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THE IMPROPER DUCHESS

JAMES B. FAGAN

THE IMPROPER DUCHESS



A MODERN COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

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To
The First Lady
of the Land—
The Statue of Liberty

"The Improper Duchess" was produced under the management of MAURICE BROWNE
at the Empire Theatre, Southampton, on January 12th, 1931, and opened on
January 22nd at the Globe Theatre, London.

Characters in order of their appearance

Count Seidel	FRANK COCHRANE
Milton Lee	GRANVILLE FERRIER
Captain Olven	CLAUDE WHINNEY
Baron Kamp	EUGENE LEAHY
J. Montgomery Curtis	GEORGE F. IDE
Miss Cutting	RUTH PETERSON
Augustus X (King of Poldavia)	FRANK CELLIER
Erasmus	JAMES SOLOMON
Myrom B. Garcia	ANDREA MALANDRINO
Willis Macabe	HARRY J. CLIFFORD
H.H. The Duchess of Tann	YVONNE ARNAUD
Baroness Kamp	ANNIE ESMOND

Miss Mamie Hatch
Senator Bernard J. Corcoran
Rev. Adam B. Macadam
Gunning

JULIE SUEDO
HARTLEY POWER
JOHN LAURIE
WINIFRED OUGHTON

The Play produced and the Settings designed by the Author

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

AUGUSTUS X, *King of Poldavia*

BARON KAMP

COUNT SEIDEL

CAPTAIN OLVEN

SENATOR BERNARD J. CORCORAN

REV. ADAM B. MACADAM

MILTON LEE

J. MONTGOMERY CURTIS

MYROM B. GARCIA

WILLIS MACABE

ERASMUS

H.H. THE DUCHESS OF TANN

BARONESS KAMP

MISS MAMIE HATCH

MISS CUTTING

GUNNING

The Place: Washington, D.C., U.S.A.

The Period: During the next Presidency

The Action: Covers twenty-six hours

SCENES

ACT I

Library at the Poldavian Embassy

ACT II

The Duchess's Room at the Paradise Hotel

ACT III

Same as Act I

ACT I

SCENE: *The Poldavian Embassy in Washington. The Ambassador's study. Three lofty French windows in the back wall which runs obliquely away from the audience R. to L. Outside, a terrace and glimpses of white houses through trees. Upstage in the wall R. a small door which leads through to the Chancelry. Upstage in the wall L. large double doors leading through a reception room to the other apartments. Below the doors a fireplace above which hangs a large portrait of a stout youngish man, in uniform. Other pictures and photos, groups of men, statesmen, and a few imposing ladies. At right angles to it and above the fireplace a large sofa. In front of centre window a large desk with chair on its left, a long stool on its right, and a round stool at the end next footlights, R. a round table.*

A bright morning in late spring.

At the round table R., front, four men are seated. An empty chair faces the audience, on the right of this sits MILTON LEE, President of the International Oil Co., a long lean man any age over fifty. When he speaks, which is seldom, his voice is a hard slow nasal drawl and his face never moves a muscle. On his right sits J. MONTGOMERY CURTIS, first Vice-President of I.O.C., a big, florid, fleshy, well-groomed, well-dressed, spectacled product of American business and American culture. He does the talking. Left of the empty chair sits the Poldavian Ambassador, BARON KAMP, distinguished but pompous, about forty-five, and risen from the chair on his left COUNT SEIDEL is bending over the Ambassador's chair and reading the bulky document that lies before them—a counterpart of which MONTGOMERY CURTIS is reading, while LEE sits giving an imitation of the Sphinx chewing the end of a perfect cigar. The COUNT is an elderly man, looks something of a roué, quick, humorous, and in the position of first secretary carries the brains of the establishment. The table is covered with documents, large and small. A little behind them on the left a wheeled stand with a sheaf of maps, and an attaché standing by to turn them and take notes. CAPTAIN OLVEN, a fat, pleasant young man, is naval attaché, but the Poldavian Navy consisting of six river gunboats, his work is commercial.

There is a longish pause after the curtain rises, while the three men read, SEIDEL bending forward occasionally to note with a marginal finger certain passages for his chief.

SEIDEL (*raising his eyes*): Another cigar, Mr. Lee? (*He pushes the box towards him, and resumes reading.*)

[After a pause LEE takes the stump from his mouth, puts it in the ash-tray deliberately, slowly evolves a cigar from the silver and tissue wrappings, bites the end and turning slowly ejects it. As he puts the cigar in his mouth OLVEN is beside him with a lighted match which he ignores, taking a lighter from his pocket. When his cigar is alight, he blows a long puff and drawls without turning.

LEE: Always burn oil.

OLVEN (*smiling*): In Poldavia lighters are illegal—we have a match tax.

[He retires.

MONTGOMERY CURTIS turns the last page, the Ambassador follows suit a few moments later. When CURTIS finishes reading he sits drumming the fingers of one hand, while with a pencil in the other he marks the notes he has made on a sheet of paper.

KAMP (*as he finishes reading*): Yes—yes—

CURTIS: Now, Mr. Ambassador—just one point with regard to Option A—marked blue on the map.

[OLVEN points to it; all look at the map except LEE.

By the terms of the concession, the International Oil Co. is granted a seven years' option on the blue territory A at the specified figure. It will take three years, according to the reports of our engineers, before the boring of the oil-bearing

tracts in the main concession is completed. We may never want to take up Option A. Besides, it hasn't been prospected—not properly. We don't know yet that there's enough oil there to make it pay.

SEIDEL: Oil! (*Laughing*) We know *now* that the whole of the district on that map is probably the richest oil-bearing country in Europe.

CURTIS: Maybe yes. We know there's oil on the other side—that green section——

KAMP: That is the royal hunting forest, Mr. Curtis.

CURTIS: Yes, I know, but for an option on that we could pay a very big price.

SEIDEL: I shouldn't like to suggest it to his Majesty—I might have my head chopped off. (*Laughing.*)

CURTIS: No one can sit on oil—it's bursting to come up and serve humanity.

KAMP (*glancing at the clock*): I am afraid his Majesty is very late, gentlemen.

CURTIS: Well, well, it's pleasant to find that royalty is only human.

LEE: I thought punctuality was the politeness of kings.

SEIDEL: His Majesty has been flying for three weeks. That has probably disturbed his sense of time.

[LEE *grunts.*

CURTIS: That notion of flying the tour was certainly fine. Whose idea was that?

KAMP: The Duchess of Tann's.

CURTIS: We had the trip all lined up on the railroads, but of course this made us a back number.

SEIDEL: An hour after they landed the Duchess said to me: "We could not be seen by the whole of America unless we could fly—we must travel by air."

LEE: Bully for her!

SEIDEL: In twenty-four hours the whole of the arrangements were altered, and his Majesty, taking only two equerries, the Duchess, her lady-in-waiting, and maid, started on what must certainly be the most remarkable royal progress on record. Boston, Buffalo, Detroit, Chicago, St. Louis, Cincinnati, San Francisco, Hollywood, Kansas City, New Orleans, Pittsburg, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Washington! It was an inspiration—and the newspapers red hot all the time! (*Chuckling.*)

LEE: I'll say it was the greatest advertising stunt in my time—put Poldavia on the map, I guess it may even put the Poldavian Loan on the market.

SEIDEL (*sharply*): May?

KAMP: What do you mean, Mr. Lee, by "may even"?

SEIDEL: The flotation of the Poldavian Loan is one of the conditions of the concession. The two instruments are due for signature to-morrow—simultaneously.

CURTIS: Yes, yes, yes, that will be all right—the bankers have agreed. There are one or two minor points——

[*Loud cheering is heard down the street, accompanied by hand-clapping and a chorus of Klaxon horns.*

KAMP (*relieved*): Ah! His Majesty at last. (*He rises.*)

[OLVEN *has also risen and stepped through the open window on to the terrace.*

OLVEN: It's not his Majesty, sir.

KAMP: Oh!

OLVEN: No, sir, it's the Alcazar Theatre in the next block. Raymond Trix, Personal Stellar appearance of, at the matinée of his new epic film *Just a Man!*

[*More frenzied cheers and Klaxons; as they subside OLVEN comes in, saying in an awed sotto voce:*

Mr. Trix is now entering the vestibule!

LEE'S *repressed grin now bursts into laughter in which first SEIDEL and then KAMP join. CURTIS wears a sour smile.*

CURTIS: Painful lack of the sense of proportion.

KAMP: I had forgotten, Mr. Lee, you manufacture your own kings in America now. (*Sitting.*)

LEE: Sure—and can them for export.

SEIDEL (*chuckling*): Good—very good! Now, Mr. Curtis, these minor points in connection with the Poldavian National Loan?

CURTIS: Yes. (*Taking up a small brochure*) Just read through that first page and see if anything strikes you. (*He hands it to SEIDEL and takes up another copy himself.*)

[*There is a knock at the door R.*

OLVEN: Come in. (*Going toward the door.*)

[*MISS CUTTING, a pert, pretty blonde stenographer comes in and meets OLVEN half way. She says something to him which the audience do not hear.*

OLVEN (*firmly*): He can't—the Ambassador is busy.

MISS CUTTING: It's the fourth time he's phoned.

OLVEN: Tell him he must give a message.

MISS CUTTING: I've *told* him that—he says it's *impossible*. (*Her voice reaches the high C of despair on the two words.*)

KAMP: What is the matter? (*Looking round lazily.*)

OLVEN (*coming down*): It's Mr. Garcia, the proprietor of the Paradise Hotel. He wants to speak to you personally, sir.

KAMP: No, no, no, I am too busy—he must give a message.

[*OLVEN turns to MISS CUTTING, who goes out with a despairing shrug.*

KAMP: He is so excited that his Majesty stays at his hotel—I think he has a little lost his balance.

OLVEN: Temperamental at the best of times, sir.

CURTIS (*as SEIDEL looks up*): Well?

SEIDEL: No.

CURTIS: Just listen. The proposal is to issue Poldavian National Bonds to the amount of two hundred million dollars on Wall Street, about the middle of October, bearing interest at six per cent. (*He breaks off, then resumes, reading quickly*) "General Purposes of the loan: It is proposed to modernise and extend the present railroad system of the country, adding nearly one-third to its mileage. New roads are badly needed. Works projected on the two principal rivers will give the country a supply of cheap electricity. (*With emphasis*) And *lastly*, in the vital interest of security, it is understood that a sum not exceeding fifty per cent, of the loan, is to be devoted to the military establishment." Mr.

Ambassador—that "lastly" must come right out.

KAMP (*excitedly*): No, no, no, that is not possible.

SEIDEL: It is for the army that we *need* the loan.

LEE: You won't get it for the army.

SEIDEL: The portion of the loan for the home market is called "The Security Loan." Without that it would fall flat. Security is life to us.

CURTIS: No doubt. But you have got to realise the curious mentality of the great peace-loving American people. They will make you all the war munitions you like to pay for with your own money, but they won't lend you a cent of their money to spend on fighting—no, sir, that's crime against humanity.

LEE: Wall Street is the palace of peace—it don't stand for anything with guns in it.

SEIDEL: What are we to do—go to Chicago?

CURTIS: You can do anything you like in this country so you don't get it talked about—and I guess it's the same in yours.

KAMP: In all countries.

CURTIS: Put one word of war in your prospectus and every parson, pacifist, and bootlegger in the States will be after you. No, talk of education, national health schemes, police even, and you'll get all you want. You can camouflage its destination afterwards.

LEE: You can always eat your cake and have it—if you know how.

[ERASMUS *appears at the double doors L.*

ERASMUS: His Majesty is just arriving, your Excellency.

[KAMP and SEIDEL *rise hurriedly.*

KAMP: Pray excuse me, gentlemen—we shall be with you again in a moment.

[*They go out L.*

CURTIS *rises and strolls across to the fireplace, looking at the portrait which hangs over it.*

CURTIS: who painted that portrait of his Majesty?

OLVEN: Maincz, our great portrait painter. His Majesty was fatter then.

CURTIS: So I observe.

[*A knock on the door R. MISS CUTTING entering:*

MISS CUTTING: Mr. Garcia on the phone again—I shall go plumb crazy—will you speak to him—please?

OLVEN: Very well. (*To the others*) Forgive me a moment.

[*He goes out with her.*

CURTIS (*as he lights a cigarette*): His Majesty will be fatter again, when he gets all that's coming to him from this deal.

LEE: Sure—if his head don't get too fat, and start him fighting somebody.

CURTIS: Don't worry, the Duchess will sit on all that kind of bunk.

LEE: I'll be glad to meet this dame.

CURTIS: I had a good many talks with her when I was over there in January. She certainly bosses the King and her husband—of course over there everyone knows she is his Majesty's *chère amie*.

LEE: His——? Oh, you mean his "cutie"—sure I knew that all right. Who was she anyhow?

CURTIS: A celebrated comic opera *divette*, Illyona Ferencz. After his queen died three years ago, "Toutou" married the lady to his Chancellor—in the interests of morality.

LEE (*chuckling*): And the husband ain't jealous?

CURTIS (*shaking his head*): Not that kind of man. His Highness the Duke of Tann belongs to one of the oldest families in Poldavia—constitutionally indifferent to women. (*Throws his cigarette into the fireplace and comes towards the table*) A wise-cracker over there described the marriage as "an alliance defensive and offensive."

[LEE *chuckles*.

Anyhow we've got to keep right with her. She's the Poldavian Pompadour.

LEE: Say, son, your education sure makes my brain tired—I don't get these French words.

CURTIS (*laughing*): Well, Pompadour was a swell vamp——

LEE: Shutt!!

[*The double doors L. open. The KING of Poldavia enters with BARON KAMP, COUNT SEIDEL follows. The KING, a youngish man, about thirty-five, wears a light grey tweed lounge suit and carries his right arm slung in a black silk handkerchief. He is decidedly inclined to flesh, but bronzed and pleasant-looking, with an easy smile which has made him popular. He speaks English fairly well, but with a full deep-toned foreign accent. He laughs a lot, a rather hollow laugh on one note.*

KAMP: Your Majesty, let me present to you Mr. Milton Lee, President of the International Oil Co.

KING: I have long time looked forward to making your acquaintance, Mr. Lee.

LEE: Glad to meet your Majesty.

KAMP: Mr. Montgomery Curtis you have met.

KING: Delighted to meet you again, Mr. Curtis.

CURTIS: Very pleased to see your Majesty looking so well.

KING: I trust, gentlemen, we are to have the pleasure of meeting more often in the future. You must come to Poldavia, Mr. Lee.

LEE: Well, I guess I'm a home bird, your Majesty, but I might. (*Suddenly pointing to his arm*) Say, have you been in a smash up?

KING: Ho! ho! ho! ho! ho! no—no—no—I only suffer a little from the enthusiasm of your welcome. In three weeks I have been violently shaken by thousands of American hands—with the help of massage I stood it as far as Kansas City, but after that, I have to defend myself. (*Indicating the sling*) The Mayor of Kansas! Ho! ho! ho! What a grip!—I thought he had drawn blood. (*Taking his arm from the sling*) But it is not very bad—a precaution—it will give me great pleasure to shake you by the hand. (*He shakes hands with LEE.*)

LEE: I'm being very careful, your Majesty.

[*They both laugh.*

KING: Well, gentlemen, we have business and I am very late.

[SEIDEL *draws back the centre chair for the KING, who sits.*

LEE (*sitting*): You certainly are, and I guess the business has gotten through without you.

[*The others are seated.*

KING: That is how I like it. At home, I say to my Chancellor, "Do not bother me with business, get it done and then tell it to me if you must." Ho! ho! ho! I do not hold with this modern working-man-king idea. Most of my royal cousins—those that are left—they are working from morning till night—business men. It is all wrong.

KAMP: Your Majesty is too modest.

[OLVEN *returns R.*

KING: No, no, the business of a king is to entertain himself, and any of his subjects who are entertaining. Baron, could I have a little something to eat?

KAMP: Of course, your Majesty.

[OLVEN *comes forward.*

KING: Some beer and three or four sandwiches.

OLVEN (*going*): Yes, your Majesty.

KING: Sandwiches—not American sandwiches.

OLVEN: I know, your Majesty.

[*Going out L.*

KING: Your skyscrapers give me a pain in the neck and your sandwiches give me a pain in the jaw. Ha! ha! ha!

CURTIS: You don't like our American food?

KING: Oh yes. I am sure it would be very good, if you would give us time to eat it. (*Throwing out his arms*) Oh, the rush of your life!—where are you going to?—and what will it be when you get there?

LEE: Well—we're going to Poldavia, and I guess it'll be a pretty smart place when we're through with it.

KING (*waving his fingers*): Ah yes! tell me of that—the business? It is all settled?

SEIDEL: Everything should be ready for signature to-morrow, your Majesty—if a few minor points——

CURTIS: Yes, could we not have those now, for his Majesty's consideration——

KING: No, no, no business—the Duchess of Tann will attend to it, she is here to represent her husband, my Chancellor. She has a head for business. Let us go over there, I do not like this table—it is like a cabinet meeting.

[*He rises and goes to the sofa L. The others are following.*

Sit here, Mr. Lee. Be seated, gentlemen. Ah!

[*As he stretches himself in the corner of the couch, LEE sits on his right. SEIDEL places a chair for KAMP R. of couch and remains standing. CURTIS sits on stool in front of fireplace.*

And so it is all settled.

LEE: All O.K.

KING: Good, good. My country has always been very poor and very wild. Now they tell me it will be all different. Roads, railways, everywhere; electric light blazing, big buildings, work for everybody, a big army, and money all round

—ha! ha! ha!—a little America! Well, so long as you do not spoil my hunting.

[A few moments earlier OLVEN returned with ERASMUS, the coloured butler, bearing a tankard of beer and a small plate of sandwiches on a salver. These he puts on the little table L. of couch and bends forward, placing them in front of the KING as the latter finishes speaking.]

Ah!—What a magnificent old negro! (He pats him on the back as though he were a dog.) You are a patriarch, eh?

ERASMUS: Yessuh—your Majesty. I is de oldest servant at de Embassy.

KING: What is your name?

ERASMUS: Erasmus, your Majesty.

KING: A very wise name—thank you, Erasmus.

[ERASMUS bows, smiling, and goes out; the KING takes the tankard.]

Gentlemen, I drink to our success, as we say in Poldavia. (Raising the tankard) Svod naya ukesniiov!

[He drinks nearly the whole tankard in a few gulps.]

Good! (Smacking his lips. Then swallows a sandwich at one mouthful) Very good!

KAMP (suddenly): Forgive me, gentlemen—a drink—a cocktail?

CURTIS }
Lee } (Together) (shaking his head): Thank you.
Never in the morning.

KING: After your other towns, Mr. Lee, Washington impresses me as very quiet—(Waving his arm)—an atmosphere of

LEE: Sure, Washington ain't a town, it's a high-hat shop. (Chuckling.)

KING: At other places we are besieged! But here—half a dozen journalists at the aerodrome where we land, a few more at the hotel——

KAMP: Your Majesty's arrival was planned for this morning.

KING: That is so. Ho! ho! ho! ho! the Duchess was not so fortunate—two gentlemen came right into her bedroom last night. (He roars with laughter.)

LEE: Gettin' fresh!

KING: Ho! ho! ho! ho! but it was all right—they apologise——

CURTIS: I'll say they should.

KING: Now this morning I walk here with my *aide de camp*—so pleasant—European!

CURTIS: Your Majesty mustn't take that for lack of interest——

KING: Oh! but I like it!

CURTIS: We have here all the time the representatives of many sovereigns, and of course our president who is a sort of king——

LEE: I'll say he is. (Chuckling.)

KING: Ah yes, I pay my respects to him at the White House this afternoon—(to KAMP) at what o'clock, Baron?

KAMP: At five, your Majesty.

[The KING nods and drinks the rest of his beer.]

And of course the President does us the honour to lunch here to-morrow.

CURTIS: Certainly a brilliant conclusion to your Majesty's remarkably successful visit. The whole thing has built up to a superlative climax——

LEE (rising): And we hope Wall Street will be duly impressed.

CURTIS (looking at his watch): If your Majesty will excuse us—we have another important conference before lunch——

KING (rising): Please, gentlemen, do not stand on ceremony.

[CURTIS and the others rise, CURTIS with a pained look at LEE.]

KAMP: You are lunching here at one, gentlemen——

LEE: Sure.

CURTIS: And his Majesty has not forgotten he dines with us to-night at the Excelsior——

KING: No, no, I do not forget—they told me—"a stag party with the Oil Kings." Ho! ho! ho!

LEE: We'll sure give you time to eat that one—and drink it, oh boy!

[OLVEN opens the doors, the KING accompanies LEE, CURTIS follows with KAMP, SEIDEL last.]

KING (as he goes up): You have a President of the U.S.A., Mr. Lee—and you are President of the I.O.C., and in other towns I meet all the presidents of the rest of the alphabet. Why do you do that?

LEE: I guess it's democracy.

KING: In Poldavia I am the King—if I had to meet the Emperor of boot-factory, I should not know whether to laugh or . . .

[The rest of his remark is lost, only his laugh is heard as CURTIS and KAMP follow them out, and SEIDEL is following them.]

MISS CUTTING knocks R. and enters without waiting.

MISS CUTTING (very perturbed): Mr. Garcia is waiting in the Chancelry; he says if he don't see the Ambassador at once he'll wash his hands or something—he's fair crazy—say, what am I to do with him?

OLVEN (to SEIDEL): He phoned again just now—he sounded crazy. I told him if he couldn't give a message, he'd have to bring it.

MISS CUTTING: He's brought a man with him—toughish sort of guy in a blue suit.

SEIDEL: I'd better see him. Bring them in.

[OLVEN and MISS CUTTING go out.]

SEIDEL closes the doors L., goes to the desk, lights a cigarette, and sits L. of desk. A few moments later, OLVEN brings on GARCIA and WILLIS MACABE. GARCIA is a middle-aged, stoutish yellow-faced Italian American with black waxed moustache and hair going bald. He is over-smartly dressed in black morning coat, striped trousers, and white spats. He carries a bowler in one hand and mops his head with a coloured silk handkerchief with the other. The second man is a long lean, lantern-jawed Irish American in a blue serge suit. He rarely ceases chewing gum.

SEIDEL: 'Morning, Mr. Garcia.

GARCIA: Good morning, Count. This is my hotel detective—Mr. Macabe. (*Perturbed and almost breathless.*)

MACABE: Willis Macabe.

GARCIA: He come with me because it is—very urgent——

SEIDEL (*nodding*): How d'ye do?

MACABE: Pleastameetya. (*With a nod.*)

SEIDEL: Well, Mr. Garcia, what can we do for you?

GARCIA: Count, I musta see the Ambassador.

SEIDEL: The Ambassador is with his Majesty. Anything you want to tell him—you can tell me. We have no secrets.

GARCIA (*wildly*): I do not thinka only of myself—but if a word of this gets in the papers—I am a ruined man. I coulda not sell my hotel—no, nobody buy it.

SEIDEL: What on earth are you talking about?

GARCIA: I tell it you something—if we are alone. (*He glances over his shoulder.*)

SEIDEL: Olven, do you mind? Sit down.

[OLVEN *goes out R.*

GARCIA *sits R. of desk.* MACABE *at table R.*

GARCIA (*jumping up*): What is out there—a balcony? (*Points to open window.*)

SEIDEL: A terrace.

GARCIA: Sama thing—Macabe—shuta that window. (*To SEIDEL*) That is how it all happen.

[MACABE *shuts the window. They sit.*

SEIDEL: What happened—please explain.

GARCIA: When I builda the Paradise Hotel, twenty-five years ago, I say to myself "Here in Washington the Americans they lika the European plan." So I builda him with one balcony all along the front second floor—one balcony all along fourth floor, lika you see Paris, Vienna, Monte Carlo—beautiful!

SEIDEL (*nettled*): Yes, but what has the history of your hotel——

GARCIA: In a minute—in a minute. Macabe, you tella him how it begin.

MACABE: Well, I guess it was about half-past twelve last night, I was having a walk round, as usual, just to see that folks was staying put—proper, in their own rooms, an' the like. I come down on the second floor, an' I see a bell hop outside one of the doors of the Royal suite, an' the King's aide-de-camp—Colonel—Colonel——

SEIDEL: Menken.

MACABE: Sure, that's him—giving it the boy good an' hard. I enquire the trouble. He tells me two gentlemen had just walked along the balcony and come right into the Duchess's bedroom, when Her Highness was goin' to bed, or in bed—I misremember—anyway the Colonel was in a stew and his Majesty was all het up about it an' what was I going to do?

SEIDEL: But how dare you permit such a thing to happen——!

GARCIA (*waving his arms*): That damn balcony—but you wait—you don't know the half of it!

MACABE: Well, I said it was a mistake and they'd sure apologise—he said they had—an' I told him I'd enquire into it, and

take steps it couldn't happen again—I gave him all the dope. An' he went in an' shut the door an' I thought that was all there was to it.

GARCIA: And then it begin on me! I am just going to sleep. Brrrr! the telephone. Senator Corcoran—he stay in the hotel—he coma nearly three weeks ago—he say he wanta see me at once. I say I am in bed, he say he don'ta give a damn where I am—at once. I jump out of bed, I put on my silk robe, I go down to his rooms. There is another man with him, a clergyman. They say a very serious thing have happen—I must take action at once. He say Washington by night—very beautiful—they have just walk along the balcony to look at the view. The windows of the room next but two are wide open. They looka in, they go in. There is a lady in the bed, sitting up and laughing and clapping her hands. And a gentleman in his pyjamas dancing in front of a big mirror. The lady is the Duchess of Tann. The gentleman is his Majesty the King of Poldavia——

SEIDEL (*springing up*): But how dare you let rooms on that floor——

GARCIA: I know! I know!—(*holding up his hands.*)

SEIDEL: Your contract was the whole floor for Majesty and suite——

GARCIA: It is not all my fault—I explain——

SEIDEL: I must get the Ambassador. (*Going.*)

GARCIA: That is what I ask since ten o'clock!

[SEIDEL *hurries out L.*

Dio mio! (*Mopping his brow*) I could weep—I do all they ask—I spenda six thousand dollars to make the rooms beautiful—and he shout me "How dare you let rooms."

MACABE: Say Chief, that balcony stunt's all wrong—'tain't modern—'tain't moral—seein' folks is how they is.

GARCIA: I know—if I geta out of this I rebuild the hotel—I make every room a safe deposit.

MACABE: You oughta kinda guessed you were takin' risks lettin' those rooms to that Senator guy. He's a tough joint—Colorado—always shootin' some kinda stunt.

GARCIA: How could I guess? He is a senator—sure he is tough, but everybody lika him. He come to me last Friday fortnight—I giva him the little suite right at the end—he say he wanta quiet.

MACABE: You bet he did.

GARCIA: It is here they are to blame. When they change their plans to go by aeroplane they senda half their people back home. Then a secretary here he writa me, he say he know they taka the whole floor, but many rooms would be empty, could I make a reduction? (*Rising, looks at his watch, then begins to wind it*) Dio! What is the time?

MACABE (*glancing at wrist-watch*): Half after eleven.

GARCIA: We have half an hour!—I forget to winda my watch last night. I wonder I am alive——

MACABE: Guess I'm wonderin' too——

GARCIA: What?

MACABE: Wonderin' was this a plant—or was it just an accident?

GARCIA: What!—you think——?

MACABE: Think nix—I'm just figurin' it out.

[GARCIA *stares at him, he figures and chews. SEIDEL returning with KAMP.*

SEIDEL: I have informed his Excellency briefly of what you told me—will you please go on?

KAMP: This is a very serious matter, Mr. Garcia.

[*Sitting on the sofa, GARCIA standing on his right. SEIDEL in front of fireplace.*]

GARCIA: Serious! I think your Excellency and the Count have no idea how serious it is—we have exactly half an hour.

SEIDEL: Half an hour? What do you mean?

GARCIA: Half an hour before we puta them out.

KAMP: Put them out?

SEIDEL: Who?

GARCIA: Puta them out of the hotel—his Majesty and the Duchess of Tann.

KAMP (*rising*): Good God, man, do you know what you're saying?

GARCIA (*wildly*): Your Excellency, *I* do not say nothing. It is the law that say it. It is Senator CORCORAN—it is the Rev. Adam Macadam——

KAMP: A law to turn his Majesty the King of Poldavia out of your hotel—preposterous!

SEIDEL (*laying a hand on his arm*): Wait, your Excellency—I fancy there *is* a law of some kind.

MACABE: Sure there's a law. Regulations relating to hotels, and public lodging-houses. Any man and woman not legally married found occupying a room in any hotel or public lodging-house shall be summarily ejected upon the facts being brought to the notice of the proprietor or manager. Failure to comply will involve the action of the police. The penalty shall be the padlocking of the premises for any period not exceeding one year as the Court may determine.

[*KAMP puts his hands to his head and walks to the fireplace.*]

GARCIA (*wildly*): I am innocent and it all fall on me! (*Goes towards window waving his arms.*)

SEIDEL: This law cannot apply to his Majesty's suite.

MACABE: The Duchess's rooms ain't in the suite—they're alongside. They ain't properly two rooms neither—archway and curtains between 'em. It is held in practice that a suite ain't a room for the purpose of the law. But this here's a border case, sure—an' Gawlmighty couldn't keep it out of court.

KAMP (*turning*): What nonsense, sir! As if it were a common police court case. His Majesty the King of Poldavia and her Highness the Duchess of Tann are . . . are placed above—er—consideration of this kind. Count Seidel, please, get on to the Attorney-General's department immediately, and ask for an appointment to——

SEIDEL (*holding up his hand*): Your Excellency, may I suggest even that publicity must be avoided. We must try and handle this matter ourselves.

MACABE: An' you bet your life the Attorney-General'll be watchin' his step with a Senator an' a snoopy parson waitin' round the corner.

GARCIA: Your Excellency, we do nothing but talking, and I have pledga my word I throw them out bag and baggage at twelve noon to-day.

KAMP: Mr. Garcia! I insist that you choose your words when you speak of his Majesty——

GARCIA (*wildly*): I choosa my words! I choosa my words!—lasta night I go on my knees—I weep, when Reverend Macadam he wanta me to throw them out at once.

SEIDEL: Why did you not inform us immediately?

GARCIA: Because I think they changea their minds when they sleep on it. Then at ten o'clock to-day the Senator he senda for me—Reverend Macadam also there—the Senator he say "Garcia, out at twelve or we inform the police——!" (*To KAMP*) And I phone and phone and no one leta me speak to you and now they waita for me at the hotel—what do I tella them? What do I do?

KAMP: I—I won't take the responsibility. His Majesty must be informed——

SEIDEL: Unquestionably.

KAMP: Count, don't you think——

SEIDEL: Your Excellency, in the circumstances——

KAMP (*nodding*): Yes, yes, I suppose so——

[*Goes out quickly L.*]

SEIDEL: This is the very devil!

MACABE: And then some!

SEIDEL: But what can they want?

GARCIA: They wanta I throw them out——

MACABE: I get you—but I ain't found the clue yet.

GARCIA: You think they wanta something else—no—the Reverend he is very shocked all the time—he wanta the law. But the Senator he have a twinkle in his eye. (*He shrugs his shoulders.*)

[*KAMP returns with the KING who is shaking with laughter.*]

KING: My dear Baron—can you picture it—with my figure—in golden pyjamas—in front of the cheval glass—trying to dance the Black Bottom! Ho! ho! ho! ho! ho! Of course at first I am very angry—but I cannot think of it without laughing——

KAMP: But, your Majesty——

KING: Yes, yes, I know, the story must be kept quiet—but it was funny.

KAMP: It would appear that—er—quite unintentionally—your Majesty has violated an—er—an American law——

KING (*laughing*): A law! if they have a law against my dancing the Black Bottom, it is a good law, because I am rotten——Ah, Garcia, so you have heard the story—but remember——(*Lays his finger on his lips.*)

GARCIA: Yes, your Majesty. (*Does the same, bowing.*)

SEIDEL: The law which it is alleged your Majesty has violated is as follows: Any man and woman not legally married found occupying a room in any hotel must be put out immediately by the proprietor or manager. (*To MACABE*) That is correct?

MACABE: Sure.

KING: What a funny law! (*Laughing*) What is that—more prohibition?

SEIDEL: Your Majesty, it is too serious to be funny. The two men who entered her Highness's room last night are Senator Corcoran and the Rev. Adam Macadam. At this moment they are waiting at the hotel for Mr. Garcia to let them know that your Majesty and her Highness have left the hotel for good.

KING: You are joking?

GARCIA (*perspiring*): It is no joke—I——

[MACABE *digs him in the ribs.*

KING: Because I am in a room with Lonya we are put out of an hotel!—it is impossible!

SEIDEL: It is incredible, your Majesty, but here——(*Shrugs.*)

KING: Who are these men?

SEIDEL: Two American citizens, that is all that matters.

KING: But it is ridiculous—tell them to go to the devil.

SEIDEL: Unfortunately they would not go to the devil, but to the police.

GARCIA: And I losa——

[MACABE *shuts him up with a dig in the ribs.*

KAMP: I am profoundly distressed to have to trouble your Majesty with this—er—wretched business, but apparently——

SEIDEL: Not apparently, Excellency—these men are waiting to take action.

GARCIA: At twelve o'clock—what do I say, what do I do?

KAMP: Er, yes, yes—we considered it imperative to consult your Majesty as to the procedure, er—what are we to do?

KING (*angry*): Do! *Krashtovida!*—you got me in, get me out!

KAMP: Your Majesty may rely on me. Er——(*With sudden inspiration*) Why not? Your Majesty *has* left the hotel—her Highness, too, she will be here at any moment—you—er—simply do not return. The Embassy is small but a suite of three—er—four rooms can be arranged. The others remain at the hotel. The situation is saved.

KING: I am saved—if I run away! Baron, I am ashamed of you.

SEIDEL: His Majesty is right. It would be a fatal admission. That may be just what they want, a story—a scandal, and the proof—his Majesty and her Highness have gone. It would simply put us in their hands.

KAMP: But we are in their hands!

SEIDEL: Not yet! There is only one course, we must make them withdraw their complaint.

KING: That is right. Ruffians!

KAMP: A bribe?

GARCIA (*shaking his head*): The Senator very rich man. The other——(*He shrugs his shoulders.*)

KAMP (*despairingly*): Then what *do* we do?

SEIDEL: For the moment we play for time.

GARCIA (*pulling out his watch*): Time! In ten minutes they send for the police. (*Tapping it.*)

[SEIDEL *goes to the phone on the desk.*

SEIDEL (*to the phone*): Get the Paradise Hotel—Senator Corcoran's suite—Mr. Garcia to speak to him. Quick. (*Hangs up the phone and rises.*) Garcia, sit here.

[GARCIA *sits L. of desk.*

When he comes through, say this—I am now at the Embassy——

GARCIA (*shaking*): I am now at the Embassy——

SEIDEL: With the Ambassador——

GARCIA: With the Ambassador——

SEIDEL: I am coming right back——

GARCIA: I am coming right back——

SEIDEL: To bring you full satisfaction.

GARCIA: To bring you full satisfaction.

[SEIDEL *comes down to back of sofa*. GARCIA *repeating quickly to himself*.

I am now at Ambassador, with full satisfaction, I am coming right back, to bring you the Embassy! Ah!

[*With a cry of dismay, he puts his hands to his head. The phone rings. He takes the receiver, mopping his brow.*

Is that Senator Corcoran . . . Mr. Garcia speaking. . . I am now at—the Poldavian Embassy—with the Ambassador—I am coming right back—to bring you full satisfaction. (*As he listens to the reply he winces.*) But Sen——(*He hangs up.*)

SEIDEL: What did he say?

GARCIA (*rising*): He say if I don'ta come pretty damn quick I will be tramped to death by the police squad in the vestibule.

SEIDEL: Now, get back to them at once. You will say his Excellency would be distressed, if a law had been broken. But there has been some misunderstanding. Say if they will defer taking action until six o'clock, I will call on them at whatever time they wish, and explain the situation.

GARCIA: And is that the full satisfaction?

SEIDEL: Say we are prepared to give full satisfaction if—deal in ifs. Use your native wit. Be a diplomatist for the day.

GARCIA (*nodding, pleased*): Feed 'em some good big lies—yes, yes, I understand. Your Majesty—your Excellency.

[*Bows and goes to door R. MACABE after a couple of awkward nods following.*

SEIDEL: And as soon as you've seen them, phone the result.

GARCIA: At once—I phone.

[*Goes out beyond MACABE.*

KAMP (*with pompous irony*): And may I ask, Count, what is the misunderstanding, and the situation you propose to explain?

SEIDEL (*sitting limply R.*): I haven't the slightest idea—as yet.

KING (*turns and stares at him*): So—so! (*He turns and stares at KAMP for several moments.*) And you, Baron? What helpful suggestion have you?

KAMP: Your Majesty—there are so many things we could do. I agree that we must do something—but that something—er—must achieve—er—what we want to do.

KING: So! Now I know where I am——If these two scoundrels were citizens of Poldavia I should not have to ask what to do—I should know! (*Rising*) But here I must put myself in your hands—hands! ho! ho! ho! ho! ho! the flopping feelers of two antiquated jellyfishes! (*He walks about in rising rage.*) Where is your backbone, Baron Kamp?—are you a spineless mummy that all you can do is to advise me to run away from a couple of peeping rascals—to let them insult me

—me your sovereign!

KAMP: Your Majesty, I——

KING: How dare you send me to a place where such a thing could happen?

KAMP: The arrangements were in Count Seidel's hands, your Ma——

KING: Hands! hands! You *have* no hands! Day after day I am shaking American hands and I know what hands are—they have grip. (*Shaking his finger at him*) And do not put blame on another, *you* are responsible.

KAMP (*bowing*): I am proud to think so, your Maj——

KING: And you, Count Seidel, have you no brains in your mind? Could you not know—could you not foresee—could you not make it impossible that your King should be turned into the street.

SEIDEL: Not into the street, your Ma——

KING (*shouting and striking the desk*): Into the street—into the street! If I have to go to another house—another hotel—another anywhere—first I go into the street!

SEIDEL: Your Majesty, this is one of those things—you wouldn't think could happen anywhere.

KING: Those things all happen in America! Only three weeks I am here, and already I know that. *Krashtovida!* that I should come all the way from Poldavia to suffer this!

[He sinks on the stool R. of desk exhausted, and sits eyeing first one, then the other. Then after a pause, quietly.]

What do we do? I am waiting for advice.

[The doors L. are opened by ERASMUS.]

ERASMUS (*all smiles*): Her Highness the Duchess of Tann.

[The DUCHESS enters slowly. An attractive young woman about thirty. Although her type is that of the lively soubrette, she conveys at her first appearance the sweet graciousness and quiet poise of the great lady. She is dressed for the morning with perfect simplicity. She carries a large bunch of violets.]

ERASMUS goes out, closing the door. Her speech is a lazy purr—at present.

DUCHESS: Aah! Your Excellency, how charmed I am that I see you again.

KAMP (*kissing her hand*): Your Highness, I am honoured.

DUCHESS: And the dear Count who arrange everything for us so beautifully. (*Giving him her hand to kiss.*)

SEIDEL: Your Highness is the most welcome person in the world.

DUCHESS: But how nice—(*Leaning over the desk from L.*) Toutou, you were late for the conference—I can see it in your face.

[The KING nods gloomily.]

But how naughty of you! (*Smilingly shaking her finger at him she comes down to sit on the sofa.*) And your charming wife, Baron?

KAMP: Longing to see your Highness again.

DUCHESS: So sweet, so—and this wonderful city with the big white palace with the dom—(*drawing the dome of the capital with her finger in the air*) and the big streets, and the trees, and sunshine, and spring! (*She buries her nose in*

the violets.) Wonderful people! Wonderful land!

KING (*sulkily*): There are no Americans in the room, Lonya.

DUCHESS: No—but that is how I feel. Even our funny old-fashioned hotel with the so good name—Paradise!

[The word falls with a splash into a silence which grows deathly. As she smells the violets again she becomes conscious of it, her eyes go from one to the other.]

What is it? Is anything wrong?

KING: Wrong! (*He sits glowering.*)

KAMP: Er—your Highness—I—er—we—er——(*An enormous sigh from the KING who goes to window C. and throws it open.*)

KING: Count, be good enough to relieve his Excellency of the necessity of saying nothing.

SEIDEL (*suavely*): Two men, your Highness, came into your bedroom last night——

DUCHESS: You know that?

[SEIDEL bows.

It was very shocking—but they make many apologies.

[A smile spreads on her face and grows to rocking laughter.]

KING (*loudly turning*): Why do you laugh?

DUCHESS: You know why—but I hope you have not told them.

KING (*brusquely*): They know!

DUCHESS (*laughing again*): That you were seen by those men—in your pyjamas—dancing so badly the Black Bottom. Oh! (*Dabbing her eyes with her handkerchief*) Can I ever forget it!

KING: No! when you hear the rest! (*Sits on stool below desk.*)

DUCHESS (*serious*): The rest?

SEIDEL: Your Highness, these two men are a well-known Senator and a clergyman of repute. They demand that you and his Majesty be turned out of your hotel immediately under an American law—because you were found in a hotel bedroom—and you are not married, if your Highness will pardon my putting it bluntly.

DUCHESS (*incredulous*): How could we be married—there is my husband—do they not understand?

SEIDEL: No, your Highness, the law has no understanding—it says "any man and woman not legally married—out!"

DUCHESS: They have such a law—in this wonderful country where everyone say so nice things to you? No, no——

SEIDEL: Yes, your Highness.

DUCHESS: And if we do not go out?

KING: They would send for the police.

DUCHESS: To put us in prison?

SEIDEL: To put you out.

DUCHESS: But how can they keep such a law in America? They are so little time married, and they change so quick that no

one know who is married to who.

SEIDEL: The law, though humorous, is unpleasantly precise—and these two men have the power to make a scandal that would rock the Press on both sides of the Atlantic.

DUCHESS (*rising*): A scandal! But that is terrible!—I am very angry. Your Excellency, why do you not tell us there is a law?

KAMP: Your Highness, we did not know.

DUCHESS: But you ought to know. Why do they not warn us?—they put on the grass "Keep off!"—why they not put in the rooms a ticket, "If you are not married get out!" A scandal?—It is terrible—it ruin everything! The loan——!

SEIDEL: Impossible!

DUCHESS: The concessions!

SEIDEL: Without the loan we do better elsewhere.

DUCHESS: Our tour—a fiasco! And my husband, Toutou—he would have to take notice!

KING (*nodding*): It would break his heart.

DUCHESS: Poor darling—a scandal! He would swoon with a scented handkerchief to his big nose. But what are we to do?

KING (*flinging his arms out*): Nobody knows! My advisers suggest we do something or nothing!—I have forgotten which.

SEIDEL: His Majesty's impatience is natural. But there is nothing we can do till we've seen these men, except ask for delay. Mr. Garcia has gone to ask them to wait till six o'clock.

DUCHESS: And who will see them?

SEIDEL: I will, your Highness.

DUCHESS: And then?

SEIDEL: Find out what they want?

DUCHESS: We are in a pretty mess. Toutou, is the big brain not working? (*Stroking his hair.*)

KING: In Chicago when there is someone they do not want they have a very useful thing, they—they——

DUCHESS: Bomp them off——

KING (*nodding*): Could we not bump?

DUCHESS: That is not very subtle.

SEIDEL: And they don't bump in Washington, your Majesty.

DUCHESS: Of course we cannot bomp—but might we not buy?

SEIDEL: Garcia thinks not.

DUCHESS: It is the scandal they want.

SEIDEL: I wonder. If they'd wanted the scandal they could have struck at once—had it last night—had it in the papers this morning—some of them. But they didn't.

DUCHESS: Why?

SEIDEL: In the language of the country, your Highness—they've "got something on you"——

DUCHESS: I see, and they use that something because they want something else?

SEIDEL (*nodding*): They may.

DUCHESS: Well, if it is something we can give——

[*The telephone rings. SEIDEL sits L. of desk, and takes up the receiver.*]

SEIDEL: Put him through—Count Seidel speaking, yes. (*Longish pause.*) Nothing else? (*Covers the phone.*) They give you till four o'clock, on these conditions: that they have an interview with his Excellency and—that his Majesty shall be present.

KING: *Krashtovida!* (*About to rise. The Duchess stops him with her hand.*)

DUCHESS: We accept!

SEIDEL (*to the phone*): Agreed. (*Slight pause—he covers the phone.*) At what time will his Excellency receive them?

KAMP: Er—we—er lunch at one.

KING: Not before lunch—no! I am hungry!

SEIDEL: The later the better—may I suggest two-thirty?

DUCHESS (*nodding*): Yes.

KAMP: Er—yes, yes, two-thirty.

SEIDEL (*to the phone*): His Excellency will receive them at half after two—yes. (*Hangs up.*)

DUCHESS: So they want something else. I wonder—what?

[*She stands wondering, twisting the KING'S hair. The KING sits staring at SEIDEL. The AMBASSADOR tries to think.*]

The Curtain is lowered for a moment to suggest the lapse of two hours.

When the Curtain rises again it is after lunch. Two doors leading into the reception room L. are wide open, also all the windows. Coffee is being served on a large silver tray borne by ERASMUS. With him a FOOTMAN in livery carrying a tray of liqueurs. BARONESS KAMP, an American lady, much older than her husband, with white hair and yellowish face, is standing down R. with the KING. The DUCHESS is just outside the centre window on the terrace with MILTON LEE. The AMBASSADOR is down L., behind sofa, earnestly conversing with CURTIS—figures probably, for CURTIS is tapping a notebook with a gold pencil.

BARONESS (*pointing to the R. wall*): That tapestry there—genuine seventeenth-century Italian.

KING (*putting up his eyeglass*): Beautiful!

BARONESS: Cost two hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

KING: So much?

BARONESS: It's very old. That clock over there on the mantel belonged to Marie Antoinette. (*Points L.*)

KING (*turning*): Ah, ha!

BARONESS: But that is worth only forty thousand dollars.

KING: Well, it is comparatively new.

ERASMUS: Coffee, your Majesty?

KING: Thank you—pour it out for me, Erasmus.

DUCHESS (*in high laughing voice*): No, no, no, I cannot believe it!

LEE: Sure—cost us two million dollars.

ERASMUS: Sugar, your Majesty?

KING: Three spoonfuls, Erasmus. (*Holding up three fingers.*)

BARONESS: I have two passions—very, very old antiques—and Spiritualism.

KING: The past and the future—charming.

ERASMUS: Black, your Majesty?

KING (*nods*): The best colour in the world, Erasmus.

[ERASMUS, *beaming, hands him his cup and takes tray round to* BARONESS.

BARONESS: Your Majesty is interested in Spiritualism?

KING: No—my passion is the present. Who is that beautiful girl—I was watching her at lunch. (*Looking across at a very lovely girl who has just strolled on with* OLVEN.)

BARONESS: That's the richest heiress of the Middle West—Miss Mamie Hatch. (*Calling*) Mamie! (*Then impressively confidential*) Worth thirty-five million dollars to-day, *and* more coming some day.

KING: Ah well, she can afford to wait.

BARONESS (*as* MAMIE *arrives*): Your Majesty, let me present Miss Hatch—Miss Hatch, his Majesty.

KING (*shaking hands*): How do you do, Miss Hatch?

MAMIE: Oh, your Majesty, I'm very well indeed and perfectly thrilled to meet you. Say—what do you think of America?

KING: You give us no time to think—I can only admire.

[*They go up R.*

The BARONESS *leaving them, with a fostering smile, has gone up C. as the* DUCHESS *comes down with* LEE. *Coffee and liqueurs having been served, ERASMUS goes out.*

DUCHESS: For me I like the best Chicago and New Orleans—so different. But his Majesty like Hollywood——

LEE: The films?

DUCHESS (*shaking her head*): The beautiful girls—he could hardly go away.

[*The* KING *and* MISS HATCH *go out on the terrace.*

LEE (*looking round*): He's gone away with a good one this time.

BARONESS (*archly smiling*): Well, why not—a Royal widower—and a royal fortune—such things can happen.

DUCHESS (*with hauteur*): They can not, Baroness. His Majesty will not marry again. His devotion to the memory of her late Majesty is something you do not know. (*Turning away and sitting L. of sofa.*)

BARONESS (*sitting*): How very touching!

DUCHESS: My dear husband he say to me many times—"Lonya, if you die, I do not marry any woman—I keep his example before me."

LEE: You've sure got one on us in husbands.

DUCHESS: In America to be a husband is an accident, in Europe it is a career.

LEE (*pulling out his watch*): Gummie, it's gone two! Business, Baroness. (*Shaking hands*) Guess we must be off—had a wonderful time—(*Crossing and shaking hands with the DUCHESS while CURTIS says good-bye to the BARONESS*) Duchess.

DUCHESS: Your business men, what a life! Torn between one beautiful wife and two lovely stenographers.

LEE (*laughing*): I have six.

DUCHESS: Wives?

LEE: Stenogs.

DUCHESS: Turk!—*au revoir*.

CURTIS (*shaking hands with DUCHESS*): He's boasting. Don't let his Majesty forget——

DUCHESS: To-night, no, no.

LEE (*to KAMP*): Twelve to-morrow.

KAMP: To-morrow! Yes—er—twelve, yes, yes.

[LEE, CURTIS, and KAMP go out L. The DUCHESS is looking anxiously back at the window, evidently annoyed.]

BARONESS: I should just love to get his Majesty interested in Spiritualism——

DUCHESS: No, no, his Majesty is quite otherwise—you do not know him.

[*The girl's high ringing laugh is heard from the terrace. The DUCHESS goes quickly to the centre window, then calls in her most dulcet tone.*]

Your Majesty!

[*The KING and MISS HATCH return.*]

In a few minutes—the so important conference—it is almost time.

MISS HATCH: His Majesty has been saying the cutest things to me—I'm just tickled to death.

DUCHESS: I am sure his Majesty is tickled too—you are very pretty.

[*MISS HATCH laughs delightedly.*]

MISS HATCH (*shaking hands*): Good-bye, Duchess—it's been just too wonderful to meet you. Good-bye, your Majesty!

KING (*impressively kissing her hand*): I hope not good-bye.

MISS HATCH: Well, the world's a cute little place—you never can tell! (*She crosses to the BARONESS who stands smiling benignly near doors L.*) I've had the kick of my young life, Baroness—it's just been swell.

BARONESS (*going out with her*): Mamie, we must squeeze you in somehow at the luncheon to-morrow——

[*Their voices die away.*]

DUCHESS: To-morrow, ha! What will happen before that? What have you been saying to her, Toutou? (*Sharply.*)

KING: Oh, I tell her what I think of America—of the people—of the principal products——

DUCHESS: You talk geography? Ha, ha! For you the principal product of America is the pretty girls.

[The KING laughs loudly, sitting R. of desk.

DUCHESS (*then leaning across the desk, sweetly*): I am not jealous. I only want it kept out of the newspapers—no more Hollywood—"Royal Traveller and Red-Headed Star of *Hotsy Totsy*." The newspapers! (*A sharp sigh.*) What is to happen? (*She sits L.*) I can feel them—all round us—with their million eyes! I feel that if I open my mouth they jump down my throat and print my inside.

[COUNT SEIDEL carrying a sheet of paper enters quickly R.

SEIDEL (*coming to head of desk*): Your Majesty, your Highness—Mr. Pyke has just left me—our American legal adviser—of course I gave him no names—I put an imaginary case——

KING: Well?

SEIDEL: The law is against us. Under title 22 U.S. Code immunity would apply to his Majesty, but *not* to her Highness.

[The DUCHESS takes the paper from him and reads.

Even if we succeeded in hushing it up—pulling strings—in his opinion it would be difficult to avoid the scandal.

[KAMP enters R.

KAMP: I have left instructions that they are to be sent to the Chancelry entrance when they arrive.

KING: Baron, have you no cellars in the Embassy?

KAMP: Er—we have a wine cellar, your Majesty, but why?

KING: To lock them up!

DUCHESS: In a wine cellar! Oh, no, no, they like that too much.

KAMP: We are not in Poldavia, your Majesty.

KING (*furious*): I do not need that you say silly things to me! It is good for you that we are not in Poldavia!

SEIDEL (*looking at second paper*): I have just made some hurried enquiries about Senator Corcoran. (*Reads*) "Humble origin, Irish descent. Born 1890 Cactus Valley, Colorado, State Senator, last election head of the poll. Owns big copper mine in Rio Blanco, small gold mine near Lake City, an oil field in Mexico, and other interests. Very wealthy, but not a money power. No wife, no family. Popular, but few close friends. Good speaker and good shot. Plays a lone hand. Neither wet nor dry."

DUCHESS: That tells us everything except what we want to know.

SEIDEL: Of the Rev. Adam Bride Macadam—(*reads*) "Highly respected—small church Kansas City—morals rigid and frigid—President of the W.I.T.G."——(*He peers at the MSS.*)

KING: Another President!

SEIDEL: "Women's—Interstate Temperance Guild."

DUCHESS: That is all?

SEIDEL: Yes, your Highness.

OLVEN (*opening door R.*): Senator Corcoran and the Reverend Adam Macadam in the waiting room.

SEIDEL: In a moment—I'll ring.

[OLVEN closes the door.

DUCHESS (*rising*): It is not possible, of course, that I am present—(*With a little laugh*) I might have to blush.

[SEIDEL goes to doors L.

Toutou—say as little as possible—your Excellency the same. Then they think, perhaps, you both have an ace up your sleeve. (*She goes towards doors*) Count, you must do the talk.

[SEIDEL bows.

How annoying my modesty drives me away—I miss all the fun.

[*With a laugh she goes out.*

SEIDEL closes the doors, comes to desk, presses bell. The KING crosses and stands in front of fireplace. KAMP sits at desk. SEIDEL stands above him. OLVEN shows in the two men and goes out. The SENATOR is big, bronzed, with strong mouth and chin, dressed in a dark double-breasted lounge suit. MACADAM is in black with turned down collar and white bow tie. They stand in front of the desk.

KAMP (*who has risen*): Senator Corcoran, I presume?

CORCORAN: Yeah.

KAMP: His Majesty has—er—graciously consented to be present at our—er—interview. (*Turning to the KING.*)

CORCORAN: Oh yeah?

[*He bows stiffly to the KING who inclines his head.*

My friend the Reverend Adam Bride Macadam has graciously consented to accompany me.

[MACADAM bows stiffly. A slight pause.

Well, your Majesty, and gentlemen, I guess the interview isn't going to be pleasant for you, any more than for us. Let's treat it as a matter of business, and get it over quick.

[*The KING sits L. on sofa.*

KAMP: Be seated, gentlemen. (*Waving his hand.*)

[MACADAM sits R. of table holding his hat in front of him, CORCORAN throws his hat on the table, turns a chair, and sits facing them. SEIDEL comes slowly down to the back of the sofa.

CORCORAN: May I say right here that we regret the necessity of taking action. But American law has been broken; as good American citizens it is our duty to see that the law-breakers pay the penalty.

SEIDEL (*suavely*): If the law has been broken—it was broken in ignorance——

MACADAM: Ignorance is no defence in law. (*His voice has the rasp of a saw.*)

SEIDEL: —by two very distinguished visitors at the moment guests of the American people.

CORCORAN: The guests are self-invited—the object of their visit is commercial—you can cut that damn stuff right out.

SEIDEL (*still suave*): Naturally their visit has a commercial side—but if this immense enterprise is successful, who is going to profit most by it?—the American people.

CORCORAN: Talk sense! What in hell is it going to profit the American people if a bunch of damn oil bugs grab concessions in Europe and use the American people's money to start the grab?

MACADAM (*fiercely*): What shall it profit a man to gain——

CORCORAN: Easy, Mac, easy—we're not in church. (*To SEIDEL*) You leave the American People out of this.

MACADAM (*passionately*): The American people cannot be left out!—their law has been violated—flagrantly violated.

The American people have been outraged in their deepest conviction. If I'd had my way the law would have struck the evildoer in his course. (*Striking the table.*)

CORCORAN: Sure!—if I hadn't been able to convince my reverend friend that the exceptional circumstances of the case called for circumscribed action we should not be here—now——(*Looking across*) And your Majesty would not be here either.

SEIDEL: You say the American people have been outraged in their deepest conviction. But they can't be outraged—unless you tell them.

CORCORAN: Their law is outraged even if we don't tell them.

MACADAM: It is the moral right of the people to know the truth of the abominations in their midst!

KAMP (*bending forward rubbing his hands*): Yes, gentlemen, but what is the truth in this case?

CORCORAN: Mr. Ambassador, we know all there's to it!

KAMP: His Majesty's visit, as you are already aware, is concerned with—er—important commercial negotiations. But are you aware that her Highness the Duchess of Tann is here solely as—er—the representative of her husband, the Chancellor of Poldavia? I ask you, gentlemen, could anything be more natural, more—er—proper than that his Majesty, wishing to confer, with her Highness on these vital negotiations should—er—visit her in her room—and—er—er—an informal Cabinet Council in fact?

CORCORAN: I get your point Mr. Ambassador. I was not aware that at Cabinet Councils in Europe, the official costume is pyjamas, that some of the parties are in bed, and that business is introduced by dancing in front of a mirror——

MACADAM: An obscene dance——

CORCORAN: Any dance would of course be in order—(*to KAMP*) but I thank you for the information.

KING: Your Excellency would do well to remember the advice that your silence is our most valuable asset.

[KAMP *bows*.

Gentlemen, I already know the matter is serious, I had no idea it is so serious as you say. I had no idea that my—my—very personal and private relations with a brilliant and distinguished lady could so concern the people of America—could, how did you say, "outrage their deepest convictions." If I had known that I should not have come—I should not have broken your law.

MACADAM: Our law makes no provision for the laxity of European morals.

KING: Naturally—but might there not be some slight margin for international manners?

MACADAM: Your Majesty, we are not here to debate the sophistries of corrupt social refinements—we are here to vindicate the law of the United States—the law also of a power that is above them.

CORCORAN: Sure! We take our stand on the law. There is nothing to discuss—we have come here to dictate. We have made every possible concession to avoid scandal while exacting in full the penalties which must have followed the action of the law. (*Taking a document from his pocket*) These are our terms—I have put them in the form of a binding contract.

[He reads, not as a lawyer reciting a contract, but as an orator promulgating a new declaration of independence.

"We the undersigned, having by accident entered Room No. 48, Paradise Hotel, Washington, D.C., about 12.45 a.m. on Monday, May 13th, 1933, became witnesses of an offence against the

law of the United States—Mann Act (hereinafter referred to as the said offence), whereof the delinquents are Augustus X, KING of Poldavia, widower, and (blank), wife of (blank) Duke of Tann, Chancellor of Poldavia (hereinafter referred to as the said delinquents). *Now in consideration* of the following facts:

- (a) That the said delinquents are, in the country of their origin, persons of the highest standing.
- (b) That the said delinquents are, at present visitors and, as it were, guests of the United States.
- (c) That the publication of the said offence might be followed by national, international, or domestic complications.

We the undersigned hereby agree as follows:

To take no action to set the law in motion against the said delinquents.

Not to publish or cause to be published, or communicate to any person whatsoever any circumstance appertaining to the said offence.

On the following conditions:

- 1° That the said delinquents shall not later than 2 p.m. to-morrow, May 14th, 1933, quit the above mentioned precincts and the city of Washington, and on the day following the United States of America never to return.
- 2° That all negotiations for issue of loan known as 'Poldavian National Bonds' be abandoned forthwith, and that at no time shall any loan, concession, or grant be negotiated directly or through intermediary by the said delinquents with any Company, corporation, or citizen of the United States of America.

(Signed.) BERNARD J. CORCORAN,

ADAM BRIDE MACADAM."

(*He rises, going up to the desk.*) We require the signatures of his Majesty and the Duchess of Tann to the appendix. (*Reading quickly*) "We the undersigned hereby admit the said offence and agree to abide by the above mentioned conditions (1) and (2)." (*Lays the document on the desk before KAMP.*)

[SEIDEL *comes over and stands reading. The KING rises slowly.*

KING: We cannot sign this—it is impossible—it is the destruction of everything we have worked for for years—it is—— (*He pauses.*)

[MACADAM *rises.*

KAMP: Your Majesty—er—I am entirely of your opinion.

CORCORAN: If that is your Majesty's last word—we are going straight to the Police department—and the facts will be given immediately to the Press.

[*A slight pause.*

SEIDEL (*quietly*): Your Majesty, may I submit—in the circumstances there is no alternative.

[*The KING stares at him in silence for a moment.*

KING: Is it necessary that her Highness is dragged into this?

CORCORAN: Yes, your Majesty.

KING: Your Excellency, will you——

KAMP: Yes, your Majesty.

[Rises and goes out L.]

CORCORAN (*sitting and taking document*): Duchess's Christian name?

SEIDEL: Illonya. (*As CORCORAN takes out fountain pen.*)

CORCORAN: Spell it.

SEIDEL: I-l-l-o-n-y-a.

CORCORAN (*writing*): Il-lonya. Husband's name?

SEIDEL: Anastasius Joseph Francis Xavier Clement.

CORCORAN (*writing*): An-as-ta-si-us etcetera. (*He turns the document round and rises.*)

[SEIDEL is above the chair in which the KING now sits, running his eye over the paper.]

KING: Where do I sign?

SEIDEL: There, your Majesty. (*He puts a finger on the spot, handing a pen to the KING, who signs. Slight pause.*)
Senator, what do you get out of this?

CORCORAN: Nothing.

[The DUCHESS enters slowly L., followed by KAMP, who closes the door. The KING rises and stands above chair.]

KING (*turning to her*): Your Highness, I regret that it will be necessary for you to add your signature to this—this American declaration of moral independence.

[The DUCHESS sits, takes the pen from the KING, and after running an eye over the paper, signs and sits silently watching CORCORAN, who takes another document from his pocket.]

CORCORAN: This is the signed counterpart. (*He places it in front of her, taking the other which he folds and pockets.*)

[MACADAM has risen and come up, SEIDEL has pressed the bell.]

CORCORAN: Well! I guess everything is now O.K.

[He gives a little bow, goes out with MACADAM past OLVEN, who holds the door and closes it after them. KAMP moves down to the fireplace, the KING to the back of the desk, SEIDEL a little towards door R. The DUCHESS, who is studying the document, suddenly begins to laugh.]

DUCHESS: "The said delinquents!" (*Holding it up*) All is lost—except honour!

CURTAIN

MACABE: Ain't there? That singin' o' yours oughta get the third degree! I see her Highness ain't back yet.

GUNNING: No.

[She looks round, and being one of the many millions in England and America for whom a bed will always be an improper piece of furniture, goes up quickly, presses a button L. of centre opening, which closes the tapestries over it.]

MACABE: Got anything on the hip?

GUNNING (*putting her hands to her hips and turning on him*): How dare you!

MACABE: In yer lock-up, then?—cold work, watchin' out there.

GUNNING: Pity you didn't do some watching last night.

MACABE: You've said a mouthful. (*Taking an automatic from his pocket*) But from now on that balcony's unhealthy—the chief wanted me train a machine-gun on it. (*Pocketing pistol*) Be a sport—how about a li'l drink?

GUNNING: Tch! what a country! A hundred and forty million people with their tongues hanging out! (*Takes out glass and whisky bottle*) Say when.

MACABE: Can't pronounce it.

GUNNING: There—that's more than's good for you. Soda?

MACABE: Not on your life! Here's how. (*Drinks.*) That's got t'keep me warm till one.

GUNNING: Till one!

MACABE: Sure—then Cohen takes over.

GUNNING: Perhaps you might have a drop more so.

MACABE: I'll say I might.

GUNNING:
"Don't have any more, Mrs. More,
Mrs. More, please don't have any——"

[Pouring out a stiff one.]

MACABE: That's a bum song.

GUNNING (*shocked*): Well, really——

MACABE: One o' them dry propaganda hymns, I guess. Oh "when" all right. (*Toasting her*) "She certainly had beootiful eyes."

GUNNING: Oh, go on! What did happen actually last night?

MACABE: What happened? (*Then suddenly discreet*) Oh, nothin'—couple of unauthorised persons got into the wrong room.

GUNNING: That all?

MACABE: Sure.

GUNNING: I know, her Highness was disturbed——

MACABE: Sure—accident—forget it.

GUNNING: Everyone in the place knows something happened—they've got several stories. But the floor waiter told me

MACABE: Well, they're all wet.

GUNNING: The floor waiter told me a bell-boy told him——

MACABE: Don't you listen to them guys.

GUNNING: Quite dreadful it was.

MACABE: 'Twasn't—nothing happened—abs'lutely.

GUNNING (*decisively*): Then why am I told to have everything packed by twelve to-morrow?

MACABE: Gee! to-morrow! You got one on me there.

GUNNING: So something *must* have happened—what about another little drop.

MACABE (*handing her the glass*): Kid, you burn me up!

[*She goes to take the bottle. A knock at the door. She slams the cabinet door on the drink question, and turns primly.*]

GUNNING: Come in.

[*GARCIA enters, with a big vase of yellow roses; he is on his toes after his escape.*]

GARCIA: I thinka maybe her Highness lika the beautiful roses—just arrive—ten o'clock—from the South. (*Putting the vase on writing table L. and stepping back to admire*) Say it with flowers. "I am so glad everything it is all right." (*Turning*) Macabe—whata you do in here?

MACABE: Heard a scream, chief—stepped in to investigate.

GARCIA: Scream—what scream?

GUNNING: Me, Mr. Garcia. I heard a step on the balcony.

GARCIA: Ah so! You gotta be careful—not safe any more on the balcony. (*To MACABE*) Gotta the gun?

MACABE: Sure, chief. (*Pressing a hand to his side.*)

GARCIA: Good—and don't forget, shoota first—aska the question afterward.

MACABE (*going*): O.K., chief.

GUNNING (*alarmed*): But, good gracious, if one of us went——

MACABE: You should worry, I ain't shootin' to kill—just a friendly warning. (*Turning at the curtains*) Say, chief—you heard about this packing?

GARCIA: What packing?

MACABE: Everything to be packed ready by twelve to-morrow.

GUNNING: Her Highness gave me the order when she was dressing for dinner—his Majesty's man says Colonel Menken gave them all the same orders.

GARCIA (*dumbfounded*): What does it mean?

MACABE: Search me.

GARCIA: To-morrow!—they stay only a day and a half, and I spenda all that money to maka, the rooms lika a palace. (*To GUNNING*) Do you know what I do to this room—I maka exact copy from a postcard my mother senda me—one little room in his Majesty's palace in Zaoum. (*Showing her a postcard produced from his pocket-book*) The curtains, the walls, the furniture, the armour . . . everything.

GUNNING: And what is that? (*Pointing to the tapestries.*)

GARCIA: That? "The Rape of the Sabine Women."

GUNNING: The what?

GARCIA: Oh well, "the Founding of Rome"—sama thing. (*Tearfully*) And all for a day and a half—I could almost weep. (*To MACABE*) The Senator he tell me before dinner—everything O.K. What can have happen?

GUNNING: If you want to know what I heard——

[*They both turn to her.*]

Oh no, I can't. (*Coyly.*)

GARCIA: Yes, yes.

MACABE: Spill it.

GUNNING: Well, the floor waiter told me that one of the bell-boys told him that there was a clergyman with the Senator in his rooms last night—a Reverend Macadam—and he had a lot of drink, and wasn't used to it, and he got mad and rushed out along the balcony, and into her Highness's room, and there was she in bed and—well really—anyway, his Majesty heard her screaming for help, and rushed in just in time and knocked the reverend gentleman right out—gentleman, I don't think, nor reverend—one right on the jaw, and the Senator had to come in and take him away, and now they're all terrified of its getting in the papers.

MACABE: Can you beat it?

GARCIA: No, but I sacka that floor waiter this minute. (*Going*) And I sock him one on the jaw.

[*Goes out L.*]

GUNNING (*hurrying to the door*): Oh, Mr. Garcia—no—not the waiter—the bell-boy told him——

GARCIA (*outside*): And I sacka the bell-boy. (*He bangs the outer door.*)

GUNNING (*closing door*): There—what did I tell you—course it's true.

MACABE: Yer crazy.

GUNNING: I never did like clergymen—my father was a seafaring man.

MACABE: Say, ain't there a shy drink waitin' in that cupboard?

GUNNING: It's too shy to come out—it's had time to think and so have I. Get along now—I've got to look after myself, and I expect you're no better than the clergy when you've got a few drinks in you. (*Fussing about tidying the room.*) Her Highness'll be back any minute now. (*Shaking the cushions on the couch.*)

MACABE: You're English, ain't ye?

GUNNING: Of course I am.

MACABE: Ye look it.

GUNNING (*sings*): "Don't have any more, Mrs. Mo-er——"

MACABE: Oh crimes!

[Goes out R. with his hands to his ears.]

GUNNING:

"Mrs. Mo-er, please don't have any more.
The more you have the more you want they say.
(Crosses L. and arranges the roses)
And enough is as good as a feast any day.
If you have any more, Mrs. Mo-er,
You'll never get to your—
(Sniffs the roses.)—street door,
Too many double gins gives the ladies double chins.—
(Goes through curtains C.)
Don't have any more, Mrs. More!"

[The outer door is opened, and the DUCHESS and SEIDEL are heard trying to speak through their laughter. A moment later they come in, the DUCHESS in evening dress and cloak; SEIDEL wears a coat over his evening dress and carries a hat.]

DUCHESS *(struggling with her laughter)*: What a story!—it is more fony than the truth. *(Dabbing her eyes with her handkerchief.)*

SEIDEL: And the best of it is—it sounds more like the truth.

[He is standing by the door about to go. She throws her cloak on couch.]

DUCHESS: Don't go—sit down a little minute.

[He closes door and sits R. of table.]

(She calls): Gunning!

[GUNNING appears between curtains.]

GUNNING: Yes, your Highness.

DUCHESS: This story of yours you tell to Mr. Garcia?

GUNNING: Oh, not my story, your Highness—it was the floor waiter told me—and the bell-boy told him——

DUCHESS: Well, do not you tell it anyone any more——

GUNNING: Oh no, your Highness.

DUCHESS: It might be dangerous.

GUNNING *(nodding)*: Yes, your Highness.

DUCHESS: You can wait out there. I go to bed soon.

GUNNING: Yes, your Highness.

[Goes out L.]

DUCHESS *(sitting on stool R.C.)*: Oh, I am so miserable!

SEIDEL *(nodding sympathetically)*: Your Highness—I know——

DUCHESS: All for nothing!

SEIDEL: And our Embassy dinners are not precisely thrilling.

DUCHESS (*smiling*): It was dull—(*Jumping up with cry of joy*) Oh, the beautiful roses! (*Going L.*) When I see flowers I forget everything else in the world. (*She buries her face in the roses, then looking up with a sigh of content*) If anyone want to seduce me, he could do it with flowers.

SEIDEL: I shall make a note of that.

DUCHESS (*laughing*): Oh—Count—I forget you are a man. (*Then, seeing his expression, laughs again.*)

SEIDEL: And I flattering myself I was still dangerous!

DUCHESS (*leaning over the table*): You are delightful—if it was not for you I could—burn our Embassy at Washington. Aie! Aie! (*Sits L. of table. Then seriously*) What do we do to-morrow at twelve?

SEIDEL: Exactly the same as if—we shall meet for the signing of the concessions and the loan preliminaries as if nothing had happened. We shall discuss, and then at the appropriate moment we produce—(*Putting his hand in his breast pocket*) Oh, you haven't seen the final draft the cable I suggested—(*Takes out cable-form.*)

DUCHESS: To my husband—

SEIDEL (*nodding—reads*):

"Please send immediate fast cable English as follows. Stop. Cabinet Council to-day passed unanimously resolution declaring imperative entire proceeds proposed American Loan be allocated to military establishment. Stop. Owing international situation here this step vital to security. Stop. Safety first.

"Signed TANN CHANCELLOR. Stop.

"His Majesty and Duchess of Tann in agreement. Stop. His Majesty thinks advisable holding Cabinet Council *after* cable despatched.

"Signed KAMP."

(*He puts it on table before her.*) That went, of course, in code.

DUCHESS: And so *they* will break off negotiations. (*Giving him cable.*)

SEIDEL: If this won't do it, we shall have to try dynamite.

DUCHESS: And our faces are saved—

SEIDEL (*nodding*): His Excellency calls on the President—regretful rupture—all engagements cancelled—you leave at two—and the evening papers headline, "Last Minute Crash of Poldavian Oil Deal."

[*A slight pause.*]

DUCHESS (*slowly*): And we save our face. Saving face—the world spends half its time at it! (*Lightly she runs two fingers over her face with a wry smile.*) And woman half her life! (*Turning quickly*) Do men?

SEIDEL: No. (*He laughs.*) Well, a little—sometimes—perhaps.

DUCHESS: What you use? (*Kneeling on her seat and leaning across.*)

SEIDEL: Duchess, really—the secrets of my toilet—

DUCHESS: No, no—tell me—I am curious.

SEIDEL (*leaning towards her*): Water entirely free from worry. I never worry, and I never know what I shall do next.

DUCHESS: You are an opportunist.

SEIDEL: The sneer of the people who miss their opportunities.

DUCHESS: Yes—I must not worry—you are right. It is over—we begin again. There is the British group—the Dutch—even the French——

SEIDEL: *Faute de mieux.*

DUCHESS: But I *hate* to lose.

SEIDEL: We have still our oil——

DUCHESS: And I have still my honour. (*She laughs, crossing C.*) You think there was no loophole?

SEIDEL: I could see none.

DUCHESS: I wish I had been there.

SEIDEL: I was relieved you were not.

DUCHESS: Poor Toutou! I hope he does not try too much to keep his spirits up.

SEIDEL: His Majesty has a strong head.

DUCHESS: For wine—yes. (*Holding out her hand*) Good night.

SEIDEL (*kissing her hand*): Good night, your Highness.

DUCHESS: Thank you that you see me home.

SEIDEL: The best moment of my day. (*Going to door.*)

DUCHESS: We sleep on it, Count, eh?

SEIDEL: Yes, but no dreams—facts. Good night.

[*Goes out.*

A moment later the outer door slams. The DUCHESS stands leaning on the top of the couch, thinking furiously.

GUNNING *enters.*

GUNNING: Does your Highness wish to go to bed?

DUCHESS: Bed!—yes—why not?

[*She stands staring in front of her.*

Wait—I change my mind—I no go to bed.

GUNNING (*resigned*): Very good, your Highness.

DUCHESS: Ring up the desk—and ask them to tell Mr. Garcia I would like to see him.

[GUNNING *goes to phone on desk.*

GUNNING: Desk, please . . . Is that the clerk? (*Slight pause.*) Well, the *clurk!* (*Throwing up her eyes*) Will you please tell Mr. Garcia her Highness would like to see him—at once. (*Hanging up*) He is coming "right up."

[GUNNING *picks up the cloak from stool R. C. and goes towards the bedroom. The DUCHESS, who has lighted a cigarette at the little table, moves towards the window and is going out. GUNNING, as she is slipping through the tapestries, sees her and stops her with a scream.*

Don't go there, your Highness!

DUCHESS (*turning*): What is it?

GUNNING: The detective—out there—with a gun in his pocket! If anyone steps on that balcony, his orders are to shoot.

DUCHESS: To shoot?

GUNNING: I heard Mr. Garcia tell him—"Shoota first, aska the question afterward."

DUCHESS: But it is absurd! Why do they do that?

GUNNING (*mysteriously*): They don't want the goings-on of last night to happen again.

DUCHESS (*with a little laugh*): They are wise, too late.

GUNNING: I wouldn't put my nose out—in a country where they shoot as freely as they spit—you can't be too careful.

[She goes into bedroom. The DUCHESS stands for a moment then looks back at the window, then decides she won't, and is moving away, looks back again, steals up to the window, and holding the curtains apart cautiously bends forward to peep out.]

MACABE (*sharply in the distance*): Who's there?

[She jumps back. GUNNING returns at the same moment.]

GUNNING: Your Highness!

DUCHESS: It is all right—he [ask](#) the question first.

[A knock. GUNNING goes to the door.]

GUNNING: Mr. Garcia, your Highness.

DUCHESS: Please come in, Mr. Garcia.

[GARCIA enters smiling and rubbing his hands.]

GUNNING goes out, closing the door.

GARCIA (*bowing*): Your Highness!

DUCHESS (*sitting on couch*): There is something I want to ask you, Mr. Garcia.

GARCIA (*bowing*): Your Highness may commanda me—already I taka the liberty to bringa your Highness the little roses. (*He turns and beams on them.*)

DUCHESS: It was you! But how kind—so lovely——Mr. Garcia, I wanted to ask you—this—this Senator Corcoran—what for—what kind of man is he?

GARCIA: The Senator? (*He thinks.*) Well, he is whata you call a very tough gentleman.

DUCHESS: A criminal?

GARCIA: No, no, no—he is a Senator.

DUCHESS: What he has done to us is a crime.

GARCIA: That is because he is tough, your highness, but besida that——

DUCHESS: Is he—how do you say—a sport?

GARCIA (*nodding*): A good sport.

DUCHESS: He is not married?

GARCIA: No, your Highness.

DUCHESS: Nor anything else?

GARCIA: Not to the naked eye.

DUCHESS: I would like—if he will come to see me.

GARCIA: I thinka he is in his room, your Highness—I getta him on the phone.

DUCHESS: You say to him like this: Her Highness was not at the conference to-day—her Highness is aware that the matter is finally settled, but there are certain important points which she thinks it might advantage you to know. Her Highness would be pleased if you will come to see her?

GARCIA (*at phone*): Room 45! (*Slight pause.*) Is that Senator Corcoran? Mr. Garcia speaking. Her Highness ask me to say that she was not at the conference to-day. Her Highness is aware that everything is finally settled but there are certain important questions which she thinks it would advantage you to know. Her Highness would be pleased if you would come to see her.

DUCHESS: Well?

GARCIA: He say the Rev. Macadam is with him.

DUCHESS (*making a face*): Oh!—Very well, say I am pleased if they both come.

GARCIA (*beaming*): Her Highness say she will be pleased if you both come. (*Pause.*)

DUCHESS: What did he say?

GARCIA: Nothing. There is an argument. (*Pause.*) O.K., Senator. He say, "Hold on a minute." (*Pause.*) Nothing but noise. *Che! che!* (*Shocked*) The Reverend he calla you something . . . nota nice.

DUCHESS: What?

GARCIA: I scarcely hear. Something in the Bible, I think. Now he has covered the phone. . . . I tell her Highness. (*Hangs up.*) He say . . . they come withouta prejudice.

DUCHESS: You go to meet them and show them in. Gunning!

GARCIA: At once, your Highness.

[*Exit. Enter GUNNING.*]

DUCHESS: My despatch-box, quick! "Something in the Bible"? I think I can guess—that lady in the red dress who sit on the horned beast. So uncomfortable!

[*GUNNING disappears through the curtains.*]

The DUCHESS goes to table beside the couch, puts out her cigarette on the ash-tray, then takes a key from her bag which is on the table.

GUNNING appears with a large green leather despatch-case.

Put it on the floor beside the desk!

[*She crosses L. as GUNNING puts the despatch-box below the desk on the floor.*]

Put the roses in the other room.

[*GUNNING goes off with the roses.*]

The DUCHESS going on one knee unlocks the despatch-box which is stuffed with bulky documents, throws half a dozen of them on the desk, then, leaving the despatch-box bulging with papers open, rises, unfolds some of the documents, and spreads them on the desk, then as GUNNING returns:

Make the cushions smooth!

[GUNNING *smoothes and pats the cushions on the couch.*

Now wait outside!

[GUNNING *goes out. The DUCHESS takes a pair of dark horn-rimmed spectacles from a case on the desk, puts them on, sits, takes pen, some large sheets of paper, and begins to write. A moment later she turns, surveys the room carefully, then with a mischievous smile resumes writing.*

A pause. Then a knock at the door. She does not reply, but writes and consults documents. Another knock.

DUCHESS: Come in! (*Quietly, without looking up.*)

[GARCIA *enters.*

GARCIA (*in a hushed tone*): Senator Corcoran and the Reverend Adam Macadam to see your Highness.

[CORCORAN *and MACADAM come on. GARCIA goes out closing the door.*

For a moment she continues writing, then turning with a gracious gesture of her arm:

DUCHESS: Gentlemen, will you please be so good to sit down. (*She returns to her writing, turning over a document and copying.*)

[MACADAM *sits at the top of the round table staring at her puzzled.*

CORCORAN *sits R. of table. He is in evening dress, dinner jacket. A moment after they have sat she lays down her pen.*

I am, as you see, a woman of affairs. (*Turning in her chair.*) Forgive me that the sudden change of plan make me more busy.

[MACADAM *gives a stiff little bow, CORCORAN watches her.*

First Senator, Mr. Macadam, permit I thank you, you are so good to come to see me.

MACADAM: Let it be understood our visit implies no deviation from——

DUCHESS (*emphatically*): No, no—the affair is closed——

CORCORAN: I made that clear on the phone.

DUCHESS: Absolutely. No, the terms are as unchangeable as the laws of the Medes and Persians—or, I believe, the American constitution. I was not at the conference to-day—(*Lowering her voice and averting her face*) For a woman—it was too painful—I—I—need not say—I think you understand——

[MACADAM *bows gravely. CORCORAN moves uneasily in his chair.*

But if I was there I would say to you some things about the two conditions (*she turns to the desk and takes up the counterpart of the agreement*) that I think no one say. (*Rising slowly*) The conditions are hard.

CORCORAN: Sure, damned hard—but just and absolutely fair.

DUCHESS: Oh?

CORCORAN: If we'd let the law take its course, what'd have happened? First you'd have had to quit the country. Second,

you wouldn't have had a hope on Wall Street. Third, the deal would have collapsed. And the scandal would have been hair-raising. What do we do? We exact the first three as conditions—and we *save* you from the scandal.

DUCHESS: That is true. I suppose really I ought to thank you——

MACADAM: If you have invited us here to make us defend——

DUCHESS: Oh no, Mr. Macadam—be patient—I come to it. (*She sits on the left of the table spreading the document before her.*)

[MACADAM *moves a little away.*

Condition No. 1—Well, we go to-morrow. We have to find a way to break negotiations, to save our face. We have to cancel the luncheon to meet your President——

[*A movement from MACADAM.*

Oh, it is quite right—you have to be very careful who your President meet—he could not sit at table with the two delinquents—it is the same in Europe, our royal families they are all very careful—they learn from history.

MACADAM: We don't need history—we have principle.

DUCHESS: Of course. Condition No. 2—I know it is necessary the present negotiations must break off. But why you make it impossible in the future America can get this business. It is a big business, and you drive us to England, to Holland, or another. What they gain America lose—Do you think America will thank you?

CORCORAN (*chuckling*): I know a few Americans'll be as sore as hell!

DUCHESS (*insisting*): But why, Senator?

CORCORAN: Why don' we want this dam' bunch o' grafters to grab it?—Ask him.

MACADAM: Because it is unclean in its source. Because no good can come from what is rooted in corruption. We have our own corruption, Heaven knows, but we who water the roots of the spiritual life of our country set our faces against the deeper decay of an older and rottener civilisation. We are rushing over the world after material gain—what will it profit us if we lose the strong, hard, clean, free soul that our founders left us?

[*He leans his forehead on his tightly clenched fists. A pause. The DUCHESS rises, replaces the agreement on the desk and removes the spectacles.*

DUCHESS: I understand how you feel, yes. (*She crosses to C.*) But Mr. Macadam make it very difficult. It is a case of morals before business.

[MACADAM *raises his head and stares fiercely at her.*

CORCORAN: It is the case of law before everything—with all the moral trimmings the Reverend sees behind it.

DUCHESS (*drawing forward the stool and sitting*): We break your law, yes—could we help it? If you keep a law like a snake hidden in the bathroom, the first stranger who does not know it is there will get a bite. We break your law—because we are not married——

MACADAM: Because you are living in sin.

CORCORAN (*under his breath*): Easy, Reverend——

DUCHESS (*laughing*): I do not think of it like that. For a king it is difficult to be married. He could not marry me—except morganatic, and we think it better as it is—my husband is my very good friend. In my country everybody know, and nobody is shocked.

MACADAM: You had better have stayed in your country.

DUCHESS: I know that—too late. But I come here and you find out—by accident—if it *was* an accident—our relations——

MACADAM (*fiercely*): Relations!—it was an orgy.

CORCORAN (*aside*): Easy.

DUCHESS (*smiling*): What you call an orgy, Mr. Macadam?

MACADAM (*rising*): Here in a public hotel in the heart of the capital of our country, a king dancing in his night clothes before a woman in bed beating the savage rhythm with her hands—that I call an orgy! (*He sits.*)

CORCORAN: Say, Reverend, lay off! This dancing king in his pyjamas has got your goat. What of it! Didn't King David dance before the Ark——?

MACADAM: The comparison is blasphemous—that was religious dancing.

CORCORAN: Well, I guess he danced before the lady in the bath an' she didn't even have pyjamas. This kinda talk ain't getting us nowhere. Duchess, you asked us here to show us something in the agreement, something important, something we didn't know. What is it—what do you want?

DUCHESS (*drawing her stool nearer*): This—we keep all the terms—we break negotiations to-morrow—we leave Washington to-morrow—we sail next day. Only give us one thing. When we have got home—in a little time—let us re-open negotiations here in America. I promise I do not come——

MACADAM (*striking the table*): It is a breach of faith to ask that——

[CORCORAN *stops him with grip on the forearm.*

CORCORAN (*quietly—shaking his head*): You can't have it.

DUCHESS: I ask it because I know it is best for my country—and I think it be pretty good for America, too.

CORCORAN: I'm sorry.

DUCHESS: And I too am sorry. There is no more to say.

MACADAM (*touching CORCORAN on the shoulder*): We have nothing else to wait for. (*Rising*) We ought not to have come.

DUCHESS (*rising*): Oh, do not say that—it is always good to try. Thank you for coming. Good-night.

CORCORAN: Good-night, Duchess. (*He goes to the door and opens it.*)

[MACADAM *opens his mouth, closes it firmly, bows stiffly and goes out, followed by CORCORAN closing the door.*

The outer door slams. The DUCHESS slowly sits on the stool.

DUCHESS (*quietly intense*): *Krashtovida!*

[*A moment later the door opens and GUNNING appears interrogatively.*

Yes—now I really go to bed.

[GUNNING *closes the door and pulls the tapestries apart. Then comes down, unclasps the necklace, and takes off the tiara.*

There is a knock at the door. GUNNING goes to it.

GUNNING: Mr. Garcia, your Highness.

DUCHESS (*annoyed*): Oh, come in.

[GARCIA *enters, all smiles.*

GUNNING *shuts the door and retires to the other room.*

GARCIA: Your Highness, I thinka maybe you lika a little something——

DUCHESS (*shaking her head*): No, no, I go to bed.

GARCIA (*holding his fingers an inch apart*): Just a little caviare sandwich—and a little glass of Pommery twenty-one. Maka you sleep better——

DUCHESS (*shaking her head*): Nothing make me sleep to-night.

GARCIA: Your Highness, taka my advice—I have it right here—at the door. Just a——(*With a twirl of his fingers.*)

DUCHESS (*laughing*): You are not possible to refuse.

GARCIA (*bows*): Eduardo! (*A waiter enters.*) I keepa this wine for the reporters. Prohibition is our protection from the Press. Thank God they are thirsty.

[*The waiter brings to the table a tray on which are a bottle of champagne and a glass, a plate of sandwiches and a dish of fruit. He is about to open the champagne when GARCIA waves him away.*

He goes out.

GARCIA, *opening the bottle.*

The great people always needa little something before they go to bed. (*Pouring out a glass*) So! (*Brings her the glass and the plate of sandwiches.*)

[GUNNING *takes out her crochet and sits on chair R. of bed.*

DUCHESS: Thank you.

GARCIA: Do not be afraid of the caviare, it is Bolshevik but beautiful.

DUCHESS (*takes a sandwich*): You get a glass yourself, Mr. Garcia, no?

GARCIA (*bowing*): I thanka your Highness, but I never touch it—I am very acid.

DUCHESS (*sipping*): It is good.

GARCIA: Your Highness—there is a rumour to-night, amonga the servants, that I contradict very emphatic—I am very angry.

DUCHESS: Oh?

GARCIA: That your Highness and his Majesty go away to-morrow.

DUCHESS: But who invent such a fairy tale? (*Laughing.*)

GARCIA: They see someone packing, then they thinka too dam' much—if you excuse me.

DUCHESS: Mr. Garcia, I trust to you a secret——

[*He bows.*

——the packing is diplomatic. To-morrow is the conference—they have heard we are packed, ready to jomp—then we get what we want.

[*He beams, extending his hands.*

Diplomacy was given us to conceal our intentions.

GARCIA (*nodding*): I getta you. (*Confidentially*) And the other—Macadam and the Senator—that is now O.K.

DUCHESS: Yes, yes, it is now, as you say, O.K.

GARCIA: Dio! that maka me feel good! If that horrible thing had happen to his Majesty and your Highness, here in my hotel, I breaka my heart. My mother is born in Poldavia—she liva there now—she go back to her people when my father die. Looka your Highness! (*Giving her the postcard.*)

DUCHESS: Oh, the little ante-room at Zaoum! I thought it seem familiar——

GARCIA (*waving his arm*): The furniture—the armour—the horns that his Majesty shoota——

DUCHESS (*looking round*): So—indeed!

GARCIA: Justa like home. (*Taking the postcard*) Good night, your Highness.

DUCHESS: Good-night. (*He goes to the door.*) Mr. Garcia, I can trust you that no one repeat that story of Macadam—that he try to get in my bed.

GARCIA: Your Highness can trust me. If I hear a word, I sacka the whole staff!

[*Goes out. The outer door slams.*]

DUCHESS (*going up*): Gunning, for the third and last time—I go to bed.

[*GUNNING puts her crochet in her apron pocket and comes to the DUCHESS L. of bed and unhooks her dress. It falls to the floor. She steps over it.*]

GUNNING (*picking up the dress*): I will say the Reverend Macadam didn't look that kind of man.

[*Disappears L. with dress.*]

DUCHESS: What kind of——Oh! (*She begins to laugh.*)

GUNNING (*re-appearing*): But I always suspect these gloomy ones—they've got something inside all right. (*Passing the nightdress over the Duchess's head while the other garment falls to the floor.*)

DUCHESS (*sitting on the bed*): Poor Mr. Macadam—if he have anything inside it is in a refrigerator. (*Sticking out a leg.*)

GUNNING: What I say of the clergy is, when they are good they are very, very good, but when they are bad they are horrid.

DUCHESS: Gunning, why are you always so bitter about clergymen?

GUNNING: In my younger days, your Highness, I was engaged to a sexton, but it's a long, long story.

DUCHESS: Well, you tell it to me to-morrow. I go straight in my bed—my feet are on fire and my head is on fire and my body between is just dead. (*She slips in between the bedclothes.*)

[*GUNNING disappears L. for a moment with shoes, stockings, etc. then returns.*]

GUNNING: Is that all, your Highness?

DUCHESS: All—good-night.

GUNNING: Good-night, your Highness. (*She goes in the front room.*)

DUCHESS: Oh, Gunning! As you go by ask Colonel Menken to tell his Majesty I am gone to bed—I have a headache—I see him in the morning.

GUNNING: Yes, your Highness.

[*Going, she pauses at the switch by the door, turning out all lights in front room. She goes out.*]

A moment later the sound of the outer door closing. The DUCHESS lies still with closed eyes, trying to sleep, then suddenly sitting up she crumples and bangs the pillow to make it higher and goes down on her right side closing her eyes for another attempt. Then her arm goes up switching off the light above the bed.

For a few moments darkness and silence. Then the telephone bell rings in the front room. A deep sigh of despair from the dark. The bell rings again. The light above the bed is turned on. The DUCHESS sits up, very cross, then as the bell rings again stretches out for the instrument beside her bed.

DUCHESS (*crossly*): What is it? . . . What? . . . Who? . . . Oh! (*Her expression changes to a smile and she becomes alertly awake.*) But I am in bed! . . . No, wait, I get up . . . in a minute . . . I leave open the outer door.

[She jumps out of bed replacing the phone, puts on her slippers, then her dressing-gown, fastening it up. Opens the gold box on the table, beside the bed, quickly powders, gives a few deft touches to her hair, comes into the front room, switches on the lights, presses the button which closes the tapestries, goes out, leaves the outer door ajar, and returns closing the door, crosses R. and looks out cautiously between the window curtains.

The closing of the outer door is heard, then a knock.

Come in!

[CORCORAN enters, closes the door, and stands by it a little awkwardly—the aggressive domineering manner is toned down.

CORCORAN: I guess I'd no right to disturb you——

DUCHESS: Do not apologise—I tell you to come.

CORCORAN: That's right, then I won't. I've been figurin' things out since our talk here—there's a lot o' things weren't said, couldn't be said with the Reverend here—and I'm just wonderin' if you and I couldn't get together on it.

DUCHESS: You no need to wonder—we can. I take it that is why you are here. Will you not sit down, Senator?

CORCORAN: Sure. (*He sits where he sat before, R. of table.*)

DUCHESS (*she sits on stool C.*): Well?

CORCORAN: Macadam won't budge——

DUCHESS: Oh?

CORCORAN: I've talked at him till me throat's sore—till I told him to go to—home, an' he went. He's a maniac.

DUCHESS (*nodding*): Fanatic!

CORCORAN: You've said it. Well, when he'd gone, I began to see I'd got myself in a cleft stick, an' I don't see no way out.

DUCHESS: Shall I help you?

CORCORAN: Can you?

DUCHESS: Perhaps. You have something to say that is difficult to put in words, you don't know how—I say it for you. (*Holding out her clenched fist*) You have got us like that—we know it—if you do not squeeze us too hard we are willing to pay. It is a business? How much—or what is it that you want?

CORCORAN: Jeesh! (*He bursts out laughing.*) So that's what you think I came for——Well, I guess it may sound funny to you, but I got all the money I want or near it—I didn't reckon to get a thing out o' this—yes, by God, *one* thing—but that's nothing to do with you.

DUCHESS: You are not very illuminating, Senator. If it was not that, what did you come for.

[*He looks at the ground smiling, and for a moment does not answer.*]

CORCORAN: I'll tell you—(*turning to her.*) When I'd put this over on you folks to-day I didn't feel too grand—you were good losers—you'd lost the game but you didn't lose your tempers or your manners. But when I sat here to-night I felt real mean. I've done this kinda thing a score o' times—'t ain't a parlour game sure, it's dirty——

DUCHESS (*puzzled*): "When you put this over"—do you mean——?

CORCORAN: A frame-up—a plant. Yeah, I'll say it was one of the smartest li'l frame-ups ever put across in God's own country, and I was darned proud of it—till to-night.

DUCHESS: And so when I said "*if* it was an accident"——?

CORCORAN: You said a mouthful. I knew how you were fixed—everything—I horned in on this floor a fortnight before you came—I had the Reverend all balled up about European immorality—an' we got you with the goods. There—I've "come clean" as the police say.

DUCHESS: Is "clean" quite the word——?

CORCORAN: I'll say you're right. (*Laughing.*)

DUCHESS: Why did you want to do this to us?

CORCORAN: I never thought of you—I'd hardly seen you. But I got oil lands in Mexico. Four years ago I took it to the International Oil crowd to exploit them—old Lee's a pirate sure, but he's white—I had the whole thing fixed up fair, when that yellow bastard, Montgomery Curtis, shoved his ugly nose in an' smashed the deal. Yes sir—and he hung on—he blocked me with the big five, blocked me with the banks, everywhere—for four years he's been trying to squeeze me out—(*with a laugh*) he's got a hope!—And then I saw the chance to bust the Poldavian Oil deal—his deal—and by God I've busted it sure.

DUCHESS: Indeed! (*Pause.*) But Senator, what you want is the blood of Montgomery Curtis.

CORCORAN: He ain't got no blood—soft soap and vinegar's what's in his veins. (*Leaning forward*) I'd spend my last cent—I mean it—if I could smash that white-livered skunk.

DUCHESS: That would be very nice, but it do not help us—what do *we* do?

CORCORAN: I'm beat!

DUCHESS: Could you take over the deal and put it through yourself?

CORCORAN (*shaking his head*): Too big for me. I ain't a real oil man, just an amateur who struck lucky. Only the big fellers could handle this. You don't get me. I ain't looking for nothin'. I've done the dirty on you, an' I can't get clean. I'm caught. You said I'd got you like that. (*Holds out his clenched fist.*) That's how Macadam's got me. An' try to budge him—beatin' yer head against a stone wall. (*He rises.*) Here's what I came for—to tell you I want to let you out. (*He takes the agreement from his pocket as she rises.*) You can have that back. (*Gives it to her.*) And the curse of it is, it's worth dam' all to you. Good-night. I'll have another smack at the Reverend in the morning. (*He turns to go.*)

DUCHESS: Oh no—do not go—please. Perhaps we put our heads together and we find something, no?

CORCORAN (*turning*): Sure—I'm in no hurry. But I thought mebbe you're wantin' to get back to bed.

DUCHESS: Oh, no, I can go to bed for years and years. Look, you sit once more, and I give you champagne and a caviare sandwich and we think together a little——

[*She goes to the Gothic cabinet for another glass. He goes back to his seat and sits when she comes over and fills the glass. Then, sitting opposite to him and filling her own glass:*]

So—we think more comfortable like that.

CORCORAN (*laughing*): I could do a lot of thinkin' like this.

DUCHESS (*raising her glass*): And we drink to "the way out." (*Holding out the plate*) A caviare? When they are born they are little Bolsheviks, but as Garcia say, they are very good now.

CORCORAN (*taking sandwich*): Say—what do you think of me?

DUCHESS: Do you care?

CORCORAN: No! Sure I care. But you give me caviare an' champagne—an' you should be givin' me hell.

DUCHESS: Perhaps you get hell for a savoury.

CORCORAN: An' I bet you could give it—with the lid off.

DUCHESS: Would you mind?

CORCORAN: I'd eat it.

DUCHESS: What do you think? If I go see the Reverend Macadam——

CORCORAN: He'd run a mile.

DUCHESS: That is not a compliment.

CORCORAN: Best compliment you can pay temptation.

DUCHESS (*laughing*): Oh, no, there is a better.

CORCORAN: What?

DUCHESS: Never mind.

[CORCORAN *suddenly sees it and laughs.*

Now we must think. (*She takes up the agreement, tapping the table with it.*) What way do we get the Reverend Macadam—money?

CORCORAN (*shaking his head*): Macadam's incorruptible—it'd cost too much.

DUCHESS: How you mean "cost too much"?

CORCORAN (*laughing*): Well, if you offered an archangel all the money in the world there's no tellin' what'd happen. But you haven't got it.

DUCHESS: How much?

CORCORAN: You can cut it out—I've known him since I was a kid—money won't buy him.

DUCHESS: But what then?

[*He shrugs his shoulders.*

(*She jumps up*) Oh, do not shrug! You know like me if we do not find it we are as bad as before. Is there no way we stop his mouth?

CORCORAN: Short o' shootin', none. (*With a grin*) Round here you can get a guy shot for a hundred dollars—but I don't advise it.

DUCHESS: That is absurd, of course! (*She stands balancing the agreement on her fingers.*) There is one way, Senator.

CORCORAN: Which?

DUCHESS: You have give me back this. If Macadam speak—you can say it never happen—he dream it when he sleep.

CORCORAN (*putting down his glass*): See here, kid, get this. I lugged the Reverend into this mess; if he's still set on seein' it through, I got to stand by him.

DUCHESS: You no do this for me?

CORCORAN: I ain't double-crossin' a pal for anyone—get me?

DUCHESS (*nodding*): I get you.

CORCORAN: I'll rake hell to make him change his mind—I guess I can do no more.

[She bends her head, then throws the agreement into her despatch-box, sits in the chair nearer him, and fills his glass and then her own.]

DUCHESS: Senator, what make *you* change your mind?

CORCORAN: Oh—I hardly know.

DUCHESS: You must know.

CORCORAN: I guess it wouldn't interest you.

DUCHESS: Oh, but very much.

CORCORAN: Well, it must 'a bin' watchin' you sittin' there on that stool with the pale pleadin' face fightin' for yer life, an' Macadam's jaws clappin' on ye like an old Bible pressin' a violet—I just felt I was bein' a hog.

DUCHESS: Yes, a hog—but a nice hog! (*Then laughing*) Only I do not have the pale pleading face, I feel no care a dam'.

CORCORAN: You didn't look it.

DUCHESS: Oh!

CORCORAN: Didn't rightly see you this morning—the hat—an' that first time——Gee! I couldn't take my eyes off the King's golden pyjamas.

[She leans back shaking with laughter in which he joins—then suddenly becoming serious—chasing something in his memory.]

Golden! Golden!

DUCHESS: What?

CORCORAN: Sermon "golden"—(*leaning forward*).

DUCHESS: Sermon?

CORCORAN: Two years ago, last time I heard him—"golden"—"cloths that veil the Glory of the Lord!" (*In growing excitement*) Preaching on Solomon's Temple in his little ten-cent church?

DUCHESS: Macadam?

CORCORAN (*excited*): Sure!—an' mebbe it's the way out! He'd been lettin' himself go on the grandeur an' the richness of the building, an' then he came to the holy of holies—purples and porphery and ivories an' silver an' precious stones an' "golden cloths that veiled the Glory"—an' then droppin' his voice—"My brethren, you could not duplicate that chamber to-day for four hundred thousand dollars." (*Sitting close to her*) I remember thinkin'—"there's his dream"! And wonderin' why he didn't make it half a million. An' for weeks I was expectin' to see the hat—it didn't come. But if International Oil'd build the Reverend Adam Bride Macadam a million-dollar church—I kinda reckon he'd fall for it.

[*Slight pause.*]

DUCHESS: I see Lee in the morning—I tell him they must build the Reverend a church for a million.

CORCORAN: Make it two—temptation must be irresistible—(*turning*) like you.

DUCHESS: Am I?

CORCORAN: Sure.

DUCHESS (*rises, laughing*): Temptation must be irresistible both sides to be really good.

CORCORAN (*laughing*): Sure. (*Rising*) Well, I guess that shows me where I get off.

DUCHESS: Oh no!—you are strong—you no need to run.

CORCORAN: Well, I needn't run a mile. (*Laughing, takes the bottle and pours the rest into their two glasses.*) We drank to the way out—we'll drink again to the golden pyjamas! (*Raising his glass*) They let you in, and now mebbe they'll let you out.

[*They drain their glasses.*]

Say—(*looking round*)—this ain't the same room we came into—I bin tryin' to figure it——

DUCHESS (*who has gone up*): No—it was like this. (*She presses the button, the tapestries slide back, she goes R. and sits on settee.*)

CORCORAN: Sure—that's it! Golden bed, golden mirror, and golden pyjamas! (*He laughs, crossing down to her.*) Gee! some dazzle!—an' then I apologised—an' you got under the bedclothes—to hide your shame. (*Sits on the stool beside her.*)

DUCHESS: No, to hide my laughing.

[*They laugh.*]

I hope you are ashamed.

CORCORAN: I'm a hardened sinner—Gee! it's a pity you're married.

DUCHESS: Oh, I am very complicated!

CORCORAN: I wouldn't let you out of my sight.

DUCHESS: So!

CORCORAN: Runnin' wild around Hollywood.

DUCHESS: You read that? (*He nods.*) Oh, a king belong to everybody. But he is very jealous.

CORCORAN: I'll say he is.

DUCHESS: Once at Zaoum he throw a major out of the first floor window.

CORCORAN: Gee!

DUCHESS: Oh, it is a compliment—but he break two legs—such a handsome man with a big moustache!

CORCORAN: An' we're on the second floor! (*Glancing at the window.*)

DUCHESS (*laughing*): Senator, are you making——(*She stops.*) Oh, I cannot call you Senator—it sound like a long white beard with egg on it.

CORCORAN: I bin called plenty—but my friends call me Barney.

DUCHESS: Barney——

CORCORAN: Il-lonya—kinda got a thrill writin' it—but 'stoo long.

DUCHESS: Lonya.

CORCORAN: That's bully—Lonya. What were you goin' to say?

DUCHESS: Oh, I could not say it now.

CORCORAN: Sure!

DUCHESS: Oh no. I could say (*primly*) "Senator, are you making love to me?" but I could not say (*languishing*) "Barney, are you making love to me?"

CORCORAN: I wouldn't dare—just tryin' to feel how strong I am.

DUCHESS: How strong?

CORCORAN: I'll warn you——

[The sound is heard of the outer door being opened with a key, and the KING'S voice talking and laughing loudly with someone outside.]

DUCHESS: *Krashtovida! Toutou!* (*She springs up, glides across to the door, and locks it.*)

[CORCORAN rises slowly, with a perplexed grin, looks round, then goes towards the window.]

CORCORAN (*in a loud whisper*): I'll slip to my rooms by the balcony.

DUCHESS (*running across*): No—no—you get shot——(*He stops.*) The detective—out there—with a gun!

CORCORAN: Detective?

DUCHESS: He shoota first and aska the question afterward.

CORCORAN: In here! (*Crossing to bedroom.*)

DUCHESS: No good.

CORCORAN: The bathroom?

DUCHESS: Worse. (*A loud laugh off. At sound she jumps back and collides with the man-at-arms R.*) In here! Quick! (*Takes off helmet and puts it on stool.*)

CORCORAN: In there?! (*Then starts to get in.*)

DUCHESS: Yes, yes. It is no oncomfortable—I do it once in *Madame Navarre!*

CORCORAN: Well, it ain't the first time I've been canned.

DUCHESS: Do not move. (*Buckling the armour.*)

CORCORAN: Guess I can't.

[Loud knocks.]

KING: Lonya!

DUCHESS: Who is that?

KING: Me—Toutou! (*Shaking the door.*)

DUCHESS: I am gone to bed!

KING: Then get out of bed.

DUCHESS: I am gone to sleep. (*Getting on the stool with the helmet.*)

KING: I wake you up! (*Knocking.*)

DUCHESS: Wait a minute. I put something on first.

[Putting the helmet over CORCORAN'S head, the vizor up. She puts her finger to her lips for silence, then lays it against his lips and shuts the vizor, skips down, replaces the stool, and staggers to the door, unfastening her dressing-gown, and opens the door with a stretch and a yawn.

The KING enters. He is in evening dress, with orders, and though not in the least drunk, has dined very well, and is smoking a big cigar.

DUCHESS: Why you wake me in my beauty sleep?

KING: I am not at all sleepy. (*Shutting the door.*)

DUCHESS: I shall be a wreck in morning—

KING: We shall all be a wreck in the morning. (*With a big laugh.*)

DUCHESS: I send you a message I am gone to sleep and you do not consider me—

KING: I am come to consider you—you look very sweet.

DUCHESS: I am very cross, Toutou—and half asleep. What was the dinner like?

KING: It was not a dinner—there are no words! We eat everything forbidden by the doctors and drink everything forbidden by the law. We do not dine in a room, we dine in an oil field—painted round the walls. There are no waiters—oil-workers! Even the ice-pudding is a derrick! Everything is oil—so natural I think I taste Paraffin in the soup.

[He sits at the table, lays his cigar on the ash-tray, and begins eating the caviare sandwiches.

Caviare, good!—make me hongry once more. (*Seeing the two glasses.*) Who is drinking with you?

DUCHESS: No one—I have a headache—I take aspro in this glass. (*Moving the glass away.*) Garcia bring me a bite of supper.

KING (*having tried to fill the other glass from the empty bottle*): No wonder you have a headache.

DUCHESS: Well, I must try to forget. You have some whisky.

[He nods, putting a sandwich in his mouth.

KING: No news?

DUCHESS (*as she goes to cabinet R. back*): I ask the Senator and Reverend Macadam to come to see me.

KING: Well?

DUCHESS: No good—the Reverend will not move.

KING: And the other?

DUCHESS: He cannot move.

KING: Would he if he could?

DUCHESS: I think he might.

KING: What a pity—after the fish Lee say he buy my hunting forest and stock another for me.

DUCHESS: How much? (*Having taken out syphon, whisky bottle, and glass.*)

KING: Ten million dollars.

DUCHESS (*coming L.*): Perhaps another give you more.

[*As she passes the man-at-arms he touches her on the shoulder and his head nods. She nearly drops the bottle, but sails skilfully on, reaching the table as the KING takes the last sandwich and pours out a whisky.*]

KING: Nonsense! What make you think that?

DUCHESS: I get a hunch—as they say.

KING: If you find such a fool I give you the difference.

DUCHESS: It is a bet. (*Handing him the glass.*)

[*The KING drinks. As he finishes a convulsion shakes the armour with the sound of a half-smothered sneeze. She starts and then watches for the second.*]

KING: What was that? (*Putting down the glass.*)

DUCHESS: Wind! (*Seizing the whisky*) You have another?

KING: No, no!

DUCHESS: Yes, yes! It do you good. (*She sees the second convulsion, soundless, successfully smothered.*)

KING (*putting his glass away*): American hospitality has gone the limit, but still I am sober. It is a record—do not spoil it. (*He rises laughing, and moving up R.C.*) But I feel good—my brain is working—I could do business now.

DUCHESS (*watching, as he goes straight towards the man-at-arms*): You go to bed now—or you no good for business in the morning.

KING: No good! (*Turning beside the man-at-arms*) You should have heard me! (*Laughing*) I think I frighten Lee. I say, "Those options—you get us too cheap"—and always they fill our glasses, and always I am more sober, and always he is not——

DUCHESS: Well, perhaps something happen before to-morrow—go to bed.

KING: Those two rascals! If only I had felt this morning like now! I was too quiet, too tame, too polite. *Krashtovida!* I make them ashamed!

DUCHESS: Will you go to bed!

KING: I flatten them out! (*Shaking his finger at man-at-arms on the left*) You pretend to be a clergyman—you are a sneak—and you have a lace like a cold potato! (*Turning on the other*) As for you! The noble Senator!

DUCHESS (*catching him*): Toutou, will you go to bed now!

KING: Yes, yes, I go to bed. I stay here and go to bed. (*Putting his arm round her waist.*)

DUCHESS (*twisting out of his embrace*): No, no, no! You will not stay here.

KING (*coaxing*): Lonya——

DUCHESS: No, no—you go away.

KING: Let me send for my pyjamas!

DUCHESS: We have too much of your pyjamas—all our troubles come out of your pyjamas. I am tired of your pyjamas.

KING: Lonya—I do not understand you.

DUCHESS: You understand me very well.

KING: I come to see you—here I am, here I stay.

DUCHESS: I do not want you—go away. I send you a message I am tired, I go to sleep—no, no, you come! I beg you a dozen times you go to bed—no, no, you stay! You cannot treat me so—I will not have it.

KING: But, Lonya——

DUCHESS: No—go back to Hollywood, to your beauties there—to the Spanish lady at New Orleans—to the baby blonde at Baltimore—to all the others whom I do not know. But not to me—I am done with you—I am at the end.

KING: I go, I go—but listen, Lonya——

DUCHESS: I do all the work, and no consideration! (*Tearing off her dressing-gown and flinging on the floor.*) From morning till night I am seeing people—I am discussing—I am giving the interviews—I make my speeches, I make yours. (*Kicking off a shoe which nearly hits him.*) I am arranging the programme—I am trying to find where you are when you are not there. (*Kicks off the other shoe.*) And now when I am tired to death I am not allowed to go to bed. (*Flinging herself into bed.*) It is too much—it is too much—too much! (*Pulling the clothes round her and snuggling into the pillows.*)

KING: Yes, yes, I know, but Lonya, listen——

DUCHESS (*sitting up with a jump*): Listen, listen! Always I listen, but what do I hear—nothing, nothing that help. Am I to get no peace when I am in my bed? Even now I am making plans—thinking what I can do to save our negotiations—and all you say is listen, listen!

KING (*holding up his hands to ward off the flow*): All right, all right, I go to bed—now. (*Going down*) Good-night, Lonya.

DUCHESS (*after a slight pause*): Good-night. (*She turns off her light and drops back on pillows.*) . . . Draw the curtains . . . please.

[He presses the button, and curtains slide together.]

KING: Sleep well!

DUCHESS: I try my best.

[He goes towards the door on his toes, opens it, and steals out, closing it after him.]

The laughing face of the DUCHESS appears among the Sabine women—with a convulsive jerk CORCORAN throws up the vizor of his helmet.

CORCORAN: How in hell do I get out of this?

DUCHESS (*laughing*): I got you in—I get you out.

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE: *Same as Act I. The morning after the night before.*

The DUCHESS is seated L. of desk. An agreement on a large single sheet lies before her. MISS CUTTING stands facing the desk with the counterpart in her hand, COUNT SEIDEL stands at the corner of the desk above the DUCHESS. The KING is standing in front of fireplace L. smoking a cigarette.

DUCHESS: So—you need not retype it—it is only a draft agreement, they can initial it—you block out that line. (*Running her finger along it.*)

MISS CUTTING: Yes, your Highness.

DUCHESS (*to SEIDEL*): And—what was the word?

SEIDEL: Notwithstanding—

DUCHESS: And you type "not-with-standing" before there—(*Puts her finger on the spot as MISS CUTTING notes the word*) then bring it back for his Majesty's signature.

MISS CUTTING (*taking it*): Yes, your Highness.

DUCHESS (*sweetly*): You will be quick?

MISS CUTTING: I certainly will.

[*She is off R.*

The DUCHESS studies her plan of campaign, making notes in pencil. A few moments after the curtain rose ERASMUS has come in with a mug of beer and plate of little sandwiches which he places before the KING on the little table.

KING: What is this?

ERASMUS (*smiling*): All what yo' Majesty had yesterday—an' more.

KING: I do not feel so good as yesterday—nor so hungry.

ERASMUS: Yo' Majesty try—yo' feel hungry all right.

KING (*takes up the mug laughing*): I still have a good thirst—thank you, Erasmus. (*Takes a long drink.*)

[ERASMUS *bows smiling and goes out.*

It is all something I cannot understand. Yesterday he is trying to ruin us—to-day he is buying my forest for eleven million dollars. Yesterday he is our worst enemy—to-day he is our best friend. How has this miracle been made?

DUCHESS: Only Count Seidel can tell—it is all his doing.

KING: And Count Seidel tell me it is all your doing.

SEIDEL: Your Majesty, that was merely her Highness's modesty—I only—

DUCHESS (*quickly*): No, no, I have no modesty. Who was it find out yesterday Senator Corcoran have oil in Mexico?—Count Seidel! Who was it put through this morning so cleverly the deal for the concession of the hunting forest?—(*Rising*) Count Seidel! At eleven million—one million more than Lee offer you—one million for me, Toutou!

KING: What do you mean? one million for you?

DUCHESS: You forget! You say, if you find a fool to give more you can have the difference, and I say it is a bet. You would not rob me of my paltry million?

KING: If I said it I said it.

DUCHESS (*to SEIDEL*): You are a witness. (*To the KING*) Of course I am able to help a little. In the night I am thinking—long time I am awake, and many times I think good, and I think perhaps something come of it. But the one who do things is the Count! (*With a magnificent gesture, then going to SEIDEL*) This morning I say to his Majesty, if to-day we shall be saved we shall owe it to the Count—he must have an Embassy.

KING: Yes—I make changes, London and Paris—in our first negotiations we fall between two fools—which do you like?

[MISS CUTTING *returns with the draft agreement.*

SEIDEL: London, your Majesty.

KING (*finishing the beer*): I send you to London.

SEIDEL (*bowing*): Your Majesty, I shall not attempt to put my gratitude into words—

DUCHESS: No, no, we have no time—Toutou, you must sign this. (*Going to the desk*) Quickly. (*She takes up a pen.*)

[*The KING sits at the desk, and signs.*

You will please give these to Captain Olven. His instructions are to give them to Senator Corcoran for signature—they must be signed before the conference—you understand?

MISS CUTTING: Yes, your Highness.

DUCHESS: Thank you.

[MISS CUTTING *goes out R. with agreement.*

We have two fights before we are out of the wood. In a few minutes the Senator and Reverend Macadam are here to meet his Excellency—

KING: The Baron—Ho! ho! ho!—He will make a mess of it.

DUCHESS: No, no, I have rehearse him.

KING: That Baron! I am wondering where I can send him.

DUCHESS (*nodding*): Yes, we need an ambassador there some day.

[KAMP *comes on L.*

KAMP: Your Majesty, your Highness, Mr. Lee has arrived.

DUCHESS: Good! Come along. (*Tapping the KING on the shoulder.*)

KING: No, I am not in the mood.

DUCHESS: But it is on you that I rely! Do you forget what you do to him last night?

KING: To-day my brain is not the same.

DUCHESS: Just the same, Toutou—your brain is like your sword—it is mostly in the scabbard, but though no one see it the point is always there.

[*The KING goes out.*

As she is following she turns to KAMP.

Your Excellency will remember?

KAMP (*bowing*): I remember everything, your Highness—I forget nothing.

[*She goes out followed by SEIDEL who closes the doors.*

KAMP *stands for a moment trying to think—then, taking a paper from his pocket, reads a sentence, raises his head, repeats it soundlessly. Twice he does this.*

There is a knock. He shoves the paper in his pocket.

KAMP: Come in!

OLVEN (*appearing at door R.*): Senator Corcoran and the Reverend Adam Macadam by appointment.

KAMP: Bring them in.

[OLVEN *disappears.*

KAMP *stands waiting. OLVEN shows in MACADAM and CORCORAN and retires.*

KAMP: First, gentlemen, permit me to thank you for your courtesy—er—in acceding to my request—er—for an interview.

CORCORAN: Mr. Ambassador, I've told my reverend friend of our talk on the phone. He was dead set against movin', but I guess I just collared him and brought him along.

MACADAM: I don't see the use, Mr. Ambassador I am inflexibly committed to the stand I have taken.

KAMP (*indicating the sofa*): If you would be good enough to sit down.

[MACADAM *sits in R. corner of sofa, CORCORAN on the stool below the desk.*

Mr. Macadam, Senator, I have asked you here to-day to make a last-minute appeal—er—to your generosity—your Christian feelings—to—to—er——

MACADAM (*sharply*): To what?

KAMP: To wipe the slate clean.

MACADAM: I dislike metaphor, but if you can't talk straight, I tell you your slate is so dirty that wiping won't clean it—it will only spread the dirt.

[*A moment's pause.*

We signed a solemn agreement here yesterday; are you folks going to keep your part of it?

KAMP: Mr. Macadam—er—that is the difficulty——

MACADAM (*rising*): Then we needn't wait.

CORCORAN (*quietly*): Sit down a minute, Mac. (*To KAMP*) What is the difficulty?

KAMP: I need not remind you, gentlemen, of the power of the big business interests concerned—of the immense value—not only to our country but to the trade of the United——

MACADAM (*snapping*): You need not. Come to the difficulty.

KAMP: The difficulty is precisely this—that we may not be permitted to keep this agreement——

MACADAM: Why?

KAMP: I am not exaggerating when I say that the Department of State would be very gravely concerned if the Poldavian

Oil deal were lost to America, or still worse diverted elsewhere—very gravely indeed——

MACADAM: That cannot affect the law.

KAMP: No? Suppose the police decline to move?

MACADAM: They must move.

KAMP: The police force, Mr. Macadam, is not an automatic machine. It is a very sensitive body—er—very susceptible to pressure from all sides—and particularly from above.

MACADAM: If the police decline to enforce the law——

KAMP: Speaking of law—have you considered that this agreement of yours comes very near to compounding a felony?

CORCORAN: How so?

KAMP: To conspiracy even—an attempt to interfere with the action of the very law to which you appeal?

MACADAM (*turning to* CORCORAN): Is this right?

CORCORAN: It never struck me that way—but I guess I can see now the other guy might put it like that.

MACADAM (*rising*): Very well then—if what you say is true, if American law can fail to protect the purity of American life, then we shall appeal to the people—to the mouthpiece of the people—to the Press. We shall make public the truth and the whole truth immediately.

KAMP: And if the newspapers decline to print it? The big powers——

MACADAM (*scornfully waving him down*): No, no, Mr. Ambassador, I know the Press of my country, better than you, and I thank heaven that not yet have they forfeited their old independence, their love of justice and of truth; and when a story like this one goes to every newspaper in the country, I tell you they will print it—every word—and no power big or little will stop them.

KAMP: You may be right——

MACADAM: I am most certainly right!

KAMP: But it comes down to this, Mr. Macadam—of your agreement nothing is left except your power to broadcast a scandal. You may consider that it is your duty to do so——

MACADAM: I *know* that it is!

KAMP: Well, I can only ask you to think it over carefully; and then, if you are able to regard it in a somewhat different light, I am instructed to say that there is nothing within reason which the interests involved would not do to show their appreciation—any institution you are interested in—er—charities—er—er—endowment—on the most lavish scale——

MACADAM: Are you trying to offer me a bribe?

CORCORAN: No, you've got him all wrong, Mac.

KAMP (*holding up his hands*): Nothing could possibly be further from my thoughts.

MACADAM: Let us go.

CORCORAN: In a minute! Mr. Ambassador—if my friend and I could have a few words in private——

KAMP: Certainly, Senator, I will leave you. If you should need me——(*With a gesture L.*) For the present——

[*Bows and goes out L.*]

MACADAM *follows him with his eye then turns on* CORCORAN.

MACADAM: Are you letting me down?

CORCORAN: Did I ever let you down?

MACADAM: No.

CORCORAN: 'Nough said!—But we got to watch our step, Mac. What he said about the police refusin' to act——

MACADAM: I don't believe it.

CORCORAN: The law is an ass—you believe that?

MACADAM: Sometimes.

CORCORAN: An' the ass sometimes sleeps.

MACADAM: We must wake it.

CORCORAN: 'Tain't so easy to wake an animal that sleeps wi' one eye open. An' the State Department——

MACADAM: That is impossible!

CORCORAN: I'm *in* politics—an' take it from me, big business is there all the time. When the law an' the profits get on opposite sides—queer things happen.

MACADAM: Very well then, we make public the whole disgraceful business from beginning to end.

CORCORAN: We can do that—an' if we do, I stand by you. But I'm just wonderin' is it goin' to help us any?

MACADAM: To do what is our plain duty——?

CORCORAN: I'm thinkin' maybe we won't look too good.

MACADAM: And the insult! to treat me as a dirty grafter and offer me a bribe, to——

CORCORAN: No, Mac—you got him all wrong there.

MACADAM: Then what did he mean by appreciation and endowment and the rest?

CORCORAN: Oh, he's a lousy talker—I know what he was gettin' at—he told me on the phone. Seems they've been hearin' what folks is sayin' about your preachin' at Kansas City an' other towns—an' how you only got a little ten-cent store of a place, an' they got wonderin' if building a fine big church at Kansas City wouldn't do a bit o' good.

MACADAM: A great church! (*Then sharply*) What do they know of my church and my preaching?

CORCORAN: These guys know a hell o' a lot. Money talks but it listens too, and it hears most everything. It weren't so much a church neither—more of a temple like—two million dollars he mentioned——

MACADAM (*astounded*): Two million——! (*Shutting his mouth with a snap*) It's a bribe—it's nothing more than a bribe in disguise——

CORCORAN: Talk sense, man!—where's the bribe? It isn't for you——

MACADAM: Then what is it?

CORCORAN: If they were to offer you four hundred thousand dollars—you would refuse it?

MACADAM: Most certainly I would.

CORCORAN: With indignation?

MACADAM: Yes, yes, certainly—with indignation.

CORCORAN: An' you would be right. If you fell for it you would not be the man I've known you for since we were kids. But they ain't offering you anything—no one ain't offerin' anyone anything. Only certain big American interests—world interests, who have the cause of humanity at heart—an' it's good business to have it—and who realise as well as you or I how big a part religion plays in that cause, are weighin' in their minds the possibility of givin' to the American people, in Kansas City, a great church—a wonder temple—at a cost of two million dollars.

MACADAM (*reflectively*): If I could believe that their motives are right——! (*He sits on sofa.*)

CORCORAN: Sure their motives are right when it's a church they're givin'. Have you the right to deprive your countrymen of a blessin' at that price? Think of Kansas City—Godless crowd most o' them—don't they need another church?

MACADAM: Yes, yes, there is a great darkness there!—if only my conscience could approve——!

CORCORAN: An' your conscience must approve! (*Sitting beside him*) Mac, you an' me's men o' the world—leastways me o' this world an' you o' the next. Take your conscience—what is the choice? On one side the great temple where you can gather the good harvest—on the other a dirty little scandal that you've nosed out to fling to paper scavengers who feed it to their readin' millions ravening for pornographic dirt. You were crackin' up the Press just now—do you approve o' that end of it?

MACADAM (*fiercely*): No, no, no, I abominate it!

CORCORAN: An' the publicity—d'ye think I want to see my friend the Reverend Adam B. Macadam standin' on top o' the world washin' other people's dirty linen?

MACADAM: I shrink from all that—I shrink from it!

CORCORAN: You're a minister of the Gospel, not a muck-raker—your grand voice should be trumpetin' spiritual truth through the aisles of a mighty temple, not whisperin' dirty stories through paper columns at street corners an' speakeasies

MACADAM (*rising*): No, you're right, you're right—every time you're right. I must walk warily, lest I fall in the pit I have digged——

CORCORAN: You'd be in it to your neck!

MACADAM: One can't touch pitch without being defiled.

CORCORAN: Smear'd from head to foot you'd be—mixed up with a story o' this kind!

MACADAM: After all, who am I to cast the first stone?

CORCORAN: No, lay the first stone, and let the temple rise on it!

MACADAM: I must think it over.

CORCORAN: Sure—an' keep on thinkin' o' the good you can do there in Kansas City—an' God knows they need it!

MACADAM: I will, I will. I must be alone—I must wrestle with this.

CORCORAN: Sure!

MACADAM: For the present—I leave everything in your hands. (*Putting a hand on his shoulder*) I trust you—to do what is right.

CORCORAN: I'll fix it—never fear.

MACADAM (*rubbing his chin*): I think—I think I'll leave you to see him alone—I think I'd better go now.

CORCORAN: Sure! (*Going R.*) You go 'way back and wrestle—see me at the hotel—three o'clock.

MACADAM (*moving slowly*): Two millions——(*He stops.*) Would it be necessary—would it be seemly to spend the whole sum on the building?

CORCORAN (*turning*): Sure not! Ostentation—throwin' money away. 'Course there'ld have to be a fine presbytery for you to live in—an' a maintenance fund—an' you in control——

MACADAM: And—would a committee be necessary?

CORCORAN: Committee—hell no! An' then there's the boys—Rob's doin' well in the drug store, but Amos, he's studyin' for the ministry—it'ld have to be a hereditary job——

MACADAM: Yes, yes, that's a good thought.

CORCORAN: I can put you wise how it could all be worked legitimate—square and above board——(*Going*) There'd be a good rake off both here and hereafter.

MACADAM (*following*): I'm glad of that thought about Amos.

CORCORAN (*opening the door*): Some kid Amos! (*As MACADAM passes out*) Think it over, Mac—wrestle it out—an' I'll be waitin for you at three.

[*The door closes on them.*

For a moment the stage is empty. Then COUNT SEIDEL appears strolling past the window L. back, evidently prospecting. He comes quickly to the centre window which is open, looks in, then turns and calls L.

SEIDEL: Your Highness!

[*A moment later the DUCHESS is seen passing the window L.C.*

They've both gone.

[*DUCHESS entering C.*

DUCHESS: Gone! (*For a moment she stands dismayed.*) No, no, it is not possible he fail. He is too persuasive—no clergyman could resist him! The fight is over—but why have he gone?

SEIDEL (*taking up the phone*): Miss Cutting, have those two gentlemen gone?—Senator Corcoran and the——(*A pause, then to the DUCHESS*) The Reverend Macadam has just left—the Senator is with Captain Olven signing the Concession.

DUCHESS (*dropping on the stool below the desk*): Good! We know in a minute.

SEIDEL (*to the phone*): The agreements are ready? (*Pause.*) Bring them in. (*He hangs up the receiver.*) Your Highness, may I take this opportunity of thanking you——

DUCHESS: For what?

SEIDEL: For the prospect of London——

DUCHESS: Oh that! it is no more than you deserve.

SEIDEL: But I really did nothing.

DUCHESS: Count, if you say that again I am very angry! You have been brilliantly clever—you will please think so always—and say so when possible.

[*MISS CUTTING comes on with two bulky documents, which she places on the desk.*

SEIDEL (*laughing*): Well, of course I *am* brilliantly clever——

DUCHESS: Thank you—I quite agree.

SEIDEL: Thank you. (*To MISS CUTTING. She goes to the door.*) And there is what I trust will crown my brilliant work.

[*MISS CUTTING opens the door, then stands aside to let CORCORAN enter—and goes out.*]

DUCHESS: Well?

CORCORAN: He's thinkin' it over.

DUCHESS (*rising*): Thinking it over!

CORCORAN: Gone to his hotel to wrestle till three o'clock.

SEIDEL: And signed nothing?

CORCORAN: Not a thing—if he'd seen it in black and white he'd 'a run like a rabbit. Don't you worry—he's O.K.

SEIDEL: But suppose he repents?

CORCORAN: He won't—you can repent in hundreds—you can repent in thousands—but when it comes to millions you're in a higher moral sphere.

DUCHESS (*laughing, sits on stool C.*): Poor Mr. Macadam! Almost I could be sorry—I thought his conscience was a rock.

CORCORAN: Sure it's a rock—with holes in it. It'll last him longer for a good gold fillin'.

[*The doors L. open and the KING comes in with MILTON LEE.*]

KING: Yes, yes, a Hollywood in Poldavia—you must find the capital—we have everything else. Beautiful scenery, beautiful girls—it is a national necessity. (*He sits L. on sofa.*)

DUCHESS: Mr. Lee, I think you have had the pleasure of meeting Senator Corcoran?

LEE: Sure, Duchess.

CORCORAN: The pleasure was mutual.

LEE: Four years ago—a Mexican oil field, I remember.

CORCORAN: I remember a lot more'n that. And I'm still holding the oil field——

LEE: Is that so? And I gather you're now tryin' to horn in on this deal, Senator?

CORCORAN: If there *is* a deal—I'll sure be there.

LEE (*laughs*): I guess our Vice-President'll have somethin' to say about that. (*Sitting*) He's just readin' that remarkable document of yours.

CORCORAN (*sitting L. of table R.*): I'll be interested to hear him.

[*MONTGOMERY CURTIS comes on, followed by the AMBASSADOR, who goes down to the fireplace. CURTIS, who is boiling with suppressed rage, carries open in his hand the counterpart of CORCORAN'S agreement.*]

DUCHESS (*with a mischievous smile*): Mr. Curtis, may I introduce to you Senator Corcoran.

CURTIS: Thank you, we have met.

CORCORAN (*smiling*): Sure, an' we meet again.

DUCHESS: Will you not sit down, Mr. Curtis?

CURTIS: Thank you, I prefer to stand. (*Holding out the paper*) Your Majesty, Mr. Ambassador, this is nothing but a common hold-up——

CORCORAN (*grinning*): Say an *uncommon* hold-up, Curtis.

CURTIS (*ignoring him*): If your Majesty had sent this to us yesterday instead of signing it, I'd have got the State Department moving inside half an hour.

CORCORAN: And then?

CURTIS: And put you where you belong—you and your Reverend fellow crook.

CORCORAN: Cut that out, Curtis——(*Growling.*)

CURTIS: You'd have been under indictment before you——

CORCORAN (*laughing*): Try an' get it! You ain't got nothing on me, Curtis—no one's got a thing on me!

DUCHESS: Then, Senator, you must be either very good or very careful.

CORCORAN: I guess I might be both, your Highness.

DUCHESS (*laughing*): I did not think of that.

CURTIS (*shaking the paper at him*): This is a criminal act—I can send this to the Attorney-General and——

CORCORAN (*springing up*): An' would you like to produce that document in court?

CURTIS: No—there are obvious reasons why——

CORCORAN (*sitting*): Exactly.

LEE: Is this a conference or a dog fight? Your Highness, I guess I must apologise for——

DUCHESS: Oh, but I adore a dog fight, when the dogs are men!

KING: Or the men are dogs. (*Laughing.*)

CORCORAN: Mr. Lee, are we doin' business or are we not?

LEE: What are your terms?

CURTIS (*exploding*): Lee, are you going to stand for this—are you going to allow your company to be held up by a couple of blackmailers?

CORCORAN (*rising*): Take that back, you——

CURTIS (*shouting him down*): Blackmailer—the worst sort that blackmails a woman.

CORCORAN (*about to go for him*): You lousy son of a ——!

DUCHESS: Senator! (*Springing up with outstretched hands—then quietly*) Mr. Curtis, that is not true.

[*While the two men stand glaring at each other, she leans over the desk and takes from the green despatch-box the other half of the agreement which she opens and hands to CURTIS.*]

Yesterday evening Senator Corcoran return to me the agreement we have signed.

CORCORAN (*to CURTIS*): When you an' your crook-lawyer broke my Mexican contract I could have fought you an' won, but fightin' your kind costs more'n it's worth. I ain't blackmailin' no one—I waited four years to get you where I want you, and I guess you're there now. (*Sits.*)

LEE: As we seem to have reached a comparative calm perhaps the Senator can proceed to state his terms.

CORCORAN: Sure. First the Mexican deal—contract as before.

LEE: Well, we signed it once—there ain't much damage in that.

CORCORAN: Second—a seat on the board.

CURTIS: Then I resign!

[LEE *turns to him.*

DUCHESS: Mr. Curtis, you cannot resign—it is from your brain and energy that the Poldavian Oil deal is born. You must stay to help it grow up. Besides I know that you will *want* the Senator on the board—this morning he have bought the concession of his Majesty's hunting forest.

LEE (*jumping up*): The what? Your Majesty, I offered you ten million dollars for that concession at dinner last night.

KING (*spreading his arms*): What can I do, my dear Mr. Lee, this morning the Senator give eleven.

LEE: When was this fixed up?

CORCORAN: Last night——

DUCHESS (*correcting him*): Yesterday evening, Senator—the preliminaries were discussed—the draft agreement was signed to-day.

[CORCORAN *taps his pocket where the agreement is.*

LEE: Say, Senator, I guess you ain't safe off the board. (*Sitting*) Anything more?

CORCORAN: Third and lastly—the I.O.C. shall assign a fund of two million dollars for the building of a church in Kansas City——

CURTIS: A church!

LEE: What'n hell is that for?

CORCORAN: For the conscience of the Reverend Adam Bride Macadam.

LEE: Gee! Well, if there's nothin' else standin' between us an' completin' the Poldavian Oil deal—I'll say the church is a flea-bite.

DUCHESS (*rising with a sigh of relief*): So at the last minute the moment have arrive—we sign! (*She goes to the top of the desk, speaking as she passes to SEIDEL*) Everything is in order, Count?

[SEIDEL *has already laid the two documents open on the desk.*

SEIDEL: Everything, your Highness. Mr. Lee, Mr. Curtis on this side, please. His Majesty there.

LEE (*as they rise*): Guess your Majesty's been bored?

KING: On the contrary—I hear spoken to-day for the first time the American language in its full purity.

LEE (*chuckling*): We can do a hell of a lot better'n that, your Majesty. Oh boy!

[LEE and CURTIS *sit on the long stool R. of desk, LEE next the audience, SEIDEL standing above CURTIS. The KING is in chair L. of desk, KAMP above him, the DUCHESS standing at top of desk, CORCORAN to the right above the round table.*

DUCHESS: Your Majesty, gentlemen—we have incorporated the terms as laid down by Senator Corcoran in a rider—the agreements are made contingent on this——

[SEIDEL *bends, pointing it out to LEE and CURTIS, KAMP to the KING. Over the bent heads as they read, the DUCHESS and CORCORAN stand smiling at each other. Through the doorway the cackling of the guests can be heard and just*

above it the voice of the USHER.

USHER (*off*): The Portuguese minister and Madame ——

[The name is lost.

LEE: Guess that's O.K.

[CURTIS, LEE having signed and blotted, hands contract to DUCHESS; on the other side KAMP hands his to LEE, after the KING has signed.

DUCHESS: A new page in the history of Poldavia.

CURTIS: The page of prosperity.

KING: And peace.

DUCHESS: Peace with honour.

KING: We hope so.

DUCHESS: Mr. Lee, Senator, you will settle your agreement in detail to-day?

LEE: O.K. with me.

CORCORAN: Sure.

[The double doors open, and the BARONESS enters as the voice of the USHER is heard announcing:

USHER: His Excellency the German Ambassador and Frau von ——

BARONESS: Your Majesty, your Highness, the President will be here at any moment—I hope I don't intrude——

KING: No, no, Baroness—now at last everything is O.K.! Ho! ho! ho!

DUCHESS: His Majesty will join you in a moment, Baroness.

[LEE and CURTIS go out with SEIDEL, the BARONESS following with the AMBASSADOR.

BARONESS: Our guests are most all here.

USHER: General and Mrs. Platt, Miss Platt.

DUCHESS: Your Majesty, you cannot go without some recognition of what Senator Corcoran has done for you.

KING: What has he done?

DUCHESS: I could not put it into words, but without him the Poldavian Oil deal would have crashed.

KING: At our last meeting, Senator, you were out to destroy the Poldavian Oil deal—who has changed your mind?

CORCORAN: I guess it was Count Seidel, your Majesty.

KING: A remarkable man!

DUCHESS: Oh! a modern Metternich.

CORCORAN: He didn't say much, but the intellect, the feeling behind his words—I saw that your Majesty's interest and mine were the same. (*With a bow.*)

DUCHESS: And from that moment the Senator is at our side. I suggest your Majesty bestow on him an order——

KING: An order? So!

DUCHESS: The order of the "Faithful Companions."

KING: Hm! Second class.

DUCHESS: First class.

KING: Second class. You have not twenty-six quarters?

CORCORAN (*puzzled*): I have nine million dollars.

KING: Not money. The first class is reserved for families of twenty-six quarterings.

CORCORAN: AS an American citizen and a good democrat I could not accept a decoration, but I thank your Majesty for the offer—second class.

KING: And we thank you for all that you have done for us.

[*Shaking hands with him across the desk.*]

USHER (*off*): Miss Mamie Hatch.

KING (*turning*): I think the President must be here at any minute now——

DUCHESS: You go—I follow.

[*Exit KING. The DUCHESS takes from the despatch-box a casket.*]

Wait, I have something to give you—something to remember by. (*Giving him the casket*) No—do not open it—not yet. (*He lays it on the desk.*) Well, are you satisfied?

CORCORAN: Sure—and you?

DUCHESS: Sure. You ought to be.

CORCORAN: Ought I?

DUCHESS: You get everything you want.

CORCORAN: But I can't keep it.

DUCHESS: Why not?

CORCORAN: You are going away.

DUCHESS: That is the perfect ending—to go away.

USHER (*off*): Rear Admiral Van Stutter—Miss Van [Stutter](#).

CORCORAN: Hell! To-morrow night you'll be on the *Aquitania*. When am I to see you again?

DUCHESS: You have oil in Poldavia——

CORCORAN: Sure——

DUCHESS: I too might be there—(*Bending across the desk.*)

CORCORAN: So might I. (*Bending towards her.*)

[*KAMP entering.*]

KAMP: Your Highness—the President.

DUCHESS: *Krashtovida!!!*

[Exit with KAMP.

CORCORAN looks at the casket then opens it. There is a hush outside—someone is coming—he takes out an iron gauntlet with a card attached and reads:

CORCORAN: "The velvet hand in the iron glove—a souvenir." (*Looking up with a slow expanding smile*) Well, what d'ye know about that?

USHER (*off*): The President of the United States and Mrs. ——

[*The crash of the opening chord, as the orchestra in the farthest room breaks into "The Star Spangled Banner." drowns the name still in the womb of history. He puts the glove in the box, tucks it under his arm, and hurries towards the doors.*

CURTAIN

TRANSCRIBER'S NOTES

Although the Duchess's English is good, she uses an improper verb form with the 3rd person singular several times (e.g. he have bought). Those incorrect forms have been retained.

The following changes were made to the original text:

Page 201: DUCHESS: It is all right—he aska the question first.
to [DUCHESS: It is all right—he ask the question first.](#)

Page 248: Rear Admiral Van Stutter—Miss Van Stetter.
to [Rear Admiral Van Stutter—Miss Van Stutter.](#)

Other than adding a missing quotation mark and two missing semi-colons, changing a period to a comma, and changing three italicized character names to small capitals, minor variations in spelling and punctuation have been preserved.

[End of *The Improper Duchess*, by James B. Fagan]