

The Outside

BY SUSAN GLASPELL

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

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First Performed by the Provincetown Players, December 28, 1917

ORIGINAL CAST

CAPTAIN of "The Bars" Life-Saving Station, ABRAM GILLETTE
BRADFORD, a Live-saver HUTCHINSON COLLINS TONY, a
Portuguese Live-Saver LOUIS ELL MRS. PATRICK, who lives in
the abandoned Station IDA RAUH ALLIE MAYO, who works for
her SUSAN GLASPELL

THE OUTSIDE

SCENE: *A room in a house which was once a life-saving station. Since ceasing to be that it has taken on no other character, except that of a place which no one cares either to preserve or change. It is painted the life-saving gray, but has not the life-saving freshness. This is one end of what was the big boat room, and at the ceiling is seen a part of the frame work from which the boat once swung. About two thirds of the back wall is open, because of the big sliding door, of the type of barn door, and through this open door are seen the sand dunes, and beyond them the woods. At one point the line where woods and dunes meet stands out clearly and there are indicated the rude things, vines, bushes, which form the outer uneven rim of the woods--the only things that grow in the sand. At another point a sand-hill is menacing the woods. This old life-saving station is at a point where the sea curves, so through the open door the sea also is seen. [The station is located on the outside shore of Cape Cod, at the point, near the tip of the Cape, where it makes that final curve which forms the Provincetown Harbor.] The dunes are hills and strange forms of sand on which, in places, grows the stiff beach grass--struggle; dogged*

growing against odds. At right of the big sliding door is a drift of sand and the top of buried beach grass is seen on this. There is a door left, and at right of big sliding door is a slanting wall. Door in this is ajar at rise of curtain, and through this door BRADFORD and TONY, life-savers, are seen bending over a man's body, attempting to restore respiration. The captain of the life-savers comes into view outside the big open door, at left; he appears to have been hurrying, peers in, sees the men, goes quickly to them.

CAPTAIN

I'll take this now, boys.

BRADFORD

No need for anybody to take it, Capt'n. He was dead when we picked him up.

CAPTAIN

Dannie Sears was dead when we picked him up. But we brought him back. I'll go on awhile.

[The two men who have been bending over the body rise, stretch to relax, and come into the room.]

BRADFORD

[Pushing back his arms and putting his hands on his chest.] Work,-- tryin' to put life in the dead.

CAPTAIN

Where'd you find him, Joe?

BRADFORD

In front of this house. Not forty feet out.

CAPTAIN

What'd you bring him up here for?

[He speaks in an abstracted way, as if the working part of his mind is on something else, and in the muffled voice of one bending over.]

BRADFORD

[With a sheepish little laugh.] Force of habit, I guess. We brought so many of 'em back up here. *[Looks around the room.]* And then it was kind of unfriendly down where he was--the wind spittin' the sea onto you till he'd have no way of knowin' he was ashore.

TONY

Lucky I was not sooner or later as I walk by from my watch.

BRADFORD

You have accommodating ways, Tony. Not sooner or later. I wouldn't say it of many Portagees. But the sea *[Calling it in to the CAPTAIN]* is friendly as a kitten alongside the women that live *here*. Allie Mayo--they're *both* crazy--had that door open *[Moving his head toward the big sliding door]* sweepin' out, and when we come along she backs off and stands lookin' at us, *lookin'*--Lord, I just wanted to get him somewhere else. So I kicked this door open with my foot *[Jerking his hand toward the room where the CAPTAIN is seen bending over the man]* and got him *away*. *[Under his voice.]* If he did have any notion of comin' back to life, he wouldn't a come if he'd seen her. *[More genially.]* I wouldn't.

CAPTAIN

You know who he is, Joe?

BRADFORD

I never saw him before.

CAPTAIN

Mitchell telephoned from High Head that a dory came ashore there.

BRADFORD

Last night wasn't the *best* night for a dory. [*To TONY, boastfully.*] Not that *I* couldn't 'a' stayed in one. Some men can stay in a dory and some can't. [*Going to the inner door.*] That boy's dead, Capt'n.

CAPTAIN

Then I'm not doing him any harm.

BRADFORD

[*Going over and shaking the frame where the boat once swung.*] This the first time you ever been in this place, ain't it, Tony?

TONY

I never was here before.

BRADFORD

Well, *I* was here before. [*A laugh.*] And the old man--[*Nodding toward the CAPTAIN*] he lived here for twenty-seven years. Lord, the things that happened *here*. There've been dead ones carried through *that* door. [*Pointing to the outside door.*] Lord--the ones *I've* carried. I carried in Bill Collins, and Lou Harvey and--huh! 'sall over now. You ain't seen no *wrecks*. Don't ever think you have. I was here the night the Jennie Snow was out there. [*Pointing to the sea.*] There was a *wreck*. We got the boat that stood here [*Again shaking the frame*] down that bank. [*Goes to the door and looks out.*] Lord, how'd we ever do it? The sand has put this place on the blink all right. And then when it gets too God-forsaken for a life-savin' station, a lady takes it for a summer residence--and then spends the winter. She's cheerful one.

TONY

A woman--she makes things pretty. This not like a place where a woman live. On the floor there is nothing--on the wall there is nothing. Things--[*Trying to express it with his hands*] do not hang on other things.

BRADFORD

[*Imitating TONY'S gesture.*] No--things do not hang on other things. In my opinion the woman's crazy--sittin' over there on the sand--[*A gesture towards the dunes*] what's she *lookin'* at? There ain't nothin' to *see*. And I know the woman that works for her's crazy--Allie Mayo. She's a Provincetown girl. She was all right once, but--

[*MRS. PATRICK comes in from the hall at the right. She is a "city woman," a sophisticated person who has been caught into something as unlike the old life as the dunes are unlike a meadow. At the moment she is excited and angry.*

MRS. PATRICK

You have no right here. This isn't the life-saving station any more. Just because it used to be--I don't see why you should think--This is my house! And--I want my house to myself!

CAPTAIN

[*Putting his head through the door. One arm of the man he is working with is raised, and the hand reaches through the doorway.*] Well I must say, lady, I would think that any house could be a life-saving station when the sea had sent a man to it.

MRS. PATRICK

[*Who has turned away so she cannot see the hand.*] I don't want him here! I--[*Defiant, yet choking*] I must have my house to myself!

CAPTAIN

You'll get your house to yourself when I've made up my mind there's no more life in this man. A good many lives have been saved in this

house, Mrs. Patrick--I believe that's your name--and if there's any chance of bringing one more back from the dead, the fact that you own the house ain't goin' to make a damn bit of difference to me!

MRS. PATRICK

[In a thin wild way.] I must have my house to myself.

CAPTAIN

Hell with such a woman!

[Moves the man he is working with and slams the door shut.]

[As the CAPTAIN says, "And if there's any chance of bringing one more back from the dead," ALLIE MAYO has appeared outside the wide door which gives on the dunes, a bleak woman, who at first seems little more than a part of the sand before which she stands. But as she listens to this conflict one suspects in her that peculiar intensity of twisted things which grow in unfavorable places.]

MRS. PATRICK

I--I don't want them here! I must--

[But suddenly she retreats, and is gone.]

BRADFORD

Well, I couldn't say, Allie Mayo, that you work for any too kind-hearted a lady. What's the matter with the woman? Does she want folks to die? Appears to break her all up to see somebody trying to save a life. What d' you work for such a fish for? A crazy fish--that's what I call the woman. I've seen her--day after day--settin' over there where the dunes meet the woods, just sittin' there, lookin'. *[Suddenly thinking of it.]* I believe she *likes* to see the sand slippin' down on the woods. Pleases her to see somethin' gettin' buried, I guess.

[ALLIE MAYO, who has stepped inside the door and moved half across the room, toward the corridor at the right, is arrested by this]

last--stands a moment as if seeing through something, then slowly on, and out.

BRADFORD

Some coffee'd taste good. But coffee, in this house? Oh, no. It might make somebody feel better. [*Opening the door that was slammed shut.*] Want me now, Capt'n?

CAPTAIN

No.

BRADFORD

Oh, that boy's dead, Capt'n.

CAPTAIN

[*Snarling.*] Dannie Sears was dead, too. Shut that door. I don't want to hear that woman's voice again, ever.

[*Closing the door and sitting on a bench built into that corner between the big sliding door and the room where the CAPTAIN is.*

BRADFORD

They're a cheerful pair of women--livin' in this cheerful place--a place that life savers had to turn over to the sand--huh! This Patrick woman used to be all right. She and her husband was summer folks over in town. They used to picnic over here on the outside. It was Joe Dyer--he's always talkin' to summer folks--told 'em the government was goin' to build the new station and sell this one by sealed bids. I heard them talkin' about it. They was sittin' right down there on the beach, eatin' their supper. They was goin' to put in a fire-place and they was goin' to paint it bright colors, and have parties over here--summer folk notions. Their bid won it--who'd want it?--a buried house you couldn't move.

TONY

I see no bright colors.

BRADFORD

Don't you? How astonishin'! You must be color blind. And I guess *we're* the first party. [*Laughs.*] I was in Bill Joseph's grocery store, one day last November, when in she comes--Mrs. Patrick, from New York. "I've come to take the old life-saving station," says she. "I'm going to sleep over there tonight!" Huh! Bill is used to queer ways--he deals with summer folks, but that got *him*. November--an empty house, a buried house, you might say, off here on the outside shore--way across the sand from man or beast. He got it out of her, not by what she said, but by the way she looked at what he said, that her husband had died, and she was runnin' off to hide herself, I guess. A person'd feel sorry for her if she weren't so stand-offish, and so doggon *mean*. But mean folks have got minds of their own. She slept here that night. Bill had men hauling things till after dark--bed, stove, coal. And then she wanted somebody to work for her. "Somebody," says she, "that doesn't say an unnecessary word!" Well, when Bill come to the back of the store, I said, "Looks to me as if Allie Mayo was the party she's lookin' for." Allie Mayo has got a prejudice against words. Or maybe she likes 'em so well she's savin' of 'em. She's not spoke an unnecessary word for twenty years. She's got her reasons. Women whose men go to sea ain't always talkative.

[The CAPTAIN comes out. He closes door behind him and stands there beside it. He looks tired and disappointed. Both look at him. Pause.]

CAPTAIN

Wonder who he was.

BRADFORD

Young. Guess he's not been much at sea.

CAPTAIN

I hate to leave even the dead in this house. But we can get right back for him. [*A look around.*] The old place used to be more friendly. [*Moves to outer door, hesitates, hating to leave like this.*] Well, Joe, we brought a good many of them back here.

BRADFORD

Dannie Sears is tendin' bar in Boston now.

[*The three men go; as they are going around the drift of sand ALLIE MAYO comes in carrying a pot of coffee; sees them leaving, puts down the coffee pot, looks to the door the CAPTAIN has closed, moves toward it, as if drawn. MRS. PATRICK follows her in.*]

MRS. PATRICK

They've gone?

[*MRS. MAYO nods, facing the closed door.*]

MRS. PATRICK

And they're leaving--him? [*Again the other woman nods.*] Then he's--? [*MRS. MAYO just stands there.*] They have no right--just because it used to be their place--! I want my house to myself!

[*Snatches her coat and scarf from a hook and starts through the big door toward the dunes.*]

ALLIE MAYO

Wait.

[*When she has said it she sinks into that corner seat--as if overwhelmed by what she has done. The other woman is held.*]

ALLIE MAYO

[*To herself.*] If I could say that, I can say more. [*Looking at the woman she has arrested, but speaking more to herself.*] That boy in

there--his face--uncovered something--[*Her open hand on her chest. But she waits, as if she cannot go on; when she speaks it is in labored way--slow, monotonous, as if snowed in by silent years.*] For twenty years, I did what you are doing. And I can tell you--it's not the way. [*Her voice has fallen to a whisper; she stops, looking ahead at something remote and veiled.*] We had been married--two years. [*A start, as of sudden pain. Says it again, as if to make herself say it.*] Married--two years. He had a chance to go north on a whaler. Times hard. He had to go. A year and a half--it was to be. A year and a half. Two years we'd been married.

[*She sits silent, moving a little back and forth.*

The day he went away. [*Not spoken, but breathed from pain.*] The days after he was gone.

I heard at first. Last letter said farther north--not another chance to write till on the way home.

[*A wait.*

Six months. Another. I did not hear. [*Long wait.*] Nobody ever heard.

[*After it seems she is held there, and will not go on.*] I used to talk as much as any girl in Provincetown. Jim used to tease me about my talking. But they'd come in to talk to me. They'd say--"You may hear yet." They'd talk about what must have happened. And one day a woman who'd been my friend all my life said--"Suppose he was to walk *in!*" I got up and drove her from my kitchen--and from that time till this I've not said a word I didn't have to say. [*She has become almost wild in telling this. That passes. In a whisper.*] The ice that caught Jim--caught me. [*A moment as if held in ice. Comes from it. To MRS. PATRICK simply.*] It's not the way. [*A sudden change.*] You're not the only woman in the world whose husband is dead!

MRS. PATRICK

[*With the cry of the hurt.*] Dead? My husband's not *dead*.

ALLIE MAYO

He's not? [*Slowly understands.*] Oh.

[*The woman in the door is crying. Suddenly picks up her coat which has fallen to the floor and steps outside.*]

ALLIE MAYO

[*Almost failing to do it.*] Wait.

MRS. PATRICK

Wait? Don't you think you've said enough? They told me you didn't say an unnecessary word!

ALLIE MAYO

I don't.

MRS. PATRICK

And you can see, I should think, that you've bungled into things you know nothing about!

[*As she speaks, and crying under her breath, she pushes the sand by the door down on the half buried grass--though not as if knowing what she is doing.*]

ALLIE MAYO

[*Slowly.*] When you keep still for twenty years you know--things you didn't know you knew. I know why you're doing that. [*She looks up at her, startled.*] Don't bury the only thing that will grow. Let it grow.

[*The woman outside still crying under her breath turns abruptly and starts toward the line where dunes and woods meet.*]

ALLIE MAYO

I know where you're going! [*MRS. PATRICK turns, but not as if she wants to.*] What you'll try to do. Over there. [*Pointing to the line of woods.*] Bury it. The life in you. Bury it--watching the sand bury the woods. But I'll tell you something! *They* fight too. The woods! They fight for life the way that Captain fought for life in there!

[*Pointing to the closed door.*

MRS. PATRICK

[*With a strange exultation.*] And lose the way he lost in there!

ALLIE MAYO

[*Sure, sombre.*] They don't lose.

MRS. PATRICK

Don't *lose*? [*Triumphant.*] I have walked on the tops of buried trees!

ALLIE MAYO

[*Slow, sombre, yet large.*] And vines will grow over the sand that covers the trees, and hold it. And other trees will grow above the buried trees.

MRS. PATRICK

I've watched the sand slip down on the vines that reach out farthest.

ALLIE MAYO

Another vine will reach that spot. [*Under her breath, tenderly.*]
Strange little things that reach out farthest!

MRS. PATRICK

And will be buried soonest!

ALLIE MAYO

And hold the sand for things behind them. They save a wood that guards a town.

MRS. PATRICK

I care nothing about a woods to guard a town. This is the outside-- these dunes where only beach grass grows, this outer shore where men can't live. The Outside. You who were born here and who die here have named it that.

ALLIE MAYO

Yes, we named it that, and we had reason. He died here [*Reaches her hand toward the closed door*] and many a one before him. But many another reached the harbor! [*Slowly raises her arm, bends it to make the form of the Cape. Touches the outside of her bent arm.*] The Outside. But an arm that bends to make a harbor--where men are safe.

MRS. PATRICK

I'm outside the harbor--on the dunes, land not life.

ALLIE MAYO

Dunes meet woods and woods hold dunes from a town that's shore to a harbor.

MRS. PATRICK

This is the Outside. Sand. [*Picking some of it up in her hand and letting it fall on the beach grass.*] Sand that *covers*--hills of sand that move and cover.

ALLIE MAYO

Woods. Woods to hold the moving hills from Provincetown. Provincetown--where they turn when boats can't live at sea. Did you ever see the sails come round here when the sky is dark? A line of them--swift to the harbor--where their children live. Go back!

[*Pointing.*] Back to your edge of the woods that's the *edge of the dunes*.

MRS. PATRICK

The edge of life. Where life trails off to dwarfed things not worth a name.

[*Suddenly sits down in the doorway.*]

ALLIE MAYO

Not worth a name. And--meeting the Outside!

[*Big with the sense of the wonder of life.*]

MRS. PATRICK

[*Lifting sand and letting it drift through her hand.*] They're what the sand will let them be. They take strange shapes like shapes of blown sand.

ALLIE MAYO

Meeting the Outside. [*Moving nearer; speaking more personally.*] I know why you came here. To this house that had been given up; on this shore where only savers of life try to live. I know what holds you on these dunes, and draws you over there. But other things are true beside the things you want to see.

MRS. PATRICK

How do you know they are? Where have you been for twenty years?

ALLIE MAYO

Outside. Twenty years. That's why I know how brave *they* are. [*Indicating the edge of the woods. Suddenly different.*] You'll not find peace there again! Go back and watch them *fight!*

MRS. PATRICK

[*Swiftly rising.*] You're a cruel woman--a hard, insolent woman! I knew what I was doing! What do you know about it? About me? I didn't *go* to the Outside. I was left there. I'm only--trying to get along. Everything that can hurt me I want buried--buried deep. Spring is here. This morning I *knew* it. Spring--coming through the storm--to take me--take me to hurt me. That's why I couldn't bear--[*She looks at the closed door*] things that made me know I feel. You haven't felt for so long you don't know what it means! But I tell you, Spring is here! And now you'd take *that* from me--[*Looking now toward the edge of the woods*] the thing that made me know they would be buried in my heart--those things I can't *live* and know I feel. You're more cruel than the sea! "But other things are true beside the things you want to see!" Outside. Springs will come when I will not know that it is spring. [*As if resentful of not more deeply believing what she says.*] What would there be for me but the Outside? What was there for you? What did you ever find after you lost the thing you wanted?

ALLIE MAYO

I found--what I find now I know. The edge of life--to hold life behind me--

[*A slight gesture toward MRS. PATRICK.*]

MRS. PATRICK

[*Stepping back.*] You call what you are life? [*Laughs.*] Bleak as those ugly things that grow in the sand!

ALLIE MAYO

[*Under her breath, as one who speaks tenderly of beauty.*] Ugly!

MRS. PATRICK

[*Passionately.*] I have *known* life. I have known *life*. You're like this Cape. A line of land way out to sea--land not life.

ALLIE MAYO

A harbor far at sea. [*Raises her arm, curves it in as if around something she loves.*] Land that encloses and gives shelter from storm.

MRS. PATRICK

[*Facing the sea, as if affirming what will hold all else out.*] Outside sea. Outer shore. Dunes--land not life.

ALLIE MAYO

Outside sea--outer shore, dark with the wood that once was ships--dunes, strange land not life--woods, town and harbor. The line! Stunted straggly line that meets the Outside face to face--and fights for what itself can never be. Lonely line. Brave growing.

MRS. PATRICK

It loses.

ALLIE MAYO

It wins.

MRS. PATRICK

The farthest life is buried.

ALLIE MAYO

And life grows over buried life! [*Lifted into that; then, as one who states a simple truth with feeling.*] It will. And Springs will come when you will want to know that it is Spring.

[*The CAPTAIN and BRADFORD appear behind the drift of sand. They have a stretcher. To get away from them MRS. PATRICK steps farther into the room; ALLIE MAYO shrinks into her corner. The men come in, open the closed door and go in the room where they left the*

dead man. A moment later they are seen outside the big open door, bearing the man away. MRS. PATRICK watches them from sight.

MRS. PATRICK

[Bitter, exultant.] Savers of life! [To ALLIE MAYO.] You savers of life! "Meeting the Outside!" Meeting--[But she cannot say it mockingly again; in saying it, something of what it means has broken through, rises. Herself lost, feeling her way into the wonder of life.] Meeting the Outside!

[It grows in her as slowly the curtain falls.]