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CIVILIAN CLOTHES

A Comedy in Three Acts

By

THOMPSON BUCHANAN



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LIGHT PLOT—CIVILIAN CLOTHES

ACT I

- 2—2 light brackets, not practical, Colonial prism.
- 1—Clow in footlights for fireplace.
- 2—1000 Watt spots, left, first entrance focussed on settee.
- 1—1000 Watt spot through window, left, focussed on settee.
- 2—1000 Watt bunches outside of window, left.
- 2—1000 Watt bunches on backing outside of doors, center.
- Foots—Amber and white.
- First border—Amber.

ACT II

- 3—2 light Colonial prism brackets same as first Act, practical.
- 2—1000 Watt spots, left, first entrance flood stage.
- 1—1000 Watt spot, right, first entrance flood stage.
- 1—30 Amp. Rotary switch to control circuit of amber in foots and brackets.
- 1—6 light strip amber in doorway, left.
- 1—Fire log and glow for fireplace.
- 1—6 light strip amber in doorway, right.
- 1—Electrical center piece for dining table, practical.
- 6—1000 Watt bunches blue in back of transparent conservatory.
- Foots—1 circuit amber connected on switch on stage.

ACT III

SCENE 1—HOTEL PARLOR

- 5—2 light brackets, practical.
- 1—2 light table lamp on table, right.
- 1—10 light bunch on backing outside arch, right, amber.
- 1—1000 Watt bunch, left, on corridor drop, amber.
- Foots—Amber and white.
- First border—Amber.

SCENE 2—BEDROOM

- 2—2 light brackets, practical.
- 1—1 light table lamp, practical, plug independent.
- 1—30 Amp. Rotary switch and control—1 circuit of amber foots and brackets.
- 1—Telephone, not practical.

- 1—6 light strip outside of door, R. C.
- 1—1000 Watt spot, amber, focussed where MCGINNIS stands by bed from left first entrance.
- 1—1000 Watt spot, amber, focussed on bed from right first entrance.
- Spots come on and stay on when foots are switched on second time.
- Foots—1 circuit, amber, connected to switch on stage.

PROPERTY PLOT FOR "CIVILIAN CLOTHES"

ACT I

The Lanham Library in Louisville, Kentucky

Time: The Present

NOTE—The furniture is a mixture of the old and the new, as though showing two elements in the house. Mahogany two hundred years old is mixed here and there with smart modern furniture, making a combination that while rich and comfortable would cause a modern decorator to expire in a delirium of horror. But everything shows wealth and position and every piece taken individually is in good taste.

- 1 large rug or various small rugs on floor.
- 1 library table up C. running L. and R. Books and papers on same.
- 1 heavy upholstered davenport down stage in front of table facing audience.
- 2 cushioned window seats in window L.
- 2 pairs of curtains and draperies for windows L.
- 1 arm chair up R.
- 1 arm chair down L.
- 1 small table down L.
- 1 small straight chair below table.
- 1 arm chair up L.
- 1 handsome 2 or 3 wing screen up stage L. of double door C. Carpet on stairs off stage C.
- Rugs on floor below stairs.
- Bric-a-brac here and there.
- Pictures on walls (*including one or two family portraits and some old-fashioned oil paintings of various subjects*).
- 1 tea wagon off stage R. with tea pot (*filled with tea*), cream, sugar, 4 cups, 4 saucers, 1 plate of wafers and a small decanter containing rum, which is used in the tea instead of cream.

- 1 small silver pocket whiskey flask (*filled*) for BILLY ARK-
WRIGHT.
- 3 small coins for "matching," for RUTHERFORD, ARK-
WRIGHT and the GENERAL.
- 1 fireplace grate down C. facing davenport.
- 1 pair old-fashioned andirons for same.

ACT II

The Lanham Dining Room—an old-fashioned room with a conservatory opening off back through three archways.

NOTE—The whole effect of the room should be heavy, old fashioned and rich.

ACT III

SCENE I

One of the parlors in the Hotel Grunewald, New Orleans. Room is furnished with the typical hotel parlor furniture.

- 1 rug on floor.
- 1 old-fashioned white marble mantel on L. (*ornaments on same*).
- 1 sofa above fireplace halfway facing it.
- 1 table in C. or room.
- 1 small taboret up R. above double door.
- 1 potted palm or fern on same.
- 2 *small straight chairs* } to dress stage.
- 1 *arm chair* }
- Curtains drawn on windows at back.
- 1 daily paper for HART.
- 1 College paper for HART.
- 2 cigars for HART.

SCENE II

CAPTAIN MCGINNIS' Room, in the Hotel Grunewald. A typical hotel room in a first-class hotel.

- Curtains drawn on two windows R.
- 1 bureau with mirror between windows R.
- 1 double bed with head against back wall, foot extending toward foot lights.
- 1 table below foot of bed.
- 1 small bed table up R. C. between bed and door to hall.
- 1 screen R. of bed.
- Several clothes hooks (*showing*) for practical use off stage door upper L.
- 1 writing table L.
- Hotel writing materials on same.
- 1 or 2 inexpensive but good prints on walls.
- Bedding, pillows, etc., on bed.

- 1 combination China match bowl and ash tray on bureau.
- 1 suit case placed on table C. marked so audience can see plainly "Capt. McGinnis, U. S. A."

Also on table are :

- 1 man's top coat.
- 1 man's hat.
- 1 suit of street clothes.
- 1 soiled shirt.
- 1 soiled collar.
- 1 necktie.

*(The suit case marked F. L. ready off stage.
Lady's comb and brushes in suitcase along with
personal wardrobe.)*

- 1 small straight chair for writing table.
 - 1 small straight chair in upper L. corner.
 - 1 arm chair down R.
 - 1 rocking chair up L.
 - Money for Florence to tip maid.
 - 1 practical key in door up R. C.
 - 1 telephone directory on table L.
-

CAST

(In order of appearance)

BILLY ARKWRIGHT . . .	<i>Twenty-five, late Lieutenant, A. E. F.</i>
NORA	<i>Maid</i>
GEN. McINERNEY, U. S. A.	<i>Fifty</i>
JACK RUTHERFORD . . .	<i>Late Lieutenant, N. A.</i>
FLORENCE LANHAM . . .	<i>Twenty-one</i>
MRS. LANHAM	<i>Fifty-five, her mother</i>
ELIZABETH	<i>Twenty, her sister</i>
SAM MCGINNIS	<i>Twenty-seven, late Captain, A. E. F. (winner D. S. C. medal)</i>
MRS. MARGARET SMYTHE	<i>Twenty-nine, friend of the Lanhams</i>
BESSIE HENDERSON . . .	<i>Twenty-two, friend of the Lanhams</i>
ZACK HART	<i>Fifty-two</i>
MR. LANHAM	<i>Florence's father</i>
MCGINNIS, SR.	
BELL HOP	
MAID AT HOTEL	

SCENES

- ACT. I. *The Library in the Lanham Home, Louisville, Ky. Winter of 1919.*
- ACT. II. *Dining Room in the Lanham Home. A month later.*
- ACT. III. Scene 1.—*Parlor Hotel Grunewald, New Orleans. A week later.*
- Scene 2.—*CAPTAIN MCGINNIS' Room, Hotel Grunewald.*

ACT I

SCENE—*The Lanham Library in Louisville, Ky. A handsome old-fashioned house. The room looks out on the smart street of the town. Big windows on the left. Entrance from the broad hall through double doors center. Broad double doors on R. covered with curtains, lead into the dining room. Outside in the hall broad stairs can be seen leading up to the rooms above. These must be practical as at times in the action they will be used. The furniture is a mixture of the old and the new, as though showing two elements in the house. Mahogany two hundreds years old is mixed here and there with smart modern furniture, making a combination that, while rich and comfortable, would cause a modern decorator to expire in a delirium of horror. But everything shows wealth and position and every piece taken individually is in good taste. A big board sofa is placed facing front, showing the fireplace is there. A handsome screen U. S. R. partly cuts off the room on that side. The deeply recessed windows afford cushioned seats.*

TIME—*A winter afternoon in 1919.*

DISCOVERED—*At the rise, BILLY ARKWRIGHT is on the stage alone. He is seated on the divan facing front before the fire, imagined to be where the foot-lights are. About him is that "Do or die" air of the man who has come to make a proposal and is going through with it no matter what happens. He is obviously nervous. He crosses and recrosses his legs, moves about on the seat, rises, walks to and fro, obviously going over a speech and arguments in his mind. Reseats himself on the sofa, turns half sideways, goes through pantomime talking to imaginary girl. Talks to himself so that the audience must get it from his lips, his expression, his pantomime, business with pillow, "Florence, I love you—I've loved you always, I want you to marry me." He pulls out his watch, looks at it again, frowns, as a man well satisfied, anxious to have it over with. Goes over, rings bell on R., then returns to L. C.*

BILLY ARKWRIGHT is about twenty-six, tall, dark, slender, handsome. His face, his figure, his manner all show unmistakably the breeding that comes from several hun-

dred years of gentlemen ancestors. He has both the good points and the bad points of his class to a marked degree. Physically brave, honest, honorable, he yet lacks the moral fibre to make a real success of his life if he had to do so. He does not think very fast and he cannot think deeply, but he is courteous, he loves everybody and everybody loves him for his nature and weaknesses. His chief weakness is conviviality. He will drink with anybody and he can't stand much.

NORA answers the bell, entering center. She is an Irish woman in her forties, with remains of unusual good looks and the air of the privileged servant who has been in the family at least twenty-five years and nursed the daughter of the house. She is thin, her face is sharp and her tongue can be sharper when she lets it be. Between ARKWRIGHT and NORA is the air of people who have known each other for years. NORA is dressed in a maid's costume.

BILLY

(Elaborately consulting his watch.)

Nora, does it always take young ladies just half an hour to dress?

NORA

No, sir—sometimes it takes much longer.

BILLY

Humph!

(Severely.)

I've been waiting on Miss Florence Lanham exactly thirty-two minutes.

NORA

Well, Mr. Arkwright, to my certain knowledge we've all been waiting on you a couple of years.

BILLY

(Severely.)

Nora, you take base advantage of the fact that once you used to spank me.

NORA

And Miss Florence, too—I never knew which of you needed it the most.

(Pause.)

BILLY

Are you sure Miss Florence is at home?

NORA

Well, she always is to you, sir.

BILLY

OH!

NORA

Besides, I think she was expecting you.

BILLY

(Quickly—nervously.)

What makes you say that?

NORA

Well, sir, I've noticed ever since she got back from France, Miss Florence has been sort of—er—*expecting something*—

BILLY

Something—er—a—pleasant?

NORA

Well, sir, sometimes it's pleasant and sometimes it ain't—but they all like to have it over with.

BILLY

Oh!

NORA

I'll tell Miss Lanham you are waiting, sir.

(Turns to exit center.)

BILLY

(Xs to NORA.)

Oh, Nora.

(Going up—she pauses and half turns.)

Will you fix it—so—er—we—sh—not disturbed?

NORA

(Turns straight front, a grin comes to her face, she nods, he nods.)

I understand, sir—

(Goes to door, half pauses, affectionately.)

Good luck, Mr. Billy—now, get it over with.

(She exits C. BILLY draws the long breath of a man setting himself for an ordeal. There is a light noise outside the center door. Nerving himself BILLY strides to the door, gulps a couple of times, prepares to begin with a rush.)

BILLY

(As door slams, speaks with rush, L. of door.)

Florence, I've been waiting for—

GEN. MCINERNEY

For me, Mr. Arkwright?

BILLY

(Aghast.)

Huh! Not by a damned sight—

(Turns D. C. in disgust.)

(GENERAL MCINERNEY is a West Pointer who has gone up fast on account of the War. He is a man between forty-five and fifty, of average height or a trifle under, beginning to enlarge a little at the waist—a smooth faced, keen eyed man of the world. And like

most West Pointers he has a good idea of the main chance and the advantages of the right sort of marriage.)

(It is obvious that all the joy has gone out of life for BILLY. He comes down, sits disgustedly L. end of sofa. The GENERAL looks at him keenly, moves down, takes another chair R. C., a long pause.)

GENERAL

Do you ever notice, Mr. Arkwright, the atmosphere of places? Now I'm peculiarly sensitive to it—

BILLY

(Grumpy.)

Really—never would have guessed it—

(Pause.)

GENERAL

Take this Lanham house, for instance—there's an atmosphere about this room that's unmistakable—an atmosphere—warmth of cordiality—why, I've never entered the house that I haven't felt perfectly at home.

(Sits on chair R. of davenport.)

BILLY

(Sits on sofa C.)

I remember in France you used to tell us, General McInerny, it doesn't take a great deal to make an old soldier feel at home.

GENERAL

Precisely.

(Pause—BILLY glares at his watch.)

BILLY

Forty minutes!

GENERAL

(Looks at his watch.)

Just five o'clock.

BILLY

(Innocently.)

Time for retreat, General—

GENERAL

Generals don't stand retreat, Lieutenant—

BILLY

(Indicating his clothes.)

Neither do civilians, General.

(Pause.)

GENERAL

You've known Miss Lanham a long time?

BILLY

When the first settlers built a fort on this river to keep away the Indians there was a family of Lanhams and a

family of Arkwrights—

GENERAL

Mayflower?

BILLY

No—Virginia.

GENERAL

Wonderful girl, Miss Lanham, energetic, efficient, prompt.

BILLY

Yes, prompt—forty-two minutes.

(Looks at watch.)

GENERAL

Never will forget the first time I met her—

(BILLY doesn't pay much attention though GENERAL talks on, pleased with his own ideas.)

It was at the San Mihiel Show—

BILLY

San Mihiel?

GENERAL

Yes, after you had been transferred to the Argonne, we were getting troops up into position before the show started. I had gone forward past the Brigade O. P. It was black as your hat—had just gotten to one place where there was a shaded light when who should I find there but a girl handing out hot chocolate to the doughboys as they came by. It was Miss Lanham.

BILLY

Flo!

GENERAL

She was a Red Cross canteen girl but that wasn't exciting enough, I suppose, for there she was right up almost in the front-line with a Salvation Army get-up handing out chocolate to the boys. Hell, any man would fight when they saw women like that, you know—

BILLY

You did not let her stay, did you?

GENERAL

Of course not—ordered her back in a hurry—

(Pause—chuckles.)

Found out afterwards she didn't go!

BILLY

Just like Flo—I never could make her do anything—

GENERAL

Wonderful girl.

(Pause.)

For some lucky man she'll make a wonderful wife.

BILLY

(Pause. Rises—looks at the GENERAL with sudden

alarm and suspicion—the GENERAL shifts uncomfortably.)

Now I know what you're here for—

GENERAL

(Stammering.)

Nothing of the sort—

(Stands up.)

BILLY

Oh, yes, it is—all dressed up in your new uniform and all your decorations—you're here to-day to propose to her—

GENERAL

Ridiculous!

BILLY

(Moving L.)

I agree with you—?

GENERAL

(Xs to L.)

Well, really, Mr. Arkwright, since you take that tone I don't see what would be so ridiculous about a proposal by me.

BILLY

(Turning to GENERAL.)

Florence Lanham's not the girl to waste herself on an old man.

GENERAL

(Facing BILLY front of sofa.)

Waste herself! Indeed! While I do not think this sort of discussion is in the best taste still since you have forced it, I must say that I consider Miss Lanham too intelligent a lady to throw herself away on a young whippersnapper—

BILLY

(Going to C. in front of sofa.)

Declare yourself—are you or aren't you?

GENERAL

Why I—I!

BILLY

Well, if you won't declare yourself I will—I came here to propose this afternoon. Now give me a chance.

GENERAL

(X to C. Pause.)

Well, since you are so bold about the matter, Mr. Arkwright, I'll be equally frank—that is what I came for this afternoon.

(They look at each other. Pause.)

BILLY

(Suggestively. Sits L. end of sofa.)

I was here first.

GENERAL

(Looks at BILLY and sits.)

I would suggest in view of—

BILLY

Nothing doing—that “age before beauty” stuff don’t go with me.

(Both sit obstinately.)

(GENERAL sits R. end of sofa.)

(Long pause.)

GENERAL

See here, young man, doesn’t it strike you we are acting like a couple of asses?

(They turn and look at each other.)

BILLY

Speak for yourself, General.

GENERAL

But if we both stay—

BILLY

I’ll match you—

(Up.)

GENERAL

You’re on—

(Up.)

(Swing around to R. and L. end of table. Each produces a coin, stand at the table just back of the divan. As they put their coins down.)

May the best man win!

BILLY

Hell, no—may I win!

GENERAL

We’ll see.

JOHN RUTHERFORD

(At the door.)

Hello—everybody—

GENERAL

Damn!

(JOHN RUTHERFORD is tall, clean cut, good looking. good manners, good clothes, twenty-five, and thinks on Tuesdays sometimes.)

(Comes down—takes in picture. Back of table C.)

RUTHERFORD

Matching? May I get in?

BILLY

Don’t know—

(Looks at GENERAL.)

Say, Rutherford, when was the last time you proposed to Flo?

RUTHERFORD

You've got your nerve asking that!

BILLY

(*To GENERAL.*)

Isn't he an ass? You know, every fellow in the town takes Flo like the measles—

(*To RUTHERFORD.*)

When was it? Last week?

(*RUTHERFORD hesitates—shakes his head.*)

RUTHERFORD

(*Hesitates.*)

Well—well—I haven't seen her since yesterday.

BILLY

You belong in—

RUTHERFORD

(*Putting down his money.*)

Let me get this—what are we matching for?

BILLY

Odd man wins—the other two get out and give him a chance—

RUTHERFORD

They don't quit for good?

BILLY

No, for this afternoon—

RUTHERFORD

Oh, I can ask to-morrow just as well.

(*Position—GENERAL R. of table, RUTHERFORD back of table, BILLY L. of table.*)

BILLY

Yes, it might be a good idea to give her a day's rest—

Everybody down—

(*Nods—they put coins down.*)

Everybody up.

(*All lift hands.*)

RUTHERFORD

Heads—

GENERAL

Heads—

BILLY

Heads—damn it.

FLORENCE LANHAM

(*At the door.*)

I hope I didn't keep anybody waiting.

(*All grab their coins and look innocent.*)

BILLY

(*Looks at watch.*)

Fifty minutes late, and then comes a minute too soon—

(FLORENCE LANHAM is twenty-one, about five feet four inches with fair hair and blue eyes. One's first impression is what an unusually beautiful person. To the ordinary observer this impression of beauty, of self-possession, of assurance, continues, but the discriminating man finds something disturbing. Proud, impatient of restraint, impulsive, lovable, and withal possessed of tremendous nervous energy, here is a crowded single-track mind which makes of her life a series of rear-end collisions. When the inevitable obstacle that should have been foreseen arises, she is apt to blame fate and override it rather than to blame herself and try to get around it. She has never had anything she did not want ferociously and never gotten anything she did not tire of immediately.)

(Position, training, wealth, have conspired to make her a snob, but she hates snobs when she knows them. Withal there is tremendous happiness in store for her and the right man who shall conquer her.)

FLO

(As the men leave the table.)

This is jolly! Awfully nice of you to drop in.

(Gives right hand to GENERAL—left hand to RUTHERFORD—nods to BILLY.)

Hello, Billy.

(BILLY takes his own left hand with his right, shakes it.)

BILLY

Charmed, I'm sure—

GENERAL

(Very much the courtier.)

You are always worth waiting for, Miss Lanham.

FLO

Thank you, General.

(Sits on sofa L. BILLY wheels the tea table in front of her.)

RUTHERFORD

You certainly came just in time.

FLO

Why?

RUTHERFORD

Well, two of us were about to go.

(Sits R. of FLO.)

FLO

Which two?

BILLY

(Promptly.)

JACK AND GEN. McINERNY.

(The two show hostility.)

RUTHERFORD

Me?

GENERAL

Nothing of the sort.

(NORA enters, places cake on tea table.)

FLO

I should say not!

(NORA appears rolling in tea table, from door R1. Rolls it down beside divan in front of group. She tries to pantomime to BILLY that it's not her fault and she is for him.)

Right here, Nora. You needn't wait, Nora.

(NORA exits unwillingly, leaving tea wagon, Xing to R. and exits.)

(FLO looks from one to the other.)

Nora is an old dear, you know, but she's spoiled utterly.

(She sits L. end of sofa, begins to serve tea.)

If I allowed her to stay she would at least be telling you, General, what she thinks of the Army, and putting Billy in his place.

GENERAL

I'd rather like to see some one put Mr. Arkwright in his place.

(Stands.)

BILLY

(L. of FLO standing.)

Nora can. Remember the time, Flo, she caught me kissing you and spanked you for leading me into temptation.

(All laugh.)

FLO

I remember nothing—

(FLO hands cup, tea and cake to GENERAL who takes it to chair R.)

GENERAL

Rum—

(FLO puts rum in tea and passes cup to GENERAL. RUTHERFORD returns R., while FLO fixes cup for RUTHERFORD.)

All of your servants down here old retainers? For instance, that very imposing butler I've seen—with the knee breeches and silk stockings.

FLO

Knee breeches; that's a fad of mother's. No, indeed—but father discovered he was a slacker and discharged him on the spot. Now that the war is over, however, we are look-

ing forward to the joys of competent men-servants once more. As a matter of fact, I notified the Agency to send some to-day.

RUTHERFORD

Should be plenty of ex-soldiers—

BILLY

Imagine—after charging machine guns to come back to passing the soup. I tell you, Flo, advertise—“Wanted one Butler, only D.S.C. men need apply.”

(Takes cup from FLO, sits L. on chair.)

GENERAL

And if the dinner is dull he can regale us with his adventures.

FLO

(Mischievously.)

Oh, you think my dinners dull, General?

GENERAL

No—none of that—certainly not.

FLO

(Judicially.)

The tone is doubtful. I see I'll have to convince you. We'll make it a week from to-night—

RUTHERFORD

Make what?

FLO

Dinner, of course—all of you—

THE MEN

Thanks, splendid—I'll come—I'll be here all night.

(A long pause—the men settle back determined to stay.)

BILLY

(Luxuriously—leaning back on chair L. of sofa.)

I could sit here all night—

(The GENERAL and RUTHERFORD look at him.)

—and then some.

GENERAL

(Rising and Xing to R. hands RUTHERFORD cup.)

Going my way, Mr. Rutherford.

(Business handing cup and napkin to RUTHERFORD.)

RUTHERFORD

(Indignant.)

Say, I'm no kitchen police.

(Xs to sofa.)

(Hesitates.)

You going to stay, William?

BILLY

Till the last lone man retires—and don't call me William.

RUTHERFORD

(Turns to FLO.)

Er—a—by the way, Flo—remember what we were discussing yesterday.

(BILLY sits bolt upright—the GENERAL turns sharply.)

FLO

(Startled.)

Y—e—s!

RUTHERFORD

(Leaning toward FLO.)

Any chance of changing your mind?

FLO

(Shakes her head.)

No—o—o.

BILLY

(To RUTHERFORD.)

Good night!

FLO

(To GENERAL.)

General, won't you have another cup?

BILLY

(Rising.)

No, they don't care for any—

GENERAL

Well, I'll be—allow me, please.

(FLO hastens to him—they talk in pantomime.)

RUTHERFORD

(Cheerfully.)

Well—see you to-morrow.

(Starts as though to exit—stops, turns to BILLY who is grinning at RUTHERFORD.)

You needn't grin—fifty you don't put it over, either.

BILLY

Go to the devil!

(GENERAL shakes hands—starts out with a bare nod to BILLY—who grins at him fearfully. FLO comes down R. C. BILLY down L. end of sofa.)

RUTHERFORD

(At door.)

(Taking GENERAL's arm as they go out.)

Gen!!!

(Xs to GENERAL.)

Gen!!! Didn't have any better luck than I did.

GENERAL

I'd like to have you in my outfit.

(Exit.)

(FLO turns to BILLY, and they look at each other. It

comes over him that the time for proposing has arrived. She is cool—friendly—BILLY looks at her—is suddenly panic stricken. A long pause.)

FLO

(Both sit on sofa.)

(R. of sofa. After appreciable pause—with rising inflection.)

Well?

BILLY

Er—a—quite well, thank you?

(Another pause—after it has become pronounced.)

FLO

But—

BILLY

Flo—

(Simultaneously, turning to each other.)

BILLY

(Both stop—he moves toward her on sofa.)

I beg your pardon—you were saying—

FLO

(Severely.)

There's something the matter with you, Billy.

I'll get you some Scotch.

(X's to R. Rises.)

BILLY

No.

(With determination.)

I am going to do this on my own—

FLO

Do what?

BILLY

What I'm—

(Pauses.)

FLO

Poor Billy-boy—

(X to B.)

(Reaches over in friendly fashion—puts her hand on his)

Come, tell mother all about it—

(Both sit.)

BILLY

(Shaking her hand off—resenting her friendly superior air.)

(Desperately.)

Oh, Flo, can't you help a fellow out?

FLO

Certainly—Now what have you been doing?

BILLY

And I thought it would be so—easy.

FLO

(Encouragingly.)

Anything is easy if you really set your mind to it—do like you used to do when you took medicine. Shut your eyes and go to it—Come now, tell mother all about it.

(BILLY desperately shuts his eyes—holding her hand in both of his.)

(FLO, taking her hand away.)

Billy.

BILLY

No—I mean—will you be my—

FLO

(Teasingly.)

My children's mother, Billy?

BILLY

Don't be an idiot.

FLO

Billy, I believe you're in love.

BILLY

What did you think I had—a pain in my tummy.

(Pause.)

Well, say something—

FLO

I don't know what to say—

BILLY

Nonsense! You were never in that fix in your life!

FLO

(She is obviously disturbed but plainly she is interested, even believes herself in love, but something is holding her back, making her try to avoid BILLY's proposal.)

Do I—do I understand, Billy, you are trying to ask to be the father of those children about whom you're so eloquent?

BILLY

(Takes her hand.)

Flo, I want to marry you—

FLO

(Teasing to cover her own feelings.)

Oh, I'm sure your intentions are honorable—

BILLY

(Piteously.)

Please, Flo, stop teasing me—

FLO

(With genuine regret and feeling.)

Billy—

BILLY

(Taking her hand again.)

Say yes, dear—

FLO

I—I wish I could, Billy—

BILLY

(In surprise, horror and misery.)

Flo, you don't mean that—

FLO

I can't. Billy, I just can't—

BILLY

Why?

FLO

Don't ask me that—

BILLY

(In the violent emotion of his love and the feeling of a man crossed the first time in his life.)

Don't—Hell! You think I'm going to let you turn me down without finding out why!

(His anger and force move her much more than his pleading, then feeling he hasn't been a gentleman he weakens.)

Forgive me—I don't mean to talk that way, but—oh, Flo, can't you see this is everything to me?

FLO

(With sympathy.)

Billy!

BILLY

Everything, Flo—why, ever since we were kids I've never thought of any one but you. There hasn't been a time since I can remember that I haven't looked forward to that day when we would be married.

FLO

(Moved—speaking softly.)

Yes,—I used to think so too—

BILLY

We both thought so all our lives—why, we can't remember when we weren't sweethearts.

FLO

(Weakly.)

Billy, don't—

BILLY

Everybody that knows us expects us to be married—

FLO

I can't marry you now—I just can't.

BILLY

Why?

FLO

There's a reason.

BILLY

Hang the reason—is it because I've been a bit wild, Flo? If it is I'll cut it out. Honestly I will—I'll be the good little man who brings the steak home under his arm three hundred and sixty-five days in the year—

FLO

(Amused and softly.)

You dear boy—

BILLY

I'll be your slave, Flo—I'll do anything—everything you want me to.

(She looks at him, but he does not realize that he is on the wrong track.)

FLO

I don't want you to do anything, Billy—no man gets a woman by doing *anything* for her—

(Pause.)

BILLY

(With sudden suspicion releases her hand and rises.)

You didn't fall in love or make any promise to any man you met over there, did you?

FLO

(Her armor penetrated—gasps guiltily, stalls.)

What an absurd idea.

BILLY

I should think so—you aren't the kind of girl to become interested in any man you didn't know all about—

(When he is not looking she sweeps him with one glance that shows how little he really knows her.)

FLO

(Her words contradicting her looks.)

Of course not—

BILLY

After all, what could you know about a man you just met in France?

FLO

(Eagerly.)

Yes, they all look alike, don't they—in uniform? But can you imagine me becoming interested in any one not well born, Billy?

BILLY

(Taking her hand again.)

Hardly! The Lanhams aren't that way—

(Sits. Pause.)

Oh, why can't you love me, Flo—give me some reason—at

least, I'm a gentleman—

(Throughout the whole scene FLO must have shown that she has been powerfully moved—that she believes she loves him and several times she has wanted to go to him but has been held back by some strong reason.)

FLO

(Obviously casting about for a reason.)

I reckon that's is, Billy—you were always too much the gentleman.

BILLY

(In amazement.)

Too much the gentleman?

FLO

Yes,—you've always been just that—my slave—you've never made me do anything—a woman has to be made to do things, Billy. Don't you understand? Oh, a lot of suffragettes can preach to the end of time, but that doesn't alter Nature, and when I hear one of them declaring, "No man ever made me do anything," I always feel like saying, "Yes, but don't you wish he had." And face to face with her own soul, if she's a regular woman, every time she'll say, "Yes."

BILLY

(The idea sinking in—in amazement.)

Has anybody ever *made you* do anything, Flo?

FLO

(After a pause—softly.)

Yes—

BILLY

Who was he?

FLO

That doesn't matter—now—

BILLY

(Jealously.)

What was it—where was it—

FLO

It was at San Mihiel—

BILLY

(Exclaiming.)

The General!

FLO

(Impatiently.)

Oh, goodness, no, the General couldn't make anybody do anything!

BILLY

(Relieved.)

Oh?

FLO

It was the morning of the attack—I'd gotten up near the front and was putting out hot chocolate to the boys—the General ordered me back, but I slipped around out of his sight and kept on. The shells were coming over pretty fast when some of the Infantry marched past to take position. I offered a cup of chocolate to a Captain. He passed it on to one of his men, then asked me how the Divil I got there. I told him I walked and he said I better walk back again. I laughed at him. Next he ordered me back. I refused to go. Then he called me a damn plucky little fool, boxed my ears as though I'd been a naughty child, and sent me to the rear crying with rage, my head ringing and a soldier holding each elbow.

BILLY

(Savagely.)

He struck you!

FLO

Hard! I don't believe he realized his strength—

BILLY

The cowardly brute—who was he?

FLO

(Strong feeling showing through her words.)

He was—a man—

BILLY

And you said you weren't interested in anybody—what's his name?

FLO

That doesn't matter—now.

BILLY

Well, it does matter. I'll—

FLO

There's nothing you can do—now.

BILLY

Why?

FLO

(Simply.)

He's dead.

(Pause.)

With a distinguished service cross—

BILLY

For boxing your ears?

FLO

For extraordinary heroism in capturing a machine gun and killing five Germans single handed. You see he didn't limit himself to striking women—

BILLY

All the same he was a big rough-necked brute.

FLO

But don't you wish you'd done it? All of it, Billy—even boxing my ears?

BILLY

There's been lots of times I wanted to—

FLO

(Turns to him.)

I wish you had—Oh, Billy, why didn't you make me love you—why didn't you make me marry you before you went over there? It would have saved me so much!

BILLY

(Takes her hand.)

I—I wanted to, Flo—but I—I'm not making any grandstand play, but—well—I thought I might get knocked off over there and it wouldn't be fair to you—

FLO

As though a woman ever asked a man to be fair when she loved him!

BILLY

(Eagerly.)

You did love me?

FLO

Yes, Billy, I thought I did—

BILLY

Then I'll make certain of it—I'll *make* you love me if I have to beat you three times a day—

(She is closer to him than she has been yet, half amused, half wistful, wholly moved—puts her hand on his—softly.)

FLO

Billy, I—

(Feeling she is about to yield, BILLY turns to her impulsively just as MRS. LANHAM enters, accompanied by ELIZABETH LANHAM.)

(MRS. LANHAM is short, she is fat, she is handsome with the distinction and the manner that it is popularly supposed takes three generations to acquire. She has more than a fair appreciation of the honor it will be to any man to become her son-in-law and she is determined to choose a son-in-law worthy of her. Moreover she has never forgotten that she was once a great beauty and that she made a worthy marriage. She is about sixty years old. Ineligible young men have been known to call her "the dragon," but she does not know many ineligible young men. She is absolutely without humor.)

(ELIZABETH LANHAM is what her mother was at twenty-five and she will be her mother over again when she reaches that age.)

(Both MRS. LANHAM and ELIZABETH are dressed for the street and have evidently just come in. Both take in the situation at a glance and their mutual delight shows that both completely misunderstand it.)

ELIZABETH

(Gaily. Back of table.)

What did I tell you, Mother—there they are—wooing and scallawagging—

BILLY

(Rises. Jumps to his feet guiltily. Crosses to chair L.)

Don't you believe it, Mrs. Lanham. I am wooing all right but Flo is doing the scallawagging—

MRS. LANHAM

(Completely misunderstanding—comes down to divan.)

I'm sure it wasn't very serious scallawagging—and I know you've both made me very happy—Billy!

(Kisses FLO—holds out left hand to BILLY.)

FLO

(Gasps.)

Mother!

(BILLY's face grows tragically blank, FLO sees the unfortunate position he is in.)

MRS. LANHAM

Don't say a word, my mother caught your father and me the same way—we were married very shortly afterwards—

BILLY

(Starts to speak.)

But, Mrs. Lanham—

(FLO X to B. Quickly gives her a quick, thankful look, turns to L. ELIZABETH gets to back of table C.)

MRS. LANHAM

Guess. It wasn't much of a guess.

FLO

No, it wasn't—

ELIZABETH

Should say not! Perfectly obvious.

(To BILLY.)

Wasn't it?

BILLY

(Flustered.)

Yes—yes—s'pose so—

(Grins from one to the other.)

ELIZABETH

Do I kiss Billy—under the circumstances?

BILLY

Does she kiss me, Flo—*under the circumstances?*

FLO

I wouldn't have her miss it for the world—*under the circumstances?*

ELIZABETH

(Comes over—kisses BILLY—sincerely.)

I'm awfully glad—we've all been waiting on you and Sis such a long time!

FLO

Elizabeth!

BILLY

Have you?

FLO

It's time Billy was going—

(Starts up C.)

ELIZABETH

Billy, what makes you so flustered? And Sis—why both of you—

(Looks from one to the other, puzzled.)

BILLY

(Obviously greatly embarrassed—he is embarrassed for FLO—she for him.)

I'm not flustered.

FLO

(With deadly calm, comes down.)

Perhaps, Bess, you'd be flustered if—

(Stops short.)

MRS. LANHAM

(Who hasn't paid much attention.)

I think that's very sensible—a short engagement—

ELIZABETH

And a pink wedding—when?

(Looks from one to the other.)

MRS. LANHAM

I think—

FLO

I know Billy must be going. Come, Billy!

(Starts up C.)

ELIZABETH

(X to FLO to stop her.)

No! We'll settle this first—when?

FLO

Never!!

ELIZABETH and MRS. LANHAM

Never? Why?—

FLO

Yes, never! You two walked in here and just jumped at a conclusion you both desired—that's all. Billy and I are not engaged, and as far as I know, haven't the slightest intention of becoming engaged—

ELIZABETH

Well!

MRS. LANHAM

But—but—I saw—

(With slight suspicion.)

You—you mean you were just—

FLO

Scallawagging, Mother—scallawagging.

(Sits.)

(Mrs. Lanham is horror stricken.)

MRS. LANHAM

(With decision.)

I don't believe it—

BILLY

You're right, Mrs. Lanham—I was proposing to Flo and—

ELIZABETH

And he didn't get a chance to finish—

(Goes into laughter.)

Come, Mother.

(Goes toward door.)

MRS. LANHAM

(Shocked to the bottom of her conventional soul.)

Elizabeth!

(To others.)

Awfully sorry—terribly stupid—but, well—come, Elizabeth, I think we had better leave the children—alone.

(Moves on to go.)

(Flo signals to let them go—Billy won't.)

BILLY

Wrong again, Mrs. Lanham—she refused me—

MRS. LANHAM

Re—wh—

(Turns about and sits down R. C. Slowly with great dignity—flatly.)

Well, will somebody tell me the meaning of this?

FLO

I can't very well marry Billy, if I don't love him, Mother.

MRS. LANHAM

(To Flo.)

Then what do you mean by waiting so long to break his heart?

ELIZABETH

(*Coming down between chair L. C. and sofa.*)
Everybody is expecting it of you, Flo—at least you might be accommodating--

FLO

(*Looks over her shoulder.*)
Well, Sis, why don't you marry him?

ELIZABETH

(*Startled, but the idea is evidently not as distasteful as it might be.*)

Me!

BILLY

(*At same time—involuntary horror.*)
Good G—I beg your pardon—

ELIZABETH

(*With wounded dignity.*)
Certainly, I don't think I can add anything to the discussion.

(*Exit—her feelings miffed.*)

MRS. LANHAM

But, Florence, you must be married sometime—

FLO

Not necessarily—

(*Sits on sofa.*)

MRS. LANHAM

(*Horrified to the depths of her soul.*)
Good gracious—I never.
(*Stops aghast just as MR. LANHAM enters, center.*)

MR. LANHAM

(*Coming down L. of MRS. LANHAM.*)
Hello, Elizabeth said you needed me, Mother.

(*MR. ARCHIBALD LANHAM is tall, slender, with white hair, and a keen patrician, smooth face, that shows intelligence, humor, and a fundamental kindly outlook on life and its foibles. It is the view point of a man looking down on his fellow men. He has inherited wealth and acquired more through the practice of his profession—lawyer. Therefore, to the pride of birth and wealth is added the pride of achievement. If any one told him he was a snob he would unhesitatingly admit it and justify it.*)

MRS. LANHAM

Needed you! Father!

(*Tragically.*)

Archibald, *your* daughter is going to be an old maid—

MR. LANHAM

Why the emphasis—*my* daughter?

MRS. LANHAM

(Sharply.)

Because no daughter of mine would be such a fool—

BILLY

I think I'll say good-bye.

FLO

(Grabs his arm and pulls him down on sofa. In alarm.)

Billy, don't leave me with them—

(BILLY, with hope, instantly and obviously decides not to go—sits on divan beside her.)

MR. LANHAM

(To MRS. LANHAM.)

Possibly, Elizabeth, if you leave this to me I can get to the bottom of it—

MRS. LANHAM

(With obvious unbelief.)

Possibly—but I don't think so—

(Sits on chair R. C.)

FLO

There's nothing to get to the bottom of. Billy just asked me to—well, speaking accurately, to be the mother of his children—

BILLY

(Opens his mouth to gasp.)

Wh-a—

MRS. LANHAM

Well, of course, Billy, if you start your indelicacies before marriage—

MR. LANHAM

There'll be nothing left to make marriage interesting—

BILLY

(Rises. Indignantly.)

I did nothing of the kind—I didn't even tell her she had to have any!

(FLO pulls him down.)

MRS. LANHAM

(With sharp reproof.)

Please refrain from discussing matters that are not necessary at present.

MR. LANHAM

(Judicially.)

Good! Obstacle No. 1 removed.

(Pause.)

FLO

But, Dad, all this concerns Billy and me.

MR. LANHAM

Granted, my dear—granted—that's why I'm asking—

Now, my dear Florence, have you any deep-rooted objection to the married state?

FLO

How should I know—

MR. LANHAM

Precisely—that's the beauty of the system.

MRS. LANHAM

Archibald—I think you're a perfect idiot.

(He turns to her.)

Whoever heard of any woman objecting before marriage—and if she objects afterwards she'll only be like every other woman. Thank goodness, my children are normal.

MR. LANHAM

Then, Florence, is it that you know Billy too well?

FLO

Can you know them too well?

MR. LANHAM

Huh!

(Coughs. Moves up.)

We—a—sometimes I've thought so—

BILLY

(Rises.)

Now, Mr. Lanham—see here—I don't want to be passed on like a prize pig.

FLO

Billy Arkwright, nobody has pinned any blue ribbons on you.

(Pulls him down again. Pause while all resume poise.)

MR. LANHAM

Is it because Billy has too much brains?

(BILLY brightens.)

FLO

(Doubtfully.)

No—o—o.

MR. LANHAM

A man of unusual intelligence is frequently hard to live with—ask your mother—

MRS. LANHAM

(Innocently.)

I suppose one would be—

(MR. LANHAM looks at her quickly—she goes on, relieved.)

Oh! but that won't worry Billy.

BILLY

Indeed!

MR. LANHAM

You know there are many advantages to this marriage.

FLO

Yes.

MR. LANHAM

Your mother and myself and Billy's parents have looked forward to it—dreamed of it—

FLO

Yes, but *I'd be marrying* him—

BILLY

(Jumping up.)

I'm going—

FLO

(Grabs his arm—pulls him down.)

No, you're not going—

(He subsides obediently.)

MR. LANHAM

(With look at them that points his speech.)

Daughter, believe me, you are making a grave mistake—with most couples it would require years for their relationship to become so perfectly adjusted—

FLO

I don't want to be so well adjusted—every woman likes to fight now and then—

MR. LANHAM

(With sigh.)

Y-e-s, and even if they don't they develop wonderful powers of self-sacrifice.

MRS. LANHAM

Keep to the subject, Archibald—the Lanham and the Arkwright places are side by side and for years I've dreamed how nice it would be when they were together—

FLO

Mother—you can't marry a man just because he lives next door to you—

MRS. LANHAM

Why not? It's a much better reason than most people have.

MR. LANHAM

(Turning L.)

Have you ever considered this, Flo? We are the same kind of people—we Lanhams and the Arkwrights—We think alike—we've always been the best—we've always held ourselves the best. Now, here in Kentucky we breed for a pure strain in our horses and in the matter of marriage for ourselves and our children we should be just as careful.

FLO

But in all breeding isn't it a good idea now and then to cross the strain?

MRS. LANHAM

Florence, don't be vulgar.

BILLY

(Jumping up.)

Oh, what's the use of continuing this? I'll tell you the real reason, Mr. Lanham. Flo did care for me but she went abroad and got biffed on a man in France.

MRS. LANHAM

I knew she shouldn't have gone—I told you so, Archibald!

(Rises—moves up R.)

(FLO sits quite white and still.)

MR. LANHAM

(Soothing MRS. LANHAM.)

(For first time, he is really downright serious.)

(Turns to FLO.)

Is this true, daughter?

FLO

Yes, Father.

MR. LANHAM

(He is anxious, determined—she slender, calm, white but unafraid—after a pause.)

He is a gentleman?

FLO

An officer—

MR. LANHAM

I said “a gentleman.”

FLO

(Indignantly. Rises.)

Of course, he's a gentleman!

MR. LANHAM

Then why do you refuse his name?

FLO

I told Billy. He's—

(With slight catch.)

dead—

MRS. LANHAM

Oh!

(Sits chair R.)

MR. LANHAM

(Softly.)

Oh!

(Pause. MRS. LANHAM sighs with relief.)

(After a pause.)

If he were living you would marry him?

FLO

Of course—

MR. LANHAM

But he is dead.

FLO

(*Softly—hardly breathing.*)

Yes—

MR. LANHAM

Then the greatest objection is removed—

(*Xs to L.*)

FLO

(*At his tone goes to pieces.*)

Oh, it isn't that—I just don't love Billy—I don't.

(*Goes up stage to center.*)

(*Stamps foot.*)

I don't—I don't—I don't!

MR. LANHAM

Allow me to congratulate you—she'll elope with you in a month—

FLO

(*In rage.*)

What!

(*Comes down.*)

(*Together.*)

BILLY

(*In amazement and delight.*)

What!!!

MR. LANHAM

Undoubtedly. My legal experience of thirty odd years has proven to me that whenever a witness, particularly a woman, is unusually vehement, she is invariably *lying*.

FLO

Oh!

MRS. LANHAM

Of course—every woman knows that—

ELIZABETH

(*Entering, comes down R., leaves door open. Takes in picture.*)

Well—settled? Glad of it—Margaret Smythe just called me on the phone and I told her in *confidence*—

FLO

(*Turning to R.*)

She's the worst gossip in town—Oh! I hate you—I hate you—I hate every one of you.

(*Turns, rushes from room and upstairs.*)

MR. LANHAM

(*Calmly.*)

You see—unusually vehement—

NORA

(*Appears at door L.*)

A man to see Miss Florence.
(*Involuntarily startled, all hold picture and look at one another.*)

MR. LANHAM

(*Turns to her.*)

What's his name?

NORA

Didn't give any, sir.

MRS. LANHAM

A gentleman?

NORA

Oh, no, ma'am.

(*A general sigh of relief.*)

MRS. LANHAM

(*Rises.*)

(*Before NORA can speak.*)

Oh, of course, it's the butler they've sent from the Agency. Florence telephoned them—I'll have her see him.

(*SHE and ELIZABETH exit upstairs.*)

BILLY

(*Crosses R. to MR. LANHAM C.*)

You really think, Mr. Lanham, that I--that Flo---

MR. LANHAM

The feminine psychology, my dear boy, is nothing to think about—it's to pray over—

BILLY

Yes, sir. Good afternoon.

(*XS up R. end of sofa and exits.*)

NORA

It's not the butler, sir.

MR. LANHAM

Not the butler?

NORA

(*R. C.*)

No, sir, I asked him—it's a man from France—says he has a message for Miss Florence *from the dead*—sir.

MR. LANHAM

(*Rises.*)

What's that?

NORA

Well, that's what he said, sir.

MRS. LANHAM

Ridiculous! Why should the dead want to talk to Flo? She's not at home to the dead.

(*Exit.*)

MR. LANHAM

Show him in here.

(NORA exits.)

(MCGINNIS pauses at door. He is about thirty, big, broad, with the straight forward way of looking at one that compels attention. About him is the quiet confidence of the trained bayonet fighter and he carries the air of the man who has led men when they had to be led and driven them when they had to be driven, and always gotten results. His very straightforwardness makes one overlook this shrewdness and the humor that lurks in his background. He is dressed in a way to make a sensitive woman scream, a poor fitting ready-made suit of rather loud design, a loud tie, a very low turn down collar. Very yellow shoes of the kind that are sold as "knobby" and are—a colored handkerchief shows in the outside upper left-hand pocket of the coat as well dresser at the Gas House Ball. The barber has fixed his hair as only a barber unhindered can do. Nevertheless the personality of the man is strong even with the handicap of his clothes to command respect.)

MR. LANHAM

Come in! Nora!

(Nods her out.)

NORA

Yes, sir.

(Exits.)

MR. LANHAM

(Cross to same L.)

I am Mr. Lanham.

MCGINNIS

My instructions were to give my message privately to Miss Florence Lanham.

MR. LANHAM

Your instructions from whom?

MCGINNIS

From the Captain, sir—

MR. LANHAM

Captain who?

MCGINNIS

My instructions, sir, were to say "From the Captain."

MR. LANHAM

(Xs to lower end of sofa.)

The Captain is the officer about whose death she has heard.

MCGINNIS

Yes, sir.

MR. LANHAM

(Xs to L.)

Before you deliver this message I have to say something—

McGINNIS

Yes, sir, they all—

MR. LANHAM

My daughter is—er—romantic—

McGINNIS

Yes, sir, they all are—

MR. LANHAM

But she is the kind of girl who recites Kipling in front of the fire—

McGINNIS

I've heard her.

MR. LANHAM

Do you know Omar Khayyam?

McGINNIS

Sure.

MR. LANHAM

She discovered him.

McGINNIS

(Smiles.)

Yes, sir, I heard the Captain tell her if she'd bring him a jug of wine she could cut out the "thou"—

MR. LANHAM

I should like to have known your Captain.

(Pause.)

My daughter has a single track mind and—

McGINNIS

I see. No management! Rear end collisions—

(Nods eagerly.)

MR. LANHAM

(Nods.)

So under the circumstances, since he is dead I don't wish any collision, understand?

McGINNIS

(With obvious sincerity.)

Yes, sir. The last thing that my Captain would want would be for Miss Florence to suffer one minute on his account.

MR. LANHAM

I'll send Miss Florence.

(Xs up center. Starts to exit—pause.)

(Xs around R. end of sofa and up R.)

You seem to be the kind of man to be depended upon. Later—if you need a job, I think I could find something for you—

McGINNIS

(With a meaning, Mr. LANHAM doesn't catch.)

I'll probably see you later--

(MR. LANHAM exits up stairs C.)

(Left alone, MCGINNIS looks about the room, crosses to L., dusts shoes with handkerchief. Busy with handkerchief, as he Xs up to C. door and looks off, then takes pocket mirror and fixes his hair, then looks off door R. Returns to C. door, sees FLO coming down the stairs and takes strategic position behind curtains up L., just as FLO enters. She comes in C, looks around, sees no one—but he is in view of the audience all the while. As she appears his face is transformed with longing and love for her. He slips into her view. In front of sofa C. Then she hears him, she turns, gives a wild gasp of amazement, joy, love—starts toward him, coming forward R. C.)

FLO

(She is going toward him eagerly.)

Sam!

MCGINNIS

(His arms outstretched—from the bottom of his soul.)

Flo--

FLO

Why—I—

MCGINNIS

(Front of sofa.)

Sure it's me!

(FLO stops as though struck with a club. For the first time she takes in his appearance. The light goes out of her face. Absorbed in his love and his joy at seeing her MCGINNIS does not notice. He steps over and enfolds her in his arms. She submits without returning his embrace. Her face is up to his—her eyes close defensively. The audience must see her hands held at her sides clenched as she submits to his embrace and kisses. Her action is beyond her control entirely—involuntary. At first he does not realize it in the slightest.)

MCGINNIS

(Holding her tight, kissing her.)

You do fit there, don't you—just like you used to, Mrs. McGinnis.

(Her hands at her side clench.)

FLO

(Faintly.)

Mrs. McGinnis?

MCGINNIS

That's your name, isn't it, darlin'—Mrs. Sam McGinnis—

FLO

(Faintly uncertain.)

Y-e-s, I suppose so—

McGINNIS

Suppose so?

(Laughs.)

Well, there's no doubt in my mind. Why, the last thing I thought when I jumped into that machine gun nest and went down was *you* and you know the first thing I said when I came to in the field hospital—I was lying on my back looking up at the clear sky, and I said—"Why, why, it's just the color of her eyes." And then I passed out again and didn't come to for weeks.

(Pause.)

Aren't you glad to see me?

FLO

(Constrained.)

Ye-es, of course.

McGINNIS

(Lets go her hands, grabs her face and covers it with kisses. She merely submits.)

God! It's great to be alive and back with your girl again!

FLO

You were reported—I thought you were dead.

McGINNIS

Well, you see in the mix-up one of the Fritzie's made a poke with his bayonet and just ripped off my dog tag—it was weeks before I could tell 'em who I was.

FLO

Oh!

McGINNIS

(Laughs.)

I told 'em a lot about you, though!

(Pulling her over in front of couch.)

Why, for three solid weeks, delirious, I was talking about you—why, they never did call me in that hospital anything but Florence's husband—you're famous all over France.

FLO

(Sits end of sofa R. The strain in her voice.)

You should have let me know—you should not have surprised me—you shouldn't have come.

(With a look that takes in his appearance.)

—this way—

McGINNIS

(Her viewpoints striking him for the first time. Sits. Takes her hand.)

I'm sorry—honest—I never thought of it—that way. You see, I tried to establish communication with *Miss Florence Lanham* of the Red Cross because I didn't want them to send you back for marrying over there—and I found out you'd already come back—and then I didn't cable because I thought how much fun it would be to surprise you and I waited to get well and strong because I didn't want my wife's first job to be nursing a half man—

FLO

You are all right again?

MCGINNIS

(Pats her hand.)

Sure!! Didn't I hold you like I had my strength?

(Pause.)

FLO

Nobody here knows I'm married—

MCGINNIS

Then you kept our agreement.

(Takes sofa pillow and sits on it.)

(She nods, a long pause.)

Remember that night, sweetheart, when we marched back from the front to the little village in Repos—I was dirty and tired and ragged and unshaved—didn't look much as I look now, did I?

(Gets out cigar and lights it.)

FLO

(With the bitterness she can't keep out of her tone.)

No, you didn't.

(Pause.)

You were glorious then in your Captain's uniform, with your Croix de Guerre and double citation and everybody crazy about you and the things you had done—you were glorious—then—

(He pays no attention.)

MCGINNIS

You were standing in the door of that little hotel. I turned the corner dead to the world, and then I saw you and you looked at me—just looked at me—and I was walking on air—Flo, do you remember?

FLO

Yes—I remember—

(She is looking straight forward and it begins to come back to her.)

MCGINNIS

And we went out in the moonlight and I started to tell you how ashamed I was for boxing your ears, and you made me show you those foolish medals, and then I can't

tell how or what happened, but the first thing I knew I was holding you tight and telling you—telling you things I didn't know it was in me to say, and you was just looking, with your eyes like great big stars, do you remember?

FLO

Yes—

(With intensity.)

Yes, I remember that night—

MCGINNIS

And when we came back to camp and I told the dominie what we wanted him to do, didn't he rave? It was against orders—it would cost him his job and break me and send you back to the States—my, but the old fellow was hard nosed. Then what you said to him, I'll never forget it!

(Almost solemnly.)

“He's my man and I'm going to him, so you'd better marry us, hadn't you?” You remember?

(Holding her right hand with his right.)

FLO

(Drawing a long breath.)

Yes—

MCGINNIS

And our week in that little village—our honeymoon. One week of perfect joy with the old guns booming up there ahead and men dying and us living as we'll never live again. Do you remember, Flo?

(She nods slowly.)

And the last morning—when I left for the Argonne—you were standing in the same doorway where I saw you the evening I came in, and I marched past at the head of the old F Company, and you stood there looking at me with your eyes big and your face dead white, but trying your damndest to smile—God bless you!

(Patting her hand.)

—And I turned the corner afraid to look back—

FLO

(From the bottom of her heart.)

Oh, if we could only have that time again.

MCGINNIS

That time? What's the matter with this?

(Slaps her on the back.)

(FLO rises suddenly.)

(She looks at him—droops—pause.)

All right to smoke in here?

FLO

Yes.

(She nods.)

McGINNIS

(Blows out smoke, crosses his legs, leans back comfortably in one corner of the divan. She, every sensitive feeling in her outraged by his commonness, the way he smokes—the way he leans back and crosses his legs and his general attitude.)

(He pokes his finger in his right ear. She looks at him, rises quickly, almost involuntarily—he does not rise. Xs to R. of sofa.)

What's wrong?

FLO

Nothing. Nothing that you'd understand.

McGINNIS

(Good humoredly.)

All right—

(She moves U. S. Slightly turns, looking at him—he cannot see her. On her face is all the hopelessness, the tragedy of her dead romance, the realization that from her civilian point of view she is married to a crude, provincial, good-hearted rough-neck, miles beneath her socially.)

McGINNIS

Isn't it great to think we can pick up our lives and carry on just where we left off?

FLO

Can anybody do that?

(Down stage R. end of sofa.)

McGINNIS

Why not? We've only had one week and we've got forty years ahead of us—

FLO

(Down stage.)

(She looks at him—shudders.)

Forty years!

McGINNIS

Oh, by the way—here's something you—you might like—

(Reaches hand in his pocket—pulls out the Distinguished Service Cross—tosses it to her.)

FLO

(Catching it.)

What is it?

McGINNIS

Distinguished Service Cross—gave it to me for the Argonne show—

FLO

(Sits on sofa.)

(With fierce eagerness trying to reconstruct her hero.)

Tell me all about it—how you got it—everything—
(*Almost pathetically.*)

Make it heroic!

McGINNIS

Just like a woman.

(*Shakes his head.*)

FLO

What did you get it for?

McGINNIS

Self-defense.

FLO

(*Sharply.*)

Don't be absurd!

(*Almost pathetically.*)

Tell me everything—Oh, if you could only understand how much I want to make you my hero again.

(*Stops—with look of involuntary distaste.*)

McGINNIS

Well, I told you—self-defense—you see some of those Fritziacs were going to kill me and I killed them first—that's all.

FLO

That was splendid, of course.

(*Hands it back—Rises and X R.*)

And I'm awfully proud that you got it.

McGINNIS

(*A pause—he looks about the room with admiration.*)

You know it's funny to think of your being rich—You never told me anything about your people and over there I thought you were just a poor nobody like myself. If I had realized all this—

(*Indicates room.*)

I don't think I'd have had the nerve.

(*When he begins to realize her snobbishness McGINNIS begins to "pile it on" and broaden his effects to be a little coarser than he really is. At the same time by his acting, over elaboration and side looks at her when she is doing this for effect and really having a little fun with her, at the time not realizing fully how deep her feeling is.*)

FLO

(*With unconscious snobbishness—turning to McGINNIS.*)

The Lanhams have always been what you call "rich"—and the best people—

(*Proudly.*)

My father is the best lawyer in this State—

McGINNIS

(Smiling at her pride.)

Well—my father is the best shoemaker in Racine—

FLO

(With distaste.)

A shoe manufacturer?

McGINNIS

(Rubbing it in.)

Yes—makes 'em all himself by hand and nobody turns out better ones. Look!

(Holds up feet.)

FLO

(In absolute despair.)

A cobbler?

McGINNIS

We'll visit him when we leave here—

FLO

Oh!

(She looks about wildly.)

McGINNIS

He'll be proud of you—he has a cottage, six rooms, right next to his shop—we can rent from him—

(FLO completely overwrought, sinks on chair R. of sofa and bursts into a choking sob.)

(McGINNIS Xs to her. Instantly, when she breaks, his attitude changes. He cannot altogether understand why she is so serious, but he is remorsefully tender. Puts his arm about her.)

(FLO shrinks from him.)

McGINNIS

(Rises—to R. of her.)

I didn't mean to hurt you—why, I wouldn't hurt you for the world—

FLO

I know you wouldn't—knowingly.

McGINNIS

I was just—

(Starts to say "teasing" she cuts in.)

FLO

(Cutting in.)

Oh, Sam, those clothes—that tie—those shoes.

(Points to them.)

McGINNIS

(In amazement.)

You ain't crying over the shoes—these clothes—

(Spreading himself like a peacock.)

Pretty nifty, I thought—

FLO

(Sniffily.)

“Nifty”—yes, I suppose so, pretty “nifty”—and we are going to visit your father, the best cobbler in Racine—and he’ll think they’re pretty “nifty” too—Florence Lanham’s father-in-law, the best cobbler in Racine—

(Laughs hysterically high. He Xs to R. of her.)

MCGINNIS

(A flash of anger shows on his face—then he restrains himself—looks at her with a smile.)

FLO

You’re his son.

MCGINNIS

(With sincere pride and straightforwardness.)

Yes, and I happen to be proud of my father—

(Leaning toward her.)

FLO

(Rises.)

I’m sorry—

(Pause.)

Sam, will you do something for me—just because I want you to?

(Rises.)

MCGINNIS

Of course—

FLO

Will you—will you go back in the army again?

(He looks mutinous.)

MCGINNIS

(Pause—shakes his head.)

I can’t do it—Flo—

FLO

(Pleading.)

But you were a brilliant officer with a great record—the Croix de Guerre, citations—the Distinguished Service Cross—why, you’d go up fast—you’d be some one I could be proud of—you’d be as good as anybody.

MCGINNIS

(Trying to change her mood.)

I never saw an Irishman that wasn’t better than anybody—

FLO

(Pleading. Moves toward MCGINNIS.)

Won’t you—for my sake—it’s our chance of happiness. Sam—

MCGINNIS

(Sincerely.)

I can’t be a quitter, even for you, Flo!

FLO

Quitter!

MCGINNIS

I was a Civilian Soldier and did my bit and now my duty is again as a Civilian. I'm going to become somebody—I'm going to take you away from all this foolishness. I'm going to take you to—

FLO

Racine?

MCGINNIS

If you're my wife you'll go with me to Hell!

FLO

(Turning away—facing audience.)

I'd rather go there than to Racine.

(Cross R.)

MCGINNIS

(Cross to her.)

(Speaks quietly.)

Did anybody ever tell you that you were a snob?

FLO

(Looks at him—quickly justifying herself.)

I'm not a snob—I can't explain it—but it's something—the clothes—it's what they stand for—although when I first came in and saw the clothes, before I saw your face, I thought you were one of the applicants who had come for the butler's place, but it's you, Sam, it's the way you look and act—

(FLO Xs and stops below sofa.)

—something that makes me want to get away when you touch me, Sam.

MCGINNIS

And you're my wife!

(Bows head.)

FLO

(Ashamed of herself but determined.)

I hate myself for it, Sam—but I can't help it. It's been growing since the moment I saw you. Over there we were all trying to do one thing and the bigness of what we were trying to do blotted out all differences and made us one, but over here it's not that way—we belong to different classes. Sam—

(Realizing her tragedy.)

--and I'm afraid they don't mate—

MCGINNIS

(Looking out front—pause—humorously.)

And when I got myself shot to pieces and gassed I thought I was helping to make the world safe for democracy.

FLO

(*Horried at an attack of a fetish.*)

Sam!

McGINNIS

(*Throwing cigar in fire. Crosses to her, she turns R.*)

Yes, Mrs. McGinnis, you're a damned sight worse snob than I took you for.

(*FLO turns to him.*)

—of course, I'm common and vulgar and got no manners—I know it—you've been doing nothing all your life but learning manners. My manners I got from the streets and my education from night school, but I've made a civil engineer of myself and I'm going up. Manners and sensations—that's what you and your kind live on—that's what you went to France for—just to get a new sensation—and you met me. All right, you're my wife, and now I am going to give you another sensation—

(*FLO turns to him.*)

You and I are—

FLO

I can't go through with it, Sam—I just can't.

McGINNIS

You know I worship you, Flo—and you are making me wish *I hadn't come back from France.*

(*Sincerely.*)

FLO

Don't.

(*Pause—turning to him, puts her hands on his arms.*)

Don't you realize it's hard for me, too, Sam? Do you think it's easy for a girl to have all her dreams—shattered? You want me to be honest, don't you? You wouldn't want me to go through with it looking down on you and learning to hate you?

(*Pause while he tries to get her point of view.*)

McGINNIS

Looking down on me? You mean because my father is a cobbler.

(*FLO sits. Pause. Sits on sofa C.*)

(*McGINNIS crosses up C. and down.*)

Abe Lincoln was a rail-splitter but I wouldn't be surprised if some of the haughty beauties who turned him down afterwards regretted it.

(*With lame attempt at humor to hide his heart break.*)

Of course, if dad were a bad cobbler, I would understand it—but—

(*Turning again to her.*)

I'm a civil engineer myself—yes, dad made the money, with

him own hands—that's why I'm proud of him.

(Facing front.)

FLO

Please!

(Pause.)

I didn't say it was that—

McGINNIS

(Turning front.)

You're no "Fly-up-the-creek" so I won't insult you by asking you if you love another man.

FLO

It—it—isn't that.

McGINNIS

(Pause—turning again to her.)

You mean you just don't love me any more?

FLO

Sam—it's—

McGINNIS

That my clothes and my manners have killed it—

FLO

Forgive me—

McGINNIS

Nothing to forgive—feelings are feelings and have rules of their own—only—clothes and manners—

(Pause—shakes his head.)

I thought a woman loved a man because he loved her, because he was a regular fellow and would take care of her and be kind and decent and thoughtful—I guess that only shows how little I knew of women—but clothes and manners—that seems a little thing to quit loving a man for.

(X to her.)

You know, I believe I'd keep on loving you if you—chewed tobacco—

FLO

(Horried, turns to him.)

Chewed tobacco—

McGINNIS

Yes, I'd just begin chewing too, so I wouldn't notice it.

(Xs R. back of table down to the front of sofa. She stands at left end of it, he is R. of her.)

FLO

(Rising.)

That's it—I'm afraid I'll begin chewing tobacco too.

McGINNIS

(Pause—his face suddenly lights.)

(Goes right after her.)

Yes, Mrs. McGinnis, you are a snob, in fact you're about

the funniest, dearest little snob in the world, but I'm damned if I'll admit you don't love me—I'm damned if I'll admit you're that little, and I'm damned if I'll let you admit it either—I've an idea.

FLO

(*Cross to him.*)

What are you going to do?

MCGINNIS

Do? You're a snob—I'll be a snob too!

FLO

WHAT!

MCGINNIS

No—I'll have manners and while I'm learning I'll educate you too. I'm going to give you a little lesson in democracy—

FLO

You mean you are going to learn manners from me?

MCGINNIS

Good Lord, NO! I'll learn 'em from only people who have 'em, the servants.

FLO

The servants? I don't understand—

MCGINNIS

Perfectly simple—I'm going to take that job in this house as butler that seems to be vacant.

FLO

Preposterous! You shan't.

MCGINNIS

Who is going to stop me? Your father promised me a job—

(*She is too horror-stricken to speak.*)

Yes, I'll learn manners and even if you don't learn democracy, a butler husband ought to be a pretty good cure for snobbishness.

FLO

(*Following him, grabs Sam's arm.*)

Sam, you're mad. You can't do a thing like that! You can't and you're not going to—they won't employ you—I won't permit it—

MCGINNIS

(*Turning on her.*)

If you don't want the full story of this marriage to come out—if you don't want your divorce fought to a finish in the open and you know I'll fight to a finish—you'll permit it—where do you think your proud Lanham name would be—do you think there would be such sympathy for a wife who deserted her husband after he was wounded

and had won two decorations?

FLO

That's cowardly.

McGINNIS

Of course, it's cowardly, but I'm fighting for my happiness—I'm fighting for your happiness—I'm fighting to open your eyes—to change you from a poor little snob into the real woman you have it in you to become, and I'll do anything to win because the stake is too big to lose.

(The full force of his determination overcomes her. She realizes he is going through with it and the horror of a public exposure seizes her.)

FLO

(Turns to him.)

You'd make it public?

McGINNIS

(Realizing he has won.)

On the front page of every newspaper.

FLO

(Xs to him C.)

Sam, I'll stick—no matter what I think, I'll stick—let's go away together—I'll go with you anywhere—I'll go to Racine—

McGINNIS

No.

(Shakes his head.)

FLO

Please take me to Racine—I promise—honestly I won't—

McGINNIS

Look down on my father? Oh, that's not what I'm afraid of—

(Confidently.)

I'm afraid he'll look down on you—

FLO

What!

McGINNIS

(Apologetically.)

He's very old fashioned, you know—he wears horn rim spectacles and chews tobacco—I can just see him sitting on his bench working over a shoe—chewing tobacco and looking over his specs at you—

(Xs and sits on left end of sofa—takes book end from table—acts out picture.)

“Yes, Sam, she's a good-looker, all right, and she sure is high falutin'—can she cook? No, Dad. Make clothes? No, Dad. Keep house? No, Dad. Take care of the baby? No, Dad. What are you going to do with her, Son? Put

her in the movies?"

(Rises—Xs to her.)

Then how would I feel? No, I won't take my wife to my father's house that I'd be ashamed of. I'm a snob and I couldn't stand for my wife being looked down on by the best cobbler in Racine.

(Xs down C.)

FLO

You'd be ashamed of me?

MCGINNIS

(Xs back to her.)

Now, don't hit the ceiling, and above all, don't get discouraged. After I've educated you, you'll be all right—Why, I'll make you so I can take you into the poorest house in this land and not be ashamed of you—

(She collapses—beaten.)

FLO

(Sits chair R. of sofa.)

Oh!

(Feeling he has beaten her, MCGINNIS'S attitude changes. He becomes tender, sympathetic, his love showing forth.)

MCGINNIS

(To R. of her chair. Tenderly.)

I wouldn't be so hard, darling—but I have to. You don't know how much I love you.

FLO

It's a queer way of showing it—

MCGINNIS

If I don't make good I won't hold you, I promise.

FLO

(Straightening—anxiously.)

You mean if you can't learn—if you stay as you are—

MCGINNIS

You'll be free—no one knows of our marriage—no one need know—I'll go away quietly—after a time I'll get a divorce or you can get a divorce in some other state. It can all be hushed up and none of your friends need ever know—of your disgrace—

FLO

Your word of honor?

MCGINNIS

Yes—if you play the game fairly—give me a chance—
Is it a go?

(Enter MR. LANHAM R.—FLO X to L.)

(Holds out his hand.)

(She nods as MR. LANHAM enters.)

(MCGINNIS turns to MR. LANHAM.)

(Moving towards MR. LANHAM.)

You said something about a job, sir?

MR. LANHAM

Yes.

MCGINNIS

I was speaking to Miss Lanham—I'd like to try that job as butler—

MR. LANHAM

Butler? You?

(Laughs.)

(MRS. LANHAM and ELIZABETH enter, come down L.

MRS. LANHAM left of sofa, ELIZABETH L. of chair on R.)

MR. LANHAM

Betty, what do you think of this man for butler?

(ELIZABETH laughs.)

MRS. LANHAM

(Sits on sofa L.)

That man? Archibald, don't be ridiculous—

MCGINNIS

Why don't you give me a chance—ma'am? I'll make good, I'm strong enough for the job.

MRS. LANHAM

Being a butler is hardly a question of strength. What's your experience?

MCGINNIS

I was mess sergeant of the Company once. They busted me for busting a fresh cook but I was mess sergeant once, and I've been K. P. lots of times.

MRS. LANHAM

I don't see, Archibald, what put such a ridiculous idea in your head.

MR. LANHAM

Why won't he make a butler? His manners are almost bad enough to be a gentleman—don't you think so, Flo?

FLO

I think—

MCGINNIS

I've been gassed, sir—I ain't fit for heavy work—

MR. LANHAM

That decides it. I'm not going to turn down a soldier.

(Xs to MRS. LANHAM—sits on sofa.)

Besides, Zack Hart is coming down from New York in about a month in connection with the biggest deal we've ever had—and you know how you'd feel entertaining him without a butler—

MRS. LANHAM
I know how I'd feel entertaining him with this kind of a butler.

MR. LANHAM
Nonsense, teach him. Flo, you'll teach him, won't you?
(*Xs to FLO.*)

FLO
All right, Father.
MRS. LANHAM
It's on your head, Archibald.

(*X center.*)
(*To MCGINNIS.*)
What's your name?
MCGINNIS
(*Coming to her.*)
McGinnis, ma'am.

MRS. LANHAM
McGinnis!! While you're here, your name will be "Dodson." I always call my butler "Dodson."

MCGINNIS
"Dodson" it is—ma'am.
MRS. LANHAM
That will do, Dodson. You take him in hand, Florence.
(*MCGINNIS turns to FLO.*)
FLO

(*Embarrassed.*)
Dodson, go to the dining room. Nora, the maid there, will tell you what to do—
MCGINNIS

Yes, miss.
(*Turns, stalks out—a soldier at attention.*)
MRS. LANHAM

(*Critically.*)
He has a figure.
ELIZABETH
(*Looking after MCGINNIS.*)

I bet he'd be wonderful in silk stockings.
MRS. LANHAM
I was thinking of that. He probably has beautiful legs.
(*To FLO.*)

Flo, what do you think of his legs?
MCGINNIS
(*Re-appears at door. To Mr. LANHAM.*)

All right, boss, grub's ready.
(*LANHAM laughs, MRS. LANHAM and ELIZABETH sink back in horror. FLO expression of horror as—*)

CURTAIN FALLS

“CIVILIAN CLOTHES”

ACT II

SCENE—*The Lanham Dining Room—an old-fashioned room with a conservatory opening at the back. The room is seen at an angle, the upper right-hand corner being the deepest point. From there the rear wall into which the conservatory opens, runs at an angle. The conservatory is entered by glass doors. In the extreme right-hand corner of the rear wall is the service door. The right wall, center, has a large handsome fireplace service table of mahogany. The left wall is taken up with double doors entering from the drawing room and a large old-fashioned mahogany sideboard.*

In the center parallel with the rear wall, an oval mahogany table of old design. The table is laid for a dinner of ten. The furniture of the room is mahogany and on the walls are portraits of the Lanham ancestors. The whole effect of the room is heavy, old-fashioned, rich.

TIME—*Just before dinner—a month later than events in ACT I.*

DISCOVERED—*At the rise—FLORENCE and MRS. LANHAM are inspecting the table. Both are dressed for dinner.*

McGINNIS—*wearing black dress coat, with brass buttons, striped vest, satin knicks and silk stockings, enters R., takes tray with wine bottle from serving table R. and crosses L. and places same on sideboard.*

MRS. LANHAM

Yes, Dodson—I think the table looks quite well.

McGINNIS

(In carriage, speech, manner, he has become the model butler.)

Thank you, Madam.

MRS. LANHAM

I left my lorgnette—

McGINNIS

Here, Madam.

(Gets it from sideboard.)

MRS. LANHAM

Now bring me the cards and I'll place them—I left them—

(Stops.)

McGINNIS

On the desk in the library, Madam.

MRS. LANHAM

Yes, of course—that's it—

(McGINNIS bows, and exits left.)

MRS. LANHAM

(With joy.)

I don't know how I ever got along without that man! In one month Dodson has become the best butler I ever had—

(Crosses to right.)

FLO

But suppose I don't like him?

MRS. LANHAM

Then, my dear, you had better marry Billy, and have your own establishment—

MR. LANHAM

(Enters L., goes back of table.)

How's your table, Betty?

MRS. LANHAM

Everything will be all right if your daughter will let me alone.

(Up above table.)

MR. LANHAM

Florence, how many times have I told you not to bully your poor weak mother?

FLO

It was just a simple thing.

MRS. LANHAM

Simple! She'd like me to discharge Dodson.

(Left of table.)

MR. LANHAM

Discharge Dodson!

(Whistles—shakes head.)

Oh, Florence?

(X. D. R.)

FLO

But I just can't stand the man.

MRS. LANHAM

(Sternly.)

Florence! Don't let me ever hear you speak that way again. Remember there is but one man a well-bred woman just can't stand.

(Crosses right.)

MR. LANHAM

(To FLORENCE.)

Yes, dear—her husband.

(Crosses below table to L., then up above table.)

FLO

Oh, er—a—

(MCGINNIS re-enters.)

MCGINNIS

The cards, Madam—

(Hands her cards—she moves over to table to place them.)

MR. LANHAM

Remember, Betty, this dinner must be a success. Zack Hart has come down to talk over some very important business. It means a lot to all of us.

MRS. LANHAM

I don't think that I've ever failed you socially, Archibald.

MR. LANHAM

No, my dear, you never have—socially.

FLO

How are you going to place them, Mother?

(Rises—Xs to table.)

MRS. LANHAM

Oh, Billy will be next you.

(Places cards—sets herself at lower end of table D. C.)

My place—Mr. Hart on my right.

MR. LANHAM

Then Florence.

MRS. LANHAM

Nonsense—I'll put Billy on my left—then Florence.

MR. LANHAM

But who is next Hart?

MRS. LANHAM

Archibald, if you wish to arrange the table.

MR. LANHAM

Not at all—

MRS. LANHAM

Dodson, place Mrs. Smythe—next to Mr. Hart—

MR. LANHAM

But—

(Ys to MRS. LANHAM down C.)

MRS. LANHAM

New York men like widows—they know more—or at least—can afford to admit it—

MR. LANHAM

Hart wants to talk business.

FLO

Well, he can't talk business too fast for Margie. She eloped with her first husband when she hadn't known him a week.

MR. LANHAM

Oh, very well—fix it to suit yourselves.

(Stalks out L.)

MRS. LANHAM

I'll place Elizabeth on your father's left and Bess on his right. She's utterly insipid. That will leave his mind clear for his business. Dodson, put Mr. Rutherford between Miss Florence and Miss Henderson—and General McInerny opposite—ah, that's settles—now, have the fire started properly and look at the candles in the living room.

(Starts out L.)

FLO

I'll see if the cocktails are just as Daddy likes them.

(Starts to R.)

MCGINNIS

I've already fixed the cocktails, Miss—

MRS. LANHAM

(At door L.)

And Dodson—

MCGINNIS

Yes, Madam—the glasses are to be kept full—particularly Mr. Hart's.

MRS. LANHAM

Exactly—and those special hickory logs for the fire.

MCGINNIS

Selected them myself, Madam. Anything else, Madam?

MRS. LANHAM

N-O—if there is I'm sure you'll think of it.

(Exits.)

MCGINNIS

Will you try a cocktail, Miss?

FLO

No.

MCGINNIS

Yes, Miss.

(FLO X L.)

(Goes to serving table and brings down a cocktail on tray.)

Cocktail, Miss?

FLO

No.

MCGINNIS

(Drinks cocktail.)

Thank you, Miss.

(She turns away from him—puts down the glass on tray and returns same to serving table.)

FLO

(Turns back with determination.)

Sam, I want to talk to you.

McGINNIS

(Stops, arranges the logs on the fire, rises, facing her.)
(X to FLO.)

Yes, Miss.

(His attitude is perfectly respectful—perfectly unemotional.)

(When she is looking at him but behind it lies the humor of the strong man playing with a child. Only when she isn't looking he must show his heart break—the love—the longing and the passion of a man making a desperate fight for his happiness. He must “put it over” by gesture, by attitude, by facial expression, and do this only when she is not looking.)

FLO

(L.)

Sam, I can't stand this one minute longer.

McGINNIS

Yes, Miss.

FLO

Will you stop that nonsense and be human.

McGINNIS

Yes, Miss.

FLO

Don't say “Miss” to me again!

McGINNIS

Yes, M—

(Catches himself guiltily.)

FLO

(A pause.)

Will you do something for me?

McGINNIS

Butling under your mother is doing a good deal for you—

FLO

I mean something else—

McGINNIS

Chauffeur or Chef?

FLO

Sam, I want you to give up this place—

McGINNIS

(With affected horror.)

Stop butling—Oh, Flo!

FLO

(In horror.)

I'm not laughing.

McGINNIS

No, you are positively heartless. Stop butling when I'm learning manners so fast—when meals are so regular and you meet so many nice people—that's the way—No matter what a man's dreams may be—he can always depend on his wife to wreck them.

FLO

You don't mean that permanently—you—would—

MCGINNIS

Why not? It is an ancient and an honorable profession.

FLO

I do believe you have the soul of a servant.

(Turns away from him.)

MCGINNIS

I've the job of a butler, Miss—I am a married man—I have to look into the future.

(She Xs angrily to left.)

So far it has been quite amusing—and—er—lucrative. In case, Miss, you should need a new hat or even a fur coat, it is not above our means—Mr. Rutherford, General McInerny, and particularly Mr. Arkwright have all been most generous.

FLO

You mean you've taken tips?

(Xs back of him.)

MCGINNIS

Taken them? I've held them up—

(Beams on her.)

FLO

That decides it! I'm going to divorce you!

MCGINNIS

Yes, Miss.

FLO

(Hysterical.)

I tell him I'll divorce him and he says, "Yes, Miss."

(Crosses to L. Near the end of her rope.)

MCGINNIS

(With perfect respect.)

I hope you'll do nothing hasty, Miss—Mrs. Lanham is very conservative—a scandal might cost me my place.

FLO

(Laughs—almost hysterically.)

Ha—

(Xs back to L. of table.)

MCGINNIS

You were to test the cocktails, Miss—Better let me get you one. If I may suggest, they are always helpful.

FLO

Very well—

(*X to C.*)

(MCGINNIS *Xs up side table.* FLO *below table stands watching him. He brings her a cocktail, she drinks it hastily. Pause—laughs.*)

You can mix a cocktail.

MCGINNIS

Very sweet of you to say so, Miss—

(*Takes glass, puts it down on sideboard.*)

FLO

I could have stood everything—everything but this—don't you see the position you've gotten me into? Oh, if I'd only had the courage to face the notoriety—the unpleasantness—then—

MCGINNIS

(*X to her.*)

Yes, Miss—I was afraid you would then—when you didn't it was most encouraging—

FLO

(*Almost in tears.*)

I thought you'd be an utter failure—a joke and they would get rid of you immediately.

MCGINNIS

Only you forgot my army training.

FLO

(*Crosses R. to him.*)

How could the Army train you to be a butler?

MCGINNIS

Whenever he saw the General my Colonel was a perfect butler—

FLO

And now to make it worse you've taken tips—from my friends—and you're my husband—

(*Sits.*)

MCGINNIS

(*Hastily to justify himself.*)

But I assure you I'm not holding out—you're in on it—

FLO

What! Oh!

MCGINNIS

(*Produces book.*)

Here's the record—it's all for you—a new friend of mine who is in the barber business explained it to me—'All tips go to the old woman.'

(*Rises.*)

FLO

Give them to me—every cent at once—

(Puts hand out.)

McGINNIS

(Suspiciously.)

I might have known—it—what are you going to do with them?

FLO

I shall return every penny.

McGINNIS

And explain they were collected by your husband?

FLO

Oh! I—

McGINNIS

Of course, you can't—Guess I'd better keep this—you might do something foolish—and then we wouldn't have any money to go away on our second honeymoon.

FLO

(Aghast.)

Honeymoon?

McGINNIS

Yes, quite an idea—don't you think—to have your wife's lovers pay for your honeymoon? I should be able to pick up quite a bit to-night.

FLO

(Stamps foot.)

Don't you dare to take another cent from those gentlemen—

McGINNIS

Oh, I say—have a heart, Miss—If they are making love to my wife, I ought to get something out of it.

FLO

(Angrily.)

They're not making love to me—

(Turns away from SAM.)

McGINNIS

Then they're certainly wasting their money.

FLO

(Pause.)

(Weakening.)

What—what makes you think they're making love to me?

McGINNIS

I ought to say—because no man could help it—but the truth is, Tuesday when I came into the room for the third time in ten minutes Mr. Arkwright slipped a twenty dollar gold piece—and that's how I knew, Mrs. McGinnis.

FLO

(Turning around to him.)

Oh!

McGINNIS

That's what I said, "Oh, thank you, sir—

(Bowing.)

I'll get something pretty for my wife"—sort of, you know, give him a show for his money.

FLO

That's outrageous.

McGINNIS

Now, Mrs. McGinnis—

FLO

(Stamping her foot.)

Don't call me "Mrs. McGinnis"—

McGINNIS

Yes, Miss, certainly, Miss—only don't get yourself all ruffled up—it's not becoming—no credit to me for standing back and giving all these fellows a show, if you don't look good, you know.

(She smiles.)

There, that's better, now you look good enough for any husband—to give away.

(Xs to right.)

FLO

(Forcing her sense of humor to her rescue.)

I'd like to box your ears—

McGINNIS

(Goes to her.)

I dare you—you haven't the nerve.

FLO

I haven't—

(FLO on sudden impulse slaps him soundly.)

McGINNIS

(Grabs her arm.)

Good, that's the most democratic thing you've done yet—It's the first step—

FLO

To divorce—

McGINNIS

No, to love and happiness and here's your reward—

(Suddenly seizes her—holds her close to him.)

I'm just showing you I could—I'm not kissing you—you see—

(He goes R., she L.)

(Releases her and laughs.)

FLO

(Who had already closed her eyes and set her mouth ecstatically expecting to be kissed against her will—with rage and disappointment—X back and forth. Coming towards him.)

I hate you—Da—!

MCGINNIS

Tut—tut—tut—

(R. below table, moves toward her.)

Careful—the next thing you'll forget you're a lady—and then what would Mr. Rutherford and the General and Mr. Arkwright say? Taking those poor fellows' money and then making you fall in love with your own husband—

FLO

That settles it—Now, I wouldn't go back to you if you were the last man on earth.

MCGINNIS

The last man on earth—you wouldn't have a chance—

FLO

Indeed!

MCGINNIS

Yes, indeed—there'd be millions of women—tall ones and short ones, fat ones and thin ones—ugly ones and pretty ones, blondes and brunettes, washwomen and ladies, too, and there I'd be standing with my arms folded, observing the awful tragedy—

(Stands with pose.)

Go to it, Girls—may the best looker win! Oh, no, my dear, you wouldn't have a chance—

(Crosses R. towards door.)

FLO

(L. lower end of table. Suddenly breaks, sits, half sobs. Impulsively he starts towards her, all sorrow, love and sympathy. She does not see.)

That shows what you really think of me. You'd rather have some other woman—

(She sinks into chair.)

MCGINNIS

I didn't say that.

(Goes to her. He is behind, almost ready to take her in his arms.)

FLO

You did! Now, if you're a gentleman you'll give me cause for divorce. Any gentleman would.

(MCGINNIS catches himself shrewdly.)

MCGINNIS

Of course, most gentlemen would long ago, but you see I'm a butler and butlers are essentially moral.

FLO

(Exasperated.)

Oh!

MCGINNIS

I don't see what you have to complain of. Your husband

is liberal enough—let's you play with the handsome, perfumed Mr. Rutherford.

FLO

Perfume! Don't be ridiculous—no gentleman uses perfume. I wouldn't speak to a man who used perfume.

McGINNIS

And General McInerny with his interesting war reminiscences—

FLO

Tiresome old stories! If I have to listen to another I'll scream.

McGINNIS

And Billy Arkwright, the caveman—

FLO

Mr. Arkwright is a gentleman—besides he'd be ridiculous that way.

McGINNIS

Yes, I think he would—
(*Goes R.*)

FLO

You intend to force me to do something desperate—

McGINNIS

Desperate? You?
(*X back to her.*)
(*Laughs.*)

Why, you couldn't do anything desperate—you're too afraid of Mrs. Grundy. You were born conventionally—you'll die conventionally. If you are divorced, you'll be divorced conventionally. The only unconventional thing you ever did you're ashamed of—even though it brought you the greatest happiness in life.

FLO

Happiness?

McGINNIS

(*Bending over her.*)

Yes, happiness—one week of perfect joy. The one thing you can't forget—the one thing you want to remember.

FLO

You're right. I can't forget it. I wish I could, because—

McGINNIS

Because you love me—

FLO

(*Rises.*)

No—because I love another man.

(*She expects a jealous outburst. Instead McGINNIS claps his hands with enthusiasm.*)

McGINNIS

Good—splendid!
(Claps hands.)

FLO
Then you'll help me to be free.
MCGINNIS
Help you to be free? No—I love you.

FLO
Just because I love another man.
MCGINNIS

No—because my plan is working. Don't you see you are losing your snobbishness? The veneer is peeling off—I'm making you over again into what you were—the girl I knew in France. Soon you'll have the courage to obey your impulse, to follow your heart.

FLO
(In tone of inspiration.)
I believe you're right—I feel it—I do believe you're right—

MCGINNIS
I know I'm right and when you've gained the courage to follow your heart—then—

FLO
Yes, then, I'll elope with the other man.

MCGINNIS
(Struck dumb.)
Huh!

FLO
(Crosses towards door L. At door.)
Thank you—you've shown me myself—I can never thank you enough.

(Exit.)
(NORA enters R. E.)
NORA

Hey.
(MCGINNIS starts.)

Lord Algernon.
MCGINNIS
What is it, Nora?

NORA
Too proud to answer the front door bell?
MCGINNIS

Bell?
NORA
Yes—Bell—B-E-double L.

MCGINNIS
Have all the guests arrived?

NORA
Yes, I just let Mr. Rutherford in—He's the last one.

(She begins placing plates containing caviar on table.)

McGINNIS

Well, I'll serve the cocktails.

(Exit R.)

NORA

I always knew when we got a butler I'd have twice as much work to do—me own and the butler's.

(McGINNIS enters—and exits L. I. E. with cocktails.)

NORA

(As SAM enters.)

Cocktails, sure only the rich can afford them nowadays.

McGINNIS

Oh, I don't know.

NORA

Sure, you don't, you mix 'em.

(SAM exits.)

NORA

UPSTART!

(RUTHERFORD enters from conservatory in overcoat and hat—looks around cautiously.)

RUTHERFORD

Dodson!

NORA

What is it, sir?

RUTHERFORD

I want to see Dodson, Nora—

NORA

(Gets plates from tray on side table and places them on table.)

He is in the drawing room serving the cocktails—You'd better hurry and leave your coat and hat upstairs.

RUTHERFORD

Never mind the coat and hat, Nora, I'll leave them out in the conservatory with the daffodils—

NORA

You can suit yourself, sir, but you'd better hurry.

(Exit.)

RUTHERFORD

All right, Nora.

(RUTHERFORD starts up as though to exit through conservatory. McGINNIS enters L. I. E. and starts across to R. E.—RUTHERFORD comes down R. to McGINNIS.)

RUTHERFORD

Dodson!

McGINNIS

Yes, sir!

(RUTHERFORD exits and closes the door L.)

RUTHERFORD

(Comes to MCGINNIS.)

Just a second, Dodson—I want to see you privately before I go into the drawing room—

MCGINNIS

Yes, sir—

RUTHERFORD

Dodson, YOU'VE given me some very good tips.

MCGINNIS

Yes, sir, it's been mutual.

RUTHERFORD

The arrangement can continue.

MCGINNIS

Thank you, sir.

(Pause.)

RUTHERFORD

Well?

MCGINNIS

(Pause.)

Do you use perfume, sir?

RUTHERFORD

No—of course—not.

MCGINNIS

That's a pity.

RUTHERFORD

WHY?

MCGINNIS

Miss Lanham was talking about that very thing just a few minutes ago.

RUTHERFORD

(Amazed.)

She likes a man to use perfume? Astonishing!

MCGINNIS

From what she said, sir—it would settle things between you definitely—

RUTHERFORD

I wonder where I—

MCGINNIS

There's some very nice strong perfume upstairs in the bathroom adjoining the room where your coat is, sir.

RUTHERFORD

Thanks, that is a tip worth having—

(Gives bill to MCGINNIS.)

MCGINNIS

So is this, sir—Thank you—I'll give this to my wife—

RUTHERFORD

(Going to door.)

Dodson, I'll come back after dinner smelling like a rose—
(*Exits up 1. C.*)

(*The GENERAL enters L. Comes to MCGINNIS down C.*)

MCGINNIS

Something I can do for you, sir?

GENERAL

(*Pause.*)

Dodson, I don't like using you as—

(*Looks around.*)

MCGINNIS

All Generals use an Intelligence Department, sir—

GENERAL

(*Pause.*)

Er—yes—Anything to report?

MCGINNIS

Yes, sir—I heard her speak of you to-night with a great deal of feeling—

GENERAL

Indeed!

MCGINNIS

Yes, sir—particularly your stories—She thinks they're wonderful; if you could tell one at dinner, a long one—heroic!

GENERAL

Dodson, I'll do it—

MCGINNIS

I'm sure it will get results—

(*GENERAL hands him a bill.*)

Oh, thank you, sir, I'll give this to my wife—

(*GENERAL exits L. I. E.*)

GENERAL

Dodson, I'll tell her a long one—

(*Exits.*)

(*BILLY enters from conservatory with cocktail glass in his hand.*)

BILLY

(*Comes to MCGINNIS.*)

Oh, Dodson!

MCGINNIS

(*Sees glass in BILLY's hand.*)

Did you have your cocktail, sir?

BILLY

Yes, my own and two that were left by the prohibitionists—

MCGINNIS

Will you have a glass of water, sir?

BILLY

Water, hell, no—whiskey—

McGINNIS

(Goes to serving table up R., comes down with bottle and glass pouring whiskey.)

Yes, sir. Was that all right, sir?

BILLY

No, just half—

(SAM pours a second drink. Pause—glass in hand.)

This is for courage, need a lot of courage to-night—

McGINNIS

Yes, sir.

(McGINNIS takes glass and tray back to serving table.)

BILLY

(At R. of McGINNIS.)

Dodson, I want to see Miss Lanham to-night very particularly—privately.

McGINNIS

Yes, sir.

BILLY

Whatever I am, see I'm not disturbed.

McGINNIS

Yes, sir.

(Crosses to C. of table.)

BILLY

(Crosses to McGINNIS.)

(Pause.)

Dodson, you a married man?

McGINNIS

Yes, sir.

BILLY

(Pause.)

Dodson, how do you make your wife do something when you want her to?

McGINNIS

I don't think I understand, sir—

BILLY

Course, your wife's different class—but you know Kipling—great man Kipling. Judy O'Grady, Colonel's lady—all women the same—

McGINNIS

Oh, I see, sir—well—I treat my wife rough—

BILLY

Treat her rough?

(Pause.)

Can't treat a lady rough—

McGINNIS

Did you ever try it, sir?

BILLY

N-o—

(Pause.)

Colonel's lady—Judy O'Grady—Kipling—great man, he ought to know—you say treat them rough?

McGINNIS

Yes, sir—

BILLY

(With wise air. As he runs and Yes to door C.)

Watch me—

McGINNIS

I will, sir—carefully—

BILLY

(Crosses left to door.)

Oh, treat 'em rough—treat 'em rough.

McGINNIS

I beg pardon, sir—is that all?

BILLY

Yes.

(Pulls out bill—hands it to McGINNIS.)

OH!

McGINNIS

I'll give this to my wife—

BILLY

(Starts L.)

Treat 'em rough—Treat 'em rough.

(Crosses left and exits. Walks out with great deal of dignity.)

(NORA enters R. I. E.)

NORA

The dinner's ready and the cook says the things will spoil—

McGINNIS

All right, Nora—I'll hand them in.

(NORA exits R. I. E.)

(McGINNIS opens doors. Through the open door the furnishings of the drawing room can be seen. As the door opens the chatter of voices in animated conversation—a slight pause, then the guests come through the doors into the dining room. McGINNIS follows, closes the door. As they come in all are talking. Those entering are—MRS. LANHAM, ZACK HART, MRS. MARGARET SMYTHE, GENERAL McINERNEY, BILLY ARKWRIGHT, FLORENCE LANHAM, MRS. BESSIE HENDERSON, JACK RUTHERFORD, ELIZABETH LANHAM and MR. LANHAM.)

(ZACK HART is a man who started from nothing and at fifty is a big figure in finance. He is above medium height, rather heavy, with a bulldog face, redeemed

by keen, shrewd eyes that one minute look through one and the next twinkle with humor. He has the mental snap of the man used to quick decisions, but the quite deliberate movements of a big man assured of his position and his ability. His is the snobbishness of ability and his success has been largely due to his ability to know and pick winners among men. That is his hobby.)

(MCGINNIS is left opposite FLO's place at table, picks up BILLY's card—says—)

MCGINNIS

Billy Arkwright!

(Then picks up FLO's card, saying—)

This way, Miss Lanham!

(Goes to table, picks up MRS. SMYTHE's card, then along to MISS ELIZABETH LANHAM, puts MRS. SMYTHE's card there, picks up ELIZABETH's card, places it next to BILLY's. MISS ELIZABETH LANHAM that ought to help some. MRS. MARGARET SMYTHE is close to thirty but looks five years younger. She is rather tall, full-blooded, without being fat. That may come later, but now she is at the most attractive period of her life. She is a smart, well-gowned, daring, passionate woman, without illusions. She married frankly for money the first time and now being free feels the desire and the need of marrying again the right man, and she will do it.)

(BESSIE HENDERSON is just a pretty girl like a million other pretty girls of the same birth and upbringing.)

GENERAL

(As he enters.)

And that was the finish of the story—

MRS. LANHAM

(With conventional laugh.)

Most amusing.

(The others laugh.)

(Hiding a bored yawn.)

Oh, I just adore your stories, General, don't you, Billy?

BILLY

Well, when I was in France under the General, I heard a great many—

FLO

I'm sure you enjoyed them all?

(BILLY looks at her—makes a face.)

BILLY

The younger officers always enjoy the General's stories—
It's the custom in the Army—

FLO

(Quickly.)
You're on mother's left, Billy?

BILLY

(Low.)
Next to you?

FLO

(Affectionately.)
Of course, silly—

MRS. LANHAM

(Hastily.)
Will you take this place on my right, Mr. Hart?
(He bows.)

MRS. SMYTHE

Oh, I'm next to you?
(To HART, delighted.)

HART

YOU'VE been next to me from the moment I saw you—
(Holds out her chair.)

MRS. SMYTHE

I hate frank men—they are always such liars—

HART

(Bending low and looking at her card.)
Just for that you shan't sit by me—

MRS. SMYTHE

Indeed—the hostess generally arranges that—

HART

Yes—read it.

(ELIZABETH walks around table looking for her place. Indicates card. On the other side BILLY holding out chair for FLO.)

McGINNIS

(In low tone.)
Excuse me, Miss Lanham, you're on the other side—

FLO

But I fixed it myself—

McGINNIS

On the other side, Miss Lanham—this card says “Miss Elizabeth Lanham.”

HART

You're over here by me, Miss Lanham.

FLO

Yes, Oh, yes, isn't that jolly!!
(Starts around table. Low to McGINNIS.)

You dared to mix those cards?

McGINNIS

Yes, Miss—

GENERAL

Here you are and I was afraid I was going to lose you.

(Holds out chair on his right.)

MRS. LANHAM

(As the women straighten themselves out, to McGINNIS.)

Who mixed the cards? Dodson?

McGINNIS

You placed them, Madam—

MRS. LANHAM

Why, why, of course, how careless—next time you place them—

McGINNIS

Yes, Madam.

MRS. LANHAM

You know you aren't placed at all as I arranged you.

MR. LANHAM

Don't worry—this is splendid, Betty.

MRS. SMYTHE

And if it isn't as you want it why not make it progressive?

MR. LANHAM

Oh, I say—

OTHERS

Yes, yes, make it progressive.

FLO

Precisely. The ladies will move to the left after every course.

(Look at McGINNIS as she says it.)

OTHERS

(Led by BILLY.)

Yes, yes—

ELIZABETH

I have never found *my* place.

BILLY

Here.

(Holds out chair for her. They are now seated. MRS. LANHAM at the foot of the table nearest the front, HART on her right, then in order—FLORENCE, GENERAL MC-INERNEY, MRS. SMYTHE. MR. LANHAM, BELLE HENDERSON, RUTHERFORD, ELIZABETH LANHAM and BILLY. When they are finally seated there comes that deadly pause that always follows the seating of a party. Cough from HART, and then from BILLY.)

BILLY

The zero hour!

(Immediately all begin chattering violently.)

ALL—AD LIB.

Pleasant day—have you ever known such weather as we are having this winter? Yes, indeed, I think they should let the soldiers out sooner. Oh, well, you know, Baker, I'm a Bolshevik myself.

MRS. SMYTHE

(*As SAM exits L.*)

(*To MRS. LANHAM.*)

You know, you have one thing in your house I would like to steal—

MRS. LANHAM

Just one thing, Margaret, what is it?

MRS. SMYTHE

Your butler.

FLO

The butler—why, Margie!

MRS. SMYTHE

Well, if I had him there's only one thing I'd be afraid of—some one of my guests would elope with him.

FLO

Margie, are you serious?

MRS. SMYTHE

The best looking thing I've seen. Just think of marching into a ballroom with a thing like that.

MR. LANHAM

(*Low.*)

I'll tell you a secret—I foresee a series of dinners just to show Dodson off—this is his *début*—

MRS. LANHAM

Sh—Archibald—

(*MCGINNIS and NORA begin removing the oyster plates.*)

HART

(*Who has been talking low to FLO.*)

Oh, yes, your father is in on it—you see we have the rights to a very valuable railroad in South America—have to build it of course. Just waiting to begin work when we can secure the proper man to put it through—just think of it—millions! Waiting on the an—

GENERAL

Should have thought you'd gotten the man almost first.

HART

We had him first, but German efficiency spoiled him—

BILLY

How?

HART

Belleau Wood.

FLO

And now—

HART

We have to find another engineer.

(MCGINNIS re-enters, looks at HART sharply. HART, without paying particular attention has been keeping an eye on MCGINNIS.)

FLO

Civil Engineer—why, there must be lots of them—

HART

Yes, thousands, but the man we want can't be just a civil engineer—he must be a leader of men—diplomat and a two-fisted scrapper besides—one in a thousand—it is a thousand to one against him—

BILLY

I thought this was a progressive dinner.

MRS. LANHAM

So it is.

(Rises.)

Gentlemen, please remain seated. Ladies, change.

(The ladies arise, MCGINNIS and NORA are removing the caviar plates and beginning to bring the soup.)

FLO

I am just going to the other side, you know—

BELLE

There you are, General.

MRS. SMYTHE

Now I'm where I want to be.

HART

Oh, there you are—

MRS. SMYTHE

You can't lose me—

(All ladies move to the left, FLO taking the place at the foot of the table between BILLY and HART. As soon as FLO is seated BILLY reaches over with his right hand, takes her left hand under the table.)

BILLY

(Low—ardently.)

Thought you'd never get here!

FLO

(Softly.)

Silly—

MCGINNIS

(At R. of BILLY.)

Please, sir?

(FLO looks up, catches MCGINNIS's eye, looks at him defiantly, and does not take her hand from BILLY.)

(BILLY tries to take the bread with his left hand, MC-

GINNIS *adroitly moves the bread so he can't get it.*)

McGINNIS

(Low.)

Beg pardon, sir, hadn't you better use your right hand, sir—

BILLY

Huh!

(Sulkily drops FLO's hand, takes piece of bread, puts his hand back to FLO's hand again, McGINNIS stops in between and as BILLY reaches for FLO's hand, McGINNIS drops a napkin, catches his hand in his and gives it a crushing squeeze.)

BILLY

Oueh!

McGINNIS

(With great dignity.)

Pardon me, that's my hand—you squeezed.

MRS. SMYTHE

Tough luck, Billy—

HART

(To FLO holding out hand.)

May I offer mine?

(The others laugh.)

BELLE

Congratulations! When are you going to announce it?

FLO

Nonsense! Billy was not holding my hand!

(Holds her two hands above the table.)

McGINNIS

Bread, miss?

FLO

No.

(McGINNIS exits.)

MRS. SMYTHE

I wouldn't dare put my hand under the table now!

(BILLY has reached over and taken FLO's hand again and is whispering to her. FLO is perfectly brazen in her encouragement of BILLY.)

McGINNIS

Telephone, Mr. Arkwright—

BILLY

Huh—oh, telephone—

(Turns to MRS. LANHAM.)

If you'll excuse me—

(He rises—exits left. FLO looks at McGINNIS, showing that she doesn't believe the telephone message.)

McGINNIS

You wish something, miss?

FLO

Nothing that you can give me—

MRS. SMYTHE

(*Who has been talking to HART.*)

But why haven't you ever been married?

HART

(*In voice of tragic actor.*)

It is a long and tragic story.

(*MRS. SMYTHE beats on the table.*)

MRS. SMYTHE

Listen—listen—everybody hear the Hart tragedy—

OTHERS

Hear—hear—

HART

Once I was young, poor and in love—

MRS. SMYTHE

Something familiar about that start—

OTHERS

Sh—please.

HART

She was the prettiest girl in our town and her father was the biggest banker—

MRS. SMYTHE

I knew I had heard it before—

OTHERS

Sh—

HART

He intended his daughter for the son of the second largest banker—then they would consolidate the banks and live happy ever after on other people's money—

MRS. SMYTHE

George Ade—

ALL

Sh!

HART

I wish you wouldn't let your jealousy crop out—

OTHERS

Go on, Mr. Hart!

HART

I went away to make my fortune, but I came back whenever I could borrow the price. One frightfully hot summer day I came back to see her—*my fat was a hot day!* On my way from the station, I stopped at the florist and sent her flowers with my card. When I got to the hotel, I learned her father was dead and I was particularly glad I'd sent her the flowers. They were putting papa away

that afternoon.

MRS. SMYTHE

I don't see the tragedy—

(MCGINNIS *with bottle stands L. C. L. above him.*)

HART

Now comes the tragedy—my flowers got there O. K., so did a hundred others—the son of the second largest banker put my flowers on papa and took the card to her mother—“From Jack Hart,” he told her. “He’s a nice boy,” she said, “I have always liked him.” “Read the card”—and to the assembled grief-stricken family he read the card I had sent with the flowers that now reposed on papa’s chest. I had written “Just a little something to help you through the heat.”

(GENERAL *laughs.*)

(MCGINNIS *comes down, pours wine, refills glass.*)

MRS. SMYTHE

And the girl?

HART

The next week they consolidated the banks—

(All *laugh.*)

BILLY

(*Enters.*)

Nobody wanted me on the phone.

(*Sits in his place.*)

FLO

(*To MCGINNIS.*)

Did any one want Mr. Arkwright on the phone?

MCGINNIS

Yes, miss, a man.

(*Wine.*)

(MCGINNIS *fills BILLY’S glass and all through his dinner he is careful to keep it filled. BILLY empties it rapidly and gradually shows some effect.*)

FLO

(*Turns to HART.*)

You know what you said about your railroad interested me lots. Is dad in with you?

HART

Yes, that’s why I’m down here—

FLO

What would you give for the right man to put it through?

(MCGINNIS *Yes back to table filling wine glasses.*)

HART

Almost any salary in reason.

FLO

Suppose I found that man?

HART

WHICH one of your lovers do you want to get rid of?

FLO

Nonsense.

HART

There's some chance for the man not coming back—fever—natives—the rough-necks he'll have to handle—

FLO

Sometimes I'm afraid the man I have in mind can handle—anything.

(Looks at MCGINNIS who hears her lines.)

HART

You?

FLO

(Her head coming up.)

No!

HART

Huh! if he couldn't handle a little job like that I don't want him.

FLO

Oh!

HART

(To MR. LANHAM.)

Miss Lanham and I were just speaking of a man for our project—

MR. LANHAM

I'm afraid the man Flo selected wouldn't have quite the manners for that job.

FLO

Oh, yes, he has—just manners—

(NORA enters with soup.)

GENERAL

There was a Captain in my Division—didn't know him—but he would have been just the man for you—on the D. D. C., named McGinnis—

(MCGINNIS starts up the R.)

MR. LANHAM

McGinnis—why that's the real name of our butler—

(All look at MCGINNIS.)

McGinnis, what was your rank in the Army?

MCGINNIS

(Coming down to R. of MR. LANHAM.)

Buck private, sir, but I know Captain McGinnis by sight, same regiment—

(FLO sinks back relieved.)

OTHERS

(Disappointed.)

Oh!

MRS. SMYTHE

Oh, I am so disappointed—I hoped that he was Captain McGinnis. Wouldn't it have been dramatic!

HART

Yes, wouldn't it, Miss Lanham?

(Mockingly.)

FLO

Yes, wouldn't it? But things like that only happen on the stage—

(She looks him right in the eye and they both smile challengingly.)

MRS. LANHAM

Tell us about Captain McGinnis, General—

GENERAL

(Rising.)

Certainly, if Miss Lanham would like to hear it.

FLO

I'd be delighted.

ALL

(Clapping hands and "Speech, Stand up, etc.")

GENERAL

(Rising.)

It happened in the Argonne—McGinnis came up there in command of a company of Doughboys—he'd been cited for gallantry at San Mihiel, but under a cloud—

(FLO is sitting very tense in her chair watching MCGINNIS and he, the General. MCGINNIS stands behind MRS. LANHAM where she is bound to see him.)

FLO

(Almost under her breath.)

Under a cloud?

GENERAL

Yes, an affair of a woman. Anyway, it all happened at some little village where he was in repose between San Mihiel and the Argonne, but what ever he did there, he redeemed himself gloriously. We had to make five stabs before we got through, you know. The Huns held us four times in spite of all we could do. The time of the fifth attack Mr. McGinnis's company was down to sixty men—he was cut off—quarter of a mile ahead of any other troops. Three times he crawled back himself and carried up supplies and ammunition. One nest of machine guns enfiladed him and played the devil with the men. They couldn't go forward and couldn't go back. Finally McGinnis crawled over in the night, with three men located the nest—he was the only one that got that far and he

jumped into it alone just at day break. Then his men swept on but it was too late for him. He's over there. They gave him the D. S. C., but for his escape with the woman he would probably had the Congressional Medal of Honor.

HART

That's the man for me. Where is he? I'll give him \$10,000 a year to start.

(After the start of the story MCGINNIS has begun quietly passing the soup. Has two soups on the tray.)

GENERAL

I told you they got there too late for McGinnis.

MRS. SMYTHE

You know, I could love a man like that.

HART

Then I wouldn't engage him.

BILLY

And to think that a fellow like that could throw himself away on that kind of a woman.

FLO

(Startled.)

What!

(MCGINNIS gives one soup to MRS. LANHAM and stands ready to serve BILLY. Half rises. MCGINNIS is standing behind BILLY with the soup. As FLO half rises he coughs and pours the soup down BILLY'S back. FLO sits down abruptly as BILLY jumps up.)

MRS. LANHAM

(In horror.)

McGinnis! Dodson!

MCGINNIS

Beg pardon, sir—

(Bowing.)

(In the excitement the curtain falls sharply to end the end of scene.)

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE II

(MCGINNIS *at rise is placing one of four chairs which are down stage in front of the table, up stage.*)

MCGINNIS

(*To HART who enters L. I. E.*)

What can I do for you, sir?

HART

You might shake hands with me—

MCGINNIS

I don't understand.

HART

(*Walks over—holds out hand.*)

I want to congratulate you—Captain McGinnis.

MCGINNIS

Sorry, sir, you are mistaken—my name is "McGinnis" but I am not "Captain McGinnis."

HART

(*Perfectly unruffled.*)

I don't give a damn what your name is—will you work for me?

MCGINNIS

No, sir.

HART

Ten thousand a year to start.

MCGINNIS

No, sir.

HART

Good! No butler would turn down ten thousand dollars a year. So you aren't a butler—

MCGINNIS

Then you don't want me as a butler?

HART

Hell, no, civil engineer.

MCGINNIS

(*Skeptically.*)

What makes you think I could handle a transit or calculate grades and costs?

HART

(*Coughs.*)

(*McGINNIS starts R., guiltily.*)

Good. You are McGinnis and you are an engineer.

McGINNIS

You've not proved that.

HART

No, you proved it when you blushed like a school boy at the Old General's story and then covered Miss Lanham's confusion by pouring the soup down that young fool's back.

(*Pause.*)

McGINNIS

(*Laughs.*)

You'll say nothing?

HART

Naturally, man, it's the prettiest proposition you could imagine—mines beyond the dreams of avarice, to be developed and five hundred miles of railroad to be put through the damndest country you ever saw.

(*Involuntarily, McGINNIS'S eyes sparkle, his face lights eagerly.*)

Fifteen thousand dollars a year to start with—all the money to back you, and authority.

(*A pause.*)

Can't you see it?

McGINNIS

(*Nods.*)

Of course, I can see it.

(*Pause, shakes his head.*)

But—

HART

Do you think any woman is worth sacrificing your future, big work and twenty thousand a year for?

(*MRS. SMYTHE enters L. Pauses left of chair L. C., hand on chair.*)

MRS. SMYTHE

Oh, there you are—I've chosen for you—

HART

Good! In just a moment.

(*To McGINNIS who has Xed to door R.*)

You haven't answered that last question.

McGINNIS

(*At door R., turning, in tone of butler.*)

The answer is—yes, sir, I do think so—

(*HART disappointed.*)

(*HART pleased.*)

(*HART shrugs his shoulders, turns to MRS. SMYTHE.*)

McGINNIS *exits through pantry service door.*)

HART

(*To Mrs. Smythe.*)

I need you.

MRS. SMYTHE

(*Nes to him below table, L. of him.*)

I've always felt that there was some man who needed me.

HART

How well do you make love?

MRS. SMYTHE

W-e-ll, try me.

HART

U-u-m.

MRS. SMYTHE

Or perhaps you prefer references—not from relatives.

HART

I can't afford to fail.

MRS. SMYTHE

You don't expect me to say "Yes" before you ask me?

HART

Oh, Lord, not me—I want you to make love to a butler.

MRS. SMYTHE

What! But—well, of all the—

(*Catches herself.*)

Show me the butler!

HART

Oh, he's a very superior butler—just refused \$20,000 a year to work for me.

MRS. SMYTHE

(*Amazed.*)

Twenty thousand a year—what would I do for \$20,000 a year?

(*Turns to C.*)

No lady could tell you.

HART

Come here.

(*Whispers. Bus. ad lit. She comes to him. He puts his mouth close to her ear and whispers low, fast. Her face shows front. Her expression changes from curiosity to amazement, keen delight and humor. Finally she ceases, she throws back her head and laughs heartily.*)

(*Aloud.*)

You'll help me?

MRS. SMYTHE

Will I? You bet I will—I owe her one anyhow—

HART

You'll have to work fast.

MRS. SMYTHE

I married my first husband the week after I met him—

HART

(Moving away from her.)

You don't say! I'm leaving for New York Saturday.

MRS. SMYTHE

Two days?

(Looks at him speculatively. He moves farther away.

X toward HART at door L. They move a little to R.)

HART

Some woman's going to have a lot of fun gentling you—
She'll have her work cut out for her—not wishing to discourage you—

MRS. SMYTHE

Discourage? You know you have a strange effect on my ambition?

HART

Your—

(Pauses with uplifted eyebrows.)

Ambition?

(Pause. MRS. SMYTHE faces front.)

One job at a time.

(MCGINNIS enters bringing some silver which he places on the sideboard. HART nods towards him. Then starts for door L.)

MRS. SMYTHE

Miss Lanham told me to send you immediately—

HART

I fly—I fly—

(Exits.)

MRS. SMYTHE

(Sits front of table. To MCGINNIS.)

Would you give me a glass of water, please?

MCGINNIS

CERTAINLY, madam—

(Gets the glass of water from serving table, brings it to her. She drinks the water, looking at him over the glass. Holds the glass in her hand—does not replace it on waiter.)

Was that all, madam?

MRS. SMYTHE

Yes, that'll be all.

(He takes the glass back to the serving table.)

MRS. SMYTHE

Why don't you let a woman help you?

MCGINNIS

(*Startled. Drops glass on tray.*)

What! Beg pardon, madam.

MRS. SMYTHE

I said—why don't you let a woman help you, Captain McGinnis?

McGINNIS

(*With unconscious resentment and hauteur.*)

You've made a mistake, madam—

MRS. SMYTHE

(*Rises. Bows to him with mock humility.*)

Please don't be alarmed, sir, my intentions are perfectly honorable.

(*He looks at her—she looks at him—slowly a grin spreads over his face. She smiles too.*)

There, is that better?

(*Pause.*)

Have I made a successful "pickup"?

McGINNIS

(*Bows low.*)

It does me great honor, madam, to be added to your collection.

(*She smiles.*)

MRS. SMYTHE

Good! I knew I'd like you! You see it's the first time I ever flirted with a butler. Even a make-believe butler—so forgive me if I do it rather badly.

McGINNIS

(*Falling into her mood.*)

Like a soldier called by the great Russian Queen, I await your pleasure.

MRS. SMYTHE

(*Sits front of table looking at him with critical admiration and speaking in perfectly matter of fact tone.*)

You know I think I could love you—

McGINNIS

Do you think it's a fair game for a lady to try to make a fool of a butler?

MRS. SMYTHE

I think it's a fair game for a lady to make a fool of anybody—if she can.

McGINNIS

If she can.

MRS. SMYTHE

Can she?

McGINNIS

That depends—how far do you usually go?

MRS. SMYTHE

If one knew what would be the fun in the adventure—

(Pause.)

How far do *you* usually go?

MCGINNIS

Until I get what I start after.

MRS. SMYTHE

(Rises X to MCGINNIS.)

(Smiles with invitation.)

I'll be at home to-morrow evening—

MCGINNIS

Shall I call in my—

(Indicates butler's livery.)

MRS. SMYTHE

(L. C.)

No, you may wear those very good-looking evening clothes you have hidden away to dazzle Miss Lanham with.

(He starts unvoluntarily. She smiles. The door starts to open. With a quick look MCGINNIS sees FLO entering. He bends toward MRS. SMYTHE almost loverlike.)

MCGINNIS

(Sees FLO and plays up to MRS. SMYTHE.)

What a pity we didn't meet sooner!

(FLO starts, gasps.)

MRS. SMYTHE

A late start makes for speed—don't you think!

FLO

(FLO astounded.)

Well! Margie!

(MCGINNIS with exaggerated guilty look straightens up.)

MRS. SMYTHE

Oh, that you, dear? I was just have a most charming chat with your butler.

FLO

Indeed.

MRS. SMYTHE

Yes, indeed—you know—

(X to C.)

(Lowers her voice to confidential tone.)

Since the evening I met my first husband I don't know when I've been so thrilled—My dear! he's adorable.

(MCGINNIS straightens up.)

I can hardly wait to see him in evening clothes.

FLO

Evening clothes!

MRS. SMYTHE

Of course, my dear! Evening clothes, that's the test of a man.

McGINNIS

St. Patrick.

(Exits to R.)

FLO

(Icily.)

I'd advise you to try him in a dress suit first—

MRS. SMYTHE

(Xing to L.)

Oh, I'm going to—to-morrow night. He's coming to call—

FLO

Coming to call—my—

(X to Mrs. SMYTHE.)

(Starts to say "husband"—catches herself.)

Butler—on you?

MRS. SMYTHE

(Perfectly matter of fact tone.)

Certainly—on whom else? Rush dinner a little, will you?

That's a dear child—so the poor fellow can get away early.

(McGINNIS re-enters and crosses to L., opening door for Mrs. SMYTHE.)

FLO

I'm sorry but it's Dodson's night in.

(Xes to R.)

MRS. SMYTHE

Oh, I'll wait for him—don't forget me—butlerman—

McGINNIS

I'll be there, madam.

(Closes door after her.)

FLO

(Xes L. to him in hurry.)

What did that woman say to you?

McGINNIS

I'm sorry, miss, but that is a private matter.

FLO

She's trying to make a fool of you—

(He gets her attitude instantly and plays his cards.)

McGINNIS

Oh, no, miss, I hardly think so. She seemed a very kind, sweet spoken lady.

FLO

(Xes to R. C.)

Kind, sweet spoken!

McGINNIS

Yes, and so beautiful!

She kidnapped her first husband the week she met him.

McGINNIS

Honestly?

(Looking off L. A smile of delightful anticipation spreads over his face.)

FLO

(Cuttingly.)

From your expression I suppose you imagine she'll elope with you?

McGINNIS

A few minutes ago you were going to elope with some one—well, if that's the custom of the smart set—

FLO

Oh!

McGINNIS

It's strange more women don't realize how interesting the purely natural woman without veneer or snobbery can be.

FLO

Natural! Not even her complexion is that!

McGINNIS

What is complexion besides a soul!

FLO

(Crosses to him.)

I think you've gone mad—

McGINNIS

(Dreamily.)

I wonder.

FLO

(Going to him.)

Now see here, Sam McGinnis—

McGINNIS

Beg pardon, miss, are you addressing me in my professional or personal capacity?

FLO

(With anger.)

Personally.

McGINNIS

Then speaking personally and professionally—sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, and I don't propose that you shall have all the love making in this family.

(Turns back on her.)

As a married man, I'm entitled to my share and I'm going to get it at home or elsewhere—it's up to you.

FLO

(Enraged and dumfounded.)

Well! I—

McGINNIS

Of course, as you have three, I suppose I'll have to do three times as much—

(Enlightens.)

Well, I think we can.

FLO

(With amazement, rage, fear and unwilling admiration.)

We'll see—

(X little to R.)

(BILLY enters L., it is plainly evident he has been drinking. He is speaking to himself as he enters. BILLY motions MCGINNIS off.)

BILLY

(To himself.)

Treat 'em rough!

(Makes extravagant gesture to MCGINNIS to get out. MCGINNIS realizes the situation, smiles and exits to butler's pantry. FLO turns to BILLY surprised.)

(With exaggerated savagery.)

Sit down!

(FLO amazed sits suddenly. BILLY turns toward audience with grin on his face.)

Treat 'em rough!

FLO

(Having recovered from her amazement, jumps to her feet, angry that she, without thinking, obeyed him.)

Billy Arkwright, what under the sun—

BILLY

(Looking around stage with exaggerated dignity.)

Sun? Whose son?

FLO

(Looks fixedly at BILLY, realizes he is intoxicated.)

How many times have I told you not to mix cocktails and Scotch?

BILLY

(Over dignified.)

I didn't mix 'em—I just put them there and they mixed themselves.

(Shaking his finger, sternly.)

Flo, I am not going to stand the—

FLO

(Suddenly, sharply.)

Sit down!

(BILLY flops into chair surprised. FLO starts going toward pantry.)

I know what you need. Dodson!

(MCGINNIS enters.)

Dodson, take Mr. Arkwright out and give him a bromo seltzer.

McGINNIS

(Bows.)

Yes, miss.

(Goes back to the table and takes BILLY by arm.)

If you please, sir.

BILLY

(Rises with drunken dignity.)

All right—if that's the way you feel about it.

(Moves toward pantry with McGINNIS as he goes out, holding on to McGINNIS's arm.)

Dodson, your advice's no good—a tall.

(FLO looks at him sharply.)

You and Kipling all wrong. Can't treat a lady rough—won't allow you—

McGINNIS

Yes, sir—yes, sir.

(Exits with BILLY. RUTHERFORD enters door L. Business with handkerchief.)

RUTHERFORD

Hello, been looking for you.

FLO

(Backing away from him.)

What have you been doing to yourself?

RUTHERFORD

Nothing! Why? Come into the conservatory. I want to talk to you.

FLO

Conservatory? No, thanks, you're sweet enough without the flowers.

RUTHERFORD

But, Flo—

FLO

(Moves away.)

Keep away from me. Is it hair tonic or is it some of that awful French perfume?

RUTHERFORD

Why, I put it on for you. Don't you like it?

FLO

I hate it. I hate everything like that and you know it.

RUTHERFORD

(Turning to L. and clenching his fists.)

Damn that butler!

FLO

(Following him a step.)

What has the butler to do with it?

RUTHERFORD
Nothing—absolutely nothing.

FLO
Jack Rutherford, how much did you tip Dodson for making a fool of you?

RUTHERFORD
(In a rage.)
I know what I'm going to tip him!

(The GENERAL enters L.)
GENERAL
Ah, Miss Lanham—
(Handkerchief business by RUTHERFORD. He rubs the handkerchief across the GENERAL'S shoulders. FLO turns to door of pantry.)
FLO

Yes, General, just a second.
(Calls off R.)
Dodson! Call Mr. Arkwright.

MCGINNIS
Yes, miss.
(Calls off.)
Mr. Arkwright.

BILLY
You want me, Dodson, you just took me off.
(Looks around.)
What's the trouble?

FLO
(To BILLY.)
I need you. Don't go, Dodson.
(Motions him over to her side.)

Dodson, return to these gentlemen the money they gave you to-night.

ALL
(Confused except MCGINNIS.)
Money, what money?

FLO
The money you gentlemen paid Dodson for making fools of you.

RUTHERFORD
Now listen—Flo.
GENERAL
(BILLY drops the glass and gulps.)
Miss Lanham.

FLO
Return the money, Dodson.
MCGINNIS
(Yes to the three men.)

Yes, miss.

(The three men stand like whipped school boys, pictures of embarrassed men. MCGINNIS produces his note book and bills.)

(Reads.)

“Mr. Rutherford—for information that Miss Lanham likes a man to use a strong perfume—\$5.00.”

(BILLY and GENERAL burst into a laugh.)

(RUTHERFORD holds back. FLO motions. He takes the money unwillingly.)

RUTHERFORD

(As the others laugh.)

Wait!

(In protest to FLO, with the money still in his hand.)

He hung it on me fairly—he’s entitled to the money.

FLO

Take that money for more perfume.

RUTHERFORD

I don’t use it any more.

(Takes money.)

GENERAL

Really, Miss Lanham, I object.

MCGINNIS

“General McInerny—for information that Miss Lanham loves stories of General McInerny’s heroism—\$2.00.”

(GENERAL snatches money and sticks it in his pocket.)

RUTHERFORD

(Turning to BILLY with a laugh and holding up two fingers.)

Piker—two bucks!

MCGINNIS

“Mr. Arkwright—\$20.00.”

RUTHERFORD

Say, he must have given you an ear full.

(Down C. with BILLY L. of him.)

FLO

Now, gentlemen, thanking you one and all for your kindness—

GENERAL

(Y to FLO.)

Really, I think, Miss Lanham—

FLO

(Shaking hands.)

Good night, General! I’ve enjoyed your stories so much!

RUTHERFORD

(Ys to FLO C.)

Good night, Flo. Have lunch with me to-morrow—got five

dollars.

FLO

You incorrigible!

(Shakes hands, RUTHERFORD turns, goes out.)

RUTHERFORD

(Xs to BILLY.)

Good night, William—Sweet William!

(Rubs handkerchief across BILLY and exits.)

(FLO turns to BILLY, who stands the picture of glum anger.)

MCGINNIS

Anything else, miss?

FLO

I'll speak to you later.

MCGINNIS

Yes, miss.

(Starts to turn away, turns back.)

Beg pardon, miss, but will there be any guests for dinner to-morrow night?

FLO

(Involuntary anger at his cool laughing at her.)

Oh!

BILLY

(Feeling that there is something between them, not knowing what it is.)

Flo—I'm not going to permit a damned, impertinent butler to—to—

(Like a flash MCGINNIS turns on him. The air of a butler drops from MCGINNIS. He stands instead, drawn up to his full height, the fighting Captain of doughboys facing an inferior officer—snaps out sharply in the tone of the drilling ground.)

MCGINNIS

Lieutenant Arkwright! Attention.

(Involuntarily his army training asserts itself. BILLY snaps to attention and stands rigid before his superior officer. The two face each other not as civilians, but as Captain and Lieutenant.)

BILLY

(In tone of amazement.)

Who are you to speak to me in that way?

MCGINNIS

I was a Captain of Infantry at San Mihiel.

BILLY

You a Captain?

(MCGINNIS reaches in pocket, brings out D. S. C., shows it. In tone of amazement and unwilling admiration,

looks at the Cross in his hand.)

The Distinguished Service Cross.

(Looks from MCGINNIS to FLO and back to MCGINNIS.)

So you were that Captain, sir?

MCGINNIS

Yes, and now it's cards on the table between you and me!

The rest is up to—to—

(Hesitates.)

—to Miss Lanham.

BILLY

I understand—

FLO

Wait for me, Billy, I wish to speak to Captain McGinnis.

(BILLY bows to her, bows to MCGINNIS. MCGINNIS bows to him, he turns and exits—still dazed.)

(To MCGINNIS.)

How dared you do that!

MCGINNIS

(Sternly.)

The time has come for a show down.

(Comes over to FLO.)

FLO

(Unheeding him.)

Do you think you can make a joke of my friends! Laugh at me! Humiliate me! Break your word to me!

MCGINNIS

You are sure you haven't broken your word to me?

FLO

What word?

MCGINNIS

Your word given in France to be a loyal true wife!

FLO

(Excitedly.)

Me! Loyal! True! How about yourself? Not twenty minutes ago didn't I find you in this very room carrying on with another woman—making appointments with her—planning to go to see her—at night! You think you can do all that and then expect me to love you!

MCGINNIS

You are going on like a spoiled jealous child.

FLO

(X to L. towards door. The truth of it cuts and lashes her into a rage.)

Jealous! Do you think I'd be jealous of her! A woman like that! A woman who flirts with a servant that takes tips from gentlemen!

(Laughs high and excitedly.)

Huh! Jealous of her! I'll show you how jealous I am!
(*Xs to L.*)

McGINNIS

You think I don't love you, when only to-night I—
(*About to tell her of HART's offer he stops short.*)

FLO

Say it! Say it!

(*He keeps silent, which only adds to her anger.*)

You won't—all right, I'll say it for you! Only to-night, you humiliated me, insulted me. Oh! I told you what I felt when you first came back, I knew this wouldn't work out. Oh, I was a fool—a fool!

(*She is on the verge of angry tears.*)

McGINNIS

You are acting very much like a fool now.

FLO

I'm not! I have been, but I've waked up! I see clearly! I know what I'm going to do!

McGINNIS

(*Exasperated.*)

Sometimes I almost wonder if you're worth it!

FLO

Huh—wonder—I don't wonder. I know! I knew the moment I saw you I'd made an awful mistake. You harp on promises! All right, I remember promises you made me—the promise you made when you agreed to this thing. Now I hold you to it. Now make good.

McGINNIS

What promise?

FLO

The promise to go away—say nothing—let me get a divorce quietly—

McGINNIS

And then make the greater mistake of marrying that boy. No!

FLO

You go or I go.

McGINNIS

You'd tire of him in a week.

FLO

What are you going to do?

McGINNIS

I'm going to admit we both have been fools—announce our marriage and bring you to your senses.

FLO

(*She stares at him horrified—low.*)

Oh, I hate you!

McGINNIS

(Suddenly takes her by the shoulders, gives her a little shake.)

I'm going to make you love me, understand? Love me! Love me!

(Losing control of himself, he pulls her to him, kisses her several times.)

FLO

(Fighting herself free.)

Don't, don't, don't. You'll give me grounds for divorce or I'll give you grounds for divorce.

McGINNIS

(Laughs.)

Oh, no, you won't!

FLO

I will, I will.

(Exits L. U. as she rubs her hand violently across her mouth and rushes from the room just as her mother and Mr. LANHAM, followed by HART enter excitedly.)

MRS. LANHAM

Dodson, is this true?

McGINNIS

What, madam?

MRS. LANHAM

Mr. Arkwright tells us that you are Captain McGinnis.

McGINNIS

Yes, madam.

MRS. LANHAM

A Captain in the Army for our Butler! Oh, my!

(Looks at him, almost overcome with amazement and pride.)

I—don't know what to say.

McGINNIS

I don't see that there's any necessity of anything, madam, so long as I'm giving satisfaction.

MRS. LANHAM

You mean—you mean you're going to stay!

McGINNIS

Do you know of any reason why I shouldn't?

MRS. LANHAM

N-no—n-no—

MR. LANHAM

Nonsense! If she doesn't know any reason I do!

McGINNIS

What?

MR. LANHAM

The simple reason I don't want you any longer!

MRS. LANHAM

Discharge Dodson—McGinnis, Dodson? You shall do no such thing.

MR. LANHAM

But—

MRS. LANHAM

Don't think for one instant, Archibald, that I shall permit you to interfere with my domain—Captain McGinnis is a brave soldier—he's a hero.

MR. LANHAM

I appreciate, Betty, the social advantage of having a hero as a butler, but all the same Dodson is discharged for the reason that Captain McGinnis is going to work for Mr. Hart and myself!

HART

At twenty thousand a year—

MRS. LANHAM

(Sits down abruptly, says—)

Good gracious.

McGINNIS

I'm sorry, Mr. Lanham, but I've already discussed that matter with Mr. Hart and for the present I prefer my present position.

MRS. LANHAM

There—I knew he was loyal—I knew he'd do the wise thing.

(NORA enters abruptly from the service door.)

NORA

(Rushing on from pantry.)

Excuse me—Mrs. Lanham—I must see you a moment.

(All look up startled.)

MRS. LANHAM

What is it, Nora?

NORA

It's Miss Florence, ma'am—she's gone.

MR. and MRS. LANHAM

Gone?

MRS. LANHAM

Gone where?

NORA

I don't know, sir—she's gone with Mr. Billy. Her and him eloped.

MRS. LANHAM

Oh, Arch, go after them, go after them.

(X to MR. LANHAM.)

MR. LANHAM

Now, my dear, don't get excited.

McGINNIS

Forgive me, Mrs. Lanham, my interrupting you at this happy time, but I am quitting at once.

MRS. LANHAM

But I thought—

(Mr. LANHAM looked at him shrewdly.)

HART

Don't forget that offer's open.

(Puts hand on MCGINNIS'S shoulder.)

MCGINNIS

Thanks. I'll take it. You go ahead and make arrangements.

HART

GOOD!

(Exits L.)

MCGINNIS

But first I have some family matters to attend to.

MRS. LANHAM

Family matters?

MCGINNIS

Yes—I'm going to see my wife.

(Going to door R.)

MR. LANHAM

I didn't know you were married.

MRS. LANHAM

Captain, who is your wife?

MCGINNIS

Believe me she's a damned little fool.

(Curtain falls rapidly. MRS. LANHAM and ELIZABETH talking excitedly about the elopment.)

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE—*Hotel parlor in Hotel Grunewald. Windows L., two entrances rear on corridor, one entrance R. to hotel lobby.*

Evening of the second day.

DISCOVERED—HART *in evening clothes, smoking moodily, seated R. of table reading paper.*

COLORED BOY *enters R.*

BOY

Yes, sah! Here I am, sah!

HART

(Seated R. of center table.)

Did you find out about that train?

BOY

Yes, sah. De I. C. from Louisville is twenty hours late on 'count o' high water. You come down on the L. & N. that's how you happen to beat 'em in. De trains dat oughtta got in las' night jest comin' in now, sah. I reckon de two trains, las' night's and tonight's, comin' in pretty near together.

HART

Huh!

(Pause.)

And did you find out about Mr. and Mrs. Arkwright?

BOY

No, sah, dey ain't no sech gen'leman stoppin' in de hotel. Den I rung up de St. Charles an' dey ain't dere neither, but de clerk here says Mr. Arkwright telegraphed from Memphis for rooms for himself an' wife and we're a holdin' 'em.

HART

(Reaches in his pocket, pulls out a dollar and hands it to the boy.)

All right, George Washington—let me know the moment they arrive.

BOY

'Seuse me, boss, I ain't George Washington, dat's de other boy, I'se Lafayette.

HART

(Rises.)

Excuse me, General Foch.

BOY

Yes, sah.

(Exits just as MCGINNIS enters C.)

MCGINNIS

No trace of them yet?

HART

Haven't heard, have you?

(MCGINNIS shakes his head and crosses up R. C., looks off to R.)

Don't you think, my boy, you're wasting your time?

MCGINNIS

(Crossing down toward HART.)

What do you mean?

HART

A man's a fool to allow any woman to upset him when he has big work to do. Forget her.

MCGINNIS

(Crossing up to Arch C.)

Don't you think you're wasting your time?

HART

What do you mean?

MCGINNIS

A man is a fool that tries to regulate another man's life when he knows he can't do it.

(Goes through arch to R.)

HART

I agree with you. I don't care whether it's any of my business or not I don't propose to see you spoiling your life over a woman that's not worth it.

MCGINNIS

But you see, I'm not spoiling my life, because she is worth it, to me.

HART

Now see here, Sam, I'm an older man than you, and if you take my advice—

MCGINNIS

(Interrupting quietly, as he looks off arch C.)

All the mistakes in the world come from taking the other fellow's advice.

HART

(Throwing up his hands—rises, crosses up to C.)

All right, that settles it, I'm through. But it may interest you to know, since you're so sure of her, that there are rooms reserved in THIS hotel for Mr. and Mrs. Arkwright.

MCGINNIS

(*At arch R.*)

Yes, wired from Memphis. I knew it hours ago.

HART

(*Crosses front of table to L. of it, then above table to R.*)

We can't hold up millions of dollars to wait the convenience of your love affairs, you know.

MCGINNIS

(*Crosses from arch R. to below table.*)

You can always get another boy, you know.

HART

(*Crosses quickly down L. to front of table, facing MCGINNIS and speaking in conciliatory tone.*)

Oh, come, you know I didn't mean that, you know.

MCGINNIS

(*Crosses up R. of table to R. C.*)

Then trust me. I'm playing for my life's happiness, man; I can't afford to fail. I won't be worth a continental damn to you, myself or anybody else, if I don't see this through.

(*Turns up R. C.*)

(MCGINNIS, SR., enters R. C. preceded by bell boy with grip.)

MCGINNIS, SR.

Sam! My boy!

MCGINNIS, JR.

Dad!

(*They clasp hands, SAM throwing his left arm around his father's shoulders and giving him a hug, then turning to HART.*)

My father—Mr. Hart!

(SAM and MCGINNIS, SR., move down R. of table.)

HART

(*Grasping the old man's hand.*)

How are you, Mr. McGinnis?

MCGINNIS, JR.

(*Motions bell hop off.*)

It's good to see you, Dad—didn't have an idea you were within a thousand miles of New Orleans.

(*Puts him in chair.*)

MCGINNIS, SR.

Well, you see, I've been worrying over you close to a month.

(*To HART.*)

His letters ain't been happy, so I just thought I'd sorter run down to Louisville and look at the reason.

MCGINNIS, JR.

(*Bitterly.*)

And when you got there—

McGINNIS, SR.

I went to the address you wrote. The maid told me that you had been working as a butler—

(*Turns to HART.*)

My boy working as a servant!

(*To McGINNIS, JR.*)

Then I knew things were bad.

HART

How did you know he had come to New Orleans?

McGINNIS, SR.

The maid told me at the Lanham House that he was going to work for you and they gave me your address here in New Orleans, so I took the first train and here I am.

(*To SAM.*)

You see I wanted to hear about that young woman from you.

McGINNIS, JR.

Young woman?

McGINNIS, SR.

(*R. of McGINNIS, JR.*)

Ah, don't try to fool your old dad! You've been out of the army nearly two months. What else could have kept you from your old dad? What else could have spruced you up so? Why, boy, you're a regular dude.

(*Looks expectantly at SAM—a long pause, SAM is trying to make up his mind whether or not to tell his father. HART watches him anxiously, obviously eager for SAM to tell.*)

(*SAM crosses up R.*)

HART

You're right, Mr. McGinnis, he ought to tell you all about it. I've tried to advise him, but he won't listen to me. From the way he acts, I know there's something he's holding out.

(*Turns to SAM.*)

I'll go out, Sam. You can talk to your father more freely. You aren't in shape, boy, to think clearly about this matter. Take his advice. If you want to find me—I'm going to get some 2.75.

(*Exits L. C.*)

McGINNIS, SR.

(*Looks expectantly at SAM. A long pause. SAM leans over table.*)

Come, son, tell your old man all about it. If there's any trouble you can talk to me straight from the shoulder.

(Pauses, SAM doesn't speak.)

One way and another I've gathered this much—you're in love with Miss Lanham and she's eloped—

McGINNIS, JR.

There's nothing I can tell you, Dad, nothing I can talk about until I've seen her and him.

McGINNIS, SR.

(Quickly puts his hand on his son's arm.)

She's shown what she thinks of you, boy—she's gone with another man—why not take your medicine like a man—let her go.

McGINNIS, JR.

I can't, Dad.

(Bitterly.)

McGINNIS, SR.

But if she's married to another man—

McGINNIS, JR.

But she's not—she can't be—because she's my wife.

McGINNIS, SR.

You are married?

(Strokes hair.)

McGINNIS, JR.

Yes, we were married in France.

(Looks hurt.)

I wish I had told you, Dad, but—at the time—

McGINNIS, SR.

That's all right, son.

(Pause.)

So she's your wife. And she's gone with another man!

(Rises.)

(With explosion of anger and contempt striking table with open hand.)

Then to Hell with her!

McGINNIS, JR.

(Pause R. of McGINNIS, SR.)

Yes, Dad—but what of me—and the other man?

McGINNIS, SR.

What are you planning to do, son?

McGINNIS, JR.

(Comes down and crosses R. in front of table to McGINNIS, SR.)

I'm going to take her away from him, and if he so much as bats an eye, I'll—

McGINNIS, SR.

No, boy—he couldn't have taken her if she didn't want to go.

McGINNIS, JR.

(*R. C. below table.*)

She's done nothing wrong—she's foolish, headstrong—but she's done nothing really wrong. I'd stake my life on it.

McGINNIS, SR.

But if she has?

McGINNIS, JR.

She's my wife, Dad, and I love her.

(HART enters.)

McGINNIS, SR.

Then it's time to quit talking like a foolish boy and begin to use your brains to get her back. Now when I was courting your mother—

McGINNIS, JR.

(*Crossing to door L.*)

Yes, Dad, I remember—I remember—

(*Crosses back to C.*)

What were you saying, Dad?

McGINNIS, SR.

Eh—ah—I mean I've got lots of ideas about women. Old men always have.

(*Turns to HART C. O.*)

Haven't they, sir?

HART

(*L. of McGINNIS, SR.*)

(*Offended tone.*)

How should I know?

McGINNIS, SR.

(*Starts to exit.*)

Oh, you too!

(*To McGINNIS, JR.*)

Come, son, come along to my room and we'll talk this all over.

(McGINNIS, SR., *exits L.*)

HART

(*Ad lib.*)

Where does he get that old man stuff?

(HART *sits down on chair L. C., reads.* MRS. SMYTHE *in evening gown enters at right and slowly crosses toward HART. He looks up at her.*)

HART

(*Rises L. C. Staring at MRS. SMYTHE.*)

Well, I'll be damned? You!

MRS. SMYTHE

(*Smiling.*)

Whom were you expecting?

HART

How did you get here?

MRS. SMYTHE

The trains run quite regularly.

HART

You didn't tell me you were coming to New Orleans.

(Throws paper on the table, paces to and fro. She watches him smiling the age old smile of woman.)

MRS. SMYTHE

(Crosses and stops to R.)

Didn't I? Possibly I was afraid if I told you, you might sail for South America from some other port.

HART

(Stops, faces her irritably.)

I never saw a woman like you!

MRS. SMYTHE

(Calmly.)

Of course you haven't. If you had I would have been different.

(Smiles on him—pauses.)

You see, my friend, you don't realize my possibilities—

(Front of table.)

HART

Um! I'm beginning to.

(Pauses, walks, stops again.)

See here—I don't want to be married.

MRS. SMYTHE

(Front of table.)

“Nobody asked you, sir, she said”—

HART

They haven't! What are you doing here?

MRS. SMYTHE

(Crossing to R., business with fan.)

Merely showing a prospective purchaser an attractive line of goods.

HART

I'm not in the market.

MRS. SMYTHE

(Laughs, shakes her head.)

(Together in front of table.)

You're too old and too hard to appreciate a gift—

HART

(L. C. Irritated.)

I'm not so damned old!

MRS. SMYTHE

(Calmly R. C., half seated on table.)

You're not so damned young—

HART

How about you?

MRS. SMYTHE

I'm twenty-eight and my next fifteen years are the years of a woman's life—you'll be getting the best of me, you see—

HART

I'm just fifty-two—

MRS. SMYTHE

And you've lived too hard to last much beyond sixty-seven—

HART

(Sharply—turning to L.)

I wish you wouldn't talk like that.

MRS. SMYTHE

Gives you the shivers—why is it the bigger the man the more he fears the finish?

HART

(Returning to her and striking table with hand.)

That's the worst of success—you build—and you build—and—

MRS. SMYTHE

Then you stop short—you've no one to leave it to—

HART

(Hands in pockets meditatively.)

It will take fifteen years to properly develop these new Hart syndicates properties.

MRS. SMYTHE

A boy of fourteen will be worth having then—

HART

Yes.

(Realizing what she means, looks quickly at her, then, scandalized, crossing L. and back to L. C.)

You're the frankest woman I ever met.

MRS. SMYTHE

(Crossing to R.)

I'm just as all women are going to be.

(Crosses back to R. of him.)

(Pauses as he thinks this over. She looks at him shrewdly.)

You know that night at the Lanham's I was acutely conscious that I had met two men, either of whom would make marriage worth while—

HART

(His vanity hurt. L. C.)

Two?

MRS. SMYTHE

Yes. You and Sam McGinnis.

HART

(*Startled.*)

You'd marry McGinnis?

MRS. SMYTHE

Any woman would marry McGinnis.

HART

One wouldn't.

MRS. SMYTHE

Nonsense! That was because she's young. I made her jealous—then McGinnis rode her with spurs and like any thoroughbred filly—she bolted—and I'm honestly sorry, because I know she must be eating her heart out now—

HART

(*Clasps fist into other palm.*)

Good! That speech is what I've been waiting for—so you have a heart after all!

MRS. SMYTHE

Of course! Every woman has—only men doubt that—

HART

You get that girl back for McGinnis and it's a trade—

MRS. SMYTHE

Pardon my frankness, but that's the damndest proposal I ever had—

(*Fans herself as she turns to R.*)

HART

(*Gruffly.*)

It's the only one you'll get from me—

MRS. SMYTHE

(*Turns to him.*)

But suppose she's married to Arkwright?

HART

If McGinnis is satisfied, we should worry—

MRS. SMYTHE

Accepted?

HART

(*Looks at her curiously. They are close together.*)

I wonder if we'll get on?

MRS. SMYTHE

(*She looks at him.*)

(*Matter of fact.*)

Why not? You've known many women and I've been married on and off—

(*HART embraces and kisses her. Looks at her, then turns away. Crosses to L. C.*)

(*She looks at him with tantalizing invitation. He looks at her, suddenly takes her in his arms and crushes her to him and kisses her—at last releases her. She looks at him breathlessly.*)

(McGINNIS enters and exits L. U. E.)

Did you say you were fifty-two?

(L. in front of table facing HART, who is R. of her. Shakes her head.)

Twenty-five!

(McGINNIS enters R. C. He is in evening clothes of faultless cut—looks particularly distinguished.)

HART

(Crosses to McGINNIS.)

Well, Sam, she landed me.

McGINNIS

(R. of HART a little above him—shakes hands with him.)

Congratulations!

(To MRS. SMYTHE.)

You know, he told me you were the only woman he'd ever seen worth marrying, and he thought if he could keep you guessing long enough he might land you!

MRS. SMYTHE

(To HART.)

Oh, you did! So that's the way you handle things!

HART

(Crosses to MRS. SMYTHE L. C.)

When you want a thing never let the other fellow know you're anxious to get it.

(McGINNIS gives a perceptible start.)

McGINNIS

You know it's funny, that's what dad said.

(Suddenly turns to MRS. SMYTHE.)

Will you help me, Margie?

MRS. SMYTHE

I offered to three days ago. What do you want me to do?

McGINNIS

(Crossing to R.)

I don't know—just stand by and follow my lead.

MRS. SMYTHE

What are you going to do?

McGINNIS

(At R. entrance.)

Damned if I know.

HART and MRS. SMYTHE

(In surprise.)

Eh?

McGINNIS

I mean I'm going to wait till I see her and then—

HART and MRS. SMYTHE

(Eagerly.)

Then—

McGINNIS

Then I'm going to leave it up to her and I'm going to do exactly what she doesn't expect.

MRS. SMYTHE

Business methods, my boy, business methods. Men use them in business to get rich and women use them in love to get men and the men never realize their own methods have been their undoing.

(BELL BOY enters R.)

BELL BOY

That train from Louisville has arrived and Mr. and Mrs. Arkwright have just come.

(Exits.)

McGINNIS

(Motions them off. Up L. C. looking off R.)

Just stick around and follow my lead.

HART

(Starting to leave.)

I'll be in—

McGINNIS

I know—the bar—

(HART exits with MRS. SMYTHE R. McGINNIS peeps out from portieres at arch L. C. as FLO and BILLY enter, he quickly exits. FLO and BILLY enter R. U. and cross down. FLO sinks in chair down R. They are followed by boy.)

FLO

You can put these down—I'll wait here.

BELL HOP

Yes, ma'am.

FLO

Will you tell the gentleman—

BELL HOP

Yes'm, I'll tell your husband, he's registering now.

FLO

(Coldly.)

That will be all. You can check those grips.

(BOY exits and grips.)

BILLY

(Enters hurriedly.)

Whew! Twenty hours late in a twenty-four-hour trip, still that's not bad under government ownership. How are you, dearest?

(Bends to kiss her.)

(McGINNIS enters R. U. and starts to take handkerchief from his hip pocket. FLO sees him, jumps to her

feet and screams.)

FLO

Sam! Don't! Don't! He didn't know.

McGINNIS

(Looks at them astonished.)

I've just been waiting for an opportunity to congratulate you—

(Takes a hand of each.)

I was just reading about your marriage.

FLO

(In amazement.)

About our—marriage?

McGINNIS

Yes, special from Louisville.

FLO

(To BILLY.)

You telegraphed to Louisville?

BILLY

Er—a—a—

FLO

You didn't tell me you telegraphed—

BILLY

N-n-n-o—I didn't.

McGINNIS

What's wrong?

FLO

Nothing—

McGINNIS

(Innocently.)

Aren't you married?

(FLO looks at BILLY, BILLY looks at FLO.)

FLO and BILLY

Why—why—

BILLY

Yes, of course, we—

McGINNIS

How do you like it?

(Gulps from both of them.)

FLO

How do you like it?

McGINNIS

Why ask me, I'm not married to him.

FLO

(Trying to change the subject.)

But what are you doing here?

McGINNIS

Well, you see, when—you ran away with Billy, I got lone-

some, so I—

FLO

You don't mean you—

(MCGINNIS *nods.*)

FLO

(*With involuntary fear in her voice.*)

Who—who is she?

MCGINNIS

Can't you guess?

FLO

Not—not—

MCGINNIS

Yes.

FLO

Oh!

(*Crosses R. to sofa, sits. MRS. SMYTHE and HART enter door L. MCGINNIS goes up, takes her by the arm and brings her down. HART looks after them astonished.*)

MCGINNIS

Dearest, I was just telling them about us.

(*MRS. SMYTHE starts perceptibly. MCGINNIS gives her a little sharp nudge to follow his lead. HART stares annoyed and indignant.*)

MRS. SMYTHE

(*Getting it.*)

Oh, yes, you tell her all about us, Sam.

(*HART gulps, MRS. SMYTHE beams up into MCGINNIS's face as he leads her down R. C.*)

(*FLO crosses over front of table to L., R. of BILLY. MCGINNIS brings MRS. SMYTHE down R. of table and with his arm around her stands R. of her in lover-like attitude. HART is hovering near entrance L. Slightly uneasy.*)

MRS. SMYTHE

Congratulations, Mrs. Arkwright.

FLO

(*As if in a daze.*)

Thank you, Mrs.—Mrs.—

BILLY

Congratulations, Mrs. McGinnis.

FLO

(*To MCGINNIS.*)

You didn't waste much time, did you?

MCGINNIS

We're merely following the example of the smart set.

MRS. SMYTHE

(*Now wise.*)

Oh, there's nothing slow about Sam.

(*Hangs on SAM'S arm, looking into his eyes. Suddenly.*)

I have an idea—we eloped the same time, we have met here—we'll take our honeymoon together.

FLO

Y-yes—y-yes—that will be jolly, won't it, Captain McGinnis?

MCGINNIS

Suits me.

BILLY

But, we had our plans already made.

MCGINNIS

Oh, we don't care where we are, do we Margie, dear—as long as we are together?

(MCGINNIS *kisses* MRS. SMYTHE. *Business for* HART.)

BILLY

(*Stands to kiss* FLO.)

You've got nothing on us.

FLO

Please—you know I hate vulgar display of affection.

MRS. SMYTHE

I think all women show what they feel, don't you?

(*Business for* HART.)

FLO

Yes—yes—and Billy and I are very happy, aren't we, Billy?

BILLY

Of course we are.

MCGINNIS

It's wonderful to see four people so happy—

(*Kisses* MRS. SMYTHE.)

HART

(*Comes down, trying to force a laugh.*)

Y-yes, but where do I come in?

MCGINNIS

You don't—you go out.

HART

Well, I'll go out and get a coca cola.

(*Exits L.*)

MRS. SMYTHE

Oh, where were you married?

FLO

(*Stands, crosses up R.*)

Didn't the papers say?

MCGINNIS

(*Nudges her.*)

Why, sure, the papers—where are the papers, Margie?

MRS. SMYTHE

In the room, I think—I'll go get them.

(*To BILLY.*)

Come with me.

(*To FLO.*)

If you can spare him.

(*Exit BILLY and* MRS. SMYTHE.)

FLO

(*L. C.*)

You're a good forgetter, aren't you?

MCGINNIS

(*R. C.*)

We both are.

FLO

Six days ago mad about one girl—one girl to whom you owed a duty—

MCGINNIS

I thought you decided to leave duty in France.

FLO

Just six days ago—

MCGINNIS

But then I hadn't met Margie.

FLO

(*Bitter imitation. Sits.*)

No, you hadn't met Margie.

MCGINNIS

(*Crosses to L. end of table.*)

(*Looking after* MRS. SMYTHE.)

Oh, I must tell you about Margy. You know, she's the most wonderful woman in the world—so beautiful—such taste, such knowledge and in her utmost surrender such sweet shyness.

FLO

Yes, she's famous for her sweet shyness.

MCGINNIS

I can never thank you enough for having made it possible for me to meet her—I shall always remember you for that—

FLO

Just for that? Thank you.

MCGINNIS

Yes, think but for that I'd be probably now a raving lunatic running around with a gun trying to kill Billy or you or myself—while instead I want to shake him by the hand—

(Sincerely.)

And for you I have the kindest feeling—

FLO

Thank you—that's very nice. You know, if there's anything a woman does appreciate it's for a man to have the kindest feeling for her.

(She is almost ready to cry for humiliation and rage. MCGINNIS sits R. of table.)

MCGINNIS

What do you suppose was the first thing Margie did when we found we loved each other?

FLO

(Seated L. of table.)

I really don't know, what she usually does—

MCGINNIS

(Seated R. of table.)

She asked me all about my people—

FLO

And I suppose you told her all about your father in Racine?

MCGINNIS

Yes—my father, the cobbler, and she insisted that I wire him at once to come and be with us in our happiness.

FLO

He's coming—

MCGINNIS

This evening. Expecting him any moment.

FLO

At this hotel?

MCGINNIS

(An idea obviously strikes FLO—she starts to speak, suppresses the inclination.)

Dear old dad, he'll be so proud of her—

(MARGIE'S voice heard off.)

MRS. SMYTHE

(Off, sweetly, lovingly.)

Sam—Sam—dear—

MCGINNIS

There, you hear—"His Master's Voice"—

(Calls.)

Coming, dearest—coming!

(Seizes FLO by hand, gives it energetic shake.)

Good-bye—good luck—

(Is hurrying to door to hall when meets BILLY coming in. Seizes BILLY'S hand, wrings it fervidly, wheeling him around.)

Congratulations, congratulations, good-bye.

(Calls.)

Coming, Margie, dear—

(Exits rapidly. FLO stares after him dumb and heart-sick, sits in chair L.)

BILLY

(Bland—self-satisfied.)

I never saw such a woman. Thought I'd never get away—how are you now, dearest?

(Comes over, starts to take her hand. She jerks it away from him.)

FLO

Don't touch me! Don't speak to me.

(Drops on sofa—buries face in hands—sobs.)

Oh, I'm miserable—utterly miserable.

(MCGINNIS, SR., appears at the door L. U. E. and realizes he is intruding on private party. Tries to back out and being awkward in social usages does not know how to do it gracefully.)

MCGINNIS, SR.

Excuse me—excuse me—I—I—I didn't mean to butt in—I was just looking for—

(With pride.)

for Captain Sam McGinnis.

BILLY

(Shortly.)

He's not here.

MCGINNIS, SR.

I see he ain't—excuse me—

(Strokes hair.)

(FLO stands for instant petrified. Staring at MCGINNIS, then obviously an inspiration strikes her.)

FLO

You are Captain McGinnis's father?

(Crosses R. to MCGINNIS, SR.)

MCGINNIS, SR.

(Delighted—moving toward her in a step.)

Yes, miss—yes—some folks do say we look alike—

(Strokes hair.)

FLO

I'm glad to meet you.

(Shakes hands with him eagerly.)

We are friends of Captain McGinnis—come right in—

(BILLY stands aghast and enraged.)

MCGINNIS, SR.

Well, that's right friendly of you—

FLO

This is Mr. Arkwright.

McGINNIS, SR.

(To BILLY.)

Pleased to meet you.

BILLY

I think, Florence, if Mr. McGinnis will excuse us—

(*He is obviously planning to get rid of McGINNIS.*)

FLO

(*Giving the other twist to it.*)

I want to talk to Mr. McGinnis alone.

BILLY

Certainly.

(*Exits R. U.*)

McGINNIS, SR.

Sure.

BILLY

(*Exit.*)

Good night.

McGINNIS, SR.

(*Crosses over to R. to FLO.*)

I didn't quite get your name, miss—

FLO

(*Following him.*)

My name—

(*With sudden smile of one plunging into deep water.*)

I'm Mrs. McGinnis—Sam.

(*At lower side of table.*)

McGINNIS, SR.

(*R. of table.*)

(*Stares at her a moment—blinks in surprise.*)

You are Sam's wife?

FLO

(*Glad she has gotten over it and a bit breathless after the plunge.*)

Yes!

McGINNIS, SR.

(*Hurt.*)

Sam should have told me he was married—

FLO

We've not told anybody yet—you are the first to know it—

McGINNIS, SR.

(*Instantly beams. Sits in chair R.*)

Honest?

FLO

Honest.

(*They look at each other smiling. Suddenly on impulse she bends forward and kisses him. He is obviously greatly embarrassed.*)

McGINNIS, SR.

Shucks! You—kinder—kinder—

(*Moves his shoulders in embarrassed fashion. Beams.*)
I'm awful glad Sam's married—er—a—

FLO

(*L. of McGINNIS.*)

Florence.

McGINNIS, SR.

(*Half shyly.*)

Florence—that's a pretty name. My wife's name was Katherine.

FLO

“Katherine” is a beautiful name—

(*Pauses—determined to show she is a loyal daughter.*)
Don't you want to chew?

McGINNIS, SR.

Chew what?

FLO

Tobacco.

McGINNIS, SR.

(*Pause.*)

I don't chew—but if you want to, go right ahead—

FLO

Why, Sam told me—

McGINNIS, SR.

Don't you know that boy well enough to know he's a born joker? Half the time he's making fun of folks—he can't help it.

FLO

Sam has a wonderful sense of humor, hasn't he?

McGINNIS, SR.

That's the way I like to hear a wife talk. Nothin' new fangled—just plain man and woman—them as God has joined together—

FLO

(*Softly.*)

Yes, yes—

McGINNIS, SR.

I have been worried about Sam for some time—his letters ain't been so happy.

(*Shrewdly.*)

Guess that was while you was courtin' and maybe you was treatin' him mean?

FLO

Yes.

McGINNIS, SR.

(*Confidentially.*)

That's good for him—makes him appreciate you—

(*Pause.*)

FLO

(*Half whispers.*)

You know, you aren't what I expected. Oh, why, you, you are just an old dear.

MCGINNIS, SR.

(*He takes her hand and pats it.*)

I'm mighty glad Sam's married a girl that's not ashamed of his plain, old father.

FLO

Ashamed of you? Whatever could make you think Sam's wife would be ashamed of you?

MCGINNIS, SR.

I've been mighty worried about the girl Sam would marry; you know Sam is what you call a "snob"—

FLO

(*Amazed.*)

Sam a snob?

MCGINNIS, SR.

Yes, all folks that gets ahead in this world are snobs—that's what puts them ahead—they're snobs about positions, snobs about money, snobs about society, snobs about what they can do, ability and *religion*. Why, religion's just full of 'em—some of the durndest snobs I ever knew was church snobs—absolutely certain they're the only people in the world got a speaking acquaintance with God.

FLO

But at least you aren't a snob—

MCGINNIS, SR.

But I am—I'm the durndest ever about making shoes.

FLO

And Sam?

MCGINNIS, SR.

(*Chuckles.*)

Sam's a snob about his ability—and that's the best kind of a snob, because those ability snobs have to live up to what they think they are and the better they get the better they think they are, so they just keep on goin' and goin' till the rest of us ain't got a chance—Rockefeller, Schwab and Wilson—they're ability snobs—and then Sam's a terrible snob about coming from the common people. You know that boy wouldn't take a million dollars for being able to say "My father's a shoemaker."

(*Grins.*)

When he's going strong, he calls it "Cobbler." Of course, I was a cobbler, but it's a factory now. I'm thinkin' Sam

never mentioned that?

FLO

(A light breaking.)

No, he never did.

MCGINNIS, SR.

(Smiles with appreciation of SAM'S weakness.)

(With tenderness.)

Maybe, daughter, you're wondering and thinking I oughtn't to be saying all this, but I have my reasons—

(Taking her hand.)

My boy Sam is the world to me—he's all I have—all I live for, all I have lived for since his mother left him to me, and I couldn't tell him what I've told you for anything, but you are his wife, you love him, and remember that if a man and woman are to be happy together, they don't have to worry about each other's strength, but they must understand and handle each other's weaknesses—that's why I've tipped you off to Sam's.

FLO

Thanks—I understand—

(Pauses.)

Now, what am I a snob about?

MCGINNIS, SR.

Just now you seem to be a snob about making your old daddy-in-law love you and you're doing it.

(Pauses.)

(He winks.)

The rest I'll tell to Sam.

FLO

(With eagerness.)

Whatever you tell him, will you tell him to-night—tell that—

(MRS. SMYTHE appears, cutting off FLO before she can finish.)

MRS. SMYTHE

(Cheerfully. Entering and coming down C.)

Just looking for Captain McGinnis—have you seen him, dear?

FLO

NO!

(Rises. Crosses to R.)

MCGINNIS, SR.

When you do see Captain McGinnis, ma'am, would you tell him to come here, he's expecting me.

MRS. SMYTHE

I have a suspicion that he is in the bar.

MCGINNIS, SR.

Thank you, ma'am. If he's there already it will save us both a walk—

(Pauses at the door.)

(Exits R.)

(MRS. SMYTHE has entered bright and smiling. FLO is smiling, too, facing her, but hers is the smile of battle. A pause that becomes awkward.)

FLO

(With determination.)

Margie—I want to talk to you about Sam—

MRS. SMYTHE

(Sits R. of T. C.)

(Beams.)

That's awfully nice of you, dear—you know there's no subject in the world I'm so full of. Isn't he wonderful?

(Does not pause for reply.)

Just the minute I saw him I said to myself, "There's the man to make any woman happy."

FLO

(Gulping.)

Yes—

MRS. SMYTHE

You know right after dinner that night Mr. Hart offered him twenty thousand a year to work for him and Sam, for some foolish reason, refused.

FLO

(Realizing why MCGINNIS refused and the enormity of her own loss.)

Captain—Sam refused that night—what—when? What time that night?

MRS. SMYTHE

Immediately after dinner.

FLO

Oh, what a fool—I—

MRS. SMYTHE

(Seated R. of table.)

Oh, not such a fool—he's sailing to-morrow for South America to make a preliminary investigation of the Hart properties at \$25,000 a year.

FLO

(Seated L. of table.)

Sailing to-morrow!

(MARGIE nods, with determination rising.)

I'm going with him.

MRS. SMYTHE

(Rises.)

YOU? Oh, no, I'm going with him—

FLO

(Rises.)

Margie, Sam McGinnis belongs to me!

MRS. SMYTHE

(Laughs.)

My dear, you can't have them all, you know—

FLO

(Facing MRS. SMYTHE—FLORENCE L., MRS. SMYTHE R., in front of table.)

Perhaps you won't feel that way when I tell you I'm his wife.

(She expects an outburst from MRS. SMYTHE, but she is calm.)

MRS. SMYTHE

Yes, and you let him get away from you?

(With pitying contempt.)

You poor little fool.

(Crosses, fanning herself, to R.)

FLO

(Standing L. C.)

I may have been a fool but I'm still his wife—

MRS. SMYTHE

(R. C.)

I suppose I'm the "other woman." All right, I'll be the "other woman." She generally has a better time anyhow. Fortunately the divorce will be easy to get—

FLO

You mean he'd divorce me?

MRS. SMYTHE

Well, my dear, when a married woman goes away with another man, people don't generally believe they're just playing checkers.

FLO

Margie, I've been a fool—I admit it—a poor fool—but I've waked up—I love him—I don't feel that I can go on without him—won't you—

MRS. SMYTHE

(Smiling.)

Do you think he'd take you back?

FLO

(Dumb with horror.)

Take me? You mean he wouldn't take me?

MRS. SMYTHE

(Standing R. of FLO, front of table.)

Why, child, you had him—you had his love and your happiness right in your hands—and what did you do? Just because you didn't like the cut of his clothes, or the way

the barber had brushed his hair or some other fool thing that had nothing in the world to do with the man himself, you decided to break your word, kick over a contract and ruin a man's life—

FLO

I didn't—I only wanted to—

MRS. SMYTHE

To humiliate him and furnish yourself an excuse for kicking out. That's the trouble with about half of you wives. You think that marriage is a one-sided arrangement for your protection, care and amusement instead of being a job like any other job that a woman and man have to work at to make good.

FLO

But—

MRS. SMYTHE

You had your chance—you failed and now the job is mine.

FLO

(Crosses to R.)

You refuse to give him up?

MRS. SMYTHE

I do.

FLO

Then, I'll take him away from you—

MRS. SMYTHE

(Laughs.)

You!

FLO

Yes—because I'm his wife and you can't take a man away from his wife if she wants him and is willing to fight for him, and I'll fight—

(Goes up to left of table and returns.)

MRS. SMYTHE

But I *did* take him—

FLO

You—why, you took nothing! I was just a little fool and let him go, but now I know I love him. He did love me and I'm going to make him love me all over again—you'll see, you'll see!

(Exits L. U. E.)

(MCGINNIS, JR., enters R.)

MCGINNIS

Well?

MRS. SMYTHE

(L. of table a little above it.)

She's going to do this to you—

(Makes gesture with her finger "Come to me.")

McGINNIS

(*R. of table.*)

Ah!

(*His whole being lights up with joy and love.*)

MRS. SMYTHE

(*Dryly.*)

And if you do just that, as you're doing now, you'll have her—for a while—

McGINNIS

I don't want her for a while—I want her for always.

MRS. SMYTHE

Then do this—

(*Indicates vigorously gesture of repulsion—pushing some one away.*)

McGINNIS

And drive her away from me forever?

MRS. SMYTHE

Forever? Oh, no, she's a woman.

McGINNIS

But—

MRS. SMYTHE

(*Front of table, L. end of it.*)

(*Quotes.*)

“A woman, a hound and a walnut tree, the more you beat 'em the better they be.”

(*He hesitates.*)

McGINNIS

(*Front of table, R. end of it.*)

(*Irritably.*)

Don't believe in old sayings.

MRS. SMYTHE

All right! Yet in business—do you cheapen the article when the customer is interested?

McGINNIS

I didn't want to cheapen—but—

MRS. SMYTHE

(*Disgusted.*)

Why is it, about everything but a woman, a man can use common sense? Now listen—she's bored with her pretty Billy—desperately bored—she's in the middle of an awkward situation and neither he nor she has the poise or humor to handle it—and on top of that you come along, and I've shown her your value and she sees what she's lost, and she's determined to beat me and get you back at the crook of her finger. *She's sure of it, because she told me so.*

(*Crosses to L.*)

McGINNIS

(For the first time warming up and the light of battle coming into his eyes.)

She told you that? I'll come at the first crook of her finger, eh?

(Moves to R.)

MRS. SMYTHE

(Pressing her advantage.)

Yes—will you?

McGINNIS

(R. C., facing her.)

I'll see her in—

(Points down.)

MRS. SMYTHE

(L. C., facing him.)

Then, tell her just that—

(Points down.)

(Pressing her advantage.)

You've gambled for your life—can't you gamble for your happiness—she'll be a wonderful wife if you get her on your terms—but you're a fool to take her on her own, because she'll find out she was tricked and never forgive it. And the end will be the same—Billy, or some other Billy. You started right—but—

McGINNIS

And I'd always dreamed marriage was a partnership.

MRS. SMYTHE

Yes, it is—with a good senior partner.

McGINNIS

I'll—

(FLO enters, L. U.)

FLO

Sorry to interrupt, but I dropped my handkerchief.

MRS. SMYTHE

I was just going—

(Crosses below table to R.)

McGINNIS

(L. of MRS. SMYTHE. Politely.)

Shall I?

MRS. SMYTHE

No, indeed, dear boy—I've many things to attend to.

(Pause at door R., to FLO.)

I hope, dear, you'll find—your handkerchief.

(She exits R.)

FLO

(L. C., facing McGINNIS R.)

Sam, why did you let me do it?

McGINNIS

(*R. of her below table.*)

Do what?

FLO

Run away with Billy?

McGINNIS

(*Moving a step toward her.*)

You came of your own free will, didn't you?

FLO

But you were my husband—it was your duty to stop me—

McGINNIS

How could I stop you when I didn't know anything about it?

(*X. L.*)

FLO

I wanted to show you that I had the courage to do as I liked—to follow my impulses—

McGINNIS

(*Sits R. of her.*)

Well, you did it—aren't you happy?

FLO

Sam, I've made a terrible mistake—well—I want you to come back to me—she shan't have you—I'm your wife and I won't give you up.

McGINNIS

How can you give up what you haven't got?

FLO

(*R. of C. chair.*)

Don't, Sam—

(*SAM'S business with hand.*)

don't say that—don't do that—it's not Margie, you don't understand—I—

McGINNIS

(*R. of her.*)

But I do understand. I understand better than you think. Don't I know what's in the back of your mind? You'll admit I'm your husband—come to me for a little while—

FLO

No—no—Sam—always.

McGINNIS

Nonsense—you've not changed—I've not changed—I'm the same roughneek you knew in France, the same servant who took orders in your house. If I couldn't hold you then, I can't hold you now—and I don't propose to be picked up and thrown down at any woman's whim.

FLO

I'll come back as your wife—Sam—don't you understand?
As your *wife*.

McGINNIS

(*With bitter sarcasm.*)

Yes, as my wife—to save your face—then divorce me legally and marry Billy—no—I'm through—as far as I'm concerned, you can go to the devil—

FLO

(*As he stalks out R.*)

All right, then I'll go to the devil—

(*He exits.*)

(*To herself.*)

But you'll be the devil I'll go to—

(*Curtain falls sharply to mark end of Scene I.*)

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE II—CAPTAIN MCGINNIS'S *room in the Grunewald.*

A typical hotel room in first-class hotel. On left, two windows with curtains drawn, between the windows a bureau with mirror, center of rear wall a double bed with head against wall, foot extending toward foot-lights. Entrance door from hall. Rear at right. On right two doors. Upper door. Center lower door—bathroom. A table below foot of bed. Beside bed small table with reading light. Besides this light there are bracket candles on either side of bureau and over bed, turned on giving the room a warm, soft glow. A screen between the bed and window above the bureau.

TIME—*Fifteen minutes after events of SCENE I.*

DISCOVERED—*At the rise, the stage is empty. The first thing to catch the eye must be a large suitcase placed on the table so that the audience can clearly read on the end of it: "Captain McGinnis, U. S. A."*

Pitched carelessly on the table beside it are MCGINNIS'S top coat and hat, a suit of street clothes, soiled shirt, a collar and tie.

After a distinct pause there is a low, timid rap at the door. This rapping is repeated twice. . . . Then the knob turns, the door is opened from without slowly and FLO peeps in. She looks about—then pushes the door wide open. Walks in. Looks about the room. Shakes her head in disapproval. Opens the closet door. Hangs up her dressing gown. Goes to 'phone.

FLO

(Into 'phone.)

Will you send a lady's maid, please? Captain McGinnis's room, No. 369. Mrs. McGinnis speaking.

(Hangs up 'phone. Gives a little excited cough to herself. Shakes her head at appearance of room. Begins straightening up. Hangs MCGINNIS'S coat and hat and suit in closet. Puts dirty shirt and collar in bureau drawer. A knock at door.)

FLO

Come in!

(L.)

(MAID appears.)

MAID

Yes, madam—

FLO

(Crossing to dressing table, R.)

Will you please lock the door on the outside and leave the key in the office.

MAID

Lock the door on the outside?

FLO

Yes, so my husband won't disturb me.

MAID

Oh, yes, madame, I understand.

(As FLO tips her.)

Thank you, madame.

(Goes to door.)

I hope you all sleep well. Good-night!

(MAID exits.)

FLO

(To MAID as she exits.)

Good-night!

(FLO seats herself in chair before the mirror. Proceeds to take down her hair. She brushes her hair, turns out lights, and gets into bed.)

(MCGINNIS enters, turns on lights, and stands looking at FLO'S picture on bureau while taking his tie off. FLO climbs out of bed and gets key from lock and puts it under her pillow.)

MCGINNIS

(Turns, sees her. Crosses to bedside.)

I told you to go to the devil.

FLO

Well, here I am. And you can't put me out. Please put out these lights, Sam, they hurt my eyes.

(MCGINNIS switches off lights—she turns on bed lamp.)

Oh, Sam, I've come back to you—won't you forgive me?

I love you, Sam. I love you. I've lost all my snobbish-
ness—I'm cured—Sam—I'm cured.

MCGINNIS

And who cured you?

FLO

Can't you guess? The best cobbler in Racine.

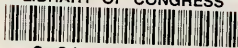
(They embrace.)

MCGINNIS

God bless you!

CURTAIN

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