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The Fascinating Fanny Brown



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Helen F. Bagg

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The Fascinating Fanny Brown

A Farce in Two Acts

BY

HELEN F. BAGG

Author of "WHY NOT JIM?" "WHISKERS,"
"THAT BLONDE PERSON," etc.



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The Fascinating Fanny Brown.

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The Fascinating Fanny Brown

CHARACTERS

PERCIVAL GALE *who keeps a summer hotel, "Idlewild."*
BILLY PEARSON *the only man at the hotel.*
HENRY DUDLEY *a college sophomore.*
MRS. CALDWELL,
AUDREY CALDWELL,
DOROTHY DUDLEY,
FLORENCE HOWE. } *guests at "Idlewild."*
MRS. MOFFETT *a neighboring cottager.*
MARTHA *a servant.*

SCENE.—The living-room of Percival's summer hotel, "Idlewild."

TIME OF PLAYING.—One hour and a half.

STORY OF THE PLAY

Percival and Billy are wooing Dorothy Dudley and Florence Howe. To make Dorothy jealous Billy writes love letters to a pretended "Fanny Brown." Dorothy accepts Billy, but discovers his plot, and plans to punish him. When her brother Henry arrives unexpectedly she dresses him as a girl, and introduces him as "Fanny Brown." Billy and Percival are worried. A nervous guest, Mrs. Moffett, thinks Henry is a traveling hypnotist who has annoyed her. Billy and Audrey discover who Henry really is, and tie him up, insisting he is the hypnotist. After a funny scene of a dog fight under pretended hypnotic influence Henry is released, and the girls forgive their lovers.

COSTUMES AND CHARACTERISTICS

PERCIVAL and BILLY. About twenty-five. Act I, white flannel trousers and summer shirts. Act II, evening dress, or blue coats, white trousers, and pumps.

HENRY. About twenty-one. On first entrance wears blue serge suit, rather dusty about bottom of trousers, low shoes, also dusty, straw hat, and carries two suit-cases. Dressed afterward as a girl, in light summer dress, white shoes and stockings, blond wig, large white hat. At end of Act II resumes serge suit. The part should be played by a light-haired man, if possible.

MRS. CALDWELL. A motherly, middle-aged woman. Wears light summer dress. At last appearance, Act II, wears kimono, and has hair in curlers.

AUDREY. About seventeen. In Act I wears "middy blouse" and blue skirt. In Act II, first entrance, wears white evening dress; at second entrance, bath robe and slippers.

DOROTHY and FLORENCE. Pretty girls in their early twenties. They wear light summer dresses in Act I, and evening dress in Act II. In last part of Act II Florence wears kimono.

MRS. MOFFETT. A young married woman, rather nervous in manner. At entrance, Act I, wears summer dress, covered with long tan coat, and hat with streaming veil. At first entrance, Act II, wears evening dress. At last entrance, Act II, wears kimono and a neat little boudoir cap.

MARTHA. A heavy-looking country girl, dressed simply. At last entrance, Act II, wears a long coat.

PROPERTIES

For MRS. CALDWELL: Magazine, pair of folded trousers.

For DOROTHY: Sewing materials, packet of letters, handkerchief.

For FLORENCE: Embroidery, handkerchief, leather writing case.

For AUDREY: Chafing-dish containing fudge, plate, spoon, suit-case, pins, lighted candle.

For MRS. MOFFETT: Bunch of letters, newspapers, suit-case, dinner-bell, poker.

For MARTHA: Pitcher.

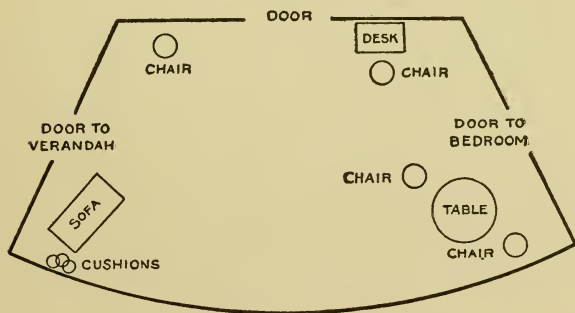
For BILLY: Cigarettes, matches, book, cushions.

For HENRY: Two suit-cases, dollar bill, handkerchief, cigarette.

For PERCIVAL: Two hand-bags, packages, lamp.

SCENE PLOT

INTERIOR BACKING



SCENE.—The living-room at "Idlewild." A wide doorway with portières, up c; door r., to verandah; door l., to bedroom. Sofa, chair, and pile of cushions down r. Table and chairs down l. Desk and chair up l. Other chairs as indicated. Lamp, newspapers, and magazines on table. All furniture light and "summery." Portières have cords, easily removed.



The Fascinating Fanny Brown

ACT I

SCENE.—*The living-room of a small summer resort hotel, "Idlewild," which is managed by PERCIVAL GALE. At C. a wide doorway with portières, leading into a corridor. At R. a door leading to the verandah. At L. a door leading to a bedroom. A table littered with newspapers and magazines down L., and several easy-chairs scattered about the room. A sofa at R.*

(As the curtain rises, four ladies are seated in the room. MRS. CALDWELL is seated in an easy-chair reading aloud from a magazine. DOROTHY DUDLEY and FLORENCE HOWE are sewing; DOROTHY seated on a pile of cushions at R., FLORENCE on the sofa. AUDREY CALDWELL is cooking "fudge" on a chafing-dish at the table.)

MRS. C. *(reading)*. "Richard drew his knife and braced himself for the onslaught. On came the furious Russian, with murder in his eyes." To be continued in the August number. *(She puts down the magazine.)*

FLORENCE. Oh! How disgusting! And we shan't know for a whole month whether he's killed or not!

AUDREY *(scornfully)*. Well, I guess they're not going to kill him off in August when the story has to run till December! What I want to know is whether Clara is going to marry him or not. She's the worst flirt I ever met, except Dorothy Dudley.

MRS. C. *(reprovingly)*. Audrey, don't be rude.

DOROTHY *(serenely)*. Oh, she isn't hurting my feelings, Mrs. Caldwell. I know I'm a flirt.

FLORENCE. You can't help it, can you, dear?

DOROTHY. Of course I can; I do it from a sense of duty.

MRS. C. A sense of duty!

DOROTHY. Of course. Every tenth girl ought to be a

desperate flirt. It's the only way to get even with the male sex for the way they play fast and loose with the hearts of the other nine. Incidentally, I rather like doing it.

MRS. C. Well, for ideas, give me the young woman of to-day!

AUDREY. I think I'll be a tenth girl, too. I never thought of it in that way before.

MRS. C. You'll do nothing of the sort. You'll go back to your boarding-school next month and try to get out of your head some of the nonsense this summer has put into it. That's what you'll do.

AUDREY (*meekly*). Yes, mother. (*To DOROTHY.*) I don't think that you picked out a very good place to work out your theories in. A summer resort with only one man!

FLORENCE. Two men. Mr. Gale certainly deserves to be mentioned, even if he does run the hotel.

AUDREY. Oh, well, he's no good for Dorothy; he never looks at anybody but you.

MRS. C. Audrey!

AUDREY. Well, he doesn't. He makes me tired. If it wasn't for Billy Pearson —

DOROTHY. I had to come here or stay in the city all summer. Henry's college expenses have been so heavy this year that father said he simply couldn't afford a more expensive place. However, I'm having a very nice summer.

FLORENCE. And you've nearly driven poor Billy Pearson out of his head. Every time the boys from town come out here for a dance he nearly has a fit, he's so jealous.

MRS. C. (*jumping up*). Mercy, I forgot that I promised Mr. Gale to show Martha how to make the punch for the dance to-night! I must go right away and find her.

AUDREY (*pouring the candy out on a plate, putting spoon in her mouth*). Tell her not to be so tight with the cherries, mother dear. She put in only seven last time. (*Exit MRS. C., at c. AUDREY carries the plate out at door R. and returns.*) Why, here comes Mrs. Moffett. She must have been to Pemberton. She has the mail.

DOROTHY. Oh!

(*She scrambles to her feet. FLORENCE puts down her work.*

MRS. MOFFETT *enters R., carrying the mail. The three girls all run to her.*)

ALL THREE. Oh, did I get anything?

MRS. M. (*dumping everything on the table*). I don't know. Help yourselves.

(*They all rummage wildly, each finding something for herself. MRS. M. sinks into a chair and fans herself with a newspaper.*)

DOROTHY (*glancing through her letter*). Oh, girls, what do you think? My brother Henry's coming!

AUDREY. }
FLORENCE. } When?

DOROTHY. Either to-day or to-morrow. Oh, wouldn't it be splendid if he'd come in time for the dance to-night?

AUDREY. How old is he?

DOROTHY. Twenty-one.

AUDREY (*with a sigh*). Glorious!

DOROTHY. I must see Mr. Gale right away and secure that room for him. (*Nods to door L. Starts to go.*)

MRS. M. I was thinking of asking for that room myself.

FLORENCE. You? What's the matter with the cottage?

MRS. M. (*mysteriously*). Girls, I don't dare stay in the cottage. I've had a horrid adventure. I've just been telling Mr. Pearson about it.

GIRLS. Oh, Mrs. Moffett, what do you mean?

MRS. M. Have you heard what happened yesterday at Pemberton?

DOROTHY }
FLORENCE } (*drawing closer to her*). No.

AUDREY. I didn't know anything ever happened in Pemberton.

MRS. M. Listen. You know they've got a circus over there? One of these little one-horse, dog and pony affairs, in a tent?

GIRLS. Yes, yes, go on!

MRS. M. Well, they've got a man traveling with them, a Professor Lyon, he's called, who's a hypnotist. I didn't see him, but they say he does the most dreadful things—goes into trances and —

AUDREY. Hypnotists don't go into trances. They put other people into 'em.

MRS. M. Well, this one does—and he did the most awful things to some of the people in Pemberton. Made them think they were cats and dogs, and all sorts of things that make your flesh creep. You know Charlie Baxter?

GIRLS. Yes.

MRS. M. Well, he hypnotized Charlie and made him think he was a yellow cat—and Charlie went and sat all night under the minister's window and howled, and the minister thought he was too, and threw a hair-brush at him and hit Charlie in the eye—and Charlie's mind was all made up to join the church, and now he says he won't, and it's all that miserable professor. (*She pauses for breath.*)

GIRLS. Oh!

MRS. M. Well, yesterday he disappeared—the professor, I mean, and no one knows where he is. They think he went into a trance and wandered off. The circus man is wild about it. Now, I'm coming to my part of it.

GIRLS. Yes, yes, do go on.

MRS. M. Well, you know Wilbur always sends me a five-pound box of candy when he doesn't come up for the week end—and of course I knew that wretched express company wouldn't deliver it, so I hired old Bob and the buggy and drove over to Pemberton after it. I got it, and stopped to do some errands at the store; that's where I met Mrs. Baxter, and heard all about the professor. Then I drove out by way of the lane. You know what a lonely sort of a place that lane is?

GIRLS. Yes.

MRS. M. Well, I was thinking about the professor and Charlie and the hair-brush, and how awful it was to have a man like that roaming around loose, and I was just wondering if I oughtn't to go back and telegraph Wilbur to come at once, when a man started up in front of me with a suitcase and asked the way to Idlewild.

GIRLS. Oh, what was he like?

MRS. M. Like? He was like that dreadful professor! I knew at once who he was. The moment he fixed those eyes on me I knew he was trying to hypnotize either old Bob or me, I didn't know which. I didn't answer his question; I just stared at him, and kept saying over and over, "We won't be influenced—we won't be influenced." That's the way you do, you know, when you don't want to be.

AUDREY. What did he say?

MRS. M. Well, he looked sort of surprised. He hadn't expected to find me on my guard, you see, so he mumbled something about wanting to get to Idlewild and not having

been able to hire a rig, but I didn't stop to hear any more. I just whipped up old Bob and left him there.

FLORENCE. What wonderful presence of mind you have, Mrs. Moffett.

MRS. M. So Wilbur says, but, of course, one has to think quickly in emergencies like that.

DOROTHY. Weren't you awfully scared?

MRS. M. Scared? My dear, my flesh crawled when that man looked at me. You've no idea what it feels like to be looked at by a psychic person! I made up my mind that I would move to the hotel to-night and stay there till Wilbur comes or that wretch is found. I thought maybe one of you girls would go home with me while I packed a suitcase.

AUDREY (*jumping down*). I will.

MRS. M. (*rising*). I can feel those eyes on me still. Do you know, I believe there's something psychic about me. I had the queerest feeling all the way home, a sort of sleepy, stretchy feeling (*she stretches out her fingers as a cat does her claws, and draws them in again*), and when I tied Bob to the tree out there I had the strangest desire to climb it!

DOROTHY. Oh, Mrs. Moffett!

MRS. M. I did. I see that I'm going to have to work very hard to throw off his influence; but thank goodness, I've got more strength of mind than Charlie Baxter. You won't catch me sitting outside of people's windows getting hit with hair-brushes. Come along, Audrey, I'll bring you back in time for dinner.

AUDREY. Tell mother where I've gone.

(*Exeunt MRS. M. and AUDREY, R.*)

FLORENCE. Do you suppose it was the professor?

DOROTHY (*putting her arm around her*). Well, if he wasn't, the man must be wondering whether Idlewild is a Home for the Insane. Come on, let's go up-stairs and finish our letters before the boys come in. I hear Billy Pearson's whistle.

(*DOROTHY and FLORENCE stroll off, arm in arm, at c. Whistling heard off stage.*)

(*Enter BILLY PEARSON and PERCIVAL, R. PERCIVAL goes to the table, sits, and begins sorting the mail. BILLY looks around in some disappointment.*)

BILLY. I thought I heard the girls' voices. Must have gone up-stairs to dress for dinner.

(*He lights a cigarette and sits R.*)

PERCIVAL (*intent on the mail*). Probably.

BILLY. Say, Percy, do you really think it was the hypnotist fellow that Mrs. M. saw?

PERCIVAL. Can't say. An inquisitive woman with an active imagination is likely to see almost anything.

BILLY. Be rather good fun, wouldn't it, if he should turn up around here to-night? We might get a little excitement out of him.

PERCIVAL (*who has arranged the scattered mail into several neat little piles, and who now rises*). You might. You're not responsible for the hotel.

BILLY. Business before pleasure, eh?

PERCIVAL (*crossing to him*). Exactly. By the way, how are you coming on with Miss Dudley? Going to announce that engagement pretty soon?

BILLY (*gloomily*). Hanged if I know! One day she's so pleasant that I begin to dope out a letter to Dad to tell him I'm going to marry the prettiest girl in New York. The next day she's so frosty that I make up my mind to drop the whole business and hike for home. What's a chap going to do with a girl like that?

PERCIVAL. In olden days he would have kidnapped her. Of course, nowadays one has to consider the police.

BILLY. Oh, of course, if you're going to guy me——

PERCIVAL. I'm not. I'm trying to help you. How is that little suggestion of mine working?

BILLY. Fanny Brown? Oh, I've worked Fanny Brown to a finish.

PERCIVAL. Didn't do any good?

BILLY. Well, once or twice I thought she seemed a bit put out.

PERCIVAL. You're making her jealous, my boy. Depend upon it, that's the only way to handle a flirt. You must rave about Fanny Brown, adore Fanny Brown, make her think there isn't a girl in the country like Fanny Brown.

BILLY. That's the trouble, there isn't a girl in the country like Fanny Brown, and I know it. I can't go on raving forever about an imaginary girl. Already I've forgotten

what color I said her hair was, and where I said she lived. I'm sick of Fanny Brown.

PERCIVAL. That's gratitude! Here I take the trouble, busy as I am, to hatch up a scheme to give you a fighting chance with a girl you're madly in love with; invent a woman out of whole cloth so that you can flirt with her in perfect safety, even take the trouble to see that Miss Dudley finds the letters you wrote to Fanny —

BILLY. Hold on. By the way, what have you done with those letters?

PERCIVAL. Put 'em in the desk drawer over there. You didn't think I was going to mail them, did you?

BILLY. Well, I didn't think you would; but you can never tell what a person with a vivid imagination like yours is going to do. I think I'd better tear 'em up, as long as Dorothy's seen 'em.

(Starts toward desk L. PERCIVAL stops him.)

PERCIVAL. Don't be a fool, Bill; of course they're all right. Look here, I've got an idea.

BILLY. Well, if it's another Fanny Brown, I don't want it. I'm going to make a clean breast of the whole thing to Dorothy to-night, and ask her to marry me.

PERCIVAL. You young idiot, she'll never forgive you. Ask her to marry you, if you like, but don't tell her that you have been trying to trick her with an imaginary woman, or she'll never speak to you again.

BILLY. I don't see why. It's no worse than the way she's treated me.

PERCIVAL. Of course it isn't, but you'll never make her look at it that way. She's one of the wickedest little flirts in New York state, but you needn't think you'll ever force her to admit it. I know women.

BILLY. Real ones, or the Fanny Brown kind?

PERCIVAL. Of course, if you —

(DOROTHY'S voice is heard outside.)

DOROTHY. Yes, Mrs. Caldwell, I'll bring your mail up to you.

BILLY *(jumping up)*. Gosh! Here she comes. Would you do it now, or —

PERCIVAL *(coolly)*. I don't think I care to meddle with

your affairs any more. You'll have to use your own judgment.

BILLY (*wildly*). Hang it, Percy, don't go back on me like that! I didn't mean ——

(*He tries to detain PERCIVAL, who shakes him off.*)

PERCIVAL (*ironically*). Oh, there's nothing I can do. I don't understand situations like this, you know. Manage your own affairs.

BILLY. But would you ask her now, or wait till ——

PERCIVAL. But before I go, I want to tell you that Miss Howe and I are engaged to be married. We're going to announce it to-night at the dance.

BILLY (*aghast*). You? Well, I'll be ——

PERCIVAL. Oh, I hope not, old man!

BILLY. Did you talk to Florence Howe about Fanny Brown?

PERCIVAL (*rather embarrassed*). Well—I—I mentioned her once or twice, just to stimulate an interest. Well, good-bye, old top, good luck to you. I'll be around after a while to drop a tear if she refuses you. (*Starts to go.*)

BILLY (*angrily*). Good-bye.

PERCIVAL (*coming back*). If she accepts you, you might whistle.

BILLY (*stiffly*). Yes, I might.

(*Exit PERCIVAL, R. BILLY starts to go to the table, when DOROTHY enters at C.*)

DOROTHY (*pausing*). Oh, I thought Mr. Gale was here.

BILLY. He was. He's just gone outside. Shall I call him?

DOROTHY (*coming down to table*). Oh, it's not important. I can see him later. I wanted to ask him about getting that room for my brother.

BILLY. Henry coming down?

DOROTHY. Yes, I've just had a letter from him. He'll be here either to-night or to-morrow.

BILLY. Perhaps he'll come out with the fellows in time for the dance.

DOROTHY. I hope so! (*Looks over the mail.*) Oh, here's something for Mrs. Caldwell. (*Moves away.*)

BILLY. Don't go!

DOROTHY. But I must. I have to dress for dinner.

BILLY. No, you don't. You look perfectly stunning now. Don't go. I want to say something to you.

DOROTHY (*glancing nervously at the door, R*). Hadn't you better wait till this evening?

BILLY. Can't. Too late. I want to ask you to save a few of your dances for me. Last time, you know, you danced with those other chaps all evening and just once with me.

DOROTHY (*rather provoked*). Did I? Well, why should I dance more than once with you?

BILLY. Why shouldn't you?

DOROTHY (*sweetly*). Well, to be quite truthful, I never have cared much for dancing with engaged men.

(*Moves up stage.*)

BILLY (*in horror*). Engaged men! What in thunder do you mean? Now come back here and explain yourself.

DOROTHY. I don't have to explain myself.

BILLY. Any woman who makes remarks detrimental to my character has to explain herself.

DOROTHY (*coming down*). Of course, if you consider it detrimental to your character to be engaged, that's another thing. Most people don't.

BILLY. Look here, Dorothy, let me tell you —

DOROTHY. Oh, you needn't tell me if you don't want to. You've a perfect right to keep it to yourself. Doesn't she want it announced?

BILLY (*choking with rage*). She?

DOROTHY. Yes. Miss Brown?

BILLY (*bursting into laughter*). Miss Brown? You didn't think I cared for her?

DOROTHY (*coolly*). Well, I've never thought much about it. It doesn't particularly interest me.

BILLY. But I want it to interest you. I want you to know that I don't care a hang for that girl in Omaha, or she for me.

DOROTHY. Omaha? You said she lived in Council Bluffs.

BILLY (*nervously*). Did I? Well, she does, but she teaches school in Omaha, so it's the same thing. She's a hard working girl, and I admire her tremendously, but I'm not in the least in love with her. I —

DOROTHY. It's odd you should write her so many letters. Mr. Gale said you wrote her nearly every day.

BILLY (*aside*). Hang Gale! (*To her.*) Why, why—you see—why, the truth of it is, I did write her a good many letters, but it was all on Gale's account. You see he's gone on Fanny Brown.

DOROTHY. What!

BILLY. Regularly mushy. Used to get me to write his letters to her because he thought I had more style than he did.

DOROTHY. Style! In love letters?

BILLY. Sure. There's a style in love letters as well as in anything else. At least so they say. I don't know anything about 'em myself. I never was in love before.

DOROTHY. Do you really mean to tell me that Percival Gale likes this—this Brown girl?

BILLY. Of course. She's a very fine girl. Why shouldn't he?

DOROTHY. We all thought—at least, I mean, I thought he liked Florence.

BILLY (*alarmed*). Hold on, he does. He told me he did.

DOROTHY (*indignantly*). What is he, a Mormon? Oh, you men make me tired!

BILLY. He—why—he—why, the fact is—oh, hang Percival. I didn't come here to talk to you about other people's love affairs. I came to ask you to marry me. Will you, Dorothy? If you had any idea how much I loved you, you'd marry me out of pity. It's positively brutal not to.

DOROTHY (*taken a little aback*). I—why —

BILLY (*coming closer to her*). Come on, say you will. You've no idea how splendidly suited we are to each other. I've been considering it all summer.

DOROTHY. You are perfectly sure you don't care for that—that other girl?

BILLY (*putting his arm around her*). If I was half as sure of getting to heaven as I'm sure of that, I'd begin to have my coats let out for wings.

DOROTHY. Then I will.

(*He kisses her.*)

BILLY. Gosh! I can't believe it! I didn't dream you cared for me.

DOROTHY. Well, to tell the truth, Billy dear, I didn't either, till Percival Gale told me about that girl. Then I realized that I couldn't let anybody else have you.

BILLY. Of course not. It takes a jolt now and then to make us realize things, doesn't it?

DOROTHY. Yes. And Billy, dear —

BILLY. Yes, honey?

DOROTHY. Do you know, if I were you I wouldn't be so friendly with Percival Gale. I don't think his influence is good for you.

BILLY. What?

DOROTHY. No, I don't. I think he's unprincipled.

BILLY. Oh, no, not as bad as that.

DOROTHY. Yes, he is. Do you know, he tried to show me a letter that you had written to that—that Brown girl and had given him to mail. He wanted me to *read* it. What do you think of him, now?

BILLY (*coughing in a wild attempt not to laugh*). Oh, you must make allowances for Percy. Keeping a summer hotel is a terribly demoralizing sort of business, you know. He's—he's an awfully good chap, take him all in all.

DOROTHY. I don't believe it. I want you to promise me not to have anything more to do with him.

BILLY. Of course; but I'll have to do it by degrees, you know. It would look queer to break with him all at once. Wouldn't it?

DOROTHY. Well, maybe. But I don't like him. Now I must take Mrs. Caldwell her mail, or she'll be coming down for it. Good-bye.

BILLY (*holding her hand*). How about those dances? Will you dance with an engaged man, now?

DOROTHY (*breaking away and going up c.*). Silly! I'll see.

(*Exit, c.* BILLY watches her go. Then breaks into a wild and furious burst of whistling. PERCIVAL appears R.)

PERCIVAL. You don't mean to say she's accepted you?

BILLY. That's what.

PERCIVAL (*slapping BILLY on the shoulder*). Bully for you, old chap! Congratulations! She's a charming girl. (*The portières at c. part slightly and DOROTHY's head appears. She has heard the whistle and come back to see what it is all about.*) I didn't think she'd take you.

BILLY. Neither did I. I don't know what she sees in me, I'm sure. (DOROTHY *smiles mischievously—starts to go.*) It's all your Fanny Brown business.

(DOROTHY'S face changes. *She decides to listen.*)

PERCIVAL. You didn't tell her?

BILLY. No. I meant to, but I was scared. I couldn't tell her that we'd invented a girl just to make her jealous. No fellow could say a thing like that to the girl he—he loved.

PERCIVAL. No, of course not. What did you say?

BILLY. Well, I just gave her to understand, in a vague sort of a way, that you were the one who was interested in Fanny Brown.

PERCIVAL (*in horror*). I?

(DOROTHY *drops the portières.*)

BILLY. Yes. That I was writing to her on your account, don't you know.

PERCIVAL (*aghast*). On my account!

BILLY. Yes. And I guess I'd better tear up those letters before I forget them.

(*Moves toward desk. PERCIVAL stops him.*)

PERCIVAL. No, you don't, my son!

BILLY. What's the matter?

PERCIVAL. I suppose you never stopped to think what Florence Howe will do when Miss Dudley tells her all this stuff you've been inventing?

BILLY. Gosh, I forgot all about you and Florence.

PERCIVAL. Yes, you seem to have forgotten everybody but yourself in this business. Those letters are all the evidence I've got to show that I'm not the guilty party in this business, so I'll just look after them myself. Lucky I made you write real letters instead of just addressing envelopes as you wanted to.

BILLY (*bitterly*). You seem to think you've planned things very neatly. I think you've made a hash of things, myself.

(*Enter DOROTHY quickly at c.*)

DOROTHY. What in the world are you boys arguing about? I could hear you from up-stairs.

(*They turn in consternation.*)

BILLY. Why, we were—we—he was congratulating me on our engagement. Weren't you, Percy?

PERCIVAL. Yes, he was telling me how ——

BILLY (*nervously*). I was telling how surprised I was that you would have me, don't you know, how ——

PERCIVAL. And I was just as surprised, too, you see ——

DOROTHY (*eying them both calmly*). I see.

BILLY. Say, Percy, hadn't we better get busy moving those tables out of the way, for the dance, you know?

PERCIVAL. Yes, that's a good idea.

BILLY. We'll be back in a few minutes.

DOROTHY. Oh, don't hurry. I'm going up-stairs to dress. I only wanted to ask Mr. Gale if I might have that room for my brother who is coming to-night or to-morrow.

PERCIVAL. Certainly, Miss Dudley, delighted to have your brother with us. Come on, Bill.

(*Exeunt both at R. DOROTHY watches them go, then turns angrily and stamps her foot.*)

DOROTHY. Oh! that's your Fanny Brown! And to think that I believed it all.—Oh, what an idiot I've been! But I'll show Mr. William Pearson a thing or two—and that other wretch, too! I'll make him sorry for this, I'll —— (*She pauses, knits her brow in perplexity; then, with a hasty glance around, goes to the desk, opens the drawer and snatches a small packet of letters, then closes the drawer, and holds the letters up triumphantly.*) I'll make them both pay for this! They'll get all they want of their precious Fanny Brown before I get through with them. I must find Florence at once!

(*She goes off C. BILLY appears at R., peeping in cautiously. Seeing the room empty, he enters, goes swiftly to the desk, opens the drawer, searches madly a moment, then turns with a horrified face as PERCIVAL enters also at R.*)

PERCIVAL. What's the matter?

BILLY. What's the matter? They're gone, that's what's the matter!

PERCIVAL. What! The letters? Impossible!

BILLY. Well, look for yourself. (PERCIVAL goes to desk.)
Somebody's swiped 'em.

PERCIVAL. Nonsense! There's no one in this house who would do a thing like that. Don't be a fool, Bill.

BILLY. Then where are they? You said you put them there. If nobody's taken them where are they?

PERCIVAL. Somebody's mailed them.

BILLY (*in horror*). Mailed them!

PERCIVAL. They were stamped, weren't they?

BILLY. Oh, yes, they were stamped. You said they wouldn't look natural unless they were stamped, so I stamped 'em. Next time I feel like taking your advice about anything, I'll —

PERCIVAL. Hold on, Billy, don't be an idiot. What difference does it make if they have been mailed?

BILLY (*aghast*). What difference does it make? Suppose they go to Fanny Brown, Omaha, Nebraska?

PERCIVAL. But there isn't any Fanny Brown, Omaha, Nebraska.

BILLY (*savagely*). How do you know there isn't? There's probably twenty of 'em. One of 'em's probably got the letters right now. We don't know when they were mailed. Or maybe the letters are scattered around to all the Fanny Browns, and I'll have the whole bunch of 'em suing me for breach of promise. Oh, you're a lovely one to go to for advice, you are.

PERCIVAL (*trying to pacify him*). But they can't, Billy; you didn't give your address.

BILLY. Oh, no, I only wrote on your blamed hotel stationery, that's all. I tell you, Percy, you've got to get me out of this. D'you hear? (*He runs his hands through his hair excitedly.*) You've got to help me get those letters; you've got to —

PERCIVAL (*soothingly*). Of course, of course; don't get so wild over it. I'll find the boy who takes the mail, and you go and 'phone to the post-office in Pemberton and see if anybody remembers sending them.

BILLY. They're so likely to!

PERCIVAL. Oh, they might—a bunch like that, all addressed to the same girl. There isn't a woman in Pemberton, postmistress or not, who wouldn't notice that. Cheer up, we'll pull through this yet. Come on.

(Pulls BILLY up stage.)

BILLY (*gloomily*). Yes, a fine show we've got to pull through! Fine!

(*Exeunt both at c.*)

(*Enter HENRY DUDLEY at R., carrying two suit-cases, which he drops with a sigh of relief. He sinks into a chair just as DOROTHY enters c.*)

HENRY (*jumping up*). Hullo, sis!

DOROTHY (*running to him*). Oh, Henry, I saw you from my window. I'm so glad you've come! (*They kiss each other.*) But what's the matter? You're all dust.

HENRY. Yes, I walked over.

DOROTHY. Walked over! But it's four miles. Why didn't you drive?

HENRY (*sitting down again and mopping his forehead*). Couldn't get a rig. The hotel 'bus had gone, and everything in town was engaged. Saturday night, you know, so I walked.

DOROTHY. You poor boy!

HENRY. I met a young lady driving a buggy in this direction, and asked her the way. Thought she might offer me a lift, but nothing doing. I guess she was nuts or something. She took one look at me and whipped up the horse. First time I ever was taken for a tramp by a good-looking woman. What's the matter?

DOROTHY (*with a giggle*). Nothing. I guess she was "nuts," as you call it. How did the dramatics go off?

HENRY. Fine! I made a hit. Dressed up as a girl; Charley's Aunt sort of business, don't you know? It was corking! I've got the duds in there. (*Points to one suit-case.*) I'll rig up in 'em some day and show you.

DOROTHY (*solemnly*). Henry, I believe heaven has sent you to this place!

HENRY (*disgustedly*). Don't you believe it. I'm here because Dad wouldn't come across with the cash for that camping trip in the Yellowstone. It's a shame, too, the whole bunch are going, and —

DOROTHY (*excitedly*). You are here to help your sister out of the worst scrape she was ever in.

HENRY. What have you been doing? I thought I handled the scrape department for the family.

DOROTHY. I—I—I've been getting engaged.

HENRY. Is that all? You've been doing that every summer since you were sixteen.

DOROTHY. Oh, but this is serious! I—he—well, we care awfully for each other.

HENRY. Well, what's the matter, then? Who is he?

DOROTHY. Who is he? Why, it's Billy Pearson, of course. Who else could it be?

HENRY. Well, you said something in one of your letters about this Gale chap——

DOROTHY (*hotly*). Percival Gale? I hate him! He's a wretch! just wait till I tell you what he's done.

HENRY. Well, fire away.

DOROTHY. You see, when Billy began to be in love with me, this miserable Gale man made Billy believe that if he could make me jealous of somebody, he would have a better chance, see?

HENRY. I see.

DOROTHY. Well, between them the idiots invented a girl named Fanny Brown, and Billy wrote letters to her every day, and they hid them in that drawer. (*Points to desk.*) Well, it did make me jealous, and when Billy proposed, I suppose I did snap him up a little quicker than I would have otherwise, don't you know, to save him from her clutches. Then he tried to make me think that it was Mr. Gale who was in love with her.

HENRY. Naturally.

DOROTHY. Then I heard them talking about it afterward, the wretches, and it made me perfectly furious. I made up my mind to give them the biggest scare they ever had in their lives, and you've got to help me.

HENRY (*rising*). Me?

DOROTHY. Yes. I've stood by you lots of times, now you've got to stand by me. I'm going to make those men suffer! Maybe I'll forgive Billy when he's suffered enough, but I'll always hate Percival Gale. And maybe Florence won't attend to his case. I've told her he's mixed up with this Fanny Brown, and she's furious.

HENRY (*patting her shoulder*). Good for you! I like your pluck. What shall we do?

DOROTHY. Well, I've got their old letters. They're the silliest, softest things you ever read. If Billy Pearson ever dares to write such stuff to me I'll—I'll get a divorce.

HENRY (*eagerly*). Lemme see 'em.

DOROTHY. Not now, we haven't time. Listen.—Those letters have been mailed to Omaha, Nebraska, and Fanny Brown has come to visit Idlewild. You are Fanny Brown.

HENRY. What!

DOROTHY. Now don't make a fuss. You've got the things there, and you made a hit in the part. You can play for a few hours—for a day, maybe —

HENRY. What! Spend a whole day in those —

DOROTHY. Of course. Now, don't be horrid.

HENRY (*grasping his waist with both hands*). But they squeeze like thunder. They're the down in front kind. It'll kill me.

DOROTHY. Nonsense. I'll let 'em out. For my sake!

HENRY. And the shoes are a crime. I've nearly ruined two perfectly good feet with 'em already.

DOROTHY. I'll pay your doctor's bills and I'll—I'll coax Dad to let you go to the Yellowstone next month.

HENRY. But —

DOROTHY. You promised. Come on.

HENRY (*seizing the other suit-case*). Oh, all right. Gee, I'm sorry for Billy.

DOROTHY (*grimly*). And I'm sorry for Mr. Percival Gale. (*Exit HENRY into bedroom, L. DOROTHY does not go in.*) Hurry up; I'll be there in a minute to help you.

(*She shuts the door and turns to cross stage, when BILLY enters hurriedly at C., not seeing her.*)

BILLY. That confounded post-office is closed for the day!

DOROTHY (*excitedly*). Oh, Billy, is that you? Where is Mr. Gale?

BILLY. I thought he was here.

DOROTHY. You must find him for me. What do you think?

BILLY (*wildly*). I can't think. There's something the matter with my head.

DOROTHY (*excitedly*). There's a new girl arrived; just a few minutes ago. I couldn't find Mr. Gale, so I told her she could have that room that we were saving for Henry. Now, I must find Mr. Gale and tell him to get Henry a room at one of the cottages.

BILLY. Sure. That's easy. Is she in there now?

(*Sound of whistling from bedroom. DOROTHY becomes nervous.*)

DOROTHY. Yes, yes, she —

BILLY. Seems to have a cheerful disposition.

DOROTHY. Oh, she's a lovely girl; I know you'll like her. But do run and find Mr. Gale for me, dear; I can't have Henry arriving and not finding a room saved for him.

(*There is a sound from the bedroom, followed by a groan. The noise is suggestion of some one who is trying to stamp a foot into a shoe too small for him, and the groan is deep and painful.*)

BILLY (*aghast*). I say, what's the matter with her? Got a fit?

DOROTHY (*pushing him up stage*). Nothing; she's just tired out. Do go and find Mr. Gale.

BILLY. Oh, all right. Don't forget those dances.

(*Exit, c.*)

DOROTHY. Oh, what wretches men are! Even the nice ones. (*Runs as HENRY puts his head out.*)

HENRY. Say, get me some hot water, will you? I've got to shave.

DOROTHY. Yes, yes, do be careful; he may come. (*Enter MARTHA at R., carrying pitcher. HENRY dives back into the bedroom. DOROTHY turns and stops her as she is crossing to c.*) Oh, Martha, do let me have that hot water.

MARTHA. I can't. I'm takin' it to Mrs. Caldwell.

DOROTHY. You must. I've got to have it. It's—it's something very important.

MARTHA. I can't. She'd be awful mad. She give me fifty cents to go to the circus yesterday.

DOROTHY. Oh, she won't mind. I'll make it all right with her. I must have that hot water. (*Takes it from MARTHA, who is too amazed to resist.*) Wait a minute. (*Runs to door and knocks. HENRY opens it cautiously, so that MARTHA does not see him; puts out a hand for the hot water.*) Give me a dollar, quick!

HENRY (*from within*). A dollar! For a shave?

DOROTHY. Hush! Give it to me, quick! (*He hands it to her and bangs the door; she runs to MARTHA and puts*

the money in her hand.) Now, you can go to the circus two more times.

MARTHA. Thank you, ma'am. Oh, it's the finest circus I ever see! They had a man there who done the queerest things! A hypnotizing man he was, and he ——

DOROTHY. Yes, yes, he must have been lovely, but I hear somebody coming down-stairs. You'd better run; it may be Mrs. Caldwell.

MARTHA. Oh, my, won't she be mad when she don't get that hot water?

(Exit MARTHA, at R.)

HENRY *(from bedroom)*. I say, sis, they won't ——

DOROTHY *(running to bedroom)*. Hush!

(Exit DOROTHY into bedroom just as MRS. C. enters at C., followed by FLORENCE, who has a handkerchief in her hand, and has evidently been crying.)

MRS. C. That girl Martha is getting more careless every day! Here it is nearly six o'clock, and she hasn't brought my hot water!

(There is a groan from the bedroom, and DOROTHY'S voice is heard.)

DOROTHY. Oh, nonsense! I can hook it. Here!

MRS. C. Bless me. I didn't know that room was occupied. Florence, why doesn't Audrey come back?

FLORENCE *(listlessly)*. I don't know.

MRS. C. *(looking R.)*. Oh, here she comes now with Mrs. Moffett. Why, they're moving all her baggage over here.

(Enter R. MRS. M. and AUDREY, staggering under the weight of two suit-cases, while PERCIVAL, with two hand-bags and several packages, brings up the rear. MRS. M. sinks into chair up R., while PERCIVAL and AUDREY lean against the wall, R., fanning themselves.)

MRS. M. I want a room on the second floor, do you understand? I won't be alone and unprotected with that awful professor in the neighborhood. Though what good second floors are against a man who can imagine himself a

monkey and climb up the porch, I'm sure I don't know! Oh, why did I let Wilbur go away?

FLORENCE. Don't worry about him any more. You can't depend on any man.

(PERCIVAL comes to back of sofa and leans over FLORENCE reproachfully.)

PERCIVAL (*in low voice*). Florence, you're not angry at me, are you? (*He comes around and sits on sofa. MRS. C., AUDREY, and MRS. M. talk together up c. FLORENCE turns her back on PERCIVAL.*) Florence, what's the matter?

(*He tries to take her hand.*)

FLORENCE (*in a low, tense tone*). Don't touch me!

PERCIVAL (*worried*). Why, what's the matter?

FLORENCE (*turning on him, bitterly*). I know all about you and your Fanny Brown. I hate you.

PERCIVAL. Fanny Brown! Some one has been telling you what isn't true. Florence, I give you my word that there isn't any such person as Fanny Brown.

FLORENCE. Oh!

(*Enter BILLY, c. He pauses to speak to AUDREY, up c.*)

PERCIVAL (*to FLORENCE*). I tell you it was all a stupid joke. (*Sees BILLY.*) Here, I can prove it by Billy. Come here a moment, Billy. (*PERCIVAL rises. BILLY comes down r.*) Billy, some one's been worrying Miss Howe with stories about Miss Fanny Brown. I've told her there isn't any such person—that it's all a joke. Isn't that so?

BILLY. That's right, and a mighty bad joke, if you ask me. There never was any Fanny Brown.

FLORENCE. Oh, if I could believe —

(*Enter DOROTHY, l.*)

DOROTHY. Oh, there you are. I've such a lovely surprise for you, Mr. Gale. And you too, Billy. (*They stare at her in amazement.*) An old friend of yours arrived a little while ago. (*The door of the bedroom, l., opens, and HENRY enters, dressed as a girl. Every one stares in astonishment. DOROTHY puts her arm around HENRY and draws him forward, down r.*) Let me present Miss Fanny Brown, of Omaha, Nebraska.

PERCIVAL. Suffering cats!

(*He sinks on to sofa. BILLY sinks back gasping against wall, R. FLORENCE gives PERCIVAL one scornful look, and rises, carefully drawing her skirts away from him.*)

MRS. M. }
MRS. C. } So pleased to meet you, Miss Brown.
AUDREY. }

(HENRY *grins cheerfully at BILLY.*)

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE.—*The same as in Act I, except that the lights are lit. Time : about midnight of the same day. Music can be heard from the room where the dancing is going on. As curtain rises, PERCIVAL and BILLY are seen ; PERCIVAL, seated at the table L., his head in his hands, BILLY, on sofa R., in an attitude of utter discouragement.*

BILLY (*with a glance at his watch, and a jerk of his head toward the dancing rooms*). Twelve o'clock ! How much longer are they going to keep that business up ?

PERCIVAL (*wearily*). They usually stop about twelve-thirty. Why don't you go in and try a round or two ?

BILLY (*with scorn*). Yes, why don't I ? Dorothy won't look at me, and I've danced with that Brown girl till my feet feel as though they'd been run over by a street car.

PERCIVAL. She's as light on her feet as a young elephant.

BILLY. Where's Florence ?

PERCIVAL. In her room. She hasn't come out of it since that infernal girl called me "Dear old Percy !" Say, Bill, who do you suppose mailed those letters ?

BILLY. Well, if you don't know, I don't know anybody else who does.

PERCIVAL (*to him*). Look here, I'm about tired of being accused of this thing. I'm not an idiot. I tell you I put those letters in that drawer, the day you wrote 'em, and I haven't seen 'em since.

BILLY. Then they probably got up and walked to the post-office and asked to be mailed. Anyhow, they were mailed. She's got 'em with her. She showed 'em to me to-night, with the tender passages marked ! Bah !

PERCIVAL. I say, Bill, what does she mean by saying that she's known us both for years ? I swear I never laid eyes on her before.

BILLY (*wearily*). She says she met us both at the Harvard Prom last year and that she fell in love with me at first sight.

PERCIVAL. Rot !

BILLY. Well, I'm only telling you what she says. She says she never dreamed that I returned her love till my "dear letters" came. So there you are. I met about fifty girls that night, maybe I did meet her—who knows?

PERCIVAL (*savagely*). Well, I never saw her before. I'd know that girl anywhere; she's got the wickedest eye I ever saw in a woman. Do you know what I think?

BILLY. No, and I don't want to. I've had enough of your thoughts.

PERCIVAL (*darkly*). All right. When she begins proceedings you may wish you'd listened to me.

BILLY. Proceedings? What do you mean?

PERCIVAL. I mean that she's an adventuress. She'll sue you for breach of promise, sure as a gun's iron.

BILLY (*rising*). What!

PERCIVAL. It's done every day. Read the papers. She —

BILLY (*wildly*). Let her try! Just let her try! I'll —

PERCIVAL. Hush! (*Enter FLORENCE at C. in evening dress. She pays no attention to either of the men, but goes to the desk L. and sits. She is carrying a leather writing case, and without looking at either of them, begins to write a letter. They stand there in some embarrassment. Finally PERCIVAL goes up to her. BILLY stays where he is and lights a cigarette, throwing the match savagely into the corner.*) Ahem! (*FLORENCE writes busily.*) I don't want to interrupt you, but —

FLORENCE. You are interrupting me.

PERCIVAL (*gesturing to BILLY to go away. BILLY glares at him, and picks up a book from sofa*). I wanted to say something to you.

FLORENCE. I'm sorry, but this letter must go by the morning's mail. (*Continues to write.*)

PERCIVAL (*with a wrathful glance at BILLY, who is deep in the book*). Is—is that why you wouldn't come down to the dance?

FLORENCE. That is one reason.

PERCIVAL (*leaning over her*). Won't you tell me some of the others?

FLORENCE (*writing harder than ever*). No, I will not.

PERCIVAL (*drawing back*). Oh, of course, if you —
(*There is a smothered chuckle from behind BILLY'S book.*)

PERCIVAL *glares at him.*) You seem to have found something amusing.

BILLY. Yes. It's a legal book. I'm looking up some information on the subject you were talking to me about—breach of promise, you know!

(PERCIVAL *stares at him in horror.* FLORENCE, *with a stony expression, shuts her portfolio with a slam and rises.*)

PERCIVAL. I say, Florence —

(*Enter Mrs. C. at c.*)

FLORENCE (*to PERCIVAL*). Miss Howe, if you please.

MRS. C. Dear me, how those young people can stand dancing in that hot room, I don't see. I must have a breath of fresh air. Florence, aren't you dancing?

FLORENCE. No, I'm going out on the veranda with you.

MRS. C. Very well, come along, I'm suffocating!

(*Exit at r.* FLORENCE *starts to follow, but PERCIVAL stops her.*)

PERCIVAL (*pleadingly*). If you'll only let me explain —

FLORENCE (*melting a bit*). If you —

(*Just at this moment HENRY, his gown badly torn around the bottom, runs in at c.* FLORENCE *stiffens instantly.* BILLY *jumps up.*)

HENRY. The big fat brute! He stepped on my dress and tore half a yard off! I'd like to break his head. Oh, hello, Billy!

BILLY. Hello! I've got this dance with Mrs. Moffett.

(*Bolts out of door r.*)

HENRY (*staring after him*). What a whopper! He's got it with me. I'll show you on the program. But I don't care. I'd lots rather sit it out with you, Percy. Do you remember —

FLORENCE (*icily*). If you will let me pass, Mr. Gale, I should like to go out on the veranda.

(*Exit FLORENCE, r.*)

HENRY (*sweetly*). Unless you'd rather dance, Percy?

PERCIVAL (*crossly*). I don't want to dance. I hate dancing.

HENRY (*sitting down in an easy chair at R. as PERCIVAL tramps uneasily up and down*). That's not the way you talked the night of the prom!

PERCIVAL (*savagely*). Oh, forget it!

HENRY. Why, Percy, never! I had a heavenly time at the prom. Don't you remember walking in the moonlight, under the beautiful trees, you and I —

PERCIVAL. I never walk in the moonlight. It gives me neuralgia.

HENRY (*sentimentally*). You said it gave you something else that night. You said —

PERCIVAL (*irritably*). Probably I did. It gives me the earache, sometimes.

HENRY. You said it gave you the heartache. That it was too beautiful to last.

PERCIVAL. Well, it didn't last, did it? (*He sits down by the table in exasperation. HENRY takes out a handkerchief and bursts into tears. PERCIVAL jumps.*) Oh, I say, don't, please. I—I didn't mean anything, I assure you, I —

HENRY. You're a heartless brute!

PERCIVAL. I know I am! I always was. I can't help it. Confound it, they'll hear you all over the house!

(*He tries to console HENRY, who weeps louder every minute.*)

HENRY. To break a helpless girl's heart with your wicked flirting! But I'll get even! I'll have satisfaction, I'll —
Oh!

(*By this time PERCIVAL is wildly fanning HENRY with a handkerchief while HENRY weeps harder all the time.*)

(*Enter AUDREY at C.*)

AUDREY (*in amazement*). Goodness gracious, what has happened?

PERCIVAL (*wrathfully*). There, I told you somebody'd hear you!

AUDREY (*coming down*). Oh, what is the matter, dear?

HENRY (*who has taken a good look at AUDREY from be-*

hind a corner of his handkerchief). A fresh guy stepped on my dress and tore it.

AUDREY (*with a glance at PERCIVAL*). Oh, is that all? I thought something unusual had happened. I'll fix it for you.

(PERCIVAL *crosses to L.* AUDREY *comes down. She takes some pins from her dress and starts to pin up the rip.*)

HENRY (*sentimentally*). Men are such brutes! They have such short memories!

AUDREY (*jabbing in pins as she kneels beside him*). And such big feet!

(HENRY *tucks his feet under his chair quickly.* AUDREY *looks at him suspiciously.*)

HENRY. Don't go away, Percy! The next is our dance.

PERCIVAL (*wrathfully, going up c.*). I shall never dance again. Never!

(*Enter MRS. M. and DOROTHY, both in evening dress, at c.* PERCIVAL *turns, comes down, throws himself into chair by the table in disgust.* MRS. M. *is gesticulating wildly to DOROTHY.*)

AUDREY. There, you're all right again.

HENRY (*looking down at the top of her head with an admiring eye, and patting it patronizingly*). You're an awfully nice little girl.

(*He rises and turns toward the others.* AUDREY, *highly indignant, sinks back on the floor, glaring at him.*)

AUDREY. Nice little girl, indeed! If I'm not more of a young lady than you are —

MRS. M. I tell you, my Susan saw him come into this house.

AUDREY (*rising*). Who? The hypnotizing man?

MRS. M. Yes, the brute.

HENRY (*aside*). The lady who took me for a tramp!

(*Crosses to PERCIVAL, perches on the table, with his back to MRS. M., and pats PERCIVAL'S head affectionately.* PERCIVAL *jerks his chair away from the table in irritation.*)

DOROTHY. But she must have been mistaken.

MRS. M. Susan is never mistaken. She said she saw a man, just the dreadful looking sort of man I described to you, Dorothy, enter this house, before dinner. He evidently followed me here.

HENRY (*brushing PERCIVAL'S hair with one finger*). Well, he's here, and you're here, so what's the matter?

PERCIVAL (*jerking his head away*). He's not here. I'll bet my hat.

MRS. M. Well, I refuse to go to bed until I know. I should think the least you could do, Mr. Gale, would be to search the house.

PERCIVAL. Certainly, search all you please.

(*Enter MRS. C., FLORENCE and BILLY at R.*)

MRS. C. Search the house? For what?

MRS. M. For the professor. He's hidden in this house somewhere. Susan saw him. He's only waiting for the shades of night to fall to murder us all.

HENRY (*clutching PERCIVAL*). Oh! Percy!

MRS. M. Why did I let Wilbur go away?

PERCIVAL (*wrenching himself away from HENRY*). I don't know, but you'll never do it again if I can help it.

(*Crosses to FLORENCE, who turns away from him.*)

DOROTHY. But I know he isn't here. He —

(*She stops in confusion.*)

AUDREY. I heard of a tramp once who hid in the pantry till the family were all in bed, and then cut every one of their throats with a razor, and —

MRS. M. Oh! Oh! Oh!

MRS. C. I insist, Mr. Gale, that this house be searched before any of us retire.

BILLY. We'll begin up-stairs. Come on, Percy.

AUDREY. I'll go in here. He may be under the bed.

(*Exit into bedroom, followed by MRS. C.*)

PERCIVAL. Somebody go and tell the musicians to play "Home, Sweet Home," or we'll never get rid of those idiots from town.

MRS. M. (*with a hurried glance toward bedroom*). I'll go.

(*Exit, c.*)

HENRY (*to BILLY*). I say, what'll you do to the chap if you catch him?

BILLY (*coldly*). Tie him up for the night and hand him over to the authorities in the morning.

HENRY (*with a gasp*). Oh! How clever of you!

(*He nudges DOROTHY.*)

DOROTHY. Hush!

PERCIVAL. Now, Billy, you and Miss Dudley and Miss Brown can search up-stairs, and Flor—Miss Howe and I will ransack the premises down here. Who ever sees him first, whistle. (*He goes toward FLORENCE.*)

FLORENCE (*coldly*). Thank you. I'm not interested in the affair at all. I'm going to bed.

(*Crosses up stage. Just at this moment there is an exclamation from the bedroom. FLORENCE stops, HENRY and DOROTHY glance at each other in consternation, the men start to go into bedroom, when MRS. C. and AUDREY emerge, the former carrying a pair of blue serge trousers. MRS. M., entering at c., at the same moment, utters a cry. HENRY gives a groan, the others stand paralyzed.*)

MRS. M. The very clothes he had on when I saw him! Now, will you deny that he's hidden here?

BILLY. Well, if he is, he'd better stay hidden, I should think.

MRS. C. (*dropping the trousers*). Mr. Pearson!

DOROTHY. That's all very well, but what's the use of finding trousers? Where's the man?

PERCIVAL (*with determination*). He's not far away. Evidently the poor chap isn't right in his mind.

MRS. M. A lunatic!

HENRY (*with another gasp*). Oh!

PERCIVAL. If the poor fellow is out of his head, it's only common humanity to find him and send him back to his friends. Now, if you ladies will go to bed, Pearson and I will keep our eyes open, and if he goes to prowling about, we'll find him. There's no cause for alarm.

MRS. C. That's a very sensible idea. Come, Audrey.

(*Exeunt MRS. C. and AUDREY, c.*)

MRS. M. (*taking the dinner bell, a huge one, from under*

her dress and putting it on the table). If you get him ring this, and we'll all come down and help. Come on, Florence.

FLORENCE (*hesitating*). You'd better be careful. He—he may be armed.

PERCIVAL (*coolly*). Thank you.

FLORENCE. Good-night.

(*Follows Mrs. M. slowly out at c.* PERCIVAL gazes after her while HENRY and DOROTHY are whispering.)

HENRY (*to DOROTHY*). You've got to get me my trousers! I tell you I won't sleep in a house without my trousers. Suppose there's a fire?

DOROTHY (*soothingly*). I'll step down and get them for you when they're all gone. (*Then louder, for the others.*) Good-night, Fanny dear.

HENRY. Good-night. (*In a whisper.*) If you forget, I'll give up the whole game! (*To the boys.*) Good-night, boys!

PERCIVAL (*gruffly*). Good-night. (*BILLY crosses to r., lights a cigarette. HENRY goes into bedroom l. DOROTHY runs off at c. PERCIVAL stoops, picks up the trousers, and hangs them over a chair.*) Anyhow, that's no way to treat a good pair of trousers, if they do belong to a professor of hypnotism!

BILLY. Professor of hypnotism be blown! That's nothing but a sample of Angela Moffett's nonsense. There's no professor of hypnotism on this place.

PERCIVAL. Then how do you account for those?

(*Points to trousers.*)

BILLY. Your precious Fanny Brown.

PERCIVAL. What do you mean?

BILLY (*coming to him*). I tell you that girl's an adventuress. She got those letters and made up her mind to make a good thing of it. It's my impression that she belongs to a gang of some sort, and that she's going to let 'em in here to-night to burglarize the place.

PERCIVAL (*alarmed*). But she—the trousers?

BILLY. She's probably planning to make a quick get away in men's clothes. I tell you I watched her when those trousers were found, and she looked sick! She's got a hand in this business somewhere.

PERCIVAL. I never thought of that. Maybe I'd better find John and tell him to keep his eye on the house from the outside.

BILLY. Maybe you had.

PERCIVAL. I'll go at once.

(Exit, R.)

BILLY *(malevolently)*. And maybe you'll have had enough of inventing females for me to write love letters to after this! Well, anyhow, she's safe enough in there now. I guess I'll take a turn outside myself and smoke. This business is getting on my nerves.

(Exit, R.)

(Enter DOROTHY, cautiously, at c. She makes a sudden grab for the trousers, and then runs to bedroom.)

DOROTHY *(in a loud whisper)*. Henry!

(Door opens and HENRY'S head appears, without the wig.)

HENRY. Have you got them?

DOROTHY *(handing them to him)*. Yes. What are you going to do with them?

HENRY *(savagely)*. Do with 'em? I'm going to put 'em on!

DOROTHY. But you mustn't! You can't go back on me. Now, you ——

HENRY. I can't stand this game any longer for anybody. I haven't had a square breath for six hours, and my feet feel as though they'd been put through a meat grinder. I tell you ——

DOROTHY. Oh, please, Henry. It's working beautifully. Don't spoil it. Now, do be reasonable!

HENRY. I won't be reasonable. Here I've been dancing my head off all evening with those two wooden heads, to please you, and you ask me to be reasonable! I've had enough of Billy Pearson; I don't care whether he gets into the family or not. He's a mess. I want to put on my trousers and have a smoke and be introduced to some of the good-looking girls on the place, and I'm going to!

DOROTHY *(angrily)*. Henry Dudley, if you dare do such a thing, I'll—I'll tell father that you were arrested for

speeding again last month and that the fifty dollars you told him was for books went to pay the fine! So there!

HENRY. Oh, I say, sis——

DOROTHY. Yes, I will! I—— (*Enter BILLY, whistling. HENRY shuts the door. DOROTHY turns, sees that escape is impossible and faces BILLY. In some embarrassment.*) I—I came down to get a glass of water.

BILLY (*politely*). Let me get it for you.

DOROTHY. Thanks. I had it—in there.

(*Points to HENRY'S room.*)

BILLY. Oh! (*Pause.*) I'm exceedingly obliged for those dances.

DOROTHY (*seriously*). I was sorry not to give them to you, Billy, but you know it wouldn't have been fair.

BILLY. Fair!

DOROTHY (*very seriously*). Yes, to her.

(*Points to bedroom.*)

BILLY (*wrathfully*). Confound her!

DOROTHY. Don't try to put the blame on her shoulders! I didn't think that of you, Billy.

BILLY (*furiously*). What the deuce do you mean?

DOROTHY (*severely*). I have always thought that the most cowardly thing a man could do was to win an innocent girl's affections by his wicked arts, and then desert her when he found some one he liked better!

BILLY (*in horror*). Are you crazy, or am I?

DOROTHY (*putting her handkerchief to her eyes*). I wish I could explain your conduct that way! Unfortunately, that broken-hearted child has confided in me, and I——

(*A sound of cheerful whistling from bedroom.*)

BILLY (*sneeringly*). Sounds broken-hearted, don't she?

DOROTHY. That's her pride. Every woman has some pride.

BILLY (*fiercely*). I tell you, I never said a word to that girl to make her think that I——

DOROTHY. Oh, I know what you said to her. The same thing every man says; and then is angry because the poor girl remembers it after he's forgotten.

BILLY (*angrily*). Look here, Dorothy! For two cents I'd tell you the truth about that girl. She ——

DOROTHY (*retreating, her hands over her ears*). I don't want to hear it!

BILLY. I tell you, she's an impostor! She ——

DOROTHY. I decline to hear another word on the subject. Mr. Pearson, I am more disappointed in you than I can possibly tell you. Good-night.

(*Goes up stage. BILLY starts after her.*)

BILLY. Oh, I say, wait a minute!

(*Enter PERCIVAL, at R.*)

DOROTHY. Not another word!

(*Exit at C. BILLY turns to face PERCIVAL. They look at each other in discouragement.*)

BILLY. Well, it's a nice mess we've made of this affair!

PERCIVAL. Beautiful!

BILLY. I suppose we may as well make ourselves comfortable?

PERCIVAL (*turning the lamp down a little*). Help yourself. Don't expect to sleep, myself.

(*BILLY takes some cushions, throws them on the floor and stretches out on them. PERCIVAL curls up on the sofa.*)

BILLY. I say, Percy, do you —— (*He is interrupted by a snore from PERCIVAL.*) Well, I give up! If he can sleep, with that blamed girl on his conscience, it's more than I can!

(*He arranges his cushions more easily and begins to snore himself. The curtains at C. are parted and AUDREY, in slippers and bathrobe, a lighted candle in her hand, comes in. She glances at the two men in disdain.*)

AUDREY. And they call this protecting the women! Ahem!

(*Both men jump up.*)

PERCIVAL. Who's that?

AUDREY (*sarcastically*). It's only I. I'm sorry to have disturbed your slumbers.

BILLY. We weren't asleep. We were meditating upon the affair.

AUDREY. Oh! Well, I've made a discovery, and I came down to tell you.

BOTH. A discovery? What?

AUDREY (*mysteriously*). Come here. (*They come toward her; she stands between them speaking very mysteriously.*) When I went up to my room, it was awfully hot, and I threw open my window and leaned out. You know my room is right over that one. (*Points to bedroom.*)

BOTH. Yes, yes!

AUDREY. What do you suppose I saw?

PERCIVAL. The professor?

AUDREY. I saw a lighted cigarette; somebody was leaning out of that window, smoking!

BILLY. I told you that girl was an adventuress!

AUDREY (*scornfully*). Girl! That's no girl!

BOTH. What?

AUDREY. I suspected it when I heard her language; I was sure of it when I saw her feet; but I knew it when I smelled that smoke!

PERCIVAL. But who the deuce is he?

AUDREY. There's something very familiar about his eyes. If I could see him without that wig —

BILLY (*jumping and giving a sudden whistle*). Eyes! You're right. Why didn't I think of it before? Of course it is! They had the sophomore dramatics night before last, and he had a girl's part! Whoopee!

PERCIVAL. Well, any time you get ready!

AUDREY. What in the world are you talking about?

BILLY (*dramatically*). Turn down the lights some more! Oh, this is the richest yet!

AUDREY (*in a resigned tone*). I think he's crazy, but you might as well humor him.

(PERCIVAL turns the lamp a little lower.)

BILLY. Now, come closer! (*They crowd up to him.*) That chap in there is Henry Dudley!

AUDREY. }
PERCIVAL. } What!

BILLY. Nobody else. Dorothy has put him up to this to get even with me for the Fanny Brown business. She's got those letters.

PERCIVAL. Well, I'll be darned !

AUDREY (*mystified*). What letters ?

BILLY. There's no time to explain. You do as I say, and we'll make both of 'em sick over this.

PERCIVAL. Won't we, though ?

AUDREY. You mean that Henry Dudley has been making us all think he was a girl ?

BILLY. Exactly. It never dawned on me till you said that about his eyes. He's got Dorothy's eyes. I haven't seen him but once or twice, but I know him all right. (PERCIVAL *makes a bolt for the bedroom door*. BILLY *grabs him*.) What are you going to do ?

PERCIVAL (*savagely*). I'm going to lick that kid within an inch of his life.

BILLY. Hold on —

AUDREY (*grabbing him*). Oh, he may be a lady !

PERCIVAL (*in disgust*). He may be a pussy cat ! Let me go ! I'll —

BILLY. Hold on, I've got a better idea than that ! If you two will play up when I say the word —

AUDREY. Hush ! She's coming out !

(*They crouch behind the table as HENRY comes out dressed in his own clothes, puffing a cigarette.*)

HENRY. If I had to keep those things on another minute — I'd commit suicide !

BILLY (*in a hoarse whisper*). Now ! Get him down !

(*He and PERCIVAL jump on HENRY and bear him to the ground down R. AUDREY rings the bell wildly.*)

HENRY. Here ! Drop that ! I say, that'll do ! Who are you, anyhow ?

AUDREY (*tearing the cord from her bathrobe*). Here ! Tie him with this !

PERCIVAL (*taking cord*). Now, my fine young man, we'll attend to your case !

AUDREY (*spitefully*). I'm a nice little girl, am I ? Oh, you villain !

BILLY (*grabbing another cord from portières*). Now, professor, we'll just let you sit in this comfortable chair, tied safely, because we don't want to lose you, and —

(*They put HENRY in the chair down R., tying him to it.*)

HENRY. Professor! I'm no professor, I tell you. I'm Henry Dudley. I——

(*Enter* MRS. C., MRS. M., FLORENCE and DOROTHY at c., *in great excitement. They are all in kimonos, except DOROTHY, who is still in her evening dress. MRS. C.'s hair is in curlers. MRS. M. wears a neat little boudoir cap and clutches a poker. DOROTHY runs to HENRY.*)

BILLY. Oh, yes, we hear you, but we know better. Henry Dudley doesn't arrive till to-morrow!

MRS. M. Oh! He's the very man I met in the lane. The hypnotist! Oh, why did I let Wilbur go!

(*She sinks into a chair up L. MRS. C. tries to calm her.*)

HENRY. I tell you I'm not a hypnotist; I'm Henry Dudley, and it was all a joke.

BILLY. It'll be a very sad joke for you, my man, when the authorities get hold of you.

DOROTHY (*down c.*). How dare you? I tell you he is my brother. Untie that rope this minute!

MRS. M. No, it isn't safe! I protest against that villain being set free.

DOROTHY. Billy Pearson, do as I say!

HENRY. And be quick about it. This infernal cord is giving me a cramp.

BILLY (*down L., to the others*). Isn't it awful? I wouldn't have supposed he could gain control over her so easily. I thought she had such a strong mind. It only shows how dangerous the fellow is.

DOROTHY (*indignantly*). What do you mean?

BILLY (*crossing to c., taking DOROTHY'S hand soothingly*). There, you'll be all right in a little while. Don't look at him: try to exert your will power.

HENRY. Is anybody going to cut this rope, or are you all crazy?

DOROTHY. How dare you treat my brother like that?

BILLY. You must try to realize that you only imagine him to be Henry. It's his deadly power that's holding you. You must try to fight it off for my sake.

DOROTHY (*furiously*). Oh, I could choke you, Billy Pearson!

HENRY (*kicking wildly*). I *will* choke him if somebody'll cut this confounded rope!

PERCIVAL. Here, quit that, none of your circus tricks around here. I'll whistle to John to fetch the constable.

(Goes up R. and calls.)

MRS. C. *(to MRS. M.)*. Are you quite sure this is the man, my dear? He's very harmless looking.

MRS. M. Oh, yes, he tried to stop me in the lane when I was coming home. He —

(There is a sudden scream from AUDREY, who runs down C. and drops to the floor in a crouching attitude. PERCIVAL comes down L.)

AUDREY. I won't be a dog! I won't! I'm a girl!
I —

MRS. C. *(rushing to her)*. My child!

BILLY. Another! I was afraid of it.

HENRY *(savagely)*. You'd better be afraid.

(DOROTHY tries to get hold of the rope, but BILLY keeps her away. She is furiously angry.)

AUDREY *(down on all fours, shaking her head furiously)*. Bow—bow—bow wow!

(She runs around, giving an imitation of a fussy small dog. MRS. C. swings her hands wildly.)

DOROTHY. Billy Pearson, if you don't stop this business instantly I shall send for the police myself.

BILLY. My dear girl, what can I do?

(PERCIVAL suddenly drops down on all fours and with a vicious snarl rushes at AUDREY. MRS. C. screams.)

FLORENCE *(wildly)*. Percival! Percival!

(She is answered by a terrible growl, as PERCIVAL jumps at AUDREY.)

BILLY. Great Scott! A dog fight! *(He rushes at them to separate them: DOROTHY seizes the opportunity to free HENRY, who jumps to his feet; BILLY springs away from the couple, his hand to his mouth, and goes down L.)* He's bitten me!

(The women scream. MARTHA appears C., wrapped in a long coat.)

MARTHA (*coming down c.*). For the love of Mike, what's the matter?

(*There is silence in an instant. PERCIVAL and AUDREY collapse on the floor and look rather ashamed.*)

HENRY. This fellow —

DOROTHY (*down r., stepping forward*). Martha, have you ever seen this young man before?

MARTHA (*looking at HENRY*). No, I ain't. Who is he?

DOROTHY. Did you see the professor of hypnotism at the circus?

MARTHA. Sure I did. A handsome feller he was, with black hair and whiskers.

MRS. M. (*up c.*). Whiskers! Oh!

DOROTHY. Then this isn't the professor?

MARTHA. Him? I should say not. Didn't I tell you the professor was a real handsome feller?

PERCIVAL (*sitting up*). That will do, Martha, you may go.

MARTHA. Yes, sir. (*She starts to go, then pauses, glancing around the room.*) Is it a play you're all practicing, sir?

PERCIVAL. Exactly. You may go.

MARTHA. Yes, sir.

(*Exit, c.*)

MRS. M. And to think I never saw the professor after all! It only shows what the country does to one's nerves. I shall write to Wilbur to come at once.

(*Goes to desk and begins to write.*)

MRS. C. (*to AUDREY*). Get off that floor this instant!

AUDREY (*scrambling to her feet*). Yes, mother.

(*She goes up c.*)

HENRY. I say, don't be hard on her. She's a jolly little soul. She was trying to get even with me for a fresh remark I made to her.

(*He goes up c. to MRS. C. and AUDREY. They talk.*)

FLORENCE (*running to PERCIVAL, down r.*). Oh, Percy, how could you frighten me like that?

PERCIVAL. My darling, can you ever forgive me?

FLORENCE. Yes, now that I know there is no Fanny Brown. Was it all a joke of Dorothy's?

PERCIVAL. Well, mostly.

(BILLY, *down R. has been standing sheepishly near DOROTHY, who is trying to be severe, but keeping her countenance with difficulty.*)

DOROTHY. And now, what have you got to say for yourself?

BILLY. Well, I had to expose the kid somehow. How did you find out about Fanny Brown?

DOROTHY (*a little ashamed*). I overheard your talk with Mr. Gale. I—I didn't mean to listen, but I—I couldn't help it. It was horrid of you, Billy.

BILLY (*remorsefully*). Beastly. I did it because I was afraid it was the only way I stood any chance with you.

DOROTHY (*softly*). Was I as bad a flirt as all that?

BILLY. Awful! You've no idea.

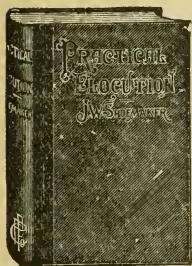
DOROTHY. Then I think you did just exactly right.

BILLY. Dorothy!

(*They embrace.*)

CURTAIN

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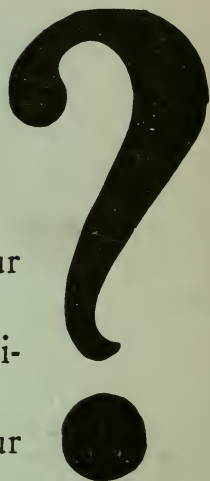
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