO AMY'S PASSIVITY)  
SARAH

A letter from Leonard?

AMY

Yes.

SARAH

Was it nice?

SARAH

Yes.

SARAH

Well, that's nice.

AMY

Yes.

SARAH

Yes?

AMY

Yes, it's nice. That his letter was nice.

SARAH

Oh, yes.

AMY SITS DOWN AT THE PIANO AND PLAYS AN IMPROMPTU VERSION OF A  
FAMILIAR MOZART ARIA)

AMY

I've forgotten what he looks like.

SARAH

Who?

AMY

Leonard. I try to imagine what it is he looks like. I read his  
letters and try to fit a face with the words he writes. Try,  
that is, to imagine what it is he looked like. Looks like.

SARAH

Well, he'll be back soon. And you'll see him again. And you'll know what he looks like.

AMY

Soon.

SARAH

Or you can have him send you a photograph. They say that the Europeans are very clever about things like photographic portraits. Yes, I think you might ask him to send you a photograph. I think, my dear, that that might be a very good, a very smart idea. I must remember to tell Harriet not to get lamb again. I think it's the time of year. I have a feeling it is not the best time of the year for lamb. It either has a peculiar taste, or it's too tough. Don't you think so?

AMY

I hadn't noticed.

SARAH

I think it's the time of the year. You must remind me. To tell Harriet. Not to buy lamb. For a while. You will remind me, won't you?

AMY

Yes, mother, I'll remind you to tell Harriet not to buy any lamb.

(BETH ENTERS AND KISSES SARAH; SHE SITS DOWN AT THE PIANO NEXT TO HER MOTHER)

BETH

Remember when Henry was a puppy, Mommy? And her fur was so soft we said it was like velvet?

AMY

His fur.

BETH

I mean, his fur.

AMY

Yes?

BETH

Well, Henry's fur feels funny now.

SARAH

Doesn't Mother play well? You must begin to take lessons, Beth, so that one day you can play just like her. That would be nice, wouldn't it? Everyone said, Amy, how exquisitely you played the other night at the Millers.

(AMY HOLDS BETH TO HER)

BETH

What's the matter, Mommy?

AMY

Nothing. I just wanted to hold you.

BETH

Why does Henry's fur feel funny? Mommy? (AMY TAKES A PIN FROM HER DRESS AND PINS IT TO BETH'S DRESS)

LEONARD'S VOICE

'And give Beth a special hug from her daddy.'

(AMY STANDS AND STRAIGHTENS UP AS IF SHE'D LIKE TO LOOSEN HERSELF FROM HER UNDERGARMENTS)

BETH

Is it because Henry's not a puppy anymore?

SARAH

And, Amy, why don't you take a walk? It's so lovely.

AMY

Yes.

SARAH

But take a parasol.

AMY

Yes.

SARAH

The weather is so changeable.

SCENE 3

(FILM CLIPS OR SLIDES FROM A MARY PICKFORD MOVIE IN WHICH SHE RIDICULOUSLY PORTRAYS A CHILD MUCH YOUNGER THAN HERSELF)  
(FILM CLIP OR SLIDE OF A THEDA BARA MOVIE)

(MUSIC: THE STRAINS OF ALBINONI'S ADAGIO)  
(AMY CAN BE SEEN THROUGH A WINDOW WALKING MOURNFULLY WITH A PARASOL--SHE CLOSES THE PARASOL)

SCENE 4

(AMY AND SARAH SITTING AT THE DINING TABLE. TWILIGHT)

SARAH

She can be quite unbearable, your Aunt Fanny. Unbearable.

AMY

Why ask her to come then?

SARAH

She is company.

AMY

Look at how the light hits the cupboard. I think this is . . .

SARAH

She is company for us. We are company for her.

AMY

. . . my favorite part of the day.

SARAH

What is it about Paris that Leonard found so beautiful?

AMY

He didn't say. He just said Paris is beautiful. I should see it one day.

SARAH

Did he ask after me?

AMY

He always does.

SARAH

Well, that's the sort of thing I like to know. You tell him I ask after him as well.

AMY

I will. I do.

SARAH

Amy, you mustn't let his letters upset you.

AMY

They don't upset me. And that's what upsets me.

AMY

And besides it's habit. She expects to come. We expect her. And so, I suppose that as unbearable as Aunt Fanny can be, we have to learn to put up with her. You haven't touched your tea.

AMY

(Sips) It's cold.

SARAH

Of course it's cold. That's because you didn't drink it when it was hot.

AMY

Isn't that amazing?

SARAH

What? (Referring to Beth and Henry) They certainly have fun together, don't they?

AMY

That it is hot and then you let it stand a while and it is cold.

SARAH

Well, there's nothing amazing in that. That's the natural order of things. Sometimes, Amy, I worry.

AMY

I'm sorry, I am beginning to feel, however, that everything I see that stands still, that does not move at all . . . is a symbol . . . of what my life is becoming. (BETH ENTERS)

SARAH

Would you like some lemonade, darling?

BETH

No. Thank you, Grandmother.

(SILENCE)

AMY

It seems to me that we were able to talk to each other once.

Weren't we able to talk to each other?

SARAH

Always. It was my mother I couldn't talk with. And your Aunt Fanny, well, that's been and that remains impossible. Oh yes. And her coming, of course, delays again my trip to New York. I've been saying for weeks how important it is that I go to our New York bank.

AMY

Well, I could go to New York for you. I could go to the bank for you. I'd love to go to New York. I want to go. There is no reason why I couldn't go. Tomorrow.

SARAH

And leave me alone with your Aunt Fanny?

AMY

It would only be a day.

SARAH

I suppose it would be all right.

BETH

A whole day?

AMY

I wouldn't be home late. I'd be home to tuck you in. You'll see, Beth, I promise. It won't seem very long at all.

SARAH

Not for you. But for me. Here. Alone. With Fanny.

THE WAR WIDOW

SCENE 5

FANNY

Enough. Enough.

AMY

But I've only just started.

FANNY

And I say it is enough for now. Play something for me.

Something lovely. I don't come to visit that often, Amy.

(AMY BEGINS TO PLAY A CLASSICAL PIECE)

But something a bit livelier.

AMY

Aunt Fanny, I am just not very good at the kind of music you like.

FANNY

Visit after visit, I bring you the newest music. Surely, there is something here you can play.

AMY

I try. Really I do. It is just that . . .

FANNY

Dry as dust. I do not want to say it, but there is no sense hinting at it. Like your mother. You'll become dry as dust.

AMY

That isn't exactly fair, Aunt Fanny.

FANNY

The truth is never fair.

AMY

I am not sure that I agree with that.

FANNY

What do you do? Tell me. Day after day? I see you've taken up needlepoint. Just like Sarah. Does she still hold weekly needlepoint meetings with the local ladies? And are you one of them now? One of the local ladies? Comparing needlepoint patterns week after week?

AMY

It fills one's time.

FANNY

I'm sure.

AMY

I'm getting quite good at it.

FANNY

It is not the quality of the work that I am talking about.

AMY

There isn't much to do. There are so few women my age.

FANNY

You want to cry? Let it out. Let it go. Let it fly. Amy.

AMY

Please, Fanny, there is no real point in getting, shall we say, melodramatic. (Pause) I do go to the movies. I see them all. Each time the program changes.

FANNY

The Woman God Forgot. Did you see that one?

AMY

I don't know that one.

FANNY

Has Intolerance come here yet?

AMY

We are not that provincial.

FANNY

Do they still have a section reserved for ladies?

AMY

Yes.

FANNY

Proper ladies.

AMY

Well, even if they didn't, there are never any men at the matinees, anyway.

FANNY

They sit together - men and women do - at the nickelodeons in Buffalo. We sit together.

AMY

It is encouraging to know that everything is so up to date in Buffalo.

FANNY

I will not tell Sarah that I hear irony creeping into your conversation. (Pause) Well, tell me, what have you seen? I adore the movies, you know. The new Chaplin, the one where he goes to a rest cure, well, it had me in hysterics. Hysterics.

AMY

Last week it was Mary Pickford.

FANNY

Poor Little Rich Girl?

AMY

I never remember titles.

FANNY

Was it good? Did you like it?AMY

Don't you think she's a little old to be so cute?

FANNY

Not at all. Although, between you and me, I do prefer the vamps.

AMY

It seems as if they are the only kinds of women in the world.

They are either vamps or they're Mary Pickford. As if there were no other kind of women. In the movies.

FANNY

I never thought of it that way. Oh, I think you take it too seriously.

(FANNY GOES THROUGH THE SHEET MUSIC)

FANNY

Here's one. Play this one.

AMY

I don't know if I can. Really.

FANNY

Oh. Try. Please, Amy. You play and I'll sing.

(SINGS)

So you're going away  
Because your heart has gone astray,  
And you promised me  
That you would always faithful be.  
Go to him your love,  
And be as true as stars above;  
But your heart will yearn,  
And then some day you will return.

Goodbye, my lady love,  
Farewell, my turtle dove,  
You are the idol and the darling of my heart,

But some day you will come back to me,  
And love me tenderly,  
So good-bye, my lady love, good-bye.  
When the dew drops fall . . .

AMY

Really.

FANNY

Okay. Okay. Let's go straight to the chorus again then.

(Sings). Good-bye, my lady love, Farewell my turtle dove . . .

SCENE 6

(THE SCENE IS AMY'S ROOM. LIKE AMY, IT IS SPARE AND SIMPLE AND ELEGANT; IT REFLECTS A SPIRIT DIFFERENT FROM THE REST OF THE HOUSE. THERE ARE BOOKSHELVES: ELIOT, AUSTEN, JAMES, FLAUBERT ARE UP THERE. DELICATE LANDSCAPES. NEEDLEPOINT. PHOTOGRAPHS)

(AMY IS PACKING A SUITCASE--AN OPEN LETTER SITS ON THE BUREAU)  
LEONARD'S VOICE:

'Paris is beautiful. You should see it one day. Well, time passes. I keep moving on. From country to country, city to city, place to place. And the mail, of course, is slower than ever in arriving. And I have no way of knowing sometimes whether or not all is well there. I imagine it is. Then a letter does come and I know it is. There isn't much to say. There is a war on and still there is a time out of war. And we can be tourists for awhile . . . And Paris is beautiful. The Eiffel Tower is certainly grand. I suppose you have heard that before, and, if not, that you might have guessed as much. I hope this letter finds you and Beth and your mother in good spirits. As I said, Paris is beautiful. You should see it one day.'

SCENE 7

AMY

Now you put your chair over there. And I'll put mine right here.  
So that we're sitting across from each other.

BETH

Is it like a game, Mommy?

AMY

Well, yes. It is sort of like a game.

BETH

And what do I do now?

AMY

Look at me. You do what I do. You see? We move back and forth.  
As if we're on a train. And the train is moving. And so it  
makes us move. That's right.

BETH

It feels funny.

AMY

But it doesn't look funny.

BETH

You look funny.

AMY

I do?

BETH

No. Not Really. Should Flossie move like this too?

AMY

Yes. If she's on the train with us, she should move, too.

BETH

I hate it when it rains.

AMY

Well, then, we will pretend that it is not raining. We will pretend that the sun is shining. Pretend that the window is there. And you're looking out the window. And you. And Flossie. Can see the sun.

BETH

Flossie can see the sun.

AMY

And you. Can you see the sun?

BETH

Not yet.

AMY

Try.

BETH

Can you?

AMY

Can I?

BETH

See the sun?

AMY

Of course.

BETH

(Pause). I see it. I see it.

AMY

Good. (Pause) It is peculiar.

BETH

What?

AMY

Nothing.

BETH

Yes. You said it was. What you said.

AMY

Peculiar. I looked at you and you looked like me. When I was your age. (Pause). Look. Look at the sun. And keep moving. Remember. We're on a train.

(AMY GETS UP AND BRINGS A STEREOPTICON, AND ALSO PLACES SOME MUSIC ON A PHONOGRAPH. FRENCH MUSIC.) Now. Look at these pictures. See? Now pretend that these pictures are real. And that they're big as life. And the sun is shining on them. And you can see them when you look out the window. Can you do that?

BETH

It's a funny game, Mommy.

AMY

Can you see it?

BETH

Can you?

AMY

Yes. You see. We're in Paris. We're on a train that's going through Paris. That big church. That's Notre Dame. That tower. That's the Eiffel Tower. You and me. And Flossie. We're not here in this room. Sitting on two chairs. We're on a train. In our own private car. And it's not raining. The sun is shining. And we're in Paris. And we can hear the music of Paris. And when we have seen all there is to see of Paris, I'll change the music and get different pictures and we shall be in another city. We can travel anywhere we want. Anywhere in the world.

BETH

When it stops raining, we can play outside, can't we, Mommy?

AMY

Anywhere. Anywhere we want.

BETH

Mommy?

AMY

Yes. If it stops raining, we can play outside. Are you ready to go through another city?

BETH

Flossie? Are you ready? (Pause). Flossie is ready.

SCENE 8

SARAH

Do I seem more scattered than usual, Fanny? It's this house. I've never entered into the rythms of this house. It's always been Clarence's house. Doesn't this lamb taste funny? I keep forgetting to tell Harriet to stop buying lamb. (About Beth, Change of Tone) Isn't she lovely, Fanny? She is so like Amy. And Amy is so like Clarence. Don't you think so, Fanny? That Amy is like Clarence? The fact is, Clarence was not an easy man to get to know. I knew that and you, Fanny, you knew that too. Amy, why are you so solemn?

SCENE 9

(SLIDE OR ENACTMENT OF AMY SITTING IN A PARLOR CAR OF A TRAIN CIRCA 1917-SHE IS STARING OUT THE TRAIN WINDOW--WE HEAR "ADAGIO" SOUND: A TRAIN SCREECHING TO A HALT AND AMY IS STARTLED OUT OF HER ISOLATION)

(SLIDE OF A LADIES CAR ON NEW YORK CITY SUBWAY-AMY IN HER SEAT-STARING IN SPACE--"ADAGIO" CONTINUES)

(SLIDES OF LADIES SECTION OF NEW YORK CITY BANK-AMY WRITING BANK TRANSACTION)

SCENE 10

(SCENE IS THE INTERIOR OF A TEAROOM DESIGNED IN THE STYLE OF CHARLES RENNIE MACKINTOSH, IT IS PRIM AND PROPER, AUSTERE AND ELEGANT--AMY IS SITTING AT A TABLE READING THE MENU--AMY IS DRINKING TEA. SHE REMAINS, ON THE SURFACE, SERENE, EACH OF THE OBJECTS IN THIS SEQUENCE SEEM MORE AND MORE FOREIGN TO HER. HER EYES REFLECT A PROFOUND INNER RESTLESSNESS.)

MUSIC: A TINKLY RENDITION OF A POPULAR SONG OF THE TIME

(AMY GETS UP, REACHING FOR HER PACKAGES, IN HER CONFUSION, SHE SWEEPS A BAG ACROSS THE TABLE AND A TEACUP BREAKS AND SHE SEEMS UNABLE TO MOVE IN HER CONFUSION)

JENNY

Might I suggest something a little stronger than tea? (Jenny is a strikingly frank and open woman in her late twenties, dressed casually but nevertheless elegantly in the manner of Frances Benjamin Johnston as seen in her self-portraits. Her splendid and dynamic directness are in sharp contrast to Amy's primness. Her colors are vivid.)

AMY

I never have.

JENNY

There's always a first time. And, besides, I was only going to suggest. Some sherry.

JENNY

Do you mind if I sit down?

AMY

No.

JENNY

Good.

AMY

I haven't much time. I didn't realize that . . . I

JENNY

Are you all right?

AMY

Yes. No. Please.

JENNY

I can say I understand. I can say it but I don't. Understand.  
I'm Jenny Croyden.

AMY

Amy Redfield. (AMY BREAKS DOWN)

JENNY

Excuse me. Excuse my boldness. I just couldn't help it. Noticing.  
You sitting here. The way you're sitting here. So totally unaffected by the fact that the day has turned to twilight. (Pause)  
And you're so lovely. And, above all else, your eyes. They seem so sad. So deeply, painfully, so, oh my God, so really sad.

JENNY

I'm frightening you, aren't I? This all seems strange to you, doesn't it?

AMY

I feel. I don't know. Silly. Absurd. I did everything I planned to do. Today. And yet. Nothing. Is as I imagined it would be. And. You. You don't even know what I'm talking about.

JENNY

I know that what you are talking about is not uncommon. In anybody's life. From time to time.

AMY

It's not?

JENNY

How about that sherry?

THE WAR WIDOW

SCENE 11

(AMY IS BUTTONING UP BETH'S JACKET: SHE KISSES HER AND SENDS HER OUT. THERE IS A PERCEPTIBLE CHANGE IN HER)

AMY

You remember, don't you, my telling you about that tearoom? Well, there were flowers there. And they spread green and white against the walls. These are so still. Stiller than those. So stately.

SARAH

Statelier than those?

AMY

Yes. Are you . . .

SARAH

Making fun of you?

AMY

Yes.

SARAH

Yes.

AMY

Well, don't.

SARAH

What do you think of these buttons?

AMY

They're lovely.

SARAH

I thought I would sew them on Beth's new coat.

AMY

What a nice idea. What do you think of her? Do you like her?

SARAH

Where is she?

AMY

Setting up her equipment. She's going to take some pictures of me and Beth. You haven't answered my question.

SARAH

Yes. I like her very much. Well, if they are good, you could send some to Leonard.

AMY

Yes, I suppose I could.

SARAH

He'd like that. Seeing you and Beth.

(JENNY ENTERS.)

There you are.

JENNY

I'm ready.

SARAH

It is very thoughtful, very kind, of you to take these pictures. I know how much Leonard, you know, Amy's husband, will appreciate receiving them. But it is too bad that I have not yet sewn these buttons--what do you think of these buttons? -- Too bad that I have not yet sewn these buttons on Beth's new coat.

JENNY

They are charming.

SARAH

Yes. I thought so. The right buttons are extremely important, don't you think?

JENNY

You understand, I mean, I supposed that Amy told you, that these pictures are to be very informal. And are as much for me, for my work, as they are for any other reasons.

SARAH

I don't understand. Not really. The idea of taking pictures as one's work, well, I have never met a woman before who works, is what I am trying to say.

JENNY

I would like to take some pictures of you, too, if I might.

SARAH

Me?

JENNY

Why, of course. Leonard, I have no doubt, would also want a photograph of you.

SARAH

Why would he want a picture of me?

JENNY

Your mother tends towards coyness.

AMY

You know very well that Leonard would want to see you as well as Beth or myself.

SARAH

I do not know that. And yet I certainly am flattered. I will just change my gown.

JENNY

Nothing posed. Just as you are.

SARAH

Just as I am?

AMY

Just as you are.

SARAH

I am not coy, Miss Croyden. Merely fastidious. It is, after all, the way I have been brought up.

JENNY

I prefer it. And I did not mean anything. Indeed, it is your fastidiousness I would like to capture.

SARAH

It's settled then. I shall change my gown.

AMY

Yes, mother, if it makes you happy.

SARAH

Happy? Why. Yes. Of course. I hadn't thought of that.

SCENE 12

(AMY AND JENNY SITTING IN THE LIVING ROOM, SIPPING SHERRY. THE FIREPLACE GLOWS)

JENNY

Last week you were so pale. Today you're radiant.

AMY

It's only a borrowed light. (There is a silence.)

JENNY

I have to leave quite early tomorrow.

AMY

Must you?

JENNY

I have work to do. I don't want to go. Today was fine. Perhaps next week you could come to the city.

AMY

I'd like that. (Silence.) It's funny. I've never had a friend before. I just realized that this afternoon. I've never really had a friend before. As a child, I was always so isolated. And then, in school, there was just time enough for one's studies and perhaps just a little extra time to think of boys. And there was always Leonard. Always. It does seem sometimes as if my first clear memory is of Leonard. And now there's waiting for Leonard. To the end.

JENNY

To the end of what?

AMY

To the end of. Everything.

JENNY

Here. It is just as I imagined it would be. You. Surrounded by cut flowers and china pots.

AMY

Don't you think that we are sometimes not what people think we are?

JENNY

I only imagined your surroundings. Not who you were. What you were. And I like it. It feels right.

AMY

I think I'd die if I didn't believe that there was some mystery. To all of us.

JENNY

I've always hated to see intelligent and sensitive people die out of this world. And yet. They do. You, Amy, you live.

AMY

Intelligent? Sensitive? And yet. There is so little that I've done. Lived through. Discovered.

JENNY

I think perhaps I only know you well enough, Amy, to see that last week your face was grey. And. Today it shines.

SCENE 13

(JENNY'S APARTMENT) (THE APARTMENT IS SPARE, BOHEMIAN, BUT UNCLUTTERED. ALTHOUGH THERE ARE NO FEMININE FRILLS, IT IS HARDLY MASCULINE. IT IS A WOMAN'S APARTMENT, FREE AND WARM AND LIGHT AND IT IS FURNISHED WITH WHAT WOULD SEEM TO BE THE WORK OF FELLOW ARTISANS. NOTHING SEEMS STORE BOUGHT--TWO PHOTO'S DOMINATE: LADY HAWARDEN'S UNTITLED PHOTOGRAPH OF TWO WOMEN; ADOLPHE BRAUN'S THE GARDEN)

JENNY

Lartigue. Lumiere. They have always been magical names to me. Steiglitz. Steichen. Olympian gods. Clarence White. Gertrude Kasebier. Have you ever heard of Gertrude Kasebier?

AMY

No.

JENNY

Well, they're not just photographers. They're poets. Painters. It's not just what gets captured inside that little box. It's what they see. It's how they see it. You think I'm crazy.

AMY

I think you're wonderful.

JENNY

Crazy and wonderful. (Pause).

How is Beth?

AMY

She's good. She's very good.

JENNY

She's a wonderful child.

AMY

Thank you.

JENNY

Anyway, Amy, all that has changed. At least some of it has changed. Look at this. (Jenny brings Amy a copy of Camera World) What I'm trying to say is that up to now I've been a kind of classicist. I still am, I think, when it comes to the other art forms. Perhaps because I don't understand them. But this. These are real photos, not just replicas of paintings. It doesn't make those other photographs less beautiful to me. But this. This is. Life looked at another way. His name. The photographer. Is Paul Strand. And what he has done is, well, there just is no other word for it, it's revolution. You see, Amy, I work for a portraitist because, well, I make a living, I manage to maintain my independence. Now. This. Is Paul Strand's world. Is my world, too. My life. It's not just taking pictures. And what is wonderful is that there is someone who sees some of the things I see. Not in the same way. But in a way that says: All sorts of possibilities are open now. To my own growth. As an artist. Because of what he's done. Can you understand? What's the matter, Amy?

AMY

I don't know. I suddenly feel sad. I have so little.

JENNY

You have a home.

AMY

I have a small room in my mother's house. A refuge from my inner turmoil. I hardly think of it as home anymore. (She goes to a table and picks up some photos) What are these?

JENNY

Part of a series. It's a special project I'm working on. For myself.

AMY

Where were they taken?

JENNY

At an asylum. In Massachusetts.

AMY

How did you get this effect?

JENNY

It's a positive print from a wax paper negative.

AMY

I'm afraid . . .

JENNY

You don't understand? Of course you don't. I could, if you were interested, teach you some of what I know. If you wouldn't be bored.

AMY

Bored?

JENNY

That was unfair of me, wasn't it? You? Bored? At any rate,

what you call that effect, what I see as that strange luminosity, I sometimes feel it defeats my purpose. It softens. It erases edges. It. I don't know anymore. But. In the beginning, when I started taking those pictures, I was angry. At the squalid conditions. The sterility. It shocked some part of me. It frightened some part of me. And I wanted to show what it was that I saw, I wanted to show the pain I felt for some of those women. Amy, some of those women are no less sane, given the . . ridiculousness of this world. No less sane than you or I. And. Anyway. I go back. And take more pictures. And more. Amy!

AMY

Yes?

JENNY

You. You could come with me. You could see what it is I do. How I do it.

AMY

Could I?

JENNY

Yes. I'm going up next week.

AMY

I don't know. I don't think so.

JENNY

Come with me.

AMY

Come with you?

JENNY

Come with me.

AMY

How? Where?

THE WAR WIDOW

SCENE 14

(THIS SCENE TAKES PLACE IN A CELL IN AN ASYLUM--ALTHOUGH THE ROOM IS BARE, WE SHOULD HAVE THE FEELING THAT ALL OF EMILY'S WORLD IS BEING RE-CREATED) (EMILY IS YOUNG AND FRAGILE, A DERANGED VERSION OF AMY; SHE IS SEWING APPLIQUE ON MUSLIN, COMPULSIVELY FINGERING THE MATERIAL, ENJOYING THE TEXTURE IN A WAY THAT SEEMS TO CONJURE UP WITHIN HER SOME PRIVATE MEMORY. AT HER FEET IS A PHOTO ALBUM)

(WHEN SHE SPEAKS SHE IS ABSOLUTELY RATIONAL, ALL THE MADNESS IS IN HER EYES. SHE IS INVOLVED IN THE APPLIQUE)

JENNY

Good afternoon, this is my assistant, Amy Redfield. Emily?

EMILY

Do you like the pattern? It's my own.

JENNY

It's lovely.

EMILY

Feel it. Go on. Feel it. I think the feel of it is. Is. I would like so to find the right word.

JENNY

Sensual?

EMILY

Oh, dear, I really don't think so. I think. Fine . . Yes. Fine. Delicate. And ever so slightly abrasive even.

JENNY

Yes. I think you're right

EMILY

The applique. On the muslin. But, of course, it is the pattern that I am most pleased with.

JENNY

And you should be. You should be. Do you remember who I am?

EMILY

Jenny. You've come to take my picture. For my album. Why shouldn't I remember you? You come here so often. I don't understand why you would think that I wouldn't remember you. Remember you? Oh, my dear Jenny, I see you more than. More than anyone. (TAKING THE MUSLIN BACK) Oh, that flower isn't right. (EMILY TAKES THE STITCHES OUT AND BEGINS AGAIN)

JENNY

I brought the picture I took last time.

EMILY

I was not wearing one of my prettier gowns that day. And when you left, I felt my hair and. It was out of place. So many loose strands. Oh, Jenny, I don't think I want to see the picture.

JENNY

(HANDING IT TO HER) I'm very proud of the picture.

EMILY

Well, I do look well there. (EMILY GOES TO PUT THE PICTURE IN THE ALBUM AND AMY GOES TO LOOK AT THE PICTURE--EMILY REACTS IN TREMULOUS PANIC--JENNY WARNS AMY WITH A LOOK NOT TO PURSUE HER ACTION--EMILY CLUTCHES THE ALBUM, CLOSES IT, PLACES IT ON HER LAP AND CONTINUES HER SEWING)

JENNY

This is my friend Amy, Emily.

EMILY

Yes.

JENNY

She will be helping me.

EMILY

Yes. (AMY RETREATS) There. The flower is right now.

AMY

(Tentatively) May I see?

EMILY

Do you do applique?

AMY

I work in needlepoint.

EMILY

I see. Well, that's quite different, isn't it? My mother works in needlepoint. My sister, too. Works in needlepoint. I tried. Once. But I found that I prefer the feel of muslin. And lace. Jenny, would you mind if I didn't sit for you today? This is not one of my prettier gowns and my hair is out of place and I want so to get this flower right.

AMY

Perhaps . . . Perhaps we could take a picture of the pattern as it is now and then, later, when it is just as you would like it to be, we could take another picture.

EMILY

But. It is not perfect. I want it to be perfect.

AMY

It is merely different now. From what it will be. And I can't imagine a prettier gown. The touch of blue. It is so becoming.

EMILY

Do you think so? Do you really think so?

AMY

Yes. I do. I really do. (JENNY TAKES THE PICTURE)

SCENE 15

(AMY IS IN HER LIVING ROOM READING A LETTER FROM LEONARD)

LEONARD'S VOICE

All the men here are somehow making do. We read the news from America and we read that the suffragette movement is causing controversy and we get a few laughs out of that, wondering what it would be like if women took over. There is much laughter and sometimes we are not really sure there is a war on. Of course, I think of you and our Beth. Your letters are interesting and I am glad to hear that you have found a friend.

(A WIND BLOWS THE LETTER FROM AMY'S HAND)

SCENE 16

(AMY'S LIVING ROOM)

SARAH

Beth and I are off to the station to pick up Aunt Fanny. And. We thought you might join us.

AMY

Why, yes. I'd like that.

SARAH

Oh. Good.

AMY

I was just going to put Leonard's letter away.

SARAH

Well, I think we can wait for you. To do that.

AMY

Mother?

SARAH

Yes?

AMY

I was thinking. I have such a yearning to see the sea again. I thought perhaps we could open the beach house a bit earlier this year.

SARAH

I don't see why not.

AMY

It would be a nice change and restful and it is so much warmer now than it usually is at this time of year.

SARAH

I think it's a splendid idea. I must buy new gloves. These are beginning to be worn out. I think you ought to hurry. If you're going to put that letter away.

AMY

Yes. And I thought Jenny might join me.

SARAH

Of course, there is the question about hiring the caretaker before the start of the season. It would be terribly expensive.

AMY

Surely, Mother, Jenny and I could do it ourselves. It will just need. Dusting. A little airing out.

SARAH

You know how Aunt Fanny is if she has to wait. The poor thing begins to imagine we're not coming at all.

AMY

I'm going.

SARAH

What does Leonard say?

AMY

He says that he is glad I have a friend. And that sometimes he hardly knows there's a war on. And he sends you his best.

(AMY LEAVES-SARAH PICKS UP AMY'S UNFINISHED NEEDLEPOINT, PUTS IT DOWN AND EXITS)

SCENE 17

A scene between Aunt Fanny and Sarah (Being written--to be inserted)

SCENE 18

(WIDOW'S WALK AT AMY'S BEACH HOUSE)

JENNY

I'm not at all happy with the last series of pictures. They seem to conceal more than they reveal.

AMY

I don't understand.

JENNY

Just that there are depths that have not been penetrated. That all I see when I look at them is contradiction. As if perhaps that is all there is to capture. Perhaps that is all that there is. Contradiction.

AMY

Peculiar. Because all I see when I look at them is their beauty. I see some part of you in every one of them.

JENNY

The darks are not dark enough and the light is like the light of an unreal twilight.

AMY

I only know that what I see in them is not at all what I saw when you took the pictures.

JENNY

Well, what was wrong with what was really there? Why didn't I capture that?

AMY

I don't know. I thought you had. And more.

JENNY

Or less.

AMY

You just want to argue.

JENNY

No. I don't want to argue at all.

AMY

Do.

JENNY

Don't. (THEY LAUGH--A ZIPOLI ADAGIO IS HEARD)

What I do like about the new series is that something of what I originally felt when I first saw that place, some of that is in them. And some new side. That I saw through you.

AMY

(Changes the subject) Do you know what this is called? A widow's walk. It's called a widow's walk. For women whose men were lost at sea. They would come up here, knowing their husbands would never return, and keep watch.

JENNY

It seems so private. And yet open.

AMY

I have always been drawn here. My body has always seemed an extension of the sea. As if there were some deep connection between me and her.

JENNY

There is a naturalness about you here that I haven't seen before.

AMY

In the summertime, when the stables are open, I take a horse out and just ride along the beach for hours. And hours. Oh, Jenny, there is a freedom in that. There most certainly is a freedom in that. For hours. Into the sunset. Into the summertime sunset.

(JENNY'S FACE IS AGLOW WITH LOVE FOR AMY)

SCENE 19

(THE INTERIOR OF THE BEACH HOUSE--IT SEEMS BARE EXCEPT FOR THE WARMTH OF THE FIRE--THE ONLY SOUND IS THE SEA AND THE WIND AND THE CRACKLING FIRE)

AMY

The week is passing so quickly. And it's damper here than I imagined.

JENNY

Come here. Closer. By the edge of the fire. Come.

AMY

(Amy moves toward Jenny) The book of Chinese poems is exquisite. I read them before I fall asleep and I find myself. I'm ashamed to say it. Ashamed because I feel so little shame with you. I find myself. Crying. And I don't know why. But I think of Emily. I read the poems and think of Emily. And cry. And I bless you for bringing all of it into my life.

JENNY

Amy?

AMY

Yes?

JENNY

Do you know how much I've grown to need you?

AMY

Need me?

JENNY

Yes. And want you.

(AMY MOVES AWAY IN SILENCE)

AMY

No. I don't want to hear that.

JENNY

I want you to. This is my life I'm risking. My life I'm offering.

AMY

I need time. Jenny. Time. Give it to me. (Pause) I have a teacup with a little crack in it. You can still drink out of it and yet, you know that one day it will break. It is a very fragile teacup. And I used to drink out of it and think my life was like that and then I met you and I stopped using that teacup. I can't explain but I can see that teacup right now. I can feel it in my hands. Right now.

JENNY

I would never hurt you.

AMY

I know that.

JENNY

I love you.

AMY

And I you.

JENNY

I knew you might not understand but I thought you'd sense something gradually. Something of what I was feeling.

AMY

I keep seeing that teacup. And Emily. I keep seeing Emily.

JENNY

You're not Emily.

AMY

It's time to go to sleep. I'm tired. And the fire is still so bright. Would you help me put the fire out? Jenny? Please?

(JENNY STANDS AND MOVES TO AMY AND HOLDS HER: AMY BREAKS AWAY)

JENNY

Go to sleep. I'll put the fire out. Go on. I'll see you in the morning. Good night.

(AMY LEAVES--JENNY IS SITTING NUMBLY BY THE FIRE--AFTER A LONG SILENCE AMY RETURNS AND PUTS HER HAND ON JENNY'S SHOULDER--JENNY TURNS TO HER)

(SLIDE OR PHOTO--AMY WITH A TEACUP IN HER HAND)

#### SCENE 20

MUSIC: A SCRATCHY RECORDING OF THE "NON PIU ANDRAI" ARIA FROM THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO) (AMY SINGS TO THE RECORD WITH A SUBTLE PARODY OF MACHISMO--JENNY LAUGHS THROUGH IT ALL)

AMY

And Figaro is off to war. To discover. Greater pleasures. No more fiddling, he says. No more waltzing. Only the music of

swords crashing and cannons flashing. Ah, he sings, no more foolishness about such things as. Beauty. Actually, it's not Figaro who's off to war. It's Cherubino, I think. Figaro just gives him this advice. You see. He's going to stay behind and waltz. And fiddle.

(THERE IS IN THE PLEASURE BETWEEN THEM A GREAT INTIMACY. WHEN THE RECORD ENDS JENNY STARTS TO SING AN INOCUOUS SONG OF THE PERIOD, SOMETHING LIKE ALEXANDER'S RAGTIME BAND AND IS JOINED BY AMY. THEY FIND THEMSELVES IN EACH OTHER'S ARMS)

SCENE 21

(AMY AND JENNY BY THE FIRE-EARLY EVENING OF THE SAME DAY)

JENNY

When you grow up on a farm, it's hard to imagine. Anything else. When the cows low, it's a very special sound. A hard one to forget. I still hear them, still. And there were these birds. Dickiebirds and Phoebebirds, Mama called them, and I thought, what funny names for birds, and yet to this day, I think that Dickie and Phoebe find each other and sing together. Always. And I remember, too, looking out my window and watching the wheat and noticing the different textures of wheat, the different colors of wheat as the sun hit it in different ways. And I'd show Mama or Papa or my brothers or my friends, and I'd say, look at the wheat, do you see the color of it, and they'd say, sure, honey, that's good wheat and it's a good crop and it'll bring in the money and I realized that no one had seen the colors I saw. And in all that open space, there was never anything to be afraid of. And now I know rooms, rooms where I sat, rooms where I tried to tell people what living on a farm was like, tiny rooms with hardly any air in them. And these rooms are my life. Now. And the farm was my life. Once.

AMY

Tell me the color of wheat.

JENNY

There's no telling the color of wheat. There's only seeing the color of wheat. I feel, though, Amy, you'd see what I saw.

AMY

And if I didn't. Would that disappoint you?

JENNY

A little. But I am not afraid of that.

AMY

When I was not much older than Beth is now, my father would take me to the amusement park and we had our favorite place there- just thinking of it makes me wish I were there right now with you, I feel not much older than Beth right now, here with you- and it was a reproduction of a first class car in a European railroad, very plush, very elegant--or, at least, it seemed so to me, then--and we would sit, my father and I, across from each other, looking out the window, at this moving panorama. There was this little old man who worked this machine that made the panorama move and each roll would take us to another place. Venice. Vienna. The Alps. And it would be like traveling through all those foreign places. And with each city, each country, the appropriate music. And I'd always want to return to Vienna. Because, in Vienna, they played this waltz.

(AMY HUMS A STRAUSS WALTZ)

THE WAR WIDOW

SCENE 21

(AMY'S LIVING ROOM--SARAH IS SEATED, WORKING ON AMY'S UNFINISHED NEEDLEPOINT--AMY ENTERS AND PUTS HER BAG DOWN AND COMES OVER TO SARAH AND KISSES HER)

SARAH

Was it nice?

AMY

Oh. Very.

SARAH

No rain.

AMY

No rain.

SARAH

It rained here. Just for a day or two. But terrible lashing rains.

AMY

I am sorry to hear that.

SARAH

I imagined it was raining there as well and I wondered what there was to do on the beach. In the rain.

AMY

But there was only sunshine.

SARAH

Well, Amy, you were quite fortunate. You do lead a charmed life, don't you?

AMY

Do I?

SARAH

And Beth had a slight fever. Nothing serious. But I did have Doctor Gray come over.

AMY

Is she all right? Where is she?

SARAH

She's fine. Just fine. Now don't you worry. She's out. Playing with Henry.

AMY

I do so want to see her.

SARAH

You will. You will. Oh, yes, and a letter came.

AMY

From Leonard.

SARAH

Why, yes. I imagine so.

AMY

Where is it?

SARAH

In your room. (Amy doesn't move) Well, aren't you going to read it? I imagined you would be anxious to read it.

AMY

I will.

SARAH

And I decided to work on your pattern. You seemed to have put it aside and I thought you wouldn't mind . . .

AMY

Of course not.

SARAH

. . . if I worked on it.

AMY

It's coming along quite handsomely.

SARAH

Yes, isn't it?

AMY

Are you cross with me? You seem to be cross with me.

SARAH

Whatever gave you that idea? Come here. Let me look at you. Let me give you a kiss. I have missed you. We have both missed you.

AMY

I think I'll go up now. And change. And read Leonard's letter.

SARAH

You will stay here for a while now, won't you?

AMY

Of course, but you do understand that I am helping Jenny on her project.

SARAH

But does she really need you? After all, she did do her work before she met you.

AMY

Mother, it is very important to me. To be doing something.

SARAH

I understand. But there are many things you can do. Right here.

AMY

Something more than what I can do here. In the house.

SARAH

I know that. Why, Aunt Fanny tells me that young women are

ANNIE

You mustn't think she's become reactionary. Although sometimes I wonder. Ever since Kate discovered that Tristan Tzara's real name is Sami Weinstock, she's taken that as reason enough not to take Dadaism seriously.

KATE

Why is it that every time you tell that story I detect a subtle suggestion on your part that I am anti-Semitic?

ANNIE

If they're playing the Castle Walk and you insist on doing the waltz . . .

JENNY

Then there must be trouble in paradise.

ANNIE

Exactly.

KATE

(Back to the photos) For one thing, his statements are so pompous. I know it shouldn't affect my appreciation of his work. But it does. I think the best thing that happened to photography is the amateur. I really miss the spontaneity of their snapshots. Like the one of the picnic you once showed me.

JENNY

The Bridson.

KATE

Yes. Oh, God, it's so beautiful. Or the one of the ice skaters.

JENNY

The Van Zel.

ANNIE

Kate still has a yearning, from time to time, for the way things

were. I must say, Jenny, one of the nicest things about these evenings with you is that I can be so loose, so relaxed. It doesn't seem possible to go anywhere anymore without being corseted. Pushed together. Squeezed together.

KATE

Are you changing the subject?

ANNIE

No. I was just trying to tell how comfortable I feel. Now if you'll excuse me for a minute. (Annie starts to leave)

KATE

I am not a reactionary.

ANNIE

(Kissing Kate) Chuck. (Pause). But despite her bohemian garb, she fancies herself, all in lace, bustled and tucked in at the waist, standing up against a shiny black piano, surrounded by at least one potted palm, singing Offenbach.

KATE

Not Offenbach. Never Offenbach. He's Jewish.

ANNIE

Touche. ANNIE LEAVES.

JENNY

Marx. Freud. Tristan Tzara. Offenbach.

KATE

Not to mention Jerome Kern. (KATE SINGING)

Helter Skelter

We shall run for shelter

Till the clouds roll by.

JENNY

How would we do without them?

KATE

(Serious now) I imagine there's someone somewhere right at this very moment trying to find out how. (Pause) Oh, Jenny, I don't know if this banter between Annie and myself is a sign of unresolved tension or if, after all these years, it really is just a way of being playful with each other.

JENNY

I wouldn't worry.

KATE

But I do. Should I say something to her now? Or wait until we get home? Or, will we get home, and will I say to myself, should I say something now, or wait until tomorrow morning?

JENNY

Say it now.

KATE

Thank you. (TO AMY) She's a good friend.

KATE LEAVES.

AMY

(AN AWKWARD SILENCE) Do you have copies of the photographs Kate was talking about?

JENNY

Somewhere. JENNY STARTS TO LOOK FOR THEM

Do you like them? Aren't they special?

AMY

Yes, I like them.

JENNY

Is anything wrong? You've hardly spoken all evening.

AMY

You know what's wrong. You are much too sensitive not to know.

JENNY

Amy.

AMY

All that talk about whether the salad should be a green salad or should it have some color, whether there was too much wine in the sauce or not enough.

JENNY

Dinner with Kate and Annie is always important to me.

AMY

And then suddenly, out of nowhere, somewhere between the sauce and the doorknocker, you say "Amy, come live with me. Amy, I can't go on like this, alone, without you."

JENNY

All the time I was talking about the sauce, I wanted to say that to you. Every minute, for the past month, I wanted to say that to you.

AMY

It is not that I didn't want to hear it. It is just that before I had a minute to do anything, say anything, perhaps just touch your hand or put my hand on your hair, there was a knock at the door, and from that moment until now, I haven't heard anything, partly because I don't really understand what they are talking about much of the time, the things they say that you're so comfortable with, partly because I keep thinking about what you said and can't concentrate on anything else.

JENNY

(Giving her the photos) There.

AMY

And sometimes I think you forget about Beth.

JENNY

Now you're being silly.

AMY

Silly?

JENNY

It never occurred to me that Beth wouldn't come with you.

AMY

I couldn't do that to her. I couldn't. Knowing the lengths Leonard and my mother would go to to prevent it.

JENNY

I'd like to take a picture of you.

AMY

To capture me? As you see me? Now?

JENNY

Yes.

AMY

Isn't your camera set up?

JENNY

Don't.

(KATE ENTERS)

KATE

Well, you see, sometimes all it takes is a word, the right word, and a hug. What's that? Oh. The snapshots. Do you see what I mean? Aren't they beautiful?

AMY

(REALIZING SHE IS HOLDING THE PHOTOS) Yes. They are.

JENNY

How is Annie's novel coming?

ANNIE

(Entering) Not very well.

KATE

It's wonderful. The best thing she has ever written.

ANNIE

I think sometimes that what we really want is to be judged not by critics but by our lovers.

JENNY

More cognac?

ANNIE

I would. Yes. Thank you.

JENNY

I keep thinking I should read something. Is there anything you'd recommend?

ANNIE

Please. No literary discussion tonight. Not without my corset on. I haven't been anywhere this spring without someone asking me what I think of Ford Maddox Ford or James Joyce or, heaven help us, Willa Cather. The truth is that I haven't read The Good Soldier or Portrait of an Artist as A Young Man or, heaven help us, My Antonia. All I've read is Tarzan and Fu Manchu and I'm still two years behind in my reading. Why won't people realize that writers never read anything worth reading?

KATE

Writers read everything.

JENNY

Okay, then, How was your weekend at Jane's?

KATE

It is exquisite up there at this time of year. The woods. The

take. And Annie and Jane do like their fishing.

ANNIE

What Kate is saying is that she was bored.

KATE

That's not fair.

ANNIE

Not fair. But true.

KATE

True. Jenny tells us that your beach house, Amy, is quite the retreat. I much prefer the sea to the country. Myself.

ANNIE

(Sipping cognac) Cognac. Outside of God, only the French would have thought of something so delicious.

AMY

Do you? Really?

KATE

Excuse me?

AMY

Prefer the sea?

KATE

Oh. Yes.

JENNY

I feel sometimes that it is Amy's one true love.

ANNIE

Cognac and Flaubert. I can't imagine what else the French could do to endear me to them. Except perhaps that their shopkeepers would be a little less rude. I might wish that.

KATE

You know what we should all do? We should all go to Coney Island. I mean, after all, it is the sea. And it would be an excursion.

ANNIE

Jenny, what do you think? Do you think Kate is flirting with Amy? No. Really. It is a wonderful idea. Going to Coney Island. We could have one of Nathan's famous frankfurters I've heard so much about. They are only five cents, half the price of the frankfurters at Feltman's German Gardens, which I also have never tasted.

KATE

But I hear are twice as good. I hear, in fact, that all the doctors at Coney Island Hospital eat them.

ANNIE

I hear that there are students in doctor's uniforms wearing stethoscopes working at Nathan's.

KATE

As evidence that doctors prefer them.

ANNIE

And I hear the spice that makes Nathan's frankfurters special is the secret of Nathan's wife Ida. So, if the price goes up, as it is sure to, for once, it will be for good reason. Viva Ida!

AMY

(Leaves the room) Excuse me.

KATE

She is lovely.

JENNY

I asked her, before dinner tonight, to live with me.

KATE

And?

JENNY

And. I'm going to lose her.

JENNY

She's been a gift. The most precious person I have ever known.

ANNIE

Did we do something wrong? I sometimes think all my sensibility is in my writing.

KATE

That's not true. That simply is not true.

KATE

We should go.

JENNY

I'll get your coats.

(AMY APPEARS DRESSED IN HER COAT)

AMY

I must leave. In order to catch the last train.

JENNY

Please. Just a moment. Kate and Annie are going. And I thought. Perhaps. A few minutes. Together.

ANNIE

It has been nice.

KATE

You must come. With Jenny. To our place for dinner.

AMY

(Distracted) Yes. . . It was good meeting you.

(KATE AND ANNIE LEAVE)

AMY

You do understand. It is important that I be home tomorrow.

JENNY

I thought you might spend the night.

AMY

I thought that the completion of the project would be cause for celebration. It does not seem much like celebration.

JENNY

Take off your coat.

AMY

There's a chill.

JENNY

Amy.

AMY

And it's late.

JENNY

What I said before. What I asked you. It has frightened you, hasn't it?

AMY

Yes.

JENNY

I'd take it back. If I could. If I could take back my feelings. I would, Amy.

AMY

Right now I want to look at Beth. Hold her. God, its . . .

JENNY

What?

AMY

Cold. It's so cold. I want to cry with her. I think I can cry with her. Now.

JENNY

I thought I had taught you how to hold a camera steady. How to look into a lens finder. And all I've taught you is how to cry.

AMY

To laugh, too. And, yes, to cry. What I really feel for Beth now is. Love. That there is something between us. Not just reading children's stories. And feeling the softness of her curls . . Why do you love me?

JENNY

My life had settled into. A pattern. I understood that pattern. I liked that pattern. And then I saw you. And worked with you. And I knew my life hadn't settled into anything. If you knew you, you'd know. Why.

AMY

I have nothing to give you.

JENNY

You've given me your sweetness. Do you know what that is?

AMY

You don't just want me to give up a little. You want me to give up everything.

JENNY

Yes.

AMY

And I think. Everything. Jenny, it seems awesome. And it

seems like nothing. And to give it up for what I cannot even put into words. When I'm alone. And I am the only one who can hear me. I cannot say what it is I know.

JENNY

I know.

AMY

I'm so warm. And it's cold. And I'm late. And we've never talked about Leonard.

JENNY

There are many things we haven't talked about. Yet.

AMY

I want to talk about Leonard.

JENNY

Talk about Leonard

AMY

I can't talk about Leonard.

WAR WIDOW

SCENE 24

(AMY'S LIVING ROOM-AMY IS AT THE PIANO, PLAYING A MOZART ARIA)  
(SARAH ENTERS)

SARAH

For you. It's from Leonard. (Hands her the letter).

AMY

Yes.

SARAH

Aren't you going to read it?

AMY

Later.

SARAH

Really, Amy, you are becoming exasperating. Maybe it says something about when he's coming home. That is most probably what it is.

AMY

Most probably. Perhaps not. It seems to be dated before the armistice.

SARAH

For God's sake, open it, read it.

AMY

In time, mother, in time.

SARAH

At any rate, now that Leonard will be back, your trips to New York will be less frequent and that's a blessing.

AMY

Why less frequent?

SARAH

They just will be.

AMY

I don't see the logic in that.

SARAH

Well, you should. You certainly should.

AMY

But I don't. Or, rather I do. And. I don't.

SARAH

Less trips to New York and less of that woman.

AMY

Who?

SARAH

That woman. I don't like that woman.

AMY

You mean Jenny?

SARAH

Yes.

AMY

Well, I like that woman. I like Jenny.

SARAH

Well, I don't.

AMY

(ALMOST AS IF SHE REALIZES IT FOR THE FIRST TIME)

I love Jenny.

SARAH

You want me to be shocked.

AMY

I hadn't thought of that.

SARAH

I am not, however. I do understand. I have understood. Your loneliness. I have not been insensitive. You think perhaps that I didn't. Understand. But I did.

AMY

I love her tenderness. I love her body next to mine.

SARAH

God apparently has seen to it that this war has ended. Just in time.

AMY

She has asked me to live with her. And I want to.

(ALMOST ASTONISHED AT HER OWN ANSWER)

I want to.

SARAH

Who do you imagine you are talking to. I close my ears to this overwrought display of passion.

AMY

(Laughing) Can't you see that I'm alive? That I'm not walking and talking through things. That I have a place to walk to. A specific destination. That I'm talking. About things. That I am capable of. I don't know. Waltzing.

SARAH

Are you capable of giving up Beth?

AMY

I hadn't thought of that. But. Yes. I'm capable of giving her up. If the only way to find myself is giving her up. It saddens me. Not giving her up. That doesn't sadden me. It saddens me that she'll grow up. Here. With you. Or with Leonard. Because so much is happening. So many things are changing. Not just within myself. But out there. And she could be responsible for some of those changes. She will be responsible. It's funny to think of little Beth in that way. But here she'll grow up and life will be a panorama that moves only because someone is cranking a machine to make it move. And what she'll see and what she'll hear is all artificial. Artificial images. Artificial music. (SHE GOES TO LEAVE)

SARAH

Where are you going, Amy?

AMY

To New York, I think. I was supposed to go today. And then I decided not to. And now. I don't know. I think I made the wrong decision. I think I'll go. After all.

SARAH

I think you made the right decision.

AMY

I have changed my mind.

SARAH

It's just not done. This sort of thing.

AMY

It's being done. Right now.

SARAH

Leonard will try to find you. You know that. What do you imagine he'll say?

AMY

I have no idea what he'll say. I have even less idea of what he'll feel. Or if he'll feel anything. Maybe that's the one thing we had in common. That neither of us could feel anything.

SARAH

Certainly you realize he'll be outraged?

AMY

Outraged?

SARAH

Outraged.

AMY

Perhaps you're right. (AMY'S EYES REGISTER SOME NEW FOUND REVELATION)

SARAH

What are you thinking?

AMY

That you may very well know Leonard better than I do. It is not entirely frivolous and I want you to know that. That more than anything I want to. Waltz. You've finished the needlepoint. Why, it's lovely. Have you ever tried applique? On muslin?

SARAH

You're mad.

AMY

I know.

(AMY'S ROOM--AMY AND BETH SEATED ON THE BED: AMY IS CARESSING A LIMP RAG DOLL.

AMY

Yes. You will.

BETH

No I won't.

AMY

I promise you that you will. It takes time. Do you think that I always played the piano as well as I do now?

BETH

Yes. Didn't you?

AMY

Not at all. And I still have to practice. Even now.

BETH

Well, then, Mommy, I think that is too much time. I don't know if I want to go on.

AMY

I love you.

BETH

I love you, too.

AMY

Did you know that? That I love you?

BETH

Yes.

AMY

I'll always love you. I want you to know that.

BETH

(About the doll) What is Flossie made of?

AMY

Rags.

BETH

I think Flossie is getting old. Aunt Fanny made her for you. Didn't she? When you were a little girl.

AMY

Yes.

BETH

Look how skinny her arm is.

AMY

Beth, I have to tell you something. You may not understand. And still I must tell you. So please listen. This is not easy. I am going away.

BETH

Where?

AMY

Someplace where I think I can find out what it means to be happy. Beth, I don't know if you have seen it or not, but I have been very unhappy. Not with you; you're the only happiness I know here. But in other ways, I have been unhappy.

BETH

I know. I've been unhappy, too.

AMY

You have?

BETH

Yes. The piano lessons make me unhappy. Mary. You know. Across the way. She's only five and she can play "Three Blind

Mice" without even looking at the music. And Henry has been kind of sad, too. And when Henry gets droopy, well, I get droopy too.

AMY

Come closer. Let me hold you. (THEY CUDDLE EACH OTHER IN SILENCE)

AMY

(Continuing) I am going away.

BETH

You go away a lot.

AMY

This is for a long time. And I want you to know that no matter how long it is, I will think of you. God, I wish I could take you with me, but, and I know you cannot understand this, I can't. I want to and I can't.

BETH

I don't understand.

AMY

Perhaps. We can be together sometimes. One day. If you need me, you can write. I will give you a secret address where you can write. Remember, though, it is a secret.

BETH

Like the secret garden?

AMY

Like the secret garden. Beth. I love you. And I want you to know me. Happy. Beth, you're going to have to be a big girl.

BETH

Grandmama says that I am a big girl.

AMY

And keep practicing. It will make Daddy very proud.

BETH

Daddy?

## SCENE 25

LEONARD'S VOICE

Dearest, my own Amy. There are things I haven't written not because I wasn't feeling them but because, I suppose, I wanted to protect you and Beth in some way. But there are times when it looks as if this war will never end. When I wonder why and how we got into it, and sometimes even what we got into. I see now with greater clarity why you instinctively reacted to my going with such hostility. As if you knew all the time how foolish it was. I am so very tired. And I have seen things so horrible, so much more horrible beyond anything you could know or I would want you to know. More horrible even than anything I have ever known or want to know again. And it's been lovely and painful and sometimes the picture in my mind of your eyes is the only light I see in this darkness. Your eyes. Your eyes and the knowledge that one day with the grace of God I'll see you and our Beth again, they are the only light and the only hope. When I have seen men dying around me and when I have thought of the times I have escaped death myself, and known suddenly that death is not a fantasy, I think of you and I know that I love you because you are alive . . .

## SCENE 26

(THE TEAROOM. JENNY IS SEATED ALONE AT THE SAME TABLE WHERE AMY SAT IN THE SCENE WHERE THEY FIRST MET. SHE SEEMS VERY RESTLESS, AS IF SHE HAS BEEN WAITING A VERY LONG TIME, SHE GETS UP KNOCKING THE TABLE SLIGHTLY. ONE OF THE TEACUPS TOPPLES WITHOUT BREAKING)

AMY

Might I suggest something a little stronger than tea? (AMY SITS DOWN) Nothing is easy, is it?

JENNY

No. Nothing I know.