

The Lights, The Spectacle (Projected on the scrim, then fades out-- Graphic cue 7A.)

(Lights come up. HATTIE reads from her rocking chair under a spotlight.)

HATTIE. March 1, 1943—March came in like a lion. Snowy and cold. Ground white with snow this morning, thawed some today. I got dinner for Irvin and Raymond and washed their dishes for the day. Irvin not feeling very well and I'm not feeling so good either. Still cold. Wilmet sick.

March 1, 1944—March came in like a lamb. Wilmet and I went to both cemeteries. Raymond's leaving for the service tonight. Cloudy, 47 degrees at 8 P.M. Alone again.

March 14, 1944—This is the worst day so far, rained in the night, then froze on trees and everything. Lights out a lot of the time and limbs broken off trees. Sim here in the evening.

April 5, 1945—Didn't do much. Hands still lame. I made a fire in the furnace in morning, let it go out in the P.M. Too hot. Went uptown and to see Charlie Aldrich. He's not gaining much. Nice day and much warmer.

April 12, 1945—I worked pretty good today. Finished a rug that I commenced a couple of weeks ago. Planted onion sets and radish seeds. Had a ton of coal put in the cellar. The President died today. It's a little warmer so I let the fire go out.

May 11, 1945—Did some work in the cellar and on rug. Went to junior class play in evening. Rode with Mrs. Lundon. Raymond was in the play. They all did their parts well.

(HATTIE's spotlight fades out. Viola stops.)

EDWARD. When Pierson goes to the symphony, he always puts cotton in his ears to block out the bad notes. If things get worse, and more bad notes get into his ears, he will stuff in more and more cotton until, at last, perfection is achieved.

(Sits on the overturned lectern.) I went to see the plays on Broadway. I saw a theater's lighting technician there fade all the stage lights *(Stage lights go black. Note: Edward pretends to raise and lower the stage lights by manipulating an imaginary dimmer switch on the spine of his journal.)* to black before a dance troupe was finished with its number. The music was still going, but the stage was as dark as a stack of black cats. The stage manager shouted through his headset, "Oh, that's the wrong cue! Wrong cue!" And the technician corrected her mistake *(Stage lights restored.)* and slowly brought the lights back up to full brilliance. And there were those dancers still going at it like nothing had happened. They were even thankful for the variety.

(Walks toward the front edge of the stage.) That is the difference between dancers and actors. An actor, say an actress in this case, isn't reliable in the dark. Cut the lights *(Stage lights are cut.)* on her in the middle of an act, and she will stumble and fall and grab for a familiar hold and get the prop-table with the prop-fishbowl on it instead. You will hear a splash and a rip, and some cursing and fussing, and you turn on the lights *(Lights are restored.)* to see how she is doing. Then you will see she has redone the set while you were out, and her hair, makeup, and wardrobe too.

But with lights restored to the stage, she goes back to what she was doing before, as if an eclipse was meant to be in the script. Her smiling fortitude with which she bears her gowns disaster will win her a Broadway Oscar for sure.

Then if you dim the lights a little, *(Stage lights are dimmed.)* she will walk through a canvas wall or loopy-loop over a coach. *(Lights are restored.)* Actresses and actors lose their stage presence in the dark without all those bright and colored lights, and they don't play anybody but themselves.

I felt I was favored above mortals when I finally got the chance to take out a New York City actress. I was in awe of her. She was the closest I had ever come to knowing a goddess. She was beautiful, intelligent, worldly-wise, *(Sits down on the front edge of the stage.)* and had a bowl's worth of spaghetti on her dress. I put it there. . . Nervous accident? Not by me! *(Lies down. . . Sits back up.)* Actually I did that *on purpose*, to keep her attention *(Lies back down.)*—but I didn't.

(Lights go down for the end of the act. Viola commences.)