

# London Wall

A Comedy in Three Acts

John van Druten  
1931

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John van Druten

# LONDON WALL

*A Comedy  
in Three Acts*

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To  
J. E. F. DELL

*London Wall* was first presented by Mr. Frank Gregory at the Duke of York's Theatre on Friday, May 1st, with the following cast:

Birkinshaw	HENRY MILLS
Mr. Brewer	HENRY MOLLISON
Miss Hooper	NADINE MARCH
Miss Janus	MARIE NEY
Miss Milligan	HEATHER ANGEL
Miss Willesden	KATIE JOHNSON
Hec. Hammond	FRANK LAWTON
Miss Bufton	HELEN GOSS
Mr. Walker	FRANK ROYDE

Produced by AURIOL LEE

## CHARACTERS (*in order of appearance*)

BIRKINSHAW  
MR. BREWER  
MISS HOOPER  
MISS JANUS  
MISS MILLIGAN  
MISS WILLESSEN  
HEC. HAMMOND  
MISS BUFTON  
MR. WALKER

## SCENES

### ACT I

General office of Messrs. Walker, Windermere & Co., solicitors, in London Wall. Lunch-time.

### ACT II

#### *Scene 1:*

Mr. Walker's room in the office. 3 o'clock.  
Three weeks later.

#### *Scene 2:*

The general office. Quarter to six. Same day.

### ACT III

#### *Scene 1:*

Mr. Walker's room. 9.30 next morning.

#### *Scene 2:*

The general office. 3 o'clock. Same afternoon.

# ACT I

*The general office of Messrs. Walker, Windermere & Co., solicitors, in London Wall.*

*Lunch-time. About 1.40 in the afternoon.*

*There are two doors to the office. One, down stage R., leads to the corridor and the remainder of the office. Another, down stage L., leads to the typists' room; when it is open the sound of typing can be heard.*

*R. and L. from point of view of the actors.*

*Practically the entire centre of the stage is taken up with an enormous table. Chairs either end of it, and above and below it. Telephone and switchboard and telephonist's chair just above door in R. wall. The whole back wall is occupied by cupboards with sliding-panel doors, half the height of the wall; the top of them forms a long shelf on which are directories, press-copier, files, etc., etc. The shelf can also be sat on. High on the back wall a real shelf, holding letter-books, etc. A stationery-cabinet just above door L. against wall.*

*The table is covered with papers, plans, etc., but must have clear space on it for work. There are no windows on stage except possibly a skylight. The office may well have a sloping roof.*

*When the curtain rises, BIRKINSHAW, a cheeky, grubby, Cockney office boy of about 16 is sitting L. of the table, indexing a letter-book. Behind him on a peg are his hat, coat and very dirty white muffler.*

BIRKINSHAW (*singing*):

Can a mother's tender care  
Cease towards the child she bear?  
Yes, she may forgetful be  
And bung it through the window  
And bung it through the window  
And bung it through . . .

*[The telephone rings. He goes and answers it.*

Hullo! Hullo! Walker, Windermere. Who's speaking? No, sir, 'e's out at lunch. I

couldn't say, sir. No, 'e's out, too, sir. Our Mr. Brewer's in.—Our manager, sir. Oh, very good, sir. I'll tell 'im.

*[Rings off. Scribbles name on a sheet of paper.]*

ERIC BREWER *comes in R. He is the managing clerk; a young solicitor of about 30, attractive, slightly gross and on the flashy side; very sure of himself, always cheery and a little familiar. He wears a lounge suit and carries some papers. He watches BIRKINSHAW writing.*

BREWER (*good-naturedly*): What's that?

BIRKINSHAW: Mr. Carpenter, sir. 'Phoned for Mr. Walker.

BREWER: Any message?

BIRKINSHAW (*brightly*): No, sir. Just 'phoned.

BREWER (*taking paper from him, looking at it, and then pointing to number of small strips of memo. paper hanging by a piece of pink tape on a nail just below 'phone*): And what are those for, Birkinshaw?

BIRKINSHAW: What, sir?

BREWER: Those slips of paper?

*[BIRKINSHAW grins.]*

Wasting good office stationery like that!

BIRKINSHAW: Sorry, my lord. I was drunk at the time.

BREWER (*laughs*): Where's everybody?

BIRKINSHAW: Gone to lunch.

BREWER: All of them?

BIRKINSHAW: Well, most of 'em.

BREWER: Miss Hooper out?

BIRKINSHAW: Just going, I think. Just bin up to wash.

*[BREWER goes over to door L. and opens it.]*

BREWER: Miss Hooper.

*[Enter MISS HOOPER from typists' room. She is about 27, not unattractive, a little truculent. She wears her hat, carries her bag, and is obviously just going out.]*

MISS HOOPER: Yes, Mr. Brewer?

BREWER: Is that letter for Darracks done yet?

MISS HOOPER (*slightly in arms*): Not yet. I haven't had a minute all the morning.

BREWER: Well, I want it to go round by hand.

[*Silence.*]

Are you going to lunch now?

MISS HOOPER (*stonily*): I was.

BREWER: Well, can you just run it off before you go?

MISS HOOPER: Run it off? Two pages, wasn't it? Is there any hurry?

BREWER: There is rather. I want them to get it before the Bank closes.

MISS HOOPER: I'm late as it is.

BREWER: Is there anyone else who can read your shorthand? Who's in there?

MISS HOOPER: No one (*With a very bad grace*) Oh, all right, I'll do it.

[*She goes back L. and slams the door.*]

BIRKINSHAW (*grimacing*): 'Ark at Irma! Ray of sunshine, she is!

BREWER (*to BIRKINSHAW*): When it's done, bring it to me to sign and I want you to take it round with some deeds. They're in my safe. Better come up and get them.

BIRKINSHAW: Who'll look after the office while I'm out? Mr. Walker doesn't like me leaving it alone.

BREWER: There's someone in, isn't there?

[*Enter MISS JANUS, R. She is about 35, neither attractive nor particularly plain. She is rather tidy, wearing blouse and skirt, possibly even collar and tie, with a sort of brusque cheery sulkiness about her.*]

BREWER: Hullo, my fair one. Have you been or are you going?

MISS JANUS: Where?

BREWER: Lunch.

MISS JANUS: Been. (*To BIRKINSHAW*) Who's in?

BIRKINSHAW: No one.

MISS JANUS: Mr. Windermere's room empty?

BIRKINSHAW: Far as I know.

[*MISS JANUS puts down one of the plugs on the telephone board and goes out.*]

BREWER: Private call. Ha!

BIRKINSHAW: 'Er boy friend.

BREWER (*with a laugh*): Miss Janus?

BIRKINSHAW: Yes. Blanche—Blanche . . . can you beat it?

BREWER: Got a boy friend?

BIRKINSHAW: Not 'arf she 'asn't. Boy friend my left kidney!

BREWER: What do you mean?

BIRKINSHAW: Why, 'e's as bald as a coot.

BREWER: How do you know?

BIRKINSHAW: Seen 'im! Fifty if 'e's a day. Foreign, too. Got some job at the Netherlands Legation . . . Swiss, or something. My word, what these women won't do for something in trousers! I'd be downright ashamed to keep after a chap the way she does, if I was a girl. And don't 'e 'arf wriggle! Coo-blow!

BREWER: Wriggle?

BIRKINSHAW: Keeps putting 'er off . . . and putting 'er on. Can't see 'er this week. Try and see 'er some time next.

BREWER: How do *you* know?

BIRKINSHAW: Isn't the telephone my department? (*Takes up the receiver and listens, then offers it to BREWER.*) Here, listen. She's just got through.

BREWER: Put that down, you little swine!

BIRKINSHAW: 'Ere, 'oo are you calling a swine?

BREWER: You. Put it down, I say.

BIRKINSHAW (*doing so*): It's all right. He's engaged, anyway.

BREWER: Do you always listen-in?

BIRKINSHAW (*irrepressively*): When I'm not too busy!

BREWER (*amused, in spite of himself*): You know, you've got no right to talk to me like that. Do you listen-in to me, too?

BIRKINSHAW: Sometimes.

[MISS JANUS *returns*.

MISS JANUS: Birkinshaw, did you get those biscuits?

BIRKINSHAW: There now, miss, I forgot. I'm going out in a minute for Mr. Brewer here. I'll get 'em then.

MISS JANUS: Well, don't be long. I want tea early to-day. I've got a splitting headache.

BREWER (*to BIRKINSHAW*): Get Garibaldi's this time.

BIRKINSHAW: Squashed flies? Right you are, sir.

MISS JANUS: Better get some Petit Beurre for Mr. Walker.

BIRKINSHAW: What about a few ginger-nuts miss? Just for a change?

MISS JANUS: The firm's teeth aren't up to it.

[MISS HOOPER *comes in with letter in her hand. MISS JANUS goes through to typists' room.*

MISS HOOPER: There you are. (*She gives letter ungraciously to BREWER.*)

BREWER: Thanks. I'm sorry if it's made you late.

MISS HOOPER: It's all right. I adore indigestion. You'd better look at it to see if it's all right.

BREWER (*mockingly*): Oh, if *you've* typed it, I'm sure it is.

MISS HOOPER: Aren't you sweet?

[BREWER *reads the letter. MISS HOOPER stands patiently by.*

BIRKINSHAW (*at door L.*): Oh, miss! Can I 'ave the money for the biscuits. Mr. Valpy's gone to lunch. Cash-box is locked up.

MISS JANUS (*off*): Here. No, wait a minute. I haven't got any change. (*Comes to door.*) I say, Irma, have you got half-a-crown in your bag?

[MISS HOOPER *looks.*

BREWER (*looking up*): By the way, Miss Hooper, your initials (*tapping letter*) being R. H., am I right in assuming that Irma is a nom-de-guerre?

MISS HOOPER (*handing coin to BIRKINSHAW*): Here. Don't forget to give it back.

BREWER (*continuing*): You know, somehow you don't look like an Irma to me.

MISS HOOPER (*hand on hip*): No?

BREWER (*dreamily*): No, I see Irma as something dark and sinuous, with flashing eyes, (*dramatically*) and secret papers tucked inside the bosom of her dress.

MISS HOOPER (*insistently*): Look here, is that letter all right, and can I go to lunch?

BREWER: Of course. I'm so sorry. Thank you so much.

MISS HOOPER (*ironically*): *Don't* mention it.

[*She makes to go.*

MISS JANUS *starts getting paper out of stationery cupboard.*

BREWER (*stopping MISS HOOPER*): Oh, just one thing more, Miss Hooper. *Would* you have any objection to telling me what the R. stands for that you spurned in favour of Irma?

MISS HOOPER (*in ultra-purist accent, rolling the "R" and standing like a mannequin*): Rose! Now are you surprised?

BREWER: No. Quite. I see.

BIRKINSHAW: No rose in all the world  
Until you came!

BREWER: Shut up, you. Here, come with me and get those deeds.

[BIRKINSHAW *follows* BREWER *out R.*

MISS JANUS: Sweet, isn't he?

MISS HOOPER: Who? Our Eric? Oh, he's not so bad. At least he's friendly.

MISS JANUS: A damn sight too friendly. Where the hell's that brief paper gone to?  
[PAT MILLIGAN *comes in R. She is 19, very pretty, simple, a little timid, rather shy and very natural.*

PAT: Hullo!

MISS JANUS (*friendly*): Hullo, Pat.

PAT: Everyone out?

MISS JANUS: Yes. Our lord and master's got an appointment up West till 3.30. I looked in his diary.

PAT (*to* MISS HOOPER): Have you been out yet?

MISS HOOPER: Just going.

PAT: You're late, aren't you?

[*Goes into inner room.*

MISS HOOPER (*to* MISS JANUS, *continuing*): I know you hate Brewer. I think you're a fool to show it as you do, though.

MISS JANUS (*American*): Oh, yeah?

MISS HOOPER: After all, he doesn't do you any harm.

MISS JANUS (*as before*): He certainly does not.

MISS HOOPER: Well, then . . .

MISS JANUS: But it doesn't seem to me a bad thing if one woman does show she doesn't find him irresistible.

[PAT *comes out carrying a towel rolled up. She smiles at the others.*

PAT: Just going up to wash.

[*Exit R.*

MISS HOOPER: What do you mean?

MISS JANUS: Well, he rather fancies himself as a bit of a Casanova, doesn't he? He's always trying to tell me about his love-life.

MISS HOOPER: Yes, me too.

MISS JANUS: Well, I can withstand it. But I'm worried about *her*. (*Jerks thumb at door R.*)

MISS HOOPER: Who? Pat?

MISS JANUS: And I've seen him watching her with that nasty, leering "how much for this little lot" look of his. . . . You know he can't keep his hands off anything that looks like a "prillil girl." One of these days I'm going to give Eric-or-little-by-little a piece of my mind.

MISS HOOPER: Surely Pat can look after herself. You've gone soppo about that child ever since she came here. I don't know what you see in her. And anyway, she's got her own boy. That chap downstairs . . . what's his name . . . Hec. Hammond.

MISS JANUS: I know. But they're babies, both of them. Besides, Hec. gets about tuppence a week and puts it in his money-box. Brewer doesn't.

MISS HOOPER: Well, what are you afraid of, anyway? Not of Pat turning up here with a whimpering bundle one morning, and hiding it in the typewriter cover? Saying that she found it under the gooseberry bushes . . .

MISS JANUS: No, of course not. But I like the kid. She's much too young to be let out on her own like this . . . and she's got no one to look after her.

MISS HOOPER: Aren't you the little Wendy? What's the boy like?

MISS JANUS: Nice . . . straight, anyway.

MISS HOOPER: Well, short of getting them married I don't see what you're going to do about it.

MISS JANUS: That's just what I'd like to do.

MISS HOOPER: Well, they've only known each other since she came here, haven't they? That's not more than six weeks.

MISS JANUS: Yes, and before they know where they are it'll be six years, and Pat'll be going on for thirty and still here. Being a shorthand typist at three quid a week for the rest of her life. I know.

MISS HOOPER: Cheerful, aren't you?

MISS JANUS: Well, it's true, isn't it?

MISS HOOPER: She's got lots of time.

MISS JANUS: Yes. I've been saying that for ten years. You've been saying it for seven. And where the hell has it got us? What's going to happen to me if I don't

pull it off with (*jerking thumb at telephone*) what's-is-name . . . or you with Douglas? (*In a sympathetic, confidential tone*) How are things, Irma?

MISS HOOPER: Bloody.

MISS JANUS: Won't she divorce him?

MISS HOOPER: He says not. Did you talk to *him* to-day?

MISS JANUS: No. He was busy.

MISS HOOPER: You're not really in love with him, are you, Blanche?

MISS JANUS: That's my business.

MISS HOOPER: Oh, sorry I spoke. Here, I must go to lunch after all the fuss I made about it. Can I borrow your library book?

MISS JANUS: Yes. You might change it for me. I forgot.

MISS HOOPER (*going into inner room for book*): What shall I get?

MISS JANUS (*pronouncing her "s"es like Welsh double "l"s*): Something lascivious. And you might bring me in some aspirin, too.

MISS HOOPER (*reappearing*): Right you are. So long.

[*She goes out R., passing BREWER and BIRKINSHAW who re-enter.*

BIRKINSHAW *carries a parcel of deeds.* MISS JANUS *returns to inner room.*

BREWER: Now, you understand. Take them straight round, and don't come back without a receipt. Get along now. By the way, who was that chap we passed on the stairs? Do you know?

BIRKINSHAW: Yes, he belongs down below, Parkers, the shipping people.

BREWER: I've seen him hanging about *here*, haven't I?

BIRKINSHAW: Shouldn't wonder.

BREWER: What's he want?

BIRKINSHAW: Miss Milligan.

BREWER: What do you mean?

BIRKINSHAW: What I say. He's 'er boy-friend. Always coming up here and wanting to borrow the Directory or the Law List or something. (*He gets his hat, coat and scarf.*) I say——

BREWER: What?

BIRKINSHAW: This divorce case—Maverick *versus* Maverick——

BREWER: What about it?

BIRKINSHAW: Pretty spicy, isn't it? I suppose I couldn't have a look at the letters?

BREWER: What letters?

BIRKINSHAW: Well, there *are* letters, aren't there? Letters from the co-respondent. Mr. Walker won't give 'em to the young ladies to copy. Valpy and Willis do 'em after hours. I'll type some for you, if you like.

BREWER: You've got your own work to do. Dirty-minded little beast.

BIRKINSHAW: Dirty-minded, I like that! Well, a chap wants a bit of a change from leases and mortgages and landlord's property tax. Ten blooming months have I been here, and not one juicy case 'ave I seen yet. Might as well work for an undertaker. But Willis said these was hot stuff. Something about wanting to kiss 'er all over, wasn't there?

BREWER: Get out. Get along with that letter.

BIRKINSHAW: Oh, all right.

*[He goes out R.]*

PAT *returns.*

BREWER: Oh, Miss Milligan, you're back? I wonder if you'd mind looking after the office while Birkinshaw's out . . . Answer the telephone . . . see anyone who comes in?

PAT: Of course, Mr. Brewer.

BREWER: Thanks.

*[MISS WILLESDEN appears at door R. She is a fantastic and rather tragic figure—about 65—dressed considerably below her years, with a lot of bits and pieces about her, including chiffon trailing from her hat. Her manner is timid and shrinking.]*

MISS WILLESDEN: Oh . . . excuse me . . . but is Mr. Walker in?

BREWER (*turning*): Oh, good afternoon, Miss Willesden. No, I'm afraid he's not.

MISS WILLESDEN: Oh dear . . . will he be back soon?

BREWER: I . . . I really don't know, Miss Willesden.

PAT (*shy*): Not till 3.30, Miss Janus said, Mr. Brewer.

MISS WILLESDEN: Oh . . . oh . . . do you think he'd be able to see me then if I were to wait?

BREWER: Not without an appointment, I'm afraid.

MISS WILLESDEN: Oh . . . oh, how very trying. Don't you think perhaps . . . you see, I came up from Brighton specially to see him . . .

BREWER: Is there anything I can do for you? I saw you last time, you may

remember . . . about your will.

MISS WILLESDEN: Yes . . . yes . . . but it was Mr. Walker I wanted to see to-day. You see, I want to start an action and I wanted to explain everything to him. I've got all the papers here.

[MISS JANUS *comes out of inner room and starts looking up address in directory at back.* PAT *moves to door, listening with a sort of frightened interest.*

MISS WILLESDEN (*to* MISS JANUS): Good afternoon.

MISS JANUS: Good afternoon.

BREWER: I could take your instructions, Miss Willesden. I'm afraid Mr. Walker won't be able to see you this afternoon.

MISS WILLESDEN: Oh dear . . . oh dear . . . No, I think I must see him personally. I must come up again, that's all.

BREWER: I'm sorry.

MISS WILLESDEN: Yes . . . yes . . . it was you who saw to my will, wasn't it? Though of course Mr. Walker supervised the actual drawing-up, didn't he? Yes . . . well . . . as a matter of fact, I do want to make a change in that, too. Perhaps I could talk to you about it, and you could tell Mr. Walker.

BREWER: Certainly.

MISS WILLESDEN: Yes, well, I think I'll do that. Perhaps I could write to him about the action and then he could make an appointment to see me, personally.

BREWER: Perhaps that would be best. If you don't mind coming up to my room, I've got your will in my safe.

MISS WILLESDEN: Oh, thank you.

BREWER: This way.

MISS WILLESDEN: Thank you. (*To* MISS JANUS) Good afternoon.

MISS JANUS: Good afternoon.

MISS WILLESDEN (*to* PAT): Good afternoon.

PAT (*scared*): Good afternoon.

[*Exit* BREWER *and* MISS WILLESDEN, *R.* BREWER *grimaces with raised eyebrows at* MISS JANUS *before he goes.*

Who is that? What's the matter with her?

MISS JANUS: Haven't you ever seen her before? She's cracked.

PAT: Mad, do you mean? Is she a client?

MISS JANUS: Yes, Walker won't see her any more though, she's such a nuisance. Harmless, of course, but definitely cracked. Always starting actions. Always altering her will and adopting people.

PAT: Is she very poor?

MISS JANUS: Rolling! That's why the firm puts up with her.

PAT: Poor old thing.

MISS JANUS: You'll probably see quite a lot of her. She's always in and out of here . . . worrying to see our lord and master.

PAT: Does she win her actions?

MISS JANUS: Of course not.

PAT: I think it's tragic.

MISS JANUS: It is, rather.

[PAT goes inside inner room, taking towel with her, and returns with a document. She sits at the table and begins to rule it up in red ink.

PAT: Saw you at lunch. You don't usually come to Lyons.

MISS JANUS: No, but I couldn't be bothered to walk to-day. I've got a headache.

PAT (*sympathetically*): Oh, I'm sorry. Let's have tea early. I'll make it.

MISS JANUS: Thanks. I've told the job to get the biscuits. Do you and Hec. lunch together every day?

PAT: When I get off sharp at one we do. That works out at about once a fortnight here. They go strict to time in their office. I wish we did. Miss Hooper was late to-day.

MISS JANUS: Yes, Brewer kept her. By the way, what do you think of that young man?

PAT: Mr. Brewer? He's rather nice. I think he's good-looking.

MISS JANUS: My God!

PAT: Don't you?

MISS JANUS: If you like that sort of thing . . . it's the sort of thing you would like.

PAT: What's the matter with him?

MISS JANUS: Well, he's the kind that hangs round pillar-boxes on the chance of a housemaid coming out to post a letter, and he's got an idea he's God's gift to women. You watch your step.

PAT: Me?

MISS JANUS: Yes, you. Don't you let him start anything. Stick to the boy you've got.

PAT: What do you mean?

MISS JANUS (*coming down*): How serious are you and Hec.?

PAT: Serious? We're friends.

MISS JANUS (*with a world of meaning*): Oh!

PAT: Do you think that a man and woman can't go about together without . . .

MISS JANUS: Without what?

PAT: Well . . . without being in love with each other?

MISS JANUS: I wouldn't put it as high as that. Look here, you're more than friends with Hec.

PAT: I'm not.

MISS JANUS: Well then, it's his fault.

PAT: He doesn't think of me like that.

MISS JANUS: More fool him, then.

PAT: He's only twenty.

MISS JANUS: I've known 'em begin before that.

PAT: He's not interested in girls . . . that way.

MISS JANUS: What is he interested in?

PAT: Himself. His career. He's not always going to be with Parkers downstairs, a clerk in a shipping office.

MISS JANUS: What *is* he going to do?

PAT: Big things.

MISS JANUS: What?

PAT: Well, I don't know exactly what, but . . . well, he writes. You know, I've been typing his stories. He's learning French, and when he's done that he's going to learn Spanish, so that he can get a job abroad if one offers. He wants to travel.

MISS JANUS: And are you going to like that?

PAT: I can't stand in his way. Besides, it won't be for ages, yet. He's only been doing French a year. But he's awfully good at it. He's reading *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* now. You remember, that Lon Chaney picture. It's a book. Ever so long, too. That's good in a year, you know.

MISS JANUS: You *are* keen on him?

PAT (*awkwardly*): Yes, I . . . I suppose so . . . in a way.

MISS JANUS: Then get him. Get him while he's young, and *you're* young. God knows it's hard enough to get men up to the scratch later on.

PAT: How can you talk like that?

MISS JANUS: Well, you want him.

PAT: I don't! I don't want anyone. I think it's beastly!

MISS JANUS: You'll think it a damn sight beastlier if you're still sitting on that typing-cushion of yours in ten years' time, and he's out with the gay Señoritas in South America or somewhere.

PAT: Well, anyway, even if I were in love with him . . . I wouldn't want him unless *he* was keen.

MISS JANUS: Look here, child. It strikes me you're wasting your time. Of course I know he's young . . . but a man who's got as much ambition as that isn't any good to a girl. Of course, if you're really keen on him it's no use my talking. Have you met his people?

PAT: No. He says if he started to bring a girl home, they'd probably think things.

MISS JANUS: What things?

PAT: Well, he's got a lot of brothers and sisters, and they tease him.

MISS JANUS: Do you take him to your place?

PAT: No, I can't. You see, it's only a bed-sitting room, and Mrs. Middleton won't let us have men up. Oh, she's right, of course.

MISS JANUS: Where *do* you see him, then?

PAT: Well, he sees me home sometimes, and we go for walks Saturdays . . . have tea at the Express Dairy . . . only it runs into money.

MISS JANUS: You know, you need someone to take your affairs in hand.

PAT (*hurt*): I can look after myself, thanks. (*Rising*) Where's the green silk?

MISS JANUS: In the men's room, I think. Willis borrowed it.

[PAT *goes out R.*

MISS JANUS *copies down address, and begins to return to room L. Enter*

BREWER.

BREWER: Well, I got rid of her.

MISS JANUS (*coldly*): Oh.

BREWER: She said what a nice girl you were. And she was very impressed with

PAT Milligan. Said how pretty she was.

MISS JANUS (*as before*): Oh, yes? (*Jerking her thumb at typing door*) You know, she's not *in* there. She can't hear you.

BREWER: Miss Janus, why do you dislike me so?

MISS JANUS: I don't know what you mean.

BREWER: Oh, I know you've been a faithful and trusted servant of the firm for . . . ten years, is it . . . and I'm only a novice, but still . . .

MISS JANUS: What are you talking about?

BREWER: But, after all, we're rather a happy family . . .

MISS JANUS: Yes? Well, I'm the changeling. (*She opens the door of the typists' room.*)

BREWER: Oh, Miss Janus.

MISS JANUS: What is it now?

BREWER: Are you aware that Birkinshaw is in the habit of listening-in to your private telephone calls?

MISS JANUS: Snotty-nosed little beast. Yes, I know.

BREWER: I thought I'd tell you. After all, we all have our private lives.

MISS JANUS (*suspiciously*): Has Birkinshaw been talking? What did he say?

BREWER: Nothing. He merely indicated that you . . . *had* a private life, that the cold, efficient secretary manner which is all that I have ever been privileged to see was perhaps only a mask behind which there lay hidden the warm, beating heart . . . (*dramatically*) of a woman!

MISS JANUS (*insistently*): What did he say?

BREWER: Nothing.

MISS JANUS: Come on.

BREWER: No, really. I was only ragging. Just my fun. I must have my little joke.

MISS JANUS: You know, you ought to be one of those men who spend their time leaning across bar-counters in the shape of a letter S, getting fresh with the barmaid!

[*She goes out angrily L.*

PAT *comes in R. as she does so.*

BREWER (*turning to PAT*): I *think* I've got a flea in my ear.

PAT (*surprised*): What? Oh, Miss Janus? Oh, it's all right. She's got a headache.

(*She sits at the table and begins to sew up the document with the green silk.*)

[BREWER *watches her appreciatively for a moment.*

BREWER: What did you think of Miss Willesden?

PAT: She frightened me, rather. Miss Janus says she's mad.

BREWER: Miss Janus is right.

PAT: Have you ever read *Bleak House*? She reminds me of the mad woman in that . . . the one who was always waiting about the Law Courts. Miss Flite.

BREWER: Yes. There's one like her in every lawyer's office.

PAT (*shuddering*): Is there? How awful.

BREWER: What have you got there?

PAT: This? It's the Huddleston mortgage. (*Pause.*) What's a message?

BREWER: A message? A house.

PAT: Oh!

BREWER: What did you think it was? Something to eat? Like the man in the Bible who sold his birthright for a pot of message? (PAT *laughs.*) How do you like working here?

PAT: Oh, all right, I think. I wish I understood what it was all about more.

BREWER: What don't you understand?

PAT: All the names of things. Messages and . . . garnishees. Writs of . . . Fi Fa.

BREWER: Well, you know what those are?

PAT: No. What?

BREWER: Things you put the bailiffs in with.

PAT: Do you mean the brokers? (*He nods.*) Really? Do you mean to say that thing I typed yesterday . . . that that's what it was for?

BREWER: Yes.

PAT: Good Lord. It was all Greek to me. *Who* put the bailiffs in?

BREWER: Our people.

PAT: Samuelsons? On that woman in Kensington? What for?

BREWER: Underclothes. A hundred and twenty-five pounds.

PAT: Oh, I wish I'd known.

BREWER: Why?

PAT: Well, it would have made it so much more interesting. Did you say a hundred and twenty-five pounds for underclothes?

BREWER: Yes, mostly. I think there were six pairs of pyjamas.

PAT: *Can* you spend a hundred and twenty-five pounds on underclothes?

BREWER: *She* did.

PAT: Was she getting married or something?

BREWER: I don't think so.

PAT: Golly! Have you seen her?

BREWER: No. We don't usually meet the defendant. In this case, I must say I'm sorry.

PAT: Why?

BREWER (*smiling*): Well . . . (PAT *doesn't understand*.) I imagine she must be rather attractive.

PAT: I can't think what her dressmaker's bill must be. It's interesting when you know what it's all about.

BREWER: Want to become a lawyer yourself now?

PAT (*smiling*): Is it awfully difficult?

BREWER (*ditto*): Awfully.

PAT: Exams?

BREWER: Um.

PAT: Hard?

BREWER: Frightful.

PAT: Did *you* have to?

BREWER (*seriously*): Yes.

PAT: When?

BREWER: About a year ago.

PAT: And then you came here?

BREWER: Yes. And then the firm's business increased so astonishingly that they had to engage a new typist . . . you!

PAT (*laughing*): Fancy that!

BREWER: Is this your first job?

PAT: Yes.

BREWER: How old are you?

PAT: Nineteen. Why?

BREWER: It's criminal!

PAT: What is?

BREWER: That you should have to work in an office.

PAT: Why?

BREWER: You're much too pretty.

PAT: Don't say things like that.

BREWER: Why not?

PAT: Because they're silly.

BREWER: They're not a bit silly. They're true.

[PAT goes on working.

(Suddenly) What would you do if I were to kiss you?

PAT (equally so): Swoon!

BREWER: What?

PAT: Swoon. Fall to the floor in a faint. (In mock Shakespearean accents) Lo, the maiden has swooned!

BREWER: I don't think I'll risk it. Have you ever been kissed?

PAT: Mr. Brewer, don't . . . please.

BREWER: Of course you have.

[She rises uncomfortably to get scissors from the side. HEC. HAMMOND comes in R. He is a youth of 20, good-looking, a little plebeian. He comes in now with his eyes on PAT and does not at first notice BREWER.

(After a minute) Yes?

HEC. (with a start): Oh. . . .

BREWER: Do you want anything . . . or anybody?

HEC.: No, it's all right. I just wondered . . . could I borrow your Law List for a moment?

BREWER: To take away, do you mean?

HEC. (hastily): No . . . oh, no . . . no . . . just to look something up in.

BREWER: It's over there.

HEC.: Yes, thanks. (He goes to the back.)

[PAT takes no notice of him but returns to the table and her work.

BREWER *watches the pair of them amusedly.*

BREWER: Can I help you find what you want?

HEC.: No, it's all right, thanks.

BREWER: Are your firm looking for a good solicitor?

HEC.: What? Oh, no . . . no, it's not that. Just an address.

BREWER (*very seriously*): Oh, I see.

[*Nods and returns to PAT, playing the following scene at HEC., who listens and watches covertly and with annoyance.*

Whereabouts do you live, Miss Milligan?

PAT: Me? Stamford Hill.

BREWER: With your people?

PAT: No, with another girl. Rooms. A room, rather.

BREWER: What do you do in the evenings?

PAT: Oh, I don't know. Read. Go to the pictures, sometimes.

BREWER: Are you fond of them?

PAT: I'd rather see a good play.

BREWER: Do you go to the theatre much?

PAT: No; I can't afford it.

BREWER: I suppose you wouldn't let *me* take you some time? (HEC. *grimaces at her behind BREWER'S back.*) Would you?

PAT (*awkward*): I . . . I don't know.

[*Telephone rings. BREWER answers it.*

BREWER: Hullo. Yes. No, I'm afraid he's out. This is Brewer speaking. Yes, I know about that. What? Well, hold on a minute and I'll look it up. (*He puts down receiver and one of the plugs and goes out R.*)

HEC. (*moving forward*): Look here.

PAT: What?

HEC.: What do you let that chap talk to you like that for?

PAT: Like what?

HEC.: Like he did. "Where do you live? What do you do in the evenings?" What's it got to do with him?

PAT: He was only being friendly.

HEC.: Blasted cheek.

PAT: Don't be silly.

HEC.: You work for him, anyway. I don't believe in mixing business with . . . being friendly.

PAT: Why not?

HEC.: Because it's all wrong. Specially when it's a chap and a girl like that. You're here to work, aren't you? This is an office, isn't it?

PAT: Well, that's no reason why it should be like a prison. You can be friendly about it.

HEC.: No, you can't. I know what it leads to.

PAT: What does it lead to?

HEC. (*uncomfortable*): You know just as well as I do. I don't think a girl ought to work for a young chap like that. In a lawyer's office, too! And with *me* here!

PAT: He didn't know who you were.

HEC.: All the more reason, then. I might have been anybody. How long's he been going on like that?

PAT (*exasperated*): Like what?

HEC.: Like that. Making up to you . . . asking you to go out with him. . . .

PAT: This was the first time.

HEC.: And it had better be the last. Next time he starts anything you can refer him to me.

PAT: Oh?

HEC.: Yes!

PAT: And then what'll you do?

HEC.: Black his eye for him, like as not.

PAT: Oh, yes.

HEC.: I would. He ought to leave you alone.

PAT (*annoyed*): Well, why shouldn't he ask me out?

HEC.: Oh, no reason. Theatre . . . restaurant . . . private rooms.

PAT: Don't be so silly.

HEC.: Well, you're not thinking of going, are you?

PAT: I don't know. I might.

HEC.: You wouldn't.

PAT: Why not? I don't get so much fun.

HEC: I'll take you out if you want to go. . . . Why didn't you say?

PAT: You can't, Hec.

HEC: Why can't I?

PAT: You can't afford it.

HEC: Of course if you want stalls and dinner at the Piccadilly . . . or the Trocadero.

PAT: That's horrid of you.

HEC: Well, I can take you to the theatre, can't I, if that's what you're so keen on. Why didn't you ask?

PAT: I don't like you spending your money on me, Hec.

HEC: Why not?

PAT: You've got other things to do with it.

HEC: I know.

PAT: You've got to save up for the future. But I don't go out much, and if Mr. Brewer asks me . . .

HEC: Well, I don't want you to. See?

PAT: Why not?

HEC: I don't want to see you get into a mess.

PAT: You and Miss Janus! Anyone would think I was fifteen from the way you go on.

HEC: What's *she* been saying?

PAT: Much the same as you.

HEC: Quite right, too.

PAT: Well, what are you doing here, anyway?

HEC: Oh . . . it's about that story . . . the one I gave you at lunch. You haven't started on it?

PAT: Well, hardly!

HEC: There's an alteration I don't know that you'll be able to read. Got some French in it, too. I just remembered. You got it there?

PAT: In there. (*Pointing L.*)

HEC: Well . . . could I show you?

PAT: I'll get it.

[*She does so.*]

HEC. (*finding place—standing behind her—leaning over her, quite unaware of her physically—pointing to the corrections*): Look. There. That goes in there. See?

[*Reading aloud:*]

“Maurice was standing by the studio window watching the sun set over the Boulevard Montparnasse.” Then you put in that bit.

[*MISS JANUS enters and stands listening.*]

“Mimi lay on the sofa watching him from beneath lowered lids. ‘You are worried, *mon ami,*’ she murmured.” M.O.N. A.M.I. See? It means “my friend.” Then you go back here. “He turned. ‘If only somebody would buy one of my pictures,’ he muttered.” And then I’ve put in that bit, where the scriggle is, see? “‘Cheer up, *cheri,*’ she answered. ‘It can’t go on for ever.’” Look: C.H.E.R.I. I’ll put the accents in myself, afterwards.

MISS JANUS (*who has been watching HEC.’S attitude with interest, now tries to pass behind PAT’S chair to the cupboard at back*): Excuse me.

HEC. (*jumping*): I beg your pardon, miss. I didn’t see you.

[*He moves.*]

MISS JANUS: Thanks.

[*She passes.*]

You seem to get a lot of time to yourself.

HEC.: What? Oh . . . well, my job takes me out of the office a bit.

MISS JANUS: Where are you supposed to be now?

[*Buzzer goes twice.*]

PAT (*starts*): That’s for me.

HEC.: Mr. Walker?

PAT: No, he’s out. That’s Mr. Windermere’s room. I didn’t know he was back. I’ll do that when I can, Hec.

HEC.: Can I see you home to-night?

PAT: I think I’d better stay and start on it.

HEC.: Well, p’raps it would be better.

[*Buzzer again.*]

PAT: I must fly.

[Dashes into room L., returns at once with shorthand notebook and goes out R.

MISS JANUS: Is that something you've written?

HEC.: Yes.

MISS JANUS: A story?

HEC.: Yes.

MISS JANUS: What about?

HEC.: Well . . . artists . . . in Paris, Montmartre. You know, like the picture . . . *Sous les Toits* . . .

MISS JANUS: Have you ever been there?

HEC.: No, but . . . well, I've read about it.

MISS JANUS: Is it a love-story?

HEC. (*definitely*): No.

MISS JANUS: Who's Mimi?

HEC.: She's another artist. Shares a studio with the chap the story's about.

MISS JANUS: Do you mean they live together?

HEC.: Yes.

MISS JANUS: In sin?

HEC.: No, of course not.

MISS JANUS: Just platonic?

HEC.: Yes.

MISS JANUS: And do you think anybody's going to swallow that?

HEC.: Why not?

MISS JANUS: Oh, well . . .

[*She busies herself at the cupboard.*

HEC.: I say, miss. Can I speak to you?

MISS JANUS: I should think so.

HEC.: Well . . . this chap, Brewer . . .

MISS JANUS (*interested*): What about him?

HEC.: What sort of chap is he?

MISS JANUS: Why d'you ask?

HEC.: Well, he was making up to Pat here just now . . . asking her to go out with

him to the theatre.

MISS JANUS: Oh? Well?

HEC.: Well, I don't like it.

MISS JANUS: *You* don't? Why?

HEC.: Well, he looks like my idea of a pretty fair sort of cad. . . .

MISS JANUS: That's right.

HEC.: Well, then. . . .

MISS JANUS: But why should *you* mind?

HEC.: Well, Pat and I are friends.

MISS JANUS: Oh, I see. Like Mimi and What's-his-name.

HEC.: Yes. I wish you'd speak to her about it.

MISS JANUS: Me? Why don't you?

HEC.: I have, but she didn't seem to take it very well, and I thought p'raps if you talked to her . . . after all, you're a woman and a lot older than she is . . .

MISS JANUS: Are you jealous of Brewer?

HEC.: Jealous? No, but . . .

MISS JANUS: Are you keen on Pat?

HEC.: Keen? Well, we're friends.

MISS JANUS: Is that all?

HEC.: What d'you mean?

MISS JANUS: You're not in love with her?

HEC.: Of course not.

MISS JANUS: Then I don't know what right you think you've got to stop her going out with whom she likes.

HEC.: I don't see what that's got to do with it.

MISS JANUS: Don't you? You're *sure* you're not in love with her?

HEC.: Yes.

[*Pause.*]

At least, I've never thought about it.

MISS JANUS: Well, I should begin, if I were you.

HEC.: Well, I *like* her, of course. I'm *fond* of her.

MISS JANUS: Oh, well, perhaps it's the same thing.

[HEC. *looks worried.*

You needn't look as if I'd said I thought you'd got consumption.

HEC.: It isn't that.

MISS JANUS: What is it, then?

HEC.: Well . . . it's a difficult thing to say . . .

MISS JANUS: Come on, cough it up.

HEC.: Well, you don't think that Pat . . .

MISS JANUS: What?

HEC.: Well, you don't think *she* thinks that I'm in love with her?

MISS JANUS (*dryly*): You haven't given her any cause, have you?

HEC.: No. No, never. Unless she thinks my going on about this chap, Brewer, was because I was jealous. (*With a flash*) You don't think that was why she did it, do you? To *make* me jealous?

MISS JANUS: You've been going to the pictures too much, young man. Why should she want to make you jealous?

HEC.: You never know with women. They're so mysterious.

MISS JANUS: Too true! Too true!

HEC.: You needn't make fun of me.

MISS JANUS: You're not flattering yourself by any chance that Pat's in love with *you*?

HEC. (*uncertainly*): N . . . no. No, of course not.

MISS JANUS: That's right.

HEC.: She's not, is she?

MISS JANUS: Well, I ask you . . . is it likely?

HEC.: She might be.

MISS JANUS: Oh!

HEC.: But she's not, though, is she?

MISS JANUS: No. Disappointed?

HEC. (*not too convincingly*): No, of course not. Here, I must be going. I've been out too long as it is. Well, will you speak to Pat?

MISS JANUS: I don't know.

HEC.: Why not? You don't want her to go out with that chap.

MISS JANUS: She's got to go out with somebody.

HEC.: Well, I'll take her out, only I can't do it swank, like he can. I wish you'd speak to her.

MISS JANUS: It's none of my business.

HEC.: Yes, it is. She's awfully young. She doesn't know what he's after.

MISS JANUS: What is he after?

HEC.: Well, what do you s'pose? . . . Oh, Pat can take care of herself, I know, when it comes to it, but . . .

MISS JANUS: Well, that's all right, then, if she can take care of herself. . . "when it comes to it." There's no harm in a bit of kissing, is there?

HEC.: Yes, there is! I say, I must go. Won't you speak to her?

MISS JANUS (*imperturbably*): No.

HEC.: Oh, Hell!

*[He kicks the table and goes out angrily. MISS JANUS laughs, picks up his story and looks at it. MISS BUFTON comes in R. A fluffy blonde—she carries the "Play Pictorial" and a paper of the "Home Chat" order.]*

MISS BUFTON: Hullo.

MISS JANUS (*not agreeably*): Oh, hullo.

MISS BUFTON: Anyone been ringing for me?

MISS JANUS: Don't think so.

MISS BUFTON: Thank goodness. I'm ever so late. I didn't think I'd *ever* get away. (*No response.*) Oh dear, I *don't* feel like work this afternoon. I was *so* late last night, I went to the theatre . . . that's three late nights running this week.

MISS JANUS (*sarcastic*): How awful.

MISS BUFTON: Well, it is! I just *can't* get up in the morning if I've been out late the night before. (*Pause.*) And cocktails at lunch aren't good for *anyone*, I'm sure.

MISS JANUS: Why d'you have 'em, then?

MISS BUFTON (*pleased to get her cue at last*): I don't usually . . . I never do. I don't really *like* them, anyway. Only to-day my friend insisted. He said I was looking so tired. At least, it wasn't really a cocktail. Only a gin-and-Italian. He took me to the Great Eastern to lunch.

MISS JANUS: I say!

MISS BUFTON: I don't really like being taken out like that in the middle of the day.

I'm no good at all for work in the afternoon. I shall probably fall fast asleep over my machine. Is everyone still out?

MISS JANUS: Our lord is. High wind in Jamaica's back. Pat's in with him. Oh, here she is.

[PAT returns. MISS JANUS goes into her room.]

MISS BUFTON (*pulling off her hat*): Oh dear! I do wish I hadn't had that cocktail.

PAT: Has someone been taking you out to lunch?

MISS BUFTON: Yes. Great Eastern. It seems waste in the City, though, somehow, doesn't it? I mean, when you've only got an hour. I simply *raced* back. But we had a lovely lunch . . . and we had asparagus. I had some last night, too, at Frascati's.

PAT: Where's that?

MISS BUFTON: Frascati's? In Oxford Street . . . haven't you ever been there?

PAT: No, is it nice?

MISS BUFTON: Ever so. We had a lovely dinner, and they played *Madame Butterfly*.

PAT: What have you got there?

MISS BUFTON: This? It's the *Play Pictorial*.

PAT: Can I look? *Madame Fleur-de-Lys*. That's at Drury Lane, isn't it? I do want to see it.

MISS BUFTON: I went last night.

PAT: Was it nice?

MISS BUFTON: Lovely. It's all about the French Revolution. Wonderfully staged. We had stalls. I don't usually like being so close, because you can see all the make-up and everything, and I think it spoils it, but these were about half-way back and just right.

PAT (*who has been turning over the pages—stopping at a picture*): Is she good?

MISS BUFTON: Yes, she's got a lovely voice. And she wears the most beautiful dresses. I do think powdered hair's becoming to men, don't you? He's awfully good-looking. (*Pointing to picture*) That's where they sing the duet in prison, and the crowd burst in with the chorus. My friend bought me the music in the interval.

PAT: I wish I could see it.

MISS BUFTON: Well, I must go up and wash.

[*Goes L.*

PAT: Can I look at this a minute?

MISS BUFTON: Of course. Don't make it dirty, though. (*She returns with her towel and goes out R.*)

[*PAT sits looking at the pictures, thoughtfully. BREWER returns.*

BREWER: Why so pensive, gentle maiden?

[*PAT starts and then laughs—puts paper aside and returns to her work.*

BREWER: What's that?

PAT: It's Miss Bufton's.

BREWER (*looking at it*): Have you seen this?

PAT: No.

BREWER: Would you like to?

PAT: I would, rather.

BREWER: Will you come with me?

PAT (*after a moment's hesitation, shakes her head*): No.

BREWER: No?

PAT: No . . . really . . . thanks awfully.

BREWER: Why not?

PAT: I . . . I'd rather not.

BREWER: Why? If you want to see it? Don't you like me?

PAT: Please. . . .

BREWER: I wish you would. I'd like to take you.

PAT: No, really.

BREWER: Why not? Where's the harm in it? You're not afraid of me, are you?

PAT: No, of course not.

BREWER: Well, then . . . ?

PAT: But it isn't right.

BREWER: Of course it's right. You ask Aunt Agatha.

PAT: Who's Aunt Agatha?

BREWER: In *Home Bothers*. (*Picks up other paper; opens it and pretends to*

read.) "Pat. London Wall. Yes, dear, it is quite right for you to go to the theatre with the gentleman if he asks you."

PAT (*laughing*): You are absurd!

BREWER: Well . . . so are you to refuse! You will come, won't you? When will you come? To-night?

PAT: I can't to-night. I've got some typing to do.

BREWER: To-morrow night?

PAT: I might to-morrow night.

BREWER: Well, shall we take it as fixed? I'd like to get tickets.

PAT: It's awfully nice of you.

BREWER: And you'll have some dinner with me first?

PAT: No, I . . .

BREWER: You've got to eat, haven't you? And so have I. Why shouldn't we do it together?

PAT: What do I wear?

BREWER: Your prettiest frock. You can change here, can't you?

PAT: Yes, upstairs.

BREWER: That's settled, then.

PAT: It's awfully nice of you. Bufton says it's a lovely play.

[BREWER *smiles and goes out R.*

PAT *goes on looking at the pictures—sighs—puts paper down, and returns to her work.* MISS JANUS *comes in. She looks round half warily and goes to telephone.* MISS JANUS *asks for the number of Netherlands Legation, and holds on.*

(*Looking up*) Private?

MISS JANUS: It's all right.

PAT: Why don't you go into Mr. Walker's room?

MISS JANUS: He'll be back any minute. (*Into 'phone*) Hullo, is that the Netherlands Legation? Capt. Kellendonck, please. (*Holds on.*) You've been a long time on that. Brewer been down here talking to you?

PAT: Just for a minute.

MISS JANUS: He seems to have upset Hec. all right.

MISS JANUS (*into 'phone*): Hello! Jan? Look here, what about to-night? Why

not? What? Flying over? Look here, you promised me you . . . yes, I know, but I hate it. . . . When shall I see you, then? You know I can't on Thursdays. . . . It's the one night I've *got* to stay at home . . . (*breaks off, aware of P<sub>AT</sub>*) You *can't* ring me up. You know how difficult it is here. You can just as easily fix it now. Oh, very well. How are you? All right? Oh, I'm sorry. Good-bye.

[*She puts down the receiver and goes into the typists' room without a word.*]

P<sub>AT</sub> *looks after her.* MISS BUFTON *returns.*

MISS BUFTON: Oh dear, I never felt so little like work.

P<sub>AT</sub> (*suddenly*): I say, Bufton.

MISS BUFTON: What?

P<sub>AT</sub>: I want to ask you something.

MISS BUFTON: What is it?

P<sub>AT</sub>: I wonder if you'd do me an awfully big favour?

MISS BUFTON: What?

P<sub>AT</sub>: Are you going out anywhere to-morrow night?

MISS BUFTON: Not me. I must be a good girl and go to bed early the rest of this week. I've been out late three nights running. Why?

P<sub>AT</sub>: Well . . . I wondered . . . you see I've been asked out, and I wondered if you could possibly lend me your evening coat. I'd take great care of it.

MISS BUFTON: Well . . .

P<sub>AT</sub>: You see, I haven't got one of my own. And Dorice—that's the girl I live with—she hasn't either.

MISS BUFTON: What do you always wear?

P<sub>AT</sub>: Well, I don't go out very much, but I usually wear my tweed coat. Only, this is . . . well, I rather wanted to look nice, and . . .

MISS BUFTON: You will take care of it?

P<sub>AT</sub> (*nods earnestly*): Um.

MISS BUFTON: It crushes awfully easily.

P<sub>AT</sub>: I know. I've seen you with it. It's lovely.

MISS BUFTON: It is nice, isn't it. All right, then. I'll bring it up in the morning.

P<sub>AT</sub>: It's awfully sweet of you.

MISS BUFTON: Where are you going? Theatre? (P<sub>AT</sub> *nods.*) What are you going to

see?

PAT (*almost speaks and then thinks better of it*): I . . . I don't know.

MISS BUFTON (*picking up "Play Pictorial"*): You ought to go to this.

PAT: I'd like to.

MISS BUFTON: Going with someone nice?

PAT: I think so.

MISS BUFTON: I say! You *are* coming on. I thought you didn't go out with chaps.

PAT: Why shouldn't I?

MISS BUFTON: That's what I say.

[BREWER *returns*.

BREWER: Oh, Miss Bufton, what about those affidavits?

MISS BUFTON: Oh, Mr. Brewer, they aren't done yet. I'm *ever* so sorry, but Mr. Walker was dictating nearly all the morning.

BREWER: Well, there's no tearing hurry.

MISS BUFTON: I'll do them as soon as ever I can.

[*Moves towards door*.

BREWER (*picking up "Home Bothers"*): Is this yours?

MISS BUFTON: Oh, yes, thanks.

BREWER (*opening it*): "Anxious mother. Certainly you should feed Baby if your health permits it."

[MISS BUFTON *giggles*.

"Is it all right to let a boy kiss you the first time he takes you out? It is inadvisable to do so, Pansy. I do not mean that there is any harm in a kiss, but it robs your flirtation of any spice of piquancy or adventure."

"Lettuce. South Shields. The correct answer to 'How-do-you-do' is 'Quite well, thank you—and you?'"

[*At the end of this speech MR. WALKER has appeared at door, R. He is a stern, but kindly man of about 55—wears dark coat and striped trousers, etc.*

MR. WALKER: Oh, Brewer, just a minute. . . .

[MISS BUFTON *vanishes into the typists' room. PAT takes up her work, and goes out R., saying "Excuse me."*

I wish you wouldn't waste the girls' time like that. I'm always finding you down here, gossiping with them. I've told you before.

[BREWER *is a little shamefaced.*

If you've nothing to do, you should stay in your own room. I know it's very small, but I can't have you hanging around the office like this. And it's a bad thing to be as friendly with the girls as that. You might have a little more sense.

BREWER: I'm sorry, sir.

MR. WALKER: Well, don't let it happen again. This isn't the first time, you know. And I don't like the way you speak to them, at the best of times. It's all very well to be pleasant, but there are limits. That's all.

[BREWER *goes.* MR. WALKER *opens door L.*

Is Miss Janus in there?

MISS JANUS: Yes, Mr. Walker.

[*She appears, transformed in his presence to a quiet secretary.*

MR. WALKER: How's that brief getting on?

MISS JANUS: It's about half done.

MR. WALKER: I'd like it to go to Counsel to-night. Can you manage it?

MISS JANUS: I think so, Mr. Walker.

MR. WALKER: And you might tell Miss Hooper I shall probably want her to stay late, if she can manage it. Are your letters done?

MISS JANUS: They're on your table, Mr. Walker.

MR. WALKER: Good.

[*He goes out R.*

PAT *reappears, passing him.*

PAT: Did he say anything?

MISS JANUS: What about?

PAT: He caught Bufton and Mr. Brewer and me wasting time.

MISS BUFTON (*appearing at door*): It was awful. I didn't know where to look.

MISS JANUS: Well, let's hope he told little Eric off.

[*Buzzer.*

PAT: That's for Hooper.

MISS JANUS: She's not back yet.

PAT: P'raps I'd better go. Oh, here she is.

[MISS HOOPER *comes in L.*

MISS JANUS: Our lord's back. Screaming for you.

[*Buzzer again.*

There he goes. Wants you to stay late to-night, too.

MISS HOOPER (*pulling off hat*): Blast! I wanted to be up West by seven.

MISS BUFTON: Well, tell him.

MISS HOOPER (*passing her—into inner room*): Oh, yes.

MISS BUFTON: I would!

MISS HOOPER: Likely. Where's my blasted note-book?

[*A different buzzer: three rings.*

MISS BUFTON: That's me.

[*Fetches note-book.*

MISS HOOPER (*returning*): I say, Blanche, could you ring up Douglas and tell him I'll be late? Say I'll get there when I can.

[*First buzzer again.*

All right! All right! I'm coming!

[*Dashes out, colliding with BIRKINSHAW, who returns with a bag of biscuits.*

Out of my way, you!

[*Vanishes.*

MISS JANUS: Here are the biscuits. Tea, thank God!

MISS BUFTON: I'm dying for it.

[*Telephone goes. Second buzzer again.*

Wait a minute, can't you? Keep mine hot.

[*She goes.*

BIRKINSHAW (*answering 'phone*): Hullo, Walker, Windermere. Who's speaking? One minute, please.

[*Puts down plug and exits.*

PAT (*opening bag of biscuits*): Oh, he's got ginger-nuts.

MISS JANUS: Just because I told him not to.

[*MISS WILLESDEN appears again at door.*

MISS WILLESDEN: Oh . . . excuse me . . . but . . . I think I just saw Mr. Walker come in, and . . . I wondered whether perhaps he could see me now . . . just for a minute.

MISS JANUS: I'm afraid he's engaged, Miss Willesden.

MISS WILLESDEN: Oh . . . oh, I see. Oh, very well. I'll write.

[MISS JANUS *goes into typists' room.*

To PAT

You're new here, aren't you?

PAT (*timidly*): Yes.

MISS WILLESDEN: Yes . . . Yes, I thought so. You're very pretty. You must make the most of it. . . . It doesn't last. Don't stay here too long . . . like her.

[*Gesture to inner door.*

Find a nice man, and marry him . . . while you're young. It doesn't last, you know.

[*With a change of thought:*

Engaged, is he? Oh, well, then, I'll write. Yes, I'll write. Good-bye.

PAT: Good-bye.

[MISS WILLESDEN *trails out. PAT is left alone.*

CURTAIN



# ACT II

## SCENE I

SCENE: MR. WALKER'S *room. Three o'clock in the afternoon. About three weeks later. A large desk, placed up and down stage, R., with a revolving chair back to the wall. Another chair (for clients) the other side of the desk. Windows behind swivel-chair in R. wall. Door down stage L. Filing cabinet centre back wall. Bookcase with law Reports, etc., centre of L. wall. Safe in R. corner of back wall: cupboard for hats and coats in L. corner of back wall. A few prints on the walls.*

*This should be a small set, capable of being set within the other.*

*When the curtain rises PAT is sitting at the desk, talking at the telephone.*

PAT (*into 'phone*): No, Mr. Walker left those blank in the letter. He asked me to get the particulars from you on the telephone. No, he's gone for the day—but if you'll give me them, I can send the letter off to-night. Yes. I'm ready.

[BREWER *comes in. He watches her amusedly, while she listens and writes in her shorthand note-book. Then he steals behind her; stands there for a moment and then leans over and kisses the back of her neck. She wriggles and tries to beat him off with her left hand.*

I'm sorry. I didn't catch that. Was that D or B? B for . . .

BREWER: Brewer.

PAT (*whispering and waving him away*): Go away!

[*Into 'phone:*

Would you spell it, please? Oh, D. D for dance.

BREWER: Or darling.

PAT: E.

BREWER: For Eric.

PAT: T? T or P? P for . . .

BREWER: Pat.

PAT: P for Patrick. T for . . .

BREWER: To-night.

PAT: T for teetotaller. F or S? F? F for freedom? Freedom or France.

BREWER: Or fun?

PAT: Oh, Deptford! Yes, I've got it. Deptford.

BREWER: Where the dukes come from!

PAT: Thanks very much. Yes, I'll see that goes to-night. Thank you. Good-bye.

*[Puts receiver down.]*

You *are* bad!

BREWER: Am I?

*[Holds out his hand.]*

Come here.

PAT: No.

BREWER: Why not?

PAT: I don't want to.

BREWER: I want to kiss you.

PAT: No.

BREWER: Why not? You've let me kiss you before. . . .

PAT: Not in the office.

BREWER: Well, it'll be a new experience for you.

PAT: I oughtn't to have let you kiss me at all.

BREWER (*approaching her*): Oh, Pat . . .

PAT (*moving to door*): No. I've got work to do.

BREWER (*seemingly careless*): Oh, by the way, I thought to-night, instead of going out anywhere we might have dinner at my flat.

*[PAT stares at him.]*

What's the matter? Don't you want to?

PAT: No.

BREWER: Why not?

PAT: I'd rather go out somewhere.

BREWER: Still afraid of me?

PAT: Of course not.

BREWER: Well, then . . .

PAT: I'd rather not.

BREWER: But why? I've got it all prepared and everything.

[PAT *looks troubled*.

Won't you come?

PAT: I oughtn't to.

BREWER: What would your boy friend say? Eh?

PAT: It isn't that.

BREWER: He gave me the dirtiest look when I passed him on the stairs this morning. Does he know you've been going out with me?

PAT: I don't know.

BREWER: Haven't you told him?

PAT: No. It's none of his business.

BREWER: Quite. Why did you tell Miss Janus?

PAT: I didn't.

BREWER: How does she know, then?

PAT (*returning*): Does she?

BREWER: She does. She's been trying to warn me off you.

PAT (*flaring up*): Well, she's got no right to.

BREWER: Why does she dislike me so?

PAT: I don't know. At least . . .

BREWER: At least?

PAT: She says you're dangerous.

BREWER: Does she? Do you think I am?

PAT: No.

BREWER: That's right. Of course I'm not. You know I wouldn't do you any harm for the world, don't you? Don't you?

[PAT *nods*.

You're awfully sweet.

PAT: Don't.

BREWER: Why should you mind my telling you? Just because it's in the office? I'll tell you to-night, then.

[*Seductively*.

My little Pat! So Miss Janus thinks I'm dangerous, does she? Dangerous to you, or dangerous to her?

PAT: To me, I suppose.

BREWER: She's probably jealous.

PAT: Why?

BREWER: Of my taking you out. I took her out once.

PAT: You did?

BREWER: Yes, only to dinner after we'd been working late one evening, when I first came here. It wasn't much fun. I've never repeated the experiment, but I have an idea she's rather expected me to.

PAT (*quite sincerely*): Yes, perhaps.

BREWER: She evidently considers me fascinating, if she thinks I'm dangerous to you.

[*Smiling.*

Do you know I shouldn't be surprised if she cherished quite a secret passion for me?

PAT: She's got a fiancé, you know.

BREWER (*ragging*): Well, she had to do something, hadn't she? Do you know what he's like?

PAT: No. I don't think he treats her very well though.

BREWER: There you are! You see, it's not the real thing.

[*Enter BIRKINSHAW.*

BREWER: What is it?

BIRKINSHAW: Aunt Sally's outside.

BREWER: Eh?

BIRKINSHAW: Miss Willesden.

BREWER: Oh. Oh, yes. Yes, I've got to see her. I'll see her upstairs in my room.

BIRKINSHAW: You've never seen anything like the way she's rigged out.

[*He laughs and goes.*

PAT *goes over to filing cabinet to get some papers.* MISS JANUS *comes in.*

MISS JANUS: Did you get those particulars all right?

PAT (*very shortly*): Yes.

MISS JANUS: Anything you don't understand?

PAT (*as before*): No.

MISS JANUS: Anything the matter?

PAT: No. Why?

MISS JANUS: Well, you sound a bit old-fashioned-like to me.

PAT: Oh?

MISS JANUS: What's up?

PAT (*turning on her suddenly*): I wish you wouldn't interfere with my affairs.

MISS JANUS: Oh? Going out with him again to-night, aren't you?

PAT: How do you know? Who? How do you know I've been out with him at all?

MISS JANUS: Buffon's brought up her evening cloak again.

PAT: Has *she* been talking? I wish I'd never borrowed it.

MISS JANUS: No, she hasn't. But I've got a little imagination. And I can put two and two together. Do you like going out with him?

PAT: Yes, I do.

MISS JANUS: That's right. So he's behaved himself, so far.

PAT: I don't know what you mean.

MISS JANUS: Don't you? You will. Wait till he asks you to his flat.

[PAT *looks startled*.

And don't say I didn't warn you, that's all. Look here. Pat, don't be a little fool. Don't go and get yourself into a mess for the sake of a few theatre tickets.

PAT: Have you quite finished?

MISS JANUS: No.

PAT: Well, I want to get on with my work.

[*Moves to door*.

MISS JANUS (*standing in front of it*): Just a minute. Have you seen Hec. lately?

PAT: What has it got to do with you?

MISS JANUS: Quite a lot. I'm your best friend. You don't know it, but it's true. You know, you're making Hec. very unhappy.

PAT: That's too bad.

MISS JANUS: I can't think what's come over you lately. At least, I can. Brewer's come over you. And you're worried about it, too. You're beginning to wish you hadn't started it, aren't you?

PAT: No.

MISS JANUS: Oh, yes you are. You're beginning to get scared. I know.

PAT: It's not true. I'm going out with him to-night, and I'm going to his flat to

dinner. There! That shows how scared I am.

MISS JANUS (*slowly*): Are you?

PAT: Yes, I am. And nothing you say can stop me. Anyway, you only try because you're jealous.

MISS JANUS: What's that?

PAT: Because you're keen on him yourself. Because he took you out once, and then never again.

MISS JANUS: Wait a minute. What's all this about?

PAT: It's true. You know it's true.

MISS JANUS: Who told you that?

PAT: Never mind.

MISS JANUS: He did—uh?

PAT (*repentant*): I oughtn't to have said it.

MISS JANUS: No, I don't think you ought. But now you have said it, we'll get to the bottom of it.

PAT (*scared*): No.

MISS JANUS: He said I was jealous, did he?

PAT: No. No. I made that up.

MISS JANUS: Oh, no, you didn't. Did you? Did you?

[PAT *doesn't answer*.

All right. Now, then. He said I was jealous. He said I was keen on him myself. Eh?

PAT (*whispering*): Yes.

MISS JANUS: Nice of him, wasn't it? Do you believe it? Do you?

PAT: I don't know.

MISS JANUS: Well, do you think it was nice of him to say so?

PAT: No. I suppose it wasn't. You won't tell him I told you?

MISS JANUS: No?

PAT: No, you mustn't. You won't, will you? Promise?

MISS JANUS: All right, I promise.

PAT: You're not keen on him?

MISS JANUS: What do you take me for?

PAT: Then why do you mind my going out with him?

MISS JANUS: Well, for one thing because I hate to see you giving him corroborative evidence for his theory that he's irresistible to women. And for another because he's not your kind. If you were Buffon it wouldn't matter. She's the sort that does slop about with men. . . . Flirtation's her game, and she knows all the rules . . . she makes them . . . and she sees that they're kept, too. But I should chuck this, if I were you. Make it up with Hec. Why don't you?

PAT: There's nothing to make up.

MISS JANUS: Oh, I know he's slow and young and silly . . . but you're fond of him. And that's something too valuable to play with.

PAT: I don't know what you mean.

*[Suddenly bursting into angry tears.*

Oh, why can't you leave me alone? Why shouldn't I enjoy myself? Where's the fun in sitting in an Express Dairy with somebody once a week . . . or paying for myself at the pictures? That's what I did with Hec. Oh, I know he can't afford it. It isn't that. And I wouldn't mind if . . . if I thought he . . .

MISS JANUS: What?

PAT: Oh, leave me alone! Why shouldn't he take me out? You *are* jealous. I know you are. Just because your own fiancé doesn't want to take *you* out . . . because you have to run after him . . .

*[She stops at sight of MISS JANUS' stricken face.*

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to say that.

MISS JANUS: You'd better go.

PAT: No. I'm sorry. Forgive me. I didn't mean it. Forgive me.

MISS JANUS (*after a very brief pause*): All right.

PAT: I didn't mean it.

MISS JANUS: It's all right. Don't worry.

*[She goes out.*

PAT *returns to the cabinet. Door opens and MISS WILLESDEN comes in, followed by BREWER.*

BREWER: If you'll wait here, in Mr. Walker's room, Miss Willesden, I'll see if your Will is ready for you to sign.

MISS WILLESDEN: Oh, thank you.

*[BREWER places chair for her and—goes.*

To PAT:

Good afternoon.

PAT: Good afternoon.

MISS WILLESDEN: Mr. Walker *is* out, then?

PAT: Yes. He won't be back this afternoon.

MISS WILLESDEN: Oh! Oh, yes. Yes, I'm glad. I thought perhaps . . . it wasn't true. Mr. Walker never sees me any more. He always used to attend to my affairs himself, of course, his practice was smaller then, and he was glad enough to have my business.

PAT (*very uncomfortable*): Oh, I don't think . . .

MISS WILLESDEN: You know all about my affairs, I suppose . . . being in the office? I suppose you do . . . discuss . . . clients' business . . . sometimes?

PAT: Not discuss it . . . no. I type some of the letters, of course, but . . .

MISS WILLESDEN: What do you think of this law-suit of mine?

PAT: I don't really know about it.

MISS WILLESDEN: Nor about that one I had last year?

PAT: No.

MISS WILLESDEN: Oh, that was monstrous. Monstrous. The Judge had been bribed. I'm convinced of that. I wrote to the Home Secretary . . . several times . . . but I got no reply. . . . You see, my dear, when you get to my age . . . and you have a little money . . . people try and take advantage of you. And the law doesn't protect you. It should, of course, but it doesn't. Old age is a very sad thing, you know.

PAT (*frightened*): Yes . . .

MISS WILLESDEN: And loneliness is a worse one. Whenever I see a pretty young girl like you, I always think: "What will she be when she is old? Will she have someone to look after her? Will she have someone to look after?" Because that's almost as important, you know. I've no one. You know this case of mine is all because I wanted someone to look after . . . so I thought . . . as I had no one of my own . . . that I'd adopt somebody. Of course, it ought to have been a baby . . . I see that now . . . but I thought perhaps I shouldn't live long enough . . . so I adopted a young man. An artist, he was, you know, with no money. I thought I was old enough for there not to be any scandal about it. And you know what happened.

PAT: He ran away with some money, didn't he?

MISS WILLESDEN: Five hundred pounds it was. It was a dreadful shock to me. I was very ill at first . . . my heart, you know, it isn't right. But you see what I mean by people taking advantage of you. But that's quite enough about me and my troubles. Tell me something about yourself, won't you?

PAT: Me?

MISS WILLESDEN: What's your name?

PAT: Milligan.

MISS WILLESDEN: Yes, I know. But your Christian name?

PAT: Pat.

MISS WILLESDEN: Pat?

PAT: Patricia.

MISS WILLESDEN: How old are you?

PAT: Nineteen.

MISS WILLESDEN: You mustn't mind my asking you questions, like this . . . but, you see, I'm interested. I always think people are so interesting.

PAT: It's all right.

MISS WILLESDEN: Are your parents alive?

PAT: No. They're dead.

MISS WILLESDEN: Then you're all alone? Or have you any other relatives? Brothers and sisters, perhaps?

PAT: No.

MISS WILLESDEN: Dear me. And you work here . . . to earn your living? You have to.

PAT: Yes.

MISS WILLESDEN: What do they pay you?

PAT (*embarrassed*): Well, I . . .

MISS WILLESDEN: Do they pay you well? They ought to.

PAT: I think so.

MISS WILLESDEN: Five pounds a week?

PAT (*laughing*): Oh, no! Not nearly as much as that. I'm only a shorthand typist.

MISS WILLESDEN: Three pounds?

PAT (*smiling*): No.

MISS WILLESDEN: What then?

PAT: Well . . . well . . . thirty shillings.

MISS WILLESDEN: Thirty shillings a week? And you live on that?

PAT: Yes.

MISS WILLESDEN: But you can't . . . can you?

PAT: I do.

MISS WILLESDEN: I really don't see how you can. I shall speak to Mr. Walker about it.

PAT: Oh, no, please, you mustn't do that.

MISS WILLESDEN: Why not?

PAT: Oh, well . . . he'd think I'd been complaining. And anyway, it's perfectly all right. I've only been here two months . . . and lots of girls begin at less than that.

MISS WILLESDEN: Well, they oughtn't to. I shall certainly speak to Mr. Walker.

PAT: No, please, Miss Willesden, you mustn't . . . really. I should lose my job. Really, I should.

MISS WILLESDEN: Well, it seems very dreadful to me. Do you have a proper dinner in the evening, when you get home?

PAT: We cook things . . . on the gas ring.

MISS WILLESDEN: Proper things? Nourishing things? Not things out of tins?

PAT: Well, sometimes.

MISS WILLESDEN: You shouldn't, you know. I don't like to think of your having to live like that at all. Supposing you were ill?

PAT: Well, there's the insurance . . .

MISS WILLESDEN: Yes . . . yes, I forgot that. That was Lloyd George, wasn't it? But still, I'm sure it's not the same. It seems very dreadful to me. And your prospects . . . what are they?

PAT: How do you mean?

MISS WILLESDEN: Well, if you stay here . . .

PAT: I'll get more money, I suppose . . .

MISS WILLESDEN: Much more?

PAT: No . . . not *much*, but . . .

MISS WILLESDEN: How much? What is the most you could earn if you stayed . . .

for ten years, say . . . like that other girl outside?

PAT: I don't know. Three pounds . . . three pounds ten, perhaps.

MISS WILLESDEN: That isn't very much to look forward to. . . . Oh, I know money can be a curse . . . too much of it. But a little can be a great blessing. Don't you ever wonder, when you look at people like that other girl outside, what's going to happen to you . . . what you've got to look forward to?

PAT (*shivering slightly*): No. I . . . I'm quite happy.

MISS WILLESDEN: That's a very wonderful thing to hear anybody say. I hope you always will be.

BREWER (*off, as he opens door*): Would you mind coming in here a moment, Miss Janus?

[BREWER returns, followed by MISS JANUS. PAT quietly slips out.

I'm sorry to have kept you waiting, Miss Willesden. It wasn't quite ready. I've got it here now. Perhaps you'd like to read it through, and then if you'll excuse it, Miss Janus here and I will witness it for you.

MISS WILLESDEN: Yes . . . Yes . . . (*looks at her watch*). Oh, dear! It's later than I thought (*hesitates*). I have an appointment . . . a firm I am afraid I shall have to bring an action against. I mustn't be late for it. I'll take this with me to read on the bus. Then I'll come back and sign it later, and if I have to bring my action . . . well . . . (*brightly*) it'll be two birds with one stone, won't it? I hope it's not very inconvenient.

BREWER (*politely*): Not at all.

MISS WILLESDEN: Well, I'll say au revoir, then.

BREWER (*opening door*): Good afternoon.

MISS WILLESDEN (*to MISS JANUS*): Good afternoon.

MISS JANUS: Good afternoon.

[BREWER shows MISS WILLESDEN out.

MISS JANUS goes to filing cabinet.

BREWER returns.

BREWER (*tapping his forehead*): Mad. Quite, quite mad. What can one do with her, changing her mind every five minutes like that?

MISS JANUS: Are you going to be in here?

BREWER: I don't know. Why?

MISS JANUS: I want to get on with the filing.

BREWER: Don't let me disturb you.

MISS JANUS: Do you think you could?

*[She begins to file letters which she takes from a wire tray on the desk and to clip them on to various files which she takes from the cabinet.]*

BREWER (*sitting on the desk*):

“How *doth* the little busy bee,  
Improve each shining hour . . . ?”

MISS JANUS: Funny . . . don't you?

BREWER: Miss Janus . . . (*with sudden, mock-dramatic intensity*) Why can we not be friends? (*No answer.*) No reply? You know, ever since Birkinshaw revealed to me the other day the existence of . . . another side of your life, I have felt differently towards you.

MISS JANUS: Oh, really . . . ?

BREWER: You see, Miss Janus, I have known you now . . . man and boy . . . for something approaching eleven months, and never have our relations been anything but strictly formal.

MISS JANUS (*addressing the ceiling*): I've never sat on your knee, of course.

BREWER: Miss Janus, I hate to appear immodest, but I am a man with a not inconsiderable experience of women.

MISS JANUS: Really?

BREWER: It may even surprise you to learn . . . who has had considerable success with women.

MISS JANUS: Are you now?

BREWER: When therefore I noticed . . . that my sunny smile and pretty ways failed to make any impression on your rigid demeanour . . . I became depressed. I couldn't eat, I couldn't sleep. Judge then of my relief when I learn that the fault lies . . . not in me, but in the fact merely that your heart was engaged elsewhere.

MISS JANUS: No other explanation ever occurred to you, I suppose?

BREWER: Such as?

MISS JANUS: Well . . . that I might have mistaken your attempts at fascination . . . they were rather peculiar, you know . . . and be nourishing a secret passion for you?

BREWER: Well, scarcely.

MISS JANUS: You think that impossible?

BREWER: I wouldn't say that.

MISS JANUS: I'm sure you wouldn't.

BREWER: But you haven't exhibited many signs of it.

MISS JANUS: I said "secret."

BREWER: Of course that's always possible.

MISS JANUS: Supposing I told you it was true?

BREWER: I shouldn't believe you.

MISS JANUS: Oh, yes, you would. Any man would believe it of any woman.

BREWER: What rot!

MISS JANUS: It's true. Almost every man *does* believe it . . . of almost every woman, as it is.

BREWER: Believe what?

MISS JANUS: That she's in love with him . . . or would be, if he raised his little finger. Do you know a single woman who you think would refuse you if you asked her to marry you? Do you?

BREWER: I haven't thought about it.

MISS JANUS: Well, think . . . and you'll find that you don't.

BREWER: What are you getting at?

MISS JANUS: Nothing. But you do like to think that all women are crazy about you, don't you?

BREWER: It *is* a pleasant thought.

MISS JANUS: But you'd hate them to tell you so, that's all.

BREWER: Why should I?

MISS JANUS: You'd like to think I had a secret passion for you . . . but if I told you so, you'd pretend not to believe me, because it would make you uncomfortable. And secretly you'd be no end thrilled.

BREWER: I *shouldn't* believe you.

MISS JANUS: Wouldn't you?

BREWER (*slightly uncomfortable*): No.

MISS JANUS (*fixing him with an intense gaze*): Why wouldn't you?

BREWER: Shut up!

MISS JANUS: Look at me.

BREWER (*very uncomfortable*): No.

MISS JANUS: Why not? You see, you half believe me already. My God, you're a beauty!

BREWER: What do you mean?

MISS JANUS: Nothing. I've got the filing to get on with.

*[She turns to the cabinet, he looks at her; she turns, their eyes meet, she stares at him, he withdraws his, uncomfortably. She turns back again.]*

BREWER: I . . . I've got some work to do.

*[He goes out awkwardly. She laughs as the door shuts and then returns to the filing a moment; looks at the telephone a moment and then goes to it; sitting at desk.]*

MISS JANUS: Hullo! (*Bangs hook.*) Hullo! (*Bangs hook again.*) What are you doing out there? Put me through to the Exchange, will you? Hullo! I want Welbeck 6787.

*[PAT comes in.]*

PAT: Have you got the Blumenkopf file? It ought to be in Mr. Windermere's room. I can't find it anywhere.

MISS JANUS (*jerking her head at cabinet*): See if it's got in there by mistake. Hullo, is that the Netherlands Legation? Captain Kellendonck, please. (*Pause.*) (*Holds on.*) Hullo, is that you? Yes. Listen, I shan't be able to get away to time to-night . . . not till about a quarter past six. What? (*Disappointed.*) Why? Going away? Where? When? For long? What do you mean . . . you've written to me? Yes, but what's in it? You're being very mysterious. How long are you going for? A year? Transferred? But you never said anything about it! Has this just happened suddenly? Well, when do you leave? Six o'clock? To-night? Oh, six to-morrow morning. Are you flying to Holland? Well, I can see you to-night, can't I? (*Long pause.*) Oh! What's in that letter? No. I'd rather you told me now. I see. Me? No, I don't think it's been a mistake.

*[Her voice arrests Pat, who stands staring at her.]*

Well, if you say so. So this is good-bye, then? Yes, I suppose I have. I think you might have found a decenter way of doing it, though. All right. Good-bye.

*[She puts the receiver down, and stares before her. Half to herself:]*

So that's that!

[*With a half sob:*

God!

[*She puts her hand to her mouth, fighting tears.*

PAT: What is it?

[*She goes to her.*

MISS JANUS: Seven years! And now, like that . . . over the telephone!

PAT: He's going away?

MISS JANUS (*nods bitterly*): Just . . . going away. Going out East. "Transferred."

As if it happened suddenly like that! Keeping it up his sleeve till the last minute!

Wasn't even going to see me!

[*Mimicking:*

"I've written to you."

[*Between angry tears:*

Bloody coward!

PAT (*putting her arms round her*): Don't!

MISS JANUS (*mimicking again, between tears*): "You must have known yourself it's been wearing thin." That's what he said!

[*Pause.*

And now what am I going to do?

[*She cries more.*

PAT: Don't! Miss Janus . . . Blanche, dear . . . don't!

MISS JANUS: Seven damned years.

PAT: You've been engaged for seven years?

MISS JANUS: And now this! Left . . . like that!

PAT: Do you love him very much?

MISS JANUS (*looks at her blankly, as though not understanding the question.*

*After a pause*): No! I did once . . . at least, I think I did. That's been gone a long time.

PAT: Then . . . ?

MISS JANUS: But I was going to marry him. I wanted to marry him.

PAT: Even though you didn't love him?

MISS JANUS (*firmly*): Yes.

PAT: Why?

MISS JANUS: I wanted to get married. You can't expect love to last, anyway. And I'd had that.

*[Talking between her teeth.*

But I'd have been a good wife . . . and if we'd married something might have come back . . . anyway, I wanted to *be* married.

PAT: Why didn't you marry before?

MISS JANUS: He kept putting it off at first . . . and then mother got ill, and I couldn't . . .

PAT: But your mother's dead, isn't she?

MISS JANUS: Yes, she's been dead a year now. But he hasn't had so much reason to be keen these last three years.

PAT: What do you mean?

MISS JANUS: He'd had all he wanted without marriage.

PAT: Oh . . . oh, you must have loved him!

MISS JANUS: I think I did. And now what's going to happen to me? I haven't looked at another man for seven years. I haven't thought of another man.

PAT: There'll *be* someone else.

MISS JANUS: For me? I'm thirty-five . . . and I've worn myself out . . . over him. And then he goes off and leaves me . . . tied to this office for the rest of my life . . . until I get too old even for that.

*[She is crying freely now, but goes on talking bitterly through her tears.*

No! I'll *make* him marry me. I don't care whether he wants to, or not. I've *got* to get married.

PAT (*shocked as well as sympathetic*): Blanche!

MISS JANUS: Well, what else am I to do? Stick here, and go on living at home looking after father? I'm the only one left. And then he'll die . . . and then what is there? Rooms . . . or a boarding house . . . or a club for women who can't get married? Earning three pounds a week for the rest of my life? No!

PAT: It can't be as bad as all that.

MISS JANUS (*breaking down completely*): What am I going to do? Oh, God! What am I going to do?

*[She buries her head on her arms.*

[PAT *does her best to comfort her.*

PAT: Don't. Don't cry like that. Blanche don't!

[*A knock on the door.*

Who's that?

MISS JANUS (*starting up*): Don't let anyone in!

[*She, rises and goes to window, standing with her back to the door.*

BIRKINSHAW (*outside*): Open the door, will you? I've got the tea here.

PAT (*opening door*): I'll take it.

BIRKINSHAW (*half in, half out*): Mr. Brewer in here?

PAT: No.

BIRKINSHAW: I'd better take his upstairs, then. This is Miss Janus's. I left yours outside.

PAT: All right.

[*She closes the door on him, and comes back to the room with a cup of tea and biscuits in the saucer.*

MISS JANUS (*turning, having pulled herself together*): I'm sorry for behaving like that.

PAT: It's all right. I understand.

MISS JANUS: You needn't tell the others about this.

PAT: I wouldn't.

MISS JANUS (*smiling*): I know. Was anyone outside listening on the 'phone?

PAT: I don't think so. Birkinshaw was getting the tea. I put you through. Bufon and Miss Hooper were typing.

MISS JANUS: You'd better get your tea.

PAT: Don't let yours get cold.

[*She goes to door.*

I say . . . I'm awfully sorry about this afternoon.

MISS JANUS (*indicating telephone*): What . . . this?

PAT: No, me. I was horrid to you. I'm sorry.

MISS JANUS: That's all right. You're a nice child.

[PAT *smiles faintly and goes. MISS JANUS takes up her tea and stirs it.*

CURTAIN



SCENE II

SCENE: *The general office. A quarter to six the same evening and a general atmosphere of rush and getting the post off.*

BIRKINSHAW *is manipulating the press-copier at back. Sounds of typing from inner room whenever door is opened. MISS BUFTON comes in R. with note-book. The opening scene should be played extremely fast.*

BIRKINSHAW: Not more letters?

MISS BUFTON: No.

BIRKINSHAW: Thank God for that. Yours all done?

MISS BUFTON: Yes. You've got them there.

BIRKINSHAW: That the lot?

MISS BUFTON: Yes.

*[Goes in L.*

MISS HOOPER *comes out.*

BIRKINSHAW: What about your letters, miss?

MISS HOOPER: Haven't you got them? They're on Mr. Windermere's table.

BIRKINSHAW: 'E 'asn't signed them. You going in there? You might give 'is elbow a jog. I want to get off early to-night.

MISS HOOPER: Too bad about you.

BIRKINSHAW: Thought we would, too—Mr. Walker not coming back. What's the right time, miss?

MISS HOOPER: Ten to six.

*[She goes out R.*

BIRKINSHAW *opens door of typing room.*

BIRKINSHAW (*calling inside*): Those enclosures ready for Huddleston?

MISS JANUS (*off*): Not yet.

BIRKINSHAW: Well, you might hurry.

*[He sits at table and begins stamping and entering letters in post book.*

PAT *comes in from L.*

I say, miss . . .

PAT: What?

BIRKINSHAW: I suppose you 'aven't time to help me with the post, have you? I'd like to get off to time to-night.

PAT: All right.

BIRKINSHAW: There's a whole lot in the Oojah Capivvy now. If you'd just take 'em out and fold 'em and stick 'em in the envelopes, and bung 'em across to me, I'll enter 'em up.

PAT: All right.

*[She goes to the back, and starts doing as requested.]*

BREWER *comes in.*

BIRKINSHAW: 'Ave I got all your letters, sir?

BREWER: I sent them down.

*[He looks at Pat.]*

MISS HOOPER *comes back R., carrying folder of letters.*

MISS HOOPER *(slamming it on table)*: There! Mr. Windermere's just gone.

*[Goes in R.]*

BIRKINSHAW *(calling PAT)*: Miss!

*[Hands folder across.]*

BREWER *(to PAT)*: Why are you doing the post?

BIRKINSHAW: Just givin' me a 'and, sir. I'm in a bit of a 'urry to get off to-night.

BREWER: Assignation?

BIRKINSHAW: Police concert. Mr. Walker gave me tickets.

BREWER: I say! Taking someone? Have you got a girl, Birkinshaw?

BIRKINSHAW: What yer think?

BREWER: What's she like?

BIRKINSHAW: Regular oner! Trust Oswald.

BREWER: Who's Oswald?

BIRKINSHAW: Me!

BREWER: Well, why doesn't she make you wash your neck?

BIRKINSHAW: Likes it like that! Last time I went, they 'ad a lot of girls doing Greek dancing. One of 'em tripped over the footlights. Coo, I didn't 'arf larf!

*[Leans over and opens door.]*

I say, miss. Did you do an envelope for Mrs. Armstrong?

MISS BUFTON (*appearing*): Oh, no, I forgot. I haven't got her address. We haven't written to her for ever so long.

BIRKINSHAW: It's in the old letter-book.

MISS BUFTON: Well, you might look it up for me, and I'll do one.

BIRKINSHAW (*persuasive*): Do you mind looking it up yourself, miss? I want to get off early.

MISS BUFTON: Oh, all right.

[*She goes to the back.*]

MISS JANUS *comes out, carrying a long envelope which she gives to*

BIRKINSHAW.

MISS JANUS: There you are.

BIRKINSHAW: Thank you, miss.

[*Looks at it—folds letter, puts it in and licks it up.*]

MISS JANUS: I'll do the post if you want to get off. Mr. Walker asked me to stay till quarter past, anyway, in case he came back.

BIRKINSHAW: Oh, thank you, miss. I'll just finish this lot, then—and there's only what Miss Milligan's got, left to do.

MISS BUFTON: I can't find it.

MISS JANUS: What are you looking for?

MISS BUFTON: Mrs. Armstrong's address. It's somewhere in Italy.

MISS JANUS: Yes. Peg del Mio Cuore. Rapallo.

MISS BUFTON: Oh. (*Then puzzled*) What did you say?

MISS JANUS: Peg del Mio Cuore. Peg o' My Heart in Italian.

BREWER: Her husband called it that because her name's Elizabeth.

MISS BUFTON: You mean Margaret.

BREWER: No, Elizabeth.

MISS BUFTON: But Peg's short for Margaret.

BREWER: I know.

MISS BUFTON: Betty's short for Elizabeth.

BREWER: So's Liza.

MISS BUFTON (*puzzled*): What do you mean? You said he called it "Peg o' my Heart" because . . .

BREWER: Yes.

MISS BUFTON (*giving it up*) (to MISS JANUS): How do you spell it?

MISS JANUS: Peg. P.E.G. Del . . . D.E.L. . . . Here, do you want an envelope done? I'll do it.

MISS BUFTON: Thanks ever so.

[MISS JANUS *goes back L.*

BREWER: Whatever's come over Miss Janus?

[PAT *turns.*

Two offers to do somebody else's work in five minutes.

MISS BUFTON: She's been sulking ever since tea-time. I expect she's trying to make up for it.

PAT: She's got a bad headache.

MISS BUFTON: Has she? She was as cheerful as anything when she got back from lunch.

PAT: It came on later.

MISS BUFTON: She was *hours* in Mr. Walker's room doing the filing, and when I went in she snapped my head off. I thought she'd been crying.

BREWER (*as though with a flash of understanding*): Oh. (*Then, with a smile*) Oh!

[MISS HOOPER *comes out of typing room, carrying towel and an attaché case.*

BIRKINSHAW: You finished, miss? I suppose you wouldn't like to enter these for me? I'm in rather a . . .

BIRKINSHAW and BREWER (*together*): Hurry to get off to-night!

MISS HOOPER: I've never known an evening when you weren't. Well, so am I!

[*Goes out R.*

MISS BUFTON: I think I'll try and get the six-ten, from Liverpool Street.

[*Exit L.*

BREWER: *Friday night's Amami night!*

[MISS WILLESDEN *appears R., she carries a long envelope, and appears somewhat out of breath.*

MISS WILLESDEN: Oh . . . oh, Mr. Brewer, I'm glad you haven't gone.

[*Puts hand to heart.*

BREWER: Miss Willesden . . . is anything the matter? You're not ill, are you?

MISS WILLESDEN: No, no . . . oh, no . . . just a little out of breath, that's all. Those

stairs . . . do you mind if I sit down a moment?

BREWER: Of course.

*[He pulls telephone chair forward in front of table.]*

MISS WILLESDEN (*sitting and gasping a little*): Thank you. I'm afraid I hurried rather . . . I wanted to catch you before you left. I suppose . . . I suppose Mr. Walker isn't back?

BREWER: I'm afraid he's not. I don't think he'll be back to-night.

MISS WILLESDEN: No . . . no . . . so you said. I only wondered if perhaps . . . it doesn't matter . . .

*[MISS BUFTON crosses stage in hat and coat and goes out R, with whispered and gesticulated "Good-nights."]*

I've brought you my will. It's executed.

BREWER: Oh, really?

MISS WILLESDEN: I'd like you to keep it for me . . . like the others. (*As BREWER takes envelope*) It's sealed . . . I'd like you to keep it sealed.

BREWER: I see . . . ?

MISS WILLESDEN: As a matter of fact, it's not the one you drew. It's a new one again. I made it myself on a form I bought at the post-office, but I think it's all right. I copied most of it from yours—only there was something a little . . . private . . . so I made it myself. I hope it wasn't a serious breach of etiquette.

BREWER: Of course not.

MISS WILLESDEN: You mustn't be offended. Perhaps I'd better write to Mr. Walker to explain. . . . I shouldn't like him to think I was dissatisfied . . . or that I hadn't confidence . . .

BREWER: It's quite all right, Miss Willesden. But are you quite sure this is all in order?

MISS WILLESDEN: Yes, oh, yes. I read the instructions most carefully. Two witnesses, not beneficiaries, both present at the same time. I got two waitresses in a tea-shop in Oxford Street. I gave them half-a-crown each. That doesn't make any difference, does it?

BREWER: None at all.

MISS WILLESDEN: Oh, I'm so glad.

BREWER: I'll put it in my safe straight away for you.

MISS WILLESDEN: Thank you. And you'll destroy the other one?

BREWER: I will.

MISS WILLESDEN (*rising*): Thank you. I'll write to Mr. Walker this evening. I'm going back to Brighton now, but I'll write when I get home. I'm late for my train. (*Breathlessly*) I must hurry. You'll keep that for me. Good afternoon.

BREWER: Good afternoon.

[SHE GOES.

*During this scene, BIRKINSHAW has finished what he was doing, and has put on hat, coat, and muffler. He opens the typing door now.*

BIRKINSHAW (*speaking to MISS JANUS inside*): I'm just off, miss.

MISS JANUS (*off*): All right.

BIRKINSHAW: There's not much more to do.

MISS JANUS: I'll see to it. I'll be out in a minute.

BIRKINSHAW: Right you are. Good-night, miss.

MISS JANUS: Good-night.

BIRKINSHAW (*taking up a pile of stamped letters*): Good-night, Mr. Brewer. Good-night, miss.

PAT: Good-night.

BREWER: Be a good boy. Don't over-excite yourself.

BIRKINSHAW: Wish I could.

[*Exit.*

BREWER (*moving to PAT, who is standing waiting for letters in press*): Are you going to be long?

PAT: No.

BREWER: Well, I'll just put this in my safe, and then I'll come down for you. Is that all right?

PAT: I've got to change.

BREWER: Don't bother if we're only going to my flat.

PAT: Aren't we going out after?

BREWER: Do you want to?

PAT: I thought we were going to the theatre.

BREWER: Well, we'll see.

PAT: I must change if we are.

BREWER: You can go like that.

PAT: No. I'm all officey. It won't take me long.

BREWER: All right. Do you want to go to the theatre?

[PAT *nods*.

(*Enigmatically*): Well, change anyway.

[*Blows her a kiss and—goes out.*

PAT *takes letters out of press.*

HEC. *comes in. He carries his hat. PAT does not see him for a moment, and he stands looking at her. Then she turns and sees him with a start.*

PAT: Oh, you frightened me!

HEC.: I'm sorry.

PAT: What do you want?

HEC.: Going home soon?

PAT (*a little startled*): Why?

HEC.: Can I take you?

[*Pat shakes her head.*

Why not? Let's go to the pictures.

PAT: I can't.

HEC.: Why not?

PAT: I'm doing something else.

HEC. (*disappointed*): Oh.

PAT: I'm sorry.

HEC.: Are you? Why can't you come? Do! I'll pay.

PAT: It isn't that.

HEC.: What is it, then? What are you doing?

PAT (*forced to it*): I'm going out.

HEC.: With Dorice?

PAT: No.

HEC.: Who then? Not . . . What's-is-name?

PAT: Yes.

HEC.: Oh . . . I see. (*Turns.*) Well . . . all right, then. (*Moves to go.*)

PAT (*sadly*): Hec.!

HEC. (*turning*): What?

PAT: Don't go off like that. Let's go out to-morrow night.

HEC.: No, thanks. I'm doing something else.

PAT (*reproachfully*): Hec.

HEC.: Good-night.

PAT: I've nearly done that story now. I'm sorry I've been so long . . .

HEC.: It doesn't matter. You needn't bother.

PAT: But I want to. I think it's awfully good.

HEC.: It isn't. It's all rot. You can tear it up.

PAT: Hec., don't! What's the matter with you?

HEC.: Nothing. Good-night. I hope you'll enjoy yourself.

[MISS JANUS *comes in L.*

MISS JANUS (*to HEC.*): Oh, hullo.

HEC.: Hullo, miss.

MISS JANUS (*to PAT*): Are those letters ready?

PAT: Here. They're not folded yet.

MISS JANUS: Give me the envelopes. I'll do 'em.

PAT: I will.

MISS JANUS: It's all right. I've got to stay. You want to get off, don't you?

PAT: Well . . .

MISS JANUS: Push 'em over.

[PAT *gives her the letters and a pile of envelopes.*

MISS JANUS *sits down with them, folds, puts them into envelopes, enters and stamps them during the ensuing scenes. There is a difficult moment of silence.*

HEC. *is still standing above the doorway R. PAT back of table. She looks from him to MISS JANUS and then, with a half-toss of her head, goes in L.*

HEC. *stares after her. MISS JANUS goes on working.*

PAT *returns carrying towel and suit-case. She crosses the stage and—goes out R., without looking at either of them.*

*Another pause.*

MISS JANUS: Are you waiting for something?

HEC.: No. Good-night.

[*Puts on his hat and makes again to go. Gets just out of door and*

*then comes back.*

I say, miss . . .

MISS JANUS: What?

HEC.: Can't you do anything with Pat? It's driving me silly.

MISS JANUS: Well, why don't *you* do something, then?

HEC.: What? I asked her to come to the pictures to-night. She's going out with *him*.

MISS JANUS: I know.

HEC.: Well, what *can* I do? I can't take her out like he does. I can't give her presents . . . evening cloaks. . . .

MISS JANUS: What do you mean?

HEC.: That new one she's got. . . . I saw her go out in it the other night, with him. I was waiting outside . . . watching for 'em to go. I meant to follow them, only they got a taxi. . . . Well, that wasn't hers, I know. I'd been saving up to buy her one for her birthday in July. She said she wanted one. At least, it wasn't going to be a cloak . . . it was a shawl. Spanish . . . you know . . . with fringe and flowers on it. She saw it in a shop once when we were together. So I know she hasn't got a coat for evenings, 'cause she said so then. And when I saw this . . . well, then I knew.

MISS JANUS: What?

HEC.: Well, that he'd given it her, I suppose.

MISS JANUS: He didn't give it her. It belongs to Miss Bufton. She's only borrowed it.

HEC.: Oh . . . oh, I never thought of that.

MISS JANUS: So you can give her the shawl, after all. Only I shouldn't wait for her birthday, if I were you.

HEC. (*thinking*): No. No. No, but I can't afford it yet. I'm putting by for it, week by week.

MISS JANUS: How much is it?

HEC.: Thirty bob. Of course, there are cheaper ones—but this is the one she liked. She didn't know the price. It's real.

MISS JANUS: And you haven't got thirty bob?

HEC.: Well, I could find it, I suppose, out of my other savings. (*Very uncomfortable and unhappy*) You see, when I saw this the other night . . . her

going out with him all pushed up like that . . . I just went home and took what I'd saved . . . for the shawl, I mean . . . and went out and blued it.

MISS JANUS: What on?

HEC.: I took a girl out . . . what I met up West, in the Corner House . . . took her out to supper and the pictures. It wasn't any fun. I was too fed-up to be able to enjoy myself. I kept thinking of Pat, and what she was doing.

MISS JANUS: Yes.

HEC.: Still, I suppose I could break into my post-office account.

MISS JANUS: What's that for?

HEC.: How d'you mean? It's my savings.

MISS JANUS: What for?

HEC.: The future. I don't know what for, exactly, but . . .

MISS JANUS: In case you ever want to get married?

HEC.: Yes.

MISS JANUS: Do you think you will?

HEC.: I expect so . . . one day.

MISS JANUS: Not yet? You don't want to yet?

HEC.: Fat lot of use my wanting.

MISS JANUS: But *do* you?

HEC.: I don't know. No. (*Then, with sudden defiance*) Yes! Yes, I do.

MISS JANUS: To Pat?

HEC. (*as before*): Yes!

MISS JANUS: Well, that's an improvement! Have you told her so?

HEC.: Haven't had a chance.

MISS JANUS: She hasn't been out *every* night, has she?

HEC.: No . . . no, but I've been bloody fed-up. . . . Oh, excuse me, miss. . . .

MISS JANUS: That's all right. Don't mind me.

HEC.: And I've been sort of . . . keeping away from her. Thought I'd chuck it, not see her any more. I know I'm a fool to let it worry me, but it does. I can't keep my mind on my work, or anything . . .

MISS JANUS (*with a smile*): But you're not in love with her?

HEC.: I don't know. P'raps I am. I feel all sappy about her . . . can't stop thinking

about her.

MISS JANUS: Well, tell her so.

HEC.: Fat lot she'd care!

MISS JANUS: I don't know. It's a thing women rather like to hear.

HEC.: She's gone on *him*.

MISS JANUS: I don't think she is, really.

HEC.: I'd like to knock his block off.

MISS JANUS: That wouldn't be such a bad idea, either.

HEC.: You *don't* think she's keen on him?

MISS JANUS: No.

HEC.: It's just . . . his cash, and what he can give her?

MISS JANUS: Not only that.

HEC.: What else?

MISS JANUS: Well, he finds her attractive. He probably tells her so . . . anyway, lets her know it. She probably hasn't had very much of that before.

HEC. (*reflectively*): No.

MISS JANUS: Has she?

HEC.: No . . . I don't suppose she has.

MISS JANUS: Well, there you are, then.

HEC.: Yes, but what can *I* do?

MISS JANUS: You know, you make me feel like a . . . well, never mind. I should have thought it was obvious what you could do.

HEC.: Tell her *I* find her attractive, do you mean?

MISS JANUS: Yes.

HEC.: I couldn't.

MISS JANUS: Why not?

HEC.: Pat and I aren't like that. Besides, what could I say? (*Dramatically*) "I love you!" Like they do in novels? "The scent of your tresses maddens me"?

MISS JANUS: I wasn't joking.

HEC.: Nor was I. At least . . . I *wouldn't* know how to tell her. As I say, we've never been like that. F'rinstance, she'd probably think I was bats if I tried to kiss her.

MISS JANUS: Oh, I don't know. Do you want to kiss her?

HEC.: Yes, I do . . . awfully.

MISS JANUS: Well, go on then. I don't think she'd mind.

HEC.: Yes, but when? Where? I can't go to her place . . . and there's such crowds of us at home. I never really see her at all. We haven't anywhere to go, except the pictures.

MISS JANUS: I *have* heard of it being done in the pictures.

HEC.: Yes, I know. *I'd* thought of that. But I want time to talk to her . . . properly about things . . . and if I'm going to think of marriage, I've got to save up, and work like stink. Oh, it couldn't be for donkey's years yet . . . I'm not earning enough . . . but I mean, I shouldn't have money to waste on the pictures.

MISS JANUS: Look here. I like you two kids. Let me do something for you.

HEC.: What?

MISS JANUS: Give you an evening out . . . properly. Then you can talk to her and . . . everything.

HEC.: How d'you mean?

MISS JANUS: Let me stand it you.

HEC.: No.

MISS JANUS: Yes . . . please let me. I'd like to. Wait a minute.

*[She goes into inner room and returns with her bag, opens it, takes out some notes.]*

Get her the shawl.

HEC.: I'll get that, anyway.

MISS JANUS: Well, take this then (*puts notes into an envelope*) and give her a chance to wear it . . .

HEC.: No, miss . . .

MISS JANUS (*growing slightly hysterical*): Please . . . please do. Take her out to dinner and the theatre . . . or drive down to Richmond in a taxi. It's a good place. Anywhere, where there's lights and water . . . and if it comes off, put me down among the wedding presents as: "Miss Blanche Janus . . . opportunity."

HEC. (*taking it*): I don't like . . .

MISS JANUS: Please . . .

*[She covers her face with her hand, on the edge of tears.]*

HEC.: Is anything the matter, miss?

MISS JANUS: No. Take it and go, please.

HEC. (*putting it in his pocket*): Well . . . it's jolly decent of you.

MISS JANUS: That's all right.

HEC. (*hovering*): Well . . . good-night, miss. I don't know how I'll ever say it.

MISS JANUS: Good-night. You'd better go now. She'll be back in a minute.

HEC.: Right you are, miss. Good-night, and . . . thanks very much.

MISS JANUS: Good-night. Oh, half a jiff. Here, you wait downstairs. I'm going to talk to her.

[HEC. goes. MISS JANUS goes on with the letters. She cries a little. MISS HOOPER comes back. She has changed into semi-evening dress.]

Hullo, I didn't know you were going out.

MISS HOOPER: I'm meeting Douglas at seven.

MISS JANUS: Any news?

MISS HOOPER: He was seeing her to-day. Going to tell her about *me*. Ask her again.

MISS JANUS: And if she still won't?

MISS HOOPER: Then I'm going to do what I wish I'd had the guts to do three years ago.

MISS JANUS: You haven't told him that?

MISS HOOPER: I'm not quite a fool.

[MISS HOOPER goes through into inner room, leaving door open.]

MISS JANUS: Is Pat still upstairs?

MISS HOOPER: Yes. She's nearly ready.

[*She comes to door, putting on hat and coat.*]

MISS JANUS (*quietly, pause*): Irma . . . if he says she *will* divorce him . . . you won't go and be a fool, will you?

MISS HOOPER: I wasn't born yesterday.

MISS JANUS: No, but you're keen on him.

MISS HOOPER: It may surprise you to learn, Blanche . . . it did me . . . that he's suddenly gone all *anxious* to marry me.

MISS JANUS: So there was some point in holding off—eh?

MISS HOOPER: Quite a lot apparently. I seem to have played my cards right. (*With*

*a moment of genuine emotion*) God, but I have hated it, though! Well, this is the last time. So long.

MISS JANUS: Good luck.

MISS HOOPER: Thanks.

[*She goes. MISS JANUS sits with her face in her hands. PAT comes back. She is wearing a pretty, but very simple, and slightly pathetic evening frock.*

PAT: I thought you'd gone. Don't sit there like that.

MISS JANUS (*removing her hands and smiling*): It's all right.

PAT: I wish I could do something.

[*MISS JANUS smiles, and finishes off the post, locks cash-box, etc., and puts things away. PAT goes in L. and returns wearing an evening coat.*

MISS JANUS *rises*.

MISS JANUS: Pat.

PAT: What?

MISS JANUS: Don't go out with him to-night. Do that for me.

PAT: I've promised.

MISS JANUS: Well, call it off. Will you?

PAT: I can't. He's got everything prepared.

MISS JANUS: Don't worry about that.

PAT: But . . .

MISS JANUS: If *I* ask you . . . for your own sake?

PAT (*after a pause*): All right. I'll try.

MISS JANUS: And be nice to Hec. when you see him.

[*She goes in L.*

PAT: Did he talk to you just now?

MISS JANUS (*off*): Yes.

PAT: Is that why you want me not to go to-night?

MISS JANUS (*off*): Partly.

PAT: Well, I don't see why . . .

MISS JANUS (*appearing at door—putting on hat and coat*): I'm asking you.

PAT: All right.

[*MISS JANUS comes out in hat and coat.*

MISS JANUS: Thanks. I don't think you'll be sorry. It's twenty-five past. Our lord won't be coming now, I should think. Good-night.

PAT: Good-night.

[MISS JANUS *looks at her—then moves to her and kisses her, and then goes.* PAT *stands at table alone.*

BREWER *comes in, carrying coat and hat.*

BREWER: Have I kept you waiting?

PAT: No, I've only just come down.

BREWER: Well, we'll just give Miss Janus time to get clear.

[*Offers cigarette case.*

Have one?

PAT: Thank you.

[*She takes one and he lights it for her.*

BREWER: You *are* sweet.

PAT (*nervously*): Mr. Brewer.

BREWER: What? By the way, why not Eric? It's after hours, even if we *are* still in the office.

PAT: I couldn't call you that.

BREWER: Why not?

PAT: I couldn't.

*Brewer (sitting on table)*: Funny baby, aren't you? Well, what is it?

PAT: I can't come to-night.

BREWER: What?

PAT: I can't come.

BREWER: Why not?

PAT: I can't.

BREWER: What nonsense. Why, you're all dressed and everything. Of course you can come.

PAT: No, really.

*Brewer (beginning to get slightly angry)*: What are you talking about?

PAT (*worried*): I ought never to have come out with you at all.

BREWER: Who's been getting at you? Miss Janus again?

PAT: No.

BREWER: You're a bad liar, aren't you? And because she's jealous you're going to throw me over, eh?

PAT: She's not jealous. You've no right to say that. It isn't true!

BREWER (*mocking*): No?

PAT: No! And it isn't true what you said this afternoon, either.

BREWER (*smiling*): Are you sure of that?

PAT: Yes!

BREWER (*with a smug smile*): Well, *I'm* not. You heard what Miss Bufton said about her looking all peculiar this afternoon . . . ?

PAT: Yes, but that was because . . .

*[She checks herself.]*

BREWER: Because what?

PAT: Nothing. She had a headache.

BREWER: That may have been what she told *you*. (*Smiles.*) Anyway, don't let's have any more nonsense about your not coming to-night.

PAT: I'm not coming. I promised.

BREWER: Who? Anyway, you promised *me* first. Didn't you? Didn't you? (*Smiling*) Don't be silly, Pat, of course you're coming. Eh?

*[He takes her in his arms.]*

PAT (*struggling*): No . . .

BREWER: Yes!

*[He kisses her.]*

Yes . . . and yes . . . and yes!

*[He kisses her again, passionately this time. PAT tears herself out of his arms.]*

PAT: You beast to kiss me like that!

*[She wipes the back of her hand across her mouth.]*

How dare you? How dare you?

BREWER (*laughing*): Why not? Didn't you like it? Pat!

*[He seizes her again.]*

PAT: No! Leave me alone! Let me go! If you touch me again, I'll burn you.

*[BREWER laughs.]*

I will.

*[He tries to kiss her again, she thrusts her cigarette at him.]*

BREWER: Damn you!

PAT (*crying a little*): I warned you.

BREWER: You've burned my shirt, damn you! Do you know it cost me three pounds?

PAT (*as before*): Well, you shouldn't wear silk shirts!

BREWER: You little beast. Give me that cigarette.

PAT: No!

BREWER: Give it me.

*[He seizes her wrist.]*

PAT: Don't . . . you're hurting!

BREWER (*twisting her wrist*): Drop it then.

*[With a squeal of pain, she does so.]*

There! Now.

*[He tries to seize her again. She struggles, breaks from him, and he chases her, pinning her against the wall L.]*

MR. WALKER (*who has appeared a moment ago at door R., wearing hat and coat and carrying bag and umbrella*): What's all this about?

*[Silence. BREWER releases PAT. She casts one terrified look at MR.*

*WALKER and then bolts into the typists' room. BREWER stands dogged.]*

What does this mean?

BREWER: I'm very sorry, sir.

MR. WALKER: So this is what goes on after office hours? (*Very sternly and angrily*) Really, Brewer. . . .

*[HEC. has also appeared, loitering in doorway.]*

MR. WALKER *sees him.*

Yes, what is it? What do you want?

*[HEC. looks helpless.]*

What do you want?

HEC. (*stammering*): I . . . I was waiting for Miss Milligan, sir.

MR. WALKER (*a faint smile twitching at the corner of his mouth*): She's in there. (*To BREWER*) Has everyone else gone?

BREWER: Yes, sir.

MR. WALKER: I'll see you in the morning, get along now. The office is closed.

BREWER: Very good, sir.

*[He takes his hat and coat, and goes out.]*

MR. WALKER *goes out. Pause.*

HEC. *(going to door):* Pat.

PAT *(opening it):* What do you want?

HEC.: Are you coming home?

*[She stares at him, dumbly, then turns without a word, and goes back into the typists' room, leaving the door open.]*

HEC. *stands waiting. She reappears, wearing her hat and tweed coat, in place of the evening cloak, and carrying her attaché case. She is crying and trying not to show it.*

Pat.

PAT: Leave me alone!

*[She goes out R.]*

HEC. *stares after her; stands a moment, thinking, then with sudden resolution claps on his hat and goes after her.*

CURTAIN



# ACT III

## SCENE I

SCENE: *Mr. Walker's room. 9.30 next morning.*

AT RISE: *When the curtain rises, BIRKINSHAW is arranging the morning's post in a pile on the desk, and altering the calendar. He whistles as he does so. The door opens and Mr. WALKER comes in.*

BIRKINSHAW: Good morning, sir.

WALKER: Good morning.

[BIRKINSHAW *takes his hat, coat and umbrella and puts them in cupboard.* MR. WALKER *goes to desk and begins looking at and opening letters.*

Mr. Brewer here yet?

BIRKINSHAW: Haven't seen him, sir.

WALKER: Ask him to see me as soon as he comes in.

BIRKINSHAW: Very good, sir. (*Pause.*) Excuse me, sir . . .

WALKER: Yes?

Birkinshaw: I'd like to thank you for those tickets, sir.

WALKER: Tickets?

BIRKINSHAW: Yes, sir. That concert last night, sir.

WALKER (*smiling*): Oh . . . did you go?

BIRKINSHAW: Yes, sir.

WALKER: Did you enjoy it?

BIRKINSHAW: Yes, sir. Thank you very much, sir.

WALKER: Good.

BIRKINSHAW: Anything else, sir?

WALKER (*handing him some letters, and ringing buzzer*): Give those to Willis, and tell him I'd like to see that draft assignment he's working on.

BIRKINSHAW: Now, sir?

WALKER: No, later. I'll ring for him. Tell him not to go out without seeing me.

BIRKINSHAW: Very good, sir.

[*He goes, passing Miss JANUS who comes in.*

WALKER (*pushing a document across table*): I want three copies of that, Miss Janus, please.

[*She makes a note on it.*

You might get on with it at once. I'll give the letters to Miss Hooper. Is she here yet?

MISS JANUS: Not yet, Mr. Walker.

WALKER: Well, ask her to come to me as soon as she arrives.

MISS JANUS: Yes, Mr. Walker.

[*Pause. He goes on reading letters.*

Mr. Walker.

WALKER: Yes?

MISS JANUS: Could I speak to you a moment?

WALKER: Certainly. What is it?

MISS JANUS: I want to give in my notice.

WALKER: What's that?

MISS JANUS: I'm sorry, Mr. Walker.

WALKER (*amazed*): Miss Janus! This is very surprising.

MISS JANUS: Yes, I know.

WALKER: Are you getting married or something?

MISS JANUS (*impassive*): No, Mr. Walker.

WALKER: Have you got another job?

MISS JANUS: No, Mr. Walker.

WALKER: Well, what is it then?

MISS JANUS: It's just that I want to leave.

WALKER: But, Miss Janus, you've been here ten years.

MISS JANUS: I know.

WALKER (*smiling*): Why, I look on you as part of the firm almost.

MISS JANUS: I'm sorry.

WALKER: Is it a question of money? Because, if so . . .

MISS JANUS: It isn't that.

WALKER: Well, what is it, then? Aren't you happy here? Don't you like the work

any more?

MISS JANUS: I don't know that I've ever really liked it, Mr. Walker. But it's just that I want to give it up, that's all. I'll stay on until you've got someone else, of course. I don't want to cause you any inconvenience.

WALKER (*after a brief pause*): I suppose I've no alternative but to accept your notice, Miss Janus, but I think it's a little foolish of you. May I ask what it is that you intend doing?

MISS JANUS: I don't quite know, Mr. Walker. I think I'm going abroad.

WALKER: Abroad? To take a post of some sort?

MISS JANUS: No. No, I don't think so.

WALKER: Sit down a moment, Miss Janus. (*She does so. Pause.*) You're perfectly free, of course, to do as you like in this matter, and I know that I've no right to ask you for your reasons. But you've been with the firm a very long time, and I don't like to see you doing something you may afterwards very seriously regret. I don't know anything about your private affairs, of course, but do they justify you in throwing up a job like this and just . . . going abroad?

MISS JANUS: I think so.

WALKER: And when you return?

MISS JANUS: I don't know, Mr. Walker.

WALKER: You've no idea what you're going to do?

MISS JANUS: No, Mr. Walker.

WALKER: Miss Janus, forgive me, but . . . aren't you being a little foolish? Are you financially in a position to do this?

MISS JANUS: For a time.

WALKER: Yes, but after that?

MISS JANUS: I don't know.

WALKER (*after a pause*): Miss Janus, I can't let you do this.

MISS JANUS: It's my affair, Mr. Walker.

WALKER: If you'd like to take a holiday . . . a proper holiday . . . three months say . . .

MISS JANUS: No, Mr. Walker.

WALKER: Well, as I say, I can't refuse to accept your notice, but that is how I shall regard it. You have been very useful to us here and if you care to return . . .

within a reasonable time . . . say, anything up to six months . . . you will find your job still open for you.

MISS JANUS: That's very generous of you, Mr. Walker.

WALKER: Not at all.

MISS JANUS: I'm afraid I shall not be able to avail myself of your offer.

WALKER: Well, we'll see. Now get on with those copies. (*Rings buzzer.*)

MISS JANUS: Yes, Mr. Walker.

WALKER (*picking up another envelope*): Oh, just a moment. . . . (*He becomes absorbed in the contents of the letter.*)

[MISS HOOPER *comes in. He looks up, and then down at the letter. MISS HOOPER and MISS JANUS stand waiting. MISS HOOPER nudges MISS JANUS and indicates a ring upon her engagement finger. By dumb show between them MISS JANUS expresses mild, slightly listless, surprised approval and MISS HOOPER gratification. MR. WALKER looks up absent-mindedly.*

Yes?

MISS HOOPER: You rang for me, Mr. Walker.

WALKER: Oh, yes, I want to give you the letters. (*Pushing a paper across*) I want ten copies of that statement, Miss Janus. Have one sent to each of the beneficiaries under the trust.

MISS JANUS: Very good, Mr. Walker.

WALKER: That's all.

[MISS JANUS *goes. BIRKINSHAW comes in.*

Yes, what is it?

BIRKINSHAW: Miss Willesden's housekeeper, sir, on the telephone. Trunk call from Brighton. Wants to speak to you particular.

WALKER: Oh, very well. Am I through?

BIRKINSHAW: Yes, sir. (*He goes.*)

WALKER (*on 'phone, while MISS HOOPER stands waiting*): Hullo . . . hullo, yes . . . speaking! Yes. Oh dear, I'm sorry to hear that. Yes. Yes, of course. Yes, I think we have. Very well. I'll send someone down . . . probably to-morrow. That'll give you time. I'm very sorry. Good-bye. (*He puts down the receiver and rings buzzer.*) One moment, Miss Hooper.

[*Enter BIRKINSHAW.*

Is Mr. Brewer here yet?

BIRKINSHAW: Just come, I think, sir.

WALKER: Ask him to come to me at once, will you? (*As BIRKINSHAW makes to go*)  
Wait a minute, wait a minute. Don't be in such a hurry. Ask him to bring Miss Willesden's will down with him, will you? I think it's in his safe.

BIRKINSHAW: Very good, sir.

[*Exit.*]

WALKER: I'll have to do the letters later, Miss Hooper. I'll send for you. You've got something to go on with?

MISS HOOPER: Oh, yes, Mr. Walker.

WALKER: All right.

[*MISS HOOPER goes.*]

MR. WALKER *goes on opening and reading letters until BREWER comes. He carries a long envelope.*

Oh, good morning, Brewer. You're late.

BREWER: I'm sorry. You wanted Miss Willesden's will?

WALKER: Is that it?

BREWER: Yes. She brought it yesterday about six o'clock.

WALKER: Her housekeeper's just telephoned. They found her dead in bed this morning.

BREWER (*lightly*): Good God!

WALKER: You'd better go down there to-morrow to see to things. (*Takes up envelope.*) Did you make this for her?

BREWER: No, she did it herself on a post-office form . . . asked me to keep it sealed.

WALKER: I hope it's all right.

BREWER: Most of it's copied from one I drew for her, I believe. She came in yesterday specially to sign it, and then took it away, and brought this back instead.

WALKER: Was she all right?

BREWER: She didn't seem any madder than usual, if that's what you mean.

WALKER: H'm. Well, let's have a look at it. (*Opens will, and looks first at foot.*) The attestation's all right. (*Pause.*) Good gracious!

BREWER: What's she done?

[*He tries to look.* MR. WALKER *folds the will to prevent his seeing.*

WALKER: What was the will you prepared for her?

BREWER: Mostly charities. Legacies to her servants and the residue to some home for retired virgins. I've got a carbon copy.

WALKER: Was that all?

BREWER: I think so. Why?

WALKER: Did she see anyone else besides you yesterday afternoon?

BREWER: I really don't know. Yes, I think she was talking to Miss Milligan while she was waiting in here.

WALKER: Oh. How long for?

BREWER: I don't know. About five minutes. Why, what's up?

WALKER: Never mind now. (*Pause.*) Look here, Brewer, about last night. I don't know whether you've anything you want to say?

BREWER: I don't think so.

WALKER: No. I don't think there's anything *I* need say, except that it can't go on. I'm very sorry, Brewer, but you'll have to go.

BREWER: Go?

WALKER: I'm afraid so. I can't have that sort of thing in the office. I've talked to you about it before. I shall be sorry to lose you . . . you've been good at your work . . . but I'm afraid I've no alternative. I can't have you assaulting the typists like that.

BREWER (*after a pause*): Very well.

WALKER: I've every right to dismiss you without notice. I don't want to do that . . . for your sake, so we'll take the three months clause in your agreement as being operative in this case. That'll take you till the first of August. Only . . . for the remainder of your time here, I don't want you to make use of the girls in any way. You'll give your dictation to Willis . . . I'll instruct him about that . . . or draft your letters in longhand if he's busy. And any copying you have you'll send down by Birkinshaw. (*Speaking firmly and distinctly*) I don't want you to use the general office for any purpose whatsoever. You will keep to your own room upstairs entirely. If I find you down here under any circumstances you go at once. You understand?

BREWER (*very subdued*): Yes.

WALKER: Very well. (*Rings buzzer.*) By the way, I suppose you're not in any way

responsible for Miss Janus giving me notice this morning, are you?

BREWER (*surprised*): Miss Janus?

WALKER: Yes. Do you know any reason why she wants to leave?

BREWER: No, none at all. (*With a sudden thought*) Unless . . .

WALKER: Unless?

BREWER: No. None at all. I can't imagine.

WALKER: I wonder.

[*He returns to his papers. BREWER smiles to himself. PAT comes in. She and BREWER avoid each other's eyes.*]

That's all, Brewer.

[BREWER goes.]

PAT: You rang, Mr. Walker?

WALKER: Yes, sit down.

[*She does so.*]

Did you see Miss Willesden here yesterday?

PAT: Yes, Mr. Walker.

WALKER: Did you talk to her?

PAT: Yes.

WALKER: What about?

PAT: I don't know . . . (*Alarmed*) Oh, she hasn't said anything, has she? She promised she wouldn't.

WALKER: What about?

PAT: About me. Oh, Mr. Walker, I wasn't complaining . . . honestly, I wasn't. She promised she wouldn't say a word.

WALKER: Miss Milligan, what are you talking about? What did she promise she wouldn't say a word about?

PAT: She was asking me questions about myself, and she wanted to know how much money I got . . . here, I mean. I tried not to tell her, honestly I did, Mr. Walker, but she kept on and on, and at last I had to. And she said she thought it wasn't enough and that she was going to speak to you about it. I told her she mustn't, and that it would look as if I'd been complaining. . . .

WALKER: Was that all?

PAT: Yes.

WALKER: I see.

PAT: She hasn't written to you about it? She said last night when she came back that she was going to write to you, but that was about her will.

WALKER: Do you know anything about that?

PAT: No, except that she didn't sign the one Miss Buffon typed. She made one on a form, I heard her say.

WALKER: And that's all you know?

PAT: Yes, Mr. Walker.

WALKER: She didn't tell you what she was going to do with her will?

PAT: Oh, no, Mr. Walker.

WALKER: Miss Milligan, Miss Willesden died at her home in Brighton last night.

PAT: Oh . . . !

WALKER: And in that will she made yesterday afternoon she left you a hundred and fifty pounds a year.

PAT (*shocked*): No . . . oh, no!

WALKER (*opening will*): Listen. "I desire that an annuity of £150 per annum be bought and paid quarterly to Miss Patricia Milligan, typist to Messrs. Walker, Windermere, Solicitors, of 370<sub>A</sub>, London Wall, that she may have less reason to fear old age."

PAT (*crying*): I can't take it.

WALKER: Why not?

PAT: No . . . she'd no reason to leave it me. I feel as if I'd asked for it.

WALKER: I don't think you need feel that.

PAT (*still crying*): It's dreadful.

WALKER: All the rest of her money goes to charity. You needn't feel you're robbing anyone.

PAT: But I didn't know her. I'd only spoken to her once before.

WALKER: I must admit that I don't care very much for the idea of my staff receiving legacies from clients, but Miss Willesden was rather an exceptional case. And I'd rather you didn't discuss your private affairs with the clients . . . but there again, I'll admit the circumstances were unusual. Miss Willesden was a little peculiar.

PAT: I know.

WALKER (*smiling*): Well, don't let it occur again, Miss Milligan, that's all. And I congratulate you. You'd better go back to your work.

PAT (*rising*): Mr. Walker.

WALKER: What is it?

PAT: I'd like to give in my notice.

WALKER (*sharply*): What? Is this an epidemic?

PAT: If you please.

WALKER: Why? Because you've come into money?

PAT: No . . . oh, no!

WALKER: Why, then?

PAT: Because of last night.

WALKER: Oh yes . . . last night. I'd forgotten about that. Sit down again, Miss Milligan. (*She does so.*) Tell me about last night.

PAT: I can't.

WALKER: When I came in, Mr. Brewer appeared to be . . . assaulting you. Was that the case?

PAT: It was my own fault.

WALKER: Oh?

PAT: For going out with him in the first place. I knew I oughtn't.

WALKER: You've been going out with Mr. Brewer?

PAT: Yes.

WALKER: I see. Miss Milligan, I'm not going to ask you any more questions, but I want to talk to you. You're very young, and you haven't been here very long, but there's one thing you've got to understand. The only way to run an office is for every member to make himself . . . or herself . . . as nearly as possible an automaton, or a machine. That's a hard thing to say, but I'm afraid it's true. You can't bring personalities and personal relationships into business.

PAT (*whispering*): I know.

WALKER: You're here to work. You can't *do* your work if you mix other things up with it. That's why it was wrong of you to go out with Mr. Brewer . . . (*with a smile*) quite apart from any other reasons. Outside the office, have as good a time as you like or can, but in the office . . . work. And when you've done your work . . . go home.

PAT (*tearful*): I'm sorry.

WALKER: Yes, well, don't cry about it. (*Smiling*) That's another thing you mustn't do in the office. (*Serious again*) I don't want you to think I don't sympathise. I know office work's no fun. I don't always enjoy it myself. There are lots of things I'd rather be doing, and thinking about, but they can't intrude here. You know, my old father always used to warn me that it wasn't going to be possible having women in the office . . . he retired the day we engaged our first woman typist. "Work's work," he always used to say, "but with women about it never can be." I'm afraid he was rather right, but it's a thing we can't go back on now. So it's up to you to minimise it, do you see? (PAT *nods*.) Very well. Now I don't want to accept your notice. I can promise you you'll have no more trouble with Mr. Brewer, if you'll behave yourself—and there'll probably be quite a lot more work for you in the near future. What did I tell you about crying in the office? Go along now.

[*Rings buzzer.*]

PAT (*rising*): Thank you, Mr. Walker. (*She goes.*)

[MISS HOOPER *comes in.*]

WALKER: Now, Miss Hooper, we can get down to the letters at last. Oh, by the way, you're a friend of Miss Janus, aren't you? Did *you* know she was going to give me notice this morning?

MISS HOOPER (*staggered*): No, Mr. Walker!

WALKER: Have you any idea why?

MISS HOOPER: No, Mr. Walker, I haven't.

WALKER: Oh. All right. Dear Sir, In re Margetson. Your reference: KLM downward stroke Z. We are in receipt of your letter . . . Oh, just one moment. I want to say a word to Mr. Windermere before he goes out.

[*Exit.*]

MISS HOOPER *sits alone.* MISS JANUS *comes in, goes to filing cabinet for some papers.*

MISS HOOPER: I say, Blanche.

MISS JANUS: What?

MISS HOOPER: What's this about your giving notice?

MISS JANUS: Who told you?

MISS HOOPER: Our lord.

MISS JANUS: Well?

MISS HOOPER (*eagerly*): What's happened? Have you pulled it off, too?  
(*Laughing*) Are we . . . sisters of the ring?

MISS JANUS: Oh, shut up, can't you?

[*She goes out swiftly, with a paper. MISS HOOPER stares after her in amazement.*

CURTAIN

SCENE II

SCENE: *The general office. About 3.30 the same afternoon.*

*When the curtain rises, BIRKINSHAW is at the table, reading something with fierce and gloating interest. MISS BUFTON comes in R.*

BIRKINSHAW: I saw, miss . . . 'ave a look at this.

MISS BUFTON: What is it?

BIRKINSHAW: Letters in that divorce case . . . Maverick v. Maverick. I've been trying to get hold of them for weeks.

MISS BUFTON: Where did you get them?

BIRKINSHAW: Took 'em off Willis' table just now while 'e was in with Mr. Walker. 'E's been copying them.

MISS BUFTON: I know. Are they *awful*?

BIRKINSHAW: Lovely and rude!

MISS BUFTON: I *oughtn't* to look at them. Mr. Walker wouldn't like it . . .

BIRKINSHAW: Just look at this bit.

MISS BUFTON (*looking*): Oh, I say! Really! Oh, I say!

[*She sits down and goes on reading, avidly. BIRKINSHAW leans over her shoulder.*

BIRKINSHAW: Wait a minute . . . I'll show you the best bit. (*He does.*)

[*MISS HOOPER comes in.*

MISS HOOPER: What have you got there?

MISS BUFTON: The Maverick letters . . . they're *terrible*.

MISS HOOPER: Let's see. (*She joins the group.*) My giddy aunt! Turn over.

MISS BUFTON: Oh, I say!

[*PAT comes in.*

PAT: What are you reading?

MISS HOOPER: Nothing for little girls.

PAT: What is it? Let me see.

MISS HOOPER: No, you're too young.

PAT: Don't be silly. What is it?

MISS BUFTON: Love-letters. From that man to Mrs. Maverick.

BIRKINSHAW: There's some from 'er to 'im.

MISS BUFTON: Oh, do let's see. Do you remember the day she came up here . . . in that sable coat, and *smothered* in diamonds . . . ?

BIRKINSHAW: *And* what a niff! Coo-blow! 'Ad to fumigate the place after 'er, we did. Look: 'ere we are. "Lovey boy." That's 'ow she begins. "It is three o'clock, and you have just left me . . ."

PAT: Don't!

BIRKINSHAW: What d'you mean?

PAT: Don't read them . . . it's horrible.

BIRKINSHAW (*blandly*): Why?

PAT: It is.

BIRKINSHAW: All in the day's work.

PAT: They weren't meant to be read . . . like that. Bufton, how *can* you . . . sit there reading them like that. Suppose they were *your* letters . . .

BIRKINSHAW (*guffaws*): Huh!

[MISS BUFTON *puts them down rather uncomfortably*.

PAT: No, but suppose you'd written them . . . to someone you were in love with . . . would you like to think of them being read . . . like that?

MISS BUFTON (*faintly*): No . . . no. Still, they're only copies. It isn't as if they were on note-paper!

[*The group breaks up*.

BIRKINSHAW: What d'yer think of old Willesden Green kicking the bucket like that? Thought she was going to chuck a fit 'ere in the office last night, 's a matter of fact.

MISS HOOPER: I bet she had a tidy bit of money put away. I expect she kept it in a stocking under her bed.

PAT (*suddenly*): How *can* you talk like that?

[*Almost in tears, she goes in hurriedly L*.

MISS HOOPER: What the hell's the matter with her?

MISS BUFTON: I don't think she liked Birkinshaw talking about Miss Willesden like that. After all, she only died this morning. You know it made *me* feel quite funny, thinking it was only yesterday I'd been typing her will.

MISS HOOPER: Home for Indignant Spinsters or something, wasn't it?

MISS BUFTON: Yes . . . at Peacehaven!

MISS HOOPER: What waste.

*[The telephone signal clicks.]*

MISS BUFTON (*to* BIRKINSHAW): There's Mr. Brewer ringing for you.

BIRKINSHAW: 'E's been doing that all day. Sending for me to bring letters down to copy.

*[Goes to 'phone.]*

MISS BUFTON: He hasn't dictated one. Written them all out in longhand. I can't think why. And his writing's so difficult to read.

BIRKINSHAW (*on 'phone*): Hullo. Yes. What for? Oh, all right! (*Puts down receiver.*) Come and fetch something down for copying. Why the 'ell can't 'e bring it?

*[Exit.]*

MISS HOOPER: I don't know what's come over the place to-day. That kid (*indicating* PAT *within*) going all Christian on us; little Eric sulking upstairs, and Blanche going about looking like a tart at a christening.

MISS BUFTON: What's the matter with her?

MISS HOOPER: Gawd knows. You know she's given notice?

MISS BUFTON: No? Why?

MISS HOOPER: Haven't the foggiest, unless he's chucked her.

MISS BUFTON: Who? Her boy, do you mean? I say!

MISS HOOPER: Haven't had a word out of her all day.

MISS BUFTON: Did you tell her *you* were engaged?

MISS HOOPER: Yes.

MISS BUFTON: What did she say?

MISS HOOPER: Nothing.

MISS BUFTON: Didn't she think your ring was lovely?

MISS HOOPER: She hardly looked at it.

MISS BUFTON: I think it's beautiful. Such good taste. And so quiet, too.

MISS HOOPER: Deathly!

MISS BUFTON: Are you going to be married in church?

MISS HOOPER: I don't expect so.

MISS BUFTON: Oh! Oh, but don't you *want* a proper wedding? I do. I want confetti and everything.

MISS HOOPER: It's not that kind of a marriage.

MISS BUFTON: What do you mean?

MISS HOOPER (*pulling herself together*): He's been married before.

MISS BUFTON: Oh! Oh, I say! Yes, I see what you mean. It does seem to make a difference, somehow. It's as if the bloom had gone off it!

MISS HOOPER: Thanks!

[BIRKINSHAW *returns with document and an evening paper. PAT comes out of typing room and goes to cupboard at back for paper.*

BIRKINSHAW (*to MISS HOOPER*): 'Ere you are, miss. Three copies for Mr. Brewer.

MISS HOOPER: Have you been out?

BIRKINSHAW: No. Why?

MISS HOOPER: Where d'you get the paper?

BIRKINSHAW: Upstairs. Mr. Brewer's. Wanted to see what won the two-thirty.

MISS HOOPER: Have you been betting again?

BIRKINSHAW: Lift man gave me a tip this morning, miss. (*He picks up the paper and looks at the front page. Reading from the paper*) "Lost bridegroom doped? His mother's story. Went to see his fiancée and remembers no more" . . . "Married in person" . . . oh, no, in prison. "Ceremony performed in jail."

[*Turns to next page. MISS HOOPER is looking at the front page, which he is holding up.*

MISS HOOPER: Another air smash. (*She reads. Pause.*) Here, wait a minute.

BIRKINSHAW: What's up?

MISS HOOPER (*reading*): "Another air disaster. Foreign plane comes down in Channel. Dutch diplomats on board." (*With alarm in her voice*) Wait a minute. (*She snatches the paper from BIRKINSHAW.*) Good God!

MISS BUFTON: What is it?

MISS HOOPER (*reading from paper*): "Jacob van Hoff, Hermann Schelding and

their secretary, Capt. Jan Kellendonck.” That’s Blanche’s boy.

MISS BUFTON: Not . . . killed?

MISS HOOPER (*nods*): Oh, poor Blanche!

[P<sub>AT</sub> *listens, white faced.*

MISS BUFTON: When?

MISS HOOPER: This morning.

BIRKINSHAW: On ’is way to The ’ague. ’An past six this morning. Sunk in the Channel.

[*A faint moan from P<sub>AT</sub>.*

MISS BUFTON: Oh, poor thing!

MISS HOOPER: So that’s why . . . They must have telephoned her at home before she left.

MISS BUFTON: Fancy her coming!

MISS HOOPER: Oh, poor Blanche . . . no wonder she’s been like that all day. Oh, poor Blanche.

MISS BUFTON: But, I mean, fancy her coming to work, and giving notice and everything.

MISS HOOPER: And I asked her if . . . (*She shudders.*)

BIRKINSHAW: ’Ere she is.

MISS HOOPER: Put that away. Quick!

[BIRKINSHAW *conceals paper in waste-paper basket as MISS JANUS comes in. There is an embarrassed tableau.*

MISS JANUS: What are you all standing like that for? (*Silence.*) What’s the matter?

MISS BUFTON (*touching her sleeve*): I’m so sorry.

[*She goes in L.*

MISS JANUS (*bewildered*): What’s that mean?

MISS HOOPER: Blanche . . .

[*She tries to speak, breaks into tears and follows MISS BUFTON in L.*

MISS JANUS: What’s all this about? (*Telephone clicks.*) That’s Mr. Walker. He wants you. He’s just going out.

BIRKINSHAW (*with a look that conveys a vast desire to express himself, and a great reluctance to leave*): Yes, miss.

[*He goes.*

PAT *steals forward*.

MISS JANUS: Well, what's up?

PAT: Blanche . . . then you *haven't* heard . . . ?

MISS JANUS: Heard what? What's all the mystery?

PAT: Blanche . . . dear . . . it's bad news.

MISS JANUS: For me?

PAT: Yes.

MISS JANUS: What?

PAT (*whispering*): He's dead.

MISS JANUS: Who?

PAT: Your . . . your friend.

MISS JANUS: Jan? (PAT *nods*.) How do you know?

PAT: It's in the paper. There's been an accident.

MISS JANUS: Crashed?

PAT: Yes . . . this morning.

MISS JANUS (*white and rigid, looking for paper*): Where is it? Where's the paper?

PAT: No, don't. Don't read it . . . now.

MISS JANUS: You're sure?

PAT: Yes. On his way to Holland, it said.

MISS JANUS (*seeing paper in basket*): Is this it? Let me see.

PAT: No . . . please, Blanche, don't . . . not now.

MISS JANUS: Why not?

PAT: It's horrible. (MISS JANUS *sits down*.) They all think you knew . . . that that's why you've been looking so unhappy . . . why you gave notice. I didn't tell them. (MISS JANUS *takes her hand*.) Blanche dear!

MISS JANUS (*dry-eyed, hard*): I wish I could feel something. I can't. He's dead and . . . it doesn't matter. I've always been afraid of his flying . . . doing himself in . . . and now . . . (*Pause*.) I got his letter last night. I put it on the fire, with all the rest of them. If yesterday hadn't happened, I'd be crying now . . . for him. But I can't. It's like the White Queen . . . I've done all my crying already . . . years ago, for him . . . yesterday, for myself. If yesterday hadn't happened, I'd have been thinking now that we'd have got married, that I'd lost my fiancé. Now . . .

that's what *they* think. Well, that's one good thing.

PAT: You're leaving here?

MISS JANUS: Yes.

PAT: What are you going to do?

MISS JANUS: Going abroad. I've always wanted to travel . . . if I don't do it soon I never shall. I want to see different places . . . new places . . . France, and Italy, and Greece . . . I'm sick of the tube and buses and . . . London Wall, every day. I've been saving for my trousseau for years. That'll last for a bit.

PAT: But afterwards?

MISS JANUS: I don't know . . . and I don't care. I can always work . . . so long as it's not in an office. I'm not afraid. And if I go up the spout, I go up the spout . . . so long as it's a *new* spout! Anyway, I'm going to get away, and I daresay it's the best thing that's happened to me yet.

[*Buzzer.*

PAT: That's me. (*She goes.*)

[MISS JANUS *remains alone, staring before her. Then she remembers the newspaper, takes it out of the basket, smooths it out and reads it. She lets it fall. Tears come into her eyes.*

MISS JANUS (*shuddering*): Oh God! (*She covers her face, and then murmurs, her voice empty of everything except pity*) Poor . . . devil! (*She rises and goes to the back, to turn up a letter-book.*)

[PAT *returns.*

PAT: What's Capt. Huddleston's number? Do you know? I've got to telephone him quickly.

MISS JANUS: It's on the how-do-you-do.

[PAT *finds number on telephone memorandum gadget, and rings up.*

PAT: Temple Bar 3484, please.

MISS JANUS: Did you see Hec. at lunch?

PAT: No, he wasn't there. I was punctual to-day, too. He must have gone somewhere else on purpose. I don't think he wants to see me, any more. I was hateful to him last night. (*Into 'phone*) Hullo, is Capt. Huddleston there? Walker, Windermere & Co. (*She holds on.*)

[HEC. *appears. He carries a parcel.*

Hec.!

HEC.: Have you got a moment?

PAT: I . . . (*Into 'phone*) Hullo. Is that Capt. Huddleston? I'm speaking for Mr. Windermere. He asked me to find out from you the date of your contract with Ballingers Ltd. We haven't a copy. All right, I'll hold on. (*Does so.*)

HEC.: You busy?

PAT: I am, rather.

HEC.: I'd like to speak to you.

PAT: What is it?

HEC.: No, I'll wait till you're off the 'phone.

PAT: You weren't at lunch.

HEC.: No, I was . . . doing something.

PAT (*into 'phone*): Hullo . . . yes . . . yes . . . April 14th, 1928. Thank you very much. (*Scribbling on block*) April 14th, 1928. Yes. Good-bye.

[*Rings off.*]

HEC.: I say, Pat.

PAT: Just a minute. I must take this in to Mr. Windermere. He's waiting for it.

[*She goes out.*]

MISS JANUS: How are you this morning?

HEC.: Oh . . . all right, thanks.

MISS JANUS: What happened last night?

HEC.: What? Oh . . . nothing. She wouldn't speak to me when she left here. I followed her home, but . . . I can't go up to her room and she wouldn't come down. I hung about outside until . . . well . . . the landlady turned me away. Then I did a bit of walking and I did a bit of thinking, too.

MISS JANUS: Yes?

HEC.: It was just like a book . . . where a chap suddenly sees . . . what a mess he's made of everything. I expect I've ruined my chance of happiness for ever

. . .

MISS JANUS (*concealing a smile, indicates the parcel*): Is that . . . ?

HEC.: Yes. Oh, and look here, miss, that money . . . I don't want it. It was jolly decent of you to give it me, but I know what I've got to do . . . if she'll look at me again . . . and I'd rather do it myself . . . see? No offence, of course, but . . . (*Hands her back the envelope.*) Do you mind?

MISS JANUS (*smiles; takes it*): Very well.

HEC. (*like SIDNEY CARTON*): It's up to me, now!

[BIRKINSHAW *comes flying in—opens typing door.*

BIRKINSHAW: Mr. Walker wants his letters . . . 'e's just going.

MISS HOOPER (*off*): Already?

BIRKINSHAW: Got an appointment.

MISS BUFTON (*off*): Here you are.

[BIRKINSHAW *goes in to fetch them.*

MISS JANUS: I'll give you mine.

[*She goes in after him.*

PAT *comes back.*

HEC.: I say, Pat . . .

[*Telephone clicks.*

PAT: Just a minute . . . that's Mr. Brewer. (*Answers it.*) Yes? I don't know, Mr. Brewer. I'll ask. (*Calls into typing room*) Mr. Brewer wants to know if Mr. Walker's gone yet?

BIRKINSHAW (*off*): Just going. Can I 'ave your letters, miss?

PAT: Just a minute. (*Into 'phone*) He's just going, Mr. Brewer. Do you want him? Oh, all right. (*Rings off.*)

HEC.: Pat . . .

PAT: Wait a minute. (*She dashes into typing room.*)

[BIRKINSHAW *comes out, carrying letter folders.*

(*To BIRKINSHAW, as she passes*) Wait a minute, I'll give you mine.

BIRKINSHAW: I'll come back for 'em. (*Exit L.*)

[MISS HOOPER *comes out, hunts on table for rubber stamp, muttering: "Where is the blasted thing?" Stamps it across the base of a document and goes out L.* HEC. *stands waiting.* PAT *returns, carrying letter folder.*

PAT: Can't you come back later? We're all in a rush now.

HEC.: I can't get out again this afternoon.

PAT: Well, six o'clock, then. Wait for me downstairs. You mustn't come up here.

HEC.: I've got something for you.

PAT: Give it me then.

HEC.: No, now. Here. (*He hands parcel.*)

P<sub>AT</sub>: What is it?

H<sub>EC</sub>.: Have a look.

[B<sub>IRKINSHAW</sub> *returns, in a rush.*

B<sub>IRKINSHAW</sub>: Your letters, miss?

[P<sub>AT</sub> *gives him folder. He goes to typing door.*

Anything more in there? What about that power of attorney?

MISS BUFTON (*off, plaintively*): I'm doing it as fast as ever I can.

B<sub>IRKINSHAW</sub> (*into inner room*): You, miss?

MISS JANUS (*off*): That's the lot.

[B<sub>IRKINSHAW</sub> *dashes back across stage and out R.*

P<sub>AT</sub> (*to H<sub>EC</sub>., during the above*): I can't open it here.

H<sub>EC</sub>.: Go on.

P<sub>AT</sub>: No. What is it?

H<sub>EC</sub>.: Something you want.

P<sub>AT</sub>: What?

H<sub>EC</sub>.: Go on . . . look.

[P<sub>AT</sub> *tears the corner of the paper.*

P<sub>AT</sub>: What is it? (*Tears more, and sees.*) H<sub>EC</sub>.! It's not that shawl? Oh, H<sub>EC</sub>. . . .  
(*She rips the paper right open.*) Oh . . . it's lovely.

H<sub>EC</sub>.: Here, they've forgotten to take the ticket off. (*He pulls it off, himself.*)

P<sub>AT</sub>: Mind, you'll tear it. Oh, H<sub>EC</sub>., it's beautiful. When did you get it?

H<sub>EC</sub>.: Lunch-time.

P<sub>AT</sub> (*overcome*): Oh . . . oh . . . I can't look at it here. I'll put it away. (*She carries it in L.*)

[MISS JANUS *comes out. H<sub>EC</sub>. goes up to back. BREWER comes in, rather furtively, R. He looks at H<sub>EC</sub>.—and then ignores him.*

B<sub>REWER</sub>: Miss Janus . . .

MISS JANUS: Why, you're quite a stranger!

B<sub>REWER</sub>: I want to speak to you.

MISS JANUS: What is it?

B<sub>REWER</sub>: I understand . . . you've given Mr. Walker notice.

MISS JANUS: Well?

B<sub>REWER</sub>: Well . . . if it's got anything to do with our conversation yesterday . . .

MISS JANUS: Yesterday?

BREWER: I thought you might care to know that I've decided to leave, myself. . . . so . . . you won't be bothered by my presence for much longer.

MISS JANUS (*understanding*): My God! The nerve of it. I told you you'd believe it.

[PAT *returns, stands in doorway.*

WALKER (*calling*): Miss Bufton! Miss Bufton! (*He appears. BREWER slinks upstage.*) Brewer! What does this mean? What are you doing here? (*Silence.*) You know what I told you? Very well. Miss Bufton!

[BREWER *goes out.*

MISS BUFTON *comes out of typing room. HEC. hastily gets Law List off shelf and busies himself with it.*

MISS BUFTON: Yes, Mr. Walker?

WALKER: What about that power of attorney?

MISS BUFTON: It's just done, Mr. Walker. I haven't examined it yet.

WALKER: Well do, then see it goes round by hand at once. I'm going now.

MISS BUFTON: Yes, Mr. Walker. (*She returns to typing room.*)

WALKER (*to HEC.*): What are *you* doing here?

HEC.: Oh . . . oh, I'm from Parkers downstairs, sir. I just wanted to know if I might look something up in your Law List.

WALKER: Oh. Oh, all right. I want you a minute, Miss Janus.

[*He goes out. MISS JANUS follows him.*

PAT: Hec., you must go. You mustn't come up here any more. Mr. Walker was talking to me this morning.

HEC.: About me?

PAT: No, but . . . work's work. I'll see you to-night.

HEC.: Yes, but . . . there's something I want to say to you now.

PAT: Can't it wait?

HEC.: It's waited too damned long already.

PAT: Well, what is it?

HEC.: Did you like that shawl?

[MISS BUFTON *comes out, carrying some documents. She looks on table for rubber stamp and stamps one of them.*

MISS BUFTON: Oh! Oh dear! I've put it upside down. That means doing a new back sheet.

[MISS HOOPER *comes back*.

Oh, Hooper, just examine this with me, will you? It won't take a minute, and it's got to go by hand.

MISS HOOPER: Right you are. Here, I'll sit down. Will *you* read?

MISS BUFTON: Yes.

[MISS HOOPER *sits at table*. MISS BUFTON *begins to read the power of attorney aloud from a draft*, MISS HOOPER *having the completed one*. She reads in a gabbling, completely meaningless voice, merely to check typing errors.

Know all men by these Presents that I, Herbert William George Moggeridge of 37 Minerva Road, Hammersmith in the County of London, Provision Merchant, hereby appoint Frederick Arthur Moggeridge of The Limes, Salters Green Road, Beckenham in the County of Kent, gentleman, my Attorney in my name or on my behalf to do or execute all or any of the acts and things hereinafter mentioned that is to say One.

[*During this* HEC. and PAT *mouth silently at each other—she, trying to make him go and to convince him of the uselessness of his staying; he in protest*.

HEC. (*at last in desperation*): I say, miss, *couldn't* you do that somewhere else?

MISS BUFTON: Well, really!

MISS HOOPER: Well, I'm damned!

HEC.: I'm sorry, miss, but . . .

MISS HOOPER: Oh, all right, let's go inside. Lucky for you I'm in a good temper to-day, young man. Come on.

[*She and* MISS BUFTON *go into typing room, leaving door open*.

MISS BUFTON (*off*): Where did I get to? Oh, yes. One, to demand, sue for, enforce payment of and receive and give receipts and discharges for all money, securities for money, debts, legacies, goods, chattels and personal estate . . .

[*The drone goes on, and then* HEC. *goes over and closes door*.

PAT (*shocked*): Really, Hec.

HEC.: I've *got* to talk to you.

PAT: What is it?

HEC.: Well . . .

[*He makes an obvious change in what he was going to say.*

I want you to come to dinner on Sunday over at my place . . . will you?

PAT (*puzzled*): Yes . . . of course . . . I'd like to.

HEC. (*trying again*): And . . . we're going out to-night, see?

PAT (*bewildered*): Yes?

HEC. (*plunging*): Look here, Pat, I've been an awful fool, I know, but . . .

[*MISS JANUS comes in R.*

Oh, Hell!

MISS JANUS: Don't mind me!

PAT: You'd better go, Hec. Tell me to-night . . . whatever it is.

MISS JANUS: I say, Pat, our lord's just given me that will to copy. Why didn't you tell me? I'm so glad. (*Kisses her.*)

HEC.: What's that about?

MISS JANUS: Haven't you told him?

PAT: No, not yet.

HEC.: What is it?

PAT: Never mind now.

HEC.: No, tell me.

MISS JANUS: Don't worry. *You're* all right.

[*She goes in L.*

PAT: Poor Blanche.

HEC.: What did she mean?

PAT: No, don't ask me now.

HEC.: Look here, Pat. . . .

[*Buzzer.*

PAT: That's me. I must go.

HEC.: Pat.

PAT: I *must* go.

HEC.: Pat!

PAT: What?

HEC. (*suddenly pleading*): Give me a kiss . . . please!

PAT (*surprised*): Hec.!

*[He seizes her and kisses her, a long kiss. The buzzer goes again. They jump apart.]*

HEC.: Hell!

PAT: I must fly. Work's work.

*[She goes.]*

HEC. *stands alone, then returns to the Law List at back.*

BIRKINSHAW *returns and regards him.*

BIRKINSHAW: Can't your firm afford to buy a Law List of its own?

*[HEC. makes a jovial, mock-menacing gesture with his arm at him. The telephone rings. BIRKINSHAW goes over to it.]*

*(Answering)* Hullo. Walker, Windermere. Who's speaking? One moment, please. . . .

CURTAIN



# TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.

Inconsistency in hyphenation has been retained.

[The end of *London Wall* by John Van Druten]