# Long Day's Journey into Night

## INTRODUCTION

### BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF EUGENE O'NEILL

Eugene O'Neill was born in a hotel in New York City to Irish immigrants. Both of his parents toured with a theater company and, as such, O'Neill attended a Catholic boarding school. His father was an alcoholic and his mother was addicted to morphine, a family situation that influenced his later theatrical works. As a young man, he began working on ships and became involved with unions and labor movements in the U.S. He became ill with tuberculosis in his early twenties, after which he decided to dedicate himself to writing full-time. His first play, *Beyond the Horizon*, opened in 1920, and *The Emperor Jones* premiered later that year. *Jones* was his first big hit and expressed O'Neill's thoughts on the U.S. occupation of Haiti. O'Neill was married three times and had three children. In 1943, after suffering for most of his life from depression and alcoholism, O'Neill's hands began to tremble, and he was mostly unable to write for the last ten years of his life. He died in a hotel room in Boston. Though he asked his third wife to wait 25 years to publish *Long Day's Journey into Night* (which O'Neill wrote between 1940 and 1941), she published the play in 1956. It won a Tony Award for Best Play and posthumously earned O'Neill the Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In any discussion of *Long Day's Journey into Night*, it's worth considering the fact that addiction was—as a concept—still rather mysterious in 1912. Unlike today, doctors didn't necessarily treat addiction as a disease, nor did they treat it with a robust understanding of mental health. As such, people like Mary Tyrone were often misled when they sought help. On a separate note, it's helpful to know that *Long Day's Journey into Night* is an autobiographical play. All of the characters correspond to Eugene O'Neill's actual family members (including himself), suggesting that the dynamic O'Neill crafts in the play is likely quite accurate. After all, like the character Edmund, O'Neill himself had tuberculosis, his older brother and father were alcoholics, his father was a famous actor, and his mother was a morphine addict. As such, the primary historical events that pertain to *Long Day's Journey into Night* don't have to do with anything specific that happened in the country at the time, but rather pertain to the life of the O'Neill family.

### RELATED LITERARY WORKS

With its examination of addiction—and alcoholism in particular—*Long Day's Journey into Night* is similar to one of O'Neill's other critically-acclaimed dramas, *The Iceman Cometh*. In both plays, characters drink heavily and yearn for a sense of transcendence that never comes. Indeed, the hard-drinkers in *The Iceman Cometh* spend the majority of their time searching for reasons to continue drinking, often producing elaborate forms of self-deception to avoid thinking poorly of themselves. Similarly, Mary and the Tyrone men go to great lengths to convince themselves that their chemical dependencies are justified or, at the very least, not their fault. In addition, *Long Day's Journey into Night* also resembles *Sweet Bird of Youth* by Tennessee Williams, a play that—like *Long Day's Journey*—shows how hard it is for people (and especially actors) to age past their prime.

### KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** Long Day's Journey into Night
- **When Written:** 1940-41
- **Where Written:** Tao House in Danville, California
- **When Published:** 1956
- **Literary Period:** Modernism/Postmodernism
- **Genre:** Drama, Realism
- **Setting:** The Tyrones' summer house
- **Climax:** *Long Day's Journey into Night* relies upon the back-and-forth of the Tyrone family's many arguments. As such, there is no singular climactic moment. Having said that, the drunken altercation between Jamie and Edmund—in which Edmund punches his brother in the face for insulting their mother—signifies a breaking point in the play, where the tension becomes too much for the family to handle.
- **Antagonist:** Apathy and addiction are the primary antagonistic forces threatening to undo the Tyrone family.

### EXTRA CREDIT

**The Summer House.** The summer house in which *Long Day's Journey into Night* takes place still stands in New London, Connecticut. Owned by the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center, the house is decorated exactly as specified in the play.

**Loss.** Within a three-year period, all of O'Neill's family members died. First, his father succumbed to a longstanding illness. Shortly thereafter, his mother died of a brain tumor (after eight years of sobriety). Having a hard time coping with these losses, his brother, Jamie, drank himself to death.

## PLOT SUMMARY

It is morning in the Tyrones' summer home when the play begins. James Tyrone—an aging matinee star—is spending time with his wife, Mary, who has recently returned from a sanatorium. James expresses his happiness at Mary being back and encourages her to "keep up the good work." Mary appears restless, admitting she got little sleep the night before because of a nearby **foghorn** that blared until morning.

Before long, James and Mary's eldest son, Jamie, enters. He's thirty-three and good-looking but "lacks his father's vitality," since "the signs of premature disintegration are on him." His little brother, Edmund, also enters. He is ten years younger, thinner, and looks sickly. Once the two brothers settle in, the family bickers in a way that fluctuates between playfulness and flat-out scorn, especially when James accuses his sons of making fun of him behind his back. After arguing, Edmund gets up and leaves the room, exhausted by the way his father berates him and Jamie for having no work ethic. After he leaves, Mary says that James should go easy on Edmund, since the young man has a "summer cold." "It's not just a cold he's got," Jamie interjects. "The Kid is damned sick." Spinning to face him, Mary responds, "Why do you say that? It *is* just a cold! Anyone can tell that! You always imagine things!"

Jumping in, James suggests Mary shouldn't worry, maintaining that Jamie simply meant that Edmund might have a "touch of something else, too, which makes his cold worse." He then says Doctor Hardy thinks Edmund might have caught "malarial fever" from working in "the tropics," but Mary disregards this, saying Doctor Hardy is unreliable because he's cheap.

When Mary leaves, James chastises Jamie for talking about Edmund's health in front of her, saying this is the one topic he should avoid in her presence. The two men then admit to one another that they think Edmund has consumption, at which point Jamie suggests that his little brother wouldn't ever have gotten this sick if James had sent him to a "real doctor" instead of saving money by using Doctor Hardy. Defensively, James upholds that Hardy is a perfectly respectable doctor, though he admits to wanting to avoid expensive "society doctors." He then says Jamie doesn't know the value of a dollar, lampooning him for leading the life of a wannabe actor on Broadway, where Jamie spends his time drinking and visiting whores. He also accuses Jamie of teaching Edmund his wicked ways, saying the poor boy doesn't have the "constitution" to lead the kind of life Jamie has taught him. Nevertheless, they agree that Edmund's wide-ranging adventures as a sailor have done him no good.

James also laments that Edmund is sick, since it's terrible timing for Mary, who had "control of her nerves" before he became ill. In response, Jamie tells his father that he heard Mary get up in the middle of the night and retreat into the guestroom. He begins to note that this has always been a "sign," but before he can finish James interrupts to insist that Mary just got up to escape his snoring. They then argue about who's to blame for Mary's addiction, with Jamie suggesting that the "cheap quack" who treated Mary after Edmund was born was perhaps responsible for her dependency. As his father refutes this point, though, they quickly change the subject because Mary enters the room. In order to avoid her, they go outside to trim the hedges.

At this point, Edmund comes into the parlor and talks to his mother, who criticizes her husband for never providing the family with a permanent home. Since James was a famous actor, the family was constantly traveling from one place to the next and living in second-rate hotels. According to Mary, this is why Jamie and Edmund were never able to meet respectable women—after all, they didn't have a presentable home where they could entertain people. As for herself, she has always felt lonely and untethered because of this lifestyle, so much that she deeply misses her days as a young girl in a convent, when she was studying to be a nun or a concert pianist.

During this conversation, Edmund makes references to Mary's addiction, though she tries to stop him from speaking about the matter and says it "makes it so much harder" to live "in this atmosphere of constant suspicion." Nevertheless, Edmund says he heard her go into the spare room the previous night. And though she shames him for suspecting, she also admits she understands why he thinks she might relapse. "How can any one of us forget?" she asks. Changing the subject, she tells Edmund he should go outside because it'll be good for his health. When he leaves, she sits nervously and fidgets with her hands.

That afternoon, Edmund sits in the parlor and has a glass of whiskey with Jamie. Together, they wait for lunch as their father talks outside with a passing neighbor. Meanwhile, Mary comes downstairs, and it's immediately clear she has taken morphine. Jamie sees this right away, but it takes Edmund longer, especially since Mary won't look him in the eye. After a moment, she exits, and James finally comes in, has a drink of whiskey (along with his sons), and claims whiskey in "moderation" is healthy, even for a sick person like Edmund. At this point, Mary reenters and goes on a long rant, which she delivers with a sense of distance that James recognizes as a sign of relapse. Then, seeing Edmund's glass on the table, she worriedly tells him he shouldn't drink, asking if he remembers her own father, who had consumption but wouldn't stop drinking and, as a result, died an early death.

Shortly thereafter, James admits he feels like a "fool" for having believed in Mary, and though she pretends to not understand what he's talking about, she eventually says, "I tried so hard!" In response, James simply says, "Never mind. It's no use now." This dynamic continues throughout lunch, with Mary rambling on in a removed manner and frequently casting blame on James for never providing her with a proper home. In keeping with this,

she suggests that James is a cheapskate who, despite his riches, fears ending up in the poorhouse.

Eventually, the telephone rings and James answers it, since he's expecting a call from Hardy, who has news about Edmund's condition. When returns, he only says that Hardy wanted to make sure Edmund sees him that afternoon. At this point, Mary announces she must go upstairs, and it's obvious that she wants to take more morphine. Resigned to this reality, James tells her to go right ahead. Then, when she's gone, Edmund tries to convince his father and brother that they shouldn't give up on Mary, but they tell him there's no use trying to intervene now that she has relapsed. Nevertheless, Edmund is undeterred and goes upstairs to reason with her. When he leaves, James tells Jamie that Doctor Hardy informed him that Edmund does indeed have consumption and that he'll have to go to a sanatorium. He then asks his son to accompany Edmund to the doctor's, but to refrain from using the excursion as an excuse to get drunk.

When Mary comes downstairs again, she looks even more "detached." Jamie leaves, and James tries to convince Mary to get out of the house, but she says she doesn't like being driven around. When Edmund comes downstairs, James gives him money and tells him not to share the cash with Jamie, who will only spend it on alcohol. He then departs. Before Edmund also leaves, he pleads with Mary to stop taking morphine, but she pretends she doesn't know what he's talking about. At the same time, she tells him she understands why he doesn't believe her. Defeated, he exits, leaving her alone.

That evening, Mary sits in the parlor with Cathleen, a housekeeper. Giving Cathleen drinks of James's whiskey, she speaks nostalgically about the past, telling the young woman about her life in the convent and how good she was at piano. She had decided to become a nun, she explains, but then she went to one of James's shows and was star-struck by him. That same night, she went to his dressing room, and they fell in love. Since then, she has been traveling with him.

Eventually, James and Edmund come home, and Mary speaks disparagingly about Jamie, who's out drinking because Edmund gave him some money. Because Mary's high, she can't help rambling about the past, often blaming James and Jamie for her troubles. She even talks about Eugene, the child she had after Jamie who, not long after he was born, died of measles. This never would have happened, Mary suggests, if James hadn't asked her to come on the road with him and leave Jamie with her mother. If Mary herself had stayed home, she upholds, Jamie wouldn't have been allowed to go into Eugene's room when he had measles, and so the baby wouldn't have been infected. Going on, she says that the cheap doctor James hired to treat her when she gave birth to Edmund is to blame for her morphine habit. This is because Edmund's birth was complicated and messy, and the doctor didn't know how to properly tend to Mary, so he gave her morphine. As she says these terrible things, Eugene and James come in and out of the room, wanting to avoid her words.

Around midnight, James sits alone in the parlor. He's extremely drunk and playing cards with himself when Edmund, also thoroughly intoxicated, enters. In an overly sentimental monologue, James tells his son about the highlights of his acting career, admitting that he regrets chasing commercial success at the expense of artistic fulfillment. In turn, Edmund tells his father the high points of his own career as a sailor, talking about the freedom he finds in the loneliness of the ocean. When they hear Jamie stumbling into the house, James decides to wait on the side porch to avoid an argument. As such, Jamie and Edmund have a one-on-one conversation in which Jamie scolds his younger brother for drinking with consumption, then lightens up and lets him continue. At one point, Jamie insults Mary's honor by talking about her addiction, and Edmund punches him in the face. Jamie readily accepts his mistake and thanks his brother for setting him straight. Before long, he slips into a drunken sleep, and James returns.

When Jamie wakes up again, the three Tyrones pour themselves whiskey and are about to toast when Mary appears in the doorway holding her **wedding dress** with a distant look on her face. Forgetting their drinks, they watch as she walks around without seeming to notice them, talking all the while as if she's a younger version of herself. Indeed, she speaks as if she's still in the convent, and says she's looking for something, though she can't remember what. Going on distractedly, she talks about her relationship with one of the nuns, and then she sits down—facing the audience—and stares off into the distance as her drunken family members sit uncomfortably nearby.

## CHARACTERS

### MAJOR CHARACTERS

**James Tyrone** – James is the patriarch of the Tyrone family, a sixty-five-year-old man who seems younger because of the confident way he holds himself. A former matinee star, he has the posture of a well-known actor and the clear enunciation of a true thespian. He is also a high-functioning alcoholic who drinks in great excess without letting the effects show, though by the end of the play there is no hiding the toll that whiskey has taken on his alertness. This, it seems, has been a pattern throughout his entire life, as Mary—his wife—often talks about how much time he spends in barrooms. In fact, people have frequently had to bring him home because he's been too drunk to find his own way. Despite his own addiction, though, James spends most of his energy focusing on Mary, hoping desperately that she won't relapse and continue her morphine habit. As such, he's sure to praise and compliment her at the

beginning of the play, since she has recently returned from rehab and has thus far refrained from using drugs. Unfortunately, this doesn't last, and James quickly grows despondent about his wife's addiction. He adopts a fatalistic mindset about the entire matter, feeling as if he can do nothing to stop Mary from using morphine. As such, he sits back and listens to her blame him for all sorts of things, like the fact that he is constantly thinking of ways to save money even though he's rich and his family members need assistance. Indeed, this is another part of James's personality; despite his wealth, he'll never forget what it was like to grow up in an impoverished Irish Catholic family, and so he hordes his money and makes unwise real estate investments because he thinks buying land is the only way to make sure he won't end up in the "poorhouse."

**Mary Tyrone** – The matriarch of the Tyrone family. A recovering morphine addict, Mary is "restless" at the beginning of the play because she has recently returned from rehab and is trying hard to stay clean. However, everything around her seems to put her on edge, especially the **foghorn** that bleats throughout the night and keeps her awake. At the same time, this is perhaps only an excuse to return to her old ways of taking morphine. Before she relapses, her family members all notice the tell-tale signs, suggesting that this has happened many times before. Even so, Mary shames them all into giving her privacy, framing their concern as intrusive and distrustful. In turn, they give her the benefit of the doubt by granting her independence. Still, they're relatively unsurprised when she starts using morphine again. Unfortunately, her drug use only encourages her to guilt-trip her family members even more, so that she starts blaming them for her own troubles and shortcomings. Indeed, she chastises James for never buying her a proper home, suggests that Jamie purposefully infected Eugene—her second-born who died as a baby—with measles, and blames James for hiring the doctor who first got her addicted to morphine. As she spirals back into full-fledged drug use, she also spends more and more time romanticizing her past life, when she lived as a young girl in a convent and wanted to be either a nun or a concert pianist. Unwilling to confront her bleak present reality, she plunges into a kind of nostalgia that not only blinds her to what's going on in her life, but also isolates her from her family.

**Edmund Tyrone** – James and Mary's youngest son. At twenty-three, Edmund has worked in the "tropics" as a sailor, but always seems to come back to his parents without any money. And although he is certainly his parents' favorite child, they lament the fact that he has adopted the alcoholic, lazy ways his older brother, Jamie. Nonetheless, James and Mary are slow to critique Edmund these days because he sick. Although Mary insists that her son only has a "summer cold," everyone else—including Edmund himself—acknowledges that what he has is clearly serious. Indeed, this is confirmed when Doctor Hardy informs James that Edmund has consumption and that he'll have to go to a sanatorium. Despite this news, Edmund refuses to stop drinking. Instead of monitoring his health, he pours himself large glasses of whiskey with his father and brother (who both make a show of discouraging him, though they always relent and tell him that one more drink won't hurt). This morbid resignation to a bleak fate aligns with how Edmund sees the world. After all, he writes depressing poetry and embraces the idea of loneliness. At the same time, his acceptance of isolation is more than mere pessimism, but rather a belief that loneliness is simply a fact of life that ought to be ushered in rather than ignored. Finally, it's worth noting that Edmund is based on Eugene O'Neill himself.

**Jamie Tyrone** – James and Mary's eldest son. Jamie is a thirty-three-year-old failed actor who spends the majority of his time drinking and living the raucous lifestyle on offer in New York's Broadway theater scene. Like his father, he is a talented thespian, but he doesn't have the discipline that James applied to his own craft. As such, he frequently returns to live with his parents, which is why he's currently staying in their summer home. When Mary begins taking morphine again, Jamie is the first to know, and he immediately becomes pessimistic and harsh about the matter, wanting his family to acknowledge her relapse and recognize that she can't be helped. Because of this, he often finds himself at odds with Edmund, who wants to believe their mother might find the willpower to stop using the drug. At the end of the play, Jamie offends Edmund by speaking badly about their mother, and Edmund punches him in the face. In response, he simply thanks his brother for knocking sense into him. He then warns Edmund—because he's drunk enough to admit it—that he should be wary of him. Insisting that he loves his younger brother, he confesses that he thinks he purposefully brought him down to his own level by showing him the lifestyle of an alcoholic. This, it seems, most likely has to do with the fact that Mary blames Jamie for the death of Eugene, who died as a baby before Edmund was born. Not wanting to pale in comparison to Edmund, then, he has sabotaged the young man's life (though it's worth noting that this seems less like a confession and more like an internalization of his parents' disapproval).

**Cathleen** – One of the Tyrones' housekeepers. O'Neill describes Cathleen as an "Irish peasant" in her "early twenties." When the Tyrone men leave Mary home alone in the third act, she offers Cathleen drinks out of James's whiskey bottle, getting the young woman drunk so that she has someone to talk to while she waits for her family to return.

**Eugene Tyrone** – James and Mary's second child, who died as a baby. Mary blames Eugene's death partly on James and partly on Jamie. Indeed, she says she never would have left Jamie and Eugene with her mother if James hadn't invited her to come on tour with him. If she hadn't left, she maintains, Jamie wouldn't have been allowed to go into Eugene's room while he had measles. As such, the baby wouldn't have contracted the

disease, and would not have died as a result. It's worth noting that O'Neill had a brother who died as a baby before he himself was born, and that this child's name was Edmund. In *Long Day's Journey into Night*, then, O'Neill has switched his name with his dead brother's.

**Mother Elizabeth** – A nun in the convent Mary attended as a young girl. When Mary told Mother Elizabeth that she wanted to be a nun herself, Mother Elizabeth advised her to live a normal life for one year before committing herself to the church, just to make sure she truly wanted to embark upon a religious life. During this period, Mary met James, fell in love, and decided to not become a nun.

### MINOR CHARACTERS

**Doctor Hardy** – The doctor that diagnoses Edmund with consumption. Although James upholds that Hardy is a good and reliable doctor, the rest of the family believes that he is a "quack," accusing James of skimping on Edmund's medical care.

**Captain Turner** – A neighbor who stops to talk to James in the Tyrones' yard.

**McGuire** – A man who periodically convinces James Tyrone to buy land from him, getting him drunk and convincing him that he's giving him a good deal when, in reality, James doesn't need more property.

## THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

### FATALISM AND RESIGNATION

Because *Long Day's Journey into Night* is a play about addiction and vice, O'Neill is interested in the ways in which his characters conceive of their own predicaments. Although most of the members of the Tyrone family effectively deny their shortcomings by refusing to acknowledge their substance abuse problems, they also seemingly accept their addictions in a morbid, fatalistic way. For instance, James Tyrone technically claims he isn't an alcoholic, but he has no problem fully embracing the lifestyle of a boozer, spending the majority of his time in bars and the lion's share of his money on liquor. Similarly, Mary gives herself over to an opiated existence, one in which "reality is but an appearance to be accepted and dismissed unfeelingly." This mentality—which enables a person to "dismiss" reality—is problematic because it keeps one from grappling with and fully acknowledging his or her troubles. This, it seems, is the kind of thinking that enables people like James and Mary to indulge their addictions. As such, their acceptance of this lifestyle is unhealthy and self-defeating, and is ultimately better described as a pessimistic resignation to fate. Whereas a true acceptance or acknowledgement of vice might empower a person to change the way he or she lives, this bleak embrace of the worst-case scenario only makes it harder for a person to improve him- or herself. By emphasizing the deleterious effects of this kind of thinking, then, O'Neill effectively shows the audience that fatalistic resignation leads to disempowerment.

Even though James Tyrone argues against anyone who insinuates that he's an alcoholic, he throws himself with reckless abandon into the lifestyle of a drunkard. Constantly looking for an excuse to drink, he pours himself glasses of whiskey throughout the day until he's almost too drunk to play cards with Edmund at midnight. In other words, he gives himself over to living like a drunk even as he refuses to admit he's an alcoholic. There is, he seems to think, nothing to be done about his drinking, so he simply drowns himself in more alcohol. This pessimistic approach to addiction also brings itself to bear on the way he conceives of his wife's morphine habit. In a conversation with his sons about Mary's addiction, he concludes, "But what's the use of talk? We've lived with this before and now we must again. There's no help for it." This notion that there is "no help" for addiction is exactly the kind of attitude he himself apparently embraces when it comes to his drinking, considering that he continues to pour himself large glasses of whiskey even as Mary and his sons criticize him for being an alcoholic. Simply put, he has resigned himself to a bleak reality, one in which he can go on drinking because he believes there's no remedy or alternative choice.

Mary, for her part, also welcomes the fatalistic idea that there is "no help for" her addiction. In fact, the very act of relapsing is in and of itself one of resignation, since Mary relents and gives herself over to her vice despite knowing that doing so will undo the hard work she's done to get sober. When James pleads with her to stop, she says, "James! We've loved each other! We always will! Let's remember only that, and not try to understand what we cannot understand, or help things that cannot be helped—the things life has done to us we cannot excuse or explain." In this moment, she frames her addiction as something that no one can "understand" or "help." She also suggests that "life has done" things to her and James that can't be undone. In turn, she gives herself an excuse to live in a way that is blatantly self-destructive, portraying her situation as hopeless and unchangeable.

Like the rest of his family, Edmund also appears unwilling to take control of his addiction. However, he is perhaps the only member of the Tyrone clan who recognizes the harmful effects of resigning oneself to a bleak reality. In a conversation between James, Edmund, and Jamie about Mary's relapse, James says, "I wish she hadn't led me to hope this time. By God,

I never will again!" This pessimistic outlook bothers Edmund, who replies, "That's a rotten thing to say, Papa! Well, I'll hope! She's just started. It can't have got a hold on her yet. She can still stop. I'm going to talk to her." This is the hopeful perspective the rest of the Tyrones lack, a form of optimism that encourages Edmund to confront his mother rather than simply making a morbid kind of peace with the idea that she will succumb to her addiction. Rather than resigning himself to this dismal outcome, Edmund acknowledges that his mother is a morphine addict without plunging himself into helpless nihilism, and this is why he has the strength to try to help her.

However, everyone in Edmund's life is so committed to their fatalistic outlooks that it's unlikely he himself will ever be able to turn his optimistic proactiveness onto himself to address his own alcoholism. Indeed, in a conversation in which he criticizes his brother, his mother tells him, "[Jamie] can't help being what the past has made him. Any more than your father can. Or you. Or I." Under this interpretation, a person can do nothing to change him- or herself, and it is this idea that is responsible for Edmund's inability to quit drinking. Indeed, he recognizes the danger of resigning oneself to fate, but he doesn't have the power to face his own troubles. He has, it seems, internalized his family's pessimistic worldview, rendering him incapable of improving himself. In turn, O'Neill illustrates how difficult it is to fight against apathy and resignation, especially when a person is surrounded by people who don't believe in meaningful change.

## DENIAL, BLAME, AND GUILT

In *Long Day's Journey into Night*, O'Neill showcases how hard people will work to avoid confronting their guilt. This dynamic is most evident in the way Mary tries to keep her family from focusing on her addiction. First and foremost, she takes attention away from her morphine habit by staunchly denying that she is headed toward yet another relapse. However, her denial isn't enough to placate her worried family members, and so she accuses them of distrusting her. This is a way of deflecting their suspicions by forcing them to pretend—along with her—that nothing is wrong. Of course, once they begrudgingly give her their trust, she relapses. Then, once she's high, she continues to blame them for her own shortcomings, finding it even easier to avoid taking responsibility for her actions. In fact, after she's taken morphine, she goes even further with her guilt-tripping, ultimately accusing James—in a roundabout way—of driving her to addiction, and Jamie of killing her second-born son, who died of measles as a baby. In turn, O'Neill shows the audience the extravagant lengths people will go to in order to cope with their own sorrows without having to face their feelings of guilt and culpability—even if doing so means destroying their own familial relationships.

Because Mary has relapsed so many times, her family members pay close attention to her at the beginning of *Long Day's Journey into Night*. When Edmund notices her walking around the house at night, he fears she's reverting to her old ways, recalling that she used to get up late and go into the guestroom to inject morphine. When he confronts her about this, though, she guilt-trips him for distrusting her. "For heaven's sake," she replies, "haven't I often used the spare room as my bedroom? But I see what you thought. That was when—" Feeling remorseful, Edmund interrupts, saying, "I didn't think anything!"

Nonetheless, Mary accuses him of distrusting her, bitterly adding that it would "serve [him] right if it was true" that she was using the drug again. "Mama! Don't say that! That's the way you talk when—" Edmund begins, but Mary cuts him off and says, "Stop suspecting me! Please, dear! You hurt me!" It's worth noting here that Mary hasn't actually started using morphine yet, but her nervous behavior is a clear indication that she is nearing another relapse. Nonetheless, she hasn't broken down, suggesting that her intense response to Edmund is an attempt to convince *herself* that everything is still okay. Indeed, she wants to deny the possibility of a relapse, as if she isn't already on the cusp of succumbing to her craving.

While it's true that Mary wants to deny the possibility of yet another relapse, it's also evident that something else is at play in her conversation with Edmund. When she says "you hurt me," for example, the audience gets the uneasy feeling that she's purposefully trying to manipulate him into feeling ashamed for even *suggesting* she might relapse. By doing this, she slyly convinces him to ignore his misgivings. Even though it's logical for him to suspect her of relapsing, she makes it seem as if he's being cruel, and this keeps him from following up on his suspicion. In this way, she uses blame as a way of enabling herself to do the very thing her family is afraid she'll do: relapse.

Knowing his mother is worried about his own illness, Edmund tries to make her promise that—if he's diagnosed with something serious—she won't turn to drugs as a way of coping. "Of course, I promise you. I give you my sacred word of honor!" Mary says. But then, with what O'Neill calls a "sad bitterness," she adds, "But I suppose you're remembering I've promised before on my word of honor." Interestingly enough, Edmund vehemently denies this, saying, "No!" As such, he proves how successful Mary has been in guilt-tripping him into feeling bad about "suspecting" her. After all, Edmund surely *has* heard her "promise" on her "sacred word of honor" before, but he goes out of his way to make it seem like he's not worried or suspicious. In keeping with this, when Mary says she's going upstairs to lie down—something she used to say when she was using morphine—he gives her an "instinctive look of suspicion" before looking away "ashamed of himself" and going outside, thereby affording her a moment alone—an opportunity she takes advantage of by going upstairs and injecting morphine.

Once Mary finally relapses, she becomes less subtle about blaming her loved ones for her own hardships. In one

argument, she blames her husband, James Tyrone, for turning Jamie, their eldest, into an alcoholic. "You brought him up to be a boozer. Since he first opened his eyes, he's seen you drinking," she says, failing to recognize that Jamie has also witnessed her own substance abuse. "When you have the poison in you, you want to blame everyone but yourself!" James replies. This is quite true, as made evident by what Mary says when discussing the death of her second-born child, Eugene, who died as a baby. Indeed, she says she should never have left the child alone with her mother, but that she did so because James invited her on the road (there is, it's worth noting, an unspoken accusation even in this small detail). When she was gone, she upholds, Jamie went into Eugene's room and infected him with measles—something Mary claims Jamie did on purpose. Of course, this is a ridiculous thing to say, but it indicates just how willing she is to blame her loved ones for her misfortune.

What's more, she even manages to suggest that she never would have become addicted to morphine if James had hired a more expensive, knowledgeable doctor who—in the aftermath of Edmund's complicated birth—would have known what to do to ease Mary's pain without introducing her to morphine. As she spins this hypothetical scenario, the audience sees how determined she is to avoid taking responsibility for her own addiction. And though everyone in the Tyrone family denies their vices—the three men insisting they aren't alcoholics even as they drown themselves in liquor—it's clear Mary's way of dealing with her problems is the most tragic, since she cruelly tries to manipulate her loved ones into shouldering the burden of her despair. In this way, O'Neill spotlights the ways in which using denial and blame to avoid guilt can ravage personal relationships.

## LONELINESS, ISOLATION, AND BELONGING

A sense of loneliness pervades *Long Day's Journey into Night*. Despite the fact that the Tyrone family lives together and is constantly surrounded by servants, they are all on their own when it comes to dealing with their emotions. Mary, in particular, struggles with a feeling of isolation that makes her feel alone even when her husband and sons dote on her and try to make her happy. This, she claims, is because she has never had a true "home." Instead, she's spent her entire adult life traveling with James and staying in cheap hotels, a lifestyle that has made it impossible for her to forge meaningful relationships with people outside her family. Now that she actually has settled down into this summer home, though, she feels even more isolated from the world than before. Similarly, Edmund insists that he will "always be a stranger who never feels at home." But the difference between him and his mother is that he's willing to admit he'll never feel like he belongs anywhere, whereas Mary insists upon disparaging her current situation in order to go on hoping that she might someday—in another context—rid herself of loneliness. Given that she appears unable to even hear or speak to her family members by the end of the play—a representation of how much she has isolated herself—it's reasonable to argue that O'Neill condemns this kind of grass-is-always-greener mentality. By perpetually chasing a sense of belonging that doesn't exist, Mary has only intensified her solitude. In turn, O'Neill intimates that loneliness is an inherently human condition that affects everyone, and that this ought to be accepted as a fact of life.

In the first act, O'Neill makes it clear that Mary has idealized the idea of leading a socially gratifying life. Indeed, she believes that having a home and friends might alleviate the sense of isolation she seems otherwise incapable of escaping. In a conversation with Edmund about their neighbors, she says, "People like them stand for something. I mean they have decent, presentable homes they don't have to be ashamed of. They have friends who entertain them and whom they entertain. They're not cut off from everyone." At the beginning of this passage, it seems as if Mary is concerned first and foremost about her image, since she speaks enviously about her neighbors' "presentable home." However, she eventually points out that these acquaintances aren't "cut off from everyone." As such, she hints that she herself *does* feel "cut off" from the outside world. Of course, what she fails to take into account is that she is currently living in a home, which is what she has always wanted. Nonetheless, this fact is apparently incapable of soothing her sense of isolation—an indication that superficial matters like home ownership do nothing to banish a person's loneliness.

Throughout the play, Mary goes on at length about wanting to settle down in a true home, saying things like, "In a real home one is never lonely." She also laments the fact that she has never lived in a place long enough to make friends. "If there was only some [...] woman friend I could talk to—not about anything serious, simply laugh and gossip and forget for a while—someone besides the servants," she says. However, O'Neill insinuates that Mary doesn't actually want these things. Indeed, Mary has romanticized the idea of domesticity. This is evident in her conversation with Edmund about their neighbors. After speaking jealously about the fact that these people aren't "cut off from everyone," she adds, "Not that I want anything to do with them. I've always hated this town and everyone in it."

As such, it becomes clear that she's not interested in *actually* living the lifestyle of a wealthy suburban woman, but that she has simply determined that this way of life might eradicate the loneliness she currently feels. She admits this much to Edmund at the end of their conversation about the neighbors, saying, "I know it's useless to talk. But sometimes I feel so lonely." This, it seems, is her chief concern: finding a way to get rid of her sense of solitude.

Like his mother, Edmund feels lonely and isolated. However, he doesn't believe—like she does—that he could ever get rid of this feeling. He reveals this in a drunken conversation with his father in the play's final act, when he talks about the time he's spent as a sailor. He talks about lying on the bowsprit one night and looking up at the starry sky as waves crashed beneath him, and he speaks adoringly about the freedom he felt in this moment, in which he was utterly alone and yet felt connected to the world. "I became drunk with the beauty and singing rhythm of it," he says, "and for a moment I lost myself—actually lost my life. I was set free! I dissolved in the sea, became white sails and flying spray, became beauty and rhythm, became moonlight and the ship and the high dim-starred night! I belonged, without past or future, within peace and unity and a wild joy, within something greater than my own life, or the life of Man, or Life itself!" By giving himself over to a feeling of complete solitude in the middle of the ocean, Edmund achieves something like transcendence. "As it is," he says, "I will always be a stranger who never feels at home, who does not really want and is not really wanted, who can never belong […]."

Having his loneliness, then, Edmund's worldview is bleak, but it is this very mindset that enables him to access fleeting moments of joy and transcendence. Whereas Mary spends her time fantasizing about ways to feel a sense of belonging, Edmund embraces his feeling of isolation and, in doing so, manages to convert it into something worthwhile. This, O'Neill suggests, is the only way to approach loneliness, which is an inherently human condition that is impossible to avoid.

## LOVE AND FORGIVENESS

It's easy to identify the strains of anger, hate, and resentment that run throughout *Long Day's Journey into Night*, but readers and audience members often overlook the tenderness that the Tyrones have for one another. The characters can't communicate effectively, fight constantly, and frequently accuse one another of malice, but they also always try to make amends. Indeed, their disputes are punctuated by sudden reversals, in which the family members take back the venomous things they've said or—at the very least—try to make up for their hurtful words by changing the subject. Of course, this relational dynamic is dysfunctional and seemingly untenable. And yet, no matter how intensely they insult each other—no matter how viciously they yell—they simply go on with their pattern of spite and forgiveness. In turn, the audience begins to sense that, although the Tyrone family is tragically flawed, there is almost nothing that can truly tear them apart. After all, they would have already parted ways for good if their relationships couldn't survive the tensions that arise between them. In this way, O'Neill suggests that certain familial bonds can withstand even the most toxic environments, though it's worth noting that he doesn't indicate whether this resilience is for better or for worse.

Because they're often drunk, the arguments between the Tyrone men are often exaggerated and aggressive. This is evident throughout the play, but the most notable dispute comes when Jamie and Edmund—both excessively drunk after a day of hard drinking—sit in the living room and talk about their mother's addiction. When Jamie calls Mary a "hophead," Edmund rears up in a protective fury. Wanting to defend his mother's honor, he punches Jamie in the face. As the audience braces for an all-out brawl, though, the situation quickly diffuses itself. O'Neill's stage direction reads as follows: "For a second Jamie reacts pugnaciously and half rises from his chair to do battle, but suddenly he seems to sober up to a shocked realization of what he has said and he sinks back limply." In this moment, Jamie's drunken scorn evaporates, leaving him ashamed and sad. He even *thanks* Edmund for hitting him, saying, "Thanks, Kid. I certainly had that coming. Don't know what made me—booze talking—You know me, Kid." In response, Edmund says, "I know you'd never say that unless—But God, Jamie, no matter how drunk you are, it's no excuse!" After a pause, he adds, "I'm sorry I hit you." What began as a heated argument on the cusp of intense physicality has now become nothing more than a passing incident about which both brothers feel sorry. The fact that they each apologize to each other—and seem to genuinely forgive each other—demonstrates not only how accustomed they are to getting into fights, but also that their bond enables them to overcome violent altercations.

The Tyrones are so used to getting into fights that they've learned how to avoid them. When, for instance, Mary goes on an inebriated rant in which she disparages Jamie, both Edmund and James tell her to be quiet, knowing that in her opiated state she's liable to say things that will upset them. "Stop talking, Mama," Edmund says, and James agrees, saying, "Yes, Mary, the less you say now—." However, Edmund eventually gets sucked into what she's saying, unable to resist responding to her upsetting notions. "Now, now, lad," James interjects when Edmund begins to reply. "You know better than to pay attention." Despite this wise counsel, though, even James finds himself enraged by what Mary has to say, and starts to respond only several moments later, at which point it's Edmund's turn to interject, saying, "Papa! You told me not to pay attention." No matter what these family members do to avoid conflict, then, they are seemingly incapable of refraining from argument. By virtue of this, O'Neill shows the audience that fighting with loved ones is unavoidable, even when a family makes a concerted effort to sidestep drama.

Beneath the Tyrones' animosity, there is a strong undercurrent of love and appreciation. This is how they find it in themselves to forgive one another after terrible fights. "I'm sorry if I sounded bitter, James," Mary says after a particularly bad argument. "I'm not. It's all so far away. But I did feel a little hurt when you wished you hadn't come home. I was so relieved and

happy when you came, and grateful to you." When she says this to her husband, she reveals her affection for him. Following up on this, she asks if he remembers the day they first met. Tenderly and "deeply moved," James replies, "Can you think I'd ever forget, Mary?" to which she says, "No. I know you still love me, James, in spite of everything." Moving on, he says he will love her "always and forever." This is why they never leave one another—they love each other "in spite of" the anger and tension that runs rampant throughout the family, touching not only them, but their sons, too. "I've loved you dearly," Mary says, "and done the best I could—under the circumstances."

This, it seems, can be said of *all* the Tyrones: they have "done the best" they can to love one another under difficult "circumstances." As a result, nothing in their family dynamic ever changes. Indeed, the audience gets the sense that Mary will go on with her addiction, the Tyrone men will keep fighting and drinking, and none of them will ever leave or break the never-ending cycle of anger and forgiveness—and this is all because they love each other. Unfortunately, this keeps them rooted in an abysmal environment, one in which none of them are actually happy. By presenting this dysfunctional family, then, O'Neill shows both the admirable resilience of love *and* the depressing fact that love itself can weigh people down and keep them from leading healthy lives.

## THE PAST, NOSTALGIA, AND REGRET

In many ways, *Long Day's Journey into Night* is a play about a family that can't extricate itself from the past. The majority of the characters are obsessed with periods in their lives that have already ended. For Mary, this obsession manifests as a form of nostalgia, one in which she tries to escape her present reality, which is bleak and depressing. Unfortunately, though, her drugged-out reveries of living her past life only make her feel like she has taken the wrong path. Indeed, she fondly remembers her days as a girl, when she lived in a convent and planned to be a nun or a concert pianist. Similarly, James waxes poetic about his past, and although he did ostensibly lead the life he always thought he wanted, he eventually realizes that he focused on the wrong things by sacrificing his passion for art in favor of a commercially successful acting career. As such, both Mary and her husband wallow in regret, wishing they could turn back time and change the way they lived. And though this is impossible, they waste away the present by mourning the past. In fact, at the end of the play, Mary even tries to pretend she's a girl in the convent again, but this is only a disturbed, inebriated fantasy. In this manner, O'Neill spotlights the futility of dwelling on the past, making it clear that focusing on nostalgia and regret do nothing to help a person attain happiness.

Part of the reason Mary finds herself unable to stop thinking about the past has to do with how she views personal history. Rather than seeing life as constantly changing, she believes a person's past dictates the rest of his or her existence. As such, she's unable to ignore her own history. This becomes clear in a conversation she has with James, in which he urges her to "forget the past." "Why?" she asks. "How can I? The past is the present, isn't it? It's the future, too. We all try to lie out of that but life won't let us." When Mary says that "life won't let" her wriggle out of the past, she commits herself to the idea that she's locked into a certain way of being. Under this interpretation, what has already happened in her life not only determines the nature of her "present" experience, but also dictates her "future." As a result, she has no reason to stop thinking about the past. In fact, this mentality only further encourages her to disregard her current life, ultimately inspiring her to spend all her mental energy thinking about that which has already happened.

The nostalgia Mary has for the past turns easily into regret, since she laments the fact that she has lost touch with her old life. Before she met James, she explains at several different moments throughout the play, she was an "innocent" young girl living in a convent, studying to be a nun, and practicing to become a concert pianist. Once she met James, however, she became smitten with him and quickly left behind her old ambitions. Instead of entering the church or pursuing a career as a musician, she decided to travel with him as he went around the country as a famous actor. And although she seems to have thoroughly enjoyed this at first, now she can only focus on what she gave up to live this life. "You're a sentimental fool," she mutters to herself at one point after she has told Cathleen—the servant—about how delightful it was when she first met James. "What is so wonderful about that first meeting between a silly romantic schoolgirl and a matinee idol? You were much happier before you knew he existed, in the Convent when you used to pray to the Blessed Virgin." It's worth noting here that, though Mary is discounting the notion that her first encounter with James was "wonderful," she is doing so in order to further exalt her past. After all, she says that she was "much happier before" she met him, thereby using her "sentimental" story about James as a way of romanticizing her convent days to an even greater extent. Needless to say, this does not help her make the best of her current situation.

Mary isn't the only family member to spend the majority of her time thinking fondly about the past, since James also has a tendency to glorify his days as a famous actor. In a conversation with Edmund, he rehashes the finest moment of his career, when a legendary actor praised his portrayal of Shakespeare's Othello. "As I look back on it now," he says, "that night was the high spot of my career." However, he has already prefaced this story by saying that he's tired of "fake pride and pretense," admitting that this play—though it was the "high spot of [his] career"—ruined him because it brought him too much fame and attention. Instead of following his heart and pursuing interesting roles, he tells Edmund, he started chasing

commercial success. Depressed after recounting this story, he says, "I'd gladly face not having an acre of land to call my own, nor a penny in the bank—I'd be willing to have no home but the poorhouse in my old age if I could look back now on having been the fine artist I might have been." When he says this, it becomes evident that—as is the case with Mary—James's nostalgia easily turns into regret, for there's nothing he can do to change the past, and yet, he can't help but retell the stories of his halcyon days.

At the end of *Long Day's Journey into Night*, Mary comes downstairs holding her **wedding dress** and starts saying in a confused, opiated way that she's going to be a nun. In this moment, the audience sees that she has plunged herself into a disturbed reenactment of her own personal history by pretending to be a younger version of herself. In doing so, she proves how thoroughly entrenched she is in the past. This only emphasizes the tragedy of her and James's obsession with their personal histories. Unhappy with their current existences, they waste their days reliving experiences that are long gone. In this way, O'Neill uses Mary's sad attempt to reenter the past to symbolize the pointlessness of indulging nostalgia, suggesting that the only thing a person can do to alleviate regret is to simply move on with life.

## SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

### THE FOG

Throughout *Long Day's Journey into Night*, fog both troubles and soothes Mary, who sees it as something that ushers in isolation and loneliness. At the beginning of the play, she suggests that she's troubled by the thick fog that enshrouds the Tyrones' summer home each night, especially since the foghorn keeps her awake and rattles her nerves. However, her relationship with fog isn't quite so simple. Indeed, although O'Neill uses the onset of fog to foreshadow Mary's relapse, Mary herself claims at one point that the fog itself doesn't bother her. "It's the foghorn I hate," she says. "It won't let you alone. It keeps reminding you, and warning you, and calling you back." This suggests that what Mary actually dislikes has nothing to do with the sound of the horn, but rather the fact that it "remind[s]" her that she can't simply slip into the pure solitude of the fog, which is what she would really like to do. Indeed, fog is something that creeps between people and makes it impossible for them to see each other—something that appeals to Mary because she'd like to isolate herself from her present reality, thereby enabling herself to indulge her drug addiction without having to endure the scrutiny of her disappointed family. In this way, O'Neill uses the fog as a representation of the ways in which isolation and separation manifest themselves within personal relationships.

### MARY'S WEDDING DRESS

Because of how much she covets it, Mary's wedding dress comes to stand for her own desperate attempt to reconnect with her past. In an opiated rant about her wedding, she fondly remembers how picky she was in the process of choosing her gown, saying, "It was never quite good enough." After describing the dress at length, she suddenly wonders where it is, saying, "Where is it now, I wonder? I used to take it out from time to time when I was lonely, but it always made me cry." As such, it's clear that this particular article of clothing is fraught with meaning and symbolic of the fact that Mary will never again be able to relive her past, which she has romanticized as a way of taking her mind off her bleak current circumstances. In the play's final scene, she appears holding the dress, which is draped over one arm and dragging along the floor as she advances into the room and talks about her life as a young girl in the convent. The fact that she focuses in this moment not on the dress itself but on the life she led before she got married suggests that finding the gown has done nothing to help her revitalize her past. As a result, she has gone back even farther in time and trying to relive her years in the convent. In turn, the dress comes to signify the futility of romanticizing the past.

## QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Yale edition of *Long Day's Journey into Night* published in 1987.

### Act One Quotes

*What strikes one immediately is her extreme nervousness. Her hands are never still. They were once beautiful hands, with long, tapering fingers, but rheumatism has knotted the joints and warped the fingers, so that now they have an ugly crippled look. One avoids looking at them, the more so because one is conscious she is sensitive about their appearance and humiliated by her inability to control the nervousness which draws attention to them.*

**Related Characters:** Mary Tyrone

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 12

**Explanation and Analysis**

This explanation of Mary appears at the beginning of the

play's first act. O'Neill makes a point of calling attention to her "nervousness," emphasizing the extent to which she appears unsettled and agitated. Of course, the audience will later learn that some of this "nervousness" has to do with the fact that she is yearning to relapse, though she hasn't yet succumbed to her desire to take morphine. As such, she can't manage to keep her hands "still," constantly fidgeting with her "warped" fingers. O'Neill goes out of his way in this moment to spotlight the harsh effect time has had on Mary's body, ultimately indicating that she has had a troubled past—one that has essentially left her in an "ugly" state. What's more, he foregrounds the play's interest in shame when he says that "one avoids looking at" Mary's fingers because she is "sensitive about their appearance." This dynamic foreshadows the fact that Mary's family members are constantly tip-toeing around her insecurities in order to avoid upsetting her.

TYRONE
You're a fine lunkhead! Haven't you any sense? The one thing to avoid is saying anything that would get her more upset over Edmund.

JAMIE
*Shrugging his shoulders.*
All right. Have it your way. I think it's the wrong idea to let Mama go on kidding herself. It will only make the shock worse when she has to face it. Anyway, you can see she's deliberately fooling herself with that summer cold talk. She knows better.

**Related Characters:** Edmund Tyrone, Mary Tyrone, Jamie Tyrone, James Tyrone

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 29

**Explanation and Analysis**

James and Jamie have this conversation after Jamie mentions in front of his mother that Edmund's illness is most likely more serious than she thinks. When Mary leaves, James calls his son a "lunkhead" for risking "upset[ting]" Mary, who is especially sensitive about Edmund's condition. However, Jamie disagrees with his father about the fact that they should protect Mary from bad news. "I think it's the wrong idea to let Mama go on kidding herself," he says, expressing his belief that denying the truth will only "make the shock worse" in the end. This idea is worth keeping in mind as the play goes on, since Mary, James, and Edmund are so eager to look away from their troubles. Jamie, on the other hand, never "kid[s]" himself, though this doesn't necessarily mean he has a healthy way of approaching the truth. Indeed, he isn't afraid to admit his shortcomings or recognize the unfavorable things in his life, but he never does anything to try to change his situation. As such, he simply resigns himself to fate, effectively rendering himself as helpless as his family members.

You've been the worst influence for him. He grew up admiring you as a hero! A fine example you set him! If you ever gave him advice except in the ways of rottenness, I've never heard of it! You made him old before his time, pumping him full of what you consider worldly wisdom, when he was too young to see that your mind was so poisoned by your own failure in life, you wanted to believe every man was a knave with his soul for sale, and every woman who wasn't a whore was a fool!

**Related Characters:** James Tyrone (speaker), Edmund Tyrone, Jamie Tyrone

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 35

**Explanation and Analysis**

In this passage, James tries to blame Edmund's disappointing life on Jamie. Claiming that Jamie led his younger brother into "rottenness," he refuses to consider the fact that Edmund has made his own decisions. Instead, he takes out his disappointment in Edmund on Jamie, saying that he made the boy "old before his time" by showing him the "worldly wisdom" of Jamie's own life on Broadway. Of course, this completely strips Edmund of any personal agency whatsoever, but James doesn't care about such matters. Rather, he cares about making Jamie feel guilty for what he's done. In turn, he creates a distraction for himself, since picking on Jamie gives him something to focus on other than Edmund's illness and Mary's addiction. In this way, he uses blame and guilt as a way of denying—or at least momentarily ignoring—the problems in his life that are most pressing.

❝ Yes, this time you can see how strong and sure of herself she is. She's a different woman entirely from the other times. She has control of her nerves—or she had until Edmund got sick. Now you can feel her growing tense and frightened underneath. I wish to God we could keep the truth from her, but we can't if he has to be sent to a sanatorium. What makes it worse is her father died of consumption. She worshiped him and she's never forgotten. Yes, it will be hard for her. But she can do it! She has the will power now! We must help her, Jamie, in every way we can!

**Related Characters:** James Tyrone (speaker), Mary Tyrone, Edmund Tyrone, Jamie Tyrone

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 37

**Explanation and Analysis**

James says this to Jamie in one of the play's first straightforward conversations about Mary's addiction. When he says, "This time you can see how strong and sure of herself she is," the audience learns that this is not the first time she has come home after trying to recover. What's more, James emphasizes the importance of Mary's "nerves," suggesting that she has "control" of them in a way she's never had before. Unfortunately, this is not necessarily the most helpful viewpoint he could adopt as someone trying to support a loved one struggling with addiction. After all, it's unlikely that Mary will *ever* be able to get rid of her "nervousness"—with or without morphine. As such, a better way of handling the situation would be to encourage her to *accept* the various tensions that naturally arise in life. Rather trying to protect her from Edmund's illness, for example, her family should help her confront reality without turning to drugs. And though this "will be hard for her," the only thing that might actually help her refrain from drug abuse is accepting that she won't always feel happy in life. Sadly, though, James doesn't see the situation in this light, instead upholding that his wife simply needs to buckle down and use her "will power" to defeat her addiction.

❝ Still […] people like them stand for something. I mean they have decent, presentable homes they don't have to be ashamed of. They have friends who entertain them and whom they entertain. They're not cut off from everyone.

*She turns back from the window.*

Not that I want anything to do with them. I've always hated this town and everyone in it. You know that. I never wanted to live here in the first place, but your father liked it and insisted on building this house, and I've had to come here every summer.

**Related Characters:** Mary Tyrone (speaker), James Tyrone, Edmund Tyrone

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 44

**Explanation and Analysis**

Mary speaks these words to Edmund after looking out the window and seeing their neighbors drive by. As they pass, she considers the fact that these people have "decent, presentable homes they don't have to be ashamed of." In turn, she implies that this is what she wants. Going on, she speaks enviously about the fact that her neighbors have "friends who entertain them and whom they entertain," insinuating that she herself feels a profound lack of companionship. And as if it's not already clear that she yearns for this social lifestyle, she adds, "They're not cut off from everyone." As such, she suggests that domestic lifestyles are what a person needs in order to banish any feelings of loneliness or isolation.

However, she Mary quickly adds that she doesn't want "anything to do with" her neighbors. "I've always hated this town and everyone in it," she says. In turn, O'Neill intimates that these stereotypical ideas of domestic bliss are superficial and unrewarding. Indeed, Mary only likes the *thought* of living like her neighbors. In reality, though, she's completely uninterested in this lifestyle. By highlighting this dynamic, then, O'Neill argues that the kind of loneliness Mary experiences is too broad—too existential and all-encompassing—to be solved by living in a "presentable home."

EDMUND
Anyway, you've got to be fair, Mama. It may have been all his fault in the beginning, but you know that later on, even if he'd wanted to, we couldn't have had people here—
*He flounders guiltily.*
I mean, you wouldn't have wanted them.

MARY
*Wincing—her lips quivering pitifully.*
Don't. I can't bear having you remind me.

EDMUND
Don't take it that way! Please, Mama! I'm trying to help. Because it's bad for you to forget. The right way is to remember. So you'll always be on your guard. You know what's happened before.
*Miserably.*
God, Mama, you know I hate to remind you. I'm doing it because it's been so wonderful having you home the way you've been, and it would be terrible—

**Related Characters:** James Tyrone, Edmund Tyrone, Mary Tyrone

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 46

**Explanation and Analysis**

During this exchange, Edmund tries to convince his mother to consider the fact that her unhappiness and loneliness isn't all James's fault. She, for her part, has tried to argue that she feels isolated because her husband has never provided her with a proper, "presentable" home. However, Edmund points out that even if James *had* given her such a place, the family wouldn't have been able to entertain guests because of her morphine addiction, which would have certainly rendered even the nicest house unpresentable. As soon as he says this, though, she acts hurt, telling him she "can't bear having" him remind her of her addiction. Desperate to avoid upsetting her, Edmund pleads with her to not "take" what he's saying the wrong way. Indeed, he tries to make her see that he's only "trying to help" by encouraging her to "remember" her past struggles. "Because it's bad for you to forget," he says, emphasizing the fact that she shouldn't simply deny her troubles.

MARY
*Her hands fluttering.*
It makes it so much harder, living in this atmosphere of constant suspicion, knowing everyone is spying on me, and none of you believe in me, or trust me.

EDMUND
That's crazy, Mama. We do trust you.

MARY
If there was only some place I could go to get away for a day, or even an afternoon, some woman friend I could talk to—not about anything serious, simply laugh and gossip and forget for a while—someone besides the servants—that stupid Cathleen!

**Related Characters:** Cathleen, Edmund Tyrone, Mary Tyrone

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 47

**Explanation and Analysis**

After Edmund says it's important for his mother to "remember" her past struggles instead of denying the hardships she has undergone, Mary shames him for suspecting her of relapsing. "It makes it so much harder, living in this atmosphere of constant suspicion," she says, making her son feel wretched for simply showing concern. By doing this, she forces Edmund to pretend that he actually trusts her, ultimately manipulating him into backing off and giving her the privacy she needs to relapse. Then, once she has gotten him to stop talking about how she must not "forget" the past, she tries to blame her addiction on her isolation. Indeed, she suggests that everything would be different if there were "some woman friend [she] could talk to." Again, then, she fantasizes about pulling herself out of loneliness. Instead of acknowledging that loneliness is simply part of life, she fantasizes about finding someone with whom she could pass the time. However, this is yet another fruitless idea, one that would surely do nothing to help her. After all, she already *has* someone to talk to (Cathleen), but she pompously upholds that she needs someone better.

## Act Two, Scene One Quotes

❝ Because he's always sneering at someone else, always looking for the worst weakness in everyone.

*Then with a strange, abrupt change to a detached, impersonal tone.*

But I suppose life has made him like that, and he can't help it. None of us can help the things life has done to us. They're done before you realize it, and once they're done they make you do other things until at last everything comes between you and what you'd like to be, and you've lost your true self forever.

**Related Characters:** Mary Tyrone (speaker), James Tyrone, Edmund Tyrone, Jamie Tyrone

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 63

### Explanation and Analysis

Mary says this after Edmund asks why she's constantly picking on Jamie. Unbeknownst to him, she has already relapsed. As such, she rambles on angrily about Jamie, lamenting the fact that "he's always sneering at someone else, always looking for the worst weakness in everyone." This, it seems, is a technique to shift attention away from herself so that her family members don't notice she's gotten high, though Jamie himself has already put this together. However, she is also quite contemplative when she's high, which is why she suddenly shifts tones and says, "But I suppose life has made him like that, and he can't help it." By saying this, she reveals her belief that a person's past has the power to determine his or her behavior. Indeed, she upholds that "none of us can help the things life has done to us." In turn, she voices a rather fatalistic worldview, one in which it's not even worth trying to change oneself for the better. As such, she essentially lets herself off the hook, simply resigning herself to the fact that "life" has "made" her a morphine addict.

❝ Oh, I'm so sick and tired of pretending this is a home! You won't help me! You won't put yourself out the least bit! You don't know how to act in a home! You don't really want one! You never have wanted one—never since the day we were married! You should have remained a bachelor and lived in second-rate hotels and entertained your friends in barrooms!

*She adds strangely, as if she were now talking aloud to herself rather than to Tyrone.*

Then nothing would ever have happened.

*They stare at her. Tyrone knows now. He suddenly looks a tired, bitterly sad old man.*

**Related Characters:** Mary Tyrone (speaker), James Tyrone, Edmund Tyrone, Jamie Tyrone

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 69

### Explanation and Analysis

Mary says this to James, randomly exploding with a tirade about how she doesn't see their summer house as a true "home." Although she and her family are fully installed in the house and treat it like an actual residence, she refuses to accept the idea that it is a welcoming, accommodating place. Instead, she insists that her husband is forcing her to "pretend" that "this is a home." Worse, she actively blames James for not wanting to "help" her. "You won't put yourself out the least bit!" she accuses him, suggesting that he "never wanted" a home. "You should have remained a bachelor and lived in second-rate hotels and entertained your friends in barrooms!" she says. Without a doubt, this a cruel way of distracting her family members from the fact that she has recently relapsed. What's more, when she says that "nothing would have happened" if James had simply "remained a bachelor," she implies that her morphine addiction—and all the wretchedness that has come from it—is his fault. And though she is perhaps saying these hurtful things to distract her family from the fact that she's high, James instantly recognizes in this moment that she has relapsed, since—as he says later in the play—she always blames others for her misfortune when she's on morphine.

You're to blame, James. How could you let him? Do you want to kill him? Don't you remember my father? He wouldn't stop after he was stricken. He said doctors were fools! He thought, like you, that whiskey is a good tonic!

*A look of terror comes into her eyes and she stammers.*

But, of course, there's no comparison at all. I don't know why I—Forgive me for scolding you, James. One small drink won't hurt Edmund. It might be good for him, if it gives him an appetite.

**Related Characters:** Mary Tyrone (speaker), James Tyrone, Edmund Tyrone, Jamie Tyrone

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 70

**Explanation and Analysis**

In this passage, Mary sees that Edmund has been drinking. Scared about his health, she lashes out at James, whom she says is "to blame" for her son's ill-advised habits. "How could you let him?" she asks. "Do you want to kill him?" Saying this, she acts like Edmund doesn't have any personal agency, ignoring the fact that he is the one who ultimately decides whether or not he drinks. Furthermore, when she asks James if he remembers her father, she accidentally reveals that she is more worried about Edmund than she's willing to admit. Indeed, although she claims that her son has nothing but a "summer cold," here she lets slip that she can't help but draw a comparison between Edmund and her father, who died because he wouldn't stop drinking even after he was diagnosed with consumption. Of course, once she hears herself make this comparison, she instantly retracts what she's said, desperately babbling about the fact that "there's no comparison at all" and that "one small drink won't hurt Edmund." As such, the audience sees once again how eager she is to deny the things that trouble her most.

## Act Two, Scene Two Quotes

*The family are returning from lunch as the curtain rises. Mary is the first to enter from the back parlor. Her husband follows. He is not with her as he was in the similar entrance after breakfast at the opening of Act One. He avoids touching her or looking at her. There is condemnation in his face, mingled now with the beginning of an old weary, helpless resignation. Jamie and Edmund follow their father. Jamie's face is hard with defensive cynicism. Edmund tries to copy this defense but without success. He plainly shows he is heartsick as well as physically ill.*

**Related Characters:** Jamie Tyrone, Edmund Tyrone, James Tyrone, Mary Tyrone

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 73

**Explanation and Analysis**

This passage appears just after lunch, at the beginning of Act Two, Scene Two. By this point, all of the Tyrones know that Mary has relapsed. As such, the audience sees the various ways in which each Tyrone man has processed the bad news. James, for his part, tries to avoid "touching" or "looking" at Mary, as if refusing to acknowledge her will make the trouble disappear. "There is condemnation in his face," O'Neill writes, "mingled now with the beginning of an old weary, helpless resignation." It's worth noting O'Neill's use of the word "old" in this sentence, as it emphasizes the fact that this is not the first time Mary has relapsed, nor is it the first time James has had to deal with the thought of his wife plunging once more into drug abuse. For this reason, he wears an expression of "weary, helpless resignation" that hints at the number of times he has been disappointed by Mary in the past. Similarly, Jamie has witnessed this routine countless times, but his reaction is angrier and bolder than his father's. Indeed, his face is "hard with defensive cynicism." Although he champions acknowledging hardship, it's clear that this is simply a "defense" mechanism, a way of coping with the world without actually trying to change anything. Edmund, on the other hand, can't quite resign himself to this "cynicism," which is why he "plainly shows" that he is "heartsick."

TYRONE
You ought to be kicked out in the gutter! But if I did it, you know damned well who'd weep and plead for you, and excuse you and complain till I let you come back.

JAMIE
*A spasm of pain crosses his face.*
Christ, don't I know that? No pity? I have all the pity in the world for her. I understand what a hard game to beat she's up against— which is more than you ever have! My lingo didn't mean I had no feeling. I was merely putting bluntly what we all know, and have to live with now, again.

*Bitterly.*

The cures are no damned good except for a while. The truth is there is no cure and we've been saps to hope—

*Cynically*

They never come back!

**Related Characters:** Edmund Tyrone, Mary Tyrone, Jamie Tyrone, James Tyrone

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 78

**Explanation and Analysis**

This argument between James and Jamie takes place after Jamie speaks ill about his mother. Enraged that she has relapsed once more, he voices his disappointment without bothering to mask his contempt, which is why his father reacts so strongly. After all, James and Mary always try to act civilized, even when tensions are running high. As such, James is appalled to hear his son saying bad things about his wife, and he reminds Jamie that Mary would be the first one to "weep and plead" for him if James were to kick him out. "Christ, don't I know that?" Jamie responds, explaining that he has "all the pity in the world for" his mother. This, he claims, is exactly why he's so distraught—he cares so much for her that he doesn't know what to do now that she has relapsed. "I was merely putting bluntly what we all know, and have to live with now, again," he says, emphasizing the fact that they've all been through this exact song and dance many times. Then, hearing himself say this, he plunges into cynicism, upholding that it was futile to even hope Mary might beat her addiction. "The cures are no damned good except for a while," he says, resigning himself to bleak idea that nothing can be done about Mary's morphine habit.

> It was my fault. I should have insisted on staying with Eugene and not have let you persuade me to join you, just because I loved you. Above all, I shouldn't have let you insist I have another baby to take Eugene's place, because you thought that would make me forget his death. I knew from experience by then that children should have homes to be born in, if they are to be good children, and women need homes, if they are to be good mothers. I was afraid all the time I carried Edmund. I knew something terrible would happen. I knew I'd proved by the way I'd left Eugene that I wasn't worthy to have another baby, and that God would punish me if I did. I never should have borne Edmund.

**Related Characters:** Mary Tyrone (speaker), Eugene Tyrone, Edmund Tyrone, James Tyrone

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 91

**Explanation and Analysis**

Mary says this to James while talking about their shared history. High on morphine, she speaks at length about the hardships that have befallen the Tyrone family. Regarding Eugene—their second child, who died as a baby—she upholds that the boy's death was her "fault." However, she then tries to shift responsibility onto James by saying, "I should have insisted on staying with Eugene and not have let you persuade me to join you, just because I loved you." By saying this, she guilt-trips James for asking her to come on the road with him (thereby forcing her to leave Eugene with her own mother, which is when he died). Then, as if this isn't cruel enough, she also tries to make James feel guilty for never providing her with a proper "home." "I knew from experience by then that children should have homes to be born in, if they are to be good children, and women need homes, if they are to be good mothers." In this way, Mary intimates that her failure as a mother is James's fault because he didn't give her a permanent place to live. In turn, O'Neill once again shows the audience how willing Mary is to blame others for her own shortcomings so that she doesn't have to shoulder the burden of grief and guilt.

> But some day, dear, I will find it again—some day when you're all well, and I see you healthy and happy and successful, and I don't have to feel guilty any more—some day when the Blessed Virgin Mary forgives me and gives me back the faith in Her love and pity I used to have in my convent days, and I can pray to Her again— when She sees no one in the world can believe in me even for a moment any more, then She will believe in me, and with Her help it will be so easy. I will hear myself scream with agony, and at the same time I will laugh because I will be so sure of myself.

**Related Characters:** Mary Tyrone (speaker), Edmund Tyrone

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 96

**Explanation and Analysis**

Mary says this after suggesting to Edmund that she doesn't "understand" herself because she can "no longer call [her] soul her own." In this moment, she suddenly becomes optimistic and says that she will someday "find" her soul again. Interestingly enough, though, she says she'll only be able to do this when the rest of her family is "healthy and happy and successful." Although this might seem like a kind

and generous thing to say, it's worth noting that Mary puts the onus on her family members to change, telling Edmund that she herself won't improve until he, his father, and his brother do. Worse, she says that she'll only recover her "soul" again once her family is "healthy"—something they can't truly control. In other words, she essentially tells Edmund that one of the primary obstacles standing between her and sobriety—or, at the very least, self-improvement—is the fact that he is sick. Once again, then, she washes her hands of any kind of responsibility regarding her own mistakes, this time using her lost sense of religion as an excuse as to why she can't stop using morphine.

## Act Three Quotes

❝ *Mary is paler than before and her eyes shine with unnatural brilliance. The strange detachment in her manner has intensified. She has hidden deeper within herself and found refuge and release in a dream where present reality is but an appearance to be accepted and dismissed unfeelingly—even with a hard cynicism—or entirely ignored. There is at times an uncanny gay, free youthfulness in her manner, as if in spirit she were released to become again, simply and without self-consciousness, the naive, happy, chattering schoolgirl of her convent days.*

**Related Characters:** Mary Tyrone

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 99

### Explanation and Analysis

As the day wears on, Mary gets higher and higher on morphine. By the time this passage appears, it is evening, meaning that she has become even more withdrawn and strange than before. This is made evident by the fact that she is "paler," her eyes shining with an "unnatural brilliance" that has only intensified throughout the day. Indeed, these are physical manifestations of the fact that she has "hidden deeper within herself and found refuge and release in a dream." This, it seems, is the effect she's after—the feeling that she has removed herself from the world. For her, morphine is a way of escaping "present reality," which suddenly feels distant and inconsequential, as if it can be "accepted and dismissed unfeelingly." The word "unfeelingly" is important to note here, as it highlights Mary's desire to deny the way she feels about her current circumstances. And once she removes herself from "reality," she's free to reminisce about her past life, acting as if she can once more "become" "the naïve, happy, chattering schoolgirl of her convent days."

❝ *Dreamily.*
It wasn't the fog I minded, Cathleen. I really love fog.

[...]

It hides you from the world and the world from you. You feel that everything has changed, and nothing is what it seemed to be. No one can find or touch you anymore.

[...]

It's the foghorn I hate. It won't let you alone. It keeps reminding you, and warning you, and calling you back.

*She smiles strangely.*

But it can't tonight.

**Related Characters:** Mary Tyrone (speaker), Cathleen

**Related Themes:**

**Related Symbols:**

**Page Number:** 100

### Explanation and Analysis

In this scene, Mary passes the time with Cathleen. Looking out at the fog, she talks about the fact that she was unable to sleep the night before because the foghorn kept her awake. She then clarifies that she doesn't actually "mind" the fog itself, which she actually "love[s]" because it "hides you from the world and the world from you." By saying this, Mary reveals that—despite all her talk about hating that she's "cut off from everyone"—she actually *likes* isolation. Indeed, she covets the fog because it makes her feel as if "no one can find or touch" her. However, she has trouble fully embracing this feeling, as evidenced by how much she hates the "foghorn," which she sees as a reminder that she can't simply slip into an existence of total solitude. This is an important moment, for it suggests that Mary's ideas about loneliness and isolation aren't as cut and dry as they might seem. Whereas she claims that she wants to rid herself of loneliness, in this conversation it becomes clear that she has actually fetishized isolation. Either way, both attitudes are rather unhealthy, since the best way to approach loneliness is to accept it as part of life without romanticizing it.

You're a sentimental fool. What is so wonderful about that first meeting between a silly romantic schoolgirl and a matinee idol? You were much happier before you knew he existed, in the Convent when you used to pray to the Blessed Virgin.

*Longingly.*

If I could only find the faith I lost, so I could pray again!

*She pauses—then begins to recite the Hail Mary in a flat, empty tone.*

"Hail, Mary, full of grace! The Lord is with Thee; blessed art Thou among women."

*Sneeringly.*

You expect the Blessed Virgin to be fooled by a lying dope fiend reciting words! You can't hide from her!

*She springs to her feet. Her hands fly up to pat her hair distractedly.*

I must go upstairs. I haven't taken enough. When you start again you never know exactly how much you need.

**Related Characters:** Mary Tyrone (speaker), Cathleen, James Tyrone

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 99

**Explanation and Analysis**

Mary speaks these words to herself after Cathleen leaves her alone in the parlor. Having rambled on about the past, she scolds herself for idealizing the first time she met James, calling herself a "sentimental fool" because she no longer considers that moment of her life significant or wonderful. Rather, she believes that she was "happier" before she knew James. As such, she doesn't realize that she's romanticizing her life in the convent in the same way that she has just romanticized her and James's "first meeting." This is why she suddenly launches into prayer, trying desperately to recapture the spirituality she used to have as a young girl.

Upon stopping, she tells herself that the Virgin Mary would never listen to "a lying dope fiend." More than anything, this is simply an excuse to stop praying, since she has already stated that she would be able to overcome her addiction if she ever regained her faith. As such, she sabotages her own attempt to recapture her faith, thereby enabling herself to continue using morphine. In keeping with this, she decides to go upstairs to give herself another dose.

But I forgive. I always forgive you. So don't look so guilty. I'm sorry I remembered out loud. I don't want to be sad, or to make you sad. I want to remember only the happy part of the past.

**Related Characters:** Mary Tyrone (speaker), James Tyrone

**Related Themes:**

**Related Symbols:**

**Page Number:** 116

**Explanation and Analysis**

In this passage, Mary tells James that she will never forget all the nights he left her alone to go out drinking. She will, however, "forgive" him. "So don't look so guilty," she says, adding that she's sorry she brought it up. "I want to remember only the happy part of the past," she says. This line is a perfect summary of how she conceives of time and her personal history. Not wanting to deal with conflict or hardship, she tries to focus only on "happy" things, like when she was a young girl in the convent. This is why she takes morphine—to forget about unpleasant matters, both past *and* present.

## Act Four Quotes

*Tyrone is seated at the table. He wears his pince-nez, and is playing solitaire. He has taken off his coat and has on an old brown dressing gown. The whiskey bottle on the tray is three-quarters empty. There is a fresh full bottle on the table, which he has brought from the cellar so there will be an ample reserve at hand. He is drunk and shows it by the owlish, deliberate manner in which he peers at each card to make certain of its identity, and then plays it as if he wasn't certain of his aim. His eyes have a misted, oily look and his mouth is slack. But despite all the whiskey in him, he has not escaped, and he looks as he appeared at the close of the preceding act, a sad, defeated old man, possessed by hopeless resignation.*

**Related Characters:** James Tyrone

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 127

**Explanation and Analysis**

When the curtains open on the play's fourth act, the audience beholds James as he sits at the table and drunkenly plays a game of cards against himself. O'Neill

makes a point of accentuating James's drunkenness in this moment, noting that the old man is incapable of playing cards with any kind of "certain[ty]." Interestingly enough, the fact that James is playing cards with himself at all is a perfect representation of the self-defeating habits that he and his family members indulge. Indeed, he is distraught over Mary's relapse, but his only real response is to get drunk. As such, he exacerbates his own addiction while doing nothing to help his wife. It's not hard to see, then, that this is a lose-lose situation—just like playing cards against oneself. What's more, he seems cognizant of how futile his actions are, as he has clearly embraced his dismal circumstances. Indeed, O'Neill writes that James "has not escaped" his sadness despite how drunk he is. He is, O'Neill asserts, "a sad, defeated old man" who is mired in "hopeless resignation."

> The fog was where I wanted to be. Halfway down the path you can't see this house. You'd never know it was here. Or any of the other places down the avenue. I couldn't see but a few feet ahead. I didn't meet a soul. Everything looked and sounded unreal. Nothing was what it is. That's what I wanted—to be alone with myself in another world where truth is untrue and life can hide from itself. Out beyond the harbor, where the road runs along the beach, I even lost the feeling of being on land. The fog and the sea seemed part of each other. It was like walking on the bottom of the sea. As if I had drowned long ago. As if I was a ghost belonging to the fog, and the fog was the ghost of the sea. It felt damned peaceful to be nothing more than a ghost within a ghost.
>
> *He sees his father staring at him with mingled worry and irritated disapproval. He grins mockingly.*
>
> Don't look at me as if I'd gone nutty. I'm talking sense. Who wants
>
> to see life as it is, if they can help it?

**Related Characters:** Edmund Tyrone (speaker), Mary Tyrone, James Tyrone

**Related Themes:**

**Related Symbols:**

**Page Number:** 133

**Explanation and Analysis**

Edmund speaks these words to his father while they're both drunk and listening to Mary walk around in an opiated state upstairs. Telling James about his walk along the beach, Edmund admits that he likes the fog, which lends him a sense of abiding peace in solitude. "That's what I wanted," he says, "to be alone with myself in another world [...]." Going on, he makes it clear that he actively enjoys losing "the feeling of being on land," as if he can simply remove himself from the entire context of the Tyrone household and all its tumultuous drama. When he notices that his father is worried about him, though, he stands up for himself, insisting that he's "talking sense." "Who wants to see life as it is, if they can help it?" he asks, a question that reveals his motivation for drinking. Indeed, Edmund is a man who yearns for a sense of transcendence, embracing seemingly anything that will alter his relationship to the world. In this way, he is similar to his mother, as they both nurse escapist worldviews because they don't want to face their troubles. The difference, of course, is that Edmund is willing to admit what he's running from, whereas Mary prefers to deny her hardships.

> I lay on the bowsprit, facing astern, with the water foaming into spume under me, the masts with every sail white in the moonlight, towering high above me. I became drunk with the beauty and singing rhythm of it, and for a moment I lost myself—actually lost my life. I was set free! I dissolved in the sea, became white sails and flying spray, became beauty and rhythm, became moonlight and the ship and the high dim-starred sky! I belonged, without past or future, within peace and unity and a wild joy, within something greater than my own life, or the life of Man, to Life itself! To God, if you want to put it that way. Then another time, on the American Line, when I was lookout on the crow's nest in the dawn watch. A calm sea, that time. Only a lazy ground swell and a slow drowsy roll of the ship. The passengers asleep and none of the crew in sight. No sound of man. Black smoke pouring from the funnels behind and beneath me. Dreaming, not keeping lookout, feeling alone, and above, and apart, watching the dawn creep like a painted dream over the sky and sea which slept together. Then the moment of ecstatic freedom came. The peace, the end of the quest, the last harbor, the joy of belonging to a fulfillment beyond men's lousy, pitiful, greedy fears and hopes and dreams!

**Related Characters:** Edmund Tyrone (speaker), James Tyrone

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 156

**Explanation and Analysis**

In this passage, Edmund explains to his father the sense of unbridled freedom and transcendence that he has experienced as sailor in the middle of the ocean. Lying on the bowsprit, he is overcome by "the beauty and singing rhythm" of the world—a beauty in which he loses himself. By venturing out into the enormous ocean and immersing himself in the experience of feeling small and alone, he manages to feel a sense of belonging that is rather spiritual. "I belonged, without past or future, within peace and unity and a wild joy, within something greater than my own life," he says. Compared to his claustrophobic, drunken existence in the family summer home, this experience is invigorating and life-affirming, giving Edmund a sense of "ecstatic freedom" that finally lets him feel "the joy of belonging." However, this sense of "belonging" has nothing to do with the kind of superficial notions his mother clings to about having friends or living in a respectable home. Rather, it goes "beyond men's lousy, pitiful, greedy fears and hopes and dreams." In turn, O'Neill shows the audience that Edmund's complete acceptance of solitude actually empowers him to overcome the negative aspects of loneliness.

> It was a great mistake, my being born a man, I would have been much more successful as a seagull or a fish. As it is, I will always be a stranger who never feels at home, who does not really want and is not really wanted, who can never belong, who must always be a little in love with death!

**Related Characters:** Edmund Tyrone (speaker), James Tyrone

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 157

**Explanation and Analysis**

Continuing his monologue about what it's like to embrace isolation and loneliness as a sailor drifting through the vast ocean, Edmund admits to his father that he will "always" feel like "a stranger who never feels at home." This, it seems, is why he loves the untethered feeling of being at sea. After all, *no one* "feels at home" at sea, at least insofar as it's impossible to actually live in the ocean. As such, Edmund covets the idea of being a "seagull or a fish," since he feels so out of place as a human trying to make his way through the world. Indeed, he thinks he will "never belong," and this is why the transcendent experience he had at sea is so important to him. Having said that, it's worth noting that Edmund isn't complaining about his loneliness, but rather accepting it as part of what it means to be alive. Unlike his mother, he doesn't lament the terror of isolation. Instead, he embraces the idea that he will "never feel at home." As such, he doesn't need to go searching for a sense of belonging, which is presumably the same kind of existential quest that encourages Mary to turn to morphine.

> I suppose it's because I feel so damned sunk. Because this time Mama had me fooled. I really believed she had it licked. She thinks I always believe the worst, but this time I believed the best.
>
> *His voice flutters.*
>
> I suppose I can't forgive her—yet. It meant so much. I'd begun to hope, if she'd beaten the game, I could, too.
>
> *He begins to sob, and the horrible part of his weeping is that it appears sober, not the maudlin tears of drunkenness.*

**Related Characters:** Jamie Tyrone (speaker), Edmund Tyrone

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 165

**Explanation and Analysis**

Jamie says this to Edmund after having drunkenly uttered offensive things about Mary. When Edmund punches him in the face for what he's said, Jamie admits that he was wrong to disparage their mother. "I suppose it's because I feel so damned sunk," he says, admitting that he allowed himself to get his hopes up about her sobriety. This is why he has so much trouble forgiving her, he says. What's more, his feelings are extra complicated because he began to think—before Mary relapsed—that if she could quit morphine, he might be able to stop drinking. As such, he's not only disappointed in her, he's also depressed because her relapse suggests he'll never be able to improve himself.

Did it on purpose to make a bum of you. Or part of me did. A big part. That part that's been dead so long. That hates life. My putting you wise so you'd learn from my mistakes. Believed that myself at times, but it's a fake. Made my mistakes look good. Made getting drunk romantic. Made whores fascinating vampires instead of poor, stupid, diseased slobs they really are. Made fun of work as sucker's game. Never wanted you succeed and make me look even worse by comparison. Wanted you to fail. Always jealous of you. Mama's baby, Papa's pet!

*He stares at Edmund with increasing enmity.*

And it was your being born that started Mama on dope. I know that's not your fault, but all the same, God damn you, I can't help hating your guts — !

**Related Characters:** Jamie Tyrone (speaker), Mary Tyrone, Edmund Tyrone, James Tyrone

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 169

**Explanation and Analysis**

Jamie says this to Edmund before passing out drunk in the parlor. Having prefaced this monologue by telling Edmund he needs to warn him about himself, he confesses that he has always been out to get his little brother. Indeed, he insists that he purposefully steered Edmund off-track by making his own "mistakes look good." What's most interesting about this moment, though, is not the idea that Jamie actually thinks this, but that he has internalized his parents' narrative that he is a bad influence. After all, he himself has already pointed out that Edmund is "stubborn" and that the young man always makes his own choices. And yet, he now claims that he actively tried to "make a bum of" him. As such, the audience sees that he has simply fallen prey to his parents' blame, finally embracing their conviction that he has tried to ruin his brother. In turn, O'Neill shows the tragic ways in which parental blame can make a person feel guilty even if he hasn't truly done anything wrong.

MARY
*Looking around her.*
Something I need terribly. I remember when I had it I was never lonely nor afraid. I can't have lost it forever, I would die if I thought that. Because then there would be no hope.
*She moves like a sleepwalker, around the back of Jamie's chair, then forward toward left front, passing behind Edmund.*

EDMUND
*Turns impulsively and grabs her arm. As he pleads he has the quality of a bewilderedly hurt little boy.*
Mama! It isn't a summer cold! I've got consumption!

MARY
*For a second he seems to have broken through to her. She trembles and her expression becomes terrified. She calls distractedly, as if giving a command to herself.*
No!
*And instantly she is far away again. She murmurs gently but impersonally.*
You must not try to touch me. You must not try to hold me. It isn't right, when I am hoping to be a nun.
*He lets his hand drop from her arm.*

**Related Characters:** Edmund Tyrone, Mary Tyrone

**Related Themes:**

**Related Symbols:**

**Page Number:** 177

**Explanation and Analysis**

In this passage, Mary walks around the parlor while holding her wedding dress. As she "moves like a sleepwalker," she tries to remember what she's looking for, saying, "Something I need terribly. I remember when I had it I was never lonely nor afraid." Once again, then, the audience sees how badly Mary wants to find something—a lifestyle, a home, a drug, anything—that will banish her loneliness. However, there is nothing in the entire world that can rid a person of loneliness, which is why she doesn't even know what she's looking for.

Recognizing that his mother is completely removed from the present moment, Edmund tries one last time to bring her back. "Mama! It isn't a summer cold! I've got consumption!" he yells, trying to keep her from blocking out the world and denying her problems. Unfortunately, though, she has already decided to drift through life and relive her past in order to recapture a sense of contentment. As such, she dismisses his outbreak despite the fact that she clearly understood what he said. In turn, O'Neill shows the audience just how willing Mary is to remain ignorantly

blissful.

## SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

### ACT ONE

One morning in August of 1912, James and Mary Tyrone walk into the parlor of their summer home after breakfast. The house is filled with old and important books, and a portrait of Shakespeare hangs on the wall. Mary is a fifty-four-year-old woman who looks healthy, but her hands are constantly fidgeting, signaling a certain restlessness. By contrast, James is confident and assured, striding into the parlor with the unmistakable gait of a successful theater actor who "has no nerves" and has "never been really sick a day in his life." As the couple advances through the room, James tells his wife how happy he is that she looks healthy and has gained weight. Undercutting this good mood, though, he stops to listen to his two sons in the next room, resentfully guessing that they're laughing at his expense.

*When James tells Mary how pleased he is about her health, the audience intuits that she is not usually so fit or stable. This, of course, is most likely why her hands are constantly fidgeting—she is, it seems, a naturally nervous person. Although she's in good health now, she clearly can't forget whatever hardships have befallen her in the past. James most likely can't forget these hardships either, as evidenced by the fact that he goes out of his way to praise Mary's seemingly newfound stability. In turn, O'Neill intimates that the Tyrone family is burdened and haunted by the past. On another note, James's assumption that his sons are making fun of him is an indication that tends to instinctively accuse others of malice.*

Banishing the idea of his sons from his mind, James lights a cigar and talks about how wonderful it is to smoke after breakfast. "It was McGuire put me on to them," he says, to which Mary bitterly replies, "I hope he didn't put you on to any new piece of property at the same time. His real estate bargains don't work out so well." Arguing this, James points out that one of the properties he bought from McGuire actually did make a "quick turnover," but Mary simply says, "I know. The famous one stroke of good luck." Then, reconsidering her words, she says, "Never mind, James. I know it's a waste of breath trying to convince you you're not a cunning real estate speculator."

*Although James and Mary are in seemingly good spirits, it's worth noting their inability to avoid confrontation. However small, this dispute about McGuire suggests that Mary resents James for buying so much land. Furthermore, when she says, "I know it's a waste of breath trying to convince you you're not a cunning real estate speculator," she reveals a certain kind of pessimism, or a worldview in which people are not only incapable of change, but also incapable of recognizing their own shortcomings, essentially living in denial of their flaws.*

The sound of coughing comes from the next room, and Mary tells James that he ought to be worried about the fact that Edmund isn't eating enough. "He needs to eat to keep up his strength," she says. "I keep telling him that but he says he simply has no appetite. Of course, there's nothing takes away your appetite like a bad summer cold." James agrees that loss of appetite is "only natural" when a person has a summer cold, adding, "So don't let yourself get worried." In turn, she assures him she's not too worried, though she remarks that it's a "shame" he's sick "right now." "Yes, it is bad luck," replies James, casting a worried look in her direction. "But you mustn't let it upset you, Mary. Remember, you've got to take care of yourself, too."

*In this moment, James's love for his wife comes to the forefront, as he worries in a vague way about her nervousness. Indeed, although the audience doesn't yet know why he goes out of his way to make sure Mary isn't too stressed about Edmund's illness, it's clear that something has unsettled him. This, it seems, is yet another indication that he—and perhaps Mary herself—is troubled by something that has happened in the past, which is why he wants to do what he can to keep Mary from getting "upset." At the same time, this approach seems to encourage her to deny difficult feelings—a way of coping that is problematic in and of itself.*

Defensively, Mary says she isn't "upset," and asks James what would make him think otherwise. "Why, nothing, except you've seemed a bit high-strung the past few days," he answers, but she tells him this is merely his imagination. "You really must not watch me all the time, James. I mean, it makes me self-conscious," she says. In response, he tells her he hasn't been monitoring her, then adds, "I can't tell you the deep happiness it gives me, darling, to see you as you've been since you came back to us, your dear old self again. So keep up the good work, Mary."

*When Mary tells James that he shouldn't "watch" her so closely because it makes her feel "self-conscious," O'Neill suggests that whatever has taken place in the past for the Tyrone family has affected the ways in which they interact with one another. As James tries to pay attention to his wife, she finds herself resenting his attention. This is because his scrutiny perhaps makes her feel guilty for putting him through such emotional turmoil. In turn, though, she essentially makes* him *feel guilty for not leaving her alone. As such, the audience sees even in this early stage of the play the cycles of guilt that circulate throughout the Tyrone family's relational dynamic.*

Mary tells James she'll "keep up the good work," then admits she *does* feel "out of sorts." "I wasn't able to get much sleep with that awful **foghorn** going all night long," she says, expressing how glad she is that she fog seems to have lifted.

*As she complains about the grating effects of a nearby foghorn, Mary's nervous sensibility surfaces once again. By showing the audience how easily she can be unraveled by a rather ordinary occurrence, O'Neill suggests that whatever ailment Mary has suffered in the past might be easily awoken, thereby lacing a sense of dread and pessimism through the play.*

Again, Mary and James hear their sons laughing in the next room, and James grouchily assumes the joke is about him. Nonetheless, Mary says it's "a relief to hear Edmund laugh," regardless of the joke. Ignoring this, James fixates on the idea that his sons are laughing at him, suggesting that Jamie must have told a mean joke. "Now don't start in on poor Jamie, dear," Mary says. "He'll turn out all right in the end, you wait and see." In response, James says that Jamie is "nearly thirty-four" and, thus, doesn't have much time to "turn out all right."

*The familial tensions that run throughout the Tyrone clan are readily apparent in this moment. Indeed, one might argue that James is misplacing his stress by berating his son, Jamie. Unsettled by Mary's recent nervousness—a sign that she might be headed for disaster—he focuses his own restless energy on his sons, ultimately blaming them for his own discontent.*

Jamie and Edmund finally enter. Jamie is thirty-three and resembles his father, but his appearance is remarkably worse, since he "lacks his father's vitality" and "the signs of premature disintegration are on him." Edmund, for his part, is ten years younger but looks frail and sickly. He resembles both parents, but has a stronger likeness to his mother, mostly because of his visible nervousness. As they enter, Mary asks why Jamie is staring at her. "Is my hair coming down?" she asks. "Your hair's all right, Mama. I was only thinking how well you look." When he says this, James and Edmund heartily agree.

*When Jamie scrutinizes his mother, it becomes obvious that James isn't the only one in the family who is worried about her. In fact, all three Tyrone men are apparently concerned about her well-being, as evidenced by the way they emphasize "how well" she looks. Given that they're so eager to reassure her, it's clear that whatever ailment has plagued Mary in the past is most likely emotional or psychological, since it seems related to her mood. Otherwise, her family members wouldn't try so hard to keep her in good spirits.*

Edmund and Mary talk about the fact that James is a loud snorer, and Jamie agrees, saying, "The Moor, I know his trumpet." Defensively, James replies, "If it takes my snoring to make you remember Shakespeare instead of the dope sheet on the ponies, I hope I'll keep on with it." In response, Mary tells him not to be so "touchy," and Edmund chimes in, saying, "The first thing after breakfast! Give it a rest, can't you?" However, Mary then says, "Your father wasn't finding fault with you. You don't have to always take Jamie's part."

*In this quick back-and-forth, Mary both mocks and defends her husband, instantly switching allegiances when Edmund chastises his father for being so sensitive. This, it seems, is simply the way the Tyrone family operates. Constantly finding their way into arguments, they blame one another for small things, then retract what they've said because they feel guilty.*

Uninterested in the family's blossoming argument, Jamie says, "Let's forget it," but James immediately jumps down his throat, saying, "Yes, forget! Forget everything and face nothing! It's a convenient philosophy if you've no ambition in life except to—" Before he can finish, Mary cuts him off and changes the subject by asking her sons what they were laughing about earlier. Edmund then launches into a story, telling his parents about an encounter he had at the local Inn with an Irish tenant who lives on one of James's properties. Before he can begin, Mary tells him in a concerned voice that he shouldn't be drinking, but he ignores her and pushes on, saying that this tenant has been letting his pigs swim in his millionaire neighbor's pond. When the millionaire confronted him about this, the tenant accused him of coaxing the pigs into his pond to kill them.

*Once again, the Tyrones prove themselves incapable of avoiding conflict with one another. James is especially sensitive, clearly savoring any opportunity to criticize Jamie for not having enough "ambition in life." What's more, it's worth noting that Mary interrupts Edmund's story to tell him he shouldn't be drinking because of his "summer cold." As such, the audience realizes that Mary isn't the only person the family worries about. Indeed, Mary herself knows what it's like to love someone intensely and fret about their demise, as made clear by her insistence that Edmund avoid alcohol while he's sick.*

As Jamie laughs with the others at Edmund's story, James turns on him and tells him to stop laughing, scolding him for being a lazy worker. This annoys everyone present, and they all tell him to stop criticizing Jamie. Edmund, for his part, stomps upstairs to read a book, and Mary tells James not to "mind" him because he "isn't well," though she quickly adds, "A summer cold makes anyone irritable." Hearing this, Jamie says, "It's not just a cold he's got. The Kid is damned sick." As he says this, his father shoots him a "sharp warning look," but he fails to intercept it. With resentment, Mary says, "Why do you say that? It *is* just a cold! Anyone can tell that!" Quickly interjecting, James suggests that Jamie simply meant Edmund "might have a touch of something else, too, which makes his cold worse."

*Again, the Tyrone family proves that it is especially prone to unnecessary conflicts, ones in which family members turn on each other quickly and without warning. What's more, it becomes clear that Mary doesn't want to consider the fact that Edmund might have something more than a "summer cold." Indeed, she would rather deny this possibility, and James is all too willing to indulge this emotional reflex. This is because he himself is worried that any bad news might unhinge his wife. As such, he protects her from reality by trying to undo the harsh effect of Jamie's realistic outlook.*

Pushing on, James says that Doctor Hardy thinks Edmund might have malarial fever from working in the tropics. "Doctor Hardy!" Mary scoffs. "I wouldn't believe a thing he said, if he swore on a stack of Bibles! I know what doctors are. They're all alike. Anything, they don't care what, to keep you coming to them." Stopping short, she sees her husband and son staring at her. "What is it?" she asks. "What are you looking at? Is my hair—?" Cutting her off, James comes to her and assures her that she looks fine, teasing her by saying that she's simply fishing for compliments. This eventually encourages her to speak longingly about how beautiful her hair used to be, and then she departs, saying she must go talk to the cook about dinner. On her way out, she reminds James not to make Edmund do any work.

*Once more, Mary demonstrates her wish to deny that Edmund might be seriously ill. By discounting Doctor Hardy, she attempts to erase all likelihood of Edmund having something more than a simple "summer cold." As she goes on her rant about Hardy, Jamie and James stare at her uneasily, as if they can't help but worry about her state of agitation. As such, they quickly try to reassure her that everything's all right when she realizes they're scrutinizing her. Yet again, then, O'Neill demonstrates how Mary's family members try to hide the fact that they're worried about her reverting to her old ways (though he hasn't yet revealed what those ways are).*

"You're a fine lunkhead!" James says to Jamie when Mary leaves. "The one thing to avoid is saying anything that would get her more upset over Edmund." Jamie shrugs at this, saying, "Have it your way. I think it's the wrong idea to let Mama go on kidding herself. It will only make the shock worse when she has to face it. Anyway, you can see she's deliberately fooling herself with that summer cold talk. She knows better." He continues by admitting he doesn't believe Doctor Hardy really thinks Edmund has malaria. "He couldn't say anything for sure yet," James says in reference to a conversation he had with the doctor the day before. "He's to phone me today before Edmund goes to him." "He thinks it's consumption, doesn't he, Papa?" Jamie asks, and James says, "He said it might be."

*Despite the fact that Jamie is—according to his father, at least—lazy and unaccomplished, he at least understands the value of acknowledging the truth. Instead of simply letting his mother deny the possible reality of Edmund's illness, he wants to make her "face it" so that she isn't "shock[ed]" later on. Unfortunately, though, he exists in a family that doesn't believe in handling problems this way, and so he's forced to go along with the charade that Edmund only has a "summer cold."*

Pained to hear his brother might have consumption, Jamie says that this might never have happened if James had sent Edmund to a "real doctor when he first got sick." Defensively, James asks what's wrong with Doctor Hardy, and Jamie upholds that the man is a "cheap old quack." After telling his son that he has no excuse to speak so disparagingly of others, since he's not drunk, James says, "If you mean I can't afford one of the fine society doctors who prey on the rich summer people—" At this, Jamie interrupts, saying, "Can't afford? You're one of the biggest property owners around here." Nonetheless, James claims that this doesn't mean he's rich, since his houses are all mortgaged. "Because you always buy more instead of paying off mortgages," Jamie says. "If Edmund was a lousy acre of land you wanted, the sky would be the limit!"

*Jamie's reaction to the possibility of bad news is worth noting, for it is a perfect example of how the Tyrones deal with misfortune. Although he believes in acknowledging harsh realities, he still adopts an escapist attitude when it comes to truly confronting difficult issues. Indeed, rather than making peace with the fact that Edmund might have consumption—otherwise known as tuberculosis—he immediately blames his father by saying that none of this would have happened if James had spent money on a better doctor. This essentially takes his mind off the situation at hand, ultimately manufacturing a superficial conflict that he can focus on instead of thinking about Edmund's illness. As such, the use of blame becomes a method of emotional denial.*

When James starts to argue against Jamie's accusations of his cheapness, Jamie tells him to stop, saying he knows he "can't change the leopard's spots." In response, James says he knows this all too well, since he himself has "lost all hope" that Jamie will make something of himself. "You've never saved a dollar in your life!" he says. "At the end of each season you're penniless! You've thrown your salary away every week on whores and whiskey!" He then says that if Jamie weren't his son, no one in the acting business would give him a part. In his own defense, Jamie says he never wanted to be an actor in the first place, but that James forced him to do it. In turn, James says he only did that because Jamie couldn't get any other job.

*It's clear that the argument James and Jamie have about Jamie's pathetic career is yet another form of denial. Eager to avoid any kind of true consideration of Edmund's illness, they blame each other for other misfortunes. In turn, they distract themselves from the matter at hand.*

Jamie tells James not to "drag up" "ancient history," but James upholds that it's not "ancient history" because his son "has to come home every summer" to live with him. Eventually, Jamie says, "All right, Papa. I'm a bum. Anything you like, so long as it stops the argument." Returning to their conversation about Doctor Hardy, James says he couldn't have found Edmund a better doctor, since Hardy has treated the boy since he was a child. Speaking regretfully about Edmund, he says that he has "deliberately ruined his health by the mad life he's led ever since he was fired from college." Going on, he says, "Even before that when he was in prep school, he began dissipating and playing the Broadway sport to imitate you, when he's never had your constitution to stand it."

*Although James and Jamie have purposefully—though unknowingly—found their way into this argument, they eventually tire of it. This is why Jamie tells his father to stop referencing things that have happened in their tumultuous past. Once he stops the argument, then, it's unsurprising that the two men are forced to return to their original conversation about Edmund, since they have exhausted their distraction. Interestingly enough, though, one gets the sense that they have genuinely forgiven each other for the nasty things they said throughout the course of their argument, a fact that suggests they're quite accustomed to these kinds of disputes.*

Picking up on the fact that his father is speaking about Edmund as if he's a goner, Jamie begins to talk about the power of modern medicine. Before he can finish, his father tells him he knows this, eventually suggesting that they should stop talking about Edmund. "The less you say about Edmund's sickness, the better for your conscience! You're more responsible than anyone!" he says. This, he argues, is because Jamie was a terrible influence, making the boy "old before his time" and "pumping him full of what [Jamie] consider[s] worldy wisdom." In turn, Jamie admits that he did "put Edmund wise to things," but only because he saw that the boy had already started to "raise hell."

*The peace that James and Jamie have just managed to strike only lasts for several moments, as James immediately accuses Jamie of corrupting Edmund. As such, the audience sees how volatile their relationship is, even when they've decided to stop "drag[ing] up" "ancient history."*

After a moment, Jamie says, "That's a rotten accusation, Papa. You know how much the Kid means to me." Moved, James says, "I know you may have thought it was for the best, Jamie. I didn't say you did it deliberately to harm him." Jamie then points out that there's nothing anyone could really do to influence Edmund anyway, since he's surprisingly stubborn. "What had I to do with all the crazy stunts he's pulled in the last few years—working his way all over the map as a sailor and all that stuff. I thought that was a damned fool idea, and I told him so." Going on, he says that he himself likes to "stick to Broadway, and a room with a bath, and bars that serve bonded Bourbon."

*Once more, James and Jamie make up, forgiving one another despite the vehemence they've just displayed. What's more, when Jamie says that no one could possibly influence Edmund, he destabilizes the notion that it's possible to blame someone for another person's shortcomings. In turn, O'Neill suggests that people are ultimately responsible for their own actions, despite how hard they—or others—might try to shift culpability onto their loved ones.*

Wanting to say something nice about Edmund, James remarks that his son has been doing well working for the local newspaper, but Jamie instantly says, "A hick town rag! Whatever bull they hand you, they tell me he's a pretty bum reporter." Then, ashamed, he says, "No, that's not true! They're glad to have him, but it's the special stuff that gets him by. Some of the poems and parodies he's written are damned good." James agrees that Edmund has "made a start," pointing out that Jamie himself used to want to be a newspaper man but never wanted to "start at the bottom," to which Jamie replies, "Oh, for Christ's sake, Papa! Can't you lay off me!"

*Again, James and Jamie cycle through yet another revolution of blame and forgiveness. This time, though, it's worth noting that Jamie appears somewhat jealous of Edmund's relative success, which is why he's so eager to diminish his little brother's accomplishments. At the same time, though, he feels guilty for disparaging Edmund, suggesting that—despite his enviousness—he ultimately loves his brother.*

Switching course, James says that it's "damnable luck" that Edmund is sick "right now." "It couldn't have come at a worse time for him," he says. "Or for your mother. It's damnable she should have this to upset her, just when she needs peace and freedom from worry. She's been so well in the two months since she came home." He goes on to say that "this time" Mary's strength and confidence is evident. "She's a different woman entirely from the other times," he says, suggesting that she has "control of her nerves." Or, he says, she did up until Edmund fell ill. "Now you can feel her growing tense and frightened underneath," he says. "I wish to God we could keep the truth from her, but we can't if he has to be sent to a sanatorium."

*When James says that Mary seems "a different woman entirely from the other times," he reveals that she has gone through the same hardship multiple times. Although the audience still doesn't know what, exactly, Mary struggles with, it's now quite clear that it has to do with her "nerves" and her ability—or inability—to stay calm. This is why James wants to "keep the truth" of Edmund's illness from her, ultimately wanting to keep her in denial because he thinks she will unravel if she has to confront reality.*

James points out that the situation with Edmund is made worse by the fact that Mary's father died of consumption. Nonetheless, he states his belief that Mary can find the willpower to cope with the bad news if Edmund does indeed have consumption. "Of course, Papa," Jamie says. "Outside of nerves, she seems perfectly all right this morning." Immediately, James asks why Jamie used the word "seems," asking him "what the hell" he means. Jamie then tells him he heard Mary get up late the night before. "Well, you know how it is," he says, "I can't forget the past. I can't help being suspicious." Going on, he says, "Around three o'clock this morning, I woke up and heard her moving around in the spare room. Then she went to the bathroom. I pretended to be asleep."

*When Jamie says that he "can't forget the past" and "can't help being suspicious," the audience understands why the Tyrones are constantly scrutinizing Mary—they are closely attuned to her because she has previously demonstrated a seeming inability to remain stable. At this point, it begins to become obvious that the ailment Mary struggles with most likely has to do with addiction. After all, there are very few other reasons why her family members would be so "suspicious" of the fact that she's walking around at night. Indeed, Jamie seems afraid that his mother's "nerves" are going to encourage her to sneak off on her own and use drugs in the dead of night.*

"She told me herself the foghorn kept her awake all night, and every night since Edmund's been sick she's been up and down, going to his room to see how he was," James says, to which Jamie replies, "It was her being in the spare room that scared me. I couldn't help remembering that when she starts sleeping alone in there, it has always been a sign—" Vehemently interrupting, James yells, "It isn't this time! It's easily explained. Where else could she go last night to get away from my snoring?"

*In the same way that James wants to help Mary deny the frightening possibility that Edmund is seriously ill, he himself desperately wants to deny the fact that his wife is about to relapse. This is why he yells at Jamie for being suspicious of Mary. Indeed, he buys into Mary's narrative about the foghorn keeping her awake, ultimately enabling himself to avoid confronting the possibility that she's using drugs again.*

Despite his outbreak, James considers the story Jamie has just told him, saying, "It would be like a curse [Mary] can't escape if worry over Edmund—It was in her long sickness after bringing him into the world that she first—" Jamie cuts him off here, offended by the idea that James is blaming Mary for her own troubles. "I'm not blaming her," James insists, but Jamie asks, "Then who are you blaming? Edmund, for being born?" By way of response, James says, "You damned fool! No one was to blame." Nevertheless, Jamie suggests that the doctor his father hired to deliver Edmund was to blame, saying that he was "another cheap quack like Hardy." "So I'm to blame!" James says. "That's what you're driving at, is it? You evil-minded loafer!"

*Throughout* Long Day's Journey into Night, *characters often begin to say something fraught and disturbing, but stop before they finish. This creates a sense of mystery and vagueness that illustrates just how unwilling the family members are to acknowledge hardship. However, it's possible to infer what they mean when they begin certain sentences. For example, when James says, "It would be like a curse [Mary] can't escape if worry over Edmund—It was in her long sickness after bringing him into the world that she first—," it's reasonable to assume that Mary's ailment first started when Edmund was born. What's more, the fact that the process of Edmund's birth brought on a "long sickness" suggests that Mary was most likely in pain. In turn, the audience can intuit that she was given pain-killing drugs, and from here it's obvious that this must be how she became addicted in the first place. This is why James finds irony in the idea that Mary might relapse as a result of worrying about Edmund, whom he underhandedly suggests was the reason for her addiction in the first place. In this way, he once again uses blame to help himself cope with a difficult situation. Jamie, for his part, resents his father for making such ghastly implications. However, he proceeds by blaming James for hiring an incompetent doctor to treat Mary, ultimately casting blame onto his father in the same way that James tries to blame Edmund for Mary's addiction.*

Suddenly, Jamie shushes his father because Mary has entered the room. "Well," he says as a cover-up, "if we're going to cut the front hedge today, we'd better go to work." When Mary advances into the room, she asks what her husband and son were arguing about, and Jamie claims was simply suggesting that Doctor Hardy isn't his "idea of the world's greatest physician"—an opinion Mary agrees with before urging them both to go about their business outside to "take advantage of the sunshine before **the fog** comes back." Before the two men leave, Jamie tells his mother he's proud of her and that she has to be "careful." "You mustn't worry so much about Edmund. He'll be all right," he says. "Of course, he'll be all right," she replies. "And I don't know what you mean, warning me to be careful."

*Mary's obsession with the fog seems to correlate with her nerves, as she is apparently incapable of ignoring the possibility of its return. In this way, it is similar to her family's fear that she is going to relapse. Indeed, the Tyrones all have pessimistic attitudes that cause them to resign themselves to the possibility of a bleak future. This is why Jamie goes out of his way to tell his mother she shouldn't worry about Edmund so much, though it's worth noting that this goes against what he said earlier about not hiding the truth from Mary. By spotlighting this contradiction, O'Neill shows the audience that how hard it is for loved ones to decide what's best for one another.*

On his way out, Jamie apologizes for telling Mary to be careful, and then he and James exit. Once alone, Mary sits in a chair, "her face betraying a frightened, furtive desperation." After a moment, Edmund enters and admits that he waited until his father and brother went outside because he feels "too rotten" to argue with them. "Oh," Mary says, "I'm sure you don't feel half as badly as you make out. You're such a baby. You like to get us worried so we'll make a fuss over you." Laughing, she tells him she's only teasing, instantly soothing him and telling him she'll take care of him, though he says that she should focus on caring for herself.

*Once more, Mary goes out of her way to diminish the severity of Edmund's illness. When she says that he's "a baby" who simply wants attention, it's clear she's simply trying to convince herself that she need not worry about him. This attitude is somewhat self-centered, since Mary tries to dismiss her worries for her own sake instead of acknowledging what Edmund is actually going through.*

Looking out the window, Mary comments on their neighbors, whom she sees passing in a Mercedes. "People like them stand for something," she tells Edmund. "I mean they have decent, presentable homes they don't have to be ashamed of. They have friends who entertain them and whom they entertain. They're not cut off from everyone." Turning from the window, she adds, "Not that I want anything to do with them. I've always hated this town and everyone in it. You know that. I never wanted to live here in the first place, but your father liked it and insisted on building this house, and I've had to come here very summer." Trying to placate her, Edmund tells his mother that living here is "better than spending the summer in a New York hotel," but Mary upholds that she's never felt like this was her home.

*When Mary praises her neighbors and says they have "decent, presentable homes they don't have to be ashamed of," she reveals her desire to live in a house she truly believes is her own. What's more, she also implies that she feels lonely and isolated, as made evident by the fact that she jealously says her neighbors aren't "cut off from everyone." Strangely enough, though, she then goes out of her way to uphold that she doesn't actually want what her neighbors have. As such, O'Neill suggests that what Mary truly wants is to get rid of her own loneliness. Because this has nothing to do with living in "decent, presentable homes," though, she'll never be able to shake her feelings of isolation.*

"It was wrong from the start," Mary says about the family's summer house. "Everything was done in the cheapest way. Your father would never spend the money to make it right." This, she claims, is why she's never been able to have friends. She also believes it's why Edmund and Jamie have never been able to entertain respectable women—they don't have a presentable home. In response, Edmund says it's unfair to blame everything on James, since even if he had wanted to change things, he would have had a hard time because of her habits. "Don't," Mary says. "I can't bear having you remind me." Edmund insists that he's trying to help, "Because it's bad for you to forget. The right way is to remember. So you'll always be on your guard. You know what's happened before."

*In this conversation, Edmund recognizes the detrimental emotional effects of using blame to avoid thinking about one's own shortcomings. Telling his mother it's "bad for [her] to forget" about her addiction, he encourages her to "remember" what she's been through in the past. This, he intuits, is the only way to keep herself on "guard." Blaming James, Edmund suggests, will only make it easier for Mary to avoid taking responsibility for her own actions and, in doing so, slip back into her old habits.*

"God, Mama, you know I hate to remind you," Edmund says to Mary, maintaining that he's only doing it for her own good. In response, she says she doesn't know why he's speaking this way, asking why he and everyone else is "so suspicious all of a sudden." "It makes it so much harder, living in this atmosphere of constant suspicion, knowing everyone is spying on me, and none of you believe in me, or trust me," she says.

*Although it may be true that her family members' suspicions make it "harder" for her to remain sober, it seems in this moment that Mary is purposefully guilt-tripping her son for encouraging her to acknowledge her history of addiction. By making Edmund feel ashamed for bringing up her troubled past, she essentially forces him to trust her. This, it's worth noting, is exactly what a person who is on the verge of relapsing might do in order to avoid scrutiny.*

Edmund tells Mary that he, Jamie, and James *do* trust her, but that they worry about her. Still, she laments the fact that none of them feel comfortable leaving her alone, and then she "insist[s]" that Edmund tell her why he seems so "suspicious" of her this morning. "It's stupid," he says. "It's just that I wasn't asleep when you came in my room last night. You didn't go back to your and Papa's room. You went in the spare room for the rest of the night." This, she says, is because of James's snoring. "For heaven's sake," she adds, "haven't I often used the spare room as my bedroom? But I see what you thought. That was when—" Guilty, Edmund cuts her off to insist that he wasn't suggesting anything, but she doesn't believe him. "It would serve all of you right if it was true!" she says.

*When Mary says, "That was when—," O'Neill once again provides the audience with only the first half of a sentence that would undoubtedly be fraught with meaning if it were to be finished. He does this in order to emphasize the extent of the Tyrone family's denial. Indeed, Mary is hesitant to talk about her addiction, and even Edmund—who supposedly believes such matters must not be forgotten—is perfectly happy to cut his mother off so he doesn't have to hear her talk about her troubled past. Of course, this willingness also has to do with the fact that his mother has shamed him for "suspecting" her. Suddenly, he is eager to convince her that he trusts her, though it's obvious he should not, since she says it would "serve" her loved ones right if their suspicions were true.*

Edmund tells his mother not to say such morbid things, saying, "That's the way you talk when—." Before he can finish, though, she says, "Stop suspecting me! Please, dear! You hurt me!" She then says that she simply couldn't sleep because she was worried about his sickness, and he tells her that he simply has a "bad cold." However, he also says that he wants her to promise that she won't revert to her old ways if his illness turns out to be more serious, but she refuses to hear this, saying, "I won't listen when you're so silly! There's absolutely no reason to talk as if you expected something dreadful." Even so, she gives him her "sacred word of honor" that she will continue to take care of herself. "But I suppose you're remembering I've promised before on my word of honor," she adds.

*Mary is quite good at making her loved ones feel bad about watching her closely. In fact, she's a bit too good at this for someone who supposedly has nothing to hide. Indeed, she shames Edmund into pretending as if he doesn't "suspect" her, telling him that he is "hurt[ing]" her. What's more, she blames his sickness for her uneasiness, claiming that she's out of sorts because she's worried about him—a statement that no doubt makes him feel even worse about himself. By doing this, she encourages him to leave her alone, ultimately enabling herself the kind of autonomy and privacy she would need if she were to relapse without her family finding out. In short, she plays on her son's love as a way of manipulating his trust.*

Once more, Edmund insists he doesn't suspect Mary, but she ignores him, saying she can't blame him. "How can any one of us forget? That's what makes it so hard—for all of us. We can't forget." Changing the subject, she says she feels "tired and nervous this morning," saying she "ought to go upstairs and lie down." At this, Edmund "gives her an instinctive look of suspicion" and then quickly looks away, ashamed. "Or are you afraid to trust me alone?" she says. "No!" he replies. "Can't you stop talking like that! I think you ought to take a nap." He then goes outside to lie in the shade and watch Jamie work. Once he's gone, Mary sits and drums her fingers against the armrest before leaning forward in "a fit of nervous panic," her eyes wide and her hands "driven by an insistent life of their own."

*In this final moment of Act One, it is overwhelmingly obvious that Mary is purposefully manipulating Edmund by making him feel guilty for "suspecting" her of relapsing. When she declares that she wants to go upstairs alone—a telltale sign that she's planning to use drugs—she says, "Or are you afraid to trust me alone?" In doing so, she forces Edmund to act like he does indeed "trust" her. Given the tormented way she behaves after he leaves, though, it's clear she's about to do exactly what he fears.*

## ACT TWO, SCENE ONE

Around noon on the same day, Edmund is sitting alone in the parlor when Cathleen, one of the housekeepers, enters with a bottle of whiskey. After Edmund tells her to fetch Jamie and James for lunch, she guesses aloud that he'll sneak a drink before they arrive. "Now you suggest it," he says, turning to the bottle. He then tells Cathleen to wake up Mary, but the housekeeper tells him his mother hasn't been sleeping, but "lying down in the spare room with her eyes wide open." Disconcerted, Edmund says, "Oh well then, just call my father." When Cathleen leaves, he quickly grabs the whiskey and pours himself a drink, then arranges himself to look like he's simply been reading as Jamie walks in.

*It's relatively unsurprising that Mary hasn't been napping, but rather lying on the bed with her "eyes wide open." This, it seems, is yet another indication that she has relapsed after manipulating Edmund to stop monitoring her every move. On another note, it's worth paying attention to the irony of Edmund's concern about his mother's addiction, considering that he seems to have a vice of his own: drinking. Indeed, by sneaking a glass of whiskey, he takes part in a similar kind of furtive activity.*

Looking at the whiskey, Jamie—who was not followed inside by his father—says, "Sneaking one, eh?" Smiling, Edmund admits that he did in fact have a drink. Moving toward the bottle himself, Jamie says that James is outside talking to Captain Turner, and when he's finished stealing some whiskey for himself, he fills the bottle back to its original level with water. "Listen, Kid," he says, sitting down. "You know me. I've never lectured you, but Doctor Hardy was right when he told you to cut out the redeye." In response, Edmund assures his brother he's going to stop drinking after Hardy delivers him the bad news during their appointment that afternoon. "I'm glad you've got your mind prepared for bad news," Jamie says. "It won't be such a jolt."

*Once again, Jamie reveals his belief that people ought to acknowledge the truth, even when it's difficult. This is why he's glad to hear that Edmund is "prepared for bad news." Unfortunately, Mary is apparently incapable of adopting this kind of mindset. What's more, it's somewhat ironic that Edmund tries so hard to combat denial, considering that his claim that he'll stop drinking seems like a lie he's telling himself in order to continue his bad habit.*

"Where's Mama?" Jamie asks, suddenly looking about himself. When Edmund tells him that Mary is upstairs, Jamie is visibly unsettled. "Is she coming down to lunch?" he asks, to which Edmund says, "Of course." "No of course about it," Jamie replies. "She might not want any lunch. Or she might start having most of her meals alone upstairs. That's happened, hasn't it?" Hearing this, Edmund shows "frightened resentment" and tells his brother to stop "suspect[ing]" their mother. "You damned fool!" Jamie explodes. "Why did you leave her alone so long? Why didn't you stick around?" "Because she accused me—and you and Papa—of spying on her all the time and not trusting her," Edmund answers. "She made me feel ashamed."

*In this conversation, Edmund admits that his mother has shamed him into leaving her alone. Only now, it seems, does he fully recognize the fact that she has manipulated him. And yet, he defends himself, angry that his brother would imply that he should have been more responsible. After all, Mary is clearly quite adept at deceiving her loved ones, and so it isn't fair that Jamie should chastise Edmund for succumbing to her tricks.*

"Listen, Kid," Jamie says, "I know you think I'm a cynical bastard, but remember I've seen a lot more of this game than you have. You never knew what was really wrong until you were in prep school. Papa and I kept it from you. But I was wise ten years or more before we had to tell you." He goes on to say that he hopes he's wrong, but that he has good reason to be suspicious of Mary. At this point, the two brothers hear their mother coming downstairs, and Jamie takes this as a sign that she hasn't succumbed, saying, "I guess I'm a damned suspicious louse." However, when she appears in the parlor, Jamie "knows after one probing look at her that his suspicions are justified."

*When Jamie says he has "seen a lot more of this game than" Edmund, he reminds his brother that there's a history to their mother's addiction. Indeed, Jamie has witnessed Mary's troubles time and again, and this makes it difficult for him to have faith in her ability to stay clean. Unfortunately, this distrustful attitude turns out to be "justified" when Mary appears in the living room, at which point Jamie can tell that she has relapsed.*

Edmund, for his part, doesn't notice that Mary is less nervous and that her eyes are brighter. In fact, he doesn't even notice the "detachment in her voice and manner" that Jamie immediately picks up on. When he asks if she feels rested, she says, "Yes, ever so much better. I've been lying down ever since you went out. It's what I needed after such a restless night. I don't feel nervous now." Catching Jamie's scornful look, she asks what's bothering him, and when he doesn't answer, she remembers aloud that he's been doing yardwork. "That accounts for your sinking into the dumps, doesn't it?" she says. "If you want to think so, Mama," he replies. Mary then asks where James is, and Edmund tells her he's wasting his time talking to Captain Turner.

*Although it's obvious—to Jamie, at least—that Mary has relapsed, she decides to keep up her act of innocence. As such, she tells herself that Jamie is in a bad mood because he had to do yardwork, though she should know that the real reason he's angry is because he knows she has relapsed. Because she doesn't want to admit this, though, she tells herself this phony story, oddly keeping up her charade of denial even after she has given herself over to addiction once again.*

Jamie makes a joke at his father's expense, and Mary chastises him for not respecting James enough. "Stop sneering at your father! I won't have it! You ought to be proud you're his son! He may have his faults. Who hasn't? But he's worked hard all his life. He made his way up from ignorance and poverty to the top of his profession!" At this point, Edmund asks his mother why she's badgering Jamie so much, and she says she doesn't like the way he's "always looking for the worst weakness in everyone." Then, she adds, "But I suppose life has made him like that, and he can't help it."

*When Mary says that "life has made" Jamie look "for the worst weakness in everyone," she implies that change is impossible. Indeed, she even says that her son "can't help" acting like this, ultimately framing growth as impossible. As such, she reveals her fatalistic worldview and the belief that a person's past is inescapable. This, of course, is yet another way to avoid having to reckon with her own problems, since this interpretation of life makes it easy for her to believe there's nothing to be done about her addiction.*

As Edmund, Jamie, and Mary wait for James, they grow impatient. Mary, for her part, goes on a rant about the fact that their servants are incompetent because they're only seasonal residents. "Every year I have stupid, lazy greenhorns to deal with. But you've heard me say this a thousand times. So has [James], but it goes in one ear and out the other. He thinks money spent on a home is money wasted. He's lived too much in hotels. Never the best hotels, of course. Second-rate hotels." Trying to look into her eyes, Edmund says, "What makes you ramble on like that, Mama?" Patting his cheek, she tells him there's no particular reason for her chattiness.

*As Mary goes on a rant about her husband being too cheap to invest in a real house, she once again implies that a large part of her discontent has to do with the fact that she doesn't feel at home anywhere. In turn, this unprompted monologue alerts Edmund to the strange way she's acting, and he begins to realize that something is amiss.*

Edmund gets up and goes to summon James. Meanwhile, Jamie stares resentfully at Mary, who asks him why he's looking at her so menacingly. "Oh, for God's sake, do you think you can fool me, Mama? I'm not blind." In response, she tells him she has no idea what he's talking about, and before they can finish their conversation, Edmund returns and says he "got [James] moving." Then, pausing, he asks his mother what's wrong. "Your brother ought to be ashamed of himself. He's been insinuating I don't know what," she says. "God damn you!" Edmund yells at Jamie, advancing upon him angrily even as his brother turns his back and shrugs. Stopping Edmund, Mary grabs him and says, "It's wrong to blame your brother. He can't help being what the past has made him. Any more than your father can. Or you. Or I."

*Once again, Mary tries to evade her family's scrutiny by shaming anyone who is suspicious of her. Of course, this time Jamie actually has a right to be suspicious, since it's clear she has finally relapsed. Nonetheless, she clings to this manipulative tactic, ultimately pitting Edmund against Jamie in order to take attention away from her drug use. However, when Edmund comes to her defense, she immediately feels guilty. As such, she reiterates her fatalistic idea that people can't change themselves, suggesting that the "past" has made them all the people they are, for better or worse.*

Disconcerted by what his mother has just said, Edmund says, "He's a liar! It's a lie, isn't it, Mama?" "What is a lie?" Mary responds. "Now you're talking in riddles like Jamie." Then, when she looks up at him, she says, "Edmund! Don't!" As James walks up the steps outside, Edmund slumps dejectedly in a chair. Still, though, he refuses to admit anything. "Well?" Jamie says to him, but he merely answers, "Well, what? You're a liar. Here's Papa. I hope he loosens up with the old bottle."

*At this point, it's obvious that Edmund knows his mother has relapsed, but he's unwilling to admit it. As such, he plunges into denial, unable to reckon with the idea that his mother has manipulated him to do the very thing he was afraid she'd do.*

Entering, James apologizes for being late, claiming that Captain Turner wouldn't stop talking. Without turning, Jamie can tell his father is examining the whiskey. "It's all right," he says. "The level in the bottle hasn't changed." "I wasn't noticing that," James says. "As if it proved anything with you around. I'm on to your tricks." From his chair, Edmund interrupts to say, "Did I hear you say, let's all have a drink?" Frowning, James says Jamie is free to have some whiskey, but that Edmund shouldn't because of what Doctor Hardy has advised. "To hell with Doctor Hardy!" Edmund says. "One isn't going to kill me." As such, James makes a display of "fake heartiness" and admits that a little bit of whiskey in moderation is good for the health. When Edmund dashes a large drink into his glass, though, he says, "I said, in moderation."

*Along with Edmund's denial regarding his mother's relapse comes a renewed desire to drink. In this way, O'Neill shows the audience that this young man—and, in truth, all of the Tyrones—deals with hardship by turning to substances. This, of course, does nothing to help Edmund come to terms with his mother's relapse, but he's content nonetheless to resign himself to alcoholism.*

The three Tyrone men drink their sizable glasses of whiskey. Sensing tension in the room, James looks around and asks what's wrong. "Why are you wearing that gloomy look on your mug?" he asks Jamie, who says, "You won't be singing a song yourself soon." At this moment, Mary—who had momentarily stepped out to speak with the cook—comes in and speaks in a distant, distracted way, eventually saying that she's "sick and tired of pretending this is a home." "You never have wanted [a home]," she says to James, "never since the day we were married! You should have remained a bachelor and lived in second-rate hotels and entertained your friends in barrooms! Then nothing would ever have happened." As everyone stares at her, it's evident James now knows that she has relapsed.

*Hoping to distract her family members from the fact that she's high, Mary chastises James for never providing her with a proper home. Worse, she even tries to blame him for her own misfortunes by saying that "nothing would ever have happened" if he didn't ask for her hand in marriage and then bring her along to live his untethered life.*

Seeing Edmund's empty glass, Mary tells her son he shouldn't be drinking. She then blames James for letting their son have alcohol. "How could you let him?" she asks. "Do you want to kill him? Don't you remember my father? He wouldn't stop after he was stricken. He said doctors were fools! He thought, like you, that whiskey is a good tonic!" After she says this, "a look of terror" passes over her face, and she says, "But, of course, there's no comparison at all."

*In this moment, audience members will recall that Mary's father died of consumption. The fact that Mary starts talking about him, then, indicates that she knows—on some level—that what Edmund has is more serious than a mere "summer cold." However, she instantly takes back what she said, trying hard to convince herself that "there's no comparison at all" between Edmund and her father.*

After a moment, Mary notices that the Tyrone men are staring at her. "Please stop staring!" she says. "One would think you were accusing me—." Cutting herself off, she says in a "pleading" tone, "James! You don't understand." James responds that he's been foolish to believe her in. "I don't know what you mean by 'believing in me.' All I've felt was distrust and spying and suspicion," she says. She then points out that he's having yet another drink and that he'll be fully drunk by nighttime. Switching gears, she says, "Oh, James, please! You don't understand! I'm so worried about Edmund! I'm so afraid he—" Before she can finish, though, James says he doesn't want to hear her excuses.

*Mary fluctuates rapidly between acknowledgement and denial. Interestingly enough, each acknowledgement she issues comes about somewhat involuntarily. Indeed, she seems incapable of containing these moments of partial confession, suddenly exploding with, "James! You don't understand" and other similar lines. However, the next thing she says is always some kind of denial. When this no longer proves effective, though, she says, "I'm so worried about Edmund!"—a pathetic attempt to blame her relapse on her son's illness.*

"James! I tried so hard! I tried so hard!" Mary says. "I suppose you did," he answers, rather moved despite his anger and disappointment. "For the love of God, why couldn't you have the strength to keep on?" Then, as if she's having a completely separate conversation, Mary says, "I don't know what you're talking about. Have the strength to keep on what?" "Never mind," James says as he exits the parlor. "It's no use now."

*Mary's insistence upon denying her relapse is absurd, considering that she also provides excuses for why she succumbed to her addiction. Nonetheless, she holds fast to her denials, and this depresses James, who eventually asserts that it's "no use" trying to reason with her. As such, he expresses his resignation, a defeatist attitude that oddly mirrors Mary's own assertion that people can't "help" what the past has "made" them.*

## ACT TWO, SCENE TWO

It is half an hour later, and the Tyrone family has just finished lunch. Mary is once again incredibly nervous, "as if the strain of sitting through lunch with [her family] ha[s] been too much for her." And yet, she is also even more "aloof" than she was before. As they enter the parlor, she is speaking without paying attention to her words, complaining about the servants and saying that this summer home isn't really a home. "No, it never can be now," James says. "But it was once, before you—" Mary interrupts, "Before I what?" Then there is a long silence, which she eventually breaks by insisting that her husband is wrong: the summer house has never home because he has spent the majority of his time in bars and clubs. Indeed, he has left her alone on many nights in cheap hotels.

*The fact of the matter is that not very much actually happens in* Long Day's Journey into Night. *The characters have the same arguments in the same place, and the only thing that truly changes is that they all become increasingly inebriated as time goes on. However, this is exactly the point of the play: O'Neill is interested in exploring the ways in which these family members—who do indeed love each other—can't avoid the same old disputes. When Mary and James come onstage in Act Two, Scene Two, then, it's unsurprising to hear them bickering about Mary's relapse and about James's cheapness. What's important, of course, is not necessarily the points they're making, but the cyclical way that they circulate between blaming one another and denying their own shortcomings.*

Switching tracks, Mary tells Edmund she's worried about him because he didn't eat lunch, and he sullenly promises he'll eat more in the future. Just then, the phone rings, and James steps into the hall to answer it, lying by saying he's expecting a call from McGuire. "He must have another piece of property on his list that no one would think of buying except your father," Mary says to her boys. "It doesn't matter any more, but it's always seemed to me your father could afford to keep on buying property but never to give me a home." From the hall, James can be heard saying hello to Doctor Hardy. In a sad voice, he concludes his conversation and returns. "That didn't sound like glad tidings," Edmund says, but James simply tells him that the doctor wanted to remind Edmund to see him at four in the afternoon.

*While Mary complains about James's unwillingness to provide her with a real home, she says, "It doesn't matter anymore." This is a noteworthy phrase, since it shows that she has given up on trying to get what she wants. This is partly because she thinks she'll never be able to change James, but it's also because she's using drugs again. As such, she doesn't care very much about the things that used to bother her.*

Mary uses this opportunity to say she doesn't trust Doctor Hardy because he's so cheap, suggesting that the only reason James likes him is because he's inexpensive. "He understands nothing!" she says. "And yet it was exactly the same type of cheap quack who first gave you the medicine—and you never knew what it was until too late! I hate doctors!" When she's finished with this tirade, Edmund tells her to stop talking, and she apologizes for being angry. "I'm going upstairs for a moment, if you'll excuse me. I have to fix my hair," she says. "Mary!" James says, desperately. "Yes, dear? What is it?" she answers. "You're welcome to come up and watch me if you're so suspicious." In response, James says, "As if that could do any good! You'd only postpone it."

*When Mary references the doctor who "first gave" James "the medicine," she hints at the fact that James hired a cheap doctor who gave them the very medication to which she would eventually become addicted. In doing so, she subtly blames him for her entire addiction, which is why Edmund tells her to stop talking.*

"Another shot in the arm!" Jamie says once his mother has gone upstairs, and Edmund tells him to "cut out that kind of talk." Even his father tells him not to be so harsh, but Jamie insists that what he said didn't mean he doesn't empathize with her. "I was merely putting bluntly what we all know, and have to live with now, again," he says. "The cures are no damned good except for a while. The truth is there is no cure and we've been saps to hope—They never come back!"

*Jamie wants to be "blunt" about the fact that Mary has relapsed, most likely because he has seen how futile it is to deny such matters. However, instead of empowering him, this acknowledgement of Mary's relapse only leads him toward resignation, causing him to believe there's nothing that will ever save his mother from her addiction. This, it should be noted, is hardly better than denial itself, since both emotional approaches fail to address the problem at hand.*

Edmund scolds Jamie for his pessimistic attitude. In turn, Jamie says that Edmund isn't so optimistic himself, pointing out that the young man loves morbid poetry and philosophy. At this point, James interrupts and says that both their lifestyles pale in comparison to religious devotion, though he himself is a bad Catholic. Still, he upholds that Mary might have been able to beat her addiction if she hadn't "denied her faith." "But what's the good of talk?" he says after a moment. "We've lived with this before and now we must again. There's no help for it. Only I wish she hadn't led me to hope this time. By God, I never will again!"

*Like Jamie, James has given himself over resignation. Although he implies that he thinks religious faith might have the power to help him and his wife, this belief is clearly not strong enough to convince him that Mary will ever be able to stop using drugs. "There's no help for it," he says, vowing never to "hope" again.*

Once more, Edmund takes issue with his family members' pessimism, suggesting that they shouldn't give up on Mary. "She can still stop," he says. "I'm going to talk to her." "You can't talk to her now," Jamie says, and his father agrees, adding, "Every day from now on, there'll be the same drifting away from us until by the end of each night—." Cutting him off, Edmund tells him to be quiet. "I'm going to get dressed," he says. "I'll make so much noise she can't suspect I've come to spy on her." He then stomps upstairs.

*In this moment, the name of the play begins to make sense. Indeed, James says that—from now on—Mary will drift away throughout the day, getting higher and higher until she's essentially unresponsive by night's end. This, it seems, is the "long day's journey into night." And though Edmund most likely has witnessed this before (alongside James and Jamie), he refuses to resign himself to this fate.*

"What did Doc Hardy say about the Kid?" Jamie asks his father once they're alone. When his father tells him that Edmund does indeed have consumption, Jamie is distraught, realizing that his brother will have to go to a sanatorium. James agrees, saying that Hardy told him Edmund will be cured in six months to a year "if he obeys orders." He then tells James that he's meeting Hardy later that afternoon to talk about where to send his son. "Well, for God's sake, pick out a good place and not some cheap dump!" Jamie says, urging his father not to tell Hardy he wants to save money. "I'm no millionaire who can throw money away!" James replies.

*Despite the fact that James must know his reputation as a cheapskate, he can't help but try to save a dollar. Indeed, even when it comes to sending Edmund to a sanatorium, he insists that he can't "throw money away." On another note, this is one of the few straightforward conversations that take place in* Long Day's Journey into Night, *as both James and Jamie find themselves capable of talking about Edmund's illness without denying the severity of the situation.*

After their conversation about the sanatorium, Jamie and James decide that Jamie ought to accompany Edmund to Hardy's, though James warns him against using the outing as an excuse to go drinking. Pointing out that he doesn't have money to spend at a bar, Jamie leaves to get dressed, and Mary enters once more and asks her husband if he's seen her glasses. O'Neill's stage note indicates that her eyes look even brighter than before, and her "manner is more detached." When Jamie tells her that he hasn't seen her glasses, she asks what's the matter with Jamie, and before waiting for answer, says that he would have been better off if he'd been raised "in a real home." Moving on, she notes that it's going to be **foggy** again that night. "Oh, well," she adds. "I won't mind it tonight."

*Once again, Mary reveals her resignation, which has come about as a result of her relapse. Whereas the fog bothered her before she started using drugs, now she says that she "won't mind it." In turn, the audience understands—in a certain way—why she had so much trouble refraining from relapsing in the first place.*

When James starts to leave for his "appointment at the Club," Mary tries to stop him, saying she doesn't want to be alone. She then says she's glad Jamie's accompanying Edmund to Hardy's, though she knows he'll be drunk when he returns—which, she points out, James probably will be, too. "I won't," he says defensively. "I never get drunk." Proudly, he reminds her he's never missed a performance in his entire life. At the same time, he points out that if anyone ever had a good reason to get drunk, it would be him. "Reason?" Mary responds. "What reason?" After this exchange, James finally gets up to leave, and as he does so, he tells Mary she ought to go on a drive.

*This conversation is rife with denial and blame. First, James claims that he never gets drunk. This is clearly a lie, considering the fact that he has already been drinking whiskey rather steadily and it's only the afternoon. When this denial fails, he tries to blame Mary for his drinking problem, suggesting that he's an alcoholic because drinking helps him deal with her addiction. In turn, Mary denies that she gives him a "reason" to drink, pretending that she hasn't relapsed. As such, O'Neill once again shows the audience the cycle of denial and blame that the Tyrones use in order to avoid taking responsibility for their actions.*

Mary tells James that she doesn't like driving around in the car, making it clear that his attempt to please her by buying an automobile when she returned from her last sanatorium stay was in vain. Nonetheless, she appreciated his effort, and says, "I knew buying the car was a hard thing for you to do, and it proved how much you loved me, in your way, especially when you couldn't really believe it would do me any good." In turn, James breaks down and pleads with his wife, saying, "Mary! Dear Mary! For the love of God, for my sake and the boys' sake and your own, won't you stop now?" At first, this appeal reaches her core, but then she says, "Stop what? What are you talking about?"

*There are several moments throughout* Long Day's Journey into Night *when the characters are capable of expressing themselves without animosity. This is one of them. As James listens to his wife speak pessimistically—saying, "you couldn't really believe [a car] would do me any good"—he suddenly finds himself incapable of keeping up the vicious cycle of blame that normally characterizes their conversations. Instead, he tries to connect with her on an emotional level. Unfortunately, though, she only pretends she doesn't know what he's talking about, and so his attempt at earnestness goes to waste.*

In another reversal, Mary suddenly says, "James! We've loved each other! We always will! Let's remember only that, and not try to understand what we cannot understand, or help things that cannot be helped—the things life has done to us we cannot excuse or explain." James, for his part, takes this to mean that Mary won't "even try" to "stop."

*Only moments ago, James tried to appeal to Mary's emotional side, but she refused to connect with him on this level. Now, she herself attempts to evoke their love as a way of bridging the distance between them. Unfortunately, though, this attempt is a strategic way of convincing him to resign himself to the reality of her addiction. As such, he remains unmoved by her appeal.*

Changing the subject, Mary remarks how lonely she is, maintaining that taking a drive in the car will do nothing to assuage this feeling. "At the Convent I had so many friends," she says. "Girls whose families lived in lovely homes. I used to visit them and they'd visit me in my father's home. But, naturally, after I married an actor—you know how actors were considered in those days—a lot of them gave me the cold shoulder." Then, out of the blue, she remembers that she *does* need to go on a drive. "There's something I must get at the drugstore," she says.

*During this moment of reminiscence, Mary shows the audience that she has romanticized the past. Speaking wistfully about her time in the convent, she suggests that she felt a sense of belonging as a young girl—something she hasn't been able to recapture in her adult life. In turn, she uses her nostalgia and regret about the past as yet another excuse to dull herself to her present reality, which is why she suddenly remembers that she needs to go to stock up on more drugs.*

"Leave it to you to have some of the stuff hidden, and prescriptions for more!" James says to Mary. "I hope you'll lay in a good stock ahead so we'll never have another night like the one when you screamed for it, and ran out of the house in your nightdress half crazy, to try and throw yourself off the dock!" Then, when he sees how badly this remark hurts his wife, he begs for her forgiveness, but she only tells him it doesn't matter. "Nothing like that ever happened. You must have dreamed it," she says.

*When James references the time when Mary "ran out of the house in [her] nightdress" and was "half crazy" because she needed more drugs, O'Neill lets the audience in on the embattled past the Tyrone family has undergone as a result of Mary's addiction. However, Mary remains unwilling to admit her own shortcomings, eventually telling her husband that he "must have dreamed" this situation.*

"I was so healthy before Edmund was born," Mary continues. "You remember, James. There wasn't a nerve in my body. Even traveling with you season after season, with week after week of one-night stands, in trains without Pullmans, in dirty rooms of filthy hotels, eating bad food, bearing children in hotel rooms, I still kept healthy. But bearing Edmund was the last straw. I was so sick afterwards, and that ignorant quack of a cheap hotel doctor—All he knew was I was in pain. It was easy for him to stop the pain." At this point, James begs his wife to stop rehashing the past, but she says, "How can I? The past is the present, isn't it? It's the future, too. We all try to lie out of that but life won't let us."

*As Mary relives the past, she underhandedly implies that Edmund's birth is the reason she has become a drug addict. What's more, she guilt-trips James for never giving her a true home, suggesting that this made her especially prone to hardship. Then, when she tells James that "the past is the present" and "the future," she emphasizes her fatalistic mindset, insisting that "life won't let" her stop being the person the "past" has turned her into.*

Still reminiscing about the past, Mary thinks about her and James's second son, Eugene, who died as a baby. "I swore after Eugene died I would never have another baby," she says to James. "I was to blame for his death. If I hadn't left him with my mother to join you on the road, because you wrote telling me you missed me and were so lonely, Jamie would never have been allowed, when he still had measles, to go in the baby's room. I always believed Jamie did it on purpose. He was jealous of the baby. He hated him. Oh, I know Jamie was only seven, but he was never stupid. He'd been warned it might kill the baby. He knew. I've never been able to forgive him for that."

*Characteristically, Mary tries in this moment to blame others for the extreme hardship she has had to endure. First, she not-so-subtlety implies that James was wrong to invite her "on the road" with him. This, of course, is a very cruel thing to say. After all, James only wanted to be with Mary because he missed her—hardly a sentiment he deserves to be punished for. Moving on, Mary then blames Jamie for killing Eugene on purpose, and although she knows he was only a small boy—and thus understands, on some level, that her accusation is inherently ridiculous—she decides to blame him anyway.*

Just then, Edmund enters and tells his parents he's about to leave for Doctor Hardy's, mentioning that he doesn't have money for carfare. Feeling sorry for the boy, James reaches into his pocket and gives him ten dollars—much more than he ever lends his sons. "Did Doc Hardy tell you I was going to die?" Edmund jokes, but when he sees his father's face, he says, "No! That's a rotten crack. I was only kidding, Papa." Shortly thereafter, his father leaves and his mother advances upon him. Having heard his joke, she yells at him for spewing "morbid nonsense." She then tries to convince him to stay home with her so that she can care for him, but he reminds her he has an appointment.

*Edmund's joke to his father is unsettling because it touches upon the bleak reality that he is indeed in danger of dying, since consumption was at the time a potentially life-threatening condition. However, he only says this as a joke, and his father is able to accept that. Mary, on the other hand, can't bear to hear such "morbid nonsense." This is because she is determined to deny the possibility that Edmund has anything more than a "summer cold."*

Edmund tries to level with Mary, reminding her that she's "only just started" again, and saying, "You can still stop. You've got the will power!" Unfortunately, though, Mary only asks him not to talk about things he doesn't "understand." What's more, she points out that the doctors warned her after she left the sanatorium that nothing at home should upset her. "All I've done is worry about you," she says, but she immediately follows this up by saying, "But that's no excuse! I'm only trying to explain. It's not an excuse!"

*When Mary brings up her doctor's advice to avoid stressful situations, she implies that Edmund's illness is the reason for her relapse. Once again, then, she tries to blame others for her own troubles. However, she immediately feels remorseful about saying this, taking it back and admitting that she's only making excuses for herself.*

"I've become such a liar," Mary admits. "I never lied about anything once upon a time. Now I have to lie, especially to myself. But how can you understand, when I don't myself. I've never understood anything about it, except that one day long ago I found I could no longer call my soul my own." Hearing herself say this, she says she'll find her soul again someday, when the rest of her family is "healthy and happy and successful" and she doesn't "feel guilty" anymore. Longing for the innocence of her days in the convent, she waxes poetic about the Blessed Virgin Mary, hoping someday she'll be able to pray to her again. Pulling herself out of this reverie, she looks out the window and says, "Now I think of it, you might as well go uptown. I forgot I'm taking a drive. I have to go to the drugstore."

*Once again, Mary romanticizes her past life, which she spent as a young woman in a convent. Indeed, she thinks that finding religious salvation would give her the strength necessary to beat her addiction. She suggests that praying would help her with her troubles, but it's worth noting that there's nothing stopping her from getting back in touch with her faith. In fact, the only thing keeping her from committing herself once more to the Virgin Mary is her preoccupation with her addiction. In keeping with this, she suddenly remembers that she needs to go get more drugs, dropping her considerations of the past in order to pursue yet another high.*

Before Edmund leaves, Mary tells him not to give any of the money James lent him to Jamie, who will spend it on alcohol. She then asks him to promise to refrain from drinking, which is dangerous given his condition. When he finally leaves, she looks about the room nervously. "It's so lonely here," she says to herself before adding, "You're lying to yourself again. You wanted to get rid of them. Their contempt and disgust aren't pleasant company. You're glad they're gone." Then, with a laugh, she says, "Then Mother of God, why do I feel so lonely?"

*Mary's conversation with herself spotlights her internal discord. On the one hand, she is sad when her family members leave her alone, saying, "It's so lonely here." On the other hand, though, she admits that she actively enjoys their absence, since this means she can go about her opiated existence without having to consider the fact that she's hurting them. In turn, she finds herself conflicted between her feelings of love and loneliness and her desire to live without judgement.*

## ACT THREE

It is almost dinner, and Mary is spending time with Cathleen, whom she has given considerable amounts of whiskey because she wants someone to talk to. Mary's skin is even paler than it was before, and her eyes "shine with unnatural brilliance." What's more, her "detachment" is quite pronounced, and she speaks as if she's the "naive, happy, chattering schoolgirl of her convent days." As the scene opens, she comments on the **foghorn**, which bleats through the window. "Isn't it awful, Cathleen?" she asks, and the drunken housekeeper agrees that it's "like a banshee." "I don't mind it tonight," Mary admits.

*Mary hates being alone so much that she has sought out Cathleen's company just so she doesn't have to deal with her own crushing sense of isolation. Indeed, her feelings of loneliness are clearly quite troubling, considering the fact that she can't seem to escape them even when she's high. After all, even the foghorn—which she previously detested—doesn't bother her when she's high, suggesting that her loneliness is uniquely resistant to her drug use.*

Throughout their conversation, Cathleen rambles about random matters, but Mary doesn't seem to notice. Instead, she focuses on voicing her own thoughts, using Cathleen as nothing more than an excuse to talk. When Cathleen eventually tries to go back to the kitchen to help the cook, Mary tells her to stay because she doesn't "want to be alone, yet." To convince the young girl, she offers another "big drink of whiskey" and fills the bottle back up with water.

*Once more, Mary's loneliness comes to the forefront of the play. This time, she appears rather desperate to avoid spending time alone, as if she can't bear even a moment of solitude.*

Indulging her mistress, Cathleen accepts the drink and starts asking Mary questions. This encourages Mary to rehash her life as a young girl living in a convent. "I used to love the piano," she says. "I worked hard at my music in the Convent—if you can call it work when you do something you love. Mother Elizabeth and my music teacher both said I had more talent than any student they remembered." She upholds that she might have gone to Europe to study music if she hadn't met James. "Or I might have become a nun," she adds.

*With nothing in particular to talk about, Mary yet again plunges into the past. In doing so, she makes it clear once more that she has idealized the idea of her own youth, thinking of it as a time when nothing in her life was wrong. By talking extensively about her former prospects as a concert pianist, she tries to ignore her present reality.*

Mary tells Cathleen a story about the first time she met James. At the time, he was a well-known actor. Apparently, Mary's father became friends with him and wrote to tell her that he wanted to introduce them when she came home for Easter vacation. When the time came, she and her father went to one of James's performances and were invited backstage after the show. "I know he liked me the first moment we were introduced," she says. "I fell in love right then. So did he, he told me afterwards. I forgot all about becoming a nun or a concert pianist. All I wanted was to be his wife."

*It's worth noting that, although Mary is rehashing what was perhaps the happiest period of her life, she'll never be able to escape the present. This is why even when she's romantically reminiscing about the past, she can't help but speak somewhat regretfully about the choices she made. Indeed, she knows that her decision to marry James is what eventually led her away from her supposedly idyllic life in the convent. As such, her words are fraught with meaning and regret when she says, "I forgot all about becoming a nun or a concert pianist."*

After Mary finishes her story, Cathleen retreats to the kitchen. Lounging in a chair, Mary speaks to herself, criticizing herself for speaking "sentimental[ly]" about the past. "You were much happier before you knew he existed, in the Convent when you used to pray to the Blessed Virgin," she says. She then tries to pray but stops because she doesn't think that "the Blessed Virgin" will be "fooled by a lying dope fiend." Just then, she decides she must go upstairs and take more morphine, but she hears James and Edmund returning before she can slip away.

*In keeping with the idea that Mary's memory of the convent is tainted by regret, she tells herself that she was "much happier" before she met James. This, it seems, is why even her reveries about the past bear hints of her sorrow. In an effort to recapture the person she was before she met James, then, she tries to pray, but she no longer has the willpower to stick with it. As such, she gives herself an excuse to stop, saying that "the Blessed Virgin" can't be "fooled by a lying dope fiend." In turn, she grants herself permission to seek out more morphine.*

As Edmund and James enter, Mary gives them a warm welcome, urging her husband to have some whiskey and generally babbling in drugged excitement. Eventually, she notices that Jamie hasn't come home, and says, "I'm afraid Jamie has been lost to us for a long time, dear," concluding that her son has gone out drinking with Edmund's money. "But we mustn't allow him to drag Edmund down with him," she continues, "as he'd like to do. He's jealous because Edmund has always been the baby—just as he used to be of Eugene. He'll never be content until he makes Edmund as hopeless a failure as he is." In response, both Edmund and his father tell Mary to stop talking, though James adds that Edmund should heed her advice so that his brother doesn't "poison" his life.

*One thing that's worth considering about the Tyrone family is that they are—against all odds—bound together very tightly. Indeed, the fact that they say such awful things and still manage to live with one another is rather remarkable, a sign that their love is resilient. After all, Mary has just suggested that her very own son purposefully killed Eugene and is now trying to bring Edmund down, and yet, her family members hardly even argue with her. Though they tell her to be quiet, her venomous words do little to actually upset them, and James even echoes her sentiment. Given that Edmund feels strongly for his brother, it's a wonder that he doesn't storm out of the house. In fact, it's a testament to just how much he loves his mother that these comments don't drive him away from her for good.*

Ignoring James and Edmund, Mary talks about how Jamie has grown up to "disgrace" the family. At the same time, though, she says it's not so surprising, since James brought the boy up to be a "boozer." "Since he first opened his eyes, he's seen you drinking." Protesting this point, James says, "When you have the poison in you, you want to blame everyone but yourself!" Unfortunately, she continues in this manner, and Edmund and James do their best to ignore her, advising one another not to pay attention to her words. Pouring drinks for themselves, they down whiskey, and Mary apologizes for sounding "bitter."

*When James says that Mary wants "to blame everyone but" herself when she "has the poison" in her, he successfully identifies her main way of avoiding guilt. At the same time, there's no denying that James is an alcoholic, meaning that both he and Mary have set negative examples for James and Edmund. Instead of dwelling on this fact, though, James and Edmund simply pour drinks for themselves, apparently resigned to the fact that they're alcoholics.*

"Do you know what I was telling [Cathleen], dear?" Mary asks James. "About the night my father took me to your dressing room and I first fell in love with you. Do you remember?" Touched by this turn in the conversation, James assures her that he'll never forget, and Mary says, "No. I know you still love me, James, in spite of everything." She then tells him that she loves him, too, "in spite of everything," though she ruins the moment by adding that she wouldn't have married him if she'd known he drank so much. She then talks about how he used to leave her in hotel rooms all by herself while he was out drinking, and Edmund explodes, saying, "Christ! No wonder—!"

*The idea that Mary and James love each other "in spite of everything" is a perfect encapsulation of why the entire Tyrone family is able to stay together. Although they all treat one another terribly—blaming each other and trying to make others feel guilty about their own shortcomings—they can't escape the fact that their familial bond (their love) is stronger than their differences. And though this is perhaps admirable, it's worth considering that this dynamic keeps them from ever breaking the toxic cycle of denial and blame that ensures their collective unhappiness.*

Once again reverting to nostalgia and sweetness, Mary reminisces about the beauty of her **wedding dress**, remembering how "particular" she was about how it was made. "I wonder where I hid it?" she says. "Probably in one of the old trunks in the attic. Some day I'll have to look." At this point she stops, realizing she has been rambling about the past, and her husband sighs, asks when dinner will be ready, and says, "Well, if I can't eat yet, I can drink." Looking at the whiskey, though, he realizes that people have been "tampering" with his alcohol. Angrily, he goes to fetch another bottle.

*Once again, Mary loses herself in the past as a way of forgetting about her current circumstances, this time speaking admiringly about her wedding dress. The fact that she doesn't know where this dress is anymore is significant, for it symbolizes her inability to recapture the happiness and youthful innocence of her earlier days.*

When James is gone, Mary tells Edmund about his past, saying he's stingy because of the way he was raised. "His father deserted his mother and their six children a year or so after they came to America. He told them he had a premonition he would die soon, and he was homesick for Ireland, and wanted to go back there to die. So he went and he did die. He must have been a peculiar man, too. Your father had to go to work in a machine shop when he was only ten years old." Uninterested, Edmund tells Mary he's heard this story countless times. To change the subject, he says, "You haven't asked me what I found out this afternoon. Don't you care a damn?" he asks. "Don't say that!" she replies. "You hurt me, dear!"

*Given that she so frequently complains about James's stinginess, it's surprising that Mary speaks empathetically in this moment about his upbringing. Indeed, she seems eager to show her son why James feels the way he does about money. This tenderness comes about because she loves her husband, despite their tumultuous relationship. However, Edmund clearly dislikes the way his mother fluctuates between emotions, and so he tries to change the subject by telling her about his diagnosis.*

Ignoring his mother's sensitivity, Edmund says, "What I've got is serious, Mama. Doc Hardy knows for sure now." Just as Mary begins to disparage Hardy, he pushes on, saying that the doctor had a specialist examine him, too, meaning that they're absolutely sure about the diagnosis. "Listen, Mama," he says. I'm going to tell you whether you want to hear or not. I've got to go to a sanatorium." In an aggressive voice, Mary tells Edmund that she "won't have" this, saying Hardy doesn't know what he's doing. She then tries to downplay the situation, saying that she's not going to worry because she knows that Edmund—like his father—likes to be dramatic. "If I gave you the slightest encouragement, you'd tell me next you were going to die," she says.

*Yet again, Mary fervently denies the possibility that Edmund might be seriously ill. What's remarkable about this moment, though, is that he's telling her very straightforwardly that he's quite sick, and she* still *manages to avoid acknowledging reality. As such, the audience sees that her unwillingness to accept what Edmund is telling her has less to do with Edmund himself than it has to do with her. Indeed, her refusal to hear what her son is saying is a selfish act of self-preservation, not an empathetic reaction to difficult news.*

Speaking honestly with Mary, Edmund informs her that people *do* die of what he has. He even begins to reference her own father, but she cuts him off. "There's no comparison at all with you. He had consumption," she says. Frustrated, Edmund erupts, saying, "It's pretty hard to take at times, having a dope fiend for a mother!" Instantly, he regrets saying this, apologizing and then asserting that he needs to leave, hurrying through the parlor as his mother stares out the window. When he's gone, Mary speaks to herself, saying that she should go take more morphine and adding that she hopes she'll take too much sometime, because she would never be able to overdose on purpose, since this would mean the "Blessed Virgin" would never forgive her.

*As Mary continues to deny the fact that Edmund is seriously ill, Edmund finds himself unable to stand her any longer. Instead of offering him support, she makes the entire matter about herself, ultimately causing him to say that it's hard to have "a dope fiend for a mother." In this moment, he articulates the difficulty of having a parent who is emotionally incapable of supporting her loved ones.*

Before Mary can go upstairs to take more morphine, James returns with a new bottle of whiskey, and she tells him that Edmund most likely left to go find Jamie uptown. Then, breaking down, she says, "Oh, James, I'm so frightened! I know he's going to die!" In response, James tells her that Hardy said it should only take six months for Edmund to recover, but Mary doesn't believe him. Defeated, James says they should sit down for dinner, but she announces that she's not hungry and that she thinks it would be best for her to "go to bed and rest." "Up to take more of that God-damned poison, is that it? You'll be like a mad ghost before the night's over!" he seethes. "I don't know what you're talking about, James," she replies. "You say such mean, bitter things when you've drunk too much."

*No matter how hard Mary tries to deny the fact that Edmund is seriously ill, it becomes clear that she doesn't truly believe the lies she's telling herself. This is overwhelmingly apparent when she suddenly admits that she's "frightened" Edmund is going to die. And yet, despite this outbreak of honesty, she instantly composes herself, once more pretending nothing is wrong by saying that she doesn't "know what [James is] talking about" when he references her drug use. Worse, she blames* him *for behaving erratically when he's intoxicated, as if she's not the one constantly contradicting herself when she's high.*

## ACT FOUR

It is midnight, and James is sitting alone at the table playing solitaire against himself. The bottle of whiskey sits half-empty at his side, and it's obvious by his slow movements that he's quite drunk. Before long, Edmund enters, stumbling into something in the hall, which is dark because James is constantly turning lights off to save money. This sparks an argument between the two men, as Edmund tells him he should leave a light on in the hall because one bulb won't run him into the poorhouse, and James claims he's not "giving a ball" and thus shouldn't need to light the whole house. This argument culminates when James threatens to beat Edmund if he doesn't turn out the light, at which point he suddenly remembers his son's frailty and instantly feels sorrowful.

*The Tyrones can't help but argue with one another, even when they don't want to. Although Mary is normally the one instigating disputes, in this moment James and Edmund are at odds with one another on their own terms, a sign that their familial problems don't all revolve around Mary. However, James finds it difficult to fight with his son because doing so makes him feel guilty. In turn, O'Neill shows the audience that the threat of Edmund's illness is forever lurking in the family members' collective consciousness.*

Feeling sorry, James gets up and turns all the lights on, saying, "To hell with them! The poorhouse is the end of the road, and it might as well be sooner as later!" Laughing, Edmund says, "You're a wonder, Papa." James then asks where Jamie is, but Edmund doesn't know because he didn't go uptown to find him. Rather, he walked along the beach in **the fog**. However, he admits that he *did* end up giving Jamie half his money, so it's likely his brother is at the brothel. Throughout their conversation, Edmund and James teeter on the edge of argument. Instead of indulging these disputes, though, they try to avoid confrontation, each one drinking steadily even as James says Edmund shouldn't have alcohol with his illness.

*Once again, O'Neill showcases the ways in which the Tyrone family goes back and forth between argument and forgiveness. In this scene, James and Edmund weave their way in and out of disputes, and James displays his loving concern for Edmund's wellbeing by telling him not to drink, despite the fact that this is a rather hypocritical thing for him—a hard-drinking man—to say.*

Edmund tells James that he stopped at the Inn on his way back, and when his father says he should have "more sense" than to get drunk when he has consumption, he says, "To hell with sense." He then recites a poem before launching into a brief monologue about walking through **the fog**. "The fog was where I wanted to be," he says. "Halfway down the path you can't see this house. You'd never know it was here. Or any of the other places down the avenue. I couldn't see but a few feet ahead. I didn't meet a soul. Everything looked and sounded unreal. Nothing was what it is. That's what I wanted—to be alone with myself in another world where truth is untrue and life can hide from itself."

*Unlike his mother, Edmund welcomes loneliness and isolation. Whereas Mary can't stand to be alone, he relishes the idea that he's by himself "in another world" where he can't even see the people or places surrounding him. "Halfway down the path you can't see this house," he tells his father, a sentiment that indicates just how badly he wishes he could remove himself from the tumultuous emotional landscape of the Tyrone family. Unfortunately, he can't bring himself to leave behind his family in earnest because he loves them.*

When he senses his father regarding him with a worried look, Edmund says, "Don't look at me as if I'd gone nutty. I'm talking sense. Who wants to see life as it is, if they can help it?" In response, his father tells him he is poetic but "morbid." Going on, James says he shouldn't have given Edmund a drink. "Well, what's wrong with being drunk?" Edmund says. "It's what we're after, isn't it? Let's not kid each other, Papa. Not tonight. We know what we're trying to forget. But let's not talk about it now. It's no use now." "No," James agrees. "All we can do is try to be resigned."

*When Edmund says, "Who wants to see life as it is, if they can help it?" he admits his desire to blot out the world by drinking. What he wants, it seems, is to alter the way he sees the world, searching for a way to make his otherwise bleak reality at least somewhat manageable. And though this is indeed a "morbid" thought, his father can't help but agree, since he too uses alcohol to help him accept the difficulties of life. However, James correctly articulates the fact that this kind of coping doesn't actually lead to acceptance, but rather resignation.*

Drunkenly, Edmund continues to recite poetry, calling up a poem about a man sleeping with an overweight prostitute. This, he jokes, is probably what Jamie is reciting now as he himself sleeps with a prostitute. And though James finds some of these poems humorous, he can't get over the fact that they're all morbid, and so he criticizes his son's taste, saying that he should focus on Shakespeare. Pausing in their conversation, they hear Mary moving around upstairs. "I hope to God she doesn't come down," James admits. "Yes. She'll be nothing but a ghost haunting the past by this time," Edmund agrees, saying that his mother likes to talk when she's high about a time before he himself was born.

*Although James and Edmund love Mary and are distraught that she has relapsed once again, they don't want to see her. In fact, it is exactly because they're so unhappy about her condition that they want to avoid having to look at her, as if pretending she's not there will somehow help them forget their troubles. What's more, they suggest that she isn't truly there anyway, upholding that she's "nothing but a ghost haunting the past" after having used morphine all day. In turn, they put their finger on the fact that Mary romanticizes the past as a way of ignoring her current reality.*

Edmund says that the hardest thing to witness regarding Mary's addiction is "the blank wall she builds around herself." "Or it's more like a bank of **fog** in which she hides and loses herself," he says. "Deliberately, that's the hell of it! You know something in her does it deliberately—to get beyond our reach, to be rid of us, to forget we're alive! It's as if, in spite of loving us, she hated us!" In response, his father reminds him that this is only "the damned poison," but Edmund says that she takes the drug in order to "get that effect."

*In this moment, O'Neill calls attention to a difficult question: why do addicts take drugs? Does Mary take morphine because she already feels like there is "a bank of fog" around her, or does she take it specifically to achieve that "effect"? Of course, O'Neill provides no answer to this question, thereby inviting the audience to experience the frustrated confusion that a drug addict's loved ones go through when trying to understand addiction.*

James points out that part of the reason Mary relapsed has to do with how worried she is about Edmund, but Edmund rejects this idea, saying that *James* is the person to blame because he didn't hire a good doctor for her when she was in pain after giving birth to him (Edmund). The doctor James hired, Edmund upholds, was cheap. When James refutes this point, Edmund switches tactics, claiming that his father has never given Mary any reason to "stay off" morphine, especially since he's never provided her with a true home.

*Once more, members of the Tyrone family blame one another. As James and Edmund try to force guilt onto one another, the audience begins to feel just how fatiguing this dynamic truly is. Indeed, it's exhausting to watch these family members accuse each other of malice when, in reality, no one is to blame for Mary's addiction. In turn, O'Neill underlines the ways in which addiction puts a strain on otherwise loving relationships.*

Truly hurt, James pleads with Edmund to stop repeating his mother's "crazy accusations." Then, turning angry, he says, "If you insist on judging things by what she says when she's not in her right mind, if you hadn't been born she'd never—" With this, he stops talking, unspeakably guilty. "Sure. I know what she feels, Papa," Edmund says. James quickly falls to apologizing, and they make up once again, though this peace only lasts several moments, as Edmund eventually suggests that his father is going to send him to the cheapest possible sanitorium because he thinks he's going to die. James, for his part, vehemently denies this, but he eventually admits that it's true he doesn't want to overpay doctors. Still, he says that Edmund couldn't possibly understand the way he sees the world, since he has lived a charmed life, whereas James himself has known true poverty.

*When James talks about "judging things by what [Mary] says when she's not in her right mind," he implies that Edmund is to blame for his mother's addiction, since Mary only started taking morphine after she gave birth to him (since the process of labor was so painful). And although he stops before fully voicing this thought, Edmund understands what he means and immediately feels dejected and sad—an indication that he does in fact feel partially responsible for his mother's addiction. At the same time, though, he immediately tries to distract himself from this feeling by once more attacking James. As such, the toxic cycle of denial, blame, and guilt circles on and on.*

James tells Edmund about his own upbringing, saying that he had to take over as the prominent bread-winner when his father died when he himself was only ten years old. His mother's one fear, he explains, was that she would get sick and "have to die in the poorhouse." This, he claims, is how he "learned to be a miser." Now, though, he promises that Edmund can go to any sanitorium he wants, even the most expensive place. He then tells Edmund a sanitorium that Hardy's specialist told him about, a place endowed by millionaire factory owners, who established the facility so that their workers could attend for only seven dollars a week. Apparently, Edmund is eligible to go to this sanitorium, but James says he doesn't have to. Stifling a smile, Edmund says, "It sounds like a good bargain to me. I'd like to go there."

*Edmund can't help but find humor in the fact that his father is trying to convince him to go to the cheapest available sanitorium. The fact that he agrees to go, though, is a testament to his love for his father, as he ultimately decides to put James first by agreeing to undergo the least expensive medical treatment. Of course, this might be a simple act of kindness, but it also suggests that Edmund has given up hope and resigned himself to the possibility that he might die. As such, he doesn't care which sanitorium he attends.*

"Maybe life overdid the lesson for me, and made a dollar worth too much, and the time came when that mistake ruined my career as a fine actor," James says. Going on, he says he's never told anyone this, but he believes the play that made him famous ultimately "ruined" him "with its promise of an easy fortune." He tells Edmund a story about his glory days, when he played Othello alongside a famous actor who heaped praise on him. Because of his success in this show, he was able to land a large role only several years later, and it was this show that made him his first fortune. From that point on, he chased money, not an artistic career. "What the hell was it I wanted to buy, I wonder, that was worth—" he says. "Well, no matter. It's a late day for regrets."

*Although James says that it's "a late day for regrets," it's clear that this is exactly what he's doing: regretting the mistakes he made in the past. Like Mary, he can't help but think wistfully about the many choices he could have made instead of the ones he actually did make. In turn, his disappointment is perhaps why he spends his time drinking—he wants to be able to tell himself that his regrets don't "matter," but this is only something he can convince himself of when he's drunk.*

Looking up, James says that the lights he turned on are hurting his eyes, and so he asks Edmund if he minds if he turns them out. Once again, Edmund stifles his laughter and tells his father he can do what he wants. As he turns the lights out one by one, he says, "I'd be willing to have no home but the poorhouse in my old age if I could look back now on having been the fine artist I might have been."

*Despite the fact that James says he'd be willing to "have no home but the poorhouse" if only he could "look back now" on a respectable artistic career, the audience senses that this isn't actually the case. After all, he's currently in the process of turning off lights in order to save money, thereby demonstrating his obsession with riches. Nonetheless, his drunkenness blinds him to the irony of this moment, enabling him to deny the fact that he's kidding himself.*

Edmund and James hear Mary moving around again upstairs, and Edmund says, "Yes, she moves above and beyond us, a ghost haunting the past, and here we sit pretending to forget, but straining our ears listening for the slightest sound […]." He then decides to tell his father about his own career as a sailor, speaking poetically about one time when he lay down on the bowsprit of a boat and let the ocean pass beneath him. "I became drunk with the beauty and singing rhythm of it," he says, "and for a moment in the sea, became white sails and flying spray, became beauty and rhythm, became moonlight and the ship and the high dim-starred sky! I belonged, without past or future, within peace and unity and a wild joy, within something greater than my own life, or the life of Man, to Life itself!"

*Perhaps the most important word of Edmund's monologue about his time at sea is the word "belonged." Indeed, when he says that he felt a sense of belonging as he crashed through the waves and looked up at the night sky, he suggests that he finally was able to shake his feeling of loneliness and isolation. However, the audience should note that he experienced this while staring into the sky in the middle of the ocean—an incredibly isolated moment in and of itself. As such, it seems Edmund felt that he "belonged" simply because he embraced the idea of loneliness. Coming to terms with the beauty of belonging to "something greater than [his] own life," he found himself at ease, having finally transcended his loneliness by merely embracing it. Unlike his mother, then, he manages to find happiness in the idea of being alone. Mary, on the other hand, wants to banish her feeling of loneliness by living in a proper home, but it's clear this would do nothing to ease her sense of isolation. What she needs to do, O'Neill implies, is come to terms with loneliness as an unassailable part of life. This, it seems, is what Edmund was able to do at sea.*

Edmund continues his monologue about the wonders of traveling the world on his own, saying, "And several other times in my life, when I was swimming far out, or lying alone on a beach, I have had the same experience. Became the sun, the hot sand, green seaweed anchored to a rock, swaying in the tide. Like a saint's vision of beatitude. Like the veil of things as they seem drawn back by an unseen hand. For a second you see—and seeing the secret, are the secret. For a second there is meaning! Then the hand lets the veil fall and you are alone, lost in **the fog** again, and you stumble on toward nowhere, for no good reason!"

*Although Edmund has achieved a sense of "belonging," he recognizes that he won't always feel this way. Indeed, he has become accustomed to the isolating sensation of "fog" rolling in around him, and he doesn't truly know how to fight this feeling. As such, he simply lives with his loneliness. Having had a transcendent experience—in which he accessed the "secret" of life—he is no closer to actually understanding or controlling his current circumstances. This, he implies, is simply the way life works.*

Thinking for a moment, Edmund adds, "It was a great mistake, my being born a man. I would have been much more successful as a sea gull or a fish. As it is, I will always be a stranger who never feels at home, who does not really want and is not really wanted, who can never belong, who must always be a little in love with death!"

*Unlike Mary, Edmund accepts that he will "never feel at home." Indeed, he believes that he will always live the life of a "stranger" who doesn't "belong." By contrast, Mary tries hard to deny the fact that loneliness and isolation are simply part of life, but this denial only makes it harder for her to cope with her current circumstances. Although Edmund is certainly not a model of happiness, O'Neill suggests, he at least doesn't shy away from harsh realities.*

Edmund and his father hear Jamie stumbling onto the porch. Wanting to avoid unnecessary arguments, James decides to step out as his son comes into the parlor. "Oh, hello, Kid," Jamie says when he enters. "I'm as drunk as a fiddler's bitch." Flopping down in a chair, he recites poetry and pours himself a large drink. Head lolling, he launches into a tawdry song with disparaging lyrics about Mary. "Shut up!" Edmund threatens, but Jamie simply says, "Where's the hophead? Gone to sleep?" Leaping from his chair, Edmund calls his brother a "dirty bastard" and punches him in the face. To his surprise, Jamie says, "Thanks, Kid. I certainly had that coming. Don't know what made me—booze talking." Edmund, for his part, apologizes for hitting him, and the two brothers put the dispute behind them.

*Yet again, O'Neill shows the audience how quickly the members of the Tyrone family can get into an argument and then forget about the dispute altogether. In this instance, Edmund even punches Jamie, but the event still passes without much drama (all things considered). In turn, O'Neill spotlights yet another example of how guilt and rage influence the Tyrone family's relational dynamics.*

Jamie hypothesizes that the only reason he spoke so insultingly about Mary is because he's so disappointed that she has relapsed. He really thought she would stay clean this time, he admits. "I suppose I can't forgive her," he says. "And then this stuff of you getting consumption. It's got me licked. We've been more than brothers. You're the only pal I've ever had. I love your guts. I'd do anything for you." Before long, though, he drunkenly says that he wants to "warn" Edmund about himself. "Mama and Papa are right," he says. "I've been a rotten bad influence. And worst of it is, I did it on purpose." Going on, he says he intentionally exposed Edmund to his wild lifestyle so he himself wouldn't look bad in comparison. Plus, he adds, it was Edmund's birth that got Mary addicted to morphine, so he can't help "hating [his] guts."

*In this moment, Jamie delivers a strange combination of sincerity and blame. On the one hand, he seems genuinely concerned about protecting Edmund from himself. On the other hand, though, he also delivers a cruel remark, ultimately blaming Edmund for Mary's addiction to morphine. In this way, his confession is fraught with tension—so much so that the audience undoubtedly will wonder if he's being sincere or simply trying to make Edmund feel guilty and sorry for him.*

After Jamie makes this confession, he dozes off, at which point James sneaks back inside and pours a drink. Hearing his father's voice, Jamie snaps awake and begins insulting him, but he and his father decide they're too tired to argue. Suddenly, the lights snap on in the next room, and piano music issues forth, startling all three Tyrone men to attention. The song is stilted and awkward, and abruptly ceases. Moments later, Mary materializes in the doorway. Over one arm, her **wedding dress** is draped so that it drags carelessly on the floor. "The uncanny thing is that her face now appears so youthful," O'Neill's stage note reads. "Experience seems ironed out of it. It is a marble mask of girlish innocence, the mouth caught in a shy smile."

*The higher Mary gets, the more removed she seems from her present reality. What's more, she appears to have journeyed even further into the past, so that now her face "appears" "youthful." In this way, O'Neill presents her as a woman who's deliberately evading the present. Morphine, the audience understands, is the only way she thinks she can access her past life, which she has romanticized in light of her dismal current circumstances. And yet, it's obvious that she can't recapture her youthfulness, as made evident by the fact that she's dragging her wedding dress on the floor, ultimately sullying it. In this way, O'Neill suggests that Mary's idealization of the past only desiccates the memory of that time period, which she'll never be able to relive.*

As Mary advances upon her family members, she "seems aware of them merely as she is aware of other objects in the room, the furniture, the windows, familiar things she accepts automatically as naturally belonging there but which she is too preoccupied to notice." "The Mad Scene," Jamie says in a scathing tone. "Enter Ophelia!" Both Edmund and James whirl to face him—horrified—and Edmund slaps him across the face. "All right, Kid," he replies. "Had it coming. But I told you how much I'd hoped—" Without finishing his sentence, he breaks down, weeping.

*When Jamie starts to cry, the audience understands that his callous jokes and brazen attitude are only feeble attempts to hide his grief. By making cruel quips about his mother's addiction, he tries to deny just how troubled he is about the entire situation. When Edmund slaps him, though, he finds himself incapable of keeping up this charade, which is why he suddenly breaks down.*

As if to herself, Mary speaks over Jamie's sobs, saying, "I play so badly now. I'm all out of practice. Sister Theresa will give me a dreadful scolding. She'll tell me it isn't fair to my father when he spends so much money for extra lessons." Going on, she talks about other nuns in the convent as if she's still a little girl. "Let me see," she says at one point. "What did I come here to find? It's terrible, how absent-minded I've become. I'm always dreaming and forgetting." Seeing that his wife is getting her **wedding gown** dirty, James jumps up and says, "Christ! Mary! Isn't it bad enough—? Here, let me take it, dear. You'll only step on it and tear it and get it dirty dragging it on the floor." "Thank you," Mary replies, as if to a stranger. "You are very kind."

*Although Mary has plunged herself into the past, her family members have not. This is why James is so troubled to see her dragging her wedding dress on the floor—he understands that she's sullying the past by trying to relive it. For him, it's painful to watch his beloved wife ruin herself while fantasizing about her previous life. Worse, she's not even truly thinking about her wedding, but about the period of her life before she met James. Indeed, she is mainly pretending to be a girl in the convent; the wedding dress is just something she happens to have in her hands. As such, James is forced to watch her drag the dress around as an afterthought.*

"It's a wedding gown," Mary explains as James takes the dress from her. "But I don't know what I wanted it for. I'm going to be a nun—that is, if I can only find—What is it I'm looking for? I know it's something I lost." As she makes her way aimlessly through the room, James shouts her name, desperately trying to get her attention, but Jamie tells him there's no use. "Something I miss terribly," Mary continues. "It can't be altogether lost." Looking about herself, she says, "I remember when I had it I was never lonely nor afraid. I can't have lost it forever, I would die if I thought that. Because then there would be no hope."

*The "it" to which Mary refers is left intentionally vague. When she says, "I remember when I had it I was never lonely nor afraid," the audience understands why she doesn't even know what she's looking for. After all, there's nothing in life that can completely banish loneliness. Unfortunately, though, Mary believes there must be some way to alleviate her unhappiness, and so she has spent her life searching for this elusive "it," ultimately turning to morphine because it's the only thing that numbs her to the world.*

Unable to watch this display any longer, Edmund grabs Mary's arm, turns her around, and yells, "Mama! It isn't a summer cold! I've got consumption!" This almost penetrates the haze separating her from the rest of the world, as she "trembles and her expression becomes terrified." "No!" she says, mostly to herself. Then, once more, she mentally retreats, saying, "You must not try to touch me. You must not try to hold me. It isn't right, when I am hoping to be a nun."

*Seeing that his mother is using morphine in order to run from the things that upset her, Edmund decides to force the truth upon her. To do this, he tells her pointblank that he has consumption. And although it seems for a moment as if she understands what he has said, she quickly forces herself to keep up her ruse of living in the past. This, of course, is yet another attempt to turn away from reality.*

As this scene unfolds, Jamie periodically recites poetry, which his father finds morbid. "Oh, we're fools to pay any attention," James says. "It's the damned poison. But I've never known her to drown herself in it as deep as this. Pass me that bottle, Jamie. And stop reciting that damned morbid poetry. I won't have it in my house!" Jamie pushes the bottle to his father, who pours himself a glass and sends the bottle back. Jamie then pours himself a glass and shoves the bottle to Edmund, who also pours a glass. When James raises his glass for a toast, his two sons follow suit, but Mary speaks before they have a chance to bring their glasses to their lips. As she begins, they all "slowly lower their drinks to the table, forgetting them."

*This is an important moment in* Long Day's Journey into Night. *Throughout the play, the Tyrone men have tried many times to deal with the hardship of Mary's addiction. Mostly, though, they've turned to alcohol as a source of relief, ultimately practicing the same kind of escapist behavior as Mary herself. Now, though, O'Neill shows the audience once and for all that the Tyrones won't find solace in drinking. Indeed, when Mary begins speaking and the three men put down their glasses—forgetting about their toast—O'Neill suggests that their sadness is so all-consuming that it eclipses their desire to drink. Nothing they do, O'Neill intimates, will ever distract them from the sorrow they feel about Mary.*

"I had a talk with Mother Elizabeth," Mary says, speaking about the convent once again. "She is so sweet and good. A saint on earth. I love her dearly." She goes on, praising Mother Elizabeth until a certain point, whereupon she says, "All the same, I don't think she was so understanding this time. I told her I wanted to be a nun. I explained how sure I was of my vocation, that I had prayed to the Blessed Virgin to make me sure, and to find me worthy. […] But Mother Elizabeth told me I must be more sure than that, even, that I must prove it wasn't simply my imagination. She said, if I was so sure, then I wouldn't mind putting myself to a test by going home after I graduated, and living as other girls lived, going out to parties and dances and enjoying myself."

*At this point, it's clear that the Tyrones have fully lost Mary to the past. High out of her mind and unwilling to acknowledge the present, she has plunged into her past life. In turn, the title of the play once again brings itself to bear on the characters; Mary has, it seems, been on a "long" "journey" throughout the entire day, dosing herself with morphine until now, finally, she has lost herself to the "night," when she can finally leave the present altogether and lose herself to an uninterrupted fantasy of the past.*

Mary explains that Mother Elizabeth told her if she still wanted to be a nun after living "as other girls lived," then she could return to the convent. "After I left her, I felt all mixed up," she says, "so I went to the shrine and prayed to the Blessed Virgin and found peace again because I knew she heard my prayer and would always love me and see no harm ever came to me so long as I never lost my faith in her. [...] That was in the winter of senior year," Mary says. "Then in the spring something happened to me. Yes, I remember. I fell in love with James Tyrone and was so happy for a time." As Mary stares out into "a sad dream," James "stirs in his chair," Edmund and Jamie sit still, and the curtain closes.

*The end of* Long Day's Journey into Night *is appropriately anti-climactic. After all, this is not a play with a robust or surprising plot. Rather, the entire production concerns itself with the ways in which the Tyrone family copes with sadness and addiction. For Mary, this means taking drugs and reminiscing about the past as a way of ignoring the present. As such, the play ends with her staring out into "a sad dream" of the past, rehashing the moment her life changed and set her on a path to unhappiness. Meanwhile, her family members sit idly by, feeling utterly helpless. Estranged from Mary because she is nothing but a "ghost haunting the past," they have no choice but to resign themselves to the hopeless reality of her addiction.*

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