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1914







A PAIR OF SIXES

A Farce in Three Acts



BY

EDWARD PEPLÉ



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CHARACTERS

T. BOGGS JOHNS	}Business Partners
GEORGE B. NETTLETON		
KROME.....		Their Bookkeeper
MISS SALLY PARKER.....		Their Stenographer
THOMAS J. VANDERHOLT.....		Their Lawyer
TONY TOLER.....		Their Advertising Salesman
MR. APPELEGATE.....		Their Customer
JIMMY.....		Their Office Boy
MRS. NETTLETON.....		The Wife
MISS FLORENCE COLE.....		The Sweetheart
CODDLES.....		An English Maid-of-all-work

Time of Action—The Present

ACT I—Offices of the Eureka Digestive Pill
Co—in New York.

ACT II—Home of Nettleton, two weeks later.

ACT III—Same as Act 2, one week later.

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ACT I

SCENE: *Office of the Eureka Digestive Pill Company—New York. At right rear is main entrance to office. At left rear is entrance from and into salesroom. R and L, down front, are entrances into offices of Nettleton and Johns, that at Right, being lettered "George B. Nettleton, Private"; that at L, "T. Boggs Johns, Private." Typewriter's desk at R, a little upstage. At L is a standing desk and high stool. Phone on desk. Over desk is a small Cashiers' window connecting with the salesroom. Safe in corner. Large letter file at rear. Other office furniture. At C is a six-foot table piled with violet colored pill boxes and literature. Big poster on rear wall advertising the Eureka pill.*

DISCOVERED: *Sally Parker, the stenographer, seated at desk writing rapidly. Krome, the bookkeeper, on stool, working over his books. Jimmy, the office boy, enters, right rear with a package of letters. He carries part of them to Nettleton's office, part to Johns' office and the balance on Krome's desk.*

Jimmy—Letter for you, Miss Parker!

Sally—Here Jimmy! (Handing a telegraph form) Ring for a messenger and get this off—right away.

Krome (as Jimmy starts toward Sally)—And ask the shipping clerk about this order. It's over a week behind and the customer's kicking like a mule.

Sally—Here Jimmy!

Jimmy (taking papers from Krome, Xing to Sally)—Aw, how many t'ings does yer want me to be doin' at de same time? I ain't no orty-mo-bile truck! (Jerks telegram out of Sally's hand.)

Sally—No; you're a noisy little runabout that needs more spanking than you do cranking! (Writes on machine.)

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Jimmy (smiling at her)—Say! If you was my wife, you know what I would do?

Sally—What?

Jimmy (sentimentally)—I'd take yer on a weddin' trip—to de very end of de world!

Sally—Oh, that would be nice.

Jimmy—An' den I'd drop you off.

(As Sally makes a movement toward him, half amused, half angry, Jimmy retreats.)

Krome—Get out of here.

(Jimmy exits right rear. Mrs. Nettleton enters left rear.)

(Krome turns quickly on stool.)

Oh! Mrs. Nettleton! Slipping quickly from stool, advancing and drawing out chair from table.) Come right in.

Mrs. Nettleton (pointedly ignoring Sally as she comes down)—How do you do, Mr. Krome? (As he indicates chair.) No, thank you. I haven't the time. Is Mr. Nettleton in his office?

(Sally glances at her and writes rapidly on machine.)

Krome—he's out at present. I'm expecting him any moment.

Mrs. Nettleton—Oh! How very annoying. (Glancing at watch.) I phoned him I would be here at twelve! (Starting to L.) I'll speak to Mr. Johns!

Krome—Sorry, Mrs. Nettleton, but he's out, too. Went over to the bank.

Mrs. Nettleton (turning)—I declare men are never in place when we want them. (To Sally, in annoyance at the typewriting.) Er—Miss Parker—please—It—it makes me nervous. (As Sally stops writing and sits with her hands in her lap resignedly, Mrs. Nettleton turns to Krome.) Tell Mr. Nettleton I've gone to the station to meet Miss Cole.

Krome—Yes'm, I will.

Mrs. Nettleton—I'll be back in a little while and wish to see him particularly.

Krome (following her as she moves upstage)—Yes'm. I'll tell him.

Mrs. Nettleton (again ignoring Sally as she passes)—And say to him that I hope no stupid business will interfere with my appointment a second time.

Krome (opening door and bowing her out)—Yes'm. Good morning. (Closes door and starts back to desk.)

Sally—Say, Charlie, what an old fool Adam was to ever part with that extra rib.

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Krome—Well, it wasn't his fault, he was asleep at the time.

Sally—And you men have never waked up since. Miss Parker—please—please—— (Imitates Mrs. Nettleton. Jerks paper viciously out of machine and puts in another.)

Krome—What's the matter with Mrs. Nettleton?

Sally (with a short, angry laugh)—Oh, she's nice enough to you. You wear trousers! But did you see the way she looked at me? (Dates letter on machine—looks up.) Thinks every woman on earth is crouching like a tiger waiting to pounce on her precious, pudgy husband! (Starts to write, rises and advances.) And I'll tell you one thing, Charley, if this Miss Cole that Mr. Johns is so sweet on, isn't an *improvement*, I'm going to quit my job.

Krome—Well, I'm not worrying about the women, it's the *men*! I don't see why the bosses can't get on. A big, fine business—increasing every month—and yet they are quarrelling and fighting all day long.

Sally (polishing nails with handkerchief)—Well, I know why! Vanity! Mr. Johns invented a violet sugar coating for a pill, and believes he made *the world*! And as for Mr. Nettleton—he's making a perfect show of himself.

Krome—That's so! It's all right to quarrel when you have a failure, but our bosses are the only two idiots I ever heard of who couldn't get along when they had a success.

(Sally moves in her chair, making a display of her silk stockings. Jimmy enters from right rear, coming down to Krome.)

Jimmy—Mr. Krome, de shippin' clerk says—— (He stops abruptly, looking at Sally's stockings out of the corner of his eye.)

Krome (turning on stool)—Well? What?

Jimmy—Well—well he did say somptin'—but— (again glancing at Sally) but it's gone clean out of me head.

Krome (severely, pointing right rear with ruler)—Well, you take your head out there and keep your eyes on your work—where they belong.

Sally—Oh! (pulling down skirt) And you do the same—with yours!

Jimmy—De boss is comin'! (Exit.)

(Sally runs to desk, sits and begins writing rapidly.)

Krome pulls off coat, crosses quickly to stool and becomes very busy.)

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(Nettleton enters right rear. Starts down to his office at right front.)

Krome—Er—Mr. Nettleton— (as Nettleton pauses) your wife was here a few minutes ago, sir. (As Nettleton snaps fingers as though suddenly remembering.) She said she had an appointment with you.

Nettleton—That's so—by Jove! Did you say I left word that I was called out on an important engagement?

Krome—No sir, I didn't know you had one.

Nettleton—I hadn't! But next time work your imagination! (Starts to door and again stops.) By the way, Krome, did you finish up that advertising dummy?

Krome—Yes, sir. I was just completing it as you came in. (Takes up large sheet on which various advertisements are pasted in form of a page, and advances. Nettleton comes forward, meeting him at C.) There's one thing though, that—

Nettleton (who has taken sheet, looks nervously at Krome, tapping center of sheet with his finger)—What's *this*? (Pause—Krome looks nervous—Nettleton speaks sharply.) I thought I told you—distinctly—that the center of this page was to be occupied by *my* ad. concerning the medicinal qualities of our pill. And here I find this junk about a fashionable violet coloring. Pah! (Throws sheet on table.)

Krome—Yes, sir, I know I—I did fix it up in the way you told me, but Mr. Johns—

Nettleton—Now never mind Mr. Johns! You do what *I* say! Understand?

Krome—Yes, sir.

Nettleton—Then do it. (Turns away.)

Krome—I will, Mr. Nettleton, of course, but— (picking up sheet from table) but before this goes to the printer, I'll *have* to have Mr. Johns' O. K. and—

Nettleton (wheeling)—There you go! Mr. Johns—Mr. Johns!—Mr. Johns! till I'm sick and tired of it. *I'm* the head of this firm, and the sooner you realize it the better. (Turning quickly.) You, too, Miss Parker.

Sally (jumping)—Yes, sir.

Nettleton (turning to Krome)—Think I'm carrying this whole business on my shoulders for *fun*? Who engaged you for your position, anyway?

Krome—Why—you did, sir.

Nettleton—All right. Then carry out my orders, or *I'll*

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discharge you. What this office needs is system, and I'm going to have it. System! (Exit.)

(Krome sighs and Xes to desk, taking up paste pot and a pair of shears.)

Sally (smiling)—What are you going to do, Charley?

Krome—The only thing I can do. (Holding up two advertisements the size of the center ad. on sheet.) I keep a stock of these on hand. Every time one boss kicks I paste *his* ad. over the other one.

Sally—How many have you now?

Krome (pasting)—Half a dozen! By the end of the week—if I last that long—this pile will be an inch thick.

(Johns enters from right rear.)

Sally—Oh Lord! Here's the other one! (Writes rapidly—Krome turns sheet over on its face and begins posting ledger.)

Johns (coming down and stopping at Krome's desk, taking out pass book and laying it on desk. Speaks cheerily)—Pass book, Krome. Discounted the Jennings' note and put Sherwood's in for collection. (Starts to leave, pauses and picks up sheet.) Oh! Hello! Finished the dummy, did you? Good boy! (Turns sheet over, looks at it, then slowly lowers his arm.) Krome!

Krome—Yes sir?

Johns (wearily)—This is the fourth time I find this absurd, inartistic and ridiculous cut in the middle of our advertising page—I told you to put *mine* there— (Checking Krome as he tries to speak.) *You* ought to be able to understand a simple thing like that. If you *don't*—

Krome—*I* do, Mr. Johns, but Mr. Nettleton—

Johns (checking him)—Now, now, cut out Mr. Nettleton! Half the time he doesn't know what he's talking about, and the other half he's talking about what he doesn't know! (Door R slams.) You do what *I* tell you!

Krome—But—but how *can* I, when *he* insists on the opposite?

Johns—And don't you know *yet* who the boss of this office is?

Krome (looking at floor)—I'm—I'm sorry, sir; but I *don't!*

Johns—Then I'll *tell* you— (turning to Sally) *both* of you— (back to Krome) *I* am! If it wasn't for *me*, this business would be just what it was the day I came in—a

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poor little sickly squirming baby, dying of cholera infantum. *I've* made it what it is, and——

Krome—Yes, sir. I understand you—perfectly—but——

Johns—If Nettleton wants to countermand my order, you send *him* to *me*. *Me!* I'll show him who the boss is. (Tapping sheet with finger.) Now fix up this dummy and don't pay any attention to that one—and do it in the next ten minutes. (Tosses sheet on desk and starts to L.) It goes to the printers'—*today!*

Krome (following him)—But listen, Mr. Johns—please—I'm a poor married man—I'm doing my very best— (pointing to R.) but *he* says, if I don't do it, *his* way, he'll discharge me——

Johns—Oh! You're a poor married man. You love your family, don't you? Well then, you do it my way, or *I'll* discharge you! (Exit.)

(Krome rubs his forehead with sleeve and looks from one office to the other. Sally laughs.)

Krome (climbing slowly back on stool)—That's right—laugh!

Sally (laughing)—I can't help it, you old dear. You looked so funny that I—— (Laughs again, but stops in the middle of it as the two office buzzers sound almost simultaneously.) Good Lord! (She grabs up her stenographic book and looks from one office to the other, in doubt.)

Krome (turning with a grin)—Aha! *Now* you can see how *funny* it is.

Sally—Which one rang first?

Krome—Neither. It was both at once.

Sally (crossing R)—Yes, I know, but if I go to Mr. Nettleton— (buzzer L, she turns and starts to cross L) and if I go to Mr. Johns— (buzzer R—starts R—both buzzers sound) Charley! which one must I go to?

Krome—Go to the one that will make you *laugh* the most.

(As she still hesitates—he points with ruler at the two offices. Stops as Johns enters from L.)

Johns—Miss Parker, bring your book——

Sally—Yes sir. (Starts to follow him L when Nettleton enters R.)

Nettleton—Miss Parker! One moment! I thought you fully understood that when my buzzer sounded once—it meant that I wished to give dictation?

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Sally—Yes sir; I do understand it—but——

Nettleton—Then bring your book. (Turns to office.)

Sally—Yes sir. (Starts to follow him.)

Johns—Hold on there!

Sally (hesitates between the two)—Yes sir—but you see—Mr. Nettleton——

Johns—Never mind him—I rang first.

Nettleton—You didn't!

Johns—I did!

Nettleton—It isn't true, and I don't care if it is. *I'm* the senior partner in this firm—and propose to have my rights. (Turning to office.) Miss Parker, I'm ready with my mail.

Johns (stepping forward)—Oh no, you don't! The partners in this firm are equal! I own fifty per cent. of the stock, don't I? And my mail is just as important as yours. Miss Parker will come into *my* office—at once.

Nettleton (grabbing her wrist)—Will she?

Johns (grabbing her other wrist)—She will!

Sally—Oh, please—please! You are hurting my wrists—You—Oh—oh!!

(In the following speeches Nettleton and Johns both speak together, angrily, each pulling Sally, she protesting, till there is merely a jumble of words.)

Nettleton—Now see here, Johns, I've stood your impudence just as long as I'm going to, and it's got to stop! You came in here as my assistant, and you think you're the whole works! I won't have it, I tell you, and you'd just as well understand it right now!

Johns (at the same time)—If you think you are going to interfere with the company's correspondence, just because of your own pig-headed selfishness, you've got another guess. I've got to get off my mail and I don't propose to do it with my hand.

Krome (protesting)—Gentlemen! Gentlemen!

(Sally pulls away and Johns and Nettleton stand scowling.)

Nettleton—See here, Mr. T. Boggs Johns; did *you* engage Miss Parker, or did *I*?

Johns—*You* did! When I engage a stenographer, I get one that's *worth* something!

Sally (bridling up)—Oh, you *do*! Then I'll have you to know that I'm not dependant on this position for a living. If you want a typist that suits you—*get one!*

Johns—I will! you're fired!

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Nettleton—She's *not!* I retain her as *my* stenographer! (Sally crosses to R.) I'm glad to see that at least *one* of my employees recognizes the head of this firm. (To Johns.) Pah-ha! (Follows Sally into office, slamming door. Johns strides toward door with doubled fists, pauses and turns.)

Johns—Krome—call up the agency and get me a personal stenographer. (As Krome goes to phone.) And I call you to witness that when *I* want her for my mail, *she's mine!*

Krome—Yes, sir. (In phone.) Hello—5060 Worth!

Jimmy (enters from right rear)—Mrs. Nettleton is here, sir.

Johns—Well, show her in—what's the matter with you? (Exit Jimmy.)

Krome (in phone)—Hello—yes—Eureka Digestive Pill Company. We want a good stenographer—right away.

(Enter Mrs. Nettleton right rear. Johns notes it, but stands with back to her.)

Mrs. Nettleton—Thank you, Jimmy.

Johns—If George Nettleton can have a devilish pretty typist all to himself, *I'll* have one, too. Get me a slasher—a peach!

Mrs. Nettleton (registering and coming down)—Good morning, T.

Johns (turns in seeming surprise)—Ah! Why Nellie, come right in. I'm glad to see you. (Draws out chair for her, while Krome continues at phone.)

Mrs. Nettleton—You ought to be. I haven't seen you for a month. (Withdrawing her hand from his as she sits.) Is George here?

Johns—Oh, yes—in there—with *Miss Parker* (as she turns quickly) his *correspondence!*

Mrs. Nettleton—Oh! (Glancing at closed door.) But—but I understood from him that he left *that* detail of the work to *you*.

Johns—U'm—yes—And lately I'm doing it with a fountain *pen!* (As Jimmy enters, laying a package on desk.) Jimmy! Tell Mr. Nettleton—if he can spare the time—his wife would like to see him. (As Jimmy crosses to R, taps on door and enters.) I'm just engaging a stenographer of my own—to get anything down at all.

Krome—I beg your pardon, sir—— (Leaves phone and comes down.)

Johns—Er—what is it, Krome?

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Krome—They are sending over six for you to select from— three dark ones, two light ones and a red. (Turns up stage and exits.)

Johns—I'll play the red.

(Mrs. Nettleton registers, while Jimmy comes out of office and starts to pass her without speaking.)

Mrs. Nettleton—Well, boy? Well?

Jimmy—Says he's busy. Yer'll have to wait a minute. (Exits.)

Mrs. Nettleton—Well upon my word! (Crosses her hands resignedly.)

Johns (grinning to himself and turning sympathetically)—Anything *I* can do—while you are—*waiting?*

Mrs. Nettleton—Oh, no! No! (Laughing nervously.) It doesn't matter—really! (Again glancing right then turning brightly.) By the way, who do you think is visiting me?

Johns (delightedly)—You don't mean—*Florence?* (As she smiles and nods.) She wrote me that she would be here next Sunday!

Mrs. Nettleton—She came this morning. Didn't George tell you?

Johns—He? Huh! (Quickly.) I mean—it—it must have slipped his mind.

Mrs. Nettleton—Yes, possibly. She'll be here in just a minute.

Johns—Good! Where is she?

Mrs. Nettleton—We met Mr. Vanderholt—quite accidentally—going to his office; and Florence stopped to chat with him.

Johns (a little taken back)—Oh! I see!

Mrs. Nettleton (teasingly)—You'll have to look out for Mr. Vanderholt. He's awfully handsome—and a dangerously clever lawyer.

Johns—Now don't you worry over Van. I have something for Florence that will make Van look like a ten-cent piece at Tiffany's. (Going to L.) Excuse me?

Mrs. Nettleton—What is it, T?

Johns (joyously)—You ask *her*—*tomorrow!* (Exits.)

Mrs. Nettleton (calling after him)—I will—when I see it on her finger! (She turns and looks at Nettleton's door—shrugs and picks up newspaper from table. Sally is heard to laugh lightly off stage. Mrs. Nettleton drops paper, rises and faces door. Sally comes out, still laughing, but stops suddenly as she sees Mrs. Nettleton.)

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Johns—Oh, what's coming to him!

Sally—Oh! Er—how do you do, Mrs. Nettleton?

Mrs. Nettleton (regarding her severely and speaking with haughty dignity)—Quite well, thank you. I never knew before that Mr. Nettleton's correspondence was so vastly amusing. (Lowers lorgnette, turns her back on Sally and enters Nettleton's office.)

(Enter Tony Toler from right rear. He is brisk and alert, coming down quickly.)

Tony—Aha! Miss Parker! As beautiful and charming as ever! (Kissing his fingers and touching her forehead.) I greet thee with a hungry kiss!

Sally—Why, Tony—how *do you do*?

Krome (entering left rear)—*Hello, Tony. When did you get in?*

Tony (shaking hands)—Ten fifty limited, old top.

Krome—How are you?

Tony—Still busy, boozy and begrimed. Where's fighting George and tackling T? (Indicating offices.) In there? Good work! I'm in a hurry! (Crosses to Nettleton's door.)

Sally—Er—Tony—His wife is with him.

Tony—I don't want his wife. *I want him!* (Knocks loudly at door and crosses to L.) I've got something that will wake 'em up till they'll never hit the sheets again. (Knocks loudly at Johns' door and comes to C.) You watch little Tony Toler. (As Nettleton and Johns enter, stopping and looking in outraged astonishment at Tony. He smiles and nods to them.) Good morning, Boys! Well? Here I am. (As they both stride forward angrily, he holds out both hands to stop them.) Now don't get excited—please—please! You are going to love me! In fact, I think you're going to slip me a little kiss. Oh—I don't want it—I've almost—I say *almost*—landed—the Northwestern Drug Company.

Nettleton—What!

Johns—Good boy! (They shake his hands.)

Tony (addressing first one and then the other)—Worked it through their president, Mr. Sammy Applegate. Big man and a live wire. He's in town now—*on his bridal trip*; and if I can get *here* in *that* condition—he's *ours!*

Johns—When will you bring him?

Tony—That depends.

Nettleton—On what?

Tony—On *you!*

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Mrs. Nettleton (opens door; Nettleton waves her off).

Tony—Of course, it's not in my contract, but both of you promised that the day I brought in the scalp lock of the Northwestern, you'd make me a partner in this firm, with a quarter interest and ten per cent. commission on my sales. (As they both move back slightly.) Now then? Does it go?

Nettleton (pulling at his collar)—Well, I—I don't know about that. The—the business has increased since then.

Tony—So has the Northwestern's business. They control the patent medicine trade west of the Mississippi. I'll double your profits and put you where you ought to have been three years ago. Question: Do I come in?

Johns (as Nettleton still hesitates)—You bet you do! When I make an agreement, I keep it. Go to it, Tony! (Holds out hand.)

Tony—Thank you, Mr. Johns! (Shakes hands and turns to Nettleton.) Well, Mr. Nettleton?

Nettleton—Well—I guess he's right. (Turning away.) For the first time since I've known him. (To Tony.) You bring Applegate and I'll sign the contract.

Johns—No, no! *We* will sign the contract.

Tony—Thanks. I'll get him! (Shakes hands with Nettleton.)

Johns—Where did you nail him, Tony?

Tony (again speaking to both in turn)—On the train—last night! A miracle! His bride ate soft shell crabs and a charlotte russe— (smiling) then doubled up like a pretty little jack-knife.

Nettleton—My, my!

Johns—Too bad!

Tony—*Bad!* The greatest thing that ever happened. I handed her a bow and slipped a couple of our digestive pills. I waited—with sweat upon my marble brow—beaming):

In just one-quarter of an hour
The jack knife was a smiling flower!

Nettleton (laughing)—Good business! Great!

Johns—Make a hit with hubby?

Tony—A hit? Say, for the rest of the trip he didn't know which was his bride and which was *me*. Well, I'm off. (Laughs, goes up stage and turns.) I'll have him wrapped and taged in twenty minutes. You watch little

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Tony Toler! (Puts hat on side of his head, waves to Krome at left rear, and exits right rear. Krome exits.)

Johns—A good man, George; and he's going to make a first-class partner.

Nettleton (loftily)—U'm, yes. And don't forget it was *I* who first employed him. You can't take *that* from me. (Crosses to R.)

Johns—H'm! And two years ago when you wanted to fire him, *I* was the one who made you keep him. And I guess you can't take that from me! (Crosses to L.)

Nettleton (at door)—*You* made me!

Johns—I did!

Nettleton—Peh!

Johns—Peh-heh!

(Both exeunt and close doors. Sally raises hands and starts to write. Jimmy enters L rear.)

Jimmy—Say, Miss Parker! Lady by de name of Cole—waitin' outside!

Sally—Cole? Mr. Johns' girl?

Jimmy—Gee! I wish she was *mine*!

(Florence Cole opens door behind Jimmy and enters.

Jimmy tries to hold her back, but she pushes past him and comes down, while Jimmy stares at her and backs out. Florence turns to Sally, smiling and speaking courteously.)

Florence—Pardon me for interrupting you; but is Mrs. Nettleton here?

Sally—Yes—with Mr. Nettleton. Shall I tell her you—

Florence—No, no, no! Don't interrupt them—please! But would you mind saying to Mr. Johns that—that Miss Cole is calling?

Sally (rising, cheerfully)—With *pleasure*, Miss Cole. (Goes L, beaming.) That's something *like* it! (Taps and enters Johns' office as Mrs. Nettleton comes out of office opposite.)

Florence—Hello, Nell!

Mrs. Nettleton—Oh! you found the way, did you?

Florence—I was escorted—to the door—

Mrs. Nettleton—By Mr. Vanderholt?

Sally—He'll be here in just a moment!

Florence (looking about)—Is this the pillery?

Mrs. Nettleton—Yes; this is where they toil and slave—for us.

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Florence (still looking about, as Sally enters and crosses to desk)—My! and how prosperous they seem to be!

Mrs. Nettleton—Aren't they? But the best part of it is, they get *along* so well together. (Sally starts to laugh, checks it and writes rapidly.) Most business partners are continually having their little differences, but George and T are just like brothers.

(Sally again registers—Mrs. Nettleton looks at her in annoyance.)

Florence (looking from right to left)—Where are they now—rolling little purple pills?

Mrs. Nettleton—Florence! The idea! All that is done at the factory where George used to be before T was in the firm.

Florence (turning quickly)—I thought they went in together.

Mrs. Nettleton—Oh, dear *no!* George was the originator of the business, and, naturally, has the greater care and responsibility.

Florence (in surprise)—*Has* he? Why, I judged from T's letters, that most of the labor fell on *him!*

Mrs. Nettleton—The labor—yes. George does the brain work—and gives it to T to carry out.

(Sally begins to laugh, and as Florence and Mrs. Nettleton turn, she claps a handkerchief over her mouth and runs out at rear.)

Florence (to back of table)—Good gracious! What's the matter with her?

Mrs. Nettleton—*I* don't know, I'm sure!

Florence (looking after Sally and coming to Mrs. Nettleton)—Is she—er—*T's* stenographer?

Mrs. Nettleton (stiffly)—No—George's. T has just ordered several—of assorted colors—two darks, two lights and a red.

Florence—I hope he chooses the red!

Mrs. Nettleton (crosses to right, knocks on door, speaks petulently)—George, dear! Hurry, won't you? I'm *waiting!*

Florence (indicating door left)—Did you tell T that I was here? You know, there are two partners in this firm.

Mrs. Nettleton—I told him—when I first came in. (Quickly.) Oh, Florence—I have a secret! But don't say I told you! (Coming to her, looking around, then indicating Johns' door.) He's been to Tiffany's—and while he

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didn't tell me—in so many words—— (Stops and moves off as Johns enters.)

Johns (advancing joyously)—Why, Florence!

Florence (meeting him cordially)—T! How are you?

Johns (shaking both her hands)—Well, bless your heart! What bully good wind brings you down from Albany?

(Mrs. Nettleton crosses and the three stand together at L. Nettleton enters from R and stands looking at them.)

Florence—Shopping. Came down on a flying trip, swooped upon Nellie and trotted her along.

Mrs. Nettleton (at same time)—And I found I didn't have a cent of money in my purse, so I had to come here before I went to the shops.

Johns (at same time)—And I'm grateful to *any* cause that brings two such charming ladies to my humble door.

Nettleton—H'm'm! (As they stop their chatter and turn.) Anybody going to speak to *me*!

Florence—Oh! Of course! How are you, George—— (Turns to Johns—holding him in pantomime. Mrs. Nettleton crosses to R.)

Mrs. Nettleton—I'll speak to you. I forgot to tell you (as he looks at her in surprise) I want some shopping money. (As he puts hands in pockets.) If you haven't the cash, I'll take a check.

Johns—Oh, Nellie! (Looking at watch.) If you and Florence can wait for half an hour, I'd like to have you lunch with me.

(Nettleton registers and turns away.)

Mrs. Nettleton—Thank you T; but we haven't time. (Advancing.) Besides, I hardly think I *ought* to lunch with you.

Johns—No?

Florence—Why not? (Looks from one to the other.)

Mrs. Nettleton—You haven't been up to dinner for nearly a month—*has* he, George?

Nettleton—Huh! (Turns upstage.)

Mrs. Nettleton (to Florence)—And he *used* to come at least three times a week.

Florence—Why T!

Johns—Er—I've been frightfully busy lately. George has only the manufacturing end of it, and the principal and more important part of the business falls on *me*!

Mrs. Nettleton—What?

Nettleton—*What's that?*

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Johns (to Mrs. Nettleton)—I mean—that every firm has got to carry *some* dead wood. (Glancing at Nettleton. Turns back to Florence—Nettleton starts toward him, but is checked by Nellie.)

Mrs. Nettleton—George, dear! What is it?

Nettleton (striving to hide his rage)—Er—Nellie! Come into my office, will you? I'll—I'll draw that check! (Turns to office.)

Mrs. Nettleton—But, darling! Oh, what is it?

Nettleton (at door, glancing at Johns and speaking in angry sarcasm)—Nothing! Only—I'm afraid of taking up more of his *valuable time*! (Follows her into office, scowling back at Johns).

Florence (to back of table)—My goodness! What's the matter with him!

Johns—Liver, I guess. Needs a couple of his own pills. (Turning to her.) But look here! Surely you aren't going back to Albany tonight?

Florence—Oh, but I must. Father's away and mother is quite alone. (Turning with a smile.) Besides, you are not particularly glad to see me.

Johns (sitting on edge of table)—I'm *not*? Why not?

Florence—Because, when I came to see you—specially—it took you just four whole minutes to come out of your cubby hole. I expected you to jump!

Johns—Aha! But I had a reason! (Taking small package from vest pocket and undoing it.) I was digging in my safe—for this!

Florence—Oh, well, if it's nice, I'll forgive you. (Sits on edge of table beside him.) What is it? (As he hands her a ring, she takes it, holding it up.) Oh! A ring! Two diamonds and a ruby! Why T—it's perfectly exquisite! (Turning quickly.) Who's it for? (Begins taking off her left glove.)

Johns—For the finest, jolliest, loveliest, most beautiful, most perfect little scout between Iceland and the Panama Canal. For the greatest, most glorious, most——

Florence (laughing)—Hold on T! There's only *one* like *that*! (Holding up her finger.) Slip it on—with a wish.

Johns (poising ring)—I wish—hello! What's *that* ring?

Florence—Oh, that ring! That's mine!

Johns—Yes, I know—but who gave it to you—Mr. Vanderholt?

Florence—Your lawyer? Ha, ha, ha! And don't

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you know if I had had a love affair with a lawyer, that *he* would have had the ring, not I? (Holding up finger.) Are you satisfied?

Johns (slipping ring on and taking both her hands)—Perfectly. What do *I* get for mine?

Florence—It depends upon what you want. (As he draws her toward him.) Oh, don't! *You* musn't kiss me—here! (As he continues to draw her, she slips from table.) Somebody might come in—don't!

Johns—Then come in here—my office.

Florence (hanging back)—Oh, no—no! That would seem so cold-blooded!

Johns—It won't be when you get it!

Florence—No, maybe not—but— (glancing around) I think I'll risk it here. (Again looking round, then turning.) Quick. (He takes her in his arms and kisses her. Jimmy from rear, sees them and beats a hasty retreat. Releasing herself, turning and seeing no one.) What was that?

Johns—I guess it was my heart—turning a double somersault. (Coming to her.) Come on! Make it do it again!

Florence (eluding him and running around table)—Oh, no, no! I prefer it right side up! (Picking up samples from table.) My! What prettily colored boxes!

Johns—Aha! The secret of the firms' success. That color? *Mine!* (As she turns to him inquiringly.) George was in business first, but the pill he was putting up tasted so—er—simply villainous that the public said it would be da—— (Puts hand over mouth.)

Florence—Go on—say it. That's half of matrimony. (Taking up box.) What's *in* the pills?

Johns—Cincona, colchicum, aloes, asafedita, strychnine, sodium and a compound of rarified peptinoids.

Florence (making a face)—*Waugh.*

Johns—Exactly. Then *I* came along—and corrected it. Invented a sugar coating—to take off the curse—and colored it with violet. (Taking up box and opening it.) Look! The present most fashionable tint. *My* work! *My art!*

Florence—Do children cry for them?

Johns—They howl! (Holding up box.) In its present perfected state, it is known as the little pill that fills the bill. (Handing box.) Take some along, won't you?

Florence (moving away)—No, thank you. I still have *you* to live for. (Stopping before his office door.) Is this where your genius germinates?

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(Nettleton enters with check in his hand, followed by Mrs. Nettleton. Florence has her back to them.)

Johns (bowing to Florence)—The official cubby hole. Walk in! (As Florence passes him.) *This* side of the office represents the *brains* and *blood*. (Jerking thumb over shoulder.) *That* side—the *bone* and *fat*! (Exits with Florence into office.)

Nettleton (glaring after him, in fury)—You hear that, Nellie? You hear *that*? He's the brains and blood! And *I'm* the bone and fat. Agh! (Turns away.)

Mrs. Nettleton (following him)—Now, dear—don't! Perhaps he's only joking!

Nettleton—Joking? Joking! I tell you, Nellie, he's doing it all the time! Continually knocking my splendid work, and praising his own childish efforts to the skies! What's he done for the business anyway? Nothing!

Mrs. Nettleton—Yes, dear—of course—— (Taking up box from table.) But still, you must admit, that the violet coloring *is* fashionable.

Nettleton (disgustedly)—Fashionable! It's hideous!

Mrs. Nettleton (again following him, trying to pat his shoulder)—Now, darling, don't! It will *never* do for such old friends to quarrel. T has been like a member of the family for years. Of course, we all have our little weaknesses; but *you* don't seem to realize that sometimes *he* may be right and *you* *wrong*.

Nettleton (turning angrily)—That's right! Take up for *him*! Run *me* down! I'm *nothing*!

Mrs. Nettleton (reproachfully as she sits R of table)—George!

Nettleton—I tell you, Nellie. When a man's business troubles get into his home—it's just about time to quit! (Sternly.) Hereafter, you keep out of it!

Mrs. Nettleton (offended, rising)—Oh, well, if you take *that* tone, I'm rather sorry I came to see you. Give me my check, that's all I came for anyhow. (Snatching it out of his hand, folding and putting it in her purse.)

Nettleton (as Krome enters from rear)—Krome! (Pointing to Johns' office.) Tell that—— (As Johns and Florence enter.) Never mind. There it is!

Florence—Going, Nellie?

Mrs. Nettleton—Yes. We are in the way—of business! (Glares at Nettleton and crosses affably to Johns.) Good-bye, T. Come up soon—to dinner—won't you?

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Johns—I will. The very first time that *George* invites me!

(Nettleton turns away.)

Mrs. Nettleton—Now, don't you wait for *him*. Come to see *me*! (Laughing.) Goodbye!

Florence (shaking hands with Nettleton)—Goodbye, George! I'm so glad to find you both so prosperous—and happy.

Nettleton—Goodbye!

Johns (going up to rail with the two ladies)—Goodbye, Florence, I'll run up to Albany just as soon as I can trust George with the—er—critical affairs of business.

Florence (holding up her finger, indicating ring)—Yes, do—and make it soon. Goodbye!

(Johns blows a kiss after her, then turns, and with hands in pockets comes down, humming lightly, ignores Nettleton and crosses to office L. Sally enters.)

Nettleton (in anger and sarcasm)—Hold on there, Mr. Blood and Brains! The Bone and Fat are going to *tell* you something.

Johns (smiling)—Yes? Pray do.

Nettleton—I heard you! Why did you make that statement to Miss Cole?

Johns (airily, with an irritating smile)—From an inborn sense of justice—and a love of truth.

Nettleton—Truth, hell! And I'll tell you this, if you wait for an invitation to my house, you'll be playing music—on a *harp*!

Johns—And when I do come, *you'll* be attending to business—for *once*—with a pitchfork!

Nettleton—Well, I'll attend to business now! I've stood for you long enough, and I'm going to dissolve this disgusting partnership *today*!

Johns—All right. *That suits—me!*

Nettleton—Krome! Call up my lawyer. Ask him to come over—right away.

Krome—Yes, sir.

Johns—Krome—you can say to my attorney—that I'm just as anxious to see him as Mr. Nettleton is.

Krome—Yes, sir. I'll try to make it clear to him. (Crosses to phone.)

(Nettleton and Johns take a step toward each other, stop, then turn to their offices.)

Nettleton (at open door)—Nut!

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Johns—Mutt!

Nettleton—What?

Johns—Tut—tut!

(They exit into offices, slamming doors.)

(Sally comes down to machine.)

Krome—Hello! 2480 Rector!

Sally—Charley—this place reminds me of the man who had both hands cut off.

Krome—Well?

Sally—And then he got hives!

Krome (in phone)—Hello! That you, Mr. Vanderholt? Krome speaking. Yes, sir. Mr. Johns and Mr. Nettleton would like you to come over—right away, sir. (Pause.) All right, sir. Thank you. Goodbye. (Hanging up receiver and turning with a sigh.) I guess this is the finish, Miss Sally—for us!

(Enter from right rear Tony, followed by Mr. Samuel Applegate, a large man with a deep bass voice. Krome nervously glances from them to the two offices.)

Tony—Right this way, Mr. Applegate! Our Bookkeeper, Mr. Krome. Miss Parker, kindly announce Mr. Applegate. (Pulling out chair.) Have a seat! (Rubbing hands, beaming and smiling at Krome and Sally.) I want you to meet the members of my firm—a *team*! The finest pair that ever pushed a pill!

Applegate—Thank you, Mr. Toler. It will be a pleasure. (Takes out cardcase. Sally crosses to L and goes into office, then comes out of Johns' office and crosses into Nettleton's office.) A perfect partnership, Mr. Toler, should run with the same degree of order and lack of friction—as the home affairs of a happily married couple.

Tony (nervously)—Yes. That's what *we* have *here*. Just one long honeymoon. (Sally comes out of Nettleton's office, crosses to desk and sits. Johns enters from office L. Tony advances.) Mr. Johns, I have the honor to introduce—

Johns (putting him aside and advancing with extended hand)—A—h! Mr. Applegate! (Tony steps back in hurt astonishment, while Johns advances.) This is, indeed, a pleasure. Johns is my name, and— (As Nettleton enters from R.) Oh, come in, George! Mr. Applegate, permit me to present my esteemed partner—Mr. Nettleton. (Pats him on the back and brings him forward while Tony looks on in astonishment and begins to beam again.)

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(Tony, Krome and Sally register throughout scene.)

Applegate (as he shakes hands with Nettleton)—Well, well, well—I *am* flattered. In fact——

Nettleton—Have a seat, sir.

Johns—Yes, do! (Both draw out the same chair.)

Applegate (bowing to both)—Thank you—thank you. (Taking seat L of table.) I was about to remark——

Nettleton—Pardon me. (Turning.) Jimmy—my cigars. And pick up your feet!

Jimmy—Yesser! (Goes into office R.)

Johns—Don't trouble, George! Mine are nearer. (Turning.) Krome, get *my* cigars. *MY* private box! (Exit Krome into office L.)

Nettleton (patting Johns on shoulder)—No trouble, dear old chap. None in the wide, wide world. (As Jimmy enters with box, he takes it.) Ah! Here we are. (Opening box and passing to Applegate.) Have a cigar, sir.

Applegate (as Krome enters from L)—Thank you. I was about to say, gentlemen——

Johns—Pardon me. (Taking box from Krome.) I think you will find the flavor of these a trifle more agreeable. *Tobacco* is the one point on which Nettleton and I can never quite agree.

(Sally checks a laugh, clapping her hands over her mouth, Krome and Tony make frantic gestures for her to stop. Jimmy returns to Nettleton's office, abstracting several cigars from the box and putting them in his pocket.)

Applegate (pocketing the two cigars of Johns and Nettleton)—Thank you. I was about to say, gentlemen, that my time is limited. Let's get down to business.

Nettleton (taking seat)—Happy to serve you, Mr. Applegate.

Johns (taking seat)—In *any* capacity!

Applegate—Good! It is a pleasure, I assure you, to transact business with two such enterprising fine young men. (Nettleton smiles and bows to Johns. Johns smiles and bows to Nettleton. Krome and Sally register their astonishment. Tony beams.) Your harmony of method appeals especially to *me*—a—um—a newly married man.

Nettleton (delightedly)—What! (Grasps his hand.)

Johns (delightedly)—*You?* (Grasps his other hand.) Congratulations!

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Nettleton—To you and to the lady. I have a very charming wife myself.

Johns—And *I* am about to have one!

Applegate (laughing with them)—Delightful! All three in the same connubial boat. But, let's sail back to business. (As they both bow.) I'm interested in your remedy—through your very bright young salesman, Mr. Toler.

Tony—Um—thank you, sir. (Advancing.) And if I may dip in my little paddle, gentlemen—

Nettleton (waving him back from behind chair)—Not just now, Tony.

Johns—Don't come into the firm too soon. (Turning.)

Applegate—The Northwestern is going to carry your line of goods. Give me a blank and I'll sign our first spring order for— (Slight pause.) Well—say—fifty thousand gross—

Nettleton (swallowing)—Er—thank you, Mr. Applegate.

Applegate—No. No thanks to *me*. The West is growing and it needs a good energetic pill.

Nettleton—Krome!

Johns—An order blank.

(Krome hands order blank—both reach for it, but Johns get it.)

Nettleton—No, no—T let *me*!

Johns—Oh, I wouldn't trouble you—for the world!

Nettleton—Oh! Just as you prefer, of course. (Turns to Applegate. Johns fills out order on table.)

Applegate (to Nettleton)—No *wonder* you two have made a great success.

Nettleton—Thank you. And while we are waiting, I'd like to show you what *I* have done to perfect this pill. The ingredients are *mine*. A marvellous combination of effective though non-injurious drugs; and the answer is in our sales. (Stepping to L.) Krome, give me the order book and report of our last fiscal year, showing sales for the East and South.

Johns (placing order and pen in front of Applegate)—And I'd like to call your attention to the color of these pills. *My* idea. (As Nettleton tries to interrupt, Johns waves him aside.) The coating is made from the best refined beet sugar, and this fashionable violet dye has defied the persecutions of the Pure Drug Law. (Applegate nods ap-

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proval, takes up pen and signs.) The enormous sales, due almost exclusively to the outside of this pill——

Nettleton (interrupting)—Yes, yes, old fellow; but the selling quality is on the *inside*. (Taking sheet from Krome and waving Johns aside.) Here we are! Account of sales for year ending November 30th, 1912: One hundred and forty-three thousand gross—— (Glancing triumphantly at Applegate.) Counting fifty pills to the box——

Johns—Fifty-one!

Nettleton—Counting fifty pills to the box—we have a total of ten hundred and twenty-nine million, six hundred and twenty thousand opportunities for a sound digestion—that *I* have offered to the East and South alone.

Johns (a little sharply)—*You* have!

Nettleton—Yes, *I!* Mr. Applegate is interested in the ingredients of my pill!

Johns—And Mr. Applegate, as a business man and a druggist, knows perfectly well that the success of *any* patent medicine depends first on its advertising and next on its pleasing taste or form.

(Applegate begins to look uncomfortable—the others register their alarm.)

Nettleton—Nothing of the sort—and you know it.

Tony (stepping forward, appealingly)—Mr. Johns! Mr. Nettleton!

Nettleton—Tony, keep out of this!

Applegate—Gentlemen, I didn't come here to——

Johns—You keep out, too! (To Nettleton.) The public doesn't give a hang for the inside of your pill——

(Applegate rises and backs away in astonishment.)

Nettleton—The public does! As shown by the approval of every reputable doctor!

Johns—Huh! And what reputable doctor ever prescribed *yours*?

Nettleton—Peh! Do doctors prescribe your purple coloring?

Johns—They do! They are even giving X-ray violet baths!

(As Nettleton turns away in disgust, Applegate speaks to Tony.)

Applegate—What *are* they? Humorists—or just plain bugs?

Nettleton (turning)—Johns, you are talking like a fool.

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(Turning.) And if Mr. Applegate will come with me into my office——

Applegate (checking him with a lifted hand)—No, Mr. Nettleton, I don't believe I care to.

Johns (picking up boxes from table with both hands)—But Mr. Applegate——

Applegate (checking him with other hand)—No, Mr. Johns, your sugar coating doesn't appeal to me, either. (Looking from one to the other.) What *my* firm wants is a pill that will give the human stomach a good square honest deal. (Picking up hat and gloves.) But in *this* office—the cause of indigestion—seems rather stronger than the cure. (Taking up order and tearing it across.) Good morning, gentlemen. (Turns and starts up stage.)

Tony (in one last appeal)—But—*Mister—Applegate!*

Applegate (handing him the torn order)—Frame it—for future reference. (Exits right rear.)

(Pause—Johns and Nettleton hold positions at C. Tony at rear. Krome and Sally on either side of stage.)

Tony (almost weeping—furious)—Say, you two damn fools—you don't need a salesman. You want a *wet nurse!* (Throws fragments of order at them, and exits right rear.)

Nettleton (calling after him)—Get out of here! You're fired!

Tony—Fired, huh!

Johns—Now you've done it! Lost the best salesman in America, and killed the biggest order we nearly ever had.

Nettleton—I didn't kill the order! You did it yourself when you tried to hog the credit for my pill!

Johns—It isn't so! He was *my* customer. I got him first and had him going.

Nettleton—And now you've got him *gone!*

Johns—And why? Because you butt in and queered the sale when I had the order *signed!*

Nettleton—Heh! Then I'm glad you lost it!

Johns—And are perfectly willing to smash the business and choke the profits of the firm on account of your piggish jealousy! It isn't fair to *me*—or my children!

Nettleton (in contempt)—Your children! You soap-headed nincompoop, you're not even married!

Johns—No, but I *expect* to be! *I'm* looking to the *future!* (Pathetically) And when I think of those poor little things—crying for food—starving—*on your* account—it makes me *wild!* (Turns away.)

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Nettleton (striding toward him angrily)—See here, Mr. Brains and Blood! that's just about enough! Another remark or two like that and we'll make the matter *personal*!

Johns—All right, Mr. Bone and Fat—I'm *with* you!

Nettleton—*With* me! That's the trouble. As soon as my lawyer comes and I get *rid* of you, I'm going to sit down—and laugh!

Johns—And when *I* get rid of *you*, I'm going to set off fireworks!

Nettleton—Bluff!

(They begin to back away toward their respective offices.)

Johns—A couple of bluffs!

(They puff smoke at each other, enter offices and slam doors. Krome crosses wearily to cooler, draws water and puts it on his head. Sally crosses to mirror and begins putting on her hat.)

Sally—Say, Charley, if I want to keep *this* job, I'll have to lead a double life.

(Thomas Vanderholt enters from right rear.)

Vanderholt—Good morning, Krome.

Krome—Oh, Mr. Vanderholt—you're just in time.

Vanderholt (advancing briskly)—Miss Parker, good morning. (Turning to Krome.) Well? What's the trouble? Same old fight?

Krome—Yes sir; but this time it's to a finish.

Vanderholt—U'm—bad as *that*, eh?

Sally—It's worse!

Krome—They want you to dissolve their partnership, and let this fine, big, money-making business go to smash.

Sally—And we don't want to lose our positions.

Vanderholt (checking her)—Don't worry about your positions. Just have them out and we'll settle this thing for good and all.

Krome—But you won't, sir——

Sally—Indeed, you won't!

Krome—It's gone too far. You can't smooth over *this* time, or if you do, you've got to give them something with a punch behind it!

Vanderholt—All right, I will. Now get them out!

(Sally and Krome cross to the two offices, tapping on doors and speaking at the same time.)

Krome—Mr. Vanderholt is here, sir.

Sally—Mr. Vanderholt is here, sir

(They start back to their desks.)

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Vanderholt (at C)—Thank you—both of you. Now leave the whole case—to me!

Nettleton (entering from R)—Hello, Van!

Johns (entering from L)—Hello, Van!

Vanderholt—Hello, boys! How are you?

Nettleton (advancing).—I'm the one who sent for you.

Johns (advancing)—And so am I.

Both (catching him by either arm)—Come into my office, will you?

Vanderholt—Hold on! Hold on! This is one of the times when I'll have to take you both together. (As they hold him.) Come on, now—come on! (As they move to either end of the table, scowling at each other.) And sit down! (As they jerk out chairs and sit.) Ah! (As Sally advances.) Er—what is it, Miss Parker?

Sally—Excuse me, but would you like me to go out for a while?

Johns—Yes—please.

Nettleton—No—stay where you are. (To Van.) I want her for my witness.

Vanderholt (as Johns rises in protest)—Not a bad idea, T—we may need her. (Turning.) Take a seat, Miss Parker.

Johns (as Sally sits at her desk)—All right! If *he* has a witness, then *I'll* have a witness. (Calling.) Kromie! Kromie!

Krome—Yes, sir?

Johns—Stay right where you are—I want you for *my* witness!

Krome—Yes, sir.

Vanderholt (turning)—Well, boys, what's the row this time?

Nettleton—I want you to dissolve this partnership—at once.

Johns—And no patching up *this* trip—I want it ripped wide open.

Vanderholt (looking from one to the other in half pity)—What's the *matter* with you two? It's a shame you can't get on when you have every reason on earth to pull together.

Nettleton—Heh!

Johns—Heh—heh!

Vanderholt—You mean to tell me you are going to let this valuable business go to ruin simply because of your

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own pig-headedness. You ought to be kicked—the pair of you!

Johns—Now look here, Van——

Vanderholt—Hold on! *I'm* talking. You've been squabbling and fighting for years, and trotting to me with your childish differences. I get it in your office, and my office, and on the street, and everywhere I see you, till you've just about driven me crazy. I've fixed you up and started you off at least forty times, and the next day you blow up and are at it again. Now, I'm fond of you both—you know that. (Patting Nettleton's shoulder.) Old George has been a sort of running mate of mine—— (Turning with a smile.) And as for T—and we've both got the good taste to admire the same girl. (Johns looks at him. Seriously.) But this is business and we'll cut the friendship out. If you choose to be sensible and settle this thing like rational human beings, I'll help you all I can, but you've got to shake hands and make it a *final* settlement. (As Nettleton and Johns remove hands from table and put them in pockets, Van rises and looks down at them.) Good Lord! Did either of you fellows ever play football? (No reply—they glance at each other.) I'll bet you didn't. Now did you?

Nettleton—No.

Johns—Why?

Vanderholt—Team work! That's the way to win out! Team work. Of course, if you can't pull together—then fight. Knife your own prospects, commit a cold-blooded business suicide—and pay *me* for arranging the funeral decorations. (As Johns and Nettleton glare at each other sullenly.) Do I understand that you are fully determined to dissolve this partnership?

Johns—I am.

Nettleton—Ab-so-lutely!

Vanderholt—All right—we'll do it. (Seating himself and drawing a pad toward him.) Question is—*how* will we do it?

Johns—That's what we are paying *you* for.

Vanderholt—And God knows I'm earning my fee! Now then! The simplest and most amicable process is for one of you to buy the other out.

Nettleton—Now you're *talking*.

Johns—For the first time since you started.

Vanderholt—Good! I'm glad you agree on something!

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Next question, which of you will sell? How about you, George?

Nettleton—*Me* sell out! To *him*? And how long do you think the business would last with *that* Napoleon of finance at the head of it?

Johns (rising angrily)—Now see here, George Nettleton—

Vanderholt (as Nettleton also rises)—Here! Here. Sit down there—both of you. *I'll* referee this battle. (As all sit.) Mr. Nettleton refuses to sell. How about you, T?

Johns—Who? Me? Sell out the results of *my* brains—to that big, fat jelly-fish? (Turning head away in disgust.)

Vanderholt (restraining Nettleton from rising)—All right. I construe that as another refusal. Now! Since a simple bill of sale is out of the question, *we'll* turn to the *next* amicable process. (Sit.) You two will *divide* the business; each taking equal share of live customers, stock of pills on hand, and good will of the company. (As Nettleton and Johns nod their heads.) You can then be rivals, and cut each other's throats at your own pleasure and convenience!

Nettleton—Fine! I like that!

Johns—So do I. It's great!

Vanderholt—Ah! Now we are *getting* somewhere. Next question: which of you is to retain the name of the present concern?

Nettleton—Naturally, I will—

Johns (jumping up, facing Nettleton)—What! and get the advantage of all our advertising? Now much, you don't!

Nettleton—Why not? Didn't I originate the business—and build it up to what it is?

Johns—You built up the business! Ha, ha—started it—yes—such a business as it was. All you had was a pill that wouldn't sell.

Nettleton—And just because *you* came along with a measley five hundred dollars and a hideous purple coating, you think you've done it all!

Johns—I have!

Nettleton—You haven't—and I'll prove it. (Triumphantly.) I am the man who *made* the pills!

Johns—And I am the man who made the public *swallow* them!

(Sally begins to laugh, trying to check it by stuffing hand-

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kerchief in her mouth. All look at her, Nettleton steps over and regards her severely.)

Nettleton—Miss Parker, leave the room.

Johns—Miss Parker, do nothing of the kind.

Vanderholt—Will you two sit down?

Johns—I won't sit down.

Nettleton—And I won't! I want you to put that maniac out of my office!

Johns—And I want you to get that baboon out of mine!

Nettleton—A-h-h-h-h-h! (Turns away.)

Vanderholt (turning away to L in utter disgust)—Oh, stop it, will you! *Stop—it!*

Krome—You *see*, it's no use, sir, you'd better give it up!

Vanderholt—You watch me!

Nettleton (pointing angrily at Johns)—I'd give anything on earth I own to have that man in the only place he's fit for—or ever *will* be—a *valet*—to lay out my pajamas!

Johns—And I'd like to have *you* as a servant—to *black my shoes!*

Nettleton—I'm much more likely to black your eyes!

Johns (advancing angrily)—Try it!—and I'll lay *you* out—instead of your pajamas!

Vanderholt (coming between them)—*Will—you—two—infernal—idiots—shut—up!*

Nettleton—Van, keep out of this!

Johns—That's right—keep out!

Vanderholt (angrily)—I won't keep out! You are here to settle a business proposition and all you can do is to throw a baby bluff!

Nettleton—Who? Me!

Vanderholt—No, both of you! All this rot about valets and servants and blacking boots, will you make me sick.

Johns—Then why don't you settle it?

Vanderholt—I would, if you two were sports enough to put it through.

Johns—I'd put through anything.

Nettleton—So would I.

Vanderholt—You would? Then come over here and sit down. (As they look at each other doubtfully.) Come on! Come on! (Johns and Nettleton sit R and L of table—Vanderholt stands behind it.) Now then, you won't have law or reason or common sense, so I'll give you something you can understand. I'll deal you each a hand of poker—cold—The man who wins will run this business for a year;

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the man who loses will be the other's servant for a year. Now!

(They stare at each other mutely, he looks from one to the other.)

Nettleton—What are you trying to do—kid us? (Turns away.)

Johns—You're a hell of a lawyer! (Turns away.)

Vanderholt—You've handed me a hell of a proposition; and even when I give you a sporting chance, you turn it down because neither of you has the grit to stand the gaff. (Turns away, bus with Krome.)

Nettleton—If you mean that for me, I have as much grit as *you* have—any day!

Johns—And I have more than both of you.

Nettleton (turning on him)—*You!* Ha, ha! You poor moon face, you wouldn't bark at a sick canary.

Johns—Wouldn't, eh? How about *you?* When Van made his fool proposal, you were so afraid I'd take him up, I thought you'd faint!

Nettleton—And if I *had* taken you, you'd have *died*—standing up!

Johns—Would I? Well, I'll bet you a thousand dollars that you'd be the first to crawl!

Nettleton—Prove it!

Johns—I will! *I'm* game for Van's little hand of poker, just for the satisfaction of seeing you duck. Take me?

Nettleton (waving him aside)—Aw, bluff—bluff!

Johns (sharply)—Then call it! (As Nettleton again waves him off and turns away.) If I'm bluffing, call my bluff!

Nettleton (desperately)—All right. *I will.*

Vanderholt (quickly)—You're on! Both of you! (Turning) Miss Parker, get your book! (As Nettleton and Johns look at him mutely.) We'll put this down in contract form and have no come-back. (As Nettleton and Johns turn to him as if in protest.) Now then! Who's to be the quitter? (Looking from one to the other.) Speak up! Don't mind *me!* Speak up! (As they scowl at each other, jerk out chairs and sit at either end of table.) Ready, Miss Parker?

Sally (with stenographic book in her lap)—Yes, sir.

Vanderholt—And don't you interrupt me. (Standing R, dictating.) This agreement, made and entered into this blank day of November, 1913, by and between George B.

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Nettleton, party of the first part, and T. Boggs Johns, party of the second part—

Johns (rising quickly)—Hold on there! I decline—positively—to be known as the party of the second part! (Sits.)

Nettleton—H'm! Always the way with that pin-headed captain of industry! Blocks everything.

Vanderholt—Thanks, George. I'll make you the party of the second part.

Nettleton—No, I'm hanged if you will. I wouldn't give him that much satisfaction.

Vanderholt (running hands through hair)—Wheweugh! Miss Parker, strike that out! (Dictating.) This agreement, made and entered into this blank day of November, 1913, by and between *the parties who have hereto set their hands and seals* Witnesseth: Paragraph. Whereas, the parties hereto have found it impossible to continue as business partners, they hereby agree and do agree, as follows: Paragraph. To play one hand of show-down in a game which, for future legal reference, may be known as poker—(pacing up and down as he dictates)—and the loser in said game, for the term of one year from date hereof, shall become the household servant of the winner in said game; the winner hereinafter to be known as the Master; and the loser hereinafter to be known as the Man, subject to the following conditions. To wit— (Turning.) All right, boys?

Johns—Fine!

Nettleton (dejectedly, wiping forehead)—Yes—that's splendid.

Vanderholt—Good! (To Sally.) Clause One: and the Master shall have full and absolute control of all matters pertaining to the Eureka Digestive Pill Co., without stay, let, hindrance or process of injunction, on the part of the Man. (As Johns and Nettleton both rise in protest, Van holds out his hands to quiet them.) *BUT*—the Master shall credit the Man's account—with all income, commissions, or other moneys rightfully his—(as Nettleton and Johns sit)—and shall hold same, subject to deductions for bad behavior.

Nettleton—Say, Van—what *kind* of bad behavior?

Vanderholt—I'm coming to that. Clause Two: and the Man shall immediately enter the service of the Master, as his servant, valet or in such other capacity as may seem good and agreeable to the said Master's wishes or desires.

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(Johns grins, Nettleton looks troubled.) And furthermore, the Man shall serve the Master with energy, diligence, respect and in all other acts of strict obedience, as are generally accepted with the duties of a menial. (As Johns begins to laugh.) What's the matter?

Johns—Excuse me, Van. I can't help it. You know, I'm to be married in June, and was just thinking how great it would be to start in housekeeping with Nettleton as our butler. (Laughing more heartily.) Anything we want done—we'll let George do it! Laughs.)

(Nettleton reaches angrily for notary's seal, but Van stops him.)

Van—Here you! No assault and battery! Hand over that weapon, George! (Taking seal and turning.) Last line, Miss Parker—

Sally—In all other acts of strict obedience as are generally accepted with the duties of a menial.

Van—*But*—for each and every violation of such acts, the Master may charge the Man's account in the sum of One Hundred Dollars forfeit. (Johns chuckles and rubs his hands, Nettleton mops neck with handkerchief.) It is understood and agreed, however, that the Master shall pay the Man, in addition to his board and lodging, the sum of Twenty Dollars per month, in wages.

Nettleton—Oh, see here, Van; that's rather small, isn't it?

Johns (magnanimously)—Oh, all right, I'll make it thirty.

Vanderholt (to Sally)—Change it to thirty. Clause Three: the one other party to whom the conditions of this agreement may be made known, is Mrs. George B. Nettleton.

(Nettleton sighs in relief and Johns rises quickly.)

Johns—And where does Mrs. Nettleton come in?

Vanderholt (turning to him)—In either case she's *got* to know; whether George is *your* servant, or you *his*—What's the *matter* with you?

Johns—Oh! Then you've got to put in another clause to hold him down.

Vanderholt—I'm going to. (To Sally.) It is understood and agreed, however, that should either of the parties hereto, or the wife of one of the parties hereto, make known the nature of this agreement to any other person, the offending party shall pay over to the aggrieved party—the sum of five thousand dollars—cash.

Nettleton (rising)—No, that isn't fair. That makes *me* responsible for ten thousand to his five.

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Johns—Not unless you and your wife *both* tell. What's the *matter* with you?

Vanderholt—That's right, George. Keep quiet. (Nettleton sits slowly—Van turns to Sally.) Clause Four: this agreement may at any time be annulled and cancelled, but only by mutual consent. *And*—should either party fail to faithfully fulfill the covenants herein contained, then such party shall forfeit to the other party—all his stock and other interests—in the Eureka Digestive Pill Company. (Johns whistles and Nettleton mops neck with handkerchief.) Clause Five: Mr. Thomas J. Vanderholt is hereby appointed as referee; with power to decide all questions of dispute; *and* shall charge therefore—such fee or fees—as may, in his judgment, seem just and lawful.

Johns—General Villa!

Vanderholt. (He turns away and then back to Sally.) That's all. Three copies, please. And if you or Krome ever mention this agreement to anyone, you'll lose your jobs. (As Sally turns to desk, taking up blank sheet of paper and carbon, he turns to Nettleton and Johns.) Are you both entirely satisfied?

Johns—I *am*.

Vanderholt—And agree to sign it—before witnesses and under oath?

Johns—Sure. (Pointing to Nettleton who sits dejectedly.) But look at *him*!

Vanderholt (turning)—Well, George—how about it?

Nettleton (rising)—I—I won't do it—I'm married!

Johns (jumping up with a happy laugh)—Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! Now, isn't that the limit! He's married! (Turning to Nettleton.) Who's playing this game of poker, you or she?

Nettleton—It isn't a square deal! Oh, not on my account! but I've *got* to consider Mrs. Nettleton!

Johns—Oh, somebody warm his milk for him, and give him a little kiss!

Nettleton (angrily)—Cut that, will you? (To Van, appealingly.) Why—think of *her* position, Van, if I lost—and had to be a servant—to that little bow-legged imitation of a bluff!

Johns (sweetly)—Now don't you worry, Georgie dear, I have a large nature and am perfectly willing to take on Mrs. Nettleton as a parlor maid.

Nettleton (furiously as he starts forward)—*You*—

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(Krome takes Johns' arm, and Van takes hold of Nettleton.)

Sally—Oh! Oh! Oh!

Vanderholt—Here, you! Here! (Pulling Nettleton back.) No rough house, or I'll whip the pair of you. "Johns," white hope. (Looking from one to the other.) You've got my proposition—take it or leave it!

Johns—Oh, he'll leave it all right, all right. I knew he'd crawl; but I didn't think he'd duck behind a petticoat.

Nettleton (furiously)—That's a lie! And I'll show you, too! (Turning.) *Here! Who's got a pack of cards!*

Krome—I have. (Takes pack from his hip pocket and advances to table.) I play solitaire with 'em on the New Rochelle Express.

Vanderholt (taking them and shuffling)—Thanks. We'll deal quick, or they'll *both* quit. (Smiling at Johns and Nettleton.) Come on—and take your medicine. (As they scowl at each other and sit at either end of table, Sally comes forward behind table, looking on eagerly.) Here, Krome; you are honest and impartial. Cut!

Krome—Yes, sir. (He cuts cards and Van takes them up.)

Nettleton (nervously)—Well, well; What are you waiting for? Deal 'em—hurry up!

Johns—Ha, ha! Getting nervous! Got him beat to start.

Vanderholt—All right, boys; here goes! Senior partner first! (Deals five cards to each alternately, beginning with Nettleton. Business of the two men "skinning" hands and looking at each other.)

Johns—Get your foot off my chair!

Vanderholt—Well, George? How many cards?

Nettleton (swallowing and discarding)—Three!

Vanderholt—All right—put down your pair or whatever it is.

Nettleton (holding two cards close to his breast and looking at Johns)—What are you? Pat!

Johns—Never mind that! Put down your hand. (Discards four cards.)

Krome (as Nettleton lays cards on table)—Pair of sixes! (Johns laughs and Nettleton sinks back in chair.)

Vanderholt—Well, T? What have *you*?

Johns (holding up one card)—I'm holding one card—my lucky queen of Clubs, and three more ladies in the pack! (Laying it on table.) Deal!

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Vanderholt—Hold on—George first.

Krome (calling denomination of cards as Van deals them out one at a time, face up.) Nine—three—eight!

Vanderholt—Still a pair of sixes! (Johns laughs and Nettleton sinks lower in chair.)

Johns (exultantly)—*Oh*, what a cinch to beat! Here! Gimme four! Just flip 'em out, old pal, I'm going to eat that butler up!

Vanderholt—Look out, T, the game's young yet! (Deals one at a time as before.)

Krome—King—

Johns—Of hearts. Come on, you king or queen!

Krome—Jack!

Johns (rising in excitement)—Of hearts! Come on you *Jack* or queen!

Krome—Ace!

Johns—Of hearts! Come on you little straight or flush—come on!

Krome (as last card is dealt)—Four!

Sally—Of Spades!

Vanderholt to Johns)—Nothing! (Turning and holding out hand.) Good boy, George!

(Johns stares at his cards, sinking slowly into seat. Nettleton, for an instant, fails to realize his victory. He ignores Van's outstretched hand, pressing his own to his heart and rising slowly.)

Nettleton—My God! I win! (A slow smile begins to overspread his features. He adjusts his coat and straightens himself.) Boggs! Attend me! (Slight pause.) As my butler, the first little service I shall require of you—is to grow side whiskers!

(Johns tears cards in half and drop them to the floor.)

CURTAIN.

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ACT II

SCENE: *Home of Mr. Nettleton, two weeks later. Late afternoon. Living-room. At Rear is a wide stairway, with turn, going to upper part of house. Right rear is entrance to house, through hallway. Right of it a window with lace curtains and hangings. Right front is doorway leading into library. L a little to rear is doorway leading into servants' quarters. At C is table with several chairs. L fireplace. Wide settee in front of it, small table back of it. Room handsomely furnished. Lights up.*

Johns enters, in costume of a butler, wearing dark side whiskers. He looks sad and depressed. He carries a waiter on which is a decanter, cyphon of vichy and glasses, which he places on table. He crosses to library and returns with a smoking jacket and a pair of slippers. Throws jacket into chair, and crosses to fireplace. Dashes slippers down, then takes them up and places them before the fire to warm. Places hand to head, sighs, and sits dejectedly L. From L enter Coddle, the English maid of all work. She has her broom in her hand.

Coddle (at door)—S-s-sh! Mr. Boggs, sir.

Johns (sitting up and turning)—Well, Coddle, what do you want?

Coddle—Ho, come now, don't be cross. H'I thought w'ilst h'everythink was quiet like, H'I'd jus' run h'in an' 'elp you with your work. (Come toward him, with a smile.)

Johns—Keep away, will you? Keep away!

Coddle (stepping back)—Yes, sir. Thank you, sir. H'I didn't mean no 'arm. But this 'ere h'ain't no man's work, h'any 'ow. I don't see w'y the marster makes ye do it.

Johns—I do. (Taking up rag.) The precise removal of myscroscopic specks of dust from his personal possessions—is the chief component part of a butler's destiny.

Coddle—Yes, sir. I don't know wot you mean, sir; but it's very likely. (She presses her hands to her bosom, looking at him in love-sick adoration.)

Johns—Here! Stop grinning at me that way! (As she changes her expression and backs away.) What are you doing—sweeping—at this time of the afternoon?

Coddle—We's h'expectin' guests—for dinner, sir.

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Johns (rises, starting)—Guests? For dinner? *Who?*

Coddle—The marster, 'e just telephone, an' told me to tidy hup the spare room.

Johns (grimly; sits on settee)—Guests! And a million to one—they know me! (Mops his forehead with dust rag.)

Coddle (advancing to side of settee)—Now don't you worry, sir, about the h'extra work. H'I'll 'ave the dishes 'ot, an' ready for you to serve 'em. (As Johns turns his head away.) Ho, Mr. Boggs, sir, H'I don't believe you's 'appy.

Johns—No? Why not?

Coddle (L. C. by settee)—Men folks can 'ide ther feelins in the day time, Mr. Boggs; but not h'at night. (As Johns looks up at her.) W'y, sir, I can 'ear you through the transom, a-moanin' an' acursin' in your sleep. (Leaning forward tenderly.) Mr. Boggs, sir—was you h'ever a married man?

Johns (grimly)—Yes! Three times!

Coddle—Was you now? W'y, dearie *me!* (Moves closer. Sits on settee.)

Johns (jumping up and moving from her to C)—But I'll tell you one thing, Coddle—that *three* is just about my limit. Understand?

Coddle (following and standing close)—Yes, sir. Thank you, sir. But, of course we h'always 'as the privilege of changin' of our minds. (He backs away as she advances. Coily.) Mr. Boggs, sir—did you h'ever think of the diffrince 'tween *you* an' *me*.

Johns (C of table)—Eh? No, I didn't! How do you mean?

Coddle—In this 'ere 'ouse'old, *you* was h'engaged because you's 'andsome. But H'I was h'engaged—because I'm 'omely.

Johns (taking a step away)—Yes? What makes you think so?

Coddle—Of course, nobody h'aint never told me, plump outright; but h'any one with 'arf h'an 'h'ye can see that the Missus 'as a jealous disposition. 'H'an sho ain't a-goin' to 'ave no good lookin' 'uzzues a-'angin' aroun' to attract 'er 'usband.

Johns—Well, that's good logic, maybe; but where do I come in?

Coddle—Ho, with you h'it's different. A handsome butler is a h'ornament.

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Johns—H'm! That's what the *master* says I am. (Sits R of table.)

Coddle (clasping hands and speaking pathetically)—Yes, sir. An' sometimes you looks mournful an' that sad, you puts me in mind of a piece of music.

Coddle (as he throws the dust rag aside, she takes it, pressing it to her heart. Speaks lovingly)—An' w'en you is un'appy, it's because you'se lonesome. (Coming behind him.) An' h'if you would h'only let me rub your 'ead, sir—an' 'old your 'and—— (Reaches forward touching him.)

Johns (springs up)—Coddle, you are sick! You need a doctor! You—— (Retreats to R, she following.)

Coddle—No, no, sir, 'deed H'I don't! T'it hain't the *stummick*, Mr. Boggs, sir, h'it's the 'eart. (Still advancing while he retreats in terror.) H'an h'if you h'only learn to care a weeny little bit, sir——

Johns—Stop it, will you! Keep away! Why, woman, you are raving crazy! You—— (Glancing to rear.) Look out! Look out!

Coddle (looking round)—Ho, Lud, h'it's '*im*! (Runs to L and turns at door.) Mr. Boggs, sir—if you 'appens to change your mind, sir, I'm in the kitchen! (Giggles and exits.)

(Johns comes to attention. Nettleton enters from R rear and advances to C. He carries two packages, one long and thin, the other flat and about eight inches square. He places them on table, and speaks haughtily.)

Nettleton—Boggs! My hat and stick! (Hands hat, then cane. Johns takes them, making motion behind him as if to strike, Nettleton comes down L.) It is part of your duty to *anticipate* my wishes, without my being forced to continually call your attention to such trifling details. It is most annoying. (Pause.) Why don't you answer me?

Johns—Yes, sir!

Nettleton—Then please remember it. And get my smoking jacket. (Johns helps him on with jacket, in jerks.) Boggs! you have missed your vocation, you should have hired out to a piano mover.

Johns—I did.

Nettleton—Now, Boggs, I'll have my slippers. (Johns takes them from fireplace, makes motion to hit him, then kneels in front of him and unbuttons shoes. Nettleton

leans back luxuriously.) By the way, I noticed this morning—that—er—*shine* you gave me—was purely superficial. If I remember right, our contract calls for energy and dilligence. (Glancing down at shoe.) Well! Are you going to take all night? Why don't you pull it off? (As Johns jerks it off.) Ouch! What the devil are you doing?

Johns—You told me to pull it off, didn't you?

Nettleton—I didn't tell you to pull off my foot *with* it. Get me a highball. And be quick about it. (Johns pours whiskey into glass, and adds vichy. Drinks behind Nettleton's back and fills up glass with vichy, then hands it to Nettleton. Nettleton sips and leans back.) And where is Mrs. Nettleton?

Johns (at C with shoes in his hands)—Been out all afternoon—calling.

Nettleton (again sipping and leaning back)—A-h-h-h-h! I tell you, Boggs, it's great to have a comfortable cozy home to come to after office hours. But then, as a successful business man, I believe that I deserve it.

Johns (timidly)—I say, George— (As Nettleton looks up sharply.) I mean, Mr. Nettleton— (Looking at floor, then up.) Er—how *is* business?

Nettleton—Great! (Enthusiastically.) Why, T, you'd hardly believe it, but since *you* left, I've just about *doubled* the business. It shows what system and intelligence can do. No disturbance. No noise—except the orders coming in. (Sips.) For the first time in years, I feel that I can do something. (Drinks.) Oh! That reminds me. I've decided to change the color of our pills.

Johns—What? *What?* (Dropping shoes and speaking slowly as if dazed.) You are going to change the color of my pills? (Stepping forward.) Why, George! You don't mean that! You *can't!*

Nettleton—Haven't I a right, according to the contract? (Taking paper from pocket and reading.) It gives me full and absolute control of all matter pertaining to the business! (Smiles and replaces paper in pocket.) That's clear enough, isn't it?

Johns (pathetically)—Yes, I know. But to change the color of my— (Sinking into chair.) Why George—it's like the *murder*—of my only child.

Nettleton (grinning)—Look here! Don't you think it about time to stop *worrying* over your *descendants?*

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(Pause.) That violet was a hideous color, anyhow. I've decided to change it to a polka dot.

Johns (rises)—A polka dotted pill? For the Lord's sake, George—

Nettleton (checking him)—No argument.. I've proved it. The minute I advertised this change, the business jumped. (Drinks.)

Johns (aside, gloomily)—*Jumped!* It's a wonder it didn't scream!

Nettleton—Oh, Boggs! I forgot to tell you. I'm expecting dinner guests this evening.

Boggs—Who are they?

Nettleton—What?

Johns (advancing, speaking in louder tone)—I said—who *are* they?

Nettleton—Boggs! You mortify me! Please remember your position—and the contract. (Turns to fireplace.)

Johns—I *do* remember them—both! But there's nothing in that contract that gives you the right to put me on exhibition—for the benefit of my former friends.

Nettleton—There's nothing in it to the contrary. (As Johns turns away, his hand to his head.) Must *I* consult the butler as to who are to be my dinner guests? (Smiling.) Besides, you'll be disguised—by your—or—side whiskers. Of course, they aren't very becoming to you, Boggs; but they answer their purpose—admirably. (As Johns doubles fist and advances.) Remember the contract. (As Johns stops, the door bell rings.) See who that it.

Johns—All *right!* But I want to say this to you and Van. That contract is just about the most *one-sided* contract that was ever written. (Starts to R rear, and turns back.) And another thing! *I—want—my—mail.*

Nettleton (loftily)—Your mail?

Johns—My private letters—that come to the office! And I'm going to *have* them!

Nettleton (holding up hand)—Boggs! Don't irritate me—with such a trivial matter. (Bell. Sternly.) Go see who's at that door. (John turns, jerks open the door and exits. Nettleton grins after him, and turns to telephone. In phone.) Hello! 6170 Lenox. (Again glancing toward door.) Poor old Boggsy! But where ye sow, there also shall ye reap. (In phone.) Hello! Is that Mr. Vanderholt's home? Oh! Hello, Van! How are you? Fine! Did you find you could make it for dinner this evening?

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(As Johns enters from R rear carrying a large bundle.) Good boy! Come right along over. I have a surprise for you. What? (Glancing at Johns.) No, I can't tell you over the phone. The servants are hanging around. Put on your Tux and hurry. Good-bye! (Hangs up receiver and sits at L.) Well, Boggs? What was it?

Johns—*Your—damned—laundry!* (He takes the package in both hands and throws it down on Nettleton's head. The package breaks and shirts and collars fell out.)

Nettleton (springing up)—Why—you—you impertinent—say! Look here! (Taking out small note book.) Did you know this piece of work is going to cost you just one hundred dollars? (Starts to make memo.)

Johns—*Yes.* I know it. But it's worth it. This is the first half minute of actual enjoyment I've had since I came into this house.

Nettleton—Then I'll give you another. You pick up my shirts.

Johns—With pleasure, sir. (Stoops and begins to collect articles, putting them in their wrapping.)

Nettleton (in an injured tone)—A *nice* way to act—and after all my thoughtfulness—and consideration—of *you*. (Turning suddenly.) Do you know what day this is?

Johns (coming down C after placing bundle on chair at rear)—No. I've lost track of the days, lately.

Nettleton—It's the 24th of November. *Your birthday.*

Johns—Ha, ha! Many happy returns.

Nettleton (X to table)—But since you behave as you do, you completely destroy my pleasure in the whole affair. There ought to be *one* day in the year when you and I bury the hatchet.

Johns—Oh, well, if—if you feel that way, I'm with you! (Holding out hand.) I'm sorry, George!

Nettleton (shaking hand and patting him on shoulder)—It's all right, T. We'll say no more about it. (Crossing to table.) Here's a little present I bought for you. It isn't much, but still—

Johns—A present for me? (Taking it.) That's awfully good of you, old chap! *Hanged* if it isn't! Why—

Nettleton—Oh, no—no! I'm *glad* to do it. (As Johns unwraps bundle.) I only hope it will be a comfort to you!

Johns—Looks like an Easter lily.

Nettleton—Ain't you going to open it?

Johns (opening and disclosing a feather duster. He looks

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at it critically. Looking up)—What's the idea? (Holds it behind him.)

Nettleton—Ah! (Opening the flat, square bundle.) Here is the *other* part of our birthday celebration. (Opens bundle, disclosing a picture frame, containing three playing cards, and holds it up.) Two little sixes, and a torn queen. Aren't they cute? (Johns controls himself silently. Nettleton places picture on table.) Now then! I'll want you to dust this—carefully—twice a day. In the morning before you serve my breakfast, and in the afternoon—before I return from business. Understand?

Johns—Yes.

Nettleton—*Sir!*

Johns—*Sir.*

Nettleton (loftily)—Very well. (Going to rear.) We'll dine this evening—at seven. (Going up steps and turning at landing.) And I trust you'll do nothing to mortify me before my guests. And Boggs—you may serve the cock-tails—*here.* (Exits.)

(Johns looks after him mutely, then turns to the table, looking at picture, the feather duster in his hand.)

Johns—It's going to cost me another hundred—BUT— (With the duster he strikes the picture, knocking it to the floor and breaking the glass. As he turns away, Mrs. Nettleton enters from right rear, in street costume. She comes down L.) Good evening, Nellie!

Mrs. Nettleton turning)—Oh! Good evening, T. (As she moves she stumbles over shoes.) My gracious! What a careless dear George is. (Stoops and picks up shoes. Johns comes forward to take them. She tries to pull them away.) T! *You* musn't do such things. Give them to me. (As he takes shoes, stepping back.) Why—why, don't you know it mortifies me when I see you as—as an actual— (Turning away.) Oh, T, I'm ashamed. Why don't you and George stop all this nonsense?

Johns—No! I was the one who made a fool of myself. And I'm going through with it—if I turn purple, and bust!

Mrs. Nettleton—Has George been—unkind to you again?

Johns (airy)—Oh, no! He was particularly pleasant this evening.

Mrs. Nettleton (coming to him)—Which means you are telling a beautiful, splendid fib.

Johns—Not at all. There were any *number* of little

things he forgot to put over. Shall I tell him you are here? (Starts away.)

Mrs. Nettleton—No! No! (Following him and stopping him.) Oh, T! I'm sorry for this—indeed, I am—and I'm doing all I can to—to make it easier for you.

Johns—Thank you, Nellie. You're a brick!

Mrs. Nettleton—No, I'm not. But I *am* using all *my* influence with George to—to make him less exacting. Why, T—

Nettleton (calling from upstairs)—Hello, sweetheart! Are you there?

Mrs. Nettleton (to Johns)—S-h-h-h-h! (Going to rear and calling, while Johns goes to L.) Yes, darling! I've just come in. (To Johns, in undertone.) Don't let him see you talking with me. It—it might affect my influence.

Johns (by settee)—But, Nellie. There's just one thing.

Mrs. Nettleton (Glancing up the stairs, then back to him.)—What is it?

Johns—If you really *have* any influence with him, let Coddle serve the dinner this evening. I'll stay in the kitchen and cook. I know how to boil potatoes and fry a steak—I—

Nettleton (upstairs)—Nellie!

Mrs. Nettleton—S-h-h-h-h! (Mrs. Nettleton comes quickly down C, and Nettleton descends the stairs.)

Johns (at door)—Oh Lord! If I could fry *him!* (Exits L.)

Nettleton (coming down steps)—Well, well, well! Here you are at last! (Kissing her.) Where have you been so late?

Mrs. Nettleton (releasing herself)—Well, I had such a terrible lot of calls to make I forgot the time completely.

Nettleton—I see. I was getting quite worried about you.

Mrs. Nettleton—Were you?

Nettleton—I should think I *was*. (Taking her by the elbow, looking into her eyes.) For the last half hour I've been sitting at the window, watching every woman who came along.

Mrs. Nettleton (withdrawing, speaking a little sharply)—What?

Nettleton—I—I mean—watching for *you*. *You* know what I mean. (Turning away with a careless shrug:) These other women—Oh! Merely disappointments.

Mrs. Nettleton—Sure?

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Nettleton—Of course, I am! (Taking her arm and leading her to L.) Now, come right over here—and we'll sit down by our own bright fire, and—— (Stops and looks down at floor.) Excuse me—just a minute. (Picks up broken picture, places it on table, and takes out note book and pencil.)

Mrs. Nettleton (sitting L.)—What is it, dear?

Nettleton—Nothing. Only our Boggs is growing careless. I'm making a charge on his office account, and a deduction—for breakage—against his wages.

Mrs. Nettleton (as he places book in pocket and sits beside her.)—George, why is it you are so—so harsh with T?

Nettleton—Ha, ha, I? What nonsense. It is merely wholesome discipline.

Mrs. Nettleton (shaking a finger at him)—That's just what I mean. T is a human being, and you are not in the least considerate of him. He's so miserable and wretched all the time, that——

Nettleton—Wait! Has that fellow been trotting to *you* with his troubles?

Mrs. Nettleton—No, he hasn't! But I can *see* it—in the poor boy's face! It's not kind of you, darling; no, not one bit. And the reason I thought of it, was this. (Opens hand bag and takes out telegram.)

Nettleton—A telegram, eh? We'll read it together. (As she unfolds it.) What does it say?

Mrs. Nettleton (reading)—Will arrive this afternoon, six fifteen. Love, Florence. (Turning.)

Nettleton—Now *I* know all about that telegram. *I* wrote to Florence, several days ago. Asked her to run down and spend a week with us. Told her you would be delighted.

Mrs. Nettleton (in consternation)—With *us*? But, George, dear! *We* can't have *her*—*here*!

Nettleton—Why not? She's one of your most intimate friends. I thought you'd be glad to have her.

Mrs. Nettleton—*I would*—under ordinary circumstances; but you don't seem to—— (Earnestly.) Why, don't you *know* that T is head over heels in *love* with Florence Cole?

Nettleton (rising)—Yes, I know it. That was my reason for inviting her.

Mrs. Nettleton—George! (She looks at him reproachfully, rising.) But she'll *see* him—*here*—*as your butler*—and, naturally, you'll have to explain it.

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Nettleton—And pay five thousand for the privilege. Not much!

Mrs. Nettleton—Very well; then *I'll* explain it.

Nettleton (quickly)—Oh, no, you don't! I don't propose to pay five thousand for you, please remember the contract.

Mrs. Nettleton—But *somebody's* got to tell her. If *you* can't and *I* can't, why, then poor T will have to do it.

Nettleton (smiling)—Oh, well, that's different. T has more reason to explain. Besides, I can use *his* five thousand very nicely.

Mrs. Nettleton (in earnest reproach)—Oh, George! It isn't fair! It's cruel! It's—ah! (Turns away.)

Nettleton—Look here, Nellie! Why are you always taking up for *him*?

Mrs. Nettleton (turning on him)—Because I have a heart! Because you never had a right to *make* that horrid contract.

Nettleton—*He forced* me into it. Yes, he did! For three years that fellow made my life a curse; and now I'm going to make his life a curse—for just one year from date thereof.

Mrs. Nettleton—But, oh, how can you?

Nettleton—Oh, I guess I can, all right. And then there's Van. *He's* in love with Florence, too. (Taking picture from table to R of table.) Good old Van helped *me* when he dealt me this pair of sixes; and now, by Jupiter, I'm going to fix things up for *him*.

Mrs. Nettleton (angrily. X to table)—And what of *me*?

Nettleton (in astonishment)—Of *you*? and I had been that queen who is torn in half! (Sits down, half crying, L of table.)

Nettleton—But, Nellie—darling—

Mrs. Nettleton—And—you—risked—*me*! (Crying.) I've never quite forgiven you for that! And I never will! Most women would have never rested till they had gotten even, and I don't know but what I shall, too! (Dabs at her eyes.)

Nettleton (back of chair, trying to pacify her)—But, Nellie—my precious little—

Mrs. Nettleton—Don't talk to me! Don't argue with me. You know I'm nervous. You—

Nettleton (turning away, sharply)—All right, all right, I *won't*!

(Door bell rings, and Mrs. Nettleton gives a long sob.)

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Mrs. Nettleton—A-h-h-h-h-h! There's Florence now—and what are we going to do—oo—oo—oo—oo!

Nettleton (X to R)—Don't let her see you crying. Run up to your room.

Mrs. Nettleton (weeping)—I won't! You want to get rid of me-e-e-e-e-e-e!

Nettleton—All right! Then stay where you are! (Turns away, gritting his teeth.)

(Enter Johns from L crossing to door at R. Mrs. Nettleton sees him and turns in dread.)

Mrs. Nettleton—*George!*

Nettleton (going up R, and intercepting Johns at door)—Never mind, Boggs, I'll answer it.

Johns (stepping back in amazement)—What! *You?*

Nettleton—Well? Can't I answer my own door bell? What's the *matter* with you? *Clear out!* (Door bell rings again.)

(Johns looks at him, turns on heel and goes out L, slamming door. Nettleton turns and starts to stride after him.)

Mrs. Nettleton—*George!*

(Nettleton stops, looks at her, then takes out his note book, making an entry as he goes to door R. Exits.

Mrs. Nettleton, half sobbing, reaches for her hand bag, takes out mirror and powder puff, and begins to repair the effects of her tears. Half sobbing. Dabs her face and eyes, fusses with a stray lock or two, then smiles at herself in mirror. Smiles at herself again, replaces articles in bag, as Nettleton enters with Florence, he carrying suit-case, which he brings down to table.)

Nettleton—Here she is, darling. Here she is!

Mrs. Nettleton (turning to Florence in radiant cordiality)—Why—*Florence!*

Florence (running forward, embracing and kissing her)—Why, Nellie! You dear old thing!

Mrs. Nettleton—I'm so glad you've come! I've just been *longing* for you from the minute I asked dear old George to write you.

(Nettleton registers.)

Florence—Have you? Lovely! And how *well* you're looking!

Mrs. Nettleton—Am I? And how well *you* are looking!

Florence (laughs and turns)—And how well dear old

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George is looking. (Crossing to him R, of table down.) Shall I kiss him, too?

Mrs. Nettleton—What! (As Florence turns.) Why, certainly—if you like. (Turns away.) Well—of—all—the—— (At sound of a loud kiss she turns quickly.)
George!

(He laughs foolishly, she trying to join him.)

Florence—There! (Plumping herself into chair L of table.) *Now* I feel at home.

Mrs. Nettleton—Yes—ha—ha! So it seems. But since you *are* at home, I won't make company of you. I'm going up to dress for dinner.

Florence—To dress! Good gracious, my trunk isn't here, and I haven't a single thing! Are there going to be guests for dinner?

Nettleton—No, no, no. Just home folks. Van is coming over.

Florence—Van? Oh, well, I don't mind him. (Sitting herself back in chair.) Will Mr. Johns be here?

Mrs. Nettleton (taken by surprise)—Mr. Johns?

Florence—I've written him seven times, and haven't heard one solitary word. Not even when I wired him!

Nettleton (laughing behind his hand)—Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! Yes, he'll be here!

Florence—Has he been at the office?

Nettleton—Well, no! He's been on a sort of—*holiday!*

Florence—Oh! Where did he go?

Nettleton (smiling)—He didn't say!

Florence (turning)—What is it, George? Oh, *I* know! (Smiling and beckoning to them with either hand. You and Nellie are giving a birthday dinner—to dear old T.)

Nettleton (moves down R, rubbing his chin and grinning)—Ha, ha, that's it. Especially for dear old T.

Florence—Well? What's that joke?

Nettleton—Nothing. Only, with Van and T both clamoring for your heart and hand. I was wondering how you'd manage them.

Florence (rising)—Nonsense! They are just two silly boys, and I don't care a fig for either.

Mrs. Nettleton (catching Florence's hand, looking at ring)—No?

Florence (jerking hand away)—Stop it! That ring was given me by my own, own uncle—as a consolation for be-

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ing an old maid. (Laughs and holds out hand.) Think it's pretty?

Mrs. Nettleton—Yes, beautiful; but we are wasting time. You talk to George while I dress, and—— (Turning and seeing Florence going toward him.) I mean—suppose you come along with *me*, dearest, and we'll have a nice, old-fashioned chat.

Florence (going to rear)—Oh, all right. Splendid. Come along. (Starts up stairs, humming happily.)

Mrs. Nettleton (to Nettleton, with side-long glance)—H'm! *Enjoyed* your little kiss! *Didn't* you!

Nettleton (up back of table)—S-h-h-h! She'll hear you! (Aloud.) Well, run along, girls. I've got to come up, too—to shave.

Florence (turning on landing)—Good! And if Nellie doesn't mind—I'll hold your shaving mug. (Exits laughing.)

(Nettleton takes up Florence's suit-case, and starts forward. Mrs. Nettleton, on stairs, checks him, drawing herself up, haughtily.)

Mrs. Nettleton—I *think*, Mr. Nettleton, you had better shave in the *bath* room. (Takes satchel out of his hand and goes up.)

(Nettleton looks after her, then turns as Johns enters from L with a scuttle of coal, going to fireplace. Nettleton looks down at him, laughs and goes up.)

(Florence is heard to laugh off stage. Johns starts, goes up stage, looks up stairs, then turns, coming down in troubled thought.)

Johns—My God! That laugh! (Passing hand through hair.) Oh, but it *couldn't* be! It *couldn't*!

(Enter Coddle from L. Holds one hand behind her.)

Coddle—S-h-h-h-h! Mr. Boggs, sir!

Johns (starting and turning sharply)—Well? What is it?

Coddle—I got a secret for you, sir. (As Johns moves away from her in alarm.) Ho, it hain't about *me*, sir.

Johns (relieved)—Oh!

Coddle—A gentleman come hup just now from Mr. Nettleton's office, sir. But 'e couldn't wait.

Johns—Well?

Coddle—It was about your mail.

Johns (sharply)—What's that?

Coddle—Yes, sir. 'E says that hevery hother day 'he's

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been a-puttin' 'em on the marster's desk—thinkin' as 'ow the marster would bring 'em 'ome to you.

Johns (who has been registering his sugar silently)—And he held back my mail! My letters! (With doubled fists turning toward stairs.) Well, contract or no contract, I'm—

Coddle (running after him and throwing arms about him)—Ho, Mr. Boggs, sir. Mr. Boggs, sir—don't!

Johns (breaking her hold)—Keep away, will you! Keep away! (Seeing letters in Coddle's hand.) Ah! *You've* got them! My letters! Give 'em here!

Coddle (eluding him and getting behind table)—Ha, he, he, he, he. (Coily.) Wot's they worth to you, Mr. Boggs, sir. He, he, he, he, he.

Johns (trying to reach across table)—Worth nothing! Hand 'em over!

(Coddle drops letters on table and steps back, watching

Johns, who seized letters and begins looking over them hurriedly, still showing his anger.)

Coddle (beginning to whimper mournfully)—I knowed they was from another woman— (Dabbing at her eyes with corner of apron, while Johns tears open letter and begins to read.) I knowed by the color of 'em—and the sweet smell of 'em—that they come from some young 'ussy. (Wails.)

Johns (looking up from letters in irritation)—No! They don't! They come from my—my oldest daughter. (Returns to reading.)

(Coddle's wail subsides. Her features slowly spread into a grin of happiness.)

Coddle—Do they now! Dearie me! (Begins to edge over toward him.) Hexcuse me, sir; but I just want to h'arsk you somethink—most particular.

Johns (crossly)—Oh, what *is* it?

Coddle—This 'ere. (Clasping her hands and looking at him appealingly.) Wot hever become of them three lydies.

Johns (bewildered, his hand to his forehead)—Three ladies. *What* three ladies?

Coddle—W'y, them wot you was *married* to—h'at different *times*, sir.

Johns—Oh! Those (Sternly.) Coddle—I'll tell you. They come to violent ends. *All* of them!

Coddle—Did they, now? Dearie, me. But hif H'I 'ad been one of them Mrs. Boggses, sir, w'y—

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Johns—Hold on there! (Pointing finger at her.)—Do you know what became of the last one—the *third* unhappy Mrs. Boggs?

Coddle—No, sir. Wot?

Johns—I hung her up by her heels and skinned her.

Coddle (blinking)—Yes, sir. Very likely, sir. An' I'll bet you a tuppence she jolly well deserved it. (As Johns raises hands in despair and turns from her, she follows him, clasping her hands.) But hif H'l 'ad been that 'ere Mrs. Boggs, sir, an'—

Johns (turning away)—Oh, hell, what *is* the use? *Get out!*

Coddle (looking at him reproachfully, then turning to L)—My conscience! Some men h'is hawful 'ard to take a 'int, an' that one—my Gawd—you got to 'it 'im with a 'atchet. (Exits at L.)

(Johns is tearing open his letters. BELL. But he pays no heed.)

Johns (choking with rage as he looks at letter)—Written on the eighteenth. And this is the twenty-fifth!

(BELL.)

Nettleton (calling from upstairs)—Boggs! You Boggs! (As Johns starts and turns.) Why the devil don't you answer that door bell!

Johns (going to foot of stairs and bawling)—*Because I thought you had taken on that job yourself!*

Nettleton—Well, you count that as another hundred—for impertinence—and see who's at my door!

Johns (furiously)—*All right.* (Turns and jerks the door open.)

(Enter Vanderholt, in dinner dress.)

Vanderholt—Oh! Hello, T! How are you? It took you so long to answer the bell. I walked right in. Well, T, this is a bit rough on you. A little service, Boggs. (Taking off overcoat and hat, handing them to Johns who makes no reply to his salutation, then crossing to table and pours himself a drink.) Ah! This does look cozy. (Turns to Johns cheerfully.) Well, T? How goes it?

Johns (advancing with determination)—I'm rather glad to see *you*—and by yourself.

Vanderholt (sipping highball)—You flatter me. What's the secret?

Johns—It isn't a secret. It's pretty well wide open. I want that contract cancelled, and I want it done *now*.

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Vanderholt (in astonishment)—Cancel your contract? Ha, ha. Ask me something easy. (Sits.)

Johns—I don't ask it, I demand it!

Vanderholt—Now see here, T. You know perfectly well—that agreement can *only* be annulled by mutual consent.

Johns—Not when *you* drew it?

Vanderholt—No.

Johns—And you call yourself a lawyer.

Vanderholt—Well, I manage to make a living.

Johns—And how? By drawing up illegal contracts.

Vanderholt—What's that? And why is *yours* illegal?

Johns—Because all the covenants are on one side. And any court will see it.

Vanderholt (shrugging)—All right, then. If I don't know my business, suppose you consult some *other* lawyer.

Johns—I can't. If I told a lawyer—or anybody else—it would cost me five thousand dollars—cash. *You* put that in, as a special clause.

Vanderholt—And you signed the agreement. You go into a thing because you think you've got the big, soft end; but when you find you haven't you put up a howl. If you don't like the contract—break it.

Johns—And forfeit all my interest in the business! *Another* of your infernal clauses! *That's* the way you've tied me up! That's what you have done to me. But I'll tell you there are two things that are *not* in the contract.

Vanderholt (turning quickly)—Good Lord! Did I forget something? What are they?

Johns—First, my personal mail. George has been holding it at the office; and no matter *what* it costs me, *I'm—going—to—punch—his—nose!*

Vanderholt—Oh! Held your mail, did he? Well, T? I agree with you. That isn't exactly fair. I'll speak to George about it. What's your other grievance?

Johns—Florence!

Vanderholt (stepping toward him)—Florence? Well? What about Florence?

Johns (pointing finger)—*You* arranged for Nellie to know about the contract, and you've got to arrange for Florence to know.

Vanderholt—Why?

Johns—Because you've put me in a hole. I can't even *write* to her without lying; and I'm not going to lie to *her*.

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Vanderholt (thoughtfully)—U'm—I see. Well—if that's what you want, you'll have to arrange it with George.

Johns—Meaning—that you won't do it!

Vanderholt—No—I won't. (Turns away.)

Johns (angrily)—And I know why. Because you planned it! Deliberately! To put me out of the running, and get the inside track yourself!

Vanderholt (wheeling sharply)—Hold up, there! Don't make me lose my temper! You had a fair deal, didn't you? And an outside party cut the cards. Suppose *you* had won, and George had been *your* butler.

Johns—Wouldn't Florence have wanted to know *why*? That's what I claim! You've jobbed me! Got me going or coming! But I know a way to *force* you to tell her—and I won't break the contract either.

Vanderholt—How?

Johns—I'm going to telegraph Florence—*today*—saying I am safe and well; and for further information, please apply to Mr. Thomas J. Vanderholt, Referee.

Vanderholt—Wha—— (Advancing.) Oh, no you don't! You——

Johns (checking him)—And when *that* little lady comes down from Albany—it's nighty-night *for you*! (As Van paces thoughtfully, making no answer.) Well? Will you tell her?

Vanderholt (facing him)—No! My interest in Miss Florence is a personal matter *not* mentioned in the contract. (Checking Johns as he starts to speak.) But if you give information *leading* toward the contract—it would be equivalent to a direct violation.

Johns—It wouldn't at all! It——

Vanderholt (checking him)—In your opinion. But as Referee, with powers to decide all questions of dispute, I'm afraid I should decide the point *against* you. (Smiles and turns away.)

Johns—All right! Then I'll find some other way to get you, if it lands me in a hospital. (Raising his clenched fists.) And as for George B. Nettleton——

Nettleton (calling from upstairs)—Boggs! (As Johns involuntarily comes to attention.) Is that Mr. Vanderholt down there?

Vanderholt (laughing at Johns and calling up to Nettleton)—Yes, Hello, George! How are you?

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Nettleton—Tip top, thanks. Be down in a minute. Tell Boggs to mix the cocktails!

(Johns lifts his hands in despair and crosses to L. Vanderholt turns to him with a smile.)

Vanderholt—Boggs, your master's voice. By the way, T. (As he pauses.) Of course, you understand—there'll be a nominal fee of fifty dollars—for legal consultation.

Johns—What! (Advancing furiously.) I won't pay it! You get that? I won't! What do you and George *think* I am? *A gold mine?*

Nettleton (appearing on stairs and stopping suddenly)—Why, Boggs! (Slight pause.) How dare you assume that attitude toward my guests? Remember your position. (Sternly, pointing L.) Go get those cocktails!

Johns—All right! But say! And get out your little red book. I'm going through with that contract, no matter *what* you do to me. But in one year—if *I'm still alive*—*I'm going to crawl all over you!* Both of you. (Exits Johns at L.)

(Nettleton comes down stairs, laughing as he makes memorandum in book.)

Vanderholt (laying hand on Nettleton's shoulder. Soberly)—George! Aren't you a little—rough on him?

Nettleton (airily)—Oh, no! One always has trouble with one's servants. I'm merely—training him.

Vanderholt—Well, he *has* got grit! Come on, now. Give the devil his dues.

Nettleton (X to L)—I do. He's pretty rank. I will admit; but he's a much better butler than he is a business man.

Vanderholt (laughing)—All right. It's not my funeral. What's the little surprise you had for me?

Florence (appearing at head of stairs)—Oho! Good evening, Mr. Vanderholt!

Vanderholt (turning in delighted surprise)—Why, Miss Florence! (Running up two or three steps and meeting her as she comes down.) This is a pleasure! (Shaking her hands and bringing her down.) When did you get to town?

Florence—Just came. And right on time for T's birthday party. (As Vanderholt registers his alarm, looking at George.) Well? What is it?

Vanderholt (a trifle nervously)—Oh, nothing—nothing—ha, ha—only—I was so pleurably astonished at seeing *you*, that it knocked everything out of my head.

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Florence—Oh, you flatterer! (Turning.) George! Is there anything I can put my violets in? (Goes to mantel, looking for vase.)

Nettleton—Why, certainly. (Crossing.) I'll ring for the butler! (Crosses and touches bell.)

(Vanderholt again registers his alarm and sneaks into library.)

Florence—No, no, no—don't trouble. Here's something. (Takes vase from mantel and turns without seeing Van's retreat. She goes to table and squirts vichy into vase.)

Nettleton—No trouble, I assure you. In fact, it will be a pleasure to him. (Stands behind right of stairs.)

(Enter Johns with tray of cocktails. He comes straight into room, then turns, seeing Florence. He cries out, drops tray and stands staring at her.)

(Florence turns at his exclamation, and for a moment stares at him blankly.)

Florence—*T!* (Pause.) *T!* (Pause. Nettleton begins going up stairs backward, looking down in enjoyment.) What does this mean? (Pause.) Those awful clothes! (Sharply.) And those *horrible* side whiskers! Where have you been?

Johns (dejectedly)—Here—for two weeks.

Florence—Here? But I heard you were on a holiday.

Johns—Holiday. Ha, ha.

Florence—What! You were neither away nor at your office, and never told me a single thing? (Coming to him.) Then tell me now.

Johns—Florence— (He turns to her impulsively, stops and turns away.)

Florence—Oh, T, what is it? I haven't had one line or word, and I've just been waiting—waiting!

Johns—Um—yes. So have I.

Florence—But how—why? Darling—tell me—please.

Johns—Florence—I can't.

Florence (stepping back)—You mean—you *won't!* (As he makes no answer.) Then I'll find out. (Turning and calling as George disappears at head of stairs.) George! Van! Where are you? (Looking about in bewilderment.) Darling! What *can* it mean? Is there anything you could conceal from *me*? (Coming to him and putting arms about him.) Don't you know I love you—with all my heart? And I've been worrying till I'm almost ill. And the moment George wrote me, asking me to come—

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Johns (releasing himself quickly)—What's that? George wrote you—asked *you—here?* (Starting for stairs with doubled fists.) Oh, wait till I get hold of him!

Florence (intercepting him.)—Darling! Don't! Please listen.

Johns—*He* did it—on *purpose!*

Florence—Did what? You tell me nothing, and I'm all upset. No answers to my letters—no answer to me—the woman who is to be your wife. (Pathetically.) And I find you here—in buttons—and a pair of unspeakable monkey whiskers— (Hopefully.) Oh! Oh! It's a joke! Tell me—isn't it?

Johns (sadly)—A joke? No, Florence—that's the worst guess you've made yet.

Florence (drawing back.)—Oh, I see. Then it's something you're ashamed of?

Johns (turning resolutely)—No, I'm *not* ashamed. And if you'll only trust me—and wait for me—

Florence—How long?

Johns—Er—eleven months and two weeks.

Florence—Eleven mon—I won't! I want to know now. (He again makes a movement as if about to tell her, stops and turns away. Florence takes a more severe tone.) Don't carry this too far. The Lord didn't give me a red head merely as a mark of beauty; and if you're trying—willfully—to make me angry or humiliated—

Johns—Florence!

Florence (with change of tone)—No, no, no—forgive me! I've been so happy—loving you—and trusting you. Won't *you* trust *me*—and tell me—everything?

Johns—I'm—sorry—Florence . . . but, I can't!

(As he shakes his head miserably, she changes her tone to one of coolness.)

Florence—Very well, Mr. Johns. Since you've brought it on yourself, there's just one thing for me to do— (Turning from him.) As hard as it is to do it— (She bites her lips, takes off her ring, crosses to him and puts it into his hand.) Here! Take it! (Pushes his hand away, turns and crosses to R, crying.)

Johns (quietly)—Thank you. (Crosses to L, turns and looks at ring.) This is the first little thing—of actual value—that has come my way—for two whole weeks. (Exit L.)

Florence—Oh, it can't be true! It can't! It's too im-

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possible! (Crossing toward door L.) T darling! T! I didn't mean it. Won't you please come back? (Enter Johns with dust pan and brush, comes to C while Florence moves back of lounge, looking at him in wonder. He stoops, takes up broken glass in pan and exits without looking at her. Florence looks after him.) For the love of Mike! (Sharply.) Oh! How perfectly disgusting! (She turns, runs up to first landing of stairs and calls.) George! George Nettleton! You come down here—at once! (She comes down to table C, showing her excitement. Nettleton comes downstairs, followed by Mrs. Nettleton.) Now, George—and you, too, Nellie—I want to know—immediately—what this means!

Nettleton—Goodness? Why the excitement? What *what* means!

Florence—There's no use trying to evade me. Sit down—(Nettleton sits.) Both of you!

Mrs. Nettleton (elevating her brows)—And—in— my house!

Florence—Sit down! (As both sit.) Now! Why is it I find—one of my personal friends—as a butler in your household? (She looks from one to the other.)

(Vanderholt enters from library and comes forward.)

Vanderholt—Miss Florence; if you'll permit an outsider to—er——

Florence—Never mind now! Will *you* please sit down, too?

Vanderholt (taken aback)—Eh? Oh, ha, ha—Yes, certainly—with pleasure! (Taking seat.) What's the trouble, George?

Florence—H'm! *Another* Mr. Innocence! (Turning.) Now, George Nettleton, I want my question answered.

Nettleton (while Mrs. Nettleton looks nervous)—Well, Florence—I'd like to—really, but to tell you the truth, there is only *one* person I know of—who can *afford* to answer.

Florence—You mean T? I've asked him.

Nettleton (leaning forward hopefully)—What? He told you?

Florence—No, he didn't!

Nettleton—Oh—what a pity! (Leans back disappointedly.)

Florence—But you seem to lose sight of the fact—all three of you—of the most important point. As for Mr.

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Johns, he means nothing to me—Ab-so-lutely—nothing! (As all three register their astonishment and relief.) I'm demanding this explanation—not on *his* account—but mine!

Mrs. Nettleton—Yours?

Nettleton (rising)—Oh, well, Florence; in that case— (Mrs. Nettleton also rises, and all three speak together in ad lib lines. Van looks on enjoying it.) If you are not personally interested in T, what difference does it make whether he's a butler or not?

Mrs. Nettleton—Now just don't worry about it, darling. Everything will all come out right, and as soon as I can tell you, I will.

Florence (at same time)—I don't care. There's something wrong about it, and I tell you I am going to find out.

(They all stop suddenly and a pause ensues, as Johns enters from L, carrying a waiter on which are four cocktails. He passes tray to Mrs. Nettleton; she takes one, handing another to Florence, who moves back regarding Johns in wonder and contempt. Johns passes tray to Van.)

Vanderholt (taking glass)—Thank you, T. (As Johns passes tray to Nettleton, who refuses.) Better take one, George; you need it. (Nettleton takes one, holding it in hand. All look at Johns as he exits solemnly at L. Van raises glass.) Well—here's to the ladies. (No one drinks, and he turns to Nettleton.) What's the matter, George? Aren't you indulging?

Nettleton (smelling cocktail and putting it on table.)—Not *that* one. I don't like the *looks* of it.

(Van also looks at cocktail, then puts it on table.)

Florence (putting her glass on table.)—Now, if you please, we'll continue. I was about to say that not one of you seems to realize—this insult to *me*.

Mrs. Nettleton (rising)—Insult?

Vanderholt (rising)—To you?

Nettleton (rising)—How?

Florence (angrily)—Sit down. By inviting me here—both you and Nellie—for the sole purpose of seeing me mortified—and shamed!

Mrs. Nettleton (in a pathetic injured tone)—Why, *darling*, how *unjust* you are. *I* didn't ask you. My husband did! And I never knew one single thing about it—till I got your telegram!

Florence (turning to her)—No? And not half an hour

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ago—to quote your own exact words—you had just been *longing* for me—from the very first minute you asked dear old George to write me. (Turning away.)

Mrs. Nettleton (pathetically, as she holds out cocktail glass)—George! Take the horrid thing! (Nettleton rises and gets glass, and places it on table with the others.) I've spilt it all over my brand new gown!

Florence—And I'm glad you did! I'm also glad that I haven't broken bread under this hateful roof! And now, George Nettleton, I'm going to a hotel! (Starts upstairs.)

Vanderholt (rising)—One minute, Miss Florence! If you'd only——

Florence—Never mind, Mr. Vanderholt. From your look of cherubic innocence, I think you are in it, too.

Vanderholt—I? (Expostulating.) Oh, come now, Miss Florence. It's hardly fair to put the whole thing on *me*. (Looking meaningly at Nettleton.)

Nettleton (as Florence turns to him)—No, and it isn't fair to put it all on *me*. (Looks at Mrs. Nettleton.)

Mrs. Nettleton—And what have *I* to do with it? Nothing—Nothing! (To Nettleton.) And to prove it, I have a great mind to tell her the whole thing. (Rising and turning.) Florence——

Nettleton (coming down to her quickly)—Nellie! For the Lord's sake—don't!

Vanderholt—Ha, ha, ha, ha! (Covers hand with mouth as Florence turns to him.)

Florence—That will do Mr. Vanderholt. It's no laughing matter. (Turning.) That applies to all of you. (Runs up several steps and turns.) I may not have a vote, but before I get through with this, *somebody* is going to wish I was wearing breeches. (Exits.)

Nettleton—Wheough! *Now* what are you going to do? (Turning.) It's up to *you*, Van! Get at it.

Vanderholt (in astonishment)—Me? Why me?

Nettleton—Why not? (Taking out contract.) You appointed yourself as referee—with power to settle all questions of dispute—*This* is a question of dispute. (As Van steps back.) What are you going to do about it? Well?

Vanderholt—Oh! (Thoughtfully.) Now, naturally, *this* case is going to call for some pretty nice diplomatic *work*. Of course, you understand there'll be a nominal legal fee; but——

Nettleton—To hell with the fee—go on—go on!

Vanderholt—Thank you. Therefore, I suggest—that you first take your wife off—anywhere—and leave me—here—to tackle Florence when she comes downstairs.

Nettleton—*Will* you? (Grasping his hand.) You good old Van!

Mrs. Nettleton (beginning to weep)—No one ever seems to consider *me!* No one!

Nettleton (turning to her)—But, my darling child; that's just what we are considering. (Gently as he takes her.) Now, come on, sweetheart; go upstairs—and lie down—

Mrs. Nettleton (sitting up sharply)—What! Where *she* is! No, no!

Nettleton (trying to pacify her)—All right, dear; all right. We'll go into the library. (Helping her up.) Come on, darling; come on!

Mrs. Nettleton (weeping as she is led across to R)—I don't *want* to go into the library! I want to go into the kitchen, because I know the dinner is burnt to a horrible, black crisp. O-o-o-o-o-o-o-o! (Exit with Nettleton into library.)

(Florence comes downstairs, in hat and coat, carrying her satchel. Van meets her at foot of stairs.)

Vanderholt—Florence! One minute, please!

Florence (hesitating, putting down her satchel and advancing)—Well? What is it?

Vanderholt—First, upon my sacred word of honor—I never knew you were here, or coming here, until I saw you. Do you believe me?

Florence—If you say so—yes.

Vanderholt (beaming again)—Thank you. Now as to both George and Nellie—

Florence—Wait! What is *your* interest in this affair?

Vanderholt—Purely friendly—diplomatic; but principally—*you!* (Stepping toward her.) Of course, you know, my dear Florence—

Florence (checking him)—Have I given you the right to call me your dear Florence?

Vanderholt—Well—no; but—but I'm *asking* for the right. I'm—

Florence—And why at such a time?

Vanderholt—I—I didn't *intend* to—only—er—well, you rather forced my hand. (As she looks at him sharply.) Oh! I didn't mean it *that* way; but—but you see, Miss Florence, I have a purely legal mind. And—

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Florence—Very well. We'll put it on a purely legal basis. (Takes seat on settee L)—Now, then! You are asking for a certain right. In other words, you want to marry me— (As he steps back in astonishment, she folds her arms.) A hearing for the plea is granted. Go on.

Vanderholt (nervously)—Ha, ha. Thank you. I will. Only you—well, you do have a way of taking the wind out of a fellow's sails.

Florence—Then paddle! You delay proceedings!

Vanderholt—Ha, ha! All right. I suppose I've got to. As I—er—intimated before, I—I had no intention of making love to you—that is—today, but since you—you bring the subject up yourself, I—I would like some sort of answer.

Florence—Very well; I'll give it. (As he steps toward her.) But first I want to ask a legal question.

Vanderholt—Yes? (Sitting R of Florence.)

Florence—Do you think it just or unreasonable—for two young people—such as you and I—to start out on their married life with—with a secret holding them apart?

Vanderholt (thoughtfully)—Well—no—They shouldn't!

Florence—Good! Then why is T a butler?

Vanderholt (rising.)—Eh? Oh, come now, Miss Florence, that isn't exactly fair. It isn't professional for the lawyer in a case to—well—to—

Florence—Ah! So you *were* in it? Good again! But since you, too, refuse to tell me— (Rising.) My answer is—

Vanderholt—Hold on! Don't! (Smiling.) Of course, if you put it *that* way—I have no choice but to throw myself on the mercy of the court. (Looking behind him to see that he is not overheard.) Briefly: it was this. George and T just couldn't get on in business, and fought like cats and dogs. Each claimed the other was only fit for a servant and—and there you are!

Florence—Yes? What else?

Vanderholt—As a friend of both, I tried to save them the scandal of a lawsuit, and—and so they signed an agreement—for one year—and played a hand of show-down—to see who'd *be* the servant!

Florence—And why didn't George tell me that?

Vanderholt—Because, by telling *anyone*—he'd lose five thousand dollars.

Florence—Oh, I see! (Beginning to laugh.) But it

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was funny! (Laughing more heartily.) And *you* suggested the idea? How clever of you, Van! (Laughs.)

Vanderholt (swelling up a little)—Oh, I don't know. At least it *was* a solution of the problem.

Florence (still laughing)—A perfectly delightful one. (Laughs.) Of course, you drew up the agreement?

Vanderholt (beginning to laugh with her)—I did, indeed; And I tell you, Florence, I sewed it up with twine!

Florence—No doubt, you did! (Laughing.) Then, too, you dealt the cards!

Vanderholt (chuckling and rubbing his hands)—Um-hum! George won on a pair of sixes. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! (As Florence laughs with him he suddenly grows sober.) But now that you do know, Florence—

Florence—I'll give my answer. (Sitting in large chair at R.) I wouldn't marry you—if you were the last lone man on earth—and I was fifty-five years old!

Vanderholt (stepping back)—Florence!

Florence—That's all. (As he starts to speak, she rises.) No, not one word! (Pointing finger at him.) The criminal premeditation—was yours! And now, my legal-minded friend, your case is dismissed—with costs.

Vanderholt—Not quite, your honor. (Goes up stage and turns.) No lawyer or lover should *admit* defeat until after the appeal.

Florence—No? Why not?

Vanderholt—For further information, please apply to Mr. T. Boggs Johns, the man who can't beat sixes! (Exit.)

Florence—Alright. But there'll be a brand new deal.

Florence (as Johns enters L)—Come in T. I want to speak to you.

Johns—And *I* want to speak to *you*! (Advancing impulsively.) Florence—I'm going to tell you everything—if it means my last cent on earth—my one last crumb of bread—I'm here because—

Florence—No, no, no, no, no! Don't—it's too expensive! (As he looks at her.) Besides—I've found out!

Johns (hopefully)—Did George tell you?

Florence—No. You haven't won five thousand—yet.

Johns (disappointedly)—Oh! I thought maybe, luck had turned! (Sits dejectedly L of table.)

Florence—It won't—until you turn it. Why do you submit to this?

Johns—Submit? I guess you haven't read that contract.

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Florence—Hang the contract! The stronger it is the better I like it! It runs for a year, doesn't it?

Johns—Yes, for one whole year. (Bows his head in his hands.)

Florence—Oh, T, brace up and be a man. (Sitting beside him on the edge of his chair.) To my mind the word MAN is better than the word MASTER. Why don't you turn the tables on him?

Johns—Turn 'em—on George! How?

Florence (rising)—What's his weakest point? (As Johns looks at her miserably.)

Johns—I don't know.

Florence—What's any poor married idiot's weakest point?

Johns (looking up)—His wife?

Florence—Of course. *That's* where you've got to hit him—hard! As long as *you* are miserable, he's *happy*. Make *him unhappy*! Serve him, and serve him well! With energy and diligence! But always with a smile. And George will wonder *why*! Keep close to Nellie— (As Johns looks up.) Not *too* close, mind you; for I will be looking on. But hit him, T, and hit him where he lives! *He* wants *you* to break the contract—Make *him* break it! (Smiling.) Do you get me?

Johns (who has been registering with dawning understanding)—*Yes, I do!*

Florence—Then go after him and—*get him*. But don't forget to smile!

Johns—FLORENCE! YOU QUEEN!

(Takes her in his arms, both laughing. As they hold the embrace, enter Coddle from L. She starts, then emits a wail of anguish and crosses to R, keeping her eyes on Johns and Florence who laugh louder. Florence breaks position and crosses to door, picking up her satchel and standing at exit. Johns throws himself into chair, roaring with laughter. Nettleton enters from library, bumps into Coddle, sees Johns and registers his anger. Mrs. Nettleton follows Nettleton and Vanderholt comes down stairs.)

Nettleton—Coddle! What's the matter? (She wails and points at Johns, Nettleton looks at Johns and advances savagely, while Johns drink cocktail and laughs.) Boggs! What have you done to Coddle?

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Johns—Coddle? (Leans back in chair laughing uproariously.)

Nettleton (getting out his book)—Stop that! Do you hear me! What the devil does it mean?

Johns (taking up another cocktail)—Say, George; just charge me up with another hundred, will you? I can't tell you why, but it's worth it! (Drinks cocktail and laughs louder.)

Nettleton—He's drunk! (Turning.) Van, I want you to make a legal note of that—he's drunk!

(Johns puts feet up on table and laughs.)

CURTAIN.



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ACT III

SCENE: *Same as Act II. Same time—late afternoon. Room lighted as before. One week later.*

DISCOVERED: *Coddle, coming down stairs. As she reaches landing, she pauses, listening. Johns is heard off stage singing happily, the door at L being partially open. Johns enters from L, singing to himself, carrying tray on which are decanter, vichy bottle, glasses and ice. The tray is balanced jauntily on his upturned hand. He sets it on table, picks up duster and begins to dust articles, the decanter, back of Nettleton's chair, the picture containing cards on table—and otherwise shows his happiness. Coddle watches him in silent, open-mouthed wonder. Johns takes up slippers and places them daintily before fireplace, clasping his hands and looking down at them.*

Johns—For his little Footsy-tutsies!

Coddle—Mr. Boggs, sir!

Johns (turning)—Oh! Hello, Coddle! Are you there?

Coddle (coming down to him with an air of deep concern)—Ho, Mr. Boggs, sir, wot makes you so h'awful 'appy?

Johns (twirling duster)—I? Happy? Am I?

Coddle—Ho, yes, sir, h'it's just abeen agrowin' h'on you for the larst 'ole week. (Clasping her hands and advancing.) H'it h'aint on *my* account, now h'is it?

Johns (solemnly)—Coddle—to be honest we must oft' be cruel. It is *not* on your account.

Coddle (disappointedly)—No? Wot then?

Johns—Sh-h-h-h! (Glancing behind him and speaking mysteriously.) It's because—I have *arrived!*

Coddle—H'arrived, sir? *W'ere?*

Johns—Here! (Swelling out his chest.) I have never realized till now the joy of being out in service. To watch! Anticipate an every wish! (Bowling.) To serve! (As Coddle stares at him, stepping back slowly.) Love? Fortune? Marriage? Bah! I only ask a serviceable feather duster—and a good, kind, loving master.

Coddle (in amazement)—The marster, sir? *H'our* marster? (Glancing behind her.) Ho, Lud! I thought as 'ow you was a-callin' 'im a ragin' H'African 'iena!

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Johns (lifting his hands in horror)—Oh, Coddle! You are dreaming! He's a *dove*! There's nothing that man wouldn't do for me—if he had the chance. Why, only yesterday, when he threw the inkwell, he did it so gently that it hardly broke the skin. (As Coddle stands blinking at him.) And if I could only acquire your delicious H'inglish h'accent, I believe it would *please* the marster—varstly. (Smiles at Coddle, picks up cushion and pets it lovingly.)

Coddle (aside)—Ah, the poor nut. 'E's gone wrong in the 'ead! (To Johns, appealingly.) H'excuse me, sir, but—that 'ere doctor—wot comes to see me for the cramps—'e's h'awful good, sir—h'an h'inexpensive, too. H'an h'if you would only let 'im *see* you, sir, per'aps 'e might save you from a spell.

Johns—Ha, ha! Now, Codlums—don't! (Tickles her under chin with duster.)

Coddle (coyly)—Ho, stop h'it, sir! Now stop! (Giggling.) W'y lawys, Mr. Boggs, w'en you gets to cuttin' h'up that way—it—— (Giggles and shakes her apron at him.)

Johns (in mock sternness)—Woman—have a care! Remember—there are dinner guests this evening. Reserve your motions for the privilege of passing in the plates.

Coddle (backing away L, speaking seriously)—Yes, sir. 'E's a-comin' this evenin', sir.

Johns—Who?

Coddle—The doctor, sir. H'I'll take the liberty of speakin' to 'im. Yes, sir.

(As Johns laughs idiotically and runs at her with duster, she half giggles and half screams, running out at L.

Johns begins to sing to himself, returning to his work.

(Florence appears at window, outside of room, peeps in and taps on glass. Johns runs delightedly to window, and they kiss through glass. Johns runs to door and lets her in.)

Florence (speaking in a whisper)—Shh-h-h! Be careful, T—where's Nellie?

Johns (in whisper)—Up stairs—dressing!

Florence (in whisper)—Oh! Good! I don't want her to see me yet. (Coming to him with a broad smile.) She's getting repentant. Invited me over to dinner.

Johns (reaching for her)—Ah!

Florence (keeping him off)—No, no, no! Keep to business. Well? How's it working? (As Johns begins to

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chuckle, suppressing laughter with his hand.) Is George falling for it?

Johns (grinning)—He *loathes* me! (Soberly.) But, say! I'm making an awful hit with Coddle!

Florence—Yes; but I'm afraid *I'm not!* Dreamed last night she was *after* me—with one of these—er—scalloped edge bread knives. (Laughing as she comes to him.) Here! I've got a little present for you. (Hands small package which she has carried in her hand.)

Johns—No, no—that's how I got this one. (Holding duster.)

Florence (holding him off)—But open it—please!

(Johns opens package, disclosing an atomizer and looks at her inquiringly. She raises it to his nose, and he makes a wry face. She stands on tiptoe and whispers in his ear. Johns' face registers his understanding and delight. She steps back, taking veil from the rim of her hat and handing it to him.)

Johns—Oh, but Florence, that's so old.

Florence—Wait until you see how wonderfully it works.

Mrs. Nettleton (calling from up stairs)—T! T!

Johns (to Florence)—Sh-h-h-h! Look out! (Calling up stairs. Putting veil and atomizer in pockets.) Yes, Nellie! I'm here. (Stands at R, while Florence runs to L and stands in corner L of stairs.)

Mrs. Nettleton (coming down stairs, dressed for dinner)—Good evening, T. (As he makes a low, formal bow, she registers her annoyance.) Oh, *please!* I wish you wouldn't—bow that way. You seem so—like—a—a servant.

Johns—Thank you, Nellie! Some day I may ask you for a reference. (Places finger tips together.)

Mrs. Nettleton (laughing)—And I promise to give you any kind you want. (Pulling his hands apart.) Oh, T! You are trying to make the best of a—a horrid situation, and it's very brave of you.

Johns—And so much cheaper. George hasn't been able to charge me up with a hundred dollars for six whole days.

Mrs. Nettleton—And I hope he never will again. Have you seen anything of my note paper. I want to drop a line to mother.

Johns (drawing out chair L of table at C)—Yes; I put it away myself.

Mrs. Nettleton—Thank you. (Sits. As soon as she is seated, Florence begins to tip up stairs, while Johns cross-

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es to side table, opens drawer and brings box of note paper to Mrs. Nettleton at C.)

Johns (opening box)—Allow me! (Handing pen which he takes from vest pocket.) My fountain pen!

Mrs. Nettleton (starts to write and speaks without looking up)—George hasn't come home yet, has he?

Johns (virtuously)—Not yet. He's probably—very busy—at the office!

Mrs. Nettleton (looking up sharply)—Why do you emphasize—at the office?

Johns (turning away)—Oh, nothing! Nothing! (Covers mouth with hand as though hiding a smile.)

Mrs. Nettleton (looking at him thoughtfully, making a gesture of annoyance and returning to her writing)—Er—call him up, will you, and see if he's there.

Johns—With pleasure. (Takes up phone and calls sweetly.) Three-four-three-two, Rector, please. (Holds phone to ear, glancing at Nellie with a smile.)

Mrs. Nettleton (looking up)—T—have you noticed lately what a curious change has come over George?

Johns—In what way?

Mrs. Nettleton—Oh, it's hard to say, *exactly*; but he seems so troubled—and discouraged. And then his *manner*—to *me*. Why, only the other day—you remember—when he came home early, and you and I were fixing the roses in the vase. After you went out, he looked at me in the oddest sort of way, and said—er—"Nellie, I should think that fellow was quite strong enough to lift a bunch of roses by himself." Then he used a profane word and stalked out of the room. Now, what do you suppose he meant?

Johns (virtuously)—I wonder.

Mrs. Nettleton—The poor boy doesn't seem well; and I'm afraid I haven't been very helpful to him.

Johns—No?

Mrs. Nettleton—When he snapped at me, I snapped back. But hereafter I'm going to be quite different. I'm going to be sweet and loveable and considerate—

Johns—Excuse me. (In telephone.) Hello—then never mind. Thank you. (Replaces phone on table.) Office doesn't answer.

Mrs. Nettleton (glancing at clock with annoyed look, then back to letter)—Oh, well, er—perhaps he's on his way home to dinner; and I have a nice little surprise for him. You know, he's been wanting to have Florence over, but I—

well, I demurred. (Looking up.) Oh, I know it was ugly of me, but I did. (Back to letter.) So, today I phoned her and asked her to come to dinner. (Looking up.) Well? Isn't that the proper spirit?

Johns—Magnanimous. Especially to *me*. Personally, I shall endeavor to serve her soup without spilling it down her back.

Mrs. Nettleton (rising in consternation)—Oh! *T!* (Coming to him.) I wasn't thinking of *your* being in love with her. I was only thinking of the surprise—for dear old George.

Johns—Very kind of you, I'm sure.

Mrs. Nettleton—But I *want* to be kind—and especially to my husband. And from now on, I'm going to prove to him that I *can* be nice to *every one*; no matter how perfectly horrid they are to me.

Johns—Referring, I presume, to Florence?

(As he glances to rear, Florence appears around edge of steps, pointing to R, and indicating with her lips—
“George—he's coming!”)

(Nettleton is seen peering through window at R, Johns indicates that he understands, crosses and bends over the back of Mrs. Nettleton's chair.)

Mrs. Nettleton (answering Johns, speaks a little confusedly)—Well, I—I hardly mean it—er—just exactly that way; of course, but—

Johns—Nellie, you're an awfully generous woman. You are an intelligent woman; and what's more, you're a good woman. (Nettleton enters, starting and registering, as Johns bends closer to Mrs. Nettleton.) And if I ever have the chance to prove to you—

Nettleton (sharply)—*Nellie!*

(Johns jumps, moves quickly away and stands at attention.)

Mrs. Nettleton—Oh! (She springs up, turning and facing Nettleton.) George! How you *startled* me!

Nettleton (coming down C, glancing from one to the other, speaking in sarcasm)—Did I?

Mrs. Nettleton (petulantly)—Yes, you did. You know I'm nervous. You—

Nettleton (harshly)—Never mind your nerves! Sit down!

Mrs. Nettleton (angrily)—Oh, well, if you employ *that* tone—I *won't!* (Turning and going up stairs. Florence

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retreats quickly.) If you are going to be brutal the minute you come into the house, I wish you wouldn't come at all. (Exits up stairs.)

(Nettleton turns angrily to Johns.)

Johns (with the deferential air of a servant)—Pardon me, sir. Shall I take your hat and coat?

Nettleton (savagely)—*No!* (Pulling off coat and throwing it into chair.) Think I'm not capable of taking off my own coat? (Throws hat on table and crosses to decanter.)

Johns (stepping forward)—Oh! Allow *me*, sir!

Nettleton—Keep your hands off!

Johns (backing away)—Yes, sir. Thank you, sir. (Nettleton pours whiskey and drinks with shaking hand, puts glass down with a bang, crosses and drops into chair L. Johns watches him with a smile.) H'm! Will you have your—*slippers*, sir?

Nettleton (glaring at him)—Yes! and be quick about it! That's all you're fit for.

Johns (sweetly)—Yes, sir. Very good, sir! (While Johns gets slippers, Nettleton unbuttons his own shoes. Johns kneels, pulls one off then the other; takes hold of toe of stocking daintily and pulls it. Nettleton jerks foot away.) Oh, pardon me. Did I tickle you?

Nettleton—Look here! What the devil's the matter with you? (Puts on his own slippers.)

Johns—With *me*, sir? I don't know, I'm sure. But I hope it's nothing to annoy you. To what, may I ask, do you allude?

Nettleton (jumping up)—To everything. First—you—you seem so damn well satisfied—— (As Johns shrugs and turns away.) And ever since I caught you drunk the other day, you've been wearing a smirk that—that I couldn't pull off with a monkey-wrench. (Pause.) Well? Why don't you answer me—why is it?

Johns (suavely)—Perhaps, sir, it's because I'm beginning to realize—my opportunities.

Nettleton (registering and stepping forward)—*What opportunities?*

Johns—Of serving—Mr. Nettleton.

(They look each other in the eye till Nettleton breaks position.)

Nettleton—You get out of here!

Johns—Yes, sir, very good, sir. (Places shoes in the palms of his hands and starts out L.)

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Nettleton—Hey, there! (As Johns pauses and turns.) Tell Mrs. Nettleton that I want to see her—in here—at once.

Johns (eagerly)—Yes, sir. With pleasure, sir! (Starts up stairs.)

Nettleton (intercepting him)—No, you don't! I'll just do that myself! (Coming to him angrily.) And look here! If I ever catch you hanging around her again—I'll—*break—your—neck?* Get me?

Johns—Yes, sir. I get you. (Going L and turning.) In future—I shall try to be—more careful. (Exit L.)

Nettleton (glares after him, starts up stairs, hesitates, then comes down to phone. Savagely)—Hello! (Rattling the hook.) Hello, hello—hello! Lenox 6170—and hurry, will you? Hurry! (Sets down receiver, crosses and brings decanter and syphon, making highball and trying to listen at phone.) Well? Can't you get that number? Oh, hello—is that Mr. Vanderholt's home? Oh! This is George! Say, Van! I want you to come over, will you—right away! (Pause.) Of *course*, it's important. What? (Glancing at Johns who enters from L.) No, I can't tell you over the phone. There's something in the way. (Savagely.) As it always is! All right, I'll look for you. Goodbye! (Replaces phone on table and drops into chair.)

Johns (advancing and pouring whiskey)—H'm! Er—pardon me, sir. But won't you take a little—stimulant?

Nettleton—*Mind your own business.*

Johns—Yes, sir! I only took the liberty—because you look so tired and overworked. (Hands glass.)

Nettleton (snatching at glass)—Yes. I *am* overworked. I'm working like a *dog*. And *you*—up here—loafing around all day and—I don't know what!

Johns (sweetly)—No, sir. How should you, sir? (Nettleton registers, then turns away, burying his face in his hands.) I'm very sorry to see you so. (Taking atomizer from pocket and spraying his shoulder.) Especially as your splendid work in the Eureka Digestive Pill Co. is partially on my account. (Replacing atomizer in pocket.) And so I hope I don't offend you, sir, in offering a suggestion. No? Thank you. Then since you *are* so overworked, why not run off for a little trip somewhere—and rest—for a week or two?

Nettleton (springing to his feet)—*What's that?*

Johns—Oh, of course, I mean, sir—that you would take *her* with you.

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Nettleton (struggling with his fury)—Oh, you *do!* Then let me tell you one thing, Mr. Johns, and I want you to remember it. My personal and domestic affairs are *not* mentioned in the contract!

Johns—There is nothing in it to the contrary! (Johns takes contract from pocket and starts to unfold it.)

Nettleton (pushing his hand aside)—There is in *this* house! and there's going to be—from now on! Get me?

Johns—Yes, sir. I've got you. And whenever you can think of any *other* little matter that would please you, I trust you will—er—bring it to my attention. (Replaces contract in pocket.)

Nettleton (glaring into his eyes)—There are several little matters I am going to bring to your attention. (Crossing to library R.) And if you don't look sharp, the first one will be an *undertaker*.

Johns (with finger tips together)—Yes, sir. Very good, sir. (Nettleton exits R, slamming door.)

(Johns grins after him, then takes Florence's veil from his pocket, sprays it with atomizer and stuffs it into Nettleton's overcoat pocket, on chair. He then takes out note paper from Mrs. Nettleton's box, on table, takes out a blank sheet, folds it, then crosses to fireplace, sits and makes believe to read, glancing from time to time at library. As Nettleton re-enters, Johns kisses note. Johns glances around, sees Nettleton, and jumps up, holding note behind him.)

Nettleton—Well? What's that? (As Johns seems to shrink back, making no answer.) Don't you hear me speaking to you? What is it?

Johns—It is one of the person—or domestic affairs—*not mentioned*—in the contract! (Tears up note and throws it into fire.)

Nettleton (furiously, as he strides toward table)—Well, by—

Johns (sharply)—Hold on, there! (As Nettleton reaches edge of table and pauses. Johns speaks again with the air of the servant.) Remember, sir—that any excessive violence, on the part of the master, might legally be construed as a violation of the contract. Do you get me?

Nettleton—Yes, I get you—and I'm *going* to get you—by the neck! (As he starts forward, Mrs. Nettleton appears on stairs.)

Mrs. Nettleton—*George!* (Nettleton breaks position,

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turning to R. Coming down steps.) Why—why you looked as though you were going to fly at each other's throats. What is it, George?

Johns (virtuously)—Believe me, Nellie, it was not his fault. Merely a little nervous strain—from overwork—at the office.

Mrs. Nettleton—Oh! (Turning.) George, dear, why were you so late at the office?

Nettleton (advancing, speaking vehemently)—I'll tell you why! Because I'm doing two men's work! Because the entire business is resting on my shoulders. Does anybody appreciate that? No! I toil and slave and sweat—ten hours a day—and that—*smirking lump of laziness*—is prancing around with a dinky little feather duster. (Turning away.) My God, Nellie, it makes me sick! Sick!

Mrs. Nettleton—Well? You told him to do it, didn't you? In fact, you gave him the duster—on his birthday.

Nettleton (turning to her)—That's it—take up for him—as you always do!

Mrs. Nettleton—And why shouldn't I defend him? *Someone* should! Isn't the poor fellow doing everything on earth to please you?

Nettleton (lifting his clenched fists)—Ah-h-h! To please me! (In angry sarcasm.) Yes, he is! He's pleasing me—every minute of the day or night! And so are you! And now, Mrs. Nettleton, I want to know why and what you are writing to that man!

Mrs. Nettleton (in amazement)—I? What man?

Nettleton (in biting sarcasm)—What man! T! T! T! Boggs Johns! (Strikes table with fist.) That's the man I mean, and you know it. (Turns away.)

Mrs. Nettleton—Why, darling, you are nervous! Why in the world should I write to T. when I have him here all day long and can tell him what I choose?

Nettleton (registering, then stepping forward)—All right! Have it that way? What are you saying to him all day long? And what's he saying to you? (As she stares at him in pained wonder.) That's it—look innocent! I'm the goat—not you!

Mrs. Nettleton—My precious, George! You're not yourself. You need a rest. Now, why don't you run off somewhere—for a week or two?

Nettleton—Aha! You, too! That's what he wanted! To get me out of the way! (Advancing threateningly.)

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Now then! I want to know what it means—do you hear me? (Grasping her arms.) Now look me in the face and *tell* me—if you can.

Mrs. Nettleton (sniffing)—George! (Smelling his coat and stepping back.) *GEORGE!*

Nettleton (harshly)—Well? What are you getting at?

Mrs. Nettleton—Your coat sleeve! *Smell* it!

Nettleton (taken aback)—What? My co—— (Smelling it.) H'm, by Jove! That is funny! I wonder where I got it?

Mrs. Nettleton (stiffly)—That's what *I* want to know. Where?

Nettleton (defensively)—How can *I* tell, it must have been here—— (Sniffing.) I've—I've been noticing something for the last five minutes.

Mrs. Nettleton—I should think you might. You're positively reeking with it. (Drawing herself up.) Now, sir! *Where—have—you—been?*

Nettleton—Been? Why—why—just where I *said* I've been—Just——

Mrs. Nettleton—Stop! Don't make it worse by lying!

Nettleton—Nellie! (Steps back and speaks in painted reproach.) That's a nice raw deal to get when a tired business man comes home. If you don't think I've been working, there's the telephone—why didn't you call me up and find out?

Mrs. Nettleton—I did. Twice. (Sarcastically.) And Central always said the office didn't answer.

Nettleton (faltering)—Oh! Well—er—well that may be, too. Our phone has been out of order. (As Mrs. Nettleton laughs derisively.) Then *don't* believe me! If you like, I *wasn't* there! If it suits you better, I haven't *seen* the office for a week.

Mrs. Nettleton—Aha! At last we are getting at the *truth!* Well *I* know a phone which is *not* out of order. (Crosses to phone and snatches off receiver.)

Nettleton—*And what are you doing now?*

Mrs. Nettleton—Calling up my lawyer—Mr. Vanderholt! (In phone.) Hello!

Nettleton—Then save yourself the trouble—he'll be here in about five minutes.

Mrs. Nettleton (replacing phone on table and coming to chair L)—Very well! I'll *see* him! (Beginning to cry.) And I want you to know, sir, that this is the end! Of everything! (Sinking into seat.) Every-y-y thing!

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Nettleton (starts to come to her)—Oh, but darling—
(Phone bell rings—he crosses to it and speaks savagely.)
Hello! What? *No!* I didn't call. Ring off!

Mrs. Nettleton (sobbing and fumbling in her sleeves for handkerchief, also in bosom of dress.) Where's my handkerchief? I've lost it—I've lost it!

Nettleton—Here, dear, takes mine! (Fumbling in coat, seeing white object in overcoat pocket and crossing.) Here we are! (Pulls veil out, stares at it wildly, then tries to conceal it in his inside pocket.)

Mrs. Nettleton (rising quickly)—What is it? (Snatching it from him.) *Aha! Her veil!*

Nettleton—*Her veil? Whose veil?*

Mrs. Nettleton (thrusting it under his nose)—*Smell it!*
(As he steps back sniffing his coat in comparison, she throws veil down and stamps on it, then flings herself into chair at C, laughing and sobbing.)

Nettleton—Nellie! Nellie! For heaven's sake! Don't! Don't! (She continues. He starts around to her, when phone rings. He looks from her to the phone, starts for phone, then comes back to her.) Darling! Speak to me, Nellie! Won't you even *look* at me? (She continues to laugh and sob. Phone gives long ring. Nettleton, on his knees, turns and shakes his fist at it.) That's it! Go on—damn you! Go on!

Mrs. Nettleton (in a bitter wail)—And now you're cursing me-e-e-e-e-e-e-e!

Nettleton—I'm not cursing you! I'm cursing the phone! I'm——

Mrs. Nettleton—And now you're putting it on the poor old telephone. (Sobs and laughs—Door bell rings.)

Nettleton—Oh, my God! there's something else! Why don't the house catch fire and finish it! (Mrs. Nettleton sobs louder. Johns enters from L and crosses to door, grinning.) Nellie! Nellie! You are only making a fool of yourself. I don't know a *thing* about that smell! I swear it! Not a thing. (Pulling down her skirts as she kicks.) Oh, don't! Please! Please!

Johns (opening door at R and ushering in Vanderholt, with a bow)—Mr. Vanderholt!

Mrs. Nettleton (sitting up, speaking in natural voice)—Whom did he say it was?

Nettleton—It's only Van, darling. Just dear old Van!
(Mrs. Nettleton lapses into hysteria again.)

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Vanderholt (registering his alarm)—George! What is it! Is she ill?

Johns—Something, I fancy, has disagreed with her.

Nettleton (to Johns)—*Get out of here!*

Johns—Yes, sir, very good, sir. (Exit happily at L.)

Van—now, old man, what is it?

Nettleton (still on his knees, pathetically)—Everything! And I'm supposed to dress for dinner with one hand and treat a case of hysteria with the other. (Risng.) We've got to get her out of here. Help me, will you? Take her head—it's the lightest part of her!

Mrs. Nettleton (wailing)—I want a divorce-e-e-e-e-e—absolute—with alimony-e-e-e-e!

(Vanderholt takes her head, while Nettleton catches her around the knees, while she kicks, and he dodges.)

Vanderholt (pulling to rear)—Up stairs?

Nettleton (pulling toward R)—No! We'd bump her on the bannisters! Library—come on!

(Coddle enters from L, seeing the row, and wringing her hands.)

Coddle—Ho Lud! Ho Lud! Ho Lud! Ho Lud!

Nettleton—You Coddle! Stop that, and open the library door! (She runs across and opens door. Mrs. Nettleton is carried in still sobbing and laughing, and the door is closed. Coddle moves away from it with her hand to her head. Johns has entered from L, sitting on steps and laughing with delight. Florence has appeared at head of stairs, looking down in enjoyment. Nettleton enters from library. Sounds of hysteria coming out until he closes door.) Coddle! Telephone the doctor!

Coddle—Yes, sir. Wot number?

Nettleton—Six-five, Columbus! Hurry! (Exit into library—sounds of hysteria coming out and stopping as he closes door.)

Coddle—Yes, sir! Yes, sir! (She starts for phone, sees Johns on steps, smiles and starts L to go to him. Johns registers his alarm and runs out, she following until he shuts the door and holds it. Then she goes to phone.) Are you there? I say, are you there? Six-five, Columbi-ous!

Nettleton (enters from library)—Well, well! Did you get him?

Coddle—No, sir. 'E shut the door in me face, sir!

Nettleton (roaring at her)—Who? The *doctor*?

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Coddle—No, sir. Mr. Boggs, sir!

Nettleton (in helpless fury)—Oh, you idiot! Here! Go in there to your mistress—she needs you!

Coddle—Yes, sir! Yes, sir! (Exit into library, while Nettleton crosses to phone. As he takes it up, Vanderholt enters from library, shuts the door to cut off sounds of hysteria, and advances.)

Vanderholt—Now, old man, what's all this silly rubbish about divorce?

Nettleton (leaving phone and advancing)—Well, I—I got some cologne or something on my shoulder. I don't know where, of course; but nothing under heaven can persuade the lady that the head of some *other* lady has not been reposing *here*. (Coming to him.) Whiff that!

Vanderholt (smelling sleeve and stepping back)—Shades of the chorus! (Drops into chair, laughing uproariously.)

Nettleton—Well? What's the matter with you? (Sniffing coat.) Woman, hell! This is a perfume *factory*! (As Van laughs.) That's right, make a game of it! Enjoy yourself! Howl! (Turning away, then back.) But see here, Van. *You* understand it, don't you?

Vanderholt—Oh, yes, I understand—Georgie—Georgie!

Nettleton—You believe me, don't you? (As Van laughs again, Nettleton speaks angrily.) Then don't! If you haven't brains enough to understand it, here's something you *can* understand. I WANT THAT CONTRACT CANCELLED!

Vanderholt—I thought you thought it great?

Nettleton—I did until I saw it work, and now it's rotten.

Vanderholt (sitting up)—Well, what other reasons have you for wanting it cancelled?

Nettleton—A hundred and fifty million reasons! First, it isn't legal!

Vanderholt—That's what T says—why isn't it legal?

Nettleton—Because all the advantage is on *his* side—and the rank injustice falls on *me*. And that won't stand—at law!

Vanderholt—Oh, yes, it will. Yours is a personal agreement between two private individuals; and it *stands*—at *law*! It *can* be annulled, but only by mutual consent—or by one of the parties breaking it—deliberately.

Nettleton—All right! I'll break it! I'll fire that fellow—now! (Starts to L.)

Vanderholt—Good! And forfeit all your interest in the business?

Nettleton (stopping short)—Eh? Oh! Then its a frame-up! (Advancing angrily.) So that's what you've done to me! Tied me up! *Fixed* me—so I can't even *kick* him out! I've got to *keep* him—for a *year*?

Vanderholt—That's what you wanted, wasn't it? You're making a butler of him, and since he left the office you are doing twice as well as you were before.

Nettleton—I'm not! The business is running down. One man can't do it all!

Vanderholt (whistling)—Oh, I see! So you want him *back* at the office?

Nettleton—No, I don't! I want him out of this house! He's a curse! And one way or the other you've got to get me rid of him!

Vanderholt—*I* must! Ha, ha! And on what grounds?

Nettleton—On *legal* grounds! (Serious.) Van, he's in love with Nellie—and she with him.

Van—What! In love with Ne—— (Stopping and speaking in disgust.) Oh, George! Go out and see a *vetenary*! (Turns away.)

Nettleton—It's true! For a week he's been swaggering around here as if he *owned* the place. Drinks my whiskey! Smokes my best cigars! And then he—*always*—with *her*! If I come in suddenly, he jumps—a guilty start—and looks like a poisoned sheep! Why, Van, I tell you plainly, man to man—— (Stops as Johns enters from up stairs, coming partly down steps.)

Johns—Er—pardon me, sir; but shall I lay out your—er—violet pajamas—or the pink ones?

Nettleton—Get out of here—or I'll lay *you* out!

John—Yes, sir. Very good, sir. (Exits.)

Nettleton (turning)—Get that, Van? Get that? Did you see him *grin-n-n-ning* at me?

Vanderholt—No. He looked to *me* like a highly respectable grave digger.

Nettleton—Well, I'll dig *his* all right, and plant him—in a violet colored shroud! (Speaking confidentially.) Van, would you believe it, they are writing notes to each other, and right under my very nose!

Vanderholt (sitting up)—Correspondence? Now you're *talking*! Produce it!

Nettleton—I can't. They burn it.

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Vanderholt (laughing)—Good work. (Laughs.)

Nettleton—Eh?

Vanderholt—I mean—er—how does Mrs. Nettleton seem to bear up under the trying circumstances?

Nettleton—*She?* Why, Van, she carries it off with an air of brazen innocence that would knock you cold. When I put it up to her a while ago, what do you think she did?

Vanderholt—What?

Nettleton—Just looked at me—with her big, beautiful eyes—then attacked me—about that damned cologne.

Vanderholt—Ha, ha—By Jove, that *was* clever. Ha, ha!

Nettleton—Well, it don't go down with *me!* (Coming to him.) Now then—what are you going to do about it?

Vanderholt—I? See here, old sport, you seem to think this is *my* divorce.

Nettleton—Well? You saddled me with Boggs, didn't you?

Vanderholt—No, I didn't. But still—— (Stopping and brightening.) Ha! I've got it——

Nettleton—What?

Vanderholt—We'll call T in here and get *him* to dissolve the contract—with *your* magnanimous consent. Get the idea?

Nettleton—You mea—— Good, by Jupiter! It's great! (Crossing and touching bell button, then crossing quickly.) But don't you tell him that I want it, and don't you tell him that business is rotten, either.

Vanderholt—Oh, no, no! You leave it to *me*. I owe him an upper-cut, myself.

Johns (enters from L. He turns to Nettleton)—Er—pardon me—you rang?

Nettleton (sharply)—Yes, I rang! What did you think it was, the angels calling you?

Johns (sweetly)—No, sir. I used to believe in angels, but somehow lately, sir——

Nettleton—Shut up!

Vanderholt (coming between them)—That's right. (Turning. Nettleton sits at R.) Now, T, listen! George and I have been talking matters over and have come to the conclusion that this contract is—well, a little rough on *you*.

Johns—Yes, sir?

Vanderholt—And so—partially at my advice—he has generously consented to—to let you off.

Johns—You mean—for a *day*, sir.

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Vanderholt—Oh, no, no! I mean altogether. In other words, he's willing—under certain conditions—to allow you—to cancel.

Johns (in respectful astonishment)—What! Cancel my contract? (Lifting his hand in deferential protest.) *Oh, Mr. Vanderholt!*

Vanderholt—Here! Here! Cut that butler stuff, it don't go with *me!*

Johns (in natural tone)—All right, I will! And why *should* I cancel it? Isn't George at the office—working his head off—piling up receipts and even improving on the color of my pills? He's doubling the business every week or two—according to *his* account—and is crediting half the profits up to mine. (Pausing and smiling.) On the other hand—I'm here—a regular rest cure snap. Good whiskey—fair cigars—and—er—— (Pauses.)

Nettleton (rising and stepping forward)—And *what?*

Johns (placing finger tips together, closing eyes and speaking with unctious joy)—A good, kind, generous, loving marster; who is all my simple soul desires. (Bows and retreats toward L.)

(Nettleton starts forward, doubling fists. but Vanderholt checks him.)

Vanderholt—Steady, George! Leave this to me! (Turning to George, who is now at door.) Well, T? How about it?

Johns—Cancel my contract? What *I* want to do is to *renew* it! (Exits L.)

Nettleton (turning to Van in outraged indignation)—Can you beat *that?* Can you *beat* it?

Vanderholt (running his chin)—Well, *no*, old chap! I'm horribly afraid—we *can't!*

(Coddle enters from library. She closes door and leans against it limply.)

Coddle—Ho, Mr. Nettleton! She's a-takin' h'on some-think hawful, sir—a-grittin' of 'er teeth, an' a-stretchin' hout her legs like this! (Bares teeth and holds her arms and legs rigid.)

Vanderholt—Good Lord! What is it *now?*

Nettleton (ironically)—Pathetic business for divorce proceedings—for benefit of council. (Opening library door and waving hand.) Walk in and get a line on it.

Vanderholt—One minute, George, how about a retainer?

Nettleton—Retainer? You go in and retain her! (Exit

Venderholt laughing. Nettleton turns to Coddle.) Coddle, take my advice, and remain a maiden! (Exit.)

(Coddles places hand to forehead and falls backward to the floor. Rises, assisting herself on edge of table.)

Coddle—Ho, dearie me! Ho, dearie me! H'I a-rather do the cookin' than be a-waitin' h'on a lunny-tick! (Look from R to L.) I wonder now if 'e caught it from 'er, or h'if she caught it from 'im. (Johns enters from L, singing happily and carrying a hot-water bottle in one hand and a bunch of flowers in the other. He starts across to library door. When Coddle sees him, her expression changes to one of alarm.) Don't go in there, Mr. Boggs, sir. Don't you do h'it. 'E'll murder you, 'e will. 'E'll bash you on the 'ead, sir. 'E'll—

Florence (coming down stairs)—*Coddle!* (She advances.) You go back to the kitchen this minute—and let poor Mr. Boggs alone.

Coddle—Now, don't you worrit, Miss. Don't you worrit. (Backing toward door L.) I wouldn't marry that lobby 'eaded ijjit,—no, not if 'e was willing. (At door.) I ain't a-goin' to spend my 'oney moon in no bloomin', bally, bug 'ouse! (Exits.)

Florence (laughing)—Who were those flowers intended for—Nellie?

Johns—Partially. I thought it would please the marster if he knew I was *thinking* of her. (Grins and strokes the hot-water bottle.)

Florence—Well, stop thinking of *her* and think of *me*.

Johns (laying bag on table and coming to her eagerly)—I am.

Florence (keeping him off)—No, no, no! I mean business.

Johns (advancing)—So do I.

Florence (checking him)—Yes, but not that kind. T—you've got to make George discharge you.

Johns—The contract won't let him. If he throws me out as an asset, I come back to him as a liability. We nailed him with the cologne, but we didn't clinch it.

Florence (turning away in thought)—Yes—I see— (Turning quickly.) Let's have a look at the little trouble-maker. (Johns takes atomizer from pocket and hands it. She sits L, looking at it thoughtfully.) My, my, my! and such a little thing! (She reverses the nozzle, turns her head and begins to spray herself copiously.)

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Johns (stepping back)—Good Lord, Florence—what are you doing?

Florence—I'm trying to become George's little correspondent. (Rising and lying atomizer on table.) And if this doesn't work, I know something else that will.

Johns—What?

Florence—It depends on *you*.

Johns—How?

Florence—Are you aware of the fact that not ten minutes after becoming engaged to *me*, you sat down, deliberately and gambled away my chances of being married?

Johns (blankly)—*Your* chances of being married—!

Florence—Yes. What do you think I grew up for?

Johns—Oh, but Florence, you are wrong. What I forfeited was only myself—and my business.

Florence—You don't expect me to marry a butler—

Johns—Well, n-no, I—I don't! (Turning to her.) What do you want me to do? If you will only help me out—

Florence (quickly)—Ah, that's just the point! Like every other man on earth. You go sailing around—on your own account—till you land in the fly paper—with all six feet—and then begin buzzing for the lady of the house to help you out! (As Johns looks at her meekly, rubbing one side whisker.) And suppose I *do* help you out; suppose I forgive you, as a fool of a woman is always doing! Suppose I put you back in your own office where you belong—Suppose I do! *That's* the point! Mr. Blood and Brains! What do *I* get out of it!

Johns (solemnly)—Florence—you get anything I own on earth, or ever *hope* to own.

Florence—Be careful, T.

Johns—I am. Square my account; first with yourself and then with George, and whatever *you* say for me to do—*I'll do it!*

Florence—And if you fail?

Johns—I'll be your butler for the rest of my natural life.

Florence—And you'll do what I ask you now?

Johns—I will.

Florence—Without regard to consequences? You promise?

Johns—I swear it.

Florence—On your honor?

Johns—As a gen— As a—butler!

Florence—All right. (Stands on tiptoe and whispers in his ear.)

Johns (happily)—What! You mean it?

Florence—Yes.

Johns—You are sure?

Florence—Of course!

Johns—*Florence!* (Coming to her.) Then don't you try to keep me off this time, because you haven't got the strength. (Takes her in his arms, she protesting.)

Florence—Don't, T! Don't—please! (Glancing behind her.) Er—somebody might come in!

Johns—*Lct 'em.* You can't keep me off this time. (Laughing and drawing her to him.) Come on! Come on!

(She suddenly withdraws her hands, then throws her arms about his neck, and they rock from side to side in happiness.)

(Nettleton enters from library, stopping and staring at them in amazement.)

Nettleton (sharply)—*Boggs!* (As they spring apart, he looks from one to the other severely, takes out his book and turns to Johns.) What's the meaning of this?

Johns (smiling at him)—That for the second time, in your presence—I was holding a *lucky queen!* (Blows a kiss to Florence and exits. Nettleton looks after him with a scowl and turns to Florence.)

Florence—You evening, George! You seem surprised to see me?

Nettleton (stiffly)—Yes, Miss Cole, I am! You have no right to interfere in this affair—especially in my house! And you have no right to help *him* out!

Florence (sweetly)—No? And what are you going to do about it?

Nettleton—Do! (Striding toward her.) *I'll* tell you what I'll do. I'll— (As he reaches her, he stops suddenly, sniffs and begins backing away.)

Florence—Why don't you do it, George? (As he looks at her suspiciously—sniffs his sleeve)—Why, what *is* it?

Nettleton (nervously)—Ha, ha—nothing—only—ha,—ha—well, you see—Nellie—

Florence (innocently)—Oh, yes, I know. T told me she was in the library. (Crossing.) I'll run right in and see her.

Nettleton (intercepting her)—No, no—please—I wouldn't

—not just now. She's not at all well, Florence. In fact, she's *ill*—and won't be able to appear at dinner.

Florence (sympathetically)—Ah! too bad! What seems to be the trouble?

Nettleton—Er—er—er—ha, ha—er—*nerves!*

Florence—*Nerves!* Good gracious! I thought the trouble was with her *nose*.

Nettleton—Eh? (Coming to her.) And what do you know about it?

Florence—A lot. Now, look here, George, how much would you give to get out of this mess?—entirely!

Nettleton—You mean—all of it—Boggs included?

Florence—Boggs included *here!* But suppose I put him back in his office, where you need *him*, as badly as *he* needs you. Suppose I do *that*, Mr. Bone and Fat, what is it worth—to *me?*

Nettleton (blows out his cheeks, sits L. of center table and speaks solemnly)—Florence—I'd give a thousand dollars—cold. Yes, fifteen hundred! By Jupiter—I'd give *two* thousand!

Florence—There, there, there! Stop bidding against yourself! (Taking up atomizer from table.) I'll take the first offer of a thousand in the form of a wedding present—and here's a little something to keep you from forgetting it. (Sprays cologne in his face, laughs and exits into library. Nettleton sits for an instant sniffing, then rises slowly, doubling his fists.)

Nettleton—Boggs! I knew it! Boggs! That poisonous little scorpion! (Vanderholt enters from R.) That wart—that toad—that grinning, chuckling, chattering ape. That—

Vanderholt—Say! George—(as Nettleton pauses)—did you notice a similarity between the perfume Florence is using and the one—on your coat?

Nettleton (coming to him angrily)—*Yes, I did!* (Pointing to L.) And that devil in there is responsible! That stum-tailed serpent! That—

Vanderholt—Who? I?

Nettleton—He's gone *beyond* his contract this time, and I'm going to sue him—*for damages*—and I'm going to damage him before the suit. I'm—

Vanderholt—Here! Cut that! I'm the referee in this affair! (As Nettleton turns from him in disgust.) You leave it to me—I'll straighten you out!

Nettleton (turning to him)—Straighten *me* out! Me! And haven't you found out who the crook is *yet*? And if you can't get him legally—— (He is interrupted by Mrs. Nettleton who enters angrily from library, followed by Florence.)

Mrs. Nettleton—Where is he? Oh, where is he? (Nettleton sees her coming, from over his shoulder, and tries to sneak up stairs. She calls sharply.) George! Come back here! I don't mean you! I mean T. Johns! (As Nettleton turns to her in delighted astonishment.) How *dared* he do such a thing? To *you*—and *me*! Where is *he*? (Crosses to L.)

Nettleton (beaming)—Ah! Of course! That's different! How *dared* he?

Mrs. Nettleton (throwing open door and calling)—T. Johns! T. Johns! Come here!

Vanderholt (who has been registering his bewilderment, crosses to L, trying to pacify her)—Nellie—please—if you'd only——

Mrs. Nettleton (turning to him with haughty anger)—And *you*, Mr. Vanderholt! I never understood before that *you* were at the bottom of all the trouble!

Vanderholt (stepping back)—*I*?

Mrs. Nettleton—Yes, *you*! When our two boys were getting along so *happily* and *peacefully*, then *you* stepped in and upset everything! (Florence and Nettleton laugh.) And you did it on purpose—just to charge them legal fees!

Vanderholt—Oh, now, Nellie—*don't*! They had been going it for two years before *I* came in. Miss Florence knows that. I leave it to *her*! (Turning to Florence.) Now, am *I* the one to be made responsible?

Florence—You *are*!

Mrs. Nettleton (as Van steps back)—There! I knew it! (Mr. and Mrs. Nettleton and Florence point fingers at him, following him across stage, as he backs away, protesting. Ad lib lines in a jumble.)

Vanderholt—I tell you it wasn't my fault! I was only trying to teach them a valuable lesson they both needed!

Florence—You knew all the time just what sort of a row you were stirring up, and deserve everything that's coming to you.

Nettleton—You saddled me with Boggs! You did it deliberately. You knew in advance just what he'd do to me.

Mrs. Nettleton—It was perfectly horrid of you. My in-

nocent husband, who called you his best friend. And poor old T!

Vanderholt (raising his voice above the noise)—Here! Here! Stop it, will you! All of you! Stop it! I never knew a poor devil yet who *didn't* get in trouble when he tried to help his friends! Now, as for all this useless row—

(He is stopped by Coddle who enters from L with tray of cocktails, coming between Van and his attackers.

Van registers his relief and turns away.)

Nettleton—*Coddle!* (As she starts, almost upsetting the tray.) What's this? Why isn't *Boggs* serving those cocktails?

Coddle—'E arsked me to serve 'em *for* 'im, sir!

Nettleton (angrily)—Oh; he *did!*

Florence—Don't get excited, George!

Mrs. Nettleton—Yes, darling—please!

(Coddle places tray on table.)

Nettleton (waving them aside, speaks sarcastically)—What *else* did the boss of the establishment have to say?

Coddle—'E said to tell you, sir, that if you didn't loik it, you could charge 'im h'up with another 'undred an' go to 'ell! (Exit L.)

Nettleton (crossing and pressing bell button)—All right, we'll see about it!

Mrs. Nettleton—George! What are you doing *now?*

Nettleton—I'm ringing for *Boggs!* If he don't come in, I'm going after him and *bring* him in! (As Johns appears on stairs, without his whiskers and with his overcoat on and a hat in his hand.) *Boggs!* (All make exclamations of surprise. Nettleton turns to Van.) You see him, Van! He's quitting! He's breaking his contract. He's—

Johns (coming down)—Not much I am! I want to tell you something about that contract—

Nettleton—Yes, and I want to tell *you* something about that contract—

Johns and Nettleton (together, pointing their fingers)—It is stated in the contract—

Florence (coming between them)—Here, here, here—stop it! There *isn't* any contract!

(Nettleton and Johns look at her, while an expression of joy begins to overspread their features.)

Nettleton (happily)—What?

Johns—What's that?

Florence—There never *was* any contract.

A PAIR OF SIXES

Vanderholt—Why *not*?

Florence—To begin with, it wasn't legal.

(They all look at Vanderholt.)

Vanderholt (to Florence, stepping forward)—And why wasn't it legal?

Florence—Because the contract—fundamentally—was based on a game of poker—Now, poker is gambling—and gambling is illegal—— (Slight pause—all register.)

Nettleton—Eh?

Johns—Oh!

Mrs. Nettleton—George!

Vanderholt (laughing)—Look here, Miss Florence, *I* knew that; but how in the name of glory did *you* know?

Florence—I asked a lawyer—a real one (As Van turns to L, she turns to Nettleton and Johns.) You boys had a real business, and you've made a farce of it. But, now, if you have the real stuff in you, you can make it a real success.

Johns—How?

Nettleton—How?

Florence—It's like your digestive pill—depending on which is the more important—the outside or the inside!

Nettleton (smiling)—It's partially the outside!

Johns (smiling)—It's partially the inside!

Florence—It's the combination!

Johns—Say, George, what I said about Van still goes.

Nettleton—What's that?

Johns—He's a hell of a lawyer!

CURTAIN.

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