

Merrily We Roll Along

A Play

George S. Kaufman
&
Moss Hart
1934

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*Merrily
We Roll
Along*

A PLAY

BY

GEORGE S. KAUFMAN

AND

MOSS HART

RANDOM HOUSE
NEW YORK

NOTE

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MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

“Merrily We Roll Along” was produced by Sam H. Harris at the Music Box Theatre, New York, on Saturday night, September 29th, 1934, with the following cast:

<i>Julia Glenn</i>	MARY PHILIPS
<i>David Haskell</i>	GILBERT SQUAREY
<i>Ivy Carroll</i>	MURIAL WILLIAMS
<i>Rosamond Ogden</i>	MARY HOWES
<i>Val Burnett</i>	JACK EDWARDS
<i>Albert Ogden</i>	GRANT MILLS
<i>Sam Frankl</i>	HERBERT STEINER
<i>Lady Patricia Dorson</i>	MARY HEBERDEN
<i>Laura Nash</i>	JACQUELINE LOGAN
<i>Richard Niles</i>	KENNETH MACKENNA
<i>Everett Nash</i>	WILFRID SEAGRAM
<i>Althea Royce</i>	JESSIE ROYCE LANDIS
<i>Cyrus Winthrop</i>	CHARLES HALTON
<i>A Butler</i>	EDWARD LOUD
<i>A Maid</i>	PEGGY BANCROFT
<i>A Man</i>	JOHN COSBY
<i>A Woman</i>	OTIS SCHAEFER
<i>The Waiter</i>	BURTON MALLORY
<i>The Headwaiter</i>	GEORGE JACKSON
<i>Two Very Young Girls</i>	{ PATRICIA PALMER { BETTY REYNOLDS
<i>P. J. Morton</i>	GEORGE ALISON
<i>Jonathan Crale</i>	WALTER ABEL
<i>Ito</i>	BIACOUREN YOSHIWARA
<i>George Niles</i>	HAROLD MOFFET
<i>Molly</i>	BEATRICE BLINN
<i>Court Attendants</i>	{ LEO KENNEDY { BURTON MALLORY
<i>Women Coming from the Trial</i>	{ ELSA RYAN { JENNY MAC { ELIZABETH KENNEDY

Reporters

{ JOHN KENNEDY
{ WILLIAM MACFADDEN

Mrs. Murney

LESLIE BINGHAM

Helen

ADRIENNE MARDEN

Richardson

CHARLES ENGEL

Mr. Murney

GRANVILLE BATES

The Head Photographer

LOUIS CRUGER

Wertheimer

GEORGE PARSONS

A Captain of Waiters

JAMES SEELEY

A Bellboy

EDWIN MILLS

Althea Royce's Maid

MARTHA BROWN

Harry Nixon

MALCOLM DUNCAN

Sid Kramer

GEORGE MCKAY

Mrs. Riley

CECELIA LOFTUS

Janet Newcombe

CHOUTEAU DYER

{ GERALDINE WALL

{ OTIS SCHAEFER

A Few Important Guests

{ PEGGY BANCROFT

{ PATRICIA ALLEN

{ HENRY EPHRON

A Policeman

LEO KENNEDY

A Man With a Dog

JAMES SEELEY

Two Boys

{ EDWIN MILLS

{ IRVING SCHNEIDER

Two Girls

{ CONNIE MADISON

{ DORIS EATON

Patrons of Le Coq D'Or, Courtroom Crowd, Party Guests, Waiters, Soldiers, College Students.

Stage Manager

Assistant Stage Manager

JOHN KENNEDY

WILLIAM MACFADDEN

The action of the play moves backward. Each scene takes place at an earlier time than the scene preceding.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE

- SCENE I. The Home of Richard Niles, Long Island. 1934.
- SCENE II. Restaurant Le Coq D'Or. 1927.
- SCENE III. Richard Niles's Apartment. 1926.

ACT TWO

- SCENE I. Jonathan Crale's Studio. 1925.
- SCENE II. A Court-house Corridor. 1924.
- SCENE III. Althea Royce's Apartment. 1923.

ACT THREE

- SCENE I. Living Room of the Murneys. 1922.
- SCENE II. Madison Square Park. 1918.
- SCENE III. A College Chapel. 1916.

ACT ONE

SCENE I

The country house of Richard Niles—Sands Point, Long Island, an evening in September, 1934. The room we see is oval in shape and is fringed with French windows, which look out upon the Sound itself. It is night, but there is a glimpse of tall white pillars through the windows.

It is the kind of room you have often seen as a fullpage illustration in Town and Country, over a caption reading: "This unusual décor is a glimpse of the drawing room in the Long Island home of . . ."

There are some ten or twelve people present, the men in tails, the women in evening dress. There is a game of bridge, a game of backgammon. A dark-haired young MAN is at the piano, playing, with a good deal of skill, one of the popular tunes of the day. Leaning across the piano, listening with a professional interest, is a handsome, flaxen-haired LAD of about twenty-three or four. A LADY with a highball in her hand sits a little apart, surveying the scene with a certain detachment. There is a relaxed air about all of these people—it is merely an informal Sunday evening on Long Island.

For a moment the music plays, the flaxen-haired young man hums a little, the bridge and backgammon games go on. Through the music, you catch the routine chatter at the tables: "Double." . . . "I'll take it." . . . "Spade." . . . "Two hearts." . . . "Pass." . . . "Pass." . . . "Two spades." . . . "Pass." . . . "Pass." . . . "Pass."

After a bit of this, DAVID HASKELL comes in through the French windows. He is an ardent young man of about twenty-six, with a rather sensitive face. He goes to the liquor table, mixes a drink, and then notices the lady with the highball. JULIA GLENN is a woman close to forty. She is not unpretty, but on her face are the marks of years and years of quiet and steady drinking—eight, ten hours a day. In contrast to the modish evening clothes of the other women, JULIA wears something from about three years ago, and which wasn't quite right then. Withal, there is about her definitely an air. Here is a person.

DAVID raises his glass to her in grave salute.

JULIA

(Returning the salute with her own glass. Then, ever so brightly)

Know what I'm having?

DAVID

What?

JULIA

(Grimly)

Not much fun.

(DAVID gives an appreciative chuckle and goes out through the windows with the highball)

(An extremely beautiful girl named IVY CARROLL comes down the stairs, a book tucked rather showily under her arm. For a moment she stands surveying the room and its occupants with a quiet superiority, then she moves up to the windows, breathes deeply, and is gone)

(The flaxen-haired young man, who has been humming, now finishes a song in full voice and breaks away from the piano. His name is VAL BURNETT)

ROSAMOND OGDEN

(Who has been watching her husband at the backgammon board)

Tell me, Mr. Burnett—I thought you broadcast every Sunday night. Is that changed now?

VAL

Oh, sure. That was the Miracle Mayonnaise Hour. I'm on the Black Star Axle Grease Hour now. Tuesdays and Fridays, eight-thirty.

ROSAMOND OGDEN

Really? I must listen.

JULIA

(Into her drink)

Mayonnaise to axle grease. Just a step.

VAL

It's really the biggest hour there is. Blue and Red network, you know. National hook-up.

ALBERT OGDEN

(Shaking his dice cup)

Yeah! Fifteen minutes twice a week and gets more than the President of the United States.

ROSAMOND OGDEN

Really, we're so spoiled! Here's Mr. Burnett—millions of people listen to him every time he broadcasts—and here he is tossing off these golden notes—

VAL

(Assuming a false modesty)

Oh, I'm just a crooner. I guess you people would rather hear Lawrence Tibbett, or something like that.

JULIA

Why, Mr. Burnett, we would *not*!

(Scornfully)

Lawrence Tibbett! I'll bet you he couldn't croon if he tried.

VAL

I never know whether you're kidding me or not, Miss Glenn, but honest—do you like my singing?

JULIA

Like it? Why, I'm your greatest admirer.

VAL

Say, that means more to me than you think, because I'm just crazy about your stories. I think you write just about the best stories I ever read. That one about the boy and the girl—I read it over and over.

JULIA

Why, I'm—touched. Didn't you get it the first time?

SAM FRANKL

(At the piano)

Hey, Val! Remember this one?

(He plays a phrase or two)

VAL

Do I?

(His voice picks up the music)

CYRUS WINTHROP

(Putting down his cards)

Two and one.

LADY PATRICIA DORSON

(Also a bridge player. She has listened to the music, rapt)

Oh! That divine song! It just *swept* London. The Prince couldn't get enough of it. He still sings it. The Prince has quite a nice voice, you know.

JULIA

What hour is he on?

LADY PAT

(Abstractedly)

H'm?

CYRUS WINTHROP

I think we make three no-trump, too.

RICHARD NILES

Do you?

ROSAMOND OGDEN

Lady Dorson, didn't I read somewhere that the Prince was coming over for a visit?

LADY PAT

Well, there was some talk about it just before I left.

JULIA

(Into that same drink)

I should say there was.

CYRUS WINTHROP

(Who has been thinking it over)

No, I guess we go down one.

LADY PAT

I say, Mr. Frankl, there was another song of yours the Prince simply adored.

(She hums a fragment; FRANKL picks it up on the piano)

That's it. Isn't that too soothing, my dear?

LAURA NASH

(The fourth bridge player)

I love everything of Sam's.

(Raising her voice)

Sam, why don't you write more songs like that? You never do any more.

FRANKL

Well, I've been pretty busy lately on my concerto. I promised Stokowski he'd get it by the fifteenth.

ROSAMOND OGDEN

But, Sam, those glorious songs! We'll have nothing to dance to next winter.

FRANKL

Oh, I'll do a show or two, I suppose—they're always after me. I'm in the middle of a new symphony, too. You see, the trouble with me is——

(He rises from the piano)

I've got three different careers. My light music, my serious music, and my sculpture.

LADY PAT

Sculpture? Why, I didn't know you were a sculptor, too.

FRANKL

Oh, sure. Didn't you see those heads I did of myself? They were in the *Times*.

LADY PAT

How astonishing!

IVY

(In the windows)

Oh! To play under the stars on a night like this! The Greek theatre must have been magnificent.

LAURA NASH

Who dealt?

WINTHROP

I did. . . . Pass.

LADY PAT

(Resuming her seat)

Oh, so sorry. What happened?

WINTHROP

I dealt and passed.

RICHARD

I pass.

LADY PAT

Is there a score?

WINTHROP

They're vulnerable. We have sixty.

LADY PAT

I pass.

LAURA NASH

I'm bidding.

IVY

Mr. Frankl, play me that Chopin Waltz—you know the one I mean. Opus 3, Number 9.

FRANKL

Sorry. I don't play Chopin.

JULIA

You'll take Frankl or nothing.

(The piano starts up again; JULIA makes a slight genuflexion in the direction of the music)

LAURA NASH

Two no-trump.

WINTHROP

By me.

RICHARD

Three no-trump.

LADY PAT

I pass.

LAURA NASH

Pass.

WINTHROP

My lead?

RICHARD

(Putting down his hand as WINTHROP leads)

The clubs aren't so good, but I've got my values.

(He rises. RICHARD NILES, at forty, is the layman's idea of what a fashionable playwright should look like. His portrait by Pirie MacDonald has long been familiar to readers of Vanity Fair. He is faultlessly attired, has that distinguished touch of gray at the temples)

Well! . . . How are you backgammon boys coming along? Who's winning?

OGDEN

(Indicates NASH)

He doesn't have to produce plays for a living. I never saw such luck.

(NASH rolls the dice)

My God! Doubles again!

RICHARD

Tell me, Everett—where do you go from London?

NASH

Well, I've got to stay there till the 18th, you know—the Gladys Cooper opening. Then I go over to Budapest to see Molnar, and I've got to be back in London in November—got to find something for the Adelphi—that Cochran show won't do.

RICHARD

No chance of your coming South with me? Give you some great shooting.

NASH

Sailing Wednesday.

RICHARD

Well, Althea and I are going to be in St. Moritz for Christmas. Why don't you and Laura join us there and we'll go to Antibes together?

LAURA NASH

(From the bridge table)

We could do that, Everett.

RICHARD

Oh, that's fine.

LAURA

We make three. Shall we stop?

LADY PAT

Yes—let's.

LAURA

Have you got a house yet, Richard? I mean in Antibes?

RICHARD

Got a cable this morning. We're taking the Elliott place.

LAURA NASH

Oh, Richard, that's a divine house!

LADY PAT

Isn't that right next to Willie Maugham's place?

LAURA NASH

It's that house on the cliff. It's simply huge. You'll have to give loads of parties, Richard.

RICHARD

I like a big place—lots of people. I think if we come back to Long Island next summer we'll take the Atherton place, instead of this.

WINTHROP

Really? This is a charming place. Seems quite large.

RICHARD

Ye-es, but there's no place to dock the boat—you've got to land at Manhasset and have the car meet you.

JULIA

(So distressed)

O-oh!

RICHARD

Well, next summer's a long ways off. First I'm going down to Carolina—I've got to get away. Those four weeks of rehearsal and the two weeks out of town—pretty wearing. But if I get some good shooting, and a month in London before St. Moritz, I'll be ready to start work again when we get to Antibes.

JULIA

I've got *my* year pretty well laid out, too. Let's see. I'm going to spend November in Tony's, if they'll give me credit, and December trying to keep from getting thrown out of my apartment. I think in January I'll put a piece of paper in the typewriter, and if anything comes of that I'll be very much surprised. February and March are going to be tough sledding, but in April it's warm again and I can go right back to the gutter, only next year I'm going to give up the *little* gutter and take a great, big *hell* of a gutter. Hi, Richard!

(She lifts her glass in drunken salute)

RICHARD

(In a low tone)

Will you stop drinking?

JULIA

(In a voice just as high as his was low)

Will I stop drinking? No, I won't stop drinking!

RICHARD

Julia—

(DAVID HASKELL comes back through the windows)

DAVID

Say, they must have the papers by this time. It's twelve-thirty.

LAURA NASH

That's the worst of these Saturday openings. You have to wait all day Sunday for the reviews.

DAVID

I think I'll jump in the car and get them. If you wait for them to bring 'em it'll take hours.

(He dashes out again)

OGDEN

Say, young Haskell's more nervous than you are, Dick. You'd think it was his play instead of yours.

RICHARD

Oh, I'm reconciled to whatever they say.

IVY

(Who has come close to RICHARD as the conversation turned on the newspapers)

Richard!

(She extends her hand)

RICHARD

(Gently taking her hand)

Now, you mustn't be nervous. You've no reason to be.

IVY

This was my great chance, Richard. I know it better than anybody. Whatever happens, I'll always be grateful to you.

RICHARD

Ivy, believe me, no matter what they say about the play, they're certain to say that you were magnificent.

ALTHEA ROYCE

(On the stairway)

I'm sure they will. No matter what they say about the play.

(Her entrance has been quiet, unobtrusive. Her voice turns every head toward her)

RICHARD

(Quietly)

Why, hello, Althea. Have you been upstairs all the time?

ALTHEA

Didn't you know?

(ALTHEA ROYCE is just over forty, and still a beautiful woman. She moves with a certain conscious grace—the result of many years of hearing people say “There goes Althea Royce!” when she entered a restaurant or passed down a theatre aisle)

LAURA NASH

Althea darling, I hear you've taken the Elliott house. I'm terribly excited!

ALTHEA

Yes, won't it be lovely!

LADY PAT

Do you know the Pendergasts, Althea? They're going to be there this season—they're both darlings, and *such* fun? All they *do* is give parties! Of course they're not married . . .

(IVY has disappeared through the windows again. From time to time you get a glimpse of her, nervously pacing. After a moment or two RICHARD joins her)

ROSAMOND OGDEN

(To ALTHEA)

My dear, how I envy you! The Carolinas, St. Moritz, London, Antibes! I think if one could really choose one's husband, the smartest thing to do is to marry a playwright.

ALTHEA

A successful playwright, of course.

(She, too, drifts toward the windows, keeping a weather eye on the two figures without)

ROSAMOND OGDEN

Oh, yes. No Cape Cod for me in the summer time . . . Or marry a producer.

(She turns toward EVERETT NASH)

Everett, why didn't you marry for money instead of social position? I'm awfully rich, you know.

OGDEN

Here, here, now! Don't you give people the wrong impression, my dear. I loved you from the minute I looked you up in Bradstreet's.

LAURA NASH

Tell the truth, Everett. Why did you really marry *me*?

NASH

Rosamond has told you. I wanted to meet the best people.

JULIA

(Half to herself)

You got stuck.

BUTLER

(In the doorway)

Mr. Winthrop's car is here, madam.

WINTHROP

Oh!

(A look at his watch)

Tell him I'll be right out.

ALTHEA

Now, Cyrus, you're not going. You must wait for the notices. They'll be here in a minute.

JULIA

(Beckoning to BURNETT)

Val!

WINTHROP

Well, it's a good hour's drive, you know.

JULIA

(VAL having joined her)

Sit here.

(He drops down at her feet)

ALTHEA

Oh, Cyrus! Suppose you *do* get to bed twenty minutes later.

JULIA

(Drunkenly tender)

You like me, Val?

(She runs a hand through his hair)

OGDEN

Yes, Winthrop, if you don't get around to that office in the morning it'll be all right too. They'll turn out just as much of that cellopaper without you there.

(He picks up a package of cigarettes and rips off the cellopaper wrapper)

And suppose this stuff *wasn't* on here. You could get to the cigarettes quicker.

WINTHROP

Don't say such things. If that stuff wasn't on there, where would I be?

JULIA

(To VAL, under cover of a light laugh from the group)

I think you're very beautiful—do you mind?

OGDEN

Imagine making a million dollars a year out of this! Cellopaper! I wish I had a graft like this.

LAURA NASH

Some people have all the luck.

WINTHROP

Listen, Mrs. Nash, ten years ago anybody could have had it. I went around begging people—they wouldn't touch it. They thought I was crazy.

NASH

Crazy like a fox. They tell me it's all profit, Winthrop. Doesn't cost you anything to make.

WINTHROP

God knows I don't hang onto it long. The art galleries get most of it.

JULIA

(Softly, as VAL'S eyes meet hers for a second)

Hello.

OGDEN

Well, a man's money is his own, of course, but if I had two hundred thousand to throw away I don't think I'd put it into a picture. Think I'd buy a racing stable or something—get some fun out of it.

WINTHROP

I just happen to get my fun out of pictures. When you look at a canvas that's got that spark in it, and you feel it's going to mean something three hundred years from now, and *you* can own it—that's got horse-racing beat a mile. Because you're betting on a man's talent—whether you're right about it—and that's more important than you, or your money, or anything else. Right now, I'm betting on a man named Jonathan Crale. You know Jonathan Crale? Well, it's a name your grandchildren are going to know. Every hundred years or so there's a Jonathan Crale, and when he comes along it's history. Know what I mean?

(He looks around him for corroboration, but a dead silence has fallen upon the group. Obviously, he has said something he shouldn't)

JULIA

Why, Cyrus Winthrop! Don't you know you shouldn't mention Jonathan Crale in this house? You'll never be invited again.

OGDEN

Julia, for God's sake!

JULIA

(Ploughing right on)

Where have you been all these years—wrapped in cellopaper? Don't you know Jonathan Crale painted a horrid picture of our host?

RICHARD

Julia, please!

JULIA

(Not to be stopped)

And our hostess! Althea was in it, too! With a hundred arms, like an octopus!

ALTHEA

(White with rage)

Julia, I told you that if you came into my house—

(The tension is broken by the arrival of a highly excited and exuberant DAVID HASKELL, a sheaf of newspapers under his arm)

DAVID

I got 'em! They're wonderful—every single notice! It's a hit, Richard—it's a hit!

(There is an excited reaching for papers as the group receives this news. NASH: "Let me see 'em!" LADY PAT: "How exciting!" LAURA NASH: "Everett, do I get that sable?" ROSAMOND OGDEN: "Of course it's a hit! You're not surprised?" WINTHROP: "Well, I'm glad I waited!" FRANKL: "Congratulations, Richard, I know the feeling!")

(On the heels of DAVID, IVY CARROLL has also come back into the room, and stands tensely waiting)

NASH

(Paper in hand)

Whee! Listen to this, people! "Here is sophisticated comedy at its brightest. Expertly written, beautifully produced, admirably acted."

OGDEN

(Also with his paper)

"Richard Niles, whose flair for smart comedy is exceeded by none——"

LAURA NASH

"Our most fashionable playwright has written what will unquestionably be the most fashionable play of the season. It is Park Avenue's own."

ROSAMOND OGDEN

"You will hear its lines quoted at every smart dinner table, its clothes will set the mode for the younger set, the second-act boudoir will find itself duplicated in many a Southampton home."

LAURA NASH

And Ivy, my dear, you're a star! "Ivy Carroll, loveliest of our younger actresses, comes into

her own in ‘Silver Spoon’.”

ROSAMOND OGDEN

“Starry-eyed and beautiful, her translucent performance . . .”

NASH

Here’s that next play, Richard! “Ivy Carroll is the perfect instrument for the deft and sparkling comedy of Richard Niles. Playwright and actress form an ideal combination.”

ROSAMOND OGDEN

(Going to IVY and embracing her)

Ivy, let me be the first!

NASH

Don’t be surprised if you see your name in lights tomorrow night, young lady!

(IVY presses a kerchief to her lips with a little choking sound)

LAURA NASH

Ivy! My sweet!

IVY

(Bravely)

I’m all right. But it makes me feel very humble, very little. Because you know it’s not me, really. It’s Richard’s beautiful play.

ROSAMOND OGDEN

Isn’t she a sweet child?

NASH

Well, Richard, I guess you can have your London and your St. Moritz—with a pretty light heart.

OGDEN

(An arm around RICHARD in great good fellowship)

You’ve rung the bell again, kid! What have you got to say to all this? Come on! “Author! Author!”

ROSAMOND OGDEN

Albert! What do you want him to say?

RICHARD

Well, no use pretending I’m not pleased. You never can tell till the notices, of course, but I will say it’s about as nice a birthday present as I ever received.

LADY PAT

Birthday!

LAURA NASH

Althea, is this Richard's birthday?

OGDEN

By God, that's right! Twenty-third of September! You're forty! Year younger than I am! Well, this is an occasion!

LAURA NASH

Now, that does call for a speech, Richard!

OGDEN

Wait a minute!

(He reaches for a wine glass and hoists it high)

I've been with Richard on a good many birthdays—ever since we were at college together. I guess I'm just about his oldest friend—eh, Dick? But I want to say that this is as happy a birthday as I can remember. A new hit, his friends around him, right in the prime of life—
(There is a chorus of good-natured protest. "All right!" "Never mind!" "We know!"')

ROSAMOND OGDEN

It isn't a banquet, Albert.

JULIA

(Getting drunkenly to her feet)

Are speeches in order?

(Her glass comes up)

To Richard Niles! Our most fashionable playwright! The man who has everything! And I'd rather be what I am—a drunken whore!

(There is a horrified pause—a short gasp from one of the women)

LADY PAT

(In a constrained voice)

Althea, I really must be going. I'm expecting a 'phone call from London.

JULIA

Who from? The Prince or the King?

RICHARD

(Quietly taking JULIA'S glass)

All right, Julia—you've had enough now.

JULIA

Disgraced myself again, have I, Richard?

(She turns to VAL)

Come on, Beautiful. Take me home.

VAL

(Half apologetically, to the others)

I'll see that she gets home all right.

JULIA

(Weaving an uncertain way toward the door)

Well, I guess I'll never see the inside of this house again. And that's O.K. with——

(She gives a drunken lurch and crashes into the table with the drinks, which goes down under her. Glasses, bottles, ice bowl, whiskey, White Rock. The women give a little cry; the men rush to her assistance. She is helped to her feet)

Ooh! Look what I got!

(She produces a solitary ice cube, which she has happened to clutch in the mêlée. Playfully she presses it against her breast, as though it were an ornament)

The very latest! Can be worn here . . . Here . . .

(She moves it from left to right)

Or as a brooch!

(For the final gesture she turns in the doorway and presses the ice cube none too daintily against her bottom. On this pretty note she makes her departure)

(She is followed by VAL and RICHARD, the latter stopping to throw an agonized look back at his guests)

ROSAMOND OGDEN

Althea, darling—you mustn't mind.

FRANKL

Drunken sot! Why anybody invites her I don't know. She came up to my place once and broke two heads of myself.

LADY PAT

I was simply stunned! What a vile woman!

ALTHEA

(Tight of lip)

Perhaps this will teach Richard a lesson.

OGDEN

Well, those things can't be helped.

(There is an awkward pause)

ROSAMOND OGDEN

Albert, you've got to get up awfully early.

OGDEN

Ah—yes.

WINTHROP

Frankl, can I drive you in?

FRANKL

Fine! Good night, Althea. Glad the play's a hit.

(There is the routine exchange of farewells. OGDEN: "Lady Dorson, you're coming with us—that right?" LADY PAT: "Yes, thank you." OGDEN: "Everett, you've got your own car?" NASH: "We're staying over—going in in the morning." WINTHROP: "Anybody else want to be dropped? Haskell?" DAVID: "I'm staying too." WINTHROP: "How about you, Miss Carroll?" IVY: "No, thank you. So am I." LADY PAT: "Althea dear, it's been so nice. Do let's have lunch before I go." ALTHEA: "We must." WINTHROP: "Good night, Althea. Where's Richard—outside? Richard!" FRANKL: "Don't forget my concert on the 28th. The new concerto. Good night, Everett." ALTHEA: "Good night, Rosamond dear." ROSAMOND OGDEN: "Good night, darling. See you Tuesday at the Cunninghams'." OGDEN: "Night, Althea. . . . Hope we're late enough to dodge the bridge traffic.")

(ALTHEA follows them out for a moment, LAURA NASH picks up her evening bag, preparatory to going upstairs. DAVID HASKELL turns eagerly back to the newspapers. IVY CARROLL stands a little apart, one hand clutched in the other)

LAURA NASH

Wasn't that awful?

NASH

(Shaking his head in a thoughtful sort of way)

Too bad that had to happen tonight.

(He takes a breath)

Well, we've got a hit, anyway.

LAURA NASH

I must say I think Althea behaved beautifully—don't *you*, Ivy? . . . My dear, what's the matter with your hand?

IVY

I cut it, picking up that glass.

LAURA NASH

Let me see it. Oh! It's bleeding quite a lot.

ALTHEA

(Returning just in time to catch a bit of this)

What's the matter?

LAURA NASH

Ivy cut her hand on that glass.

IVY

Oh, it's nothing much.

DAVID

I'll go up and get you some iodine.

IVY

No, don't bother.

DAVID

It's no bother. Just take a minute.
(He bounds up the steps)

NASH

Let him get it. We can't have *you* incapacitated.

LAURA NASH

See what it is to be a star, Ivy! The merest trifle and they run off in all directions.

ALTHEA

(Lightly)

How well I remember.

IVY

I don't really need anything. It's—it's stopping already.
(An impulsive moment, and she is out on the lawn again)

NASH

Great kid. She's a star, all right. . . . Well, Laura, what do you say? Bed?

LAURA NASH

Oh, dear! Once he knows it's a hit he gets sleepy. All right.
(She moves toward the steps)

NASH

See you in the morning, Althea.

RICHARD

(Returning)

What's this? Going to bed already?

NASH

Yeah—I'm sleepy. And thanks to you, Richard, I think I'll have a very good night. You're still my favorite playwright.

(He salutes RICHARD gratefully and disappears)

LAURA NASH

Good night, darlings. Pleasant dreams.
(Then to DAVID, as he passes her on the steps)

Good night, Davy.

DAVID

Good night. . . . Where's Ivy?

ALTHEA

(The venom beginning to appear)

In an ambulance with two surgeons operating.

RICHARD

(Vaguely)

What?

DAVID

Ivy cut her finger. I brought down some iodine.

RICHARD

(Concerned)

She did? Where is she?

DAVID

Where'd she go? Outside?

ALTHEA

For that last look at the moon on the water.

DAVID

I'd better take this out to her.

(He starts for the windows, then stops and turns to RICHARD rather boyishly)

I didn't have a chance to congratulate you, Richard, but you know how I feel.

RICHARD

Thank you, David. You'll have your own hits pretty soon.

DAVID

I hope so. But I'm never going to forget what I owe to Richard Niles. I'd have given up after the first one, if it hadn't been for you.

RICHARD

The first failure doesn't mean anything. You've got stuff. Just go right ahead and don't listen to anybody. Not even me.

DAVID

(Haltingly, hero worship plain on his face)

Well, on *my* fortieth birthday, if I'm where you are, I'm going to be a pretty happy man.

RICHARD

(Good-humoredly)

Oh, get out of here, David.

(DAVID goes)

ALTHEA

Well, that was quite royal of you. Advice from the Great Man.

(She mimics his tone)

“Don’t listen to anybody. Not even me.”

RICHARD

What’s the matter with you?

ALTHEA

What’s the matter with *me*? I take it you’re quite satisfied with the entertainment furnished by your good friend Miss Glenn.

RICHARD

I don’t want to talk about that. I feel very sorry for Julia.

ALTHEA

Oh, stop it! You don’t feel sorry for anybody. You’ve got your hit and that’s all you care about.

RICHARD

(In the resigned tone of one who wants to avoid a scene)

All right, Althea.

(He moves toward the stairs)

ALTHEA

Oh, no, you don’t! I’ve got something to say to you. If you think I don’t know what’s going on between you and Ivy Carroll, you’re crazy!

RICHARD

That’s not true!

ALTHEA

You’re a liar! I know how you work!

RICHARD

(Anything for peace)

All right. It’s true—if that’s the way you want it.

ALTHEA

Oh, now you’re the martyred husband, eh? It won’t do. I knew it was true the minute Everett told me I wasn’t right for the part. And I knew it last year, too, with Judith Marshall. I suppose *that* wasn’t true, either. The idea is I’m finished, eh? Well, I know damn well who’s helping to finish me.

RICHARD

Lower your voice, will you?

ALTHEA

Shut up! Althea Royce—not right for the part! I was all right for you to use as a stepladder, though, wasn’t I? Where do you think you’d have been if I hadn’t played Penelope for you in “The Ostrich”? I made P. J. produce it. . . . And I needed this play. I needed it to come back in,

and you killed it! What do you think they're saying, not seeing me in that part?

RICHARD

(Forcing himself to be calm)

Althea, believe me, if I'd thought you were right for that part—

ALTHEA

You! You don't care about anybody but yourself! You'd sell your soul to get a hit. Fashionable playwright! Fashionable prostitute—that's what you are!

RICHARD

(Stung)

What did you want me to do? Let you play a nineteen-year-old girl? You can see yourself, can't you, playing that balcony scene in a negligee! Why, they'd have laughed you off the stage!

ALTHEA

(In a low tone)

You . . . dirty . . . bastard!

(She takes a breath)

Well, maybe *I am* through, but you're not far behind me. Your trick won't last. You may write a couple more of these powder puffs, but they're onto you even now. And when you go you're going to go quick. *Then* see how you like it. Wait till you write those three straight flops and see who's out here on Sunday nights! Because you haven't got any *real* friends. No snob ever has.

RICHARD

(With a dangerous calm)

I see. Well, you asked for this and you're going to get it. It's true about Ivy, and it was true about Judith, and it's going to be true about all of them. How do you like *that*?

ALTHEA

I like it fine. Because you're never going to get rid of me. Never, never, never!

RICHARD

(Slowly)

I know that. And a pretty prospect it is, too.

ALTHEA

God, but it's funny! That *you* should be telling *me*—why, I picked you up out of the Provincetown Theatre—a snivelling little failure—and gave you your chance. You were so frightened—you were going to be so grateful. Well, I can see now that you just used every one of us—me, and Julia, and Helen, and P. J.—all of us! You never made a move without knowing exactly where you were going. The only one you never fooled was Crale. How right he was! You don't see *him* hanging around. He recognized you for what you were—a money-loving, social-climbing, second-rate hack. And he put it all on canvas.

RICHARD

(Bitterly)

Well, God knows he was right about you, too. If I'd listened to him I might still be writing those failures for the Provincetown Theatre, but I wouldn't be bored and fed up with myself and sick of my life. You think these plays mean anything to me? I do them because I can't do anything else—I don't dare stop and take a look at myself. But all they bring with them is more of *this*—and I don't give a goddam what happens to me, or anything else. I'd just as soon have that tombstone over my head right now.

ALTHEA

Oh, don't ask me to feel sorry for you—you knew what you wanted and you've got it. But if you think I'm going to stand around—

(IVY bursts through the windows, vibrant with youth. DAVID is with her)

IVY

Oh, there never *was* such a night! There never was a moon like this one, and the stars never hung so low—you can reach up and touch them!

DAVID

The patient is doing pretty well, Richard. All she needed was the moon.

(There is a dead silence. Even IVY is aware that something is wrong)

RICHARD

(Tensely)

David, could you drive Miss Carroll into town tonight?

DAVID

(Confused)

Why—of course, if—

ALTHEA

(Taking a moment to survey her)

I have just discovered, Miss Carroll, why you were so right for the part.

RICHARD

Althea!

ALTHEA

“Most beautiful of our younger actresses.” “Starry-eyed and translucent . . .” Well, perhaps you won't be so starry-eyed now!

(With a quick movement she picks up the bottle of iodine, which DAVID had set down. In a flash she uncorks it and hurls the contents into IVY'S face. The dark stain splotches over her white evening gown)

(IVY screams)

RICHARD

Christ!

ALTHEA

(Hysterically laughing and crying)

There goes your hit, Richard! . . . Didn't think I'd do that, did you? . . . I'll do it all the time!
. . . To your hits and your women!
(The men have rushed to IVY)

IVY

Richard! My eyes!

RICHARD

David! Telephone Manhasset nine three! Dr. Pritchard! Tell him what's happened and ask him to rush!

(Yelling after the fleeing DAVID)

Or we'll take her down there!

IVY

My eyes! It's my eyes!

(The NASHES, in bathrobes, appear on the steps. "What's the matter?" "Who screamed?")

ALTHEA

(Her hysteria mounting)

I did it! I threw it at her, Laura! All over that beautiful face! . . . Starry-eyed!

(She laughs)

You wouldn't give the part to me, Everett! And now you've got no one!

(The BUTLER and a MAID, also in bathrobes, appear in the doorway)

(LAURA and EVERETT hurry down the stairs. NASH: "Oh, my God!" LAURA: "Althea! Ivy!" RICHARD is bending over IVY: "Be brave, darling. Just a couple of minutes. It'll be all right.")

(From the next room we hear DAVID'S voice: "Dr. Pritchard? . . . I'm calling for Richard Niles . . .")

ALTHEA

(Her voice, almost in a screech, rising above the confusion)

He was sleeping with her, Laura! That's why I did it! He was sleeping with her! And he told me I was finished! Well, this'll finish everything—Ivy, and me, and everything!

THE CURTAIN IS DOWN

SCENE II

A corner in the Restaurant Le Coq D'Or; showing two or three tables. Le Coq D'Or is the place to lunch—expensive, exclusive, the afternoon rendezvous of the social and theatrical elite. It is to New York what the Ritz Bar is to Paris.

The year is 1927, and an unseen orchestra is playing the song hits of the day—"Old Man River," "Blue Skies," etc.

A solitary couple are finishing their luncheon—at the demi-tasse and liqueur stage.

HE

Did I?

(He laughs)

You know, I don't remember a single thing after we left the El Fay Club.

SHE

You were pretty well lit all evening. Don't you remember meeting Jim and Laura Stanhope?

HE

No. When?

SHE

Well, that shows you. You walked right up to him and said, "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?" And Jim said, "No, just a corset salesman on the loose."

HE

(Laughs again)

You know, that case is liable to make or break the corset business.

SHE

I don't know about corsets, but lots of women are thinking of buying sashweights.

HE

Imagine those two thinking they could get away with it. How could a woman do a thing like that?

SHE

Ruth Snyder isn't a woman—she's a hellcat. I feel a little sorry for Gray, though.

HE

I don't. He helped kill him, didn't he?

SHE

Yes, I suppose you're right.

HE

Listen—they both did it and they're both going to get the chair. You watch. . . . Check,

please.

SHE

Her too, you think?

HE

You bet she will.

SHE

(A glance at the check)

They charge the hell out of you, but everybody comes here.

HE

(Giving a bill to the waiter)

Okay.

WAITER

Thank you very much, sir.

HE

Well, we've got till five o'clock. What do you want to do? See a picture?

SHE

You know what I'd love.

HE

What?

SHE

Let's go to the Palace and see Nora Bayes. She's always marvelous.

HE

All right.

(They go)

(The WAITER picks up a plate or two—gives an annoyed glance around. The HEADWAITER enters)

WAITER

That damn boy, he ain't never here.

HEADWAITER

Bus! Hey, boy! Where are you?

WAITER

Always by the band, instead of the tables.

HEADWAITER

Boy! Come here!

(The BUS BOY comes in. It is none other than that radio star-to-be, VAL BURNETT, just now pretty frightened at the prospect of a bawling out)

Fix up this table!

(VAL hurries to the table and begins piling plates onto his tray)

WAITER

Dumbkopf!

(He goes)

HEADWAITER

(To VAL)

What do you think you're getting paid for? To stand and listen to the orchestra all day? Believe me, if help wasn't so hard to get you'd have been fired long ago! Hurry up that table, now!

(He goes)

(VAL continues with his work for a moment, but as the orchestra picks up a new tune, a dreamy look comes into his face. He begins to hum the tune. Then he gets an idea. First taking a quick look around, he picks up a menu from the table, rolls it into a megaphone, places it to his lips and sings through it. It is a great discovery. If someone had killed VAL BURNETT at this particular moment, there would be no crooners today)

(At the sound of approaching guests he quickly puts down the menu, gathers up his tray, and goes)

(It is a couple of girls who enter—about seventeen or eighteen. The debutante type. They are in a state of considerable nervous excitement, throwing ecstatic glances back into the main room)

FIRST GIRL

Doesn't she look beautiful?

SECOND GIRL

Yes, she's just as beautiful off the stage. Did you see those orchids?

FIRST GIRL

And that bracelet! That was a wedding present from *him*. He's *so* good-looking.

SECOND GIRL

Let's go and see the show again next week, if we can get tickets.

FIRST GIRL

All right. I could see it over and over. That scene where he makes love to her on the divan—

SECOND GIRL

Isn't that wonderful? That's why I like her plays—she always has a scene like that.

FIRST GIRL

I know. I wasn't allowed to see her plays till I was sixteen.

SECOND GIRL

I wasn't either. But I went anyhow.

FIRST GIRL

Oh! She's coming in here! I dare you to speak to her!

SECOND GIRL

(In a great lather at the very thought)

I wouldn't dare!

FIRST GIRL

I'll do it!

SECOND GIRL

You would not!

FIRST GIRL

Sssh!

(They back away a few steps, in a great state of nervous giggles)

(ALTHEA enters. The ALTHEA ROYCE of 1927 is ALTHEA Royce at her height. Her very gesture denotes the actress who has New York at her feet)

(She casts an annoyed glance over her shoulder as the HEADWAITER hurries in)

HEADWAITER

This table all right, Miss Royce?

ALTHEA

No, I'm not lunching just yet. I just saw someone I wanted to avoid.

HEADWAITER

Oui, Madame.

ALTHEA

The trouble with your place, Louis, is that one not only sees everyone one wants to see, but also the other kind.

HEADWAITER

(Accepting the blame for this)

I am sorry, Madame.

ALTHEA

It doesn't matter. Will you tell Mr. Niles, when he comes, that I'm in here?

HEADWAITER

(Bowing)

Oui, Madame. And may I offer my little congratulations on Madame's marriage?

(ALTHEA gives an imperious nod, which dismisses him. One of the debutantes, in a great fresh burst of giggling, pushes her friend toward ALTHEA)

FIRST GIRL

(Hardly able to get the words out)

Miss Royce, could we congratulate you too? We think you're wonderful.

ALTHEA

(So graciously)

Thank you.

FIRST GIRL

We saw a picture of the wedding in the Sunday paper, and you looked just like you do in the play.

(Suddenly the words come with a great rush)

We saw you in "The Ostrich" about four times, and we've seen you twice in this already, and we're coming back again next Wednesday afternoon.

ALTHEA

I'm so glad you liked me.

SECOND GIRL

Is your—is your husband going to write all your plays from now on?

ALTHEA

(With a light laugh)

I hope so. He's my favorite playwright.

(There is a little pause as the GIRLS try to think of another question, but can't)

FIRST GIRL

Well—thank you for being so nice to us.

(They hesitate again for a second, then with a renewed burst of giggling they make their departure)

(ALTHEA, turning, has barely had time to drop the gracious manner before she finds herself confronting the man she had been seeking to avoid. He is somewhere in the early sixties, gray-haired, on the shabby side. But instinctively you feel that he had been someone in his day. His name is P. J. MORTON)

MORTON

Althea!

ALTHEA

Oh! Hello, P. J.

MORTON

Althea, did you get my note at the theatre?

ALTHEA

Oh! Yes—yes. I—I meant to call you, P. J., but we've been so rushed.

MORTON

Yes, I know. I read about it. That's fine.

(Plunging)

Althea, can you let me have it? The five hundred. I've found a hell of a play, Althea, and if I can just tie it up I know I can get the money to produce it. I think my name as a producer would still mean something.

ALTHEA

(Kindly)

P. J.—it's terribly hard to refuse you, but—you said that about the last five hundred, and—I can't just go on. . . . Can I?

MORTON

(The mask completely falling. A pitiable figure)

You're right, Althea. I haven't any play. But I don't know who to turn to any more. I haven't got—fifty cents.

ALTHEA

(Looking away from him, quickly opens her pocketbook and presses a bill into his hand)

You come to the theatre tonight, and I'll have something more for you. I'll talk to Richard about it, too. I'll see what we can do.

MORTON

Althea, you don't know what it does to me to have to——

ALTHEA

(Seizing upon the providential return of the HEADWAITER)

Oh, Louis, that woman who's going to interview me—did you say she was in the bar?

HEADWAITER

(Catching on)

Oh—yes, Madame.

ALTHEA

Oh! Excuse me, P. J. I just have to run.

(She goes. MORTON stands uncertainly in his tracks for a moment. The HEADWAITER regards him)

HEADWAITER

(In his most austere manner)

Is there anything I can do for you, Monsieur?

MORTON

No. No—thank you.

(He starts slowly out, hurrying a little as he gets past the door)

(The HEADWAITER looks around, touches a napkin, fixes a flower)

(JULIA GLENN and JONATHAN CRALE come in. The JULIA of 1927 is just beginning to show the faint traces of the woman we have seen in 1934. She has not yet acquired the flabby look of the steady drinker, but even this early in the day she is not quite sober)

(JONATHAN CRALE is RICHARD'S age, which means that just now he is 33. He is, however, the very opposite of RICHARD in looks, dress, and manner. He is none too particular about the daily shave, and it is a long time since his suit was pressed. One forgets all this, however, under the spell of his personality)

(The HEADWAITER regards them with a certain hauteur. They so definitely do not belong in the Restaurant Le Coq D'Or)

HEADWAITER

You are lunching here, Monsieur?

CRALE

Why not?

HEADWAITER

Yes, sir. Right here, sir.

(He seats them with a good deal of chair-pulling and bowing. Proffers a menu to JULIA)

JULIA

(Waving the card aside)

I don't want any food. Scotch highball.

(The HEADWAITER receives this order with quiet dignity and turns his attention to CRALE, who is scanning a menu)

HEADWAITER

A little caviar first, sir?

CRALE

(Looking thoughtfully at the HEADWAITER)

Orange juice, wheat cakes and country sausages, coffee—got any angel cake?

HEADWAITER

(Shocked, but carrying on)

I'm afraid not, sir.

CRALE

Well—that's all.

HEADWAITER

Yes, sir.
(*He goes*)

JULIA

Angel cake? Where do you think you are? Childs'?

CRALE

(*His eyes following the HEADWAITER*)

You know, *he* ought to sit down and let us wait on *him*.

JULIA

And now, Mr. Crale, will you tell me what we are doing in this cradle of luxury? A couple of bums.

CRALE

Oh, just spying on the rich. . . . Don't you love flowers?
(*He picks up a vase of roses from the table and sets it on the floor*)

JULIA

I hate flowers, I hate music, little children and open fires.
(*She looks him over*)

How have you been, Jonathan?

CRALE

I've been in bed for three days.

JULIA

Sick?

CRALE

(*Matter of factly*)

No. But I didn't feel like painting and there was nobody I wanted to see, so I just didn't get up.

JULIA

Maybe that's an idea for me. The rest of my life.

CRALE

(*His hand closes over hers for a second*)

You'll be all right, Julie.
(*With a slightly false brightness*)

Look! How about taking a walking trip with me? Bear Mountain. It's beautiful.

JULIA

That would be what I'd draw. A walking trip. Other girls get Cadillacs and Pierce-Arrows, and I get a walking trip. No, you son-of-a-bitch.

CRALE

Well, you're a fool. Nothing like the Palisades this time of year.
(The WAITER enters, bearing the orange juice and the highball)

WAITER

(With the infallible instinct of his kind)

Orange juice for Madame?

CRALE

No, that's for me.

(The WAITER puts down the glasses and goes. JULIA immediately takes a long swig of her drink and gives a little sigh of relief)

CRALE

How many have you had today?

JULIA

I don't know. Couple.

CRALE

A few more than that, I should say.

JULIA

What's the difference? I've got to do something.

CRALE

Well—you could work, you know.

JULIA

I'm never going to write another line, Jonny. Except just enough to keep myself in liquor.

CRALE

Oh, yes, you are. You've got to get hold of yourself, Julie—quick. You can't go ahead this way—drinking Scotch highballs in the morning, sitting in speakeasies all night. That just gets worse and worse, you know. You've got no right to let that happen to you.

JULIA

I've got a right to do anything that'll make it easier for me. Because if I live to be a hundred I'm still going to be in love with you. Only I hope to God I don't live to be a hundred.

(The HEADWAITER comes importantly into view, gives a rather suspicious glance at CRALE and JULIA, and goes on out again. JULIA looks venomously after him)

What did you think we were doing? Stealing the napkins?

(She turns on CRALE)

In God's name, will you tell me why you brought me here? I hate it.

CRALE

Certainly I'll tell you. I wanted to see Richard.

(JULIA'S highball glass comes down on the plate with a little bang)

It's nothing to do with you, Julie. I want to see him myself. He won't talk to me on the telephone and he won't answer my letters. I know this is where he generally lunches, so I came here.

JULIA

(After a moment)

It was wrong of you, Jonny. You never should have shown that picture.

CRALE

Oh, I suppose not. You never should do anything where your friends are concerned. But I didn't know it was going to stir up all this fuss.

JULIA

You knew people would see it.

CRALE

No, I didn't. Nobody ever saw any of my pictures before. It was just tough luck this one happened to get into the newspapers. Only I didn't know Richard was going to get so mad. God, he won't answer my letters; he won't talk to me; he told Albert he never wants to see me again. I can't believe it. What's he so mad about?

JULIA

You didn't think he'd be pleased, did you? A picture of himself embracing a cash register with one arm and Althea with the other. Why did you ever paint it in the first place?

CRALE

Because I felt it. The way I feel about things has got to come out. And I'm a *painter*.

JULIA

I'm sorry you did it, Jonny.

CRALE

So am I—now. I wouldn't have anything come between Richard and me for anything in the world. God, he's my best friend. I love him. The big baby. But I know if I run into him that we'll wind up with our arms around each other and everything'll be all right.

JULIA

And how do I fit into this touching scene of reconciliation?

CRALE

Because I wanted you here. The three of us have always been together, and—I wanted you here.

(The WAITER returns, this time with the wheat cakes and sausages)

WAITER

Wheat cakes for Madame?

JULIA

No, no—there. It's always the other person, just remember that.

(The WAITER puts the plate in front of CRALE)

And another Scotch highball, please.

(The WAITER goes)

CRALE

(Regards his food)

Mm. Three pancakes. Only a dollar-eighty.

(He takes a bite with evident relish)

Anyhow, Julia, one thing has come out of the whole business. I'm in demand. Two people want me to do their portraits. Not going to do them. And I got a letter this morning from some—ah—where is it?—

(He fishes in his pockets and brings out a letter. Refreshes his memory with a glance at the envelope)

What is the *Cosmopolitan Magazine*? Is that a magazine?

JULIA

It's something Fannie Hurst writes every month.

CRALE

And I got another letter—

(Feels in his side pocket and apparently encounters a foreign substance)

—what the hell is this?

(He pulls out a good-sized pair of pliers and regards them vacantly. Then he suddenly remembers)

Oh, yes! I was going to fix my razor.

JULIA

(Regarding the two days' growth)

I see you fixed it.

CRALE

I had that letter . . .

(He tries the other side pocket)

Now, what—

(This time he brings out a top—one of those gayly colored, self-winding affairs that are just the thing for children of five)

JULIA

Why, Tiny Tim!

CRALE

(Childishly excited)

Oh! Picked this up on a pushcart—wait till you see it go!

(Instantly he is out of his seat and down on the floor, busily winding the top)

JULIA

Crale, are you crazy?

CRALE

(He spins it)

Look at it go, Julie!

JULIA

Look at *us* go!

(CRALE tilts himself back on his heels and watches the top with profound admiration. At this moment, unfortunately, the HEADWAITER returns. He does not quite believe what he sees, but, equal to any crisis, he steps over the spinning top and continues his progress, his head held high. CRALE guiltily gathers up the toy and stuffs it into his pocket)

JULIA

(When the HEADWAITER has disappeared)

We might as well steal the napkins and go, because we're going to be thrown out anyway.

CRALE

I don't know why you shouldn't be allowed to spin tops, just because you're grown up. Do kids have to have all the fun?

JULIA

Jonny, you're 33. People are going to quit making allowances pretty soon.

CRALE

(In high excitement)

Remember the time you and Richard and I spent the whole day calling people up and telling 'em the water supply was going to be shut off?

JULIA

All over the Bronx!

CRALE

We had 'em filling up bathtubs, wash basins, milk bottles——

JULIA

Richard sounded so official! They always believed him!

CRALE

We had a wonderful trick we used to work in college, Julie. Richard used to pretend——

(He stops short as RICHARD enters. He rises and goes toward him with proffered hand)

Hello, Richard.

(Without a word RICHARD strikes him with his fist. CRALE reels slightly, then hits back. RICHARD swings again—they are at it)

JULIA

(White and stricken)

Richard! Jonny! Don't! Don't! It mustn't end this way! It mustn't!

(The sounds of scuffle bring an increasing horde of excited patrons into the room.

JULIA'S pitiful cries of "Dickie! Jonny! Don't! Don't!" come through the excited shouts of the crowd as—

THE CURTAIN FALLS

SCENE III

RICHARD NILES'S rooms in an apartment-hotel just off Park Avenue. An interior decorator has clearly been given a free hand, and the result is a modernistic room done to the hilt. The hilt of 1926, of course, for the time is the fall of that year.

A Japanese servant, ITO by name, is setting the breakfast table, which is being laid for two.

The telephone rings.

ITO

Hello. . . . Apartment Mr. Richard Niles. . . . Who? . . . Miss Royce? . . . Oh! I call him. . . . What? . . . Oh! . . . All right, Miss Royce, I tell him.

(The door bell sounds. A refined buzz)

I tell him. . . . Yes, Miss Royce.

(He goes to the door)

Yissir?

(There enters a rather nondescript man in the middle forties, an indefinable air of the small-towner about him)

THE MAN

(Heartily)

Good morning!

ITO

(Uncertainly)

Yissir?

THE MAN

You remember me. I'm Mr. Niles's brother. Is he up yet?

ITO

Oh! Mr. Niles shaving. I tell him.

GEORGE NILES

It's all right.

(He raises his voice)

Hello, Dick!

RICHARD

(From the bedroom)

Hello! Who is it?

GEORGE

It's me. George.

RICHARD

With you in a minute.

GEORGE

No hurry. All the time in the world.

(There is a pause. His eye goes to the breakfast table)

Somebody coming to breakfast, eh?

RICHARD

What? Oh—yes.

GEORGE

Well, I'll get right out.

(He strolls over to the breakfast table)

Pretty soft for you writers—breakfast at eleven-thirty.

(He looks over a bowl of fruit on the table, sinks an inquiring finger nail into a pear, puts it down and takes up another one. He takes a juicy bite of it and speaks with his mouth full)

Always through with my breakfast seven o'clock.

(RICHARD comes out of the bedroom. He is in bathrobe and pajamas, and both are Finchley's best)

RICHARD

(Polite, but that's all)

Hello, George.

GEORGE

Hi! How's the kid brother?

RICHARD

Fine, thanks.

GEORGE

Just dropped in to say good-bye. I'm going back this afternoon.

RICHARD

Oh, thought you were staying till Wednesday, George.

GEORGE

Well, finished up yesterday. Might as well go back. You know, Dick, I was thinking: why don't you come home for awhile? Be good for you. Get away from all this——

(He feels for the right phrase)

... New York, running around, restaurants. Get some good fresh air in your lungs, and some home cooking under your belt, and I bet you'd write better. I couldn't write a letter in this place.

RICHARD

(Starts to open the morning mail)

Oh, I'm all right.

GEORGE

You know, we'd get an awful kick having you back. You're a big man in Evansville. Gosh, what a kick Mom and Pop would have got if they could see you now.

RICHARD

(Glancing up from a letter)

You look after the cemetery, don't you, George?

GEORGE

Sure—Ed and I don't let a year pass.

ITO

(Returning from the pantry)

Excuse, Mr. Niles. Miss Royce call while you shave. She say you wait here. She come over.

RICHARD

She did?

(A glance at his watch)

What time did she say she was coming?

ITO

She not say.

(RICHARD, annoyed by this news, starts for the telephone)

She say you not call her. She come over.

RICHARD

(Puzzled)

Not call her? Are you sure you got that straight, Ito?

ITO

Yes, Mr. Niles. She talk very low, but I understand.

RICHARD

(Thoughtfully)

That's funny.

GEORGE

(With considerable innuendo)

I thought maybe it was her coming to breakfast.

RICHARD

What? No.

GEORGE

Good-looking woman, all right. Stunner. Darned good in your show, too. Of course she's pretty sexy, but I guess that's what they want.

(RICHARD, *his mind on the 'phone message, is pacing thoughtfully up and down.*

GEORGE, *with no little hesitancy, continues*)

I don't suppose any of that stuff in the newspapers about you and her was true—huh? Just newspaper talk?

RICHARD

What did you say?

(The telephone rings)

GEORGE

(Half to himself)

Not that I'd blame you. . . . Good-looking woman.

Ito

(At the telephone)

Apartment Mr. Richard Niles. . . . Who? . . . Mr. Who? . . . Wertheimer?

RICHARD

I'll take that, Ito. . . . Hello, Jack—Richard. . . . What new grief have you got for me today? . . . Well, when your lawyer calls up it isn't just to say hello. . . . Well, look, Jack. Tell Helen to keep the child for another six months. . . . That's right. . . . I'm foregoing my privilege. She's to keep him for my six months. . . . She might send me a snapshot of the youngster. . . . Okay. Thanks. . . . Oh, Jack! If you're uptown tomorrow afternoon drop in around five for a cocktail. Good-bye.

GEORGE

Say, how *is* that kid of yours, Dick? You don't see much of him, do you?

RICHARD

(Not eager for the subject)

I see him occasionally. It's difficult for me to—ah——

GEORGE

How old is he now? About five, isn't he?

RICHARD

Yes.

GEORGE

Gee, how time flies! You know, it seems like yesterday when you brought Helen to Evansville on your honeymoon. Don't suppose *you* two ever see each other?

RICHARD

(Now definitely annoyed)

No, we don't!

(The door bell sounds)

GEORGE

Well, marriage sure is a lottery, all right. Say, talking about kids, you've got a couple of nephews back in Evansville that you've never even seen. We were saying the other night—
(*Ito opens the door. It is EVERETT NASH who enters*)

NASH

Good morning, Ito. Forgive my barging in this way, Richard, but—Oh, excuse me.
(*He stops as he sees a stranger*)

RICHARD

It's all right, Everett. My brother. This is Mr. Nash.

GEORGE

How do you do?

NASH

How are you? Listen, Richard, Metro called me on the 'phone last night from Hollywood. I tried to reach you. They must want the show, all right. They came up to seventy-five.

RICHARD

They did?

GEORGE

(*Eyes bulging*)

Seventy-five what?

NASH

Seventy-five thousand.

GEORGE

(*Stunned*)

Seventy-five thousand *dollars*? For *that* play?

RICHARD

(*With a smile*)

We feel the same way, George.

GEORGE

Oh, I didn't mean the play wasn't good, Mr. Nash, but the story isn't much, is it? It's just those funny lines of Richard's, and you can't hear words in a picture.

NASH

(*Smilingly*)

No. . . . What do you say, Dick? Do you want to take it?

RICHARD

I don't know. Think they'll go any higher?

NASH

They might. They want it for Mae Murray.

RICHARD

Oh—let's take it.

NASH

All right—I'll shoot 'em a wire.

GEORGE

(To himself)

Seventy-five thousand dollars.

NASH

By the way, Richard, I see somebody's going to produce that night-club melodrama that I turned down. *You* read it.

RICHARD

Oh, yes. "Bright Lights." Wasn't that the name of it?

NASH

That's it. They've changed the name, though. Calling it "Broadway." Good title, but the play won't get a nickel. You didn't like it, did you?

RICHARD

No. Who's producing it?

NASH

I don't know. Nobody you ever heard of. So long, Richard. Good day, Mr. Niles.

(They toss "good-byes" at him as he disappears)

GEORGE

Well, I got to be going too.

RICHARD

Well, George, nice to have seen you. Give my love to every one back home.

GEORGE

Seventy-five thousand dollars. Well, I guess it was worth it—Ed and I putting you through college. Ed working all those years in the knitting mill, and me nights in the drug-store, just so you could go to college and earn all this money. Yes, *sir*. Ed and I never regretted doing it, either—not for one minute. No, *sir*.

(His eyes finally meet RICHARD'S)

RICHARD

(Realizing, only too well, what is expected of him)

What's the name of that oldest boy of yours, George?

GEORGE

(Brightening immediately)

Lester. Why?

RICHARD

(Heading for the checkbook)

I just thought I'd like to make him a little present.

GEORGE

(A shade too heartily)

Oh, you don't have to bother with anything like that.

RICHARD

How old is he?

GEORGE

Fourteen. Hell of a kid. Lot like you used to be, Dick.

(As RICHARD starts to write)

Say, Lester certainly will appreciate this. Just make it out to cash.

(The door bell sounds)

Can't trust a kid of his age with that amount of money. You know, he writes, too. Like a son of a gun. I'm going to send you some of his stuff.

(As RICHARD hands him the check)

Thanks, Dick! Well, good-bye!

(Without another word, he rushes pell-mell to the door, which ITO has just opened. In his haste to get out he almost knocks down JONATHAN CRALE, who is entering)

RICHARD

Jonny! My God, but I'm glad to see you!

(He throws his arms around CRALE and gives him a great friendly hug)

Where the hell have you been? It's been weeks!

CRALE

Listen—don't hang it on me, you big stiff. I'm always around. It's you, posing for those lousy pictures in *Vanity Fair* all day.

RICHARD

Crale, you're getting soft. Have you been reading *Vanity Fair*?

CRALE

God, no! Saw a copy lying on a garbage can.

RICHARD

Well, anyway, I got you at last. . . . All right, Ito.

CRALE

Yeah—a breakfast date. What is this—a new style or something? I don't like it.

RICHARD

The whole thing is a big conspiracy to get you out of bed before noon. The reason you've got no sense, Crale, is that when we were at college all the important classes were held in the mornings, so of course you never knew anything about them.

(They are at the breakfast table by this time, about to start in on the orange juice)

CRALE

Well, you're wrong today. I've been up for hours. Just got back from the morgue.

RICHARD

The morgue? What happened?

CRALE

Nothing happened. I just like to go down there.

RICHARD

You mean you just like to go down to the morgue?

CRALE

Sure. There's nothing gives you such a sense of life and death. Whenever I'm feeling too cocky about my work, or if I'm low about anything, I go down there, and I come out feeling fine.

RICHARD

Ever think of going to a movie? Honest, Jonny, the longer I know you——

CRALE

Well, I don't let myself get bored, anyhow. That's one of the secrets of my failure, I guess.

RICHARD

How are things going, Jonny? Sold any pictures?

CRALE

Don't be a goddam fool. Nobody buys my pictures. In the first place, I haven't painted any for six months.

RICHARD

Oh, dear. Well, no use my lecturing you again. What have you been up to otherwise?

CRALE

Well, I was in jail last week.

RICHARD

(His fork, descending on the plate with a clank)

Now, don't tell me you just went *there* for the fun of it.

CRALE

No. I was arrested. That's why I missed your opening—I was locked up.

RICHARD

(Helplessly)

What did you get into this time?

CRALE

Garment workers' strike. I was picketing.

RICHARD

You're not a garment worker.

CRALE

No, but I thought they were right. So I picketed for them, and—happened to beat up a cop.

RICHARD

I give up.

(As he is served)

Thank you, Ito.

(He takes a bite of egg)

You missed a good show, you know.

CRALE

I saw it last night.

RICHARD

You did? . . . Well?

CRALE

(Hesitates for a second, then takes the plunge)

My God, Richard, what do you want me to say? You know how I feel about those plays. I liked it; I laughed. And by the time I got to Broadway and Forty-fifth Street I'd forgotten all about it. It's a carbon copy of the other two you wrote. This year's model.

RICHARD

(Good-humoredly)

Well, a lot of people don't agree with you.

CRALE

Oh, I know it's a hit. But what are you going to do? Keep *on* writing those things? You're better than that, Richard. My God, you wrote a fine play once.

RICHARD

All right, and what happened to it? Two weeks at the Provincetown Playhouse.

CRALE

Yes, and you were better off then with a failure than you are now with a hit, whichever way you look at it.

RICHARD

(Pushing his chair back)

So that's the new argument, eh? If it's a hit it isn't a good play. It's wrong to be successful. You've got to starve to death and write plays for a little art theatre that nobody comes to see.

CRALE

I don't mean that. You *know* I don't mean that.

RICHARD

All right. What *do* you mean?

CRALE

I mean—all *this*.

(*A wave of the arms that takes in the room*)

That Mongolian you've got out there. The whole life you're leading now. The people around you. It's doing something to you. You're not the same Richard I used to know.

RICHARD

Why? Because I don't eat in those bum restaurants and don't have to worry about where my next dollar's coming from?

CRALE

Yes—among other reasons. You're getting away from the guts of things into a whole mess of nice polite *nothing*. And that's what your plays are about. Why, I used to come into the studio and find you bubbling over with ideas—good, juicy ones. And in the past year all I've heard you talk about is how much the play grossed, and what you got for the movie rights, and you met Noel Coward.

RICHARD

All right—now let me tell *you* something. I *like* my life the way it is now. I like meeting Noel Coward, and I like being successful. I'm enjoying myself for the first time. I had plenty of the other thing—all those years with Helen. Working in a shoe store all day and writing that fine play at night. And what for? So that you and Julia could tell me how great I was? I don't see myself writing plays for two people, and being miserable the rest of the time. Why has that got to be part of it? Why do you have to be poor to write a fine play?

CRALE

Because when you're rich you never write it. That's why.

RICHARD

I don't want to be *rich*, Jonny. But give me a chance. Give me a chance to get a little money in the bank and I'll write you a fine play. I'll write you the finest play that ever closed in a week.

CRALE

No, you won't. The longer you wait the tougher it gets. It's like a man saying he's going to take up reading when he's forty. You start reading at ten or you don't read at all. Besides, the trouble with these plays you're doing is you don't dare stop. You've got to write one a year or they'll forget you ever wrote a line. But you write one good play and they'll *always* know who you are. If I paint one good picture they'll remember *me*.

RICHARD

But I'm not like you, Jonny. That's the answer to the whole thing. I'm not like you!

CRALE

But you *are*, Richard. I know you too well for you to tell me that. You *are*, but you *won't* be if you go on living this way, getting in deeper and deeper with these people. I know all this isn't hard to take—

(A gesture that takes in the room)

—it must be very pleasant. It's fine for Ogden, and Nash, and people like that, but you and I have got no right to it. I get my fun in front of an easel, and it's the only fun I'm entitled to. And that's where you ought to get yours—in front of a typewriter. I don't know whether you ever get any reward for it, but I do know this: you've only got so many good years, and when they're gone—and that may come sooner than you think, Richard—if you haven't made use of them, it's very tough. Because then you've got nothing.

(RICHARD says nothing for a long moment. Then:)

RICHARD

(Pacing, thinking)

It's hard, Jonny. I'd rather have your respect than anything. But it's hard to know which way to turn. When you've had nothing all your life, and suddenly get all this, maybe you have to be stronger than I am to push it aside. That's what I meant by a couple of years more—

CRALE

No, Richard. You've got to make a clean cut.

(He pauses a moment)

Right from the very core.

RICHARD

What do you mean by that?

CRALE

Althea. You've got to start by cutting her right out of your life.

RICHARD

(Stiffening)

So that's it.

CRALE

Richard, I couldn't say this if I didn't feel closer to you than I do to—my mother. Althea's poison for you. It's just sex—that's all it is. You can't love that woman. And as long as you're tied up with her you're tied up with everything she stands for. Get rid of her. You don't love her. You wouldn't *marry* her, would you?

RICHARD

Marry her? She's got a husband, in the first place.

CRALE

All right, then it's just a question of sleeping with her. Isn't it?

(RICHARD *looks at him without answering. He takes a turn around the room*)

RICHARD

(*Slowly*)

Jonny, I've got nothing on this afternoon that I can't call off. Let's spend the day together, have dinner, and talk right through the whole goddam night.

CRALE

That's the stuff—that sounds like the old Richard.

(*An arm thrown around RICHARD'S shoulder*)

Richard, I'm—I'm very glad. It's going to seem like old times, having a day together. Listen—let's pick up Julie and make it an old-fashioned session. What do you say?

RICHARD

All right. I've been feeling a little guilty about Julia lately. I haven't seen as much of her as I—Jonny, isn't she drinking a good deal?

CRALE

(*Quietly*)

She certainly is. A great deal.

RICHARD

Why? She never used to. What's the matter with her?

CRALE

Don't you know?

RICHARD

(*Trying to think*)

No, I don't think I do.

CRALE

Ever occur to you that she might be in love with you?

RICHARD

(*Stunned*)

Julia? In love with me?

CRALE

So in love with you that she can't bear—what's going on.

RICHARD

(*Unable quite to realize it*)

Why—I never thought of Julia that way. She's the swellest person in the world to be with, but Julia's like—well, she's like *you*. She's some one you talk to like a man. I never thought of her as—

CRALE

Well, there you have it. Come on—get your things on.

RICHARD

(Still turning it all over in his mind)

Julia. . . .

CRALE

Well! Want to get dressed?

RICHARD

What?

CRALE

You can't go *that* way.

RICHARD

Oh!

(He starts toward the bedroom, then stops short, remembering)

Oh, look, Jonny! I can't go right away. I just remembered.

CRALE

What's the matter?

RICHARD

Well—nothing important—just something I've got to—where'll you be in about an hour?

CRALE

How about picking me up at Julie's?

RICHARD

Okay.

CRALE

It's a date.

(He goes to him)

Listen, you dirty capitalist—you still love me after all the things I said?

RICHARD

Don't be an idiot. Nothing can ever change that, no matter what you say or do. Now get the hell out of here, before we both bust out crying.

CRALE

See you in an hour!

(He goes)

(RICHARD stands looking after him for a moment, then takes a few thoughtful steps around the room)

(Ito comes in from the pantry. He looks surprised, and a little hurt, at the remains of the breakfast on the table)

Ito

Something matter breakfast, Mr. Niles?

RICHARD

H'm? No, no—fine. Just take everything away.

(Ito clears the table as RICHARD, still pacing, nervously lights a cigarette)

(The door bell sounds)

I'll go, Ito.

(He opens the door as Ito vanishes into his pantry. ALTHEA ROYCE stands framed in the doorway, a small over-night bag in her hand)

ALTHEA

(Rushing in and throwing herself into his arms. Obviously in a state of great emotional stress)

Oh, my darling!

RICHARD

Althea! What's the matter?

ALTHEA

I've left him, Richard! I've left him at last!

RICHARD

What?

ALTHEA

It was terrible! I haven't slept all night! He kept following me from one room to another, hammering on the doors!

(She is near hysteria)

RICHARD

Althea! Get hold of yourself! Tell me what happened!

ALTHEA

(Tensely)

Last night—after I left you—I went home. I didn't mean to say anything—but suddenly—it all came over me. I saw myself—night after night—coming home—him sitting there. I couldn't stand it—I said, "Harry, I'm leaving you—I want a divorce."

RICHARD

(Almost inaudible)

Good God!

ALTHEA

He began to cry . . . I've been very good to him, Richard. All these years. I owe him nothing. . . . All night he kept it up. All morning. You don't know what I've been through! Finally I just—left. I told Della to pack my things, and—left.

RICHARD

But—what are you going to do—Althea?

ALTHEA

Do? Here I am, Richard. You're all I care about.

(The telephone rings. Her hand goes convulsively to her throat)

What's that?

(RICHARD goes to the 'phone)

RICHARD

Hello. . . . Yes . . . Yes, she's here.

(He turns to ALTHEA)

It's Della.

(ALTHEA hesitates for a brief moment, then goes jerkily to the 'phone and takes the receiver)

ALTHEA

Yes, Della?

(She listens for a long, taut moment, her face expressionless. Suddenly her hand goes limp. Staring vacantly in front of her, she slowly hangs up the receiver. Her lips move, but no sound comes forth)

RICHARD

(Sharply)

Althea!

ALTHEA

It's—Harry. He's killed himself.

RICHARD

(With a sharp intake of breath)

Oh, God!

(ALTHEA starts uncertainly toward him, then suddenly rushes to him)

ALTHEA

(Her arms around his neck)

Richard! . . . Richard! . . . Richard!

(He stands dully for a moment. Then, as if they were weighted, his arms come up and envelop her)

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE I

JONATHAN CRALE'S studio. A skylight room on the top floor of an old house, somewhere in the East Twenties.

It is cluttered up, of course, with all the traditional paraphernalia of the artist—easel, model stand, brushes, canvases. In addition, however, there are several objects around that are much more difficult to explain. A huge brass telescope, on a tripod, stands near the window. There is an old-fashioned Russian samovar, enormous, pushed into a corner. A pair of ice skates have been tossed onto a chair, and a pogo stick leans against the wall.

The year is 1925, the time approximately ten o'clock of a bright Spring morning. JONATHAN CRALE is sprawled in a dilapidated easy chair. He is in his pajamas, but, since the morning is a trifle chilly, he is wearing a coat. It is, however, a woman's coat with an imitation fox collar.

To top it all off he is very seriously playing an accordion, or at least trying to. He has set his heart on mastering the popular tune of the day, but is having a hard time of it.

From the bedroom comes a GIRL'S VOICE.

THE GIRL

Craley!

(He is preoccupied with his music)

Craley!

CRALE

What is it?

THE GIRL

I can't find my step-ins.

CRALE

Well, I haven't got them on.

(He starts playing again)

THE GIRL

(After a moment)

It's all right—I got 'em!

(There is another pause, during which the music is atrocious)

Craley, help me close this bag, will you? It won't shut.

CRALE

(Not stirring)

You can shut it. Take some things out of it.

(He resumes playing, trying a few extra flourishes this time)

(THE GIRL comes out of the bedroom—something very attractive in the early twenties. She carries a small suitcase in one hand and a hat in the other)

THE GIRL

I don't see why I have to get out of here just because this friend of yours is coming back. You'd think he was a minister or something. I don't see why I can't stay. There are two beds in there. We wouldn't bother him any.

CRALE

(*Musingly*)

Molly, I just thought of a one-word description of you. Inhibited.

MOLLY

I don't see why you have to be so squeamish about *him*, anyway. *He* knows what it's all about—your Mr. Niles. From what I read in the papers he could give us *all* lessons. No wonder he went away. I'm surprised he's got the nerve to come back.

CRALE

Come on, Toots—out you go.

MOLLY

I guess that Althea Royce must be pretty hot stuff, if she's anything like her plays.

CRALE

“‘The time has come,’ the Walrus said”——

MOLLY

Aw, Craley! You haven't painted my picture yet. I haven't even posed for you.

(*She gestures toward the easel, on which is a perfectly blank canvas*)

CRALE

Molly, I'm afraid that if you haven't posed in three months, something must have happened to prevent it.

MOLLY

Well, let me just stay and get a look at him.

CRALE

Am I going to have to——

MOLLY

Oh, all right! Give me my coat and I'll go!

(*The downstairs buzzer sounds. MOLLY is immediately excited*)

Oh, is that him?

CRALE

Listen, his boat doesn't get in until eleven-thirty, so you haven't got a chance. Press the button, will you?

(MOLLY goes to the push button as CRALE gets himself out of her coat)

MOLLY

(As CRALE helps her on with the coat)

Crale, you still love me, don't you?

CRALE

Crazy about you. Good-bye.

MOLLY

Oh, you!

(She gathers up her bag)

CRALE

Take care of yourself, Molly. You were a good fellow when you had it.

(She goes)

(CRALE looks around the room—decides to be an astronomer for awhile. Draws a chair up to the telescope, starts to sit down, discovers the ice skates and tosses them onto the floor. He is intently peering through the telescope when JULIA enters)

Julie, the sun's out!

JULIA

You don't say so! Do you mean to say that you can look through a little bit of a thing like that and tell when the sun is out? That's a wonderful invention! Do people know about that?

(The JULIA of 1925 is fresh, buoyant, youthful, happy. There is a definite glow about her)

CRALE

Why, you're all dressed up, you little son-of-a-gun.

JULIA

(Throwing her arms around his neck in sheer joy)

Of course I'm dressed up! And of course the sun is out! Do you think it would dare stay in with Richard coming home! There'll be a moon tonight, and stars, and a milky way, and what the hell are you doing in pajamas? We've got to meet that boat!

CRALE

I overslept.

JULIA

I know. I met her going down the stairs. . . . What was that she had with her—a sample case?

CRALE

Uh-huh. Fuller brush lady.

JULIA

(Unable to contain her high spirits)

Oh, Jonny! I never realized how much I wanted to see that man! Eight months! For God's sake get out of those pajamas! I was up at five o'clock!

CRALE

Fifty-six shakes of a lamb's tail!

(He disappears into the bedroom, the pajama top coming off over his head as he goes)

JULIA

Well, make it fast! I want to see that boat come up the bay, I want to wave to him from the end of the pier. I want to see him walk down the gangplank! Have you got money for a taxi?

CRALE

(From the bedroom)

Huh?

JULIA

Have you got money for a taxi?

CRALE

(Still in the bedroom)

I think so. How far is it?

JULIA

I don't know. Where's the pier?

CRALE

(Calling)

What?

JULIA

Where's the pier?

(CRALE appears in the doorway. He has donned a shirt, but still wears his pajama pants)

CRALE

Don't *you* know where the pier is?

JULIA

No. You said you were going to find out.

CRALE

No, I didn't. You said *you* were going to.

JULIA

Oh, Jonny!

CRALE

Well, we can find out in two minutes. What's the name of the boat?

JULIA

The *Rosamond*, of course.

CRALE

Well, let's see. Do they put private yachts in the newspaper?

JULIA

I don't know. Where's the newspaper?

CRALE

I haven't got one.

JULIA

Don't you take a morning paper?

CRALE

No, I don't. Does Mr. Hearst buy my paintings?

JULIA

Very funny. But where does the boat dock?

CRALE

Now, don't get panicky. People have been in worse jams than this. We can figure it out.

JULIA

I know. You sit down and say to yourself, "Where would I go if I was a yacht?"

CRALE

My God, it's Ogden's boat, isn't it? We'll call up his house and *ask* them. *They'd* know.

JULIA

(Shaking her head)

Not listed. He's too rich now.

CRALE

All right—his office!

JULIA

Now you've got it! . . . What's the name of that company? Investment—investment. The Something-or-Other Investment Company.

CRALE

That's a big help.

JULIA

(Thinking it out)

What do people invest in?

CRALE

(*A sudden idea*)

I know how we can find out! I know just the man!

(*He goes to the telephone*)

Stuyvesant 1840. . . . Old fellow at the Sailors' Home. Knows every boat that comes into the harbor—I don't care what it is. That's all he does all day. Looks up boats. Mud scows to the *Aquitania*. . . . Sailors' Home? . . . I want to talk to Captain Peterson. . . . Peterson. . . . Well, tell him to stop for a minute and come to the 'phone. It's important.

(*He turns to Julia*)

He's playing chess.

JULIA

Not looking up boats today, huh?

CRALE

Greatest sea dog you ever met in your life. Didn't I tell you about him, Julie? Picked him up on the Battery. Looks magnificent. Right out of Conrad! I brought him straight up here to paint his picture. Ticked him no end.

JULIA

(*Eyeing the blank canvas*)

It's good, too.

CRALE

Say, once he started talking, Michael Angelo couldn't have painted. What a life he's had! Mutiny on two ships. Feet frozen to the mast. Why, once in Tahiti—hello! Captain Peterson? . . . This is Jonathan Crale. . . . How are you? . . . Huh? . . . Well, I haven't started painting it yet, Captain. Just some rough sketches. But it's going to be a great picture. Wait till you see it!

JULIA

He should live so long.

CRALE

Listen, Captain, there's a private yacht coming in today and I want to know where it docks. . . . Huh? . . . It's called the *Rosamond*. . . . *Rosamond*. Owner, Albert J. Ogden. And it's got a lot of rich bastards on board, if that'll help you any. . . . All right. I will.

(*To Julia*)

He's talking it over with the boys.

JULIA

Tell 'em to take their time.

CRALE

You watch—they'll know. They'll know it, if anybody——

(*The 'phone again*)

—what? . . . How's that?

(*To Julia again*)

Captain Schmidt says it got in two days ago.

JULIA

Oh, for God's sake!

CRALE

(Into the 'phone)

No, that must be another boat, Captain. . . . The *Rosamond*. . . . That's right. Coming in from Gibraltar. . . . That's it! That's the one!

(To JULIA)

I told you he'd know it. . . . I'm listening. . . . Pier 19, foot of 26th Street. That's fine—I'm right at 24th Street. . . . Huh? . . . Oh! 26th Street, Brooklyn.

JULIA

Oh, dear!

CRALE

Well, thanks a lot, Captain. I'm coming down there some day and beat the pants off you boys at chess. . . . Well, you practice up. . . . Good-bye.

(He hangs up)

JULIA

(Who has been pacing impatiently)

Jonny, will you get dressed? Brooklyn! It'll take hours!

CRALE

I'll hurry! Honest I will!

(He scoots into the bedroom)

JULIA

Brooklyn! If I was rich enough to own a yacht, I'd own a pier too. And I'd have it on the lake in Central Park, where you could get at it.

CRALE

(From the bedroom)

What did you say?

JULIA

Never mind! Get dressed!

(A look around. She begins to tidy the room)

It's a wonder you wouldn't fix this place up, with Richard coming. Everybody doesn't like to live in a mess.

CRALE

I do!

JULIA

(Pausing in her work. A rapt look comes into her eyes)

Jonny, won't it be wonderful to have him back! Fresh, and starting all over again! That whole terrible business behind him. I'm so excited I could sing! I *will* sing!

(And she does. A phrase of "Look for the Silver Lining")

CRALE

You're terrible!

JULIA

I don't care! I don't care about anything!

(She stands for a moment, smiling at nothing in particular)

You know, Jonny, I was thinking this morning—it's funny how things work out. For the best, I mean. Everything seemed so hopeless eight months ago, but when you look at it now it seems as if it was all planned. He *had* to go through all that. That one taste of success was bad for him anyway, Jonny—he liked it. That shake-up was just what he needed. We were able to get him away.

CRALE

(Emerging from the bedroom, struggling with his necktie)

"This world is so full of a number of things, I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings."

(He gives a little snarl)

JULIA

Jonny, do you think he's finished the play?

CRALE

(At the mirror)

Maybe.

JULIA

In Cairo he had one act done. If he's had any luck at all——

CRALE

Well, we'll know soon enough. He'll be full of it.

JULIA

I've got some news for Richard. And you too.

CRALE

Yeah?

JULIA

I've started the novel, Jonny. Day before yesterday.

CRALE

You don't say?

JULIA

Thirty-five pages. I think it's good, too.

CRALE

Gosh, Julie, I'm tickled to death.

JULIA

Jonny, I want to kick up my heels! Where can I learn to kick up my heels?

CRALE

United Cigar Stores.

JULIA

Ooooooh! . . . On Saturday something terrible is going to happen to me.

CRALE

Huh? Why?

JULIA

Everything is too swell right now. I'm too happy. I always figure if I have a Thursday and Friday like this, on Saturday I'm due for a sock in the nose. Oh, Jonny, I'm glad I was born!
(In sheer exuberance of spirits she picks up a crayon and quickly sketches in a huge black mass on the canvas)

CRALE

Hey! What are you doing? Do you think canvas grows on trees?

JULIA

It's Captain Peterson! Don't you see his beard?
(The buzzer sounds)

Who's that?

CRALE

How do I know?

JULIA

We're not stopping for anybody!

CRALE

(As he presses the button)

Okay!
(He opens the hall door and calls down)

Who is it?

A VOICE

(From two or three flights down)

It's me! Richard!

CRALE

It's Richard!

JULIA

Richard!

(They almost fly out of the door—you hear the clatter of their feet as they rush down the stairs, and their excited cries: “Richard! For God’s sake!” . . . “We were coming to meet you!” . . . “Richard!” . . . “Look at him, Julie—he’s ten pounds heavier!” . . . “Did you miss me? I’ll bet you never knew I was away!”)

(The voices swell as they approach the room. CRALE: “Honest to God, we were just this minute leaving the house!” JULIA: “We’d have been there hours ago, but he wouldn’t put his pants on!” RICHARD: “Say, I know you two! I’m surprised you remembered the day, even! Gosh but it’s good to see you!”)

(They bring him into the room—RICHARD in the middle, the other two clinging to him. Looming up in the rear, his face beaming, is ALBERT OGDEN)

(Except for a coat of tan, RICHARD NILES has the beginnings of the man we have already seen—well-tailored, an air of assurance. His appearance and bearing, however, are in the nature of a surprise to CRALE and JULIA. Even the mustache is a product of the trip)

CRALE

(As they come in)

And maybe you don’t think you’re a sight for sore eyes! Gee, but it’s good to see you, you bum!

JULIA

Richard, was it wonderful? Was it all wonderful—Egypt, and India, and——

CRALE

Let’s get a look at him first! Stand over there in the light!

OGDEN

Doesn’t he look great? Did I do a good job?

CRALE

Look at that outfit, will you? What’s that—London?

RICHARD

Hawes and Curtis!

JULIA

Right out of Bond Street. Are they paid for?

RICHARD

(Turning around, mannequin-fashion)

Like ’em?

CRALE

Stand still a minute! There's something—my God, he's got a mustache!

JULIA

He hasn't! Why, so he has! Richard!

CRALE

A mustache! Why didn't you cable?

RICHARD

Oh, it's just a little thing. For God's sake, stop talking about me and let me get a look at you two! Tell me some news!

CRALE

Listen—you've knocked everything out of our heads, coming in this way! What happened?

RICHARD

We got in an hour ahead of time.

OGDEN

Made the tide.

RICHARD

Look here, you people must know *something*. I've been away eight months. What have you been doing? Whom have you been seeing? What's been going on?

JULIA

We haven't got any news! You're the one with the news! What about the new play, Richard? I can't wait! Have you finished it?

CRALE

Have you, Richard?

OGDEN

You bet he finished it! And it's great!

JULIA

Richard!

(She throws her arms around him)

CRALE

Say, that's real news!

JULIA

When can we hear it, Richard? It sounded so swell! I was so excited! When can we hear it?

RICHARD

(Uncomfortable)

Well, I'm not so sure that you and Jonny—

OGDEN

Just wait! You'll die laughing! He read it to us and we almost fell overboard! Novel as hell—the whole thing takes place on a yacht! Everybody's wife gets into the wrong cabin! "All on Deck"—isn't that the name of it, Richard?

RICHARD

Ah—yes.

(A little nervous laugh)

It's not as funny as all that, Albert.

(There is a slight pause)

JULIA

But, Richard—that isn't the play you wrote us about.

RICHARD

(Ill at ease)

No—it isn't, Julia.

JULIA

But—what happened to that? It—sounded—so swell.

RICHARD

You mean the coal-mine play? Well, I did an act of it—you know, I wrote you—but I was afraid of it. I don't think they want plays like that right now.

OGDEN

I should say not. There's enough trouble in real life without going to the theatre for it. People want to laugh.

RICHARD

Well, they want serious plays too, but—

(He faces JULIA)

—I read it to the crowd and they didn't seem to think—

(He is interrupted by a staccato buzzing of the door bell—two or three rings)

JULIA

(Turning)

What's that?

OGDEN

(Calling out the open door)

Coming right down! . . . It's Rosamond and some of the crowd. I guess they're getting impatient.

CRALE

Rosamond? Why didn't you tell us? Ask 'em to come up!

(He starts for the door)

OGDEN

No, no! We've got to go! Only stopped a minute—just wanted to say hello.

CRALE

Oh! Too bad we can't all have lunch together. I'd like to see her. . . . Your bags in the car, Richard? I'll bring 'em up.

OGDEN

Oh, Richard's coming with us.

JULIA

What?

RICHARD

We're—we're spending the week-end at the Flemings'. We kind of made arrangements on the boat for a farewell get-together. The whole crowd are going out, and—I couldn't—I'll be back Monday morning.

(The buzzer sounds again—a long, imperative summons)

OGDEN

(Yelling down the stairs)

Oh, all right! . . . We'd better go down. Good-bye, people! Coming, Richard?

RICHARD

Ah—just a second.

OGDEN

Okay!

(The bell again. Still more demanding)

Coming down! Lay off the bell, will you?

(He is gone)

CRALE

(Making the best of it—giving RICHARD a pat on the back)

All right, kid—have a good time. When are you coming in—Monday? Leave me your trunk keys and I'll have you all unpacked.

RICHARD

Well, look, Jonny—would you care a lot if—if I didn't come back here to live? You see, I found on the boat—I could work better being alone, and—anyway it puts you to a lot of trouble having me here. I thought I'd just take a room at the Lombardy or somewhere until I can get a place of my own. You don't mind, do you?

CRALE

(Masking his disappointment)

Why—no. If you think you can work better that way, Richard—that's all right.

RICHARD

It isn't as if we can't see each other just as much. I—I want to talk to you both about the coal-mine play. Maybe I could go back to it, if—you liked it. Ah—how about dinner Monday night? Are you both free?

CRALE

We're both free. If you are.

RICHARD

Fine. I'll keep it open.

(There is an awkward pause)

Well—I guess I'd better go down before they start ringing again. Good-bye, Jonny, you old fool. See you Monday. . . . Good-bye, Julia.

(He blows her a kiss)

Can't tell you how good it's been to see you two again.

CRALE

Good-bye, Richard.

RICHARD

Good-bye.

JULIA

(As he goes through the door)

Good-bye, Richard.

(She looks down the stairs after him)

Good-bye.

(Slowly she pulls the door shut and leans with her back against it. Her voice takes on a new meaning)

Good-bye, Richard. . . .

(She gives a shrill, unpleasant laugh)

Hail and farewell! . . . Jonny, we saw the last of Richard Niles eight months ago—the day he got on that boat. He's met The Crowd, Jonny! He's met The Crowd, and there he goes! And do you remember something, Jonny? *We did it!* You and I. That day in the court-house. We made him get on that boat. Everything works out for the best, eh? Did I say that? Well, if I did I was a God-damned fool!

(CRALE, who has slumped into the easy chair, gives a single blast of discord on the accordion)

CURTAIN

SCENE II

A Court-house Corridor.

The year is 1924.

A couple of ATTENDANTS stand guard outside a courtroom door, from behind which comes the droning voice of a JUDGE.

THE JUDGE

—at which time the plaintiff will proceed with the presentation of her evidence. Before taking an adjournment, may I remind the gentlemen of the press that this is a court of law, and that the dignity of the court must be upheld at all times? I will hold in contempt of court any newspaper photographer who attempts to take another picture in this courtroom, and if there are any further demonstrations from the public attending this trial I will order the courtroom cleared.

(There is the sound of the descending gavel)

Court is adjourned until nine o'clock tomorrow morning.

(From the courtroom come the voices of the BAILIFFS, growing louder as the cry is picked up by those nearer the door. "Court is adjourned!" "Court adjourned!")

(Immediately a babel of sound springs up inside the courtroom, and from the door there emerges THE PUBLIC—or, at least, those lovely representatives thereof as are inevitably drawn to any legal procedure that promises cheaply sensational developments. The women are sleazy, cheaply dressed, sensation-hungry. There is, however, a sprinkling of Bronx housewives and two or three over-dressed West End Avenue ladies. The men are of the variety generally referred to as loafers, but among them too there are a few who are better dressed)

(The crowd is in holiday mood, and is happily discussing the juiciness of the day's evidence as it crosses the corridor)

A GIRL

Are you coming tomorrow, Evelyn?

EVELYN

You bet I am. Tomorrow's going to be juicy.

A WOMAN

Did you get a good look at Niles? He looks paler than he did yesterday.

HER FRIEND

Paler? He ought to be blushing all over the place.

THE WOMAN

I feel sorry for that Mrs. Niles, with a baby and everything.

A MAN

The poor sucker's unlucky, that's all. It could happen to any of us.

ANOTHER WOMAN

(Emerging from the courtroom)

Believe me, if he was my husband I wouldn't be suing for a divorce. They'd have me on trial for murder.

HER COMPANION

Did you see what the paper said today about Althea Royce? That editorial in the *Mirror*?

THE FIRST WOMAN

Yeah—nice for that little kid of his, ain't it? They're the ones that suffer with these divorces.

STILL ANOTHER WOMAN

My little girl said to me today—she's just old enough to read—she said: "Mama, what was it they did on the leopard skin?" What could I tell her?

A PASSING MAN

Tell her to keep away from leopard skins.

THE WOMAN'S FRIEND

Imagine how that poor Mrs. Niles must have felt—coming there and finding the two of them on that leopard skin! I know how I'd feel!

A MAN

(To a male companion)

We've got a leopard skin up at the country club. Gives me an idea.

HIS COMPANION

Let me know how you make out.

A WOMAN

I wouldn't miss tomorrow for anything. That's when she's going to tell how she found 'em.

HER FRIEND

Do you think Althea Royce will testify?

THE WOMAN

What could she say? She was caught, wasn't she?

HER FRIEND

The *Mirror* is going to run her love secrets. Her maid wrote it.

THE ATTENDANTS

No loitering, please! Keep these corridors clear. Do your talking outside. Outside, please! Keep moving! Outside!

(On the heels of the disappearing crowd three or four reporters come out of the courtroom)

A REPORTER

How about a drink, boys?

ANOTHER REPORTER

Okay with me!

A THIRD REPORTER

Not me! I've got to knock out my story. My paper's on the street at eight.

THE FIRST REPORTER

Say, you can bat this one out in twenty minutes. Whenever you're stuck just put in some more dirt.

THE SECOND REPORTER

Yeah, this one's from heaven. Thank God for that leopard skin.

THE FIRST REPORTER

That's what Niles said.

(There is a ribald laugh from all of them as they pass on)

(A new group comes out of the courtroom. It is headed by a frail, rather distraught young woman, leaning rather heavily on a woman who is obviously her mother. A little behind them comes a brisk businesslike gentleman, accompanied by an older man and a youth of nineteen or so)

THE MOTHER

I've got some spirits of ammonia in my pocketbook, Helen. Do you want it?

THE GIRL

No, I'm all right, Mom.

THE LAWYER

Now look, Mrs. Niles——

(The GIRL stops and turns)

MRS. NILES

Yes, Mr. Richardson?

RICHARDSON

I want you to get a good night's sleep——

(He turns suddenly to the older woman)

——see that your daughter gets a good night's sleep, Mrs. Murney, because I may have to put you on the stand again tomorrow, Mrs. Niles.

MRS. NILES

I'll try.

HER MOTHER

She'll be all right.

HER FATHER

Mr. Richardson says this was a very good day for us, Helen. We'll make that fellow feel sorry for what he did to you.

THE YOUTH

You bet we will!

THE MOTHER

(As they are about to leave the corridor)

I'll take the baby in my room tonight, Helen, so you——

(They are interrupted by a trio of brash YOUNG MEN who dash out of the courtroom. Two of them carry cameras)

A PHOTOGRAPHER

Mrs. Niles! Oh, Mrs. Niles!

RICHARDSON

Now, boys, Mrs. Niles is very tired. No more pictures today.

THE PHOTOGRAPHER

Can't we have just one? Please! Just one with her brother, showing how they came in the room and found 'em! We've got a leopard skin out here and everything!

RICHARDSON

(Shepherding the family out)

Now, none of that, boys! No, no!

THE PHOTOGRAPHER

Well, can we come up to the house and get one of Mrs. Niles and the baby? Won't take a minute?

RICHARDSON

No, no, boys! Mrs. Niles is very tired—can't you understand that?

THE PHOTOGRAPHER

(Following them out)

But just one, Mr. Richardson! We can't go back without a picture.

(They are gone. A couple of COURT ATTENDANTS are next, chatting as they walk)

FIRST ATTENDANT

Ain't had a case like this in a long time. Not since that Mrs. Fletcher sued for rape.

SECOND ATTENDANT

I wasn't here then. Did she get it?

(From the courtroom there emerges ALBERT OGDEN, accompanied by a serious-looking little man)

OGDEN

Agonizing experience—my God, what an ordeal! How long's it going to go on, Wertheimer? I don't think Richard can stand much more of it.

WERTHEIMER

Oh, couple of days, I guess. They're going to pile on plenty of dirt, you can make up your mind to that.

OGDEN

But it's so horrible—Richard having to go through this. Sensitive fellow like that. These crowds staring at him, and jokes about it in the street—that composite picture in the paper this morning. You can see what it's doing to him.

WERTHEIMER

Well, you've got to expect that in a case of this kind. Women like Althea Royce—all those sexy plays she's been in. It was made to order for the tabloids.

OGDEN

But I tell you he's going to crack up. How long's it got to go on?

WERTHEIMER

Well, that's up to you people.

OGDEN

What do you mean by that?

WERTHEIMER

I mean it's one of those cases that never should have come into court in the first place. I told him that when he came to me.

OGDEN

God, I hate to give up now, after we've gone through all this. Don't you think there's any chance at all?

WERTHEIMER

(A shake of the head)

It'll only get worse. Tomorrow they're going to have some of those people testify that were at the party—the last ones to go. You see, Mr. Ogden, it all ties in too well. His wife leaves the party in tears—comes back with her brother at ten minutes to four—and there they were. On that damned leopard skin. Trust the tabloids to pick up that leopard skin. It was all they needed.

OGDEN

Well, I'd like to save him from any more of this. I suppose there's no use—

(RICHARD comes out of the courtroom, along with JULIA and JONATHAN CRALE. RICHARD shows the full effects of the ordeal that he is passing through. His white, drawn face is the face of a man shaken to the very roots. He looks old)

RICHARD

Can't we get out of here? I want to get out of here!

JULIA

You don't want him for anything, do you, Mr. Wertheimer?

CRALE

I want to take him home.

(The PHOTOGRAPHERS, having finished with the plaintiff, now return in search of the defendant)

A PHOTOGRAPHER

Here he is! How about a picture, Mr. Niles? Just one!

(RICHARD makes a convulsive gesture with his arms, as the others instinctively screen him)

WERTHEIMER

Get out of here! We've had enough of your damned pictures! Go on! Get out!

THE PHOTOGRAPHER

(After looking him up and down)

O. K., counsellor. But you don't have to get nasty about it. You're glad enough to get pictures when you're winning a case.

(The PHOTOGRAPHERS withdraw)

JULIA

Oh, why won't they let him alone!

(RICHARD, with a deep sigh, brings his hands down from his face)

OGDEN

(Going to RICHARD)

Listen, old man, I've been talking to Wertheimer. He feels you oughtn't to go on with it. Now, if you stop now you can save yourself a lot of suffering. What do you say?

RICHARD

(Dully)

What?

OGDEN

We don't think you ought to go on with the case. We think you ought to stop now. What do you say?

(RICHARD looks at him dumbly)

All right?

RICHARD

(Too far gone to care)

Whatever you think.

JULIA

Oh, Richard, I'm so glad!

(CRALE *merely lays a steady hand on his shoulder*)

OGDEN

(*With a sigh of relief*)

It's better already.

JULIA

Of course it is.

WERTHEIMER

Believe me, Niles, it's the only thing to do.

RICHARD

I suppose so. I can't seem to think any more. I just want it to be over.

OGDEN

Well, it's over now, Richard—all finished.

WERTHEIMER

You won't ever have to come back here any more.

RICHARD

Thank God for that. I've never thanked you, Jack, for everything you've tried to do—and you, Albert, for everything you've done——

OGDEN

Now don't worry about that.

RICHARD

Julia, you've been so wonderful. I don't think I ever could have faced it if it hadn't been for the way you and Jonny——

JULIA

But Richard—we love you. We're always going to be with you—whenever you need us. Always.

CRALE

Just you forget about us, Dickie. Right now you've got to think about yourself.

JULIA

Richard, what you've got to do is to get away—get away as quickly as possible. Just think—in ten days you can be on Albert's boat, and this'll all seem like a bad dream.

RICHARD

No, no. I don't want to go away.

CRALE

It's what you need, Richard. You've got to.

JULIA

You won't be alone. You'll have Albert with you, and all his friends.

OGDEN

You'll love it, Richard. She's a beautiful boat, if I do say so myself. And it's a swell crowd that's going.

JULIA

Richard, think of it! The Mediterranean, Egypt, India!

RICHARD

No. Just let me stay with you and Jonny. I'll be all right if you and Jonny are with me.

JULIA

Listen, Richard. You're worn out. You're on the ragged edge. If you're ever going to work again you've got to get fresh strength—you've got to see new people, new places—this is a heaven-sent chance. If you stay here, even with Jonny and me at your side, you'll be constantly reminded of it—the whole city'll remind you of it. Richard, you must go. Won't you do it for *me*, Richard—for Jonny and me?

RICHARD

Julia, I'm afraid to go away now—the way I feel. I'm afraid to——

(Without warning, the PHOTOGRAPHERS spring their coup. One of them quickly dashes up behind RICHARD with a leopard skin, which he holds up as a background. At the same time the man with a camera levels it at him, while his accomplice rushes in with the flash powder)

THE MAN WITH THE LEOPARD SKIN

O. K.! Shoot!

(There is a quick flash; almost immediately the men are gone. But not before they throw a taunt back over their shoulders: "See how you like this tomorrow morning!")

CRALE

The God-damned——

WERTHEIMER

(Through set teeth)

If I can ever——

JULIA

(To RICHARD)

Oh, my dear!

RICHARD

All right, Julia. I'll go. I'll go. Only get me away quick. I can't stand it. I can't stand it.
(He is sobbing hysterically as the others try to quiet him)

CURTAIN

SCENE III

ALTHEA ROYCE'S apartment. The year is 1923.

Prominently visible is a leopard skin, which is thrown casually over a couch. A large Arabian sword hangs incongruously on the wall. An Indian drum, which is evidently used as a seat, stands in a corner. The room, in fact, is a strange combination of furniture supplied by the hotel and favorite pieces of her own added thereto by ALTHEA, probably bits from this and that production in which she has appeared.

It is about eleven-fifteen at night, and it is clear from what is going on that a party is about to be given. WAITERS are entering from the hallway and passing through to another room, laden with trays and glasses, cutlery and china. A CAPTAIN hovers about, giving little unnecessary instructions. "Right in there!" . . . "The plates go on the small table." . . . "Plenty of big glasses, too."

A BELLBOY, who has been pressed into service to take charge of the men's coats, loafs in the entrance hall, while a colored MAID, who is to perform a like service for the ladies, appears from time to time in one of the doorways.

CAPTAIN

(Signalling to his WAITERS)

Come on—don't loaf in there.

BELLBOY

Say, I ain't got room for an awful lot of coats. Is it going to be a big party?

MAID

Can't ever tell. Last time I was here Miss Althea says to me a few people is going to drop in, and by the time they was through coming there must have been a hundred.

BELLBOY

I guess she knows plenty of people, Miss Royce. Do you think there's liable to be any movie stars here tonight?

MAID

That party I was just telling you about, Patsy Ruth Miller was here.

BELLBOY

You don't say? She's swell. Did you see her in "The Hunchback of Notre Dame"? Oh, good evening, Mr. Nixon.

(Two men in dinner coats have come through the open door. They are HARRY NIXON, ALTHEA ROYCE'S husband, and SID KRAMER, a vaudeville agent who is his constant companion. HARRY NIXON is in his middle forties, a trifle gray. It is not so long ago that he was considered a handsome juvenile. He still looks a trifle dashing in his evening clothes, but there is an indefinable air of sadness about him)

HARRY

(*To the BELLBOY*)

Hello, Tommy. Got you working tonight, eh?

BELLBOY

Yes, sir.

HARRY

(*To the CAPTAIN*)

Hello, Gus. Everything under control?

CAPTAIN

Yes, sir. We are very nearly ready—just a few minutes more.

HARRY

Plenty of time—the show's just over.

CAPTAIN

How was the opening, Mr. Nixon? Is it a hit?

HARRY

Seemed to go very well.

CAPTAIN

Oh, that is fine. Miss Royce will be very happy. My congratulations.

HARRY

Thank you, Gus.

(*The CAPTAIN departs. With the master of the house now home, the MAID and the BELLBOY have likewise disappeared to their respective cloakrooms*)

(*As he takes off his coat*)

Mix yourself a drink, Sid. You know where it is.

SID

I can wait.

(*He lights a cigarette*)

HARRY

I thought it went darned well, didn't you?

SID

They liked it. Downstairs draw, maybe, but it'll go. Smart kid, that young Niles. Pretty good for a first play.

HARRY

Yeah—he's got stuff, all right.

(*He pulls a great batch of telegrams out of his pocket*)

Look at this, would you? And still more in the dressing room. Althea gets more telegrams every time she opens.

SID

I don't suppose *you* got any, huh? You're only her husband.

(He holds out a hand for some telegrams)

Let me see some of those.

HARRY

(Paging through the messages)

They're all here, all right—all the big ones. Elsie Ferguson, Glenn Hunter, Lenore Ulric, Conde Nast——

SID

(Reading from his own batch)

Irene Fenwick, Al Woods, Oliver Morosco, David Belasco——

HARRY

Is there one from Belasco? Let me see it.

(He takes it)

Gee, what it would have meant to us ten years ago—a couple of vaudeville hicks—to get a telegram from David Belasco.

SID

(Who is under no illusions)

You didn't get it. It's to Althea.

HARRY

That's all right. She's the one that was up there acting.

SID

Yeah—I know.

(HARRY puts the telegrams down and takes a nervous turn or two around the room)

HARRY

I wish this party was over. I wish it was time for 'em to go home.

SID

Why?

HARRY

I hate these parties. They—they get on my nerves. I hate 'em.

SID

I don't wonder.

(Suddenly bursting out)

You know, if I was you, Harry, I'd be so sore I couldn't sleep nights.

HARRY

What do you mean?

SID

Hell, you know what I mean! Whose fault is it that she's up there acting tonight? Whose fault is it that she ever came out of the chorus?

HARRY

What's the difference, Sid? As long as one of us made the grade, what's the difference?

SID

The difference is she's got no gratitude. Everything she knows she learned from you. You can't tell me anything about Althea Royce. I can remember catching your act when you first teamed up with her, and she didn't know how to walk across a stage.

HARRY

(He smiles reminiscently)

"Harry Nixon and Girlie." Gee, that seems a long time ago.

SID

I don't begrudge her having her name in lights—more power to you if you can get ahead in this business—but she's forgotten you ever had anything to do with it.

HARRY

(Trying hard to be loyal)

No, she hasn't.

SID

Yes, she has. And it's a mystery to me why you stand for it.

HARRY

No, no, Sid. Althea's all right. It's—me. You see, Althea's an important actress now. She's got to meet important people—be seen in the right places. I don't like to—tag along with her. They don't want *me*—it's Althea. They're nice enough, but—after about five minutes I'm always sort of standing around, wishing it was time to go home. That's why I just don't go any more.

SID

She goes, though, don't she?

HARRY

Well, now, Sid, you can't ask her to give up all that just because *I* don't fit in. She's—she's darned nice to me—lots of ways. It's—it's me. I just don't know what to do with myself any more. I used to think, all right, I'll go back and play a small part here and there, but—they don't remember me. And anyhow it—wouldn't look right. Althea Royce's husband.

SID

What are you going to do? Sit here and rot?

HARRY

Oh, it's not as bad as that. I guess maybe I ought to be pretty grateful—no worry about money, and a roof over my head. . . . But I don't know. Some mornings I wake up, and I wish I could stay right in bed till the day was over. I don't know what to do with the days. Sometimes I find myself, two o'clock in the afternoon, standing in one of those auctioneer places on Broadway. Just standing there listening.

SID

(Kindly, for the first time)

Don't you go to the Lambs' Club any more? That used to be your regular hang-out.

HARRY

No, I—I stopped going there.

SID

What for?

HARRY

Well, maybe it was foolish of me—I don't suppose the boys meant anything by it—but I'd come in there and all I'd hear was, "Pretty soft for you, Harry. See your wife's in a new hit. *You* don't have to worry, do you?" It got so—I just couldn't go there any more.

(There is a little silence. Then HARRY laughs with a false brightness and slaps SID on the back)

Oh, don't mind me, Sid. I get days when I go on this way—feeling sorry for myself. Maybe it's this darned party tonight—they always get me kind of low. I wish it was over, or I didn't have to be here, or something.

SID

(After a moment's pacing)

Look, Harry! Maybe I shouldn't tell you this. But I'm a friend of yours and I'm going to! This is what makes me so mad. It's everything you did for her, and going through hell now, and her carrying on with other men. Right under your nose! It's no secret around town, I can tell you that. And it was high time somebody told you.

HARRY

(Quietly)

I know all about that, Sid.

SID

(After looking at him for a long moment)

You do? And you're still willing to take it. Well, I give up.

HARRY

You see, Sid, there's one thing about it you don't understand. I'm still—crazy about her.

SID

But my God, Harry! It's one after another. You can see from the way she looks at young

Niles—

(He pauses significantly)

HARRY

I don't care. I'm so in love with her that if she'll just let me stay around, I don't care what she does. That's the only thing that scares me, Sid—if she ever left me. Because if that ever happens, then there's no reason for me at all.

SID

(A little frightened by his tone)

Oh, come on, now! That's never going to happen! She's very fond of you. I didn't mean—let's mix ourselves a drink. Where did all those waiters go?

HARRY

Gus! Hey, Gus!

(Gus does not appear, but there stands in the doorway instead a lady of formidable proportions. It is ALTHEA'S mother, MAGGIE RILEY. She has one of those emphatic Irish faces, which just at the moment is laboring under such loads of make-up that it is difficult to tell her age, and she is wearing what would be considered evening clothes on anybody else. Something happens, during the course of an evening, to anything that MAGGIE RILEY puts on. Her long white gloves are dirty at the fingertips; her evening cape, obviously handed down from ALTHEA, is a trifle askew on her shoulders; the edge of her petticoat shows beneath her dress. People like MAGGIE RILEY enormously—because she is not their mother)

MRS. RILEY

(Booming)

Hello, Harry! Say, Harry! Coming up in the elevator just now I found my A! Listen!

(She bursts into "Alexander's Ragtime Band"—good and loud)

How's that? The old pipes are still there, eh?

HARRY

(Considerably disturbed at seeing her)

Hello, mother. Sid, you know Althea's mother, don't you? Mrs. Riley.

MRS. RILEY

(Before SID can answer)

Say, I know Sid Kramer. He booked an act of mine once. "The Four Nightingales." Remember that act, Sid? Boy, was that a stinkerino!

SID

It sure was.

MAID

(Coming out of the bedroom)

Take your wraps, Madam?

MRS. RILEY

No, thanks. I ain't a guest. I may get kicked out any minute. Hey, Puss!

(She hails a passing WAITER)

Bring me a bottle of beer, will you? And make it fast! I'm going to get *something* out of this wake!

(Another WAITER is passing, bearing a platter with a huge cold ham on it, already partly sliced)

Hey, what you got there? Let's see that! Boy, I'm hungry! Say, that looks good.

(She quickly removes her gloves and takes a large slice of ham in her fingers)

Mm. Wonder why food always tastes better in your fingers. Got that beer? Ah! Thanks.

(As the WAITER pours it)

Everyone's so goddam flossy these days. Beer out of bottles! Oh, well!

(She lifts her glass)

Up the chimney, boys!

(She drinks, spilling a little of it over her dress, then elaborately wipes her mouth with the back of her hand)

Ah!

(Glass in hand, she surveys the other two contentedly)

Well, boys, how did you like the show?

HARRY

Why—we thought it was fine, mother. I think it's a big hit. Didn't you like it?

MRS. RILEY

Like it? What the hell was it all about, will you tell me that? What did the name mean? "The Ostrich." Wasn't a goddam bird in it.

HARRY

Well, the whole idea is—people afraid to face things. Sticking your head in the sand.

MRS. RILEY

Well, why didn't they come out and say so? "The Ostrich," for Christ's sake! What they get away with today! Those kind of plays give me a pain.

(She affects the pose and voice of what she considers the modern actress)

"There's no one here, Alfred. They've all gone into the garden. Shall we dawnce?" . . . "I can face anything, dearest, as long as I know that I have you. Shall we dawnce?" . . . "Edgar! Father has just shot himself! Shall we dawnce?" Dawnce my behind! Believe me, that show could *use* a couple of ostriches. And they call it acting, too—that's what beats me. "Won't you have a cup of tea?" "Yes, it *is* warm." Acting, for Christ's sake! Leslie Carter swinging on that bell in "The Heart of Maryland"—that was acting. That blood dripping down in "The Girl of the Golden West"—that was acting. Why, Leslie Carter would have pooped Althea right off the stage!

HARRY

Well, mother, it's a different kind of show business today.

MRS. RILEY

You bet your life it is! You had to *have* something in the old days. When you could sing

“The Holy City” in a burlesque show, the way I did, to a bunch of Hunkies in Youngstown, Ohio, and *hold 'em*—

(She sings a phrase of “The Holy City”)

God damn it, you *had* something! I don't call *this* show business!

(She heads for a side table to put down her beer glass)

(At the same moment ALTHEA appears in the entrance hall. She is resplendent. Great bursts of orchids peep out through the fur of her evening wrap, while behind her stand two MAIDS, laden with flower boxes)

ALTHEA

(Not seeing MRS. RILEY in the excitement of the moment)

What an opening! What an audience! What a glorious night!

MRS. RILEY

Shall we dawncé?

(She comes into ALTHEA'S view)

Hello, Annie. Take off your things and make yourself at home.

ALTHEA

(Surprised is not the word)

Why, mother dear.

(It is said sweetly, but from its very sweetness you understand how heartily she loathes MRS. RILEY)

I—I thought you were going home. Won't you miss your train?

HARRY

I—I was just going to tell your mother how tired you are after an opening.

MRS. RILEY

Tired? What the hell from? I sat in the first row of the balcony and couldn't hear a goddam word you said.

ALTHEA

(From a great height)

Oh, really? The rest of the audience heard every word.

MRS. RILEY

They must have good ears. What were you doing with your back to the audience all the time? I thought you were going right *up* that fireplace.

ALTHEA

(Icily)

Well, mother, I'm sure you're right and everyone else is wrong. That's why P. J. Morton pays me two thousand dollars a week and puts my name up in lights.

MRS. RILEY

Say, get it while you can, Annie—before they get onto you.

ALTHEA

(Unable to stay calm any longer)

Mother, will you *please* stop calling me Annie?

MRS. RILEY

Well, for Christ's sake that's your name, ain't it? That's what you were born. Annie Riley to Althea Royce—that's a sleeper jump for you. And I see by the program—

(She unfolds it)

—where your grandfather was the founder of the Irish Theatre. Old Patrick Royce. The only place *he* was ever found was under the seat drunk.

(She consults the program)

“Comes from a long line of distinguished Irish actors.” You should know some of them. Your great-grandfather was a horse-thief; old Patrick Royce was sent up for wife-beating, when he wasn't busy founding the Irish Theatre, and—

ALTHEA

(With repressed fury)

Mother, are you going home or aren't you?

MRS. RILEY

(Squaring off)

Oh, I see. I'm not good enough for your fine friends. Listen—just because they wear ermine wraps and a lot of jewelry don't fool *me*. I'm on to them all. Irene Bordoni! Where do you think *she* came from—Tiffany's?

ALTHEA

Now, that's one thing I will not stand for! I will not have you saying things like that about my friends!

MRS. RILEY

Oh, save that for someone who doesn't know you. You're just shanty Irish, that's all you are! You're not lace-curtain Irish—you're *shanty*! And don't you forget it!

ALTHEA

(Losing all control)

Get out of here! Get out of here before I throw something at you!

HARRY

Althea—please. You're all tired out.

ALTHEA

(In near hysteria)

That I have to put up with this on the night of my opening—

HARRY

Althea, don't get yourself upset. I'll take mother back to Roseville. We'll go right away.
Come on, mother.

MRS. RILEY

(Having had her fun)

Don't worry. I wouldn't stay at your goddam party. I don't want to talk to a bunch of hams.

ALTHEA

Ooh!

(Unable to speak for anger, she flings herself into her room)

HARRY

Ready, mother?

MRS. RILEY

You bet I'm ready.

(She gulps down the rest of the beer)

HARRY

Listen, Sid—if I don't get back to-night—it may be too late for me to get back—way over in Jersey—will you kind of look after things for Althea?

SID

Sure.

MRS. RILEY

Well, I got a bottle of beer out of it, anyway.

(She raises her voice in a final bellow)

Good-bye, Annie! Did I tell you I ran into your first husband the other day? He's still tiling bathrooms!

(She goes, followed by HARRY)

(SID stands morosely looking after them for a moment, then turns and calls into the dining room)

SID

Give me a highball, will you? Make it strong.

(An unseen WAITER calls back, a "Yes, sir" as ALTHEA returns to the room)

ALTHEA

(Still smouldering)

Really, what I have to put up with! No one else in the world would do it!

SID

(Surveying her)

Yeah—you got it pretty tough.

ALTHEA

(Bridling)

What's that?

SID

(Looking her straight in the eye)

I said you got it pretty tough.

ALTHEA

And just what do you mean by that?

SID

Oh, nothing.

(He takes a turn away)

Not a thing.

ALTHEA

Just a minute, Kramer. I don't know what you're talking about, but I don't have to take anything from you. Just remember that.

(She sweeps back into her room)

(SID looks after her: He gives a little shake of the head; mutters something under his breath)

(The WAITER comes in with the highball, but for a moment SID does not notice him)

WAITER

Your highball, sir.

SID

Oh! Thanks!

(A YOUNG MAN appears in the entrance hall, looking around uncertainly. It is SAM FRANKL, in a rather shiny dinner coat of uncertain cut, but SAM FRANKL nevertheless)

BELLBOY

Your coat, sir?

FRANKL

Is this Miss Royce's apartment?

BELLBOY

Yes, sir.

FRANKL

(Addressing SID)

Good evening.

SID

Hello.

FRANKL

I'm the piano player from Harms. To play for the party.

SID

Well, there's the piano.

FRANKL

Okay. Bet you it's out of tune—they always are.

(He runs his fingers over the keyboard, then indulges in a little display of fireworks)

SID

(Admiringly)

Say, you're pretty good.

FRANKL

Uh-huh.

(Another musical flourish)

SID

Lot of good songs this year, don't you think?

FRANKL

As for instance?

SID

Well, that new song of Irving Berlin's, and Kern's got a couple of good ones.

FRANKL

Those old hacks. They were washed up ten years ago, only they don't know it. Listen—when they write the history of American music they're only going to mention one song writer. Sam Frankl.

SID

Sam Frankl? Who's that?

FRANKL

Me.

SID

(A trifle stunned)

Oh! Well, it doesn't do a young fellow any harm to feel that way.

FRANKL

What do you mean feel that way? *I know.* Why should I be modest? I'm a genius. It's got nothing to do with me—I just am. Say, I sit down in the morning and what comes out of that piano frightens me sometimes. It's tremendous. Berlin, Kern, Friml—don't make me laugh! Listen to this one. This is Frankl.

(He starts to play again just as the first guests begin to arrive. It is some eight or ten

people, among them EVERETT NASH and a young woman named LAURA WILLOUGHBY. The BELLBOY advances to take the men's coats and hats; DELLA comes forward to assist the women. One or two of the women follow DELLA into the next room to freshen their make-ups, emerging a few moments later. The others surrender their evening wraps to DELLA)

(There is the customary buzz of all early arrivals. "Oh, are we the first ones?" . . . "What do you think of that?" . . . "We were lucky—I had Jack wait right at the theatre." . . . "Oh, you know how these things are—everybody stops at Tony's first." . . . "Well, Althea said to come right up. She was coming right up." . . . "Oooh! Althea!")

ALTHEA

(Emerging from the room)

Oh, my darlings, was I terrible? I want you to tell me the truth, my dears, because I know when I'm bad.

(This is met, as ALTHEA meant it to be, with a veritable gush of denial. "Althea, my darling, you were wonderful!" . . . "My dear, we loved you. We've never seen you better." . . . "My dear, didn't you hear that audience? They practically cheered—they never do that!" . . . "You were brilliant, Althea darling. That's all I can say—brilliant!")

ALTHEA

Thank you, darlings. But you know it's not me, really. It was Mr. Niles's beautiful play.

NASH

That lad's a comer, Althea. I'd like to get ahold of him.

LAURA

It really is a perfectly delightful play. A little gem.

ALTHEA

I discovered him, you know. Absolutely discovered him.

(Another COUPLE or two appear in the entrance hall. "Hello, people!" . . . "How are you?" . . . "Hello, Everett!")

A WOMAN

(Advancing toward ALTHEA with outstretched hands)

Althea, darling, I never saw such a performance in my life. I've seen them all, my dear, and never in my life—it was absolutely stunning, that's all. It was breath-taking.

ALTHEA

Oh, Janet darling, you're the sweet of the world. Did you really like me?

ANOTHER WOMAN

I should think it would just run forever, that's all. I'm going back and see it again and again.

(Into the entrance hall has come another group. It is headed by P. J. MORTON—P. J. MORTON at his height as a producer. He is a far cry from the man we have seen in Le

Coq D'Or; down to his last fifty cents)

ALTHEA

(Sighting him and advancing toward the entrance hall)

P. J.! My darling! Your roses were wonderful!

(From the crowd: "Hello, P. J.! Another hit, eh?")

ALTHEA

(With a great show of humility)

Well! Did you like your little girl tonight, P. J.?

MORTON

(After a kiss on the forehead and a paternal pat on the shoulder)

You made me very proud tonight, my dear, proud to be your manager. I've handled all the big ones, but you, my dear—tonight I think you are the biggest of them all.

(Two or three people applaud a little, echoing his sentiments. "Well, you can't ask for more than that, Althea." . . . "Now, do you believe you were wonderful?")

ALTHEA

(Huskily)

That means more to me, P. J., than all the critics in the world. As long as I am able to walk onto the stage, I want you to be my producer.

(And she embraces him, to the accompaniment of ecstatic "Oh's!" and "Ah's!" from the crowd)

(At the same moment another group of guests arrives. "Where is Althea? Where is she?" "I must tell her right away!" . . . "There she is!" . . . "My dear, you were divine!" . . . "Althea, you were wonderful! I never saw such a performance in all my life!")

ALTHEA

(Advancing to the new group)

Darlings, did you really think so! Did you really like me?

(The group around P. J. is lavishing attention on him, as due to the producer of the hour. "Well, P. J., the third hit and the season's young yet. How many more are you going to have?" . . . "Say, you're a combination of Augustin Daly and Charles Frohman rolled into one. He just pulls hits out of his sleeve." . . . "What are you going to do with all your money?")

MORTON

Put it right back in the theatre—that's what I'm going to do with it. The next ten years in the theatre are going to be bigger than you ever saw. I'm building three new theatres right now. I can't find enough theatres to put my shows in—I got to build 'em!

(Still another handful of guests arrives—there is the same hullabaloo, the same gush of compliments for ALTHEA. By this time the room is starting to be pretty crowded. WAITERS are pressing through with trays of highballs—almost everyone has a drink in his hand. Cigars and cigarettes are already beginning to fill the room with smoke)

(It is at this point that RICHARD NILES arrives. We see him framed in the doorway—Richard at 29,—youthful, eager, scared. Clinging to his arm, as though she were afraid ever to let go, is his wife, HELEN. She is very pretty, with the kind of good looks that go at thirty—one of those women whose chief allure is an excessive femininity, of the helpless, appealing kind. At the moment her bewilderment, almost her fright at her surroundings, is plain on her face)

ALTHEA

(Raising her voice above the crowd)

There he is! There's the man who did it all! Richard! Everybody! Listen! Quiet, people, please! Stop that piano a minute! People, this is Richard Niles, our author!

(There is a little buzz from the crowd. "Why, isn't he young?" . . . "Bravo! Mr. Niles!")

ALTHEA

Richard, come on! People are dying to meet you! Oh—Hello, Mrs. Niles. So glad you came.

HELEN

Hello, Miss Royce.

ALTHEA

(Pulling him through the crowd with a predatory hand, with HELEN trailing behind them)

Isn't he a brilliant young man to have written that lovely play! He's going to be so successful he won't know any of us in a few years!

(She brings him to a halt in front of a little group)

I want you to meet two of my oldest friends. Mr. and Mrs. Maynard! And Mr. Kennedy, and Miss Newcombe. This is Richard Niles.

RICHARD

How do you do?

(At once the group surrounds him. "Mr. Niles, how did you ever think of all those funny lines?" . . . "Well, young man, you've written a very entertaining play." . . . "It's really the best comedy we've had in a long time." . . . "Great show, all right!")

RICHARD

Why,—thank you. Thank you very much. This is—my wife, Mrs. Niles.

ALTHEA

Oh, yes—of course.

HELEN

How do you do?

MRS. MAYNARD

Well, Mrs. Niles, you must be very happy. Aren't you proud of your husband tonight?

HELEN

(Falteringly)

Yes.

MAYNARD

Must be an exciting night for *you*.

HELEN

Yes.

MRS. MAYNARD

Didn't you think the audience received it well?

HELEN

Yes.

ALTHEA

Oh, come on, Richard! There's Everett Nash—he asked especially to meet you.

(She hauls him to another group, HELEN still tagging along. Through all of this new guests have been entering—among them JONATHAN CRALE, JULIA GLENN, ALBERT OGDEN and ROSAMOND COOPERTON. The guests now no longer wait to be greeted by their hostess, but plunge immediately into the party)

Here he is, Everett! You wanted to meet him, I know.

NASH

Mr. Niles, I just wanted to shake you by the hand. You've written the best comedy I've seen in twenty years.

RICHARD

Thank you very much, Mr.—ah——

LAURA

I've never laughed so much at any play in all my life.

ALTHEA

Everett, you never saw such a modest author in all your life. Why, during rehearsals we couldn't find him—he used to hide.

NASH

Well, you've got nothing to be frightened of now, Niles.

RICHARD

Thank you. I—I'd like you to meet my wife.

LAURA

Why, how do you do, Mrs. Niles?

HELEN

How do you do?

NASH

Well, I guess you're a pretty proud woman tonight, huh?

HELEN

Yes.

ALTHEA

(Sighting a friend across the room)

Sybil! Richard, you must meet my oldest friend in all the world!

(Again she clutches him by the hand and hauls him across the room. This time a sudden movement of the crowd keeps HELEN from following, and in a twinkling there is a solid mass of people between her and RICHARD)

LAURA

Don't you think the theatre is very exciting this season, Mrs. Niles?

HELEN

(Her eyes trying to follow RICHARD)

Yes.

NASH

You know, I think that the Theatre Guild is going to do a lot of interesting things in the next couple of years. Don't you, Mrs. Niles?

HELEN

How's that?

NASH

I say, the Theatre Guild. Very interesting.

HELEN

Yes.

(She just stands there)

NASH

(Finding the whole thing pretty difficult)

Well, nice to have met you. See you later.

LAURA

Good-bye.

HELEN

Good-bye.

(They ease away)

(HELEN looks around rather frantically for RICHARD, but he is lost in the crowd)

(A WAITER comes to her with a tray of drinks)

WAITER

Highball, Madame? Sherry?

HELEN

No, thanks. I—I don't drink.

(The crowd is beginning to press in upon her, buffeting her from side to side. She clutches her evening cape, which is about to be swung off her shoulders)

A MAN

(Catching her cape)

I beg your pardon. Awful crowded, isn't it?

HELEN

Yes.

THE MAN

(As he turns away from her)

So I says to Barney, I can play a part like that. Why do you managers always think——

(Suddenly there is a little jovial commotion in another part of the room. "Yes, that's the idea!" . . . "Come on, Althea!" . . . "Make her do it!" . . . "You can't tell us you're bashful!" . . . "Oh, make her do it!" . . . "Up she goes!")

(The figure of ALTHEA is suddenly hoisted above the crowd—she is standing on a bench or chair)

ALTHEA

(As they lift her up)

Now really, this is too silly.

("There you are! Now you've got to do it!" . . . "Hurray!" . . . "Shush, everybody! Everybody listen! Althea's going to make a speech!" . . . "Attention, everybody!")

(The rest of the room quiets a bit—attention is transferred to ALTHEA. A man, lifting his highball glass aloft, shouts: "Yea! Althea!")

ALTHEA

(In a deep voice, pulling at an imaginary beard)

"Friends, Romans, countrymen——"

(There is a laugh from the crowd)

Oh, my dears, I'm very happy tonight, but I'm not going to make a speech. Because if you have a sprig of laurel to place on anybody's brow, I want you to place it on Richard Niles. Richard, come up here.

(The crowd yells. "That's the stuff! Author! Author!" . . . "Speech! Speech!" Over his protest, and with more noise from the crowd, RICHARD is elevated to a place beside ALTHEA. The crowd applauds)

RICHARD

(Very much the trembling young author)

Why—I haven't anything to say except—thank you, and—well, I do want to say I think Mr. Morton has been grand——

(Applause. A cheer or two. Cries of "P.J.!")

But more than anything else I want you to know that the play owes everything to—Althea Royce. It isn't only the wonderful performance she gives, but—no one can ever know what a great help she's been right through it all. I can only say—

(He turns to her)

—thank you, Althea.

ALTHEA

Why, Richard! Aren't you a darling?

(Impulsively she throws her arms around him and kisses him full on the lips. The crowd roars its approval. HELEN, on the edge of the mob, tries to take it like a good fellow, but does not quite succeed. She turns away, her lips trembling, just in time to hear the conversation of a group standing near her)

A MAN

(A gesture toward RICHARD)

Well, there he goes. I guess he's going to be the next one.

A WOMAN

Yes. Leave it to Althea, with a good-looking playwright.

A MAN

She certainly works fast, all right.

A WOMAN

Well, you can't blame her. She wants to make sure of that new play next season.

A MAN

Say! Pretty soft for these playwrights.

(They ALL laugh)

(RICHARD and ALTHEA, who had disappeared into the crowd, now become visible again at the other side of the room, the center of a little group. Something that RICHARD says draws a laugh from those around him)

ALTHEA

(Gayly)

Richard, you mustn't say those things!

(She leans forward and rubs her cheek playfully against his, a gesture far more intimate than the kiss had been. Then, drawing away, she carelessly rumples his hair)

(It is more than HELEN can stand. With a little sob she gathers her wrap around her and starts to fight her way through the crowd, toward the door. The room is packed pretty solidly by this time, and it takes an appreciable interval for her to make her way out. As she nears the hall she is met by a new onrush of guests, and has to battle to get through the door)

(The party is now at its height. Late arrivals have come in such numbers that the

room is literally jammed from wall to wall. People have stopped trying to move, and now stand just where they are. The noise is terrific, of course. Everyone is talking, and everyone is talking at the top of his voice, since it is impossible to be heard any other way. Four or five WAITERS wedge their way through the mob, trays held aloft. The cigarette and cigar smoke has become a dense cloud, hanging over the room like a pall. SAM FRANKL, at the piano, pounds on)

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT III

SCENE I

Living room of the MURNEYS. The year is 1922.

It is the regulation middle-class, \$70-a-month apartment, located in West 111th Street, just below Morningside Heights. The living room itself, which also serves as a dining room, is a replica of countless other living rooms all over New York. The wall paper is characterless, the furniture equally so. A wide moulding, which runs around the room, holds a couple of fancy steins and a few pieces of dusty Wedgwood, which look as though they might have been won in a ring-the-cane game in Asbury Park. There is a large Kewpie doll in the corner—obviously a souvenir of another happy outing. The personal touch is given by two large, gold-framed, colored photographs of MR. and MRS. MURNEY, HELEN'S parents, in their wedding attire.

All in all, it is not the pleasantest room to be in on a hot summer's night, and this is one of the hottest. The family is just finishing the evening meal; MRS. MURNEY and HELEN are carrying out the plates. HELEN wears a bungalow apron over her dress; MRS. MURNEY has a dish towel strung around her middle. MR. MURNEY is still at the table, finishing that second cup of coffee and absent-mindedly gathering up pie crumbs in his fingers. He has shed his coat, collar and tie—even loosened his belt. His shirt, as he has said many times that day, is sticking to him—there are great streams of discoloration around each armpit. From time to time he wheezes heavily from the heat.

RICHARD is not present, but the other male member of the household, BUDDY MURNEY, is seated in front of that new wonder of 1922, the radio. He has the ear phones over his head, and is intently working with the copper wire, trying to find a sensitive spot in the crystal.

HELEN

(After a moment)

Want some more coffee, Dad?

MR. MURNEY

No—I got enough.

HELEN

I'll do the rest, mama. You sit down.

MRS. MURNEY

No, it's all right.

(She goes into the kitchen)

MR. MURNEY

(To BUDDY)

I don't see how you can sit there with those things over your ears on a night like this.

BUDDY

Sssh! I think I got something.

(BUDDY is a few years older than his sister—a pale, blondish youth. He spends his days in a shipping room, his evenings at Loew's 110th Street, his Sundays on boat trips to Bear Mountain. And he looks it)

MRS. MURNEY

(Re-entering the room)

Buddy, it's so hot. I don't see how you can sit there with——

BUDDY

Ssh! I'm getting something.

MRS. MURNEY

Can you understand that thing, Alfred? I can't.

MR. MURNEY

A new toy. He'll get tired of it.

MRS. MURNEY

Mrs. Levenson's boy Harold made one himself, and they say it works. Anything to do with electricity, he picks up right away.

BUDDY

I got it! Hey, Pop! Come here! Listen!

MR. MURNEY

It's too hot.

BUDDY

Come on! Listen! You can hear it as plain as anything.

(MR. MURNEY gets up from the table)

MRS. MURNEY

Her other boy, Walter, he can't do a thing.

BUDDY

(As he hands his father the ear phones)

Be careful, now, not to shake the crystal.

(MR. MURNEY places the ear phones over his head and listens for a moment)

You hear it? You hear it, Pop?

MR. MURNEY

I hear something. Sounds like a ukulele.

BUDDY

That's right. It is a ukulele!

(MR. MURNEY, without a word, removes the ear phones and hands them back to BUDDY)

HELEN

(Calling from the kitchen)

Mama! Will you ask Buddy to help me put the garbage pail on the dumbwaiter?

MRS. MURNEY

Buddy, go in and help Helen put the garbage pail on the dumbwaiter.

BUDDY

(Picking up the ear phones again)

Wait a minute.

(He listens)

A man is talking now.

MRS. MURNEY

What's he saying?

BUDDY

(A moment of tense listening)

I can't understand him.

HELEN

(From the kitchen, pettishly)

Mama!

MRS. MURNEY

Buddy, go on. The janitor gets mad.

BUDDY

Oh, all right.

(He goes)

(MRS. MURNEY spreads an embroidered cover over the table and places thereon a cut-glass bowl with imitation flowers in it. MR. MURNEY settles himself with his newspaper)

MRS. MURNEY

Yesterday he told Mrs. Elsman she could take her own garbage down.

MR. MURNEY

(Craning his neck toward the window)

The awning down?

MRS. MURNEY

No. It's up.

MR. MURNEY

No air at all, is there?

MRS. MURNEY

No. I think I'll take off my corsets and make myself comfortable.

MR. MURNEY

Well, look, I got a man coming up to see me. I don't suppose it matters.

MRS. MURNEY

Who is it?

MR. MURNEY

A fellow that used to work in the store. He's got an idea he wants to talk to me about—some invention.

MRS. MURNEY

Invention? What's he bringing it to *you* for?

MR. MURNEY

I don't know—it's got something to do with the paper and twine business.

MRS. MURNEY

Well, I guess he won't notice—I'll take off my corsets anyhow.

(She goes to her bedroom)

(MR. MURNEY settles himself again, turns a page of the newspaper, takes off one shoe for greater comfort. After a moment, from across the areaway, there comes the sound of a rather tinny player-piano, grinding out "Pretty Baby." MR. MURNEY gives an annoyed glance out of the window)

(BUDDY comes out of the kitchen and heads for his bedroom)

MR. MURNEY

Where are you going, Buddy? Loew's?

BUDDY

Yeah. Picking up the girl friend.

(He disappears)

MR. MURNEY

(Calling after him)

It's awful hot—why don't you take a bus ride?

(HELEN returns from the kitchen, removing her apron as she comes in)

HELEN

That kitchen's like an oven.

MR. MURNEY

Yeah, it's a sizzler, all right. . . . Where's the big writer? Going to do without his supper altogether?

HELEN

I guess so. We're not speaking. He's mad.

MR. MURNEY

What's *he* got to be mad about?

HELEN

Oh, we had a fight. I found a pocketbook in the butcher's today and it had eleven dollars in it. He said I ought to find out who lost it and I said finder's-keepers. Isn't that right, Dad? I can use that eleven dollars.

MR. MURNEY

Do you know who lost it?

HELEN

No, I don't.

MR. MURNEY

Then of course you should keep it. He's a fine one to complain about getting eleven dollars. It's more than he's brought into this house in the past six months.

HELEN

That's what *I* told him, too.

(BUDDY comes out again, a straw hat on the back of his head and struggling into his coat as he talks)

BUDDY

Say, can't that husband of yours find some place to do his writing except in my room? He has the light over on the table—a fellow can't see to comb his hair. Honest to God, some people got no consideration.

(He is out of the door, just as RICHARD appears in the bedroom doorway)

RICHARD

(In the tone of a man who has had a fight with his wife, but must speak to her nevertheless)

Helen, the baby's crying.

(He goes right back again)

(HELEN does not deign to answer; she has merely given him a look)

MR. MURNEY

Why can't he write in his own room? He upsets the whole house.

HELEN

Oh, don't ask me. I'm sick of it.

MRS. MURNEY

(Emerging from the bedroom doorway, now comfortable, if unappetizing, in a loose,

flowered kimono)

Helen, the baby's crying. I guess the heat bothers him.

HELEN

Oh, I know.

(She starts for the bedroom)

Dad, couldn't we send down for some ice cream later on? It'd go good tonight.

(She goes)

MRS. MURNEY

They had a fight today.

MR. MURNEY

Helen told me. I wish he'd say something to *me* once. Believe me, *I'd* tell him a thing or two.

MRS. MURNEY

It's best not to interfere.

(She picks up the second section of the paper, which has slid onto the floor)

You through with this part?

MR. MURNEY

That feller! It's time somebody took him down off his high horse.

MRS. MURNEY

(As though dismissing the whole subject)

Well!

(For a moment they both sit with their papers. Then "Pretty Baby" starts again from across the areaway. MR. MURNEY is not pleased)

MRS. MURNEY

(Picking up the song)

... "Pretty Baby."

MR. MURNEY

Do you have to sing it, too?

MRS. MURNEY

What? Pull your chair to the window, Alfred—there's more air . . . "For I'd like to love a baby and it might as well be you, bum-bum, Pretty Baby of mine."

(HELEN, the baby's milk bottle in her hand, comes out of the bedroom and goes into the kitchen)

MRS. MURNEY

(Newspaper still in hand)

Hearn's are having a Dollar Day next week.

(MR. MURNEY is unmoved)

Did I tell you Alice called up today?

MR. MURNEY

What about?

MRS. MURNEY

More trouble. I feel awful sorry for Alice.

MR. MURNEY

What's the matter now?

MRS. MURNEY

It's Lew again. Three of those people he gave the checks to, they're willing not to prosecute, but they're having a lot of trouble with the other man.

MR. MURNEY

He's just no good, that boy.

HELEN

(As she returns from the kitchen to the bedroom, carrying the filled bottle)

Mother, we've got to take more ice in this weather. The milk goes bad awful quick.

(She disappears)

MRS. MURNEY

All right.

(She goes back to her newspaper; there is a moment's pause)

They give you such little pieces now for twenty cents.

(The doorbell rings)

MR. MURNEY

(As he rises)

I'll go. It's that fellow that's coming up to see me.

MRS. MURNEY

Shall I go inside?

MR. MURNEY

No, you can stay here.

(He opens the door)

Hello, Weintraub. Come right in.

(He turns to his wife)

This is Mr. Weintraub, Rose—Simon Weintraub.

(SIMON WEINTRAUB comes in. If the MURNEYS but knew it, they are at this moment in the presence of a future millionaire, a man who is destined to change the entire surface of industrial America. For SIMON WEINTRAUB is none other than that future art connoisseur and cellopaper king, CYRUS WINTHROP)

WEINTRAUB

Good evening, Mrs. Murney.

MRS. MURNEY

How do you do?

MR. MURNEY

Well, Weintraub, what have you got? Let's see this thing. Don't mind Mrs. Murney—it's all right.

WEINTRAUB

Thank you.

(He looks nervously around for a place to put his hat, then places a little black satchel on the table)

MR. MURNEY

You got it all in there?

WEINTRAUB

Yes, sir.

MR. MURNEY

All right. Go ahead.

WEINTRAUB

(Gathering his courage and plunging)

Mr. Murney, you are in the paper and twine business. What would you say if I could show you something that would change the whole paper business from the bottom up?

MR. MURNEY

Well, go ahead. What is it?

WEINTRAUB

(Impressively)

All right, Mr. Murney. I'll show it to you.

(He slowly opens his satchel, reaches into it, waits for one momentous moment, then draws forth a loaf of bread wrapped in the shiny, transparent material that is cellopaper. Proudly he holds it aloft)

MRS. MURNEY

(After looking at it for a puzzled moment)

It's a loaf of bread.

WEINTRAUB

Sure it's a loaf of bread. And this is a package of cigarettes, and this is a toothbrush—
(He brings the respective articles out of his bag)
—but do you see what's on the outside of them?

MRS. MURNEY

You mean that tissue paper?

WEINTRAUB

No, no, this isn't tissue paper. This is called cellopaper. That's my invention. That's the whole idea. It not only protects the article—it makes it look better. And for the first time people will be able to see what they're buying. Now, you take this toothbrush, Mr. Murney. Ordinarily you go into a drug-store and you ask for a toothbrush and the clerk digs it up out of some old drawer. But if it was wrapped in cellopaper it could be lying right on the counter and——

MR. MURNEY

Hold on a minute, Weintraub. Not so fast. Wait a minute. Let me see that stuff once.

(He takes the cellopaper-wrapped loaf in his hand)

Why is it any better than regular paper?

WEINTRAUB

Well, the way it makes things look, in the first place. It makes the merchandise attractive. And not only that, Mr. Murney——

MR. MURNEY

Now, wait a minute, Weintraub. Wait a minute.

(He turns to MRS. MURNEY)

Let me ask you something, Rose. If you were to go into the grocery store to buy a loaf of bread, would you want it wrapped up in this——er——stuff of Weintraub's?

MRS. MURNEY

(After a judicial inspection of the loaf)

No, I don't see any sense in it.

WEINTRAUB

But, Mrs. Murney, outside of the way it looks, don't you see how much cleaner it is, how much more sanitary?

MRS. MURNEY

Mr. Weintraub, the grocery store I deal with, you could eat off the floor. Besides, it'd have to be wrapped up in regular paper before I could take it home. I wouldn't want people on the street to see what I was carrying. So what good is it?

MR. MURNEY

You see, Weintraub, I'm afraid it's no good. My wife is no different from millions of other women.

WEINTRAUB

(Pleadingly)

But, Mr. Murney, look! Take these cigarettes——

MR. MURNEY

Now, that's silly, Weintraub. Cigarettes are wrapped up anyhow—that's the last thing they'd put it on. It would just annoy people.

WEINTRAUB

All right—take this. Here's a package of chewing gum—

MR. MURNEY

Chewing gum! What good would it be on chewing gum? Listen, Weintraub—what's the use of wasting your time and mine? You can't sell the public something it doesn't want. It's like that radio thing over there—I bet you the fellow that invented that thought *he* had something, too. Take a tip from me, Weintraub—stop wasting your time with this thing.

WEINTRAUB

(Gathering his samples together)

Well, thank you for looking at it, anyhow, Mr. Murney.

MR. MURNEY

No trouble at all. Believe me, Weintraub, if I thought it was any good, I'd help you.

WEINTRAUB

Well—good night.

MR. MURNEY

You don't have to go right away. Sit down awhile—we're going to have some ice cream.

WEINTRAUB

No—I got to go. Thank you.

MR. MURNEY

Well, whatever you say.

WEINTRAUB

Good night, Mrs. Murney.

MRS. MURNEY

Good night.

MR. MURNEY

Good night, Weintraub.

(He has opened the door)

Say, it looks like one of those summers, don't it?

(WEINTRAUB has gone; the door closes)

MRS. MURNEY

Is he crazy or something?

MR. MURNEY

Too bad he's got this bug. He's a nice little fellow.

MRS. MURNEY

Nice little fellow! How much did he want you to put into that thing?

MR. MURNEY

Two thousand dollars for fifty per cent of it.

MRS. MURNEY

Two thousand dol—the nerve of some people! He must have thought you were an easy mark.

MR. MURNEY

(With spirit)

All right—I didn't do it, did I?

MRS. MURNEY

No, for once in your life you were smart.

(HELEN returns from the bedroom. She is in a mood)

HELEN

No wonder the baby wakes up. He keeps walking up and down the hallway all the time.

MR. MURNEY

I always thought you sat down when you wrote. He must be a new kind of writer.

HELEN

He's a new kind of writer, all right. The world isn't good enough for his kind of writing. You've got to take a college course before you can come to see one of his plays. That's why we're so rich.

MRS. MURNEY

Helen, you two young people shouldn't be fighting all the time. Why don't you try to get along with him?

HELEN

Try? I'd like to know what I've been doing the past three years. No one can tell me I haven't tried. I've done without all kinds of things, and what for? You saw. A crazy play that didn't mean anything, put on in some old theatre that didn't even have seats, just benches. And he didn't get a nickel out of it. Well, if that's what I'm bringing up my baby for, and going without new dresses and everything else—well, I'm just tired of it, that's all.

MRS. MURNEY

Well, anyway, he tries all the time. He's writing another one.

HELEN

What good is that? It'll be just like the last one. We're never going to get anywhere. He won't even look for a job any more. Honest, I just don't know what I'm going to do. I'm so sick of the whole business, I don't care what happens any more.

(She is on the verge of tears)

MR. MURNEY

It all comes down to marrying a man like that. Children won't ever listen to their parents.

They think they don't know anything. But they come running to them quick enough when they haven't got a roof over their heads. And it's lucky for them that their parents can take them in.

MRS. MURNEY

Now, Alfred, it's no trouble at all to have Helen and Richard here. I'm glad of the company during the day. They're no trouble.

MR. MURNEY

It's plenty of trouble to pay the bills when they come in, I can tell you that. I have to work very hard for my money, every penny. A day like today in the store, with the perspiration running off me——

(He stops short as RICHARD comes into the room, hat in hand)

RICHARD

I'll be back later.

(He starts for the door)

HELEN

Where are you going?

RICHARD

I won't be long.

HELEN

Well, where are you going?

RICHARD

(Patiently)

Just across the street to the park.

HELEN

Just across the street to the park to meet Jonny Crale—that's where you're going!

RICHARD

Yes.

HELEN

I suppose I'm not good enough for you to talk to. I'm not intellectual enough.

RICHARD

Helen, you're very welcome to come along if you want to.

HELEN

Oh, sure I'm welcome! Jonny Crale just loves me. I'm welcome to stand there and listen while you two talk about books and art. I don't have to be told when anybody looks down on me. He thinks I'm dumb. Well, maybe I *am* dumb. But I know enough not to go where I'm not wanted.

MR. MURNEY

Dumb! And Crale is supposed to be smart, huh? Can't find enough banks to put his money in, I suppose.

RICHARD

Jonny doesn't feel that way about you, Helen.

HELEN

Oh, he does so. Don't tell me. Why does he meet you over in the park if he wants to see *me*? Why doesn't he come here?

RICHARD

(Quietly)

What do you want to do, Helen?

HELEN

Oh, go ahead. Go ahead and see him. I wouldn't think of stopping you. Maybe you should have married him—you like him so much.

MR. MURNEY

It's a new style they've got now. The people that make the money are the dumb ones, and those that don't are the smart ones. Is that what they call intellectuals?

RICHARD

Well—if you're not coming, Helen, I'll go ahead. I'm late now.

HELEN

(Ignoring him)

Yes, that's what intellectuals are, father. They don't care about their wives or their baby or anything else. All they care about is books and art and——

(The door bell rings)

RICHARD

(Starting for the door)

That must be Jonny.

HELEN

Don't tell me Mr. Crale is lowering himself——

RICHARD

(As he opens the door)

Hello, Jonny. I'm sorry I'm late, but——Oh!

(He stops short upon seeing that CRALE is not alone)

CRALE

(Entering)

Don't you have clocks in this house? Come on in, Julia.

(JULIA GLENN comes into view)

Julia, this is Richard Niles. Richard, this is Julia Glenn. You two ought to know each other.

RICHARD

How do you do, Miss Glenn? Ah—this is my wife, and—my mother-in-law and father-in-law.
(*There are unenthusiastic “How do you do’s?” from the MURNEYS and HELEN*)

CRALE

Well, Helen, haven’t seen much of you lately.

HELEN

I’ve been right here.

CRALE

Listen, Richard! We’re going up to hear Debs speak at Palm Garden. Going to be a hell of a meeting. Why don’t you and Helen come along?

RICHARD

(*Eagerly*)

I’d love to. Helen, wouldn’t you like to go?

HELEN

What is it?

RICHARD

Eugene Debs is speaking tonight. I’d love to hear him.

HELEN

No, I don’t want to go.

RICHARD

I think you’d like it. Debs is a great man.

HELEN

I said I don’t want to go, Richard.

RICHARD

But why, Helen?

HELEN

Because I just don’t want to, that’s all. There’s nothing to stop *you* from going. I don’t mind sitting here. I’m used to it.

RICHARD

(*After an embarrassed pause*)

I don’t think I’d better go, Jonny. Helen’s had a hard day with the baby and——

CRALE

(*Understandingly*)

Okay.

RICHARD

I'm sorry.

CRALE

(Uneasily)

Yeah.

(Then, not quite able to make an abrupt departure, he addresses MR. MURNEY)

How are you, Mr. Murney? How's business?

MR. MURNEY

(Belligerently)

Business is very good for people who want to work, Mr. Crale.

CRALE

I see . . . well . . . good night, everybody.

JULIA

Good-bye, Mr. Niles. I—I just wanted to meet you, because—I saw your play at the Provincetown and—I think it was almost a great play, Mr. Niles.

RICHARD

(Eyes lighting up)

Oh, did you see the play? I'm so glad you liked it.

JULIA

Liked it? I thought it said more than any other play I'd ever seen in my life. I thought it was beautiful. I saw it twice, Mr. Niles.

RICHARD

Did you really? I can't tell you how happy that makes me. Not many people seemed to like it.

JULIA

Not many people liked Ibsen in the beginning either. Oh, Mr. Niles, you mustn't let anything stand in your way. You're going to do great things in the theatre.

CRALE

You needn't worry about him, Julie. He's the Rock of Gibraltar. Why, he just turned down an offer from P. J. Morton to write a play for Althea Royce.

JULIA

I should think he would.

(The MURNEYS and HELEN exchange quick looks)

RICHARD

(Trying to pass it off)

Well, Miss Glenn, I'm awfully glad you liked the play.

CRALE

Come on, Julie. If we're going to get seats at all . . .

JULIA

You're writing a new play, aren't you, Mr. Niles?

RICHARD

Yes. I am.

JULIA

I can't tell you how eager I am to see it. I feel like some débutante gushing to a writer, but all I can say is—I mean it. I—I think you're a great playwright.

CRALE

Good night, Helen.

(He turns to the MURNEYS)

Good night.

JULIA

Good night, everybody. Good night, Mr. Niles.

(The MURNEYS and HELEN barely acknowledge the good-byes. Their eyes are fastened on RICHARD as CRALE and JULIA go out the door)

HELEN

What did that mean?

RICHARD

What?

HELEN

You didn't tell me anything about an offer from P. J. Morton.

RICHARD

Didn't I?

HELEN

You certainly didn't.

RICHARD

Well—I didn't think it was worth mentioning.

HELEN

Oh, you didn't!

MR. MURNEY

What's that mean—you got an offer from P. J. Morton? He's a big producer, isn't he?

HELEN

Sure he is! He's the biggest! And Althea Royce is a big star!

(She turns to RICHARD)

Did he make you a real offer, with some advance money?

RICHARD

What if he did?

HELEN

How much was it?

RICHARD

What's the difference?

(He starts to go)

HELEN

(Barring his way)

I want to know how much it was!

(RICHARD is silent)

I know! I know how much they pay! It was five hundred dollars, wasn't it? At least that!

RICHARD

(Facing the guns)

Well?

HELEN

And you turned it down! You let my mother and father support you, and you turned down five hundred dollars and a chance of making a lot of money! What about *me*? Don't I ever get any consideration?

MR. MURNEY

You've got no right to turn down anything! You ought to be damned glad of a chance to pay back some of what you owe!

HELEN

He doesn't care! He doesn't care about anything but himself!

(She wheels on RICHARD)

What did you marry me for? Just to shut me up in a room? Just to tie me down with a baby, so I couldn't ever go any place or have a good time again!

MR. MURNEY

(Shouting)

You ought to be ashamed of yourself!

MRS. MURNEY

Alfred, the neighbors!

MR. MURNEY

I don't care! Let 'em hear! They know it anyway.

HELEN

How do you think I feel when I haven't got a dress to go out in? How do you think I feel

when I meet all my friends? What are we going to do—go on like this? Pinching and scraping! Well, I won't do it! I won't!

RICHARD

(Taking a deep breath)

Now, listen. I want to try to explain to you—all of you—how I feel about this. I've tried very hard, Helen, to give you the things you want—and that you ought to have. I was a floorwalker, and—I tried selling that coffee, and—for pretty near two years I worked in a shoe store. Didn't I? I've got a duty toward you, Helen. I know that. But I see a little further than you do. I know what I'm trying to do. If I could only make you understand that. I know the kind of plays I've got to write, and what I want to say, and that's everything to me. It's all I've got. I know it's hard on you, but—if you'll only come along with me, Helen—if you'll only help me fight it out.

(He is met with dogged silence)

You see, Helen, I know what it would mean—writing a play for Althea Royce. It's just the opposite of—everything I'm trying to do.

(She remains silent)

I'm doing all this for you, Helen—for both of us. And I need your help. I need your help if we're ever going to get there. Don't you see that? Because if you don't see that, then—there's nothing more I can say.

MR. MURNEY

I'll tell you what *I* see. I see what I've been telling my wife and daughter ever since I first laid eyes on you. You're a lazy good-for-nothing who doesn't want to work, that's what's the matter with you. And I'll tell you something else. I'm through supporting you. You can go out and get a job or you can get out of here! Because I'm through supporting you!

(He storms out of the room. There is a fractional pause; then, from over the areaway, come once more the strains of "Pretty Baby")

HELEN

(In a low tone)

I wish I was dead. I wish the baby was dead. I wish I'd never seen you.

MRS. MURNEY

Helen, you mustn't say such things. That's a terrible thing to say.

HELEN

(Shaking off her mother's hand)

Oh, let me alone!

(She stalks out of the room)

MRS. MURNEY

(Following her)

Helen, please! He's your husband. Helen!

(She is gone)

(RICHARD stands stock still for a second, then his steps carry him slowly over to the window. He stands there, staring vacantly out)

(There is a long pause. MR. MURNEY appears in the doorway)

MR. MURNEY

As long as you're not paying for it, perhaps you won't mind if I put the lights out.

(He switches off the lights, and goes. The room is in darkness except for the light from the apartment across the areaway, where the piano continues to grind out "Pretty Baby.") RICHARD stands motionless in the little circle of light

CURTAIN

SCENE II

Madison Square Park. The year is 1918.

The Metropolitan Life Insurance Building looks down over the little area of trees, grass and scattered benches that make up the park. It is evening, and the dim outline of the building is seen in the background. A lamp post sheds a gentle glow over a secluded corner of the park.

A POLICEMAN strolls leisurely into view. From the other side comes a man with a dog.

POLICEMAN

Hello there. You're late tonight.

THE MAN

Am I?

(He looks up at the tower)

No—only quarter to nine.

POLICEMAN

(Glancing down at the dog)

How's Ping tonight?

THE MAN

He's fine. . . . Well, things are kind of quieting down again, huh?

POLICEMAN

Yeah, it's all over now, all right. But it sure was some celebration while it lasted.

THE MAN

Funny thing. We've got no children, but my wife bust right out crying when she heard the armistice was signed.

POLICEMAN

Yeah, it affected everybody, I guess—whether they had anybody in the war or not. People just let go.

THE MAN

Down at my place they let us all off at ten in the morning and I got the wife and we both stood at Forty-second Street and Fifth Avenue the whole day. I figured we'd never see anything like that again.

POLICEMAN

You bet your life you won't.

(A couple of soldiers come across the park. The POLICEMAN salutes them)

Hi, boys!

(The SOLDIERS give a desultory salute and pass on)

THE MAN

Guess they'll *all* be coming home pretty soon.

POLICEMAN

Yep. Fast as they can bring 'em. Take a lot of boats to bring 'em all back.

THE MAN

Bet you the good old Statue of Liberty will look pretty good to them, too.

POLICEMAN

Yeah, they'll be glad to get home, all right. Say, what do you think of Wilson going over there? Lot of people seem to think he oughtn't to do it.

THE MAN

That's what I think. I don't trust those babies over there.

POLICEMAN

Say, Wilson's pretty smart. They'll have to get up pretty early in the morning to put anything over on him.

THE MAN

Well, whatever they do, it won't make any difference to you and me.

POLICEMAN

Yeah—no use losing any sleep over it. Kind of warm for November, ain't it?

THE MAN

Sure is. I like it this way, though. Well—come on, Ping. See you tomorrow.

POLICEMAN

Good night.

(The MAN goes)

(TWO BOYS with roller skates over their shoulders cut through the Park. They are singing lustily as they walk)

THE BOYS

“He doesn't say very much,
But when he starts in to speak—
You'd be surprised!
He isn't good at the start,
But at the end of a week—
You'd be surprised!
At a party or at a ball,
I've got to confess that he's nothing at all,
But in a Morris chair—oh boy!—
You'd be surprised!”

(The BOYS are out of earshot; by this time the POLICEMAN too has gone on his way)

(A couple of GIRLS come through the park, chattering busily)

FIRST GIRL

—so I just came home and took off my hat and said, “Look, mother! It’s done. Now, is that so terrible?”

SECOND GIRL

I wouldn’t dare bob mine. My father would throw me out. Tell me, didn’t you feel awful when they started to cut it off?

FIRST GIRL

No, it was all over in a minute. Really, Mary, you ought to do it. You get up in the morning and in two minutes you’re all through. No hairpins or anything. It used to take me half an hour.

(They are gone)

(HELEN and RICHARD appear around a bend in the park. Their arms are interlocked, their heads close together. They are walking slowly, intent on each other. RICHARD is in uniform)

HELEN

All that day the armistice was signed I just kept saying, “Richard is safe now,” “Richard is safe now”—over and over again.

RICHARD

Did you, Helen? You know, when the news came all I could think of was you. It didn’t mean that the greatest war in the history of the world was ended—somehow, it just meant you. Curious how, even at a great moment like that, one thinks selfishly.

HELEN

Let’s sit here for a minute. I’m tired.

RICHARD

Oh, darling, I’m sorry. I’ve been walking you for blocks, haven’t I?

HELEN

I didn’t mind.

(She moves closer to him; rests her head on his shoulder)

How long will it be, Richard, before they let you out of the army?

RICHARD

I don’t know. Some of the fellows say six weeks—some say longer. Nobody really knows yet.

HELEN

I hope it’s only six weeks. I miss you so when you’re at camp, Richard.

RICHARD

Comfortable?

(She makes a little sound of contentment)

It's nice here, isn't it? I always feel so grateful for a spot like this, set down in the midst of all these buildings.

HELEN

Yes . . . Richard—after we're married, we don't have to live in the country, do we?

RICHARD

Not necessarily. Why?

HELEN

Well, you said once you'd like to, but—I don't know—I'm afraid I'd get lonely in the country.

RICHARD

Well, we don't have to if you don't want to. I love it, though.

(Playfully)

You know, I'm not a hardened city child, the way you are. I'm a little boy from a small town.

HELEN

Are you going to take me there on our honeymoon, to see your people?

RICHARD

We might.

(He tilts her face up to his)

Helen, the day I get out of uniform—that very day—let's get married.

HELEN

I'm willing, Richard. That very day.

(He kisses her tenderly)

HELEN

Richard, suppose we *can't* get married—I mean, if you haven't got a job or anything.

RICHARD

We're going to get married.

HELEN

But, Richard, you may not sell your plays right away, and what are we going to live on?

RICHARD

Air, my dear. Pure, rarefied, ecstatic air.

(He laughs a little)

Now, don't you worry. I'll get a job during the day—I don't care what it is—and write at night. I'm going to work like seven devils.

HELEN

Won't it be wonderful, Richard?

RICHARD

I've thought a good deal lately about our marriage, Helen. I want our love to be something that nothing can disturb, nothing uproot—something that will always be there for us to fall back on, no matter what happens.

HELEN

I love to hear you talk that way, Richard. It makes me feel all trembly inside.

RICHARD

We mustn't ever be like other people, Helen. You see so many people who are disillusioned, bitter. We mustn't ever let our marriage become tattered and shopworn.

HELEN

(Looking up at him)

Richard, I love you so.

(He gently brushes the hair back from her forehead, and kisses her again, lightly.)

HELEN sighs happily. They sit in silence for a moment. A SAILOR, whistling, vaguely crosses the park)

RICHARD

You know, sometimes when I'm lying in bed, just after they turn out the light—that five minutes before I fall asleep—I let myself think of what the next few years are going to be like for us, Helen. All the new wonders we're constantly going to find in each other. Sometimes I don't get to sleep for hours—it's almost more than I can bear. It's like hearing great music for the first time—you want to rush out into the street and stop the first person you see, and tell him about it.

HELEN

I know, Richard.

RICHARD

Sometimes I feel I'm going to do great things, Helen. I can feel myself almost bursting with them.

(He takes a quick, deep breath)

Just the sheer joy of living, the excitement of being alive! The things there are to do, and see, and taste, and to enjoy! It's such a wonderful world, Helen! It's such a miracle to discover it with some one you love!

HELEN

Oh, I'd love to travel, Richard. It's the dream of my life to go to Paris.

RICHARD

(With a laugh)

You're a funny little thing.

HELEN

You're funny, too.

RICHARD

Am I?

(He draws her closer to him, protectingly)

I wonder what life is going to do to us, my dear. We're starting out in a strange new time. Don't you feel it? The world isn't what it was yesterday. It's all new. The war has changed everything. Things are going to be fresher, and cleaner—more honest, somehow. And we're part of it, Helen—you and I. In our own small way we're part of it. You can feel it in the air. People are breathing again. They're lifting up their heads to a new America. All over the country, like millions of invisible wires, people are reaching out to be part of it, to shape their lives to this new world.

HELEN

(Caught up in the sweep of his idealism)

Yes, Richard! And I want to do it all with you.

RICHARD

How lucky we are, Helen! How lucky we are to be young just at the start of it!

(Transported, he softly begins:)

“O world, be nobler, for her sake!

If she but knew thee what thou art,
What wrongs are borne, what deeds are done,

In Thee, beneath thy daily sun,

Know'st thou not that her tender heart

For pain and very shame would break?

O world, be nobler, for her sake!”

(He sweeps her into his arms; she gives him her lips, passionately. For a moment they are locked in a tight embrace—then the Metropolitan chimes begin to strike the hour)

HELEN

(Tremulously)

Richard, we'd better go. If we take the bus it'll be almost ten before I get home.

(He kisses her once again. They rise and start out of the park. The chimes are still tolling the hour)

CURTAIN

SCENE III

A college chapel. The year is 1916.

Gothic pillars frame a towering stained-glass window, through which floods a stream of sunlight. In half shadow, on the platform, sit a solid mass of students and faculty. Sunlit, in the centre of the platform, stands RICHARD.

RICHARD

... All of these things, and more, college has given us.

(He pauses)

And now, fellow students—and this, in the way of all things, is the last time that I shall be able to address you as fellow students—I stand before you as your valedictorian to speak for you and for myself. I have touched upon the educational aspects of these four years, I have dwelt with gratitude upon the stimulating influence of our teachers. But I have purposely left until the last the two things that lie closest to my heart, the two things which this college has helped to foster, and which will remain ever green so long as memory lasts. I have waited until the last to talk about *you*—you as I know you, not in the classroom or on the field, but in those small, chosen hours, those all-revealing hours when we sat and talked about ourselves and each other—talked with a richness and a warmth that never can be recaptured. Those were the hours when we discovered and embraced that greatest of all glories—friendship. Of all the things I take away with me, the one that I most treasure, for which I am the most humbly grateful, is a friendship that I have formed here.

(He makes a slight gesture toward JONATHAN CRALE)

I hope he will always be beside me, all through my life. Many are the things that vanish in this changing world, but a real friendship will always endure. If I could make one wish for you—for all of you—I would ask that you be given a great friendship.

(He pauses momentarily)

Lastly, this I have learned. I have learned to value ideals above all else. Let them ever be our heritage, our guiding force. As we go out in the world, as we take up our chosen professions, we are clad, as it were, in shining armor. Let nothing sully that. With you goes a new hope, a new idealism. Carry your banners high; compromise them never. I give you the words of Polonius;

“This above all; to thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.
Farewell: my blessing season this in thee!”

(The organ peals thunderously forth as—)

THE CURTAIN DESCENDS

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.

Inconsistency in hyphenation has been retained.

Inconsistency in accents has been retained.

[The end of *Merrily We Roll Along* by George S. Kaufman & Moss Hart]