
THREE-MINUTE BLACKOUTS

A COLLECTION OF TWENTY-FIVE
BLACKOUTS

By

RICHARD DRUMMOND



PUBLISHED BY

THE NORTHWESTERN PRESS

2200 Park Avenue,

Minneapolis,

Minnesota

793.1 K19th

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Three-minute Black-
outs.

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A Collection of Twenty-five Blackouts

By

RICHARD DRUMMOND

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Introduction

A "blackout" is a funny little creature with a stinger in its tail. In other words, a blackout is a very short, pithy skit that ends as abruptly as it began, the high spot being in the last one or two lines. It is much shorter than the ordinary one-act playlet, but longer than the dramatized joke.

The blackout is growing in popularity both on the professional and amateur stage, as well as a form of short entertainment in the parlor. Used as a filler for between the acts on the stage, or as an ice-breaker at a house party it never fails to please if properly presented. Many rules of play technique are sacrificed in the construction of the blackout. In the three-act play and most of the one-acters there is some form of introduction wherein the audience is informed of what has taken place previous to the opening of the play, and to acquaint them with the facts and circumstances. Then there must be a plot that needs developing. Next, there must be a climax, which is the highest point of interest. This is followed by the unraveling of the tangles, and the solving of certain problems. In the blackout there is a minimum of introduction and the play ends at the climax. There is no unraveling or solving. Anything that might have happened after the climax is reached is left to the imagination of the audience. The longer play may be likened to a photograph, where all the details are set forth, while the blackout is like an artist's drawing—the more important things are set forth, and the details are left for the spectator to inject.

A blackout is called a blackout because the stage lights are extinguished when the act ends instead of lowering a curtain on the scene. To lower a curtain, which is necessarily a slow-moving means of blotting the scene, on an act that starts and stops so quickly would ruin the effect.

The stage or room is in darkness. The player or players take their places; the lights are switched on, and the play is immediately in progress. Simultaneously with the last word to be spoken, or the very last bit of business, the lights are switched off, and are not turned on again until the players have left the stage, or rearranged themselves for the subsequent blackout. The blackout may be played as a single feature, or a group of them may be played one after the other.

In the following blackouts it will be noted that the costuming is made as simple and easy as possible. Very little scenery is necessary. Most of the acts call for a simple living room setting. For this reason they may be presented anywhere, any time. The number of players in the casts are small and the properties very simple.

When in doubt, try a blackout.

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No Visitors Allowed

THE CAST

INEZ.....
MARJ..... } two high school seniors
THE NURSE.....at the hospital

The girls are typical high school girls about seventeen or eighteen years old. The nurse is a pleasant woman of forty-five. She wears the costume of a graduate nurse.

* * *

SCENE: *Simple setting to represent the waiting room of a hospital. A small stand and a wicker settee will suffice. May be staged without furniture.*

STAGE TOTALLY DARK
STAGE LIGHTS ON

(INEZ and MARJ are standing near Center, looking about rather foolishly as if they hardly knew what to do.)

INEZ (*Giggles.*) Now that we're here, Marj, what in the world are we going to do?

MARJ. Why, Inez, you talk as if you had never been in a hospital before.

INEZ. I never have been.

MARJ. Neither have I. (*They giggle.*) What do we do? Just sit down until somebody comes?

INEZ. Until somebody comes and hauls us off to the operating room.

MARJ. I certainly feel foolish standing here.

INEZ. We'd feel just as foolish sitting down. I'm just about ready to run.

MARJ. I'm going to ask somebody.

INEZ. Ask them what? If we can see Vincent?

MARJ. Of course. Who else did we come here to see? I hope he isn't hurt badly.

INEZ. You heard what they said at the game when they carried him off the field. He had a broken leg.

MARJ. Oh, but wasn't it wonderful?

INEZ. The broken leg?

MARJ. No, no. The way Vincent carried that ball for two touchdowns.

INEZ. If he hadn't had the accident he would have made another touchdown. He runs like a deer.

MARJ. He is a deer. Well, now that we're here to see him, I'm not so sure that we should go in.

INEZ. What?

MARJ. Do you think we should? He might not like it.

INEZ. Oh, he likes me, Marj. I know he does, because he smiled at me in class Wednesday. And what a smile that boy has! When he smiled at me I was headed straight for heaven.

MARJ. Well, come back to earth. We're in a hospital. Say, maybe they won't let us go in where he is.

INEZ. I don't see why not, Marj. A broken leg isn't so serious.

MARJ. Not nearly as serious as a broken heart, and if you fall any harder for him that's what you'll have.

INEZ. Oh, is that so? Well, you've done a lot of talking about him yourself. I wonder who we're supposed to ask.

MARJ. One of the nurses, ninny.

INEZ. But where are they? I haven't seen a nurse yet.

MARJ. This might be their day off.

INEZ. Nurses are never off, Marj. They work twenty-four hours a day—sometimes more.

MARJ. If we do go in Vincent's room, what will we say? What excuse will we offer for coming? He doesn't know us except that we are in his classes. I'll bet he doesn't even know our names.

INEZ. I don't care. He's just about the handsomest . . .

MARJ. Sh! (*Nods to offstage.*) Somebody's coming out of that room there.

INEZ (*In a loud whisper.*) It's a nurse. (*Enter NURSE. She is about to pass the girls when they stop her.*)

INEZ. Are you—er—are you the head nurse?

NURSE (*Stops and smiles pleasantly.*) No, I am not.

INEZ (*At a loss for words.*) Oh! I—we—we thought you were the head nurse.

NURSE. I'm a special nurse at present. Years ago I happened to be head nurse in this hospital. Now I am on special duty.

INEZ. Oh.

NURSE. Was there something or someone . . . ?

MARJ. I'd like—that is, we would like to see someone.

INEZ. We'd like to see Vincent—er—Mr. Layman.

NURSE. I'm sorry, girls, but the doctor left orders that no one except those of the immediate family should go in Mr. Layman's room. He is running a temperature.

INEZ. So am I—I mean, that's too bad.

MARJ. Why—er—I'm his sister.

INEZ (*Quickly.*) So am I. We're both his sisters.

NURSE. You really are his sisters?

INEZ (*Nods head decidedly.*) Oh, yes, we're his sisters, aren't we, Marj?

MARJ. Oh, yes, indeed.

NURSE. Neither one of you girls resemble him in any way whatever.

INEZ. That's what everybody says, but just the same, we're his sisters.

NURSE. That's strange. I wonder why I've never met you girls before.

MARJ (*Gulps.*) Then—then you've known Vincent a long time?

NURSE. Ever since he was born. You see, girls, I'm Vincent's mother. (*Girls collapse.*)

LIGHTS OUT

What Price Roommate?

CHARACTERS

FRED..... }
JOE..... } roommates
BART..... }
BART.....a friend

COSTUMES AND TYPES

All three boys are of college age. Joe is wearing a bathrobe, or dressing gown, and slippers. Fred is wearing a new suit and raincoat. Bart also wears a raincoat.

* * *

SCENE: *A room very simply set as one might find in a dormitory. Beds are not essential.*

STAGE DARK LIGHTS ON

(JOE, in bathrobe, is pacing angrily back and forth.
Enter BART.)

BART. Heigh ho, Caesar!

JOE. Hello, Bart. You didn't see it on the way in, did you?

BART. Be more explicit, brother. What did I see if I saw it?

JOE. My raincoat.

BART. What are you going to do, wear it to bed?

JOE. I'm not going to bed. I just got up. What time is it?

BART. One-thirty. Nearly time for the game — that is if you're interested.

JOE. If I'm interested! I've been interested for half an hour in the whereabouts of my raincoat. I can't go to a game on a day like this without a raincoat.

BART. Going to wear it over the bathrobe?

JOE. Who said anything about wearing it over a bathrobe? As soon as I got out of bed I missed my raincoat, and I've been looking for it ever since.

BART. Where's your honorable roommate?

JOE (*Stops abruptly his pacing.*) That's where my raincoat is. I'll bet a punctured peanut Fred's swiped my raincoat. If he has, I'll wring his neck till it sounds like Big Ben. Come to think of it, he lost his raincoat last week.

BART. Well, don't get sore about it, Joe. You wouldn't expect the poor kid to go to the game without a raincoat, would you?

JOE. But how—how the heck am I expected to go without one?

BART. As long as you haven't dressed yet, it would pay you to go back to bed and forget it.

JOE. You're forgetting that I'm assistant cheer leader.

BART. Boy, you don't possess enough cheer right now to be third assistant.

JOE. Well, you wouldn't be the picture of joy and happiness if somebody swiped your raincoat, would you?

BART. Mebbe not. I've had this raincoat for eight years.

JOE. Eight years? That coat?

BART. This coat.

JOE. It certainly doesn't look like you've had it eight years. How do you keep it looking so new?

BART. That's easy. I've had it cleaned four times and last week I exchanged it in a restaurant for a newer one. Come on, if you're going to the game.

JOE. I can't go without a raincoat, can I?

BART. Slip on your clothes and wear the blanket. It looks like a horse blanket anyway.

JOE. You have a lot o' sympathy for a guy in distress! I hope somebody steals your suspenders on prom night.

BART. The only thing I can suggest is, go without your raincoat.

JOE. But you don't understand, Bart. Two of my suits are at the cleaners, and the only suit I have for the game is a brand new one. I just got it yesterday.

BART. That's bad. Well, get dressed. By that time Fred might be back.

JOE. Back, me eye! That bird's at the game now laughing up my sleeve. If I get my hands on him I'll . . . (*Enter FRED, wearing a raincoat that is wet.*)

FRED. Baby, and is it raining!

JOE. Say, you big prune, who said you could wear my raincoat?

FRED. Nobody.

JOE. Then what business have you wearing it?

FRED. Gee, Joe, I didn't think you'd want me to get your new suit all wet. (*Throws back the raincoat, displaying a new suit. JOE sinks to the chair in a faint.*)

LIGHTS OUT

Blackmail

CHARACTERS

JOHN MARSHALTON.....in trouble
BOB.....his friend
BETTYJohn's wife

All are about twenty-five and neatly dressed.

* * *

SCENE: *Living room. A davenport half down Right under which is a package containing a lady's fur coat. Telephone.*

LIGHTS OUT ON STAGE

STAGE LIGHTS ON

(JOHN is seated with his head in his hands, looking disconsolately at floor. BOB is seated near.)

BOB. Snap out of it, John. Everything will come out all right.

JOHN. Oh, yeah? (*Holds out a letter.*) With that hanging over my head? Bob, I'm in for it.

BOB. But she said she'd not say anything if you got her a new fur coat, didn't she?

JOHN. But how do I know she'll keep her word? Anybody that would play a dirty trick like that is capable of doing anything. Bob, sometimes I think I'm a fool. And I thought I was playing a gentleman's role when I asked her to ride.

BOB. Times have changed, John. It certainly doesn't

pay any more to pick up strangers and give them a lift. If they don't biff you on the head, they blackmail you.

JOHN. Are you telling me? She was standing way out at the end of Emery Street waiting for a bus to town, and you know the buses come into town only three times daily. I thought as long as I was driving into town I might as well offer her a ride. And then to have her . . .

BOB. Who is it she says she can call as a witness that you had your arm around her?

JOHN. That guy that runs a filling station on Green and Marion Streets.

BOB. Why didn't you see him about it?

JOHN. I did go there, but he's gone for a day or two.

BOB. Is he a buddy of her's?

JOHN. He must be if he'll stand up and say that I had my arm about her when I didn't. Anyway, she's getting a fur coat out of it, and I'm out two hundred dollars.

BOB. It's a tight place, John, I realize that, but I believe I'd hesitate about spending two hundred as hush money.

JOHN. You would if you were up against it as I am, Bob. With that woman lying, and a witness to back her up, what would my wife think? And if it's a ring of crooks, she may have a dozen other witnesses. It resolves itself into one thing, Bub: buy that she-devil a fur coat or have my home broken up. Maybe I'd better hide that coat before the wife pops in.

BOB. Where is she now?

JOHN. Grocery shopping.

BOB. And where is the coat?

JOHN. Under the davenport.

BOB. And if the two should meet there'd be trouble.

JOHN. That's my idea exactly. I have to get rid of that coat.

BOB. What's this woman's name?

JOHN (*Referring to the letter.*) Lucille Bender.

BOB. Address?

JOHN. 1336 Fairmont, second floor front.

BOB. Perhaps they're both fictitious.

JOHN. I don't think so. She gave me that address so I'd know where to send the coat.

BOB. Then why didn't you send it and get it out of the way?

JOHN. I'm not such a fool as that, Bob. I'm going to deliver that coat myself and not leave until she signs a confession that she lies if she says I had my arm about her in the car.

BOB (*Stands.*) Well, John, here's hoping you get the breaks. I have to beat it. I hope everything turns out all right, and if I can be of any help, call on me.

JOHN. Thanks, Bob, but this looks like a one-man job.

BOB. Or a one-woman job. Well, so long. (*Goes Right.*)

JOHN. So long. (*Pockets the letter. Bob exits Right.*) What a mess! (*Sits moodily for a moment, then leaps to his feet when he hears someone coming off Right.*) That coat! (*Quickly snatches it from beneath the davenport and is about to exit off Left when BETTY enters Right, dressed for the street. Has a few packages that she deposits later on the table.*)

BETTY (*Laughs.*) Don't run away, John, I'm harmless.

JOHN (*Stops and looks rather sheepish.*) Oh, yes. Hello, Betty.

BETTY. My goodness, you look awfully guilty about something.

JOHN. Guilty? (*Forces laugh.*) Why should I be guilty? I was just going to my room with—with . . .

BETTY. What's in the package?

JOHN. Oh, just some underwear, Betty. I'll be right back.

BETTY. Aren't you going to let me see it? I nearly bought you some while I was out. Let me see it.

JOHN. Aw, Betty, it's just common everyday underwear. (*Starts Left.*)

BETTY (*Stepping towards him.*) I just wanted to look at it. I won't bite it.

JOHN. Listen, Betty, underwear is underwear, isn't it?

BETTY (*Steps to him.*) I'm interested, that's all. (*Reaches for the package.*)

JOHN (*Steps away.*) Aw, Betty, please.

BETTY. John Marshalton, anyone would think you had a reason for not letting me see it!

JOHN (*Quickly.*) Oh, no!

BETTY (*Laughs.*) Fraidy cat! Fraidy cat! (*Before he realizes she has snatched the package from him.*)

JOHN (*Desperately.*) Betty! Give that to me! Do you hear? Don't you dare open that!

BETTY. Oh! Now I *do* want to see it. (*Starts to tear the paper from the box.*)

JOHN (*Makes an unsuccessful grab at the package.*) For Pete's sake, Betty, give me . . .

BETTY (*Takes the fur coat from the box and gasps.*) John! (*JOHN gulps.*) John Marshalton! Is—is . . . ? (*Throws her arms about his neck.*) Oh, John, you darling! (*JOHN gulps.*) Oh, you dear, dear man! This is one time you haven't forgotten my birthday. (*Kisses him.*) I'll be right back, dear, and you'll think I'm a queen. Ta, ta! (*Prances off Left.*)

JOHN (*Drops limply onto the davenport.*) What a mess! What a mess! (*Telephone rings. He rises slowly and goes to the phone. He removes the receiver. To phone.*) Hello! . . . (*Registers interest.*) Huh? (*Becomes excited.*) Bob! what did you say? . . . What? . . . Say that again, Bob! . . . You just found out that Lucille Bender was pinched for shoplifting and sentenced? . . . For six months? Excuse me while I dance. (*Replaces the receiver and dances about.*) Enter BETTY, wearing the fur coat.)

BETTY. How happy it must make you feel, dear, to give me this.

JOHN. O—oh, yes, dear, it does. I'm extremely happy. More than I can ever tell.

BETTY. And, John . . .

JOHN. Yes?

BETTY. What animal is this fur from?

JOHN. A jackass.

LIGHTS OUT

Cats Is Cats

THE CAST

MONTY MORSE.....who goes berserk
NORMA.....his wife
DOCTOR LAYMAN.....who calls

CHARACTERISTICS

Monty, about thirty, is nicely dressed, but his hair is tousled, and he is very nervous and upset. Norma, about twenty-five, a pretty woman in neat house dress, is somewhat bewildered by Monty's condition. Doctor Layman is a typical doctor with a soothing voice.

* * *

SCENE: *Living room.*

STAGE IS DARK

LIGHTS ON

(MONTY is standing, staring at the floor, but in every way conveying to the audience that he is very nervous. NORMA is at the phone, but has her eyes on MONTY, rather anxiously watching him.)

NORMA (*To the telephone.*) All right. Good-bye. (*Returns the receiver and goes to MONTY.*) And now, dear . . .

MONTY. Norma, I tell you it can't be done. Absolutely can't be done! ...

NORMA. Please, Monty, don't excite yourself. You'll be ill.

MONTY. Ill, nothing! I'm talking about cats.

NORMA. I know, dear, that's all you've talked about since you got up this morning.

MONTY. But don't you understand, Norma, you can't kill 'em? They're not only blessed with nine lives. Their lives are eternal. They're impervious to hell, fire and brimstone. You can't shoot 'em! You can't hang 'em! You can't drown 'em. The government should dispose of them. It's the duty of the government to protect its citizens against such a menace.

NORMA. But, Monty, if they are impervious, as you say, how can the government dispose of them?

MONTY. That's so, that's so. (*Walks nervously around the circle.*) Oh, why did Noah take those two cats into the ark? Lack of forethought on his part. He should have thought of the consequences to future generations. Now, Norma, just take for instance . . .

NORMA. Please, Monty, sit down and calm yourself. Doctor Layman will soon be here.

MONTY. What's he coming for?

NORMA. I want him to give you something for your nerves. You're all unstrung about something.

MONTY. I'm not unstrung. I'm simply talking about cats.

NORMA. And nothing else. I've heard nothing from you since you got up but cats, cats, cats. If the doctor doesn't give you something for your nerves he'll have to give me something for mine.

MONTY. Excuse me, Norma. I'll not say another word about cats. But, you know as well as I that cats are a nuisance. All night long they yodel. All day long they howl at the doors. They tip over the milk bottles, they . . . (*Doorbell rings. Before NORMA can exit to answer the bell DOCTOR LAYMAN enters.*)

DOCTOR. Good morning.

NORMA. Good morning, Doctor Layman.

DOCTOR. What's the trouble?

NORMA. It's Mr. Morse here. He's developing . . .

MONTY. Cats, Doctor, cats! I don't know why she called you, Doctor. She should have called a veterinarian.

DOCTOR. Please sit down, Mr. Morse. (MONTY sits.) Let's see your tongue.

MONTY. My tongue? I haven't been eating cats.

DOCTOR. And your pulse. (Feels MONTY's wrist.) Ah, it's very fast.

MONTY. That isn't my pulse, Doctor. That's my wrist-watch.

DOCTOR. Every man's pulse is his wrist watch, ticking off the seconds of his life.

MONTY. I won't have many seconds left if those cats . . .

DOCTOR (Draws up a chair and sits beside Monty.) Now, Mr. Morse, just what is this about cats?

MONTY. You can't kill 'em, Doc. They're impervious! They're . . .

NORMA. Doctor, what do you make of it?

DOCTOR. Nothing but a minor case of obsession, Mrs. Morse. The persistent and unescapable influence of some idea or emotion. All that is necessary to bring him out of it is to have some sympathetic listener hear his story. Now, Mr. Morse, tell us just what is on your mind.

MONTY. Cats!

DOCTOR. Yes, Mr. Morse, we understand that perfectly. But there is something behind all this—some basic reason. What I want you to do is tell me what prompted your mind to start dwelling on the subject of cats.

MONTY. I'll tell you, Doctor. We have been bothered to death by the neighbors' cats. Every neighbor has a cat, and every cat has more cats. Nothing but cats, cats, cats! (Becomes excited.)

DOCTOR. (Pats him on his knee.) Easy now, Mr. Morse. Go on.

MONTY. Well, one great big black son-of-a-gun old enough to remember the Civil War has made camp on our back steps for a month, and nothing that I could do would induce him to vacate, move or scam. Furthermore, this cat had many relatives and friends that would visit him much too often, mostly nocturnal calls—and what calls,

Doctor, what calls! There were cats, cats, cats! (*Again becomes excited.*)

DOCTOR (*Pats MONTY's knee.*) Yes, go on.

MONTY. So last night, Doctor, I went to the basement and got a brick and a piece of rope. Then sneaking up on this old Methuselah I grasped him by the neck and struggled with him to the basement. I tied the rope securely around the cat's neck. The other end of the rope I tied around the brick. You see, everything was being done in a thorough manner. Then I filled an old washtub full of water. I was going to teach all the other cats a lesson. Doctor, did you ever step out of your back door and see nothing but cats, cats, CATS?

DOCTOR (*Again pats MONTY's knee.*) Never mind about that. Just take it easy and tell us. You tied one end of the rope about the cat's neck, the other end around a brick, and you filled a tub full of water. Then what?

MONTY. I picked up the struggling animal and I flung it into the tub. (*Stops.*)

DOCTOR. And then?

MONTY. I watched it struggle for a moment. Then heartlessly I turned away and laughed.

DOCTOR. And then?

MONTY. Then I came upstairs and went to bed.

DOCTOR. And this morning you . . .

MONTY. Oh, Doctor, it was awful! (*Shivers.*)

DOCTOR. You will feel better if you tell us. This morning?

MONTY. This morning I went down to get the cat from the tub of water so that I could bury him, but—Doctor, do you know what? (*Excitedly.*) Do you know what?

DOCTOR. Well?

MONTY. That darn cat had drunk up all the water and was sitting on top of that brick washing its face! Quick, a hypodermic!

NORMA. Why didn't you tell me, Monty? That old tub leaks like a sieve.

LIGHTS OUT

The Speech of Acceptance

CHARACTERS

HENRY HEMPS.....an amateur orator
ROSEhis wife
JUNIOR.....a neighbor's little boy

CONCERNING THE CAST

Henry is about thirty. Nicely dressed. Is a very serious sort of person.

Rose, dressed nicely for street, is a pretty woman of about twenty-five. Contrasting to Henry, she is lively and full of fun.

Junior is a boy of about eight, nicely dressed, but not too refined.

* * *

SCENE: *A living room.*

STAGE IS DARK

LIGHTS ON BRIGHT

(HENRY is standing with a typewritten sheet in his hand. He is looking very serious. Rose, about to leave, is looking at HENRY with a mischievous smile about her mouth.)

ROSE. Well, good-bye, Judge.

HENRY. Kid me! Go ahead and kid me. (*She laughs*)

heartily.) You've always wanted me to become a man of influence and now when I . . .

ROSE . . . become one of the judges in the baby contest I laugh? Is that it, Henry?

HENRY. You might, at least, appreciate my growing popularity in this community, Rose.

ROSE. Excuse me, Henry, I didn't mean to be unappreciative. But it does amuse me to have you appointed a judge in a baby contest when we have no children of our own.

HENRY. As far as that goes, a number of our Supreme Court judges have never been convicted. And my being appointed a judge in a baby contest when I am not the father of any children really goes to show that I was not selected because of experience but because of my natural ability as a judge.

ROSE. Well, I'll be back in time for dinner, Henry. That will give you a nice long time to rehearse your speech of acceptance. Or should I remain here and listen to you orate?

HENRY (*His feelings still somewhat damaged.*) Oh, you needn't mind. You wouldn't appreciate its fine points, anyway.

ROSE (*Going towards the exit.*) Well, bye, bye—Judge! (*She exits.*)

HENRY (*Snappishly.*) Good-bye! (*Sighs.*) Now let me see. (*Looks at the paper a moment, takes an oratorical pose and is about to speak. Changes his mind, steps to the davenport and arranges the cushions so they will represent his listeners. Steps back, clears her throat, takes a pose and speaks dramatically to the cushions.*) Ladies and gentlemen, fathers and mothers, it is with great pleasure that I accept your most kind and flattering offer. I gladly take upon myself the responsibility of this most pleasant task of judging the babies that are to be entered in the coming baby contest. You are all aware that I myself have no children—yet, but I can proudly say that I know all about babies, having been one myself. Ha, ha, ha! (*Takes a*

more serious attitude.) Babies, dear friends and parents, are an essential commodity. Little acorns from mighty oaks—that is, big acorns from little . . . Our coming generation must, therefore, depend upon the acorns—babies of today. The generation that is ahead of us must depend upon the babies of the past. (*Looks at the paper and speaks much louder.*) The welfare of tomorrow depends upon the infants of today. But, my dear friends, the babies of today can also be the downfall of tomorrow—that is, the downfall of our whole social and economic system. We cannot cultivate the weeds in our garden and expect to reap carrots and spinach. We must do away with the weeds in their infancy. When once the roots of obnoxious weeds become firmly embedded in the soil it is much more difficult to dislodge them and give the better elements of our gardens an opportunity to grow and thrive. (*Louder.*) We cannot expect our babies of today to grow into useful citizens of the future unless we give them all the helpful and stimulating advantages at our command. And what, my dear friends, are the advantages? They are good health, good minds, and the art of thinking clearly for themselves in any emergency when we cast them out on the waters of life to float, sink or swim. And what constitutes good health? Nothing, my friends, but good food, plenty of exercise, and sleep! And what are good minds? Good minds, my friends, are minds that quickly grasp the opportunities that lie about them, and if opportunities lie about them as much as the parents do, there'll be plenty of opportunities. And sleep, my dear parents, sleep is the one great and precious factorial asset that every baby is entitled to. Sleep, that their bodies and minds may grow uniformly and naturally. Sleep that the tired muscles may be regenerated, and the blood supply slowed down for the rest that is necessary for the coming day. (*Very loudly.*) Let me repeat: A man may go without raiment—he may go without shelter—he may go without food for many days, but a baby needs its sleep. (*Yells.*) Therefore, my friends, give the baby sleep—sleep! Let nature dictate to him! Sleep! (*Knock on the door.*)

HENRY (*Sharply.*) Come in! (JUNIOR *enters.*) Oh, it's you, Junior. Does your mother want to borrow anything?

JUNIOR. Naw, she just wanted me to ask you to turn off your radio.

HENRY. Huh?

JUNIOR. She says it's so loud she can't get our baby to sleep.

LIGHTS OUT

Pop Goes the Heart

CHARACTERS

KENT.....the husband
MARY.....the wife
TILLIE.....her spinster sister

ABOUT THEM

Kent is about twenty-five. Nice looking and nicely dressed. Mary, a pretty girl of twenty-two, wearing a pretty house dress. Tillie, about thirty, is a typical spinster. Plain, tight-fitting dress.

SCENE: *Living room. KENT's hat and topcoat are on the davenport.*

STAGE DARK STAGE LIGHTS ON

* * *

(KENT is reading a newspaper. MARY is reading a book. TILLIE is knitting. Doorbell off Right rings.)

KENT. Now what?

MARY. Don't get up, Kent. I'll answer it. (*Exits Right.*)

TILLIE. Humph! Another agent, I suppose. I never saw so many agents and peddlers in my life. I'll be glad when I get back home and away from these everlasting doorbells. They jiggle my nerves all to pieces. Getting home will be a relief.

KENT. It certainly will.

TILLIE. Beg pardon?

KENT. Nothing. (*Enter MARY with a letter.*)

TILLIE. For me?

MARY. Special delivery letter for you, Kent.

KENT. Me? (*Takes the letter.*) Thanks. (*Opens it. Reads and becomes very much interested.*)

MARY. What is it, Kent?

KENT. Nothing, dear. (*Stands.*) I'm going out for a while.

MARY (*Hurt.*) All right, if you won't tell me I guess I can stand it.

TILLIE. You certainly stand for more than I'd stand from any man, Mary. Staying single, I guess, isn't so bad, after all. (*KENT takes the hat and topcoat from the davenport.*)

MARY. You're not going to tell me, Kent?

KENT. Why should I?

MARY. Mean old thing!

KENT (*Dons the coat and hat. Starts to place the letter in a pocket of the coat, but drops it to the floor where it lies unnoticed.*) Good-bye! (*Hurries out Right.*)

MARY (*Sadly.*) He might have told me where he was going.

TILLIE. Well, for heaven's sake, Mary, don't cry. Men like to cause women all the misery they can. They think it's smart. (*Sees the letter lying on the floor.*) Look, that's his letter. (*Picks it up.*) I think we have a right to know.

MARY. Kent wouldn't want you to read it, Tillie.

TILLIE. That doesn't mean I'm not going to read it.

MARY. But it's private.

TILLIE. Only while it's in the envelope. (*Reads aloud.*) "Dear Kent: Meet me at Joe's. I finally got Alice to come with me. She acts sometimes as though she wanted to appear shy, but believe me, there's nothing shy about her. I've been wanting you two to meet for a long time, and if you don't fall in love with her at first sight there's something wrong with you. You're just the sort of man that will appeal to her. And is she beautiful! I ask you to ask

me. Irrisistible eyes! Hair you'll love to pat. Anyway, if you can sneak away, come at once. Ed." Humph! And that's your husband, Mary. What do you think of that?

MARY (*Almost crying.*) I can't believe it.

TILLIE. That's because you're foolish. Why, I wouldn't live with him another hour.

MARY. But he's my husband.

TILLIE. And anybody else's sweetheart. You can't trust them, Mary. That's the reason I never married.

MARY (*Bursts into tears.*) What'll I do? Oh, what'll I do?

TILLIE. Get out. Walk out on him. Show him you're not just a jellyfish. Show him that you have a will of your own. Show him that you—you . . . Just pack up and get out.

MARY. But, Tillie, where'll I go?

TILLIE. I'm your sister, am I not? Come home with me. Humph! (*Looks at the letter.*) Irresistible eyes! Wretch! Hair you'll love to pat! And a waist, I suppose, he'll love to hug.

MARY (*Stands and clenches her hands.*) Stop, Tillie! Stop! Get my bag from my room.

TILLIE (*Stands.*) Now you're talking sense, Mary. I'll get your bag and help to pack it. (*Exits Left.*)

MARY (*Starts to cry. Then purses her lips and stands rigid.*) I won't cry! I won't! I'll show him! I'll go home with Tillie and I'll make dates with other men, and I'll—I'll . . . (*Enter TILLIE with a bag that she drops to the floor.*)

TILLIE. Let's hurry before he gets back. The less he knows the more effective it will be. You can't be too cruel to such men.

MARY (*Dramatically.*) I'll never come back! Never! Never! Never! I'll never even write to him! He'll never see me again! He'll never hear of me again! To him I'll be as dead as—as . . .

TILLIE. . . . a herring. (*Enter KENT, Right, with a Pomeranian, or other small, long-haired dog beneath his arm.*)

KENT. It's for you, Mary.

MARY. What?

KENT. Irresistible eyes! Hair you'll love to pat. Isn't she a beauty? And did I fall in love with her.

MARY. Oh, Kent, what's her name?

KENT. It may sound coincidental, but it's Tillie.

TILLIE. What?

KENT (*Sees bag.*) What's the bag for?

TILLIE. I'm going home. Too many doorbells.

LIGHTS OUT

Brotherly Revenge

CHARACTERS

ART.....)
BILL.....) two brothers and one sister
LOIS.....)

Art, Bill and Lois, are of a high school age. All are modern young people, nicely dressed.

* * *

SCENE: *Living room, neatly furnished. Telephone on a small stand on one side of the stage.*

STAGE IS DARK

STAGE LIGHTS ON

(When the curtain rises ART and BILL are facing each other from the opposite side of the center table or davenport, scowling very belligerently.)

ART. One more crack out o' you, big boy, and I'll . . .

BILL. Oh, yeah? Advertising for the heavyweight championship, huh?

ART. Just the same, Bill, you lay off Jane Farrel.

BILL. Suppose you have a copyright on her, huh?

ART. I sure have, and I don't want any infringements.
(Enter LOIS.)

LOIS. Well, for heaven's sake, Art, are you and Bill fighting again?

BILL. Not again—yet.

LOIS. And is it Jane Farrel this time?

ART. Who else could it be, Sis? But it's the last fight we're going to have over her. I'm going to wallop this big palooka . . .

BILL. You're what?

ART. Can't you understand English? You're as dumb here as you are in class, only more so.

BILL. Who's dumb in class besides you?

ART. You sit there all day doing nothing.

BILL. How do you know?

ART. Because I sit there all day and watch you. And what a bright remark you made today. Wow!

BILL. What remark did . . . ?

ART. Just too dumb to know what you did in physics class. Miss Herman asks you to name something with only one foot, and you yell, "A sock!" And you think you're smart enough to get Jane Farrel away from me. Huh!

BILL. What d'you mean away from you? You never had her.

LOIS. Please, boys, please. If Jane knew how you're fighting over her, she'd never speak to either of you.

BILL. What right has this hatrack to try and stop me from getting a date with Jane if I want to, and can? Just because he took her home from that party the other night he thinks she's his property. Well, I'm stepping in right now. How d'you like that, big brother?

LOIS. Well, of course, everything is fair in love and war . . .

ART. There's love, all right, and there's soon going to be war, and there's no league of nations to settle it. I'm knee-deep in love with her.

BILL. Haw-haw! Knee-deep!

ART. You heard me—knee-deep.

BILL. No wonder you're on her wading list. Excuse me, Sir Loin, but I'm calling Jane for a date right now.

ART. I wish I could hear what she'll be calling you. To her you'll never play anything but second fiddle.

BILL. I'd rather play second fiddle to her than be a whole orchestra to any girl.

ART. Honest, Bill, if you keep on talking I'll burst right out laughing.

BILL. You won't laugh after I call her.

ART. Okay-doke, Bill. But don't blame me if you die of a broken heart. Go ahead and call her. You did me a great favor once.

BILL. *I must have been sleeping.*

ART. I'll never in all my life forget what you did for me.

BILL. Well, what did I do?

ART. Well, I can't think what it was right now, but . . .

BILL. Bah! (*Goes to the phone.*)

ART. Sis, this is going to be good.

LOIS. For whom?

BILL (*To the phone.*) Mayfair, 2-6-9-6. (*To ART.*) Better find another girl, Art. This baby is bye-bye to you. (*To the phone.*) Hello! . . . Jane? . . . This is Bill. . . . Bill! . . . no, not gas, electric or Buffalo. Bill Carter. Listen, Jane, how about a big date tonight? . . . I can show you a swell time, Jane . . . No, I don't know any other girl. It's you, Jane. I dream of you by night. I dream of you by day. Your eyes, Jane—like limpid pools of water. Your lips, Jane—like rosebuds. Your hair, Jane—like golden tress. Your feet, Jane—like . . .

ART (*Loudly.*) . . . submarines!

BILL. Shut up! (*Quickly to the phone.*) No, no, Jane, not you! Hello—Jane! Hello! Hello! (*Turns to find LOIS and ART laughing heartily.*) I'll . . . (*Advances threateningly towards ART.*) I'll . . . (*Telephone rings.*)

LOIS. Now be quiet. I'll answer it. (*Goes to the phone.*) Hello . . . Oh, hello, Jane.

BILL and ART. Jane?

LOIS (*To the phone.*) Yes . . . Oooo! Goody! You bet I will, Jane. Good-bye. (*Hangs up the receiver.*)

BILL and ART (*Starting for the phone.*) For me?

LOIS. For me. Jane wants me to come to her house this evening. She's having two of her boy friends there and . . .

BILL and ART. What?

LOIS. She said some boob just called her, but she didn't get his name.

ART. Bill, let's go to a show.

BILL. No. I'm going to my lab' and take some strychnine.

LIGHTS OUT

The Newlyweds

CHARACTERS

JACK FIRMAN..... }
BABS..... } on their honeymoon
SAM..... the bellhop

* * *

COSTUMES: *Modern.*

SCENE: *A hotel room. A simple living room setting will answer the purpose.*

DARK STAGE

STAGE LIGHTS ON FULL

(JACK is standing with an arm about BABS. A few feet away stands SAM, grinning broadly as he fingers the money in his hand.)

JACK (To SAM.) And you'll do that for us, Mr.—er . . . ?

SAM (Grinning.) Dey calls me Sam foh short, sah.

JACK. Well, Sam, perhaps if you do a good job of keeping your mouth shut there'll be another two dollars for you when we leave.

SAM. Yes, sah, yes, sah. I keeps shet a'right. All I does am say nuffin', an' I doan say dat very loud, sah. No, sah,

I doan say nuffin' 'bout you an' de lady jest bein' married, sah.

JACK. That's the boy, Sam. Mrs. Firman here is quite sensitive and she doesn't like to be pointed out as a— a newly-wed.

SAM. She doan need worryfy none 'bout me tellin' nobody in dis hotel dat you'ns am jest married. I jest natch-erly doan know nuffin' 'bout it.

BABS. That's exactly it, Sam, and perhaps— well, perhaps if you are a very good boy I'll be able to find another dollar for you, also.

SAM. Colly, Miss, I sho' kin be pow'ful good foh a dollah. When I's home I's good foh nuffin'.

JACK. All right, Sam, now run along and don't let anybody know that we're on our honeymoon.

SAM. Trust me, boss. Some day mebbe I'll go on a honeymoon, too. You isn't de fust "jest marrieds" dat's been heah. 'Cose you can't fool me. I spots 'em like a seben on a gallopin' dice soon's dey comes in de hotel, but . . . (*Looks at the money in his hands.*) . . . when dey's s'ficient fie-nances I's shet tighter den a streetcah window. (*Grins and exits.*)

JACK. And now for some cigarettes and a little exercise.

BABS. Let me go, Jack dear. I want a magazine.

JACK. You rest. I'll get you a magazine.

BABS. But I don't know what I want until I look them over. I'll go and while I'm there I'll get your cigarettes.

JACK. O. K., Babs. Your mother told me before we left that I shouldn't argue with you.

BABS. We'll never argue, will we, dear? (*Places her arms about his neck.*)

JACK. I should say not. We'll never argue. We may discuss things, but we'll never argue. Now run along, and while you're gone you might get me a little exercise.

BABS (*Kisses him.*) You won't be lonesome while I'm away, will you?

JACK. Be sure and write.

BABS. Oh, isn't love wonderful! Jack, do you still love me?

JACK. I'll love you forever and ever!

BABS. Ah, men! (*Laughs and skips out. JACK smiles happily, sighs and sits. Enter BABS, looking worried.*)

BABS. Jack!

JACK (*Leaps to his feet.*) Babs! What's happened?

BABS. Jack, I started down the hall and everybody—everybody stared at me.

JACK. They stared at you? Why?

BABS. I don't know. They made me feel guilty of something. They just looked and looked as if I had done something awful—committed murder or something. Do you think Sam . . . ?

JACK. I hardly think so, but of course we don't know anything about that bellhop. His mouth takes up a lot of his face.

BABS. I bet he told everybody we were just married.

JACK (*Goes to the phone.*) Hello! Hello! Room 311. Could you please send Sam up at once? . . . Thank you. (*Turns to BABS.*) We'll soon find out. If he has broadcast . . .

BABS. No, don't do that, Jack. He's just a boy.

JACK. Well, anyway, I can scare him so he'll not embarrass another newly married couple. I'll tell him plenty, and then we can go to another hotel.

BABS. But, Jack, they'll charge you for this room, anyway, and that's about twelve dollars. Maybe I'm too sensitive, anyway. (*Knock on the door.*)

JACK (*Roughly.*) Come in! (*Enter SAM.*)

SAM. Yes, sah, Mistah Firman?

JACK. Sam, did you go right out of this room and tell everybody that we were just married?

SAM. No, sah, Mistah Firman, no sah. I didn't tell nobody nuffin' 'bout you jest bein' married, no, sah.

JACK. Are you sure that you didn't say a thing about our being married and on our honeymoon?

SAM. Hones' goodness, boss, I didn't said nuffin' 'bout you bein' married. Fac' am, boss, I done do you a favor, yes, sah.

JACK. What do you mean, you did us a favor?

SAM. Why, Mistah Firman, I knows right off dat it wouldn't be right foh nobody to know dat you was jest married, so I jest clinches de whole thing an' makes sure by tellin' evahbody dat you two wasn't married a-tall. (*BABS falls limply into JACK's arms. He grits his teeth.*)

LIGHTS OUT

Aunt Emma Brings Dicky

CHARACTERS

TOM.....who was a boy once, too
JUNEhis wife
AUNT EMMA.....June's maiden aunt

COSTUMES AND CHARACTERISTICS

Tom and June are about twenty-seven and twenty-four, respectively. Both nicely dressed. Aunt Emma is a typical spinster and dressed to accentuate the part.

* * *

SCENE: *Comfortable living room.*

STAGE DARK
LIGHTS ON

(TOM is sprawled lazily in a chair reading a paper.
Enter JUNE with a piece of mail.)

TOM (*Looks up.*) Any mail, June?

JUNE (*Tosses the mail on the table.*) Nothing but an ad.

TOM. That's better than nothing but a dun. No further word from your Aunt Emma?

JUNE. No, Tom. I was positive she would write again before she arrived. She wasn't very explicit in her other letter.

TOM. Well, we'll have to take her at her word and expect her here this morning. Where's the letter you got from her yesterday?

JUNE. Here. (*Takes the letter from the book on the table. Hands it to TOM.*) You already know what's in it.

TOM. Just to be sure we have things straight. (*Looks at the letter.*) Writes like a man, doesn't she?

JUNE. I'd advise you to say nothing like that in her presence. She's a man-hater.

TOM. Most women are that have never been proposed to.

JUNE. Now, Tom, don't say mean things about my aunt.

TOM. I'm just kidding, June.

JUNE. Read that part again where she says she is coming with Dicky.

TOM. A man-hater, huh? Dicky is no feminine name.

JUNE. Please read!

TOM (*Reading letter.*) "And now for the important news, June. I will arrive at your place Tuesday morning . . ."

JUNE. This is Tuesday morning.

TOM. If there is no opposition to that remark I'll proceed.

JUNE. Proceed.

TOM (*Reading.*) "I will arrive at your place Tuesday morning with Dicky. And, June, how you'll love him. He's a darling. So young and cunning." Well, June, that's that. What do you make of it?

JUNE. Why ask me? You're as good at guessing as I.

TOM. Your aunt is a—er . . .

JUNE (*Laughs.*) Say it, Tom, say it. Aunt Emma is an old maid.

TOM. Spinster or bachelor girl might sound better. And now about this boy, Dicky. Where does he come in?

JUNE. Well, you know, I told you when I saw Aunt Emma three years ago that she was threatening to adopt a boy from the orphan home. She must have carried out that threat. Anyway, it appears that she thinks the world of this Dicky. The only thing, Tom, is that—that . . .

TOM. Yes, now you say it, June, say it. Your Aunt Em-

ma has a lot of money and now that she has adopted a boy our name is mud in her will, eh?

JUNE. Well, of course, nothing was ever said about us being named as heirs. We just took it for granted.

TOM. It wouldn't hurt us any to make a big showing of hospitality. She might be inveigled into leaving us a little slice, and I presume the best way to make a favorable impression is to rave over Dicky.

JUNE. How about those things I told you to get?

TOM. I have them all ready to put on display.

JUNE. Then you had better get them on display. She's liable to pop in here any minute now.

TOM (*Stands.*) O. K. Here goes Santa Claus. (*Exits. Then calls from offstage.*) Should I call her Aunt Emma?

JUNE. Why, of course, Tom.

TOM. I was just wondering. If she's a man-hater I can't take any chances.

JUNE. But hurry with those toys before she does come.

TOM. I'm coming. (*Enters with a toy train, some building blocks, a big rubber ball and toy horn.*) If these things don't please the kid, there's something wrong with the new generation.

JUNE. They should please him. Richard, no doubt, is like any other boy. (*TOM sits on the floor with the toys.*) What are you . . . ?

TOM. Going to build something so it'll look as though we were counting a lot on his coming. Tact and diplomacy, I call it. (*Piles the blocks.*) Look, June, this is the railroad station. It takes me back a few years. And here, this is a taxi that's trying to get to the station to meet the train. (*Runs the ball toward the station as he loudly blows the horn.*) Come on, boy, step on it! (*Blows the horn.*) Ding-dong! June, the train's pulling out! Taxi isn't going to make it! (*Blows the horn.*) Hear him come, June! Ding-dong! (*Blows the horn.*)

JUNE. Sh! Tom, was that the bell?

TOM. Sure, train pulling out.

JUNE. I mean the doorbell. (*Doorbell offstage rings.*) Tom! It is the bell!

TOM. I didn't hear a thing. (*Blows the horn.*) Come on, taxi! Step on it! Dingdong! (*Toots the horn enthusiastically.*) AUNT EMMA appears in the doorway with a birdcage in which is a canary. She is staring at TOM who does not see her.)

JUNE. Aunt Emma! (*Runs to her.*)

AUNT EMMA. No one answered the bell so I walked in. (*Nods her head to TOM who is staring at her.*) Is he all right in the head?

JUNE (*Laughs heartily.*) Oh, Aunt Emma! He's all ready to play with Richard.

AUNT EMMA. Richard?

JUNE. Yes, Dicky. Where is Dicky?

AUNT EMMA (*Holds up the bird cage.*) This is Dicky. (*JUNE bursts into laughter. TOM draws back his foot and kicks over the railroad station.*)

LIGHTS OUT

And He Never Came Back

CHARACTERS

GRACE RITTER.....the girl
CECIL CADD.....the boy
DADDY RITTER.....Grace's father

ABOUT THE CHARACTERS

Grace is a pretty girl of nineteen or twenty. Cecil is a typical sissy. Very foppish. Dressed immaculately. Egoistical. Daddy is a pleasant, middle-aged man, fairly well dressed.

* * *

SCENE: *Living room. May be played in a parlor.*

STAGE IN DARKNESS

STAGE LIGHTS ON

(CECIL, *apparently very well satisfied with himself, is seated on the davenport. DADDY is standing in front of him, hands in his pockets. He appears to be somewhat amused as there is a half smile on his face.*)

DADDY. Then, Mr. Cadd, as I understand it, you are desirous of marrying my daughter? Am I right?

CECIL. Yes, sir, Mr. Ritter. If I make mention of it myself, sir, I do not think she could do better.

DADDY. In other words, if Grace should marry you she would at once be transported to a sort of Utopia?

CECIL. Yes, sir, you might put it that way, for I'm already convinced that Gracy would be the happiest girl in the world if she were mine.

DADDY. I admire your confidence, my boy. I surely do. But tell me, how has this affair progressed so far without my ever seeing you here?

CECIL. Well, we have met a number of times, sir.

DADDY. And you and Grace have come to an agreeable understanding in this matter?

CECIL. Well, I can hardly go so far as to say that, Mr. Ritter. I haven't definitely mentioned marriage to Gracy, but I look for no objection on her part.

DADDY. Mr. Cadd, I reiterate—if I may use the word . . .

CECIL (*Condescendingly.*) You may use the word.

DADDY. Thank you so much. As I said, I reiterate when I say that I admire your confidence. Grace has always been her own boss—that is, in most matters, and I wouldn't think of going against her wishes at this late date.

CECIL. Then, sir, I have your parental consent to proceed with any necessary arrangements for our marriage?

DADDY. My boy, your self-confidence is beyond comprehension to one such as I.

CECIL. I am glad, Mr. Ritter, that you recognize that rare and valuable quality, and what it will mean to your daughter.

DADDY (*Registers extreme seriousness.*) There is one thing, however, Mr. Cadd. You have not as yet mentioned your intentions to my daughter, and perhaps it would be well that she be given some hint of what you intend to do. To have this happiness heaped upon her without warning may be somewhat detrimental to her well being. And then again, Grace may wish to make a few suggestions regarding the trousseau, the selection of her silverware, and so on.

CECIL. I must have time to think it over, sir, but I believe I can make such a concession.

DADDY. You are very kind. Now there is one stipulation that I would like to make.

CECIL. I will consider any stipulation you might find advisable to make, Mr. Ritter.

DADDY. It is this. I am not as young as I used to be. In a few years it is my earnest desire to retire, and I want my son-in-law to continue my business. I cannot let it die with me.

CECIL. In other words, sir . . .

DADDY. In other words, any man that marries my daughter must become my partner in business. I will send Grace to you at once. Good night. (*Turns abruptly and approaches the exit.*)

CECIL. And Mr. Ritter.

DADDY (*Stops.*) Yes?

CECIL. Tell Gracy there is a pleasant surprise awaiting her.

DADDY. I will. (*Laughs heartily and exits.*)

CECIL (*Carefully brushes back his hair, and spends a few moment primping.* Enter GRACE.)

GRACE. Good evening, Cecil.

CECIL (*Stands and bows.*) Gracy, you look delightfully charming this evening.

GRACE. Thank you, Cecil. (*Sits on the davenport.*) Please sit down.

CECIL. Thank you. Gracy, I just spoke to your father about our marriage.

GRACE (*Registering surprise.*) About — about our marriage?

CECIL. Why, yes. Hadn't you thought of it?

GRACE (*Not showing much enthusiasm.*) I had not. Daddy said there was a pleasant surprise in store for me.

CECIL. Don't you think getting married to me would be a pleasant surprise?

GRACE. Well, it would be a surprise, all right. And Daddy really said that I could marry you?

CECIL. Not only that, Gracy, but he insisted that as soon as we were married that I go into partnership with him.

GRACE (*Suppressing smile.*) He did, really?

CECIL. He did. I consider your father a man of extreme far-sightedness. He at once perceived in me that rare qual-

ity of leadership necessary to the success of any business. He offered absolutely no objections to our marriage. But I did not anticipate any, for there are none.

GRACE. As soon as you marry me you are to become his partner?

CECIL. Exactly, Gracy, exactly.

GRACE. But wasn't he reluctant about placing any responsibilities upon you when you know nothing of his business?

CECIL. He didn't seem to. He saw only my inborn talent . . .

GRACE. He, of course, informed you what his business was.

CECIL. No, we didn't go into that. With my intelligence I could . . .

GRACE. Really, Mr. Cadd, before proceeding further it might be well that you understand perfectly just what my father is so that when you become his partner you will understand what's expected of you.

CECIL. Oh, well, what is your father?

GRACE. A professional parachute jumper. *(CECIL slides from the davenport and heads for the exit. GRACE laughs.)*

LIGHTS OUT

Who's a Hick?

CHARACTERS

HIRAM SLATTERLEY.....just a hick
MARTHAhis wife
JOE CRANE...representing the Affiliated Highway Barbecues
EDWARD HOWE.....the association's appraiser

* * *

SCENE: *Simple but neat and comfortable living room.*

STAGE IN TOTAL DARKNESS

STAGE LIGHTS ON

(HIRAM is pacing nervously back and forth. MARTHA is seated, reading or knitting.)

HIRAM. I tell you, Martha . . .

MARTHA. For heaven's sake, Hiram, cool down. Just because a couple of city men call you a hick . . .

HIRAM. But we're not hicks any more than any other farmer these days. We take our daily newspaper. We have our radio. We have a car. We have our children in school, and one in college. It makes me hot under the collar, Martha, to have some slinky-eyed, oily-haired city boob come out here and call us hicks.

MARTHA. Well, you admitted they didn't call you a hick to your face, didn't you?

HIRAM. Well, even so, it doesn't go down very good. I was standing there at the post office when I heard these two

men talking about how easy the hicks around here looked. They didn't notice me. And I'll be dog-goned if they didn't mention *my* name.

MARTHA. Your name?

HIRAM. Yes, sicee, Martha, my name. One of them said he'd looked about these parts the week before and decided Hiram Slatterley looked like good meat to him. Good meat, Martha! Do I look like a ham or a pork chop?

MARTHA. What did they mean?

HIRAM. That's what I was wondering, too, so I circled around and a little later I walked up to them and passed the time sort of dumb like, and acted like I was interested in their coming to our section of the country. Then I introduced myself sort of nonchalantly, and—oh, say, I got a letter from our Larry.

MARTHA. What did he say? Did he pass his final chemistry examination? Just what day will college close, and when will he be home?

HIRAM. Is that all you want to know? I haven't had a chance to open the letter yet. Sh! Listen! There's a car driving in. Quick, Martha, you step out of here, and don't come back till I call you.

MARTHA. But . . .

HIRAM. No buts, Martha, and don't pay any attention to what I do. I'm going to be a regular hick for a while. Now get out quick. (*Pushes her off Left, she trying to protest. Knock on the door, Right.*) Come in! (*Enter JOE and ED, Right.*)

JOE. Hello, Mr. Slatterley!

HIRAM. Well, gosh-burn, howdy! I reckoned as how you'ns be drivin' down this-a-way. Come right in, Mr. Crane. You, too, Mr. Howe. Come right in an' make yourself at hum.

JOE. Thanks, Mr. Slatterley. By the way, just call me Joe and call him Ed.

HIRAM. Dinged if I won't. You'ns call me Hiram. Might as well be neighborly. Sit down. (*They sit.*)

JOE. I presume you have thought over the proposition we spoke of this morning?

HIRAM. Yep, but I ain't had much chance to speak to Marthy 'bout it. Now lemme see, you was repersentin' what was it?

JOE. I am representing the Affiliated Highway Barbecues, and Ed here is their official appraiser. By opening these barbecues along the principal highways under one head they can be made to pay, and we are in a position to offer the farmers better prices for their land. Now you have an ideal location for such a stand. You offered us your farm this morning for seven thousand dollars.

HIRAM. Yep, that's right. Reckon when Larry gits home from college an' is a fust class chemist he won't keer to stay here no-how. Reckon you'd like to go over the farm?

ED. There isn't any use of doing that. In driving past a few of your fields I feel safe in saying that there is no question as to its value to us.

JOE. Now, Hiram, you no doubt understand that we cannot pay you the entire seven thousand dollars today, or until it is O. K'd by the board of directors. However, we can give you five hundred dollars for an option on the property.

HIRAM. I ain't 'zactly up on them option things.

JOE. It is simply a paper that you and your wife sign that says we may buy the land whenever we please at the price mentioned. We give you five hundred dollars to bind the bargain, and then, of course, you cannot sell it to anyone else.

HIRAM. Gosh, that's fair 'nough. 'Scuse me a minute till I call the old woman. (*Exits Right. JOE and ED look at each other and laugh.*)

JOE. It's like taking candy from a baby.

ED. Now let's get this straight quick, Joe. We get an option for five hundred dollars. Then a little later we dump a few barrels of oil on his land, and he thinks there's a fortune in oil if he can get the land back. But we don't let him have it back unless he comes across with two or three thousand dollars.

JOE. That's it in a nutshell. If he wants the option canceled he pays us plenty. But we have to work fast. He said

his kid was coming home from college in a week or so, and if he's a full-fledged chemist, why he'll . . . (*Enter HIRAM and MARTHA, Left.*)

HIRAM. This is Marthy, fellers. Marthy, this is Mr. Crane an' Mr. Howe.

MARTHA. How do you do? (*ED and JOE stand and bow graciously.*)

HIRAM. Marthy says as how she's purty busy, so mebbe we better be a-gettin' things fixed up right smart. (*MARTHA looks at HIRAM somewhat bewildered.*) You fellers, I reckon, is got the five hundred dollars with you?

JOE. Oh, certainly, Hiram. Also, the option is all made out.

MARTHA. Hiram, just what are you doing?

HIRAM. Now you just hush up, Marthy. I'm gettin' to be a reg'lar big business man, I am. (*JOE and ED wink at each other.*) Pull your chairs right up to the table, fellers, and Marthy, you git that bottle o' ink an' that pen over there.

ED. I have a fountain pen here.

HIRAM. Not fer me, Ed. I ain't never got used to them new fangled things. Ain't none too good with the old styled pen. (*MARTHA places the ink and pen on the table.*)

JOE (*As he and ED go to the table.*) Here's the option. (*Lays paper on the table.*) All you have to do is to sign it. Mr. Slatterley here, and Mrs. Slatterley directly beneath.

HIRAM. Jest to show you fellers I ain't no easy mark I don't sign nothin' till I gits the five hundred dollars.

JOE (*Laughs.*) I don't blame you, Hiram. One can tell you're too smart to be gold-bricked. (*Another wink at ED.*) Here's the five hundred. (*Lays the bills on the table.*)

MARTHA. Hiram Slatterley, just what does all this mean?

HIRAM. Tut, tut, Marthy, tut-tut. Gimme that pen. (*Takes pen, dips it carefully in the ink and writes. Hands pen to MARTHA.*) Right under mine, Martha. (*She hesitates, then signs.*) There ye be, fellers. There's your option, or whatever you calls it.

JOE. Now you understand, Mr. Slatterley, we can have

possession of the property at any time by paying the balance of the seven thousand dollars.

HIRAM. Yep, that's right.

JOE (*Shakes HIRAM's hand.*) Good-bye, Hiram. Pretty easy, wasn't it?

ED (*Shakes HIRAM's hand.*) There's a lot of easy ways to make money, aren't there?

HIRAM. Yep, more than most people know 'bout, says I. Good-bye. (*Exeunt JOE and ED, Right.*)

MARTHA. Now, Hiram Slatterley, what does all this tomfoolery mean?

HIRAM. It means, Martha, that a hick isn't as dumb as he looks. Look at this, would you? (*Holds up money.*) Five hundred dollars!

MARTHA. But they have an option on the farm.

HIRAM. They just think they have. They didn't know that I knew all about their scheme. Come here and try to flim-flam me! Come here and get an option on this land, and then later pour oil on it so I'll be crazy enough to pay them three thousand dollars to get my option canceled. Imagine that!

MARTHA. But, Hiram, we did sign the option, didn't we?

HIRAM. Sure, we did, but that won't do them any good. We used that ink that Larry made up in chemistry class. It's what he calls disappearing ink. In five or six hours there won't be a scratch of our names on that option. When they open up that paper tomorrow they'll find nothing but the dotted lines.

LIGHTS OUT

Childish Prattle

CHARACTERS

MRS. WANTROCKS.....with social ambitions
EVELYN.....her daughter, with similar ambitions
JUNIOR.....too young for ambitions
HOMER HOLTEN.....a good catch

CONCERNING THE CAST

Mrs. Wantrocks is about forty-five years old and is a type of woman who is ambitious to climb the social ladder, but cannot quite make the grade. Evelyn is a daughter after her mother's heart. Rather pretty, but somewhat petulant. Junior is just an ordinary boy of ten who, no doubt, takes after his father more than his mother. He is nicely dressed. Homer is about twenty-four, and is immaculately attired.

* * *

SCENE: *Living room. Entrances Left and Right stage.*

STAGE DARK

STAGE LIGHTS ON

(EVELYN and JUNIOR are on the stage. EVELYN is giving JUNIOR instructions and emphatically shaking her finger in his face.)

EVELYN. For once in your life, Junior Wantrocks, I want you to behave yourself when Mr. Holton comes.

JUNIOR. Oh, sure, Sis, I will.

EVELYN. That's what you always promise, but when somebody calls to see me you're always on hand to make some very embarrassing remark. If I had my way, you'd go to bed now.

JUNIOR. It isn't my bedtime.

EVELYN. Then please sit down and be quiet.

JUNIOR (*Holds out his hand.*) How about a dime?

EVELYN. I don't happen to have a dime. But if you promise to be quiet, and keep your promise, I'll give you fifteen cents when I do get some money.

JUNIOR. That's what Dad calls dealing in futures and it's a bum way of doing business.

EVELYN. You'll get your fifteen cents.

JUNIOR. O. K., Sis, I'll keep quiet. (*Plumps down in deep chair with a book. Enter MRS. WANTROCKS, Left.*)

EVELYN. What time is it, Mother?

MRS. WANTROCKS. Nearly eight o'clock.

EVELYN. Is Daddy home yet?

MRS. WANTROCKS. Why, no, Evelyn. He wasn't to meet that man until eight-thirty. Oh, how I hope he sells that property. It will mean a commission to him of two hundred dollars, and we certainly need it.

EVELYN. Nearly eight. Mr. Holten ought to be here soon.

MRS. WANTROCKS. Yes, he should. And how I do hope you'll do your utmost to get him to propose to you, Evelyn. Wouldn't it be just too wonderful for you to be the wife of Homer Holten! Just think of the social influence it would bring to us.

EVELYN. It may not be so easy to marry a million dollars.

MRS. WANTROCKS. The only way to impress a man of his financial standing is to talk his language. Talk big money, big plans . . .

JUNIOR. Sis can't even talk a dime. She's always dealing in futures.

MRS. WANTROCKS. Junior, if you don't keep quiet I'll send you to bed at once. If your sister should happen to marry Mr. Holton we'd all have plenty of dimes. So don't

spoil everything with your childish prattle. And, Evelyn, I believe it will be a good idea for me to do most of the talking when Mr. Holton first arrives. I am older than you, and understand how . . .

JUNIOR . . . to talk big money.

MRS. WANTROCKS. Junior!

JUNIOR. O. K. (*Doorbell rings off Right.*)

MRS. WANTROCKS. Shh! Junior, answer the door.

JUNIOR. O. K. Sis, don't forget that fifteen cents. (*Exits Right.*)

EVELYN. Oh, Mother, I'm so nervous.

MRS. WANTROCKS. Don't show it, for heaven's sake. You must give him the impression that receiving marriage proposals is a common thing with you. You might talk about some of the proposals you've had from men high in society. (*Enter JUNIOR and HOMER, Right.*)

JUNIOR. It's Mr. Holten, Ma—Mother.

MRS. WANTROCKS (*Advances to HOMER with outstretched hand.*) So glad, I assure you, Mr. Holten.

HOMER (*Accepts her hand and bows graciously.*) Thank you, Mrs. Wantrocks. It is a pleasure to call, I assure you. (*Turns to EVELYN.*) You look charming, Miss Wantrocks.

EVELYN. Thank you.

HOMER. I parked my car on the left side of the street. (*Smiles.*) No danger of mixing with the police, is there?

MRS. WANTROCKS. Oh, dear, no, Mr. Holten. Mr. Wantrocks is so influential politically, no one would dare to object. Won't you sit down?

HOMER. Thank you. (*Sits as he motions EVELYN to do likewise.*)

MRS. WANTROCKS. I was in hopes you could meet Mr. Wantrocks this evening, but he had already made an engagement to look over a new car he is thinking of buying.

JUNIOR (*Sits up with interest.*) Huh? (*Receives a warning sign from EVELYN.*) O. K. (*Settles back in the chair.*)

HOMER. There are some beautiful cars on the market this season.

MRS. WANTROCKS. Yes, but so many cheap cars, don't you think, Mr. Holten? (*Sits beside HOMER.*) And of

course Mr. Wantrocks isn't interested in those at all. He mentioned something at dinner this evening about a car that appeals to him very strongly, and the price, I believe, was six thousand dollars.

HOMER (*Smiles.*) Such a car ought to appeal to most anyone.

MRS. WANTROCKS. But, you know, Mr. Holten, one must keep a sensible balance. Mr. Wantrocks thinks that one's car should be consistent with one's income. I wouldn't be a bit surprised if he should drive the new car home this evening.

JUNIOR. If he does buy the car, Ma, will that funny little man call every month like he did when you bought your vacuum cleaner? (*EVELYN and MRS. WANTROCKS nearly faint. HOMER suppresses a smile.*)

LIGHTS OUT

There Are Badges and Badges

CHARACTERS

HAROLD.....who wants to step out with Elsie
ELSIE.....who has to stay home
CAPTAIN SWARTZ.....of the detective squad

CONCERNING THE CAST

Elsie is a pretty girl of eighteen, nicely dressed. Harold is a rather boastful youth of twenty, nicely dressed, and wearing a fake detective badge. Captain Swartz, a plain clothes detective, is about thirty. Is polite but stern, and rather hard-boiled. Has a badge on his vest.

* * *

SCENE: *Living room.*

STAGE IN DARKNESS

STAGE LIGHTS ON

(ELSIE and HAROLD are standing near Center. HAROLD has just arrived and is still holding his hat in his hand.)

HAROLD. Aw, come on, Elsie. It's too big a night to stay inside. Let's ride, or dance, or see a show, or—well something.

ELSIE. It can't be done, Harold. Daddy said before he left that he didn't want me to step outside the house tonight.

HAROLD. But, Elsie, that's all hooey about Scarlip Moran being in the neighborhood. Where'd you get that news?

ELSIE. Daddy heard about it. He said the police have a—a—dragnet out, I guess, and they have him cornered somewhere in the neighborhood, and there's liable to be some shooting. That Scarlip is an awfully bad man.

HAROLD. Just because he's listed as public enemy Number One everybody's scared of him. But I'm telling you this, Elsie, all those birds are yellow when they meet up with regular he-men. As for me—huh! I wouldn't be afraid to meet any of them.

ELSIE. Sit down, Harold. I can't go out, so we might as well make the best of it. Even if Daddy hadn't forbidden me, I wouldn't think of going out. It makes me shuddery just to think of meeting Scarlip Moran. Harold, what if he would try to come in here?

HAROLD. Well, as far as I'm concerned, I wouldn't mind having him do it. That way I could show him up and prove to you what I said about them being yellow. But if your dad says you can't go out, I'm not the one to say you can. (*Hands his hat to ELSIE and drops onto the davenport.*) But I sure did want to take you for a ride. It's the new car, Elsie, and what a honey! I can cut circles all around the old bus with it. It'll make ninety like nobody's business.

ELSIE (*Lays the hat on the table and sits beside him.*) What good is all that speed, Harold? They're arresting them for doing over fifty.

HAROLD. Not me, they're not. I can make my ninety any time and get away with it.

ELSIE. How?

HAROLD. Like this. (*Throws back his coat, displays a fake detective badge.*)

ELSIE. Harold, where did you get that?

HAROLD. Swiped it off my kid brother.

ELSIE. Is it a real police badge?

HAROLD. No, but it fools 'em. When a cop stops me I just flash the badge and presto, he salutes, and I'm off. Easy, huh?

ELSIE. Some time you'll get in trouble, Harold.

HAROLD. I'm too smart for 'em. Three times today I was stopped, and believe it or not, I worked this game successfully each time.

ELSIE. But it isn't right to do it, is it?

HAROLD. There are a lot of things that people do that aren't right, but they do them, anyway.

ELSIE. What if . . . ? (*Startled.*) What was that noise?

HAROLD. I didn't hear anything.

ELSIE. I thought I heard . . . (*Forces laugh.*) I must be nervous thinking of Scarlip Moran.

HAROLD. Elsie, I wish you would remember that I am sitting beside you. Of course, I realize that girls don't have the steel nerves that we men have, but you shouldn't be nervous when I'm around. If worst comes to worst and the government cannot do anything with these gangsters I'll offer my services to the government. Ah! Then give me a squad of men—just a little squad—and gangland will be history.

ELSIE. Oh, Harold, you have so much confidence. And when you do get on the regular force you would have a *real* badge, wouldn't you?

HAROLD. A real badge doesn't mean so much. It's the brave heart that beats beneath the badge that counts. If Scarlip Moran should enter this room now . . . (*CAPTAIN SWARTZ steps quietly into the room unseen by the two.*)

SWARTZ (*In a gruff voice.*) Pardon me. (*ELSIE screams. HAROLD is petrified with fear and afraid to look around.*)

ELSIE. What—what do you want?

SWARTZ. Don't be alarmed, lady, and pardon my intrusion. I am Captain Swartz of the Detective Bureau.

HAROLD (*Emits a big sigh of relief. Then stands with regained confidence.*) Good evening, Captain Swartz. Anything I can do for you?

SWARTZ. Yes. You may tell me whose car that is out front parked without lights.

HAROLD. That is my car, Captain.

SWARTZ. Perhaps you can tell me why you're not obeying the law about lights on a parked car?

HAROLD. Oh, that's easy. (*Pulls back his coat, flashing the badge.*)

SWARTZ. I see. Pardon me for reminding you of the car. (*Aside HAROLD winks at ELSIE.*) I'm certainly glad you flashed the badge, my boy.

HAROLD. I thought you would be.

SWARTZ. Yes, I am. We're rounding up every available officer of the law. We have Scarlip Moran bagged within this block and expect to jump him any minute. You may consider yourself deputized.

HAROLD (*Aghast.*) But—but . . .

SWARTZ (*Sternly.*) Come on, step on it! Get your gun ready; you'll need it. (*Goes towards the exit.*) Did you hear me? Come on! (*HAROLD follows with legs that are very weak and wobbly.*)

LIGHTS OUT

Their Golden Wedding Anniversary

CHARACTERS

HENRY..... }
ANNA..... } married fifty years
MARY..... their granddaughter

CONCERNING THEM

Henry and Anna are in their early seventies. They are clean-cut, well-preserved elderly folks. Mary is a lively, pretty girl of about twenty years, nicely dressed.

* * *

SCENE: *Living room.*

STAGE DARK

LIGHTS ON BRIGHT

(Enter MARY, dancing happily between HENRY and ANNA, whose hands she is holding.)

ANNA. Hold on, Mary, hold on. A little slower. We're not as young as we used to be.

HENRY. Feel kinda pert myself today, Anna. *(Starts to skip and gets a rheumatic pain in his leg.)* Ouch!

ANNA. Henry, will you ever be your age?

MARY *(Laughs heartily.)* Now, Gran'ma, and Gran'pa, I want you both to sit right on that davenport and talk over old times. This is your golden wedding anniversary

and it ought to be a lot of fun going back fifty years. Reminiscence is good for the soul. Now you just sit down and play sweethearts again.

ANNA (*Sits.*) Mary, you haven't said yet where Jane and Tom are.

MARY. Gran'ma, your heart is strong, but perhaps I'd better prepare and forewarn you. Mother and Dad are out rounding up some of the family for a party in your honor this afternoon.

HENRY. A party, Anna, just like fifty years ago when we got married. Remember how all the young folks . . .

ANNA. My, my, Henry . . . (*Dabs her eyes with a kerchief.*) . . . we were happy then, weren't we?

HENRY. Not a blame bit happier'n we are now, Anna. (*There is a bit of sadness in his voice.*)

MARY. Here, stop that! We're all trying to make this a hey-dey of merriment, and you two turn on the water-works. Now, Gran'pa, you sit right down before I become very, very angry.

HENRY. Reckon mebbe I'd better, if that's the case. (*Sits beside ANNA.*)

MARY. Now you two just stay put and make love all over again. I'll be seeing you. (*Dances out.*)

HENRY. Gosh! Anna, it seems a mighty long time since we were that young, doesn't it?

ANNA. Oh, I don't know, Henry. Seems to me like these fifty years have slid by pretty fast.

HENRY. Reckon you're right, Anna.

ANNA. Do you remember the first day we were married, Henry, I baked you a black walnut cake?

HENRY. Will I ever forget it!

ANNA. And this is the first anniversary that I haven't baked you a black walnut cake.

HENRY. You wouldn't have missed it this time, Anna, if Mary hadn't insisted that we take it easy.

ANNA. Married fifty years, and every anniversary I baked you a black walnut cake.

HENRY (*Pats her hand.*) Anna, I look back on those black walnut cakes as milestones in my life.

ANNA. And to think that you nearly married my twin sister ahead of me.

HENRY. It was a sort of toss-up between you and Sarah, wasn't it?

ANNA. You never did tell me, Henry, why you selected me instead of Sarah.

HENRY. It always was sort of a foolish thing to talk about, Anna. I guess it was sort of a combination of love and superstition that made me marry you.

ANNA. Superstition of what?

HENRY. Well, I'll tell you. One day I was walking down the street thinking about Anna and Sarah. I saw a cigar lying in the street—done up in a cellophane wrapper. I picked it up, and I'll be blamed if it didn't say on the wrapper, "Hav-anna," so I took Anna. *(They both laugh.)*

ANNA. And then that night you proposed. *(Sighs.)* Oh, Henry! *(Lays her head on his shoulder.)*

HENRY *(Pats her hand.)* After I proposed you sat there for an hour and never opened your mouth.

ANNA. Yes, I remember.

HENRY. Believe me, Anna, when I say that was the happiest hour of my life. *(ANNA leaps to her feet and pounds him with a sofa pillow.)*

LIGHTS OUT

Fifty Dollars Worth of Dog

CHARACTERS

UNCLE HUMPHREY.....very wealthy but philanthropic
BETTYhis sister
JUNIORher boy

Humphrey is a rather pudgy, good-natured, middle-aged man, very well dressed. He has the stamp of wealth all over him. Betty is about thirty-five, attired in a pretty house dress. Junior is a common everyday boy of eleven, nicely dressed, but not overdone.

* * *

SCENE: *Nicely furnished living room.*

STAGE IN TOTAL DARKNESS

STAGE LIGHTS ON BRIGHT

(UNCLE HUMPHREY *is comfortably seated. Near him is seated BETTY.*)

UNCLE HUMPHREY. Now, Betty, once more I am going to appeal to your common sense. I'm wealthy—I never did like the word "rich." I'm very wealthy, comparatively speaking. Everything seems to have turned my way. I am something of a King Midas. I just couldn't seem to avoid the money piling up on me.

BETTY. Please, Humphrey, even though you are my brother I cannot do as you say. Tom wouldn't approve.

UNCLE HUMPHREY. But, my dear sister, why shouldn't I pass some of this money over to you and Tom? I have much more than I will ever need. Tom is a hard working man, and I should think he'd be willing to let me do something for him.

BETTY. One man's principles, Humphrey, are not always understood by another. He would much rather go on his own. It's very nice of you though, Humphrey, and Tom and I both appreciate your most kind offer. I wonder where Junior is. I haven't seen him for two or three hours.

UNCLE HUMPHREY. I wouldn't worry about him, Betty. He'll show up.

BETTY. You said that a moment ago. Do you know where Junior is?

UNCLE HUMPHREY. Well—yes, I do, but I knew if you knew you'd set your foot down on that, too.

BETTY. Humphrey, where is Junior?

UNCLE HUMPHREY. Well, I guess you'll have to know. You've turned me down so many times on this offer I've made to you and Tom, that I've decided to beat around the bush and fix things up for Junior's future.

BETTY. What?

UNCLE HUMPHREY. That's right. But, Betty, it wouldn't do at all—it wouldn't be well to do such a thing without first teaching him some things during his adolescent years.

BETTY. Go on. I'm sure I don't understand.

UNCLE HUMPHREY. First, I started working on his one weakness. He's been coaxing you to buy him a dog.

BETTY. Yes, I know, and heaven help us if he ever brings a dog into this house.

UNCLE HUMPHREY. Dogs are not so bad. In fact, I believe every boy should have a dog.

BETTY. I must disagree with you on that, Humphrey.

UNCLE HUMPHREY. That's because you never had a dog. You have never had the opportunity to learn of their charms.

BETTY. Charms or not, I sincerely hope . . . Oh, well, Junior's a boy, and if he must have a dog, I suppose he must. But what about teaching Junior?

UNCLE HUMPHREY. Well, Betty, Junior and I had a long talk this morning about the value of money, and what could be accomplished with money if handled in the right way. He's a very bright boy, Betty, and to test his business ability I gave him fifty dollars.

BETTY. You—you gave Junior—an eleven-year-old boy fifty dollars?

UNCLE HUMPHREY. Yes, to buy a dog.

BETTY. My stars! Fifty dollars to buy a dog! Why, he's liable to come marching in here with a half ton Saint Bernard. How in the world can buying a dog teach him anything about the value of money?

UNCLE HUMPHREY. In this way, Betty. As I said, I talked for a long time with Junior, explaining all about money before I finally gave him the fifty dollars. Then I said, "Junior, here is fifty dollars. You may use your own judgment entirely in this matter. If you think you want a dog that costs fifty dollars, all well and good. If you want to buy a cheaper dog, and bank the remainder of the money, all well and good. I want you to use your own common sense in the matter. After you think it over you may find something else that will mean more to you than a dog." So he took the fifty dollars and scooted out of here.

BETTY (*Sighs.*) Well, we might as well reconcile ourselves to boarding a dog. With fifty dollars in his hand, and a craving in his heart for a dog, what can the answer be? But I do wish he'd come. (*Enter JUNIOR.*)

JUNIOR. Hey, Ma!

BETTY. Oh, Junior, where in the world have you been?

JUNIOR. Round looking at dogs. Uncle Humphrey gave me fifty . . .

BETTY. Yes, I know all about that. He gave you fifty dollars for a dog. Where's the dog?

UNCLE HUMPHREY. Yes, Junior, I'm as anxious as your mother to know what you did.

JUNIOR. Well, you know, Uncle Humphrey, you said I could spend it all on a dog if I wanted to.

UNCLE HUMPHREY. Yes, I did.

JUNIOR. And you said I might find something else that might mean more to me than a dog.

UNCLE HUMPHREY. I did.

JUNIOR. Well, I found a peach of a dog for fifty dollars, but I finally decided that spending fifty dollars on one measly dog wasn't just right.

BETTY. Oh, Junior, I'm so glad!

JUNIOR. So instead of paying out that fifty bucks on that dog, I went to another store and bought fifty one-dollar dogs. They're sending 'em out. (UNCLE HUMPHREY *makes wry face*. BETTY *slumps in chair*. JUNIOR *is grinning*.)

LIGHTS OUT

A Welcome Reminder

CHARACTERS

BOB..... }
ETTA..... } brother and sister

Both are in their late teens. Nicely dressed.

* * *

SCENE: *Living room.*

STAGE DARK

STAGE LIGHTS ON

(BOB has on hat ready to leave but stands thinking very seriously. Enter ETTA.)

ETTA. Ah! The statue of "The Thinker" standing up.

BOB (*Aroused from a reverie.*) Huh?

ETTA. I thought you were in a rush to get away.

BOB. Believe me, I am, Etta, but I've forgotten something important.

ETTA. Bob, just what is the matter with you? For a week now you've been walking around in a dream. What's her name?

BOB. Aw, go jump in the lake! (*Shrugs his shoulders.*) Well, I might as well sit down till I think of it. (*Removes his hat and carefully lays it on the chair. Then starts to sit on the table.*)

ETTA. Bob! You'll tip over the table.

BOB. Oh, yes, that's right. (*Places the hat on the table and sits in the chair.*)

ETTA. Bob, you didn't used to be like this. What makes you so absent-minded now?

BOB. I'm not absent-minded. Everybody makes mistakes. To err is but human, or something like that.

ETTA. No, you're not absent-minded. (*Laughs.*) What did you do this morning when you left the house?

BOB. What did I do?

ETTA. You kissed the door and slammed Mother.

BOB. You're off your nut, Sis. I . . .

ETTA. And yesterday when you left for school you dropped your collar button.

BOB. I distinctly remember that I did not drop a collar button.

ETTA. And then you rolled under the dresser and waited for the collar button to find you.

BOB. I did not and I can prove it.

ETTA. Yeah?

BOB. When I got to school I discovered that I had forgotten to wear a shirt. (*Scratches his head.*) There's something I should do and I can't go until I think what it is. I'd give fifty dollars if I could think of it.

ETTA. If you had fifty dollars you'd put it in the bank and forget which bank it was in. Go through the alphabet and it may bring it to mind.

BOB. Say, that is a good idea. A-B-C-D-E-F-G-H—H—
Etta, what comes after H?

ETTA. I.

BOB. You?

ETTA. No, I.

BOB. Well, that's what I said—you.

ETTA. H-I-J-K . . .

BOB. L-M-N-O-P-Q-R-S-T—T . . . what comes after T?

ETTA. Gran-ma comes after her tea . . .

BOB. That's a punk joke, but it reminds me I forgot to eat any lunch.

ETTA. Grandma comes after her tea . . .

BOB. That isn't the important thing I forgot. (*Doorbell offstage.*) Get that, please.

ETTA. All right, lazy. (*Exits, but immediately enters with a letter.*) It's for you, Bob.

BOB. Thanks. (*Rips open the letter, reads it and waves arms.*) Hooray! Now I remember. Hooray!

ETTA. Remember what?

BOB. Now I remember what I forgot to remember. This letter, Etta, clears up everything.

ETTA. But what is it?

BOB. Listen. "Dear sir: This letter is to remind you that you have neglected sending in your final payment on the memory course you are taking with us."

LIGHTS OUT

Leave It to Mother

THE CHARACTERS

MOTHER.....who knows a few things, too

OWEN..... her eighteen-year old son

EDNA.....her nineteen-year old daughter

* * *

SCENE: *Living room. Telephone on a small stand.*

STAGE TOTALLY DARK

LIGHTS ON BRIGHT

(OWEN is sprawled lazily in a chair. EDNA is standing beside his chair.)

EDNA. Please, Owen!

OWEN. No! Absolutely, positively, no! I'm put for the evening, and if you don't like it, Sis, you can drag that brand new boy friend of yours off in the moonlight. But you're not going to budge me.

EDNA. I'm too tired to go places tonight, Owen, and I . . .

OWEN. Say, who is this new one?

EDNA. Will you go and let us have the room for the evening?

OWEN. No, I won't.

EDNA. Then I can be as stubborn as you, Owen Weber, and you'll not find out his name from me.

OWEN (*Shrugs his shoulders.*) O. K., Sis. Makes no dif to me.

EDNA. Then you won't get out of here for the evening?

OWEN. You heard me. No! As soon as I get a good book from my room I'm going to take roots and be permanent.

EDNA. Better get a book on how to repair Dad's car that you smashed up this afternoon.

OWEN. I didn't smash Dad's car. It was that big palooka, Red Allen, that banged into me, and believe me, Sis, if the cops hadn't come up when they did I'd have smeared that bird all over the road.

EDNA. Red Allen?

OWEN. Yes, Red Allen! I'd have walloped him so hard . . .

EDNA. Why, Owen, Red Allen could beat you up before you could say "Jack Rabbit."

OWEN (*Stands.*) Huh! Another hero-worshipper, aren't you? Just because he was lucky enough to make a coupla touchdowns you think he can . . . (*Laughs.*) Why, Sis, if I run into that guy there's going to be one more patient in the hospital. (*Enter MOTHER while he is talking.*)

MOTHER. Owen, are you starting another world war?

OWEN. Mother, one haymaker on that matinee idol's kisser and the war would be over before it started. (*Throws back his shoulders and struts from the room.*)

MOTHER (*As she and EDNA laugh.*) Just big boy stuff, Edna.

EDNA. Mother, can you make Owen stay in his room this evening? He insists on staying right here, and I can't entertain Jack Warren with that pestering brother of mine around.

MOTHER. Did you ask him to vacate?

EDNA. I asked him; I begged him; I pleaded with him, but he is *so* stubborn.

MOTHER. Leave it to Mother. (*Goes to the phone.*) M-8-7-3-2, please . . . Hello, Clara. Will you call me back in about one-half minute? . . . Oh, just for fun. I'll tell you later. Goodbye. (*Hangs up the receiver.*) Now, Edna,

watch big brother Owen get out of this room without much hesitation or argument.

EDNA. I don't understand, Mother. (*Enter OWEN with a book. He flops into the chair and is immediately absorbed in the book. Telephone rings. MOTHER goes to the phone.*)

MOTHER. Hello . . . Oh, yes . . . Why, yes, indeed, I will. Goodbye. (*Hangs up the receiver.*)

OWEN (*Showing no interest.*) For me?

MOTHER. For Edna.

EDNA. What was it, Mother?

MOTHER. It was your new boy friend, Edna. He'll be a little late getting here. He's taking his mother somewhere in the car. So you can read a little longer, Owen.

OWEN. A little longer? I'm here for the evening.

MOTHER. Well, of course, it doesn't matter to me if it's all right with Mr. Allen.

OWEN. Huh? Who?

MOTHER. Why, you know Red Allen, don't you? He'll be here soon . . .

OWEN (*Tosses the book on the table and stands.*) Gee! I clean forgot I had to meet Joe. See you later. (*Quickly exits. MOTHER and EDNA laugh heartily.*)

LIGHTS OUT

A Near Tragedy

CHARACTERS

GEORGE BURNS.....waiting, waiting, waiting
JOHN MANDERS.....also waiting
LOIS CRAMM.....who saves the day

George and John are two business men. Lois is a pretty girl of about twenty, nicely dressed for street.

* * *

SCENE: *Some resemblance to an office.*

STAGE DARK

LIGHTS ON

(GEORGE is pacing back and forth, his face haggard, registering extreme agitation. JOHN is seated, disconsolate.)

GEORGE. Why doesn't she come? Oh, why doesn't she come?

JOHN. For heaven's sake, George, stop it! I say, stop it! You're driving me insane! *(Loudly.)* Stop it!

GEORGE. But where is she? *(Looks at his watch.)* Already it is half an hour past the appointed time. *(Stops and glares at JOHN.)* Man, have you no emotion in your makeup? Have you no feeling of . . . ?

JOHN. George, I realize our plight as much as you, but I am trying to at least take it calmly. You gain nothing by infernally pacing back and forth like a lion.

GEORGE. If you were suffering as I am . . .

JOHN. But I *am* suffering. Oh, how I'm suffering! Perhaps in another minute she will . . .

GEORGE. John, what if she has deserted us—gone back on us—doublecrossed . . . ?

JOHN. Stop, George Burns! You cannot honestly say that about her. She has always proved faithful, and you have no right to distrust her now. Perhaps circumstances beyond her control . . .

GEORGE (*Looks at his watch.*) Thirty-five minutes late! Another five minutes of this torture and my nerves will snap like violin strings.

JOHN. Calm yourself, George, calm yourself. You are doing yourself harm by . . .

GEORGE. John Manders, are you senseless to pain? Is there nothing that will upset you? Your never-ending patience is a hideous thing! Oh, why doesn't she come? Why doesn't she come?

JOHN. I'm as anxious as you to have her come, but why carry on when it does no good. (*Phone rings.*)

GEORGE (*Wildly.*) It's Miss Cramm! Get it, John, get it . . . No! Wait! It may be . . . Perhaps she's in trouble. Let me answer it! (*To the phone.*) Hello! Hello! (*Returns the receiver.*) Wrong number. (*Paces.*)

JOHN. *Will* you stop this racing back and forth? You go and I'll remain here.

GEORGE. Never, John Manders, never! I wouldn't desert you at a time like this.

JOHN. Go, George, go.

GEORGE. Never. When you go, I go. Not before. I know—I realize you are suffering as much as I. I will try to be quiet, John. I'll sit down. (*Sits. Then leaps to his feet and listens.*) Did you hear that? Listen! Feet in the hall! Listen! Her feet! They're coming this way! (*Enter Lois.*)

LOIS. Am I late?

GEORGE (*Exploding.*) Late? Are you late? Forty minutes late! Tomorrow you be here at twelve to look after the office. Come on, John, let's go eat.

LIGHTS OUT

Tit for Tat

CHARACTERS

SMITH *and* JONES

Smith is about thirty, rather nicely dressed. He carries a shotgun. Jones is about 45, is dressed in overalls, blue flannel shirt, floppy felt hat. Also carries a shotgun.

* * *

SCENE: *Woods drop.*

DARK STAGE

LIGHTS ON

(JONES *is standing with a gun leaning against him while he lights his pipe. Enter SMITH.*)

SMITH (*Breezily.*) Hello!

JONES (*Puffing on his pipe.*) Howdy, stranger! How's tricks?

SMITH. Fine. Hunting?

JONES. Well, you can't say I'm pickin' cocoanuts.

SMITH. Hardly. Seems to be a fine place for hunting around here, doesn't it?

JONES. Toler'ble.

SMITH. Have any luck?

JONES. Plenty of it.

SMITH. Mind telling me?

JONES. Well, sonny, I shot fourteen squirrels this morn-

in', besides eight rabbits an' two pheasants. This afternoon I plunked eight quail and a wild turkey.

SMITH. Say, that's what I'd call shooting.

JONES. Kinda thought so myself. But take it all in all, they're none better with a gun that I ever met up with.

SMITH. What was that list again?

JONES. Fourteen squirrels, eight rabbits, two pheasants, eight quails and a wild turkey. By the way, Mr. . . .

JONES. Jones is my name. What's yours?

SMITH. Smith. And, by the way, do you know who I am?

JONES. Can't say I do.

SMITH. Well, I happen to be the game warden.

JONES (*Laughs.*) Well, Mr. Smith, do you know who I am?

JONES. Well, I happen to be the biggest liar in the state. (*Laughs heartily.*)

SMITH (*Laughs.*) Perhaps I'd better lay claim to that title myself. You see, I was just sounding you out. I'm not a game warden.

JONES. You're not?

SMITH. No, I should say not. But it happens I did a lot of shooting back here a ways, and not being open season, I got a bit leary.

JONES. What did you get?

SMITH. Twelve quail and eight squirrels.

JONES (*Laughs.*) Gosh, you sure had me scared for a bit when you said you was the game warden. (*Sobers.*) Say, sonny, it doesn't happen that you *are* the game warden, does it?

SMITH (*Laughs.*) If I had been I wouldn't have dared shoot twelve quail and eight squirrels. No, I'm not the game warden.

JONES (*Displaying the star inside of his overall bib.*) Well, I am.

LIGHTS OUT

The Passing of Bruno

CHARACTERS

HIGGINS.....a farmer
LARRY.....his boy
JONES.....a motorist

COSTUMES

Higgins wears overalls, flannel shirt, and an old felt hat. He carries a shotgun. Larry, a boy of fourteen, wears overalls, an old coat and a cap. Jones is dressed in a business suit.

* * *

SCENE: *Any scene that gives the impression of a rural exterior.*

DARK STAGE

STAGE LIGHTS ON

(Enter HIGGINS and LARRY, Right, HIGGINS carrying a shotgun. At Center they stop, looking off Left.)

HIGGINS *(Whistling for a dog and then calling to off Left.)* Bruno, come back here!

LARRY. He ran out on the highway, Pa.

HIGGINS. I see he did, Larry, an' a feller ain't got much chance the way them durn fool city fellers drive on that road. *(Calls.)* Bruno! Come back here. That blame fool

dog'll get killed out there sure'n shootin'. He's gettin's too consarned old to dodge them cars. Look out, Bruno!
(*Sound of squeaking brakes off Left.*)

LARRY. Look, Pa! That man hit him! Ran over him, Pa!

HIGGINS. Gosh! Well, one thing, he's man enough to stop an' git out'n his car.

LARRY. He's coming over here, Pa. (*Enter JONES, Left.*)

JONES. Hello.

HIGGINS. Howdy.

JONES. I suppose you saw me run over the dog?

HIGGINS. Yep, we seen you.

JONES. I really couldn't avoid striking him. I was going pretty fast, and the dog . . .

HIGGINS. Bruno ain't as spry as he used to be. Used to be the fastest crittur that ever chased a rabbit.

JONES. Of course I'm willing to pay any damages. It was your dog, wasn't it?

HIGGINS. Yep, we raised him from a pup.

JONES. I'm certainly sorry it happened. Looks like he might have been a pretty good dog in his day.

HIGGINS. None better, stranger.

LARRY. Well, he's gone now, Pa.

HIGGINS. Yes, Larry, a dog-gone good dog gone.

JONES (*Takes a pocketbook from his pocket.*) If you had been wanting to sell him, what would you have asked for him?

HIGGINS. Gosh, I dunno. Never thought nothin' about sellin' him.

JONES. Although it was really not my fault that he was struck, I'm perfectly willing to pay. He came from behind that clump of bushes and hobbled directly in the path of the car. I had no chance whatever of dodging him.

HIGGINS. I seen how it happened, stranger, an' I ain't a-blamin' you none a-tall.

JONES. Well, now, let me see. Would you be satisfied if I gave you . . . Well, would twenty dollars be satisfactory to you?

HIGGINS. Yes, siree, I'd be mighty satisfied if you gimme twenty dollars.

JONES (*Hands bills to HIGGINS.*) Well, there you are, twenty dollars. I'm indeed sorry about the affair.

HIGGINS. Thanks, stranger, thanks. Come on, Larry, we've got to go home an' git a shovel to bury Bruno. So long, stranger. (*Exits Right.*)

JONES. So long. (*To LARRY.*) And, sonny, here's a little present for you. A whole dollar.

LARRY. Gee, thanks, Mister.

JONES. And don't feel bad about the dog. Perhaps your father will get you another one. But I am sorry that your hunting trip was cut short.

LARRY. Oh, we weren't going hunting.

JONES. No?

LARRY. Nope. Me and Pa was going over to the marsh to shoot Bruno.

LIGHTS OUT

Being Poor Is No Disgrace

CHARACTERS

GENE.....
GRACE..... } sisters
DICK RAYMOND.....who gets an earful

Gene and Grace are seventeen and eighteen years old respectively. Both the neatly attired in pretty house dresses. Dick is about eighteen, nice looking, and well-dressed. He carries a brief case.

* * *

SCENE: *Living room. Telephone conveniently located.*

STAGE DARK

LIGHTS ON

(GENE is on, lolling in a chair. Looks off Left.)

GENE (*To offstage.*) For heaven's sake, Grace, get away from that window, will you?

GRACE. Tut-tut!

GENE. What?

GRACE. I said, tut-tut.

GENE. You'll get squinty-eyed trying to see that new family next door. Come away before they catch you spying on them. (*Enter GRACE, Left.*)

GRACE. But Mother said they were such nice looking people, and looked to be very well to do.

GENE. Mother says that about everybody. You're plain noseey.

GRACE. I am not. I'm just interested. Love thy neighbors as thyself . . .

GENE. But I don't think much of myself. (*Telephone rings.*) Get that, Grace.

GRACE (*To the phone.*) Hello. Oh, Mother, where are you? . . . What? . . . The tax assessor? . . . He's coming here? . . . We should what, Mother? . . . Tell him we're very poor? . . . But . . . Oh, is that the way they do it? . . . All right, Mother. 'Bye! (*Hangs up receiver.*)

GENE. What was it, Grace?

GRACE. Mother is across the street at Mrs. Thornton's, and she says the tax assessor is calling at the houses on this street assessing household goods.

GENE. Well, what about it?

GRACE. She wanted to warn us not to uphold the value of our belongings. The more they're assessed by this man the more taxes Daddy will have to pay on them.

GENE. And then what?

GRACE. Don't you see, Gene? She wants us to undervalue everything and give the assessor the impression that we are quite poor.

GENE. We might carry everything up into the attic and let him see for himself how poor we are.

GRACE. There's no time for that now. Mother said he would be here most any minute. You're better at lying than I, so I'll beat it and let you do the talking.

GENE. You'll do nothing of the kind. While I'm doing the lying you'll be peeking through the curtain at the house next door. You're going to stay right here with me.

GRACE (*Sighs.*) Oh, all right. (*Sits.*) Now for instance, we'll tell that assessor this rug cost a dollar and a half, and . . .

GENE. Oh, you have to stay within reason. We'll say this rug cost—well, forty dollars instead of two hundred fifty. And the radio—well, we bought that second-hand for—for . . .

GRACE. Three-ninety-eight.

GENE. Who said I could lie better than you? The radio cost eleven dollars and it isn't half paid for yet. And the chairs . . . (*Doorbell rings off Right.*)

GRACE. Well, there he is. Can't I go peek out of the window?

GENE. You go peek out of the door. If he has a bunch of papers under his arm you might as well let him in. If you don't he'll come back later, and maybe at an inopportune time.

GRACE. O. K. (*Exits Right. GENE quickly snatches articles from the table and hides them behind the davenport or the chair. Enter GRACE, Right, followed by DICK, who is carrying his brief case. GRACE motions to the chair.*) Please sit down and take a good look.

DICK. Thank you. (*Sits.*) I . . .

GENE. Yes, we know. Now in the first place, there is no use wasting time. We're as poor as Job's turkey, or the proverbial church mouse. This rug is getting very old and frayed and isn't worth much. When new it cost only—only—how much did I say, Grace?

GRACE. Eleven dollars, and isn't half paid for yet.

GENE. No, that was the radio.

DICK. But it isn't necessary to tell me that, you know. You see . . .

GENE. But it is necessary. The depression just about cleaned us out. Dad is in debt up to his ears, and what we have is heavily covered by—by—I think it's a chattel mortgage. Of course you'll want to see the other rooms in the house, but I might as well tell you the new electric refrigerator isn't paid for and Daddy says they'll have to come and take it back. The new gas range isn't paid for, either.

DICK (*Takes some papers from the case.*) As I was going to say . . .

GRACE. Let him write that down, Gene.

GENE. But I wanted to tell him about Dad. Daddy's job is liable to go pop any day. His salary has been cut so

many times . . . Well, you'd be alarmed if you really knew how we live. Cornmeal mush three times a day.

GRACE. But of course, you tax assessors don't realize . . .

DICK. Why, I'm not a tax assessor.

GIRLS. What?

DICK. I'm Dick Raymond from next door. I'm being transferred to your high school and I wanted some information about it. (*Girls are "sunk".*)

LIGHTS OUT

Misinformed

CHARACTERS

DELORES.....
GERTRUDE..... } girl friends
PROFESSOR VAN DE WERT.....a caller

TYPES

Gertrude and Delores are girls about seventeen. Typical high school girls. Professor Van de Wert is a middle-aged man, nicely dressed in clothes that characterize a learned man. Is very dignified.

* * *

SCENE: *Living room setting.*

STAGE TOTALLY DARK

LIGHTS ON

(GERTRUDE *is on reading a magazine. Enter DELORES.*)

DELORES. Hello!

GERTRUDE (*Startled.*) Oh! Oh, Delores, you frightened me!

DELORES. May I come in?

GERTRUDE. You're in.

DELORES. May I sit down?

GERTRUDE (*Laughs.*) You may, Delores. (DELORES *sits.*)
Where are your books? I thought you and I were to do our home work together this evening?

DELORES. That's all off, Gertrude. I'm going over to

Ruth's. She's going to show me how to make a new kind of salad. I dropped in to see if you would like to go along.

GERTRUDE. I'd love to, Delores, but—well, I can't go until Professor Van de Wert calls.

DELORES. Professor Van de What?

GERTRUDE. Not Van de What—Van de Wert? He's calling to see Mother about forming a new literary club of some kind. Mother was called away for about half an hour, and I have orders to remain here until she returns just in case the professor arrives.

DELORES. Then you will go with me when your mother returns?

GERTRUDE. Surely. Salad beats home work, doesn't it?

DELORES. Is this professor young or old, and if he is young, is he nice looking?

GERTRUDE. Mother didn't say. The fact is, she has never met him herself. So I don't know whether he is eccentric and absent-minded, or . . . Oh, yes, Mother did say that she understood that he was very, very deaf.

DELORES. How will you talk to him?

GERTRUDE. I can make motions. (*Bell rings offstage.*) That must be the professor now. Excuse me. (*She exits.*) Enter GERTRUDE, followed by PROFESSOR VAN DE WERT. He bows silently to DELORES. GERTRUDE takes his hat and coat and lays them on the chair.)

GERTRUDE (*To PROFESSOR.*) Mother will be back directly. (*Motions to the chair and PROFESSOR sits without saying anything.*)

DELORES (*To GERTRUDE.*) He must be awfully deaf.

GERTRUDE. Terribly so! I hardly know how to entertain him.

DELORES. He appears as if he didn't expect to be entertained.

GERTRUDE (*As she sits beside Delores.*) Delores, don't look directly at him now, but notice what a funny little shaped nose he has.

DELORES. I did notice it. Don't you look, either, but notice how he combs his hair. It looks like a clothes brush.

GERTRUDE. Maybe he can read our lips. Most deaf people can read lips, you know. Talk sort of sideways. Like this. (*Talks from the side of her mouth.*) Does he look like a real professor to you?

DELORES. My stars, no. He looks more like an old clothes collector.

GERTRUDE. I can't imagine Mother ever picking him out to start a literary club.

DELORES. Of course you can never tell. Looks are so deceiving. You often find delicious apples beneath a homely skin.

GERTRUDE. I wonder if he would be more talkative if he were not so deaf.

PROFESSOR. You girls must have been misinformed. It is my brother who is deaf. (*Girls are extremely embarrassed.*)

LIGHTS OUT

He's Not So Dumb

CHARACTERS

MRS. LONG.....Junior's mother
JUNIOR.....the boy
MR. FISH.....a caller

ABOUT THEM

Mrs. Long is a pretty woman in neat house dress. She is about thirty-five years old. Junior is a typical American boy about ten years old. Mr. Fish is a very wishy-washy man of about thirty. Immaculately attired.

* * *

SCENE: *None required.*

STAGE IS DARK

STAGE IS LIGHTED

(MRS. LONG is seated. She may be reading. Enter JUNIOR, Left.)

JUNIOR. Ma, can I go play ball?

MOTHER. Not now, Junior. Mr. Fish is calling shortly and I'd like to have you here to help entertain him.

JUNIOR. What d'you want me to do, stand on my head or something?

MOTHER. Hardly that, Junior.

JUNIOR. Then what?

MOTHER. Well, Junior, perhaps I should not be saying such things, but Mr. Fish is such an uninteresting sort of person that I need your help to — well, to make things easier for me.

JUNIOR. What's he want here? Dad isn't here.

MOTHER. Well, you see, Junior, Mr. Fish is forming a literary club and he wants me to become a member.

JUNIOR. Literary club! Plop-plop! Why doesn't he get up a baseball club or something like that?

MOTHER (*Laughs.*) When once you've seen Mr. Fish you will understand that he isn't that type of man at all. He's literary, but nothing else, and possesses a very high opinion of himself.

JUNIOR. Are you joining?

MOTHER. No, Junior, your father is not in favor of it.

JUNIOR. Maybe Dad thinks you belong to too many clubs now.

MOTHER. It isn't that. Your father doesn't like Mr. Fish. He thinks he's too "wishy-washy."

JUNIOR. Say, Ma.

MOTHER. Well, what is it?

JUNIOR. Is he the guy Dad was talking about last night at the table?

MOTHER. Yes, I believe he did say some things not so complimentary about Mr. Fish. (*Doorbell or knock off Right.*) That must be he now.

JUNIOR. Last call, Ma. Can I go play ball?

MOTHER. Last answer, Junior. You may not. And, Junior, because I'll not let you play ball I don't want you cutting any funny didos while Mr. Fish is here.

JUNIOR. O. K., Ma.

MOTHER. And don't forget. (*Exits Right. JUNIOR jams his hands deep into his pockets and plainly registers his displeasure. Enter MOTHER, followed by MR. FISH.*) Mr. Fish, this is my boy, Harold Junior.

MR. FISH (*Holds out hand daintily, which JUNIOR reluctantly accepts.*) What a sweet little boy!

JUNIOR (*Jerks hand away.*) Thank you. And what a sweet little man!

MOTHER (*Reprimandily.*) Junior! Please have a chair, Mr. Fish.

MR. FISH. Thank you, Mrs. Long. (*Sits.*)

JUNIOR. Ma, may I be excused?

MOTHER. You may, but do not leave the house.

JUNIOR. O. K. (*Exits Left.*)

MR. FISH. I presume, Mrs. Long, you have thought over what I said a few days ago relative to the formation of a literary club?

MOTHER. Well, yes, in a way I have.

MR. FISH. I can assure you, Mrs. Long, that you will benefit greatly by becoming a member, especially since I will conduct the meetings and personally review the books. My wide experience along this line . . . (*Enter JUNIOR, Left, with small paper bag. He goes directly to MR. FISH.*)

JUNIOR (*Holds bag near MR. FISH's face.*) What's in the bag?

MR. FISH (*Looks in the bag.*) Why, my child, those are beans.

JUNIOR. Gosh, Ma, he does know.

MOTHER. Junior, what do you mean?

JUNIOR. Dad said Mr. Fish didn't know beans when the bag is open.

LIGHTS OUT

Some of Them Begin Young

CHARACTERS

| | |
|------------|------------|
| SPUD | a newsboy |
| RED..... | a beginner |
| SMITH..... | a customer |

CHARACTERS AND DRESS

Spud is a typical newsboy. Makeshift clothes. Cap on the side of his head. Has a paper bag hanging from his shoulder. Red, a freckle-faced, red-headed boy somewhat smaller than Spud is also attired in a soiled, misfit suit and cap. Also has paper bag. Smith is a well-dressed business man.

* * *

SCENE: *None required.*

STAGE DARK

LIGHTS ON

(RED, a newspaper in his hand, is standing silently looking to offstage as though he were afraid to call his wares. Enter SPUD.)

SPUD. How yuh comin', Red?

RED. N. G., Spud. Ain't sold nothin'.

SPUD. Nothin'? Cripes! Yuh couldn't do any worse if yuh were tryin' to sell battleships. What d'yuh think you are, a statue?

RED. Well, nobody wants a paper.

SPUD. Course, they don't. Yuh got to make 'em think they wants it. You ain't yellin' loud 'nough. (*Points to offstage.*) See that bird leanin' against that buildin' over there?

RED. Yeah.

SPUD. Didja see him before I points?

RED. Naw.

SPUD. Course, yuh didn't. He wasn't makin' no noise. If he'd been yellin' you'd o' knowed he was there, wouldn't yuh?

RED. I git yuh, Spud.

SPUD. Folks ain't payin' no attention to yuh 'less you're makin' a lot o' noise. Yell 'em out! Tell 'em what's in de paper, an' if there's nothin' in de paper tell 'em there is anyway. Listen, Red. I'm turnin' this corner over to you, but cripes, if yuh ain't intendin' to do no business yuh can't keep it, see? I'm gettin' a chain o' yuh guys on the job just like a lot o' chain stores, an' if yuh don't make good, out yuh go. See? Now yell.

RED (*Weakly, as he holds out paper and looks to offstage.*) Paper! Paper! Buy a paper!

SPUD. Naw, that ain't right. Listen to me, Red, an' learn somethin'. (*Yells raucously.*) Paper! Evenin' paper! All about the mummumuguma! All . . .

RED. About what, Spud?

SPUD. That's just part o' de noise, Red. Folks don't know what you're yellin' an' they buys a paper to find out. See? Now try it ag'in.

RED (*A bit louder.*) Paper! Evenin' paper! All about the mummumumu . . . Spud, what was it all about?

SPUD. Cripes, Red! It don't make no dif'rence what it's all about. Just yell somethin', an' yell loud. The louder yuh yell the less folks know what you're yellin' an' the more they'll buy. See?

RED. I get yuh, Spud. (*Yells.*) Paper! Evenin' paper! Mummumumum! Whoop-ee! Rah! Rah! Rah!

SPUD. Fer the love o' Mike! You ain't seein' a football game. You're sellin' papers.

RED. Yuh said to make a lot o' noise, didn' yuh?

SPUD. But yuh got to make the right kind o' noise. You'll be poundin' on a washtub next. Yell your head off, but yell about somethin'. Git 'em interested in de paper an' they'll buy 'em. See? Now hop to it. I got 'o beat it. An' if yuh can't sell 'em I'll git somebody what kin, see?

RED. O. K., Spud.

SPUD. Here comes a swell-lookin' bozo. Git him. So long. (*Runs off. Enter SMITH.*)

RED. Paper! Evenin' paper! Bigges' fraud in de world! One hundred an' ten victims! A hundred an' ten victims!

SMITH. Here, boy.

RED. Yes, sir. (*Hands him a paper and receives a coin.*) Thanks, Mister.

SMITH (*Quickly scans the front of the paper.*) Here, boy! There's nothing here about a fraud.

RED (*Walking away, yelling.*) Big fraud! One hundred an' *eleven* victims! A hundred an' *eleven* victims!

LIGHTS OUT

Just Ask Father

CHARACTERS

WILLIE.....who wants to know things
FATHER.....who knows things
MOTHER.....who isn't so sure

Willie is about ten years old, and a common everyday boy. Father and Mother are about thirty-five.

* * *

SCENE: *None required.*

(FATHER is seated comfortably reading. MOTHER may be reading or sewing.)

FATHER. I see here in the paper that foreign exchange is causing more worry on Wall Street.

MOTHER. I never read those things because I don't understand them.

FATHER. You should, my dear. I've explained them so often to you, but you don't seem to get what I mean. Now, for instance, if our dollar is worth fifty cents in this country, and the English pound is worth five dollars, then the French franc is changed so that its value is balanced with the average set by the dollar and the pound. In other words, if . . . (*Enter WILLIE with books and papers.*)

WILLIE. Was it Balboa who discovered the Mississippi River, Mother, or was it Lord Baltimore? (*FATHER quickly*

buries his face in his paper so he will not have to answer.)

MOTHER. I don't remember, Willie. I think your father can tell you. He knows history like a book. (*Smiles mischievously.*)

FATHER. What was the question, my boy?

WILLIE. Was it Balboa or Lord Baltimore who discovered the Mississippi River?

FATHER. My dear boy, I'm surprised. It was Balboa.

WILLIE. That's funny. You see, the teacher wanted us to ask our parents about it.

FATHER. It was Balboa who discovered the Mississippi. Now run along.

WILLIE. But my history says it was De Soto.

FATHER. Oh, well, of course, historians differ on that, too.

MOTHER. When you get older, Willie, and want to know about high finance and foreign exchange your father can help you a lot. (*Laughs.*)

FATHER. My dear, sarcasm is the lowest form of wit, and not at all suitable to the ears of adolescent youth. Psychology teaches us that the adolescent mind is plastic. I have studied psychology and I . . .

WILLIE. We had that word in class today and nobody could spell it. How do you spell it, Daddy?

FATHER. Psychology? Why, s-y-p—I mean s-y-e-h—What's the matter with me? I can't seem to say what is on my mind. Psychology. P-s-y . . .

MOTHER. P-s-y-c-h-o-l-o-g-y.

FATHER. Now, dear, that wasn't a nice thing to do. He asked me to spell it. You took it right off the end of my tongue.

WILLIE. Can you spell it now, Daddy?

FATHER. There is no use repeating it since your mother spelled it correctly. Now run along. I want to read. (*MOTHER bursts out laughing.*) What is so funny, if I may ask?

MOTHER. Your spelling sometimes amuses me.

FATHER. My dear, I've been away from school for some

time. When I was younger nobody had anything on me when it came to spelling.

MOTHER. If I remember correctly your spelling *was* quite original. At the bottom of the first love letter you ever wrote me you spelled "sincerely" with two I's.

FATHER. Bah! Just a slip of the pen. (*Resumes his reading.*)

WILLIE. There's one thing more I'd like to ask before I go to bed.

MOTHER. Yes, dear?

WILLIE. It's about natural philosophy.

MOTHER. Laying all joking aside, Willie, this is one thing your father does understand.

FATHER (*Looking up quickly.*) What was that?

WILLIE. I would like someone to explain about natural philosophy.

FATHER. Willie, I will explain briefly. Ahem! In the first place, natural philosophy is the science of cause and reason. Do you understand?

WILLIE. Oh, yes. Go on.

FATHER. For instance, you see an apple fall downward from a tree. Do you know why it falls downward and not up?

WILLIE. That's gravity.

FATHER. You are right. Now, another instance. You see the steam coming out of the spout of a kettle but you do not know why or for what reason it does come out.

WILLIE. The heck I don't! The reason the steam comes out of the kettle is so that mother can open your letters without you knowing it.

LIGHTS OUT

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