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that Jack Built*

by
Georgia Earle

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T. S. Denison & Company, Publishers

154 West Randolph Street

CHICAGO

THE LIE THAT JACK BUILT



THE LIE THAT JACK BUILT

A Comedy in One Act

BY

GEORGIA EARLE

AUTHOR OF

"Gettin' Acquainted," "The Villain," "Hitchin' Up Amos,"
"The Porchclimber," "The Lovejoy Twins,"
"The Rented Lady," etc.

AND CO-AUTHOR

"The Mark of the Beast"

(Produced at the Princess Theatre, New York)



CHICAGO
T. S. DENISON & COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

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THE LIE THAT JACK BUILT

CHARACTERS.

JACK ELLISON *A Writer Chap*
FRANK MONTGOMERY *His Friend*
DORA TAYLOR *One of His "Other" Friends*
HELEN DOUGLAS *His Fiancée*

PLACE—*Ellison's Bachelor Apartment and "Workshop" in New York City.*

TIME—*The Present.*

TIME OF PLAYING—*About Thirty Minutes.*

*Originally produced at the Savoy Theatre, New York City,
October 14, 1910.*

By Miss Lillian Kingsbury and the following players:

JACK ELLISON *Page Spencer*
FRANK MONTGOMERY *Charles Fleming*
HELEN DOUGLAS *Helen Beresford*
DORA TAYLOR *Lillian Kingsbury*

COSTUMES.

MODERN.

ELLISON and MONTGOMERY wear sack suits and are well groomed.

DORA TAYLOR wears a becoming afternoon frock and hat and carries a parasol.

HELEN DOUGLAS is dressed in a simple traveling gown and carries a small traveling bag.

PROPERTY PLOT.

Flat top desk, desk blotter, paper, pens, pencil, inkwell, usual desk equipment.

Desk telephone with reasonably long cord.

Trash basket under desk.

Revolving desk chair, two armchairs.

Door bell, telephone bell.

Bundle of laundry.

About twenty or more photographs of girls.

Unframed photo of Dora.

Folding frame with two pictures of Helen.

Large framed photograph of Helen.

Newspapers.

Mantelpiece, pipe for Ellison.

Small traveling bag for Helen.

Bills, pair of shoes, armful of shirts, collars, etc., hat, overcoat, suitcase and umbrella for Frank.

Parasol for Dora.

Books, pictures, chairs, etc., to dress the stage.

LIGHT PLOT.

Lights full up all through.

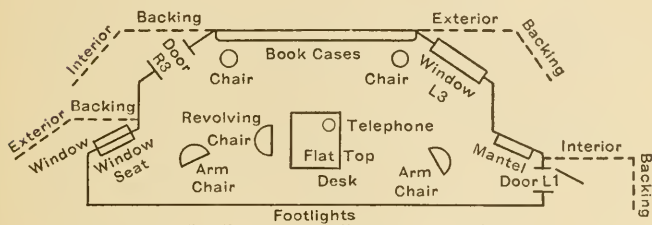
Bunch lights at doors and windows.

CURTAIN CUES.

WARNING.—“Good afternoon, Bonehead!”

CURTAIN.—“Come on up, I’m all alone!”

SCENE PLOT.



STAGE DIRECTIONS.

R. means right of stage; *C.*, center; *R. C.*, right center; *L.*, left; *1 E.*, first entrance; *U. E.*, upper entrance; *R. 3 E.*, right entrance, up stage, etc.; up stage, away from footlights; down stage, near footlights. The actor is supposed to be facing the audience.

THE LIE THAT JACK BUILT

SCENE: *The scene is laid in JACK ELLISON's bachelor apartment, and the place where he does his work. There is a flat top desk C. which faces the L. wall. A revolving desk chair stands on its R. side. On the desk is a large desk blotter, pens, ink, pencils, paper—the usual desk equipment. On its up-stage side is a desk telephone. There is a door R. 3 which opens on to the hall outside. Below this door is a window. There is a window in the L. wall below which is a mantelpiece with fireplace. On the mantel are many photographs (at least twenty) of pretty girls. Among them is a picture of DORA TAYLOR, which has fallen on its side, slightly back of some of the others. Below the mantel is a door L. 1, which leads into a bedroom. There is a chair in the window L. 3. There is an armchair down L. in front of the mantel, another armchair down stage a little R. of R. C. Another chair is up R. near outer door. There are books, book-cases, pictures, other chairs, to dress the stage and make it look like a comfortable man's room which is being lived in. ELLISON's coat lies over the back of one of the chairs, there are newspapers strewn on the floor and a slight disorder prevails which can easily be set right.*

At rise of curtain, JACK ELLISON is discovered seated at R. side of desk C., writing. He is in his shirt sleeves and is smoking a pipe as he works. The door-bell is heard ringing furiously off R. 3 as the curtain goes up.

ELLISON.
(*Calling.*)

Oh, Montgomery! Frank Montgomery!! (*Door-bell rings again.*)

FRANK.
(*Appearing in door L. 1, his coat off and a pair of boots in his left hand.*)

Hello!

ELLISON.
(*Busily writing, not looking up.*)
See who's ringing, like a good chap!

FRANK.
(*Dropping his boots inside the bedroom door and crossing to the door R. 3*)

Why don't you go? Have you housemaid's knee, clergyman's sore throat, or are you dead from the waist down? (*Opens door and takes bundle handed to him.*)

It's your laundry, Jack!

ELLISON.
How much is it?

FRANK.
Three eighty-five.

ELLISON.
You pay it old man. Give it to you later. (*He goes on writing unconcernedly.*)

FRANK.
(*Giving him an expressive look.*)
Yes, "let George do it!" (*To boy outside.*)
Here's four dollars, son. Keep the change. (*He closes the door, throws the bundle of laundry on the chair up stage and crosses to the up-stage side of the desk.*) I seem to be the handy man about this house. What'll you do when I go back to Boston?

ELLISON.

Hire Andrews back again.

FRANK.

Why did you fire him?

ELLISON.

He knew too much. (*Indicates the pictures on the mantelpiece.*)

FRANK.

(*Turning to the mantel.*)

Oh, did he? He must have had a good memory to keep track of this bunch! I'd need a card index. Hello, who's this? (*He spies DORA'S picture slid down behind the others and picks it up. Excitedly.*) I say, Jack, do you know—

ELLISON.

(*Absorbed in his writing.*)

Keep quiet, I'm busy.

FRANK.

(*Putting the picture back and going over to desk.*)

Polite, aren't you? When I—(*His speech is interrupted by the ringing of the desk telephone bell. Both men make a grab for the instrument. FRANK gets it and picks it up, grinning. To ELLISON.*) Oh, no, you don't! I'm taking Andrews' place! (*He speaks into the telephone in an assumed voice with an English accent, in imitation of the discharged servant, Andrews.*) Hello? No, this hisn't Mr. h'Ellison.

ELLISON.

(*In a stage whisper.*)

Who is it?

FRANK.

(*Leaning toward him in the same manner.*)

It's a woman!

ELLISON.

(Rising hastily and reaching for the telephone.)

Here, give it to me!

FRANK.

(Moving back out of reach and grinning.)

No! I'm paying the bills! *(Into phone again.)*
This h'is h'Andrews, Mr. h'Ellison's man, mem.

ELLISON.

(Making a wild gesture toward him.)

No! No!!

FRANK.

(Enjoying ELLISON'S distress. Very servilely into phone.)

Who wants him, please? *(Surprised and eager.)*
Miss Taylor? Miss Dora Taylor? *(He looks at ELLISON with a broad and knowing smile.)*

ELLISON.

(Hastily.)

Dora! Say I'm out and won't be back today!

FRANK.

(Into phone, in same assumed tone.)

'E's out, Miss Taylor, and h'I don't know when 'e'll be back.

ELLISON.

(Approvingly, moving down stage.)

That's right!

FRANK.

(Into phone.)

I think 'e's gone for the day! *(ELLISON nods. The door-bell rings. They look at each other. FRANK puts his hand over the transmitter.)*

You go, Jack, it's your turn.

ELLISON.

(Going to door, uneasily.)

Be careful what you say!

FRANK.

(Laughing.)

You know me!

ELLISON.

That's just the trouble! *(He exits door R. 3.)*

FRANK.

(Into telephone.)

Beg pardon? * * * * Oh, I have a cold! *(He coughs convincingly.)* Your voice sounded strange, too. * * * * I thought it was one of his—other—friends! *(He looks cautiously around toward the door and grimaces. ELLISON not being in sight he goes on ingratiatingly.)* Oh, I know you, of course, you are different! * * * * Yes, he always did prefer blondes! *(Or whatever the coloring of the girl playing DORA is.)*

ELLISON *enters looking at the letters in his hand. He overhears the last speech and looks up startled.*

ELLISON.

What's that?

FRANK.

(Hastily, into phone, but keeping a weather eye on ELLISON.)

No, oh, no! I didn't say he went out with a blonde!

ELLISON.

(Starting around the desk after him.)

I'll break your neck!

FRANK.

(In a gale of laughter.)

Get away, Ellison, you're supposed to be out! *(He races around the lower corner of the desk as far as the telephone wire will let him and stands tip-toe, eyeing ELLISON and ready to run in either direction if he moves. Into phone.)*

What? * * * * No, no, I'm quite alone! (*They both make a start.*) It's a dog barking in the street! (*Holding the telephone out to ELLISON.*) Here, bark like a dog!

ELLISON.

(*Furiously.*)

You'll pay for this!

FRANK.

(*Hastily into phone.*)

I'll tell him you phoned! Good-bye! (*He hangs up the receiver just as ELLISON makes a grab for it, puts the phone back on the desk, laughing uproariously. He goes over and sinks into the armchair in front of the mantel, helpless from mirth.*)

ELLISON.

(*Savagely.*)

I suppose you think you're very funny! (*He sits in desk chair, wheeling so he faces the audience, his hands in his pockets.*)

FRANK.

(*Nodding.*)

Uh-huh! (*He goes off into another gale of laughter.*)

ELLISON.

I don't agree with you!

FRANK.

Say, Jack, I didn't know you knew Dora Taylor!

ELLISON.

(*Snappishly.*)

Well, you know it now and a nice mess you've got me into.

FRANK.

Sorry for you! (*He roars again.*) Dora's temper has a beautiful start! Gee, she was mad!

ELLISON.

(Suddenly sitting up and looking at FRANK in surprise.)

What do you know about her temper?

FRANK.

(Rising and crossing to the desk and leaning on it, impressively.)

My boy, I have the whole 57 varieties of Dora's temper classified and tabulated.

ELLISON.

You have?

FRANK.

I have!

ELLISON.

(Suspiciously.)

How long have you known Dora?

FRANK.

Ancient history, son! (He re-crosses to the arm-chair and sits.) Once upon a time I was engaged to be married!

ELLISON.

To Dora?

FRANK.

Nope. Dora busted the whole thing up.

ELLISON.

How?

FRANK.

(Uncomfortably.)

It was one of those things a chap couldn't explain but—(airily) I was innocent as a newborn babe!

ELLISON.

(Cynically.)

Oh, yes!

FRANK.

You don't believe me now, but wait, wait—till

you're engaged! (ELLISON *laughs feebly*. FRANK *looks sharply at him*.) What's the matter with you?

ELLISON.
(*Awkwardly*.)

I—I am engaged.

FRANK.

You! Engaged!!! (He whirls around to the pictures on the mantel and begins to count them.) One, two, three, four, five, six, sev—(pauses, his finger still indicating the seventh, speaking to ELLISON over his shoulder.) I say, Jack, how many of 'em are you going to marry?

ELLISON.

Quit your kidding, this is serious! If she finds out about Dora—*good-night!*

FRANK.

Then—drop Dora!

ELLISON.
(*Petulantly*.)

Hang it, Frank, I can't! (FRANK *laughs*.) You know that, you've tried it! Besides—(*speculatively*) Dora is a very interesting study in feminine psychology!

FRANK.

Oh! That's your name for it, is it? (*He laughs and turns back to the mantel*.) I say, Jack, which is the future Mrs. Ellison?

ELLISON.
(*Scornfully*.)

She isn't in that bunch!

FRANK.
(*Wheeling on him*.)

What!! Got another bunch somewhere?

ELLISON.

(*Dignifiedly.*)

Certainly not! (*Takes a folding frame from the desk drawer and hands it awkwardly to FRANK.*)

FRANK.

(*Taking the picture and looking at ELLISON. Mockingly.*)

Why blush so?

ELLISON.

(*Returning crossly to his writing.*)

Oh, shut up!

FRANK.

(*Strolls over to front of armchair L. and opens the frame. As he sees the picture he stops dead. Under his breath—startled.*)

Helen Douglas! Helen, by all that's wonderful! (*Rather shaken, he turns to ELLISON, seriously.*) I say, old man—this picture—it's—

ELLISON.

(*Irritably.*)

For heaven's sake, let me alone, will you? I'm busy!

FRANK.

(*Laying the picture back on the desk. Gruffly.*)

All right. I'll pack my bag. (*He exits L. 1 E.*)

ELLISON.

(*Mumbling.*)

Go ahead and pack it, then. (*FRANK begins firing his boots, etc., in bedroom.*) Say! Keep quiet or shut the door!

FRANK.

(*Banging the door.*)

All right!

ELLISON.

(*Throwing his pen down in disgust.*)

Confound him! He's upset my morning! I'll never be able to square myself with Dora for this! (*Re-*

flectively.) I wonder if she was in love with him, too! (*The telephone rings. FRANK, his arms full of shirts and collars, flings himself across from the bedroom, dropping them as he slides for the desk. ELLISON grabs the telephone.*)

ELLISON and FRANK.

(*Simultaneously, with a long drawn out, upward inflection.*)

Hel-lo!

FRANK.

(*Sweetly.*)

Shall I answer it?

ELLISON.

(*Grimly.*)

No, thank you!

FRANK.

(*Virtuously.*)

You don't dare let me answer it I'm too honest!

(*He picks up his scattered belongings and exits into bedroom, ostentatiously closing door behind him.*)

ELLISON.

(*Into phone, very crossly.*)

Hello, hello, hello! (*His tone changes to honeyed sweetness.*) Oh, Helen, is that you? * * * * 'Three o'clock this afternoon? But, dearest, I can't! Honestly! I'm terribly busy! * * * * "Mr. Ellison!" Yes, Miss Douglas! Now, Helen, dear, don't be silly. Of course I want to see you before you go to Boston, only—Helen, listen, I'll tell you what! You stop here on your way to the station and that will save me the trip up town! * * * * Nonsense! Wait a minute! (*He has been speaking in a guarded tone not to be overheard by FRANK. He now puts the phone on desk and goes over to door L. 1 E., speaking to FRANK through the closed door.*) I say, Frank!

FRANK.

(*Off stage.*)

Yep?

ELLISON.

How soon are you clearing out?

FRANK.

In a few minutes. Why?

ELLISON.

Nothing. Just wanted to know. (*He goes back to desk, sitting on the L. corner, down stage. Picks up phone, into it.*) Helen, come on down now! * * * * Of course it's perfectly proper. This is my office. We're engaged to be married. It's not likely I'd ask you to do anything that isn't right and proper. * * * * You'll come? Good! Good-bye, dear! (*Puts down telephone, resumes seat at desk and starts to write.*)

FRANK *enters whistling. He has his hat on, his overcoat over one arm and carries a suitcase and umbrella.*

ELLISON.

(*Looks up.*)

Going, old man? Good-bye! (*Goes on writing.*)

FRANK.

My, but you're sorry to lose me! I have lots of time! (*He puts down suitcase and sits in armchair L.*) What's your hurry?

ELLISON.

(*Uneasily.*)

Nothing, only—I'm expecting a caller! (FRANK *laughs.* ELLISON, *very dignifiedly.*) A caller on *business!* Just phoned.

FRANK.

Oo-oh? On business, eh? All right, I'll go! (*He gets up with his baggage, indicating by his manner*

that he is "on.") So long, old man! (FRANK crosses to door R. 3.)

ELLISON.

(*Not looking up.*)

So long!

FRANK.

(*At door, aside.*)

What's up? I'll just—*forget*—my umbrella! (*He ostentatiously leaves his umbrella near door and exits.*)

ELLISON.

(*Looking around after FRANK has gone.*)

Gone, thank goodness! Now to clean up! This place is a sight. (*He begins to clean up the disorder of the room, picking up the newspapers strewn on the floor.*) I wish Frank wouldn't hang everything up on the floor when he gets through with it! (*Having gathered the papers all up neatly, he now either throws them behind an article of furniture or off stage on the floor. He sweeps tobacco ashes off desk into trash basket. Both lines and business of this scene can be filled in to suit the actor.*) This certainly is a messy place! (*Suddenly sees the photographs on the mantel.*) Great heavens, girls, I nearly forgot you! I'm afraid you will have to go into temporary retirement. (*He gathers them all up and bundles them into a desk drawer. DORA'S picture drops to the floor.*) Dora! Unmanageable as usual! (*Picks it up and puts it in drawer with the others.*) There goes your picture, anyway. I wish you were as easily disposed of. Now, then, Helen, we'll put these two pictures of you prominently on the desk—(*places the folding case he showed FRANK on the desk opened up and takes from another drawer a large framed picture of her*) and this big framed picture of you shall go on the mantel. (*Places it there.*)

Now, when Helen herself comes, there'll be a quartet of Helens! (*Goes over, gets coat off chair and puts it on. The door-bell rings.*) Helen! (*Looks at watch.*) She must have broken the speed limit! (*He goes to door R. 3 and opens it.*) Welcome, my dear—

DORA TAYLOR *enters. He drops back aghast.*

ELLISON.

Dora Taylor!!

DORA.

(*Sweeping volcanically down stage and across L., looking about her.*)

Yes, Dora Taylor!

ELLISON.

(*Following her, panic-stricken, as she makes a complete sweep of the room.*)

What on earth—

DORA.

(*Sarcastically.*)

You evidently weren't expecting to see me! (*She turns toward him menacingly.*)

ELLISON.

I certainly was not! (*He notices HELEN'S pictures on the desk and has just time to slam them face down before she turns.*)

DORA.

(*Peering into room L. 2.*)

I hope I'm not interrupting you, Jack! (*She sweeps on up stage, past the mantel.*)

ELLISON.

(*Following her.*)

What madness brought you here—ah! (*He sees HELEN'S picture on mantel, makes a dive and gets that face down as he talks*)—without letting me know? (*DORA goes down stage and crosses L. C.,*

having made a tour of the room, ELLISON following her.) Great heavens! If anyone should see you here—in my apartment—what would they think? (*Taking her hands and trying to draw her toward door R. 3.*) Darling, sweetheart, angel, please, *please* go immediately!

DORA.

(*Breaking away from him.*)

You're very anxious to get rid of me, aren't you? (*She goes toward him, he retreats to R., walking backward.*) "Out for the day!" Yes, you look it! (*Angrily.*) It's just as I thought—you're expecting another woman!

ELLISON.

My dearest girl, what put that insane idea into your head?

DORA.

Insane? Huh! (*She turns away from him and walks over to armchair L.*)

ELLISON.

(*Following her as far as the desk, where he surreptitiously picks up HELEN'S pictures and bangs them into the drawer. As DORA turns he falls into his revolving chair. The lines are spoken during the business.*)

Insane, certainly! Why I don't even know any other women!

DORA.

(*Seating herself in armchair L.*)

We'll see!

ELLISON.

(*Groaning—aside.*)

Lord, if Helen comes now!

DORA.

(*Staring straight ahead of her into vacancy and speaking in a low, vibrant tone.*)

I was sitting at home, quietly, thinking of you—

ELLISON.

(*Impatiently, rising and going up stage, back of desk.*)

How kind!

DORA.

(*Dramatically.*)

Suddenly a voice seemed to say to me, "He doesn't love you any more!"

ELLISON.

(*Sarcastically.*)

That voice works overtime! (*He goes up to mantel.*)

DORA.

(*Not heeding him and very dramatically.*)

Even now, the other woman is *there*, with him! Oo-oo-ohhhh!! (ELLISON is just taking HELEN'S picture off the mantel with a view to hiding it. DORA'S impassioned "O-oo-h!" so startles him that he almost drops it. He recovers himself, hides the picture under his coat and slides back to the desk again. Her speech is uninterrupted by his business.) I could endure it no longer! I called up your apartment!

ELLISON.

(*Uneasily.*)

And I wasn't even here! (*He has come down in front of desk on this speech.*)

DORA.

(*Rising and advancing menacingly toward him.*)

Then how did you know?

ELLISON.

(*Confused.*)

I knew I was out, didn't I? (*He retreats as she advances.*)

DORA.

(*Fiercely.*)

When? (*She takes another step toward him as she speaks.*)

ELLISON.

(Very much rattled.)

Why, when—when I came in, of course!

DORA.

(Still suspicious.)

You must have come in immediately?

ELLISON.

Y-y-yes.

DORA.

(With another movement toward him.)

Why didn't you call me up?

ELLISON.

(Backing away.)

W-why-y—

DORA.

(Angrily.)

Why didn't you call me up?

ELLISON.

(Very nervously.)

I—I—I was g-going to!

DORA.

Rubbish! *(She turns away from him in disgust and crosses L.)*

ELLISON.

(Hastily concealing HELEN'S picture in his desk drawer and sitting at desk, beginning to write furiously.)

But I'm *very* busy today—no time to stop for anything!

DORA.

(Suddenly turning and hurling her question at him.)

Why did Andrews tell me you had gone out for the day? *(Over to desk)*. Did you tell him to tell me that? *Answer me!* *(She picks up telephone and slams it on desk to punctuate her remarks.)* ELLISON,

very much rattled, falls over backward in the revolving chair.)

ELLISON.

(Picking himself up.)

No—yes—why, he thought I had!

DORA.

(Deliberately.)

I—don't—believe—you!

ELLISON.

(In a much aggrieved tone.)

Oh, well, of course—

DORA.

(Tragically.)

I felt—I *knew*—something was wrong! And the voice spoke to me again: “Go,” it said, “and you will find him out!”

ELLISON.

(With a ghastly attempt at a joke.)

Instead of which you find me *in!* That's a joke! Ha! ha! (DORA glares at him.) Ha-hard at work, and some—some stupid people coming to—to lunch, almost immediately. Why, I thought it was they when you came!

DORA.

(Turning on him and speaking in a voice in which triumph, rage, jealousy and hysteria are blended.)

So she *is* coming, after all! You admit it! She *is* coming!

ELLISON.

(Backing away from her.)

She? Who?

DORA.

(Melodramatically.)

The other woman!

ELLISON.

(Very virtuously—lying by the clock.)

My good old friends, the—the—Robinsons are

coming. They should be here now! Dora, you *must* go immediately! (*As he speaks he takes her by the arm and attempts almost forcibly to lead her up to door R. 3. DORA has been standing down stage, almost in front of desk. ELLISON in front of desk chair.*)

DORA.

Still trying to get rid of me, aren't you?

ELLISON.

Oh, no, no, I want you to stay—

DORA.

(*Swinging in front of him and sitting in desk chair.*)

Thank you, I will!

ELLISON.

(*L. of desk, in a panic.*)

Oh, oh, but you mustn't! Really! Think, Dora, think of your reputation! That is more precious to me than all the world!

DORA.

You're very clever, Jack Ellison, but you can't fool me! (*She looks at him steadily, firmly.*) You are expecting a woman and I sha'n't stir one step till I see her!

ELLISON.

(*Drawing himself up.*)

Yes, a woman!

DORA.

I thought so!

ELLISON.

And—her husband!

DORA.

(*Sceptically.*)

Indeed?

ELLISON.

Yes, Mr. and Mrs—Robinson!

DORA.

(*Disagreeably.*)

Oh? Mr. and Mrs. Robinson, eh?

ELLISON.

(Nervously and placatingly.)

Yes, they're old friends of mine—old friends of the family, rather—and—and—they—they've just recently been married, and I'm giving them a little blow-out before they leave for Boston! *(He concludes in a little burst of triumph at his own ingenuity.)*

DORA.

(Sarcastically.)

On their honeymoon? *(She rises on this speech and sweeps down L. She is not at all impressed. ELLISON drops down C.)*

ELLISON.

(Eagerly.)

Yes, on their honeymoon, so you see, Dora—*(there is a loud peal of the door-bell. ELLISON turns down stage R. Aside—in horror.)* Helen! *(The bell rings again. He stands, paralyzed with fear, unable to think. DORA turns and looks at him, he speaks accusingly.)* Now you've done it! It's the Robinsons!

DORA.

(Jeering.)

Oh, is it? Well, why don't you let them in?

ELLISON.

(Holding his head in despair.)

Oh, Lord! *(The bell rings again.)*

DORA.

(Nastily.)

Don't consider *me*.

ELLISON.

(Miserably—trying to think.)

S'pose I've got to let 'em in. I invited 'em.

DORA.

(*Sarcastically.*)

Of course! (*Bell again.*)

ELLISON.

(*With a sickly grin, echoing.*)

Of course! (*He starts despairingly toward the door; then, stopping and pulling himself together, speaks heroically.*) So be it!! Now, woman, you shall see how you have misjudged me! (*Aside.*) I hope! (*The door-bell rings again; he almost weakens.*)

DORA.

(*In a panic—for the first time thinking she has made a mistake.*)

Oh, Jack, let me hide! (*She starts toward C. door.*)

ELLISON.

(*Heading her off.*)

No! You got into this mess, now you must trust me to get you out of it!

DORA.

(*Pulling away from him and starting toward door L.*)

Yes, but—

ELLISON.

Look out!

(*DORA screams and starts back.*)

Don't go in there!

DORA.

Why not?

ELLISON.

R-Robinson—always goes in there to—to—put on his slippers. Always puts on slippers when he comes here to lunch! (*Bell rings again.*)

DORA.

(*Wringing her hands.*)

But I must hide somewhere!

ELLISON.

(*Aside.*)

Hide! I guess not!! I can watch her out here!

DORA.

Jack, what shall we do!

ELLISON.

(*Wildly.*)

Do! Do!! (*A sudden inspiration comes to him.*)
By Jove! An idea!

He goes up and opens door R. 3. HELEN DOUGLAS enters, almost running into his arms.

HELEN.

(*Affectionately, putting her face up to be kissed.*)
Jackie, dear, how are you?

ELLISON.

(*Backing away from her and shaking hands at arm's length.*)

Why, how do you do, Mrs. Robinson, Mrs. Robinson! (*He makes faces at her to indicate his meaning.*) DORA, who has started into the bedroom, turns at the sound of a woman's voice, undecided what to do. She stands at the opposite side of the stage, trying to hear.)

HELEN.

(*Bewildered.*)

Robinson?

ELLISON.

(*Still shaking hands effusively.*)

You are on time for luncheon, I see, but where is that husband of yours? Is he behind you? (*He peers out into the hall.*)

HELEN.

My husband?

ELLISON.

Yes, yes! (*Aside to HELEN.*) If you love me, lie a little!

HELEN.

(*Whispering.*)

Who is it? What is it? What's the matter?
(*Seeing DORA.*) Oh! Who's your friend?

ELLISON.

(*Aside to HELEN.*)

My cousin! She's going in a minute! (*Aloud.*)
But you haven't yet told me where your husband is?

HELEN.

Oh, yes, my husband? He sent me on ahead, but
I do hope he won't be late!

ELLISON.

So—so do I—well—

DORA.

(*Interrupting.*)

Excuse me! (*ELLISON is now down stage in front
of desk; DORA at his L.; HELEN at his R.*)

ELLISON.

I—I beg your pardon, Mrs. Robinson, this is—
is my cousin, Mrs. ——— (*DORA gives him a warning
jab with her parasol; in an agonized tone*) Mrs.
Payne! I've been so anxious for you two to meet!
I told her I was expecting you—(*as he looks from
DORA to HELEN*) and I've been trying to persuade
her to stay to luncheon, but she lives in the country
—(*He goes over to DORA and looks at her mean-
ingly*)—and must get home! (*As DORA regards him
icily he becomes panic stricken.*)

DORA.

(*Standing her ground, with a frosty smile.*)

Nothing doing, Jack!

ELLISON.

(*Wilting and fading up stage.*)

Really, it's awfully warm here—I—I—think I

better open the window. (*He starts toward window up L.*)

DORA.

(*Decisively.*)

I've changed my mind! (*ELLISON stops.*) Now that I've met Mrs. Robinson, I shall *stay* to luncheon after all! (*She sits in armchair L.*)

ELLISON.

(*Collapsing in desk chair.*)

Oh, Lord! (*HELEN, a little angry, doubtful and very uncomfortable, sits in armchair R.*)

DORA.

(*With sugary politeness and insulting emphasis.*)

Do you think your—husband—will be very late, Mrs.—er—Robinson?

HELEN.

(*Also very sweetly, and in exact imitation of DORA's intonation.*)

I sincerely hope not, Mrs.—er—Payne. I—(*ELLISON coughs warningly; she corrects herself.*) We have a train to make!

ELLISON.

(*Perfectly miserable and thoroughly foolish.*)

Yes, she makes the nicest little trains—(*He looks at DORA, giving a foolish giggle, she turns on him furiously. He looks at HELEN, but she, too, is disgusted and turns away. He laughs foolishly again.*) When—what train are you going to make, Mrs. Robinson? (*Pause. Both women are quite disgusted with him and look straight ahead of them.*) How cold it is here! I think I'll close that window! (*Rises.*)

DORA.

(*Iceily.*)

You didn't open it!

ELLISON.

(Stopping irresolutely.)

Oh, didn't I? *(He sits.)*

DORA.

(Emphatically.)

No, you *didn't!*

ELLISON.

That's so, I didn't! You see, I've been working very hard, and I haven't been out all day, so I—

DORA.

(Triumphantly.)

Indeed!

ELLISON.

(In consternation.)

Oh! *(There is a long peal of the doorbell that startles everybody. Pause. They all rise slowly and simultaneously. Slight pause.)*

DORA.

(In a very quiet conversational tone.)

The bell rang.

ELLISON.

(Foolishly.)

The bell? Oh—did the bell ring? *(He looks from one to the other, grinning idiotically.)*

DORA.

Yes, the bell rang!

HELEN.

(Drawing a long breath.)

Don't you think you better go to the door?

ELLISON.

Oh—g-go to the door?

(The doorbell rings again.)

DORA.

(Rather sarcastically.)

It is probably Mrs. Robinson's husband!

HELEN.

Probably!

DORA is standing in front of armchair L., her head turned toward door so she is first to see FRANK. HELEN is down stage about in front of armchair R. and facing front. ELLISON is in front of desk, uncertainly looking from one to the other when FRANK enters.

FRANK.

(Coming in breezily, right down to ELLISON, and speaking as he enters.)

I say, Jack, I forgot my umbrella!

DORA.

(Coming down stage, aside, quickly.)

Frank Montgomery!

ELLISON.

(Turning and grasping FRANK's hands effusively, shaking hands and boisterously greeting him as a life saver.)

Why, hello, Robinson, old chap, how are you, Robinson! Robinson, my old friend, it's good to see you again!!

FRANK.

(Surprised.)

Robinson?

DORA.

(Aside, mystified for the moment.)

Robinson?

ELLISON.

(Making signs to FRANK and still shaking hands effusively.)

No apologies, no apologies! Got here at last! Your wife—

DORA.

(Aside.)

His wife!

FRANK.

My wife!

ELLISON.

(Indicating HELEN, who has her back turned to them and is enjoying the situation.)

Your wife was beginning to get impatient!

FRANK.

What in—*(ELLISON wheels him toward HELEN, who turns; the recognition is mutual.)*

Helen Douglas!

HELEN.

(Surprised.)

Frank! *(As he turns FRANK toward HELEN, ELLISON himself moves backward, so that he accidentally bumps into DORA, who has now sized up the situation and whose expression shows it. ELLISON turns to apologize and meets her sarcastic smile. They are absorbed in each other and therefore miss the recognition between the other two. ELLISON, seeing DORA's expression, suddenly remembers that FRANK and DORA know each other.)*

ELLISON.

(Aside.)

Good Lord, I forgot he knew Dora! *(Throws up his hands and goes up stage in despair. DORA follows him with her eyes, still smiling sarcastically.)*

HELEN.

(Recovering first and trying to help FRANK understand the situation.)

So glad you've come, dear. I was afraid you were going to keep Mr. Ellison's lunch waiting. *(She puts her hand confidently on his arm.)*

FRANK.

(Promptly covering her hand with his and looking at her fatuously.)

Y—yes—n—no—

DORA.

(Going up to ELLISON.)

Well, introduce me! *(She smiles wickedly.)*

ELLISON.

(Unhappily conscious of the mess he is in, comes down stage to front of desk. DORA strolls down L.)

I forgot! Mr.—er—Mrs.—er—er—Mr.—

HELEN.

(Prompting him.)

Mr. Robinson.

ELLISON.

Y—yes—Mr. Robinson, this is my cousin, Mrs.—er—

HELEN.

(Prompting again and attracting FRANK's attention; he is so absorbed in her that he is not looking at ELLISON.)

His cousin, Mrs. Payne, dear!

ELLISON.

Yes, Mrs. Robinson, Mr. Payne, I—I mean—Mr. Payne, Mrs. Robinson, oh—

FRANK.

(To HELEN.)

What?

HELEN.

Mrs. Payne, dear—

FRANK.

Oh, yes! Mrs. Payne, dear—*(He crosses to shake hands with DORA before he sees who it is.)* Good Lord, Dora!

DORA.

(Suavely.)

So pleased to meet you, Mr.—er—Robinson?

FRANK.

(*Shaking hands, his composure recovered, amused.*)
So pleased, Mrs—er—Payne?

DORA.

I got the name right?—Robinson?

FRANK.

Yes, Mrs—Payne! (*They look at each other a moment, measuring one another, then, with a little laugh, DORA turns away from him and strolls up stage. She is going in ELLISON'S direction, but he is trying to avoid her. FRANK continuing and crossing back to HELEN—in a low voice.*) Say, whom am I supposed to be?

HELEN.

(*Aside.*)

'Sh! My husband! (*Aloud.*) Yes, dear, I was just saying I hoped your forgetfulness wasn't going to make us lose the three o'clock train to Boston.

FRANK.

(*Ardently taking HELEN'S hands.*)

Nothing would make me lose that! (*ELLISON'S side-stepping now causes him to bump into FRANK, and he hears the last speech. To the others, rather foolishly.*) Lovely trip to Boston by boat. Why don't you go by boat—boat so much nicer than train. You take the—the—the—

DORA.

(*Freezingly.*)

Yes, the—(*ELLISON looks at her and wilts. She stands down stage L. C.*)

HELEN.

(*Helpfully.*)

The Joy Line, Mr. Ellison?

ELLISON.

(*Gratefully.*)

Yes, the Joy Line. FRANK.

(*Promptly putting his arms around HELEN.*)

It's always the Joy Line when you are with me, Helen! (*Very tenderly.*)

ELLISON.

(*Startled—aside.*)

Helen? (*Aloud.*) Did you say Helen? (*He advances menacingly on FRANK.*)

FRANK.

(*Facing him down.*)

Certainly I said Helen! Why shouldn't I say Helen! Isn't she my wife? My own little Helen! (*He takes her in his arms.*)

ELLISON.

(*Wildly.*)

Don't do that!

HELEN.

(*Embarrassed—drawing away from FRANK.*)

Don't be silly, Frank!

ELLISON.

(*Tearing his hair.*)

Frank! Good Lord, what next! (*Goes up stage.*)

HELEN.

(*Sitting in armchair R.*)

Yes, it would be very serious if we didn't get back! (*As she sits FRANK goes up stage and joins ELLISON.*)

DORĀ.

(*Sitting in armchair L.*)

Indeed?

HELEN.

(*Demurely.*)

I've never left the children so long before! (*ELLISON looks at HELEN in consternation; FRANK re-*

gards her in startled surprise, then, as though the situation were too much for them, they turn and walk up stage.)

DORA.

(Startled.)

The children? *The children?*

HELEN.

(Nodding.)

Yes.

DORA.

(Aside—looking straight out to the audience.)

And on their honeymoon! *(Politely to HELEN.)*

How many children have you, Mrs. Robinson?

HELEN.

(Gushing.)

I have two—*(ELLISON coughs beseechingly)*—the dearest little things! *(FRANK coughs; after each cough HELEN looks at them, innocently inquiring—and goes on talking.)* But of course you'd expect me to say that!

FRANK.

(Coming down stage and sitting on the arm of HELEN'S chair. Trying not to laugh.)

They take after their mother!

DORA.

(Satirically.)

How charming!

HELEN.

(Hurriedly.)

Helen, the little girl, is named after me, and the boy is—

FRANK.

(Who is having a very good time.)

Named Francis, after his father, though they usually call us both Frank!

DORA.

How old are your children, Mr. Robinson?

FRANK.

(*Blandly.*)

Which one?

HELEN.

(*Interrupting.*)

Little Frank is five and Baby Helen three.

FRANK.

I never can remember their ages—fathers never can.

DORA.

Really, you surprise me. I should never have imagined you'd been married so long!

ELLISON.

(*Suddenly.*)

They haven't! (*They all look at him, rising to their feet. He begins to laugh nervously.*) No—no—that is—I mean—it is surprising, isn't it?

DORA.

(*Sarcastically.*)

Very!

(FRANK, DORA and HELEN reseal themselves.)

FRANK.

(*Talking fast.*)

As my wife says, they're both beautiful children. One of them has—

ELLISON.

(*Wrathfully, unable to endure FRANK's attentions to HELEN any longer.*)

I say, Frank, it's quite unnecessary for you and Helen to occupy the same chair! (FRANK *doesn't move—exasperated.*) The arm's loose, anyway! *Montgomery!!*

DORA.

(Rising, in triumph.)

Oo-ohh! Montgomery? I thought the name was—Robinson? *(There is a moment's general consternation, DORA holding the whip hand.)*

HELEN.

(She has an idea, which the audience should see dawn in her face; she comes to ELLISON's rescue with well-simulated admiration.)

There! *(She rises.)* You *did* think of it, didn't you, Jack?

ELLISON.

(Perfectly blank.)

Huh? *(None of them have the faintest idea what she is driving at.)*

HELEN.

(Directly to DORA, in elaborate explanation.)

You see, it is so confusing to have a little Frank and a big Frank in the same family, that we are all trying to call Papa Frank, here, by his *middle* name of *Montgomery!* *(Blank and helpless amazement from the two men.)*

DORA.

(Aside—in reluctant admiration.)

The little liar!

HELEN.

(Complacently.)

But really, it is very difficult. I never can remember it myself. I'm so used to calling him Frank!

DORA.

(Dryly.)

Indeed! It must be most perplexing! *(To FRANK, who comes C. to her.)* So, Mr. Robinson, your *middle* name is Montgomery?

FRANK.

Yes.

DORA.

(*Meaningly.*)

Any relation to the Boston Montgomery's? (*In this little scene with FRANK, DORA has her one chance to show that she is really an attractive woman and not merely a shrew.*)

FRANK.

(*Blandly.*)

Yes, cousins.

DORA.

(*Significantly.*)

I used to know one of them.

FRANK.

(*Impudently.*)

Maybe you've met my cousin Frank!

DORA.

(*With a long, lingering, sentimental look at him.*)

I knew him very well—once! (*She gives a little insinuating laugh and turns away; FRANK stares after her.*)

HELEN.

(*Who has been listening and trying to fathom the situation.*)

She knew him! And her name's Dora! (*Understanding at last.*) Then it must be Dora Taylor!

ELLISON.

(*Worried—coming down stage to HELEN.*)

Helen, I want to speak to you a minute!

HELEN.

(*Angrily.*)

Well, I don't want to speak to you, ever again! Here's your ring! Our engagement's broken! (*She starts up stage.*)

ELLISON and FRANK.

Helen!!

DORA.

(*Crossing C.—imperiously.*)

Your engagement! You aren't engaged to Jack Ellison! He belongs to me! (HELEN turns and faces her as she speaks.)

ELLISON.

(*Plaintively.*)

I don't!

DORA.

(*Emphatically.*)

You do!

FRANK.

He does!!

HELEN.

(*Violently.*)

Oh, does he? Well, keep him! I'm going home!

ELLISON.

Helen, listen to me!

HELEN.

I've been listening to everybody, and I've had enough!

FRANK.

(*Going to her and putting his arms around her.*)

My poor darling!

HELEN.

Frank, take me away from here!

DORA.

Yes, take her to Boston, on the Joy Line, on your honeymoon — and — be — sure — you — take — the — children! (*As she speaks she follows them to the door, they receding but still facing her. She literally talks them out of the room.*)

FRANK.

(*As he puts HELEN out the door.*)

Not yet, but soon! (*He makes a hasty exit.*)

ELLISON.

(Sinking into desk chair—very weakly.)

Helen!

DORA.

(Mimicking.)

Helen! *(Scornfully.)* A nice specimen you are! *(Very patronizingly and sarcastically.)* And you thought you were clever enough to keep two women on a string, did you? Let me tell you something, that's a woman's game—there isn't a man living clever enough to get away with it! Good afternoon *Bonthead!* *(She goes out slamming the door.)*

ELLISON.

(Sitting at the desk, utterly disgusted.)

Well, I'm glad they've all gone! I'll *never* love another woman! *Never again!* *(Telephone rings.)* *Crossly.* Hello, hello, hello! *(His tone changes to cooing sweetness.)* Oh—is that you, Mabel? Sure, come on up, I'm all alone!

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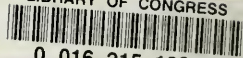
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