

CRIMES AT THE OLD BREWERY

Crimes at the Old Brewery was first produced at the Emerson Theatre at Elmira College in Elmira, New York in March 1991, attended by Helen Hayes, to whom author, Tim Kelly, dedicated the play.

“Kelly’s play reveals how people in all walks of life use and misuse power ... [It’s] filled with suspense, thrills, terror, dry wit and psychological insight ... Powerful!” (*The Leader*, Corning, N.Y.)

“A story with lots of atmosphere and action.” (New England Theatre Conference.)

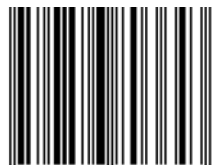
Drama. *By Tim Kelly.* *Cast: 11m., 10w. (a smaller cast with doubling).* An unscrupulous villain calling himself Jack O’Lantern ruled a community of murderers, robbers and assorted cut-throats in a notorious tenement house, the Old Brewery, in New York’s toughest crime area. True to history, this tale recounts events in its tunnels and shadowy passageways that made the crusading newspaper, the *Police Gazette*, write, “No crime is too vile, no tenant unwilling to participate.” A reporter infiltrates and inflames public opinion with his news stories just before Jack makes a big mistake by kidnapping beautiful socialite Irene Felton. The vice squad prepares to demolish the structure, but its dangerous tenants have no intention of living elsewhere. Irene escapes with the help of the reporter just as Jack, attempting to solve the problem to his own advantage, destroys himself and the Old Brewery. A director’s dream for limitless character types as well as makeup and set adventures. The action is designed to proceed without interruption. *One int. set: a large, dark, filthy room in the brewery in 1852. Costumes: period clothes for outsiders, dirty rags for the inhabitants. Approximate running time: 70 to 90 minutes. Code: CM8.*

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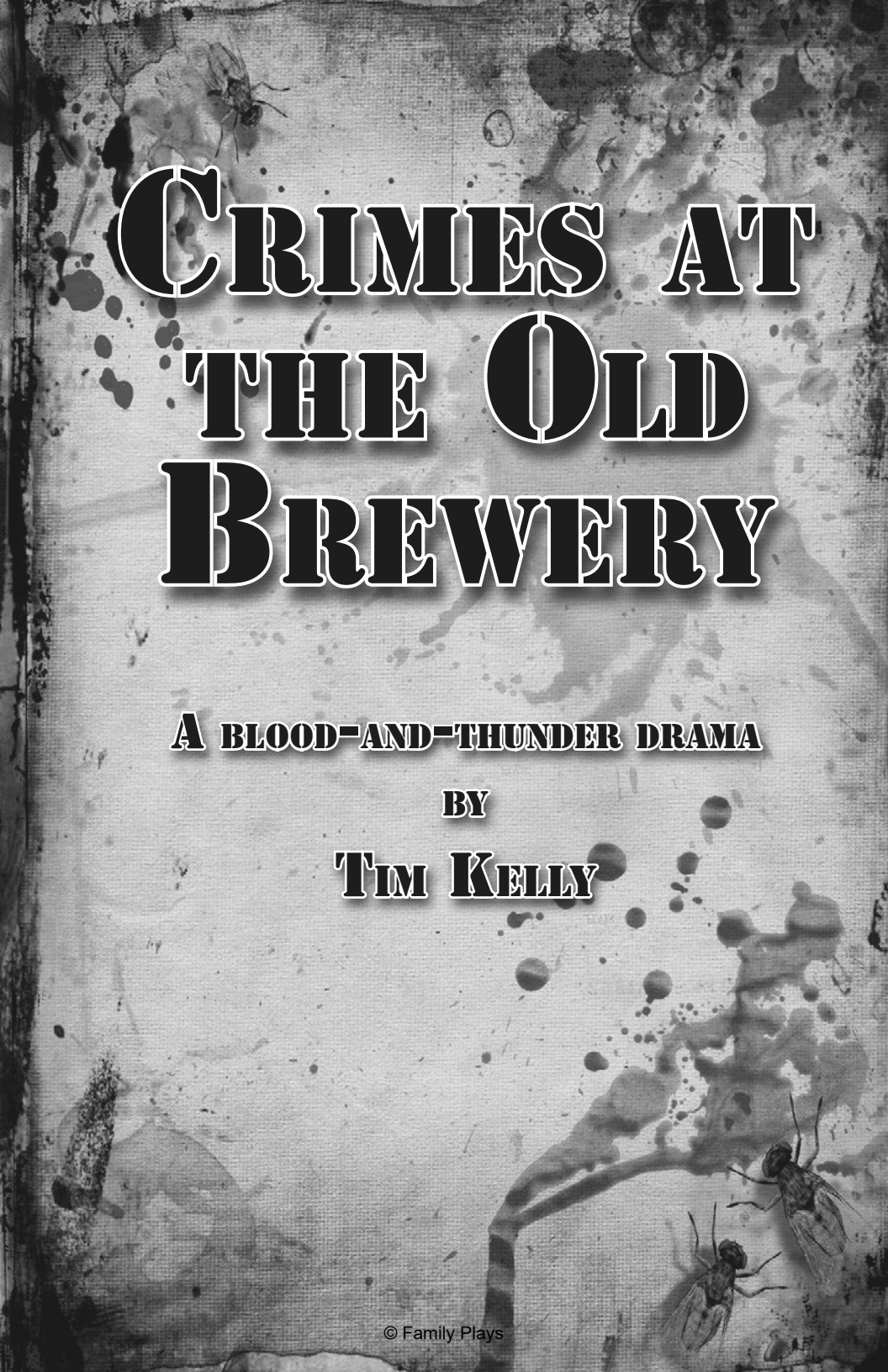
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Crimes at the Old Brewery



CRIMES AT THE OLD BREWERY

A BLOOD-AND-THUNDER DRAMA

BY

TIM KELLY

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A FULL-LENGTH PLAY

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TIM KELLY

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TIM KELLY

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(CRIMES AT THE OLD BREWERY)

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“Produced by special arrangement with
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To Helen Hayes

CRIMES AT THE OLD BREWERY

Cast of Characters (In order of speaking)

MOHAWK	MRS. VANDERBEEK
THE RAT	INSPECTOR BURNS
DRUNKEN SAILOR	BLIND ALICE
PRETTY POLLY	JACK O' LANTERN
MARGARET	DEADLEG
APPLE WOMAN	BRIDGET COLE
MAN	MOTHER HUBBARD
GHOUL	TENEMENT OWNER
SURGEON	IRENE FELTON
REVEREND WILKES	FASHIONABLE LADY
MRS. WILKES	

Flexible Casting

Although there are 21 roles, the cast can be made smaller by doubling. Some suggestions: Sailor—Deadleg; Mrs. Wilkes—Fashionable Lady; Ghoul—Tenement Owner; Man—Inspector Burns; Surgeon—Sea Captain

Various characters can double in the roles of Tenants for Scenes 9, 11, and 14. The character of Tenement Owner can be played as female, in which case Mrs. Wilkes or Mother Hubbard might double.

Synopsis

The action of the play takes place in the Old Brewery, a notorious tenement house located in Lower Manhattan. Autumn, 1852

CRIMES AT THE OLD BREWERY was first produced at the Emerson Theatre, Elmira College, Elmira, New York, in March, 1991, under the direction of Amnon Kabatchnik, production design by George H. deFalussy, with the following cast:

Blind Alice	Kathrynn Rudgers
Mohawk	Peter Burstin
The Rat	H. Kevin Opela
Drunken Sailor	Craig Joel Levins
Pretty Polly	Caroline Tarlton
Man	Anthony R. Cardno
Margaret	Janice Slocum
Apple Woman	Jenny Lambert
Ghoul	Ray Morales
Surgeon	Whit Weigel
Reverend Wilkes	Gary Yogy
Mrs. Wilkes	Jenna E. Bronson
Mrs. Vanderbeek	Blair Jemmings
Inspector Burns	Irving Cook
Jack O'Lantern	Daniel C. Gaumont
Deadleg	Charles Russell
Bridget Cole	Alison C. Moss
Mother Hubbard	Mary I. Nelson
Tenement Owner	John W.B. Greene
Irene Felton	Christine D. Doyle
Sea Captain	Bob Finley
Fashionable Lady	Jane Burke

Brewery Tenants

Anthony R. Cardno
 Mark Carpenter
 Stephanie Kreps
 David Lapkin
 Craig Joel Levins
 Brooke McKernan
 Kim Noble
 Christi Standish
 Jeff Turner

*Committee for the Supression
 of Crime and Vice:*

Sandra C. Frank
 Joan Pachuta
 Michelle L. Treille
 Jessica Willette

ABOUT THE PLAY

In a notorious tenement house in Lower Manhattan during the mid-19th century, an unscrupulous and mysterious villain rules a community of murderers, robbers, and assorted cut-throats. He calls himself Jack O'Lantern. The tenement house is known as the Old Brewery and most of the city's crime emanates from its tunnels and shadowy passageways.

No crime is too vile, no tenant unwilling to participate. The crusading "Illustrated Police Gazette" plants a reporter in the foul building, and soon articles depicting the wretchedness of the place inflame public opinion.

When Jack kidnaps the beautiful Irene Felton, he makes his first big mistake. The Committee for the Suppression of Crime and Vice decides the structure must be leveled. The dangerous tenants, however, have no intention of living anywhere else. Jack attempts to solve the problem to his own advantage.

In doing so, he destroys himself and the walls come tumbling down.

Historical Note

The Old Brewery is not a fiction. It was condemned for brewery use in 1837 and transformed into a wretched tenement house. Some accounts estimate that as many as 1,000 people were crowded into its rooms, passageways, and tunnels. Its tenants were murderers, robbers, lunatics, beggars, prostitutes, pickpockets, dope addicts, drunks, ragpickers, and starving children.

The building was located in New York's toughest crime area: the notorious Five Points District of Lower Manhattan. Public outrage, fanned by crusading articles in the "Illustrated Police Gazette," caused The Old Brewery to be torn down in 1852.

The play is designed for a flexible cast of 11 females, 10 males. A smaller cast is possible with doubling.

The action is designed to proceed without interruption. Scene changes are indicated with very brief (3-5 seconds) blackouts, or with light fades and dissolves, or with nothing at all.

If an intermission break is desired, it should come after Scene 9.

Playing time is about 75 minutes, not counting the intermission.

Comments from the Media

"Tim Kelly's powerful play, 'Crimes at the Old Brewery' [is] a spectacular stage production that premiered Thursday in Elmira College's Emerson Theatre . . . Kelly's play reveals how people, in all walks of life, use and misuse power . . . Kabatchnik and Kelly have created a production filled with suspense, thrills, terror, dry wit and psychological insight . . . The unexpected ending is shattering."—*Corning, N.Y., Leader*

"Tim Kelly, whose plays have been performed by New York's Studio Ensemble Theatre, Royal Court Rep and Los Angeles Actor's Theatre, won the Elmira College Playwriting Contest with 'Crimes at the Old Brewery' . . . Kelly's submission beat 306 other entries from seasoned writers from across the United States."—*Elmira College News*

"A wonderful evening."—*Star-Gazette, New York*

"A wealth of interesting characters."—*The Octagon*

and from Helen Hayes

Helen Hayes, the First Lady of the American Stage, was one of numerous celebrities present at the world premiere of *Crimes at the Old Brewery*. Miss Hayes wrote Mr. Kelly:

"I was very frustrated not to see you after the play to tell you how much I enjoyed it . . . It is fun and I hope it will be enjoyed through many university players and community theatres . . . Alas it can never be a New York production because of that great line of actors bowing at the end and the salaries they would represent . . . For a long time I have been putting my trust and hopes into Community theatres to keep the theatre alive all over our land. The Broadway theatre is so impoverished that we can not afford anything more than casts of two or three. I am most grateful through Elmira College to see 'Crimes in the Old Brewery.' Bless you." [Signed]
Helen Hayes

PRODUCTION NOTES

Properties

On Stage: Wooden table, stools, crates, barrels, rag piles, throne-like chair on low platform.

Scene 1

Blackjack—MOHAWK
Pocket watch—MAN
Liquor bottle—MARGARET
Coin—APPLE WOMAN
Shovel and lantern—GHOUL
Medical bag—SURGEON

Scene 2

Hanky—MRS. WILKES, MRS. VANDERBEEK
Filthy blanket holding infant (doll)—ALICE
Wad of paper money—JACK

Scene 3

Crutch—DEADLEG
Shawl—BRIDGET
Coins—THE RAT

Scene 4

Stolen loot to include: Candlestick, figurine, jewelry, silver plate, military sword—TENANTS
Ledger—MARGARET

Scene 5

Locket on chain, opium pipe—JACK
Basket with apples—APPLE WOMAN

Scene 6

Newspaper ("Illustrated Police Gazette")—MRS. VANDERBEEK

Scene 7

Sack, rope, mouth gag—IRENE
Locket—JACK
Small medicine bottle—MARGARET

Scene 8

Bandana—SEA CAPTAIN

Scene 9

Paper, pencil—IRENE
Small medicine bottle—MARGARET
Crutch—DEADLEG

Scene 10

Slips of paper—REVEREND WILKES, MRS. VANDERBEEK

Scene 11

Top hat—JACK

Ledger—MARGARET

Coins, paper money—POLLY, THE RAT, BRIDGET, TENANTS

Reticule with small pistol, gold coins—FASHIONABLE LADY

Scene 12

Gold coins—JACK

Scene 14

Sword, bottle, cup, key—MARGARET

Basket of apples—APPLE WOMAN

Envelope with paper money—INSPECTOR BURNS

Crutch—DEADLEG

Kerosene keg—JACK

Knife—ALICE

Costumes and Make-Up

The play takes place in about 1852. The tenants of the old brewery would be dressed in rags—or worse. Beards and matted hair for the men, tangled stringy hair and smudged faces for the women would be appropriate. Inspector Burns, the Rev. Wilkes, and the other visitors would be properly costumed in fashionable clothing of the mid-nineteenth century.

Lighting and Special Effects

Imaginative light and sound effects will add greatly to the mood: Street noises, musical riffs, offstage voices of the tenants, police whistles. Storm effects for Scene 9. The periphery of the stage should be dim and shadowy. Transitions between scenes must be rapid; long delays will ruin the excitement of the action. Wherever possible use fades and dissolves rather than blackouts. Keep blackouts to 5 seconds or less.

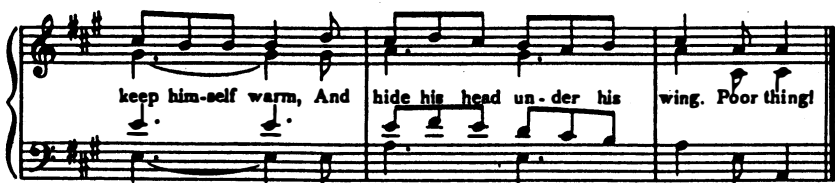
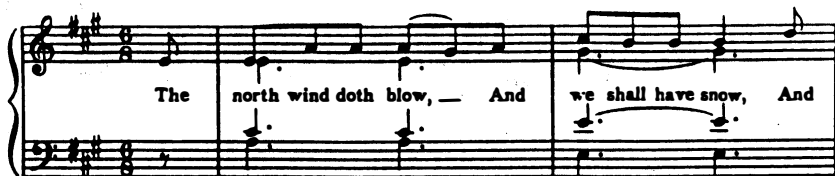
Give some consideration to a “fire” ending. Supposedly Jack has already started the blaze offstage. When he crawls to the throne-chair, smoke clouds may billow in from Stage Left and/or a reddish glow to simulate flames may be projected, also from Left.

Style

Although the melodramatic aspect of the thriller is somewhat overpowering, it should not be played for laughs. It is a “sensation” play: Thrills and chills, heightened emotions—blood-and-thunder. The play should move swiftly, but with plenty of atmosphere, one scene blending darkly into the next.

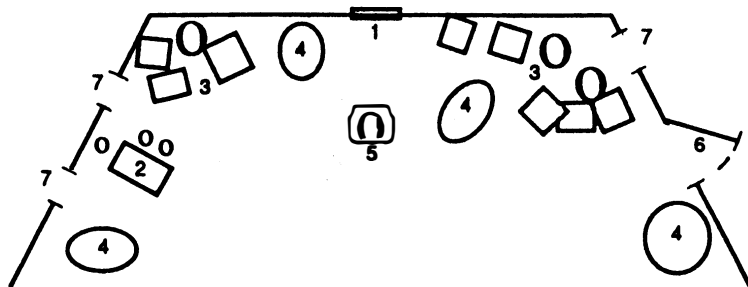
Music

Crimes at the Old Brewery provides delicious opportunities for eerie and dramatic background music of the producer’s choice. The only required music is Blind Alice’s pitiful a cappella rendition of “The North Wind Doth Blow”:



Floor Plan

The set is the epitome of decay and degradation.



- 1—Window "set high in the back wall"
- 2—Wooden table and stools
- 3—Battered crates and barrels scattered about the room
- 4—"Piles of rags that pass for beds"
- 5—"An impressive throne-like chair that sits atop a low, crude platform"
- 6—Main entrance
- 7—"Shadowy passageways lead to other areas of the rotting structure."

CRIMES AT THE OLD BREWERY

[A cavernous room, large, dark. The only LIGHT comes from a broken window set high in the back wall. Formerly this area was used to house giant vats of beer. The floor is filthy, the atmosphere foul. The furnishings are few. There's a wooden table with some stools at Stage Right. Scattered about are battered crates and barrels. Here and there are piles of rags that pass for beds. Stage Center is dominated by an impressive throne-like chair that sits atop a low, crude platform.

The main entrance into the room, which is known as the Den of Thieves, is Stage Left. Shadowy passageways, Left and Right, lead to other areas of the rotting structure]

Scene 1 The Den of Thieves

[MOHAWK, THE RAT, and DRUNKEN SAILOR enter from Left]

MOHAWK. Almost there.

THE RAT. Wait 'til you see the ladies.

MOHAWK. And there's more gin.

DRUNKEN SAILOR. Gin.

MOHAWK. All you can drink. Fresh-made. Drink 'til you swell up and bust. *[DRUNKEN SAILOR staggers Right]*

DRUNKEN SAILOR. I—I don't feel so good. *[Turns]* Maybe—maybe I'll go back outside. *[MOHAWK steps behind Drunken Sailor and produces a blackjack]*

THE RAT. You don't want to do that, lad. You'll miss all the fun.

MOHAWK. Fun.

DRUNKEN SAILOR. Get out of my way.

MOHAWK. Don't be impolite. *[MOHAWK slams the blackjack into the DRUNKEN SAILOR's skull. He collapses to the floor]*

THE RAT. He ought to fetch a good price.

MOHAWK. Give a hand.

[MOHAWK and THE RAT drag off the body. LIGHTING gradually

shifts to another area of the stage where PRETTY POLLY leads in MAN. He, too, is tipsy]

POLLY. Come along, mister. It's safe, I tell you.

MAN. Don't like the looks of this place.

POLLY. My room is one flight up. All to myself. There's a bed and a candle. You'll be at home. I'll make it worth your time. You'll see.

MAN. Place smells bad.

POLLY. Ah, quit complaining. Give us a kiss. *[She embraces him, kisses him, manages to steal his pocket watch]*

MAN. Which way? It's so dark.

POLLY. *[Points Right]* Straight ahead. *[MAN moves off. POLLY holds up the watch. Swings it on its chain, admires it]*

MAN. I can't see.

POLLY. Don't sweat. Pretty Polly will lead the way. *[POLLY crosses to the MAN. They exit]*

[LIGHTING shifts to APPLE WOMAN and MARGARET, who holds a bottle]

APPLE WOMAN. Show a little charity, Margaret.

MARGARET. I don't set the price. You want drink. I don't.

APPLE WOMAN. I'll have to starve myself.

MARGARET. Booze is good for when you're feeling hungry. Eases the empty feeling.

APPLE WOMAN. You're hard, Margaret. You're a clever woman but you're hard.

MARGARET. You want it or not?

APPLE WOMAN. I want it. It's the only comfort I got. *[Hands Margaret some coins, takes bottle, drinks]* Ow! It tastes awful. Sour and warm.

MARGARET. Take another swallow. The second gulp is always easier. *[APPLE WOMAN gulps. They disappear into the shadows.]*

[LIGHTING shifts to GHOUL with shovel and glowing lantern, SURGEON with medical bag]

SURGEON. You understand that I'll pay no more than ten dollars for a

fresh corpse. If they're dead more than a week they're of no use to me. It's workable flesh I'm after, not corruption.

GHOUL. Have I ever delivered shoddy goods?

SURGEON. Just so we understand each other.

GHOUL. Oh, we do, good doctor. We do.

SURGEON. Make certain no one sees you.

GHOUL. No one ain't yet. I know my job . . .

SURGEON. Tonight.

GHOUL. [*Confirms*] Tonight. [*SURGEON moves to exit*] It would be easier and safer to kill one of the tenants. Half the people who live here at the Old Brewery don't care if they live or die.

SURGEON. I'll pretend I didn't hear that.

GHOUL. Suit yourself.

SURGEON. [*Suddenly concerned*] You've never "murdered" for me, have you?

GHOUL. Come, come, doctor. [*Holds the lantern to his face*] Is this the face of a murderer? [*He grins. SURGEON exits*]

[LIGHTS fade, leaving the GHOUL's face in an eerie afterglow; he blows out the lantern. LIGHTS dissolve to:]

Scene 2

No Building in America Is Worse Than This

[LIGHTS up. From Left enter: INSPECTOR FRANK BURNS, REVEREND WILKES, MRS. WILKES, MRS. VANDERBEEK]

REVEREND WILKES. It's worse than I expected.

MRS. WILKES. [*Hanky to her nose*] It's an inferno.

MRS. VANDERBEEK. [*Hanky to her nose*] The stench.

INSPECTOR BURNS. Ah, yes. The stink. You must understand, Mrs. Vanderbœek, that the building was formerly a brewery.

MRS. VANDERBEEK. The aroma of beer and ale would be welcome.

INSPECTOR BURNS. True.

MRS. VANDERBEEK. Every corner is an open sewer.

REVEREND WILKES. Inspector Burns, the Old Brewery must be torn down.

INSPECTOR BURNS. It's private property.

REVEREND WILKES. Private property or not, this tenement house is a disgrace and a mockery of everything decent.

MRS. VANDERBEEK. They say murders are committed here.

INSPECTOR BURNS. One a day is my guess.

REVEREND WILKES. Tsk, tsk.

MRS. WILKES. Do you catch the murderers?

INSPECTOR BURNS. It has happened.

MRS. WILKES. How many people live here?

INSPECTOR BURNS. No one knows. Over a hundred rooms. Five stories high. The scum of humanity. There's never been a census. White and black, Indian and Dutchman, Eye-talian and Scot. All the same here at the Old Brewery.

REVEREND WILKES. Half the crime in New York emanates from this "tenement house."

INSPECTOR BURNS. I would guess more.

MRS. VANDERBEEK. Then do something, Inspector. You're the police.

INSPECTOR BURNS. We do what we can. My men never enter the building unless there are twenty or more in the raiding party.

MRS. WILKES. That bad?

REVEREND WILKES. Tsk, tsk.

INSPECTOR BURNS. Worse. Within these walls is represented every crime and vice known to man. The walls fairly shake from delirium tremens. Children are born here—

MRS. WILKES. Children—?

INSPECTOR BURNS. —who never live to see the sun.

MRS. WILKES. What of their mothers?

MRS. VANDERBEEK. Harlots?

INSPECTOR BURNS. Most.

REVEREND WILKES. Say, instead, they are lacking in chastity.

MRS. WILKES. Is there starvation?

INSPECTOR BURNS. For some. Insanity for others. Last week a tenant, crazed by disgrace, drank three ounces of carbolic acid. [*OTHERS gasp*] Lived less than a minute. Suicides are common. I, myself, found a woman with her head in a barrel of water. Wednesday, it was. The tenants are not kind to one another. They're full of violence, like the city.

REVEREND WILKES. Tsk, tsk.

INSPECTOR BURNS. Most of the tenants don't dare leave the building. During the day.

MRS. VANDERBEEK. Why is that?

INSPECTOR BURNS. The neighbors throw things at them.

MRS. WICKES. They leave only at night?

INSPECTOR BURNS. The lower floors are honeycombed with tunnels. They enter and leave that way.

MRS. VANDERBEEK. Like rats.

MRS. WILKES. You make them sound less than human.

INSPECTOR BURNS. Judge for yourself. If a tenant drops dead, or if he or she is murdered, they are stripped of their clothing within seconds. Jackals would show more compassion.

REVEREND WILKES. Considering that filth and wretchedness is their lot, small wonder.

MRS. WILKES. Poverty breeds crime.

INSPECTOR BURNS. In the summer they bake. In the winter they freeze. They're ignorant and they are vicious.

MRS. WILKES. You're sure we're in no danger?

INSPECTOR BURNS. There is one man they fear.

REVEREND WILKES. You, Inspector?

INSPECTOR BURNS. The owner's representative. Calls himself Jack O' Lantern. No one knows much about him. Some burrow into the Old Brewery to forget their past. I suspect he is one of them. The tenants fear him and he fears me—as much as he's capable of fear. As long as I am with you there's no danger.

MRS. WILKES. That's a comfort.

INSPECTOR BURNS. Comforts are almost unknown in the Old Brewery.

MRS. VANDERBEEK. I am not afraid. I am angry. I wanted to see this horror for myself. I couldn't believe what I read about it. Gross exaggerations, I thought. I am not a naive woman, but I never thought it would be as bad as this.

REVEREND WILKES. Anger is what we need, Mrs. Vanderbeek. Only anger will cleanse. We are avenging angels.

INSPECTOR BURNS. There's a great deal more to see. I'm certain there are bodies buried under the floorboards.

REVEREND WILKES. Tsk, tsk.

MRS. WILKES. We are determined to cut out this sore.

INSPECTOR BURNS. Easier said than done.

[BLIND ALICE, a young girl, wanders in. She holds a baby cradled in a filthy blanket]

BLIND ALICE. *[Sings]* "The north wind doth blow, And we shall have snow, And what will poor robin do then, poor thing? He'll sit in a barn, to keep himself warm, And hide his head under his wing, poor thing!"

MRS. WILKES. *[Moving to Blind Alice]* She's blind.

INSPECTOR BURNS. Lived all her life in the Old Brewery. In the dark. They call her Blind Alice.

MRS. WILKES. The poor thing. *[Peeks into the blanket]* This infant—it's dead.

REVEREND WILKES. No!

INSPECTOR BURNS. Fortunate child.

MRS. VANDERBEEK. How can you be so unfeeling?

INSPECTOR BURNS. Where this pesthole is concerned I try not to have feelings. Some of the tenants, like Blind Alice here, break my heart, some annoy me. Some amuse me.

REVEREND WILKES. Amuse you!

[JACK O' LANTERN enters. A larger-than-life character, evil-minded, sly, scheming; swaggering gait. He has a strange mesmerizing influence over his tenants]

JACK. Inspector Burns. Always a pleasure. *[Others draw back instinctively]*

INSPECTOR BURNS. Eavesdropping, were you, Jack? *[Indicates]* Some representatives from the Committee for the Suppression of Crime and Vice. Reverend and Mrs. Wilkes. Mrs. Vanderbeek.

JACK. Honored.

MRS. WILKES. That girl is holding a dead infant.

JACK. Not to worry, Missus. It don't belong to her. *[BLIND ALICE wanders off]*

REVEREND WILKES. We intend to close this place down.

JACK. I've heard that before. Think, sir, before you act.

MRS. VANDERBEEK. What is that supposed to mean?

JACK. I give the tenants a place to live. It's home and hearth, you

might say. Ten cents to a quarter a day. They can afford no better. If the Old Brewery shuts down, the streets of Manhattan will flood with the unwanted, the unwashed, the mad and the diseased. You may think you're doing good work, but you are wrong. The Old Brewery serves its purpose. It keeps my tenants hidden from public view. Take my advice. Stay out of it.

REVEREND WILKES. That's enough.

MRS. VANDERBEEK. Such presumption.

MRS. WILKES. Disgraceful.

MRS. VANDERBEEK. We will see the mayor.

REVEREND WILKES. You are no Good Samaritan, sir. Your pity and help is misguided.

JACK. Bless me. I do what I can. I am a man of vast experience.

REVEREND WILKES. No doubt.

MRS. VANDERBEEK. Hypocrite.

[REVEREND WILKES indicates that they should leave. He and the WOMEN exit. INSPECTOR BURNS starts to follow, turns back]

JACK. Another committee? Hard to keep track, eh, Frank? No doubt you gave them their dime's worth. Better than a wax museum. A brief tour to inspect the unscrupulous vermin. I can't abide missionaries. They're bad luck.

INSPECTOR BURNS. It's those articles in the "Illustrated Police Gazette." Damn crusading rag. "Clean up the Old Brewery." Every time one appears, the good citizens squawk like farmyard chickens.

JACK. Chickens like to squawk. It's their nature. Still don't know who the reporter is?

INSPECTOR BURNS. I know as much as you do. Signs himself "Bob Hood."

JACK. When we find out who he is, I'll see that he never writes again.

REVEREND WILKES' VOICE. *[From off]* Inspector?

INSPECTOR BURNS. *[Calls]* Coming, Reverend. *[To Jack]* First of the month.

JACK. So it is. *[He takes a wad of money from a pocket, starts to peel off bills. INSPECTOR BURNS grabs the entire wad]*

INSPECTOR BURNS. Don't bother to count it, Jack. I'm sure you wouldn't cheat me.

[LIGHTS to BLACK]

Scene 3

Pay Up and the World, Such As It Is, Is Yours

[LIGHTS up. JACK is seated in the throne chair]

DEADLEG'S VOICE. *[From Left]* Jack! Jack O'Lantern! *[JACK looks Left as DEADLEG hobbles in. He uses a crutch, but is nimble]*

DEADLEG. Another fish!

JACK. One more flounder for the barrel, eh? One more minnow for the stew. *[BRIDGET COLE enters. She is pitiful; ragged shawl over her head. Coughs]* She don't look like much. *[DEADLEG indicates that she should throw back the shawl. She does]*

DEADLEG. She's got all her own teeth.

JACK. Is that a fact? That's worth something, I suppose. Where'd you find her?

DEADLEG. Sleeping in an alley off Mulberry Street.

BRIDGET. I've got to get off the street, sir. If I don't, I'm finished.

JACK. How old are you?

BRIDGET. I'm not sure. Fourteen, I think. Maybe fifteen.

JACK. Can you read? Can you write? *[BRIDGET shakes her head. Coughs]* It's better that way. Fish that read and write are more trouble than they're worth. *[MARGARET enters, Right]* You got no husband?

BRIDGET. I've had "husbands." Four or five, but they always leave.

DEADLEG. What can you do? Shoplift? Pickpocket? Sneakthief?

BRIDGET. I'm no good at those things. I'd be caught for sure.

JACK. Pity.

MARGARET. If she can't pay, she can't stay.

JACK. A flop's ten cents a day. Can you manage that?

BRIDGET. I'll try. *[Coughs]*

MARGARET. Starting now. No freeloaders.

JACK. *[To Bridget]* This is Margaret, my wife. She keeps the books. She's not like Jack O'Lantern. She has no heart.

DEADLEG. I'll stake her to the first night.

MARGARET. Generous all-of-a-sudden, ain't you, Deadleg?

DEADLEG. She's got all her own teeth. *[BRIDGET coughs]*

MARGARET. I don't like the sound of that cough. We've got too many coughers and wheezers.

JACK. What's your name, my dear?

BRIDGET. Bridget. Bridget Cole.

JACK. Hear me well, Bridget Cole. For any business you transact in the Old Brewery, I get a cut. Understand me?

BRIDGET. Yes, sir.

JACK. *Rat! [Nervously, BRIDGET looks to the floor]*

BRIDGET. Where! Oh! I'm afraid of rats.

DEADLEG. Then you're in the wrong place. *[OTHERS laugh]*

JACK. RAT!

[From a pile of rags, like some grim spectre, rises THE RAT. He stumbles forward, yawning]

THE RAT. I'm here, Jack. I'm here. *[BRIDGET is frightened]*

JACK. Sorry to disturb your slumber. I know how hard you work. A workman needs his rest.

THE RAT. *[Looks to Bridget]* New fish?

MARGARET. Deadleg found her.

JACK. *[To Bridget]* Let me introduce you to THE RAT. When it comes to the craft of shanghaiing, there's none better. You know what shanghaiing is, don't you, dear? *[BRIDGET shakes her head]* A long sea voyage, all expenses paid. Ha! *[To The Rat]* I was telling sweet Bridget with the cough that no one holds out on Jack O'Lantern. I get my fair share.

THE RAT. True enough, Jack. Fair enough. *[Suddenly, JACK leaps for The Rat's throat. Enraged]*

JACK. Lying rat! *[Jack has great strength. He forces THE RAT to his knees. THE RAT gasps for breath. BRIDGET is trembling. MARGARET and DEADLEG look on with indifference]* I look after my tenants. I take good care of them. I see that no harm comes their way. I don't interfere. All I ask is that they play fair with Jack.

THE RAT. *[Struggling]* I ain't done nothing.

JACK. *[Mockingly]* "I ain't done nothing." A sailor is locked below. He's been picked clean and I don't have my cut.

THE RAT. *[Terrified]* I forgot. Honest, Jack. I forgot.

JACK. *[Snarls]* You forgot. *[JACK tosses his victim aside. THE RAT crawls away a few steps, digs into his rags. Takes out coins]*

THE RAT. Here, Jack. What I picked from his pockets. All for you. *[JACK moves to The Rat and kicks him]* You didn't have to do that!

JACK. That's for insulting a proper businessman. Do it again and I'll

rip the hide off your face. I take a *fair* cut. I'm entitled. No more, no less.

THE RAT. Whatever you say, Jack. You're the king. [*JACK takes a single coin, displays it*]

JACK. Fair share.

DEADLEG. Go ahead, Jack. Punch him in the mouth a couple of times. [*THE RAT crawls off*]

JACK. That's how things are done here, Bridget Cole. [*Studies her*] Hmmmm. What do you think, Margaret? She might make a good window smasher. Why waste her on picking rags?

MARGARET. Ten cents a night steady. That's all I care about.

JACK. Pay up and the world, such as it is, is yours. This world, Bridget Cole. My world. The Old Brewery. Welcome.

[*LIGHTS dissolve to:*]

Scene 4

A Thousand Houses Waiting

[*LIGHTS up. TENANTS enter from the passageways carrying stolen loot. MARGARET checks the goods against entries she has in a ledger. The loot is placed atop the table, on stools, barrels, crates. TENANTS exit.*]

While this is going on, MOTHER HUBBARD, a fence, enters Left. JACK is with her

MOTHER HUBBARD. I don't want to hear your troubles, Jack O'Lantern. I got enough of my own.

JACK. It's all because of that "Illustrated Police Gazette." Awful lies it prints.

MOTHER HUBBARD. I never read papers and such. Bad for the eyes. [*As they discourse, MOTHER HUBBARD moves from stolen piece to stolen piece. She picks up and inspects a silver candlestick, a figurine, some jewelry*]

JACK. I'm saying the risk is high.

MOTHER HUBBARD. You're saying the risk is high, but the pay is low. You think I'm dense? You know me better.

MARGARET. You're not easy with money, Mother Hubbard.

MOTHER HUBBARD. Can't afford to be. I'm getting on.