

*(He rises then opens and shuts the hall and the dining room doors.)*

I wish I could find Lesley.

**VERA.** Your wife?

**MACKENZIE.** Yes. I wish you'd known her. She was so pretty.  
So gay -

**VERA.** Was she?

Start

**MACKENZIE.** I loved her very much. Of course, I was a lot older than she was. She was only twenty-seven, you know. *(Pause.)* Arthur Richmond was twenty-six. He was my A.D.C. *(Pause.)* Lesley liked him. They used to talk of music and plays together, and she teased him and made fun of him. I was pleased. I thought she took a motherly interest in the boy. Damn fool, wasn't I? No fool like an old fool. *(A long pause.)* Exactly like a book the way I found out. When I was out in France. She wrote to both of us, and she put the letters in the wrong envelope. So I knew -

**VERA.** Oh, no.

**MACKENZIE.** It's all right, my dear. It's a long time ago. But you see I loved her very much - and believed in her. I didn't say anything to him - I let it gather inside - here -

*(He strikes his chest.)*

- a slow, murderous rage - damned young hypocrite - I'd liked the boy - trusted him.

*(VERA looks about nervously.)*

**VERA.** I wonder what the others are doing?

**MACKENZIE.** I sent him to his death.

**VERA.** Oh -

**MACKENZIE.** It was quite easy. Mistakes were being made all the time. All anyone could say was that I'd lost my nerve a bit, made a blunder, sacrificed one of my best men. Yes, it was quite easy *(Pause.)* Lesley never knew. I never told her I'd found out. We went on as usual - but somehow nothing was quite real any more. She

died of pneumonia. *(Pause.)* She had a heart-shaped face - and grey eyes - and brown hair that curled.

**VERA.** Oh, don't.

**MACKENZIE.** Yes, I suppose in a way - it was murder. Curious, murder - and I've always been such a law-abiding man. It didn't feel like that at the time. "Serves him damn well right!" that's what I thought. But after - *(Pause.)* Well, you know, don't you?

*(VERA is at a loss.)*

**VERA.** What do you mean?

*(MACKENZIE stares at her as though something puzzles him.)*

**MACKENZIE.** You don't seem to understand - I thought you would. I thought you'd be glad, too, that the end was coming -

*(VERA draws back, alarmed; she eyes him warily.)*

**VERA.** I -

*(MACKENZIE follows her. VERA looks round for help.)*

**MACKENZIE.** We're all going to die, you know.

**VERA.** I - I don't know.

**MACKENZIE.** You're very young - you haven't got to that yet. The relief! The blessed relief when you know that you've done with it all, that you haven't got to carry the burden any longer.

**VERA.** General -

**MACKENZIE.** Don't talk to me that way. You don't understand. I want to sit here and wait - wait for Lesley to come for me.

End

*(He goes out onto the balcony, draws up a chair and sits. The back of his head is visible through window. His position does*