

THIRD BOOK
OF
SHORT PLAYS

BY

MARY
MAC MILLAN





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THIRD BOOK OF SHORT PLAYS

By MARY MacMILLAN

SHORT PLAYS

The Shadowed Star.—The Ring.—The Rose.—
Luck.—Entr' Act.—A Woman's a Woman for
A' That.—A Fan and Two Candlesticks.—A
Modern Masque.—The Futurists.—The Gate
of Wishes.

MORE SHORT PLAYS

His Second Girl. — At the Church Door. —
Honey.—The Dress Rehearsal of Hamlet.—The
Pioneers.—In Mendelesia, Part I.—In Mende-
lesia, Part II.—The Dryad.

THIRD BOOK OF SHORT PLAYS

The Weak-End.—The Storm.—In Heaven.—
When Two's Not Company.—Peter Donnelly.—
An Apocryphal Episode.—Standing Moving.

A FAN AND TWO CANDLESTICKS

(Published separately)

THE LITTLE GOLDEN FOUNTAIN
AND OTHER POEMS

THIRD BOOK
OF
SHORT PLAYS

Laurie
By
MARY MACMILLAN



CINCINNATI
STEWART KIDD COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

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To
NANCY ELY HENSHAW

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THE WEAK-END.

A FARCE IN THREE ACTS.

CHARACTERS AS THEY APPEAR.

ETHEL, *an essentially calm and detached young woman, niece to Mrs. Winthrop.*

JERRY, *a very excitable and sympathetic young man, nephew to Mrs. Winthrop.*

MRS. WINTHROP, *a slightly more than middle-aged widow with an actively romantic interest in the love affairs of youth.*

GWENDOLYN, *a guest, tall and willowy, but without will.*

JIM, *a guest, the fat-tenor type of young man, with a rich cigarette cough and an aptitude for misfortune.*

LEANDER, *a guest, also tall and willowy, but without will.*

MISS GOTTSCHALK, *rich, elderly, deaf, with little consideration for non-essentials, friend to Mrs. Winthrop.*

MISS RUSSELL, *whose interests are long in intentions, but short in vocabulary, secretary to Mrs. Winthrop.*

ANGE, *a guest, pretty, attractive, clever.*

LIZ, *a guest, plump, athletic, with a bull-terrier.*

WALTER, *a guest, a sensible young man.*

ALAN, *who is uninvited, a small young man with all the will anyone else may lack.*

CHARLOTTE, *who is also uninvited, the feminine prototype of Alan.*

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[SCENE: *It is the summer of 1919, and the action takes place Friday, Saturday, and Sunday afternoon in one of those intensely hot spells that sometimes visit the Middle-West. The scene throughout is in the hallway of a country-house near Cincinnati. On the left side of the stage the front door opens to a wide verandah which, one must imagine, looks out upon a wooded lawn with sweeping driveway winding away among great forest trees. On the stage right the wide doorway to the drawing-room is curtained off. At the back of the stage are glass doors dividing the front from the rear hall, so that what goes on behind may be seen but not heard in front. The stairway to the second floor goes up at the right. There is a grandfather's clock of several generations ago, a narrow, stiff, straight sofa of the same straight age and a victrola of our more wastrel period. The old mahogany furniture and all the appointments indicate the good taste of the lady-of-the-house. There is the inevitable telephone, but its stage use will be elevated to strictly long-distance distinction. There will be no meals served on the stage and no more smoking than the nervousness of the actors absolutely demands. There will be no butler superfluously polishing glass and no parlor maid cleansing the furniture with a feather duster. There will be no delinquent letter as co-respondent to the plot. Nor will there be letters discovered under the carpet to explain the situation, which will have to be gathered entirely from the actors themselves. When the curtain goes up Ethel is seen lounging on a rattan*

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couch, reading a book and sipping iced limeade. She is dressed in white and looks calm and cool, as she always does. Jerry comes bolting in, hot and fussy.]

ACT I.

JERRY. Oh, there you are!

ETHEL. I'm sorry my presence annoys you, but I can't very well help being sometimes where I live.

JERRY. I didn't do a thing but remark that you are here. How you do jump a chap! Gosh, but it's hot! [*Fanning himself.*]

ETHEL [*looking at him with dark disapproval*]. That is one of the most disgusting words you use.

JERRY. It's too hot to think of language. I'm too languid for langwidge. [*Dropping into a chair.*]

ETHEL [*looking at him and quite all over him*]. You seem hot.

JERRY. Seem, madam, nay, am! Of course you are never disturbed by anything under the sun nor the sun himself, but I can tell you it's hotter than love in April.

ETHEL. How poetic.

JERRY. It gets me how you can manage always to look so cool, Ethel.

ETHEL [*always with the same calm*]. I make a business of it. You can't be cool unless you try to look and feel cool.

JERRY. Can't you, though? Try it in January.

ETHEL. You are uneducated, Jerry. I am

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making practical use of my psychology and you don't understand. It's a pity you didn't go to college.

JERRY. Then you wouldn't have any poor nut to try out your intelligence on.

ETHEL. Did you just come?

JERRY. Just come? Sure. And hurried to you instantly. And this is the way you receive me. It will be jolly to take a swim later on.

ETHEL. I thought I heard your machine.

JERRY. You can't fail to hear Lizzie. You ought to try your psychology on her. I've tried everything but an ax.

ETHEL. Did you come alone?

JERRY. No, I brought Leander along with me. He's out at the pump washing up. The rest of the bunch will come in Walter's jitney.

ETHEL [*sitting up*]. But where is Mr. Lee?

JERRY. Leander? I told you he's in the lavatory laving his countenance of the dust of the Sahara typhoon Lizzie and the rest of her breed kicked up on the king's highway. Funny name, he has, isn't it? Leander Lee. But it seems there's been a Leander in the family ever since the original one swam the Hellespont. He's a devil of an F. F. V., you know.

ETHEL. I suppose that is why your Virginia aunt is so keen about him.

JERRY. My Virginia aunt? I guess your blue-blooded Boston Winthrop uncle married her. Boston is as nutty about blue-blood as Virginia.

ETHEL. That doesn't excite me particularly.

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If I had to choose of course I should prefer Boston to Virginia, but I'm rather fed up on old blood.

MRS. WINTHROP [*making her entrance swimmingly, looking at them beamingly*]. Here you two dear children are! Always together!

JERRY. Together! About the way two tom-cats are together.

ETHEL. Jerry, it's enough for you to be so covered with perspiration without using such outrageously coarse language. [*She takes her glass of limeade and goes.*]

MRS. WINTHROP. Why did Ethel go?

JERRY. Lord, does anyone know why Ethel ever comes or goes? She and her limeade come and go when they list, like the wind.

MRS. WINTHROP. She always comes where you are, dear.

JERRY. Not if she knows it first.

MRS. WINTHROP. She really is devoted to you, dear.

JERRY. About as devoted to me as a ball rolling down a bowling alley is devoted to the ten pins.

MRS. WINTHROP. She is tremendously fond of you, dear. You are a blind little boy not to see it.

JERRY. By gum, if she shows it I must be blind! I reckon she went away just for the pure pleasure of meeting me again. Oh, she's damned crazy about me!

MRS. WINTHROP. You are so profane, dear. And Ethel is so refined. But I suppose it makes you fascinating to her. It is so masculine. Did that delightful Mr. Lee come with you?

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JERRY. Yes, he's washing up. I hauled him out in Lizzie. But why do you call him delightful, Aunt? He's just six-feet-five of Virginia straight-cut.

MRS. WINTHROP. Oh, I know he must be charming. His uncle was Ellery Lee, of Roanoke. Jerry, I feel certain already that it is going to be a most successful week-end house-party. There are sure to be several affairs. Wouldn't it be wonderful if several matches were made?

JERRY. Aunt, you ought to have been a carpenter and joiner.

MRS. WINTHROP. That dear girl who came out to Olive Morton's wedding is going to stay over and visit Ethel. They were dear friends at school, you know. I persuaded Ethel to invite her.

JERRY. It must have been a touching attachment if you had to persuade Ethel to invite her.

MRS. WINTHROP. Oh, Ethel is not demonstrative in her affections.

JERRY. I've noticed that.

MRS. WINTHROP [*with a naïve expression as of "There, there," "Tut, tut"*]. Oh, Jerry boy, you can't deceive me! I know deep down in your heart how fond you are of Ethel.

JERRY. About as fond of her as a monkey is of fleas. She's a nice girl and all that, of course, being your late husband's niece, but I give you my word, Aunt, if she didn't live here in the house with you, I'd seek her society about as hard as a toothless infant would suck a lemon. I've got no martyr's blood in me.

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MRS. WINTHROP. Jerry, Jerry, I thoroughly understand lovers' quarrels. It is when two natures are complete opposites—like yours and Ethel's—that the strongest attraction occurs.

JERRY [*exploding*]. By Jove, Aunt, you'd make a match between St. Paul and Queen Elizabeth. [*An automobile horn is heard.*] That may be St. Paul now.

MRS. WINTHROP. It is somebody.

JERRY [*running to the window and looking out*]. It's just part of them—Jim and the Robertson girl.

MRS. WINTHROP. Oh, that nice girl who came on to Olive Morton's wedding. [*They both go out to meet the guests on the porch and almost immediately re-enter with them.*]

MRS. WINTHROP [*leading in the girl affectionately by the hand*]. I am so relieved that you are safely here. One never knows—with those romantic boys and their automobiles. They may suddenly decide to elope with a pretty girl.

JIM [*with his plumpness and his cigarette cough he gives the impression that he barely escaped death by whooping-cough or croup in infancy, only to go off with influenza later on*]. What ideas you do put into a man's head, Mrs. Winthrop.

JERRY. Where's the rest of the bunch?

JIM. Walter thought we'd better come in two machines—we might not want to go back all at the same time.

MRS. WINTHROP. Sly old Walter! He's thinking of pairs.

JERRY. Or peaches.

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JIM. They ought to be here by now. They started first. But if I don't happen to have an accident, I always beat Walter.

MRS. WINTHROP. Gervaise, take James out to wash his hands.

JIM. My hands are perfectly clean. I don't get all stewed up and dirty over a little drive. But I've got to take some things out of my car.

JERRY [*as he goes out with Jim*]. I'll put his duds in my room.

JIM. I haven't got much but a collar. I don't go loaded down with impedimenta.

MRS. WINTHROP. Fortunately we have plenty of room for everybody in this rambling old house of ours. This is my dear old home, Miss Robertson, the house my husband built for me and to which I have retired in my loneliness.

GWENDOLYN. Oh, Mrs. Winthrop, it must be dreadful to have lost your husband.

MRS. WINTHROP. You feel the importance of husbands, don't you, dear? [*Smiling wanly.*] We were great travelers, my husband and I, but since his death, I live quietly here. It is very lonely sometimes. [*Sighing.*] That is why I am so happy now to be surrounded by young people. I am all alone most of the time with just my secretary. And—oh, before it escapes me, I must tell you about my secretary, Miss Russell. I always have to warn people about her so they won't hurt her feelings. She was a school-girl friend of mine and her father lost all his money and I couldn't bear to have her go to the Widows' Home.

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GWENDOLYN. Is she a widow, too?

MRS. WINTHROP. Oh, dear no, but they take in people who ought to be widows, too. I think every woman ought to be a widow—no, no, I don't mean that. I mean every woman ought to be married. Miss Russell has a strange little failing, she always gets the wrong word. It's a slight detriment in a secretary—I always have to re-write my business letters and of course I write my personal letters anyway. You mustn't notice her words—I wouldn't have her feelings hurt for the world. But I am very lonely!

GWENDOLYN. Oh, Mrs. Winthrop, how sad! But doesn't Ethel live with you?

MRS. WINTHROP. Oh, Ethel is very unselfish. She gives me all the time she can. When she isn't Red-Crossing or Y. W.-ing or going to college alumnæ meetings, she is here and brightens up the old house with her girlish presence. Ethel and Jerry have been sweethearts from childhood.

GWENDOLYN. How interesting!

MRS. WINTHROP. Isn't it? [*Smiling.*] I can never quite decide whether it is lovelier to be sweethearts from childhood or later to meet your destined fate and fall in love at first sight. That is so very romantic. You have never met Mr. Lee, have you?

GWENDOLYN [*innocently*]. No.

MRS. WINTHROP. He is a dear boyhood friend of Jerry's. They were at a preparatory school together, though I regret to say Gervaise never went to college. He is wonderfully clever, but he always permitted the other boys to write his

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essays for him and do his translations—that and boyish pranks seemed to prejudice the professors against him. I have always regarded professors as a little narrow-minded. Gervaise is doing wonders now on the stock exchange. Business has brought Mr. Lee to our city and we must do our best to make him forget he is a stranger in a strange land.

GWENDOLYN. In a strange land?

MRS. WINTHROP. My dear, don't whisper it—but every other place seems a little provincial and uncouth to a Virginian. So I'm going to make him feel as much at home as possible and I count on your help.

GWENDOLYN. But I'm a stranger, too.

MRS. WINTHROP. That is exactly the reason you can do so much for him. [*To Ethel, who is re-entering.*] Here is our girl, Ethel.

ETHEL [*greeting Gwendolyn in a polite but all-in-the-day's-work manner*]. So glad to see you. Have a nice ride?

GWENDOLYN. Oh, yes, we came spinning.

ETHEL. You always do with Jimmie. Didn't lose a wheel or anything?

GWENDOLYN. Oh, no.

ETHEL. You were lucky. It's probably the only time in his life he didn't have an accident. He usually runs into another car or a tree or something. Jimmie is the unfortunate sort.

JERRY [*re-entering*]. I left Jim out there working with his Lizzie. He thinks he's discovered something the matter with her, and if there isn't now there will be by the time he gets through.

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MRS. WINTHROP. Gervaise, where do you suppose Mr. Lee is? He has been so long.

JERRY. He was washing up. But Jove, he's had time to swim the Hellespont again. I'll go see if he's drowned. [*He goes.*]

MRS. WINTHROP. I must tell Miss Gottschalk you have come. She will be so glad. [*She goes.*]

GWENDOLYN. It is awfully good of you to stay with your aunt. She seems very lonely.

ETHEL. Don't let dear Aunt work on your feelings more than you can help. She was very fond of Uncle, of course, but she's never lonesome. She gets too much pleasure out of managing people ever to be bored.

JERRY [*darting in again*]. How do you do? [*To Gwendolyn.*] I hardly had time to speak to you before. He's changing his shirt. He'll be here in a minute.

ETHEL [*continuing*]. Aunt always has a lot of people about her. She always has a lot of my friends or Jerry's or her own. And she has her secretary, Miss Russell.

JERRY. Called Russell because she rustles so. Also called more intimately Clara. It's her tongue that rustles continuously like autumn leaves. She has a little discrepancy of the tongue. In fact you have to make a paraphrase mentally of everything she says—to Clarafy it, as it were—you might call it a Clara-pharse.

ETHEL. And there's Miss Gottschalk.

JERRY. Miss Gottschalk, like the poor, is always with us. Oh, they're a triumvirate, be-

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lieve me, Aunt and Miss Gottschalk and Miss Russell. They're always together. They travel together, as every porter on the trains between here and New York knows. They take all the comforts of home with them. Miss Gottschalk is the female Rockefeller of our humble burg and I'm doing my best to win her young affections, but she's coy.

GWENDOLYN. How interesting!

ETHEL. Oh, Miss Gottschalk is a very old friend who practically lives with Aunt.

JERRY. Practically for Aunt but very impractically for Hermione—Miss Gottschalk's baptismal name is Hermione. Aunt does her out of her limousine and her bridge winnings and works her for trips to Atlantic City and God knows what.

ETHEL. No one could do Miss Gottschalk out of her bridge winnings—you know that. You give a false impression of Aunt. She is the most generous and harmless person in the world.

JERRY. She means to be, but take it from me, nobody is harmless who plans.

ETHEL. Absurd.

JERRY. I say, no one is harmless who plans. It's only Providence who can cope with such a person.

ETHEL. Miss Gottschalk doesn't seem to suffer from her.

JERRY. Hermione has gobs of Government bonds, is stone deaf, is a shark at bridge, and nobody knows what she thinks except when she is asleep, which she is at stated intervals.

MRS. WINTHROP [*re-entering*]. Miss Gottschalk

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has just wakened. She has been taking her little afternoon nap. She is delighted to know you are here.

JERRY [*as Leander enters*]. This is Leander, Aunt.

MRS. WINTHROP. Oh, Mr. Lee, you have made me so happy by your coming. This is our Ethel and this is Miss Robertson, Ethel's friend.

[*There are greetings and Miss Gottschalk enters. She is considerably beyond middle-age not to say quite elderly, a heavy person in weight, wisdom, and wealth, wears glasses, and has the look of abstracted observation common to the deaf. Mrs. Winthrop turns to her and leads her forward by the hand.*]

MRS. WINTHROP. My dear, this is Mr. Lee, Jerry's friend, and this is Miss Robertson, Ethel's bosom friend.

MISS GOTTSCHALK. How do you do, young people? [*She greets them in a friendly manner which, however, leaves no room for doubt that their existence is of no essential importance to her. She takes herself and the book she is carrying to a sofa and lies down and reads.*]

MRS. WINTHROP. We are really a homogeneous little party ourselves—aren't we? Even if the others didn't come.

GWENDOLYN. You have a perfectly lovely place, Mrs. Winthrop.

LEE. It is almost like a Virginia estate.

MRS. WINTHROP. Oh, you dear boy!

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GWENDOLYN. Or like a country place near Chicago.

JERRY. Except that we are not flat here.

ETHEL. Sometimes some of us are quite flat.

JERRY. But never flatter! Do you swim, Miss Robertson?

GWENDOLYN. I adore swimming.

JERRY. Bully! The best part of Aunt's grounds is the river. It's right out there not a stone's throw away. It's not over your head—you can wade across it—but there is one deep hole you can dive into. Aunt has been an old sport and built bath-houses for us on the bank, or, if you prefer, you can use your own room in the house and run down, it's so near. Come on, let's have a swim now and not wait for the rest of the bunch.

MRS. WINTHROP. No, I am going to take these two out to see my view. Jerry and Ethel probably have something they want to do together. [*She takes Leander and Gwendolyn by the arms and walks them out. Jerry and Ethel are left. They look at each other with anything but agreeable expressions. Jerry sticks his tongue out at Ethel.*]

ETHEL. I do wish for Aunt's sake you would try occasionally to behave yourself like a grown-up man.

JERRY. You're almost too sweet, Ethel. Go get yourself another limeade, you need more acid in your system. [*They turn away from each other and go out in different directions, Jerry to the porch, Ethel to the drawing-room. Miss Gottschalk, who has paid no attention to them, goes on reading.*]

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Jim enters, looks about and sees nobody but Miss Gottschalk.]

JIM. Well, that beats the Dutch! Where's everybody gone? [*Miss Gottschalk, not hearing him, merely glances in his direction and goes on reading.*] Did they leave you all alone, Miss Gottschalk? I call that low of them. [*Miss Gottschalk does not hear him and pays no attention to him.*] Just like them to go off gallivanting and have a jolly good time and leave us all the work to do and get along the best way we can. My, but that little car of mine is a bird. I can't quite make out what is the matter with her now. It's a good thing she didn't stall on the road out. Your chauffeur tells me he prefers a Stevens-Duryea, though he's driven all kinds of other cars for you that he likes. He likes a Cadillac, too, and a Winton-Six, and he has no objections to a Marmon or a Haines or a Hudson. He says he knows a man who prefers a Maxwell and another who won't work for people who don't own a Pierce-Arrow, and another who drives only Coles. He says a friend of his will pass any man on the road with a Chandler, though this same man will drive a Roamer or a Paige or even a Saxon. And another fellow swears by his Packard, though he will drive a Locomobile if he has to. And another chap wants only a Premier, while another one he knows likes a Lafayette, and an older driver wants an Elgin, while a kid friend of his likes a Stutz. Well, I guess it's a good deal a matter of taste, as the old lady said when she kissed her cow. When I get to be a millionaire

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I'm going to buy me a Buick. But I don't want you to misunderstand me—I'm not going back on my little Lizzie. She suits me all right. I say little, but she's really not so little. I guess at a pinch I could squeeze at least seven people into her and even then hum up the hills just the same. Which is your favorite car, Miss Gottschalk? Your man tells me you have had at least twenty-six different makes since he has been driving for you. I say, which is your favorite car?

MISS GOTTSCHALK [*apparently not having heard a word—looks up*]. James Doolittle, it is a great pity that a young man of your vast information should talk so little. [*She reads again.*]

JIM. I just thought as you had had so many cars you might give me some advice. I was just coming round to that. There's something the matter with my Lizzie. She won't go. If it was winter I'd think she was cold, but she is boiling. I thought she might be too hot, so I poured a pitcher of ice water into her. Maybe you could suggest something. [*She looks at him.*] I say [*raising his voice*], maybe you could suggest something—maybe you could give me some advice about my Lizzie.

MISS GOTTSCHALK. No, no. Not I—never. I never mix up in young men's love affairs. It's a thankless task. I leave all that to Mrs. Winthrop.

JIM [*shaking his head*]. You don't understand.

MISS GOTTSCHALK. Probably not. Girls never do understand. I should be surprised if she did

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understand. Girls are a brainless lot. Don't ever expect any sense from any of them.

JIM [*shaking his head and frowning*]. No, no, no. She isn't a girl. I say you don't understand me.

MISS GOTTSCHALK. Nonsense, James Doolittle! Don't you try to flirt with me!

JIM. Oh, my Lord!

MISS GOTTSCHALK. I've had young men try to play that little game before. They'll do anything, commit any crime to marry money rather than work. It's a mistake. Poverty is a young man's greatest blessing—keeps 'em from vice. I say, James Doolittle, poverty is your greatest blessing. I'm ashamed of you. Don't you try to flirt with me.

JIM. Oh, my soul! [*He turns and hurries out, stumbling into Miss Russell, who is coming in.*]

MISS RUSSELL. Oh, my goodness, Mr. Doolittle, you are so big! You quite knock the breath out of a frail little butterfly like me. [*He gives her a terrified glance and rushes on out.*] Have you seen Mrs. Winthrop? [*Shouting to Miss Gottschalk.*]

MISS GOTTSCHALK. I've seen nothing but young creatures. They make me nervous with their excessive vitality. They are always jumping and running and bustling about. If I had my way I should never have anyone in the house under fifty.

MISS RUSSELL. I have so many letters to write and if I don't get through it will be a perfect category! She wants me to write to New

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York for a lot of new underwear, and I have completely forgotten what style of brazier she decided on. [*She hurries on out and in a moment Jerry comes in from the back hall and Ethel from the drawing-room.*]

JERRY. Well, she's fixed it already.

ETHEL. What?

JERRY. Leander and your bosom friend.

ETHEL. You know she is not an intimate friend of mine at all. We have never corresponded and I didn't know her well at college. I haven't heard of her for a year and really don't know a thing about her. It was Aunt wanted to have her out here, not I.

JERRY. I get you. You want to deny all responsibility.

ETHEL. I do.

JERRY. Well, by Jinks, no more do I know Lee.

ETHEL. Miss Russell is more responsible for inviting her than I am. She wrote the note asking her for the week-end. And she spelled it w-e-a-k, too.

JERRY. It's longer ago since I saw Lee. We played football together at school, and a bum player he was, too. That's the very last thing I know about him. Of course he's all right, and all that, but he's Aunt's guest and not mine. I want that understood. I'm not going to be responsible for him—I'm not.

ETHEL. Well?

JERRY. Well, Aunt's going to make a match between them.

ETHEL. Oh!

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JERRY. She says they're just cut out for each other, that she never saw two people so exactly suited, so evidently intended by Providence for each other. All right, let her go ahead and work on 'em, maybe it will divert her from you and me for a while.

ETHEL. I devoutly hope so.

JERRY. There comes your chum. I don't feel that I want to face her with this dark red secret on my chest.

ETHEL. I'm sure I don't know what to talk to her about.

JERRY. Leave her for a tête-à-tête with Hermione. You'd better go get yourself another limeade—you'll need it to give you strength. [*He disappears out through the back-hall and Ethel follows him. Gwendolyn enters from the porch, looks about, watches Miss Gottschalk the immovable, then goes to the telephone and takes down the receiver.*]

GWENDOLYN [*telephoning*]. Please give me Long Distance. Is this Long Distance? Will you please give me Mr. Alan Davis, the Central Trust—what? Oh, must I wait?—Chicago.—Please hurry, then.—Yes, this is Torrence Hill, 1409.—Oh, please hurry, please do! [*She hangs up the receiver and goes away, wanders about a little, seems fidgetty, goes to the door and looks out. In a moment the telephone bell rings and she rushes to it and picks up the receiver.*] Am I Mrs. Winthrop? Of course not, what would she want with—Call her to the telephone to O. K. it? Oh, perfectly impossible!—What?—Oh, she has O. K.d

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all Long Distance calls, only you have to put down the name of the person charging it. All right, this is Miss Robertson. But you won't put down the name of the person I'm telephoning to, will you? Of course I don't want it known.—Mr. Alan Davis, Central Trust Building, Chicago. Oh, please hurry, please do! [*She hangs up the receiver again and walks to and fro nervously. In a moment the bell rings again and she rushes back to the telephone.*] Yes. Yes. Oh, YES. Is that you, darling? Alan, it's Gwen. Yes. I'm out here at Mrs. Winthrop's country place where I told you I was coming and I'm all alone in this hall and I just couldn't resist the temptation of calling you up. I'm all alone except for a stone-deaf old woman—she doesn't hear a thing I am saying. The others are all out somewhere. Some one may come in any minute, so I can't talk long.—Oh, yes, seven or eight—it's a week-end party, you know.—Tell them I'm engaged to you? Certainly not—that is my own private affair, too dear and sacred to share with strangers.—Men? Of course there are men.—What?—Oh, they're all paired off, in love with each other, according to Mrs. Winthrop.—Oh, you foolish boy! There never has been anyone else in the whole world since I have known you.—Oh, I know it is expensive calling up over the Long Distance [*smiling*—specially as I am going to marry a laddie of Scotch ancestry—and I'll have to make Mrs. Winthrop let me pay her for it. I won't do it again—I'm going to be very economical and save money—but I had to just this once. I had

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this wonderful opportunity all by myself and I wanted so to hear your dear voice.—I wanted to make sure you still love me—do you?—[*Smiling ecstatically.*] Oh, you dear rascal!—There comes somebody!—No, I won't do it again. Goodbye, darling.—What?—The other men? Why, of course, dear, I've got to be nice to them.—One of them is a stranger—I have to be polite to him.—Oh! [*Smiling as though she had heard something particularly tender.*] There, goodbye, sweetheart! [*She hangs up the receiver just as Leander comes in.*]

LEANDER. Oh, you were using the telephone.

GWENDOLYN. Did you want to?

LEE. Oh, no, not at all.

GWENDOLYN. I was just going.

LEE. Oh, don't let me drive you away. I don't need to telephone at all. It was only a little business I forgot to attend to in town.

GWENDOLYN. I was going, anyway. I—I had forgotten my—my toothbrush and had to telephone for one. Now don't let me interrupt you. I must take some things out of my suit-case to keep them from musing. [*She goes and he wanders nervously about, looks anxiously at Miss Gottschalk, who calmly reads on, paying no attention to him. Finally he goes to the telephone.*]

LEE. Give me Long Distance, please.—Give me Miss Sallie Carter—what?—Oh, my name? What difference does it make?—Well, if you must know, Leander Lee.—I want Miss Sallie Carter, the Washington, Roanoke, Virginia.—This is Torrence Hill 1409.—Please be quick about it—it's important business and my time is limited.

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[*He hangs up the receiver and wanders about nervously with his hands in his pockets, goes to the door and looks out. The bell rings in a moment and he hurries over and takes up the receiver.*]

Hello!—Hello, sweetheart! Yes, this is Lee.—I am out here at Mrs. Winthrop's country house, where I told you I was coming.—The bunch is scattered and I am all alone in this hall, with nobody but a stone-deaf old woman who doesn't hear a word I say. So I couldn't resist the temptation of calling you up.—Say, honey, I was just crazy to hear your sweet voice.—Oh, it's a week-end party.—About eight.—Are there girls? Sure, there are girls, but I never see anybody since I fell in love with you. You are the onliest lil' girl for me.—Why, darlin', I wear your locket round my neck all the time.—Tell them we are engaged? No, of course not. Maybe girls go around telling that sort of thing, but a man can't. Oh, I know it's expensive calling up over the Long Distance—I know you want me to save all my spare cash now—and I'll have to pay Mrs. Winthrop. Say, honey, I forgot for a moment your grandmother was Scotch!—Oh, well, all right—I know you are right—you always are!—I won't do it again, honey, believe me, but I just had to this one chance—I may never have another after they all get here.—I just had to hear your sweet voice tell me you are my little girl still?—And am I your great big boy? [*Smiles ecstatically.*] Oh, say!—Don't I write you every day? Darlin'! Oh, this crowd are all sweet on each other, so Mrs. Winthrop tells me.

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MISS GOTTSCHALK [*getting up*]. This couch is very uncomfortable. I shall try to find something softer. I dare say, young man, you find everything soft. The young do. I suppose you are so soft yourself. But remember, young man, as you make your bed so you will have to lie on it. [*She goes.*]

LEE. I wonder what she meant by that?—Oh, it was only this stone-deaf old woman made a remark about—nothing at all.—Oh, I couldn't, sweetheart.—You are my onliest little honey-bunch.—Why, dearie, I've got to be polite to these girls. One of them's a stranger—I've got to sort of show her a good time. There comes somebody, I must hang up. Goodbye, honey, sweetheart! [*He is nervously hanging up the receiver and in looking round, drops it, jumps to replace it, ejaculates "Oh!"*]

MISS RUSSELL [*entering fussily, as always*]. Oh, Mr. Lee!—I'm sure it is Mr. Lee, because of Mrs. Winthrop's description of you. She said you are an Apollyon and you are—a perfect Apollyon!

LEE [*smiling rather constrainedly*]. You are—I am afraid—cruelly witty.

MISS RUSSELL. Flatterer! I am Miss Russell, Mrs. Winthrop's friend. I am afraid I frightened you. I'm a dangerous person, you know! [*Smiling archly.*]

LEE [*bowing in his most beautiful manner*]. A most attractive danger.

MISS RUSSELL. Dangers have their detractions, don't they? You politic young man with

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your compliments. I'm sure you are a soldier—soldiers are so politic.

LEE. Some of them have tried to be, but senators beat them.

MISS RUSSELL. But you are a soldier, aren't you?

LEE. Well, yes, I have had that honor.

MISS RUSSELL. There, I knew it. I'm a great character reader. I knew you were a soldier by your feet. You can always tell a soldier by his feet. Never look at his head—that doesn't matter. And I'll wager you were an officer—a first lieutenant.

LEE. Hardly that—I was a captain.

MISS RUSSELL. Oh, indeed! Then I'll wager you rose from the ranks.

LEE. No, I went to an officers' reserve camp. You see, I had an uncle in Congress.

MISS RUSSELL. Oh, how importunate.

LEE. It was really quite easy—and safe. If you enlist as a private you may get into a bunch of awful roughnecks.

MISS RUSSELL. I can see that private life would always be questionable.

LEE. I shouldn't want mine to be to you.

MISS RUSSELL. Oh, you flatterer! I have always heard that millinery men and especially Southerners are awful flatterers.

LEE [*in smiling gallantry*]. Oh, Miss Russell, you wouldn't think me insincere? I assure you I mean everything I say to you.

MISS RUSSELL [*coolly*]. I believe you are a flirt.

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But I interrupted your telephoning. It must have been to your sweetheart.

LEE. Oh, no, indeed. I was—I—you see I forgot—my toothbrush. And I was just going to—

MISS RUSSELL. Let me get one for you. Thomas, the butler, is going in to town this evening. He always goes in Saturday evening for a toot, you know. He is going to do several little omissions for me and I shall be delighted to have him buy a toothbrush. He shall get you some powder or paste, too.

LEE. How sweet of you.

MISS RUSSELL. Not at all. Do you know, I would do anything for you—do you believe it?

LEE. I, oh—I should like to believe it.

MISS RUSSELL. You are a flirt.

LEE. Really not.

MISS RUSSELL. You and I will have a little secret. Just our own weenty-teenty secret. Anything you want—anything—you come to me about—a toothbrush or anything—and I will make it my care to look after all your wants.

LEE. Oh, Miss Russell, you are too good.

MISS RUSSELL. Don't call me Miss Russell—call me—Clara!

LEE. I must go now. Mrs. Winthrop wants me.

MISS RUSSELL. Remember our secret! And don't you ask her for anything, or Ethel, or anybody but me!

LEE. You shall be my fairy-godmother.

MISS RUSSELL. And you shall be my fairy prince. Don't forget our secret!

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LEE. No. [*As he starts to go she holds out her hand.*]

MISS RUSSELL. To close our bargain.

LEE. And seal it. [*He bends over her hand and kisses it, then hurries off.*]

MISS RUSSELL [*as he goes*]. Oh, you—[*when he is gone*—darling!

JIM [*entering, stands and looks at Miss Russell*]. Oh, here you are, Miss Russell, busy as usual.

MISS RUSSELL. Oh, you imperial young person. [*With a wink at him and a shrug.*] I was hunting Mrs. Winthrop. I have looked everywhere for her—in the garden and even in the barage, but she doesn't seem to be anywhere on the astute.

JIM. Maybe she's come back into the house now. It's a lovely house, Miss Russell. Must be awfully jolly to be somebody's secretary and live in such a nifty place.

MISS RUSSELL. It is charming. Mrs. Winthrop has such good taste and is so fond of art. That little Pellagra figue there (*pointing to a Tenagra figure*) I think is adorable. And that little bronze copy of the MacMonnies Debutante I think is dear.

JIM. She hasn't any more clothes on than the average debutante. I don't know much about art.

MISS RUSSELL. Of course, I'm not a dinosaur myself, but I've picked up a good deal of malformation from Mrs. Winthrop.

MISS GOTTSCHALK [*returning from the drawing-room*]. The couch in there is as uncomfortable as this one. I shall have one of my own Davenports

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brought out. [*She reclines on the couch again and closes her eyes.*]

JIM [*looks rather puzzled, but smiles gallantly*]. Well, I leave all that to the ladies.

MISS RUSSELL [*tapping him on the arm with her fan*]. Of course, you do, you great big soldier-man—what do you care about art? Your spear is war! I adore soldiers—one almost wishes we could have another war. But glory rhymes with gory. If we could have wars without bloodshed!

JIM [*looking gloomy*]. Does it? I ain't much on poetry, either.

MISS RUSSELL. Of course not, you big, brave warrior! You leave all the little embroideries of life to the ladies.

JIM. Well, I don't know. I'm used to accidents—having driven my Lizzie—and I did want to get to France. But, Miss Russell, I'll be frank with you, I never got anywhere beyond the Ohio River. What I had to do was wash plates, and after that I took care of the men that went crazy. I guess they gave me the job because I'm big. They seemed to regard me as a sort of human punching bag in uniform.

MISS RUSSELL. My dear, life always has its full-backs.

JIM. Well, I'm used to accidents—if only I—

MISS RUSSELL. It isn't all roses here. It's difficult living with [*nodding her head in the direction of Miss Gottschalk*] an octogeranium like that. Stone-deaf and SO old! [*Lowering her voice to a stage whisper.*] She'll soon be quite intrepid! [*Louder.*] Perhaps Mrs. Winthrop is in her room.

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JIM. You're not going to leave me? [*With an apprehensive glance at Miss Gottschalk.*]

MISS RUSSELL. Oh, you soldier-men are such flirts! Mr. Lee is a soldier, a captain.

JIM. Just his luck.

MISS RUSSELL. And, oh, he is so handsome and gallant, don't you think so?

JIM. I hadn't noticed it.

MISS RUSSELL. Oh, he is. But all you soldiers are flirts! [*She scuttles off, looking back and throwing him a kiss. Jim gives a furtive glance at Miss Gottschalk and steals off, tiptoeing.*]

MISS GOTTSCHALK. James Doolittle, don't you try— [*He flees.*]

MRS. WINTHROP [*as she and Jerry enter from the porch*]. My dear, it is perfectly lovely! They have fallen in love with each other at first sight.

MISS GOTTSCHALK. Who have?

MRS. WINTHROP. Mr. Lee and Miss Robertson.

MISS GOTTSCHALK. Has either of them any money?

MRS. WINTHROP. Oh, what a thing to suggest! It is love, my dear, love! You can just see they were made for each other—they look alike—they are like a young god and goddess—both tall and fair. They are alike temperamentally, too, both so modest and shy. Being so similar is why they are attracted to each other. It is an axiom of mine that like attracts like.

JERRY. Well, by Jinks!

MRS. WINTHROP. It is beautiful to look on and see the young love dawning in their eyes.

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MISS GOTTSCHALK. Can either of these young people play bridge?

JERRY [*as an automobile horn is heard*]. That must be the rest of the bunch. [*Almost immediately Ange, Walter, and then Liz, with her dog, come running in.*]

ANGE. How do you do, Mrs. Winthrop?

[*They all greet one another.*]

MRS. WINTHROP. Oh, you dear children, I am so delighted to have you.

ANGE. Especially Liz's dog.

LIZ. It was sweet of you to let me bring Fido.

MRS. WINTHROP. What a strange name for a bulldog!

JERRY. Liz calls him Fido because it is the generic name for dogs in her family, just as Maggie is for cooks in ours.

LIZ. He loves so to ride in an automobile.

JERRY. Well, you got here all right, all of you—Liz and Fido and Ange and Walter—four.

ANGE. Walter is the safe and sane 4th.

LIZ. He is that—you can always depend on old Walter.

ANGE. Have the others really arrived? We expected to pick up Jimmie's bones scattered on the road.

JERRY [*as Jim comes in*]. Let him speak for himself.

JIM. I don't see why you take it for granted I couldn't get out here without an accident.

ANGE. There were probably no trees along the road. Jimmie forgets his car is not a cat.

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WALTER. When he tried to ford the river he thought it was a fish.

JERRY. Instead of a Ford.

ANGE. Why, there is Miss Gottschalk, I didn't see her. [*She goes to speak to Miss Gottschalk, followed by Walter and Liz.*]

MRS. WINTHROP. Children, now that we are all together—all except Ethel, and she knows—and before our two young strangers join us, I want to tell you something and obtain your co-operation. [*She looks around, gathers them all together, and exclaims "Hush."*] Jerry's friend, Mr. Lee, and Ethel's friend, Miss Robertson, have met and the little god of love is already at work with his merry pranks. It is perfectly clear that these two have fallen in love with each other at first sight, and I thought I'd better tell you so that you will know what course to pursue. You will all have to be considerate and discreet and make opportunities for them to be alone together as much as possible.

JIM [*looking slyly at Ange*]. I say, though, Mrs. Winthrop, isn't it rather a shame? I brought her out here and she's a peach, and I've not even had a look in. I didn't know there was going to be a frame-up.

ANGE [*teasingly*]. You were born to disappointment, Jimmie. This is another case where you will have to practise your noble self-sacrifice.

MRS. WINTHROP. I see I can count on your co-operation.

MISS GOTTSCHALK [*sitting up*]. Oh, there you are.

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MRS. WINTHROP. All the world loves a lover.

MISS GOTTSCHALK. Except deaf old women.

MRS. WINTHROP [*smiling*]. The deaf, my dears, are as paradoxical as parrots—they surprise you with apropos remarks when they haven't heard a word.

MISS RUSSELL [*hurrying in*]. Oh, has the party all assembled? How do you do, everybody! [*Looking about*.] All here except Mr. Lee, that perfectly charming young man.

ANGE [*to Ethel, who slowly walks in, carrying a glass of limeade*]. Hello, Ethel.

ETHEL. Hello.

WALTER. Hello, Ethel. It's a warm day.

ETHEL. Hello.

[*Leander and Gwen appear from different directions, she from the back-hall, he from the porch.*]

MRS. WINTHROP [*with her finger on her lip*]. Hush! Here they come! Remember what I told you!

MISS RUSSELL [*hastening to Lee's side*]. Remember our secret! If you want anything—a handkerchief—I have lots of them—or comb or nail-file—

MRS. WINTHROP. Where have you truants been?

MISS GOTTSCHALK. Can any of you young people play bridge?

JERRY. Let's have a dance. [*He starts the victrola. A wild Hawaiian tune is heard. They all start to dance.*]

[CURTAIN TO ACT I.]

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ACT II.

[As remarked before, the scene is in the hallway of Mrs. Winthrop's country house. It is the next afternoon—Saturday, and still very hot. Jerry comes in through one door and Ethel through another, the latter carrying a tall glass of limeade.]

JERRY. There you are with that eternal limeade.

ETHEL *[calmly seating herself in a rocking-chair and setting her glass on a table at her side]*. Jerry, you smoke too much. You consume entirely too many cigarettes—they make you nervous.

JERRY. Me nervous? Well, by Jimminy! I don't have to dope myself up on limeade all the time to keep calm. I reckon it's sweets to the sweet, and limes to a lemon. Lime is an awful word—sounds like slime.

ETHEL. You are inconsequential, as usual. What have you done with your protégé?

JERRY. Leander? He's no protégé of mine.

ETHEL. You brought him here.

JERRY. I didn't. As a matter of fact Miss Russell wrote the note asking him out for the weekend—spelled it w-e-a-k, too. And, by Jinks, it's the way to spell it as far as he is concerned. However, it's not my fault if he turned out a pie.

ETHEL. He isn't. He's a very pleasant fellow.

JERRY. He's a nut. Why can't he carry on

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his own love affair? Aunt says to get him and Gwen together and give him a chance, and I get them together—I spend all my valuable time getting them together—and he acts like a kitten spitting at a saucer of milk.

ETHEL. I suppose you are not tactful.

JERRY. I'm the soul of tact. But, by gum, if I were in love with a girl, you wouldn't have to be dragging me after her with a rope all the time. [*Gives Ethel a sidelong, dark look.*] Anyhow, it's my private opinion that he's nuts on Clara.

ETHEL. Miss Russell? Jerry, you perfect idiot.

JERRY. Well, you never can tell—love's a funny dope. Guys have been known to fall in love with their grandmothers before. There's Antony and Cleopatra. Who knows but what Clara has turned into a vamp. Anyhow, he hops around after her like a young sparrow after its ma.

ETHEL. Oh, it's all her fault. She's crazy about him, that is quite evident.

JERRY. Of course, you blame the woman—that's the catty way girls have. If he isn't in love with her, he's acting like a worse idiot than I thought he was.

[*Mrs. Winthrop comes in dressed in a pretty summer gown and carrying her knitting.*]

MRS. WINTHROP. Here you two are again!

JERRY. Aunt, I should think all that wool stuff would be awfully hot in this weather.

MRS. WINTHROP. It is, dear, but duty takes no account of weather. Just as you stood by the guns so do we stand by our knitting.

JERRY. I thought there'd been enough sweat-

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ers. I got nineteen. Anyway, the war is over, all the officers and even some of the men are home.

MRS. WINTHROP. This is Red Cross work, dear, which never ceases. We are going to devote ourselves to Persia.

JERRY. I should think it was hot enough there.

MRS. WINTHROP. Wool is an absorbent. All the aviators use it. It is necessary in all climes to absorb night dampness.

JERRY. I'm beat.

MRS. WINTHROP. I thought everyone had gone swimming? But you two are always having a tête-à-tête. [*She smiles at them, and they look cross.*] Of course the others understand.

ETHEL. I hope they do understand.

JERRY. You bet I hope so.

MRS. WINTHROP. It is so nice to have an even number of men and girls—they get to know each other so well.

JERRY. And sprout so many love affairs.

ETHEL. Love affairs are like pots—they never boil if they're watched.

JERRY. Ethel, you're a regular Luke McLuke for making bon mots.

MISS RUSSELL [*hurrying in*]. Oh, there you are. I have been hunting for you everywhere—I am obliged to tell you of the escalades of the dog.

ETHEL. Aunt, dear, I really think you will have to indicate gently in your beautiful, tactful way to Liz Smith that her dog isn't altogether welcome.

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MRS. WINTHROP. Why, I know he is a perfect nuisance, but how am I going to be able to tell Elizabeth? She dotes on him so.

MISS RUSSELL. If he stays, all the servants will leave.

MRS. WINTHROP. Has he done much harm?

MISS RUSSELL [*to Ethel*]. You tell her.

ETHEL. Yesterday he ate up the laundress' best hat and chased the cows just before milking time and that, they say, is so bad for the cows.

MISS RUSSELL. John says it drives the milk into the cows' horns.

ETHEL. John was infuriated and threw rocks at Fido till he sprained his shoulder, which didn't improve his temper.

MRS. WINTHROP. John ought to keep the cows penned up more closely. Elizabeth says the dog is so young and never really means any harm.

JERRY. But a dog is judged by what he does, not what he means—by effect, not cause.

ETHEL. This morning he broke away from Liz and dug up Giovanni's pet rosebed in the garden. Giovanni is usually very deferential with me, but when he told me about it he forgot himself completely—I have never in my life heard such oaths.

JERRY. Trust a dago to swear—it takes the Holy Roman Empire to cuss.

ETHEL. It seems that when Giovanni remonstrated with Fido, the dog thought he was playing and jumped on him, throwing him down and—you know it had been raining in the night and the flower-bed was muddy—Fido rolled Giovanni in the mud.

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MRS. WINTHROP. But it was all in play.

ETHEL. But Giovanni didn't want to play—he is a serious-minded old man.

MRS. WINTHROP. Perhaps you'd better tell Elizabeth to watch her dog more closely.

ETHEL. Well, Aunt, dear, you are the one who ought to tell her, not I.

MRS. WINTHROP [*turning to Miss Russell*]. Then you do it for me, Clara.

MISS RUSSELL. Oh, Helen, really, I couldn't. I could write a consulting note to a stranger if necessary, but to speak to Liz would be absolutely imperative in me, and she knows I have a perfect perversion to dogs.

ETHEL. But we can't lose all the servants.

MRS. WINTHROP [*to Ethel*]. Well, then, send Liz to me.

ETHEL. I will if I can find her, but I have to attend to the salad for dinner.

JERRY. You do that very well, Ethel. You ought to confine yourself to salads.

ETHEL. They are better dressed and not so green as some young men.

MRS. WINTHROP. Perhaps you could find Liz. Remember, dear [*to Ethel as she goes*], to do all you can for Gwendolyn and Leander. They are madly in love, but they are both so absurdly shy. I don't believe he has actually proposed to her yet. And he an officer, too. But they say a soldier who will intrepidly face a gun will tremble before a woman. The dears! They both talk to me and tell me how they feel, but when they are

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together they are so timid. Jerry, you really ought to do more for Leander.

JERRY. Oh, help a camel to swim in sand! Why doesn't he pick up his feet? Anyhow, he's nuts on Clara.

MRS. WINTHROP. Gervaise, don't make me think you are a born fool.

JERRY. It's not me that's a fool. I tell you it's true—he is. He's just the sort of degenerate that would fall in love with his maiden aunt.

MRS. WINTHROP. Gervaise! Remember to whom you are talking. I never allow that word to be used in my presence.

JERRY. Well, I can't help the facts. You watch 'em. He's nuts on her. Of course Ethel says it's all Clara's fault, but—

MRS. WINTHROP. It is absurd, ridiculous. It can't be.

JERRY. But it is.

MRS. WINTHROP. She ought to be ashamed of herself. She is old enough to be his mother.

JERRY. But she's sentimental.

MRS. WINTHROP. She never had a love affair in her life.

JERRY. All the more why she's having it good and hard now. Her passion has been bottled up.

MRS. WINTHROP. I will attend to Miss Russell. I will give her letters to write that will take every scrap of her time for the rest of the summer. I wish she would learn to use the typewriter, but she never gets beyond one finger and she wears out the paper changing mistakes. Oh, go find Lee and bring him to me.

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JERRY. There comes the love-sick ostrich now. Like a horse that hasn't made up its mind to race.

MRS. WINTHROP. Oh, go find Gwendolyn and bring her here.

[*Jerry heaves a sigh and goes, passing Leander entering.*]

MRS. WINTHROP [*beaming on Lee*]. Jerry and I were just talking about what fun you would have swimming.

LEE. But I don't swim.

MRS. WINTHROP. You don't? What a pity! Gwendolyn swims beautifully.

LEE [*without enthusiasm*]. Does she?

MRS. WINTHROP. It is the only thing you haven't in common. She will have to teach you.

LEE. She'd have a very stupid pupil. Nobody could ever teach me to swim—I don't seem built for it. I shouldn't dream of bothering her. And going in the water always gives me a cold.

MRS. WINTHROP. It wouldn't on such a warm day—and with such a teacher. Oh, my dear boy [*smiling at him*], I am perfectly well aware how things are with you.

LEE. With me?

MRS. WINTHROP. With you and Gwendolyn. She is madly in love with you.

LEE. Oh, Mrs. Winthrop, you are very much mistaken.

MRS. WINTHROP. No, no, I am not mistaken in the least—I know.

LEE. It is just your goodness of heart that makes you think so—your kindness. You have talked to me so much about her liking me, but

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she doesn't, really. She doesn't show a sign of it. She doesn't give a hang about me. She couldn't care for a fellow like me.

MRS. WINTHROP. You are just her type. Romantic girls like Gwen always love soldiers.

LEE. I never even got to France.

MRS. WINTHROP. That wasn't your fault, I'm sure.

LEE. Sick with the flu all the time.

MRS. WINTHROP. But you are brave, if delicate.

LEE [*leaning back dejectedly on a chair as if he wants to lie down*]. Much of a soldier I was!

MRS. WINTHROP. Oh, a wonderful looking soldier and a beautiful lover.

LEE. But she doesn't think so.

MRS. WINTHROP. That is just your natural pessimism. You are the hopeless type of lover—and I will say that is the kind I adore and so does Gwen.

LEE. But I assure you, dear lady, I am not at all the sort of man she would look at.

MRS. WINTHROP. It is only your modesty that makes you feel that way, your modesty and faint heart. You know faint heart never won fair lady! But you have already won her—you have only to say the word.

LEE [*aghast*]. What?

MRS. WINTHROP. My dear boy, she is perfectly crazy about you. Why, she has told me so.

LEE. She has told you that?

MRS. WINTHROP. Oh, in a thousand ways. Oh, it is perfectly obvious to everybody but you.

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LEE. You mean the—the others have seen it?

MRS. WINTHROP. Why, they are all talking about it.

LEE. My God!

MRS. WINTHROP. You silly boy, you are wonderfully lucky. Most men would have to work hard to make a conquest, but here a sweet, lovely girl has fallen head over ears in love with you and you have nothing to do but take her.

LEE. Haven't I? Oh!

MRS. WINTHROP. Only one thing can happen when a fascinating girl falls in love with a man—his fate is sealed. If he is a chivalrous Virginia gentleman like you, his honor leaves him no choice.

LEE [*wildly*]. No choice, Mrs. Winthrop!

MRS. WINTHROP [*with smiling archness*]. Oh, these things seem so beautifully tragic to youth—to the unbelieving, despondent lover. My dear, you are a poem, a perfect poem.

LEE. I don't want to be a poem.

MRS. WINTHROP. Perhaps not now—you can't appreciate the beauty of it—but when it is all happily consummated you will look back at this time with a realization of the charm of it and the utmost pleasure in it—when you are happily married to her.

LEE. Married to her!

MRS. WINTHROP. Yes, my dear boy, that is how it is going to end. Gwen is coming in here in a moment. You will like to walk with her down to the river before the others. The river is so romantic.

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LEE [*nervously starting to go*]. Yes, of course, I'd love to, but I promised Jim I'd help him change a tire on his machine—I'm afraid he's waiting for me now. I'm so sorry, but I've got to go.

MRS. WINTHROP. You stay right here. I'll find Jimmie, myself, and tell him you were detained. Stay here till I return, I want to plan something with you. [*She goes. Lee stands in nervous perturbation, looking non-plussed and worried, when Miss Russell flutters in. When she sees him, she stops and smiles blissfully.*]

MISS RUSSELL. You here and alone! What a co-accident!

LEE [*gloomily*]. The world seems to be full of co-accidents and coincidents and co-partners and may be full of co-respondents.

MISS RUSSELL. My dear, you seem impressed.

LEE [*forcing a smile*]. Oh, not at all. I'm gay. But I suppose everyone gets a little depressed occasionally.

MISS RUSSELL. But a soldier shouldn't—they are so self-constrained and capacious.

LEE. I don't believe I have just the qualifications of a soldier. Sometimes a very harmless fellow is born into a family of politicians and soldiers. There was Hamlet, for instance.

MISS RUSSELL. Oh, my prince—I said you were my prince, you know—I believe you are like Hamlet, Prince of Denmark. He is my favorite hero in all fiction. He is so romanesque. I can understand and sympathise with you for melancholy is my *bête nuance*, too. But I can't bear

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to have you unhappy. I am very salacious about you. I can't bear to have you moribund or hypodermic.

LEE [*looking at her quizzically and with a slight frown*]. I should hate to think of being that myself. I wonder what you do mean?

MISS RUSSELL. Oh, I wonder if I was using the wrong word again. I make so many slips of the tongue—it is quite uninstitutional, I assure you, and I always know what I mean.

LEE. That's more than most people do.

MISS RUSSELL. Oh, thank you, I knew you would understand. There is such perfect simplicity between us, I feel sure. This little weakness of mine—but hasn't everybody some little weakness?

LEE. Everybody has, and it's a very small one if it is only in words.

MISS RUSSELL. Oh, you are so sweet to me! Perhaps it is only pity, but "pity is akin to love," you know. Well, this little weakness is inherited, so you see it isn't a wilful fault. My father had it—it amounted to aphorism—no, I mean euphuism with him. He had euphuism in words.

LEE. Oh, my dear lady, many people have that. But, will you pardon me? I have an engagement—

MISS RUSSELL. Surely I mustn't be selfish with you when you are in so much command—so populace. But you don't hate me, do you?

LEE. Oh, dear lady, on the contrary—

MISS RUSSELL. You like me a little?

LEE. OH!

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MISS RUSSELL. Shall I tell you what I feel? I feel that we are twin souls. [*She holds out her hand, he bends over and kisses it.*] Call me Clara!

LEE. Oh, really—

MISS RUSSELL. Say it, please do!

LEE. Ah!

MISS RUSSELL. Just whisper it!

LEE. Clara. [*He ejaculates it and tears himself away, fleeing upstairs just as Jerry comes in from behind with Gwendolyn.*]

JERRY. Where's Lee?

MISS RUSSELL. He's just gone to keep an appointment. He is so populace.

JERRY. Well, that damned—[*with a sidelong glance at Gwendolyn*—giraffe! I beg your pardon. But he has such a beautiful coat, you know, just like a giraffe—and lovely eyes.

[*Miss Russell glances at him angrily and goes upstairs. Mrs. Winthrop comes in from the porch.*]

JERRY. Do you know where Lee is?

MRS. WINTHROP. I think he had to keep an appointment with Jimmie to repair a tire.

JERRY. Well, that damned galoot!

MRS. WINTHROP. Gervaise!

JERRY. Of course I mean Jim. I reckon it takes a pair to repair a tire. It makes me tired. All my efforts in vain.

MRS. WINTHROP. You might be able to help them and get through sooner.

JERRY. Well, I might for a few minutes, but I tell you pretty soon I'm going swimming whether anyone else goes or not.

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MRS. WINTHROP. Jerry, bring Leander here to me in about five minutes, I want to ask him to write to his mother for that recipe for sweet pickles he was talking about.

JERRY. All right, I'll fix him—I'll put a halter round his neck. [*He goes.*]

MRS. WINTHROP. Dear, Lee had faithfully promised poor unfortunate Jimmie to help him, but when he heard you were coming in here he could hardly tear himself away. I have never in my life seen a young man so desperately in love with a girl as he is with you.

GWENDOLYN. Oh, Mrs. Winthrop!

MRS. WINTHROP. I have been telling you all along how it is with him. It was love at first sight, and he is so unhappy because he thinks you don't care.

GWENDOLYN. But, Mrs. Winthrop, I—

MRS. WINTHROP. Of course I know you do, but how can I persuade him of that? He ought to press his suit himself, but he is so desperately despondent and shy. I have never in my life seen a young man so shy and modest.

GWENDOLYN. But, Mrs. Winthrop—he—

MRS. WINTHROP. Oh, he is mad about you, positively mad! He has told me all about it.

GWENDOLYN [*shocked*]. He hasn't told you that?

MRS. WINTHROP. Oh, my dear, in a thousand ways. It is perfectly apparent to everybody.

GWENDOLYN. You mean the others have noticed it?

MRS. WINTHROP. Why, certainly, how could

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they help it? They are all talking about it. Everybody is so sorry for him. It is a serious thing. I don't know what will happen if you refuse him.

GWENDOLYN. Oh, Mrs. Winthrop, that isn't possible.

MRS. WINTHROP. Dear girl, it is not only possible, but it has been done. Girls don't know their responsibility. I know a case of suicide—

GWENDOLYN. Oh, Mrs. Winthrop, how horrible!

MRS. WINTHROP. I have known personally in my own experience three suicides from thwarted love. He is a soldier, and soldiers are so reckless. And southern men are notoriously hot-headed. He is a Virginian, you know. [*Starting to go.*] When he comes back, encourage him. Remember you are playing with fire. [*She goes. Gwendolyn stands looking distraught, as though she saw a ghost, then turns and follows Mrs. Winthrop. In a moment Ethel and Liz appear.*]

LIZ. Do you know what she wanted me for?

ETHEL. I have a strong suspicion.

LIZ. Oh, go on and tell. You make me feel as if I had been caught throwing paper wads at the teacher and been sent for to appear before the principal. You are so terrifically superior and secretive, Ethel.

ETHEL. Not in the least. I only endeavor to attend to my own business.

LIZ [*giving her an amused look*]. Ethel, apropos of nothing at all, I do wish that aunt of yours—you know I love her dearly—but I do wish she

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wouldn't always be throwing me at Jimmie Doolittle's head. Jimmie is a dear great big baby, and of course I love him, but it must be embarrassing for him to have me hurtling through the air at his head continuously. And then there are other men. There's that nice Lee fellow—he's pleasant, even if he is in love with Gwen. And there's Walter.

ETHEL. The world is wide, my child. There are even men in it who are not under this roof.

LIZ. There comes your aunt now.

ETHEL. Give her a gentle hint, she has one for you—exchange of courtesies. I must go, I've been neglecting the salad. [*She disappears out through the back-hall as Mrs. Winthrop enters from the porch, followed by the troubled Gwendolyn.*]

MRS. WINTHROP. My dear [*to Gwendolyn*], you are with me too much. You would have much more enjoyment with a certain young man.

GWENDOLYN. I don't know what is the matter with me, Mrs. Winthrop, but I can't bear to have you out of my sight.

MRS. WINTHROP. Oh, Elizabeth, you are just the one I wanted to talk with about something.

LIZ. I wanted to talk to you about something, too, Mrs. Winthrop—I hope it isn't the same thing—but now it hardly seems worth while. You make me feel inadequate. Somehow people always make me feel inadequate.

MRS. WINTHROP. You inadequate, Elizabeth! What a word to use! Why, I know you were an honor student at college, taking all sorts of prizes

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and then you are so useful and practical in real life—just like Jimmie. You two are so alike! [*Smiling and shaking her head.*] He can take an automobile completely apart.

LIZ. Oh, dear me, I'm sure we're not. I shouldn't dream of disturbing an automobile's inward emotions. Those parts Mr. Ford has joined together let no man put asunder.

MRS. WINTHROP. Elizabeth, you are so clever! I only want you to have the best time in the world and not worry in the least about your dog. [*A scrambling and much noise is heard and Ethel and Jerry enter, the latter dressed in his bathing-suit and dragging or rather being dragged by a strong, pitching young bull-terrier on the end of a piece of clothes-line.*]

JERRY. Here is the octopus. I saved his life—much thanks he gave me. [*Walter and Leander enter.*]

ETHEL. You oughtn't to have cut the clothes-line. Maggie will be more than vexed.

JERRY. Clothes-line! I'd have cut the cord from a holy father's cassock or anything else to chain this charging dinosaur. The servants were going to kill him.

LIZ. Oh, my Fido!

MRS. WINTHROP. What is the matter?

JERRY. He was cutting up high jinks in the kitchen and stole the roast of beef for tomorrow's dinner.

ETHEL. Aunt, cook is in an awful rage. He has added insult to injury—you know yesterday

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he chewed up her best hat with poppies on it. She is packing her trunk.

[*Ange and Jimmie enter.*]

MRS. WINTHROP. Oh, my dear, with all these people in the house!

JERRY. Perhaps you can pacify her if you have the dog shot.

LIZ. Oh, mercy, no! You mustn't shoot Fido! He is as innocent as a baby.

JERRY. A baby with small-pox may be innocent.

LIZ. I will take him home if anybody will drive us.

JERRY. No one can spare the time—we are all going in swimming.

LIZ. One of the servants, then.

JERRY. You couldn't persuade any of them to go near him. They wouldn't feel safe up a sycamore tree with this ichthyosaurus at the bottom.

LEE [*stepping forward*]. Won't you permit me to take charge of him? I should love to be of some use to you all, and as I don't swim and am not going in, I could watch him.

LIZ. Oh, will you?

LEE [*smiling and taking the rope from Jerry*]. I surely will.

MRS. WINTHROP. Oh, you dear boy, it is the true Virginia gentleman that always does the chivalrous thing.

JERRY. Now perhaps we can have our swim at last. Come on, people.

MRS. WINTHROP. Yes, yes, run along, children, all of you and have a good time.

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ETHEL [*to Mrs. Winthrop*]. Perhaps you can persuade cook to stay. You'd better try. [*They all start to go.*]

LIZ [*to Lee as they go*]. If you can just hold him till I get a chance to take him home!

MRS. WINTHROP. Maybe Jimmie can arrange to drive you in this evening by moonlight in his Ford.

[*They all go and Miss Gottschalk enters with a book in her hand.*]

MISS GOTTSCHALK. Where are they all going now?

MRS. WINTHROP [*shrieking to her*]. They are going in bathing.

MISS GOTTSCHALK. Are they all going in?

MRS. WINTHROP. All except Leander Lee—he doesn't swim.

MISS GOTTSCHALK. He impresses me as being a young man who couldn't swim.

MRS. WINTHROP. He says going into the water always gives him a cold.

MISS GOTTSCHALK. He impresses me as being a young man who would take very good care of his health. It is dull that they all want to go in swimming. I should think some of them would want to play a quiet game of bridge on so hot an afternoon. There is Lee and you and I—Ethel plays very well, she would make a fourth hand.

MRS. WINTHROP. Leander has to take care of Liz Smith's dog—it has been doing all sorts of damage.

MISS GOTTSCHALK. He doesn't impress me as

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a young man who would have much control over a dog.

MRS. WINTHROP. It has destroyed Maggie's hat, [*always shouting at her*] dug up a rose-bed, chased the cows, mauled Giovanni, stolen a roast of beef, and I don't know what all. Leander is going to hold it till it can be taken home.

MISS GOTTSCHALK. He doesn't impress me as being the sort of young man who could hold on to anything.

MRS. WINTHROP. I must go interview Maggie—she is packing her trunk to leave. Do you think you could manage to hear the telephone? There is no one else about.

MISS GOTTSCHALK. I sometimes don't hear the bell if it is going to be bothersome. But you know very well I hear over the telephone better than the other way. The wire seems to eliminate the usual mushiness of the human voice.

MISS RUSSELL [*rushing in*]. Oh, Helen, there is a perfect category! Giovanni is starting for town—he is going into a factotum. He says better are men with machines than a rose-garden with lions. Maggie says she will not work in a hotel for hyenas. All the servants are in a perfect stage and are going to leave.

MRS. WINTHROP. Oh, Clara, I do wish you would try to think of your words a little. You will drive me crazy with your absurd vocabulary.

MISS RUSSELL. Oh, you think too much of vocabulary. It is really a very small matter. Mr. Lee says so. He thinks little mistakes are quite uninopportune.

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MRS. WINTHROP. He does, does he?

MISS RUSSELL. To him my little misrepresentations are altogether charming.

MRS. WINTHROP. Clara, you surprise me. What in the world can you have to talk about with that young man?

MISS RUSSELL. We have a great deal to talk about. Don't think because you are a widow that other women are not interested in men.

MRS. WINTHROP. At your age!

MISS RUSSELL. I am younger than you, you remember—two classes below you. Age has nothing to do with propinquity, and that is it, you see—I am his propinquity.

MRS. WINTHROP. This is shocking!

MISS RUSSELL. Not at all. Detractions, though inexcusable, are perfectly natural. He and I are wholly congenital.

MRS. WINTHROP. Oh, will you drive me absolutely mad with your crazy words, when I am already nearly frantic? Go and stop Giovanni.

MISS RUSSELL [*bursting into tears*]. Do you attack me? Merciful Heavens! This is the last stroke! I shall leave you! I shall become a nun! Better are clustered walls than the home of a friend who insinuates one!

MISS GOTTSCHALK [*looking at the weeping Miss Russell*]. Don't be a goose.

MRS. WINTHROP. I will talk to you later. Now go at once and persuade Giovanni to stay.

MISS RUSSELL. I wonder [*with dignity*] that you think me culpable of assuaging anything. [*She goes weeping.*]

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MRS. WINTHROP. And don't let your mind dwell on Lee. He is engaged to be married to Gwendolyn and at the present minute he has gone in swimming with her.

MISS RUSSELL. Mercy, he can't swim! He told me so. Oh, he is in danger! Oh, you have probably sent him to his death!

MRS. WINTHROP. Nonsense. He is in no more danger of his death than if he were in a bathtub. And we cannot think of such foolish little things when all the domestic arrangements are so topsyturvy. I cannot lose all my servants. Go and talk to Giovanni. [*Miss Russell makes her exit.*] If Maggie goes I don't know what in the world I shall do. She has been with me twenty years. It will break up the party. It will break up everything.

MISS GOTTSCHALK [*who has heard only in part*]. Did you say you are going to break up? That will suit me. Then we can go to Atlantic City. Atlantic City will be quieter. [*Mrs. Winthrop starts to go. Miss Gottschalk settles herself on the couch and reads her novel. In a few moments the telephone bell rings. She does not hear it for some time. At last she looks up and around with a listening expression on her face, turns her head on one side, finally gets up and goes to the telephone.*]

MISS GOTTSCHALK. Did the bell ring? [*She speaks slowly and in a loud monotonous voice.*] I mean the telephone bell—did it ring?—You will have to speak clearly and distinctly. [*She speaks as one accustomed to being obeyed.*] I say, speak clearly and distinctly. You sound as

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though you were chewing gum—if you are, take it out.—Don't mouth your words, don't talk as though your mouth were full of hot apple-sauce.—This is Mrs. Winthrop's house.—Miss Gwendolyn Robertson?—Yes, she is visiting here. I can't get her for you—she is in the water.—I am not going after her or anybody.—You will have to put up with me. [*Listens in a bored manner for a few moments.*]—How do I know you are her fiancé? She has one here. I suppose a girl likes to have more than one beau, though I should think one would be enough of a bore. I should think she would be wise enough to pick one that could play bridge—it's surer than love to count on for after years.—I can't hear what you say.—Oh, I suppose you are the young man she was talking silly nonsense to a while ago. Well, I am the stone-deaf old woman she referred to. She strikes me as being the sort of young woman who would get herself engaged to whatever happened to be about. She's probably engaged to a dozen. She is engaged to this one.—My young man, there are high jinks going on here.—You are in Chicago, four hundred miles away?—Well, I can't help that, I am not responsible for the geography of the country.—I can't hear you.—No, I am not going after anybody else.—I am tired of making an effort to hear you—you still talk as if you were eating something.—I cannot bother with you any longer. I am nothing but a stone-deaf old woman. Goodbye. [*She hangs up the receiver, goes back to the couch, takes up her book and reads again. In a moment the bell rings. She*

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listens as before and finally gets up and picks up the receiver.] Well, well, well, did this telephone bell ring again?—Yes, I told you before it is Mrs. Winthrop's house.—Oh, it is a girl this time.—No, I can't call Mr. Leander Lee.—Why can't I call him? Because I don't want to.—Yes, he is here somewhere. He is busy holding a dog. He is also busy making love to a girl.—Oh, I suppose you are the young woman he was talking such arrant nonsense to a while ago. Well, I am the stone-deaf old woman he remarked upon.—If you are his fiancée you'd better look to your laurels. He is engaged to this one out here. He strikes me as being the sort of young man who might get into almost any engagement. He probably has a dozen sweethearts.—At least he is engaged to this one here.—I can't help it if you are in Virginia, four hundred miles away, the world is large.—I am not going to talk to you any longer. You enunciate as if your nose was packed with antiphlogistine. Perhaps it is tears, they produce the same effect.—These love affairs are a great nuisance.—Remember I am only a stone-deaf old woman. [*She calmly hangs up the receiver and goes back to her couch and reads. In a few minutes Ange and Jimmie come tearing in, breathless and excited, from the porch, and Mrs. Winthrop appears at the top of the stairs.*]

ANGE [*fairly sobbing*]. Oh, Mrs. Winthrop, we were nearly frightened to death.

JIMMIE [*his eyes fairly starting out of his head*]. We have come back to break the news to you. There has been a horrible accident.

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MRS. WINTHROP. Oh! oh! What is it? Tell me! Not Jerry?

JIMMIE. No, it wasn't Jerry.

MRS. WINTHROP. Oh, oh, who?

JIMMIE. It was Lee. He fell into the water—into the big hole.

MRS. WINTHROP. Oh, mercy—he can't swim! Oh, heavens, he is drowned! [*Wringing her hands.*]

JIMMIE. Drowned, yes, drowned! And badly hurt.

MISS RUSSELL [*shrieking*]. Oh!

ANGE. No, no, he isn't drowned—not quite. Jimmie, you perfect idiot, you have frightened her to death.

JIM. Well, you told me to break it to her.

ANGE. You have—like a battering-ram.

MRS. WINTHROP [*wringing her hands*]. Oh, merciful heavens, one accident after another.

JIM [*to Ange*]. You do nothing but find fault with me when you know I think everything you do is right.

ANGE. I'm not finding fault with you, but you oughtn't to have said he was drowned.

JIM. I didn't say exactly that.

MRS. WINTHROP. Oh, tell me, tell me! Don't stand there and cavil at each other. Can't you see I'm in an agony of suspense?

JIM. Well, you know, Jerry had been crazy about a swimming party and had been trying to get one up all day and never seemed to be able to get the bunch together and—

ANGE. Oh, Jimmie, let me tell it!

JIM. Nobody ever lets me tell anything.

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ANGE. We were all going in swimming, some of us were in. Leander was standing on the bank with Fido when that awful dog jumped against him—

JIM. The dog was only playing, you understand, he isn't really savage—he didn't mean to attack him—but—

ANGE. The dog jumped against him and pushed him over—he lost his balance, fell and rolled over and over right in—into the deep hole.

MISS RUSSELL [*shrieking again*]. I knew it, I knew he would be drowned—I had a permutation of it!

MRS. WINTHROP. He doesn't swim—oh, oh!

JIM. And had all his clothes on, even his hat, though of course his hat fell off.

ANGE [*frowning at Jim*]. He went down, disappeared—came up—and went down again.

MISS RUSSELL. Oh! [*Shrieks again.*]

JIM. If they go down the third time they never come up.

ANGE. Gwen jumped in after him—she grabbed him by his coat and the coat came off, he made such a fuss and floundered so—then she tried to catch—

JIM. Then she tried to catch him by the hair, but his hair was too short—

ANGE. At last she got him by the collar of his shirt—

JIM. He was scrambling and floundering and making so much fuss and wild dives to get hold of her, so she had a hard time to keep clear of him.

ANGE. He quite lost his head, of course, but she

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was very cool and swam to shore with him and pulled him out.

MISS RUSSELL. If only I had taken charge of the dog.

JIM. Then the dog would have charged you.

MISS RUSSELL. We might both have been upset and fallen into the water and drowned together.

MRS. WINTHROP. She saved him, then, she saved him! How romantic!

JIM. Well, of course, if she hadn't, Jerry or Walter would have.

MRS. WINTHROP. But it was she!

MISS RUSSELL. It is just her luck. She is fortuitous. I never was.

MRS. WINTHROP. And he is saved!

JIM. If he doesn't have concussion of the brain from hitting his head against that stone, or doesn't develop pneumonia—

MISS RUSSELL. Oh, did he hit his head?

JIM. Yes, and cut it awfully.

ANGE. Here they come.

[*Gwendolyn, Jerry, Liz, Walter, and Leander enter. Liz and Walter are dressed in their ordinary clothes, Walter is as immaculate as ever, Jerry is wet with bath-towels wrapped around his bathing suit, Gwendolyn and Leander pale and dripping, with long, black rain-coats on, collars turned up.*]

MRS. WINTHROP [*hurrying to Lee*]. Oh, my dear, what an escape! How thrilling and dramatic and romantic! It seems to have been directed wholly by Providence!

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[*Miss Russell also hurries to Leander and hovers about him sighing and moaning and purring.*]

JERRY. Well, by gum, I reckon Providence chased the cows, too, and dug up the flower-bed, and chewed up the best summer hat, and ate the roast! Sportive Providence!

MRS. WINTHROP. Gervaise! Don't be blasphemous.

MISS RUSSELL. Oh, if I had only had an intimidation of all this, I might have taken care of that dog myself and the entire accident would have been perverted. Oh, you have cut your head on a wicked stone or something, too. [*There is a slight abrasion on Lee's forehead and already it is beginning to swell.*]

MRS. WINTHROP. You must lie right here [*to Lee*] and rest and have Gwendolyn take care of you. Jerry, dear, get him a glass of whisky.

JERRY. But, Aunt, you forget we're dry—don't you remember that last social worker you entertained stole all you had left. There isn't a drop to make a mosquito drunk.

MRS. WINTHROP. Then he must lie right down here.

JERRY. But, Aunt, he's wet.

MISS GOTTSCHALK. There's more hubbub here than a deaf old woman can stand. [*Getting up.*] I'm going. If the young man has had a ducking you ought to give him a good pint of whisky and put him to bed between blankets. He will probably be drunk, but it will be good for him. He doesn't impress me as a young man who could

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stand a ducking and not more than a teaspoonful of whisky.

LEE. I don't want any whisky—I never drink.

JERRY. Don't worry, my boy, we don't any of us.

MRS. WINTHROP. He can lie right here and be quiet and comfy and have a cup of tea.

WALTER. But he will have to change his clothes, Mrs. Winthrop, he's dripping.

MRS. WINTHROP. Oh, well, then, after all, I think it will be best to put him to bed and nurse him.

LEE. I don't want to be put to bed and nursed.

WALTER. At least you'll consent to dry clothes?

MRS. WINTHROP. Come, you must remove these dripping ones and put on something dry. I will take care of you. [*She seizes them each by the arm and marches them out through the back hall. Miss Russell runs after them and puts her hand on Lee's shoulder as they go. Ethel, entering, passes them, stops to look at them enquiringly, then comes on in.*]

ETHEL [*in her calm tone*]. Well, what in heck has happened now?

ANGE. Oh, such an excitement! Liz's dog pushed Leander into the river.

LIZ. My poor innocent Fido! I wonder where he is?

JERRY. Innocent as a Bengal tiger! And Aunt said it was Providence.

ETHEL. But the river is shallow and today is hot—why the agitation?

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JERRY. Leander doesn't know how to use his fins.

ANGE. And he fell square into the deep, round hole.

JERRY. Gwen fished him out, and if that doesn't bring him to time, nothing will. I must get some duds on.

WALTER. I should think you'd better—you're a sight.

JERRY. I'm not the swift little dresser you are. Walter went into the bath-house and put on his tie and his right mind while the rest of us were getting our breath after the ducking.

ETHEL. But are they really all right now?

JIM. All right till they go down with pneumonia or Lee develops concussion of the brain. He says his head hit a stone when he went down.

JERRY. Hard on the stone.

JIM. Seems to me he acts dazed and queer now.

JERRY. He always acts that way—it's his normal condition.

LIZ. You all take it as a joke and it might have been a tragedy.

WALTER. It may be yet. It's no laughing matter.

ETHEL. Walter, are you fooling just for the fun of scaring us or do you really mean it?

WALTER. No, I mean it.

JERRY. Of course, he always means it, good old serious-minded Walter.

WALTER. It was a serious matter. She had

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all she could do to get him out. He was very nearly drowned.

LIZ. Why didn't you plunge in and help?

WALTER. She was managing better than any of us could. She is a better swimmer than I am. I thought I would be of more use when she got him to shore to help her out. She's a wonderful swimmer. But he!—I never saw such a scared man.

ETHEL. But they are all right now.

WALTER. Well, no, you can't tell. It must have been a nervous shock to both of them, and he struck his head against a stone or root.

JIM [*gloomily*]. He told me he had a bad heart.

JERRY. Sure he has—soft—soft as the under side of a cake of soap and as mushy.

JIM. Well, I guess he's queered the party—we might as well all go home.

MRS. WINTHROP [*re-entering, smiling in ecstatic pleasure*]. After all their vicissitudes the little ship of love has come safely into port. It is finally settled. He feels that he owes his life to her.

ETHEL. But are they all right? Won't they both be sick?

MRS. WINTHROP. Oh, I hope not. Of course he will need care, but it will be her delight to give him that. He feels he owes his life to her and he is so grateful. They are both so sweet about it.

JERRY. Are they actually engaged?

MRS. WINTHROP. Oh, yes indeed.

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JERRY. Well, I always think there is many a skid 'twixt the car and the curb.

JIM. How about Gwen?

MRS. WINTHROP. Oh, she is so happy. She feels that he must be taken care of and Providence has evidently selected her to do it.

JERRY. Providence tried it on the dog first.

LIZ. But are they really happy?

MRS. WINTHROP. Oh, in the seventh Heaven!

JERRY. Out of the deep hole into the seventh Heaven.

MRS. WINTHROP. Every cloud has a silver lining.

JERRY. Well, Lee has acted as if he were under a cloud.

MISS RUSSELL [*running in breathless*]. Liz's dog!—He has chased Hermione's cat into her room—he has got her treed on top of the tall secretary now—the cat, not Hermione—he knocked over a Brokewood vase and a lamp, smashed them, tore up a ciderdown quilt—feathers everywhere even out in the hall—I couldn't tell you all—the room looks like the wrath of God. [*Ethel goes out.*]

LIZ [*frantically*]. Oh, will anybody take us home? [*Appealing to them.*] Anybody? Right away?

MRS. WINTHROP. James, perhaps it would be better for you to take her now and not wait for the moonlight.

LIZ. Oh, all right. Fido and I might as well be smashed up on the road as end on the gallows.

JIM [*crossly*]. Come on, then. [*They start out,*

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and Miss Gottschalk enters, carrying her cat, a large Angora.]

MISS GOTTSCHALK. I am going to Atlantic City. You can stay at home if you prefer, but this hubbub here is too much for me. I'm going to a quieter place. I could stand the dancing and telephoning—two silly creatures called up, perfectly unimportant, and talked for hours, I could stand the general disturbance and young men getting drowned, but the dog is too much. If you have succeeded in persuading any of the servants to stay, will you have my room straightened up a bit? It is powdered with feathers. I suppose I shan't be able to get off before tomorrow. [*She sits down with her cat.*]

MRS. WINTHROP. Now don't be silly, dear!

MISS GOTTSCHALK. I am not silly—I am never silly.

MRS. WINTHROP. Don't break things up—

MISS GOTTSCHALK. I never break things up.

MRS. WINTHROP. —just as things are beginning to run smoothly.

MISS GOTTSCHALK. Tomasso ran smoothly. [*Stroking her cat.*]

MRS. WINTHROP. I have sent the dog away, [*shouting*] do you hear? The dog is going home.

MISS GOTTSCHALK. I hope so.

MRS. WINTHROP. Your room shall be arranged at once. Don't worry.

MISS GOTTSCHALK. I never worry.

MRS. WINTHROP. Don't think of running away now when everything is coming out all right.

MISS GOTTSCHALK. I don't think he's out yet.

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MRS. WINTHROP. Oh, here they come! Now don't make a scene! See for yourselves how happy they are! Congratulations are in order!

[*Lee and Gwendolyn appear, both looking pale and miserable. He has on a long sky-blue lady's bathrobe of corduroy. The others all gather round them and congratulate them with "good luck, old man", "come in, the water's fine", "best wishes", "all the happiness in the world", etc. Jim sings, flating dolefully and in a rough voice, "Here comes the bride." Lee and Gwendolyn accept it all nervously, wanly, with very artificial smiles.*]

LEE. But, Mrs. Winthrop, I can't wear this thing! [*Holding up the bathrobe.*] It is smothering me.

MRS. WINTHROP. You must be kept warm, dear. [*To the others.*] It is Gwen's and [*to him*] she loves to have you wear it.

GWENDOLYN. I really don't need it in the least.

MRS. WINTHROP. Now you lie down, dear, and rest.

LEE. I don't need to rest. I'd rather stand.

MRS. WINTHROP [*forcing him to lie down on the couch*]. And you sit here, dear, and calm him and take care of him. [*Placing Gwendolyn in a chair by the couch.*] I think you'd better be starting, Jimmie, if you expect to get there to-night.

JIM. All right. Come on, Liz. [*Jim and Liz go out.*]

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JERRY [*to them as they go*]. I'll help you find the dog.

WALTER. We'd better all help.

MRS. WINTHROP. Yes, do go, all of you. Lee needs perfect quiet. [*They all go.*] Come with me, Hermione, and we will see to your room. [*She takes Miss Gottschalk by the arm and leads her to the stairs and up.*]

MISS GOTTSCHALK [*as they go, she carrying her cat.*] Tomasso will not be safe till that dog is back in town.

[*Miss Russell has remained and sidled up to the couch, where she stands patting the pillows, when Mrs. Winthrop looks back, sees her and stops. Miss Gottschalk goes on upstairs.*]

MRS. WINTHROP. Clara, he must be kept very quiet, so will you come with me, please?

MISS RUSSELL. Oh, I will not incite him.

MRS. WINTHROP. Perhaps you won't intend to, but you know you can't keep from talking. He is very nervous and must be kept perfectly still. Any conversation will excite him.

MISS RUSSELL. Then why not leave him entirely alone?

MRS. WINTHROP. Gwendolyn belongs by his side. They are betrothed. She is going to sit by him and watch him.

MISS RUSSELL. I can do that and retrieve her so she can go and join her young companions—I know you want your guests to have a good time—and I have nothing else to do.

MRS. WINTHROP. But, Clara, your letters—those important—

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MISS RUSSELL. I did them all this morning—I hurried so I could have the afternoon free. Besides, he needs more mature attention. His wounds have not been dressed. [*A little blood has oozed from Lee's forehead where there was a small scratch.*]

MRS. WINTHROP. I will send a bandage for Gwen to apply.

MISS RUSSELL. You needn't—I will imply first aid. [*She takes out two clean handkerchiefs.*] I always carry two in order to be able to lend one in case of necessity. [*She knots them together.*] Very often someone needs an extra handkerchief or toothbrush or something. [*She begins to tie it about Lee's head.*]

MRS. WINTHROP. Clara, you must leave him alone.

MISS RUSSELL [*almost weeping*]. But I want so much to take care of him and I'm sure he doesn't object—do you? [*To Lee.*]

LEE. Oh, on the contrary, I should like it so much.

MISS RUSSELL. There, you see. I knew he wanted me. You don't understand. We are absolute infirmities, he and I.

MRS. WINTHROP. Clara!

LEE. Oh, please let her stay, Mrs. Winthrop. I do want her. I—I—feel I may need her.

MISS RUSSELL. There, you have heard his plea. I didn't like to make it all so pointed. But we both want each other. He needs me—needs my animadversions—he—[*with caressing gestures about Lee's head and shoulders.*]

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MRS. WINTHROP. Clara, come with me—I have work for you to do—a most important letter. Come! [*Sternly.*]

MISS RUSSELL. I will go with her and do my duty—the duty of my position [*to Mrs. Winthrop*], but [*to Lee*] I will return to you—sweetheart! [*She follows Mrs. Winthrop up the stairs, gazing back at Lee and throws him an impassioned kiss. He looks after her with an expression that might be construed to mean either intense trouble or intense longing. Lee and Gwendolyn are left alone together and for a few minutes they furtively glance at each other and then away in constrained embarrassment, catch each other's eye, and turn away, look troubled, worried, unhappy, afraid each of the other and terribly nervous.*]

LEE [*speaking at last with deep emotion and embarrassment*]. It is the first time I was ever—in—such—er—a situation. You—you saved my life.

GWENDOLYN [*also deeply moved and nervous*]. Oh, I—

LEE. You endangered your own life for such a worthless thing as my life!

GWENDOLYN. Oh, don't speak of your life that way! You mustn't ever think of committing suicide again!

LEE. If you knew all about me you would think I might as well.

GWENDOLYN [*wildly*]. Oh, don't talk that way—please, please don't!

LEE. Honestly, for your own sake, I wish you wouldn't mind whatever happens to me.

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GWENDOLYN. Oh, please, please don't bother about me, but promise you won't ever try to do it again!

LEE. I know what I owe you—but why you ever cared to save such a worthless thing as my life—

GWENDOLYN. Oh, it—it was nothing—

[CURTAIN TO ACT II.]

ACT III.

[In the same old hall. It is the afternoon of the next day—a blazing hot summer Sunday—rather late. All alone sitting in a large bamboo rocking-chair, Jerry, looking rather bored, detached, troubled, is strumming a ukelele. He strums a little and at intervals hums a little “Dese bones shall rise again.” Ethel comes in carrying a tall glass of limeade.]

JERRY. It's hotter than ever. “Dese bones shall rise again.” It was as hot as hell Friday, hotter Saturday, hottest today. There's got to be a thunder storm to clear the air.

ETHEL. Indications point to a psychic storm.

JERRY. There ought to be a ripping thunder storm and, by Jove, it's coming. I heard thunder a while ago.

ETHEL. Are you sure it wasn't Liz's dog? Where did you put him?

JERRY. I've got him chained in the cow-stable. Ever since yesterday Hermione's cat

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has been perching on the top of the secretary and nobody can get her down. She's living on a higher plane. It's so hot I pretty nearly don't blame you for drinking that stuff. Give me a sip.

ETHEL. I hate the sort of people who ask you for a bite or sip of something somebody else has. Why don't you go out and get yourself a glass?

JERRY. I'm afraid of Maggie. Ever since I prevented her from braining the dog with a skillet I don't dare go near the kitchen, and if I sent she'd put poison in the lime. It's a limentable situation.

ETHEL. I don't know why Liz ever consented to let Jim try to take her back. I knew when they started there would be an accident.

JERRY. Whoever rides out with Jim, has to walk back. Liz must have enjoyed the five-mile saunter. She says Jim never stopped one second on the way explaining just how the accident happened. There wasn't a nut or screw or wire or bolt he didn't mention lovingly by name. Jim's grand on post mortems. [*After a moment's pause, he sings, "Dese bones shall rise again."*]

ETHEL. Where is Aunt?

JERRY. Search me.

ETHEL. Promoting, I guess. She had an idée fixe—in fact a whole nest of them, and she's counting her chickens before they're hatched. [*After a pause.*] I wonder where everybody is?

JERRY. Hiding, I guess. [*Suddenly.*] The trouble with this week-end is that it began on Friday the thirteenth. We didn't notice and Fate threatens.

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ETHEL. She threatens and threatens like your thunder storm that never comes.

JERRY. We have got a little used to threatening—but I tell you we needn't be so sure even yet that Leander won't be drowned or hanged or poisoned. I tell you my storm is coming and something is going to drop. "Dese bones shall rise again."

ETHEL. Maybe Clara will elope with Leander. That is positively the most sickening affair I ever knew. I do loathe a sentimental old maid.

JERRY. I don't know—I rather like a little sentiment in women of any age. In my acquaintance it is rather rare. [*With a sharp look at her.*] It is a grumbling old lady I can't stand—now Hermione gets my goat with her eternal grouch. I hope you will not be that sort.

ETHEL. Don't worry, Jerry, I shall be a flip-pant old lady.

[*Miss Russell whisks in from the back-hall and peers about quickly, like a bird.*]

JERRY. Whom are you looking for, Clara?

MISS RUSSELL [*cooly*]. Oh, nobody.

JERRY. No, now, Clara! I know whom you are looking for. You better look out. Aunt has different designs on him. And he's engaged.

MISS RUSSELL. Whatever may be her interjections she can't always patrol affairs of the heart. Sometimes an infirmity occurs that is wholly inexcusable.

JERRY. Am I to infer that you and Lee are infirmities?

MISS RUSSELL [*with a shrug of her shoulders and*

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a gay smile at the ceiling]. -Oh, you may infer anything you like. Besides, he needs my attention and care. He had a high temperament last night.

JERRY. What? He always seems to me sub-normal.

MISS RUSSELL. He isn't at all. I understand him. I know what is on his mind and heart. She tried to have Miss Robertson take his temperament, but he preferred to have me do it.

JERRY. Well, another ducking might finish him. I guess he's more used to chickens than ducks. But he ought to learn to fall without stumbling. [*Miss Gottschalk and Mrs. Winthrop come downstairs, talking, the former frowning and cross, the latter distraite and placating. Miss Russell sees them and runs out through the back-hall.*]

MRS. WINTHROP [*yelling at her companion*]. You know, my dear, I couldn't help it. It was wholly unforeseen. How could I know that a dog would steal the roast? And it was so late in the afternoon all the butcher shops were closed. We couldn't get another roast anywhere.

MISS GOTTSCHALK [*in her loud, peculiarly modulated voice*]. Canned salmon for dinner on Sunday is enough to upset one's digestion for the entire week.

MRS. WINTHROP. But you know, my dear, the dog ran off with the roast. He must have eaten it all or buried what he couldn't eat—there was not a scrap left anywhere.

JERRY [*thrumming his ukelele and humming low*]. "Dese bones shall rise again."

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MISS GOTTSCHALK. He probably devoured it all. He was very sick in my room afterwards.

MRS. WINTHROP. Oh, my dear, was he?

MISS GOTTSCHALK. Very sick indeed.

MRS. WINTHROP. I wonder where all our guests are?

MISS GOTTSCHALK. Jerry, can't you get up a little game of bridge?

JERRY. Now, Miss Hermione, how could you suggest such a thing? You know I never play on Sunday.

MISS GOTTSCHALK. Nonsense.

JERRY. Besides, canned salmon on a hot Sunday has a strange effect on me. I feel peculiarly languid—sort of watery and weak. I may fill a watery grave.

MISS GOTTSCHALK [*going to the table and getting out a pack of cards*]. It does seem peculiar that in a company of ten persons it is impossible to get up one game of bridge. I'll have a little solitaire. [*She shuffles her cards, spreads them on the table and begins to play.*]

MRS. WINTHROP [*to Ethel and Jerry*]. Don't you know where your guests are? Haven't you provided for their entertainment in any way?

JERRY. You can provide entertainment for a lunatic asylum, but you can't make them play.

MRS. WINTHROP. Come, we must find them and make things gay. Come. [*She goes, followed by Ethel and Jerry.*]

JERRY [*as they go*]. Make a funeral gay!

[*Liz and Jim enter, hot and angry. He has his arm in a sling.*]

THE W E A K - E N D

LIZ. I don't see why you follow me around.

JIM. I am not following you around. I don't want you to misunderstand my intentions in the least. Please don't think I'm trying to force my unwelcome attentions upon you.

LIZ. It is a relief to know that.

JIM. My Lord, I reckon you thought I was all stuck-up on you!

LIZ. I'll do you the justice to say I never did think that.

JIM. Oh, thank you so much! I was afraid you thought I was such a rotten dog-goned sentimental idiot I just couldn't keep away from the fire. I'll have you to know I'm not the kind of man who makes a fool of himself trailing round after a girl unless she's given him some encouragement. I may be some kinds of a fool, but I'm not that kind. I don't come hither unless I've had the come-hither invitation.

LIZ. My word! Do you mean to imply that I've been vamping you?

JIM. Oh, there you go, mad again. Everybody always gets mad at me.

LIZ. I never vamped in my life—I hate it—I despise the style of butterfly that does it. The idea of your accusing me of it, James Doolittle! If I were a man I'd knock you down—I have a great notion to anyway.

JIM. I ain't accusing you of anything—it's you that's accusing me. I only wanted to try to explain—to put myself straight with you.

LIZ. You've done nothing but try to explain—

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and anybody that's as round as you are couldn't possibly be straight.

JIM. I don't know what's the matter with my car. She's been behaving something awful ever since I drove her out. But she was going all right when it happened. She was going like a bird, going uphill like a skylark—

LIZ. My word, do I have to listen to all that again?

JIM. —going like a top, when that infernal dog of yours—

LIZ. Don't you say a word against Fido—

JIM. You let him fall down into the brakes, and, while a Ford is roomy, you can't carry a cow down among the pedals—

LIZ. It was all your own fault!

JIM. He's a cow—

LIZ. You pinched him!

JIM. He's a coward—

LIZ. You wanted to kill him!

JIM. I did, but I didn't try to, I was trying to shift to low and his legs got all tangled up in the pedals, he howled bloody murder and you tried to haul him out, I couldn't manage the brakes and something got the matter with the clutch, the steering-gear—

LIZ. I will not listen to all this again!

JIM. Wait a minute. So we ran down into the ditch and up the other side, through a barbed-wire fence and didn't stop till we hit the tree and were all spilled out. Broke the lamps and fender, wrecked the whole car.

LIZ. Didn't you have it insured?

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JIM. Of course, but no self-respecting company will pay insurance to anybody that would take a man-eating elephant to ride in his car.

LIZ. I won't have you talk that way about my dog! The whole accident was all your fault and not a bit of his. You did it all.

JIM. There you go, blaming me. I wouldn't so much mind the smash-up if I didn't get so infernally blamed for it. As if I'd go to work and break up my car on purpose. I might as well stay at home and use an ax on her and not run the risk of breaking my own neck, too,—or maybe you think I wanted to commit suicide and was lonesome for the company of a dog on my way to heaven.

LIZ. Well, well, well, think of Jimmie becoming sarcastic!

JIM. It's enough to make St. Peter sarcastic. A chap tries to do a girl and a whole bunch of people a good turn and gets smashed up for it by a fool dog, and the girl turns in and won't speak to him and tells the story so it looks as if it was all his fault and everybody goes and blames him! And makes fun of him!

LIZ. Is it the first time in your life you were ever made fun of?

JIM. Oh, that's right, go right on—keep it up! I know what everybody says, and it's all your doing! But just let them try driving that confounded dog. Everybody's talking like greased lightning.

LIZ [*apprehensively*]. There is going to be a storm.

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JIM. There is. The sooner the better. Or maybe you think it wasn't premeditated foxiness on my part to ditch you—maybe you think I'm just a poor simp that can't steer a car! I may be a bonehead, but I'm not as bad as all that. I came out here all right with no dog and a different kind of girl. My arms and legs are all lamed up so I doubt if I can drive a car again for weeks, if ever.

LIZ. You did your best to kill me.

JIM. I just managed to save you from being killed. And then to be treated like this! I call it rather a shame to treat a man this way—I ain't an ass.

LIZ. I won't listen to you any longer. You talk like an illiterate idiot!

JIM. It's a dog-goned rotten shame. You insult me all the time.

LIZ. I don't care enough about you to insult you.

JIM. I want you to understand I'm not in love with you and never was.

LIZ. That's the only thing I have to thank you for. But I do wish you wouldn't keep going to Mrs. Winthrop and telling her how much you are in love with me. It's not a joke—if you are silly enough to think it is.

JIM. I never did.

LIZ. You did.

JIM. I didn't.

LIZ. You did—time and again—she told me so.

JIM. I did not.

LIZ. You needn't deny it.

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JIM. I didn't and I wish you wouldn't do the same thing about me—telling her how sweet I am.

LIZ. I? Never! Oh, you are being funny!

JIM. It's you that's being funny—dog-goned funny!

LIZ. This is too much! I'll never speak to you again! [*She goes out. Jim ejaculates "Damn." Miss Gottschalk looks up and sees him.*]

MISS GOTTSCHALK. Don't you try your philandering with me again, James Doolittle.

[*Jim ejaculates "Damn" again and hurries out into the drawing-room. In a moment Walter and Ange enter. Miss Gottschalk does not see them.*]

WALTER. It is the first time in my life I have ever been accused of doing anything ungentlemanly.

ANGE. That is exactly the trouble with you, Mr. Walter Harkness, you are so sure of your wonderful good-breeding that it never occurs to you you can make a false step.

WALTER. And you are so sure of people making allowances for your clever tongue that it never occurs to you someone may object to your indiscriminate slashing right and left, cutting into people, giving wrong impressions.

ANGE. You have come to regard yourself as impeccable. Your attitude to yourself is "the king can do no wrong." Your devotion to yourself is quite beautiful.

WALTER. I have never been criticised before, and on my honor as a gentleman I don't consider it necessary to bear your insinuations.

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ANGE. Far be it from me to insinuate—I am not so clever. I am merely stating facts.

WALTER. You call it a fact, do you? That I said what I tell you I didn't say?

ANGE. I have no reason to believe you didn't say it.

WALTER. You accuse me of lying, too, then? Well, by Jove, this is too much. To accuse me first of making ungentlemanly insinuations and then of lying to clear myself. Why shouldn't you believe me? Have you ever caught me in a lie?

ANGE. I suppose before you have been too clever to be found out. Heaven knows what stories you have been telling about me or all the other girls being in love with you. Doubtless you think you are such a heart-smasher that you've been going around boasting of your conquests to all the old ladies in town.

WALTER. You might give me the benefit of the doubt.

ANGE. Why should I prefer your word to Mrs. Winthrop's? She has no object in boasting of your charms—telling me how handsome you are and a long list of your virtues and your statement that your mother had picked out a girl with hazel eyes for you, and you couldn't help knowing whose they were because mine are always on you. Oh!

WALTER. I'm not responsible for what my mother says—if she ever said it, which I don't believe for an instant.

ANGE. But what you yourself said was worse—that you knew and everybody knows that I am

absolutely cr—crazy about you. It wouldn't have mattered so much if you had said it only to the other boys—men are all conceited and catty and think girls are in love with them and talk about it to each other—but for you to tell Mrs. Winthrop! Oh, it is absolutely unspeakably low!

WALTER [*hotly*]. I tell you I did not do it!

ANGE. Oh, deny it all you want, but you can't prove you didn't. Mrs. Winthrop says they are all talking about it—about my love-lorn state.

WALTER. You use picturesque words. She didn't put it that way, surely?

ANGE. You needn't split hairs—that was her meaning.

WALTER [*sarcastically*]. If I split hairs, you embroider all over till you cover the pattern.

ANGE. Oh, your cavilling analysis! Instead of arguing with me it is obviously up to you to apologise to me and explain before each one of them separately.

WALTER. I don't see it.

ANGE. That would be too great a downfall to your beautiful pride, wouldn't it?

WALTER. Why shouldn't you do the same for me, then? For the matter of that, I have a little crow to pick with you on my own account.

ANGE. I have no doubt you are self-righteous enough to have a dozen.

WALTER. Why should you tell Mrs. Winthrop that I am head over heels in love with you?

ANGE. I did nothing of the sort.

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WALTER. She told me so. Naturally, I believe her.

ANGE. Why shouldn't you believe me?

WALTER. For the simple reason that Mrs. Winthrop would have no reason for starting such an absurd story.

ANGE [*hotly*]. Oh, of course, accuse me of lying, accuse me of being a perfect little cat! It's like you, like your Beau Brummel chivalry—

WALTER. I don't care about the fellows—they all know me—but to have Mrs. Winthrop think I am madly in love with you places me in an awkward position—especially in regard to the other girls.

ANGE. You don't want your chances spoiled with them?

WALTER. I should be grateful to you if you would deny that I am in love with you.

ANGE. Do your own denying! Apologise and explain what you've told about me first, oh, you first gentleman of Ohio!

WALTER. This is absolutely impossible! Ange, I am constrained to tell you that if you were a man, I should be compelled to knock you down. [*He turns on his heel toward the door to the porch.*]

ANGE. And I am constrained to tell you that if I were a man I should have slapped your face long ago. Oh, you—you cur! [*She bursts into tears and runs out through the door into the drawing-room as he goes out to the porch. Miss Russell and Lee enter from the back-hall, she radiant, he melancholy and absorbed, but with an air of clinging to her.*]

THE WEAK-END

MISS RUSSELL. I shall never forget this little walk with you under the trees with the breeze in the overhanging branches breathing its blessing over our heads. When can we have another?

LEE. I hope next year—I mean very soon. I want you to be with me a great deal. You are my only hope.

MISS RUSSELL. Oh, my prince! I wonder if this little walk could have been prolific? That it may mean other lovely things to come? Do you know, I adore everything connected with weddings—all the little doings and superscriptions. I particularly dote on the charming little custom of throwing spaghetti over the happy pair. [*With a gay smile she looks up at Lee, who gazes at her with knit brows.*] But now I must write some more letters for her—perhaps you could help me?

LEE. I might as well. I feel safe with you.

MISS RUSSELL [*as they go upstairs*]. I shall never to my dying day forget this first walk—the rosy sunshine—the happy singing birds—[*They disappear and Ethel and Jerry come in from the back-hall.*]

JERRY. As soon as this delightful week-end party is over, I've got to get away from here. If I stay, Aunt will make a match between you and me in spite of all I can do.

ETHEL. I will aid and abet you both in regard to preventing the match and your going away.

JERRY. You'd like to get rid of me, wouldn't you?

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ETHEL. Very much. But I'd like still better to get away myself.

JERRY. We might elope.

ETHEL. We might. [*After the briefest pause.*] We might also take poison or shoot ourselves.

JERRY. If we stay here I don't know what may happen. She'll marry us to each other in spite of ourselves.

ETHEL. Jerry, you have no more self-determination than an oyster. I honestly believe you would sit right down and let Aunt marry you to me. I can tell you, you make it mighty hard for me—why don't you fight it? Why don't you act the man's part, why don't you put your foot down on it, why don't you make her understand once for all that you detest the very sight of me, that we are about as well suited to each other as a goat and a hippopotamus, that I am too old for you, that a match with me would spoil all your chances for life?

JERRY [*acidly*]. Why don't I?

ETHEL. Why don't you make it plain and unobscure and open and clear and downright and undeniable and fixed that you loathe me and I abhor you, that we quarrel incessantly, that a match between us would be unnatural, abnormal, unpsychological, disgusting, that we would probably end by murdering each other? Be a man, or at least pretend you are a man, make yourself dominating, be master of the situation, tell her a man must choose his own mate, tell her you are already in love with someone else, tell her you are engaged, tell her you are going to do as you damn

THE WEAK-END

please, tell her it's none of her business, make it flat, make it clear, make it unequivocal!

JERRY. By gum, but you can talk when you want to! I never knew you to say so much in my life. I didn't know you had so many words in your head. The four-minute men aren't in it with you. You'll be in the Senate next—the lady from Ohio! Jove, you've said a mouthful!

ETHEL. I haven't said half as much as I think, Gervaise Houghton!

JERRY. Gosh, has it come to my full ancestral, baptismal, abysmal name?

ETHEL [*stamping her foot*]. Don't use that disgusting word!

JERRY. Gosh is delightful, a pet lamb of a word, reminding me of Miss Gottschalk.

ETHEL [*giving him a long look of hot, blighting anger*]. I think I'll never speak to you again. Not till you can talk and act like a man.

JERRY. You know, Ethel, you're almost devilishly handsome when you're mad — satanic enough to make a worm sit up and think.

ETHEL. Oh! [*She turns in a fury to go and Jerry turns also to go, the one to the porch, the other to the drawing-room, when Mrs. Winthrop and Gwendolyn trailing after her come down the stairs. The older lady is delicately holding up her skirt, though it is short—Gwendolyn does not touch hers.*]

JERRY. You can tell the age of a woman nowadays by the way she manages her skirt.

MRS. WINTHROP. Where are you two running away to? And where are the others?

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JERRY [*diving into the drawing-room*]. Well, two of them are in here.

ETHEL [*from just outside on the porch*]. Well, two of them are out here.

MRS. WINTHROP. Bring them in.

[*Jerry, Ange, and Jim come in from the drawing-room, Ethel, Walter, and Liz from the porch.*]

JERRY. Here are some of the culprits.

MRS. WINTHROP. On so lovely an afternoon we ought to be doing something gay. What shall we do? [*Beaming.*] We will have to plan—charades?

JERRY. Aunt, I think you've planned till we're almost planted. Also, I've discovered if you plant a plan chaos comes up.

LIZ. Jerry, you're getting to be what the English call a wag.

JERRY. Liz, you associate so much with Fido your ideas have become dogmatic. But I could tell you a different tail!

LIZ. You're a sad dog.

MRS. WINTHROP. What shall we do?

[*Miss Russell and Leander enter from the porch. He wears the blue bathrobe again.*]

JERRY. Let's go for a swim.

MISS RUSSELL. Oh, no, no, don't mention swimming before Mr. Lee!

JERRY. Well, we've got to do something. If we don't, something's going to happen.

ANGE. Jerry, since when did you become clairvoyant? I didn't know you had the gift of second sight.

JERRY. Oh, you needn't josh. I tell you,

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something awful is going to happen. I've felt it in the air all day. Let's dance. Let's be merry, for tomorrow we die. [*He goes to the victrola and puts on a wild jazz dance. Then he moves the chairs, Jim and Walter helping him rather sombrely. Jerry seizes Liz and whirls her off, Walter dances with Ethel, Jim with Ange, and Lee with Miss Russell, who puts herself in his way smiling truculently up at him—she can scarcely dance the new style, steps on his toes, and they almost fall down several times. Gwendolyn stands behind Mrs. Winthrop, who surveys the scene askance, the young people not being paired off to suit her. The dancers bump into each other, owing to the awkwardness of Miss Russell, who bumps into all of them, and even more often into Miss Gottschalk, who frowns over her solitaire but goes on playing. Mrs. Winthrop watches the dancing for a few minutes, but finally can bear the wrong partnerships no longer, and going to the victrola turns it off right in the middle of its howling tune. The effect is of one having his throat cut right in the midst of lusty life. The dancers fall apart and look surprised.*]

JERRY. But, Aunt, why did you stop it? We want to dance.

MRS. WINTHROP. My dear, I don't in the least object to your dancing, I love young people to have a merry time, even if it is on the Sabbath Day. I'm no Puritan, I'm from Virginia, but I have ears! I can't stand that horrible screeching rag-time. Put on some pretty old-fashioned tune.

JERRY. But we haven't got one—we all dance rag—we like it.

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MISS GOTTSCHALK [*meditatively*]. In my day young people danced like ladies and gentlemen, nowadays they dance like vertical hoptoads.

MRS. WINTHROP [*hunting among the records*]. There must be something pretty. Try this one.

JERRY. That's rag, too.

MRS. WINTHROP. It is better. Sweeter. Try it.

JERRY [*wiping the perspiration from his forehead and tossing back his hair*]. When you dance in winter you look like a feather duster, in the summer you look like a floor mop. [*He puts the record on.*]

MRS. WINTHROP [*to Jerry*]. Dance with Ethel this time and don't let everything get mixed up again. [*She takes Walter to Ange.*] Ange, Walter is longing to dance with you.

ANGE. I hardly think so.

MRS. WINTHROP. Yes, he does. You must dance together, as I say! [*Smiling, with her finger up. At their hostess' behest they dance, but with compressed lips. She goes to Jim, leading Liz with her.*] Jimmie, Liz is dying to dance with you.

JIM. She'll die before she does, I guess.

MRS. WINTHROP. There, there, I'll have no more lovers' quarrels in my house, no more unhappiness! You two are to dance together. [*Thus compelled, they dance, Jim with a look of gloomy and maltreated innocence, his arm still in a sling, he clasps his partner loosely, Liz with a Mona Lisa smile. Jerry seizes Ethel, who, taken off her guard, dances with impenetrable calm and*

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coldness. Mrs. Winthrop takes Lee's arm—he has been standing with Miss Russell loath to venture his life again with her into the light fantastic, while she ecstatically smiles up at him,—and leads him to Gwendolyn.] Here is a gay young Lothario longing frantically to dance with you. [*With a look at each other as if meeting a black and implacable fate, they dance.*] No more misunderstanding now! But sunshine and joy!

[*Just then a roar of thunder is heard and as it rolls off the dashing of rain is heard. The dancing continues. The couples bump into Miss Gottschalk, jogging her elbow until finally with a dark frown she gathers up her cards and goes. Walter and Ange dance into the back-hall, where there is more room and Lee and Gwendolyn follow them. The thunder roars often and the wind and dashing rain are heard. Walter and Ange dance back again, leaving Lee and Gwendolyn alone in the rear hall. Amid the thunder which becomes almost continuous, the music from the victrola, a particularly reprehensible rag with diabolically regulated jerks and shrieks and poundings, the wind and the sound of torrents of rain, the honk of an automobile is heard, followed by another honk, as if it were the answering call of its mate. In a few minutes amid a great roar of thunder a strange young man and girl in traveling suits and dripping with rain, burst in through the front door. The dancers fall apart in consternation, all except Lee and*

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Gwendolyn, who, oblivious to what is occurring, are seen slowly jazzing in melancholy dejection and blue bathrobe.]

ALAN [*standing at the door and shouting*]. May I speak to Mrs. Winthrop? Which is Mrs. Winthrop? [*Looking from Miss Russell to Miss Gottschalk.*]

MISS RUSSELL. Oh, dear no, you are laboring under a collusion. This is Mrs. Winthrop. [*Gesturing elaborately to the lady.*]

ALAN. Pardon me, Mrs. Winthrop. Where is Miss Robertson?

SALLIE [*also standing at the door and shouting*]. Where is Mr. Lee?

[*Mrs. Winthrop starts as though her fate were upon her. The others all drop back so that the melancholy dancers are in full view except to the newcomers on the side. The victrola continues to grind out its blatant tune. Jerry goes to it and stops it suddenly, giving the effect again, in sound, of life cut short.*]

MRS. WINTHROP. Who are you?

ALAN [*looking about at the astonished company*]. Where is my wife? I demand my wife!

MRS. WINTHROP [*faintly*]. Your wife?

ALAN. She will be in a month. I am Alan Davis and Miss Robertson is engaged to be married to me. She must have told you.

MRS. WINTHROP. But she is engaged to Mr. Lee.

ALAN. She cannot be.

[*The newcomers take a few steps forward, the others move, so that Lee and Gwendolyn be-*

THE WEAK - END

come visible to Alan and Sallie, they are still dancing and the house-party stands watching them with back to the audience.]

SALLIE. It is true! My worst suspicions are true!

[Lee and Gwendolyn realising something is going on, stop, slowly separate, turn about and see their newly arrived fiancés. There is a mixture of amazement, pleasure, and fright on their faces and they slowly, not to say reluctantly, diffidently, make their way into the front hall to the others. For a moment they stand helplessly gazing.]

MRS. WINTHROP *[in her suavest voice]*. I don't know who you are or why you have walked into my house so abruptly, but these two young people are engaged to each other and you must not make a scene.

ALAN *[wildly]*. A scene! Isn't this a scene? Gwendolyn, what does this signify?

SALLIE. Leander, come here! *[He somewhat hesitatingly goes a few steps towards her and halts.]* Leander, do you mean to say you haven't told them?

LEE. Ah, told them? Told them—what?

SALLIE. What? As if you needed to ask! Leander Lee, you know perfectly well what I mean. Did you tell them?

LEE. I—er—well—er—no. I—you see it wasn't necessary.

SALLIE. It was necessary. Leander, come right here to me. *[He goes to her, she seizes him*

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by the blue bathrobe and looks straight into his eyes.]
Now tell them.

LEE. But, my dear, so publicly? You wouldn't have me—

SALLIE. Yes, I would. Go on. (*Lee hesitates.*)
Go on.

LEE [*turning to the others while she holds him by the back of the blue bathrobe*]. Well—er—Sallie and I—Sallie and I were—

SALLIE. Were?

LEE [*hastily*]. Sallie and I are—

SALLIE. Are what?

LEE. Sallie and I are engaged. [*Smiles faintly.*]
I hope you don't mind.

ALAN [*sternly*]. Gwendolyn! [*She takes a few steps towards him and halts, looking terrified by his stern aspect.*] Gwendolyn, what Mrs. Winthrop has just declared needs an explanation.

SALLIE. It does, Leander. What has been happening? Will you please explain?

LEE [*weakly*]. Oh, nothing has happened—oh, nothing at all—not in the least—there isn't anything to explain.

ALAN. Gwendolyn, I demand an explanation.

GWENDOLYN. Oh, there isn't anything to explain—anything at all—there isn't anything the matter—anything at all. We were just dancing, you know. You saw us—just dancing.

ALAN. No judge would be satisfied with such an answer.

GWENDOLYN [*almost weeping*]. Oh, Alan, you lawyers are so exact.

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ALAN. Exact! Here I have come all the way from Chicago, about four hundred miles, because of my anxiety and you will not satisfy me. Exact, you call me—exacting is what you mean, I suppose, you use words so carelessly. Do you know why I came? Because you, my affianced wife, were flirting with other men or one other man, which is worse. When I call up over the Long Distance someone—a drunken or crazy old woman—answers and tells me there are “high jinks” going on here—those were her words, “high jinks”—that my fiancée is carrying on outrageously with other men—or with another man, which is worse—

SALLIE [*breaking in*]. And I, Leander, had the same experience. When I called up yesterday over the Long Distance it must have been some impertinent, lazy, deaf old servant who answered and would give me no satisfaction and wouldn't call you, but told me there were high jinks going on here and you were off somewhere spooning with a girl—that was exactly what she said, “spooning with a girl”! That is why I came about four hundred desperate, anxious miles from Richmond, Virginia.

ALAN. So I took the next train.

SALLIE. So did I.

ALAN. Our trains arrived at the same time and I met this young lady in the station, where we were both trying to hire a taxi to come out here, and we discovered we were bound for the same place and on similar errands, and came out here in this terrific storm—

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SALLIE. In two streaming taxis without chains, one right after the other.

ALAN. Like a funeral procession—

SALLIE. It was a funeral procession—it felt like one.

ALAN. And when we arrive, what do we find?

SALLIE. Yes, what do we find?

LEE. Oh, nothing, nothing.

SALLIE. Nothing? Leander, you were dancing with her—and how?

LEE. Oh, one dances with anyone that way this year—it doesn't mean any more than a fashion-plate in a magazine.

SALLIE. But you were dancing with her and not one of the others.

LEE. I couldn't help it—it wasn't my fault.

SALLIE. And in that—that—negligée! [*Looking pointedly at the bathrobe.*]

LEE. It really wasn't my fault.

GWENDOLYN [*beginning to weep*]. Oh, it wasn't mine—you know it wasn't!

LEE [*almost weeping, too*]. Well, you made me think—or at least, Mrs. Winthrop made me think—that you—that you—

GWENDOLYN. That I? Why, it was you! She told me you were crazy about me—that—

LEE. She told me that you were madly in love with me—

GWENDOLYN. I—oh—

LEE [*with a break in his voice*]. She said I had to marry you because you saved my life.

GWENDOLYN [*sobbing violently*]. She told me you would commit suicide if I didn't marry you.

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ALAN [*scornfully and ungrammatically*]. Commit suicide! Him!

SALLIE [*relinquishing her hold on the blue bathrobe*]. Leander, you may take her if you want.

LEE. I don't want her.

ALAN [*with magnificent scorn*]. Gwendolyn, you are free!

GWENDOLYN. I don't want to be free.

LEE [*in high-pitched masculine hysterics*]. Mrs. Winthrop, see what you have done!

GWENDOLYN [*in high-pitched feminine hysterics*]. Oh, see what you have done!

MRS. WINTHROP [*bursting into tears*]. Is this the end of my self-sacrifice? Is this the way all my kindness is rewarded? All my efforts to make others happy?

LEE. We were happy, if you had let us alone.

MRS. WINTHROP. You to say that! You to be the first to reproach me!

GWENDOLYN. Oh, you have made everybody wretchedly unhappy.

MRS. WINTHROP. The ingratitude of youth!

SALLIE. You are a meddlesome old cat!

MRS. WINTHROP. Oh, you impertinent little hussy!

ALAN [*very cocky, furious, but judicious*]. She has put it most unfortunately, most rawly. I regret the circumstances most deeply, but nevertheless what she says is true, madam. By your animadversions and misrepresentations you have very apparently put us all in a completely false position—a position from which heaven knows how we can be extricated.

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MRS. WINTHROP. I am sorry it is necessary to suggest it, but you can all extricate yourselves from my house! You are an impertinent, rude, impudent, shameless, brazen-faced young pack! I never want to hear or see any of you ever again or any young people. In my day young ladies and gentlemen were brought up differently—they never talked this way to their elders— You have treated me outrageously! It is a disgrace, a shame, an infamy! Oh! Oh! Oh! [*She starts to go, furious and weeping.*]

ALAN [*as she goes*]. It is all your own fault.

SALLIE. You meddled with other people's business.

ALAN. You attempted to wreck the happiness of a pure young girl.

SALLIE. You tried to entangle a chivalrous young man.

ALAN. It is almost a case of blackmail.

SALLIE. It is atrocious.

[*Mrs. Winthrop goes out sobbing and hysterical up the stairs.*]

JERRY. Look here, you know I don't want to seem rude in my own house and all that—for it is just the same as my own house [*becoming dignified and masterful*], but I feel obliged to tell you what I think of you. I think you've all acted like a set of damn fools and mean ones at that. You, Mr. Alan Davis, are a cur. If I had a girl engaged to me and couldn't trust her I wouldn't blame anyone else. And as for my old friend, Lee, you've acted like a cad. I don't want to criticise a lady, but you, Miss Robertson, have

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been about as spineless as a jelly-fish, and I should say Miss Sallie Carter is a tartar. I want to say I won't stand having Aunt insulted. She may have been foolish and made mistakes, but she meant no harm—she was doing what she thought was for your happiness, Gwen and Lee. It's up to you all to write and apologise to her. I hope I've made my meaning clear. I am here to wish you all four goodbye and hope that you will have all the torments that are by rights coming to you. If your taxis aren't rain-proof, I'll be glad to send you all back together in our limousine—at once. [*Ethel watches him intently as he delivers himself of this speech and then goes upstairs after Mrs. Winthrop.*]

ALAN [*sternly*]. Gwendolyn, come!

GWENDOLYN. My things?

ALAN. Get them. Hurry. [*She runs out of the room.*]

SALLIE. Leander, you come along with me. You can't wear that private theatricals property [*looking at the bathrobe*]*—get your coat and hat. [He goes.]*

JERRY. It is hardly fit for a rainy day.

ANGE. I don't know how the rest of you feel about it, but I feel sort of de trop.

WALTER. We'd better all go home. How about it, Lizzie?

LIZ. I'm ready. I didn't bring anything but a toothbrush and Fido. You won't mind him. I guess we'd better tell you, though, before we go that out there on the porch just now I promised Walter to marry him.

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JERRY. Well, for the love o' Mike!

LEE [*re-appearing, coat on, hat in hand*]. I didn't take time to pack—could you—would you be so kind as to send me my suit-case? [*To Jerry*].

JERRY. I'd send you anything, old man, to get rid of you.

[*Sallie takes Lee by the arm, and without looking back he says goodbye and they hurry out. Miss Russell bursts into violent tears and shrieking and turns and runs out through the back-hall.*]

LIZ. Come, Walter, we must find Fido—

JERRY. He's locked in the cow-house.

LIZ. —and go.

ANGE. Jimmie, I think we ought to tell them, too.

JIM [*nearly bursting with heat, confusion, and pride*]. Well, you may as well know before we go that in the drawing-room there just now Ange promised to marry me.

JERRY. Well, for the love o' Mike!

[*Gwendolyn appears with her suit-case, which Alan gallantly takes from her. She fugitively whispers goodbye, and Alan in his grand manner lifts his hat as they go out.*]

ANGE. We'll come for my things tomorrow. I can't bear to face her now.

LIZ. Come on.

[*Walter takes Liz's arm and they go. Ange takes Jimmie's arm and they go.*]

JERRY. Well, for the love o' Mike! [*He sticks his hands into his pockets and stands staring, finally picks up his ukelele and hums "Dese bones*

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shall rise again." Ethel comes in carrying a tall glass of limeade and drops on a divan weariedly and nervously.]

JERRY. Well, the storm seems to be over. [*Thunder is heard in the distance.*]

ETHEL. Jimminy! My hand shakes so I am almost spilling it.

JERRY. Well?

ETHEL. Oh, it's all right. She's gone to interview the cook about putting up fruit tomorrow. She's crying still—a little. It is some disappointment and humiliation, but mostly temper. I'm sorry to say it of Aunt, but it is mostly temper.

JERRY. But it's kind of hard on Aunt.

ETHEL. It's been hard on all of us.

JERRY. Harder on you than you pretended.

ETHEL. Have they all gone?

JERRY. The whole bunch. And I'm glad of it.

ETHEL [*smiling*]. Are you, Jerry? So am I.

JERRY. I'm glad we are alone again.

ETHEL. Are you, Jerry? So am I. But I thought you liked a lot of people around?

JERRY. I don't. I like just one person around—worse fool me! I suppose you wish I'd go.

ETHEL. Oh, no, I am rather exhausted. Your—your prattle amuses me. You see I am used to you.

JERRY. I didn't know you ever got exhausted.

ETHEL. There are a good many things you don't know about me. A good many things you haven't seen. If one lives too close to a person one doesn't see things unless one naturally has abnormal eyes.

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JERRY. Too close? Well, I'd take the risk. I never see anything anyhow. I'm nothing but a blind puppy. Sometimes I feel things coming—like the storm today, the thunder storm and the psychic upheaval—I knew something was in the air—too heavy—something was going to bust.

ETHEL [*suddenly*]. Jerry, you were magnificent!

JERRY. Gee, I? What, when, how?

ETHEL. When you defended Aunt—when you came to her support and spoke right out from the shoulder. You were manly and fine and straight and to the point and strong. You were superb!

JERRY. My God, Ethel! You must be talking to somebody else, not me!

ETHEL. I always knew you had it in you and I always wanted you to assert yourself, and at last you have. You were perfectly splendid!

JERRY. Ethel, you darling! Are you quite sure you are talking about me?

ETHEL. Oh, quite. I never admired anyone so much in my life.

JERRY. Oh, you sweetheart! Ethel, I adore you!

ETHEL. No, you don't, Jerry. You have always detested me.

JERRY. I have always been in love with you ever since I can remember, but I never dared mention it because you have always been a walking iceberg to me.

ETHEL. Oh, Jerry!

JERRY. Do you think you won't freeze up again to me and stop the pipes of my emotions?

ETHEL [*with a deep sigh*]. Oh, Jerry!

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JERRY. Oh, you love! [*He steps towards her and is about to embrace her when Miss Gottschalk enters.*]

MISS GOTTSCHALK [*looking about*]. Where are they all?

JERRY [*shouting*]. Not here. Only us—Ethel and me.

MISS GOTTSCHALK. Has anything happened?

JERRY. Very much.

MISS GOTTSCHALK. Did those young fools come, perchance? Those two who were telephoned to in the presence of the stupid stone-deaf old woman. Oh, perhaps I made them a little uneasy later when I talked to them. Have they all gone?

JERRY. Yes, they've all gone—all—gone—home!

MISS GOTTSCHALK. All?

JERRY. ALL!

MISS GOTTSCHALK. Home?

JERRY. Home, James!

MISS GOTTSCHALK. That's good. Perhaps we can get off to Atlantic City now.

JERRY. You'd better go find Helen and propose it.

MISS GOTTSCHALK. I will. [*She goes.*]

JERRY [*after a brief intent moment of watching her safe out of sight*]. Ethel, do you think you could arrange to marry me tomorrow? I feel awfully restless and nervous and run down—I'd like so awfully to go off on a honeymoon. [*He kisses her as the curtain falls.*]

[CURTAIN TO ACT III AND TO THE PLAY.]

THE STORM.

A FARCE WITH A VISION.

CHARACTERS AS THEY APPEAR:

MOLLIE BARTON,
CLEMENTINE GARTH,

Slightly differentiated, the one by a sharper tongue, the other by a more patient heart. Perfectly capable of doing a day's washing, but devoting their energies to society and charity and living upon the bounty of their fashionable friends.

MAID.

MISS WATSON, *a thin, sallow person in mourning, boasting bereavements, a weak stomach, and perverse appetite.*

MRS. ADDISON, *a sweet, fat old lady devoted to duty which the dead-and-gone male members of her family patently neglected.*

MRS. STEIMER, *a plump blonde with an absence of sensitiveness.*

MRS. SMYTHE, *a thin, elderly, willowy widow, with a bubbling optimism.*

MISS HOLWORTHY, *healthy, hard, and with a fixed belief that you can pluck figs from thistles if you try hard enough.*

MRS. DRAHO, *small, and busy on her ladder, conscious that her husband's factory is more pro-*

THE STORM

ductive than a family tree. French poets have not yet dawned on her horizon, but her limousine always carries a bouquet.

MRS. LAWRENCE, *with a willingness to attempt anything that may counteract her tendency to obesity.*

MISS JOHNSON, *a very modest young teacher, who has been hired to tell the ladies what they want to know without trouble.*

THE SOLDIER.

[The Garden Club is about to meet at the home of one of its members, Mrs. Draho. The club is composed for the most part of ladies of the aristocracy of their city who live on polished floors and butlers inside their castles, and marble walks and gardeners outside. Mrs. Draho, the exception, has been admitted because of her notably wonderfully beautiful garden. Her drawing-room, where the meeting takes place, is not a gratification of huge expense of the nouveau riche, but is rather a curiously crowded display of taste in selection—a wholesale collection of selection, as it were, of Rococo tables, Louis Quinze chairs, gilded mirrors, Bohemian glass, Dresden china shepherdesses, etc. Mollie Barton and Clementine Garth are ushered in by an immaculate maid.]

CLEMENTINE. But Mrs. Draho is expecting us, isn't she?

MAID. Oh, yes, miss. Mrs. Draho was detained at the Red Cross and is just eating a bite of lunch. She wasn't expecting the ladies quite so early. She will be with you in a few moments.

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If you'll just make yourselves at home, please.
[*She goes.*]

MOLLIE. I came early purposely to get a look at her house before the meeting. I was afraid she'd have us out in the garden and never let us get a peep at the house.

CLEMENTINE. Yes, she would. Trust her to have us in the house. She knows everybody knows about her precious garden—she's digging her way into society through her garden—now she's got us here, she wouldn't let us escape without showing off the house. [*Looking around at things.*] Isn't it awful?

MOLLIE. Most curious place I ever saw. Curious is the word. It looks like a salesroom of curios. They say she had Albertus Darling furnish it for her, and it looks exactly like his store—jewelry and antiques.

CLEMENTINE. Albertus ought by rights to be a lady's maid instead of a jeweler.

MOLLIE. If he were, what in the world would people do for an extra man to fill in at dinner parties?

CLEMENTINE. Fill in or fill up?

MOLLIE. Oh, I said fill in. Albertus has the appetite of a cooing dove. That's another reason for inviting him, in addition to his wearing trousers—especially in war times—he's so cheap.

CLEMENTINE. Well, his things are not cheap. [*Looking about.*] He must have made a fortune on this deal.

MOLLIE. Very spiffy, eh? How many castles he must have rifled? I see English castles, one

THE STORM

German castle, one Italian palace, one French château—I say, isn't it funny it's always English and German castles, the others are châteaux, palaces, villas.

CLEMENTINE. Castles nothing. I see Paris pawn shops.

MOLLIE. Well, she ought to smash up this Dresden china junk, it's not patriotic to keep it. Turn it into shells and smash a Hun's mug with it.

CLEMENTINE. Break it up and use it for shell roads.

MOLLIE. Oh, come in, Clem, you're getting maudlin.

CLEMENTINE. I'm not as outrageous as you are, anyway, coming to a woman's house for the sole purpose of making fun of it. You're absolutely low and shameless.

MOLLIE. What else would I come for except the eats? I know they'll be *de luxe*, and that's what brought you here, you pure virgin.

CLEMENTINE. It will be a sell if they're not good after we've come such an outlandish distance. If they're not I'll never honor her with my presence again.

MOLLIE. Tut, tut. People who live on other people's ice-cream mustn't throw mud.

CLEMENTINE. Oh, don't be sanctimonious, Moll. You're as poor as I am.

MOLLIE. Poorer, my dear, if that's possible. I make no pretensions, I'm a little sister of the rich, my brother married money. We haven't had any money in our family since my great-grandfather married it. My grandfather and

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father lost it all. In our family it is three generations from marrying money to marrying money.

CLEMENTINE. We still drag along on the little my father didn't spend. I wish Isaac would marry money, but he's getting old—

MOLLIE. He's only forty.

CLEMENTINE. But he's blind of an eye and has no sense of smell, and all the debutantes are marrying chauffeurs that have got to be corporals. They seem to prefer them to perfectly good blind or deaf gentlemen. And Isaac has got himself perfectly enthralled in Bahaism. Whom are you going to get to take you home? We can't walk back—it's too terribly far from the car line.

MOLLIE. Why, you hypocritical cherub, you know we never walk. We only go with these dear old hens in order to ride in their limousines. I shall freeze on to Mrs. Smythe, the simple one, to take me along and drop me at my brother's. You'd better pick a limousine, too, and not an open car, because there will probably be a terrible thunder shower.

CLEMENTINE. You're popular with the dears because they like to hear you talk, but I never feel safe.

MOLLIE. Oh, hop-toads! There's no choice between us except I take more pains to polish up my adjectives. On the other hand, you're more interested in their ailments.

CLEMENTINE. I guess I'll go home with Miss Watson. It's Thursday, the maid's day out, and

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we won't have anything but canned salmon at home.

MOLLIE. Miss Watson lives perpetually on fatted calf, that's why the poor dear is eternally dyspeptic. But you'll have a re-hash of X-rays and stomach pumps.

CLEMENTINE. Moll, how do you happen to be in the Garden Club, anyhow?

MOLLIE. My brother married a garden, so I'm interested in hybrids.

CLEMENTINE. Or mongrels.

MOLLIE. How about you, my dear ingenuous debutante?

CLEMENTINE. Other people sat in my grandfather's garden, so I don't see why I shouldn't sit in other people's gardens. Besides, I have a geranium bed in the back yard.

MOLLIE. All gardens are alike to me. I walk in other people's gardens and enjoy the hollyhocks just as much as if I paid taxes on them. All my gardening is vicarious gardening. For that matter, there's a good deal of vicarious gardening.

CLEMENTINE. Here's Miss Lilly. [*Miss Watson enters.*] How do you do, Miss Lilly? I trust you're feeling better today?

MISS WATSON. I am, I *think* I am. I've gone to a new doctor.

CLEMENTINE. But, Miss Lilly, you *are* better, and you must keep on thinking so. I'm not a Christian Scientist or anything like that—

MOLLIE. Like that? you strange idiot. You either are a Christian Scientist or you're not—

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it's like having babies, you either have one or haven't, there's no half-way course.

CLEMENTINE. What I mean is, I think you can think a great deal—even when you go to a doctor.

MOLLIE. No, going to a doctor isn't a thinking process—it's purely emotional.

MISS WATSON. Well, I have this new doctor, a perfectly marvelous man, a stomach specialist. He won't touch anything but stomachs. He says no one has ever understood my case before, that all the other doctors' treatment has been altogether wrong, that it isn't physiological at all, but anatomical entirely, that my stomach is reversed—think of it—reversed. And he has put me on a stringent diet of beer and fried potatoes.

MOLLIE. That seems reasonable, if your stomach is reversed you should eat the reverse of what is generally considered digestible.

MISS WATSON. I hadn't thought of that.

MOLLIE. Perhaps it is the weight of the beer and potatoes that will turn your stomach over to its proper position.

[*Enter Mrs. Addison, Mrs. Steimer, and Mrs. Smythe. There are greetings.*]

MRS. ADDISON. How do you do, ladies? How do you do, Lilly. Welcome to our midst.

MRS. STEIMER [*to Miss Watson*]. Oh, is this your first meeting?

MISS WATSON. Yes. I have always meant to come into the Garden Club, but my health

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seemed never to permit it, and I am always in mourning.

MRS. ADDISON. You have had a good many bereavements, Lilly, haven't you?

MISS WATSON. I am the constant subject of bereavements. Nobody has as many bereavements as I do. But when I heard you were going to change from a flower garden to a war garden club I determined that, come what might, I would join. You see, in addition to wanting to be a patriot and do my bit, I am also personally interested in potatoes. I have to eat them now exclusively.

MOLLIE. Fried.

MRS. SMYTHE. Oh, my dear, not fried?

MISS WATSON. Yes, the doctor is very specific about their being fried.

MRS. STEIMER. But *fried* potatoes! They are so plebeian—what street-car conductors would eat.

MOLLIE. Not they, poor souls—with their cold lunches.

MRS. SMYTHE. But think how pleased Mr. Hoover would be with anybody's using a diet of nothing but potatoes. Why don't you send him a telegram, dear, telling him how patriotic you are?

MOLLIE. You might get a cross of—vegetable ivory.

[*Enter Mrs. Draho in a wonderful gown.*]

MRS. DRAHO. Oh, how do you do, ladies? Oh, I am so ashamed of myself for not being ready. I was kept at the Red Cross, and I just

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had to change my dress—I was so dirty, pot black! I thought you didn't meet till four and—excuse me, but the Garden Club has never been on time before and it isn't four yet.

MRS. STEIMER. I suppose we all came early for fear we wouldn't see enough of your beautiful [*looking about the room curiously*] garden.

MRS. DRAHO. Are you all here?

MOLLIE. Well, you know, we're never all there.

MRS. ADDISON. I think we might wait a few moments for some of the others to come.

CLEMENTINE. Especially as the lady who is to talk to us this afternoon isn't here yet.

MRS. SMYTHE. Oh, is there to be a lady to talk to us? How interesting! Who is she?

CLEMENTINE. Miss Johnson, of the Institute.

MISS WATSON. It sounds as if she were an insane person, but of course she couldn't be, could she, to address us? Is she an inmate?

CLEMENTINE. The Institute, dear lady, is our city educational institution—

MOLLIE. Easily confused with an asylum.

CLEMENTINE. A college, you know.

MISS WATSON. Oh, yes, of course, I had forgotten. It is the place here where the poor young men of the city go who can't afford to go away to Harvard. Is she a student there?

CLEMENTINE. Dear, no. She is a professor. She teaches domestic science.

MISS WATSON. Oh, indeed. Is domestic science something like Christian Science?

MOLLIE. They both belong to the same general family.

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MISS WATSON. I don't understand you, Mollie, though I know what you say must be witty—you are always so witty. I don't see the connection between Christian Science and a garden club—but there are so many things quite beyond me.

CLEMENTINE. She is going to tell us about vegetables.

MISS WATSON. I know—tomatoes are five cents apiece, my cook tells me. I have to buy them for the servants. They have to have so much. Of course I don't let them have bacon, but that makes them eat so many chickens.

MOLLIE. They are never on a diet of fried potatoes.

MRS. STEIMER. It is time that woman was here. It is just like a woman of her class to keep us all waiting.

MOLLIE. If she doesn't hurry up she'll be sprinkled. It's been sultry all day and the clouds are gathering fast—faster than we are.

MRS. ADDISON. Was some one going to bring her here?

MRS. DRAHO. Oh, no, she can come on the street car and then walk the rest of the way. She was given directions how to find the place.

MRS. SMYTHE. Maybe some of us ought to take her home.

MRS. STEIMER. Oh, someone can drive her to the nearest car line.

[Mrs. Lawrence and Miss Holworthy arrive, and there are greetings.]

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MRS. STEIMER. Don't you think we can begin now?

MRS. ADDISON. I don't like to begin till all the ladies who are coming are here. Do you think any more will come, Mrs. Draho?

MRS. DRAHO. Well, I'm sure I couldn't say. They didn't any of them let me know.

MISS WATSON. Really, Clem, I'm all in a flutter. I wonder if it will hurt my stomach? Because this is my first woman's club meeting. I have always been so afraid of ladies' clubs, they know so much. I am acquainted with all of you, and yet in a club you positively intimidate me. If I am called upon for anything I feel sure I shan't find my tongue.

MOLLIE. You won't be called upon for your tongue—only a tomato plant.

MRS. LAWRENCE. You see the purpose of the garden club was really for the exchange of plants. If I had a rose of a particularly fine variety—

MRS. SMYTHE. But you haven't, have you?

MRS. LAWRENCE. I would exchange cuttings of it for something you would have.

MRS. SMYTHE. But you haven't any roses, my dear.

MRS. DRAHO. You have something I do want so awfully, Mrs. Lawrence—your columbine.

MRS. ADDISON. Oh, yes, your columbines are famous.

MRS. SMYTHE. I'll give you some of my canterbury bells for your columbine.

MRS. STEIMER. Oh, we all want some of your columbine.

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MRS. LAWRENCE [*who, be it remembered, is huge, speaking grandiloquently and pugnaciously*]. They are not for exchange. Anyone that gets my columbine will have to do it over my dead body. [*There is a moment's embarrassed silence.*]

MRS. ADDISON. Shall we begin, ladies?

CLEMENTINE. Maybe your Miss Johnson is afraid of the rain and isn't coming.

MRS. STEIMER. Oh, no, people of that sort go out in all weathers.

MISS HOLWORTHY. I think it is outrageous for us to be so slipshod in the way we conduct business. We haven't any parliamentary rules, at all. We don't pay any attention to parliamentary order. The reason the Germans and the suffragists have got ahead so is that they are so methodical and efficient.

MRS. STEIMER. That's perfectly plain, and we ought to fight the Germans and the suffragists with their own weapons.

MISS HOLWORTHY. Exactly. We ought to fight them with method and efficiency.

MRS. ADDISON [*nodding*]. I've heard my dear son use those terms.

MRS. STEIMER. We've all heard the men use them.

MISS HOLWORTHY. Oh, yes, use the terms. But in the Garden Club we don't use method and efficiency. We sit around like a pack of hens.

MRS. SMYTHE [*ecstatically*]. Oh, my dear, you ought to be a four-minute man. You would be an inspiration to anybody. You are a burning torch.

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MISS HOLWORTHY [*somewhat soothed*]. Well, I think it is outrageous for us to be so slipshod. The reason the working classes have formed unions and all that and socialism has got so dangerous and everything, is that the women of the—the aristocracy—are so—so slipshod.

MRS. LAWRENCE. Wages have gone up terribly. Why you have to pay an upstairs maid eight dollars a week now.

MOLLIE. Upstairs maids have gone up.

MRS. STEIMER. You can't get a good cook any more.

CLEMENTINE. They have all gone into the army to cook mess and the women cooks have all gone into the hotels. They say they will have to employ women chefs in the hotels exclusively.

MOLLIE. They are using girls for elevator boys and even for starters. It always did take a woman to start things.

MISS HOLWORTHY. Is this a garden club or is it not? As I was saying, we ought to use parliamentary laws.

MRS. ADDISON. But, my dear, I am your president and I don't know anything about parliamentary laws.

MRS. STEIMER. We don't any of us.

MRS. ADDISON [*rather tremulously*]. I am afraid you made me your president just because of my age.

MISS WATSON [*forgetting her timidity*]. I think that's a very good reason. All the presidents of banks are old men.

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MRS. SMYTHE. Oh, my dear, you were the natural president because you have the biggest garden.

MRS. LAWRENCE. That's the way things are done. In a business company the richest man, the one that has the most stock is always the one that's elected president of the company.

MRS. ADDISON. I may have the largest garden, but I am sure it isn't the choicest. I'm very humble about it. And now that we're going to be a war garden club I am sure mine will not excel. I have always had a small vegetable garden because I always go to my summer cottage in Mt. Desert for the warm months.

MRS. STEIMER. I wish we could have another Red Cross drive. My little girls enjoyed it so. They were out every afternoon and had a perfectly wonderful time, and they looked so cunning in the costume. I had a corking time myself.

MRS. DRAHO. It *was* fun, wasn't it? I stood and rattled my tin-cup in front of the bank just like a Salvation Army lassie and held up all my husband's friends as they went in. It was like a play. I just love things where you have to dress up. Don't you think we could give another fête? For the Italian orphans or something?

MRS. STEIMER. It would be fun. We could have an East Indian booth. The costumes are so becoming.

MRS. LAWRENCE. Well, *I* can wear almost any kind of costume. They're all becoming to me. But I have to wear my glasses [*they are*

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large tortoise-shell rims] and my ground-gripper shoes.

MRS. SMYTHE. Oh, you look lovely, sweetheart, in anything. You have so much presence. And those veils the Oriental women wear would *partly* cover your glasses.

MRS. DRAHO. Oh, here is Miss Johnson. [*She arises and goes to greet the stranger, who comes in puffing and hot and very apologetic for being late.*]

MISS JOHNSON. Oh, I am so sorry to have kept you waiting.

MRS. ADDISON [*kindly and benevolently*]. We have been having a very pleasant time, my dear, while we were waiting. Don't upbraid yourself in the least. We always have a pleasant time.

MISS JOHNSON. I lost my way. It was very stupid of me—I walked a mile up the wrong road and had to come back.

MRS. STEIMER. But you were given instructions just how to get here?

MISS JOHNSON. Oh, yes, I made a mistake in the turn of the road—it was all my fault—it was all my own stupidity. I am always doing things like that.

MRS. STEIMER. Perhaps you are the sort of person that is always unfortunate. There are such people, you know.

MISS JOHNSON [*resignedly*]. Maybe I am.

MRS. ADDISON. Now that you are here at last, you can tell us so much about what we want to know—what we *need* to know.

MISS WATSON. Oh, is the meeting actually going to begin? I am all in a flutter!

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MRS. ADDISON. What was the subject you were going to address us upon?

MISS JOHNSON. The food values of our common vegetables.

MRS. ADDISON. Oh, yes, to be sure. The food values of our common vegetables. Ladies, Miss Johnson of the Institute will now address us on the very important subject of the food values of our common vegetables.

MRS. LAWRENCE. Food values, indeed. It is the *money* values of vegetables that people are interested in. With tomatoes at seven cents apiece and peas at forty cents a small measure.

MRS. SMYTHE. Dear me, are they so high? My housekeeper hadn't told me.

MRS. STEIMER. High? Why, they sell onions and cabbage by the pound now. Think of it!

MOLLIE. Even the low-brow yellow banana is not sold now in families of a dozen, but as an individual.

MISS HOLWORTHY [*in wrath*]. Is this a market quotation or is it a garden club? Are we going to listen to Miss Johnson or are we not?

MRS. ADDISON. Yes, yes, of course. Ladies, we are now going to listen to Miss Johnson of the Institute address us on the subject of valuable vegetables as food.

MISS WATSON. Oh, I am so excited!

MISS JOHNSON [*modest, slow, and apologetic always*]. Ladies, in talking to you about—about—about the subject Mrs. Addison has just mentioned, I feel that I ought to apologise to the

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members of the Garden Club who must know so much more about vegetables than I do.

MISS HOLWORTHY [*cynically*]. We don't know beans about anything. We've been a flower-garden club—just little ephemeral butterflies is what *we* are, without any system or efficiency or parliamentary rules or anything.

MRS. LAWRENCE. But now we are turning into a war garden club.

MRS. SMYTHE. Just like a butterfly turning into a moth. [*Smiling delightedly.*]

MISS HOLWORTHY. We're going to get some efficiency into us if we have to dig to China for it. [*She grits her teeth.*]

MOLLIE [*aside to Clementine*]. She'll get efficiency into us if she has to wring our necks to do it.

[*There is a moment's lull, then Miss Johnson resumes hesitatingly in an effort to give her lecture.*]

MISS JOHNSON. It is only in recent years that people have begun to think about food values.

MRS. LAWRENCE. Well, it's only since the war began that food has been so high. Why, you have to pay fifteen cents a loaf for Peterson's bread now that used to be eight.

MISS HOLWORTHY. You ought to be willing and glad to pay it. You ought to be willing to *starve*.

MRS. LAWRENCE. Well, I am. I'm as patriotic as anybody. I'm perfectly willing to *starve*, or, what is worse, I'm willing to eat the saw-dust

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they give us in bread, but what I do object to is the grocers making money off us.

MRS. STEIMER. That's it exactly—they make money while we have to do without the things we need. Why, my husband was going to buy two new automobiles this spring, as usual, he always does—one for the family and one for himself,—and our grocers' bills had gone up so he said he just couldn't afford to—he could only afford to buy one and the family would have to do with the old one. Of course that means using a last year's model. It seems perfectly absurd not to be able to afford what you need and to have to put so much money into mere food.

MISS JOHNSON [*very hesitatingly*]. There are people, you know—poor people—who always have to put everything they make into food.

MRS. LAWRENCE. They do that—they eat up all they make—they're perfect gluttons.

MRS. DRAHO. They eat up everything they make, when they ought to be saving nine-tenths of their wages.

MISS HOLWORTHY [*furiously*]. Is this a garden club or is it not?

MISS JOHNSON [*slowly—she is a sweet, simple soul, who speaks always with modesty and hesitation*]. Now there are a great many people who do not know very much about the properties of fats and starch and sugars.

MRS. STEIMER [*groaning*]. Sugar is so high.

CLEMENTINE. Have you heard about the—the—maybe I'd better not mention the name—a family out in Glen Arden, who had their house

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filled with stores? The government officers got on to it and found five barrels of sugar in their attic.

MISS HOLWORTHY. They ought to be interned.

CLEMENTINE. But they're Americans.

MISS HOLWORTHY. I don't care—they ought to be interned.

MRS. LAWRENCE. Well, I have a good deal laid away.

MRS. STEIMER. You have to have.

MRS. DRAHO. They say at Atlantic City you can't get sugar for love nor money. You just have to tip the waiters hugely at every meal continuously.

MRS. STEIMER. Talking about sugar and vegetables, when there is such a shortage of sugar I have been thinking of something. They talk so much about beet sugar—now I don't see why we couldn't just use beets—just plain beets, you know, instead of sugar or molasses or syrups.

MOLLIE. That beats the juice.

MISS HOLWORTHY. Is this a garden club, and are we going to listen to Miss Johnson or are we not?

[In the momentary silence Miss Johnson resumes.]

MISS JOHNSON. Well—er—er—as you probably all know, vegetables differ somewhat in their properties of starch and sugar and—

MRS. LAWRENCE. Well, personally, I have cut out sugar. My doctor says it's fattening, so I'm glad to give my share to the soldiers.

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MRS. SMYTHE [*smiling benignly*]. I'm sure that's doing *your* bit.

MRS. STEIMER. Personally, I don't care for beets, they seem to me so plebeian, but I'm perfectly willing to raise a lot of them—for the people, you know, to use in place of sugar. Have you put any beets in?

MRS. LAWRENCE. No, I put all my garden in corn. I'm very fond of corn.

MRS. SMYTHE. It always gives me a violent indigestion.

MRS. LAWRENCE. Corn? How absurd! Corn couldn't disagree with anybody. I've put all my garden in corn, and I'm going to keep half of it myself and send the other half to the Red Cross or the Y. M. C. A., or something.

MRS. SMYTHE. It might be sent to the orphans in Italy.

MRS. LAWRENCE. We were a little late getting it in, but the cunning little blades are all beginning to show now. It's only July and there's all the rest of the summer for it to grow in—if it only gets plenty of rain.

MOLLIE. It will get some this afternoon. The storm is coming fast.

MRS. SMYTHE. You know what they say about putting all your eggs in one basket. I thought of that, and so instead of trusting to one vegetable I have put *everything* in my garden. Onions and turnips and corn and rhubarb—I had James put them all in together early in the spring. James never gardened before—he has always been a

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butler, but he is as interested in gardening now as I am.

MRS. STEIMER. Are your vegetables all doing well?

MRS. SMYTHE. That's the advantage of not having all your eggs in one basket, you know. They all started well, the dear little green things, though of course most of them have died.

MISS WATSON [*with an access at last of daring*]. I haven't started my garden yet, but I'm going to have nothing but mushrooms. I'm so fond of them, and they take the place of meat, you know. I am going to have an entire acre ploughed up for a garden for them, and I shall keep only half of them myself and send the other half to the soldiers in France. I know I'm a little late starting my garden, but mushrooms grow so fast, and with all the hot summer sun I'm sure there ought to be a big crop by September.

MISS HOLWORTHY [*groaning*]. *Is this a practical garden club conducted with method and efficiency or is it not? And are we going to listen to Miss Johnson or are we not?*

[*There is a moment's pause, then Miss Johnson tentatively resumes.*]

MISS JOHNSON. As I was saying, starch—

CLEMENTINE. I suppose we'll be eating the laundry starch soon and go without it in our clothes.

MOLLIE. Wearing it inside instead of out.

MRS. LAWRENCE. Well, the doctors say starch

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is fattening like sugar. I have tried to cut out all starchy and saccharine foods, but there is so little left to eat.

MRS. SMYTHE. You do look starved, darling.

MRS. DRAHO. You can't tell from people's being fat whether they are big eaters or not. Some of the fattest people are the smallest eaters and some of the thinnest people are huge eaters.

MOLLIE. It seems to me I have heard that statement before.

CLEMENTINE. Winifred always says it whenever Charlie's size is mentioned. Charlie has an enormous appetite—everybody knows it. He always eats everything in sight.

MRS. STEIMER. He must be trained down now that he has been in an officers' reserve camp.

CLEMENTINE. I don't see how Charlie can get to be an officer. Why, he never passed an examination in his life.

MRS. STEIMER. But you know his uncle is a senator.

CLEMENTINE. Winifred has so many service flags for Charlie. She had them all made of satin and trimmed with gold fringe—one in the front door, one in each automobile, one at the garage, one on his locker at the golf club, one on each of the servants.

MRS. SMYTHE. That must be so encouraging to the people. The more service flags they see the more will they be influenced to enlist. We of our class must do all in our power to show the people an example of patriotism and zeal.

MRS. STEIMER. That is exactly why we women

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should wear our service flags all the time as encouragement and example to the people. It isn't ostentation at all.

MOLLIE. There's thunder.

CLEMENTINE [*to Mrs. Steimer*]. Who is your service flag for?

MRS. STEIMER. My nephew. I have only two little daughters myself, but my nephew represents the family.

MRS. SMYTHE. I wear mine for a cousin's son.

MISS WATSON. I wear mine for a cousin.

MRS. DRAHO. I wear mine for my brother-in-law.

MOLLIE. I wear mine for my sister-in-law's son.

MRS. LAWRENCE. I wear mine for my niece's brother-in-law.

MRS. ADDISON. Well, I wear mine for my own dear boy.

CLEMENTINE. Isn't it strange that out of all of us Mrs. Addison is the only one who actually has a son in the service?

MOLLIE. Oh, I don't know. A good many of us couldn't very decently have sons, could we? You or I or Miss Lily or Miss Anne—

MISS HOLWORTHY. Is this a garden club or not, and are you going to let Miss Johnson talk or not?

[They all subside, and Miss Johnson hesitantly clears her throat and begins again.]

MISS JOHNSON. Different vegetables differ in their food values and they also differ in the

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amounts of starch they contain and of sugar, and so on.

MRS. STEIMER. I adore all vegetables. I am a perfect vegetarian.

MRS. DRAHO. Well, I think we have all been eating too much meat. It seems to me that this war garden movement is valuable that way, too. It will make people raise more vegetables and naturally be more interested in eating them.

MRS. LAWRENCE. Well, the people need food containing calor'ies—or is it pronounced cal'ories?

MOLLIE. I don't know—you always say chol'eric old gentlemen.

MRS. LAWRENCE. One can never tell where the accent falls in these Greek derivations.

MRS. SMYTHE. And caffeine—they need a great deal of caffeine, too—or is it that they *don't* need it? I never can remember.

CLEMENTINE. There's thunder again. Do you notice how dark it's getting?

MISS WATSON. Oh, I hope we are not going to have a storm. I am so timid in storms.

MRS. STEIMER. The war garden movement is valuable that way. It does interest people in vegetables and they naturally like to eat their own vegetables. And then when there are so many vegetables growing there is the natural tendency to eat them.

MOLLIE. I suppose that's the way cannibals feel.

MISS WATSON. Oh, it is a wonderful movement, isn't it?

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MRS. STEIMER. And then our having war gardens is such a splendid example to the people.

MRS. SMYTHE. And it is doing our bit. [*Smiling delightedly.*]

MISS HOLWORTHY. I haven't seen that we've done much yet. Are you going to listen to Miss Johnson?

CLEMENTINE. There's thunder again. My, but it's getting dark.

MISS WATSON. Oh, do you think we are going to have a very awful storm? I *am* so timid in storms.

CLEMENTINE. I am afraid it is going to be a hard storm. It is getting dark so rapidly.

MRS. STEIMER. I don't in the least mind. I adore storms. There is something wonderful and big in the crashing of a storm.

MRS. ADDISON. Over there at the battle front it must be like a great storm all the time. I always think in a storm that it is like what my boy is experiencing, and I like to feel that I am near him then.

MRS. LAWRENCE. Another reason why the war garden movement is excellent is that the exercise is so fine for the people. Of course I went into it purely with unselfish motives—only with the desire to do my bit—but I do hope that the exercise may reduce me some. I intend to spade and hoe and rake and do everything, just as if I were a peasant.

MRS. SMYTHE. That's the spirit of democracy—isn't it splendid?

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MRS. LAWRENCE. I should hope it might reduce me twenty pounds in the season.

MRS. SMYTHE. Oh, it will be beneficial to the health of all of us.

MOLLIE. It is getting perfectly pitch black.

MISS WATSON. Oh, I am so terrified! Mrs. Draho, is your house wired for lightning?

MOLLIE. I don't see how we can go on. We can't see each other talk.

MRS. DRAHO. Shall I turn on the lights?

MISS WATSON. Oh, no, please don't turn on the lights! I am so afraid to have the electricity turned on.

MRS. STEIMER. No, don't turn on the lights—I love to watch the storm.

MRS. SMYTHE. I never saw anything come on so rapidly.

MOLLIE. It has been brewing all afternoon. Things come that way—slowly, and you don't notice them till they suddenly break.

CLEMENTINE. Just like the war.

MRS. STEIMER. It is black as midnight.

MISS WATSON. Oh, I am so terrified. Do you think it will strike us?

MRS. ADDISON. We are under shelter. I keep thinking it is like what my boy is hearing.

[It grows very dark, so that objects on the stage become so dim they are scarcely seen at all. At the back suddenly appears a light, so that the stage is in complete darkness. In the light there is a vision of a young soldier, screened off, and therefore somewhat indistinct. He is

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in khaki, dressed as he would be in the trenches, rather battered and worn. He moves about a little as if restless and with something on his mind, finally stands perfectly still, folds his arms across his breast and stares straight ahead, his eyes somewhat cast upward, as if looking into the far distance.]

SOLDIER. Mother—dear! [*He speaks at first slowly, his voice low and tense as if with a supreme effort to carry through his intent.*] Mother, I am feeling so very near you tonight. I want to write you a letter, for if anything happens to me tomorrow I'd like you to know that you had my last word, my last thought. We've been ordered to attack at dawn, and I shall be in the first line. It's not the big offensive—if that is ever going to come, and I hope it will soon, God knows—it's just going to be a little skirmish, but one can get killed in a small skirmish as well as in a big offensive, and I somehow feel so at the end of things that it makes me think seriously perhaps this is my last night. Night! Yes, deep night here with us, but I always calculate the difference of time, and it's only afternoon with you—yesterday afternoon. I want with all my heart to write you a letter—if only just a note of my love and thought of you, but we are not permitted even a match now here in the front trenches. I don't know whether there's anything in telepathy or not—[*he speaks slowly, wonderingly*] sometimes I think there is. Anyhow, it's all I've got now between me and you. And I'm going to try it—

THE STORM

to feel and think as intensely to you as I can and to talk to you. Do you hear me, dear? Oh, be near me, Mother! I have only a few moments left with you, for we have work to do before the attack, which is to begin at daybreak.

I've done what I wanted to do, the right and glorious thing, the only thing possible for me to do, even if I take my life away from you and you are left desolate. You must be satisfied and proud, for it's a big thing to be able to fight in this war. Better fellows than I have been ruled out, unfit because of eyes or heart or something. I was sound and healthy and your harum-scarum, happy-go-lucky kid has stood hardships you would never believe possible for me to stand.

It's been so different from what I expected, so very much harder and more awful and nicer, too, in some ways. The quaint little villages and the lovely country, the deep woods. Spring was lovely. Spring in France is marvelous, or rather summer, for it was like jumping from winter into summer—wonderful after the long, long weeks of grey and cold, slime and mud and ice, and day after day of lead-color skies, then suddenly orchards blooming everywhere and birds up in the woods singing all day long. I love to listen to them, especially the cuckoos at daybreak. I remember a corner of a field full of buttercups by a forest—birds calling from the woods, cuckoos and wood-pigeons, such a beautiful, marvelous world of blue and green, of sweet, fresh spring, country smells.

That on the one side and then these trenches,

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these horrible holes in the ground where men and rats and vermin live side by side, and there is mud and slimy straw and worse—and stench. And when the weather is hot that pungent, sickening, awful smell of rotting bodies out in No-Man's Land. I smelled it once all mixed up with the scent of blossoming orchards.

There's no glory in the trenches, no glory in this sort of warfare. It's just brute endurance of what your soul hates, just stolid determination to carry on. When a rat runs over my foot, or I reach under my shirt to kill a louse, I just keep my lips shut, because I know it's all in the big game and can't be helped, and I'm better off than the fellow next me, who has a weak stomach yet never says a word of complaint about anything. That's about all the valor there can be in this kind of war—keeping your mouth shut and keeping your head if you can when you feel yourself going crazy. And the firing. Sometimes it's just a little spitting and cracking, sometimes the great huge booming, the shrieking, bursting of shells, cannonading. A big thunderstorm at home gives you a little idea of it. But I wouldn't be anywhere else, dear. I'm standing it, for I'm fighting for what I believe in with every drop of my blood. I'm in the big game, and I know that here is honesty and straightforwardness. Here is no sham, no littleness, no sentimentality, no parade of false virtues. It's a struggle, it's life shorn of all parlor tricks.

I can't talk to you any longer, Mother. I wonder if you hear, if you see me? It's night

THE STORM

and dark here, because it's cloudy. I don't see the moon or a star. It's yesterday afternoon with you. I wonder if you're in the garden—your pretty garden that I used to look down into from my bed-room window in the morning. I wonder if you have many roses this year and if there are any gold-fish in the pool? I think I'll have the pool deepened when I get home, so I can swim in it. That'll be hard on the gold-fish. There, I'm called. I've got to go, dear. There are things to do. We attack at daybreak.

[He ceases speaking. The vision disappears and the room is left in darkness for a few moments. Then the light comes on and the ladies are seen seated as before.]

MRS. DRAHO *[at the door]*. Well, that was the most awful storm. I am so sorry you were left in the dark. I tried my best to turn on the lights, but it seemed the electricity wouldn't work. *[The maid speaks to her at the door. She answers, then turns back to the group.]* Oh, Mrs. Addison, there is someone wants to speak to you, a message. *[Mrs. Addison gets up and goes out, followed by Mrs. Draho.]*

MRS. STEIMER. I wonder if possibly the house was struck?

MISS WATSON. Oh, do you think it could have been? I am all in a tremor. I do believe I had a shock.

MOLLIE. If it had been struck all the wires would have been knocked out, and you see the lights are all right now.

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MISS WATSON. I feel sure something must have been struck. I feel positive I have had a shock.

MOLLIE. It's still raining. It's going to be sloppy going home. I think it's going to keep on raining all evening.

[Mrs. Draho re-enters looking white and frightened. They all gaze at her.]

MRS. DRAHO. I have some bad news. It has just come. Mrs. Addison has been sent for. Her son has been killed. It happened some time ago, but the word has just come through Washington. Her housekeeper came over to tell her and take her home. It seems he was in an attack. He would have received the cross of honor. Maybe it will be sent to her.

MRS. SMYTHE. He was her youngest, her baby, the only one she had left, the others died years ago. And he was only twenty-one.

MOLLIE. But he was doing something. He was leading his life splendidly. He was straight and honest. He was doing something great. And then—there must have been something else—he must have seen buttercups and heard wood-pigeons and watched the dawn.

[CURTAIN.]

IN HEAVEN

PERSONS:

GEORGE THE THIRD.
LOUIS THE FOURTEENTH.
FREDERICK THE GREAT.
JULIUS CÆSAR.

TIME:

A MOMENT IN THE GREAT WAR.

[*The scene is in Heaven. The lighting is dim and seems to come up from below in a faint, rosy glow, for obvious reasons. On some nice comfortable soft grey clouds three shades are sitting; another, remote in spirit, stands balancing himself sedately on a cloud in the background. Although clad in soft and rather filmy draperies, these three are robust shades. They wear their crowns or halos, but have stacked their harps together on another cloud nearby. One of them, Frederick, is peering with deep interest in front of him down below whence comes the rosy glow. One, Louis, more interested in himself than in anything else, is, however, observing the remote and solitary shade. One of them, George, has a spy-glass and an ear-trumpet and is absorbed in watching and listening to what is going on away off to the right.*]

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GEORGE [*moving restlessly on his seat as if trying to get a better view, shifting his spy-glass and ear-trumpet, and speaking somewhat irritably*]. The clouds get in my way so! It's hard enough anyhow to watch what is going on down on the Earth—what with comets flying by and shooting stars—and it's hard enough at best to see through the Milky Way. But now there are so many clouds hanging about the Earth, particularly over the spot of Europe. They get in my way fearfully.

LOUIS [*laughing*]. They are not the first thing that's been in your way, Georgie. It seems to me I can remember several things. You have the habit of getting yourself in front of obstacles. George Washington was one of them, for instance.

GEORGE [*exploding*]. Louis, don't you ever dare to speak to me of that man!

FREDERICK. It is the war they are having down on the Earth that makes the clouds. The explosion of gunpowder always brings rain.

LOUIS. Keep your mouth shut, Fritz! We have decided to hold no further conversation with you—in short, to cut you dead.

CÆSAR [*somber and speaking in a melancholy tone of voice*]. Why are you gentlemen quarreling so? It reminds me painfully of the days of the First Triumvirate, which brings back the melancholy remembrance of my death. But would you mind telling me who you all are? I am a lonely ghost and should enjoy the pleasure of your acquaintance. I myself am Caius Julius

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Cæsar, commonly known by the last name in the series, merely.

GEORGE. Oh, yes, Cæsar! A good old Bible name.

FREDERICK [*jumping up to go over and grasp the hand of Cæsar*]. Damned glad to know you, Cæsar! I have always thought that you and I were kindred spirits—that is, when you were in your prime.

LOUIS. There, there, none of that, Fritz! If you keep on being obtrusive, you'll be thrust into the outer darkness. Don't shake hands with him, Cæsar, my friend. You are an Italian, remember.

FREDERICK [*laughing derisively*]. A Dago—ha-ha!

LOUIS. M. Cæsar, I am most happy to present my friend, George the Third of England, and myself, Louis the Fourteenth of France. This ruffian here is Frederick of Prussia. We are on friendly terms with him, or the reverse, according to whether our nations are at war with each other or not. At present we are down on him fearfully and are ignoring and insulting him as much as possible. I must confess, M. Cæsar, that I would have preferred you to be Nero or even Augustus. Nevertheless I am delighted to meet you, and I have a great mind to create you the Comte de Tiber. No! I have it! I will create you Comte de Marche, because you made so many splendid marches.

CÆSAR [*wailingly*]. Oh, don't mention March! The idea of March brings back the Ides of March, which are a most unhappy recollection.

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GEORGE. By George, man, why are you so somber and pathetic and melancholy, as if you were trying to impersonate Sir Henry Irving?

CÆSAR [*sighing*]. It is one of the tragedies of the after-life that we spirits must take the form of the popular image of us down on the Earth. Now Shakespeare ruined me. Of course, I was never remarkably robust, but I was athletic and military and developed myself to the very utmost. And I was a successful general, if I do say it myself. I should prefer to go through Eternity with some of the virility of my middle-age. But Shakespeare chose to describe me in my latter days, when my system was somewhat shattered by those unfortunate fits I had had all my life, and henceforth throughout Eternity I must always be Shakespeare's Julius Cæsar, the mere ghost of my real self.

GEORGE. It's lucky for me that no playwright depicted me in my latter days of insanity. It would be horribly unpleasant to have to be insane throughout Eternity. I should hate it.

LOUIS. You are safe from dramatists, Georgie. Your madness wasn't interesting enough. You were commonplace in that as in everything else.

CÆSAR [*meditatively*]. I understand a man has written a book called Shakespeare's Julius Cæsar. That's all I am. The skull that once was Yorrick! Think of it! Ah! [*Sighs deeply.*]

FREDERICK [*blustering*]. I don't believe it. I don't believe any of it. You are practically acknowledging that a weakling dramatist is of more importance than a great general. That his

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written word lives and that he has an influence on thought, that he influences and makes history. Fudge! Pst! Pah!

CÆSAR [*going on absent-mindedly in his own sad trend of thought*]. It is pleasanter to die young and live on throughout Eternity in the bloom of youth. Look at Rupert Brooke and Keats, for instance, in the Poets' Pasture of the Elysian Fields. There's a happy fate for you!

LOUIS. Oh, la, Heaven is full of the young just at present. They didn't have time to be bad, poor little fellows! The war got them first. But the other place will fill up with the old as time goes on.

CÆSAR. Yes, those who made the war have got to die some time.

FREDERICK. Well, for me, I'm glad I didn't die young. It's more sport to live longer and fight a few wars and extend your kingdoms and rule with a rod of iron.

LOUIS. Silence, Fritz! Who are you, to presume to speak?

GEORGE [*fixing his spy-glass and ear-trumpet again*]. The comfortable thing about Heaven is that here we can know all about what is going on in the world without the great bother of living.

FREDERICK. Oh, comfort! I call that pure laziness. I'd much rather be in the thick of the fight.

LOUIS. Silence, Fritz!

GEORGE. Here in Heaven we know what's going on before and after we died.

CÆSAR. Heaven, as you call it, is the place

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where "we look before and after and sigh for what is not."

FREDERICK. Oh, everybody knows that what you are sighing for, Cæsar, is a crown. You didn't get it, and that is why you are everlastingly discontented. The idea of refusing a crown! You beat the Jews!

GEORGE [*meditatively*]. It is true that he wasn't a king. The fact is that Cæsar was only a near-king. [*After the briefest pause as if cogitating over the idea.*] I don't know that he ought to be allowed in this group—that he has the right to be associating with us.

LOUIS. Well, George, pardon me, but if my family tree were as bourgeois as yours, I don't think I'd bring up the subject of qualifications for royalty at all. The fact is that I am the only one among you who is in every inch a king. We French are a very modest people. Our modesty is founded on our innate understanding of our own superiority over all others. Noblesse oblige.

GEORGE [*listening with his ear-trumpet*]. I heard a queer thing just now down on the Earth. Some one said that the only place left for kings nowadays is the comic-opera stage. What do you suppose he meant by that?

LOUIS. He meant "after us the deluge."
[*Laughs.*]

GEORGE. I don't understand.

LOUIS. You never did understand.

CÆSAR [*turning to them wearily*]. Whom are the Romans fighting now?

GEORGE. Oh, the Huns, as usual.

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FREDERICK. Dummkopf! Give me the glass! [*Seizes it.*] You English have a way of telling things so as to make a man believe everything you say. [*Looking through the glass.*] Hah! It is as I thought, the Germans are victorious! They are at present conducting a victorious retreat. The Prussians are always victorious. No matter how things turn out, no matter where they are, no matter what the people think, Prussians are always victorious. Es geht ohne sagen. A Prussian understands that, whether anyone else does or not. It is in his will.

LOUIS. Rude ruffian, where are your manners?

FREDERICK. Why have manners when one may have efficiency? The end justifies the means.

LOUIS. Rude ruffian, give me the glass! [*With a grand flourish he seizes the glass and stands peering through it.*] Ah, it is as I thought. The victory is to the French. They have done all the fighting. Their generals are superb. Everything is in France. The German army—dogs—is there, the English army is there, the little Yankees are there. France—ah, France is the centre of the universe!

CÆSAR. Let me look through your peculiar reed. [*He takes the glass and gazes through it.*] I knew I could not be mistaken. The Romans—Italians, as you call them—have won the war. It is their gallant fighting that has saved the day.

GEORGE. Oh, talk all you like, but you are talking rot. When it comes to dividing the spoils, you'll find out who won the war. The English.

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FREDERICK. Well, I don't care how much you all boast, just so you don't give any credit to those fool Americans. Let's keep the credit among ourselves here in Europe.

CÆSAR. Yes, keep the credit here in Europe, for the gold is in America.

LOUIS. Silence, Fritz! What have you to do with it? We pet the little Yankees and pat them on the back and kiss them on both cheeks.

GEORGE. Oh, what do you know about it, either of you? [*Listening with his ear-trumpet and both eyes tight shut.*] They belong to me, those Americans.

FREDERICK. Devil they do! Maybe they did once.

GEORGE. They do again. You keep your awkward feet out of it. Everybody knows you brought on the war. I wouldn't have cared so much—none of us kings would—but the dire outcome of it is that those fool Yankees got busy about democracy, and that bloody Woody Wilson, with all his insinuations and suggestions, started your Germans to thinking, with the awful result that they turned themselves into a republic and—well, where is it going to end? Looks as if it would end with the end of us kings and all our families on the Earth. That would be a nice state of affairs, wouldn't it?

LOUIS. It wouldn't be a state at all. *I* am the State.

GEORGE. It sounds as though even that perfectly inoffensive chap, George the Fifth, would have to abdicate. He does no harm. He doesn't

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do a thing but keep up appearances and the social expense budget, and somebody has got to do that in an aristocracy.

CÆSAR [*reflectively*]. The Romans never abdicated. They always stabbed them. [*Shivers.*]

LOUIS. The French used the guillotine a good deal.

CÆSAR [*again peering through the telescope*]. In Russia and some places they seem to shoot them.

GEORGE. Is the Czar killed again? The English court cannot go into mourning for him every time he's killed. Still, it impresses the people.

LOUIS. Listen, if you can all keep a secret, I'll tell you where the Czar is.

FREDERICK. You? How do you know? I don't believe it.

LOUIS. Who should know better than I? Paris always knows where discharged monarchs are. But you mustn't let it creep out. It mustn't be known on the Earth.

GEORGE. Well, none of us ever walks on the Earth except Cæsar.

CÆSAR. You mustn't upbraid me. It isn't kind of you to upbraid me. You know perfectly well that it is Shakespeare's fault that my ghost walks, and anyhow my ghost never warns or advises or tells heavenly secrets. It only visits—like relatives or a bad conscience.

LOUIS. Well, then, listen. The Czar of all the Russians has been shaved and let his hair grow and parted it, and is at present working demurely

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on a nice celery farm just out of Kalamazoo, Michigan.

GEORGE. Where is Michigan? I never heard of it.

LOUIS. It is one of your lost provinces.

GEORGE. Oh, the devil! I tell you they have come back.

LOUIS. Not they. You wait and see. America is too gay a place for the people to want to leave it and go back to English graveyards.

CÆSAR. What is this place you call America?

LOUIS. It is a place one of your Italians discovered. And now your Italians there all dig in ditches for street railroads.

CÆSAR [*proudly*]. The Romans were always great builders of roads.

FREDERICK. Oh, what a fall was there, my countrymen!

CÆSAR [*with his eye at the telescope*]. Gentlemen, from the way things are going in Europe, it looks to me as if all the kings would have to emigrate to America. One of the Austrian royal house is already planning to have a small shoe-store in Cumminsville, Ohio. His wife has saved a little and will set him up in business. It will be convenient and economical, because the family can live behind the store and keep a few chickens.

GEORGE. I understand there are a great many chickens in America, and they are intending to stock France with them.

LOUIS [*smiling*]. Transporting chickens to Paris would be a good deal like carrying coals to Newcastle, wouldn't it?

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CÆSAR. The king of Greece and Alfonso of Spain are going into partnership and will set up a little combination shop—candy and fruit and a shoe-shining parlor—fifteen by fifteen feet, on the west side of Clarke Street, Chicago. Greece will sell the candy and fruit and Alfonso will shine the shoes. Alf expects to charge eight cents a shoe or fifteen for the pair. Or no! I have got it mixed! It is Alf who is going to sell the candy and fruit and Greece will shine the shoes.

FREDERICK. Elbow Greece has gone up. In fact, everything has gone up but brains. What about that young Willie Hohenzollern? Has he any prospects?

CÆSAR. He expected to go into partnership with Manuel of Portugal, but Manny saw he was going to come out the little end of the horn, as neither of them wanted to work. They will each have to get partners who will do all the work. For the present Manuel expects to teach colored dancing classes—dancing classes of young darkies—in Louisville, Kentucky. And Willie is going to tour New England on an 1898 bicycle as a book agent for a volume his father wrote, entitled "How to Shoot Without Ammunition."

FREDERICK. And the rest of my family?

CÆSAR. The youngest Hohenzollerns have all assumed Welsh names and are going to be cow-boys on ranches in the western States in America.

FREDERICK. And the Kaiser?

LOUIS. Pardon me, the Ex-Kaiser.

CÆSAR. He has already shaved his moustache and has grown a large grey beard and taken the

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name of Hiram Johnson, and is going to assume the parts of rustic old men and of fathers in the movies in Hollywood.

LOUIS. How about that delicate man, the Sultan of Turkey? I have always been interested in him. He is one of the few romantic figures left among modern monarchs.

CÆSAR. Oh, he is happily fixed. He has emigrated to America and taken out papers of citizenship in Utah and joined the Mormon church.

GEORGE. My grandson, George? He hasn't given up yet, has he?

CÆSAR. Yes, it looks as if he were going to finally. Of course the English are the very last to accept innovations. But the Church of England will buy him a nice tidy little island in Lake Chautauqua.

GEORGE. That's thoughtful of them and like them. George never would feel comfortable off an island.

LOUIS. Lake Chautauqua was discovered by a Frenchman. By rights it ought to belong to France—all America ought to belong to France, for that matter. I know all about Lake Chautauqua, and it hasn't any islands.

CÆSAR. Yes, a very diminutive one. Perhaps it was built just for him.

GEORGE. A very diminutive one would satisfy George, but what about Mary and the children?

CÆSAR. She will have a boarding-house on the Assembly Grounds and conduct a night class in dressmaking. She has so much style, you know.

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GEORGE. Chautauqua will suit Mary. She is the only prohibitionist that ever married into our family.

LOUIS. If she doesn't get to flirting with William Jennings Bryan, I'll miss my guess. They were just cut out for each other.

CÆSAR. Louis the Fourteenth, you have a low mind.

LOUIS [*shrugging his shoulders*]. We French are of the Latin race.

CÆSAR. Well, you know very well that the Romans were very particular, very particular.

GEORGE. Where have I heard that said before? Oh, on the Earth, of course—Harry Lauder said it about a drunken sailor.

CÆSAR. We took our matrimony straight, absolutely straight, like the English.

LOUIS. I have always thought there was a similarity between the Romans and the English. I wonder no one else has ever noticed the resemblance.

CÆSAR. Our wives were good souls. Helpful. The fact is, I miss Calpurnia dreadfully. She took such good care of my clothes and diet. She always had my togas so nicely laundered and a hot-water bottle for my feet at night. In my later years—I always call them my Shakespearean years—I suffered so miserably from cold feet.

FREDERICK. You have told us all about the other monarchs, but what about my fool grandson, the Kaiser? What is he doing now before he goes into the movies?

LOUIS. The Ex-Kaiser, you mean.

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CÆSAR [*gazing through the telescope*]. They have had a great deal of trouble about the Ex-Kaiser. You see, he was too efficient. There were so many things he did too much.

GEORGE. He ran efficiency into the ground—rather—didn't he?

LOUIS. Overdone efficiency is like a charred roast of beef.

FREDERICK. To change the figure somewhat, it "o'erleaps itself," as your Shakespeare would say.

CÆSAR. My Shakespeare?

GEORGE. Or mine?

FREDERICK. That's William all over. He tried to be so all-round that he ran round in circles.

LOUIS. A vicious circle, one might say.

CÆSAR. I see that they tried him on a stock farm, but he spent all his time drilling the cows to march in battalions. Then they put him in a millinery shop, and he took all the hats to pieces and put them on blocks to reshape them into helmets. After that he was put into a strawberry patch, but he tried to train the strawberries to grow in rows and cut off the buds in an effort to make the fruit all ripen at the same time. Then they hired him out as a chauffeur, but he tried to get ahead of everything in sight and had so many accidents he had to be taken out of that. Finally, after a try-out at almost everything—for he said he could do anything—the Y. M. C. A. made up a little purse for him out of their excess profits, realizing that they owed it to him, and bought a little corner store for him down in Hattieboro, Kentucky. And there he sits on a

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cracker barrel by an air-tight stove and tells all the other loafers how the U. S. A. ought to be run.

LOUIS. All that is very interesting. But what about the ladies? Where is that pretty Queen Wilhemina, the Queen of Holland? She is a buxom maid, a man's good armful. I like them plump.

CÆSAR. Oh, she still lives in Holland and just as usual. They have been placid in Holland. Of course she was deposed—placidly, very placidly deposed, or will be—I can't quite make out which [*squinting through the glass*], and is, or will be, president of a mothers' club and votes.

LOUIS. Votes—pah! I suppose they all vote, much good it may do them. Fritz, it is all your fault—I'd like to have you guillotined. [*Makes a wild dive at Frederick.*] All your fault, or the fault of your idiot grandson, for getting up the war and thereby precipitating democracy on the Earth.

FREDERICK [*dodging him*]. You can't cut my head off, for I'm nothing but a ghost, and you can't cut a ghost's head off. We're all spooks now, not kings. Besides, it is not fair to blame me for what William did—it's not fair to visit the sins of the children upon the fathers.

GEORGE. You started the notion of the infallibility of royalty.

FREDERICK. I never did. I was always human—all too human. I wish spooks could fight, for then you would see whose head would get knocked off. I always was a believer in the strenuous life, I was. But this William was spoiled, his father

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was too easy on him. I taught my son to love me by beating the life out of him. You can't be too tender with boys. But this Hohenzollern—pah!—I'd like to take him and wring his neck—he's ruined all I built up. I'm not responsible for him—not I! Emperor, forsooth! What business had he to write poetry and compose music and think he was blood-cousin to God? Be-whiskered and be-sworded baby! That's what I think of my descendant. You can build up a kingdom for your children, but you can't keep them from ruining it.

LOUIS. They had a lively time in France after my day, too. These moderns don't understand the business of being king.

GEORGE. My little George does—or Lloyd George, I forget which. Their names are so alike that I can't remember which is which sometimes. The only way I can tell the difference is that George has a beard and Lloyd George only a moustache. Anyhow, they understand that a king nowadays oughtn't to try to do anything but open the horse-show.

CÆSAR. You talk as if there were a lot of kings still when I've told you they are abolishing them. A man can't afford a king and an automobile at the same time.

FREDERICK. I suppose not, unless he happens to be a butcher, and they can't all be butchers. A small place like Chicago can't support more than about two.

LOUIS [*bitterly*]. Well, it's a crass age, and taste for the picturesque is dead. Men prefer

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automobiles to kings. What is the world coming to? It seems that people are beginning to prefer to have a good time themselves, rather than have kings to have a good time for them.

CÆSAR [*sighing heavily*]. I am tired of gazing through your peculiar reed. And I am lonely. There hasn't been a general to come up here to Heaven for ever so long. In my day colonels and generals were killed, but now they kill off only the boys and presidents. I am a little homesick and I miss the ministrations of Calpurnia. I would fain repose me somewhere.

GEORGE. Go lie down on the harps.

LOUIS. Harps are cold comfort. He said he wanted Calpurnia.

CÆSAR. I regret that we Romans did not think differently of women—then we could have them all with us in the after-world. Calpurnia was a good soul, gentlemen, a worthy person. She had only one fault—she would have the nightmare. She did make night hideous with her cries occasionally—especially before the Ides of March.

GEORGE [*dropping his ear-trumpet*]. By George, it is lonesome up here without the women. There isn't one interesting woman in our set up here. Catherine of Russia, Mary Queen of Scots, the Empress of China, all the clever ones are in the other place.

LOUIS. A woman's sins are never done, a man's forgot e'er he goes to heaven.

GEORGE. A woman's sins are never done?

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Do you mean by that that someone else does them for her?

LOUIS. Read it as you will—at least they are never forgiven. That is why heaven is so dull for us. There are no queens here except Victoria.

GEORGE [*bristling*]. Don't say anything against Victoria—she's a good woman.

LOUIS. There, there, I know she is—I wouldn't say a word against her—I honor her to extinction, I assure you. But her place is Buckingham Palace. A good woman's place is the home. I am an anti-suffragist. The place for good women is the home—I want a few places left where you can have a good time.

GEORGE. But Victoria is all right.

LOUIS. Of course she is, that's the trouble. You know you yourself hid from her just a little while ago.

GEORGE. Well, she goes around talking about the children all the time—you have to escape her, that's only self-preservation. She gives long dissertations on how Ally had the measles and Arty the mumps and Vicky the whooping cough, how Alice's kitten scratched her finger and how Eddy sprained his ankle and little George fell from his pony—till you can't stand it.

LOUIS. One of those modern Americans has said that home is the place where they have to take you in when you have to go there. Good women should be kept there—to take you in when you have to go there. And I add, a good woman's place is the home. She ought to be kept there.

IN HEAVEN

CÆSAR. I don't care—I'm lonesome for Calpurnia. [*Begins to weep.*]

FREDERICK [*who has taken up the telescope cast down by Cæsar and the ear-trumpet discarded by George*]. Pah and bah! It is disgusting down there on the Earth. They do nothing but run about and have little revolutions—they make me sick! I like real war that ends in conquest and the building up of your kingdom. What they need now in Europe is a full house of proud and haughty kings—then they wouldn't have time for all their silly little revolutions and their vaunted discontent. They make me sick! [*Throws down the telescope and the ear-trumpet. Yawns.*] I wish I could have a merry little game of pinochle with some clever-tongued female.

CÆSAR [*weeping quietly*]. I want Calpurnia.

GEORGE [*peering down in the direction of the red lights*]. This atmosphere up here is too thin for my blood. Down there they have a cozy fire and—yes, there are plenty of queens, not to mention duchesses. I do love a nice fat little duchess.

LOUIS. Gentlemen, Heaven is no place for kings, let us forth upon the trail—the long trail, the broad trail, the winding trail, the trail of many turnings.

CÆSAR [*wailing audibly*]. I want Calpurnia. Do you suppose we would find her there?

LOUIS. Undoubtedly.

GEORGE. If I could find a fine, plump girl down there I'd be perfectly willing and more than willing to go. I could make her a duchess.

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FREDERICK. I'm willing to hit the trail down to the merry glow. This place is deadly dull. I want to go where there are ladies. A good, gay frau! Ja—I like a jolly frau, a house-frau who knows how to cook!

CÆSAR. I feel better at the very thought of going!

LOUIS [*taking Cæsar by the arm*]. Come, M. Cæsar, come, gentlemen all. Heaven is not the place for us. The place for us, for all the great royal hearts of all time, is that rose-coloured spot where there are ladies. Come, my friends! *Cherchez la femme!*

[*Cæsar, in a broken, reedy voice, starts the song, "For It's Always Fair Weather When Good Fellows Get Together," and they all sing it loudly as, arm in arm, they start off toward the rosy glow.*]

[CURTAIN.]

WHEN TWO'S NOT COMPANY.

PERSONS AS THEY APPEAR:

A YOUNG MAN.

ANOTHER YOUNG MAN.

TIME: TODAY.

SCENE: THE LIBRARY IN THE HOME OF THE GIRL.

[The room is large and comfortable and well furnished, expressive of the easy wealth of a Middle-West city. There is a big davenport furnished with an ample number of pillows and a big table similarly furnished with books, big chairs furnished with deep seats, etc., every indication that the pater familias made plows successfully for years even before the war. At the back of the room large curtained windows open out upon a lawn which stretches to the street. To the right a curtained doorway leads into a hall which is heard to contain a hall-clock possessing Westminster chimes. A young man enters, talking to an invisible maid in the hall.]

YOUNG MAN. That's all right. Maybe she isn't at home to everybody, but she will be at home to me. There now, don't worry. You've absolved yourself—told me she isn't at home and I'm coming in anyhow, taking all the responsibility on myself. See? You should worry. The

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fact is I've got a date with her at five, so she'll be home soon. I may be a few minutes early—watch a little fast. [*Walks back to the door, taking off his overcoat and handing it and his hat to the invisible maid in the hall, who gives him the evening newspaper. He comes back into the room with the paper in his hand, talking the while.*] Yes, thank you, I'll take in the paper. I'll take it in. Now, listen, if Miss Elaine comes in without my seeing her, you just tell her I'm here. I'll make myself at home till she comes. [*He walks back into the room with the complacent air of one who feels himself perfectly at home and moves about a little, placing the newspaper on the table, before selecting a chair in which to sit. Finally he sits down in a chair facing the hall and expectantly watches the door. Being somewhat nervous, he remains sitting only a few moments, gets up and stalks about, puts his hands into his pockets and takes them out again, examines the pictures, the books, goes and looks out of the window, comes back and sits down again in a different chair, gets up and looks out of the window again, comes back and picks up a magazine, throws it down and goes to the window again, returns and examines a Cloissonné jar, drops it, ejaculates "Oh, Lord!" picks it up, finding it unbroken, replaces it, throws himself into another chair, occupying altogether four centuries or minutes in his fidgeting, and finally is standing at the window, when he suddenly exclaims "Oh, Damn!", hurries to the table, seizes a volume, drops into a chair, and presents the appearance of one who is consumed in the read-*

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ing of a most exciting book. In the meantime the electric bell of the front door has been heard to ring, and in a few moments another young man appears in the doorway, talking as before to the invisible maid in the hall.]

OTHER YOUNG MAN. Oh, I don't mind waiting. I'll just sit here till she comes. It won't be long now, I imagine. Don't tell anyone I'm here. I'll just put in the time. Oh, if I don't happen to see Miss Elaine when she comes in, will you please tell her I'm here waiting for her. [*He turns about and, coming in, sees the Young Man. The look between them is as cordial as that of two young dogs who have just smelled the same bone.*]

YOUNG MAN [*in the antithesis of a Christian greeting*]. Hello.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. Oh, you here?

YOUNG MAN. I guess so. Looks like it. Why not?

OTHER YOUNG MAN. Well, why should you be?

YOUNG MAN. That's *my* business.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. Oh, I don't know. Perhaps not altogether.

YOUNG MAN. I think it is. I'll tell the world so. By the way, you're here.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. So it seems.

YOUNG MAN. Maybe *I* wonder why.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. Well, I might quote you, and say it's my business.

YOUNG MAN. Oh, indeed. Have it your own way.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. I think I shall. [*He selects a chair near the door and sits down. The*

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Young Man ardently peruses his book. After some scintillating moments of silence in which unseen sparks fly, the Other Young Man coughs. Silence again. He coughs again.]

YOUNG MAN. You seem to have it bad. I hope it isn't tuberculosis.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. No, it's to-be-local-ass's victim.

YOUNG MAN. What?

OTHER YOUNG MAN. Nothing. Don't let me interrupt your reading.

YOUNG MAN. Oh, you don't interrupt anything.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. Thanks. You seem to be much absorbed. Is it a new book?

YOUNG MAN. Yes. [*Holding it up and looking at the fresh leather binding.*] Yes, just out.

OTHER YOUNG MAN [*coming over and standing near the Young Man as if to look over his shoulder, an action which the Young Man evidently resents, as we always do.*] What is it?

YOUNG MAN [*reading the title slowly from the back of the book.*] Hesperides [*pronouncing it Hesper-ides*], by a guy named Robert Herrick.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. Oh, poetry.

YOUNG MAN [*frowning darkly*]. Yes, of course.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. I didn't know you were a lover of poetry.

YOUNG MAN [*emphatically*]. I am. There are a lot of things you don't know about me.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. I suppose you read all the new things. Herrick and Suckling and

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Crashaw, and all the modern free-verse profiteers.
[*Standing by the table.*]

YOUNG MAN. Yes, I do.

OTHER YOUNG MAN [*walking away a few steps*].
Funny—

YOUNG MAN. Not funny at all.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. Yes, it is funny. [*Turning about.*] Psychologically considered, it is quite remarkable. When we were in school your one preoccupation was baseball. You couldn't be hired to read anything but the sporting page of the newspaper. Now it seems to be only a step from Babe Ruth to Amy Lowell. [*The Young Man pretends to be completely absorbed in his book. The Other Young Man takes out his cigarette-case, lights a cigarette, and sits smoking and watching his companion and smiling contemplatively.*] I remember you couldn't be made to read "The Children's Hour" or "Little Orphant Annie" or "Paul Revere's Ride," or anything. You wouldn't even take an interest in "The Boyhood of Theodore Roosevelt." Your mother used to bribe me with movie tickets to help you with your lessons. [*Puffing large rings of smoke.*] Your development into an impassioned lover of poetry is almost beyond belief, but it is evidently true. Proof that would satisfy any court.

YOUNG MAN. Gosh! I never could understand why you lawyers think you are so witty. No one else thinks so.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. How direct you are! You would make a splendid witness.

YOUNG MAN. Witness? [*Turning in his chair*

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and glancing at the Other Young Man.] Heaven preserve me from ever falling into a lawyer's clutches. You think because you went to college and studied law and I went straight into business that you've hogged all the brains in the world.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. Not at all. I went to college and pursued the pragmatic illusion of education and you stayed at home and pursued the arts. You are my superior. [*Bowing elaborately.*]

YOUNG MAN. You think it's an easy job learning how steel accessories are made and selling them.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. Far from it. You are the true artist. [*Leaning back in his chair and speaking with elocutionary effects and gesturing.*] The business man is. He composes the music of the mills, the lyrics of the slums. He paints the genre pictures of the factory. He carves the statue of success out of steel. [*The Westminster chimes in the hall strike five o'clock. Both young men take notice. The Young Man jumps to his feet and throws the book on the table. The Other Young Man puts out his cigarette. The Young Man thrusts his hands into his pockets and walks about rapidly. Each is intent upon his own appearance and the coming event and only surreptitiously conscious of the other. Finally after a few moments of anxious waiting the Young Man blurts out his statement.*]

YOUNG MAN. Jove! I may as well tell you. I have a date here at five o'clock this afternoon.

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OTHER YOUNG MAN [*immovably*]. You surprise me.

YOUNG MAN. By Jove, you mean you're going to stay?

OTHER YOUNG MAN. Certainly. Why not?

YOUNG MAN. Well, you have the nerve. [*He nervously walks about, glancing angrily and hurriedly at and away from the Other Young Man several times. At last he throws himself into a chair again.*]

OTHER YOUNG MAN [*taking out his cigarette-case again*]. Have a cigarette?

YOUNG MAN. Thanks. I have my own. [*The Other Young Man carefully lights a cigarette. The Young Man, after a little nervous and angry brooding, also takes out his cigarette-case and lights a cigarette. More unseen sparks fly as they glance at and away from each other.*]

OTHER YOUNG MAN. If you've entirely finished your first book you might read another volume of poetry while you wait. It will while away the time for you. [*Reaching over the table.*] Here's one called "Paradise Lost." Good, thick book—ought to last you several minutes. Also, interesting title. Also, most apropos title for you. [*The Young Man gives him a furious glance.*] Most apropos.

YOUNG MAN. I reckon you think your kidding is the funniest thing in the world, but, believe me, it's dumb.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. Sorry you don't appreciate my efforts at conversation.

YOUNG MAN. Oh, conversation be damned!

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[*Getting up.*] I don't like to be rude or anything, but the fact of the matter is, when a man has the consummate nerve you have there is only one thing to be done.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. Interesting analysis. Go on.

YOUNG MAN [*walking over in front of the Other Young Man and turning on him furiously*]. And that is, to tell the truth.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. I have ever been a seeker after truth. Proceed.

YOUNG MAN. I've told you that I have a date with Elaine at five o'clock. The only decent thing for you to do under the circumstances [*crossing back to the other side again*] is to make yourself scarce.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. That may seem so from your point of view, but it is unfortunately—for you—impossible. Sorry not to be able to accommodate you.

YOUNG MAN. Look here. You know this is carrying things almost too far. By gum, this is my dance, you can't cut in. See? Your presence isn't wanted.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. My dear boy—

YOUNG MAN. Don't you "dear boy" me!

OTHER YOUNG MAN. If you don't enjoy my presence, it is fairly evident what you can do.

YOUNG MAN. You have the nerve of a turtle, the cheek of a hippopotamus.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. Picturesque figures.

YOUNG MAN. Oh, it's no joke. I have a date with Elaine here this minute.

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OTHER YOUNG MAN. So you've intimated twice before. But one may assume that she hasn't one with you.

YOUNG MAN. Do you mean you think I'm lying?

OTHER YOUNG MAN. Well, perhaps you are exaggerating a little.

YOUNG MAN. Oh, thunder, you know I never do. I'm not up to that sort of thing.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. Not as a rule, but I have reason to believe you are doing it right now.

YOUNG MAN. What do you mean?

OTHER YOUNG MAN. You say you have an engagement here at five o'clock with Elaine, but that is absolutely impossible, because I have an engagement at five o'clock here with Elaine.

YOUNG MAN. The deuce you have!

OTHER YOUNG MAN. It may be unwelcome news to you, but it is true.

YOUNG MAN. Oh, go to the dickens!

OTHER YOUNG MAN. My dear fellow, that is the habitat for you. I stay right here. I keep my engagement.

YOUNG MAN. You can't fool me with any cock-and-bull story like that.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. It wouldn't interest me to try to fool you. I'm telling the truth. I made an engagement with Elaine to be here at five this afternoon.

YOUNG MAN. You're talking rot. I made an engagement with Elaine to see her at five this afternoon. [*He crosses over to the Other Young Man.*]

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OTHER YOUNG MAN. Sorry to dispute your word.

YOUNG MAN. Do you think I'm lying?

OTHER YOUNG MAN. Well, the evidence is against you.

YOUNG MAN. Oh, all right, you'll see when she comes. I'm it!

OTHER YOUNG MAN. When she comes you will have the opportunity to observe that I am the man!

YOUNG MAN. Why, man, I called her up over the 'phone this morning at ten-thirty and made the engagement for this afternoon at five.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. I telephoned yesterday afternoon at three-thirty and made the engagement for this afternoon at five.

YOUNG MAN. Well, if you did, which I doubt, she forgot all about it by this morning. [*He crosses back to his chair by the table.*]

OTHER YOUNG MAN. If she made an engagement with you this morning, which I don't believe, she was just playing a little game with you.

YOUNG MAN. Oh, thunder! She may have played her little games with other men, but she never has with me. When she meets a real man she's perfectly straight, the most honorable little girl in the whole world.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. I agree with you in substance, but you have made a mistake as to the identity of the man. I have every reason to believe in her.

YOUNG MAN. I'm willing to trust her.

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OTHER YOUNG MAN. The world is full of willing fools.

YOUNG MAN. It's overcrowded with able liars.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. Am I to infer that includes me?

YOUNG MAN. You know best yourself.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. All right, young man, we shall see.

YOUNG MAN. You bet we'll see—when she comes.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. Yes, when she comes.

[There is a noise of a door slamming and they both jump to their feet and stand facing the hall. No one comes, and, after a few moments of intense waiting, the Young Man sits down again. They have their backs to each other and are most obviously oblivious of each other. The Young Man becomes restless and screws about in his chair. The Other Young Man watches him with lips compressed in a sardonic and legal grin.]

OTHER YOUNG MAN. Why don't you smoke another one of your own cigarettes? *[Takes out his case and lights another cigarette for himself.]*

YOUNG MAN. Aw—go—to—*[grunting]*.

OTHER YOUNG MAN *[after a few complacent puffs]*. Well, you might read another book of poetry to while away the time.

YOUNG MAN *[turning on him viciously]*. I reckon I might. By the way, you need some occupation yourself to put in the time. There

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are some clubs out in the hall. Why don't you play a little parlor golf?

OTHER YOUNG MAN [*a little nettled*]. Thanks. I'm doing very well. [*He sits down.*]

YOUNG MAN. So I've heard. Didn't know till the other day that you'd taken up the game, but it's never too late to learn. The coach at the club tells me you're a braw man at swiping up the earth—says he'd back you against a Ford tractor at swiping up the clods. Why don't you hire yourself out to a farmer in the ploughing season? But of course that's not your game. Every sport has two birds—to the politician—the bird in the bush may be your little golf ball, but the bird in the hand is the unfortunate man you play with—a prospective client, eh? You lose the game, but gain your own client? Oh, boy [*getting up and walking about*], but you're the wonderful little sportsman! Didn't know you liked the game so well yourself, did you?

OTHER YOUNG MAN. Oh, I like it well enough.

YOUNG MAN. Do you now? Well, well. I wonder when you turned into such a sport? As I remember, you'd never play games when we were kids. Wouldn't play marbles, because sitting on the ground got your pants dirty. [*The Other Young Man flushes and looks annoyed.*] Wouldn't box or wrestle. If a boy wanted to fight you, you bought him off with candy. Wouldn't play hockey or learn to skate. But you're a lover of sports now all right?

OTHER YOUNG MAN. Oh, more or less.

YOUNG MAN. Strange, but a fact, as the old

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lady said when the lightning struck her. Yet I remember you would never play ball, and once when the fellows made you and shoved you into the game and a ball happened to light on your nose, it bled so you cried. [*He sits down.*]

OTHER YOUNG MAN. I bleed so easily.

YOUNG MAN. And you bleed other people easily, too, don't you? But in those days you never could be got to play tennis or learn to drive a car. It's so different now. Now you just love hand-ball, don't you?

OTHER YOUNG MAN [*weakly*]. Well, why not?

YOUNG MAN. Oh, I don't know—seems odd. It used to be so different. But now I understand you're a regular lion in the gym and go off on wild hunting trips—nothing but big game satisfies you! And drive your own Rolles-Royce. Gee, it's fine to see a regular he-man, strong and fit, like you. A regular hefty. Wonder you don't challenge Dempsey. If you do, let me act as your sponger, will you?

OTHER YOUNG MAN [*fussed like a dignified rooster when he is teased*]. All you know about it. Why shouldn't I have become athletic, for all you know?

YOUNG MAN. Oh, but I do know, that's just it! You've turned into a regular athlete! Boxer! More on the Carpentier order—ladies' man and all that. Come on, let's have a little round! [*He jumps to his feet, pulls up his sleeves, and begins to make passes.*] Come on! I'll give you lief to punch me a little just for practice. [*He advances in bellicose manner, grinning grimly.*]

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The Other Young Man looks amazed and frightened, cringing back into his chair.] Come, stand up, like a man, the real fighter you are! [He gives the Other Young Man a light punch in the ribs and hovers over him, lowering. The Other Young Man crouches and coughs and chokes from the punch. Just then the front door bangs. The Young Man jumps back and stands facing the door, his hands still clenched. The Other Young Man takes out his handkerchief, continues to cough, tries to pull himself together. No one comes.]

OTHER YOUNG MAN. You'd better sit down.

YOUNG MAN. You've got a nice, rich, juicy, cigarette cough, haven't you?

OTHER YOUNG MAN. Don't—[coughing]—don't make a fool of yourself.

YOUNG MAN. Or pulp out of you. Maybe I will before I'm through. [He turns and walks to the window, comes back, lights a cigarette and throws himself into a chair. A few moments of silence follow, with occasional spasmodic coughs from the Other Young Man.]

OTHER YOUNG MAN. Better—keep your wit—till you need it more. That time may come.

YOUNG MAN. You don't say? [He sits in silence a little while. Finally a light breaks over his face, as he is evidently thinking of something which delights him much, and he breaks into a smile.] Say, I've got to tell you. There's—there's an engagement.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. You said before that you had a date with her.

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YOUNG MAN. Yes, I know. But—I don't mean that. I—mean—we're engaged.

OTHER YOUNG MAN [*getting back some of his sang-froid*]. Your more elegant way of saying again that you have a date with her.

YOUNG MAN. No, I don't mean that. A date's one thing—this is quite another. I mean—oh, I mean that she's engaged to be married to me.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. You scarcely expect me to believe that, do you?

YOUNG MAN. Well, I don't see why you shouldn't.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. For two very good and sufficient reasons. First, because you haven't hesitated to stretch the truth about having an appointment with her here this afternoon, and second, and more conclusively, because she is engaged to be married to me.

YOUNG MAN [*bursting into loud and long laughter*]. By gum, that's the funniest thing I ever heard!

OTHER YOUNG MAN. I don't see why it's funny that a girl should be engaged to be married to me.

YOUNG MAN. Oh, yes—ha-ha—it is!

OTHER YOUNG MAN [*bristling*]. Why shouldn't a girl be engaged to me?

YOUNG MAN. No reason at all why a girl shouldn't—any old gander can find some sort of goose—but Elaine isn't a goose, and she couldn't be engaged to you, because she's engaged to me.

OTHER YOUNG MAN [*sarcastically*]. Nobody seems to be aware of it but you.

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YOUNG MAN. Of course, it hasn't been announced yet—it's a secret.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. So well kept that nobody knows it but you—not even the girl herself.

YOUNG MAN. Oh, she knows it all right. It would be conceited for me to boast or anything like that, but she is—I mean we are very happy. We have been for the past month.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. If she ever was engaged to you—which I doubt—she isn't now.

YOUNG MAN. Why, man, a month ago she promised to marry me.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. In the meantime, then, she changed her mind. Two weeks ago she promised to be my wife.

YOUNG MAN. Oh, Hells-Bells, she did nothing of the sort. [*Jumping to his feet.*]

OTHER YOUNG MAN. I tell you, she did.

YOUNG MAN. Well, then, she was just flirting with you, fooling with you. Or else—she's so soft-hearted she wouldn't hurt a fly—she just pretended to give in to let you down easy, couldn't stand to see your disappointment.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. Don't try to deceive yourself. She has always been perfectly sincere with me.

YOUNG MAN. Humph! How do you account for it that she didn't break off her engagement to me, then?

OTHER YOUNG MAN. How do I know she didn't?

YOUNG MAN. Well—[*laughs angrily*]—because I'm still here.

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OTHER YOUNG MAN. Probably—she's so tender-hearted—she couldn't bear to hurt you by telling you she had changed her mind.

YOUNG MAN. Oh, changed her mind nothing! Why, we've been planning. We didn't tell anybody, because we wanted to keep it a secret. She's so romantic, she wanted to keep it a sacred secret just between ourselves. Not even her family know. But we talked about the future and made all sorts of plans. We agree about everything. Her tastes and mine are identical. We both love the country and hate apartment houses. We want to live as near the country as possible, out at the edge of town. I'm going to build a cozy little bungalow as soon as possible—my business will permit it now—and we'll have a regular home, not a box of a flat. We'll have a garden. She's so fond of flowers, and she'll work with the flowers and I'll 'tend the vegetables. I can get out early from the office nearly every day. Fresh vegetables—ripe tomatoes and green corn! Oh, boy!

OTHER YOUNG MAN. Sounds delightfully bucolic.

YOUNG MAN. Maybe we'll keep a cow.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. I would suggest a goat.

YOUNG MAN. But that's farther off.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. I guess so.

YOUNG MAN. We've had lots of fun planning our wedding trip, too. I want to drive in my car and stop whenever we please and go wherever the spirit moves us. She agrees absolutely, but she has a hankering after Europe, too, so we play

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we're going there. Italy, if we're married in the fall, England, if the wedding comes off in the summer.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. That's all very romantic. It's very amusing and rather pathetic. Humor and pathos are never far apart. Perhaps that was once what she thought she'd like, but she has changed her mind. She and I have talked about life and how we can economize resources so as to get the best with the least expenditure of physical and mental effort. At the rate of speed people are living now and the heavy tax on one's time and energies, one must conserve the life-force. Elaine and I are going to live in an apartment, where so much is provided without having to think about it. The janitor looks after the furnace—I never could keep a furnace going—and the plumbing and papering and everything they do for you.

YOUNG MAN. Sometimes they do, sometimes they do you.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. We intend to be in a building that has a café, so that if we are without a maid Elaine will not have to go into the kitchen. And we will not keep an automobile. It is cheaper and more satisfactory to hire one when you need it. And, besides, so many of our friends have cars.

YOUNG MAN. Ha-ha! That's economy for you! I suppose you think you will be having me take you out places?

OTHER YOUNG MAN. I don't see why not—when you have got over your disappointment.

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YOUNG MAN. Disappointment? Oh, Hells-Bells! You don't think for a moment that I believe all this stuff you've been saying?

OTHER YOUNG MAN. It doesn't really matter to me whether you believe it or not.

YOUNG MAN. Of all the consummate lying I never heard the beat!

OTHER YOUNG MAN. What do you suppose I think of all you've been saying? Well, I would hate to tell you, but I don't think your story would get by any jury.

YOUNG MAN. Oh, you and your juries! I bet you never had a case. My patience is just about worn out.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. You've drugged mine.

YOUNG MAN. Are you going to stay till she comes?

OTHER YOUNG MAN. Certainly. It won't be long now.

YOUNG MAN. Well, so am I. [*He gets up and walks to and fro. The Other Young Man sits watching him for a few moments, then goes over to the table and picks up the evening newspaper. He turns over the sheets languidly and with no interest. There is heard nothing but the rustle of the paper and the footsteps of the Young Man as he walks about. After a little time the Young Man is standing looking out of the window when the Other Young Man starts, sits bolt upright and is absorbed in the paper which he holds with trembling hands. The Young Man turns about and looks at the other, becoming interested in his very evident excitement.*]

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YOUNG MAN [*coming closer*]. What's the matter with you?

OTHER YOUNG MAN [*with a start, looking at the other*]. I—oh, I think I'll go.

YOUNG MAN. What made you change your mind so suddenly?

OTHER YOUNG MAN. Oh, nothing.

YOUNG MAN. Yes, there was. You read something in the paper that got you. What was it?

OTHER YOUNG MAN. Oh, nothing. Nothing at all.

YOUNG MAN. Yes, there was.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. No, not at all. I must go.

YOUNG MAN. No, you don't. You don't stir till you tell me what it was.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. Well, if you must have it, it's this. [*Reads from the paper.*] "Mr. and Mrs. Robert Thomas Gallagher announce the engagement of their daughter, Elaine, to Mr. Henry Irving Robertson. The wedding will take place in June. This afternoon Miss Elaine is telling the happy news to a few of her most intimate friends at a tea given her by—"

YOUNG MAN [*interrupting*]. My word! You're making this up!

OTHER YOUNG MAN. I wish I were.

YOUNG MAN. I don't believe it.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. See for yourself. [*Hands him the paper, which he seizes with frantic hands and reads.*]

YOUNG MAN. Good God! There must be some mistake.

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OTHER YOUNG MAN. There couldn't be. A thing like this is authentic.

YOUNG MAN. But newspapers lie so.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. Not about this sort of thing. There's nothing to be gained.

YOUNG MAN. You think it's true, then?

OTHER YOUNG MAN. I wish I could think otherwise.

YOUNG MAN. So that's where she is—at a tea announcing her engagement to Harry instead of keeping her engagement here with me.

OTHER YOUNG MAN [*grimly*]. Instead of keeping her engagement here with me.

YOUNG MAN [*looking at his companion in misery suddenly and searchingly*]. Dick, honest to God, were you on the level?

OTHER YOUNG MAN. I swear I was. What about you?

YOUNG MAN. Oh, I'm too much of a fool to make up a lie. But why, why, when I asked her if I could come here today, did she say "yes"?

OTHER YOUNG MAN [*with a twisted smile*]. Because she is too tender-hearted to say "no." [*He gets up.*]

YOUNG MAN. My—my heart's thumping so it feels as if it would jump out of my chest.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. I—I'm trembling like a leaf.

YOUNG MAN. Jove, but I—I've been an ass.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. We've been a pair of them. Come along. [*He takes the arm of the Young Man and they start slowly to go out, when the Young Man pulls back.*]

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YOUNG MAN. Wait a minute.

OTHER YOUNG MAN. What do you want?

YOUNG MAN [*going back to the table*]. I want to see the name of that guy that wrote "Paradise Lost."

[Westminster chimes ring in the hall.]

[CURTAIN.]

PETER DONELLY.

PERSONS:

MRS. ALLEN.

CLARISSA ALLEN, *her daughter.*

ELIZABETH, *Clarissa's cousin.*

PETER DONELLY.

TIME: THE PRESENT.

[*The action takes place in the very comfortable and well-to-do library of some very nice people of a Middle-West city. There is evidence of past, present, and future abundant "means" to buy all that a properly constituted family needs. There are the usual deep leather chairs and couches suggestive of the process of sleep rather than of active mental effort. The heavy walnut book-cases of forty years back contain smooth rows of sets in half-leather binding—Scott, Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot; Continental culture represented by Balzac; all the standard English poets with crushed Levant backs, the New England group and a little blue Poe; from these there is a third of a century jump to a large sprinkling of social and economic subjects in dark blue and brown cloth and a "Leaves of Grass" in green. The entire room rests in an atmosphere of luxurious sobriety. There is a convenient telephone stand and by it a comfortable chair. In the chair sits a lady of sixty years or more of age, in an immaculate black gown.*]

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MRS. ALLEN (*telephoning*). I called you up, my dear, because I am in such trouble! Such trouble! It is horrible! I am nearly crazy! I feel as if I should scream! But I must *not* scream—I must not let the servants know. I must be self-controlled and strong—I must set my lips with firm determination. I realise that I must resolve myself into a tower of strength, but, Oh, my dear, I have been weeping so! That is why I did not call you up before [*sobs*]*—I couldn't speak for sobs.* I know it must seem cruel to weigh you down with my troubles, but I must talk to someone or I shall go raving mad. What? [*Pause.*] Oh, it is about Clarissa, of course. What other interest in life have I but my daughter? What other interest can a mother have but her child? [*Pause.*] Oh, no, there hasn't been an accident and she isn't ill—heaven knows, it might be better if she were, for then at least she could be kept at home. You haven't seen the afternoon paper? The home edition? The *home* edition which goes into every home in the city so that everyone will know—*every* one! [*Her voice almost breaking. Pause.*] Oh, no, Clarissa isn't here—I couldn't be talking to you this way if she were. She has gone to a bridge party. You know she plays a wretched game, and she never by any possibility goes to a party if she can avoid it. She is utterly stupid about bridge, and I never ask her even to make a fourth hand in our own little games if I can get anyone else. But she seizes this most inopportune time to go to a bridge party. I believe she did it purposely.

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I don't see how she could—I don't see how she had the face or the heart to, but she did, she just went calmly where she will have to meet all her friends, just went there as if nothing had happened or were about to happen, and left me to bear all the disgrace and opprobrium here alone. I don't understand Clarissa, I never did understand her. I, a mother, have to acknowledge that I don't understand my own child! Clarissa is headstrong—I wouldn't say it to anyone but you, my dear, but she *is*, she is headstrong, stubborn, arrogant, obstinate, she has an invincible determination. She always has been hard to conquer. As a baby she would fight her bottle. And then she would go to college instead of going to Europe to be finished. She never cared for music and the languages. She always liked mannish studies. And her reading is so—advanced. Immoral persons like Walt Whitman and all sorts of queer, unknown anarchists who write about politics and philosophy. I was brought up on the classics, and when I want diversion I read a little of Margaret Deland or Mrs. Humphrey Ward. And she has always chosen such queer people for friends, Polish Jews and strange creatures who are interested in what she calls social work. She calls it social work when she really means charity. Social! In my day a social meant a pleasant gathering of the congregation for an ice-cream or strawberry supper in the basement of the church. And I can't see how the word can mean anything but something connected with society, the people one knows or knows about,

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whose names occur in the social columns of the daily press. But she applies it to philanthropic activities, and chooses as her friends the strangest people—not merely common, but of the very lowest classes. She invites them to her home, and I'm sure they are just as uncomfortable as I am. I have positively been ashamed to have the butler see them eat with their knives and make horrible noises over their soup. What? [*Pauses.*] I haven't told you yet? I thought you had looked at the paper while I was talking and had read it, and I was just beginning to explain how the horrible thing came about. For if she hadn't meddled with those horrible people she never in this world would have met him and it wouldn't have occurred. What? [*Pauses.*] Why, it is announced that Clarissa is engaged to Peter Donnelly. [*Pauses.*] You are relieved! [*Pauses.*] Why, my dear, it couldn't have been worse! You don't think that my daughter!— Oh, my dear, that couldn't have happened! But think of my daughter marrying Peter Donnelly! Why, he is a councilman and the owner of that unspeakable Lakeside Park! That is how she became acquainted with him. She was working in this reform business—philanthropy is what it really is—and went to call on councilmen and all sorts of low politicians. She seemed to be prepossessed in his favor from the start. And, of course, he sought every chance to be in her society. It isn't often that a councilman can meet a lady. It never occurred to me as possible that she would think of him in the light of a suitor. Why, my dear,

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his clothing and his manners! He has come up from the gutter—the very gutter! But—would you believe it?—she seemed pleased with his attentions. She never has had a lover before—I suppose that is the reason. Clarissa has never cared for young men and young men are not going to spend their time courting a girl who thinks of nothing but unhappy scrubwomen and slum babies instead of them. Young men like a little attention—I have always told Clarissa so. They are afraid of strong-minded women—I never wanted Clarissa to go to college. And they are repelled by a masculine woman. I have told Clarissa time and again that if she wants to vote she oughtn't to say so, she oughtn't to let anyone know. Clarissa is a strong-minded suffragist you know. Oh, I wish her father had lived, for she needs a strong hand, and I have never been able to manage her. With her social work! And her picking up creatures like Peter Donelly! She must have had it put in the paper herself. It says that Mrs. Jerome Allen [*reading from the newspaper*] announces the engagement of her daughter, Clarissa, to Mr. Peter Donelly. *I* announce it, indeed! *I* denounce it! What? [*Pauses.*] Oh, yes, she told me all about it. I have wept and pled with her. I have told her it would kill me. I shall never live through it—with my delicate health. But she is so obstinate. And of course I never dreamed that she would really do it. He has been hanging around constantly for a month back, driving her out in his big car, taking her to dinner and to the theatre. Clarissa

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has never had anything of the sort before, and I suppose it has just taken her off her feet. Oh, yes, he has plenty of money, all stolen from the tax-payers, doubtless, or made in other shady ways. Oh, my dear, and he has lavished it on Clarissa. Such flowers as he has sent her you never saw! Roses or orchids every day and bunches of violets so large that no decent girl could wear them. Our house has looked as if we were having a continuous ball. Such ill-bred ostentation! And the dinners he orders for her at the Levington Hotel! He always invites me—I suppose she makes him, for he never would have the good-breeding to do it himself. I went once, and you would have thought it was the Princess of Wales he was entertaining. He sends her tickets to all sorts of things—of course most of them she doesn't care for. And his big car—I believe he has two—is at her disposal all the time. [*Pauses.*] Why yes, it has been going on for a month or so, I told you. [*Pauses.*] Break it up in the beginning? Why, of course, my dear, I tried to, but what could I do with Clarissa? She is so obstinate, so determined, so headstrong! But I shall oppose it, oh, I shall set my face like flint against it! And I want you and all my friends to help me. I want you to talk to her. I believe she went to that bridge party out of pure bravado, just in wilful determination to outface society. Oh, my dear, there is the front door, someone is coming in. It may be Clarissa, I must ring off. [*She hastily hangs up the receiver, unfolds the paper, and appears to be reading it when Clarissa enters*

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the room with her cousin, Elizabeth. Clarissa is a small person of thirty-five, rather neutral in coloring and general appearance, quiet and demure, gentle and unassuming, with soft, sweet eyes, and creating an impression of anything but obstinacy and strong-mindedness. She seems calm and unperturbed in marked contrast to the nervousness and excitement of her mother and cousin.]

CLARISSA. Well, Mother, here is Elizabeth. She has invited herself home with me to dinner.

ELIZABETH. How do you do, Aunt Julia? I don't know that I can stay to dinner, but I wanted to come—I felt that I must—

CLARISSA. Wonders will never cease. I took a prize, Mother. Maybe your efforts haven't been in vain after all and I'll turn into a star bridge player yet. All your arduous coaching ought to bring success. Well, lucky at cards, unlucky in love. Elizabeth, will you take your hat off upstairs or down here?

ELIZABETH. Oh, I don't think I'll take my hat off. I didn't really invite myself to dinner.

CLARISSA. Oh, do stay. It is so much nicer to have four at table than three, and Mr. Donelly is going to be here. [*She launches this bombshell in a quiet, matter-of-fact way as if Mr. Donelly's presence at her mother's board were an every-day affair. The others start and stare at her, their breath taken quite away.*]

MRS. ALLEN. Clarissa! You haven't invited that man this evening?

ELIZABETH. Clarissa, it was exactly to talk to you about that man that I came home with you.

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CLARISSA [*slowly and gently*]. I thought so. I thought I might as well introduce the subject.

ELIZABETH [*somewhat dumbfounded*]. Well, what could you expect? You can't suppose people will stand idly by and watch you commit social suicide without making some protest—can you? Aunt Julia, you haven't given your consent, have you? In spite of the announcement in the paper, I couldn't believe you would.

MRS. ALLEN. I give my consent, Elizabeth, to such a misalliance, you know I never would! I only hope other people will have the discrimination to realise that I haven't and that I never sent the announcement to the paper. Unfortunately everybody will read it, but I don't want them to think I had anything to do with it. I hope your mother and father will realise I had nothing to do with it. Of course they will see it in the paper—everybody will read it. [*In a tearful voice.*]

ELIZABETH. Everybody *has* read it. Someone who had seen it came to the bridge party this afternoon and the news spread like wildfire. In ten minutes everybody knew and everybody was talking—except when Clarissa was around, and even then they were whispering and talking in low tones behind her back and I was so afraid she would hear. [*Clarissa looks at her in mild inquiry and Elizabeth glances at her.*] And yet I realised she would have to know what people think about it and how they are talking, and I made up my mind then and there that I would take the bull by the horns [*looking sternly at little*

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Clarissa] and come home with her and tell her and strive with her to persuade her to give up this strangely perverted and mad infatuation.

CLARISSA [*gently*]. It isn't a mad infatuation.

ELIZABETH. It is impossible for me to see my own cousin, a girl of my own set, one I have known since babyhood, played dolls with and gone to school with, the daughter of my own mother's brother, a girl of my own class, step down and out from where she belongs and marry a creature of another world completely.

MRS. ALLEN. Oh, thank you, Elizabeth! Thank you for coming to my rescue. Thank you for making things so clear.

ELIZABETH. Aunt Julia, how did it happen?

MRS. ALLEN. Oh, he is a councilman, you know, and she met him slumming. [*Clarissa looks rather surprised and smiles.*]

ELIZABETH. I don't exactly see how she could meet a councilman slumming.

MRS. ALLEN. Oh, it was about garbage or the segregated district or something she had to consort with low politicians about. I think he hypnotized her at the start.

ELIZABETH. Hypnotized! Nonsense! *Clarissa* isn't a person to be hypnotized. Our family aren't that weakling sort.

CLARISSA [*always gently*]. Thank you, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH. But I don't see how it started, how she could have anything to do with him. One doesn't consort with low politicians.

MRS. ALLEN. Well, he began with little at-

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tentions, sending his big car for her and tickets to places.

ELIZABETH [*scornfully*]. I suppose as the owner of that unspeakable Lakeside Park, he gets passes to everything. Cheap sort of attention.

MRS. ALLEN. Well, he hasn't been cheap exactly.

CLARISSA. Thank you, Mother.

MRS. ALLEN [*scowling*]. Oh, he has lavished his money in the grossest, most vulgar ostentation. Dinners and the theatre, flowers—orchids and dozens of roses, and candy—he never sends less than a ten-pound box.

ELIZABETH. He must think Clarissa has an appetite.

MRS. ALLEN. He only does it to show off, of course. Clarissa isn't used to such things. She has been brought up in an atmosphere of good taste and refinement, as you know, Elizabeth.

CLARISSA [*weakly*]. Would you like me to go out of the room while you discuss me? If it would leave you freer to say what you like—

MRS. ALLEN. Discuss you? Oh, my dear child, I wouldn't discuss you with anybody. I am your mother and a proper mother doesn't discuss her daughter even with members of the family—hardly even with the minister.

ELIZABETH. We are not discussing you, Clarissa.

CLARISSA. It rather seemed as though you were.

ELIZABETH. Well, we were not. I came for the sole purpose of talking to you, to show you

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what an awful mistake you have made which you don't seem to see and to induce you to break off before it is too late.

CLARISSA [*sinking into a chair*]. How can you break off a mistake? Go on.

ELIZABETH. I don't for the life of me see how you could do this thing. A girl who, as your mother says, has been brought up in an atmosphere of good taste and refinement. Why, you are one of us, Clarissa. You are, or were, an aristocrat. [*Clarissa gazes at her in mild interest.*]

MRS. ALLEN. That is just it. Her father was a member of the Order of Cincinnatus and I am a Colonial Dame. In our families, Elizabeth, the men all went to Harvard and the girls to Europe to be educated and then interested themselves in church work and charities. To think of my daughter marrying a low politician! You know, Elizabeth, no gentleman goes into politics now except perhaps a college president becomes governor to purify the office.

ELIZABETH. If she marries him—but she isn't going to [*sitting down opposite Clarissa*], she will commit social suicide. Why, people can't entertain him, he would be like a bull in a china shop. Fancy him at a dinner party!

CLARISSA. Well, *I* can still eat.

ELIZABETH. But you wouldn't be invited alone. Husbands and wives don't go about separately in society.

CLARISSA. Perhaps it would add to the gayety of things if they did. I have often thought so. But no, society harnesses them together and that

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is why they get to hating each other so, always starting out together, always going home together.

ELIZABETH. Why, Clarissa, who would ever have thought that you had such radical ideas! But other people haven't—nice people. I suppose you got all that going to college. I am glad I didn't go. And with such a husband you would be ostracized. Nobody would invite you to dinner.

CLARISSA. I haven't noticed people falling over themselves to invite me to dinner, anyhow, Elizabeth. I am not exactly what you would call a social lion.

MRS. ALLEN. But, my dear child, that is all your own fault. You have never cared for society. You have never seemed to enjoy the people and pursuits of your own class and have preferred to consort with outlandish creatures instead.

ELIZABETH. You have always been so queer, Clarissa, and that is why you haven't always been included in things the girls were getting up. I know they haven't meant to leave you out, but—well, you know you're quiet or else you like to talk about deep subjects and you make people feel uncomfortable. Men don't like a girl who is quiet and supposed to have views. They don't know what she's thinking about. They just like to eat and dance and play cards and golf and motor. They like to *do* things and you just *think*.

CLARISSA [*sighing*]. I didn't know I did.

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ELIZABETH. But when it comes to a matter of your marrying outside of your class, they will resent it. They won't stand by and permit it. If you could have heard the things the girls said this afternoon.

CLARISSA [*scarcely audible*]. I did hear.

ELIZABETH. Well, then you know how outrageous they think it is. Why, if you must get married—I didn't know before that you were so crazy to—[*Clarissa looks at her in wide-eyed astonishment.*—]lay your trap for Bob Andrews or Clarence Doolittle or anybody in preference to that hodcarrier. These men are wild as you make 'em and drink like fish, but at least they're gentlemen. I haven't any objection to a self-made man, per se, if they gradually work out of their class into an upper stratum of society like Professor Rogers, for instance, whose father kept a little corner grocery, but he went to night school and studied and finally became a historian and now can play golf with the best of them. But this man of yours never tried to get out of his class. He has never had a golf club in his hand, he has never contributed to the symphony concert orchestra fund—I know that—he never bought an opera ticket in his life.

MRS. ALLEN. If you could see him!

ELIZABETH. I suppose he looks the part—a common Irish politician.

MRS. ALLEN. My dear, his appearance is perfectly impossible and, as you say, he will never be different, he isn't the sort to change, and his manners are, if possible, worse than his clothing.

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He tucks his napkin in his shirt-front at dinner—he even tucks it between his collar and his chin. He sucks his soup and he gurgles in his coffee. He talks to the waiter as if they were bosom friends. His voice is so loud and awful like the bellowing of a bull. He murders the King's English and uses so much low and inordinate slang that it is quite impossible to undertsand his meaning.

ELIZABETH. If he has any.

MRS. ALLEN. He shakes hands like a gorilla—I have seen him, though I have never offered him my hand—and his favorite attitude is to stand with his thumbs stuck in the arm-holes of his waistcoat. And, oh, his clothing! My dear, he wears huge check suits, gaudy waistcoats, enormous rings, and a flashy diamond pin, red—*bril-
liant* red cravats, yellow gloves, and a bright green hat. He—

CLARISSA. Oh, don't talk so loud, please don't! I heard the maid open the front door and let someone in.

ELIZABETH. Well, nothing could be so loud as what we are talking about.

[The subject of their conversation enters in all his powerful and masculine exuberance. He is dressed as they have described him and carries the bright green hat in his hand. He is an Irishman, big and strong and gay, with red cheeks, a happy smile, and a comfortable air of sureness of his ground. He advances quickly and with a light, firm step to Clarissa

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and fairly beams like a broad, bright sun as he takes her hand.]

PETER. I guess I'm a little bit early, my girl, but I had an extra quarter of an hour and I just couldn't stay away.

CLARISSA [*smiling back at him tenderly and with relief as to one who finds no fault with her, in whose happy depths she is all right, a perfect thing*]. I am so glad you came.

PETER. Are you now? [*With a loud laugh. He puts his green hat under his arm and takes her two hands in both of his and swings and plays with them. Then with a quick glance.*] And here is the mother, too. [*He turns from Clarissa and strides with outstretched hand to Mrs. Allen.*] How-de-do, ma'am?

MRS. ALLEN [*coldly glaring at him, not offering her hand*]. I am quite well.

PETER [*a little crestfallen*]. That's good. I'm glad to hear it, ma'am. [*He looks at his despised hand, then strokes his lips thoughtfully with it. With a sidelong glance at Clarissa for inspiration.*] I guess I've butted into a family party. I wouldn't want to be interruptin'.

CLARISSA. Oh, no, Peter, this is my cousin, Miss Worthington. Elizabeth, this is Mr. Donelly.

PETER [*advancing again with a quick stride and outstretched hand*]. Pleased to meet ye, ma'am. Any relation or friend of Clarissa's is a friend of mine.

ELIZABETH [*coldly, curtly, insolently, without offering her hand*]. How-do-you-do.

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PETER [*looks at Elizabeth steadily in surprise and inquiry for a moment, then a queer little gleam of a smile comes into his eyes as he withdraws his hand and folds his arms*] I'm fine, ma'am. I always enjoy elegant health. [*After an icy moment, he clears his throat.*] It's fine weather we're having—bright and sunny, though you might say a little chilly in the house. [*With a furtive, broad wink at Clarissa.*] Maybe it's good for a man to get hit by a cold draught now and then, keeps him in his place all right, makes him realise he don't own the earth and the stars and everything in between. For myself, though, I never did care about hot air, always said cold was healthier. [*A pause. Peter looks round at the ladies, who stand immovable, Mrs. Allen and Elizabeth still cold and glaring, Clarissa becoming more nervous and excited.*] Hum! As I was saying, it's bully weather for driving. If a man has an hour or so to spare, it's grand to be free to get out and hit the road at about forty miles an hour. I never go faster—it ain't safe. Forty is my limit. But driving in your own car sure is the way to travel. I often wish I could make my trips to the capital that way—but I can't spare the time. The roads are good, too. The roads all round here in this neck of the woods are first rate now. And the woods are all dressed up in their fall clothes—pretty as a girl fixed up for a dance. I guess you ladies like a spin now and then, most ladies do. We'll have to go for one some fine afternoon. Nothing would tickle me more than to give any of Clarissa's friends a good time. My car can

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take us four and three or four others—the more the merrier—as they say—and when we come back we can have a nice little dinner at the Lev-
ington and then take in a show. Some fun, eh? Most ladies can stand a show, too, judging by the way they flock to a Saturday afternoon matinée. I guess they like a show same as they like a good spin and a little dinner. A nice, hot little dinner introduced with a cocktail—a good cold Man-
hattan—served where you know the waiter and the management. [*Seeing Elizabeth frown.*] Or, of course, we can omit the drinks if you are tee-
totalers. Some ladies are, and I know when they are they're awful touchy about it. I wouldn't do nothing to offend your feelings. And we'll omit the drinks forevermore. Though I will say some ladies do seem to enjoy a cocktail, and from my observation I don't think female suffrage is responsible for prohibition. Not me. Would you believe it? Clarissa has made me believe women ought to vote. Though I wouldn't have my political opinions on that subject get round in my ward. I'm just telling it in the family. But we're getting off the subject. Let's us plan for our little party for the show. What do you say? What's the matter with tomorrow night?

MRS. ALLEN [*frigidly*]. I have never been to a circus in my life. I always supposed circuses were for children and the proletariat.

CLARISSA. He means the theatre, mother.

PETER. Haw, haw! I call everything in the stage line a show. I thought everybody did. But if you ain't ever attended a circus, ma'am, you've

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missed half your life. I wish I might have the joy of escorting you to the next one. I always take a bunch of kids every spring—youngsters from the fourth ward—that's my old lay-out. They call it Donnelly's Treat, and they just do fight—cussin' and kickin'—which one shall hold my hand. There's pop-corn and peanuts for them and the elephants. They come all dressed up in their best Sunday clothes, faces shining with soap, hair slick. Believe me, they sure do have some good time. It would do your blessed old heart good to see 'em, ma'am, and I think you would enjoy headin' the procession.

MRS. ALLEN. You are quite mistaken, Mr. Donnelly, I should not enjoy heading a procession.

PETER. Wouldn't you? Well, maybe not. Maybe a show—I mean a play—is more in your line. I know Clarissa takes to plays like a duck to water, don't you, my girl? Like daughter, like mother, *maybe*, though I don't really guess so. Why, I believe Clarissa could stand a show, I mean a play, almost every night in the week. And I figured it out most ladies can. The funny thing is that they like deep subjects. Now a man, he goes to a show just for entertainment, same as he goes to the races, only not so exciting. Why, I bet you if men was allowed to bet on how a play comes out, the theatres would be just packed. It's a wonder some theatrical guy don't think of it and start a book—it would triple his receipts in no time, even if he did it on the square. But of course ladies don't care about that—they ain't sporty and don't like funny plays. In fact,

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ladies are very serious-minded people. No offence to the ladies—I'm sure—it's only the difference between 'em and men folks. For me, I get as much fun outside the theatre as in. I think people in real life are as interesting as any show—play, I mean. In fact, I get my fun studying human nature. It's the most interesting job in the world watching how folks work—I mean the mechanism. They all have their ambitions and their prejudices and if you study 'em enough you get to know just what they're going to do. If you touch a button here, it sets some set of wheels going, and if you pull a wire there, it sets off something else. Believe me, it sure is some game—and some folks call it politics. [*He laughs heartily, then, seeing the others unmoved, he gazes at them interrogatively and sobers down.*] Excuse me, ladies, I guess it's me that's monopolizing the conversation.

ELIZABETH. Clarissa, we haven't finished our interview. If this—this gentleman will permit me.

PETER. Why, sure, I didn't know I was interrupting.

CLARISSA. Oh, Elizabeth, won't you—won't you postpone it to some more opportune time?

ELIZABETH. It can't be postponed. It must be settled now. You haven't been made to see. You haven't promised anything.

CLARISSA. Oh, I know you are doing this out of the goodness of your heart, Elizabeth, I know you mean it for a kindness, but it isn't kind, it is quite, quite cruel.

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ELIZABETH. Cruel? Do you think I enjoy it? Is it pleasant to have to explain to a friend that she is making a fool of herself? To try to keep her from making a horrible, an irreparable mistake!

CLARISSA. Oh, please don't, please hush!

ELIZABETH. Clarissa, come away, come home with me! [*Moving towards her.*]

CLARISSA. Oh, I can't! Don't you see? Peter has come to dinner.

PETER. Well, I wouldn't want to butt in on any unfinished business. I can eat anywhere. I ain't particular.

ELIZABETH [*taking her by the arm*]. My dear, you come home with me to dinner.

CLARISSA [*pulling away from her*]. It is quite quite impossible. Won't you stay to dinner with us?

PETER. This is a funny business.

ELIZABETH [*starting slightly and looking at him in amazement*]. Aunt Julia, I don't believe he knows. I don't believe he understands. I don't believe he comprehends the situation in the least. Clarissa evidently hasn't told him.

PETER. I guess I don't. I guess if there's a situation I'm all in the dark there. If you've got a flash-light you might turn it on, ma'am.

ELIZABETH. And you, Aunt Julia, you haven't yourself made the situation clear to him, have you?

MRS. ALLEN. Oh, I have in every way possible. Maybe not just in so many words, but by

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my manner, my refusals, my—oh, what can a lady do in her own house?

ELIZABETH. You see, Mr. Donnelly, you put Mrs. Allen at a disadvantage by coming here.

PETER. You mean I ain't wanted?

ELIZABETH. That is putting it rather crudely—but—

PETER. I guess I am crude.

ELIZABETH. Mrs. Allen never invited you here. You do not come by her invitation. You must see how things are.

PETER. I'm beginning to.

ELIZABETH. Clarissa got into this affair without thought, she has been carried away, she hasn't known what people would say, how they are talking now, how much her family and friends are opposed to it.

MRS. ALLEN. *Opposed?* I *have* opposed it—I *do* oppose it and *will* oppose it.

ELIZABETH. You see? Her mother will never give her consent to this marriage.

MRS. ALLEN. Consent? Oh, never, never! I cannot lose Clarissa. It would kill me. Mrs. Worthington says I am quite right, that I must set my face with grim determination like flint against it. They all say so. My friends are all supporting me. I cannot lose Clarissa. It would kill me!

PETER. But you wouldn't be losing her.

MRS. ALLEN. Oh, it would be worse than losing her. I should rather see my daughter in her grave than see her married to you.

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PETER [*under his breath*]. By gum!

ELIZABETH. We all feel that way, Aunt Julia. We are all with you. Father and Mother haven't heard of it yet, but I know what they will do—they will set their feet right down on it. For the sake of the family they will back you right up. All the aunts and uncles and cousins will, everybody will. Your friends this afternoon were all sympathetic. They all said you would have to stop it. And as for the others—oh, what they said! It was a scandal.

PETER [*aghast*]. You mean people are talking about Clarissa?

ELIZABETH. Of course. I suppose it is impossible for a man like you to realise what you subject a girl like Clarissa to.

CLARISSA. Oh, Elizabeth, don't!

PETER. She'd best tell me, Clarissa. [*To Elizabeth.*] Go on.

ELIZABETH. No one dreamed her relations with you were anything but business and philanthropic, so when the announcement of your engagement comes out, they say ugly things.

PETER. Ugly things about *her*?

ELIZABETH. It's only natural. They talk outrageously.

PETER. It don't seem natural to me for ladies to talk outrageously.

ELIZABETH. Much you know about ladies.

PETER. Anyhow, it ain't natural for anyone to talk scandal about a lady like Clarissa—it's damned blasphemy. If I hear any of it—well, they best come to me. I'll choke their mouths

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and settle their hash. I won't stand for nothing said against my girl.

ELIZABETH. Oh, a lot you could do. You would better hold your tongue. You would only make matters worse.

PETER. Me?

ELIZABETH. Don't you understand, you idiot, that it is just because of you that they are talking about her? They ask why a girl of blue blood, of refinement, education, culture, why she should marry a boor like you—and they give nasty reasons.

PETER [*angrily*]. The devil they do! [*With clenched teeth and fists.*] I'd like to hear 'em!

ELIZABETH. You! You would better keep away. You would only hurt her by your interference. You can only do more harm. You've done enough.

PETER. I can't do nothing to protect my girl?

ELIZABETH. Don't you realise, you fool, that her friends resent you, that they will none of you? They won't touch you. If Clarissa marries you, it is the end of her. Her friends will try to prevent it, if they don't succeed they will be helpless. All they can do will be to drop her and they *will* drop her. She will be ostracized.

MRS. ALLEN. Nobody will invite her anywhere. She will have no society. She will lose caste.

ELIZABETH. They have begun already. Today the president of a woman's club who was going to appoint Clarissa chairman of a committee decided not to. And another woman struck her

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name off a list she was getting up for a bridge club.

PETER. You mean if she marries me, she'll lose her friends?

ELIZABETH. Of course. A woman's social standing is gauged by her husband's—she can't rise above his. Her family and friends will never admit you to their social circle. You—a product of the gutter!

MRS. ALLEN. Oh, look at you—your clothing, your manners, the way you stand, you lout, you knave, you low politician, you boor! Oh, it will kill me! I am not strong—I never have been strong! It will break my heart and take my life! [*She bursts into tears.*]

ELIZABETH. It would kill her mother.

PETER. I don't see why it should kill her.

ELIZABETH. That is just it—you are too coarse-grained to see! But at least you ought to be able to comprehend that *I* know. *I* understand the situation as perfectly as it is impossible for you to understand it, and it is only left for you to take my word for it. You must. You've got to. It is the only thing left for you to do. This horrible thing would kill her mother. Aunt Julia would not survive it a year.

PETER. You make it pretty hard, ma'am.

ELIZABETH. Hard? Do you think it is easy for me? Do you think I am enjoying it? To try to explain something incomprehensible to a rough, coarse-grained oaf like you? To try to get you to see that Clarissa would lose her social standing—all that makes life worth while. All the

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little pleasures and connections she has always enjoyed, the things and people she was born to and has always possessed—her friends that she would lose, one after another, the pleasures that would drop away, one after another, till there was nothing left—nothing—but you and her life with you, which in the end she could not possibly bear. She wasn't born for your life—she would hate it. She would have to give up all her own life for you and in the end she would hate you for it. I said it would kill her mother, and do you think she herself, Clarissa, could stand that? No, no daughter could. It would fill her with regret and hatred for you, the cause of it. It would wreck her. In the end it would kill Clarissa. Oh, it is monstrous—criminal—

PETER [*though he has reddened and become more and more excited, is very quiet, his face now being full of suppressed emotion*]. Wait! [*Holding up his hand.*] Don't say anything more. I've heard enough. You've made it clear. You maybe could have done it a little different, but anyhow you've done it. I guess I understand. I guess I've been a fool. I always was a hard worker, and so things came pretty easy and I guess I didn't know when to stop. Sooner or later a man always meets what he can't put over, and I didn't see when I got there. I hadn't sense enough to realise the difference between me and a real lady. I didn't know about the opposition of the family, and when I talked about them and the difference between her class and mine she said her mother's objection was just the natural ob-

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jection of a mother to anyone, and I hadn't the sense to see it was only Miss Allen's kindness of heart that made her say so to me. I thought I might give her a little something—my life and all I've got. You see, I worship her. I thought I might be some good to her family and friends. I wanted to give her some pleasure in using me and my things and money, but I never thought of the other side—I never thought about her losing anything. All I thought about was what I could do for her. I never thought about her giving up things. I couldn't stand that. I wouldn't hurt her. You can depend on that. You can depend on me for that. I'll get out. I wouldn't come between her and her mother. I wouldn't want the old lady to suffer—much less *her!* I wouldn't come between them and all her home ties and all she's ever had. I'll go. I'd better go straight off. [*Turning to Clarissa, who has been watching him intently and in utter amazement.*] Good-bye, little girl. I guess—[*his voice trembling and choking*]—I guess I better not shake hands. [*For a second they gaze at each other, then without a word or sound, he turns away and starts to walk out. Clarissa gives a little low cry, runs to him, throws her arms about his neck.*]

CLARISSA. Peter! What have you to say to me? Do you suppose I am going to let you go like this? Don't you know I care about you? Why do you think I promised to marry you? I did promise, you remember. Maybe, if you try hard enough, you'll remember the circumstances—and so did you promise to marry me. And I

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am not going to let you break your promise. [*She releases him, but still holds his hand.*] I am the person to decide this question, I'll have you to know. Do you suppose for one moment that I am going to permit two women to sit up and decide that I must not marry this man and this man to acquiesce in the decision and say they are perfectly right and he will not marry me! Why, Peter, you are a big booby to allow yourself to be so bullied by two women! But I am not or at least I am not going to allow myself to be bullied any longer. I have stood all I am going to stand, Mother and Elizabeth, I want you to realise that. I am not a child, I am a woman—and not a young one, either. I have chosen to marry Peter and I am going to do so, understand, because he is what I want—I want his love—because we respect each other and have some sort of tenderness and consideration for each other. [*She drops his hand.*] I know him and you don't. I want to tell you that though he may not have the wonderful blue blood in his veins that has given some of our relatives an interesting purple past, he has a brain in his head the like of which has not occurred in our beloved family for many generations. And if he can't play golf or wear a fraternity pin, he has a big heart that he wears on his sleeve, and a nobility that keeps him from injustice and rudeness. If marrying him is going to make people drop me, they'll have to drop me—and I don't think I'll feel the jar.

MRS. ALLEN [*moaning*]. Clarissa, Clarissa, my

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child, don't talk so! Don't use such coarse and vulgar language!

ELIZABETH. You don't know what you are saying—you are carrying on like an insane person.

CLARISSA. Insane nothing! I am doing the most sensible thing I ever did in my life.

ELIZABETH. You are not going to do it. We are not going to let you. Come away! [*She seizes Clarissa by the arm and attempts to lead her out of the room. Clarissa angrily shakes her off and stands away from her. Peter has all through this proclamation of free speech, stood still regarding Clarissa with wide-eyed and intense amazement and delight.*]

CLARISSA. Let me alone, Elizabeth. I am not going to be bossed by you or anyone else any longer. Carrying on like an insane person, am I? Well, if I am—which I'm not—it is you who have driven me to it with your impertinent and uncalled-for intrusion into my affairs. Don't know what I am saying, indeed! Which leads me to say a great deal more than I would have said otherwise. I am going to tell you all exactly why I am marrying Peter—though, Peter [*turning to him*], with your kindness and insight into human nature you might have guessed. Don't you see, Peter, that I am sick of it all—of social distinctions and propriety and blue blood and all the life-lies I have had to live by? Maybe if I had been pretty and gay and popular I wouldn't have cared, but I wasn't and I do. I was always a homely, quiet little girl, and I never

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had a lover or a good time and nobody ever cared. I was a lonely forsaken little girl, the odd little black sheep, weak and timid, in a family of healthy white animals all alike and all disliking me for being different. Nobody ever did anything for me till you came along and then they all stand up on their hind-legs and kick up a hullabaloo of the danger to their class pride if even the little black sheep mates out of the drove!

ELIZABETH. Clarissa!

MRS. ALLEN. Oh, heaven, such sentiments, such language!

CLARISSA. Even so! I'm going to get it all out—I'm going to make a clean sweep. Don't you see, Peter, what I've been up against? Lots society cares about me, except to control me. Society! I've been fed on blue blood till I'm sick of it. Family! Why, we've had locomotor-ataxia and everything else in our family. We've collected rents from tenements that were not fit for pigs to live in. We've avoided paying taxes in every possible way. We've made money out of making soap that we sell for three times what it is worth. We've committed all the crimes that all the rest of rich, selfish humanity has committed. Who are we? What is there for us to be proud of? When I was a little girl I was taught so that I believed that all ladies and gentlemen were Republicans and everybody outside the Episcopal Church was the scum of the earth. I had to go to Sunday School and dancing class, when I hated them both because all the other little boys and girls slighted me, and I was never

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allowed to play with any little boys and girls outside my class, and they all picked on me or else teased me or else left me out of things so that I was more lonesome than when I was alone. Later on I had to make calls and go to teas and dances, and I was miserable because I couldn't chatter and dance and everybody slighted me. What I wanted was work. I wanted to be a newspaper reporter, but they wouldn't let me because it would be a disgrace to the family. They talked me over at family dinners—I suppose they never guessed how unhappy I was. My cousins made fun of my clothes—because I liked warm rough things and not thin filmy stuff that is supposed to be for ladies. And Aunt Harriet, who is Elizabeth's mother, would insist upon taking me shopping. I had to go calling with mother on stupid women who talked all about their diseases and sometimes would ask condescendingly about my slum work. When I wanted to be a stenographer the family raised a hue and cry. Why was I so queer that I must want to work like a poor girl? Wasn't there plenty of money coming in from the tenements and the soap? I am never noticed in the family except when I do something different from the rest and then noticed only to be criticised. The black sheep of the family, the round ball in the square hole—oh, how square and mathematical and even and measured and standardized by generations of aunts and uncles and cousins—but they think I must stay there because I am my mother's only child. The aunts and uncles and

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cousins—most of them commonplace enough and many of them distinctly unpleasant but squarely filling their little square holes. And now at last I am an old maid—an old maid who has never had a happy youth—but few of them do have. And I have been slow developing and am just at last realising that I have powers of enjoyment in abundance for the sort of things I myself really like—not the things I have been forced to try to like. And then you come along, Peter, and offer me means of escape from the shackles and bore-some old restraint. Do you think I would refuse it? I don't know how I happened to love you—does anybody ever know?—or how you happened to love me, but I know I want you because you don't criticise me. You don't care if I wear brown gloves when other women are all wearing white ones and you fortunately don't know all about the rules and regulations of society that I am so deadly sick of. You take me as I am—[*stopping for breath.*]

PETER. You bet I do—because you are all right.

CLARISSA. That's just it—the least of us want that from somebody. The cosiest feeling of comfort I have ever had in my life is just that feeling of being right in your eyes. [*Turning to the others.*] In addition, I like him. Oh, it was I who led him on—don't blame him. He is a politician, of course, but so are Senator Lodge and Lord Balfour. And he is human. I like him because of his breeziness and humor. He has made the youngsters of the fourth ward happy and many

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other people—and he has made me happy. As for your losing me, Mother, you won't, of course, because I refuse to be lost. And you will keep right on playing auction and getting pretty clothes and being happy in your own way and not thinking of me just as usual. But I never dreamed you and Elizabeth could be so ill-bred, so brutal. You'll have to take it all back, you understand. You'll have to tell Peter you're sorry. Now you'd better go and wash your eyes and make yourself presentable for dinner. Elizabeth, you are welcome to stay, if you like. I expect to go to your house whenever I choose, just the same and you will do the same here as you always have, of course. Only understand I'm going to say and do what I like now and hereafter and shall not ever allow myself to be bullied again. I'm a person to be reckoned with now—I've got someone to rely on—to back me up. Someone who believes in me. And understand that you've both got to treat Peter decently because he belongs to me. And I'm one of the family. [*With a smile.*]

ELIZABETH. There is no use trying to say anything more to her today, Aunt Julia. She is a perfect spit-fire.

MRS. ALLEN [*rising*]. Oh, Elizabeth, don't leave me! [*Going over to her niece.*]

ELIZABETH. No, Aunt Julia, I'll never desert you.

MRS. ALLEN. I need your support. I never knew her to take such a stand, to talk as she did. She is quite unlike herself.

CLARISSA. Perhaps I am being quite like my-

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self at last and not everlastingly trying to be like someone else.

MRS. ALLEN. Oh, Elizabeth, hear her!

ELIZABETH. I certainly do, Aunt Julia, it is shocking.

CLARISSA. Oh, do run along, both of you, and wash your tear-stained faces. I'm sure dinner will be served any minute.

MRS. ALLEN. Oh, Elizabeth, you'll have to stay! I cannot be left alone with them. You must!

ELIZABETH [*putting her arm about Mrs. Allen as they go out*]. After such a scene! I don't see how I can—but of course I will not desert you.

CLARISSA. Do stay, Elizabeth. You'll find Peter very diverting.

ELIZABETH [*glaring back at her as she goes out with her aunt*]. I shall stay, Aunt Julia!

[*They go. Peter turns to Clarissa and gazes at her with unbounded admiration beaming on his smiling face.*]

PETER. By golly, but you stood up to them! And you stood up for me! You are some little soldier right at the cannon's mouth!

CLARISSA. You mustn't say "by golly," Peter. That is one of the things that prejudices people against you.

PETER. Oh, I reckon, by golly,—I mean that's absolutely true! [*Laughing and half-embarrassed.*] I forget so. You'll have to teach me to talk and I guess you'll have a harder time doing it than if I was a baby learning. But say, maybe some that they said, was true.

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CLARISSA. Maybe it was.

PETER. But say, if it is—

CLARISSA. If it is, then we'll have to convince people. We'll have to begin at home, like charity, with Mother.

PETER. I'd like so awful well to be good to her. But she—well, for one thing she don't like my clothes. You reckon you could buy the right kind of suit for me?

CLARISSA. You know I like your gay clothes, Peter. It's all a part of the gayety and health and niceness of you. But you can wear some others for Mother. We'll go slow and we'll win Mother and Elizabeth and everybody, finally. It's no easy job. You saw her last look. And you've got to stand by me.

PETER. I'll stand wherever you want me to, you know that. But it's awful hard work you've got ahead of you, teaching me. I'm no spring chicken, either, you know, my dear.

CLARISSA. You have given me happiness, Peter. I shall be getting a lot of pleasure out of anything I do with you.

PETER. Oh, my dear, you are—you are—! If I can't use slang how on earth can I say what you are?

CLARISSA. Oh, Peter, you are such a goose! I am your little girl, of course, that is perfectly plain—the first person I ever belonged to, because you belong to me.

PETER. Well, my dear, there is one thing more you are—you are an angel! [*He takes her in his arms.*]

[CURTAIN.]

AN APOCRYPHAL EPISODE.

*Being an Interlude Not Generally Found in Ordinary Editions of
The Odyssey or The Æneid.*

CHARACTERS AS THEY APPEAR.

DIDO.

ULYSSES.

ÆNEAS.

CALYPSO.

[*In the centre of a grassy open space, a sort of natural court, surrounded by tall trees and many flowering bushes, a funeral pile has been erected. It is high and of generous proportions. About it are strewn funeral boughs and garlands, and upon it lie the nuptial bed of Æneas and Dido, heaped with the Trojan's clothing, armor, and sword which he had left when he departed precipitately for his ship. It is late night, just before dawn, that sullen, haunted hour when sick human bodies give up their ghosts and when bones long dead execute a danse macabre before returning to their graves at the cock's first crow. In the dim grey light Dido is seen with hair dishevelled and gown torn, wandering about the funeral pile.*]

DIDO. Well, I must make up my mind. I must decide whether really I, Dido, Queen of Tyre, shall throw my very good-looking body on the sword of the perfidious Trojan or not. The

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scene is all set. Everything is dramatically executed. I have done all I could possibly think of to frighten him into thinking I was going to commit suicide, and he hasn't come back yet. I must say I hate to take the next step. One does, you know, hesitate to take the step that leads up to the top of a funeral pile. I believe I will give him a few minutes more. His ship may possibly have got off, though I don't think so. In any case it would take some time for the rumors to reach him that I set afloat about my mad condition and the tragic end I am planning. It would be silly not to give him plenty of time. [*She sits down on a funeral bough and is silent a moment.*] Of course, I don't have to commit suicide. Perhaps it is true that there are as many good fish in the sea as ever were caught—but I am crazy about Æneas. Yet there are quantities of men in the world, and I am a widow. [*Thinks a moment.*] I have had many offers since my husband died—a handsome widow has. I might marry one of those Numidians. But they are all so black and I've always preferred light men. My own complexion is dark, and it is better for a brunette to mate with a blond. It makes a happier alliance. Besides, if I married one of them he might remember the way I formerly scorned him, for I certainly was haughty in the way I declined their suits, and he might be bad-tempered and nasty later on. Then, on the other hand, I might collect my ships and follow Æneas, since he is so bent on going to a new country. But I feel sure I should despise a pioneer life.

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Hardships are not in my line. In Italy—a perfectly new and unsettled country—with Æneas I should not have the bare comforts, not to mention the luxuries, of civilization and my husband would be so engrossed with the founding of Rome, I know I should be neglected. No, I prefer city life—a city already founded—and apartments suitable for royalty, and plenty of well-trained servants and a luxurious table and an excellent chef. Perhaps Rome may grow into a city some day, but it's nothing but a mud bank on the Tiber now. No, there are only two courses left open to me, either to get Æneas back or to commit suicide and haunt him. I suppose it doesn't make any difference to a ghost where it is—that my ghost would be as comfortable in the pioneer settlement of Rome as it would be in a big established city like Tyre. Ghosts never seem to be comfortable anywhere. But at least I could get some pleasure out of making him miserable. If he doesn't come back and I do commit suicide I shall never give him another easy hour in his life. My ghost shall make him perfectly miserable. I believe I will climb the funeral pile and rave some more. [*She gets up and begins laboriously and with much sliding backward to ascend the funeral pile. After great struggling she arrives out-of-breath at the top.*] The descent to Avernus may be easy [*breathing heavily*], but the preparatory ascent is not. [*She drops and sits in a heap at the top of the pile.*] This is his armor [*touching it*], this his sword, and these are his clothes—the vain man, he

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knew he was good-looking and always dressed well to set off his manly beauty. Well, I may as well rage a bit more and see if that will do any good. [*She rises and begins screaming and rending her hair and gown.*] Oh, me unhappy! Oh, Dido, that was Queen of the Tyrians, now distressed, forlorn, forsaken, soul-depressed! Deserted by the perfidious Trojan, I must now seek death by my own hand. I will set fire to my funeral pile and plunge his sword into my bosom. Let the cruel Trojan from the sea feed his eyes with these flames and bear with him the arrows of my death. [*She stops and listens a moment and then speaks in a lower and more natural tone of voice.*] I may as well pretend to do it—he may be looking. [*She again raises her voice and shrieks.*] So I, Dido, Queen of Tyre, die by the sword of him who has so cruelly abandoned me! [*She pretends to plunge upon the sword just as a man in full armor, a Greek, rushes in and leaps to the pile, catching the sword from her, exclaiming meanwhile:*]

ULYSSES. Hold on, hold on! There, there, my good woman, what are you about? [*Dido, panting heavily, would fall, but he supports her and she collapses in his arms.*]

DIDO [*with eyes closed*]. Ah!

ULYSSES. That was a narrow escape. I got here just in the nick of time. [*She opens her eyes a moment, rolls them—they are large and very beautiful, and Ulysses gazes at her in deep admiration—and closes them again. She is hanging in his arms, utterly relaxed.*] Come, let me help you

AN APOCRYPHAL EPISODE

down from this infernal affair. [*He draws her gently, lifts, half carries her down to the ground.*] I have been awfully unlucky in the last few years, getting wrecked and lost and arriving constantly in the most malapropos places, but I certainly was fortunate this time to get here just at the right moment.

DIDO [*starting away from him violently, her eyes dilated and gazing at him with pretended surprise and amazement*]. Ah, who are you? You are not he!

ULYSSES. No, evidently not. Did you think I was?

DIDO [*repeating with a tragic break in her voice*]. You are not he!

ULYSSES. It is unfortunate for me that I am not. I only wish I were. Would you mind telling me whom you were expecting?

DIDO. Tell me first your name.

ULYSSES. Well, I don't much like to, because it seems to bring bad luck. There usually ensues a concatenation of circumstances to prevent my moving on. But I don't so much care whether I move on from here or not. I don't mind telling you. The fact is that I think I should have to tell you anything. I am Ulysses.

DIDO [*starting*]. Ulysses! The Achaian! The Greek! The enemy of him! Ah, woe is me!

ULYSSES. Bad luck does seem to pursue me after all. But now you might tell me who he is, and more especially I am passionately interested to know who you are.

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DIDO. I am Dido, Queen of Tyre, and he is the perfidious Trojan, pious Æneas.

ULYSSES. Perfidious is the word. They are all that, those Trojans—perfidious, lying, deceiving in every possible way, abominable, execrable, diabolical. They are fiends incarnate. I hope you have not put your trust in Æneas.

DIDO. He seemed so gentle, so plausible.

ULYSSES. That is just their way of spreading propaganda. I hope you didn't believe him.

DIDO. I did. I trusted every word that fell from his lips. He won me with his marvelous tales of bravery and hardship.

ULYSSES. Manufactured out of whole cloth, every one of them.

DIDO. He worked upon my woman's sympathy, the poor, unfortunate, lonely man, deprived in one fell blow of father and wife and home.

ULYSSES. Lucky dog!

DIDO [*turning on him fiercely*]. What!

ULYSSES. Oh, I don't mean that—I only mean that by being an object of pity he won your—your interest. It's a funny thing a woman is always ready to fall in love with a man because he's lost his wife—another woman. Now I can't arouse anybody's sympathy, because I have a complete outfit of home and family back in Greece.

DIDO. He had lost his spouse, poor lonely man!

ULYSSES. The second summer is the dangerous age for infants, the fatal one for widowers.

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DIDO. He had his son with him, a darling little creature.

ULYSSES [*nodding his head gloomily*]. There you are. Looked like Eros, I suppose. And so Æneas worked on your sympathy for all he was worth, and you took care of him, darned his socks and nursed the baby.

DIDO. I gave him hospitality and believed him when he told me how much I meant to him.

ULYSSES. Don't believe a man when he tells how much he loves you, only believe him when he neglects his business for you.

DIDO. That he did not do. It was his business that drew him away from me. He said that he must go, that the gods intended him to found a city and raise up a nation, an eternal city, Rome in Italy. All my entreaties were in vain, my tears, my supplications. He, who had won me with his appeals, his distress, his soft speech, now became cold, callous, stony-hearted, abusive. He left me, saying he would sail away in his ship, oh, stern and cruel one! Then, overpowered by my grief, I took the Furies into my breast and determined to die. There is in my palace a marble shrine in honor of my former husband, to whose memory I have never ceased to be devoted. [*Casting her eyes piously to Heaven.*] To that I paid extraordinary veneration—after Æneas had deserted me. I had it encircled with snowy fillets of wool and festal garlands.

ULYSSES [*sighing deeply*]. Ah, fidelity is an appealing quality in woman!

DIDO. But I have only the ghost of my former

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husband, and Æneas, with strong, real arms and hot, real lips, has been whispering soft nothings into my ear and stealing away my heart.

ULYSSES. It would have been wiser to steel your heart against him than to have him steal it.

DIDO. Ah, me unhappy, I am the victim of masculine charms! Undone by the perfidy of the pious Æneas—

ULYSSES. Pious people always are to be watched.

DIDO. I determined to seek death by my own hand and descend to the shade of my former husband. Therefore yesterday I caused this vast funeral pile to be erected, with these torches and faggots of oak, and the ground strewn with these garlands and funeral boughs and his armor and clothes and sword carried here from my apartment, where he had abandoned them—and had them placed on top.

ULYSSES. If he went off without his things, don't you think he'll come back?

DIDO. Oh, no, no!

ULYSSES. Then you *must* have had a scene.

DIDO. I also caused altars to be erected around, and a priestess with hair dishevelled and with thundering voice invoked three hundred gods and Erebus and Chaos and threefold Hecate. Oh, she made a terrific spectacle of herself.

ULYSSES. I can easily believe it.

DIDO. She sprinkled water as the symbol of the lake of Avernus, and spread full-grown herbs cut with brazen sickles by moonlight, and juice of black poison. Oh, it was all done properly.

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ULYSSES [*gallantly*]. I feel sure you would not leave the least little dramatic thing undone.

DIDO. Then, at night when the others had all gone to bed, I alone stood by the altars with salt cake and appealed to the gods and to the stars.

ULYSSES. It sounds beautifully lyric and lovely.

DIDO. I alone stood here under the stars through the night when all others slept—when even the great trees of the woods and the surging waves of the sea were quiet and all beasts and speckled birds, both the water birds that nest out on the far rocks of the sea and the little birds that live in the tall grasses of the fields and in the bushes. All through the silent night under the stars I raged and beat my breast for the perfidious, pious one who had neglected and deserted me.

ULYSSES [*approaching and putting his arms around her*]. It is a perfect outrage, my dear girl. I cannot understand how any man could be so callous to your charms.

DIDO. Oh, indeed, it wasn't that! He wasn't callous at all, but he was too ambitious to found a family and build a city.

ULYSSES. Ah, I see—the old, old chaste combination of piety and the love of riches.

DIDO [*as if suddenly recollecting herself*]. Oh, my friend, I had in my distracted state of mind almost forgotten my hospitality. You must be travel-worn and weary.

ULYSSES [*sighing*]. I am always travel-worn

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and weary. I am forever being shipwrecked and lost. It has got to be my normal condition.

DIDO. Then come with me to my palace, that I may provide you with refreshment.

ULYSSES (*with a meaning glance*). My charming hostess, I think I would come with you anywhere. [*He offers her his arm and they proceed off to the right. As they go, Æneas and Calypso appear from the left, entering cautiously. They have seen Dido and Ulysses and have watched them go, but the others have not seen them.*]

ÆNEAS [*his lip curling with scorn*]. She is already flirting with another man!

CALYPSO. Well, are you surprised? You deserted her, didn't you? What does a man expect when he leaves a woman to the wiles of any passing stranger? And Ulysses has wiles, I can assure you. Besides, my dear fellow, what are *you* doing? Haven't you been flirting with me as hard as you could?

ÆNEAS [*sighing heavily*]. Oh, please do not call it flirting. I am quite in earnest, I do assure you. From the moment I saw you sitting upon a rock on the shore when I was tossing in my ship among the surges I knew some beneficent god was directing me to come to you.

CALYPSO [*smiling*]. Perhaps the gods are not quite so busy with human destinies as you think. You see I know a little bit about them, being one on my father's side.

ÆNEAS. You are a goddess and a queen. You are everything that is beautiful and attractive.

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[*Raptly.*] You must be divine, since you are so good.

CALYPSO. Oh, thank you. Such a remark is very appealing, even coming from a stranger. I don't often hear this sentiment about myself. You know a woman, even a goddess on her father's side, becomes a little weary of hearing nothing but pretty things said about her beauty—the perfection of her eyes or the loveliness of her nose [*with a wan, sad smile*], and longs to hear a compliment to her goodness, especially from a pious man like you. [*Smiling at him archly.*]

ÆNEAS. Then you do admire piety in a man?

CALYPSO. Oh, piety has the greatest fascination for me. It does for all women. That is why so many men are married—most men are so good.

ÆNEAS. But you came here after Ulysses, you said you followed him. Ulysses is not pious, he is a perfidious Greek, fickle, untrustworthy, base.

CALYPSO. I followed him to be revenged. When a man tires of a woman, as he always does unless she gets ahead of him and does it first, when he forsakes her, some women try to lure him back by charms, some forget him and persuade themselves they are better off, some follow him. That is the course men dislike most, so I followed him.

ÆNEAS. But you will give up following him now? You will turn your attentions to a more worthy object?

CALYPSO. Now don't you think that is carrying piety a little too far? Revenge is a very

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noble and ancient virtue. Call it punishment if you prefer. Every pious person knows that he wants to revenge himself upon his enemy—that is, of course, to say that the wrong-doer must be punished.

ÆNEAS. If I should meet this perfidious Greek I should punish him. It is not fitting for you to do so, it is fitting for you—

CALYPSO. But you just saw him and I didn't notice you rushing after him.

ÆNEAS. —it is fitting for you, a pious woman, to unite yourself with a pious man and found a pious family and build a pious city and establish a pious race and nation.

CALYPSO. Do you really expect to do all that?

ÆNEAS [*solemnly*]. It is the will of the gods.

CALYPSO. Well, then, I suppose you are going to do it. If a man persuades himself that the gods are backing him up, he generally succeeds—at least for a time. There's everything in thinking you have moral support.

ÆNEAS [*suddenly*]. Oh, Calypso, my perfect one, come away with me to Italy! [*Holding out his arms to her beseechingly.*]

CALYPSO. Hark, someone is approaching!

ÆNEAS. Then let us wander off to the sea and watch the shining rays of the dawning sun play upon the rippling waves. Besides, it will be safer there.

[*They go, and almost immediately Dido and Ulysses enter.*]

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DIDO. The arms would have been perfectly safe. No one would be impious enough to rob a funeral pile.

ULYSSES. It is wiser for us to come back and get them. My dear, I feel much surer to have the sword of Æneas in my own possession. It isn't safe to leave arms lying around. They may go off. [*He proceeds to climb the pile and pick up the sword.*]

DIDO. But a funeral pile is inviolate and a sword couldn't go off.

ULYSSES. Oh, innocent-minded woman, it might with a man, and the perfidious Trojan is impious enough to rob his own funeral pile. [*He descends.*] Now I feel easier about it. [*Adjusting the sword into his own belt.*] It comes in handy, for my own sword went to the bottom in my last shipwreck. It was one I rather valued, too, presented to me by the father of Nausicaa after I was shipwrecked in front of their house. Poor girl! She was so impressionable! And a shipwrecked man cannot help being a little grateful. [*He smiles reminiscently.*]

DIDO. You seem to have been shipwrecked a great deal.

ULYSSES. Yes, I have got into the habit. I may say it is my worst, almost my only, bad habit. [*Patting the sword.*] Well, I feel more comfortable with this in my possession. As for Æneas, he can get another when he goes aboard his own ship. Lucky dog, to have his own ship! I hope he's well embarked by now.

DIDO. Will you come now and refresh your

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weary heart with wine and bread and luscious fruits?

ULYSSES. I will, my queen, and afterwards, if I may, I will lie with my head pillowed on your breast and be lulled to sleep by the music of your heart. [*He takes her arm and they go out. At once the other two enter from the other side, Calypso with knitted brows, her face intense with anger and hatred, her movements quick, Æneas following slowly a few feet behind.*]

ÆNEAS. I told you not to wait and listen or you'd hear something you didn't want to hear.

CALYPSO. The fickle knave! And she—the weak impostor!

ÆNEAS. You'd much better come with me.

CALYPSO [*her expression changing slowly as if a sudden thought had just come to her, as she seems to be cogitating and planning keenly and quickly, turns suddenly and directly to him*]. Do you really love me?

ÆNEAS. I worship you. [*He stands stock-still, however, and she approaches him.*]

CALYPSO. What would you give for a kiss?

ÆNEAS. Do you really mean it, goddess?

CALYPSO [*playing the siren and alluring him to the full extent of her power*]. Will you try to steal a kiss, oh, faint-hearted one? [*He slowly approaches and finally puts his arm about her, catching her to him in a closer embrace. As he does so, she screams frantically.*] Oh, oh, loose me, ruffian! Oh, help, help!

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[Dido and Ulysses come running, but, seeing who the others are, they stop and Ulysses puts his arm about Dido. Calypso is still in the arms of Æneas, managing to cling to him so that he is made to appear to be holding her, and standing thus, the two couples on either side regard each other. Dido disengages herself from Ulysses and takes a few steps towards the others.]

DIDO. Oh, Æneas! Oh, perfidious, but beloved and pious hero!

CALYPSO *[as if trying with difficulty to free herself]*. This man has followed and besought and wooed and pursued me and at last when I was helpless has attacked me.

DIDO *[advancing to him]*. Adored one! My heart's treasure!

[Ulysses, left alone, bursts into fury, draws his sword and prepares for an attack upon Æneas.]

ULYSSES. Oh, you scoundrel, dog, impious wretch, coward, traitor, deserter, base one, cur! It is not enough for you to make love to one woman and then forsake her, but you must now proceed to play the villain with another! Come on! Defend yourself! *[He brandishes his sword.]*

ÆNEAS *[disentangling himself from Calypso on the one hand and from Dido on the other, who endeavors to throw herself into his arms]*. Can't you let me alone, both of you? It wasn't my fault. She enticed me. She lured me on.

ULYSSES. Who did?

CALYPSO. Not I! Anyone that knows me

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knows that I would never entice and allure a pious man.

DIDO. Oh, how can you, Æneas? You know I never did.

ÆNEAS. They both did.

CALYPSO. Oh, oh, base liar! [*Shrieking.*]

DIDO. Oh, Æneas! [*Weeping.*]

ULYSSES. Enough! You low defamer of women, defend yourself! Or die in ignominy! [*He stalks towards Æneas brandishing his sword, which is that of Æneas. Calypso and Dido start away and Æneas jumps back and proceeds to draw his sword, talking the while.*]

ÆNEAS. All women are alike. You can't depend on any of them. I didn't want to start this quarrel. I didn't want to fight. I really don't like quarrels and fighting. I'm always drawn into them. I do wish I had got off to Italy.

ULYSSES [*grandiloquently*]. Coward and deceiver! [*Lunges at Æneas.*]

[*Ulysses and Æneas fight. At first Æneas chiefly parries the blows that come thick and fast. They are fairly evenly matched. Calypso on one hand and Dido on the other watch, Calypso with intense interest and delight, Dido with moans, shrieks, and weeping. Calypso is confident, knowing the wonderful strength and ability of Ulysses, but at last as the fight continues for some time with no apparent sign of victory on either side, she finally goes over to Dido and, after watching a few minutes*

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more with Dido, she draws her aside and speaks to her.]

CALYPSO. Which of these two men do you really want?

DIDO. Oh, Æneas, Æneas, of course! How can you ask? Oh, oh, I am so much afraid he will be killed!

CALYPSO. If you feel that way, then, if you want him, why don't you get him out?

DIDO. Oh, how can I? Oh, oh!

CALYPSO. Well, there is really no need for these men to be hacking each other to pieces, you know. They both love me, of course, but I couldn't be bothered with Æneas. [*She stands as if thinking, then with loud cries she runs to the two warriors and throws herself between them.*] Apart! Apart! Stop fighting and stand aside! [*Ulysses and Æneas, as she throws herself between them, separate, draw back with exclamations and stand gazing at her in amazement and perplexity.*] You've both shown now that you can fight—that you are both doughty warriors—and it is perfectly senseless for you to keep on till you cleave each other in two. There are four of us now. You are great fools to fight, moreover, when you might be much more pleasantly occupied.

DIDO [*approaching with tears*]. Oh, Æneas!

ÆNEAS. Do not speak to me, woman!

DIDO. Oh, Æneas!

ÆNEAS. You were flirting with another man!

CALYPSO. So? Jealous, are you? [*Smiling.*]

ÆNEAS. Not at all—but—

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CALYPSO. Oh, you aren't, aren't you? Well, Dido wasn't flirting in the least, it was all Ulysses' fault. I know him. She wouldn't flirt. She is so good, she is almost simple-minded. Why don't you take her? You are absolutely cut out for each other. And there is little reason to doubt that she is in love with you. Now stop your silly fighting.

ÆNEAS. Well, I didn't start it. I never did care much for fighting. By nature I am more of a business man. If Ulysses would only let me alone I might be able to get to Italy and found a family and a city even yet.

CALYPSO. And you, Ulysses?

ULYSSES [*with deep irony and anger*]. And you? You were carrying on with this Trojan—I know you were.

CALYPSO. What? Jealous, too?

ULYSSES. Certainly not—but—

CALYPSO [*sweetly*]. No? Is it so strange that neither of you can realize it? That is that both Dido and I are not wholly without charm for other men perhaps even besides yourselves? Honestly, Ulysses, won't you acknowledge that we are both beautiful?

ULYSSES [*smiling darkly*]. All women are beautiful—too beautiful.

CALYPSO. And you, Æneas, will acknowledge, too, that we are both beautiful?

ÆNEAS. My piety compels me to tell the truth—that you are both of you beautiful—and good, so very good.

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CALYPSO. That's all right, then. You won't fight any more over us?

ÆNEAS. It is my theory that fighting should be carried on by slaves alone. Why should we feed them, otherwise? In future history, kings will carry on their wars that way—I shall put that in the constitution of Rome. Don't you agree with me, Ulysses?

ULYSSES. No, I don't agree with you about anything and never shall, but I am willing to stop fighting for the present, if you wish. This little skirmish has got my blood going again and I feel very much better—in fact, quite myself once more. Dalliance in the isle of Calypso had got me awfully soft and rusty. Shipwrecks are something, but they don't do for your muscles what a good fight does. A man needs hard exercise if he has been used to it, like me, in wars and things. But now—really—I feel quite fit again.

ÆNEAS. Look here, wouldn't it be a good idea if you and I signed a peace pact between our countries for future ages?

ULYSSES. Dear me, no, not I. I don't want to consign my name to oblivion by being the father of any league of nations.

ÆNEAS. Oh, come, now, it would be so noble and humanitarian. And it would make me feel so much safer about the mercantile and marine affairs of Rome.

ULYSSES. Why should I sign a peace pact when I like war? The exercise is good for a man's system, and anyhow doubtless I'll get into a

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brawl every time I meet one of your countrymen. It will be that way, you know. Greece and Rome will probably keep up the feud forever, my boy.

ÆNEAS. Well, it will be very bad for business unless it is carried on by slaves. In that case—now I wonder?—*it—war* may prove to be a protection to business! [*Thoughtfully.*]

CALYPSO. Æneas, Æneas, Dido is waiting for you. Go to her—she is good, so very good and pious, just like you. You are both pillars of society. [*He does not move at once and Calypso repeats petulantly, impatiently, stamping her foot.*] Go to her, I say. [*Æneas goes over to Dido, who holds out her arms to him.*]

DIDO. My Æneas, my own pious Æneas!

CALYPSO. Now betake yourselves to Dido's palace and have your cakes and wine and fruit and be happy.

[*Dido hangs upon the arm of Æneas and they start away slowly as Calypso continues speaking to Ulysses.*]

CALYPSO. And you, my Ulysses! [*Alluring him with the charm of her smile and attitude.*] Come with me to the island of joy.

ULYSSES [*captivated by her*] I am only human, you know, and you are—

CALYPSO. And I am half divine, you would say?

ULYSSES. No, not half divine—you are divine! Perhaps we can—what would you say?—perhaps

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we can surreptitiously borrow one of Æneas' boats to take us back to the island.

CALYPSO. Back to the island of joy! Our island of joy where the little waves from the deep blue sea roll and curl up to the shore, and the wide, fair sands are opalescent at sunset when music makes happy and all the sweetest birds sing in the fresh green olive trees and saplings, where the smiling sun warms and the dewy wind cools and the night is alive with stars and sweet with the floating breath of jasmine and oleander. Come! [*She holds out her arms to him, he takes her hand, putting his arm around her, and together they wander off in the direction of the sea, as Dido and Æneas have gone off in the other direction toward the city.*]

[CURTAIN.]

STANDING MOVING.

CHARACTERS:

BILLY. BERTHA.
MIRIAM. GEORGE.

*In this play two actors may assume
double roles.*

[*The scene represents the living-room in a very old frame house. Be it understood that the house has been a good one in its time, built on large grounds in what was then a residential part of the city, but it has been allowed to go to rack and ruin, just as the neighborhood has changed, deteriorating into a slum. The room has been dismantled. It is bare, but cluttered with stray unfortunate articles of furniture. A large old-fashioned square piano stands in the centre, some broken rocking-chairs are gathered together in a helpless group, a very old broken clock is on the mantelpiece, three large dress-boxes are tied together on the floor, several old family oil portraits lean lop-sidedly against the wall on the floor, etc. —as much as you please to indicate the hopelessly left-overs when moving ought to have been done. A pretty girl enters with a bungalow apron on much the worse for wear, a coat over it, and her hat on. She carries a grip, box tied with white ribbon, handbag, glass vase, bronze statue, two framed photographs, large Chinese lantern,*

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anything else you may think of, which she deposits on the floor. A latch-key is heard, and a young man appears through the door which opens into the hall behind.]

BILLY [*looking about with sharp surprise and disgust*]. Well, for the love o' Mike!

MIRIAM. What, dear?

BILLY. You said this morning everything would be moved today.

MIRIAM. Everything is.

BILLY. Don't you call all this truck anything?

MIRIAM. Oh, these things are just left-overs.

BILLY. But what are you going to do with them?

MIRIAM. I don't know.

BILLY. You don't know?

MIRIAM. Yes. That's just the point. Let's sit down. I'm so tired I can't stand. My feet feel as if they would come off, and I wish they would—then I wouldn't have to do anything more. [*She drops to the floor and sits there.*] The floor is so dusty, though I swept it myself six times.

BILLY. Sit on those [*pointing to the dress-boxes*].

MIRIAM. Oh, I couldn't! I never "sat on you" in my life.

BILLY. I'm not three paper boxes.

MIRIAM. Yes you are, dear, symbolically. These are your love letters.

BILLY. Good Lord, did I write all that? And paper so high! Why didn't you burn them?

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MIRIAM. Billy, I could never burn your love-letters! These [*indicating the box tied with white ribbon*] are the letters you proposed in.

BILLY. Good Lord! How many?

MIRIAM. Thirty-nine.

BILLY. It isn't fair to keep such evidences of a man's imbecility. I'll burn them.

MIRIAM. Never! I won't let you. We'll take them with us.

BILLY. Not on your life! I'm not going to live in one room with all my dead selves.

MIRIAM. Oh, Billy, do you mean you don't love me any more?

BILLY. Of course, I love you. But you've got to stop being sentimental. Look here! That fellow was so mean, and I was so afraid he'd back down and not buy the place, that I signed a paper promising we'd be out of here by six o'clock tonight.

MIRIAM. Well, we will be. I'm all ready to start.

BILLY. You look ready! What are you doing with that apron on?

MIRIAM. Oh, I forgot to take it off. I don't know what to do with it now. It won't go in the grip. That grip is so full it wouldn't hold a postage stamp more. I'll just have to carry it over my arm.

BILLY. It's the dirtiest thing I ever saw.

MIRIAM. Do you know, sweetheart, one thing I have always admired in you so much is your neatness?

BILLY. My dear girl, we haven't time for ad-

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miration now. What are you going to do with all these things? I tell you I signed a contract before a notary with that chap, promising we'd be out by six o'clock tonight—that means us, our belongings. All this truck is yours.

MIRIAM. I wish you wouldn't call the things I love truck. This piano was my grandmother's when she was a little girl.

BILLY. It sure looks it.

MIRIAM. It is a dear old thing—I love it.

BILLY. I suppose you do. Women are queer. I suppose if I died you'd love the end of the shaving soap I'd used. The fact is this piano is a white elephant on our hands—a regular white elephant. It's cracked, it won't stay in tune, it's too big for any modern house, it wouldn't even make good kindling wood. It's worse than a dead battle-ship—we've no sea to drop it in. Why didn't you get rid of it?

MIRIAM. Well, I tried to. I tried to sell it to everybody—all the music-stores and schools. All the neighbors—even the laundry man.

BILLY. Why didn't you give it away?

MIRIAM. I tried to do that, too, but they all refused politely, with deep thanks. Even the Apple-Faced-One wouldn't, though he took everything else.

BILLY. Who's he?

MIRIAM. He's one of the men on the moving-van. I don't know his name, but he looks like an apple. He's Irish, and he's been so kind. He's taken everything I didn't know what to do with—such stacks of stuff.

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BILLY. I bet he has [*grimly*].

MIRIAM. He's going to dispose of what is left in the kitchen.

BILLY. Do you mean to say there's anything left in the kitchen?

MIRIAM. Just a few things.

[*Billy rushes out frantically through the door to the right and in a second tears wildly back again.*]

BILLY. Miriam, why the kitchen's full! Broken china, broken furniture, old clocks, rolls of wall-paper, a sewing-machine—

MIRIAM. It won't run, no one can make it run.

BILLY. —fruit jars, old pictures, burned cooking utensils, broken crockery, bottles, bottles, bottles, truck, truck, truck! You said a few things! Good Lord! The kitchen's so full you can't wade through! This is awful! All this stuff here and all that stuff there! We can't get it out and we can't get out of it! I feel as if I were drowning!

MIRIAM. You act as if you were. I never saw you so hysterical.

BILLY. Hysterical? Me? Don't be insulting. Though I might well be hysterical. I'll probably be sued. It's all your fault. To be out at six! [*Looking at his watch.*] It's three minutes to six now! I'll be sued! Sued!

MIRIAM. If you were as tired as I am you wouldn't mind. I'd be glad to go to jail and sit down to rest in a nice quiet cell.

STANDING MOVING

BILLY. Oh, don't talk like an idiot! We've got to *do* something. What are we going to do?

MIRIAM. The Apple-Faced-One is going to do it.

BILLY. What is he going to do? When?

MIRIAM. Well, he tried to give everything to the Salvation Army, but they wouldn't have it.

BILLY. I don't blame them—I don't blame them.

MIRIAM. So he's got a friend of his, an old darky, to cart them away this evening with his mule. I had to pay him two dollars and a half. It was too much, but I was reckless.

BILLY. It would be cheap at fifty dollars.

MIRIAM. Now about these portraits, Billy. I've made up my mind to part with them.

BILLY. Fine! We'll burn them. It's the best thing when you move to burn your ancestors behind you.

MIRIAM. I'm attached to them, Billy.

BILLY. One has a certain connection with one's ancestors.

MIRIAM. I know they're not beautiful.

BILLY [*holding an awful, stern old gentleman up to view*]. No?

MIRIAM. And they don't look at all like the people.

BILLY. Portraits never do.

MIRIAM. But I've steeled myself to part with them.

BILLY. I've often wished someone would *steal* them.

MIRIAM. Yet I don't want anybody else to

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get hold of them and pass them off as their ancestors.

BILLY. Give them to the old nigger.

MIRIAM. No, the Apple-Faced-One is going to bury them in the back yard, only they have to be cut up first.

BILLY. Well, I won't be cut up by that. [*Pointing to the portrait of the stern old gentleman.*] My, what a cut-up he is!

MIRIAM. I got out the old carving knife to do it, but I couldn't bear to.

BILLY. Didn't like to knife your ancestors? I'll be the cat's-paw. It's the job of a son-in-law. [*Takes out his knife, opens it, and makes for the ancestors.*]

MIRIAM. Oh, Billy, I can't stand to see you do it! I'll leave a note asking the Apple-Faced-One to. I have every confidence in him.

BILLY. Ha! I have a happy thought. Leave the ancestors to him. Leave everything to him. Let him appropriate the ancestors. It isn't every man that knows his own father. Why shouldn't yours be his, anyhow?

MIRIAM. Billy! My family has always been moral.

BILLY. I know. It seems so—otherwise they wouldn't have got so poor. But from what you tell me, the Apple-Faced-One is getting rich. He'll soon need ancestors, his children will demand them, and so we'll just provide them for him. We'll give him the ancestors and clock and piano and everything.

MIRIAM. My grandfather was always so fond

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of the clock. He bought it when he was a young man. He always called it Excelsior. I never knew why, but it seemed romantic.

BILLY. It runs as if it were full of hay.

MIRIAM. Then there's the cuckoo clock out in the hall, too.

BILLY. We'll give them all to the Apple-Faced-One. They'll all go in the new house of concrete blocks he'll be building soon. And he'll tell how his grandfather sat in that old chair and rocked till he fell asleep after his arduous day of cutting coupons, and how his grandmother played soft old-fashioned airs on this old piano—oh, I've got it fixed up—fine, splendid, bully! Besides, he can stand a law-suit better than I can. You write a note giving everything that's left here to him, and then when that chap sues me for not having all the goods and chattels removed from the premises I can prove that none of it belonged to me, but all of it to the Apple-Faced-One. By gum, that's the ticket! Then let that infernal gazoo bring on his law-suit.

MIRIAM. Billy, you are positively ferocious in your attitude to George.

BILLY. Am I? Well, I wonder why?

MIRIAM [*shrugging her shoulders*]. I am sure I don't know.

BILLY. Look here, we couldn't sell this place, could we? We tried and tried and tried, and finally George came along and wanted to buy it. Oh, no, he didn't want to buy it exactly, he only was willing to buy it in his supercilious way just to do you a favor.

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MIRIAM. How absolutely unjust you are to George. He isn't supercilious at all. He is a perfect lamb.

BILLY. Oh, yes, and you love lambs, don't you? Miriam had a little lamb! Bah! You can't deny you were sweethearts once. And he's been carrying on with you now again right here under my nose. Coming here to look at the house in my absence!

MIRIAM. A man has a right to look at a place he's thinking of buying, hasn't he?

BILLY. As if he didn't know all about it! Used to fairly live here, didn't he?

MIRIAM. That was several years ago, and he wasn't thinking of buying it then.

BILLY. Oh, no, he was only thinking of marrying it.

MIRIAM. Oh, Billy, you married it, didn't you?

BILLY. That's it! Twit me with it! I didn't marry you for your house. A man makes a big mistake to marry a girl with a house and home.

MIRIAM. How can you be so mean? I don't want to reproach you. I never have reproached you. But when we were married you said you loved every stick and stone that was mine, and then gradually you changed and got to hating it. Of course I know you haven't any feeling of local attachment.

BILLY. A man who has lived in twenty-nine different boarding-houses loses his sense of direction, let alone local attachment. But I thought it was local *de*-tachment you were trying to get. Didn't you want to get rid of this place?

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MIRIAM. Oh, yes, I felt we ought to sell it—but I loved it. You haven't been sympathetic, Billy. I don't want to reproach you, but it's the home of my ancestors, my great-grandfather built the house.

BILLY. And a regular old rattle-trap it's got to be. You said you wanted a modern apartment with plumbing.

MIRIAM. He came here and built it when there wasn't another house within a half-mile.

BILLY. And a nice, sweet-smelling slum the neighborhood is now.

MIRIAM. But I love every tree and shrub and blade of grass. I love the church steeples rising out of the smoke in the city below. I love the old house—every window, with its little distorting panes of glass, every board of the old creaking floor. My grandmother was married here and my mother and I. I love all the old dilapidated furniture. Maybe I wouldn't have cared so if you had been more sympathetic. But you haven't helped me in the least. All you did—I don't want to reproach you, but all you did was to say, "Sell everything and give away the rest." And then you'd put on your hat and go. That's what a man does—he puts on his hat and goes. And I worked like a slave dismantling a house that had been lived in by the same family seventy-five years. I found everything under the sun, from my great-grandfather's carpet slippers to my uncle's skeleton.

BILLY [*shouting*]. What!

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MIRIAM. Yes, my uncle was a medical student, and he had a skeleton to study.

BILLY. Oh!

MIRIAM. I had all of this to do myself, selling things and giving them away and paying to have them carted off and hunting a place for us to go to—and all you did was to put on your hat and go—after I had got your breakfast for you.

BILLY. Didn't I order the moving vans?

MIRIAM. All I could find was one room for us to live in—

BILLY. Fine and cozy it will be, after this barn.

MIRIAM. —that George and his wife have been occupying, and I wouldn't have got that if it hadn't been for George—

BILLY. Damn George!

MIRIAM. And all the dear old furniture is stored. Oh, I don't know how I stood it! I don't [*her voice breaking*—I don't know how I can stand moving!

BILLY. We're not the only people who are standing moving. All the world is on its feet and don't know where to go. [*Miriam bursts into tears.*] There now! [*Looking at his watch.*] Oh, my soul, it's after six! I'll write the note to the Pear-Faced-One. [*Takes out his note-book.*] Pair-Faced—dual personality—pair of faces—should prefer pair of aces. [*Starts writing.*]

MIRIAM [*brokenly*]. *Apple-Faced-One.*

BILLY [*writing*]. Know all men by these presents [*gesturing to the broken chairs, etc.*] that I hereby do give, present, and make over—

STANDING MOVING

MIRIAM We've got to carry all these other things with us.

BILLY. —all my possessions left in this house to—what's his name?

MIRIAM. I don't know.

BILLY. Well, Pear-Faced-One will do. [*Continuing.*] To the Pear-faced—

MIRIAM. *Apple-Faced—*

BILLY. *Apple-Faced-One.* Sign it. [*Miriam signs.*] Leave it on the piano. Most obvious. They'll run into the piano first. Come on. [*He picks up the suit-case in one hand, dress-boxes in the other. She slides the bronze statue under his arm and the glass vase under the other arm and hangs the Chinese lantern from his neck. She picks up the box tied with white ribbon, photographs, handbag, grip, lampshade, etc. He ejaculates "Good Lord!" "Oh, my soul!" "My word!" and finally "Hell!" as she loads him up. He drops the suit-case as he starts toward the hall to open the front door, in imminent danger of dropping the bronze ornament and vase.*]

MIRIAM. Oh, look out!

BILLY. I don't want to look out—'fraid I'll meet that damned skunk!

MIRIAM [*bursting into tears again*]. Dear George!

[*They squeeze out. The old clock on the mantel-piece begins to strike. Billy gives it one look, snaps off the light, and slams the front door behind them with a loud bang. In a few minutes, as soon as they can manage to change*

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their clothes and make-up somewhat, these two return as the other couple. While they are out the old clock goes on striking slowly and methodically up to twenty-three, or as long as necessary. The new couple open the front door into the hall and come stumbling into the room in the dark.]

BERTHA. They might at least have left the light turned on so we could see our way, but I suppose we'll have to pay the next bill, so it's as well they didn't. Not that they'd ever intentionally do anything to save us money.

GEORGE. I ought to know where the light is, but I can't remember.

BERTHA. Oh, probably you turned it off many a time to spoon in the dark.

GEORGE [*sighing*]. No, she never gave me the chance.

BERTHA. Oh, my toe! I've run into something!

GEORGE. I'll have to strike a match to find the light.

BERTHA. Oh, my toe!

GEORGE [*lights a match*]. Ah, here it is. [*Turns on the light.*]

BERTHA [*surveying the room*]. Those outrageous people! Why, they've left the house crammed full of their old broken-down furniture! That's what I ran into. [*Pointing to the piano.*] Oh, my toe, how it hurts! [*Standing miserably on one foot.*] That horrible ugly thing!

GEORGE. It's really a lovely old piece.

STANDING MOVING

BERTHA. Oh, I suppose she played on it and sang love songs to you.

GEORGE [*sentimentally*]. It was her mother's.

BERTHA. Looks as if it had been played on by some old witch.

GEORGE [*mildly*]. Her mother was very beautiful.

BERTHA. Oh, doubtless you thought all the family were beautiful. There are some specimens of them. Do you call those beautiful? [*Pointing to the portraits.*] Ghastly old wretches! I hate people who flaunt their family portraits.

GEORGE. People who haven't family portraits always do hate those who have.

BERTHA. George! Is that a dig at me?

GEORGE. Well, I thought you said you wanted to buy some to go in the new old house.

BERTHA. Well, if I did I wouldn't have these—I'd get good-looking ones.

GEORGE. Oh, sure! If you're going to buy ancestors, buy good-looking ones by all means.

BERTHA. You are getting positively sarcastic. I don't know what to make of you. It's a new turn for you.

GEORGE. Well, never mind. Some worms just turn round and round and don't do themselves any good.

BERTHA. I don't know what you mean. If you are comparing yourself to a worm, it's disgusting. I dislike people who depreciate themselves constantly. It's a form of egotism.

GEORGE. I suppose it is. I find I have a great

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many faults I never dreamed of before. Shall we make our beds here?

BERTHA. Here? I should say not. Surely there are some rooms in this house that are not all cluttered up. I couldn't sleep with all those things staring at me. Nightmares! [*Looking at the portraits.*]

GEORGE. The sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children.

BERTHA. George! You don't seem to realise the enormity of the situation. Didn't you have them sign that paper I told you to fix up, making them promise they'd have everything out?

GEORGE. Yes, he signed it.

BERTHA. Then we can sue them. You must sue them. You'll have to bring suit right away.

GEORGE. All right—all right. I'll sue them. But let's not bring suit tonight. I'm dead tired. Let's go to bed before we bring suit.

BERTHA. I can't understand you—taking everything so calmly.

GEORGE. Well, somebody's got to take things calmly.

BERTHA. But you don't have to be absolutely sheepish. You just lie down and let them walk all over you—let them plague you and torment you.

GEORGE. I guess it's just natural for a sheep to be woolled.

BERTHA. Oh, do have the spirit of a man, not a sheep! Do buck up!

GEORGE. But—if I'm a sheep and not a buck?

BERTHA. Oh, do brace up—do be a man!

STANDING MOVING

Don't let people trample on you and cheat you. Assert yourself. A man ought to take his place in the world and—

GEORGE [*murmuring*]. If you are going to preach a sermon! [*Sits down on the edge of one of the broken rocking-chairs. It gives way with him and he falls to the floor and remains sitting there.*] Always like to sit down when I'm moving.

BERTHA. —and defy everybody.

GEORGE [*mildly, from the floor*]. Of course. I do.

BERTHA. And assert yourself. I would if I were a man. It's really a pity I am not the man. It's a pity I didn't marry you.

GEORGE. You did, my dear.

BERTHA. Now these people have cheated us. We are paying more for the place than it is worth.

GEORGE. No, I would hardly say that.

BERTHA. Anything we paid would be more than it is worth.

GEORGE. Well, strictly speaking, we aren't paying for it. It's the building association that's paying. Building associations believe in the home. They own most of them.

BERTHA. George, don't be so silly. The fact is, here we have their old ramshackle house on our hands—

GEORGE. Before, you said it would be a home over our heads, now you say it's on our hands.

BERTHA. —and we've got to decide things to do. I wish we were well out of it. [*George reaches up and removes his hat, which he has hung on a*

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chair, and puts it on again.] We were idiots to say we'd take it.

GEORGE. But you said it was so picturesque and it would be such fun to live in the slums. I guess distance lends enchantment to slums.

BERTHA. That was when I was living cooped up in one room.

GEORGE. Awfully cozy little room.

BERTHA. Oh, of course you liked it—you didn't have to stay in it all day. And no furnace for you to look after.

GEORGE. There's no furnace here.

BERTHA. No furnace?

GEORGE. No, only innumerable fires.

BERTHA. And you're so lazy you'd never attend to them and they'll all go out, and I'll just have to live in one room again. But that isn't the point now. The point is, what are we going to do with all these things?

GEORGE. Seems more like a mess than a point, don't it?

BERTHA. I wonder if the whole house is cluttered. Give me a match. [*He hands her a box of matches and she starts out toward the kitchen, ejaculating: "Oh, my toe!" She is gone a few moments. George looks about helplessly, sees the ancestors, takes off his hat and bows to them most elaborately. Bertha re-enters.*]

BERTHA. The kitchen is piled with junk! Awful, outrageous truck! Sewing-machines, bottles, broken tables, broken china, old magazines, bottles. I couldn't get through to the range or

STANDING MOVING

the sink. It's a blessing we didn't plan to get breakfast here.

GEORGE [*resignedly*]. Well, it's an old house, you know. It must have been very full of stuff. And you wanted to buy it, you know. You said you were just crazy for an old house.

BERTHA. That's right! Blame it all on me! Blame me for everything!

GEORGE. Oh, no, my dear, I ain't blaming you—I—

BERTHA. Yes, you are. You lay the blame for everything on me. You'll be telling everybody I made you buy it.

GEORGE [*elaborately*]. Certainly not, my dear. It was all my fault. I am entirely to blame. Everybody knows I am so restless. Couldn't stay and be content in the little room.

BERTHA. Oh, content, content! You're always content. You'd be content to live in a dog-house or a chicken-coop. If all people were like you there would be no change, no movement, no progress—the world wouldn't move.

GEORGE. Well, I guess the world ain't like me—

BERTHA. Don't be ungrammatical!

GEORGE. Thank you, my dear—I meant to say the world is apparently unlike me, for it's all moving. I met six vans this afternoon. Most of 'em have to move and no place to move to. As for me, I never feel the need of change except when I have to pay my car-fare. [*Grinning sheepishly.*]

BERTHA. How can you be so trivial?

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GEORGE. Well, change is a trifling matter, ain't—is it not?

BERTHA. How can you joke?

GEORGE. I always believe in putting the best joke foremost. Now, honest, Bertha, this change is a great joke on us, ain't it?

BERTHA. Don't you dare say "ain't" again!

GEORGE. I won't.

BERTHA. And, really, it's unsympathetic in you to try to be funny when you see I am in such distress.

GEORGE. All right, I'll be in distress, too. Don't you think it would be sensible for us to dis-dress and go to bed?

BERTHA. If you keep up that foolishness I'll never forgive you.

GEORGE. I guess you never will anyhow.
[*Sighing heavily.*]

BERTHA. We'll have to make some sort of bed. It is an outrage for those people to turn us out of our room. I never dreamed that we couldn't stay there tonight and come here after our bed was put up tomorrow.

GEORGE. Well, they got the room, you know.

BERTHA. They never would have got it if you hadn't told them about it.

GEORGE. The poor souls hadn't anywhere to go.

BERTHA. You are terribly sympathetic with them.

GEORGE. It's a funny thing that the people who sold us this house should be taking our room at the boarding-house.

STANDING MOVING

BERTHA. Are'nt you ever going to get up?

GEORGE. Sure, I am. [*He gets up slowly and stands looking at her.*]

BERTHA. Well, aren't you going to do anything about this awful mess?

GEORGE. Sure, my dear. We'll make the bed on top of the piano.

BERTHA. Nonsense, we'll make it on the floor.

GEORGE. Of course, the floor is handier, but—

BERTHA. But what?

GEORGE. I hate to suggest it, but in an old house like this there are apt to be—you know—mice and roaches and things.

BERTHA. Oh, my goodness, I suppose there are! But I never can climb on top of the piano.

GEORGE. I'll lift you up.

BERTHA. And I'd be sure to fall off in the night.

GEORGE. I could tie you on. Or we could tie ourselves together. Blessed be the tie that binds.

BERTHA. You're joking again.

GEORGE. No, ma'am, I'll never make another joke, I only want to make a bed. I don't want to joke, I want to lie—down and sleep.

BERTHA. Besides, if we fell off together and were killed, it would seem like a suicide pact.

GEORGE. Pact suicide in a packed house. I couldn't help that, honest! It was accidental—fell off, you know, like us—pat!

BERTHA [*walking to the piano*]. My toe hurts from the—

GEORGE [*grinning benignly*]. Impact!

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BERTHA. —with that awful thing. What is this?

GEORGE. As they say in the movies.

BERTHA. I have found a note. [*Reads.*]
“Know all men by these presents that I do hereby give, present, and make over all my possessions left in this house to the Apple-Faced-One.

“Miriam Oliver,

“William Oliver, her husband.”

Why, this reads like a legal document, though it's written in pencil.

GEORGE. It's a joke.

BERTHA. But it reads like a legal document.

GEORGE. It's probably meant to be. Legal documents are always jokes—practical jokes.

BERTHA. But what does it mean?

GEORGE. I hate to think.

BERTHA [*reading the paper again*]. Why it must mean—it does mean that she is giving all this awful truck to—the Apple-Faced-One—that means you.

GEORGE. I guess it does. Funny, ain't it?—I mean it's funny.

BERTHA. No, it's not funny at all. It's insulting. And it's outrageous. We won't accept their magnificent gift.

GEORGE. Well, I don't know how we are going to get out of it. Gifts are a good deal like the rain that falleth on the just and on the unjust, and you canst not tell whither they cometh nor whence they goeth.

BERTHA. We will not accept their gift. We will bring suit.

STANDING MOVING

GEORGE. What! Bring another suit again so soon after getting the first one settled?

BERTHA. Don't you object to being called the Apple-Faced-One by your old sweetheart?

GEORGE. I guess I don't like it, but what's the use of objecting? "It don't do a rabbit a bit of good to have a mean disposition," as the old saying is. Anyhow, I don't believe she meant it.

BERTHA. Oh, I suppose you think she's still in love with you.

GEORGE. No, I guess she never was. [*Sighing.*]

BERTHA. I believe you are still in love with her. I have always thought you were in love with her. Though what on earth you ever saw in her I'm sure I don't know. [*The telephone rings.*] Dear me, I wonder who could be calling us up here already?

GEORGE. It's probably for the other folks. [*He starts toward the telephone, but she intercepts him and takes up the receiver.*]

BERTHA. Hello! No, this is not Mrs. Oliver. This is Mrs. Kelly, the new owner.—No, I don't know where Mrs. Oliver is.—What do you want?—It's off, you say, what's off?—Well, I should like to know why?—The deal is off?—Why? I am afraid I do not understand.—That is very strange. Very strange, indeed. I should like to know what right they had to go ahead and sell a place if they couldn't sell it.—This is most extraordinary. [*In a tone of the most frigid and official politeness.*] Will you kindly hold the line a moment till I

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tell my husband? [*Turning to George.*] He says it's all off, the deal is off—he says—

GEORGE. Who says?

BERTHA. The real estate man. He says it isn't a real sale. It's all off. They haven't sold the place and we haven't bought it.

GEORGE. That seems a little exaggerated. But why?

BERTHA. The title isn't clear. There's an uncle somebody has a life interest, and he's just sent word that he won't sign the papers.

GEORGE. Fine! Then we can go back to the cozy little room!

BERTHA. But it is an outrage! To be turned out of our house and home!

GEORGE. You just said you wanted to get rid of it.

BERTHA. Nothing of the sort. We bought it, therefore it is ours.

GEORGE. Oh, I made a mistake. Sorry. Thought you'd be relieved.

BERTHA. Relieved to have no roof over my head? Well, you are smart! He's talking again. [*Speaking into the telephone.*] What is it?—Yes, I've told my husband. He's absolutely amazed. [*George throws up his head and twists his mouth to one side.*] He says it is a perfect outrage. He says he will sue those people.

GEORGE. The third law-suit.

BERTHA. Yes, I understand perfectly. The deal is off. And if we cannot have this place we will not stay in it another minute. We will not stay here even tonight after such treatment. We

STANDING MOVING

will immediately go back to our room in the boarding-house, and you can telephone those people at once—they are in our room—that they will have to get out, for we are coming back.— Yes, you may look for another house for us. But we will not promise to take it, after the way you have deceived us. My husband is furiously enraged, and you will find him very hard and stiff to deal with. He's going to bring suit at once.— I don't know about buying again. We may have other plans. Goodbye. [*She hangs up the receiver.*] He says she has an uncle Jim who has a life interest in the place. He's very rich and she's his heir, and they never dreamed he wouldn't sign, but it seems he wants her to keep the place, so he won't give his consent to the sale, and it's all off for good. That miserable real estate man—I don't know but what we ought to sue him, too.

GEORGE. Law-suit number four.

BERTHA. He wants to sell us another house, but I have a different plan. We're going to build a house.

GEORGE. Oh, Lord!

BERTHA. Now don't take it that way. You'll enjoy it. You're going to turn carpenter and build cupboard shelves and put up screen doors and stain floors and learn to be so handy with tools. It will be fun.

GEORGE. I never could drive a nail without smashing my thumb.

BERTHA. Oh, I am so cold in this barn. It will be nice to get back to a steam-heated room.

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GEORGE. Suits me.

BERTHA. Come, we must go. [*Buttons her coat. He picks up the two suit-cases and grip. She gathers up the blankets and other things.*] I hope they freeze when they get back to this. They'll be here in a few minutes. You go ahead and I'll turn out the light. I hope she runs into the piano. [*She snaps off the light.*] George, we're going to have steam heat in our new bungalow.

[*They go out, and the stage is dark long enough for them to change their clothes and make up and return as the first couple. While they are gone the cuckoo clock in the hall strikes twelve. The door is heard opening and the first couple enters. Billy snaps on the light. His face is dark with ferocious gloom, Miriam's is set with patient resignation. Billy takes off his hat, looks around for a place to hang it, and finally deposits it on the mantelpiece, removes his muffler, folding it carefully and placing it on top of the hat. He takes off his overcoat and lays it on top of the piano. Miriam meanwhile watches him in silent perturbation.*]

MIRIAM. I don't want to reproach you, but you are so melancholy. [*Billy gives her a fiery, scorching look.*] It is so depressing to have you this way. You haven't said a word all the way home.

BILLY. Home! [*through his teeth, with a withering glance about the room.*]

MIRIAM. You didn't like the room at the boarding-house, so I thought you might be glad to get

STANDING MOVING

back home. You said the room there was like living in a chicken-coop, so I thought—

BILLY. Room? Not even as big as a chicken-coop! More like living in a shredded-wheat carton, hearing people talk all the time on one side of the wall and water running in the bathroom all the time on the other side. It's positively indecent the way people live nowadays, cooped up in little compartments like so many boxes of eggs on a grocery shelf. It's indecent, outrageous, horrible!

MIRIAM. Oh, go right on! I'm so glad you've broken your silence at last.

BILLY. Modern life is commercialized discomfort. Street-cars are packed like sardine boxes, people climb round and round on top of each other in stores and on the street like bees in a hive, and when they go home at night they're jammed away in so many little compartments like so many cases of compressed chicken on a grocery shelf.

MIRIAM. Oh, please go right on, dear. I don't mind it so much when you rant and rave, but it is frightful when you preserve that awful silence.

BILLY. Rant and rave? Thank you! I am not ranting and raving in the least. I am absolutely self-possessed. I am only voicing in a perfectly cool and collected manner certain well-known, but unacknowledged sociological facts. The way people live on top of each other is not only frightful socially and morally, but it is degenerating biologically and it is unhygienic.

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MIRIAM. Well, it's nice to get back home, then, isn't it? Where we have plenty of room and air.

BILLY. Room and air? I should say so! Has a man got to choose between a barn and a pepper-box to live in?

MIRIAM. I felt so hopeful that if you really had the experience of moving—because one always moves into something worse—that you would be better contented at home again.

BILLY. Home? Bah! I tell you if we've got to live here, and your Uncle Jim doesn't let us sell this place, he's got to come across and make it decent.

MIRIAM. I feel sure he will, dear.

BILLY. I feel sure he won't. He's probably as stingy as the rest of the family.

MIRIAM. Billy! How can you? I don't want to reproach you, but you are so hard on my relatives.

BILLY. Well, if he hadn't interfered—and Lord knows why he did, for it isn't his and he never will get anything out of it—but if he hadn't interfered, we'd be well rid of it by now.

MIRIAM [*irrelevantly*]. I guess we'll have to sleep on top of the piano.

BILLY. Might make it soft with a mattress of love-letters. [*Pointing to the paper-boxes.*]

MIRIAM. Oh, here is the note to the Apple-Faced-One. I'm so glad he didn't get hold of it—then he'd have all those things.

BILLY. You don't mean to say you're going to keep all this stuff now?

STANDING MOVING

MIRIAM. Everything comes in handy if you keep it long enough. I'm sorry I gave him the wash-boiler and the step-ladder and the coal-shovel and the carpet-sweeper and the mop and the dust-pan and the iron skillet and the—

BILLY. I'm not—all those ancient implements—now we can get something new—you never would have otherwise.

MIRIAM. I wonder if they—the new owners—really were here. It must have seemed queer to George to be here with his wife.

GEORGE. I daresay. Confound him! Got the house at last but not the same girl. Must seem queer to you, too. Well, maybe you'd like to trade husbands even yet.

MIRIAM. Billy, I don't want to reproach you, but I must say I don't think George would ever have talked to me the way you do.

BILLY. Oh, Lord, no! He wouldn't. Good-natured cuss and all that. And I suppose you mean to infer that I'm a beast. Hum!

MIRIAM. George is so kind-hearted.

BILLY. Maybe you want to get rid of me, maybe you want to get a divorce. Well, go ahead! I'm done. Having that dunderheaded fool held up to me as a paragon and model of all that a husband ought to be. It's too much for any man to stand. I'm done. I'm through.

MIRIAM. Oh, Billy! [*Her voice high-pitched up in her nose and breaking.*]

BILLY. Confounded ass preferred to me! [*Miriam breaks into wild weeping.*] It's more than

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a self-respecting man can bear. [*Miriam weeps loudly.*] Damned idiot preferred to me.

MIRIAM. Oh!

BILLY [*stalking about the room*]. Too much to stand! Standing moving. Standing everything. [*Continues to stalk about, glancing at her as she sobs wildly.*] Oh, stop that crying! [*Miriam wails more loudly.*] What's the use of weeping? [*Miriam wails more loudly at each word from him.*] I wish you wouldn't cry.

MIRIAM. Oh!

BILLY. Oh, for the Lord's sake don't sob that way.

MIRIAM. Oh!

BILLY. For heaven's sake stop crying.

MIRIAM. How—can—I—help—it—when—

BILLY [*coming to her and standing in front of her*]. You know I can't stand to see you cry.

MIRIAM [*puts her head on his shoulder*]. Well—then—why do—you—

BILLY. Well, then, I didn't mean to. I—well, I'm sorry. [*Puts his arms round her. They are standing by the piano in the center of the room. He continues to pet and fondle her.*]

MIRIAM. Don't you know I never cared about anybody but you?

BILLY. And you don't think, then, that he's a much nicer chap than me?

MIRIAM. Nobody is nicer than you. Nobody could be so charming and lovely and dear.

BILLY. [*lifting her to the top of the piano*]. I speak without thinking. I've got such an infernal bad temper.

STANDING MOVING

MIRIAM. Nothing of the sort. I won't let you malign yourself that way. You have the sweetest disposition of any man I ever knew.

BILLY. Do you really think so?

MIRIAM. Do I? [*Smiling sweetly.*] I'll say so!

BILLY. Standing moving is bad enough, but standing my wife's tears is more than I can stand. [*Jumps up on the piano beside her and puts his arm round her.*]

MIRIAM. Darling, I don't care what you say about the family and the old house. If you just love me.

BILLY. If you'll only promise not to cry, I'll promise never to move from this spot while I live. [*Kicking his foot against the old piano.*]

[*A loud pounding is heard in the rear.*]

MIRIAM. Oh dear, that must be the Apple-Faced-One and the old darky and the mule!

[CURTAIN.]

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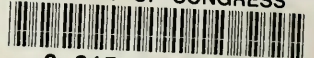
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