

# High Pressure Homer

*A COMEDY OF FAMILY LIFE IN THREE ACTS*

BY  
BRUCE BRANDON



SAMUEL FRENCH

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## WHO'S CRAZY NOW?

Farce. 3 acts. By Gerald Bell. 3 males, 9 females.  
Interior. Modern costumes.

The scene of this uproarious farce is laid in the reception-room of the Sunnyvale Insane Asylum, where we find a number of school teachers who have lost their mental balance trying to educate their pupils. The play gets off to a hilarious start when the good ladies reverse their positions and talk and act after the fashion of their former charges. For instance, the English teacher talks like a street urchin; the gym instructor is the laziest member of the lot and refuses to do a bit of exercise; it is the ambition of the head of the history department to deliberately confuse the dates of important happenings, etc., etc. A love story is introduced with the visit of the niece of the superintendent and a young staff doctor, but this, too, is treated in broad humorous lines, since each thinks the other is an inmate of the Asylum. In addition to a good night's fun the play contains a moral for students.

(Royalty, \$10.00.) Price, 50 cents.

## THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER

Comedy. 3 acts. By Wilbur Braun. 6 males, 7 females. Interior. Modern costumes.

Tom Sawyer and his chum Huckleberry Finn decide to visit the graveyard to try the cat-cure for warts. Arrived at the scene of their experiment, they are suddenly confronted with the figures of Doc Robinson, Injun Joe, a villainous half-breed, and old Muff Potter. The two boys hide behind bushes and by the light of the moon see Injun Joe plunge a knife into Doc Robinson's back, the knife that belongs to old Muff Potter; then when the old man is unconscious, Injun Joe puts the knife into old man Potter's hand and when he regains consciousness, Injun Joe tells Potter that he alone murdered Doc Robinson. Walter Potter, son of old Muff Potter, renounces his sweetheart, Mary Rogers, because he doesn't wish to bring disgrace upon her, and the two boys are beside themselves trying to find a way out of their dilemma when suddenly the way is cleared for them and Muff Potter is saved from hanging and the real culprit is exposed. You will find that the title, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, will bring business into your box office, and that this play will live in the hearts of your audience just as surely as Samuel Clemens' great classic has lived in their memories!

(Royalty, \$10.00.) Price, 50 cents.

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## HIGH PRESSURE HOMER

### STORY OF THE PLAY

One of the most fascinating and diverting comedies of family life, Mr. Brandon has attacked his subject from a new viewpoint and the result is an evening of sheer joy in the theatre. All amateur groups will want to do this play because it offers such fine opportunities for the entire cast. The entire action of the play takes place in the living room of the Woodruff family. And what a family it is! Mother Woodruff just adores going to funerals because she finds them so stimulating and meets so many of her friends there! Father Woodruff loves to go to fires, nothing else gives him such keen joy! Junior Woodruff, their son, is of a mechanical bent. He can fix anything (and does!) and he also gets great joy from shooting a rifle. Boots, their daughter, loves to act and is rehearsing a part at the most inopportune times. Amidst all this confusion, Aunt Cora arrives bringing with her what turns out to be a pet, and that, too, is of a most unusual nature. Arelene, the Woodruff's adopted daughter, is practically engaged to Homer Hampton Haywood, who believes in employing high pressure salesmanship methods. Since Homer, a typical go-getter, always knows more than his employer, he never holds a job very long. But that doesn't bother him—he goes blithely on his way inventing new ways of making a fortune. Finally young Wade Wainright arrives on

the scene and falls a victim to Arlene's charms. When the self-assured and confident Homer plunges the entire Woodruff family into grief, Arlene breaks her engagement and vows never to see Homer again. But our indomitable hero has several cards up his sleeve and he proceeds to play them with the most stunning of comedy effects. The laughs continue right up to the final curtain. Many human touches are developed during the course of the three clever acts but the play is one that was primarily written for laughing purpose and the curtains are avalanches of laughter. Easy to prepare and present, with smart sayings and smarter situations.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

MRS. CHESTER WOODRUFF, *who loves to go to funerals.*

CHESTER WOODRUFF, *her husband, who loves to go to fires.*

JUNIOR WOODRUFF, *their son, who loves explosions.*

BOOTS WOODRUFF, *their daughter, who loves to act.*

ARLENE WOODRUFF, *their adopted daughter, who loves them all.*

ZENITH, *the Woodruff maid, who loves to escape work.*

AUNT CORA, *who loves to complain.*

MRS. MARGARET TAYLOR, *who loves to visit.*

BUNNY TAYLOR, *her daughter, who loves to have her own way.*

HOMER HAMPTON HAYWOOD, *who loves to promote.*

WADE WAINRIGHT, *who loves Arlene.*

CHETWYNDE CLUETT, *who loves making folks happy.*

## SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

*The entire action of the play takes place in the living room of the Woodruff family in a medium-sized Eastern town.*

TIME: *The present.*

ACT I. *Late afternoon in June.*

ACT II. *Afternoon; two weeks later.*

ACT III. *Noon; two weeks later.*

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APPENDIX

The following is a list of the names of the persons who have been named in the foregoing chapters.

- Part I. The first part of the list.
- Part II. The second part of the list.
- Part III. The third part of the list.



## DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERS

**JUNIOR:** *A boy in his middle teens who, because of his small stature, appears to be much younger. He is interested in anything that has to do with mechanics. He is boyish and impulsive and very vivacious.*

**ZENITH** *is a mild-mannered girl in her late teens with a sort of vacant, bewildered expression that seldom changes. Is very slow and deliberate in her movements. Her voice is slow and drawly.*

**MRS. MARGARET TAYLOR:** *A tall, thin, angular woman in her late forties. Her bump of curiosity is over-developed and she insists on prying into other folks' affairs.*

**BOOTS:** *A pretty girl of sixteen. She is very diminutive and appears to be even younger than she is because of her short stature. All her gestures as well as her speech are greatly exaggerated.*

**MRS. CHESTER WOODRUFF (MINNA)** *is a short, stout, matronly-appearing woman in her late forties. Her smile is cheery and contagious and although she is inclined to be rattle-brained, she has such a charming personality and so much magnetism that most people adore her.*

**ARLENE:** *A pretty and charming girl in her early twenties. She is refined in manner, possessed of natural charm, refreshingly natural and sincere.*

**CHESTER:** *An easy-going and good-natured man of fifty. His hair is somewhat grey and the years*

8 DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERS

*have him stooped a bit. He possesses a charming smile and a fund of humor.*

WADE: *A tall, athletic-appearing chap in his early twenties. He is obviously a gentleman, well-groomed and with an engaging personality.*

MRS. CORA WOODRUFF: *A tall, thin, angular woman in her middle forties. She has a rather severe manner but is decidedly kind-hearted.*

HOMER HAMPTON HAYWOOD: *A tall, nice-looking boy of twenty-three. He is well-poised, full of pep, very sure of himself and never at a loss for words. He regards himself as a business genius but is never obnoxious. His personality is so delightfully refreshing that people like him in spite of themselves.*

BUNNY: *A tall, gangling girl. She is at the awkward age of fifteen. Her voice is high and shrill. Her hair is parted in the center and worn in two braids down her back. Horn-rimmed glasses cause her to look homelier than she really is.*

CHETWYNDE: *A tall, imposing-appearing man of fifty. His hair is white, a small white moustache decorates his upper lip, he is polished and refined. It is obvious that he is a man of wealth and position.*

# HIGH PRESSURE HOMER

## ACT ONE

SCENE: *The living room of the Woodruff family in a medium-sized Eastern town.*

TIME: *The present. Late afternoon in June.*

DESCRIPTION OF SET: *A large room that has a decidedly old-fashioned atmosphere. The walls are covered with paper of a loud color and with a garish design. A faded carpet covers the floor, with several rugs over it also of loud colors that scream at each other. In the rear wall, direct Center, an arch leads out to a hallway interior backing. Through the arch and off Right leads to the outside; off Left leads to the upstairs portion of the house. Two doors in the Left wall, both with interior backings. The door L.2 well up stage leads to a parlor or "front room," and the door well down stage L.1 leads to the dining room, kitchen and maid's room. In the Center of the Right wall are French windows that lead to the garden and garage; exterior backing. The curtains on these windows are also of a loud and garish color. Against the Left wall, between the two doors, is a flat-topped desk with a desk chair. The top of the desk is liter-*

*ally loaded with miscellaneous papers, a telephone book, pen, ink and pencils, writing paper and a few bric-a-brac ornaments. Against the rear wall up Right is a low flat bench. Another bench of the same kind against Right wall below French windows. Well up Left near rear wall is a telephone on a stand. Well down and Right of Center is a large and comfortable divan with an end table just Left of divan. Several cushions covered in loud materials on divan. On an angle with the divan but Left of Center is a library table with three straight-backed chairs around it. An armchair down in extreme Left corner. Doorbell ring off stage up Right. The room is brightly lighted at all times. Framed pictures on the walls should be of comedy subjects. Bric-a-brac ornaments, etc., to dress the stage at the discretion of the director.*

*Just before the Curtain rises a RADIO or VICTROLA is heard playing a loud tune just outside of arch off Left. Simultaneously with the music a loud POUNDING is heard. This concerted noise continues for a few seconds and when the Curtain is raised we see JUNIOR WOODRUFF, a boy in his middle teens who, because of his small stature, appears to be much younger. He stands in front of low bench down R. A tool kit rests on the bench and he has a hammer in his hand and is pounding loudly on a small steel or iron bar. JUNIOR is interested in anything that has to do with mechanics. He is boyish and impulsive and very vivacious. Wears a soft white shirt with collar attached and open at the neck; no necktie, a pair of knickers, sport shoes. His thick hair is disheveled and looks as though a comb hadn't been near it for a week. There are streaks of dirt on his face.*

*After the Curtain has been up a short second the DOORBELL rings loudly off stage up R., adding to the confusion. JUNIOR continues with his hammering. The BELL rings again impatiently.*

ZENITH, the Woodruff maid, enters door L.I. She is a mild-mannered girl in her late teens with a sort of vacant, bewildered expression that seldom changes. Is very slow and deliberate in her movements. Wears a calico dress and an apron over same. Her voice is slow and drawly.

ZENITH. (*As she enters; vacantly*) I thought I heard the bell ringin'.

JUNIOR. (*Hammering all the louder*) So what?

ZENITH. (*Placing her hands to her ears*) There's so much noise in here I can't think.

JUNIOR. (*Grinning*) Sister, are you sure the noise is what stops you? (*DOORBELL rings again.*)

ZENITH. (*As she crosses up to arch*) Yeah, there must be someone at the door. (*She exits c. to R.*)

JUNIOR hammers away loudly. Short pause. The TELEPHONE rings loudly. JUNIOR registers disgust; rushes up to telephone.)

JUNIOR. (*Answering telephone, loudly and impatiently*) You got the wrong number! (*He slams up the receiver, replaces telephone on stand, rushes back to bench down R. and is about to resume his hammering when Mrs. TAYLOR's voice off R. halts him.*)

Mrs. TAYLOR. (*Off R.; loudly*) Are you the new maid? I want to see Mrs. Woodruff at once.

JUNIOR. (*Excitedly*) Mrs. Taylor! Good-night! (*He drops his hammer on the bench and exits quickly through French windows, leaving them open in his haste.*)

(*The MUSIC off L. stops abruptly. ZENITH enters c. from R., followed by MRS. MARGARET TAYLOR, a tall, thin, angular woman in her late forties. Her bump of curiosity is over-developed and she insists on prying into other folks' affairs. Wears a Summer frock of a loud color, a small hat perched on the top of her head for comedy effect, carries a purse and a parasol.*)

ZENITH. (*As they enter*) Missus Woodruff is out, Ma'am, but she said if anybody comes to tell 'em to wait. (*Stands L. of arch; anxiously*) You ain't sellin' nothin', are you?

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Stiffly*) Certainly not. I might have known Minna Woodruff wouldn't be at home in the middle of the day. (*Comes down to below divan, R. of C.*) What's your name, girl?

ZENITH. (*Following her and standing on a line with her but L. of C.*) Name's Zenith, Ma'am.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Astonished*) Zenith? That's an unusual name, isn't it?

ZENITH. (*Vacantly*) 'Tain't unusual to me; I've had it all my life. You see, Ma'am, when I wuz born my Maw said she had reached her zenith o' delight an' Paw sez that wuz as good a name as any, so they just tagged me Zenith.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Sitting on divan*) You're new here, aren't you?

ZENITH. (*Nodding assent*) This is my second day.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Agog with curiosity*) Do you get enough to eat? Do they have much company? How do you like it so far?

ZENITH. (*Blankly*) Well—er—I guess it'd be all right if they'd all go out an' leave me be. They don't act like the folks I used to work for.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Witheringly*) You could hunt the world over and you'd never find another family like these Woodruffs. Why, when they're all gathered in

this house together even the policeman on the beat is afraid to pass.

ZENITH. (*Bewildered*) What's he afraid o'?

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Enjoying herself hugely*) Don't you know? Haven't you figured it out for yourself?

ZENITH. (*Shaking her head "no"*) I never wuz very good at figgers, Ma'am. What's the matter o' the Woodruff fam'ly?

MRS. TAYLOR. (*As though exploding a bomb*) Oh, nothing, nothing at all—except that each and every one of them is mentally unbalanced—that is, just a little mad.

ZENITH. (*Her knees trembling frightenedly*) Huh?

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Firmly*) Show me a sane Woodruff and I'll show you a mild, playful lion. Each and every one of these Woodruffs have a mental quirk of some kind.

ZENITH. (*Fearfully*) How 'bout Miss Arlene? She seems to be all right.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Triumphantly*) She's not a Woodruff. They adopted her when she was real young.

ZENITH. (*Frightened*) You mean the whole Woodruff fam'ly's got bats in their belfries? Why don't they put em all in a nut fact'ry?

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Firmly*) Oh, they're not insane—I mean, not bad enough to be put away. It's just that—

ZENITH. (*Breaking in quickly*) Now wouldn't it be my luck to get into a mess like this? I better hadn't stay here another night. Guess I'll be goin' while the goin's good. (*Starts for door L.I.*)

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Reassuringly*) There's nothing to be afraid of. (*Her voice halts ZENITH, who pauses, turns and faces MRS. TAYLOR*) None of them are violent. They're absolutely harmless and wouldn't resort to bodily harm. You're as safe here as in your own home. (*BOOTS emits a loud, blood-curdling*

*scream just outside L. of arch. ZENITH clutches at the table L.C. for support, registering great fear.)*

BOOTS. (*Off stage, loudly and dramatically*) Stop! If you advance one step I'll shoot you down like the cur that you are! (*Loud sounds of an EXPLOSION are heard off R. This effect may be produced by shooting a blank cartridge revolver into a barrel. At the sound of the explosion ZENITH drops to her knees below table and assumes a prayerful attitude. MRS. TAYLOR springs up from divan.*)

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Fearfully*) What—what was t-t-that?

ZENITH. (*Stammering with fright*) S-she's k-killed him! M-mebbe it's our t-t-turn n-n-next!

(BOOTS WOODRUFF, a pretty girl of sixteen, enters c. from L. carrying a paper-backed book that is opened to a certain page and reading aloud from same. She is very diminutive and appears to be even younger than she is because of her short stature. Is attired in a sport sweater, a pleated skirt, and flat-heeled shoes. All of her gestures as well as her speech are greatly exaggerated.)

BOOTS. (*Reading aloud from the book as she enters; loudly and dramatically*) I know you now for the cad that you are, Harcourt Bellows! Stand aside and let me pass! (*Comes down c.*)

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Fearfully*) Boots Woodruff, what fresh nonsense are you up to now?

BOOTS. (*Looking up from her book; condescendingly*) This isn't nonsense, Madame. I am rehearsing my part in "No Mother To Guide Her."

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Bewildered*) W-what?

BOOTS. (*Importantly*) Because of my divine talent as an actress, I'm going to be the leading lady in our home talent. Everybody says I'm the loudest and the best one in the cast. (*Returning to her book and*



*reciting aloud with exaggerated gestures*) No, Harcourt, never! I trusted you once and you betrayed that trust and I can never trust you again! Avaunt! (*Slinks L. in the manner of a tragedy queen and stumbles over ZENITH, who emits a startled scream.*)

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Iratelily*) See what you've done to your poor hired girl? She's frightened to death. (*Resumes her seat on divan.*)

BOOTS. (*Facing Mrs. TAYLOR; loftily*) She should be thrilled by such an exhibition of great art. (*Turning to ZENITH*) Arise, my girl. You are one of the fortunate few who are privileged to see a great artist at work. (*ZENITH rises fearfully.*)

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Fearfully*) What was that explosion we just heard out there? (*Indicates French windows.*)

BOOTS. (*Casually*) Oh, that was just Junior at rifle practice. He just loves to shoot things, you know. (*ZENITH trembles.*)

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Indignantly*) I might have known there'd be some excitement going on in this house.

BOOTS. (*Enthusiastically*) Yes, isn't it grand here? There's never a dull moment. (*Returning to her book and reading aloud*) We are not like other people, Harcourt. Our viewpoint is as broad as all outdoors. (*Opens her arms wide with a sudden gesture, one of her hands coming in contact with ZENITH's head.*)

ZENITH. (*Rubbing her head painfully as she backs to door L.I.*) I gotta gather them vegetables. (*Exits quickly.*)

MRS. TAYLOR. (*To BOOTS; pointedly*) No doubt there'll be an extra demand for vegetables in this vicinity.

BOOTS. (*Standing direct c. and declaiming aloud*) I was young and innocent and attracted by your false promises and worldly airs. (*Looks up from her book and faces Mrs. TAYLOR eagerly*) How does that sound to you, Mrs. Taylor?

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Shuddering*) Terrible!

BOOTS. (*Resentfully*) Too bad they wouldn't have your Bunny in this play. Her heart was set on playing this part but they didn't think she had enough technique.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Angrily*) I wouldn't allow my daughter to make an exhibition of herself in public.

BOOTS. (*Her eyes glued to the printed page before her; mockingly*) Sour grapes, Harcourt—sour grapes! You are as transparent as a pane of glass and as easy to see through.

JUNIOR. (*He sticks his head in through French windows; to BOOTS, excitedly*) Hsst! Hsst! Boots, come on out. I've got somethin' to show you.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Rising quickly*) Junior Woodruff, I want to see you. (*BOOTS crosses behind divan to French windows.*)

JUNIOR. (*Grinning broadly*) Not now, Mrs. Taylor. I gotta look after the bees while Pop is away. (*Withdraws his head quickly. BOOTS follows him off. MRS. TAYLOR tosses her head angrily and starts up c.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Just outside R. of arch*) Arlene! Boots! Where are you, my dears? Mother is so tired.

(*MRS. TAYLOR stands L. of arch as MRS. CHESTER WOODRUFF (MINNA) enters c. from R. She is a short, stout, matronly-appearing woman in her late forties. Her smile is cheery and contagious, and although she is inclined to be rattle-brained she has such a charming personality and so much magnetism that most people adore her. Wears a black Summer frock, a smart hat, carries a large black purse and presents a decidedly smart appearance.*)

MRS. TAYLOR. (*As Mrs. WOODRUFF appears in arch; impatiently*) Well, I'm glad you got home at last, Minna. I've been hoping you'd get here soon.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Going to Mrs. TAYLOR and shaking her hand*) I'm so glad you called. I hardly ever see you any more, Maggie.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Withdrawing her hand; indignantly*) Margaret! Nobody ever calls me Maggie any more, Minna.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Blankly*) Don't they? Now don't tell me that you've been psychoanalyzed or numerologized or whatever it is that causes people to change their names.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Hastily*) No, of course I haven't.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Beaming at her fondly*) I'm so glad of that. I've never believed in any of that business since Tootsie Galvin changed her name to Malvina and didn't live long enough to use her new name. (*Comes down to divan and sits*) Oh, dear, I don't know when I've been so tired and worn out.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Coming down to chair R. of table L.C. and sitting*) Where have you been, Minna?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Removing her hat and placing it on end table L. of divan; wearily*) This has been such an unusually busy week for me, you know. I've had three funerals to attend. (*Starts patting her hair into place.*)

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Sympathetically*) Three funerals? But I didn't know there had been any deaths in your family.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Placing her purse on end table with her hat*) Oh, they weren't in my family, silly.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Bewildered*) Oh, I see. Friends of yours, eh? Who died, Minna?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Facing Mrs. TAYLOR and smiling warmly*) Well, let me see. I hope I can remember them all. Today's funeral was for Mrs. Faraway—yesterday it was that Jackson man who had

something to do with weighing weights and measures, and the day before it was— (*Pauses abruptly*) Now let me see, what was that name?

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Astonished*) You mean you went to the funeral of somebody you never even knew?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*With a great display of unction*) But of course—why not? I just adore going to funerals. One meets so many friends; to say nothing of the enjoyable ride one usually has. (*Smiles with a self-satisfied air.*)

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Disdainfully*) Well, that's a new one on me! I never heard of such a thing.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Bewildered*) Never heard of going to funerals? Why, people have been doing it for years, my dear. Very often one is asked to stay for a meal, too. I find it most stimulating.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*In horrified tones*) Stimulating!

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Nodding assent; enthusiastically*) I often try to get my husband to go with me, but since he's become engrossed in raising bees it's difficult to make him accompany me.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Fearfully*) Your Chester is raising bees?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Effusively*) Yes, isn't it just too lovely?

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Disdainfully*) Bees? Well, what next?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Smiling*) I don't know. But I suppose Chester will pick out something that is equally uplifting. (*Rising and crossing to R. of Mrs. TAYLOR; anxiously*) You're not sitting on anything, are you, my dear?

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Bewildered*) Sitting on anything? No, of course not. Er—what do you mean?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Apologetically*) Well, it's just that there are times when Chester brings some of the dear little bees in here with him and forgets to take them outside with him.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Emits a startled scream, jumps up quickly and looks at the chair anxiously*) Well, the idea!

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Garrulously*) Yes, I always caution the children that it's a good idea to look before they sit. (*Chuckles; crosses to divan and resumes her seat*) It was such a charming funeral today. (*MRS. TAYLOR brushes off her chair, then sits.*) Not as inspiring as the one we had when Uncle Ipswich was taken. He was a bishop, you know. That was the loveliest funeral I ever attended.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Disgusted*) I never heard of such a thing! A lovely funeral, indeed!

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Gayly*) Oh, but it was—it positively was. You know when the bishop passed on we had a famous concert singer at his services. Her voice was simply divine. I remember it as if it were yesterday. She appeared in a large fur coat and sang "Goodbye, Summer"!

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Disdainfully*) I didn't come over here to discuss funerals, Minna.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Irrelevantly*) Oh, but you should, you really must. The next time there's an especially nice funeral I'll call for you and take you with me. You'll be amazed how uplifting it is. You must have a deal of spare time—I often wonder what you do with yourself all day long.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Severely*) I can find plenty to do. My house is run like a normal home.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Blankly*) Is it? Don't you find that awfully tiresome, my dear? I was saying to Arlene just the other day that most people lead such narrow lives. I don't want my children to be like carbon copies of other children.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Witheringly*) There's no danger of that, Minna. Your children are certainly different from any I've known.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Beaming at her warmly*) Oh,

then you've noticed it too? Thanks so much for the compliment, my dear. I've tried my best to make them outstanding. They're so refreshing, aren't they—my little brood? But I can't seem to get any of them to take an interest in funerals. Perhaps that will come later.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Rising; indignantly*) I wish your Junior didn't take such an interest in other folks' affairs. He's the best home-wrecker I've ever known. That's what I came over to see you about.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Bewildered*) What do you mean? I'm afraid I don't understand.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Taking over to L. of divan; irately*) It's easy enough to explain. I've just bought a new electric refrigerator and I'd only had it two days when Junior came over to see my Bunny.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Gayly*) They get along so well together. It's just too sweet for words.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Withering*) Junior said the new refrigerator wasn't hooked up correctly although we all thought it was working perfectly.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Proudly*) My little dear is so ingenious. And he's so mechanically inclined. He can do anything.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Iratly*) He certainly can. He just tinkered with that refrigerator until it doesn't work at all. He ruined it completely.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Rising quickly*) There must be some mistake. I'll have to speak to him about this.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Angrily*) Speak to him? He ought to be punished severely.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Crossing to French windows R. and calling off R.*) Junior! Are you out there?

JUNIOR. (*Just outside of French windows*) What d'you want, Mom?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Commanding*) You come in here this instant, do you hear? (*Retraces her steps to just below divan.*)

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Taking over to below table L.C.*) I hope you'll be firm with him, Minna.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Nodding assent*) Oh, yes, of course. I don't believe in spoiling the rod and sparing the child.

JUNIOR. (*Enters through French windows reluctantly, carrying a large rifle*) D'you want me, Mom? (*Comes down to R. of Mrs. WOODRUFF and faces her fearfully.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Sternly*) Junior Woodruff, look how dirty your hands and face are. You can't come to the table like that.

JUNIOR. (*Protesting*) Aw, that's all right, Mom. I'll rub 'em off before we sit down. (*Rubs one of his hands on his trousers*) Come to think of it, I won't be home to supper tonight.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*In puzzled tones*) Won't you? Where are you going?

JUNIOR. (*Grinning broadly*) Chuck Hughes's vine is full o' tomatoes an' I'm goin' to help him pick 'em.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Angrily*) Why did you tinker with my new icebox when it was working so perfectly?

JUNIOR. (*Crossing to C.*) It wasn't workin' right, Mrs. Taylor, honest it wasn't. You'd have had trouble with it sooner or later.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Wrathfully*) And now I'll have trouble with it permanently. You've ruined it so that nobody will be able to repair it.

JUNIOR. (*Persistently*) But I tell you it needed hammerin', Mrs. Taylor. It—

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Breaking in quickly*) Junior Woodruff, stop that arguing immediately. You know that I always insist on having harmony in this house—perfect harmony.

JUNIOR. (*Turning to Mrs. WOODRUFF; ruefully*) I'm sorry, Mom, but that let's me out. I can't sing a note.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Commanding*) You apologize to Mrs. Taylor at once.

JUNIOR. (*Turning and advancing to R. of Mrs. TAYLOR*) Gosh—I'm sorry, Mrs. Taylor, honest I am. (*Brings up his rifle and points the end of it directly at her.*)

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Backing away L.; shrilly and fearfully*) Point that thing the other way before it explodes and kills me.

JUNIOR. (*Disgustedly*) Aw, you ain't afraid o' a little thing like this, are you? (*Turning to Mrs. WOODRUFF*) Can you imagine that, Mom? She's afraid o' a rifle. (*Crosses up to behind table L.C.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*To Mrs. TAYLOR*) You're not really afraid, are you, my dear? I think Junior looks so military when he carries his rifle.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Terribly frightened*) He wouldn't look military if it exploded and killed him.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Gayly*) I never think of that. I had the sweetest little rifle when I was a girl. It was made of cardboard and when you pressed the trigger candy kisses popped out. It was simply darling. (*Sits on divan.*)

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Crossing to L. of JUNIOR*) What are you going to do about my refrigerator, young man?

JUNIOR. (*Magnanimously*) Aw, well, if you're goin' to be like that about it I'll hafta come over an' fix it.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Fearfully*) You'll do nothing of the kind. I forbid you to ever touch it again.

JUNIOR. (*In puzzled tones*) But how can I fix it without touchin' it, Mrs. Taylor? I ain't no hypnotist.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Sternly*) I'll speak to your father about this.

JUNIOR. (*Hastily*) That won't do no good. I got



Pop beat a million miles when it comes to fixin' things. He's just good at raisin' things.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Stiffly*) He didn't do a very good job at raising you, young man.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Frigidly*) I resent that remark, Maggie. None of us are perfect, you know. (*To JUNIOR*) Where is your father, Junior?

JUNIOR. (*Crossing down to L. of divan*) He's gone to the station to meet somebody.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Blankly*) Oh, has he? Is somebody coming? (*MRS. TAYLOR sits L. of table L.C.*)

BOOTS. (*Outside of French windows R.; dramatically*) Unhand me, villain! I am going to be the bride of Lester Maycliff.

JUNIOR. (*Disgustedly*) She's at it again! (*BOOTS enters R., her eyes glued to the book before her.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*To MRS. TAYLOR, proudly*) Isn't she intense? (*To BOOTS*) Come to Mother, darling. (*BOOTS crosses to R. of divan and kisses MRS. WOODRUFF affectionately, then sits R. of MRS. WOODRUFF.*)

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Agog with curiosity*) Has Arlene heard from that Homer Haywood since he left town?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Proudly*) Homer? Oh, yes. He writes regularly.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Distastefully*) Well, it certainly is a relief not to have to listen to him talk about himself. (*JUNIOR crosses up and sits behind table L.C., laying the rifle on top of the table, the end of it pointing toward MRS. WOODRUFF.*) That boy could talk about himself for the rest of his life.

JUNIOR. (*Disgusted*) Yeah, an' what's more, he does. He's talked himself outa every job he's ever had. Beats me how many dif'rent jobs he'd get in one week.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Sadly*) I miss Homer. He used to love to accompany me to funerals. I always

thought he'd make a lovely husband for Arlene. He'd have such a nice voice at the breakfast table.

JUNIOR. (*Groaning*) Yeah, he's inherited all o' his father's intelligence—the dope!

BOOTS. (*Looking up from her book*) Mother, do you think I ought to have my hair dyed for this part? I'm so tired of it this way.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Stroking BOOTS' hair*) I wouldn't be at all surprised if that wouldn't be a good idea, darling. They dye hair so beautifully nowadays. (*MRS. TAYLOR registers astonishment.*) I've always leaned towards purple hair.

BOOTS. (*Bewildered*) Purple? I never thought of that.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*In her most rattle-brained manner*) Yes, I've often wondered why girls don't have purple hair? I've never seen any, have you, dear?

BOOTS. (*Shaking her head "no"*) No, but I'm afraid if I did that all the other girls would have their hair dyed purple, too, and then it wouldn't be unusual. (*MRS. TAYLOR looks at the table and sees the rifle pointed in her direction. She rises quickly, backs away, crosses to armchair in extreme L. corner and sits, emitting a long sigh of relief.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Patting BOOTS on the hand*) We'll settle the color later, darling. (*To MRS. TAYLOR*) What were we talking about?

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Distastefully*) About Homer Hampton Haywood—but we needn't continue. I want to forget that I ever knew him.

JUNIOR. (*Dismally*) I wish I could. That guy is so cracked that he ought to be nursed by a plasterer and I'd like to do the plasterin'. (*He chuckles dryly.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Iratly*) I won't have you speaking about Homer that way, Junior. And you all have to admit that he has a lovely smile.

BOOTS. (*Looking up from her book; disgustedly*) A lovely smile—Homer? Yes, he has, only the trou-

ble is that he smiles so much a person can figure out how much his bridge-work cost.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Angrily*) The idea! Homer hasn't any bridge-work.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Disdainfully*) No, or any other kind of work, either!

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Loyally*) I can't agree with any of you. I think Homer has one purpose in life.

BOOTS. (*Withering*) And that purpose is to make everybody around him miserable and to out-talk the rest of the world. I never did see such a gift of gab.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Loyally*) Homer comes of a long line of distinguished ancestors.

JUNIOR. (*Dubiously*) Who told you that, Mom?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Firmly*) He did. He can trace his forefathers back to royalty. If the dear boy had his rights he'd be King of England.

JUNIOR. (*Disgusted*) And what a two weeks that would be!

(ARLEN WOODRUFF, a pretty and charming girl in her early twenties, enters c. from L. She is refined in manner, possessed of natural charm, refreshingly natural and sincere. She is attired in a white sports outfit that enhances her prettiness, white shoes and stockings, a white band of ribbon around her hair.)

ARLENE. (*As she enters and sees MRS. WOODRUFF*) Mother! I wondered if you were back. (*Comes down to L. of divan and kisses MRS. WOODRUFF affectionately*) Did you have a nice time, dear?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Enthusiastically*) Oh, yes, very nice. Of course it wasn't as lavish a funeral as Uncle Ipswich's. But then, he was a bishop.

BOOTS. (*Looking up from her book; curiously*) What did Uncle die of, Mother?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Blankly*) Eh? What's that? Now let me see. What did the dear bishop pass on from? (*As though suddenly remembering*) Oh, yes, I remember. It was very sad. There was something the matter with his diocese. (*JUNIOR starts to tinker with his rifle.*)

ARLENE. (*Smiling at MRS. TAYLOR*) Good afternoon, Mrs. Taylor. You're looking awfully well. (*MRS. TAYLOR nods stiffly. ARLENE turns to MRS. WOODRUFF*) Isn't Daddy back from the station yet, Mother?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Helplessly*) I don't think so. The children would have seen him if he were. By the way, Arlene, why did he go to the station?

ARLENE. (*Dismayed*) Why, Mother, don't you remember his telling you this morning at breakfast?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Vacantly*) No, I don't. I'm afraid my mind was on the funeral. I was so afraid I'd be late.

ARLENE. (*Greatly upset*) It's Daddy's sister Cora who is coming to pay us a visit.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Jumping up as though she'd been shot*) Mercy days, I forgot all about it! Cora Woodruff's coming and she's bringing her daughter, Fayette, with her. Call Zenith, will you, Arlene, there's a dear. (*ARLENE crosses to door L.I.*)

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Starting to rise*) I really should be going but I promised I'd wait here for Bunny.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Politely*) Oh, don't go. We just love having company. Why, once a friend of Chester's came to visit us for a week and he stayed two years. (*Chuckles heartily. MRS. TAYLOR resumes her seat.*)

ARLENE. (*Opening door L.I and calling*) Zenith, Mother wants you. (*She crosses up to L. of table L.C. and sits.*)

ZENITH. (*Enters and stands near door L.I*) D'you want me, Missus Woodruff?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Hastily*) Zenith, we'll have some of that lovely hash tonight for supper.

ZENITH. (*Fearfully*) Hash in a place like this?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Commanding*) Set two extra places. We're having company. And be careful when you serve supper that you don't spill anything.

ZENITH. (*Reassuringly*) You needn't to worry 'bout that, Missus Woodruff. I won't say a word. I ain't given to talkin'. (*Exits L.I.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Bewildered*) What's the matter with the girl?

JUNIOR. (*Grinning broadly*) I think she's a little whacky, if you ask me.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*In staccato tones*) Whacky? What's that?

BOOTS. (*Looking up from her book*) He means she's goofy, Mom.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Sternly*) I do wish you'd both stop using those horrible slang expressions. It's not at all re-shar-shay. (*JUNIOR rises and takes his rifle over to bench down R. and picks up his hammer.*)

MRS. TAYLOR. (*To ARLENE, agog with curiosity*) Didn't I see you with a young man last night, Arlene? (*JUNIOR starts to hammer on his rifle.*)

BOOTS. (*Rising and declaiming aloud from her book*) Did you think I would fall for that excuse, Harcourt Bellows? Do your worst. I defy you!

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*To MRS. TAYLOR, proudly*) Isn't she wonderful? She reminds me of myself when I was a girl.

ARLENE. (*Placing her fingers to her ears*) Do stop that hammering, Junior.

JUNIOR. (*He ceases hammering abruptly; disgusted*) Aw, gosh, a feller can't do nothin' 'round here. If this keeps up I'm goin' to get a job.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Commanding*) You'll do nothing of the sort. I won't allow any of my family to work. I made your father retire. How would it look

if you took a position? Folks would think you were supporting us.

BOOTS. (*To JUNIOR, contemptuously*) Going to work, eh? Turning capitalistic on us, are you? I'm ashamed of you, Junior. (*MRS. TAYLOR registers astonishment.*)

ARLENE. (*To MRS. TAYLOR*) What were you saying, Mrs. Taylor?

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Curiously*) I was just asking you about the young man I saw you with. He's a stranger here, isn't he?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Rising and crossing to R. of table L.C.*) Why, Arlene, you didn't say anything to me about any young man. When did you meet him?

ARLENE. (*Embarrassed*) I told you all about him, Mother. Don't you remember? His name is Wade Wainright and I met him at Selma's gathering the other evening.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Sitting R. of table L.C.; blankly*) Oh, did you? I can't seem to remember.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Greatly awed*) Is that the young Wainright who just came to live here recently? (*ARLENE nods.*) They say he has scads of money.

JUNIOR. (*Enthusiastically*) That'll certainly be a great change after Homer Haywood. All he has is the suit o' clothes he stands in an' he wouldn't have that if the installment collector ever caught up with him. (*Chuckles heartily.*)

ARLENE. (*Indignantly*) Junior, don't you dare say such things about Homer. He's doing wonderfully well at his new position in New York.

JUNIOR. (*Hastily*) Yeah, I know, I know. He can't make up his mind whether to fire the boss or let him keep workin' for him.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Iratelly*) Junior, you stop talking that way. You forget that Arlene is practically engaged to Homer.

JUNIOR. (*Crossing to R. of MRS. WOODRUFF;*

*knowingly*) Then what's she goin' out with this new feller for? Two-timin' Homer, eh? Gals is all alike. (*Looks at ARLENE contemptuously.*)

ARLENE. (*Sincerely*) I wasn't out with Mr. Wainright, Junior. I met him on the street as I was returning from a meeting of our Girl's Friendly Society and he asked if he might walk home with me.

JUNIOR. (*Contemptuously*) Gal's Friendly Society! What a lot o' baloney that is! Just let two o' them gals get stuck on the same boy friend an' then you'd see how friendly they'd be. (*Shakes his head disgustedly and crosses to bench down R.*)

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Outside of arch R.; loudly and excitedly*) Mother! Oh, Mother! Where are you?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Rising*) Here's your father now, children.

(CHESTER WOODRUFF, an easy-going and good-natured man of fifty, enters c. from R. His hair is somewhat grey and the years have him stooped a bit. Wears a white linen or Palm Beach suit that is baggy and a trifle large for him, white sport shoes, soft white shirt with collar attached, a dark necktie. No hat, the inference being that he has left it out in the hall. He possesses a charming smile and a fund of humor.)

MR. WOODRUFF. (*As he enters*) Well, I've had a wonderful time, Mother. (*Comes down c. to R. of MRS. WOODRUFF and pecks at her forehead*) It ain't every day I can get to see a fire.

JUNIOR. (*Excitedly*) Was there a fire, Dad?

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Enthusiastically*) Yes, a beaut. I'm sorry the house had to burn but I wouldn't have missed seeing it for anything. (*Placing a hand in his trouser pocket*) That reminds me, Junior, did you take fifty cents from my pocket?

JUNIOR. (*Shaking his head "no"*) No, I didn't, but

that's an idea. (*Starts to hammer loudly. BOOTS rises, crosses up to arch c., her eyes on her book, and exits c. to L. The VICTROLA starts to play off up L.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Commanding*) Junior, stop that hammering. I want to talk to your father.

ARLENE. (*Rising quickly*) Didn't you meet Aunt Cora's train, Dad? (*JUNIOR stops hammering, dashes up to French windows and exits, taking his rifle.*)

MR. WOODRUFF. (*To ARLENE, bewildered*) Eh?

ARLENE. (*In puzzled tones*) Didn't you go to the station to meet Aunt Cora's train?

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Placing a hand to his forehead, as though suddenly remembering*) Now can you beat that? I knew there was something I was trying to remember.

ARLENE. (*Dismayed*) Oh, Daddy, didn't you go to the station at all?

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Apologetically*) I started for there but the fire was so pretty I just stood and watched it and forgot all about Cora.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Placing a hand on MR. WOODRUFF'S arm*) Perhaps you'd better go now, dear.

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Protesting*) That wouldn't do any good, Minna. The train was due in here an hour ago.

ARLENE. (*Terribly upset*) Then where are they? You don't suppose something happened to them, do you?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Firmly*) Certainly not. All Cora would have to do is to ask anybody where we live and they'd direct her. We're known all over town.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Nodding assent pointedly*) There's no doubt about that.

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Starting to French windows*) I've got to look after my bees. Steve Slocum was telling me of a new wrinkle I want to try out.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Blankly*) Something new? But I thought you had tried everything, Father.



MR. WOODRUFF. (*Pausing at French windows and facing MRS. WOODRUFF*) The last thing I tried was recommended by that hot-air merchant, Homer Hampton Haywood. It killed most of my bees. It certainly is a relief to be rid of that gas-bag.

ARLENE. (*Indignant*) Dad!

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Grinning broadly*) I wonder how many jobs he's had since he landed in New York? I'll wager he's had a different one every day (*Turning as though to exit*) Well, let me know if Cora shows up.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Before he has a chance to exit*) Just a minute, Mr. Woodruff. Where was the fire?

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Bewildered*) Didn't I tell you?

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Rising*) Why, no. Whose house was it—anybody we know?

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Blankly*) Why, I thought sure I'd mentioned that it was *your house that was on fire!* (*MRS. TAYLOR emits a shrill scream, rushes up and exits C. to R.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*To MR. WOODRUFF, after MRS. TAYLOR'S exit*) The Taylor house on fire, Father?

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Nodding assent*) That's right. (*Fingering his chin thoughtfully*) She seemed quite surprised, didn't you think? (*Exits through French windows. DOORBELL rings.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Hastily*) Perhaps that's Cora and her daughter now. Will you keep an eye on Zenith, Arlene? I'll answer the bell. (*ARLENE nods, crosses and exits L.I. MRS. WOODRUFF crosses and exits C. to R. There is a short pause.*)

WADE. (*Outside R. in arch*) I'm Wade Wainright. I was just passing and thought I'd drop in on Miss Arlene.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Effusively*) I'm so glad you did. I'm sure she'll be delighted. We were just talking about you, Mr. Wainright.

(MRS. WOODRUFF enters c. from R., followed by WADE WAINRIGHT, a tall, athletic-appearing chap in his early twenties. He is obviously a gentleman, well-groomed and with an engaging personality. Wears a light Summer suit, collegiate necktie, sport shoes, no hat.)

WADE. (*Stands R. of MRS. WOODRUFF*) Really? I hope I've made a good impression. (*Smiles at her in friendly fashion.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Hastily*) Oh, yes, yes, of course. Tell me, Mr. Wainwright, do you like to attend funerals? (*Peers up at him anxiously.*)

WADE. (*Bewildered*) Funerals? Why, no, I've never been to one.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Forlornly*) Oh, what a pity! I find them so stimulating. Perhaps you'd like to attend the next one with me.

WADE. (*Shaking his head "no"*) Er—I'd rather not, if you don't mind. I'm afraid it would depress me. (*Looks at her bewilderedly.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Coming down to below divan.* WADE follows and stands c. on a line with her) Oh, would it really? Don't you think everybody should have a hobby of some sort? I do. I most certainly do. But do sit down. (*She sits on divan. WADE sits R. of table L.C.*) Warm, isn't it?

WADE. (*Embarrassed*) Er—yes, rather. You have a charming place here, Mrs. Woodruff.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Modestly*) It's homey but not very palatial. We're very ordinary folks, Mr. Wainright, just very ordinary. (*Sighs and settles back on the divan.*)

BOOTS. (*Off stage up L.; loudly and dramatically*) You've had your chance. Now you can suffer for all of your foul deeds, Harcourt Bellows. (*The sound of a loud EXPLOSION is heard off R. just outside*

of French windows. WADE jumps up as though he had been shot.)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Smiling proudly*) That was my daughter rehearsing her part in a play she's going to appear in.

WADE. (*Looking at her, astonished*) Er—does she always make that much noise?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Anxiously*) Oh, do you think she's too loud? I'll tell her to tone down a bit.

WADE. (*Fearfully*) Why—er—I thought I heard an explosion.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Sweetly*) Oh, that was Junior at rifle practice. My children are so industrious. You must remember that I warned you, Mr. Wainright, that we're just the average American family. (*Giggles coyly.*)

WADE. (*Dryly*) So I observe.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Enthusiastically*) We encourage Junior to use his rifle as much as possible.

WADE. (*Resuming his seat*) Really?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Gayly*) Oh, yes, it's a great protection. It keeps salesmen and bill collectors away. They're so afraid he'll hit them, you know. (*Giggles.*)

ARLENE. (*Enters L.I*) Oh, Mother, I— (*Pauses at sight of WADE, who rises quickly*) Mr. Wainright! This is a surprise. (*Crosses up to R. of WADE and they shake hands*) Have you met my mother?

WADE. (*Smiling at her*) Oh, yes, we've introduced ourselves.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Rising*) I'm so disappointed. He doesn't like to go to funerals, Arlene. Isn't that peculiar? (*The VICTROLA stops. DOORBELL rings.*) That must be Cora and her daughter now. I wonder what she's like? (*Crosses up to arch*) Pardon me. We're expecting my husband's sister, Mr. Wainright, and I'm so excited! (*Exits c. to R. ARLENE crosses to below divan.*)

WADE. (*Taking c.*) Perhaps I shouldn't have dropped in so unceremoniously.

ARLENE. (*Nervously*) Oh—er—it's quite all right. I've never met Aunt Cora or her daughter.

CORA. (*Off up R., complaining*) Well, this was some reception. The train was over an hour late and nobody to meet us. Not that it matters—I don't want to be a burden.

ARLENE. (*Fearfully*) Yes, it's Aunt Cora.

(WADE crosses to below table L.C. MRS. WOODRUFF enters c. from R., followed by MRS. CORA WOODRUFF, a tall, thin, angular woman in her middle forties. She has a rather severe manner but is decidedly kind-hearted. Wears a Summer ensemble of a very loud and garish color, an over-trimmed hat of a different color. Horn-rimmed glasses add to her severe manner. She carries a large wooden crate that contains a small chicken. NOTE: Wherever it isn't possible to get a live chicken the wooden crate may be covered over with heavy cloth to give the impression of containing a chicken.)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*As they enter*) Come right in, Cora. I'm so sorry Chester missed meeting you. Arlene, tell your father that Aunt Cora is here. (MRS. WOODRUFF stands in arch L. of CORA, who inspects the room curiously.)

ARLENE. (*Crossing below divan and R. to French windows and calling off R.*) Dad, oh, Dad, Aunt Cora's here. (*Retraces her steps to R. of divan.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*To CORA*) Where's Fayette? You didn't make the trip alone, did you, Cora?

CORA. (*Firmly*) Of course not. Can't you see that I'm not alone? (WADE looks on interestedly as CORA holds up the crate for MRS. WOODRUFF to see) I

never go any place without Fayette. She's in this crate.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Astonished*) Er—is that Fayette?

CORA. (*Nodding assent*) Of course. She's such a lovely chicken! (*Crosses to bench that stands R. of arch and places the crate on bench, then bends in front of crate and talks "baby talk" to the chicken*) Was Mother's little pet all upset over the long trip? Just relax, there's a good girl. (*WADE turns away in order to hide his mirth.*)

MR. WOODRUFF. (*As he enters through French windows; excitedly*) Cora here? (*Sees her and crosses up R. to her. She straightens up.*)

CORA. (*As she pecks at MR. WOODRUFF'S forehead*) Well, Chester, I hope I'm not going to be in the way here. (*Assumes the air of a martyr.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Coming down c.*) How absurd of you to even think of such a thing, Cora. You know you're as welcome as the flowers in December. (*Indicates ARLENE*) This is our Arlene and this is Mr. Wainright. (*Indicates WADE. MR. WOODRUFF stands R. of CORA.*)

WADE. (*Bowing to CORA politely*) How do you do? (*MRS. WOODRUFF comes down to below divan.*)

ARLENE. (*Crossing up R. of divan and joining CORA*) I'm so glad you're here, Aunt Cora. (*They kiss. CORA stands below bench, MR. WOODRUFF R. of her, ARLENE L. of her.*)

CORA. (*Doubtfully*) Well, I don't know how Fayette will get along here. She's so susceptible to strange atmosphere.

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Eagerly*) Where is Fayette?

CORA. She's home. Somebody had to stay and look after the house, Chester.

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Astonished*) But you wrote that Fayette was coming with you.

CORA. (*Nodding assent*) And so she did. That's Fayette—named after my daughter.

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Bewildered*) Did you bring that chicken all this distance with you, Cora? You could have saved yourself the trouble. We have chickens here.

CORA. (*With the air of a martyr*) But they're not like my Fayette. She's different. I hope you won't mind having her here, Chester. I couldn't think of staying without her.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Firmly*) We don't mind at all. She'll be nice company for Father's bees.

WADE. (*Restraining his desire to laugh and clearing his throat*) Er—I think I'd better be going. (*Crosses up to L. of ARLENE*) I hope I see you again, Miss Woodruff. (*To CORA*) I'll look forward to seeing you too, Mrs.—Mrs.— (*Pauses uncertainly.*)

CORA. (*Hastily*) Woodruff, same name as my brother's. I married a man with the same name—of course he wasn't any relation. He always said I married him so I wouldn't have to bother changing my name.

WADE. (*Bewildered*) Yes, I see. Well, goodbye, everybody. (*Smiles at ARLENE and exits c. to R.*)

ARLENE. (*Leading CORA down c.*) You must be tired, Aunt Cora. Do sit down. (*MRS. WOODRUFF sits on R. end of divan.*)

CORA. (*As she sits on divan L. of MRS. WOODRUFF*) I don't want you to wait on me or treat me like company. I'll help with the work just like one of the family, Minna. (*ARLENE sits R. of table L.C.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Lightly*) Oh, there isn't any work to do, Cora. The maid takes care of things.

MR. WOODRUFF. (*As he crosses to French windows*) I'll be right back, Cora. I'm just finishing up outside. (*Exits through French windows.*)

CORA. (*Sighing forlornly*) I can't realize that Chester is my brother. He used to be so handsome.

It's been so many years since we've seen each other.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Indignant*) He's still handsome. And he's just like a boy—he'll never grow up. He still gets a thrill out of going to fires.

CORA. (*Astonished*) Does he? Oughtn't you do something about it?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Gayly*) Oh, we do. Everybody always rushes to tell him whenever there's a conflagration.

JUNIOR. (*He rushes in through French windows carrying his rifle*) Pop said Aunt Cora is here! (*Comes down to R. of divan*) Hya, Aunt Cora?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Proudly*) This is Junior. (*CORA smiles at him.*) Isn't he a big boy? (*To ARLENE*) What became of that Mr. Wainright who was here a few minutes ago, Arlene?

ARLENE. (*Embarrassed*) Why, he said goodbye and left, Mother.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Blankly*) Oh, did he? I don't think he has much of a personality.

CORA. (*To ARLENE*) Is he your young man, Arlene?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Before ARLENE has a chance to reply*) Oh, no. Arlene's young man works in New York. He has a very responsible position there.

JUNIOR. (*Grinning broadly*) You mean he *had* a position. By this time he's lost it and is about to startle the world with his high pressure salesmanship. (*Crosses to bench down R. and sits swinging his legs.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Reprovingly*) That will do, Junior. What will Aunt Cora think of you? (*To ARLENE*) What is it that Homer is doing in New York, Arlene?

ARLENE. (*Proudly*) He's connected with a large radio studio as an announcer, Mother.

JUNIOR. (*Disgusted*) Just another number on a dial.

ARLENE. (*Angrily*) You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Junior. Homer is going to be a tremendous success. You've no idea of how many people just wait to hear him on the air.

JUNIOR. (*Firmly*) An' you ain't got any idea o' how many people turn him off the minute he starts one o' his spiels. (*DOORBELL rings.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Eagerly*) I wonder who that is? Junior, you answer the bell. (*JUNIOR rises quickly; rushes up R. of divan and exits c. to R.*)

CORA. (*To Mrs. WOODRUFF*) What do you do with yourself, Minna? Do you go about a good deal?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Enthusiastically*) Oh, yes, whenever there's a funeral. I hope we have some nice ones while you are here, Cora.

CORA. (*Shuddering*) Oh, I wouldn't care for that at all. (*Mrs. WOODRUFF registers great disappointment. CORA turns to ARLENE*) I don't suppose you go out much now that your young man isn't in town, Arlene?

ARLENE. (*Proudly*) Oh, it won't be long before Homer has worked himself up to a fine salary and then we'll announce our engagement.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Enthusiastically*) Oh, yes, Homer is bound to be a success in New York with his personality.

JUNIOR. (*Outside R. of arch; loudly and astonishedly*) Well, if it isn't Homer Hampton Haywood! What are you doin' back here?

HOMER. (*Outside R. of arch; loudly and gayly*) I'll inform you of my plans later, Junior. Right now I can only think of Arlene. She's expecting me. (*ARLENE rises quickly, a bewildered expression on her face.*)

JUNIOR. (*He rushes on c. from R.; loudly*) Meet your boy friend, Arlene, and don't titter. (*He stands L. of arch, a broad grin on his face as HOMER HAMP- TON HAYWOOD, a tall, nice-looking boy of twenty-*



three, enters c. from R. He is well poised, full of pep, very sure of himself and never at a loss for words. He regards himself as a business genius but is never obnoxious. His personality is so delightfully refreshing that people like him in spite of themselves. Is immaculately groomed and attired in a light Summer suit, soft shirt with collar attached, a collegiate necktie, sport shoes, a flower in the lapel of his coat. He carries a box of candy, securely wrapped and tied.)

HOMER. (*As he enters, beaming at ARLENE*) Well, here I am. Homer Hampton Haywood returns to the scenes of his former triumphs! (*Laughs gayly and comes down c. and to R. of ARLENE*) Were you surprised to hear I was on my way back? (*Takes her hand and shakes it heartily, then before ARLENE has a chance to reply, he turns to MRS. WOODRUFF*) Ah, Mother Woodruff, you're looking fresh as a daisy—more beautiful than ever!

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Rising and crossing to just R. of HOMER*) Homer! This is a surprise!

ARLENE. (*Reproachfully*) Why didn't you let me know you were coming home for a visit, Homer?

HOMER. (*Bewildered*) I wrote you all about it. You should have had the letter this morning. (*JUNIOR comes down to behind table L.C. and grins broadly at HOMER.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Coming to with a start*) Oh, dear, I knew I'd forgotten something. I've a letter for you in my purse, Arlene. I didn't think it was important. (*JUNIOR chuckles. She crosses to end table, picks up her purse and opens same, removing a sealed letter*) It came just as I was on my way to the funeral. (*Hands the letter to HOMER, who passes it on to ARLENE.*)

HOMER. (*Gayly*) Don't worry about it, little Mother. (*To ARLENE*) So my arrival here is somewhat in the nature of a surprise, eh? Well, unex-

pected pleasures are always the greatest. (*He beams at ARLENE. JUNIOR'S broad grin changes to a look of disgust.*) Here is a little gift that I bought for the person I love best of anybody in the whole world. (*He holds up the box of candy.*)

JUNIOR. (*Disgusted*) What is it, a safety razor for yourself? (*Crosses to French windows.*)

HOMER. (*Smiling widely*) I see that Junior hasn't changed a particle since I went away. He's just as quick on the comeback as ever. (*Hands the box of candy to ARLENE, who places it and the letter on the table, L.C. JUNIOR works down R. to bench where he sits, picks up his rifle and starts to tinker with it.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*To HOMER*) This is Mr. Woodruff's sister, Mrs. Woodruff, Homer. (*Places her purse on end table.*)

HOMER. (*Crossing over to L. of CORA; effusively*) Aunt Cora! Arlene wrote me they were looking forward to your visit. You certainly resemble your brother, only better-looking, of course. Just call me Homer. (*Grabs her hand and shakes it heartily. CORA manages to withdraw her hand and rubs it painfully. MRS. WOODRUFF crosses up to behind table L.C. and sits. ARLENE sits R. of table. MR. WOODRUFF enters through French windows carrying a bird-cage that is entirely covered with canvas or heavy white muslin so that the inside of the cage is not at all visible.*)

MR. WOODRUFF. (*As he enters and sees HOMER; astonished*) Homer Haywood! What brings you here? (*Registers disgust.*)

HOMER. (*Rushing R. to MR. WOODRUFF, warmly*) Ah, Father Woodruff, I'm overwhelmed by the warmth of your greeting! It's grand to be back home again. (*Tries to grasp MR. WOODRUFF'S hand but the latter is too quick for him.*)

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Holding up his cage*) Be careful of my bees, young man. You might make them vio-

lent. (*Crosses behind divan and L. to desk, placing the cage on the desk and, sitting, starts to rummage among the papers on desk.*)

HOMER. (*Crossing down to JUNIOR and slapping him vigorously on the back*) Still toying with your rifle, I see, Junior. I'll have to buy you a good one one of these days.

JUNIOR. (*Scowling at him*) You can't buy rifles with collar buttons.

HOMER. (*Rubbing his hands together jubilantly*) Now that's amazing—little short of amazing.

JUNIOR. (*Disgusted*) No, it ain't—it's just good sense.

HOMER. (*Laughing*) I meant to say that it's amazing that you should mention collar buttons. I expect to devote all of my energies to them in the future. (*Crosses to c. and stands R. of ARLENE.*)

ARLENE. (*Bewildered*) But Homer, what happened to your radio career? Aren't you still on the air?

JUNIOR. (*Disgusted*) He couldn't be still on the air or off it.

ARLENE. (*Iratly*) Junior, will you stop? (*To HOMER*) What happened to your job, Homer?

HOMER. (*Importantly*) Which one, Arlene? I've had several since I went to New York.

JUNIOR. (*Triumphantly*) Didn't I tell you?

ARLENE. (*Miserably*) But I—we—we all thought you were doing so well.

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Witheringly*) I didn't.

HOMER. (*Boastfully*) Why, you see, the radio world was too small for a man of my talents. It didn't offer enough scope. I didn't like anything about the way they were running things, so I just told the boss how inefficient he was, handed in my resignation and walked out.

JUNIOR. (*With exaggerated solemnity*) Boy, that must have ruined the radio world for weeks.

HOMER. (*To ARLENE, enthusiastically*) I had a scheme that should have made me thousands of dollars that I wanted to put into practice.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Eagerly*) Oh, do tell us what it was, Homer. I just love to hear about your schemes.

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Dryly*) And that's as far as any of them ever get, Mother. Just having him tell about them. (*JUNIOR laughs loudly. ARLENE darts an angry glance at him and he stops laughing abruptly.*)

HOMER. (*Gayly*) Well, you see, folks, it was like this. For years I had thought how wonderful it would be if somebody perfected a machine that would manufacture frankfurters without any skins.

JUNIOR and MR. WOODRUFF. (*Together, astonished*) What?

HOMER. (*Enjoying the sensation he is creating*) Isn't that a brilliant idea? Nobody ever thought of it until I suddenly conjured up the idea.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*In baffled tones*) Frankfurters without skins? But wouldn't they be kind of loose?

HOMER. (*Proudly*) Not if they were made with my machine. That was the purpose of it. It turned out frankfurters without skins and they were simply delicious.

ARLENE. (*Anxiously*) But what became of the plan, Homer?

JUNIOR. (*Withering*) I'll tell you. All the hot-dog men got together to keep him from doin' it. They were afraid he'd put 'em out o' business.

HOMER. (*Greatly pleased*) Now that you mention it, Junior, I believe that was the very reason it was difficult to raise the capital. And anyhow, while I was working on that plan I received one of the greatest inspirations of my life.

ARLENE. (*Eagerly*) Oh, Homer, is it really that good?

HOMER. (*Elated*) Good—that doesn't begin to de-

scribe it. I just told you it was an inspiration, didn't I?

JUNIOR. (*Disgusted*) I'll bet I could find another name for it.

HOMER. (*Placing his hand in his coat pocket and bringing forth several collar buttons*) Now what is the most dreaded thing in the world—the thing that men fear most?

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Looking directly at HOMER; significantly*) Having some hot-air merchant talk an ear off them. (*Rises.*)

HOMER. (*Smiling happily*) You're all wrong about that, Father Woodruff. People are always willing to listen to sound business. This is the day and age of high pressure salesmanship and I'm going to make a fortune through just those methods.

ARLENE. (*Eagerly*) But how do you propose to do it, Homer?

HOMER. (*Holding up a collar button for her to see*) You've seen these before, haven't you?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Loudly; astonished*) Why, it's a collar button. I've seen hundreds of them.

HOMER. (*Importantly*) You've seen ordinary collar buttons, Mother Woodruff, but none like these. This is my own special patent and idea.

CORA. (*Curiously*) What's special about it?

HOMER. (*Smiling blandly*) Ah, that's it! That's what the world will ask. Then, through a series of delightful talks, I shall enlighten men, telling them that with my collar buttons they'll never have to get down on their hands and knees before a bureau to hunt for a missing collar button again.

JUNIOR. (*Rising*) Say, what kind o' a gag is this, anyhow?

HOMER. (*Importantly*) It isn't a gag, my dear Junior. It's a very remarkable idea. Now you know how annoying it is to lose your collar button and have to hunt all over a room for it while you're dressing

in a hurry, don't you, Father Woodruff? (*Continuing before MR. WOODRUFF has a chance to reply*) Of course you do. It happens in the best regulated households.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Blankly*) Homer, do you mean that you've invented a collar button that a man can't drop?

HOMER. (*Smiling broadly*) Oh, you can drop it, all right.

CORA. (*Bewildered*) Then what good is it, young man?

HOMER. (*Importantly*) You can drop it but you can't lose it and you don't have to waste time hunting for it. (*Holding up one of the collar buttons*) On the bottom of each and every one of my collar buttons I have smeared a solution of radium paint that lights up in the dark. A man drops his collar button in the dark and he can tell exactly where to find it. Isn't it marvelous?

JUNIOR. (*Grinning broadly*) It beats anythin' I ever heard o'. (*Doubles up with merriment.*)

HOMER. (*Importantly*) I knew you'd see the value of my scheme, Junior. Tomorrow I start taking orders for this little contraption and before you know it I'll make a down payment on a new house. (*Smiles at ARLENE warmly.*)

CORA. (*With an air of martyrdom*) Of course I don't expect anybody to pay any attention to me and I don't want to be treated like company, but I would like a drink. Just anything you happen to have handy—lemonade or cold tea.

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Crossing to door L.I*) Come along, Cora. I'll fix something for you. (*Leaves the bird-cage on desk and holds the door open for CORA.*)

CORA. (*Rising*) You'll keep your eye on Fayette for me, won't you, Junior? She hasn't been feeling so well lately and I don't want her to suffer a relapse.

JUNIOR. (*Disgusted*) That's the first time anybody ever asked me to be a keeper for a rooster.

CORA. (*Crossing to door L.I.*) Fayette isn't a rooster. She's a hen and a most ladylike one at that. (*Exits with MR. WOODRUFF.*) (*WARN Curtain.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Rising*) I'm afraid Cora isn't going to be happy here. The idea of bringing a chicken with her, all that distance. (*Crossing to door L.I.*) Do you know, I'm beginning to wonder if she has all of her senses? (*Exits quickly.* JUNIOR places his rifle on bench and picks up his hammer.)

ARLENE. (*Rising*) You'll stay to supper, won't you, Homer?

JUNIOR. (*He emits a dry and humorless "Ha!"*) Yeah, we'll feed you some radium paint.

ARLENE. (*As she crosses to door L.I.*) I'll tell Zenith to set an extra place. (*Exits.* JUNIOR starts to hammer on the bar of steel or iron on bench R., making a great racket. HOMER crosses L. to desk and picks up the cage MR. WOODRUFF has placed there. Then he crosses to c. and stands inspecting the cage. BOOTS enters c. from L. with the opened book in her hand.)

BOOTS. (*As she enters, dramatically*) I shall never be your wife, Harcourt Bellows! Never, I say! (*Stalks down c. to R. of HOMER and faces him, her eyes glued to the printed page before her.*)

HOMER. (*Holding the cage in one hand and looking at BOOTS bewilderedly*) What's the matter, Boots, aren't you feeling well? (*JUNIOR continues to hammer.*)

BOOTS. (*Intent on rehearsing her part*) You are rich and powerful while I am a nobody, but I shall force those words back down your throat with my own hands, you cur! (*Places both of her hands around HOMER'S neck and starts to pantomime choking him.*)

HOMER. (*Trying to fight her off unsuccessfully*)  
Let go of me. You're choking me.

JUNIOR. (*Stops hammering and turns around,  
facing BOOTS and HOMER*) Look out for those bees.

HOMER. (*Trying to draw away from BOOTS*) Let  
go of my neck. You're killing me. (*She holds on to  
him tenaciously. HOMER raises his hands to break her  
hold on his neck and in doing so he drops the cage  
to the floor with a bang.*)

JUNIOR. (*Loudly and excitedly*) Now you've done  
it. You've upset Pop's bees. (*He makes a bee-line  
for the French windows, and exits quickly. BOOTS  
utters a startled scream as the Curtain falls swiftly.*)

END OF ACT ONE



## ACT TWO

SCENE: *Same as previous Act.*

TIME: *Late afternoon, two weeks later.*

*The chicken crate remains on bench up R. The bird-cage containing the bees has been removed and the end table L. of divan has been cleared off, as has the table L.C. All LIGHTS full up.*

DISCOVERED AT RISE: *Mrs. WOODRUFF sits on divan. She is attired in an inexpensive but becoming Summer frock of a bright color. She has a large harmonica up to her lips and is blowing on it vigorously, producing a loud and discordant noise. The instant the Curtain rises JUNIOR'S voice is heard off stage up L. outside of arch.*

JUNIOR. (*Loudly*) Hey, Mom, have you seen my pants? I can't find 'em any place.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Removing the harmonica from her lips, turning and facing arch; irately*) Junior, will you stop bothering me? I'm trying to perfect my tone on this harmonica. (*Replaces the harmonica to her lips and blows on it loudly. ZENITH enters c. from R., attired as in previous Act.*)

ZENITH. (*Coming down c. to L. of divan*) It was another o' those salesmen, Missus Woodruff. I told him we weren't buyin' a thing.

JUNIOR. (*Outside L. of arch, loudly*) Hey, for Pete's sake, Mom, where's my slacks?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Stops playing abruptly and rises*) I can't hear myself play with all these interruptions. Now who did you say was here, Zenith?

ZENITH. (*Vacantly*) Just another salesman. I shoed him away.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*As though suddenly remembering*) I told Junior to print that sign. (ZENITH crosses L. to below table L.C.)

JUNIOR. (*Off stage, complainingly*) Hey, Mom, can't you come up here for a minute an' help me find my pants?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Crossing up c. to arch and calling off L.*) Have you finished making that sign I want for the front of the house?

JUNIOR. (*Off stage, loudly*) Yeah, it's finished but I can't find my slacks.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Commanding*) Never mind that. Bring that sign down here right away. (*Comes down c.*) Where's Aunt Cora, Zenith?

ZENITH. (*Blankly*) I ain't seen her, Missus Woodruff.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Taking over to below divan R.C.*) I'm afraid she's going to stay here indefinitely. If she only knew how I dislike having that chicken in the living room.

ZENITH. (*Helpfully*) Couldn't you ask her to take it outside?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Iratly*) I started to suggest it the other day and she flew into such a rage it reminded me of the time Samson killed the Philip-pines.

ZENITH. (*Nervously*) Yeah, she's awful peculiar.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Fearfully*) I just hope she doesn't become violent. She's not at all like Mr. Woodruff. He's so sane and sensible. She must have inherited her peculiarities from her husband.

ZENITH. (*Astonished*) Was he a nut, too?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Firmly*) I never met him but

he must have been. He had a whole menagerie of animals right in their living room and you know no sane person would live that way. (JUNIOR enters c. from L., carrying a large piece of cardboard. He is attired exactly as in previous Act but his face and hands are clean and his hair is plastered down into place.)

JUNIOR. (Coming down to L. of MRS. WOODRUFF) Here's the sign you wanted, Mom.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (Taking the sign and holding it so that printed side is not exposed to the audience, she faces straight out front and reads aloud) "We shoot and kill every fourth bill collector and salesman who rings our bell. The third one just left!"

JUNIOR. (Proudly) I thought it all up myself. I guess that'll keep 'em away. (Takes the sign from MRS. WOODRUFF and crosses R. to bench, where he rummages in the tool kit for some nails and picks up the hammer.)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (Resuming her seat on divan) Tack that sign on the outside of the house right away, Junior. (To ZENITH) I hope you've started supper, Zenith?

ZENITH. (Starting for door L.I) How many is there goin' to be?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (Poising her harmonica at her lips as though about to play) Why, just the immediate family.

ZENITH. (Pausing at door, thoughtfully) How many's that?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (Lowering her harmonica, incredulously) You can count, can't you? Didn't you learn anything at school?

ZENITH. Yes'm, I learned that if your pencil has an eraser on the end o' it an' if you put the eraser in your mouth first, it's easier to rub out things. (Exits quickly. JUNIOR doubles up with mirth.)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (Iratly) Didn't I tell you to put

that sign on the house, Junior? (*Is about to blow on her harmonica again when his voice stops her.*)

JUNIOR. All right, Mom, I'm goin' to. But I can't help wonderin' what become o' my slacks.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Lightly*) Why, they must be upstairs somewhere. (*As though suddenly remembering*) I remember. I gave a bundle of clothing to the church rummage sale. Your slacks must have been in that bundle.

JUNIOR. (*Appalled*) Oh, Mom, you didn't. Why, them slacks were almost new.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Greatly pleased*) Then they'll get a better price for them than they'd ever be able to ask for old ones. Always remember, Junior, that it pays to be charitable.

JUNIOR. (*Scowling*) Not when you hafta go without a pair o' pants! (*Crosses up and exits c. to r., taking the hammer, a few nails and the piece of cardboard with him.* MRS. WOODRUFF settles back on the divan and starts to blow on her harmonica furiously. CORA enters L.2, dressed as in previous Act and carrying a book.)

CORA. (*As she enters*) Mercy days, is that you making that awful noise, Minna? (*Crosses to c., then comes down to below chair r. of table L.C.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Lowering the harmonica; gayly*) Isn't it darling? I'm trying to learn to play "Abide With Me" so that I can render it at funerals.

CORA. (*Turning and glancing at bench up r.; anxiously*) I hope it don't disturb Fayette. She's not used to such outlandish noises. (*Sits on chair*) Of course I don't want to be a burden to any of the family. I don't want to interfere with any of you in any way.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Pointedly*) You won't. But I'm afraid you're not having a very good time here, Cora. You're not too bored, are you?

CORA. (*Settling back on her chair*) I never get

bored, Minna. I found out long ago that I could always entertain myself.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Interested*) Really? How?

CORA. (*Firmly*) By talking to myself. I've been doing it for years and I've never said one thing that I didn't enjoy hearing! (*Starts reading from her book.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Enthusiastically*) Now I think that's gay. I must try it one day. (*Eagerly*) What's that you're reading, Cora?

CORA. (*With a self-satisfied air*) It's a book that Mr. Wainright loaned me. *You ought to read it, Minna.* It would explain so many things to you.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Not at all interested*) Would it? (*Places her harmonica to her lips again but CORA'S voice stops her.*)

CORA. (*Determined*) Listen to this: (*Starts reading aloud*) "Most cases of insanity are not inherited directly from parents. Studies reveal that eighty out of every hundred insane persons come from mentally sound mothers and fathers."

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Indignantly*) I never heard of such a thing. Why should Wade Wainright give you such a book to read? (*Glances up quickly at the chicken crate*) He must know.

CORA. (*Pointedly*) He said he bought this book after he paid his first visit to this house.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Giggling*) Oh, yes, that was the day you walked in with Fayette. I suppose he did think that was funny.

CORA. (*Severely*) I don't see anything funny about having a dear little pet, Minna.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Hastily*) No, you wouldn't. Did Arlene tell you that Wade Wainright had proposed to her?

CORA. (*Astonished*) Has he really?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Gayly*) Oh, yes, he's just crazy about her.

CORA. (*Firmly*) Well, of course, my opinion wasn't asked and I'm not the sort to go around giving advice nor do I expect anybody to take it, but I certainly think she ought to get rid of that blowhard, Homer What's-his-name, and marry this Wainright boy.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Incredulously*) Give up Homer? Why, Arlene wouldn't even consider such a thing!

CORA. (*Stiffly*) She'll consider nothing else but if she's ever fool enough to marry him. Look what he did right in this room two weeks ago. Knocked over those bees and almost frightened us to death.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Loyally*) That wasn't Homer's fault. Boots was to blame. And nobody was hurt, so it didn't matter. Father has a new regiment of bees already.

CORA. (*Withering*) It's too bad some of those bees didn't light on that Homer. It might have made him stop talking long enough to do some work.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Proudly*) Homer has a wonderful invention. He's on the road to fame and fortune at last.

CORA. (*Dubiously*) I've been here two weeks and he's had a dozen jobs in that short time. What's he doing now?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Enthusiastically*) He's working on a new alarm clock.

CORA. (*Withering*) Does he know what it's going to be?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Vaguely*) Why—er—I don't just know all the details.

CORA. (*Disdainfully*) I'll wager I know what he hopes it will be.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Curiously*) What?

CORA. (*Severely*) An alarm clock that'll wake him up in time to work and then *go out and do the work for him!*

MRS. WOODRUFF. You mustn't say things like that about Homer in front of Arlene, Cora. She's genuinely devoted to him.

CORA. (*Stiffly*) Well, they say there's a Jack for every Jill but I don't see how she can endure that man. Of course I'd never mention it to her. I know how people resent hearing the truth from their relatives. That's why I never express my opinions.

JUNIOR. (*Enters c. from R., carrying a sealed envelope*) Here's a note from his royal shyness, Homer Hampton Haywood. It's for Arlene. (*Comes down c.*) Gosh, you'd think he'd said everythin' the last time he saw her without writin' her.

CORA. (*Withering*) I never saw such a big-headed person in all my born days.

JUNIOR. (*Grinning broadly*) Yeah, he's so big-headed that his ears ain't neighbors any more.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Anxious to change the subject*) Did you tack the sign on the house, Junior? (*He nods.*) Then take that note upstairs to Arlene.

JUNIOR. (*Inspecting the note*) I'm dyin' to see what he's wrote her. I'll bet he's told her that the whole town is tryin' to get him to work for 'em.

CORA. (*Disdainfully*) His idea of work is what somebody else does. And to think that Arlene could marry into that exclusive Wainright family! Not that it's any of my affair—

JUNIOR. (*Breaking in excitedly*) Holy mackerel! Has Wade popped?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Sternly*) Junior, you're not to mention Wade's proposal to anybody, do you hear?

JUNIOR. (*Grinning broadly*) 'Course not. I'll be as silent as Aunt Cora. We never mention nothin'. (*Wheels quickly and rushes up and exits c. to L.*)

CORA. (*Shaking her head*) Tch! Tch! Young folks nowadays haven't any manners at all. Now when I was a girl—but there, I'm only a relative. I must remember my place.

(MR. WOODRUFF enters C. from R. attired as in previous Act. He is carrying the hammer JUNIOR used in previous Scene and mopping his brow with a handkerchief.)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Dismayed*) Oh, dear, I simply must practice on my harmonica. (*Places it to her lips.*)

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Coming down R. and placing hammer on bench*) Warm, isn't it?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Lowering her harmonica*) Hello, Father. Did you have a nice time? See any fires?

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Dismally*) Nary a one, Mother. They don't seem to have as many as they used to. (*Sits on bench*) How are you today, Cora?

CORA. (*Stiffly*) I'm all right, Chester. You're the only one who ever thinks to ask. Not that I expect folks to be concerned about me. I'm quite used to being ignored.

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Tactfully*) I just had a talk with that young Wainright. He's expecting his father to visit him today. He certainly is fond of our Arlene.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Astonished*) He is? Arlene never told me that she'd met him.

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Bewildered*) Met who, Mother?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Blankly*) Wade Wainright's father. Didn't you just say he was fond of Arlene?

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Shaking his head "no"*) No, I meant Wade is fond of her. He just asked me if I thought he had a chance.

CORA. (*Eagerly*) Has Arlene ever told him?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Nodding vigorously*) Oh, yes, she told him when he proposed that she's going to marry Homer.

CORA. (*Impatiently*) I don't mean that. Has she ever told this Wainright boy that she's not your real daughter?



MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Horried*) Of course not. Arlene wouldn't mention a thing like that.

CORA. (*Curiously*) Why not? She knows, doesn't she?

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Nodding assent*) Oh, yes, she knows—but she never thinks about it. You see, Cora, we took Arlene when she was only a year old. (*Reminiscently*) She was a beautiful baby, wasn't she, Mother?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Enthusiastically*) Yes, lovely. When she was real young I hoped that she'd enjoy going to funerals with me after she grew up but I could never get her to take any interest. (*Sighs dismally.*)

CORA. (*Severely*) It was a risky thing to do—taking in a strange baby.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Astonished*) Oh, she wasn't strange. You see, her mother left her with our milkman. And he was such a nice person. When he died he had the loveliest funeral.

MR. WOODRUFF. (*To CORA*) Arlene's real father was killed in the World War. Her mother brought her to live with our milkman—they were related. And when Arlene's mother passed away we thought it would be nice if we took her to live with us.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Proudly*) So you see, I'm really the only mother she ever knew.

CORA. (*Sadly*) It's certainly a great pity.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Indignantly*) What?

CORA. (*Hastily*) I mean it's a pity that her own parents have passed on.

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Firmly*) She's never missed them. We've seen to that. Arlene is as much like our own child as Junior or Boots.

CORA. (*Stiffly*) Well, I won't comment on that, Chester. After all, I'm just your sister. It makes a difference. (*GLASS CRASH is heard off outside of door L.I.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Rising quickly*) Oh, dear, that Zenith is breaking up the kitchen again. I won't have a dish left. (*Crosses to door L. I and exits quickly.*)  
JUNIOR *enters c. from L.*

CORA. (*To MR. WOODRUFF*) Do you think Fayette looks well since we arrived here, Chester?

JUNIOR. (*Rushing down c.*) Hya, Pop? What's up?

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Rising*) Zenith just broke something and your mother is upset.

JUNIOR. (*Loudly*) I'm upset, too. Mom gave my best pair o' slacks to the church rummage. Can you feature that?

CORA. (*Rising*) I'd like to be able to read my book in peace. Not that I expect anybody in this house to respect my wishes. I realize only too well my position in this house. (*Crosses up and exits c. to L.*)

JUNIOR. (*Bewildered*) What's the matter with her, Pop?

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Sighing deeply*) I'm afraid Cora always was the peculiar one in our family, Junior. But you mustn't mind her—she doesn't mean anything. The very nicest people can be difficult to have around if their thyroid starts acting up. (*Crosses up c. to arch.*)

JUNIOR. (*Bewildered*) Is that why she acts so screwy?

MR. WOODRUFF. (*In arch*) I'm afraid so, Son. Be sure to let me know if anybody telephones that there's a fire. I wouldn't want to miss one. (*Exits c. to L. JUNIOR crosses to bench down R.; picks up hammer and starts to pound on steel or iron bar with same.*)

(*The French windows open and BUNNY TAYLOR, a tall, gangling girl, enters cautiously. She is at the awkward age of fifteen. Her voice is high*

*and shrill. Her hair is parted in the center and worn in two braids down her back. Horn-rimmed glasses cause her to look homelier than she really is. Her dress is of gingham or calico made along conventional lines.)*

BUNNY. (*As she enters*) Hsst! Hsst! Junior!

JUNIOR. (*Stops hammering and looks up; startled tones*) Bunny! What are you doin' here?

BUNNY. (*Crossing to c.; reproachfully*) I came over to tell you I won't be seein' you any more, Junior Woodruff. (*Crosses up to R. of her.*) After the way you ran away an' left me in the lurch yesterday.

JUNIOR. (*Impatiently*) For Pete's sake, don't gals ever have any brains to use? If I'd kept walkin' with you your Ma'd o' seen us for sure. I saw her comin' along the street. That's why I ducked.

BUNNY. (*Fearfully*) She questioned me again today an' asked me if I'd seen you. She's forbidden me to ever speak to you again.

JUNIOR. (*Grumbling*) Just because I tried to fix your ice-box. What harm did I do? It burned down anyhow.

BUNNY. Everythin' in that house was insured so Ma didn't mind that. But when we moved into our new house an' you started monkeyin' with the radio an' put that outa commission then Ma was fit to be tied.

JUNIOR. (*Protesting*) I told her I'd fix it, didn't I? What more could I do?

BUNNY. (*Firmly*) You'll just hafta stay away from our house, that's all. Ma saw you playin' marbles outside today an' she was watchin' like mad.

JUNIOR. (*Disgustedly*) I wasn't playin' marbles. That's only for kids. I had a fight with Buster Graves an' after it was over I helped him pick up his teeth. (*He inflates his chest proudly.*)

BUNNY. (*Reproachfully*) I don't approve o' boys fightin'. It's not good manners.

JUNIOR. (*Jealously*) Oh, no? I don't suppose that Harold Ford ever fights, does he? Good reason why. He'd be afraid he'd get licked. You're stuck on him, ain't you?

BUNNY. (*Indignantly*) Why, I am not. Besides, he's an old man. He's eighteen. (*Takes a few steps away from him.*)

JUNIOR. (*Facing her angrily*) We've been playin' together for a long time now an' just 'cause your Ma's sore at me for no reason, you want to call it off. All right, see if I care. I'll get somebody else to play with.

BUNNY. (*Apologetically*) But it ain't my fault, Junior. I'd rather play with you than with any other boy; honest I would.

JUNIOR. (*Elated*) Would you, Bunny? Cross your heart?

BUNNY. (*Tearfully*) You know I mean every word o' it. But if Ma ever found out I was sneakin' away an' seein' you—

JUNIOR. (*Breaking in quickly*) All right, all right, don't cry. Whenever a gal does that I'm always afraid she's goin' to propose to me. (*The big man of affairs.*)

BUNNY. (*Horried*) Junior Woodruff, how dare you talk to me that way? I ain't ever seen a man I'd propose to—so there!

JUNIOR. (*Scratching the side of his head*) Maybe not yet you ain't, but you will. Gals can't get along without us men. (*Takes over R. a few steps.*)

ZENITH. (*Enters L.I*) Your Ma wants to know if the paper's come yet. She wants to see if there's any funerals tomorrow.

JUNIOR. (*Nervously*) Go on out an' see if it's come yet, will you, Zenith? I ain't had time to look. (*ZENITH crosses up L. and exits C. to R.*)

BUNNY. (*Fearfully*) You don't s'pose she'll tell anybody I was here, d'you, Junior?

JUNIOR. (*Disgusted*) Naw, she's too dumb to know what it's all about. She prob'ly didn't even see you. (*Crossing to r. of her*) Now look! We're all goin' to the strawberry festival tonight. D'you want to come along?

BUNNY. (*Fearfully*) I'd love to but I'm afraid.

JUNIOR. (*His hands in his trouser pockets*) Say, when are you goin' to grow up an' act your age?

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Outside r. of arch; demandingly*) Has my Bunny been here today, Zenith?

BUNNY. (*Beside herself with fear*) It's Ma! What shall I do?

JUNIOR. (*Taking her hand and pulling her toward French windows*) Go out this way. I'll keep your Ma here long enough so she won't be able to follow you. (*He rushes her through French windows, then calls after her*) Meet you in the drug store soon as I can get away. (*Mrs. Taylor enters c. from r., dressed in a different frock than worn in previous Act but along the same lines. JUNIOR turns and faces her and pretends great surprise*) Mrs. Taylor! I was hopin' you'd come over to our house soon.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Coming down c. and standing on a line with JUNIOR*) Have you seen Bunny? I want the truth now, mind you.

JUNIOR. (*Crossing to r. of Mrs. Taylor and assuming a solemn manner*) I'm glad you mentioned Bunny, Mrs. Taylor. I'm mighty sorry for her.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Suspiciously*) My daughter doesn't need your sympathy, young man.

JUNIOR. (*With a wordly air*) Well, we've played together since we was kids an' I can't help the way I feel. Even though we are all washed up I don't like to see her this way.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Agog with curiosity*) What way? What are you talking about?

JUNIOR. (*Reluctantly*) There I go spoutin' my mouth off again an' I promised Doc Weatherby that I wouldn't say a word.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Fearfully*) Doc Weatherby? Did he say that there's something the matter with my Bunny? (*Commanding*) Junior Woodruff, if you don't tell me what he said I'll make your father get the truth out of you. You tell me this instant.

JUNIOR. (*His hands in his trouser pockets; with pretended shyness*) Oh, gosh, Mrs. Taylor, you sure have me in a tough spot. If Doc knew I'd told you he'd never speak to me again.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Earnestly*) I give you my word I'll never mention it to the Doctor. Now what did he say?

JUNIOR. (*Reluctantly*) We-el, I suppose you'll have to know sometime. But I don't know what you can do 'bout it. There ain't no cure for it.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Beside herself with curiosity*) No cure for what? What's the matter with Bunny?

JUNIOR. (*Straight out front; with great solemnity*) The poor kid—Doc says she's frustrated.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Fearfully*) She's what?

JUNIOR. (*Solemnly*) Frustrated. You know—it means that she's got to get out among people more. She's been in the house too much. Let her go to parties, make her get out in the air.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Greatly upset*) Oh, this is dreadful! (*Rushes up to arch c.*) I must find Bunny right away.

JUNIOR. (*Crossing up to R. of her; anxiously*) You don't think she's grievin' 'bout anythin', do you? Doc says that that's what ails her.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Tearfully*) It's all my fault. Oh, I'll never deny her anything again as long as I live. (*Rushes out c. to R. JUNIOR doubles up with mirth and starts for French windows. ARLENE enters quickly c. from L. She wears a becoming but inex-*

*pensive frock of organdy or some sheer material and presents a comely appearance.)*

ARLENE. (*As she enters and sees JUNIOR*) Why this burst of merriment, Junior? (*Comes down c.*)

JUNIOR. (*A broad grin on his face*) You wouldn't understand, an' I ain't got time to tell you. I gotta important date.

ARLENE. (*Smiling*) Well, before you keep it, march yourself upstairs. Dad wants to see you right away.

JUNIOR. (*Greatly chagrined*) I tell you I ain't got time now. What does he want?

ARLENE. (*Firmly*) You! And you'd better make it snappy.

JUNIOR. (*Iratly*) Can you beat it? Just when I'm havin' a crisis in my life Dad has to want me. Parents ain't got no consideration for their children. (*Rushes up and exits c. to L. ARLENE comes down c., a smile on her face.*)

ZENITH. (*Outside R. of arch*) Yeah, she's home. Go right in, Mr. Wainright. (*ARLENE pauses c. at the sound of ZENITH'S voice. WADE enters c. from R. He wears a pair of grey flannel slacks, a contrasting sport coat, sport shoes, vivid necktie; no hat.*)

WADE. (*As he enters and sees ARLENE*) I was hopin' I'd find you home, Arlene. (*Comes down to R. of her.*)

ARLENE. (*Cordially*) It's nice to see you, Wade.

WADE. (*Eagerly*) Do you really mean that?

ARLENE. (*Sincerely*) Of course. Won't you sit down?

WADE. (*Anxiously*) You sure Homer won't mind my being here?

ARLENE. (*Lightly*) Why should he? He knows that you and I are friends.

WADE. (*Grinning broadly*) Did you tell him that the last time I proposed to you you promised to be a sister to me?

ARLENE. (*Embarrassed*) No, of course I didn't. I've never told him anything about it at all.

WADE. (*Jealously*) Does that mean that you didn't attach enough importance to my proposal to mention it?

ARLENE. (*Turning away; shyly*) What am I supposed to say to that? (*Crosses to chair R. of table L.C. and sits.*)

WADE. (*Following and standing R. of her*) I know what I wish you'd say.

ARLENE. (*Nervously*) Er—do you—what?

WADE. (*Eagerly*) That you've changed your mind and decided to accept me.

ARLENE. (*Reprovingly*) The last time we talked on the subject you promised you'd never mention it again.

WADE. (*Lightly*) Well, I didn't—not for the rest of that day. But this is another day and you can't blame a fellow for hoping, can you? (*ARLENE opens her lips as though about to speak but he continues*) Listen, Arlene, I've a great favor to ask of you. My Dad arrived today and I'm so anxious to have him meet you.

ARLENE. (*Nervously*) Your father? You—you mean you'd like to bring him to our house? Why, of course, Wade. We'd be delighted.

WADE. (*Embarrassed*) Why—er—I hadn't thought of that. I'd hoped that you'd have dinner with us this evening at the hotel. We'd have more opportunity to chat there.

ZENITH. (*Outside R. of arch*) Your Ma's waitin' for the paper, Miss Boots. (*BOOTS enters c. from R. She is attired in a pair of grey flannel slacks, sport shoes, a boy's shirt open at the neck.*)

BOOTS. (*As she enters; gayly*) Oh, Arlene, I— (*Pauses abruptly*) Oh, I didn't know Wade was here. (*Comes down c. to R. of WADE. ZENITH enters*)



c. from R., carrying a newspaper. She crosses over to extreme L., then goes down and exits L.I.)

ARLENE. Mr. Wainright to you, Boots!

BOOTS. Aw, be yourself, Arlene. Don't you know that formality went out o' style long ago. (*Crosses R. to below divan.*)

WADE. (*To ARLENE; reassuringly*) It's all right. I want her to call me Wade. (*To ZENITH*) Where has the world's greatest actress been all afternoon?

BOOTS. (*In bored tones*) I've been to rehearsal. Honest, the rest o' that cast is so dumb. It takes them weeks to learn their lines an' I knew mine days ago. (*JUNIOR dashes on c. from L. He is about to come down when he sees BOOTS. He pauses just below arch, unobserved by the OTHERS.*) I'm so bored, going over the same thing again and again. I do wish something exciting would happen for a change.

JUNIOR. (*Coming down c. to R. of WADE; angrily*) Somethin'll happen if you don't take my slacks off right away. Take 'em off, d'you hear? (*Starts toward her.*)

BOOTS. (*Excitedly*) You keep away from me, Junior Woodruff! (*Wheels quickly and runs L. of divan and up stage with JUNIOR chasing her. WADE takes c. BOOTS runs up as far as arch c., turns abruptly and comes down stage to L. of WADE, grabbing hold of the latter and turning him so that he faces R. and she is behind him. JUNIOR rushes after her and pauses just R. of WADE, grasping the latter so that WADE is in between the two, his back to BOOTS.*)

ARLENE. (*Rising quickly; in angry tones*) I want you children to stop this nonsense right away.

JUNIOR. (*At the top of his lungs; defiantly*) She's got my slacks on, I tell you. Make her take 'em off.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Enters quickly L.I., the newspaper in her hand*) Father, who d'you think is holding a funeral tomorrow? (*Pauses abruptly*) What game are you children playing now?

BOOTS. (*Iratly*) It's not a game, Mom. Junior's annoying me.

ARLENE. (*Embarrassed*) Make them stop, Mother. The both of them ought to be punished severely. What will Wade think of us?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Crossing up to R. of JUNIOR and placing a hand on his arm*) I'm sure Wade doesn't mind. He was young once himself.

JUNIOR. (*Angrily*) You're always takin' Boots' part, Mom. You said you gave my slacks to the rummage sale an' she's got 'em on.

BOOTS. (*Releasing her hold on WADE and standing L. of him*) Well, s'pose I have. You'd oughta be glad I'd wear 'em.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Mildly*) Boots, take his slacks off right away.

BOOTS. (*Stamping the floor with her foot angrily*) Why do I always have to give in to him?

ARLENE. (*Commanding*) Boots, do as Mother says. I'm ashamed of you.

BOOTS. (*To MRS. WOODRUFF; angrily*) If I can't wear his old slacks I'll drink a whole glass o' milk. You know how sick that always makes me.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Terribly upset*) Oh, dear, where is Father? He's never here when I need him.

JUNIOR. (*Angrily*) If she won't gimme my slacks I'll tear 'em off her.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Turning on him angrily*) You'll do nothing of the sort, Junior Woodruff. You go out and practice with your rifle. I'll take care of this.

JUNIOR. (*Hastily*) I'll go out 'cause I got a important date—but them slacks better be on my bed when I get back or I'll pour a pitcher o' milk down her throat. (*Rushes out French windows.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*R. of WADE*) Aren't they refreshing? It makes me long to be young again when I see them at play. (*Giggles.*)

ARLENE. (*To Mrs. Woodruff; nervously*) Mother, I do wish you'd take Boots upstairs with you. Wade and I were having a serious discussion when they interrupted us.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Blankly*) Oh, were you? I thought you'd settled all that. (*Glances at her newspaper*) I mustn't forget to tell Father about this. (*Crossing up to arch c.*) Come along, Boots. (*Exits c. to L. WADE crosses over to L. of end table.*)

BOOTS. (*Tearfully*) I don't want to go upstairs.

ARLENE. (*Sternly*) Boots, do as Mother tells you.

BOOTS. (*Angrily*) I'll go upstairs, but I'll get even with Junior if it's the last thing I do. (*Rushes up and exits c. to L.*)

ARLENE. (*Crossing to L. of WADE; apologetically*) I'm so sorry this happened, Wade. (*Releases a long sigh.*)

WADE. (*Lightly*) Don't give it another thought, Arlene.

ARLENE. (*Crossing to divan and sitting*) It seems that something dreadful happens every time you call here. I'm afraid you'll have a dreadful opinion of us.

WADE. (*Smiling*) It does seem unusually active in this house.

ARLENE. (*Embarrassed*) I suppose all children are alike. I wonder if we acted that way when we were young?

WADE. (*Grinning broadly*) Oh, I was a terror. I used to waylay folks at night and make faces to scare them. (*BOTH laugh lightly.*)

ARLENE. (*Relieved*) Well, at least it's quiet now. What were we talking about before the battle started? (*Mrs. Woodruff's HARMONICA is heard loudly and discordantly outside L. of arch.*)

WADE. (*In startled tones*) What on earth is that?

ARLENE. (*Rising; nervously*) Er—that? It's Mother. She's learning to play on the harmonica.

WADE. (*Groaning*) Is this her first attempt?

CORA. (*Outside L. of arch*) I don't expect you to pay any attention to me, Minna. Nobody ever does. That's why I never venture to express an opinion.

ARLENE. (*Embarrassed*) Oh, dear! (*MRS. WOODRUFF stops playing abruptly. ARLENE resumes her seat on divan. WADE stands L. of divan.*)

WADE. (*Clearing his throat significantly*) Now perhaps you realize that it would be so much nicer if you'd join Dad and me at dinner this evening, Arlene.

ARLENE. (*Slowly*) You—you mean you'd be ashamed to bring him here because of my family?

WADE. (*Hastily*) I don't mean anything of the sort. I hope you know me better than that. It's just that—that— Well, you understand.

ARLENE. (*Quietly*) I'm afraid I do, Wade.

WADE. (*Taking a deep breath and making another effort to convince her*) I don't see why we should burden your mother with the extra work that two guests would entail.

ARLENE. (*Firmly*) I hate to refuse your invitation but I'm afraid I'll have to. You see, Wade, I'm practically engaged to Homer and I don't think it would be right to dine with you and your father under the circumstances.

WADE. (*Resignedly*) I suppose I'll have to tell you the reason I'm so anxious to have you meet Dad. I was going to keep it a surprise until everything was settled.

ARLENE. (*In puzzled tones*) What do you mean?

WADE. Well, Dad is just paying a flying visit. He's leaving tomorrow, you know. He has business interests elsewhere.

ARLENE. (*Eagerly*) Are you opening your new shops tomorrow?

WADE. (*Nodding assent*) Four of them. One here and the other three in neighboring towns. It's going to keep me on the jump.

ARLENE. Yes, of course it will. But what has all this to do with my meeting your father?

WADE. (*Smiling*) That's the surprise I spoke of. You see, I'm going to need a female assistant, somebody I can rely on. I thought of you for the post.

ARLENE. (*Rising; astonished*) Wade! Do you really mean it?

WADE. (*Nodding vigorously*) I'll say I do. I'm sure you'd be an asset to our business and I'm equally certain that if Dad meets you he'll agree with me and offer you the job. (*DOORBELL rings.*)

ARLENE. (*Excited*) Oh, Wade, this is wonderful! Of course the folks would object no end but I'm sure I could win them over and, it would mean that I could save money toward our home and Homer and I could be married sooner than we expected.

WADE. (*Significantly*) Yes, in that way you might be able to realize your plans. (*ZENITH enters L.I., crosses up L. and exits c. to R.*)

ARLENE. Now I ask you, is that nice?

WADE. (*Hastily*) I meant that you'd be able to have more of the things you want before you do marry. (*Eagerly*) Well, what do you say? Is it a bargain? Do we all dine together this evening?

ARLENE. (*Enthusiastically*) Oh, yes! I'm sure Homer will be thrilled when I tell him about it.

WADE. (*Uneasily*) Er—if I were you I wouldn't say anything until you've met Dad and landed the job.

ARLENE. Oh, I'd have to tell Homer. I never keep anything from him.

WADE. (*Dryly*) No, nobody has ever been able to.

HOMER. (*Outside R. of arch; effusively*) Well, little Zenith! Greetings and salutations!

ARLENE. (*Enthusiastically*) Here's Homer now.

WADE. (*Taking over L. to below table L. of c.; dryly*) Yes, the ray of sunshine and light is about to descend. (*HOMER enters c. from R. He is dressed*

*entirely in white: white linen suit, white shoes, white shirt with collar attached, white necktie; no hat. He is perfectly groomed and tailored and his usual smiling, breezy self.*)

HOMER. (*As he enters*) Did you get my note, Arlene? (*Comes down to L. of divan. ZENITH enters c. from R., crosses over L. and exits L.I.*)

ARLENE. (*Smiling at him warmly*) Yes, thanks. You think of everything, Homer.

HOMER. (*Boastingly*) Oh, yes, I always remember everything, just like an elephant. (*Chuckles lightly.*)

WADE. (*Tartly*) An elephant, eh? Then you ought to start eating peanuts right now.

HOMER. (*To WADE, smiling warmly*) Ah, Wainright, it's nice seeing you again. I just had a most enlightening discussion with your father. At least it was enlightening for him. I gave him some valuable advice about running his business. (*Rubs one hand over the other enthusiastically.*)

WADE. (*Astonished*) You—you gave my Dad advice?

HOMER. (*Importantly*) Yes. Of course I was reluctant to do it but he sensed my great capacity for business and I couldn't withstand helping him.

CORA. (*Outside L. of arch*) Maybe I can find some peace in the living room. (*CORA enters c. from L., carrying her book.*)

HOMER. (*Crossing up to R. of CORA and beaming at her*) Well, well, if it isn't dear Aunt Cora!

CORA. (*Pausing L. of him and looking directly at him; witheringly*) Well, if it isn't I wish you'd tell me who it is. (*Tosses her head indignantly, crosses down to R. of WADE and extends her hand*) Mr. Wainright, I'm so glad you're here. (*They shake.*) ARLENE resumes her seat on divan. HOMER comes down to L. of divan.)

ARLENE. (*To CORA*) Do sit down, Aunt Cora.

CORA. (*Turning and looking directly at HOMER;*

*tartly*) No, thanks. I came down here in order to escape all the chit-chat going on upstairs and I know what to expect here—now.

HOMER. (*Gayly*) Just you wait a few days, Aunt Cora, and I'll send my car and chauffeur around to take you out.

CORA. (*Withering*) I don't expect to live that long, Mr. Haywire.

HOMER. (*Hastily*) Haywood—Homer Hampton Haywood!

CORA. (*Firmly*) I said Haywire. So you're going to make a fortune on those alarm clocks, eh?

HOMER. (*Blankly, as though he had never heard of them*) Alarm clocks? (*As it suddenly dawns on him*) Oh, I've given that up long ago. You see, I've a much better scheme. In fact, I might say that I'm well on the road to fame and fortune. Nothing can prevent it, this time.

ARLENE. (*Fearfully*) Oh, Homer, don't tell me you've got a new scheme?

HOMER. (*Taking c. ; with great aplomb*) This isn't a scheme, Arlene. It's an actual fact—I'll be rolling in wealth before another week passes over my head.

CORA. (*Dryly*) Is this as good as the painted collar buttons? (*Turns to WADE and exchanges an amused glance with him.*)

HOMER. (*Enthusiastically*) This is an idea that came to me while shaving. Now tell me, Wainright, old boy, what is the most annoying thing about shaving?

WADE. (*Dryly*) I don't know. I'll have to ask my barber.

HOMER. (*Condescendingly*) Oh, you're one of those, are you? I didn't think any man had a barber shave him any more. I can see that you won't be one of my prospective customers.

ARLENE. (*Dismayed*) Homer—don't tell me you're going to open a barber shop?

HOMER. (*With a wave of his hand*) Certainly not. That would only make a living for me—this way I'll make millions. (*Reaches into his inside coat pocket and brings forth a tube of shaving cream*) Do you see this?

ARLENE. (*Nodding*) It looks like a tube of shaving cream.

HOMER. (*Holding it up and beaming at it*) And so it is. But what an *extraordinary* tube it is—nothing like it has ever been placed on the market before. Only the genius of a Homer Haywood could have invented it.

WADE. (*Grinning broadly*) You break right down and confess that, eh, Haywood?

HOMER. (*Gayly*) And I can back up every word of my boast, Wainright. Now you see, the thing most men hate about shaving is that they lose the top of their shaving cream tubes and never can find them again or else they waste a lot of time hunting for said tops.

ARLENE. (*Innocently*) But Homer, won't they lose the top of that tube, too?

HOMER. (*Importantly*) Ah, that's where the Haywood ingenuity comes into play. The top of this tube can't come off. (*Looks around him for approval.*)

CORA. (*Astonished*) Can't come off? Then how'll the men get the shaving cream out of the tube?

HOMER. (*Gayly*) A most pertinent question, Aunt Cora. Well put and entirely relevant. You see, the top of this tube is fastened on with a hinge. One may remove the top to get the cream out, but the top of the tube stays on the hinge and cannot be lost or mislaid. (*Glances around at the assemblage with a triumphant air as he replaces shaving cream tube in coat pocket.*)

WADE. (*Bewildered*) Are you going to manufacture the shaving cream too, Haywood?



HOMER. (*Modestly*) Oh, no, I'll leave that to others.

CORA. (*Tartly*) Then all you'll have is an empty tube. Who's going to pay money for that? Of course I don't expect you to pay any attention to me. Nobody ever does. I'm just an interloper here.

HOMER. (*Enthusiastically*) It's my idea to sell my perfected tubes to the manufacturers of shaving creams all over the world. That is why I found it necessary to refuse a most valuable offer that Mr. Wainright, Senior, made me this afternoon.

WADE. (*Stammering with surprise*) My—my father made y-you an offer?

HOMER. (*Proudly*) Oh, yes, but you see, there's nothing surprising about that. In this era of big business there is a sort of fraternity among important tycoons. Your father realizes my worth but understands that I must devote my genius to my own devices.

ARLENE. (*Rising quickly*) Oh, Homer, don't you think it was a mistake to reject Mr. Wainright's offer? Think what it would have meant to us?

HOMER. (*Turning and facing her*) My dear Arlene, I must insist that you allow me to run the business end of our partnership and you run the home.

CORA. (*Tartly*) Before she can run it she'll have to get it. (*To WADE*) Do come over again, Mr. Wainright. I always like to meet young men who have their feet on the ground and talk sense. (*Crosses and exits door L.2.*)

HOMER. (*Enthusiastically*) Charming woman, Aunt Cora. I must do something for her as soon as my ship comes in. (*Crosses up to behind table L.C.*)

WADE. (*Crossing to L. of divan and smiling at ARLENE*) I'll see you later, Arlene. Will you be ready about seven? (*ARLENE nods. He crosses up to arch*) 'Bye, Haywood. I hope one of your schemes makes good some day. The law of average ought to

give you at least *one* success. (*Chuckles and exits c. to r.*)

HOMER. (*Frowning*) Can you imagine that fellow talking that way to *me*? Doesn't he know the position I occupy in this town?

ARLENE. (*Rising*) I'm sure Wade didn't mean anything, Homer. He's a good friend of ours, really he is.

HOMER. (*Crossing to r. of her*) I don't like the way he hangs around you, Arlene. Anybody can see that he's crazy about you.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Outside l. of arch; loudly*) Arlene, do you know where I put those passport pictures?

ARLENE. (*To HOMER*) Excuse me a minute, Homer. (*He takes over l. a few steps. ARLENE crosses up to arch and calls off l.*) No, I don't, Mother. What do you want them for? You're not going to Europe.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Off; loudly*) One never knows and I always like to be prepared. Come up here and help me find them.

ARLENE. (*To HOMER*) I'll be back in a minute, Homer. Don't go away. I want to talk to you. (*Exits c. to l. ZENITH enters l.i.*)

HOMER. (*Muttering to himself*) Passport pictures. She's as nutty as a good peanut bar.

ZENITH. (*Crossing to l. of him and peering up at him*) Who? You mean Missus Woodruff?

HOMER. (*Iratelly*) That's exactly who I mean. If that woman doesn't lose her mind completely my name isn't Homer Hampton Haywood. (*CORA enters l.2, unobserved by the OTHERS. She is about to come down when ZENITH'S voice stops her. She pauses and listens intently.*)

ZENITH. (*Fearfully*) If Missus Woodruff is really cuckoo I'd oughta get away from here. She might kill me in cold blood any minute.

HOMER. (*Shrugging his shoulders nonchalantly*) Oh, there'd always be somebody around to save you, Zenith.

ZENITH. (*Trembling fearfully*) Then it's a fact that I'm in danger, ain't it?

HOMER. (*Reluctantly*) Well, between Mr. and Mrs. Woodruff, this wouldn't be my idea of a very safe place to work. (*CORA registers great anger.*)

ZENITH. (*Frightened*) Is he some buttons loose, too? (*Before HOMER can reply*) If I only had another job to go to I'd walk outa here today.

HOMER. (*Importantly*) Well, I'd never worry about a job, Zenith.

ZENITH. (*Blankly*) Huh? Wouldn't you?

HOMER. (*Firmly*) I should say not. I never saw the time that I couldn't get a job. That's why I've built up such an important position in this community. People consult my opinion about everythng.

ZENITH. (*Greatly awed*) Gosh, Mister Haywood, mebbe you could git me a job.

HOMER. (*Enthusiastically*) Of course I could. But I'd hardly like to do that while you are employed here. Of course if Miss Arlene and I were married I'd give you immediate employment among our servants.

ZENITH. (*Terribly impressed*) Servants? Are you goin' to have more than one?

HOMER. (*Importantly*) One servant to run the sort of mansion we're going to have? Don't be silly, Zenith. We'll need one girl just to polish our silver.

ZENITH. (*Anxiously*) When are you an' Miss Arlene goin' to be hitched?

HOMER. (*Importantly*) Oh, any week now. I'm just waiting to settle a few business details and then I'll take time off to get married. I've bought the engagement ring today.

ZENITH. (*Anxiously*) Then if I leave here an' rest up for a week or two, will you hire me for sure?

HOMER. (*Nodding assent*) Yes, indeed. It will be nice for Mrs. Haywood to find a familiar face among the servants when we return from our honeymoon abroad.

ZENITH. (*Her mind made up*) I'll do it. Will you pay me what I get here?

HOMER. (*With a toss of his hand; magnanimously*) Don't give it another thought, my girl. I'll give you twice what you're getting here.

ZENITH. (*Thoughtfully*) Well, so far they ain't paid me nothin'—what'd twice that be?

HOMER. (*Boastfully*) I'll see that you are well taken care of, Zenith. You'll never have to worry about money.

ZENITH. (*Fearfully*) I don't worry 'bout money as much as I do' bout gettin' killed by one o' them nuts. (*CORA shakes a fist at HOMER and exits L.2.*) I'm goin' to leave here today. (*Crosses to door L.1.*)

HOMER. (*Importantly*) Of course I don't want to be the means of your leaving. I think it would be safe for you to stay until our home is bought and completed, you understand.

ZENITH. (*Shaking her head "no"*) I don't. You wouldn't think so neither if you'd seen the way Missus Woodruff looked at me just 'cause I broke a set o' dishes. I'm goin' to git outa here while the gittin's good! (*Exits L.1. ARLENE enters c. from L.*)

HOMER. (*Turning and seeing ARLENE*) Did you find the passport pictures?

ARLENE. (*Coming down to R. of him*) Yes. Mother had mislaid them.

HOMER. (*Smiling at her*) We'll have to sit for some soon, Arlene.

ARLENE. (*Bewildered*) Will we? What for?

HOMER. (*Boastfully*) We'll need them before we leave for our honeymoon. Little girl, I hope you realize what being Mrs. Homer Hampton Haywood

means? You're going places and will be seeing things when you're married to me.

ARLENE. (*Protesting*) But Homer, that won't be for such a long time. And in the meantime I have an opportunity to help you and make some extra money.

HOMER. (*Incredulously*) You? But what could you do, Arlene?

ARLENE. (*Proudly*) Wade is taking me to dinner this evening to meet his father. Mr. Wainright, Senior, will give me a position assisting Wade, if he likes me. (*She beams up at him.*)

HOMER. (*Horried*) My little woman soiling her tiny hands with toil? I wouldn't even hear of it. Do you want to make me the laughing stock of this town?

ARLENE. I couldn't.

HOMER. (*Astonished*) What?

ARLENE. (*Hastily*) I mean, of course I don't. But think how nice it would be to be saving money every week toward furnishing our home.

HOMER. (*In the grand manner*) I'll take care of all that, Arlene. I've never failed you yet, have I?

ARLENE. (*Nervously*) No, but—

HOMER. (*Breaking in quickly*) We'll say no more about it. It's all settled. And you're not to see Wade Wainright ever again. When he arrives here this evening I'll meet him and tell him what I think of him.

ARLENE. (*Greatly upset*) Oh, Homer, I—

HOMER. (*Breaking in with a gesture of finality*) That's enough, Arlene. You know how I loathe arguments. Life is too short. I believe in merriment and happiness at all times. (*Reaching into his coat pocket and bringing forth a small white box, the sort a ring comes in*) And with that in mind I bought your engagement ring today. (*Holds it up for her.*)

ARLENE. (*Clapping her hands together joyously*) Oh, Homer, where did you get the money?

HOMER. (*Importantly*) Never mind that. It will be paid back with the first week's profits of my noiseless motor invention.

ARLENE. (*Astonished*) Your what? I thought it was to be tubes for shaving cream?

HOMER. (*Hastily*) Oh, yes, that's so. You see how it is with me, Arlene. I've so many wonderful ideas that there are times when I sort of get them mixed in my mind. (*Taking her arm and leading her to French windows*) Come on outside. I want to place this ring on your finger on the very spot where I first proposed to you. Remember how thrilled you were at the thought of marrying Homer Hampton Haywood, the greatest genius of all time? No wonder all the girls envy you! (*Chuckles as they exit.*)  
MRS. WOODRUFF enters c. from L., blowing on her harmonica. CORA enters L.2.)

CORA. (*As she enters and sees MRS. WOODRUFF*) Stop that noise and listen to me, Minna. Not that I expect you to pay any attention to me. Nobody ever does. (*MRS. WOODRUFF comes down c. CORA crosses to L. of her.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Lowering the harmonica and facing CORA; wearily*) What is it now, Cora?

CORA. (*Stiffly*) You're about to lose your maid, that's what. She's leaving here today.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Gayly*) Is she? I'm glad of that. No more broken dishes. You can do the work until I get another maid and I'll help on the days that there aren't any funerals.

CORA. I wouldn't mind doing the work, Minna. I'm used to that. People are always imposing on me. It's the reason Zenith is leaving that has me all stirred up.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Blankly*) Isn't she leaving be-

cause she broke the dishes? (*Crosses R. to divan and sits, placing the harmonica up to her lips.*)

CORA. (*Taking over to L. of divan*) If you blow another note on that thing I'll scream. (*MRS. WOODRUFF lowers the harmonica and looks at CORA blankly*) Now you listen to me. Zenith is leaving here because she's afraid to stay in this house with insane people.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Astonished*) You mean she's found out about you?

CORA. (*As though exploding a bombshell*) I mean that that brainless fool of a Homer Haywood told Zenith that it isn't safe for her to stay in this house because of you and Chester.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Rising; bewildered*) You mean he actually included me?

CORA. (*Iratly*) And not only that, he told Zenith that he would give her a position in his house among his servants at twice what she's getting here.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Vacantly*) But he hasn't got a house. He lives in a furnished room. (*Shrugging her shoulders*) Oh, well, I suppose Father does act peculiar at times but I've sort of become used to it.

CORA. (*Angrily*) It wasn't Chester's peculiarities that Homer Haywood stressed. It was yours.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Astonished*) Mine? But I haven't any peculiarities. I'm the only normal person in this family.

CORA. (*Spitefully*) Homer doesn't seem to think so. He told Zenith that any woman who would gad around going to funerals would be apt to do anything.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Jumping up; greatly incensed*) Did he say that? He's the very first person who ever criticised me for that. And he pretended he enjoyed coming along with me. Oh, I could never forgive him for this—never.

ZENITH. (*Enters L.I., wearing a hat and dressed*

*for the street*) 'Scuse me, Missus Woodruff, but I'm leavin' an' I wish you'd gimme my money. I'm packin' my things now.

CORA. (*Triumphantly*) Now I'll prove the truth of what I just told you, Minna. (*Taking a few steps toward ZENITH*) Zenith, didn't Mr. Haywood tell you that it isn't safe to stay in this house and that anybody who'd go to funerals must be insane?

ZENITH. (*Blankly*) Yeah, he did, but I knew it without him tellin' me.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Angrily*) You finish your packin' and leave here at once. (*ZENITH backs to door L.I and exits hastily.*) Wait until I see that Homer Haywood! Just wait! I wouldn't allow Arlene to marry him even if he had good sense. (*Crosses to c. CORA stands below table L.C. ARLENE and HOMER enter through French windows, arm in arm, laughing gayly.*)

ARLENE. (*Looking up and seeing Mrs. WOODRUFF*) Oh, Mother, I've a great surprise for you.

MRS. WOODRUFF. Arlene, come away from that imitation of a man. (*HOMER registers astonishment and stands with his back to French windows.*)

ARLENE. (*Crossing to R. of Mrs. WOODRUFF*) Why, Mother, do you realize what you're saying? Look, Homer has just placed this diamond engagement ring on my finger. (*Holds up her hand and exhibits a small solitaire diamond ring on her engagement finger.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Taking ARLENE's hand and inspecting the ring closely; scornfully*) I might have known it wouldn't be genuine. It's an imitation.

HOMER. (*Blandly*) But after all, isn't that the sincerest form of flattery, Mother Woodruff?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Crossing to HOMER; angrily*) Don't you ever speak to me again, Homer Haywood, and I'll trouble you to stay away from this house in



the future. Arlene shall never marry you with my consent and that goes for Mr. Woodruff, too.

ARLENE. (*She stands c., bewildered*) But, Mother, what's this all about? You've always liked Homer.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Turning and facing ARLENE, angrily*) How was I to know that I was nursing a viper who hasn't had his fangs removed. He told Zenith that anybody who went to funerals was insane. Can you imagine that?

HOMER. (*Apologetically*) She misunderstood me, Mother Woodruff. I only said that—

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Breaking in angrily*) You've said too much already. This is my house and I don't want you in it. Don't slam the door too hard when you depart. (*Crosses up.*)

JUNIOR. (*Outside R. of arch; loudly and angrily*) Where is he? Where is that windbag of a Homer Haywood? (*Mrs. WOODRUFF pauses below R. end of arch. HOMER crosses to L. of divan. ARLENE stands R. of table L.C., CORA below table. HOMER and ARLENE exchange puzzled glances at the sound of JUNIOR'S voice.*)

CORA. (*Tartly*) Looks like Junior is on the war-path, too.

JUNIOR. (*As he dashes on c. from R.; angrily*) Is that no 'count Homer here? (*Looks around the room, sees HOMER and rushes down to L. of HOMER threateningly*) You've butted into my affairs for the last time, Mr. wise-guy. I've got a score to settle with you. Come on outside. (*Places a hand on HOMER'S arm*)

HOMER. (*Blandly*) I've just been outside. Furthermore, I've no desire for your company just now. I've more important affairs to attend to.

JUNIOR. (*Ragefully*) You'll come outside or I'll fix your jaw so that you'll never be able to use it again.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Rushing down to L. of divan;*

*hastily*) Junior, no violence! Remember, Mother has taught you always to be dignified.

JUNIOR. (*To HOMER; threateningly*) It wouldn't be violence to muss this guy up—it'd be a pleasure.

ARLENE. (*Anxiously*) Junior, what's happened to you? Tell Sister.

JUNIOR. (*Releasing his hold on HOMER and facing ARLENE*) I had Mrs. Taylor all sold on the idea that Bunny was sick an' needed lots o' air an' comp'ny. Bunny an' me was all set to go out together an' your boy friend met Mrs. Taylor on the street an' spilled the works. (*Turns and glares at HOMER.*)

HOMER. (*Innocently*) Why, I didn't anything of the sort. I merely mentioned to Mrs. Taylor that I had seen you and Bunny coming out of the drug store together this afternoon and that I had met you together last night. (*Laughs lightly.*)

ARLENE. (*Greatly upset*) Oh, Homer, you didn't!

HOMER. (*Bewildered*) Didn't see them? Oh, but I give you my word, I did, Arlene. And I saw no reason for not mentioning it.

JUNIOR. (*Angrily*) The reason for not sayin' anythin' to Mrs. Taylor 'bout seein' me an' Bunny was that she had forbidden Bunny to play with me. I had her all talked out o' that an' you spoiled everythin' with your gift o' gab.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Iratly*) I think people who interfere in other folks' affairs are worse than people who go to funerals. (*Commanding*) Arlene, I'll let you get rid of Mr. Haywood in your own way. Come along, Junior. We'll see Mrs. Taylor tomorrow and make her listen to reason.

JUNIOR. (*As he crosses R. to MRS. WOODRUFF*) But, Mom, what 'bout the strawberry festival to-night?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Coaxing*) You come out here with Mother. We'll look at the bees. They're always

such a comfort. (*Places an arm around JUNIOR and they exit French windows.*)

HOMER. (*To ARLENE*) Can you imagine Junior getting upset over a little thing like that, Arlene?

ARLENE. (*Quietly*) It wasn't a little thing, Homer.

CORA. (*To ARLENE; triumphantly*) I'm glad you still have that Wainright boy, Arlene. He's the one you ought to marry if you ask me. But of course you didn't. Nobody ever does. (*Sighs dismally and exits L.I.*)

HOMER. (*Casually*) I'll have to apologize to your Mother, girl friend. I'm not accustomed to making apologies but I'll do it for your sake. (*He crosses to R. of ARLENE.*)

WADE. (*Outside R. of arch; excitedly*) Arlene, are you at home? (*Enters c. from R.*) I'm sorry to intrude this way, but the front door was open and I'm in a hurry. (*Comes down to R. of HOMER*) I'm looking for you, Haywood. I want to see you outside.

HOMER. (*In his usual happy manner*) Everybody seems to want me to imbibe the atmosphere today. Such popularity must be deserved.

WADE. (*Doubling his fists; angrily*) You won't be able to enjoy your popularity when I've finished with you.

HOMER. (*Stoutly*) Anything you have to say to me may be said before Miss Woodruff.

ARLENE. (*Anxiously*) What is it, Wade? What has Homer done now?

WADE. (*Crossing to R. of ARLENE*) Plenty! (*HOMER humors the cross with WADE and takes R. a few steps.*) Just when I had everything all set with my father he has to throw the monkey wrench into everything.

ARLENE. (*Bewildered*) Homer said something that upset your father?

WADE. (*Glowering at HOMER*) Upset is hardly the

word. I've never seen my father so angry. It's going to make it terribly difficult for me to remain with him now.

ARLENE. (*Astonished*) What?

HOMER. (*Blandly*) Why, how could that be? I merely remarked to Mr. Wainright that—

WADE. (*Breaking in ragefully*) You merely remarked that I was wasting my time and his hanging around Arlene and that as a result of my loafing you feared the new shops would be neglected because I wouldn't devote enough time and care to them.

HOMER. (*Nonchalantly*) That's right—that's all I said.

ARLENE. (*Dismayed*) Oh, Homer, you didn't tell Mr. Wainright that, did you?

HOMER. (*Nodding vigorously*) I most certainly did. And what's more, I meant every word of it. I have a right to express my opinions, haven't I?

(*WARN Curtain.*)

WADE. (*Sarcastically*) As if anybody could ever prevent you from talking! That's all you have ever done since you were born—and you usually do it at the wrong time.

HOMER. (*Angrily*) Well, I'm telling you the same thing I told your father. Arlene doesn't want you here and I've forbidden my girl to have anything more to do with you. I won't have it.

ARLENE. (*Crossing to L. of HOMER; WADE humors the cross with her and takes over L. a few steps; ARLENE faces HOMER defiantly*) Oh, so you won't have it, eh? I'm tired of hearing what you'll have and what you won't—tired of hearing you tell everybody what a great genius you are, tired of seeing people turn their heads to prevent laughing in your face!

HOMER. (*Soothingly*) Now, Arlene, you don't realize what you are saying. I know that you're upset so I'll forgive you this time.

ARLENE. (*Tearfully*) You'll forgive me, will you? Well, I'll never forgive you. Here's your imitation ring. Take it and don't ever come back here again. (*Removes the ring from her finger during this speech*) I never want to see you again as long as I live. (*Hurls the ring at him, sobs loudly and runs up and exits C. to L. HOMER bends down and picks up the ring. MRS. WOODRUFF rushes on through French windows and makes a bee line for the C. arch where she calls off L. loudly.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Excitedly*) Father, oh, Father! Where are you?

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Outside L. of arch; loudly*) What is it, Mother?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Impatiently*) Come quick. I wouldn't have you miss it for anything.

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Off stage; eagerly*) Miss what, Mother?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Joyfully, a broad smile on her face*) It's a fire—quite the most gorgeous one you've ever seen.

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Off stage; eagerly*) A fire? Where is it?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Shouting the words gleefully*) Right here. Our garage is burning down! (*Laughs delightedly as she wheels and rushes out to French windows. HOMER wheels and rushes R. and exits through French windows with WADE following him. A loud EXPLOSION is heard off stage R. as the Curtain falls swiftly.*)

END OF ACT TWO

## ACT THREE

SCENE: *Same as previous Acts.*

TIME: *Noon; two weeks later.*

*All characters dressed as in previous Act unless otherwise stated. LIGHTS on stage full up.*

DISCOVERED AT RISE: CORA sits on divan R.C., a handkerchief to her eyes. She is sobbing loudly. The instant the Curtain rises MRS. WOODRUFF enters C. from L. She is attired in a suit of man's clothing, a soft white shirt with collar attached and a vivid necktie. The effect is extremely comic.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Coming down to L. of divan; anxiously*) What's the matter, Cora? What are you crying about?

CORA. (*Removing the handkerchief from her eyes; tearfully*) It's Fayette!

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Bewildered*) Fayette? What's the matter with her? (*Turning and looking at crate on bench up R.*) She appears to be all right.

CORA. (*Tearfully*) But she's not. Chester discovered it. Oh, it's dreadful!

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*In puzzled tones*) Is it? What's the matter with her?

CORA. (*Sobbing*) That's it. She's not a she. She's a he!

MRS. WOODRUFF. *What!*

CORA. (*Between sobs*) Chester got to wondering why Fayette never laid any eggs. Now we know why. She isn't that kind of a chicken. (*Sobs loudly, raising her handkerchief to her eyes.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Appalled*) You mean that—

CORA. (*Breaking in without lowering her handkerchief; loudly and tearfully*) I mean she's not a hen—he's a rooster!

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Amazed*) But are you sure?

CORA. (*The handkerchief to her eyes; sobbing*) Chester is positive.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Blankly*) Is he? I never knew that Chester was an authority on chickens. I'll have to speak to him about this.

CORA. (*Lowering her handkerchief*) It's changed my entire feeling toward Fayette. As far as I'm concerned you can do anything you please with him.

MRS. WOODRUFF. But I don't want to do anything with her—I mean him. When you first parked your pet in this room I sort of resented it—but now I've become accustomed to it. As a matter of fact I enjoy seeing Fayette in this room. It sort of makes the house seem more folksy.

CORA. (*Drying her eyes*) I wouldn't mind if you killed Fayette and served him for dinner.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Iratelty*) Really, Cora, I never heard of such a thing. It sounds positively inhuman. Just like eating a member of one's own family. (*Shudders*) It makes me feel like a canine—aren't they the ones who eat human flesh?

CORA. (*Shaking her head "no"*) No, they're heathens.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Irrelevantly*) Well, that's what I meant. (*Turning around and exhibiting her costume*) How do you like me in this get-up? Cute, isn't it?

CORA. (*Looking at her, bewildered*) Mercy days, what *are* you wearing. Chester's suit for?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Facing her; proudly*) It's my costume for the pageant that's being given for the benefit of the Tombstone Association. I'm having a mask made to fit over my face.

CORA. (*Bewildered*) A mask?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Nodding assent*) Yes, I'm going as Mickey Mouse! (*Crosses L. to desk and sits*) Isn't it a lovely idea? (*Rising quickly*) Oh, I mustn't forget to call Hilda Vandrift. She told Boots she knew of an excellent maid. (*Crosses up L. to telephone, picks up same and removes receiver*) Hello, Central, I want Main 0-0-0-0—What's that? There isn't any such number?—Are you sure?—Well, you could be mistaken, you know.—I'll call back later. (*Hangs up receiver and replaces telephone on stand.*)

CORA. (*Dismally*) I thought that number didn't sound right. But then, nobody ever pays any attention to me. I don't expect them to.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Crossing to desk and sitting*) I'll ask Boots for the number when she comes in. (*Sighing forlornly*) Oh, dear, I do wish we'd have a few funerals. There hasn't been one all week. (*Picks up a pencil and starts to write feverishly. DOORBELL rings.*) Will you see who it is, Cora? I'm terribly busy just now.

CORA. (*Rising; curiously*) Busy? What are you doing, Minna?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Writing feverishly*) I'm designing my Christmas cards.

CORA. (*Astonished*) Designing Christmas cards in the summer?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Turning and facing her*) And why not? Columbus didn't wait until America was full grown and populated before he discovered it,



did he? I believe in preparedness. Remember, Cora, it's the early bird who catches the worm.

CORA. (*In puzzled tones*) Is it? I've always wondered what anybody would want with a worm after they caught it. (*Crosses up and exits c. to R.* MRS. WOODRUFF returns to her writing.)

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Off stage up R.; loudly*) Is Minna at home?

CORA. (*Off stage up R.*) Yes, she's inside. Come right in, Mrs. Taylor. (*Enters c. from R., followed by MRS. TAYLOR, who wears another of her outlandish outfits for comedy effect.*)

MRS. TAYLOR. (*As she enters; excitedly*) Oh, Minna, I just had to run over. There's something I'm just dying to tell you. (*Crosses down to R. of MRS. WOODRUFF. CORA crosses down and resumes her seat on divan.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Continuing her writing*) Is there? What rhymes with Santa Claus?

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Astonished*) What?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Continuing to write*) Don't you hear well, Maggie?

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Stiffly*) Margaret, if you please.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Placing her pencil on the desk and holding up the sheet of paper and reading from it*)

Christmas comes but once a year,  
Bringing with it endless cheer.

If you'd like a visit from Santa Claus—  
(*Pauses and wrinkles her forehead*) That's as far as I've gotten. How do you like it?

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Bewildered*) What's it for?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Rising and facing her impatiently*) How can anybody be so obtuse? You don't think it's an Easter greeting, do you?

MRS. TAYLOR. (*In puzzled tones*) I don't know, I'm sure. I came over to tell you—

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Breaking in triumphantly*) Wait

a minute! I've got it! (*She resumes her seat at desk, picks up her pencil and writes vigorously, reading aloud as she writes*)

If you'd like a visit from Santa Claus,  
Make a wish each time you pass a horse!

(*Faces MRS. TAYLOR proudly*) Isn't that artistic?

CORA. (*Timidly*) I'd like to make a suggestion. I don't expect anybody to pay any attention to me. Nobody ever does. But I just thought that Mrs. Taylor might know Hilda's 'phone number. (*MRS. TAYLOR crosses to c.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Crossing to L. of MRS. TAYLOR*) Do you know Hilda Vandrift's 'phone number, Mag—er—Margaret?

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Facing MRS. WOODRUFF*) Why, didn't you know? She left town yesterday. She's terribly sick.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Amazed*) Sick? What's the matter with her?

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Sympathetically*) She went away for a nervous breakdown.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Blankly*) Really? Well, I hope she succeeds in getting it. (*Sits behind table L. of c.*) Oh, dear, I do wish I could find a good maid. All the girls are on relief and they simply love it!

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Sitting R. of table L.C.*) No doubt Homer Haywood could find a maid for you. He could find anything, to hear him tell it.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Iratly*) Don't mention that man's name to me. It's just like waving a red flag in front of a cow.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Astonished*) But that's exactly what I came over to see you about. I thought you and Homer were good friends again.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Withering*) He has only one friend in this world and that's himself. What ever gave you that impression?

MRS. TAYLOR. (*As though exploding a bomb*)

Why, I saw Mr. Woodruff and Homer walking down the street together yesterday, arm in arm.

CORA. (*Astonished*) What? Chester was with that Homer?

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Nodding vigorously*) I was right behind them. They were talking together at a great rate.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Eagerly*) What were they saying?

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Dismally*) I don't know. They were talking in such low tones I couldn't get a word of it.

CORA. (*Knowingly*) They must have seen you following them. (*To MRS. WOODRUFF*) Of course I hate to give advice, Minna, but if I were you I'd certainly have this out with Chester. The idea of his having anything to do with that Homer after the way he treated Arlene!

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Resignedly*) I'm not at all surprised. Chester always was peculiar. I always say that after some people see the handwriting on the wall they can't even read it.

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Enters through French windows; cordially*) What's going on here—a hen party?

CORA. (*Placing her handkerchief to her eyes; sobbingly*) Don't mention hens to me, Chester. It reminds me of my great disappointment in Fayette. (*MR. WOODRUFF smiles and crosses to c.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Rising and facing MR. WOODRUFF; irately*) Father, what's this I hear about you and Homer Haywood?

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Soothingly*) Now, Mother—

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Breaking in angrily*) Then it's true! You have been speaking to him. (*Takes over to L. of him.*)

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Placatingly*) Homer's all right when you understand him.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Angrily*) I understand him all right. I never heard a man boast so about himself in all my life.

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Smiling*) Somebody accused Homer of that the other day and he replied that as we progress we have to branch out. (*He chuckles.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Angrily*) I won't have you associating with that man.

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Placatingly*) Now, Mother, you must admit that Homer was a great help the day our garage caught on fire.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Withering*) Yes, he had a grand time bossing the firemen and telling them what to do.

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Enthusiastically*) Anyhow it was a wonderful fire while it lasted. I never expected them to save the garage, but they did. (*Forlornly*) There hasn't been a real pretty fire in town since that day.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Suspiciously*) What were you talking to Homer about?

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Evasively*) Oh—just talking. You really ought to be more tolerant of him, Mother. Since Arlene broke her engagement with him he's been in sort of a run-down condition.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Rising; withering*) What else can you expect of a heel?

CORA. (*With the air of a martyr*) Of course I never interfere with your affairs, Chester, and I'd be the last person in the world to criticise my brother, but I do think it's strange of you to defend this Homer after Arlene has broken off her engagement to him.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Iratelily*) He caused me plenty of grief, too. I never would have believed what Junior told me if Doctor Weatherby hadn't assured me it was true.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Crossing to desk L. and sitting*) Yes, that was nice of the Doctor, wasn't it?

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Astonished*) What?

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Hastily*) Minna means it was nice of him to take such an interest in Bunny.

MRS. TAYLOR. (*Enthusiastically*) Oh, yes. She's like a different girl lately and she and Junior do have such good times together. (MR. WOODRUFF *takes over R. to behind divan.*) Well, I must be going. (*Crosses up to arch*) Remember me to Arlene and tell her I hope her engagement to that nice Wainright boy makes her very happy. She certainly was wise to get rid of that Homer Haywood. (*Exits c. to R.* MRS. WOODRUFF *sits at desk L., writing.* CORA *sits on divan.* MR. WOODRUFF *crosses to behind table L.C. and sits.* JUNIOR *enters quickly through French windows.*)

JUNIOR. (*As he enters and dashes to c.*) Hya, everybody? How's your thyroid, Aunt Cora?

CORA. (*Drawing herself up; indignantly*) Sir!

JUNIOR. (*Grinning broadly*) Don't "Sir" me; makes me feel too ancient.

MR. WOODRUFF. (*To JUNIOR*) Mrs. Taylor just left, Son.

JUNIOR. (*Enthusiastically*) That's good! (*Taking a step L.; anxiously*) Doc hasn't put her wise, has he, Pop?

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Shaking his head "no"*) No, and you needn't worry about that. Doc never goes back on his word.

CORA. (*Astonished*) You—you mean that Bunny wasn't sick at all?

JUNIOR. (*Grinning*) 'Course not. I went to Doc an' explained things to him an' he helped me out.

CORA. (*Accusingly*) Well, of course it's none of my affair and I don't want to offer my opinion, but I think it's terrible of you to make Mrs. Taylor pay the doctor when Bunny wasn't sick.

JUNIOR. (*Grinning broadly*) Anybody who could get Mrs. Taylor to pay a doctor bill would have to be better than Doc Weatherby.

(BOOTS enters c. from R., dressed as in Act One. She is holding an open letter in her hand and reading same.)

BOOTS. (*As she enters she looks up from her letter*) 'Lo, everybody. (*Comes down to R. of JUNIOR, pauses and continues to read her letter.*)

JUNIOR. (*He tries to look over her shoulder at her letter but she is too quick for him and lowers it so he can't see; agog with curiosity*) Who's your letter from, Boots?

BOOTS. (*Taunting*) Wouldn't you love to know?

JUNIOR. (*Jeering*) I'll bet you wrote it to yourself 'cause who'd write to you?

BOOTS. (*Haughtily; with her most grown-up air*) As if I'd give a thought to one o' your opinions, Mr. Smarty.

JUNIOR. (*Coaxing*) Aw, come on, Boots. Don't be like that. What's in the letter?

BOOTS. (*Impatiently*) What d'you want to know for?

JUNIOR. (*Indignantly*) Can you beat that? What do I want to know for? You're the nosiest person I've ever met! (BOOTS tosses her head indignantly, crosses to L.I and exits. ARLENE enters c. from L., dressed as in Act One. JUNIOR crosses to bench down R. and sits. ARLENE comes down c.)

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Smiling at ARLENE*) Feeling better, Arlene?

ARLENE. (*Standing R. of him and placing an arm around his shoulder*) Yes, my headache has almost entirely disappeared, Daddy.

JUNIOR. (*Wisely*) Your headache disappeared the

day you gave Homer Hampton Haywood the air. I hear he's got a new job.

CORA. (*Astonished*) Only one?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Pauses at her writing, holding her pencil up in front of her*) Oh, dear, I can't think of anything to go with lillies. (*Looks around her forlornly.*)

ARLENE. (*Crossing and standing near desk*) What are you writing, Mother?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Smiling at her*) I'm just trying to write a nice verse for my Easter cards.

CORA. (*Astonished*) Easter? I thought you were doing your Christmas cards, Minna?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Gayly*) Oh, I finished that and I thought I might as well do my cards for the rest of the year while I'm about it. (*DOORBELL rings.*)

JUNIOR. (*Jumping up quickly*) I'll take it! (*Dashes up and exits c. to r.*)

ARLENE. (*Crossing down to chair L. of table L.c.*) Perhaps it's Wade. He said he might drop over.

CORA. (*Agog with curiosity*) Have you set the date for your wedding yet, Arlene? Not that it's any of my affair. I'm sure I'll be the last one to be told about it. Nobody ever pays any attention to me.

ARLENE. (*Smiling*) We're waiting for Wade's father to get here before we make any definite plans, Aunt Cora. Since I didn't get to meet him on his last visit Wade and I decided to wait for his next trip before setting a date.

MR. WOODRUFF. (*To ARLENE*) Well, I'm glad you're going to live right here in town. We'd never be able to part with you, would we, Mother?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*As though suddenly inspired*) I have it! (*She starts writing again.*)

MR. WOODRUFF. (*In puzzled tones*) What have you got, Mother?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*As she writes; exuberantly*)

The word to go with lillies. It's funerals. Of course, it doesn't rhyme very well, but the two go together so well.

CORA. (*Agog with curiosity*) I wonder who rang the bell? Not that it's of any importance to me. I realize that I'm just a visitor here. I'd leave today if I weren't so broken up over Fayette. (*Places her handkerchief to her eyes.*)

JUNIOR. (*Dashes on c. from R. and pauses below L. of arch; excitedly*) Oh, boy, is this goin' to be good? You'll never guess in a million years who's here.

(*HOMER enters c. from R. He is faultlessly attired in sports clothes, carries a large bouquet of flowers and is his usual breezy self, well-poised and self-assured.*)

HOMER. (*Standing c. of arch, a broad smile on his face*) Well, it certainly is nice to see the various members of the Woodruff family again. (*MRS. WOODRUFF and ARLENE rise quickly. HOMER addresses JUNIOR*) And how is the world treating you these days, Junior?

JUNIOR. (*Disgusted*) Not very often!

HOMER. (*Crossing down to R. of MRS. WOODRUFF*) These flowers reminded me so forcibly of you, Mother Woodruff, that I just had to bring them to you. (*She takes bouquet of flowers, too stunned to speak. HOMER crosses to c. and stands just R. of table L.C., smiling warmly at ARLENE*) It's fine seeing you again, Arlene.

ARLENE. (*Frigidly*) Really?

HOMER. (*With a wave of his hand; magnanimously*) Now you needn't start apologizing for losing your temper the night of the fire. I've forgiven you long ago.



ARLENE. (*Coldly*) That's sweet of you, I must say.

HOMER. (*Smiling broadly*) Well, I'm like that, you know. Never did believe in holding grudges. What's the use? Life's too short, don't you agree with me, Father Woodruff?

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Nervously*) Why—er—yes, of course.

HOMER. (*Breezily*) I told Harry Denham the same thing when his marriage went on the rocks a short time ago. I'd always said that he'd married on the cafeteria plan.

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Bewildered*) I never heard a marriage referred to that way before, Homer.

HOMER. (*Brightly*) Well, Harry's marriage always made me think of a cafeteria because he picked out something nice and had to pay for it later. (*Chuckles heartily*) Isn't that clever? Things like that just come natural with me.

JUNIOR. (*Crossing down to R. of HOMER; agog with curiosity*) I suppose you had a job this mornin', Homer, or are you on your way to a new one this afternoon?

HOMER. (*Importantly*) No, I'm in business for myself now. I decided I'd be the best boss I could ever work for.

JUNIOR. (*Grinning broadly*) Yeah, you won't be able to fire yourself.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*To HOMER; suspiciously*) And what are you doing now, if I might ask?

HOMER. (*Facing her; blandly*) Well, you see, Mother Woodruff, I was working on a plan that dropped out of a clear sky. It suddenly occurred to me that we ought to build more cities.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Blankly*) What?

HOMER. (*Enthusiastically*) Yes. And the thought also occurred to me that we should arrange our cities to suit the highways. Just picture how wonder-

ful it would be if you didn't have to drive to get from one city to another.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Vacantly*) You think of it. I've got to put these flowers in water. (*Crosses and exits L.I.*)

CORA. (*Rising*) I think I'll go upstairs. (*JUNIOR crosses R. to behind divan. CORA starts up and pauses R. of HOMER, fixing him with an irate look*) Young man, there's just one question I'd like to ask you. I've been wanting to ask it since the first day I met you here.

HOMER. (*Beaming at her*) Why, of course, Aunt Cora. Just ask me anything you want to. I'm always glad to answer questions.

CORA. (*Sternly*) Then answer this one, if you can. If you had your life to live over would you fall in love with yourself again? (*JUNIOR doubles up with merriment. CORA sweeps up and exits c. to L. JUNIOR dashes up and exits after her.*)

HOMER. (*Smiling broadly*) Remarkable woman, Aunt Cora. So witty and bright! (*To MR. WOODRUFF*) Well, Father Woodruff, before we discuss our business I'd like to have a little chat with Arlene.

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Nervously*) Er—yes, of course. (*Crosses to door L.2*) I'll be in here whenever you're ready, Homer. (*Exits.*)

ARLENE. (*Facing HOMER; coldly*) I can't see that there's anything to be gained by thrashing this situation over again, Homer. I must ask you to excuse me. (*Crosses to door L.I.*)

HOMER. (*Rushing to R. of her*) Arlene, wait just a minute, please. (*Takes her hand and leads her back to c. stage. He is R. of her*) There are so many things I want to say to you.

ARLENE. (*Stiffly*) And all of them concern one Homer Hampton Haywood, no doubt.

HOMER. (*Pleadingly*) You used to be interested in me. Have you forgotten?

ARLENE. (*Shaking her head "no"*) Oh, no. I just marvel how I ever could listen to your remarks about yourself and not see through you. Just now when you were expounding on that ridiculous plan of—

HOMER. (*Breaking in quickly*) Oh, but I've dropped that. I'm going in for something entirely different. This time I can't fail to win out.

ARLENE. (*Crossing to chair R. of table L.C. and sitting; wearily*) That speech has a familiar ring to it. How many times have I heard it before?

HOMER. (*Taking over to R. of her*) Arlene, won't you wear my ring again and give me another chance?

ARLENE. (*Shaking her head "no"*) What you ask is impossible, Homer. Even if I weren't going to marry Wade Wainright I wouldn't ever wear your ring again.

HOMER. (*Jealously*) Wade Wainright! He's responsible for your changed attitude toward me. To think that you'd even consider a boy as dumb as he is when you can have me! It just doesn't make sense.

ARLENE. (*Rising; loyally*) Well, at least Wade will be able to support me.

HOMER. (*Grinning broadly*) His father may, but not Wade. He couldn't earn enough to keep you in hairpins. He's never earned a dollar in his life.

ARLENE. (*Angrily*) People who live in glass houses—

HOMER. (*Breaking in quickly*) And you'll never be able to live in this town if you marry Wade.

ARLENE. (*Indignantly*) And why won't I?

HOMER. (*Firmly*) Because your present boy friend doesn't like or understand your family. He thinks they're all a little mad. If you don't believe me just ask him to bring his father here to meet your folks.

ARLENE. (*Frigidly*) I wouldn't pay enough attention to anything you said and certainly I wouldn't

distrust Wade to that extent. He's very fond of my family.

HOMER. (*Angrily*) I ought to mop up the floor with him for stealing you away from me right under my eyes.

ARLENE. (*Iratelily*) Wade had nothing to do with that. *You* were responsible. I just got tired of hearing you rave about yourself and knowing deep down in my heart that you were a laughing-stock to everybody who knows you.

HOMER. (*Indignant*) Oh, is that so? Well, watch them laugh on the other side of their faces when they see the results of my salesmanship! (*Crosses to door L.2*) I always thought you were sensible but this Wainright fellow has you hypnotized to such an extent that I'm glad you're going to marry him. It will serve you both right. (*Exits quickly. DOORBELL rings.*)

ARLENE. (*Tossing her head indignantly*) Oh! (*JUNIOR dashes on from L., crosses behind arch and exits R. ARLENE sinks into chair R. of table L.C.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*As she enters L.1 and looks around, anxiously*) Where is he, Arlene? (*Crosses to R. of ARLENE.*)

ARLENE. (*Blankly*) Where is who?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Suspiciously*) Homer, of course. Is he with Father or has he gone?

ARLENE. (*Shaking her head "no" and pointing to door L.2*) They're in there.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Worried*) I don't like it. What can he want of Father?

ARLENE. (*Placatingly*) Well, he can't talk Father out of any money for his wild-cat schemes because Dad hasn't any money to give him.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Gayly*) No, he hasn't. I never thought of that. That's something to be thankful for. (*WADE enters c. from R., followed by JUNIOR. The*

*latter comes to bench down R. WADE comes to R. of MRS. WOODRUFF.)*

WADE. (*Looking at ARLENE*) Hello, Arlene! How are you, Mister Woodruff? (*Extends his hand to MRS. WOODRUFF.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*As she takes his hand; smiling gayly*) Oh, did you think I was Father, Wade? I'm not. I'm me! (*Laughs gayly.*)

WADE. (*Trying to cover up his surprise*) Oh, I'm sorry—excuse me.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Exuberantly*) Oh, I'm flattered. It's quite a compliment to be taken for a man, don't you think?

JUNIOR. (*Grinning broadly*) Mom got the habit from Boots. She swiped my slacks, so Mom took Dad's suit. (*ARLENE is visibly embarrassed.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Indignant*) It's nothing of the sort, Wade. I'm going to be Mickey Mouse at the pageant and I wanted to see how it feels.

WADE. (*Trying to cloak his astonishment*) Really?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Gayly*) You know I've decided not to play my harmonica any more. I didn't like what came out when I blew on it. I've decided to get a saxophone instead.

ARLENE. (*Dismayed*) Mother, you haven't.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Enthusiastically*) Oh, but I have. Isn't that the instrument that goes um-pah, um-pah all the time?

JUNIOR. (*Disgusted*) Naw, you mean a cornet.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Jubilantly*) Of course. I must speak to Father about it. (*Glancing at door L.2*) I do wish he'd finish with Homer and come out here.

WADE. (*Crossing to divan and sitting*) Homer Haywood here? (*Registers great surprise.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Nodding assent*) Yes. He brought me the darlingest flowers.

WADE. (*Smiling*) I heard the best joke about him that I've ever listened to.

JUNIOR. (*Eagerly*) What's he up to now, Wade?  
(*Rises and stands R. of divan.*)

WADE. (*Grinning*) Well, I suppose you know that they took the last of the trolley cars off the tracks yesterday and substituted busses?

JUNIOR. (*Nodding assent*) Sure. It was about time they took 'em Toonerville trolleys off; they was ready to fall apart anyhow.

WADE. (*Smiling broadly*) Well, Homer bought two of those trolleys today. Paid cash for them, too.

ARLENE. (*Astonishedly*) Are you positive, Wade? What on earth would anybody want with two trolley cars?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Enthusiastically*) Now I think that's just too cute for words. Of course I can't imagine what he's going to do with them but I think it's a darling idea. I wouldn't mind having one for myself. It would be lovely to drive up to a funeral in. (*Laughs gayly and crosses up where she exits c. to L.*)

JUNIOR. (*Grinning broadly*) I believe he bought the trolleys like you say, Wade, but you never could make me swallow the yarn that he paid cash for 'em. That guy ain't never had any cash an' if he did it'd be Chinese money. (*Dashes off through French windows.*)

WADE. (*Rising and crossing to R. of ARLENE*) You don't suppose Homer is trying to win you back through your father, do you, Arlene?

ARLENE. (*Shaking her head "no"*) We settled that just a few minutes ago right here in this very room, Wade. I'd rather not talk about it.

WADE. (*Jealously*) Well, I don't like his being here. I'd rather you didn't have anything to say to him.

ARLENE. (*Rising; reassuringly*) You needn't worry on that score. I'll never speak to him again.

WADE. (*Elated*) Is that a promise?

ARLENE. (*Nodding assent*) And furthermore I'm going to make Dad promise me that he won't have anything more to do with Homer. (*Taking his arm*) I'm parched. Let's have some lemonade.

WADE. (*Smiling at her*) Suits me. (*They cross down to door L.I. He holds same for her to pass, then exits after her. DOORBELL rings. MRS. WOODRUFF enters from L., crosses behind arch and exits off R. There is a short pause.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Outside up R. of arch*) Won't you hang up your hat and come in? (*She re-enters, c. from R., followed by CHETWYNDE CLUETT, a tall, imposing appearing man of fifty. His hair is white, a small white moustache decorates his upper lip, he is polished and refined. It is obvious that he is a man of wealth and position. Wears a conservative business suit, stiff white shirt and collar, dark necktie, no hat. Eyeglasses in his inside coat pocket.*)

CHETWYNDE. (*As he follows MRS. WOODRUFF on*) This is the Woodruff house, isn't it?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Coming down c. to below divan*) Yes, we live here. Have for some time. (*Indicates chair R. of table L.C.*) Won't you sit down?

CHETWYNDE. (*Coming down c. to L. of divan*) The fact is, Mister Woodruff—

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Breaking in quickly*) I'm Mrs. Woodruff. You're the second person who mistook me for Father today. (*Laughs gayly.*)

CHETWYNDE. (*Clearing his throat*) I'm terribly sorry. I don't see very well without my glasses. (*Removes glasses from inside coat pocket and adjusts same on his nose*) I'm Chetwynde Cluett.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Eagerly*) Are you? It's a gorgeous name but I don't see how you remember it. I never could. (*Taking a step toward him*) You don't know how much a good cornet would cost, do you?

CHETWYNDE. (*Backing away; bewildered*) Eh?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Garrulously*) I tried playing a

harmonica but I think it's sort of dated, don't you? I'm sure a cornet would be more proper for funerals. Do you like to attend funerals?

CHETWYNDE. (*Blankly*) Beg pardon?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Gayly*) I just love it.

CHETWYNDE. (*Anxiously*) You have quite a family, haven't you?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Enthusiastically*) Oh, yes, a really lovely family—if I do say it myself. (*Loud EXPLOSION is heard off stage just outside of French windows. CHETWYNDE jumps from surprise.*)

CHETWYNDE. (*Astonished*) What was that?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Sitting on divan; gayly*) That's part of my family. (*MR. WOODRUFF enters L.2, followed by HOMER*) Here's Father! (*MR. WOODRUFF comes down to L. of table L.C. HOMER crosses down to L. of CHETWYNDE.*)

CHETWYNDE. (*To MR. WOODRUFF*) How do you do, sir? I am Chetwynde Cluett.

HOMER. (*Before MR. WOODRUFF has a chance to reply, slapping CHETWYNDE on the back vigorously*) Not the Chetwynde Cluett?

CHETWYNDE. (*Wincing painfully*) I've never heard of another, sir.

HOMER. (*Grasping his hand and shaking it industriously*) Well, I should say not. There couldn't be another. Well, this is a great stroke of luck for you, I must say.

CHETWYNDE. (*Pulling his hand away and stroking his fingers painfully*) Eh?

HOMER. (*Importantly*) I was thinking about you the other day. Something I read in the paper. I wanted to write and give you some advice.

CHETWYNDE. (*Gaspingly*) You—you wanted to advise me, sir?

HOMER. (*Nodding vigorously*) Yes, indeed. I can be of great assistance to you, Chetwynde. (*To MR. WOODRUFF*) Father Woodruff, I propose that we



withdraw into the next room for another conference, taking Chet with us. (*Grasps CHETWYNDE'S arm in a firm grasp and leads him to door L.2. JUNIOR dashes in through French windows. DOORBELL rings.*)

CHETWYNDE. But I don't want to enter into any conference. I came here to—

HOMER. (*Breaking in gayly*) Now, Chetty, opportunity doesn't knock every day. It will behoove you to listen to my ideas before I change my mind and decide not to part with them. (*To MR. WOODRUFF*) Come along, Father Woodruff. This is indeed a gala occasion. (*JUNIOR rushes up and exits c. to r. HOMER literally pulls CHETWYNDE through door L.2.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*In her most fluttery manner*) Oh, dear, I wish I knew what this is all about.

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Vaguely*) So do I. I think I'll go in and see. (*Crosses up and exits L.2. MRS. WOODRUFF sits alone on divan. JUNIOR re-enters c. from r., followed by ZENITH, who wears the same hat she wore in previous Act.*)

JUNIOR. (*As he dashes on*) Look who's here, Mom. (*Stands below arch and L. of same. MRS. WOODRUFF rises quickly.*)

ZENITH. (*Coming down c.; fearfully*) I hope you ain't mad at me, Missus Woodruff. (*Stands c., on a line with MRS. WOODRUFF.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Astonished*) Zenith! What brings you back here?

ZENITH. (*Nervously*) Why—er—I thought meb-be you'd take me back.

JUNIOR. (*Explosively*) Good-night! (*Dashes over and exits French windows.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Amazed*) You want to come back here and work?

ZENITH. (*Nodding assent*) Yes'm. I thought that Homer Haywood was goin' to marry Miss Arlene an' gimme a job, but that'll never be.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Bewildered*) But I thought you had a place and were working?

ZENITH. (*Dismally*) I did have but I just couldn't stand it there.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Eagerly*) Why couldn't you, Zenith?

ZENITH. (*Painfully*) Why, you see, Missus Woodruff, the Master collected bugs an' he'd bring 'em to the table with him.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Appalled*) Bugs at the table? I never heard of such a thing. I should think they'd get in the food.

ZENITH. (*Blankly*) Oh, he kept 'em in bottles. I could stand that, but when he spoke o' bringin' a monkey into the house for a pet it made me sick.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Indignant*) I should think it would!

ZENITH. (*Groaning*) An' the Missus used to put out all the lights an' beg the spirits o' dead folks to visit with her. They all called her medium, but I think she was half baked.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Rising; appalled*) Why, that entire family must have been mad.

ZENITH. (*Nodding assent*) Yes'm. I wished I could find one what isn't.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Crossing to R. of her and smiling at her encouragingly*) You did quite right to return here where everything is so peaceful and serene, Zenith. (*WADE and ARLENE enter L.I.*)

ARLENE. (*As she sees ZENITH, surprised*) Zenith! Don't tell me you're going to work here again? (*ARLENE and WADE drop down to below door L.I.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Gayly*) Yes, she is. I thought she'd be back. The family she was working for were quite insane. Come along, Zenith. (*Exits L.I with ZENITH.*)

ARLENE. (*Crossing to divan and sitting*) I hope

Zenith doesn't break any dishes for at least a few days.

WADE. (*Following and sitting L. of her*) I do wish Dad would get here so that we could plan our wedding. (*Smiles at ARLENE.*)

ARLENE. (*Lightly*) I'm not going to take any chances of missing him this time. You must bring him here the very day of his arrival. Mother will have a nice meal for him.

WADE. (*Evasively*) Arlene, won't it be wonderful to have a home of our own away from here?

ARLENE. (*In puzzled tones*) Away from here? What do you mean by that, Wade?

WADE. (*Nervously*) Why—er—don't you think we'd have a better time if we were away from all this?

ARLENE. (*Appalled*) You mean go some place else to live?

WADE. (*Firmly*) Yes, that's just what I mean. I'm sure it would be better for all concerned.

ARLENE. (*Astonished*) I never knew you felt this way, Wade. I wouldn't dream of leaving the family.

WADE. (*Smiling at her warmly*) You'll do it for my sake, won't you? (*Reaches over and tries to take her hand.*)

ARLENE. (*Pulling her hand away beyond reach and jumping up quickly*) It's just as Homer said it would be. He was right after all.

WADE. (*Rising and facing her irately*) Homer again, eh? What has he to do with where we live?

CORA. (*As she enters c. from L.*) Oh, Minna, I— (*Comes down c.*) Where's your mother, Arlene?

ARLENE. (*Crossing to R. of CORA*) She's in the kitchen with Zenith. Our old hired girl is back. (*WADE crosses down extreme R. and sits on bench.*)

CORA. (*Folding her hands in front of her with the air of a martyr*) If I were in your mother's place I wouldn't have that girl in this house. It's bad policy

to hire a servant after they've once left. If Minna had consulted me I'd have told her so. But then, nobody ever comes to me for advice; that's the reason I never offer any. (ARLENE restrains a desire to laugh, crosses to divan and sits on L. end of same. BOOTS enters L.I. She carries the letter used earlier in this Act in her hand. MRS. WOODRUFF follows her on.)

BOOTS. (*As they enter*) But I tell you I'll just hafta have a new dress, Mom. (*Crosses up to L. of CORA*) Our play was such a big success they're goin' to give it again an' I'm goin' to play my old part. (MRS. WOODRUFF stands near door L.I.)

CORA. (*Appalled*) Don't tell me you're going to start that carrying on all over again? Mercy days!

BOOTS. (*Proudly*) Yeah, I'm goin' to go over my lines right now so's I won't forget 'em. Everybody said I was so great in that part that I'll always haunt 'em.

CORA. (*Iratly*) Well, I should think you would the way you murdered it.

BOOTS. (*Tossing her head indignantly*) Oh, this professional jealousy is just terrible! (*Crosses up and exits C. to L.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Crossing up to divan and sitting R. of ARLENE*) Haven't the men folks come out of that room yet, Arlene? (ARLENE shakes her head "no." CORA crosses down extreme L. and sits in arm-chair.)

WADE. (*Distastefully*) If Homer Haywood is talking at them they'll probably be in there for several days.

HOMER. (*Just outside of door L.2*) Then it's all settled?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Excitedly*) Here they come now! (HOMER enters door L.2, his arm interlocked with that of CHETWYNDE'S.)

HOMER. (*As they enter, in his most condescend-*

*ing tone*) You've been most fortunate, Windey—most fortunate, indeed. *(They cross to C. and come down to L. of divan. HOMER is L. of CHETWYNDE.)*

MRS. WOODRUFF. *(To CHETWYNDE)* This is my daughter Arlene, Mr.—Mr.—

HOMER. *(Breaking in before CHETWYNDE has a chance to speak)* Mr. Chetwynde Cluett, the great automobile manufacturer! We've just put through a most advantageous deal, isn't that so, Windey? *(Chuckles and inflates his chest. MR. WOODRUFF enters L.2, crosses down L. to chair L. of table L. and sits. JUNIOR dashes on through French windows and stands just above same.)*

CHETWYNDE. *(His eyes riveted on ARLENE)* So you are Arlene?

HOMER. *(Before ARLENE can speak, in his usual important manner)* Isn't she everything I said she was, Chetty? *(WADE clenches his fists angrily.)*

CHETWYNDE. *(Taking over R. a step and never removing his gaze from ARLENE's face; simply)* My dear, I've traveled many miles to see you.

ARLENE. *(Bewildered)* To—to see me?

HOMER. *(Rubbing one hand over the other jubilantly)* And you never supposed that you'd form such a profitable partnership at the end of your trip, did you, old boy?

CHETWYNDE. *(Remonstratingly)* We'll get to that later, young man. *(He faces ARLENE again)* I am a World War veteran. Several years after the end of the War I went from one hospital to the other in an effort to regain my health. It was a long and tedious affair and prevented my returning to America.

MRS. WOODRUFF. *(Garrulously)* I never did believe in hospitals. Everybody I've ever seen in them has been sick.

CHETWYNDE. *(Addressing his remarks to ARLENE)* I left a wife and child behind me when I enlisted. During the time I was so very ill my wife died.

When I tried to find some trace of my child I was unsuccessful.

ARLENE. (*Sympathetically*) Oh, I'm so sorry for you.

CHETWYNDE. (*Continuing to face her*) One of my companions at the last hospital I was in had a most amazing scheme to manufacture automobiles in Europe.

CORA. (*Withering*) He must have been a relative of Homer's.

CHETWYNDE. (*Smiling at ARLENE*) Knowing that I couldn't do anything without money, I agreed to team up with him and enter his uncle's plant. There we worked a long time on his idea and finally, a few years ago, it bore fruit.

HOMER. (*Brightly*) And today you are one of the most successful of all the automobile manufacturers. And from now on—

CHETWYNDE. (*Breaking in hastily*) I determined recently to come back and try to find my daughter. The trail led me here. Do you understand, Arlene?

ARLENE. (*Rising*) You—you mean that you are my father?

CHETWYNDE. (*Nodding slowly*) That's right. I have all the proof and Mr. Woodruff can verify what I say.

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Simply*) It's all true, Arlene. There can't be any doubt.

JUNIOR. (*Astonished*) Gosh, can you beat it?

CHETWYNDE. (*To ARLENE, simply*) I can hardly expect you to forgive me or to feel toward me as a daughter should. I can only beg you to give me a chance to prove my affection for you. (*Extends his hand.*)

ARLENE. (*Taking his hand*) I—I hardly know what to say. Dad and Mother Woodruff have been so wonderful to me. I—I— (*Her voice falters and breaks.*)

CHETWYNDE. (*Quietly*) I understand, my dear. They shall be generously rewarded.

HOMER. (*Determined to make his presence felt*) Wait until you hear the rest of the news. Listen carefully while Homer Hampton Haywood informs you of his most successful coup. Perhaps you've heard that I bought two trolley cars just today.

JUNIOR. (*Disgusted*) Yeah, we heard it. What'd you use for money?

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Rising*) I gave Homer the money.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Rising quickly; in shrill tones*) Father, you didn't? You couldn't? Where did you get the money from?

HOMER. (*Proudly*) I arranged all that. A little mortgage on this house. It was all very simple.

CORA. (*Gasping*) Chester Woodruff, did you mortgage this house to get money for that—that—

HOMER. (*Breaking in quickly*) Don't say anything you'll be sorry for, Aunt Cora. It was the luckiest investment Father Woodruff ever made and one that will yield him handsome dividends.

WADE. (*Rising; disgusted*) Would you mind telling us what you wanted with those two trolley cars, Haywood?

HOMER. (*Gayly and jubilantly*) I'll be delighted to tell you, Wainright. It's just another of my wonderful schemes. It suddenly occurred to me that there would be a fortune in buying up used trolleys, tearing out the insides and reconstructing them into modern trailers. (*Places both of his thumbs under the lapels of his coat and glances at the assemblage triumphantly.*)

CHETWYNDE. (*Releasing ARLENE'S hand*) And he's right. I am going to open a factory here and promote this scheme for all it is worth. It has wonderful possibilities.

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Happily*) We've already signed

an agreement—the three of us have formed a partnership.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Gayly and enthusiastically*) I think it's a darling idea. I'll take the first tractor you make.

HOMER. (*Breezily*) Not tractors, Mother Woodruff—trailers.

CHETWYNDE. (*Smiling at Mrs. Woodruff*) I'll return the money Mr. Woodruff borrowed on this house tomorrow. (*To Arlene*) And since you're going to marry this young man it solves all of our problems. (*Points to Homer.*)

ARLENE. (*Embarrassed*) But I—I—

CHETWYNDE. (*Breaking in quickly*) You and your husband shall have a home here. I'll have my factory here and we'll all be together.

WADE. (*Angrily*) But she isn't going to marry Homer, sir. Arlene is engaged to me.

CHETWYNDE. (*Turning to Homer; irately*) Didn't you tell me that Arlene was engaged to you?

HOMER. (*Triumphantly*) I most certainly did. I'd like to see her try to marry anybody else.

WADE. (*Crossing to French windows*) Let's discuss this outside, Haywood, if you dare.

HOMER. (*Beside himself with joy*) Dare? Nothing would give me greater pleasure. (*Wade exits through French windows. Homer rushes over and follows him off.*)

JUNIOR. (*Dashing to French windows; excitedly*) Come on, Pop. They might upset the bees! (*Exits quickly. Cora rises hastily.*)

ARLENE. (*In troubled tones*) Oh, this is dreadful! Stop them, somebody. (*Rushes to French windows and exits quickly. Mr. Woodruff crosses to French windows and exits hastily. Chetwynde follows him through French windows.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Sinking onto divan*) I do hope



they don't get too rough. I never could endure the sight of bloodshed.

CORA. (*Firmly*) I hope he teaches him a lesson.

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Nodding vigorously*) So do I! Wade has proven himself anything but a gentleman.

CORA. (*Astonished*) You mean you'd like to see Homer the victor?

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Gayly*) Wouldn't you? After he thought of that darling idea about the trolleys?

JUNIOR. (*Just outside of French windows, excited*) Hit him again! Zowie! That one landed right on the chin.

ARLENE. (*Just outside of French windows, tearfully*) Take your hands away from him, you big bully. Don't you dare strike him again.

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Just outside of French windows*) Now, Arlene, you'd better come away.

ARLENE. (*Loud and determined*) Stop it, I say. I never want to see you again!

JUNIOR. (*Disgusted*) Gosh, couldn't you put up a better fight than that? (MR. WOODRUFF *enters through French windows, followed by CHETWYNDE. They cross up to behind table L.C.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Rising quickly*) Is it all over? Who won, Father?

JUNIOR. (*Dashing in through French windows*) I didn't think so much o' that, did you, Pop? (Stands just above French windows. ARLENE *enters with HOMER. The latter has removed his coat, his collar is open at the neck, his hair is disheveled and one of his eyes is discolored. HOMER crosses to c., rubbing his eye. ARLENE follows him over and stands R. of him.*)

HOMER. (*To CHETWYNDE; triumphantly*) Ask your daughter now whom she's going to marry, Chetty.

ARLENE. (*To HOMER; admiringly*) Oh, Homer, I

knew I could never marry anybody else the moment I saw him hit you. (*WARN Curtain.*)

CORA. (*Disgusted*) Well, I never! (*As she crosses to door L. I*) But then, I might have known it! And it's none of my affair. I'll just keep still as I always do. (*Exits quickly.*)

ARLENE. (*To HOMER, anxiously*) Are you hurt badly, Homer?

HOMER. (*Astonished*) Hurt? Me? I didn't even know he hit me. Did you see that last fast uppercut to his chin? That was a little idea of my own. (*CHETWYNDE and MR. WOODRUFF chuckle heartily. BUNNY sticks her head in through French windows.*)

JUNIOR. (*As he sees her; excitedly*) Bunny! What are you doin' here?

BUNNY. (*Excited*) Ma sent me over. She sez to tell Mister Woodruff that the old Adams place is on fire an' he wouldn't want to miss it. (*Exits quickly.*)

JUNIOR. (*Excited*) Hey! Wait a minute. I got a new rifle. (*Dashes out through French windows.*)

MR. WOODRUFF. (*Excited; to CHERWYNDE*) I hope you'll excuse me. There's a fire and I don't get a chance to see one every day.

CHETWYNDE. (*Spiritedly*) A fire? Do you like to attend them? (*MR. WOODRUFF nods vigorously. CHETWYNDE links arms with MR. WOODRUFF*) So do I. Crazy about them! Let's go. (*They cross up and exit c. to R. HOMER and ARLENE stand down c., holding a pantomime conversation. TELEPHONE rings sharply. MRS. WOODRUFF crosses up to telephone.*)

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Picking up the telephone and answering same*) Hello— Yes, this is Mrs. Woodruff— Who?— Oh, yes— What?— There's going to be a funeral tomorrow? Are you sure?— Where?— (*HOMER and ARLENE smile at each other, cross to French windows and exit, their hands joined.*)

BOOTS. (*Outside L. of arch; loudly and dramatic-*

*ally*) Stop! If you advance one step I'll shoot you down like the cur that you are!

MRS. WOODRUFF. (*Continuing to speak into telephone; gayly*) Oh, yes, I'd be delighted to attend. Will there be many at the funeral, do you think?—Yes, I find them so stimulating. (*Loud sound of an EXPLOSION is heard off stage outside of French windows as the Curtain falls swiftly.*)

END OF PLAY

## HIGH PRESSURE HOMER

### LIST OF PROPERTIES

#### ACT ONE

- Faded carpet with several small rugs over it for the floor.
- Flat-topped desk and desk chair between doors against Left wall; stationery, pen, ink, pencils and lots of miscellaneous papers on desk.
- Low flat bench against Right wall below French windows with a tool kit on bench that includes a large hammer.
- A small bar of steel or iron on bench.
- Telephone on stand in extreme upper Left corner.
- Divan with several cushions on it well down stage and Right of Center.
- An end table just Left of divan.
- Library table with three straight-backed chairs surrounding it, well down stage and Left of Center.
- Armchair in extreme lower Left corner.
- Doorbell ring off stage up Right.
- Victrola with several records, all ready to play, just outside of arch off Left.
- A blank cartridge revolver and several blanks (sure fire) to be fired into an empty barrel off stage Right to give the effect of loud explosions.  
(JUNIOR.)
- A rifle (JUNIOR).

- Paper-backed copy of a play (BOOTS).  
Large black purse containing a sealed letter (MRS. WOODRUFF).  
Large wooden crate containing a live chicken (CORA).  
Box of candy securely wrapped and tied (HOMER).  
A bird cage that is entirely covered with canvas or white muslin so that the inside of the cage is completely hidden (MR. WOODRUFF).  
Several collar buttons in coat pocket (HOMER).

## ACT TWO

- Large harmonica (MRS. WOODRUFF).  
Large piece of white cardboard to represent a sign (JUNIOR).  
A few nails in tool kit on bench Right (JUNIOR).  
A book (CORA).  
Sealed envelope (JUNIOR).  
Handkerchief (MR. WOODRUFF).  
Glass crash off stage just outside of door L.I (ZENITH).  
Pair of grey flannel slacks (BOOTS).  
Newspaper (ZENITH).  
Tube of shaving cream in inside coat pocket (HOMER).  
Small white jeweler's box, the sort a ring comes in, in coat pocket (HOMER).  
A hat for comedy effect (ZENITH).  
Small solitaire imitation diamond ring on engagement finger (ARLENE).  
Same effect used for explosion in previous Act, off stage Right.

## ACT THREE

- Handkerchief (CORA).

Same effect used for explosion as in previous Act,  
off stage Right.

An open letter and an envelope (BOOTS).

Large bouquet of flowers (HOMER).

Pair of eyeglasses in inside coat pocket (CHET-  
WYNDE).

Black grease paint off Right to use on HOMER's eye.

HIGH PRESSURE HOMER  
PUBLICITY THROUGH YOUR LOCAL  
PAPERS

The press can be an immense help in giving publicity to your productions. In this belief we submit a number of suggested press notes which may be used either as they stand or changed to suit your own ideas and submitted to the local press.

ALL ABOUT A MAD FAMILY!

When the curtain rises on the first act of "High Pressure Homer," the evening of (Date of Performance) at The (Name of Theatre or Auditorium), the Woodruff family will be revealed in all of their mad glory. For each and every member of said Woodruff family has a hobby and nobody will be able to resist howling with glee at their mad pranks.

Bruce Brandon, who wrote the play, was asked recently how he came to put such a mad family into a play. "It all happened by accident," Mr. Brandon smiled. "I was taken for a week-end up in Connecticut by an old friend and he told me what lovable folks we were going to stay with. I had been in their home only half an hour when I realized that these people were different from any family I'd ever met. The entire week-end was just one long scramble to stay out of their way and trying my best not to let

them see me laughing. It was so strenuous that when I arrived back in New York I went to bed for twenty-four hours to get thoroughly rested. A few days later the friend who had insisted that I accompany him on the week-end visit, barged into my apartment. He laughingly asked if I would like to make another trip to visit his friends. He was astonished when I said that I was not only willing but eager to pay another visit, and a few weeks later we started out again—only this time I had plenty of pencils and a notebook and took down everything our hostess and her prankish family did. You see, by that time I had decided to write a play about them. No, of course their names weren't Woodruff and I've disguised them thoroughly, but all of their antics went into "High Pressure Homer" for comedy and the way audiences have howled at the play proves that my week-end visits were not spent in vain."

Tickets are on sale now at (Name of place) and it looks as though it will be a sell-out house, so get your seats early and get aboard the fun wagon. You'll have one of the most amusing and entertaining evenings you've ever spent.

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"HIGH PRESSURE HOMER" TO BE  
PRESENTED HERE

The (Name of group presenting play) have just announced that by special arrangement with Samuel French of New York City they have procured the rights to Bruce Brandon's latest and gayest comedy, entitled "High Pressure Homer." This is a comedy of family life and it is to be given on (Date of performance) at (Name of Theatre or Auditorium). The cast has been selected and is rehearsing diligently under the direction of (Name of director).

Good plays for amateur players are difficult to



find and that is why this play was snapped up for local presentation as soon as it was read. If you've never attended a "laugh fest" here is your opportunity because "High Pressure Homer" is just that—a clean, entertaining and screamingly funny comedy that has broken attendance records everywhere. It is a fine study of American life attacked from a new viewpoint. The play is replete with funny situations and sayings that will be quoted all over town the following day. You'll be greatly amused at the character of Homer Hampton Haywood, a young show-off who in spite of his high opinion of himself only succeeds in making a hopeless mess of everything he tackles—and he tackles plenty of things during the three acts of this play. He seldom holds a job longer than a day or two and is just full of ideas for achieving great success with his high pressured salesmanship. This part is in the able hands of (Name of actor) and he will have you convulsed from the time he makes his first entrance until the very curtain of the last act. The entire Woodruff family in whose house the action of the play takes place are given to mad pranks that are so amusing to an audience, and judging by the rehearsals this is going to be the best performance ever offered by a local group. It's a play for the entire family, so get your tickets now and have a bright and merry evening. Seats may be purchased at (Name of place selling tickets).

#### GAY NEW COMEDY TO BE PLAYED HERE

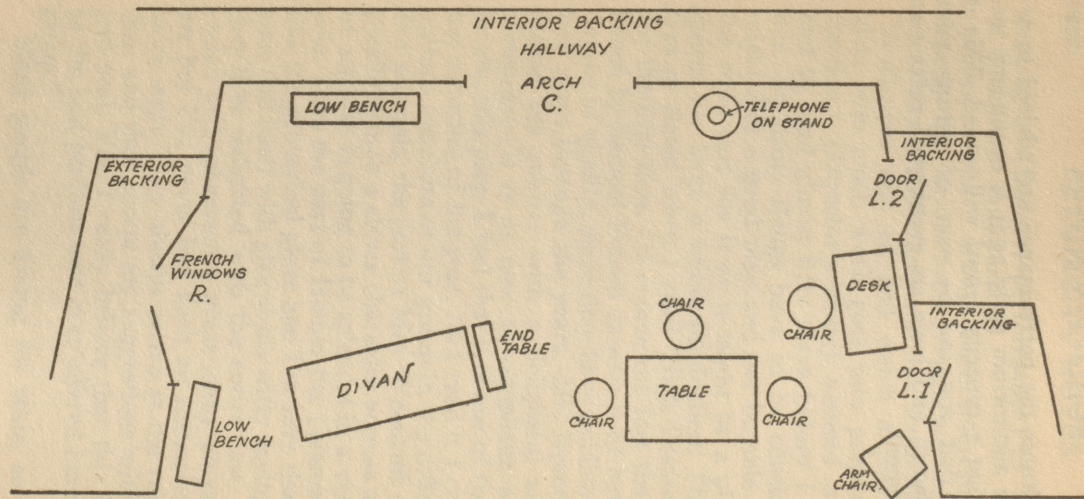
By special arrangement with Samuel French, the largest play publishers in the world, The (Name of Group) have arranged for the production of "High Pressure Homer" by the noted playwright, Bruce Brandon. The performance will be given on the

evening of (Date of performance) at The (Name of Theatre or Auditorium).

Since we have always been interested in plays done by the various local groups, we decided to call on (Name of Director) and talk about the new play. "Audiences who sit and watch a play never realize how much work goes into preparing a production," (Director's name) assured us. "First I had to read almost fifty plays before I found this one. So many things have to be considered. One might find a good play and not be able to get just the right cast for it or it might be a play that requires too large a scenic production. That's why I was so elated when I read 'High Pressure Homer' for the first time. Of course the fact that it is published by Samuel French assures it of having a high degree of quality, since they have published the very best plays through the years. Mr. Brandon has attacked his subject with a delightful and unusual viewpoint—it is as new as celophane and just as bright, this play. I feel that it is one of the outstanding comedies of the year. As I read it I could see the various members of our group in the different parts. For example, the part of Mrs. Woodruff offers great possibilities to a clever character actress and (Name of actress) is going to be splendid in a very exacting role. Then the part of Homer fits (Name of Actor) like the proverbial glove and I'm sure that our audience will howl with glee at his witty sayings and that they'll be delighted with the entire cast. I have directed and rehearsed a great many plays and players but I've never had such an enthusiastic cast to work with. They always arrive at the rehearsals on time and they accept my suggestions with eagerness and zeal. Yes, I really believe that this is going to be the best performance ever offered here by a local group."

Many people are asking for seats, so those who

plan to witness the performance are advised to arrive at the auditorium early as it is confidently anticipated that a capacity crowd will attend. This is one time that you can be sure of getting your money's worth and have an evening of relaxation and amusement.



SCENE DESIGN  
 "HIGH PRESSURE HOMER"

## AUNT TILLIE GOES TO TOWN

Farce. 3 acts. By Wilbur Braun. 4 males, 7 females. Interior. Modern costumes.

Aunt Tillie Trask, an eccentric maiden lady, is occupying her country home near a smart summer resort. She is greatly upset, because her favorite niece, Pamela Marsh, has announced her impending marriage to Mervin Tucker. The telephone rings and Aunt Tillie is called to town by her lawyer. She goes upstairs to pack a suitcase. Mervin Tucker arrives suddenly. He has wired his pal, Ronald Rowland, who is vacationing in the nearby hotel, to meet him at Aunt Tillie's. Mervin deposits his suitcase in Aunt Tillie's living room and goes out to look for Ronald. Aunt Tillie comes downstairs, mistakes Mervin's suitcase for her own and departs for town taking Mervin's suitcase and leaving her own. Ronald arrives looking for Mervin. The door bell rings and it is Luther Lorimer, Ronald's wealthy employer who arrives unexpectedly. Mervin, who has been swimming, comes out from behind the screen in female attire. Ronald presents him as Aunt Tillie and then the fun is on. Poor Pamela Marsh is at her wit's end trying to figure things out. And when Dr. Hattie Bing, a strong and efficient chiropractor, arrives and mistakes Mervin for Aunt Tillie, insisting on giving the hapless Mervin a thorough treatment, the fun is at its height. Clean and wholesome.

(Budget Play.)\* Price, 50 cents.

## "MAMA'S BABY BOY"

Farce. 3 acts. By Charles George. 4 males, 7 females. Interior. Modern costumes.

Imagine the great amount of fun that is obtained by having a very attractive widow nearing forty, having her eighteen-year-old son dress and pose as a youth of fourteen, so that she might pass as a younger woman and marry a widower, whom she believes to be wealthy. In turn, the widower, trying to appear younger, has his seventeen-year-old daughter pose as a girl of thirteen, so that he might wed the widow, whom he believes to be rich. This situation leads to no end of amusing complications, when they both try to keep the knowledge of their losses from the other, also the real ages of their respective offsprings. How it is all eventually worked out and a portion of the losses of both widow and widower is restored makes one of the funniest farces of modern times.

(Budget Play.)\* Price, 50 cents.

\* For explanation of "Budget Play," see French's Catalogue.

## AUNT CINDY CLEANS UP

Farce. 3 acts. By Wilbur Braun. 4 males, 7 females. Interior. Modern costumes.

Claire Harlow shares a bungalow with her Uncle Ripley at Claytonville. Uncle Ripley is called away and doesn't hesitate to leave Claire because he knows that Lotus Clayton and her Aunt Sabine are coming to visit Claire and will remain with her while he is gone. Lotus arrives at the Harlow bungalow minus Aunt Sabine. Claire doesn't mind, but Lotus is very prim and objects to being without a chaperon. Here is where Aunt Cindy Timpkins, an eccentric old maid who detests men, enters upon the scene. Lotus begs her to remain and act as their chaperon. Aunt Cindy agrees, providing no men are allowed to enter the sacred portals of the bungalow. Just as everything is settled satisfactorily Mrs. Jennie Dawson, the town busybody rushes in and, mistaking Aunt Cindy for Lotus's Aunt Sabine, acquaints the old maid with the fact that the entire town of Claytonville has been left to her providing she will marry within a week! This is only a small part of the many exciting and humorous incidents that are woven into the play.

(Budget Play.)\* Price, 50 cents.

## SIS PERKINS

Farcical comedy drama. 3 acts. By Wilbur Braun. 4 males, 6 females. Interior. Modern costumes.

Mrs. Elizabeth Chandler moves in the smartest social circles in New York with her son, Baldwin, and her daughter, Marcia. When confronted with financial difficulties owing to unwise investments she immediately thinks of matrimony for Baldwin to a very wealthy girl as a way out. Providentially, Violet Astor, an eccentric young girl who has great wealth and who is a celebrity has announced her intentions of paying the Chandlers a visit. Mrs. Chandler determines that Baldwin shall propose to Violet. Meanwhile she receives a letter telling her that a poor relation, Sis Perkins, from Painted Post, Missouri, is coming to New York to visit. Violet Astor wires that she will be unable to pay her visit. Sis embarrasses the Chandlers to such an extent with her crude untutored ways that they are delighted when Lydia La Salle, a society matron who always claims to have met celebrities, rushes in, grasps Sis's hand and insists that she is Violet Astor. How Sis turns the tables on her snobbish relations makes an evening of splendid entertainment in the theater.

(Budget Play.)\* Price, 50 cents.

\* For explanation of "Budget Play," see French's Catalogue.

## TEMPEST AND SUNSHINE

Comedy-drama. 3 acts. By Ned Albert. 4 males, 8 females. Interior. Modern costumes.

The entire action of the play takes place in the living room of the Middleton family on a plantation in Kentucky. Here Joshua Middleton and his wife, Nancy, live with their two daughters, Julia, whom Joshua has nicknamed Tempest because of her fiery nature, and Fanny, whom he calls Sunshine because she is so sweet and lovable. When young Dick Wilmot comes to Kentucky to teach school he is inclined to like Sunshine. But Tempest makes up her mind to attract his attention and does so. Sunshine doesn't care for Dick except as a friend and Tempest exerts all her force and succeeds in winning a proposal from young Wilmot. Suddenly there arrives upon the scene a handsome young physician from New Orleans named George Lacey. Dr. Lacey is attracted by Sunshine's beauty and innocence and he falls in love with her and proposes. Tempest loses all interest in young Wilmot and falls desperately in love with Dr. Lacey. How she manages to make Dr. Lacey think that Sunshine is in love with Dick Wilmot, how she contrives to make Sunshine think that Dr. Lacey is fickle, how she tricks the doctor into a proposal of marriage are all shown with great dramatic effect. But Sunshine wins Dr. Lacey for her husband and the play ends with the two sisters reconciled, thereby pointing a fine moral. (When ordering, please state author's name.)

(Budget Play.)\* Price, 50 cents.

## LENA RIVERS

Comedy-drama. 3 acts. By Ned Albert. 6 males, 7 females. Interior. Modern costumes.

The story deals with the plight of young Lena Rivers and her beloved Granny Nichols who are compelled to leave their New England home and seek refuge with Granny's son, John, who has changed the family name of Nichols to Livingstone because of the social aspirations of his dominating wife Matilda. Durward Belmont, whom Mrs. Livingstone plans to marry to her daughter Caroline, becomes enamored of Lena. The younger Livingstone daughter, Anna, and her brother, John Junior, become Lena's firm friends and champion her cause. In the last act when it looks as though Lena were going to lose Durward, Fate steps in and proves our heroine's sterling character and the denouement at the end of the play is startling indeed.

(Budget Play.)\* Price, 50 cents.

\* For explanation of "Budget Play," see French's Catalogue.

## MURDER IN REHEARSAL

Mystery-farce. 3 acts. By Austin Goetz. 6 males, 6 females. Bare stage. Modern costumes.

Jack Ellery is directing the last rehearsal of a mystery play which is to be presented by a dramatic group. Jack is playing opposite Claudia Warren, his fiancée, and during the first love scene between Jack and Claudia two shots are fired by Morton Hill on cue. Jack falls but it is discovered that Jack is not acting at all. He is dead! Just as they are about to send for the police the Sheriff, Pete Cullen, walks in, late for rehearsal. He locks the theater and starts in to solve the mystery within a mystery. Of course the first suspect is Chubby Forbes, the property boy who loaded the gun. Enter Morton Hill, with a definite motive. Mrs. Fiske Warren comes in for her share of suspicion. Even Claudia is under suspicion, supposedly with very good reason. It seems as if the whole cast and half the town had gathered in the theater at this last rehearsal for the express purpose of disposing of Jack Ellery. But the solving of this intriguing mystery is not the last of the play by any means. There is a revelation coming that will make you gasp and then laugh boisterously—then chuckle with merriment as the curtain descends.

(Royalty, \$10.00.) Price, 50 cents.

## DOUBLE TROUBLE

Farce. 3 acts. By James Reach. 6 males, 7 females. Interior. Modern costumes.

Fred Berry is in business difficulties and must raise \$1500 in ten days. An easy-going sort, the entire burden is on his shoulders; for Jimmy refuses to go to work as a delivery boy in his store—considers it beneath his dignity—and Alice has just lost her third job in a year. Just when things seem blackest, they receive a surprise visit from their fabulously wealthy relative, Aunt Deborah, whom they haven't seen in thirty years. But—"Aunt Deborah" isn't Aunt Deborah at all! "She" wears a wig and smokes cigars! How "Aunt Deborah" is finally unmasked; how the Berry's financial problems are unexpectedly solved; how Alice finds romance and Jimmy a job; how Art Samson, the small-town boy, makes good in a big way; how Uncle Curt comes through in a pinch; what happens when two "Aunt Deborahs"—the fake and the real—meet; all these and more are skilfully blended in this new farce that is uproarious and yet clean as a whistle.

(Royalty, \$10.00.) Price, 50 cents.



## SOUP TO NUTS

Farce. 3 acts. By Austin Goetz. 6 males, 6 females.  
Interior. Modern costumes.

Doctor Manny Pilski, a progressive health specialist, has conceived the idea of opening a dietetic sanatorium on the California desert where meals are served in the form of concentrated pellets. Among the first guests are Mrs. Beams, a society matron, who brings her lovely daughter, Veronica, for a course of treatments, and two mysterious patients, Lincoln Lewis and Trudy Trudello, a movie queen. Bob Bennington arrives and runs slap bang into his sweetheart, Veronica, with whom he has quarreled. Things go from bad to worse as Damon Goodfellow arrives with his bag full of chronic grouch. In the meantime Doctor Pilski receives three sample bottles of "emotional pellets" labeled "Anger," "Love" and "Truth." By accident the "Anger" pellets are served for luncheon, and when they take effect, pandemonium reigns. When the bedlam reaches a point beyond endurance, someone serves the "Love" pellets for dinner. Then comes the "Truth" pellets, and the facts that are disclosed are more than startling. The truth costs everyone a great deal but gives them back their self-respect and their mates, which is more than fair play.

(Royalty, \$10.00.) Price, 50 cents.

## WHISPERING WALLS

Mystery. 3 acts. By Wall Spence. 6 males, 6 females. Interior. Modern costumes.

For years the lonely old "witch house" has been shunned as a fearsome place, haunted by ghostly spirits. Unaware of this, Deane Mattox, a notorious gentleman crook (known as "The Phoenix"), has taken over the place. There he has had his features remodeled by Dr. Rosmer. Thelma, the doctor's innocent niece, is being treacherously detained until she consents to marry Mattox. Three visitors arrive—a young man who claims to be George Hughes (who recently inherited the house), Lulu Hatch, an eccentric medium, and her timorous sister, Hortense. An unexpected guest is Julia Nelson, whose fiancé, Robert Bixby, has mysteriously disappeared. She suspects he has been murdered and that his body is concealed on the premises. Thelma and Hughes are instantly drawn to each other and she confides in him. Mattox, however, has meanwhile discovered that Hughes is *not* the owner. In the dark, a thrilling séance is held. From then on the play moves breathlessly until it reaches a most unique and startling denouement.

(Royalty, \$10.00.) Price, 50 cents.

## WHO'S CRAZY NOW?

Farce. 3 acts. By Gerald Bell. 3 males, 9 females.  
Interior. Modern costumes.

The scene of this uproarious farce is laid in the reception-room of the Sunnyvale Insane Asylum, where we find a number of school teachers who have lost their mental balance trying to educate their pupils. The play gets off to a hilarious start when the good ladies reverse their positions and talk and act after the fashion of their former charges. For instance, the English teacher talks like a street urchin; the gym instructor is the laziest member of the lot and refuses to do a bit of exercise; it is the ambition of the head of the history department to deliberately confuse the dates of important happenings, etc., etc. A love story is introduced with the visit of the niece of the superintendent and a young staff doctor, but this, too, is treated in broad humorous lines, since each thinks the other is an inmate of the Asylum. In addition to a good night's fun the play contains a moral for students.

(Royalty, \$10.00.) Price, 50 cents.

## THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER

Comedy. 3 acts. By Wilbur Braun. 6 males, 7 females. Interior. Modern costumes.

Tom Sawyer and his chum Huckleberry Finn decide to visit the graveyard to try the cat-cure for warts. Arrived at the scene of their experiment, they are suddenly confronted with the figures of Doc Robinson, Injun Joe, a villainous half-breed, and old Muff Potter. The two boys hide behind bushes and by the light of the moon see Injun Joe plunge a knife into Doc Robinson's back, the knife that belongs to old Muff Potter; then when the old man is unconscious, Injun Joe puts the knife into old man Potter's hand and when he regains consciousness, Injun Joe tells Potter that he alone murdered Doc Robinson. Walter Potter, son of old Muff Potter, renounces his sweetheart, Mary Rogers, because he doesn't wish to bring disgrace upon her, and the two boys are beside themselves trying to find a way out of their dilemma when suddenly the way is cleared for them and Muff Potter is saved from hanging and the real culprit is exposed. You will find that the title, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, will bring business into your box office, and that this play will live in the hearts of your audience just as surely as Samuel Clemens' great classic has lived in their memories!

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