

ACT TWO

SCENE 22

Darkness. Lights come slowly up on ALAN kneeling in the night at the hooves of Nugget. Slowly he gets up, climbing lovingly up the body of the horse until he can stand and kiss it. DYSART sits on the Downstage bench where he began Act One.

DYSART With one particular horse, called Nugget, he embraces. He showed me how he stands with it afterwards in the night, one hand on its chest, one on its neck, like a frozen tango dancer, inhaling its cold sweet breath. "Have you noticed," he said, "about horses: how they'll stand one hoof on its end, like those girls in the ballet?" (ALAN leads Nugget out of the square. DYSART rises. The horse walks away up the tunnel and disappears. The boy comes Downstage and sits on the bench DYSART has vacated. DYSART crosses Downstage and moves slowly up round the circle, until he reaches the central entrance to the square.) Now he's gone off to rest, leaving me alone with Equus. I can hear the creature's voice. It's calling me out of the black cave of the Psyche. I shove in my dim little torch, and there he stands—waiting for me. He raises his matted head. He opens his great square teeth, and says— (*Mocking.*) "Why? . . . Why Me? . . . Why—ultimately—Me? . . . Do you really imagine you can account for Me? Totally, infallibly, inevitably account for Me? . . . Poor Doctor Dysart!" (*He enters the square.*) Of course I've stared at such images before. Or been stared at by them, whichever way you look at it. And weirdly often now with me the feeling is that *they* are staring at *us*—that in some quite palpable way they precede us. Meaningless, but unsettling

. . . In either case, this particular one, this huge implacable head, is the most alarming yet. It asks questions I've avoided all my professional life. (*Pause.*) A child is born into a world of phenomena all equal in their power to enslave. It sniffs—it sucks—it strokes its eyes over the whole uncountable range. Suddenly one strikes. Why? Moments snap together like magnets, forging a chain of shackles. Why? I can trace them. I can even, with time, pull them apart again. But why at the start they were ever magnetized at all—just those particular moments of experience and no others—I don't know. *And nor does anybody else.* Yet if I don't know—if I can never know that—what am I doing here? I don't mean clinically doing, or socially doing:—I mean *fundamentally!* These Whys, these questions are fundamental—yet they have no place in a consulting room. So then do I? . . . This is the feeling more and more. Displacement . . . Relentless displacement . . . “Account for me” says staring Equus. “First account for Me!” . . . This is more than professional menopause. (*NURSE rushes in.*)

NURSE. Doctor! . . . Doctor! There's a terrible scene with the Strang boy. His mother came to visit him, and I gave her the tray to take in. He threw it at her. She's saying the most dreadful things.

(*ALAN springs up, Down Left. DORA springs up, Down Right. They face each other across the bottom end of the Stage. It is observable that at the start of this Act FRANK is not sitting beside his wife on their bench. It is hopefully not observable that he is placed among the audience Upstage, in the gloom, by the central tunnel.*)

DORA. Don't you dare! Don't you dare!

DYSART. Is she still there?

NURSE. Yes! (*He quickly leaves the square, followed by the NURSE. DORA moves towards her son.*)

DORA. Don't you look at me like that! I'm not a doctor, you know, who'll take anything. Don't you dare give me that stare, young man! (*She slaps his face. DYSART joins them.*)

DYSART. Mrs. Strang!

DORA. I know your stares. They don't work on me!

DYSART. (*To her.*) Leave this room.

DORA. What did you say?

DYSART. I tell you to leave here at once.

DORA. (*She hesitates. Then:*) Goodbye, Alan. (*She walks past her son, and round into the square. DYSART follows her. Both are very upset. ALAN returns to his bench and NURSE to her place.*)

SCENE 23

Lights up on the square.

DYSART. I must ask you never to come here again.

DORA. Do you think I want to? Do you think I want to?

DYSART. Mrs. Strang, what on earth has got into you? Can't you see the boy is highly distressed?

DORA. (*Ironic.*) Really?

DYSART. Of course! He's at a most delicate stage of treatment. He's totally exposed. Ashamed. Everything you can imagine!

DORA. (*Exploding.*) And me? What about me? . . . What do you think I am? . . . I'm a parent, of course—so it doesn't count. That's a dirty word in here, isn't it, "parent?"

DYSART. You know that's not true.

DORA. Oh, I know. I know, alright! I've heard it all my life. It's *our* fault. Whatever happens, *we* did it. Alan's just a little victim. He's really done nothing at all! (*Savagely.*) What do you have to do in this world to get any sympathy—blind animals?

DYSART. Sit down, Mrs. Strang.

DORA. (*Ignoring him: more and more urgently.*) Look Doctor: you don't have to live with this. Alan is one patient to you: one out of many. He's my son. I lie awake every night thinking about it. Frank lies there beside me. I can hear him. Neither of us sleeps all night. You come to us and say Who forbids television? who does what behind whose back?—as if we're criminals. Let me tell you something. We're not criminals. We've done nothing wrong. We loved Alan. We gave him the best love we could. Alright, we quarrel sometimes—all parents quarrel—we always make it up. My husband is a good man. He's an upright man, religion or no religion. He cares for his home, for the world, and for his boy. Alan had love and care and treats, and as much fun as any boy in the world. I know about loveless homes: I was a teacher. Our home wasn't loveless. I know about privacy too—not invading a child's privacy. Alright, Frank may be at fault there—he digs into him too much—but nothing in excess. He's not a bully . . . (*Gravely.*) No, Doctor. Whatever's happened has happened *because of Alan*. Alan is himself. Every soul is itself. If you added up everything we ever did to him, from his first day on earth to this, you wouldn't find why he did this terrible thing—because that's *him*: not just all of our things added up. Do you understand what I'm saying? I want you to understand, because I lie awake and awake thinking it out, and I want you to know that I deny it absolutely what he's doing now, staring at me, attacking me for what *he's* done, for what *he* is! (*Pause: calmer.*) You've got your words, and I've got mine. You call it a complex, I suppose. But if you knew God, Doctor, you would know about the Devil. You'd know the Devil isn't made by what mummy says and daddy says. The Devil's *there*. It's an old-fashioned word, but a true thing . . . I'll go. What I did in there was inexcusable. I only know he was my little Alan, and then the Devil came. (*She leaves the square, and resumes her place.*) DYSART

watches her go, then leaves himself by the opposite entrance, and approaches ALAN.)

SCENE 24

Seated on his bench, the boy glares at him.

DYSART. I thought you liked your mother. (*Silence.*) She doesn't know anything, you know. I haven't told her what you told me. You do know that, don't you?

ALAN. It was lies anyway.

DYSART. What?

ALAN. You and your pen. Just a con trick, that's all.

DYSART. What do you mean?

ALAN. Made me say a lot of lies.

DYSART. Did it? . . . Like what?

ALAN. All of it. Everything I said. Lot of lies. (*Pause.*)

DYSART. I see.

ALAN. You ought to be locked up. Your bloody tricks.

DYSART. I thought you liked tricks.

ALAN. It'll be the drug next. I know.

DYSART. (*He turns, sharply.*) What drug?

ALAN. I've heard. I'm not ignorant. I know what you get up to in here. Shove needles in people, pump them full of truth drug, so they can't help saying things. That's next, isn't it? (*Pause.*)

DYSART. Alan, do you know why you're here?

ALAN. So you can give me truth drugs. (*He glares at him. DYSART leaves abruptly, and returns to the square.*)

SCENE 25

HESTHER comes in simultaneously, from the other side.

DYSART. (*Agitated.*) He actually thinks they exist! And of course he wants one.

HESTHER. It doesn't sound like that to me.

DYSART. Of course he does. Why mention them otherwise? He wants a way to speak. To finally tell me what happened in that stable. Tape's too isolated, and hypnosis is a trick. At least that's the pretence.

HESTHER. Does he still say that today?

DYSART. I haven't seen him. I cancelled his appointment this morning, and let him stew in his own anxiety. Now I am almost tempted to play a real trick on him.

HESTHER. (*Sitting.*) Like what?

DYSART. The old placebo.

HESTHER. You mean a harmless pill?

DYSART. Full of *alleged* Truth Drug. Probably an aspirin.

HESTHER. But he'd deny it afterwards. Same thing all over.

DYSART. No. Because he's ready to abreact.

HESTHER. Abreact?

DYSART. Live it all again. He won't be able to deny if after that, because he'll have shown me. Not just told me—but acted it out in front of me.

HESTHER. Can you get him to do that?

DYSART. I think so. He's nearly done it already. Under all that glowering, he trusts me. Do you realise that?

HESTHER. (*Warmly.*) I'm sure he does.

DYSART. Poor bloody fool.

HESTHER. Don't start that again. (*Pause.*)

DYSART. (*Quietly.*) Can you think of anything worse one can do to anybody than take away their worship?

HESTHER. Worship?

DYSART. Yes, that word again!

HESTHER. Aren't you being a little extreme?

DYSART. Extremity's the point.

HESTHER. Worship isn't destructive, Martin. I know that.

DYSART. I don't. I only know it's the core of his

life. What else has he got? Think about him. He can hardly read. He knows no physics or engineering to make the world real for him. No paintings to show him how others have enjoyed it. No music except television jingles. No history except tales from a desperate mother. No friends. Not one kid to give him a joke, or make him know himself more moderately. He's a modern citizen for whom society doesn't exist. He lives *one hour* every three weeks—howling in a mist. And after the service kneels to a slave who stands over him obviously and unthrowably his master. With my body I thee worship! . . . Many men have less vital with their wives. (*Pause.*)

HESTER. All the same, they don't usually blind their wives, do they?

DYSART. Oh, come on!

HESTER. Well, do they?

DYSART. (*Sarcastically.*) You mean he's dangerous? A violent, dangerous madman who's going to run round the country doing it again and again?

HESTER. I mean he's in pain, Martin. He's been in pain for most of his life. That much is obvious even to me.

DYSART. Possibly.

HESTER. *Possibly?! . . .* That cut-off little figure you just described must have been in pain for years.

DYSART. (*Doggedly.*) Possibly.

HESTER. And you can take it away.

DYSART. Still—possibly.

HESTER. Then that's all you need to know. That should be enough for you.

DYSART. No.

HESTER. Why not?

DYSART. Because it's his.

HESTER. I don't understand.

DYSART. His pain. His own. He made it. (*Pause. Earnestly.*) Look . . . to go through life and call it yours—*your* life—you first have to get your own pain.

Pain that's unique to you. You can't just dip into the common bin and say "That's enough!" . . . He's done that. All right, he's sick. He's full of misery and fear. He was dangerous, and could be again, though I doubt it. But that boy has known a passion more ferocious than I have felt in any second of my life. And let me tell you something: I envy it.

HESTHER. You can't.

DYSART. (*Vehemently.*) Don't you see? That's the accusation! That's what his stare has been saying to me all this time. "*At least I galloped! When did you?*" (*Simply.*) I'm jealous, Hesther. Jealous of Alan Strang.

HESTHER. That's absurd.

DYSART. Is it? . . . I go on about my wife. That smug woman by the fire. Have you thought of the fellow on the other side of it? The finicky, critical husband looking through his art books on mythical Greece. What worship has *he* ever known? Real worship! Without worship you shrink, it's as brutal as that . . . I shrank my *own* life. No one can do it for you. I settled for being pallid and provincial, out of my own eternal timidity. The old story of bluster, and do bugger-all . . . I imply that we can't have children: but actually, it's only me. I had myself tested behind her back. The lowest sperm count you could find. And I never told her. That's all I need—her sympathy mixed with resentment . . . I tell everyone Margaret's the puritan, I'm the pagan. Some pagan! Such wild returns I make to the womb of civilization. Three weeks a year in the Mediterranean, every bed booked in advance, every meal paid for by vouchers; cautious jaunts in hired Fiats, suitcase crammed with Kao-Pectate! Such a fantastic surrender to the primitive! And I use that word endlessly: "*primitive.*" "Oh, the primitive world," I say. "What instinctive truths were lost with it!" And while I sit there, baiting a poor unimaginative woman with the *word* that freaky boy tries to conjure the *reality*! I sit looking at pages of

centaurs trampling the soil of Argos—and outside my window he is trying to *become one*, in a Hampshire field! . . . I watch that woman knitting, night after night—a woman I haven't *kissed* in six years—and he stands in the dark for an hour, sucking the sweat off his God's hairy cheek! (*Pause.*) Then in the morning, I put away my books on the cultural shelf, close up the Kodachrome snaps of Mount Olympus, touch my reproduction statue of Dionysus for luck—and go off to hospital to treat *him* for *insanity*. Do you see?

HESTHER. The boy's in pain, Martin. That's all I see. In the end. (*He looks at her. She rises, and crosses away from him. ALAN gets up from his bench and stealthily places an envelope in the left-hand entrance of the square, then goes back and sits with his back to the audience, as if watching television.*) What else can I say? I'm not just being Mrs. MacBrisk.

DYSART. (*Hard.*) But?

HESTHER. You are still—oh, I don't know!

DYSART. Indulgent? . . . That's getting to be rather an easy word, isn't it?

HESTHER. (*Urgently: with difficulty.*) Look! . . . I understand, you know. I do understand . . . You haven't made your own pain. You've still made other things. Your own thoughts and skill! Your own way of connecting! . . . I've watched you do it, year after year. Skill absolutely *yours*—what you just said: *unique to you!* . . . Don't tell me now that work's unworthy—you're just a butcher, you're just provincial—all that stuff, it's *hateful!* . . . (*Calmer.*) Alright, you've never galloped. Too bad. Let me tell you: if I have to choose between the boy's galloping and your sheer training, I'll take the training every time—and *so will he*, at this moment! . . . That stare of his isn't accusing you, my dear. Can't you see, it's simply demanding?

DYSART. What?

HESTER. Just that. Your power to pull him out of the nightmare he's galloped himself into.

DYSART. I'll talk to you.

HESTER. Goodnight . . . (*She goes. DYSART looks after her, then makes a sudden gesture of frustration.*)

DYSART. Yes! . . . Yes, yes, yes, yes! . . . What of it? . . . Whose power pulls me out of mine?

SCENE 26

DYSART *becomes aware of the letter lying on the floor. He picks it up, opens and reads it.*

ALAN. (*Speaking stiffly as DYSART reads.*) "It is all true what I said after you tapped the pen. I'm sorry if I said different. Post Scriptum: I know why I'm here." (*Pause.*)

DYSART. (*Calling, joyfully.*) Nurse!

NURSE. (*She comes in.*) Yes, Doctor?

DYSART. (*Trying to conceal his pleasure.*) Good evening!

NURSE. You're in late tonight.

DYSART. Yes! . . . Tell me, is the Strang boy in bed yet?

NURSE. Oh, no Doctor. He's bound to be upstairs looking at television. He always watches to the last possible moment. He doesn't like going to his room at all.

DYSART. You mean he's still having nightmares?

NURSE. He had a bad one last night.

DYSART. Would you ask him to come down here, please?

NURSE. (*Faint surprise.*) Now?

DYSART. I'd like a word with him.

NURSE. (*Puzzled.*) Very good, Doctor.

DYSART. If he's not back in his room by lights out, tell Night Nurse not to worry. I'll see he gets back to

bed all right. And would you phone my home and tell my wife I may be in late?

NURSE. Yes, Doctor.

DYSART. Ask him to come straight away, please. (NURSE goes to the bench, taps ALAN on the shoulder, whispers her message in his ear, and returns to her place. Excitedly, DYSART produces a bottle of pills from his pocket, looks at it and replaces it. ALAN stands up and pauses for a second—then steps into the square.)

SCENE 27

He stands in the doorway, depressed.

DYSART. Hallo.

ALAN. Hallo.

DYSART. I got your letter. Thank you. (Pause.) Also the Post Scriptum.

ALAN. (Defensively.) That's the right word. My Mum told me. It's Latin for "After-writing."

DYSART. How are you feeling?

ALAN. All right.

DYSART. I'm sorry I didn't see you today.

ALAN. You were fed up with me.

DYSART. Yes. (Pause.) Can I make it up to you now?

ALAN. What d'you mean?

DYSART. I thought we'd have a session.

ALAN. (Startled.) Now?

DYSART. Yes! At dead of night! . . . Better than going to sleep, isn't it? (The boy flinches.) Alan—look. Everything I say has a trick or a catch. Everything I do is a trick or a catch. That's all I know to do. But they work—and you know that. Trust me. (Pause.)

ALAN. You got another trick, then?

DYSART. Yes.

ALAN. A truth drug?

DYSART. If you like.

ALAN. What's it do?

DYSART. Make it easier for you to talk.

ALAN. Like you can't help yourself?

DYSART. That's right. Like you have to speak the truth at all costs. And all of it. (*Pause.*)

ALAN. (*Slyly.*) Comes in a needle, doesn't it?

DYSART. No.

ALAN. Where is it?

DYSART. (*Indicating his pocket.*) In here.

ALAN. Let's see.

DYSART. (*He solemnly takes a bottle of pills out of his pocket.*) There.

ALAN. (*Suspicious.*) That really it?

DYSART. It is . . . Do you want to try it?

ALAN. No.

DYSART. I think you do.

ALAN. I don't. Not at all.

DYSART. Afterwards you'd sleep. You'd have no bad dreams all night. Probably many nights, from then on . . . (*Pause.*)

ALAN. How long's it take to work?

DYSART. It's instant. Like coffee.

ALAN. (*Half believing.*) It isn't!

DYSART. I promise you . . . Well?

ALAN. Can I have a cigarette?

DYSART. Pill first. Do you want some water?

ALAN. No. (*DYSART shakes one out on to his palm. ALAN hesitates for a second—then takes it and swallows it.*)

DYSART. Then you can chase it down with this. Sit down. (*He offers him a cigarette, and lights it for him.*)

ALAN. (*Nervous.*) What happens now?

DYSART. We wait for it to work.

ALAN. What'll I feel first?

DYSART. Nothing much. After a minute, about a hundred green snakes should come out of that cupboard singing the Hallelujah Chorus.

ALAN. (*Annoyed.*) *I'm serious!*

DYSART. (*Earnestly.*) You'll feel nothing. Nothing's going to happen now but what you want to happen. You're not going to say anything to me but what you want to say. Just relax. Lie back and finish your fag. (*ALAN stares at him. Then accepts the situation, and lies back.*) Good boy.

ALAN. I bet this room's heard some funny things.

DYSART. It certainly has.

ALAN. I like it.

DYSART. This room?

ALAN. Don't you?

DYSART. Well, there's not much to like, is there?

ALAN. How long am I going to be in here?

DYSART. It's hard to say. I quite see you want to leave.

ALAN. No.

DYSART. You don't?

ALAN. Where would I go?

DYSART. Home . . . (*The boy looks away. DYSART crosses and sits on the rail Upstage, his feet on the bench. A pause.*) Actually, I'd like to leave this room and never see it again in my life.

ALAN. (*Surprise.*) Why?

DYSART. I've been in it too long.

ALAN. Where would you go?

DYSART. Somewhere.

ALAN. Secret?

DYSART. Yes. There's a sea—a great sea I—love . . . It's where the God's used to go to bathe.

ALAN. What Gods?

DYSART. The old ones. Before they died.

ALAN. God's don't die.

DYSART. Yes, they do. (*Pause.*) There's a village I spent one night in, where I'd like to live. It's all white.

ALAN. How would you Nosey Parker, though? You wouldn't have a room for it any more.

DYSART. I wouldn't mind. I don't actually enjoy being a Nosey Parker, you know.

ALAN. Then why do it?

DYSART. Because you're unhappy.

ALAN. So are you. (DYSART looks at him sharply. ALAN sits up in alarm.) Oooh, I didn't mean that!

DYSART. Didn't you?

ALAN. Here—is that how it works? Things just slip out, not feeling anything?

DYSART. That's right.

ALAN. But it's so quick!

DYSART. I told you: it's instant.

ALAN. (Delighted.) It's wicked, isn't it? I mean, you can say anything under it.

DYSART. Yes.

ALAN. Ask me a question.

DYSART. Tell me about Jill. (Pause. The boy turns away.)

ALAN. There's nothing to tell.

DYSART. Nothing?

ALAN. No.

DYSART. Well, for example—is she pretty? You've never described her.

ALAN. She's alright.

DYSART. What colour hair?

ALAN. Dunno.

DYSART. Is it long or short?

ALAN. Dunno.

DYSART. (Lightly.) You must know that.

ALAN. I don't remember. *I don't!* (DYSART rises and comes down to him. He takes the cigarette out of his hand.)

DYSART. (Firmly.) Lie back . . . Now listen. You have to do this. And now. You are going to tell me everything that happened with this girl. And not just tell me—show me. Act it out, if you like—even more

than you did when I tapped the pencil. I want you to feel free to do absolutely anything in this room. The pill will help you. I will help you . . . Now, where does she live? (*A long pause.*)

ALAN. (*Tight.*) Near the stables. About a mile. (*DYSART steps down out of the square as JILL enters it. He sits again on the Downstage bench.*)

SCENE 28

The light grows warmer.

JILL It's called The China Party. (*She comes down and sits casually on the rail, her manner is open and lightly provocative. During these Scenes ALAN acts directly with her, and never looks over at DYSART when he replies to him.*) When Daddy disappeared, she was left without a bean. She had to earn her own living. I must say she did jolly well, considering she was never trained in business.

DYSART. What do you mean, "disappeared?"

ALAN. (*To DYSART.*) He ran off. No one ever saw him again.

JILL. Just left a note on her dressing table saying "Sorry. I've had it." Just like that. She never got over it. It turned her right off men. All my dates have to be sort of secret. I mean, she knows about them, but I can't ever bring anyone back home. She's so rude to them.

ALAN. (*To DYSART.*) She was always looking.

DYSART. At you?

ALAN. (*To DYSART.*) Saying stupid things. (*She jumps off the bench.*)

JILL. You've got super eyes.

ALAN. (*To DYSART.*) Anyway, she was the one who had them. (*She sits next to him. Embarrassed, the boy tries to move away as far as he can.*)

JILL. There was an article in the paper last week saying what points about boys fascinate girls. They said Number One is bottoms. I think it's eyes every time . . . They fascinate you too, don't they?

ALAN. Me?

JILL. (*Sly.*) Or is it only horse's eyes?

ALAN. (*Startled.*) What d'you mean?

JILL. I saw you staring into Nugget's eyes yesterday for ages. I spied on you through the door!

ALAN. (*Hotly.*) There must have been something in it!

JILL. You're a real Man of Mystery, aren't you?

ALAN. (*To DYSART.*) Sometimes, it was like she knew.

DYSART. Did you ever hint?

ALAN. (*To DYSART.*) Course not!

JILL. I love horse's eyes. The way you can see yourself in them. D'you find them sexy?

ALAN. (*Outraged.*) What?!

JILL. Horses.

ALAN. Don't be daft! (*He springs up, and away from her.*)

JILL. Girls do. I mean, they go through a period when they pat them and kiss them a lot. I know I did. I suppose it's just a substitute, really.

ALAN. (*To DYSART.*) That kind of thing, all the time. Until one night.

DYSART. Yes? What?

ALAN. (*To DYSART defensively.*) She did it! Not me. It was her idea, the whole thing! . . . She got me into it!

DYSART. What are you saying? "One night:"—go on from there.

ALAN. (*To DYSART.*) Saturday night. We were just closing up.

JILL. How would you like to take me out?

ALAN. What?

DYSART. *Why?*

ALAN. *Because! . . . (Pause.)* Well—we went into the Cinema!

SCENE 29

A burst of rock music, instantly fading down. Lights darken. ALAN enters the square. JILL rises and together they grope their way to the Downstage bench, as if in a dark auditorium.

ALAN. The whole place was full of men. Jill was the only girl. *(They push by a Patron seated at the end, and sit side by side, staring up at the invisible screen, located above the heads of the main audience. A spotlight hits the boy's face.)* We sat down and the film came on. It was daft. Nothing happened for ages. There was this girl Brita, who was sixteen. She went to stay in this house, where there was an older boy. He kept giving her looks, but she ignored him completely. In the end she took a shower. She went into the bathroom and took off all her clothes. The lot. Very slowly . . . What she didn't know was the boy was looking through the door all the time . . . *(He starts to become excited.)* It was fantastic! The water fell on her breasts, bouncing down her . . . *(FRANK steps into the square furtively from the back, hat in hand, and stands looking about for a place.)*

DYSART. Was that the first time you'd seen a girl naked?

ALAN. *(To DYSART.)* Yes! You couldn't see everything, though . . . *(Looking about him.)* All round me they were all looking. All the men—staring up like they were in church. Like they were a sort of congregation. And then—*(He sees his Father.)* Ah! *(At the same instant FRANK sees him.)*

FRANK. Alan!

ALAN. God!

DYSART. *Why?*

ALAN. *Because! . . . (Pause.)* Well—we went into the Cinema!

SCENE 29

A burst of rock music, instantly fading down. Lights darken. ALAN enters the square. JILL rises and together they grope their way to the Downstage bench, as if in a dark auditorium.

ALAN. The whole place was full of men. Jill was the only girl. *(They push by a Patron seated at the end, and sit side by side, staring up at the invisible screen, located above the heads of the main audience. A spotlight hits the boy's face.)* We sat down and the film came on. It was daft. Nothing happened for ages. There was this girl Brita, who was sixteen. She went to stay in this house, where there was an older boy. He kept giving her looks, but she ignored him completely. In the end she took a shower. She went into the bathroom and took off all her clothes. The lot. Very slowly . . . What she didn't know was the boy was looking through the door all the time . . . *(He starts to become excited.)* It was fantastic! The water fell on her breasts, bouncing down her . . . *(FRANK steps into the square furtively from the back, hat in hand, and stands looking about for a place.)*

DYSART. Was that the first time you'd seen a girl naked?

ALAN. *(To DYSART.)* Yes! You couldn't see everything, though . . . *(Looking about him.)* All round me they were all looking. All the men—staring up like they were in church. Like they were a sort of congregation. And then—*(He sees his Father.)* Ah! *(At the same instant FRANK sees him.)*

FRANK. Alan!

ALAN. God!

JILL. What is it?

ALAN. Dad!

JILL. Where?

ALAN. At the back! *He saw me!*

JILL. You sure?

ALAN. Yes!

FRANK. *(Calling.)* Alan!

ALAN. Oh God! *(He tries to hide his face in the girl's shoulder. His father comes down the aisle towards him.)*

FRANK. Alan! You can hear me! Don't pretend!

PATRONS. *Ssssh!*

FRANK. *(Approaching the row of seats.)* Do I have to come and fetch you out? . . . Do I? . . . *(Cries of "Ssssh!" and "Shut up!")* Do I, Alan?

ALAN. *(Through gritted teeth.)* Oh fuck! *(He gets up as the noise increases. JILL gets up too and follows him.)*

DYSART. You went?

ALAN. *(To DYSART.)* What else could I do? He kept shouting. Everyone was saying shut up! *(They go out, right through the group of patrons—who rise protesting as they pass, quickly replace the benches and leave the square. DYSART enters it.)*

SCENE 30

Light brightens from the cinema, but remains cold: a street at night. The three walk round the circle Downstage in a line: FRANK leading, wearing his hat. He halts in the middle of the left rail, and stands staring straight ahead of him, rigid with embarrassment. ALAN is very agitated.

ALAN. *(To DYSART.)* We went into the street, all three of us. It was weird. We just stood there by the bus stop—like we were three people in a queue, and

we didn't know each other. Dad was all white and sweaty. He didn't look at us at all. It must have gone on for about five minutes. I tried to speak. I said—*(To his father.)* I—I—I've never been there before. Honest . . . Never . . . *(To DYSART.)* He didn't seem to hear. Jill tried.

JILL. It's true. Mr. Strang. It wasn't Alan's idea to go there. It was mine.

ALAN. *(To DYSART.)* He just went on staring, straight ahead. It was awful.

JILL. I'm not shocked by films like that. I think they're just silly.

ALAN. *(To DYSART.)* The bus wouldn't come . . . We just stood and stood . . . Then suddenly he spoke. *(FRANK takes off his hat.)*

FRANK. *(Stiffly.)* I'd like you to know something. Both of you. I came here tonight to see the Manager. He asked me to call on him for business purposes. I happen to be a printer, Miss. A picture house needs posters. That's entirely why I'm here. To discuss posters. While I was waiting I happened to glance in, that's all. I can only say I'm going to complain to the council. I had no idea they showed films like this. I'm certainly going to refuse my services.

JILL. *(Kindly.)* Yes, of course.

FRANK. As long as that's understood.

ALAN. *(To DYSART.)* Then the bus came along.

FRANK. Come along, now Alan. *(He moves away Downstage.)*

ALAN. No.

FRANK. *(Turning.)* No fuss, please. Say goodnight to the young lady.

ALAN. *(Timid but firm.)* No. I'm stopping here . . . I've got to see her home . . . It's proper. *(Pause.)*

FRANK. *(As dignified as possible.)* Very well. I'll see you when you choose to return. Very well then . . . Yes . . . *(He walks back to his original seat next to his wife. He stares across the square at his*

son—who stares back at him. Then, slowly, he sits.)

ALAN. And he got on, and we didn't. He sat down and looked at me through the glass. And I saw . . .

DYSART. (Soft.) What?

ALAN. (To DYSART.) His face. It was scared.

DYSART. Of you?

ALAN. (To DYSART.) It was terrible. We had to walk home. Four miles. I got the shakes.

DYSART. You were scared too?

ALAN. (To DYSART.) It was like a hole had been drilled in my tummy. A hole—right here. And the air was getting in! (He starts to walk Upstage, round the circle.)

SCENE 31

The girl stays still. This whole Scene must go urgently.

JILL. (Aware of other people looking.) Alan . . .

ALAN. (To DYSART.) People kept turning round in the street to look.

JILL. Alan!

ALAN. (To DYSART.) I kept seeing him, just as he drove off. Scared of me . . . And me scared of him . . . I kept thinking—all those airs he put on! . . . "Receive my meaning. Improve your mind!" . . . All those nights he said he'd be in late. "Keep my supper hot, Dora!" "Your poor father: he works so hard!" . . . Bugger! Old bugger! . . . Filthy old bugger! (He stops, clenching his fists.)

JILL. Hey! Wait for me! (She runs after him. He waits.) What are you thinking about?

ALAN. Nothing.

JILL. Mind my own beeswax? (She laughs.)

ALAN. (To DYSART.) And suddenly she began to laugh.

JILL. I'm sorry. But it's pretty funny, when you think of it.

ALAN. (*Bewildered.*) What?

JILL. Catching him like that! I mean, it's terrible—but it's very funny.

ALAN. Yeh! (*He turns from her.*)

JILL. No, wait! . . . I'm sorry. I know you're upset. But it's not the end of the world, is it? I mean, what was he doing? Only what we were. Watching a silly film, it's a case of like father like son, I'd say! . . . I mean, when that girl was taking a shower, you were pretty interested, weren't you? (*He turns round and looks at her.*) We keep saying old people are square. Then when they suddenly aren't—we don't like it!

DYSART. What did you think about that?

ALAN. (*To DYSART.*) I don't know. I kept looking at all the people in the street. They were mostly men coming out of pubs. I suddenly thought—*they all do it! All of them!* . . . They're not just Dads—they're people with pricks! . . . And Dad—he's just not Dad either. He's a man with a prick too. You know, I'd never thought about it. (*Pause.*) We went into the country. (*He walks again. JILL follows. They turn the corner and come Downstage, Right.*) We kept walking. I just thought about Dad, and how he was nothing special—just a poor old sod on his own. (*He stops. To JILL: realising it.*) Poor old sod!

JILL. That's right!

ALAN. (*Grappling with it.*) I mean, what else has he got? . . . He's got mum, of course, but well—she—she—she—

JILL. She doesn't give him anything?

ALAN. That's right. I bet you . . . She doesn't give him anything. That's right . . . That's really right! . . . She likes Ladies and Gentlemen. Do you understand what I mean?

JILL. (*Mischievously.*) Ladies and gentlemen aren't naked?

ALAN. That's right! Never! . . . *Never!* That would be disgusting! She'd have to put bowler hats on them! . . . *(She laughs. The rest of the Scene goes even more urgently.)*

DYSART. Was that the first time you ever thought anything like that about your mother? . . . I mean, that she was unfair to your dad?

ALAN. *(To DYSART.)* Absolutely!

DYSART. How did you feel?

ALAN. *(To DYSART.)* Sorry. I mean for him. Poor old sod, that's what I felt—he's just like me! He hates ladies and gents just like me! Posh things—and la-di-da. He goes off by himself at night, and does his own secret thing which no one'll know about, just like me! There's no difference—he's just the same as me—just the same!—*(He stops in distress, then bolts back a little Upstage.)* Christ!

DYSART. *(Sternly.)* Go on.

ALAN. *(To DYSART.)* I can't.

DYSART. Of course you can. You're doing wonderfully.

ALAN. *(To DYSART.)* No, please. *Don't make me!*

DYSART. *(Firm and quick.)* Don't think: just answer. You were happy at that second, weren't you? When you realised about your dad. How lots of people have secrets, not just you?

ALAN. *(To DYSART.)* Yes.

DYSART. You felt sort of free, didn't you? I mean, free to do anything?

ALAN. *(To DYSART, looking at JILL.)* Yes!

DYSART. What was she doing?

ALAN. *(To DYSART.)* Holding my hand.

DYSART. And that was good?

ALAN. *(To DYSART.)* Oh, yes!

DYSART. *(Urgent.)* Remember what you thought. *As if it's happening to you now. This very moment* . . . What's in your head?

ALAN. (*To DYSART.*) Her eyes. *She's* the one with the eyes! . . . I keep looking at them, because I really want—

DYSART. To look at her breasts?

ALAN. (*To DYSART.*) Yes.

DYSART. Like in the film.

ALAN. (*To DYSART.*) Yes . . . Then she starts to scratch my hand.

JILL. You're really very nice, you know that?

ALAN. (*To DYSART.*) Moving her nails on the back. Her face so warm. Her eyes.

DYSART. You want her very much?

ALAN. (*To DYSART.*) Yes . . .

JILL. I love your eyes. (*She kisses him. Whispering.*) Let's go!

ALAN. Where?

JILL. I know a place. It's right near here.

ALAN. Where?

JILL. Surprise! . . . Come on! (*She darts away round the circle, across the Stage and up the Left side.*) Come on!

ALAN. (*To DYSART.*) She runs ahead. I follow. And then—and then—! (*He halts.*)

DYSART. What?

ALAN. (*To DYSART.*) I see what she means.

DYSART. What? . . . Where are you? . . . Where has she taken you?

ALAN. (*To JILL.*) *The stables?*

JILL. Of course!

SCENE 32

Chorus makes a warning. The horses actors enter, and ceremonially put on their masks—first raising them high above their heads. Nugget stands in the central tunnel.

ALAN. (*Recoiling.*) No!

JILL. Where else? They're perfect!

ALAN. No! (*He turns his head from her.*)

JILL. Or do you want to go home now and face your dad?

ALAN. No!

JILL. Then come on! (*He edges nervously past the horse standing at the Left, which turns its neck and even moves a challenging step after him.*)

ALAN. Why not your place?

JILL. I can't. Mother doesn't like me bringing back boys. I told you . . . Anyway, the barn's better.

ALAN. No!

JILL. All that straw. It's cosy.

ALAN. No.

JILL. *Why not?*

ALAN. Them!

JILL. Dalton will be in bed . . . What's the matter?

. . . Don't you want to?

ALAN. (*Aching to.*) Yes!

JILL. So?

ALAN. (*Desperate.*) Them! . . . Them! . . .

JILL. *Who?*

ALAN. (*Low.*) Horses.

JILL. *Horses?* . . . You're really dotty, aren't you? . . . What do you mean? (*He starts thinking.*) Oh, you're freezing . . . let's get under the straw. You'll be warm there.

ALAN. (*Pulling away.*) No!

JILL. What on earth's the matter with you? . . . (*Silence. He won't look at her.*) Look, if the sight of horses offends you, my lord, we can just shut the door. You won't have to see them. Alright?

DYSART. What door is that? In the barn?

ALAN. (*To DYSART.*) Yes.

DYSART. So what do you do? You go in?

ALAN. (*To DYSART.*) Yes.

SCENE 33

A rich light falls. Furtively ALAN enters the square from the top end, and JILL follows. The horses on the circle retire out of sight on either side. Nugget retreats up the tunnel and stands where he can just be glimpsed in the dimness.

DYSART. Into the Temple? The Holy of Holies?

ALAN. (*To* DYSART: *desperate.*) What else can I do? . . . I can't say! I can't tell her! . . . Shut it tight.

JILL. All right . . . You're crazy!

ALAN. Lock it.

JILL. Lock?

ALAN. Yes.

JILL. It's just an old door. What's the matter with you? They're in their boxes. They can't get out . . . Are you all right?

ALAN. Why?

JILL. You look weird.

ALAN. *Lock it!*

JILL. Sssh! D'you want to wake up Dalton? . . . Stay there, idiot. (*She mimes locking a heavy door, Upstage.*)

DYSART. Describe the barn, please.

ALAN. (*Walking round it: to* DYSART.) Large room. Straw everywhere. Some tools . . . (*As if picking it up off the rail where he left it in Act One.*) A hoof pick! . . . (*He "drops" it hastily, and dashes away from the spot.*)

DYSART. *Go on.*

ALAN. (*To* DYSART.) At the end this big door. Behind it—

DYSART. Horses.

ALAN. (*To* DYSART.) Yes.

DYSART. How many?

ALAN. (To DYSART.) Six.

DYSART. Jill closes the door so you can't see them?

ALAN. (To DYSART.) Yes.

DYSART. And then? . . . What happens now? . . .
Come on, Alan. Show me.

JILL. See, it's all shut. There's just us . . . Let's sit down. Come on. (*They sit together on the same bench, Left.*) Hallo.

ALAN. (*Quickly.*) Hallo. (*She kisses him lightly. He responds. Suddenly a faint trampling of hooves Off-stage, makes him jump up.*)

JILL. What is it? (*He turns his head Upstage, listening.*) Relax. There's no one there. Come here. (*She touches his hand. He turns to her again.*) You're very gentle. I love that . . .

ALAN. So are you . . . I mean . . . (*He kisses her spontaneously. The hooves trample again, harder. He breaks away from her abruptly towards the Upstage corner.*)

JILL. (*Rising.*) What is it?

ALAN. Nothing! (*She moves towards him. He turns and moves past her. He is clearly distressed. She contemplates him for a moment.*)

JILL. (*Gently.*) Take your sweater off.

ALAN. What?

JILL. I will, if you will. (*He stares at her. A pause. She lifts her sweater over head: he watches—then removes his. They each remove their shoes, their socks, and their jeans. Then they look at each other diagonally across the square, in which the light is gently increasing.*)

ALAN. You're . . . You're very . . .

JILL. So are you . . . (*Pause.*) Come here. (*He goes to her. She comes to him. They meet in the middle, and hold each other, and embrace.*)

ALAN. (To DYSART.) She put her mouth in mine. It was lovely! It was lovely! It was lovely! (*They burst into giggles. He lays her gently on the floor in*

the center of the square, and bends over her eagerly. Suddenly the noise of Equus fills the place. Hooves smash on wood. ALAN straightens up, rigid. He stares straight ahead of him over the prone body of the girl.)

DYSART. Yes, what happened then, Alan?

ALAN. (*To* DYSART: *brutally.*) I put it in her!

DYSART. Yes?

ALAN. (*To* DYSART.) I put it in her.

DYSART. You did?

ALAN. (*To* DYSART.) Yes!

DYSART. Was it easy?

ALAN. (*To* DYSART.) Yes.

DYSART. Describe it.

ALAN. (*To* DYSART.) I told you.

DYSART. More exactly.

ALAN. (*To* DYSART.) I put it in her!

DYSART. Did you?

ALAN. (*To* DYSART.) All the way!

DYSART. Did you, Alan?

ALAN. (*To* DYSART.) All the way. I shoved it. I put it in her all the way.

DYSART. Did you?

ALAN. (*To* DYSART.) Yes!

DYSART. Did you?

ALAN. (*To* DYSART.) Yes! . . . Yes!

DYSART. Give me the TRUTH! . . . Did you? . . . Honestly?

ALAN. (*To* DYSART.) Fuck off! (*He collapses, lying Upstage on his face. JILL lies on her back motionless, her head Downstage, her arms extended behind her. A pause.*)

DYSART. (*Gently.*) What was it? You couldn't? Though you wanted to very much?

ALAN. (*To* DYSART.) I couldn't . . . see her.

DYSART. What do you mean?

ALAN. (*To* DYSART.) Only Him. Every time I kissed her—*He* was in the way.

DYSART. Who?

ALAN. (*He turns on his back. To DYSART.*) You know who! . . . When I touched her, I felt Him. Under me . . . His side, waiting for my hand . . . His flanks . . . I refused him. I looked. I looked right at her . . . and I couldn't do it. When I shut my eyes, I saw Him at once. The streaks on his belly . . . (*With more desperation.*) I couldn't feel her flesh at all! I wanted the foam off his neck. His sweaty hide. Not flesh. *Hide! Horse-hide!* . . . Then I couldn't even kiss her.

JILL. (*She sits up.*) What is it?

ALAN. (*Dodging her hand.*) No! (*He scrambles up and crouches in the corner against the rails, like a little beast in a cage.*)

JILL. Alan!

ALAN. Stop it!

JILL. (*She gets up.*) It's all right . . . It's all right . . . Don't worry about it. It often happens—honest . . . There's nothing wrong. I don't mind, you know . . . I don't at all. (*He dashes past her Downstage.*) Alan, look at me . . . Alan? . . . Alan! (*He collapses again by the rail.*)

ALAN. Get out! . . .

JILL. What?

ALAN. (*Soft.*) Out!

JILL. There's nothing wrong: believe me! It's very common.

ALAN. *Get out!* (*He snatches up the invisible pick.*)
GET OUT!

JILL. Put that down!

ALAN. Leave me alone!

JILL. Put that down, Alan. It's very dangerous. Go on, please—drop it. (*He "drops" it, and turns from her.*)

ALAN. You ever tell anyone. Just you tell . . .

JILL. Who do you think I am? . . . I'm your friend—Alan . . . (*She goes towards him.*) Listen: you don't have to do anything. Try to realise that. Nothing

at all. Why don't we just lie here together in the straw. And talk.

ALAN. (*Low.*) Please . . .

JILL. Just talk.

ALAN. Please!

JILL. All right, I'm going . . . Let me put my clothes on first. (*She dresses, hastily.*)

ALAN. You tell anyone! . . . Just tell and see . . .

JILL. Oh, stop it! . . . I wish you could believe me. It's not in the least important. (*Pause.*) Anyway, I won't say anything. You know that. You know I won't . . . (*Pause. He stands with his back to her.*) Good-night, then, Alan . . . I wish—I really wish— (*He turns on her, hissing. His face is distorted—possessed. In horrified alarm she turns—fumbles the door open—leaves the barn—shuts the door hard behind her, and dashes up the tunnel out of sight, past the barely visible figure of Nugget.*)

SCENE 34

ALAN stands alone, and naked. A faint humming and drumming. The boy looks about him in growing terror.

DYSART. What?

ALAN. (*To DYSART.*) He was there. Through the door. The door was shut, but he was there! . . . He'd seen everything. I could hear him. He was laughing.

DYSART. Laughing?

ALAN. (*To DYSART.*) Mocking! . . . Mocking! . . . (*Standing Downstage he stares up towards the tunnel. A great silence weighs on the square. To the silence: terrified.*) Friend . . . Equus the Kind . . . The Merciful! . . . Forgive me! . . . (*Silence.*) It wasn't me. Not really me. Me! . . . Forgive me! . . . Take me back again! Please! . . . PLEASE! (*He kneels on*

the Downstage lip of the square, still facing the door, huddling in fear.) I'll never do it again. I swear . . . I swear! . . . (Silence. In a moan.) Please!!! . . .

DYSART. And He? What does He say?

ALAN. *(To DYSART.)* "Mine! . . . You're mine! . . . I am yours and you are mine!" . . . Then I see his eyes. They are rolling! *(Nugget begins to advance slowly, with relentless hooves, down the central tunnel.)* "I see you. I see you. Always! Everywhere! Forever!"

DYSART. Kiss anyone and I will see?

ALAN. *(To DYSART.)* Yes!

DYSART. Lie with anyone and I will see?

ALAN. *(To DYSART.)* Yes!

DYSART. And you will fail! Forever and ever you will fail! You will see ME—and you will FAIL!

ALAN. Yes. *(The boy turns round, hugging himself in pain. From the sides two more horses converge with Nugget on the rails. Their hooves stamp angrily. The Equus noise is heard more terribly.)*

DYSART. The Lord thy God is a Jealous God! He sees you. He sees you forever and ever, Alan. He sees you! . . . *He sees you!*

ALAN. *(In terror.)* Eyes! . . . White eyes—never closed! Eyes like flames—coming—coming! . . . God Seest! God seest! . . . NO! . . . *(Pause. He steadies himself. The stage begins to blacken. Quieter.)* No more. No more, Equus. *(He gets up. He goes to the bench. He takes up the invisible pick. He moves slowly Upstage towards Nugget, concealing the weapon behind his naked back, in the growing darkness. He stretches out his hand and fondles Nugget's mask. Gently.)* Equus . . . Noble Equus . . . Faithful and True . . . Godslave . . . Thou— God— Seest— NOTHING! *(He stabs out Nugget's eyes. The horse stamps in agony. A great screaming begins to fill the theater, growing ever louder. ALAN dashes at the other two horses and blinds them too, stabbing over the rails. Their metal hooves join in the stamping. Re-*

lently, as this happens, three more horses appear in cones of light: not naturalistic animals like the first three, but dreadful creatures out of nightmare. Their eyes flare—their nostrils flare—their mouths flare, they are archetypal images—judging, punishing, pitiless. They do not halt at the rail, but invade the square. As they trample at him, the boy leaps desperately at them, jumping high and naked in the dark, slashing at their heads with arms upraised, and shouting “Nothing!” savagely with each blow. The screams increase. The other horses follow into the square. The whole place is filled with cannoning, blinded horses—and the boy dodging among them, avoiding their slashing hooves as best he can. Finally they plunge off into darkness and away out of sight. The noise dies abruptly, and all we hear is ALAN yelling in hysteria as he collapses on the ground—stabbing at his own eyes with the invisible pick.) Find me! . . . Find me! . . . Find me! . . . KILL ME! . . . KILL ME! . . . KILL ME! . . . KILL ME!

SCENE 35

The light changes quickly back to brightness. DYSART enters swiftly, hurls a blanket on the Left bench, and rushes over to ALAN. The boy is having convulsions on the floor. DYSART grabs his hands, forces them from his eyes, scoops him up in his arms and carries him over to the bench. ALAN hurls his arms round DYSART and clings to him, gasping and kicking his legs in a dreadful frenzy. DYSART lays him down and presses his head back on the bench. He keeps talking—urgently talking—soothing the agony as he can.

DYSART. Here . . . Here . . . Ssssh . . . Ssssh . . . Calm now . . . Lie back . . . Just lie back! Now breathe in deep. Very deep. In . . . Out . . .

In . . . Out . . . That's it . . . In. Out . . . In . . . Out . . . (*The boy's breath is drawn into his body with a harsh rasping sound, which slowly grows less. DYSART puts the blanket over him.*) Keep it going . . . That's a good boy . . . Very good boy . . . It's all over now, Alan. It's all over. He'll go away now. You'll never see him again, I promise. You'll have no more bad dreams. No more awful nights. Think of that! . . . You are going to be well. I'm going to make you well, I promise you . . . You'll be here for a while, but I'll be here too, so it won't be so bad. Just trust me . . . (*He stands upright. The boy lies still.*) Sleep now. Have a good long sleep. You've earned it . . . Sleep. Just sleep . . . I'm going to make you well. (*He steps backwards into the center of the square. The light brightens some more. A pause.*) I'm lying to you, Alan. He won't really go that easily. Just clop away from you like a nice old cart-horse. Oh, no! When Equus leaves—if he leaves at all—it will be with your intestines in his teeth. And I don't stock replacements . . . If you knew anything, you'd get up this minute and run from me as fast as you could.

HESTER. (*She speaks from her place.*) The boy's in pain, Martin.

DYSART. Yes.

HESTER. And you can take it away.

DYSART. Yes.

HESTER. Then that should be enough for you . . . In the end!

DYSART. (*Crying out.*) All right! I'll take it away! He'll be delivered from madness. *What then?* He'll feel himself acceptable! *What then?* Do you think feelings like his can be simply re-attached like band-aids? Stuck on to other objects we select? *Look at him!* . . . My desire might be to make this boy an ardent husband—a caring citizen—a worshipper of abstract and unifying God. My achievement, however, is more

likely to make a ghost! . . . Let me tell you exactly what I'm going to do to him! (*He steps out of the square and walks round the Upstage end of it, storming at the audience.*) I'll heal the rash on his body. I'll erase the welts cut into his mind by flying manes. When that's done, I'll set him on a metal scooter and send him puttering off into the concrete world, and, he'll never touch hide again! With any luck, his private parts will come to feel as plastic to him as the products of the factory to which he will almost certainly be sent! Who knows? he may even come to find sex *funny*. Smirky funny! Bit-of-grunt funny! Trampled and furtive and entirely in control! Hopefully, he'll nothing at his fork but Approved Flesh. *I doubt, however, with much passion!* . . . Passion, you see, can be destroyed by a doctor. It cannot be created. (*He addresses ALAN directly, in farewell.*) You won't gallop any more, Alan. Horses will be quite safe. You'll save your money every week, till you can change that scooter for a car, and spend glorious weekends grooming that! You'll slip off round to the betting shop, and put the odd fifty pence on *the nags*—quite forgetting that they were ever anything more to you than bearers of little profits or little losses. You will, however, be without pain. More or less completely without pain. (*Pause.*) And I? . . . (*Pause.*) I stand in the dark with a pick in my hand, striking at heads! (*He moves away from ALAN back to the Downstage bench, and finally sits.*) I need—more desperately than my children need me—a way of seeing in the dark. What way is this? *What dark is this?* . . . I cannot call it ordained of God. I can't get that far. I will however pay it so much homage. There is now, in my mouth, this sharp chain. And it never comes out. (*A long pause. DYSART sits staring. SUDDEN BLACKOUT.*)