

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Copyright Protection. This play (the “Play”) is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations, whether through bilateral or multilateral treaties or otherwise, and including, but not limited to, all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention, and the Berne Convention.

Reservation of Rights. All rights to this Play are strictly reserved, including, without limitation, professional and amateur stage performance rights; motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video, and sound recording rights; rights to all other forms of mechanical or electronic reproduction now known or yet to be invented, such as CD-ROM, CD-I, DVD, photocopying, and information storage and retrieval systems; and the rights of translation into non-English languages.

Performance Licensing and Royalty Payments. Amateur and stock performance rights to this Play are controlled exclusively by Playscripts, Inc. (“Playscripts”). No amateur or stock production groups or individuals may perform this Play without obtaining advance written permission from Playscripts. Required royalty fees for performing this Play are specified online at the Playscripts website (www.playscripts.com). Such royalty fees may be subject to change without notice. Although this book may have been obtained for a particular licensed performance, such performance rights, if any, are not transferable. Required royalties must be paid every time the Play is performed before any audience, whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. All licensing requests and inquiries concerning amateur and stock performance rights should be addressed to Playscripts (see contact information on opposite page).

Inquiries concerning all other rights should be addressed to Playscripts, as well; such inquiries will be communicated to the author and the author’s agent, as applicable.

Restriction of Alterations. There shall be no deletions, alterations, or changes of any kind made to the Play, including the changing of character gender, the cutting of dialogue, or the alteration of objectionable language, unless directly authorized by Playscripts. The title of the Play shall not be altered.

Author Credit. Any individual or group receiving permission to produce this Play is required to give credit to the author as the sole and exclusive author of the Play. This obligation applies to the title page of every program distributed in connection with performances of the Play, and in any instance that the title of the Play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing, or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production thereof. The name of the author must appear on a separate line, in which no other name appears, immediately beneath the title and of a font size at least 50% as large as the largest letter used in the title of the Play. No person, firm, or entity may receive credit larger or more prominent than that accorded the author. The name of the author may not be abbreviated or otherwise altered from the form in which it appears in this Play.

Publisher Attribution. All programs, advertisements, and other printed material distributed or published in connection with the amateur or stock production of the Play shall include the following notice:

Produced by special arrangement with Playscripts, Inc.
(www.playscripts.com)

Prohibition of Unauthorized Copying. Any unauthorized copying of this book or excerpts from this book is strictly forbidden by law. Except as otherwise permitted by applicable law, no part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means now known or yet to be invented, including, without limitation, photocopying or scanning, without prior permission from Playscripts.

Statement of Non-affiliation. This Play may include references to brand names and trademarks owned by third parties, and may include references to public figures. Playscripts is not necessarily affiliated with these public figures, or with the owners of such trademarks and brand names. Such references are included solely for parody, political comment, or other permitted purposes.

Permissions for Sound Recordings and Musical Works. This Play may contain directions calling for the performance of a portion, or all, of a musical work, or performance of a sound recording of a musical work. Playscripts has not obtained permissions to perform such works. The producer of this Play is advised to obtain such permissions, if required in the context of the production. The producer is directed to the websites of the U.S. Copyright Office (www.copyright.gov), ASCAP (www.ascap.com), BMI (www.bmi.com), and NMPA (www.nmpa.org) for further information on the need to obtain permissions, and on procedures for obtaining such permissions.

The Rules in Brief

- 1) Do NOT perform this Play without obtaining prior permission from Playscripts, and without paying the required royalty.
- 2) Do NOT photocopy, scan, or otherwise duplicate any part of this book.
- 3) Do NOT alter the text of the Play, change a character's gender, delete any dialogue, or alter any objectionable language, unless explicitly authorized by Playscripts.
- 4) DO provide the required credit to the author and the required attribution to Playscripts in all programs and promotional literature associated with any performance of this Play.

For more details on these and other rules, see the opposite page.

Copyright Basics

This Play is protected by United States and international copyright law. These laws ensure that playwrights are rewarded for creating new and vital dramatic work, and protect them against theft and abuse of their work.

A play is a piece of property, fully owned by the playwright, just like a house or car. You must obtain permission to use this property, and must pay a royalty fee for the privilege—*whether or not you charge an admission fee*. Playscripts collects these required payments on behalf of the author.

Anyone who violates an author's copyright is liable as a copyright infringer under United States and international law. Playscripts and the author are entitled to institute legal action for any such infringement, which can subject the infringer to actual damages, statutory damages, and attorney's fees. A court may impose statutory damages of up to \$150,000 for willful copyright infringements. U.S. copyright law also provides for possible criminal sanctions. Visit the website of the U.S. Copyright Office (www.copyright.gov) for more information.

THE BOTTOM LINE: If you break copyright law, you are robbing a playwright and opening yourself to expensive legal action. Follow the rules, and when in doubt, ask us.

Playscripts, Inc.
450 Seventh Ave, Suite 809
New York, NY 10123

toll-free phone: 1-866-NEW-PLAY
email: info@playscripts.com
website: www.playscripts.com

*A bow to the original players, whose first names serve as the characters'
first names in this adaptation:*

John Cumberland

Janet Beecher

Ralph Morgan

Madge Kennedy

Hamilton Revelle

Olive May

Robert Fisher

Harry Lorraine

Staged by Robert Milton

Produced by Selwyn & Company

Opened at the Eltinge Theatre, New York City, 6 November 1915

Cast of Characters

JOHN “JOHNNY” BARTLETT, a banker

JANET BARTLETT, his wife

RALPH WHEELER, a broker

MARGARET “MADGE” WHEELER, his wife

HAMILTON EVANS, a playboy

OLIVE / TESSIE, the Bartlett’s maid

FISHER, a mover

HARRY MEALY, the mover’s helper

Time and Place

November, 1915. The Bartlett apartment in Gramercy Park, New York City.

Synopsis of Scenes

Act One: The drawing-room. Eight p.m. What happened first.

Act Two: The same. Six hours later. What happened then.

Act Three: The Bartlett’s bedroom. The next morning. And then—
what happened.

(For an ensemble of sharp farceurs. Smartly played, a curtain at eight rings down about ten.)

Note

An alternative ending, notes on the period, a set plot, and Avery Hopwood's biography, are provided at the end of the play.

Just an "Inside" Note

The "favorite" first names the characters choose at the end of the play are their original character names. The surnames of the characters are unchanged from the original. This information should not be listed in the program.

FAIR AND WARMER
A FARCE OF TEMPERAMENT AND TEMPERATURE

In Three Breezes
Begins with a Zephyr and Ends with a Whirlwind

adapted by Jack Sharrar

FROM AVERY HOPWOOD'S HIT COMEDY

ACT I

(November, 1915. Drawing room of the Bartlett apartment in Gramercy Park, New York City. Eight p.m. JANET BARTLETT sits, smoking, hopelessly bored reading "Smart Set" magazine. Perhaps playing the Victrola will raise her spirits. She goes to the Victrola but doesn't play it. The doorbell rings once. JANET welcomes a possible diversion, but does not anticipate HAMILTON EVANS.)

HAMILTON. *(Off stage:)* Is Mrs. Bartlett home?

(JANET is thrilled.)

OLIVE. *(Off stage, blasé:)* I think so, sir.

HAMILTON. *(Off stage, spiritedly:)* May I see her?

OLIVE. *(Off stage:)* I'll see, sir.

(OLIVE enters blasé and announces HAMILTON EVANS.)

Mrs. Bartlett, Mr. Evans is calling.

JANET. Ask him to come in, Olive.

OLIVE. Yes, ma'm.

(Exits in the same blasé manner.)

HAMILTON. Janet!

JANET. Milt! What a nice surprise!

HAMILTON. To see me? You haven't seen much else these last few

weeks, have you?

JANET. One can't see too much of a good thing.

HAMILTON. The "Good Thing" thanks you. And wants to entice you to go to the opera with him tonight. He won a couple of tickets at the club.

JANET. My savior! Love to!

HAMILTON. If you'll just wait, then, I'll run around to my place and get into some clothes.

JANET. Wait? I have to get into my clothes, too.

HAMILTON. Won't that do?

JANET. No. Besides—if there's any waiting to be done, you're going to do it! (*With a sudden thought:*) Won't we be awfully late, though?

HAMILTON. Plenty of time. It's only eight. If we get there by half past nine or ten...

JANET. Half-past nine, or ten! What are they singing?

HAMILTON. *Siegfried.*

JANET. Oh, then it doesn't matter what time we get there. *Siegfried* always begins before you arrive, and ends after you leave.

HAMILTON. I thought we might sit through an act, or so, and then go to Riccardo's and dance for a while.

JANET. Lovely.

HAMILTON. But Johnny won't mind, will he? I mean, you're going to Riccardo's?

JANET. John never minds anything—you know that. Besides, he's not home. He phoned from the bank. There's a director's meeting or some tedious thing.

HAMILTON. Well, then, you might offer me a liqueur.

JANET. (*Beat.*) I do offer you a liqueur. What shall it be?

HAMILTON. What do you offer?

JANET. Anything—you know, I've a perfect bar in there. It's the only way to be a successful hostess. Give them a lot to drink, and they don't know if it's their taster or the taste.

HAMILTON. Now, Jan, you're a wonderful cook—when you do cook.

JANET. Which isn't much, with John at the bank all the time.

HAMILTON. Of course, Johnny doesn't drink, does he? You have to get the spice just right!

JANET. John and spice are oxymoron. No, he never drinks anything. So, what shall it be?

HAMILTON. I think I'd like a little apricot brandy, if I may?

JANET. You may.

HAMILTON. Umm, I like these cigarettes, where's Johnny get them?

JANET. He doesn't get them—I get them!

HAMILTON. It's crazy that you ever married him, you know? Light?

JANET. Two years it's been.

HAMILTON. Jan...

(They exchange a moment.)

JANET. You'd better be running along if we're going to hear any of *Siegfried*.

HAMILTON. The last time we heard Wagner we were in Vienna. *Tristan and Isolde*. The coffee house in the *Graben*...

JANET. Milt—if I'm to dress...

HAMILTON. All right, I'll vamoose. *(Noticing the Victrola:)* Hey, when did you get that?

JANET. Yesterday. John thought it'd be nice for dancing.

HAMILTON. Johnny dances?

JANET. I'm not going to say it again. John doesn't do...

HAMILTON. Anything.

JANET. It's for me to dance by. And our guests.

HAMILTON. Then let this guest show you a new step. (*Getting a record:*) Here, this one ought to be good.

(He plays the recording.)

JANET. (*Laughingly:*) "Hold Me In Your Loving Arms."

(They dance. HAMILTON kisses JANET.)

Milt!

(She quickly stops the Victrola.)

HAMILTON. Jan. I couldn't help it. You must know...

JANET. I don't want to know. It was April three years ago in Vienna. It's November now in New York—and I'm married.

HAMILTON. (*Sympathetically:*) And you're not happy.

JANET. I didn't say I was "happy"—I said I was married!

HAMILTON. If it hadn't been for that childish, stupid quarrel back then, you'd be married now—to me!

JANET. It wasn't "stupid." It wasn't "childish." (*Beat.*) You made love to that brazen—I won't even mention it—before my very eyes!

HAMILTON. It was only a glance, a couple of times, at a poor little girl—

JANET. Little? Her breastplate was bigger than Tristan's!

HAMILTON. You broke off our engagement over a harmless flirtation! She meant nothing to me. Spoiled my life—and yours!

JANET. If it had only been one girl! But it was dozens of girls. Hundreds of girls. Every girl you saw! That one in the *Graben* was simply the “last straw.” And a good, hefty straw at that!

HAMILTON. Jan, Jan, let’s calm down. I know I may have “looked about” a bit—but there’s never been anyone except you. (*Beat.*) If only you had waited. We would have found our senses again. I looked for you, I did. Why did you do it? Why did you marry John Bartlett?

JANET. I was foolish. I should never have fled to Venice—all that moonlight, and everybody singing all the time to everybody else.

HAMILTON. Jan...

JANET. Don’t try to console me. I don’t want to be consoled. Oh, I’m a beast to talk about Johnny the way I do. He’s so good to me. (*Beat.*) That’s just the trouble! He’s so damned good!

HAMILTON. Jan...

JANET. Two years of married life and not one quarrel!

HAMILTON. Impossible!

JANET. I’ve tried to make him angry. Heaven knows I’ve tried. But I can’t. The moment I start to fuss about a thing, he says—“All right, dear. Just as you say, dear.” Oh! There’ve been times when I could have loved him, if he’d only swear at me!

HAMILTON. You didn’t sense this—even a little before you were...

JANET. It’s awful to be the wife of a man you can’t find fault with! Yes, I want to look up to John, but not so far up that I have to bend over backward to do it!

HAMILTON. I had no idea, he had this effect on you.

JANET. Still, I could put up with his not drinking or smoking, nor losing his temper, nor doing anything of the other things that you *expect* a husband to do— If only he’d show some interest in—other women!

HAMILTON. You must be mad! That’s why you gave me up!

JANET. I don't mean I want him to fall in love with every woman he meets!

HAMILTON. My dear Janet—

JANET. But I would like to feel that “other women,” at least, existed for him! But they don't! And they realize it! You know women are very quick to sense that sort of thing! And the result is—he doesn't exist for them! It's that, I think, more than anything else, that I resent! That—other women—don't want—my—husband!

HAMILTON. Good Lord!

JANET. I thought a husband would be an awful, wonderful, beautifully—disturbing creature! Who would bring adventure, color, romance into my life!

HAMILTON. You expected all that—from Johnny?

JANET. He was agitated and interesting enough before we were married. But the minute he was sure of me, he “settled down.” And everyday he “settles” further and further! I could be a female Rip Van Winkle—I could go to sleep for twenty years and when I woke up he would be in the same place, in the same frame of mind, doing the same thing! And he wouldn't have looked at another woman—the whole twenty years! He'd have waited for me to “wake up.” Emotion! Excitement! Romance! It's horrid of me to speak of Johnny like this. But I can't help it. I'm afraid, sometimes, that if something didn't happen in this house, I'd blow it up! Just to see if it wouldn't bring some expression of passion to his face! Just to see if I could give a jolt to his eternal, external, internal—and infernal calm! (*Beat.*) And yet, somehow—I didn't seem to mind all this so much...

HAMILTON. Until...

JANET. Yes—you came back. I suppose it's made me realize what might have been. Instead of—what is.

HAMILTON. Need it be only “what might have been”? We should have been married. That we weren't—that we aren't—is simply a wretched mistake. (*Beat.*) Jan—marry me now!

JANET. Milt!

HAMILTON. Tell Johnny you want your freedom.

JANET. Hurt him? I don't think I could. Not when he's been good to me—so fond of me.

HAMILTON. You no longer care for him, Jannie. You need a life that he can't give you.

JANET. But he is good to me. He provides...

HAMILTON. Let him be "good" to someone else.

(JANET shoots him a look.)

I love you, Jannie—and you love me

JANET. Oh! I do—I did—I—

HAMILTON. Then promise me you'll—

JANET. I can't promise anything! Damn, everything's confusion. Milt, I—

HAMILTON. *(Stepping toward her:)* Jan!

JANET. No, no, we can't—you better go. It's all happening too quickly. I need time.

HAMILTON. But you will think about it.

JANET. Yes. I'll think about it.

HAMILTON. That's all I ask, Jan. I'll give you time. All the time you want. *(Beat.)* But we can still go to the opera tonight just the same, can't we? Whichever scene it's in. And I promise, I'll be good— I'll behave.

JANET. No! For Heaven's sake, don't!

HAMILTON. Back in half an hour!

(HAMILTON exits. JANET weighs the situation. Presses button to call the maid. After a moment, OLIVE enters, tired and insolent; clearly her mistress has disturbed her personal time.)

OLIVE. Did you ring, ma'm?

JANET. Yes. Olive, I'm going out tonight, after all. I'll want you to help me to change.

OLIVE. Yes, ma'm. Will you be late?

JANET. You needn't wait up for me. I'll take the key.

OLIVE. Yes, ma'm.

JANET. Oh! And, Olive— Have a little supper prepared for us, and leave it on the dining room table. Some—salad and sandwiches will do. Some of that special chicken salad that Mr. Evans likes so much.

OLIVE. Yes, ma'm.

(JOHNNY BARTLETT enters, in Tuxedo, shoes—not pumps, New York Evening Post in hand. OLIVE gives a knowing look and exits.)

JOHNNY. Hello, dear.

JANET. Why—Johnny! When did you come in?

JOHNNY. About fifteen minutes ago.

(He gives JANET a little peck on the ear, which she rubs off.)

Olive told me Evans was in here—but I thought I'd better go ahead and get dressed.

(He settles to enjoy his newspaper.)

JANET. But—what did you “dress” for?

JOHNNY. Well, I thought I better. You know, Ralph always does.

JANET. Ralph! You mean Ralph Wheeler?

JOHNNY. Yes—you haven't forgotten, have you dear—that Ralph and his wife are coming down to spend the evening with us?

JANET. You told me they were coming tomorrow night.

JOHNNY. No, dearest. Tonight.

JANET. You distinctly said “tomorrow night”! I’m sure you did! Milt has asked me to go to *Siegfried* with him. He’s calling for me in half an hour.

JOHNNY. Well, when he comes back, we’ll explain it to him, and he can spend the evening here with us.

JANET. But I don’t want him to spend the evening here with us. I want to go to the opera—and I’m going!

JOHNNY. But—dear. What will I say to Ralph and his wife?

JANET. Tell them the truth—that you made a mistake!

JOHNNY. But I don’t think I did.

JANET. You mean I made it?

JOHNNY. Oh—no! I don’t say that. It was merely a—misunderstanding. (*Beat.*) But I don’t think you ought to go to the opera, dear—really I don’t.

JANET. Oh! You forbid me to go?

JOHNNY. Oh! My dear! Certainly not!

JANET. Oh! That settles it! I shall go!

JOHNNY. Very well, dear. I’ll explain it to Ralph and Madge, somehow. It’ll be very quiet without you, but— We can play a few tunes.

JANET. Play a few tunes?!

JOHNNY. (*Reading in the newspaper:*) Ah, “Fair and Warmer”—tomorrow.

JANET. How fascinating! I’m going to dress!

JOHNNY. All right, dear. I’ll explain it all to the Wheelers. Will you be late?

JANET. I don’t know.

JOHNNY. I’m afraid I can’t wait up for you.

JANET. I don't want you to sit up for me!

JOHNNY. You know, dear—I always get so sleepy—

JANET. Oh, I know! You'll sit here all evening, and play a few tunes; and then, about half-past ten, you'll bid the Wheeler's goodnight, you'll go to bed, and start snoring about ten forty-five—

JOHNNY. Yes, dear.

JANET. And nothing will disturb you, nothing will excite you.

JOHNNY. I don't believe so, dear. Everything's going well at the bank.

JANET. Nothing ever will disturb you—excite you, will it?—your whole life long!

JOHNNY. I hope not, dear.

JANET. (*Sotto voce:*) Oh! Won't it!

JOHNNY. What, dear?

JANET. Johnny!

JOHNNY. Yes, dear?

JANET. John—I can't live with you any longer.

JOHNNY. What!?

JANET. At last! A sign of life. I mean it.

JOHNNY. Janet—what are you talking about? What's the matter?

JANET. Nothing! Everything!

JOHNNY. Jan, dear! Aren't you well?

JANET. Oh, I am! I am! And so are you. Everything's well. Sickeningly well!

JOHNNY. My dear, what is it?

JANET. Don't call me your "dear."

JOHNNY. Very well, dear.

(JANET screams.)

Janet, dear—something is the matter.

JANET. John! Something's been the matter—ever since I married you—and it might as well be remedied now, as later!

JOHNNY. Janet!

JANET. I did something I had no right to do. I married you without really being in love—deeply in love with you. And I'm not in love with you, now.

JOHNNY. Jan!

JANET. I can't stay married to you any longer.

JOHNNY. What have I done?

JANET. Nothing!

JOHNNY. But I must—have done—something!

JANET. No—that's just it! You wouldn't understand.

JOHNNY. I—I'm sorry. Whatever it was—I didn't mean to do it!

JANET. You've not done anything. I shouldn't have married you, Johnny—that's all! And now—I just can't go on any longer!

JOHNNY. Janet—

JANET. I can't help it, John.

JOHNNY. Our honeymoon, Jannie. *Firenza* by night! You told me how much you loved me. I couldn't get along without you, Jannie!

JANET. I'm sorry, Johnny. Terribly sorry. But you wouldn't want me to go on living with you—feeling the way I do.

JOHNNY. But you won't always feel like this. You're tired, tonight. You're not well. Something—

JANET. I am. Perfectly well. I know what I'm saying. And I know what I want. I want to be free.

JOHNNY. Divorce? A divorce? I can't— Not a divorce. (*Beat.*) Of course, I wouldn't make you go on as my wife—if you didn't want to.

JANET. Oh! Even our divorce will be without excitement.

RALPH. (*Off stage:*) Are Mr. and Mrs. Bartlett at home, Olive?

JOHNNY. The Wheelers!

OLIVE. (*Off stage:*) Yes, sir. They're expecting you. Will you go right in, please?

RALPH. (*Off stage:*) Go right in, Madge.

(*MADGE and RALPH WHEELER enter.*)

MADGE. Good evening, Janet! I've been so looking forward to tonight.

RALPH. How are you, Johnny, old man?

JANET. Madge!

JOHNNY. Hello, Ralph. Madge.

MADGE. Good evening, John.

JOHNNY. Awfully glad to see you.

RALPH. Janet—I've a terrible confession to make. I've come to say I can't come.

MADGE. Isn't that awful. I suppose it's all my fault, though. You see, Ralph insists that I told him we were invited for tomorrow night. And just fifteen minutes ago he calmly informed me that he had an engagement for tonight.

RALPH. The Mystic Shrine. You know how important that is! Can't get out of that. Of course, I'd much rather stay here, but—

JOHNNY. It's quite all right. I got mixed up, too—in telling Jan about tonight, and she's accepted an invitation for the opera.

JANET. (*To MADGE.*) But, of course, dear—if *you* can stay?

MADGE. Oh, no. Now that Ralph can't, I wouldn't want to, either. We'll spend another evening together.

RALPH. She says she doesn't enjoy herself, if I'm not there.

MADGE. Come, Ralph—we mustn't keep Janet from her engagement.

JANET. Madge—you needn't run away like this. Come in and talk to me at least while I'm changing my gown—and Ralph and Johnny can chat.

MADGE. Have you time, Ralph?

RALPH. A bit, dear.

JANET. Well, even if he should be gone when you come back—I suppose you can manage to get upstairs without him!

RALPH. I don't know about that. Little mouse. She hardly dares put her nose outside the door without me.

(He kisses MADGE.)

MADGE. Oh, Ralph. It's true, though. I just hate to go anywhere without him.

(JANET gives a look as MADGE and RALPH blow kisses; JANET and MADGE exit.)

RALPH. So, Johnny, old man—how's the banker?

JOHNNY. Oh, a few bumps, you know—how's the broker?

RALPH. Like all the other brokers—trying not to be broke.

JOHNNY. Yes. Isn't that the way? (*Beat.*) Well, now, won't you sit down, Ralph?

RALPH. Just for a minute. (*Sitting.*) You know, sport—I can't get over how nice it is.

(JOHNNY sits.)

You and I, living in the same apartment house, after not having seen each other since college.

JOHNNY. Good ol' Maize and Blue. [or Orange and Black, Red and White, etc.]

RALPH. *Tempus Fugit!*

JOHNNY. Oh, (*Jumping up:*) I'm always forgetting—won't you have a drink?

RALPH. Now that you're up—

JOHNNY. I'm afraid you better fix your own drink, though. Sorry. You know more about it than I. Janet's got everything you need in there.

RALPH. All right, I don't mind doing a little work in a good cause. You won't have anything?

JOHNNY. No, thanks.

RALPH. You've certainly stuck to your principles. A real teetotaler!

(Pouring his whiskey and water.)

JOHNNY. It's more a case of my principles sticking to me. Dad and all of his people were complete abstainers.

RALPH. Well, Johnny—here's to “what you're missing.”

JOHNNY. I've often wondered—when I've been thinking over the “old days”—how it was that you and I always hit it off so well. We're so different.

RALPH. I know. My college days consisted mainly of getting into scrapes—and yours of getting me out of them.

JOHNNY. And when we roomed together, you were always coming home about the time I was getting up.

RALPH. Don't you ever feel the need of a little something to forget your troubles? (*Beat.*) What's the matter?

JOHNNY. Ralph—you were the first fellow I wrote to when I became engaged to Janet—

RALPH. Same way with me, old man. You were the first chap I wrote to when Madge gave me the happy “Yes.”

JOHNNY. I suppose it’s only fitting that you should be the first to learn about—the end of everything.

RALPH. What!?

JOHNNY. Janet’s leaving me.

RALPH. Good Lord. Johnny. Divorce?

JOHNNY. That’s what she means. She told me tonight. She’s not in love with me anymore. Seems to think she never was.

RALPH. But, she must have been, or she wouldn’t have married you. She didn’t have to. She must have had plenty of other chances. She was young, rich, attractive—

JOHNNY. I guess she’s—just got tired of me. I can’t figure it out, Ralph. I don’t know what to make of it.

RALPH. I think I do.

JOHNNY. What?

RALPH. I was awfully surprised, just now, when you sprung this on me. But now—that I come to think it over—I’m not so surprised.

JOHNNY. You’re not?

RALPH. No, Johnny, I’m not. In these three months that I’ve been living one floor above you here—since I’ve come to know you again, and got acquainted with your wife—I think I know why. The trouble with you, Johnny, is you’re too good to your wife.

JOHNNY. What?

RALPH. No—not that, exactly. No— You’re too good for her.

JOHNNY. I’m not half good enough!

RALPH. Oh, my dear boy—you are. You’re too good for any self-respecting woman.

JOHNNY. You mean—simply because I—happen to be “regular” in my habits?

RALPH. That’s precisely what I mean. You’re too damned regular! Janet knows exactly where you are. She knows just where to find you every hour of the day—and night. And the result is—she doesn’t want to find you. Listen sport—if you expect to “hold” a woman, you can’t afford to become a piece of furniture in her life. You must keep moving.

JOHNNY. Keep moving?

RALPH. Janet is too sure of you.

JOHNNY. Oughtn’t she be sure—of her own husband?

RALPH. That’s the one thing in life that she shouldn’t be sure of. Has she ever lain awake at two a.m. wondering if you’d ever come home?

JOHNNY. No!

RALPH. Has she ever been aroused at three a.m. by your persistent attempts to find the key?

JOHNNY. Never! I’m a model husband.

RALPH. That’s my point! A woman doesn’t want a “model” husband. She may think she does—but let her get one, and she’s soon looking for something else.

JOHNNY. Happiness—contentment...

RALPH. Have you ever deceived your wife? *(Pause.)* Well, have you?

JOHNNY. I have—once.

RALPH. You have?

JOHNNY. About a ring I gave her. Her diamond and sapphire ring.

RALPH. Yes?

JOHNNY. I told her it cost five hundred—and it cost a thousand.

RALPH. You heavenly idiot— What I meant was—have you ever deceived her about another woman?

JOHNNY. Don't tell me that you deceive your wife?

RALPH. We won't go into details, dear boy.

JOHNNY. You and Madge seem so happy.

RALPH. We are. And the reason is—I keep her “wondering.” If anyone goes out at night in our house—it's me—not her. Look at you. Janet's going out with another man, and you're sitting by the hearth.

JOHNNY. I wouldn't know where to go.

RALPH. You need to join the Mystic Shrine, old man. Start crossing the “hot sands.”

JOHNNY. I'm not very good at joining clubs. And I don't think I'd like being in the desert.

RALPH. You lovable mutt—the Mystic Shrine's just a figure of speech. Don't you remember when I was in *The Importance of Being Earnest* at college? *(Pause.)* Mr. Bunbury—being a “Bunburyist”? How all the fellows latched on to the idea? Every man has a “Mystic Shrine” in his life. *(Pause.)* Look, it could be the Odd Fellows, the Knight's of Columbus—even a weekly Turkish bath.

JOHNNY. You take a Turkish bath? Why would you go there?

RALPH. *(Kidding:)* Rheumatism.

JOHNNY. Oh, I go to Dr. Clemens for that.

RALPH. Johnny—you need a night off!

JOHNNY. If I had a night off I could go to bed at eight o'clock instead of ten.

RALPH. Hopeless—I give up!

JOHNNY. Oh, no, don't give me up—I don't want to lose Janet. But I just don't understand about you getting Madge “wondering.” If

she doesn't know that you don't go to the Mystic Shrine, why does she care?

RALPH. Absence alone, dear boy, from the conjugal board and bed—that always has an effect upon a wife. Gets her “wondering”—makes her uneasy—thinking about things she may have heard before about you.

JOHNNY. And so—she suspects that your weekly absence isn't on account of the Mystic Shrine at all.

RALPH. You bet! *And*, I'd be willing to bet that if you became interested in some other woman, Janet would soon come back round to you.

JOHNNY. But what “other woman”?

RALPH. It doesn't matter. Any pretty one will do. Just go out some night looking like one thing and come back looking like another. Hit the “high spots.” Show Jan you're not a one-woman man. Make her watch for you—cry for you—ready-to-die for you! Make her jealous!

JOHNNY. I can't—I can't, I just want to be good to her.

RALPH. Stop being good to her and be a husband! That's the type of man that attracts a woman—and that's the kind of man who has attracted your wife.

JOHNNY. What!?

RALPH. Don't tell me you haven't noticed that, too?

JOHNNY. What do you mean?

RALPH. Hamilton Evans.

JOHNNY. You think Janet's in love with him?

RALPH. I don't say that. But—

JOHNNY. Oh! Why didn't I see it? Ever since he appeared on the scene, Janet's been so different. She knew him before she met me. She was engaged to him. Of course! Hamilton Evans!

RALPH. Now, Johnny. Don't fly off altogether. It may just be a harmless flirtation. But Evans is the sort of man I'm talking about—a Don Juan! A Lothario!

JOHNNY. A Lothario! And I made him my friend!

RALPH. If you look back, you'll probably find that he made a friend of you.

JOHNNY. He did—he did! He always goes out of his way to be nice to me. To do me favors!

RALPH. Too nice to you—so he can be even “nicer” to your wife.

(The phone rings three times off.)

JOHNNY. Do you suppose that's Evans? She's going out with him tonight!

RALPH. There you are. See the effect it has on you! She has you “wondering.”

(OLIVE enters, cheerfully, in contrast to her manner with JANET; she's all eyes for JOHNNY.)

OLIVE. Mr. Bartlett. You're wanted on the phone, sir.

JOHNNY. Excuse me, Ralph. Thank you, Olive.

(JOHNNY exits. OLIVE watches him adoringly. She then exchanges a shy flirtation with RALPH and exits. RALPH's ego is pleased at this. MADGE enters.)

MADGE. O-o-oh!

RALPH. O-o-oh!

MADGE. I was afraid you'd left without telling me bye-bye.

RALPH. I wish I didn't have to go, dear.

MADGE. Don't let them keep you too late at the Shrine, will you?

RALPH. It will be rather late tonight, dearest. I'm sorry. We're having initiation.

MADGE. I hate initiation nights—they make you work too hard. You're always tired out the day after.

RALPH. You only imagine that sweetheart.

MADGE. When you're away from me, I can't think of anything but you! Even when I'm asleep—especially when I'm asleep. That's why I always wake up when you come in.

RALPH. And say—"Is this you, Ralphie?"

MADGE. And Ralphie says—"Yes, darling."

RALPH. And then—

RALPH & MADGE. O—o—oh!

MADGE. Oh, Ralph. It's just awful the way I love you.

(RALPH *kisses* MADGE.)

RALPH. Honey dear, it's awfuller the way I love you. (*Beat.*) Did Janet tell you anything?

MADGE. What about?

RALPH. Did she?

MADGE. No—why?

RALPH. Oh, nothing.

MADGE. Ralph. What is it?

RALPH. Now, Madge—

MADGE. You might as well tell me.

RALPH. Dear!

MADGE. You always do tell me!

RALPH. I'm sorry I mentioned it—there's nothing to tell.

MADGE. Ralph! If you don't tell me this minute, I—I won't wake up when you come home!

RALPH. You won't tell that I told you?

MADGE. Ralph! I never tell.

RALPH. Well—I'm afraid Johnny and Janet—are going to—split up.

MADGE. O-o-oh!

RALPH. Ssh! Ssh!

MADGE. Separate?

RALPH. It looks like it.

MADGE. How dreadful. Poor Janet. Ralph—what has John done?

RALPH. Nothing!

MADGE. I know how you men always stick up for each other! He must have done something!

RALPH. No, dear. You see—

MADGE. Ralph! Tell me what—I know you men. You're trying to shield him!

RALPH. Good Lord, Madge!

MADGE. Does John drink?

RALPH. Yes.

MADGE. It's always drink!

RALPH. Buttermilk.

MADGE. Ralph! This is nothing to laugh about. It must be some other woman!

RALPH. Listen dear, it's a long story—and I can't go into details with you just now.

MADGE. Of course—if it's something awful he's done, I don't want to know about it! I mean not at the moment. But you'll tell me all about it when you come tonight, won't you?

RALPH. Yes, dear. I'll explain it all to you then.

MADGE. But maybe you can talk to John. Make him give up his evil ways. Don't let him break poor Janet's heart.

RALPH. Now, baby dear. If you have a fault, it's bothering too much about other people's affairs.

MADGE. I know, Ralphie—but often—a word in time—

RALPH. Causes all kinds of trouble. So, for goodness sake, baby mine, don't say a word to Johnny or Janet about it. Promise me.

MADGE. All right—I promise. But I want—

(RALPH places his fingers to MADGE'S lips. JOHNNY enters.)

JOHNNY. Ralph! It's you they want on the phone. Your maid must have told them to call down here. Something about the Mystic Shrine.

RALPH. Oh! Excuse me a moment, darling.

(RALPH exits. MADGE exchanges awkward looks with JOHNNY.)

JOHNNY. Ralph is looking awfully well, isn't he?

MADGE. What can you tell about a man from the way he looks? Who'd have believed it?!

JOHNNY. What?

MADGE. Oh, don't tell that I told you—but Ralph told me about you and Janet.

JOHNNY. I see.

MADGE. Oh, Mr. Bartlett. Of course, it's none of my affair! I had no right to speak to you about it—but anything like this always upsets me so! When a couple seem so happy—and then of a sudden—Oh dear, I'm sorry.

JOHNNY. I suppose it makes you think that you and Ralph may be the next to go.

MADGE. Ohhhhhhh! Oh, Mr. Bartlett—Ralph said I mustn't speak to you about this. But if I can keep you from breaking up your home I'm going to speak! (*Beat.*) Who is she?

JOHNNY. Who is who?

MADGE. The woman—you're mixed up with!

JOHNNY. Did he say I was mixed up with a woman?

MADGE. Ralph denied it! But I know better! In a case like this there is always a woman! One of those awful creatures, who hasn't a husband of her own, and who goes round—trying to get everybody else's!

JOHNNY. But—

MADGE. Don't let yourself be swept away by some painted-up-thing—with somebody else's hair and no reputation!

JOHNNY. But, I've not been swept—

MADGE. Cling to the wife who's been faithful to you!

JOHNNY. I'm trying to cling!

MADGE. And I'll help you. I'll plead with Janet. I'll ask her to forgive you!

JOHNNY. There's nothing to forgive. That's just it! You don't understand.

MADGE. Well, what is it? Tell me—you can tell me. I won't tell. What have you done, to make Janet want to leave you?

JOHNNY. I've been too good to her.

MADGE. Been—too good to her?

JOHNNY. I'm too good for any self-respecting woman. I've been just a piece of furniture in Janet's life. I should have kept moving! Has she ever lain in bed at two a.m. wondering if I would come home? No! Has she ever been aroused at three a.m. by my persistent attempts to find the keyhole? No! No! Have I ever deceived her? No! No! No!

And what's the result? She's been happy and contented. And when she's happy and contented she—doesn't know she's married!

MADGE. Oh!

JOHNNY. It's true! You, if anyone, know that it's true! You, if anyone, realize—that the man who holds a woman is the man who runs after other women—while they're running after him! So, I ask you—what chance have I—without even a Turkish bath after crossing the hot sands?

MADGE. Turkish bath! Hot sa—

JOHNNY. Or an Odd Fellows' meeting!

MADGE. Odd—!

JOHNNY. Or a Mystic Shrine!

MADGE. Mystic Shrine!

JOHNNY. Like Ralph!

MADGE. Ralph!? How dare you!?

JOHNNY. Now, my dear, Mrs. Wheeler—don't pretend that you don't know! Because Ralph told me that you knew! And all I have to say is—you're a brave little woman!

MADGE. Ralph told you I knew what?

JOHNNY. About his pretending to go to the Mystic Shrine! When he's really going somewhere else!

MADGE. O-o-oh!

JOHNNY. If I were only like Ralph! I'd be going out this evening for my weekly—night off! And Janet would be sitting at home, alone like you! I'd be out—keeping her “wondering”! Wine, women, and song! Like Ralph! (*Beat.*) Oh, Mrs. Wheeler—I oughtn't have told you—but Ralph said you knew. Or at least suspected.

RALPH. (*Off stage.*) Thank you, very much, Olive.

JOHNNY. Oh, Mrs. Wheeler, don't tell Ralph!

(RALPH enters buoyantly.)

RALPH. I thought I'd never be able to choke that fellow off! You know how it is with those boys from the Shrine!

(MADGE wails.)

What, dear?

(HAMILTON, dressed for the opera, enters and brightens up upon seeing the others.)

HAMILTON. How are you, Wheeler?

RALPH. Good evening, Evans!

HAMILTON. Good evening, Mrs. Wheeler! Johnny, old man! What's going on here, a party?

RALPH. Oh, no! We just dropped in. I'm just going!

MADGE. Yes—to the Mystic Shrine!

RALPH. Ha, ha! See how well I have her trained? She knows just where I'm going!

(JANET enters, lightly, opera cloak in arm.)

JANET. I thought I heard you Hamilton.

RALPH. Jannie! How stunning!

JOHNNY. Oh!!!!

(JOHNNY moves towards HAMILTON with menace. RALPH grabs him before HAMILTON sees.)

RALPH. Johnny has a headache!

HAMILTON. Is that so, old man? —Sorry. Have you taken anything for it?

JOHNNY. I'm thinking of trying a Turkish bath!

RALPH. Well, I must be going! I'll be late for the Mystic Shrine.

MADGE. You might miss the initiation!

JANET. We must be starting, too, Milt. Ralph! If you're going downtown, we'll give you a lift. Goodnight, Madge. Nighty-night, John.

(JANET exits.)

HAMILTON. Goodnight, Johnny, old man!

(He exits quickly after JANET.)

Jannie—I have seats in the sixth row—!

(JOHNNY follows them to door.)

JOHNNY. Janet!

RALPH. Come along, darling.

MADGE. I think I'll stay—and have a few minutes conversation with Mr. Bartlett.

RALPH. Oh! Very well, dear. Don't lie awake for me tonight. Remember, I'll be late. I suspect we're going to have a strenuous initiation. Goodnight, Johnny—don't keep my baby up! 'Night, honey.

(RALPH blows MADGE a kiss and exits. After a moment, MADGE wails. JOHNNY is uncomfortable. He picks up the newspaper he was reading earlier.)

JOHNNY. *(Reading aloud:)* "Fair and Warmer"—tomorrow!

(MADGE goes to JOHNNY, takes the paper, folds it once and throws it to the floor.)

MADGE. Now! I want the truth!

JOHNNY. About what?

MADGE. You know what! About keeping me "wondering." About Turkish baths. About Mystic Shrines!

JOHNNY. But you know!

MADGE. I don't know! But I'm going to. Did Ralph tell you that he was fond of—some other woman?

JOHNNY. Oh, no! No!

MADGE. Did he tell you that he doesn't go to the Mystic Shrine—that he just pretends to—that he goes someplace else?

JOHNNY. No! No!

MADGE. He did! Don't stand here denying it! You told me he did!

JOHNNY. I didn't mean to tell you! I mean—

MADGE. I know what you meant—it's all true—the whole awful thing is true!

JOHNNY. Oh, Mrs. Wheeler—

MADGE. And I love him so. And he's going out tonight with some other woman!

JOHNNY. No, not with any woman in particular. Just women in general. And no matter what he's doing—it's all out of a sense of duty. Just to keep you "wondering." Now—now—Mrs. Wheeler—don't get excited!

MADGE. I will get excited! Wouldn't you get excited?! If your husband was going out with some other woman? I mean—your wife—with some other man?

JOHNNY. She is.

MADGE. Not the way my Ralph is. With some awful hussy to some Mystic Shrine!

JOHNNY. Worse than that! Janet wants to divorce me—because she's in love with Hamilton Evans.

MADGE. Well, what are you going to do about it!?

JOHNNY. What can I do?

MADGE. I'd do something!

JOHNNY. Well, why don't you!

MADGE. I will! You'll see! I've always let Ralph do as he pleases—because I trusted him—because I loved him—because I was such a goose about him! But now!— You'll see! I'll do something desperate! I will! I will! I will!

(She hurls a book onto the floor.)

There!

JOHNNY. So will I!

(He seizes a book and hurls it to the floor.)

There!

MADGE. But what—will I do?

JOHNNY. Something. Take Ralph's advice. That's what I'll do! Start out looking like one thing and come home looking like another! Hit the high spots! I'll take that Turkish bath! Take two—or three!

MADGE. I'll follow it, too! We'll do just as he says—and we'll do it together!

JOHNNY. We can't take a Turkish bath together!

MADGE. No—of course not. And I can't hit the high spots. I could never hit anything.

JOHNNY. I can't either. There's no use trying. I couldn't go out looking like one thing and come home looking like another—I wouldn't know how. I never drank a thing in my life. I like to spend my evenings at home.

MADGE. And that's just what we'll do. Spend our evening at home—together.

JOHNNY. We will?

MADGE. We'll have our own Mystic Shrine. We'll start them "wondering." We'll start them "wondering"!

JOHNNY. Wait! Now, wait!

MADGE. When Ralph comes home and sees the bed empty, he'll come running down here.

JOHNNY. If he comes home the way he says he does, he won't be able to see anything.

MADGE. And the moment he comes in here, you know what he'll find? You and me—together! In a compromising situation!

JOHNNY. Oh, Lord!

MADGE. And if Janet and Hamilton come home first—they'll find us—and that'll be just as good!

JOHNNY. But—!

MADGE. Don't you want to be found in a compromising situation with me?

JOHNNY. No—I'd be delighted, of course! But do you think I ought to? I mean with you? Ralph's my best friend!

MADGE. Which is all the better!

JOHNNY. He did say—any woman will do! But, you'll help me, won't you?

MADGE. I'll do everything I can.

JOHNNY. And I'll do everything I know. I'll show Janet a thing or two. I'll start her "wondering"!

MADGE. (*Spreading her arms:*) Compromise me!

JOHNNY. I will! I will!

(JOHNNY almost goes into her arms but hesitates and turns abruptly. He goes and gets a chair identical to the one near MADGE and brings it down to her.)

(Savagely:) We'll show them! We'll show them!

(JOHNNY and MADGE sit abruptly in their respective chairs, with determination.)

(Dramatically:) Now, then—let them find us!

(JOHNNY and MADGE fold arms on breasts, hold defiantly.)

(Curtain.)

*(An Intermission, or there is a brief pause for the passage of time.
A clock strikes.)*

End of Act I

ACT II

(Same as Act I. Six hours later. JOHNNY and MADGE in the same chairs, asleep. MADGE's head rests on JOHNNY's shoulder. A clock strikes off. JOHNNY opens his eyes. MADGE awakens.)

JOHNNY. Two o'clock— Good Lord! Will they ever come home?

MADGE. I don't believe they ever will.

JOHNNY. *Siegfried* is long, but not as long as this!

(JOHNNY rises. His foot gives out. He sits back down.)

Oo-! Ooooh!

MADGE. What's the matter?

JOHNNY. My foot's asleep.

MADGE. Lucky foot! It's just as I said. Janet and Mr. Evans have gone somewhere to dance. You know, some of those cabaret places keep open awfully late. I wonder where Ralph is?

JOHNNY. You see. He has you "wondering."

MADGE. Oh!

JOHNNY. Don't be upset, Mrs. Wheeler—Madge. I was just pointing out Ralph's system.

MADGE. You ought to know all about it. Your wife seems to use it!

JOHNNY. Ohh! When I think she's been out all this time with that man!

(JOHNNY rises again, forgetting his foot.)

Ooh!

MADGE. And Ralph! At the Mystic Shrine! I hate that name! All I can think of is horrid women with veils on their faces, and—and not enough of anywhere else.

JOHNNY. His mind seems to run on things like that—Turkish baths and harems, and—

(Sound of the elevator off.)

MADGE. I hear them!

JOHNNY. There they are!

MADGE. Go on! Compromise me! Put your arms around me!

JOHNNY. Right around?

MADGE. Twice around!

JOHNNY. No—It was only someone going up in the elevator. I wish we could do this “compromising business” in the daytime. If there’s anything I hate—it’s staying up late.

MADGE. So do I. You know—I was brought up in a small town. I like to go to bed with the chickens. I don’t know what Ralph means by it, but he says New York chickens never go to bed!

(JOHNNY and MADGE exchange yawns.)

JOHNNY. Would you like me to read to you?

MADGE. For Heaven’s sake no—I will go back to sleep. We could play cards.

JOHNNY. The only game I know is Solitaire.

MADGE. Can two people play that?

JOHNNY. Yes—but not together. We could sit down again. They’ll be here before long now. Wherever they are, they’ll get put out pretty soon.

MADGE. I don’t know. Ralph says some of those night restaurants don’t close till it’s time for them to open. But we have to be ready for them.

JOHNNY. We’ve been ready since eight o’clock.

MADGE. What I mean is when they come in we have to be sure to be compromised. It’d be awful if we didn’t hear them, and were just sitting twiddling our thumbs.

JOHNNY. Janet will probably forget her key—she generally does.

MADGE. When they do come, I must be in yours arms.

(MADGE seizes his hands and pulls him to her, placing his arms around her waist.)

JOHNNY. Don't you think one arm is enough?

(Sound of the elevator.)

Oh! Here they are—this time!

MADGE. Quick! Quick!

(MADGE beckons JOHNNY. They go through a series of awkward "compromising" positions, holding each one a few moments in anticipation of being discovered. Finally, they groan to a halt.)

JOHNNY. No. Just somebody else going up in the elevator.

MADGE. If this keeps up much longer—I'll pass away.

JOHNNY. I'm getting weak—I haven't had anything to eat since noon.

MADGE. I haven't had *much*.

JOHNNY. Let me see if I can find something.

(JOHNNY heads for the door.)

MADGE. Oh, please, don't bother.

JOHNNY. It isn't any bother—and I'm starving!

(JOHNNY exits, leaving the door open.)

MADGE. Maybe if we play a tune—I wish Ralph would get us a Victrola.

(JOHNNY returns with a tray of food.)

JOHNNY. Look what I found!

MADGE. Where did you get all that?

JOHNNY. Olive must have made it for Janet and Evans.

(He takes a sandwich and starts to take a bite. MADGE stops him.)

MADGE. Do you think we ought to eat it?

JOHNNY. If Hamilton Evans can go out with my wife, I can eat his supper!

(He starts to take a bite again.)

MADGE. If I eat it, I'm afraid I will go straight to sleep.

(JOHNNY hesitates.)

JOHNNY. Me, too.

MADGE. Then we couldn't compromise each other, could we?

JOHNNY. No. It's hard enough to do it when we're awake.

(He puts down his sandwich regretfully. He then gets a "devilish" idea—for him.)

Suppose we take something—to keep us awake?

MADGE. Take something?

JOHNNY. To drink. When I'm with Janet and start to get sleepy—she always says, if only I'd take a cocktail, or a highball or something—

MADGE. But can't they make you sleepy?

JOHNNY. I don't know; I've never taken one.

MADGE. Neither have I!

JOHNNY. But people who are discovered the way we're going to be always are drinking things—I've read about them.

MADGE. Well, I suppose just a little something wouldn't do any harm.

JOHNNY. I saw some champagne in the icebox.

MADGE. Champagne! I hear that's rather exhilarating!

JOHNNY. I don't think it'll affect you much, if you're not used to it.

(He exits, getting the champagne. MADGE, at a loss of what to do, goes to the Victrola and takes out a record.)

MADGE. "Where is my wandering boy tonight?" Oh, Ralphie.

(She gives a little cry. She turns the record over.)

"He's a Devil in His Own Home Town."

(She gives a squawk of pain. JOHNNY enters with a champagne bucket and three bottles of champagne.)

JOHNNY. Here we are! "Just a little nip"—as Janet says!

MADGE. Oh! Isn't three bottles too much?! I don't believe we can drink more than one bottle.

JOHNNY. Well—I thought I'd better bring enough. I'm a heavy water-drinker.

MADGE. I do hope it will wake us up.

JOHNNY. Just in case it won't—I'll get something that will. We'll have a cocktail, too!

MADGE. I never drank a cocktail in all my life!

JOHNNY. Me neither, but they always seem to make people more lively!

(He gets the cellarette and runs it center. MADGE joins him. They take nervous delight in "monkeying with a buzz saw," so to speak. They stare at all the "fixings.")

Do you know how to make one?

MADGE. I've watched Ralph.

JOHNNY. And I've seen Jannie concoct one. I guess we can figure out what goes in—between us.

MADGE. That's the thing you mix them with. There has to be ice. What kind of cocktail are you going to make?

JOHNNY. I don't know—we'll just make it and—then it'll be—what it'll be.

(JOHNNY and MADGE, sort out the mixer, get out some ice, and concoct a "cocktail.")

Here's whiskey.

MADGE. That goes in!

JOHNNY. Are you sure?

MADGE. Positive. Ralph calls it the foundation.

JOHNNY. Good, we want a "firm foundation."

MADGE. Ralph says whiskey makes the world go round.

JOHNNY. Stop thinking of Ralph!

MADGE. I can't help it—when I see all these beautiful bottles.

JOHNNY. Italian Vermouth!

MADGE. That goes in!

JOHNNY. Here's French, too!

MADGE. Put a little of each in—that's the safest way.

JOHNNY. Well, we have a foundation—and a first and second floor! Let's see what else we have here. Gin!

MADGE. That goes in!

JOHNNY. You think?

MADGE. It can't do any harm to use a little. I've heard people say, "the more you put into a cocktail, the more you get out of it."

JOHNNY. This will be the third story. Absinthe. Oooo—I've heard about this one.

MADGE. Me, too. That goes in!

JOHNNY. Well—we've got a foundation—and three stories—this will be the attic. It's a regular house!

(He pours the whole bottle into the shaker.)

MADGE. Here's a pretty bottle. Apple Brandy! I'd like some of that. I'm awfully fond of apples.

JOHNNY. A foundation, three stories, and an attic—this will be the roof.

(He pours it into the shaker and shakes.)

I guess we've got it built!

MADGE. But if it's a house, don't you think we ought to paint it? Here's something—a nice reddish color. Sherry Wine. Paint it with this.

JOHNNY. Anything else?

MADGE. No, we don't want a strong cocktail.

JOHNNY. I think this ice is going to have to swim for its life!

MADGE. Now shake it! No. No. No. Don't churn it, shake it! Give it to me.

(She takes the shaker and with too serious a purpose shakes it "correctly"—like she thinks she's seen it done.)

JOHNNY. There aren't any cocktail glasses in here.

MADGE. That's all right; we'll use these water glasses. I'm crazy to taste it, aren't you? Pretty color! *(Pouring back and forth, so each glass has the same amount:)* Ralph always does that—sort of gets them even.

JOHNNY. I sort feel like we've left something out.

MADGE. There are a lot more bottles.

JOHNNY. No! We'll try it just as it is!

MADGE. All right—first we have to say—"Here's how!"

JOHNNY & MADGE. (*Raising their glasses:)* Here's how!

(They take a sip in unison. Beat.)

MADGE. I don't think we left anything out.

JOHNNY. I don't know how a cocktail ought to taste, but that's the way I thought a cocktail tasted.

(They both look at each other then drink the full contents of their glasses. It strangles them, leaving them gasping and almost choking.)

MADGE. Oh! If that's a cocktail, what must a horse's neck be like?

JOHNNY. Try some of this champagne.

MADGE. Thank you, thank you. That's better.

JOHNNY. Yes, this is nice and mild.

MADGE. It sort of 'fizzes' your nose, though—don't it?

JOHNNY. Have some more. (*Correcting her:)* Doesn't it.

MADGE. Just a little.

(JOHNNY seizes the champagne bottle and starts to pour MADGE a glass. His foot gives under him. He recovers. They drink.)

JOHNNY. I think we better eat something. This stiff—stuff might go to our heads.

MADGE. Ralph says that's where it belongs.

JOHNNY. Well, it seems to know, all right.

MADGE. Has it gone to your head?

JOHNNY. Not yet. But I think it's sort of on the way.

MADGE. I feel better since I had mine. I was really quite faint before. But I feel stronger now! Much, much stronger!

JOHNNY. I don't feel any stronger. I feel different. (*Beat.*) Where can they be? I hope something hasn't happened to them.

MADGE. I hope something has!

JOHNNY. Madge!

MADGE. Don't you think it's getting warm in here?

JOHNNY. Yes— The temperature must have risen.

MADGE. Something's risen! That's New York, though, isn't it? Cold one minute, hot the next!

JOHNNY. And the paper did say—"Fair and Warmer."

MADGE. Give me some more of that fizzy stuff! It's so nice and refreshing. And I always had such a prediji—Predi—I don't see why Ralph won't let me drink anything! It—rests—you—so!

JOHNNY. It makes me feel quiet, and peaceful.

MADGE. (*Jumping up:*) Now I feel all light! Sort of all lit up! All dressed up and no place to go!

(She begins to grasp bottles and shakes them a la "bell ringer.")

Ta ta! Ta ta! Ta ta! Did you ever hear those vaudeville actors make sounds on bottles, did you? Ta ta! Ta ta! Ta ta! Oh, here's a lovely, new bottle! Apricot Brandy. Ahhhhh—won't that be nice? Apricots are so healthful.

JOHNNY. Not when they grow in bottles.

MADGE. Mmmmm—smell it. Put on a couple stories of that. Our house needs an addition. I wonder if there's any watermelon brandy—I love watermelons.

JOHNNY. Here's some peach!

MADGE. Umn! Three stories of that!

JOHNNY. We're going up, all right!

MADGE. Looooook! Violet stuff! Isn't it pretty? (*Smelling it:*) Why, it's a perfume.

(She holds it under JOHNNY's nose.)

Four stories of that!

JOHNNY. Madge—don't you think we better—

MADGE. Oh, what's a story or two—to us!

JOHNNY. But—we've got ten or twelve—already!

MADGE. Ten or twelve!? My, God—it's a skyscraper!

JOHNNY. It's the Willworth—*Woolworth Building!* *(Beat.)* Say, can you—shake—a skyscraper?

MADGE. Not unless you're an earthquake!

JOHNNY. That's the trouble with my legs—the earth's been quaking!

(They stand dazed a moment.)

MADGE. I know! I know! We'll put in an elevator! Here's some green stuff. That's soothing. We'll put in a green elevator!

(Pours in some Crème de Menthe.)

JOHNNY. I never saw a green elevator!

MADGE. *(In recitative, with Delsarte gestures:)* I never saw a green elevator. I never hope to see one. But I would rather, oh, much rather see a green elevator than be one!

JOHNNY. Ha, ha! You're good! *(Holding up a bottle:)* What's this one?

MADGE. *(Grabbing it:)* Forbidden Fruit!

JOHNNY. *(Grabbing it back:)* That'll make us feel like Adam and Eve!

MADGE. Adam and Eve—in a skyscraper—with a green elevator!

JOHNNY. Now, hold your glass.

MADGE. Oh! Really, Mr. Bartlett! What for? *(Beat.)* Oh— Wait till I find it.

JOHNNY. *(Filling Madge's glass and his and extending them:)* Going up!

MADGE. To the top! It's perfectly delicious!

JOHNNY. So that's Forbidden Fruit.

MADGE. We mustn't forbid it!

JOHNNY. I think you better eat something. This is going to your head—and past it!

MADGE. All right. Come, Johnny—let's drink our salads.

(She attempts to eat her salad, but can't seem to spear it. JOHNNY watches intently.)

JOHNNY. You haven't touched a thing.

MADGE. I tried to—but it kept running away from me.

(JOHNNY attempts to eat his salad. MADGE watches intently.)

JOHNNY. That's the trouble with chicken salad—it's so reckless!

MADGE. Oh, dear! I always said you were a funny man! I used to say to Ralph—why did Janet marry such a funny man!

JOHNNY. Oh, Jannie!

MADGE. Never mind about Jannie! Just as good fish in the sea!

JOHNNY. Did you call Janet a fish?

MADGE. I didn't say she was a fish! I might think she was a fish, but I didn't say she was a fish!

JOHNNY. Do you know what Ralph is? He's a soused herring!

MADGE. Oh! I'll not have my husband called a "soused herring"! You've been drinking! And your manner is very offensive to me! *(Picking up the cellarette:)* I'm going to take my child and go home!

(She drags cellarette off a ways with her.)

JOHNNY. Don't go home! I withdraw the "soused herring"!

MADGE. What's that?

JOHNNY. I withdraw the "soused herring"!

MADGE. That's different.

JOHNNY. He's a—pickled bloater.

MADGE. I accept your apology.

(MADGE waves her hand a la Delsarte in front of JOHNNY's face for him to kiss. He manages to recognize it as a hand and takes it a la minuet and bows. They do a Grand Minuet—or try to. At close, they stagger into chairs. JOHNNY's head bobs.)

JOHNNY. I begin to see Jannie in a different light.

MADGE. I begin to see things I never saw before! Oh, Johnny! What do you want with two heads?

JOHNNY. Two heads are better than one. Your head is loose, too, isn't it?

MADGE. Is it? It didn't use to be! I could twist it, but I couldn't take it off!

(She feels her bobbing head and removes a long, wide tortoise pin from her hair.)

Johnny! This old pin has been sticking in my head all evening! Here! You can have it!

(She removes the pin and hands it to JOHNNY, who seriously puts it in his lapel. She takes down her long hair and extending small switch. She hands it to JOHNNY.)

And, Johnny, you can have that, too!

JOHNNY. What's that?

MADGE. That's "Theirs"! The rest is mine! See! All this!

JOHNNY. (*Enjoying his pun.*) In the morning how can you tell switch is switch? (*Running it along his jaw.*) It tickles!

MADGE. (*As she moves, her ankle gives beneath her.*) 'Scuse me! (*It happens again.*) 'Scuse me! There seems to be something on my foot.

(*JOHNNY leans forward to look.*)

Turn around, Johnny. Turn around, I'm going to investergate. (*Lifting her gown a bit.*) Oh! It's my slipper!

(*She takes it off.*)

JOHNNY. What are you going to do with it?

MADGE. Didn't you read about that Grand Duke "Whozus" or something or other of Russia drinking wine out of that French actress'sess'ss slipper, or didn't you? Well, when Janet come home, you're gonna drink champagne out of mine!

JOHNNY. Hold your slipper.

(*They hold the slipper and pour champagne into it.*)

Sanitary drinking cup!

(*He sips.*)

MADGE. No! No! No! Don't drink him— (*Indicating the ice bucket.*) Put him on ice!

JOHNNY. He's a "cold-storage" slipper!

(*He staggers and loses balance taking the slipper to the bucket.*)

'Scuse me. (*Beat.*) 'Scuse me.

(*MADGE bows with dignity to him. He gathers himself up and careens to the couch, where he plops down.*)

MADGE. What's the matter, Johnny? Is there something on your foot, too?

JOHNNY. I think I better go to bed.

MADGE. (*Playfully:*) No! No! No! Don't you want to be compromised?

JOHNNY. Can't we compromise in bed?

MADGE. I don't think so—I never heard of such a thing. Come on—let's have some music!

JOHNNY. I don't wanna keep you from going home if you're tired.

MADGE. I don't wanna go home—I been there too much! I'm gonna sleep with you down here.

JOHNNY. There's only room enough for me on this couch. You go to Janet's room!

MADGE. Are you telling me what to do? All rightie.

(She starts to head out, but runs into something.)

Where is Janet's room? I know where it used to be—but you keep moving things around on me!

JOHNNY. Just stand perfectly still and grab the first door that goes by!

MADGE. All rightie, then. Here I go!

(She prepares to "take-off" again.)

Ooo-h! Johnny! When did you put in the moving sidewalk?!

(She plays on her new "toy" and exits.)

JOHNNY. That's right—just follow the cracks. But don't break your mother's back!

(He struggles to remove his jacket and gets comfortable to go to sleep. In the process, he staggers and pushes the maid's bell, causing a long ring.)

(Not comprehending why the ring is so long:) Olive! Answer that bell!

(He discovers his mistake and enjoys playing with his new "toy." He presses the bell again. He then manages to get his coat off and climbs onto the couch, where he attempts to settle himself. He

places the hair switch in his pocket and covers himself with a throw and puts a pillow over his face. He gives a long sigh.)

OLIVE. Did you ring, sir?

(She assesses the situation. JOHNNY sighs and moans, startling her. She goes up close for a look. Accepts the situation and clears the food tray. Exits. After a moments pause, MADGE enters in a negligee of Janet's.)

MADGE. Johnny, that's the coldest bed I ever was in! And it keeps bobbing like a canoe! How do I look in Janet's negligee? Johnny! Don't you dare hide from me! Johnny? Johnny!? Oh, there you are. Oh, how you've changed. Johnny, Janet's bed isn't stationary. The minute I got in—it began bobbing—and then floating around the room! If I hadn't got out it would've capsized—I might have drowned. Johnny! I'm speaking to you! Johnny! Get up and give me the couch! You go to Janet's boat—you're used to it! *(Poking JOHNNY:)* Oh, dear.

JOHNNY. *(Moaning in sleep:)* Jannie...

MADGE. Ralphie.....

(She slumps to the floor and curls up under the bearskin rug, completely from view of anyone. After a moment or two, the doorbells rings, then rings again, and then gives a long ring. After a slight pause, OLIVE enters, putting up her hair, having been disturbed preparing for bed.)

OLIVE. *(Sotto voce:)* More damn bells in this house!

(Three more short, sharp rings.)

JANET. *(Off stage:)* I'm sorry to have gotten you up, Olive.

OLIVE. *(Off stage:)* Oh, that's all right, ma'm. I'm here to serve!

(JANET and HAMILTON enter.)

JANET. I thought we'd never get in!

OLIVE. *(Taking the opera cloak and exiting, sotto voce:)* If only I had Aladdin's lamp.

HAMILTON. Imagine—Johnny sleeping through all that!

JANET. Point made—again! Wait a minute; I'll put on a light.

HAMILTON. Jannie. Never mind the light.

JANET. *(A little protest:)* Milt—

HAMILTON. There's light enough—for you—and me.

JANET. I think you're hungry. Shall I bring the supper in here? It's more cozy than the dining room.

HAMILTON. Yes—do.

JANET. I've a little surprise for you.

HAMILTON. Something special?

JANET. Your favorite salad.

(She exits.)

HAMILTON. I'm ravenous after all that dancing at Riccardo's

JANET. *(Off stage:)* Oooh, Milt!

(She enters.)

HAMILTON. What's the matter?

JANET. Someone has eaten your chicken—salad!

HAMILTON. What?— Who?

JANET. John? Madge?

(JOHNNY gives a little groan.)

What was that?

HAMILTON. What?

JANET. It sounded like someone breathing.

HAMILTON. You're nervous. You're upset about my chicken—that's very dear of you.

JANET. I can't help it. I've been upset all evening thinking of the brutal way I treated Johnny tonight. That I was going to divorce him.

HAMILTON. Jannie, we worked all through that during the two-step. Of course, you must divorce him.

JANET. I know, I know. You're right. But—well, what grounds am I going to offer? He's a "model" husband.

(JOHNNY gives a moaning yawn.)

Are you—yawning!?

HAMILTON. Certainly not!

JANET. I told you after the fox trot—you needn't stay up on my account!

HAMILTON. Jannie, Jannie—compose yourself. There are ways. Maybe we can persuade him to—well—to use the old found-with-another-woman-tactic.

JANET. I think you've had too much pink champagne tonight—Johnny would never do that!

(JOHNNY groans again.)

That's the second time you've yawned!

HAMILTON. But I didn't yawn!

JANET. It's time for you to go!

HAMILTON. Jannie!

JANET. If I want something to yawn at me, I can find it in my own house!

(She sits on the couch and gives a scream.)

HAMILTON. What is it?

JANET. *(Jumping up:)* There's someone on the couch!

(HAMILTON goes to the couch and removes the pillow from JOHNNY's face.)

HAMILTON. Johnny!

JOHNNY. (*Sitting up bleary-eyed:*) Oh, hello, Janet.

JANET. Why aren't you in bed? Is there something the matter? You're not ill? You look flushed!

JOHNNY. I feel flushed. Where's the ice water.

JANET. Johnny! You're feverish! O-o-oh! He's been drinking!

HAMILTON. No!

JOHNNY. Who let you in?!

HAMILTON. I just dropped in after the opera for a bite.

JOHNNY. How dare you bite my wife! Get out of my house! I'll bite my own wife!

JANET. He's awful!

JOHNNY. You heard what I said. Leave my house now—or my house will leave you!

HAMILTON. Perhaps I'd better be going, Jannie.

JANET. No! Stay where you are! John, this is my house, too—and my friend. I won't have him insulted. Milt, I may need you.

JOHNNY. I don't need him!

HAMILTON. What you need is a bromo-seltzer!

JOHNNY. I don't need anything from—you. I got square with you! I ate your supper!

JANET. John!

JOHNNY. I ate yours—too!

HAMILTON. Some "model" husband!

(The doorbell gives three short rings.)

JANET. Who can that be—at this time of night?

HAMILTON. Shall I answer it?

JANET. No, let Olive open it.

RALPH. *(Off stage:)* No! Thank you very much, Olive—I'll go right in myself!

(He enters wildly.)

JANET. Ralph!

RALPH. Is Madge here?

JANET. No—why?

RALPH. When I got home, just now, and came into my room—I thought she'd wake up like she always does, and say—"Is that you, Ralphie?" But there wasn't a sound! Not even her breathing! Her bed was empty!

JANET. John, when Madge left—where was she going?

JOHNNY. I heard her say something about the Bowery.

RALPH. Is he looney?

JANET. This is how we found him. He must have been drinking for hours.

RALPH. *(Grabbing JOHNNY:)* What did you do with my Maggie?!

JOHNNY. We were crossing the hot sands.

RALPH. Good Lord! *(Beat.)* Johnny, listen to me—when Madge left, did you see her to the elevator?

JOHNNY. Yes!

RALPH. Which way did she go?

JOHNNY. Up—and down.

RALPH. Don't talk nonsense—she couldn't go in both directions at once!

JOHNNY. Oh, yes she could. It was a green elevator.

RALPH. Look! (*Picking it up Madge's slipper:*) Maggie's slipper! Full of water!

JOHNNY. It's champagne!

JANET. She was with him all night!

(RALPH grabs JOHNNY, raises him up and swings at him.)

RALPH. Where is she? Where's Maggie? Where is she!?

(MADGE, as RALPH starts for JOHNNY, slowly rises to knees and crawls a foot or two, still covered with the bearskin.)

JOHNNY. Oh, my God!

(General commotion, gasps of astonishment, amazement, shrieks of terror. RALPH goes to MADGE and throws off the bearskin.)

RALPH. Margaret!

(More commotion. JANET turns on another light.)

MADGE. (*Blinking, sweetly:*) Hello everybody.

RALPH. Maggie, dear!

MADGE. My, what a lot of people!

JANET. She's been drinking, too! Oh! And in my negligee!

RALPH. Madge! What have you been doing?

HAMILTON. Calm down, Wheeler! This must all be some joke.

RALPH. To find my wife rolling around in a bearskin? Some joke!

MADGE. Bare skin? I'm entirely clothed!

JOHNNY. 'Scuse me. Madge and I have a little secret. We just love Forbidden Fruit, don't we?

RALPH. Maggie—what did he do to you to get you in this condition?

JANET. What did she do to *him*? You talk about *her* condition! Look at *his*!

JOHNNY. What's the matter with our "condition?" Look at your "condition"! Coming home the day after tomorrow!

MADGE. (*Cautiously:*) With a crowd of people—

JOHNNY. Yes—and a very mixed crowd!

MADGE. Very mixed!

JOHNNY. And you wake us up in the middle of the night, and give a big party!

MADGE. Very big!

JOHNNY. And are we invited to your party? Not that we wanted to be invited to your damn party!

MADGE. Oh, *very* damn!

JOHNNY. We had a party of our own!

MADGE. We did!

RALPH. Oh, did you?

MADGE. 'Scuse me! Go away now, Ralphie. Johnny and I's got a little secret.

RALPH. We already know your little secret! There'll be no more Forbidden Fruit!

JANET. (*To RALPH:*) And this is your "quiet little mouse." Who'd never go anywhere without you! And the moment I'm out of the house, she's down here carousing with my husband! (*To JOHNNY:*) I wonder if it's the first time?

JOHNNY. She wonders! I've got her "wondering"!!

JANET. But I won't "wonder" long!

RALPH. (*About to get JOHNNY.*) Nor I!

JANET. Wait—let me get it out of him! (*To JOHNNY.*) Did this—woman—arrange this—assignment?

JOHNNY. Can I help it if women want to be alone with me?

RALPH. How long have you and my wife been conducting this intrigue behind our backs?

JOHNNY. If you hadn't turned your backs, there wouldn't have been any intrigue—or assignment!

JANET. Oh! Just because I spend an evening out—is no excuse for you to give yourself up to unbridled license!

MADGE. Didn't need a Bridal License! Did we?

RALPH & JANET. Oh!

JOHNNY. Liquor's sold here without a license!

JANET. And this isn't the first time you two have been alone together! Admit it! Those other nights when I went to the opera, you stole up to her!

JOHNNY. Never stole up!

MADGE. Took a green elevator!

RALPH. Then you do admit it!

JANET. How many times? How many? Once? Twice? Three times? Four? Five? Six?

JOHNNY. Raise you seven!

JANET. Six and seven—

JANET & RALPH. Thirteen!

MADGE. No, no, no!

RALPH & JANET. What?

MADGE. Unlucky number. (*To HAMILTON.*) Isn't it?

JOHNNY. Make it fourteen!

RALPH. (*About to pummel JOHNNY.*) You dare sit there and—

JANET. Wait! One moment—and he's yours! You two have been meeting daytimes, too, haven't you?

JOHNNY. Yep, I certainly have her "wondering"!

JANET. Some café? You go to cafés and drink during the day—the two of you. Don't you?

JOHNNY. Nobody has to make me a drink. I'm a bloated herring!

MADGE. (*Bouncing up.*) Woops!

RALPH. Sit down!

JOHNNY. Drink on my way downtown in the morning. Drink in the bank! Drink—all the time!

JANET. And all this time I thought you were a model of temperance! All this time I imagined you cared only for me!

JOHNNY. A "one-woman" man, I'm not!

MADGE. He wants a harem!

JANET & RALPH. Oh!

JOHNNY. I've already got one!

JANET. Then, there have been other women!?

JOHNNY. Right along with the drink! Women in the morning, women in the bank—women in the safe deposit vaults!

JANET. Now, I begin to see. That's why you're always sleepy. That's why you never want to go out! How you've deceived me your whole life!

RALPH. I don't care about his whole life. I just want to know about the life he had tonight with my wife!

MADGE. Deary, we told you what happened. We had a party. A lovely little party. Lots to eat and drink—and everything floating

around the room! And every once in a while Johnny would compromise me.

(She puts JOHNNY's arm around her and cuddles up to him. Horrified exclamations.)

RALPH. He'd what?

MADGE. He'd compromise me. It's something you do with somebody else's husband!

(Gasps from all.)

And then—we went to bed!

(More gasps.)

Only for a little while.

(RALPH cries out and starts to attack JOHNNY. HAMILTON restrains him.)

HAMILTON. Wheeler! Wheeler! Wait, man. Wait!

RALPH. When you're sober, I'm coming back here and kill you!

JOHNNY. Then I won't get sober!

MADGE. That's right, Johnny! Don't you ever get sober!

JANET. Take her out of here. Get her out of here!

MADGE. Yes, Ralphie. You better take me home now. The company's getting mixier and mixier.

(RALPH breaks loose from HAMILTON and grabs MADGE by the arm.)

RALPH. Home? I'll take you to a lawyer!

HAMILTON. *(To JANET:)* You wanted "grounds." You can't get more ground than this.

RALPH. You're headed for a divorce, Missy!

MADGE. Divorce?

RALPH. Divorce!

MADGE. Oh, Johnny! You hear that? You've ruined me!

JOHNNY. (*Triumphantly.*) You hear that, Janet? I've ruined that woman!

(RALPH screams and rushes after JOHNNY. JOHNNY faces RALPH. HAMILTON goes to stop RALPH. JANET tries to protect JOHNNY. MADGE freezes in terror. Hold. Blackout.)

(Curtain.)

End of Act II

Intermission

ACT III

(The Bartlett's bedroom. The next morning. JOHNNY is in bed with a towel wrapped around his head, a la bandage, in pajamas and bare feet. His slippers on foot of the bed. Phone rings twice. JANET enters, very business-like, shutting the door none-too-quiet. She goes to the dressing table. Phone rings several more times. JANET goes to the bed during these and switches on the lamp. JOHNNY stirs and rolls over, placing a pillow over his face. This pleases JANET. She goes to the phone.)

JANET. Hello! Mr. Bartlett can't answer the phone. He's—not well! No, you can't, he doesn't have a wife!

(She slams down the phone.)

JOHNNY. O—oh!

(JANET goes to the window and puts up the shade.)

Jannie—

(JANET goes to the other window and puts up the shade.)

Jannie!

JANET. What is it?

JOHNNY. Would you mind getting me some—?

JANET. I would mind! You think I'm going to wait on you?—You—fallen man!

(She exits, slamming the door. Phone rings insistently. JOHNNY tries to ignore it but finally picks up.)

JOHNNY. *(Weakly:)* Hello. No. No! You can't speak to Mr. Bartlett—He's a "fallen man." He fell off the Woolworth Building.

(He hangs up. OLIVE enters cheerily with a breakfast tray, which she puts on a stool near the bed.)

OLIVE. Good morning. A bite to eat, sir?

JOHNNY. Oh!

OLIVE. Coffee, and ham and eggs.

JOHNNY. Oh!

OLIVE. Would you rather have—hash, sir?

JOHNNY. Nothing—no eggs!

OLIVE. I told Mrs. Bartlett you wouldn't be wanting anything. Mr. Dempster, the gentleman at the last place I worked—used to be like this pretty near every other day!

JOHNNY. (*Horrified:*) People do this more than once?

OLIVE. Oh, yes, sir.

JOHNNY. I'll never touch a thing to drink again as long as I live.

OLIVE. Yes, sir. That's what Mr. Dempster always used to say.

JOHNNY. Oh!

OLIVE. Yes, sir. And then he'd pull himself together—for a while.

JOHNNY. I don't think there's anything left of me *to* pull together.

OLIVE. Well, sir—"The morning after," Mr. Dempster always used to take a "pick-me-up."

JOHNNY. A what "me-up"?

OLIVE. It's what they call a "bracer," sir. Shall I fix one for you, sir? I think it would make you feel better.

JOHNNY. It couldn't make me feel worse.

OLIVE. I'll get it for you, sir.

JOHNNY. Thank you, Olive.

OLIVE. (*Effusively:*) That's all right, sir.

(JANET enters, leaving the door open. OLIVE recovers her servant poise.)

JANET. Olive! What are you doing?

OLIVE. Just—waiting on Mr. Bartlett, ma'm.

JANET. There's some packing waiting on you. Please go and do it!

(OLIVE heads for the door. JANET holds for her to go. At the threshold OLIVE turns back to JOHNNY.)

OLIVE. Sst! Sst!

(JOHNNY looks at OLIVE. JANET tenses—did she hear something? OLIVE winks and indicates that she's still going to bring the "bracer." JANET turns and mistakes the action as a flirtation. JOHNNY reacts. OLIVE senses something is wrong and looks over her shoulder to see JANET. OLIVE starts and exits with the tray, closing the door with her foot. JANET goes about her business, packing.)

JOHNNY. Packing? Are you going somewhere?

JANET. You don't expect me to go on living with you after last night, do you?!

JOHNNY. Yes. *(Beat.)* It was all Ralph's fault! He said I needed a night off with "wine"—"women"—and "song."

JANET. Stop! You don't need to catalogue the steps of your shame!

JOHNNY. There weren't any steps! It was all "Shoot-the-Chutes"!

JANET. Oh!!

(JOHNNY groans, grabbing his head and falls back.)

JANET. If I didn't want to claim a few trifles that belong to me, I wouldn't have exposed myself to the spectacle of a "Morning After."

(She gets an idea and purposely drops the drawer she's holding. JOHNNY groans. JANET takes out some lingerie and flirts out the wrinkles in spite and packs one.)

JOHNNY. I'll never have a "morning after"—after this!

JANET. What you do in the future has no interest for me!

JOHNNY. Jannie—if you'll only let me explain.

JANET. You attended to that last night, thank you. You gave me a

full explanation.

JOHNNY. That's just it, Jannie. It was a "full" explanation. I didn't know what I was saying.

JANET. Exactly—and the truth came out! And you think now I'm going to believe some trumped-up story? You'll have plenty of time to explain—in the Divorce Court!

JOHNNY. But Jannie—I did it all for you!

JANET. Stop telling me that, you fool!

JOHNNY. Don't shout!

JANET. I didn't shout!

JOHNNY. All right, dear. But please don't do it again.

JANET. Don't bully me!

(She kicks the bed.)

JOHNNY. Oh! Stop, stop—my head!

(JANET throws down some things and heads for the door.)

You're not leaving right now, are you?

JANET. I'm sorry to disappoint you—but I'm not. I'm going to find a headache powder.

JOHNNY. Oh, dear. Thank you.

JANET. Not for you—for mine! You got that "head"! You can get rid of it! I'll be out of here by noon!

(She heads for the door.)

JOHNNY. I promise I'll never see Madge Wheeler again, or speak to her—or think about her—I never intended to see her in the first place!

JANET. Ha!

(She exits. JOHNNY lies back in bed, moaning. The phone rings.)

More groaning. He doesn't answer it. OLIVE knocks at the door.)

JOHNNY. Come in.

(OLIVE enters with tray and NY Times.)

Olive—I've only got a few minutes.

OLIVE. Oh, sir, don't say that—you'll recover. I've seen worse cases than you get strong and well again!

(JOHNNY slowly gets up and puts on his robe and slippers.)

JOHNNY. I mean I've only got a few minutes to explain everything to Janet when she returns—and the way I feel now—it would take three years! Every time I open my mouth, something cracks in my head.

OLIVE. This will mend the cracks, sir. I'll fix your "Prairie Oyster," sir.

(JOHNNY doesn't notice her crack an egg and drop it into a cup.)

JOHNNY. Oyster! Uhh!

OLIVE. That's just the name of it, sir. How much whiskey will you want in it?

JOHNNY. No! That's how it all began last night—that was the foundation!

OLIVE. Then that's just why you should take some now, sir. Mr. Dempster—Dempsie, I called him when we were alone. Anyway, he always said: "If you drink too much of anything the night before—just drink some more of the same thing the morning after. What did you drink last night, sir? Mostly?"

JOHNNY. Mostly—everything.

OLIVE. *(Extending the cup to JOHNNY:)* There, sir. That'll settle your stomach.

(JOHNNY takes it, hesitates. OLIVE encourages him. JOHNNY

starts to drink, but catches a glimpse of the contents.)

JOHNNY. My God! It's alive!

OLIVE. That's just a cockeye, sir.

JOHNNY. *(With a groan:)* But what makes it so black?

OLIVE. That's the Worcestershire sauce.

JOHNNY. Why do I have to take that? I didn't drink any Worcestershire sauce last night. Did I?

OLIVE. Go on, sir—drink up! It'll do you good.

(JOHNNY goes through the throws of trying to drink it. OLIVE coaxes and humors him.)

JOHNNY. Don't hurry me, Olive. Look the other way!

(He finally downs it and gives the cup back.)

What did you call that, again?

OLIVE. A "Prairie Oyster," sir.

JOHNNY. More like a "Prairie Fire"! Ice water, Olive! Get me some ice water!

OLIVE. Yes, sir.

(The phone rings.)

JOHNNY. Oh! Olive, if you please.

OLIVE. Hello? *(Covering the mouthpiece:)* It's Mrs. Wheeler!

JOHNNY. Tell her I'm not in!

OLIVE. He's not in, ma'm. *(Beat.)* She says you must be!

JOHNNY. Tell her I just died!

OLIVE. He says he's dead, ma'm. *(Beat.)* She says she's dead, too. But she still wants to talk to you.

JOHNNY. Ask her—to call me when I'm feeling better. Next week!

OLIVE. Mr. Bartlett says— Hello! Hello! (*Beat.*) She's hung up, sir.

JOHNNY. She ought to be hung up! (*Beat.*) You know, Olive—I think I feel a little better since I took that "Prairie Ostrich"!

OLIVE. Signs of improvement, sir?

JOHNNY. Signs of something!

OLIVE. (*Recollecting with pleasure:*) Oh, dear. It brings back the 'old days' with Dempsie. (*Catching herself:*) Perhaps you'd like to look at the paper, sir.

(*JOHNNY takes the paper. The doorbell rings.*)

Goodness! The doorbell!

JOHNNY. Yes, I'm certainly feeling better!

(*OLIVE starts to exits and turns back.*)

OLIVE. Mr. Bartlett!

JOHNNY. Yes, Olive?

OLIVE. When I used to fix Demps—Mr. Dempster's "Prairie Oyster"—he always called me the nicest name.

JOHNNY. I see.

OLIVE. His little "morning glory."

(*Sheep eyes at JOHNNY and exits.*)

JOHNNY. (*Dawning on him:*) Morning Glory!—oh, my. Morning Glory.

(*There is a knock at the door. JOHNNY smiles.*)

Come in—Morning Glory.

(*MADGE enters gingerly, her head bandaged with a towel. JOHNNY turns to see her.*)

JOHNNY. Oh, my Lord!

MADGE. Mr. Bartlett.

JOHNNY. Keep away from the bed! Keep away from the bed!

MADGE. But I—

JOHNNY. Olive! Olive!

MADGE. But Mr. Bartlett—!

JOHNNY. Please, Mrs. Wheeler. Please get out of here—quick! I told Janet I'd never see you again! If she comes back, and finds you here—!

MADGE. But—I had to come!

JOHNNY. What's the matter now?!

MADGE. Oh, Mr. Bartlett! When Ralph got home last night, he called me "a Rag—and a Bone—and a Hank of Hair"! And then—he left me! He's been out all night! Something awful's happened to him—I know it!

JOHNNY. Don't worry; he's probably gone back to the Mystic Shrine!

MADGE. O-o-oh!

JOHNNY. Don't worry—

MADGE. (*Holding head:*) I never felt so terrible in all my life! All those skyscrapers! I'll never touch another thing to drink as long as I live.

JOHNNY. I know—that's what Dempsie always says.

MADGE. Dempsie?

JOHNNY. Mr. Dempster! A friend of Olive's! (*Beat.*) Now, look here, Madge—Mrs. Wheeler.

(*OLIVE enters with ice water.*)

OLIVE. Here's your ice water, sir!

(She takes in MADGE.)

I thought I'd better bring two glasses!

MADGE. Thank you!

JOHNNY. Thank you, Olive!

(MADGE attempts to cool her head on the pitcher. OLIVE thwarts her and engages JOHNNY in a routine of holding ice pitcher against his forehead to ease his discomfort.)

OLIVE. *(To JOHNNY:)* I always did that for—Mr. Dempster.

(She looks at MADGE and gives a sneering laugh and exits.)

JOHNNY. *(To MADGE:)* Now, you go back upstairs and—

MADGE. But can't you help me find my Ralph! You know where he goes! You know his habits!

JOHNNY. But I don't know his "habits" telephone numbers!

MADGE. O-oo-oh!

JOHNNY. Now, look—you've got to get out of here!

MADGE. Of course! All you want, now, is to get rid of me! You drag me into this whole lurid affair, and then—!

JOHNNY. Dragged you into it? You must still be drunk! Who started the whole thing? Who wanted to be compromised?

MADGE. Who thought we ought to drink? Who plied me with wine?

JOHNNY. Sup-plied, you mean! And hard work it was pouring things out fast enough for you! I shall always think of you—surrounded by bottles!

MADGE. And I shall always think of you—behind a bar!

JOHNNY. Yes—serving you drinks!

MADGE. Oh! Well—I'm not going to budge from this room till you find my Ralphie—

JOHNNY. I'm sorry Madge. But Janet's liable to come back at any moment. And I have only a few minutes left to explain about last night. If she's finds you here, it'll start things all over again. She's going to divorce me—and she's going to name—you!

MADGE. Name me what?

JOHNNY. You'll have to go to court—and tell all about being compromised!

MADGE. No!

JOHNNY. And champagne in your slipper!

MADGE. Oh!

JOHNNY. And green elevators!

MADGE. I'll go! I'll go!

JOHNNY. That's right! Upstairs you go—go—go.

(He's ushering MADGE out. The doorbell rings.)

The doorbell! *(Looking out the door:)* It's Janet coming back!

(Another ring. MADGE starts out.)

MADGE. I'll go!

JOHNNY. *(Pulling her back:)* No, no! You can't. You'd meet her!

MADGE. What'll I do? Where'll I go?!

JOHNNY. Hide! Hide!

(MADGE looks about and runs to an open trunk standing on end and crouches inside. JOHNNY closes door and turns around.)

Where are you? Where?

MADGE. Ooo-oo!

(JOHNNY runs over and tries to stuff MADGE in. She wails.)

What'll I do? What'll I do?

JOHNNY. Let me think! Let me think! Here, go into the bathroom!

MADGE. Oh—no!

JOHNNY. (*Pushing her.*) Just for a minute—till I get rid of her! Then you can slip out!

MADGE. What'll I do if she finds me in there?

JOHNNY. Act natural! Be taking a bath!

(MADGE exits into the bathroom, closing the door. RALPH knocks loudly at the door. JOHNNY runs for the whiskey bottle and seeks a place to hide it. More knocking. He runs to the bed and buries it under the pillows. He sits on the edge of the bed and takes up the newspaper.)

Come in!

(A crumpled RALPH tears in, leaving the door open. JOHNNY yelps and lies back, shielding his face with the paper. RALPH runs to him and tears the paper from him.)

RALPH. You—Lothario! You—Don Juan!

JOHNNY. Hello, Ralph.

RALPH. Before I choke the life out of you—where's my wife?

JOHNNY. Your—wife, Ralph?

RALPH. I've been walking the streets all night trying to decide if I'm going to kill you—or her, or you and her—or all three of us! No, I decided, I'll divorce her—and make her marry—that man! After I kill him!!

JOHNNY. Don't kill me—don't kill me. You gave me the idea!

RALPH. The idea—not the permit! The whole thing is a dream, isn't it?—a horrible nightmare. When I came home, I rushed upstairs to give her a chance to explain. I thought I'd find her there—watching for me—waiting for her little Ralphie. (*Beat.*) And she was gone—again!!

(A drinking glass breaks in the bathroom.)

What was that?

JOHNNY. What?

RALPH. That sound from the bathroom—

(JANET enters briskly.)

JANET. Ralph! What're you doing here?

RALPH. Madge is gone! But where has she gone?

(JANET crossing toward the bathroom.)

JANET. Ask him! He's her keeper!

JOHNNY. Where are you going?!

JANET. To get my dressing gown—if you care.

JOHNNY. No, no—not that lovely negligee!

JANET. *(Staring in amazement at JOHNNY, then to RALPH:)* The man's mad!

JOHNNY. Ralph! Ralph! Grab her—don't let her take that dressing gown!

RALPH. His brain must be permanently pickled! To hell with you and your dressing gown!

JOHNNY. There, you hear that, Jannie!—Ralph says to hell with you and your dressing gown!

(OLIVE enters, leaving the door open a bit.)

OLIVE. Mrs. Bartlett! The man from the Manhattan storage company is here!

JANET. Yes— Just a minute, Olive.

OLIVE. Yes, ma'm.

JANET. Ralph! The men have come for my furniture. I must ask you to go!

RALPH. Not until he tells me what he did with my wife!

JANET. Why don't you look upstairs for her?

RALPH. Because she's not there!

JANET. She phoned down here not fifteen minutes ago!

RALPH. She did? Well, why didn't you tell me before!

(He starts for the door.)

JANET. I did! I told you!

RALPH. No! You didn't told me! *(Running to door:)* No! *(To OLIVE:)* Did she? I know she didn't told me! Maggie, I'm coming!

(RALPH is out.)

JANET. Come along, Olive—if you're not ready to run screaming from the room yourself.

(JANET exits. OLIVE differs, gives JOHNNY a look and exits. JOHNNY holds, and then heads to the bathroom to see if the coast is clear. Before he gets there, MADGE peeks out and enters.)

MADGE. You've got to get me out of here!

JOHNNY. Shh! Ssh!

MADGE. You heard Ralph—he's coming back to give me a chance to explain. We'll never explain this if he finds out. Oh—I won't be able to live without my Ralphie!

JOHNNY. For God's sake, be quiet! They'll hear you. Go back in the bathroom!

MADGE. I won't—I won't—I won't go back in the bathroom!

(JOHNNY struggles to muzzle MADGE.)

JOHNNY. Ssh! Shut up! Be quiet!

MADGE. No! I won't be found! Get me out of here! If you don't get me out of here, I'll jump out the window!

JOHNNY. Don't you dare jump out my window! Go back upstairs and jump out your window!

MADGE. But I can't get upstairs!

JOHNNY. Ok—wait! I'll see if Janet's anywhere in sight. If she isn't you can get out! But don't move! Don't move till I tell you—you can move!

(JOHNNY goes to the door and peeks out. MADGE holds for an instant, and then quickly runs after JOHNNY to exit.)

JOHNNY. Look out, they're coming! *(Waving MADGE back, still keeping a lookout:)* Ah—ah! Ah!

(MADGE runs back toward the bathroom, then thinks better and runs to the bed. She gets down and rolls beneath the bed. JOHNNY closes the door and runs to the bathroom presuming that's where MADGE went.)

(Speaking through the bathroom door:) Now, you keep quiet, Madge Wheeler! Don't you dare come out of there!

(He locks the door.)

There!

(OLIVE enters. JOHNNY takes the key from the door and holds it in his hand.)

OLIVE. Mr. Bartlett—

JOHNNY. Ah!!! Oh, it's you, Olive!

OLIVE. Yes, sir. Mrs. Bartlett wants you to—

JOHNNY. Olive—please, please, please. Whatever you do, don't tell that Mrs. Wheeler is here.

OLIVE. Oh, Mr. Bartlett, I—

JOHNNY. Olive—don't fail me now. Remember, you're my Morning Glory. My little Morning Glory!

(JANET has entered.)

JANET. Oh!

OLIVE. O-o-oh!

JANET. “Morning Glory”! *(To OLIVE:)* Leave this room at once!

OLIVE. *(Sobbing:)* Yes, ma’m. That’s what Mrs. Dempster always said.

(She exits.)

JANET. You’ve quite a little harem, haven’t you? No wonder, you’ve been so content to spend your evenings home—alone!

JOHNNY. Jannie!

JANET. One on this floor! One on the next! *(Crossing to the bathroom:)* Have you been to the basement, yet? *(Hand on the doorknob.)* This door’s locked!

JOHNNY. Is it? Dear! Well! Well!

JANET. You know very well it is! *(Turning on him:)* What the hell’s the matter with you? *(Eyeing key:)* Give me that key!

JOHNNY. I never saw a key, dear!

JANET. Give me that key!

(She snatches it from his hand, goes to the bathroom door, unlocks and goes in. JOHNNY flies about wildly—what to do. RALPH barges in.)

RALPH. Maggie’s not upstairs. Nobody’s home upstairs!

(JANET enters quickly with her dressing gown in hand.)

JOHNNY. *(To JANET:)* Don’t tell him! *(To RALPH:)* I can explain!

JANET. Explain what?

(JOHNNY exits into the bathroom.)

RALPH. Janet! You said Madge phoned you. That she was upstairs. Are you sure?

JANET. I answered the phone myself. I told her don't you dare call here again. And I hung up!

JOHNNY. (*Off stage:*) O-o-oh!

JANET & RALPH. What is it?!

(JOHNNY enters wildly, almost unable to walk and trying to speak, but only gibberish comes out. JANET and RALPH are terrified. Finally, he does speak.)

JOHNNY. Downstairs! Oh, God! I think you'll find Madge in front of the building!— Slightly changed!

RALPH. What? (*Beat.*) NO-o-o-o!

JOHNNY. Before you go down—you better look out the window yourself—just—to get used to things.

RALPH. (*Running into the bathroom:*) Maggie!

JANET. People don't do such things—do they?

JOHNNY. Go to him, Jannie. Somebody should be with him, when he sees—the remnants.

JANET. Oh-o-o!

(She rushes into the bathroom. JOHNNY staggers to the bed and sits on the edge.)

JOHNNY. She said she'd do it, and she did, too! Oh, Maggie!

(MADGE wails, lifts the dust skirt, and grabs JOHNNY's ankle. JOHNNY leaps in fright, and then gets down and tries to push MADGE back under. They struggle. JANET and RALPH enter. JOHNNY sits and continues to fight MADGE with his feet.)

JANET. There's nothing in front of the building, John!

RALPH. He's got the D.T.s!!

JOHNNY. I wish that's all I had!

(OLIVE enters.)

OLIVE. I beg pardon, ma'm, but the movers want to know what to take out next?

JANET. Bring them in here—I'll tell them what to take out "next."

OLIVE. (*Calling off out the door:*) Come in here, please! (*Beat.*) Sorry, ma'm.

(*FISHER, a big mover, enters quickly, holds, glancing about. HARRY MEALY, much smaller, enters, close on the heels of FISHER. OLIVE exits, leaving the door open.*)

FISHER. Want something taken out of here, ma'am?

JANET. I certainly do! You can start with this trunk!

(*FISHER goes to the trunk.*)

FISHER. Here you go, Harry.

(*HARRY goes to the trunk.*)

We'll manage it all right, ma'am.

(*FISHER tips the trunk so HARRY can get at it. He helps HARRY get it to his back.*)

Up with it big boy!

(*HARRY sways under its weight and lugs it out the door.*)

RALPH. Careful!

FISHER. Look out for the wallpaper going down the stairs!! (*To JANET:*) Anything else ma'am?

JANET. That stool!

FISHER. That stool—

JANET. The chiffonier—

FISHER. The chiffonier—

JANET. The chairs—

FISHER. The chairs—

JANET. The carpet—

FISHER. The carpet—

JANET. And all the little things are mine!

(HARRY re-enters.)

FISHER. Harry! We take everything out but the bed!

JANET. Oh! The bed, too. Of course!— You'd better take that first!

(MADGE wails under the bed. All look about.)

JOHNNY. *(Giving a bad imitation of Madge's wail and kicking the dust skirt:)* Ah-ah! Ah-ah!

JANET. What is the matter with you?

JOHNNY. My voice! My voice! I'm loosing my voice!

JANET. Hurry, take this bed out of here—please!

JOHNNY. Oh, Jannie! Not the bed!— Not our bed!

JANET. Take it!

JOHNNY. All the tender memories!

JANET. I'm taking the bed! Mama gave it to me!

JOHNNY. Anything else—but not the bed—not the bed!

(He lies back on bed.)

JANET. I suppose you want the lace pillows to go with it, too!

(She has seized the pillows, revealing the hidden whisky bottle.)

Ha! We know what kind of "Tender Memories" this bed is full of!

JOHNNY. Oh-o, Jan—it was just for a little "Prairie Rooster"! I needed it!

JANET. “Skyscrapers”—“Green Elevators”—and now—“Prairie Roosters!?” What bar has he been going to?!

FISHER. Excuse me, ma’am—but does she move, or don’t she?

JANET. She moves! Elevators, Skyscrapers, Roosters—and all!

FISHER. Get busy, Harry!

JOHNNY. Oh, Jannie, please don’t move me now! I’m very ill. I think I’m going to die!

JANET. Then get out and die on the floor!

(She puts the whiskey bottle on the chifffonier.)

FISHER. Say, ma’am, I think he meant—“Prairie Oyster”—not rooster!

RALPH. For god’s sake just get the bed out of here—you’re not paid to think!!

FISHER. *(Moving in on RALPH:)* Oh, is that so—

(HARRY steps between FISHER and RALPH.)

HARRY. Nix on the rough stuff, boss! Remember the last time—

JANET. Please—just take the bed.

FISHER. But, what’ll we do with him? We ain’t paid to haul no livestock!

JANET. I don’t care what you do with him!

FISHER. Let’s go, Harry. Pull her out from the wall, and we’ll knock her down.

(They start to take the bed apart.)

(To JOHNNY:) Okay, Bright Eyes! Up-sie Doodle! Up-sie Doodle!

JOHNNY. Please—leave me alone. I’m a sick man. I’m dying.

FISHER. Ma’am, I’m sorry, but we ain’t no ambulance service!

RALPH. Come on, I'll give you a hand!

(The three men continue packing up the bed, lifting the mattress with JOHNNY on it and setting it on the floor perpendicular to the foot of the bed.)

FISHER. Lift up the springs!

(HARRY and FISHER start to lift up the springs.)

JOHNNY. Look away, Jannie! Look away!! Ralph, don't let her look!

RALPH & JANET. Look at what?!

HARRY. Holy Mackerel!

(MADGE is crouched, quaking. JANET and RALPH turn to look. MADGE jumps up in fright.)

JANET & RALPH. Madge!!!!

(JOHNNY crawls away, trying to hide.)

JANET. When she's not in the bed, she's under it!

RALPH. *(Chasing after JOHNNY:)* You scoundrel!

(JOHNNY gets caught up between FISHER, HARRY, and the bedsprings. HARRY escapes and lugs the mattress off.)

MADGE. Stop him! He'll kill him! Janet, make him stop! You don't understand— He don't understand!

JANET. *(Stepping toward MADGE:)* You little fiend!

(MADGE runs for cover behind the springs with JOHNNY—they look a little like they're behind bars.)

MADGE. Let me in! Let me in! *(To RALPH:)* You never gave me a chance!

(RALPH has started for MADGE. FISHER stops him cold.)

FISHER. Hey—the lady says you never gave her a chance!

RALPH. What do you know about this?! She's no lady—she's my wife!

(We hear a classic rim-shot. Everyone does a take. The action resumes.)

FISHER. You're the kind a guy that wouldn't give nobody a chance!

(He gives RALPH a good shove.)

RALPH. Hey—hey, buddy! I'm not some football!

(HARRY re-enters and carries off the chest.)

FISHER. No, but you've got a mean kisser!

JANET. What right have you to interfere with my guests! You're hired help!

FISHER. I don't know nothing about no "rights," ma'm—but *(To MADGE:)* nobody better hurt this "baby-doll."

(He gives MADGE a big smile and a wink. She cowers in fear. HARRY re-enters.)

HARRY. Hey, boss, we can use your back on this stuff out here.

FISHER. Yeah, yeah—I'm on the job!

(He gives a look to everyone, then gets the bottle of whiskey and exits, as OLIVE enters. OLIVE, FISHER, and HARRY exchange looks. RALPH sits. HARRY collects more items to move, stacking, balancing and juggling them—at times eavesdropping, but always playing the scene. He exits after not too long.)

OLIVE. The janitor wants to know if you're leaving for good ma'm?

JANET. Now, we get his "Morning Glory" again! *(To RALPH:)* Must be your wife was his "Night-Blooming Moon Vine!"

(MADGE shrinks. OLIVE steps forward.)

OLIVE. Oh, ma'm! The only reason Mr. Bartlett called me his "Morning Glory"—was so I wouldn't tell you about Mrs. Wheeler!

JANET. So, *she* knows about the fiend!

RALPH. What exactly do you know?

OLIVE. Well, ma'm, just before you came home last night, the drawing room bell rang, and when I was going to answer it, I noticed your door was open. I looked in and I thought I saw you in bed—then I saw it was Mrs. Wheeler.

JANET. And what was she doing—if you dare give us the details?

OLIVE. Holding on to the bed and singing—“Throw Out the Life-line”!

(JANET and RALPH give MADGE a look.)

And then I went into the drawing room—

RALPH. What did you see there?

OLIVE. Mr. Bartlett on the couch, snoring his head off!

RALPH. Asleep?

OLIVE. I said he was snoring, didn't I?

JANET. Go on! What happened next?

OLIVE. Nothing ma'm. A few minutes later, the doorbell rang. It was you coming home—late, as usual.

MADGE. A-hah!

JANET. *(To OLIVE:)* You may go—Olive!

OLIVE. Oh, I'm going, ma'm! I'm going! To some respectable house!

(She exits.)

RALPH. Then, this clears my Maggie—completely!

JANET. What do I care about your Maggie? What about him meeting women on the way downtown! Women in the bank! Women in the safe-deposit vaults!

JOHNNY. Oh, Jannie. I never thought of other women, and Turkish baths, and Mystic Shrines! I told you it was Ralph who started me!

JANET. Oh!

(She exits.)

RALPH. Lord help me!

MADGE. That's right— You Mystic Shriner!

RALPH. Now, Maggie, we're past all that—

MADGE. Don't you come near me! Trying to put all the blame on me! When it's you who—

RALPH. Maggie! Maggie! My, Maggie!

MADGE. Deceiving me every week for the last two years!

JOHNNY. And that's a hundred and four times!

MADGE. My heart's breaking and you stand there doing arithmetic! I'm starting to get very angry.

RALPH. But Maggie, dear—

MADGE. Don't speak to me! The moment there was any question about me—you believed the worst! And you now expect me to forgive you?! Take you back?! Never—never—NEVER!

RALPH. Maggie!

MADGE. You—you—Sheik!

(She exits.)

RALPH. *(Turning on JOHNNY:)* This is what I get for trying to help you!

JOHNNY. Don't you ever try to help me again! You—you— Mormon, you!

RALPH. Mormon nothing! I've never known any other woman in the world but Maggie!

JOHNNY. Did you or did you not tell me—

RALPH. Oh, Johnny! I didn't mean all that stuff! I'm just a damn, ol' braggart—trying to show off for you. I've never done more than play a lousy hand of poker at the Mystic Shrine! But I can't tell Madge that!

JOHNNY. Why not?

RALPH. Her folks are Baptists!

JOHNNY. What? This is crazy. Janet's about to divorce me—all because of the Baptists?!

RALPH. No! No, no, no! Now, she's yours. Don't you see? She's ready to eat out of your hand!

JOHNNY. Bite out of it, you mean! She's furious!

RALPH. Because she's found out she really cares for you!

JOHNNY. Now, I know this is a farce!

RALPH. Because she thinks you care for someone else!

JOHNNY. Oh, Ralph— *(Beat.)* You really think she does care for me, after all?

RALPH. She's crazy about you! Why, if you could make her think that it was you who wanted a divorce—you couldn't get her out of the house with a crane!

JOHNNY. I don't know about taking any more advice from you. I might—

(JANET enters carrying a small traveling case.)

JANET. Well— I'm going!

RALPH. Hah! So I'm not the only one who's being left out! Well, good for you, Janet! You're quite right to dump this Up-sie Doodle, alcoholic jellyfish! Quite right! Now, it's my turn to face the music!

(He exits.)

JANET. Well, I'm leaving now. I'll find some place where I can live quietly and frugally until a divorce is granted!

JOHNNY. Where?

JANET. The Ritz. I shall spend the afternoon in consultation with a lawyer—who will find some first-rate “grounds”!

JOHNNY. Jannie—

JANET. Please—don't make a scene. My mind is made up. If you've anything further to say—you may address my attorney!

JOHNNY. Jannie, I was just going to say—as I told you at the start. I won't contest it. And I don't want you to have to bother with it. I'll attend to everything. If we're going to get a divorce, we might just as well get a good one! I'll go down myself this afternoon and talk to your lawyer. You'll have the best “grounds” in town. You shall have your divorce!

JANET. (*Sucking the air out of the room.*) That's right! Cast me off! Cast me off! Put me out of the house, you brute! It wasn't enough to make a spectacle of me before my friends! Now, you must throw me aside for another woman! Make me a spectacle before the whole of Metropolis!

JOHNNY. What hole?

JANET. But you shan't do it! I defy you to get a divorce! What are your “grounds”?

JOHNNY. I haven't any.

JANET. I don't care what they are!! I'll fight! Do you hear? I'll fight!!

(*MADGE hurries in.*)

MADGE. Janet! Ralph has confessed everything!!

JANET. Of course he did!

MADGE. He doesn't go to the Mystic Shrine, after all!

JOHNNY. He doesn't?

**THIS PLAY IS
NOT OVER!**

In order to protect our associated authors against copyright infringement, we cannot currently present full electronic scripts.

To purchase books with the full text, and to apply for performance rights, click ORDER or go back to:

www.playscripts.com