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DON'T WEAKEN''

A Comedy in Three Acts

BY
WALTER HACKETT

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“DON'T WEAKEN.”

CHARACTERS.

DUNCAN PRICE
ALEXANDER TRAVIS
ROLAND KENT
RICHARD STEELE
JAMES MEREDITH
WILLIAM CANNON
SAMUEL MARVIN
ETHEL TRAVIS
MRS. KENT
MRS. CANNON
A MAID

The action takes place in the living room in the home of MR. and MRS. CANNON in New York.

ACT I.—An evening near the end of May.

ACT II.—Afternoon a month later.

ACT III.—Evening of the same day.

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“DON'T WEAKEN.”

ACT I.

SCENE:—*The scene represents the living room in the home of the CANNONS. It is comfortably and tastefully furnished. There is an exit L. leading to the dining room. One about R. 1, and one up stage R. leading to the hall.*

When the curtain rises the doors leading to the dining room are closed and the sound of a college song being sung there is heard.

MRS. MARJORY CANNON is discovered arranging the card table fixing cards and chips, placing cigar boxes, siphons, bottles, etc., on convenient taborets. While she is doing this bell off L. rings. She hears it, nods and smiles, slight pause. ETHEL TRAVIS enters.

MAID. Miss Travis.

ETHEL. Hello, Marjorie.

MARJ. Ethel dear! I thought you were never coming.

ETHEL. Then I am not too early?

MARJ. Of course not. The boys never let a woman sit at the table with them when they are having their annual reunion dinner and I've been dreadfully lonely.

ETHEL. How often have they had these re-union dinners?

MARJ. Ever since Jim Meredith, Roland Kent, Duncan Price and my husband left college eight years ago.

ETHEL. Jim Roland and Duncan were on the football team together, weren't they?

MARJ. Yes. And Will was the manager. Dick Steele and Sam Marvin were in college with the other boys but graduated some years earlier. They were all chums, though, and they've kept up the friendship ever since.

ETHEL. That's splendid. (ETHEL sees chips and tables) Going to let them play cards?

MARJ. I'm going to let them *think* they'll play, but just when they're starting I'll sing one of their old college songs and then— Well, just wait and see how long their game will last.

ETHEL. You schemer. (a burst of laughter comes from the dining room) The dinner seems to be a great success.

MARJ. Yes, thank heaven. Though for a while I thought it wouldn't be.

ETHEL. Why?

MARJ. This is the first time all six friends haven't been at the dinner together.

ETHEL. One of them is missing?

MARJ. Duncan Price.

ETHEL. (all the pleasure dying from her face) Not Duncan?

MARJ. He sent a telegram at the last minute, saying that business interfered. The boys all realized immediately that it was only an excuse to avoid coming.

ETHEL. But why *should* Duncan wish to avoid coming?

MARJ. Because he hasn't been successful like the others. His pride kept him away.

ETHEL. Oh! I'm sure it couldn't be that. Duncan is bound to succeed some day.

MARJ. That's what we've been saying for years.

ETHEL. Yes. That's true, but don't you see that——

MARJ. He has failed in everything he has tried until now he barely manages to make a living as a clerk in a broker's office. There are other men beside Duncan Price. Dick Steele for instance—He's crazy about you and he's a man worth while.

ETHEL. Not to me.

MARJ. Although he's only thirty-four he's successful and powerful and the head of one of the biggest firms in his line in the country, the same business as your father, too. Now, Ethel, if I were you——

ETHEL. Oh, please, please.

MARJ. Just as you say, dear, but——

(The door bell rings.)

ETHEL. Perhaps Duncan has changed his mind and has come after all.

(MAID enters.)

MAID. Mrs. Kent, ma'am.

MARJ. Very well.

(MAID exits.)

ETHEL. *(disappointed)* Oh dear!

MARJ. Mrs. Kent. I wonder what *she* wants.

(MRS. KENT enters. She is apparently greatly worried.)

MRS. KENT. I'm afraid you will think this a dreadful intrusion, Mrs. Cannon.

MARJ. Of course not, it's a delightful surprise—You know Miss Travis, don't you? *(ETHEL and*

MRS. KENT *bow cordially*) Do let me help you off with your cloak.

MRS. KENT. (*worried and embarrassed*) I won't take it off, thanks, I only came in for a moment.

MARJ. (*taking cloak*) Nonsense! Now you're here we are going to keep you.

MRS. KENT. I was so worried I just had to come.

MARJ. Worried! What about?

MRS. KENT. It's about my husband—poor, dear Rollo—is he sober?

ETHEL. Surely Mr. Kent isn't in the habit of——!

MRS. KENT. I don't know. This is the first chance he has had since we were married five months ago, and my poor dear mamma always says: “If a man doesn't do a thing the first time it can't become a habit.”

MARJ. But, why should you think that Mr. Kent is——

MRS. KENT. My poor dear mamma told me you could only trust men to behave when you had your eye on them—and mamma has had great experience with men—she's been *married four times* and was a *widow once!*

MARJ. Her life must have been very interesting.

MRS. KENT. But frightfully discouraging. Each of her husbands had entirely different methods. Their ingenuity was so appalling she was convinced that there was but one rule to follow—never believe anything a man says; and if you *do* believe him don't trust him!

MARJ. A safe method, but rather contradictory.

(*A burst of laughter comes from the dining room.*

ROLLO'S voice being plainly distinguishable.

MRS. KENT draws herself up tragically.)

MRS. KENT. That's Rollo's voice and he promised me he wouldn't touch even a drop during dinner. I must test him.

ETHEL. Test him?

MRS. KENT. By making him kiss me.

MARJ. Oh!

MRS. KENT. If he has even tasted the wine or the liquor he will hesitate—perhaps even stammer—and then I shall know!

(Sounds come from the dining room as though the dinner party were breaking up.)

MARJ. There! They are coming in. Now, Mrs. Kent, you will see how baseless your suspicions are!

MRS. KENT. Oh, this is an awful moment for me——

(Men enter from dining room. MARVIN and CANNON come first, rather quickly.)

CANNON. Hello, dear! Well, how are the girls?
(crossing to her) Hello, there is Ethel. *(greetings, ETHEL and MRS. KENT)* Why this is a surprise.

MRS. KENT. How do you do, Mr. Cannon.

ETHEL. How are you, Will?

MARVIN. That was a wonderful dinner, Marjorie.

MARJ. Thank you, Sam.

MARVIN. You don't mind my smoking, I know.

MARJ. Certainly not.

(KENT, STEELE and MEREDITH enter slowly, KENT in center telling story.)

STEELE. Go on, Kent, finish the story——

KENT. Well, I hadn't been introduced to the girl—so when she dropped her handkerchief I picked it up, handed it to her and said: “Do you trot?” You know the band was playing, and then——

MEREDITH. *(seeing MRS. KENT and endeavoring to warn KENT)* Why, there is Mrs. Kent——

STEELE, Then you found it was the same old thing—she turned you down.

KENT. I didn't give her a chance—my arms were around her and soon we were dancing up the floor like this—(KENT *turkey-trots a little and suddenly finds himself face to face with MRS. KENT. He stops abruptly*) Why, Allie darling, how did you get here!

MRS. KENT. Kiss me.

KENT. (*embarrassed*) Really, dear, before everybody? I hardly think——

MRS. KENT. Good gracious, you hesitate——

KENT. Well, you know I—I have always maintained—that people—that people——

MRS. KENT. Kiss me——

KENT. Yes, Baby. (*he bends over and shamefacedly kisses her—she smiles delightedly*)

MRS. KENT. Why, you haven't had *anything* to drink!

KENT. (*seriously*) Didn't I promise?

MRS. KENT. Yes, dear.

KENT. And have you ever known me to *break* a promise?

MRS. KENT. No, dear. (*slight pause*) I'm sorry.

KENT. That's all right, sweetheart.

MEREDITH. Roland, when you have quite finished spooning with your wife you might present me. I have never had the pleasure——

KENT. (*relieved*) That's true, you haven't. This is Jim Meredith, Allie.

MRS. KENT. (*very distantly*) How do you do, Mr. Meredith.

MEREDITH. I am mighty glad to meet you, Mrs. Kent. You know Roland and I roomed together in college——

MRS. KENT. Yes, and I know all about the way *you treated* him!

MEREDITH. (*surprised*) What!

KENT *pantomimes to MEREDITH.*)

MRS. KENT. I think it disgraceful the way you got into all those scrapes and made the faculty believe that guilty person was my poor dear boy.

MEREDITH. (*stunned*) But, really——

MRS. KENT. He has told me everything—(KENT *is wildly signalling MEREDITH to silence*) Haven't you, dear? (KENT *stops suddenly*)

KENT. Mm! Oh yes—yes, I've told you *more* than everything.

MRS. KENT. More?

KENT. I mean everything there was to tell.

MRS. KENT. But you said——

KENT. You take me up so quickly I don't know what I am saying.

CANNON. (*at table L.*) Well, boys, here are the cards and chips. How about a little poker?

MARJ. I suppose that is a polite hint for us women to go.

MRS. KENT. Surely, Mrs. Cannon, you are not going to let them play poker?

MARJ. I am afraid we can't prevent it.

MRS. KENT. Of course you are not going to play, Rollo?

KENT. Well, you see, my dear, I thought—that is I—I——!

MRS. KENT. You have always told me that you didn't know *how* to play.

KENT. I don't! I don't! (*to MEREDITH*) Do I, Jim?

MEREDITH. You certainly don't! And it has cost you a lot of money to find it out.

MRS. KENT. If you don't promise me not to try to play we'll go straight home.

KENT. Oh, I haven't any idea of playing. I'm only going to sit and look on—I just love to sit and look on.

MARJ. (*at door R. with ETHEL*) Coming, Mrs. Kent?

MRS. KENT. Yes, at once.

MARJ. We will see you all again presently. (*she and ETHEL go out door R., MRS. KENT goes to door and turns*)

MRS. KENT. Now, remember I trust you. Don't forget your promise, Rollo.

KENT. Roland, baby.

MRS. KENT. I like Rollo best, it's such a sweet name. Remember—(*he smiles at her reassuringly until she goes out door R. closing it behind her. Then he crosses over and mixes himself a highball. STEELE goes to him*)

STEELE. When you and that girl got through turkey trotting, what happened?

KENT. (*glaring at him*) Oh, shut up. You are beginning to get on my nerves——

MEREDITH. (*to KENT indicating drink*) You are forgetting your promise very quickly.

KENT. I only promised not to drink during dinner—this is after!

MEREDITH. A pure evasion,—Rollo.

KENT. (*crossly*) Don't call me by that fool name!

CANNON. (*seated at table shuffling cards*) Come, boys, cease this idle chatter and sit in.

MEREDITH. (*seating himself*) Straight poker or stud?

MARVIN. (*seating himself*) More action in stud—and action is what I am after—you know I am leaving for Boston on the midnight train.

STEELE. (*seating himself*) Straight poker is a good deal more conservative.

KENT. (*seating himself*) Maybe, but stud has the thrills—and they make losing money easier.

CANNON. You're out voted, Dick, it's stud.

MEREDITH. Just a moment, Rollo! You are forgetting your promise.

KENT. My promise?

MEREDITH. Not to try to play.

KENT. (*his face falling*) Oh, hell! (*he pushes back his chair and rises*)

STEELE. Who's banking?

CANNON. I am. The whites are a quarter, blues fifty cents, and the yellow boys a dollar. Twenty-five dollars a stack, table stakes—(CANNON *counts out chips*)

MEREDITH. Honestly, Rollie, your wife isn't *jealous* of you, is she?

KENT. Yes, she is.

MEREDITH. Well, can you beat it. Jealous of you! Boys *she* is jealous of *that*.

(*All laugh. MARVIN takes up cards.*)

MARVIN. First Jack deals. (MARVIN *throws cards around*)

KENT. She's the dearest, sweetest little woman in the world with only one fault—an everlastingly suspicious nature.

MEREDITH. That's easily cured.

KENT. How?

MARVIN. Jack! Jim deals.

MEREDITH. You can cure her by psycho therapeutics—in plain words, by suggestion.

CANNON. Go on, Jim, deal the cards.

MEREDITH. It is a well recognized fact——!

STEELE. (*to KENT*) See what you've done. You've started Jim on one of those theories of his.

MEREDITH. It isn't a theory. If you suggest a thing to a person often enough and strongly enough that person will end by accepting the suggestion as a reality——

MARVIN. Your theory then is this: I am a lawyer——

KENT. Alleged.

MARVIN. Now, all that is needed to make me the

greatest lawyer in the world somebody has only to *suggest* it to me.

STEELE. Or to have Dunc Price make a million dollars all you have to do is to have some one suggest *that* to *him*.

MEREDITH. Yes. If the person could suggest it in a way that would give Dunc confidence in himself. If he would believe he was going to succeed he *would* succeed.

MARVIN. And to make Rollo's wife think he is guileless as a babe, that only has to be suggested to her.

MEREDITH. Strongly enough. Yes, it is a scientific fact.

KENT. Then it is cold with me. (*door bell rings*) There is no scientific way to handle a woman.

CANNON. When are we going to play cards?

KENT. Still I should like to know.

CANNON. Deal.

STEELE. Do.

MARVIN. For heaven's sake!

(MEREDITH *begins to deal.*)

MEREDITH. I've been telling you the truth, if Dunc Price would only——

(TRAVIS *enters.*)

TRAVIS. Hello, boys. (*he is warmly welcomed by the others*)

CANNON. You know everybody, of course, Mr. Travis?

TRAVIS. Certainly! I've come to take Ethel home when she's ready.

MEREDITH. You're the stingiest father I know. You never let any of us get a chance with Ethel.

TRAVIS. I should say I don't. She's my pal.

She's all I've got and I'm going to watch her as close as I can.

STEELE. Object to making a little money while you're waiting?

TRAVIS. Not if the police aren't watching us?

MARVIN. Then sit in.

TRAVIS. What is it?

CANNON. Stud.

TRAVIS. Stud, eh?

STEELE. I don't think that Mr. Travis is fond of taking chances.

TRAVIS. I make it a rule never to take chances, but after looking at the shape of your heads I don't think this *would* be taking any! (*he sits*) Slide me a stack.

CANNON. (*passing chips*) Twenty-five dollars worth. Whites a quarter, blues a half, yellows a dollar. table stakes.

TRAVIS. Well, if the Government doesn't enjoin me I ought to do some regular business in the next hour.

(MEREDITH *has dealt cards around.*)

MEREDITH. High card bets. That's you, Dick. (*game ad lib until from room R. sounds a college song, played on the piano in the next room, comes through doorway. MEREDITH, about to deal second round of cards, pauses*) Say, fellows, do you hear that?

MARVIN. Yes.

KENT. Bully old song, isn't it?

CANNON. How poor old Duncan used to sing it—

MEREDITH. I shall never forget one night he sang it—after we tied Yale six-six.

MARVIN. I know. (*indicating KENT*) You made the touchdown with only two minutes to play.

KENT. And Jim here made the hole for me to go through.

MEREDITH. Their line had been holding like a stone wall and it was the last down with four yards to go. We had tried so often before and been held that we thought we hadn't a chance. We hadn't quit, you know, but we were weakening.

KENT. Right.

MEREDITH. Just at the critical moment we heard the good old cheer, "don't weaken," all together now. (*they give a college yell*) It was just what was needed to brace us up. It was a case of do or die—and we did.

KENT. You bet.

CANNON. I remember.

MARVIN. Of course you do. It was the night you first met Marjorie.

CANNON. Yes! Some night, eh, boys?

(The tune is changed to another college song.)

MEREDITH. Say, fellows, let's cut out the cards and go in and listen.

KENT. That sounds good to me.

STEELE. Yes, you're not playing and Mr. Travis is. He isn't interested in those old songs.

TRAVIS. You're wrong there, I am. There's youth in 'em and hope and that's what a man of my age longs for most—youth and hope! Boys, that takes me back to the happiest time of a man's life—the days when his first moustache is just beginning to break ground.

MARVIN. I'd rather like the music too. There's no sense in my getting interested in cards when I've got to leave for Boston at midnight.

CANNON. Then music it is.

STEELE. That suits me.

MARVIN. Then come along.

(All but TRAVIS move toward door.)

TRAVIS. May I see you for a minute, Steele?

STEELE. Certainly, Mr. Travis.

TRAVIS. (to CANNON) Will you excuse us, please?

CANNON. For a minute only. But not a second longer, eh boys?

KENT. I should say not.

MEREDITH. Not for a second.

(CANNON, KENT and MEREDITH exeunt to dining room.)

TRAVIS. I thought we might just as well settle matters now.

STEELE. I'm agreeable.

TRAVIS. I received your note asking me to see you. It means fight, I suppose.

STEELE. I'm not looking for any fight with you, Mr. Travis. No matter what my partners may think I'm against war with you at any price.

TRAVIS. But your *partners* wouldn't be averse to it.

STEELE. Perhaps not. In the proposed amalgamation of the rubber tire companies they think—in fact they're sure—that your firm could be left out and that you would have to go to the wall.

TRAVIS. They're *sure* of that, are they?

STEELE. Yes, Mr. Travis, they are! And so are you.

TRAVIS. They'd find there's some fight in the old man yet.

STEELE. They know how game you are, but the odds would be too big.

TRAVIS. Well?

STEELE. I'm the head of my firm in reality as well as name and in the end what I say will go—

TRAVIS. Well?

STEELE. There'll be no fight, Mr. Travis. You'll go in—with us.

TRAVIS. That's understood?

STEELE. It is.

TRAVIS. Thank you. (*he gives his hand to STEELE. They clasp hands*) I would have put up a fight but in the end I should have had to surrender. This means a lot to me.

STEELE. And take my word for it, everything will be all right.

TRAVIS. Thank you again.

STEELE. I'm only too glad to be able to do it. Shall we go in?

TRAVIS. Yes.

(TRAVIS and STEELE start toward dining room.
CANNON enters.)

CANNON. Minute's up.

TRAVIS. And we are on our way.

CANNON. Good.

(TRAVIS and STEELE enter dining room. CANNON starts after them. MAID enters.)

MAID. Mr. Cannon.

(CANNON stops.)

CANNON. Yes?

MAID. A gentleman has just sent this card to you. (MAID gives card to CANNON. He reads message on the back)

CANNON. Show the gentleman in. (MAID exits)

(There is a pause. DUNCAN PRICE enters. His clothes are neat but not new. Seeing CANNON, he assumes an air of good spirits.)

DUNCAN. Hello, Bill.

CANNON. You're a fine one, you are. What do you mean by deserting and sending a fake telegram about business preventing; you don't suppose anyone believed it, do you?

DUNCAN. Why *should* they believe it. I didn't.

CANNON. Then why didn't you come?

DUNCAN. Bill, for the past six weeks I've been a brilliant ornament in the army of the unemployed.

CANNON. What?

DUNCAN. I've lost my job.

CANNON. If you wanted money you could have had it from me.

DUNCAN. I know, Bill, but I couldn't ask. I really couldn't.

CANNON. You've got to live.

DUNCAN. I can't live without eating. That's why I've walked the streets for days looking for a job.

CANNON. Without finding one? (DUNCAN *nods*) That's tough old man.

DUNCAN. You don't know how tough it is. Nobody knows till he tries it.

CANNON. Why don't you go in for something on your own?

(DUNCAN *shakes his head.*)

DUNCAN. I've done that three or four times already—that's where the little money I had has gone. And then—I've lost my nerve.

CANNON. Oh, no——

DUNCAN. Yes, I have! Besides if I wanted to do anything where could I get the capital? I've got a scheme in mind right now—a great scheme—but it would take five thousand dollars to start it and ninety-five thousand more to see it through.

CANNON. Don't you know anybody who'll lend it to you?

DUNCAN. The only people who would lend me

money can't get out of the asylums to get their check books.

CANNON. Old Dick Carson might. He was a friend of your father's, and he's got tons of money.

DUNCAN. Yes, but he also has a terrible attack of banker's paralysis. Every time you touch his heart he can't open his hand.

CANNON. Well why don't you try him?

DUNCAN. I made up my mind to do that this morning and went to his office. But when I was face to face with him I couldn't—my courage failed.

CANNON. Too bad.

DUNCAN. This is the way I pictured myself doing it. (*he assumes a jaunty manner*) “How do you do, Mr. Carson. I have called to see you about a splendid business proposition which I am sure will bring magnificent returns”—then he said: “Glad to see you my boy. Sit down and we'll talk it over”—the result being that I left his office with his check for five thousand and a promise of the other ninety-five.

CANNON. Well?

DUNCAN. This is what really happened. (*he assumes a jaunty air as before but soon loses it*) “How do you do, Mr. Carson. I—I've called to see you—I've called to see you—” “I know that: what do you want?” “I would—er—like to talk to you—I would like to talk to you—! “Well?” “I would—er—like to talk to you—about—er—about—er—” “Young man—I believe you won the college debating prize?” “Yes, sir.” “Well, since it has resulted in your present lucidity of thought and fluency of expression all I can say is— God help the men who lost! Good morning.” (*exit DUNCAN, limping*)

CANNON. If I could raise the money—

DUNCAN. I'm sure of that Bill, but it wouldn't do any good. It looks as if I'm through.

CANNON. Don't talk rot.

DUNCAN. It isn't rot! (*a man's voice is heard*)

singing verse of “Old Nassau.” Other voices join in chorus. DUNCAN rises and going to door R. stands listening, deeply affected) It's a wonderful song, isn't it? When we used to sing in college, Bill, how bright everything seemed—what hopes I had—and now—why I'm ashamed to face my friends, I haven't had the heart to see anybody for weeks. I've even cut out calling on Ethel.

CANNON. She's here to-night.

DUNCAN. (*rising quickly*) Well, I guess I'd better be running along.

CANNON. (*he has observed the effect of ETHEL'S name on the other*) Wait a minute, Duncan, Jim Meredith has a theory he was telling us about—It fits your case exactly and if it works it will get you all the money you need.

DUNCAN. I see— He's found a safe way to rob a bank.

CANNON. No! No! Nothing like that! It's psycho—psycho—I can't pronounce it.

DUNCAN. You bet you can't. Neither can anybody else!

CANNON. It simply means that any man can win out if he won't lose faith in himself.

DUNCAN. But I *have* lost faith in myself.

CANNON. You ought to get it back.

DUNCAN. Yes, and I ought to get a million dollars! But I can't.

CANNON. If the right girl believes in you don't you think that would help some?

DUNCAN. The right girl. Yes. But there's no such luck for me! No, Bill, I'm through in New York anyway. In a few days I'm going out West and see what I can do there.

(ETHEL enters.)

ETHEL. They've sent after you Will and—(*she sees DUNCAN*) Why, Duncan—

DUNCAN. Hello, Ethel.

ETHEL. I'm awfully glad to see you. (*she goes to him and gives him her hand*)

DUNCAN. I'm glad to see you too.

ETHEL. How can I believe that when you haven't been near me for weeks?

DUNCAN. Well, you see, Ethel, I've been awfully busy.

ETHEL. (*laughing*) Busy——

DUNCAN. (*embarrassed*) Yes. This is the open season in my line and I'm doing my best to get it closed.

(*They are forgetting all about CANNON. He comes forward.*)

CANNON. Ethel, did you say you had a message for me?

ETHEL. Yes. I was to take you in to the others at once.

CANNON. Good! You and I will form a gorgeous escort for the triumphant arrival of little Duncan—the long lost friend.

ETHEL. We'll do nothing of the kind. You'll go in alone and you're not to tell them that Duncan is here. I mean to make him explain his desertion of me before I permit him to take any part in the exercises.

CANNON. That's right, Ethel, if he's wrong make him apologize. And if he isn't—well, remember you're a woman and make him apologize anyway.

(*He goes out door R. ETHEL and DUNCAN smile at each other.*)

DUNCAN. Well!

ETHEL. Well——

DUNCAN. I'm awfully glad you kept me back here with you.

ETHEL. Why?

DUNCAN. I've been wanting to have a talk with you.

ETHEL. Really? What about?

DUNCAN. (*taken aback by her directness*) Why—er—why—er——

ETHEL. Explicit but not quite satisfactory.

DUNCAN. The fact is——

ETHEL. Well—I'm waiting.

DUNCAN. That's what I wanted to talk to you about.

ETHEL. What?

DUNCAN. Waiting.

ETHEL. Waiting?

DUNCAN. (*floundering*) Why—er—yes! I don't mean just ordinary waiting—waiting on the table or anything like that— No. I—I mean another kind of waiting—er—er—waiting for another till he's ready—till he can come straight up to you and—and—! Do you know what I'm talking about?

ETHEL. Certainly! And everything would depend on whom I am waiting for—and why?

DUNCAN. Would it?

ETHEL. Yes. (*there is a pause*) Well?

DUNCAN. Would you wait for—for——!

ETHEL. Yes?

DUNCAN. For, for—Jim Meredith?

ETHEL. No.

DUNCAN. Or Dick Steele?

ETHEL. No.

DUNCAN. Or—or——

ETHEL. Well?

DUNCAN. I haven't the right to say it.

ETHEL. I give you the right.

DUNCAN. Ethel——

ETHEL. I do.

DUNCAN. Do you realize——

ETHEL. Yes.

DUNCAN. It's too good to be true! I've had so much bad luck I can believe in the good when it comes.

ETHEL. And you think this is—good luck?

DUNCAN. You don't know. You don't understand. Listen Ethel, I haven't any money or any success, but if you'll promise to wait for me I'm sure they'll come. Why if I were fighting for you I don't believe there is anything I couldn't do.

ETHEL. Then you may begin right now.

DUNCAN. And you'll wait——

ETHEL. Yes.

DUNCAN. Really?

ETHEL. Yes.

DUNCAN. (*radiantly*) It's wonderful.

ETHEL. On one condition.

DUNCAN. It's wond—! Condition!

ETHEL. Yes.

DUNCAN. I knew it was too good to be true.

ETHEL. This isn't a very serious one.

DUNCAN. Well—I'm prepared for the worst.

ETHEL. It's—father.

DUNCAN. I told you I was prepared for the worst.

ETHEL. You don't know how close we've always been. We haven't been just father and daughter but two dear chums. I don't believe that either of us has ever kept a thought from the other. I can't keep this from him now.

DUNCAN. But he mightn't be interested in a little thing like this.

ETHEL. Why Duncan, this is the great happiness of my life! And I've always promised him that when love came he should know so that he could share the joy with me. It isn't as though he'd interfere—you know he wouldn't—but I wouldn't have him left out, for the world. You'll tell him, won't you?

DUNCAN. If you insist.

ETHEL. Thank you dear.

DUNCAN. I'll tell him with pleasure—with a great deal of pleasure—if you wish it. But when do you want me to do it.

ETHEL. Now.

DUNCAN. Now?

ETHEL. Certainly. I don't want it kept from him for an instant.

DUNCAN. But Ethel——

ETHEL. Oh! Yes, Duncan, I must have my way in this.

DUNCAN. (*gloomily*) Well, since you insist—very well! (*brightening*) and why not? Since I must do it, why not to-night? It looks as though you were giving me courage already.

ETHEL. Then I'll go right in and send him to you—that is after you've said and done the things you've forgotten.

DUNCAN. (*wonderingly*) The things I've forgotten?

ETHEL. (*smiling*) Yes. Don't you know what they are? I can't speak from previous experience but I've always understood that certain formalities were always followed in cases like this.

(*He gathers her meaning, and, springing forward, clasps her in his arms.*)

DUNCAN. I love you, dear. I love you better than I love my life.

ETHEL. That's just how I love you. (*a kiss. She disengages herself*) Now I'll send father to you. (*she goes to exit R.*)

DUNCAN. No, no!

ETHEL. Yes dear, yes.

DUNCAN. Not just this very minute?

ETHEL. This very minute, so be ready. (*ETHEL turns to smile at him*)

DUNCAN. We, who are about to die, salute you!

ETHEL. (*laughing*) Nonsense!

(*She goes out door R. Alone, DUNCAN is very nervous. Then lights a cigarette, uses two or three matches. His eyes fall on whiskey. He goes to table L. and nervously mixes himself a high-ball. Just as he starts to drink TRAVIS enters door R.*)

TRAVIS. Hello Duncan.

DUNCAN. (*putting down his glass quickly*)
Hello, Mr. Travis.

TRAVIS. Finish your drink, don't mind me.

DUNCAN. (*very nervous*) I don't think I care for it now. Won't you have it—it'll only spoil.

TRAVIS. No thanks. But I will take one of those cigars.

DUNCAN. Certainly. (*he takes drink to him*)

TRAVIS. I said cigars.

DUNCAN. Of course you did. (*puts drink back and passes cigar box*)

TRAVIS. Thanks.

DUNCAN. Have a match?

TRAVIS. I've got one.

DUNCAN. That's good. I haven't.

TRAVIS. (*passing lighted match*) Then I'll give you a light.

DUNCAN. (*lighting cigarette*) Thanks.

TRAVIS. Ethel says you want to talk to me.

DUNCAN. Yes.

TRAVIS. Well?

DUNCAN. Why Mr. Travis I—I——!

TRAVIS. You've asked her to marry you.

DUNCAN. Yes sir, and she has promised to wait.

TRAVIS. If she says she'll wait, she will.

DUNCAN. Thank you.

TRAVIS. Unless you tell her not to.

DUNCAN. What! What did you say?

TRAVIS. I said Ethel will wait unless you tell her not to.

DUNCAN. I couldn't do that.

TRAVIS. You ought to do it, Duncan.

DUNCAN. But she's just promised.

TRAVIS. Had you the right to ask her?

DUNCAN. Mr. Travis!

TRAVIS. Well, had you? (*there is a pause*) I don't want to hurt you I just want to have a plain, honest talk with you. I knew this had to come and I've been dreading it as I've dreaded few things in my life for I like you Duncan, sincerely like you, but I love Ethel, and I want her to be happy.

DUNCAN. And you don't think she'd be happy with me?

TRAVIS. I know she wouldn't. You haven't any money.

DUNCAN. Money! Why that's all——

TRAVIS. Wait! Don't say it! I know what's in your mind, but I don't mean it in that way. I speak of money not for itself but for what it represents. The man who makes money proves he has the primary qualification for being a husband. He can provide for those dependent on him. But what of the man who can't make it! What does that prove: (*there is a pause*) And you've got to have money to live as we live nowadays. Girls are brought up to expect too much, and that's the way I've raised Ethel. She's not fit to face poverty and struggle and it's not her fault, it's mine. (*there is a pause*) And Duncan, you don't know what this means to a woman. I do. Ethel's mother—! The good luck didn't come until after she died, if it had I might have saved her. That's an awful thought to go through life with my boy.

DUNCAN. But I don't intend to be poor *always*.

TRAVIS. It's nearly ten years since you left college—what salary are you getting? (*there is a*

pause) Why you haven't even a job! How much did your last one pay?

DUNCAN. Twenty-five dollars a week.

TRAVIS. I pay Ethel's chauffeur thirty! Do you want her to share a prospective twenty-five with you? (*there is a pause*) Or do you expect to live on my money?

DUNCAN. No, certainly not.

TRAVIS. I'm glad of that, for all the men that I despise I despise the civilized squaw-man most! (*there is a pause*) Well, how do you expect to live? And how long do you want Ethel to wait? And—for what— (*there is a pause*) Everything rests with you. And if she marries you I shall of course see that she has enough to live on, and you of course will be included.

DUNCAN. No. I tell you, no.

TRAVIS. Then if you love her, if you're thinking of Ethel and not of yourself, don't you see there's only one thing to do— (*there is a pause*) I know Ethel and if you tell her to wait she'll do it. What I ask is that you be honest with yourself and fair to her. It's up to you.

DUNCAN. (*bitterly*) I knew it couldn't last. I knew it.

TRAVIS. I can understand your bitterness, my boy, but better a small drink of it now than a long draught for both of you later. (*there is a pause*) You'll do it? (*pause*) Will you?

DUNCAN. What else can I do?

TRAVIS. And—you'll tell her?

DUNCAN. Tell her—tell Ethel that——

TRAVIS. Yes.

DUNCAN. I couldn't.

TRAVIS. She'll have to know.

DUNCAN. I'll write to her.

TRAVIS. When you start out to play a hand, play it through! Tell her——

DUNCAN. I—I couldn't.

TRAVIS. The quicker it's over, the better for both of you.

DUNCAN. She'd hate me.

TRAVIS. That might make it *easier* for her! I'll call her.

DUNCAN. No Mr. Travis—no.

(TRAVIS goes to door R. and calls off.)

TRAVIS. Ethel, come here a minute please.
(TRAVIS comes on stage) Now is the chance for you to show what you are made of.

(ETHEL enters R.)

ETHEL. Well, father, did Duncan tell you.

TRAVIS. Yes.

ETHEL. I'm so glad. (*she goes to DUNCAN*) I told you dear that—that——! (*she observes DUNCAN'S expression and attitude*) What is it? What's wrong? Duncan! Duncan what is it?

DUNCAN. The whole thing is a mistake Ethel—all a mistake.

ETHEL. A—mistake!

DUNCAN. I had no right to ask you to wait.

ETHEL. I gave you the right.

DUNCAN. That makes no difference.

ETHEL. Father, if you have——

DUNCAN. It's not your father that has changed me. I've just realized the truth. I couldn't take care of you! I'm—afraid!

ETHEL. Afraid!

DUNCAN. Of the future.

ETHEL. But if, in spite of that I am willing to wait?

DUNCAN. No.

ETHEL. Duncan— I *am* willing.

DUNCAN. No.

ETHEL. You—you don't want me to wait?

DUNCAN. No.

ETHEL. But Duncan——

DUNCAN. Please! (DUNCAN *turns away*)

ETHEL. Father!

TRAVIS. Shall we join the others dear?

ETHEL. No. I couldn't go back there. I want to go home. I want to go—now——

TRAVIS. Very well dear.

ETHEL. Good-night, Duncan.

DUNCAN. Good-night, Ethel. (ETHEL *exits L.*)

TRAVIS. Good-night my boy—I'm sorry, but you've done the right thing. (TRAVIS *exits L.*)

(DUNCAN *stares straight before him. There is a pause. Then he laughs grimly. His eyes fall on the drink he poured out for himself. He seizes it and drinks it at a gulp. CANNON enters with MARVIN R. CANNON sees DUNCAN, calls MARVIN'S attention to him and in pantomime urges MARVIN on.*)

CANNON. Here he is, Sam, little Duncan, the boy wonder.

MARVIN. Hello, Duncan.

DUNCAN. Hello, Sam.

CANNON. Well, what's the matter—you look like the father of all the glooms.

DUNCAN. That's a fine theory of Jim Meredith's isn't it. I followed it—and the Travis family have gone home.

CANNON. Well, I didn't guarantee that it would work, did I?

MARVIN. Stop squabbling. I have to catch that midnight train and before I go I want to talk to Duncan. I've got some news for him.

DUNCAN. Some news for me?

MARVIN. Yes.

DUNCAN. Who's dead?

MARVIN. This is good news

DUNCAN. Then it's a lie.

CANNON. For heaven's sake tell him quick, Sam, before he turns on the gas.

MARVIN. It's confidential.

CANNON. All right. I won't tell a soul.

MARVIN. You're in hard luck, aren't you, Duncan?

DUNCAN. Hard luck! If a little bit of good luck—only that much—were to come into my life, it would loom up like a red vest at a funeral.

MARVIN. That's my excuse for doing what I'm going to do, though it's scarcely professional. Under the circumstances, however, I think I'm justified.

DUNCAN. Well?

MARVIN. You remember your Uncle Malcolm who died in Alaska?

DUNCAN. I asked you who was dead.

MARVIN. Do you remember him?

DUNCAN. Certainly I do! The crankiest and crossdest man that ever lived. I hated the sight of him.

MARVIN. Well, when he died in Seattle two years ago he left a fortune of two million dollars.

CANNON. Left two million dollars?

DUNCAN. Yes, and he left all of Alaska, too. Stop trying to kid me.

MARVIN. I'm not trying to kid you. I'm telling you the truth.

DUNCAN. You mean Uncle Malcolm really left two million dollars? (MARVIN *nods*) But I was his only heir—that is if he didn't marry out there. But I'll bet that's just what he did do. I'll bet he married a Squaw.

MARVIN. He was unmarried when he died and he left you his entire fortune.

DUNCAN. I never heard of it.

MARVIN. Precisely what your Uncle wanted.

DUNCAN. Then he got his wish.

MARVIN. He had an idea that the possession of a

lot of money before he was thirty-five was apt to ruin a man's prospects.

CANNON. There's something in that.

DUNCAN. I'm willing to take chances.

MARVIN. He thought it would make him sit down and stop trying—in other words, throttle all that was best in him, so he made a secret deed of trust in which it was stipulated that you were to have no knowledge of his gift until it was paid to you on your thirty-fifth birthday—three years from now. The papers happened to be in the office of my firm out there in Seattle, so I knew about it—and knowing of your hard luck I am certain that your Uncle would want you to learn what was in store for you—to sort of cheer you up.

DUNCAN. Well, that's quite an ingenious story. In fact it's a damn good story. Why don't you get it printed.

MARVIN. It's the truth.

DUNCAN. Prove it.

MARVIN. How?

DUNCAN. Lend me five thousand dollars.

MARVIN. I haven't that much money. And you can't borrow against this trust fund.

DUNCAN. Of course I can't. (to CANNON) What did I tell you?

MARVIN. Duncan, there's no use in adopting that tone. I meant what I said. You are the heir to two million dollars.

DUNCAN. Not really?

MARVIN. Really.

DUNCAN. Two millions?

MARVIN. Yes.

DUNCAN. Two mill——! (he pours another drink and takes it) Now say it again and say it slow.

MARVIN. You are the heir to two million dollars which you get when you are thirty-five.

DUNCAN. Good Lord!

CANNON. Congratulations old man! Congratulations! (*he shakes DUNCAN'S hand*)

DUNCAN. (*dazed*) I get two million dollars when I'm thirty-five, if in the meantime, I don't starve to death.

CANNON. No fear of that!

MARVIN. Well, I'm off.

DUNCAN. No. Tell me more about Uncle Mal, dear good old Uncle Mal. He was the kindest-hearted fellow——

MARVIN. Not another word. I've got to go down, get into a taxi and hurry to the Grand Central station.

CANNON. Aren't you going to say good-bye?

MARVIN. Said it in there. Good-bye you fellows.

CANNON. Good-bye, Sam.

DUNCAN. Good-bye old man! Say, let me give you a little kiss.

MARVIN. I should say not. Good-bye. (*MARVIN exits L.*)

DUNCAN. Two million dollars!—two million—Oh I shall wake up in a minute.

CANNON. It must be all right; Sam wouldn't fool you like that.

DUNCAN. That's true. He wouldn't! Well I'll show some of these fellows now. I'll show 'em! First of all I've got to get that five thousand dollars. Yes, and I'll get it too!

(*MEREDITH and STEELE enter R. talking.*)

MEREDITH. Why there's Duncan, good old Duncan.

DUNCAN. How are you Jim old fellow.

(*MEREDITH and DUNCAN shake hands enthusiastically.*)

STEELE. Hello Price.

DUNCAN. Hello Steele!

MEREDITH. I'm glad to see you Duncan, awfully glad.

DUNCAN. Same here. I was just going to send in for you! Jim, lend me five thousand dollars?

MEREDITH. What?

DUNCAN. Lend me five thousand dollars.

(STEELE begins to go cautiously to exit L.)

MEREDITH. That's a lot of money.

DUNCAN. Don't be foolish.

MEREDITH. But it is.

DUNCAN. Well I've simply got to have it, and if——! (*he sees STEELE who is near the exit. STEELE stops. To MEREDITH*) I won't take no for an answer.

MEREDITH. Come to my office in the morning and talk it over.

DUNCAN. I want this money—to-night—now!

MEREDITH. But I have no checks here.

DUNCAN. Will has. Haven't you Will?

CANNON. You bet I have. (*CANNON goes to drawer and takes out check-book*) Here you are.

MEREDITH. But really——!

DUNCAN. Now, Jim. NOW, now.

CANNON. Oh let him have it. You said he only needed confidence and you can see he's got that. If you have any faith in your theory, back it up.

DUNCAN. Yes Jim. Show your faith by your works, and back it up.

MEREDITH. All right, I will.

DUNCAN. Fine.

CANNON. Immense!

STEELE. Ha!

(MEREDITH sits down to write the check. MARJORIE, KENT and MRS. KENT enter R.)

MARJ. Why have you men deserted us?

DUNCAN. Hello Marjorie.

MARJ. How do you do Duncan, I'm so glad you came.

DUNCAN. Mrs. Kent.

MRS. KENT. Mr. Price.

DUNCAN. How are you Kentie?

KENT. Hello Duncan old scout. You did come after all.

DUNCAN. I came on a matter of business.

KENT, MARJ., MRS. KENT. Business?

DUNCAN. I'm just closing up a little deal with my friend Jim here. (*to MEREDITH*) Almost finished?

MEREDITH. Yes. (*MEREDITH rises with check in his hand*)

DUNCAN. Thank you. (*DUNCAN takes the check*) And now if you will excuse me——

KENT. But I say Duncan——

MARJ. Going so soon?

DUNCAN. Must, so as to be up bright and early in the morning. I have a hard day ahead of me tomorrow! Good-night everybody.

KENT, MARJ., MRS. KENT. Good-night!

(*DUNCAN takes MEREDITH'S hand and shakes it.*)

DUNCAN. Thank you Jim, thank you! (*to CANNON*) Good-bye Bill.

CANNON. Good-bye Dunc. (*DUNCAN goes to exit L.*)

DUNCAN. Steele old fellow stand aside if you please. Stand aside and make way for a regular business man. (*DUNCAN exits L. briskly*)

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

SCENE:—*The scene is the same as in ACT I. The time is late afternoon some four weeks later. The stage is empty. After a brief pause the telephone rings. The MAID enters and goes to the 'phone.*

MAID. (at 'phone) Hello! (pause) Yes. (pause) I'll see if Mrs. Cannon is in. Who is calling her please? (MRS. CANNON enters) Wait just a moment please.

MRS. C. Who is it Bessie?

MAID. Mr. Steele ma'am. He wants to speak to you.

MRS. C. Very well. (MRS. C. takes 'phone. MAID exits) Hello. Is this you Dick? (pause) Yes this is Majorie. (pause) Ethel is out just now. She's gone for a walk but I'm sure she'll be back soon. (pause) Do come. (pause) Of course she'll be glad to see you. (pause) Oh don't be down-hearted. (pause) You know I'm your friend at any rate. (pause) I'm glad of that. (CANNON enters from hall unheard by MRS. C.) (pause) And you'll come? (pause) Good. (pause) She'll be back soon I'm sure. (pause) I'm so glad you're coming! Good-bye. (MRS. CANNON puts up 'phone turns and sees CANNON) Hello dear.

CANNON. Hello, Marjorie! 'Phoning Dick Steele to come over and see Ethel?

MRS. C. Yes.

CANNON. I thought so. Ever since Ethel's father went on his hunting trip and Ethel came to stay with

us I have noticed that Steele's visits here have been quite regular.

MRS. C. Why shouldn't he come to see Ethel?

CANNON. There's no reason that I can think of except—Duncan.

MRS. C. How does anyone know he cares for Ethel.

CANNON. Now dear——!

MRS. C. She told me herself that she hasn't seen or heard from him for more than a month—since that night Jim Meredith loaned him the five thousand dollars. Have you heard from him since then?

CANNON. No. Nobody has.

MRS. C. Really?

CANNON. Nobody.

MRS. C. You don't mean——!

CANNON. I mean exactly what I said. Since that night Duncan has just—disappeared.

MRS. C. Well!

CANNON. We're all greatly worried about him! Jim Meredith called me on the 'phone this morning to talk about it and I arranged for him and Roland Kent to call here on their way home, and discuss the matter. They're liable to be here any minute, now.

MRS. C. Please don't ask them to stay to dinner. Sam Marvin is dining with us to-night and I have squabs for only four.

CANNON. I see.

(MAID *appears*. MEREDITH *and* KENT *enter*.)

MEREDITH. Hello Will.

CANNON. Hello Jim. (CANNON *shakes hands with* KENT)

MEREDITH. You're looking fine, Marjorie.

MRS. C. Thank you Jim! And how are *you* Roland?

KENT. Splendid thank you.

MRS. C. And your wife? How's she?

KENT. What!

MRS. C. Your wife— How is she?

KENT. Variable. She is expecting a letter from her mother and if it comes it is sure to mean squally weather and a choppy sea.

MEREDITH. I am getting into Mrs. Kent's good graces. She's invited me to dinner to-night.

(CANNON *looks pleased.*)

MRS. C. Splendid!

KENT. I'm not quite sure what meat we are going to have, but if—that letter came I know the salad will be poison ivy.

CANNON. Three dear——

MRS. C. Certainly. (MRS. C. *exits*)

KENT. My wife doesn't approve of my drinking before dinner. Her poor dear mamma once said—

MEREDITH. Let's cut the domesticity and get down to cases.

CANNON. Good!

MEREDITH. Now as regards Duncan I have a theory——

KENT. Let's can the theories and get down to facts.

CANNON. Good again.

KENT. When you slipped Dunc that five thousand you said he would run it into a fortune over night! And what happened?

MEREDITH. I don't know.

KENT. That's the first time I've heard you admit there was *anything* you didn't know. Shake! (KENT *shakes MEREDITH'S hand*)

CANNON. What's the matter with you?

MEREDITH. That's what I'd like to know.

KENT. I'm sore because he gave up that money to Duncan. Since then he has disappeared completely. Not a soul has either seen or heard from him. (to CANNON) That's true, isn't it?

CANNON. Yes.

KENT. Well there you are.

MEREDITH. You don't mean you think that Duncan deliberately took the five thousand and—and——

KENT. No! Certainly not!

MEREDITH. Because if you *had* thought it there was going to be trouble right here.

CANNON. Yes, and with me too.

KENT. I meant that Dunc had lost the money and so was ashamed to show himself.

MEREDITH. It wasn't your money: what are you worrying about?

KENT. About Dunc! Where is he? What has become of him? You know how he was feeling. Why—if he has lost it—even now he might be—be— Good God fellows do you realize *where* he might be?

MEREDITH. I hadn't thought of it in that way——

CANNON. I had.

KENT. I've been thinking of it for days. It's got on my nerves a bit too. (*to MEREDITH*) If I was a little abrupt just now old man I'm sorry——

MEREDITH. That's all right.

CANNON. Wouldn't it be tough on Duncan though particularly with that inheritance due in two years.

KENT. Yes.

MEREDITH. There is no inheritance.

KENT. What?

CANNON. No inheritance?

MEREDITH. No.

CANNON. But I heard Sam Marvin tell Duncan about it myself.

MEREDITH. Yes, I arranged it.

CANNON. You arranged it?

MEREDITH. Exactly. I invented the entire thing so as to give Duncan confidence in himself and Sam helped it along by telling the story.

CANNON. On the strength of it you loaned Duncan five thousand dollars.

MEREDITH. I *had* to.

KENT. Well you can kiss that five thousand good-bye.

MEREDITH. Don't be too sure. I know my theory is right and I know Duncan. Why I wouldn't be surprised to see him turn up any day with something really big.

CANNON. You're a marvel Jim and your optimism is wonderful.

(*Door bell rings.*)

KENT. That's what it is. If Jim had been wrecked in Lake Michigan and was drowning, just as he went down for the last time he'd be thinking how lucky he was that the water wasn't salt.

MEREDITH. And why not? That's what I'd like to know. Why not?

(*MAID appears.*)

MAID. Mr. Steele!

(*STEELE enters. MAID exits. STEELE is surprised at seeing others.*)

STEELE. Hello fellows!

CANNON. Hello Dick.

MEREDITH. Hello Steele.

KENT. How de.

STEELE. What is this—a conference of the powers——

CANNON. Yes in a way.

STEELE. (*to CANNON*) How's the wife?

CANNON. Splendid, thanks.

STEELE. And Mrs. Kent?

KENT. Well but emotional. (*KENT looks at watch. To MEREDITH*) We'll have to be moving pretty soon. She's expecting us at four fifty-six.

STEELE. Why so exact?

KENT. Mrs. Kent has a schedule. I leave the office every day at four, get to the subway at three minutes past, take the express which reaches our station at four twenty-one and then take five minutes to walk home which makes it four twenty-six. She allowed me thirty minutes for this call which makes it four fifty-six.

MEREDITH. Good lord, she isn't a wife, she's a time-table.

CANNON. Don't accidents ever happen?

KENT. Of course—some times on the level, too! Say fellows, last Thursday. Last Thursday there was a flood which tied up the subway and the surface cars for over three hours. Ah! (KENT *sighs ecstatically. The others look at each other*)

MEREDITH. (*humming*) No wedding bells for me. I'm as happy as can be.

KENT. Cut that Jim.

MEREDITH. All right old chap.

KENT. You and Dick being bachelors don't understand.

(MEREDITH and STEELE look at each other and laugh.
ETHEL enters dressed for a walk.)

ETHEL. Good afternoon everybody. This is a surprise. (*there are general greetings*)

MEREDITH. Isn't she looking well.

STEELE. Splendid.

KENT. Yes, indeed.

ETHEL. Thank you.

MEREDITH. And how is your father?

ETHEL. I haven't heard for two days and can't hear again for another week or even more.

MEREDITH. How's that?

ETHEL. Father's in the wilds, right away from civilization, hunting big game up in Canada, where

there's neither telephone, telegraph nor rural delivery.

MEREDITH. I wish I was there.

KENT. So do I.

(MARJORIE *enters.*)

MARJ. Glad to see you Dick.

STEELE. Same to you.

MARJ. Hello, Ethel dear.

ETHEL. Marjorie.

MARJ. (*to others*) *They* are awaiting you in the dining room.

CANNON. Then come along.

MEREDITH. You bet.

KENT. It is now four thirty-eight. I shall just have time——!

MEREDITH. To come with us.

(MEREDITH, KENT *and* CANNON *talking ad lib ex-eunt to dining room.*)

MRS. C. I think I'll prepare one for you as well. Would you like me to?

STEELE. Very much indeed.

MRS. C. Then—I will. (MRS. C. *exits*)

STEELE. Have a nice walk?

ETHEL. Very.

STEELE. You didn't wear *my* flowers.

ETHEL. I appreciate them just the same.

STEELE. That's something anyway.

ETHEL. You've been very kind to me lately.

STEELE. I want to be.

ETHEL. And you were very kind to father, too.

STEELE. Why not?

ETHEL. He told me about it. He said that if it had come to a fight you would probably have wiped him out but that instead of fighting you've taken him

in with you. It was splendid of you and I've wanted to thank you.

STEELE. Don't try.

ETHEL. It meant so much to him. He's been at the head of his own firm so long that to have it go under would have broken his heart.

STEELE. Well, it isn't going under. It's going to be bigger and more prosperous than ever.

ETHEL. I'm so glad.

STEELE. I'll tell you something I haven't breathed to a soul.

ETHEL. Yes.

STEELE. A process has been invented which will entirely revolutionize the rubber tire business, and wipe the present methods of manufacturing right out of existence. And I have control of it, or shall have it at half-past eight to-night when the man who owns it calls on me at my apartment to sell it. Do you realize what it means. We'll control the business of the entire country and your father will be in with us.

ETHEL. It's fine of you to be so kind to him.

STEELE. I'm not doing it for your father.

ETHEL. No?

STEELE. I'm doing it for you. (*there is a pause*)
I love you.

ETHEL. Please.

STEELE. I do, Ethel, with all my heart.

ETHEL. I'm sorry.

STEELE. That means you won't marry me.

ETHEL. I can't.

STEELE. Haven't I any chance? (*ETHEL shakes her head slowly*) None?

ETHEL. I'm terribly sorry. To hurt one who has been so kind, who only a minute ago was telling me of the splendid things he was going to do for us, who— who——! (*there is a pause*) This won't make any difference will it?

STEELE. I told you I was doing it—for you—— (*there is a pause*)

ETHEL. I see.

STEELE. I'll tell you the real facts. My partners have been against taking in your father from the beginning, they knew it wasn't good business, but I finally put it up to them as an ultimatum and—I won. If I say the word he comes in and there's a community of interest; what I want is, that the community of interest be—entire.

ETHEL. And if it isn't? *(there is a pause)* I understand.

STEELE. Don't think too harshly of me. A man must fight with the weapon that he has! *(there is a pause)* Won't you think it over for a while. Please——

ETHEL. I must.

STEELE. Thank you.

ETHEL. And now if you'll excuse me— *(she picks up her coat and exits)*

(There is a brief pause. KENT, MEREDITH and CANNON enter talking ad lib. CANNON carries a cocktail in a glass which he gives to STEELE who drinks it.)

CANNON. Good?

STEELE. Fine. I needed it, too.

MEREDITH. Marjorie certainly can mix a cocktail.

KENT. Mine was about the best I ever tasted. *(KENT takes a small box from his vest pocket and puts some small candies—sen sen—or something of the kind—in his mouth. There is a pause. KENT places one of the candies between his thumb and forefinger and holds it up)* Small but precious! I call it—the peace-maker!

MEREDITH. Your wife. *(KENT nods)*

KENT. She can scent a cocktail at a hundred paces! *(looks at watch)* I think we had better be going.

MEREDITH. We've plenty of time.

CANNON. Certainly.

MEREDITH. Even if we *were* a little late what would it matter?

KENT. Nothing! Nothing at all!

MEREDITH. There you are.

KENT. Still—— (KENT *takes out the candy and eats another piece.* STEELE *laughs at him quietly*)

CANNON. You've got to stay till we make up our minds what we are going to do about Duncan.

MEREDITH. Right.

KENT. But my wife expects me to——

STEELE. Why not 'phone her and get her to extend your parole——

KENT. Parole! See here, Steele if——!

MEREDITH. He didn't mean parole, he meant re-prieve.

KENT. Repri—— Say what do you think I am?

MEREDITH. I think you're the best tamed half-back in Captivity. “Step up ladies and gentlemen and see the once ferocious beast eat out of the little lady's hand.”

KENT. Is that so?

MEREDITH. Yes it is and you know it.

KENT. Well, that's *my* business.

CANNON. Steele's suggestion is a splendid one. Why not 'phone her and see if you can't get your paro—reprie—get it extended.

MEREDITH. We've got to do something definite about Duncan and dinner isn't till seven any way.

CANNON. So go on—'phone.

STEELE. Yes—do——

MEREDITH. If you have the nerve——

KENT. All right, I will. (KENT *goes bravely to 'phone. Briskly*) Give me River 041. Yes. River 041—and hurry. (*pause*) Is this River 041. Please ask Mrs. Kent! (*pause—in changed tone*) Oh it's you is it Baby! (*pause*) Yes this is Rollie. (*pause*) Of course I recognized your voice. (*pause*) What!

Certainly not! How could you even suggest such a thing. (*he eats another candy*) I am at Will Cannon's. The matter we're talking over is very important and I want you to give me half an hour longer. (*pause*) Fifteen minutes, please—(*pause*) All right then darling—ten minutes. Thank you, sweetheart—(*pause*) Good-bye Baby! Good-bye—(*he replaces receiver*) There. It's all right.

CANNON. Then let's get down to business.

MEREDITH. What about Duncan.

STEELE. Well, *what* about him?

MEREDITH. Are we going to do anything definite about finding out what has become of him or aren't we?

STEELE. What can we do, advertise?

KENT. Don't be absurd.

STEELE. Or put detectives on his trail?

MEREDITH. Rot.

STEELE. Then don't you see there's nothing for us to do? If anything has happened to him we'll learn it soon enough but if nothing has happened, he'll thank us to mind our own business.

CANNON. There's something in that.

STEELE. I know Duncan.

MEREDITH. I feel that something should be done but I don't exactly see what.

KENT. Well, since the matter's settled I think we'd better be moving along.

CANNON. What's your hurry. Your wife extended your time—(*door bell rings*)

KENT. Just the same she likes me to be home.

MEREDITH. On the level, now, do you love your wife or are you afraid of her?

KENT. Of course I'm not afraid of my wife.

STEELE. Oh, certainly not.

KENT. Well, I'm not.

STEELE. That's what I said.

(MAID *appears.*)

MAID. Mr. Price.

(DUNCAN enters briskly and wearing fashionable and expensive clothes.)

DUNCAN. Hello, fellows.

(They all greet him characteristically and bring him down stage the center of the group, when this is finished MEREDITH speaks.)

MEREDITH. And now tell us where you've been these four weeks.

DUNCAN. I have been honoring with my presence the busy marts of trade.

STEELE. Doing what?

DUNCAN. Ah—that would be telling.

MEREDITH. Well, where is my five thousand.

DUNCAN. The prisoner refuses to answer.

KENT. I know where it is. Look at him, he's spent it for clothes.

DUNCAN. Oh, no! I haven't put up a cent for these.

CANNON. You got them on credit?

DUNCAN. Certainly, and other things, too. Boys, all you need to make you succeed in life is just one thing—confidence.

MEREDITH. What did I tell you, eh? What did I tell you.

STEELE. Have you really been *working*?

DUNCAN. Of course. Look at this knife? (*he produces the various articles as he mentions them*) It's a self-sharpener and can't possibly get dull. Also the secret process that we have of oxidization prevents the blade from rusting under any and all circumstances. Cut whatever you please with it, fruit, wood, or anything—and it will neither rust nor dull. Why boys, there's a fortune in it.

KENT. You—you don't mean to say—

MEREDITH. Duncan, old man——

DUNCAN. One moment, please. (*he takes out a watch and shows it to STEELE*) What is that?

STEELE. It looks like a watch.

DUNCAN. And it is a watch, a watch with our patent indestructible works. That watch gentlemen, can neither be injured nor destroyed. Heat cannot affect it and cold cannot influence it. Freeze this watch in a solid cake of ice, and what do you think will happen. What?

KENT. I know, it will melt the ice.

DUNCAN. It will keep time just as it did before. Neither the heat of the tropics nor the cold of the frozen north will cause it to vary a single second. Also its works have been demagnetized and in this way the subtle influence of the magnetic poles has been overcome. Also, as I said before, the works are indestructible. Drop it on the ground and it does not affect it in the slightest degree. Should the baby find it and use it as a hammer—in this way—(*he pounds the watch on the table*) it will keep time exactly as before! And so we have here gentlemen, an indestructible, nonmagnetic, unvariable time-piece, with a movement adjusted to three positions, to temperature and to isochionism, cased in a single-joint case of special design thinner by one and two-thirds millimeters than the ordinary watch and made to sell at retail for the petty, paltry and insignificant sum of fifty cents. Imagine gentlemen, imagine the money there is in that! (*he extends his hand with the watch on his open palm. There is a pause*)

MEREDITH. Say? I'm getting dizzy.

CANNON. But Duncan, I should like to know——!

DUNCAN. And then again! Ha, ha! Ah, ha! (*DUNCAN looks from one to the other smiling significantly. Then he produces a mechanical toy, winds it up and then lets it run either on the floor or on the table*) Gentlemen, words are unnecessary!

KENT. (*to MEREDITH*) Come on, let's go home.

STEELE. But Price——!

CANNON. See here, Duncan——

DUNCAN. And then once more! I have here——!

CANNON. We don't care what you have.

DUNCAN. But I should like to show you a——

MEREDITH. You'll show us nothing.

KENT. No.

DUNCAN. I have here a patent, self-adjustible——

MEREDITH. Oh shut up do you hear? Shut up!

CANNON. Yes, for heaven's sake do.

KENT. Or if you have to make a noise, at least put the muffler on.

DUNCAN. All right! Very well! But when in the near future, you hear of the stupendous fortunes which you are now calmly throwing aside, don't say that I didn't give you the first chance at them; that is all I ask—don't blame me.

(MEREDITH, KENT *and* CANNON *show their relief.*)

STEELE. Honestly now, do you mean to tell me that you're peddling those things?

DUNCAN. Peddling? No, indeed. I am promoting them.

MEREDITH. Promoting!

DUNCAN. Exactly.

MEREDITH. With *my* money.

DUNCAN. Oh no! That has been invested in a proposition which is undoubtedly the biggest and most colossal thing in the business world to-day. I'll tell you a little about it. You see——!

MEREDITH. You'll tell us nothing. Do you hear—nothing!

DUNCAN. You don't wish to know?

MEREDITH. I do not.

DUNCAN. All right. Have it your own way.

MEREDITH. It's enough for me to hear that my money's gone.

DUNCAN. Not gone, Jim, invested.

MEREDITH. It's the same thing. (MEREDITH turns away to KENT)

DUNCAN. Not always.

KENT. (to MEREDITH) What do you think of your theory now?

MEREDITH. (to KENT) I was wrong, but you needn't rub it in. (MEREDITH sits down in disgust)

DUNCAN. Is it always the same thing Steele?

STEELE. Nearly always but not quite! Occasionally such a thing turns out big. For instance, tonight I am to meet a man who has an option on an invention which will completely revolutionize the automobile tire business.

DUNCAN. Really?

STEELE. Yes.

DUNCAN. How much bonus do you think the man who has secured the option ought to get for it?

STEELE. It all depends on the man.

DUNCAN. I see.

STEELE. No matter what it's worth I'll bet that I don't pay him more than ten thousand for it.

DUNCAN. How much will you bet?

STEELE. Anything you like. Shall we say a hundred?

DUNCAN. Piker.

STEELE. Five hundred.

DUNCAN. Too small to bother with.

STEELE. A thousand?

DUNCAN. Now you're talking. You bet me a thousand dollars that you don't pay more than ten thousand bonus to the man who has the option on the invention.

STEELE. That's it exactly.

DUNCAN. You're on.

STEELE. Then put up your money. (STEELE takes out his pocketbook)

DUNCAN. You bet I will. (DUNCAN goes to

MEREDITH) Jim—— Loan me a thousand dollars to bet Steele with.

MEREDITH. (*gasps*) What?

DUNCAN. Loan me a thousand dollars to bet Steele with.

KENT. He has confidence all right.

DUNCAN. But this is a sure thing—absolutely.

MEREDITH. Don't bother me. I'm busy.

DUNCAN. But it is I tell you. We can't lose.

MEREDITH. And why can't we lose?

DUNCAN. Because I am the man who has the option.

MEREDITH. What!

CANNON. You!

DUNCAN. Yes.

CANNON. Do you mean it?

DUNCAN. I certainly do.

STEELE. Are you the man I was to meet?

DUNCAN. I am. That's the reason I wouldn't give my name.

MEREDITH. And you mean it—you really mean it?

DUNCAN. Of course. I don't joke about business. I have the control of the process that Steele wants. That's what I put your money into.

MEREDITH. You see, I knew I was right all the time! Some business man, eh; boys?

DUNCAN. When I met you to-night— I came here to ask Will—if he would go with me and act as my attorney. Will you act for me, Will?

CANNON. I should say I would.

DUNCAN. Then so far as I am concerned we might as well begin negotiations right now.

MEREDITH. (*to KENT*) Some business man!

KENT. (*to MEREDITH*) That's so.

DUNCAN. Well?

STEELE. All right.

DUNCAN. How much?

STEELE. You know of course that the practica-

bility of the process has not been entirely established. There is still a grave element of uncertainty; this matter is as yet in a very broad sense, speculative, there is also——!

DUNCAN. Just a moment if you please, Mr. Steele.

STEELE. Well?

DUNCAN. We are both business men and time is valuable to us, so why waste it in useless preliminaries. The matter resolves itself into this very simple proposition:— I have something for sale. If you don't want to buy, negotiations close here and now; if you do want to buy, make a bid, and I'll take it under consideration. That's all there is to it, and conversation on either side won't change the price a cent.

MEREDITH. Another Daniel come to judgment!

DUNCAN. Well, Mr. Steele?

STEELE. I'll give you a bonus of five thousand dollars. (DUNCAN *shakes his head*) Ten thousand— (DUNCAN *shakes his head*) It's a lot of money.

DUNCAN. To some people.

STEELE. Fifteen thousand. (DUNCAN *shakes his head*) Twenty. (DUNCAN *shakes his head*)

MEREDITH. (to KENT) That is a lot of money.

STEELE. Set a figure on it, then. What is your lowest price?

DUNCAN. One hundred thousand dollars.

STEELE. One hundred thousand dollars?

DUNCAN. Precisely.

STEELE. Ridiculous.

DUNCAN. You asked my price, I have given it to you.

KENT. (to MEREDITH) He has confidence all right.

MEREDITH. (to KENT) Yes, but he needn't be foolish.

STEELE. I'll tell you what I'll do. This is my

best and final offer. I'll give you twenty-five thousand.

DUNCAN. If that is really your final offer don't let me detain you.

CANNON. Twenty-five thousand is twenty-five thousand.

MEREDITH. That's what it is. And if I were you Duncan——

DUNCAN. Excuse me, but I am handling this affair

MEREDITH. But Dunc——

DUNCAN. Please, Jim. (to STEELE) Well?

STEELE. Twenty-five thousand, or I'm through.

DUNCAN. No.

STEELE. Then good-bye.

DUNCAN. Good-bye, old man.

(STEELE goes to exit.)

STEELE. I'm sorry Duncan.

DUNCAN. The exits are marked by the red lights.

STEELE. All right. The deal is off. STEELE exits)

CANNON. Don't let him get into the street.

DUNCAN. Don't worry about that.

MEREDITH. After all it's your first deal and you mustn't expect too much.

DUNCAN. I don't. (the street door slams)

MEREDITH. There! He's gone!

DUNCAN. Only to walk a block or two so as to give himself time to cool off and come back.

CANNON. I'm not so sure.

DUNCAN. I am. In less than two minutes the doorbell will ring and Steele will come in here and try to compromise.

MERERD.TH. That's what you think?

DUNCAN. It's what I know. Rollo time it. Two minutes remember.

KENT. Right. (KENT takes out watch)

MEREDITH. If he doesn't come back of course you'll go to him won't you?

DUNCAN. I should say not. I have the goods and he has to come to me.

MEREDITH. Don't be so arbitrary Duncan. There's five thousand of my money tied up in this.

DUNCAN. Don't worry Jim. Remember that all you need is confidence.

KENT. Yes, Jim, remember that all you need is confidence.

MEREDITH. Oh, get out——

KENT. Thirty seconds.

CANNON. You don't really expect to get a hundred thousand do you?

DUNCAN. No. I should get it but he won't pay it so I'll take fifty thousand and he *will* pay it. And you don't know what it means to me boys; it means more than the money, it means that I've made good.

MEREDITH. Still there's no use in taking reckless chances.

DUNCAN. This isn't a chance, it's a certainty. It's only the beginning too! And the thing that did it all was that inheritance. You know it don't you.

MEREDITH. Yes. Of course.

KENT. Certainly he knew it. (MEREDITH *turns quickly toward* KENT) One minute.

CANNON. (*to* KENT) You hear!

DUNCAN. Yes, but that's only half the time. I'm still betting that in less than another minute Steele will be back in the room ready to resume negotiations.

CANNON. I hope you're right.

MEREDITH. So do I, and you can't deny that twenty-five thousand is pretty good for a starter.

DUNCAN. Yes, but it isn't enough.

KENT. A minute and thirty seconds.

MEREDITH. You see, you see——

CANNON. That leaves only half a minute.

DUNCAN. It takes just one second to win this bet so I have a chance to win it thirty times over.

MEREDITH. Well, we'll soon see.

DUNCAN. That's what we will.

KENT. (*counting*) Thirty-six, thirty-seven, thirty-eight, thirty-nine, forty—(*KENT continues counting*)

MEREDITH. You haven't much time now.

DUNCAN. I have enough.

MEREDITH. You still think he'll come?

DUNCAN. Of course I do.

KENT. Forty-five, forty-six—(*the door bell rings*
KENT continues counting)

DUNCAN. What did I tell you. What did I tell you?

MEREDITH. You're all right, Duncan. Some business man you are—

KENT. He hasn't won yet, though. He said Steele was to be in here—(*KENT counts*) Fifty-three, fifty-four, fifty-five—!

(*The MAID appears.*)

MAID. Mrs. Kent.

KENT. Fifty-six, fifty-six—fifty-six—

DUNCAN. Mrs. Kent?

MAID. Yes sir.

KENT. Game called on account of darkness.

(*The MAID exits. KENT takes out the candy box and begins to eat one of the candies. MRS. KENT enters.*)

MRS. KENT. Good afternoon.

CANNON. Oh, good afternoon, Mrs. Kent.

MEREDITH. Good afternoon.

MRS. KENT. I'm delighted to see you here, Mr. Price.

DUNCAN. Thank you, Mrs. Kent. The same to you.

MRS. KENT. I was so lonesome at home all alone without a soul to speak to that I thought you really wouldn't mind if I came over so that I could walk back with Rollo, and perhaps Mr. Meredith. You *don't* mind, do you?

CANNON. Of course not. We're very glad you came. (*to MEREDITH*) Aren't we?

MEREDITH. Mm. Oh, yes, yes. Very glad indeed. (*to DUNCAN*) Aren't we?

DUNCAN. Mm? Oh, yes, yes; we're simply delighted. (*to KENT*) Aren't we?

KENT. Mm. Oh, yes, yes! Only delighted is too weak a word for me—altogether too weak a word—for me—

MRS. KENT. Isn't that nice? (*MRS. KENT stands smiling and not looking at KENT*)

KENT. Your coming so unexpectedly, Baby, was like—was like—a ray of sunshine—a ray of sunshine—illuminating and irradiating as it were—the dark cell in which we were all imprisoned—and in this way, Bunnie—in this way—as I said before—your coming has brought into this moment of our lives—as it were—it has brought, I say—it has—brought—it has—Oh hell!

MRS. KENT. You big strong men don't know what it means for a little woman to be left all alone, if you did I'm sure you'd be with her more.

KENT. But, Bunnie dear, you know you allowed me this extra time, you know you did.

CANNON. We were here when he 'phoned.

MEREDITH. Yes.

MRS. KENT. I am not speaking of this time in particular, I am speaking of husbands and wives in general. My poor dear mamma always says, "If a woman's husband is at home she knows exactly where he is, but if he is not at home she only knows where he says he is."

DUNCAN. Comforting! Very comforting. Isn't it, Rollo?

KENT. Yes, it's a wonderful thought—simply wonderful and——

MEREDITH. And so soothing.

MRS. KENT. Mamma is a remarkable woman! And now if you will excuse me—you see I haven't seen Rollie since morning——

CANNON. We understand.

MEREDITH. Yes, indeed.

DUNCAN. Certainly we do.

(MRS. KENT goes to KENT.)

MRS. KENT. Kiss me, sweetheart.

KENT. But, Baby——

MRS. KENT. Kiss me, dearie—(KENT kisses MRS. KENT. *Her expression shows that her worst fears are confirmed. There is a pause*)

KENT. They forced it on me. (*there is a pause*) Honest they did. (*there is a pause*) Oh, Bunny, you don't think I'd lie to you? (*there is a pause.*

MRS. KENT *turns away*)

MRS. KENT. Please tell Mrs. Cannon that I enquired after her.

CANNON. I'll let her know that you are here.

MRS. KENT. Please don't trouble.

CANNON. No trouble at all, and she'd be glad to know.

MRS. KENT. Please don't, we're going now, aren't we, Rollo?

KENT. Mm?

MRS. KENT. I said “we're going now, aren't we?”

KENT. Yes, oh yes. We're going now.

MRS. KENT. And you, Mr. Meredith—(KENT *in pantomime motions for MEREDITH to go with them*)

MEREDITH. I have some unfinished business with Mr. Price; it's really very important so if you'll excuse me, just for the time being——!

MRS. KENT. Certainly. (*she turns to KENT who suddenly stops motioning to MEREDITH*) Won't we?

KENT. Certainly! Certainly! with pleasure.

MRS. KENT. Then, good afternoon. (DUNCAN, CANNON and MEREDITH bid MRS. KENT good afternoon and she goes to exit) Come, Rollie dear.

(MRS. KENT exits.)

KENT. (*Fiercely, to MEREDITH*) You saw me motioning to you.

MEREDITH. I did not.

KENT. Yes, you did. I'll get even for this——

MEREDITH. But, look here——

KENT. I'll get even all right. Some day I'll——!

MRS. KENT. (*off*) Coming, darling.

KENT. Yes, sweetheart. I'm looking for my hat.

MRS. KENT. (*off*) It's here in the hall, dearest.

KENT. Is it. Oh, yes, I remember now I left it there. (*to MEREDITH*) That's no way to treat a pal and I won't forget it either. (*going toward exit*) Isn't that funny, darling, I thought it was in here. (KENT exits. *There is a pause on stage but KENT continues talking off stage*) And all the time it was in the hall. Strange, isn't it, how such things happen.

(KENT talks ad lib as though going down the hall till the closing of the street door is heard. DUNCAN and CANNON laugh.)

CANNON. Poor old Rollo!

DUNCAN. “Led to the Slaughter” and other tales!

MEREDITH. Never mind, Rollo, what about Steele. He hasn't come back yet and it's considerably over your two minutes.

CANNON. That's so.

DUNCAN. I know it is. To tell the truth, I'm get-

ting a bit nervous myself. Just the same I can't think I'm wrong.

MEREDITH. It will be pretty tough if you are. Remember Steele said that the deal was off.

CANNON. Even if it is, with a big thing like Duncan has, he can easily get outside capital. (to DUNCAN) Can't you?

DUNCAN. No.

CANNON. You can't?

MEREDITH. Why?

DUNCAN. Because I've been trying it for nearly a month and Steele is the only one I've been able to interest at all— It's tremendous but revolutionary, and I must give Steele credit for a least one thing—he's the only man yet who's had the brain to appreciate it and the nerve to undertake it.

CANNON. You'll find somebody else.

DUNCAN. I don't know where. My option expires at noon to-morrow.

CANNON. At noon?

MEREDITH. To-morrow——

DUNCAN. Yes.

CANNON. And how much were you to pay for it?

DUNCAN. A hundred thousand dollars!

MEREDITH. Then you still owe ninety-five thousand?

DUNCAN. Yes.

CANNON. And if you don't raise ninety-five thousand dollars by noon to-morrow you lose the option and the five thousand you have put up as well.

DUNCAN. That's it.

MEREDITH. You have a fine chance! Five thousand— (*kiss his hand*) Good-bye! Some business man.

CANNON. Take my advice, get to Steele early in the morning.

MEREDITH. Yes.

DUNCAN. No. I'm going to make fifty thousand dollars clear or nothing. He's got to come to me.

CANNON. Don't be unreasonable.

MEREDITH. No, for heaven's sake don't! You know Dick Steele. Once he's made up his mind to do a thing he'll do it. He'll never come back here. He'll never——!

(The door bell rings. DUNCAN who is between CANNON and MEREDITH seizes each by the wrist. There is a tense pause. The MAID appears.)

MAID. Mr. Steele.

DUNCAN. Oh, he won't, won't he——

MEREDITH. Some business man. Some business man!

(STEELE enters.)

STEELE. Duncan, I've come to make you what is absolutely my final offer.

DUNCAN. Good. What is it?

STEELE. I'll come straight to the point; for your option I'll give you a bonus of fifty thousand dollars.

MEREDITH. Hurrah! Hurrah!

DUNCAN. It isn't enough.

MEREDITH. Hurr— What!

DUNCAN. Fifty thousand is not enough. *(MEREDITH nearly collapses. To STEELE)* My option is worth at least a hundred thousand and you know it, but to bring things to an issue I'll sell it to you for seventy-five.

(MEREDITH is slowly dying.)

STEELE. Nothing doing.

DUNCAN. Very well, then I'll make you my final offer—I'll sell it to you for sixty thousand cash.

STEELE. Fifty.

DUNCAN. Sixty——

STEELE. Fifty.

DUNCAN. Sixty.

(There is a pause.)

STEELE. All right. Sixty.

DUNCAN. Sold.

MEREDITH. *(almost breathless)* Some business man!

CANNON. I congratulate you both.

STEELE. When can we close the deal?

DUNCAN. Right now. These cover everything. *(he takes papers from his inside coat pocket)* I brought them along for Will to look over before the meeting we were to have at your apartment. He can act for both of us, can't he?

STEELE. Certainly.

DUNCAN. Then, here you are. *(he gives papers to CANNON)* Look them over together and if they are satisfactory to Steele draw up the bill of sale and I'll sign it.

CANNON. Good. Come along, Dick.

(STEELE and CANNON go toward exit.)

DUNCAN. Just a minute. *(STEELE and CANNON stop)* So that there may be no misunderstanding let's repeat the terms again! For my option you are to pay me a bonus of sixty thousand dollars, cash.

STEELE. Right.

DUNCAN. That's all.

(STEELE and CANNON exeunt. MEREDITH goes to DUNCAN.)

MEREDITH. Put her there. *(he shakes DUNCAN'S hand enthusiastically)* You're a marvel.

DUNCAN. All you need is confidence.

MEREDITH. Yes! But, do you know how I felt

while you were doing that "fifty—sixty—fifty—sixty" business?

DUNCAN. No.

MEREDITH. I felt as though the boat was slowly sinking and the captain had just shouted, "—back, women and children first"——

DUNCAN. Believe me, Jim, I had that sinking feeling too.

MEREDITH. You didn't look it.

DUNCAN. I had it just the same. If Steele had said "no"—Bla!

MEREDITH. But he didn't. He didn't, and it proved my theory was right.

DUNCAN. Your theory! What about?

MEREDITH. Why—er—why——

DUNCAN. Well, what?

MEREDITH. Why, nothing, nothing at all! Only, you see——!

(ETHEL enters.)

ETHEL. Your wife wants you, Will. (*she sees DUNCAN*) I beg your pardon. I didn't know.

(ETHEL starts toward exit.)

DUNCAN. Don't go, please. I've something very important to say to you—(*to MEREDITH*) Haven't I?

MEREDITH. Mm? Oh, yes. Certainly.

DUNCAN. And don't forget your hat is in the hall, too.

MEREDITH. That's so. And I've got to be going.

ETHEL. But, really——

MEREDITH. It's right. I'm dining at the Kents, have to go home to dress. Good afternoon! (*to DUNCAN*) See you in the morning—and remember that all you need is confidence. Good-bye! Good-bye! Good-bye!

(MEREDITH *exits*. ETHEL *is undecided as to what to do. There is a pause.*)

DUNCAN. Ethel, I've made good.

ETHEL. (*in matter of fact tone*) Yes.

DUNCAN. I can do the things I was afraid I couldn't do. I've proved it. I'm not afraid of anything now.

ETHEL. Really?

DUNCAN. I love you. And I want to ask you the question I did before and to beg you to give me the same answer.

ETHEL. You're very amusing.

DUNCAN. Amusing!

ETHEL. Do you think I am the kind of girl who can be dropped coldly one minute and then calmly taken up the next.

DUNCAN. No, of course not.

ETHEL. Then why should you imagine that this conversation interests me. Good afternoon.

(ETHEL *starts to go.*)

DUNCAN. Stop! (*slight pause*) Ethel, stop!

(*The authoritative tone has its effect and ETHEL pauses.*)

ETHEL. Well?

DUNCAN. I'm not the same man I was when I spoke to you before.

ETHEL. No?

DUNCAN. Can't you see the difference? Can't you feel it? Can't you?

(*ETHEL'S interest is gradually arousing.*)

ETHEL. Yes. There is a change in you.

DUNCAN. Then I was a failure, now I'm not.

ETHEL. Duncan.

DUNCAN. At that time I had no faith in myself, no belief. I thought I was a man condemned forever to stand in the shadow watching the rest of the world march by in the sunshine! And I hadn't the right to ask you to stand there with me. I hadn't the right.

ETHEL. But, I don't understand, I——

DUNCAN. I was a failure and I thought I always should be one. I didn't understand that what made me fail was just that thought. But, suddenly, it came to me. I realized that the one big thing necessary for success was faith in one's self. And then I worked, and hustled and worked again, and after awhile I began to get a little result. And that encouraged me to work all the harder and to fight all the harder, because I wanted to make good in your eyes, because I was working and fighting for you! And so I kept on, and on, working for the big thing, I knew must be waiting for me. And to-day, sooner than I had even dared to hope, it came! I've made good, Ethel, I can do things. Now I have the right to ask for now—I'm a man.

(She offers her hands to him impulsively.)

ETHEL. I'm glad.

DUNCAN. And everything is all right? *(there is a pause)* It is, isn't it?

ETHEL. I'm afraid not.

DUNCAN. Ethel——

ETHEL. I'm afraid it's—too late——

DUNCAN. Too late?

ETHEL. Yes.

DUNCAN. There's some one else? *(ETHEL nods)*
And you—love him?

ETHEL. No, dear, no! I love you——

DUNCAN. You do——

ETHEL. Of course, and always shall.

DUNCAN. Then there's nothing to it! Whew! You had me worried for awhile! Tell me, dear, when shall it be?

ETHEL. You don't understand. It *can't* be.

DUNCAN. Ethel! (*there is a pause*) You don't mean that?

ETHEL. I do.

DUNCAN. But why? Why?

ETHEL. Father! He's in trouble.

DUNCAN. With whom?

ETHEL. Dick Steele.

DUNCAN. But, I heard that Steele is going to take your father in with *him*.

ETHEL. He *was*—going to.

DUNCAN. Was?

ETHEL. Yes.

DUNCAN. I see. (*there is a pause*) It depends on you. (ETHEL *nods*) That's a fine piece of work. Since he can't win you fairly and honestly he tries to get you by intimidation and threats.

ETHEL. He hasn't threatened. He simply showed me things just as they are.

DUNCAN. He can hurt your father? (ETHEL *nods*) Badly?

ETHEL. Very. Dad told me that himself! And he doesn't know—everything.

DUNCAN. *What* doesn't he know?

ETHEL. The odds were greatly against him even as matters stood, but he still had just a fighting chance. Now, if what Mr. Steele says is true, the odds are overwhelming and he has no chance.

DUNCAN. Why?

ETHEL. Because this evening Mr. Steele is going to get control of an invention which will enable him to put all his competitors out of business.

DUNCAN. What?

ETHEL. Because this evening Mr. Steele is going to get control of an invention——!

DUNCAN. I know the rest! (*he laughs*) That's immense! That's splendid! (*he laughs again*)

ETHEL. Why are you laughing?

DUNCAN. Because I can't help it. I'm thinking of the jolt that is coming to Steele. In a few minutes he'll think he's been struck by a six cylinder eighty horse power car drawn by a "joy" rider with a bicycle cop after him! Oh, the bump he will get.

ETHEL. Why?

DUNCAN. Because I am the man who controls the invention aforesaid.

ETHEL. Duncan!

DUNCAN. It's true, dear. I control it and was going to sell it to Steele. Now do you know how much chance he has to get it—he has as much chance as a wooden-legged man in a forest fire.

ETHEL. You mean it?

DUNCAN. Certainly. It was the big thing I was telling you about. Come right over there and kiss me.

ETHEL. Oh, Duncan!

(*She goes to him and kisses him. He takes her in his arms. There is a pause.*)

DUNCAN. (*tenderly*) And for awhile I thought you would never do that again.

ETHEL. Dear!

DUNCAN. Now about Steele.

ETHEL. Well?

DUNCAN. We're not quite safe yet.

ETHEL. (*slightly alarmed*) No?

DUNCAN. There's nothing to worry about. To get complete control I have to raise ninety-five thousand dollars before noon to-morrow.

ETHEL. Can you do it?

DUNCAN. I've got to do it! There's one man I haven't approached who is sure to see the value, and with his backing I can raise the money easily.

ETHEL. Splendid, dear, who is it?

DUNCAN. Your father.

ETHEL. But he's in Canada hunting.

DUNCAN. I'll wire him.

ETHEL. But he's in the wilds, miles away from civilization; a message couldn't possibly get to him in less than two or three days.

DUNCAN. I must get word to him before twelve to-morrow.

ETHEL. You can't. It's impossible.

DUNCAN. You *mean* that?

ETHEL. Yes, dear. (*there is a pause*) Now, what are you going to do?

DUNCAN. I don't know yet. But I'll do something. I don't know what it is—but I'll do it.

ETHEL. If things shouldn't turn out right after all——

DUNCAN. They've got to turn out right. Nothing can stop us now. My luck has turned and from now on it's going to be just as good as it used to be bad. (*MARVIN enters*) You'll see that I——!

MARVIN. Hello, Duncan! How—are you, Ethel?

ETHEL. How are you, Sam?

DUNCAN. Didn't I tell you. Didn't I tell you. Here's the very man to do the trick, and he's turned up just at the right time.

MARVIN. Wha's the idea?

DUNCAN. (*to* ETHEL) It's all right now. I want to see Sam privately for just about a minute. Will you wait—in there?

ETHEL. Certainly. I'm so anxious. You won't be long.

DUNCAN. Not more than three minutes—by the clock.

ETHEL. Very well.

DUNCAN. And don't worry. Everything is all right now.

(*ETHEL exits.*)

MARVIN. Well, Dunc, what can I do for you?

DUNCAN. You can get me ninety thousand dollars before noon to-morrow.

MARVIN. Oh, stop your joking.

DUNCAN. I was never more in earnest in my life. I've got to have the money, I simply have *got* to have.

MARVIN. And how do you expect me to get it for you?

DUNCAN. Borrow it on my inheritance.

MARVIN. But, Duncan, I——!

DUNCAN. You don't know what that has meant to me. It changed my life entirely. It gave me courage and strength and now it's going to give me this——

MARVIN. It can't be true.

DUNCAN. It's a matter of life and death and it's *got* to be done.

MARVIN. I won't do it.

DUNCAN. Then I will.

MARVIN. But, Duncan——

DUNCAN. Listen to me, Sam. Ethel's happiness, her father's happiness and *my* happiness depend on this. To-morrow morning, somewhere, somehow, I am going to borrow that money with my inheritance as security and you're going with me to back up my word and give the proofs.

MARVIN. I can't do it, Duncan.

DUNCAN. You can and you will. You're with me or you're against me. You're my friend or you're not. Come on now. Which is it— (*there is a pause*) Which is it?

MARVIN. I'm your friend, of course.

DUNCAN. And you'll do it?

MARVIN. I can't.

DUNCAN. Why can't you? Why? (*there is a pause*) Is there any reason?

MARVIN. Yes.

DUNCAN. What reason? (*there is a pause*)
What?

MARVIN. I can't tell you.

DUNCAN. You must! You've gone too far to hold anything back now. What is the reason you won't go with me to-morrow and help me get that money? Come on now. You've got to tell me.

MARVIN. Then I will tell you. It would be getting the money under false pretences.

DUNCAN. Why?

MARVIN. Because there is no—inheritance.

DUNCAN. Don't joke with me now, Sam.

MARVIN. I'm not joking, Duncan. The whole thing was a scheme put up by Jim Meredith, to give you confidence and prove a theory of his.

DUNCAN. (*slowly*) Sam, say that again and say it slow.

MARVIN. I'm sorry, Duncan.

DUNCAN. (*fiercely*) Never mind that. Tell me.

MARVIN. (*slowly*) There is no inheritance. It was a scheme of Jim's to prove a theory of his.

(*The truth slowly dawns on DUNCAN. The world slips from under his feet and he stands as if stupefied. His knees give way as if he is about to fall and MARVIN starts to go to him, but DUNCAN puts up his hand and stops him. Then slowly, and almost as if drunken, he goes to a chair and sits. There is a pause. MARVIN goes to him.*)

MARVIN. We had no idea it would turn out like this. We did it for the best.

DUNCAN. It was a lie—all a lie——

MARVIN. We thought it would give you confidence.

DUNCAN. It did! But now, what? Now?

MARVIN. We didn't mean to hurt you. You know

that, don't you? Don't you? (DUNCAN *nods*)
That's some comfort.

DUNCAN. Don't say—any more—just—go away
—and—leave me—alone!

MARVIN. Duncan!

DUNCAN. Just leave me—alone—then I'll soon
be all right.

MARVIN. If you'd only let me—

DUNCAN. Oh, please! Please!

MARVIN. Very well—But God knows—I'm sorry.

(DUNCAN *exits*. *There is a pause*. DUNCAN *rises*
and laughs harshly at first, but ending the laugh
almost with a sob. Then he *sits* again. *There*
is a pause. ETHEL *enters* quietly. She *sees*
DUNCAN. *There is a pause*. ETHEL *goes*
quietly to DUNCAN. *There is a pause*.)

ETHEL. Duncan— (*there is a pause*) Duncan—
(DUNCAN *looks up*) It was so quiet I felt sure that
Sam had gone and I simply had to come to hear the
news. (*there is a pause*) Was it bad news?
(DUNCAN *nods*) Don't let it trouble you, dear. I
am never going to be disheartened again. And you
mustn't be either. (*there is a pause*) You've had
a—set-back—perhaps, but you mustn't be dis-
couraged. When in there—alone—I realized how
changed you are, and I know now, no matter what
happens that you are bound to succeed.

DUNCAN. You don't know.

ETHEL. I don't want to know for there's one
thing I'm sure of—you have strength! and courage
and no matter what the obstacle may be you are
going to overcome it and win.

DUNCAN. I'm afraid I'm beaten, Ethel.

ETHEL. Afraid! Afraid! How dare you use that
word to me! (*there is a pause*) You're not afraid

and you're never going to be afraid again of anything or anybody—do you hear me, never!

DUNCAN. Ethel!

ETHEL. You're a man—a real, fighting man. That's true, isn't it? Isn't it? *(there is a pause. DUNCAN'S expression shows he is catching ETHEL'S spirit)* If it isn't true now is the time to let me know. *(there is a pause)* Duncan, our happiness, our whole future happiness is hanging in the balance. Whichever way the scale goes you are going to turn it. Remember that—and remember this as well—I love you, dear, love you with all my heart, but I won't marry a weakling, I won't marry a coward. *(there is a pause)* Oh, don't disappoint me again, for I should never get over it. So promise you won't, dear. Promise me? *(there is a pause)*

DUNCAN. I won't. I won't.

ETHEL. Duncan! *(she goes to him)*

DUNCAN. You've saved me, Ethel. I was going under—and you've saved me.

ETHEL. Dear——

DUNCAN. But that's gone by, gone by forever. Your courage and your trust have given me back the faith in myself that I was losing. I realize now that strength doesn't come from without, it comes from within. What I have done I can do again. There is nothing in the world that I shall ever fear now—nothing.

ETHEL. Thank God!

DUNCAN. I'm going to fight, Ethel—I'm going to fight. You just stand by and watch me—that's all, just watch me.

(STEELE and CANNON enter. CANNON has legal paper.)

STEELE. Everything is satisfactory.

CANNON. And here's the agreement ready for your signature.

(CANNON *hands paper to DUNCAN who looks it over.*)

STEELE. All right, isn't it?

DUNCAN. Probably. But I'm not going to sign it.

CANNON. Not going to sign it?

DUNCAN. No.

STEELE. And why?

DUNCAN. Because I've changed my mind.

STEELE. Really! Well, let me tell you that this time the change doesn't go.

DUNCAN. Oh, yes, it does.

STEELE. Oh, no, it doesn't, and I'll give you the reason. You and I came to a definite and explicit understanding in the presence of witnesses, one of whom was your lawyer. I stand ready to carry out that understanding to the letter, and if you refuse to sign that agreement I shall simply hold you to your verbal contract. There's your lawyer, ask him whether or not I can do it. Go on, ask him.

DUNCAN. (to CANNON) Well?

CANNON. If Steele stands ready to comply with all the terms of the verbal contract you will have to abide by it.

STEELE. You hear? Well I do stand ready to comply with all the terms to sign or not just as you please, the option is mine.

DUNCAN. I'm not so sure.

STEELE. Well I am.

DUNCAN. To secure the option you have to comply with all the terms.

STEELE. Yes.

DUNCAN. And what was the principal one?

STEELE. That for it I was to pay you sixty thousand dollars.

DUNCAN. Cash! That was the agreement wasn't it? Sixty thousand cash.

STEELE. Yes.

DUNCAN. Very well give me the cash and the option's yours.

STEELE. You don't suppose I have that amount here with me do you?

DUNCAN. I am not supposing anything about this transaction. I am simply asking you to live up to our agreement.

STEELE. I haven't the money with me, you know that but I'll give you a check.

DUNCAN. A check isn't cash. There's your lawyer now you ask him? (STEELE looks at CANNON)

CANNON. He's right.

DUNCAN. And so you can't live up to the terms of the agreement and the option isn't yours.

STEELE. Perhaps it isn't—yet! But it will be before one o'clock to-morrow. I've known all along that it expires at noon unless by that time you have raised ninety-five thousand dollars additional capital.

DUNCAN. Well?

STEELE. I've already been dickering with the inventor and knowing you can't possibly raise the money I would have ignored you altogether only it happens that now your terms are lower than his. Well I'll have him waiting in my office to-morrow and when you don't make good, as I know you can't, I'll have the deal cinched in less than five minutes.

DUNCAN. That's a pretty scheme but it fails in several essential points. The first is that I can make good—the others don't matter.

STEELE. Oh, no, you can't. Where can you raise ninety-five thousand by noon?

DUNCAN. That's my affair——

STEELE. You can't do it and I know you can't. By fifteen minutes after twelve to-morrow I'll have closed the deal and then look out for yourselves—all of you.

CANNON. Steele——

DUNCAN. We must look out for yourselves? The shoe's on the other foot Steele, you must look out for yourself. I'm going after you and what's more

I'm going to get you and get you good and plenty.
(STEELE *with a laugh turns to* CANNON)

ETHEL. (*to* DUNCAN) Splendid. How are you going to do it?

(STEELE *turns to* DUNCAN.)

DUNCAN. (*to* ETHEL) I don't know. Yes, Steele. I'm going after you. I'm not only going to raise that money but I'm going to form a company to manufacture the goods and then I'll run you out of business and when once I start you running, you'll go as fast as a jackrabbit in front of a prairie fire.

STEELE. Run me out of business.

DUNCAN. That's exactly what I'll do and what's more you know that I can do it. Inside of six months I'll have a plant in full running order and inside of a year we'll have the goods on the market. Then your product will be worth about fifty cents on the dollar and all your machinery will be good for, will be to sell for old scrap iron. Pretty soon I'll drop something on you, I'll drop something on you Steele and if it doesn't knock you flat I'll come back and walk round you to see what's holding you up.

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

SCENE:—*The scene is the same as in ACT II and it is about half past eight of the same day. The curtain rises on an empty stage. MRS. CANNON, CANNON and MARVIN enter from dining room chatting as though dinner were just over.*

MARVIN. Another splendid dinner Marjorie, but then that's nothing unusual.

MRS. C. Thank you, Sam.

CANNON. (*to MARVIN*) Great housekeeper isn't she?

MARVIN. The best ever. The happiness and comfort in a home like this make marriage an awful temptation.

CANNON. It's the greatest thing in the world—if you hit it right. (*he touches MRS. C. lovingly*)

(*The 'phone rings. MRS. CANNON answers it.*)

MRS. C. (*at 'phone*) Hello—(*pause*) Yes (*pause*) Oh, how do you do, Mrs. Kent. (*pause*) Of course! (*pause*) We'll be delighted to see you. (*pause*) Yes, dinner is over so come right along. (*pause*) That's good! Good-bye. (*she replaces receiver*) The Kents and Jim Meredith are coming right over in the machine.

CANNON. Splendid.

MARVIN. Jim hasn't any idea of the shock he is going to get.

CANNON. Shock?

MARVIN. Yes. He doesn't know that Duncan called the deal off and that most likely he'll lose his five thousand.

CANNON. That's so. I can see Jim's face when he hears the news.

(MAID enters with coffee.)

MRS. C. Oh, here we are!

(The MAID serves coffee to them.)

MAID. Miss Travis says she'll be here in just a minute ma'am.

MRS. C. Very well. (MAID exits) Ethel's greatly upset, isn't she?

CANNON. Naturally. So much depends on whether Duncan is successful or not.

MRS. C. Where has he gone?

CANNON. To see the inventor and try to get an extension of time.

MRS. C. If he *doesn't* get it?

CANNON. It will make things hard for both Duncan and Ethel—very hard—so when Ethel comes in, let's try and buck her up a bit.

MARVIN. Good idea.

MRS. C. (to CANNON) I infer that you think Duncan *won't* succeed.

CANNON. Marjorie—he has just as much chance of succeeding as I have of pushing over the Metropolitan Life Building with a wooden toothpick.

MRS. C. But why?

CANNON. Because now the inventor knows the value of the process and realizes that he can get much more for it than Duncan is to pay.

MARVIN. Much more——

MRS. C. I see.

(ETHEL enters. CANNON catches sight of her as she appears, begins to laugh, and in pantomime tells MRS. C. and MARVIN to join. They laugh also.)

ETHEL gives no heed to the laughter and sits down stage.)

CANNON. That was splendid, Sam, simply splendid. (to MRS. C.) Wasn't it?

MRS. C. Oh, yes, yes! It was *very* funny.

MARVIN. Glad you liked it.

CANNON. (to ETHEL) Sam just told us the best story I've heard in a long time.

MARVIN. It *is* funny! New too.

CANNON. That's what.

MARVIN. It *always* gets a laugh.

CANNON. Always! Tell it to Ethel!

MARVIN. —what?

CANNON. Tell the story to Ethel.

MARVIN. Why—why—! I don't think Ethel cares for funny stories.

CANNON. Of course she does. (to ETHEL) Don't you?

ETHEL. Not just now I'm afraid. What time is it please?

CANNON. (looking at watch) About a quarter to nine.

ETHEL. Duncan said he'd be here by half past eight.

MARVIN. Duncan's always late.

ETHEL. He said, if he wasn't here by then, that his news would be bad news.

MRS. C. Ethel dear, please don't worry.

MARVIN. Everything's going to turn out all right.

CANNON. Of course it is.

ETHEL. I wish I were sure. (door bell rings) Perhaps that's Duncan now.

(The voices of the KENTS and MEREDITH are heard in the hall.)

MRS. C. I'm afraid not dear. It's Mr. and Mrs. Kent and Jim Meredith.

(KENT and MRS. C. enter followed by MEREDITH.)

MRS. C. (to MR. KENT) I'm so glad you came.

MRS. KENT. It was very good of you to let us come.

KENT. How de!

MEREDITH. Hello everybody. (*there is a general greeting then MEREDITH looks about*) Where's Duncan. I want to shake hands with him again. In my opinion—he is the combined John D. and Andrew C. of the coming commercial generation! Where is he? Where is that boy?

CANNON. He is not here just now.

ETHEL. But he's expected—very soon.

MEREDITH. Out on some other project I suppose—not letting the grass grow under his feet. He's some business man I tell you.

MRS. KENT. I can't make out what it's all about.

KENT. I tried several times to explain it Bunny.

MEREDITH. I tried too, at dinner, frequently and since dinner, continuously.

MRS. KENT. Oh, I know it's about an option but I really don't know what an option is.

KENT. I'll explain it all over again drearie.

MRS. KENT. Drearie——

KENT. Dearie! I said "Dearie."

MRS. KENT. I thought you said "drearie" (*to others*) Didn't you?

OTHERS. Oh, no, certainly not.

MEREDITH. I heard him distinctly. He said "Dearie" just like that "Dearie" as though it came gushing from the heart but met a dam up here in the throat. (*he points to his throat*)

MRS. KENT. Oh, I see.

KENT. *Shall* I explain it all over again?

MRS. KENT. I don't think so, sweetheart.

KENT. I will if you say so.

MRS. KENT. No! No, thank you.

KENT. Then you don't *want* me to explain it.

MRS. KENT. No dear. I'm quite sure it wouldn't do any good.

KENT. Very well.

MEREDITH. Well, thank God *that's* settled!

MRS. KENT. Mr. Meredith!

(KENT *slips quickly away and works toward the whiskey which is up stage.*)

MEREDITH. I—I beg your pardon, Mrs. Kent. (to MRS. C. and ETHEL) Yours as well.

(MRS. C. and ETHEL *nod.*)

MRS. KENT. I should like to know exactly what you meant by that remark, Mr. Meredith.

MEREDITH. I didn't mean *anything*, Mrs. Kent.

MRS. C. Of course he didn't.

MARVIN. Certainly not.

MRS. KENT. (*showing signs of crying*) I know that I'm stupid——

MEREDITH. Not at all.

CANNON. Quite the contrary.

MRS. KENT. I know—that I'm stupid—but I don't like—to be reminded of it—in front of people. (MRS. KENT *begins to cry a little*) That isn't very nice.

MEREDITH. Don't cry Mrs. Kent. Please, don't.

(MRS. CANNON, CANNON and MARVIN *sympathize with MRS. KENT ad lib.* KENT *who has been watching others cautiously starts to pour out a drink.*)

MEREDITH. It just slipped out and I'm sorry.

MRS. KENT. I'll try not to cry.

MEREDITH. Thank you.

MRS. KENT. I never cry without cause—never—but I'm extremely sensitive. Isn't that so, Rollo! Rollo where are you?

(KENT puts the glass down and comes down stage quickly.)

KENT. Here I am darling.

MRS. KENT. Isn't it true that I'm extremely sensitive?

KENT. Yes, dear, extremely, extremely! She's so sensitive she cries over the least thing—in fact sometimes she cries over nothing at all.

MRS. KENT. I do not—I *never* cry over nothing at all.

KENT. But darling I don't mean what *you* mean!

MRS. KENT. Then what do you mean?

KENT. I'll explain it darling. I mean that while what you cry over may not mean "nothing at all to you" it may be absolutely nothing at all to me. Understand? Mm? Don't you?

MRS. KENT. I must say that I don't.

KENT. And yet it's quite clear. (to OTHERS) Isn't it?

OTHERS. Yes. Certainly of course it is—etc.

MEREDITH. It's absolutely clear to me.

KENT. You understand it perfectly don't you Jim?

MEREDITH. Perfectly.

KENT. Then you explain it to her.

MEREDITH. But—I—I——

MRS. KENT. There is no need for Mr. Meredith to explain anything.

MEREDITH. But Mrs. Kent I—I——

MRS. KENT. Any explanation due from my husband I prefer to come from him direct. (*beginning to cry again*) And I must say I'm not having a very pleasant evening.

(ALL but ETHEL sympathize with MRS. KENT and ask her not to cry.)

KENT. And remember pet crying makes your nose red.

MRS. KENT. I know it does. And mamma always says “If a woman has a red nose it proves she has either a bad husband or indigestion and you know I haven't indigestion.

KENT. Yes dearie, I know it very well.

MRS. KENT. Then there you are.

KENT. Yes, darling, here I am.

MRS. KENT. Then nothing more need be said.

KENT. No, dearie.

MRS. KENT. Very well. (MRS. KENT speaks this with a finality and MEREDITH shows his relief. There is a pause) But always remember this——

MEREDITH. Oh, lord!

KENT. I'll remember anything darling——

MRS. KENT. All right dear.

MRS. C. And now come to my room for a moment. If there's any red on your nose I'll soon take it off.

MRS. KENT. Thank you.

MRS. C. Then we'll come down and have some music.

MRS. KENT. I shall like that very much.

MRS. C. Coming Ethel?

ETHEL. Yes, just for a minute. (ETHEL goes toward exit. MRS. KENT'S eye lights on the whiskey and the glass. She stops)

MRS. KENT. Remember Rollo, I trust you.

KENT. I'll remember darling.

MRS. KENT. Please do. (cry again. MRS. C. and MRS. KENT exeunt. MRS. KENT talking ad lib. After their exit there is a sigh of relief from the men. MEREDITH'S being particularly noticeable. He also gets the whiskey pours himself a drink)

MEREDITH. Where is Duncan, I thought he'd be here to celebrate.

MARVIN. Celebrate what?

MEREDITH. The deal he made with Steele to-day. Just think, he clears fifty-five thousand dollars and I get my five thousand back into the bargain! Some business man!

CANNON. Duncan certainly is a great business man.

MEREDITH. I should say so.

CANNON. A *great* business man.

MEREDITH. Yes, sir.

CANNON. Only the deal is off.

MEREDITH. What!

KENT. Do you mean it?

CANNON. Ask Sam.

MARVIN. That's right.

CANNON. Eighty more to get.

MEREDITH. I don't know where nor how but I'm sure he'll get it. He's proved my theory and I'm for him first, last and all the time.

MARVIN. So am I.

CANNON. And I.

KENT. You can bet I am.

MEREDITH. There's one thing though at least we can do.

KENT. (*enthusiastically*) What? I'd go the distance for Dunc.

MEREDITH. We can at least drink to his success.

CANNON. Fine.

MARVIN. I'm for that.

(*There is a pause. KENT'S expression changes.*

MEREDITH, CANNON and MARVIN busy themselves pouring drinks. KENT is alone. When the drinks are poured one each is taken up by MEREDITH, CANNON and MARVIN.)

MEREDITH. To Duncan's success. (*they raise their glasses.* MEREDITH notices that KENT hasn't

joined them) Just a minute. (to KENT) What's the idea? (*there is a pause*)

CANNON. You *want* Duncan to succeed.

MEREDITH. Of course he does.

MARVIN. Then why not? (*there is a pause*)

MEREDITH. He's whipped, boys. He's whipped.

CANNON & MARVIN. Whipped!

MEREDITH. By his wife! Roland Kent, is afraid to drink to the success of a friend.

KENT. What's the use of—*lookina*—for trouble?

MEREDITH. Isn't it funny. Whenever a regular fellow is whipped by a woman she isn't a Juno or a Jeanne d'Arc! No sir. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred she's a little bit of feminine fluff, standing not more than five feet two, and she's generally a blonde with sky-blue eyes and a baby voice at that.

KENT. You don't understand.

MEREDITH. Perhaps not, but there's something I do understand and it's this. In the last five months I've pictured many things about you Roland—many—but never in my life have I pictured you as having sunk so low as I found you to-day—you, acting as valet to a Pekinese pup.

KENT. You're not married?

MEREDITH. Will is.

CANNON. Thank God.

KENT. That's different.

MEREDITH. Why?

KENT. Well—it is.

MEREDITH. Only because you let it be so. (*there is a pause*) Close as we were before your marriage, to-night was the first time I have ever been in your home and, as true as I'm standing here, so long as things are as they are now it will be the last. On the level, Roland, do you expect to be the father or the mother of your children?

CANNON. (*warningly*) Jim!

MEREDITH. Oh, I know what generally happens to

the fellow who interferes between a man and his wife but I've started this and I'm going through!

CANNON. Have it your own way.

MEREDITH. (*to KENT*) I didn't think it possible that five months could make such a change in a man. Then you didn't know what fear was, now you're afraid to call your soul your own. Five months old man, five months! Unless you stop it now and stop it hard what do you think you will be in five years? (*pause*) What?

KENT. I told you you're not married and you don't understand. Besides it has nothing to do with you anyway.

MEREDITH. Oh, yes it has.

KENT. Oh, no, it hasn't.

MEREDITH. It has a lot to do with me—a lot! (*there is a pause*) The next five minutes decide whether I keep my friend or I lose him, and—I don't want to lose him. But I want to know whether he's going to be a man or a mouse. If it's a man I stick to the end, if it's a mouse, I quit—right now. Which is it to be? (*there is a pause*) Well? (*there is a pause. To CANNON and MARVIN*) I lose. (*to KENT*) Good-bye old man. But before I go I want to tell you a few things about yourself. You have the most miserable life ahead of you that a man can possibly contemplate—the life of a hen-pecked husband. You'll be a sorrow to your friends, a joy to your enemies, and a joke to everybody. You'll be one continual laugh; not a wholesome hearty laugh but just a little snickering, sneering laugh. And why will you be this. Because you've lost your nerve, because you're a coward. Do you hear, because you're a coward.

MARVIN. Jim!

CANNON. Be careful!

(THEY start toward them. MEREDITH motions them back.)

KENT. Don't you say that again Jim?

MEREDITH. I do say it again. You're a coward. Do you hear, you're a damned coward.

(KENT strikes quickly at MEREDITH who stops the blow.)

MARVIN. For God's sake.

MEREDITH. That's all right. It's just what I wanted. Boys, I haven't lost yet.

(There is a pause. The significance of MEREDITH'S action dawns on them.)

CANNON. I see.

KENT. So do I.

MEREDITH. If you hadn't resented it I'd have walked through that door and never looked back. But you came up splendidly and you're all right. Put her there. (MEREDITH extends his hand. KENT takes it. There is a pause) Now go in and win.

KENT. How can I? I love her! That's at the bottom of it all! At first I gave in because I said to myself, "It's only a little thing" and I didn't want to hurt her. Then I gave in because she coaxed and then because she cried and then because she had hysterics and lately because I found it was the easiest thing to do. But I haven't surrendered without a struggle. I made a stand only the other day—but it was no use—she—she threatened to go away.

MEREDITH. Where?

KENT. To her mother.

MEREDITH. Have you seen her mother?

KENT. Yes.

MEREDITH. So have I. And have you heard her mother—

KENT. Yes.

MEREDITH. So have I. Her voice tells volumes.

When she says, "good morning" it sounds like—"back, women and children first."

MARVIN. Your wife's only bluffing.

CANNON. Certainly she is.

MEREDITH. And you want to keep her love?

KENT. Of course.

MEREDITH. And do you imagine you'll keep it by making her despise you?

KENT. Despise me?

MEREDITH. Exactly. How do you think a woman feels towards a husband she can make, fetch, and carry? Does she respect him—hardly? She'll tolerate him of course but she'll know he's a weakling and in her heart she'll despise him and a woman can't love a man she despises. That's true isn't it? (*pause*) Isn't it?

KENT. Yes, I suppose it is.

MARVIN. Of course it is.

MEREDITH. You know it is. Then don't you see what you're doing? You're not only losing your own respect and the respect of all who care for you but in the end you'll lose the very thing you want so much to keep—her love. It's inevitable.

CANNON. That's true.

MEREDITH. Make a stand. You've nothing to lose and everything to win, and, you will win. It's sure. What do you say? (*there is a pause*)

KENT. It's a go.

MEREDITH. Good.

CANNON. Fine.

MARVIN. Splendid!

KENT. But it won't be as easy as it sounds.

MEREDITH. I know it. So when you feel yourself beginning to weaken think of the cheer that gave you courage when you went through the line and made the touchdown that tied the score. (*to MARVIN*) You remember it?

MARVIN. Yes, indeed. (*MARVIN, CANNON and MEREDITH give the cheer*)

MEREDITH. Well?

KENT. I'll do it.

MEREDITH. Good. And as the first shot in the battle let's do as I suggested, let's drink to Duncan.

KENT. You're on.

MARVIN. Great!

CANNON. Immense.

(Each take a glass.)

MEREDITH. To Duncan and his success.

KENT, CANNON *and* MARVIN. To Duncan and his success.

(They start to drink. MRS. KENT enters.)

MRS. KENT. *(speaking as she comes on)* I thought I'd see what—what—you—— *(she sees the others and stands as if petrified. They drink as if they had not heard)*

KENT, MER. CANNON & MARVIN. Ah!

MEREDITH. Have another old man.

KENT. Don't care if I do.

MEREDITH. Good. *(Meredith fixes highball for Kent. Mrs. Kent tries to speak but can't. Kent starts to drink)*

MRS. KENT. Rollo! Rollo! Rollo!

KENT. Oh, hello darling. *(Kent finishes drink)*

MRS. KENT. May I have a word with my husband?

MEREDITH. Of course, eh; boys?

CANNON & MARVIN. Certainly.

MRS. KENT. I should like it at once—and alone.

MEREDITH. Most assuredly Mrs. Kent.

(Meredith, Marvin and Cannon go toward exit. They give the first part of the cheer as they go. They exeunt. There is a pause.)

MRS. KENT. There are several things I have to

say to you but I won't say them here; we are going home right now.

KENT. I don't think so.

MRS. KENT. You don't think so!

KENT. Exactly. I came here to spend the evening and here I am going to spend it.

MRS. KENT. What did you say?

KENT. I think you heard me dear, but for fear you didn't I'll repeat it. I came here to spend the evening and here I am going to spend it.

MRS. KENT. Then you'll spend it without me, do you hear, without me, for I am going now, this instant.

KENT. Shall I make your excuses to Mrs. Cannon?

MRS. KENT. You would let me go?

KENT. Why not if you wish to.

MRS. KENT. Alone?

KENT. The car is at the door.

MRS. KENT. Perhaps you think I won't go.

KENT. It's for you to say.

MRS. KENT. You'll remember this. (MRS. KENT exits to hall. There is a pause. The door slams)

KENT. (to himself) She went—good Lord she went! (KENT loses his nerve and shows his agitation. There is a pause. MRS. KENT peeps cautiously from the hall. KENT shows signs of weakening and MRS. KENT smiles. Then KENT recovers his nerve, says under his breath—) I'll be damned if I will. (and sits. MRS. KENT'S face shows her astonishment. KENT takes out a cigarette, lights it and begins to smoke furiously. MRS. KENT goes back into hall. There is a short pause then the slam of the door is heard and MRS. KENT re-enters)

MRS. KENT. I'll give you one more chance. You come home with me now, this minute, or I shall go to my mother.

KENT. Say that again please?

MRS. KENT. You come home with me now, this instant or I shall go back to my mother.

KENT. Very well, dear. If you prefer your mother to me, go to her. Under such circumstances it would be better for us both.

MRS. KENT. But—— (*she stops then begins to cry. Across.*) I see how it is. You don't love me any more—you don't love me any more.

KENT. You know that I do.

MRS. KENT. Oh no, you don't. You're tired of me already—after only five months—you're tired of me. It's horrible—terrible—! Everything I've done has been for your good and you know it. And I love you, love you with all my heart, and I shall never be happy again because you're tired of me. My heart is breaking—it's breaking! You're tired of me—you're tired of me——

(MRS. KENT sobs. KENT is visibly affected. He struggles for control of himself but loses it and starts toward her. He is about to speak when the cheer previously given is heard. It stops him and he gathers courage as the cheer continues. The cheer ends. There is a pause.)

KENT. I love you just as much as you love me——

MRS. KENT. (*getting more violent*) Oh, no you don't. You don't love me—at all— Do you hear you don't love me at all.

KENT. That isn't true and you know it.

MRS. KENT. (*working up the scene*) I don't know it, I don't. If you cared for me—even the least little bit—you couldn't see me suffer like this—and I am suffering—I am—horribly—— (*she begins to get hysterical*) and you stand there—you stand there—and let me—you—you—you——

KENT. Stop this do you hear, stop it.

MRS. KENT. I can't—I can't—why do you torture me—why do you— Oh—a—ah!

(*She starts to scream. KENT seizes her and puts his*

hand over her mouth. He holds her till her efforts to scream cease then he throws her from him with real physical force. They stand glaring at each other. There is a pause, during which MRS. KENT'S expression gradually shows that she realizes she is beaten.)

KENT. Sit down—(*pause*) Sit down. (MRS. KENT *sits*) And now listen. This has happened for the last time. Try it in our own home and I shall know how to handle you. Try it anywhere else and I shall do what you only threaten to do. I shall leave you.

MRS. KENT. Roland!

KENT. I shall, and without any compunction. You knew that I loved you and you took advantage of me; realizing my weakness you played on it. But that's all over—it's finished. Since it is quite clear that one of us has to be master, I am going to be the one. Fix me a drink—a highball! Go on.

(MRS. KENT *makes a highball for KENT and gives it to him. He starts to drink.*)

MRS. KENT. (*softly*) Dear, I wouldn't take that if I were you. I think you've had enough for to-night.

KENT. You're right, I have. (KENT *puts the glass down. There is a pause*)

MRS. KENT. Oh, my darling I love you so. I love you so. (*she goes to him. He takes her in his arms. There is a pause. The door bell rings*) You won't bully me too much will you?

KENT. I'll never bully you dear! Never! But we understand each other.

MRS. KENT. Yes, dear.

(MRS. KENT *holds up her lips. KENT kisses her. MAID appears. DUNCAN enters.*)

MAID. I'll tell Miss Travis, sir, and Mr. Cannon.

DUNCAN. Very well. And the minute Mr. Steele arrives let me know but don't show him in.

MAID. I understand, sir. (MAID *exits*)

DUNCAN. Good evening.

MRS. KENT. Good evening.

KENT. How are things, Dunc?

DUNCAN. Oh, pretty well.

KENT. Think you'll be able to fix matters?

DUNCAN. I think so.

KENT. Good.

(ETHEL *enters followed by MAID who exits to hall.*)

ETHEL. Duncan, I've been—— (sees MR. and MRS. KENT) I beg your pardon.

KENT. Oh, that's all right. We were just leaving, weren't we?

MRS. KENT. Yes. Shall we go Roland?

KENT. Yes, dear. (they both nod to others and go toward exit. MRS. KENT taking KENT'S arm)

MRS. KENT. I was never so happy in my life. (they *exeunt*)

ETHEL. (eagerly) Well, dear? (DUNCAN shakes his head) Oh, Duncan!

DUNCAN. Steele outgeneralled me. He went from here directly to the inventor and when I arrived he had already left with a second option in his pocket.

ETHEL. Then we've lost. We've lost, and it means so much.

DUNCAN. Now it's you who must be brave.

ETHEL. I know. But it's so hard.

DUNCAN. Don't give up dear, we're not beaten yet.

ETHEL. You have a plan?

DUNCAN. Yes.

ETHEL. What?

DUNCAN. I can't tell you.

ETHEL. Duncan——

DUNCAN. It's a desperate, despairing chance but there is a hope of it's coming off and so long as there's hope of any kind we won't surrender, will we?

ETHEL. No, we won't.

(CANNON enters.)

CANNON. Hello Duncan. The maid said you wanted to see me.

DUNCAN. Yes. (DUNCAN hands him a paper) Here are the terms I am going to make with Steele. Draw them up in the briefest form possible that is legal and binding.

CANNON. But if——

DUNCAN. There's no time to waste. He's liable to be here any minute.

CANNON. Here?

ETHEL. Mr. Steele?

DUNCAN. Yes. I arranged it.

ETHEL. But why to-night?

DUNCAN. Because to-morrow will be too late. Steele and I come to terms in the next ten minutes or we don't come to terms at all! Hurry, Will!

CANNON. I'll do it of course. (*he looks at paper*) But he'll never agree to this.

DUNCAN. He will if he'll agree to anything.

CANNON. You must think you have him cinched.

DUNCAN. Never mind about me. Get that in shape and do it quickly.

CANNON. All right old man I will. (CANNON exits)

ETHEL. What are you going to do?

DUNCAN. Bluff him.

ETHEL. Bluff him?

DUNCAN. Yes. If it's possible, and the way I have it framed up I think it is. (*the door bell rings*)

ETHEL. But Duncan.

DUNCAN. I think I can do it.

(MAID enters.)

MAID. Mr. Steele, sir.

DUNCAN. Ask him to wait a minute or two. Then show him in when I ring.

MAID. Yes, sir. (MAID exits)

ETHEL. Dear!

DUNCAN. I must see him alone.

ETHEL. Oh, I'm so anxious.

DUNCAN. Of course you are and so am I.

ETHEL. If you fail?

DUNCAN. I mustn't fail. I've got to win. I've got to win!

ETHEL. Good luck and all my love. (she reaches up and kisses him. He holds her for a second. There is a pause. ETHEL goes to exit)

DUNCAN. Don't worry dear. It's going to be all right. (exit ETHEL)

(The instant ETHEL disappears DUNCAN relaxes showing the strain he has been under during the previous scene and steadies himself with his hands on the back of a chair. There is a pause. He wipes his face with his handkerchief then he gradually gets hold of himself, pulls himself together and rings the bell. There is a pause. STEELE enters. There is a pause. Both men are cautious and wary.)

STEELE. Hello Duncan.

DUNCAN. Hello Dick. (pause) Sit down.

STEELE. Thanks. (STEELE sits. There is a pause) Well? (pause) You said you wanted to see me,

DUNCAN. Yes. (pause) About the option.

STEELE. Not a cent over sixty thousand—not one red cent.

DUNCAN. As I told you this afternoon it isn't for sale at any price.

STEELE. Then why—this?

DUNCAN. I want to avoid a fight.

STEELE. I should think you would—if there was anything to fight over—but there isn't.

DUNCAN. Oh, yes there is—a lot.

STEELE. What?

DUNCAN. The entire trade—that's all.

STEELE. Don't try it. It doesn't go. You've made a great fight and I give you credit for it.

DUNCAN. Thanks.

STEELE. But you're beaten and you know it.

DUNCAN. Ha!

STEELE. You can't possibly raise ninety-five thousand before noon to-morrow.

DUNCAN. So I've been told many times to-day.

STEELE. And you know it's true.

DUNCAN. I can have it before ten-thirty.

STEELE. Yes?

DUNCAN. Yes.

STEELE. Then there's no need of my staying.

DUNCAN. Why?

STEELE. If you can raise the money you get control and—that let's me out.

DUNCAN. Not of necessity.

STEELE. No?

DUNCAN. This thing is big enough for all of us. If you're not in it you're sure to go down in the end, but I know you Steele and I know the fight you'll put up, and what it will cost us.

STEELE. I imagine it would be expensive.

DUNCAN. For both of us. And so I propose——

STEELE. Yes?

DUNCAN. A consolidation.

STEELE. Of what?

DUNCAN. Of your interests on the one hand and Mr. Travis' and mine on the other.

STEELE. I know exactly what Mr. Travis' interests are but I haven't the remotest idea of yours.

DUNCAN. Mine is the control of the invention.

STEELE. But if you can't deliver it?

DUNCAN. I can.

STEELE. You can?

DUNCAN. Absolutely. (*there is a pause*)

STEELE. Very well. Bring it to my office at half past twelve to-morrow and I'll close the deal. (*pause*) That's satisfactory of course?

DUNCAN. No.

STEELE. Why?

DUNCAN. The deal must be closed to-night.

STEELE. And I must advance you the necessary money?

DUNCAN. Yes.

(*STEELE laughs quietly.*)

STEELE. I'd begun to think you were a bright business man. I apologize.

DUNCAN. Those are my terms.

STEELE. Which are declined with thanks. (*pause*) Anything else?

DUNCAN. I'd like to hear what you have to say.

STEELE. (*his manner becomes alert and his speech incisive*) Very well, you shall hear it and hear it quick. I like your nerve thinking you could put a proposition like that over with me. What do you think I am?

DUNCAN. A business man.

STEELE. That's exactly what I am and the reason that I'm here—I knew from the beginning that you were bluffing but I wanted to see how far you'd go. Well, I've seen and now we'll dismiss it.

DUNCAN. Just a minute.

STEELE. We'll dismiss it! And get down to cases! Your option is for a hundred thousand. I have a second option for a quarter of a million exactly one hundred and fifty thousand more than yours. If you accept my offer of sixty thousand I save ninety thousand. That's the reason I'm here—

to try to save that ninety. Will you accept sixty thousand or won't you?

DUNCAN. I won't.

STEELE. Then I'll tell you what I'll do and it is my last proposition. I'll give you seventy-five thousand. That makes it an even break. You make seventy-five and I save seventy-five. Is it a go?

DUNCAN. No.

STEELE. This is the last call. Take it or leave it.

DUNCAN. No.

STEELE. Good-night. STEELE. *goes briskly toward exit*)

DUNCAN. (*sharply*) Steele. (STEELE stops)

STEELE. Well?

DUNCAN. (*briskly and incisively*) Now I'll get down to cases. Mr. Travis arrives on the seven o'clock train in the morning from Montreal.

STEELE. What?

DUNCAN. You heard me?

STEELE. Seven in the morning.

DUNCAN. Exactly. I've been in touch with him ever since he left. Do you think I was leaving as big a thing as this to chance— Do you think I'd overlook one single way of bringing it to an issue? Mr. Travis arrives at seven to-morrow. You've heard my terms and now you can take them or leave them and "good-night." (DUNCAN *goes down stage to corner with his back toward STEELE. There is a pause*)

STEELE. I don't believe it—I don't believe it.

DUNCAN. Meet the train and see.

(*There is a pause. The door bell rings. STEELE laughs.*)

STEELE. I take my hat off to you Duncan. You're certainly a good bluffer. Unfortunately though your story has a small but fatal defect. If Mr. Travis

arrives to-morrow morning why did you go to the inventor and beg for an extension.

DUNCAN. Why —I—

STEELE. Don't deny that you didn't because he 'phoned me about it.

DUNCAN. Of course I went and then I was bluffing. I wanted to see just how far you'd go in trying to get the option and in this way confirm my opinion as to what it was really worth.

STEELE. I can't give you any credit for that—it isn't up to the standard.

DUNCAN. It's the truth.

STEELE. Oh no! You had me worried for awhile—I admit it—but it's all over. Good-night old man. (STEELE goes toward exit)

DUNCAN. But Steele—Steele——!

STEELE. No more. (STEELE stops at exit and suddenly turns) I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give you just one more chance. Seventy-five—for the last time—seventy-five.

DUNCAN. No.

STEELE. All right.

(ETHEL enters hurriedly. She has a telegram.)

ETHEL. Duncan! Father's coming. He arrives at nine to-morrow from Montreal. Isn't it wonderful?

DUNCAN. (to STEELE) Now am I bluffing?

(STEELE comes down.)

STEELE. You said seven.

DUNCAN. That's the schedule time.

ETHEL. But the train's two hours late he says so. And he wants me to meet him with the car. Oh, I'm so happy.

(There is a pause. STEELE looks searchingly at ETHEL.)

STEELE. May I see the telegram?

ETHEL. Really Mr. Steele I——

DUNCAN. Let him, please. (ETHEL gives telegram to STEELE. He reads it carefully) Well?

STEELE. (to ETHEL) Will you do something for me?

ETHEL. That depends.

STEELE. A big thing hangs on it and it concerns your father very closely. Will you do what I ask?

ETHEL. Duncan——

DUNCAN. Whatever it is do it.

(STEELE goes hurriedly to 'phone and looks for a number.)

ETHEL. Must I?

DUNCAN. Yes, dear.

ETHEL. Very well.

STEELE. (at 'phone) Is this 4870101. The Western Union? (pause) I am the butler at Mr. William Cannon's residence where Miss Ethel Travis is staying. (ETHEL starts to speak but DUNCAN restrains her) Miss Travis has just received a message from her father and she wishes to speak to you about it. (pause) Thank you. Please look it up and hold the wire. (he covers the transmitter. To ETHEL) Please.

ETHEL. But I——

DUNCAN. Do whatever he says.

(ETHEL goes to 'phone. STEELE gives her the transmitter but he takes the receiver.)

STEELE. Please repeat what I say. (ETHEL repeats the following message) This is Miss Travis. (pause) I have just received a telegram from my father about his arrival in the morning. (pause) Please tell me where it was sent from as the sending station is blurred. (pause) That's all. (pause)

Thank you. Good-bye. (STEELE hangs up 'phone and comes down stage watching ETHEL.)

ETHEL. Now I insist on knowing what this means?

DUNCAN. It's quite simple. Mr. Steele thought there was some trickery connected with your telegram.

ETHEL. Trickery?

DUNCAN. Yes.

ETHEL. Ridiculous.

DUNCAN. (to STEELE) Are you convinced now?

STEELE. Not quite. (to ETHEL) With your permission. (he goes to 'phone and gets another number) Hello is this M. H. 7800. (pause) What time is your train due in the morning from Montreal. (pause) Is it on time? (pause) Find out please. It's most important. I'll wait.

ETHEL. Never—in all my life—have I heard of such a thing.

DUNCAN. It's all right, dear. It's all right.

ETHEL. The impertinence! The impertinence!

(DUNCAN calms ETHEL.)

STEELE. (at 'phone) What? Two hours late. (pause) Thank you. That's all. Good-bye. (STEELE replaces receiver and comes down)

DUNCAN. And now?

STEELE. I can't fight that evidence.

ETHEL. Will you be so good as to explain?

STEELE. I will and frankly. I thought there was deception somewhere.

ETHEL. In my father's telegram to me?

STEELE. Yes.

ETHEL. The idea.

STEELE. I still don't understand why you want me in. It isn't altruism I know.

DUNCAN. It's just common sense, plain common sense. I've given you one reason—right at the out-

set. I'm not looking for a fight with a man as strong as you. Another reason is this: You are by all odds the brainiest and best man in the business and I'd rather have you with us than against us. And there's another reason—the most important of all.

STEELE. What?

DUNCAN. Ethel promised to marry me but her father wouldn't agree. He said I couldn't make good. I want to show him that I can and above all that I can do it without his help. That's the reason I want to put the deal through now, that's why I want it clinched to-night—before he comes. I want to show him that I can put this through myself—alone—without him.

STEELE. I see. (*pause*) It's a go. (*he offers his hand which DUNCAN takes*)

DUNCAN. Good. (*DUNCAN goes to exit*) You'll find Will Cannon working on the agreement and this time we'll both sign it.

STEELE. (*going to exit*) You don't waste much time. I'm glad to be associated with you, Duncan.

DUNCAN. Thanks.

DUNCAN. Thanks. (*STEELE exits*)

ETHEL. Isn't it all splendid. And father coming home to-morrow, too.

DUNCAN. He isn't coming home.

ETHEL. But the telegram?

DUNCAN. I sent it.

ETHEL. .But it's dated Montreal.

DUNCAN. I have a friend in Montreal.

ETHEL. Then—then—— (*the idea dawns on her and she points toward STEELE who has made his exit. DUNCAN nods*) Oh, Duncan! Wasn't that a great idea!

CURTAIN.

Don't weaken! Don't weaken!

Though rough and hard may be the going

No white feather must be showing
Don't weaken—don't weaken
You are fighting for us all to-day
 To-day.

You are fighting for your mother
For your sister and your brother
You are fighting for your pal
You are fighting for your gal
And as sure as sky's above you
You must win for those who love you
 So don't weaken! Don't weaken!
 You are fighting for us all to-day
 To-day
 You are fighting for us all to-day.

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