

STUNT PLAYS

For Your Club Night

by

OWEN KELLEY



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TORONTO

LONDON

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FOREWORD

Stunts have long been popular at church, community, and private gatherings. Now the Stunt Play supplies the same demand and carries the treatment of the dramatic situation a step farther, making it into a miniature play which retains all the advantages of the stunts in that it needs no scenery, is costumed without effort, and can be prepared with few rehearsals. It permits the busy person with a hankering for drama, but no time to devote to it, to satisfy his desire to act without sacrifice of time or energy. Many of the plays in this book can be rehearsed and produced in one evening. Others requiring more time can be cast and rehearsed at one meeting, costumed at home, given a quick rehearsal before the meeting on the following club night, and presented during that evening. In the church society, the bridge circle, or the lodge the Stunt Play may be introduced both as an entertainment for the guests and a recreation for the actors.

A few experiments with the little plays prove that nearly everyone has some dramatic ability and wants to use it. Perhaps the quiet little woman who is chiefly known for her hot biscuits at church suppers may startle her family with a truly artistic interpretation of the old Gypsy in "Mademoiselle Tania." Or father, who has not had an opportunity to dramatize himself in years, may prove an excellent villain for "A Maiden in Dis-

dress." Here is an opportunity for everyone to find characters to his liking and to enjoy brief jaunts into the realm of drama during his hours of relaxation.

Where it is impossible to have anything but the simplest of settings, it is only necessary to use a plain curtain, or several screens, and such properties as are absolutely essential to the play. A master of ceremonies may be appointed to give a short introductory speech, describing the scene. His part is as important as that of the actor for, if he is a good master of ceremonies, he will establish the atmosphere of the little play and the audience will quickly set the stage with the properties of the imagination.

Where there is no curtain, the black-out may be used. This simply means that the lights are turned out promptly at the end of the play to give the players a chance to leave the stage. Generally this is by far the more effective way of ending the Stunt Play.

BETRAYED

CHARACTERS

MR. CARTER.

MRS. CARTER.

SCENE: *The Carter living room. Mr. Carter is seated, down right, reading the evening paper. Mrs. Carter enters, left, wearing an attractive afternoon dress, hat, and gloves. She carries a number of small packages wrapped in tissue papers and dainty ribbons. She deposits her bundles on a chair or table and starts to take off her gloves, every movement indicating that she is furiously angry.*

MR. CARTER: Hello, Peggy. Have a nice time?

MRS. CARTER (*shortly*): No.

MR. CARTER (*absently*): Oh, I thought Dorothy Jane was giving a birthday luncheon for you today.

MRS. CARTER: She did.

MR. CARTER (*aware for the first time that all is not well*): Why, honey, what's the matter? Didn't you have a good time at the party?

MRS. CARTER: No, it was horrid.

MR. CARTER (*puzzled*): The girls gave you a lot of nice presents, didn't they?

MRS. CARTER (*giving a parcel a vicious push*): Oh, yes, a lot of nice presents.

MR. CARTER (*laying aside his paper*): Well, what's the matter?

MRS. CARTER (*taking off her hat*): Dorothy Jane's a cat, Fred, a nasty cat! I always thought she was my friend, but I've made a big mistake.

MR. CARTER (*bored*): Oh, you women—always getting your feelings hurt! You never hear of me quarreling with Jack or Bill, do you?

MRS. CARTER (*angrily*): That's all right, Fred Carter, but just tell me this—did Bill ever insult you in public? Did Jack ever blackball you in your clubs?

MR. CARTER (*amazed*): No, of course not.

MRS. CARTER: Then you don't know what you're talking about. You don't realize what one woman can do to another.

MR. CARTER (*incredulously*): But surely Dorothy Jane didn't —

MRS. CARTER: She did! She did! She made a fool of me, an *idiot*, I tell you.

MR. CARTER (*rising*): Peggy, I won't stand for it! No one can treat my wife like that and get away with it. I'll show that fathead husband of hers that his wife can't treat *you* like that. (*Going to Mrs. Carter.*) Tell me just what she said, Peggy.

MRS. CARTER (*weeping*): She didn't *say* anything. She *did* something.

MR. CARTER: Oh, she *did* something, eh?

MRS. CARTER: It was so humiliating, Fred. I'll never be able to face my friends again.

MR. CARTER: Peggy, you must tell me. I—I'll go right over there this minute and demand an apology!

MRS. CARTER: Oh, I'll get even with her. Just wait till

the next person congratulates her on her beautiful brown hair. Brown hair! Yes—the kind you get in a bottle! And all that talk about her family. Family! Her grandfather was a *hod* carrier!

MR. CARTER: Now, honey, don't get yourself all upset. Just leave it to me. (*Putting his arm across her shoulders.*) Now tell me just what happened.

MRS. CARTER (*weeping*): We were all at the table.

MR. CARTER: Yes, dear.

MRS. CARTER (*sobbing occasionally, her head on his shoulder*): And we had had the fruit Melba and the creamed scallops.

MR. CARTER: I see, honey.

MRS. CARTER: And the peas in timbales and the candied sweet potatoes.

MR. CARTER: Yes, yes, darling.

MRS. CARTER (*with a shudder*): And then the cake was brought in!

MR. CARTER: Now pull yourself together, Peggy. Tell me what happened next.

MRS. CARTER (*drawing away from him and holding her head up indignantly*): Fred, do you know how old I am?

MR. CARTER: Of course, Pet, you're twenty-nine—and you don't look a day over eighteen.

MRS. CARTER: And do you know, Fred—do you know what that Dorothy Jane did to me? She brought in a birthday cake ablaze—just *ablaze*—with *twenty-nine candles!*

(*Curtain or black-out.*)

DOCTOR

CHARACTERS

OFFICE GIRL.
FIRST PATIENT.
SECOND PATIENT.
A YOUNG MAN.

SCENE: *Dr. Smythe's office. The office girl is at desk, center back. There are chairs on either side of desk for patients. The telephone rings.*

OFFICE GIRL (*answering*): Hello! No, Dr. Smythe will not be in until three o'clock. (*Firmly.*) Dr. Smythe has an emergency call and will not be back until three o'clock. (*Pause.*) What? (*She giggles.*) I couldn't possibly tell you, Mr. Smart. (*Pause.*) Yes, you may wait here if you wish.

(*She hangs up. First woman patient enters, left.*)

FIRST PATIENT (*in complaining tones*): I don't suppose the doctor's in.

GIRL: No, not for half an hour, anyway. Won't you have a chair?

FIRST PATIENT (*crossing over right and seating herself*): Well, I might as well wait, being as I'm here. (*Confidentially.*) You know, Dr. Smythe doesn't understand my case.

GIRL (*pleasantly*): No?

FIRST PATIENT: No, none of the doctors do. I've got some new disease that hasn't been discovered yet. I say they ought to operate. But they won't do it. Well, I'm going to have a post mortem, anyway. (*With great satisfaction.*) They'll know then what a sick woman I've been all my life!

(*Second Patient enters, left. She is younger and more frivolous.*)

SECOND PATIENT: Oh, don't tell me I can't see the doctor!

GIRL: He'll be in shortly. Have a chair.

SECOND PATIENT (*sitting down, right, beside First Patient*): Oh, he'll be so disappointed if I don't wait.

(*To Girl.*) You see, I was in last week and he told me to be *sure* and let him know how I got along. So I just dropped in to tell him that I'm all right now.

FIRST PATIENT (*grimly*): Well, you better knock on wood!

(*Young Man enters, left, and dashes up to desk.*)

YOUNG MAN: You haven't heard from the doctor yet?

GIRL (*pleasantly*): No, you'll have to wait.

(*Young Man seats himself, left, rubbing his hands together nervously.*)

SECOND PATIENT (*to First*): He looks awfully pale, doesn't he?

FIRST PATIENT: Terrible. I wouldn't give him long. I had an uncle like that once—Uncle Amos, my mother's brother. He never knew a well day in his life. (*With deep sigh.*) I take after him.

(*Young Man gets up and paces floor, loosens collar, mops his face.*)

YOUNG MAN: *When* can I see the doctor? I've got to see him. I *can't* stand this!

GIRL: I'm sorry but you'll have to wait. Could I get you a drink of water?

YOUNG MAN: No! No, don't bother me, don't bother me. No one can do anything for me.

(*He sits down, puts head in hands and occasionally groans.*)

SECOND PATIENT: If my husband was as sick as that, I'd lose my mind!

FIRST PATIENT: He's probably no worse off than I am. Men never can stand a little pain. I always tell my husband, if he felt the way *I* do, he'd be in the hospital.

(*Young Man groans.*)

SECOND PATIENT: But he ought to be home in bed.

FIRST PATIENT: I wouldn't wonder if he's got a bad heart or some kind of liver trouble. Well, it's an old story for me—I've been all through it. He might as well give up right now. The doctors can't do a thing.

YOUNG MAN: How much longer? Isn't there *anything* you can tell me?

GIRL: Try to be calm, Mr. Smart.

YOUNG MAN: Oh, you don't know what it's like. I tell you, I can't stand it.

FIRST PATIENT: If I were you, young man, I wouldn't trust the doctors. Look at the people dying every day.

YOUNG MAN (*with long groan*): Oh, I know, I know. That's what makes it so terrible.

SECOND PATIENT: Won't they give you any hope?

YOUNG MAN: They won't tell me a thing.

FIRST PATIENT (*to Second*): They never tell them when it's too late.

(*Telephone rings. Girl answers.*)

GIRL: Hello! Yes, Dr. Smythe. (*Young Man leaps to his feet and stands rigidly.*) Yes, he's right here. I'll tell him. I'll tell him. (*She hangs up and turns to Young Man, smiling.*) Dr. Smythe says to tell you, Mr. Smart, that it's a boy, a nine-pound boy, and she's doing nicely.

(*Young Man lets out yell of delight, throws hat in the air and dashes out of office, left.*)

(*Lights out or quick curtain.*)

TO MEET THE DUKE

CHARACTERS

THE DUKE.

MRS. X.

MISS Y.

THE HOSTESS.

SCENE: *The corner of a large room in a fashionable house. There may be several pieces of furniture about, to create the impression of a richly furnished room or screens and a potted palm might be used.*

(The Duke enters, right, and comes down center, holding a cup of tea and munching a sandwich. He is just a nice looking man, neither foreign nor distinguished. He is eating his sandwich with relish. Mrs. X wanders in, left, with a cup of tea.)

MRS. X *(coming slowly down to the Duke)*: Ah, good-afternoon, Mr.—er—Spivens, isn't it? *(The Duke bows courteously.)* So many people—so tiresome, these affairs, don't you think so?

DUKE: Ah, but so many lovely ladies! How can it be tiresome?

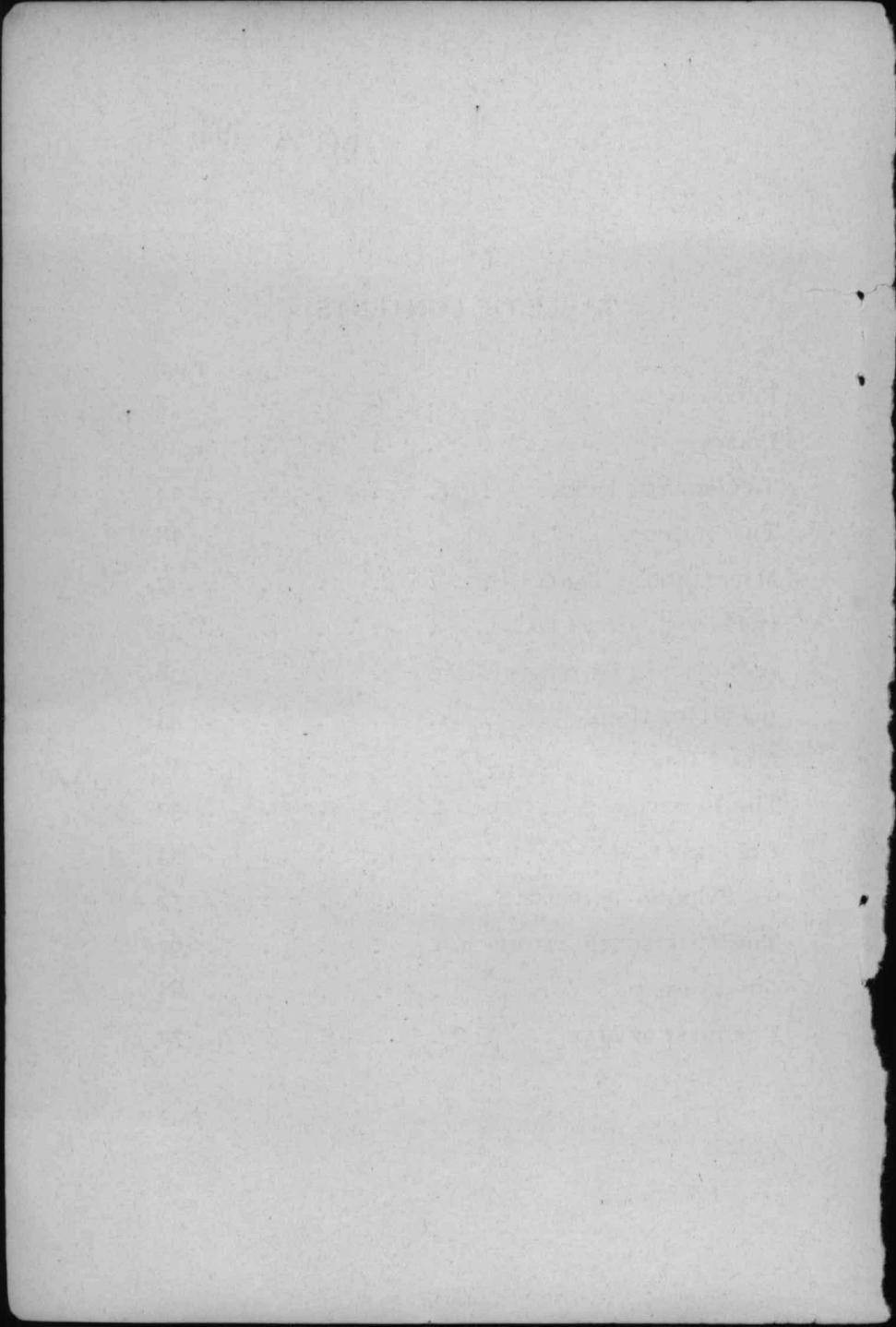
MRS. X: How like a man to say that.

DUKE: But what else would you have me say? It is indeed the truth. Can't I get you some more tea?

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MRS. X (*obviously uninterested*): No, thank you, I'm leaving in just a minute. (*Pause.*) You haven't any idea how one can meet the Duke, have you?

DUKE (*smiling*): Oh, you wish to meet him?

MRS. X: Why else should I come to this stupid thing?
(*She sips her tea as she talks.*)

DUKE: I assure you he's a very ordinary sort of a fellow.

MRS. X: Then you've met him?

DUKE: I have.

MRS. X: And you don't think much of him?

DUKE (*with a shrug*): I don't think you'd find him very interesting.

MRS. X (*confidentially*): Of course I don't believe in making a fuss over these foreigners. (*Laughing.*) I really can't help wondering if they are *clean*. You know you never can get hot water in Europe.

DUKE (*scandalized*): No?

MRS. X: All my friends say it's dreadful. They never bathe over there. And, you know, these poor fellows haven't a penny to bless themselves with. It's our money they're after, that's all.

DUKE: How distressing.

MRS. X: Oh, certainly. Take this Duke that's on display this afternoon. I'll wager he hasn't had anything to eat since his last invitation.

DUKE (*laughing*): Dear lady, you may be right.

(*Miss Y strolls in, left, nodding and smiling as though just leaving some other guest.*)

MISS Y: How do you do, Mrs. X. (*To Duke, coyly.*)

Oh, you're Mr. — Now don't tell me—I'll have it in a minute. You're Mr. Grant! (*The Duke bows. Mrs. X looks surprised, then shrugs and sips tea.*)

Of course! I met you somewhere on Long Island last year. (*As Duke starts to interrupt.*) Well, maybe it wasn't Long Island. Goodness, you ought to be grateful to me for remembering your name! (*The Duke bows.*) They say there's an honest-to-goodness Duke here this afternoon.

MRS. X: But such a crush! It's hardly worth getting in that mob, even to meet a Duke.

MISS Y: Oh, what's a Duke, anyway? Remember the last one? He decamped with Mrs. Blodgett's diamonds.

(*Duke looks from one woman to the other in growing amazement.*)

MRS. X: I was just telling Mr.—er—Grant that you can't trust foreigners.

MISS Y: I always take an inventory of my rings and earrings after I've danced with one of them.

MRS. X: They say the Duke has his eyes on Mrs. Blodgett's daughter.

MISS Y: Poor Ernestine! Fancy going to live in a moldy castle with a bankrupt old roué! I'll take an ordinary pickpocket every time!

DUKE: Can't I—can't I, *please*, get you ladies some more tea?

MISS Y: Heavens, no! I've had ten cups and not a drop of cream in one of them.

(*The Hostess enters, right, and bears down on them in full sail. The Duke bows low.*)

HOSTESS (*playfully*): Oh, *here* you are! Aren't you the shameless things to keep him all to yourselves like this! I'm going to take him right away from you! I can't let just two people monopolize our *only Duke!*

(She takes the Duke's arm, he bows to both ladies, and goes out, right, with Hostess, leaving Mrs. X and Miss Y gasping.)

(Quick curtain or black-out.)

THE SCANDAL

CHARACTERS

MRS. GREEN, *the hostess.*
MRS. JONES, }
MRS. SMITH, } *members of the Aid.*
MRS. PARKER, }
MRS. RICHARDSON, *the widow.*

SCENE: *A living-room with chairs arranged for five. Mrs. Green is making final preparations for the meeting of the Ladies' Aid Society, straightening a pillow or rubbing her finger over a chair to be sure that every particle of dust has been removed. The door-bell rings and she goes down, left, to admit Mrs. Jones.*

MRS. JONES: Am I early?

MRS. GREEN: No indeed, Clara, come right in.

MRS. JONES: Well, Maud, I could hardly wait to get here. (*Takes off her hat which Mrs. Green takes from her and lays aside. Mrs. Jones seats herself.*) What do you suppose I saw this morning?

MRS. GREEN (*sitting down*): I can't imagine, Clara.

MRS. JONES: I was down in front of Morgan's meat market, watching that bold Jessie Hammer flirting with the clerk over at the post office, when along comes Mrs. Richardson.

MRS. GREEN: You mean the new Aid member?

MRS. JONES: Yes, the *widow*, if she is a widow. Well, she was walking along as bold as you please with a strange man.

MRS. GREEN: Who do you suppose it was?

MRS. JONES: Don't ask me. Only thing I know is, she was talking and laughing like she knew him pretty well.

MRS. GREEN: My! my! And she says her husband's only dead a year.

MRS. JONES: I'm sorry we were so hasty about asking her to join the Aid. Like as not she's got brass enough to come.

MRS. GREEN: Goodness me, I gave her a special invitation to come over this afternoon!

MRS. JONES: But just wait till I tell you the rest of it. (*The women lean toward each other and Mrs. Jones whispers something in Mrs. Green's ear.*)

MRS. GREEN: You don't mean it, Clara!

MRS. JONES: Uh-huh! Saw it with my own eyes. Now what do you think of that for a scandal?

MRS. GREEN: Tch! Tch! What did the man look like?

MRS. JONES (*slowly*): Well, he didn't look like the right sort, somehow. Sort of *fast*, you know.

(*Door-bell rings.*)

MRS. GREEN (*going to door*): I hope that isn't Mrs. Richardson now. I sort of need time to collect myself. (*Opens door.*) Oh, Mrs. Smith. I'm so glad to see you. Come right in. Here, give me your hat and sit right down. Clara and I have some news for you, haven't we, Clara?

(*Mrs. Jones nods solemnly.*)

MRS. SMITH (*as all pick up their sewing*): Did you find out how much the parson's wife paid for her hat?

MRS. JONES: No, this is a lot more serious.

MRS. GREEN: That's right. Just wait till you hear. Tell her, Clara.

MRS. JONES: Well, I was just telling Maud about how I met Mrs. Richardson down on Main Street with a man.

MRS. SMITH. A man! (*Nodding.*) Trust a widow! I'm glad I didn't introduce Henry to her.

MRS. GREEN: Kind o' *theatrical* looking man, didn't you say, Clara?

MRS. JONES: Yes, he was dark and—you know—sort of *bad* looking. And she was a sight—all painted up like a chorus girl.

MRS. SMITH (*rolling up her eyes and raising her hands in horror*): And we let her in the Ladies' Aid!

MRS. GREEN: And she's likely to ring the door-bell any minute. But you haven't heard it all. Tell her the worst part, Clara.

(*Mrs. Jones leans across and whispers something in Mrs. Smith's ear.*)

MRS. SMITH: No! Why! Now what do you suppose *that* means?

(*Door-bell rings. All drop their sewing and straighten up.*)

MRS. JONES: Maybe she's here now. I don't know what I can say to her.

(*Goes to door.*)

MRS. SMITH: It don't seem decent, having her here with the minister's wife and all.

MRS. GREEN (*at door*): Oh, it's Mrs. Parker. Well,

come right in. Aid meetings never seem complete without the parson's wife.

MRS. PARKER (*coming in*): Now that's a right nice thing to say. (*She enters and exchanges greetings with the other women. Giving her hat to Mrs. Green and seating herself.*) My, you look nice and cozy. Now don't let me interrupt. You know I'm not above a bit of gossip myself.

(*Women laugh and exchange glances over their sewing.*)

MRS. GREEN (*coughing self-consciously*): Mrs. Jones was just telling us about something we're all very sorry to hear about our new member.

MRS. PARKER: You don't mean that nice Mrs. Richardson?

MRS. SMITH: Yes. It just goes to show that you never can tell.

MRS. PARKER: You don't mean—you don't mean to say that she isn't *all right*?

MRS. GREEN: You go ahead, Clara, and tell Mrs. Parker.

MRS. JONES: I hate to tell you, Mrs. Parker, but I saw Mrs. Richardson on Main Street with a very *queer* looking man.

MRS. PARKER. You did?

MRS. SMITH: It was at night, I suppose?

MRS. JONES (*with gusto*): Yes, it was late at night. I was hurrying home from Minnie Simpson's after a fitting and I almost bumped square into them before I saw them. She was all fixed up—well, she didn't look like a lady, if you know what I mean.

MRS. PARKER: I never! And she always puts a dollar in the collection plate every Sunday!

MRS. JONES: *And* — (She leans over and says something in a low voice to Mrs. Parker.)

MRS. PARKER (*bracing herself back in her chair*): Oh, my goodness gracious! Why —!

MRS. GREEN: And tell her about the man. Just listen to this.

MRS. JONES: Well, he looked like an *actor* to me, like the kind you see around burlesque shows. (*Quickly.*) Not that I ever went to a burlesque, but I can imagine. (*All nod understandingly.*) He had a dangerous look. I tell you, I'd hate to meet him alone on a dark night. (*All shudder.*)

MRS. SMITH: I wouldn't wonder if he was keeping out of the way of the police, slinking around like that at night.

MRS. PARKER: How dreadful! And Mrs. Richardson so young!

MRS. GREEN: I don't know about that. I got a good look at her in church last Sunday and I wouldn't wonder if she never sees forty-five again. She dresses young, but a crow's foot's a crow's foot.

MRS. JONES: Wouldn't wonder if she dyes her hair.

MRS. PARKER: Well, handsome is as handsome does. (*Door-bell rings. All sit up and look at each other in alarm.*)

MRS. GREEN (*going to door*): If it's her, I'll have to let her in.

MRS. PARKER: Oh, yes, of course.

MRS. SMITH: Maybe we could hint around that we're awfully particular about such things in Strawberry Point. If she thinks this is the city, she's mistaken.

MRS. JONES: I think she ought to get her comeuppance good and proper, if you ask me.

MRS. GREEN: Oh, don't say anything, Clara. I don't want any unpleasantness in my house. (*Door-bell rings again and Mrs. Green opens door.*) Oh, good-afternoon, Mrs. Richardson. Come in and meet the ladies. (*Nervously.*) I—I guess you know them all by this time.

(*Mrs. Richardson is a charming middle-aged woman, dressed in the latest fashion and appearing young in contrast with the staid dress of the other women. She nods pleasantly and is greeted with varied degrees of reserve.*)

MRS. RICHARDSON: Good-afternoon, Mrs. Parker. (*To Mrs. Smith.*) How do you do? Didn't I see you on Main Street this morning, Mrs. Jones? (*Mrs. Jones eyes her in silence.*) I wasn't quite sure it was you. You see I haven't been here long enough to get to know people.

(*She seats herself in middle of group, keeping her hat on.*)

MRS. SMITH (*meaningly*): It won't take people long to get to know you, Mrs. Richardson.

MRS. RICHARDSON: Oh, thank you. I do so want to be friendly. (*All purse their lips and sew furiously.*) Mrs. Green, you won't mind if I keep my hat on, will you? I can only stay a few minutes.

MRS. GREEN: Why—must you go?

MRS. RICHARDSON: Yes, I really must, much as I hate to. I am so anxious to get to know you ladies. But you see, I have some new responsibilities.

MRS. JONES (*sarcastically*): Responsibilities, have you?

Well, I never heard of a lone widow having responsibilities. Seems like it's just respectable married folks that have the burdens.

MRS. RICHARDSON: Goodness me! I'm glad to have a burden for a change.

MRS. SMITH (*dryly*): Well, of course, there are burdens and *burdens*.

MRS. RICHARDSON: I just stopped in to show you that I really intend to be a good Aid member, even if I have to be a little formal this time. (*Women slowly straighten up in alarm.*) I have a guest, you see.

MRS. JONES: Yes, I *did* see.

MRS. SMITH: A woman has to be mighty careful what she does in a God-fearing community, Mrs. Richardson.

MRS. JONES: Especially around *men*.

(*There is a pause. Then Mrs. Richardson laughs.*)

MRS. RICHARDSON: You don't mean to tell me they're gossiping about my *son* coming to see me?

ALL: Your *son*?

MRS. RICHARDSON: Bless you, yes. (*Teasingly to Mrs. Jones.*) Now I know why you didn't see me this morning, Mrs. Jones! You were too busy looking at my big handsome boy. I don't blame you a bit. I can hardly take my eyes off him myself.

MRS. JONES (*rallying*): Now I do remember it was you with that nice young man, but whose—um——?

MRS. RICHARDSON (*laughing*): You mean the *baby*? (*All nod, half frightened. Mrs. Richardson, proudly.*)

My grandson—my own blessed grandson!

MRS. PARKER: No!

MRS. GREEN: Well, well, *well!*

MRS. RICHARDSON: Yes, of course. I'm keeping the baby until Herbert and his wife get settled. My son's just been ordained, you know.

MRS. PARKER: He's—he's a minister?

MRS. RICHARDSON: Why, I supposed you knew about it, Mrs. Parker. Rev. Parker called this morning and invited Herbert to take the pulpit next Sunday evening.

MRS. PARKER: And Ernest never told me!

MRS. RICHARDSON: Yes, it will be the first time I've ever heard Herbert from the pulpit. It will be a proud moment for me. And now, ladies, I really must fly home. (*Rising.*) Baby's a little colicky today.

MRS. SMITH: Whatever you do, Mrs. Richardson, don't give him any soothing syrup.

MRS. GREEN: Couldn't I lend you Junior's old comforter? The main thing is to keep their feet warm.

MRS. RICHARDSON (*at door*): Thank you, but you've no idea how times have changed since we had our babies. Marjorie won't even let me put stockings on him. Now you'll all come over, won't you?

MRS. GREEN: We certainly will, Mrs. Richardson.

MRS. PARKER: Yes, indeed.

MRS. SMITH: Don't be surprised if I slide an apple pie in the kitchen door some morning.

MRS. JONES: I'll be mightily pleased to meet your son, Mrs. Richardson.

(*Mrs. Richardson goes out.*)

MRS. PARKER: Just think of Ernest not telling me that!

MRS. GREEN: A grandmother! Well, I can't get over it.

MRS. SMITH: And looking as fresh as a daisy.

MRS. GREEN: The first time I saw her in church I said to myself, "That woman has the face of a Madonna."

MRS. JONES (*triumphantly*): Just wait till you see her son! If ever a young man had a noble countenance, that one has. I can hardly wait to see him in the pulpit!

(*All sew as the curtain falls or lights go out.*)

MADemoiselle TANIA

CHARACTERS

MASTER OF CEREMONIES.

MARRA, *an old fortune teller.*

GUIDO, *a clown.*

SCENE: *The stage represents the interior of a small tent adjoining the big circus tent, but, as it would be impractical to attempt to set the stage for so short a play, only a curtain or several screens need be used. The essential properties are two straight chairs, down center. The Master of Ceremonies describes the scene, using, if he cares to, the following lines:*

MASTER OF CEREMONIES:

Friends, we offer you a brief diversion
And beg you'll take with us a short excursion
Into the land of clowns and plumes and spangles,
Of ladies dazzling in their bright fandangles,
Of elephants, of lemonade that's pink,
Of educated horses that can think
And do a sum as quick as any boy,
Of seals that play and serpents that are coy,
Of tom-tom, blaring horn, and tambourine—
The circus? Why, of course, that's what I mean!
And now, just as an added fascination,

Please set the stage with your imagination.
The big tent's right out there (*pointing off left*) and we
can see

The rings and hear the old calliope.

This is an anteroom. You see, I hope,

Its walls of canvas and the stakes and rope.

Our hero's now performing in the ring,

Nimble young Guido, he who takes the sting

Out of his blows with clown's philosophy.

And you'll see old Marra, ancient Romany,

Whose cards hold many secret pangs or balm

For those who thrust their silver in her palm.

And now your close attention, friends, I pray,

While clown and crone present their little play.

(The Master of Ceremonies bows and retires. Marra enters, right, in gypsy costume, carrying a deck of cards. She is old and bent and witch-like. She comes down to chairs, seats herself, facing the audience, and draws one chair in front of her so that it makes a table for her cards, its back at her right. She begins to lay the cards on the chair, slowly, nodding occasionally to herself. Guido, a clown, strolls in, left. As clown make-up is particularly difficult, Guido need not wear any and may carry a towel with which he appears to be removing the paint from his face.)

GUIDO (*coming down*): Mother Marra at her cards again!

MARRA (*peering at him*): Oh, it's you, Guido.

GUIDO: Business poor tonight?

MARRA (*cackling*): What do they care about fortunes when they can be in there watching Tania? Marra is an old woman who looks into the future but, when

Tania is so young and beautiful, the present is enough for them.

GUIDO: Ah, who can blame them! I'm proud that they all love her so. But, Marra, why did I let her go on tonight? I'm—I'm a little frightened. Why didn't I stop her?

MARRA (*continuing to lay cards out*): You couldn't stop her, Guido. Ah, no. No one could stop her. (*Putting down a card.*) It says so here. Always the cards tell the truth, Guido. Marra is an old woman—she knows. The cards never lie.

GUIDO: Nonsense. But it's all right as long as she doesn't try the high trapeze. The doctor said so himself. And it's her last night, Mother Marra. It's Tania's last night in the big show. After tonight we can have her all to ourselves. And I'm going to take good care of her. You'll see.

MARRA: I know, I know. I see everything here. (*With a gesture toward cards.*) Shall I tell you what I see, Guido?

GUIDO (*savagely*): No! Leave the cards alone. Anyway, how can a pack of dirty cards hurt Tania? (*Marra nods wisely and goes on with her cards. There is a sound of applause off stage. A band starts playing in the distance. Such music as "The Stars and Stripes Forever," played on a phonograph and muffled so as to give the effect of distance, may be used.*) It's her turn, Marra. They've just finished with the lions.

MARRA (*not looking up*): Yes, I hear her music.

(*Guido looks off, left. A whistle is heard, the band stops playing, and the voice of the ringmaster is heard, almost too far off to distinguish the words. "La-a-adies*

and gentlemen. I ask you to direct your attention to Mademoiselle Tania, the wonder girl of the air. Tania will now perform for you the most thrilling, daring, death-defying feats of human aeronautics ever witnessed by man. I present to you Mademoiselle Tania." There is a burst of applause, a whistle is blown twice, and the band again strikes up and continues to play through the remainder of the play.)

GUIDO (looking up as his eye follows Tania climbing the trapeze): Ah, she is lovely, Marra. When they turn the lights on her she is like a fairy.

MARRA (sadly): Ah, yes, like a fairy. Such tiny hands and feet.

GUIDO: She's taking her time, Marra. She's being careful.

MARRA (almost crooning to her cards): Slowly. Slowly. Slowly.

GUIDO (taking a few steps, down left, and speaking, with his eyes on Tania): It's the last time I'll see her up there like that. And I'm glad. I'm glad she's coming down to me for good. Sometimes I almost hate those ropes and swings. She seems to belong to them. Look how they catch and toss her!

MARRA (continuing with cards): Yes, those ropes—they know.

(The music plays very softly from here on.)

GUIDO: Sometimes I'm afraid she'll sail up and up—through the tent and on up to the stars, Marra. She seems to belong way off in the air somewhere beyond my reach. But I want her to belong to me. I'm—I'm jealous of the air. I think she loves it more than she loves me!

MARRA. Yes, she loves the air. Better she didn't. She loves to be up there with thousands of people watching her.

GUIDO (*still watching*): I'm afraid she'll never be so happy down with me. Maybe, if her heart gets stronger, she can go back some day. (*Pause.*) Why is she doing that? Marra!

(*Marra gathers up her cards and, holding them in her hand, goes to stand beside Guido, peering up at Tania.*)

MARRA: She's going up there, Guido! The fool!

GUIDO: No, she can't! She can't do the high jump. She promised me, Marra! (*There is a pause while they both watch intently.*) Look at her! She's not steady. She's swaying.

MARRA: It's the ropes, Guido. It's the wind.

(*Pause.*)

GUIDO (*brushing his hand across his eyes*): I—I can't seem to see her any more, Marra. Is she up?

MARRA: She's still climbing.

GUIDO (*straining to keep Tania in sight*): It's because it's her last night. She wants to do it for the last time. She's so proud of that jump. (*Turning his head away.*) Oh, I can't stand it, Marra. If anything should happen to her heart—up there —

MARRA (*grasping Guido convulsively*): Look! She's going to jump!

GUIDO (*thrusting her away and covering his head with his arm*): Stop! (*He looks up again.*)

MARRA: Look—look—she's —

(*Marra screams and hides her face in her hands. Simultaneously the whistle blows, the music stops with a crash, and there is the off-stage sound of thousands*

saying "Oh!" in horror. Guido puts his hand to his heart and staggers back as if shot. Then there is silence for a moment.)

GUIDO: Marra, Marra, she's lying on the net. (*As he staggers off, left.*) I—I guess—she's—fainted.

MARRA: No, she hasn't fainted. (*Lifting the cards high in both hands and letting them fall.*) No—no. The cards never lie.

(*The whistle blows and the band strikes up a loud, rollicking air for a second as the curtain falls or the lights go out.*)

IT HAPPENS EVERY DAY

CHARACTERS

MRS. MCPHERSON, } scrub women.
MRS. O'TOOLE, }
A DESPERATE MAN.

SCENE: *A city park. Several park benches face the audience. A somber looking man in black is seated down left. He is slightly turned from the audience, his left elbow on the back of the seat and his chin in his hand. He is the picture of dejection. Mrs. O'Toole enters, left, surveys him as she passes, and seats herself near center. She is a scrub woman returning from a day's work and carries a large paper bundle. She wears a shawl and a hat worn high on her head. She has scarcely seated herself and begun mopping her brow and fanning herself with her handkerchief when Mrs. McPherson, another scrub woman, enters right.*

MRS. O'TOOLE: Good day to yez, Mrs. McPherson.

MRS. MCPHERSON (*coming down and seating herself*): Well, Mrs. O'Toole! And how are yez gettin' on in these terrible toimes?

MRS. O'TOOLE (*elbows spread and hands on her knees*): Sure himsilf is out of jail and workin' stidy, now and then, and it's mesilf that spends the days on me knees

—and not prayin'. But, as I always sez, what have we got to complain of—we're still livin'.

MRS. MCPHERSON. Sure, we're livin', but we niver know when our toime's comin'. (*Man on bench puts elbows on his knees and sits with head in hands.*) What with the terrible things that're goin' on in the world these days, it's a whole lot safer to be dead.

(*She purses her lips and nods knowingly.*)

MRS. O'TOOLE: There's truth in yer words, Maggie McPherson. I'll not be denying it, and Pat Murphy drinkin' himsilf into his grave last week and not lavin' enough for a dacent wake. Sure, you could hear the widow two blocks away.

MRS. MCPHERSON (*with great interest*): You don't be tillin' me!

MRS. O'TOOLE: A-a-h, yis. 'Twas the second disaster on the block this summer. The first was Mrs. Ryan fallin' downstairs with a pot o' boilin' potato soup. Sure, she broke her neck, poor woman. But she'd 've died anyway, she was that scalded. And now I'm waitin' for the third.

(*Man looks at his watch and slumps into attitude of despair.*)

MRS. MCPHERSON: It'll come, take me word for it.

MRS. O'TOOLE (*earnestly*): Sure, I only hope it'll happen on a Sunday. It's a hard thing to be a workin' woman and missin' all the good things of life. Sure I've missed all the big funerals on the block for the last foive years.

MRS. MCPHERSON: 'Tis a great pity. I was out mesilf when the man jist across the hall from me slashed his throat with a bread knife. Sure I saw some of the

blood where they carried him out and it was a horrible sight, I'm tillin' yez. (*Man groans and changes position.*) Did yez hear that!

(*They both eye him suspiciously.*)

MRS. O'TOOLE. I don't like the look of him. Sure he might be one of thim maniacs. (*They both watch him closely. He takes a bottle out of his pocket slowly and deliberately and stares at it, nodding his head sadly. Mrs. O'Toole, excitedly.*) Do yez see that bottle?

(*Man consults his watch and then sits staring dully at bottle.*)

MRS. MCPHERSON (*as both lean forward so as not to miss a move*): Sure it's suicide and there's no mistake of that. O-o-oh, what a terrible thing to be witnessin'. Sure do ye think he'll be takin' it or is he just shammin' like?

MRS. O'TOOLE. Niver ye worry. He'll be takin' it, all right. Belike he's thinkin' now o' the terrible life that's behind him and decidin' there's but one way out. Sure I'd like to see the note he left somewheres.

MAN (*regarding bottle*): At six o'clock—at six o'clock I'll do it! Bah!

(*He turns his head away from bottle as he utters exclamation of disgust.*)

MRS. O'TOOLE: Sure he's fightin' with the divil himself, poor soul. 'Tis the divil hidin' in that bottle and no mistake.

MRS. MCPHERSON: Now I wonder if it's somethin' that'll take him quick like. Mesilf, I'd rather be blowin' me brains out and havin' it over that quick.

MAN (*tensely, as he holds bottle up and looks at it*): I

said I'd do it and I will. Other men have done it. I'll do it. I know I'm a fool—but, ugh!

(He makes a terrible face and shudders, covering his eyes.)

MRS. O'TOOLE: He's gettin' up his nerve for it.

MRS. MCPHERSON: I'm tillin' ye, Bridget O'Toole, 'tis a terrible thing that's happenin' in this park tonight, and the two of us lookin' on.

(A clock, off stage, starts to strike six. The Man rises quickly and uncorks bottle.)

MAN *(with resignation)*: Six o'clock! Well, I might as well have it over with.

(He puts bottle to his lips. Both women rush over to him, yelling at once.)

MRS. O'TOOLE: Stop it! Stop it! For the love of hiven, don't be takin' it.

MRS. MCPHERSON: Man! Man! Don't do it. Sure you'll be dyin' in foive minutes.

MAN: Get away. Leave me alone! Are you crazy?

(He struggles with them, all talking at once, and manages to hold them off until he has emptied the bottle.)

MRS. O'TOOLE: Give me that bottle! Give it to me, I say. Sure I'll not be lettin' yez die like this!

MRS. MCPHERSON: Think o' yer wife, man. Think o' yer wife! Oh, the saints preserve us, he's done it!

(Man flings bottle away and sinks on bench, groaning and apparently in great agony. Women draw away.)

Oh, what'll we do, what'll we do? He'll be dyin' here in foive minutes and not a policeman in sight even.

(Mrs. O'Toole runs and picks up bottle and examines label. There is a pause.)

MRS. O'TOOLE *(holding out bottle)*: Well! Mrs.

A MAIDEN IN DISTRESS

CHARACTERS

THE BOY, *about twenty-one.*

THE GIRL, *about sixteen.*

THE VILLAIN, *middle-aged.*

FRIEND OF THE BOY, } *off-stage voices.*

THE CONDUCTOR, }

SCENE: *A railway car.*

(The Boy enters, puts down his grip and magazines and looks out the window.)

BOY: Here I am, old man.

FRIEND (*outside window*): All set?

BOY: All set. Don't wait now. We start in a minute.

FRIEND: Well, have a good time. Wish I could take a vacation now. Get some of those thrills you've been talking about.

BOY: Thanks, Bill, I'll try. But, gosh, you know nothing ever happens to me. I've decided there's no such thing as adventure any more.

FRIEND: Don't you believe it. There's plenty of adventure if you only look for it. Keep your eyes and ears open. It'll come when you least expect it. Well, so long.

BOY: So long, Bill.

McPherson, Mrs. McPherson! Will you be lookin' at this!

MRS. MCPHERSON (*looking at bottle*): Castor oil! C-a-astor oil! The very same as I give me little Patrick ivery Saturday night!

(*Mrs. O'Toole throws bottle down, takes bundles off bench and pulls Mrs. McPherson by the arm.*)

MRS. O'TOOLE: Come on, Mrs. McPherson, come on home. (*Glaring back at Man.*) Sure I knew by the look of him, he hadn't the nerve to do it.

(*Both adjust their shawls with quick, businesslike jerks, give Man a last disgusted glance and start out, right. Man howls and is convulsed with agony as the curtain falls quickly or lights go out.*)

FRIEND: Remember, keep your eyes open.

(*Boy settles down. Opens detective magazine with flaming cover and is soon lost in its contents. The Villain enters, carrying a suitcase. Behind him trails the Girl, who carries a small bag and some magazines. The Villain has her by the hand and is practically dragging her. She is frightened and weebegone.*)

VILLAIN: Sit down here, now.

GIRL: Oh, I can't, I can't. Please don't make me —

VILLAIN (*in harsh undertone*): Sit down, I tell you! Stop all this fussing!

GIRL: Let me off, please, please! I can't go, I just can't.

Oh, you don't know what this means to me —

VILLAIN (*half pushing her into seat*): Be quiet! Do you want the police on our trail?

(*The Boy pricks up his ears, straining forward in his seat to catch every word.*)

GIRL: Police?

VILLAIN: Yes, it's a wonder you haven't brought out the whole force. Now get settled and stop that sniffing.

CONDUCTOR (*off stage*): All aboard! Next station stop is Centertown, Centertown.

GIRL: Oh, we're going! Let me off, please let me off. (*Rather weakly.*) Or else I'll jump off.

VILLAIN: Do you want to break your neck?

GIRL: I might just as well break it. (*Plumps herself in seat, man sits beside her.*) Just as well! What is there in life for me now?

VILLAIN. Heroics again! Look here, Betty, you're not a child any longer. Be sensible now, and pull yourself together. Why don't you look at a magazine?

GIRL: L-look at a magazine when my heart is bursting?

(She sobs convulsively, the tears gradually subsiding. The man tries to read a newspaper. The Girl wipes her eyes.) I h-hope you're satisfied. You're taking me away from all I love best. Shutting me away behind those gray walls, away from my home, from my friends—I'll grow thin and wan and pine away. I'll never smile again. But will you care? No, you are relentless! Oh, can't I go back to my mother?

VILLAIN: Great Scott! I thought we'd been all over that. You can't and you know it.

GIRL: Years and years behind those gray walls!

VILLAIN: Oh, for heaven's sake! I'm going to the smoking car. Now calm down. When I come back I don't want a tear out of you. And no stunts. Stay where you are or you may have something to really worry about! We change at the next station. I'll be back for you. Remember, no stunts.

(The Villain goes out with his newspaper. The Girl continues to weep softly. The Boy is sitting tensely forward on his seat. He stares hard in the direction of the door out of which the man has gone. Finally he plucks up his courage and slides over in the seat vacated by the Villain. The Girl looks up, astonished. The Boy puts his finger to his lips and speaks excitedly, sotto voce.)

BOY: Sh-sh! I'll help you.

GIRL: Help me?

BOY: Yes, I'll save you—if I can. How long will he be gone?

GIRL: He may be back any minute. Don't sit there, please. Go away.

BOY: I—I'm not afraid.

GIRL: Oh, you don't know him. If he saw me talking to a strange boy, he'd about kill me.

BOY: Does he carry a pistol?

GIRL (*bewildered*): A pistol? Why, no, I don't think so.

BOY: Then he can't shoot. I tell you, I'm not afraid.

This is adventure. I always knew, when real adventure came, I'd be ready for it.

GIRL: Won't you go on back? I tell you, if he found me talking to you —

BOY: See here, I'm going to save you. I'll get you out of his clutches. (*He takes out card case and scribbles hastily on a card, with shaking hand. Handing card to Girl.*) Here, take this. My name and address. Quick, the time may be short.

GIRL: But I shouldn't —

BOY: Take it, quick. Write to me. Tell me where you are, what sort of a prison you're in. That may help.

GIRL: But I couldn't write to you.

BOY: Does he watch you all the time? Could he intercept the mail?

GIRL: Maybe. If he ever found that I was corresponding with a strange boy, he'd about kill me!

BOY: I'll rescue you, if I can. I'll get you away from there.

GIRL: Oh, you don't know him. Even if I did escape, he'd send me right back. It's no use.

BOY: Look here, we'll find some way. Just trust me. And whatever you do, don't marry him. You don't have to marry him if it's against your will.

GIRL (*looking at Boy as though she begins to think him a bit crazy*): M-marry him?

BOY: He might try to force you. But don't marry him.

He'd get a hold on you for life. Don't be afraid. This can't go on. The police will get him sooner or later. Didn't he say they were on his trail now? He's a villain of the deepest dye —

CONDUCTOR (*off stage*): Centertown, Centertown! Change here for eastbound trains!

GIRL (*rising in agitation*): This is our station. He's coming!

(*The Boy gives a frenzied look toward the door, then bolts back to his seat. The Villain enters.*)

VILLAIN: Here we are, Betty. Get your things together. (*The Girl starts to pick up a bag, her tears flowing afresh.*) Still crying? By the Lord Harry! Brace up, now. All the girls will be on the platform. Don't let them see you blubbering!

GIRL: Oh, I c-can't help it, I can't h-h-help it!

VILLAIN: Snap out of it! What's so terrible about going away to school? Why, hundreds of girls would give their eye-teeth to be sent to boarding school. Come on now, face 'em with a grin! Be Daddy's brave little girl!

GIRL (*wiping her eyes, picking up bundles, and following him off*): I—I'll—I'll t-try, Daddy.

(*They go out. The Boy stares after them, stupefied. The truth slowly dawns upon him.*)

BOY (*with a gesture of disgust*): Adventure! Bologna!

(*He buries his face in his detective magazine.*)

(*Curtain.*)

BLESS OUR HOME

CHARACTERS

HE.

SHE.

SCENE: *Living room of the newlyweds' apartment. She is seated, down right, crying.*

HE (*off stage*): Hello, dear! (*Enters, left, carrying his hat.*) Hello! Why—what's the matter? (*She shakes her head and goes on weeping.*) I'm awfully sorry I'm late, if that's what's wrong.

SHE: D-d-dinner's all spoiled. Everything's cold, stone cold.

HE (*cheerfully*): Why didn't you just stick it in the oven?

SHE: Don't talk to me like that! I worked all afternoon in the kitchen and burned my finger. (*Exhibits finger tied up.*) And got all hot and tired and—and now it's all spoiled.

HE: Aw, now, that's a shame. I'm awfully sorry. Now you just go powder your nose and put your hat on and we'll go out to dinner.

SHE (*sulkily*): I won't do any such thing. I don't want to go out to dinner. You don't appreciate anything I do. I'm a slave, that's what I am, just a slave.

HE (*nonplussed*): Why—I don't see why you talk like that. Good heavens, Nellie, I didn't mean to be late.

SHE: You don't care. It's neglect like this that leads to divorces. And we haven't even been married a year!

HE: Now listen, I ——

SHE: I don't want to listen. I don't want to hear any of your excuses. I suppose you took your secretary out to dinner or ——

HE: Nellie! Listen, I ——

SHE (*speaking rapidly*): Don't talk to me! I won't believe a word you say. Oh, this is terrible, terrible. I suppose it was that Gertie Smith you used to go with before you met me or some other —— O-o-oh.

(*She bursts into sobs.*)

HE (*desperately*): You're all wrong, Nellie. I don't see how you can think ——

SHE: I don't think—I *know*. I'm going home to mother, that's what I'm going to do. I'm just going right *home*.

HE: But, Nellie, you've got to let me explain.

SHE: You can't.

HE: I can!

SHE: *You can't!*

HE: *I can!*

SHE: I won't listen to you!

HE (*grabbing her by the arms*): You will!

SHE (*jerking away*): Don't touch me!

HE (*desperately*): Nellie, I was—I was getting tickets ——

SHE: Tickets?

HE (*slowly and distinctly*): I was getting tickets for the Egyptian Revels.

(There is a pause while her expression changes to great delight.)

SHE: Getting tickets for the Revels! Oh, Tommy, how divine! Will you ever forgive me?

HE *(patting her hand)*: Of course, darling. It was all my fault.

SHE *(with the shade of a lingering suspicion)*: But why didn't you 'phone me?

HE *(puzzled for a second but recovering quickly)*: Well, you see—you see I didn't dare get out of line. There was a waiting line a block long at the box office.

(He makes great, convincing gesture to describe line.)

SHE: Darling!

HE *(guiding her, down right)*: Now you go and powder your nose and put on your best hat and your sweetest smile, dearest, and we'll go out for dinner.

SHE *(tripping out right)*: All right, sweetheart.

(He looks after her to be sure she is out of hearing, then dashes down left to the telephone.)

HE *(in stage whisper)*: Algonquin 7900. *(Pause.)*

Hello! Hello! McBride's? I want two tickets for the Egyptian Revels. Saturday night. *Two.* *(Pause.)*

I want the best you have—never mind the price.

(Pause.) Wright. Thomas Wright. (Pause.)

O. K.

(He hangs up, adjusts collar, and struts across the room as curtain is lowered quickly.)

À LA CARTE

CHARACTERS

WAITER.

MA TOONER.

PA TOONER.

SOPHIE TOONER, *about seventeen.*

WILLIE TOONER, *about twelve.*

GRANDMA.

AUNT CARRIE.

AS MANY YOUNGER TOONERS AS DESIRED.

SCENE: *A hotel dining-room. A table large enough to seat the Tooner family is down center. Waiter stands near table. Pa and Ma Tooner enter, left, followed by the family. The Waiter, who dances attendance in pantomime throughout the play, hurries to them.*

MA: Now, Pa, jest see how nice and clean everything is. Bet there ain't a cockroach in the place.

PA: I'd ruther eat to home.

(The entire family take off their wraps and place them on a hall-tree near left entrance, talking as they do this.)

AUNT CARRIE: We had a hired girl once that used to work in a hotel and, land sakes, what she didn't know about spoilin' good food!

GRANDMA: I don't know why you've took to puttin' on

airs all of a sudden, Emma. Home cookin' always used to be good enough for you.

MA: I ain't had a meal away from home since the day Abner and me was married, Grandma, exceptin' up at the church suppers. Somehow, the sight of my own cookin' goes against my stomick.

WILLIE: Ma, do they have ice-cream here?

SOPHIE (*nudging him*): Keep still, Willie. Act like you had manners for once.

PA: Now if you folks are all ready, I'll see about gettin' some food.

(*Pa leads the way toward table.*)

WAITER: How many?

PA (*belligerently*): How many what?

WAITER: How many in your party?

PA: Oh, this ain't a party—jest my wife and family, but I'll count noses. Now, let's see. (*Turning and pointing his finger at each person as he names him.*) There's me and Ma here and Grandma Tooner and Aunt Carrie and Sophie and Willie and —

(*Goes on deliberately and finally gives the Waiter the number.*)

WAITER: Right this way, sir. (*They are seated and bills of fare hastily passed around by the Waiter. Pa is at one end of the table and Ma at the other. Waiter at Pa's elbow.*) What would you like, sir? Soup all around?

PA (*explosively*): Soup? Not for me. Any of you folks want soup?

SOPHIE: Of course we want soup, Pa.

WILLIE: Well, I don't. We get plenty of that to home.

GRANDMA (*to Ma*): I don't never eat soup when I'm

out. Remember Amos Peters, Emma? No, I guess he was before your time. Well, Amos died of eatin' canned soup.

PA: Well, that settles it. (*To Waiter.*) We ain't none of us goin' to have soup. (*Pa puts on spectacles and studies bill of fare.*) Well, now, let's see.

MA (*eagerly*): Chicken à la King. Now that sounds right appetizin'.

AUNT CARRIE: Don't you go spendin' your money on that. Last time I had it you could've put all the chicken that was in it in your hollow tooth!

(*Waiter waits in nervous expectancy, starting to write whenever an item is mentioned.*)

WAITER: The filet mignon is very nice, madam.

PA: None of that foreign stuff for me.

YOUNG TOONER: Ma, are we goin' to have ice-cream?

SOPHIE (*disdainfully*): Ice-cream!

WILLIE: Well, what's any better'n ice-cream, I'd like to know. Apple pie with ice-cream, that's all I want.

PA: None of that, young man. You're goin' to eat your dinner first.

YOUNG TOONER: Fried potatoes! Let me have some of them, Ma.

MA: Seems like we ought to have somethin' we don't get to home every day.

AUNT CARRIE: Guess I'll have one of them French artychokes.

PA: Artychokes! Say, if I was to find one o' them on the place, I'd root it out right smart. One of them fancy vegetables!

GRANDMA (*looking up from bill of fare*): Land sakes! I never seen so many foreign words in all my life!

AUNT CARRIE: Yes, and all they amount to is *hash* or *stew*.

MA: Well, it certainly is a treat to be eatin' out, anyhow. Here's breast o' lamb with dumplin's. Wonder if they're nice and light.

AUNT CARRIE: If you want to get a nice case of indigestion, Emma, jest eat dumplin's in a restaurant.

(*Ma begins to look a little harassed.*)

SOPHIE (*in her best manner*): I'll have endive salad.

PA: Now look here, Sophie, you get you some real food. Never mind foolin' around with *grass*.

SOPHIE. But, Pa —

PA: That's all right. You get you some meat and potatoes. I ain't goin' to have none of that reducin' business in *my* family.

GRANDMA: I don't see nothin' here that I can eat, bein' as I broke my plate this mornin'.

(*Several young Tooners become impatient and start to talk at once.*)

YOUNG TOONER: Ain't we goin' to have *nothin'* to eat?

YOUNG TOONER: I want choc'late ice-cream!

YOUNG TOONER: Ma, I want fried potatoes!

YOUNG TOONER: Ain't there any *beans*?

WILLIE: Aw, I don't want nothin' but apple pie.

PA (*rapping on the table with his knife*): Be still! I'll do the orderin'. I'll do the orderin' for all of you right now. Waiter! (*Waiter is all attention.*) A ham sandwich—and a large cup of coffee all around!

(*Waiter drops his order blank and pencil and throws up his hands as the curtain is lowered quickly or the lights go out.*)

THE INTERVIEW

CHARACTERS

PETER BANGS, a big business man.
A CUB REPORTER.

SCENE: *Office of Bangs, Bangs and Bangs.*

(Peter Bangs, an impressive man of affairs, sits at his desk down right, engrossed in papers. The Reporter enters, left. He is quite a young lad and this is his first assignment. He carries a conspicuous note-book. He walks in cautiously and Bangs does not look up.)

REPORTER. Good-morning, Mr. Bangs.

BANGS (*looking at boy*): What do you mean by walking into my private office?

REPORTER: I'm from the *Morning Herald* and I just —

BANGS: You get out of here. I don't see reporters.

REPORTER: I just want to ask you a question, Mr. Bangs.

BANGS: I have nothing to say. Now get out. (*Boy starts to go, then hesitates.*) Get out, I said.

REPORTER (*going down to Bangs*): But, Mr. Bangs, this is my first assignment. I'll lose my job if I don't get this story.

BANGS: Sorry, young man, but I won't talk to reporters. You go back and tell them they had a nerve to send you over here.

REPORTER: That won't do, sir. I've got to get an interview with you. I—I've got to make good on it, Mr. Bangs.

BANGS (*amused*): You're one of these young college boys, aren't you?

REPORTER: Yes.

BANGS: Expect to own the paper next week, I suppose, don't you?

REPORTER (*smiling*): Not next week, exactly.

BANGS (*laughing*): You college chaps! Think you're going to run the world! Well, you're in just about as much demand as Hoop Skirts, Preferred.

REPORTER (*angrily*): You won't always be able to say that, Mr. Bangs.

BANGS (*amused*): All right, young fellow, try and get that story you came after, just try and get it!

REPORTER: Do you mean that?

BANGS: Yes, I do. See if you're smart enough to get the information you want.

REPORTER: I want to know if it's true that you've been made president of the Southwestern Railroad.

BANGS: I don't see how that could possibly interest the public.

REPORTER: Anything that happens to you is news, sir.

BANGS (*pleased*): Well, I suppose that's right. But you can't catch me that way. I don't care to make a statement. Guess there's nothing in that to interest your city editor.

REPORTER (*quickly*): Yes, there is.

BANGS: How do you make that out?

REPORTER: Perhaps the statement that Mr. Bangs would

not discuss the rumor would be of great interest in some quarters.

BANGS: Bosh. If you can't go back with a better story than that—start looking for another job.

REPORTER. But isn't it possible that—*certain people*—would be inclined to think you wouldn't tell because you'd lost out?

BANGS (*grasping the arms of his chair*): What!

REPORTER (*quickly*): I may as well be frank with you, Mr. Bangs. I heard the men talking at the office this morning and they don't think it's true.

BANGS: Oh, they don't, eh?

REPORTER: They said you weren't a big enough man for the Southwestern.

BANGS (*jumping to his feet*): I'm not big enough man for the Southwestern!

REPORTER: No, they said you hadn't enough behind you.

BANGS (*striking the desk*): That's a lie—an infernal lie! I've been president of the Southwestern for three weeks!

REPORTER: Thank you, Mr. Bangs. I guess I've got my story.

BANGS: Why, you — Wait a minute! (*He sits down.*) Well, what do you know about that!

REPORTER (*pausing, down left*): Much obliged, Mr. Bangs, much obliged. And you better hang on to College Graduates Preferred. Something tells me it's going up.

(*Quick curtain or black-out.*)

HIS FIRST CASE

CHARACTERS

MISS PERRY, *an office girl.*

ERNEST YOUNG, *an attorney.*

MRS. HUMPHREY-GAY, *a lady in distress.*

SCENE: *A law office. Desk for office girl, left center. A table with impressive looking books on it, down right. Miss Perry is dusting her typewriter and Young is seated behind table, his feet on it, completely hidden behind a newspaper.*

MISS PERRY (*yawning*): Ho-hum.

YOUNG (*lowering feet and paper*): For heaven's sake, Miss Perry, can't you find something to do?

MISS PERRY (*laughing*): I've dusted the office three times this morning, Mr. Young.

YOUNG (*good-naturedly*): Well, dust it again. I'm not paying you to work—I'm paying you to *act* as if you were working. I don't care what you do. Bring your father's socks down and darn 'em if you want to. Say, did you see the new sign when you came in this morning? (*She nods, smiling.*) Some shingle! (*Gazing up and pointing at imaginary sign.*) Ernest Young, Attorney-at-law! You can see the letters a block away!

MISS PERRY: I guess that'll bring 'em, all right.

YOUNG (*seriously*): But remember, Miss Perry, when the clients start to come, you're to act as if I'm very busy. Say you're not sure whether I can see them or not. Imply that they will be lucky dogs to get so much as a peek at me. Understand?

MISS PERRY: I'll make you harder to see than the president. But, of course, I'll manage to squeeze them in, somehow.

YOUNG: That's right. Don't let 'em get away if you have to lock the door!

(*Bell rings. Young jumps up and starts out, right, saying in a stage whisper, "Don't forget—everything depends on the first impression." Miss Perry nods assurance and goes to door, left, to admit Mrs. Humphrey-Gay, a middle-aged lady, very fussily dressed and extremely excited.*)

MRS. HUMPHREY-GAY: Is Mr. Young in?

MISS PERRY: I'll see—I mean—yes. Won't you please sit down?

(*Mrs. Humphrey-Gay seats herself, up center.*)

MRS. HUMPHREY-GAY: Please tell him that I must see him at once. I'm Mrs. Humphrey-Gay.

MISS PERRY: I'll see what I can do for you, Mrs. Humphrey-Gay. Mr. Young is awfully busy this morning. (*She goes out, right, and returns immediately. Anxiously.*) Can you wait about—about five minutes?

MRS. HUMPHREY-GAY (*desperately*): I don't see how I can.

MISS PERRY: Oh, do wait! Maybe it'll only be three minutes.

MRS. HUMPHREY-GAY (*tragically*): After all, what are three minutes to an eternity of agony!

MISS PERRY (*sympathetically*): You must be in very great trouble.

MRS. HUMPHREY-GAY: I'm in terrible trouble. I hope Mr. Young has had plenty of experience with murder cases.

MISS PERRY (*enthusiastically*): Oh, lots of experience. He's *noted* for his murders—I mean his murder *cases*. (*Young enters briskly in his best professional manner.*)

YOUNG: Ah, Mrs. Humphrey-Gay?

MRS. HUMPHREY-GAY (*getting up*): It's Baby, Mr. Young. (*Weeping.*) He's—he's been poisoned.

YOUNG: How very distressing.

MRS. HUMPHREY-GAY: Every morning I put him out in the front yard to play and yesterday when I called him in he wasn't himself. Oh, I knew something was wrong!

YOUNG (*sympathetically*): Your motherly intuition.

MRS. HUMPHREY-GAY: Yes, that's it. I can see that you understand me.

YOUNG: You must look upon me as your friend, Mrs. Humphrey-Gay. Tell me just what happened.

MRS. HUMPHREY-GAY (*sniffling*): He—he wouldn't touch his dinner. He just cried and looked at me so pathetically. I picked him up and put him on the couch while I ran for the doctor. (*Sobbing.*) And then I found him there—dead.

YOUNG: Dead?

MRS. HUMPHREY-GAY (*weeping*): Yes, dead beside the little red ball that he always loved to play with.

YOUNG (*fervently*): This is a dastardly affair! I assure

you that I shall do everything in my power to send the wretch who committed this horrible deed to the electric chair!

MRS. HUMPHREY-GAY (*going to Young*): Ah, I felt I could trust you, Mr. Young.

YOUNG (*shaking hands with her solemnly*): The law shall avenge you, Mrs. Humphrey-Gay. Now come into my private office. We must go over all the details carefully.

MRS. HUMPHREY-GAY (*weeping as she moves down right*): If you could only have seen Baby you'd realize how I feel.

YOUNG: You must try to be brave.

MRS. HUMPHREY-GAY: I can still see that sad, sad look in his big eyes. It was just as if he were asking me to help him, even if he couldn't talk.

YOUNG (*deeply moved*): Ah, so young as that? How old was the baby, Mrs. Humphrey-Gay?

MRS. HUMPHREY-GAY (*despairingly*): He was nine years old.

YOUNG: Nine years old and he couldn't speak?

MRS. HUMPHREY-GAY (*looking off tragically*): No, he could only look at me and wag his little tail.

(*Quick curtain or black-out.*)

AN EVENING OF BRIDGE

CHARACTERS

MRS. PURDY, }
MR. PURDY, } a young couple.

SCENE: *The Purdy living-room. Such living-room furniture as it is convenient to have. Mrs. Purdy is moving about the room, moving a vase half an inch here and straightening a book or magazine there. Mr. Purdy hurries in right.*

MR. PURDY: Is everything ready, dear?

MRS. PURDY: I've made the place look the best I can. I do wish we had orientals and a few antiques, now that we live in Maplewood.

MR. PURDY: Oh, don't worry about that. The Parkers live very simply. Anyway, it's just an evening of bridge. Look, is my tie all right?

(He goes up to her for inspection and she fusses a little with tie.)

MRS. PURDY: There, that's better. Do I look all right?

MR. PURDY *(standing off and looking at her critically)*:

You know, dear, I never did care a lot for that dress.

MRS. PURDY *(anxiously)*: Why, what's wrong with it?

MR. PURDY: Oh, nothing, but I think Mrs. Parker dresses

rather conservatively. Isn't it—er—a little low, perhaps?

MRS. PURDY (*indignantly*): Low? Have I got to wear a high collar like a Gibson girl? What do I care what Mrs. Parker thinks, anyway? Even if she is your boss's wife!

MR. PURDY: Couldn't you just put a scarf on?

MRS. PURDY: No!

MR. PURDY: Well, I think you might be a little considerate of me. Here I am working my head off for a raise and you don't even care enough to do a little thing like that.

(*He puts his hands in his pockets and stalks, down right. There is a pause.*)

MRS. PURDY (*conscience-stricken*): Oh, Jack. I don't mean to be horrid. (*Goes over and puts her hand on his shoulder.*) I'll put a scarf on.

MR. PURDY (*turning quickly, smiling*): You'll do no such thing. I take it all back. If Mrs. Parker wants to be an old prig—let her. That's no reason for you to wrap yourself up like a mummy. I won't have my wife catering to anyone. (*They catch hands and laugh. Mr. Purdy looks at his watch.*) They'll be here any minute now.

MRS. PURDY: Jack, you ordered the ice-cream, didn't you?

MR. PURDY: Holy mackerel!

MRS. PURDY: You—you forgot it? (*He nods helplessly.*) Oh, how could you—Jack Purdy? How could you do such an awful thing?

MR. PURDY: Look here, I've got more to think about than a little thing like ice-cream. You ought to have ordered

it yourself. A man oughtn't to be bothered with such details.

MRS. PURDY (*almost ready to cry*): I won't have anything for refreshments. You've just spoiled everything. I've been shopping all afternoon and I depended on that ice-cream.

MR. PURDY: Never mind. I'll run out and get it later.

MRS. PURDY (*sarcastically*): Yes, that will look nice, won't it?

MR. PURDY (*impatiently*): Don't make such a fuss! You'd think it was your daughter's coming-out party! After all, it's just an evening of bridge.

MRS. PURDY (*gasping*): Bridge!

(*She covers her mouth and an expression of horror crosses her face.*)

MR. PURDY: Now what's the matter?

MRS. PURDY (*crushed*): I forgot to buy the cards.

MR. PURDY: Good heavens! What'll we do? They'll be here any minute. (*Rumples his hair.*) Can't we borrow some?

MRS. PURDY (*utterly resigned*): I don't know any of the neighbors.

MR. PURDY: Don't know any of the neighbors! Great Scott! Haven't we been living here a whole month?

MRS. PURDY: Don't you think I've had more to do than run after the neighbors?

MR. PURDY: Well, I should think you'd know someone. If you didn't go around with your nose in the air all the time you'd get acquainted.

MRS. PURDY (*furiously*): Don't speak to me like that! (*Beginning to cry.*) I knew we shouldn't have come to live here anyway. It was all your doing—trying to get

in with the Parkers. What do I care about the Parkers, anyway?

MR. PURDY (*thoroughly angered*): What do you care whether I get along in the office or not? What do you care if I get a promotion next year? I tell you, you've got to play up to these people. Look what happened to Harry Finch after he got in with the right crowd. Look what —— (*The door-bell rings. MR. PURDY, excitedly.*) Here they are! Dry your eyes! Put some powder on!

MRS. PURDY: I won't see them.

MR. PURDY (*taking her by the shoulders*): You will! You must!

(*Bell rings.*)

MRS. PURDY (*stonily*): You can tell them I'm ill.

MR. PURDY (*releasing her and backing down left, shaking threatening finger*): I'll do no such thing. I won't have my wife insulting people. I'm going to the door and if you're not here to greet them when I come back, I'll—I'll ——

(*Goes out.*)

MRS. PURDY (*as she hastily dabs at her eyes, powders her nose, etc.*): I'll do it—oh, I'll do it all right. But tomorrow morning—early tomorrow morning—I'll leave him. I'll go right straight home. If he thinks he can treat me like this he's mistaken. No man—no man—can ever do this to me more than once. I'll show him—just wait—I'll show him a thing or two!

(*Mr. Purdy enters jubilantly, waving a message over his head.*)

MR. PURDY: Thank heaven for poodles!

MRS. PURDY: What do you mean? Where are the Parkers?

MRS. PURDY (*reading*): "Mrs. Parker's prize poodle, Henrietta, taken suddenly ill. Unable to leave the house this evening." We're saved!

MRS. PURDY (*drawing herself up indignantly*): What? Not coming? Do you mean to tell me they're not coming?

MR. PURDY: Sure! Isn't that *luck*?

MRS. PURDY: It's an outrage, that's what it is! And after me slaving all day to get ready for them! It's an insult! Refusing to come to my house because of a *sick dog*! This is the first time—the first time, Jack Purdy—that anything like this has happened to me! And it is absolutely the last time that I shall ever invite any of your friends to my house!

(*He stands with mouth open, looking at her, as the curtain is quickly lowered or the light put out.*)

THE THIRTEENTH TRUMP

CHARACTERS

MADAME X.

O'HARA, a plain clothes man.

CAPT. BLACK.

SCENE: *A detective bureau. A flat top desk, up right, faces audience. There is a straight chair slightly right of center.*

(Madame X enters, left, followed by O'Hara. She is a carefully dressed woman of no particular age, good looking, and with an air of distinction and breeding. Detective O'Hara is a diamond in the rough, very self-satisfied and triumphant.)

O'HARA: You can sit down.

MADAME X *(going over to chair)*: Thank you.

O'HARA *(remaining down left, standing)*: Well, I guess we've got you this time.

MADAME X: Got me?

O'HARA: Doesn't something tell you that you've lifted your last diamond?

MADAME X: No.

O'HARA *(laughing)*: Say, sister, there's too much evidence this time. And besides, two carat diamonds don't sneak off and hide themselves in coat linings all by

themselves. Even Houdini couldn't make 'em do that. (*Madame X appears mildly amused.*) I know all about that little customs job, too. You're in the net this time.

MADAME X (*still amused*): Am I?

O'HARA: Think you've got something up your sleeve, do you? (*She continues to stare at him rather scornfully. O'Hara comes down a little and points at her.*) Say, I've been on your trail for the last five years. See? The jobs I can fasten on you this time will put you out of the diamond business for good. You've played every trump in the deck but one, sister—and I'm holding it.

MADAME X (*showing a little interest*): Are you sure of that?

O'HARA (*as Capt. Black enters right, quietly*): Wait till you've talked things over with the captain. Capt. Black—Madame X.

(*Capt. Black nods slightly to Madame X, then motions a brisk dismissal to O'Hara who goes out, left, quickly.*)

CAPT. BLACK (*slowly, as he moves to desk*): I've been waiting five years for this pleasure, Madame X.

MADAME X: Pleasure, Capt. Black?

CAPT. BLACK: Oh, it's never a pleasure for ladies in your circumstances to meet me. But I can assure you that this meeting is a great pleasure, a great source of satisfaction, to me. (*They stare at each other in silence for a moment. Capt. Black, more emphatically.*) You've been a bother to me for five years. The cleverest woman crook in the country, the newspapers call you. Clever Madame X! Everyone knows you, everyone knows your jobs, but this is the first time we've

been able to get you with the goods. (*She watches him, apparently unimpressed.*) The interest I take in your case is not wholly professional; it's personal as well. (*She smiles. Capt. Black snaps out his sentences.*) Take that McPherson diamond robbery two years ago. That nearly cost me my job. And that Hempstead affair on the Fourth of July. I worked day and night on that myself and you got away from me. Do you know what that did to my reputation? (*She laughs and gives a slight shrug.*) We're going to settle the score now. (*Leaning forward and tapping on the desk.*) And it won't only be this case. I've got a network of evidence that covers the last five years. You've been between me and promotion for five years—*five years*, understand?

MADAME X: And you can ill afford to make a mistake now, can you, Capt. Black?

CAPT. BLACK: Oh, none of that! I'm just giving you a chance to come across. After that—the third degree. And you know what that means, don't you?

MADAME X: No, I don't, Capt. Black. But I doubt if that will be necessary.

CAPT. BLACK: That's the way to talk. We can save each other a lot of trouble if you come across now. When I show you what I've got on you, you'll talk.

MADAME X (*easily*): Yes, I guess the time has come to—what do you call it—show our hands? (*He nods.*) Mr. O'Hara who—who arrested me—just suggested that someone held the thirteenth trump. But I believe it's in *my* hand, Capt. Black.

CAPT. BLACK (*laughing*): Now don't be theatrical. I'm hard, you know.

MADAME X: Yes, you're hard. You're like that old Greek warrior who had only one spot where he could be wounded. You've got just one weak spot, Capt. Black, and I've got my finger on it.

CAPT. BLACK: Do you think you could blackmail *me*?

MADAME X: Possibly. You claim you have much evidence, precious evidence that will get you a promotion, perhaps more power and a bigger name. But I have something more powerful than that, Capt. Black. I hold your peace of mind—all your future contentment—in my hand.

CAPT. BLACK (*carelessly*): What do you mean?

MADAME X: Oh, it's a wise man who can lay his own ghosts, but I've known a great many who couldn't do it. A house built on sand—a reputation founded on cowardice—they both topple.

CAPT. BLACK: Do you mean to tell me that my reputation is—that it is——

MADAME X (*rising and taking a few steps toward him as she speaks*): Do you dare to deny to me that your reputation is not founded on a ruined life! Look at me and deny it if you can!

CAPT. BLACK: What do you know about me?

MADAME X: A woman in my profession knows many strange things, Capt. Black. You tell me I have been a little careless—that I've left some loose ends about that prove me guilty of a twenty-thousand-dollar diamond robbery. Well—perhaps. But I'm not the only person who is careless—and is discovered.

CAPT. BLACK: I don't know what you're talking about. Are you trying to tell me that you've got something on me?

MADAME X: Exactly. Now we begin to get somewhere.

Capt. Black, I know enough to take you out of that fine, luxurious home of yours and send you back to the gutter where you began. I know enough to make your wife and your sons ashamed to bear your name. (*Turning on him suddenly.*) What will you give me to know where she is tonight?

CAPT. BLACK (*sharply*): What?

MADAME X: How much longer can you stand the uncertainty? What will you give me to know the truth?

CAPT. BLACK: Who are you?

MADAME X: Just Madame X, Capt. Black. And sometimes they call me "clever Madame X." But let's talk about her. She was young, wasn't she? And so lovely. Have you thought what fifteen or twenty bitter years could do to such beauty? But what do you know about poverty and disgrace! All these years you've been rich and respected. But in *my* world, sooner or later, they—get—cowards!

CAPT. BLACK: Well—where is she?

MADAME X: What will you give me to know?

CAPT. BLACK: What is your price?

MADAME X: My release, of course.

CAPT. BLACK: Do you know what that would mean to me?

MADAME X (*tensely*): Not as much as discovery would mean. What's *anything* compared to security?

CAPT. BLACK (*suddenly giving in*): Tell me—is she living?

(*Pause.*)

MADAME X (*looking off as though in a trance*): No. Five years ago—she died. Five years ago—today.

CAPT. BLACK (*sinking back in his chair wearily*): Today. Five years—dead. And I've had five needless years of torture.

(*There is a pause as he sits, gazing before him.*)

MADAME X (*gently*): Come, come, Capt. Black, you are forgetting something. My release, please.

(*He slowly pulls himself together, finds a paper on the desk, and signs it, then rises and pushes an electric button. O'Hara enters, left. Madame X starts to put her gloves on, very deliberately.*)

CAPT. BLACK (*briskly*): O'Hara, take Madame X downstairs. She is released.

(*Capt. Black hands the paper to O'Hara, then bows to Madame X and goes out, right.*)

O'HARA (*looking after Capt. Black, at the paper in his own hand, and at her*): Released! (*Madame X moves slowly down left, still smoothing her gloves.*) Say, you had something on the Old Man after all, didn't you? You had the thirteenth trump up your sleeve all the time!

MADAME X (*pausing down left*): Well, perhaps I did. But I shouldn't call it the thirteenth trump. No, I just brought along a shoe—a very old shoe—a shoe that might fit many men. Good-night, Mr. O'Hara.

(*She goes out, leaving O'Hara gazing after her, dumb-founded.*)

(*Black-out or quick curtain.*)

THE PROPOSAL

CHARACTERS

DICK.

SYLVIA.

SCENE: *The living-room at Sylvia's house. Dick enters, left, carrying his hat and a book. He puts his hat on a chair and comes down center, slowly, looking through book.*

DICK: By George, this ought to fix me. (*Holding book out before him and pointing to title.*) "What Every Young Man Should Know About Proposals." (*Opening book.*) Now let me see. (*Reads.*) "Proposal Number One. This is a romantic proposal recommended for sentimental types. Slowly and gracefully sink on right knee, placing right hand over heart——" Bunk! (*He turns a few pages.*) "Proposal Number Fifteen is advised for obdurate, stony-hearted types. Take the young lady's hand very gently, look intently into her eyes and repeat solemnly, 'Mary, it is impossible to go on living without you. If you will not marry me, I will have to end it all.'" Huh! That wouldn't make any impression on Sylvia. (*Turns over a few more pages.*) Gee, here's a good one! "If it is actually necessary to abduct the young lady, grasp her

firmly about the waist and say in a kindly but determined voice, 'Mary, you are going to be my wife no matter what your father says!'" Gosh, that would take a lot of nerve! I couldn't get away with that.

(*He stands thumbing through the book as Sylvia enters, left.*)

SYLVIA: Hello, Dick. Did you come over to see *me*?

DICK (*astonished*): Why—why, yes. Who would I come to see?

SYLVIA (*teasingly*): Well, you've come to see me every night this week. I just thought you might like to see someone else for a change.

DICK: No. I don't want to see anyone but you, Sylvia. Gosh, I wish I never had to even *look* at anyone else.

SYLVIA: Now don't be silly. (*Pause.*) I've—I've got to say something awfully mean to you.

DICK: Nonsense. You couldn't say anything mean. (*Pause.*) You don't mean you're going to the Prom with Harold?

SYLVIA: No, I don't.

DICK: Well, I guess that's about the worst thing that could happen to me!

SYLVIA: It's just this, Dick—I can't see you any more.

DICK: Why—why—*Sylvia!*

SYLVIA: It's not that I don't want to see you—it's father.

DICK: You mean your father doesn't approve of me?

SYLVIA: He approves of you all right, but you've been coming here to see me for two years now and ———
(*She pauses and turns her head away.*)

DICK: But, Sylvia, what have I done? I haven't started drinking. I don't gamble or anything like that. Gosh, I never *stole* anything.

SYLVIA: Of course not. You just keep coming, that's all.

DICK: Well, you want me to, don't you?

SYLVIA: Yes, but you just *keep* coming and father says two years is a long time.

DICK: So you want me to stay away?

SYLVIA: *I* don't.

DICK (*miserably*): But, Sylvia, if I can't come any more, I'll have to stay away.

SYLVIA: Well, you know, Dick, after two years people usually do stay away or—or —

DICK: Or what? Is there anything else I could do?

SYLVIA (*angrily*): Yes, of course there is.

DICK (*earnestly*): If it's anything I could do for your father, I'd be glad to—run errands or do little jobs around the house—or anything.

SYLVIA: Oh, no, we don't need any help around the place.

DICK: Or your mother—suppose I bring her a box of Huyler's tomorrow or some—some roses?

SYLVIA: No.

DICK: Well, could I do anything for your *grandmother*? I could take her to the movies or—or *church*.

SYLVIA: My goodness, no.

DICK: I'll tell you what I'll do, Sylvia—I'll take your little brother Willie to the circus. Now I don't know what more I can do for your family than that. You know yourself what I'd like to do to Willie.

SYLVIA: Oh, Dick, you're just too stupid!

DICK: *Sylvia*, is it something you want me to do for you?

SYLVIA: Yes, Dick Jones, it's something I want you to do for me—you can marry me!

DICK: *Sylvia*, did you say I could *marry* you?

SYLVIA: Yes, that's what I said.

DICK (*holding out book*): And I went and wasted three dollars on this!

(*Dick drops book and goes to embrace Sylvia as the curtain is quickly lowered or lights are turned out.*)

THE FIRST OF MAY—

CHARACTERS

COLONEL CHARTERIS, *an elderly invalid.*

ELLEN, *a young nurse.*

SCENE: *The library of the Charteris home.*

(Nurse enters, left, wheeling Colonel Charteris in an invalid's chair. He is an aristocratic, handsome old gentleman. Ellen is a capable nurse, tactful and pleasant but always professional in her manner. [If it is impossible to have the wheel chair she may be supporting him as he walks with the aid of a cane.])

COLONEL. I shouldn't have gotten out of my bed, young woman, if it hadn't been for you. *(Smiling at her.)* I had a busy day planned, too.

ELLEN *(as she settles him, down right, arranging a rug over his knees and placing a small table beside him for the breakfast tray)*: Now what were you going to do to keep yourself busy all day in bed, Colonel Charteris?

COLONEL *(chuckling to himself)*: My wallpaper! Five hundred and sixty-one of those infernal bunches of grapes on the east wall and seven hundred and one on the north. Today I was going to get the west wall done. I'm as far as the highboy already.

ELLEN: But you only count the wallpaper designs when

your pain's bad. This is one of your good days. You're looking fine this morning. (*Going out, right.*) Besides—it's the first of May.

COLONEL (*to himself*): Yes, it's the first of May, the first of May. (*He moves himself in the chair with difficulty and sits looking off in space, nodding to himself from time to time as he recognizes the series of pictures which are passing through his mind. The nurse enters, right, with breakfast tray on the side of which she has placed a sprig of wild crab apple blossoms. She places tray on table beside Colonel.*) I don't want any breakfast. Didn't I tell you I wouldn't eat this morning?

ELLEN (*pleasantly*): Nonsense. This is a May breakfast. See, I've got your tray all fixed nicely for you and the cook made your favorite muffins.

(*He looks at tray, reaches over and takes sprig, looks at blossoms a moment in silence and smells them.*)

COLONEL. Wild crab apple. You found these down by the brook, didn't you?

ELLEN (*busying herself with the tray*): Yes. There's a lovely clump of them leaning over the water.

COLONEL: It's still there, is it?

ELLEN: Oh, do you know where I mean?

COLONEL: I know every tree on my place, from the cedars at the gate to the wild crabs.

ELLEN (*handing him cup of coffee*): Come now, down with your breakfast.

COLONEL: Young woman, you're a tyrant. (*He takes coffee, drinks a little and hands it back to her. Thoughtfully.*) This is the first time in five years

that there's been wild crab apple blossoms in this house on the first of May.

ELLEN (*moving back and forth between Colonel and a table down left on which she fixes cereal as she talks to him*): Don't you—don't you like them?

COLONEL: I used to like them very much indeed. (*Slowly.*) Let me see—twenty-six—no, twenty-seven years ago today—just about this kind of a season it was, too—I went down to the brook and cut an arm-load of blossoms for my wife. She was particularly fond of wild crab.

ELLEN (*watching him closely*): Oh, an anniversary?

COLONEL: It was the morning Richard was born.

ELLEN: Your—son, Colonel Charteris?

COLONEL (*nodding*): My boy.

ELLEN: Then this is his birthday, isn't it?

COLONEL: Yes. If he's alive he's twenty-seven years old today. It's five years since I've seen him—five years since we brought in the wild crab to celebrate his birthday. Always used to put it on the hearth and upstairs in *her* room.

(*Colonel sits staring ahead of him and lets twig fall beside his chair.*)

ELLEN: You quarrelled with your son?

COLONEL (*bitterly*): He threw his life away to marry some girl he hardly knew—a girl I never even saw. My son had great talent, but he was a fool. And the girl—well, you can imagine *her* sort.

ELLEN: So you disowned him?

COLONEL: Yes. He disappointed me. I had great hopes for him. (*Nurse offers him dish of cereal. Colonel pushes it away.*) Confound it, nurse, I don't want any

breakfast this morning. I think I'm going to have a bad day after all. Better get me back to bed.

ELLEN: Oh, come now, I can't have you counting your wallpaper on a beautiful day like this.

COLONEL (*wearily*): I suppose it is a beautiful day—if you're young. Nurse, it's not good to be an old man on the first of May. It's a day for youth. Why don't you put me to bed and go out? Haven't you a young man somewhere around?

ELLEN: Yes, I've got a young man.

COLONEL (*chuckling*): Thought you had. (*Looking at her admiringly.*) Bet he's not good enough for you. Doesn't seem to hang around much, anyway.

ELLEN (*soberly*): No, I haven't seen him in a long time.

COLONEL: What? You don't mean to say he's neglecting you? You send that whippersnapper around to me. I'll tell him a thing or two!

ELLEN (*smiling*): Oh, you couldn't do anything, Colonel Charteris. His family seems to object to me because—well, I'm rather an obscure person and have to work for my living.

COLONEL (*pursing his lips*): Oh, I see. Snobs, eh? (*Scornfully.*) Cheap aristocracy! Look here, young woman, I know blue blood when I see it, and you've got it. You're too good for that young man. There's just one thing for you to do—forget him.

ELLEN: I'm afraid it's too late for that.

COLONEL: What do you mean?

ELLEN (*smiling*): Well, you see—I married him.

COLONEL: You married him? Then why are you taking care of cantankerous old men like me? Can't the fellow support you?

ELLEN: Not just now.

COLONEL: How's that?

ELLEN: He's studying—in Paris.

COLONEL: And you're working so he can do it. That's rather fine of you, my dear. (*There is a pause while the Colonel looks off, vacantly.*) In Paris, eh? I was going to send my boy to Paris, once. I used to think he'd be a great architect. But he was just a failure.

ELLEN: My husband's going to be an architect and he's going to be a great one, too.

COLONEL (*much interested*): Look here. I'm a lonely old man with a good deal of money and a son that isn't worth his salt. You're a splendid woman with a fine husband and no money. Would you accept a little help from me?

ELLEN: Oh, Colonel Charteris, we couldn't do that.

COLONEL: Why not? It's really a selfish motive. It would give me something new to think about on my bad days.

ELLEN (*coming over and taking Colonel's hand*): Thank you, Colonel Charteris, but we want to do it on our own.

COLONEL: But you're depriving me of a great pleasure and that's not like you, my dear. I'd give every cent I own if I could have found a girl like you for Richard. But that's all passed.

ELLEN: How long is it since you heard from your son? Perhaps he made good without you.

COLONEL (*caustically*): Unfortunately he hadn't the backbone for that.

ELLEN (*laughing*): Come now, it's only in old-fashioned novels that the disinherited son goes to the dogs.

Why, young people do all sorts of wonderful things by themselves now. Couldn't your son have gone to Paris and lived in a cheap, miserable pension and worked and worked till his talent was discovered and he got a chance?

COLONEL (*steadying himself on the arms of his chair*): That—that couldn't happen! But why do you talk to me like this?

ELLEN (*tensely*): Because I know it does happen. A year ago, Colonel Charteris, a starving, discouraged student left a drawing on a table in a café and a great artist found it and went all over Paris looking for the student. (*Smiling.*) And then—and then Richard got his chance.

COLONEL: Nurse—Ellen — (*Making the futile gestures of the old.*) Do you mean that Richard—is in Paris—studying—now?

ELLEN: Of course I mean it.

COLONEL: And you're—and you're—not—the girl?

ELLEN: Yes.

(*There is a pause.*)

COLONEL (*plucking at his rug and speaking bitterly*): What a miserable old fool I am. My son—(*nodding*) he's a Charteris. And I might have spent my days counting patterns on the wall. (*Pause.*) Ellen—Ellen, get me my checkbook.

ELLEN: Oh, no.

COLONEL (*helplessly*): But you've got to take my money now, child. It's all I've got.

ELLEN: No, it isn't your *money* Richard wants, Colonel Charteris.

COLONEL: I'm an old man with nothing else to offer.

ELLEN: There is something besides money for you and Richard.

(*Colonel stoops slowly and with difficulty picks up spray of blossoms. He looks at it, then turns to nurse and smiles.*)

COLONEL: Yes—yes, there is. (*Holds up spray.*) Just send this to him, my dear.

ELLEN (*taking spray*): Yes, he'll understand.

COLONEL: And you, Ellen, go down into the garden and bring in all the crab apple blossoms you can find and fill the house with them. Yes, we'll fill the house with crab apple blossoms because it's the first of May, the first of May again.

ELLEN (*falling on her knees beside him*): Father!

(*Curtain or black-out.*)

TAKE MY TIP

A comedy in 3 acts. By Nat N. Dorfman. Produced originally at the 48th Street Theatre in New York. 7 males, 6 females. 1 interior scene. Modern costumes.

Few of us have escaped getting our fingers burnt in the crash of the stock market, and even those of us who have, have heard enough about it to take a sympathetic and amused interest in the doings of Henry Merrill when he tries to buck the game and grow rich. The play starts just two months before the crash. Henry, of the local soap works, is so heavy an investor in an oil stock that he is made a thirty-sixth Vice President of the Corporation. Not being the kind of fellow who would forget his friends in this time of good fortune, he lets them all in on the good thing. Being humanly greedy, the friends jump at the chance to profit. . . . In the second act, after Henry's daughter has eloped, the friends are presenting Henry with a diamond-studded wrist watch, as a token of their esteem, when news comes of the Wall Street upheaval and all are wiped out. Things, however, are not as bad as they look, for Henry, who has an invention to revolutionize the soap industry, sells the idea for a large price and everything is all right again.

(Royalty, twenty-five dollars.) PRICE 75 CENTS.

PETER FLIES HIGH

A comedy in 3 acts. By Myron C. Fagan. Produced originally at the Gaiety Theatre, New York. 8 males, 6 females. 1 interior scene. Modern costumes.

This delightful comedy concerns one Peter Turner who caddied for the Morgans, the Kahns and the Guggenheims on the links at Miami. It was during one of these rounds on the golf links that Peter fell over and killed a stray dog. The local paper built the story up so that Peter becomes a nation-wide hero who saved the lives of many people by strangling a mad canine. By the time the story reaches his home town, Rosedale, New Jersey, Peter has become the boon companion of all the money kings—at least in the public mind—and Peter does his best to foster the deception. Carried away by his imagination he pretends to be a friend of the great, persuades his brother-in-law to buy an option to a ninety-acre lot on the assumption that "Guggenheim" is to build a golf course there, obtains \$10,000 from the local banker and then becomes badly involved in his deceptions. After Peter endures the ridicule of his townsfolk and the ire of the banker there suddenly appears on the scene a representative of "Guggenheim" who wants the acreage not for a golf course but an air field, and promptly turns over a check for \$75,000 for a part of it.

(Royalty, twenty-five dollars.) PRICE 75 CENTS.

COME OUT OF THE KITCHEN

A charming comedy in 3 acts. Adapted by A. E. Thomas from the story of the same name by Alice Duer Miller. Produced originally by Henry Miller at the Cohan Theatre, New York. 6 males, 5 females. 3 interior scenes. Modern costumes.

The story is written around a Virginia family of the old aristocracy, who, finding themselves temporarily embarrassed, decide to rent their home to a rich Yankee. The lease stipulated that a competent staff of white servants should be engaged, and one of the daughters of the family conceives the mad-cap idea that she, her sister and their two brothers shall act as the domestic staff. Olivia who is the ring-leader in the merry scheme, elects to preside over the destinies of the kitchen. When Burton Crane arrives from the North, accompanied by Mrs. Falkener, her daughter and Crane's attorney, Tucker, they find the staff of servants to possess so many methods of behavior out of the ordinary that amusing complications begin to arise immediately. Olivia's charm and beauty impress Crane above everything else and the merry story continues through a maze of delightful incidents until the real identity of the heroine is finally disclosed, but not until Crane has professed his love for his charming cook, and the play ends with the brightest prospects of happiness for these two young people.

(Royalty, twenty-five dollars.) PRICE 75 CENTS.

JONESY

Comedy in 3 acts. By Anne Morrison and John Peter Toohey. Produced originally by Earl Boothe at the Bijou Theatre, New York. 8 males, 5 females. 1 interior. Modern costumes.

The "Jonesy" of the title is Wilbur Jones, who comes home from college bringing a fraternity brother with him. Engaged to the girl next door, his vagrant fancy is attracted by the ingénue of the local stock company. His father and mother assume that he is trying to elope with the actress, and try to save him. Before they discover that the girl is the niece of their most influential townsman, the man from whom senior Jones hopes to get a good job, they have let themselves in for many embarrassing complications. With this matter reasonably adjusted, they make the further discovery that their son has sold the family car to pay his poker debts and when the father attempts to recover the car he gets himself arrested. Many humorous complications arise that unravel themselves into a happy ending.

(Royalty, twenty-five dollars.) PRICE 75 CENTS.