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3 acts

107 pp.

about 95 word
of changes and
additions pencilled
by Weaver

Springdale, Ct.
(not later than
1938)

John V. A. Weaver
Barbizon-Plaza Hotel
Circle 7-7000

R.F.D. 55
Springdale, Conn

A JOY FOREVER

CAST

DON SLOCUM

Man of the world, breezy, charming, attractive to women; must have comedy touch, enthusiasm, lightness; force, when necessary; a very human man, a good salesman of ideas.

LULU SCHAEFFER

Simple and ingenuous, but not "ga-ga". Completely unmoral. Her conniving, later, is remote from subtlety; a healthy, charming, sensuous little animal.

TERRY WHEELAN

A better type of Broadway manager-- knows all the ropes, still has ideals. Hard-boiled in attitude, soft inside.

FRANK TOLLIVER

A Broadwayite-- a playwright. He can be had. He thinks he knows a thing or two.

GLADYS TOLLIVER

His wife. Extremely smart, wise-cracking, well-dressed.

Saunders

A run-of-the-mill manager.

Mrs. Saunders

His wife. A hideous Jewess, with a "refined" British accent.

Cora Martin

Terry's secretary. Charming, fine girl, educated, ideal wife for any man. But a great contrast to Lulu.

Solomonson

A movie executive, therefore comic, while earnest.

Richard Wenn

A begoggled high-brow movie critic.

Freddie Taylor

A Reporter.

Steele

A nice youth of the Social Register-- just that. Becomes Lulu's fiancee.

Drunk - George Helvin LV

Lorraine Allen

Beautiful, very dumb, important bit of 2 sides.

A JOY FOREVER

By

John V. A. Weaver

ACT ONE

TIME:

Mid-August.

SCENE 1:

A small but tastefully-decorated and furnished studio, which is also used for a sleeping-room. The dim lights show a large north-window, built aslant, with a ground-glass, over which a curtain is now pulled, so that hardly any light shows through; a table and several chairs toward the center of the stage; in a corner, in the shadows, a large, comfortable double bed which, folded up later, makes a divan or day-bed; a chair or two near the bed, with dark objects of clothing on them, indistinguishable; and a medium-sized easel, with canvas on it facing away from the audience, at one side. There is a door, Left, leading to the bathroom. Another door, Left downstage, leads to kitchenette. Door to outside is Right.

Through this kitchenette door, in the gloom, pads softly a MAN in a dressing-gown and slippers. He carries something in either hand, which he places upon the table. He walks to the north window, draws back the curtains, and lets sufficient light into the room for details to be apparent.

Upon the walls are a number of pictures, in extremely modernistic style; also an advertising illustration for women's underwear - an enchanting girl in practically nothing but step-ins. The room might belong to either sex. The objects on the table are revealed as a steaming percolator and an electric toaster.

A wash-stand, with closed cabinet above, near table.

The MAN is in his middle thirties. His expression is sober and business-like. He walks to the bed, which is still so deeply swathed in shadows that the details and contents cannot be distinguished, and stands beside it, looking down at it. His face being toward the audience, it can be seen to hold an expression of quizzical tenderness. He thrusts his hands deep into the pockets of his dressing gown, and looks a moment or two, then speaks.

Man

(In a gentle, grave voice)
 Wake up, daughter. Time for breakfast.
 (There is no response from the bed. He yawns cavernously, scratches his head, smiling gravely. Then he puts out his hand and shakes something gently. In the same grave voice)
 Have to get up now. Don't want to be late for school.
 (There is no response from the bed. Now crossly, as any father to any daughter)
 I'm not going to tell you again. Get up!
 (As the only answer from the bed is a noise between a sigh and a purr, he chuckles affectionately, lifts his hand, and smacks sharply the form beneath the covers -- obviously on the backside)

Girl

(In the silvery tones of a child asking for a pretty posy)
 Ow! Where's the fire, you lousy bum?

Man

(Laughs)
 It's on the table, cooking breakfast. Come on, whoosit.
~~(Exit x x x x x x x x)~~
 I'm hungry. I crave an egg.
 (Exits down L.C.)

Girl

(In the same lilting voice)
 Well, go lay one then.
 (With a sigh, snuggles down into covers)

Man

(Grins with admiration and affection. Then says firmly:)
 Oh no you don't! Arise, Jail-bait! Haste thee, Nympho!

Man (Cont'd)

(As he says this, he quickly and dexterously puts his arms under her, lifts her out of bed, covers and all, and carries the struggling, protesting, giggling and kicking burden grimly and rapidly to the bathroom door, inside which he sets her down, pulling the door immediately to, except for a crack, thru which he says:)

There! You'll find a couple of extra toothbrushes in the cabinet. Don't worry -- they're brand-new. I always carry a spare for emergencies.

(He slams the door and chuckling, goes quickly to the window - opens curtain, comes back, singing the while, and attaches toaster, goes to bathroom door, takes off bathrobe, revealing that he wears trousers and undershirt; he kicks off slippers, takes them and robe, and throws them thru crack in door which he opens, saying loudly:)

Don't take time for a shower. My vitals are hollering for vittles!

(He thrusts feet into shoes, walks out into kitchenette)

(GIRL emerges almost immediately from bathroom, a sweetly-incongruous sight - her figure swallowed up in the huge bathrobe which trails on the ground. She sloshes in the slippers which flap, up to the table. Golden hair -- not authentically golden -- hangs down -- She pouts a little. She appears about sixteen. She sits down in one chair, tucking her feet under her, like a little girl, helps herself to a cup of coffee, turns the toast, and sipping coffee, looks inquiringly around the room, at the easel, and is looking up over brim of cup when MAN enters, with several newspapers, including a tabloid, in one hand, and a plate in the other. Stops short, startled, gazing at her)

Good God!

Girl

(Inquiringly)

Huh?

Man

(Slowly walks toward her, glaring. Cries in a piping voice)

What great big eyes you have, Grandmother!

(Growls, then sets down bowl of eggs, sits, still glaring fiercely)

Man (Cont'd)
(GIRL giggles)

Look here, Goldilocks, promise me you won't ask the juvenile courts on me.

Girl
(Smiling, wide-eyed)
What for?

Man
Are you sure you're not fraiming me?
(Pointing his finger at her, says
with great solemnity)
Have you reached the age of content?

Girl
(Looks back, equally solemn. Then,
removing the toast from the toaster,
she toasts one piece toward him, puts
other on her plate, saying sweetly in
the same childish voice, smiling)
Oh, go fry your ears!

Man
(Holding eggs toward her)
Try the eggs first, won't you?
(He continues watching her)

Girl
(Takes an egg, opens it into cup,
then puts her lower lip)
Do you have to keep looking at me all the time? Don't
you ever eat?

Man
(With a burlesque of lyricism)
Beauty like yours is food for the soul.

Girl
(Giggles)
Same to you and many of 'em.

Man
(Continues to study her, as he absently
pours coffee)
You know you're...You're very pretty indeed.

Girl
(Smiling at him, and as if humoring
him)
Yeah? So what?

Man
So I'd much rather look at you than eat. And you're a
darling.

Girl

(Cheerfully)

So're you.

(Takes a bite, looks around room at pictures, points with a bit of toast around at them)

Did you paint those things?

Man

(Never taking eyes from her, but mechanically beginning to eat)

I had that honor. Do you like them?

Girl

(Hesitantly)

Well.....

Man

That's all right. I think they're rather good. But I don't mind if you dislike them. What's the matter with that one, for instance?

(Points at a portrait)

Girl

(With simplicity)

Is it a man?

Man

Yes. What does it look like to you?

Girl

(Bravely)

We-ell....more like a cow, sort of.

Man

(Greatly pleased)

You're absolutely right. You mean those things that look like horns? They are horns. It's a self-portrait.

(Grinly)

I added the horns after a very painful discovery two years ago. It's an old French custom.

Girl

(Meanwhile hasn't paid much attention to the rest of his speech, and has been looking at another - points at it)

Oh, do you do those, too? Why, I saw that lots of times in the subway! "Peachbloom Dainty-things -- like a lover's caress!"

Man

Guilty. I do them on the side, when commissions are scarce.

(Shrugs his shoulders)

Girl

Now, they're swell! Every time I see those ads I want to run and buy some.

(Laughs deprecatingly)

Fat chance!....My, she's just about nude. Will they let you get away with that?

Man

(With disgust)

They love it. The public and the firm, both. I've got a new slogan for them: "Keep Touchable."

(Makes a gesture)

Girl

(In mild reproof)

Is that nice?

(Looks judiciously at picture)

She's cute. But I look just as nice as her in my undies. Gee, I wish you could do me for one of 'em. Maybe I might get to be the Daintything girl!

Man

Daintything girl, hell! When I paint you, it'll be something worth keeping.

Girl

(Wistfully)

Oh!...well, I just hoped they'd give me some sets of Daintythings for posing...they're so lovely and soft and...and... well, you know, lovely...

(She looks at picture with longing)

Man

(Looking at her compassionately)

Would Daintythings really mean so much to you?

Girl

(Cheerfully)

Well, rayon pants and a dollar brassiere get sort of tiresome, once in a while. But...it isn't what you want -- it's what you get.

Man

Haven't you ever had any underwear like that?

Girl

Sure, kind of -- twice. Not as good, but...ooo, they were grand! They looked so pretty, and they felt so clean and...delicious!

Man

(Laughing sympathetically)

That's a true aesthetic craving, and it's got to be gratified. I'll go over to the Daintything people this very day, and get you half a dozen sets.

Girl
 You will! Oh...six sets! Oh!
 (Entranced, she jumps up, dashes around
 to him, throws arms about him, rapturously)

Man
 You're a funny mixture, all right.
 (He smooths her hair with his hand)

Girl
 (Hugging him)
 I'm glad you like me.

Man
 So am I.
 (Looks at her quizzically)
 Why did you come home with me last night, anyhow?

Girl
 (Smiling at him with affectionate mischief)
 Oh....I dunno. I kind of liked you.

Man
 (Laughs)
 "Kind of liked me"? Well, I suppose that's as good a
 reason as any. Uh...do you often "kind of like" men
 and go home with them?

Girl
 (With simplicity)
 Not very often.

Man
 (Repeating, his face shadowing slightly)
 "Not very often" --- What sort of men, dear?

Girl
 Well.... I have to like 'em a lot. And...you know. You
 like 'em for a while, and then you don't. There was a
 college boy, he was sweet. And a very nice man, was a
 broker. And....I don't know. Some others. Not very many.

Man
 (Disturbed, and showing it)
 Didn't you ever think of marrying any of them?

Girl
 Oh, sure, once in a while. But mostly they don't think
 of it. And then, the ones that want to - well, they're
 dumb, or their ears are too big, or...something.

Man
 (Very sincerely)
 Do you really like that sort of life?

Girl

Well, I always hoped maybe I could get to amount to something. You do get a chance to meet people, in a cigarette-job like that, and you make enough to live on it. Besides, you don't have to stay home nights. It's kind of fun.

Man

Oh, I hope to God I don't sound like a stuffed shirt, but... this business of casual men that you "kind of like"...

(GIRL smiles with startled incredulity, meaning "Well, that's funny, coming from you")

Yes, that does sound funny. But I'm puzzled. You may be one thing, but you project something entirely the opposite. You've got a genius for virginity! Know what an epigram is?
(He smiles)

Girl

(Dubiously)
Something they put on your grave?

Man

(With a hearty laugh)
That'll fit...Yes, sir, a genius for virginity!
(Kisses her heartily)
That's what charmed me right off the bat, and it's growing on me every minute. So get away from me, quick.
(Pushes her gently, but affectionately away, stands up)

Girl

(Startled)
What's the matter?

Man

Fix myself up, keep two engagements, and get those Dainty-things for you.

Girl

(Pleased, but provocative)
But...you don't have to hurry, do you? I mean...uh...
(Smiling at him, she comes close to him, looks up at him with a questioning provocativeness)

Man

(With meek-gruffness, pushes her into a chair, roars)
Get away from me! I have duties to attend to!
(Goes to wash face)
Sit there and speak when you're spoken to, and try to look ugly.

Girl

(Giggles, screws face into a knot, looks over a tabloid. He shaves industriously. She says, thoughtfully)
I was just thinking -- couldn't you use me to paint from, and still it wouldn't look like me -- I mean, not enough so people would reckonize me?

Man

(Not looking around)
Oh -- the perfect lay-figure, eh?

Girl

(Pouting)
Aw, do you have to get dirty?

Man

(Strangles a laugh, then says:)
I apologize. And I'll paint you so well that you'll be proud to have it look like you.
(Combs hair)

Girl

(Contentedly)
Well, all right.
(GIRL starts looking at pictures in paper again, humming)

Man

(Looks in mirror at her, then turns, looks down on her - says sincerely with wondering admiration)
How do you do it?

Girl

Do what?

Man

Haul that heavy cigarette-tray around that dump till three A.M. and then get up before noon, looking like this?

Girl

(Solemnly)
Do I look all right?

Man

How do you do it?

Girl

(Satisfied that he approves)
It's a gift.

Man

(Wiping face, says with seriousness)
That's right. It is a gift.

(Looks at her commiseratingly)
Poor kid.

Girl

(Wide-eyed)
Do you get that way often?

Man

(Smiles seriously)
Every now and then, darling. I hope you won't let it annoy you. You see, I'm afraid I'm falling in love with you, because you're young and lovely and fascinating. It's horribly depressing.

Girl

(Bats her eyes wonderingly at him)
Sounds kind of nuts to me. Why don't you take a drink and forget it?

Man

(Grinning)
Honey, when I go for anything, I take it hook, line, sinker and bait-can. Listen. One December afternoon I walked from a law-court in Reno to a speakeasy. The next thing I remember I was in another law-court, but it was in France. The birds were singing, and the frogs were chirping---they were chirping that I could find a thousand francs for trying to bathe in the public fountain.

Girl

(Laughing - exits to chair L. of table)
Well, that's sort of a big party.

Man

One drink, and I'm off to the races. So that's my big secret sorrow. Now, what's yours?

Girl

Mine? Why, I haven't got a worry in the world.

Man

Well, then I'll worry for you. I'm wondering how many nights in these dumps, and with men you "kind of like", it'll take to grab that lovely gift of yours and put it away with last year's birds-nests. In other words, what the hell is going to become of you?

Girl

(Pulling feet on chair, hugs knees, frowns solemnly)

Yeah.

Man

The best you can hope for is to have some guy give you a place to live in, and pretty clothes, and take you places.

Girl

(Frowns uncomfortably)

Oh-- I'll get along.

Man

But that sort of thing can't last forever.

Girl

(Very uncomfortable, evasive)

Sure....Can't we talk about something else?

Man

(Tying tie)

I suppose you'd like to love the man, if possible. And none of them seems to give you the kick you want---is that it?

Girl

(Suddenly giggles, and says with mischievous sincerity)

Well....you aren't so bad.

Man

(Wheels, extremely pleased, walks to her, looks at her, smiling, says seriously)

Darling! Are you propositioning me?

Girl

(Gaily)

Uh-huh! Why not? I think you're swell. Don't you like me?

Man

(With deep sincerity)

I do. I think you're very swell. That's why I'm not going to keep you---not by a damn sight.

Girl

(Pouting)

Why? You got some other girl? You aren't married, are you?

Man

No! Both times no! But keeping you---in the first place, I couldn't afford to.

Girl

Well, I'm not very expensive. Please!

Man

(Suddenly shakes her shoulders)

Yes you are! You ought to be, anyhow! You ought to be hard to get!

Girl

You mean I should be a regular gold-digger?

Man

You know I don't!

(Enthusiasm and salesmanship growing as he talks)

Believe it or not, I'm getting a great idea about you! I bet I could put you on your feet, and give you something that will last! A springboard you can jump off of, and keep going up, and be something inside--inside, you understand?

(Puts on coat-- is now fully dressed)

How'd you like that, hey?

Girl

(Pleased, but slightly mystified)

Listens good, but--

Man

(gaily enthusiastic)

But nothing! I'll do it! Any objections? How about your folks?

Girl

(with mischievous mock-seriousness)

You want the sad story of my early struggles? Well, I was brought up in a convent, and--"

Man

Cut it out.

Girl

All right. I got nobody but my mother, and she didn't bother to see me for a couple years now. I have to look after myself. I'm my own boss. But how about you? Didn't you say something last night about a wife? Wouldn't you get into some sort of a jam, yourself?

Man

No jam. The wife is out. Ex. Divorced, three years ago.

Girl

Oh. That was the marathon drunk, eh?

Man

(Cheerfully)

It was. Well, I won't need liquor with you around. You're a tonic. Just what the doctor ordered!

Girl

(Giggles)

Yeah? Twice daily, I s'pose, and shake well before using!

Man

(with immense enthusiasm)

You're what I've been looking for--something to get excited about! I'm bored with this squirrel-cage I run around in--

(bawls)

Man (Cont'd)

same people, same spectacles, same dirty stories, same---Hell! I could be a god painter, but I'm not. But something tells me you're going to give me a rush of pep to the brain!

Girl

Does it start with a rush of words to the mouth?

Man

Yes! And I'll make the words come true! All of a sudden I feel like working on you and lots of other material-- and creating something grand! It's going to be a hell of a lot of fun, making something out of you that isn't cheap and lousy!

Girl

(smiling dubiously)

Is that supposed to be a compliment?

Man

Certainly! You've got the makings, and we're going to turn out a masterpiece, as sure as my name's Don Slocum, and yours is---now can you beat that? What is your name, anyhow?

Girl

(Between annoyance and amusement)

Lulu Schaeffer, you crazy!

Man

Lulu Schaeffer. My God, yes! It would be. Never mind. It's settled. From now on, my Lulu Schaeffer. How does that sound?

Girl

Nice. But look. If you got such ... uh.... high-hat ideas.... what about last night, and.... well, you know?

Man

Darling, you're lovely in so many ways.... Last night didn't leave me with any questions to face. Understand? Or don't you feel that way about it?

Girl

(puzzled, forehead wrinkled. Then, with a demure smile)

Well.... what do you think?

(kisses him long, voluptuously and sincerely, arms about him)

Man

(coming up for air)

Whew! Thanks, dearest. That ought to reassure me.

(makes a motion to disentangle himself)

Now I've got to dash. Make yourself at home, stay as long as you like. There's ham and sardines in the ice-box, and bread and milk and ginger-ale. If you're still here at four, I'll be very happy.

Lulu
(in a little-girl voice, but voluptuous,
still holding him)
Have you got to go now--right away, this minute?

Don
(removing her arms, very business-like)
Yep. Important engagement. Can't be late.

Lulu
(With mischievousness but deep provocative-
ness)
Not a little late? Just a little, little late?

Don
(firmly)
Nope, not even a little.
(stands wavering a moment, then says)
Oh, well.....

(Begins to take off his coat,
grinning, as she smiles)

BLACKOUT

and

CURTAIN

ACT ONE

Scene 2.

The same. Early September,
three weeks later.

Don stands working before a canvas on an easel, whistling shrilly.

Terry Wheelan, a middle-aged, prosperous-looking man, squirms in a chair, posing.

Terry
(after a moment or two, bellows)
Will you get to your dame, and let me see this other masterpiece?

Don
In a minute.

Terry
(jumps up)
No, now! Come on, unveil it! Who is it-- one of those society dames that seem to chase you--God knows why?

Don
Nope. Far from it.

Terry
It's not my little love of a secretary, is it?

Don
Now, really, Terry. Can you imagine my using Cora for a model?

Terry
(belligerently)
I can't imagine you using any sense about her at all. Are you blind? Can't you see she's carrying a torch for you?

Don
Don't be silly. She's just a friend-- a swell friend.

Terry
Friend be damned! She mopes around the office, and talks about you all the time. It's love, poor girl.

Don
(impatiently)
You're crazy. She's fond of me, and I'm certainly glad, because I never knew a nicer girl. She's a real pal. But love-- don't be stupid.

Terry
Stupid! God, you are a fool! Can't you realize what a marvelous wife she'd make for you?

Don
(still more impatiently)
Of course I can!

Terry
Then why the devil don't you marry her?

Don
Because I've had enough marriage, thank you. Never again.

Terry
Yes-- to the wrong woman. But here's the right one--the one in a million. She'd be the making of you!

Don
(quietly)
I know it, Terry. But what about her? Why should a swell person like Cora waste herself on a bum like me?

Terry
Just what I keep telling her! But will she believe me? She gets sore.

Don
(grinning)
Does she?
(changing to great seriousness)
But don't you worry. I won't let her mess her life up with me. We'll see she gets the kind of man she deserves, won't we.

Terry
(kidding) *she won't leave me! I prefer every day.*
~~Impossible. I'm married already.~~ But if she's got to ^{take} ~~have~~ somebody second-rate, she could get worse than you.

Don
(smiling, but serious)
Think so? Well, I don't agree. If I can hold her friendship, that's all the luck I'm entitled to.

Terry
(shaking his head)
Maybe you're right. Oh, well--
(with an abrupt change of manner back to the very first)
Anyhow, you're hooked elsewhere, are you? Well, let's see the hooker.

Don
(going to pile of canvasses, pulls top one out)
She's wonderful, Terry. I'm mad about her.
(holds canvas with its face away from Terry)
Shall I let you see it or not?

Terry
After all your build-up, when you've got me winging? Unless you want a clout in the jaw--

Don
 (substituting picture on easel, watching
 Terry with anxiety)
 All right? Nice piece of work?

Terry
 (Solemnly reaches out, shakes DON'S
 hand)
 She is.

Don
 Lovely personality?

Terry
 (leers)
 Lovely! -- both of 'em

Don
 Haven't I taught you to look at beauty as beauty, even if it
 hasn't any clothes on? I'm serious about this!

Terry
 (exits down to chair R.C. - sits)
 Don't get so tough. You think that body's okey, don't you?
 Otherwise, why didn't you paint her in woolies and a fur coat?

Don
 I give up.
 (Whips out a handkerchief, spreads it
 over body)
 Here, maybe this will help. Isn't that a beautiful face?

Terry
 (In burlesque astonishment - rises)
 Why -- she has got a face! Damn pretty, too! Even looks
 pure and young! Why, you low dog -- you cradle-snatcher!

Don
 So you do see it! That's the quality I've tried to catch.

Terry
 (sits R.C. again)
 Whoa, whoa! This is Terry Wheelan. You're not telling me --

Don
 That's not the point. What she's ever done doesn't matter.
 She's got that quality. It's a genius for virginity! Now do
 you see what I mean by her "difference"?

Terry
 Yep. She's different, all right.

Don
 This isn't just one of these things. She's wonderful material --
 not just paints or clay -- alive! I want to make something out
 of her.

Terry
Fifty-fifty, huh? She gives and you give. And I, being a theatrical manager, and your friend --

Don
Don't put it that way. I'm offering you the opportunity of discovering her.

Terry
Why are you so good to me? And what's she got?
(rises - exits to picture L.C.)
Prettiness, yes. Personality....mm, yes. Sex-appeal.... obviously. What else?

Don
She has a quick little mind...learns fast.

Terry
Ever acted? Can she sing?

Don
I...uh....

Terry
(exits to R.C. back of table)
I see. Don't suppose she can dance, either. That's all right-- send her to Earl Carroll.

Don
(exits to C.)
Joking aside, revue's exactly what I don't want.

Terry
Why not? Looks -- personality -- no training or visible ability whatever -- revue would be perfect. Earn while she learns.

Don
Don't bother. My mind's set against it. Besides, I don't want to lose her. I'm selfish. And I want to build her up -- give her a new slant that's not Broadway Broadway. I want her to grow mentally, and spiritually. How about it?

Terry
(Plaintively - exits to L. of table)
Do I have to take the bite bone-dry?

Don
Help yourself!
(as he hands him whiskey and a glass)
Rather have gin?

Terry
(taking a drink)
Hell, no. This is bad enough. Go on with your sermon, while I'm still conscious.

Don
 You're the right kind of manager for her-- you have ideals and pride in your stuff, and still you're practical.
 (during this speech, he takes painting to wall, placing it face outward, replacing Terry's on easel)

Terry
 Do you change your oil every five hundred miles?

Don
 Now, she's got this virginal personality, and she'll learn quickly. You can use her for one of those sweet little ingenue parts in your next production.

Terry
 (exits to L.C.)
 Can I, honestly? Say, that's great of you! What makes you think there'll be any such lollipops in my next?

Don
 There always is.

Terry
 (makes a wry face, then relents)
 Well....as a matter of fact....not the next. That's an all-English drawing room dresser -- the one Gilbert Miller missed... But after that, there's one with a young shop-girl, but --

Don
 (Interrupting)
 Perfect. All I ask is a small part with a minimum salary.

Terry
 Look. You're one of my best friends, but my plays --

Don
 (At once crestfallen)
 You're going to be that way, are you?

Terry
 Honestly, Don, what has she got that I can buy?

Don
 This quality! And this personality, and a mind -- and --

DOOR BELL RINGS

There!
 (Rushes toward door)

Terry
 That her?

Don
 (Exits to R.C. opens door)
 Must be. Now you'll see for yourself.

Don (Cont'd)

(Pulls door wide. Is startled)

(Terry exits up to sofa L. - sits)

Why....eh.... hello, Cora. Glad to see you. Come in. Well, well! How are you?

Cora

(Nice-looking, not especially pretty, but refined and efficient girl of better class, whose relations toward Terry are like father and daughter, enters)

Splendid, Don, thanks. My, you're looking fit.
(Exits to R.C.)

Terry

(With a grunt)

Isn't he, though! Just shows you what sticking to one thing'll do for anybody.

Cora

(Trying to hide hurt under lightness)

Yes, you must have been working day and night! Not even a phone call! I decided I'd grow a beautiful, flowing beard before you made any move, so here I am.

Terry

What did I tell you? You're just like catnip to her.

(To Cora, with a gleam in his eye)

Come on over here and sit by your boss. He appreciates you, anyhow.

(Pulls at her arm)

Don

(Nervously)

Why yes -- uh.... sit down....

Cora

(Exits up to sofa L.C.)

No. You've got to come right back to the office. Mr. White's due there in exactly seven minutes.

(DON looks even more nervous)

Terry

Lots of time, lots of time. Take a look at my caricature.

(Exits to R.C.)

Don

(As Cora goes toward Terry's picture)

Yes, I want you to tell me if you don't think it needs a little change around the right eye, and then you can do me a big favor -- go back and entertain Mr. White while I just catch a few minutes more of Terry in this light.

Terry

(With a malicious grin - Rises and exits to R.C.)

Why, is that the famous Slocum politeness? Stick around, Sis. White can wait.

Cora

(With a tremulous laugh)

No, no! I know how Don gets when he's terribly busy. I wouldn't have dreamed of intruding -- only I thought you were finished. I'll simply take a quick look -- and you'll be rid of me.

(Looks at picture)

Don

(With a quick remorse, putting his hand affectionately on her shoulder, during which he gives a furious, brief glare at Terry - exits to L. center)

Don't be silly, dear! You know that isn't what I meant at all! Terry's simply trying to be funny. Let Mr. White wait.

(Nervously)

I'm so glad to see you again.

Cora

(Looking at the picture, laughs, with a catch in her voice)

Yes, I'm sure! Never mind -- serves me right for butting in.

(Then, quickly)

Oh, Don! That's so good! It's the real thing!

Terry

Why shouldn't it be? Look at the model!

Don

(Warmly)

Thanks, Cora. I hoped you'd like it.

Cora

And I don't see what you mean about the eye. Were you serious about needing to change it?

Don

Why, I --

Terry

(Chuckles)

Nothing wrong with anybody's eyes but his, Sis. Poor old Don -- his record on women is perfect -- one hundred per cent wrong.

Don

(Profoundly irritated)

You're so funny today, aren't you? What are you trying to do, anyhow?

Terry

Cure her! *So maybe I could have a chance.*

Cora

(Bravely)

Cure me? What of? Don and I understand each other, don't we, Don! We're perfect friends, and --

Terry

(Snorts)

Perfect? Him? He couldn't appreciate the tenth of you in a million years --

Don

(With deep indignation)

Pay no attention to him. I can't appreciate you, eh? When I know you're a charming person, with brains and character and--

Cora

(With a rueful laugh)

And so the hell with me!

(Gives DON a little hug)

I won't let him tease you any more. Shut up, boss!

(Moves down to R.C.)

We've only a minute or two, and I've got a marvelous idea I want to tell you about -- that's really why I came over -- it's a series of paintings about --

(Suddenly sees picture of LULU, face out against wall)

Oh, what's that! Isn't it lovely!

(And before DON has time to protest, she darts over to it)

Don

(Exits to L. - In dismay, stammers)

Oh.... uh.... I didn't want anybody to see that yet.

(Hurries to her side)

It's only a little study I'm working on in my spare time. Not half done yet.

Terry

(Enjoying this hugely, chuckles)

Better say, barely begun!

Don

(Bending and turning it face-inward)

Sorry, but....

Cora

Please, can't I look just a bit more? It's stunning! Please!

Don

(Firmly if apologetically)

awfully sorry. To tell the truth, I promised the child I'd never let anybody see it. You see, she's never posed before, and the lack of clothes -- it's silly, of course, but --

Terry

(Stretching his eyes, talks in a miming tone)

"So out jumped a great....big.... RABBIT! And now, little friends, Uncle Roscoe says good-night until tomorrow at --

Don

(Hastily, and apologetically - puts canvas against wall)

There's a couple of other new things I can show you, dear, if --

Cora

(Excitedly)

No, never mind! Let me tell you my idea! A whole series, interpreting New York -- not buildings, but people -- in speakeasies and night-clubs and headlines -- you know what I mean --

Don

(Vastly relieved at changing conversation, responds at once)

Of course, not like the New Yorker drawings?

Cora

No, no -- not funny -- angry and violent -- oils, naturally--

Don

I know -- like Hogarth and the Rake's Progress --

Terry

Autobiography!

Don

Sure! It's a perfect idea!

Cora

I've been so excited ever since I --

Don

(Grabs her hands)

Cora, you're the gods! My pals!
(Hugs her)DOOR BELL - with a signal (4 rings)

Don

(Frozen)

Gosh!

Terry

(Delighted)

Well, well, well! It must be -- eh?

Cora

(Rises)

What? What's the matter?

Don

(Beginning to release her - exits down in L.C.)

Nothing! Nothing at all! Er.... uh....

Terry
 (Rises - exits to L.C.)
 Now I can take a quick look, and seram.

Cora
 But what --
 (Exits down to L.C.)

(LULU opens door with latch key)

Don
 (Says with great effect of surprise)
 Why.... why hello! This is a surprise!

Lulu
 (Dressed quietly and nicely in a dark dress and poke-bonnet, enters breathlessly)
 Oh, I hope I'm not awful late! I hurried, but --

Don
 (clearing his throat)
 Yes, of course. Oh-- uh, Miss Martin -- this is Miss Schaeffer.

Cora
 (her jaw drops, as she recognizes the model of the painting. She almost stares, as she says, with hostility)
 How do you do?

Lulu
 (is also hostile at once. Imitates Cora, sarcastically)
 How do you do?

Cora
 (looks toward picture against wall, at Don, then back at Lulu)
 Haven't I seen you somewhere before?

Lulu
 (shortly)
 No.
 (turns abruptly away from her, goes to Don, says with possessiveness, and her "little-girliest" manner)
 Darling, don't I get introduced to the nice gentleman?

Cora
 (with suave cattiness)
 It's strange. I never forget a face.

Don
(looks imploringly at Cora, then
hastily leads Lulu to Terry)
This is my great friend, Mr. Terry Wheelan.

Terry
(taking her hand, looking at her
appraisingly and sharply, as a
professional)
Well, Miss Schaeffer, Don's been telling me some very nice
things about you.

Lulu
(putting on the charmingly demure
and shy pose)
Well, he just raves about you.

Terry
(laughing gringly)
That's twice he's shown good judgment, anyhow.

Don
(looking greatly upset, goes toward
Cora, looking pleadingly at her)

Cora
(gives him a look of complete com-
prehension, as if she were saying,
"I see. So that's the sort of girl
you prefer to me." goes away from
Don, to Wheelan, saying in her most
business-like way)
Mr. Wheelan, I'm awfully sorry to interrupt, but your appoint-
ment --

Terry
Yes, yes. I'll be with you in two shakes.
(to Lulu)
Would you mind walking across the room and back?

Lulu
(Looks at Don, then at Cora, then
says, in a deliberately pitiful
voice, all pretty confusion)
I-- I-- oh, dear-- I get so sort of upset-- I mean, with
strangers around--

Don
(trying to smooth things out)
Nonsense. Nothing to be upset about. Cora and Terry aren't
strangers-- at least, they're not going to be--

Cora
(suavely)
No, no. I understand exactly what Miss Schaeffer means. I'm
sure the fewer people there are around, the more easily she
can show her best points.

Cara (Cont'd)

(to Don, brightly)
So I'll just run and find a taxi. They're awfully scarce this time of day--

Don

(most unhappily)
I'll go with you--

Lulu glares

Cara

I wouldn't think of taking you away from Miss Schaeffer and Mr. Wheeler-- I know you've got a lot to talk over and

(brightly)

you'd better take advantage of your time, because he really must come back to the office.

(gives Don her hand)

Thanks terribly for letting me see his portrait. And I do hope I've given you something in the way of an idea.

Don

(very unhappily)

Cara! It was swell of you--

Cara

Good. Well, do ring me up some time again--
(leaves him, and as she goes past Lulu)

Good-bye, Miss Schaeffer.

(with a burlesque of archness,
smiling roguishly)

It's all cleared up now-- the mystery of where Don's disappeared to, recently. Only do let him see some of his old friends oftener, won't you? We miss him dreadfully.

(she is out, with a sweep)

Lulu

(gives her a dazzling smile with a poniard in it)

Don

(hastily, to Lulu, with forced cheeriness)

Well, well-- and now just go ahead and walk across the room.

Lulu

(gives him a quick glower, then immediately puts on a revivifying smile, and starts to walk, with hands on hips, like a model. At a warning shake of the head from him, she folds her hands in front, and ninces demurely to the bureau, turns, and bats her eyes at Terry)

Terry
 (grunts in approval, says brusquely)
 All right. How old are you?

Lulu
 Twenty-one, last month.

Terry
 Eighteen?

Lulu
 No, twenty-one, honest and truly.

Terry
 (to Don)
 That quality, eh?
 (to Lulu)
 Will you take off your hat, please?

IF LULU IS A BLONDE

Don
 (hastily, as Lulu does so)
 I've been telling her she's got to let her hair go back to brown. It goes with her personality better.

Lulu
 It isn't a pretty brown. It's in between-- mousey.

IF LULU IS A BRUNETTE

Lulu
 (as she takes hat off)
 I want to change to blonde hair. Brown don't mean anything.

Don
 I keep telling her blonding up will ruin her personality. Her hair's perfect the way it is.

Lulu
 (fretfully)
 It is not. It's in-between-- mousey.

IN EITHER CASE

Terry
 (scanning over near her, and looking her over carefully)
 Don's right. Natural, that's your line. Blondes are a dime a dozen. Everything from canary to tin. Even a real blonde don't look it.

Lulu
 But--

Terry

Your gag is to be sweet and old-fashioned--deare.
 (scrutinizing closely the lines
 of her body, not with the least
 lecherousness, but like a horse-
 dealer looking over a horse, with
 approval)

You've got to act all the time as if you didn't know what a
 swell little body you have-- that makes you all the more at-
 tractive--

(laughs at himself)

Listen to me, telling my granny how to milk ducks!

Lulu

(looks at him in wide-eyed innocence)

Why, Mr. Wheeler-- how do you mean?

Terry

(chuckling)

That's the way. Great!

(turns away, to Don)

Well, she's got the makings, I guess. Go ahead with your plans,
 get her some training, and we'll see what I can do for her--
 later.

Don

Wait. Suppose she had something definitely saleable-- right
 now?

Terry

Such as?

Don

A name. A reputation.

Terry

That's a different plate of fish. What is it?

Don

Never mind. I've got my ideas. By the time you're beginning
 to cast after the British invasion, she'll have one.

Terry

Can't arrest you for trying.

Don

Get used to this idea. You're going to buy this girl.

Terry

(grins; and with another appreciative
 look over her figure)

Good-bye, Miss er--uh. What you've got, you've got plenty of!

(goes rapidly to door)

So long, Don. Thanks for some lousy liquor.

(he leaves)

Lulu
(the minute he is gone, pouts, and stands looking from under her eyebrows at Don)

Don
(in relief)
Well, it's started! He's interested, all right.

Lulu
(sulkily)
Oh, yeah?

Don
Yep. And when I get through with my plan, he'll be crying for you.

(changing to the manner of a father about to scold a child)
Now. Aren't you sorry for being so rude to Gera?

Lulu
(like a child, bursts out)
No! Didn't she high-hat me, and acting like she had some sort of strings on you--

Don
(amused, but keeping up the severity)
She has. Strings of friendship. You ought to make friends with her, too.

Lulu
(genuinely upset, looks as if she were about to cry)
Friends!

(comes over to him)
How could I help it? I was j-j-jealous!

Don
(heartily, grinning)
That's good!
(as she buries her face in his lapel, he hugs her, forgiving)
Now, you just pack up your little bag and baggage, and move in here tomorrow. We'll start the campaign right away.

Lulu
Campaign?

Don
Yep. You're a little flower, you know. Now, what makes little flowers grow?

Lulu
Sunshine?

Don
Yes. And fertilizer.

Lulu
Huh? Fertilizer?

Don
Publicity! We'll make you blossom onto every front page in the country!

Lulu
What have I got to do?

Don
(excitedly, begins to act and sell the idea)
First, I've got to teach you the act. Then we take you over to Brooklyn-- and spring it.

Lulu
(making a wry face)
Brooklyn! Why?

Don
(pacing quickly away from her)
Sure! Fewer people are likely to know you. It's midnight. You go to a police station.

Lulu
(starting to object)
A police--

Don
(rapidly and excitedly, with enthusiasm)
Shut up. You go in there--you're helpless, sweet and lost.
(acts, imitating her, showing her what to do)
(casting his eyes upward, imitating a little helplessness)
You don't know where you are--don't know where you live--don't even know your name! Oh, help me, help me!
(is the picture of woe)
It always works--you've got ~~amnesia!~~ *amnesia!*

Lulu
(giggles--knowing she's making a punk joke)
Milk of amnesia?

Don
(still excited) *for*
Not funny. Technical name of losing your memory. They question you-- try to help. No good. The newspapers grab it. I'll see to that. Lovely young girl wandering in daze. You become the Mystery girl--Miss Whoosit--who are you?

Lulu
(really getting interested)
I know--Miss Question-Mark!

Don
 (goes to her and hugs her)
 Miss Question-Mark! Perfect! Front pages--pictures--retos!
 Then you do remember your name. And it's not Lulu Schaeffer.
 I've worked it out--it's a wow. Mary-Lou Manners!

Lulu
 (repeating)
 Mary-Lou Manners. Sorta nice.

Don
 Sounds exactly like you.

Lulu
 Yeh. So then what?

Don
 So Terry gives Mary-Lou Manners the job, and you both cash in
 on the publicity!
 (hugs her)
 Now what do you say?

Lulu
 We-ell.... all right.... only....

Don
 Only what? Come on. What's the trouble? Let's have it.

Lulu
 Well.... I guess you like me NOH --

Don
 Oh, do I?

Lulu
 Yes....But look.... suppose you ever get mad@ at me, or tired
 of me.

Don
 Think I'm likely to?

Lulu
 I sure hope not. But how can you tell? So then what would I do?

Don
 Have me looked up in the insane asylum.

Lulu
 No, now honest, please don't joke. If I couldn't get a job, or
 something like that. You know what I mean. And you wouldn't
 want me around any more.

Don
 (making a vigorous attempt at seriousness)
 Go on.

Lulu

(rises - exits to R.C.)

Well.... last week I was talking to Laura Mason, and she was asking me why I was leaving, and I didn't know what to say, so I said a man was going to put me in vaudeville.

Don

Vaudeville? Where did you get that?

Lulu

Well, it was because Laura, she used to be in vaudeville and she had an agent, Lew Bloom.

Don

(rises - comes down C.)

I'm in the same class as an agent, am I?
(smiles)

Lulu

(goes to him)

Aw! Now, please don't be mean! What I was thinking, you could just be my personal manager, sort of.... Mr. Bloom gave Laura fifty dollars a week, whether she worked or not, and when he got her jobs, she gave him the fifty back, and he had a percentage.

Don

(glowers, between laughter and anger)

Percentage? Have you some wild idea I want to make money out of you?

Lulu

No! I was just telling you what he did. Oh, I knew I'd get all balled up. You see, after a while he got mad at her, and he wouldn't have anything to do with her any more, but still he did keep on getting her jobs, and she wasn't left out on a limb, because she had a contract with him.... see?

Don

(exits to R.C.)

The point is, you want a contract with me?

Lulu

(goes to him)

Please! Just so if you did want to get rid of me, still I wouldn't be in such an awful fix.

(DON studies her silently)

(intent upon her proposal, pleads)

Please! Just any kind of contract for a year, but something I could count on, even if you get so's you hated me!

(snuggles, accenting helplessness)

And then, look -- if you had a contract, you could make me do what you say, even if I get cross and stubborn. Like about my hair.

Don
There's something in that.

Lulu
So please... please?

Don
(exits to L. - smiles with paternal affection)
Oh.... it's ridiculous. But if it'll make you any happier....
But mind you, no money for me -- no "percentage", and all that.

Lulu
(flings arms about his neck)
You're the darlinest man in the whole world!

Don
(smiles sadly)
Shall I make it two years... five years.... a hundred?

Lulu
(giggles gaily)
Two hundred!

Don
And we'll put it into the contract that I'll always love you!
(Lulu kisses him passionately. Finally Don lifts head abruptly, and says)
All right. Take off your clothes.

Lulu
(stares at him mischievously)
Huh?

Don
(all business)
Yep. Painting to do.
(gives her a push, as he goes briskly toward easel)
Fix up that shoulder, and that shadow on the arm.

Lulu
(sighs disappointedly)
Oh dear.
(begins to unfasten dress)
Well--- all right.

BLACKOUT

AND

CURTAIN

ACT ONE

Scene 3.

The same. Last of January.

Don lounges in a chair, listening to a gramophone playing "Menuet" from the Petite Suite of Debussy. A pencil hangs from his fingers. The record is coming to its end.

A bowl of fruit arranged for a "still-life" model.

Opposite him, with hat and coat on, obviously just there for a moment, sits Cora, on the edge of a chair, also listening.

Very shortly, there is a noise of a key in the door. Don and Cora look up, as Lulu enters, in coat and hat. Don smiles, Cora gives a little nod of the head.

Lulu nods back, not cordially, starts to speak, then cutely puts hand over mouth, and takes a seat quietly until the record finishes, which it does at once.

Don
(stopping gramophone, says nicely to Lulu)
Thank you.

Lulu
(cheerfully, with a consciousness of virtue)
Well, you were kicking the other day about people talking through music.... and that's a nice tune. It's so... so peaceable and quiet and... cute.

Cora
(trying to be pleasant)
Yes. Graceful.

Lulu
(showing off a bit, though sincere)
I was just thinking, it's like this new speech you been making me learn. Did you play it because they're like each other?

Don
(puzzled)
How do you mean?

Lulu
Oh, never mind.
(to Cora, with over-brightness)
Well, what's the news from Mr. Wheelan?

Cora

Not very good, I'm afraid. I just brought a note from him. He's gone to Florida.

Lulu
(in dismay)

Florida! Then he won't--

Don

No. Guess not.
(waving the note)

Says he's called it a season, postponed the rest of the shows till next fall, and is going to play golf and forget everything.

Lulu
(upset)

Oh, dear.

Cora
(not without a certain well-disguised malice)

I heard him say there wasn't anything important enough for you in either of them, anyhow.... not after the hit you made in "Blind Rapture".

Lulu
(somewhat indignantly)

Hit? Do you call that a hit?

Don
(peaceably)

You had nine weeks and nice notices. Very satisfactory beginning.

Lulu
(sniffs)

~~Satisfactory~~ ^{Beginning} Maybe, but--

Cora
(hastily)

Well, I must run back. You have no idea what a lot of things he left undone. The office is a mad-house.
(rises)

Don
(shaking her hand warmly)

Very thoughtful of you to take time off and bring me the note, dear.

Cora
(lightly)

Not at all! glad to have the chance to snatch a couple of minute's talk. You're such a stranger nowadays.

Don
(hastily)

Busy as a hound-dog. Oh, look, darling. What shall I give you for your birthday?

Cora

(lightly)
 Forget it's happening-- that'll be gift enough. G'bye.
 (starts away)

Don

So long, dear.

Cora

(very pleasantly, at door)
 Good-bye, Miss Schaeffer.

Lulu

Miss
 (not nastily, but correcting her)
 Manners, please.

Cora

(so sincerely that she is almost believable)
 I do beg your pardon. Isn't that the stupidest slip! Please
 forgive me.

Lulu

Why, sure.

Cora

(leaves)

Lulu

(glares after her, muttering)

Don

(not scolding)
 Never mind, Honey. She didn't mean anything.

Lulu

(pouting)

No?

Don

(smiling, and coming toward her)
 Of course not.

(starts to open his arms, but she moves away)
 Why, what's the matter?

Lulu

(resentfully)

Whole lot of dears and darlings, seems to me.

Don

(laughs)

You know I'm fond of Cora. I don't want her to be cross over
 my never seeing her these days.

Lulu

(sarcastic)

Sure, she's terrible cross at you!

Don

(beaming)
 Jealous again?
 (grabs her, tries to kiss her)

Lulu

(escapes, plaintively says)
 Well, who wouldn't be?
 (walks away, fretfully)
 Besides, I'm in a bad humor. Do you suppose I'm never going to work any more?

Don

(without much conviction)
 Don't be that way! Be patient.

Lulu

(kicking at a chair, and wandering about)
 I been patient for the last two months, but nobody's breaking their necks to use me.
 (and in the same thought)
 What does she have to come snooping around here for? She could have mailed the letter.

Don

(patiently, as he sits down, studies fruit, pencil poised over paper)
 Forget her, will you? And don't ~~mean~~ ^{mean} so. Plenty of plays get on, way into the spring.

Lulu

(pointedly)
 Yeah, but you don't seem to get on with the managers. Like Mr. Leamington. He's doing a grand one.

Don

(shortly, studying fruit)
 Go apply for a job, then.

Lulu

Huh! What chance have I got, without a drag? You know how he is.

Don

I do. That's why I don't mix with him and his gang of chiselers. They treat the theater like a racket. I don't like them, and they don't like me.

Lulu

(meaningly)
 But they do put on shows.

Don

So does Minsky.
 (changing the subject)
 What did you mean about the scene you're learning? I mean, it and the music?

Lulu

(sulkily)

Oh, well-- you know the part about "how sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank"? That's like the tune. It's moonlighty.

Don

(delighted)

Darling, you're absolutely right! It's just that-- moonlighty! May I kiss you?

Lulu

(has meanwhile moved over, looked at the easel)

Oh! You didn't work today, again?

Don

Nope. Not a lick. Tell you the truth, I have been worrying about your job, too.

Lulu

(really remorsefully, but taking a fruit from the still-life and eating it)

Oh, dear-- I just ruin your career, don't I!

Don

(glaring briefly)

What I've been worrying about is Ben Hempstead giving that part to that dumb Whatsername. He swore you'd get a shot at it.

Lulu

(pointedly)

She's a blonde.

Don

No, there's been some finagling.

Lulu

I notice the blondes get most of the finagling.

Don

Has that got to start again? All you need is a break. And meantime, you're getting good training.

Lulu

(reluctantly admitting it)

Yes, I suppose so. Even Mr. Hempstead said my voice sounded better.

Don

(delighted)

Did he! Now aren't you glad I made you learn these scenes? How's the new one, anyhow? Know it all?

Lulu

I guess so.

Don

Let's hear it.

Lulu
It sounds pretty good. Say, if anybody ever told me I'd be spouting Shakespeare-- I thought only hams did that.

Don
You could still be right.

Lulu
(goes away some feet, turns, takes pose, arranges hair, looks at him inquiringly, clearing throat)
Er--uh....

Don
Don't sing it, but remember it's poetry. Go ahead. "The moon shines bright--"

Lulu
Oh, yes.
(in prosaic manner, with gestures)
"The moon shines bright on such a night as this--"

Don
(interrupting)
Not "on"-- in. "In such a night."

Lulu
Why?

Don
Because that's the way he wrote it.

Lulu
I thought maybe you made a mistake copying it down.

Don
I didn't. And sweetheart, you aren't giving a weather report. It is poetry. Don't spout it. Just lift it a little.

Lulu
Well, all right.
"The moon shines bright. In such a night as this,
When the sweet wind did gently kiss the trees,
And they did make no noise, in such a night,
Troilus methinks--"

Don
(interrupting)
Look, dear-- it's Troilus, not Trolius. Don't you remember?

Lulu
(who has stopped in mid-gesture, nods brightly)
Oh, sure.
(and says it exactly the same way)
"Troilus methinks mounted the Trojan walls,
And sighed his soul to-ward the Grecian tents
Where Cressid
(hesitates and soft-pedals the next word)

Lulu (Cont'd)

"lay that night.

(with a quick smoothing gesture)

How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank.
Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears. Look how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold".

(stops, and asks)

What did you say that "patines" number means?

Don

Flecks. Flakes of gold in the floor of heaven.

Lulu

Stars, huh?

Don

Yes. Well, thank you very much. That's good work.

Lulu

Yeah.... But what does it get me?

Don

It's its own reward, and it helps make an artist out of you.

Lulu

I bet Connie Bennett and Joan Crawford didn't have to bother with Shakespeare.

Don

That's right. Metro forgot to pick up his option.
(door bell)

Lulu

Who's that?

Don

(goes to door, opens it. Speaks
to person he ushers in)

Hul-lo! Mrs. Tolliver, I'm afraid!

(Shakes hand, pulls her into room)

Gladys Tolliver

(A ripe, hard-boiled, good-looking,
well-dressed woman in her ~~early~~ ~~late~~ ~~late~~ ~~late~~
~~thirties~~.thirties. Sense of humor, gruff,
deep voice, almost bass)

Ah, the artist himself, ~~caught~~ ^{caught} with his ~~brush~~ ^{brush}
~~brush~~ ^{brush} ~~in hand~~ ^{in hand} ~~over his~~ ^{over his} ~~shoulder~~ ^{shoulder}.

paints down! I hope
I'm interesting.

Gladys

I'm on my way to Saks to have a fit. Dropped in for the one purpose of bawling you out.

Don

(with a bow)

The same to you, Lady Agatha. You know Miss Manners.

Gladys

How do you do, Miss Manners. I know all about you, because Don mentioned you every other sentence while he was painting me, and besides, one believes everything one reads in the tabloids, doesn't one. You were charming in Wheeler's little misfortune, too.

Lulu

(nicely)

Thanks, Mrs. Tolliver. I always wanted to meet you, because everybody knows you're just about the best-dressed woman in New York.

Gladys

Now, that's what I call a polite and pleasing child. Why can't you follow her example and be complimentary once in a while, Don?

Don

Why, I'm sure I sing your praises in every---

Gladys

That's because you like me, the Lord knows why.

Don

Simple enough. That's a heart o' gold beneath them rugged hills--

(points at her bosom)

Gladys

(taking up the burlesque lingo)

Hebbe they used to be, pard, but they aint't been much prospetin' ther since '49.

(sighs heavily)

Don

(with a laugh)

Well, set down, stranger, and have a nip and unboason yourself some more.

Gladys

(sitting - sits R.C.)

Seat, but no nip. I'm extremely sore at you.

Don

(sits at R. of table R.C.)

Poor old me?

Gladys

What do you mean by refusing to do Mrs. Saundler's portrait, when I spent days convincing her you're the hottest painter since Whistler warbled "Maisy"?

Don
I meant what I said. No more portraits.

Gladys
You were very gruff. You could have told her you had painter's colic, or been diplomatic. But no. Gruff. And you're a prize fool to turn it down.

Don
No more racketeers' molls or hags like the Saunders critter. I'm through with your whole mob.

Gladys
Very stupid. Reba Saunders doesn't have to be slicked up -- she knows how ugly she is -- she glories in it. She'll pay you a thousand dollars for it, and never quiver a wrinkle.

Don
Too bad.

Gladys
Listen, Don. I like you a lot. I appreciate your honesty and integrity, but you're making yourself very unpopular.

Don
I get along all right. I make enough money, and I have a few friends I don't have to shower with horse-feathers or exchange "yesses" with.

Gladys
Now, wait. I have my own opinions about a lot of my gang, but Broadway is Broadway, and it's a lot easier to get along if you spread a little molasses instead of vitriol.

Don
There are nice people in your crowd, -- you, for instance. But there are also too many of the others and I feel uncomfortable among them. I'm not a playboy, or a big shot, or a jewelry salesman, or a society black sheep, or a twenty per cent agent. I've got nothing to sell and I don't care if I never marry ~~Reba Saunders~~. *Jeep Harlow!*

Gladys
Why don't you pause for station announcements? I'd like to edge in a word. Did it ever occur to you that you're sort of calling the what-you-call-em what-have-you?

Don
I? Are you crazy?

Gladys
Not very. If I were an unprejudiced observer, I might consider that your Miss Question-Mark gag was a little -- well Sixth Avenue, anyway. Clever, but fire-saleish.

Don
That was only one time, and that was enough.

Gladys

All the samey. If you start playing ball, you have to keep on playing ball. Aren't you a tiny bit rude about agents, considering---

Don

Are you putting me into --

Gladys

My lamb, are you or are you not endeavoring to handle Miss Manners' career?

Lulu

(who has been listening wide-eyed to all this)

Why, yes! He's my personal representative!

Gladys

(turning to her)

So he told me. Now, my dear child, have you any influence with him? He ought not to leave one wire unpulled, and here's this wire right in his hands.

Lulu

Why, sure! Mr. Saunders is one of the biggest producers in the business! And the paper says he's got two plays yet this season.

Don

He's also a prime all-American, and his wife's schnozzle would curdle my paints.

Gladys

Maybe. But the motto of Incandescent Alley is scratch my back and I'll scratch yours, or else. You can uncurdle your paints, and while you're doing it, you can be insinuating a few boosts for your protegee into the Saunders shell-like ear.

Don

I'll be hanged if I'll worm favors out of that frog-faced old --- hag.

Gladys

I'm not asking you to make a pushover out of your art -- just a once-in-a-while. I shall now roll up my sleeves and come down to cases. I want you to do me a favor, and yourself a much bigger one, all at the same time.

Don

Save your breath! I--

Lulu

(exits to R. of table)

You can listen, can't you?

Gladys

Thank you. Now. Act one-- La Saunders is furious at you because you won't do her portrait. Just the other day, the name of Miss Harners was mentioned for a part in one of Mr. Saunders' plays. Mrs. Saunders greeted it with loud shouts of silence, and seeing as how Mr. Saunders dwells beneath Madame's thumb--

Lulu

(with great agitation)

There, you see! And it's all because --

Gladys

(to Lulu)

It appears so. But -- La S. can put in a plug as well as a knock.

Lulu

(beseechingly, toward Don)

Oh! Don!

Don

(grinly)

A sweet, juicy little piece of conniving. And what are you after?

Gladys

(rises - exits to C. - acts this all out)

Act two, my husband, Frankie, a writer prolific and pretty successful if he is sometimes lousy, has a play he's adapting from the Hungarian.

Don

You don't tell me. He wouldn't be trying to sell it to Saunders, by any chance?

Gladys

Strangely enough, yes. And Monsieur Saunders is sort of hanging back. It's a pretty opera, -- a little thing concerning a hot lady who puts over a radio station through the sex-appeal in her voice.

Don

My God!

Gladys

It's called "Station IT", and dear Frankie is in the throes of double locomotor ataxia and the Chinese gonggo, trying to get Saunders off the fence where he's at present sitting. If I can only be restored to favor with the wife, she will work on the husband --

Don

And, lo and behold, Saunders takes a chance on Frankie's horrible play?

Gladys

Exactly. She will then feel so kindly toward me that she'll make him produce it next, and we will eat regularly. Act three, Frank is saved, the lady gets her portrait, you manage to put over plenty of sales-talk about Miss Manners while you do the painting, she gets a good part in a Saunders production, and comes the dawn of a better day.

Don

You think so? I don't care for any, thank you. That goes for your whole gang, -- you can have 'em.

Gladys

(rising - exits to R.C.)

I've had most of them -- do I have to go through all that again?

(rises)

Now, Don, my woodland sprite -- change your mind.

Don

I will not!

Lulu

Oh, Don!

Gladys

(on way to door - exits above table)

That's right, Miss Manners. I see you differ from his views. Use a club on him if you have to. I'm tossing a small riot at my apartment Sunday night -- stand-up eating and fall-down drinking. All my horrid friends will be there, and so will you and Mr. Slocum. I trust you to see that he is prepared to tell Fraulein Saunders he'll be charmed to immortalize her bezer.

Don

(furiously - rises - exits to L.C.)

I refuse to have anything to do with it --

Gladys

(exits to door)

Any time after seven. No evening clothes -- our little group is always so sweetly informal on the Lord's day. Good afternoon, thanks for obliging, and God bless us all.

(exits, with an airy wave of the hand)

Don

(yells after her)

No! No!

(DON stands glaring in the direction she went)

Lulu

(immediately, a tone of ordering mixed with girly-girlishness - exits to C.)

But you're going to, 'course you are.

Don

(ironic)

Am I indeed?

Lulu

(more angrily)

Why, sure. I kept telling you not to be so mean to those people. Now you see! But you can fix it all up again, like she said.

Don

The hell I can!

Lulu

(upon the point of angry tears)

You certainly can! What's the matter with you, anyways? Sometimes you act like you was crazy!

Don

I have no doubt. Just the same, I'll use my own judgment, such as it is.

Lulu

(bursting into loud tears)

Your judgment! Your judgment! Yeah, that's great! Get yourself in wrong all you want to, but what about me? You heard her! They take it out on me! And a lot you care! Just thinking about yourself, that's all! Oh, yes, you love me such a lot, don't you?

Don

(exits up and down stage)

(grinding his teeth, controlling himself)

Will you relax?

Lulu

(weeping louder)

All you got to do is be nice to Mrs. Saunders! Is that going to kill you? You got to fix it up -- you just got to!

Don

(at his wit's end)

For the love of God! --

Lulu

I told you not to make cracks about them! I told you I should gl blonde!

(kicks heels in air, and bawls, in a tantrum)

Don

(yells)

Go blonde, then! Dye yourself plaid!

Lulu

(howling)

No! I only want to go to the party, and fix things up!
(howling accusation)

Lulu (Cont'd)

I didn't want to have any career, in the first place! It was all your idea! But now, when you got me so I really want to amount to something--- now you ruined it--- ooo-hooo-hoooo!

Don

(struck, looks at her, groans)
So it's all my fault, eh? Hell! All right! All right! If you'll only shut up! We'll go!

Lulu

(stopping her sobbing almost instantaneously, with a joyful cry of a little girl)

Honest? Cross your heart?

Don

(falling into a chair, clutching his head)
Yes! Yes, damn you! Anything!

Lulu

(rushing toward him, cooing)
Darling! Oh, that's wonderful! And I saw the cutest dress at Bendel's.

Don

(Raises eyes to heaven as witness of his martyrdom - moans loudly)

BLACK OUT

AND

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE 1:

The party at Gladys' Duplex Apartment.

But the party is not seen. It is off-stage, Right, around a jog of the wall. What is seen is the hall -- a wall extending left to right. Slightly off-center is a flight of stairs, going up to the second floor of the apartment. It has a landing and a turning. Only a few stairs are seen.

The set must be as shallow as possible-- the shallower the better, in order to bring the people closer to the audience, and make scenes played on the stairs themselves very intimate, and yet heard.

A door to toilet. A table against wall, mirror over it. Vase with flowers. It must look homelike.

From time to time, people must pass through, laughter etc. be heard from off-stage, giving effect of a party. Waiter with drinks every now and then will help. Perhaps music from right, off-stage, too.

At rise, Mrs. Saunders is talking, near the foot of the stairs, to Gladys.

Mrs. Saunders

(a very ugly woman, with a frightful nose, and a very British accent, gowned rather ultra-- nobody is in formal evening clothes-- is talking)

But my deah-- you make such a mistake wearing American clothes! Look at this little thing I've got on-- Worth's, my dear, and only forty guineas!

Gladys

(kidding, but flattering)

Is that all! Next time you're in London, you must bring me back a gross.

Mrs. Saunders

(laughing dubiously)

Deah Gladys! Always so jolly!

Saunders

(a manager, her husband, cheap American type, is coming down stairs, looking glum)

Gladys

(gaily)

Well, Mr. Saunders! What are you looking so sour about? That musical show having troubles?

Mrs. Saunders

(as Saunders gives a sour smile)

Youah positively psychic! It's frightfully expensive, and the backing has backed out.

Gladys

(to Saunders, as he comes up to them)

That shouldn't bother you! Why don't you use your own money?

Saunders

(grimly)

Mine? I spent it all on a sandwich, last week.

Gladys

I heard of a dear old lady who wants to put some into a musical.

Saunders

What's the matter with her?

Gladys

Why, it seems, there's a young tenor she's sort of attached to, in a nice way. She's practically adopted him, if you know what I mean.

Saunders

(s cynically)

Sure, you mean adapted. Well, how much has she got?

Gladys

You might squeeze twenty grand out of her, if the punk is permitted to yodel two or three songs, and play the juvenile lead.

Mrs. Saunders

How sick-making!

Saunders

(grimly)

Lead me to her! For that much backing, I'd let him sing soprano!

Gladys

(seeing Don approaching)

I'll find out all the dirty details, and give you the dope. Now wouldn't you like some supper? Nearly everybody else is finished.

(taking Don's hand cordially)

Oh. You know Mr. Slocum, don't you? Mr. and Mrs. Saunders.

Don

(bows pleasantly)

How do you do.

Gladys
 (as the Saunders make cold murmurs,
 not shaking hands)
 Isn't it grand! Mr. Slocum finds he can do your portrait,
 after all.

Mrs. Saunders
 Sorry. I feah I've changed my mind.

Gladys
 But you said--

Mrs. Saunders
 Perhaps I did. But I may have to nip back to London.

Don
 (controlling himself, in response to
 a nudge from GLADYS)
 Oh, now don't disappoint me, Mrs. Saunders. I can get at it
 right away, if your plans are --

Mrs. Saunders
 (with a cold, bright smile)
 I'm sush it would be a bit of all right. But I shall have to
 see. Mrs. Tolliver can phone you up.
 (turns toward her husband)

Gladys
 (to cover DON'S sudden movement of rage,
 yells brightly)
 Food! Food! Get in to the food! Special Movie dish tonight--
 liver and options.

Saunders
 Any cinema toast?

Lulu
 (During this, has appeared at top
 of stairs, hesitating prettily,
 looking extremely fetching in a
 new, primly-indecent dress)

Gladys
 (As the rest are about to move on,
 DON sulking at left)
 Has anybody seen my dear drunken husband?

Don
 I hear he's in the snaking room.

Gladys
 Thank you. Under which table?

(LULU chooses this moment to drop,
 very carefully, her vanity-case, which
 rolls downstairs. She gives a little
 quirk and loud "Oh," and runs help-
 lessly down after it. The desired effect
 results. They all turn and look at her.)

Saunders
 (Nearest her, picks up case, hands
 it to her)

Gladys
 (with an approving leer at the performance)
 This is Miss Mary-Lou Manners, Mr. Saunders.

Lulu
 (prettily thanking him)
 Thank you, Mr. Saunders! Oh, dear -- I'm so clumsy!

Gladys
 And Mrs. Saunders -- you remember, I was telling you about
 Mary-Lou yesterday.

Mrs. Saunders
 (without enthusiasm)
 Oh, yes. "Miss Question-Mark".

Saunders
 You played in that thing of Terry Wheelan's, didn't you?

Lulu
 (brightly - exits to R.C.)
 Yes. I was Helen.

Saunders
 (talking about the weather)
 Yes.
 (looks at DON, purses his lips, turns away)

Gladys
 Now rush in! The ice-cream's getting cold.
 (pushes out the Saunders. Gladys,
 Don and Lulu are near stairs)

Don
 (angrily - R.C.)
 Lovely woman, Mrs. Saunders. And just as nice as she looks.

Gladys
 (exits to C.)
 She's angrier than I thought. But hold everything -- I'll fix
 it.

(to Lulu)
 That entrance of yours was good. You get hold of Mrs. Saunders
 later on, ask her about England, and drink it all in. It gets
 her every time.

Don
 (still angry)
 I told you I'm no good at politics. I can't hide the way I
 feel, and they see right through my attempts. I will not do it
 any more.

Gladys

Go get Miss Manners and yourself some food, and you'll feel better.

(Starts away)

Don

Wait!... Did you tell Frank I've got an idea about his play?

Gladys

(exits up to L.)

Yes, but I must admit he didn't seem very excited. You tell him yourself. Where the devil is he, anyhow?

(Calls, as she leaves)

Frank! Frank!

(Matters, going out)

Husbands!

Don

(Catches LULU'S hand, pulls her down next him on a stair, gloomily)

I suppose if we're going to take a shot at this chiseling, we might as well do it right. Remember, hand Frank Tolliver a line, if you get a chance. Flatter him up -- you can lay it on thick, because he's from Georgia.

Lulu

Well, all right, if you say so. But I heard he's sort of silly.

Don

He's an ass, but if we can get you in his play -- the way I'm going to suggest to him. -- Well, I'm going to work on him, and you'll have to do your share. Remember, now, you're quiet and modest and sweet -- every minute. And rather scared.

Lulu

(smiling)

You want me to be the itzy-bitzy dirlie?

Don

Yes.

(Furiously)

God! How I hate this bunk!

Lulu

(In little-girl manner)

Please, now -- can I have some supper? I'm just starved.

Gladys

(Pushing her husband, a Southerner, ahead of her, comes to stairs, saying)

Stagger upstairs, dear, and chase down anybody you find.

Frank

(Not drunk -- makes an exaggerated bow)

Yo' wuhd is mah comman' !

(Goes back of her to stairs)

Pahdon me kindly, ma'am.

Frank (Cont'd)
(Starts to squeeze between LULU and DON)

Gladys
(As FRANK is about to step over LULU)
The lady you're stepping on is Miss Manners.
(To LULU, who has hastily risen,
leaving DON still seated)
This pretty creature is my husband -- Frank Tolliver, your
host, America's fastest playwright, the modern Sammy Shipman.

Frank
(Who has squeezed past LULU, bows with
grave courtesy, kissing Lulu's hand)
A pleasuah and a honnuh, Miss Manners.

Don
Less of your old southern courtesy, there.

Frank
Suh, eh'll meet you at sunrise, with swords or pistols!
(With dignity continues upstairs)

Gladys
Don't you dere fall asleep!
(To DON and LULU)
Take Miss Manners in, now.

Don
(Wearily)
Do it for me, will you? I want to think a minute.

Gladys
(Exiting to L. with Lulu)
(To Lulu)
Splendid idea. I'll introduce you to some really nice people--
there must be one or two here. You can bring him back a sand-
wich.

Don
No thanks, I feel sick enough already.

Gladys
Splendid. Join me in the hospital. I'm thinking of having an
operation.
(Moving away, with LULU)

Don
Not appendicitis again?

Gladys
Dear me, no! I've had appendicitis three times.
(She is out with LULU)

Don
(Walks up and down a couple of times,
thinking deeply, looking bitter and
depressed)

Frank

(Comes loping down the stairs. As he gets just above DON, he says)
 Couldn't find a soul -- looked in every bed.

Don

(With a quick change of manner, coming down with him, says with alacrity)
 Just the man I'm after. Can you give me two minutes?

Frank

Well -- just two. Ol' lady's got me undah hah thumb to-night.

Don

(Exiting over to R.C. - Button-holding him, as they walk around)
 Now, look. I hear this "Station IT" play of yours doesn't please you much yet.

Frank

(Sits at R.C. on bench)
 It's a stinkaroo.

Don

Gladys was telling me about it. Suppose I could give you an idea that might turn it into something good?

Frank

I'd kiss you and you' fambly, any place, any hour.

Don

Suppose I give you the idea -- free?

Frank

Boy, ah'd even kiss ye' a-ancestuh!

Don

Well, look. The main idee of your play is to put over sex-appeal with the heroine's voice -- over the radio, is that it?

Frank

That was the idee. Sometimes I think I'd be better off dead!

(At this moment a drunk comes tottering with hasty solemnity, and stands helpless, obviously searching for something, looks pitifully at FRANK)

Frank

(Points to a door, through which man, making a bow, darts)

Don

(Impatient with the distraction)
 Here's my slant. Suppose it isn't broadcasting sex-appeal -- but joy! Get that? Happiness and joy!
 (As FRANK makes a weary gesture, he continues urging)

Don (Cont'd)

Look. a sweet little girl in a lot of trouble -- she gets a chance to broadcast, and works out a joy-program, her influence through her voice saves the boy, and she becomes America's Joy-girl. From what I hear, you could write the play in a week.

Frank

(Morosely)

Why don't you write it?

Don

No, seriously. And I've got a marvelous name for it -- not "Station IT" ---- "Station Joy"!

Frank

(Really struck by the title, ponders, saying it over to himself)

"Station IT" - "Station Joy" -

Drunk

(Comes out of toilet, totters out toward living-room)

Frank

Title ain't a bad switch. But hell -- happiness and sunshine on the radio -- that ain't as good as sex-appeal.

Don

But wait till I explain--

Gladys' Voice

Frank! Frank! Where are you?

Frank

(Groans)

Oh, Lewdy! Ryuh come the slave-drivuh!
(Makes a movement to escape)

Don

(Grabs him)

But I haven't come to the point yet--

Frank

(Unwillingly, pushes Don toward toilet)

Well, come on in heah-- this is one place they seldom folluh us.
(Is about to follow Don in, when)

Gladys

(dashs up, followed by CORA and a girl named LORRAINE ALLEN, just behind her)

Frank! You come here!

(grabs his coat-tails)

Frank

(trying to shake her off)

Lemme be! I got to talk ovuh a idesh.

(LULU comes in, looking for DON)

Gladys

I think that's where most of your ideas come from.

(grabs his ear, pulls him out)

Now, behave. Pay some attention to your party. This is Terry Wheelan's secretary, Miss Martin. She wants to talk to you about something or other.

Cora

(looking very smart in a pretty gown, gives a glance at DON who is coming, very much disappointed, out of the toilet, says apologetically)

Oh, no -- really -- I wouldn't think of interrupting you and Mr. Slocum --

Frank

(pleasantly enough -- he has been looking past CORA at LORRAINE, sizing her up)

Ain' no interruptin', truly, ma'am. What you got on yo' min'?

Cora

(considerably embarrassed)

Why.... really, perhaps later --

Frank

(with a huge grin)

Bettuh grab me now. Ah'm li'ble to drink mahse'f spifflicated, if some people Ah know don't stay offa mah neck.

(giving GLADYS a dirty look)

Gladys

Liable to! Huh-huh-huh!

(stage-laugh)

Cora

(still embarrassed)

Well.... I understood you couldn't find a girl to do "Station IT", and when Charlie Walsh asked me to come here with him tonight, I thought you wouldn't mind if I brought along this young lady--

(DON is aghast, LULU looks furious. GLADYS looks upset)

Frank

(who has been giving the girl a quick up-and-down)

To be sho'ly! To be sho'ly!

Cora

(finishes)

She's a friend of mine-- Miss Lorraine Allen.

(indicating girl, very pretty, young)

Frank

(moving right in)

Well, well! Howdy, Miss Allen. You got sex-appeal in yo' voice?

Lorraine
 (somewhat upset at this direct question)
 Why... uh.... some people seem to think so.

Frank
 (archly)
 Why -- maybe they're right!

Don
 (at a furious dig from Lulu's elbow)
 But-- uh.... I thought you'd about given up the IT idea. Isn't that what you said?

Frank
 (waving his aside)
 That was account of who could we get? Maybe the Lawd just sent me somep'n.
 (to LORRAINE)
 You had much expe'ince?

Gladys
 (with acid sweetness, to Lorraine)
 He means on the stage.

Lorraine
 Oh, yes. I started with Bulgakov, and I did some Ibsen with Beleslovski, and two Chekhov plays at the Sutton place, and--

Frank
 Grand! You don't expect any salary, then?

Lorraine
 (looking astonished)
 Why-- uh -- why, what do you mean?

Cora
 (hastily, despite her feeling that she has interfered with Don)
 She's done other things besides art-theaters. Mr. Wheelan used her in "Lost Soul", and --

Gladys
 (interrupting)
 Wasn't that the one they called "Lost Roll"?

Lorraine
 (persistently)
 It only lasted ten days, but I went right into "Drum Beats" and then "Forgotten Faces" and then "Who's Your Friend" and.... and then "Just You", and --

Frank
 (losing enthusiasm)
 Whoo, whoo! Six shows in eight monthe -- that's a lotta shows.

Lorraine
And this year I did "Idle Dreams" and "How Goes It?" and
"Murder For Two" --

Frank
(suddenly interested)
What was you? The fiancée?

Lorraine
Yes -- Barbara.

Frank
Why, she'-- I remembuh! Why, you was grand-- only thing in it
that was! Say, now yoush talkin'!

Lulu
(takes this opportunity to burst into
an innocent giggle)
Oh, dear-- I was just thinking, Miss Allen-- you've sort of been
like a cranberry!

Lorraine
(staring)
Cranberry?

Lulu
(with another giggle, like a
naughty child)
Yes. Every time you come in, it's with a turkey!

Frank
(bursts into a loud guffaw)
Hot Diggity, li'l gal! That's a mean one! Gimme that fo' the
show!

Lulu
(with great surprise)
Oh, Mr. Tolliver! Did I say something funny?

Frank
(chuckling)
Say, why didn't they tell me about you befo'? Got any no' lines
like that?
(his attention is centered on her)

Lulu
(giving him the pleased, baby-stare look)
Lines? Why, I ~~just~~ say things that come into my head.

Just
Cladya
(very much irritated, and as hostess
seeing that she must create a diversion,
says sharply)
The party's in there. Why do people insist upon ganging out
here?

Frank

(To Gladys, with a pathetic note)
 Maybe so's they can get away from you, a minute.

Gladys

(firmly taking Lorraine's arm with one
 hand, Frank's with other)
 Charming creature! Come along, now. I mean it!
 (starts pulling them)

Frank

(catching at Lulu)
 Heah! Ah don' wants lose mah collaboratuh!

Don

(in a low voice to Lulu, making a sign)
 Just a second.

Lulu

(gives him a frown, then says gaily
 to Frank)
 Go on. I'll catch right up.
 (and, as GLADYS drags FRANK firmly away,
 with LORRAINE on her other side, she comes
 back to Don, and, turning her back on CORA--
 all this very quickly, and says in the most
 hurt tone to DON)
 Well-- what do you want?

Don

(looking embarrassedly at CORA,
 then back to LULU)
 Why-- uh --

Lulu

(as if she were upon the point of tears)
Don't stop me now, unless it's important! What is it?

Don

Why... uh.... I'm afraid everything's rather hatched up --
 (looks most uncomfortably toward Cora,
 back at Lulu)

Lulu

(with emphatic brightness, ignoring Cora)
 Oh, no! Maybe not. We'll see what I can do. Only I'll have
 to hurry.
 (and out she goes)

Cora

(looks miserable--as well as deeply
 sympathetic toward Don-- and puzzled)
 Don, have I... I mean, I've done something I shouldn't, haven't
 I?

Don
(unhappily, but trying to reassure her)
No, no. It's all right. It's not your fault.

Cora
Yes, I've upset some plan of yours.

Don
(wearily)
No, no. I was simply trying to show Tolliver how he could change his play, and maybe use Lulu--

Cora
(abject)
No wonder! Oh, please forgive me! I wouldn't have done it for the world--

Don
(affectionately through his glumness)
Don't you think I know that? Serves me right for trying to play this game, anyhow. Forget it!
(pulls her toward the stairs)
Sit down, and be nice to a poor old boob.

Cora
(hesitates, then says)
I'll never forgive myself.

Don
(pushing her to a seat on the third stair)
Never mind. It doesn't matter.
(taking a seat on the stair below her)
That are you doing in a dump like this?

Cora
(brevely trying to be gay)
Haven't you heard? I'm stepping out, these days.

Don
You picked a swell spot to step in-- this ~~kind~~ *bunch* of chiselers and half-wits. Still--you're trying to sell somebody, too.

Cora
(reproachfully)
Oh, Don!
(earnestly)
That only happened. I really came because Charley said you'd be here.

Don
(takes her hand, looks up, says kiddingly)
Pursuing me, I suppose.

Cora
(with simplicity)
Yes. It's been such a long time since I saw you, and I've missed you awfully.

Don
 (studies her face, drops the kidding)
 Why.... I really believe you mean that!

Cora
 Of course I do!

Don
 (with self-disgust)
 I can't imagine why. Well-- how do I look among the other swine?

Cora
 (judicially)
 A little tired, and unhappy.... otherwise, charming as always.

Don
 (stares)
 Why don't you bawl me out?

Cora
 (with a rueful laugh)
 So that's the way you've got me fixed in your mind-- some sort of old-maid school-ma'am, forever scolding! That's all changed. I've gone gay!

Don
 (chuckles, stuffing her with approval)
 Gone gay! You! But you have changed, that's a fact. I mean, I never saw you look so attractive... and that dress!

Cora
 (somewhat shakily beaming)
 Like it?

Don
 Perfect! Why.... I swear, you've turned into a raving beauty!

Cora
 Don't overdo it. But I'm so glad you like it. I got it just for tonight.

Don
 To waste on these clucks?

Cora
 (with smiling simplicity)
 No. On you.

Don
 (warnly, leans back, holding her hand tight, head on her shoulder)
 God, it's great to be right here, and relax.... you've got such swell sweetness and strength... and I know I can count on it!
 (half-closes eyes, with a contented sigh)

Cora
 (quietly happy, with a little mock-bow of her head)

Cora (Cont'd)

Thank you, sir, she said.

Don

(In an almost dazed content, leaning
back, his eyes closed)You know, I feel as if I'd been wandering around on a cocaine
jag, and my eyes hurt, and my head hurt-- and now all of a sudden
they don't! I --

Cora

(Showing her love, brushes his hair
gently with other hand, soothing him)

Sssh. Don't bother to talk.

Don

(Humorously, kidding his own emotion,
uses flip phrase to cover it)

Balzie-walzie!

Cora

(Keeps stroking, with a somewhat
bitter smile at his choice of epithet)

Sssh!

(Soothes him)

There now. Rest.

Don

(However, is now out of that mood, and
into another, of admiration, and stares
at her, very seriously)Good Lord, what a swell gal you are, Cora! I'm always discover-
ing it over again -- as if I didn't know it all the time. Why,
do you suppose?

Cora

(With a little twist to her smile)

Probably because it isn't true.

Don

It is! Character--sympathy--understanding --

Cora

(Trying to kid, and succeeding very well)

You've been reading my mail again.

Don

(Putting his arm around her)

Why -- you've even got a kick!

Cora

(Still for self-protection, yet
beginning definitely to waver, tries
to keep up the flippancy)

Music cue!

(Sings burlesquing)

"Soft lights and sweet music--"

Don

(Quickly and genuinely)
 Why, who'd ever have thought---
 (He pulls her face close to his, staring
 into it)

Cora

(The smile fades and she looks him
 straight back, with invitation)

Don

(Leans toward her)

Cora

(Her barriers down completely,
 raises her lips)

Don

(Suddenly he pushes her firmly and
 abruptly away)
 No! It won't do!

Cora

(Hurt deeply, is speechless)

Don

(Shaking his head)
 Nope. None of that messing around.

Cora

(Gasps)
 Messing around!

Don

(Completely kidding again, on purpose
 to knock her out of the mood)
 Not with my palzie-walzie.

Cora

(Aghast)
 Messing around!

Don

(Takes her by the shoulders, and makes
 a burlesque of shaking her, as he says
 in a mock-scolding voice)
 You're probably the loveliest and deentest and finest palzie-
 walzie now at large, and you're going to stay that way, if I
 have to call in the fire department and the marines!

Cora

(trying to collect herself)
 But... but if I love you--

Don

(with a forced hearty laugh)
 Quit leading me on. I might believe you, and try to take you up.

Don (Cont'd)
And that would be completely lousy for you. So be a good little girl and give me up as a bad job.

Cora
(pitifully)
But--

Don
(smiling broadly, with mock-gruffness)
Shut up! I don't want any more complications! I want a friend!

Cora
(looks at him, then says quietly)
Very well, then. A friendly kiss?
(she kisses him very simply, and a little sadly, briefly)

Don
(pats her, saying with sympathetic appreciation)
Thanks, dear.
(they are releasing each other, when)

Lulu
(comes quickly in. She has caught the position, but gives no sign of it)

Don
(says, as if continuing a former speech, to Cora)
So don't think any more about it. How could you know I had any plans *plans you could interfere with?*
(gives Cora a hug meant to show complete impersonality of attitude) *and releases her.*

Lulu
(surprisingly enough, is very sweet and humble now to Don, comes up and says)
Don, dear-- I'm so sorry I spoke that way. I was sore. But everything's coming along fine. I've been talking to Mr. Tolliver, and I think he's really interested.

Don
(with relief)
Good! The JOY angle, too?

Lulu
(with a quick look at Cora, in a little-girl upset manner)
Well-- I couldn't get around to that. You see, there's such a lot of people around... and Miss Allen keeps trying to talk to him, too--

Cora
(chagrined, but calmly cool)
I understand. I'm awfully sorry. I'll go right in and take her away.

Lulu

(as if she were frightfully disturbed over that)
 Oh, dear! No, please don't. That wouldn't be nice.
 (as if she had just thought of a brilliant
 idea)

I tell you! If I could only talk to him a minute or two, some
 place that nobody would cutt in--

(with the pleased enthusiasm of a child
 with a doll)

Out here, maybe! Look, Don! Why don't you just go in there
 and send him out here? Then it would look all right-- and he'd
 know it was all right, because it was you!

Don

(dubiously)

Mmm.... let's see...

(Cora looks on ironically)

Lulu

Yes, grand! And you could sort of keep people from coming out!
 (as he still hesitates, looking at her
 keenly, she gets an impatient note into
 her voice)

Now, please! Don't argue! I know exactly what to tell him--
 just what you said! I'll flatter him, and--
 (gives him a slight push)

Don

(hastily)

Well....

Lulu

(quickly, to Cora)

Please pardon me for being mean to your friend, Miss Martin. I
 just lost my temper--

(to Don)

He's over by the window--

(resumes, to Cora, as Don reluctantly
 goes out)

You see, I thought you were doing it on purpose--
 (and, as Don is gone, suddenly switches
 to anger, but always like a little girl,
 not nastily)

And I still think so!

Cora

(who has been listening in somewhat
 cool perplexity, suddenly is astonished)

What!

Lulu

Well, maybe not. That would get you in wrong with Don. But if
 you could knife me without his catching on--

Cora

(drawing herself up)

I beg your pardon!

Lulu

(with straightforward hostility)
 Why not? I'd knife you, if I had to, and you'd do the same to me, if you could. We're enemies. Quit pretending anything different.

Please

Cora

(looks at her a moment. Then, with calm self-possession)
 Very well. I admit I don't like you, or anything about you. But if you're implying I'd descent to any such--

Lulu

(as if she were playing hide and seek, or saying "naughty naughty")
 Take off your whiskers! Don't you suppose I know the way you're trying to chisel on me? Oh, you do it very lady-like, but I catch on!

(as Cora starts to make an indignant protest)
 What were you pulling just now, when I came in?

(as Cora starts)

That was naughty! I saw you, looking at him like a dying duck. You're trying to out me out, and you might as well say so.

Cora

(coldly, as a lady should)
 "Cut you out"? That's a little funny, coming from you. Don and I have been friends for three years. I don't think I'd talk about "chiseling", if I were you.

Lulu

(sweetly) *and you never got anywhere?*
 Three whole years? ~~and where did it get you?~~ What right have you got to make passes at him now?

Cora

(flushing)
 The same right I'd have if I saw him becoming a drunkard or a dope-fiend.

Lulu

Oooo! And I suppose you think you're what he needs, and not me? What could you give him I can't?

Cora

(suddenly blazing)
 A home! And comfort, and real companionship, and real love! That's what he needs-- not just one long.... roll in the hay!

Lulu

(taking it)
 Whew! Well, I asked for it, and I got it. But it don't matter what you think about me. ~~You better get wise to yourself, and give up.~~ It's me he wants-- not you.

Cora

(bitterly)

So it seems... just now.

Lulu

Yes, and it's going to keep on! Don's my sweetheart. You lay off him! Understand?

(as someone is approaching)

Yes, I'm so glad we got everything straightened out, Miss Martin. And you must come over and see us sometime, and--

Cora

(simply watches her with ironic admiration)

Frank

(comes lumbering in, along, says gaily)

So hyuh you ah. Slocum said you had somethin' to tell me about.

(somewhat disappointedly)

Howdy again, Miss Martin. Can I get you a drink?

Cora

(composedly)

No thank you. I was just going to find Miss Allen.

Frank

(relieved)

She's in theah, talkin' to Gladys.

Lulu

(in the little-girl voice, to Cora, as letter leaves under perfect control)

See you later, dear. Don't forget what I said!

(turns to Frank with an innocent smile)

Frank

(with a grunt of relief)

Well! So! Now, what you got on yo' mind?

Lulu

(all girlish trust and confidence)

Nothing much! I... I got so tired of all these people in there, and I just thought it would be so nice to get you off here, so I could really get to know you better!

(beams up at him, shyly)

Frank

(gives her a very sharp look, grins)

Well, dog my cats! That Slocum mus' be crazy, lettin' me get all alone with a sweet little dish like you!

Lulu

(smiling up at FRANK, then says)

I hope you mean that for a compliment, Mr. Tolliver!

Frank

(grins)

Well -- it's pactly that ol' southe'n molasses, same as ah put in mah plays. But you'ah putty sweet, all right.

Lulu

(vamping him with little-girlishness)

Well, I'd rather you'd say that than anybody I know of-- because I've always had a sort of a hero-worship on you.

Frank

(showing that he isn't fooled for one minute)

Shame on you--makin' fun of a pe' ol' crackuh like me!
(studies her intently and measuringly)

(FRANK pulls her toward stairs, out of the way)

Let's pahk 'em heah fo' a while, what say?

(pushes her gently down, and as he begins to sit down beside her, says

Done many stage jobs?

Lulu

(giggles)

Not as many as Miss Allen. But "Blind Rapture" for Mr. Wheelan --that was my last one.

Frank

Wished I'd a seen you.

(studies her even more appraisingly)

Mebbe they's somep'n in what Slocum says. Mebbe you could handle a good pahk--specially if it was written for you.

Lulu

(moving as if unconsciously a little closer to him, so that she tabs against him, meanwhile looking shy, timid and pure)

Oooh-- do you s'pose I could really fit into the kind of strong dramas you write? I mean, am I the type? I'm just quiet and... and... well, you know, not wild and sexy.

(almost manages to blush at such a word)

Frank

(with a knowing grin)

They's sexy and sexy. Anyhow, I'm tished of writin' red-hot hoey fo' sizelin' dames. Maybe I oughta do somethin' fo' a cute li'l rascal with a sweet li'l voice, like you.

Lulu

Oh, Mr. Tolliver! Don't say things like that unless you really mean them. If I could only do a Tolliver play -- it's my dream!

Frank

(looking at her with undisguised enjoyment and insinuation)

You neveh can tell. Sometimes dreams have a way of comin' true.

Frank (Cont'd)
 Now yo' futuah, -- hyuh. Give ol' Gypsy Tollivuh yo' putty li'l
 paw a minute.
 (takes her hand, pretends to study it)

Lulu
 (shyly looking up at him, with a
 delighted shiver)
 Oooo! I'm afraid there isn't much to see!

Frank
 Hol' still, white chile! Ah got to go into mah trance.
 (looks at her hand, then straight
 into her face, she responds with
 provocation, then he says with
 large reguishment)
 That theah is yo' fate line, and it says....it says you might
 get somethin' you ain't expected, real soon.

Lulu
 Oooooooo! Something nice?

Frank
 (looking straight at her, and
 chuckling)
 Well.... I ain't nevah had any complaints.

Lulu
 (all delighted trustfulness)
 I know! You mean you're really going to put me in your play!

Frank
 (with a guffaw)
 You ain't so dumb.
 (puts hand stealthily on her knee,
 as if by accident)
 Honey, ah think you 'n me is goin' to unduhstan' each othuh real
 well.

Lulu
 (looks quickly and stealthily around,
 makes no effort to remove his hand or
 to indicate that she disapproves)
 Well.... I hope so.

Frank
 Yep. I got an ideah youah a right good acress. You could do
 this innocent stuff till the cows come home!

Lulu
 (pretending she doesn't understand
 his insinuation, but letting him see
 that she does indeed understand, in a burlesque
 of being indignant)
 Why, Mr. Tolliver! What do you mean -- "Do innocent stuff"?

Frank
 Yes, ma'am-- the bigguh load of yo' wuhk I get, the mo' I'm
 sho' Slocum's right. Hamma. Station JOY.... Joy-Cal. Think
 you could do it?

Lulu

(kneeing him, as she says with
timorous rapture)

Don't get my hopes all raised, if you're only teasing!

Frank

Ah could tuh'n it out in ten days...co'se, it'd he'p a lot if I
can see you real often--so's I can study you. Did...uh...did
Slocum go with you out of town when they tried out that Wheelan
thing?

Lulu

Oh yes---but he had to be in New York four days. I was so
lonesome!

Frank

(leering - exits up to bench)

Saunders goes to Philadelphia fo' a try-out---maybe Washington,
too.

Lulu

Oh, dear! Don hates to go as far from his work as that. I ex-
pect he wouldn't be along much. I'd just have to get along
without him.

(gives him a look)

Frank

(sits)

(looks straight at her, strokes her
leg with his hand. As she does not
do any flinching, he says)Honey, you done sold somethin'! Ah'm stahtin' that play fust
thing in the mawnin'! And ah'm she goin' to take a chance on
you!

Lulu

Oh, Mr. Tolliver! I could just kiss you.

Frank

You could?

(looks stealthily around, puts
arms around her)(LULU, with the most innocent air,
gives him one of those long, slow
voluptuous kisses)(FRANK, releasing LULU quickly, but
smacking his lips, as she demurely
becomes prim again, says)Yes.... suh... boy! Neveh believe in open' cold! Nothin' helps
a author like a good long tryout!!BLACK OUT

ACT TWO

SCENE 2.

Early March, Philadelphia. A Sunday
Afternoon about two o'clock.

Lulu's bedroom in a hotel. Door
right, bathroom door left, closet
door, half-open.

Twin beds made, the room in order.
Two suit-cases, nearly packed, are
open, in the middle of the floor.

LULU, in a very sheer nightgown and
negligee, is lying on one bed, fret-
fully reading a Public Ledger. She
frowns, yawns, looks at watch, frowns
again, lights a cigarette, lies back
fretfully.

The phone rings. She jumps, hesitates
as the phone rings again, frowns at
it, then picks it up.

Lulu

(Putting on her idea of a French maid)

Allo? Who ees, please? Meester Gaige, or Rexco Feelms? Wan
moment, please, I weel see eef Mees Mannaires ees een.

(waits, looking very pleased and
and excited, then eeses)

Oh, Hello, Mr. Gaige! Well, how are you?

(Listens)

~~skxxxxxxxxxxxx~~

But I'm so excited to think of a big movie director, remembering
a mere actress like I!

(Listens)

Oh, now Mr. Gaige! You mustn't turn my head!

(Listens)

But what are you doing in Philadelphia on a Sunday? Such a dumb
place!

(Listens, then with relief)

Oh, you're in New York---what?

(Listens, then very positively)

No, no! You mustn't come down! I'm leaving for Washington in
five minutes---my maid's just finished packing, and I've got my
coat on now, and---

(Listens)

No, truly, Mr. Gaige, we're rehearsing down there, right after
dinner. No, I'm so sorry, but---

(Listens, very much upset, then
confidentially)

But I tell you what---would you be around maybe, after we open in
New York--

(Listens. Then with great disappointment)

To the Coast? Tomorrow? Oh, dear!

(Very vexed, but positive)

Lulu (Cont'd)

No, I just couldn't! I can't possibly get out of what I've got to do. What?

(Listens. Then cries excitedly)

Oh, Mr. Gaige! The Joy-Girl, with you directing! But how soon could you know?

(Listens, then deeply disappointed)

A couple of months! But couldn't you sell the idea from--

(Listens)

Well, indeed I will! Wait'll I get a permit--

(Searches for something, grabs a lipstick, writes on envelope)

Jack Gaige.... 1760 Canyon Drive, Beverly Hills, Cal.

(Listens)

But maybe you'll be back in New York while the show's running--

(Listens)

Why yes, of course I do! I'll never forget what you're trying to do for me, even if you don't succeed. I'll always be so grateful--

(Listens)

(FRANK carrying a large package, enters, softly)

(Lulu sees him, changes her tone, interrupts)

Well, I'm awfully sorry, I've got to dash. I can't miss the train!

(Listens impatiently and guiltily)

Yes, I've got to! Good-bye for now.

(Hangs up hastily, puts on an impersonation of vexation)

Oh, dear-- Don is such a lot of trouble!

(Pushes note under side of cloth under telephone)

Frank

(at door, looks a little alarmed)

Don? Whosh is he at?

Lulu

Oh, he's safe in New York, but I wish he wouldn't bother me--

(Clicks telephone, and now says into it)

Operator? Oh, listen, dear. Don't put any more calls through.

Tell everybody I've left for Washington--yes, please-- every-
body. I'm tired out, and I want to sleep. Thanks a lot.

(Hangs up)

Frank

(Meanwhile, with large coyness, has taken the "Do Not Disturb" sign, and, gesturing toward her with it, hangs it on the outside of door, closes door and locks it, says with high good humor)

Well, sugah--at las', huh? How you feelin'?

Lulu

(Fretfully)

Bored to death.

Frank

Don't you fret, sweetie-pie. Heah I am, and we got a nice long
aftuhnoon ahead of us--

(Drops hat and overcoat on floor)

Lulu

Oh, I wouldn't care if you never got here, only Philadelphia's
no treat any day, and how'd you like to be sitting around in a
punk hotel all alone, with nothing to do but read the Public
Ledger?

Frank

(Exhibiting two bottles of champagne
and a bottle of stout)

Aw, hush, baby. Ah had to hang around that No'th Philly station,
makin' sure the troupe was all gone. Then I had to get hold of
this heah happy-watuh.

(Opens stout with a pocket-opener)

Ring down and get a lotta ice, please ma'am.

(Pulls a pitcher toward himself)

Lulu

Are you crazy? What about the bell-hops?

Frank

Thess right. Well, I'll run out an' get some.

Lulu

No! I won't have you jumping in and out of my room. If you have
to drink, you'll have to take it warm.

Frank

But baby--it's terrible that way. You won' like it.
(Tugs at champagne cork)

Lulu

I'm not drinking.

Frank

(Champagne pops)

Why, honey! What's the mattuh with you all of a sudden?

Lulu

Not a thing, only I'm not drinking.

Frank

(Pouring champagne into pitcher with
one hand, stout with other)

Aw, come on, honey! This-heah is electric-juice, what I mean!
Do take jus' a little nip!

(Sloshes mixture in pitcher)

Lulu

(Coming toward him, looking with
curiosity at mixture)

What is the nasty stuff?

Frank

(Pouring some into a glass)

Black velvet! It's pow'ful smooth. Stout to smooth it out, and fixx to give it that old myuh! Couple of shots of that, and ol' Jawn D. Rockefeller wouldn't be safe with you:

Lulu

(Makes a face, then suddenly pulls his head down, gives him a quick, hot kiss. Then, demurely)

Do you think I really need any?

(She runs quickly away from him, to bed, where she stretches out languidly, watching him)

Frank

(Meanwhile, the moment she kisses him, lets out a bay like a dog)

Ow-ooo! Boy! Guess ah bettah drink the whole thing may-self!

(Gulps an entire glass-ful)

Wow! Now bring on yo' tighah!

(Pours out another drink, brings it over to bed, where he sits down next to her, saying as he comes over)

What did that ol' Slocum want on the phone, honey?

Lulu

Oh--nothing. He was just apologizing for getting sore about Mr. Gaige--you know, all that row about the movies...and going off home the way he did.

Frank

(With a chuckle)

He'd be a heap scarer, if he only knowed, hey, sugah?

(Takes a sip of drink, begins stroking her with hand)

Gladys done swalluhed mah yarn like a lamb. Ah'm motorin' down with a old Washington friend.

(Chuckles again)

You sho' Don ain't suspicious?

Lulu

(Impatiently)

Yes, yes, it's all perfect. I told the troupe I'm waiting for him here. If he gets asking any questions, I simply missed the train, and had to take a later one.

Frank

The po' dumb punk! Why don't you get rid of him, once an' fo' all?

Lulu

(Sharply)

Why don't you mind your own business? I happen to care a lot about Don-- a whole lot!

Frank

(With a cynical grin)

Yeah? Oksy. So long's you love me jes' a little.

Lulu

What's love got to do with it? I kind of like you--otherwise, you don't think you'd be here now, do you?

Frank

(Chickling again)

"Kinda likeme?" Well, that's good enough for a stahtuh.

(Leans over, gives her a little
kiss on neck)

Speakin' of that movie man, did you know he done got in touch with Saunders about buyin' the show for Rexco Films?

Lulu

(Feigning surprise)

No! Did he?

Frank

Sho' did! Says it may take some time, because he's gotta go West and sell the comp'ny on it, but looks like he'll make 'em buy it-- an' he says he wants you to do it on the screen.

Lulu

Me? Oh, wouldn't that be gorgeous!

Frank

Well, I ain't countin' on it, but I'm sure hopin'! I don't spec' we'll get any Broadway run-- but if we could cash in on the movie rights--bless yo' li'l heht!

(Kisses her again, this time on the mouth)

Play's no good, anyhow. Make a swell movie, though--specially with you in it!

Lulu

You're pretty sweet!

Frank

An' maybe you ain't!

(Stretching out, begins kissing
her in earnest)

Lulu

(In a moment, puts her arms up around
him, pulls him close to her. Suddenly,
in the silence, a knock on the door,
peremptory)

Frank

(Jumps, leans on elbow)

What the devil?

Lulu

(As knock is repeated, frightened,
whispers)

Don't answer!

Voice

(After another knock, distinctly)

If Frank Tolliver's in there, get the hell out!

Lulu
(In a whispered shriek)
Don!

Frank
(Shaking her shoulders in a furious
whisper)
What kind of a game is this?

Don
(Loudly, from outside)
Get out--quick! Your wife's on her way over here, from the
station! Gladys-- understand?

Frank
(Jumps to middle of floor)
Good gawd a'mighty!

Lulu
(In a panic, sits shivering
on edge of bed)

Frank
(grabs hat and coat, starts toward door,
but when he gets there, stops, bellows
at Lulu)
Double-crossed me, huh? Why, you little--

Don
(outside, shakes door-knob, yells)
Will you open the door, you fool?

Lulu
(in a panic)
Don't!

Frank
(with a snort of rage)
No?
(flings open door)

Don
(as he rushes in)
Beat it!

Frank
(angrily and stubbornly)
Think you can bluff me that-a-way?

Don
Bluff? She called me up--asked me a lot of questions. I
caught the same train. She didn't see me. She's been having
you watched-- you damned sap!

Frank
Who you callin' a sap?
(comes toward him)

Don
(groans, yells at Lulu)
Get under the covers! Be asleep!

Lulu
(aghast and frightened, starts to get
out of bed)
Don! I-- I--

Don
(gives her a terrific push back in)
Shut up! Get in there!
(rushes over to bureau, flings bottles and
glasses in--all but a glass which is left on
little table by bed, tells Lulu instructions
as he works)
When she gets here, wait a second, and then tell her to come
right in.
(grabs "Do Not Disturb" sign, fixes lock open)

Frank
(who has been following Don menacingly around)
Ah don't believe none of it!

Don
Come on! Get out!
(grabs Frank's arm)

Frank
(shakes his arm furiously off. They are
near bath-room door)
Lemme me--
(there is a sharp knock at door)

Lulu
(stifles a scream)

Frank
(is petrified)

Don
(points at bathroom door, whispers)
Bathroom?

Lulu
(frantically nods "yes", seeing glass
on small table at same moment. Leaps
from bed, flies with it after them as)

Don
(with complete silence, hurls self at
Frank, drags him into bathroom, and as
Lulu puts glass in his hand, he closes
bathroom door noiselessly)

(knock repeated, louder and more peremptorily)

Lulu

(jumps into the bed, pulls covers up,
and at same moment says languidly and
sleepily)

Yes? Who is it?

Gladys' Voice

(in angry excitement, from outside)

Gladys Tolliver!

Lulu

(forcing arch surprise into her voice, which
trembles nevertheless)

Why-- for goodness sake! Come in-- the door's unlocked!

Gladys

(marches in, suppressing excitement
under a grim sweetness)

My dear-- I've done the stupidest thing! I thought I'd find
the company here--and they tell me downstairs they've all left
for Washington!

Lulu

(wide-eyed and innocent)

Why, yes! They must have gone quite a while ago.

Gladys

But you're not with them? What did you do--oversleep?

Lulu

Oh, no. I was tired, and I stayed on purpose. You see, Don's
coming down, and he can't get here till later, and we're going
over together.

Gladys

Really? Now, isn't that strange? You know, I 'phoned Don
just before I left, and he didn't say a word about coming. We
might have come down together.

(she is searching the room with her eyes)

Lulu

That's too bad. I guess he knew he couldn't make it.

Gladys

I'm so provoked at myself! I wanted especially to see Frank--
and I thought I could catch him.

Lulu

Oh, no. He must have left long before the troupe did. In a
car, with some Washington friend.

Gladys

Yes-- that's what he told me. I thought he might have changed
his plans.

(moves toward clothes closet door, which
is ajar)

Lulu
Well, I'm sure I don't know.

Gladys
(at clothes closet door, pries it open,
as if by accident, with her foot, sees
inside that it's empty, says)
Not much closet-room in this place, is there?
(fixes her eye on bathroom door, as
she comes around bed)

Lulu
(sees the lock, answers hastily)
No, that's the only one, and it's pretty small.
(frantically, to create a diversion)
Oh, my! Where are my slippers? Are they under the bed?

Gladys
(grinly, as she looks, while Lulu gives
a frantic look at the bathroom door)
No, dear. I don't see them.

Lulu
I s'pose I must have packed them.

Gladys
(her eye now fixed firmly on the bathroom door)
Well-- I think I'll have to fly, if I'm going to catch the
train. I'm so grimy! Do you mind if I just go in the bath,
and wash up?

Dear me! Lulu
(gulps, then desperately)
It's the funniest thing! I can't get in there. Something the
matter with the lock!

Gladys
(sure she's got it)
Really! Isn't that strange! Perhaps I can work it!
(dashes over, and tries to open bathroom
door. She cannot)

Lulu
There, you see?

Gladys
Why, I believe it's locked from the inside!

Lulu
How could it be?

Gladys
(grinly)
Yes, how could it be?
(rattles and shakes door, as if she would
break it down. Suddenly there is the noise
of the shower starting, and a howl from in-
side, and immediately some singing)

Lulu
(gasps)

Gladys
(in triumph)
The shower! Somebody is in there!

Lulu
(desperately)
No, no!

Gladys
(grinily)
Burglars!
(pounds on door)
Give yourself up! Come out!

Lulu
(with a little shriek)
Burglars!

Don
(singing in a loud voice) *"A role mio!"*
~~"Who's afraid of the big, bad wolf, he had wolf--"~~
(pops his head out door, still singing,
holding a towel up to his neck, head wet,
noise of shower loud, cloud of steam if
possible, Stops in mid-note, pretends to
be astounded by sight of Gladys, yells)
My God!
(jerks head back, slams door)

Gladys
(recoiling in confusion)
Don!
(to Lulu)
But what-- why--

Lulu
(hanging her head)
So now you know! You better go away!

Gladys
(flabbergasted)
But--only two hours ago-- I just talked to him in New York!
~~What--~~ *How on earth did he get down here?*
(shower off, noises inside)

He just got here.

Lulu
(glibly - almost weeping)
He was all hot and tired, and he wanted to take a shower-- and
I didn't want you to find out-- I mean, you might misunderstand--

Gladys
(defeated, but far from making head or
tail of it)
Misunderstand? Oh, yes-- I've always thought you and Don simply
play hide-and-seek together or read good books. *together.*

Lulu

(wails)
There! I knew it! You don't understand! We're just good friends!

Gladys

(bitterly)
Well, I'm so glad for your sake that everything is so simple and innocent. You must be careful, though, dear. It would be such a shame if anything happened to interfere with your career -- you're such a clever girl. I'm sure you're going a long way.

Lulu

(brokenly)
Oh, Mrs. Tolliver-- there's nobody I'd rather have say that than you!

Gladys

Oh, everybody agrees! Take Frank. He's crazy about your work.

Lulu

(brokenly)
I do hope he isn't being fooled!

Gladys

So do I. It would be so unfortunate if anything-- well, anything uncomplimentary or scandalous came out in the papers or anywhere-- just at this stage.

(with a bright smile)

You must be all sweetness and light, in the theater and out! Quite a responsibility!

Lulu

(as if shattered)
Yes! That's why I'm so upset about Don-- and what you think!

Gladys

Don't worry, dear. Your secret's safe with me.

(with a vicious, gay laugh)

Well, pardon my bursting in on you. And do be careful. Anyone but myself might misunderstand.

(with a falsely gay wave of the hand,
she goes out door)

Lulu

(sits shivering, collapses on bed, then eyes door, like a bird fascinated by a snake. Suddenly makes up her mind to escape if possible, stealthily starts to crawl out of bed toward her clothing, is actually out, when there is sound of commotion inside of the bathroom, and the door bursts open. Out pops Frank, dripping wet, propelled by Don, who holds Frank's coat and hat, hurls Frank into the middle of the room. She leaps back into bed, and hides head under covers)

Frank

(howls)
I'll git you! Hell's peckuh! I'm boiled alive!

Don

(grinly)
You better thank God there was a shower to hide in! ^{now} You're safe.
~~Now~~ get out!

Frank

(with a snarl)
What you goin' to do--blackmail me?

Don

I ought to smack your mug for that crack! ^{get this straight} I'm here to protect
her, ~~that's all!~~

(rushes to door, looks out, and as he comes
back to Frank, says)
All's clear. Take the back stairs. Beat it, before I break
your ~~neck~~ ^{leg}.

(throws Frank's hat and coat at him, and
grabs him, coat-collar and seat of pants,
in the manner of making him "walk turkey",
gives him the bum's rush out the door,
slams door after him, locks it. Then he
pulls himself together, walks with cold
anger over to the bed, where Lulu is
covering under the covers, says ~~in a cold~~ ^{with frozen}
~~voice~~ ^{fury}!

Well?

(no answer. Comes close)

Well? What have you got to say?

(roughly pulls her shoulder, pulling
her half upright)

Come on, sit up. I'm waiting.

Lulu

(in a heart-broken wail)

Oh, Don!

Don

(his voice cold with fury)

Is that all you can find to say? "Oh Don!"?

(looks at her in disgust)

Are you stupid enough to think I'll forgive you?

Lulu

(makes up her mind the best thing is
a complete penitent act of self-abase-
ment, wails)

No, no! You couldn't forgive me! Oh, what have I done? After
the way you've loved me,-- and taken care of me-- how could I
do such a thing to you!

Don

Yes, how could you is right! And with that gully-jumper-- that
wind-bag! How could you fall for that--that ape!

Lulu

(moans)

Fall for him! Did you think I fell for him-- when I love you so?

Don

Love me? Stop clowning!

Lulu

I love you, and nobody else! I wanted you to be proud of me, like you were always talking about-- I wanted to be something! And we tried every way to get the job, and nothing worked, and then he let me know what he wanted, and--

(with another moan, hides her face)

Don

(understanding at once)

That's what you did? Deliberately made a bargain?
(speechless with stupefaction)

Lulu

It wasn't any bargain--

Don

You were willing to sell yourself for a job!

Lulu

Don't call it that! It wouldn't have meant anything--how could it, when I didn't care anything about him? He--

Don

You mean to tell me you couldn't realize what a-- a cheap little tramp you were making of yourself?

Lulu

(in a climax of self-abasement)

Now I do. But I had my heart set on making good--for you! What did I care about a little thing like that, compared to making you happy--

Don

(staring at her in amazement)

My God, I really believe you don't know the difference!

Lulu

No, I see it all now! I've lost you, and I don't deserve any thing else! If you only hadn't found out, everything would have been all right!

(breaks into a fit of sobbing)

Don

(so completely astounded by this last bit that he can't look at her, walks away from her)

Lulu

(peeks at him, sobbing louder)

Don

(his back turned)

Of course, some of it's my fault. I haven't any strings on you--
except I was fool enough to believe you really loved me, and
that would keep you straight.

Lulu

I do love you! I always will!

(starts to get out of bed)

And now you better go away and forget me! I feel like killing
myself!

Don

Very funny! ~~You haven't any intention of doing it, so don't~~
~~bother to lie.~~ *now she tell the one about the two fishermen.*

Lulu

You're absolutely
(sob)
through with me?

Don

I am!

Lulu

Yes.... G-g-goodbye--
(sobs)
dearest!

Don

(very coldly)

Goodbye.

Lulu

All the
(sob)
happy times we had together!
(sob)
The way we loved each other--
(sob)
Now I learned my lesson, I'd never even look at anybody else
again--
(sob)

Don

(completely unmoved, says nothing)

Lulu

(turns brokenly away)

Good-bye.

Don

(grimly cheerful)

Good-bye.

(goes firmly toward door)

Lulu

(as he goes)

I hope.... some day.... you'll forgive me.

Don

(at door)
So do I.
(takes hat)

Lulu

(lets out most heartbreaking wail of all,
turning to him)
Oh, Don! How can I go on without you!

Don

(stares at her)
If I ever had any doubts about your being an actress, this ought to clear them up.

Lulu

(tragically addressing heavens)
Acting! He calls it acting, when my heart's breaking!

Don

(paying no attention to this)
If I could only figure out how much of it's real, and how much is phoney!

Lulu

(dreeps to bed, with tremendous reproach)
Phoney!

Don

Why do you go to all this trouble? What can you possibly need out of me any more?

Lulu

I'll be lost without you-- just lost!

Don

(grinly)
You'll get found, quickly enough. You'll always manage to be around where the finding's good.

Lulu

(with a last terrific effort)
Can't you have any pity? Can't you understand what I'm begging for? If you let me go, I'll just go down and down! Save me from myself! If I could only explain--
(gives him the imploring Magdalen look)

Don

Explain! I'm a sap to have listened to all this hokum you've already sprung. What the devil's the matter with me, anyhow?

Lulu

(thinking she sees an advantage)
It's because you know it isn't hokum-- it's the truth! Please, please won't you stay-- just a little while?

Don

Certainly not!

Lulu
(stretching her arms toward him, so that
she knows she looks her most seductive)
Just a little.... little while?

Don
(at his iciest)
That's a great act you've put on. Give it to Frankie for his
next show!
(jams hat on head, starts to unhook door)

Lulu
(with a last despairing thought)
But the contract I got with you--

Don
Sue me! Now get the hell out of my life, and stay out!
(flings door open, leaves, slamming door)

Lulu
(falls sobbing on bed a moment. Then, still
sobbing but less, goes to bureau, takes a
swallow of a drink ~~xxx~~ which she gets from
inside, and in a voice which shows her de-
fiance and anger at her defeat, says dis-
tinctly but not loudly)
Aw, nuts!

BLACK OUT
AND
QUICK CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE 1:

Six months later.

Backstage at the Wheel on Theater, just before the opening of the talkie version of "STATION JOY".

A small temporary dressing-room, about the center of a bare stage, with flats and bits of old scenery, etc., about. A door at each end of the dressing-room, one facing the opening in the wings which leads in front of the screen to the stage where later she must make her personal appearance. Cold edge of a screen-frame seen at extreme left, beyond a tormentor and velvet curtain, drawn back.

The little dressing-room is brilliantly lighted, and Terry, Saunders and Solomonson are in it. Terry is adjusting things in a business-like way at the dressing-table, Saunders is looking around the little room, Solomonson is peevish.

Solomonson

(to Terry)

What kind of a dressing-room do you call this? After what we give her at Rexco--

Terry

(drily)

We're not used to great big movie stars, that have to have special rooms fixed up back of the screen. She'll take it and like it.

Solomonson

Well-- never mind. Everything else is going like a greasy pig! We got a smash on our hands! What a premier! Dress suits, even!

Terry

(sailing)

Certainly it's a smash. You don't think I'd rent you my beautiful theater if I wasn't sure of it, do you? I hate talkies -- but money is money these days, no matter how thin you cut it.

Saunders

(down stage C.)

You lucky so-and-so! How'll you bet on six weeks run?

Solomonson

Make it twenty, and I'll take half the bet! The little girl's a natural!

Natural what? Just the same,
Terry

~~she is, all right.~~ She's learned plenty since she worked for me.

Saunders

Even learned something about acting.

Solomonson

One more like this, and she's right up to the top. I wonder, shouldn't I put her in a dramatic like Seventh Heaven?

Terry

(jovially)

Why don't you have a couple dozen of your writers do an original story, and just sort of keep Seventh Heaven in their minds?

Saunders

Hey! Don't grab my sale, Wheelan, I've got another lollipop I'm trying to put over on him-- great follow-up for the Joy-Girl. It's something new -- all about an orphan asylum.

(laughs)

Terry

(drily)

That's right. Stick to the sweet stuff while you can.

Solomonson

(with anxiety and seriousness)

I know what you mean, Wheelan. Let me tell you, she don't pull ~~stuff like that~~ any more. She's a changed girl.

funny ones

Saunders

(laughs grimly)

Ah? Well, that's not a bad idea.

Solomonson

(with great earnestness)

She's gotta be, and she knows it. She started some of that monkey-business with that fella Gaige, when she first got out to the Coast, and I put her on the spot like that!

(snaps his fingers)

I told her, "One piece of dirt about you, and I don't care what a hit you are -- out you go like a sky-rocket!"

Saunders

(laughs)

So -- just like that --

(snaps his fingers in jocular burlesque of Solomonson)

She changed her whole character.

Solomonson

Her character we can't help. But I told her, I said, "For the public you are going to be the Joy-Girl-- you are going to represent all the good things in America's girlhood. You look like it, you act like it on the screen. And by Golly, that's what you're going to be, or else!"

Terry

And she believes you mean it?

Solomonson

(in angry fervor)

Do I mean it! Listen. Already we got half a million dollars invested in her, and with the Joy-Girl build-up she's gonna make Rexco a couple million profits. But we're not going to sell the public any fake. The very second she don't behave herself like what she stands for-- out of pictures she goes!

Saunders

That's a tough assignment. Sure you won't have to soft-pedal a little slip now and then---

Solomonson

(almost purple with earnestness)

Not a slip! This is going to be on the complete up-and-up! Too many times these wild women and crazy guys made a sucker out of the picture-industry! Well, there ain't going to be any razz-berries in this one! As sure as I'm standing here, the minute she does one thing that ain't in line -- no protection, no pussy-fott, no soft-soap -- investment, profits and all, I throw it right out the window!

Saunders

(with a shrug)

Well -- anything for a novelty.

Solomonson

Believe me, the Joy-Girl is going to be the Joy-Girl -- every minute of the day and night, off as well as on. Thank God she's marryin' this society kid -- that'll fix it!

Saunders

(sarcastically)

Oh-Key, Reno!

Solomonson

(earnestly)

No, listen, Saunders, don't you think---

Mrs. Saunders

(Dashes in, followed by GLADYS and FRANK, all in full regalia. She anxiously talks as she enters)

Do come along! It's five-and-twenty to nine--

Saunders

(firmly)

Not a step till the News-reel's through. My last attack of Graham MacNamee kept me on the run three days.

Terry

(jocularly)

We were just saying that Miss Mary-Lulu Schaeffer-Manners seems to be definitely made.

Gladys

(venomously gushing)

Made is right! And I'll always claim that my husband is the man who made her!

Frank

Thanks, sweetie-pie. Ah can always count on you fo' a pretty bow-key.

Mrs. Saunders

And the British public will go screaming mad about her.

Solomonson

I was saying about her marrying this Mr. Steele -- right up to the top of the society-tree! What a break, huh?

Frank

Why, she'll probably tuhn into a reg'lah li'l housewife.

Terry

(chuckling)

Babies and everything.

Gladys

Come, come, Mr. Wheelan. Babies? Just because she's getting married, must she forget everything she knows?

Solomonson

Babies! Perfect!

(pulling out a little note-book)

I'll get Abe to fix up a clause, full pay for time out, and a nice little bonus, if and or babies!

(writes)

Terry

(looking at watch)

Well, I don't want to hurry you, but the picture's supposed to start in five minutes---

Mrs. Saunders

Yes, do let's pop off! I hate to fight through that dreadful scrum--

(pulls at Saunders)

Saunders
 (reluctantly starting toward door)
 The word is scam.
 (knock on door)

Lulu's Voice
 Yoo-hoo! It's Mary-Lou!
 (somebody nearest door opens it with a flourish)

Lulu
 (ravishing in an exquisite gown, makes an entrance, followed by a nice-looking boy. Lulu is breathless and radiant. Cora is in evening-clothes, looking well but business-like, ushers them in. She is sardonic during the whole scene. Busies herself with a list, checking it off, pays no attention to the others. Lulu says excitedly)
 Hello, everybody! Oh, isn't it the most exciting!

Mrs. Saunders
 What a ducky little dressing-room! Quite posh, actually!

Lulu
 (without enthusiasm)
 It'll have to do.
 (with exaggerated sweetness, to Cora)
 I thought you were going to get me another chair, dear.

Cora
 (controlling herself, says with the same vicious sweetness)
 All in good time, dear.
 (turns back, at which Gladys chuckles)

Lulu
 (pulling Steele forward)
 Sweetheart, do you know all these lovely people? Mr. and Mrs. Saunders, Mr. Steele - the man I'm going to marry - Mr. and Mrs. Tolliver.... Dear Mr. Wheelan, who gave me my first chance... and this is his theater... and--
 (impulsively kissing Solomonson's cheek)
 Darling Grandpa Solomonson. This is Mr. Steele, my fiancee.
 (acknowledgments, hand-shakes all around)

Solomonson
 Listen, now. You got all the arrangements straight? You and Mr. Steele in the box, and fifteen minutes before the end you slip out and come back here. It's only a couple of steps to the wings. You make your little speech, and take your bows, and then you run and pull me on. Look-- I got an idea. Would Mr. Steele-- I mean, if he'd step out with you--

Lulu
 No, indeed! Why, Mr. Solomonson! He wouldn't like it at all.

Solomonson

Well, maybe three of us would be too many. Come on, now, everybody. We oughta be in our seats.

(starts them toward door)

Terry

(as the Saunders go out)

Advance congratulations... Mary-Lou.

(grins at the name)

(LULU blows him a kiss, and goes out, holding Steele's hand)

Solomonson

(Happily, as he leaves, hand affectionately on Lulu's arm)

It's in the bag! You're great!

Frank

(as he exits)

Ya, suh! When aceses is concerned, ah nevah go wrong!

Cladys

(on threshold)

Virtue pays!-- That's what I always say. She's strictly business. The minute she gets away from work, she goes straight to bed!

(with a huge wink, she exits)

Terry

(chuckles)

Cora

(gives a mildly sardonic laugh,
looks up from her list)

And poor old me! Would you like my resignation tonight or tomorrow?

Terry

What's the matter now?

Cora

I've had that little flower on my neck all day, and you have the nerve to ask me what's the matter! If I'm to spend another minute trotting after Mary-lou, it'll cost you a full partnership! "Miss Martin-- this isn't right!"-- ask "Miss Martin, will you arrange that?" I'll tear her hair out!

Terry

Go ahead. Did you put those three seats aside for Herbert Swope?

Cora

(crossly)

Yes, yes, yes. Only I don't see why you don't make him pay for them. Oh, The Hollywood Reporter called---

Terry
They got 'em.

Cora
(folding list)
Well-- that seems to be all -- what about the---

Terry *(looks at door)*
~~(goes to door, opens it,~~ steps back,
crying)
The Forgotten Man himself!

Don
(all dressed up, and looking as care-free
and brisk as when he first appeared in
Act 1, appears, grinning, says, spreading
his arms like an acrobat)
Tyah-dah!

Cora
(rushes at him, throws arms around him,
hugging him)
Don! Darling!
(at which he looks quite pleased)

Terry
How did you get in here?

Don
(at L.)
Oh-- told the doorman I was your new partner.

Terry
(grinning grinaly)
I'll fire him tomorrow. How come you didn't run into your
ex-passion?

Don
(cheerfully)
I did. I mean, I hid behind the fire-escape, and watched her
"sweep in". Golly, she looks expensive these days!

Cora
(C.)
And you look like a new man. How long have you been back?

Don
I am a new man. Three days.

Cora
All that time? And didn't look us up till now? After a whole
year? That's horrid! If you only knew how we've worried about
you!

Terry
(at R.C.)
Speak for yourself. I was only worried he'd turn up again.
Where in the devil have you been?

Don
Oh-- wandering around Europe. Did some fair painting and a lot of refined drinking--

Terry
And plenty of playing around. Get yourself into a new mess in place of the old one?

Don
Not me! I'm cured for keeps! The beating I took from that little honey was enough. Forever more, my motto is the four "F's"-- find 'em, fondle 'em, fool 'em and forget 'em!

Terry
~~Never mind~~ Never mind--you're through with women, for good?

Don
Through with entangling alliances.

Cora
(hugging him with one arm)
Indeed? We'll see about that! Wait till I get to work on you!

Don
(giving her a slight squeeze, and grinning)
I can hardly wait.

Terry
(appraisingly)
I guess the old pre-war Don's back, all right. Pretty heroic treatment, though. Did you have to sneak off like a kicked pup?

Don
(cheerfully)
I did. How could I face people? I was the prize damned fool of New York--- I knew it, and everybody else knew it. Well-- I had to go away and get sane. Now I can look anybody in the eye, and say, "All right, I made a holy jackass of myself, so what?"

Cora
(happily, arm still about him)
So now you're back, and I've got you in my clutches.

Terry
What made you take it so hard? Everybody makes a sucker of himself some time or other.

Don
Not like I did! Could you believe I'd go right ahead, even after the lesson I had? But I walked right in, with my eyes wide open. She was in my blood, like a disease, that's all. I suppose if she hadn't run off with that movie guy, I'd still be the blue-ribbon goof of goofs. I wish I could find him, I'd like to kiss him.

Terry
He needs consolation. Only lasted long enough to get the papers signed. He received the air almost before you could say "contract". She's yurrry, yurrry respectable these days, grabbed herself a load of dough and society.

Don
(absolutely unperturbed)
Oh, sure. That young Steele Winchell says is "blazing" about her?

Cora
(gaily malicious)
Wedding-bells! And he's like you-- he hasn't enough sense to pound sand in a rat-hole, either.

Terry
She's a good picker - the dirty little gold-digger!

Don
(with complete impersonal indifference and good humor)
Oh, give her a break. She does the best she can. Anybody sap enough to let himself get hurt has no right to squawk. I got what was coming to me, and that's that. Life's a tough racket. It's dog eat dog, or
(grinning)
vice versa.

Cora
He is cured! Why, he's practically human!

Don
(complacently)
Yep. Very practically.

Cora
And here's where I get my chance at you at last! I'm going to drag you to the altar, if I have to chloroform you!

Terry
God, has that got to start again?

Cora
It never stopped! He's a marked man, and the sooner he says "yes", the more trouble it will save!

Terry
(pretending to look around)
Now, where did I put that strait-jacket?

Don
Let her rave. It doesn't do any harm.

Terry
(to Cora)
Did it occur to you the picture's started, and we've got business to attend to? Lay off this mush, and snap into it!

Cora
Tend to your own knitting. I'll tend to mine.

Terry
(groans)
Thanks.
(to Don)
Come around again next year, will you, old man?
(opens door)

Don
Hey! Wait, how about a dust for the entertainment?

Terry
Not from me. If ~~she~~ ^{she} wants to take you, that's her funeral.
(exits, banging door)

Cora
(a little dubiously)
You don't really want to see this picture, do you?

Don
Certainly I do! That's one of the reasons I galloped over here. You can find me a place in a corner, and-- tell you what! You sit on my lap, so nobody can see me. We'll give a fine Bronx cheer every time Lulu goes into a big sweet scene. And I'll laugh in all the wrong places.

Cora
(looking at him steadily)
I wonder.

Don
(with a facetious pretence of fretfulness)
I thought you were crazy for me. Oh, well-- if you don't want my company--

Cora
(very seriously)
Don, I meant every word I said. You know that, don't you?

Don
(refusing to get serious)
Do I?
(grins)

Cora
Dearest, I think you're crazy, and I love you, and I'll marry you, and take care of you, and nag you, and make you paint great things, and you'll be happy.

Don
(gives her a hug, smiling)
I'll take the matter under consideration, Miss Martin.

Cora

(happily)

You haven't a chance of escaping. Come on. You can look at
Lulu till your eyes pop out. I'm not afraid. I honestly think
you've got some sense at last. Anyhow, I won't let you out of
my sight, and if I catch you approving of her just once-- I'll
wring your neck!

Don

You needn't worry about that. Let's go.
(he laughs. They start out, both
laughing, toward door, as)

BLACK OUT

ACT THREE

Scene II

The same, an hour and a half later.

Lulu is near looking-glass, excitedly putting final touches to her makeup and appearance, while Freddie Taylor, a reporter, and Richard Wenn, a movie critic, talk to her. Steele sits on the dressing-table, proudly drinks it all in!

Freddie

(Enthusiastically)
And what do you think of this for a title, Miss Manners ---
"Miss Question-Mark to America's Joy-girl in one Year"

Wenn

(Sarcastically)
Not long enough. Why not make it, "Miss Question-Mark to
America's Joy-Girl in One Year I Love You"?

Lulu

(Sweetly approving)
Don't be naughty, Mr. Wenn.
(To Freddie)
It's just perfect!

Freddie

(Turning his back on Wenn, addressing Steele)
You know I discovered her, Mr. Steele.

Wenn

(In burlesque astonishment)
You did? Well, why dont you let somebody know? You only
announced it four times this week.

Freddie

Yeah? Well, when are you going to discover her? I suppose be-
fore you give her a tumble, she's got to show in the Europa and
change her name to Sophie Somonovitch!

Lulu

(Trying to make peace)
Please, now, Mr. Taylor -- mustn't use such language!

Wenn

(To Lulu)
Pay no attention to him, Miss Manners. I appreciate your art!
You're the blazing new star of the new order---the return to the
old order! Pre-jazz sincerity and sweetness, the timeless values!

Freddie

(Groans)

So that's your new gag, is it?

(To Steele)

Let's pretend there's no such thing as a movie-critic.

Lulu

(Peace-making)

Sssssh!

Wenn

(Off on his hobby, to Lulu)

The era of Puritan virtues has come back! The jazz-age is dead and buried! You're the incarnation of the new age---the age of decency and sweetness and---

Freddie

Why don't you wait till Sunday?

Lulu

Don't interrupt! I think he's wonderful!

Wenn

(His voice rising to peroration)

Out with the jazz-rhythm! In with the lilting rhythm of gentleness and joy!

(Takes an attitude)

Freddie

Remind me to forget to read your stuff any more.

Wenn

(At last annoyed, turns on him)

Why don't you beat it, you dumb penny-a-liner?

Freddie

How would you like a good smack in the nose?

Steele

(As Lulu puts on an alarmed, timid expression)

Er---uh---look, gentlemen. Don't forget Miss Manners has to make a speech in a few minutes. I don't like to butt in, but---

Freddie

(Immediately apologetic)

Why, sure!

(To Wenn) *Safe*

Come on, ~~shakeupere~~. Let's be nice.

(Pulls him toward exit)

Thanks a lot for the story. Plenty more to come.

(Has dragged Wenn to door, opens it, goes out, pulling Wenn)

Wenn

(As he is being dragged out)

I'd like another interview tomorrow -- without any hacks around

Lulu
Of course! Call me at the Ambassador! And thank you both
just loads!

Wenn
(Outside, door to dressing room shut, furiously to
Freddie)
Now listen, you feeble-minded stoogè----

Freddie
(In perfect good-humor, putting arm through Wenn's)
Forget it, stupid. Come on over to Tony's, and I'll buy you
a drink.
(Pulls the muttering Wenn off-stage)

Lulu
(Meanwhile, has turned to Steele, and holding both his
hands, gazes fondly at him, says happily)
At last! Oh, darling!
(Lifts face to his)
Kiss?

(Steele takes her into his arms, kisses
her rapturously, she is too wise to make
it sexy, she is just the sweet girl in
love. After kiss, stands on tiptoes, flings
arms out joyously)

Oh...it's all so wonderful and lovely! I'm so happy! I feel
as if I could fly!

Steele
(Puts arms around her, with a laugh)
Don't try it, will you?

Lulu
I believe I could! Tonight, anyway! Right out of here, 'way,
'way out, over the buildings into the moonlight, up to a star!
You fly with me!

Steele
(With a happy laugh, holding her close, in a hesitant
voice)
Why....I don't need to...haven't I got my star right here?

Lulu
Silly! Sweet!
(She laughs tenderly. They are silent a few moments.
Suddenly, in a rapturous low voice)
The moon shines bright. In such a night as this,
When the sweet wind did gently kiss the trees,
And they did make no noise, in such a night..

Steele
(Stares in admiration, says with wondering delight)
Why...that's Shakespeare, isn't it? Gee, darling...I
didn't know---

Steele cont'd.

didn't know....

Lulu

(quickly and seriously)
Well, it's a secret. Long time ago when I was starting in acting, I figured out I ought to train my voice learning beautiful little pieces like that. So I learned quite a lot.

Steele

Dearest! Why, I'm finding out more about you every day!
(Takes her hand, kisses the back of it)

Lulu

Don't think I'm any highbrow -- honest I'm not! I just can't help liking beautiful things.

(Quotes again)

"How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!"

(Holds the mood for a moment. Then, with a sudden giggle)
Only it's not a bank -- the bank's around the corner!

(Steele, hugs her close)

Isn't it darling of Mr. Colomanson to fix it so we can get off to France for a little while? He's just like a father to me. Do you like him?

Steele

Why -- I just met him. I guess so.

Lulu

He's a dear. Oh, I'm so excited about France -- will you show me all the sights? Paris and everything?

Steele

We'll have to get down to Italy for a week, and visit my friend Luigi.

Lulu

Who?

Steele

Count Sporcasa. He's coming to the party tonight. He's crazy to meet you.

Lulu

Count? One of those fake.....

Steele

Fake nothing. His family goes back to the Caesars...and he isn't even broke.

Lulu

(With a trace of excitement)
Oh --- a real count? Where did he see me?

Steele

He saw the private showing, and he's been talking about you ever since.

(Laughs)

He says you're the best-looking girl he ever saw.

Lulu

(More excited)

Yeah? I s'pose he's some greasy macaroni-snatcher.

Steele

(Laughs again)

Think so? He knows plenty about women's looks. They chase him enough. He's called the Italian Menace.

Lulu

(Now really excited)

Honestly? But what does the Countess think about that?

Steele

Countess? Oh, he isn't married.

Lulu

And he's nice? What's the matter with him?

Steele

Nothing that I know of. He's cagey.

Lulu

Oh, he is, is he? Bring him around.

Steele

Hey! You're engaged to me, don't forget.

Lulu

(Hugging him - but her face, visible over his shoulder, looks acquisitive)

You funny thing---as if I didn't remember it every minute!

Solomonson

(who has darted from the wings, pounds on door)

Mary-lou! Are you decent?

Lulu

Oh, Mr. Solomonson---come in!

Solomonson

(Bustles in)

Oh, you're all ready. That's fine. Now look, if Mr. Steele don't mind, you should be alone. It's only five minutes now, and you gotta compose yourself.

Steele

Why, of course.

(Leans, kisses her)

Knock 'em cold, dearest.

(To Solomonson)

May I stand on the side and listen?

Solomonson
 Sure, of course, back of me. I'll show you.

Lulu

(To Steele)
 Be sure to bring the Count around. See you later, dear.

Solomonson

(As he leaves)
 You're all set. It's a wow! Now, do your stuff -- you know the act. Only the few words, and after the fourth bow, you come and drag me on.

Lulu

Sure.

Solomonson

All right. Just set there and compose yourself.
 (Dashes out, joins Steele in wings. They talk animatedly and move out of sight)

(Lulu sits at dressing-table, humming, touching up make-up)

(Don comes silently from other side, sneaks to dressing-room door, enters it silently, undetected by Lulu until door clicks)

Lulu

(Looks up, sees him, is astonished, for a second is dismayed, gasps)
 You!...What....
 (Immediately controls self, decides to be haughty and snippy, says in a very cold voice)
 How'd you get in here anyhow?

Don

(Very much at ease, grinning mockingly)
 Oh, I just pulled a fast one on the doorman. Aren't you happy to see me, baby?

Lulu

(Equally sure of herself, sarcastically)
 Yes. It's a wonderful treat. Thanks a lot. ~~Slam the~~ ^{Slam the} door as you go out.

Don

(Grinning broadly)
 Now, is that any way to welcome your long-lost love?

Lulu

(With a sarcastic burlesque of cordiality)
 Now, that's right. So glad to have seen you. What's your hurry?

Don

(Taking up the cue -- but not the way she wishes)
 Hurry? Why, I've got all the time in the world! You didn't think I'd let your big triumph go by without congratulating you, did you? Would that be nice?

Don cont'd.
 (Makes a deep, exaggerated bow)
 My humble compliments. Not exactly what I had in mind for you,
 but a colossal success. You're there, Lulu!

Lulu
 (Beginning to be greatly annoyed, very sarcastically)
 No kidding!

Don
 (Ignoring this)
 Yes, you certainly put it over! The whole bag of tricks!
 (Imitating her, looking pure)
 Expression number seven -- "purity".
 (For the next, he does "faith" with a noble expression,
 "hope" with eyes rolled upward, "charity" with a
 Durante Hot-cha, only using the word "charity" for the
 word "hot-cha")
 Numbers nine, ten and eleven - faith, hope and ~~charity~~ *hot-cha!*
hot-cha!

Lulu
 (Really angry)
 Gee, you're a comic! Maybe I could get you a test *for the movies*

Don
 (With false apology)
 Beg your pardon. Guess I'm wrong about charity. You're no
 fool. You don't give something for nothing these days, do you,
 baby?

Lulu
 (Now really furious, gives him a real one)
 Why, how you talk! I'm very nice to pan-handlers. ~~With five dollars~~
~~be enough?~~ *How much do you want?*

Don
 You're not getting sore, are you, baby? I'm complimenting you.
 You're smart nowadays---and I think it's great! I understand
 you -- I know you from A to Z --- and still I approve of you!
 What a work of art'. My masterpiece!

Lulu
 (Quite nastily)
 Yours!
 (Laughs shrilly)
 Yours! I got big-timers hanging around me -- millionaires,
 and ---and counts!

Don
 (Delighted)
 I know it! You're up among 'em! When I think of what you were
 when I picked you up -- and the swell dish you are now! I
 certainly had the vision, didn't I! Am I proud of you! But
 I'm just a little disappointed. You don't seem very grateful
 baby.

Lulu

(Furious)
Who're you calling baby? You cheap has-been!

Don

(Grinning; advancing toward her)
Don't I get some little token of gratitude? One little kiss?

Lulu

(Panicly, but defiant)
If you lay a hand on me...

Don

Not even a hand? Why, baby! One thing more, and we're quits!
I've been saving this up a whole year -- and God, how I'm
going to enjoy it!
(Grabs her)

(Off-Stage applause)

Lulu

(Struggles, kicks, tries to scream)
You -- you -- hel---
(Yell is smothered, as he claps hand over her mouth)

Don

(With a wrestler's grip, as he sits on a chair, throws
her over his knee, yanks her dress up, with all his
might spansks her, with loud, clapping blows, laughing
wildly. Yells)
Is that fun! Paid in full!
(throws her off lap onto floor)
Now get up and be America's Joy-girl!
(Gets up, guffawing in triumph)

Lulu

(Lies looking at him, for a moment, getting her strength
back. Picks herself up, her face glorified, rushes
at him, crying)

Darling!

(Throws herself on the neck of the astounded Don)
Darling! My Man!!!

(Don, from astonishment, goes into liking
of the kiss. It is one of their ancient ones,
multiplied by ten)

Solomonsen

(Comes dashing across from wings, calling)
Mary-lou!

(Comes in, sees kiss)
Hey! What the Hell!

(Rushes at them)
Hey, come on, come on! Our public is waiting!

APPLAUSE OFFSTAGE

Cora
 (who has rushed after Solomonson, sees tableau, cries)

Don!

Solomonson
 (Drags Lulu across, out of dressing-room, toward curtain)

Lulu
 (Still sobbing, is dragged, but at door of dressing-room pulls Solomonson back, willy-nilly)

Don
 (Meanwhile, looks at Cora, shrugs shoulders in a large gesture, says, with the tone of one who regrets it but cannot help it)

Hooked again!

Lulu
 (Grabs Don's hand, as she is dragged out again to curtain, pulls him along. She steps to the curtain opening, seen by imaginary audience -- lets go Don's hand -- he takes stand next her, unseen by imaginary audience. As the roar of applause swells and stops suddenly to silence, she sobs)

Dear, dear public -- this is the happiest moment of my life!
 (and rubs her backside with her left hand)

VERY FAST CURTAIN