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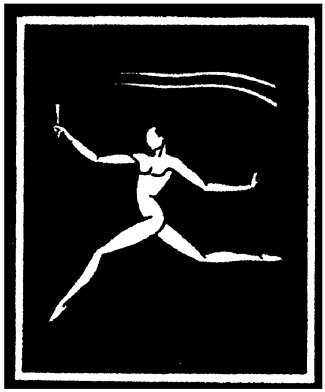
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BY KAUFMAN AND HART

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Six Plays

By Kaufman and Hart

With an Introduction by BROOKS ATKINSON

Once in a Lifetime

Merrily We Roll Along

You Can't Take It with You

The American Way

The Man Who Came to Dinner

George Washington Slept Here



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TO

THE MAN

WHO PRODUCED THEM

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INTRODUCTION

By BROOKS ATKINSON

THIS IS NOT to be regarded as the definitive edition of the plays written in collaboration by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart. At the moment, *George Washington Slept Here* of 1940, is their last work together. Since 1940 Mr. Kaufman has written *The Land Is Bright* with Edna Ferber, and Mr. Hart has written *Lady in the Dark* with music and lyrics by Kurt Weill and Ira Gershwin. But Mr. Kaufman and Mr. Hart are still neighbors and business associates in New York, where they live like gentlemen of substance, and neighbors in Bucks County, Penn., where they live like Broadway agriculturalists—expensively old-fashioned in the props and décor of their houses. Once before there was a lapse of four years in their joint labors at theatre mischief. When they are both amused by the same idea simultaneously they will probably write another play together.

Even if they do not, for no one knows what the next few years will do to our civilization, they have contributed something distinctive to American drama. For fantastic wit and humor, compact in form, swift in tempo, it would be hard to improve upon *Once in a Lifetime* of 1930, *You Can't Take It with You* of 1936 and *The Man Who Came to Dinner* of 1939. All those comedies added to the gaiety of the nation during a period, incidentally, when gaiety was not unconfined and the theatre was declining in scope and originality. *You Can't Take It with You* won the Pulitzer Prize.

None of the other plays is in their best style. Although I enjoyed *Merrily We Roll Along* in 1934 and *The American Way* in 1939, the one study of character with moral overtones and the other study of American democracy with moral overtones lack the gusto of the three memorable works. As pieces of theatrical showmanship they were as vivid as any of the others, but as writing they are guarded and their values are acquired. *The Fabulous Invalid* is not included in this volume because it can hardly be separated from Donald Oenslager's brilliantly naturalistic scenery and a long sequence of nostalgic theatrical posters; nor is the script of *I'd Rather Be Right* included here because it cannot be separated from the Rogers and Hart score and lyrics. As for *George Washington Slept Here*, which was a box-office success, it seems to me no more than a dutiful chore in playwriting and it does not convey the real enjoyment the authors take in their country estates. But three of the plays in this volume bustle and flare with a kind of comedy that is peculiarly American. No one can write a complete history of the nineteen thirties without reckoning with them.

Probably Mr. Kaufman and Mr. Hart have written brilliantly together because they like each other. Ever since they first met in 1930 in the office of the late Sam H. Harris to work on Mr. Hart's script of *Once in a Lifetime* they have gotten on famously. They have much in common in their point of view toward Broadway and the dim world that lies beyond, and they complement each other in other respects. Mr. Kaufman, who was born in 1889, is the older by fifteen years. He was operating in the theatre with immense success and acclaim while Mr. Hart was enviously staring at Broadway from the outside. Before 1930 Mr. Kaufman had written, among other works, *Merton of the Movies* and *Beggar on Horseback* with Marc Connelly and *The Royal Family* with Edna Ferber. Working without a collaborator, he had also written *The Butter*

and Egg Man, which was as hilarious as anything that bears his name, and the book of *The Cocoanuts* for the Marx Brothers, who were just then beginning to destroy the logic and sobriety of the Western world.

Meanwhile, Mr. Hart was going through a bedraggled apprenticeship. While employed as secretary to the late Augustus Pitou, the Erlanger booking agent, he wrote *The Hold-Up Man,* which succeeded in failing obscurely in Chicago in 1923. He acted with a group of amateurs. He directed amateur groups and staged shows in summer hotels and camps. In the Spring of 1930 *Jonica,* a musical comedy he had written with Dorothy Heyward, appeared on Broadway to reviews that were not unappreciative. A serious drama, entitled *No Retreat,* was staged that Summer by the Hampton Players on Long Island before a society audience that stole all the press notices, although some Broadway managers saw it and expressed interest in the author's abilities. Shortly afterward Mr. Hart submitted the script of *Once in a Lifetime* to six managers, all of whom accepted it. He sold it to Mr. Harris on the promise that Mr. Kaufman would work on it as collaborator. That was the beginning of their association.

Mr. Kaufman is the gloomy dean of Broadway wits. A tall, reticent man with a long head and a shock of bushy black hair, he underplays life and humor; and his smile is hardly more than a baring of the teeth. He is a fabulously efficient workman. When I first knew him in 1926 he was drama editor of the New York *Times.* Although he had a desk where he worked swiftly for an hour or so at a time, his office was really in his hat, where he carried an enormous fund of detailed business as editor and playwright. He was even-tempered, amusingly sardonic, pleasant and obliging, though never exactly cordial; and he came in and out of the office several times by day and night to keep his work moving. His habits were his own; his work was authoritative and final. Always a scrupulous man, he

kept his newspaper and theatrical work in separate compartments, leaning always on the side of impersonal fairness. It was notorious that the producer of any of Mr. Kaufman's plays got short shrift in the Sunday section and found the *Times* rather more than less austere toward his enterprises. Everything went like lightning when Mr. Kaufman stood on the south side of the make-up table. He never wasted time or emotion on anything. Although he was one of the most envied men on Broadway, you would never have suspected it from his informal and preoccupied appearance and his quiet concentration upon what he was doing.

Since he was earning corpulent sums of money in the theatre, no one understood exactly why he clung to his job on the *Times*; but since we all knew a good thing when we had it, no one asked. We suspected that he liked it because it represented something stable in contrast to the theatre, which is always hysterical and vicious. Mr. Kaufman is a modest man. He never feels easier in mind than when he is underestimating his abilities. What he did by himself in *The Butter and Egg Man* and the script for *The Cocoanuts* suggests to the bystander that his abilities are broader than he thinks. But Mr. Kaufman suspects within himself a lack of warmth and inventiveness, and it is true that his best plays have been written with Marc Connelly, Edna Ferber and Moss Hart who have these qualities. A large part of his strength as a theatreman comes from his passion for being realistic about his own abilities.

When a man is so conspicuously successful in one aspect of the theatre there is a common temptation to urge him on to better and higher things. The celebrated wit is expected to become a master of intellect and philosophy and to solve the problems of the world. Mr. Kaufman has been accused of writing down to the Broadway public for commercial reasons. But that criticism substitutes a

sly motive for a blunt fact. Like most writers, Mr. Kaufman has done the best work he could on every occasion. And it is a fact that he has always done his best work when he has kept inside the boundaries he has set for himself. He is master of the destructive jest; he has made the wisecrack a part of our language; and in the topsy-turvy period of the twenties his point of view was especially refreshing. It was also a corrective. Since the early thirties the destructive wisecrack has lost some of the prestige it had in the previous decade. Americans feel less secure; they are less tough-minded and self-assured. But the sharp, explosive crack at stupidity and buncombe, and the taut style of craftsmanship in playwriting and staging are the things of which Mr. Kaufman is master; and it is greatly to his credit that he has stuck to his last.

Mr. Hart is also tall; he also has a long head and black hair, although it is humorously receding in twin bays that leave a satyric peninsula of hair in the middle of his scalp. He also is master of the wisecrack and the verbal ricochet. He and Mr. Kaufman are intellectually congenial. Emotionally he is spontaneous and enthusiastic. Especially since 1930, when *Once in a Lifetime* began to pour money into all his pockets, he has taken a frank delight in living expensively surrounded by friends. There is nothing mean or prudent about him in character or purse. He leaves a little trail of impulsive gifts wherever he goes. He spends money with the eager lavishness of a man who once had none. A good part of it he has put into a house and farm in New Hope, Penn., where he lives whenever he has a few days or weeks. "Gold-plated Hart" he is called by people who are stunned by the speed with which he buys furniture, trees, paintings and gadgets, but the epithet is spoken with an undertone of good will. For he wants everyone to enjoy his good fortune, and he regards wealth as luck rather than the goal of living. Drama is something he lives as well as writes. Like Mr. Kaufman he is honest

with himself. But he is less willing to regard his limitations as final. He has a centrifugal personality, and he is always hoping to enlarge the area where he works.

Apart from his collaborations with Mr. Kaufman he has written the scripts of several illustrious musical shows—*Face the Music* and *As Thousands Cheer* with Irving Berlin, *Jubilee* with a score by Cole Porter and *Lady in the Dark* which is a co-ordinated musical play as contrasted with the routine form of musical show. A part of Mr. Hart's spontaneity derives from the fact that he is artistically ambitious.

No one knows exactly what each man contributes to their collaborations. People who know both of them might hastily conclude that Mr. Kaufman supplies the discipline and Mr. Hart the spirit. Indeed, I fancy there is more of Mr. Hart than of Mr. Kaufman in the tone of *You Can't Take It with You*, which is the most sympathetic of their comedies. Although Mr. Hart wrote the original script of *Once in a Lifetime* under that title, I confess I can perceive no individual traits in their whirling satire of Hollywood, unless it is the acid character of Lawrence Vail that Mr. Kaufman played in the original production; and I cannot distinguish individual notes in *The Man Who Came to Dinner*, which Mr. Kaufman and Mr. Hart wrote about the cyclonic personality of their crony, Alexander Woollcott. The truth seems to be that these plays are genuine collaborations. They are not jobs of assembly, but a blending of ideas and phrases, brought to a furious boil.

Mr. Kaufman and Mr. Hart collaborate somewhat as follows: They first discuss various ideas casually, sometimes letting an idea develop at random for several months before they begin to take it seriously. When they feel that an idea has become sufficiently tangible, they go to work on a daily schedule in some place where they can be free from interruption. Even New York has served that purpose on one occasion. At first they continue talking for

two or three weeks, hoping to enlarge and clarify the idea and to run up stray notions into fantastification. The whole thing begins to change proportion and direction once they get both heads working at it systematically. When the details of character and narrative have begun to take shape, Mr. Kaufman and Mr. Hart start putting them on paper, Mr. Kaufman usually sitting at the typewriter, Mr. Hart roaming the house and hoping for interruptions. An orderly person who likes to attack everything on plan, Mr. Kaufman feels happy if they produce four pages a day. They are likely to overwrite the first draft, confident that it is easier to improve a play by cutting than by expanding. Working after this general fashion, *You Can't Take It with You* was finished in five weeks, but *The Man Who Came to Dinner* took six months.

By the time the play is finished Mr. Kaufman and Mr. Hart know what actors they need and usually they have an opening date set for the next October. All the plays in this volume were actively staged by Mr. Kaufman, with Mr. Hart sharing the responsibility. Both gentlemen suffer acutely on opening nights, but happily in individual fashion, and both hate opening-night audiences. Since the opening-night audiences usually scream with neurotic pleasure Mr. Kaufman's and Mr. Hart's antipathy toward them may be dismissed as a temperamental phobia. There are no other authors held in higher esteem by the bizarre assembly of New York people who regard opening-night performances as essential to their prestige in the community.

Even the best plays in this volume are not notable for plot or theme, and you will search them in vain for passionate adventures of the heart. Mr. Kaufman and Mr. Hart are not poetic writers. The plots serve as frames for the fireworks; the romantic scenes are dutiful gestures toward conventions of the stage. But the fury of the gags, the bitterness and speed of the attacks upon stupidity,

the loudness of the humor, the precision of the phrasing are remarkable in the field of popular comedy. Mr. Kaufman and Mr. Hart have made their best plays out of dynamite.

MEN AT WORK

by Moss Hart

The lady on my right—the one with the electric smile —was turning toward me, the smile flashing on and off like the new Chesterfield sign. I had the uneasy feeling that I knew what she was going to say. I was right. She proceeded to say it.

"Mr. Hart," she said, "do writers mind being asked questions about their work?"

"Yes—in a word!" I said, as grimly as I knew how, and turned back to my salad.

I could feel the smile coming brilliantly on again; out of the corner of my eye, I caught a glimpse of teeth with Neon lights behind them, and a jeweled hand was laid lightly on my arm, swinging me toward her.

"Now, you're *not* going to finish until you've told me what I want to know," she said, "and bad boys don't get dessert!"

There was a nasty pause, the while I blinked painfully at that glistening expanse of dental art, Model T.

"All right," I thought, "you asked for it, lady!" and turned toward her with a smile of my own, coiled and ready to strike.

So far, the evening had been trying enough, God knows, without this. Warm cocktails, cold food, a long senseless conversation with a visiting English novelist, and now the little horror on my right.

Dinner parties of twenty people, I reflected, are downright uncivilized, anyway, and the hostess, who pins you

down with the promise of "Just *us*!" and then surprises you with twenty ill-assorted stuffed shirts, deserves the consequences.

At any rate, I was going to see to it that I was never invited again, and the toothy lady on my right seemed an instrument of darkness admirably suited to my purpose.

"What," I said, "would you like to know?"

The teeth flashed again.

"George Kaufman," she said, "excites me!"

"Physically?" I inquired, politely.

"Really," she trilled, "you writers! I mean, what lies behind those glowering eyes?"

I weighed the matter carefully for a moment.

"That bourne from which no traveler returns," I said, and decided not to go on with it. It wasn't, after all, her fault that the cocktails had been warm and the food dreadful. Met in other surroundings, with a pair of sun glasses to protect one from the brilliance of that smile, she might be innocuous enough. I decided to fulfil my role of the extra man with good grace, and muttered some nonsense about writers being a shy lot.

But no! The lady had saved me the waltz. This time she swung me around by the shoulders and the smile glittered like Radio City on a sunlit November morning.

"What I really want to know," she said, "is, aren't you frightened to *death* of him? You've written all those plays together and I don't see *how* you do it. Truly, Mr. Hart, aren't you scared of George Kaufman? Just a little teentsy-weentsy bit? 'Fess up, now!"

I suppose, at least I have thought since, that it was the phrase, "'Fess up, now," that made me behave so badly. For I proceeded to behave very badly indeed, and I am not, as a rule, a rude person. I can, on occasion, summon up a passive resistance that will see me through even the dullest of dinners. But at the combination of "teentsy-weentsy" and "'Fess up now," something snapped inside.

Dream Girl either heard the snap—it seemed to me quite audible—or was aware of it physically, for she turned on the teeth again and said: "Am I boring you, Mr. Hart?"

This time I didn't hesitate. "Frankly, yes," I said. "You are boring the living b'jesus out of me!"

The smile froze on her lips.

Now, I have, like most avid readers of detective stories, read a good deal about smiles freezing on lips, without ever quite believing the phrase, but I actually proceeded to see it carried out before my eyes. It is quite true—smiles can freeze. The mechanism is a very definite one. The lips twist grotesquely; the teeth, I could swear, grow two shades darker; the mouth clicks shut and draws the lips into a thin line of open fury. I watched, fascinated.

There followed, then, a little silence of the rugged grandeur variety and, wrapping her dignity about her like an imperial Roman toga, the lady proceeded to give me her back for the rest of the dinner, a back which I promptly christened Little America, so glacial was its aspect.

Afterward, mellowed by some excellent brandy, I experienced an acute sense of guilt. It seemed to me, as the brandy chortled through my digestive tract, that I had been ill mannered and a boor. I decided to apologize, but when I came upon the lady in the drawing room later, she would have none of me.

The teeth flashed with a new brilliance; the smile glittered handsomely. But the mood had changed; that first fine careless rapture had gone.

"There is no need," she said sweetly, "for you to apologize, Mr. Hart. One either has good manners, or one hasn't, don't you think?"

And once more I was given a bird's-eye view of Little America.

Well, she was right, I am afraid, and this is being written as a gesture of atonement and humility. Should her

glistening eye happen to stray over these pages, she will find here such random thoughts as I have been able to gather on the working method of Mr. Kaufman and I hope, if she cannot find it in her heart to forgive me, she will at least find her unfortunate question answered.

For, if the truth must be told, she was right, in more ways than one. Perhaps, subconsciously, I resented the question because of its very truth. The plain fact is George Kaufman *did* frighten me to death originally. He frightens everyone, I suppose. I know now, of course, that underneath that beetling brow and behind that acidulous manner of speech there lies, to coin a new phrase, a heart of purest marshmallow.

And this I must admit—it took two plays, a number of rides on a carrousel, and what is tenderly known as an English summer for me to find it out. Our original contact was for me a decidedly frightening one, and our later meetings were not helped greatly by the fact that I was prone to stare for long periods at Mr. Kaufman, inarticulate and with what I can only describe now as a generally cow-like expression about the eyes. For I came upon George Kaufman very much as a boy of ten would come upon Dick Merriwell, or the captain of the winning eleven.

I was, at our first meeting, coming face to face with my hero, and that makes it just about as difficult for the hero as for anybody else. I think he suspected as much, for he snarled a great deal, his manner was brusque and wintry, and I left the office elated at having met him but conscious that I had undergone a baptism of fire.

The occasion of our meeting was his decision to participate in the rewriting of *Once in a Lifetime*, and for days before that I had swung breathless between prayers that he would decide to collaborate and an unholy excitement at the prospect of an interview, whether he decided to participate or not.

He was, to me, already a legendary figure. As a high-

school boy, I had been entranced by *Dulcy* and *To the Ladies*; I had made my long-suffering family take the *Morning World* instead of the *American* so that I might follow his all-too-few-and-far-between contributions to F. P. A.'s column, while the Sunday drama section of the *Times*, of which he was then editor, became a weekly religious ritual. By the time I had seen *Merton of the Movies* and *Beggar on Horseback*, I had developed one all-consuming ambition—to write plays in the Kaufman tradition.

I may say that it was while I sat in the gallery of the Broadhurst Theatre, drinking in a performance of *June Moon* that the idea of *Once in a Lifetime* struck me—if that is the word one uses for those creative occasions. As a matter of fact, I started the first act that night on my return from the theatre and three weeks later saw the play finished. I dimly realized that what it lacked in technique it perhaps made up in freshness of approach, and while I was not altogether unhopeful of its ultimate sale, I truly believe that it was basically written for the sole purpose of procuring an interview with George Kaufman. That he would like it well enough to collaborate, I don't believe ever crossed my mind. In some childlike fashion I considered it as a letter of introduction that might serve in some way to procure that precious interview. At best, I had fond hopes of some obscure position as second stage manager with a play of his, if it aroused his interest sufficiently.

When I received word that he had read the play, and not only liked it but definitely wanted to collaborate on the revisions, I suppose my excitement was a little unearthly, so that I entered the office for that first meeting wide-eyed with hero worship and drunk with my own perfume.

It was only later that I discovered he shied at the slightest display of emotion as most men flee from smallpox.

and when I recall that my performance that afternoon was mildly reminiscent of Lillian Gish in *The White Sister*, I can understand a little better the sharpness of his tone and the brevity of the interview. I left the office, however, mad with power, for I had not only met George S. Kaufman, but we were to start work the very next day. I recall also that my father and mother were not a little startled, on my return, to find me talking in strange, clipped accents, addressing my bewildered brother as "Mr. H.," and my shocked aunt as "The Old Lady from Dubuque." I was, of course, already talking like George Kaufman, and for some two months after that my dismayed friends and family suffered from the curious combination of what they knew to be a rank sentimentalist talking in terms of a rabid Algonquinite. It was a difficult time, I imagine, for that particular section of Brooklyn known as Flatbush.

At any rate, I reported for work the next morning, stupidly innocent and blissfully eager, and there began what I now fondly call "The Days of the Terror." Our working day consisted of ten o'clock in the morning until exhausted—somewhere, perhaps, around one or two o'clock the next morning—with perhaps fifteen minutes out for such meals as Mr. Kaufman considered necessary to keep alive. Since he cared nothing for food, I found myself, at the end of the day, not only exhausted but starved as well.

Also, to add to my growing alarm, work proceeded at what I considered a maddeningly slow pace. Two hours would be spent sometimes in shaping one short sentence into a mosaic-like correctness. A whole day would pass in merely discussing an exit. If I had had visions of an early production, I was to learn the fitness of that time-worn phrase, "Plays are not written, but rewritten." And the rewriting process under the guidance of the eagle-eyed Mr. Kaufman slowly formulated itself in my mind

as a combination of the Spanish Inquisition and the bloodiest portions of the First World War.

I was to discover, also, that a series of personal idiosyncrasies on the part of Mr. Kaufman were as much a part of the actual working day as sitting at the typewriter, and I came to watch for them much as one watches a steadily falling barometer on a rough day at sea.

I was to learn, for instance, that a slow and careful picking of lint from the carpet was invariably the forerunner of the emergence of a good line. I was to learn that Mr. Kaufman's lanky form stretched full-length on the floor for long periods at a time meant trouble. And I came to know that what Mr. Kaufman needed much more than fresh air and food was the immediate necessity to remove his shoes and to pace madly before he could even think of working. Shoelaces drove him crazy and so, I discovered much later on, did my cigar smoking; but since he never complained I puffed contentedly on, not quite realizing that a major portion of his pacing was a frantic effort to elude the blue clouds of smoke with which I filled the room. Moreover, since the room we worked in didn't provide enough pacing space for two, I was the one who sat stiffly for long hours in an overstuffed chair while I watched Mr. Kaufman perform gymnastics that would make *The Man on the Flying Trapeze* turn green with envy.

With "Curtain" finally typed—we had begun in December and it was now June—I heaved a breathless sigh of relief, but the relief was short lived. Rehearsals, to which I had looked forward with such eagerness, were a trifle marred by the fact that what had seemed so right at the typewriter seemed suddenly so wrong on the stage. And it became the regulation thing, as rehearsals proceeded, to sit up most of the night rewriting and to appear at rehearsals fresh and bright at ten o'clock the next morning.

The dress rehearsal I remember only as an unpleasant nightmare. The train ride to Atlantic City I remember not at all, and the opening I have been living down quietly ever since. I am, I suppose, notorious for the way I behave on the opening night of any play of mine, and this first play was no exception. The fact that I am unable to retain food of any kind for at least three days before an opening is unpleasant enough, but the horrible fact that I am compelled to spend most of the opening night in the men's room of the theatre, unable to witness the performance at all, has always been the sore spot in my career as a writer. I emerged long enough, however, to catch fleeting glimpses of Mr. Kaufman on the stage. He was, you may remember, Lawrence Vail, the playwright, in *Once in a Lifetime,* and the greenish pallor of his face sent me scurrying back to my retreat as fast as I could go.

It was not an auspicious opening. Mr. Kaufman had told me—I may say that I still called him Mr. Kaufman in those days—that his experience with Sam Harris had taught him that if Sam Harris liked a play, he remained for the full week of its tryout in Atlantic City. If he didn't like the play, he said nothing but quietly slipped out of town the next morning. I waited then, not so much for the reviews in the Atlantic City papers, but to see if Mr. Harris still remained in town. He didn't. I learned, to my horror, that he had not even waited until the next morning. He had left at eleven-thirty that night, leaving only a message in our box which said, "It needs work, boys," which sentence I have since had engraved as the largest understatement since the spring of 1910.

We played out the week in Atlantic City, and another week at Brighton Beach. There was obviously so much work to be done, the play was so unwieldy, so cumbersome, so filled with actors, scenery and costumes, that the only possible thing to do was to close it and get back to a typewriter as fast as we could. That was the tenth of

July. There followed, then, the longest, hottest, most exhausting summer I have spent or ever hope to spend. Mr. Kaufman, in the face of disaster, seemed suddenly to come to life. If I had thought that our working sessions were tough before, it seemed to me now that I had wandered into a concentration camp, and an eraser took on all the semblance of a rubber truncheon. This time, Mr. Kaufman forgot entirely about food. He paced two rooms instead of one. There were days at a time when we never left the house. And I remember reflecting bitterly that if this were what the theatre was like, I had sooner be a good insurance agent. Because, in my dim-witted way, I began to realize that this was but the beginning. And I was right.

For the second production, rehearsals took on a new ghastliness. I was depressed by the fact that Mrs. Kaufman, for whose critical judgment I had come to have an enormous respect, liked the new third act not at all and by the time the Philadelphia opening rolled around, a numbness had crept into my bones which I thought nothing, not even the biggest hit in the world, would assuage.

There was á large contingent of New Yorkers who came down for the opening, and I remember my panic when I saw them leave in the middle of the third act. It meant only one thing to me: dire failure. I didn't realize that they *had* to leave, whether they liked it or not, to catch the midnight back to New York, and since we had only reached the middle of the third act by midnight, it will be noted by even the least theatrically wise person that our play was a shade too long.

And then came the dawn. Only we never saw the dawn, nor the day, nor the night either. For in the next six days I never left my room at the hotel. Mr. Kaufman had to leave because he was acting in the play, but his schedule, and I still cannot realize how he managed to do it, ran something like this: he returned from the theatre at eleven-

thirty. We worked steadily through the night until ten o'clock the next morning. He would then leave to put the new stuff into rehearsal and rehearse until two. Then, while the actors learned the new lines for the evening's performance, he would return to my room at the hotel and work until eight-thirty; then back to the theatre for the performance; then back to my room again to work all night until ten o'clock the next morning.

I may add, resentfully, that he seemed to blossom through all this; that his eyes sparkled with an unwonted brightness; that his hand holding a pencil was like a surgeon's hand holding a scalpel. I may also add that one three o'clock in the morning, strolling out for a breath of fresh air, which I insisted upon, we came upon a children's carrousel in some little public playground, and it was there I discovered the marshmallow heart. Instinctively, we both made for the carrousel, and for half an hour, in the ghostly light of a Philadelphia dawn, we swung madly around on it. Whether, by this time, I was growing less frightened of him, as the dear lady suggested, I do not know; but his essential kindliness, his great good humor, the curious kind of nobility which he possesses more than any other man I know, had given me a fondness for him that enveloped my original timidity. And I found by the closing night in Philadelphia that while he still remained my hero, he was a hero I could talk to comfortably.

The night before the New York opening, the night of the final dress rehearsal at the Music Box, he unbent sufficiently to smile and say, "Don't worry too much. It's been swell anyway. And let's do another one." So that I didn't care particularly whether the play went well the next night or not. It had been pretty fine, at that. And as you can see by this book, we married and had several beautiful children.

FORKED LIGHTNING

By GEORGE S. KAUFMAN

SOME YEARS AGO, during a visit to London, Moss Hart found that the nightly round of top hat, Savoy Grill and Quaglione's was beginning to wear him down. There had been about a week of it, uninterrupted, and a good night's sleep was indicated. So at nine o'clock of a dismally foggy night he put aside all temptation, pulled the shades down in his hotel room and settled himself for at least twelve good hours of slumber.

Sure enough, his watch said nine-thirty when he awoke. A bit of fog was still coming through the window cracks, but Moss was enormously refreshed. He bounced out of bed with high vigor, bathed, shaved, and phoned down for toast, eggs, coffee and marmalade. By the time he had stowed this away he was fairly bursting with vitality. Nothing like a good night's sleep!

He would like the morning papers, he told the phone operator. "Yes, sir!" Up they came, and for twenty eager minutes Moss buried himself in the news. And then presently he came across an item that had a vaguely familiar ring. Hadn't he read that yesterday? Yes, he had. And here was another such item. And another. Then he pulled himself together and looked at the date line. It was yesterday's newspaper.

Back on the telephone, he demanded to know how they could do such a thing. "But you must be mistaken, sir—those are this morning's newspapers." "But I tell you they aren't." "But if you'll look at the date, sir—"

Moss looked, and a horrible foreboding took possession of him. "What time is it?" he asked the operator. "Ten o'clock, sir." "Ten o'clock when?" "Ten o'clock Tuesday evening, sir."

The mystery was solved, of course. Moss had slept exactly half an hour.

Now, I don't for a minute say that this could not happen to anybody but Moss, but it is a little bit remarkable that so many similar incidents have managed to crowd themselves into his life. Nothing happens to Moss in the simple and ordinary terms in which it happens to the average person. The most normal of human experiences is crowded with drama where Moss is concerned.

Nothing, for example, could be more within the simple range of human activity than a visit to the dentist. We have all gone through it, lingered for our unpleasant hour, and gone on our way. But not Moss. When Moss went to the dentist it was at once discovered that a couple of teeth were growing out of his knee, or his elbow, or something. The dentist called in another dentist, and he brought along two more. It seemed it would require quite a course of treatment.

And it did. For something like three months Moss went to the dentist. But he didn't go the way you or I would. Oh, no! Moss would get there at eleven o'clock in the morning, and he would be there until four or five in the afternoon. Then, one epochal day, he arrived at eleven in the morning and stayed until nine o'clock that evening! This was so whimsical a procedure, even for Moss, that he felt I would not possibly believe him. So he brought along an affidavit from the dentists—there were three or four, and they worked on him in relays—testifying to its truth.

There were weeks, then, that Moss could not keep a dinner engagement because he had to be at the dentists'. This was a new reason for breaking dinner dates, and his

friends were somewhat perplexed. But he was only building up to the grand climax. On the final day of treatment Moss arrived at the dentists' at ten o'clock in the morning and left at two o'clock the following morning! There were no affidavits this time, because he knew I wouldn't even believe the affidavits. But it was true.

Nor was that all. This was followed by a complete nervous breakdown on the part of the dentists, although Moss felt fine. And as a complete you-can't-top-this finish to the whole business, the dentists gave Moss a beautiful present when it was all finished, and Moss reciprocated by buying them cuff links!

Now, is that going to the dentist or isn't it?

Forked Lightning, I called him. Only I am not sure that it plays around his head. I think his head plays around the lightning, deliberately.

And that is one of the reasons, if you ask me, why he is a good playwright. The prodigality that marks the simplest moments of his life is matched by the prodigality of his mind. Ideas pour forth, and the simplest things of life are highlighted and made interesting. His is an instinctive sense of drama, on and off. Life, like the plays, cuts itself neatly into acts, with climaxes, second-act curtains, and interesting minor characters.

There are times, I think, when he is not completely sure whether the curtain is up or down. There was, for example, that moment when he decided to drive North instead of South. He woke to a day that promised no particular activity of interest—that same trip down to the office to see what was going on. He decided, suddenly, that he would not drive down to the office at all—he would drive in the other direction.

Drama took the wheel of the car at this point, and at the end of about an hour Moss found himself far up in the city, and just around the corner from the school he

had attended as a boy. He would drive around and look at it. He remembered the day the school had opened—there had been a terrific ceremony, and they had all paraded from the old building to the new. The principal had headed the procession. Professor Cartwright. Twenty-five years ago, almost. Was he still there, he wondered?

And then, since the story had to have a second act, Moss got out of the car and went in. There was a door marked PRINCIPAL, and he knocked on it. A voice said "Come in!" and there was a little man back of a desk—a man who might very well have been Professor Cartwright, and who, in the manner of good dramatic construction, was indeed he.

"Professor Cartwright?" asked Moss, eagerly.

"What do you want?" The professor's tone was uncompromising.

"Is this Professor Cartwright?"

"What do you want?"

"My name is—Moss Hart." Moss waited hopefully for the minor sensation which this revelation was supposed to bring about, but nothing happened. "I—uh—I used to go to school here when I was a boy. My name is—Moss Hart."

"Well, what do you want?"

"Why—nothing. I just thought I'd—my name is Moss Hart." Still with a shade of hope. "I just happened to be near by, and thought I'd—uh—you know."

"Is that all?"

"Well, is it all right if I just go through the school—look around?"

"All right. Here's a pass."

Moss went up a flight of stairs, and there was Room No. 5. He had sat in that room for many hours, dutifully trying to learn things that would be of no help in the theatre.

A stern-looking woman opened the door. This time drama had sprung one of its surprises—it was not his old teacher.

"My name is—Moss Hart." A little bit of hope still sticking.

"Oh, yes. You're the father of one of the boys, aren't you?"

"No, no. I write—plays. Plays. I used to go to this school, so—"

"Oh, come right in. . . . Boys, this is—what is the name?"

"Moss Hart."

"Yes. He used to go to school here. Sit right down, Mr. Hart."

So for two hours Moss went back to school, and very dull he found it. But there was a curtain coming, of a sort. When it was all over the teacher pulled a manuscript out of her desk drawer.

"Did you say you wrote plays, Mr. Hart? I just happen to have written a play myself. . . ."

I think, on the way out, that Moss opened the door of the principal's room just a crack. Instinctively he felt the need of a finish. Professor Cartwright might be lying dead on the floor, a knife of peculiar design plunged into his heart. But the professor was still sitting at his desk. He looked up just for a second. "What do you want?" he said.

Forked Lightning. Only Moss could have planted thirty-five hundred new trees on his farm in Bucks County, and only Moss, in the midst of plenty, could have failed to find water at the end of three months and the digging of something like seventeen wells. Only Moss could have bought a hundred pigs to give his caretaker enough interest in the place to persuade him to stay on. Only Moss and his family, after *Once in a Lifetime*, could have moved out of their Sheepshead Bay house over-

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night, leaving every piece of furniture, every shred of clothes and every kitchen utensil right where it was. Only Moss could have written a show that called for four revolving stages, double the number that had ever been used before.

Forked Lightning.

But it makes for awfully good shows.

ONCE IN A LIFETIME

Once in a Lifetime was produced by Sam H. Harris at the Music Box Theatre, New York, on Wednesday night, September 24th, 1930, with the following cast:

GEORGE LEWIS	HUGH O'CONNELL
MARY DANIELS	JEAN DIXON
JERRY HYLAND	GRANT MILLS
THE PORTER	OSCAR POLK
HELEN HOBART	SPRING BYINGTON
SUSAN WALKER	SALLY PHIPPS
CIGARETTE GIRL	CLARA WARING
COAT CHECK GIRL	OTIS SCHAEFER
PHYLLIS FONTAINE	JANET CURRIE
MISS FONTAINE'S MAID	MARIE FERGUSON
MISS FONTAINE'S CHAUFFEUR	CHARLES MACK
FLORABEL LEIGH	EUGENIE FRONTAI
MISS LEIGH'S MAID	DOROTHY TALBOT
MISS LEIGH'S CHAUFFEUR	EDWARD LOUD
BELLBOY	PAYSON CRANE
MRS. WALKER	FRANCES E. BRANDT
ERNEST	MARC LEOBELL
HERMAN GLOGAUER	CHARLES HALTON
MISS LEIGHTON	LEONA MARICLE
LAWRENCE VAIL	GEORGE S. KAUFMAN
WEISSKOPF	LOUIS CRUGER
METERSTEIN	WILLIAM MCFADDEN
FIRST PAGE	STANLEY FITZPATRICK
SECOND PAGE	EDWIN MILLS

THREE SCENARIO WRITERS—KEMPTON RACE, GEORGE CASSELBURY AND BURTON MALLORY

RUDOLPH KAMMERLING	WALTER DREHER

FIRST ELECTRICIAN	JACK WILLIAMS
SECOND ELECTRICIAN	JOHN O. HEWITT
A VOICE PUPIL	JANE BUCHANAN
MR. FLICK	HAROLD GRAU
MISS CHASEN	VIRGINIA HAWKINS
FIRST CAMERAMAN	IRVING MORROW
THE BISHOP	GRANVILLE BATES
THE SIXTH BRIDESMAID	FRANCES THRESS
SCRIPT GIRL	GEORGIA MACKINNON
GEORGE'S SECRETARY	ROBERT RYDER

Staged by GEORGE S. KAUFMAN

SCENES

ACT ONE

Scene I. A room in the West Forties, New York.
Scene II. A Pullman Car.
Scene III. The Gold Room of the Hotel Stilton, Los Angeles.

ACT TWO

Reception Room of the Glogauer Studio

ACT THREE

Scene I. On the set.
Scene II. The Pullman Car.
Scene III. The Reception Room.

ACT ONE

SCENE I

(A room in the West Forties, New York City. It is a replica of the countless other furnshed rooms in the district —cheerless and utterly uninviting. There is a bed, a washstand, an easy chair, two faded pictures on the walls. A pretty dismal place, all in all—yet GEORGE LEWIS, *seated in the easy chair, seems completely content.* GEORGE *is about twenty-eight, a clean-cut, nice-looking young fellow, with the most disarmingly naïve countenance it is possible to imagine. Completely without guile. He is the sort of person insurance men and book agents instinctively head for, and in the case of* GEORGE, *it might be noted, usually succeed in selling. Withal, there is a quiet sincerity about* GEORGE *and a certain youthful ardor and genuineness that make him a decidedly likeable person.*

He is sunk deep down in the easy chair, at the moment, immersed to the exclusion of all else in that Bible of show business, VARIETY. *He has a large plate of Indian nuts on the arm of the easy chair, and these he proceeds to crack and eat with a methodical thoroughness, stopping only to turn a page of the paper or to brush some of the shells off his trousers. It is a picture of a man thoroughly content and blissfully happy in the moment. There is a sharp knock at the door.* GEORGE *murmurs a "Come in" and* MAY DANIELS *enters. She is quite a person, this* MAY DANIELS. *It is evident from the moment*

she enters the room. There is a sharp, biting incisiveness about everything she says and does—a quick mind, and a hearty, earthy sense of humor. Tall and slender, she carries herself with the conscious ease and grace of a person who has always been thoroughly sure of herself, and her blonde good looks are a bit clouded just now by a tired line between the eyes and a discouraged droop at the corners of the mouth. With one glance she takes in GEORGE, VARIETY, *and the Indian nuts—then sits dejectedly on the edge of the bed)*

MAY. Jerry not back yet, huh?

GEORGE. No.

MAY. Anything new since this afternoon? You haven't heard anything, have you?

GEORGE. No. Are you going to stay and talk, May? I'm reading.

MAY. What time's Jerry coming back, do you know?

GEORGE. He went to a show.

MAY. It's wonderful how you two take it. You off to ball games every day, Jerry going to shows! What about the old vaudeville act? Are we gonna get some bookings or aren't we?

GEORGE. I don't know anything about it, May. I'm reading.

MAY. Still "Variety?"

GEORGE. Uh-huh.

MAY. One of these days you'll pick up a paper that's written in English, and you'll have to send out for an interpreter.

GEORGE. What do you mean, May? "Variety" is in English.

MAY. All right.

GEORGE. It has news of the show world from different countries, but it's all in English.

MAY (*willing to call the whole thing off*). I said all right, George.

GEORGE. Want some Indian nuts?

MAY. No, thanks. (*He cracks a nut—and a good sturdy crack it is.* MAY *surveys him*) Don't your teeth ever bother you?

GEORGE. No. Why?

MAY. I dunno—after all those damn things you've eaten. Do you realize, George, that you've left a trail of Indian nuts clean across the United States? If you ever commit a crime they could go right *to* you.

GEORGE (*going back to his reading*). Aw!

MAY. You've thrown them shells under radiators in every dollar-and-a-half hotel from here to Seattle. I can visualize hundreds of chambermaids, the country over, coming in the morning you check out and murmuring a blessing on your head. Don't you ever have bad dreams, George, with that on your mind?

GEORGE. Listen, May, are you gonna keep talking till Jerry gets here?

MAY (*nervously*). What's Jerry up to, George? Is he going to land us something or isn't he? How much longer are we going to lay around here?

GEORGE. Don't ask me—ask Jerry.

MAY. I'm gonna—and we'll have a showdown tonight. The Automat don't spell home to me.

GEORGE (*just a literal boy*). We don't live there.

MAY. We do everything but sleep there, and we'd be doing that if they could get beds into them slots.

GEORGE. You oughta have patience, May. We've only been here four weeks.

MAY. George, listen. Dumb as you are, you ought to be able to get this: the bank-book says there's just one hundred and twenty-eight dollars left. One hundred and twenty-eight dollars. Get that?

GEORGE. Sure.

MAY. Well, how long do you think three people can live on that, with Jerry going to opening nights and you taking in the world series?

GEORGE. Something'll turn up. It always does. (*And for good luck he cracks another nut*)

MAY. Well, I'm glad you like those goddam things—you're certainly a lucky fellow. Because the way things are going you may have to live on 'em in another week.

GEORGE. Go on, May—nobody could live on Indian nuts. There isn't enough to 'em. Look—that's all they are. (*He cracks another; exhibits the contents*)

MAY. All right, George. (*A moment's restless pacing*) Well, I suppose it's another week of hanging around offices, and another series of those nickel-plated dinners. I'm so sick of the whole business I could yell.

GEORGE. You're just blue, May.

MAY. I wouldn't wonder. Living alone in that hall bedroom—without even the crack of an Indian nut to cheer me up. . . . Well! I wanted to do it, and here I am. I guess it's better than selling ninety-cent perfume to the feminine population of Connellsville, Pennsylvania, but there's times when I wish I was back there.

GEORGE (*brightly*). Maybe we'll play there some day.

MAY (*that's all she needs yet*). It wouldn't surprise me.

GEORGE. I wonder if we'll ever play Medallion—I haven't been back for four years.

MAY. Has it got an Automat?

GEORGE. I don't think so.

MAY. We'll never play it.

GEORGE. Jerry played it once—that's where he discovered me. He played the theatre I was working in—I was an usher.

MAY. Yah, I remember. Too bad that was pre-Roxy, George—you'd have had a career.

GEORGE. If I'd have stayed I might have been a lieutenant. One of the boys I started with is a major.

MAY. Do you think they'll ever have conscription for ushers?

GEORGE. Then Jerry came along and offered me this job. He said I was just right for it.

MAY. He had a good eye. As far as I'm concerned you're best dead pan feeder in all show business.

GEORGE. Don't the audiences like me, too?

MAY. No one ever gave birth in the aisle, George, but you're all right.

GEORGE. I love doing it, too. The longer we play the act the more I like it.

MAY (*suddenly looking at him*). George, you and Jerry have been bunking together for four years. Isn't Jerry a swell guy?

GEORGE. He's been a wonderful friend to me.

MAY. I wouldn't tell this to him, George, but I'll never forget what I owe Jerry Hyland. (*Quickly*) And don't you go telling him, either.

GEORGE. I won't tell him. How much do you owe him?

MAY (*nearly ready to give up*). George, please stop eating those things—they're going to your head. I don't mean I owe him any money. But he's never made me feel that we were anything but good friends, or that I'd have to feel anyways else to keep the job.

GEORGE (*not to be outdone*). He never made me feel anything, either.

MAY. Well, that's just dandy.

GEORGE. Shall I tell you something, May?

MAY. I wish you would.

GEORGE. I think Jerry likes you.

MAY. All right, George.

GEORGE. No—I mean he *really* likes you—a whole lot.

MAY. O.K., George. The question is: What do we do about bookings? Are we going to crash the big time or aren't we?

GEORGE. We were doing all right on the small time. We could be working right along—you know what the Booking Office told us.

MAY. And you know where the Booking Office books us. Bellows Falls, Vermont.

GEORGE. I liked it there.

MAY. What?

GEORGE. We had a good dinner there. With jello.

MAY. Look, George. Don't you want to do anything else all your life but knock about all over the map as a small-time vaudeville actor?

GEORGE. No.

MAY. You don't?

GEORGE. No.

MAY. Well, I guess that settles that, doesn't it? You might as well go ahead and read.

GEORGE. No, I feel like talking now.

MAY. I feel like reading now.

(*At which the door is flung rather violently open and* JERRY HYLAND *enters the room.* JERRY HYLAND *is your idea of the complete bond salesman. Looking like one of those slick Men's Clothing Advertisements in "Vanity Fair," he completes the illusion by talking as if he had just stepped out of the picture. It is almost impossible not to like* JERRY *immediately, and, if his talent for salesmanship has been submerged by that for second-rate acting, he makes up for it by being the first to tell you what a bum actor he really is and outlining a project to merge Ford and General Motors.* JERRY *is in the early thirties, and the major part of his late twenties have been spent in concocting one scheme or another to get them out of Vaudeville and into the Big Money. Just at the moment he is laboring under the stress of some tremendous piece of news, and it is a moment or two before he can find the breath to tell them*)

MAY. Well, here we are! When do we play the Palace?

GEORGE. Hello, Jerry!

MAY. Or did you settle for the last half in Bridgeport?

JERRY. May, it's here!

MAY. You got bookings?

GEORGE. Is it the Palace?

JERRY. Never mind about that! I've got some news for you! I saw history made tonight!

MAY. What are you talking about?

GEORGE. You saw what?

JERRY. I've just been to the opening of Al Jolson's talking picture, "The Jazz Singer."

MAY. Well, what of it?

JERRY. And I'm telling you it's the greatest thing in the world!

MAY. There've been good pictures before, Jerry—

JERRY. I'm not talking about the picture! I mean the Vitaphone!

MAY. The what?

JERRY. The Vitaphone—the talkies!

GEORGE. They talk.

MAY. Oh, that!

JERRY. That! You ought to hear them cheering, May! Everybody went nuts! I tell you, May, it's going to revolutionize the entire industry. It's something so big I bet even the Vitaphone people don't know what they've got yet. You've got to hear it, May, to realize what it means. Why, in six months from now—

MAY. Come out of it, Jerry! What are *you* getting so het up about? It's no money in *your* pocket, even if it *is* good!

GEORGE. No!

JERRY (*pretty calmly, for him*). No? (*He takes in the pair of them*) Well, we're leaving for Los Angeles in the morning.

MAY. What did you say?

JERRY. We're leaving for Los Angeles in the morning.

GEORGE (*all he wants are the facts*). What time?

MAY. Are you out of your mind?

JERRY. Don't you understand, May? For the next six

months they won't know which way to turn! All the old standbys are going to find themselves out in the cold, and somebody with brains and sense enough to use them is going to get into the big dough! The movies are back where they were when the De Milles and the Laskys first saw what they were going to amount to! Can't you see what it would mean to get in *now*?

MAY. What do you mean get in, Jerry? What would *we* do there—act, or what?

JERRY. No, no! Acting is small potatoes from now on! You can't tell what we'll do—direct, give orders, tell 'em how to do things! There's no limit to where we can go!

MAY. (*vaguely groping*). Yah, but what do we know about—

JERRY. Good Lord, May! We've been doing nothing but playing the act in all the small-time houses in the country. Suppose we *do* cut loose and go out there? What have we got to lose?

GEORGE. A hundred and twenty-eight dollars.

MAY. Shut up, George! I don't know, Jerry—

JERRY. We gotta get out there, May! Before this Broadway bunch climbs on the bandwagon. There's going to be a gold rush, May. There's going to be a trek out to Hollywood that'll make the 49'ers look sick.

MAY. Y'mean thar's gold in them hills, Jerry?

JERRY. Gold and a black marble swimming pool, with the Jap chauffeur waiting outside the iron-grilled gate—all that and more, May, if we can work it right and get in *now*! They're panic-stricken out there! They'll fall on the neck of the first guy that seems to know what it's all about! And that's why we gotta get there quick!

MAY. Yah, but give me time to think, Jerry. (*A hand to her head*) Suppose we don't catch on right away—how are we going to live? You heard what the boy wonder said—a hundred and twenty-eight dollars.

JERRY (*exploding the bombshell*). I've got five hundred more!

MAY. What!

JERRY. I've got five hundred more! Right here!

MAY. Where'd you get it?

JERRY. Now don't yell, May! I sold the act!

MAY. You did what?

JERRY. I sold the act! I took one look at that picture and sold the act outright to Eddie Garvey and the Sherman Sisters for five hundred cash! Now don't get sore, May! It was the only thing to do!

MAY. (*slowly*). No, I'm not getting sore, Jerry, but—

GEORGE (*coming to life*). You sold the act to the Sherman Sisters?

JERRY. My God, if people once took a mule and a covered wagon, just because they heard of some mud that looked yellow, and endured hardships and went all the way across the country with their families—fought Indians, even—think what it'll mean, May, if we win out! No more traveling all over the country—living in one place instead of—

MAY (*catching some of his excitement*). Okay, Jerry—I'm with you! You had some helluva nerve, but count me in!

JERRY. Good for you! How about you, George?

GEORGE. What?

JERRY. Are you willing to take a chance with us—leave all this behind and cut loose for Hollywood?

GEORGE. Well, but look—if you sold the act—

JERRY. Sure I sold the act! We're going out and try this new game! Now what do you say?

MAY. Come on, George!

JERRY. It's the chance of a lifetime!

GEORGE. But what'll we do there?

JERRY. We can talk that over on the train! The important thing is to get out there and to get there fast!

GEORGE. But if you've sold the act—

(JERRY *gives up;* MAY *leaps into the breach. They are working in relays now*)

MAY (*as to a child of ten*). George, listen. We're giving up the act. We're not going to do the act any more. Don't you understand that?

GEORGE. Yah, but he sold the act—

(*It seems that they sold the act*)

MAY. I *understand* that he sold the act. Look, George. There is a new invention called talking pictures. In these pictures the actors will not only be seen, but will also talk. For the first time in the history of pictures they will use their voices. (*And in that moment a notion comes to her. Slowly she turns to* JERRY) I've got an idea.

JERRY. What?

MAY. I think I know what we're going to do out there.

JERRY. Well?

MAY. Most of these bozoes haven't ever talked on a stage! They've never spoken lines before!

JERRY. They gotta learn, that's all!

MAY. You bet they do! And who's going to teach them? We'll open a school of elocution and voice culture!

JERRY. What?

MAY. We'll open a school, Jerry—teach 'em how to talk! They're sure to fall for it, because they'll be scared stiff! We'll have them coming to us instead of our going to them!

JERRY. Yah, but—but *us* with a school, May! We don't know anything about it!

MAY. Maybe *you* don't, but *I* went to one once, and it's easy!

JERRY. But what do you have to do? Can I learn it?

MAY. Sure! Anyhow, I'll do all that!

GEORGE (*five minutes behind, as usual*). *What* are you going to do?

MAY. I tell you it's a natural, Jerry!

JERRY (*quieting both of them*). Shut up a minute, will you? Let me think! Maybe you got hold of something! A school of elocution—it might not be a bad idea.

GEORGE (*getting right down to the root of it*). What's elocution?

MAY. It's a swell idea! And if I know actors, Jerry, they'll come running! Why, between you and I and the lamp-post here— (*She takes in* GEORGE, *and it's really the best notice he's had from her in some time*) —it's the best idea anybody ever had! How soon we gonna leave?

JERRY. Tomorrow! I want you to see the picture first!

MAY. O.K.! Twenty-five of that five hundred goes for books on elocution first thing in the morning! I'll learn this racket or know the reason why!

GEORGE. But what'll *I* do? I don't know anything about elocution!

MAY. George, you don't know anything about anything, and if what they say about the movies is true, you'll go far! (*Swinging to* JERRY) So help me, Jerry, it'll work out like a charm—you watch if it doesn't! It's coming back to me already—I remember Lesson No. 1.

JERRY. Well, if you're sure you can get away with it, May—

MAY. It's a cinch! Just watch! Come here, George!

GEORGE. What?

MAY. Say "California, here I come."

GEORGE. Huh?

MAY. Don't argue—say it!

GEORGE. "California, here I come."

MAY. Now, then—stomach in, chest out! Wait a minute —maybe it's the other way around! No, that's right— stomach in, chest out! Now say it again!

GEORGE (*better this time*). "California, here I come."

MAY (*working him up to a pitch*). Now this time with feeling! You are about to start on a great adventure—

the covered wagon is slowly moving across the plains to a marble swimming pool!

JERRY. Come on, George—give it everything!

GEORGE (*with feeling plus*). "California, here I come."

JERRY. Yay!

MAY. It works, Jerry—it works!

JERRY. And if it works on George it'll work on anybody!

MAY. California, here we come!

Curtain

SCENE II

(*The corner of a Pullman car, on a train Los Angeles bound. The regulation Pullman, with* MAY, JERRY, *and* GEORGE *slumped down in their seats in various attitudes.* JERRY *is in the middle of his hundredth cross-word puzzle,* GEORGE *is busy with* VARIETY *and the inevitable Indian nuts, while* MAY *gazes straight ahead, a troubled expression in her eyes. There is a silence, broken only by the cracking of the shells*)

MAY. This dust is about an inch thick on me. (*There is a pause, and, as usual in any pause,* GEORGE *cracks an Indian nut*) George!

GEORGE. Yeah?

MAY. Do those things come without shells on them?

GEORGE. I don't think so. Why?

MAY. A few more days of hearing you crack them and I'll go bugs.

GEORGE. I didn't know they were bothering you, May.

MAY. I was keeping it secret. (*Opens the book on her lap. Reads with venom*) "To teachers of the culture of the human voice—"

JERRY (*busy over his puzzle*). What's a four-letter word for actor?

MAY (*she knows that one*). Dope. (*Reading again*) "We strongly urge the use of abdominal breathing as a fundamental principle in elocutionary training. This is a very simple operation and the following methods may be used."

(*There enters, pillow in hand, a negro* PORTER)

PORTER. You ready to have your berth made up?

MAY. No!

PORTER. Yes, ma'am.

MAY. All you people know is make up berths. The minute it gets dark you want to make up berths.

PORTER. Lots of times folks wants 'em made up.

MAY. Where are we now—pretty near out of this desert?

PORTER. No'm, I guess we're still in it. Pretty dusty, all right.

MAY. It is, huh?

PORTER. Yes, ma'am, it's dusty, all right. Dust all over. See here? (*He shows her*)

MAY. Thanks.

PORTER (*blandly wiping the dust off on the pillow*). You welcome. Anything else you want?

MAY. No, that's all, thank you. I just wanted to know if it was dusty.

PORTER. Yes, ma'am, it is.

MAY. I'm ever so much obliged.

PORTER. I guess this your first trip out, ain't it, ma'am?

MAY. How did you know?

PORTER. 'Count of your noticing the dust that way. I've taken out lots of folks—I mean that was going out for the moving pictures, like you folks—and they always notices the dust.

MAY. They do, huh?

PORTER. Yes, ma'am. But coming back they don't generally

care so much. (*And having planted this sweet thought he departs*)

MAY. Did you hear that? Coming back they don't generally care so much.

JERRY. Oh, come out of it, May! If we don't put up a front like a million dollars, we're lost!

MAY. You know how much of a bankroll we've got, Jerry, and how long it's going to last. And this elocution idea —how do we know it's going to work?

JERRY. It's just around the corner, if we keep our nerve! Think what it'll mean, May, if we put it over!

MAY. Well, I mustn't go out there this way—it's aging me. But my God, wouldn't you think the railroad would put a couple of mountains in here somewhere? I'm so sick of looking at wheat and corn— (*A nut cracks*) —and those nuts cracking are beginning to sound like cannons going off.

GEORGE. Why, May—

MAY. Oh—go ahead and crack two at a time and see if I care. I'm going out to the ladies' smoker—maybe I'll hear a good dirty story.

(*She goes. In the distance the train whistle is heard*)

JERRY. George!

GEORGE (*deep in* VARIETY). Uh-huh.

JERRY. You and I have got to pull May out of this. Y'understand?

GEORGE. Sure.

JERRY. We've got to keep her spirits up—keep telling her we're going to get away with it.

GEORGE. All right.

JERRY. If she starts anything with you, come right back at her. We can't fail. We're pioneers in a new field. The talkies are the thing of the future and there's going to be no stopping them. Got that?

GEORGE (*glibly*). The legitimate stage had better look to its laurels.

JERRY (*somewhat bowled over*). What?

GEORGE. The legitimate stage had better look to its laurels. It's in "Variety."

JERRY. Sure! That's the idea.

GEORGE. Here is a medium that combines the wide scope of the motion picture with the finer qualities of the stage proper. It's an interview with Mr. Katzenstein.

JERRY. Let me see it.

GEORGE (*wound up*). It affords opportunities for enter tainment—

JERRY. All right, all right.

(MAY *returns*)

MAY. Say, what do you think?

GEORGE. What?

MAY. I just saw somebody I know—anyhow, I *used* to know her.

JERRY. Who is it?

MAY. This may mean something, Jerry—maybe the luck's changing.

JERRY. It's Gloria Swanson and she wants to take lessons.

MAY. Gloria Swanson nothing! It's Helen Hobart!

GEORGE. Helen Hobart! I read her stuff.

MAY. Sure you do, and a million like you. America's fore-most movie critic.

GEORGE. And she's on this train?

JERRY. How well do you know her?

MAY. We used to troupe together. I knew her well enough to tell her she was a rotten actress.

JERRY. What'll we do? Can we get her in here?

MAY. We've got nothing to lose.

JERRY. Ring the bell, George!

GEORGE (*pressing the buzzer*). Helen Hobart!

JERRY. Say, if she ever sponsored us we'd have all Holly-wood begging to get in. She's a powerful important lady, and don't you forget it.

MAY. I don't know whether she'll remember me or not—

I didn't dare stop and say hello. The way I feel today I'd break down and cry if anybody ritzed me.

JERRY (*as the* PORTER *appears*). There's a woman named Miss Helen Hobart in the next car—

MAY. Talking to a young girl. You page her and tell her Miss May Daniels would like to see her.

PORTER. Yes, ma'am.

MAY. And come right back and tell me what she says. (*The* PORTER *goes*) I'd like to talk to the old battleship again, if only to see her strut her stuff. She's the original iron horse, all right.

JERRY. How long is it since you knew her?

MAY. Plenty. Now listen. If you ever let her know we're just a small-time vaudeville act you'll get the prettiest freeze-out you ever saw. Unless she thinks you're somebody she won't even notice you.

JERRY. Well, what'll we tell her? Let's get together on a story!

MAY. Leave it to me. This is my party.

GEORGE. Don't make up any lies about me.

JERRY. Say, if we could ever get her interested! Her stuff is syndicated all over the country.

GEORGE. It's in two hundred and three newspapers. I was just reading it. (*He produces the paper*)

MAY. Yah. It's an awful thought, Jerry, but there must be thousands of guys like George reading that stuff every day.

GEORGE. But it's good.

MAY. And thinking it's good, too. (*She takes the paper from* GEORGE) Get this, Jerry. "Hollywood Happenings, by Helen Hobart. Well, movie fans, Wednesday night was just a furore of excitement—the Gold Room at the Stilton just buzzed with the news. But your Helen has managed to get it to you first of all. What do you think? Tina Fair is having her swimming pool done over in egg-shell blue." How do you like that?

GEORGE. Nice color.

JERRY. They've *all* got swimming pools!

MAY. And if I know Helen she lives and acts just like this column of hers. Did I hear that door? I did. (*She has taken a quick peep*) Here she comes!

(*Making quite an entrance of it,* HELEN HOBART *comes in.* HELEN *is an important figure in The Fourth Largest Industry, and she looks and acts pretty much like an important figure in The Fourth Largest Industry. She positively glitters. Jewels stud her person from the smart diamond arrow in her hat to the buckles of her shoes, and her entire ensemble is the Hollywood idea of next year's style à la Metro-Goldwyn*)

HELEN. My dear! How perfectly lovely! How nice to think of your being on this train!

MAY. Helen, you look marvelous!

HELEN. Thank you dear, you haven't changed at all.

MAY. Really? I expected living abroad would change me somewhat.

HELEN. What?

MAY. But let me introduce you to my business manager, Mr. Jerome Hyland—

HELEN. How do you do?

MAY. And my technical advisor, Doctor Lewis.

HELEN. How do you do, Doctor?

(JERRY *murmurs an acknowledgment, but* GEORGE *is too stunned to speak*)

MAY. Please sit down, Helen, and chat a while.

HELEN. Thanks, I will. There's some little girl back in my car who discovered I was Helen Hobart, and she simply won't let me be. That's why I was so glad to get away. She's been reading my column, and she just can't believe I'm human like herself—(*A modest little laugh*) —thinks I'm some sort of goddess. If you *knew* how much of that sort of thing I get!

MAY (*innocently*). You're doing some sort of newspaper work, aren't you?

HELEN (*amazed*). My dear—didn't you *know*?

MAY. Don't tell me you're a film actress?

HELEN (*with measured definiteness—from a great height*). I write the most widely syndicated column in the United States. Anybody who reads the newspapers—but where on earth have you *been*, my dear, that you haven't heard about *me*?

MAY. I've been living in England for the last eight years, Helen. That's probably why I didn't know. But go on and tell me. I'm frightfully interested.

HELEN. Well—! (*She settles herself—after all, this is quite a chance*) If you don't *know*, my dear, I can't quite tell you *all*! But I think I can say in all modesty that I am one of the most important figures in the industry. You know, it was I who gave America Gary Cooper and Rex the Wonder Horse. Yes, I've done very well for myself. You know I always *could* write, May, but I never expected to be *the* Helen Hobart! Oh, I can't tell you *everything*, one-two-three, but movie-goers all over the country take my word as law. Of course I earn a perfectly fabulous salary—but I'm hardly allowed to *buy anything*—I'm simply *deluged* with gifts. At Christmas, my dear—well, you'll hardly believe it, but just before I came East they presented me with a home in Beverly Hills!

MAY (*in spite of herself*). No kidding!

HELEN. They said I deserved it—that I simply *lived* in the studios. I always take an interest in new pictures in production, you know, and suggest things to them—and they said that I ought to have a home I could go to and get away from the studios for a while. Wasn't that marvelous?

MAY. Marvelous!

HELEN. I call it Parwarmet. I have a penchant for titles.

MAY. You call it *what*?

HELEN. Parwarmet. You see, I always call my gifts after the people who give them to me—rather a nice thought, you know. And I didn't want to offend anybody in this case, so I called it after the three of them—Paramount, Warner, Metro-Goldwyn—the first syllable of each. Parwarmet.

GEORGE. Won't Fox be sore?

HELEN. Oh, no, Doctor. Because the Fox Studios gave me a wonderful kennel, and I have twelve magnificent dogs, all named after Fox executives. But listen to me rattling on and not asking a word about *you*! Tell me what you've been doing. And what in the world took you abroad for eight years? The last I heard of you—

MAY (*quickly*). Yes, I know. Well, of course, I never expected to stay in the theatre—that is, not as an actress. I always felt that I was better equipped to teach.

HELEN. Teach?

MAY. Voice culture. I began with a few private pupils, and then when I was abroad Lady Tree persuaded me to take her on for a while, and from that I drifted into opening a school, and it's been very successful. Of course I accept only the very best people. Mr. Hyland and Dr. Lewis are both associated with me, as I told you—

HELEN. And now you're going to open a school in Hollywood!

MAY. What? Why, no—we hadn't expected—

JERRY. Hollywood? We hadn't thought about it.

HELEN. *Wait* till I tell you! Of course you don't know, but something is happening at the present time that is simply going to revolutionize the entire industry. They've finally perfected *talking pictures*!

MAY. No!

HELEN. Yes! And you can't imagine what it's going to

mean! But here's the point! Every actor and actress in the industry will have to learn to talk, understand? And if *we* were to open the first school—my dear!

MAY. But Helen, we couldn't *think* of such a thing!

JERRY. Oh, no, Miss Hobart!

GEORGE. Sure! That's why we—

(JERRY *silences him*)

HELEN. I simply won't take no for an answer!

MAY. But what about our school in London?

JERRY. We've got a good deal of money tied up in London, Miss Hobart.

HELEN. May—America needs you. You're still, I hope, a loyal American?

MAY. Oh, yes, yes. But—

HELEN. Then it's settled. This is Fate, May—our meeting —and in the industry Fate is the only thing we bow to.

MAY. But—

HELEN. Now please—not another word! Oh, but this is marvelous—right at this time! Of course it'll take a certain amount of money to get started, but I know just the man we'll take it to—Herman Glogauer! You know —the Glogauer Studios!

MAY. Well, I'm not sure—

JERRY. Oh, yes, of course!

GEORGE. Yah!

HELEN. I'll send him a telegram right away, and ask for an appointment.

JERRY. That's a good idea! George!

(GEORGE *presses the buzzer*)

MAY. Is he important?

HELEN. Oh, my dear!

JERRY. *Is* he important?

GEORGE. You bet!

HELEN. One of the biggest! And he's the man who first turned down the Vitaphone!

MAY. He did?

HELEN. So he buys *everything* now! Why, he just signed that famous playwright—you know, May—that Armenian who writes all those wonderful plays and things.

MAY. Noel Coward.

HELEN. That's right! Of course you people can't realize, but a school of voice culture, opening up at this time—well! I should say my half interest alone would bring me in I just don't know how much! (*It seems that* HELEN *is declaring herself in*) Because there's absolutely no limit to where the talkies are going—just no limit! Tell me, Doctor—

(GEORGE *fails to respond*)

Doctor—

(GEORGE, *spurred on by* JERRY, *pays attention*)

What do you think of this marvelous development in the motion pictures? Just what is your opinion?

MAY (*trying to save the day*). Well, the Doctor hasn't had much time—

JERRY. He looks after the scientific end.

GEORGE (*coming right through with it*). I think the legitimate stage had better look to its laurels.

HELEN. My words exactly! Just what I've been saying in my column!

GEORGE (*blossoming*). It combines the wide scope of the motion picture with the finer qualities of the stage proper.

HELEN. That's *very* true. May, you've got a great brain here. (*To* GEORGE *again*) I *do* want to talk to you sometime, Doctor. I want to discuss voice and body control with you.

GEORGE. It affords opportunities for entertainment—

(*There arrives, at this point,* MISS SUSAN WALKER. *The first glimpse of* SUSAN *makes it obvious that she and* GEORGE *have been "made for each other."* SUSAN WALKER, *to give you the idea immediately, is the female counterpart of* GEORGE, *very young, very pretty, very charm-*

ing, and, as you must have guessed by this time, very dumb. She has a number of cute little mannerisms of the sort that intrigue the stronger sex, and a complete and unshakeable belief in her powers as an actress. She flutters about a good deal, and her anxiety not to lose her contact with HELEN *makes her positively twitter*)

SUSAN (*who is not at all bashful*). Oh, hello, Miss Hobart! You said you were coming back, and I waited—

HELEN. Yes, dear, but this is very important. I can't talk to you now.

SUSAN. When *can* you talk to me?

HELEN. I'm sure I don't know. Later.

SUSAN. I only want to ask you some questions.

HELEN. I understand, but I'm busy, dear.

SUSAN. Because you could be of such help to me.

HELEN. *Yes*, dear.

GEORGE (*who has been showing a growing interest*). Wouldn't you like to sit down?

SUSAN. Oh, thank you. I—

HELEN (*compelled to introduce her*). This is little Miss—

SUSAN. Susan Walker.

HELEN. Susan Walker. She's the little girl I was telling you about.

GEORGE (*to* SUSAN). Are you going to act in the pictures?

HELEN. She wants to—yes. Tell me, Doctor—

SUSAN. I'm going to try to, if I can get started. I don't know very much about it.

HELEN. She doesn't know very much about it.

GEORGE. You could go to our school! May!

SUSAN. What?

HELEN. Yes, yes, of course. Now run along, dear, and read the Book of the Month or something. We're very busy.

SUSAN. Well, but you *will* let me talk to you later, won't you?

HELEN. Yes, of course, dear.

SUSAN. Good-bye. (*Her glance sweeps the others; rests timidly on* GEORGE *for a second*)

GEORGE. Are you right in the next car?

SUSAN. No, I'm in Number 20—with my mother.

HELEN. She's with her mother.

GEORGE. I'll take you back, if you want.

MAY. Yes, you do that, George. That'll be fine.

SUSAN. Oh, thank you very much.

HELEN. You won't stay long, will you Doctor? Because I want to hear more of your ideas. I can see that you've given it thought.

GEORGE (*piloting* SUSAN *out*). No, I'll be right—that is, unless— (*He takes refuge in turning to* SUSAN) —what's your mother's name? Mrs. Walker?

(*They go*)

HELEN. What a man! He must have been enormous in England!

MAY. Very big! Wasn't he?

JERRY. Yes, indeed!

HELEN. May, *do* you think we can keep him in America?

MAY. Jerry, can we keep him in America?

JERRY. I think we can keep him in America.

MAY. I guess we can keep him in America—

HELEN. Marvelous! How much would it cost, May, to start things going?

JERRY. Fifty thousand!

MAY. A hundred thousand!

HELEN. Oh, that's more like it. Now we get to Hollywood Tuesday! On Wednesday everybody gathers at the Stilton—

(*The falling curtain cuts them off*)

SCENE III

(*The gold room of the Hotel Stilton, in Los Angeles. Early de Mille. Gold-encrusted walls, heavy diamond-cut*

chandelier, gold brocade hangings and simply impossible settees and chairs. There is an air of such complete phoneyness about the room that an innocent observer, unused to the ways of Hollywood, rather expects a director suddenly to appear from behind a door and yell: "All right, boys! Take it away!"

This particular room, for all its gaudiness, is little more than a passage to the room where Hollywood really congregates—so you can imagine what THAT *is like. The evening's function is approaching its height, and through the room, as the curtain rises, there pass various gorgeous couples—one woman more magnificently dressed than another, all swathed in ermine and so hung with orchids that it's sometimes a little difficult to see the girl. The women, of course, are all stunningly beautiful. They are babbling of this and that phase of Hollywood life as they cross the room—"This new thing, dialogue"—"Why didn't you introduce me to him—I just stood there like a fool"—"It wasn't the right time—I'll take you to him when they're ready to cast the picture." Through it all an unseen orchestra is grinding out "Sonny Boy," and it keeps right on playing "Sonny Boy" all evening. Because it seems there was a man named Jolson.*

Weaving through the guests is a CIGARETTE GIRL*—but not just an ordinary cigarette girl. Like every other girl in Hollywood, she is beautiful enough to take your breath away. Moreover, she looks like Greta Garbo, and knows it. Hers is not a mere invitation to buy her wares: on the contrary, her "Cigars! Cigarettes!" is charged with emotion. You never can tell, of course, when a director is going to come along.*

The COAT CHECK GIRL*, certainly the most beautiful girl in the world, buttonholes the* CIGARETTE GIRL *as the crowd thins out)*

COAT CHECK GIRL. Say, I got a tip for you, Kate.

CIGARETTE GIRL. Yah?

COAT CHECK GIRL. I was out to Universal today—I heard they was going to do a shipwreck picture.

CIGARETTE GIRL. Not enough sound. They're making it a college picture—glee clubs.

COAT CHECK GIRL. That was this morning. It's French Revolution now.

CIGARETTE GIRL. Yah? There ought to be something in that for me.

COAT CHECK GIRL. Sure! There's a call out for prostitutes for Wednesday.

CIGARETTE GIRL. Say, I'm going out there! Remember that prostitute I did for Paramount?

COAT CHECK GIRL. Yah, but that was silent. This is for talking prostitutes.

(*She drops into a respectful silence as a great procession enters the room. It is headed by* PHYLLIS FONTAINE and FLORABEL LEIGH, *two of filmdom's brightest and most gorgeous lights—or at least they were until yesterday, when Sound hit the industry. They are dressed to the hilt and beyond it—ermines, orchids, jewels. Behind each of them walks a* MAID, *and the* MAIDS *are hardly less beautiful than their mistresses. Next come a pair of* CHAUFFEURS—*tall, handsome men, who were clearly cut out to be great lovers, and who will be just as soon as the right director comes along. Each of the* CHAUFFEURS *leads a Russian wolfhound—smartly jacketed animals who are doing their respective bits to celebrate the fame of their mistresses. For on one jacket is lettered: "Phyllis Fontaine in 'Diamond Dust and Rouge,'" and on the other: "Florabel Leigh in 'Naked Souls.'" All in all, it is an imposing procession. Led by its haughty stars, it advances and prepares for the Grand Entrance. The maids remove their mistresses' ermine coats; perform those last little powdering rites*)

MISS LEIGH'S CHAUFFEUR. Is the staircase clear?

COAT CHECK GIRL. Yes, it is.

MISS LEIGH'S CHAUFFEUR. The staircase is clear.

MISS LEIGH'S MAID. The staircase is clear, Miss Leigh.

MISS FONTAINE'S MAID. The staircase is clear, Miss Fontaine.

MISS LEIGH'S MAID (*signalling to a* CHAUFFEUR). Boris, please.

(*One of the great dogs is passed over to his mistress*)

MISS FONTAINE'S MAID (*repeating the operation*). Katrina, please.

(*Dogs on leash, they are posed for their moment of triumph. As they sweep out of the room you hear their voices for the first time. May they be charitably described as Pretty Bad?*)

FLORABEL (*from the depths of her bower of orchids*). If they put us at that back table I'm going to raise an awful stink.

PHYLLIS. Yes, God damn it, they ought to know by this time. . . .

(*They are gone. There is a moment's relaxation on the part of the Other Half*)

A CHAUFFEUR. You girls working this week?

CIGARETTE GIRL. No, we ain't.

THE OTHER CHAUFFEUR. Universal's doing a college picture.

(A BELLBOY *bounds in*)

BELLBOY. Say, I hear you boys are all set out at Universal! French Revolution picture.

CHAUFFEUR. No, they changed it. It's a college picture.

BELLBOY. It's Revolution again—they just changed it back, down in the Men's Room.

CIGARETTE GIRL. Oh, that's good!

BELLBOY. Yah, on account of the sound. They're going to be playing the guillotine all through. (*He strums an imaginary banjo*)

MAID. That means I'm out of it. I don't know one note from another.

CHAUFFEUR. You can't tell. Let's see what it is in the morning.

(*The* MAIDS *and* CHAUFFEURS *are gone*)

BELLBOY. What do you think happened about five minutes ago? I was down in the Men's Room, singing, and Mr. Katzenstein came in.

COAT CHECK GIRL. That's a break!

CIGARETTE GIRL. Did he hear you?

BELLBOY. You bet he heard me! Said I had a great voice and told me to come and see him! What do you think of that?

COAT CHECK GIRL. Gosh, I wish he'd come into the ladies' room.

(*They go*)

(*There runs on, in great excitement,* MISS SUSAN WALKER. *She is followed by her mother*)

SUSAN. Mother! Come on! Hurry up!

MRS. WALKER. Yes, dear.

SUSAN. This is wonderful here! Look! (*Peers into the next room*) There's where they're all going to eat!

MRS. WALKER. Yes, dear. Don't over-excite yourself.

SUSAN. But mother, imagine! Practically every big star in Hollywood will be here.

MRS. WALKER. Yes, I know, dear.

SUSAN. This is where they come every Wednesday. They're all over the place now. Look! Can you recognize anyone?

MRS. WALKER (*peering*). Isn't that John Gilbert?

SUSAN. Where? Where?

MRS. WALKER. Over there! Right near that post!

SUSAN. Mother! That's a waiter!

MRS. WALKER. Well, I'm sure I don't know how one is to tell. Every man we see looks more and more like John Gilbert.

SUSAN. Well, we'll see some of the real ones tonight, mother. Dr. Lewis said we're sure to see everyone.

MRS. WALKER. If there's so many people trying to be picture actors, I'm afraid they'll never give *you* a chance.

SUSAN. Oh, but it's different now—

(*And right now* JOHN GILBERT *himself enters the room. Anyhow it looks like him. It is a careful, measured entrance—obviously designed to impress. With a good deal of deliberation he slowly turns his head, revealing the profile of an Apollo.* SUSAN *and her mother are terrifically impressed. At this moment a new couple enter the room—a dashingly handsome couple, of course*)

THE MAN (*chatting as he enters*). I just saw her downstairs. Wouldn't you think, after the preview of that last picture, that she'd stay home and hide?

THE GIRL. They've no shame, some of them.

THE MAN (*sighting the handsome stranger*). Oh, Ernest!

ERNEST (*for that is indeed his name*). Yes, Mr. Weisskopf?

THE MAN. I'm expecting some guests—two gentlemen and a lady. Will you see that they're brought to my table?

ERNEST (*bowing much too low for John Gilbert*). Yes, sir. Very good, sir.

(*The couple continue their stroll as* SUSAN *and her mother relax in disappointment*)

THE GIRL. Who was that man that came over to Diane's table—must have been one of her new ones, eh?

THE MAN. Must have been.

THE GIRL. I give him about three weeks.

(*They go. The late John Gilbert addresses* SUSAN *and* MRS. WALKER)

ERNEST. Anything I can do for you, Madam?

MRS. WALKER. Why, no, I guess not.

SUSAN. Have any of the stars arrived yet?

ERNEST. Very few, Miss. It's only nine-thirty. There are one or two cowboy stars here, but I don't suppose you'd be interested in them.

SUSAN. Oh, no.

MRS. WALKER. I don't like Westerns very much.

ERNEST. Of course no one of any consequence gets here before ten. You get a smattering of First National and Pathé about nine-thirty, but you don't get United Artists until ten-fifteen.

SUSAN. But they'll all *be* here, won't they?

ERNEST. Oh, yes. Everyone who is of any importance in the industry comes here every Wednesday night.

MRS. WALKER. My, you must find it interesting!

ERNEST. Yes, you get *life* out here. In fact, I get most of the ideas for my scenarios right here in the hotel.

SUSAN. Scenarios? Mother, he's a scenario writer!

MRS. WALKER. Really?

ERNEST (*modestly*). I dabble a bit, that's all.

SUSAN. Have you had any produced? Who was in them?

ERNEST. Well, Paramount is dickering for something of mine right now.

MRS. WALKER. It is?

SUSAN. How proud you must feel!

ERNEST. Well, of course, one never knows.

MRS. WALKER. But to have Paramount dickering!

SUSAN. Who is the story for? I hope it's Greta Garbo.

ERNEST. Well, Miss Garbo's all right, but— (*He breaks off, apparently sighting someone in the next room. The women excitedly follow his gaze*)

SUSAN. Who is it?

ERNEST. I *think*—yes, it is! It's Buddy Rogers!

SUSAN. It is?

MRS. WALKER. Really? Where?

ERNEST. You're very lucky, ladies! Only nine-forty-five and you've got Buddy Rogers!

(*The women rush off, gurgling in their excitement. As* ERNEST *follows them another couple crosses the room, talking as they go*)

THE MAN. So I said to Katzenstein, "Why don't we buy it?

It's the biggest thing in New York to-day—'Strange Interlude.' And look at the name you get! Eugene O'Neilll!"

THE GIRL. Well, did he write the music too?

THE MAN. No, he just did the libretto. But if we can get him out here I've got a great guy to team him up with. He's a little Jewish fellow—

(*They are gone. But already another couple is present*)

THE MAN. What's the use of your meeting him? The part isn't your type. The girl is eighteen years old and a virgin.

THE GIRL. Well, I look eighteen under lights, and I can talk like a virgin.

(*They too depart. On their heels enters* GEORGE—*rather a bewildered* GEORGE, *a good deal impressed by everything that is going on around him. His eyes take in the room. The* CIGARETTE GIRL *glides on; finding someone present, she at once drops into character*)

CIGARETTE GIRL (*in the well-known Garbo manner*). Will —you—have—some—cigarettes?

GEORGE (*scared*). Why—no. No.

CIGARETTE GIRL (*and from her tone you gather that* GEORGE *is really the father of her child*). Very well. I'm—sorry—I—intruded. (*She goes.* GEORGE *weighs his decision for a moment, then decides that he had better get out of there. Before he can do so, however,* SUSAN *rushes in*)

SUSAN. Hello, George. Isn't it exciting? Seeing all the stars and everything!

GEORGE. I should say so!

SUSAN. I left mother at the staircase, watching them all walk down. Hollywood is even better than I dreamed it would be! Aren't you crazy about it?

GEORGE. It's wonderful, all right. It kinda reminds me of the first time I went to the circus—only there's no elephants.

SUSAN. I can hardly wait till I become a star—when I can

do the things they do, and have myself pointed out to tourists.

GEORGE. I'll tell you something, Susan, if you promise not to breathe it. Who do you think we're going to meet here tonight?

SUSAN. Who?

GEORGE. Herman Glogauer, one of the biggest motion-picture producers in the country.

SUSAN. Really? Oh, George, will you tell him about me—see if he'll give me a part?

GEORGE. Sure. That's what I'm meeting him for.

SUSAN. Oh, George!

(MRS. WALKER *enters in excitement*)

MRS. WALKER. Susan, I just saw—

SUSAN. Mother, what do you think? Dr. Lewis is meeting Herman Glogauer here tonight and he's going to tell him all about me!

MRS. WALKER. Well, isn't that fine? A big man like that coming here to talk about Susan!

SUSAN. Where's he going to be? Right here? Will you introduce me to him?

MRS. WALKER. You just leave it to Dr. Lewis, dear.

GEORGE. I think you'd be just great in talkies—the way you recite and everything. I told May all about those poems you recited. Especially that one—what was it?

MRS. WALKER. "Boots"? By Rudyard Kipling?

GEORGE. Yes, that's it.

SUSAN (*to a pedal accompaniment*). "Boots, boots, boots, boots, movin' up and down again—Five, seven, nine, eleven, four and twenty miles today—"

GEORGE (*trying to stop her*). Yeah, yeah, that's the one. She told me she sort of felt Susan recited "Boots" from the minute she laid eyes on her. Does she do that one about "It Takes a Heap of Loving to—"

SUSAN. "To Make a House a Home"? Oh, yes.

MRS. WALKER. That's one of her best.

GEORGE. Miss Daniels said you probably did. She felt a lot more things about you, too. I guess she's pretty interested.

MRS. WALKER. Would she want to give her an audition?

GEORGE. I don't think she'll have to. I told her how Susan made me feel—when that man in the poem goes crazy how I felt sort of weak myself—and she said she wouldn't want to take a chance.

MRS. WALKER. You've been wonderful to us, Doctor. I'd just trust Susan anywhere, anywhere with you—I told her today I thought you were the most harmless motion-picture man in the business.

GEORGE. Say, I'm going to try to live up to that.

(MAY *comes in. She's followed by* JERRY)

MAY. Good evening! What's going on here?

MRS. WALKER. Hello, Miss Daniels. Mr. Hyland.

GEORGE. Oh, May! Susan does know that poem, about living in a house or something.

MAY. Sure she does. She knows "Ring Out, Wild Bells," too, don't you, Susan?

MRS. WALKER That was one of her first ones.

MAY (*to* JERRY). That's five you owe me.

JERRY. O.K.

MRS. WALKER. Well, come on, Susan. We'll get on out. We know you're going to meet Mr. Glogauer.

MAY. Oh, did George tell you we're going to meet Mr. Glogauer?

SUSAN. Oh, yes.

JERRY. Isn't that fine?

GEORGE. I just mentioned it.

MRS. WALKER. I think it's just wonderful, what Dr. Lewis has accomplished.

MAY. How's that?

MRS. WALKER. Just wonderful!

SUSAN. Good-bye.

GEORGE. Good-bye.

MAY. Take care of yourselves. (SUSAN *and* MRS. WALKER *go*) Jerry!

JERRY. Huh?

MAY (*a look at* GEORGE). Would there be some way of making him silent as well as dumb?

GEORGE. I didn't hurt anything.

JERRY (*peering into the next room*). Well, kid, here it is! Hollywood! And was I right? Did you hear 'em downstairs? Scared stiff!

MAY. Not nearly as scared as I am.

JERRY. All we got to do is play our cards right! This is the time and place! Chance to make a million or lose a million!

MAY. Which do you think we ought to do?

JERRY. If things go right for us, May, it won't be long now. And we'll do it in style, too.

GEORGE. What do you mean, Jerry—that you and May are going to get married? Are you, May?

MAY. Look, George, we've got all kinds of things on our mind. You'll be the first to know.

JERRY. Yes, sir, it's all up to how we click with Glogauer—and we'll click with him, too!

GEORGE. He's pretty lucky we came out here.

MAY (*in measured tones*). George, when Mr. Glogauer gets here and you're introduced to him, just say, "Hello. See? In a pinch, "Hello, Mr. Glogauer." Then from that time on—nothing.

GEORGE. But suppose I have a good idea?

MAY. That's when I sing "Aida."

JERRY. Say, Glogauer ought to be getting here. Where's Helen?

MAY. Down talking terms with a couple of hundred movie stars. I was out at Parwarmet to-day. Only twenty-two rooms—just a shack, really.

JERRY. *That* part's all right. She's been damned nice to us.

MAY. Sure. For fifty per cent of the gross she'd be damned nice to Mae West.

(*Outside the door you hear a little crescendo of voices. It is topped by* HELEN HOBART, *bidding her public be patient. She will talk to them all later, the dears. She enters, on the crest of the wave*)

HELEN. My dear, *everyone* is here tonight! And such excitement! Nobody knows where they're at! (*There are greetings from the three, which* HELEN, *in her excitement, rides right over*) And of course, wherever you turn all you hear is Sound! Sound! One has to be very careful whom one insults these days—they may be the very ones to survive!

MAY. Things are pretty well topsy-turvy, aren't they?

HELEN. I should say so! What do you think I just heard? You know that tremendous spectacle the Schlepkin Brothers are putting on—"The Old Testament." Well, Mr. Schlepkin—I mean the oldest of the twelve brothers—the real brains of the business—he used to have the cloak-room privilege in all the West Coast theatres—he just told me that they've stopped work on the picture and they're scrapping the whole thing. They're not going to make anything but talkies from now on!

JERRY. Big people, the Schlepkins. I'd like to meet them.

MAY. Are they all here tonight?

HELEN. Oh, all twelve of them. That shows you what they think of the talkies—it's the first time in years that they've all been in Hollywood at the same time. They generally keep two with their mother—she lives in Brooklyn and they fly back and forth. Such a lovely thought! Why, their aeroplane bill alone is ten thousand dollars a month.

(*The* BELLBOY *enters, followed by two uniformed policemen*)

HELEN. Oh, Mr. Glogauer must be coming now. Is that for Mr. Glogauer?

BELLBOY. Yes, Miss Hobart. His car just drew up.

(*They march out*)

HELEN. They always give him an escort, so he can get through the lobby. If he says "yes" to our little proposition we can turn this into a celebration.

MAY. It's marvelous you were able to get him to come.

JERRY. Yes, indeed.

HELEN. Oh, they'll all come running now. Even the big ones. Besides, Glogauer is scared stiff. He's the man who first turned down the Vitaphone—I told you.

MAY. Oh, yes.

HELEN. Anyhow, that's the story. Of course, he's never admitted it, and no one's ever *dared* mention it to him.

JERRY. I wouldn't think so.

GEORGE (*ever literal*). What did he turn it down for?

HELEN. He just didn't know, Doctor, what it was going to amount to. He didn't have enough vision. (*As a young girl enters, pleading*) No, dear, not now. Later on, maybe. (*She waves the girl out*) Someone wanted to meet the Doctor.

GEORGE. What?

HELEN. Oh, I lost no time, Doctor, in telling them about you. Isn't it marvelous, May—

(*From outside the door comes a rising tide of voices, presently mounting into a roar. Fighting its way into the room comes a streaming and screaming mob, which the* BELLBOY *and the* POLICEMEN *are trying to hold in check. You hear "Mr. Glogauer!" . . . "Mr. Glogauer!" . . . "Mr. Glogauer, can I have just a minute?" And then the voice of* GLOGAUER—*"No, no, no! See me at my office! Write me a letter!" The attendants beat back the mob;* GLOGAUER *finally disentangles himself*)

GLOGAUER. I can't see anyone now! Close the doors! Let's have a little peace here!

(*With no little difficulty the* BELLBOY *and the two* POLICEMEN *get the doors closed.* HERMAN GLOGAUER, *who now*

stands brushing himself off, emerges as a nervous little man who probably has a bad stomach. You can't go through that kind of thing every day without it's having some effect)

HELEN (*as the noise subsides*). Well, here's the great man himself—and on time, too! Mr. Glogauer, this is Miss Daniels, Mr. Hyland, and Dr. Lewis.

GLOGAUER. How are you?

BELLBOY (*who has been biding his time*). Mr. Glogauer, are you in the market for a great trio?

GLOGAUER. What? (*For answer the* BELLBOY *and the* POLICEMEN *burst loudly into "Pale hands I love!"*) No, no, no! Go away! Go away!

(*They go*)

MAY. What's all that about?

GLOGAUER. These people!

HELEN. You see, they all know Mr. Glogauer, and they try to show him they can act.

GLOGAUER. It's terrible! Terrible! Everywhere I go, they act at me! Everyone acts at me! If I only go to have my shoes shined, I look down and someone is having a love scene with my pants.

HELEN. That's the penalty of being so big a man.

GLOGAUER. All over the hotel they come at me. Ordinarily I would say, "Let's go out to my house," where we got some peace. But Mrs. Glogauer is having new fountains put in the entrance hall.

HELEN. It's the most gorgeous house, May. You remember —we saw it from the train.

MAY. Oh, yes. With the illuminated dome.

HELEN. And the turrets.

GLOGAUER. In gold leaf.

HELEN. But the *inside*, May! I want you to see his bathroom!

MAY. I can hardly wait.

HELEN. It's the show place of Hollywood! But they can see it some other time—can't they, Mr. Glogauer?

GLOGAUER. Any Wednesday. There is a guide there from two to five. I tell you what you do. Phone my secretary —I send my car for you.

MAY. Why, that'll be wonderful.

HELEN. Yes, and what a car it is! It's a Rolls Royce!

MAY. You don't say?

GEORGE. What year?

(*It is, to say the least, an awkward moment*)

JERRY (*coming to the rescue*). Well, Mr. Glogauer, we understand that you're in the midst of quite a revolution out here.

HELEN. I should say he is!

GLOGAUER. Is it a revolution? And who have we got to thank for it? The Schlepkin Brothers. What did they have to go and make pictures talk for? Things were going along fine. You couldn't stop making money—even if you turned out a *good* picture you made money.

JERRY. There is no doubt about it—the entire motion picture is on the verge of a new era.

HELEN. Mr. Glogauer, I tell you the talkies are here to stay.

GEORGE (*who knows a cue when he hears one*). The legitimate stage had better—

MAY. All right, George.

GLOGAUER. Sure, sure! It's colossal! A fellow sings a couple of songs at 'em and everybody goes crazy! Those lucky bums!

HELEN. He means the Schlepkin Brothers.

GLOGAUER. Four times already they were on their last legs and every time they got new ones. Everything comes to those Schlepkin Brothers! This fellow Lou Jackson—sings these mammies or whatever it is—he comes all the way across the country and goes right to the Schlepkin Brothers.

(*The* BELLBOY *enters*)

BELLBOY. I beg your pardon, Mr. Glogauer?

GLOGAUER. Yes, yes? What is it?

BELLBOY. The twelve Schlepkin Brothers would like to talk to you. They're downstairs.

GLOGAUER. Tell 'em later on. I come down later.

BELLBOY. Yes, sir. (*Goes*)

GLOGAUER. Schlepkin Brothers! I know what they want! They're sitting on top of the world now—with their Lou Jackson—so they try to gobble up everybody! All my life they been trying to get me! Way back in the fur business already, when I had nickelodeons and they only had pennylodeons. Always wanting to merge, merge! And because there's twelve of them they want odds yet!

JERRY. But you can teach your own people to talk! Why not let us take them in hand and give them back to you perfect in the use of the English language?

HELEN. I told you about their school in London—Lady Tree!

MAY. It's entirely a matter of correct breathing, Mr. Glogauer. Abdominal respiration is the keynote of elocutionary training.

JERRY. We'll not only teach your people to talk, Mr. Glogauer, but we'll have them talking as well as you do.

GLOGAUER. Well, I don't ask miracles.

(*Again the* BELLBOY *enters*)

BELLBOY. Mr. Glogauer!

GLOGAUER. Well? Well? What now?

BELLBOY. The Schlepkin Brothers are flying to Brooklyn in half an hour. They say they've got to see you right away.

GLOGAUER. Tell 'em in a minute. And tell Phyllis Fontaine and Florabel Leigh I want to see 'em up here right away. (*To the others*) Two of my biggest stars. (*To the* BELLBOY) Tell 'em to come up alone—without any of the Schlepkin Brothers.

BELLBOY. Yes, sir. (*Goes*)

GEORGE. Excuse me—I'll be right back. (*He dashes out*)

GLOGAUER. Phyllis Fontaine—$7500 a week she draws down. And in the old days she was worth it! Every time she undressed in a picture it was sure-fire!

HELEN. The most beautiful legs in America!

GLOGAUER. But you can't hear 'em! That's just the trouble. They're beautiful girls, but unspeakable. You know what I do now? The biggest stage actress in America I am bringing out—from New York. Ten thousand a week I'm paying her! What's her name, anyhow?

HELEN. Dorothy Dodd.

GLOGAUER. That's it! All day I was trying to remember.

(PHYLLIS *and* FLORABEL *return*)

PHYLLIS AND FLORABEL (*in those awful voices*). Hello, Hermie!

GLOGAUER. Ah, here we are, girls! This is the ladies I was telling you about. Phyllis Fontaine and Florabel Leigh.

HELEN. Hello, darlings!

FLORABEL. Hello, Helen!

GLOGAUER. Listen, girls—this is Miss Daniels and Mr. Hyland—voice specialists from England.

PHYLLIS. Voice specialists!

FLORABEL. Whaddye know?

GLOGAUER. Well, here they are, Miss Daniels. This is what I'm up against.

MAY. I'd like to listen to their breathing, if I may, Mr. Glogauer.

HELEN. You know, it's all a question of breathing.

JERRY. That's the whole story!

MAY. May I ask if you ladies have ever breathed rhythmically?

PHYLLIS. What?

FLORABEL. Why, not that I know of.

MAY. You see, rhythmic breathing is the basis of all tonal quality.

JERRY. It's the keynote.

MAY. If you are able to breathe rhythmically then there is every reason to believe that you will be able to talk correctly.

HELEN. That's right!

GLOGAUER. Well—what about it? (*To the girls*) Can you do it?

MAY (*as the girls look blank*). If you'll permit me, I think I can tell you.

GLOGAUER (*impressed*). Sure, sure.

(*There is a momentous silence as* MAY *goes to* PHYLLIS *and puts her head to her chest*)

MAY. Will you please breathe? (*She listens a moment; then raises her head. They expect some word; the suspense is terrific*)

GLOGAUER. Well?

HELEN. Sssh!

(MAY *passes on to* FLORABEL)

MAY. Please breathe. (*She repeats the operation.* GLOGAUER *is on edge*)

GLOGAUER (*when it is over*). Well? How about it? (MAY *nods, sagely*)

GLOGAUER. We got something?

MAY (*quietly*). Absolutely.

HELEN. Isn't that wonderful?

PHYLLIS. We can do it?

GLOGAUER. Keep still, girls! We got something, huh? We ain't licked yet? What's next? What do they do now?

MAY. For the present they should just keep breathing.

GLOGAUER. Hear that, girls? Wait around—don't go home. Now I tell you how we handle this! I give you rooms right in the studio and as fast as you turn 'em out we put 'em right to work! We got to work fast, remember?

JERRY. Right!

MAY. Right!

GLOGAUER. You teach these people to talk and it's worth all the money in the world!

JERRY. We'll teach 'em.

GLOGAUER. You people came just at the right time! We'll show 'em—with their Lou Jackson! This is a life saver! To hell with the Schlepkin Brothers!

(GEORGE, *breathless, runs back into the room, dragging* SUSAN *after him. You begin to understand what he went out for*)

GEORGE (*indicating* GLOGAUER). There he is, Susan! Right there!

SUSAN (*rushing right up to him and starting in*). "Boots," by Rudyard Kipling.

GLOGAUER. What?

SUSAN (*making the most of her opportunity*). "Boots, boots, boots, boots—"

GLOGAUER. What? What? I don't want any boots!

SUSAN. "Marchin' up and down again . . ."

(*The* BELLBOY *again returns*)

BELLBOY. The Schlepkin Brothers!

(*As* SUSAN *continues her recitation the* SCHLEPKIN BROTHERS *march in. And when the* SCHLEPKIN BROTHERS *march in they* march in. *There are twelve of them—all shapes and sizes. Two abreast, they head for* GLOGAUER)

MOE SCHLEPKIN (*at the head of the line*). Listen, Herman, we're flying back to New York tonight—

GLOGAUER. No, sir! I wouldn't merge! I got something better! I wouldn't merge!

SUSAN. "Five, seven, nine, eleven, four and twenty miles today . . ."

The curtain is down

ACT TWO

(*The scene is the reception room at the Glogauer studio, and it may be briefly described as the God-damnedest room you ever saw. Ultra-modernistic in its décor, the room is meant to impress visitors, and it seldom falls short of its purpose. The walls are draped in heavy grey plush, the lighting fixtures are fantastic, and the furniture is nobody's business. It is the sort of room that could happen only as the reception room of a motion picture studio. In addition to a semi-circle of chairs, designed for those who are hopefully waiting, the furniture includes one desk—modernistic as hell, but a desk. It belongs to the reception secretary, who is seated there at the moment, languidly examining this paper and that. She is pretty much like the furniture. She wears a flowing black evening gown, although it is morning, fondles a long string of pearls, and behaves very much like Elinor Glyn*)

(*Also present is* LAWRENCE VAIL—*a nervous young man who is waiting, none too comfortably, in one of the modernistic chairs. He wears the hunted look of a man who has been waiting for days and days, and is still waiting*)

(*Things are buzzing—the telephone is ringing; an office girl is crossing the room with papers*)

MISS LEIGHTON (*for that is the name of the Reception Secretary*). Miss Leighton at this end. (*She is answering the 'phone, it might be explained*)

OFFICE GIRL (*putting papers on desk*). Requisition Department! (*She goes*)

MISS LEIGHTON. Requisition right!

(*Two men, named* METERSTEIN *and* WEISSKOPF, *cross the room*)

WEISSKOPF. But the important thing is your retakes.

METERSTEIN. That's it—your retakes.

WEISSKOPF. You take your retakes, and if they aren't good you've got no picture.

METERSTEIN. Oh, it's the retakes.

WEISSKOPF. Yeh, it's the retakes, all right.

(*They are gone*)

MISS LEIGHTON (*on 'phone through all this*). I shall have to consult the option department . . . Oh, no, all options are taken care of by the option department . . . That would be Mr. Fleming of the option department . . . Correct! (*Hangs up*)

(*There is quiet for a second. Then a Page enters, wearing a simply incredible uniform—all gold braid and tassels. He carries an illuminated sign, on which is lettered:* MR. GLOGAUER IS ON NUMBER FOUR. *He shows the sign to* MISS LEIGHTON, *who acknowledges it with a little nod, then to* VAIL, *whose nod is a shade more vicious. A nasty fellow, this* VAIL. *As the* PAGE *goes the telephone rings again*)

MISS LEIGHTON. Miss Leighton at this end . . . Who . . . Oh, yes. Yes, he knows you're waiting . . . How many days? . . . Well, I'm afraid you'll just have to wait . . . What? . . . Oh, no, you couldn't possibly see Mr. Glogauer . . . No, I can't make an appointment for you. Mr. Weisskopf makes all Mr. Glogauer's appointments. . . . Oh, no, you can't see Mr. Weisskopf . . . You can only see Mr. Weisskopf through Mr. Meterstein . . . Oh no, no one *ever* sees Mr. Meterstein. (*She hangs up*)

(*Another* PAGE *enters with a sign reading:* MR. WEISSKOPF IS ON NUMBER EIGHT. *Clicks his heels in military fashion;* VAIL *must again nod a response*)

(*A third* PAGE *enters, with some papers, which he gives to* MISS LEIGHTON)

PAGE. Waiting to see Miss Daniels.

MISS LEIGHTON. Miss Daniels is still busy with the ten o'clock class. Take them into Number Six. I will be there in three minutes.

PAGE. Number Six in three minutes. Yes, Miss Leighton. (*He goes*)

(*A couple of men come in*—SULLIVAN *and* MOULTON, *their names are*)

SULLIVAN. Get it? She makes believe she's falling for this rich bozo—to save her sister, do you see?—*and the show goes on!* Plenty of spots for numbers in the revue scenes —are they ready for us, sister?

MISS LEIGHTON. Waiting for you, Mr. Sullivan. Number Ten.

SULLIVAN (*hardly stopping*). And the kid sister thinks she's double-crossing her. Of course she sees her kissing this fellow—

(*Another man comes on. The name, if it matters, is* OLIVER FULTON)

FULTON. Hello, boys.

SULLIVAN. Hello, Ollie—you're just in time. They're waiting to hear it.

FULTON. O.K.

SULLIVAN. Wait till I tell you the new twist. She makes believe she's falling for the rich guy—for her sister's sake, get it?

FULTON. And the show goes on! For God's sake, Art, I told you that at lunch yesterday.

SULLIVAN. Did you?

FULTON. I don't mind your stealing from Fox or Metro—that's legitimate—but if we steal our own stuff we'll never know where we are.

(*They go. The 'phone again*)

MISS LEIGHTON. Miss Leighton at this end . . . No, Miss Daniels is still with the ten o'clock class . . . Oh, no,

the lisp and nasal throat toners are at one . . . Didn't you receive the notification? . . . I'll have Miss Daniels' secretary send you one. . . . You're welcome. (*Another* PAGE. *Another sign*) (MISS LEIGHTON *finally notices* VAIL) I beg your pardon, but I forget whom you're waiting to see.

VAIL. I don't wonder.

MISS LEIGHTON. I beg your pardon?

VAIL. I am waiting to see Mr. Glogauer.

MISS LEIGHTON. Mr. Glogauer is on Number Nine.

VAIL. Napoleon just informed me.

MISS LEIGHTON. How's that?

VAIL. I said Lord Nelson just came in here with a sign.

MISS LEIGHTON. Have you an appointment with Mr. Glogauer?

VAIL. Yes, ma'am—direct. Right through Mr. Meterstein to Mr. Weisskopf to Mr. Glogauer.

MISS LEIGHTON. If you'll give me your name I'll tell Mr. Weisskopf.

VAIL. My name is Lawrence Vail. I gave it to you yesterday, and the day before that, and the day—I would like to see Mr. Glogauer.

MISS LEIGHTON. I'll tell Mr. Weisskopf.

VAIL. I'm ever so much obliged.

MISS LEIGHTON (*as the 'phone rings again*). Miss Leighton at this end . . . Yes . . . Yes . . . Very well—holding the line for thirty seconds.

(*A* PAGE *enters with a sign reading:* MR. WEISSKOPF IS ON NUMBER SIX. *Shows it*)

VAIL. Thank you so much.

FIRST PAGE. You're welcome, sir.

VAIL. Wait a minute. Now I'll give you a piece of news. I'm going to the Men's Room and if anybody wants me I'll be in Number Three. (*He goes. So does the* PAGE)

MISS LEIGHTON (*continuing into telephone*). Miss Leigh-

ton at this end. . . . You will receive yesterday's equipment slips in seven minutes. Kindly have Mr. Weisskopf O.K. them. Thank you. (*Hangs up*)

(PHYLLIS *and* FLORABEL *come in*)

PHYLLIS (*as she enters*). . . . by the seashore. She sells seashells by the seashore.

FLORABEL. Sixty simple supple sirens, slick and smiling, svelte and suave.

PHYLLIS. Ain't it wonderful, Miss Leighton? We can talk now.

MISS LEIGHTON. Really?

FLORABEL. Yes, and a damn sight better than most of them.

MISS LEIGHTON. I think your progression has been just marvelous. I can't see why they keep bringing people from New York.

FLORABEL. Yeh—people from the "legitimate" stage, whatever that is.

PHYLLIS. Yes, Miss Leighton, we've been wondering about that. What the hell *is* the legitimate stage, anyway?

MISS LEIGHTON. It's what Al Jolson used to be on before he got famous in pictures. He worked for some real estate people—the Shuberts.

FLORABEL. Do you know what someone told me at a party the other day? They said John Barrymore used to be on the legitimate stage.

PHYLLIS. I heard the same thing and I didn't believe it.

MISS LEIGHTON. My, you'd never know it from his acting, would you?

FLORABEL. And that ain't all. I heard that since *he's* made good some sister of his is trying to get out here.

MISS LEIGHTON. Yes, Elsie Barrymore. . . . It must have been kind of interesting, the legitimate stage. Of course, it was before my time, but my grandfather used to go to it. He was in the Civil War, too.

PHYLLIS. The Civil War—didn't D. W. Griffith make that?

(MAY *enters*)

MAY. Got a cigarette, Miss Leighton?

MISS LEIGHTON. Right here, Miss Daniels.

PHYLLIS. Oh, Miss Daniels! I got the seashells.

FLORABEL. And I got the supple sirens.

MAY. Well, that's fine. But I won't be happy till you get the rigor mortis.

PHYLLIS. Oh, that'll be wonderful!

FLORABEL. I can hardly wait!

(*They go*)

MISS LEIGHTON. There are some people outside for the ten o'clock class, Miss Daniels. Are you ready for them? They're the stomach muscles and abdominal breathing people.

MAY. You heard the girls' voices just now, Miss Leighton.

MISS LEIGHTON. Yes, Miss Daniels.

MAY. How did they sound to you?

MISS LEIGHTON. Oh, wonderful, Miss Daniels.

MAY. You didn't hear anything about their tests, did you? Whether Mr. Glogauer has seen 'em yet?

MISS LEIGHTON. No, I haven't. But I'm sure they'll be all right.

MAY. Thanks.

MISS LEIGHTON. Miss Daniels, I know you're very busy, but sometime I'd like you to hear me in a little poem I've prepared. "Boots" by Rudyard Kipling.

MAY (*smiling weakly*). Fine. I've never heard "Boots."

MISS LEIGHTON. I've been having some trouble with the sibilant sounds, but my vowels are open all right.

MAY. Any fever?

(*A* PAGE *enters*)

PAGE. Miss Leighton, please!

MISS LEIGHTON. Excuse me. (*Her eyes sweep the message*) Oh, dear! Some of the nasal throat toners are out there with the abdominal breathers. What shall I do about it?

MAY. Tell 'em to pick out two good ones and drown the rest.

MISS LEIGHTON. How's that?

MAY. Oh, send 'em in. I'll make one job of it.

MISS LEIGHTON. Yes, ma'am. (*To* PAGE) Understand?

(*The* PAGE *goes*)

(JERRY *comes briskly in*)

JERRY. Say, May! (*His watch*) You've got a class waiting, haven't you?

MAY. I know.

JERRY. Oh, Miss Leighton—Mr. Glogauer busy? I want see him.

MISS LEIGHTON. Afraid he is, Mr. Hyland.

JERRY. Tell him I've got some figures on the school—just take a minute.

MISS LEIGHTON. I'll tell him. But he has conference after conference all morning. In fact, at 11:57 two of his conferences overlap. I'm so ashamed. (*Goes*)

JERRY. Well, the old school is working on high, isn't it?

MAY. Jerry, are you busy for lunch?

JERRY. Afraid I am, May. Booked up pretty solid for the next two days.

MAY. Oh, I see.

JERRY. Kinda hard finding time for everything.

MAY. Isn't it, though?

JERRY. This school's a pretty big thing. You don't realize, just with the classes. But the business end keeps a fellow tied down.

MAY. Of course, Jerry. I suppose you're busy tonight?

JERRY (*nods*). Party up at Jack Young's.

MAY. Ah, yes. Still I—I would like to have a little chat with you—sometime.

JERRY. Why? Anything special?

MAY. We haven't really had a talk for—of course, I kinda expected to see you last night—

JERRY. Oh, yes. Sorry about that, May, but I knew you'd understand. Got to trot with the right people out here.

I'm meeting everybody, May. I was sorry I had to break that date with you, but—

MAY. Oh, that's all right about the date, Jerry. I wouldn't bother you, but I do think it's kind of important.

JERRY. Why? What's happened?

MAY. Oh, nothing's happened, but—Glogauer was supposed to hear those tests last night, wasn't he?

JERRY. Sure—you mean Leigh and Fontaine?

MAY. Well, what about them? We haven't heard anything yet.

JERRY. How do you mean—you're not nervous, are you? He just hasn't got round to it.

MAY. He was pretty anxious to get 'em—calling up all afternoon.

JERRY. Say! He's probably heard 'em already and buying up stories—that's more like it! Stop worrying, May! We haven't got a thing in the world to worry about. We're sitting pretty. (*Goes*)

(MAY *stands looking after him a moment. She is worrying, just the same.* GEORGE *appears, brightly. He carries a single book*)

GEORGE. May!

MAY. What is it?

GEORGE. Is it stomach in and chest out or stomach out and chest in or the other way around?

MAY. Huh?

GEORGE. I've got the class all in there with their chests out and now I don't know what to do about it.

MAY. George, are you fooling with that class again?

GEORGE. I was just talking to them till you got ready.

MAY. Look, George. You know that big comfortable chair over in the corner of my office?

GEORGE. You mean the blue one?

MAY. That's right. Will you go and just sit in that, until about February?

GEORGE. Huh?

MAY. You know, I'm only one lesson ahead of that class myself. That's all we need yet—your fine Italian hand.

GEORGE. My what?

MAY. That's all right.

GEORGE. May!

MAY. Yes?

GEORGE. Susan's doing all right in the school, isn't she?

MAY. Sure—great.

GEORGE. She's got a new poem that would be fine for a voice test.

MAY. All right, George.

GEORGE. "Yes, I'm a tramp—what of it? Folks say we ain't no good—"

MAY. Yes, George!

GEORGE. "Once I was strong and handsome—"

MAY. George, will you go on in there?

GEORGE. She does it wonderful, May. Susan's a wonderful girl, don't you think?

MAY. Yes, George.

GEORGE. She's the kind of girl I've always been looking for. And she says *I* am, too.

MAY. George, it isn't serious between you two, is it?

GEORGE. Well, Susan says she won't get married until she's carved out her career.

MAY. Oh, that's all right, then.

GEORGE. She likes me—*that* part of it's all right—but she says look at Eleanora Duse—her career almost ruined by love. Suppose I turned out to be another D'Annunzio?

MAY. She's certainly careful, that girl.

GEORGE. May, now that the school's a success, what about you?

MAY. What?

GEORGE. What about you and Jerry?

MAY. Jerry's a busy man these days, George. We've decided to wait.

GEORGE. Oh!

MAY. Just the minute there's any news, I'll let you know.

GEORGE. Thanks, May.

MAY. Before *you* tell *me.*

GEORGE. It was a wonderful idea of Jerry's—coming out here. I guess you must be pretty proud of him.

MAY (*nods*). I'm working on a laurel wreath for Jerry, evenings.

GEORGE. I won't say anything about it—it'll be a surprise.

MAY. Look, George. Even when Susan has carved out her career—and I want to be there for the carving—you just do a good deal of figuring before you get married. And you come to me before you take any steps. Understand?

GEORGE. Why? I love Susan, May.

MAY. I understand, but of course all kinds of things can happen. You never can tell.

GEORGE. Can happen to Susan, you mean?

MAY. I'll tell you what might happen to Susan. She's going to be reciting "Boots" some day, and a whole crowd of people is going to start moving toward her.

GEORGE. With contracts?

MAY. Well, contracts and—

(*A* PAGE *enters*)

PAGE. There's a lady asking for Miss Susan Walker.

MRS. WALKER (*entering on the heels of the* PAGE). Oh, Miss Daniels, can Susan get away for a little while? Hello, Doctor! You won't mind if Susan goes away for a little while, will you?

MAY. No, no.

GEORGE. Is anything the matter?

MRS. WALKER. It's nothing to worry about—Susan's father is going to call us up—long distance. Down at the hotel

in ten minutes—that really leaves us nine minutes. He sent a telegram and says he wants to talk to us.

GEORGE. Well, I'll get Susan. Will it be all right if I went along with you, while you telephoned?

MRS. WALKER. Why, I'd love to.

GEORGE. You don't care, do you, May?

MAY. No, indeed.

GEORGE (*calling*). Susan! (*He hurries off*)

MAY (*about to withdraw*). I'm awfully sorry, but—

MRS. WALKER. Oh, Miss Daniels! Please don't go! I wonder if I could talk to you about Susan? I mean about how she's getting along in the school?

MAY (*hooked*). Of course.

MRS. WALKER. I've been kind of worried about her lately. You do think she's doing all right?

MAY. Oh, sure. I—ah—I think she's got Garbo licked a dozen ways.

MRS. WALKER. Really, Miss Daniels? What at?

MAY. Oh, pretty near everything. Crocheting—

MRS. WALKER. Oh, I'm so happy to hear you say that, because her father gets so impatient. I've tried to explain to him that it isn't so easy out here, even if you're the kind of an actress Susan is.

MAY. It's even harder if you're the kind of an actress Susan is.

MRS. WALKER. Of course. Then last week I wrote and told him what you said about her—you know—that you thought Technicolor would help? And he said for me to say to you—that you are doing the most courageous work out here since the earthquake. I couldn't understand what he was driving at.

MAY. Thanks. Just tell Mr. Walker that I'm doing the best I can, and that the Red Cross is helping me.

MRS. WALKER. Oh, yes, it's a wonderful organization—

(GEORGE *and* SUSAN *run in*)

SUSAN. Mother, what does father want?

GEORGE. We've got six minutes!

MRS. WALKER. I don't know, dear. My, we've got to hurry. Six minutes. We mustn't keep Mr. Walker waiting.

GEORGE. What kind of a man is he, Mrs. Walker? Do you know him very well?

(*They are gone.* MAY *alone is left. Back comes* VAIL—*a nod to* MAY, *who returns it in kind. Immediately* VAIL *sinks into his chair again*)

MAY (*surveying him*). Isn't there some disease you get from sitting?

VAIL. If there is, I've got it.

MAY. What do you do about your meals—have them sent in?

VAIL. What's the record for these chairs—do you happen to know?

MAY. I'm not sure—I think it was a man named Wentworth. He sat right through Coolidge's administration.

(*A* GIRL *peeps in through one of the doors*)

GIRL. Oh, Miss Daniels, we're waiting for you.

MAY. What?

GIRL. We're still breathing in here.

MAY (*rolling up a sleeve*). Yah? Well, I'll put a stop to that. (*She goes*)

(VAIL *is alone. He rises; goes to the table and inspects a magazine. He gives it up for another, which he also glances idly through. Takes it back to his seat, drops it onto the chair and sits on it*)

(MISS LEIGHTON *enters. Sees* VAIL. *It is as though she had never seen him before*)

MISS LEIGHTON. Yes?

VAIL. Don't you remember me, Princess? I'm the Marathon chair warmer.

MISS LEIGHTON. What is the name, please?

VAIL. Lawrence Vail. I am waiting to see Mr. Glogauer.

MISS LEIGHTON. Oh, yes. I gave him your name, but he doesn't seem to remember you. What was it about, please?

VAIL. It's about a pain in a strictly localized section.

MISS LEIGHTON. How's that?

(RUDOLPH KAMMERLING, *a German director, enters. He is in a mood*)

KAMMERLING. Where is Mr. Glogauer, Miss Leighton? Get hold of him for me right away.

MISS LEIGHTON. He's on Number Eight, Mr. Kammerling.

KAMMERLING. I just come from Number Eight—he is not there.

MISS LEIGHTON. Then he must be in conference with the exploitation people, Mr. Kammerling.

KAMMERLING. Maybe he is just through. Try his office.

MISS LEIGHTON. I've just come by there. He isn't in his office.

KAMMERLING. Gott in Himmel, he must be *some* place. Try number eight again.

MISS LEIGHTON. Yes, sir.

KAMMERLING (*pacing nervously up and down*). For two cents I would go back to Germany and Ufa!

MISS LEIGHTON (*at 'phone*). Number Eight! Mr. Kammerling calling Mr. Glogauer! Imperative!

KAMMERLING. America! Reinhardt begged me not to come! On his knees in the Schauspielhaus he begged me!

MISS LEIGHTON. Hello? Mr. Glogauer not there? Just a moment. . . . He isn't there, Mr. Kammerling. Any message?

KAMMERLING (*beside himself—shouting*). Yes! Tell them I take the next boat back to Germany! Wait! Who is it on the phone?

MISS LEIGHTON. Mr. Weisskopf.

KAMMERLING. Give it to me! (*Takes the phone;* MISS LEIGHTON *leaves*) Hello! This is Kammerling . . . How much publicity is there sent out on Dorothy Dodd?

. . . What? . . . We are lost! . . . Why? I tell you why? Because I have just seen her and she is impossible! I will not ruin my American career! . . . (*Hangs up*) What a country! Oh, to be in Russia with Eisenstein! (*He storms out*)

(TWO ELECTRICIANS *enter. They carry work kits, and they're tough specimens*)

1ST ELECTRICIAN. You take all this studio equipment—they don't know what they're getting when they buy this stuff.

2ND ELECTRICIAN. They certainly pick up a lot of junk.

1ST ELECTRICIAN. Look at that base plug—torn half way out of the socket. Socket all wrenched out of shape, too. Haven't got a new one in your bag, have you?

2ND ELECTRICIAN. Don't think so. Wait a minute. (*He looks through his tools, whistling as he does so*) No. Nothing doing.

1ST ELECTRICIAN. No use till we get one—it's all torn out. (*The other man, while packing up his tools, shakes his head. Still whistling*) Say, what *is* that? (*The* 2ND ELECTRICIAN *whistles a bit further—interrogatively, as if to inquire if he was referring to the melody*) Yah—is it yours? (*Still whistling, the other man nods*) Start it again. (*He does so; whistles a phrase*) I think I got the lyric. (*He improvises to the other man's whistling*)

"By a babbling brook at twilight.
Once there sat a loving twain—"

2ND ELECTRICIAN. That's great!

1ST ELECTRICIAN (*Hotly*). And this one doesn't go to Paramount, after the way they treated us.

(*They go, whistling and singing*)

(MISS LEIGHTON *enters; notices* VAIL. *As usual, she never saw him before*)

MISS LEIGHTON. Yes?

VAIL (*ready to commit murder*). Say it ain't true, Duchess —say you remember?

MISS LEIGHTON. Oh, yes. An appointment, wasn't it?

VAIL. That's it—an appointment. I got it through a speculator. Listen, maybe this will help. I work here. I have an office—a room with my name on the door. It's a big room, see? In that long hall where the authors work? The people that write. Authors! It's a room—a room with my name in gold letters on the door.

MISS LEIGHTON (*visibly frightened by all this*). What was the name again?

VAIL. Lawrence Vail.

MISS LEIGHTON. Oh, you're Lawrence *Vail.* Well, I'll tell Mr. Weisskopf—

VAIL (*stopping her*). No, no! Nothing would come of it. Just let the whole thing drop. Life will go on. Only tell me something—they make talking pictures here, is that right?

MISS LEIGHTON. What?

VAIL. This is a picture studio? They make pictures here —pictures that talk? They do *some*thing here, don't they?

MISS LEIGHTON (*edging away*). I'll tell Mr. Weisskopf—

VAIL. Don't be afraid of me, little girl. I'll not harm you. It's just that I've been in that room—my office—the place with my name on the door—for months and months—nobody ever noticed me—alone in there—the strain of it—it's been too much. And so I came out. I don't expect to see Mr. Glogauer any more—I just want to go in and wander around. Because tomorrow I'm going home, and I want to tell them I saw 'em made. Who knows—maybe I'll run into Mr. Glogauer—I'd love to know what God looks like before I die. (*He goes*)

MISS LEIGHTON. Yes—yes—I'll tell Mr. Weisskopf. (*Sinks into her chair*)

(HELEN HOBART *bustles in*)

HELEN. Good morning, Miss Leighton!

MISS LEIGHTON (*weakly*). Good morning.

HELEN. My dear, what *is* the matter? You're shaking.

MISS LEIGHTON. There was a drunken man in here just now.

HELEN. You poor child. Well, they'll soon be weeded out —Will Hays is working as fast as he can.

MISS LEIGHTON. Yes, I know.

HELEN. Dorothy Dodd get here, Miss Leighton?

MISS LEIGHTON. Yes, she got in this morning.

HELEN. I do want to meet her. You know, more people have told me I look like her. . . . Tell me, Miss Leighton. My paper wants me to try to find— (*Delving into bag*)—what *is* his name? He works here. (*Finds slip of paper*) Lawrence Vail.

MISS LEIGHTON. Lawrence Vail? No, I don't think I ever heard of him. Is he a director?

HELEN. No, no, he's a playwright. From New York. He's supposed to have come out here a long time ago and nothing's been heard of him. He seems to have just disappeared.

MISS LEIGHTON. Why, isn't that terrible? Have you tried Paramount?

HELEN. No, he's not at Paramount. They've lost six playwrights of their own in the past month. Once they get out of their rooms nobody knows what becomes of them. You'd think they'd lock the doors, wouldn't you?

MISS LEIGHTON (*going to her desk and taking a stack of cards from a drawer*). Yes—that's what we do. (*Looking through cards*) Lawrence Vail. I'm sure he isn't one of our playwrights, because if he was I'd be sure to— (*Finds the card*)—well, isn't that strange? He *is* one of our playwrights. (*Reads*) "Lawrence Vail."

HELEN (*looking over her shoulder*). That's the man.

MISS LEIGHTON (*eyes on card*). Yes—he came out here on Oct. 18. "From New York City." He was one of a shipment of sixteen playwrights.

HELEN (*reading*). "Dark hair, brown eyes—"

(MAY *returns*)

MAY. Oh, hello, Helen.

HELEN (*with no warmth whatever*). May, dear.

MISS LEIGHTON. Suppose I look in the playwrights' room. Maybe he's there.

HELEN. Oh, thanks, Miss Leighton. Shall I come along with you?

MISS LEIGHTON. No, if he's there I'll find him. Though I hate to go into the playwrights' room. It always scares me—those padded walls, and the bars over the windows. (*She goes*)

HELEN (*plainly anxious to slide out*). My, nearly twelve o'clock! I'd no idea!

MAY. Oh, must you go? You're quite a stranger these days.

HELEN. Yes—the mad, mad pace of Hollywood! I have two luncheons to go to—the Timken Ball Bearing people are having a convention here and it's also the fifth anniversary of Golden Bear cookies.

MAY. Well, if you have just a minute—

HELEN. The cookie people are so prompt—

MAY. I just wondered how you thought everything was going, Helen.

HELEN. Oh, wonderful, wonderful! You know, my column is being translated into Spanish now—they'll be reading it way over in Rome.

MAY. Yes, that's fine. But what I was going to ask you was —have you heard anything about the school lately?—how everybody thinks it's going?

HELEN (*evasively*). Well, of course you'd know more than I do about that—after all, it's *your* enterprise. Naturally I'd be the last person to—

MAY. Then you *have* heard something, haven't you, Helen? Who from—Glogauer?

HELEN. Why, of course not, May—whatever gave you such an idea? Of course you never can tell about things out

here—sometimes something will just happen to catch on, and then again—*well!*

(*The final "Well!" is a sort of grand dismissal of the subject, coupled with relief at having got that far. She is on the verge of departure*)

MAY (*with quiet dignity*). Thanks, Helen. I'm very grateful.

HELEN. Well, I—ah— (*Turning to her*) I don't imagine you've made any plans?

MAY. Not yet.

HELEN. After all, I suppose you've got all of your friends in England—it's only natural that—

MAY. Oh, yes. All of them.

HELEN. Well, I may be coming over in the spring—and if I do we must get together.

MAY. By all means.

HELEN. Well! (*She beams on her*) Bon voyage! (*She goes.* MAY *stands looking after her. A gentleman named* MR. FLICK, *carrying various strange boxes, looms in the doorway*)

FLICK. Pardon me, but can you tell me where I am?

MAY. What?

FLICK. I'm looking for the office of— (*Takes out paper*) —Miss May Daniels.

MAY. Huh?

FLICK (*reading*). Miss May Daniels, Mr. Jerome Hyland, Dr. George Lewis.

MAY. I'm Miss Daniels. What do you want?

FLICK. Oh, I don't want you. I just want to know where your office is.

MAY (*a gesture*). Right through there.

FLICK. Thanks. (*Starts*)

MAY. You won't find anybody in there.

FLICK. Oh, that's all right. I've only got to do some work on the door.

MAY. Oh! On the door?

FLICK. I just gotta take the names off.

MAY. You mean Daniels, Hyland and Lewis are coming off the door?

FLICK. That's right.

MAY. So that's your business, is it—taking names off doors?

FLICK. Well, I put 'em on too. I do more door work than anybody else in Hollywood. Out at Fox the other day I went right through the studio—every door. Why, some of the people didn't even know they were out till they saw me taking their names off.

MAY. Must have been a nice surprise.

FLICK. Yes, sometimes they leave their office and go out to lunch and by the time they get back it says Chief Engineer.

MAY. We aren't even out to lunch.

FLICK. Well, if you'll excuse me—

MAY. Yes, you've got your work to do. Well, it's been very nice to have met you.

FLICK. Much obliged.

MAY. You're sure you know where it is? Right at the end of the corridor—see?

FLICK. Oh, yes. Miss May Daniels, Mr. Jerome Hyland—

(*He is gone*)

(MAY *stands at the door a moment. A few office workers come in and go again—things are pretty busy. And then* JERRY. *Brisk, businesslike, whistling gayly*)

MAY (*quietly*). Jerry.

JERRY. Huh?

MAY. Have you got a minute?

JERRY. Gosh, May—afraid I haven't.

MAY. Yes, you have.

JERRY. I've got to see Weisskopf right away.

MAY. No, you don't.

JERRY. What?

MAY. You don't have to see Weisskopf.

JERRY. Yah, but I do.

MAY. No, you don't.

JERRY. What are you talking about?

MAY (*very lightly*). Did you ever hear the story of the three bears?

JERRY. Huh!

MAY. There was the Papa Bear, and the Mama Bear, and the Camembert. They came out to Hollywood to start a voice school—remember! A couple of them were engaged to be married or something—that's right, they were engaged—whatever happened to that?

JERRY. Wha-at?

MAY. Well, anyway, they *did* start a voice school—what do you think of that? They started a voice school, and had a big office, and everything was lovely. And then suddenly they came to work one morning, and where their office had been there was a beautiful fountain instead. And the Mama Bear said to the Papa Bear, What the hell do you know about that?

JERRY. May, stop clowning! What is it?

MAY. And this came as a great big surprise to the Papa Bear, because *he* thought that everything that glittered just *had* to be gold.

JERRY. Say, if you're going to talk in circles—

MAY. All right—I'll stop talking in circles. We're washed up Jerry.

JERRY. What are you talking about?

MAY. I said we're washed up. Through, finished, and out!

JERRY. What do you mean we're out? Why—who said we were out?

MAY. I knew it myself when we didn't hear about those tests—I felt it. And then ten minutes ago Helen Hobart walked in here.

JERRY. What did she say?

MAY. She handed the school right back to us—it seems she had nothing to do with it. That tells the story!

JERRY. That doesn't mean anything! You can't tell from what she says!

MAY. Oh, you can't, eh? Then I'll show you something that does mean something, and see if you can answer this one! (*She starts for the door through which* MR. FLICK *has vanished. The arrival of* GEORGE *stops her*)

GEORGE. May! May, something terrible has happened!

MAY. I know it!

GEORGE. You can't! It's Mr. Walker! Susan has to go back home—they're leaving tomorrow!

JERRY. May, what were you starting to tell me?

GEORGE. Did you hear what I said, May? Susan has got to go back home!

JERRY. Shut up, George! (*To* MAY) What were you going to tell me?

MAY (*breaking in*). For God's sake, stop a minute! George, we've got more important things!

GEORGE. There couldn't be more important things!

JERRY. Oh, for the love of—

MAY. Well, there are! We're fired, George—we haven't got jobs any more!

GEORGE. What?

JERRY. How do you know, May? How do you know we're fired?

MAY. I'll show you how I know! (*She goes to the door and opens it. In a trance, they follow her and look off*)

JERRY (*in a hushed tone*). Gosh!

GEORGE. You mean the window washer?

JERRY (*stunned*). Why—why, I was talking to Glogauer only yesterday—

MAY. Well, there you are, Jerry. So you see it's true.

GEORGE. You mean—you mean there isn't any school any more?

MAY. That's the idea, George.

GEORGE. But—but—why? Then—what about Susan?

MAY. Oh, let up on Susan! Besides, I thought you said she was going home.

GEORGE. Yah, but if we could get her a job right away!

(MR. FLICK *returns with scraper and tool-kit in hand. Crosses cheerfully, with a nod to all*)

MAY. Well, that was quick work.

FLICK. Oh, it don't take long. You see, I never use permanent paint on those doors.

(*A pause after his departure*)

MAY. Well, I suppose we might as well get our things together. (*She looks at the disconsolate figure of* JERRY) Don't take it so hard, Jerry. We've been up against it before.

JERRY. But everything was so—I don't know which way to turn, May. It's kind of knocked me all of a heap.

MAY. Don't let it lick you, Jerry—we'll pull out of it some way. We always have.

JERRY. Yah, but—not this. A thing like this sort of—what are we going to do?

MAY. What do you say we go to Hollywood? I hear they're panic-stricken out there. They'll fall on the necks of the first people—

(*They go*)

(GEORGE *is alone. The two studio men,* METERSTEIN *and* WEISSKOPF, *come in with their interminable chatter*)

WEISSKOPF. But the important thing is your retakes.

METERSTEIN. That's it—your retakes.

WEISSKOPF. You take your retakes and if they aren't good you've got no picture.

METERSTEIN. Oh, it's the retakes.

WEISSKOPF. Yah, it's the retakes, all right.

(*They go*)

(SUSAN *comes in. Pretty low*)

GEORGE (*eagerly*). Susan! Anything happen? After I left?

SUSAN (*forlornly*). I just came back to get my books and things. (*In his arms*) Oh, George!

GEORGE. Susan, you can't go back like this—it isn't fair! Why, you were just made for the talkies—you and I both! Did you tell your father we were waiting for Technicolor?

SUSAN. He just said stop being a God-damn fool and come on home.

GEORGE. But giving up with your career only half carved!

SUSAN. He wants mother home, too. He says eating all his meals in restaurants that it's ruining his stomach.

GEORGE. But you've got your own life to live—you can't give up your career on account of your father's stomach!

SUSAN. It's no use, George. You don't know father. Why, when the first talking picture came to Columbus he stood up and talked right back to it.

GEORGE. I guess your father's a pretty hard man to get on with.

SUSAN. Oh, you don't know, George. It's going to be terrible, going back to Columbus, after all this.

GEORGE. I'm not going to let you go back, Susan. Something's got to be done about it.

SUSAN. But it's so hopeless, George. (*She leaves him*)

(GEORGE *stands a moment, puzzled.* MISS LEIGHTON *enters, still carrying the* LAWRENCE VAIL *card*)

GEORGE. Could you find Mr. Glogauer for me?

MISS LEIGHTON. Sorry, Doctor—I'm terribly worried. I'm looking for a playwright, and there's a drunken man following me all around. (*As she goes* LAWRENCE VAIL *immediately enters. Goes to chair for his coat.* GEORGE *watches him as he brings his magazine back to the table*)

GEORGE. Excuse me, but have you seen Mr. Glogauer? (VAIL, *his eyes on* GEORGE, *drops the magazine onto the table*) I've been trying to find him, but nobody knows where he is.

VAIL. You one of the chosen people?

GEORGE. What?

VAIL. Do you work here?

GEORGE. Oh! I thought you meant was I—yah. I'm Dr. Lewis.

VAIL. Oh, yes. About Mr. Glogauer. Tell me something—it won't go any further. Have you ever seen Mr. Glogauer?

GEORGE. Oh, yes. Lots of times.

VAIL. Is that so? Actually seen him, huh? I suppose you've been here a good many years.

GEORGE (*shakes his head*). No. Only about six weeks.

VAIL. Only six weeks. I wouldn't have thought it possible.

GEORGE. Do you work here too?

VAIL. Yes. Yes. You see, Doctor, I'm supposed to be a playwright. Probably it doesn't mean anything to you, but my name is Lawrence Vail. (GEORGE'S *face is a complete blank*) It *doesn't* mean anything to you, does it?

GEORGE. No.

VAIL. No, I wouldn't have thought so.

GEORGE. Well, is that what you're doing here—writing plays?

VAIL. Not so far I'm not.

GEORGE. Well then, what are you doing?

VAIL (*sadly*). Don't ask me that. I don't know. I don't know anything about it. I didn't want to come out to this God-forsaken country. I have a beautiful apartment in New York—and friends. But they hounded me, and belabored me, and hammered at me, till you would have thought if I didn't get out here by the fifteenth of October every camera in Hollywood would stop clicking.

GEORGE. You don't say?

VAIL. And so I came. In a moment of weakness I came. That was six months ago. I have an office, and a secretary, and I draw my check every week, but so far no one has taken the slightest notice of me. I haven't received an assignment, I haven't met anybody outside

of the girl in the auditor's office who hands me my check, and in short, Dr. Lewis, I haven't done a single thing.

GEORGE. Why do you suppose they were so anxious to have you come out, then?

VAIL. Who knows? Why do you suppose they have these pages dressed the way they are, and those signs, and that woman at the desk, or this room, or a thousand other things?

GEORGE. Don't you like it out here?

VAIL. Dr. Lewis, I think Hollywood and this darling industry of yours is the most God-awful thing I've ever run into. Everybody behaving in the most fantastic fashion—nobody acting like a human being. I'm brought out here, like a hundred others, paid a fat salary—nobody notices me. Not that I might be any good—it's just an indication. Thousands of dollars thrown away every day. Why do they do that, do you know?

GEORGE. No, sir.

VAIL. There you are. Plenty of good minds have come out here. Why aren't they used? Why must everything be dressed up in this God-damn hokum—waiting in a room like this, and having those morons thrust a placard under your nose every minute? Why is that?

GEORGE. I don't know.

VAIL. Me neither. The whole business is in the hands of incompetents, that's all. But I don't have to stay here, and I'm not going to. I've tried to see Mr. Glogauer—God knows I've tried to see him. But it can't be done. So just tell him for me that he can take his contract and put it where it will do the most good. I'm going home, and thank you very much for listening to me.

GEORGE. There's a lot in what you say, Mr. Vail. I've been having a good deal of trouble myself.

VAIL. You bet there's a lot in what I say. Only somebody ought to tell it to Glogauer.

GEORGE. That's right. Well, look—why don't you make an appointment with Mr. Glogauer and tell him?

(*It is too much for* VAIL. *He goes*)

(GEORGE *is alone. He thinks it over, then decides that action of some sort has to be taken. He goes to the telephone*)

GEORGE. Hello . . . This is Dr. Lewis . . . Dr. Lewis . . . Well, I work here. That is, I—ah—I've got to get in touch with Mr. Glogauer.

(GLOGAUER *and* KAMMERLING *enter, in the middle of a hot argument.* GEORGE, *of course, hangs up the receiver immediately*)

GLOGAUER. What can I do about it now? Miss Leighton! Where is Miss Leighton? You know just how we are fixed! What can I do about it at a time like this? You know just who we've got available—what do you want me to do about it?

GEORGE. Mr. Glogauer, could I talk to you for a minute?

KAMMERLING. There is no use of going on! Dorothy Dodd will not do! I will go back to Germany and Ufa before I shoot a foot!

GLOGAUER (*into the 'phone*). Get Miss Leighton for me —right away.

GEORGE. Mr. Glogauer—

GLOGAUER. Do you realize that I brought that woman from New York, took her out of a show, and she's on a play-or-pay contract for the next three months? Besides, she's got a big legit name! Take her out, he says!

(GEORGE, *a little bowled over by the momentum of all this, is between the two fires*)

KAMMERLING. But I will not have my work ruined! She will be terrible—she is not the type!

GLOGAUER. Then go to work on her! What are you a director for?

KAMMERLING. No, no—she is a good actress, but it is the wrong part. The part is a country girl—a girl from the country!

GLOGAUER. Don't I know that?

KAMMERLING. But Dorothy Dodd is not a country girl! She is a woman—a woman who has lived with a dozen men—and looks it! Can I make her over? I am just a director—not God!

GLOGAUER. But if it was explained to her! How long would it take to explain a country girl?

KAMMERLING. But everyone knows about her—it's been in the newspapers—every time they break a door down they find *her*!

GLOGAUER. But what am I to do at a time like this?

KAMMERLING. Get somebody else! Somebody that looks it!

GEORGE. Mr. Glogauer—

KAMMERLING. My work would go for nothing! My work would be ruined!

GLOGAUER. Let me get this straight—you mean she *positively* won't do?

KAMMERLING. *Positively.*

GLOGAUER. Well, if it's positively I suppose there's nothing for it.

KAMMERLING. Ah!

GLOGAUER. We got to get somebody then, and quick!

KAMMERLING. Now you're again the artist! Somebody like Janet Gaynor—she would be fine! Maybe Fox would lend her to you!

GEORGE (*weakly*). I know who could do it.

GLOGAUER. Maybe Warners would lend me John Barrymore! Don't talk foolish Kammerling! I went over our list of people with you and you know just who we've got available.

GEORGE (*stronger this time*). I know somebody could do it.

GLOGAUER. I can't do a magician act—take somebody out of my pocket! You know just who we got!

GEORGE (*making himself heard*). But I know exactly the person!

GLOGAUER. You what?

GEORGE (*excited*). I know an actress who would fit the part perfectly.

KAMMERLING. Who?

GLOGAUER. What's her name? Who is she?

GEORGE. Her name is Susan Walker.

KAMMERLING. Who?

GLOGAUER. I never heard of her. What's she done?

GEORGE. She hasn't done anything.

GLOGAUER. Hasn't done anything! Taking up our time with a girl—we must have a name! Don't you understand? We must have a name!

GEORGE. Why?

GLOGAUER. What's that?

GEORGE. Why must you have a name?

GLOGAUER. Why must we have—go away, go away! Why must we have a name? I spend three hundred thousand dollars on a picture and he asks me—because Susan Walker as a name wouldn't draw flies—that's why! Not flies!

GEORGE. But she could play the part.

GLOGAUER. So what? Who would come to see her? Why do you argue on such a foolish subject? Everybody knows you can't do a picture without a name. What are you talking about?

GEORGE (*his big moment*). Mr. Glogauer, there's something you ought to know.

GLOGAUER. What?

GEORGE. This darling industry of yours is the most God-awful thing I've ever run into.

GLOGAUER. Huh! (*Stares at him*)

GEORGE. Why don't people act human, anyhow? Why are you so fantastic? Why do you go and bring all these people out here, whoever they are, and give them all

this money, and then you don't do anything about it. Thousands of dollars—right under your nose. Why is that?

GLOGAUER. Huh?

GEORGE. Can you tell me why in the world you can't make pictures without having the stars playing parts they don't fit, just because she's got a good name or something? How about a girl that hasn't got a good name? And how about all these signs, and this room, and that girl, and everything? And everything else? It's the most God-awful—all kinds of people have come out here—why don't you do something about it? Why don't you do something about a person like Miss Walker, and give her a chance? Why, she'd be wonderful. The whole business is in the hands of incompetents, that's what's the trouble! Afraid to give anybody a chance! And you turned the Vitaphone down! (GLOGAUER *gives him a startled look*) Yes, you did! They're all afraid to tell it to you! That's what's the matter with this business. It's in the hands of—you turned the Vitaphone down!

GLOGAUER (*stunned; slowly thinking it over*). By God, he's right!

GEORGE (*not expecting this*). Huh?

GLOGAUER. He's right! And to stand up there and tell me that—that's colossal!

GEORGE. You mean what I said?

GLOGAUER. That's what we need in this business—a man who can come into it, and when he sees mistakes being made, talk out about them. Yes, sir—it's colossal.

GEORGE (*if it's as easy as that*). Why, it's the most God-awful thing—

KAMMERLING. Who is this man? Where did he come from?

GLOGAUER. Yes, who are you? Didn't I sign you up or something?

GEORGE. I'm Dr. Lewis.

GLOGAUER. Who?

GEORGE. You know—the school.

GLOGAUER. You are with the school? But that school isn't any good.

GEORGE (*moved to an accidental assertiveness*). It *is* good!

GLOGAUER. Is it?

GEORGE (*with sudden realization that an emphatic manner can carry the day*). Why, of course it is. You people go around here turning things down—doing this and that—

GLOGAUER (*to* KAMMERLING). He's right! Look—I pretty near fired him! I did fire him.

GEORGE. You see? And here's Susan Walker—just made for the talkies.

GLOGAUER. Say, who is this girl?

KAMMERLING. Where is she?

GLOGAUER. Tell us about her.

GEORGE. Well—Mr. Kammerling knows her—I introduced her.

GLOGAUER. She's here in Hollywood?

GEORGE. Oh, sure! She just went—

KAMMERLING. I remember! She might be able to do it! She is dumb enough.

GEORGE. Shall I bring her in?

GLOGAUER. Yes, yes—let's see her!

GEORGE. She's right out here. (*Rushing out*)

GLOGAUER. Fine, fine! There is a big man, Kammerling! I can tell! Suddenly it comes out—that's the way it always is!

KAMMERLING. In Germany, too!

GLOGAUER. Turned the Vitaphone down—no one ever dared say that to me! I got to hang on to this fellow—take options.

(MISS LEIGHTON *enters*)

MISS LEIGHTON. Did you send for me, Mr. Glogauer?

GLOGAUER. Yes! Where's my coffee? I want my coffee!
MISS LEIGHTON. Yes, Mr. Glogauer—where will you have it?
GLOGAUER. Where will I have it? Where *am* I! Answer me that! Where am I?
MISS LEIGHTON. Why—right here, Mr. Glogauer.
GLOGAUER. All right—then that's where I want my coffee!
MISS LEIGHTON. Yes, sir.
GLOGAUER. And tell Meterstein I want him—right away! And Miss Chasen, with her notebook.
MISS LEIGHTON. Yes, sir. (*Goes*)
GLOGAUER. Now I show you how we handle this! We'll have her and a name too! We'll create a name for her! I've done it before and I do it again!
KAMMERLING. If only she looks like it—
GEORGE (*rushes in with* SUSAN). Here she is, Mr. Glogauer —here she is!
GLOGAUER. Yes! Yes! She can do it! He's right!
KAMMERLING. Ya, ya! Wunderbar!
GEORGE. Of course I'm right.
KAMMERLING. Say "I love you."
SUSAN. "I love you."
KAMMERLING. Ya! Sie kann es thun!
GLOGAUER. That's wonderful!
GEORGE. Sure it is!
GLOGAUER. No time to talk salary now, Miss Walker—but you don't have to worry!
SUSAN. Oh, George!
GEORGE. Susan!
KAMMERLING (*to* SUSAN). "I hate you!"
SUSAN. "I hate you!"
KAMMERLING. Ya, ya!
(MISS CHASEN *enters*)
MISS CHASEN. Yes, Mr. Glogauer?
GLOGAUER. Ah, Miss Chasen! Where's Meterstein? I want Meterstein!

(METERSTEIN *rushes in*)

METERSTEIN. Here I am, Mr. Glogauer!

GLOGAUER. Listen to this, Meterstein! Miss Chasen, take this down! Tell the office to drop everything they're doing and concentrate on this! Drop everything, no matter what it is!

MISS CHASEN (*over her notes*). Drop everything.

GLOGAUER. Wire the New York office that Susan Walker, a new English actress we've just signed, will arrive in New York next week— (*A quick aside to* GEORGE) I want her to go to New York first!

GEORGE. Yes, sir.

SUSAN. Does he mean me?

KAMMERLING. Yes, yes!

GLOGAUER. Have them arrange a reception at the Savoy-Plaza—get her pictures in every paper! Tell them I want her photographed with Mayor Walker!

METERSTEIN. Mayor Walker.

GLOGAUER. I want everybody in the studio to get busy on this right away! Everybody! And get hold of Davis for me right away!

MISS CHASEN. Get Davis!

METERSTEIN (*calling out the door*). Get Davis!

VOICE IN THE DISTANCE. Get Davis!

VOICE STILL FURTHER AWAY. Get Davis!

GLOGAUER. Get hold of Photoplay and Motion Picture Magazine and the trade papers—I want them all! Send for Helen Hobart and tell her I want to see her personally! And I want Baker to handle this—not Davis! Don't get Davis!

METERSTEIN. Don't get Davis!

VOICE IN THE DISTANCE. Don't get Davis!

VOICE STILL FURTHER AWAY. Don't get Davis!

GLOGAUER. I want national publicity on this—outdoor advertising, twenty-four sheets, everything! Meterstein,

arrange a conference for me with the whole publicity department this afternoon! That's all!

METERSTEIN. Yes, sir. (*Goes*)

SUSAN. Oh, George! What'll father say now?

GLOGAUER. Miss Chasen, shoot those wires right off!

MISS CHASEN. Yes, sir.

GLOGAUER. I'll be in my office in ten minutes, and no appointments for me for the rest of the day! That clear?

MISS CHASEN. Yes, sir. (*Goes*)

GLOGAUER. Now then, Doctor, tear up your old contract!

GEORGE. I haven't got one!

GLOGAUER. You are in charge of this whole thing—understand? What you say goes!

GEORGE. Yes, sir.

SUSAN. George, does this mean—

GLOGAUER. When I have faith in a man the sky's the limit! You know what I do with you, Doctor? I make you supervisor in full charge—over all productions of the Glogauer Studio!

SUSAN. George—!

GEORGE (*very matter-of-factly*). All right.

(MAY *and* JERRY *enter*—JERRY *carrying a brief case,* MAY *with her hat on, both obviously ready to leave*)

GEORGE. May! Jerry! What do you think! I've just been made supervisor!

SUSAN. Yes!

JERRY. Huh!

MAY. What!

GEORGE. I told him about the Vitaphone!

MAY. You did what?

GLOGAUER. The one man! (*To* GEORGE) Tomorrow morning you get your office—with a full staff!

GEORGE (*to* MAY *and* JERRY). Hear that?

GLOGAUER. That's the way we do things out here—no time wasted on thinking! I give you all the people you need —anybody you want! All you got to do is say so!

GEORGE. I know who I want, Mr. Glogauer!

GLOGAUER. Already he knows—see, Kammerling?

KAMMERLING. Wonderful!

GLOGAUER. All right! Name 'em—name 'em!

GEORGE. I want Miss Daniels and Mr. Hyland!

JERRY. What is this?

GLOGAUER. What? Those people? (*A deprecatory wave of the hand*) You don't want them! They're fired!

GEORGE. Mr. Glogauer, I know who I want!

GLOGAUER. But you could have Weisskopf, Meterstein—

GEORGE. No, sir. I have to have Miss Daniels and Mr. Hyland or I can't do anything. And if I can't have them— (*In a very small voice*) —I walk right out.

SUSAN. George, you mustn't!

MAY. California, here we go!

(*But it doesn't seem to be true.* GLOGAUER *fairly throws his arms around* GEORGE, *pleading with him to stay*)

GLOGAUER. No! No! . . . Miss Daniels! Mr. Hyland!

MISS LEIGHTON (*entering, followed by two* PAGES *bearing an enormous silver coffee service*). Here you are, Mr. Glogauer. (*The* PHONE *rings*) Miss Leighton at this end—

The curtain is down

ACT THREE

SCENE I

(*A set on the* GLOGAUER *lot. The curtain rises on a scene of tremendous but rather vague activity. Set against a background of church wall and stained-glass windows, are pews, altar, wedding bell, and all the other paraphernalia that go to make up the filming of a movie wedding. In and out of this, all talking, all shouting, all rushing, weave cameramen, assistant directors, electricians, routine studio workers, and actors. In this particular instance the players are costumed to represent bridesmaids and ushers, and above a hammering and sawing and shouting, bits of: "Hey,* WEBER*—we're taking the truck shot with your camera!" "Use your soft lights for the altar shots,* BUTCH*" are heard from the cameramen, etc., and snatches of: "Where are you going,* LILY*?" "Oh, I don't know—get a soda." "You just had one." "Say, I hear Paramount sent a call out." "What for?" "Dunno—just heard they had a call out," come from the bridesmaids and ushers. Sitting a little apart from the rest of the actors is a gentleman dressed in the gorgeous robes of a* BISHOP*, peacefully snoozing away until it is time to play his part.*

It is the last day of shooting on SUSAN WALKER'S *picture, "Gingham and Orchids," and all these incredible goings-on are nothing more than the usual "getting set" of camera and lights, the usual yelling and the usual standing about, the inevitable waiting that is part and parcel of the whole business of taking pictures.*

A PAGE BOY, *in the regular studio page uniform, enters, calling for* MR. METERSTEIN. *He arouses, for the first time, the* BISHOP.)

BISHOP (*who is a shade less spiritual than you might expect*). Oh, boy! Can you go out and get me a copy of "Racing Form"?

PAGE. I'll try.

LIGHT MAN. Hey, Spike!

BISHOP. Yeh?

LIGHT MAN. What are you playing?

BISHOP. I've got one in the fourth at Caliente, looks good. Princess Fanny.

LIGHT MAN. Whose?

BISHOP. Princess Fanny.

(*A wandering* BRIDESMAID *strolls on*)

BRIDESMAID. Where the hell's the Bishop? Oh, there you are.

BISHOP. What's up?

BRIDESMAID. Send me up a case of gin, will you—same as last time.

BISHOP. O.K.

(*In the distance a voice is heard: "Oh,* BUTCH! *When we get through here we go over on twenty-eight." And hammering and sawing. Endless hammering and sawing*)

BISHOP (*seating himself in a pew*). You know, these pews are damned comfortable. I should have gone to church long ago.

A BRIDESMAID. Good night.

BISHOP. There's nothing like a good Simmons pew.

ELECTRICIAN. Hey, Mixer! Mixer!

MIXER (*in the distance*). What do you want?

ELECTRICIAN. How are we on sound?

MIXER. O.K.

(MRS. WALKER *bustles on, carrying* SUSAN'S *bridal bouquet*)

MRS. WALKER (*to the* BRIDESMAIDS). Well, I've just had the most exciting news! Susan's father is coming on for the wedding. Isn't that just too lovely?

A BRIDESMAID. I'm all choked up inside.

MRS. WALKER. He wasn't coming at first—it looked as if he'd have to go to Bermuda with the Elks. You know, the Elks are in Bermuda.

BRIDESMAID (*to another* BRIDESMAID). The Elks are in Bermuda.

THE OTHER BRIDESMAID (*telling still another*). The Elks are in Bermuda.

NEXT BRIDESMAID (*singing it*). The Elks are in Bermuda.

FINAL BRIDESMAID (*singing, of course*). The farmer's in the dell.

BISHOP. There's a horse named Elk's Tooth running at Tia Juana. I think just on a hunch I'll—

(MISS CHASEN *hurries on*)

MISS CHASEN. Is Dr. Lewis on the set?

(*They tell her he isn't*)

MRS. WALKER. He's at the architect's.

MISS CHASEN. Well, Mr. Glogauer wants to know the minute he gets here. Will you have somebody let me know?

(*She goes.* KAMMERLING *comes on—a great show of activity. The actors leap to their feet. The script girl enters; various actors stroll back onto the set*)

KAMMERLING. Good morning, everybody! Good morning! Is Dr. Lewis here yet?

MRS. WALKER. He's at the architect's. I'll get Susan for you.

(*She dashes off*)

KAMMERLING. Now listen, everybody! We take first the scene on the church steps—

(*Along comes* JERRY—*so busy*)

JERRY. Well, we're on the home stretch, eh?

KAMMERLING. That is right. We do first the retake on the steps.

(SUSAN *enters in full bridal regalia*)

SUSAN. Oh. Mr. Kammerling, I'm ready to be shot!

KAMMERLING. Fine! We take the scene on the church steps.

SUSAN. The what?

KAMMERLING. The scene on the church steps.

SUSAN. But I don't think I know that scene.

JERRY. Didn't May rehearse you in that this morning?

SUSAN. No—she didn't.

KAMMERLING. Miss Daniels! Where is Miss Daniels!

VOICE OFF. Miss Daniels on the set!

KAMMERLING. She knew we were going to take it. (*Calling*) Miss Daniels!

SUSAN. Jerry, did mother tell you—we just had a telegram from father?

JERRY. No. What's up?

THAT BRIDESMAID. He's joined the Elks.

(MAY *arrives*)

MAY. Does there seem to be some trouble?

JERRY. May, what about the church steps? Susan says you didn't rehearse her.

MAY. Susan, I know your memory isn't very good, but I want you to think way back to—Oh, pretty near five minutes ago. We were sitting in your dressing room —remember?—and we rehearsed that scene?

SUSAN. But that isn't the scene he means.

MAY (*to* KAMMERLING). Outside the church, is that right?

KAMMERLING. Yes, yes!

SUSAN. Outside the church—Oh, yes, we did *that*! You said the church steps.

KAMMERLING. That's right! That's right!

MAY. Susan—we feel that it's time you were told this. Outside the church and the church steps are really the same scene.

SUSAN. Are they?

MAY. Yes. In practically all churches now they put the steps on the outside.

SUSAN. Oh, I see.

KAMMERLING. Then are we ready?

MAY. I doubt it. Do you remember the scene as we just rehearsed it, Susan? You remember that you ascend four steps—then turn and wave to the crowd—

SUSAN. Oh, yes—Now I remember! (*She waves her hand —a violent gesture*)

MAY. No, no—you do not launch a battleship. You see, they'd have to get a lot of water for that.

KAMMERLING. Is it then settled what you are doing?

SUSAN. Well, I think I understand. . . . The steps are outside the church. . . .

A BRIDESMAID. Lily, want to make a date tonight? Those exhibitors are in town again.

LILY. Who?

BRIDESMAID. Those two exhibitors.

LILY. Oh, Mr. Hyland, do you want us tonight?

JERRY. Can't tell till later.

LILY. Well, I've got a chance to go out with an exhibitionist.

(*The crowd is all gone by this time.* MAY *and* JERRY *are alone*)

JERRY. May, I just came from Glogauer and he's tickled pink.

MAY. He must look lovely.

JERRY. Picture finished right on schedule, advancing the opening date—it's the first time it ever happened!

MAY. Yah.

JERRY. You don't seem very excited about it! Picture opening in three days—and it's going to be a knockout too!

MAY (*who has heard all this before*). Now, Jerry.

JERRY. Well, it is, and I don't care what you think.

MAY. But Jerry, use a little common sense. You've seen the rushes. What's the use of kidding yourself?

JERRY. All right. Everybody's wrong but you.

MAY. I can't help what I see, Jerry. The lighting, for example. Those big scenes where you can't see anything —everybody in shadow—what about those?

JERRY. That's only a few scenes. You know that—George forgot to tell them to turn the lights on, and they thought he meant it that way. Nobody'll notice it.

MAY. All right. But I caught something new yesterday. That knocking that goes on—did you get that?

JERRY. Well, we're trying to find out about that. The sound engineers are working on it.

MAY. Don't you know what that was?

JERRY. No. What?

MAY. That was George cracking his God-damn Indian nuts.

JERRY. Is that what it was?

MAY. I suppose nobody's going to notice that, either.

(*There is a great hubbub outside—cries of* "DR. LEWIS *is coming!*" "*Here comes the* DOCTOR!" *And presently he does come—preceded by a pair of pages bearing a silver coffee service and the inevitable box of Indian nuts, and followed by his secretary and a stream of actors. There come along, too, the three scenario writers—pressing for his attention*)

GEORGE. Good morning! Good morning! Good morning! (*He sights* SUSAN) Good morning, darling. Well, Kammerling? What have I done this morning?

KAMMERLING. We have taken the retake on the church steps.

GEORGE. Well, what have I got to decide?

KAMMERLING. There is only the last scene—the wedding ceremony.

JERRY. Right on schedule.

GEORGE. There's just the one scene left to take?

KAMMERLING. That is all.

GEORGE (*a snap of the fingers; the decision has been reached*). We'll take that scene.

KAMMERLING. Everybody on the set, please! Everybody on the set!

GEORGE. I'll decide everything else at two o'clock.

SECRETARY. Yes, sir.

MAY (*coming to* GEORGE). Dr. Lewis, I met you in New York. I'm Miss Daniels.

GEORGE. Hello, May.

KAMMERLING. Are we then ready? Ready, Dr. Lewis?

ONE OF THE SCENARIO WRITERS. Dr. Lewis, we left a scenario in your office—

SECRETARY. No answers on scenarios until two o'clock.

GEORGE. That's right.

WRITER. But it's five weeks now.

GEORGE. All right. We'll take the scene from wherever we left off.

KAMMERLING. We will take the end of the wedding ceremony, where we left off! Places, please! We are going to take the end of the wedding ceremony. Everybody in their places.

(*The wedding party takes its place at the altar*)

KAMMERLING (*to the* BISHOP). Oh, Mr. Jackson, have you got this straight?

GEORGE (*sternly*). Get this straight, Mr. Jackson.

BISHOP. What?

GEORGE (*to* KAMMERLING). Yes—what?

KAMMERLING. About the ceremony. You understand that when she says "I do," you release the pigeons.

BISHOP. Oh, sure.

KAMMERLING. They are in that little cottage up there. When Miss Walker says "I do," you pull that ribbon and the pigeons will fly out.

BISHOP. They ain't gonna fly down on me again, are they?

KAMMERLING. No, no, they have been rehearsed.

GEORGE. Those pigeons know what to do. They were with Cecil·DeMille for two years.

BISHOP. Oh, that's where I met 'em.

GEORGE. Oh! I forgot! There aren't any pigeons.

KAMMERLING. What?

GEORGE. Well, they had to stay up in there so long, and I felt kinda sorry for them, so I had them sent back to the man.

KAMMERLING. Well, what shall we do?

GEORGE. I know! Let's not have any. That's what we'll do —we won't use them.

KAMMERLING. Very well, Doctor.

MAY. He certainly meets emergencies.

SUSAN. Oh, George! Is that all I say during the entire ceremony—just "I do"?

GEORGE. Is that all she says, May?

MAY. That's all. That's the part she knows, too.

SUSAN. But that's so short.

GEORGE. Yes!

MAY. Maybe she could perform the ceremony, then she could do all the talking.

GEORGE. But that wouldn't fit the scenario—

(*In the distance comes the cry that signals the approach of the great.* "MR. GLOGAUER *is coming!*" "MR. GLOGAUER *is coming!*" *He arrives all bustle and importance. He is followed by one page who carries a portable desk and a telephone, by a second page who brings a small folding chair, and by the ubiquitous* MISS CHASEN *and her notebook. Immediately the* PAGE *puts together the desk and plugs in the telephone;* MISS CHASEN *settles herself, and in the twinkling of an eye the place is open for business*)

GLOGAUER. Well! Here is the happy family! (*A general greeting*) Well, everything going fine, huh?

JERRY. Right on schedule, Mr. Glogauer.

GEORGE. That's what it is.

GLOGAUER. Well, that's wonderful—wonderful. What's going on now?

GEORGE. We're taking the last scene.

GLOGAUER. That's fine—fine! I congratulate everybody.

MISS CHASEN (*into the telephone*). Miss Chasen speaking. Mr. Glogauer is on Number Nine.

GLOGAUER. Tell 'em I will look at "Foolish Virgins" at two-fifteen.

MISS CHASEN. Mr. Glogauer will look at "Foolish Virgins" at two-fifteen.

GLOGAUER. The reason I came down—you don't mind if I interrupt you for a minute for a very special reason?

GEORGE. Why, no.

(*There is a general movement. Some of the* BRIDESMAIDS *are about to depart*)

GLOGAUER. Everybody stay here, please! I want everybody to hear this!

GEORGE. Everybody listen to Mr. Glogauer! Mr. Glogauer is probably going to say something.

KAMMERLING. Attention, everybody!

GLOGAUER. Boys and girls, as you know this is the last day of the shooting. Many of you have worked for me before, but never under such happy circumstances, and so I want you all to be here while I say something. Seventeen years ago— (*The* BISHOP, *who is no fool, sits down*) —when I went into the movie business, I made up my mind it should be run like a business, as a business, and for a business. And that is what I have tried to do. But never before have I been able to do it until today. Never since I started to make Glogauer Super-Jewels has a picture of mine been finished exactly on the schedule. And what is the reason for that? Because now for the first time we have a man who is able to make decisions, and to make them like *that*—Dr. George Lewis.

GEORGE (*as the applause dies*). Ladies and Gentlemen—

GLOGAUER. Wait a minute—I am not through yet. (GEORGE *apologetically steps back*) And so in recognition of his remarkable achievement, I take great pleasure in presenting him with a very small token of my regard. (*He gives a signal. Immediately* TWO MEN *enter, carrying a huge table on which is spread out a golden dinner set —something absolutely staggering. It is met with a chorus of delighted little gasps.* SUSAN *scampers down to gurgle over it*) A solid gold dinner set, a hundred and six pieces, and with his initials in diamonds on every piece.

MAY. What's the first prize?

(*There are calls of "Speech," and* "DR. LEWIS")

GEORGE. Ladies and gentlemen—and Mr. Glogauer—this is the first solid gold dinner set I have ever received. I hardly know what to say, because this is the first solid gold dinner set I have ever received, and I hardly know what to say. All I can say is it's wonderful, Mr. Glogauer, and now let's show Mr. Glogauer the finish of the picture, and take the last scene.

KAMMERLING (*pushing the* BRIDESMAIDS *away*). All right, all right! Look at it afterwards!

GLOGAUER (*as* MISS CHASEN *starts to leave*). I will address the new playwrights on Number Eight.

MISS CHASEN. Yes, Mr. Glogauer.

KAMMERLING. Everybody take their places! Mr. Glogauer is waiting!

GEORGE. Everybody take their places!

LIGHT MAN. Hey, Spike!

BISHOP. Yah?

LIGHT MAN. They're off at Caliente. Fourth race.

BISHOP. O.K. Let me know the minute you hear.

LIGHT MAN. O.K.

KAMMERLING. All right. We are taking the scene now, Mr. Jackson. Horses come later.

GEORGE. We are taking the scene now, Mr. Glogauer.

GLOGAUER. Fine!

KAMMERLING. Are we lined? (CAMERAMEN *assent*) Phased? (*Another assent*) Red light. How are we for sound?

MIXER (*through his phone*). O.K.

KAMMERLING. All right. Are we up to speed?

VOICE. Right.

KAMMERLING. Four bells!

(*Four bells sound. There is complete silence*)

VOICE (*in the distance*). Taking on upper stage! Everybody quiet!

KAMMERLING. Hit your lights! (*Lights on*) Camera!

BISHOP. Cyril Fonsdale, dost thou take this woman to be thy wedded wife, to live together in the holy state of matrimony? Dost thou promise within sacred sight of this altar to love her, comfort her, honor and keep her in sickness and in health, and, forsaking all others, keep true only unto her, so long as ye both shall live?

THE GROOM. I do.

BISHOP. Mildred Martin, dost thou take this man to be thy wedded husband? Dost thou promise to obey him and serve him, love, honor and keep him in sickness and in health, so long as ye both shall live?

SUSAN. I do.

BISHOP. Forasmuch as these two have consented together in holy wedlock, and have witnessed the same before this company and have given and pledged their troth each to the other, I hereby pronounce them man and wife.

(SUSAN *and* THE GROOM *embrace, as camera on truck is moved up for close-up*)

KAMMERLING. Cut! One bell!

(*One bell sounds. Hammering and sawing instantly spring up all over the place again*)

LIGHT MAN. Spike! That horse ran sixth.

BISHOP. God damn it! I knew that would happen.

GEORGE. There you are, Mr. Glogauer—embrace, fade-out, the end.

GLOGAUER. I see, I see. Wait a minute—I don't understand. You said what?

GEORGE. Embrace, fade-out, the end.

GLOGAUER. End? You mean you take this scene last. But it's not really the end.

GEORGE. Sure it is. (*To* KAMMERLING *and the others*) Isn't it?

KAMMERLING. Certainly it's the end.

GLOGAUER. But how can it be? What about the backstage scene?

KAMMERLING. What?

GLOGAUER (*slightly frenzied*). On the opening night! Where her mother is dying, and she has to act anyhow!

GEORGE. That wasn't in it, Mr. Glogauer.

KAMMERLING. Why, no.

GLOGAUER. Wasn't in it! I had twelve playwrights working on that.

GEORGE. But it wasn't in it.

GLOGAUER (*dangerously calm*). This is a picture about a little country girl?

GEORGE. Yes, sir.

GLOGAUER. Who gets a job in a Broadway cabaret?

GEORGE. There isn't any Broadway cabaret.

GLOGAUER. No Broadway cabaret?

GEORGE. She doesn't come to New York in this.

GLOGAUER. Doesn't come—you mean the cabaret owner doesn't make her go out with this bootlegger?

GEORGE. Why, no, Mr. Glogauer.

GLOGAUER. Well, what happens to her? What *does* she do?

GEORGE. Why, this rich woman stops off at the farm-house and she takes her to Florida and dresses her all up.

GLOGAUER. And there is no backstage scene? Any place?

GEORGE. No. She goes out swimming and gets too far out and then Cyril Fonsdale—

GLOGAUER. Let me see that script, please.

GEORGE. It's all there, Mr. Glogauer. (GLOGAUER *looks through the script*) See? There's where she goes swimming.

GLOGAUER (*closing the script with a bang*). Do you know what you have done, Doctor Lewis? You have made the wrong picture!

(*Consternation, of course*)

GEORGE. Huh?

KAMMERLING. What is that?

GLOGAUER. That is all you have done! Made the wrong picture!

GEORGE. But—but—

JERRY. Are you sure, Mr. Glogauer?

GLOGAUER (*looking at the thing in his hand*) Where did you get such a script?

GEORGE. Why, it's the one you gave me.

GLOGAUER. I never gave you such a script. She goes swimming! Swimming! Do you know who made this picture? Biograph, in 1910! Florence Lawrence, and Maurice Costello—and even then it was no good!

JERRY. But look, Mr. Glogauer—

GLOGAUER. Sixty thousand dollars I paid for a scenario, and where is it? In swimming!

GEORGE. Well, everybody was here while we were making it.

GLOGAUER. Everybody was here! Where were their minds? Kammerling! Kammerling!

KAMMERLING. It is not my fault. Dr. Lewis gave us the script.

GLOGAUER. I had to bring you all the way from Germany for this! Miss Newton! You held the script in your hands! Where were your eyes?

MISS NEWTON. I got it from Dr. Lewis—right in his office. I'm sure I couldn't—

GLOGAUER. So, Doctor! On Wednesday night we open and

we have *got* to open! And after that it goes to four hundred exhibitors and we got signed contracts! So tell me what to do, please!

GEORGE. Well, couldn't we release it as a super-special?

GLOGAUER. Never in my life have I known such a thing! After this I make a ruling—every scenario we produce, somebody has got to read it!

JERRY. Yes, Mr. Glogauer.

GLOGAUER. You know what this does to *you*, Miss Walker! You are through! Swimming! This kills your career! And you know who you got to thank for it? Dr. Lewis! (SUSAN *meets the situation by bursting into tears*) A fine supervisor! The business is in the hands of incompetents, he says! So what do I do? I give him everything the way he wants it—his own star—his own staff—(*It is a new thought. He fixes* MAY *and* JERRY *with a malignant eye*) Oh, yes. And where were *you people* while all this was going on?

JERRY. Mr. Glogauer, I was on the cost end. I didn't have anything to do with the script. Dr. Lewis was the—

GLOGAUER. But Miss Daniels was here—all the time! Right with Dr. Lewis! What about *that*?

MAY (*not frightened*). Yes. I was here.

GLOGAUER. Well! Where was your mind?

MAY. To tell you the truth, Mr. Glogauer, I thought it was just another Super-Jewel.

GLOGAUER. Oh, you did?

MAY. I couldn't see any difference.

GLOGAUER. You couldn't, huh?

MAY. And while we're on the subject, Mr. Glogauer, just why is it all Dr. Lewis's fault?

GLOGAUER. Why is it his fault? Who did this thing? Who else is to blame?

MAY. Well, if I'm not too inquisitive, what do *you* do with yourself all the time? Play marbles?

GLOGAUER. What's that?

MAY. Where were *you* while all this was going on? Out to lunch?

GLOGAUER (*drawing himself up with dignity*). I go to my office. That will be all. (*About to say something else, but changes his mind*) I go to my office. (*Notices the script still in his hand*) Mr. Supervisor, I make you a present.

GEORGE (*Weakly, as he takes it*). Thank you.

GLOGAUER (*to the company*). And will you all please understand that nothing about this is to get out of the studio. That is official. Come, Hyland! Seventeen years and this is the worst thing that has ever happened to me!

JERRY (*following him*). Mr. Glogauer, if I'd been on the set this never would have happened. I didn't have anything to do with the script—

(*They are gone*)

KAMMERLING (*after a moment's embarrassed pause*). That is all for today. You will be notified.

BISHOP. Well—the wrong picture and the wrong horse!

(*A babble of talk springs up as everyone starts to go.* SUSAN *has a fresh outburst of tears*)

GEORGE. Susan, don't cry like that.

SUSAN (*through sobs*). You heard what Mr. Glogauer said —my career is ruined. I'm—through.

MRS. WALKER. Now, darling, you mustn't take on that way. Everything'll turn out all right.

GEORGE. But, Susan, it wasn't my fault. I didn't know it was the wrong picture.

(*All are now gone except* MAY *and* KAMMERLING)

KAMMERLING. It is too bad, Miss Daniels.

MAY. Yah. Isn't it?

KAMMERLING. But after all it is the movie business. It is just the same in Germany.

MAY. It is, huh?

KAMMERLING. Even worse. Oh, it is terrible over there. I think I go back.

(*He leaves.* JERRY *returns, at white heat*)

JERRY. Well, you fixed everything fine, didn't you? On top of everything else you had to go and get smart!

MAY. It was time somebody got smart, Jerry.

JERRY. Well, you *did* it! And maybe you think Glogauer isn't sore!

MAY. Well, you don't have to worry, do you, Jerry?

JERRY. What?

MAY (*very calmly*). You don't have to worry. You crawled out from under. You gave as pretty an exhibition as *I've* ever seen.

JERRY. What do you mean?

MAY. Oh, nothing. Just the way you stood up for George.

JERRY. Well, somebody's got to keep his feet on the ground around here!

MAY (*so quietly*). Yours are all right—aren't they, Jerry? Yah. Right deep in the soil of California!

JERRY. I was trying to fix things up—that's what I was trying to do.

MAY. No, Jerry. No. It's been coming on you ever since you got out here, and now it's here. You've gone Hollywood, Jerry. And as far as I'm concerned, that's that.

(*It has been said very quietly, but its very quietness gives it a definiteness.* JERRY *looks at her; senses that she means it. He turns on his heel and goes*)

(MAY *is alone for a moment. Then, in the offing, a man's voice is heard, singing, "I wanna be loved by you-ou-ou, and nobody else but you,—I wanna be kissed by you, a-lone." At the end of the song the singer comes into sight. It is the* BISHOP. *He disappears again*)

(GEORGE *comes back.*)

GEORGE. She wouldn't talk to me, May! Shut the door right in my face and wouldn't talk to me!

MAY (*abstracted*). What?

GEORGE. She just keeps on crying and won't even talk to me.

MAY. That's all right. Everything is all right. It is for me, anyhow. Just fine and dandy.

GEORGE. Fine and dandy?

MAY. Just swell.

GEORGE. Susan ought to know I didn't do it on purpose. I tried to tell her. Look, May, do you think the picture's so bad?

MAY. Bad as what, George?

GEORGE. Bad as he thinks it is?

MAY. Well, I think it's got a good chance.

GEORGE. Chance of what, May?

MAY. Of being as bad as he thinks it is.

GEORGE. Oh!

MAY. By the way, George—just to keep the record straight—how'd you come to *make* the wrong picture. Or don't you know?

GEORGE. Well, I've been trying to think. You know that thing in my office where we keep the new scenarios—well, if you're in a hurry it looks exactly like the waste-basket—and so I reached into it, only it was the waste-basket—

MAY. And thus endeth the first lesson.

GEORGE. But look, if I go to him and tell him how it happened—

MISS CHASEN (*in the distance*). Paging Dr. Lewis! Miss Daniels!

MAY. Ah, here we are! Right in here. I thought it was taking a long time. (MISS CHASEN *enters*) You're late.

MISS CHASEN (*giving her two envelopes*). Executive office! No answer! (*Turns to go*)

MAY. Wait a minute. Who else have you got? (*Examining remaining envelopes*) Kammerling, Weisskopf, Meterstein—Ah, yes. (MISS CHASEN *goes*) (MAY *turns back to* GEORGE.) Do you want yours?

GEORGE. Do you mean we're—fired, May?

MAY. Good and fired!

GEORGE (*in a daze, opening his letter*) Yah.

MAY (*looking at hers*). Me too. Well, George—we've got a solid gold dinner set, anyway. A hundred and six pieces, and every piece marked with your initials in diamonds. That's not bad for two months' work. (TWO PAGES *enter and carry off the dinner set*) No, George—you *haven't* got a solid gold dinner set.

Curtain

SCENE II

(*It is the Pullman car again, and, by a strange coincidence, the same car on which* MAY *and her companions went West. But it is* MAY *alone who is traveling back East—at all events, she is seated alone when we first behold the car. The* PORTER *enters—and, since it is the same car, it is also the same porter. He is right there with the same question, too*)

PORTER. You ready to have your berth made up?

MAY. No, thanks.

PORTER. I been meaning to ask you, Miss Daniels—how's come those two gentlemen ain't going back?

MAY. Well, that's a long story.

PORTER. Yes, ma'am.

MAY. But I wouldn't be surprised if at least one of them was with you pretty soon.

(*The train whistle blows*)

PORTER. We makes a two-minute stop here. Anything you want?

MAY. No, thanks. Where are we?

PORTER. We makes a stop at Needle's Point. That's where they got that sanitarium.

MAY. Look—is there a news stand?

PORTER. Yes, ma'am.

MAY. See if you can get hold of Thursday's Los Angeles papers, will you?

PORTER. Yes, ma'am. (*Starts off*)

MAY (*calls after him*). They've got to be Thursday's or I don't want 'em.

(MAY *is left alone. There is a single blast of the whistle; the lights no longer fly past outside the window,* MAY *tries to look out. Then she settles herself again; takes up a book; tries to read; throws it down*)

(*The* PORTER *re-enters with luggage*)

PORTER. Right this way, sir. You need any help? Just a gentleman from the sanitarium.

(LAWRENCE VAIL *enters. Instantly, of course, he recognizes* MAY)

MAY. Why, Mr. Vail!

VAIL. Hello, Miss Daniels.

MAY. So you're the gentleman from the sanitarium?

VAIL. That's right. Well, this is a good deal of a surprise!

MAY. Well—please sit down.

VAIL. Thanks. Well!

MAY. You're certainly the last person I—I hadn't heard you were ill. Nothing serious, I hope?

VAIL (*shakes his head*). Just a kind of breakdown. Underwork.

MAY. I can't quite picture that reception room without you.

VAIL. Then I heard about this place—sanitarium here. Sounded pretty good, so I came out. Fellow named Jenkins runs it. Playwright. Seems he came out here under contract, but he couldn't stand the gaff. Went mad in the eighth month. So he started this place. Doesn't take anything but playwrights.

MAY. Good, is it?

VAIL. Great. First three days they put you in a room without a chair in it. Then they have a big art gallery—life-sized portraits of all the studio executives. You see, for an hour every day you go in there and say whatever you want to any picture.

MAY (*nods*). I see.

PORTER (*passing through*). I'll get your papers right now.

VAIL. And now what's all this about? Going home on a visit?

MAY. Well—going home.

VAIL. All washed up?

MAY. Scrubbed.

VAIL. Really? I'm kind of surprised. I never quite got the hang of what you people did out there, but I had the idea you were in pretty solid. Something happened?

MAY (*taking a moment*). Did you ever meet Dr. Lewis?

VAIL. I had quite a talk with Dr. Lewis.

MAY. Well, Dr. Lewis did something that no one had ever done before. He reminded Mr. Glogauer about turning the Vitaphone down. That made him supervisor.

VAIL. Only supervisor?

MAY. And there was also Miss Susan Walker. Miss Walker is a young woman who has a chance of becoming the world's worst actress. I should say a very good chance. She's young yet—has plenty of time.

VAIL. I see.

MAY. With that to start with, the Doctor cinched things by working from the wrong scenario. Some little thing from 1910. The picture opened Wednesday. And how is *your* uncle, Mr. Vail?

VAIL. My recollection of the 1910 pictures is that they weren't so bad.

MAY. They didn't have the Doctor in those days. Most of it you can't see because the Doctor forgot to tell them to turn the lights on; Miss Walker has a set of gestures

that would do credit to a travelling derrick—and did you ever happen to hear about the Doctor's bright particular weakness?

VAIL. There's something else?

MAY. It's called Indian nuts. (*A glance around*) There must be one around here somewhere. Anyhow, he eats them. With sound. He kept cracking them right through the picture, and they recorded swell.

VAIL. That, I take it, decided you?

MAY. That, and—other things.

VAIL. Funny—I should think there would be a great field out there for a man who could turn out the wrong picture.

MAY. Yes, if he could do it regularly. But sooner or later Dr. Lewis would make the right one.

VAIL. Not the Doctor.

MAY. Well, maybe you're right.

PORTER (*re-entering with newspapers and a pillow*). Here your papers, Miss Daniels.

MAY (*taking them*). Thanks.

PORTER (*to* VAIL). I brought you a pillow.

VAIL. Thank you. (PORTER *goes*)

MAY (*scanning the date line*). Yah. These have probably got the notices.

VAIL (*reaching for one*). Oh, you mean the picture?

MAY. It wouldn't surprise me. (THEY *each open a paper.* MAY *is in no hurry*)

VAIL. You're a pretty brave girl, actually sending out for these.

MAY. Well, I might as well know the worst.

VAIL (*finding the place*) Here we are, I guess. "Gingham and Orchids"—that the name of it?

MAY. That's it.

VAIL (*scanning the headlines as he folds the paper*). An all-talking, all-singing—

MAY. All-lousy picture.

(*She takes the paper,* VAIL *meanwhile opening the other one*)

VAIL (*as* MAY *reads*). I guess that must be what they mean by a hundred per cent. (MAY's *eyes slide quickly down the column, then she looks blankly up at* VAIL) What is it? (MAY *hands the paper over to him, indicating the spot.* VAIL *reads*) "Never in the history of Hollywood has so tumultuous an ovation been accorded to any picture—"

MAY (*not quite able to speak; indicates a spot further on in the review*) No. Down there.

VAIL (*reads*). "Herman Glogauer's 'Gingham and Orchids' is a welcome relief from the avalanche of backstage pictures. It marks a turning point in the motion picture industry—a return to the sweet simplicity and tender wistfulness of yesteryear."

MAY. It *does* say that?

VAIL. Indeed it does.

MAY (*as if in a daze, takes the paper from* VAIL *and reads further*). "A new star twinkled across the cinema heavens last night and the audience took her at once to its heart. Here at last is an actress who is not afraid to appear awkward and ungraceful." That word is "afraid," isn't it?

VAIL. That's right.

MAY. "In the scene on the church steps, where she waved to the onlookers below, her hands revealed a positively Duse-like quality." I'll tell you about that some day.

VAIL. I'll be there.

MAY (*still reading*). "And here is one wedding, by the way, that sets a new mark for originality and freshness. It does not use pigeons." Remind me about that one, too.

VAIL. I will.

MAY (*reads*). "Then too, the lighting of the picture is superb. Dr. Lewis has wisely seen the value of leaving

the climaxes to the imagination of the audience. In the big scenes almost nothing was visible." (*She indicates the other paper*) I'm afraid I haven't got strength enough to reach for that one.

VAIL. I beg your pardon. (*He changes papers with her*) The whole thing couldn't be a typographical error, could it?

MAY (*looks the new paper quickly over, then looks up at* VAIL *with a weak smile*). I want you to settle yourself for this.

VAIL. I'm ready.

MAY. Put the pillow right back of you.

VAIL. All right. (*Does so*)

MAY. "In the opening sequences the audience was puzzled by a constant knocking, and it seemed to many of us that something might be wrong with the sound apparatus. Then suddenly we realized that what was being done was what Eugene O'Neill did with the constant beating of the tom-tom in 'The Emperor Jones.' It was the beat of the hail on the roof." (*She looks up at* VAIL, *who nods*) "It is another of the masterly touches brought to the picture by that new genius of the films, Dr. George Lewis." (*She lowers the paper, then, as if she cannot quite believe it, raises it and reads again*) "That new genius of the films, Dr. George Lewis." (*For a moment,* MAY *and* VAIL *merely look at each other. Then* VAIL *leans back, crosses his legs, sighs*)

VAIL. I hear the boll weevil is getting into the cotton-crop again.

(*The* PORTER *returns*)

PORTER. Here's a telegram for you, Miss Daniels. Caught us right here at Needle's Point.

MAY. Oh, thanks. (*The* PORTER *goes*) My guess is that this is from that new genius of the films.

VAIL. I wouldn't wonder.

MAY. Oh, yes. (*Reads*) "The picture is colossal. It has put

the movies back where they were ten years ago. I am the Wonder Man of the Talkies. They keep coming at me to decide things. Please take next train back—Jerry is gone and I am all alone here. They have made me an Elk and Susan is an Eastern Star. Please take next train back—I need you. Where is Jerry? I am also a Shriner."

VAIL. Well, what are you going to do about that?

MAY (*looking at the telegram*). "Jerry is gone and I am all alone here." (*Letting the telegram slowly fall*) Well, it looks as if I'm going back.

VAIL. I think you have to.

MAY. Because if George is alone out there— (*She breaks off*) And then there's another thing. As long as George owns Hollywood now, there are two or three reforms that I'd like to put into effect. Do you know what I'm going to do?

VAIL. What?

MAY. I'm going to get all those page boys together and take their signs away from them—then nobody will know where anybody is. I'm going to pack up the Schlepkins and send 'em back to Brooklyn, and then I'm going to bring their mother out *here*. I'm going to take Miss Leighton out of that reception room—

VAIL. Put cushions on those chairs—

MAY. And make her ask for an appointment to get back in!

VAIL. Great!

MAY. And when I get that done, I'm going out to Mr. Glogauer's house, put the illuminated dome where the bathroom is, and then I'm going to take the bathroom and drop it into the Pacific Ocean. . . .

The curtain is down

SCENE III

(*It is again Mr. Glogauer's reception room, but altered, as you see at first glance, in one vital particular. Over every door, and the room is fairly fringed with doors, there is a sizeable picture of* DR. GEORGE LEWIS. *And that isn't all. The thoughtful* GLOGAUER *has so arranged matters that these pictures light up whenever the corresponding door is opened—every last one of them When there is plenty of dashing in and out—and that is one of the things that there is an abundance of in* MR. GLOGAUER'S *place of business—you see a* GEORGE *whose beaming countenance is being constantly ringed with incandescents.*

It is a busy place at the moment. Half a dozen people are talking at once, all pressing the great DR. LEWIS *about this matter or that. A man at an easel is sketching the* DOCTOR'S *portrait. There are two or three newspapermen.* MISS NEWTON *is there with her eternal scripts. There is a man who wants an indorsement for somebody's neckties, and still another man who seems, believe it or not, to be taking down the* DOCTOR'S *autobiography. A* PAGE *stands waiting with a gold box filled with Indian nuts, and occasionally the* DOCTOR *dips a hand in. Presiding over the whole thing is the* DOCTOR'S *able secretary, who stands with watch in hand and arm upraised, as though about to bring everything to halt at any second.*

As for the DOCTOR, *he is pacing busily up and down, and handling all comers.*)

GEORGE. So far as my plans for Mr. Glogauer are concerned, I can only say that the coming year will be a Glogauer year. And by the time all of our plans have been carried into effect, why, the legitimate stage had better look to its laurels.

(METERSTEIN *dashes in*)

METERSTEIN. They're waiting for you on No. 8, Dr. Lewis!

SECRETARY. Dr. Lewis on No. 8 at three-twenty.

METERSTEIN. Right! (*Dashes out again*)

PAINTER. Dr. Lewis, will you turn your head just a little this way?

BIOGRAPHER. Dr. Lewis, we were up to Chapter 7. September, 1910.

GEORGE. Oh, yes. My biography. I was still living in Medallion then. I was but a boy, and one day an idea came to me. I decided to be an usher.

THE MAN. Dr. Lewis, your indorsement will have a hundred thousand men wearing Non-Wrinkable Ties inside of three months.

REPORTER. Dr. Lewis, can I have the rest of that statement?

SECRETARY (*watch in hand*). One minute more, Doctor!

MISS NEWTON. Dr. Lewis, I have to have a decision on these scenarios.

PAINTER. Dr. Lewis, please!

REPORTER. Doctor, it's getting late.

WEISSKOPF (*dashing in and out*). O.K. on those contracts, Doctor!

GEORGE. O.K.

REPORTER. How about a statement from Miss Walker?

GEORGE. Miss Walker is making a personal appearance in San Francisco. She'll be here pretty soon.

SECRETARY. Time! Time's up!

(MISS NEWTON *goes out as* MISS LEIGHTON *comes in*)

MISS LEIGHTON. Dr. Lewis, the Knights of Columbus are downstairs.

SECRETARY. Your time is up, gentlemen! Sorry!

REPORTER. Well, can we see him again later?

PAINTER. I'm only half finished here.

TIE MAN. If I could have just one minute—

SECRETARY (*shepherding them out*). The Doctor has no

free time this month. All requests must be submitted in writing.

MISS LEIGHTON. What about the Knights of Columbus, Dr. Lewis? Shall I tell them to come up?

GEORGE. Tell them I'll join later.

MISS LEIGHTON. Yes, sir. (*Goes*)

GEORGE. Now, where were we?

BIOGRAPHER. You decided to be an usher.

GEORGE. Oh, yes. I became an usher and pretty soon I was put in charge of the last two rows of the mezzanine.

(SUSAN *enters*)

GEORGE. Hello, darling! (*Dismissing the others*) All right, everybody!

SECRETARY. You are due on No. 8 in two minutes, Doctor.

GEORGE. All right.

SECRETARY. The Doctor will start Chapter 8 on Tuesday at twelve-fifteen.

(*They all go out*—GEORGE *and* SUSAN *are alone*)

GEORGE. How was it, Susan?

SUSAN. Oh, wonderful, George! Thousands of people, and arc lights, and my name on top of everything! Oh, it was wonderful, George!

GEORGE. It's been wonderful here, too. I'm up to Chapter 8 in my biography, and there's a man painting my portrait, and—Oh, what do you think? I've got a surprise for you, Susan.

SUSAN. George, what is it? Tell me quick!

GEORGE. Three guesses.

SUSAN. A swimming pool?

GEORGE. No.

SUSAN. Two swimming pools?

GEORGE. It's an aeroplane.

SUSAN. George!

GEORGE. The man gave it to me for nothing. All I had to do was buy a few aeroplanes for Mr. Glogauer.

SUSAN. That's wonderful, George! Just what we needed!

GEORGE. First I was only going to buy a couple, but the man kept talking to me, and it worked out that if I bought a few more I'd get one free.

SUSAN. George, you're so clever! You couldn't have given me a nicer surprise! Isn't everything wonderful, George?

GEORGE. Yes, only I wish May and Jerry would get here. They always know what to do in case things come up.

SUSAN. George, you mustn't worry about it. They got your telegrams.

GEORGE. Yes, but you see, Susan, we've always been together. This is the first time in years I haven't been together, and—did you see my pictures, Susan? They light up! (*He points to one of them, and at that moment it* does *light up*) See?

(*Through the door comes a pretty annoyed* GLOGAUER, *followed by* MISS CHASEN)

GLOGAUER. Dr. Lewis, I want to talk to you. How do you do, Miss Walker? Dr. Lewis, did you order four hundred and sixty aeroplanes?

GEORGE. How's that?

GLOGAUER. Four hundred and sixty aeroplanes have just arrived in front of the studio. They say you ordered them.

GEORGE (*uneasily*). Well, don't you believe in aviation, Mr. Glogauer?

GLOGAUER. The question is, Dr. Lewis: why did you buy four hundred and sixty aeroplanes?

(*Enter* MISS LEIGHTON)

MISS LEIGHTON. Mr. Glogauer! Another hundred aeroplanes just arrived and there's more coming every minute!

GLOGAUER. WHAT?

MISS LEIGHTON. They're arriving in groups of fifty, Mr. Glogauer.

GLOGAUER. What is this, Doctor! Don't tell me you bought *more* than four hundred and sixty aeroplanes!

MISS LEIGHTON. The man from the aeroplane company says the order calls for two thousand!

GLOGAUER. Two thousand!

MISS LEIGHTON. That's what he said!

GLOGAUER. Is this *true,* Doctor? Can such a thing be possible?

GEORGE. Well, the man from the aeroplane company—

GLOGAUER. Two thousand! Two thousand aeroplanes! Where's Meterstein—Weisskopf!

MISS CHASEN. Mr. Weisskopf! Mr. Meterstein!

GLOGAUER. Two thousand aeroplanes! Seventeen years and never in my life— (*He storms out, followed by the others*)

MISS LEIGHTON. I told them you weren't in and that you couldn't see anybody.

SUSAN. George, is anything the matter? Shouldn't you have bought the aeroplanes?

GEORGE (*bringing up the rear of the procession*). But Mr. Glogauer, I don't see what you're so angry about! All I did was buy a few aeroplanes!

(*All are gone. A pause; then* MAY *enters. She at once becomes conscious of the pictures of* GEORGE; *looks at the lighted picture over the door through which she has entered. Closes the door, then opens and closes it again.* MISS LEIGHTON *returns*)

MISS LEIGHTON. Hello, Miss Daniels.

MAY. Hello, Miss Leighton.

MISS LEIGHTON. Have you been away?

MAY (*indicating the pictures*). I see you've got some new decorations.

MISS LEIGHTON. How's that?

MAY (*trying another door*). Is that all they do? No fireworks?

MISS LEIGHTON. Aren't they lovely? Mr. Glogauer had them put up all over the building the day after the picture

opened. When Dr. Lewis came into the studio, everything lit up.

MAY. Mr. Glogauer, too?

MISS LEIGHTON. How's that?

MAY (*a change of manner*). Miss Leighton—is Mr. Hyland around?

MISS LEIGHTON. Mr. Hyland? Oh, Mr. Hyland isn't with us any more.

MAY. He isn't? Where is he?

MISS LEIGHTON. I don't know, Miss Daniels. I only know he isn't with the company. I think he went back East.

MAY. Went back East? When did he leave, Miss Leighton?

MISS LEIGHTON. Well, I really don't know, Miss Daniels—

MISS CHASEN (*entering*). Miss Leighton, Mr. Glogauer wants his coffee. He's going crazy.

MISS LEIGHTON. But he's had it twice this morning.

MISS CHASEN. He wants it over again—he's raving.

MISS LEIGHTON. Oh, dear. That's the second time this week he's raved. (*She departs with* MISS CHASEN. *Immediately* GEORGE *sticks his head in; then, seeing* MAY, *literally falls on her neck*)

GEORGE. May!

MAY. Well, if it isn't Dr. Lewis!

GEORGE. Gosh, but I'm glad to see you, May! Did you—did you get my telegrams! I've been wiring you and wiring you!

MAY. Where's Jerry, George?

GEORGE. Why—why, I don't know. Isn't he with *you*, May? —he went to find *you*.

MAY. Went where? When?

GEORGE. Why—why, right after you did. He had a big fight with Mr. Glogauer—he told him all kinds of things—and then he went looking for you, but you were gone already.

MAY. Wait a minute, George. You mean Jerry got fired?

GEORGE (*nods*). He didn't even get a letter.

MAY. Well, where is he now, George? Where did he go? Haven't you heard from him?

GEORGE. I don't know. Look, May, something terrible has happened. I bought a lot of aeroplanes—

MAY. George, where would Jerry be likely to go to? What did he say when he left here?

GEORGE. He didn't say anything, May. He just said he was going to find you and nothing else mattered.

MAY (*a smile*). Oh, he didn't say anything, eh? Just that?

GEORGE. He'll come back, May—he'll come back when he knows you're here. But May, what am I going to do about the aeroplanes? (*He breaks off as* JERRY *enters.* MAY *and* JERRY *stand looking at each other*) Hello, Jerry! Why—here's Jerry now, May!

JERRY. May, you've got to listen to me. You were right. I knew you were right the minute I walked off that set. And I went straight up to Glogauer and told him so.

GEORGE. I told her, Jerry, I told her all about it.

JERRY. And so the answer is—here I am.

GEORGE. Here he is, May. We're all together again.

JERRY. Are we together, May? What about it, May? Are we together?

MAY (*landing into him*). What the hell do you mean by leaving George alone here?

JERRY. Well, I wasn't going to stay here without you!

MAY. Then why didn't you come after me?

JERRY. I did!

MAY. All right, then!

GEORGE. Yes, sir, we're all together again.

(*Suddenly* MAY *turns away from them—averts her face*)

JERRY. What is it, kid—what's the matter?

GEORGE. Why, May!

MAY (*coming out of it*). I'm all right, gentlemen. Let a lady have her moment, for God's sake. It's just that we're together again, I guess. It's seemed so long.

JERRY. May, I can't ever forgive myself—

MAY. Don't, Jerry—you make me feel like a second act climax. Well, from now on it's the Army with Banners, no matter what happens! George is the biggest man in Hollywood and we're riding the high wave!

GEORGE. No, we aren't, May.

MAY. What?

GEORGE. Mr. Glogauer is awful mad. I bought two thousand aeroplanes.

JERRY. You did what?

GEORGE. I bought two thousand aeroplanes.

MAY. What for?

GEORGE. I don't know. The man must have been a salesman.

MAY. Let me get this straight—you bought two thousand aeroplanes?

GEORGE. That's right.

MAY. For Mr. Glogauer?

GEORGE (*nods*). I got one free.

JERRY. What! In God's name, George, what did you do it for?

GEORGE. Can't we do something with them? There ought to be some way to use two thousand aeroplanes!

MAY. Sure—make applesauce!

JERRY. Well, you can't lick that! It's all over but the shouting, May. For God's sake, George, how could you do such a thing?

MAY. Well, there you are, Jerry, and what are you going to do about it?

JERRY. Why did you do it, George?

GEORGE. Well, if somebody offered you an aeroplane—

(*And back comes* MR. GLOGAUER, *followed by* SUSAN *and about half the studio force*)

GLOGAUER (*who seems to be beaming*). Well, Doctor, we have done it again! Isn't it wonderful?

SUSAN. George!

GEORGE. Huh?

GLOGAUER. We've done it again! What a man you are, Doctor—what a man you are!

JERRY. What is this?

GLOGAUER. Miss Daniels! Mr. Hyland! Did you hear what the Doctor did? He went out and bought two thousand aeroplanes! Wasn't that wonderful?

MAY (*trying to get her bearings*). Wonderful!

JERRY. Wonderful!

GLOGAUER. The trend is changing, Miss Daniels—they just been telephoning me! Everybody wants to make aeroplane pictures, but they can't make 'em because the Doctor bought up all the aeroplanes! Every company is phoning me—offering me any amount!

GEORGE. Yes, I thought they would.

SUSAN. Isn't it wonderful?

GLOGAUER. So, Doctor, you saw the trend coming! You saw the trend!

MAY. Saw it? He *is* the trend!

JERRY. You don't realize the kind of man you've got here!

GLOGAUER. Yes, I do! Doctor—this is the way you work—always you make believe you are doing the wrong thing—and *then*! Doctor, I bow to you!

SUSAN. Oh, George!

MAY. George, you don't need us. You just go ahead and be yourself.

GEORGE. Mr. Glogauer, there's something we've got to take up.

GLOGAUER (*anxiously*). What?

GEORGE (*pointing to the door through which* GLOGAUER *has just entered*). One of my pictures doesn't light up!

GLOGAUER (*greatly upset*). What! Meterstein! Weisskopf! (METERSTEIN *and* WEISSKOPF *hurry off, to rectify the error*) Doctor, you're not angry! Tell me you're not angry!

MISS LEIGHTON (*entering*). Mr. Glogauer—

GLOGAUER. Yes?

MISS LEIGHTON. Do you know the studio's being torn down?

GLOGAUER. What?

MISS LEIGHTON. There's a lot of workmen downstairs. They have orders to tear down the studio!

GLOGAUER. Tear down the studio!

MISS LEIGHTON. Yes, sir!

GLOGAUER (*looks slowly to* GEORGE *to see if he is the man who gave the order.* GEORGE *wears a broad grin of perfect confidence. He nods.* GLOGAUER *turns back to* MISS LEIGHTON). Tell 'em to go ahead! Tell 'em to go ahead! I don't know what is it, but it'll turn out all right!

(METERSTEIN *and* WEISSKOPF *dash in, indicating the relit picture*)

METERSTEIN. O.K. now, Mr. Glogauer!

GEORGE. We're putting up a bigger one, Mr. Glogauer.

JERRY. Say, that's a good idea!

GLOGAUER. Wonderful! There's another trend coming, eh, Doctor?

GEORGE. Sure, sure!

SUSAN. Isn't he wonderful, May?

MISS LEIGHTON (*at 'phone*). Construction department, please.

The curtain is down.

MERRILY WE ROLL ALONG

Merrily We Roll Along was produced by Sam H. Harris at the Music Box Theatre, New York, on Saturday night, September 29th, 1934, with the following cast:

JULIA GLENN	MARY PHILIPS
DAVID HASKELL	GILBERT SQUAREY
IVY CARROLL	MURIAL WILLIAMS
ROSAMOND OGDEN	MARY HOWES
VAL BURNETT	JACK EDWARDS
ALBERT OGDEN	GRANT MILLS
SAM FRANKL	HERBERT STEINER
LADY PATRICIA DORSON	MARY HEBERDEN
LAURA NASH	JACQUELINE LOGAN
RICHARD NILES	KENNETH MACKENNA
EVERETT NASH	WILFRID SEAGRAM
ALTHEA ROYCE	JESSIE ROYCE LANDIS
CYRUS WINTHROP	CHARLES HALTON
A BUTLER	EDWARD LOUD
A MAID	PEGGY BANCROFT
A MAN	JOHN COSBY
A WOMAN	OTIS SCHAEFER
THE WAITER	BURTON MALLORY
THE HEADWAITER	GEORGE JACKSON
TWO VERY YOUNG GIRLS	PATRICIA PALMER BETTY REYNOLDS
P. J. MORTON	GEORGE ALISON
JONATHAN CRALE	WALTER ABEL
ITO	BIACOUREN YOSHIWARA
GEORGE NILES	HAROLD MOFFET
MOLLY	BEATRICE BLINN

COURT ATTENDANTS	LEO KENNEDY BURTON MALLORY
WOMEN COMING FROM THE TRIAL	ELSA RYAN JENNY MAC ELIZABETH KENNEDY
REPORTERS	JOHN KENNEDY WILLIAM MACFADDEN
MRS. MURNEY	LESLIE BINGHAM
HELEN	ADRIENNE MARDEN
RICHARDSON	CHARLES ENGEL
MR. MURNEY	GRANVILLE BATES
THE HEAD PHOTOGRAPHER	LOUIS CRUGER
WERTHEIMER	GEORGE PARSONS
A CAPTAIN OF WAITERS	JAMES SEELEY
A BELLBOY	EDWIN MILLS
ALTHEA ROYCE'S MAID	MARTHA BROWN
HARRY NIXON	MALCOLM DUNCAN
SID KRAMER	GEORGE MCKAY
MRS. RILEY	CECELIA LOFTUS
JANET NEWCOMBE	CHOUTEAU DYER
A FEW IMPORTANT GUESTS	GERALDINE WALL OTIS SCHAEFER PEGGY BANCROFT PATRICIA ALLEN HENRY EPHRON
A POLICEMAN	LEO KENNEDY
A MAN WITH A DOG	JAMES SEELEY
TWO BOYS	EDWIN MILLS IRVING SCHNEIDER
TWO GIRLS	CONNIE MADISON DORIS EATON

PATRONS OF LE COQ D'OR, COURTROOM CROWD, PARTY GUESTS
WAITERS, SOLDIERS, COLLEGE STUDENTS.

Stage Manager JOHN KENNEDY
Assistant Stage Manager WILLIAM MACFADDEN

The action of the play moves backward. Each scene takes place at an earlier time than the scene preceding.

SCENES

ACT ONE

Scene I. The Home of Richard Niles, Long Island. 1934.
Scene II. Restaurant Le Coq D'Or. 1927.
Scene III. Richard Niles's Apartment. 1926.

ACT TWO

Scene I. Jonathan Crale's Studio. 1925.
Scene II. A Court-house Corridor. 1924.
Scene III. Althea Royce's Apartment. 1923.

ACT THREE

Scene I. Living Room of the Murneys. 1922.
Scene II. Madison Square Park. 1918.
Scene III. A College Chapel. 1916.

ACT ONE

SCENE I

The country house of Richard Niles—Sands Point, Long Island, an evening in September, 1934. *The room we see is oval in shape and is fringed with French windows, which look out upon the Sound itself. It is night, but there is a glimpse of tall white pillars through the windows.*

It is the kind of room you have often seen as a full-page illustration in Town and Country, *over a caption reading: "This unusual décor is a glimpse of the drawing room in the Long Island home of . . ."*

There are some ten or twelve people present, the men in tails, the women in evening dress. There is a game of bridge, a game of backgammon. A dark-haired young MAN *is at the piano, playing, with a good deal of skill, one of the popular tunes of the day. Leaning across the piano, listening with a professional interest, is a handsome, flaxen-haired* LAD *of about twenty-three or four.* A LADY *with a highball in her hand sits a little apart, surveying the scene with a certain detachment. There is a relaxed air about all of these people—it is merely an informal Sunday evening on Long Island.*

For a moment the music plays, the flaxen-haired young man hums a little, the bridge and backgammon games go on. Through the music, you catch the routine chatter at the tables: "Double." . . . "I'll take it." . . . "Spade." . . . "Two hearts." . . . "Pass." . . . "Pass." . . . "Two spades." . . . "Pass." . . . "Pass." . . . "Pass."

After a bit of this, DAVID HASKELL *comes in through the French windows. He is an ardent young man of about twenty-six, with a rather sensitive face. He goes to the liquor table, mixes a drink, and then notices the lady with the highball.* JULIA GLENN *is a woman close to forty. She is not unpretty, but on her face are the marks of years and years of quiet and steady drinking—eight, ten hours a day. In contrast to the modish evening clothes of the other women,* JULIA *wears something from about three years ago, and which wasn't quite right then. Withal, there is about her definitely an air. Here is a person.*

DAVID *raises his glass to her in grave salute.*

JULIA (*returning the salute with her own glass. Then, ever so brightly*). Know what *I'm* having?

DAVID. What?

JULIA (*grimly*). Not much fun.

(DAVID *gives an appreciative chuckle and goes out through the windows with the highball*)

(*An extremely beautiful girl named* IVY CARROLL *comes down the stairs, a book tucked rather showily under her arm. For a moment she stands surveying the room and its occupants with a quiet superiority, then she moves up to the windows, breathes deeply, and is gone*)

(*The flaxen-haired young man, who has been humming, now finishes a song in full voice and breaks away from the piano. His name is* VAL BURNETT)

ROSAMOND OGDEN (*who has been watching her husband at the backgammon board*). Tell me, Mr. Burnett—I thought you broadcast every Sunday night. Is that changed now?

VAL. Oh, sure. That was the Miracle Mayonnaise Hour. I'm on the Black Star Axle Grease Hour now. Tuesdays and Fridays, eight-thirty.

ROSAMOND OGDEN. Really? I must listen.

JULIA (*into her drink*). Mayonnaise to axle grease. Just a step.

VAL. It's really the biggest hour there is. Blue and Red network, you know. National hook-up.

ALBERT OGDEN (*shaking his dice cup*). Yeah! Fifteen minutes twice a week and gets more than the President of the United States.

ROSAMOND OGDEN. Really, we're so spoiled! Here's Mr. Burnett—millions of people listen to him every time he broadcasts—and here he is tossing off these golden notes—

VAL (*assuming a false modesty*). Oh, I'm just a crooner. I guess you people would rather hear Lawrence Tibbett, or something like that.

JULIA. Why, Mr. Burnett, we would *not!* (*Scornfully*) Lawrence Tibbett! I'll bet you he couldn't croon if he tried.

VAL. I never know whether you're kidding me or not, Miss Glenn, but honest—do you like my singing?

JULIA. Like it? Why, I'm your greatest admirer.

VAL. Say, that means more to me than you think, because I'm just crazy about your stories. I think you write just about the best stories I ever read. That one about the boy and the girl—I read it over and over.

JULIA. Why, I'm—touched. Didn't you get it the first time?

SAM FRANKL (*at the piano*). Hey, Val! Remember this one? (*He plays a phrase or two*)

VAL. *Do* I? (*His voice picks up the music*)

CYRUS WINTHROP (*putting down his cards*). Two and one.

LADY PATRICIA DORSON (*also a bridge player. She has listened to the music, rapt*). Oh! That divine song! It just *swept* London. The Prince couldn't get enough of it. He still sings it. The Prince has quite a nice voice, you know.

JULIA. What hour is he on?

LADY PAT (*abstractedly*). H'm?

CYRUS WINTHROP. I think we make three no-trump, too.

RICHARD NILES. Do you?

ROSAMOND OGDEN. Lady Dorson, didn't I read somewhere that the Prince was coming over for a visit?

LADY PAT. Well, there was some talk about it just before I left.

JULIA. (*into that same drink*). I should say there was.

CYRUS WINTHROP (*who has been thinking it over*). No, I guess we go down one.

LADY PAT. I say, Mr. Frankl, there was another song of yours the Prince simply adored. (*She hums a fragment;* FRANKL *picks it up on the piano*) That's it. Isn't that too soothing, my dear?

LAURA NASH (*the fourth bridge player*). I love everything of Sam's. (*Raising her voice*) Sam, why don't you write more songs like that? You never do any more.

FRANKL. Well, I've been pretty busy lately on my concerto. I promised Stokowski he'd get it by the fifteenth.

ROSAMOND OGDEN. But, Sam, those glorious songs! We'll have nothing to dance to next winter.

FRANKL. Oh, I'll do a show or two, I suppose—they're always after me. I'm in the middle of a new symphony, too. You see, the trouble with me is— (*He rises from the piano*) I've got three different careers. My light music, my serious music, and my sculpture.

LADY PAT. Sculpture? Why, I didn't know you were a sculptor, too.

FRANKL. Oh, sure. Didn't you see those heads I did of myself? They were in the *Times*.

LADY PAT. How astonishing!

IVY (*in the windows*). Oh! To play under the stars on a night like this! The Greek theatre must have been magnificent.

LAURA NASH. Who dealt?

WINTHROP. I did. . . . Pass.

LADY PAT (*resuming her seat*). Oh, so sorry. What happened?

WINTHROP. I dealt and passed.

RICHARD. I pass.

LADY PAT. Is there a score?

WINTHROP. They're vulnerable. We have sixty.

LADY PAT. I pass.

LAURA NASH. I'm bidding.

IVY. Mr. Frankl, play me that Chopin Waltz—you know the one I mean, Opus 3, Number 9.

FRANKL. Sorry. I don't play Chopin.

JULIA. You'll take Frankl or nothing.

(*The piano starts up again;* JULIA *makes a slight genuflexion in the direction of the music*)

LAURA NASH. Two no-trump.

WINTHROP. By me.

RICHARD. Three no-trump.

LADY PAT. I pass.

LAURA NASH. Pass.

WINTHROP. My lead?

RICHARD (*putting down his hand as* WINTHROP *leads*). The clubs aren't so good, but I've got my values. (*He rises.* RICHARD NILES, *at forty, is the layman's idea of what a fashionable playwright should look like. His portrait by Pirie MacDonald has long been familiar to readers of* Vanity Fair. *He is faultlessly attired, has that distinguished touch of gray at the temples*) Well! . . . How are you backgammon boys coming along? Who's winning?

OGDEN (*indicates* NASH). He doesn't have to produce plays for a living. I never saw such luck. (NASH *rolls the dice*) My God! Doubles again!

RICHARD. Tell me, Everett—where do you go from London?

NASH. Well, I've got to stay there till the 18th, you know

—the Gladys Cooper opening. Then I go over to Budapest to see Molnar, and I've got to be back in London in November—got to find something for the Adelphi —that Cochran show won't do.

RICHARD. No chance of your coming South with me? Give you some great shooting.

NASH. Sailing Wednesday.

RICHARD. Well, Althea and I are going to be in St. Moritz for Christmas. Why don't you and Laura join us there and we'll go to Antibes together?

LAURA NASH (*from the bridge table*). We could do that, Everett.

RICHARD. Oh, that's fine.

LAURA. We make three. Shall we stop?

LADY PAT. Yes—let's.

LAURA. Have you got a house yet, Richard? I mean in Antibes?

RICHARD. Got a cable this morning. We're taking the Elliott place.

LAURA NASH. Oh, Richard, that's a divine house!

LADY PAT. Isn't that right next to Willie Maugham's place?

LAURA NASH. It's that house on the cliff. It's simply huge. You'll have to give loads of parties, Richard.

RICHARD. I like a big place—lots of people. I think if we come back to Long Island next summer we'll take the Atherton place, instead of this.

WINTHROP. Really? This is a charming place. Seems quite large.

RICHARD. Ye-es, but there's no place to dock the boat—you've got to land at Manhasset and have the car meet you.

JULIA (*so distressed*). O-oh!

RICHARD. Well, next summer's a long ways off. First I'm going down to Carolina—I've got to get away. Those four weeks of rehearsal and the two weeks out of town —pretty wearing. But if I get some good shooting, and a

month in London before St. Moritz, I'll be ready to start work again when we get to Antibes.

JULIA. I've got *my* year pretty well laid out, too. Let's see. I'm going to spend November in Tony's, if they'll give me credit, and December trying to keep from getting thrown out of my apartment. I think in January I'll put a piece of paper in the typewriter, and if anything comes of that I'll be very much surprised. February and March are going to be tough sledding, but in April it's warm again and I can go right back to the gutter, only next year I'm going to give up the *little* gutter and take a great, big *hell* of a gutter. Hi, Richard! (*She lifts her glass in drunken salute*)

RICHARD (*in a low tone*). Will you stop drinking?

JULIA (*in a voice just as high as his was low*). Will I stop drinking? No, I won't stop drinking!

RICHARD. Julia—

(DAVID HASKELL *comes back through the windows*)

DAVID. Say, they must have the papers by this time. It's twelve-thirty.

LAURA NASH. That's the worst of these Saturday openings. You have to wait all day Sunday for the reviews.

DAVID. I think I'll jump in the car and get them. If you wait for them to bring 'em it'll take hours. (*He dashes out again*)

OGDEN. Say, young Haskell's more nervous than you are, Dick. You'd think it was his play instead of yours.

RICHARD. Oh, I'm reconciled to whatever they say.

IVY (*who has come close to* RICHARD *as the conversation turned on the newspapers*). Richard! (*She extends her hand*)

RICHARD (*gently taking her hand*). Now, you mustn't be nervous. You've no reason to be.

IVY. This was my great chance, Richard. I know it better than anybody. Whatever happens, I'll always be grateful to you.

RICHARD. Ivy, believe me, no matter what they say about the play, they're certain to say that you were magnificent.

ALTHEA ROYCE (*on the stairway*). I'm sure they will. No matter what they say about the play.

(*Her entrance has been quiet, unobtrusive. Her voice turns every head toward her*)

RICHARD (*quietly*). Why, hello, Althea. Have you been upstairs all the time?

ALTHEA. Didn't you know?

(ALTHEA ROYCE *is just over forty, and still a beautiful woman. She moves with a certain conscious grace—the result of many years of hearing people say "There goes Althea Royce!" when she entered a restaurant or passed down a theatre aisle*)

LAURA NASH. Althea darling, I hear you've taken the Elliott house. I'm terribly excited!

ALTHEA. Yes, won't it be lovely!

LADY PAT. Do you know the Pendergasts, Althea? They're going to be there this season—they're both darlings, and *such* fun? All they *do* is give parties! Of course they're not married . . .

(IVY *has disappeared through the windows again. From time to time you get a glimpse of her, nervously pacing. After a moment or two* RICHARD *joins her*)

ROSAMOND OGDEN (*to* ALTHEA). My dear, how I envy you! The Carolinas, St. Moritz, London, Antibes! I think if one could really choose one's husband, the smartest thing to do is to marry a playwright.

ALTHEA. A successful playwright, of course. (*She, too, drifts toward the windows, keeping a weather eye on the two figures without*)

ROSAMOND OGDEN. Oh, yes. No Cape Cod for me in the summer time . . . Or marry a producer. (*She turns toward* EVERETT NASH) Everett, why didn't you marry

for money instead of social position? I'm awfully rich, you know.

OGDEN. Here, here, now! Don't you give people the wrong impression, my dear. I loved you from the minute I looked you up in Bradstreet's.

LAURA NASH. Tell the truth, Everett. Why did you really marry *me*?

NASH. Rosamond has told you. I wanted to meet the best people.

JULIA (*half to herself*). You got stuck.

BUTLER (*in the doorway*). Mr. Winthrop's car is here, madam.

WINTHROP. Oh! (*A look at his watch*) Tell him I'll be right out.

ALTHEA. Now, Cyrus, you're not going. You must wait for the notices. They'll be here in a minute.

JULIA (*beckoning to* BURNETT). Val!

WINTHROP. Well, it's a good hour's drive, you know.

JULIA (VAL *having joined her*). Sit here. (*He drops down at her feet*)

ALTHEA. Oh, Cyrus! Suppose you *do* get to bed twenty minutes later.

JULIA (*drunkenly tender*). You like me, Val? (*She runs a hand through his hair*)

OGDEN. Yes, Winthrop, if you don't get around to that office in the morning it'll be all right too. They'll turn out just as much of that cellopaper without you there. (*He picks up a package of cigarettes and rips off the cellopaper wrapper*) And supposes this stuff *wasn't* on here. You could get to the cigarettes quicker.

WINTHROP. Don't say such things. If that stuff wasn't on there, where would *I* be?

JULIA (*to* VAL, *under cover of a light laugh from the group*). I think you're very beautiful—do you mind?

OGDEN. Imagine making a million dollars a year out of this! Cellopaper! I wish I had a graft like this.

LAURA NASH. Some people have all the luck.

WINTHROP. Listen, Mrs. Nash, ten years ago anybody could have had it. I went around begging people—they wouldn't touch it. They thought I was crazy.

NASH. Crazy like a fox. They tell me it's all profit, Winthrop. Doesn't cost you anything to make.

WINTHROP. God knows I don't hang onto it long. The art galleries get most of it.

JULIA (*softly, as* VAL'S *eyes meet hers for a second*). Hello.

OGDEN. Well, a man's money is his own, of course, but if I had two hundred thousand to throw away I don't think I'd put it into a picture. Think I'd buy a racing stable or something—get some fun out of it.

WINTHROP. I just happen to get my fun out of pictures. When you look at a canvas that's got that spark in it, and you feel it's going to mean something three hundred years from now, and *you* can *own* it—that's got horse-racing beat a mile. Because you're betting on a man's talent—whether you're right about it—and that's more important than you, or your money, or anything else. Right now, I'm betting on a man named Jonathan Crale. You know Jonathan Crale? Well, it's a name your grandchildren are going to know. Every hundred years or so there's a Jonathan Crale, and when he comes along it's history. Know what I mean? (*He looks around him for corroboration, but a dead silence has fallen upon the group. Obviously, he has said something he shouldn't*)

JULIA. Why, Cyrus Winthrop! Don't you know you shouldn't mention Jonathan Crale in this house? You'll never be invited again.

OGDEN. Julia, for God's sake!

JULIA (*ploughing right on*). Where have you been all these years—wrapped in cellopaper? Don't you know Jonathan Crale painted a horrid picture of our host?

RICHARD. Julia, please!

JULIA (*not to be stopped*). And our hostess! Althea was in it, too! With a hundred arms, like an octopus!

ALTHEA (*white with rage*). Julia, I told you that if you came into my house—

(*The tension is broken by the arrival of a highly excited and exuberant* DAVID HASKELL, *a sheaf of newspapers under his arm*)

DAVID. I got 'em! They're wonderful—every single notice! It's a hit, Richard—it's a hit!

(*There is an excited reaching for papers as the group receives this news.* NASH: *"Let me see 'em!"* LADY PAT: *"How exciting!"* LAURA NASH: *"Everett, do I get that sable?"* ROSAMOND OGDEN: *"Of course it's a hit! You're not surprised?"* WINTHROP: *"Well, I'm glad I waited!"* FRANKL: *"Congratulations, Richard, I know the feeling!"*)

(*On the heels of* DAVID, IVY CARROLL *has also come back into the room, and stands tensely waiting*)

NASH (*paper in hand*). Whee! Listen to this, people! "Here is sophisticated comedy at its brightest. Expertly written, beautifully produced, admirably acted."

OGDEN (*also with his paper*). "Richard Niles, whose flair for smart comedy is exceeded by none—"

LAURA NASH. "Our most fashionable playwright has written what will unquestionably be the most fashionable play of the season. It is Park Avenue's own."

ROSAMOND OGDEN. "You will hear its lines quoted at every smart dinner table, its clothes will set the mode for the younger set, the second-act boudoir will find itself duplicated in many a Southampton home."

LAURA NASH. And Ivy, my dear, you're a star! "Ivy Carroll, loveliest of our younger actresses, comes into her own in 'Silver Spoon'."

ROSAMOND OGDEN. "Starry-eyed and beautiful. her translucent performance . . ."

NASH. Here's that next play, Richard! "Ivy Carroll is the perfect instrument for the deft and sparkling comedy of Richard Niles. Playwright and actress form an ideal combination."

ROSAMOND OGDEN (*going to* IVY *and embracing her*). Ivy, let me be the first!

NASH. Don't be surprised if you see your name in lights tomorrow night, young lady!

(IVY *presses a kerchief to her lips with a little choking sound*)

LAURA NASH. Ivy! My sweet!

IVY (*bravely*). I'm all right. But it makes me feel very humble, very little. Because you know it's not me, really. It's Richard's beautiful play.

ROSAMOND OGDEN. Isn't she a sweet child?

NASH. Well, Richard, I guess you can have your London and your St. Moritz—with a pretty light heart.

OGDEN (*an arm around* RICHARD *in great good fellowship*). You've rung the bell again, kid! What have you got to say to all this? Come on! "Author! Author!"

ROSAMOND OGDEN. Albert! What do you want him to say?

RICHARD. Well, no use pretending I'm not pleased. You never can tell till the notices, of course, but I will say it's about as nice a birthday present as I ever received.

LADY PAT. Birthday!

LAURA NASH. Althea, is this Richard's birthday?

OGDEN. By God, that's right! twenty-third of September! You're forty! Year younger than I am! Well, this is an occasion!

LAURA NASH. Now, that does call for a speech, Richard!

OGDEN. Wait a minute! (*He reaches for a wine glass and hoists it high*) I've been with Richard on a good many birthdays—ever since we were at college together. I guess I'm just about his oldest friend—eh, Dick? But I want to say that this is as happy a birthday as I can re-

member. A new hit, his friends around him, right in the prime of life—

(*There is a chorus of good-natured protest. "All right!" "Never mind!" "We know!"*)

ROSAMOND OGDEN. It isn't a banquet, Albert.

JULIA (*getting drunkenly to her feet*). Are speeches in order? (*Her glass comes up*) To Richard Niles! Our most fashionable playwright! The man who has everything! And I'd rather be what *I* am—a drunken whore!

(*There is a horrified pause—a short gasp from one of the women*)

LADY PAT (*in a constrained voice*). Althea, I really must be going. I'm expecting a 'phone call from London.

JULIA. Who from? The Prince or the King?

RICHARD (*quietly taking* JULIA'S *glass*). All right, Julia—you've had enough now.

JULIA. Disgraced myself again, have I, Richard? (*She turns to* VAL) Come on, Beautiful. Take me home.

VAL (*half apologetically, to the others*). I'll see that she gets home all right.

JULIA (*weaving an uncertain way toward the door*). Well, I guess I'll never see the inside of this house again. And that's O.K. with— (*She gives a drunken lurch and crashes into the table with the drinks, which goes down under her. Glasses, bottles, ice bowl, whiskey, White Rock. The women give a little cry; the men rush to her assistance. She is helped to her feet*) Ooh! Look what I got! (*She produces a solitary ice cube, which she has happened to clutch in the mêlée. Playfully she presses it against her breast, as though it were an ornament*) The very latest! Can be worn here . . . Here . . . (*She moves it from left to right*) Or as a brooch! (*For the final gesture she turns in the doorway and presses the ice cube none too daintily against her bottom. On this pretty note she makes her departure*)

(*She is followed by* VAL *and* RICHARD, *the latter stopping to throw an agonized look back at his guests*)

ROSAMOND OGDEN. Althea, darling—you mustn't mind.

FRANKL. Drunken sot! Why anybody invites her I don't know. She came up to my place once and broke two heads of myself.

LADY PAT. I was simply stunned! What a vile woman!

ALTHEA (*tight of lip*). Perhaps this will teach Richard a lesson.

OGDEN. Well, those things can't be helped.

(*There is an awkward pause*)

ROSAMOND OGDEN. Albert, you've got to get up awfully early.

OGDEN. Ah—yes.

WINTHROP. Frankl, can I drive you in?

FRANKL. Fine! Good night, Althea. Glad the play's a hit.

(*There is the routine exchange of farewells.* OGDEN: *"Lady Dorson, you're coming with us—that right?"* LADY PAT: *"Yes, thank you."* OGDEN: *"Everett, you've got your* OWN *car?"* NASH: *"We're staying over—going in in the morning."* WINTHROP: *"Anybody else want to be dropped? Haskell?"* DAVID: *"I'm staying too."* WINTHROP: *"How about you, Miss Carroll?"* IVY: *"No, thank you. So am I."* LADY PAT: *"Althea dear, it's been so nice. Do let's have lunch before I go."* ALTHEA: *"We must."* WINTHROP: *"Good night, Althea. Where's Richard—outside? Richard!"* FRANKL: *"Don't forget my concert on the 28th. The new concerto. Good night, Everett."* ALTHEA: *"Good night, Rosamond dear."* ROSAMOND OGDEN: *"Good night, darling. See you Tuesday at the Cunninghams'."* OGDEN: *"'Night, Althea. . . . Hope we're late enough to dodge the bridge traffic."*)

(ALTHEA *follows them out for a moment,* LAURA NASH *picks up her evening bag, preparatory to going upstairs.* DAVID HASKELL *turns eagerly back to the newspapers.* IVY

CARROLL *stands a little apart, one hand clutched in the other*)

LAURA NASH. Wasn't that awful?

NASH (*shaking his head in a thoughtful sort of way*). Too bad that had to happen tonight. (*He takes a breath*) Well, we've got a hit, anyway.

LAURA NASH. I must say I think Althea behaved beautifully —don't *you*, Ivy? . . . My dear, what's the matter with your hand?

IVY. I cut it, picking up that glass.

LAURA NASH. Let me see it. Oh! It's bleeding quite a lot.

ALTHEA (*returning just in time to catch a bit of this*). What's the matter?

LAURA NASH. Ivy cut her hand on that glass.

IVY. Oh, it's nothing much.

DAVID. I'll go up and get you some iodine.

IVY. No, don't bother.

DAVID. It's no bother. Just take a minute. (*He bounds up the steps*)

NASH. Let him get it. We can't have *you* incapacitated.

LAURA NASH. See what it is to be a star, Ivy! The merest trifle and they run off in all directions.

ALTHEA (*lightly*). How well I remember.

IVY. I don't really need anything. It's—it's stopping already. (*An impulsive movement, and she is out on the lawn again*)

NASH. Great kid. She's a star, all right. . . . Well, Laura, what do you say? Bed?

LAURA NASH. Oh, dear! Once he knows it's a hit he gets sleepy. All right. (*She moves toward the steps*)

NASH. See you in the morning, Althea.

RICHARD (*returning*). What's this? Going to bed already?

NASH. Yeah—I'm sleepy. And thanks to you, Richard, I think I'll have a very good night. You're still my favorite playwright. (*He salutes* RICHARD *gratefully and disappears*)

LAURA NASH. Good night, darlings. Pleasant dreams. (*Then to* DAVID, *as he passes her on the steps*) Good night, Davy.

DAVID. Good night. . . . Where's Ivy?

ALTHEA (*the venom beginning to appear*). In an ambulance with two surgeons operating.

RICHARD (*vaguely*). What?

DAVID. Ivy cut her finger. I brought down some iodine.

RICHARD (*concerned*). She did? Where is she?

DAVID. Where'd she go? Outside?

ALTHEA. For that last look at the moon on the water.

DAVID. I'd better take this out to her. (*He starts for the windows, then stops and turns to* RICHARD *rather boyishly*) I didn't have a chance to congratulate you, Richard, but you know how I feel.

RICHARD. Thank you, David. You'll have your own hits pretty soon.

DAVID. I hope so. But I'm never going to forget what I owe to Richard Niles. I'd have given up after the first one, if it hadn't been for you.

RICHARD. The first failure doesn't mean anything. You've got stuff. Just go right ahead and don't listen to anybody. Not even me.

DAVID (*haltingly, hero worship plain on his face*). Well, on *my* fortieth birthday, if I'm where you are, I'm going to be a pretty happy man.

RICHARD (*good-humoredly*). Oh, get out of here, David. (DAVID *goes*)

ALTHEA. Well, that was quite royal of you. Advice from the Great Man. (*She mimics his tone*) "Don't listen to anybody. Not even me."

RICHARD. What's the matter with you?

ALTHEA. What's the matter with *me*? I take it you're quite satisfied with the entertainment furnished by your good friend Miss Glenn.

RICHARD. I don't want to talk about that. I feel very sorry for Julia.

ALTHEA. Oh, stop it! You don't feel sorry for anybody. You've got your hit and that's all you care about.

RICHARD (*in the resigned tone of one who wants to avoid a scene*). All right, Althea. (*He moves toward the stairs*)

ALTHEA. Oh, no, you don't! I've got something to say to you. If you think I don't know what's going on between you and Ivy Carroll, you're crazy!

RICHARD. That's not true!

ALTHEA. You're a liar! I know how you work!

RICHARD (*anything for peace*). All right. It's true—if that's the way you want it.

ALTHEA. Oh, now you're the martyred husband, eh? It won't do. I knew it was true the minute Everett told me I wasn't right for the part. And I knew it last year, too, with Judith Marshall. I suppose *that* wasn't true, either. The idea is I'm finished, eh? Well, I know damn well who's helping to finish me.

RICHARD. Lower your voice, will you?

ALTHEA. Shut up! Althea Royce—not right for the part! I was all right for you to use as a stepladder, though, wasn't I? Where do you think you'd have been if I hadn't played Penelope for you in "The Ostrich"? I made P. J. produce it. . . . And I needed this play. I needed it to come back in, and you killed it! What do you think they're saying, not seeing me in that part?

RICHARD (*forcing himself to be calm*). Althea, believe me, if I'd thought you were right for that part—

ALTHEA. You! You don't care about anybody but yourself! You'd sell your soul to get a hit. Fashionable playwright! Fashionable prostitute—that's what you are!

RICHARD (*stung*). What did you want me to do? Let you play a nineteen-year-old girl? You can see yourself, can't you, playing that balcony scene in a negligee! Why, they'd have laughed you off the stage!

ALTHEA (*in a low tone*). You . . . dirty . . . bastard! (*She takes a breath*) Well, maybe I *am* through, but you're not far behind me. Your trick won't last. You may write a couple more of these powder puffs, but they're onto you even now. And when you go you're going to go quick. *Then* see how you like it. Wait till you write those three straight flops and see who's out here on Sunday nights! Because you haven't got any *real* friends. No snob ever has.

RICHARD (*with a dangerous calm*). I see. Well, you asked for this and you're going to get it. It's true about Ivy, and it was true about Judith, and it's going to be true about all of them. How do you like *that?*

ALTHEA. I like it fine. Because you're never going to get rid of me. Never, never, never!

RICHARD (*slowly*). I know that. And a pretty prospect it is, too.

ALTHEA. God, but it's funny! That *you* should be telling *me*—why, I picked you up out of the Provincetown Theatre—a snivelling little failure—and gave you your chance. You were so frightened—you were going to be so grateful. Well, I can see now that you just used every one of us—me, and Julia, and Helen, and P. J.—all of us! You never made a move without knowing exactly where you were going. The only one you never fooled was Crale. How right he was! You don't see *him* hanging around. He recognized you for what you were—a money-loving, social-climbing, second-rate hack. And he put it all on canvas.

RICHARD (*bitterly*). Well, God knows he was right about you, too. If I'd listened to him I might still be writing those failures for the Provincetown Theatre, but I wouldn't be bored and fed up with myself and sick of my life. You think these plays mean anything to me? I do them because I can't do anything else—I don't dare stop and take a look at myself. But all they bring with

them is more of *this*—and I don't give a God-damn what happens to me, or anything else. I'd just as soon have that tombstone over my head right now.

ALTHEA. Oh, don't ask me to feel sorry for you—you knew what you wanted and you've got it. But if you think I'm going to stand around—

(IVY *bursts through the windows, vibrant with youth.* DAVID *is with her*)

IVY. Oh, there never *was* such a night! There never was a moon like this one, and the stars never hung so low—you can reach up and touch them!

DAVID. The patient is doing pretty well, Richard. All she needed was the moon.

(*There is a dead silence. Even* IVY *is aware that something is wrong*)

RICHARD (*tensely*). David, could you drive Miss Carroll into town tonight?

DAVID (*confused*). Why—of course, if—

ALTHEA (*taking a moment to survey her*). I have just discovered, Miss Carroll, why you were so right for the part.

RICHARD. Althea!

ALTHEA. "Most beautiful of our younger actresses." "Starry-eyed and translucent . . ." Well, perhaps you won't be so starry-eyed now! (*With a quick movement she picks up the bottle of iodine, which* DAVID *had set down. In a flash she uncorks it and hurls the contents into* IVY's *face. The dark stain splotches over her white evening gown*)

(IVY *screams*)

RICHARD. Christ!

ALTHEA (*hysterically laughing and crying*). There goes your hit, Richard! . . . Didn't think I'd do that, did you? . . . I'll do it all the time! . . . To your hits and your women!

(*The men have rushed to* IVY)

IVY. Richard! My eyes!

RICHARD. David! Telephone Manhasset nine three! Dr. Pritchard! Tell him what's happened and ask him to rush! (*Yelling after the fleeing* DAVID) Or we'll take her down there!

IVY. My eyes! It's my eyes!

(*The* NASHES, *in bathrobes, appear on the steps. "What's the matter?" "Who screamed?"*)

ALTHEA (*her hysteria mounting*). I did it! I threw it at her, Laura! All over that beautiful face! . . . Starry-eyed! (*She laughs*) You wouldn't give the part to me, Everett! And now you've got no one!

(*The* BUTLER *and a* MAID, *also in bathrobes, appear in the doorway*)

(LAURA *and* EVERETT *hurry down the stairs.* NASH: *"Oh, my God!"* LAURA: *"Althea! Ivy!"* RICHARD *is bending over* IVY: *"Be brave, darling. Just a couple of minutes. It'll be all right."*)

(*From the next room we hear* DAVID'S *voice: "Dr. Pritchard? . . . I'm calling for Richard Niles . . ."*)

ALTHEA (*her voice, almost in a screech, rising above the confusion*). He was sleeping with her, Laura! That's why I did it! He was sleeping with her! And he told me I was finished! Well, this'll finish everything—Ivy, and me, and everything!

The curtain is down

SCENE II

A corner in the Restaurant Le Coq D'Or, showing two or three tables. Le Coq D'Or is the place to lunch—expensive, exclusive, the afternoon rendezvous of the social and theatrical élite. It is to New York what the Ritz Bar is to Paris.

The year is 1927, and an unseen orchestra is playing the song hits of the day—"Old Man River," "Blue Skies," etc. A solitary couple are finishing their luncheon—at the demi-tasse and liqueur stage.

HE. Did I? (*He laughs*) You know, I don't remember a single thing after we left the El Fay Club.

SHE. You were pretty well lit all evening. Don't you remember meeting Jim and Laura Stanhope?

HE. No. When?

SHE. Well, that shows you. You walked right up to him and said, "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?" And Jim said, "No, just a corset salesman on the loose."

HE (*laughs again*). You know, that case is liable to make or break the corset business.

SHE. I don't know about corsets, but lots of women are thinking of buying sashweights.

HE. Imagine those two thinking they could get away with it. How could a woman do a thing like that?

SHE. Ruth Snyder isn't a woman—she's a hellcat. I feel a little sorry for Gray, though.

HE. I don't. He helped kill him, didn't he?

SHE. Yes, I suppose you're right.

HE. Listen—they both did it and they're both going to get the chair. You watch. . . . Check, please.

SHE. Her too, you think?

HE. You bet she will.

SHE (*a glance at the check*). They charge the hell out of you, but everybody comes here.

HE (*giving a bill to the waiter*). Okay.

WAITER. Thank you very much, sir.

HE. Well, we've got till five o'clock. What do you want to do? See a picture?

SHE. You know what I'd love?

HE. What?

SHE. Let's go to the palace and see Nora Bayes. She's always marvelous.

HE. All right.

(*They go*)

(*The* WAITER *picks up a plate or two—gives an annoyed glance around. The* HEADWAITER *enters*)

WAITER. That damn boy, he ain't never here.

HEADWAITER. Bus! Hey, boy! Where are you?

WAITER. Always by the band, instead of the tables.

HEADWAITER. Boy! Come here! (*The* BUS BOY *comes in. It is none other than that radio star-to-be,* VAL BURNETT, *just now pretty frightened at the prospect of a bawling out*) Fix up this table! (VAL *hurries to the table and begins piling plates onto his tray*)

WAITER. Dummkopf! (*He goes*)

HEADWAITER (*to* VAL). What do you think you're getting paid for? To stand and listen to the orchestra all day? Believe me, if help wasn't so hard to get you'd have been fired long ago! Hurry up that table, now! (*He goes*)

(VAL *continues with his work for a moment, but as the orchestra picks up a new tune, a dreamy look comes into his face. He begins to hum the tune. Then he gets an idea. First taking a quick look around, he picks up a menu from the table, rolls it into a megaphone, places it to his lips and sings through it. It is a great discovery. If someone had killed* VAL BURNETT *at this particular moment, there would be no crooners today*)

(*At the sound of approaching guests he quickly puts down the menu, gathers up his tray, and goes*)

(*It is a couple of girls who enter—about seventeen or eighteen. The debutante type. They are in a state of considerable nervous excitement, throwing ecstatic glances back into the main room*)

FIRST GIRL. Doesn't she look beautiful?

SECOND GIRL. Yes, she's just as beautiful off the stage. Did you see those orchids?

FIRST GIRL. And that bracelet! That was a wedding present from *him*. He's *so* good-looking.

SECOND GIRL. Let's go and see the show again next week, if we can get tickets.

FIRST GIRL. All right. I could see it over and over. That scene where he makes love to her on the divan—

SECOND GIRL. Isn't that wonderful? That's why I like her plays—she always has a scene like that.

FIRST GIRL. I know. I wasn't allowed to see her plays till I was sixteen.

SECOND GIRL. I wasn't either. But I went anyhow.

FIRST GIRL. Oh! She's coming in here! I dare you to speak to her!

SECOND GIRL (*in a great lather at the very thought*). I wouldn't *dare!*

FIRST GIRL. I'll do it!

SECOND GIRL. You would not!

FIRST GIRL. Sssh!

(*They back away a few steps, in a great state of nervous giggles*)

(ALTHEA *enters. The* ALTHEA ROYCE *of 1927 is Althea Royce at her height. Her very gesture denotes the actress who has New York at her feet*)

(*She casts an annoyed glance over her shoulder as the* HEADWAITER *hurries in*)

HEADWAITER. This table all right, Miss Royce?

ALTHEA. No, I'm not lunching just yet. I just saw someone I wanted to avoid.

HEADWAITER. Oui, Madame.

ALTHEA. The trouble with your place, Louis, is that one not only sees everyone one wants to see, but also the other kind.

HEADWAITER (*accepting the blame for this*). I am sorry, Madame.

ALTHEA. It doesn't matter. Will you tell Mr. Niles, when he comes, that I'm in here?

HEADWAITER (*bowing*). Oui, Madame. And may I offer my little congratulations on Madame's marriage?

(ALTHEA *gives an imperious nod, which dismisses him. One of the debutantes, in a great fresh burst of giggling, pushes her friend toward* ALTHEA)

FIRST GIRL (*hardly able to get the words out*). Miss Royce, could we congratulate you too? We think you're wonderful.

ALTHEA (*so graciously*). Thank you.

FIRST GIRL. We saw a picture of the wedding in the Sunday paper, and you looked just like you do in the play. (*Suddenly the words come with a great rush*) We saw you in "The Ostrich" about four times, and we've seen you twice in this already, and we're coming back again next Wednesday afternoon.

ALTHEA. I'm so glad you liked me.

SECOND GIRL. Is your—is your husband going to write all your plays from now on?

ALTHEA (*with a light laugh*). I hope so. He's my favorite playwright.

(*There is a little pause as the* GIRLS *try to think of another question, but can't*)

FIRST GIRL. Well—thank you for being so nice to us.

(*They hesitate again for a second, then with a renewed burst of giggling they make their departure*)

(ALTHEA, *turning, has barely had time to drop the gracious manner before she finds herself confronting the man she had been seeking to avoid. He is somewhere in the early sixties, gray-haired, on the shabby side. But instinctively you feel that he has been someone in his day. His name is* P. J. MORTON)

MORTON. Althea!

ALTHEA. Oh! Hello, P. J.

MORTON. Althea, did you get my note at the theatre?

ALTHEA. Oh! Yes—yes. I—I meant to call you, P. J., but we've been so rushed.

MORTON. Yes, I know. I read about it. That's fine. (*Plunging*) Althea, can you let me have it? The five hundred. I've found a hell of a play, Althea, and if I can just tie it up I know I can get the money to produce it. I think my name as a producer would still mean something.

ALTHEA (*kindly*). P. J.—it's terribly hard to refuse you, but—you said that about the last five hundred, and—I can't just go on. . . . Can I?

MORTON (*the mask completely falling. A pitiable figure*). You're right, Althea. I haven't any play. But I don't know who to turn to any more. I haven't got—fifty cents.

ALTHEA (*looking away from him, quickly opens her pocketbook and presses a bill into his hand*). You come to the theatre tonight, and I'll have something more for you. I'll talk to Richard about it, too. I'll see what we can do.

MORTON. Althea, you don't know what it does to me to have to—

ALTHEA (*seizing upon the providential return of the* HEADWAITER). Oh, Louis, that woman who's going to interview me—did you say she was in the bar?

HEADWAITER (*catching on*). Oh—yes, Madame.

ALTHEA. Oh! Excuse me, P. J. I just have to run.

(*She goes.* MORTON *stands uncertainly in his tracks for a moment. The* HEADWAITER *regards him*)

HEADWAITER (*in his most austere manner*). Is there anything I can do for you, Monsieur?

MORTON. No. No—thank you. (*He starts slowly out, hurrying a little as he gets past the door*)

(*The* HEADWAITER *looks around, touches a napkin, fixes a flower*)

(JULIA GLENN *and* JONATHAN CRALE *come in. The* JULIA *of 1927 is just beginning to show the faint traces of the woman we have seen in 1934. She has not yet acquired the flabby look of the steady drinker, but even this early in the day she is not quite sober*)

(JONATHAN CRALE *is* RICHARD'S *age, which means that just*

now he is 33. He is, however, the very opposite of RICHARD *in looks, dress, and manner. He is none too particular about the daily shave, and it is a long time since his suit was pressed. One forgets all this, however, under the spell of his personality*)

(*The* HEADWAITER *regards them with a certain hauteur. They so definitely do not belong in the Restaurant Le Coq D'Or*)

HEADWAITER. You are lunching here, Monsieur?

CRALE. Why not?

HEADWAITER. Yes, sir. Right here, sir.

(*He seats them with a good deal of chair-pulling and bowing. Proffers a menu to* JULIA)

JULIA (*waving the card aside*). I don't want any food. Scotch highball.

(*The* HEADWAITER *receives this order with quiet dignity and turns his attention to* CRALE, *who is scanning a menu*)

HEADWAITER. A little caviar first, sir?

CRALE (*looking thoughtfully at the* HEADWAITER). Orange juice, wheat cakes and country sausages, coffee—got any angel cake?

HEADWAITER (*shocked, but carrying on*). I'm afraid not, sir.

CRALE. Well—that's all.

HEADWAITER. Yes, sir. (*He goes*)

JULIA. Angel cake? Where do you think you are? Childs'?

CRALE (*his eyes following the* HEADWAITER). You know, *he* ought to sit down and let us wait on *him.*

JULIA. And now, Mr. Crale, will you tell me what we are doing in this cradle of luxury? A couple of bums.

CRALE. Oh, just spying on the rich. . . . Don't you love flowers?

(*He picks up a vase of roses from the table and sets it on the floor*)

JULIA. I hate flowers, I hate music, little children and open fires. (*She looks him over*) How have you been, Jonathan?

CRALE. I've been in bed for three days.

JULIA. Sick?

CRALE (*matter of factly*). No. But I didn't feel like painting and there was nobody I wanted to see, so I just didn't get up.

JULIA. Maybe that's an idea for me. The rest of my life.

CRALE (*his hand closes over hers for a second*). You'll be all right, Julie. (*With a slightly false brightness*) Look! How about taking a walking trip with me? Bear Mountain. It's beautiful.

JULIA. That would be what I'd draw. A walking trip. Other girls get Cadillacs and Pierce Arrows, and I get a walking trip. No, you son-of-a-bitch.

CRALE. Well, you're a fool. Nothing like the Palisades this time of year.

(*The* WAITER *enters, bearing the orange juice and the highball*)

WAITER (*with the infallible instinct of his kind*). Orange juice for Madame?

CRALE. No, that's for me.

(*The* WAITER *puts down the glasses and goes.* JULIA *immediately takes a long swig of her drink and gives a little sigh of relief*)

CRALE. How many have you had today?

JULIA. I don't know. Couple.

CRALE. A few more than that, I should say.

JULIA. What's the difference? I've got to do something.

CRALE. Well—you could work, you know.

JULIA. I'm never going to write another line, Jonny. Except just enough to keep myself in liquor.

CRALE. Oh, yes, you are. You've got to get hold of yourself, Julie—quick. You can't go ahead this way—drinking

Scotch highballs in the morning, sitting in speakeasies all night. That just gets worse and worse, you know. You've got no right to let that happen to you.

JULIA. I've got a right to do anything that'll make it easier for me. Because if I live to be a hundred I'm still going to be in love with you. Only I hope to God I don't live to be a hundred. (*The* HEADWAITER *comes importantly into view, gives a rather suspicious glance at* CRALE *and* JULIA, *and goes on out again.* JULIA *looks venomously after him*) What did you think we were doing? Stealing the napkins? (*She turns on* CRALE) In God's name, will you tell me why you brought me here? I hate it.

CRALE. Certainly I'll tell you. I wanted to see Richard. (JULIA's *highball glass comes down on the plate with a little bang*) It's nothing to do with you, Julie. I want to see him myself. He won't talk to me on the telephone and he won't answer my letters. I know this is where he generally lunches, so I came here.

JULIA (*after a moment*). It was wrong of you, Jonny. You never should have shown that picture.

CRALE. Oh, I suppose not. You never should do anything where your friends are concerned. But I didn't know it was going to stir up all this fuss.

JULIA. You knew people would see it.

CRALE. No, I didn't. Nobody ever saw any of my pictures before. It was just tough luck this one happened to get into the newspapers. Only I didn't know Richard was going to get so mad. God, he won't answer my letters; he won't talk to me; he told Albert he never wants to see me again. I can't believe it. What's he so mad about?

JULIA. You didn't think he'd be pleased, did you? A picture of himself embracing a cash register with one arm and Althea with the other. Why did you ever paint it in the first place?

CRALE. Because I felt it. The way I feel about things has got to come out. And I'm a *painter.*

JULIA. I'm sorry you did it, Jonny.

CRALE. So am I—now. I wouldn't have anything come between Richard and me for anything in the world. God, he's my best friend. I love him. The big baby. But I know if I run into him that we'll wind up with our arms around each other and everything'll be all right.

JULIA. And how do I fit into this touching scene of reconciliation?

CRALE. Because I wanted you here. The three of us have always been together, and—I wanted you here.

(*The* WAITER *returns, this time with the wheat cakes and sausages*)

WAITER. Wheat cakes for Madame?

JULIA. No, no—there. It's always the other person, just remember that. (*The* WAITER *puts the plate in front of* CRALE) And another Scotch highball, please.

(*The* WAITER *goes*)

CRALE (*regards his food*). Mm. Three pancakes. Only a dollar-eighty. (*He takes a bite with evident relish*) Anyhow, Julia, one thing has come out of the whole business. I'm in demand. Two people want me to do their portraits. Not going to do them. And I got a letter this morning from some—ah—where is it?—— (*He fishes in his pockets and brings out a letter. Refreshes his memory with a glance at the envelope*) What is the *Cosmopolitan Magazine?* Is that a magazine?

JULIA. It's something Fannie Hurst writes every month.

CRALE. And I got another letter—(*Feels in his side pocket and apparently encounters a foreign substance*)—what the hell is this? (*He pulls out a good-sized pair of pliers and regards them vacantly. Then he suddenly remembers*) Oh, yes! I was going to fix my razor.

JULIA (*regarding the two days' growth*). I see you fixed it.

CRALE. I *had* that letter . . . (*He tries the other side pocket*) Now, what—— (*This time he brings out a top*

—one of those gayly colored, self-winding affairs that are just the thing for children of five)

JULIA. Why, Tiny Tim!

CRALE (*childishly excited*). Oh! Picked this up on a push-cart—wait till you see it go! (*Instantly he is out of his seat and down on the floor, busily winding the top*)

JULIA. Crale, are you crazy?

CRALE (*he spins it*). Look at it go, Julie!

JULIA. Look at *us* go!

(CRALE *tilts himself back on his heels and watches the top with profound admiration. At this moment, unfortunately, the* HEADWAITER *returns. He does not quite believe what he sees, but, equal to any crisis, he steps over the spinning top and continues his progress, his head held high.* CRALE *guiltily gathers up the top and stuffs it into his pocket*)

JULIA (*when the* HEADWAITER *has disappeared*). We might as well steal the napkins and go, because we're going to be thrown out anyway.

CRALE. I don't know why you shouldn't be allowed to spin tops, just because you're grown up. Do kids have to have all the fun?

JULIA. Jonny, you're 33. People are going to quit making allowances pretty soon.

CRALE (*in high excitement*). Remember the time you and Richard and I spent the whole day calling people up and telling 'em the water supply was going to be shut off?

JULIA. All over the Bronx!

CRALE. We had 'em filling up bathtubs, wash basins, milk bottles——

JULIA. Richard sounded so official! They always believed him!

CRALE. We had a wonderful trick we used to work in college, Julie. Richard used to pretend—— (*He stops*

short as RICHARD *enters. He rises and goes toward him with proffered hand*) Hello, Richard.

(*Without a word* RICHARD *strikes him with his fist.* CRALE *reels slightly, then hits back.* RICHARD *swings again—they are at it*)

JULIA (*white and stricken*). Richard! Jonny! Don't! Don't! It mustn't end this way! It mustn't!

(*The sounds of scuffle bring an increasing horde of excited patrons into the room.* JULIA'S *pitiful cries of "Dickie! Jonny! Don't! Don't!" come through the excited shouts of the crowd as——*

The Curtain Falls

SCENE III

RICHARD NILES'S *rooms in an apartment-hotel just off Park Avenue. An interior decorator has clearly been given a free hand, and the result is a modernistic room done to the hilt. The hilt of 1926, of course, for the time is the fall of that year.*

A Japanese servant, ITO *by name, is setting the breakfast table, which is being laid for two.*

The telephone rings.

ITO. Hello. . . . Apartment Mr. Richard Niles. . . . Who? . . . Miss Royce? . . . Oh! I call him. . . . What? . . . Oh! . . . All right, Miss Royce, I tell him. (*The door bell sounds. A refined buzz*) I tell him. . . . Yes, Miss Royce. (*He goes to the door*) Yissir?

(*There enters a rather nondescript man in the middle forties, an indefinable air of the small-towner about him*)

THE MAN (*heartily*). Good morning!

ITO (*uncertainly*). Yissir?

THE MAN. You remember me. I'm Mr. Niles's brother. Is he up yet?

ITO. Oh! Mr. Niles shaving. I tell him.

GEORGE NILES. It's all right. (*He raises his voice*) Hello, Dick!

RICHARD (*from the bedroom*). Hello! Who is it?

GEORGE. It's me. George.

RICHARD. With you in a minute.

GEORGE. No hurry. All the time in the world. (*There is a pause. His eye goes to the breakfast table*) Somebody coming to breakfast, eh?

RICHARD. What? Oh—yes.

GEORGE. Well, I'll get right out. (*He strolls over to the breakfast table*) Pretty soft for you writers—breakfast at eleven-thirty. (*He looks over a bowl of fruit on the table, sinks an inquiring finger nail into a pear, puts it down and takes up another one. He takes a juicy bite of it and speaks with his mouth full*) Always through with *my* breakfast seven o'clock.

(RICHARD *comes out of the bedroom. He is in bathrobe and pajamas, and both are Finchley's best*)

RICHARD (*polite, but that's all*). Hello, George.

GEORGE. Hi! How's the kid brother?

RICHARD. Fine, thanks.

GEORGE. Just dropped in to say good-bye. I'm going back this afternoon.

RICHARD. Oh, thought you were staying till Wednesday, George.

GEORGE. Well, finished up yesterday. Might as well go back. You know, Dick, I was thinking: why don't *you* come home for a while? Be *good* for you. Get away from all this—— (*He feels for the right phrase*) . . . New York, running around, restaurants. Get some good fresh air in your lungs, and some home cooking under your belt, and I bet you'd write better. I couldn't write a letter in this place.

RICHARD (*starts to open the morning mail*). Oh, I'm all right.

GEORGE. You know, we'd get an awful kick having you back. You're a big man in Evansville. Gosh, what a kick Mom and Pop would have got if they could see you now.

RICHARD (*glancing up from a letter*). You look after the cemetery, don't you, George?

GEORGE. Sure—Ed and I don't let a year pass.

ITO (*returning from the pantry*). Excuse, Mr. Niles. Miss Royce call while you shave. She say you wait here. She come over.

RICHARD. She did? (*A glance at his watch*) What time did she say she was coming?

ITO. She not say. (RICHARD, *annoyed by this news, starts for the telephone*) She say you not call her. She come over.

RICHARD (*puzzled*). Not call her? Are you sure you got that straight, Ito?

ITO. Yes, Mr. Niles. She talk very low, but I understand.

RICHARD (*thoughtfully*). That's funny.

GEORGE (*with considerable innuendo*). I thought maybe it was *her* coming to breakfast.

RICHARD. What? No.

GEORGE. Good-looking woman, all right. Stunner. Darned good in your show, too. Of course she's pretty sexy, but I guess that's what they want. (RICHARD, *his mind on the 'phone message, is pacing thoughtfully up and down.* GEORGE, *with no little hesitancy, continues*) I don't suppose any of that stuff in the newspapers about you and her was true—huh? Just newspaper talk?

RICHARD. What did you say?

(*The telephone rings*)

GEORGE (*half to himself*). Not that I'd blame you. . . . Good-looking woman.

which the command itself was originally given, namely, as a memorial of God's having rested from the creation of the world, cannot be transferred from the seventh day to the first; nor can any new motive be substituted in its place, whether the resurrection of our Lord, or any other, without the sanction of a divine commandment. Since then it is evident from more than one passage of Scripture, that the original Sabbath is abrogated, and since we are nowhere told that it has been transferred from one day to another, nor is any reason given why it should be so transferred, the church, when she sanctioned a change in this matter, evinced, not her obedience to God's command (inasmuch as the command existed no longer) but her own rightful liberty; for in any other view it can only be termed folly. To make any change whatever in a commandment of God, whether we believe that commandment to be still in force or not, is equally dangerous, and equally reprehensible; inasmuch as in so doing we are either annulling what is not yet repealed, or re-enacting what is obsolete. It ought also to be shown what essential principle of morality is involved in the number seven; and why, when released from the obligation of the Sabbath, we should still be bound to respect a particular number, possessing no inherent virtue or efficacy. The only moral sabbatical rest which remains for us under the gospel, is spiritual and eternal, pertaining to another life rather than the present. Heb. iv. 9–11. "there remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God; for he that hath entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his; let us labor

you. They must want the show, all right. They came up to seventy-five.

RICHARD. They did?

GEORGE (*eyes bulging*). Seventy-five what?

NASH. Seventy-five thousand.

GEORGE (*stunned*). Seventy-five thousand *dollars*? For *that* play?

RICHARD (*with a smile*). We feel the same way, George.

GEORGE. Oh, I didn't mean the play wasn't good, Mr. Nash, but the story isn't much, is it? It's just those funny lines of Richard's, and you can't hear words in a picture.

NASH (*smilingly*). No. . . . What do you say, Dick? Do you want to take it?

RICHARD. I don't know. Think they'll go any higher?

NASH. They might. They want it for Mae Murray.

RICHARD. Oh—let's take it.

NASH. All right—I'll shoot 'em a wire.

GEORGE (*to himself*). Seventy-five thousand dollars.

NASH. By the way, Richard, I see somebody's going to produce that night-club melodrama that I turned down. *You* read it.

RICHARD. Oh, yes. "Bright Lights." Wasn't that the name of it?

NASH. That's it. They've changed the name, though. Calling it "Broadway." Good title, but the play won't get a nickel. You didn't like it, did you?

RICHARD. No. Who's producing it?

NASH. I don't know. Nobody you ever heard of. So long, Richard. Good day, Mr. Niles.

(*They toss "good-byes" at him as he disappears*)

GEORGE. Well, I got to be going too.

RICHARD. Well, George, nice to have seen you. Give my love to everyone back home.

GEORGE. Seventy-five thousand dollars. Well, I guess it was worth it—Ed and I putting you through college. Ed working all those years in the knitting mill, and me

nights in the drugstore, just so you could go to college and earn all this money. Yes, *sir.* Ed and I never regretted doing it, either—not for one minute. No, *sir.* (*His eyes finally meet* RICHARD'S)

RICHARD (*realizing, only too well, what is expected of him*). What's the name of that oldest boy of yours, George?

GEORGE (*brightening immediately*). Lester. Why?

RICHARD (*heading for the checkbook*). I just thought I'd like to make him a little present.

GEORGE (*a shade too heartily*). Oh, you don't have to bother with anything like that.

RICHARD. How old is he?

GEORGE. Fourteen. Hell of a kid. Lot like you used to be, Dick. (*As* RICHARD *starts to write*) Say, Lester certainly will appreciate this. Just make it out to cash. (*The door bell sounds*) Can't trust a kid of his age with that amount of money. You know, he writes, too. Like a son of a gun. I'm going to send you some of his stuff. (*As* RICHARD *hands him the check*) Thanks, Dick! Well, good-bye! (*Without another word, he rushes pell-mell to the door, which* ITO *has just opened. In his haste to get out he almost knocks down* JONATHAN CRALE, *who is entering*)

RICHARD. Jonny! My God, but I'm glad to see you! (*He throws his arms around* CRALE *and gives him a great friendly hug*) Where the hell have you been? It's been weeks!

CRALE. Listen—don't hang it on me, you big stiff. *I'm* always around. It's you, posing for those lousy pictures in *Vanity Fair* all day.

RICHARD. Crale, you're getting soft. Have you been reading *Vanity Fair*?

CRALE. God, no! Saw a copy lying on a garbage can.

RICHARD. Well, anyway, I got you at last. . . . All right, Ito.

CRALE. Yeah—a breakfast date. What is this—a new style or something? I don't like it.

RICHARD. The whole thing is a big conspiracy to get you out of bed before noon. The reason you've got no sense, Crale, is that when we were at college all the important classes were held in the mornings, so of course you never knew anything about them.

(*They are at the breakfast table by this time, about to start in on the orange juice*)

CRALE. Well, you're wrong today. I've been up for hours. Just got back from the morgue.

RICHARD. The morgue? What happened?

CRALE. Nothing happened. I just like to go down there.

RICHARD. You mean you just like to go down to the morgue?

CRALE. Sure. There's nothing gives you such a sense of life and death. Whenever I'm feeling too cocky about my work, or if I'm low about anything, I go down there, and I come out feeling fine.

RICHARD. Ever think of going to a movie? Honest, Jonny, the longer I know you——

CRALE. Well, I don't let myself get bored, anyhow. That's one of the secrets of my failure, I guess.

RICHARD. How are things going, Jonny? Sold any pictures?

CRALE. Don't be a God-damn fool. Nobody buys my pictures. In the first place, I haven't painted any for six months.

RICHARD. Oh, dear. Well, no use my lecturing you again. What have you been up to otherwise?

CRALE. Well, I was in jail last week.

RICHARD (*his fork descending on the plate with a clank*) Now, don't tell me you just went *there* for the fun of it.

CRALE. No. I was arrested. That's why I missed your opening—I was locked up.

RICHARD (*helplessly*). What did you get into this time?

CRALE. Garment workers' strike. I was picketing.

RICHARD. You're not a garment worker.

CRALE. No, but I thought they were right. So I picketed for them, and—happened to beat up a cop.

RICHARD. I give up. (*As he is served*) Thank you, Ito. (*He takes a bite of egg*) You missed a good show, you know.

CRALE. I saw it last night.

RICHARD. You did? . . . Well?

CRALE (*hesitates for a second, then takes the plunge*). My God, Richard, what do you want me to say? You know how I feel about those plays. I liked it; I laughed. And by the time I got to Broadway and Forty-fifth Street I'd forgotten all about it. It's a carbon copy of the other two you wrote. This year's model.

RICHARD (*good-humoredly*). Well, a lot of people don't agree with you.

CRALE. Oh, I know it's a hit. But what are you going to do? Keep *on* writing those things? You're better than that, Richard. My God, you wrote a fine play once.

RICHARD. All right, and what happened to it? Two weeks at the Provincetown Playhouse.

CRALE. Yes, and you were better off then with a failure than you are now with a hit, whichever way you look at it.

RICHARD (*pushing his chair back*). So that's the new argument, eh? If it's a hit it isn't a good play. It's wrong to be successful. You've got to starve to death and write plays for a little art theater that nobody comes to see.

CRALE. I don't mean that. You *know* I don't mean that.

RICHARD. All right. What *do* you mean?

CRALE. I mean—all *this*. (*A wave of the arms that takes in the room*) That Mongolian you've got out there. The whole life you're leading now. The people around you. It's doing something to you. You're not the same Richard I used to know.

RICHARD. Why? Because I don't eat in those bum res-

taurants and don't have to worry about where my next dollar's coming from?

CRALE. Yes—among other reasons. You're getting away from the guts of things into a whole mess of nice polite *nothing.* And that's what your plays are about. Why, I used to come into the studio and find you bubbling over with ideas—good, juicy ones. And in the past year all I've heard you talk about is how much the play grossed, and what you got for the movie rights, and you met Noel Coward.

RICHARD. All right—now let me tell *you* something. I *like* my life the way it is now. I like meeting Noel Coward, and I like being successful. I'm enjoying myself for the first time. I had plenty of the other thing—all those years with Helen. Working in a shoe store all day and writing that fine play at night. And what for? So that you and Julia could tell me how great I was? I don't see myself writing plays for two people, and being miserable the rest of the time. Why has that got to be part of it? Why do you have to be poor to write a fine play?

CRALE. Because when you're rich you never write it. That's why.

RICHARD. I don't want to be *rich,* Jonny. But give me a chance. Give me a chance to get a little money in the bank and I'll write you a fine play. I'll write you the finest play that ever closed in a week.

CRALE. No, you won't. The longer you wait the tougher it gets. It's like a man saying he's going to take up reading when he's forty. You start reading at ten or you don't read at all. Besides, the trouble with these plays you're doing is you don't dare stop. You've got to write one a year or they'll forget you ever wrote a line. But you write one good play and they'll *always* know who you are. If I paint one good picture they'll remember *me.*

RICHARD. But I'm not like you, Jonny. That's the answer to the whole thing. I'm not like you!

CRALE. But you *are*, Richard. I know you too well for you to tell me that. You *are*, but you *won't* be if you go on living this way, getting in deeper and deeper with these people. I know all this isn't hard to take—(*A gesture that takes in the room*)—it must be very pleasant. It's fine for Ogden, and Nash, and people like that, but you and I have got no right to it. I get my fun in front of an easel, and it's the only fun I'm entitled to. And that's where you ought to get yours—in front of a typewriter. I don't know whether you ever get any reward for it, but I do know this: you've only got so many good years, and when they're gone—and that may come sooner than you think, Richard—if you haven't made use of them, it's very tough. Because then you've got nothing.

(RICHARD *says nothing for a long moment. Then:*)

RICHARD (*pacing, thinking*). It's hard, Jonny. I'd rather have your respect than anything. But it's hard to know which way to turn. When you've had nothing all your life, and suddenly get all this, maybe you have to be stronger than I am to push it aside. That's what I meant by a couple of years more——

CRALE. No, Richard. You've got to make a clean cut. (*He pauses a moment*) Right from the very core.

RICHARD. What do you mean by that?

CRALE. Althea. You've got to start by cutting her right out of your life.

RICHARD (*stiffening*). So that's it.

CRALE. Richard, I couldn't say this if I didn't feel closer to you than I do to—my mother. Althea's poison for you. It's just sex—that's all it is. You can't love that woman. And as long as you're tied up with her you're tied up with everything she stands for. Get rid of her. You don't love her. You wouldn't *marry* her, would you?

RICHARD. Marry her? She's got a husband, in the first place.

CRALE. All right, then it's just a question of sleeping with her. Isn't it?

(RICHARD *looks at him without answering. He takes a turn around the room*)

RICHARD (*slowly*). Jonny, I've got nothing on this afternoon that I can't call off. Let's spend the day together, have dinner, and talk right through the whole God-damn night.

CRALE. That's the stuff—that sounds like the old Richard. (*An arm thrown around* RICHARD'S *shoulder*) Richard, I'm—I'm very glad. It's going to seem like old times, having a day together. Listen—let's pick up Julie and make it an old-fashioned session. What do you say?

RICHARD. All right. I've been feeling a little guilty about Julia lately. I haven't seen as much of her as I—Jonny, isn't she drinking a good deal?

CRALE (*quietly*). She certainly is. A great deal.

RICHARD. Why? She never used to. What's the matter with her?

CRALE. Don't you know?

RICHARD (*trying to think*). No, I don't think I do.

CRALE. Ever occur to you that she might be in love with you?

RICHARD (*stunned*). Julia? In love with me?

CRALE. So in love with you that she can't bear—what's going on.

RICHARD (*unable quite to realize it*). Why—I never thought of Julia that way. She's the swellest person in the world to be with, but Julia's like—well, she's like *you*. She's some one you talk to like a man. I never thought of her as——

CRALE. Well, there you have it. Come on—get your things on.

RICHARD (*still turning it all over in his mind*). Julia. . . .

CRALE. Well! Want to get dressed?

RICHARD. What?

CRALE. You can't go *that* way.

RICHARD. Oh! (*He starts toward the bedroom, then stops short, remembering*) Oh, look, Jonny! I can't go right away. I just remembered.

CRALE. What's the matter?

RICHARD. Well—nothing important—just something I've got to—where'll you be in about an hour?

CRALE. How about picking me up at Julie's?

RICHARD. Okay.

CRALE. It's a date. (*He goes to him*) Listen, you dirty capitalist—you still love me after all the things I said?

RICHARD. Don't be an idiot. Nothing can ever change that, no matter what you say or do. Now get the hell out of here, before we both bust out crying.

CRALE. See you in an hour! (*He goes.*)

(RICHARD *stands looking after him for a moment, then takes a few thoughtful steps around the room.* ITO *comes in from the pantry. He looks surprised, and a little hurt, at the remains of the breakfast on the table*)

ITO. Something matter breakfast, Mr. Niles?

RICHARD. H'm? No, no—fine. Just take everything away. (ITO *clears the table as* RICHARD, *still pacing, nervously lights a cigarette. The door bell sounds*) I'll go, Ito. (*He opens the door as* ITO *vanishes into his pantry.* ALTHEA ROYCE *stands framed in the doorway, a small overnight bag in her hand*)

ALTHEA (*rushing in and throwing herself into his arms. Obviously in a state of great emotional stress*). Oh, my darling!

RICHARD. Althea! What's the matter?

ALTHEA. I've left him, Richard! I've left him at last!

RICHARD. What?

ALTHEA. It was terrible! I haven't slept all night! He kept following me from one room to another, hammering on the doors! (*She is near hysteria*)

RICHARD. Althea! Get hold of yourself! Tell me what happened!

ALTHEA (*tensely*). Last night—after I left you—I went home. I didn't mean to say anything—but suddenly—it all came over me. I saw myself—night after night—coming home—him sitting there. I couldn't stand it—I said, "Harry, I'm leaving you—I want a divorce."

RICHARD (*almost inaudible*). Good God!

ALTHEA. He began to cry . . . I've been very good to him, Richard. All these years. I owe him nothing. . . . All night he kept it up. All morning. You don't know what I've been through! Finally I just—left. I told Della to pack my things, and—left.

RICHARD. But—what are you going to do—Althea?

ALTHEA. Do? Here I am, Richard. You're all I care about. (*The telephone rings. Her hand goes convulsively to her throat*) What's that?

(RICHARD *goes to the 'phone.*)

RICHARD. Hello. . . . Yes . . . Yes, she's here. (*He turns to* ALTHEA) It's Della.

(ALTHEA *hesitates for a brief moment, then goes jerkily to the 'phone and takes the receiver*)

ALTHEA. Yes, Della? (*She listens for a long, taut moment, her face expressionless. Suddenly her hand goes limp. Staring vacantly in front of her, she slowly hangs up the receiver. Her lips move, but no sound comes forth*)

RICHARD (*sharply*). Althea!

ALTHEA. It's—Harry. He's killed himself.

RICHARD (*with a sharp intake of breath*). Oh, God!

(ALTHEA *starts uncertainly toward him, then suddenly rushes to him*)

ALTHEA (*her arms around his neck*). Richard! . . . Richard! . . . Richard!

(*He stands dully for a moment. Then, as if they were weighted, his arms come up and envelop her*)

Curtain

ACT TWO

SCENE I

JONATHAN CRALE'S *studio. A skylight room on the top floor of an old house, somewhere in the East Twenties.*

It is cluttered up, of course, with all the traditional paraphernalia of the artist—easel, model stand, brushes, canvases. In addition, however, there are several objects around that are much more difficult to explain. A huge brass telescope, on a tripod, stands near the window. There is an old-fashioned Russian samovar, enormous, pushed into a corner. A pair of ice skates have been tossed onto a chair, and a pogo stick leans against the wall.

The year is 1925, the time approximately ten o'clock of a bright Spring morning. JONATHAN CRALE *is sprawled in a dilapidated easy chair. He is in his pajamas, but, since the morning is a trifle chilly, he is wearing a coat. It is, however, a woman's coat with an imitation fox collar.*

To top it all off he is very seriously playing an accordion, or at least trying to. He has set his heart on mastering the popular tune of the day, but is having a hard time of it.

From the bedroom comes a GIRL'S *voice.*

THE GIRL. Craley! (*He is preoccupied with his music*) Craley!

CRALE. What is it?

THE GIRL. I can't find my step-ins.

CRALE. Well, I haven't got them on. (*He starts playing again*)

THE GIRL (*after a moment*). It's all right—I got 'em! (*There is another pause, during which the music is atrocious*) Craley, help me close this bag, will you? It won't shut.

CRALE (*not stirring*). You can shut it. Take some things out of it. (*He resumes playing, trying a few extra flourishes this time*)

(THE GIRL *comes out of the bedroom—something very attractive in the early twenties. She carries a small suitcase in one hand and a hat in the other*)

THE GIRL. I don't see why I have to get out of here just because this friend of yours is coming back. You'd think he was a minister or something. I don't see why I can't stay. There are two beds in there. We wouldn't bother him any.

CRALE (*musingly*). Molly, I just thought of a one-word description of you. Inhibited.

MOLLY. I don't see why you have to be so squeamish about *him,* anyway. *He* knows what it's all about—your Mr. Niles. From what I read in the papers he could give us *all* lessons. No wonder he went away. I'm surprised he's got the nerve to come back.

CRALE. Come on, Toots—out you go.

MOLLY. I guess that Althea Royce must be pretty hot stuff, if she's anything like her plays.

CRALE. "'The time has come,' the Walrus said"——

MOLLY. Aw, Craley! You haven't painted my picture yet. I haven't even posed for you. (*She gestures toward the easel, on which is a perfectly blank canvas*)

CRALE. Molly, I'm afraid that if you haven't posed in three months, something must have happened to prevent it.

MOLLY. Well, let me just stay and get a look at him.

CRALE. Am I going to have to——

MOLLY. Oh, all right! Give me my coat and I'll go! (*The*

downstairs buzzer sounds. MOLLY *is immediately excited*) Oh, is that him?

CRALE. Listen, his boat doesn't get in until eleven-thirty, so you haven't got a chance. Press the button, will you?

(MOLLY *goes to the push button as* CRALE *gets himself out of her coat*)

MOLLY (*as* CRALE *helps her on with the coat*). Craley, you still love me, don't you?

CRALE. Crazy about you. Good-by.

MOLLY. Oh, you! (*She gathers up her bag*)

CRALE. Take care of yourself, Molly. You were a good fellow when you had it. (*She goes.* CRALE *looks around the room—decides to be an astronomer for awhile. Draws a chair up to the telescope, starts to sit down, discovers the ice skates and tosses them onto the floor. He is intently peering through the telescope when* JULIA *enters*) Julie, the sun's out!

JULIA. You don't say so! Do you mean to say that you can look through a little bit of a thing like that and tell when the sun is out? That's a wonderful invention! Do people know about that? (*The* JULIA *of 1925 is fresh, buoyant, youthful, happy. There is a definite glow about her*)

CRALE. Why, you're all dressed up, you little son-of-a-gun.

JULIA (*throwing her arms around his neck in sheer joy*). Of course I'm dressed up! And of course the sun is out! Do you think it would dare stay in with Richard coming home! There'll be a moon tonight, and stars, and a milky way, and what the hell are you doing in pajamas? We've got to meet that boat!

CRALE. I overslept.

JULIA. I know. I met her going down the stairs. . . . What was that she had with her—a sample case?

CRALE. Uh-huh. Fuller brush lady.

JULIA (*unable to contain her high spirits*). Oh, Jonny! I never realized how much I wanted to see that man!

Eight months! For God's sake get out of those pajamas! I was up at five o'clock!

CRALE. Fifty-six shakes of a lamb's tail! (*He disappears into the bedroom, the pajama top coming off over his head as he goes*)

JULIA. Well, make it fast! I want to see that boat come up the bay, I want to wave to him from the end of the pier. I want to see him walk down the gangplank! Have you got money for a taxi?

CRALE (*from the bedroom*). Huh?

JULIA. Have you got money for a taxi?

CRALE (*still in the bedroom*). I think so. How far is it?

JULIA. I don't know. Where's the pier?

CRALE (*calling*). What?

JULIA. Where's the pier?

(CRALE *appears in the doorway. He has donned a shirt, but still wears his pajama pants*)

CRALE. Don't *you* know where the pier is?

JULIA. No. You said you were going to find out.

CRALE. No, I didn't. You said *you* were going to.

JULIA. Oh, Jonny!

CRALE. Well, we can find out in two minutes. What's the name of the boat?

JULIA. The *Rosamond,* of course.

CRALE. Well, let's see. Do they put private yachts in the newspaper?

JULIA. I don't know. Where's the newspaper?

CRALE. I haven't got one.

JULIA. Don't you take a morning paper?

CRALE. No, I don't. Does Mr. Hearst buy my paintings?

JULIA. *Very* funny. But where does the boat dock?

CRALE. Now, don't get panicky. People have been in worse jams than this. We can figure it out.

JULIA. I know. You sit down and say to yourself, "Where would I go if I was a yacht?"

CRALE. My God, it's Ogden's boat, isn't it? We'll call up his house and *ask* them. *They'd* know.

JULIA (*shaking her head*). Not listed. He's too rich now.

CRALE. All right—his office!

JULIA. Now you've got it! . . . What's the name of that company? Investment—investment. The Something-or-Other Investment Company.

CRALE. That's a big help.

JULIA (*thinking it out*). What do people invest in?

CRALE (*a sudden idea*). I know how we can find out! I know just the man! (*He goes to the telephone*) Stuyvesant 1840. . . . Old fellow at the Sailors' Home. Knows every boat that comes into the harbor—I don't care what it is. That's all he does all day. Looks up boats. Mud scows to the *Aquitania*. . . . Sailors' Home? . . . I want to talk to Captain Peterson. . . . Peterson. . . . Well, tell him to stop for a minute and come to the 'phone. It's important. (*He turns to* JULIA) He's playing chess.

JULIA. Not looking up boats today, huh?

CRALE. Greatest sea dog you ever met in your life. Didn't I tell you about him, Julie? Picked him up on the Battery. Looks magnificent. Right out of Conrad! I brought him straight up here to paint his picture. Tickled him no end.

JULIA (*eyeing the blank canvas*). It's good, too.

CRALE. Say, once he started talking, Michelangelo couldn't have painted. What a life he's had! Mutiny on two ships. Feet frozen to the mast. Why, once in Tahiti—hello! Captain Peterson? . . . This is Jonathan Crale. . . . How are you? . . . Huh? . . . Well, I haven't started painting it yet, Captain. Just some rough sketches. But it's going to be a great picture. Wait till you see it!

JULIA. He should live so long.

CRALE. Listen, Captain, there's a private yacht coming in

today and I want to know where it docks. . . . Huh? . . . It's called the *Rosamond.* . . . *Rosamond.* Owner, Albert J. Ogden. And it's got a lot of rich bastards on board, if that'll help you any. . . . All right. I will. (*To* JULIA) He's talking it over with the boys.

JULIA. Tell 'em to take their time.

CRALE. You watch—they'll know. They'll know it, if anybody—(*The 'phone again*)—what? . . . How's that? (*To* JULIA *again*) Captain Schmidt says it got in two days ago.

JULIA. Oh, for God's sake!

CRALE (*into the 'phone*). No, that must be another boat, Captain. . . . The *Rosamond.* . . . That's right. Coming in from Gibraltar. . . . That's it! That's the one! (*To* JULIA) I told you he'd know it. . . . I'm listening. . . . Pier 19, foot of 26th Street. That's fine—I'm right at 24th Street. . . . Huh? . . . Oh! 26th Street, Brooklyn.

JULIA. Oh, dear!

CRALE. Well, thanks a lot, Captain. I'm coming down there some day and beat the pants off you boys at chess. . . . Well, you practice up. . . . Good-by. (*He hangs up*)

JULIA (*who has been pacing impatiently*). Jonny, will you get dressed? Brooklyn! It'll take hours!

CRALE. I'll hurry! Honest I will! (*He scoots into the bedroom*)

JULIA. Brooklyn! If I was rich enough to own a yacht, I'd own a pier too. And I'd have it on the lake in Central Park, where you could get at it.

CRALE (*from the bedroom*). What did you say?

JULIA. Never mind! Get dressed! (*A look around. She begins to tidy the room*) It's a wonder you wouldn't fix this place up, with Richard coming. Everybody doesn't like to live in a mess.

CRALE. I do!

JULIA (*pausing in her work. A rapt look comes into her*

eyes). Jonny, won't it be wonderful to have him back! Fresh, and starting all over again! That whole terrible business behind him. I'm so excited I could sing! I *will* sing! (*And she does. A phrase of "Look for the Silver Lining"*)

CRALE. You're terrible!

JULIA. I don't care! I don't care about anything! (*She stands for a moment, smiling at nothing in particular*) You know, Jonny, I was thinking this morning—it's funny how things work out. For the best, I mean. Everything seemed so hopeless eight months ago, but when you look at it now it seems as if it was all planned. He *had* to go through all that. That one taste of success was bad for him anyway, Jonny—he liked it. That shake-up was just what he needed. We were able to get him away.

CRALE (*emerging from the bedroom, struggling with his necktie*). "This world is so full of a number of things, I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings." (*He gives a little snarl*)

JULIA. Jonny, do you think he's finished the play?

CRALE (*at the mirror*). Maybe.

JULIA. In Cairo he had one act done. If he's had any luck at all——

CRALE. Well, we'll know soon enough. He'll be full of it.

JULIA. I've got some news for Richard. And you too.

CRALE. Yeah?

JULIA. I've started the novel, Jonny. Day before yesterday.

CRALE. You don't say?

JULIA. Thirty-five pages. I think it's good, too.

CRALE. Gosh, Julie, I'm tickled to death.

JULIA. Jonny, I want to kick up my heels! Where can I learn to kick up my heels?

CRALE. United Cigar Stores.

JULIA. Oooooh! . . . On Saturday something terrible is going to happen to me.

CRALE. Huh? Why?

JULIA. Everything is too swell right now. I'm too happy. I always figure if I have a Thursday and Friday like this, on Saturday I'm due for a sock in the nose. Oh, Jonny, I'm glad I was born! (*In sheer exuberance of spirits she picks up a crayon and quickly sketches in a huge black mass on the canvas*)

CRALE. Hey! What are you doing? Do you think canvas grows on trees?

JULIA. It's Captain Peterson! Don't you see his beard? (*The buzzer sounds*) Who's that?

CRALE. How do I know?

JULIA. We're not stopping for anybody!

CRALE (*as he presses the button*). Okay! (*He opens the hall door and calls down*) Who is it?

A VOICE (*from two or three flights down*). It's me! Richard!

CRALE. It's Richard!

JULIA. Richard!

(*They almost fly out of the door—you hear the clatter of their feet as they rush down the stairs, and their excited cries: "Richard! For God's sake!" . . . "We were coming to meet you!" . . . "Richard!" . . . "Look at him, Julie—he's ten pounds heavier!" . . . "Did you miss me? I'll bet you never knew I was away!"*)

(*The voices swell as they approach the room.* CRALE: *"Honest to God, we were just this minute leaving the house!"* JULIA: *"We'd have been there hours ago, but he wouldn't put his pants on!"* RICHARD: *"Say, I know you two! I'm surprised you remembered the day, even! Gosh but it's good to see you!"*)

(*They bring him into the room—*RICHARD *in the middle, the other two clinging to him. Looming up in the rear, his face beaming, is* ALBERT OGDEN)

(*Except for a coat of tan,* RICHARD NILES *has the beginnings of the man we have already seen—well-tailored, an air of assurance. His appearance and bearing, how-*

ever, are in the nature of a surprise to CRALE *and* JULIA. *Even the mustache is a product of the trip*)

CRALE (*as they come in*). And maybe you don't think *you're* a sight for sore eyes! Gee, but it's good to see you, you bum!

JULIA. Richard, was it wonderful? Was it all wonderful—Egypt, and India, and——

CRALE. Let's get a look at him first! Stand over there in the light!

OGDEN. Doesn't he look great? Did I do a good job?

CRALE. Look at that outfit, will you? What's that—London?

RICHARD. Hawes and Curtis!

JULIA. Right out of Bond Street. Are they paid for?

RICHARD (*turning around, mannequin-fashion*). Like 'em?

CRALE. Stand still a minute! There's something—my God, he's got a mustache!

JULIA. He hasn't! Why, so he has! Richard!

CRALE. A mustache! Why didn't you cable?

RICHARD. Oh, it's just a little thing. For God's sake, stop talking about me and let me get a look at you two! Tell me some news!

CRALE. Listen—you've knocked everything out of our heads, coming in this way! What happened?

RICHARD. We got in an hour ahead of time.

OGDEN. Made the tide.

RICHARD. Look here, you people must know *something*. I've been away eight months. What have you been doing? Whom have you been seeing? What's been going on?

JULIA. We haven't got any news! You're the one with the news! What about the new play, Richard? I can't wait! Have you finished it?

CRALE. Have you, Richard?

OGDEN. You bet he finished it! And it's great!

JULIA. Richard! (*She throws her arms around him*)

CRALE. Say, that's real news!

JULIA. When can we hear it, Richard? It sounded so swell! I was so excited! When can we hear it?

RICHARD (*uncomfortable*). Well, I'm not so sure that you and Jonny——

OGDEN. Just wait! You'll die laughing! He read it to us and we almost fell overboard! Novel as hell—the whole thing takes place on a yacht! Everybody's wife gets into the wrong cabin! "All on Deck"—isn't that the name of it, Richard?

RICHARD. Ah—yes. (*A little nervous laugh*) It's not as funny as all that, Albert.

(*There is a slight pause*)

JULIA. But, Richard—that isn't the play you wrote us about.

RICHARD (*ill at ease*). No—it isn't, Julia.

JULIA. But—what happened to that? It—sounded—so swell.

RICHARD. You mean the coal-mine play? Well, I did an act of it—*you* know, I wrote you—but I was afraid of it. I don't think they want plays like that right now.

OGDEN. I should say not. There's enough trouble in real life without going to the theatre for it. People want to laugh.

RICHARD. Well, they want serious plays too, but—(*He faces* JULIA)—I read it to the crowd and they didn't seem to think— (*He is interrupted by a staccato buzzing of the door bell—two or three rings*)

JULIA (*turning*). What's that?

OGDEN (*calling out the open door*). Coming right down! . . . It's Rosamond and some of the crowd. I guess they're getting impatient.

CRALE. Rosamond? Why didn't you tell us? Ask 'em to come up! (*He starts for the door*)

OGDEN. No, no! We've got to go! Only stopped a minute —just wanted to say hello.

CRALE. Oh! Too bad we can't all have lunch together. I'd

like to see her. . . . Your bags in the car, Richard? I'll bring 'em up.

OGDEN. Oh, Richard's coming with us.

JULIA. What?

RICHARD. We're—we're spending the week-end at the Flemings'. We kind of made arrangements on the boat for a farewell get-together. The whole crowd are going out, and—I couldn't—I'll be back Monday morning.

(*The buzzer sounds again—a long, imperative summons*)

OGDEN (*yelling down the stairs*). Oh, all right! . . . We'd better go down. Good-bye, people! Coming, Richard?

RICHARD. Ah—just a second.

OGDEN. Okay! (*The bell again. Still more demanding*) Coming down! Lay off the bell, will you? (*He is gone*)

CRALE (*making the best of it—giving* RICHARD *a pat on the back*). All right, kid—have a good time. When are you coming in—Monday? Leave me your trunk keys and I'll have you all unpacked.

RICHARD. Well, look, Jonny—would you care a lot if—if I didn't come back here to live? You see, I found on the boat—I could work better being alone, and—anyway it puts you to a lot of trouble having me here. I thought I'd just take a room at the Lombardy or somewhere until I can get a place of my own. You don't mind, do you?

CRALE (*masking his disappointment*). Why—no. If you think you can work better that way, Richard—that's all right.

RICHARD. It isn't as if we can't see each other just as much. I—I want to talk to you both about the coal-mine play. Maybe I could go back to it, if—you liked it. Ah—how about dinner Monday night? Are you both free?

CRALE. We're both free. If you are.

RICHARD. Fine. I'll keep it open. (*There is an awkward pause*) Well—I guess I'd better go down before they start ringing again. Good-bye, Jonny, you old fool. See

you Monday. . . . Good-bye, Julia. (*He blows her a kiss*) Can't tell you how good it's been to see you two again.

CRALE. Good-bye, Richard.

RICHARD. Good-bye.

JULIA (*as he goes through the door*). Good-bye, Richard. (*She looks down the stairs after him*) Good-bye. (*Slowly she pulls the door shut and leans with her back against it. Her voice takes on a new meaning*) Good-bye, Richard. . . . (*She gives a shrill, unpleasant laugh*) Hail and farewell! . . . Jonny, we saw the last of Richard Niles eight months ago—the day he got on that boat. He's met The Crowd, Jonny! He's met The Crowd, and there he goes! And do you remember something, Jonny? *We did it!* You and I. That day in the court-house. We made him get on that boat. Everything works out for the best, eh? Did I say that? Well, if I did I was a God-damned fool!

(CRALE, *who has slumped into the easy chair, gives a single blast of discord on the accordion*)

Curtain

SCENE II

A Court-house Corridor.

The year is 1924.

A couple of ATTENDANTS *stand guard outside a courtroom door, from behind which comes the droning voice of a* JUDGE.

THE JUDGE. —at which time the plaintiff will proceed with the presentation of her evidence. Before taking an adjournment, may I remind the gentlemen of the press

that this is a court of law, and that the dignity of the court must be upheld at all times? I will hold in contempt of court any newspaper photographer who attempts to take another picture in this courtroom, and if there are any further demonstrations from the public attending this trial I will order the courtroom cleared. (*There is the sound of the descending gavel*) Court is adjourned until nine o'clock tomorrow morning.

(*From the courtroom come the voices of the* BAILIFFS, *growing louder as the cry is picked up by those nearer the door. "Court is adjourned!" "Court adjourned!"*)

(*Immediately a babel of sound springs up inside the courtroom, and from the door there emerges* THE PUBLIC *—or, at least, those lovely representatives thereof as are inevitably drawn to any legal procedure that promises cheaply sensational developments. The women are sleazy, cheaply dressed, sensation-hungry. There is, however, a sprinkling of Bronx housewives and two or three over-dressed West End Avenue ladies. The men are of the variety generally referred to as loafers, but among them too there are a few who are better dressed*)

(*The crowd is in holiday mood, and is happily discussing the juiciness of the day's evidence as it crosses the corridor*)

A GIRL. Are you coming tomorrow, Evelyn?

EVELYN. You bet I am. Tomorrow's going to be juicy.

A WOMAN. Did you get a good look at Niles? He looks paler than he did yesterday.

HER FRIEND. Paler? He ought to be blushing all over the place.

THE WOMAN. I feel sorry for that Mrs. Niles, with a baby and everything.

A MAN. The poor sucker's unlucky, that's all. It could happen to any of us.

ANOTHER WOMAN (*emerging from the courtroom*). Be-

lieve me, if he was my husband I wouldn't be suing for a divorce. They'd have me on trial for murder.

HER COMPANION. Did you see what the paper said today about Althea Royce? That editorial in the *Mirror*?

THE FIRST WOMAN. Yeah—nice for that little kid of his, ain't it? They're the ones that suffer with these divorces.

STILL ANOTHER WOMAN. My little girl said to me today—she's just old enough to read—she said: "Mamma, what was it they did on the leopard skin?" What could I tell her?

A PASSING MAN. Tell her to keep away from leopard skins.

THE WOMAN'S FRIEND. Imagine how that poor Mrs. Niles must have felt—coming there and finding the two of them on that leopard skin! I know how I'd feel!

A MAN (*to a male companion*). We've got a leopard skin up at the country club. Gives me an idea.

HIS COMPANION. Let me know how you make out.

A WOMAN. I wouldn't miss tomorrow for anything. That's when she's going to tell how she found 'em.

HER FRIEND. Do you think Althea Royce will testify?

THE WOMAN. What could she say? She was caught, wasn't she?

HER FRIEND. The *Mirror* is going to run her love secrets. Her maid wrote it.

THE ATTENDANTS. No loitering, please! Keep these corridors clear. Do your talking outside. Outside, please! Keep moving! Outside!

(*On the heels of the disappearing crowd three or four reporters come out of the courtroom*)

A REPORTER. How about a drink, boys?

ANOTHER REPORTER. Okay with me!

A THIRD REPORTER. Not me! I've got to knock out my story. My paper's on the street at eight.

THE FIRST REPORTER. Say, you can bat this one out in twenty minutes. Whenever you're stuck just put in some more dirt.

THE SECOND REPORTER. Yeah, this one's from heaven. Thank God for that leopard skin.

THE FIRST REPORTER. That's what Niles said.

(*There is a ribald laugh from all of them as they pass on*)

(*A new group comes out of the courtroom. It is headed by a frail, rather distraught young woman, leaning rather heavily on a woman who is obviously her mother. A little behind them comes a brisk businesslike gentleman, accompanied by an older man and a youth of nineteen or so*)

THE MOTHER. I've got some spirits of ammonia in my pocketbook, Helen. Do you want it?

THE GIRL. No, I'm all right, Mom.

THE LAWYER. Now look, Mrs. Niles— (*The* GIRL *stops and turns*)

MRS. NILES. Yes, Mr. Richardson?

RICHARDSON. I want you to get a good night's sleep— (*He turns suddenly to the older woman*)—see that your daughter gets a good night's sleep, Mrs. Murney, because I may have to put you on the stand again tomorrow, Mrs. Niles.

MRS. NILES. I'll try.

HER MOTHER. She'll be all right.

HER FATHER. Mr. Richardson says this was a very good day for us, Helen. We'll make that fellow feel sorry for what he did to you.

THE YOUTH. You bet we will!

THE MOTHER (*as they are about to leave the corridor*). I'll take the baby in my room tonight, Helen, so you—

(*They are interrupted by a trio of brash* YOUNG MEN *who dash out of the courtroom. Two of them carry cameras*)

A PHOTOGRAPHER. Mrs. Niles! Oh, Mrs. Niles!

RICHARDSON. Now, boys, Mrs. Niles is very tired. No more pictures today.

THE PHOTOGRAPHER. Can't we have just one? Please! Just one with her brother, showing how they came in the

room and found 'em! We've got a leopard skin out here and everything!

RICHARDSON (*shepherding the family out*). Now, none of that, boys! No, no!

THE PHOTOGRAPHER. Well, can we come up to the house and get one of Mrs. Niles and the baby? Won't take a minute?

RICHARDSON. No, no, boys! Mrs. Niles is very tired—can't you understand that?

THE PHOTOGRAPHER (*following them out*). But just one, Mr. Richardson! We can't go back without a picture.

(*They are gone. A couple of* COURT ATTENDANTS *are next, chatting as they walk*)

FIRST ATTENDANT. Ain't had a case like this in a long time. Not since that Mrs. Fletcher sued for rape.

SECOND ATTENDANT. I wasn't here then. Did she get it?

(*From the courtroom there emerges* ALBERT OGDEN, *accompanied by a serious-looking little man*)

OGDEN. Agonizing experience—my God, what an ordeal! How long's it going to go on, Wertheimer? I don't think Richard can stand much more of it.

WERTHEIMER. Oh, couple of days, I guess. They're going to pile on plenty of dirt, you can make up your mind to that.

OGDEN. But it's so horrible—Richard having to go through this. Sensitive fellow like that. These crowds staring at him, and jokes about it in the street—that composite picture in the paper this morning. You can see what it's doing to him.

WERTHEIMER. Well, you've got to expect that in a case of this kind. Women like Althea Royce—all those sexy plays she's been in. It was made to order for the tabloids.

OGDEN. But I tell you he's going to crack up. How long's it got to go on?

WERTHEIMER. Well, that's up to you people.

OGDEN. What do you mean by that?

WERTHEIMER. I mean it's one of those cases that never should have come into court in the first place. I told him that when he came to me.

OGDEN. God, I hate to give up now, after we've gone through all this. Don't you think there's any chance at all?

WERTHEIMER (*a shake of the head*). It'll only get worse. Tomorrow they're going to have some of those people testify that were at the party—the last ones to go. You see, Mr. Ogden, it all ties in too well. His wife leaves the party in tears—comes back with her brother at ten minutes to four—and there they were. On that damned leopard skin. Trust the tabloids to pick up that leopard skin. It was all they needed.

OGDEN. Well, I'd like to save him from any more of this. I suppose there's no use—

(RICHARD *comes out of the courtroom, along with* JULIA *and* JONATHAN CRALE. RICHARD *shows the full effects of the ordeal that he is passing through. His white, drawn face is the face of a man shaken to the very roots. He looks old*)

RICHARD. Can't we get out of here? I want to get out of here!

JULIA. You don't want him for anything, do you, Mr. Wertheimer?

CRALE. I want to take him home.

(*The* PHOTOGRAPHERS, *having finished with the plaintiff, now return in search of the defendant*)

A PHOTOGRAPHER. Here he is! How about a picture, Mr. Niles? Just one!

(RICHARD *makes a convulsive gesture with his arms, as the others instinctively screen him*)

WERTHEIMER. Get out of here! We've had enough of your damned pictures! Go on! Get out!

THE PHOTOGRAPHER (*after looking him up and down*).

O. K., counselor. But you don't have to get nasty about it. You're glad enough to get pictures when you're winning a case.

(*The* PHOTOGRAPHERS *withdraw*)

JULIA. Oh, why won't they let him alone!

(RICHARD, *with a deep sigh, brings his hands down from his face*)

OGDEN (*going to* RICHARD). Listen, old man, I've been talking to Wertheimer. He feels you oughtn't to go on with it. Now, if you stop now you can save yourself a lot of suffering. What do you say?

RICHARD (*dully*). What?

OGDEN. We don't think you ought to go on with the case. We think you ought to stop now. What do you say?

(RICHARD *looks at him dumbly*) All right?

RICHARD (*too far gone to care*). Whatever you think.

JULIA. Oh, Richard, I'm so glad!

(CRALE *merely lays a steadying hand on his shoulder*)

OGDEN (*with a sigh of relief*). It's better already.

JULIA. Of course it is.

WERTHEIMER. Believe me, Niles, it's the only thing to do.

RICHARD. I suppose so. I can't seem to think any more. I just want it to be over.

OGDEN. Well, it's over now, Richard—all finished.

WERTHEIMER. You won't ever have to come back here any more.

RICHARD. Thank God for that. I've never thanked you, Jack, for everything you've tried to do—and you, Albert, for everything you've done—

OGDEN. Now don't worry about that.

RICHARD. Julia, you've been so wonderful. I don't think I ever could have faced it if it hadn't been for the way you and Jonny—

JULIA. But Richard—we love you. We're always going to be with you—whenever you need us. Always.

CRALE. Just you forget about us, Dickie. Right now you've got to think about yourself.

JULIA. Richard, what you've got to do is to get away—get away as quickly as possible. Just think—in ten days you can be on Albert's boat, and this'll all seem like a bad dream.

RICHARD. No, no. I don't want to go away.

CRALE. It's what you need, Richard. You've got to.

JULIA. You won't be alone. You'll have Albert with you, and all his friends.

OGDEN. You'll love it, Richard. She's a beautiful boat, if I do say so myself. And it's a swell crowd that's going.

JULIA. Richard, think of it! The Mediterranean, Egypt, India!

RICHARD. No. Just let me stay with you and Jonny. I'll be all right if you and Jonny are with me.

JULIA. Listen, Richard. You're worn out. You're on the ragged edge. If you're ever going to work again you've got to get fresh strength—you've got to see new people, new places—this is a heaven-sent chance. If you stay here, even with Jonny and me at your side, you'll be constantly reminded of it—the whole city'll remind you of it. Richard, you must go. Won't you do it for *me*, Richard—for Jonny and me?

RICHARD. Julia, I'm afraid to go away now—the way I feel. I'm afraid to—

(*Without warning, the* PHOTOGRAPHERS *spring their coup. One of them quickly dashes up behind* RICHARD *with a leopard skin, which he holds up as a background. At the same time the man with a camera levels it at him, while his accomplice rushes in with the flash powder*)

THE MAN WITH THE LEOPARD SKIN. O. K.! Shoot!

(*There is a quick flash; almost immediately the men are gone. But not before they throw a taunt back over their shoulders: "See how you like this tomorrow morning!"*)

CRALE. The God-damned—

WERTHEIMER (*through set teeth*). If I can ever—

JULIA (*to* RICHARD). Oh, my dear!

RICHARD. All right, Julia. I'll go. I'll go. Only get me away quick. I can't stand it. I can't stand it.

(*He is sobbing hysterically as the others try to quiet him*)

Curtain

SCENE III

ALTHEA ROYCE'S *apartment. The year is* 1923.

Prominently visible is a leopard skin, which is thrown casually over a couch. A large Arabian sword hangs incongruously on the wall. An Indian drum, which is evidently used as a seat, stands in a corner. The room, in fact, is a strange combination of furniture supplied by the hotel and favorite pieces of her own added thereto by ALTHEA, *probably bits from this and that production in which she has appeared.*

It is about eleven-fifteen at night, and it is clear from what is going on that a party is about to be given. WAITERS *are entering from the hallway and passing through to another room, laden with trays and glasses, cutlery and china. A* CAPTAIN *hovers about, giving little unnecessary instructions. "Right in there!" . . . "The plates go on the small table." . . . "Plenty of big glasses, too."*

A BELLBOY, *who has been pressed into service to take charge of the men's coats, loafs in the entrance hall, while a colored* MAID, *who is to perform a like service for the ladies, appears from time to time in one of the doorways.*

CAPTAIN (*signaling to his* WAITERS). Come on—don't loaf in there.

BELLBOY. Say, I ain't got room for an awful lot of coats. Is it going to be a big party?

MAID. Can't ever tell. Last time I was here Miss Althea says to me a few people is going to drop in, and by the time they was through coming there must have been a hundred.

BELLBOY. I guess she knows plenty of people, Miss Royce. Do you think there's liable to be any movie stars here tonight?

MAID. That party I was just telling you about, Patsy Ruth Miller was here.

BELLBOY. You don't say? She's swell. Did you see her in "The Hunchback of Notre Dame"? Oh, good evening, Mr. Nixon.

(*Two men in dinner coats have come through the open door. They are* HARRY NIXON, ALTHEA ROYCE'S *husband, and* SID KRAMER, *a vaudeville agent who is his constant companion.* HARRY NIXON *is in his middle forties, a trifle gray. It is not so long ago that he was considered a handsome juvenile. He still looks a trifle dashing in his evening clothes, but there is an indefinable air of sadness about him*)

HARRY (*to the* BELLBOY). Hello, Tommy. Got you working tonight, eh?

BELLBOY. Yes, sir.

HARRY (*to the* CAPTAIN). Hello, Gus. Everything under control?

CAPTAIN. Yes, sir. We are very nearly ready—just a few minutes more.

HARRY. Plenty of time—the show's just over.

CAPTAIN. How was the opening, Mr. Nixon? Is it a hit?

HARRY. Seemed to go very well.

CAPTAIN. Oh, that is fine. Miss Royce will be very happy. My congratulations.

HARRY. Thank you, Gus.

(*The* CAPTAIN *departs. With the master of the house now*

home, the MAID *and the* BELLBOY *have likewise disappeared to their respective cloakrooms*)

(*As he takes off his coat*) Mix yourself a drink, Sid. You know where it is.

SID. I can wait. (*He lights a cigarette*)

HARRY. I thought it went darned well, didn't you?

SID. They liked it. Downstairs draw, maybe, but it'll go. Smart kid, that young Niles. Pretty good for a first play.

HARRY. Yeah—he's got stuff, all right. (*He pulls a great batch of telegrams out of his pocket*) Look at this, would you? And still more in the dressing room. Althea gets more telegrams every time she opens.

SID. I don't suppose *you* got any, huh? You're only her husband. (*He holds out a hand for some telegrams*) Let me see some of those.

HARRY (*paging through the messages*). They're all here, all right—all the big ones. Elsie Ferguson, Glenn Hunter, Lenore Ulric, Conde Nast—

SID (*reading from his own batch*). Irene Fenwick, Al Woods, Oliver Morosco, David Belasco—

HARRY. Is there one from Belasco? Let me see it. (*He takes it*) Gee, what it would have meant to us ten years ago—a couple of vaudeville hicks—to get a telegram from David Belasco.

SID (*who is under no illusions*). You didn't get it. It's to Althea.

HARRY. That's all right. She's the one that was up there acting.

SID. Yeah—I know.

(HARRY *puts the telegrams down and takes a nervous turn or two around the room*)

HARRY. I wish this party was over. I wish it was time for 'em to go home.

SID. Why?

HARRY. I hate these parties. They—they get on my nerves. I hate 'em.

SID. I don't wonder. (*Suddenly bursting out*) You know, if I was you, Harry, I'd be so sore I couldn't sleep nights.

HARRY. What do you mean?

SID. Hell, you know what I mean! Whose fault is it that she's up there acting tonight? Whose fault is it that she ever came out of the chorus?

HARRY. What's the difference, Sid? As long as one of us made the grade, what's the difference?

SID. The difference is she's got no gratitude. Everything she knows she learned from you. You can't tell me anything about Althea Royce. I can remember catching your act when you first teamed up with her, and she didn't know how to walk across the stage.

HARRY (*he smiles reminiscently*). "Harry Nixon and Girlie." Gee, that seems a long time ago.

SID. I don't begrudge her having her name in lights—more power to you if you can get ahead in this business—but she's forgotten you ever had anything to do with it.

HARRY (*trying hard to be loyal*). No, she hasn't.

SID. Yes, she has. And it's a mystery to me why you stand for it.

HARRY. No, no, Sid. Althea's all right. It's—me. You see, Althea's an important actress now. She's got to meet important people—be seen in the right places. I don't like to—tag along with her. They don't want *me*—it's Althea. They're nice enough, but—after about five minutes I'm always sort of standing around, wishing it was time to go home. That's why I just don't go any more.

SID. *She* goes, though, *don't* she?

HARRY. Well, now, Sid, you can't ask her to give up all that just because *I* don't fit in. She's—she's darned nice to me—lots of ways. It's—it's me. I just don't know what to do with myself any more. I used to think, all right, I'll go back and play a small part here and there,

but—they don't remember me. And anyhow it—wouldn't look right. Althea Royce's husband.

SID. What are you going to do? Sit here and rot?

HARRY. Oh, it's not as bad as that. I guess maybe I ought to be pretty grateful—no worry about money, and a roof over my head. . . . But I don't know. Some mornings I wake up, and I wish I could stay right in bed till the day was over. I don't know what to do with the days. Sometimes I find myself, two o'clock in the afternoon, standing in one of those auctioneer places on Broadway. Just standing there listening.

SID (*kindly, for the first time*). Don't you go to the Lambs' Club any more? That used to be your regular hang-out.

HARRY. No, I—I stopped going there.

SID. What for?

HARRY. Well, maybe it was foolish of me—I don't suppose the boys meant anything by it—but I'd come in there and all I'd hear was, "Pretty soft for you, Harry. See your wife's in a new hit. *You* don't have to worry, do you?" It got so—I just couldn't go there any more. (*There is a little silence. Then* HARRY *laughs with a false brightness and slaps* SID *on the back*) Oh, don't mind me, Sid. I get days when I go on this way—feeling sorry for myself. Maybe it's this darned party tonight—they always get me kind of low. I wish it was over, or I didn't have to be here, or something.

SID (*after a moment's pacing*). Look, Harry! Maybe I shouldn't tell you this. But I'm a friend of yours and I'm going to! This is what makes me so mad. It's everything you did for her, and going through hell now, and her carrying on with other men. Right under your nose! It's no secret around town, I can tell you that. And it is high time somebody told you.

HARRY (*quietly*). I know all about that, Sid.

SID (*after looking at him for a long moment*). You do? And you're still willing to take it. Well, I give up.

HARRY. You see, Sid, there's one thing about it you don't understand. I'm still—crazy about her.

SID. But my God, Harry! It's one after another. You can see from the way she looks at young Niles— (*He pauses significantly*)

HARRY. I don't care. I'm so in love with her that if she'll just let me stay around, I don't care what she does. That's the only thing that scares me, Sid—if she ever left me. Because if that ever happens, then there's no reason for me at all.

SID (*a little frightened by his tone*). Oh, come on, now! That's never going to happen! She's very fond of you. I didn't mean—let's mix ourselves a drink. Where did all those waiters go?

HARRY. Gus! Hey, Gus!

(GUS *does not appear, but there stands in the doorway instead a lady of formidable proportions. It is* ALTHEA'S *mother,* MAGGIE RILEY. *She has one of those emphatic Irish faces, which just at the moment is laboring under such loads of make-up that it is difficult to tell her age, and she is wearing what would be considered evening clothes on anybody else. Something happens, during the course of an evening, to anything that* MAGGIE RILEY *puts on. Her long white gloves are dirty at the fingertips; her evening cape, obviously handed down from* ALTHEA, *is a trifle askew on her shoulders; the edge of her petticoat shows beneath her dress. People like* MAGGIE RILEY *enormously—because she is not* their *mother*)

MRS. RILEY (*booming*). Hello, Harry! Say, Harry! Coming up in the elevator just now I found my Al Listen! (*She bursts into "Alexander's Ragtime Band"—good and loud*) How's that? The old pipes are still there, eh?

HARRY (*considerably disturbed at seeing her*). Hello, Mother. Sid, you know Althea's mother, don't you? Mrs. Riley.

MRS. RILEY (*before* SID *can answer*). Say, I know Sid

Kramer. He booked an act of mine once. "The Four Nightingales." Remember that act, Sid? Boy, was that a stinkerino!

SID. It sure was.

MAID (*coming out of the bedroom*). Take your wraps, Madam?

MRS. RILEY. No, thanks. I ain't a guest. I may get kicked out any minute. Hey, Puss! (*She hails a passing* WAITER) Bring me a bottle of beer, will you? And make it fast! I'm going to get *something* out of this wake! (*Another* WAITER *is passing, bearing a platter with a huge cold ham on it, already partly sliced*) Hey, what you got there? Let's see that! Boy, I'm hungry! Say, that looks good. (*She quickly removes her gloves and takes a large slice of ham in her fingers*) Mm. Wonder why food always tastes better in your fingers. Got that beer? Ah! Thanks. (*As the* WAITER *pours it*) Everyone's so God-damn flossy these days. Beer out of bottles! Oh, well! (*She lifts her glass*) Up the chimney, boys! (*She drinks, spilling a little of it over her dress, then elaborately wipes her mouth with the back of her hand*) Ah! (*Glass in hand, she surveys the other two contentedly*) Well, boys, how did you like the show?

HARRY. Why—we thought it was fine, Mother. I think it's a big hit. Didn't you like it?

MRS. RILEY. Like it? What the hell was it all about, will you tell me that? What did the name mean? "The Ostrich." Wasn't a God-damn bird in it.

HARRY. Well, the whole idea is—people afraid to face things. Sticking your head in the sand.

MRS. RILEY. Well, why didn't they come out and say so? "The Ostrich," for Christ's sake! What they get away with today! Those kind of plays give me a pain. (*She affects the pose and voice of what she considers the modern actress*) "There's no one here, Alfred. They've all gone into the garden. Shall we dawnce?" . . . "I

can face anything, dearest, as long as I know that I have you. Shall we dawnce?" . . . "Edgar! Father has just shot himself! Shall we dawnce?" Dawnce my behind! Believe me, that show could *use* a couple of ostriches. And they call it acting, too—that's what beats me. "Won't you have a cup of tea?" "Yes, it *is* warm." Acting, for Christ's sake! Leslie Carter swinging on that bell in "The Heart of Maryland"—that was acting. That blood dripping down in "The Girl of the Golden West" —that was acting. Why, Leslie Carter would have pooped Althea right off the stage!

HARRY. Well, Mother, it's a different kind of show business today.

MRS. RILEY. You bet your life it is! You had to *have* something in the old days. When you could sing "The Holy City" in a burlesque show, the way I did, to a bunch of Hunkies in Youngstown, Ohio, and *hold 'em*—(*She sings a phrase of "The Holy City"*) God damn it, you *had* something! I don't call *this* show business! (*She heads for a side table to put down her beer glass*)

(*At the same moment* ALTHEA *appears in the entrance hall. She is resplendent. Great bursts of orchids peep out through the fur of her evening wrap, while behind her stand two* MAIDS, *laden with flower boxes*)

ALTHEA (*not seeing* MRS. RILEY *in the excitement of the moment*). What an opening! What an audience! What a glorious night!

MRS. RILEY. Shall we dawnce? (*She comes into* ALTHEA'S *view*) Hello, Annie. Take off your things and make yourself at home.

ALTHEA (*surprised is not the word*). Why, Mother dear. (*It is said sweetly, but from its very sweetness you understand how heartily she loathes* MRS. RILEY) I—I thought you were going home. Won't you miss your train?

HARRY. I—I was just going to tell your mother how tired you are after an opening.

MRS. RILEY. Tired? What the hell from? I sat in the first row of the balcony and couldn't hear a God-damn word you said.

ALTHEA (*from a great height*). Oh, really? The rest of the audience heard every word.

MRS. RILEY. They must have good ears. What were you doing with your back to the audience all the time? I thought you were going right *up* that fireplace.

ALTHEA (*icily*). Well, mother, I'm sure you're right and everyone else is wrong. That's why P. J. Morton pays me two thousand dollars a week and puts my name up in lights.

MRS. RILEY. Say, get it while you can, Annie—before they get onto you.

ALTHEA (*unable to stay calm any longer*). Mother, will you *please* stop calling me Annie?

MRS. RILEY. Well, for Christ's sake that's your name, ain't it? That's what you were born. Annie Riley to Althea Royce—*that's* a sleeper jump for you. And I see by the program— (*She unfolds it*)—where your grandfather was the founder of the Irish Theatre. Old Patrick Royce. The only place *he* was ever found was under the seat drunk. (*She consults the program*) "Comes from a long line of distinguished Irish actors." You should know some of them. Your great-grandfather was a horse-thief; old Patrick Royce was sent up for wife-beating, when he wasn't busy founding the Irish Theatre, and—

ALTHEA (*with repressed fury*). Mother, are you going home or aren't you?

MRS. RILEY (*squaring off*). Oh, I see. I'm not good enough for your fine friends. Listen—just because they wear ermine wraps and a lot of jewelry don't fool *me*. I'm

onto them all. Irene Bordoni! Where do you think *she* came from—Tiffany's?

ALTHEA. Now, that's one thing I will not stand for! I will not have you saying things like that about my friends!

MRS. RILEY. Oh, save that for someone who doesn't know you. You're just shanty Irish, that's all you are! You're not lace-curtain Irish—you're *shanty!* And don't you forget it!

ALTHEA (*losing all control*). Get out of here! Get out of here before I throw something at you!

HARRY. Althea—please. You're all tired out.

ALTHEA (*in near hysteria*). That I have to put up with this on the night of my opening—

HARRY. Althea, don't get yourself upset. I'll take Mother back to Roseville. We'll go right away. Come on, Mother.

MRS. RILEY (*having had her fun*). Don't worry. I wouldn't stay at your God-damn party. I don't want to talk to a bunch of hams.

ALTHEA. Ooh! (*Unable to speak for anger, she flings herself into her room*)

HARRY. Ready, Mother?

MRS. RILEY. You bet I'm ready. (*She gulps down the rest of the beer*)

HARRY. Listen, Sid—if I don't get back tonight—it may be too late for me to get back—way over in Jersey—will you kind of look after things for Althea?

SID. Sure.

MRS. RILEY. Well, I got a bottle of beer out of it, anyway. (*She raises her voice in a final bellow*) Good-bye, Annie! Did I tell you I ran into your first husband the other day? He's still tiling bathrooms! (*She goes, followed by* HARRY)

(SID *stands morosely looking after them for a moment, then turns and calls into the dining room*)

SID. Give me a highball, will you? Make it strong.

(*An unseen* WAITER *calls back a "Yes, sir" as* ALTHEA *returns to the room*)

ALTHEA (*still smouldering*). Really, what I have to put up with! No one else in the world would do it!

SID (*surveying her*). Yeah—you got it pretty tough.

ALTHEA (*bridling*). What's that?

SID (*looking her straight in the eye*). I said you got it pretty tough.

ALTHEA. And just what do you mean by that?

SID. Oh, nothing. (*He takes a turn away*) Not a thing.

ALTHEA. Just a minute, Kramer. I don't know what you're talking about, but I don't have to take anything from you. Just remember that. (*She sweeps back into her room*)

(SID *looks after her. He gives a little shake of the head; mutters something under his breath*)

(*The* WAITER *comes in with the highball, but for a moment* SID *does not notice him*)

WAITER. Your highball, sir.

SID. Oh! Thanks!

(A YOUNG MAN *appears in the entrance hall, looking around uncertainly. It is* SAM FRANKL, *in a rather shiny dinner coat of uncertain cut, but* SAM FRANKL *nevertheless*)

BELLBOY. Your coat, sir?

FRANKL. Is this Miss Royce's apartment?

BELLBOY. Yes, sir.

FRANKL (*addressing* SID). Good evening.

SID. Hello.

FRANKL. I'm the piano player from Harms. To play for the party.

SID. Well, there's the piano.

FRANKL. Okay. Bet you it's out of tune—they always are. (*He runs his fingers over the keyboard, then indulges in a little display of fireworks*)

SID (*admiringly*). Say, you're pretty good.

FRANKL. Uh-huh. (*Another musical flourish*)

SID. Lot of good songs this year, don't you think?

FRANKL. As for instance?

SID. Well, that new song of Irving Berlin's, and Kern's got a couple of good ones.

FRANKL. Those old hacks. They were washed up ten years ago, only they don't know it. Listen—when they write the history of American music they're only going to mention one song writer. Sam Frankl.

SID. Sam Frankl? Who's that?

FRANKL. *Me.*

SID (*a trifle stunned*). Oh! Well, it doesn't do a young fellow any harm to feel that way.

FRANKL. What do you mean feel that way? I *know.* Why should I be modest? I'm a genius. It's got nothing to do with me—I just am. Say, I sit down in the morning and what comes out of that piano frightens me sometimes. It's tremendous. Berlin, Kern, Friml—don't make me laugh! Listen to this one. This is Frankl.

(*He starts to play again just as the first guests begin to arrive. It is some eight or ten people, among them* EVERETT NASH *and a young woman named* LAURA WILLOUGHBY. *The* BELLBOY *advances to take the men's coats and hats;* DELLA *comes forward to assist the women. One or two of the women follow* DELLA *into the next room to freshen their makeups, emerging a few moments later. The others surrender their evening wraps to* DELLA)

(*There is the customary buzz of all early arrivals. "Oh, are we the first ones?" . . . "What do you think of that?" . . . "We were lucky—I had Jack wait right at the theatre." . . . "Oh, you know how these things are—everybody stops at Tony's first." . . . "Well, Althea said to come right up. She was coming right up." . . . "Oooh! Althea!"*)

ALTHEA (*emerging from the room*). Oh, my darlings, was

I terrible? I want you to tell me the truth, my dears, because I know when I'm bad.

(*This is met, as* ALTHEA *meant it to be, with a veritable gush of denial. "Althea, my darling, you were wonderful!" . . . "My dear, we loved you. We've never seen you better." . . . "My dear, didn't you hear that audience? They practically cheered—they* never *do that!" . . . "You were brilliant, Althea darling. That's all I can say—brilliant!"*)

ALTHEA. Thank you, darlings. But you know it's not me, really. It was Mr. Niles's beautiful play.

NASH. That lad's a comer, Althea. I'd like to get ahold of him.

LAURA. It really is a perfectly delightful play. A little gem.

ALTHEA. I discovered him, you know. Absolutely discovered him.

(*Another* COUPLE *or two appear in the entrance hall. "Hello, people!" . . . "How are you?" . . . "Hello, Everett!"*)

A WOMAN (*advancing toward* ALTHEA *with outstretched hands*). Althea, darling, I never saw such a performance in my life. I've seen them all, my dear, and never in my life—it was absolutely stunning, that's all. It was breathtaking.

ALTHEA. Oh, Janet darling, you're the sweet of the world. Did you really like me?

ANOTHER WOMAN. I should think it would just run forever, that's all. I'm going back and see it again and again.

(*Into the entrance hall has come another group. It is headed by* P. J. MORTON—P. J. MORTON *at his height as a producer. He is a far cry from the man we have seen in Le Coq D'Or, down to his last fifty cents*)

ALTHEA (*sighting him and advancing toward the entrance hall*). P. J.! My darling! Your roses were wonderful!

(*From the crowd: "Hello, P. J.! Another hit, eh?"*)

ALTHEA (*with a great show of humility*). Well! Did you like your little girl tonight, P. J.?

MORTON (*after a kiss on the forehead and a paternal pat on the shoulder*). You made me very proud tonight, my dear, proud to be your manager. I've handled all the big ones, but you, my dear—tonight I think you are the biggest of them all.

(*Two or three people applaud a little, echoing his sentiments. "Well, you can't ask for more than that, Althea." . . . "Now, do you believe you were wonderful?"*)

ALTHEA (*huskily*). That means more to me, P. J., than all the critics in the world. As long as I am able to walk onto the stage, I want you to be my producer.

(*And she embraces him, to the accompaniment of ecstatic "Oh's!" and "Ah's!" from the crowd*)

(*At the same moment another group of guests arrives. "Where is Althea? Where is she?" "I must tell her right away!" . . . "There she is!" . . . "My dear, you were divine!" . . . "Althea, you were wonderful! I never saw such a performance in all my life!"*)

ALTHEA (*advancing to the new group*). Darlings, did you really think so! Did you really like me?

(*The group around* P. J. *is lavishing attention on him, as due to the producer of the hour. "Well, P. J., the third hit and the season's young yet. How many more are you going to have?" . . . "Say, you're a combination of Augustin Daly and Charles Frohman rolled into one. He just pulls hits out of his sleeve." . . . "What are you going to do with all your money?"*)

MORTON. Put it right back in the theatre—that's what I'm going to do with it. The next ten years in the theatre are going to be bigger than you ever saw. I'm building three new theatres right now. I can't find enough theatres to put my shows in—I got to build 'em!

(*Still another handful of guests arrives—there is the same*

hullabaloo, the same gush of compliments for ALTHEA. *By this time the room is starting to be pretty crowded.* WAITERS *are pressing through with trays of highballs—almost everyone has a drink in his hand. Cigars and cigarettes are already beginning to fill the room with smoke*)

(*It is at this point that* RICHARD NILES *arrives. We see him framed in the doorway—Richard at 29—youthful, eager, scared. Clinging to his arm, as though she were afraid ever to let go, is his wife,* HELEN. *She is very pretty, with the kind of good looks that go at thirty—one of those women whose chief allure is an excessive femininity, of the helpless, appealing kind. At the moment her bewilderment, almost her fright at her surroundings, is plain on her face*)

ALTHEA (*raising her voice above the crowd*). There he is! There's the man who did it all! Richard! Everybody! Listen! Quiet, people, please! Stop that piano a minute! People, this is Richard Niles, our author!

(*There is a little buzz from the crowd. "Why, isn't he young?" . . . "Bravo! Mr. Niles!"*)

ALTHEA. Richard, come on! People are dying to meet you! Oh— Hello, Mrs. Niles. So glad you came.

HELEN. Hello, Miss Royce.

ALTHEA (*pulling him through the crowd with a predatory hand, with* HELEN *trailing behind them*). Isn't he a brilliant young man to have written that lovely play! He's going to be so successful he won't know any of us in a few years! (*She brings him to a halt in front of a little group*) I want you to meet two of my oldest friends. Mr. and Mrs. Maynard! And Mr. Kennedy, and Miss Newcombe. This is Richard Niles.

RICHARD. How do you do?

(*At once the group surrounds him. "Mr. Niles, how did you ever* think *of all those funny lines?" . . . "Well,*

young man, you've written a very entertaining play." . . . "It's really the best comedy we've had in a long time." . . . "Great show, all right!")

RICHARD. Why,—thank you. Thank you very much. This is —my wife, Mrs. Niles.

ALTHEA. Oh, yes—of course.

HELEN. How do you do?

MRS. MAYNARD. Well, Mrs. Niles, you must be very happy. Aren't you proud of your husband tonight?

HELEN (*falteringly*). Yes.

MAYNARD. Must be an exciting night for *you.*

HELEN. Yes.

MRS. MAYNARD. Didn't you think the audience received it well?

HELEN. Yes.

ALTHEA. Oh, come on, Richard! There's Everett Nash—he asked especially to meet you. (*She hauls him to another group,* HELEN *still tagging along. Through all of this new guests have been entering—among them* JONATHAN CRALE, JULIA GLENN, ALBERT OGDEN *and* ROSAMOND COOPERTON. *The guests now no longer wait to be greeted by their hostess, but plunge immediately into the party*) Here he is, Everett! You wanted to meet him, I know.

NASH. Mr. Niles, I just wanted to shake you by the hand. You've written the best comedy I've seen in twenty years.

RICHARD. Thank you very much, Mr.—ah—

LAURA. I've never laughed so much at any play in all my life.

ALTHEA. Everett, you never saw such a modest author in all your life. Why, during rehearsals we couldn't find him—he used to hide.

NASH. Well, you've got nothing to be frightened of now, Niles.

RICHARD. Thank you. I—I'd like you to meet my wife.

LAURA. Why, how do you do, Mrs. Niles?

HELEN. How do you do?

NASH. Well, I guess you're a pretty proud woman tonight, huh?

HELEN. Yes.

ALTHEA (*sighting a friend across the room*). Sybil! Richard, you *must* meet my oldest friend in all the world!

(*Again she clutches him by the hand and hauls him across the room. This time a sudden movement of the crowd keeps* HELEN *from following, and in a twinkling there is a solid mass of people between her and* RICHARD)

LAURA. Don't you think the theatre is very exciting this season, Mrs. Niles?

HELEN (*her eyes trying to follow* RICHARD). Yes.

NASH. You know, I think that the Theatre Guild is going to do a lot of interesting things in the next couple of years. Don't you, Mrs. Niles?

HELEN. How's that?

NASH. I say, the Theatre Guild. Very interesting.

HELEN. Yes. (*She just stands there*)

NASH (*finding the whole thing pretty difficult*). Well, nice to have met you. See you later.

LAURA. Good-bye.

HELEN. Good-bye.

(*They ease away*)

(HELEN *looks around rather frantically for* RICHARD, *but he is lost in the crowd*)

(A WAITER *comes to her with a tray of drinks*)

WAITER. Highball, Madame? Sherry?

HELEN. No, thanks. I—I don't drink.

(*The crowd is beginning to press in upon her, buffeting her from side to side. She clutches her evening cape, which is about to be swung off her shoulders*)

A MAN (*catching her cape*). I beg your pardon. Awful crowded, isn't it?

HELEN. Yes.

THE MAN (*as he turns away from her*). So I says to Barney,

I can play a part like that. Why do you managers always think—

(*Suddenly there is a little jovial commotion in another part of the room. "Yes, that's the idea!" . . . "Come on, Althea!" . . . "Make her do it!" . . . "You can't tell us you're bashful!" . . . "Oh, make her do it!" . . . "Up she goes!"*)

(*The figure of* ALTHEA *is suddenly hoisted above the crowd —she is standing on a bench or chair*)

ALTHEA (*as they lift her up*). Now really, this is too silly.

(*"There you are! Now you've got to do it!" . . . "Hurray!" . . . "Shush, everybody! Everybody listen! Althea's going to make a speech!" . . . "Attention, everybody!"*)

(*The rest of the room quiets a bit—attention is transferred to* ALTHEA. *A man, lifting his highball glass aloft, shouts: "Yea! Althea!"*)

ALTHEA (*in a deep voice, pulling at an imaginary beard*). "Friends, Romans, countrymen—" (*There is a laugh from the crowd*) Oh, my dears, I'm very happy tonight, but I'm not going to make a speech. Because if you have a sprig of laurel to place on anybody's brow, I want you to place it on Richard Niles. Richard, come up here.

(*The crowd yells. "That's the stuff! Author! Author!" . . . "Speech! Speech!" Over his protest, and with more noise from the crowd,* RICHARD *is elevated to a place beside* ALTHEA. *The crowd applauds*)

RICHARD (*very much the trembling young author*). Why—I haven't anything to say except—thank you, and—well, I do want to say I think Mr. Morton has been grand—(*Applause. A cheer or two. Cries of "P.J.!"*) But more than anything else I want you to know that the play owes everything to—Althea Royce. It isn't only the wonderful performance she gives, but—no one can ever know what a great help she's been right through it all. I can only say—(*He turns to her*)—thank you, Althea.

ALTHEA. Why, Richard! Aren't you a darling?

(*Impulsively she throws her arms around him and kisses him full on the lips. The crowd roars its approval.* HELEN, *on the edge of the mob, tries to take it like a good fellow, but does not quite succeed. She turns away, her lips trembling, just in time to hear the conversation of a group standing near her*)

A MAN (*a gesture toward* RICHARD). Well, there he goes. I guess he's going to be the next one.

A WOMAN. Yes. Leave it to Althea, with a good-looking playwright.

A MAN. She certainly works fast, all right.

A WOMAN. Well, you can't blame her. She wants to make sure of that new play next season.

A MAN. Say! Pretty soft for these playwrights. (*They* ALL *laugh*)

(RICHARD *and* ALTHEA, *who had disappeared into the crowd, now become visible again at the other side of the room, the center of a little group. Something that* RICHARD *says draws a laugh from those around him*)

ALTHEA (*gayly*). Richard, you mustn't *say* those things! (*She leans forward and rubs her cheek playfully against his, a gesture far more intimate than the kiss had been. Then, drawing away, she carelessly rumples his hair*)

(*It is more than* HELEN *can stand. With a little sob she gathers her wrap around her and starts to fight her way through the crowd, toward the door. The room is packed pretty solidly by this time, and it takes an appreciable interval for her to make her way out. As she nears the hall she is met by a new onrush of guests, and has to battle to get through the door*)

(*The party is now at its height. Late arrivals have come in such numbers that the room is literally jammed from wall to wall. People have stopped trying to move, and now stand just where they are. The noise is terrific, of course. Everyone is talking, and everyone is talking at the top of his voice, since it is impossible to be heard*

any other way. Four or five WAITERS *wedge their way through the mob, trays held aloft. The cigarette and cigar smoke has become a dense cloud, hanging over the room like a pall.* SAM FRANKL, *at the piano, pounds on)*

The Curtain Falls

ACT THREE

SCENE I

Living room of the MURNEYS. *The year is 1922.*
It is the regulation middle-class, $70-a-month apartment, located in West 111th Street, just below Morningside Heights. The living room itself, which also serves as a dining room, is a replica of countless other living rooms all over New York. The wall paper is characterless, the furniture equally so. A wide moulding, which runs around the room, holds a couple of fancy steins and a few pieces of dusty Wedgwood, which look as though they might have been won in a ring-the-cane game in Asbury Park. There is a large Kewpie doll in the corner —obviously a souvenir of another happy outing. The personal touch is given by two large, gold-framed, colored photographs of MR. *and* MRS. MURNEY, HELEN'S *parents, in their wedding attire.*
All in all, it is not the pleasantest room to be in on a hot summer's night, and this is one of the hottest. The family is just finishing the evening meal; MRS. MURNEY *and* HELEN *are carrying out the plates.* HELEN *wears a bungalow apron over her dress;* MRS. MURNEY *has a dish towel strung around her middle.* MR. MURNEY *is still at the table, finishing that second cup of coffee and absent-mindedly gathering up pie crumbs in his fingers. He has shed his coat, collar and tie—even loosened his belt. His shirt, as he has said many times that day, is sticking to him—there are great streaks of discoloration around each armpit. From time to time he wheezes heavily from the heat.*

RICHARD *is not present, but the other male member of the household,* BUDDY MURNEY, *is seated in front of that new wonder of 1922, the radio. He has the ear phones over his head, and is intently working with the copper wire, trying to find a sensitive spot in the crystal.*

HELEN (*after a moment*). Want some more coffee, Dad?

MR. MURNEY. No—I got enough.

HELEN. I'll do the rest, mama. You sit down.

MRS. MURNEY. No, it's all right. (*She goes into the kitchen*)

MR. MURNEY (*to* BUDDY). I don't see how you can sit there with those things over your ears on a night like this.

BUDDY. Sssh! I think I got something.

(BUDDY *is a few years older than his sister—a pale, blondish youth. He spends his days in a shipping room, his evenings at Loew's 110th Street, his Sundays on boat trips to Bear Mountain. And he looks it*)

MRS. MURNEY (*re-entering the room*). Buddy, it's so hot. I don't see how you can sit there with—

BUDDY. Ssh! I'm getting something.

MRS. MURNEY. Can you understand that thing, Alfred? I can't.

MR. MURNEY. A new toy. He'll get tired of it.

MRS. MURNEY. Mrs. Levenson's boy Harold made one himself, and they say it works. Anything to do with electricity, he picks up right away.

BUDDY. I got it! Hey, Pop! Come here! Listen!

MR. MURNEY. It's too hot.

BUDDY. Come on! Listen! You can hear it as plain as anything.

(MR. MURNEY *gets up from the table*)

MRS. MURNEY. Her other boy, Walter, he can't do a thing.

BUDDY (*as he hands his father the ear phones*). Be careful, now, not to shake the crystal. (MR. MURNEY *places the ear phones over his head and listens for a moment*) You hear it? You hear it, Pop?

MR. MURNEY. I hear something. Sounds like a ukulele.

BUDDY. That's right. It *is* a ukulele!

(MR. MURNEY, *without a word, removes the ear phones and hands them back to* BUDDY)

HELEN (*calling from the kitchen*). Mama! Will you ask Buddy to help me put the garbage pail on the dumbwaiter?

MRS. MURNEY. Buddy, go in and help Helen put the garbage pail on the dumbwaiter.

BUDDY (*picking up the ear phones again*). Wait a minute. (*He listens*) A man is talking now.

MRS. MURNEY. What's he saying?

BUDDY (*a moment of tense listening*). I can't understand him.

HELEN (*from the kitchen, pettishly*). Mama!

MRS. MURNEY. Buddy, go on. The janitor gets mad.

BUDDY. Oh, all right. (*He goes.*)

(MRS. MURNEY *spreads an embroidered cover over the table and places thereon a cut-glass bowl with imitation flowers in it.* MR. MURNEY *settles himself with his newspaper*)

MRS. MURNEY. Yesterday he told Mrs. Elsman she could take her own garbage down.

MR. MURNEY (*craning his neck toward the window*). The awning down?

MRS. MURNEY. No. It's up.

MR. MURNEY. No air at all, is there?

MRS. MURNEY. No. I think I'll take off my corsets and make myself comfortable.

MR. MURNEY. Well, look, I got a man coming up to see me. I don't suppose it matters.

MRS. MURNEY. Who is it?

MR. MURNEY. A fellow that used to work in the store. He's got an idea he wants to talk to me about—some invention.

MRS. MURNEY. Invention? What's he bringing it to *you* for?

MR. MURNEY. I don't know—it's got something to do with the paper and twine business.

MRS. MURNEY. Well, I guess he won't notice—I'll take off my corsets anyhow. (*She goes to her bedroom*)

(MR. MURNEY *settles himself again, turns a page of the newspaper, takes off one shoe for greater comfort. After a moment, from across the areaway, there comes the sound of a rather tinny player-piano, grinding out "Pretty Baby."* MR. MURNEY *gives an annoyed glance out of the window*)

(BUDDY *comes out of the kitchen and heads for his bedroom*)

MR. MURNEY. Where are you going, Buddy? Loew's?

BUDDY. Yeah. Picking up the girl friend. (*He disappears*)

MR. MURNEY (*calling after him*). It's awful hot—why don't you take a bus ride?

(HELEN *returns from the kitchen, removing her apron as she comes in*)

HELEN. That kitchen's like an oven.

MR. MURNEY. Yeah, it's a sizzler, all right. . . . Where's the big writer? Going to do without his supper altogether?

HELEN. I guess so. We're not speaking. He's mad.

MR. MURNEY. What's *he* got to be mad about?

HELEN. Oh, we had a fight. I found a pocketbook in the butcher's today and it had eleven dollars in it. He said I ought to find out who lost it and I said finders keepers. Isn't that right, Dad? I can use that eleven dollars.

MR. MURNEY. Do you know who lost it?

HELEN. No, I don't.

MR. MURNEY. Then of course you should keep it. He's a fine one to complain about getting eleven dollars. It's more than he's brought into this house in the past six months.

HELEN. That's what *I* told him, too.

(BUDDY *comes out again, a straw hat on the back of his head and struggling into his coat as he talks*)

BUDDY. Say, can't that husband of yours find some place to

do his writing except in my room? He has the light over on the table—a fellow can't see to comb his hair. Honest to God, some people got no consideration. (*He is out of the door, just as* RICHARD *appears in the bedroom doorway*)

RICHARD (*in the tone of a man who has had a fight with his wife, but must speak to her nevertheless*). Helen, the baby's crying. (*He goes right back again*)

(HELEN *does not deign to answer; she has merely given him a look*)

MR. MURNEY. Why can't he write in his own room? He upsets the whole house.

HELEN. Oh, don't ask me. I'm sick of it.

MRS. MURNEY (*emerging from the bedroom doorway, now comfortable, if unappetizing, in a loose, flowered kimono*). Helen, the baby's crying. I guess the heat bothers him.

HELEN. Oh, I know. (*She starts for the bedroom*) Dad, couldn't we send down for some ice cream later on? It'd go good tonight. (*She goes*)

MRS. MURNEY. They had a fight today.

MR. MURNEY. Helen told me. I wish he'd say something to *me* once. Believe me, *I'd* tell him a thing or two.

MRS. MURNEY. It's best not to interfere. (*She picks up the second section of the paper, which has slid onto the floor*) You through with this part?

MR. MURNEY. That feller! It's time somebody took him down off his high horse.

MRS. MURNEY (*as though dismissing the whole subject*). Well!

(*For a moment they both sit with their papers. Then "Pretty Baby" starts again from across the areaway.* MR. MURNEY *is not pleased*)

MRS. MURNEY (*picking up the song*). . . . "Pretty Baby."

MR. MURNEY. Do you have to sing it, too?

MRS. MURNEY. What? Pull your chair to the window, Al-

fred—there's more air . . . "For I'd like to love a baby and it might as well be you, bum-bum, Pretty Baby of mine."

(HELEN, *the baby's milk bottle in her hand, comes out of the bedroom and goes into the kitchen*)

MRS. MURNEY (*newspaper still in hand*). Hearn's are having a Dollar Day next week. (MR. MURNEY *is unmoved*) Did I tell you Alice called up today?

MR. MURNEY. What about?

MRS. MURNEY. More trouble. I feel awful sorry for Alice.

MR. MURNEY. What's the matter now?

MRS. MURNEY. It's Lew again. Three of those people he gave the checks to, they're willing not to prosecute, but they're having a lot of trouble with the other man.

MR. MURNEY. He's just no good, that boy.

HELEN (*as she returns from the kitchen to the bedroom, carrying the filled bottle*). Mother, we've got to take more ice in this weather. The milk goes bad awful quick. (*She disappears*)

MRS. MURNEY. All right. (*She goes back to her newspaper; there is a moment's pause*) They give you such little pieces now for twenty cents.

(*The doorbell rings*)

MR. MURNEY (*as he rises*). I'll go. It's that fellow that's coming up to see me.

MRS. MURNEY. Shall I go inside?

MR. MURNEY. No, you can stay here. (*He opens the door*) Hello, Weintraub. Come right in. (*He turns to his wife*) This is Mr. Weintraub, Rose—Simon Weintraub.

(SIMON WEINTRAUB *comes in. If the* MURNEYS *but knew it, they are at this moment in the presence of a future millionaire, a man who is destined to change the entire surface of industrial America. For* SIMON WEINTRAUB *is none other than that future art connoisseur and cellophane king,* CYRUS WINTHROP)

WEINTRAUB. Good evening, Mrs. Murney.

MRS. MURNEY. How do you do?

MR. MURNEY. Well, Weintraub, what have you got? Let's see this thing. Don't mind Mrs. Murney—it's all right.

WEINTRAUB. Thank you. (*He looks nervously around for a place to put his hat, then places a little black satchel on the table*)

MR. MURNEY. You got it all in there?

WEINTRAUB. Yes, sir.

MR. MURNEY. All right. Go ahead.

WEINTRAUB (*gathering his courage and plunging*). Mr. Murney, you are in the paper and twine business. What would you say if I could show you something that would change the whole paper business from the bottom up?

MR. MURNEY. Well, go ahead. What is it?

WEINTRAUB (*impressively*). All right, Mr. Murney. I'll show it to you. (*He slowly opens his satchel, reaches into it, waits for one momentous moment, then draws forth a loaf of bread wrapped in the shiny, transparent material that is cellopaper. Proudly he holds it aloft*)

MRS. MURNEY (*after looking at it for a puzzled moment*). It's a loaf of bread.

WEINTRAUB. Sure it's a loaf of bread. And this is a package of cigarettes, and this is a toothbrush— (*He brings the respective articles out of his bag*) —but do you see what's on the outside of them?

MRS. MURNEY. You mean that tissue paper?

WEINTRAUB. No, no, this isn't tissue paper. This is called cellopaper. That's my invention. That's the whole idea. It not only protects the article—it makes it look better. And for the first time people will be able to see what they're buying. Now, you take this toothbrush, Mr. Murney. Ordinarily you go into a drug store and you ask for a toothbrush and the clerk digs it up out of some old drawer. But if it was wrapped in cellopaper it could be lying right on the counter and—

MR. MURNEY. Hold on a minute, Weintraub. Not so fast.

Wait a minute. Let me see that stuff once. (*He takes the cellopaper-wrapped loaf in his hand*) Why is it any better than regular paper?

WEINTRAUB. Well, the way it makes things look, in the first place. It makes the merchandise attractive. And not only that, Mr. Murney—

MR. MURNEY. Now, wait a minute, Weintraub. Wait a minute. (*He turns to* MRS. MURNEY) Let me ask you something, Rose. If you were to go into the grocery store to buy a loaf of bread, would you want it wrapped up in this—er—stuff of Weintraub's?

MRS. MURNEY (*after a judicial inspection of the loaf*). No, I don't see any sense in it.

WEINTRAUB. But, Mrs. Murney, outside of the way it looks, don't you see how much cleaner it is, how much more sanitary?

MRS. MURNEY. Mr. Weintraub, the grocery store I deal with, you could eat off the floor. Besides, it'd have to be wrapped up in regular paper before I could take it home. I wouldn't want people on the street to see what I was carrying. So what good is it?

MR. MURNEY. You see, Weintraub, I'm afraid it's no good. My wife is no different from millions of other women.

WEINTRAUB (*pleadingly*). But, Mr. Murney, look! Take these cigarettes—

MR. MURNEY. Now, that's silly, Weintraub. Cigarettes are wrapped up anyhow—that's the last thing they'd put it on. It would just annoy people.

WEINTRAUB. All right—take this. Here's a package of chewing gum—

MR. MURNEY. Chewing gum! What good would it be on chewing gum? Listen, Weintraub—what's the use of wasting your time and mine? You can't sell the public something it doesn't want. It's like that radio thing over there—I bet you the fellow that invented that thought

he had something, too. Take a tip from me, Weintraub —stop wasting your time with this thing.

WEINTRAUB (*gathering his samples together*). Well, thank you for looking at it, anyhow, Mr. Murney.

MR. MURNEY. No trouble at all. Believe me, Weintraub, if I thought it was any good, I'd help you.

WEINTRAUB. Well—good night.

MR. MURNEY. You don't have to go right away. Sit down awhile—we're going to have some ice cream.

WEINTRAUB. No—I got to go. Thank you.

MR. MURNEY. Well, whatever you say.

WEINTRAUB. Good night, Mrs. Murney.

MRS. MURNEY. Good night.

MR. MURNEY. Good night, Weintraub. (*He has opened the door*) Say, it looks like one of those summers, don't it?

(WEINTRAUB *has gone; the door closes*)

MRS. MURNEY. Is he crazy or something?

MR. MURNEY. Too bad he's got this bug. He's a nice little fellow.

MRS. MURNEY. Nice little fellow! How much did he want you to put into that thing?

MR. MURNEY. Two thousand dollars for fifty per cent of it.

MRS. MURNEY. Two thousand dol—the nerve of some people! He must have thought you were an easy mark.

MR. MURNEY (*with spirit*). All right—I didn't do it, did I?

MRS. MURNEY. No, for once in your life you were smart.

(HELEN *returns from the bedroom. She is in a mood*)

HELEN. No wonder the baby wakes up. He keeps walking up and down the hallway all the time.

MR. MURNEY. I always thought you sat down when you wrote. He must be a new kind of writer.

HELEN. He's a new kind of writer, all right. The world isn't good enough for his kind of writing. You've got to take a college course before you can come to see one of his plays. That's why we're so rich.

MRS. MURNEY. Helen, you two young people shouldn't be fighting all the time. Why don't you try to get along with him?

HELEN. Try? I'd like to know what I've been doing the past three years. No one can tell me I haven't tried. I've done without all kinds of things, and what for? You saw. A crazy play that didn't mean anything, put on in some old theatre that didn't even have seats, just benches. And he didn't get a nickel out of it. Well, if that's what I'm bringing up my baby for, and going without new dresses and everything else—well, I'm just tired of it, that's all.

MRS. MURNEY. Well, anyway, he tries all the time. He's writing another one.

HELEN. What good is that? It'll be just like the last one. We're never going to get anywhere. He won't even look for a job any more. Honest, I just don't know what I'm going to do. I'm so sick of the whole business, I don't care what happens any more. (*She is on the verge of tears*)

MR. MURNEY. It all comes down to marrying a man like that. Children won't ever listen to their parents. They think they don't know anything. But they come running to them quick enough when they haven't got a roof over their heads. And it's lucky for them that their parents can take them in.

MRS. MURNEY. Now, Alfred, it's no trouble at all to have Helen and Richard here. I'm glad of the company during the day. They're no trouble.

MR. MURNEY. It's plenty of trouble to pay the bills when they come in, I can tell you that. I have to work very hard for my money, every penny. A day like today in the store, with the perspiration running off me—

(*He stops short as* RICHARD *comes into the room, hat in hand*)

RICHARD. I'll be back later. (*He starts for the door*)

HELEN. Where are you going?

RICHARD. I won't be long.

HELEN. Well, where are you going?

RICHARD (*patiently*). Just across the street to the park.

HELEN. Just across the street to the park to meet Jonny Crale—that's where you're going!

RICHARD. Yes.

HELEN. I suppose I'm not good enough for you to talk to. I'm not intellectual enough.

RICHARD. Helen, you're very welcome to come along if you want to.

HELEN. Oh, sure I'm welcome! Jonny Crale just loves me. I'm welcome to stand there and listen while you two talk about books and art. I don't have to be told when anybody looks down on me. He thinks I'm dumb. Well, maybe I *am* dumb. But I know enough not to go where I'm not wanted.

MR. MURNEY. Dumb! And Crale is supposed to be smart, huh? Can't find enough banks to put his money in, I suppose.

RICHARD. Jonny doesn't feel that way about you, Helen.

HELEN. Oh, he does so. Don't tell me. Why does he meet you over in the park if he wants to see *me*? Why doesn't he come here?

RICHARD (*quietly*). What do you want to do, Helen?

HELEN. Oh, go ahead. Go ahead and see him. I wouldn't think of stopping you. Maybe you should have married him—you like him so much.

MR. MURNEY. It's a new style they've got now. The people that make the money are the dumb ones, and those that don't are the smart ones. Is that what they call intellectuals?

RICHARD. Well—if you're not coming, Helen, I'll go ahead. I'm late now.

HELEN (*ignoring him*). Yes, that's what intellectuals are, father. They don't care about their wives or their baby

or anything else. All they care about is books and art and—

(*The door bell rings*)

RICHARD (*starting for the door*). That must be Jonny.

HELEN. Don't tell me Mr. Crale is lowering himself—

RICHARD (*as he opens the door*). Hello, Jonny. I'm sorry I'm late, but— Oh! (*He stops short upon seeing that* CRALE *is not alone*)

CRALE (*entering*). Don't you have clocks in this house? Come on in, Julia. (JULIA GLENN *comes into view*) Julia, this is Richard Niles. Richard, this is Julia Glenn. You two ought to know each other.

RICHARD. How do you do, Miss Glenn? Ah—this is my wife, and—my mother-in-law and father-in-law.

(*There are unenthusiastic "How do you do's?" from the* MURNEYS *and* HELEN)

CRALE. Well, Helen, haven't seen much of you lately.

HELEN. I've been right here.

CRALE. Listen, Richard! We're going up to hear Debs speak at Palm Garden. Going to be a hell of a meeting. Why don't you and Helen come along?

RICHARD (*eagerly*). I'd love to. Helen, wouldn't you like to go?

HELEN. What is it?

RICHARD. Eugene Debs is speaking tonight. I'd love to hear him.

HELEN. No, I don't want to go.

RICHARD. I think you'd like it. Debs is a great man.

HELEN. I said I don't want to go, Richard.

RICHARD. But why, Helen?

HELEN. Because I just don't want to, that's all. There's nothing to stop *you* from going. I don't mind sitting here. I'm used to it.

RICHARD (*after an embarrassed pause*). I don't think I'd better go, Jonny. Helen's had a hard day with the baby and—

CRALE (*understandingly*). Okay.

RICHARD. I'm sorry.

CRALE (*uneasily*). Yeah. (*Then, not quite able to make an abrupt departure, he addresses* MR. MURNEY) How are you, Mr. Murney? How's business?

MR. MURNEY (*belligerently*). Business is very good for people who want to work, Mr. Crale.

CRALE. I see . . . well . . . good night, everybody.

JULIA. Good-bye, Mr. Niles. I—I just wanted to meet you, because—I saw your play at the Provincetown and—I think it was almost a great play, Mr. Niles.

RICHARD (*eyes lighting up*). Oh, did you see the play? I'm so glad you liked it.

JULIA. Liked it? I thought it said more than any other play I'd ever seen in my life. I thought it was beautiful. I saw it twice, Mr. Niles.

RICHARD. Did you really? I can't tell you how happy that makes me. Not many people seemed to like it.

JULIA. Not many people liked Ibsen in the beginning either. Oh, Mr. Niles, you mustn't let anything stand in your way. You're going to do great things in the theater.

CRALE. You needn't worry about him, Julie. He's the Rock of Gibraltar. Why, he just turned down an offer from P. J. Morton to write a play for Althea Royce.

JULIA. I should think he would.

(*The* MURNEYS *and* HELEN *exchange quick looks*)

RICHARD (*trying to pass it off*). Well, Miss Glenn, I'm awfully glad you liked the play.

CRALE. Come on, Julie. If we're going to get seats at all . . .

JULIA. You're writing a new play, aren't you, Mr. Niles?

RICHARD. Yes. I am.

JULIA. I can't tell you how eager I am to see it. I feel like some debutante gushing to a writer, but all I can say is —I mean it. I—I think you're a great playwright.

CRALE. Good night, Helen. (*He turns to the* MURNEYS) Good night.

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(*The door bell rings*)

RICHARD (*starting for the door*). That must be Jonny.

HELEN. Don't tell me Mr. Crale is lowering himself—

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RICHARD. But why, Helen?

HELEN. Because I just don't want to, that's all. There's nothing to stop *you* from going. I don't mind sitting here. I'm used to it.

RICHARD (*after an embarrassed pause*). I don't think I'd better go, Jonny. Helen's had a hard day with the baby and—

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JULIA. I should think he would.

(*The* MURNEYS *and* HELEN *exchange quick looks*)

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RICHARD. Yes. I am.

JULIA. I can't tell you how eager I am to see it. I feel like some debutante gushing to a writer, but all I can say is —I mean it. I—I think you're a great playwright.

CRALE. Good night, Helen. (*He turns to the* MURNEYS) Good night.

JULIA. Good night, everybody. Good night, Mr. Niles.

(*The* MURNEYS *and* HELEN *barely acknowledge the goodbyes. Their eyes are fastened on* RICHARD *as* CRALE *and* JULIA *go out the door*)

HELEN. What did that mean?

RICHARD. What?

HELEN. You didn't tell me anything about an offer from P. J. Morton.

RICHARD. Didn't I?

HELEN. You certainly didn't.

RICHARD. Well—I didn't think it was worth mentioning.

HELEN. Oh, you didn't!

MR. MURNEY. What's that mean—you got an offer from P. J. Morton? He's a big producer, isn't he?

HELEN. Sure he is! He's the biggest! And Althea Royce is a big star! (*She turns to* RICHARD) Did he make you a real offer, with some advance money?

RICHARD. What if he did?

HELEN. How much was it?

RICHARD. What's the difference? (*He starts to go*)

HELEN (*barring his way*). I want to know how much it was! (RICHARD *is silent*) I know! I know how much they pay! It was five hundred dollars, wasn't it? At least that!

RICHARD (*facing the guns*). Well?

HELEN. And you turned it down! You let my mother and father support you, and you turned down five hundred dollars and a chance of making a lot of money! What about *me?* Don't I ever get any consideration?

MR. MURNEY. You've got no right to turn down anything! You ought to be damned glad of a chance to pay back some of what you owe!

HELEN. He doesn't care! He doesn't care about anything but himself! (*She wheels on* RICHARD) What did you marry me for? Just to shut me up in a room? Just to tie me down with a baby, so I couldn't ever go any place or have a good time again!

MR. MURNEY (*shouting*). You ought to be ashamed of yourself!

MRS. MURNEY. Alfred, the neighbors!

MR. MURNEY. I don't care! Let 'em hear! They know it anyway.

HELEN. How do you think I feel when I haven't got a dress to go out in? How do you think I feel when I meet all my friends? What are we going to do—go on like this? Pinching and scraping! Well, I won't do it! I won't!

RICHARD (*taking a deep breath*). Now, listen. I want to try to explain to you—all of you—how I feel about this. I've tried very hard, Helen, to give you the things you want—and that you ought to have. I was a floorwalker, and—I tried selling that coffee, and—for pretty near two years I worked in a shoe store. Didn't I? I've got a duty toward you, Helen. I know that. But I see a little further than you do. I know what I'm trying to do. If I could only make you understand that. I know the kind of plays I've got to write, and what I want to say, and that's everything to me. It's all I've got. I know it's hard on you, but—if you'll only come along with me, Helen—if you'll only help me fight it out. (*He is met with dogged silence*) You see, Helen, I know what it would mean—writing a play for Althea Royce. It's just the opposite of—everything I'm trying to do. (*She remains silent*) I'm doing all this for you, Helen—for both of us. And I need your help. I need your help if we're ever going to get there. Don't you see that? Because if you don't see that, then—there's nothing more I can say.

MR. MURNEY. I'll tell you what *I* see. I see what I've been telling my wife and daughter ever since I first laid eyes on you. You're a lazy good-for-nothing who doesn't want to work, that's what's the matter with you. And I'll tell you something else. I'm through supporting you. You can go out and get a job or you can get out of here! Because I'm through supporting you! (*He storms out of*

the room. There is a fractional pause; then, from over the areaway, come once more the strains of "Pretty Baby")

HELEN (*in a low tone*). I wish I was dead. I wish the baby was dead. I wish I'd never seen you.

MRS. MURNEY. Helen, you mustn't say such things. That's a terrible thing to say.

HELEN (*shaking off her mother's hand*). Oh, let me alone! (*She stalks out of the room*)

MRS. MURNEY (*following her*). Helen, please! He's your husband. Helen!

(*She is gone*)

(RICHARD *stands stock still for a second, then his steps carry him slowly over to the window. He stands there, staring vacantly out*)

(*There is a long pause.* MR. MURNEY *appears in the doorway*)

MR. MURNEY. As long as you're not paying for it, perhaps you won't mind if I put the lights out.

(*He switches off the lights, and goes. The room is in darkness except for the light from the apartment across the areaway, where the piano continues to grind out "Pretty Baby."* RICHARD *stands motionless in the little circle of light*)

Curtain

SCENE II

Madison Square Park. The year is 1918.

The Metropolitan Life Insurance Building looks down over the little area of trees, grass and scattered benches that make up the park. It is evening, and the dim outline of the building is seen in the background. A lamp post sheds a gentle glow over a secluded corner of the park.

A POLICEMAN *strolls leisurely into view. From the other side comes a man with a dog.*

POLICEMAN. Hello there. You're late tonight.

THE MAN. Am I? (*He looks up at the tower*) No—only quarter to nine.

POLICEMAN (*glancing down at the dog*). How's Ping tonight?

THE MAN. He's fine. . . . Well, things are kind of quieting down again, huh?

POLICEMAN. Yeah, it's all over now, all right. But it sure was some celebration while it lasted.

THE MAN. Funny thing. We've got no children, but my wife bust right out crying when she heard the armistice was signed.

POLICEMAN. Yeah, it affected everybody, I guess—whether they had anybody in the war or not. People just let go.

THE MAN. Down at my place they let us all off at ten in the morning and I got the wife and we both stood at Forty-second Street and Fifth Avenue the whole day. I figured we'd never see anything like that again.

POLICEMAN. You bet your life you won't. (*A couple of soldiers come across the park. The* POLICEMAN *salutes them*) Hi, boys!

(*The* SOLDIERS *give a desultory salute and pass on*)

THE MAN. Guess they'll *all* be coming home pretty soon.

POLICEMAN. Yep. Fast as they can bring 'em. Take a lot of boats to bring 'em all back.

THE MAN. Bet you the good old Statue of Liberty will look pretty good to them, too.

POLICEMAN. Yeah, they'll be glad to get home, all right. Say, what do you think of Wilson going over there? Lot of people seem to think he oughtn't to do it.

THE MAN. That's what I think. I don't trust those babies over there.

POLICEMAN. Say, Wilson's pretty smart. They'll have to

get up pretty early in the morning to put anything over on him.

THE MAN. Well, whatever they do, it won't make any difference to you and me.

POLICEMAN. Yeah—no use losing any sleep over it. Kind of warm for November, ain't it?

THE MAN. Sure is. I like it this way, though. Well—come on, Ping. See you tomorrow.

POLICEMAN. Good night.

(*The* MAN *goes.*)

(TWO BOYS *with roller skates over their shoulders cut through the Park. They are singing lustily as they walk*)

THE BOYS. "He doesn't say very much,
But when he starts in to speak—
You'd be surprised!
He isn't good at the start,
But at the end of a week—
You'd be surprised!
At a party or at a ball,
I've got to confess that he's nothing at all,
But in a Morris chair—oh boy!—
You'd be surprised!"

(*The* BOYS *are out of earshot; by this time the* POLICEMAN *too has gone on his way*)

(*A couple of* GIRLS *come through the park, chattering busily*)

FIRST GIRL. —so I just came home and took off my hat and said, "Look, mother! It's done. Now, is that so terrible?"

SECOND GIRL. I wouldn't dare bob mine. My father would throw me out. Tell me, didn't you feel awful when they started to cut it off?

FIRST GIRL. No, it was all over in a minute. Really, Mary, you ought to do it. You get up in the morning and in two minutes you're all through. No hairpins or anything. It used to take me half an hour. (*They are gone*)

(HELEN *and* RICHARD *appear around a bend in the park. Their arms are interlocked, their heads close together. They are walking slowly, intent on each other.* RICHARD *is in uniform*)

HELEN. All that day the armistice was signed I just kept saying, "Richard is safe now, Richard is safe now"—over and over again.

RICHARD. Did you, Helen? You know, when the news came all I could think of was you. It didn't mean that the greatest war in the history of the world was ended—somehow, it just meant you. Curious how, even at a great moment like that, one thinks selfishly.

HELEN. Let's sit here for a minute. I'm tired.

RICHARD. Oh, darling, I'm sorry. I've been walking you for blocks, haven't I?

HELEN. I didn't mind. (*She moves closer to him; rests her head on his shoulder*) How long will it be, Richard, before they let you out of the army?

RICHARD. I don't know. Some of the fellows say six weeks —some say longer. Nobody really knows yet.

HELEN. I hope it's only six weeks. I miss you so when you're at camp, Richard.

RICHARD. Comfortable? (*She makes a little sound of contentment*) It's nice here, isn't it? I always feel so grateful for a spot like this, set down in the midst of all these buildings.

HELEN. Yes . . . Richard—after we're married, we don't have to live in the country, do we?

RICHARD. Not necessarily. Why?

HELEN. Well, you said once you'd like to, but—I don't know—I'm afraid I'd get lonely in the country.

RICHARD. Well, we don't have to if you don't want to. I love it, though. (*Playfully*) You know, I'm not a hardened city child, the way you are. I'm a little boy from a small town.

HELEN. Are you going to take me there on our honeymoon, to see your people?

RICHARD. We might. (*He tilts her face up to his*) Helen, the day I get out of uniform—that very day—let's get married.

HELEN. I'm willing, Richard. That very day.

(*He kisses her tenderly*)

HELEN. Richard, suppose we *can't* get married—I mean, if you haven't got a job or anything.

RICHARD. We're going to get married.

HELEN. But, Richard, you may not sell your plays right away, and what are we going to live on?

RICHARD. Air, my dear. Pure, rarefied, ecstatic air. (*He laughs a little*) Now, don't you worry. I'll get a job during the day—I don't care what it is—and write at night. I'm going to work like seven devils.

HELEN. Won't it be wonderful, Richard?

RICHARD. I've thought a good deal lately about our marriage, Helen. I want our love to be something that nothing can disturb, nothing uproot—something that will always be there for us to fall back on, no matter what happens.

HELEN. I love to hear you talk that way, Richard. It makes me feel all trembly inside.

RICHARD. We mustn't ever be like other people, Helen. You see so many people who are disillusioned, bitter. We mustn't ever let our marriage become tattered and shopworn.

HELEN (*looking up at him*). Richard, I love you so.

(*He gently brushes the hair back from her forehead, and kisses her again, lightly.* HELEN *sighs happily. They sit in silence for a moment.* A SAILOR, *whistling, vaguely crosses the park*)

RICHARD. You know, sometimes when I'm lying in bed, just after they turn out the light—that five minutes before I fall asleep—I let myself think of what the next

few years are going to be like for us, Helen. All the new wonders we're constantly going to find in each other. Sometimes I don't get to sleep for hours—it's almost more than I car bear. It's like hearing great music for the first time—you want to rush out into the street and stop the first person you see, and tell him about it.

HELEN. I know, Richard.

RICHARD. Sometimes I feel I'm going to do great things, Helen. I can feel myself almost bursting with them. (*He takes a quick, deep breath*) Just the sheer joy of living, the excitement of being alive! The things there are to do, and see, and taste, and to enjoy! It's such a wonderful world, Helen! It's such a miracle to discover it with someone you love!

HELEN. Oh, I'd love to travel, Richard. It's the dream of my life to go to Paris.

RICHARD (*with a laugh*). You're a funny little thing.

HELEN. You're funny, too.

RICHARD. Am I? (*He draws her closer to him, protectingly*) I wonder what life is going to do to us, my dear. We're starting out in a strange new time. Don't you feel it? The world isn't what it was yesterday. It's all new. The war has changed everything. Things are going to be fresher, and cleaner—more honest, somehow. And we're part of it, Helen—you and I. In our own small way we're part of it. You can feel it in the air. People are breathing again. They're lifting up their heads to a new America. All over the country, like millions of invisible wires, people are reaching out to be part of it, to shape their lives to this new world.

HELEN (*caught up in the sweep of his idealism*). Yes, Richard! And I want to do it all with you.

RICHARD. How lucky we are, Helen! How lucky we are to be young just at the start of it! (*Transported, he softly begins:*)

"O world, be nobler, for her sake!
If she but knew thee what thou art,
What wrongs are borne, what deeds are done,
In Thee, beneath thy daily sun,
Know'st thou not that her tender heart
For pain and very shame would break?
O world, be nobler, for her sake!"

(*He sweeps her into his arms; she gives him her lips, passionately. For a moment they are locked in a tight embrace—then the Metropolitan chimes begin to strike the hour*)

HELEN (*tremulously*). Richard, we'd better go. If we take the bus it'll be almost ten before I get home.

(*He kisses her once again. They rise and start out of the park. The chimes are still tolling the hour*)

Curtain

SCENE III

A college chapel. The year is 1916.

Gothic pillars frame a towering stained-glass window, through which floods a stream of sunlight. In half shadow, on the platform, sit a solid mass of students and faculty. Sunlit, in the center of the platform, stands RICHARD.

RICHARD. . . . All of these things, and more, college has given us. (*He pauses*) And now, fellow students—and this, in the way of all things, is the last time that I shall be able to address you as fellow students—I stand before you as your valedictorian to speak for you and for myself. I have touched upon the educational aspects of these four years, I have dwelt with gratitude upon

the stimulating influence of our teachers. But I have purposely left until the last the two things that lie closest to my heart, the two things which this college has helped to foster, and which will remain ever green so long as memory lasts. I have waited until the last to talk about *you*—you as I know you, not in the classroom or on the field, but in those small, chosen hours, those all-revealing hours when we sat and talked about ourselves and each other—talked with a richness and a warmth that never can be recaptured. Those were the hours when we discovered and embraced that greatest of all glories—friendship. Of all the things I take away with me, the one that I most treasure, for which I am the most humbly grateful, is a friendship that I have formed here. (*He makes a slight gesture toward* JONATHAN CRALE) I hope he will always be beside me, all through my life. Many are the things that vanish in this changing world, but a real friendship will always endure. If I could make one wish for you—for all of you—I would ask that you be given a great friendship. (*He pauses momentously*) Lastly, this I have learned. I have learned to value ideals above all else. Let them ever be our heritage, our guiding force. As we go out in the world, as we take up our chosen professions, we are clad, as it were, in shining armor. Let nothing sully that. With you goes a new hope, a new idealism. Carry your banners high; compromise them never. I give you the words of Polonius;

"This above all; to thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.
Farewell: my blessing season this in thee!"

(*The organ peals thunderously forth as—*

The Curtain Descends

YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU

You Can't Take It with You was produced at the Booth Theatre, New York City, Monday night, December 14th, 1936, by Sam H. Harris, with the following cast:

PENELOPE SYCAMORE	JOSEPHINE HULL
ESSIE	PAULA TRUEMAN
RHEBA	RUTH ATTAWAY
PAUL SYCAMORE	FRANK WILCOX
MR. DE PINNA	FRANK CONLAN
ED	GEORGE HELLER
DONALD	OSCAR POLK
MARTIN VANDERHOF	HENRY TRAVERS
ALICE	MARGOT STEVENSON
HENDERSON	HUGH RENNIE
TONY KIRBY	JESS BARKER
BORIS KOLENKHOV	GEORGE TOBIAS
GAY WELLINGTON	MITZI HAJOS
MR. KIRBY	WILLIAM J. KELLY
MRS. KIRBY	VIRGINIA HAMMOND
THREE MEN	GEORGE LEACH RALPH HOLMES FRANKLIN HELLER
OLGA	ANNA LUBOWE

Stage Manager—WILLIAM MCFADDEN

The Scene Is the Home of Martin Vanderhof, New York

ACT ONE

A Wednesday Evening.

(*During this act the curtain is lowered to denote the passing of several hours.*)

ACT TWO

A Week Later.

ACT THREE

The Next Day.

ACT ONE

SCENE I

The home of MARTIN VANDERHOF—*just around the corner from Columbia University, but don't go looking for it. The room we see is what is customarily described as a living room, but in this house the term is something of an understatement. The every-man-for-himself room would be more like it. For here meals are eaten, plays are written, snakes collected, ballet steps practiced, xylophones played, printing presses operated—if there were room enough there would probably be ice skating. In short, the brood presided over by* MARTIN VANDERHOF *goes on about the business of living in the fullest sense of the word. This is a house where you do as you like, and no questions asked.*

At the moment, GRANDPA VANDERHOF'S *daughter,* MRS. PENELOPE SYCAMORE, *is doing what she likes more than anything else in the world. She is writing a play—her eleventh. Comfortably ensconced in what is affectionately known as Mother's Corner, she is pounding away on a typewriter perched precariously on a rickety card table. Also on the table is one of those plaster-of-Paris skulls ordinarily used as an ash tray, but which serves* PENELOPE *as a candy jar. And, because* PENNY *likes companionship, there are two kittens on the table, busily lapping at a saucer of milk.*

PENELOPE VANDERHOF SYCAMORE *is a round little woman in her early fifties, comfortable looking, gentle, homey.*

One would not suspect that under that placid exterior there surges the Divine Urge—but it does, it does.

After a moment her fingers lag on the keys; a thoughtful expression comes over her face. Abstractedly she takes a piece of candy out of the skull, pops it into her mouth. As always, it furnishes the needed inspiration—with a furious burst of speed she finishes a page and whips it out of the machine. Quite mechanically, she picks up one of the kittens, adds the sheet of paper to the pile underneath, replaces the kitten.

As she goes back to work, ESSIE CARMICHAEL, MRS. SYCAMORE'S *eldest daughter, comes in from the kitchen. A girl of about twenty-nine, very slight, a curious air of the pixie about her. She is wearing ballet slippers—in fact, she wears them throughout the play.*

ESSIE (*fanning herself*). My, that kitchen's hot.

PENNY (*finishing a bit of typing*). What, Essie?

ESSIE. I say the kitchen's awful hot. That new candy I'm making—it just won't ever get cool.

PENNY. Do you have to make candy today, Essie? It's such a hot day.

ESSIE. Well, I got all those new orders. Ed went out and got a bunch of new orders.

PENNY. My, if it keeps on I suppose you'll be opening up a store.

ESSIE. That's what Ed was saying last night, but I said no, I want to be a dancer. (*Bracing herself against the table, she manipulates her legs, ballet fashion*)

PENNY. The only trouble with dancing is, it takes so long. You've been studying such a long time.

ESSIE (*slowly drawing a leg up behind her as she talks*). Only—eight—years. After all, Mother, you've been writing plays for eight years. We started about the same time, didn't we?

PENNY. Yes, but you shouldn't count my first two years, because I was learning to type.

(*From the kitchen comes a colored maid named* RHEBA *—a very black girl somewhere in her thirties. She carries a white tablecloth, and presently starts to spread it over the table*)

RHEBA (*as she enters*). I think the candy's hardening up now, Miss Essie.

ESSIE. Oh, thanks, Rheba. I'll bring some in, Mother—I want you to try it. (*She goes into the kitchen*)

(PENNY *returns to her work as* RHEBA *busies herself with the table*)

RHEBA. Finish the second act, Mrs. Sycamore?

PENNY. Oh, no, Rheba. I've just got Cynthia entering the monastery.

RHEBA. Monastery? How'd she get there? She was at the El Morocco, wasn't she?

PENNY. Well, she gets tired of the El Morocco, and there's this monastery, so she goes there.

RHEBA. Do they let her in?

PENNY. Yes, I made it Visitors' Day, so of course anybody can come.

RHEBA. Oh.

PENNY. So she arrives on Visitors' Day, and—just stays.

RHEBA. All night?

PENNY. Oh, yes. She stays six years.

RHEBA (*as she goes into the kitchen*). Six years? My, I bet she busts that monastery wide open.

PENNY (*half to herself, as she types*). "Six Years Later."

(PAUL SYCAMORE *comes up from the cellar. Mid-fifties, but with a kind of youthful air. His quiet charm and mild manner are distinctly engaging*)

PAUL (*turning back as he comes through the door*). Mr. De Pinna! (*A voice from below. "Yah?"*) Mr. De Pinna, will you bring up one of those new skyrockets, please?

I want to show them to Mrs. Sycamore. (*An answering monosyllable from the cellar as he turns toward* PENNY) Look, Penny—what do you think of these little fire crackers? Ten strings for a nickel. Listen. (*He puts one down on the center table and lights it. It goes off with a good bang*) Nice, huh?

PENNY. Paul, dear, were you ever in a monastery?

PAUL (*quite calmly*). No, I wasn't. . . . Wait till you see the new rockets. Gold stars, then blue stars, then some bombs, and then a balloon. Mr. De Pinna thought of the balloon.

PENNY. Sounds lovely. Did you do all that today?

PAUL. Sure. We made up—oh, here we are. (MR. DE PINNA *comes up from the cellar. A bald-headed little man with a serious manner, and carrying two good-sized sky-rockets*) Look, Penny. Cost us eighteen cents to make and we sell 'em for fifty. How many do you figure we can make before the Fourth, Mr. De Pinna?

DE PINNA. Well, we've got two weeks yet—what day you going to take the stuff up to Mount Vernon?

PAUL. Oh, I don't know—about a week. You know, we're going to need a larger booth this year—got a lot of stuff made up.

DE PINNA (*examining the rocket in his hand*). Look, Mr. Sycamore, the only thing that bothers me is, I'm afraid the powder chamber is just a little bit close to the balloon.

PAUL. Well, we've got the stars and the bombs in between.

DE PINNA. But that don't give the balloon time enough. A balloon needs plenty of time.

PAUL. Want to go down in the cellar and try it?

DE PINNA. All right.

PAUL (*as he disappears through the cellar door*). That's the only way you'll really tell.

PENNY (*halting* DE PINNA *in the cellar doorway*). Mr. De

Pinna, if a girl you loved entered a monastery, what would you do?

DE PINNA (*he wasn't expecting that one*). Oh, I don't know, Mrs. Sycamore—it's been so long. (*He goes*)

(RHEBA *returns from the kitchen, bringing a pile of plates*)

RHEBA. Miss Alice going to be home to dinner tonight, Mrs. Sycamore?

PENNY (*deep in her thinking*). What? I don't know, Rheba. Maybe.

RHEBA. Well, I'll set a place for her, but she's only been home one night this week. (*She puts down a plate or two*) Miss Essie's making some mighty good candy today. She's doing something new with cocoanuts. (*More plates*) Let's see—six, and Mr. De Pinna, and if Mr. Kolenkhov comes that makes eight, don't it? (*At which point a muffled sound, reminiscent of the Battle of the Marne, comes up from the cellar. It is the skyrocket, of course. The great preliminary hiss, followed by a series of explosions.* PENNY *and* RHEBA, *however, don't even notice it.* RHEBA *goes right on*) Yes, I'd better set for eight.

PENNY. I think I'll put this play away for a while, Rheba, and go back to the war play.

RHEBA. Oh, I always liked that one—the war play.

(ESSIE *returns from the kitchen, carrying a plate of freshly made candy*)

ESSIE. They'll be better when they're harder, mother, but try one—I want to know what you think.

PENNY. Oh, they look awfully good. (*She takes one*) What do you call them?

ESSIE. I think I'll call 'em Love Dreams.

PENNY. Oh, that's nice. . . . I'm going back to my war play, Essie. What do you think?

ESSIE. Oh, are you, Mother?

PENNY. Yes, I sort of got myself into a monastery and I can't get out.

ESSIE. Oh, well, it'll come to you, Mother. Remember how you got out of that brothel. . . . . Hello, boys. (*This little greeting is idly tossed toward the snake solarium, a glass structure looking something like a goldfish aquarium, but containing, believe it or not, snakes*) The snakes look hungry. Did Rheba feed them?

PENNY (*as* RHEBA *re-enters*). I don't know. Rheba, did you feed the snakes yet?

RHEBA. No, Donald's coming and he always brings flies with him.

PENNY. Well, try to feed them before Grandpa gets home. You know how fussy he is about them.

RHEBA. Yes'm.

PENNY (*handing her the kittens*). And take Groucho and Harpo into the kitchen with you. . . . I think I'll have another Love Dream.

(MR. SYCAMORE *emerges from the cellar again*)

PAUL. Mr. De Pinna was right about the balloon. It was too close to the powder.

ESSIE (*practicing a dance step*). Want a Love Dream, Father? They're on the table.

PAUL. No, thanks. I gotta wash.

PENNY. I'm going back to the war play, Paul.

PAUL. Oh, that's nice. We're putting some red stars after the blue stars, then come the bombs and *then* the balloon. That ought to do it. (*He goes up the stairs*)

ESSIE (*another dance step*). Mr. Kolenkhov says I'm his most promising pupil.

PENNY (*absorbed in her own troubles*). You know, with forty monks and one girl, something ought to happen.

(ED CARMICHAEL *comes down the stairs. A nondescript young man in his mid-thirties. In shirtsleeves at the moment*)

ED. Listen! (*He hums a snatch of melody as he heads for the far corner of the room—the xylophone corner. Arriving there, he picks up the sticks and continues the*

melody on the xylophone. Immediately ESSIE *is up on her toes, performing intricate ballet steps to* ED'S *accompaniment*)

ESSIE (*dancing*). I like that, Ed. Yours?

ED (*shakes his head*). Beethoven.

ESSIE (*never coming down off her toes*). Lovely. Got a lot of *you* in it. . . . I made those new candies this afternoon, Ed.

ED (*playing away*). Yah?

ESSIE. You can take 'em around tonight.

ED. All right. . . . Now, here's the finish. This is me (*He works up to an elaborate crescendo, but* ESSIE *keeps pace with him right to the finish*)

ESSIE. That's fine. Remember it when Kolenkhov comes, will you?

PENNY (*who has been busy with her papers*). Ed, dear, why don't you and Essie have a baby? I was thinking about it just the other day.

ED. I don't know—we could have one if you wanted us to. What about it, Essie? Do you want to have a baby?

ESSIE. Oh, I don't care. I'm willing if Grandpa is.

ED. Let's ask him.

(ESSIE *goes into the kitchen as* PENNY *goes back to her manuscripts*)

PENNY (*running through the pile*). Labor play . . . religious play . . . sex play. I know it's here some place.

(ED, *meanwhile, has transferred his attention from the xylophone to a printing press that stands handily by, and now gives it a preliminary workout*)

(MR. DE PINNA *comes out of the cellar, bound for the kitchen to wash up*)

DE PINNA. I was right about the balloon. It was too close to the powder.

ED. Anything you want printed, Mr. De Pinna? How about some more calling cards?

DE PINNA (*as he passes into the kitchen*). No, thanks. I've still got the *first* thousand.

ED (*calling after him*). Well, call on somebody, will you? (*He then gives his attention to* RHEBA, *who is busy with the table again*) What have we got for dinner, Rheba? I'm ready to print the menu.

RHEBA. Cornflakes, watermelon, some of those candies Miss Essie made, and some kind of meat—I forget.

ED. I think I'll set it up in boldface Cheltenham tonight. (*He starts to pick out the letters*) If I'm going to take those new candies around I'd better print up some descriptive matter after dinner.

PENNY. Do you think anybody reads those things, Ed—that you put in the candy boxes? . . . Oh, here it is. (*She pulls a manuscript out of a pile*) "Poison Gas." (*The door bell sounds*) I guess that's Donald. (*As* RHEBA *breaks into a broad grin*) Look at Rheba smile.

ED. The boy friend, eh, Rheba?

PENNY (*as* RHEBA *disappears into the hallway*). Donald and Rheba are awfully cute together. Sort of like Porgy and Bess.

(RHEBA *having opened the door, the gentleman named* DONALD *now looms up in the doorway—darkly. He is a colored man of no uncertain hue*)

DONALD. Good evening, everybody!

ED. Hi, Donald! How've you been?

DONALD. I'm pretty good, Mr. Ed. How you been, Mrs. Sycamore?

PENNY. Very well, thank you. (*She looks at him, appraisingly*) Donald, were you ever in a monastery?

DONALD. No-o. I don't go no place much. I'm on relief.

PENNY. Oh, yes, of course.

DONALD (*pulling a bottle out of each side pocket*). Here's the flies, Rheba. Caught a big mess of them today.

RHEBA (*taking the jars*). You sure did.

DONALD. I see you've been working, Mrs. Sycamore.

PENNY. Yes, indeed, Donald.

DONALD. How's Grandpa?

PENNY. Just fine. He's over at Columbia this afternoon. The Commencement exercises.

DONALD. My, the years certainly do roll 'round.

ED (*with his typesetting*). M — E — A — T. . . . What's he go there for all the time, Penny?

PENNY. I don't know. It's so handy—just around the corner.

(PAUL *comes downstairs*)

PAUL. Oh, Donald! Mr. De Pinna and I are going to take the fireworks up to Mount Vernon next week. Do you think you could give us a hand?

DONALD. Yes, sir, only I can't take no money for it this year, because if the Government finds out I'm working they'll get sore.

PAUL. Oh! . . . Ed, I got a wonderful idea in the bathroom just now. I was reading Trotzky. (*He produces a book from under his arm*) It's yours, isn't it?

ED. Yah, I left it there.

PENNY. *Who* is it?

PAUL. *You* know, Trotzky. The Russian Revolution.

PENNY. Oh.

PAUL. Anyhow, it struck me it was a great fireworks idea. Remember "The Last Days of Pompeii"?

PENNY. Oh, yes. Palisades Park. (*With a gesture of her arms she loosely describes a couple of arcs, indicative of the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius*) That's where we met.

PAUL. Well, I'm going to do the Revolution! A full hour display.

DONALD. Say!

PENNY. Paul, that's wonderful!

ED. The red fire is the flag, huh?

PAUL. Sure! And the Czar, and the Cossacks!

DONALD. And the freeing of the slaves?

PAUL. No, no, Donald—

(*The sound of the front door slamming. A second's pause,*

and then GRANDPA *enters the living room.* GRANDPA *is about 75, a wiry little man whom the years have treated kindly. His face is youthful, despite the lines that sear it; his eyes are very much alive. He is a man who made his peace with the world long, long ago, and his whole attitude and manner are quietly persuasive of this*)

GRANDPA (*surveying the group*). Well, sir, you should have been there. That's all I can say—you should have been there.

PENNY. Was it a nice Commencement, Grandpa?

GRANDPA. Wonderful. They get better every year. (*He peers into the snake solarium*) You don't know how lucky you are you're snakes.

ED. Big class this year, Grandpa? How many were there?

GRANDPA. Oh, must have been two acres. *Everybody* graduated. And much funnier speeches than they had last year.

DONALD. You want to listen to a good speech you go up and hear Father Divine.

GRANDPA. I'll wait—they'll have him at Columbia.

PENNY. Donald, will you tell Rheba Grandpa's home now and we won't wait for Miss Alice.

DONALD. Yes'm. . . . (*As he goes through the kitchen door*) Rheba, Grandpa's home—we can have dinner.

PAUL. Got a new skyrocket today, Grandpa. Wait till you see it. . . . Wonder why they don't have fireworks at Commencements.

GRANDPA. Don't make enough noise. You take a good Commencement orator and he'll drown out a whole carload of fireworks. And say just as much, too.

PENNY. Don't the graduates ever say anything?

GRANDPA. No, they just sit there in cap and nightgown, get their diplomas, and then along about forty years from now they suddenly say, "Where am I?"

(ESSIE *comes in from the kitchen, bringing a plate of tomatoes for the evening meal*)

ESSIE. Hello, Grandpa. Have a nice day?

GRANDPA (*watching* ESSIE *as she puts the tomatoes on the table*). Hello-have-a-nice-day. (*Suddenly he roars at the top of his voice*) Don't I even get kissed?

ESSIE (*kissing him*). Excuse me, Grandpa.

GRANDPA. I'll take a tomato, too. (ESSIE *passes the plate;* GRANDPA *takes one and sits with it in his hand, solemnly weighing it*) You know, I could have used a couple of these this afternoon. . . . Play something, Ed.

(ED *at once obliges on the xylophone—something on the dreamy side. Immediately* ESSIE *is up on her toes again, drifting through the mazes of a toe dance*)

ESSIE (*after a moment*). There was a letter came for you, Grandpa. Did you get it?

GRANDPA. Letter for me? I don't know anybody.

ESSIE. It was for you, though. Had your name on it.

GRANDPA. That's funny. Where is it?

ESSIE. I don't know. Where's Grandpa's letter, mother?

PENNY (*who has been deep in her work*). What, dear?

ESSIE (*dancing dreamily away*). Where's that letter that came for Grandpa last week?

PENNY. I don't know. (*Then, brightly*) I remember seeing the kittens on it.

GRANDPA. Who was it from? Did you notice?

ESSIE. Yes, it was on the outside.

GRANDPA. Well, who was it?

ESSIE (*first finishing the graceful flutterings of the Dying Swan*). United States Government.

GRANDPA. Really? Wonder what *they* wanted.

ESSIE. There was one before that, too, from the same people. There was a couple of them.

GRANDPA. Well, if any more come I wish you'd give them to me.

ESSIE. Yes, Grandpa.

(*A fresh flurry of dancing; the xylophone grows a little louder*)

GRANDPA. I think I'll go out to Westchester tomorrow and do a little snake-hunting.

PAUL (*who has settled down with his book some time before this*). "God is the State; the State is God."

GRANDPA. What's that?

PAUL. "God is the State; the State is God."

GRANDPA. Who says that?

PAUL. Trotzky.

GRANDPA. Well, that's all right—I thought *you* said it.

ED. It's nice for printing, you know. Good and short. (*He reaches into the type case*) G — O — D — space — I — S — space — T — H — E

(*The sound of the outer door closing, and* ALICE SYCAMORE *enters the room. A lovely, fresh young girl of about twenty-two. She is plainly* GRANDPA'S *grand-daughter, but there is something that sets her apart from the rest of the family. For one thing, she is in daily contact with the world; in addition, she seems to have escaped the tinge of mild insanity that pervades the rest of them. But she is a Sycamore for all that, and her devotion and love for them are plainly apparent. At the moment she is in a small nervous flutter, but she is doing her best to conceal it*)

ALICE (*as she makes the rounds, kissing her grandfather, her father, her mother*). And so the beautiful princess came into the palace, and kissed her mother, and her father, and her grandfather—hi, Grandpa—and what do you think? They turned into the Sycamore family. Surprised?

ESSIE (*examining* ALICE'S *dress*). Oh, Alice, I like it. It's new, isn't it?

PENNY. Looks nice and summery.

ESSIE. Where'd you get it?

ALICE. Oh, I took a walk during lunch hour.

GRANDPA. You've been taking a lot of walks lately. That's the second new dress this week.

ALICE. Oh, I just like to brighten up the office once in a while. I'm known as the Kay Francis of Kirby & Co. . . . Well, what's new around here? In the way of plays, snakes, ballet dancing or fireworks. Dad, I'll bet you've been down in that cellar all day.

PAUL. Huh?

PENNY. I'm going back to the war play, Alice.

ESSIE. Ed, play Alice that Beethoven thing you wrote. Listen, Alice.

(*Like a shot* ED *is at the xylophone again,* ESSIE *up on her toes*)

(GRANDPA, *meanwhile, has unearthed his stamp album from under a pile of oddments in the corner, and is now busy with his magnifying glass*)

GRANDPA. Do you know that you can mail a letter all the way from Nicaragua for two pesetos?

PENNY (*meanwhile dramatically reading one of her own deathless lines*). "Kenneth, my virginity is a priceless thing to me."

ALICE (*finding it hard to break through all this*). Listen, people. . . . Listen. (*A break in the music; she gets a scattered sort of attention*) I'm not home to dinner. A young gentleman is calling for me.

ESSIE. Really? Who is it?

PENNY. Well, isn't that nice?

ALICE (*with quiet humor*). I did everything possible to keep him from coming here, but he's calling for me.

PENNY. Why don't you both stay to dinner?

ALICE. No, I want him to take you in easy doses. I've tried to prepare him a little, but don't make it any worse than you can help. Don't read him any plays, mother, and don't let a snake bite him, Grandpa, because I like him. And I wouldn't dance for him, Essie, because we're going to the Monte Carlo ballet tonight.

GRANDPA. Can't do *anything*. Who *is* he—President of the United States?

ALICE. No, he's vice-president of Kirby & Co. Mr. Anthony Kirby, Jr.

ESSIE. The Boss's son?

PENNY. Well!

ALICE. The Boss's son. Just like the movies.

ESSIE. That explains the new dresses.

ED. And not being home to dinner for three weeks.

ALICE. Why, you're wonderful!

PENNY (*all aglow*). Are you going to marry him?

ALICE. Oh, of course. Tonight! Meanwhile I have to go up and put on my wedding dress.

ESSIE. Is he good looking?

ALICE (*vainly consulting her watch*). Yes, in a word. Oh, dear! What time is it?

PENNY. I don't know. Anybody know what time it is?

PAUL. Mr. De Pinna might know.

ED. It was about five o'clock a couple of hours ago.

ALICE. Oh, I ought to know better than to ask you people. . . . Will you let me know the minute he comes, please?

PENNY. Of course, Alice.

ALICE. Yes, I know, but I mean the *minute* he comes.

PENNY. Why, of course. (ALICE *looks apprehensively from one to the other; then disappears up the stairs*) Well, what do you think of that?

GRANDPA. She seems to like him, if you ask me.

ESSIE. I should say so. She's got it bad.

PENNY. Wouldn't it be wonderful if she married him? We could have the wedding right in this room.

PAUL. Now, wait a minute, Penny. This is the first time he's ever called for the girl.

PENNY. You only called for me once.

PAUL. Young people are different nowadays.

ESSIE. Oh, I don't know. Look at Ed and me. He came to dinner *once* and just stayed.

PENNY. Anyhow, I think it's wonderful. I'll bet he's crazy about her. It must be he that's been taking her out every

night. (*The door bell rings*) There he is! Never mind, Rheba, I'll answer it. (*She is fluttering to the door*) Now remember what Alice said, and be *very* nice to him.

GRANDPA (*rising*). All right—let's take a look at him.

PENNY (*at the front door; milk and honey in her voice*). Well! Welcome to our little home! I'm Alice's mother. Do come right in! Here we are! (*She reappears in the archway, piloting the stranger*) This is Grandpa, and that's Alice's father, and Alice's sister, and her husband, Ed Carmichael. (*The family all give courteous little nods and smiles as they are introduced*) Well! Now give me your hat and make yourself right at home.

THE MAN. I'm afraid you must be making a mistake.

PENNY. How's that?

THE MAN. My card.

PENNY (*reading*). "Wilbur C. Henderson. Internal Revenue Department."

HENDERSON. That's right.

GRANDPA. What can we do for you?

HENDERSON. Does a Mr. Martin Vanderhof live here?

GRANDPA. Yes, sir. That's me.

HENDERSON (*all milk and honey*). Well, Mr. Vanderhof, the Government wants to talk to you about a little matter of income tax.

PENNY. Income tax?

HENDERSON. Do you mind if I sit down?

GRANDPA. No, no. Just go right ahead.

HENDERSON (*settling himself*). Thank you.

(*From above stairs the voice of* ALICE *floats down*)

ALICE. Mother! Is that Mr. Kirby?

PENNY (*going to the stairs*). No. No, it isn't, darling. It's —an internal something or other. (*To* MR. HENDERSON) Pardon me.

HENDERSON (*pulling a sheaf of papers from his pocket*). We've written you several letters about this, Mr. Vanderhof, but have not had any reply.

GRANDPA. Oh, that's what those letters were.

ESSIE. I told you they were from the Government.

(MR. DE PINNA *comes up from the cellar, bearing a couple of giant firecrackers. He pauses as he sees a stranger*)

DE PINNA. Oh, pardon me.

PAUL. Yes, Mr. De Pinna?

DE PINNA. These things are not going off, Mr. Sycamore. Look. (*He prepares to apply a match to one of them, as a startled income tax man nearly has a conniption fit. But* PAUL *is too quick for him*)

PAUL. Ah—not here, Mr. De Pinna. Grandpa's busy.

DE PINNA. Oh. (MR. DE PINNA *and* PAUL *hurry into the hall with their firecrackers*)

HENDERSON (*now that order has been restored*). According to our records, Mr. Vanderhof, you have never paid an income tax.

GRANDPA. That's right.

HENDERSON. Why not?

GRANDPA. I don't believe in it.

HENDERSON. Well—you own property, don't you?

GRANDPA. Yes, sir.

HENDERSON. And you receive a yearly income from it?

GRANDPA. I do.

HENDERSON. Of—(*He consults his records*)—between three and four thousand dollars.

GRANDPA. About that.

HENDERSON. You've been receiving it for years.

GRANDPA. I have. 1901, if you want the exact date.

HENDERSON. Well, the Government is only concerned from 1914 on. That's when the income tax started.

GRANDPA. Well?

HENDERSON. Well—it seems, Mr. Vanderhof, that you owe the Government twenty-two years' back income tax.

ED. Wait a minute! You can't go back that far—that's outlawed.

HENDERSON (*calmly regarding him*). What's *your* name?

ED. What difference does that make?

HENDERSON. Ever file an income tax return?

ED. No, sir.

HENDERSON. What was your income last year?

ED. Ah—twenty-eight dollars and fifty cents, wasn't it, Essie?

(ESSIE *gives quick assent; the income tax man dismisses the whole matter with an impatient wave of the hand and returns to bigger game*)

HENDERSON. Now, Mr. Vanderhof, you know there's quite a penalty for not filing an income tax return.

PENNY. Penalty?

GRANDPA. Look, Mr. Henderson, let me ask you something.

HENDERSON. Well?

GRANDPA. Suppose I pay you this money—mind you, I don't say I'm going to do it—but just for the sake of argument—what's the Government going to do with it?

HENDERSON. How do you mean?

GRANDPA. Well, what do I get for my money? If I go into Macy's and buy something, there it *is*—I see it. What's the Government give me?

HENDERSON. Why, the Government gives you everything. It protects you.

GRANDPA. What from?

HENDERSON. Well—invasion. Foreigners that might come over here and take everything you've got.

GRANDPA. Oh, I don't think they're going to do that.

HENDERSON. If you didn't pay an income tax, they would. How do you think the Government keeps up the Army and Navy? All those battleships . . .

GRANDPA. Last time we used battleships was in the Spanish-American War, and what did we get out of it? Cuba—and we gave that back. I wouldn't mind paying if it were something sensible.

HENDERSON (*beginning to get annoyed*). Well, what about

Congress, and the Supreme Court, and the President? We've got to pay *them*, don't we?

GRANDPA (*ever so calmly*). Not with my money—no, sir.

HENDERSON (*furious*). Now wait a minute! I'm not here to argue with you. All I know is that you haven't paid an income tax and you've got to pay it!

GRANDPA. They've got to show me.

HENDERSON (*yelling*). We *don't* have to show you! I just told you! All those buildings down in Washington, and Interstate Commerce, and the Constitution!

GRANDPA. The Constitution was paid for long ago. And Interstate Commerce—what *is* Interstate Commerce, anyhow?

HENDERSON (*with murderous calm*). There are forty-eight states—see? And if there weren't Interstate Commerce, nothing could go from one state to another. See?

GRANDPA. Why not? They got fences?

HENDERSON. No, they haven't got fences! They've got *laws*! . . . My God, I never came across anything like this before!

GRANDPA. Well, I might pay about seventy-five dollars, but that's all it's worth.

HENDERSON. You'll pay every cent of it, like everybody else!

ED (*who has lost interest*). Listen, Essie—listen to this a minute.

(*The xylophone again;* ESSIE *goes into her dance*)

HENDERSON (*going right ahead, battling against the music*). And let me tell you something else! You'll go to jail if you don't pay, do you hear that? There's a law, and if you think you're bigger than the law, you've got another think coming! You'll hear from the United States Government, that's all I can say! (*He is backing out of the room*)

GRANDPA (*quietly*). Look out for those snakes.

HENDERSON (*jumping*). Jesus!

(*Out in the hall, and not more than a foot or two behind*

MR. HENDERSON, *the firecracker boys are now ready to test that little bomber. It goes off with a terrific detonation, and* MR. HENDERSON *jumps a full foot. He wastes no time at all in getting out of there*)

PAUL (*coming back into the room*). How did that sound to you folks?

GRANDPA (*quite judicially*). I liked it.

PENNY. My goodness, he was mad, wasn't he?

GRANDPA. Oh, it wasn't his fault. It's just that the whole thing is so silly.

PENNY (*suddenly finding herself with a perfectly good Panama in her hand*). He forgot his hat.

GRANDPA. What size is it?

PENNY (*peering into its insides*). Seven and an eighth.

GRANDPA. Just right for me.

DE PINNA. Who was that fellow, anyhow?

(*Again the door bell*)

PENNY. This *must* be Mr. Kirby.

PAUL. Better make sure this time.

PENNY. Yes, I will. (*She disappears*)

ESSIE. I hope he's good-looking.

PENNY (*heard at the door*). How do you do?

A MAN'S VOICE. Good evening.

PENNY (*taking no chances*). Is this Mr. Anthony Kirby, Jr.?

TONY. Yes.

PENNY (*giving her all*). Well, Mr. Kirby, come right in! We've been expecting you. Come right in! (*They come into sight;* PENNY *expansively addresses the family*) This is *really* Mr. Kirby! Now, I'm Alice's mother, and that's *Mr.* Sycamore, and Alice's grandfather, and her sister Essie, and Essie's husband. (*There are a few mumbled greetings*) There! Now you know *all* of us, Mr. Kirby. Give me your hat and make yourself right at home.

(TONY KIRBY *comes a few steps into the room. He is a*

personable young man, not long out of Yale, and, as we will presently learn, even more recently out of Cambridge. Although he fits all the physical requirements of a Boss's son, his face has something of the idealist in it. All in all, a very nice young man)

TONY. How do you do?

(*Again the voice of the vigilant* ALICE *floats down from upstairs. "Is that Mr. Kirby, Mother?"*)

PENNY (*shouting up the stairs*). Yes, Alice. He's *lovely*!

ALICE (*aware of storm signals*). I'll be right down.

PENNY. Do sit down, Mr. Kirby.

TONY. Thank you. (*A glance at the dinner table*) I hope I'm not keeping you from dinner?

GRANDPA. No, no. Have a tomato?

TONY. No, thank you.

PENNY (*producing the candy-filled skull*). How about a piece of candy?

TONY (*eyeing the container*). Ah—no, thanks.

PENNY. Oh, I forgot to introduce Mr. De Pinna. This is Mr. De Pinna, Mr. Kirby.

(*An exchange of "How do you do's?"*)

DE PINNA. Wasn't I reading about your father in the newspaper the other day? Didn't he get indicted or something?

TONY (*smiling*). Hardly that. He just testified before the Securities Commission.

DE PINNA. Oh.

PENNY (*sharply*). Yes, of course. I'm sure there was nothing crooked about it, Mr. De Pinna. As a matter of fact—(*She is now addressing* TONY) —Alice has often told us what a lovely man your father is.

TONY. Well, I know father couldn't get along without Alice. She knows more about the business than any of us.

ESSIE. You're awful young, Mr. Kirby, aren't you, to be vice-president of a big place like that.

TONY. Well, you know what that means, vice-president. All I have is a desk with my name on it.

PENNY. Is that all? Don't you get any salary?

TONY (*with a laugh*). Well, a little. More than I'm worth, I'm afraid.

PENNY. Now you're just being modest.

GRANDPA. Sounds kind of dull to me—Wall Street. Do you like it?

TONY. Well, the hours are short. And I haven't been there very long.

GRANDPA. Just out of college, huh?

TONY. Well, I knocked around for a while first. Just sort of had fun.

GRANDPA. What did you do? Travel?

TONY. For a while. Then I went to Cambridge for a year.

GRANDPA (*nodding*). England.

TONY. That's right.

GRANDPA. Say, what's an English commencement like? Did you see any?

TONY. Oh, very impressive.

GRANDPA. They are, huh?

TONY. Anyhow, now the fun's over, and—I'm facing the world.

PENNY. You've certainly got a good start, Mr. Kirby. Vice-president, and a rich father.

TONY. Well, that's hardly my fault.

PENNY (*brightly*). So now I suppose you're all ready to settle down and—get married.

PAUL. Come now, Penny, I'm sure Mr. Kirby knows his own mind.

PENNY. I wasn't making up his mind for him—was I, Mr. Kirby?

TONY. That's quite all right, Mrs. Sycamore.

PENNY (*to the others*). You see?

ESSIE. You mustn't rush him, mother.

PENNY. Well, all I meant was he's bound to get married, and suppose the wrong girl gets him?

(*The descending* ALICE *mercifully comes to* TONY'S *rescue at this moment. Her voice is heard from the stairs*)

ALICE. Well, here I am, a vision in white. (*She comes into the room—and very lovely indeed*) Apparently you've had time to get acquainted.

PENNY. Oh, yes, indeed. We were just having a delightful talk about love and marriage.

ALICE. Oh, dear. (*She turns to* TONY) I'm sorry. I came down as fast as I could.

RHEBA (*bringing a platter of sliced watermelon*). God damn those flies in the kitchen. . . . Oh, Miss Alice, you look beautiful. Where you going?

ALICE (*making the best of it*). I'm going out, Rheba.

RHEBA (*noticing* TONY). Stepping, huh?

(*The door bell sounds*)

ESSIE. That must be Kolenkhov.

ALICE (*uneasily*). I think we'd better go, Tony.

TONY. All right.

(*Before they can escape, however,* DONALD *emerges from the kitchen, bearing a tray*)

DONALD. Grandpa, you take cream on your cornflakes? I forget.

GRANDPA. Half and half, Donald.

(*The voice of* BORIS KOLENKHOV *booms from the outer door*)

KOLENKHOV. Ah, my little Rhebishka!

RHEBA (*with a scream of laughter*). Yassuh, Mr. Kolenkhov!

KOLENKHOV. I am so hungry I could even eat my little Rhebishka! (*He appears in the archway, his great arm completely encircling the delighted* RHEBA. MR. KOLENKHOV *is one of* RHEBA'S *pets, and if you like Russians he might be one of yours. He is enormous, hairy, loud, and very, very Russian. His appearance in the archway still*

further traps ALICE *and* TONY) Grandpa, what do you think? I have had a letter from Russia! The Second Five Year Plan is a failure! (*He lets out a laugh that shakes the rafters*)

ESSIE. I practiced today, Mr. Kolenkhov!

KOLENKHOV (*with a deep Russian bow*). My Pavlowa! (*Another bow*) Madame Sycamore! . . . My little Alice! (*He kisses her hand*) Never have I seen you look so magnificent.

ALICE. Thank you, Mr. Kolenkhov. Tony, this is Mr. Kolenkhov, Essie's dancing teacher. Mr. Kirby.

TONY. How do you do?

(*A click of the heels and a bow from* KOLENKHOV)

ALICE (*determined, this time*). And now we really *must* go. Excuse us, Mr. Kolenkhov—we're going to the Monte Carlo ballet.

KOLENKHOV (*at the top of his tremendous voice*). The Monte Carlo ballet! It *stinks*!

ALICE (*panicky now*). Yes. . . . Well—good-by, everybody. Good-by.

TONY. Good-by. I'm so glad to have met you all.

(*A chorus of answering "Good-bys" from the family. The young people are gone*)

KOLENKHOV (*still furious*). The Monte Carlo ballet!

PENNY. Isn't Mr. Kirby lovely? . . . Come on, everybody! Dinner's ready!

ED (*pulling up a chair*). I thought he was a nice fellow, didn't you?

ESSIE. Mm. And so good-looking.

PENNY. And he had such nice manners. Did you notice, Paul? Did you notice his manners?

PAUL. I certainly did. You were getting pretty personal with him.

PENNY. Oh, now, Paul . . . Anyhow, he's a very nice young man.

DE PINNA (*as he seats himself*). He looks kind of like a cousin of mine.

KOLENKHOV. Bakst! Diaghileff! *Then* you had the *ballet*!

PENNY. I think if they get married here I'll put the altar right where the snakes are. You wouldn't mind, Grandpa, would you?

ESSIE. Oh, they'll want to get married in a church. His family and everything.

GRANDPA (*tapping on a plate for silence*). Quiet, everybody! Quiet! (*They are immediately silent—Grace is about to be pronounced.* GRANDPA *pauses a moment for heads to bow, then raises his eyes heavenward. He clears his throat and proceeds to say Grace*) Well, Sir, we've been getting along pretty good for quite a while now, and we're certainly much obliged. Remember, all we ask is just to go along and be happy in our own sort of way. Of course we want to keep our health, but as far as anything else is concerned, we'll leave it to You. Thank You. (*The heads come up as* RHEBA *comes through the door with a steaming platter*) So the Second Five Year Plan is a failure, eh, Kolenkhov?

KOLENKHOV (*booming*). Catastrophic! (*He reaches across the table and spears a piece of bread. The family, too, is busily plunging in*)

The curtain is down

SCENE II

(*Late the same night. The house is in darkness save for a light in the hall.*

Somewhere in the back regions an accordion is being played. Then quiet. Then the stillness of the night is suddenly broken again by a good loud BANG! from the

cellar. Somewhere in the nether regions, one of the Sycamores is still at work.

Once more all is quiet, then the sound of a key in the outer door. The voices of ALICE *and* TONY *drift through.*)

ALICE. I could see them dance every night of the week. I think they're marvelous.

TONY. They are, aren't they? But of course just walking inside *any* theater gives *me* a thrill.

ALICE (*as they come into sight in the hallway*). It's been *so* lovely, Tony. I hate to have it over.

TONY. Oh, is it over? Do I have to go right away?

ALICE. Not if you don't want to.

TONY. I don't.

ALICE. Would you like a cold drink?

TONY. Wonderful.

ALICE (*pausing to switch on the light*). I'll see what's in the ice-box. Want to come along?

TONY. I'd follow you to the ends of the earth.

ALICE. Oh, just the kitchen is enough. (*They go out. A pause, a ripple of gay laughter from the kitchen, then they return.* ALICE *is carrying a couple of glasses,* TONY *brings two bottles of ginger ale and an opener*) Lucky you're not hungry, Mr. K. An ice-box full of cornflakes. That gives you a rough idea of the Sycamores.

TONY (*working away with the opener*). Of course, why they make these bottle openers for Singer midgets I never *was* able to—ah! (*As the bottle opens*) All over my coat.

ALICE. I'll take mine in a glass, if you don't mind.

TONY (*pouring*). There you are. A foaming beaker.

ALICE. Anyhow, it's cold.

TONY (*pouring his own*). Now if you'll please be seated I'd like to offer a toast.

ALICE (*settling herself*). We are seated.

TONY. Miss Sycamore— (*He raises his glass on high*) —to you.

ALICE. Thank you, Mr. Kirby. (*Lifting her own glass*) To you. (*They both drink*)

TONY (*happily*). I wouldn't trade one minute of this evening for—all the rice in China.

ALICE. Really?

TONY. Cross my heart.

ALICE (*a little sigh of contentment. Then shyly*). Is there much rice in China?

TONY. Terrific. Didn't you read "The Good Earth"? (*She laughs. They are silent for a moment*) I suppose I ought to go.

ALICE. Is it very late?

TONY (*looks at his watch*). Very. (ALICE *gives a little nod. Time doesn't matter*) I don't want to go.

ALICE. I don't want you to.

TONY. All right, I won't. (*Silence again*) When do you get your vacation?

ALICE. Last two weeks in August.

TONY. I might take mine then, too.

ALICE. Really?

TONY. What are you going to do?

ALICE. I don't know. I hadn't thought much about it.

TONY. Going away, do you think?

ALICE. I might not. I like the city in the summer time.

TONY. I do too.

ALICE. But you always go up to Maine, don't you?

TONY. Why—yes, but I'm sure I *would* like the city in the summer time. That is, I'd like it if—Oh, you know what I mean, Alice. I'd love it if *you* were here.

ALICE. Well—it'd be nice if you were here, Tony.

TONY. You know what you're saying, don't you?

ALICE. What?

TONY. That you'd rather spend the summer with me than anybody else.

ALICE. It looks that way, doesn't it?

TONY. Well, if it's true about the summer, how would you feel about—the winter?

ALICE (*seeming to weigh the matter*). Yes. I'd—like that too.

TONY (*tremulous*). Then comes spring—and autumn. If you could—see your way clear about those, Miss Sycamore. . . .

ALICE (*again a little pause*). Yes.

TONY. I guess that's the whole year. We haven't forgotten anything, have we?

ALICE. No.

TONY. Well, then—

(*Another pause; their eyes meet. And at this moment,* PENNY *is heard from the stairway*)

PENNY. Is that you, Alice? What time is it? (*She comes into the room, wrapped in a bathrobe*) Oh! (*In sudden embarrassment*) Excuse me, Mr. Kirby. I had no idea —that is, I— (*She senses the situation*) —I didn't mean to interrupt anything.

TONY. Not at all, Mrs. Sycamore.

ALICE (*quietly*). No, Mother.

PENNY. I just came down for a manuscript— (*Fumbling at her table*) —then you can go right ahead. Ah, here it is. "Sex Takes a Holiday." Well—good night, Mr. Kirby.

TONY. Good night, Mrs. Sycamore.

PENNY. Oh, I think you can call me Penny, don't you, Alice? At least I hope so.

(*With a little laugh she vanishes up the stairs. Before* PENNY'S *rippling laugh quite dies, BANG! from the cellar.* TONY *jumps*)

ALICE (*quietly*). It's all right, Tony. That's Father.

TONY. This time of night?

ALICE (*ominously*). *Any* time of night. Any time of *day.*

(*She stands silent. In the pause,* TONY *gazes at her fondly*)

TONY. You're more beautiful, more lovely, more adorable than anyone else in the whole world.

ALICE (*as he starts to embrace her*). Don't, Tony. I can't.

TONY. What?

ALICE. I can't, Tony.

TONY. My dear, just because your mother—all mothers are like that, Alice, and Penny's a darling. You see, I'm even calling her Penny.

ALICE. I don't mean that. (*She faces him squarely*) Look, Tony. This is something I should have said a long time ago, but I didn't have the courage. I let myself be swept away because—because I loved you so.

TONY. Darling!

ALICE. No, wait, Tony. I want to make it clear to you. You're of a different world—a whole different kind of people. Oh, I don't mean money or socially—that's too silly. But your family and mine—it just wouldn't work, Tony. It just wouldn't work.

(*Again an interruption. This time it is* ED *and* ESSIE, *returning from the neighborhood movie. We hear their voices at the door, deep in an argument.* ED: *"All right, have it your way. She* can't *dance. That's why they pay her all that money—because she can't dance." And then* ESSIE: *"Well, I don't call that dancing, what she does."*)

(*They come into sight*)

ESSIE. Oh, hello. (*There is an exchange of greetings, a note of constraint in* ALICE'S *voice. But* ESSIE *goes right ahead*) Look! What do *you* think? Ed and I just saw Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. Do you think she can dance, Mr. Kirby?

TONY (*mildly taken aback by this*). Why, yes—I always thought so.

ESSIE. What does she do, anyhow? Now, look—you're Fred Astaire and I'm Ginger Rogers. (*She drapes herself against* TONY, *à la Ginger Rogers*)

ALICE. Essie, please.

ESSIE. I just want to use him for a minute. . . . Look, Mr. Kirby—(*Her arms go round his neck, her cheek against his*)

ALICE (*Feeling that it's time to take action*). Essie, you're just as good as Ginger Rogers. We all agree.

ESSIE (*triumphantly*). You see, Ed?

ED. Yeh. . . . Come on, Essie—we're butting in here.

ESSIE. Oh, they've been together all evening. . . . Good night, Mr. Kirby.

(*An exchange of good nights—it looks as though the* CARMICHAELS *are really going upstairs before the whole thing gets too embarrassing. Then* ED *turns casually to* ESSIE *in the doorway*)

ED. Essie, did you ask Grandpa about us having a baby?

ESSIE (*as they ascend the stairs*). Yes—he said go right ahead.

ALICE (*when they are gone*). You see? That's what it would be like, always.

TONY. But I didn't mind that. Besides, darling, we're not going to live with our families. It's just you and I.

ALICE. No, it isn't—it's never quite that. I love them, Tony—I love them deeply. Some people could cut away, but I couldn't. I know they do rather strange things—I never know what to expect next—but they're gay, and they're fun, and—I don't know—there's a kind of nobility about them. That may sound silly, but I mean—the way they just don't care about things that other people give their whole lives to. They're—really wonderful, Tony.

TONY. Alice, you talk as though only you could understand them. That's not true. Why, I fell in love with them tonight.

ALICE. But your family, Tony. I'd want *you*, and everything about you, everything about *me*, to be—one. I couldn't start out with a part of me that you didn't share, and part of you that I didn't share. Unless we were all one

—you, and *your* mother and father—I'd be miserable. And they never can be, Tony—I know it. They couldn't be.

TONY. Alice, every family has got curious little traits. What of it? My father raises orchids at ten thousand dollars a bulb. Is that sensible? My mother believes in spiritualism. That's just as bad as your mother writing plays, isn't it?

ALICE. It goes deeper, Tony. Your mother believes in spiritualism because it's fashionable. And your father raises orchids because he can afford to. My mother writes plays because eight years ago a typewriter was delivered here by mistake.

TONY. Darling, what *of* it?

ALICE. And look at Grandpa. Thirty-five years ago he just quit business one day. He started up to his office in the elevator and came right down again. He just stopped. He could have been a rich man, but he said it took too much time. So for thirty-five years he's just collected snakes and gone to circuses and commencements. It never occurs to any of them—

(*As if to prove her point, they are suddenly interrupted at this moment by the entrance of* DONALD *from the kitchen. It is a* DONALD *who has plainly not expected to encounter midnight visitors, for he is simply dressed in a long white nightgown and a somewhat shorter bathrobe—a costume that permits a generous expanse of white nightshirt down around the legs, and, below that, a couple of very black shins. His appearance, incidentally, explains where all that music had been coming from, for an accordion is slung over his shoulder*)

DONALD (*surprised, but not taken aback*). Oh, excuse me. I didn't know you folks was in here.

ALICE (*resigned*). It's all right, Donald.

DONALD. Rheba kind of fancied some candy, and— (*His*

gaze is roaming the room) oh, there it is. (*He picks up* PENNY'S *skull, if you know what we mean*) You-all don't want it, do you?

ALICE. No, Donald. Go right ahead.

DONALD. Thanks. (*He feels that the occasion calls for certain amenities*) Have a nice evening?

ALICE. Yes, Donald.

DONALD. Nice dinner?

ALICE (*restraining herself*). Yes, Donald.

DONALD. The ballet nice?

ALICE (*entirely too quietly*). Yes, Donald.

DONALD (*summing it all up*). That's nice. (*He goes—and* ALICE *bursts forth*)

ALICE. Now! Now do you see what I mean? Could you explain Donald to your father? Could you explain Grandpa? You couldn't, Tony, you couldn't! I should have known! I did know! I love you, Tony, but I love them too! And it's no use, Tony! It's no use! (*She is weeping now in spite of herself*)

TONY (*quietly*). There's only one thing you've said that matters—that makes any sense at all. You love me.

ALICE. But, Tony, I know so well . . .

TONY. My darling, don't you think other people have had the same problem? Everybody's got a family.

ALICE (*through her tears*). But not like mine.

TONY. That doesn't stop people who love each other. . . . Darling! Darling, won't you trust me, and go on loving me, and forget everything else?

ALICE. How can I?

TONY. Because nothing can keep us apart. You know that. You must know it. Just as I know it. (*He takes her in his arms*) They want you to be happy, don't they? They *must*.

ALICE. Of course they do. But they can't change, Tony. I wouldn't want them to change.

TONY. They won't have to change. They're charming, lovable people, just as they are. You're worrying about something that may never come up.

ALICE. Oh, Tony, am I?

TONY. All that matters right now is that we love each other. That's right, isn't it?

ALICE (*whispering*). Yes.

TONY. Well, then!

ALICE (*in his arms*). Tony, Tony!

TONY. Now! I'd like to see a little gayety around here. Young gentleman calling, and getting engaged and everything.

ALICE (*smiling up into his face*). What do I say?

TONY. Well, first you thank the young man for getting engaged to you.

ALICE. Thank you, Mr. Kirby, for getting engaged to me.

TONY. And then you tell him what it was about him that first took your girlish heart.

ALICE. The back of your head.

TONY. Huh?

ALICE. Uh-huh. It wasn't your charm, and it wasn't your money—it was the back of your head. I just happened to like it.

TONY. What happened when I turned around?

ALICE. Oh, I got used to it after a while.

TONY. I see . . . Oh, Alice, think of it. We're pretty lucky, aren't we?

ALICE. I know that *I* am. The luckiest girl in the world.

TONY. I'm not exactly unlucky myself.

ALICE. It's wonderful, isn't it?

TONY. Yes . . . Lord, but I'm happy.

ALICE. Are you, Tony?

TONY. Terribly . . . And now—good night, my dear. Until tomorrow.

ALICE. Good night.

TONY. Isn't it wonderful we work in the same office? Otherwise I'd be hanging around *here* all day.

ALICE. Won't it be funny in the office tomorrow—seeing each other and just going on as though nothing had happened?

TONY. Thank God I'm vice-president. I can dictate to you all day. "Dear Miss Sycamore: I love you, I love you, I love you."

ALICE. Oh, darling! You're such a fool.

TONY (*an arm about her as he starts toward the hallway*). Why don't you meet me in the drugstore in the morning—before you go up to the office? I'll have millions of things to say to you by then.

ALICE. All right.

TONY. And then lunch, and then dinner tomorrow night.

ALICE. Oh, Tony! What will people say?

TONY. It's got to come out some time. In fact, if you know a good housetop, I'd like to do a little shouting.

(*She laughs—a happy little ripple. They are out of sight in the hallway by this time; their voices become inaudible*)

(PAUL, *at this point, decides to call it a day down in the cellar. He comes through the door, followed by* MR. DE PINNA. *He is carrying a small metal container, filled with powder*)

PAUL. Yes, sir, Mr. De Pinna, we did a good day's work.

DE PINNA. That's what. Five hundred Black Panthers, three hundred Willow Trees, and eight dozen Junior Kiddie Bombers.

(ALICE *comes back from the hallway, still under the spell of her love*)

PAUL. Why, hello, Alice. You just come in?

ALICE (*softly*). No. No, I've been home quite a while.

PAUL. Have a nice evening? Say, I'd like you to take a look at this new red fire we've got.

ALICE (*almost singing it*). I had a beautiful evening, Father.

PAUL. Will you turn out the lights, Mr. De Pinna? I want Alice to get the full effect.

ALICE (*who hasn't heard a word*). What, Father?

PAUL. Take a look at this new red fire. It's beautiful. (MR. DE PINNA *switches the lights out;* PAUL *touches a match to the powder. The red fire blazes, shedding a soft glow over the room*) There! What do you think of it? Isn't it beautiful?

ALICE (*radiant; her face aglow, her voice soft*). Yes, Father. Everything is beautiful. It's the most beautiful red fire in the world! (*She rushes to him and throws her arms about him, almost unable to bear her own happiness*)

Curtain

ACT TWO

(*A week later, and the family has just risen from the dinner table. Two or three of them have drifted out of the room, but* GRANDPA *and* PAUL *still sit over their coffee cups*)

(*There is, however, a newcomer in the room. Her name is* GAY WELLINGTON, *and, as we will presently guess, she is an actress, a nymphomaniac, and a terrible souse. At the moment she sits with a gin bottle in one hand and a glass in the other, and is having a darned good time. Hovering over her, script in hand, is a slightly worried* PENNY. ED *is watching the proceedings from somewhere in the vicinage of the printing press, and* DONALD, *leisurely clearing the table, has paused to see if* MISS WELLINGTON *can really swallow that one more drink of gin that she is about to tackle. She does, and another besides*)

(PENNY *finally decides to make a try*)

PENNY. I'm ready to read the play now, Miss Wellington, if you are.

GAY WELLINGTON. Just a minute, dearie—just a minute (*The gin again*)

PENNY. The only thing is—I hope you won't mind my mentioning this, but—you don't drink when you're acting, do you, Miss Wellington? I'm just asking, of course.

GAY. I'm glad you brought it up. Once a play opens, I never touch a drop. Minute I enter a stage door, this bottle gets put away till intermission.

GRANDPA (*who plainly has his doubts*). Have you been on the stage a long time, Miss Wellington?

GAY. All my life. I've played everything. Ever see "Peg o' My Heart"?

GRANDPA. Yes, indeed.

GAY (*with that fine logic for which the inebriated brain is celebrated*). I saw it too. Great show. (*She staggers backwards a bit, but recovers herself just in time*) My! Hot night, ain't it?

DONALD (*ever helpful*). Want me to open a window, Miss Wellington?

GAY. No, the hell with the weather. (*She takes a second look at the dusky* DONALD) Say, he's cute.

(RHEBA, *who has entered just in time to overhear this, gives* GAY *a look that tells her in no uncertain terms to keep out of Harlem on dark nights. Then she stalks back into the kitchen,* DONALD *close on her heels*)

DONALD (*trying to explain it all*). She's just acting, Rheba. She don't mean anything.

PENNY. Well, any time you're ready, we can go up to my room and start. I thought I'd read the play up in my room.

GAY. All right, dearie, just a minute. (*She starts to pour one more drink, then suddenly her gaze becomes transfixed. She shakes her head as though to dislodge the image, then looks again, receives verification, and starts to pour the gin back into the bottle*) When I see snakes it's time to lay down. (*She makes for a couch in the corner, and passes right out—cold*)

PENNY. Oh, but those are real, Miss Wellington. They're Grandpa's. . . . Oh, dear! I hope she's not going to— (*Shaking her*) Miss Wellington! Miss Wellington!

ED. She's out like a light.

PAUL. Better let her sleep it off.

DONALD (*carrying the news into the kitchen*). Rheba, Miss Wellington just passed out.

(*From the nether recesses we hear* RHEBA'S *reaction—an emphatic "Good!"*)

PENNY. Do you think she'll be all right?

GRANDPA. Yes, but I wouldn't cast her in the religious play.

PENNY. Well, I suppose I'll just have to wait. I wonder if I shouldn't cover her up.

GRANDPA. Next time you meet an actress on the top of a bus, Penny, I think I'd *send* her the play, instead of bringing her home to read it.

ESSIE (*as* ED *starts in with the printing press*). Ed, I wish you'd stop printing and take those Love Dreams around. They're out in the kitchen.

ED. I will. I just want to finish up these circulars.

ESSIE. Well, do that later, can't you? You've got to get back in time to play for me when Kolenkhov comes.

GRANDPA. Kolenkhov coming tonight?

ESSIE. Yes, tomorrow night's his night, but I had to change it on account of Alice.

GRANDPA. Oh! . . . Big doings around here tomorrow night, huh?

PENNY. Isn't it exciting? You know, I'm so nervous—you'd think it was me he was engaged to, instead of Alice.

ESSIE. What do you think they'll *be* like—his mother and father? . . . Ed, what are you doing *now*?

ED. Penny, did you see the new mask I made last night? (*He reveals a new side of his character by suddenly holding a homemade mask before his face*) Guess who it is.

PENNY. Don't tell me now, Ed. Wait a minute . . . Cleopatra.

ED (*furious*). It's Mrs. Roosevelt. (*He goes into the kitchen*)

(PAUL, *meanwhile, has gone to a table in the corner of the room, from which he now brings a steel-like boat model, two or three feet high, puts it down on the floor, and proceeds to sit down beside it. From a large cardboard*

box, which he has also brought with him, he proceeds to take out additional pieces of steel and fit them into the model)

PAUL. You know, the nice thing about these Erector Sets, you can make so many different things with them. Last week it was the Empire State Building.

GRANDPA. What is it this week?

PAUL. The Queen Mary.

PENNY (*looking it over*). Hasn't got the right hat on. (ED *comes in from the kitchen, bringing a pile of about a dozen candy boxes, neatly wrapped, and tied together for purposes of delivery*)

ED (*as* MR. DE PINNA *comes in from the hall*). Look. Mr. De Pinna, would you open the door and see if there's a man standing in front of the house?

ESSIE. Why, what for?

ED. Well, the last two days, when I've been out delivering, I think a man's been following me.

ESSIE. Ed, you're crazy.

ED. No, I'm not. He follows me, and he stands and watches the house.

DE PINNA. Really? (*Striding out*) I'll take a look and see.

GRANDPA. I don't see what anybody would follow *you* for, Ed.

PENNY. Well, there's a lot of kidnapping going on, Grandpa.

GRANDPA. Yes, but not of Ed.

ED (*as* MR. DE PINNA *returns from the hall*). Well? Did you see him?

DE PINNA. There's nobody out there at all.

ED. You're sure?

DE PINNA. Positive. I just saw him walk away.

ED. You see? I told you.

ESSIE. Oh, it might have been anybody, walking along the
Ed, will you hurry and get back?
ig *up his boxes*). Oh, all right.

DE PINNA. Want to go down now, Mr. Sycamore, and finish packing up the fireworks?

PAUL (*putting the Queen Mary back on the table*). Yeh, we've got to take the stuff up to Mt. Vernon in the morning.

(*They go into the cellar. Simultaneously the voice of* ALICE, *happily singing, is heard as she descends the stairs*)

ALICE. Mother, may I borrow some paper? I'm making out a list for Rheba tomorrow night.

PENNY. Yes, dear. Here's some.

ALICE (*as she sights* MISS WELLINGTON). Why, what happened to your actress friend? Is she giving a performance?

PENNY. No, she's not acting, Alice. She's really drunk.

ALICE. Essie, you're going to give Rheba the kitchen all day tomorrow, aren't you? Because she'll need it.

ESSIE. Of course, Alice. I'm going to start some Love Dreams now, so I'll be 'way ahead. (*She goes into the kitchen*)

ALICE. Thanks, dear . . . Look, Mother, I'm coming home at three o'clock tomorrow. Will you have everything down in the cellar by that time? The typewriter, and the snakes, and the xylophone, and the printing press . . .

GRANDPA. And Miss Wellington.

ALICE. And Miss Wellington. That'll give me time to arrange the table, and fix the flowers.

GRANDPA. The Kirbys are certainly going to get the wrong impression of this house.

ALICE. You'll *do* all that, won't you, Mother?

PENNY. Of course, dear.

ALICE. And I think we'd better have cocktails ready by seven-fifteen, in case they happen to come a little early. . . . I wonder if I ought to let Rheba cook the dinner. What do you think, Grandpa?

GRANDPA. Now, Alice, I wouldn't worry. From what I've

seen of the boy I'm sure the Kirbys are very nice people, and if everything isn't so elaborate tomorrow night, it's all right too.

ALICE. Darling, I'm not trying to impress them, or pretend we're anything that we aren't. I just want everything to—to go off well.

GRANDPA. No reason why it shouldn't, Alice.

PENNY. We're all going to do everything we can to make it a nice party.

ALICE. Oh, my darlings, I love you. You're the most wonderful family in the world, and I'm the happiest girl in the world. I didn't know anyone could *be* so happy. He's so wonderful, Grandpa. Why, just seeing him—you don't know what it does to me.

GRANDPA. Just seeing him. Just seeing him for lunch, and dinner, and until four o'clock in the morning, and at nine o'clock *next* morning you're at the office again and there he is. You just see him, huh?

ALICE. I don't care! I'm in love! (*She swings open the kitchen door*) Rheba! Rheba! (*She goes into the kitchen*)

GRANDPA. Nice, isn't it? Nice to see her so happy.

PENNY. I remember when I was engaged to Paul—how happy I was. And you know, I still feel that way.

GRANDPA. I know . . . Nice the way Ed and Essie get along too, isn't it?

PENNY. And Donald and Rheba, even though they're *not* married. . . . Do you suppose Mr. De Pinna will ever marry anyone, Grandpa?

GRANDPA (*a gesture toward the couch*). Well, there's Miss Wellington.

PENNY. Oh, dear, I *wish* she'd wake up. If we're going to read the play tonight—

(MR. DE PINNA *comes up from the cellar, bringing along a rather large-sized unframed painting*)

DE PINNA. Mrs. Sycamore, look what I found! (*He turns*

the canvas around, revealing a portrait of a somewhat lumpy discus thrower, in Roman costume—or was it Greek?) Remember?

PENNY. Why, of course. It's my painting of you as The Discus Thrower. Look, Grandpa.

GRANDPA. I remember it. Say, you've gotten a little bald, haven't you, Mr. De Pinna?

DE PINNA (*running a hand over his completely hairless head*). Is it very noticeable?

PENNY. Well, it was a long time ago—just before I stopped painting. Let me see—that's eight years.

DE PINNA. Too bad you never finished it, Mrs. Sycamore.

PENNY. I always meant to finish it, Mr. De Pinna, but I just started to write a play one day and that was that. I never painted again.

GRANDPA. Just as well, too. *I* was going to have to strip next.

DE PINNA (*meditatively*). Who would have thought, that day I came to deliver the ice, that I was going to stay here for eight years?

GRANDPA. The milkman was here for five, just ahead of you.

DE PINNA. Why did he leave, anyhow? I forget.

GRANDPA. He didn't leave. He died.

PENNY. He was such a nice man. Remember the funeral, Grandpa? We never knew his name and it was kind of hard to get a certificate.

GRANDPA. What was the name we finally made up for him?

PENNY. Martin Vanderhof. We gave him *your* name.

GRANDPA. Oh, yes, I remember.

PENNY. It was a lovely thought, because otherwise he never would have got all those flowers.

GRANDPA. Certainly was. And it didn't hurt *me* any. Not bothered with mail any more, and I haven't had a telephone call from that day to this. (*He catches an unwary fly and drops it casually into the snake solarium*)

PENNY. Yes, it was really a wonderful idea.

DE PINNA (*with the picture*). I wish you'd finish this sometime, Mrs. Sycamore. I'd kind of like to have it.

PENNY. You know what, Mr. De Pinna? I think I'll do some work on it. Right tonight.

DE PINNA. Say! Will you?

(*The door bell rings*)

PENNY (*peering at the prostrate* GAY). I don't think she's going to wake up anyhow. . . . Look, Mr. De Pinna! You go down in the cellar and bring up the easel and get into your costume. Is it still down there?

DE PINNA (*excited*). I think so! (*He darts into the cellar*)

PENNY. Now, where did I put my palette and brushes? (*She dashes up the stairs as the voice of* KOLENKHOV *is heard at the door, booming, of course*)

KOLENKHOV. Rhebishka! My little Rhebishka!

RHEBA (*delighted, as usual*). Yassuh, Mr. Kolenkhov!

PENNY (*as she goes up the stairs*). Hello, Mr. Kolenkhov. Essie's in the kitchen.

KOLENKHOV. Madame Sycamore, I greet you! (*His great arm again encircling* RHEBA, *he drags her protestingly into the room*) Tell me, Grandpa—what should I do about Rhebishka! I keep telling her she would make a great toe dancer, but she laughs only!

RHEBA (*breaking away*). No, suh! I couldn't get up on my toes, Mr. Kolenkhov! I got corns! (*She goes into the kitchen*)

KOLENKHOV (*calling after her*). Rhebishka, you could wear diamonds! (*Suddenly he sights the portrait of* MR. DE PINNA) What is that?

GRANDPA (*who has taken up his stamp album again*). It's a picture of Mr. De Pinna. Penny painted it.

KOLENKHOV (*summing it up*). It stinks.

GRANDPA. I know. (*He indicates the figure on the couch*) How do you like that?

KOLENKHOV (*peering over*). What is *that*?

GRANDPA. She's an actress. Friend of Penny's.

KOLENKHOV. She is drunk—no?

GRANDPA. She is drunk—yes. . . . How are *you,* Kolenkhov?

KOLENKHOV. Magnificent! Life is chasing around inside of me, like a squirrel.

GRANDPA. 'Tis, huh? . . . What's new in Russia? Any more letters from your friend in Moscow?

KOLENKHOV. I have just heard from him. I saved for you the stamp. (*He hands it over*)

GRANDPA (*receiving it with delight*). Thanks, Kolenkhov.

KOLENKHOV. They have sent him to Siberia.

GRANDPA. That so? How's he like it?

KOLENKHOV. He has escaped. He has escaped and gone back to Moscow. He will get them yet, if they do not get him. The Soviet Government! I could take the whole Soviet Government and—grrah! (*He crushes Stalin and all in one great paw, just as* ESSIE *comes in from the kitchen*)

ESSIE. I'm sorry I'm late, Mr. Kolenkhov. I'll get into my dancing clothes right away.

KOLENKHOV. Tonight you will really work, Pavlowa. (*As Essie goes up the stairs*) Tonight we will take something new.

GRANDPA. Essie making any progress, Kolenkhov?

KOLENKHOV (*first making elaborately sure that* ESSIE *is gone*). Confidentially, she stinks.

GRANDPA. Well, as long as she's having fun. . . .

(DONALD *ambles in from the kitchen, chuckling*)

DONALD. You sure do tickle Rheba, Mr. Kolenkhov. She's laughing her head off out there.

KOLENKHOV. She is a great woman. . . . Donald, what do you think of the Soviet Government?

DONALD. The what, Mr. Kolenkhov?

KOLENKHOV. I withdraw the question. What do you think of *this* Government?

DONALD. Oh, I like it fine. I'm on relief, you know.

KOLENKHOV. Oh, yes. And you like it?

DONALD. Yassuh, it's fine. Only thing is you got to go round to the place every week and collect it, and sometimes you got to stand in line pretty near half an hour. Government ought to be run better than that—don't you think, Grandpa?

GRANDPA (*as he fishes an envelope out of his pocket*). Government ought to stop sending me letters. Want me to be at the United States Marshal's office Tuesday morning at ten o'clock.

KOLENKHOV (*peering at the letter*). Ah! Income tax! They have got you, Grandpa.

GRANDPA. Mm. I'm supposed to give 'em a lot of money so as to keep Donald on relief.

DONALD. You don't say, Grandpa? You going to pay it now?

GRANDPA. That's what they want.

DONALD. You mean I can come right *here* and get it instead of standing in that line?

GRANDPA. No, Donald. You will have to waste a full half hour of your time every week.

DONALD. Well, I don't like it. It breaks up my week. (*He goes into the kitchen*)

KOLENKHOV. He should have been in Russia when the Revolution came. Then he would have stood in line—a bread line. (*He turns to* GRANDPA) Ah, Grandpa, what they have done to Russia. Think of it! The Grand Duchess Olga Katrina, a cousin of the Czar, she is a waitress in Childs' restaurant! I ordered baked beans from her only yesterday. It broke my heart. A crazy world, Grandpa.

GRANDPA. Oh, the world's not so crazy, Kolenkhov. It's the people *in* it. Life's pretty simple if you just relax.

KOLENKHOV. How can you relax in times like these?

GRANDPA. Well, if they'd relaxed there wouldn't *be* times like these. That's just my point. Life is simple and kind

of beautiful if you let it come to you. But the trouble is, people forget that. I know I did. I was right in the thick of it—fighting, and scratching, and clawing. Regular jungle. One day it just kind of struck me. I wasn't having any fun.

KOLENKHOV. So you did what?

GRANDPA. Just relaxed. Thirty-five years ago, that was. And I've been a happy man ever since.

(*From somewhere or other* GRANDPA *has brought one of those colored targets that one buys at Schwartz's. He now hangs it up on the cellar door, picks up a handful of feathered darts, and carefully throws one at the target*)

(*At the same time* ALICE *passes through the room, en route from kitchen to the upstairs region*)

ALICE. Good evening, Mr. Kolenkhov.

KOLENKHOV (*bowing low over her hand*). Ah, Miss Alice! I have not seen you to present my congratulations. May you be very happy and have many children. That is my prayer for you.

ALICE. Thank you, Mr. Kolenkhov. That's quite a thought. (*Singing gayly, she goes up the stairs*)

KOLENKHOV (*looking after her*). Ah, love! That is all that is left in the world, Grandpa.

GRANDPA. Yes, but there's plenty of that.

KOLENKHOV. And soon Stalin will take that away, too. I tell you, Grandpa—

(*He stops as* PENNY *comes down the stairs—a living example of what the well-dressed artist should wear. She has on an artist's smock over her dress, a flowing black tie, and a large black velvet tam-o'-shanter, worn at a rakish angle. She carries a palette and an assortment of paints and brushes*)

PENNY. Seems so nice to get into my art things again. They still look all right, don't they, Grandpa?

GRANDPA. Yes, indeed.

KOLENKHOV. You are a breath of Paris, Madame Sycamore.

PENNY. Oh, thank you, Mr. Kolenkhov.

DONALD (*coming in from the kitchen*). I didn't know you was working for the WPA.

PENNY. Oh, no, Donald. You see, I used to paint all the time, and then one day—

(*The outer door slams and* ED *comes in*)

ED (*in considerable excitement*). It happened again! There was a fellow following me every place I went!

PENNY. Nonsense, Ed. It's your imagination.

ED. No, it isn't. It happens every time I go out to deliver candy.

GRANDPA. Maybe he wants a piece of candy.

ED. It's all right for you to laugh, Grandpa, but he keeps following me.

KOLENKHOV (*somberly*). You do not know what following is. In Russia *everybody* is followed. I was followed right out of Russia.

PENNY. Of course. You see, Ed—the whole thing is just imagination. (MR. DE PINNA *comes up from the cellar, ready for posing. He wears the traditional Roman costume, and he certainly cuts a figure. He is carrying* PENNY'S *easel, a discus, and a small platform for posing purposes*) Ah, here we are! . . . Right here, Mr. De Pinna.

DONALD (*suddenly getting it*). Oh, is that picture supposed to be Mr. De Pinna?

PENNY (*sharply*). Of course it is, Donald. What's it look like—me?

DONALD (*studying the portrait*). Yes, it does—a little bit.

PENNY. Nonsense! What would I be doing with a discus?

KOLENKHOV. Ed, for tonight's lesson we use the first movement of Scheherazade.

ED. Okay.

DE PINNA (*about to mount the platform*). I hope I haven't forgotten how to pose. (*He takes up the discus and*

strikes the classic pose of the Discus Thrower. Somehow, it is not quite convincing)

DONALD. What's he going to do with that thing? Throw it?

PENNY. No, no, Donald. He's just posing. . . . Mr. De Pinna, has something happened to your figure during these eight years?

DE PINNA (*pulling in his stomach*). No, I don't think it's any different.

(*With a sudden snort,* GAY WELLINGTON *comes to*)

PENNY (*immediately alert*). Yes, Miss Wellington?

(*For answer,* GAY *peers first at* PENNY, *then at* MR. DE PINNA. *Then, with a strange snort, she just passes right out again*)

PENNY. Oh, dear.

(ESSIE *comes tripping down the stairs—very much the ballet dancer. She is in full costume—ballet skirt, tight white satin bodice, a garland of roses in her hair*)

ESSIE. Sorry, Mr. Kolenkhov, I couldn't find my slippers.

KOLENKHOV (*having previously removed his coat, he now takes off his shirt, displaying an enormous hairy chest beneath his undershirt*). We have a hot night for it, my Pavlowa, but art is only achieved through perspiration.

PENNY. Why, that's wonderful, Mr. Kolenkhov. Did you hear that, Grandpa—art is only achieved through perspiration.

GRANDPA. Yes, but it helps if you've got a little talent with it. (*He returns to his dart throwing*) Only made two bull's-eyes last night. Got to do better than that. (*He hurls a dart at the board, then his eye travels to* MISS WELLINGTON, *whose posterior offers an even easier target*) Mind if I use Miss Wellington, Penny?

PENNY. What, Grandpa?

GRANDPA (*shakes his head*). Never mind. . . . Too easy.

(GRANDPA *throws another dart at the target*)

KOLENKHOV. You are ready? We begin! (*With a gesture he orders the music started; under* KOLENKHOV'S *critical eye*

ESSIE *begins the mazes of the dance*) Fouettée, temps, élevée. (ESSIE *obliges with her own idea of fouettée, temps, élevée*) Pirouette! . . . Come, come! You can do that! It's eight years now. Pirouette! . . . At last! . . . Entrechat! . . . Entrechat! (ESSIE *leaps into the air, her feet twirling*) No, Grandpa, you cannot relax with Stalin in Russia. The Czar relaxed, and what happened to *him*?

GRANDPA. He was too late.

ESSIE (*still leaping away*). Mr. Kolenkhov! Mr. Kolenkhov!

KOLENKHOV. If he had not relaxed the Grand Duchess Olga Katrina would not be selling baked beans today.

ESSIE (*imploringly*). Mr. Kolenkhov!

KOLENKHOV. I am sorry. (*The door bell rings*) We go back to the pirouette.

PENNY. Could you pull in your stomach, Mr. De Pinna? . . . That's right.

KOLENKHOV. A little freer. A little freer with the hands. The whole body must work. Ed, help us with the music. The music must be free, too.

(*By way of guiding* ED, KOLENKHOV *hums the music at the pace that it should go. He is even pirouetting a bit himself*)

(*From the front door comes the murmur of voices, not quite audible over the music. Then the stunned figure of* RHEBA *comes into the archway, her eyes popping*)

RHEBA. Mrs. Sycamore. . . . Mrs. Sycamore. (*With a gesture that has a grim foreboding in it, she motions toward the still invisible reason for her panic*)

(*There is a second's pause, and then the reason is revealed in all its horror. The* KIRBYS, *in full evening dress, stand in the archway. All three of them:* MR. AND MRS. KIRBY, *and* TONY)

(PENNY *utters a stifled gasp; the others are too stunned even to do that. Their surprise at seeing the* KIRBYS,

however, is no greater than that of the KIRBYS *at the sight that is spread before them*)

(GRANDPA, *alone of them all, rises to the situation. With a kind of old world grace, he puts away his darts and makes the guests welcome*)

GRANDPA. How do you do?

KIRBY (*uncertainly*). How do you do?

(*Not that it helps any, but* MR. DE PINNA *is squirming into his bathrobe,* KOLENKHOV *is thrusting his shirt into his trousers, and* ED *is hastily getting into his coat*)

TONY. Are we too early?

GRANDPA. No, no. It's perfectly all right—we're glad to see you.

PENNY (*getting rid of the smock and tam*). Why—yes. Only—we thought it was to be tomorrow night.

MRS. KIRBY. Tomorrow night!

KIRBY. What!

GRANDPA. Now, it's perfectly all right. Please sit right down and make yourselves at home. (*His eyes still on the* KIRBYS, *he gives* DONALD *a good push toward the kitchen, by way of a hint.* DONALD *goes, promptly, with a quick little stunned whistle that sums up HIS feelings*)

KIRBY. Tony, how could you possibly—

TONY. I—I don't know. I thought—

MRS. KIRBY. Really, Tony! This is most embarrassing.

GRANDPA. Not at all. Why, we weren't doing a thing.

PENNY. Just spending the evening at home.

GRANDPA. That's all. . . . Now, don't let it bother you. This is Alice's mother, Mrs. Sycamore . . . Alice's sister, Mrs. Carmichael. . . . *Mr.* Carmichael. . . . Mr. Kolenkhov. . . . (*At this point* MR. DE PINNA *takes an anticipatory step forward, and* GRANDPA *is practically compelled to perform the introduction*) And—Mr. De Pinna. Mr. De Pinna, would you tell Mr. Sycamore to come right up? Tell him that Mr. and Mrs. Kirby are here.

PENNY (*her voice a heavy whisper*). And be sure to put his pants on.

DE PINNA (*whispering right back*). All right. . . . Excuse me. (*He vanishes—discus and all*)

GRANDPA. Won't you sit down?

PENNY (*first frantically trying to cover the prostrate* GAY WELLINGTON). I'll tell Alice that you're— (*She is at the foot of the stairs*) —Alice! Alice, dear! (*The voice of* ALICE *from above, "What is it?"*) Alice, will you come down, dear? We've got a surprise for you. (*She comes back into the room, summoning all her charm*) Well!

GRANDPA. Mrs. Kirby, may I take your wrap?

MRS. KIRBY. Well—thank you. If you're perfectly sure that we're not— (*Suddenly she sees the snakes and lets out a scream*)

GRANDPA. Oh, don't be alarmed, Mrs. Kirby. They're perfectly harmless.

MRS. KIRBY (*edging away from the solarium*). Thank you. (*She sinks into a chair, weakly*)

GRANDPA. Ed. take 'em into the kitchen.

(ED *at once obeys*)

PENNY. Of course we're so used to them around the house—

MRS. KIRBY. I'm sorry to trouble you, but snakes happen to be the one thing—

KIRBY. I feel very uncomfortable about this. Tony, how could you have done such a thing?

TONY. I'm sorry, Dad. I thought it was tonight.

KIRBY. It was very careless of you. *Very!*

GRANDPA. Now, now, Mr. Kirby—we're delighted.

PENNY. Oh, now, anybody can get mixed up, Mr. Kirby.

GRANDPA. Penny, how about some dinner for these folks? They've come for dinner, you know.

MRS. KIRBY. Oh, please don't bother. We're really not hungry at all.

PENNY. But it's not a bother. Ed!— (*Her voice drops to a loud whisper*) Ed, tell Donald to run down to the A. and

P. and get half a dozen bottles of beer, and—ah—some canned salmon—(*her voice comes up again*)—do you like canned salmon, Mr. Kirby?

KIRBY. Please don't trouble, Mrs. Sycamore. I have a little indigestion, anyway.

PENNY. Oh, I'm sorry . . . How about you, Mrs. Kirby? Do you like canned salmon?

MRS. KIRBY (*you just know that she hates it*). Oh, I'm very fond of it.

PENNY. You can have frankfurters if you'd rather.

MRS. KIRBY (*regally*). Either one will do.

PENNY (*to* ED *again*). Well, make it frankfurters, and some canned corn, and Campbell's Soup.

ED (*going out the kitchen door*). Okay!

PENNY (*calling after him*). And tell him to hurry! (PENNY *again addresses the* KIRBYS) The A. and P. is just at the corner, and frankfurters don't take *any* time to boil.

GRANDPA (*as* PAUL *comes through the cellar door*). And this is Alice's father, *Mr.* Sycamore. Mr. and Mrs. Kirby.

THE KIRBYS. How do you do?

PAUL. I hope you'll forgive my appearance.

PENNY. This is Mr. Sycamore's busiest time of the year. Just before the Fourth of July—

(*And then* ALICE *comes down. She is a step into the room before she realizes what has happened; then she fairly freezes in her tracks*)

ALICE. Oh!

TONY. Darling, will you ever forgive me? I'm the most dull-witted person in the world. I thought it was tonight.

ALICE (*staggered*). Why, Tony, I thought you— (*To the* KIRBYS) —I'm so sorry—I can't imagine—why, I wasn't —have you all met each other?

KIRBY. Yes, indeed.

MRS. KIRBY. How do you do, Alice?

ALICE (*not even yet in control of herself*). How do you do, Mrs. Kirby? I'm afraid I'm not very—presentable.

TONY. Darling, you look lovely.

KIRBY. Of course she does. Don't let this upset you, my dear—we've all just met each other a night sooner, that's all.

MRS. KIRBY. Of course.

ALICE. But I was planning such a nice party tomorrow night . . .

KIRBY (*being the good fellow*). Well, we'll come again tomorrow night.

TONY. There you are, Alice. Am I forgiven?

ALICE. I guess so. It's just that I—we'd better see about getting you some dinner.

PENNY. Oh, that's all done, Alice. That's all been attended to.

(DONALD, *hat in hand, comes through the kitchen door; hurries across the room and out the front way. The* KIRBYS *graciously pretend not to see*)

ALICE. But mother—what are you—what did you send out for? Because Mr. Kirby suffers from indigestion—he can only eat certain things.

KIRBY. Now, it's quite all right.

TONY. Of course it is, darling.

PENNY. I asked him what he wanted, Alice.

ALICE (*doubtfully*). Yes, but—

KIRBY. Now, now, it's not as serious as all that. Just because I have a little indigestion.

KOLENKHOV (*helping things along*). Perhaps it is not indigestion at all, Mr. Kirby. Perhaps you have stomach ulcers.

ALICE. Don't be absurd, Mr. Kolenkhov!

GRANDPA. You mustn't mind Mr. Kolenkhov, Mr. Kirby. He's a Russian, and Russians are inclined to look on the dark side.

KOLENKHOV. All right, I am a Russian. But a friend of mine, a Russian, *died* from stomach ulcers.

KIRBY. Really, I—

ALICE (*desperately*). Please, Mr. Kolenkhov! Mr. Kirby has indigestion and that's all.

KOLENKHOV (*with a Russian shrug of the shoulders*). All right. Let him wait.

GRANDPA (*leaping into the breach*). Tell me, Mr. Kirby, how do you find business conditions? Are we pretty well out of the depression?

KIRBY. What? . . . Yes, yes, I think so. Of course, it all depends.

GRANDPA. But you figure that things are going to keep on improving?

KIRBY. Broadly speaking, yes. As a matter of fact, industry is now operating at sixty-four per cent. of full capacity, as against eighty-two per cent. in 1925. Of course in 1929, a peak year—

(*Peak year or no peak year,* GAY WELLINGTON *chooses this moment to come to life. With a series of assorted snorts, she throws the cover back and pulls herself to a sitting position, blinking uncertainly at the assemblage. Then she rises, and weaves unsteadily across the room. The imposing figure of* MR. KIRBY *intrigues her*)

GAY (*playfully rumpling* MR. KIRBY'S *hair as she passes him*). Hello, Cutie. (*And with that she lunges on her way—up the stairs*)

(*The* KIRBYS, *of course, are considerably astounded by this exhibition; the* SYCAMORES *have watched it with varying degrees of frozen horror.* ALICE, *in particular, is speechless; it is* GRANDPA *who comes to her rescue*)

GRANDPA. That may seem a little strange to you, but she's not quite accountable for her actions. A friend of Mrs. Sycamore's. She came to dinner and was overcome by the heat.

PENNY. Yes, some people feel it, you know, more than others. Perhaps I'd better see if she's all right. Excuse me, please. (*She goes hastily up the stairs*)

ALICE. It *is* awfully hot. (*A fractional pause*) You usually

escape all this hot weather, don't you, Mrs. Kirby? Up in Maine?

MRS. KIRBY (*on the frigid side*). As a rule. I had to come down this week, however, for the Flower Show.

TONY. Mother wouldn't miss that for the world. That blue ribbon is the high spot of her year.

ESSIE. I won a ribbon at a Flower Show once. For raising onions. Remember?

ALICE (*quickly*). That was a Garden Show, Essie.

ESSIE. Oh, yes.

(PENNY *comes bustling down the stairs again*)

PENNY. I'm so sorry, but I think she'll be all right now. . . . Has Donald come back yet?

ALICE. No, he hasn't.

PENNY. Well, he'll be right back, and it won't take any time at all. I'm afraid you must be starved.

KIRBY. Oh, no. Quite all right. (*Pacing the room, he suddenly comes upon* PAUL'S *Erector Set*) Hello! What's this? I didn't know there were little children in the house.

PAUL. Oh, no. That's mine.

KIRBY. Really? Well, I suppose every man has his hobby. Or do you use this as a model of some kind?

PAUL. No, I just play with it.

KIRBY. I see.

TONY. Maybe you'd be better off if *you* had a hobby like that, Dad. Instead of raising orchids.

KIRBY (*indulgently*). Yes, I wouldn't be surprised.

ALICE (*leaping on this as a safe topic*). Oh, *do* tell us about your orchids, Mr. Kirby. (*She addresses the others*) You know, they take six years before they blossom. Think of that!

KIRBY (*warming to his subject*). Oh, some of them take longer than that. I've got one coming along now that I've waited ten years for.

PENNY (*making a joke*). Believe it or not, I was waiting for an orchid.

KIRBY. Ah—yes. Of course during that time they require the most scrupulous care. I remember a bulb that I was very fond of—

(DONALD *suddenly bulges through the archway, his arms full. The tops of beer bottles and two or three large cucumbers peep over the edge of the huge paper bag*)

PENNY. Ah, here we are! Did you get everything, Donald?

DONALD. Yes'm. Only the frankfurters didn't look very good, so I got pickled pigs' feet.

(MR. KIRBY *blanches at the very idea*)

ALICE (*taking command*) Never mind, Donald—just bring everything into the kitchen. (*She turns at the kitchen door*) Mr. Kirby, please tell them *all* about the orchids —I know they'd love to hear it. And—excuse me. (*She goes*)

GRANDPA. Kind of an expensive hobby, isn't it, Mr. Kirby—raising orchids?

KIRBY. Yes, it is, but I feel that if a hobby gives one sufficient pleasure, it's never expensive.

GRANDPA. That's very true.

KIRBY. You see, I need something to relieve the daily nerve strain. After a week in Wall Street I'd go crazy if I didn't have something like that. Lot of men I know have yachts—just for that very reason.

GRANDPA (*mildly*). Why don't they give up Wall Street?

KIRBY. How's that?

GRANDPA. I was just joking.

MRS. KIRBY. I think it's necessary for everyone to have a hobby. Of course it's more to me than a hobby, but my great solace is—spiritualism.

PENNY. Now, Mrs. Kirby, don't tell me you fell for that. Why, everybody knows it's a fake.

MRS. KIRBY (*freezing*). To me, Mrs. Sycamore, spiritualism is—I would rather not discuss it, Mrs. Sycamore.

PAUL. Remember, Penny, you've got one or two hobbies of your own.

PENNY. Yes, but not silly ones.

GRANDPA (*with a little cough*). I don't think it matters what the hobby is—the important thing is to have one.

KOLENKHOV. To be ideal, a hobby should improve the body as well as the mind. The Romans were a great people! Why! What was their hobby? Wrestling. In wrestling you have to think quick with the mind and act quick with the body.

KIRBY. Yes, but I'm afraid wrestling is not very practical for most of us. (*He gives a deprecating little laugh*) I wouldn't make a very good showing as a wrestler.

KOLENKHOV. You could be a *great* wrestler. You are built for it. Look!

(*With a startlingly quick movement* KOLENKHOV *grabs* MR. KIRBY'S *arms, knocks his legs from under him with a quick movement of a foot, and presto!* MR. KIRBY *is flat on his whatsis. Not only that, but instantaneously* KOLENKHOV *is on top of him*)

(*Just at this moment* ALICE *re-enters the room—naturally, she stands petrified. Several people, of course, rush immediately to the rescue,* TONY *and* PAUL *arriving at the scene of battle first. Amidst the general confusion they help* MR. KIRBY *to his feet*)

ALICE. Mr. Kirby! Are you—hurt?

TONY. Are you all right, Father?

KIRBY (*pulling himself together*). I—I—uh—(*He blinks, uncertainly*)—where are my glasses?

ALICE. Here they are, Mr. Kirby. . . . Oh, Mr. Kirby, they're broken.

KOLENKHOV (*full of apology*). Oh, I am sorry. But when you wrestle again, Mr. Kirby, you will of course not wear glasses.

KIRBY (*coldly furious*). I do not intend to wrestle again, Mr. Kolenkhov. (*He draws himself up, stiffly, and in*

return gets a sharp pain in the back. He gives a little gasp)

TONY. Better sit down, father.

ALICE. Mr. Kolenkhov, how could you do such a thing? Why didn't somebody stop him?

MRS. KIRBY. I think, if you don't mind, perhaps we had better be going.

TONY. Mother!

ALICE (*close to tears*). Oh, Mrs. Kirby—please! Please don't go! Mr. Kirby—please! I—I've ordered some scrambled eggs for you, and—plain salad—Oh, please don't go!

KOLENKHOV. I am sorry if I did something wrong. And I apologize.

ALICE. I can't tell you how sorry I am, Mr. Kirby. If I'd been here—

KIRBY (*from a great height*). That's quite all right.

TONY. Of course it is. It's all right, Alice. We're not going.

(*The* KIRBYS *reluctantly sit down again*)

(*A moment's silence—no one knows quite what to say*)

PENNY (*brightly*). Well! That was exciting for a minute, wasn't it?

GRANDPA (*quickly*). You were talking about your orchids, Mr. Kirby. Do you raise many different varieties?

KIRBY (*still unbending*). I'm afraid I've quite forgotten about my orchids.

(*More silence, and everyone very uncomfortable*)

ALICE. I'm—awfully sorry, Mr. Kirby.

KOLENKHOV (*exploding*). What did I do that was so terrible? I threw him on the floor! Did it kill him?

ALICE. Please, Mr. Kolenkhov.

(*An annoyed gesture from* KOLENKHOV; *another general pause*)

PENNY. I'm sure dinner won't be any time at all now.

(*A pained smile from* MRS. KIRBY)

ESSIE. Would you like some candy while you're waiting? I've got some freshly made.

KIRBY. My doctor does not permit me to eat candy. Thank you.

ESSIE. But these are nothing, Mr. Kirby. Just cocoanut and marshmallow fudge.

ALICE. Don't, Essie.

(RHEBA *appears in the kitchen doorway, beckoning violently to* ALICE)

RHEBA (*in a loud whisper*). Miss Alice! Miss Alice! (ALICE *quickly flies to* RHEBA'S *side*) The eggs fell down the sink.

ALICE (*desperately*). Make some more! Quick!

RHEBA. I ain't got any.

ALICE. Send Donald out for some!

RHEBA (*disappearing*). All right.

ALICE (*calling after her*). Tell him to run! (*She turns back to the* KIRBYS) I'm so sorry. There'll be a little delay, but everything will be ready in just a minute.

(*At this moment* DONALD *fairly shoots out of the kitchen door and across the living room, beating the Olympic record for all time*)

(PENNY *tries to ease the situation with a gay little laugh. It doesn't quite come off, however*)

TONY. I've certainly put you people to a lot of trouble, with my stupidity.

GRANDPA. Not at all, Tony.

PENNY. Look! Why don't we all play a game of some sort while we're waiting?

TONY. Oh, that'd be fine.

ALICE. Mother, I don't think Mr. and Mrs. Kirby—

KOLENKHOV. *I* have an idea. I know a wonderful trick with a glass of water. (*He reaches for a full glass that stands on the table*)

ALICE (*quickly*). No, Mr. Kolenkhov.

GRANDPA (*shaking his head*). No-o.

PENNY. But I'm sure Mr. and Mrs. Kirby would love this game. It's perfectly harmless.

ALICE. Please, Mother. . . .

KIRBY. I'm not very good at games, Mrs. Sycamore.

PENNY. Oh, but *any* fool could play this game, Mr. Kirby. (*She is bustling around, getting paper and pencil*) All you do is write your name on a piece of paper—

ALICE. But Mother, Mr. Kirby doesn't want—

PENNY. Oh, he'll love it! (*Going right on*) Here you are, Mr. Kirby. Write your name on this piece of paper. And Mrs. Kirby, you do the same on this one.

ALICE. Mother, what *is* this game?

PENNY. I used to play it at school. It's called Forget-Me-Not. Now, I'm going to call out five words—just anything at all—and as I say each word, you're to put down the first thing that comes into your mind. Is that clear? For instance, if I say "grass," you might put down "green"—just whatever you think of, see? Or if I call out "chair," you might put down "table." It shows the reactions people have to different things. You see how simple it is, Mr. Kirby?

TONY. Come on, father! Be a sport!

KIRBY (*stiffly*). Very well. I shall be happy to play it.

PENNY. You see, Alice? He *does* want to play.

ALICE (*uneasily*). Well—

PENNY. Now, then? Are we ready?

KOLENKHOV. Ready!

PENNY. Now, remember—you must play fair. Put down the first thing that comes into your mind.

KIRBY (*pencil poised*). I understand.

PENNY. Everybody ready? . . . The first word is "potatoes." (*She repeats it*) "Potatoes." . . . Ready for the next one? . . . "Bathroom." (ALICE *shifts rather uneasily, but seeing that no one else seems to mind, she relaxes again*) Got that?

KOLENKHOV. Go ahead.

PENNY. All ready? . . . "Lust."

ALICE. Mother, this is not exactly what you—

PENNY. Nonsense, Alice—that word's all right.

ALICE. Mother, it's *not* all right.

MRS. KIRBY (*unexpectedly*). Oh, I don't know. It seems to me that's a perfectly fair word.

PENNY (*to* ALICE). You see? Now, you mustn't interrupt the game.

KIRBY. May I have that last word again, please?

PENNY. "Lust," Mr. Kirby.

KIRBY (*writing*). I've got it.

GRANDPA. This is quite a game.

PENNY. Sssh, Grandpa. . . . All ready? . . . "Honeymoon." (ESSIE *snickers a little, which is all it takes to start* PENNY *off. Then she suddenly remembers herself*) Now, Essie! . . . All right. The last word is "sex."

ALICE (*under her breath*). Mother!

PENNY. Everybody got "sex?" . . . All right—now give me all the papers.

GRANDPA. What happens now?

PENNY. Oh, this is the best part. Now I read out your reactions.

KIRBY. I see. It's really quite an interesting game.

PENNY. I knew you'd like it. I'll read your paper first, Mr. Kirby. (*To the others*) I'm going to read Mr. Kirby's paper first. Listen, everybody! This is Mr. Kirby's. . . . "Potatoes—steak." That's very good. See how they go together? Steak and potatoes?

KIRBY (*modestly, but obviously pleased with himself*). I just happened to think of it.

PENNY. It's *very* good. . . . "Bathroom—toothpaste." Uh-huh. "Lust—unlawful." Isn't that nice? "Honeymoon—trip." Yes. And "sex—male." Yes, of course . . . That's really a wonderful paper, Mr. Kirby.

KIRBY (*taking a curtain call*). Thank you . . . It's more

than just a game, you know. It's sort of an experiment in psychology, isn't it?

PENNY. Yes, it is—it shows just how your *mind* works. Now we'll see how *Mrs.* Kirby's mind works. . . . Ready? . . This is *Mrs.* Kirby. . . . "Potatoes—starch." I know just what you mean, Mrs. Kirby. . . . "Bathroom—Mr. Kirby."

KIRBY. What's that?

PENNY. "Bathroom—Mr. Kirby."

KIRBY (*turning to his wife*). I don't quite follow that, my dear.

MRS. KIRBY. I don't know—I just thought of you in connection with it. After all, you *are* in there a good deal, Anthony. Bathing, and shaving—well, you *do* take a long time.

KIRBY. Indeed? I hadn't realized that I was being selfish in the matter. . . . Go on, Mrs. Sycamore.

ALICE (*worried*). I think it's a very silly game and we ought to stop it.

KIRBY. No, no. Please go on, Mrs. Sycamore.

PENNY. Where was I . . . Oh, yes. . . . "Lust—human."

KIRBY. Human? (*Thin-lipped*) Really!

MRS. KIRBY. I just meant, Anthony, that lust is after all a—human emotion.

KIRBY. I don't agree with you, Miriam. Lust is not a human emotion. It is depraved.

MRS. KIRBY. Very well, Anthony. I'm wrong.

ALICE. Really, it's the most pointless game. Suppose we play Twenty Questions?

KIRBY. No, I find this game rather interesting. Will you go on, Mrs. Sycamore? What was the next word?

PENNY (*reluctantly*). Honeymoon.

KIRBY. Oh, yes. And what was Mrs. Kirby's answer.

PENNY. Ah—"Honeymoon—dull."

KIRBY (*murderously calm*). Did you say—dull?

MRS. KIRBY. What I meant, Anthony, was that Hot Springs was not very gay that season. All those old people sitting on the porch all afternoon, and—nothing to do at night.

KIRBY. That was not your reaction at the time, as I recall it.

TONY. Father, this is only a *game.*

KIRBY. A very illuminating game. Go on, Mrs. Sycamore!

PENNY (*brightly, having taken a look ahead*). This one's all right, Mr. Kirby. "Sex—Wall Street."

KIRBY. Wall Street? What do you mean by that, Miriam?

MRS. KIRBY (*nervously*). I don't know what I meant, Anthony. Nothing.

KIRBY. But you must have meant something, Miriam, or you wouldn't have put it down.

MRS. KIRBY. It was just the first thing that came into my head, that's all.

KIRBY. But what does it mean? Sex—Wall Street.

MRS. KIRBY (*annoyed*). Oh, I don't know what it means, Anthony. It's just that you're always talking about Wall Street, even when— (*She catches herself*) I don't know what I meant . . . Would you mind terribly, Alice, if we didn't stay for dinner? I'm afraid this game has given me a headache.

ALICE (*quietly*). I understand, Mrs. Kirby.

KIRBY (*clearing his throat*). Yes, possibly we'd better postpone the dinner, if you don't mind.

PENNY. But you're coming tomorrow night, aren't you?

MRS. KIRBY (*quickly*). I'm afraid we have an engagement tomorrow night.

KIRBY. Perhaps we'd better postpone the whole affair a little while. This hot weather, and—ah—

TONY (*smoldering*). I think we're being very ungracious, Father. Of *course* we'll stay to dinner—tonight.

MRS. KIRBY (*unyielding*). I have a very bad headache, Tony.

KIRBY. Come, come, Tony, I'm sure everyone understands.

TONY (*flaring*). Well, *I* don't. I think we ought to stay to dinner.

ALICE (*very low*). No, Tony.

TONY. What?

ALICE. We were fools, Tony, ever to think it would work. It won't. Mr. Kirby, I won't be at the office tomorrow. I —won't be there at all any more.

TONY. Alice, what are you talking about?

KIRBY (*to* ALICE), I'm sorry, my dear—very sorry . . . Are you ready, Miriam?

MRS. KIRBY (*with enormous dignity*). Yes, Anthony.

KIRBY. It's been very nice to have met you all. . . . Are you coming, Anthony?

TONY. No, Father. I'm not.

KIRBY. I see. . . . Your mother and I will be waiting for you at home. . . . Good night. (*With* MRS. KIRBY *on his arm, he sweeps toward the outer door*)

(*Before the* KIRBYS *can take more than a step toward the door, however, a new* FIGURE *looms up in the archway. It is a quiet and competent-looking individual with a steely eye, and two more just like him loom up behind him*)

THE MAN (*very quietly*). Stay right where you are, everybody. (*There is a little scream from* MRS. KIRBY, *an exclamation from* PENNY) Don't move.

PENNY. Oh, good heavens!

KIRBY. How dare you? Why, what does this mean?

GRANDPA. What *is* all this?

KIRBY. I demand an explanation!

THE MAN. Keep your mouth shut, you! (*He advances slowly into the room, looking the group over. Then he turns to one of his men*) Which one is it?

ANOTHER MAN (*goes over and puts a hand on* ED'S *shoulder*). This is him.

ESSIE. Ed!

ED (*terrified*). Why, what do you mean?

ALICE. Grandpa, what is it?
KIRBY. This is an outrage!
THE MAN. Shut up! (*He turns to* ED) What's your name?
ED. Edward—Carmichael. I haven't done anything.
THE MAN. You haven't, huh?
GRANDPA (*not at all scared*). This seems rather high-handed to me. What's it all about?
THE MAN. Department of Justice.
PENNY. Oh, my goodness! J-men!
ESSIE. Ed, what have you done?
ED. I haven't done anything.
GRANDPA. What's the boy done, Officer?
ALICE. What is it? What's it all about?
THE MAN (*taking his time, and surveying the room*). That door lead to the cellar?
PENNY. Yes, it does.
PAUL. Yes.
THE MAN (*ordering a man to investigate*). Mac . . . (MAC *goes into the cellar*) . . . Jim!
JIM. Yes, sir.
THE MAN. Take a look upstairs and see what you find.
JIM. Okay. (JIM *goes upstairs*)
ED (*panicky*). I haven't done anything!
THE MAN. Come here, you! (*He takes some slips of paper out of his pocket*) Ever see these before?
ED (*gulping*). They're my—circulars.
THE MAN. You print this stuff, huh?
ED. Yes, sir.
THE MAN. And you put 'em into boxes of candy to get 'em into people's homes.
ESSIE. The Love Dreams!
ED. But I didn't mean anything!
THE MAN. You didn't, huh? (*He reads the circulars*) "Dynamite the Capitol!" "Dynamite the White House!" "Dynamite the Supreme Court!" "God is the State; the State is God!"

ED. But I didn't mean that. I just like to print. Don't I, Grandpa?

(DONALD *returns with the eggs at this point, and stands quietly watching the proceedings*)

GRANDPA. Now, Officer, the government's in no danger from Ed. Printing is just his hobby, that's all. He prints anything.

THE MAN. He does, eh?

PENNY. I never heard of such nonsense.

KIRBY. I refuse to stay here and—

(MR. DE PINNA, *at this point, is shoved through the cellar door by* MAC, *protesting as he comes*)

DE PINNA. Hey, let me get my pipe, will you? Let me get my pipe!

MAC. Shut up, you! . . . We were right, Chief. They've got enough gunpowder down there to blow up the whole city.

PAUL. But we only use that—

THE MAN. Keep still! . . . Everybody in this house is under arrest.

KIRBY. What's that?

MRS. KIRBY. Oh, good heavens!

GRANDPA. Now look here, Officer—this is all nonsense.

DE PINNA. You'd better let me get my pipe. I left it—

THE MAN. Shut up, all of you!

KOLENKHOV. It seems to me, Officer—

THE MAN. Shut up!

(*From the stairs comes the sound of drunken singing—"There was a young lady," etc.* GAY WELLINGTON, *wrapped in* PENNY'S *negligee, is being carried down the stairway by a somewhat bewildered* G-MAN)

THE G-MAN. Keep still, you! Stop that! Stop it!

THE LEADER (*after* GAY *has been persuaded to quiet down*). Who's that?

GRANDPA (*pretty tired of the whole business*). That—is my mother.

(*And then, suddenly, we hear from the cellar.* MR. DE PINNA *seems to have been right about his pipe, to judge from the sounds below. It is a whole year's supply of fireworks—bombs, big crackers, little crackers, skyrockets, pin wheels, everything. The house is fairly rocked by the explosion*)

(*In the room, of course, pandemonium reigns.* MRS. KIRBY *screams; the* G-MAN *drops* GAY *right where he stands and dashes for the cellar, closely followed by* MR. DE PINNA *and* PAUL; PENNY *dashes for her manuscripts and* ED *rushes to save his xylophone.* KOLENKHOV *waves his arms wildly and dashes in all directions at once; everyone is rushing this way and that*)

(*All except one. The exception, of course, is* GRANDPA, *who takes all things as they come.* GRANDPA *just says "Well, well, well!"—and sits down. If a lot of people weren't in the way, in fact, you feel he'd like to throw a few darts*)

Curtain

ACT THREE

The following day.

RHEBA *is in the midst of setting the table for dinner, pausing occasionally in her labors to listen to the Edwin C. Hill of the moment—*DONALD. *With intense interest and concentration, he is reading aloud from a newspaper*)

DONALD. ". . . for appearance in the West Side Court this morning. After spending the night in jail, the defendants, thirteen in all, were brought before Judge Callahan and given suspended sentences for manufacturing fireworks without a permit."

RHEBA. Yah. Kept me in the same cell with a strip teaser from a burlesque show.

DONALD. I was in the cell with Mr. Kirby. My, he was mad!

RHEBA. Mrs. Kirby and the strip teaser—they were fighting all night.

DONALD. Whole lot about *Mr.* Kirby here. (*Reading again*) "Anthony W. Kirby, head of Kirby & Co., 62 Wall Street, who was among those apprehended, declared he was in no way interested in the manufacture of fireworks, but refused to state why he was on the premises at the time of the raid. Mr. Kirby is a member of the Union Club, the Racquet Club, the Harvard Club, and the National Geographic Society." My, he certainly is a joiner!

RHEBA. All those rich men are Elks or something.

DONALD (*looking up from his paper*). I suppose, after all this, Mr. Tony ain't ever going to marry Miss Alice, huh?

RHEBA. No, suh, and it's too bad, too. Miss Alice sure loves that boy.

DONALD. Ever notice how white folks always getting themselves in trouble?

RHEBA. Yassuh, I'm glad I'm colored. (*She sighs, heavily*) I don't know what I'm going to do with all that food out in the kitchen. Ain't going to be no party tonight, that's sure.

DONALD. Ain't we going to eat it anyhow?

RHEBA. Well, I'm cooking it, but I don't think anybody going to have an appetite.

DONALD. *I'm* hungry.

RHEBA. Well, *they* ain't. They're all so broke up about Miss Alice.

DONALD. What's she want to go 'way for? Where's she going?

RHEBA. I don't know—mountains some place. And she's *going*, all right, no matter what they say. I know Miss Alice when she gets that look in her eye.

DONALD. Too bad, ain't it?

RHEBA. Sure is.

(MR. DE PINNA *comes up from the cellar, bearing the earmarks of the previous day's catastrophe. There is a small bandage around his head and over one eye, and another around his right hand. He also limps slightly*)

DE PINNA. Not even a balloon left. (*He exhibits a handful of exploded firecrackers*) Look.

RHEBA. How's your hand, Mr. De Pinna? Better?

DE PINNA. Yes, it's better. (*A step toward the kitchen*) Is there some more olive oil out there?

RHEBA (*nods*). It's in the salad bowl.

DE PINNA. Thanks. (*He goes out the kitchen door as* PENNY *comes down the stairs. It is a new and rather subdued* PENNY)

PENNY (*with a sigh*). Well, she's going. Nothing anybody said could change her.

RHEBA. She ain't going to stay away long, is she, Mrs. Sycamore?

PENNY. I don't know, Rheba. She won't say.

RHEBA. My, going to be lonesome around here without her. (*She goes into the kitchen*)

DONALD. How *you* feel, Mrs. Sycamore?

PENNY. Oh, I'm all right, Donald. Just kind of upset. (*She is at her desk*) Perhaps if I do some work maybe I'll feel better.

DONALD. Well, I won't bother you then, Mrs. Sycamore. (*He goes into the kitchen*)

(PENNY *puts a sheet of paper into the typewriter; stares at it blankly for a moment; types in desultory fashion, gives it up. She leans back and sits staring straight ahead*)

(PAUL *comes slowly down the stairs; stands surveying the room a moment; sighs. He goes over to the Erector Set; absentmindedly pulls out the flag. Then, with another sigh, he drops into a chair*)

PAUL. She's going, Penny.

PENNY. Yes. (*She is quiet for a moment; then she starts to weep, softly*)

PAUL (*going to her*). Now, now, Penny.

PENNY. I can't help it, Paul. Somehow I feel it's our fault.

PAUL. It's mine more than yours, Penny. All these years I've just been—going along, enjoying myself, when maybe I should have been thinking more about Alice.

PENNY. Don't say that, Paul. You've been a wonderful father. And husband, too.

PAUL. No, I haven't. Maybe if I'd gone ahead and been an architect—I don't know—something Alice could have been proud of. I felt that all last night, looking at Mr. Kirby.

PENNY. But we've been so happy, Paul.

PAUL. I know, but maybe that's not enough. I used to think it was, but—I'm kind of all mixed up now.

PENNY (*after a pause*). What time is she going?

PAUL. Pretty soon. Train leaves at half past seven.

PENNY. Oh, if only she'd see Tony. I'm sure he could persuade her.

PAUL. But she won't, Penny. He's been trying all day.

PENNY. Where is he now?

PAUL. I don't know—I suppose walking around the block again. Anyhow, she won't talk to him.

PENNY. Maybe Tony can catch her as she's leaving.

PAUL. It won't help, Penny.

PENNY. No, I don't suppose so. . . . I feel so sorry for Tony, too. (GRANDPA *comes down the stairs—unsmiling, but not too depressed by the situation. Anxiously*) Well?

GRANDPA. Now, Penny, let the girl alone.

PENNY. But, Grandpa—

GRANDPA. Suppose she *goes* to the Adirondacks? She'll be back. You can take just so much Adirondacks, and then you come home.

PENNY. Oh, but it's all so terrible, Grandpa.

GRANDPA. In a way, but it has its bright side, too.

PAUL. How do you mean?

GRANDPA. Well, Mr. Kirby getting into the patrol wagon, for one thing, and the expression on his face when he and Donald had to take a bath together. I'll never forget that if I live to be a hundred, and I warn you people I intend to. If I can have things like that going on.

PENNY. Oh, it was even worse with Mrs. Kirby. When the matron stripped her. There was a burlesque dancer there and she kept singing a strip song while Mrs. Kirby undressed.

GRANDPA. I'll bet you Bar Harbor is going to seem pretty dull to the Kirbys for the rest of the summer.

(*With a determined step,* ALICE *comes swiftly down the stairs. Over her arm she carries a couple of dresses. Looking neither to right nor left, she heads for the kitchen*)

GRANDPA. Need any help, Alice?

ALICE (*in a strained voice*). No, thanks, Grandpa. Ed is helping with the bags. I'm just going to press these.

PENNY. Alice, dear—

GRANDPA. Now, Penny.

(ED *has appeared in the hallway with a couple of hatboxes,* ESSIE *behind him*)

ED. I'll bring the big bag down as soon as you're ready, Alice.

ESSIE. Do you want to take some candy along for the train, Alice?

ALICE. No, thanks, Essie.

PENNY. Really, Alice, you could be just as alone here as you could in the mountains. You could stay right in your room all the time.

ALICE (*quietly*). No, Mother, I want to be by myself—away from everybody. I love you all—you know that. But I just have to go away for a while. I'll be all right. . . . Father, did you 'phone for a cab?

PAUL. No, I didn't know you wanted one.

PENNY. Oh, I told Mr. De Pinna to tell you, Paul. Didn't he tell you?

ED. Oh, he told *me,* but I forgot.

ALICE (*the final straw*). Oh, I wish I lived in a family that didn't always forget *every*thing. That—that behaved the way *other* people's families do. I'm sick of cornflakes, and—Donald, and—(*Unconsciously, in her impatience, she has picked up one of* GRANDPA'S *darts; is surprised to find it suddenly in her hand*)—everything! (*She dashes the dart to the floor*) Why can't we be like other people? Roast beef, and two green vegetables, and—doilies on the table, and—a place you could bring your friends to—without— (*Unable to control herself further, she bursts out of the room, into the kitchen*)

ESSIE. I'll—see if I can do anything. (*She goes into the kitchen*)

(*The others look at each other for a moment, helplessly.* PENNY, *with a sigh, drops into her chair again.* PAUL *also sits.* GRANDPA *mechanically picks up the dart from the floor; smooths out the feathers.* ED, *with a futile gesture, runs his fingers idly over the xylophone keys. He stops quickly as every head turns to look at him*)

(*The sound of the door opening, and* TONY *appears in the archway. A worried and disheveled* TONY)

PENNY (*quickly*). Tony, talk to her! She's in the kitchen!

TONY. Thanks. (*He goes immediately into the kitchen. The family, galvanized, listen intently. Almost immediately,* ALICE *emerges from the kitchen again, followed by* TONY. *She crosses the living room and starts quickly up the stairs*) Alice, won't you listen to me? Please!

ALICE (*not stopping*). Tony, it's no use.

TONY (*following her*). Alice, you're not being fair. At least let me talk to you.

(*They are both gone—up the stairs*)

PENNY. Perhaps if I went upstairs with them . .

GRANDPA. Now, Penny. Let them alone.

(ESSIE *comes out of the kitchen*)

ESSIE. Where'd they go? (ED *with a gesture, indicates the upstairs region*) She walked right out the minute he came in.

(MR. DE PINNA *also emerges from the kitchen*)

MR. DE PINNA. Knocked the olive oil right out of my hand. I'm going to smell kind of fishy.

GRANDPA. How're you feeling, Mr. De Pinna? Hand still hurting you?

DE PINNA. No, it's better.

PAUL. Everything burnt up, huh? Downstairs?

DE PINNA (*nodding, sadly*). Everything. And my Roman costume, too.

GRANDPA (*to* PENNY). I told you there was a bright side to everything. All except my twenty-two years back

income tax. (*He pulls an envelope out of his pocket*) I get another letter every day.

DE PINNA. Say, what are you going to do about that, Grandpa?

GRANDPA. Well, I had a kind of idea yesterday. It may not work, but I'm trying it, anyhow.

DE PINNA (*eagerly*). What is it?

(*Suddenly* KOLENKHOV *appears in the doorway*)

KOLENKHOV (*even he is subdued*). Good evening, everybody!

PENNY. Why, Mr. Kolenkhov!

GRANDPA. Hello, Kolenkhov.

KOLENKHOV. Forgive me. The door was open.

GRANDPA. Come on in.

KOLENKHOV. You will excuse my coming today. I realize you are—upset.

PENNY. That's all right, Mr. Kolenkhov.

ESSIE. I don't think I can take a lesson, Mr. Kolenkhov. I don't feel up to it.

KOLENKHOV (*uncertainly*). Well, I—ah—

PENNY. Oh, but do stay to dinner, Mr. Kolenkhov. We've got all that food out there, and somebody's got to eat it.

KOLENKHOV. I will be happy to, Madame Sycamore.

PENNY. Fine.

KOLENKHOV. Thank you. . . . Now, I wonder if I know you well enough to ask of you a great favor.

PENNY. Why, of course, Mr. Kolenkhov. What is it?

KOLENKHOV. You have heard me talk about my friend the Grand Duchess Olga Katrina.

PENNY. Yes?

KOLENKHOV. She is a great woman, the Grand Duchess. Her cousin was the Czar of Russia, and today she is waitress in Childs' Restaurant. Columbus Circle.

PENNY. Yes, I know. If there's anything at all that we can do, Mr. Kolenkhov . . .

KOLENKHOV. I tell you. The Grand Duchess Olga Katrina has not had a good meal since before the Revolution.

GRANDPA. She must be hungry.

KOLENKHOV. And today the Grand Duchess not only has her day off—Thursday—but it is also the anniversary of Peter the Great. A remarkable man!

PENNY. Mr. Kolenkhov, if you mean you'd like the Grand Duchess to come to dinner, why, we'd be honored.

ESSIE. Oh, yes!

KOLENKHOV (*with a bow*). In the name of the Grand Duchess, I thank you.

PENNY. I can hardly wait to meet her. When will she be here?

KOLENKHOV. She is outside in the street, waiting. I bring her in. (*And he goes out*)

GRANDPA. You know, if this keeps on I want to live to be a hundred and *fifty*.

PENNY (*feverishly*). Ed, straighten your tie. Essie, look at your dress. How do *I* look? All right?

(KOLENKHOV *appears in the hallway and stands at rigid attention*)

KOLENKHOV (*his voice booming*). The Grand Duchess Olga Katrina! (*And the* GRAND DUCHESS OLGA KATRINA, *wheat cakes and maple syrup out of her life for a few hours, sweeps into the room. She wears a dinner gown that has seen better days, and the whole is surmounted by an extremely tacky-looking evening wrap, trimmed with bits of ancient and moth-eaten fur. But once a Grand Duchess, always a Grand Duchess. She rises above everything—Childs', evening wrap, and all*) Your Highness, permit me to present Madame Sycamore—(PENNY, *having seen a movie or two in her time, knows just what to do. She curtsies right to the floor, and catches hold of a chair just in time*) Madame Carmichael— (ESSIE *does a curtsey that begins where all others leave off. Starting on her toes, she merges the*

Dying Swan with an extremely elaborate genuflection) Grandpa—

GRANDPA (*with a little bow*). Madame.

KOLENKHOV. Mr. Sycamore, Mr. Carmichael, and Mr. De Pinna.

(PAUL *and* ED *content themselves with courteous little bows, but not so the social-minded* MR. DE PINNA. *He bows to the floor—and stays there for a moment*)

GRANDPA. All right now, Mr. De Pinna.

(MR. DE PINNA *gets to his feet again*)

PENNY. Will you be seated, Your Highness?

THE GRAND DUCHESS. Thank you. You are most kind.

PENNY. We are honored to receive you, Your Highness.

THE GRAND DUCHESS. I am most happy to be here. What time is dinner?

PENNY (*a little startled*). Oh, it'll be quite soon, Your Highness—very soon.

THE GRAND DUCHESS. I do not mean to be rude, but I must be back at the restaurant by eight o'clock. I am substituting for another waitress.

KOLENKHOV. I will make sure you are on time, Your Highness.

DE PINNA. You know, Highness, I think you waited on me in Childs' once. The Seventy-Second Street place?

THE GRAND DUCHESS. No, no. That was my sister.

KOLENKHOV. The Grand Duchess Natasha.

THE GRAND DUCHESS. *I* work in Columbus Circle.

GRANDPA. Quite a lot of your family living over here now, aren't there?

THE GRAND DUCHESS. Oh, yes—many. My uncle, the Grand Duke Sergei—he is an elevator man at Macy's. A very nice man. Then there is my cousin, Prince Alexis. He will not speak to the rest of us because he works at Hattie Carnegie's. He has cards printed—Prince Alexis of Hattie Carnegie. Bah!

KOLENKHOV. When he was selling Eskimo Pies at Luna Park he was willing to talk to you.

THE GRAND DUCHESS. Ah, Kolenkhov, our time is coming. My sister Natasha is studying to be a manicure, Uncle Sergei they have promised to make floor-walker, and next month I get transferred to the Fifth Avenue Childs'. From there it is only a step to Schraffts', and *then* we will see what Prince Alexis says!

GRANDPA (*nodding*). I think you've got him.

THE GRAND DUCHESS. You are telling *me*? (*She laughs a triumphant Russian laugh, in which* KOLENKHOV *joins*)

PENNY. Your Highness—did you know the Czar? Personally, I mean.

THE GRAND DUCHESS. Of course—he was my cousin. It was terrible, what happened, but perhaps it was for the best. Where could he get a job now?

KOLENKHOV. That is true.

THE GRAND DUCHESS (*philosophically*). Yes. And poor relations are poor relations. It is the same in every family. My cousin, the King of Sweden—he was very nice to us for about ten years, but then he said, I just cannot go on. I am not doing so well, either. . . . I do not blame him.

PENNY. No, of course not. . . . Would you excuse me for just a moment? (*She goes to the foot of the stairs and stands peering up anxiously, hoping for news of* ALICE)

DE PINNA (*the historian at heart*). Tell me, Grand Duchess, is it true what they say about Rasputin?

THE GRAND DUCHESS. Everyone wants to know about Rasputin. . . . Yes, my dear sir, it is true. In spades.

DE PINNA. You don't say?

KOLENKHOV. Your Highness, we have to watch the time.

THE GRAND DUCHESS. Yes, I must not be late. The manager does not like me. He is a Communist.

PENNY. We'll hurry things up. Essie, why don't you go out in the kitchen and give Rheba a hand?

THE GRAND DUCHESS (*rising*). I will help, too. I am a very good cook.

PENNY. Oh, but Your Highness! Not on your day off!

THE GRAND DUCHESS. I do not mind. Where is your kitchen?

ESSIE. Right through here, but you're the guest of honor, Your Highness.

THE GRAND DUCHESS. But I love to cook! Come, Kolenkhov! If they have got sour cream and pot cheese I will make you some blintzes!

KOLENKHOV. Ah! Blintzes! . . . Come, Pavlowa! We show you something! (*With* ESSIE, *he goes into the kitchen*)

DE PINNA. Say! The Duchess is all right, isn't she? Hey, Duchess! Can I help? (*And into the kitchen*)

PENNY. Really, she's a very nice woman, you know. Considering she's a Grand Duchess.

GRANDPA. Wonderful what people go through, isn't it? And still keep kind of gay, too.

PENNY. Mm. She made me forget about everything for a minute. (*She returns to the stairs and stands listening*)

PAUL. I'd better call that cab, I suppose.

PENNY. No, wait, Paul. I think I hear them. Maybe Tony has— (*She stops as* ALICE's *step is heard on the stair. She enters—dressed for traveling.* TONY *looms up behind her*)

ALICE. Ed, will you go up and bring my bag down?

TONY (*quickly*). Don't you do it, Ed!

(ED *hesitates, uncertain*)

ALICE. Ed, please!

TONY (*a moment's pause; then he gives up*). All right, Ed. Bring it down. (ED *goes up the stairs as* TONY *disconsolately stalks across the room. Then he faces the Sycamores*) Do you know that you've got the stubbornest daughter in all forty-eight states?

(*The door bell rings*)

ALICE. That must be the cab. (*She goes to the door*)

GRANDPA. If it is, it's certainly wonderful service.

(*To the considerable surprise of everyone, the voice of* MR. KIRBY *is heard at the front door*)

KIRBY. Is Tony here, Alice?

ALICE. Yes. Yes, he is.

(MR. KIRBY *comes in*)

KIRBY (*uncomfortably*). Ah—good afternoon. Forgive my intruding . . . Tony, I want you to come home with me. Your mother is very upset.

TONY (*he looks at* ALICE). Very well, Father . . . Good-bye, Alice.

ALICE (*very low*). Good-bye, Tony.

KIRBY (*trying to ease the situation*). I need hardly say that this is as painful to Mrs. Kirby and myself as it is to you people. I—I'm sorry, but I'm sure you understand.

GRANDPA. Well, yes—and in a way, no. Now, I'm not the kind of person tries to run other people's lives, but the fact is, Mr. Kirby, I don't think these two young people have got as much sense as—ah—you and I have.

ALICE (*tense*). Grandpa, will you please not do this?

GRANDPA (*disarmingly*). I'm just talking to Mr. Kirby. A cat can look at a king, can't he?

(ALICE, *with no further words, takes up the telephone and dials a number. There is finality in her every movement*)

PENNY. You—you want me to do that for you, Alice?

ALICE. No, thanks, Mother.

PAUL. You've got quite a while before the train goes, Alice.

ALICE (*into the phone*). Will you send a cab to 761 Claremont, right away, please? . . . That's right, thank you. (*She hangs up*)

KIRBY. And now if you'll excuse us . . . are you ready, Tony?

GRANDPA. Mr. Kirby, I suppose after last night you think this family is crazy, don't you?

KIRBY. No, I would not say that, although I am not accustomed to going out to dinner and spending the night in jail.

GRANDPA. Well, you've got to remember, Mr. Kirby, you came on the wrong night. Now tonight, I'll bet you, nothing'll happen at all. (*There is a great burst of Russian laughter from the kitchen—the mingled voices of* KOLENKHOV *and the* GRAND DUCHESS. GRANDPA *looks off in the direction of the laughter, then decides to play safe*) Maybe.

KIRBY. Mr. Vanderhof, it was not merely last night that convinced Mrs. Kirby and myself that this engagement would be unwise.

TONY. Father, I can handle my own affairs. (*He turns to* ALICE) Alice, for the last time, will you marry me?

ALICE. No, Tony. I know exactly what your father means, and he's right.

TONY. No, he's *not*, Alice.

GRANDPA. Alice, you're in love with this boy, and you're not marrying him because we're the kind of people we are.

ALICE. Grandpa—

GRANDPA. I know. You think the two families wouldn't get along. Well, maybe they wouldn't—but who says they're right and we're wrong?

ALICE. I didn't say that, Grandpa. I only feel—

GRANDPA. Well, what *I* feel is that Tony's too nice a boy to wake up twenty years from now with nothing in his life but stocks and bonds.

KIRBY. How's that?

GRANDPA (*turning to* MR. KIRBY). Yes. Mixed up and unhappy, the way you are.

KIRBY (*outraged*). I beg your pardon, Mr. Vanderhof, I am a very happy man.

GRANDPA. Are you?

KIRBY. Certainly I am.

GRANDPA. I don't think so. What do you think you get your indigestion from? Happiness? No, sir. You get it because

most of your time is spent in doing things you don't want to do.

KIRBY. I don't do anything I don't want to do.

GRANDPA. Yes, you do. You said last night that at the end of a week in Wall Street you're pretty near crazy. Why do you keep on doing it?

KIRBY. Why do I keep on—why, that's my *business.* A man can't give up his business.

GRANDPA. Why not? You've got all the money you need. You can't take it with you.

KIRBY. That's a very easy thing to say, Mr. Vanderhof. But I have spent my entire life building up my business.

GRANDPA. And what's it got you? Same kind of mail every morning, same kind of deals, same kind of meetings, same dinners at night, same indigestion. Where does the fun come in? Don't you think there ought to be something *more,* Mr. Kirby? You must have wanted more than that when you started out. We haven't got too much time, you know—any of us.

KIRBY. What do you expect me to do? Live the way *you* do? Do nothing?

GRANDPA. Well, I have a lot of fun. Time enough for everything—read, talk, visit the zoo now and then, practice my darts, even have time to notice when spring comes around. Don't see anybody I don't want to, don't have six hours of things I *have* to do every day before I get *one* hour to do what I like in—and I haven't taken bicarbonate of soda in thirty-five years. What's the matter with that?

KIRBY. The matter with that? But suppose we *all* did it? A fine world we'd have, everybody going to zoos. Don't be ridiculous, Mr. Vanderhof. Who would do the work?

GRANDPA. There's always people that like to work—you can't *stop* them. Inventions, and they fly the ocean. There're always people to go down to Wall Street, too —because they *like* it. But from what I've seen of you,

I don't think you're one of them. I think you're missing something.

KIRBY. I am not aware of missing anything.

GRANDPA. I wasn't either, till I quit. I used to get down to that office nine o'clock sharp, no matter how I felt. Lay awake nights for fear I wouldn't get that contract. Used to worry about the world, too. Got *all* worked up about whether Cleveland or Blaine was going to be elected President—seemed awful important at the time, but who cares now? What I'm trying to say, Mr. Kirby, is that I've had thirty-five years that nobody can take away from me, no matter what they do to the world. See?

KIRBY. Yes, I do see. And it's a very dangerous philosophy, Mr. Vanderhof. It's—it's un-American. And it's exactly why I'm opposed to this marriage. I don't want Tony to come under its influence.

TONY (*a gleam in his eye*). What's the matter with it, Father?

KIRBY. Matter with it? Why, it's—it's downright Communism, that's what it is.

TONY. You didn't always think so.

KIRBY. I most certainly did. What are you talking about?

TONY. I'll tell you what I'm talking about. You didn't always think so, because there was a time when you wanted to be a trapeze artist.

KIRBY. Why—why, don't be an idiot, Tony.

TONY. Oh, yes, you did. I came across those letters you wrote to Grandfather. Do you remember those?

KIRBY. NO! . . . How dared you read those letters? How dared you?

PENNY. Why, isn't that wonderful? Did you wear tights, Mr. Kirby?

KIRBY. Certainly not! The whole thing is absurd. I was fourteen years old at the time.

TONY. Yes, but at *eighteen* you wanted to be a saxophone player, didn't you?

KIRBY. Tony!

TONY. And at twenty-one you ran away from home because Grandfather wanted you to go into the business. It's all down there in black and white. You didn't *always* think so.

GRANDPA. Well, well, well!

KIRBY. I may have had silly notions in my youth, but thank God my father knocked them out of me. I went into the business and forgot about them.

TONY. Not altogether, Father. There's still a saxophone in the back of your clothes closet.

GRANDPA. There is?

KIRBY (*quietly*). That's enough, Tony. We'll discuss this later.

TONY. No, I want to talk about it *now*. I think Mr. Vanderhof is right—dead right. I'm never going back to that office. I've always hated it, and I'm not going on with it. And I'll tell you something else. I didn't make a mistake last night. I knew it was the wrong night. I brought you here on purpose.

ALICE. Tony!

PENNY. Well, for heaven's—

TONY. Because I wanted you to wake up. I wanted you to see a real family—as they really *were*. A family that loved and understood each other. You don't understand *me*. You've never had time. Well, I'm not going to make *your* mistake. I'm clearing out.

KIRBY. Clearing out? What do you mean?

TONY. I mean I'm not going to be pushed into the business just because I'm your son. I'm getting out while there's still time.

KIRBY (*stunned*). Tony, what are you going to do?

TONY. I don't know. Maybe I'll be a bricklayer, but at least I'll be doing something I want to do.

(*Whereupon the door bell rings*)

PENNY. That must be the cab.

GRANDPA. Ask him to wait a minute, Ed.

ALICE. Grandpa!

GRANDPA. Do you mind, Alice? . . . You know, Mr. Kirby, Tony is going through just what you and I did when we were his age. I think, if you listen hard enough, you can hear yourself saying the same things to *your* father twenty-five years ago. We all did it. And we were right. How many of us would be willing to settle when we're young for what we eventually get? All those plans we make . . . what happens to them? It's only a handful of the lucky ones that can look back and say that they even came close. (GRANDPA *has hit home.* MR. KIRBY *turns slowly and looks at his son, as though seeing him for the first time.* GRANDPA *continues*) So . . . before they clean out that closet, Mr. Kirby, I think I'd get in a few good hours on that saxophone.

(*A slight pause, then* THE GRAND DUCHESS, *an apron over her evening dress, comes in from the kitchen*)

THE GRAND DUCHESS. I beg your pardon, but before I make the blintzes, how many will there be for dinner?

PENNY. Why, I don't know—ah—

GRANDPA. Your Highness, may I present Mr. Anthony Kirby, and Mr. Kirby, Junior? The Grand Duchess Olga Katrina.

KIRBY. How's that?

THE GRAND DUCHESS. How do you do? Before I make the blintzes, how many will there be to dinner?

GRANDPA. Oh, I'd make quite a stack of them, Your Highness. Can't ever tell.

THE GRAND DUCHESS. Good! The Czar always said to me, Olga, do not be stingy with the blintzes. (*She returns to the kitchen, leaving a somewhat stunned* MR. KIRBY *behind her*)

KIRBY. Ah—who did you say that was, Mr. Vanderhof?

GRANDPA (*very offhand*). The Grand Duchess Olga Katrina, of Russia. She's cooking the dinner.

KIRBY. Oh!

GRANDPA. And speaking of dinner, Mr. Kirby, why don't you and Tony both stay?

PENNY. Oh, please do, Mr. Kirby. We've got all that stuff we were going to have last night. I mean tonight.

GRANDPA. Looks like a pretty good dinner, Mr. Kirby, and'll kind of give us a chance to get acquainted. Why not stay?

KIRBY. Why—I'd like to very much. (*He turns to* TONY, *with some trepidation*) What do you say, Tony? Shall we stay to dinner?

TONY. Yes, father. I think that would be fine. If—(*His eyes go to* ALICE)—if Alice will send away that cab.

GRANDPA. How about it, Alice? Going to be a nice crowd. Don't you think you ought to stay for dinner?

ALICE. Mr. Kirby—Tony—oh, Tony! (*And she is in his arms*)

TONY. Darling!

ALICE. Grandpa, you're wonderful!

GRANDPA. I've been telling you that for years. (*He kisses her*)

(ESSIE *enters from the kitchen, laden with dishes*)

ESSIE. Grandpa, here's a letter for you. It was in the icebox.

GRANDPA (*looks at the envelope*). The Government again.

TONY (*happily*). Won't you step into the office, Miss Sycamore? I'd like to do a little dictating.

GRANDPA (*with his letter*). Well, well, well!

PENNY. What is it, Grandpa?

GRANDPA. The United States Government apologizes. I don't owe 'em a nickel. It seems I died eight years ago.

ESSIE. Why, what do they mean, Grandpa?

GRANDPA. Remember Charlie, the milkman? Buried under my name?

PENNY. Yes.

GRANDPA. Well, I just told them they made a mistake and I was Martin Vanderhof, Jr. So they're very sorry and I may even get a refund.

ALICE. Why, Grandpa, you're an old crook.

GRANDPA. Sure!

KIRBY (*interested*). Pardon me, how did you say you escaped the income tax, Mr. Vanderhof?

KOLENKHOV (*bursting through the kitchen door, bringing a chair with him*). Tonight, my friends, you are going to eat. . . . (*He stops short as he catches sight of* KIRBY)

KIRBY (*heartily*). Hello, there!

KOLENKHOV (*stunned*). How do you do?

KIRBY. Fine! Fine! Never was better.

KOLENKHOV (*to* GRANDPA). What has happened?

GRANDPA. He's relaxing. (ED *strikes the keys of the xylophone*) That's right. Play something, Ed.

(*He starts to play.* ESSIE *is immediately up on her toes*)

THE GRAND DUCHESS (*entering from the kitchen*). Everything will be ready in a minute. You can sit down.

PENNY. Come on, everybody. Dinner! (*They start to pull up chairs*) Come on, Mr. Kirby!

KIRBY (*still interested in the xylophone*). Yes, yes, I'm coming.

PENNY. Essie, stop dancing and come to dinner.

KOLENKHOV. You will like Russian food, Mr. Kirby.

PENNY. But you must be careful of your indigestion.

KIRBY. Nonsense! I haven't any indigestion.

TONY. Well, Miss Sycamore, how was your trip to the Adirondacks?

ALICE. Shut your face, Mr. Kirby!

KOLENKHOV. In Russia, when they sit down to dinner . . .

GRANDPA (*tapping on his plate*). Quiet! Everybody! Quiet! (*Immediately the talk ceases. All heads are lowered as* GRANDPA *starts to say Grace*) Well, Sir, here we are

again. We want to say thanks once more for everything You've done for us. Things seem to be going along fine. Alice is going to marry Tony, and it looks as if they're going to be very happy. Of course the fireworks blew up, but that was Mr. De Pinna's fault, not Yours. We've all got our health and as far as anything else is concerned, we'll leave it to You. Thank You.

(*The heads come up again.* RHEBA *and* DONALD *come through the kitchen door with stacks and stacks of blintzes. Even the Czar would have thought there were enough*)

Curtain

THE AMERICAN WAY

The American Way was produced by Sam H. Harris and Max Gordon at the Center Theatre, Rockefeller Center, New York City, on the evening of Saturday, January 21, 1939, with the following cast:

MARTIN GUNTHER	FREDRIC MARCH
IRMA GUNTHER	FLORENCE ELDRIDGE
IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL	JAMES MACDONALD
LISA GUNTHER AS A CHILD	LORNA LYNN NORMA CLERC VIRGINIA LODGE
A BOY	BOBBY BARRON
ANOTHER BOY	BOB WHITE
JUDGE HEWITT	BRADFORD HUNT
MRS. KENNEDY	JEANNE WARDLEY
MRS. WHITE	GRACE VALENTINE
DR. SQUIRES	SYDNEY GRANT
OTTO HEINRICH	MAURICE WELLS
CLARA HEINRICH	ELSA ERSI
SAMUEL BROCKTON	MCKAY MORRIS
A POLITICAL SPEAKER	ROBERT RHODES
ANOTHER POLITICAL SPEAKER	JAMES MOORE
WINIFRED BAXTER	RUTH WESTON
A SCHOOL TEACHER	MARY MURRAY
ANTONIO COLETTI	JOHN LONG
ALEX HEWITT AS A CHILD	BUDDY BUEHLER ROBERT CUSHMAN
KARL GUNTHER AS A CHILD	TEDDY CASEY BUDDY IRVING
BOBBY	TOMMY LEWIS

ANNA		JANET FOX
FACTORY WORKERS		EDWARD FISHER
		SIDNEY STONE
		BRANT GORMAN
		JAMES RUSSO
MRS. BROCKTON		EILEEN BURNS
MRS. HEWITT		JEANNE SHELBY
THE CHAIRMAN		JOHN LORENZ
MAYOR MCEVOY		HUGH CAMERON
DR. MACFARLANE		LE ROI OPERTI
JEFF		ALLEN KEARNS
MRS. SQUIRES		MARY BRANDON
TENNIS GIRLS		MONA MORAY
		RUTH STROME
		GERRY CARR
		KATHERINE DUNCAN
		MARION EDWARDS
LISA GUNTHER		ADRIENNE MARDEN
ALEX HEWITT		ALAN HEWITT
KARL GUNTHER		DAVID WAYNE
TOMMY		WALTER KELLY
MANDOLIN PLAYER		STEPHEN SANDES
HELEN		DORA SAYERS
TOMMY NELSON		ALEX COURTNEY
ANOTHER YOUNG MAN		EDWARD ELLIOTT
KARL GUNTHER, AGE 9	MARTIN	DICKIE VAN PATTEN
JULIA HEWITT, AGE 11	GUNTHER'S	ELINOR PITTIS
MARY HEWITT, AGE 10	GRANDCHILDREN	CLAIRE HOWARD
A POLITICAL SPEAKER		RICHARD LLOYD
A MINISTER		WALTER BECK
JULIA, AGE 21		BARBARA WOODDELL
MARY, AGE 20		GRETCHEN DAVIDSON
KARL, AGE 21		WHITNER BISSELL
ED LORENZ		JACK ARNOLD
JOHN WILLIAMS		GEORGE HERNDON
HENRY COURTNEY		WARD TALLMON

Townspeople, Immigrants, Guests, etc.—EVE ABBOTT, SUZANNE ASHBROOK, CATHIE BAILEY, MARY BENNETT, EVELYN BERNIE, LOUISE BUCK, ELEANORE CAMPSALL, NATALIE CHILVERS, LAURA CHURCH, BEATRICE COLE, ETHEL DARLING, CELESTE DEBELLIS, DOROTHY DOWNS, HELEN EDWARDS, RUTH ENDERS, NORMA GREEN, CLAIRE GREENWOOD, ANN HAGUE, LOLA HARRIS, NINA HILL, MARY HOBAN, CYNTHIA HOLBROOK, CAROL HULINGS, LILA KING, DOROTHY KNOX, BETTY MACDONALD, MARVEL MACINNIS, JEAN MARTEL, DOROTHY LOUISE MILLER, LOIS MONTGOMERY, MAY MUTH, FLORRIE NADEL, EDNA NAGY, DORIS NEWCOMB, GRACE O'MALLEY, MARGARET OWENS, JUDY PARRISH, JEANNIE BELLE PERRY, MARTHA PICKENS, GLORIA PIERRE, JEAN PORTER, MARY ROMANO, SYLVIA ROSEMAN, LESLEY SAVAGE, LOUISE SEGALL, FRANCES THRESS, MARY STEVENSON, DAPHNE SYLVA, JOAN VITEZ, JULIA WALSH, PEGGY WELLS, MARY WILLIAMSON, LOIS WINSTON, JANICE WINTER, NANCY WHITMAN, LYNN WHITNEY.

Townspeople, Immigrants, Guests, Soldiers, Policemen, Sailors—ALBERT AMATO, ROBIN BATCHELLER, ALAN BANDLER, JOSEPH BEALE, HERMAN BELMONTE, RONALD BENNETT, MILTON BLUMENTHAL, ORIN BORNSTEIN, JOSEPH BUSH, ELDRIDGE CARSON, DANIEL CONWAY, RUSSELL CONWAY, GEORGE COTTON, EDWARD CROSSWELL, HARRY CROX, TOM CURLEY, KENNETH DANA, BUD DAVIS, LOUIS DELGADO, SANFORD DODY, CLARK EGGLESTON, HERBERT EVERIN, GILBERT FATES, EUGENE FRANCIS, PHILIP POLLARD, VINCENT GARDINER, HERBERT L. GOFF, CARL GOSE, DONN HAGERTY, GILBERT HAGGERTY, VERNON HAMMER, ROBERT HANLEY, MICHAEL HARVEY, WILLIAM HAWES, JAMES HAYES, CARL JOHNSON, PETER MOFFAT JOHNSON, CURTIS KARPE, JOHN KERR, ROBERT KERR, WILLIAM LAYTON, MICHAEL LEONARD, EDWARD MANN, JULES MANN, REMI MARTEL, GAYLORD MASON, GORDON MERRICK, GORDON MILLS, CARMAN MITCHELL, CECIL NATAPOFF, MELVIN PARKS, LEE PARRY, ALBERT PATTERSON, CHARLES PAYNE, GEORGE REPP, NAT SACK, RAYMOND SANTOS, NAT SEIGAL, TOM SPEIDEL, DON STARR, RODNEY STEWART, ELLIOTT STRANGER, JERRY SYLVON,

JOHN THOMAS, JEROME THOR, HARRY TODD, CARL URBONT, ALAN WENFIELD, ALBERT WHITLEY, GENE YELL.

The Children—BOBBY BARRON, VIVIAN BAULE, BUDDY BUEHLER, GLORIA CAREY, KENNETH CASEY, TEDDY CASEY, PATTEE CHAPMAN, NORMA CLERC, ROBERT CUSHMAN, GENE DOUGLAS, ALICE FITZSIMMONS, BOB GEWALD, DANNY HOOD, CLAIRE HOWARD, BUDDY IRVING, WALTER KELLY, KENNETH LEROY, TOMMY LEWIS, AUDREY LODGE, CONSTANCE LODGE, VIRGINIA LODGE, JOHN LONG, LORNA LYNN, BUDDY MATTHEWS, PATRICIA MINTY, DONALD O'DAY, ELINOR PITTIS, JANET REGAN, RONALD REISS, ERIC ROBERTS, JAMES ROLAND, PEGGY ROMANO, DICKIE VAN PATTEN, GEORGE WARD, WILLIAM WELCH and BOB WHITE.

THE COMMUNITY NOVELTY BAND.

Casting Director—MYRA STREGER
General Stage Manager—E. JOHN KENNEDY
Stage Manager—WILLIAM MCFADDEN
Ass't Stage Managers—FRANKLIN HELLER, HENRY EPHRON, WILLIAM ATLEE, BARBARA ADAMS, WILLIAM TORPEY

The Lighting and Technical Direction by HASSARD SHORT, Costumes Designed by IRENE SHARAFF, Special Music Composed and Arranged by OSCAR LEVANT.

*

The opening scene takes place at Ellis Island in the year 1896. The rest of the play is laid in a small American town.

ACT ONE

As the curtains part, dawn is just breaking over New York Harbor. In the distance is the Statue of Liberty, dimly seen through the morning mist; in the foreground is a gangplank, one end hauled into mid-air, plainly awaiting the arrival of a boat.

Simultaneously, the lights go up on the side stages. Each is filled with a patient cross-section of American immigrant life: Italians, Portuguese, Russians, Lithuanians, Germans, Latvians, all kinds—men, women and children, all ages. They are held in place by a little line of uniformed immigration officials. Other officials stand near the gangplank, shuffling papers, talking to each other.

For a moment there is only the low murmur of the crowd; then a fog-horn is heard in the distance. Immediately the crowd stirs to activity; begins to mill about.

An eager young GERMAN, *on the edge of the crowd, taps an official on the arm.*

THE GERMAN. Please, sir. That is the ship?

THE OFFICIAL. Yes, Fritzie, that's the ship.

(*A murmur runs through the crowd. "It's coming! It's coming!"*)

(*To* THE GERMAN) You certainly got here early. Been here all night, haven't you?

THE GERMAN (*nodding eagerly*). I wanted to be in front.

THE OFFICIAL. Who's coming over? Your best girl?

THE GERMAN. No, no. My wife. My wife and my babies. One of them I have never seen—the boy.

THE OFFICIAL. Are you sure it's yours, Fritzie? . . . Keep back there, everybody! Keep back! She's not in yet.

(*The fog-horn again. Then, softly at first, and gradually louder as the ship approaches, we hear the ship's band playing "My Country, 'Tis of Thee"*)

(*The excitement of the crowd increases; they surge forward a little. "Listen! It's coming!"*)

ANOTHER OFFICIAL. Everybody stand back now! The boat isn't in yet. We'll let you through in plenty of time.

THE GERMAN (*again tugging at the sleeve of the nearest official, and edging up a few steps*). Is it all right if I just move up here?

THE OFFICIAL. All right, Fritzie. I'll get you to that baby as fast as I can.

(*Suddenly the prow of the ship comes into view. Immediately a roar goes up from the waiting throngs—an excited torrent of Italian, Russian, Swedish, etc. The excitement grows as the boat comes into view*)

(*Then it stops. A great iron door in the bowels of the ship is opened; behind it is a solid mass of eager faces, all nationalities. The gangplank is run up; as the first immigrant sets foot on the gangplank the waiting relatives can no longer be held in check. They rush forward, screaming the names of their loved ones. Laughter, tears, embraces, kisses. For a good interval the officials are helpless; the dock is a swirling mass of excited and joyous humanity. Then gradually the officials regain control*)

OFFICIALS. All right now! All right! Keep moving! Keep moving! Both sides! Both sides to the health officers! Examination of papers! Both sides to the health officers! Examination of papers!

(*Another official shouts the same instruction in Italian; another in Jewish; another in Russian, etc. Slowly the masses of people are herded toward the examination room; the lights go down on the main stage; the crowds*

are still visible on the side stages, making their way out)

(*The excited jumble of greetings slowly diminishes in volume, and now bits of excited conversation begin to emerge—German, Italian, Russian, all languages*)

(*Presently, his face beaming,* THE YOUNG GERMAN *approaches with his family—a wholesome-looking German girl in her late twenties, leading a little girl of three or four by the hand and carrying a baby in her arms.* THE YOUNG GERMAN *is laden with old-world boxes and bundles*)

(*The young wife is pouring forth an excited stream of German as they walk along. Even the little girl is chattering away excitedly*)

THE YOUNG GERMAN (*trying to stop the flood*). Irma! . . . Irma! . . . Wart einmal! . . . Irma! (*Finally she is silent*) Hier müssen wir Englisch sprechen.

IRMA. Aber Ich kann es nicht thun, Martin.

MARTIN. Yes, yes, you must. You are going to be an American now.

IRMA (*haltingly*). Martin, you speak already so good. Das kann Ich nie thun.

MARTIN. Yes, yes. See how in one year I speak. Did you study the books I sent you, Irma?

IRMA. Ach, yes. I learn all the time.

MARTIN. Let me look at Karl again. (*He looks at the boy fondly*) Wunderbar. Ein kleiner Mann. Wunderbar

THE LITTLE GIRL. Papa, sehe mich auch an. Ich bin auch wunderbar.

MARTIN. Yah, yah, my kleine Lisa. . . . Irma, Irma, I am so happy. (*He embraces her*)

THE OFFICIAL. Hello, Fritzie. So this is the baby, eh? (*He addresses the child, playfully*) Think you're going to like America?

MARTIN. He is wonderful—no? And my little girl, and my wife.

THE OFFICIAL. All going to be Americans, eh? Where are you going to live? New York?

MARTIN. No, no, we live in Ohio. Already I have made a home there.

THE OFFICIAL (*to the baby*). Well, when you get to be Governor of Ohio, don't forget who let you into this country. . . . Good luck, Fritzie. (*He goes on his way*)

MARTIN (*picking up the boxes and bundles again*). Come, Liebchen. We get through here, and then I take you to our new home.

IRMA. Es ist schoen, Martin—Ohio?

MARTIN. Wait till you see, Liebchen. Our new home. (*He is unable to contain himself*) Ach, come, Irma. I cannot wait.

(*A bell clangs—sharply, insistently*)

(*The voices of the officials rise again, in all languages*)

OFFICIALS. Clear the passageways, please! Straight ahead to the health officers! Keep moving! Straight ahead to the health officers!

(*The lights have been slowly dimming. The polyglot crowd disappears into America*)

(*The curtains open on the village square of a small American town—specifically, Mapleton, Ohio. The little park in the foreground can be found in a thousand American small towns—the Civil War cannon, the pile of cannon balls, the little monument, a few scattered benches, etc. Circling the square are the traditional landmarks of small-town life. There is the church, the bank, the post-office, the courthouse, the hotel*)

(*The hotel is called* THE MAPLETON HOUSE, *and is run by* WALTER PAYSON, PROP. *The bank is the* MAPLETON NATIONAL BANK, SAMUEL J. BROCKTON, PRES. *The post office, of course, is merely* UNITED STATES POST OFFICE, MAPLETON, OHIO, *while the courthouse is identified by the carving above the archway,* LET JUSTICE PREVAIL)

(*There is, too,* THE MAPLETON COURIER-NEWS, *its office*

next to the courthouse, while on the other side of the square are the more commercial enterprises. There is J. MERCER, DRY GOODS; *near by is the drug store, chastely lettered* ROBERT MAC TAGGERT, CHEMIST. *There is also* OTTO HEINRICH, BAKERY, *and another store simply marked* GROCERIES. *A smaller establishment is lettered* A. COLLETTI, BARBER; *next to it is the cigar store, outside of which stands the inevitable wooden Indian.* OLSEN & OLSEN *sell* BUGGIES AND HARNESS, *and on the corner a gentleman named* PATRICK MURPHY *is the proprietor of what is simply known as* BAR, FAMILY ENTRANCE AROUND THE CORNER)

(*Above the stores are the offices of the professional people —the window-lettering reads* LAWYER, REAL ESTATE, INSURANCE, NOTARY PUBLIC, JUSTICE OF THE PEACE, *etc. Over the barber shop a banner proclaims that this is* REPUBLICAN NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS, *and a huge poster carries a picture of McKinley on it, with the slogan:* FOR PRESIDENT, WILLIAM MC KINLEY. *A few doors away are the* DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS—FOR PRESIDENT, WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN)

(*It is twilight of a mild October day, and a few lights have already come on in the stores and offices. Some of the proprietors stand idly outside their doors, chatting with friends, and life in the square itself is going on in the leisurely, amiable manner of the mid-nineties*)

(*A boy of about ten comes out of the saloon with a can of beer. He joins another lad*)

THE FIRST BOY. Come on home with me while I take this beer.

THE SECOND BOY. All right. (*They start to walk along*) If we was voting, Jimmy, we'd vote for McKinley, wouldn't we?

THE FIRST BOY. Sure. Vote for McKinley—he's the man—tie Bill Bryan to an old tomato can.

(*They disappear, chanting the refrain over and over again*)

(*A woman has come out of the dry goods store; another has emerged from the post office; they meet and greet each other. "Good evening, Mrs. Kennedy." "Good evening, Mrs. White"*)

MRS. KENNEDY. My, real Indian summer weather we're having, isn't it?

MRS. WHITE. Yes, it is. . . . You going on home, Mrs. Kennedy?

MRS. KENNEDY. Well, I'm going to stop by and see Mrs. Greenway. She's going to show me how to curl my feather boa.

MRS. WHITE. Oh, do you mind if I go along? Mine needs curling, too.

MRS. KENNEDY. Oh, not at all. . . . Good evening, Judge Hewitt.

THE JUDGE. Good evening, ladies. Pleasant weather, isn't it?

(THE JUDGE *goes on his way, greeted respectfully by all whom he encounters. Presently he stops to give a little special greeting to a man coming toward him*)

THE JUDGE. Good evening, Doctor.

THE DOCTOR. How are you, Judge? Going to the rally tonight?

THE JUDGE. No, Mrs. Hewitt and I are going to the Brocktons' for a game of whist.

THE DOCTOR. I was just telling Brockton—quite a lot of Bryan sentiment around, don't you think?

THE JUDGE. I hope not. (*Contemptuously*) Free silver. Sixteen to one. That man's a radical of the first water. . . . How about a cigar? Can I buy you a Lillian Russell? (*They go into the cigar store*)

(*A woman passes through the square, on her head the latest New York bit of millinery. Two disrespectful urchins immediately start to sing "Where Did You Get*

That Hat?" As she turns and glares at them they of course affect complete innocence)

(*Through the saloon doors, rather violently propelled, comes a drunkard. He gathers himself together and shouts back into the saloon*)

THE DRUNK. That's what I said—Hurray for Bryan! (*Getting no argument, he acquires courage and raises his voice*) You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold! William—Jennings—*Bryan!* (*And he is on his way*)

(*Two young* BLADES *of the day emerge from the barber shop, freshly tonsorialed. They are informally humming a popular song of the day*)

FIRST YOUNG BLADE (*singing*). "I don't want to play in your yard—"

SECOND BLADE (*picking it up*). "I don't like you any more—"

FIRST BLADE. "You'll be sorry when you see me, sliding down our cellar door . . ." Say, I've got an idea. What do you say we hire single buggies tonight, to take the girls out, instead of a double one?

SECOND BLADE. Single buggies? Say! (*His face lights up*)

FIRST BLADE. Costs a little more, but, oh, you kid!

(*They go on their way, their voices blending in "I Don't Want to Play in Your Yard"*)

(*Arm in arm,* MARTIN *and* IRMA, *the young German couple, now stroll into the square. She is looking eagerly about her;* MARTIN *is proudly officiating as guide*)

MARTIN. This, Irma, is the square. Schoen, nicht wahr?

IRMA. Yah. Schoen.

MARTIN. See, Liebchen. There is the cannon from the Civil War, and the monument to the soldiers from this town. And there is the courthouse—see? That is where I went to get my first papers. Remember—I wrote you?

IRMA. Yah, yah.

MARTIN. And in five years I go back, and then I am a

citizen. You too, Irma. And there is the bank, Irma, where I have money. Almost two hundred dollars, even with what I sent you. In one, maybe two years, Irma, I have my own shop. Work for myself. I will not be just a cabinet maker, but—Martin Gunther, Cabinet Maker.

IRMA. Ein jahr! Das ist sehr schnell, Martin.

MARTIN. No, no. In America it can happen. You will see. . . . Ah, good evening, Otto. Clara. (*As a comfortable-looking German couple approach*) Look—she is here, my Irma. Wait until you see my babies, Otto. Irma, meine gute Freunde, Otto Heinrich und Frau Heinrich.

IRMA. Guten Abend.

OTTO. Wie befinden Sie sich, Frau Gunther?

IRMA. Sehr gut, danke.

CLARA. Ach, I am glad you are here, Frau Gunther. How he has missed you!

OTTO. Welcome to America, Frau Gunther. Martin, tomorrow Clara and I give for Frau Gunther a little party. We close the shop early and give a party.

MARTIN. You hear, Irma? A party for *you.*

IRMA (*with some effort*). Thank you, Herr Heinrich.

MARTIN. You hear? Already she speaks American.

CLARA. You will like it here, Frau Gunther. Six years ago, Otto and I come here. We could not speak a word. Now we have our own shop. See? (*She indicates it*) Otto Heinrich, Bakery.

IRMA. Es ist wunderbar. Yah, I like it here.

CLARA. I come and see the babies tomorrow, Frau Gunther, and then we have our party. And Otto will bake for you a great American dish—doughnuts.

(*And with an exchange of "Guten Abends" they are on their way*)

IRMA. Martin, I like them.

MARTIN. They have been good friends to me, Irma, while I was without you.

(*A man with a bass drum, and wearing a huge sash, comes*

down the stairs from Republican Headquarters and proceeds on his way, giving a few preliminary thumps to the drum as he goes)

MARTIN. See? Soon now comes the parade.

IRMA (*uncertainly*). Parade?

MARTIN. In two weeks, Liebchen, comes an election for President of the whole country. Think of it! Here in America the people say who shall be the man. There is no Kaiser, no King, no Czar. Everything is the people, Irma. And in five years, Irma, I vote too. Think of it.

IRMA. Es ist wunderbar, Martin.

MARTIN. And our babies, Irma—Lisa and Karl—they grow up in a free country. They are Americans.

IRMA. It is good, Martin.

MARTIN. Yah, Irma. It is good. (*Along the sidewalk there has come a pleasant-looking man in his mid-thirties. He pauses*)

THE MAN. Good evening, Gunther.

MARTIN (*respectfully*). Good evening, Mr. Brockton.

BROCKTON. I take it this is the long-awaited Mrs. Gunther.

MARTIN. Yes, sir. She came today. Irma, this is Mr. Brockton. He owns the bank where our money is.

(MRS. GUNTHER *curtsies*)

BROCKTON (*lightly*). I should hardly say that, Gunther.

MARTIN. Well, it is a fine bank, Mr. Brockton, and you have been so kind to me, with my little bit of money. You would think I was a rich man, Irma, the way they treat me.

(IRMA, *in appreciation, drops another little curtsey*)

BROCKTON. Well, good night, Gunther. I'm glad your wife is here. Good evening, Mrs. Gunther. (*They murmur "Good evening!" as he goes*)

MARTIN. You see, Irma? You see how it is in America? The banker stops and talks to us—we are just the same as he is.

IRMA. Yah, yah. (*Suddenly she stops and listens*) Martin! Music!

(*And in the distance we hear a band playing "There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight." As they listen the music grows louder—the parade is obviously approaching. A dozen urchins come scampering on ahead of it, screaming and yelling. The square begins to fill. A few come on bicycles and lean them against the railing.* MARTIN *hustles* IRMA *to a vantage spot as the procession enters*)

(*It is now quite dark, and what we see is a political torchlight parade. It is led by the band, then an American flag, then torchlit marchers carrying election banners and placards. Great pictures of William McKinley and Garret A. Hobart.* VOTE FOR MC KINLEY AND HOBART. . . . THE FULL DINNER PAIL. . . . THE SQUARE DEAL. . . . OHIO'S FAVORITE SON. . . . DOWN WITH BRYAN! . . . DOWN WITH FREE SILVER!)

(*The procession circles once around the square, singing as it goes, while the crowd cheers. Then it comes to a halt, and a* SPEAKER *jumps up onto the base of the cannon and prepares to address the crowd*)

THE SPEAKER. Voters of the fair town of Mapleton: Two weeks from tomorrow you will go to the polls to elect the next President of the United States. (*Cheers from the crowd*) It is your solemn duty to vote for a man who will represent the best interests of the people. Gentlemen, William McKinley stands for the working man, the full dinner pail, and a square deal for everybody. (*More cheers*) And that is not *all* he stands for. William McKinley—

A WOMAN'S VOICE. Well, what *I* want to know is: Where does William McKinley stand on votes for women? (*There are catcalls and boos from the crowd. Cries of "I should worry, I should fret, I should marry a suffra-*

gette." But the lady is not to be shouted down) Where does William McKinley stand on votes for women?

THE SPEAKER. Lady, does your husband know you're out tonight?

(*Derisive laughter from the crowd*)

THE WOMAN. Do you intend to answer my question, sir? Where does Mr. McKinley stand on votes for women?

THE SPEAKER. Lady, I don't think Mrs. McKinley has ever asked him. (*Laughter from the crowd*) But I will answer your question. There is no man who holds womanhood in greater respect and admiration than William McKinley. But he believes that women should be guarded and protected from the harsh realities of life.

THE WOMAN. Tommyrot! I don't have to be protected from *anything*. The women of this country—

THE SPEAKER. Lady, will you please go home?

THE WOMAN. No, I will not! (*She turns and addresses the crowd*) Women of Mapleton—

THE SPEAKER. Constable, will you please remove that woman? She is disturbing the peace of this meeting.

THE CONSTABLE. Come along, Miss Baxter. You'll have to leave.

MISS BAXTER. You'll have to take me, Constable.

THE CONSTABLE (*amiably*). All right, Miss Baxter. . . . Give me a hand, Pete.

(*Another* CONSTABLE *gives aid, and between them they drag her out of the square*)

MISS BAXTER (*as they take her out*). Votes for women! Votes for women!

(*The crowd, enjoying all this hugely, yells derisively after her*)

THE SPEAKER. Well, folks, after votes for women I suppose we ought to have votes for monkeys. (*A roar of laughter from the audience*) And now, gentlemen, to get back to serious matters. Don't forget, when you go to the

polls on Tuesday, November third, that there is only one candidate who stands four-square and solidly—

(*He is suddenly drowned out, at this point, by the appearance of another procession, headed by another and louder brass band. To the music of "John Brown's Body" the new paraders are chanting "Vote for William Jennings Bryan, Vote for William Jennings Bryan, Vote for William Jennings Bryan—to the White House he must go!"*)

(*Again there are banners and placards*—FOR PRESIDENT, WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN. FOR VICE-PRESIDENT, ARTHUR SEWALL. . . . BRYAN AND SEWALL. . . . DON'T BE A SLAVE TO GOLD . . . MCKINLEY IS THE TOOL OF MARK HANNA. . . . BRYAN, THE MAN OF THE PEOPLE)

THE BRYAN SPEAKER. Gentlemen, my friend here has been telling you about William McKinley. . . .

THE MCKINLEY SPEAKER. Just a minute, my friend! I am addressing this meeting!

THE BRYAN SPEAKER. So am I! . . . Gentlemen, William Jennings Bryan has no Mark behind him. He has only the people behind him! And in front of him the Presidency of the United States!

A MAN IN THE CROWD. Well, here's something in front of you, Mister!

(*And he hurls an over-ripe tomato right into the speaker's face. A yell goes up from the crowd, and immediately a rotten egg hits the McKinley speaker. In two seconds it is a free-for-all, the rival factions swinging wildly at each other and rolling in the streets. The women scream and flee*)

(*Gradually the Bryan faction gives way. Still fighting, they are chased down the street, leaving a scene of destruction behind them—men nursing bruised heads, broken jaws, battered shins*)

(MARTIN, *meanwhile, has gathered* IRMA *up in his arms, protectively*)

MARTIN (*looking down at her*). Liebchen, Liebchen, are you all right?

IRMA. Yah, yah. . . . Martin, who was elected President?

(*The curtains close*)

(*The sound of a school bell is heard, ringing away. Then, in the darkness, we hear a number of childish voices, reciting in unison: "I pledge allegiance to my flag, and to the Republic for which it stands. One nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all"*)

(*The lights come up slowly on one of the side stages. Led by a teacher, a score or more of school children, boys and girls, ranging in years from six to eight, march out in formation. They are singing the last few bars of "My Country, 'Tis of Thee"*)

"From ev-e-ry mountainside,
Let Freedom ring.

(THE TEACHER *now addresses them*)

THE TEACHER. Attention, boys and girls. A great honor is being conferred upon Mapleton today. You are indeed lucky children. Three months ago you had the opportunity of greeting Admiral Dewey, our hero of Manila Bay, and today we are going to welcome a great American writer, Mark Twain. Now, we are all going to march to the station, and stand, in just this formation, when his train arrives. Mr. Twain is going to come out on the platform, and Mayor Henderson is going to make a speech of welcome. Then comes our part. We will— (*She stops, conscious of the fact that two boys in the rear are intent upon devices of their own*) Antonio Colletti.

TONY (*meekly*). Yes, Miss Moorhead.

MISS MOORHEAD. Step forward, please. (TONY *does so*) Alexander Hewitt. (*Another little boy steps out of the ranks*) What is the meaning of this disturbance?

TONY. Nothing, Miss Moorhead.

ALEX. We weren't doing anything.

MISS MOORHEAD. Alexander, what are you holding behind your back?

ALEX. Nothing, Miss Moorhead.

MISS MOORHEAD. Alexander Hewitt, let me see what you have in your hand.

(*With enormous reluctance,* ALEX *hands over the cause of all the trouble*)

MISS MOORHEAD. Cigarette pictures! Sweet Caporal cigarette pictures! . . . Give me yours too, Antonio. (TONY *does so*) As a punishment you will each copy the entire poem of "Excelsior" and bring it to school tomorrow morning. Resume your places, please. I shudder to think what Mr. Twain would say if he knew that little boys collected cigarette pictures . . . Now, before we march to the station, let me repeat our part in the ceremonies. After Mayor Henderson's welcome speech, Lisa Gunther will present Mr. Twain with the bouquet. Lisa Gunther! Step forward, please. (LISA GUNTHER, *now a pretty little blonde girl of six, carrying a bouquet, steps confidently forward*) What are you going to say to Mr. Twain, Lisa?

LISA. Beloved Mr. Twain, on behalf of the school children of Mapleton, Ohio, I present you with this bouquet.

MISS MOORHEAD. Very nice, Lisa. And now we will sing our school song as we march. Watch the beat.

(*The childish voices are raised once again in song as they march off*)

Oh, Mapleton, the gem of Ohio!
Fair town that we all so dearly love!
Your hills and your rills are the fairest;
We treasure them all others above
To our school and our parents and our teachers
We will pledge our allegiance firm and true.
Oh, Mapleton, the gem of Ohio,
Our hearts' pride and love are for you!

(*The curtains part on the shop of* MARTIN GUNTHER, *cabi-*

net maker. It is a small, crowded room, in the rear of which, through a curtained archway, can be seen the Gunther living quarters)

(GUNTHER *is running a plane over a board, pausing between times to inspect his handiwork. For a few seconds only the sound of the plane is heard*)

(*Then the shop door opens—there is a little warning tinkle of a bell. A boy of eight or nine stands in the doorway*)

THE BOY. Good evening, Mr. Gunther.

MARTIN. Hello, Bobby.

BOBBY (*going right into his act*). Mr. Gunther, would you be interested in a subscription to *St. Nicholas Magazine*? *St. Nicholas* is a magazine for both children and grown-ups. Many families would not be without it, and if I get ten subscriptions I get a magic lantern or an air rifle.

MARTIN (*obviously concealing the real reason*). I tell you, Bobby. Just now I have so many magazines, but I tell you what I do. Here is a nickel for your trouble in coming.

BOBBY. Oh, thank you, Mr. Gunther. I didn't mind coming

MARTIN. I am sure you will get the magic lantern anyhow.

BOBBY. Gee, I hope so. I'm going to give shows with it in our cellar. Good-bye, Mr. Gunther.

(MARTIN *returns to work as* IRMA *looms up in the doorway*)

IRMA. Martin, you will be through soon? We have sauerbraten for supper.

MARTIN. I think I will work a little. I am not very hungry.

IRMA. Martin, today for dinner you ate nothing; now you do not eat supper.

MARTIN. I want to finish the Christmas presents for the children. That is all.

IRMA. Martin, something is worrying you. Won't you tell me?

(LISA *and* KARL, *now six and four, come running in from the rear room in their night clothes*)

THE CHILDREN. Good night, papa. Good night, papa.

MARTIN. Good night, Kinder.

LISA. Papa, we have been very good all day.

KARL. For mama, and for papa, and for Santa Claus.

MARTIN (*laughing*). A little bit more for Santa Claus, I imagine.

KARL (*having discovered an unfinished toy train on the work bench*). Papa, papa! Look what I found!

MARTIN. Tst, tst! It is nothing. Something I am making for a railroad man.

LISA. Let *me* see it.

MARTIN. No, no, darling. It is not for you.

IRMA. Come, come. Good nights are over. . . . Anna! (*She is calling to a young servant girl, visible in the next room*) Anna, take please the children. I come soon.

ANNA. Komm, Lisa. Komm, Karl. Vergesse nicht—der Kris Kringle sieht zu. (*With more "Good night, papa's" they are gone*)

MARTIN. That little Karlie is a devil. He finds his Christmas present.

IRMA (*after a pause*). Martin, I know what has happened. You have lost Mrs. Brockton's order. . . . Am I right? You have lost Mrs. Brockton's order.

MARTIN (*finally faces her*). It was work for the whole winter. There are no more orders like that, Irma.

IRMA. But what happened, Martin?

MARTIN. Mrs. Brockton changed her mind. She is buying the furniture in Chicago.

IRMA (*slowly*). Martin—what will we do?

MARTIN. We will not starve, Irma. I will find work. Perhaps I even go back and work for Mr. Bennett again, till things get better. We will get along.

IRMA. And we lose the shop, Martin.

MARTIN. No, no. Not forever, Irma. We start again when things are better.

(*There is a moment's silence between them*)

IRMA. Martin. (*He looks at her*) Maybe we should go back.

MARTIN. Back?

IRMA. Perhaps America is not good for us.

MARTIN. No, no, Irma. Whatever happens we stay in America. Why did we come here? We do not want our Karl to be used just for an army, like me. Like my father. No, Irma, we do not give up. It is worth working for—these things—for our children and for us, both.

IRMA (*after a pause*). You are right, Martin. Sometimes I forget. What difference does a little hardship make? (*She kisses him, tenderly*) And now I try to put Karl to bed. Believe me, Martin, they would have trouble with Karl in an army.

(*He laughs a little. Before* IRMA *can leave, however, there is the tinkle of the shop door, and* WINIFRED BAXTER *enters. She is attired in bloomers, and has obviously left her bicycle just outside*)

WINIFRED. Good evening. (*The* GUNTHERS *greet her, courteously*) Mr. Gunther, if you don't mind my saying so, you're a fool.

MARTIN (*chuckling*). Perhaps you are right.

WINIFRED. I have just heard that Mrs. Samuel J. Brockton has cancelled a large order because I am one of your customers. Is that right?

MARTIN. She did not exactly mention you by name, Miss Baxter.

WINIFRED. No, she probably said that insufferable suffragette. Well, why didn't you give up *my* business, which amounts to a good dollar and a quarter a year?

MARTIN (*smiling*). Maybe I believe in votes for women.

WINIFRED. No, I think I had it right the first time. You're a fool.

MARTIN. Maybe. But in a way I am like *you.* A little bit stubborn. I do not like even Mrs. Samuel Brockton to tell me who my customers should be.

WINIFRED. Well, that's fine if you can afford it, but remember I'm not exactly popular in this town. I'm considered not quite a lady. I'm what they call a radical, you know, and Mrs. Brockton and a number of other ladies don't approve of that. You're going to lose another customer every time I chain myself to a lamp-post, and you'll lose 'em by the dozen week after next, when I go on a hunger strike in Senator Fletcher's bedroom. Don't let that get around yet. . . . So you see, Mr. Gunther, I'm a pretty expensive customer. Think you can afford me?

MARTIN. Yes, you *are* a little expensive, Miss Baxter, but I cannot help it. This is a free country—no? You have the right to chain yourself to lamp-posts; I have the right to choose my customers. No?

WINIFRED. Oh, yes. Yes. But just this once, Mr. Gunther, suppose we cancel *my* order instead?

MARTIN. Miss Baxter, I took your order first. That is all I can say.

WINIFRED. I see. . . . Well, Mr. Gunther, you're not only a fool, but I'll go further. You're the kind of a fool I like.

(*The bell tinkles again, and* SAMUEL J. BROCKTON *enters*)

MARTIN. Good evening, Mr. Brockton.

BROCKTON. Good evening, Gunther. Mrs. Gunther. Good evening, Winifred.

WINIFRED (*pleasantly*). Good evening, Samuel. . . . Good night, Mr. Gunther. Go right ahead with my order, even if you don't hear from me, because there's a good chance of my being in jail. In fact, I've already packed a bag and sent it over. (*And she goes*)

MARTIN. It is nice to see you, Mr. Brockton. Can I do something for you?

BROCKTON. Well, I'd just like to talk to you for a few moments, if I'm not interrupting anything.

IRMA. If you will excuse me, please . . . the children. (*She goes*)

(*There is a pause;* BROCKTON *looks around, curiously*)

MARTIN. You have not seen my shop before, Mr. Brockton, have you?

BROCKTON. No, no. I haven't. It's very nice. . . . Tell me, Gunther, did you really throw my wife out of your shop this afternoon?

MARTIN (*astonished*). Why, no, Mr. Brockton. Certainly not.

BROCKTON. You're sure?

MARTIN. Why, yes, Mr. Brockton. Of course I'm sure.

BROCKTON. Well, why *didn't* you?

MARTIN. I beg your pardon?

BROCKTON. That's what I would have done in your place.

MARTIN. Are you joking with me, Mr. Brockton?

BROCKTON. Not at all. The fact is, Gunther, you're entitled to a medal, but you'll have to be satisfied with just getting that furniture order back.

MARTIN. Mr. Brockton, you mean I have the order again?

BROCKTON. That's right

MARTIN. Oh, Mr. Brockton—Mr. Brockton, that is wonderful. You do not know how much that means to me. It means everything. I can keep my shop. I can keep—Oh, Mr. Brockton, how can I thank you?

BROCKTON. You don't have to, Gunther. But tell me, did you really give up that order because of some silly obligation to Miss Baxter?

MARTIN. That does not matter now. Oh, Mr. Brockton, how can I thank you?

BROCKTON. You *did,* didn't you? You threw a thousand-dollar order away just because— (*He shakes his head, mystified*) —why did you do it, anyhow?

MARTIN. I don't know, Mr. Brockton. I must do what I think is right. Do not misunderstand me—I did not like to throw away that order. But if you will forgive my saying so, Mrs. Brockton was not fair. Miss Baxter has a right to what she thinks, even if that is different from what Mrs. Brockton thinks. All my life, Mr. Brockton, my one idea was to come to America. Why? Because then no one can tell me what I must do, how I must think.

BROCKTON. I see. Well, it's brought a good many people to this country. My great-grandfather, among them. Only he died for just what you're talking about.

MARTIN. It is not a bad thing to die for, Mr. Brockton—freedom. You only understand what it means when you have not had it.

BROCKTON. Yes, I suppose so. Well, we've got a great country here. Young, and rich, growing all the time. No telling where it'll go.

MARTIN. I am proud to be even a little part of it, Mr. Brockton.

BROCKTON. Well, we need people like *you*, too, Gunther. . . . Tell me, have you ever thought of branching out a little?

MARTIN. Well, of course I like to dream. Some day a shop twice as big. Maybe a couple of helpers.

BROCKTON. No, no, I meant more than that. Seems to me furniture is one of the everyday necessities. Lots of little towns around here, all of them growing. Everybody has to have furniture. . . . I meant a factory. Ever think of that?

MARTIN. A factory, Mr. Brockton! Do you know how much money that would take?

BROCKTON. Yes, I think I do. But you see, Gunther, banks sometimes lend money on promising investments. Seems to me you'd be a pretty good investment. Anyway, it's

something to talk about. Drop into the bank some day—let's talk it over.

MARTIN (*considerably stunned*). Yes. Yes. I will be— (*He has to swallow at this point*) —I will be glad to.

BROCKTON. Good. Come in right after the holidays.

MARTIN. Yes. Yes.

BROCKTON. My, my! Kind of wonderful to think we're starting a new century, isn't it? Nineteen—hundred. Certainly sounds strange, doesn't it? Nineteen hundred. Well, I guess by the time it's finished we'll be used to it. . . . Merry Christmas! (*And with a wave of the hand he is gone*)

(GUNTHER, *quivering with excitement, can barely await the closing of the door. He runs shouting into the room at the rear*)

MARTIN. Irma! Irma! What do you think? What do you think?

(*The curtains close*)

(*Immediately a factory whistle blows—a single prolonged blast*)

(*The lights go up on one of the side stages, and a crowd of workingmen emerges. Overalls, caps, lunch boxes. Without a word, they sit down, open their lunch boxes, and begin to eat. Thick meat sandwiches, slabs of pie, hunks of cake, apples, bananas. For a full minute not a word is said—just good, serious eating*)

(A FOREMAN *then comes out and calls for attention*)

THE FOREMAN. Men, can I have your attention for a minute? (*The men turn toward him*) We're behind with that Cleveland order. Mr. Gunther wants to know if you'll work overtime the rest of this week. And Mr. Gunther says to tell you that he'll pay time and a half for everything over ten hours. What do you say, men? We want to get that order out on time. (*There is a murmur of assent from the men. "Oh, sure." "I'm willing." "Why not?"*) Thanks, men. (*He goes*)

A WORKMAN. I don't mind. That extra money'll come in handy.

ANOTHER. I can use it too. You know, I can remember when you didn't get paid at all for overtime. Not so long ago, either.

A THIRD MAN. He's a good boss. First man in this town to give you time and a half for overtime.

A FOURTH. Well, it ain't so long ago *he* was at the bench himself.

THE SECOND MAN. Did you see him finish off that chair yesterday? Better than I could have done it. (*He is looking at a newspaper*) Say, anybody want to bet on the fight?

A FIFTH MAN. Sure. Five dollars on Jim Jeffries, even money.

THE SECOND MAN (*with a scornful laugh*). What do you think you've got here? A greenhorn?

THE FIRST MAN (*also reading from a newspaper*). What do you think of *that*?

THE SECOND MAN. What?

THE FIRST MAN. Those Wright Brothers went up in their flying machine again. Stayed up in the air two minutes.

THE FIFTH MAN. They *did*?

THE FIRST MAN. That's what it says here.

THE SECOND MAN I don't believe it.

THE FIRST MAN. What do you mean you don't believe it? It's in the newspaper.

THE SECOND MAN. I don't care if it's in fifty newspapers. It's impossible.

THE THIRD MAN. Jim's right. Nobody can go up in the air in a machine and fly. What keeps you *up*?

THE FIRST MAN. I don't know what keeps you up, but I tell you here it is in the newspaper. They stayed up two minutes.

THE THIRD MAN. Aw, gwan. It's like those books my kid's always reading. About ships under the sea.

THE FIRST MAN (*exasperated*). But why would the newspapers print a thing like this if it wasn't true?

THE SECOND MAN. Listen—it's impossible and that's all there is to it. Even if I *saw* them up there I wouldn't believe it.

THE FIRST MAN. Oh, I suppose you don't believe the automobile, either.

THE SECOND MAN. That's different. That's on the ground. It ain't flying around in the air.

THE FIRST MAN. All right. What about the electric light? Did you believe that when you saw it?

THE SECOND MAN. What's that got to do with it?

THE FIRST MAN. It's got *this* to do with it. When you was a kid there was no such thing as automobiles and electric light, was there? Well, why shouldn't there be a flying machine?

THE SECOND MAN. Because automobiles and electric light is possible, and flying machines *ain't* possible. So shut up.

THE FIRST MAN. Don't tell *me* to shut up!

THE SECOND MAN. Then don't tell *me* that men are flying around in the air.

(*"Come on now, boys!" . . . "What's the difference?" from the assembled men*)

THE FIRST MAN. Well, nobody's going to call me a liar. I say that the Wright Brothers stayed up in the air two minutes!

THE SECOND MAN. I say they didn't!

(*They start to strip off their coats, but immediately the other men leap up to stop the fight. "Now hold on, boys." "Don't do that." "We don't want any fights around here." "Hold onto him, Pete." "Come on—forget it."*)

(*For a split second the two men glare at each other, uncertain whether to go ahead with the fight. In that second,* THE FOREMAN *re-appears*)

THE FOREMAN. Listen, boys! On account of working overtime, Mr. Gunther is setting up free beer! Come on!

(*And they go. Fights and flying machines are forgotten as they scramble into the factory*)

(*This time the curtains part on a picnic grove on the outskirts of Mapleton. It is filled to overflowing with men, women and children in all kinds of holiday attire. A gay and festive scene. On a bandstand the Firemen's Band is playing away for dear life—above the bandstand a huge banner proclaims:*

MAPLETON ANNUAL OUTING

JULY 4TH, 1908

(MARTIN GUNTHER *and his family are seated at a picnic table. The Martin Gunther we now see bears few of the marks of the young German immigrant. He is beginning to blossom into a successful American businessman; his figure, of course, is a shade more substantial than in the early days, and there is about him that air of authority and assurance that comes with a little success. As for* IRMA, *the eight or nine intervening years, plus a period of prosperity, have also done much to alter her appearance.* LISA *and* KARL, *now fifteen and thirteen, are attractive youngsters very much in the American mold*)

(*Also at the table with the Gunthers is* SAMUEL BROCKTON, *and beside him* MRS. BROCKTON, *whom we now see for the first time. Present too are* JUDGE HEWITT *and his wife, the* DOCTOR *and* MRS. SQUIRES)

(*Portions of the crowd sit at other tables, while the remainder simply swarms all over the place. Children are playing diabolo, tag, flying kites; others are being handed open bottles of soda pop by doting parents*)

(*The band is playing as the curtains open, and a man, seemingly in charge of the proceedings, is urging the crowd on to sing. The singing is haphazard but lusty,*

and is punctuated by the booming of firecrackers from just over the hill. As one song finishes the leader yells out the name of the next one, and the crowd goes into it. The songs are the popular songs of the day—"I'm Afraid to Go Home in the Dark," "Because I'm Married Now," "Keep a Little Cosy Corner in Your Heart for Me," "Down Where the Wurzburger Flows," "Take Me to St. Louis, Louis")

(*Through the strains of the last song there are shouts of "Jeff!" "Hey, Jeff!" "Get Jeff out there!" "Come on, Jeff!"*)

(*Nothing loath,* JEFF *steps forward—it turns out he is one of the band. The crowd greets him with a cheer—he is obviously the local Harry Lauder. The music strikes up and* JEFF *plunges into his* pièce de résistance. *"I Picked a Lemon in the Garden of Love"*)

(*When it's over* THE LEADER *raises his hand for silence*)

THE LEADER. Wait a minute! Wait a minute! I've got a little surprise for you. Jim McLennon and Eddie Blake have worked up a little stunt for this afternoon—you remember them *last* Fourth of July, don't you? (*The crowd obviously remembers and yells its approval*) Well, here they are again. It's a little impersonation act, and you ought to be able to guess who they are. . . . All right, boys!

(*There is a chord from the band as* JIM *and* EDDIE *run up on the platform. Their costumes and make-up are strictly home-made, but you gather that it is Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft that they are supposed to look like*)

ROOSEVELT. Hello, Bill!

TAFT. Hello, Teddy!

ROOSEVELT. You know what this is? The Big Stick!

TAFT. You know what this is? (*He pats his paunch*) The Big Stomach!

(*Laughter and applause*)

ROOSEVELT. Well, I'll get after that corporation, too, Willie. . . . Tell me, Bill, do you think you can fill my shoes at the White House?

TAFT. I don't know, but I'll certainly fill the White House. (*Laughter*)

ROOSEVELT. Well, tell me, when you're President, are you going to carry out my policies?

TAFT. I certainly am. Feet first!

ROOSEVELT. Bully for you!

(*Another chord from the band, and the act is over*)

(*A voice from the crowd. "Hey, Jim, when you get back to the White House say hello to Alice for me." More laughter. From a little boy: "Papa, can I have the mustache now?"*)

THE LEADER. Now, folks, if you'll stop eating that fried chicken for a minute, and drink up your beer, we're going to have a little Fourth of July speech from our Mayor, Junius W. McEvoy.

(*Cheers, and* MAYOR MCEVOY *is at once up on the platform*)

THE MAYOR. Fellow-citizens: On this glorious Fourth of July, the most glorious of all Fourth of Julys, I stand before you as the Mayor of the fair town of Mapleton. (*Applause*) The fastest growing little town west of the Mississippi. (*For one panicky second he reconsiders; then quickly covers himself*) East—*East* of the Mississippi. (*He takes a fresh breath*) Mapleton is destined to be one of the biggest small towns in Ohio. Watch out, Cleveland! Last week the Town Council voted to repave six blocks of Main Street in the latest asphalt paving, same as they have right in New York City. (*More applause*) Yesterday four people bought automobiles and three babies were born! Watch out, Cleveland! (*Applause again*) And just now, not five minutes ago, I learned that our esteemed fellow-citizen, Martin Gunther, has completed plans to build a new furniture

factory, the largest in the county, right here in Mapleton! (*Applause and cheers. All eyes go to* MARTIN. THE MAYOR, *however, permits him only a brief moment in the spotlight, then plunges on*) Our population now stands at eleven thousand, four hundred and eighty-two, and even as I talk to you our birth-rate is rising. (*And at this point His Honor casts logic to the winds and goes right out for votes*) *And*—if I am re-elected in the Fall this will be one of the biggest towns in Ohio! Watch out, Cleveland! (*He sits down to thunderous applause, as* THE LEADER *again mounts the rostrum*)

THE LEADER. And now, folks, before I announce the events for the afternoon, our beloved principal, Dr. MacFarlane, will award the school prizes for the term just ended.

(DR. MACFARLANE, *an elderly, scholastic-looking gentleman, advances to the platform, memorandum in hand*)

DR. MACFARLANE. It pleases me to report to the parents of Mapleton that we have had a most successful scholastic year, and that the averages in the various grades have been very excellent indeed. Next year we hope to do even better, particularly since we are assured that the new steam heat, which was installed this year, will be working, we trust, by next year. And now it is my pleasure to award the year's prizes. (*He consults his list*) Alexander Hewitt. (*A boy advances to the platform as those present applaud*) Winner of the final-term debate, "Resolved, That the United States Should Finish the Panama Canal" . . . Betsy Davis. (*Applause*) Elocution. For her recitation of Edwin Markham's "The Man with the Hoe." . . . Miriam Squires. (*Applause*) American History. For her essay, "How the Monroe Doctrine Protects Us." . . . And finally Karl Gunther. (*Applause*) English Composition. For his composition, "Could the San Francisco Earthquake Have Been Avoided?" . . . Thank you, one and all.

(*Applause, and* THE LEADER *steps forward again*)

THE LEADER. Attention, folks! We're just going to give the boys in the band a chance to eat their lunch, and then the festivities will go right on. All right, boys.

(*The picknickers drift here and there, hello-ing and chattering away. A little group in bathing suits comes through the grove*)

KARL. Papa, don't forget you promised to see the ball game with me.

MARTIN. I don't forget, Karl.

(*Young* ALEXANDER HEWITT *bounds back*)

ALEX. Lisa! Lisa! I've got seats right by first base for us, for the ball game.

LISA. All right. I thought you'd forgot, Alex.

KARL (*the eternal kid brother*). Alex's got a girl. Lisa's got a fellow!

LISA. Papa, make him stop. Make Karl stop teasing me.

MARTIN. Karl, behave yourself. Stop teasing your sister.

IRMA (*in another group*). Are you quite comfortable, Mrs. Brockton? I think one of these camp chairs would be more comfortable.

MRS. BROCKTON. Oh, thank you, Mrs. Gunther. I think I will. (*She settles herself*)

IRMA. Excuse me, I think I see Anna . . . Anna! Anna!

MRS. BROCKTON. I hear Anna is leaving you, Mrs. Gunther. Too bad.

IRMA. Yes. She is like one of the family.

MRS. BROCKTON. You will have a hard time getting another girl, Mrs. Gunther, I warn you. I don't know what servants are coming to these days. I pay my new girl two dollars a week and she refuses point-blank to do the washing and ironing.

(ANNA *enters*)

ANNA. Should I make some fresh lemonade, Mrs. Gunther?

IRMA. No, it's all right, Anna. Just take the basket.

MRS. BROCKTON. Well, Anna, we hear you're getting married soon. Is that right?

ANNA. Yes, Mrs. Brockton.

MRS. BROCKTON. My, isn't that nice?

ANNA. I don't know yet.

IRMA. Anna is making a very nice marriage, Mrs. Brockton. He's in the Fire Department.

MRS. HEINRICH. He plays in the band, too. He was the one with the horn.

MRS. BROCKTON. A fireman! Well! How did you happen to meet him?

ANNA. I went to a fire.

MRS. SQUIRES. Why, isn't that romantic! I hope you'll be very happy, Anna.

ANNA. Thank you. (*She goes*)

MRS. HEWITT. Tell me, Mrs. Gunther—

(*She is interrupted by a series of sputterings and explosions, coming from quite near by. They are climaxed by a single explosion louder than the others—then a second of complete silence*)

(*And then* WINIFRED BAXTER *enters. Obviously she has had something to do with all this noise and confusion, for she is dressed for automobiling—and dressed to the hilt. She wears a linen duster, right down to her heels, and a hat with an elaborate veil thrown over it. In addition, she is removing a pair of goggles as she enters*)

WINIFRED. No, that was not firecrackers, girls. That was me and my new automobile. (*Turns to look at the car*) How do you like her? It's the newest model, right from the factory. A Pope-Toledo. She can do thirty miles an hour if I let her out. Seven horse-power.

MRS. BROCKTON (*stiffly*). I do not believe in scorching along the roads. I do not let Mr. Brockton go over fifteen.

WINIFRED. Might as well use a horse then, Flora . . . Hey, you kids, get away from there! (*And she is off to protect her Pope-Toledo*)

THE LEADER (*up on the stand again*). Attention, folks! Now, folks, here's the list of events for this afternoon. First, the baseball game. Mapleton Mohawks versus the Mesalia Magpies. Eddie Blake pitching for Mapleton. (*Cheers*) Children will please not throw lighted firecrackers at the ball players. Right after the ball game, the Fat Man's Peanut Race, followed by the Paper Bag Relay. At five o'clock, the Watermelon and Pie-eating Contests, right here in the clearing. And at six o'clock Professor Alonzo B. Peddigrew, the world's most famous balloonist, will make a balloon ascension from the top of Porcupine Hill And don't forget, at eight o'clock tonight, the biggest fireworks display Mapleton has ever had, featuring the Last Days of Pompeii and the Battle of Bunker Hill. This gigantic fireworks display has been donated by a man you all know. He is one of our most public-spirited citizens. He is building a big new factory here, and he is helping to put Mapleton, Ohio, on the map. I propose we give three cheers to Martin Gunther!

(*Cheers and cries of "Speech! Speech!" "Come on, Martin —stand up!" "Yeah, Martin!"*)

(MARTIN *is embarrassed and uncomfortable, but is forced to his feet. "Come on—make a speech!" "Speech! Speech!"*)

MARTIN. I am not a speechmaker. Please! (*"Come on—we want a speech!"*) What can I say? Here I am, and it's the Fourth of July. I never knew what the Fourth of July meant until I came to America, but now I am very glad that George Washington and all those other men— went across the Delaware— Ach, I cannot make a speech. (*From the crowd: "Come on! Come on!"*) No, no. I— (*He gets a sudden idea*) —if you will all join in the chorus with me, I will sing for you an old German song.

(*Cheers of approval.* MARTIN *gestures to the band, which strikes up "Ach du Lieber Augustine." Halfway through*

the chorus the crowd joins in lustily—everyone is having a wonderful time)

(*But something always happens on these occasions. Suddenly the sky begins to darken and a strong gust of wind sweeps the picnic grove. For a while* MARTIN *bravely ignores the coming storm—he continues to sing lustily. But presently hats and pieces of newspaper begin to blow through the air, and the crowd begins to scramble for shelter.* MARTIN *still keeps trying, but presently even "Ach du Lieber Augustine" has to yield to the inevitable ending of all Fourth of July picnics. Everyone is running helter-skelter as the curtains close*)

(*As the lights go up on the side stage, a young girl of about twenty-one, in a ladies' tennis outfit of 1914, comes running out, racquet under her arm She is in a state of great girlish excitement, and is followed immediately by four or five girls of the same age, also in tennis togs. These girls, too, are in a state of squealy, high-pitched laughter. They immediately corner the first girl*)

A GIRL. Lisa Gunther, it's true!

LISA. No, no!

ANOTHER GIRL. It is, too, Lisa, you're engaged to Alex Hewitt!

LISA. I am not. It isn't true at all.

(*"You are so!" . . . "Tell us all about it!" . . . "When did you get engaged to him?" . . . "When are you going to get married?"*)

LISA. Oh, you girls are just terrible.

A GIRL. Well, it's all over your face. Anybody would know it.

ANOTHER GIRL. And the way Alex behaved just now.

LISA (*taking a breath*). Now listen, it's a big secret.

(*A squeal of delight. "Lisa Gunther, how wonderful!" "I knew it! I knew it all the time!" "When did it happen? Tell us all about it!"*)

LISA (*vastly enjoying it*). Now remember, not a soul must

know about it. Alex has made me promise not to tell. (*"We won't tell a soul!" "Come on—tell us!"*) Well, night before last, I gave him back his fraternity pin. We had just had a big fight, and I told him I never wanted to see him again. And before I knew what happened, we were engaged. But remember, you're not to tell a soul, because Alex made me promise— (*Half a dozen* BOYS *come on, forcibly escorting a very much embarrassed young* MAN. *To make it all clear, they are singing the Wedding March as they propel him forward*) Alexander Hewitt! You told!

ALEX. No, I didn't. I just said—

LISA. Alex Hewitt! I kept *my* promise!

(*From the boys, derisively: "He didn't tell, Lisa." "Certainly not!" "Oh, no!" "Not in a million years!"*)

(*A young* BOY *of about nineteen steps forward and ceremoniously takes young* HEWITT *by the hand*)

THE BOY. Mr. Hewitt, as your future brother-in-law, I feel it my duty to warn you that my sister talks in her sleep. In fact, that new wing we built on the house—

LISA. Karl Gunther, you shut up!

KARL. However, when you're walking the floor with that baby, you won't mind it. I trust you will name the first one Karl, the second one Karla, the third and fourth ones—

LISA. Karl Gunther, I'll—

(*Both she and* ALEX *advance with raised tennis racquets;* KARL *runs as they pursue him. Screaming and squealing, the rest of the crowd rush out after him*)

(*The lights go out*)

(*The parting curtains reveal the veranda of* GUNTHER'S *home on a summer evening. A comfortable, wide piazza. Flowering vines, moonlight. Seated in rocking chairs are* MARTIN, IRMA, WINIFRED, BROCKTON. MARTIN *strikes a match and lights his pipe*)

IRMA. I don't know where the summer has gone to, this

year. The end of July already, and so much to do yet. Do you realize, Martin—only six weeks till your daughter is a married woman?

MARTIN. Yes, I know. (*He chuckles a little*)

IRMA. What is it?

MARTIN. I think Karl's got a girl, too. That girl that's visiting here from Chicago. A nice little girl, too.

IRMA. Martin, don't be crazy. How can Karl have a girl? He's going to college.

WINIFRED. I thought that's what they studied at college.

IRMA. Karl with a girl. A fine way to be an architect.

(ANNA *emerges from the house with a pitcher of iced tea and cookies*)

ANNA. I made a little iced tea. It's such a hot night.

IRMA. Oh, thank you, Anna. That was nice of you.

WINIFRED. Good evening, Anna. How are you?

ANNA. Fine, thank you, Mrs. Alexander. How are you?

WINIFRED. I'm simply elegant, Anna, but call me Miss Baxter. I like it better and so does Mr. Alexander, wherever he is.

ANNA. Sure, Miss Baxter. (*Suddenly she hears a childish squeal somewhere out on the lawn*) Tommy, you come right inside. I've been looking for you . . . Excuse me, Mrs. Gunther. (*A little boy of five now comes into view at the foot of the steps*) Look at your suit. Where have you been?

TOMMY. I'm an Indian, mama.

WINIFRED. Why, hello, Tommy. I'd almost forgotten you had a son, Anna. . . . How big you've grown, Tommy.

TOMMY. I'm an Indian.

WINIFRED. Well, I think it's time for Indians to go to bed now, don't you?

ANNA. Come on, Tommy. Excuse me, Mrs. Gunther. Excuse me taking him in this way.

IRMA (*as* ANNA *and the boy disappear*). That's quite all right, Anna . . . Poor Anna. That husband of hers,

leaving her with a little boy. She has never even heard from him.

WINIFRED. Yes, that was quite a fire he went to six years ago, wasn't it?

IRMA. I was so wrong about Anna's husband. I thought he was a nice fellow, but the minute a band came to town, off he went with it. You never can tell, I guess.

WINIFRED. You certainly can't. God knows I was wrong about the one I married. I began to wish a band would come along about the second week.

MARTIN. Maybe you didn't give it enough chance, Winifred. How long were you married—six months? That was hardly a fair trial.

WINIFRED. Oh, I think it was, Martin. We were just not made for each other, that's all. The things you find out after you're married. How would you like to discover, in the middle of your honeymoon, that you had married an ardent spiritualist? Every night at ten o'clock he tried to get his mother back. No, Martin, I gave it a fair trial all right, and here I am.

IRMA. You'll find somebody else, Winifred. Some nice man will come along.

WINIFRED. No. No, I think I'll settle down now. I've chained myself to my last lamp-post—no offense to Mr. Alexander. I think I'll just sit back and let you teach me how to knit, Irma. . . . Meanwhile, I'm going to have a cigarette.

IRMA. Winifred, do not smoke on the porch. Do you mind? People pass and see . . . the young people will be coming home.

WINIFRED. All right. I don't have to have it.

IRMA. I'll tell you what. Come inside—I want to show you Lisa's trousseau anyway. You can smoke in there.

WINIFRED. All right, Irma. (*She rises*)

IRMA (*thoughtfully*). Lisa's trousseau. I can't seem to realize it. And now Karl with a girl. All those years they are

a part of you, a part of your life. And then, one day, they meet somebody, and in five minutes they are not yours any more. Funny.

MARTIN. You know, Samuel, if Lisa did *not* get married Irma would not like it either. When a woman is really happy, then she begins to feel sorry for herself.

WINIFRED. You leave women alone, Martin Gunther . . . Come on, Irma. We'll look at Lisa's trousseau and have a wonderful cry together.

(*They go into the house*)

MARTIN. You know, Samuel, if she hadn't got that votes-for-women in her head, Winifred Baxter would have made a wonderful wife for some man.

BROCKTON (*thoughtfully*). Yes . . . You didn't know, did you, Martin, that way back before Flora, I almost married Winifred?

MARTIN. You don't tell me.

BROCKTON (*living the years over*). Yes. Yes, indeed. (*A little sound of assent from* MARTIN, *they sit for a moment without speaking*) Doesn't seem like four years since Flora passed on, does it, Martin?

MARTIN. No. Is it four years, Samuel?

BROCKTON. Nearer five. You know, I'd be pretty lost, Martin, if you hadn't kind of taken me into the family. Lisa and Karl seem almost like my children.

MARTIN. You *are* one of the family, Samuel.

BROCKTON. Well, it's very nice of you to think of me that way, Martin. Very nice indeed.

MARTIN. Samuel, everything that I have in the world I owe to you.

BROCKTON. Nonsense, Martin.

MARTIN. Yes, yes. That day you walked into the shop—when first we talked together—that was the beginning of everything for me.

BROCKTON (*laughing a little*). Your idea of a factory was two helpers—remember, Martin?

MARTIN. If anyone had ever told me I would some day employ hundreds of men—it wasn't so long ago, either. Fourteen years. Remember—you said next week we start a new century, nineteen hundred. They have been a wonderful fourteen years for me . . . America. God has been good.

(*There is a silence for a moment*)

BROCKTON (*rises and walks to the end of the porch*). My, that wistaria smells lovely, doesn't it?

MARTIN. That's honeysuckle, Sam. You always call it wistaria.

BROCKTON. Honeysuckle. It still smells nice . . . Well, Martin, some good years ahead, too, eh? Lisa's children, then Karl's. Not a bad way to grow old. Like this. Sitting and talking, on a nice summer night. Watching the children grow up. What more can anyone want?

MARTIN. I don't know, Samuel. It seems to me life is very good.

BROCKTON (*looking at his watch*). Ten-thirty. Time for you to walk me down to the Square, Martin. (*He looks up at the house*) The ladies are probably too busy to say good night.

MARTIN. Well, I'll go as far as the cigar store. I must get some tobacco.

(*As they come down the steps there is the sound of a mandolin near by, and youthful voices singing and laughing*)

BROCKTON. Here they are. How they can sit in one of those movies on a hot night, I don't know.

(*The young people come along—half a dozen of them.* LISA *and* ALEX, KARL *and a pretty young girl, another couple, the boy strumming a mandolin*)

LISA. Hello, papa. Hello, Uncle Samuel.

(*From the others: "Good evening, Mr. Gunther. Good evening, Mr. Brockton"*)

MARTIN (*when the greetings are over*). Well! How was the moving picture, children?

LISA. Oh, great. Mary Miles Minter in a wonderful picture, and Episode 13 of the "The Clutching Hand."

KARL. Mama still up, pop?

MARTIN. She's inside with Miss Baxter.

KARL. Well, they won't mind a little noise. (*He motions to the boy with the mandolin, who begins to play again*)

MARTIN (*as he and* BROCKTON *go*). There's iced tea and cookies on the porch, Lisa.

LISA. Oh, we're too full of banana splits, papa.

BROCKTON. Good night, everyone.

(*The youngsters call "Good night" and settle down on the steps. "You Made Me Love You" is being played on the mandolin;* KARL *picks up the last half of the chorus*)

THE MANDOLIN PLAYER'S GIRL. Oh, Helen! What are you going to wear to the tennis club dance?

HELEN. Oh, I don't know whether I'll be here, Alice. I may have to go back to Chicago before that.

KARL. Oh, no, you don't. Chicago can wait—you're coming to the dance with me.

HELEN. Oh, I want to, Karl. If only I don't have to go home.

ALEX. Karl, you're not going to have much of a football team next year, are you? With McCutcheon and Dexter both graduating.

KARL. Well, if the worst comes to the worst I'll go out for the team myself. That'll settle it.

LISA. God help Yale. . . . My, your shoulder's uncomfortable, Alex.

KARL. A fine time to find that out.

(*"Peg o' My Heart" is struck up on the mandolin; they all sing a little of it haphazardly*)

THE MANDOLIN PLAYER (*through the music*). I saw that show in New York last year. It was swell.

LISA (*when the music ends*). Shall I go in and make some fudge? Anybody want some?

ALEX. No, no. You stay right where you are.

KARL. Look, I'm "The Clutching Hand." (*He contorts his face and makes a fearsome clutch at the girl by his side*)

THE GIRL. Karl, stop that. It frightens me.

KARL. All right—I'm Mary Miles Minter. (*He grows very cute and makes kissing sounds with his lips. They all laugh*)

LISA. Karl, do you behave that way at college, too?

KARL. Certainly. (*Sings*) "When the Midnight Choo-Choo Leaves for Alabam'."

(*The rest join in. The chorus is sung almost through when suddenly* GUNTHER *returns, a newspaper in his hand*)

MARTIN. Children, children, stop a minute.

KARL. What's the matter, pop?

MARTIN Something has happened! Something terrible!

LISA. What is it?

KARL. What's happened?

MARTIN. Austria-Hungary has declared war on Serbia.

LISA (*relieved*). Oh, papa, how you scared me. I thought something really was the matter.

KARL. Let me see. (*Reaching for the paper*) What's so terrible about *that*?

MARTIN It's what it might lead to, Karl. It's what it might lead to. (*He looks at the paper again as he goes up the steps*) I don't like it. I don't like it. (*He goes into the house*)

KARL (*calling after him*). Don't you worry about it, pop. . . . Gosh, I thought something had happened right here in Mapleton.

THE MANDOLIN PLAYER. "And then he'd row, row, row, way up the river" . . .

(*The mandolinist picks up the tune; so do the other boys and girls. Their voices blend in the song as the curtains close*)

(*Immediately, on the side stage, a brass band marches out, playing "Tipperary." There are crowds behind them,*

singing, shouting, cheering. They carry banners aloft—
MAPLETON WILL DO HER BIT. . . . UNCLE SAM WANTS YOU FOR THE ARMY. . . . MAPLETON'S VICTORY LOAN GOAL: TWO MILLION DOLLARS. . . . OUT TO LICK THE KAISER. . . . BERLIN OR BUST. . . . I AM A GOLD STAR MOTHER. . . . WE ARE NOT TOO PROUD TO FIGHT. . . . MAKE THE WORLD SAFE FOR DEMOCRACY. . . . REMEMBER THE LUSITANIA. . . . SAVE PEACH PITS. . . . SAVE TIN FOIL. . . . SUGAR WILL WIN THE WAR. . . . LICK A THRIFT STAMP AND LICK THE KAISER. . . . DON'T WAIT TO BE DRAFTED . . . MAPLETON IS GIVING HER ALL. . . . HOCK THE KAISER. . . . REMEMBER MEATLESS MONDAY. . . . MAPLETON EATS LIBERTY CABBAGE)

(*From time to time a speaker addresses the crowd. Sometimes it is a soldier who speaks; sometimes a Red Cross nurse; sometimes a Gold Star mother; sometimes a Boy Scout; sometimes merely a civilian. The speeches, singing and cheering intermingle, never stopping. You hear a fragment of each speech: "The challenge is to all mankind. We are fighting for the rights and liberties of all small nations." . . . "Our beloved President has called this a war without hate. We are fighting to make this a world safe for democracy." . . . "This is a war to end all wars, to end all tyranny." . . . "Every time you buy a Liberty Bond you are forging a link in the chain of freedom." . . . "My boy gave his life in France, and I am proud of it. I have two other sons fighting there now, and I only wish that I had more." . . . "Do you know where my arm is? It's in Belleau Wood. But I'm here to tell you that I'm going right back there, and if I have to lose the other one, that's all right, too." . . . "I have nursed the wounded and dying in the bloody trenches of Belgium, and all they asked was that we at home should carry on." . . . "They give their lives—all that we ask you to do is buy Liberty Bonds." . . . "Do you want the Huns over here, right here in Mapleton—*

holding babies on the ends of swords! If you don't, then buy Liberty Bonds." . . . "President Wilson is counting on each and every one of you to buy Liberty Bonds." . . . "Belgium lies bleeding at the feet of an insatiable monster. What are you going to do about it?")

(Through the speeches come the cheers and singing of the crowd, as the two bands veer from one war song to another. "Keep Your Head Down, Fritzie Boy." . . . "Over There." . . . "Keep the Home Fires Burning." . . . "Tipperary." . . . "Good Morning, Mr. Zip, Zip, Zip." . . . "Long, Long Trail." . . . "Mademoiselle from Armentières." . . . "Pack Up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit Bag")

(The singing, cheering and yelling reach a frenzied climax. Then, as the band swings into the rousing strains of "Madelon," the crowd follows, in a paroxysm of war hysteria)

(The lights dim)

(The curtains part on the living room of the Gunther home. Present are MARTIN, IRMA, LISA, ALEX, KARL, *and the girl we have seen with him on the veranda—*HELEN. ALEX *is in a captain's uniform. It is obviously a moment of tensity—there seems to be electricity in the air.* KARL *is pacing nervously up and down the room;* MARTIN *stands rooted, his eyes following* KARL, IRMA *sits in a chair, twisting and untwisting her handkerchief)*

KARL (*suddenly wheeling on his mother*). Mama—mama, you have no right to do this to me. I can't bear to see you suffer, but how do you think I feel when I walk down the street, and people yell "Slacker!" after me? How do you think I feel?

IRMA (*almost moaning it*). I don't care, Karl. I don't care.

KARL. What can I say to them? That my mother doesn't *want* me to go? Other mothers have sons. We're no different from anybody else.

IRMA. Karl, Karl, I can't stand any more. I won't listen.

KARL. But, mama, can't you see—

MARTIN. Karl, wait! Wait a minute. You must try to understand how your mother feels.

KARL. I know, papa—I know. Why do you think I haven't just gone out and enlisted? Because I *do* understand. But I can't bear it any more—I can't. We're Germans, papa—Germans. Everybody knows it. What do you think they're saying?

LISA. Mama, he's right. People are saying terrible things.

ALEX. It's true, Mrs. Gunther.

IRMA. I don't care. I don't care.

HELEN. Mrs. Gunther, I love Karl too. We're going to be married. But I think he ought to go. I want him to go.

IRMA. I don't care. If Karl goes to this war he will be shooting at his own flesh and blood. My own brothers he may shoot down. My own brothers. I cannot stand it. Surely there must be some other way—that Karl should not have to go over there and kill his own people. (*In the distance the sound of a band is heard—"Pack Up Your Troubles"*) I won't do it. I will never say yes. My heart cries out against it. I grew up with those people. I love them. I have their letters—their pictures. How can I send my son over to shoot them?

LISA. But, mama, we're at war. That makes things different. You're wrong, mama. You're wrong.

IRMA. Wait until you have a son, Lisa. Wait until you and Alex have a son. (*The door bell rings*) Wait until they ask you to send him out to shoot down his own people. Then you will know how I feel.

(*The music is swelling. In another moment the parade will be passing the door. We hear an excited voice or two in the street. "Hock the Kaiser! Hang him to a sour apple tree!"*)

(ANNA *passes through the room, on the way to the door. They all stand tense. No one moves*)

(*The music now reaches a crescendo. More cheers; more excited voices*)

(WINIFRED *and* BROCKTON *enter*—WINIFRED *in the uniform of the overseas ambulance corps*)

BROCKTON. Well, here she is, folks. The war's practically over—she leaves tonight.

WINIFRED. General Pershing said to get right over there. He couldn't do without me another minute.

MARTIN (*with obvious effort*). Well, well. The soldier girl. Let's take a look at you.

WINIFRED (*whirling around for inspection*). How do you like it? If this doesn't win the war I don't know what will.

MARTIN (*still forcing himself to speak*). Yes. It looks fine, Winifred. Fine. . . . Doesn't it, Irma?

IRMA (*the words torn from her*). Yes. . . . Yes. . . .

(CRASH! *A rock comes hurtling through the window. Voices are raised outside. "How do you like that, you dirty slacker?" "What's the matter? Are you afraid to enlist?" "We don't want any slackers in this town!"*)

(KARL, *in a white fury, starts for the door.* BROCKTON *and* ALEX *restrain him*)

BROCKTON (*quietly*). It's all right, Karl. Take it easy.

(KARL *stands tense for a moment, controlling himself. Then, looking neither to left nor right, he turns and walks stumblingly into the other room.* HELEN, *pain written across her face, follows after him*)

(*There is a moment of overpowering silence in the room. Then* WINIFRED *speaks*)

WINIFRED (*her tone low*). I have to leave. My train goes in twenty minutes. But, Martin, Irma, whatever happens, I just want you to know that I feel about you the way I've always felt. (*She puts an arm around* IRMA, *kisses her. She goes to* MARTIN *and shakes his hand*) Auf Wiedersehen.

(*There is a low good-bye from* LISA *and* ALEX)

BROCKTON. I'll come right back from the station, Martin. (*He and* WINIFRED *go*)

(*There is a second's pause. Then, slowly,* MARTIN *walks over and picks up the rock. He looks at it for a moment; puts it down on a table*)

IRMA (*bursting forth*). I don't care! Let them throw rocks! It is better than that Karl should kill our people!

MARTIN (*finally facing her*). They are not our people, Irma.

IRMA. Martin, what are you saying?

MARTIN. I have been silent long enough—because I knew how deeply you felt this. But they are not our people any more.

IRMA. No, no, Martin, I cannot tear these people out of my heart, just because now there is a war. I was born in Germany, Martin. I grew up there. So did you. I love this country—yes, but I love Germany too. I cannot help that. It is deep inside of me. My heart breaks enough when I think that these two countries I love must fight each other. But that Karl should go over there, a gun in his hand, and kill those people I grew up with—that I cannot stand.

MARTIN. Don't you think that I am tortured too, Irma? When I wake in the night and hear you crying beside me, don't you think *my* heart breaks? I love Germany too, Irma. Do you think I can forget the little town that we were born in? My mother and father those boys and girls we went to school with—they must have sons now too, Irma, like our Karl. Do you think I *want* him to go over and kill those people?

IRMA. Then for God's sake, Martin, do not let Karl go! Do not let him go.

MARTIN. No, Irma—Karl *must* go. This country opened its arms to us, reared our children. Everything that we have and everything that we are, we owe to America. Lisa's baby is an American; the children that Karl will have

will be Americans, and *I* am an American, Irma. And so are you!

IRMA (*brokenly*). No, no! Don't let him go, Martin. Please! Please!

MARTIN. Irma Liebchen, he must go. This is our country, Irma, and I am proud that we *have* a son to go. We cannot divide our allegiance, Irma—we are either Germans or we are Americans, and I say we are Americans! . . . Karl! Karl!

(IRMA *is sobbing convulsively.* LISA *goes to her*)

(*The lights dim*)

(*Immediately the ear is assailed by a cacophony of sound —factory whistles, automobile horns, sirens, bells. Every imaginable thing that can make a noise seems to be making it*)

(*For perhaps a quarter of a minute the noise continues at its height; then, as the noise lessens a little in volume, the lights come up on one of the side stages. A man in nightshirt and bathrobe comes running out. He looks about him for a second; listens to the din. Then he calls back into the house*)

THE MAN. Mary! Come on out here, quick! Come on out!

(*On the opposite side stage a man and a woman come running out, also in bathrobe and nightdress*)

THE SECOND MAN (*calling across to his neighbor*). Mr. Murchison! Mr. Murchison! What's the matter? What's going on?

THE WOMAN. What is it? I never heard such a noise.

THE FIRST MAN. The armistice, I guess! It must be the armistice!

THE WOMAN. It's the armistice! . . . Johnny! Ethel! Get up! Get up! It's the armistice!

(*The Woman who had been called* MARY, *now rushes out*)

MARY. What is it, Jim? Is it the armistice?

THE FIRST MAN. Can't be anything else! Listen to that noise!

MARY. Thank God! . . . Harry! Grandma! Amy!

(*On the second stage* JOHNNY, ETHEL *and* TOM *now appear. One of them is beating a frying pan with a big spoon;* ETHEL *wears a lampshade over her head and has the bedclothes trailing behind her. They parade around singing "We'll Hang the Kaiser to a Sour Apple Tree"*)

(*In the middle of this, on the first stage,* HARRY, GRANDMA *and* AMY *emerge. One wears a saucepan on her head;* GRANDMA *is doing a jig. They start to sing "Good Morning, Mr. Zip, Zip, Zip," parading as they do so*)

(*Through the singing and the mock-parading they call across to one another. "Isn't it wonderful? The war's over!" "Yes, the boys will be coming home soon!" "This is the biggest day Mapleton has ever had!" "Let's get dressed and go down to the Square—there'll be big doings!" "Dressed nothing—let's go down the way we are!"*)

(*Again they go into a frenzy of singing and parading. The factory whistles and sirens reach a crescendo*)

(*The lights dim*)

(*Again the curtains open on the Square. Naturally the Square of 1918 is a far cry from the Square of 1896—chain stores have replaced both Mr. Mercer and the grocery store, a motion picture theatre now stands where Olsen & Olsen had sold harness and buggies, and an ice cream emporium now occupies the spot where Mr. Murphy's saloon had stood*)

(*Flags, bunting and banners gaily bedeck the buildings.* WELCOME HOME, MAPLETON HEROES. . . . WE WELCOME OUR BOYS. . . . MAPLETON HELPED WIN THE WAR. . . . WAR HEROES, THE TOWN IS YOURS. . . . MAPLETON SURRENDERS TO THE A.E.F. . . . WELCOME, SOLDIER BOYS)

(*The Square is almost deserted—just a few people are hurrying through. But the few who are visible are excited, happy. One kid calls to another: "Come on, Hank—we're late." "I'm coming." They rush off. . . . Then*

two men. "Train's almost in, isn't it?" "Yes, it is." "Say, I went to see them arrive." . . . Then a man and woman. The woman speaks: "I can't believe it, Jim! Harry's coming home! Harry's coming home!" "Ain't it wonderful, mother?" . . . Two more kids. "I'm going to march with the soldiers." "Me, too. My uncle promised me a helmet")

(*Now, out of the church, come the* GUNTHERS. MARTIN *and* IRMA, LISA *and* ALEX, HELEN. *The deep mourning worn by the women tells its own story. With them, as they come out, are* BROCKTON *and* WINIFRED BAXTER. IRMA *is weeping softly;* LISA *and* HELEN *are dry-eyed now, but they too have been weeping*)

LISA. Come, Mother. Come home with *us* for a little while.

(IRMA *shakes her head, unable to speak*)

HELEN. I'll take Mother home. . . . Come, Mother. We'll give Baby his dinner together—just you and I. (*She moves on with* MRS. GUNTHER. LISA *and* ALEX *follow*)

MARTIN (*slowly surveying the Square*). Soldier heroes. . . . I hope it was not all a waste. I hope he did not die for nothing. . . . You are coming home with us, aren't you, Winifred? And you, Samuel. You can make Irma forget a little, maybe.

WINIFRED. Yes, Martin.

IRMA (*as* MARTIN *joins her*). Perhaps it is not all a loss, Martin. Maybe the world learns a little bit from all this. Maybe when Karl's son is a man, he finds a better world than Karl knew.

MARTIN. Karl's son. Karl will live for us again, Irma, in his son.

(*In the distance, softly at first, we hear a military band playing "Over There," accompanied by the sound of people cheering*)

IRMA. They are home, Martin.

MARTIN (*putting an arm around her*). Yes, Liebchen, they are home.

(*Now the first urchins come running into the Square. "They're coming! The soldiers are coming!"*)

(*The music swells; the cheers of the crowd are nearer. In another second the crowd sweeps into the Square, yelling, excited, seeking vantage points. In a moment every available spot is filled—roofs are occupied, faces appear at upper windows*)

(*Then come the soldier boys—band ahead of them, marching proudly and with smiles on their faces, they swing into the Square. Flowers are tossed at their feet; kisses blown; children dodge excitedly in and out among the paraders; parents call out the names of their loved ones*)

(*Then, at the command of an officer, the procession comes to a halt. Through the cheers we hear the shouted command: "Halt! Break ranks!"*)

(*Now the excitement knows no bounds. The boys rush into the arms of their mothers, fathers, sweethearts. Tears, laughter, more cheering*)

(MARTIN *and* IRMA, *his arm around her, stand and watch*)

Curtain

ACT TWO

The terrace of the Mapleton Country Club.
The year is 1927.
The regular Saturday-night dance is in full progress. The terrace is filled with couples in evening dress, dancing away to the strains of an unseen orchestra, and through the open French windows we see still more couples whirling. The dance tune is the popular song hit of the day, "Ramona."
The orchestra comes to the end of the song—there is that smattering of applause from the dancers. Then, as the dancers start to drift away, a VOICE, *obviously from a loud speaker in the ballroom, stops them.*

THE VOICE. Station KDKA, Pittsburgh. Station KDKA, Pittsburgh. (*An excited murmur from the crowd. "Listen, everybody! Listen!"*) Here is the latest news on the sensational New York-to-Paris flight of Charles Lindbergh. This young American, who startled the world yesterday by taking off alone in his plane, the Spirit of St. Louis, has still not been sighted over Europe. An immense crowd is waiting at Le Bourget Field in Paris to give him the greatest welcome of all time, when and if he arrives, and all over America tonight his fellow countrymen are wishing Charles Lindbergh Godspeed and a happy landing. Station KDKA will keep you advised.

(*We hear excited fragments of conversation as the dancers return to the ballroom. "Boy, think of that! Flying over the Atlantic Ocean, all by himself!" "You know, he looks*

so young. He looks just like a baby" . . . "Do you realize what it means, if he gets over there? New York to Paris—imagine that!" "Gosh, what I'd give to be in Paris tonight! Can you imagine that place, if he gets there!" . . . "Gee, I hope he makes it. Wouldn't it be terrible if he didn't make it?" "Well, I've got a hunch he is going to make it." . . . "I think he's got the cutest face. I love the way he looks." "Yeh, but that's not going to get him to Paris")

(*As the last of the dancers disappears* WINIFRED BAXTER *and* JUDGE HEWITT *come out onto the terrace*)

JUDGE HEWITT. A very daring exploit. Very daring indeed. What is the young man's name again?

WINIFRED. Lindbergh. Charles Lindbergh.

JUDGE HEWITT. Oh, yes . . . Wonderful times we're living in, aren't we, Winifred?

(MRS. HEWITT *appears*)

MRS. HEWITT. Oh, there you are, Charles. The Doctor and Mrs. Squires want to know if you'll play bridge.

JUDGE HEWITT. Well, I might play a rubber or two. Would you excuse me, Winifred?

WINIFRED. Why, certainly, Judge. Go right ahead.

JUDGE HEWITT. Now remember, Dorothy, I will only play auction, and not that new-fashioned contract bridge. I don't like it.

(*The* HEWITTS *go into the clubhouse.* WINIFRED *lights a cigarette, takes a puff or two.* ANNA, *the major-domo of the Gunther household, comes up onto the terrace. She is wearing her Sunday best*)

ANNA. Oh, excuse me. Good evening, Miss Baxter.

WINIFRED (*mildly surprised*). Why, good evening, Anna.

ANNA (*looking about her*). My, it's nice—the country club. I've never been here before.

WINIFRED. I suppose you've come to hear Tommy play in the orchestra, eh, Anna?

ANNA. Yes. Mr. and Mrs. Gunther said I should come

tonight and hear him. I can't believe he's grown up already. My little Tommy.

WINIFRED. He's a nice boy, Anna. And he seems to play very well.

ANNA. I guess he got it from his father, with that horn. (*She indicates her idea of a slide trombone*) Thank God that's all he did get from his father. Yes, Tommy's a good boy. You know, Miss Baxter, last week he made forty dollars and he gets ten dollars just for playing here tonight. . . . Tell me, Miss Baxter, is there any news yet about that fellow that's flying over the ocean?

WINIFRED. Not yet, Anna, but they seem to think he's going to make it.

ANNA. My, I bet you *his* mother is proud tonight, too. . . . Oh, good evening, Miss Lisa. Mr. Alex. (*She goes in*)

(*Through the windows have come Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Hewitt—in other words,* LISA *and her husband. They murmur a "Good evening" to* ANNA)

LISA. Winifred, you *must* come and take a look. Mother and Father are dancing.

WINIFRED. Lisa, you don't mean it? Martin and Irma? (*As she looks in*) Why, so they are. Well, it's the first time a schottische has ever been danced to "Yes, Sir, She's My Baby."

ALEX (*lighting a cigar*). Ah, me! I'm afraid I ate too much dinner.

LISA. You certainly did, Alex. And you'd better watch yourself—you're getting a tummy.

(SAMUEL BROCKTON *comes through the windows*)

BROCKTON. *Who's* getting a tummy?

ALEX. I'm afraid it's me, Mr. Brockton. And I don't know what I can do about it, either.

BROCKTON. The trouble is you don't get enough exercise.

ALEX. You may be right. But as Mr. Coolidge put it last week, "I do not choose to run."

(*There is a little laugh*)

BROCKTON (*as the music changes*). Ah! "Barney Google." (*He offers his arm to* WINIFRED, *elaborately*) I have saved it for you.

WINIFRED (*taking his arm*). Thank you, Mr. Brockton. You don't know what it means to a woman to have a man save "Barney Google" for her.

(*They go in*)

LISA. Alex, you really *must* go on a diet. You're getting to look like one of those captains of industry.

ALEX. Well, I *am*, my dear. After all—vice-president of Gunther and Company . . . By the way, did your father tell you the news? We're opening another branch in Cleveland.

LISA. Oh, really?

(*Two little girls, aged about eleven and twelve, now come running up onto the terrace. They are followed by a prim-looking* GOVERNESS)

THE GIRLS. Hello, Mother! Hello, Daddy!

(LISA *and* ALEX *greet them in return*)

THE GOVERNESS. I must say, madame, that I do not approve of the children being kept up so late.

LISA (*indulgently*). Well, it's just for tonight, Miss Price. Their grandfather insisted that they be allowed to stay up on such an occasion.

THE GIRLS. Did he get there yet, Daddy? Did he get to Paris?

ALEX. Not yet, girls.

THE GIRLS. Well, if he doesn't get there all night, can we stay up all night?

ALEX. Now, now, girls.

LISA. Where's Karl? Didn't Karl come with you?

THE GIRLS. Yes, there they are. Here he is with Aunt Helen.

(*Young* KARL, *now a boy of nine, appears on the terrace, followed by his mother.* HELEN, *Karl's widow, is now an attractive woman just turning thirty*)

KARL. What about Lindy? Did he get there yet?

THE GIRLS. No, he didn't get there yet, and we're going to stay up all night till he gets there. Grandpa promised.

(MARTIN *and* IRMA *appear in the windows*)

MARTIN. Now, what did Grandpa promise? (*There are cries of "Grandpa!" from the three children, and they all rush to him*) Hello, there. Don't choke me, children. Julia—Mary—Karl.

HELEN. Karl, don't be so rough with your grandfather.

IRMA. It's his own fault, Helen. He spoils them so.

(*There is a great cheer within the clubhouse; we see couples scurrying off the dance floor*)

(*The children scream "It's Lindy! It's Lindy!" and dash in.* LISA *and* ALEX, HELEN, THE GOVERNESS—*all follow.* MARTIN *and* IRMA *start after them*)

(*A couple emerge from the clubhouse, crossing the terrace*)

MARTIN. What is it? Is he there?

THE MAN. No. False alarm. They thought they saw him over Paris, but they didn't. (*He goes on his way*)

(KARL *now dashes out*)

KARL. Oh, gee, I thought he was there, but he isn't . . . Grandpa, can I stay up till he gets there? You promised.

MARTIN. Sssh! Your grandmother is here. Do you want to get me in trouble, Karl?

IRMA. I heard every word, Martin.

MARTIN (*in a heavy whisper*). Karl, we talk together alone, afterwards.

KARL. Okay, Grandpa, I get it. (*With a sly look at his grandmother, he goes in*)

MARTIN (*chuckling*). That little Karl. He is a devil.

IRMA (*fondly*). Yes. It is like living over again, Martin, to have him with us. He talks just like our Karl used to. The same voice he has, Martin.

MARTIN. Yes, sometimes I think I am back in the shop again. I have to pinch myself. You know what I did

today, Irma? I went into the factory and made him a train. I can still make a pretty good train, Irma.

IRMA (*gently kissing him*). Ah, Martin, God was kind to us. He took away our boy, but He gave us little Karl.

(WINIFRED *and* BROCKTON *re-enter through the windows*)

WINIFRED. No, Samuel, it has nothing to do with your dancing. It's just that I may want to walk again some day.

MARTIN. Any news of Lindbergh yet, Samuel?

BROCKTON. Not yet . . . Martin, I am afraid our dancing days are over. They don't play "The Blue Danube" any more. I am afraid the younger generation is always going to the dogs, Martin.

WINIFRED. Say, it wasn't so long ago that *I* was the younger generation. "Votes for Women"—remember? Shocked everybody. Well, that's all over now. The ladies have got their vote. And what was the first thing they did with it, after all my struggles? They elected Warren G. Harding President of the United States.

BROCKTON. Well, Winifred, you might have known something like that would happen.

WINIFRED. Yes, I suppose so. You know, the funny part of it is, except for a few fools like me, they didn't really *want* the vote. They don't care *now*. Just let 'em be feminine, and get their man—that's all they care about. Well, you can't say I haven't kept up with the times. Yes, sir, I opened up the first beauty shop in Mapleton.

IRMA. Yes, I thought you were crazy, Winifred. That women should go to a store to get made beautiful, like you go to the grocer's for a pound of coffee—I thought you were crazy.

WINIFRED. Well, Irma, they do it. Facial, shampoo, henna rinse, mud pack, manicure, pedicure, neck massage—and they walk out looking just the same. Ah, me! Votes for Women!

(ANNA *comes through the windows—all excitement*)

ANNA. Mr. Gunther—Mrs. Gunther—excuse me. Tommy is singing with the orchestra. Would you come in and listen for a minute?

IRMA. Tommy is singing? Why, I didn't know he could sing.

ANNA. Well, it doesn't sound like singing—they call it crooning. But people are listening.

MARTIN. Come on, Irma—we hear this.

(MARTIN *and* IRMA *follow* ANNA *into the clubhouse*)

WINIFRED (*listening for a moment to* TOMMY'S *voice*). No, it certainly isn't singing, but I rather like it.

BROCKTON (*looking at her*). So the beauty shop's a big success, eh, Winifred?

WINIFRED. Enormous, Samuel. Funny, isn't it, that I should turn into a big business woman. Well, I had to do something. I was so—restless, Samuel. You know, the war did things to people. To me, anyhow.

BROCKTON. Yes, I know what you mean . . . Well, Winifred, are you in the mood for another proposal of marriage?

WINIFRED. Samuel, dear. You're very kind . . . But I wouldn't mind strolling in the moonlight with you. In fact, I'd rather like it.

BROCKTON. Good! We'll take a rowboat and go out on the lake. What do you say?

WINIFRED. All right. I've just read "An American Tragedy," so this is your chance.

(*They stroll off toward the lake*)

(*One or two couples hurry up onto the terrace and into the clubhouse, talking as they go. "I wonder if there's any news." "Oh, if he'd landed we'd have heard a yell go up" . . . "Well, he ought to be there now if he's ever going to get there." "You don't say? Well, you try to fly to Paris some time. See how long it takes you"*)

(TOMMY NELSON'S *song now comes to a crooning conclu-*

sion, and there is a burst of applause. MARTIN *then emerges from the clubhouse, surrounded by his three grandchildren*)

MARTIN. Yes, indeed, children, I can remember when men first started to fly. Think of that. When men first started to fly.

MARY. I know, grandpa. The Wright Brothers.

MARTIN. That's it, Mary—the Wright Brothers. They stayed up in the air two minutes, and people couldn't believe it. And now here is a young man flying all the way across the ocean.

KARL. Was Lindy a boy just like me, grandpa?

MARTIN. Yes, I imagine he was, Karl. He grew up in a small town, went to school, played games—just like any little boy—and now he is going to be a great American.

KARL. Maybe I can be a great American some day too, huh, grandpa?

JULIA (*laughing*) You couldn't fly an airplane. Aunt Helen wouldn't let you.

KARL. I could so.

MARTIN. All right—perhaps not airplanes, Karl, but maybe you can do something else. Just look at all the little boys who came from little towns and became great Americans. Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Edison, Lincoln—all the rest of them. Starting with nothing—not even as much as you have. But all of them had a spirit inside them that made them great Americans. That is the important thing. And now Lindbergh—flying all by himself over the ocean. Starting off in the dawn yesterday—just waving his hand good-bye. And doing something no man has ever done before. Doesn't that make you feel proud, children? Isn't it a wonderful story? How a little boy, a boy just like millions of other Americans—

(*From within the clubhouse there now comes a cheer of tremendous proportions. Then a voice booms out: "He did it! He did it! Lindy did it!"*)

(*Out of the clubhouse pour the dancers, jubilant, excited. They cheer, dance, embrace each other.* MARTIN *and his three grandchildren are the nucleus of a gay group of celebrants—even* MARTIN *essays a little dance step. Out come* IRMA, LISA, ALEX—*everyone. And then, after them all, the orchestra—gaily playing "Yankee Doodle"*)

(*The curtains close on a noisy, happy group*)

(*As the lights go up on one of the side stages a political speaker is haranguing a street meeting. You are not long in doubt as to the nature of the meeting, for pictures of Herbert Hoover tower over the gathering, and various campaign banners urge you to* VOTE THE STRAIGHT REPUBLICAN TICKET—VOTE FOR HERBERT HOOVER)

(*The crowd is listening attentively as the speaker delivers his message*)

THE SPEAKER. Voters of Mapleton: On Tuesday of next week you will go to the polls to elect the next President of the United States. I have only this to say to you. If you want prosperity to continue, if you want good times such as you have never seen before, vote for Herbert Hoover. (*Cheers*) Herbert Hoover is first and foremost a businessman—the great executive. Let's put a businessman in the White House, and in Herbert Hoover's own words there will be a chicken in every pot and a two-car garage for every American family. (*Cheers*) And now to you women voters let me say just this: We are relying upon the great intelligence of the average American woman in this campaign. Mr. Hoover realizes that the American woman is a great force in our political life, and if you ladies, you who control the purse strings of the nation, and whose vote is all-important—if you ladies want these happy times to continue, vote for Herbert Hoover. (*Cheers*) Voters of Mapleton, one final word. If you think you have got prosperity *now*, elect Herbert Hoover President of the United States, and this country will never forget him. I thank you.

(*The crowd disappears as the lights go out*)

(*The curtains open once more on the Square—February, 1933. It is a chill winter's day, and the entire atmosphere of the scene is one of bleakness and despair.* FOR RENT *and* FOR SALE *signs are prominent; stores stand empty; buildings without tenants. A huge banner is hung between two buildings*)

GIVE TO THE COMMUNITY CHEST
REMEMBER THE NEEDY

(*The pedestrians that hurry by reflect the spirit of the times. Harried, forlorn, despair in their eyes. Here and there a few threadbare, shivering men are offering apples at five cents apiece. Boy Scouts are scattered about the Square, contribution boxes in hand, soliciting passers-by*)

(*A man stops another man and draws him to one side*)

THE MAN. Bill! See this? First National Bank closed over in Mesalia.

THE OTHER MAN. Let's see. (*He takes the paper*) "Failed to open this morning."

THE FIRST MAN. Fidelity Trust closed, too, over in Alliance.

THE SECOND MAN. Yeh. Think Brockton's bank is all right?

THE FIRST MAN. I don't know. I guess so. (*He walks on; the eyes of the other man follow him*)

(*A* WOMAN *comes up to him*)

THE WOMAN. What was that about the bank, mister?

THE MAN. Huh? Why—nothing.

THE WOMAN. You said something about a bank failing. What bank?

THE MAN. I don't know what you're talking about. (*But he heads right for the bank*)

(*She watches him. Then quickly stops another woman*)

THE WOMAN. Myrtle! There's something wrong at the bank. Better take our money out.

(*As they hurry toward the bank they stop and whisper to another woman. The rumor is under way. Like wildfire it spreads from one person to another. You see one dash for home to get a bankbook; another gathers a little knot of people around him, excitedly whispers the news. In no time at all a milling crowd has gathered in front of the bank. Grimly, a line forms, stretching out into the Square*)

(*A bank attendant in uniform comes out for one frightened second, darts back in. People come pouring into the Square as the word spreads through the town; the line lengthens. A low murmur is rising from the crowd*)

(*A bank employee, in alpaca coat, rushes out, looks wildly about the Square. "Karl! Karl Gunther!" He beckons frantically to one of the Scouts.* KARL *comes running over. "Go get your grandfather, right away! Mr. Brockton wants him!"* KARL *dashes away*)

(*Suddenly the line breaks and turns into a mob. With a yell they are about to charge the bank doors. A little group of police, however, arrive in time to halt them; they are pushed back into line again*)

(*Suddenly* BROCKTON *comes out of the bank, stands on the steps and raises a hand for silence*)

BROCKTON. There is absolutely no reason for this panic. I give you my word this bank is safe. You have known me for years; I know most of you. Please take my word. This bank is absolutely solvent. Your money is safe.

A VOICE. Well, if it's safe give it to us. Give us our money!

(*The crowd echoes this*)

BROCKTON. Please! Listen to me! No bank in the world can pay every depositor in cash. That is not the way a bank is run. But if you will go to your homes— (*He is shouted*

down by the crowd. He tries to get their attention again, but he cannot)

(*Then, through the Square, comes* MARTIN GUNTHER, *with* KARL *running a few steps ahead of him.* MARTIN *pushes his way to the steps and faces the crowd*)

MARTIN. People! People! Listen to me! Listen to me! (*The crowd gradually stills; he gains attention*) You must believe Samuel Brockton when he tells you this bank is safe. (*A voice from the crowd: "We want our money!"*) You will get your money, but you cannot have it all at once. (*"Give us our money!"*) Listen to me! I have money in this bank, just like you. I am not drawing it out—not a penny of it. (*"We don't care! We want our money!"*) Listen! Listen! You all know Samuel Brockton. He is your friend as well as mine. I am going inside here now and sign over to this bank everything that I have in the world. My factory—everything! (*There is a scoffing roar from the crowd*) Please! Please! Stop this madness! Stop and think this over! (*The crowd is almost silent, almost convinced*) Do you hear me! Do you understand what I am saying! I am putting everything I have in the world in this bank. (*He stops, looks into the faces of the crowd. They are still*)

(MARTIN *goes into the bank*)

(*For a moment the crowd is quiet—almost too quiet. With solemn faces, men and women look at each other. Then, almost imperceptibly, the line moves—each of them is a few precious inches nearer to his goal*)

(*Quiet again—and then a hysterical woman can stand it no longer. She breaks forth*)

THE WOMAN. I want my money! I'm a widow! It's all I've got! What'll I do? What'll I do? It's all in that bank! I want my money!

A MAN (*as the hysteria spreads*). I've got a sick kid! I've got to send him away or he won't live!

ANOTHER WOMAN (*weeping*). My money! My money! Oh, God! Oh, God!

THE MAN. What's the matter with this line? Why isn't it moving? What are they keeping us out here for? I've got a sick kid! I've got to have money or he'll die! I've got a sick kid, I tell you!

THE FIRST WOMAN. What are you going to do? Why doesn't somebody do something? My whole life—my whole life is in there—all my money! *I want my money!*

(*The crowd is beyond reason. With another roar it surges forward. The police, now two dozen strong, charge into it with clubs uplifted. The crowd fights back; heads are cracked, clothes torn. In a second it is no longer a crowd, but an angry mob. The Square is in a state of complete riot*)

(*The curtains close*)

(*In the darkness we hear the voice of* FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT *coming over the microphone*)

PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT. I am certain that my fellow Americans expect that on my induction into the Presidency I will address them with a candor and a decision which the present situation of our Nation impels. This is preeminently the time to speak the truth, the whole truth, frankly and boldly. Nor need we shrink from honestly facing conditions in our country today. This great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper. . . . Our distress comes from no failure of substance. We are stricken by no plague of locusts. Compared with the perils which our forefathers conquered because they believed and were not afraid, we have still much to be thankful for. . . . The money changers have fled from their high seats in the temple of our civilization. We may now restore that temple to the ancient truths. . . . We face the arduous days that lie before us in the warm courage of national unity. . . .

In this dedication of a Nation we humbly ask the blessing of God. May He guide me in the days to come.

(*As the lights come up on the forestage a crowd of WPA workers marches out—picks, shovels, WPA sign. Tired men—men who only too plainly are not accustomed to wielding picks and shovels*)

(*They pause for a moment's rest*)

ONE OF THEM. Where is it we're going again?

ANOTHER. Mesalia. Going to fix a road.

STILL ANOTHER. Yah. Fixing a road over in Mesalia. I'm certainly glad I went to college.

THE FIRST MAN. Well, buddy, take a look at me. I'm what's left of the most brilliant research chemist in his class.

STILL ANOTHER. How about me? I was voted the man most likely to succeed.

AN OLDER MAN. Well, fellows, we're eating, anyway, and that's something. We were starving before.

(*Suddenly a* FOREMAN *appears—blows his whistle for attention*)

THE FOREMAN. Hey, men! Your checks are here.

(*Picks and shovels clatter to the ground as the men go for their pay*)

(*At the same time a boy and a girl stroll out from the opposite side. Nothing unusual about them—just an average American boy and girl. But they are dispirited, dejected. It is the boy who breaks the silence*)

THE BOY. How about another bus ride? This is a big night, Ruth. I've got a whole dollar to spend.

THE GIRL. Karl! Karl Gunther! Why must you be so bitter? What can you do? That's the way things are. (*She looks at the boy beside her.* KARL GUNTHER *is now a boy of twenty-one*)

KARL. Yes, that's the way things are, all right.

RUTH. But it's that way for everybody. We're not alone, Karl.

KARL. Listen, Ruth, what's the use of kidding ourselves? Here I am—twenty-one years old. I've never had a job in my life—never had a *job*. I've been trying for three years, but I can't get one.

RUTH. I know, Karl, but it doesn't help being so bitter.

KARL. What am I supposed to do—laugh? All right, I've got a home. A place to go and sleep nights, and listen to my grandfather tell me what a wonderful country this is. Still a wonderful country. Took everything he had. His business—money. Lost it all in a day that time the bank went under. But it's still a wonderful country. What's so wonderful about it, I'd like to know?

RUTH. But—but it's our country, Karl. You wouldn't want to be anywhere else, would you?

KARL. I don't know. There must be some place where a fellow's got a chance, where the cards aren't stacked against you right from the beginning.

RUTH. Darling, don't let it spoil everything for us.

KARL. Oh, sure not—it'll be fine. In a couple of years things will be even worse, so we can get married and go right on relief.

RUTH. Karl, Karl, what can I do with you?

KARL. I'm sorry, Ruth. I don't give you much fun, do I? Why don't you get some rich guy that can take care of you?

(*The girl, hurt, utters an involuntary "Karl!"*)

(*At the same time two young men stroll into the scene. A bit too haphazardly, perhaps—you sense that their apparently aimless entrance must have more behind it than meets the eye*)

(*One of them greets* KARL *and* RUTH. *"Hello, Karl. Hello, Ruth"*)

KARL. Hello, Ed. How are you?

ED. Oh, I'm pretty good. How about you?

KARL (*not meeting his eye*). I'm all right.

ED. How so you mean all right? Have you got a job yet?

KARL (*a moment's pause*). No.

ED. Well, there's plenty more like you.

KARL. Yah, I suppose so.

ED (*taking a pamphlet out of his pocket*). Karl, look this over when you have a minute. It's sort of what I was telling you about the other day.

KARL (*taking it*). What's it about?

ED (*carelessly*). Oh, just read it. So long.

KARL (*as* ED *strolls away, his satellite following*). So long. (*His eyes go to the pamphlet, so do* RUTH'S. *For a moment there is silence as they both read*)

RUTH (*reaching for it*). Karl, don't read that.

KARL (*snatching it away*). No, I want to read it.

RUTH. But it's vicious, that stuff. Do you want the same kind of thing here that they have in Germany?

KARL (*as he puts the pamphlet in his pocket*). Well, what are we going to do?

RUTH. Karl, we'll solve our problems in our own way. We don't need those ideas.

KARL. I'm not so sure about that. I only know I'm sick of waiting around.

(*Before the girl can answer the WPA workers start returning, pocketing checks as they come*)

A WPA MAN (*quite grand about it*). You know, by the time I open the Palm Beach house and take the yacht out, there's hardly anything left.

ANOTHER. Me neither. I think I may sell my boat—the *Ile de France.*

ANOTHER (*stooping for his shovel*). Come on, fellows—pick 'em up. Let's get over to Mesalia.

(*And they are on their way*)

(KARL *follows them with his eyes as they go*)

KARL (*bursting forth as the last man disappears*). Well, I can always do that, anyway. How about it, Ruth? If I can get on the WPA, will you marry me?

RUTH (*with spirit*). *Yes*! Yes, Karl, I would. That's the way *I* feel about it!

KARL (*violently*). Well, I don't! . . . Come on—I'll treat you to a Coca-Cola. We'll make a great big night of it.

(*They go on their way*)

(*The curtains part once more on the home of* MARTIN GUNTHER. *It is a festive occasion. In the center of the room a great bell of flowers is suspended from the ceiling, and over the archway pink carnations spell out the words:* GOLDEN WEDDING. *Flowers everywhere; garlands of smilax*)

(*Present for the occasion are all of* MARTIN'S *and* IRMA'S *friends and family.* SAMUEL BROCKTON, WINIFRED BAXTER, JUDGE *and* MRS. HEWITT, DR. *and* MRS. SQUIRES, CLARA *and* OTTO HEINRICH, ANNA. *And, of course,* LISA *and* ALEX, HELEN, MARTIN'S *two granddaughters, now grown into lovely young ladies, and* KARL, *his grandson, now a boy of twenty-one. There are, also, various townsfolk—the room is filled to overflowing, all dressed in their very best*)

(*Under the wedding bell a* MINISTER *stands waiting, prayer book in hand.* LISA, *who has been hovering about making sure that everything is in readiness, now goes to the double doors and opens them an inch or two—peers in. She whispers: "All ready!" then turns back and gives a signal to a waiting pianist and violinist*)

(*Then, to the strains of the "Wedding March," the doors open and* MARTIN *and* IRMA *walk in together, her arm in his* IRMA, *for the occasion, has donned the wedding veil that she was married in.* MARTIN *walks erect and stalwart beside her; his white hair and dignified bearing give him great distinction*)

(*They take their places before the clergyman*)

THE MINISTER. Martin and Irma Gunther, on this the fiftieth anniversary of your wedding day, I give you the blessing of God. You have shared together both

the joys and sorrows of the years, and because you have shared them together each joy has been a greater joy, each sorrow a lesser sorrow. Now, together, you stand before me truly as one, and may it please God to continue His blessings in the years to come. (*He opens the prayer book and reads aloud*) "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm; for love is strong as death. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." (*He closes the book*) My blessings upon thee, Martin and Irma Gunther.

(MARTIN *takes* IRMA *in his arms and tenderly kisses her —the guests applaud*)

(*Through the doors now come two men carrying a large satin-lined case, in which reposes a gold tray. As they bring it forward* SAMUEL BROCKTON *steps out of the crowd and addresses* MARTIN *and* IRMA)

BROCKTON. Martin—Irma—your friends have asked me to present to you this token of their affection. On it you will find inscribed the names of all those who love you and hold you dear. But I want to do more than just present this gift. I would like to tell you, Martin, and you, Irma, how much you mean to your friends, how much you mean to *me*. I remember the day you first brought Irma to Mapleton, Martin. Your pride as you introduced me to her. I remember that day I first walked into your little shop, and found there a man so simple—and yet with principle and honor. I saw you prosper, I saw your children grow, I saw you lose one that you held very dear. Through it all you remained those two simple people. I saw you grow rich, and then, one day, in a moment of crisis, I saw you stand on the steps of my bank and give everything that you had in the world in a valiant effort to save a friend. I saw you start again with nothing, Martin—your money gone, your factory gone. You may again have factories, Martin—it may very well be—but what you have to-

night is a rare possession for any man. Irma beside you, Lisa, your grandchildren, your friends. Martin—Irma—I am proud to have known you. (*He kisses* IRMA; *shakes hands with* MARTIN. *The crowd surrounds* MARTIN *and* IRMA—*congratulations, kisses, tears*)

(*In the midst of this* ANNA *gets up on a chair and struggles for the attention of the crowd*)

ANNA. Please! Please! Everybody! Listen, everybody! (*Finally they are quiet*) Mr. Gunther, Mrs. Gunther—I have a surprise for you. Somebody turn on the radio, quick! WLW. Karl, quick! Turn on the radio or it'll be too late. What time is it?

KARL. Ten minutes to ten.

ANNA. That's just right. Listen, everybody—listen.

(*A radio orchestra is just finishing the last strains of a popular tune*)

THE RADIO. You have been listening to Tommy Nelson and his Troubadours, coming to you direct from the Rainbow Room, Radio City, New York.

IRMA. Anna's Tommy!

THE RADIO. This is Tommy Nelson's last week at the Rainbow Room, folks, before going to Hollywood to begin his new starring contract at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. And now here is Tommy Nelson himself.

THE VOICE OF TOMMY NELSON. Good evening, folks. This is Tommy Nelson speaking. Before we continue I would like to send a special greeting to two friends of mine back in my home town—to Mr. and Mrs. Martin Gunther, of Mapleton, Ohio. I wish I could be with you tonight, Mr. and Mrs. Gunther, to help celebrate your golden wedding, but I'm thinking of you, and I want to sing a little song especially for you.

(*The orchestra picks up and* TOMMY NELSON *sings—"Put On Your Old Gray Bonnet"*)

"Put on your old gray bonnet,
With the blue ribbons on it,

And we'll hitch old Dobbin to the shay.
Through the fields of clover
We will drive to Dover,
On our golden wedding day."

TOMMY NELSON'S VOICE AGAIN. I'm blowing a kiss to you, Mr. and Mrs. Gunther. Good night.

(*Everyone burbles with excitement and appreciation.* ANNA *is congratulated on all sides—she beams with pleasure.* MARTIN *and* IRMA *come to her*)

IRMA (*throwing her arms around her*). Anna! Anna! What a wonderful surprise! How lovely of you!

MARTIN. It was wonderful, Anna. Thank you very much.

ANNA. My goodness, I was so afraid Mr. Brockton would go on talking, I nearly died.

LISA (*clapping her hands for attention*). Come on, everybody! Supper! Supper is served! Everybody in the dining room! Supper!

(*The voices pick up—everybody is talking at once as they stream into the dining room*)

JUDGE HEWITT (*taking* ANNA'S *arm*). Anna, that was very nice. Very nice indeed. What a wonderful success your son has made!

ANNA. Yes, think of it. From blowing a horn comes ten thousand dollars a week.

(*They go into the dining room*)

(*Now* MARTIN'S *and* IRMA'S *grandchildren cluster about them*)

MARY. Grandpa, Grandma—it was wonderful!

JULIA. I kept wishing I could marry Grandpa myself.

KARL. Grandpa, Grandma—my congratulations.

MARTIN AND IRMA. Thank you, Karl. Thank you, children.

ALEX. Well, folks, I've been your son-in-law for a good many years now, but I still like it. That's all I can say. Congratulations.

MARTIN. Thank you, Alex. Thank you very much.

HELEN. And now—may I offer *my* congratulations?

IRMA (*as she kisses her*). Helen, darling.

MARTIN. Thank you, Helen.

HELEN (*choked up*). I didn't even have a—first wedding anniversary, did I?

IRMA. Helen, dear.

KARL. Mother! Mother—don't.

(LISA *emerges from the dining room*)

LISA. Come on—what are you people doing out here? We're waiting for you.

THE GIRLS. We're coming, Mother. Come on, Dad.

ALEX. I'm ready. I've just discovered I'm hungry.

KARL. Come on, Mother.

(MARTIN *stops* BROCKTON *as he and* WINIFRED *are about to follow the others*)

MARTIN. Samuel, that was a wonderful speech you made. A wonderful speech.

BROCKTON. I only said what I felt, Martin.

IRMA. Winifred, I never would have believed it. I saw you crying.

WINIFRED. Nonsense, Irma. My orchids hit me in the eye.

(*She takes* BROCKTON's *arm and goes*)

MARTIN (*stopping* IRMA). Irma Liebchen, wait a minute. (*She turns and faces him*) Can you believe it? We have been married fifty years?

IRMA. No, Martin. I cannot believe it. To me it seems just a little while.

MARTIN. Me too, Irma.

IRMA. I remember so well—that day you came to my father's house and told him your prospects—and that you wanted to marry me.

MARTIN. Yah . . . Yah . . .

IRMA. I listened outside my father's door—I can see myself now. And then I went upstairs and waited for you to propose. Two days I waited, Martin.

MARTIN. It took me two days to get up my courage.

IRMA. It seems such a little while ago, Martin. And now it is fifty years.

MARTIN (*nods*). Tell me, Liebchen, would you do it over again?

IRMA. You know I would, Martin.

(*They kiss*)

(*From the dining room come cries of "Martin! Irma! Come on! Where are you?"*)

MARTIN. We're coming.

(*They go into the dining room. A great cheer greets them, then voices are lifted once more in the "Wedding March." A burst of laughter, another cheer. The clink of glasses lifted in a toast*)

(*The door bell rings. A* MAID, *in cap and apron, comes through the room and goes to the outside door. "Can I speak to Karl Gunther?" "Why, yes. Just step in a minute—I'll tell him"*)

(*A young man of about thirty slouches into the room. It is the same youth we have seen in the preceding scene —the young man of the pamphlet*)

THE MAID. I'll try to get him for you, but—there's a party going on. (*She goes into the other room. The young man peers in, curiously. A snatch of song floats out. Then comes* KARL. *He stops short as he sees his visitor —his manner changes. He closes the doors behind him*)

KARL. Hello, Ed.

ED. What's going on?

KARL. Why, it's—an anniversary.

ED. Oh! . . . Well, you don't have to stay for it, do you?

KARL. Why, yes, I do. It's my grandparents'—golden wedding.

ED. Well, you can break away, can't you?

KARL. It'd be kind of tough. What's up?

ED. You know—it's the big meeting. Initiation. And Kamerling's going to speak. He just got back.

KARL. Well, maybe I can get there later.

ED (*getting a little nasty*). Listen, Karl. We're not playing around with dolls, you know. Kamerling's an important man, and you ought to hear him. He's been over there for three months. This is an important meeting, and— (*He stops abruptly as* SAMUEL BROCKTON *comes through the doors*)

BROCKTON. Oh, excuse me. Did you see my cigar case around any place? (*He looks for it, a shade too elaborately*) No, I guess it isn't here. (*He stands there, his eyes on* KARL'S *visitor*)

KARL (*his hand forced*). Ah—this is Mr. Edward Lorenz. Mr. Brockton.

BROCKTON. How do you do, Mr. Lorenz.

ED. How do you do. . . . Well, I'll—see you later, Karl. Good-bye. (*And he is gone*)

(*There is an uncomfortable second for* KARL; *then he pulls himself together and starts back to the dining room*)

BROCKTON (*carelessly*). Oh, Karl.

KARL (*stopping*). Yes?

BROCKTON. You weren't by any chance thinking of going to that meeting tonight, were you?

KARL. What meeting?

BROCKTON. The meeting that man Lorenz wants you to go to.

KARL. What if I am?

BROCKTON. Karl, I know all about Mr. Lorenz, and all about that man that's speaking there tonight.

KARL (*sulkily*). Why don't you let me tend to my own affairs, Mr. Brockton?

BROCKTON (*looking at him*). Karl, does your grandfather know about this?

KARL. No, and I don't care if he does.

BROCKTON (*going to the doors*). Martin! Martin, come here for a minute, will you? (*He closes the doors again, goes*

back to KARL) I don't think you realize what you're doing, Karl.

(MARTIN *emerges from the dining room*)

MARTIN. What is it, Samuel?

BROCKTON. Close the door, Martin.

(MARTIN *does so, puzzled*)

MARTIN. What's the matter, Samuel? What *is* all this?

BROCKTON. Martin, I wouldn't talk to you about this tonight if I didn't feel it necessary.

MARTIN. Why, Samuel, what is it?

BROCKTON. Martin, you know what has been going on lately here in Mapleton. Well, Karl is going to one of those meetings tonight.

MARTIN. Karl, is this true?

KARL. I'm going to a meeting, if that's what you mean.

MARTIN. The kind of meeting that Mr. Brockton says?

KARL (*turning on him*). You've no right to stop me. How do *you* know—how does *he* know—what it's like for me? For millions like me. You're living in the past—the world's moving. You don't know what's going on. We've got different problems now. And the same old system can't meet them any longer.

BROCKTON. You see what's happening, Martin. No place is safe from it, even America.

KARL. Go ahead—wave the flag. Let the bands play. But if you stop listening to "The Star-spangled Banner" for a minute, you can hear this whole rotten system crashing around your ears.

MARTIN. Karl, Karl, do you know what you're saying?

KARL. You bet I do! The land of the free! Sure! Free to waste your life away looking for a job! What's the use of freedom if it doesn't get you anywhere?

BROCKTON. Karl, stop it. You ought to be ashamed of yourself.

MARTIN. No, no, let him go on. I want to hear this.

KARL. What's so wonderful about the American way of doing things, compared with any other way? Look at *you*! What have *you* got after all these years? Nothing!

MARTIN. I will tell you what I have got, Karl. I have got everything that I wanted from America, and more. I came over here a poor boy, with nothing, and I got from America riches and years of happiness. All right, the riches have gone. That does not matter. But freedom there still is, and that is what *does* matter. I don't care how they are trying to change this country, or what name they call themselves. They are all the same —all these things—they are un-American. What really matters, Karl, is that you, and the young people like you, should take over this country, and keep it what it has always been.

KARL. Try that speech when you're looking for a job, Grandpa, and see where you get. You're sentimental about this country, but I'm not. I tell you this country is in a bad way—you ought to talk to *my* generation. Just listen to them for a while. You've had your life, and everything that went with it. But I haven't. I'm just starting, and I'm going to fight for my chance.

MARTIN. You will not get your chance that way, Karl.

KARL. Oh, I know all about that.

MARTIN. If you have your way—you and your friends—and they change this country the way they want it—it will not be what they tell you now, Karl.

KARL. I don't care what it is. I'll have a job, anyway.

MARTIN. You will have a job—yes—but you will live your life in a country that is one great prison.

KARL. I'll take that chance. It's my life.

MARTIN. There will be no friends even that you can trust, that you can talk to. Your own children will not belong to you. They will be told from the cradle what to believe; at five they will have guns put in their hands.

KARL. I don't care what they do—they get results, don't they? Look at 'em!

MARTIN. Yes, look at them! Look what they are doing over there today. They have gone back to the Dark Ages. Don't think that I have not thought about you, Karl—how hard it is for you. I have. But your chance lies with the America that we have.

KARL. I know. Freedom! Well, it isn't enough. You can't marry a girl on freedom! You can't eat it if you're hungry!

MARTIN. Freedom! Freedom is a curious thing, Karl—you do not get up every morning saying "Ah! I am free!" You do not even think about it, perhaps, but it is part of a man, as much as living and breathing. It is the very spirit of a man. To live where there is freedom, Karl, that is the greatest thing in the world. Yes—yes, I *am* sentimental about this country. If America meant liberty before, think what it means now.

KARL. Well, that's the way *you* feel about it. I'm going to that meeting! (*And he flings himself out of the house*)

(MARTIN *instinctively takes a step toward the door, but in that instant the doors are opened and the crowd sweeps gaily back into the room*)

IRMA. Martin! Martin! They want us to dance together! "The Blue Danube." Come, Martin! (MARTIN *stands stunned, barely hearing*) Come on, Martin. "The Blue Danube."

(*The music strikes up;* IRMA *goes to him. Mechanically he starts to waltz with her. The crowd laughs and applauds as the dance whirls on*)

(*On the side stage, seemingly out of nowhere, a man comes slowly forward. He wears a brown shirted uniform with military belt. He stands perfectly still for a moment; gives an almost imperceptible glance around. Quietly, another man joins him. He too is in uniform.*

They walk forward a step or two; stop again. Two more men quietly join them. Brown shirts, military belts. More and more appear—still absolute silence. Then still more—thirty, forty, a hundred)

(*Now three young men appear—these three are not in uniform. One of them is* KARL. *They join the men in uniform; then quietly and silently move away*)

(*The curtains open again on the picnic grove, last seen in 1908. Out of the blackness of the night the trees stand silhouetted. Then we see the flicker of approaching torches. Into the grove move, slowly and silently, the men that we have seen assembling. Their faces are dimly lit by the torches that they carry. The men stand motionless, waiting. A* MAN *now appears on the speakers' stand. He is surrounded by three guards. Immediately the crowd snaps to attention*)

THE LEADER (*his voice the voice of a fanatic*). You all know our mission. We must fulfill our part. Then and then only can America fulfill *her* destiny. There are forces in this country who accuse us of being un-American; in reality we are in the truest sense of the word Americans, the real patriots of this country. (*A cheer from the men*) Our program in the United States is this: We seek the spiritual regeneration of the youth of America after the model of the homeland. When we have attained this goal, we will organize the youth of this country and give them economic reinforcement and political schooling. Thus prepared, economically rejuvenated and politically active, our youth shall then be used, under our leadership, in the coming struggle for the reconstruction of America! (*Another cheer*) Let us not swerve from our high purpose; we must remake this country for Americans and Americans only. Other countries have cleaned their houses; the time is coming when we must do the same. Tonight we meet to initiate three new members, to pledge them, as we have pledged our-

selves. Henry Williams, John Courtenay, Karl Gunther —step forward. (*The three figures step forth into the light*) When you take this solemn oath, you pledge with your life to work for our cause—to free this country from the bonds in which it is now held. You! (*He points to* KARL) Repeat these words after me. I, Karl Gunther—

KARL. "I, Karl Gunther—"

THE LEADER. Pledge with my life—

KARL. "Pledge with my life—"

(*Suddenly there is a cry from out of the darkness. "No! No!" It is* MARTIN GUNTHER *who forces his way into the gathering*)

MARTIN. Stop this! Stop this!

THE LEADER. Who is this man?

MARTIN. Karl, I will not let you do this!

KARL. You let me alone!

MARTIN. No, I will *not* let you alone!

THE LEADER. Who *are* you?

MARTIN. I know these men! They know me! (*He faces them*) How can you listen to this man who violates our institutions?

(*A roar from the crowd*)

THE LEADER. Get out of here, you! Take him away!

MARTIN. WAIT! . . . They *know* me, these men. You are *afraid* to let me speak.

THE LEADER. You're interrupting this meeting.

MARTIN. You are *afraid* to let me speak.

THE LEADER (*as the crowd jeers*). Go ahead!

MARTIN (*speaking above the cries and taunts of the crowd*). Think! *Think* what you are doing! There are not many countries left that are free! If this country goes down, what will men do? Where else can men go? Do not do this thing, I beg of you! Do not bring this madness over here! You will not starve in this country. There will be jobs again, just as there have been in the past. This is not our first crisis! Read! Read the history

of America! Again and again we have fought our way through. And now, just because one man—*one man*—stands over in Europe and tells us that democracy is finished, that this country is no good, are you going to believe him? Because if that is what you believe, you have no right to call yourselves Americans! Democracy is *not* finished; it still exists in many countries of the world, and we are not going to let it die! We are going to keep up the fight until this evil force is wiped from the face of the earth! (*He pauses. The cries of the crowd are mounting*)

THE LEADER (*swinging* MARTIN *around*). You're a German, aren't you?

(*The crowd echoes this, derisively*)

MARTIN (*screaming*). I am a German—*yes*! But that does not matter. I could be Russian, Italian, anything—I am an *American*! My own son—*his father*—died for this country, and I would rather see this boy dead than here tonight! (*Another yell from the crowd. The men are now at a desperate pitch. But* MARTIN *does not falter*) I am ashamed that that flag—that pirate flag—flies over Germany today! I am—

(*But he has said too much. With a roar* THE LEADER *of the mob strikes him with his belt; another follows suit, then another.* MARTIN *falls to the ground; the blows rain upon him, unmercifully*)

(KARL, *as this onslaught begins, cries out in protest, but two stalwart guards immediately seize and hold him*)

(*The beaten* MARTIN *groans feebly; the men about him draw back a step. In that instant* THE LEADER *of the mob looks down at the prostrate figure; something that he sees causes even this man to withhold his hand. Quickly, his face expressionless, he beckons to the mob—they withdraw in silence, their pace increasing until at the end they are almost in flight*)

(KARL, *thus released, drops down and takes the figure of*

his grandfather in his arms. His voice is breaking as he speaks to him)

KARL. Grandfather! Grandfather! Grandfather!

(*But there is no answer*)

(*Slowly, the lights go out*)

(*In the darkness, we hear the tolling of a church bell. Then a little procession of simple people, the men and women and children of Mapleton, walk solemnly across the forestage. The bell continues to toll*)

(*The curtains open once more on the Square. It is packed solidly with* MARTIN GUNTHER'S *fellow townsmen, come to pay him their last respects. It is a hushed and reverent mass of people who stand waiting for the procession to emerge from the church*)

(*Then slowly the mourners appear. First the flag-draped coffin in which reposes the body of* MARTIN GUNTHER. *Then the* MINISTER. *Then* IRMA, BROCKTON, KARL, *his mother—the family and all of* MARTIN'S *old friends.* WINIFRED, *the* HEWITTS, *the* DOCTOR *and his wife, the* HEINRICHS)

(*As the procession halts it is* SAMUEL BROCKTON *who steps forward and addresses the waiting throng*)

BROCKTON. To you, his fellow townspeople, who have come to say farewell to Martin Gunther, I would say that you may bid him farewell not only sorrowfully, but also joyously. Martin Gunther lived with tolerance and in peace among his neighbors. He had a deep and simple faith in the goodness of his fellow men, and he died fighting for that which he felt gave meaning to life—for that which made it rich and beautiful—Freedom. He died for the thing he loved—his country.

(*Then suddenly, hysterically,* KARL *breaks out*)

KARL. Grandpa! Grandpa! It wasn't all for nothing! If you could only know that! If you could only know that!

(IRMA *puts a comforting hand on his arm*)

BROCKTON. To Martin Gunther we pay a just homage. For

it may be truly said that he was an American. He lived as an American; he died as an American. I can think of no finer epitaph. I see in the life of Martin Gunther, and even in his death, high hope for America. It will go on, this country, so long as we keep alive the thing that Martin Gunther died for. Let us keep this land of ours, which we love so dearly, a land of hope and freedom.

(*The funeral procession again starts on its way. As it does so, a single voice starts "The Star-spangled Banner." Another joins in, then more and more, until every voice in the Square is uplifted in the national anthem. Men, women, children—their voices mount to a fervid finish*)

Curtain

THE MAN WHO CAME TO DINNER

TO

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT

For reasons that are
nobody's business

THE AUTHORS

The Man Who Came to Dinner was produced by Sam H. Harris at the Music Box Theatre, New York, on Monday night, October 16, 1939, with the following cast:

MRS. ERNEST W STANLEY	VIRGINIA HAMMOND
MISS PREEN	MARY WICKES
RICHARD STANLEY	GORDON MERRICK
JUNE STANLEY	BARBARA WOODDELL
JOHN	GEORGE PROBERT
SARAH	MRS. PRIESTLEY MORRISON
MRS. DEXTER	BARBARA ADAMS
MRS. MCCUTCHEON	EDMONIA NOLLEY
MR. STANLEY	GEORGE LESSEY
MAGGIE CUTLER	EDITH ATWATER
DR. BRADLEY	DUDLEY CLEMENTS
SHERIDAN WHITESIDE	MONTY WOOLLEY
HARRIET STANLEY	RUTH VIVIAN
BERT JEFFERSON	THEODORE NEWTON
PROFESSOR METZ	LE ROI OPERTI
THE LUNCHEON GUESTS	PHIL SHERIDAN CHARLES WASHINGTON WILLIAM POSTANCE
MR. BAKER	CARL JOHNSON
EXPRESSMAN	HAROLD WOOLF
LORRAINE SHELDON	CAROL GOODNER
SANDY	MICHAEL HARVEY
BEVERLY CARLTON	JOHN HOYSRADT
WESTCOTT	EDWARD FISHER
RADIO TECHNICIANS	RODNEY STEWART CARL JOHNSON

SIX YOUNG BOYS	DANIEL LEONE JACK WHITMAN DANIEL LANDON DONALD LANDON DEWITT PURDUE ROBERT REA
BANJO	DAVID BURNS
TWO DEPUTIES	CURTIS KARPE PHIL SHERIDAN
A PLAINCLOTHES MAN	WILLIAM POSTANCE

Stage Manager—BERNARD HART
Setting by DONALD OENSLAGER

With thanks to Cole Porter for the music and lyrics.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

The scene is the home of Mr. and Mrs. Stanley, in a small town in Ohio.

ACT ONE

Scene I—A December morning
Scene II—About a week later

ACT TWO

Another week has passed
Christmas Eve

ACT THREE

Christmas morning

ACT ONE

SCENE I

The curtain rises on the attractive living room in the home of MR. *and* MRS. ERNEST W. STANLEY, *in a small town in Ohio. The* STANLEYS *are obviously people of means. The room is large, comfortable, tastefully furnished. Double doors lead into a library; there is a glimpse of a dining room at the rear, and we see the first half dozen steps of a handsome curved staircase. At the other side, bay windows, the entrance hall, the outer door.*

MRS. STANLEY *is hovering nervously near the library doors, which are tightly closed. She advances a step or two, retreats, advances again and this time musters up enough courage to listen at the door. Suddenly the doors are opened and she has to leap back*

A NURSE *in full uniform emerges—scurries, rather, out of the room.*

An angry voice from within speeds her on her way: "Great dribbling cow!"

MRS STANLEY (*eagerly*). How is he? Is he coming out?

(*But the* NURSE *has already disappeared into the dining room*)

(*Simultaneously the door bell rings—at the same time a young lad of twenty-one,* RICHARD STANLEY, *is descending the stairs*)

RICHARD. I'll go, Mother.

(JOHN, *a white-coated servant, comes hurrying in from the dining room and starts up the stairs, two at a time*)

MRS. STANLEY. What's the matter? What is it?

JOHN. They want pillows. (*And he is out of sight*)

(*Meanwhile the* NURSE *is returning to the sick room. The voice is heard again as she opens the doors. "Don't call yourself a doctor in my presence! You're a quack if I ever saw one!"*)

(RICHARD *returns from the hall, carrying two huge packages and a sheaf of cablegrams*)

RICHARD. Four more cablegrams and more packages. . . . Dad is going crazy upstairs, with that bell ringing all the time.

(*Meanwhile* JUNE, *the daughter of the house, has come down the stairs. An attractive girl of twenty. At the same time the telephone is ringing*)

MRS. STANLEY. Oh, dear! . . . June, will you go? . . . What did you say, Richard?

RICHARD (*examining the packages*). One's from New York and one from San Francisco.

MRS. STANLEY. There was something from Alaska early this morning.

JUNE (*at the telephone*). Yes? . . . Yes, that's right.

MRS. STANLEY. Who is it?

(*Before* JUNE *can answer, the double doors are opened again and the* NURSE *appears. The voice calls after her: "Doesn't that bird-brain of yours ever function?"*)

THE NURSE. I—I'll get them right away. . . . He wants some Players Club cigarettes.

MRS. STANLEY. Players Club?

RICHARD. They have 'em at Kitchener's. I'll run down and get 'em. (*He is off*)

JUNE (*still at the phone*). Hello. . . . Yes, I'm waiting.

MRS. STANLEY. Tell me, Miss Preen, is he—are they bringing him out soon?

MISS PREEN (*wearily*). We're getting him out of bed now. He'll be out very soon . . . Oh, thank you.

(*This last is to* JOHN, *who has descended the stairs with three or four pillows*)

MRS. STANLEY. Oh, I'm so glad. He must be very happy.

(*And again we hear the invalid's voice as* MISS PREEN *passes into the room. "Trapped like a rat in this hell-hole! Take your fish-hooks off me!"*)

JUNE (*at the phone*). Hello. . . . Yes, he's here, but he can't come to the phone right now . . . London? (*She covers the transmitter with her hand*) It's London calling Mr. Whiteside.

MRS. STANLEY. London? My, my!

JUNE. Two o'clock? Yes, I think he could talk then. All right. (*She hangs up*) Well, who do you think that was? Mr. H. G. Wells.

MRS. STANLEY (*wild-eyed*). H. G. Wells? On our telephone?

(*The door bell again*)

JUNE. I'll go. This is certainly a busy house.

(*In the meantime* SARAH, *the cook, has come from the dining room with a pitcher of orange juice*)

MRS. STANLEY (*as* SARAH *knocks on the double doors*). Oh, that's fine, Sarah. Is it fresh?

SARAH. Yes, ma'am.

(*The doors are opened;* SARAH *hands the orange juice to the nurse. The voice roars once more: "You have the touch of a sex-starved cobra!"*)

SARAH (*beaming*). His voice is just the same as on the radio.

(*She disappears into the dining room as* JUNE *returns from the entrance hall, ushering in two friends of her mother's,* MRS. DEXTER *and* MRS. MCCUTCHEON. *One is carrying a flowering plant, partially wrapped; the other is holding, with some care, what turns out to be a jar of calf's-foot jelly*)

THE LADIES. Good morning!

MRS. STANLEY. Girls, what do you think? He's getting up and coming out today!

MRS. MCCUTCHEON. You don't mean it!

MRS. DEXTER. Can we stay and see him?

MRS. STANLEY. Why, of course—he'd love it. Girls, do you know what just happened?

JUNE (*departing*). I'll be upstairs, Mother, if you want me.

MRS. STANLEY. What? . . . Oh, yes. June, tell your father he'd better come down, will you? Mr. Whiteside is coming out.

MRS. DEXTER. Is he really coming out today? I brought him a plant— Do you think it's all right if I give it to him?

MRS. STANLEY. Why, I think that would be lovely.

MRS. MCCUTCHEON. And some calf's-foot jelly.

MRS. STANLEY. Why, how nice! Who do you think was on the phone just now? H. G. Wells, from London. And look at those cablegrams. He's had calls and messages from all over this country and Europe. The New York *Times*, and Radio City Music Hall—I don't know why *they* called—and Felix Frankfurter, and Dr. Dafoe, the Mount Wilson Observatory—I just can't tell you what's been going on.

MRS. DEXTER. There's a big piece about it in this week's *Time*. Did you see it? (*Drawing it out of her bag*)

MRS. STANLEY. No—really?

MRS. MCCUTCHEON. Your name's in it too, Daisy. It tells all about the whole thing. Listen: "Portly Sheridan Whiteside, critic, lecturer, wit, radio orator, intimate friend of the great and near great, last week found his celebrated wit no weapon with which to combat a fractured hip. The Falstaffian Mr. Whiteside, trekking across the country on one of his annual lecture tours, met his Waterloo in the shape of a small piece of ice on the doorstep of Mr. and Mrs. Ernest W. Stanley, of Mesalia, Ohio. Result: Cancelled lectures and disappointment to thou-

sands of adoring clubwomen in Omaha, Denver, and points west. Further result: The idol of the air waves rests until further notice in home of surprised Mr. and Mrs. Stanley. Possibility: Christmas may be postponed this year." What's *that* mean?

MRS. STANLEY. Why, what do you think of that? (*She takes the magazine; reads*) "A small piece of ice on the doorstep of Mr. and Mrs. Ernest—" think of it!

MRS. MCCUTCHEON. Of course if it were *my* house, Daisy, I'd have a bronze plate put on the step, right where he fell.

MRS. STANLEY. Well, of course I felt terrible about it. He just never goes to dinner anywhere, and he finally agreed to come here, and then *this* had to happen. Poor Mr. Whiteside! But it's going to be so wonderful having him with us, even for a little while. Just think of it! We'll sit around in the evening and discuss books and plays, all the great people he's known. And he'll talk in that wonderful way of his. He may even read *Good-bye, Mr. Chips* to us.

(MR. STANLEY, *solid, substantial—the American business man—is descending the stairs*)

STANLEY. Daisy, I can't wait any longer. If—ah, good morning, ladies.

MRS. STANLEY. Ernest, he's coming out any minute, and H. G. Wells telephoned from London, and we're in *Time*. Look!

STANLEY (*taking the magazine*). I don't like this kind of publicity at all, Daisy. When do you suppose he's going to leave?

MRS. STANLEY. Well, he's only getting up this morning—after all, he's had quite a shock, and he's been in bed for two full weeks. He'll certainly have to rest a few days, Ernest.

STANLEY. Well, I'm sure it's a great honor, his being in the house, but it *is* a little upsetting—phone going all the

time, bells ringing, messenger boys running in and out—

(*Out of the sick room comes a business-like-looking young woman about thirty. Her name is* MARGARET CUTLER—MAGGIE *to her friends*)

MAGGIE. Pardon me, Mrs. Stanley—have the cigarettes come yet?

MRS. STANLEY. They're on the way, Miss Cutler. My son went for them.

MAGGIE. Thank you.

MRS. STANLEY. Ah—this is Miss Cutler, Mr. Whiteside's secretary.

(*An exchange of "How do you do's?"*)

MAGGIE. May I move this chair?

MRS. STANLEY (*all eagerness*). You mean he's—coming out now?

MAGGIE (*quietly*). He is indeed.

MRS. STANLEY. Ernest, call June. June! June! Mr. Whiteside is coming out!

(JOHN, *visible in the dining room, summons* SARAH *to attend the excitement. "Sarah! Sarah!"*)

(SARAH *and* JOHN *appear in the dining-room entrance,* JUNE *on the stairs.* MRS. STANLEY *and the two other ladies are keenly expectant; even* MR. STANLEY *is on the qui vive*)

(*The double doors are opened once more, and* DR. BRADLEY *appears, bag in hand. He has taken a good deal of punishment, and speaks with a rather false heartiness*)

DR. BRADLEY. Well, here we are, merry and bright. Good morning, good morning. Bring our little patient out, Miss Preen

(*A moment's pause, and then a wheelchair is rolled through the door. It is full of pillows, blankets, and* SHERIDAN WHITESIDE. SHERIDAN WHITESIDE *is indeed portly and Falstaffian. He is wearing an elaborate velvet smoking jacket and a very loud tie, and he looks like every caricature ever drawn of him*)

(*There is a hush as the wheelchair rolls into the room.*

Welcoming smiles break over every face. The chair comes to a halt; MR. WHITESIDE *looks slowly around, into each and every beaming face. His fingers drum for a moment on the arm of the chair. He looks slowly around once more. And then he speaks*)

WHITESIDE (*quietly, to* MAGGIE). I may vomit.

MRS. STANLEY (*with a nervous little laugh*). Good morning, Mr. Whiteside. I'm Mrs. Ernest Stanley—remember? And this is Mr. Stanley.

STANLEY. How do you do, Mr. Whiteside? I hope that you are better.

WHITESIDE. Thank you. I am suing you for a hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

STANLEY. How's that? What?

WHITESIDE. I said I am suing you for a hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

MRS. STANLEY. You mean—because you fell on our steps, Mr. Whiteside?

WHITESIDE. Samuel J. Liebowitz will explain it to you in court. . . . Who are those two harpies standing there like the kiss of death?

(MRS. MCCUTCHEON, *with a little gasp, drops the calf's-foot jelly. It smashes on the floor*)

MRS. MCCUTCHEON. Oh, dear! My calf's-foot jelly.

WHITESIDE. Made from your own foot, I have no doubt And now, Mrs. Stanley, I have a few small matters to take up with you. Since this corner druggist at my elbow tells me that I shall be confined in this mouldy mortuary for at least another ten days, due entirely to your stupidity and negligence, I shall have to carry on my activities as best I can. I shall require the exclusive use of this room, as well as that drafty sewer which you call the library. I want no one to come in or out while I am in this room.

STANLEY. What do you mean, sir?

MRS. STANLEY (*stunned*). But we have to go up the stairs to get to our rooms, Mr. Whiteside.

WHITESIDE. Isn't there a back entrance?

MRS. STANLEY. Why—yes.

WHITESIDE. Then use that. I shall also require a room for my secretary, Miss Cutler. I shall have a great many incoming and outgoing calls, so please do not use the telephone. I sleep until noon and require quiet through the house until that hour. There will be five for lunch today. Where is the cook?

STANLEY. Mr. Whiteside, if I may interrupt for a moment—

WHITESIDE. You may not, sir. . . . Will you take your clammy hand off my chair? (*This last to the nurse*) . . . And now will you all leave quietly, or must I ask Miss Cutler to pass among you with a baseball bat?

(MRS. DEXTER *and* MRS. MCCUTCHEON *are beating a hasty retreat, their gifts still in hand*)

MRS. MCCUTCHEON. Well—good-bye, Daisy. We'll call you— Oh, no, we mustn't use the phone. Well—we'll see you.

(*And they are gone*)

STANLEY (*boldly*). Now look here, Mr. Whiteside—

WHITESIDE. There is nothing to discuss, sir. Considering the damage I have suffered at your hands, I am asking very little. Good day.

STANLEY (*controlling himself*). I'll call you from the office later, Daisy.

WHITESIDE. Not on this phone, please.

(STANLEY *gives him a look, but goes*)

WHITESIDE. Here is the menu for lunch. (*He extends a slip of paper to* MRS. STANLEY)

MRS. STANLEY. But—I've already ordered lunch.

WHITESIDE. It will be sent up to you on a tray. I am using the dining room for my guests. . . . Where are those cigarettes?

MRS. STANLEY. Why—my son went for them. I don't know

why he—here, Sarah. (*She hands* SARAH *the luncheon slip*) I'll—have mine upstairs on a tray.

(SARAH *and* JOHN *depart*)

WHITESIDE (*to* JUNE, *who has been posed on the landing during all this*). Young lady, will you either go up those stairs or come down them? I cannot stand indecision.

(JUNE *is about to speak, decides against it, and ascends the stairs with a good deal of spirit*)

(MRS. STANLEY *is hovering uncertainly on the steps as* RICHARD *returns with the cigarettes*)

RICHARD. Oh, good morning. I'm sorry I was so long—I had to go to three different stores.

WHITESIDE. How did you travel? By ox-cart?

(RICHARD *is considerably taken aback. His eyes go to his mother, who motions to him to come up the stairs. They disappear together, their eyes unsteadily on* WHITESIDE)

WHITESIDE. Is there a man in the world who suffers as I do from the gross inadequacies of the human race! (*To the* NURSE, *who is fussing around the chair again*) Take those canal boats away from me! (*She obeys, hastily*) Go in and read the life of Florence Nightingale and learn how unfitted you are for your chosen profession.

(MISS PREEN *glares at him, but goes*)

DR. BRADLEY (*heartily*). Well, I think I can safely leave you in Miss Cutler's capable hands. Shall I look in again this afternoon?

WHITESIDE. If you do, I shall spit right in your eye.

DR. BRADLEY. What a sense of humor you writers have! By the way, it isn't really worth mentioning, but—I've been doing a little writing myself. About my medical experiences.

WHITESIDE (*quietly*). Am I to be spared nothing?

DR. BRADLEY. Would it be too much to ask you to—glance over it while you're here?

WHITESIDE (*eyes half closed, as though the pain were too exquisite to bear*). Trapped.

DR. BRADLEY (*delving into his bag*). I just happen to have a copy with me. (*He brings out a tremendous manuscript*) "Forty Years an Ohio Doctor. The Story of a Humble Practitioner."

WHITESIDE. I shall lose no time in reading it, if you know what I mean.

DR. BRADLEY. Much obliged, and I hope you like it. Well, see you on the morrow. Keep that hip quiet and don't forget those little pills. (*He goes*)

WHITESIDE (*handing the manuscript to* MAGGIE). Maggie, will you take *Forty Years Below the Navel* or whatever it's called?

MAGGIE (*surveying him*). I must say you have certainly behaved with all of your accustomed grace and charm.

WHITESIDE. Look here, Puss—I am in no mood to discuss my behavior, good or bad. I did not wish to cross their cheerless threshold. I was hounded and badgered into it. I now find myself, after two weeks of racking pain, accused of behaving without charm. What would you have me do? Kiss them?

MAGGIE (*giving up*). Very well, Sherry. After ten years I should have known better than to try to do anything about your manners. But when I finally give up this job I may write a book about it all. *Cavalcade of Insult,* or *Through the Years with Prince Charming.*

WHITESIDE. Listen, Repulsive, you are tied to me with an umbilical cord made of piano wire. And now if we may dismiss the subject of my charm, for which, incidentally, I receive fifteen hundred dollars per appearance, possibly we can go to work . . . Oh, no, we can't. Yes?

(*This last is addressed to a wraith-like lady of uncertain years, who has more or less floated into the room. She is carrying a large spray of holly, and her whole manner suggests something not quite of this world*)

THE LADY (*her voice seems to float, too*). My name is Harriet Stanley. I know you are Sheridan Whiteside. I saw this holly, framed green against the pine trees. I remembered what you had written, about *Tess* and *Jude the Obscure*. It was the nicest present I could bring you. (*She places the holly in his lap, and drifts out of the room again*)

WHITESIDE (*his eyes following her*). For God's sake, what was that?

MAGGIE. That was Mr. Stanley's sister, Harriet. I've talked to her a few times—she's quite strange.

WHITESIDE. Strange? She's right out of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. . . . You know, I've seen that face before somewhere.

MAGGIE. Nonsense. You couldn't have.

WHITESIDE (*dismissing it*). Oh, well! Let's get down to work. (*He hands her the armful of holly*) Here! Press this in the doctor's book. (*He picks up the first of a pile of papers*) I see no reason why I should indorse Maidenform Brassières. (*He tears up the letter and drops the pieces on the floor*)

MAGGIE (*who has picked up the little sheaf of messages from the table*). Here are some telegrams.

WHITESIDE (*a letter in his hand*). What date is this?

MAGGIE. December tenth.

WHITESIDE. Send a wire to Columbia Broadcasting. "You can schedule my Christmas Eve broadcast from the New York studio, as I shall return East instead of proceeding to Hollywood. Stop. For special New Year's Eve broadcast will have as my guests Jascha Heifetz, Katharine Cornell, Schiaparelli, the Lunts, and Dr. Alexis Carrel, with Haille Selassie on short wave from England. Whiteside."

MAGGIE. Are you sure you'll be all right by Christmas, Sherry?

WHITESIDE. Of course I will. . . . Send a cable to Ma-

hatma Gandhi, Bombay, India. "Dear Boo-Boo: Schedule changed. Can you meet me Calcutta July twelfth? Dinner eight-thirty. Whiteside." . . . Wire to editor of the *Christian Science Monitor*: "Do not worry, Stinkie. Copy will arrive. Whiteside." . . . Arturo Toscanini. Where is he?

MAGGIE. I'll find him.

WHITESIDE. "Counting on you January 4th Metropolitan Opera House my annual benefit Home for Paroled Convicts. As you know this is a very worthy cause and close to my heart. Tibbett, Rethberg, Martinelli and Flagstad have promised me personally to appear. Will you have quiet supper with me and Ethel Barrymore afterwards? Whiteside." (*The telephone rings*) If that's for Mrs. Stanley tell them she's too drunk to talk.

MAGGIE. Hello . . . Hollywood?

WHITESIDE. If it's Goldwyn, hang up.

MAGGIE. Hello . . . Banjo! (*Her face lights up*)

WHITESIDE. Banjo! Give me that phone!

MAGGIE. Banjo, you old so-and-so! How are you, darling?

WHITESIDE. Come on—give me that!

MAGGIE. Shut up, Sherry! . . . Are you coming East, Banjo? I miss you . . . No, we're not going to Hollywood . . . Oh, he's going to live.

WHITESIDE. Stop driveling and give me the phone.

MAGGIE. In fact, he's screaming at me now. Here he is.

WHITESIDE (*taking the phone*) How are you, you fawn's behind? And what are you giving me for Christmas? (*He roars with laughter at* BANJO'S *answer*) What news, Banjo, my boy? How's the picture coming? . . . How are Wacko and Sloppo? . . . No, no, I'm all right. . . . Yes, I'm in very good hands. Dr. Crippen is taking care of me. . . . What about you? Having any fun? . . . Playing any cribbage? . . . What? (*Again he laughs loudly*) . . . Well, don't take all his money—leave a little bit for me . . . You're what? . . . Having your

portrait painted? By whom? Milt Gross? . . . No, I'm going back to New York from here. I'll be there for twelve days, and then I go to Dartmouth for the Drama Festival. You wouldn't understand . . . Well, I can't waste my time talking to Hollywood riffraff. Kiss Louella Parsons for me. Good-bye. (*He hangs up and turns to* MAGGIE) He took fourteen hundred dollars from Sam Goldwyn at cribbage last night, and Sam said, "Banjo, I will never play garbage with you again."

MAGGIE. What's all this about his having his portrait painted?

WHITESIDE. Mm. Salvador Dali That's all that face of his needs—a surrealist to paint it. . . . Now what do *you* want, Miss Bed Pan?

(*This is addressed to the* NURSE, *who has returned somewhat apprehensively to the room*)

MISS PREEN. It's—it's your pills. One every—forty-five minutes. (*She drops them into his lap and hurries out of the room*)

WHITESIDE. Now where were we?

MAGGIE (*the messages in her hand*). Here's a cable from that dear friend of yours, Lorraine Sheldon.

WHITESIDE. Let me see it.

MAGGIE (*reading the message in a tone that gives* MISS SHELDON *none the better of it*). "Sherry, my poor sweet lamb, have been in Scotland on a shooting party with Lord and Lady Cunard and only just heard of your poor hip." (MAGGIE *gives a faint raspberry, then reads on*) "Am down here in Surrey with Lord Bottomley. Sailing Wednesday on the *Normandie* and cannot wait to see my poor sweet Sherry. Your blossom girl, Lorraine." . . . In the words of the master, I may vomit.

WHITESIDE. Don't be bitter, Puss, just because Lorraine is more beautiful than you are.

MAGGIE. Lorraine Sheldon is a very fair example of that small but vicious circle you move in.

WHITESIDE. Pure sex jealousy if ever I saw it . . . Give me the rest of those.

MAGGIE (*mumbling to herself*). Lorraine Sheldon . . . Lord Bottomley . . . My Aunt Fanny.

WHITESIDE (*who has opened the next message*). Ah! It's from Destiny's Tot.

MAGGIE (*peering over his shoulder*). England's little Rover Boy?

WHITESIDE. Um-hm. (*He reads*) "Dear Baby's Breath, what is this I hear about a hip fractured in some bordello brawl? Does this mean our Hollywood Christmas party is off? Finished the new play in Pago-Pago and it's superb. Myself and a ukulele leave Honolulu tomorrow, in that order. By the way, the Sultan of Zanzibar wants to meet Ginger Rogers. Let's face it. Oscar Wilde."

MAGGIE. He does travel, doesn't he? You know, it'd be nice if the world went around Beverly Carlton for a change.

WHITESIDE. Hollywood next week—why couldn't he stop over on his way to New York? Send him a cable: "Beverly Carlton, Royal Hawaiian Hotel, Honolulu—" (*The door bell rings.* MR. WHITESIDE *is properly annoyed*) If these people intend to have their friends using the front door—

MAGGIE. What do you want them to use—a rope ladder?

WHITESIDE. I will not have a lot of mildewed pus-bags rushing in and out of this house— (*He stops as the voice of* JOHN *is heard at the front door. "Oh, good morning, Mr. Jefferson" The answering voice of* MR. JEFFERSON *is not quite audible*)

WHITESIDE (*roaring*). There's nobody home! The Stanleys have been arrested for white slavery! Go away!

(*But the visitor, meanwhile, has already appeared in the archway.* MR. JEFFERSON *is an interesting-looking young man in his early thirties*)

JEFFERSON. Good morning, Mr. Whiteside. I'm Jefferson, of the Mesalia *Journal.*

WHITESIDE (*sotto voce, to* MAGGIE). Get rid of him.

MAGGIE (*brusquely*). I'm sorry—Mr. Whiteside is seeing no one.

JEFFERSON. Really?

MAGGIE. So will you please excuse us? Good day.

JEFFERSON (*not giving up*). Mr. Whiteside seems to be sitting up and taking notice.

MAGGIE. I'm afraid he isn't taking notice of the Mesalia *Journal.* Do you mind?

JEFFERSON. You know, if I'm going to be insulted I'd like it to be by Mr. Whiteside himself. I never did like carbon copies.

WHITESIDE (*looking around, interested*). Mm. Touché if I ever heard one. And in Mesalia too, Maggie dear.

MAGGIE (*still on the job*). Will you please leave?

JEFFERSON (*ignoring her*). How about an interview, Mr. Whiteside?

WHITESIDE. I never give them. Go away.

JEFFERSON. Mr. Whiteside, if I don't get this interview, I lose my job.

WHITESIDE. That would be quite all right with me.

JEFFERSON. Now you don't mean that, Mr. Whiteside. You used to be a newspaper man yourself. You know what editors are like. Well, mine's the toughest one that ever lived.

WHITESIDE. You won't get around me that way. If you don't like him, get off the paper.

JEFFERSON. Yes, but I happen to think it's a good paper. William Allen White could have got out of Emporia, but he didn't.

WHITESIDE. You have the effrontery, in my presence, to compare yourself with William Allen White?

JEFFERSON. Only in the sense that William Allen White stayed in Emporia, and I want to stay here and say what I want to say.

WHITESIDE. Such as what?

JEFFERSON. Well, I can't put it into words, Mr. Whiteside —it'd sound like an awful lot of hooey. But the *Journal* was my father's paper. It's kind of a sentimental point with me, the paper. I'd like to carry on where he left off.

WHITESIDE. Ah—just a minute. Then this terrifying editor, this dread journalistic Apocalypse is—you?

JEFFERSON. Ah—yes, in a word.

(WHITESIDE *chuckles with appreciation*)

MAGGIE (*annoyed*). In the future, Sherry, I wish you would let me know when you don't want to talk to people. I'll usher them right in. (*She goes into the library*)

WHITESIDE. Young man, that kind of journalistic trick went out with Richard Harding Davis . . . Come over here. I suppose you've written that novel?

JEFFERSON. No, I've written that play.

WHITESIDE. Well, I don't want to read it. But you can send me your paper—I'll take a year's subscription. Do you write the editorials, too?

JEFFERSON. Every one of them.

WHITESIDE. I know just what they're like. Ah, me! I'm afraid you're that noble young newspaper man—crusading, idealistic, dull. (*He looks him up and down*) Very good casting, too.

JEFFERSON. You're not bad casting yourself, Mr. Whiteside.

WHITESIDE. We won't discuss it. . . . Do these old eyes see a box of goodies over there? Hand them to me on your way out.

JEFFERSON (*as he passes over the candy*). The trouble is, Mr. Whiteside, that your being in this town comes under the heading of news. Practically the biggest news since the depression.

WHITESIDE (*examining the candy*). Mm. Pecan butternut fudge.

(MISS PREEN, *on her way to the kitchen from the library,*

stops short as she sees MR. WHITESIDE *with a piece of candy in his hand*)

MISS PREEN. Oh, my! You mustn't eat candy, Mr. Whiteside. It's very bad for you.

WHITESIDE (*turning*). My great-aunt Jennifer ate a whole box of candy every day of her life. She lived to be a hundred and two, and when she had been dead three days she looked better than you do now. (*He swings blandly back to his visitor*) What were you saying, old fellow?

JEFFERSON (*as* MISS PREEN *makes a hasty exit*). I can at least report to my readers that chivalry is not yet dead.

WHITESIDE. We won't discuss it. . . . Well, now that you have won me with your pretty ways, what do you want?

JEFFERSON. Well, how about a brief talk on famous murders? You're an authority on murder as a fine art

WHITESIDE. My dear boy, when I talk about murder I get paid for it. I have made more money out of the Snyder-Gray case than the lawyers did. So don't expect to get it for nothing.

JEFFERSON. Well, then, what do you think of Mesalia, how long are you going to be here, where are you going, things like that?

WHITESIDE. Very well. (a) Mesalia is a town of irresistible charm, (b) I cannot wait to get out of it, and (c) I am going from here to Crockfield, for my semi-annual visit to the Crockfield Home for Paroled Convicts, for which I have raised over half a million dollars in the last five years. From there I go to New York. . . . Have you ever been to Crockfield, Jefferson?

JEFFERSON. No, I haven't. I always meant to.

WHITESIDE. As a newspaper man you ought to go, instead of wasting your time with me. It's only about seventy-five miles from here. Did you ever hear how Crockfield started?

JEFFERSON. No, I didn't.

WHITESIDE. Ah! Sit down, Jefferson. It is one of the most endearing and touching stories of our generation. One misty St. Valentine's Eve—the year was 1901—a little old lady who had given her name to an era, Victoria, lay dying in Windsor Castle. Maude Adams had not yet caused every young heart to swell as she tripped across the stage as Peter Pan; Irving Berlin had not yet written the first note of a ragtime rigadoon that was to set the nation's feet a-tapping, and Elias P. Crockfield was just emerging from the State penitentiary. Destitute, embittered, cruel of heart, he wandered, on this St. Valentine's Eve, into a little church. But there was no godliness in his heart that night, no prayer upon his lips. In the faltering twilight, Elias P. Crockfield made his way toward the poor box. With callous fingers he ripped open this poignant testimony of a simple people's faith. Greedily he clutched at the few pitiful coins within. And then a child's wavering treble broke the twilight stillness. "Please, Mr. Man," said a little girl's voice, "won't you be my Valentine?" Elias P. Crockfield turned. There stood before him a bewitching little creature of five, her yellow curls cascading over her shoulders like a golden Niagara, in her tiny outstretched hand a humble valentine. In that one crystal moment a sealed door opened in the heart of Elias P. Crockfield, and in his mind was born an idea. Twenty-five years later three thousand ruddy-cheeked convicts were gamboling on the broad lawns of Crockfield Home, frolicking in the cool depths of its swimming pool, broadcasting with their own symphony orchestra from their own radio station. Elias P. Crockfield has long since gone to his Maker, but the little girl of the golden curls, now grown to lovely womanhood, is known as the Angel of Crockfield, for she is the wife of the warden, and in the main hall of Crockfield, between a Rembrandt and an

El Greco, there hangs, in a simple little frame, a humble valentine.

MAGGIE (*who has emerged from the library in time to hear the finish of this*). And in the men's washroom, every Christmas Eve, the ghost of Elias P. Crockfield appears in one of the booths . . . Will you sign these, please? (*The door bell is heard*)

WHITESIDE. This aging debutante, Mr. Jefferson, I retain in my employ only because she is the sole support of her two-headed brother.

JEFFERSON. I understand. . . . Well, thank you very much, Mr. Whiteside—you've been very kind. By the way, I'm a cribbage player, if you need one while you're here.

WHITESIDE. Fine. How much can you afford to lose?

JEFFERSON. I usually win.

WHITESIDE. We won't discuss that. Come back at eight-thirty. We'll play three-handed with Elsie Dinsmore . . . Metz!

(JOHN, *who has answered the door bell, has ushered in a strange-looking little man in his fifties. His hair runs all over his head and his clothes are too big for him*)

WHITESIDE. Metz, you incredible beetle-hound! What are you doing here?

METZ (*with a mild Teutonic accent*). I explain, Sherry. First I kiss my little Maggie.

MAGGIE (*embracing him*). Metz darling, what a wonderful surprise!

WHITESIDE. The enchanted Metz! Why aren't you at the university? . . . Jefferson, you are standing in the presence of one of the great men of our time. When you write that inevitable autobiography, be sure to record the day that you met Professor Adolph Metz, the world's greatest authority on insect life. Metz, stop looking at me adoringly and tell me why you're here.

METZ. You are sick, Sherry, so I come to cheer you.

MAGGIE. Metz, you tore yourself away from your little insects and came here? Sherry, you don't deserve it.

WHITESIDE. How are all your little darlings, Metz? Jefferson, would you believe that eight volumes could be written on the mating instinct of the female white ant? He did it.

METZ. Seven on the female, Sherry. One on the male.

WHITESIDE. Lived for two years in a cave with nothing but plant lice. He rates three pages in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica.* Don't you, my little hookworm?

METZ. Please, Sherry, you embarrass me. Look—I have brought you a present to while away the hours. (*He motions to* JOHN, *who comes forward bearing a great box, wrapped in brown paper. He unwraps it as he speaks*) I said to my students: "Boys and girls, I want to give a present to my sick friend, Sheridan Whiteside." So you know what we did? We made for you a community of *Periplaneta Americana,* commonly known as the American cockroach. Behold, Sherry! (*He strips off the paper*) Roach City! Inside here are ten thousand cockroaches.

JOHN. Ten thousand— (*Heading for the kitchen in great excitement*) Sarah! Sarah!

METZ. And in one week, Sherry, if all goes well, there will be fifty thousand.

MAGGIE. Well, what can go wrong? They're *in* there, aren't they?

WHITESIDE. Quiet, please.

METZ. Here in Roach City they play, they make love, they mate, they die. See—here is the graveyard. They even bury their own dead.

MAGGIE. I'm glad of that, or I'd have to do it.

WHITESIDE (*glaring at her*). Ssh!

METZ. Look! Here is where they store their grain, here is the commissary of the aristocracy, here is the maternity

hospital. It is fascinating. They do everything that human beings do.

MAGGIE. Well!

WHITESIDE. Please, Maggie! These are *my* cockroaches.

METZ With these ear-phones, Sherry, you listen to the mating calls. There are microphones down inside. Listen (*He puts the ear-phones over* WHITESIDE'S *head*)

WHITESIDE (*listening, rapt*). Mm. How long has this been going on?

(MRS. STANLEY *starts timorously to descend the stairs. She tiptoes as far as the landing, then pauses as she sees the group below*)

(*Meanwhile* PROF. METZ, *his mind ever on his work, has moved in the direction of the dining room*)

METZ (*suddenly his face lights up*). Aha! *Periplaneta Americana*! There are cockroaches in this house!

MRS. STANLEY (*shocked into speech*). I beg your pardon! (*The doorbell rings*) Mr. Whiteside, I don't know who this man is, but I will not stand here and—

WHITESIDE. Then go upstairs. These are probably my luncheon guests. Metz, you're staying for the day, of course? Jefferson, stay for lunch? Maggie, tell 'em there'll be two more. Ah, come right in, Baker. Good morning, gentlemen. (*The gentlemen addressed are three in number—two white, one black. They are convicts, and they look the part. Prison gray, handcuffed together.* BAKER, *in uniform, is a prison guard. He carries a rifle*) Jefferson, here are the fruits of that humble valentine. These men, now serving the final months of their prison terms, have chosen to enter the ivy-covered walls of Crockfield. They have come here today to learn from me a little of its tradition . . . Gentlemen, I envy you your great adventure.

JOHN (*in the dining-room doorway*). Lunch is ready, Mr. Whiteside.

WHITESIDE. Good! Let's go right in. (*To one of the convicts, as they pass*) You're Michaelson, aren't you? Butcher-shop murders?

MICHAELSON. Yes, sir.

WHITESIDE. Thought I recognized you. . . . After you, Baker. . . . The other fellow, Jefferson—(*He lowers his tone*)—is Henderson, the hatchet fiend. Always chopped them up in a salad bowl—remember? (*His voice rises as he wheels himself into the dining room*) We're having chicken livers Tetrazzini, and Cherries Jubilee for dessert. I hope every little tummy is a-flutter with gastric juices. Serve the white wine with the fish, John, and close the doors. I don't want a lot of people prying on their betters.

(*The doors close. Only* MRS. STANLEY *is left outside. She collapses quietly into a chair*)

The curtain falls

SCENE II

Late afternoon, a week later. Only a single lamp is lit. The room, in the week that has passed, has taken on something of the character of its occupant. Books and papers everywhere. Stacks of books on the tables, some of them just half out of their cardboard boxes. Half a dozen or so volumes, which apparently have not appealed to the Master, have been thrown onto the floor. A litter of crumpled papers around the WHITESIDE *wheelchair; an empty candy box has slid off his lap. An old pair of pants have been tossed over one chair, a seedy bathrobe over another. A handsome Chinese vase has been moved out of its accustomed spot and is doing duty as an ash receiver.*

MR. WHITESIDE *is in his wheelchair, asleep. Roach City is on a stand beside him, the ear-phones, over his head. He has apparently dozed off while listening to the mating calls of* Periplaneta Americana.

For a moment only his rhythmic breathing is heard. Then MISS PREEN *enters from the library. She brings some medicine—a glass filled with a murky mixture. She pauses when she sees that he is asleep, then, after a good deal of hesitation, gently touches him on the shoulder. He stirs a little; she musters up her courage and touches him again.*

WHITESIDE (*slowly opening his eyes*). I was dreaming of Lillian Russell, and I awake to find *you.*

MISS PREEN. Your—your medicine, Mr. Whiteside.

WHITESIDE (*taking the glass*). What time is it?

MISS PREEN. About half-past six.

WHITESIDE. Where is Miss Cutler?

MISS PREEN. She went out.

WHITESIDE. Out?

MISS PREEN. With Mr. Jefferson. (*She goes into the library*)

(JOHN, *meanwhile, has entered from the dining room*)

JOHN. All right if I turn the lights up, Mr. Whiteside?

WHITESIDE. Yes. Go right ahead, John.

JOHN. And Sarah has something for you, Mr. Whiteside. Made it special.

WHITESIDE. She has? Where is she? My Soufflé Queen!

SARAH (*proudly entering with a tray on which reposes her latest delicacy*). Here I am, Mr. Whiteside.

WHITESIDE. She walks in beauty like the night, and in those deft hands there is the art of Michelangelo. Let me taste the new creation. (*With one hand he pours the medicine into the Chinese vase, then swallows at a gulp one of* SARAH'S *not so little cakes. An ecstatic expression comes over his face*) Poetry! Sheer poetry!

SARAH (*beaming*). I put a touch of absinthe in the dough. Do you like it?

WHITESIDE (*rapturously*). Ambrosia!

SARAH. And I got you your terrapin Maryland for dinner.

WHITESIDE. I have known but three great cooks in my time. The Khedive of Egypt had one, my great-aunt Jennifer another, and the third, Sarah, is you.

SARAH. Oh, Mr. Whiteside!

WHITESIDE (*lowering his voice*). How would you like to come to New York and work for me? You and John.

SARAH. Why, Mr. Whiteside!

JOHN. Sarah! . . . It would be wonderful, Mr. Whiteside, but what would we say to Mr. and Mrs. Stanley?

WHITESIDE. Just "good-bye."

SARAH. But—but they'd be awfully mad, wouldn't they? They've been very kind to us.

WHITESIDE (*lightly*). Well, if they ever come to New York we can have them for dinner, if I'm not in town. Now run along and think it over. This is our little secret—just between us. And put plenty of sherry in that terrapin . . . Miss Preen! (SARAH *and* JOHN *withdraw in considerable excitement.* WHITESIDE *raises his voice to a roar*) Miss Preen!

MISS PREEN (*appearing, breathless*). Yes? Yes?

WHITESIDE. What have you *got* in there, anyway? A sailor?

MISS PREEN. I was—just washing my hands.

WHITESIDE. What time did Miss Cutler go out?

MISS PREEN. A couple of hours ago.

WHITESIDE. Mr. Jefferson called for her?

MISS PREEN. Yes, sir.

WHITESIDE (*impatiently*). All right, all right. Go back to your sex life.

(MISS PREEN *goes.* WHITESIDE *tries to settle down to his book, but his mind is plainly troubled. He shifts a little, looks anxiously toward the outer door*)

(HARRIET STANLEY *comes softly down the steps. She seems delighted to find* MR. WHITESIDE *alone*)

HARRIET (*opening an album that she has brought with*

her). Dear Mr. Whiteside, may I show you a few mementoes of the past? I somehow feel that you would love them as I do.

WHITESIDE. I'd be delighted. (*Observing her*) Miss Stanley, haven't we met somewhere before?

HARRIET. Oh, no. I would have remembered it. It would have been one of my cherished memories—like these. (*She spreads the portfolio before him*) Look! Here I am with my first sweetheart, under our lovely beechwood tree. I was eight and he was ten. I have never forgotten him. What happy times we had! What— (*She stops short as she hears footsteps on the stairway*) There's someone coming! I'll come back! . . . (*She gathers up her album and vanishes into the dining room*)

(WHITESIDE *looks after her, puzzled*)

(*It is* MR. STANLEY *who comes down the stairs. He is carrying a slip of paper in his hand, and he is obviously at the boiling point*)

(*A few steps behind comes* MRS. STANLEY, *apprehensive and nervous*)

MRS. STANLEY. Now, Ernest, please—

STANLEY. Be quiet, Daisy. . . . Mr. Whiteside, I want to talk to you. I don't care whether you're busy or not. I have stood all that I'm going to stand.

WHITESIDE. Indeed?

STANLEY. This is the last straw. I have just received a bill from the telephone company for seven hundred and eighty-four dollars. (*He reads from the slip in his hand*) Oklahoma City, Calcutta, Hollywood, Australia, Rome, New York, New York, New York, New York, New York, New York— (*His voice trails off in an endless succession of New Yorks*) Now I realize, Mr. Whiteside, that you are a distinguished man of letters—

MRS. STANLEY. Yes, of course. We both do.

STANLEY. Please . . . But in the past week we have not been able to call our souls our own. We have not had a

meal in the dining room *once*. I have to tiptoe out of the house in the mornings.

MRS. STANLEY. Now, Ernest—

STANLEY (*waving her away*). I come home to find convicts sitting at my dinner table—butcher-shop murderers. A man putting cockroaches in the kitchen.

MRS. STANLEY. They just escaped, Ernest.

STANLEY. That's not the point. I don't like coming home to find twenty-two Chinese students using my bathroom. I tell you I won't stand for it, no matter *who* you are.

WHITESIDE. Have you quite finished?

STANLEY. No, I have not. I go down into the cellar this morning and trip over that octopus that William Beebe sent you. I tell you I won't stand it. Mr. Whiteside, I want you to leave this house as soon as you can and go to a hotel. . . . Stop pawing me, Daisy. . . . That's all I've got to say, Mr. Whiteside.

WHITESIDE. And quite enough, I should say. May I remind you again, Mr. Stanley, that I am not a willing guest in this house? I am informed by my doctor that I must remain quiet for another ten days, at which time I shall get out of here so fast that the wind will knock you over, I hope. If, however, you insist on my leaving before that, thereby causing me to suffer a relapse, I shall sue you for every additional day that I am held inactive, which will amount, I assure you, to a tidy sum.

STANLEY (*to his wife*). This is outrageous. Do we have to—

WHITESIDE. As for the details of your petty complaints, those twenty-two Chinese students came straight from the White House, where I assure you they used the bathroom too.

MRS. STANLEY. Mr. Whiteside, my husband didn't mean—

STANLEY. Yes, I did. I meant every word of it.

WHITESIDE. There is only one point that you make in which I see some slight justice. I do not expect you to pay for

my telephone calls, and I shall see to it that restitution is made. Can you provide me with the exact amount?

STANLEY. I certainly can, and I certainly will.

WHITESIDE. Good. I shall instruct my lawyers to deduct it from the hundred and fifty thousand dollars that I am suing you for.

(MR. STANLEY *starts to speak, but simply chokes with rage. Furious, he storms up the steps again,* MRS. STANLEY *following*)

WHITESIDE (*calling after him*). And I'll thank you not to trip over that octopus, which once belonged to Chauncey Depew. (*Left alone,* MR. WHITESIDE *enjoys his triumph for a moment, then his mind jumps to more important matters. He looks at his watch, considers a second, then wheels himself over to the telephone*)

WHITESIDE. Give me the Mesalia *Journal*, please. (*He peers at Roach City while waiting*) Hello, *Journal*? . . . Is Mr. Jefferson there? . . . When do you expect him? . . . No. No message. (*He hangs up, drums impatiently on the arm of his chair*)

(*Then he turns sharply at the sound of the outer door opening. But it is the younger Stanleys,* RICHARD *and* JUNE, *who enter. They are in winter togs, with ice skates under their arms. In addition,* RICHARD *has a camera slung over his shoulder*)

(*Their attitudes change as they see that* WHITESIDE *is in the room. They slide toward the stairs, obviously trying to be as unobtrusive as possible*)

WHITESIDE. Come here, you two. . . . Come on, come on. I'm not going to bite you. . . . Now look here. I am by nature a gracious and charming person. If I err at all it is on the side of kindness and amiability. I have been observing you two for this past week, and you seem to me to be extremely likeable young people. I am afraid that when we first met I was definitely unpleasant to you. For that I am sorry, and I wish that in the future

you would not treat me like something out of Edgar Allan Poe. How do you like my new tie?

JUNE. Thank you, Mr. Whiteside. This makes things much pleasanter. And I think the tie is very pretty.

RICHARD. Well, now that we're on speaking terms, Mr. Whiteside, I don't mind telling you that I have been admiring all your ties.

WHITESIDE. Do you like this one?

RICHARD. I certainly do.

WHITESIDE. It's yours. (*He takes it off and tosses it to him*) Really, this curious legend that I am a difficult person is pure fabrication. . . . Ice-skating, eh? Ah, me! I used to cut figure eights myself, arm in arm with Betsy Ross, waving the flag behind us.

JUNE. It was wonderful on the ice today. Miss Cutler and Mr. Jefferson were there.

WHITESIDE. Maggie? Skating?

RICHARD. Yes, and she's good, too. I got a marvelous picture of her.

WHITESIDE. Were they still there when you left?

RICHARD. I think so. Say, Mr. Whiteside, mind if I take a picture of you? I'd love to have one.

WHITESIDE. Very well. Do you want my profile? (*He indicates his stomach*)

JUNE (*starting up the stairs*). I'm afraid you're done for, Mr. Whiteside. My brother is a camera fiend.

RICHARD (*clicking his camera*). Thank you, Mr. Whiteside. I got a great one. (*He and* JUNE *go up the stairs as* MAGGIE *enters from the hallway. They call a "Hello, Miss Cutler!" as they disappear*)

MAGGIE. Hello, there. . . . Good evening, Sherry. Really Sherry, you've got this room looking like an old parrot-cage. . . . Did you nap while I was out? (WHITESIDE *merely glowers at her*) What's the matter, dear? Cat run away with your tongue? (*She is on her knees, gathering up debris*)

WHITESIDE (*furious*). Don't look up at me with those great cow-eyes, you sex-ridden hag. Where have you been all afternoon? Alley-catting around with Bert Jefferson?

MAGGIE (*her face aglow*). Sherry—Bert read his play to me this afternoon. It's superb. It isn't just that play written by a newspaper man. It's superb. I want you to read it *tonight.* (*She puts it in his lap*) It just cries out for Cornell. If you like it, will you send it to her, Sherry? And will you read it tonight?

WHITESIDE. No, I will not read it tonight or any other time. And while we're on the subject of Mr. Jefferson, you might ask him if he wouldn't like to pay your salary, since he takes up all your time.

MAGGIE. Oh, come now, Sherry. It isn't as bad as that.

WHITESIDE. I have not even been able to reach you, not knowing what haylofts you frequent.

MAGGIE. Oh, stop behaving like a spoiled child, Sherry.

WHITESIDE. Don't take that patronizing tone with me, you flea-bitten Cleopatra. I am sick and tired of your sneaking out like some lovesick high-school girl every time my back is turned.

MAGGIE. Well, Sherry—(*She pulls together the library doors and faces* WHITESIDE)—I'm afraid you've hit the nail on the head. (*With a little flourish, she removes her hat*)

WHITESIDE. Stop acting like Zasu Pitts and explain yourself.

MAGGIE. I'll make it quick, Sherry. I'm in love.

WHITESIDE. Nonsense. This is merely delayed puberty.

MAGGIE. No, Sherry, I'm afraid this is it. You're going to lose a very excellent secretary.

WHITESIDE. You are out of your mind.

MAGGIE. Yes, I think I am, a little. But I'm a girl who's waited a long time for this to happen, and now it has. Mr. Jefferson doesn't know it yet, but I'm going to try my darnedest to marry him.

WHITESIDE (*as she pauses*). Is that all?

MAGGIE. Yes, except that—well—I suppose this is what might be called my resignation—as soon as you've got someone else.

WHITESIDE (*there is a slight pause*). Now listen to me, Maggie. We have been together for a long time. You are indispensable to me, but I think I am unselfish enough not to let that stand in the way where your happiness is concerned. Because, whether you know it or not, I have a deep affection for you.

MAGGIE. I know that, Sherry.

WHITESIDE. That being the case, I will not stand by and allow you to make a fool of yourself.

MAGGIE. I'm not, Sherry.

WHITESIDE. You are, my dear. You are behaving like Tillie the Toiler. It's—it's incredible. I cannot believe that a girl who for the past ten years has had the great of the world served up on a platter before her—I cannot believe that it is anything but a kind of temporary insanity when you are swept off your feet in seven days by a second-rate, small-town newspaper man.

MAGGIE. Sherry, I can't explain what's happened. I can only tell you that it's so. It's hard for me to believe too, Sherry. Here I am, a hard-bitten old cynic, behaving like *True Story Magazine*, and liking it. Discovering the moon, and ice-skating—I keep laughing to myself all the time, but there it is. What can I do about it, Sherry? I'm in love.

WHITESIDE (*with sudden decision*). We're leaving here tomorrow. Hip or no hip, we're leaving here tomorrow. I don't care if I fracture the other one. Get me a train schedule and start packing. *I'll* pull you out of this, Miss Stardust. *I'll* get the ants out of those moonlit pants.

MAGGIE. It's no good, Sherry. I'd be back on the next streamlined train.

WHITESIDE. It's completely unbelievable. Can you see yourself, the wife of the editor of the Mesalia *Journal*, having an evening at home for Mr. and Mrs. Stanley, Mr. and Mrs. Poop-Face, and the members of the Book-of-the-Month Club?

MAGGIE. Sherry, I've had ten years of the great figures of our time, and don't think I'm not grateful to you for it. I've loved every minute of it. They've been wonderful years, Sherry. Gay and stimulating—why, I don't think anyone has every had the fun we've had. But a girl can't laugh all the time, Sherry. There comes a time when she wants—Bert Jefferson. You don't know Bert, Sherry. He's gentle, and he's unassuming, and—well, I love him. that's all.

WHITESIDE. I see. Well, I remain completely unconvinced. You are drugging yourself into this Joan Crawford fantasy, and before you become completely anesthetized I shall do everything in my power to bring you to your senses.

MAGGIE (*wheeling on him*). Now listen to me, Whiteside. I know you. Lay off. I know what a devil you can be. I've seen you do it to other people, but don't you dare to do it to me. Don't drug *yourself* into the idea that all you're thinking of is my happiness. You're thinking of yourself a little bit, too, and all those months of breaking in somebody new. I've seen you in a passion before when your life has been disrupted, and you couldn't dine in Calcutta on July twelfth with Boo-Boo. Well, that's too bad, but there it is. I'm going to marry Bert if he'll have me, and don't you dare try any of your tricks. I'm on to every one of them. So lay off. That's my message to *you*, Big Lord Fauntleroy. (*And she is up the stairs*)

(*Left stewing in his own juice,* MR. WHITESIDE *is in a perfect fury. He bangs the arm of his chair, then slaps at the manuscript in his lap. As he does so, the dawn of*

an idea comes into his mind. He sits perfectly still for a moment, thinking it over. Then, with a slow smile, he takes the manuscript out of its envelope. He looks at the title page, ruffles through the script, then stops and thinks again. His face breaks out into one great smile. Then he quickly wheels himself over to the table and hunts hurriedly through a pile of old cablegrams and letters, until he finds the one he wants. With this in his hand, he takes up the telephone receiver)

WHITESIDE (*in a lowered voice*). Long distance, please. I want to put in a trans-Atlantic call. (*He looks at the cablegram again for confirmation*) Hello. Trans-Atlantic operator? . . . This is Mesalia one four two. I want to talk to Miss Lorraine Sheldon—S-h-e-l-d-o-n. She's on the *Normandie*. It sailed from Southampton day before yesterday. . . . Will it take long? . . . All right. My name is Whiteside. . . . Thank you. (*He hangs up as the door bell rings. He goes back to the manuscript again and looks through it.* JOHN *then ushers in* DR. BRADLEY)

DR. BRADLEY (*hearty, as usual*). Well, well! Good evening, Mr. Whiteside!

WHITESIDE. Come back tomorrow—I'm busy.

DR. BRADLEY (*turning cute*). Now what would be the best news that I could possibly bring you?

WHITESIDE. You have hydrophobia.

DR. BRADLEY (*laughing it off*). No, no. . . . Mr. Whiteside, you are a well man. You can get up and walk *now*. You can leave here tomorrow.

WHITESIDE. What do you mean?

DR. BRADLEY. Well, sir! I looked at those X-rays again this morning, and do you know what? I had been looking at the wrong X-rays. I had been looking at old Mrs. Moffat's X-rays. You are perfectly, absolutely well!

WHITESIDE. Lower your voice, will you?

DR. BRADLEY. What's the matter? Aren't you pleased?

WHITESIDE. Delighted. . . . Naturally. . . . Ah—this is a very unexpected bit of news, however. It comes at a very curious moment. (*He is thinking fast; suddenly he gets an idea. He clears his throat and looks around apprehensively*) Dr. Bradley, I—ah—I have some good news for you, too. I have been reading your book—ah—*Forty Years*—what is it?

DR. BRADLEY (*eagerly*). *An Ohio Doctor*—yes?

WHITESIDE. I consider it extremely close to being one of the great literary contributions of our time.

DR. BRADLEY. Mr. Whiteside!

WHITESIDE. So strongly do I feel about it, Dr. Bradley, that I have a proposition to make to you. Just here and there the book is a little uneven, a little rough. What I would like to do is to stay here in Mesalia and work with you on it.

DR. BRADLEY (*all choked up*). Mr. Whiteside, I would be so terribly honored—

WHITESIDE. Yes. But there is just one difficulty. You see, if my lecture bureau and my radio sponsors were to learn that I am well, they would insist on my fulfilling my contracts, and I would be forced to leave Mesalia. Therefore, we must not tell anyone—not anyone at all—that I am well.

DR. BRADLEY. I see. I see.

WHITESIDE. Not even Miss Cutler, you understand.

DR. BRADLEY. No, I won't. Not a soul. Not even my wife.

WHITESIDE. That's fine.

DR. BRADLEY. When do we start work—tonight? I've got just one patient that's dying and then I'll be perfectly free.

(*The phone rings*)

WHITESIDE (*waving him away*). Ah—tomorrow morning. This is a private call—would you forgive me? . . . Hello. . . . Yes, I'm on. (*He turns again to the* DOCTOR) Tomorrow morning.

DR. BRADLEY. Tomorrow morning it is. Good night. You've made me very proud, Mr. Whiteside. (*He goes*)

WHITESIDE (*again on the phone*). Yes, yes, this is Mr. Whiteside on the phone. Put them through. . . . Hello. Is this my Blossom Girl? How are you, my lovely? . . . No, no, I'm all right. . . . Yes, still out here. . . . Lorraine dear, when do you land in New York? . . . Tuesday? That's fine. . . . Now listen closely, my pet. I've great news for you. I've discovered a wonderful play with an enchanting part in it for you. Cornell would give her eye teeth to play it, but I think I can get it for you. . . . Now wait, wait. Let me tell you. The author is a young newspaper man in this town. Of course he wants Cornell, but if you jump on a train and get right out here, I think you could swing it, if you play your cards right. . . . No, he's young, and very attractive, and just your dish, my dear. It just takes a little doing, and you're the girl that can do it. Isn't that exciting, my pet? . . . Yes. . . . Yes, that's right. . . . And look. Don't send me any messages. Just get on a train and arrive. . . . Oh, no, don't thank me, my darling. It's perfectly all right. Have a nice trip and hurry out here. Good-bye, my blossom. (*He hangs up and looks guiltily around. Then he straightens up and gleefully rubs his hands together*)

(MISS PREEN *enters, medicine in hand, and frightened, as usual*)

WHITESIDE (*jovial as hell*). Hello, Miss Preen. My, you're looking radiant this evening.

MISS PREEN (*staggered*). What?

(WHITESIDE *takes the medicine from her and swallows it at one gulp.* MISS PREEN, *still staggered, retreats into the library, just as* MAGGIE *comes down the stairs. She is dressed for the street*)

MAGGIE (*pausing on the landing*). Sherry, I'm sorry for what I said before. I'm afraid I was a little unjust.

WHITESIDE (*all nobility*). That's all right, Maggie dear. We all lose our tempers now and then.

MAGGIE. I promised to have dinner with Bert and go to a movie, but we'll come back and play cribbage with you instead.

WHITESIDE. Fine.

MAGGIE. See you soon, Sherry dear. (*She kisses him lightly on the forehead and goes on her way*)

(WHITESIDE *looks after her until he hears the doors close. Then his face lights up again and he bursts happily into song as he wheels himself into the library*)

WHITESIDE. "I'se des a 'ittle wabbit in the sunshine,
I'se des a 'ittle wabbit in the wain—"

Curtain

ACT TWO

A week later, late afternoon.

The room is now dominated by a large Christmas tree, set in the curve of the staircase, and hung with the customary Christmas ornaments.

SARAH *and* JOHN *are passing in and out of the library, bringing forth huge packages which they are placing under the tree.* MAGGIE *sits at a little table at one side, going through a pile of correspondence.*

JOHN. Well, I guess that's all there are, Miss Cutler. They're all under the tree.

MAGGIE. Thank you, John.

SARAH. My, I never saw anyone get so many Christmas presents. I can hardly wait to see what's in 'em.

JOHN. When'll Mr. Whiteside open them, Miss Cutler?

MAGGIE. Well, John, you see Christmas is Mr. Whiteside's personal property. He invented it and it belongs to him. First thing tomorrow morning, Mr. Whiteside will open each and every present, and there will be the damnedest fuss you ever saw.

SARAH (*bending over the packages*). My, look who he's got presents from! Shirley Temple, William Lyon Phelps, Billy Rose, Ethel Waters, Somerset Maug-ham —I can hardly wait for tonight.

(*The door bell rings.* JOHN *departs for the door*)

SARAH. My, it certainly is wonderful. And Mr. Whiteside's tree is so beautiful, too. Mr. and Mrs. Stanley had to put theirs in their bedroom, you know. They can hardly undress at night.

(*It is* BERT JEFFERSON *who enters*)

BERT. Hello, Maggie. Merry Christmas, Sarah.

SARAH. Merry, Christmas, Mr. Jefferson. (*She and* JOHN *disappear into the dining room*)

BERT (*observing the pile of packages under the tree*). Say, business is good, isn't it? My, what a little quiet blackmail and a weekly radio hour can get you. What did his sponsors give him?

MAGGIE. They gave him a full year's supply of their product, Cream of Mush.

BERT. Well, he'll give it right back to them over the air.

MAGGIE. Wait until you hear tonight's broadcast, old fellow. It's so sticky I haven't been able to get it off my fingers since I copied it.

BERT. I'll bet . . . Look, I'll come clean. Under the influence of God knows what I have just bought you a Christmas present.

MAGGIE (*surprised*). Why, Mr. Jefferson, sir.

BERT. Only I'd like you to see it before I throw away my hard-earned money. Can you run downtown with me and take a look at it?

MAGGIE. Bert, this is very sweet of you. I'm quite touched. What is it? I can't wait.

BERT. A two years' subscription to *Pic, Click, Look,* and *Listen.* . . . Do you think I'm going to tell you? Come down and see.

MAGGIE (*she calls into the library*). Sherry! Sherry, I'm going out for a few minutes. With Horace Greeley. I won't be long. (*She goes into the hallway for her coat and hat*)

BERT (*raising his voice*). Noël, Noël, Mr. W.! How about some cribbage after your broadcast tonight?

(*The* WHITESIDE *wheelchair is rolling into the room*)

WHITESIDE. No, I will not play cribbage with you, Klondike Harry. You have been swindling the be-jesus out of me

for two weeks. . . . Where are you off to now, Madame Butterfly?

MAGGIE. I'm being given a Christmas present. Anything you want done downtown?

WHITESIDE. 'Es. B'ing baby a lollipop. . . . What are *you* giving me for Christmas, Jefferson? I have enriched your feeble life beyond your capacity to repay me.

BERT. Yes, that's what I figured, so I'm not giving you anything.

WHITESIDE. I see. Well, I was giving you my old truss, but now I shan't. . . . Maggie, what time are those radio men coming?

MAGGIE. About six-thirty—I'll be here. You've got to cut, Sherry. You're four minutes over. Oh, by the way, there was a wire from Beverly. It's there somewhere. He doesn't know what train he can get out of Chicago, but he'll be here some time this evening.

WHITESIDE. Good! Is he staying overnight?

MAGGIE. No, he has to get right out again. He's sailing Friday on the *Queen Mary*.

BERT. Think I could peek in at the window and get a look at him? Beverly Carlton used to be one of my heroes.

WHITESIDE. Used to be, you ink-stained hack? Beverly Carlton is the greatest single talent in the English theatre today. Take this illiterate numbskull out of my sight, Maggie, and don't bring him back.

BERT. Yes, Mr. Whiteside, sir. I won't come back until Beverly Carlton gets here.

MAGGIE (*as they go on their way*). Where are we going, Bert? I want to know what you've bought me—I'm like a ten-year-old kid.

BERT (*laughing a little*). You know, you look like a ten-year-old kid right now, Maggie, at that.

(*They are out of earshot by this time*)

(WHITESIDE *looks after them intently, listens until the door*

closes. He considers for a second, then wheels himself over to the telephone)

WHITESIDE (*on the phone*). Will you give me the Mansion House, please? . . . No, I *don't* know the number. . . . Hello? Mansion House? . . . Tell me, has a Miss Lorraine Sheldon arrived yet? . . . Yes, that's right—Miss Lorraine Sheldon. From New York. . . . She hasn't, eh? Thank you. (*He hangs up, drums with his fingers on the chair arm, looks at his watch. He slaps his knees impatiently, stretches. Then, vexed at his self-imposed imprisonment, he looks cautiously around the room, peers up the stairs. Then, slowly, he gets out of his chair; standing beside it, he indulges in a few mild calisthenics, looking cautiously around all the while*)

(*Then the sound of the library doors being opened sends him scurrying back to his chair. It is* MISS PREEN *who emerges*)

WHITESIDE (*annoyed*). What do you want, coming in like that? Why don't you knock before you come into a room?

MISS PREEN. But—I wasn't coming in. I was coming out.

WHITESIDE. Miss Preen, you are obviously *in* this room. That is true, isn't it?

MISS PREEN. Yes, it is, but—

WHITESIDE. Therefore you came in. Hereafter, please knock.

(*Before* MISS PREEN *can reply, however,* JOHN *enters from the dining room*)

JOHN (*en route to the front door*). There are some expressmen here with a crate, Mr. Whiteside. I told them to come around the front.

WHITESIDE. Thank you, John. . . . Don't stand there, Miss Preen. You look like a frozen custard. Go away.

MISS PREEN (*controlling herself as best she can*). Yes, sir. (*She goes*)

(*At the same time two* EXPRESSMEN, *carrying a crate, enter from the front door*)

JOHN. Bring it right in here. Careful there—don't scrape the wall. Why, it's some kind of animals.

EXPRESSMAN. I'll say it's animals. We had to feed 'em at seven o'clock this morning.

WHITESIDE. Bring it over here, John. Who's it from?

JOHN (*reading from the top of the crate as they set it down*). Admiral Richard E. Byrd. Say!

WHITESIDE (*peering through the slats*). Why, they're penguins. Two—three—four penguins. Hello, my pretties.

EXPRESSMAN. Directions for feeding are right on top. These two slats are open.

JOHN (*reading*). "To be fed only whale blubber, eels and cracked lobster."

EXPRESSMAN. They got Coca-Cola this morning. And *liked* it. (*They go*)

WHITESIDE (*peering through the slats again*). Hello, hello, hello. You know, they make the most entrancing companions, John. Admiral Byrd has one that goes on all his lecture tours. I want these put right in the library with me. Take 'em right in.

JOHN (*picking up the crate*). Yes, sir.

WHITESIDE. Better tell Sarah to order a couple of dozen lobsters. I don't suppose there's any whale blubber in Mesalia.

(*At which point* DR. BRADLEY *obligingly enters from the hall.* MR. WHITESIDE *is equal to the occasion*)

WHITESIDE (*with just the merest glance at the* DOCTOR). Oh, yes, there is.

DR. BRADLEY. The door was open, so I— Good afternoon, Mr. Whiteside. And Merry Christmas.

WHITESIDE. Merry Christmas, Merry Christmas. Do you happen to know if eels are in season, Doctor?

DR. BRADLEY. How's that?

WHITESIDE. Never mind. I was a fool to ask you.

(JOHN *returns from the library, carefully closing the doors*)

JOHN. I opened those two slats a little, Mr. Whiteside—they seem so crowded in there.

WHITESIDE. Thank you, John. (JOHN *goes on his way*) On your way downtown, Doctor, will you send these air mail? Miss Cutler forgot them. (*He hands him a few letters*) Good-bye. Sorry you dropped in just now. I have to do my Yogi exercises. (*He folds his arms, leans back and closes his eyes*)

DR. BRADLEY. But, Mr. Whiteside, it's been a week now. My book, you know—when are we going to start work on the book? (WHITESIDE, *his eyes still closed, places his fingers to his lips, for absolute silence*) I was hoping that today you'd be— (*He stops short as* MISS PREEN *returns from the dining room*) Good afternoon, Miss Preen.

MISS PREEN. Good afternoon, Dr. Bradley. (*She opens the doors to enter the library, then freezes in her tracks. She closes the doors again and turns to the* DOCTOR, *glassy-eyed. She raises a trembling hand to her forehead*) Doctor, perhaps I'm—not well, but—when I opened the doors just now I thought I saw a penguin with a thermometer in its mouth.

WHITESIDE. What's this? Have those penguins got out of their crate?

MISS PREEN. Oh, thank God. I thought perhaps the strain had been too much.

DR. BRADLEY (*incredulous*). Penguins?

WHITESIDE. Yes. Doctor, will you go in and capture them, please, and put them back in the crate? There're four of them.

DR. BRADLEY (*somewhat staggered*). Very well. Do you suppose that later on, Mr. Whiteside, we might—

WHITESIDE. We'll see, we'll see. First catch the penguins. And, Miss Preen, will you amuse them, please, until I come in?

MISS PREEN (*swallowing hard*). Yes, sir.

(*Meanwhile* JOHN *has descended the stairs*)

JOHN. The Christmas tree just fell on Mr. Stanley. He's got a big bump on his forehead.

WHITESIDE (*brightly*). Why, isn't that too bad? . . . Go ahead, Doctor. Go on, Miss Preen.

(RICHARD *pops in from the hallway*)

RICHARD. Hello, Mr. Whiteside.

WHITESIDE. Hello, Dickie, my boy.

DR. BRADLEY (*still lingering*). Mr. Whiteside, will you have some time later?

WHITESIDE (*impatient*). I don't know, Doctor. I'm busy now.

DR. BRADLEY. Well, suppose I wait a little while? I'll—I'll wait a little while. (*He goes into the library*)

WHITESIDE. Dr. Bradley is the greatest living argument for mercy killings. . . . Well, Dickie, would you like a candid camera shot of my left nostril this evening?

RICHARD. I'm sort of stocked up on those. Have you got a minute to look at some new ones I've taken?

WHITESIDE. I certainly have. . . . Why, these are splendid, Richard. There's real artistry in them—they're as good as anything by Margaret Bourke-White. I like all the things you've shown me. This is the essence of photographic journalism.

RICHARD. Say, I didn't know they were as good as that. I just like to take pictures, that's all.

WHITESIDE. Richard, I've been meaning to talk to you about this. You're not just a kid fooling with a camera any more. These are good. This is what you ought to do. You ought to get out of here and do some of the things you were telling me about. Just get on a boat and get off wherever it stops. Galveston, Mexico, Singapore—work your way through and just take pictures—everything.

RICHARD. Say, wouldn't I like to, though! It's what I've

been dreaming of for years. If I could do that I'd be the happiest guy in the world.

WHITESIDE. Well, why can't you do it? If I were your age, I'd do it like a shot.

RICHARD. Well, you know why. Dad.

WHITESIDE. Richard, do you really want to do this more than anything else in the world?

RICHARD. I certainly do.

WHITESIDE. Then do it.

(JUNE *comes quietly in from the dining room. Obviously there is something on her mind*)

JUNE. Hello, Dick. Good afternoon, Mr. Whiteside.

WHITESIDE. Hello, my lovely. . . . So I'm afraid it's up to *you*, Richard.

RICHARD. I guess it is. Well, thank you, Mr. Whiteside. You've been swell and I'll never forget it.

WHITESIDE. Righto, Richard.

RICHARD. June, are you coming upstairs?

JUNE. Ah—in a few minutes, Richard.

RICHARD. Well—knock on my door, will you? I want to talk to you.

JUNE. Yes, I will.

(RICHARD *disappears up the stairs*)

WHITESIDE (*brightly opening his book*). June, my lamb, you were too young to know about the Elwell murder, weren't you? Completely fascinating. I have about five favorite murders, and the Elwell case is one of them. Would you like to hear about it?

JUNE. Well, Mr. Whiteside, I wanted to talk to you. Would you mind, for a few minutes? It's important.

WHITESIDE. Why, certainly, my dear. I take it this is all about your young Lothario at the factory?

JUNE. Yes. I just can't seem to make Father understand. It's like talking to a blank wall. He won't meet him—he won't even talk about it. What are we going to do,

Mr. Whiteside? Sandy and I love each other. I don't know where to turn.

WHITESIDE. My dear, I'd like to meet this young man. I'd like to see him for myself.

JUNE. Would you, Mr. Whiteside? Would you meet him? He's—he's outside now. He's in the kitchen.

WHITESIDE. Good! Bring him in.

JUNE (*hesitating*). Mr. Whiteside, he's—he's a very sensitive boy. You will be nice to him, won't you?

WHITESIDE. God damn it, June, when will you learn that I am *always* kind and courteous! Bring this idiot in!

JUNE (*calling through the dining room in a low voice*). Sandy. . . . Sandy. . . . (*She stands aside as a young man enters. Twenty-three or -four, keen-looking, neatly but simply dressed*) Here he is, Mr. Whiteside. This is Sandy.

SANDY. How do you do, sir?

WHITESIDE. How do you do? Young man, I've been hearing a good deal about you from June this past week. It seems, if I have been correctly informed, that you two babes in the woods have quietly gone out of your minds.

JUNE. There's another name for it. It's called love.

WHITESIDE. Well, you've come to the right place. Dr. Sheridan Whiteside, Broken Hearts Mended, Brakes Relined, Hamburgers. Go right ahead.

SANDY. Well, if June has told you anything at all, Mr. Whiteside, you know the jam we're in. You see, I work for the union, Mr. Whiteside. I'm an organizer. I've been organizing the men in Mr. Stanley's factory, and Mr. Stanley's pretty sore about it.

WHITESIDE. I'll bet.

SANDY. Did June tell you that?

WHITESIDE. Yes, she did.

SANDY. Well, that being the case, Mr. Whiteside, I don't think I have the right to try to influence June. If she

marries me it means a definite break with her family, and I don't like to bring that about. But Mr. Stanley's so stubborn about it, so arbitrary. You know, this is not something I've done just to spite him. We fell in love with each other. But Mr. Stanley behaves as though it were all a big plot—John L. Lewis sent me here just to marry his daughter.

JUNE. He's tried to fire Sandy twice, out at the factory, but he couldn't on account of the Wagner Act, thank God!

SANDY. Yes, he thinks I wrote that, too.

JUNE. If he'd only let me talk to him. If he'd let Sandy talk to him.

SANDY. Well, we've gone over all that, June. Anyway, this morning I got word I'm needed in Chicago. I may have to go on to Frisco from there. So you see the jam we're in.

JUNE. Sandy's leaving tonight, Mr. Whiteside. He'll probably be gone a year. We've simply got to decide. *Now.*

WHITESIDE. My dear, this is absurdly simple. It's no problem at all. Now, to my jaundiced eye— (*The telephone rings.*) Oh-h! . . . Hello. . . . Yes. . . . This is Whiteside. . . . Excuse me—it's a long-distance call. . . . Yes? . . . Yes, I'm on. Who's calling me? (*His tone suddenly becomes one of keen delight*) Oh! Put him on! (*He turns to the young pair*) It's Walt Disney, in Hollywood. (*The phone again*) Hello. . . . Hello. . . . Walt! How's my little dash of genius? . . . Yes, I hoped you would. How'd you know I was here? . . . I see. . . . Yes, I'm listening. Ten seconds more? (*A quick aside to the others*) Mr. Disney calls me every Christmas— (*The phone*) Yes, Walt. . . . Yes, I hear it. It sounds just like static. . . . June! (*He holds the receiver out to* JUNE *for a second; she listens, mystified*) Hello. . . . Thanks, old man, and a very merry Christmas to *you*. . . . Tell me—any news in Hollywood? Who's in Lana Turner's sweater these days? . . . Well

tell him to get out. . . . Good-bye. (*He hangs up*) Do you know what that was you listened to? The voice of Donald Duck.

JUNE. Not really?

WHITESIDE. Mr. Disney calls me every Christmas, no matter where I am. Two years ago I was walking on the bottom of the ocean in a diving suit with William Beebe, but he got me. . . . Now, where were we? Oh, yes. . . . June, I like your young man. I have an unerring instinct about people—I've never been wrong. That's why I wanted to meet him. My feeling is that you two will be very happy together. Whatever his beliefs are, he's entitled to them, and you shouldn't let anything stand in your way. As I see it, it's no problem at all. Stripped of its externals, what does it come down to? Your father. The possibility of making him unhappy. Is that right?

JUNE. *Very* unhappy.

WHITESIDE. That isn't the point. Suppose your parents *are* unhappy—it's good for them. Develops their characters. Look at me. I left home at the age of four and haven't been back since. They hear me on the radio and that's enough for them.

SANDY. Then—your advice is to go ahead, Mr. Whiteside?

WHITESIDE. It is. Marry him tonight, June.

JUNE (*almost afraid to make the leap*). You—you mean that, Mr. Whiteside?

WHITESIDE (*bellowing*). No, I mean you should marry Hamilton Fish. If I didn't mean it I wouldn't say it. What do you want me to do—say it all over again? My own opinion is—

(*The voice of* MR. STANLEY *is heard at the head of the stairs. "Come on, Daisy—stop dawdling"*)

(JUNE *quickly pushes her young man out of the room, as* MR. *and* MRS. STANLEY *descend the stairs*)

STANLEY (*with deep sarcasm*). Forgive us for trespassing, Mr. Whiteside.

WHITESIDE. Not at all, old fellow—not at all. It's Christmas, you know. Merry Christmas, Merry Christmas.

MRS. STANLEY (*nervously*). Ah—yes. Merry Christmas. . . . Would you like to come along with us, June? We're taking some presents over to the Dexters.

JUNE. No—no, thank you, Mother. I—I have to write some letters. (*She hurries up the stairs*)

STANLEY (*who has been donning his coat*). Come along, Daisy.

(*Turning, he reveals a great patch of court plaster on his head*)

WHITESIDE (*entirely too sweetly*). Why, Mr. Stanley, what happened to your forehead? Did you have an accident?

STANLEY (*just as sweetly*). No, Mr. Whiteside. I'm taking boxing lessons. . . . Come, Daisy.

(*They go*)

(HARRIET, *who has been hovering at the head of the stairs, hurries down as the* STANLEYS *depart. She is carrying a little Christmas package*)

HARRIET. Dear Mr. Whiteside, I've been trying all day to see you. To give you—*this*.

WHITESIDE. Why, Miss Stanley. A Christmas gift for me?

HARRIET. It's only a trifle, but I wanted you to have it. It's a picture of me as I used to be. It was taken on another Christmas Eve, many years ago. Don't open it till the stroke of midnight, will you? (*The door bell rings.* HARRIET *looks apprehensively over her shoulder*) Merry Christmas, dear Mr. Whiteside. Merry Christmas.

WHITESIDE. Merry Christmas to you, Miss Stanley, and thank you.

(*She glides out of the room*)

(*In the hallway, as* JOHN *opens the door, we hear a woman's voice, liquid and melting. "This* IS *the Stanley*

residence, isn't it?" "Yes, it is." "I've come to see Mr. Whiteside. Will you tell him Miss Sheldon is here?")

WHITESIDE. Lorraine! My Blossom Girl!

LORRAINE (*coming into view*). Sherry, my sweet!

(*And quite a view it is.* LORRAINE SHELDON *is known as the most chic actress on the New York or London stage, and justly so. She glitters as she walks. She is beautiful, and even, God save the word, glamorous. . . . Her rank as one of the Ten Best-Dressed Women of the World is richly deserved. She is, in short, a siren of no mean talents, and knows it*)

LORRAINE (*wasting no time*). Oh, darling, look at that poor sweet tortured face! Let me kiss it! You poor darling, your eyes have a kind of gallant compassion. How drawn you are! Sherry, my sweet, I want to cry.

WHITESIDE. All right, all right. You've made a very nice entrance. Now relax, dear.

LORRAINE. But, Sherry, darling, I've been so worried. And now seeing you in that chair . . .

WHITESIDE. This chair fits my fanny as nothing else ever has. I feel better than I have in years, and my only concern is news of the outside world. So take that skunk off and tell me everything. How are you, my dear?

LORRAINE (*removing a cascade of silver fox from her shoulders*). Darling, I'm so relieved. You look perfectly wonderful—I never saw you look better. My dear, do I look a wreck? I just dashed through New York. Didn't do a thing about Christmas. Hattie Carnegie and had my hair done, and got right on the train. And the *Normandie* coming back was simply hectic. Fun, you know, but simply exhausting. Jock Whitney, and Cary Grant, and Dorothy di Frasso—it was *too* exhausting. And of course London before that was so magnificent, my dear—well, I simply never got to bed at all. Darling, I've so much to tell you I don't know where to start.

WHITESIDE. Well, start with the dirt first, dear—that's what I want to hear.

LORRAINE. Let me see. . . . Well, Sybil Cartwright got thrown right out of Ciro's—it was the night before I sailed. She was wearing one of those new cellophane dresses, and you could absolutely see Trafalgar Square. And, oh, yes— Sir Harry Monti ose—the painter, *you* know—is suing his mother for disorderly conduct. It's just shocked *everyone.* Oh, and before I forget Beatrice Lillie gave me a message for you. She says for you to take off twenty-five pounds right away and send them to her by parcel post. She needs them.

WHITESIDE. Nonsense. . . . Now come, dear, what about *you*? What about your love life? I don't believe for one moment that you never got to bed at all, if you'll pardon the expression.

LORRAINE. Sherry dear, you're dreadful.

WHITESIDE. What about that splendid bit of English mutton, Lord Bottomley? Haven't you hooked him yet?

LORRAINE. Sherry, please. Cedric is a very dear friend of mine.

WHITESIDE. Now, Blossom Girl, this is Sherry. Don't try to pull the bed clothes over *my* eyes. Don't tell *me* you wouldn't like to be Lady Bottomley, with a hundred thousand pounds a year and twelve castles. By the way, has he had his teeth fixed yet? Every time I order Roquefort cheese I think of those teeth.

LORRAINE. Sherry, really! . . . Cedric may not be brilliant, but he's rather sweet, poor lamb, and he's very fond of me, and he does represent a kind of English way of living that I like. Surrey, and London for the season—shooting box in Scotland—that lovely old castle in Wales. You were there, Sherry—you know what I mean.

WHITESIDE. Mm. I do indeed.

LORRAINE. Well, really, Sherry, why not? If I can marry Cedric I don't know why I shouldn't. Shall I tell you something, Sherry? I think, from something he said just before I sailed, that he's finally coming around to it. It wasn't definite, mind you, but—don't be surprised if I *am* Lady Bottomley before very long.

WHITESIDE. Lady Bottomley! Won't Kansas City be surprised! However, I shall be a flower girl and give the groom an iron toothpick as a wedding present. Come ahead, my blossom—let's hear some more of your skulduggery.

(*The library doors are quietly opened at this point and the* DOCTOR'S *head appears*)

DR. BRADLEY (*in a heavy whisper*). Mr. Whiteside.

WHITESIDE. What? No, no—not now. I'm busy.

(*The* DOCTOR *disappears*)

LORRAINE. Who's that?

WHITESIDE. He's fixing the plumbing. . . . Now come on, come on—I want more news.

LORRAINE. But, Sherry, what about this play? After all, I've come all the way from New York—even on Christmas Eve—I've been so excited ever since your phone call. Where is it? When can I read it?

WHITESIDE. Well, here's the situation. This young author —his name is Bert Jefferson—brought me the play with the understanding that I send it to Kit Cornell. It's a magnificent part, and God knows I feel disloyal to Kit, but there you are. Now *I've* done *this* much—the rest is up to you. He's young and attractive—now, just how you'll go about persuading him, I'm sure you know more about that than I do.

LORRAINE. Darling, how can I ever thank you? Does he know I'm coming—Mr. Jefferson, I mean?

WHITESIDE. No, no. You're just out here visiting me. You'll meet him, and that's that. Get him to take you to dinner, and work around to the play. Good God, I don't

have to tell you how to do these things. How did you get all those other parts?

LORRAINE. Sherry! . . . Well, I'll go back to the hotel and get into something more attractive. I just dumped my bags and rushed right over here. Darling, you're wonderful. (*Lightly kissing him*)

WHITESIDE. All right—run along and get into your working clothes. Then come right back here and spend Christmas Eve with Sherry and I'll have Mr. Jefferson on tap. By the way, I've got a little surprise for you. Who do you think's paying me a flying visit tonight? None other than your old friend and fellow actor, Beverly Carlton.

LORRAINE (*not too delighted*). Really? Beverly? I thought he was being glamorous again on a tramp steamer.

WHITESIDE. Come, come, dear—mustn't be bitter because he got better notices than you did.

LORRAINE. Don't be silly, Sherry. I never read notices. I simply wouldn't care to act with him again, that's all. He's not staying here, is he? I *hope* not!

WHITESIDE. Temper, temper, temper. No, he's not. . . . Where'd you get that diamond clip, dear? That's a new bit of loot, isn't it?

LORRAINE. Haven't you seen this before? Cedric gave it to me for his mother's birthday. . . . Look, darling, I've got a taxi outside. If I'm going to get back here—

(*At this point the voice of* MAGGIE *is heard in the hallway*)

MAGGIE. Sherry, what do you think? I've just been given the most beautiful . . . (*She stops short and comes to a dead halt as she sees* LORRAINE)

LORRAINE. Oh, hello, Maggie. I knew you must be around somewhere. How are you, my dear?

WHITESIDE. Santa's been at work, my pet. Blossom Girl just dropped in out of the blue and surprised us.

MAGGIE (*quietly*). Hello, Lorraine.

WHITESIDE (*as* JEFFERSON *appears*). Who's that—Bert?

This is Mr. Bert Jefferson, Lorraine. Young newspaper man. Miss Lorraine Sheldon.

BERT. How do you do, Miss Sheldon?

LORRAINE. How do you do? I didn't catch the name—Jefferson?

WHITESIDE (*sweetly*). That's right, Pet.

LORRAINE (*full steam ahead*). Why, Mr. Jefferson, you don't look like a newspaper man. You don't look like a newspaper man at all.

BERT. Really? I thought it was written all over me in neon lights.

LORRAINE. Oh, no, not at all. I should have said you were —oh, I don't know—an aviator or an explorer or something. They have that same kind of dash about them. I'm simply enchanted with your town, Mr. Jefferson. It gives one such a warm, gracious feeling. Tell me—have you lived here all your life?

BERT. Practically.

WHITESIDE. If you wish to hear the story of his life, Lorraine, kindly do so on your own time. Maggie and I have work to do. Get out of here, Jefferson. On your way, Blossom.

LORRAINE. He's the world's rudest man, isn't he? Can I drop you, Mr. Jefferson? I'm going down to the—Mansion House, I think it's called.

BERT. Thank you, but I've got my car. Suppose I drop you?

LORRAINE. Oh, would you? That'd be lovely—we'll send the taxi off. See you in a little while, Sherry. 'Bye, Maggie.

BERT. Good-bye, Miss C. (*He turns to* WHITESIDE) I'm invited back for dinner, am I not?

WHITESIDE. Yes—yes, you are. At Christmas I always feed the needy. Now please stop oozing out—*get* out.

LORRAINE. Come on, Mr. Jefferson. I want to hear more

about this charming little town. And I want to know a good deal about you, too.

(*And they are gone*)

(*There is a slight but pregnant pause after they go.* MAGGIE *simply stands looking at* WHITESIDE, *waiting for what may come forth*)

WHITESIDE (*as though nothing had happened*). Now let's see, have you got a copy of that broadcast? How much did you say they wanted out—four minutes?

MAGGIE. That's right—four minutes. . . . She's looking very well, isn't she?

WHITESIDE (*busy with his manuscripts*). What's that? Who?

MAGGIE. The Countess di Pushover. . . . Quite a surprise, wasn't it—her dropping in?

WHITESIDE. Yes—yes, it was. Now come on, Maggie, come on. Get to work.

MAGGIE. Why, she must have gone through New York like a dose of salts. How long's she going to stay?

WHITESIDE (*completely absorbed*). What? Oh, I don't know—a few days . . . (*He reads from his manuscript*) "At this joyous season of the year, when in the hearts of men—" I can't cut that.

MAGGIE. Isn't it curious? There was Lorraine, snug as a bug in somebody's bed on the *Normandie*—

WHITESIDE (*so busy*). "Ere the Yuletide season pass—"

MAGGIE (*quietly taking the manuscript out of his hands*). Now, Sherry dear, we will talk a bit.

WHITESIDE. Now look here, Maggie. Just because a friend of mine happens to come out to spend Christmas with me— (*The door bell rings*) I have a hunch that's Beverly. Maggie, see if it is. Go ahead—run! Run!

(MAGGIE *looks at him—right through him, in fact. Then she goes slowly toward the door*)

(*We hear her voice at the door: "Beverly!" Then, in*

clipped English tones: "Magpie! A large, moist, incestuous kiss for my Magpie!")

WHITESIDE (*roaring*). Come in here, you Piccadilly penpusher, and gaze upon a soul in agony.

(BEVERLY CARLTON *enters, arm in arm with* MAGGIE. *Very confident, very British, very Beverly Carlton*)

BEVERLY. Don't tell me how you are, Sherry dear. I want none of the tiresome details. I have only a little time, so the conversation will be entirely about *me*, and I shall love it. Shall I tell you how I glittered through the South Seas like a silver scimitar, or would you rather hear how I frolicked through Zambesia, raping the Major General's daughter and finishing a three-act play at the same time? . . . Magpie dear, you are the moonflower of my middle age, and I love you very much. Say something beautiful to me. Sherry dear, without going into mountainous waves of self-pity, how are you?

WHITESIDE. I'm fine, you presumptuous Cockney. . . . Now, how was the trip, wonderful?

BEVERLY. Fabulous. I did a fantastic amount of work. By the way, did I glimpse that little boudoir butterfly, La Sheldon, in a motor-car as I came up the driveway?

MAGGIE. You did indeed. She's paying us a Christmas visit.

BEVERLY. Dear girl! They do say she set fire to her mother, but I don't believe it. . . . Sherry, my evil one, not only have I written the finest comedy since Molière, but also the best revue since my last one and an operetta that frightens me—it's so good. I shall play it for eight weeks in London and six in New York—that's all. No matinees. Then I am off to the Grecian Islands. . . . Magpie, why don't you come along? Why don't you desert this cannonball of fluff and come with me?

MAGGIE. Beverly dear, be careful. You're catching me at a good moment.

WHITESIDE (*changing the subject*). Tell me, did you have a good time in Hollywood? How long were you there?

BEVERLY. Three unbelievable days. I saw everyone from Adrian to Zanuck. They came, poor dears, as to a shrine. I was insufferably charming and ruthlessly firm in refusing seven million dollars for two minutes' work.

WHITESIDE. What about Banjo? Did you see my wonderful Banjo in Hollywood?

BEVERLY. I did. He gave a dinner for me. I arrived, in white tie and tails, to be met at the door by two bewigged flunkies, who quietly proceeded to take my trousers off. I was then ushered, in my lemon silk drawers, into a room full of Norma Shearer, Claudette Colbert, and Aldous Huxley, among others. Dear, sweet, incomparable Banjo.

WHITESIDE. I'll never forget that summer at Antibes, when Banjo put a microphone in Lorraine's mattress, and then played the record the next day at lunch.

BEVERLY. I remember it indeed. Lorraine left Antibes by the next boat.

MAGGIE (*half to herself*). I wish Banjo were here now.

BEVERLY. What's the matter, Magpie? Is Lorraine being her own sweet sick-making self?

MAGGIE. You wouldn't take her to the Grecian Islands with you, would you, Beverly? Just for me?

WHITESIDE. Now, now. Lorraine is a charming person who has gallantly given up her own Christmas to spend it with me.

BEVERLY. Oh, I knew I had a bit of dirt for us all to nibble on. (*He draws a letter out of his pocket*)

(*Again the library doors are opened and the* DOCTOR'S *head comes through*)

DR. BRADLEY. Mr. Whiteside.

WHITESIDE. No, no, not now. Go away.

(*The* DOCTOR *withdraws*)

BEVERLY. Have you kidnapped someone, Sherry?

WHITESIDE. Yes, that was Charley Ross . . . Go ahead. Is this something juicy?

BEVERLY. Juicy as a pomegranate. It is the latest report from London on the winter maneuvers of Miss Lorraine Sheldon against the left flank—in fact, all flanks—of Lord Cedric Bottomley. Listen: "Lorraine has just left us in a cloud of Chanel Number Five. Since September, in her relentless pursuit of His Lordship, she has paused only to change girdles and check her oil. She has chased him, panting, from castle to castle, till he finally took refuge, for several week-ends, in the gentlemen's lavatory of the House of Lords. Practically no one is betting on the Derby this year; we are all making book on Lorraine. She is sailing tomorrow on the *Normandie,* but would return on the *Yankee Clipper* if Bottomley so much as belches in her direction." Have you ever met Lord Bottomley, Magpie dear? (*He goes immediately into an impersonation of His Lordship. Very British, very full of teeth, stuttering*) "No v-v-very good shooting today, blast it. Only s-s-six partridges, f-f-four grouse, and the D-D-Duke of Sutherland."

WHITESIDE (*chuckling*). My God, that's Bottomley to the very bottom.

BEVERLY (*still in character*). "R-r-ripping debate in the House today. Old Basil spoke for th-th-three hours. D-d-dropped dead at the end of it. Ripping."

MAGGIE. You're making it up, Beverly. No one sounds like that.

WHITESIDE. It's so good it's uncanny. . . . Damn it, Beverly, why must you race right out of here? I never see enough of you, you ungrateful moppet.

BEVERLY. Sherry darling, I can only tell you that my love for you is so great that I changed trains at Chicago to spend ten minutes with you and wish you a Merry Christmas. Merry Christmas, my lad. My little Magpie. (*A look at his watch*) And now I have just time for one magnificent number, to give you a taste of how bril-

liant the whole thing is. It's the second number in the revue.

(*He strikes a chord on the piano, but before he can go further the telephone rings*)

WHITESIDE. Oh, damn! Get rid of them, Maggie.

MAGGIE. Hello . . . Oh, hello, Bert . . . Oh! Well, just a minute. . . . Beverly, would you talk to a newspaper man for just two minutes? I kind of promised him.

BEVERLY. Won't have time, Magpie, unless he's under the piano.

MAGGIE. Oh! (*Into the phone*) Wait a minute. (*To* BEVERLY *again*) Would you see him at the station, just for a minute before the train goes? (BEVERLY *nods*) Bert, go to the station and wait for him. He'll be there in a few minutes. . . . 'Bye.

WHITESIDE. The stalls are impatient, Beverly. Let's have this second-rate masterpiece.

BEVERLY (*his fingers rippling over the keys*). It's called: "What Am I to Do?"

"Oft in the nightfall
I think I might fall
Down from my perilous height;
Deep in the heart of me,
Always a part of me,
Quivering, shivering light.
Run, little lady,
Ere the shady
Shafts of time
Barb you with their winged desire,
Singe you with their sultry fire.
Softly a fluid
Druid
Meets me,
Olden
and golden
the dawn that greets me;

Cherishing,
Perishing,
Up to the stars
I climb.

"What am I to do
Toward ending this madness,
This sadness,
That's rending me through?
The flowers of yesteryear
Are haunting me,
Taunting me,
Darling, for wanting you.
What am I to say
To warnings of sorrow
When morning's tomorrow
Greets the dew?
Will I see the cosmic Ritz
Shattered and scattered to bits?
What *not* am I to do?"

(*As he swings into the chorus for a second time the door bell rings, and* JOHN *is glimpsed as he goes to the door*)

(*It is a trio of* RADIO MEN *who appear in the doorway, their arms filled with equipment for* MR. WHITESIDE'S *broadcast*)

WHITESIDE. Oh, come in, Westcott. . . . Beverly, it's superb. The best thing you've ever written. It'll be played by every ragtag orchestra from Salem to Singapore.

BEVERLY. Please! Let *me* say that . . . Ah, the air waves, eh? Well, I shan't have to hear you, thank God. I shall be on the train.

MAGGIE. Come on, Whiteside, say good-bye. Mr. Westcott, he's still four minutes over—you'll have to chisel it out.

WHITESIDE (*as* MAGGIE *starts to wheel him into the library*). Stop this nonsense. Beverly, my lamb—

MAGGIE. You can kiss Beverly in London on July twelfth.

(*Then to the technicians*) The microphone set-up is right there, gentlemen, and you can connect up outside. John, show them where it is.

WHITESIDE. Maggie, what the hell are you—I will not be wheeled out of here like a baby who has to have his diapers changed!

BEVERLY (*calling after the fast-disappearing* WHITESIDE). Au revoir, Sherry. Merry Christmas. Magpie, come get a kiss.

MAGGIE (*emerging from the library and closing the doors behind her*). Beverly, I want one minute. I must have it. You'll make the train. The station's a minute and a half from here.

BEVERLY. Why, what's the matter, Magpie?

(*At which the library doors are opened and the* DOCTOR *emerges, rather apologetically. He is sped on his way by* MR. WHITESIDE'S *roaring voice—"Oh, get out of here!"*)

DR. BRADLEY. I'm—I'm just waiting in the kitchen until Mr. Whiteside is— Excuse me. (*He darts out through the dining room*)

BEVERLY. Who *is* that man?

MAGGIE. Never mind . . . Beverly, I'm in great trouble.

BEVERLY. Why, Magpie dear, what's the matter?

MAGGIE. I've fallen in love. For the first time in my life. Beverly, I'm in love. I can't tell you about it—there isn't time. But Sherry is trying to break it up. In his own fiendish way he's doing everything he can to break it up.

BEVERLY. Why, the old devil! What's he doing?

MAGGIE. Lorraine. He's brought Lorraine here to smash it.

BEVERLY. Oh, it's somebody *here*? In this town?

MAGGIE (*nodding*). He's a newspaper man—the one you're going to see at the station—and he's written a play, and I know Sherry must be using that as bait. You know

Lorraine—she'll eat him up alive. You've got to help me, Beverly.

BEVERLY. Of course I will, Magpie. What do you want me to do?

MAGGIE. I've got to get Lorraine out of here—the farther away the better—and you can do it for me.

BEVERLY. But how? How can I? I'm leaving.

(*The library doors are opened and* WESTCOTT, *the radio man, emerges*)

WESTCOTT. Have you a carbon copy of the broadcast, Miss Cutler?

MAGGIE. It's on that table.

WESTCOTT. Thank you. One of those penguins ate the original.

(*The voice of* WHITESIDE *is now heard calling from his room*)

WHITESIDE. Beverly, are you still there?

MAGGIE. No, he's gone, Sherry. (*She lowers her voice*) Come out here.

(*Maneuvering him into the hall, we see her whisper to him; his head bobs up and down quickly in assent. Then he lets out a shriek of laughter*)

BEVERLY. I'd love it. I'd absolutely love it. (MAGGIE *puts a quick finger to his lips, peers toward the* WHITESIDE *room. But* MR. WESTCOTT *has gone in; the doors are closed*) It's simply enchanting, and bitches Sherry and Lorraine at the same time. It's pure heaven! I adore it, and I shall do it up brown. (*He embraces her*)

MAGGIE. Darling, the first baby will be named Beverly. You're wonderful.

BEVERLY. Of course I am. Come to Chislewick for your honeymoon and I'll put you up. Good-bye, my lovely. I adore you.

(*And he is gone*)

(MAGGIE *comes back into the room, highly pleased with*

herself. She even sings a fragment of BEVERLY'S *song. "What am I to do? Tra-la-la-la-la-la"*)

(JOHN, *entering from the dining room, breaks the song*)

JOHN. Shall I straighten up the room for the broadcast, Miss Cutler?

MAGGIE. No, John, it isn't television, thank God. They only *hear* that liquid voice.

JOHN. He's really wonderful, isn't he? The things he finds time to do.

MAGGIE. Yes, he certainly sticks his nose into everything, John. (*She goes into the library*)

(JOHN *is putting the room in order when suddenly* JUNE *comes quietly down the stairs. She is dressed for the street and is carrying a suitcase*)

JOHN. Why, Miss June, are you going away?

JUNE. Why—no, John. No. I'm just— Mr. Whiteside is inside, I suppose?

JOHN. Yes, he's getting ready to go on the radio.

JUNE. Oh! Well, look, John—

(*And then* RICHARD *darts down the stairs. A light bag, two cameras slung over his shoulder*)

RICHARD (*to* JUNE, *in a heavy whisper*). Where's Mr. Whiteside? In there?

JUNE. Yes, he is.

RICHARD. Oh! Well, maybe we ought to—

(*The door bell rings.* RICHARD *and* JUNE *exchange looks, then scurry out quickly through the dining room*)

(JOHN *looks after them for a second, puzzled, then goes to the door*)

(*It is* LORRAINE *who comes in, resplendent now in evening dress and wraps, straight from Paris. At the same time* MAGGIE *emerges from the library and* JOHN *goes on his way*)

LORRAINE. Hello, dear. Where's Sherry?

MAGGIE. Inside, working—he's broadcasting very soon.

LORRAINE. Oh, of course—Christmas Eve. What a wonderful man Sheridan Whiteside is! You know, my dear, it must be such an utter joy to be secretary to somebody like Sherry.

MAGGIE. Yes, you meet such interesting people. . . . That's quite a gown, Lorraine. Going anywhere?

LORRAINE. This? Oh, I just threw on anything at all. Aren't you dressing for dinner?

MAGGIE. No, just what meets the eye.

(*She has occasion to carry a few papers across the room at this point.* LORRAINE'S *eye watches her narrowly*)

LORRAINE. Who does your hair, Maggie?

MAGGIE. A little French woman named Maggie Cutler comes in every morning.

LORRAINE. You know, every time I see you I keep thinking your hair could be so lovely. I always want to get my hands on it.

MAGGIE (*quietly*). I've always wanted to get mine on yours, Lorraine.

LORRAINE (*absently*). What, dear? (*One of the radio men drifts into the room, plugs into the control board, drifts out again.* LORRAINE'S *eyes follow him idly. Then she turns to* MAGGIE *again*) By the way, what time does Beverly get here? I'm not over-anxious to meet him.

MAGGIE. He's been and gone, Lorraine.

LORRAINE. Really? Well, I'm very glad. . . . Of course you're great friends, aren't you—you and Beverly?

MAGGIE. Yes, we are. I think he's a wonderful person.

LORRAINE. Oh, I suppose so. But when I finished acting with him I was a perfect wreck. All during that tender love scene that the critics thought was so magnificent he kept dropping peanut shells down my dress. I wouldn't act with him again if I were starving.

MAGGIE (*casually*). Tell me, Lorraine, have you found a new play yet?

LORRAINE (*at once on guard*). No. No, I haven't. There

was a pile of manuscripts waiting in New York for me, but I hurried right out here to Sherry.

MAGGIE. Yes, it was wonderful of you, Lorraine—to drop everything that way and rush to Sherry's wheelchair.

LORRAINE. Well, after all, Maggie dear, what else has one in this world but friends? . . . How long will Sherry be in there, I wonder?

MAGGIE. Not long. . . . Did you know that Mr. Jefferson has written quite a good play? The young man that drove you to the hotel.

LORRAINE. Really? No, I didn't. Isn't that interesting?

MAGGIE. Yes, isn't it?

(*There is a considerable pause. The ladies smile at each other*).

LORRAINE (*evading* MAGGIE'S *eyes*). They've put a polish on my nails I simply loathe. I don't suppose Elizabeth Arden has a branch in this town.

MAGGIE (*busy with her papers*). Not if she has any sense.

LORRAINE. Oh, well, I'll just bear it, but it does depress me. (*She rises, wanders aimlessly for a moment, picks up a book from the table*) Have you read this, Maggie? Everybody was reading it on the boat. I hear you simply can't put it down.

MAGGIE. *I* put it down—right there.

(LORRAINE *casually strikes a note or two on the piano*) (*The telephone rings*)

MAGGIE (*taking up the receiver a little too casually*). Hello . . . Yes . . . Yes . . . Miss Lorraine Sheldon? Yes she's here . . . There's a trans-Atlantic call coming through for you, Lorraine.

LORRAINE. Trans-Atlantic—for me? Here? Why, what in the world—

MAGGIE (*as she hands over the receiver*). It's London.

LORRAINE. London? . . . Hello. (*Then in a louder tone*) Hello . . . Cedric! Cedric, is this you? . . . Why, Cedric, you darling! Why, what a surprise! How'd you know

I was here? . . . Darling, don't talk so fast and you won't stutter so . . . That's better . . . Yes, now I can hear you . . . Yes, very clearly. It's as though you were just around the corner. . . . I see . . . What? . . . Darling! Cedric, dearest, would you wait just one moment? (*She turns to* MAGGIE) Maggie, would you mind? It's Lord Bottomley—a *very* personal call. Would you mind?

MAGGIE. Oh, not at all. (*She goes into the dining room; almost does a little waltz step as she goes*)

LORRAINE. Yes, my dearest—now tell me . . . Cedric, please don't stutter so. Don't be nervous. (*She listens for a moment again*) Oh, my darling. Oh, my sweet. You don't know how I've prayed for this, every night on the boat . . . Darling, yes! YES, a thousand times yes! . . . I'll take a plane right out of here and catch the next boat. Oh, my sweet, we're going to be the happiest people in the world. I wish I were there now in your arms, Cedric . . . What? . . . Cedric, don't stutter so . . . Yes, and I love *you*, my darling—oh, so much! . . . Oh, my dear sweet. My darling, my darling. . . . Yes, yes! I will, I will, darling! I'll be thinking of you every moment . . . You've made me the happiest girl in the world . . . Good-bye, good-bye, darling. Good-bye. (*Bursting with her news, she throws open the library doors*) Sherry, Sherry! Do you know what's happened? Cedric just called from London—He's asked me to marry him. Sherry, think of it! At last! I've got to get right out of here and catch the next boat. How far are we from Chicago? I can get a plane from there.

MAGGIE (*emerging, mouse-like, from the dining room*). May I come in?

LORRAINE. Maggie dear, can I get a plane out of here right away? Or I'll even take a train to Chicago and fly from there. I've simply got to get the next boat for England.

When is it—do you know? Is there a newspaper here?

MAGGIE. The *Queen Mary* sails Friday. Why, what's all the excitement, Lorraine? What's happened?

LORRAINE. Maggie, the most wonderful thing in the world has happened. Lord Bottomley has asked me to marry him . . . Oh, Maggie! (*And in her exuberance she throws her arms around her*)

MAGGIE. Really? Well, what do you know?

LORRAINE. Isn't it wonderful? I'm so excited I can hardly think. Maggie dear, you must help me get out of here.

MAGGIE. I'd be delighted to, Lorraine.

LORRAINE. Oh, thank you, thank you. Will you look things up right away?

MAGGIE. Yes, I've a time-table right here. And don't worry, because if there's no train I'll drive you to Toledo and you can catch the plane from there.

LORRAINE. Maggie darling, you're wonderful. . . . Sherry, what's the matter with you? You haven't said a word. You haven't even congratulated me.

WHITESIDE (*who has been sitting through this like a thunder-cloud*). Let me understand this, Lorraine. Am I to gather from your girlish squeals that you are about to toss your career into the ashcan?

LORRAINE. Oh, not at all. Of course I may not be able to play this season, but there'll be other seasons, Sherry.

WHITESIDE. I see. And everything goes into the ashcan with it—Is that right?

LORRAINE. But, Sherry, you couldn't expect me to—

WHITESIDE (*icily*). Don't explain, Lorraine. I understand only too well. And I also understand why Cornell remains the First Actress of our theatre.

MAGGIE (*busy with her time-tables*). Oh, this is wonderful! We're in luck, Lorraine. You can get a plane out of Toledo at ten-three. It takes about an hour to get there. Why, it all works out wonderfully, doesn't it, Sherry?

WHITESIDE (*through his teeth*). Peachy!

LORRAINE (*heading for the phone*). Maggie, what's the number of that hotel I'm at? I've got to get my maid started packing.

MAGGIE. Mesalia three two.

LORRAINE (*into the phone*). Mesalia three two, please . . . Let's see—I sail Friday, five-day boat, that means I ought to be in London Wednesday night. . . . Hello. This is Miss Sheldon. . . . That's right. Connect me with my maid.

MAGGIE (*at the window*). Oh, look, Sherry, it's starting to snow. Isn't that wonderful, Sherry? Oh, I never felt more like Christmas in my life. Don't you, Sherry dear?

WHITESIDE. Shut your nasty little face!

LORRAINE (*on the phone*). Cosette? . . . Now listen carefully, Cosette. Have you got a pencil? . . . We're leaving here tonight by plane and sailing Friday on the *Queen Mary*. Start packing immediately and I'll call for you in about an hour . . . Yes, that's right . . . Now I want you to send these cables for me . . . Ready? . . . The first one goes to Lord and Lady Cunard—you'll find all these addresses in my little book. It's in my dressing case. "Lord and Lady Cunard. My darlings. Returning Friday *Queen Mary*. Cedric and I being married immediately on arrival. Wanted you to be the first to know. Love.—Lorraine." . . . Now send the same message—what? . . . Oh, thank you, Cosette. Thank you very much . . . Send the same message to Lady Astor, Lord Beaverbrook, and my mother in Kansas City . . . Got that? . . . And send a wire to Hattie Carnegie, New York. "Please meet me Sherry-Netherland noon tomorrow with sketches of bridal gown and trousseau.—Lorraine Sheldon." And then send a cable to Monsieur Pierre Cartier, Cartier's, London: "Can you hold in reserve for me the triple string of pearls I picked out in October? Cable me *Queen Mary*.—Lorraine Sheldon." . . . Have you got

all that straight, Cosette? . . . That's fine. Now you'll have to rush, my dear—I'll be at the hotel in about an hour, so be ready. . . . Good-bye. (*She hangs up*) Thank goodness for Cosette—I'd die without her. She's the most wonderful maid in the world. . . . Well! Life is just full of surprises, isn't it? Who'd have thought an hour ago that I'd be on my way to London?

MAGGIE. An *hour* ago? No, I certainly wouldn't have thought it an hour ago.

WHITESIDE (*beside himself with temper*). Will you both stop this female drooling? I have a violent headache.

MAGGIE (*all solicitude*). Oh, Sherry! Can I get you something?

LORRAINE. Look here, Sherry, I'm sorry if I've offended you, but after all my life is my own and I'm not going to—

(*She stops as* BERT JEFFERSON *comes in from the outside*)

BERT. Hello, everybody. Say, do you know it's snowing out? Going to have a real old-fashioned Christmas.

WHITESIDE. Why don't you telephone your scoop to the New York *Times*?

MAGGIE. Bert, Miss Sheldon has to catch a plane tonight, from Toledo. Can we drive her over, you and I?

BERT. Why, certainly. Sorry you have to go, Miss Sheldon. No bad news, I hope?

LORRAINE. Oh, on the contrary—very good news. Wonderful news.

MAGGIE. Yes, indeed—calls for a drink, I think. You're not being a very good host, Sherry. How about a bottle of champagne?

BERT. Oh, I can do better than that—let me mix you something. It's a Jefferson Special. Okay, Mr. Whiteside?

WHITESIDE. Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. Mix anything. Only stop driveling.

BERT (*on his way to the dining room*). Anybody admired my Christmas present yet, Maggie?

MAGGIE. Oh, dear, I forgot. (*She raises her arm, revealing a bracelet*) Look, everybody! From Mr. Jefferson to me.

LORRAINE. Oh, it's charming. Let me see it. Oh! Why, it's inscribed, too. "To Maggie. Long may she wave. Bert." Maggie, it's a lovely Christmas present. Isn't it sweet, Sherry?

WHITESIDE (*glowering*). Ducky!

MAGGIE. I told you it was beautiful, Bert. See?

BERT. Well, shows what you get if you save your coupons.

LORRAINE (*looking from* BERT *to* MAGGIE). Well, what's going on between you two, anyhow? Maggie, are you hiding something from us?

WHITESIDE (*a hand to his head*). Great God, will this drivel never stop? My head is bursting.

BERT. A Jefferson Special will cure anything. . . . By the way, I got a two-minute interview with Beverly Carlton at the station. You were right, Mr. Whiteside— He's quite something.

MAGGIE (*uneasily*). Go ahead, Bert—mix the drinks.

BERT. I was lucky to get even two minutes. He was in a telephone booth most of the time. Couldn't hear what he was saying, but from the faces he was making it looked like a scene from one of his plays.

MAGGIE (*hiding her frenzy*). Bert, mix those drinks, will you?

WHITESIDE (*suddenly galvanized*). Just a minute, if you please, Jefferson. Mr. Carlton was in a telephone booth at the station?

BERT. Certainly was—I thought he'd never come out. Kept talking and making the damnedest faces for about five minutes.

MAGGIE (*tensely*). Bert, for goodness sake, will you—

WHITESIDE (*ever so sweetly*). Bert, my boy, I have an idea

I shall love the Jefferson Special. Make me a double one, will you? My headache has gone with the wind.

BERT. Okay. (*He goes*)

(WHITESIDE, *his eyes gleaming, immediately whirls his wheelchair across the room to the telephone*)

WHITESIDE (*a finger to his lips*). Sssh! Philo Vance is now at work.

LORRAINE. What?

WHITESIDE. Sssh! (*He picks up the telephone. His voice is absolutely musical*) Operator! Has there been a call from England over this telephone within the past half hour? . . . Yes, I'll wait.

LORRAINE. Sherry, what *is* this?

WHITESIDE. What's that? There have been no calls from England for the past three days? Thank you . . . Now, will you repeat that, please? . . . Blossom Girl. (*He beckons to* LORRAINE, *then puts the receiver to her ear*) Hear it, dear? (*Then again to the operator*) Thank you, and a Merry Christmas. (*He hangs up*) Yes, indeed, it seems we're going to have a real old-fashioned Christmas.

LORRAINE (*stunned*). Sherry, what is all this? What's going on? What does this mean?

WHITESIDE. My dear, you have just played the greatest love scene of your career with your old friend, Beverly Carlton.

LORRAINE. Why—why, that's not true. I was talking to Cedric. What do you mean?

WHITESIDE. I mean, my blossom, that that was Beverly you poured out your girlish heart to, not Lord Bottomley. Ah, me, who'd have thought five minutes ago that you would *not* be going to London!

LORRAINE. Sherry, stop it! What is this? I want this explained.

WHITESIDE. Explained? You heard the operator, my dear.

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LORRAINE. Sherry, stop it! What is this? I want this explained.

WHITESIDE. Explained? You heard the operator, my dear.

All I can tell you is that Beverly was indulging in one of his famous bits of mimicry, that's all. You've heard him do Lord Bottomley before, haven't you?

LORRAINE (*as it dawns on her*). Yes . . . Yes, of course . . . But—but why would he want to do such a thing! This is one of the most dreadful—oh, my God! Those cables! (*In one bound she is at the telephone*) Give me the hotel—whatever it's called—I want the hotel—I'll pay him off for this if it's the last thing that I— Why, the cad! The absolute unutterable cad! The dirty rotten— Mansion House? Connect me with my maid . . . What? . . . Who the hell do you *think* it is? Miss Sheldon, of course . . . Oh, God! Those cables! If only Cosette hasn't—Cosette! Cosette! Did you send those cables? . . . Oh, God, Oh, God! . . . Now listen, Cosette, I want you to send another cable to every one of those people, and tell them somebody has been using my name, and to disregard anything and everything they hear from me—except this, of course . . . Don't ask questions—do as you're told . . . Don't argue with me, you French bitch—God damn it, do as you're told . . . And unpack—we're not going! (*She hangs up*)

WHITESIDE. Now steady, my blossom. Take it easy.

LORRAINE (*in a white rage*). What do you mean take it easy? Do you realize I'll be the laughingstock of England? Why, I won't dare show my face! I always knew Beverly Carlton was low, but not this low. Why? WHY? It isn't even funny. Why would he do it, that's what I'd like to know. Why would he do it! Why would anyone in the world want to play a silly trick like this? I can't understand it. Do you, Sherry? Do you, Maggie? You both saw him this afternoon. Why would he walk out of here, go right to a phone booth, and try to ship me over to England on a fool's errand! There must have been some reason—there must have. It doesn't make sense otherwise. Why would Beverly Carlton, or anybody else

for that matter, want me to— (*She stops as a dim light begins to dawn*) Oh! Oh! (*Her eye, which has been on* MAGGIE, *goes momentarily to the dining room, where* BERT *has disappeared. Then her gaze returns to* MAGGIE *again*) I—I think I begin to—of course! Of course! That's it. Of course that's it. Yes, and that's a very charming bracelet that Mr. Jefferson gave you—isn't it, Maggie dear? Of course. It makes complete sense now. And to think that I nearly—well! Wild horses couldn't get me out of here *now*, Maggie. And if I were you I'd hang onto that bracelet, dear. It'll be something to remember him by!

(*Out of the library comes* MR. WESTCOTT, *his hands full of papers. At the same time the two technicians emerge from the dining room and go to the control board*)

WESTCOTT (*his eyes on his watch*). All right, Mr. Whiteside. Almost time. Here's your new copy. Hook her up, boys. Start testing.

WHITESIDE. How much time?

WESTCOTT (*bringing him a microphone*). Couple of minutes.

(*One of the radio technicians is talking into a microphone, testing: "One, two, three, four, one, two, three, four. How are we coming in, New York? . . . A, B, C, A, B, C. Mary had a little lamb, Mary had a little lamb"*)

(MR. *and* MRS. STANLEY, *having delivered their Christmas presents, enter from the hallway and start up the stairs.* MRS. STANLEY *looks hungrily at the radio goings-on, but* MR. STANLEY *delivers a stern "Come, Daisy," and she follows him up the stairs*)

(*The voices of the technicians drone on: "One, two, three, four, one, two, three, four. O.K., New York. Waiting."* MR. WESTCOTT *stands with watch in hand*)

(*From the dining room comes* BERT JEFFERSON, *a tray of drinks in hand*)

BERT. Here comes the Jefferson Special . . . Oh! Have we time?

LORRAINE. Oh, I'm sure we have. Mr. Jefferson, I'm not leaving after all. My plans are changed.

BERT. Really? Oh, that's good.

LORRAINE. And I hear you've written a simply marvelous play, Mr. Jefferson. I want you to read it to me—tonight. Will you? We'll go back to the Mansion House right after dinner, and you'll read me your play.

BERT. Why—why, I should say so. I'd be delighted. . . . Maggie, did you hear that? Say, I'll bet *you* did this. You arranged the whole thing. Well, it's the finest Christmas present you could have given me.

(MAGGIE *looks at him for one anguished moment. Then, without a word, she dashes into the hall, grabs her coat and flings herself out of the house*)

(BERT, *bewildered, stands looking after her.* MR. *and* MRS. STANLEY *come pellmell down the stairs. Each clutches a letter, and they are wild-eyed*)

STANLEY. *Mr.* Whiteside! My son has run off on a freighter and my daughter is marrying an anarchist! They say *you* told them to do it!

MRS. STANLEY. My poor June! My poor Richard! This is the most awful—

WESTCOTT. Quiet! Quiet, please! We're going on the air.

STANLEY. How dare you! This is the most outrageous—

WESTCOTT (*raising his voice*). Please! *Please!* Quiet! We're going on the air.

(STANLEY *chokes and looks with fury.* MRS. STANLEY *is softly crying*)

(*In this moment of stillness,* DR. BRADLEY *emerges from the dining room*)

DR. BRADLEY. Oh! I see you're still busy.

STANLEY (*bursting forth*). Mr. Whiteside, you are the—

WESTCOTT (*yelling*). *Quiet!* For God's sake, quiet! QUIET! . . . All right, boys!

(*From the hallway come six* CHOIR BOYS, *dressed in their robes. They take their places by the microphone as the voice of the technician completes the hook-up*)

TECHNICIAN. O.K., New York. (*He raises his arm, waiting to give the signal.* WESTCOTT *is watching him. There is a dead pause of about five seconds.* JOHN *and* SARAH *are on tiptoe in the dining room. Then the arm drops*)

WESTCOTT (*into the microphone*). Good evening, everybody. Cream of Mush brings you Sheridan Whiteside.

(*The* LEADER *gestures to the* CHOIR BOYS, *and they raise their lovely voices in "Heilige Nacht." Another gesture from* WESTCOTT, *and* WHITESIDE *begins to speak, with the boys singing as a background*)

WHITESIDE. This is Whiteside speaking. On this eve of eves, when my own heart is overflowing with peace and kindness, I think it is most fitting to tell once again the story of that still and lustrous night, nigh onto two thousand years ago—

(*But suddenly there is an interruption.* MISS PREEN *dashes into the room, clutching her arm and screaming*)

MISS PREEN. A penguin bit me!

(*Cries of "Sssh! Quiet!" from the radio men. The doctor rushes to* MISS PREEN'S *side*)

(*But* WHITESIDE *is equal to the occasion. He raises his voice and fights right through*)

WHITESIDE. —when first the star of Bethlehem was glimpsed in a wondrous sky . . .

(*His famous voice goes out over the air to the listening millions as—*

The curtain falls

ACT THREE

Christmas morning.

The bright December sunlight streams in through the window.

But the Christmas calm is quickly broken. From the library comes the roaring voice of MR. WHITESIDE. *"Miss Preen! Miss Preen!"*

MISS PREEN, *who is just coming through the dining room, rushes to open the library doors.*

MISS PREEN (*nervously*). Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

(MR. WHITESIDE, *in a mood, rolls himself into the room*)

WHITESIDE. Where *do* you disappear to all the time, My Lady Nausea?

MISS PREEN (*firmly*). Mr. Whiteside, I can only be in one place at a time.

WHITESIDE. That is very fortunate for this community.

(MISS PREEN *goes indignantly into the library and slams the doors after her*)

(JOHN *emerges from the dining room*)

JOHN. Good morning, Mr. Whiteside. Merry Christmas.

WHITESIDE (*testily*). Merry Christmas, John. Merry Christmas.

JOHN. And Sarah and I want to thank you for the wonderful present.

WHITESIDE. That's quite all right, John.

JOHN. Are you ready for your breakfast, Mr. Whiteside?

WHITESIDE. No, I don't think I want any breakfast. . . . Has Miss Cutler come down yet?

JOHN. No, sir, not yet.

WHITESIDE. Is she in her room, do you know?

JOHN. Yes, sir, I think she is. Shall I call her?

WHITESIDE. No, no. That's all, John.

JOHN. Yes, sir.

(MAGGIE *comes down the stairs. She wears a traveling suit, and carries a bag.* WHITESIDE *waits for her to speak*)

MAGGIE. I'm taking the one o'clock train, Sherry. I'm leaving.

WHITESIDE. You're doing nothing of the kind!

MAGGIE. Here are your keys—your driving license. The key to the safe-deposit vault is in the apartment in New York. I'll go in here now and clear things up. (*She opens the library doors*)

WHITESIDE. Just a moment, Mrs. Siddons! Where *were* you until three o'clock this morning? I sat up half the night in this station wagon, worrying about you. You heard me calling to you when you came in. Why didn't you answer me?

MAGGIE. Look, Sherry, it's over, and you've won. I don't want to talk about it.

WHITESIDE. Oh, come, come, come, come, come. What are you trying to do—make me feel like a naughty, naughty boy? Honestly, Maggie, sometimes you can be very annoying.

MAGGIE (*looking at him in wonder*). You know, you're quite wonderful, Sherry, in a way. *You're* annoyed. I wish there was a laugh left in me. Shall I tell you something, Sherry? I think you are a selfish, petty egomaniac who would see his mother burned at the stake if that was the only way he could light his cigarette. I think you'd sacrifice your best friend without a moment's hesitation if he disturbed the sacred routine of your self-centered, paltry little life. I think you are incapable of any human emotion that goes higher up than your stomach, and I was the fool of the world for ever thinking I could trust you.

WHITESIDE (*pretty indignant at this*). Well, as long as I live, I shall never do anyone a good turn again. I won't ask you to apologize, Maggie, but six months from now you will be thanking me instead of berating me.

MAGGIE. In six months, Sherry, I expect to be so far away from you—

(*She is halted by a loud voice from the hallway, as the door bangs. "Hello—hello—hello!" It is* BERT JEFFERSON *who enters, full of Christmas cheer*)

BERT. Merry Christmas, everybody! Merry Christmas! I'm a little high, but I can explain everything. Hi, Maggie! Hi, Mr. Whiteside! Shake hands with a successful playwright. Maggie, why'd you run away last night? Where were you? Miss Sheldon thinks the play is wonderful. I read her the play and she thinks it's wonderful. Isn't that wonderful?

MAGGIE. Yes, that's fine, Bert.

BERT. Isn't that wonderful, Mr. Whiteside?

WHITESIDE. Jefferson, I think you ought to go home, don't you?

BERT. What? No—biggest day of my life. I know I'm a little drunk, but this is a big day. We've been sitting over in Billy's Tavern all night. Never realized it was daylight until it was daylight. . . . Listen, Maggie—Miss Sheldon says the play needs just a little bit of fixing—do it in three weeks. She's going to take me to a little place she's got in Lake Placid—just for three weeks. Going to work on the play together. Isn't it wonderful? Why don't you say something, Maggie?

WHITESIDE. Look, Bert, I suggest you tell us all about this later. Now, why don't you— (*He stops as* DR. BRADLEY *enters from the hallway*)

DR. BRADLEY. Oh, excuse me! Merry Christmas, everybody. Merry Christmas.

BERT. God bless us all, and Tiny Tim.

DR. BRADLEY. Yes. . . . Mr. Whiteside, I thought perhaps if I came very early—

BERT. You know what, Doc? I'm going to Lake Placid for three weeks—isn't that wonderful? Ever hear of Lorraine Sheldon, the famous actress? Well, we're going to Lake Placid for three weeks.

WHITESIDE. Dr. Bradley, would you do me a favor? I think Mr. Jefferson would like some black coffee and a little breakfast. Would you take care of him, please?

DR. BRADLEY (*none too pleased*). Yes, yes, of course.

BERT. Dr. Bradley, I'm going to buy breakfast for *you*—biggest breakfast you ever had.

DR. BRADLEY. Yes, yes. Come along, Jefferson.

BERT. You know what, Doctor? Let's climb down a couple of chimneys. I got a friend doesn't believe in Santa Claus—let's climb down his chimney and frighten the hell out of him. (*He does out with the* DOCTOR)

WHITESIDE (*in a burst of magnanimity*). Now listen to me, Maggie. I am willing to forgive your tawdry outburst and talk about this calmly.

MAGGIE (*now crying openly*). I love him so terribly. Oh, Sherry, Sherry, why did you do it? Why did you do it? (*She goes stumblingly into the library*)

(WHITESIDE, *left alone, looks at his watch; heaves a long sigh. Then* HARRIET *comes down the steps, dressed for the street*)

HARRIET. Merry Christmas, Mr. Whiteside.

WHITESIDE. Oh! . . . Merry Christmas, Miss Stanley.

HARRIET (*nervously*). I'm afraid I shouldn't be seen talking to you, Mr. Whiteside—my brother is terribly angry. I just couldn't resist asking—did you like my Christmas present?

WHITESIDE. I'm very sorry, Miss Stanley—I haven't opened it. I haven't opened any of my presents yet.

HARRIET. Oh, dear. I was so anxious to—it's right here, Mr.

Whiteside. (*She goes to the tree*) Won't you open it now?

WHITESIDE (*as he undoes the string*). I appreciate your thinking of me, Miss Stanley. This is very thoughtful of you. (*He takes out the gift*) Why, it's lovely. I'm very fond of these old photographs. Thank you very much.

HARRIET. I was twenty-two when that was taken. That was my favorite dress. . . . Do you really like it?

WHITESIDE. I do indeed. When I get back to town I shall send *you* a little gift.

HARRIET. Will you? Oh, thank you, Mr. Whiteside. I shall treasure it. . . . Well, I shall be late for church. Good-bye. Good-bye.

WHITESIDE. Good-bye, Miss Stanley.

(*As she goes out the front door,* WHITESIDE'S *eyes return to the gift. He puzzles over it for a second, shakes his head. Mumbles to himself—"What is there about that woman?" Shakes his head again in perplexity*)

(JOHN *comes from the dining room, en route to the second floor with* MRS. STANLEY'S *tray*)

JOHN. Sarah's got a little surprise for you, Mr. Whiteside. She's just taking it out of the oven.

WHITESIDE. Thank you, John.

(JOHN *disappears up the stairs*)

(*Then suddenly there is a great ringing of the door bell. It stops for a second, then picks up violently again—rhythmically, this time. It continues until the door is opened*)

WHITESIDE. Miss Preen! Miss Preen!

(MISS PREEN *comes hurrying from the library*)

MISS PREEN. Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

WHITESIDE. Answer the door, will you? John is upstairs.

(MISS PREEN *obviously annoyed, hurries to the door*)

my favorite dress. . . . Do you really like it?

WHITESIDE. I do indeed. When I get back to town I shall send *you* a little gift.

reason why. She is carried into the room in the arms of a pixie-like gentleman, who is kissing her over and over)

THE GENTLEMAN CARRYING MISS PREEN. I love you madly—madly! Did you hear what I said—madly! Kiss me! Again! Don't be afraid of my passion. Kiss me! I can feel the hot blood pounding through your varicose veins.

MISS PREEN (*through all this*). Put me down! Put me down, do you hear! Don't you dare kiss me! Who are you! Put me down or I'll scream. Mr. Whiteside! Mr. Whiteside!

WHITESIDE. Banjo! Banjo, for God's sake!

BANJO (*quite calmly*). Hello, Whiteside. Will you sign for this package, please?

WHITESIDE. Banjo, put that woman down. That is my nurse, you mental delinquent.

BANJO (*putting* MISS PREEN *on her feet*). Come to my room in half an hour and bring some rye bread. (*And for good measure he slaps* MISS PREEN *right on the fanny*)

MISS PREEN (*outraged*). Really, Mr. Whiteside! (*She adjusts her clothes with a quick jerk or two and marches into the library*)

BANJO. Whiteside, I'm here to spend Christmas with you. Give me a kiss! (*He starts to embrace him*)

WHITESIDE. Get away from me, you reform-school fugitive. How did you get here anyway?

BANJO. Darryl Zanuck loaned me his reindeer. . . . Whiteside, we finished shooting the picture yesterday and I'm on my way to Nova Scotia. Flew here in twelve hours—borrowed an airplane from Howard Hughes. Whiteside, I brought you a wonderful Christmas present. (*He produces a little tissue-wrapped package*) This brassière was once worn by Hedy Lamarr.

WHITESIDE. Listen, you idiot, how long can you stay?

BANJO. Just long enough to take a bath. I'm on my way to Nova Scotia. Where's Maggie?

WHITESIDE. Nova Scotia? What are you going to Nova Scotia for?

BANJO. I'm sick of Hollywood and there's a dame in New York I don't want to see. So I figured I'd go to Nova Scotia and get some good sálmon. . . . Where the hell's Maggie? I want to see her. . . . What's the matter with you? Where is she?

WHITESIDE. Banjo, I'm glad you're here. I'm very annoyed at Maggie. Very!

BANJO. What's the matter? . . . (*To his considerable surprise, at this point, he sees* WHITESIDE *get up out of his chair and start to pace up and down the room*) Say, what *is* this? I thought you couldn't walk.

WHITESIDE. Oh, I've been all right for weeks. That isn't the point. I'm furious at Maggie. She's turned on me like a viper. You know how fond I am of her. Well, after all these years she's repaying my affection by behaving like a fishwife.

BANJO. What are you talking about?

WHITESIDE. But I never believed for a moment she was really in love with him.

BANJO. In love with *who*? I just got here—remember.

WHITESIDE. Great God, I'm telling you, you Hollywood nitwit. A young newspaper man here in town.

BANJO (*surprised and pleased*). Maggie finally fell—well, what do you know? What kind of a guy is he?

WHITESIDE. Oh, shut up and listen, will you?

BANJO. Well, go on. What happened?

WHITESIDE. Well. Lorraine Sheldon happened to come out here and visit me.

BANJO. Old Hot-pants—here?

WHITESIDE. Now listen! He'd written a play—this young fellow. You can guess the rest. He's going away with Lorraine this afternoon. To "rewrite." So there you are. Maggie's in there now, crying her eyes out.

BANJO. Gee! . . . (*Thinking it over*) Say, wait a minute. What do you mean Lorraine Sheldon *happened* to come out here? I smell a rat, Sherry—a rat with a beard.

(*And it might be well to add, at this point, that* MR. SHERIDAN WHITESIDE *wears a beard*)

WHITESIDE. Well, all right, all right. But I did it for Maggie —because I thought it was the right thing for her.

BANJO. Oh, sure. You haven't thought of yourself in years. . . . Gee, poor kid. Can I go in and talk to her?

WHITESIDE. No—no. Leave her alone.

BANJO. Any way I could help, Sherry? Where's this guy live—this guy she likes? Can we get hold of him?

WHITESIDE. Now, wait a minute, Banjo. We don't want any phony warrants, or you pretending to be J. Edgar Hoover. I've been through all that with you before. (*He paces again*) I got Lorraine out here and I've got to get her away.

BANJO. It's got to be good, Sherry. Lorraine's no dope. . . . Now, there must be *some*thing that would get her out of here like a bat out of hell. . . . Say! I think I've got it! That fellow she's so crazy about over in England—Lord Fanny or whatever it is. Bottomley—that's it!

WHITESIDE (*with a pained expression*). No, Banjo. No.

BANJO. Wait a minute—you don't catch on. We send Lorraine a cablegram from Lord Bottomley—

WHITESIDE. I catch on, Banjo. Lorraine caught on, too. It's been tried.

BANJO. Oh! . . . I told you she was no dope. . . . (*Seeing* WHITESIDE's *chair, he sits in it and leans back with a good deal of pleasure*) Well, you've got a tough proposition on your hands.

WHITESIDE. The trouble is there's so damned little time. . . . Get out of my chair! (WHITESIDE *gets back into it*) Lorraine's taking him away with her this afternoon. Oh, damn, damn, damn. There must be some way out. The trouble is I've done this job too well. Hell and damnation.

BANJO (*pacing*). Stuck, huh?

WHITESIDE. In the words of one of our greatest lyric poets, you said it.

BANJO. Yeh. . . . Gee, I'm hungry. We'll think of something, Sherry—you watch. We'll get Lorraine out of here if I have to do it one piece at a time.

(SARAH *enters from the dining room bearing a tray on which reposes the culinary surprise that* JOHN *has mentioned. She holds it behind her back*)

SARAH. Merry Christmas, Mr. Whiteside. . . . Excuse me. (*This last to* BANJO) I've got something for you. . . .

(BANJO *blandly lifts the latest delicacy and proceeds to eat it as* SARAH *presents the empty plate to* WHITESIDE)

SARAH (*almost in tears*). But, Mr. Whiteside, it was for you.

WHITESIDE. Never mind, Sarah. He's quite mad.

BANJO. Come, Petrouchka, we will dance in the snow until all St. Petersburg is aflame with jealousy. (*He clutches* SARAH *and waltzes her toward the kitchen, loudly humming the Merry Widow waltz*)

SARAH (*as she is borne away*). Mr. Whiteside! Mr. Whiteside!

WHITESIDE. Just give him some breakfast, Sarah. He's harmless.

(MR. WHITESIDE *barely has a moment in which to collect his thoughts before the library doors are opened and* MISS PREEN *emerges. It is* MISS PREEN *in street clothes this time, and with a suitcase in her hand*)

(*She plants herself squarely in front of* WHITESIDE, *puts down her bag and starts drawing on a pair of gloves*)

WHITESIDE. And just what does this mean?

MISS PREEN. It means, Mr. Whiteside, that I am leaving. My address is on the desk inside; you can send me a check.

WHITESIDE. You realize, Miss Preen, that this is completely unprofessional.

MISS PREEN. I do indeed. I am not only walking out on this

case, Mr. Whiteside—I am leaving the nursing profession. I became a nurse because all my life, ever since I was a little girl, I was filled with the idea of serving a suffering humanity. After one month with you, Mr. Whiteside, I am going to work in a munitions factory. From now on anything that I can do to help exterminate the human race will fill me with the greatest of pleasure. If Florence Nightingale had ever nursed *you,* Mr. Whiteside, she would have married Jack the Ripper instead of founding the Red Cross. Good day. (*And she sails out*)

(*Before* WHITESIDE *has time to digest this little bouquet,* MRS. STANLEY, *in a state of great fluttery excitement, rushes down the stairs*)

MRS. STANLEY. Mr. Stanley is here with June. He's brought June back. Thank goodness, thank goodness. (*We hear her at the door*) June, June, thank God you're back. You're not married, are you?

JUNE (*from the hallway*). No, Mother, I'm not. And please don't be hysterical.

(MRS. STANLEY *comes into view, her arms around a rebellious* JUNE. *Behind them looms* MR. STANLEY, *every inch the stern father*)

MRS. STANLEY. Oh, June, if it had been anyone but that awful boy. You know how your father and I felt. . . . Ernest, thank goodness you stopped it. How did you do it?

STANLEY. Never mind that, Daisy. Just take June upstairs. I have something to say to Mr. Whiteside.

MRS. STANLEY. What about Richard? Is there any news?

STANLEY. It's all right, Daisy—all under control. Just take June upstairs.

JUNE. Father, haven't we had enough melodrama? I don't have to be taken upstairs—I'll go upstairs. . . . Merry Christmas, Mr. Whiteside. It looks bad for John L. Lewis. Come on, Mother—lock me in my room.

MRS. STANLEY. Now, June, you'll feel much better after

you've had a hot bath, I know. Have you had anything to eat? (*She follows her daughter up the stairs*)

(STANLEY *turns to* MR. WHITESIDE)

STANLEY. I am pleased to inform you, sir, that your plans for my daughter seem to have gone a trifle awry. She is not, nor will she ever be, married to that labor agitator that you so kindly picked out for her. As for my son, he has been apprehended in Toledo, and will be brought back home within the hour. Not having your gift for invective, I cannot tell you what I think of your obnoxious interference in my affairs, but I have now arranged that you will interfere no longer. (*He turns toward the hallway*) Come in, gentlemen. (*Two burly* MEN *come into view and stand in the archway*) Mr. Whiteside, these gentlemen are deputy sheriffs. They have a warrant by which I am enabled to put you out of this house, and I need hardly add that it will be the greatest moment of my life. Mr. Whiteside— (*He looks at his watch*) —I am giving you fifteen minutes in which to pack up and get out. If you are not gone in fifteen minutes, Mr. Whiteside, these gentlemen will forcibly eject you. (*He turns to the deputies*) Thank you, gentlemen. Will you wait outside, please? (*The* TWO MEN *file out*) Fifteen minutes, Mr. Whiteside—and that means bag, baggage, wheelchair, penguins, octopus and cockroaches. I am now going upstairs to smash our radio, so that not even accidentally will I ever hear your voice again.

WHITESIDE. Sure you don't want my autograph, old fellow?

STANLEY. Fifteen minutes, Mr. Whiteside. (*And he goes*)

(BANJO, *still eating, returns from the kitchen*)

BANJO. Well, Whiteside, I didn't get an idea. Any news from the front?

WHITESIDE. Yes. The enemy is at my rear, and nibbling.

BANJO. Where'd you say Maggie was? In there?

WHITESIDE. It's no use, Banjo. She's taking the one o'clock train out.

BANJO. No kidding? You didn't tell me that. You mean she's quitting you, after all these years? She's really leaving?

WHITESIDE. She is!

BANJO. That means you've only got till one o'clock to do something?

WHITESIDE. No, dear. I have exactly fifteen minutes— (*He looks at his watch*) —ah—fourteen minutes—in which to pull out of my hat the God-damnedest rabbit you have ever seen.

BANJO. What do you mean fifteen minutes?

WHITESIDE. In exactly fifteen minutes Baby's rosy little body is being tossed into the snow. My host has sworn out a warrant. I am being kicked out.

BANJO. What? I never heard of such a thing. What would he do a thing like that for?

WHITESIDE. Never mind, never mind. The point is, I have only fifteen minutes. Banjo dear, the master is growing a little desperate.

BANJO (*paces a moment*). What about laying your cards on the table with Lorraine?

WHITESIDE. Now, Banjo. You know Dream Girl as well as I do. What do *you* think?

BANJO. You're right. . . . Say! If I knew where she was I could get a car and run her over. It wouldn't hurt her much.

WHITESIDE (*wearily*). Banjo, for God's sake. Go in and talk to Maggie for a minute—right in there. I want to think.

BANJO. Could we get a doctor to say Lorraine has smallpox?

WHITESIDE. Please, Banjo. I've got to think.

BANJO (*opening the library doors*). Pardon me, miss, is this the Y.M.C.A.?

(*The doors close*)

(WHITESIDE *is alone again. He leans back, concentrating intensely. He shakes his head as, one after another, he discards a couple of ideas*)

(*We hear the outer door open and close, and from the hallway comes* RICHARD. *Immediately behind him is a stalwart-looking* MAN *with an air of authority*)

THE MAN (*to* RICHARD, *as he indicates* WHITESIDE). Is this your father?

RICHARD. No, you idiot. . . . Hello, Mr. Whiteside. I didn't get very far. Any suggestions?

WHITESIDE. I'm very sorry, Richard—very sorry indeed. I wish I were in position—

STANLEY (*descending the stairs*). Well, you're *not* in position. . . . Thank you very much, officer. Here's a little something for your trouble.

THE MAN. Thank you, sir. Good day. (*He goes*)

STANLEY. Will you go upstairs please, Richard?

(RICHARD *hesitates for a second. Looks at his father, then at* WHITESIDE; *silently goes up the steps*)

(MR. STANLEY *follows him, but pauses on the landing*)

STANLEY. *Ten* minutes, Mr. Whiteside. (*And he goes*)

(JOHN *enters from the dining room, bringing a glass of orange juice*)

JOHN. Here you are, Mr. Whiteside. Feeling any better?

WHITESIDE. Superb. Any cyanide in this orange juice, John? (*The door bell rings*) Open the door, John. It's probably some mustard gas from an old friend.

JOHN (*en route to the door*). Yes, sir. . . . Say, that crazy fellow made a great hit with Sarah. He wants to give her a screen test.

(*At the outer door we hear* LORRAINE'S *voice: "Good morning! Is Mr. Whiteside up yet?"* JOHN'S *answer: "Yes, he is, Miss Sheldon—he's right here"*)

(WHITESIDE *groans as he hears her voice*)

LORRAINE (*entering, in a very smart Christmas morning costume*). Merry Christmas, darling! Merry Christmas!

I've come to have Christmas breakfast with you, my dear. May I? (*She kisses him*)

WHITESIDE (*nothing matters any more*). Of course, my sprite. John, a tray for Miss Sheldon—better make it one-minute eggs.

LORRAINE. Sherry, it's the most perfect Christmas morning —the snow is absolutely glistening. Too bad you can't get out.

WHITESIDE. Oh, I'll probably see a bit of it. . . . I hear you're off for Lake Placid, my blossom. What time are you going?

LORRAINE. Oh, Sherry, how did you know? Is Bert here?

WHITESIDE. No, he rolled in a little while ago. Worked rather fast, didn't you, dear?

LORRAINE. Darling, I was just swept off my feet by the play —it's fantastically good. Sherry, it's the kind of part that only comes along once in ten years. I'm so grateful to you, darling. Really, Sherry, sometimes I think that you're the only friend I have in the world.

WHITESIDE (*dryly*). Thank you, dear. What time did you say you were leaving—you and Jefferson?

LORRAINE. Oh, I don't know—I think it's four o'clock. You know, quite apart from anything else, Sherry, Bert is really a very attractive man. It makes it rather a pleasure, squaring accounts with little Miss Vitriol. In fact, it's all worked out beautifully. . . . Sherry lamb, I want to give you the most beautiful Christmas present you've ever had in your life. Now, what do you want? Anything! I'm so deliriously happy that— (*A bellowing laugh comes from the library. She stops, lips compressed*) That sounds like Banjo. Is he here?

WHITESIDE. He is, my dear. Just the family circle gathering at Christmas. (*A look at his watch*) My, how time flies when you're having fun.

(BANJO *emerges from the library*)

BANJO. Why, hello, Sweetie Pants! How are you?

LORRAINE (*not over-cordial*). Very well, thank you. And you, Banjo?

BANJO. I'm fine, fine. How's the mattress business, Lorraine?

LORRAINE. *Very* funny. It's too bad, Banjo, that your pictures aren't as funny as you seem to think *you* are.

BANJO. You've got me there, mama. Say, you look in the pink, Lorraine. . . . Anything in the wind, Whiteside?

WHITESIDE (*sotte voce*). Not a glimmer.

BANJO. What time does the boat sail?

WHITESIDE. Ten minutes.

LORRAINE. What boat is this?

BANJO. The good ship *Up the Creek*. . . . Oh, well! You feel fine, huh, Lorraine?

LORRAINE. What? Yes, of course I do. . . . Where's that breakfast, Sherry?

(MAGGIE *emerges from the library, a sheaf of papers in her hand. She stops imperceptibly as she sees* LORRAINE)

MAGGIE. I've listed everything except the New Year's Eve broadcast. Wasn't there a schedule on that?

WHITESIDE (*uneasily*). I think it's on the table there, some place.

MAGGIE. Thank you. (*She turns to the papers on the table*)

LORRAINE (*obviously for* MAGGIE'S *ears*). New Year's Eve? Oh, Bert and I'll hear it in Lake Placid. You were at my cottage up there once, weren't you, Sherry? It's lovely, isn't it? Away from everything. Just snow and clear, cold nights. (*The door bell rings*) Oh, that's probably Bert. I told him to meet me here. (MAGGIE, *as though she had not heard a word, goes quietly into the library.* LORRAINE *relaxes*) You know, I'm looking forward to Lake Placid. Bert's the kind of man who will do all winter sports beautifully.

BANJO (*gently*). Will he get time?

(*Voices are heard from the hallway. "Whiteside?" "Yes,*

sir." "American Express." JOHN *backs into the room, obviously directing a major operation*)

JOHN. All right—come ahead. Care now—careful—right in here. It's for you, Mr. Whiteside.

LORRAINE. Why, Sherry, what's this?

(*Into view come two* EXPRESSMEN, *groaning and grunting under the weight of nothing more or less than an Egyptian mummy case. It seems that* MR. WHITESIDE'S *friends are liable to think of anything*)

EXPRESSMAN. Where do you want this put?

JOHN. Right there.

WHITESIDE. Dear God, if there was one thing I needed right now it was an Egyptian mummy.

BANJO (*reading from a tag*). "Merry Christmas from the Khedive of Egypt." What did you send *him*? Grant's Tomb?

(MR. STANLEY, *drawn by the voices of the* EXPRESSMEN, *has descended the stairs in time to witness this newest hue and cry*)

STANLEY (*surveying the scene*). *Five* minutes, Mr. Whiteside! (*He indicates the mummy case*) Including *that.* (*And up the stairs again*)

LORRAINE. Why, what was all that about? Who is that man?

WHITESIDE. He announces the time every few minutes. I pay him a small sum.

LORRAINE. But what on earth for, Sherry?

WHITESIDE (*violently*). I lost my watch!

(*From the hallway a familiar figure peeps in*)

DR. BRADLEY. Oh, excuse me, Mr. Whiteside. Are you busy?

WHITESIDE (*closing his eyes*). Good God!

DR. BRADLEY (*coming into the room*). I've written a new chapter on the left kidney. Suppose I— (*He smiles apologetically at* LORRAINE *and* BANJO) Pardon me. (*Goes into the library*)

LORRAINE. Is that the plumber again, Sherry? . . . Oh, dear, I wonder where Bert is. . . . Darling, you're not very Christmasy—you're usually bubbling over on Christmas morning. . . . *Who* sent this to you, Sherry —the Khedive of Egypt? You know, I think it's rather beautiful. I must go to Egypt some day—I really must. I know I'd love it. The first time I went to Pompeii I cried all night. All those people—all those lives. Where are they now? Sherry! Don't you ever think about that? I do. Here was a woman—like myself—a woman who once lived and loved, full of the same passions, fears, jealousies, hates. And what remains of any of it now? Just this, and nothing more. (*She opens the case, then, with a sudden impulse, steps into it and folds her arms, mummy-fashion*) A span of four thousand years—a mere atom in the eternity of time—and here am I, another woman living out her life. I want to cry.

(*She closes her eyes, and as she stands there, immobilized, the eyes of* BANJO *and* WHITESIDE *meet. The same idea has leaped into their minds.* BANJO, *rising slowly from the couch, starts to approach the mummy case, casually whistling "Dixie." But just before he reaches it* LORRAINE *steps blandly out*)

LORRAINE. Oh, I mustn't talk this way today. It's Christmas, it's Christmas!

(BANJO *puts on a great act of unconcern*)

WHITESIDE (*rising to the occasion, and dripping pure charm*). Lorraine dear, have you ever played Saint Joan?

LORRAINE. No, I haven't, Sherry. What makes you ask that?

WHITESIDE. There was something about your expression as you stood in that case—there was an absolute halo about you.

LORRAINE. Why, Sherry, how sweet!

WHITESIDE. It transcended any mortal expression I've ever seen. Step into it again, dear.

LORRAINE. Sherry, you're joshing me—aren't you?

WHITESIDE. My dear, I don't make light of these things. I was deeply moved. There was a strange beauty about you, Lorraine—pure Da Vinci. Please do it again.

LORRAINE. Well, I don't know exactly what it was that I did, but I'll— (*She starts to step into the case again, then changes her mind*) Oh, I feel too silly, Sherry.

(BANJO'S *eyes are fixed somewhere on the ceiling, but he is somewhat less innocent than he seems*)

WHITESIDE (*returning to the battle*). Lorraine dear, in that single moment you approached the epitome of your art, and you should not be ashamed of it. You asked me a little while ago what I wanted for a Christmas present. All that I want, Lorraine, is the memory of you in that mummy case.

LORRAINE. Why, darling, I'm—all choked up. (*Crossing her arms, she takes a moment or two to throw herself in the mood, then steps reverently into the case*) "Dust thou art, and dust to dust—"

(*Bang!* BANJO *has closed the case and fastened it.* WHITESIDE *leaps out of the chair*)

WHITESIDE. Eureka!

BANJO. There's service for you!

WHITESIDE. Will she be all right in there?

BANJO. Sure—she can breathe easy. I'll let her out as soon as we get on the plane. . . . What are we going to do now? How do we get this out of here?

WHITESIDE. One thing at a time—that's the next step.

BANJO. Think fast, Captain. Think fast.

(*And* MAGGIE *enters from the library, papers in hand.* WHITESIDE *scrambles back into his chair;* BANJO *is again the little innocent*)

MAGGIE. This is everything, Sherry—I'm leaving three carbons. Is there anything out here? (*She inspects a small basket fastened to his chair*) What's in this basket?

WHITESIDE (*eager to be rid of her*). Nothing at all. Thank you, thank you.

MAGGIE. Shall I file these letters? Do you want this picture?

WHITESIDE. No—throw everything away. Wait—give me the picture. I want the picture.

MAGGIE. The only thing I haven't done is to put all your broadcasts in order. Do you want me to do that?

WHITESIDE (*a flash of recollection has come to him as he takes* HARRIET'S *photograph in his hand, but he contrives to smother his excitement*). What? . . . Ah—do that, will you? Do it right away—it's very important. Right away, Maggie.

MAGGIE. I'll see you before I go, Banjo. (*She goes into the library again, closing the doors*)

WHITESIDE (*watching her out, then jumping up in great excitement*). I've got it!

BANJO. What?

WHITESIDE. I knew I'd seen this face before! I knew it! Now I know how to get this out of here.

BANJO. What face? How?

(*And, at that instant,* MR. STANLEY *comes down the stairs, watch in hand*)

STANLEY (*vastly enjoying himself*). The time is up, Mr. Whiteside. Fifteen minutes.

WHITESIDE. Ah, yes, Mr. Stanley. Fifteen minutes. But just one favor before I go. I would like you to summon those two officers and ask them to help this gentleman down to the airport with this mummy case. Would you be good enough to do that, Mr. Stanley?

STANLEY. I will do nothing of the kind.

WHITESIDE (*ever so sweetly*). Oh, I think you will, Mr. Stanley. Or shall I inform my radio audience, on my next broadcast, that your sister, Harriet Stanley, is none other than the famous Harriet Sedley, who murdered her mother and father with an axe twenty-five years ago in Gloucester, Massachusetts. . . . (*At which* MR. STAN-

LEY *quietly collapses into a chair*) Come, Mr. Stanley, it's a very small favor. Or would you rather have the good folk of Mesalia repeating at your very doorstep that once popular little jingle:

"Harriet Sedley took an axe
And gave her mother forty whacks,
And when the job was nicely done,
She gave her father forty-one."

Remember, Mr. Stanley, I too am giving up something. It would make a hell of a broadcast. . . . Well?

STANLEY (*licked at last*). Mr. Whiteside, you are the damnedest person I have ever met.

WHITESIDE. I often think so myself, old fellow. . . . Officers, will you come in here, please?

BANJO. Whiteside, you're a great man. (*He places a reverent kiss on the mummy case*)

WHITESIDE (*as the* DEPUTIES *enter*). Come right in, officers. Mr. Stanley would like you to help this gentleman down to the airport with this mummy case. He is sending it to a friend in Nova Scotia.

BANJO. Collect.

WHITESIDE. Right, Mr. Stanley?

STANLEY (*weakly*). Yes. . . . Yes.

WHITESIDE. Thank you, gentlemen—handle it carefully. . . . Banjo, my love, you're wonderful and I may write a book about you.

BANJO. Don't bother—I can't read. (*To* MAGGIE, *as she enters from library*) Good-bye, Maggie—love conquers all. . . . Don't drop that case, boys—it contains an antique. (*And out he goes with the mummy case, to say nothing of* MISS LORRAINE SHELDON)

MAGGIE (*catching on to what has happened*). Sherry! Sherry, was that—?

WHITESIDE. It was indeed. The field is clear and you have my blessing.

MAGGIE. Sherry! Sherry, you old reprobate!

WHITESIDE. Just send me a necktie some time. My hat and coat, Maggie, and also your railroad ticket. I am leaving for New York.

MAGGIE. You're leaving, Shèrry?

WHITESIDE. Don't argue, Rat Girl— Do as you're told.

MAGGIE. Yes, Mr. Whiteside. (*She goes happily into the library, just as* BERT *returns*)

BERT. Mr. Whiteside, I want to apologize for—

WHITESIDE. Don't give it a thought, Bert. There's been a slight change of plan. Miss Sheldon is off on a world cruise—I am taking your play to Katharine Cornell. Miss Cutler will explain everything. (MAGGIE *brings* WHITESIDE'S *coat, hat, cane*) Oh, thank you, Maggie, my darling.

(*And just then the* DOCTOR *comes out of the library. Still trying*)

DR. BRADLEY. Mr. Whiteside, are you very busy?

WHITESIDE. Ah, yes, Doctor. *Very* busy. But if you ever get to New York, Doctor, try and find me. (*He takes* MAGGIE *in his arms*) Good-bye, my lamb. I love you very much.

MAGGIE. Sherry, you're wonderful.

WHITESIDE. Nonsense. . . . Good-bye, Jefferson. You'll never know the trouble you've caused.

BERT. Good-bye, Mr. Whiteside.

WHITESIDE. Good-bye, Mr. Stanley. I would like to hear, in the near future, that your daughter has married her young man and that your son has been permitted to follow his own bent. OR ELSE. . . . Merry Christmas, everybody! (*And out he strolls*)

(*But the worst is yet to come. There is a loud crash on the porch, followed by an anguished yell*)

(MAGGIE *gives a little shriek and rushes out.* BERT *and the* DOCTOR *rush after her. Down the stairs come* MRS. STANLEY, JUNE *and* RICHARD. *From the dining room* JOHN *and* SARAH *come running, "What's happened?" "What is it?"*)

(*And then we see. Into view come* BERT *and the* DOCTOR, *carrying* MR. WHITESIDE *between them. He is screaming his head off*)

WHITESIDE. Miss Preen! Miss Preen! I want Miss Preen back! . . . Mr. Stanley, I am suing you for *three* hundred and fifty thousand dollars!

(MR. STANLEY *throws up his hands in despair.* MRS. STANLEY *simply faints away*)

Curtain

GEORGE WASHINGTON SLEPT HERE

George Washington Slept Here was produced by Sam H. Harris at the Lyceum Theatre, New York, on Friday night, October 18, 1940, with the following cast:

MR. KIMBER	PERCY KILBRIDE
NEWTON FULLER	ERNEST TRUEX
ANNABELLE FULLER	JEAN DIXON
MADGE FULLER	PEGGY FRENCH
STEVE ELDRIDGE	KENDALL CLARK
KATIE	GRACE VALENTINE
MRS. DOUGLAS	MABEL TALIAFERRO
CLAYTON EVANS	GEORGE BAXTER
RENA LESLIE	RUTH WESTON
HESTER	PAULA TRUEMAN
RAYMOND	BOBBY READICK
UNCLE STANLEY	DUDLEY DIGGES
LEGGETT FRAZER	DAVID ORRICK
TOMMY HUGHES	EDWARD ELLIOTT
SUE BARRINGTON	MARIAN EDWARDS
MISS WILCOX	TONI SOREL
MR. PRESCOTT	RICHARD BARBEE

Stage Manager—HENRY EPHRON
Assistant Stage Manager—JOHN SHELLIE
Settings by JOHN ROOT

SCENE

A Farmhouse in Pennsylvania

ACT ONE

Scene I—May
Scene II—June

ACT TWO

Scene I—A Friday in August
Scene II—Sunday Afternoon

ACT THREE

The Following Morning

ACT ONE

SCENE I

An abandoned farmhouse somewhere in Pennsylvania—Bucks County, to be precise. It is one of those old stone houses that go back to Revolutionary days, and it has evidently seen much better ones than the present. The plaster has come off the wall in great patches; one window has been roughly boarded up, and it is clear that no one has lived there for quite some time.

The last owners have not exactly tidied up before they left. Part of an old rusty plow occupies the center of the room; a long length of garden hose sprawls along the staircase; an old Socony oil can has been tossed into the fireplace, and a decrepit rocking chair stands forlornly at one side, the only piece of furniture in the room.

Outside it is evidently a fine spring day, for the sunlight is streaming in through the dirty panes of the remaining window.

After a moment we hear the sound of a car arriving; a second's silence, then the faint sound of voices. Another pause, and a key is inserted in the lock.

The man who enters is obviously a local product. His name is MR. KIMBER. *He looks like the caretaker of an abandoned farm, and that is what he is.*

He steps aside at the door as another man follows in, peering excitedly about. He is a smallish man, the kind of average man you meet every day in the week. His name is NEWTON FULLER. *He rubs his hands with pleasure as he looks around, then he peers out the door.*

NEWTON (*calling*). Annabelle! Come on in. (ANNABELLE *looms up in the doorway.* ANNABELLE *is an attractive woman in the forties, and no fool, to say the least. She advances into the room, a puzzled look on her face*) Aren't these old houses interesting, Annabelle? Look at that fireplace.

ANNABELLE (*less than enthusiastic*). Uh-huh.

NEWTON. Look at those beams and that funny old door.

ANNABELLE. Yes, it's old, all right.

NEWTON. Isn't it interesting, Annabelle? Two hundred years old. Just think, Annabelle! George Washington slept here. George Washington!

ANNABELLE (*looking around*). Martha wasn't a very good housekeeper.

NEWTON. This whole countryside is tied up with American history. That road we came along—that's the old York Road. The Continental Congress used it, going to Philadelphia. Washington crossed the Delaware only a little ways from here. Don't you get a kind of thrill, Annabelle?

ANNABELLE. What's the matter with you, Newton? You knew you were in America.

NEWTON. I know, but I get a kick out of these things. That old graveyard we just passed—full of Colonial soldiers. My! Think of what happened right around here! Maybe right in this very house. Say, if only these walls could talk.

ANNABELLE. Oh, if they could there'd probably be a commercial with it. . . . Now, come on—we ought to get going.

NEWTON. Wait a minute, Annabelle. I want Madge to see this. (*He calls*) Madge! Oh, there you are.

(MADGE *comes in—a pretty girl in her early twenties*)

MADGE. All right, Dad. I'm ready to see exactly where Washington slept. Not in here, I take it.

NEWTON. Look at this whole place, Madge. Isn't it wonderful?

(STEVE *appears in the doorway*)

STEVE. You know, there's some poison ivy out there that I'll bet goes right back to the Revolution.

NEWTON. Madge, Steve—look at that fireplace. That's a Dutch oven, you know. And look at the way those windows are set. Those walls are twenty inches thick. I tell you, they built houses in those days. And did you notice the outside, Madge? Do you know how old that stonework is? Over two hundred years.

MADGE. Yes, I did, Dad. It's lovely.

NEWTON. My, but I get a kick out of this. Look at this floor, Annabelle. Hand-pegged—not a nail in it. (*He is down on his knees, examining every peg*)

ANNABELLE. Yes, it's fine. Now let's get out of here and leave the stonework alone for another two hundred years. (*She turns to go*)

NEWTON. And right about half a mile from here—

ANNABELLE. Newton, you buy me a book on American history and I'll read it on West Ninety-seventh Street. Right now, I'm hot and hungry. Come on!

NEWTON. Annabelle—

ANNABELLE. Newton, we have *seen* the house.

NEWTON (*blurting it out*). I've bought it!

ANNABELLE (*stopped in her tracks*). What was that?

NEWTON. I said I've bought this place. It's—it's yours.

MADGE. Why, Dad! You mean it?

ANNABELLE. Just a minute, Madge. (*She turns to her husband*) I heard you correctly, Newton? You have *bought* this outhouse?

NEWTON (*brightly*). It's all ours.

MADGE. Steve, I want you to meet my father. A brave pioneer spirit.

ANNABELLE. Please, Madge—Newton, do you mean to

stand there and tell me that without saying a word to anybody, without consulting me at all, you have gone ahead and taken our money and—I think you've lost your mind.

MADGE. Come on, Mother, give in. Why, it's exciting. A house—all ours. We can make it wonderful.

ANNABELLE. But I *hate* the country. (*To* NEWTON) You *know* I hate the country.

MADGE. Oh, now, Mother. You've never lived in the country—how do you know? . . . Come on, Steve—let's look at the upstairs. I want to pick out the best room for myself. (*She starts for the stairs*) Why, think of Pop doing a thing like this all by himself!

MR. KIMBER. Be careful up there, miss. Some of them floors fell in last winter.

STEVE. They did, eh? . . . You better go first then, Madge.

MADGE. Thank you, dear. Chivalry may not be dead, but it's in a bad way.

(*They disappear up the stairs*)

ANNABELLE. Really, Newton, taking what little we've got and—you must be crazy. *Why*? That's what I want to know—*why*?

NEWTON. Well—well, I've had this feeling that—I wanted something I could hang on to. A home, and a piece of land—that's real. That lasts as long as anything lasts. Look at this house. It was standing here when this country started and it's standing here today. And the way things are now it's pretty wonderful to come back to a thing like this. That's why I wanted it. I wanted it for all of us. Annabelle, don't be angry. Say you're not angry, *please*.

ANNABELLE. Angry? I could spit from here to Mount Vernon. Look at this place. Just look at it.

NEWTON. But it was a terrific bargain, Annabelle. I got it at a terrific bargain.

ANNABELLE. More than a dollar?

NEWTON. You just wait and see it a month from now, when it's fixed up. We're going to do the whole thing with local labor, aren't we, Mr. Kimber? Mr. Kimber's going to superintend the whole thing.

ANNABELLE (*turning to* MR. KIMBER). And have you been here two hundred years, too?

MR. KIMBER (*trying hard*). What's that?

NEWTON. You just wait, Annabelle. You're going to be crazy about it. (*He gives her a hopeful little hug; to which* ANNABELLE *does not exactly respond*)

ANNABELLE (*her eyes travel upward*). You know, they ought to be down here in a minute, if there're no floors—

(MADGE *and* STEVE *come running down the stairs again*)

MADGE. The rooms are tiny, Mother, but you get a lovely view from every room. I love it.

STEVE. You could break down a wall and get two wonderful rooms. It wouldn't be a hard job at all.

NEWTON. There! You see.

MADGE. Let's look at the barn, Steve. Maybe I could have a studio out there, if the light's right.

(*They rush out*)

MR. KIMBER (*the voice of doom*). Watch out for that barn One of them walls is caving in.

ANNABELLE. Isn't that nice? (*Indicating a door*) That the dining room?

NEWTON. That's right. That is, it's a tool shed now, but we can make it into a dining room.

ANNABELLE (*prepared for the worst*). Tell me—is there by any chance a kitchen?

NEWTON. Oh, there's a nice big kitchen, Annabelle. There may be one of Mr. Kimber's cows in it now.

ANNABELLE (*blandly*). Oh, if it's as big as you say, Newton, I imagine there'll be room for all of us. (*She goes through the door*)

NEWTON. I hope everything's all right out there, because if

Mrs. Fuller— (*There is a terrific clatter of falling picks and shovels*) Watch out, Annabelle!

ANNABELLE (*from the distance*). Oh, shut up!

NEWTON (*smiling at* MR. KIMBER). Well, Mr. Kimber, here we are. Quite a surprise, wasn't it?

MR. KIMBER. Yes, sir. Have you figured out yet what you're going to do about water?

NEWTON. Water? What water?

MR. KIMBER. Well, what you're going to do about getting water.

NEWTON. Getting water? We've *got* water.

MR. KIMBER. No, you ain't, Mr. Fuller.

NEWTON. Why, of course we have. What about the well? Mr. Henderson said the well was the deepest in the whole county.

MR. KIMBER. Yeah, it's deep all right, but there ain't no water in it.

NEWTON (*sturdily*). Well, I'm certainly going to speak to Mr.— (ANNABELLE *returns from her tour of inspection. She seems to be in a mood*) Can't you see the possibilities, Annabelle? Don't you think we could—very easily —ah—?

(*In reply,* ANNABELLE *just looks at him. Then, with a determined step, she goes up the stairs*)

NEWTON (*first making sure that* ANNABELLE *is out of earshot*). Look, Mr. Kimber, let's not say anything to Mrs. Fuller about—the water.

MR. KIMBER. Yes, sir. But she's going to find out as soon as she wants a drink of water.

NEWTON. Isn't there—isn't there any water at all? Anywhere?

MR. KIMBER. Well, of course there's the brook. But you'd have to carry it up a bucketful at a time. Mrs. Fuller might not like that.

NEWTON (*he glances uneasily up the stairs*). No. Look,

Mr. Kimber, can't we just dig another well and find water?

MR. KIMBER. Yes, nothing to stop you doing that.

NEWTON (*vastly relieved*). Well, there you are! Then we've got water! . . . Gosh, I wish I could go right out and dig it myself. . . . Ah, Mr. Kimber, you don't know what this does to a man. You've lived in the country all your life, but I tell you, when you've been cooped up in the city ever since you were born—just the feel of walking on your own piece of land— Why, I *own* all this, Mr. Kimber! I own every bit of it! Those trees, and the brook, and this house—I can hardly believe it. You know, I want to learn all the things that *you* know, Mr. Kimber—the names of trees and birds. I want to see the seasons change, right with my own eyes. I want to find out for *myself* that summer is here, instead of by getting a cold from the air cooling at the Music Hall. Gosh, I can see myself coming down my road on an autumn night, the smell of the leaves burning—coming in and lighting that fire, and maybe it's raining outside—I tell you, Mr. Kimber, this is the finest thing that ever happened to me. (*He takes his place on the hearth, warming his hands before an imaginary fire, every inch a squire*)

MR. KIMBER (*right in character*). You're going to need a cesspool too, Mr. Fuller.

NEWTON (*rhapsodically*). Go ahead and get one, Mr. Kimber! Get the best! You see, that's just what I mean, Mr. Kimber. Whatever you put into a place, whatever you do to it, why, it's yours! Gives you something to work for. Yes, sir, Mr. Kimber, I can see myself ending my days right here. I can hear 'em saying, "There's the old Fuller place—right up the road there. Ever meet Old Man Fuller? Couldn't meet a nicer old codger—been here for thirty-five years. Don't know what we'd do without him. Yes, *sir.*"

MR. KIMBER (*peering out*). Excuse me, Mr. Fuller. My cow is trying to get into your car. Get away from there, Bessie. Get away. (*He hurries out*)

NEWTON (*monarch of all he surveys*). Yes, sir, been here thirty-five years. Should've seen this place when I bought it. Wouldn't believe it. Why—

(ANNABELLE *comes down the stairs again, a dangerous gleam in her eye*)

ANNABELLE. Newton, when George Washington slept here, where did he hang his clothes? There is not a closet in the house.

NEWTON. Huh?

ANNABELLE. George Washington also apparently never had to go to the bathroom.

NEWTON. Oh, I forgot to tell you, Annabelle—there aren't any just yet.

ANNABELLE. What are we supposed to do—run back to the apartment?

(MADGE *and* STEVE *rush back in, full of excitement*)

MADGE. The barn is perfect, Dad. It won't smell like a studio, but I can paint in it. And Steve says the brook can be dammed up and make a wonderful swimming place.

STEVE. Know what I'll do? I'm going to bring my surveying instruments down, fix you up a swimming pool, and eat off you all summer on the strength of it. I think the place is great, Mr. Fuller.

NEWTON. See, Annabelle? Why, I can hardly wait to get to work on it. Let's take these boards down right now. (*With a strength born of joy he rips a board off the window*) Ouch! I didn't see that nail.

MADGE. Did you hurt yourself, Dad?

NEWTON. Naw! (*He goes into a new rhapsody about the fireplace*) Boy, can you imagine that fireplace with a great big roaring fire! (*He sticks his head into the fire-*

place, trying to peer up the flue) Ow! (*He emerges with both eyes closed and his face covered with soot*)

MADGE. Oh, Dad, isn't that a shame! Here!

STEVE. Take my handkerchief!

(*Between them,* NEWTON *is guided to the rocking chair. He sits in it, and it collapses under him, sending him sprawling to the floor*)

ANNABELLE (*surveying the scene with satisfaction*). Good!

The curtain is down

SCENE II

A month later—the fifteenth of June.

Apparently local labor has let NEWTON FULLER *down. The room is just about as we left it, although it has been cleaned up a little. The missing window pane has been installed, and at least the plow and the oil can and the hose have been removed. But the plaster is still hanging in strips from the walls, and it is by no means that love nest you would bring a young bride to.*

However, a mess of furniture of all kinds litters the room. Assorted chairs and a divan, a few tables, a chest of drawers, a bed spring, a mattress, lamps, a few mirrors. There are two barrels of chinaware, excelsior streaming over the sides. There are piles of books tied together with rope; stacks of pictures stand against the wall. In short, the FULLERS *are moving in.*

NEWTON, ANNABELLE, MADGE *and* STEVE *are hard at work* —NEWTON *in overalls,* ANNABELLE *with a dust cloth around her hair,* MADGE *in an old pair of slacks. The regulation horror of moving in is at its height. "Mother, where do you want this?" "Well, put it in the dining*

room till we know what to do with it." "I'm taking this rug upstairs, Annabelle—is that all right?" "No, I don't want it upstairs—will you just leave it alone?" "Don't you think we should start on the china?" "Where's the ladder—has anybody seen the ladder?" "Did the kitchen stuff get down here yet, Mother—do you know? Katie's screaming." "It's somewhere around—I haven't seen it." *usual, everybody is getting in everybody else's way. Things are picked up aimlessly, put down aimlessly.* ANNABELLE *moves a stack of books to one side; a moment later* NEWTON *puts them back right where they were, much to* ANNABELLE'S *annoyance.* STEVE, *attaching a radio, is getting nothing but static. On top of all this, the horrible thumping sound of the well drill fills the room for a minute.*

ANNABELLE. Oh, that well drill!

MADGE. Look, Mother, can't we take the things upstairs that belong there and start sorting things out?

ANNABELLE. Oh, I don't care what you do. I'm so tired I can't stand up any longer. (*She drops into a convenient chair*)

MADGE. Well, I'll take these things up, anyhow. (*She goes*)

NEWTON (*irrepressible*). Gosh, I'm so full of pep—I don't know—this air out here—I could tear a house down.

ANNABELLE. Well, start with this one.

NEWTON. I'm going to get this china out. Where's that hammer and chisel, Steve? Oh, here they are. (NEWTON, *the master barrel opener, takes a good sock with chisel and hammer, and immediately there is a crash of china from within the barrel*)

ANNABELLE. Oh, God!

NEWTON. You know, they pack those barrels all wrong.

ANNABELLE. Newton, why don't you sit down for a while?

NEWTON. Why, I'm as fresh as a daisy.

ANNABELLE. You've done enough. Made us give up the

apartment—had to get out here by June fifteenth—"everything will be ready." Everything except bedrooms, bathrooms, dining room, kitchen, floors, walls, ceilings— (*There is a loud belch from the radio*) Steve, for God's sake!

STEVE. I'm afraid you're going to have trouble getting good reception out here.

ANNABELLE. I'm sure we are.

NEWTON. Oh, you always have a few little annoyances, Annabelle. But if you— (*He stops, entranced, as the trill of a bird floats into the room*) Ah, you know what that is? That's the yellow-breasted barn swallow. (*He is Audubon himself as he gives forth this information*)

ANNABELLE (*so interested*). Is that so?

NEWTON. Has a triple call. It'll come three times. Now listen . . . Sssh.

(*And it comes. But it is not a barn swallow. It is the horrible thumping sound of the well drill, crashing through stone*)

ANNABELLE (*sweetly*). That's not the same bird, is it, Newton? . . . I suppose they're going to be drilling for water all summer?

NEWTON. Mr. Kimber says this well looks very promising. I think we're really going to strike it this time.

ANNABELLE. No other man in the world would have bought a house without water. Only you, Newton.

NEWTON (*passing this off*). Ah! Smell that air. (*He pounds his chest, vigorously; looks out of the open door*) Look at how green everything is. . . . "I think that I shall never see a poem as lovely as a tree". . .

ANNABELLE (*busy with her thoughts*). Now where did I put that hot-water bag. . . . (*She opens the desk*) Oh, *here's* your tuxedo, Newton.

(*And from a two-by-six pigeonhole comes the master's dinner jacket, not exactly in very good shape*)

NEWTON. Needs pressing. (*A pile of books on the floor*

catches his eye. He is all energy again) Got to get those book shelves up pretty soon, Annabelle. Think I'll do that personally. . . . (*Picking up the top book*) My, my! *A Study in Scarlet,* by A. Conan Doyle. I haven't read that in years. (*He opens the book at random; settles himself for a good spell of reading*) "'You astound me, Watson,' said Holmes, drawing deeply on his meerschaum. 'Surely the clues are very plain.' Watson looked embarrassed."

(*A figure of fury stalks in from the kitchen. It is* KATIE, *the cook*)

KATIE: I'm quitting.

NEWTON. Why, Katie, what's the matter?

KATIE. Mrs. Fuller, I can't work in that kitchen. Nobody could.

ANNABELLE. Now, now, Katie, don't get yourself upset.

KATIE. But I'm scared of working there.

NEWTON. Scared?

ANNABELLE. What do you mean, Katie?

KATIE. A horse just walked in.

NEWTON. Oh, well, Katie, once that wall gets put up, it'll never happen again.

KATIE. No stove, and no sink, and no pots, and no pans—got to carry water up in pails. Haven't even got no water.

ANNABELLE. Just make the best of it for a few days, Katie—please.

KATIE. Well—

(MADGE *is descending the staircase*)

MADGE (*gayly*). Katie, what would you say to making us all a great big pitcher of iced tea?

(*There is something of a situation*)

ANNABELLE (*with a warning gesture*). Oh—Katie's very busy right now, Madge.

NEWTON. We don't want any iced tea, Katie. Why don't you go and sit in the sun for a while?

KATIE. That kitchen is sunny enough, Mr. Fuller, with no wall. (*She goes, and somehow you feel that* KATIE *and the country are not going to be partners very long*)

MADGE. Why, what's the matter with Katie?

ANNABELLE. Local labor. . . . That reminds me, Newton, what do you hear from the mob?

NEWTON. Well, Mr. Kimber says they'll be ready to start work any day now. If it hadn't been for Mr. Prescott's greenhouse we'd have been finished right on time. Mr. Prescott just took all the men away. It wasn't Mr. Kimber's fault, Annabelle.

ANNABELLE. No-o-o.

MADGE. Oh, by the way, I had a little glimpse of our neighbor this morning.

NEWTON. Oh, did you see Mr. Prescott? Isn't that nice? What did he say?

MADGE. He said, "You are trespassing on my property and I will thank you to get off." So we got off.

STEVE. I don't think he exactly relishes the presence of poor white trash so near by. . . . Come on, Madge—I'll teach you something about surveying. I'm going to make you a place to swim, if that's the only thing you have. The brook's got water in it, anyhow.

MADGE. Need me for a few minutes, Mother?

ANNABELLE. No, you go out and drown in the brook, dear. One of us'll have water then, anyway.

STEVE (*consulting his watch*). Ten minutes to four—I've got an hour yet. You're sure about that train, Mr. Fuller?

NEWTON (*pulling out a time-table*). Yes, sir—five-thirty-eight. It's an express. Here we are. Five-thirty-eight express. Oh! . . . "Does not run after April twenty-first." . . . Let's see—there must be another one. . . . Here we are. . . . No, that goes the other way. . . . Ah, five-forty-six. . . . A.M. . . . Say, this is funny, Ten-fifty-four.

STEVE (*looking over his shoulder*). Nothing before that?

NEWTON. Why don't you stay overnight, Steve?

MADGE. You might as well, Steve.

ANNABELLE. Yes, you're trapped like a rat.

STEVE. I guess I'd better. What train can I get in the morning?

NEWTON (*returning to the battle*). All right—*morning* trains . . . Five-forty-six A.M. Five-forty-six, five-forty-six . . . One-twenty. Nothing until one-twenty in the afternoon.

STEVE. Gosh, that's kind of a—well, I'll just have to take that late one tonight. I'm not going to get up at any four o'clock in the morning. . . . Come on, Madge.

MADGE. Fine thing, that. Why didn't we find out about the trains?

(*They go out together*)

(*For a moment* ANNABELLE *just sits and looks at* NEWTON)

NEWTON (*weakly*). I wonder why they took that train off.

ANNABELLE. Why don't you stay in New York for the summer, Newton? You'd get some sleep, anyhow.

NEWTON. Why, I asked Mr. Henderson before I bought the place, I said, could you commute, and he said, yes, sir, you certainly could.

ANNABELLE. Oh, you can. Of course, you'll get to the office at a quarter to seven in the morning— Take a Pullman out here at night to get some sleep— You won't see much of the double-breasted barn swallow, Newton, but you can commute.

(MR. KIMBER *appears in the doorway, smiling for once*)

MR. KIMBER. Mr. Fuller, I got good news.

NEWTON. No kidding? Hear that, Annabelle? What is it, Mr. Kimber?

MR. KIMBER. Well, sir, we've drilled down four hundred and twenty feet, and what do you think? We just struck mud.

NEWTON. Mud?

ANNABELLE. Why, that's fine. Bring me a glass, will you?

NEWTON. Mud, huh? Well—is that good, Mr. Kimber?

MR. KIMBER. Well, it's the best thing we've struck so far.

ANNABELLE. Oh, I think it's wonderful, Newton. Those hot nights in August, when I say to Katie—Katie, make us a big pitcher of iced mud, will you?

MR. KIMBER. Well, if you strike mud, Mrs. Fuller, there's usually water around somewhere.

NEWTON. You think we've really got hold of something, eh, Mr. Kimber?

MR. KIMBER. Certainly do.

NEWTON. That's wonderful. Tell 'em to drill hard, Mr. Kimber—full speed ahead and let the water gush where it may.

MR. KIMBER. Yes sir. . . . Oh! Couple of things, Mr. Fuller. I ordered the gravel. Going to need another load, though. Comes to a little more than we figured. Let's see. (*He pulls out a dirty piece of paper*) We figured forty-two dollars—comes to about a hundred and thirty-five. But then we won't need gravel for a couple of years. We figured a little wrong on the lime, too. Price of lime went up since I spoke to you. Be about seventy-five dollars more than we figured.

ANNABELLE. Uh-huh.

MR. KIMBER. And then there's the trees, Mr. Fuller. We ought to start doing something about the trees pretty soon.

ANNABELLE. What do we have to do about the trees, Mr. Kimber? Pay them for standing here?

MR. KIMBER. You got to spray 'em. You see, we got them elm trees out there—they're liable to get the elm blight —and them two oak trees by the brook, they're liable to get the oak bore, and that big willow tree, it's got a canker in it already. And then of course there's the tent caterpillar and the measuring worm.

NEWTON. Why, I didn't know that about trees, Mr. Kimber.

ANNABELLE. Oh, yes, Newton. You see, the measuring worm measures how much money you've got, gets in touch with Mr. Kimber, and pretty soon we're living in a tent with those caterpillars.

MR. KIMBER (*old Good News himself*). And then there's the Japanese beetle. They'll be coming along July first.

ANNABELLE. Let me understand this, Mr. Kimber. Every tree has to be sprayed—is that right?

MR. KIMBER. Yes, ma'am.

ANNABELLE. Well, who runs through the woods and sprays all *those* trees, Mr. Kimber? *They* seem to be doing all right.

MR. KIMBER. I don't know, ma'am. All I know is trees have got to be sprayed.

NEWTON. Annabelle, if Mr. Kimber says the trees have to be sprayed, why, he knows.

ANNABELLE. If he knows, let him answer my question. Who sprays the trees in the woods, Mr. Kimber?

NEWTON. What else was there, Mr. Kimber? We'll talk about the trees later.

ANNABELLE (*muttering to herself*). *He* ought to be sprayed, if you ask me.

NEWTON. Was there anything else, Mr. Kimber?

MR. KIMBER. Well, we need a couple of truck loads of manure. (ANNABELLE *looks at him*) That's forty-five dollars a load now.

ANNABELLE. Why, that's a bargain. What was it—a sale, Mr. Kimber?

MR. KIMBER. Then, let's see—we're going to need six truck loads of dirt.

ANNABELLE. Now just a minute, Mr. Kimber. If there's one thing this place has *got*, it's dirt. We are not going to *buy* any.

NEWTON. It's not just dirt, Annabelle—it's a special kind of dirt.

ANNABELLE. Newton, we have got no water—all right. But

now to find that we've got no *dirt*—that is too much.

NEWTON (*anxious to get out of all this*). Well, thank you very much, Mr. Kimber. I'll see you later.

MR. KIMBER. Yes, sir. (*He goes toward the door*) The seventeen-year locusts, they don't come along till August, so we don't have to worry about them—now. (*And, having delivered his good news, he goes*)

ANNABELLE. The seventeen-year locusts too, h'm?

NEWTON. Well, they only come every seventeen years Annabelle.

ANNABELLE. Yes. I can just imagine them talking the whole thing over, last year. One locust saying to another, "Only a year more, and then Newton Fuller will buy that place, and up we go. We'll all meet at Newton Fuller's place—us, and the Japanese beetle, and the tent caterpillar, and the measuring worm—we'll all gang up and have a hell of a time!"

NEWTON (*making a stand*). Annabelle, sometimes I just don't understand you. Here you are, face to face with the most wonderful thing in the world. Nature. And all you see is a few insignificant little—trivialities. Why, you've got a grandstand seat at the greatest show in the world—the whole panorama of nature going on right before your eyes. Insect against insect, worm against worm—all the complicated forces that make locusts stay down in the ground for seventeen years, and Japanese beetles come up right on July first—why, you ought to be struck with wonder at the very privilege of being able to watch it.

ANNABELLE. Why, that's the greatest love scene you've played in twenty-two years.

NEWTON. Well, it makes me mad all through to have you stand there and complain about buying a little bit of spray.

ANNABELLE. That's all very fine, Newton—you and the

insects—but when the honeymoon is over, where is the money coming from to pay for all this?

NEWTON. Oh, it's not going to be so much. You always have to do things like this in the beginning. Take gravel, for instance. You heard what Mr. Kimber said —we won't need any gravel for another two years.

ANNABELLE. Oh, as far as gravel is concerned we're all set. I was just thinking of little things like eating. Because when manure costs more than a sirloin steak, Newton, it kind of makes you stop and think.

(*The sound of the pump again, pounding away*)

ANNABELLE (*eyes raised to heaven*). Makes you feel like the Emperor Jones.

(*The figure of a* WOMAN *appears in the doorway, in her arms a bunch of country flowers*)

THE WOMAN. Good afternoon.

ANNABELLE. Why, good afternoon.

THE WOMAN. I hope I'm not intruding. I'm Mrs. Douglas. I just wanted to bid you welcome. I live in that little stone house just down the road.

NEWTON. How do you do, Mrs. Douglas? How nice of you!

ANNABELLE. Why, this is very nice, Mrs. Douglas. Please sit down. I hope you'll excuse the looks of this place.

MRS. DOUGLAS. Oh, I do understand, Mrs. Fuller. I hesitated to come your first day here, but—I just wanted to bring you a few flowers and say welcome.

ANNABELLE. Why, thank you, Mrs. Douglas. They're lovely.

NEWTON. I'll bet those are right out of your own garden, aren't they, Mrs. Douglas?

MRS. DOUGLAS. Yes, they are. We're having a wonderful garden year.

NEWTON. I know your house now, Mrs. Douglas. I was asking our Mr. Kimber about it. I wanted to know who had that wonderful garden. He says yours is the oldest house down here.

MRS. DOUGLAS. Yes, it's very old. About seventeen hundred,

we think. (*She turns to* ANNABELLE) I do hope you're going to like it here, Mrs. Fuller. We're always very pleased to have some nice new neighbors.

ANNABELLE. Oh, it's lovely country, Mrs. Douglas. Of course I'm such a city child—I'm afraid it will take me a while to get used to it. This whole thing was really my husband's idea. He's the—barefoot boy of the family.

NEWTON. Mrs. Fuller doesn't know quite what to make of the country just yet, but—when we get this house looking like yours, Mrs. Douglas, I'll bet I won't be able to get her out of it.

ANNABELLE (*with a little laugh*). My husband will bet on anything, Mrs. Douglas.

NEWTON (*hastily*). Tell me, Mrs. Douglas, have you lived down here since the Revolution—I mean, has your family lived here since the Revolution?

MRS. DOUGLAS. Yes. I was born in that little house. I've lived here all my life.

NEWTON. Think of that, Annabelle. Tell me—do you know anything about *this* house, Mrs. Douglas? When did George Washington sleep here?

MRS. DOUGLAS. Well, I know there is a legend that Mr. Washington slept here, but I'm afraid that isn't true, Mr. Fuller.

NEWTON. What? He never slept here at all?

MRS. DOUGLAS. No. As a matter of fact we investigated, and we discovered George Washington never slept here. It was Benedict Arnold. (NEWTON *takes this standing up, but he feels it*) Perhaps you'd like to have an old map of the place, with all the original boundaries. You see, I'm president of the County Historical Society. I think it might be interesting to you.

NEWTON. Say, I certainly would, if it wouldn't be too much trouble, Mrs. Douglas.

MRS. DOUGLAS. Why, not at all. (*There is a roll of distant thunder. It begins to grow a little dark outside*) My, I'd

better be getting home. We're going to have a storm.

NEWTON. I'll take you to your car, Mrs. Douglas.

MRS. DOUGLAS. Oh, please don't bother. I'm afraid I'll have to use this road again—I don't like driving across the fields with a storm coming up.

NEWTON. The road? Why, why shouldn't you use the road?

MRS. DOUGLAS. Well, I know that Mr. Prescott doesn't like people using it.

ANNABELLE. What has Mr. Prescott got to do with it?

MRS. DOUGLAS. Well, after all, it's Mr. Prescott's road, you know.

NEWTON. Why, no, it isn't. It's our road. It leads to his house too, but it's our road.

MRS. DOUGLAS. Oh, I'm afraid you're mistaken, Mr. Fuller. It's Mr. Prescott's road. Didn't they tell you that when you bought the place?

ANNABELLE. My husband, Mrs. Douglas, bought this place by radio-photo.

NEWTON. But, Mrs. Douglas—

ANNABELLE. Just a minute, Newton. Well, how do we get to our house, Mrs. Douglas—jump?

MRS. DOUGLAS. Well, your right of way is actually through the woods. I suppose in time you'll just have to build a road through, because after a heavy rain it's quite impassable. (*Thunder again—louder this time*) I'd better hurry. Good-bye. (*And she is gone*)

ANNABELLE. So! We haven't even got a road. How could you possibly do such a thing? Didn't you ask any questions before you said yes? Didn't you look at any papers?

NEWTON. Certainly I did.

ANNABELLE. What—*P.M.*? . . . What are we going to do? No walls, no floors, you can't get into it or out of it. Maybe the Government would take it instead of Alcatraz! (MR. KIMBER *looms up in the doorway*) Ah! The warden!

NEWTON (*numbed*). What is it, Mr. Kimber?

MR. KIMBER. Afraid that well's no good, Mr. Fuller. We just struck a cemetery.

NEWTON. A cemetery?

ANNABELLE. Anyone we know?

MR. KIMBER (*dimly aware that something is wrong*). A man just left this. (*He gingerly deposits a slip of paper on a near-by chair and escapes.* ANNABELLE *walks over and picks up the paper. She stares at it unbelievingly for a second*)

ANNABELLE. A little note of welcome from the county. (*She reads*) "Road tax, a hundred and eighty-three dollars and fifty cents." Imagine what it would be if we had a road. "School tax, ninety-eight dollars and sixty cents." "Extra assessment—County Poorhouse, twenty-one dollars and thirty cents." Let's pay that and move right in.

(*A terrific crash of thunder and suddenly the rain comes down in torrents.* STEVE *and* MADGE *dash in, just in time, closing the door behind them*)

STEVE. Boy, it's going to be a lulu! Listen to that!

MADGE (*breathlessly*). We were way down at the brook when we saw it coming!

STEVE. Say, look how dark it is! Is this lamp working? Oh, here we are! (*He plugs in a lamp*)

MADGE. Here's one over here, too.

(*A second lamp lights up. Another crash of thunder; the wind howls*)

NEWTON (*at the window*). Say, this is pretty heavy. I hope it doesn't hurt anything.

ANNABELLE. What can it hurt? That room where Benedict Arnold slept?

STEVE (*trying to yell above the storm*). Hope it lets up before I have to leave.

ANNABELLE (*feeling that she will burst if she doesn't let go, she suddenly breaks into song*). "Wintergreen for President—da de da de da de da—Wintergreen for President—"

NEWTON. What did you say, dear?

ANNABELLE (*yelling back*). I said Wintergreen for President. Want to make anything out of it?

STEVE (*peering out of the window*). Looks as if there's a car stopping here. Yah! People getting out. They're coming here.

(NEWTON *dashes over and opens the door, just in time to admit two scurrying figures, a* MAN *and a* WOMAN, *newspapers held over their heads*)

THE MAN (*a little out of breath*). Thank you—thank you very much.

NEWTON. That's quite all right.

THE MAN. Sorry to bother you. Rain was coming down so hard we couldn't drive. Hope you don't mind, for a few minutes.

NEWTON. Certainly not. We're not in very good order here. My wife— (*The thunder drowns him out. He tries again, at the top of his voice*) My WIFE, Mrs. Fuller, and my daughter, and Mr. Eldridge.

THE MAN. How do you do? My name is Clayton Evans, and this is my wife, Rena Leslie.

(*More greetings*)

MADGE. Oh, I recognized you right away, Mr. Evans. I've seen you on the stage.

NEWTON. Say, I thought you looked familiar, Mr. Evans. What do you know about that? Annabelle—you've seen Mr. Evans . . . Well, well! Have you got a house down here, too, Mr. Evans?

CLAYTON (*yelling above the storm*). No, we're living at the inn. We're down here for the summer—acting at the Playhouse. We open Monday with *The Firebrand*. We were on our way to rehearsal when the storm caught us.

NEWTON (*at the top of his lungs, only to find that the storm has subsided*). Why, I didn't know there was a summer theatre down there. That's wonderful.

RENA (*sourly*). If you can call it a theatre.

CLAYTON. Now, Rena, we're going to be here all summer. If you're going to start off that way it's going to be fine. What do you expect of a summer theatre, anyhow?

RENA. Not a great deal, Clayton. I would just like them to take the pigs out before they put the hams *in*, that's all.

(*Thunder again—the wind is mounting to a gale. From upstairs comes a great clatter of doors and shutters banging in the wind*)

NEWTON. I'd better fasten the shutters. (*Starting for the stairs*)

STEVE. I'll do it, Mr. Fuller. (*He bounds up*)

RENA. Oh, how I *loathe* the country!

ANNABELLE. Say, we could form a little club here this summer.

MADGE. Oh, look—the water is coming in the windows! Under the door, too!

NEWTON. Get some rags! You'd better get some rags!

CLAYTON (*as* MADGE *dashes for the kitchen*). Let me help you, Miss Fuller.

(*They go out together, a fact which* MISS LESLIE *does not fail to note.* NEWTON, *meanwhile, tries to stem the tide of water with his handkerchief*)

ANNABELLE. You know, it's all for the best. We'll just be washed away and never have to use the road at all.

(STEVE *comes running down the stairs*)

STEVE. The roof's leaking! There's a regular flood upstairs!

ANNABELLE. Newton's Ark.

(MADGE *and* CLAYTON *are running back in*)

CLAYTON (*his arms full of cloths*). Here we are! This'll stop it! Come on, Rena! Give us a hand!

RENA (*staying right where she is*). That is not in my Equity contract, dear.

(*Suddenly* ANNABELLE *looks up, then extends her hand, palm upward*)

ANNABELLE (*sweetly*). Newton! It's raining, Newton! Right in our little nest.

NEWTON. Gosh! Oh, here's a pail. There! (*He quickly puts the pail down and we hear the plop! plop! plop! of water as it hits the tin*)

RENA (*from her side of the room*). Have you another bucket, Mr. Fuller, or shall I just open my mouth?

NEWTON. Oh, excuse me. There. (*He goes running over with another pail*) It's getting damp in here. Suppose I start a fire—a nice big fire.

(*There is a vivid flash of lightning, a terrific peal of thunder*)

ANNABELLE. You know, I think they just put that roof on while you signed the deed, Newton, and then took it right away again.

NEWTON (*striking a match and lighting the fire*). There! Listen to her crackle, Annabelle.

(*But she doesn't crackle for long. Immediately great clouds of black smoke pour into the room*)

CLAYTON (*as the coughing becomes general*). Who started that fire?

(*Thunder and lightning, then a terrific crash just outside the door. The door is flung open and* MR. KIMBER *sticks his head in*)

MR. KIMBER. The big tree! It just blew down!

ANNABELLE. Bingo!

(*Another crash of thunder, the biggest yet*)

ANNABELLE. You know, Newton, I've got the name for this place. "Wuthering Heights."

(*Another crash of thunder and the lights go out. The room is pitch black*)

(*The storm is at its height. A vivid flash of lightning illumines the room for a second. The crash of thunder rolls deafeningly as—*

The curtain falls

ACT TWO

SCENE I

It is now August—late on a Friday afternoon.

Either local labor has come through or else ANNABELLE *has gone to work, for the room has undergone a complete transformation. It is now an attractive, tastefully furnished and livable room. The walls are freshly painted and pleasantly hung with pictures; the furniture is chintz-covered and gay. The sunlight is streaming in through the windows, and in short it looks like that place in the country that* NEWTON FULLER *dreamed about.*

But apparently all is not milk and honey, for in a moment we hear the familiar and awful sound of that well drill, still forcing its way into the earth.

Another moment, and then ANNABELLE *comes in from the outside. She carries a couple of puny radishes in her hand, and is obviously exhausted. She tosses the radishes into the waste basket, goes straight to the electric fan and stands in front of it for a moment, trying to revive herself. Then she drops into the sofa, leans back and closes her eyes. Her face contorts with pain as the pump starts once again; then it stops and she relaxes again.*

Immediately, however, there is the harsh sound of a lawn mower, just outside.

ANNABELLE. Oh! . . . Mr. Kimber! (*She goes to the door*) Mr. Kimber! (MR. KIMBER *appears, lawn mower in*

hand) Do you have to cut the grass right now? It seems to me you're *always* cutting the grass.

MR. KIMBER. Well, I got to cut it some time.

ANNABELLE. Well, don't do it *now*, will you?

MR. KIMBER. All right, but it'll just keep on growing. (*And* MR. KIMBER *disappears*)

(ANNABELLE *sits down again, closes her eyes. Presently a fly buzzes near her; she makes a tired pass at it. Then it comes closer; she strikes at it a little more viciously, but it still buzzes around. Furious, she rises and gets the fly swatter*)

(*The chase begins. She stalks the fly cautiously for a moment; then sneaks up on it. Whang! But she misses. More maneuvering, another swat—this time she gets it*)

(*Vastly pleased with herself, she falls into the couch again. But her triumph is short-lived. Along comes another fly. She leaps up this time and just chases the fly around the room. Presently it lights on a small table. She swings viciously—and succeeds in breaking a small china figure*)

ANNABELLE. O-o-o-oh! . . . Mr. Kimber! (*Her fury mounts*) Mr. God-damn Kimber!

(MR. KIMBER *once more appears, this time with a rusty saw in his hand*)

MR. KIMBER. I ain't cutting the grass. (*He cites the saw as evidence*)

ANNABELLE. Mr. Kimber, I have been begging you since July first to fix those screens. It is now the end of August. You're not *that* busy.

MR. KIMBER. Ma'am, every time you open the screen door some flies get in.

ANNABELLE. I see. It's my fault for coming into the house.

MR. KIMBER (*frank about it*). Well, it'd be better if you didn't.

ANNABELLE. I see.

MR. KIMBER. Well, I'll take a look at the screens.

ANNABELLE. Yes, you look at them and watch the flies come in.

MR. KIMBER (*ever obliging*). Yes, ma'am. (*He goes.* HESTER, *the maid, comes in from the kitchen. Somehow* HESTER *is just the right name for her*)

HESTER. Excuse me, ma'am, can I speak to you for a minute?

ANNABELLE. What is it, Hester?

HESTER. Can I get tonight off, Mrs. Fuller?

ANNABELLE (*this is the last straw*). Tonight off? Why you know we're having guests, Hester.

HESTER. But my fellow is driving over from Hatboro and this is the only night I can see him.

ANNABELLE. I can't help that, Hester. This is the first weekend we've been able to have guests down here, and you just cannot get off. You'll have to see him next week.

HESTER. I *can't* see him next week.

ANNABELLE. Now, Hester. You cannot come to me at six o'clock on a Friday afternoon and ask to have the night off, with a houseful of people coming. You can see your young man next week.

HESTER. No, I *can't.*

ANNABELLE. Of course you can. *Why* can't you see him next week?

HESTER. He's getting married.

ANNABELLE. Getting married? Well, then he isn't your young man, Hester.

HESTER. He is till he gets married. That's why I got to see him tonight.

ANNABELLE (*in a spot*). Well—after you've served dinner and turned down the beds—all right.

HESTER (*relentless*). What time will you be through dinner?

ANNABELLE (*annoyed*). I don't know, Hester. You can go when your work is finished. And be sure you carry

water up to all the rooms—fill all the pitchers and basins.

HESTER (*sulkily*). Yes, ma'am. (*But she still stands there.* MADGE *comes tripping down the stairs, heading for the door*)

MADGE. Hester, are you going to press those slacks soon? . . . Hi, Mother!

ANNABELLE. Are you going out? They'll be here in a little while.

MADGE. I'll be right back. Where are the keys to the car?

ANNABELLE. On the hook—where they always are. Where do you dash to all the time, anyhow? What are you so busy about?

MADGE. Me? Oh, I'm running for mayor.

ANNABELLE. Well, these are all *your* friends coming, remember. Don't leave me stuck here.

MADGE. Darling, I'll be right back. Don't worry. (*She goes.* ANNABELLE *turns again to* HESTER, *who has just stood there. She seems to have all the time in the world*)

ANNABELLE. What is it *now*, Hester?

HESTER. Could I ask Annie to serve the dessert tonight?

ANNABELLE. No, you cannot. Annie has got enough to do with her cooking. Now you can go as soon as you've served dinner, and that's all there is to it.

HESTER. Yes, ma'am. (*She goes, but you gather from the way she slams the door that she is none too pleased.* ANNABELLE *stands looking after her, in annoyance. And then suddenly a voice from out of nowhere speaks*)

THE VOICE. Hester is going to have a baby.

(ANNABELLE *turns slowly toward the divan*)

ANNABELLE. Come out of there, Raymond. Come on.

(*The figure of a boy, perhaps about fourteen or fifteen, rolls from under the divan. He stands up*)

RAYMOND. You're awful dumb, Aunt Annabelle. I knew about Hester three weeks ago.

ANNABELLE (*surveying him*). I cannot believe that you are my brother's child.

RAYMOND. Say, who knows? (ANNABELLE's *eyes widen*) I wonder how Mama's doing in Reno, with the cowboys. I'll bet you she's in there pitching all the time.

ANNABELLE (*facing it*). Look here, Raymond, you are going to be here another month, until the divorce is over. So we may as well have an understanding. In the first place, you have been stealing my little chalk figures and selling them to the Quaker House Antique Shop.

RAYMOND (*all innocence*). Me?

ANNABELLE. Now, don't deny it—I know you have.

RAYMOND. Aunt Annabelle, how can you call your own nephew a thief?

ANNABELLE. And if you do not stop I am going to murder you in your bed some night, so help me God!

RAYMOND. Did you know I nearly killed Mama once? They stopped me just in time. I was just a kid then.

ANNABELLE (*contemplating him*). You know, Raymond, you kind of fascinate me.

RAYMOND. You'll get used to it. (*He drifts up to the open door; looks out*) Here comes that actress. Can *she* stink up a theatre! (*His tone suddenly changes to one of charm and grace, as* RENA *comes into sight*) Hel-lo, Miss Leslie. (*Holding the screen door for her*) And how are *you* this afternoon?.

RENA (*as she enters*). Out of my way, rat.

RAYMOND. Boy, are you a lousy actress! (*And on this note of charm he goes*)

RENA. You know, I can't decide whom he resembles—Leopold or Loeb.

ANNABELLE. Well, another month and the divorce is over. The only thing that's holding it up now is the custody of Raymond. Neither one of them will take him. . . . *Very* glad you dropped in, Miss Leslie. How about a drink?

RENA. I'd love it. After bouncing up and down across that field of yours, I need it.

ANNABELLE. Yes, we're trading our car in for a tank— It's the only way to reach this place. . . . Hester! . . . Hester! . . . Oh! (*She goes to the door and calls*) Hester! (*There is a surly "Yes, ma'am" from* HESTER, *in the distance.* ANNABELLE'S *tone grows very polite*) Hester, would you mind bringing a Scotch and soda for Miss Leslie, please? (*An answering grunt*) Thank you, Hester. (*She gives* RENA *an understanding look as she sits down again*)

RENA. Hester seems to have you by the well-known chandeliers, Mrs. Fuller.

ANNABELLE. Hasn't she, though? Oh, well! It's all part of that simple country life.

RENA. Is Mr. Fuller just as crazy about it? Does he still think Benjamin Franklin makes up for the Japanese beetle?

ANNABELLE. Oh, yes. Yes. He's lost fifteen pounds catching that morning train, he's got poison ivy from his navel up, but he's still Nature's child. (HESTER *stalks into the room with* RENA'S *drink. She slams it down on the table*) Thank you, Hester. (HESTER *goes, banging the door behind her.* ANNABELLE *looks after her*) Pregnant, too.

RENA. Really? Raymond?

ANNABELLE (*she sighs*). Tell me, how're things down at the theatre?

RENA. Oh, fine. I'm playing that maid again this week. Last night the scenery fell over right in the middle of the second act. Didn't make a damned bit of difference —it was just as good. . . . You know, I don't understand the theatre. These hams come down here, work their cans off for a dollar-eighty a week, live in places that a cockroach would turn up his nose at—and for what? Just to *act*. So help me God, actors will act *any-*

where, *in* anything, and *for* anything—all they want to do is *to* act.

ANNABELLE. Well, if I'm not too inquisitive, Miss Leslie, how did *you* get into it? I've wondered.

RENA. I married one. You know how it is—he was good-looking, and he could sling those romantic nothings around, on stage and off. So before I knew it, I was an actress. Clayton's a very attractive man, you know.

ANNABELLE. Yes, indeed. When I saw him in those tights in *The Firebrand* it was no treat coming home with Newton.

RENA. Oh, he's got a way with the girls, all right. You know, it's wonderful to watch men operate. Now that I'm cured, it's kind of fun to sit in the bleachers and watch Clayton bat that ball around. I say to myself, "My God, is that what I fell for?" But I did. It's always the same. First that boyish helplessness— *You* know, "I was afraid even to ask you to go out with me." Then that smoldering look in the eye, and "Would you mind if I tell you that you're *very, very* attractive?" Then Zowie! and "Don't take *all* the blanket, dear."

ANNABELLE. Yes, I've watched Newton when he's had that one drink too many, and you wouldn't believe it. He gets that codfish look in his eye, and with a slight burp he goes into it. "You know, Mrs. Peabody, I really wanted to be an explorer—that's what I wanted to be —and when I meet somebody like you I can feel the call of the jungle all over again." Then he spills his drink over her and the next morning he can't go to the office. . . . They don't have to have black tights. They all do it. . . . May I freshen your drink?

RENA. No, no, I just dropped in for a minute. Matter of fact, I came to talk to you about something, but—I don't quite know how to say it, now that I'm here.

ANNABELLE. Why—what is it?

RENA. Well—now look, Mrs. Fuller. This is not the jealous wife speaking—it's just that I like you, and I think you ought to know what's going on.

ANNABELLE. Going on?

RENA (*looks at her for a moment*). You don't know anything about it, then?

ANNABELLE (*with foreboding*). No, I don't.

RENA. Well, it's just that Clayton and Madge have been seeing a great deal of each other, and if I know the signs I'm afraid she is in for a bad time. Ordinarily I don't interfere, but your daughter's too nice a girl, Mrs. Fuller. Anyhow, now you know, and you can do what you want about it.

ANNABELLE (*soberly*). How far has it gone, do you know?

RENA. Oh, it's still in the early stages, I'm sure.

ANNABELLE. Well, thank you very much for telling me, Miss Leslie.

RENA. Oh, it's probably just one of those summer romances, but—girls have a way of taking Clayton seriously. He's like the Japanese beetle, in a way. Turns up around July first and wrecks all the pretty flowers. . . . Well, I've got to be going. Would you like me to run over Raymond on the way out?

(*The voice of the approaching* NEWTON *is heard from the outside*)

NEWTON. Hello, hello, hello!

ANNABELLE. Thoreau has arrived.

(NEWTON *looms up on the other side of the screen door, his arms laden with packages of all shapes and sizes—more packages than you would ever think one man could carry*)

NEWTON. Why, hello, Miss Leslie.

RENA. Well, if it isn't Sears, Roebuck.

NEWTON (*to* ANNABELLE, *as he enters*). Hello, darling. Have a nice day? (*He starts to put the packages down*)

Picked up a few things we needed for the place—this and that. Pretty near missed the train.

ANNABELLE. How'd you come out—in the baggage car?

NEWTON. That's the fun of having a country place. You walk into a store, and everything you see, you need. It's wonderful.

RENA. Well, as long as you're having fun. (*She consults her watch*) My, six-thirty. I'd better get out of here.

ANNABELLE. Oh, sorry you have to go, Miss Leslie. Must you?

RENA. Yes, I've got to be on my way. Rush through my dinner, streak it over to the theatre, put on a make-up, fix my hair, get into a tight girdle, walk on and say, "Madame is resting." Back to the dressing room and take it all off again. I ought to have my head examined. . . . Good-bye, Mrs. Fuller. Mr. Fuller. (*And she goes*)

NEWTON (*holding another package aloft*). Know what this is, Annabelle? Little Miracle Chicken Feed.

ANNABELLE. Well, you'd better take a spoonful, because I've got some news for you.

NEWTON. Bad news? Mr. Kimber quit?

ANNABELLE. No, we've still got Mr. Kimber. But your daughter, Mr. Fuller, is having a little romance with a married man.

NEWTON. What do you mean, Annabelle? Who?

ANNABELLE. Clayton Evans. That's what Miss Leslie was here about.

NEWTON. Madge and Mr. Evans? I don't believe it.

ANNABELLE. Now, don't just toss it aside, Newton.

NEWTON. Honestly, you women! Always seeing the worst in everything. Why, when I was just out of college I was so crazy about Maxine Elliott that I used to go to the theatre four times a week, just to see her. But I didn't break my engagement to you and marry Maxine Elliott, did I?

ANNABELLE. No, you didn't, Newton.

NEWTON. Well, even so, it's just too silly, Annabelle. I wouldn't even talk to her about it. Silly thing like that. . . . Look, Uncle Stanley is coming out.

ANNABELLE. Well, I'm certainly going to— (*Suddenly she straightens*) What did you say?

NEWTON. Uncle Stanley is coming out.

ANNABELLE. Uncle Stanley? *When*?

NEWTON. Tonight. Just for the week-end.

ANNABELLE. Now, don't tell me you asked Uncle Stanley for this week-end.

NEWTON. But I had to, Annabelle. He called me up at the office and I had to. He's on his way up to Ed and Julia's, and this is the only week-end he has. Steve is driving him out.

ANNABELLE. Well, that's just dandy.

NEWTON. But it's only a couple of days.

ANNABELLE. Oh, sure! Just the week-end, that's all. Uncle Stanley. Old windbag! Have to be quiet till he gets up, and when he takes his nap in the afternoon, and close the windows because there's a draft, and everybody sit around and listen while he tells how he made his money, as though we hadn't all heard it seven hundred times before. Madge's friends will have a wonderful time.

NEWTON. Oh, they're young people—they'll be outside all the time.

ANNABELLE. Well, all I can say is, if we ever get that money, we've earned it. Twenty-two years of "Take *my* chair, Uncle Stanley—it's more comfortable." "Here's the white meat for *you*, Uncle Stanley." "Why, look, Madge, what Uncle Stanley has brought you. A package of chewing gum. Say 'Thank you' to Uncle Stanley."

NEWTON. Well, we've gone this far, Annabelle—we can afford to be nice a little longer.

ANNABELLE. Oh, sure! Tight old buzzard—no wonder he's got all that money. Do you realize he's never given us

so much as a handkerchief? Just those God-damned pictures of himself every Christmas. Boy, will I have a bonfire when *he* goes.

NEWTON. Say, where *are* the pictures? We'd better put them out before he gets here.

ANNABELLE. Oh, they're around. We'll have him plastered all over the place.

NEWTON. And will you be sure to have that very rare steak he likes tomorrow night, and roast duck on Sunday? I brought his special brand of cigars out— (*He indicates the box*) —and those little candies he likes. And some black cloth for the windows in case the light disturbs him. I can't think of anything else, can you?

ANNABELLE. Not a thing. It just fits perfectly. If there was one thing I needed at this moment—

(*The dining-room door is kicked violently open and* HESTER *enters, a water pitcher and basin in her hand, heading for upstairs*)

NEWTON (*cheerily*). Good evening, Hester.

(HESTER *just snarls*).

HESTER. Good evening! (*Goes on upstairs*)

NEWTON. What's the matter with Hester? Has she got a headache?

ANNABELLE. She's got *some*thing.

(MR. KIMBER *appears in the doorway*)

MR. KIMBER. Mr. Fuller.

NEWTON. Why, hello, Mr. Kimber! How's everything?

MR. KIMBER. Fine, Mr. Fuller, fine. But we need more gravel.

NEWTON. More gravel? Why, I thought we had enough for two years.

MR. KIMBER. Yeah, but I guess we figured kind of wrong. Shall I get another load?

NEWTON. I suppose you'd better, if you need it. How's the manure holding up, Mr. Kimber?

MR. KIMBER. Getting pretty low on that, too.

ANNABELLE. Well, I wouldn't worry, because Mr. Fuller's uncle is coming out today. (*She goes into the kitchen*)

NEWTON (*his manner changing with* ANNABELLE'S *absence*). Look, Mr. Kimber, we don't absolutely need that gravel, do we?

MR. KIMBER. Well, we ought to have it. Only forty-five dollars, and you know how chickens like to scratch.

NEWTON. Well, you see, Mr. Kimber, everything is costing so much more than I figured—fact is, I'm a little strapped for ready cash right now. I bought these things you said you absolutely needed— (*a gesture to the packages*) —But I've got to kind of take it easy for a while.

MR. KIMBER. Yes, sir. But you got a payment due on the threshing machine Monday. Got to pay that, Mr. Fuller.

NEWTON. Gee—Monday, huh? Well, maybe something'll kind of happen by that time. Maybe I'll— (*He switches sharply as* ANNABELLE *returns*) Yes, sir, I put it right here some place. Here you are! Little Miracle Chicken Feed.

MR. KIMBER. Yes, sir. Looked to me as if we were going to get an egg today, but then something happened. Maybe this'll help.

NEWTON. Thank you, Mr. Kimber. Anything else?

MR. KIMBER. No, sir. . . . Oh, yes! The seventeen-year locusts are here, Mr. Fuller. (*He goes, quite happy about it*)

ANNABELLE. Oh, Newton! You forgot to give me that check. I've got to pay Hester and Annie, and some things around the village.

NEWTON. Oh, yes—yes. I'll give that to you. I'll give it to you tomorrow.

ANNABELLE. Is anything wrong, Newton? Are you worried about something?

NEWTON. Me? No-o-o. Whatever gave you that idea? (HESTER *comes stamping down the stairs, hitting each*

step harder than the last one. She kicks the kitchen door open and goes on her way) Is Hester mad or something?

ANNABELLE. Oh, no-o-o.

(*A new figure strides into the room. He is, to say the least, an irate gentleman. He is dressed in impeccable sport clothes, and very much the country squire. He is dragging* RAYMOND *by the arm*)

PRESCOTT. Are you Mr. Newton Fuller? My name is Prescott. My property is right next to yours.

NEWTON (*plunging into the amenities, despite* MR. PRESCOTT'S *obvious state*). How do you do, Mr. Prescott? This is Mrs.—

PRESCOTT (*in no mood for all that*). This boy just threw a dead skunk into my swimming pool.

RAYMOND. I did not!

PRESCOTT: And yesterday he put up a sign, NUDIST CAMP, right on my front gate. Now I want this boy kept off my property! Do you understand that—kept off my property! Good day! (*And he goes*)

ANNABELLE. Newton, I give up. You have got to do something about this boy.

NEWTON. Raymond, I'm warning you. The next thing you do, I am going to throw you across my knee and give you the hiding of your life.

RAYMOND (*seeking safety on the other side of the screen door*). I'd like to see you try it, you old poop. Didn't even know enough to buy a farm with water—that's how dumb you are. (*He goes*)

NEWTON. Old—don't ever talk to me about Uncle Stanley while you've got Raymond around. I'll teach him to—(*The sound of an automobile horn is heard*) What's that? (*He darts to the door*) It's Uncle Stanley! Where are the pictures, Annabelle? You didn't put the pictures out.

ANNABELLE (*goes to the bottom of a bookshelf and fishes*

out two framed photographs). Well, here we go again, boys.

NEWTON. Hurry up, Annabelle—he's getting out of the car. . . . (*In the doorway, shouting and waving*) Hello, Uncle Stanley! Hello!

ANNABELLE (*to one of the pictures*). Hello, you old buzzard.

NEWTON. Welcome, Uncle Stanley! Welcome!

(ANNABELLE *gets the pictures in their places, just in time. For in the doorway, hale and hearty,* UNCLE STANLEY *is looming up,* STEVE *behind him*)

NEWTON. Are *we* glad to see you! Well, well!

(UNCLE STANLEY *enters. He is a good-looking man in his sixties, with all the assurance that is bred by success. When he speaks, others listen; when he cracks a little joke, the laughter is general. And he has come to expect it. In short,* UNCLE STANLEY *is that rich relative, and how well he knows it*)

UNCLE STANLEY. Hello, Newton, my boy! Hello there, Annabelle!

ANNABELLE. Hello, Uncle Stanley. So glad you could come. Hello, Steve.

NEWTON. Uncle Stanley, you look wonderful. Doesn't Uncle Stanley look wonderful, Annabelle?

ANNABELLE. Oh, indeed he does, Newton. I never saw anyone look healthier.

NEWTON. Come and sit down in this nice easy chair, Uncle Stanley—make yourself comfortable.

UNCLE STANLEY. Thank you, Newton . . . Ah! (*As he sits*) Young man, where's that little package I brought? Oh, thank you very much. Annabelle—a little something for the house, with my compliments.

NEWTON. Oh, Uncle Stanley, you shouldn't have.

ANNABELLE (*as she opens it*). Why, isn't this sweet of you, Uncle Stanley? Look, Newton—a picture of Uncle Stanley.

NEWTON. Why, what do you think of that?

ANNABELLE. Oh, thank you, Uncle Stanley. I know just where to put this.

UNCLE STANLEY. That's all right, Annabelle. Where's Madge?

ANNABELLE. Oh, Madge didn't know you were coming, Uncle Stanley. That's why she isn't here. She'll be back any moment.

STEVE. Which way did she go—do you know?

ANNABELLE. Why, I'm not quite sure, Steve.

STEVE. Oh, well, I'll find her. (*He goes out*)

UNCLE STANLEY. Newton, is there a window open some place? I feel a draft.

NEWTON. Oh, it's the door. Well, we'll soon fix that. (*He closes it*) There! Well, Uncle Stanley, what do you think of it?

UNCLE STANLEY. Think of what?

NEWTON. Why—the place, Uncle Stanley. This! (*He takes it all in with a gesture*)

UNCLE STANLEY (*hardly looking at it*). Why—nice little place, Newton. Very nice. You fix this all up, Annabelle?

(*A glare and a grunt are about all that come from* ANNABELLE)

NEWTON. She certainly did, Uncle Stanley. Why, you should have seen this place. Annabelle performed an absolute miracle.

UNCLE STANLEY. Very nice indeed. Oh—if I might make a suggestion—

NEWTON. Why, of course, Uncle Stanley. What is it?

UNCLE STANLEY. Seems to me that stool is a little too close against the bookcase. Look better if it was out a bit.

NEWTON. By gosh, Uncle Stanley, you've got an eye. (*He goes over and moves the stool about three-quarters of an inch*) Look at that, Annabelle. (ANNABELLE *could commit murder*) Why, it changes the whole appearance

of the room, Uncle Stanley. By gosh, you've got an eye.

UNCLE STANLEY. Oh, well, sometimes you just happen to see these things. I remember when I was a little shaver— (ANNABELLE, *who knows the signs, drops into a chair, an expression of martyrdom on her face*) —we were living in Pittsburgh at the time, just before we moved to Akron—and Mother used to take me out shopping with her. I was just a little shaver at the time —couldn't have been more than six or seven—and I'd never been in a department store before. Well, this particular day Mother took me to Joseph Horne & Company—that was one of the biggest department stores in Pittsburgh—and we went up to the rug department.

ANNABELLE (*casually*). Linoleum department.

UNCLE STANLEY. That's right. Well, the salesman—he was one of those young smart-alecks—I remember he had a mustache—he kept showing Mother linoleum with great big red squares on it—

ANNABELLE. Blue squares.

UNCLE STANLEY. That's right . . . Say, have I told you this story before?

ANNABELLE. No, no.

NEWTON. Go right on, Uncle Stanley.

UNCLE STANLEY. Well, Mother was one of those women who always said that children should be seen and not heard, and just as the salesman unrolled the last piece of linoleum I piped up and said— (*But he is unable to finish this deathless tale, for at this point the door is thrown open on a burst of youthful chatter and laughter. It is four young people—two boys, two girls—laden with bags, tennis racquets and the usual summer paraphernalia. "Anybody home?" "Here we are for the summer!" "Hey, Madge, here are your guests!" "What time is dinner?"*)

(*They stop short as they run into the older generation*)

NEWTON. Hello, boys and girls. You're right on time.

(*One of the boys,* LEGGETT FRAZER *by name, speaks up*)

LEGGETT. Hello, Mr. Fuller. Mrs. Fuller.

SUE. Where's Madge?

ANNABELLE. She'll be here in a moment, Sue. Hello, Tommy. Hello, Leggett.

TOMMY. Hello, Mrs. Fuller. I don't think you know Marian. This is Marian Wilcox. Mrs. Fuller—Mr. Fuller.

(MARIAN *is duly greeted, but her own contribution is merely a couple of languid smiles*)

NEWTON. This is my uncle, Mr. Menninger. Uncle Stanley, these are friends of Madge's. This is—Sue—

SUE. How do you do?

NEWTON. And—ah— (*He indicates the other girl*) —excuse me—

TOMMY (*prompting*). Miss Wilcox.

NEWTON. Miss Wilcox. (*Another smile from the lady*) And Tommy and Mr.—well—there you are. (*A further murmur of greeting*)

UNCLE STANLEY. How do you do? Would you mind closing that door, please? There's a draft.

LEGGETT. Oh, pardon me. (*He closes it*)

ANNABELLE. Now you're all up on the third floor. Want me to show you your rooms?

SUE. Oh, no. We can find them, Mrs. Fuller.

ANNABELLE. You girls are in the big room, with the strawberry wallpaper—right at the head of the stairs. And the boys are down the hall—the little blue room.

LEGGETT. We'll find 'em, Mrs. Fuller. Thank you. (*They are starting up*) Steve here yet?

ANNABELLE. Yes, he's outside somewhere, and Madge will be right back—she just went out for a minute. Now, are you sure you're all right?

TOMMY. Oh, sure. Don't worry about us.

SUE. It's a charming house, Mrs. Fuller.

LEGGETT. Madge didn't say half enough about it.

ANNABELLE. Why don't you all get into country clothes?

Dinner's in about half an hour—you don't have to hurry.

(*A little chatter as they all go up the stairs. "Isn't this nice, Marian?" from* TOMMY. *"I love these old houses, don't you?" from* SUE)

LEGGETT (*as they disappear*). Dinner in half an hour, huh? Well, I'm going to soak in a nice hot tub.

ANNABELLE (*half to herself*). That's what *you* think.

UNCLE STANLEY. Newton, you didn't tell me you were having a houseful of other people. I wouldn't have come if I'd known that.

ANNABELLE (*sweetly*). You should have told Uncle Stanley, Newton.

UNCLE STANLEY. How's that?

ANNABELLE (*she turns the charm on full*). Know what we're having for dinner Sunday night? Roast duck, with that special stuffing that you love. I'm going into the kitchen and make it myself.

UNCLE STANLEY (*pinching her cheek*). Annabelle, I'll tell you something. Of all the girls my nephews married, I always thought you were the nicest. And you know what? (*He gives her a shrewd wink*) Well, never you mind, Annabelle. But Uncle Stanley doesn't forget. . . . Now I think I'll go up to my room and freshen up a bit.

NEWTON. I'll bring your bags up, Uncle Stanley, and help you unpack. (*He picks up* UNCLE STANLEY'S *hefty bags*)

UNCLE STANLEY. Thank you, Newton. . . . Damn it, I knew I'd forgotten something. I forgot to bring out any cigars.

NEWTON. Ah-ha-ha! We think of everything, Uncle Stanley. Look what we've got here. (*He triumphantly exhibits a box of cigars*) Corona Coronas!

UNCLE STANLEY. Now, Newton, you shouldn't have done that.

NEWTON. And here are those little candies you like, to take the taste of the cigar out of your mouth.

UNCLE STANLEY. You certainly make a person feel at home, Newton. . . . Well! (*He starts up*)

ANNABELLE. I'll go with you, Uncle Stanley, and see if you've got everything you need.

NEWTON (*picking up the bags*). What was that funny story you were telling, Uncle Stanley, when the young people came in?

UNCLE STANLEY. Oh, yes—the department-store story. Well, I was just a little shaver, maybe six or seven. Mother had taken me out shopping and we went up to the rug department.

ANNABELLE. Linoleum.

(*They start upstairs.* NEWTON *follows after them, lugging the bags*)

Curtain

SCENE II

Sunday afternoon—and a rainy one. In fact, that awful rainy Sunday afternoon in the country.

They are all there, sitting around and bored stiff. UNCLE STANLEY *is dozing in the only comfortable chair;* NEWTON *is pacing aimlessly up and down;* ANNABELLE *is sitting on the divan. The young people—*MADGE, STEVE *and the four week-enders—are lying around in various stages of prisonlike torpor.*

For a moment there is no sound—the rain just pours down.

STEVE, *from time to time, throws an unhappy look at* MADGE. *But he gets no look in return—plainly, there is something going on there.*

SUE *yawns.*

NEWTON (*peering out*). Say, there's a little bright place way over there. Maybe it's going to clear up.

ANNABELLE. Newton, you've been seeing that bright place for two days now. You're just stir-crazy.

TOMMY (*letting off steam*). "Ah! Sweet mystery of life, at last I've found you—"

NEWTON (*apologetically, with a gesture toward* UNCLE STANLEY). Sssh! Mr. Menninger is . . .

TOMMY. Sorry.

(*Another yawn from someone*)

ANNABELLE. Has anybody seen the Sunday paper?

LEGGETT. Not a soul, Mrs. Fuller. Mr. Menninger has been sitting on it since nine o'clock this morning.

TOMMY. I tried to get the sports section out from under him, but—no luck.

ANNABELLE. You know, he's been sitting on them long enough to hatch out Monday's paper.

(MISS WILCOX, *beautiful and willowy, gets up and goes over to another spot*)

ANNABELLE. Want anything, Miss Wilcox?

(MISS WILCOX *smiles that mysterious smile and shakes her head; then drapes herself into a chair again.* HESTER, *humming to herself and apparently in a very happy state of mind, enters with a container of ice*)

HESTER (*eager to serve*). Anything else you want, Mrs. Fuller?

ANNABELLE (*regarding her*). No, thank you, Hester.

HESTER. Well, if there's anything you want me to do, just let me know. (*Humming happily again, she goes out*)

NEWTON. Anybody care for a drink? Sue?

SUE. No, thank you.

NEWTON. Miss Wilcox?

(ANNABELLE *leans over eagerly, hanging on the answer. But* MISS WILCOX *just smiles and shakes her head*)

LEGGETT. Say, where's our little playmate this afternoon? The Dead-End Kid.

ANNABELLE. He's around somewhere. Don't trifle with your luck.

TOMMY. Quite a nephew you've got there, Mrs. Fuller.

SUE. Yes—Marian and I had a little encounter with him last night. Just as we were going to sleep a voice from under the bed said: "These things are highly overrated."

ANNABELLE. Newton, did you hear that?

NEWTON (*reluctant to face this*). Well! I'll see how the weather looks. . . . Wait a minute. Looks a little clearer over there.

ANNABELLE. Oh, go *over* there, will you? (MISS WILCOX *gets up again, drifts across the room and up the stairs, with that beautiful undulating walk.* ANNABELLE *watches her as she disappears*) Tell me, Tommy, does Miss Wilcox ever say anything?

TOMMY. Oh, yes, she talks, Mrs. Fuller.

ANNABELLE. Well, just before she goes, have her say "Hello," will you? Just so I get the idea.

MADGE (*another yawn*). It's been just lovely, hasn't it? Rain for two solid days.

UNCLE STANLEY (*coming to*). Hel-lo. Must have dozed off for a minute. How long have I been asleep?

ANNABELLE. Since nine o'clock this morning, Uncle Stanley.

UNCLE STANLEY. Is that door open again? I feel a draft.

NEWTON. Oh, I'm sorry, Uncle Stanley.

UNCLE STANLEY. That's better. Reason I'm fussy about drafts—when I was a little shaver— (ANNABELLE *sits down and makes herself comfortable*) —couldn't have been more than eight or ten—my seat in school was right next to the window, and I kept getting colds. Well, one day it suddenly occurred to me that if I put a piece of wood in the window pulley they couldn't open the window. So you know what? That's what I did, and they never could open that window again.

NEWTON. Well, what do you know?

(*And from out of nowhere there comes a good loud raspberry*)

UNCLE STANLEY. What's that?

ANNABELLE. Come out of there, Raymond.

NEWTON. Come on, Raymond.

RAYMOND (*rolling out from under the divan*). Boy! If you didn't have any money would you have trouble with those stories!

(UNCLE STANLEY *leaps up from the chair with a bellow of rage*)

UNCLE STANLEY. By God, Newton, if this were my house I'd give that boy a chastising he wouldn't forget.

NEWTON. Wait a minute. Here we are. There she comes.

(*Suddenly the sunlight fills the room. The rain has stopped. There is a little chorus of excitement. "At last!" "The sun!" "For God's sake!" "How wonderful!"*)

NEWTON. I told you it was coming. I've been watching that spot for two days.

TOMMY. Come on—let's go swimming. Come on, everybody!

SUE. Oh, good! I'm dying for a swim.

LEGGETT. Look at that sun, will you?

SUE. Come on, Madge. Aren't you going?

MADGE. Yes, I'm coming, Sue.

STEVE (*to* MADGE, *his irritation bursting forth*). You certainly are a gracious hostess. Make everyone awfully glad to *be* here.

MADGE (*as she goes out*). Oh, stop pestering me, will you, Steve?

STEVE. All right—I'll stop.

(*Meanwhile* ANNABELLE *has grabbed the Sunday paper and sits on it herself*)

UNCLE STANLEY. Close that door, Newton—I feel a draft. . . . Say, somebody took the Sunday papers. I had 'em right here.

NEWTON. They did, Uncle Stanley? Now, who could have —Oh, Annabelle, you're sitting on Uncle Stanley's papers.

ANNABELLE. Pardon me. Just keeping them warm for Uncle Stanley, Newton. (*She hands them over*)

NEWTON. Here you are, Uncle Stanley.

UNCLE STANLEY. Thank you, Newton. (*And he sits on the papers again*)

NEWTON. Say, the sun's out—why don't we take a nice little walk?

UNCLE STANLEY I don't think so. Damned boy. I'm afraid he's given me a bit of indigestion. No, I think I'll go up and take a little nap. (*Then he turns accusingly on* NEWTON) There was a fly in my room last night, Newton.

NEWTON. Oh, I'm sorry, Uncle Stanley. . . . You're sure you won't take a walk?

UNCLE STANLEY. No, I think I'll go up and take a rest. Would you hand me the Sunday papers, Newton? I haven't had time to read them.

(ANNABELLE, *as she hears this, is something to watch*)

NEWTON. Of course, Uncle Stanley.

(*The papers go to* UNCLE STANLEY *again*)

UNCLE STANLEY. Thank you, Newton. I hope those young people aren't going to make a noise out there. (*He stumbles as he starts up the steps*)

NEWTON. Careful, careful!

UNCLE STANLEY. These steps aren't very wide, are they? Too much rain, too. And when the sun comes out, it's hot, God-damn it! (*He disappears. It seems he doesn't like things very much*)

ANNABELLE (*getting right up and reopening the door*). I hope that draft rushes right up stairs and hits him in the right place. . . . What's the matter with you, anyway, Newton? What's all this beautiful walk and talk

with Uncle Stanley? Don't you get enough of him in here?

(MISS WILCOX *drifts back down the stairs, willowy as ever*)

(ANNABELLE *seizes the opportunity and plants herself right in front of her*)

ANNABELLE (*looking her right in the eye*). Miss Wilcox? *Hello.* (*But* MISS WILCOX *gives that Mona Lisa smile and drifts out again*) (ANNABELLE *snaps her fingers*) Didn't make it.

RAYMOND'S VOICE (*yelling from outside*). Aw, gwan, you big bum—I didn't touch her. I never laid a hand on her.

(*And from upstairs we hear* UNCLE STANLEY, *calling out the window*)

UNCLE STANLEY. Stop that noise! Stop it, I tell you! I'm taking a rest.

RAYMOND'S VOICE. Who the hell cares!

NEWTON (*apprehensive*). Oh, dear!

ANNABELLE (*smiling broadly*). Good!

(*And then* MR. KIMBER *comes rushing in, in great excitement*)

MR. KIMBER. Mr. Fuller! Mr. Fuller! Mr. Fuller, we've struck it! We've struck water!

NEWTON. No kidding!

MR. KIMBER. Yes, sir—forty gallons a minute. Darnedest thing you ever saw.

ANNABELLE. Sure it's water and not oil? I'd rather have water.

MR. KIMBER. Yes, ma'am. Struck it two hours ago, but I didn't want to tell you till we checked up. This is it, all right! Forty gallons a minute! How's that, Mr. Fuller?

(*Before* NEWTON *can answer, however,* MR. PRESCOTT *strides into the room*)

PRESCOTT. Mr. Fuller, you have just put down a well on *my* property. You are drawing *my* water.

NEWTON. What? Why—Mr. Kimber!

MR. KIMBER. No, we ain't. That well is on our property.

PRESCOTT. Don't tell me—look at your deed. Your property ends at the brook. Why don't you look at your deed first, instead of having a man go out and dig wells wherever he wants to!

ANNABELLE. Look, Mr. Prescott, can't this be adjusted? We've been trying for three months to get water. Now even though the well *is* on your property, couldn't you allow us to use it?

PRESCOTT (*with a fury so repressed that he may burst a blood vessel*). Madame, this well that you have put down has tapped *my* spring. You are taking all *my* water. I just tried to fill our swimming pool and there was no water. There is no water anywhere in the house. Now is that clear to you?

ANNABELLE. Yeh. No wonder we got forty gallons a minute.

PRESCOTT. Well, Mr. Fuller? Do you plug it up or do I have *my* men do it and send you the bill?

NEWTON (*quietly*). Better go out and tell the men, Mr. Kimber.

MR. KIMBER. Yes, sir. (*He goes*)

PRESCOTT (*savagely*). Thank you very much.

ANNABELLE. And thank you, Mr. Prescott. Now since you're so fussy about other people's property, suppose you get the hell off ours!

PRESCOTT (*very calmly*). I'll be glad to, Mrs. Fuller. It may interest you to know, by the way, that I am on the board of directors of the bank that is foreclosing this property, and that I will take great personal pleasure, on Tuesday, in escorting *you* off it. Good day. (*He goes*)

ANNABELLE (*a moment's pause. A stunned pause, it might be called*). What did he say, Newton?

NEWTON. I didn't quite—understand him, Annabelle.

ANNABELLE (*calmly*): Come on, Newton. I want the truth. (NEWTON *hesitates a second, then realizes the jig is up.*

Slowly he draws a letter from his coat pocket; hands it to her without a word. She reads it, then looks at him)

NEWTON. I'm sorry, Annabelle. I just didn't have the heart to tell you.

ANNABELLE. That's all right, Newton. Just kind of a shock, that's all. . . . Foreclosing.

NEWTON. It's just that—everything cost so much more than I figured. I had enough money at the beginning, but it just melted away.

ANNABELLE. Why didn't you tell me, Newton? Why did you carry it all yourself? I would have understood.

NEWTON. Oh, I was the one who got us into it, and—I knew how you felt about it, and—somehow I just couldn't.

ANNABELLE (*looking around the room*). Do you know something, Newton? I was beginning to like it, too. I was beginning to like it a great deal.

NEWTON. Were you, Annabelle? Were you really?

ANNABELLE. Yes, I was. . . . Five thousand dollars. Newton, how much could we raise on your insurance policies?

NEWTON. I've done that already.

ANNABELLE (*the letter again*). Tuesday. That's the day after tomorrow, Newton.

NEWTON. Yes. I've been going nearly crazy. I don't know how I got through these last two days. I've been going nearly crazy. . . . There's just one chance, Annabelle.

ANNABELLE. What?

NEWTON. Uncle Stanley.

ANNABELLE. Oh! Fine chance that is.

NEWTON. Well, you can't tell, Annabelle. He might. After all, I'm going to get the money *some* day—all I'm doing is asking for some of it *now*. Just five thousand dollars, to save the house. He ought to be willing to do that.

ANNABELLE. That's true, Newton. Oh, if only he would. (*She brightens a little*) Suppose we both tackle him.

I'll come in on it too. You'll see some of the finest buttering up since the spring of 1912. We *must* get it, Newton. We *must.*

(*At this moment* MADGE *fairly flings herself into the house, obviously in an emotional state. Without looking either to right or left, she dashes up the stairs.* STEVE *has followed her in the door; he looks up the stairs after her, controlling his temper. Then he flings himself out of the house again*)

NEWTON. Why, what's all that?

(*And then* RAYMOND'S *voice again, from outside the house*)

RAYMOND (*singing at the top of his lungs*).

"There's a hell of a situation up in Yale, up in Yale;
There's a hell of a situation up in Yale, up in Yale—"

(*And, as before, the voice of* UNCLE STANLEY *from upstairs*)

UNCLE STANLEY. Stop that singing! Don't you ever think of anybody except yourself?

RAYMOND (*yelling back at* UNCLE STANLEY). No, you old bull-face! Do *you?* (*And the song again*)

"There's a hell of a situation up in Yale, up in Yale—"

(*The window is slammed down with a bang, and almost immediately* UNCLE STANLEY *is furiously descending the stairs*)

UNCLE STANLEY. Newton, I am packing up and leaving. I will not stand that boy another minute.

ANNABELLE. Now, you'll do no such thing. Our Uncle Stanley! I don't know how you've stood it this long. I think you've been just so sweet about it, Uncle Stanley —I can't tell you.

NEWTON. A saint, that's what he is. An absolute saint.

UNCLE STANLEY (*somewhat mollified by the treacle dripping around him*). Well, I'm not a saint or anything like that, and I don't want to seem fussy—

ANNABELLE. Fussy? *You,* Uncle Stanley? Newton, did you hear that? Uncle Stanley said he was fussy.

NEWTON (*laughing this off as just too improbable for words*). The idea!

ANNABELLE. Come and sit in your chair, Uncle Stanley. Newton, close the door so there's no draft on Uncle Stanley. You know, while you were upstairs, Uncle Stanley, I started laughing all over again about that story of yours—putting the piece of wood in the window—

UNCLE STANLEY. It *was* rather a clever idea, for a little shaver.

NEWTON. Only six or seven, Annabelle—that's all he was.

ANNABELLE. I know. (*She goes into fresh gales at the very thought of* UNCLE STANLEY'S *brilliance*)

NEWTON. How about a cigar, Uncle Stanley? Would you like a cigar?

ANNABELLE (*ready with the match*). Here you are, Uncle Stanley . . . There!

(UNCLE STANLEY *draws the first few contented puffs, leans back and enjoys himself*)

UNCLE STANLEY. Ah! Did you say roast duck for dinner, Annabelle?

ANNABELLE. I certainly did. With chestnut stuffing. And the dessert is a surprise, Uncle Stanley. *My* surprise.

UNCLE STANLEY. Kind of like your old Uncle Stanley, don't you?

NEWTON. Oh, Uncle Stanley.

ANNABELLE (*kissing him tenderly and stroking his brow*). That skin is as smooth as a baby's.

(*Another contented puff by* UNCLE STANLEY. *Plainly the moment is at hand.* ANNABELLE *looks at* NEWTON, *nods her head*)

NEWTON (*taking the plunge*). Uncle Stanley—

UNCLE STANLEY. Yes, Newton?

NEWTON. Uncle Stanley, there was a fellow in our office —I don't know, about fifteen years ago—and he had an aunt that was going to leave him a whole lot of

money, and this fellow got in some trouble or other, and he finally had to go to his aunt and ask her if she'd —give him some.

UNCLE STANLEY. She was a damned fool if she did it.

NEWTON. Huh?

ANNABELLE (*deciding to take over*). Uncle Stanley, Newton is trying to tell you something. Uncle Stanley, we're going to lose this house if we don't get five thousand dollars by tomorrow. Will you give it to us?

UNCLE STANLEY. Five thousand dollars?

ANNABELLE. We wouldn't ask you if we weren't absolutely desperate. We both felt that if Newton could have just that much of his inheritance *now*, why, it wouldn't be too much to ask.

NEWTON. You see, Uncle Stanley, this house means a great deal to both of us. We've never had anything that was really ours before—

ANNABELLE. It would just break Newton's heart to lose it. I know it would. Will you do this for him, Uncle Stanley?

NEWTON. It would be wonderful of you.

UNCLE STANLEY (*severely*). That's all very well, Annabelle, but people shouldn't go about buying things they can't afford to pay for.

ANNABELLE. But surely, Uncle Stanley, a man of your means—

UNCLE STANLEY. That has nothing to do with it. You go ahead and do this thing and then expect me to pull you out of it.

NEWTON. I'm sorry, Uncle Stanley. Maybe I shouldn't have. But this can't mean very much to you and it means an awful lot to me. I think you ought to do it.

UNCLE STANLEY. This is quite a shock to me, Newton—I'm surprised at you. You're the first one of my nephews that ever asked me for money. And since you've gone

ahead on this thing without consulting me, as a lesson to you I've got to say no.

NEWTON. Uncle Stanley, I'm not going to let you say no. That money would mean more to me *now*, if I could keep this house, than—anything you might leave me afterwards. I think if you won't do this for me—why—*please* say yes, Uncle Stanley. It means just everything to me.

UNCLE STANLEY (*stopping to look at both of them*). Newton—Annabelle—I'm going to tell you something. (*He stops and looks at them again*) I haven't got a Goddamned cent.

ANNABELLE. What?

NEWTON. Why, what do you mean, Uncle Stanley?

UNCLE STANLEY. I haven't got a cent. Went broke in nineteen twenty-nine. Clean broke.

NEWTON. You're joking.

UNCLE STANLEY. No, I'm not.

NEWTON. But you're my rich uncle; you always have been. . . . I just can't get it. The factory in Pittsburgh—your offices—Stanley Menninger and Company—we all send you letters there.

UNCLE STANLEY. Yes, the factory's still there, but it's belonged to the bank since twenty-nine. I get a hundred dollars a month for the use of my name, and they send my mail on, wherever I am, and—that's all. . . . You won't say anything about this, will you? To Ed and Julia, or the others?

NEWTON. I just don't understand. You haven't any money? I can't seem to get it through my head.

ANNABELLE. Since nineteen twenty-nine? But why did you do it? Why did you go on fooling everybody all these years?

UNCLE STANLEY. Well, Annabelle, I'll tell you. When I walked out of that broker's office that day, I didn't have a cent. I said to myself, "You know what you're going

to be, the rest of your life? You're going to be a poor relation. No more white meat, no more comfortable chairs, no more Corona Coronas!" And I didn't like it a bit. So I said, "Look—if you can keep them thinking you're *rich*, why, you can have a wonderful life. Winters in Florida, spring in California, summers in Maine with the rest of my nephews." I was very pleased when you bought this house, Newton. It kind of filled in some open time. . . . Now, wouldn't I have been a fool to give all that up?

NEWTON. Gosh!

ANNABELLE (*a long breath*). That is the dirtiest trick I ever heard of in my life.

UNCLE STANLEY. Well, now, look at it the other way, Annabelle. Look at all the happiness I've given you—thinking about the money you thought you were going to get. Meanwhile it hasn't done anybody any harm, and I've had one hell of a time. Now, is that so terrible? (NEWTON *and* ANNABELLE *just look at him. With a shrug, he turns and starts out the door*) Five thousand dollars, huh? Listen, if I had five thousand dollars, do you think I'd be here? I'd be over at the Stork Club. (*And he goes*)

ANNABELLE. Well, that's that.

(HESTER *comes in again, humming brightly. She picks up the ice-bowl from the table and goes.* STEVE *comes in from the outside*)

STEVE. Look, Mrs. Fuller, I've got to get back to town. You don't mind if I leave before dinner, do you?

ANNABELLE. Why, Steve, what's the matter?

STEVE. Nothing's the matter. I've just got to get back, and —well, I might as well get started.

ANNABELLE. Oh! . . . Well, I wish you'd stay for dinner, Steve. Do that for *me*, will you?

(*Before he can reply, however,* RENA LESLIE *enters. She comes right to the point*)

RENA. Mr. Fuller, have you a shotgun in the house?

NEWTON. How's that?

RENA. My husband and your daughter, Mr. Fuller, are running off together.

ANNABELLE. Madge? Why, she's upstairs—I saw her go up.

RENA. Then she went out the back way, Mrs. Fuller, because at this minute she's sitting with Clayton, with her suitcase all packed, at the Colonial Inn, just across the Delaware.

NEWTON. Oh, my God!

ANNABELLE. I knew this would happen—I knew it!

NEWTON. Think we can still catch them, Miss Leslie?

RENA. I think so—I came as fast as I could.

ANNABELLE. Oh, Newton!

RENA. I'm so sorry.

NEWTON (*stoutly*). *I* know how to handle this! (*He strides over to the fireplace and takes down an old fowling piece. It is something that probably seemed pretty terrifying when the Minute Men brandished it, but somehow* NEWTON *does not seem quite at home with it*)

RENA. Mr. Fuller, for God's sake!

ANNABELLE. Newton, don't be silly!

(*But* NEWTON *is not to be stopped. He faces them with what he fondly conceives to be George Washington's most Revolutionary manner*)

NEWTON. Come on! We're crossing the Delaware, too! (*He slings the fowling piece over his shoulder and marches out*)

The curtain falls

ACT THREE

The following morning.

For a moment the room is empty. Then down the stairs comes that paragon of all the virtues, RAYMOND. *He strolls around, just looking for trouble. His face lights up as he sees* ANNABELLE'S *bag on the sofa, evidently tossed there the night before. Making sure that no one is watching, he quickly goes through it, opens a change purse that he finds within, growls "Ten cents!" in a disgusted tone and pockets the coin.*

HESTER *comes in, intent on minor household duties.*

RAYMOND. Hester, my girl, here's ten cents for you. Buy something for the baby.

HESTER (*putting on a great act*). Baby? I don't know what you're talking about.

RAYMOND. Well then, you're in for a hell of a surprise.

(HESTER *glares at him and goes*)

(MRS. DOUGLAS *appears at the door—the neighbor who brought the flowers*)

MRS. DOUGLAS. Good morning. Is your uncle in?

RAYMOND (*all courtesy*). He hasn't come down yet, Mrs. Douglas.

MRS. DOUGLAS. Well, I'd like to see him. I have a map here for him, and it might be important.

RAYMOND. A map?

MRS. DOUGLAS. Why, yes. I promised to get an old map of this place for him, and I finally got it, and it shows something very strange. Unless I'm very much mistaken, this map—and it's the original deed—shows that Mr. Fuller's

property goes 'way over into Mr. Prescott's place. Think of that! According to this map, Mr. Prescott's road and his well really belong to Mr. Fuller. That's why I want to see your uncle right away.

RAYMOND. Say, what do you know? The road and the well belong to Uncle Newton?

MRS. DOUGLAS. That's right. Isn't that astonishing!

RAYMOND (*that little mind working*). Say, I'll bet you Mr. Prescott would give anything to get his hands on this map.

MRS. DOUGLAS. I imagine he would.

RAYMOND. Look—I'll give it to Uncle Newton for you, Mrs. Douglas.

MRS. DOUGLAS. Well, thank you, but I think I ought to see him myself, don't you?

RAYMOND. Oh, Uncle Newton's sick in bed. Didn't you know, Mrs. Douglas? He's got—some kind of blood disease.

MRS. DOUGLAS. Oh, dear!

RAYMOND. Aunt Annabelle has to be with him all the time, and I sort of look after things down here, the best I can.

MRS. DOUGLAS. Oh! What a comfort you must be to your aunt, Raymond, at a time like this. . . . Well, I'll come back tomorrow— Maybe Mr. Fuller will be better and I can give him the map then.

RAYMOND (*feeling that the roof's the limit*). Oh, I heard them say, Mrs. Douglas, that if he isn't any better— why, they may quarantine the house. Why don't you let me take it up to him, Mrs. Douglas? Maybe this good news'll make him feel better. I can tell him just what you told me.

MRS. DOUGLAS (*beaming at him*). You're a fine boy, Raymond. (*She places the map in his hands*) You will be careful of it, won't you? It belongs to the museum. Tell Mr. Fuller that I hope he feels better, and I'll stop by

tomorrow. Good-bye. (*A last fond look*) I wish I had a boy like you.

RAYMOND. Good-bye, Mrs. Douglas. (*Going right to the telephone*) Give me Mr. Prescott's house, please—I don't know the number. . . . Hello. Is this Mr. Prescott's house? . . . Mr. Prescott? . . . Mr. Prescott, this is Mr. Fuller's nephew, Raymond. . . . You'd better not hang up, or you'll be sorry. . . . I've got to talk fast. Listen—I've got hold of an old map, and if you're smart you'll buy it from me. . . . Now, wait a minute. This map shows— (*He hangs up quickly as he hears his uncle's step on the stair. Quickly picks up a book and curls himself up, all innocence*) Oh, hello, Uncle Newton. I guess I'll go out and take a walk. It's too nice a day to stay inside and read. . . . My, but it's beautiful out. (*He goes*)

NEWTON (*looking after him*). All sweetness and light. Huckleberry Capone!

(MR. KIMBER *comes in. He looks fine,* MR. KIMBER *being one of those people who thrives on bad news*)

MR. KIMBER. Good morning, Mr. Fuller. I feel real bad about things, Mr. Fuller—your losing the house. Real bad. What're you going to do with everything, Mr. Fuller? You know, you've got enough gravel for two years now, and plenty of manure, too. What'll we do?

NEWTON. Oh, mix them together, Mr. Kimber. You might get something very interesting.

MR. KIMBER. Yes, sir. . . . I've got some *good* news for you, Mr. Fuller. That cow gave milk last night—just suddenly came through.

NEWTON. That's good. I'll come outside after a while, Mr. Kimber, and we'll go over everything.

MR. KIMBER. Yes, sir. . . . Well, it'll be a long time before them real-estate people find another sucker. (*He goes*)

(UNCLE STANLEY *is descending the stairs*)

UNCLE STANLEY. Newton, I just had kind of an idea about how to save this place for you.

NEWTON. You did, Uncle Stanley? What is it?

UNCLE STANLEY. Well, sometimes if you write to Mrs. Roosevelt the darnedest things happen.

NEWTON (*in disappointment*). Oh!

UNCLE STANLEY. But she's always doing things like that, Newton. It can't hurt to try.

NEWTON. There isn't time, Uncle Stanley.

(ANNABELLE *comes in from the outside. Apparently she has been up and around early*)

ANNABELLE. Well, I just said good-bye to the Japanese beetles. They're very sorry to see us go. They loved that spray we bought for them.

UNCLE STANLEY. Annabelle—I just want you and Newton to know that I'm very sorry I didn't have that money to give you. Very sorry indeed.

ANNABELLE. Don't give it a thought, Uncle Stanley. It doesn't matter now.

UNCLE STANLEY. Well, too bad, just the same. . . . Say, here's an idea. Now, Ed and Julia still think I've got a lot of money. Why don't you sell them your share of what they think I'm going to leave? You'd not only get the five thousand to save the house, but maybe make a little on the side. We can split it three ways. Damned good business proposition, Newton.

NEWTON. Why, Uncle Stanley, you're as crooked as a corkscrew.

UNCLE STANLEY. No, I'm not—straight business.

ANNABELLE. No, Uncle Stanley—I don't think we could do that.

UNCLE STANLEY. Well, it was an idea, anyway. . . . Think I'll stroll down to that general store and get a couple of White Owl cigars. (*He goes out*)

ANNABELLE. You know, in a way, Newton, Uncle Stanley is just Raymond grown up.

(*There is a little silence*)

NEWTON. I was thinking of giving the cow to Mr. Kimber, Annabelle. I kind of like to make him a present, and I don't see how we can use it.

ANNABELLE. No, it'd be kind of cramped in those two rooms we'll be living in.

NEWTON. Lot of other things I'll have to 'tend to, but I just can't put my mind on them right now. Will you call the storage company about the furniture, Annabelle?

ANNABELLE. Yes, I will. . . . Funnily enough, Newton, there are a lot of things I'm going to miss about this place. Just—little things. Walking upstairs to bed at night—that feeling of a house you get when you walk up a flight of stairs. Pottering around the place, and—oh, I don't know, the whole feeling that it's *yours*, inside and out. You know, one night last week I couldn't sleep, and I came down and went out into the kitchen and got an apple, and then I came in here and sat for a minute—just by myself—and then I wandered outside and took a little walk around, just looking at things, and for the first time, Newton, I knew what you meant. About—coming back here, and having a place like this, and—what it does to you. I began to feel very grateful to those old boys who—fought around here. Yes, sir—Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of the Japanese Beetle—I'm going to miss it.

NEWTON. By gosh, Annabelle—it makes me awful happy to hear you say that. You know what? Let's save up every penny we can, and maybe in five years or so we can get another little place. Because that's what we both want now. We'll get another little place.

ANNABELLE. Only with water.

NEWTON. Sure. Sure. Only—I wish we could keep this place, water or no water.

ANNABELLE. Well, we can't, Newton. And now I don't

know what *you're* going to do, but I'm going to have a drink. I need it. (*She goes to the liquor cabinet*)

NEWTON. At ten o'clock in the morning, Annabelle?

ANNABELLE. Yes, and I suggest you have one, too. It'll make us both feel better.

NEWTON. All right. (*He raises his glass*) To our new place, Annabelle. Here's hoping.

ANNABELLE. I'll drink to that.

(*They both drink, just as* MADGE *comes down the stairs*)

MADGE. Well, here is the erring daughter, feeling even more like a fool than she did last night. (*She notices the drinks*) Why, what's going on here?

ANNABELLE. Just drowning the mortgage, dear. Would you care to drown Mr. Evans?

MADGE. No, I'm the one that ought to be drowned. . . . Oh, I should have had more sense from the beginning. Guess I'll never see Steve again. . . . When do we get thrown out, Dad?

NEWTON. Tomorrow, I'm afraid.

MADGE. Ah, me! House gone, Steve gone. To make it perfect I ought to tell you that I'm going to have a baby.

ANNABELLE. *Don't* make it perfect, dear. It's good enough right now

MADGE. Well, whenever you want things messed up, just let me know. I'm the girl that can do it. . . . I feel worse about Steve than anything I've ever done in my whole life. (*She goes out*)

NEWTON. Poor Madge.

ANNABELLE (*with sudden decision*). Have another drink, Newton. I'm going to. (*She pours herself one*)

NEWTON. At ten o'clock in the morning, Annabelle?

ANNABELLE. It was ten o'clock in the morning when we had the first one. It's after that now. (*She pours* NEWTON'S)

NEWTON. Well, all right. I can't feel any worse. (*He drinks*) Did I tell you that cow gave milk last night?

ANNABELLE. Really? To whom?

NEWTON. Mr. Kimber.

ANNABELLE. Recognized him, huh?

NEWTON. You never liked Mr. Kimber, did you, Annabelle?

ANNABELLE. Oh, Mr. Kimber's all right if you haven't got a place in the country. You know, I think he attracts Japanese beetles, Newton.

NEWTON. Now, Annabelle. (*He drinks again*) You know, this drink makes me feel a little better.

ANNABELLE. Have another one, Newton.

(HESTER *comes in, very chipper*)

HESTER. What time do you want lunch, Mrs. Fuller?

ANNABELLE. Lunch? Oh, I don't know. Newton, do you want lunch?

NEWTON (*above all that sort of thing*). Naw!

ANNABELLE. We won't want any lunch, Hester.

HESTER. Yes, ma'am. (*She turns to go*)

ANNABELLE. Oh, Hester.

HESTER. Yes, ma'am?

ANNABELLE. Newton, I suppose we'd better tell Hester.

NEWTON. Oh, yes. Hester, we're leaving here tomorrow, For good.

ANNABELLE. We're sorry to give you such short notice, Hester, but we've only just learned it ourselves.

HESTER (*almost purring*). Oh, that's all right, Mrs. Fuller. I'm getting married anyhow.

ANNABELLE. Oh, that's fine, Hester. You got your young man, after all.

HESTER. Well, not *him*. He got married to the other girl. Yesterday.

ANNABELLE. Oh! Then I don't understand.

HESTER. Well, he brought his brother along to talk me out out of it, and the way it ended up I'm going to marry his brother.

ANNABELLE. I see. But what about the baby?

HESTER. Well, his brother—it's all in the same family. . . . No lunch—that's good. (*She goes*)

NEWTON. Well, that takes care of Hester. . . . Say, what are we going to do about Raymond when we go, Annabelle? We've got to decide about that.

ANNABELLE (*a little high by this time*). Let's not say a word to him, Newton—just move out and leave him.

NEWTON. Let's have a drink on that, Annabelle.

ANNABELLE. Here you are, Newton. . . . Feeling better, huh?

NEWTON (*laughs*). I feel *fine*. Isn't that funny? You know, I was just thinking. Maybe this is why people drink—they feel better.

ANNABELLE. You've got something there.

NEWTON. Haven't we any bigger glasses, Annabelle? Look at these little things.

ANNABELLE. Why, certainly, Newton. Right over there. Take your own bottle, too, Newton—it's easier.

NEWTON (*brings forth a bottle and a huge glass; pours himself a stiff drink*). Ah! I feel *much* better. . . . Do you mind if I give you a little kiss?

ANNABELLE. Not at all, Newton. I'd love it.

NEWTON (*kissing her good and hard*). There!

ANNABELLE. Thank you, Newton.

NEWTON (*with a grand gesture*). Don't mention it.

(UNCLE STANLEY *returns, smoking a White Owl*)

UNCLE STANLEY. Newton—Annabelle—I just had another idea about how to save this house.

NEWTON. Oh, forget it, Uncle Stanley. Have a drink.

ANNABELLE (*happy as a lark*). Give Uncle Stanley his own bottle, Newton.

NEWTON. Here you are, Uncle Stanley. And take one of these big glasses—you can get more in 'em.

UNCLE STANLEY. Well, you've got the right idea. This is what pulled me through in nineteen twenty-nine.

ANNABELLE. Uncle Stanley, how much money *didn't* you have?

UNCLE STANLEY. Say, I was rolling in it. You know, I can't understand why I was so tight in those days. I remember I used to say to myself, every Christmas, why not give all the nieces and nephews great big wonderful presents—make it a *real* Christmas. Then I'd say to hell with 'em.

NEWTON. Here's to Uncle Stanley!

ANNABELLE. Here's to Uncle Stanley! I don't know why.

UNCLE STANLEY. Well, I was a good fellow when I had it.

NEWTON. The hell you were!

(*And* RENA LESLIE *walks in*)

RENA. Say, what is this? *Tobacco Road*?

NEWTON. Hello, Miss Leslie.

ANNABELLE. Give Miss Leslie a bottle, Newton.

NEWTON. Here you are, Miss Leslie. We're a few ahead of you.

RENA. I'll catch up. . . . Mr. Fuller, you haven't introduced me.

NEWTON. Oh, very sorry. This is Uncle Stanley. Uncle Stanley, Miss Rena Leslie. Miss Leslie is an actress.

UNCLE STANLEY. How do you do, Miss Leslie?

RENA. How do you do? Say, I'm glad to get a load of *you*, Uncle Stanley. I hear you're quite an actor yourself. That rich uncle you've been playing all these years. You've had quite a run, haven't you?

UNCLE STANLEY. Since nineteen twenty-nine.

RENA. Not bad.

ANNABELLE. Ah, think of Ed and Julia when *they* find out about Uncle Stanley. I'm not going to tell 'em. And Al and Mabel, and George and Harriet. Let 'em go right on kowtowing for the next twenty years, all of them!

UNCLE STANLEY. Why, that's very generous of you, Annabelle—very generous of you both. I always said you were my favorite niece and nephew.

NEWTON. To hell with that stuff, Uncle Stanley. Just be yourself.

ANNABELLE. Yes, sir, winters in Florida and spring in California and summers in Maine, and giving them that little shaver all the time. Pour it on, Uncle Stanley—pour it on!

RENA. Oh, you go on tour, too? I didn't know that.

(*It is* MR. KIMBER *who comes in next*)

MR. KIMBER. Mr. Fuller—been waiting outside for you, Mr. Fuller.

NEWTON. Hello, Mr. Kimber.

ANNABELLE (*nothing matters any more*). Get another bottle, Newton!

NEWTON. Surest thing you know. Here you are, Mr. Kimber.

MR. KIMBER. For me?

NEWTON. Certainly. Sit right over there and go to it.

MR. KIMBER. Well, if you say so. . . . Is that all right with you, Mrs. Fuller?

ANNABELLE. Sure. Bring in the Japanese beetles too.

(*The five of them sit there for a moment, each with a bottle and glass in hand. Then, methodically,* ANNABELLE *pours a drink and downs it.* NEWTON *follows suit. Then* RENA. *Then* UNCLE STANLEY. *Then* MR. KIMBER. *There is a moment of silence when this is all over. It is* UNCLE STANLEY *who breaks it*)

UNCLE STANLEY. Newton, I feel a draft.

NEWTON (*gayly*). Go right on feeling it, Uncle Stanley. *Good* for you! . . . Show Miss Leslie one of your cards, Uncle Stanley. "Stanley J. Menninger & Company, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania."

UNCLE STANLEY. Now really, Newton—

NEWTON. Go ahead and show her. Go ahead.

UNCLE STANLEY (*reluctantly drawing one forth*). Well, they don't really mean anything any more, but—

NEWTON. Look at that, Miss Leslie.

RENA. Say, they'd fool me. Engraved and everything.

NEWTON. Yes, sir. Of course it *ought* to say "Biggest liar since nineteen twenty-nine."

(*There is a pause; they all drink again*)

MR. KIMBER (*suddenly singing, all by himself*). "I'll never smile again, unless I smile at you."

(*Every eye goes to him, but* MR. KIMBER *just winks broadly at them all*)

(*Another pause for drinking*)

RENA. Say, I nearly forgot. I came to say good-bye.

NEWTON. Good-bye?

RENA. Yes, I'm all through with the summer theatre. I don't mind an occasional rustic touch, but when you walk into your dressing room and find that a couple of birds have built a nest in your brassière—it's time to go back to the city.

NEWTON (*sadly*). *You're* leaving—*we're* leaving—everybody's leaving. Too bad.

MR. KIMBER. Too bad. (*Another drink*) I got so mad outside just now, Mr. Fuller. I was talking to Mr. Prescott's caretaker, Mr. Perlberg, and what do you think? He says Mr. Prescott is going to buy this place in tomorrow.

NEWTON. What do you think of that?

ANNABELLE. Isn't that nice?

MR. KIMBER. Mr. Perlberg says Mr. Prescott ain't ever going to have no more trouble about people using the road and digging wells and things. (*He leans far forward in his chair*) And you know what I said to him?

NEWTON. What?

MR. KIMBER. I—just—didn't—answer—him.

NEWTON. *That's* telling him.

ANNABELLE. Certainly is wonderful. Our working like dogs around here and then Mr. Prescott gets the whole thing.

NEWTON (*through the haze of about eleven drinks*). That's the way it is. If the second payment is not made, we

lose the property. "Shall revert to the owners in its original condition, or be subject—"

ANNABELLE. "In its original condition." (*Her eye lights up*) And Mr. Prescott gets it, huh? Well, let's *revert* it to its original condition.

NEWTON. What?

ANNABELLE. Let's leave this place just the way it was when we walked in here. (*She picks up a paper-weight from a table and throws it through a window. Smash!*) Come on, everybody! Mr. Kimber, bring in that plow and a couple of old oil cans! Uncle Stanley, would you like to break a window?

UNCLE STANLEY. Yes, *sir.* (*And he does so. Crash!*)

NEWTON. Whoopee! (*He starts pulling books out of the bookshelves, throwing them on the floor. Begins ripping out the bookshelves*)

ANNABELLE. Miss Leslie, would you care to tear down the curtains?

RENA. Charmed!

ANNABELLE. Uncle Stanley, lot of windows upstairs, you know. Get busy. Break every single God-damned one of them.

UNCLE STANLEY (*as he goes up*). Oh, boy!

ANNABELLE (*calling out dining-room door*). Bring in the garbage, Hester. (*A voice from the distance: "What?"*) I said, bring in the garbage! And plenty of it!

NEWTON (*as* MR. KIMBER *re-enters with the plow and oil cans*). That's the stuff, Mr. Kimber. We want it right in the center of the room. (*A crash from upstairs, as a window goes.* UNCLE STANLEY *has gone to work*) And bring in the gravel—I want the gravel! The whole two years' supply!

(MR. KIMBER *rushes out*)

RENA. Was there gravel here when you first came?

ANNABELLE. There was everything here when we first came! . . . And bring a saw and a pick-axe, Mr. Kim-

ber! And some hatchets—anything you can lay your hands on!

(*A second window crashes upstairs*)

NEWTON. Give me those curtains, Miss Leslie. I want to stuff up the chimney. We'll give 'em original condition —we'll stick right to that contract.

(*A third crash upstairs*)

ANNABELLE (*as* HESTER *enters with the garbage pail*). Ah! Give it to me, Hester. (*She takes the pail and throws the contents against the wall.* HESTER *stands dumbfounded*) Go get some more, Hester—it still looks too good. Go to the neighbors if we haven't got any.

(HESTER *goes out as* UNCLE STANLEY *descends the steps. At the same time* MR. KIMBER *is returning, carrying a sack of gravel, along with saws, pick-axe and hatchets*)

UNCLE STANLEY. Did I *break* 'em! What do you want done now?

NEWTON. Here you are, Uncle Stanley! (*He hands him the saw and pick-axe*) Saw up the floors and make the roof leak good! Chop a big hole in it!

ANNABELLE. Don't have this kind of fun at Ed and Julia's, do you?

UNCLE STANLEY. More fun than I ever had in my life! (*He goes up*)

RENA. This is like a dress rehearsal down at our theatre.

NEWTON. Where do you want this gravel, Annabelle?

ANNABELLE. All over the place! And don't forget we've still got manure.

NEWTON. Oh, that's right. (*Yelling to* MR. KIMBER) Mr. Kimber, bring in the manure!

(*From upstairs we hear the sound of a saw.* UNCLE STANLEY *is a hard worker*)

ANNABELLE (*calling outside*). And put the cow in the kitchen, Mr. Kimber!

RENA. What the hell was this place like when you bought it?

ANNABELLE. You'll see! We need something to crack that plaster, Newton.

NEWTON. Get it for you in a minute. (NEWTON *rushes to the fireplace, grabs up an armful of kindling wood and tosses it up in the air. Goes back for more*)

ANNABELLE (*grabs up a couple of hatchets and hands one to* RENA). Come on, Miss Leslie—let's restore the stairway. (*She takes a hefty swing at one of the balustrade posts*) One for Mr. Prescott!

RENA (*swinging*). Here's one for Clayton!

ANNABELLE. Here's one for the elm blight! And that Goddamn well drill!

(*One post comes loose; she pulls it out and tosses it across the room*)

RENA. Here's one for that maid I played last week, and here's one for all the summer theatres.

NEWTON. Hey! Give me a chance! (*He grabs* RENA's *hatchet and starts swinging*) Here's one for the First National Bank of Aquetong.

ANNABELLE (*still swinging*). One for Mr. Prescott's road and another for his whole damned family!

(RENA, *meanwhile, has found a syphon of charged water, and is squirting it all over the place, singing as she squirts. "Oh, the monkey tied his tail around the flagpole, around the flagpole, around the flagpole!"*)

HESTER (*coming in with two pails in her hand*). Here's some more garbage, Mrs. Fuller.

ANNABELLE. Leave it right there, Hester.

(*The destruction is at its height as* STEVE *and* MADGE *rush in*)

STEVE (*at a pitch of excitement*). Say, what do you think!

MADGE. We've got great news!

(*They stop in amazement as they see what's going on*)

NEWTON. Come on—grab an axe. We're restoring the place to its original condition.

STEVE. Wait a minute! Wait a minute! Stop, will you! Stop!

MADGE. Mother, wait! Wait!

STEVE. A hell of a thing has happened! Stop! (*They pause, hatchets poised*)

ANNABELLE. Steve, you're back!

STEVE. Yes, yes—never mind that. Listen—the place is saved.

(*From* ANNABELLE *and* NEWTON: *"What? What are you talking about?"*)

MADGE. It's Raymond!

NEWTON. Raymond! What's happened?

STEVE. Plenty!

MADGE. Raymond fell down the well and we got there just in time.

NEWTON (*happily*). Raymond fell down the well? Where is he now?

MADGE. He's still down there!

STEVE. I pushed him back again!

NEWTON. Good!

MADGE. We got there and Raymond was swimming around, holding the map out of the water.

NEWTON. Map? What map?

STEVE. *This* map. The old map of the place that Mrs. Douglas brought you.

NEWTON. Let me see it.

MADGE. It shows that we own the road and the well and everything, and he was going to sell it to Mr. Prescott without your knowing anything about it.

NEWTON. My God!

ANNABELLE. I knew it!

STEVE. We got my surveying instruments and went over the whole thing. Your property goes sixty-four and a half feet into the Prescott place.

MADGE. The whole road is ours, and so is his well.

RENA. All this and Raymond too!

ANNABELLE. Are you dead sure, Steve?

STEVE. Absolutely!

NEWTON. Well, folks, miracles still happen. What do you think? We've still got the house.

ANNABELLE (*happily*). I can't believe it!

(UNCLE STANLEY *is descending the stairs, a piece of flooring under his arm*)

UNCLE STANLEY. I chopped a hell of a hole in the roof! . . . What's the matter—you all stopped work?

NEWTON. Uncle Stanley, what do you think has happened?

(*Before they get any further with it, however,* MR. PRESCOTT *storms in*)

PRESCOTT. Now listen to me, Mr. Fuller. (*Stumbling over the gravel*) What the hell is this? Now listen to me. I've stood all that I'm going to stand. The next one of you people that trespasses on my property, I'm going to turn the dogs loose. I'm warning you.

NEWTON. Ah, but those dogs are on my property, Mr. Prescott! We'll go into court any time you want to, and meanwhile I'll thank you not to use our road.

PRESCOTT. Now let's get one thing straight. At twelve o'clock tomorrow you're losing this place and I'm buying it. That's the important thing. You may have the old deed, but you have not got five thousand dollars.

(*They stand there, stunned.* UNCLE STANLEY, *who has listened to all this from the stairway, turns quickly and tiptoes up the stairs*)

STEVE. God! We never thought of that.

PRESCOTT. Well, it's something to think about. My lawyer appears to have been damned careless about my property line, but fortunately it will not matter after tomorrow. Now do we understand each other completely?

NEWTON (*licked*). Yes.

ANNABELLE. Yes, indeed.

PRESCOTT. Also, if you inflict any further damage on this house, I will have you hauled into court. It seems to me that it is quite clear that all this is being done with

malicious intent. You people have been causing trouble ever since you arrived. Thank heaven you will not do so any longer. And furthermore—

(*Suddenly there comes a great honk! honk! honk! of an automobile horn, and immediately a well-known voice is heard. "Hello, there! Where's everybody! Newton! Annabelle! It's Uncle Stanley!" They all look at each other, uncomprehendingly, and their amazement deepens as* UNCLE STANLEY *himself appears in the doorway, hat and coat on, carrying a bag*)

UNCLE STANLEY. Surprise, surprise! A visit from your old Uncle Stanley! (*He pretends to be amazed at the condition of the room*) Why, what's going on here? Annabelle, is something wrong? Newton, don't tell me I'm too late. I brought the check with me.

NEWTON. Check?

UNCLE STANLEY. Yes—the five thousand dollars you wrote me about. I thought I'd fly on with it and surprise you.

NEWTON (*a mild light dawning*). Oh—yes.

ANNABELLE (*playing along*). Ye-es.

UNCLE STANLEY (*turning to* MR. PRESCOTT). I beg your pardon. I don't believe I've met this gentleman.

NEWTON. Oh! Ah—this is Mr. Prescott.

UNCLE STANLEY. How do you do? I'm Stanley J. Menninger—the Menninger Ball Bearing Works, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. My card. (*And he hands one of those cards to* MR. PRESCOTT. MR. PRESCOTT *is duly impressed*)

NEWTON. Thank you, Uncle Stanley. Well, Mr. Prescott, it seems that the property will still be ours, and so will your road and your well. You see, Uncle Stanley, we've been having a little dispute about boundaries.

UNCLE STANLEY. Boundaries? Well, now, if it's a legal matter I'll have my staff of lawyers come on.

PRESCOTT. Now look here, Mr. Menninger, we don't have to have any lawyers. (*He is nervously tapping* UNCLE STANLEY'S *card against his finger*) I—ah—I think this

whole thing can be adjusted in a neighborly fashion. Suppose—ah—why don't you and Mr. Menninger come up and see me this afternoon, Mr. Fuller—have a little chat?

(*And at this moment a bedraggled* RAYMOND *comes in through the dining-room door.* ANNABELLE *quickly moves in front of him, hoping that he will not catch onto the proceedings*)

UNCLE STANLEY. Well, that's up to my nephew, Mr. Prescott. Under the circumstances, Newton, I think the best thing for me to do is just to give you the five thousand dollars and let you handle this yourself.

NEWTON. Thank you, Uncle Stanley, and I won't forget how generous you've been.

RAYMOND (*realizing that the tools of blackmail have again fallen into his hand*) Five thousand dollars! He hasn't got—

(*But he never gets any further.* RENA, *who has been toying with one of the pulled-out stairway spindles. brings it down with a sock on* RAYMOND'S *head.* RAYMOND *goes out like a light*)

PRESCOTT. Why, what's the matter? What happened?

RENA. Oh, poor Raymond has fainted. It must be the heat.

ANNABELLE. Oh, dear. Another one of his fainting spells. Let's carry him into the kitchen, Miss Leslie, and give him some water. Go right ahead, gentlemen—he'll be all right. He's such a sensitive boy and this often happens to him. (*They are carrying him through the door*) Be very careful, Miss Leslie. (*She lowers her voice*) Nice work. (*They go through the door*)

PRESCOTT (*picking up where he left off*). As far as your indebtedness at the bank is concerned—that five thousand dollars—don't bother Mr. Menninger for his check. I'll be happy to lend it to you. (ANNABELLE *and* RENA *are returning to the room*) Meanwhile, if you want water, Mrs. Fuller, I'll have my caretaker run a

pipe from that well you drilled. Will that be all right?

ANNABELLE (*blandly*). Will that be all right, Newton?

NEWTON. Well—

UNCLE STANLEY. Come now, Newton—I suggest we talk to Mr. Prescott. He seems willing to make a settlement. Why don't you go up there with me this afternoon?

NEWTON. Well, I don't know, Uncle Stanley. . . .

UNCLE STANLEY. Oh, now, Newton.

NEWTON (*a quick change of heart*). All right—I'll go. We'll be there, Mr. Prescott. Four o'clock—sharp.

PRESCOTT. Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mrs. Fuller.

(MR. KIMBER *comes running in*)

MR. KIMBER. All ready! All ready, Mrs. Fuller—I got two wheelbarrows full of manure right outside the door. What'll I do with 'em?

ANNABELLE (*her eye on* MR. PRESCOTT). Well, we won't need them now, Mr. Kimber. Thank you.

PRESCOTT. Well, I'll—see you gentlemen later, then. Good day, everybody. (*A nervous smile all around, and he goes*)

(*Not a soul moves as* MR. PRESCOTT *goes out. Then, from outside, we hear the sound of a heavy object overturning, then* MR. PRESCOTT'S *voice: "God-damn it!"*)

MR. KIMBER (*peering out*). Look out for those wheelbarrows, Mr. Pres— (*He shakes his head*) All over him. (*He goes*)

NEWTON (*bubbling over*). Uncle Stanley!

MADGE. Oh, Uncle Stanley, you were wonderful!

NEWTON. Folks, this calls for a drink.

ANNABELLE. Uncle Stanley, I want your picture. And this time I really want it.

STEVE. Uncle Stanley, you almost had *me* believing it. That's how good you were.

RENA. You ought to be with Warner Brothers.

NEWTON. You didn't do a bad job yourself, Miss Leslie.

RENA (*caressing the very spindle*). Why, it was nothing at all. I loved it.

STEVE (*as he hands each a glass*). Here you are, Mrs. Fuller, Madge—Miss Leslie.

NEWTON. Uncle Stanley, you deserve a double one.

UNCLE STANLEY (*bottle in hand*). I've got it.

RENA. The stage is set, Mr. Fuller. All ready for your entrance.

NEWTON (*facing them all*). Well—I bought this house because coming back here meant something to me. Not just to have a roof over our heads, but—something bigger. This place stands for something—for everything that seems to me to be worthwhile. So—here's to this house and what it stands for. And that's all I want to—

(*And at that moment* MR. KIMBER *rushes in*)

MR. KIMBER. Mr. Fuller! Mr. Fuller! That hurricane—it's shifted—it's headed right this way!

(*All hell breaks loose. Thunder, lightning, torrential downpour. It comes right through the roof that* UNCLE STANLEY *has so obligingly chopped a hole in, and sweeps in through the broken windows*)

(*With a shriek they are all over the place. "Get buckets!" "Close the doors!" "Go upstairs!" "It's coming in here!" "The windows are broken!" "The roof's leaking!"*)

(*In short,* NEWTON *and* ANNABELLE *have finally got that place in the country*)

Curtain

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