

# Boy Meets Girl

BY BELLA AND SAMUEL SPEWACK

TO  
JO DAVIDSON  
WHOSE HOSPITALITY AND  
ENCOURAGEMENT DELAYED THE COMPLETION OF  
THIS PLAY THREE MONTHS.

# BOY MEETS GIRL

*Boy Meets Girl* was first produced at the Cort Theatre, New York City, by George Abbott, on November 27, 1935, and closed on June 19, 1937. Following is the original cast:

ROBERT LAW	Allyn Joslyn
LARRY TOMS	Charles McClelland
J. CARLYLE BENSON	Jerome Cowan
ROSETTI	Everett H. Sloane
MR. FRIDAY (C.F.)	Royal Beal
PEGGY	Peggy Hart
MISS CREWS	Lea Penman
RODNEY BEVAN	James MacColl
GREEN	Garson Kanin
SLADE	Maurice Sommers
SUSIE	Joyce Arling
A NURSE	Helen Gardner
DOCTOR	Perry Ivins
CHAUFFEUR	Edison Rice
YOUNG MAN	Philip Faversham
STUDIO OFFICER	George W. Smith
CUTTER	Robert Foulk
ANOTHER NURSE	Marjorie Lytell
MAJOR THOMPSON	John Clarke

*Directed by* George Abbott

*Settings by* Arne Lundborg

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# BOY MEETS GIRL

## SCENES

### ACT ONE

Mr. Friday's Office, the Royal Studios in Hollywood

### ACT TWO

#### SCENE I

A Neighborhood Theatre. Seven months later

#### SCENE II

Mr. Friday's office

#### SCENE III

The same. Several hours later

### ACT THREE

#### SCENE I

A hospital corridor. Three weeks later

#### SCENE II

In your home

#### SCENE III

Mr. Friday's office

## ACT ONE

The room we see is one of a suite of three, comprising the sanctum of MR. C. ELLIOT FRIDAY, a supervisor, sometimes called a producer, who is engaged in manufacturing motion pictures in Hollywood, California.

In its present state the room is a happy combination of the Regency and Russell Wright periods—given over to pale green, mauve and canary yellow, with Rodier-cloth-covered easy chairs and couch. A magnificent, be-French-phonied desk is at one end of the room. On it rests the inter-office dictograph, over which in the course of the play we hear the voice of the great B.K., chief executive of the studio. Beside it, appropriately, stands an amiable photograph of Mrs. C. Elliot Friday, a cultured if fatuous lady; a copy of "Swann's Way" (leaves uncut), a bronze nude astride an ash tray, a bottle of Pyramidon and a copy of "Variety." In the trash basket is a copy of "Hollywood Reporter." (It was very unkind to MR. FRIDAY.) On the wall back of the desk are bookshelves with pots of hanging ivy on the top shelf, the rest given over, curiously enough, to books—and occasional bric-a-brac. There are a few end tables with ash trays and boxes of cigarettes, for it is the unwritten law in Hollywood that supervisors must provide cigarettes for writers during conferences and other times of stress. The two windows, although of the old-fashioned, non-casement kind, are framed by tasteful, expensive drapes and are partially concealed by half-drawn Venetian blinds. (A supervisor would lose caste without Venetian blinds.) The door left leads to an anteroom where sits MISS CREWS, secretary to MR. FRIDAY. The door at right rear leads to a smaller office where MR. FRIDAY sometimes thinks in solitude. This room contains MR. FRIDAY's Commencement Day photograph (Harvard '19), snapshots of B.K.'s wedding, at which MR. FRIDAY served as an usher, and a huge picture of Pola Negri inscribed "Sincerely yours." There are other photographs with more florid inscriptions upon faces once famous and since vanished in film dust. The room is also memorable for the fact that MR. FRIDAY—a bit of a diplomat in his way—sometimes keeps earnest writers here while he submits their scripts to other writers in his inner office. At times as many as fifteen bright minds are thus let loose upon a C. Elliot Friday production, with sometimes startling results.

All this, however, is very much by the by. It is really more important to note that through those Venetian blinds you can feel the sweet sterility of the desert that is so essentially Southern California. The sun is bright of course, and it pours endlessly through the windows. The time is two o'clock, and the boys have been at it since noon.

One of the boys is BENSON—J. CARLYLE BENSON, whom we discover prone on a couch. He is in his thirties and in his flannels. Years ago, as he will tell you, he worked as a scene painter and a property boy. He became a writer because he learned how bricks were made and laid. He knows every cliché, every formula, and in his heart of hearts he really believes the fairy tale is



a credo of life. And he's a damned nice guy; handicapped somewhat by the fact that he married a beautiful but extravagant young woman who obviously doesn't love him. They live in a gorgeous home, have four dogs, two cars and, as MR. FRIDAY would put it, "a menage."

The other member of the writing team is ROBERT LAW whom you will find listed in O'Brien's "Best Short Stories" of five years ago. He came to Hollywood to make a little money and run right back to Vermont where he could really write. He is rather handsome, a little round-shouldered; smokes incessantly. He's a damned nice guy, too.

There is a deep and abiding affection between the two men, even though LAW's nostalgia for realism and sincerity and substance finds no echoing response in MR. BENSON. They have one great thing in common—their mutual love of a great gag, a practical joke to enliven the monotony of the writing factory.

For we are dealing here with a factory that manufactures entertainment in approved sizes; that puts the seven arts right on the belt. And it is this very quality that makes MR. FRIDAY's office as fascinating as a power house and a good deal more entertaining.

The other inmates of the room are LARRY TOMS—you know LARRY TOMS—a Western star, and one ROSETTI, an agent. It is MR. ROSETTI's business to see to it that MR. TOMS is profitably employed, for MR. ROSETTI collects ten per cent of MR. TOMS's weekly salary which, despite the star's fading popularity, is still a respectable sum. MR. TOMS is handsome, of course. He is also parsimonious. He leads a completely righteous life, and if you don't like him it isn't our fault; in all respects he is an extremely admirable character.

As the curtain goes up we see that LAW is on his feet and obviously he has been telling a story to MR. TOMS—a story that MR. TOMS is expected to re-enact before the camera.

LAW. And this bozo comes up to you and you look him straight in the eye and you say, "Why, damn your soul, I loved her before you ever married her." And then in walks the bitch, and she cries, "Larry, I heard everything you said." And you just look at her, and there's a long pause—a long pause. And then finally you say, "Did you?" That's all. Just a plain, quiet, simple "Did you?" Boy, what a moment! (He lies down on the couch beside BENSON.)

LARRY. But what's the story about?

BENSON (rolling over). Lovel

LAW (singing). "Love is the sweetest thing—"

LARRY. Now, come on, boys—get off the couch. This ain't fair. I got a lot at stake in this picture. It's the last one in my contract. If I get a poor story I'm out in the cold.

LAW. Shivering with a million dollar annuity.

ROSETTI. Now, gentlemen, don't let's get personal.

LARRY (rises and crosses to couch). When they told me I was getting the

star team of writers on the lot, I was all for it. But you've done nothing but clown around, and the shooting date's only two weeks off. I've got to play this picture.

LAW. Why?

LARRY (swallowing). Tell me your story in a few simple words.

LAW. Mr. Benson, what's our story?

BENSON. How the hell do I know?

LAW (sits up). Didn't you listen?

BENSON. No. We ought to have a stenographer.

LAW. But they won't wear tights. And I can't dictate to a stenographer who won't wear tights.

LARRY. Now listen, boys—

LAW. Don't speak to me. You don't like our story.

LARRY. I didn't say I didn't like it. I couldn't follow it. (He slumps in disgust.)

BENSON (indignantly). You couldn't follow it? Listen, I've been writing stories for eleven years. Boy meets girl. Boy loses girl. Boy gets girl.

LAW. Or—girl meets boy. Girl loses boy. Girl gets boy. Love will find a way. Love never loses. Put your money on love. You can't lose. (Rises and saunters to window) I'm getting hungry.

BENSON. It's a sorry state of affairs when an actor insists on following a story. Do you think this is a golf tournament?

ROSETTI (earnestly). If I may make a point, I don't think you're showing the proper respect to one of the biggest stars in this studio. A man who's not only captivated millions of people but is going to captivate millions more—

BENSON (wearily). With his little lasso—

LARRY. Just because I don't get Gable's fan mail don't mean I ain't got his following. A lot of those that want to write me ain't never learned how.

LAW. Benson, injustice has been done. We've been lacking in respect for the idol of illiteracy.

BENSON. Do we apologize?

LAW. No!

ROSETTI. Well, let me tell you something. Before I became an agent I taught diction for years, and Larry Toms is potentially the greatest actor I've ever met. And I can prove it with X-rays. I was just taking them up to show B.K. He's got the Barrymore larynx. I'll put his larynx against John Barrymore's and I defy you to tell me which is which. (Takes X-rays from brief case. Gives one to BENSON, one to LAW.)

LARRY. I couldn't tell it myself and it's my own larynx.

BENSON (drawling). Say—are you sure this is his larynx?

ROSETTI (the diplomat; retrieving X-rays). Gentlemen, I wouldn't be surprised with the proper training if Larry couldn't sing. That opens up



the whole field of musicals. (*Puts brief case on chair.*)

BENSON (*to LAW*). What are we waiting for?

LAW. Lunch.

LARRY (*angrily rising*). I'm getting fed up with this. I got writers who are just plain crazy—a producer who can't concentrate—and ain't even here—and— (*Throws hat on floor and starts for BENSON and LAW. LAW moves to back of couch and BENSON goes up to door.*)

ROSETTI (*crossing down on LARRY's left*). Now . . . now . . . Larry . . . don't lose your temper.

LARRY (*righteously*). The idea of writers getting fifteen hundred a week for acting like hoodlums.

LAW. I agree with you.

LARRY. Huh?

LAW. We're not writers. We're hacks. If we weren't, would I be sitting here listening to your inarticulate grunts?

LARRY. Huh?

LAW. That's exactly what I mean. For two cents, Benson, I'd take the next train back to Vermont.

LARRY. That's all right with me.

BENSON. Will you forget Vermont?

LAW. At least I wouldn't have to sit around with *that* in Vermont. I'd write—really write. My God, I wrote once. I wrote a book. A darn good book. I was a promising young novelist. O'Brien reprinted three of my

stories. 1928-1929-1930. And in 1935 I'm writing dialogue for a horse!

LARRY (*enraged*). Now, listen—

ROSETTI (*pleading*). Larry—Larry, take a deep breath. The boys mean no harm. . . . Exhale!

LAW (*sniffing*). I smell carbon monoxide.

LARRY. One more crack, that's all—just one more crack! (*Phone rings.*)

ROSETTI (*at phone*). Hello . . . oh, yes . . . just a minute. For you, Benson.

BENSON (*taking up phone*). Yes, speaking. Who? Of course, Mrs. Benson's check is good. How much is it for? Thirty-five hundred? Oh! I hope it was real ermine. . . . Certainly it's all right. You put the check through tomorrow. (*Hangs up; dials phone.*)

ROSETTI (*with a feline purr*). Ermine is a nice fur. (*MISS CREWS enters regally; puts letters on desk.*)

LARRY (*grumbling*). Miss Crews, what's keeping C.F.?

MISS CREWS. He's still up with B.K. (*She exits regally.*)

BENSON (*into phone*). Jim? Benson. Listen, sell three of my Municipal Fives this afternoon, will you? And put it in my joint account in the Security. I've got a check to meet. Never mind about that. I'll talk to her. Right. (*Hangs up.*)

LAW. Pearl is certainly spreading prosperity.

BENSON. What the hell? She's only a kid. She's having a good time. What's money for? (*C.F. enters. C.F. is, of course, C. ELLIOTT FRIDAY.*)

C.F. (*briskly*). Good morning.

ROSETTI (*rises*). Good morning, C.F.

LARRY (*rises and sits*). Hello, C.F. (*BENSON lies on sofa. LAW rises and salaams Hindu fashion, as popularized by Mr. De Mille.*)

C.F. Boys, no antics, please. We've got a heavy day ahead of us. (*Sits at desk; picks up phone. Into phone*) I don't want to be disturbed by anybody—understand? And order some lunch. A plate of raw carrots, and a bottle of certified raw milk. See that it's raw. Bring enough for everybody. (*About to hang up.*)

LAW (*rises*). Just a moment. (*Takes phone*) Mr. Benson and Mr. Law want two cups of chicken broth—some ham hocks—cabbage—lemon meringue pie—and some bicarbonate of soda. (*Hangs up; returns to couch.*)

C.F. You're slaughtering yourselves, boys. You won't be able to think with that poison in your stomachs, and we've got to think. I've just seen the front office. Boys, we're facing a crisis.

ROSETTI (*eagerly*). Any truth in the report, C.F., that Gaumont British wants to buy the studio?

C.F. You know as much about it as I do, Rosetti.

LAW. Why sell? I thought we were sitting pretty. We're in receivership.

ROSETTI. Well, I'm going up to see B.K. I hope you boys get a good story for Larry.

C.F. (*ignoring him; C.F. can ignore beautifully*). As a matter of fact, you may as well know it. There may be a reorganization.

BENSON. Again?

C.F. And you know my position. I'm the only college-bred man in the studio. They resent me.

LAW. The big snobs.

C.F. Just because I've always tried to do something fine, something dignified, something worth while, I'm being hammered on all sides. Boys, if my next picture fails, I'm out. And you're out, Larry. And it won't do you boys any good either. Of course you can always write plays.

LAW. I don't see why not. We never wrote any.

C.F. I have an idea for a play I want to discuss with you sometime. You'll be wild about it. Just one set, too—simple to produce, and practically anybody can play it. Katharine Cornell would be marvelous for the girl. She dies in the first act.

LARRY. Listen here, C.F., I ain't in the theatre. What about my picture?

C.F. Boys, we need a big picture. Not just a good story. I want to do something fine—with sweep, with scope—stark, honest, gripping, adult, but with plenty of laughs and a little hokum.

LARRY (*bitterly*). And no "Did you?" scenes.



C.F. Something we'll be proud of. Not just another picture, but the picture of the year. A sort of Bengal Lancer, but as Kipling would have done it. Maybe we could wire Kipling and get him to write a few scenes. It would be darned good publicity. (PEGGY enters; PEGGY is the manicurist on the lot) Oh, come in . . . come in, Peggy. (PEGGY puts tray of manicurist's paraphernalia on desk; moves small chair at C.F.'s side; takes bowl and exits for water.)

BENSON (in astonishment). He doesn't think we're as good as Kipling.

C.F. (quickly). Mind you, not that I think Kipling is a great writer. A storyteller, yes. But greatness? Give me Proust anytime. Now, boys, how about a story?

LAW. Nestling on your desk for two weeks there's a script we wrote for Larry Toms.

BENSON. A beautiful script. That one with my fingerprints on the cover.

C.F. (picking up script, holding it in his hands as if weighing it). This? This won't do.

LAW. That's where you're wrong. I had it weighed at the A. & P. and the manager went wild over it. (C.F. puts script on top of dictograph. MISS CREWS enters.)

MISS CREWS. Excuse me, Mr. Friday, but Casting wants to know how many midgets you'll need.

C.F. (irritably). Midgets? I don't need any midgets.

MISS CREWS. Casting says you ordered midgets and they've got them.

C.F. They're crazy. I'm not doing a horror story. (Phone rings; at phone) Hello. . . . It's for you, Benson.

BENSON. For me?

C.F. I think it's Mrs. Benson. Listen, Miss Crews, we're in conference. Please don't disturb us again.

MISS CREWS. Yes, Mr. Friday. (She exits.)

BENSON (into telephone). Oh, hello, darling. . . . Yes, I know you've been shopping. . . . Why don't you try Woolworth's? . . . No, I'm not mad. . . . Oh, you're taking the dogs for a walk? That's good. . . . Oh, no, I can't take you to lunch. I'm in a story conference. . . . But look, darling, I'm in a story conference. . . . Hello . . . (He mops his brow and tries to shake off his gloom.)

C.F. How is Mrs. Benson?

BENSON. Swell.

C.F. I must get Mrs. Friday to invite her over to her French class. All the wives are taking it up very seriously. Gives them something to do, and as I said to Mrs. Friday: I'm a linguist—why shouldn't you be? That's the great thing in marriage—mutual interests. (BENSON crosses to couch) Of course, Mrs. Benson isn't the studious type, is she? Beautiful girl, though. . . . Where were we? What was I saying?

BENSON (crosses back to desk; sighs; indicates script). You were saying that this is one of the greatest picture scripts ever written.

C.F. (with a superior smile). Now, just a minute—

LAW (quickly). And do you know why? Because it's the same story Larry Toms has been doing for years.

BENSON. We know it's good.

LAW. Griffith used it. Lubitsch used it. And Eisenstein's coming around to it.

BENSON. Boy meets girl. Boy loses girl. Boy gets girl.

LAW. The great American fairy tale. Sends the audience back to the relief rolls in a happy frame of mind.

BENSON. And why not?

LAW. The greatest escape formula ever worked out in the history of civilization . . .

C.F. Of course, if you put it that way . . . but, boys, it's hackneyed.

LAW. You mean classic.

C.F. (triumphantly). Hamlet is a classic—but it isn't hackneyed!

LAW. Hamlet isn't hackneyed? Why, I'd be ashamed to use that poison gag. He lifted that right out of the Italians. (PEGGY enters and crosses to her chair and sits) Ask Peggy. (PEGGY puts the bowl now half filled with water down on the desk.)

BENSON. Yes, let's ask Peggy . . . if she wants to see Larry Toms in a different story. She's your audience.

PEGGY. Don't ask me anything, Mr. Benson. I've got the damndest toothache. (She takes C.F.'s hand and

looks up at him suddenly) Relax! (She begins filing.)

BENSON (wheedling). But, Peggy, you go to pictures, don't you?

PEGGY. No.

BENSON. But you've seen Larry's pictures and enjoyed them?

PEGGY. No.

BENSON. . . . As millions of others have . . .

LAW. Why, one man sent him a rope all the way from Manila—with instructions.

C.F. Boys, this isn't getting us anywhere.

BENSON (assuming the manner of a district attorney; barking at PEGGY). Peggy, do you mean to sit there and tell me you haven't seen one Larry Toms picture?

PEGGY. I saw one.

BENSON. Ah!

PEGGY. Night in Death Valley.

BENSON. This isn't getting us anywhere, eh? How would you like to see Night in Death Valley again—with a new title?

PEGGY. I wouldn't.

BENSON. That's all. Step down. (Crosses to couch; slaps LAW on shoulder) May I point out to this court that the body was found only two feet away, in an open field, with every door and window shut? (To LAW) Your witness. (He exits.)



LAW (*rises*). I've got to see a man about a woman. (*He exits. Our writers have vanished. They love to vanish from story conferences.*)

C.F. (*rises*). Come back here! (*Picks up phone.*)

LARRY. That's what I mean—clowning.

C.F. (*at phone*). Miss Crews, leave word at the gate Benson and Law are not to be allowed off the lot. They're to come right back to my office. (*Hangs up.*)

LARRY. Why do you stand for it?

C.F. Larry, those boys are crazy, but they've got something.

LARRY. They've been fired off every other lot.

C.F. I'll fire them off this one, after they've produced a story. I've made up my mind to that. Meanwhile, patience.

LARRY. That's easy to say.

C.F. You can't quibble with the artistic temperament when it produces.

LARRY (*grumbling*). They've been producing nothing but trouble around here. (*YOUNG ACTOR enters in the resplendent uniform of the Coldstream Guards. His name is RODNEY. Both uniform and actor explain themselves as the play proceeds.*)

MISS CREWS. Right in here.

RODNEY. How do you do?

C.F. What do you want?

RODNEY. Why, Wardrobe sent me. Do you approve the uniform?

C.F. Uniform for what?

RODNEY. *Young England.*

C.F. You see, Larry—three pictures in production—all going on at the same time—I'm standing on my head—and then they wonder what's wrong with the industry. (*Rises; barks at RODNEY*) Stand over there. (*MISS CREWS exits. C.F. surveys the actor judicially*) I can't say I like the hat. (*He is referring, of course, to the awe-inspiring busby.*)

RODNEY (*mildly*). The hat is authentic, sir.

C.F. I still don't like it. You can't photograph it. (*Phone rings*) Yes?—What midgets? I didn't send out any call for midgets. Get rid of them. (*Hangs up. He jiggles the phone*) Get me Wardrobe. (*Hubbub is heard outside window*) Who's making all that noise? (*PEGGY goes to the window*) This is C.F.—I don't like the hat.—I don't care if it's authentic or not—Who's making all that noise?

PEGGY (*at window*). Midgets.

C.F. (*into phone*). Change the hat. . . . You can't photograph it. . . . We want to see faces, not hats. (*Hangs up. Stone crashes through the window left*) Good God! Somebody's thrown a rock through my window. (*To RODNEY*) Here, you—pull down those blinds.

RODNEY (*always the little gentleman*). Yes, sir.

C.F. (*in phone*). Get me Casting. . . . This is C.F. . . . Somebody's thrown

a rock through my window. One of the midgets. Of course they're indignant! Sour grapes! I'm telling you to get rid of them. (*Hangs up.*)

RODNEY. What shall I tell Wardrobe, sir?

C.F. Tell them I don't like the hat.

RODNEY (*smiles diffidently*). Well, it's very peculiar that you should take umbrage at the hat as it happens to be the only correct item in the entire outfit.

C.F. What's that?

RODNEY. This coat doesn't hang properly—these buttons are far too large. These shoulder straps are absurd, of course. And the boots . . . if I may say so . . . are too utterly fantastic. Any Guardsman would swoon away at the sight of them.

C.F. So!

RODNEY. The hat, however, is authentic.

C.F. It is, eh? What's your salary.

RODNEY. As I understand it, I'm to receive seven dollars a day Monday and Tuesday, when I speak no lines, and fifteen dollars a day Thursday, Friday and Saturday, when I propose a toast.

C.F. And you're telling a fifty-thousand-dollar-a-year man how to run his picture. Look here—I spent two weeks in London, my man, at the Savoy, and I watched them change the Guards, personally.

RODNEY. At the Savoy?

C.F. Young man, we have a technical adviser on this picture. And it doesn't happen to be you.

RODNEY. Quite. He's a splendid fellow, but he's a third-generation Canadian. He's never even been to London.

C.F. So you don't like the uniform and you don't like the technical expert. (*Smoothly*) What's your name?

RODNEY. Rodney Bevan. Of course, it's a sort of *nom de plume*, or *nom de guerre*—

C.F. Rodney Bevan. (*Picks up phone*) Give me Casting. . . . This is C.F. Extra here by the name of Rodney Bevan doesn't like his uniform. Fire him.

RODNEY (*aghast*). Fire? Have you given me the sack?

C.F. I've enough trouble without extras telling me how to make pictures. That's the trouble with this business. A man spends his life at it, and anybody can walk in and tell him how to run it.

RODNEY. But I merely suggested—(*MISS CREWS enters.*)

MISS CREWS. Mr. Green and Mr. Slade are outside, Mr. Friday. They want you to hear the song.

RODNEY. I've waited a long time for this opening—

C.F. Get out! (*To MISS CREWS*) I'm in no mood for music. (*GREEN and SLADE enter.*)

GREEN. We've got it, and you're going to listen. If you don't like it,



Schulberg's nuts about it. (SLADE crosses to piano and starts playing the song) We wrote it for Young England, but it's flexible—Flexible as hell.

(MISS CREWS exits. RODNEY turns forlornly and fades out through the door. What else can he do?)

C.F. Boys, I'm in no mood for—

GREEN. It's a touching little thing, but, boy, what power! There's a "Pain in My Heart, and My Heart's on My Sleeve." Like the title? (SLADE is one of those who glues himself to a piano. He's all pasted together now, and his fingers fly. GREEN sings with all the fervid sincerity of Georgie Jessel with a cold.)

You promised love undying,  
And begged me to believe;  
Then you left, and left me crying  
With a pain in my heart, and my  
heart on my sleeve.

It isn't right to show it,  
To flaunt the way I grieve;  
But the world will quickly know it,  
For the pain's in my heart and my  
heart on my sleeve.

I confess that I'm a mess—  
The way I lived my life,  
But what does it matter?  
Yes, I guess that happiness  
Is only for a wife;  
Sorrow isn't served on a silver platter.

I really shouldn't blame you  
Because you chose to leave;  
But one thing forever will shame  
you—  
It's the pair in my heart, and my  
heart on my sleeve.

(During the song MISS CREWS enters with glass of orange juice. She crosses

around desk, puts glass in front of C.F., gets book from lower drawer.)

C.F. (as GREEN finishes song). Miss Crews, get hold of Benson and Law! (MISS CREWS exits.)

LARRY (as the din grows). I've worked for Biograph. . . . I've worked for Monogram. . . . I've worked for Columbia. . . . I've worked for Warners. . . . I've worked for Metro . . . but a screwier outfit I never did see! (BENSON and LAW enter in costume of beefeaters. They, too, wear busbies.)

C.F. (whose nails are being buffed). What do you want? (At the musicians) Quiet! (At the busbies, for C.F. doesn't deign to look at actors' faces) I told Wardrobe I don't like the hats.

BENSON. He doesn't like the hats.

LAW. Call Jock Whitney. We want to be in color.

C.F. (exasperated). For God's sake! This is a fine time to be masquerading.

BENSON (leaping into character; picking up stone). Wait! What a pretty stone! I wonder where that came from.

LAW (in his own big scene). I wonder.

BENSON (transporting himself to the desert). I think we've found gold, partner.

LAW (grabbing for it). Gold!

BENSON. Stand back—you desert rat!

LAW. Gold—after all these years! I'm going mad . . . mad . . . mad. . . .

C.F. Oh, stop it, boys.

LARRY (suddenly inspired. To C.F.). I wouldn't be surprised if they threw that there rock through the window.

BENSON. What an innuendo!

C.F. You didn't do that, did you, boys? Smash my Vita-glass?

LAW. To think—after all these years of loyal, faithful service— Larry Toms, you ought to be ashamed!

BENSON. The man with the poison-pen mind. We're going to tell Louella Parsons on you.

C.F. (impatiently). Very well . . . very well. . . . But I still have my suspicions. (Snaps) Now what about our story?

BENSON. Right here. (Indicating script on desk.)

LAW (takes a statuette from top of desk). Mr. Benson, for the most brilliant script of the year, the Academy takes great pleasure in presenting to you this little gargoye—

BENSON. Wrap it up, please. (LAW drops it in LARRY's hat and stands back of couch. Music plays.)

LARRY (rising in a dither). Now, listen—

(C.F. crosses below desk, retrieves statue, places it back on desk.)

GREEN (to SLADE at piano). What do you say to this, Otto, for the second chorus:

Yes, I've been kissed,  
But like Oliver Twist,  
I'm still crying for more.

(Without waiting for an answer, to C.F.) How did you like the song, C.F.?

LAW. Darn good. Can you play Over the Waves?

C.F. Boys, can't you be sensible for a moment? You're trying my patience. What about our story?

LAW. What about it? It's a rich, protean part for Larry.

LARRY. It just don't make sense.

LAW. I resent that as a gentleman and a grammarian.

C.F. Now really, boys, I'm tolerant, but I've got to see results. I'm not one to put the creative urge in a strait jacket. But you've been fired off every other lot in this industry for your pranks. Perhaps you've forgotten, Benson, but when I hired you for this job you promised me to behave in no uncertain terms. And you promised me Law would toe the line. Now, I'm warning you, boys. Let's get to work. Let's concentrate. (Crosses above desk to chair back of desk) Do you realize you boys are making more than the President of the United States?

LAW. But look at the fun he's having!

LARRY (angrily). Now looka here—

GREEN. How do you like the song, C. F.?

C.F. It lacks body.



LAW. No breasts.

C.F. That's exactly it— Pallid.

GREEN. Come on, Otto.

SLADE (*starts for door*). This isn't my idea of a fair audition.

GREEN. Wait'll they hear it at the Coconut Grove. They'll be sorry. (*GREEN and SLADE exit. PEGGY enters and LAW, humming "Merry Widow," intercepts her, dances a few measures with her.*)

C.F. Listen, boys—we've had enough of this.

(*SUSIE enters carrying a tray. SUSIE is a waitress. We worship SUSIE. Why describe her? We'll tell you what she wears—the full-blown costume of a Hollywood waitress. Of her blonde fragility, her intricate but blameless sex life, and the ineffable charm of her touching naïveté we won't say a word.*)

LAW. Lunch!

BENSON. Grub! Susie, I love you. (*PEGGY exits. She never comes back. Why should she?*)

C.F. Wait a minute—wait a minute— (*LAW gets end table and places it in front of couch. BENSON takes tray from SUSIE.*)

SUSIE (*weakly*). Please, Mr. Benson, be careful.

LAW. Put that tray right down here.

SUSIE (*quavering*). Thanks. . . . It's not very heavy. . . . (*She then collapses neatly on the floor.*)

C.F. Good Lord!

LAW (*bending over her*). Susie—Susie—

BENSON (*grabbing phone*). Get the doctor over here—right away—

LAW. Somebody give me water. (*BENSON takes glass from tray on table.*)

C.F. (*disapprovingly*). This is a nice thing to happen in my office. . . . Who is this girl, anyway?

LAW (*putting water to her as he kneels beside her*). Come on, Susie. (*Lifting her head up to glass.*)

LARRY (*whose father wrote letters to the papers*). That commissary shouldn't employ people with epilepsy.

C.F. (*bitter, still*). I had an actor who did that to me once. Held up my shooting schedule fourteen days.

LAW. She's all right. Here.

SUSIE. Did you all get napkins? (*Opens her eyes for the first time.*)

BENSON. Now, Susie—get into this chair.

SUSIE. Thanks. (*She sits.*)

C.F. (*sharply*). What's wrong with you, young woman?

SUSIE (*still quavering*). Nothing. . . . I'm much better now. . . . Thanks.

C.F. Where's that doctor?

SUSIE. Did you call for a doctor? You didn't have to.

C.F. Do you get these epileptic fits often?

SUSIE. I didn't have an epileptic fit.

C.F. Then what's wrong with you?

SUSIE. There's nothing wrong . . . it's only natural.

C.F. Only natural for you to come into my office and collapse on the floor.

SUSIE. Oh, no, sir . . . it's only natural for you to feel sick when you're going to have a baby.

LAW. A baby!

BENSON. Susie, you're not going to have a baby!

SUSIE. That's what they told me. . . .

BENSON. Susie's going to have a baby!

LAW. Let's get drunk!

C.F. (*into phone*). Tell that doctor not to come. You heard me. I don't want him. (*He hangs up*) I won't have my office converted into a maternity ward! (*He turns on SUSIE*) I don't think much of your husband—letting you work at a time like this!

SUSIE. Oh, but I haven't got a husband.

C.F. Huh?

SUSIE (*rises*). You'd better eat your lunch before it gets cold. Have you all got napkins?

LAW (*humbly*). The new generation! Faces the facts of nature without squeamishness, without subterfuge. "I haven't got a husband," she says. "It's only natural," she says. "I'm go-

ing to have a baby." . . . Susie, you're magnificent.

SUSIE. I'm quitting at the end of the week so I thought I'd tell everybody why. I wouldn't want them to think I was discontented.

LAW. Our little mother!

SUSIE. Oh, don't make fun of me.

LAW (*rises*). Fun? I've never been so touched in my life. Susie, I feel purified.

BENSON. Susie—can we be godfather?

SUSIE. Do you mean it?

BENSON. Do we mean it? We haven't got a baby. And we've been collaborating for years.

SUSIE. Oh, I think that would be wonderful for Happy to have writers for a godfather.

BENSON. Happy?

SUSIE. I'm going to call him Happy—even if he's a girl. Because I want him to be happy—even if he's a girl.

BENSON. Beautiful! A beautiful thought! Where are you going to have this baby, Susie?

SUSIE. In the County Hospital. It's all fixed. I was very lucky because I've only lived in the county three months and I'm not eligible.

C.F. Now, listen, boys—enough of this.

LAW (*into phone*). Give me the Cedars of Lebanon Hospital—and make it snappy.



BENSON (*jubilant*). We've got a baby!

C.F. Just a minute. Hang up that phone. (BENSON *good-naturedly brushes his arm down*.)

LAW. Dr. Marx, please. . . . Willy, this is Law of Benson and Law. Reserve the best suite in the house for us. I'm serious. Dead serious. A little friend of ours is going to have a baby and we want the goddamnedest confinement you've got in stock . . . .

BENSON. Day and night nurse.

LAW (*To BENSON*). And not the one with the buck teeth either. She's dynamite. (*Into phone*) We want everything that Gloria Swanson had—only double. What's that? Bill? Bill the studio, of course. (*He hangs up*.)

C.F. You'll do no such thing! What kind of a gag is this? (MISS CREWS *enters*.)

MISS CREWS. Do you want to hear the trumpet call? The men are here. Music Department wants your O.K.

C.F. Trumpets?

MISS CREWS. For *Young England*.

C.F. Look here—I haven't time to listen to them now. Come back here at two o'clock. And give it to me from out there. I don't want them blasting in my ear. (Meanwhile BENSON and LAW have been in *whispered conference*.)

MISS CREWS. Yes, Mr. Friday. (Exits.)

C.F. Now, boys—let's get together on this. (*Turns on SUSIE from below desk*) And you—what are you sitting here for? Get out! (*SUSIE tries to rise*.)

LAW. Sit right where you are. (*Crosses to front of desk*) Don't you bark at our inspiration! We've got it!

C.F. What?

LAW (*with mounting excitement*). A baby!

C.F. Boys, I'm a patient man, but you're trying me.

BENSON (*awed*). Larry Toms and a baby!

LAW (*to C.F.*). Do you see it?

LARRY (*bellowing*). Wait a minute—wait a minute!

LAW (*quickly*). He finds a baby—in the Rockies—

BENSON (*inspired; quickly to C.F.*). Girl with a no-good gambler—out of Las Vegas—has a baby . . . gambler is killed. Girl leaves baby on the ranger's door step. Larry is the ranger.

LAW (*dramatizing it all*). My God, he says—a baby!

BENSON (*awed*). A baby!

LAW. The most precious thing in life. The cutest, God-damn little bastard you ever saw.

BENSON. Tugging at every mother's heart. And every potential mother.

LAW. And who isn't?

BENSON. A love story between Larry and the baby—

LAW. The two outcasts! Get it?

BENSON. And then he meets the mother!

LAW. She wants her baby back.

BENSON. She's been through the fires of hell.

LAW. The man she loved . . . let her down. . . .

BENSON. She hates men . . . all men. . . .

LAW. She won't look at Larry.

BENSON (*to LARRY*). No. There she sits . . . bitter, brooding, cynical, but underneath—a mother's heart.

LAW. Out on the Rockies—

BENSON. The hell with the Rockies—back to the Foreign Legion!

LAW. Right! Larry's joined to forget. He's out on the march. We can use all that stock stuff—and he finds a baby!

BENSON. He's gone off to fight the Riffs.

LAW. The hell with the Riffs! Ethiopians!

BENSON. Stick to the Riffs. We don't want any race problem.

LAW. Right! She doesn't know if he's coming back.

BENSON. She's waiting—waiting!

LAW. We cut to the Riffs—

BENSON. Cut back—

LAW (*to BENSON*). Right into the battle.

BENSON (*really inspired now*). His father's the Colonel!

LAW. Talk about Kipling—

BENSON. Talk about scope—sweep—what a set-up!

LAW. A love story!

BENSON. A great love story!

LAW. Mary Magdalen of the Foreign Legion and the West Point man who wanted to forget!

BENSON (*rises*). The baby brings them together, splits them apart, brings them together—

LAW. Boy meets girl—

BENSON. Boy loses girl—

LAW. Boy gets girl!

C.F. (*rising in excitement*). Boys, I think you've got something! Let's go up and try it on B.K. while it's hot.

LAW. Let's go! (*They move forward*.)

LARRY (*crosses to behind couch*). Wait a minute—you can't act with a baby. They steal every scene— Look what happened to Chevalier.

LAW. Are you selling motherhood short? (LAW, BENSON and C.F. *exit through next speech*.)



LARRY. They'll be looking at the baby when they should be looking at me. I tell you—I won't play it. *(Follows off. SUSIE tries to rise, now she is left alone. She sits down again. RODNEY, in the Coldstream Guards uniform, enters. SUSIE turns.)*

RODNEY. Oh, I'm sorry. I hope I didn't startle you.

SUSIE. Oh, no. *(Then, as he looks at C.F.'s desk).* They all stepped out and they didn't even touch their lunch.

RODNEY *(licking his lips involuntarily)*. Lunch?—You don't happen to know when Mr. Friday is coming back?

SUSIE. No, I don't.

RODNEY. I did want to see him. It's rather urgent. Do you mind if I wait here?

SUSIE. No, of course not. *(He seats himself on couch, near a tray. There is an awkward silence. SUSIE stares straight ahead. RODNEY plays with a cracker. Finally SUSIE breaks the silence)* What are you supposed to be?

RODNEY. Eh? Oh! That's just it. . . . I'm supposed to be a Buckingham Palace Guard, sergeant major—*(He pops the cracker into his mouth and swallows it. SUSIE looks at him rather intently)* Good Lord! What am I doing?

SUSIE. You're eating Mr. Friday's cracker.

RODNEY. I'm awfully sorry. I don't understand how I—

SUSIE. You must be very hungry.

RODNEY. Not a bit. Not at all.

SUSIE. You *look* hungry.

RODNEY. Do I?

SUSIE. Why don't you have something? They'll never eat it. They're always sending things back they order—never even touched.

RODNEY. Really?

SUSIE. You'll only be doing me a favor.

RODNEY. Oh?

SUSIE. I won't have so much to carry back to the commissary. Sometimes I think I carry back more than I bring.

RODNEY. You're pulling my leg, of course.

SUSIE. What did you say?

RODNEY. You're not really a waitress.

SUSIE. Sure I am.

RODNEY *(triumphantly)*. Waitresses don't usually sit in producers' offices.

SUSIE. They do when they don't feel well.

RODNEY. You don't feel well? Oh, I'm sorry. Is there anything I can do?

SUSIE. No, thanks.

RODNEY. But what's wrong?

SUSIE. Oh, there's no use telling you. I told Mr. Friday and he made such a fuss about it I guess I better keep it to myself.

RODNEY. I'm afraid I don't quite understand.

SUSIE. Try the chicken soup. It's very good.

RODNEY. Are you seriously suggesting that I filch some of this broth?

SUSIE. We make it special for B.K. with nine chickens.

RODNEY. Well, dash it, I will eat it. Just to make the joke good! *(He laughs weakly and picks up the bowl and puts it to his lips, and sips it.)*

SUSIE *(warningly)*. It's hot!

RODNEY *(now quite gay)*. So I've learned.

SUSIE. When did you eat last?

RODNEY *(lying, of course)*. I had my lunch an hour ago.

SUSIE. Have some crackers with it.

RODNEY. Thanks.

SUSIE. You're English, aren't you?

RODNEY. Yes, of course.

SUSIE. So is Ronald Colman.

RODNEY *(bolting his food)*. So he is.

SUSIE. I like the way the English talk.

RODNEY. Do you?

SUSIE. It's very soothing.

RODNEY. What an idea!

SUSIE. Of course, that's only *my* idea. I'm very ignorant.

RODNEY. Oh, please don't say that. I think you're very intelligent.

SUSIE. Oh, I'm intelligent. But I don't know anything.

RODNEY. You're an extraordinary girl.

SUSIE. I've never been to high school.

RODNEY *(gallantly)*. May I say that's the high school's loss?

SUSIE. But some day I'll go to high school. That's my secret ambition. Try the ham hocks. The cook eats them himself. He comes from Czechoslovakia.

RODNEY. Does he really? Look here—I feel an awful swine guzzling by myself. Won't you join me?

SUSIE. Well, I'm not very hungry, but I can eat.

RODNEY. Good! *(He rises and adjusts a chair for her.)*

SUSIE. It's funny how I keep on eating.

RODNEY. Some ham hocks?

SUSIE. No. Happy doesn't like ham. He likes milk.

RODNEY *(mystified)*. I beg your pardon? *(But he doesn't press the point)* Did you say milk?

SUSIE. Yes. Milk.

RODNEY *(as he pours)*. There you are.



SUSIE. Thanks.

RODNEY. Cozy, this—what?

SUSIE. It's good milk. Have some.

RODNEY. Do you know, I think you're the most extraordinary girl I ever met.

SUSIE. Why?

RODNEY. You're so kind. You're so direct, so sincere. Most girls one meets play about with words so. They're so infernally smart. They make one feel like a worm.

SUSIE. Of course, I'm different on account of my condition. Most girls aren't in my condition.

RODNEY. Your condition?

SUSIE. The minute I found out about Happy I said to myself: I'm going to be very good and very sincere, because then Happy will be very good and very sincere.

RODNEY. I'm afraid I don't quite follow.

SUSIE (*sighing*). Nobody does.

RODNEY. Eh? Oh, yes. . . . As I was saying—What was I saying?

SUSIE (*looking into his eyes and feeling strangely stirred*). Have some mustard.

RODNEY. Do you know, I must confess. I was hungry. As a matter of fact, I was close to wiring home for funds today. But I didn't. (*Looks very determined, righteous.*)

SUSIE. You mean you need money, and you can get it—and you won't wire for it?

RODNEY. I can't—and keep my pride. I told *them* I was on my own. You see, my family didn't want me to act. Not that they've any prejudices against the stage—or the films. Not at all. In fact, one of my aunts was a Gaiety girl. Quite all right. But they don't think I *can* act. That's what hurts.

SUSIE. Can you act?

RODNEY. No.

SUSIE. Not at all?

RODNEY. Not at all. I'm awful!

SUSIE. Oh, that's too bad.

RODNEY. But I only realized it in the stock company . . . out in Pasadena. I was the worst member of the company. At first I thought it was because they were always giving me character parts—American gangsters—and that sort of thing. And then one week I played a Cambridge undergraduate. And, mind you, I've been a Cambridge undergraduate. And do you know that I was utterly unconvincing?

SUSIE. Then why don't you give it up?

RODNEY. Pride.

SUSIE. I can understand that—Pride.

RODNEY. Can you really?

SUSIE. Sure I can.

RODNEY. That's why I simply must see Mr. Friday. (*Suddenly*) Look here—(*He takes a book from couch and opens it*) Look at this color plate. Does this uniform remotely resemble the one I'm wearing? (*He crosses down right.*)

SUSIE (*looks at book; then at RODNEY*). Yes, I think so.

RODNEY (*crosses to her left*). But, my dear girl, look at the coat and the buttons—and the boots—note the heels—and look at mine. (*Steps back.*)

SUSIE. Well, come to think of it, I guess it is different.

RODNEY. Of course. And I've taken this book right out of their own research department. When I show this to Mr. Friday he's bound to be sporting enough to admit an error.

SUSIE. Oh, sure.

RODNEY (*leaning over her*). You see, all I want is to appear in *one* picture—and then I can tell the family: "I've done it. But it's not good enough. I'm chucking it." But I'll have my pride.

SUSIE (*gazing at him*). I see.

RODNEY. Oh . . . I say . . . I'm not boring you?

SUSIE. Oh, no. Finish your ham.

RODNEY. Eh! Oh! Don't mind if I do. A bit of pie for you? (*He extends plate with fork.*)

SUSIE (*brightly. Almost flirting*). Well, I'll try. (*She smiles at him and he at her, fork poised in mid-air.*)

RODNEY. Do you know, I've never enjoyed a lunch quite as much as this one—thanks to you. (*Suddenly*) Would it bore you if I tried out my lines—in *Young England*, you know?

SUSIE. Oh, no.

RODNEY. Very well. (*He rises, holding glass of milk*) Gentlemen, the Queen—(*He waits.*)

SUSIE. Is that all?

RODNEY. That's all. But of course I could say: "Gentlemen, I give you the Queen." Fatten up the part a bit, what? . . . Gentlemen, I give you the Queen! . . . Sounds rather better, doesn't it? (*Then with profound bass*) Gentlemen, I give you the Queen! (*LARRY enters followed by C.F. C.F. stares.*)

LARRY. I don't cotton to the whole idea, and if B.K.'s got any sense, he won't listen to those maniacs.

C.F. What's going on here?

RODNEY. How'd you do. . . . I . . . I . . . (*Puts glass of milk back on tray.*)

C.F. What is this? A tête-à-tête in my office! Good Gad! You've been drinking my milk!

SUSIE. It's all right, Mr. Friday. I told him he could have it.

C.F. You told him?

RODNEY. I'm awfully sorry. I owe you an apology, and money, of course. Will you accept my I.O.U.? And I have the book—from Research. I can show you the really authentic uni-



form. I'm sure if you study this—  
(SUSIE finds the page and hands book  
to RODNEY.)

C.F. I've a good mind to call the  
studio police.

SUSIE (rises). Oh, please don't do  
that, Mr. Friday.

LARRY. That's what you get for hav-  
ing foreign actors around. Take the  
food right out of your mouth!

RODNEY. I'm terribly sorry, of course.

C.F. Get out!

RODNEY. I realize there's nothing I  
can say— (He turns to SUSIE) except  
—my eternal gratitude. (He grabs  
her by the hand and shakes it. Exits.)

SUSIE. Oh, you shouldn't have done  
that. He's been having a terrible  
time.

C.F. (glaring at SUSIE). Get these  
dishes out of here.

SUSIE (meekly). Yes, sir. (She be-  
gins piling up dishes on tray.)

LARRY. The idea of a baby! The more  
I think of it, the less I like it.

C.F. (crosses to chair at desk). Larry,  
you're driving me into a nervous  
breakdown. I had to take you out of  
B.K.'s office so you'd stop arguing be-  
fore he could make a decision.

LARRY. There's nothing to decision.  
I won't play it.

C.F. If B.K. likes the idea, you'll play  
it.

LARRY. Maybe—and maybe not. I'm  
willing to bet ten to one right now

B.K. kicks the whole story in the  
ash can. He's no fool. (BENSON and  
LAW enter in shirt sleeves. They've  
obviously had a hot session with  
B.K.)

BENSON. Sold! Lock, stock and baby!  
B.K. says it's the best mother-love  
story he's heard in years.

LARRY. What? What's that?

LAW (magnificently). Susie, put that  
tray down!

SUSIE. Please, Mr. Law, I've got to  
get back to the commissary.

LARRY. You sold him that story, huh?

BENSON. Lie down, actor!

LARRY. I'll see about this. (He exits.)

BENSON. Now listen, Susie—and lis-  
ten carefully.

LAW. Let me tell her, will you? (He  
faces her) Susie, nature meant you  
for a sucker. You were designed to  
get the short end of the stick. The girl  
who gets slapped.

BENSON (quickly). But we're chang-  
ing all that.

LAW. Susie, in real life, you'd have  
your baby in the County Hospital  
. . . get yourself a job, if lucky, with  
a philanthropic Iowa family of four-  
teen adults and twelve minors for  
twenty bucks a month. And when  
your grateful son grew up he'd squirt  
tobacco juice in your eye and join the  
Navy.

BENSON. There you go with your  
God-damn realism. (Turns to SUSIE  
with paper and pencil) Sign, please—

SUSIE. Here? (She signs; and then  
turns, brightly) What is it?

BENSON. Just a power of attorney  
authorizing us to deal for you in all  
matters with this studio.

C.F. What power of attorney? What  
are you boys up to?

LAW. We said to ourselves upstairs—  
why shouldn't Susie have the good  
things of life?

BENSON. After all, we're godfathers.

SUSIE. I—I don't feel very good.

LAW. Get this, Susie. We've just sold  
a story about a baby.

BENSON. Sweetest story ever told!

LAW. A new-born baby.

BENSON. Brand new.

LAW. We're going to watch that baby  
—the first hair—the first tooth—the  
first smile—

BENSON. The same baby. No switch-  
ing—first time in the history of pic-  
tures. That baby's going to grow up  
before your eyes.

LAW. Open up like a flower. . . .  
Just like the Dionne quintuplets.

BENSON. Minute he's born we set the  
cameras on him. We stay with him—

LAW. That baby's going to gurgle and  
google and drool his way to stardom!

SUSIE. But—

LAW. And that baby, Susie, is  
Happy. Upstairs in B.K.'s office we  
put your unborn child into pictures!

SUSIE (transported). Happy—in pic-  
tures! Oh—that's wonderful—  
(Then, with a sudden gasp) Oh!

LAW (quickly) Susie! What's the  
matter?

SUSIE. I don't know . . . I . . . I  
. . . I don't feel so good . . . I  
think . . . I . . . (In these broken  
words, SUSIE tells all. BENSON helps  
SUSIE to lie on couch. LAW looks over  
SUSIE's shoulder; whistles; runs to  
phone.)

LAW (into phone). Emergency! Get  
the ambulance over to Mr. Friday's  
office right away—get the doctor—get  
the nurse. . .

C.F. (staring). What is it? In my of-  
fice. Good Gad! Miss Crews! (Door  
opens.)

MISS CREWS (at door). The trumpet  
are here!  
(Trumpets sound their triumphant  
clarion call.)

LAW (through the Wagnerian brass,  
to BENSON, awed). Happy's on his  
way!

CURTAIN



## ACT TWO

## SCENE I

*We are in your neighborhood theatre, seven months later.*

*As the curtain rises we face a motion-picture screen, and to the sound-track accompaniment of "Home on the Range," these glaring titles pop out at us:*

IF YOU LIKED HAPPY  
IN  
"WANDERING HEARTS"  
YOU'LL ADORE HIM  
IN  
"GOLDEN NUGGET"

*This is what is known as a trailer, in technical terms. It is shown at neighborhood theatres prior to the release of the picture so that the customers will be teased into returning the following week.*

*There are, of course, beautifully composed shots of horses, men and open spaces, and finally we come upon a series of close-ups of HAPPY, over which these titles dance:*

HAPPY!  
HAPPY!  
HAPPY!

*The sound track blares forth "Ride of the Valkyries."*

CROWN PRINCE OF COMEDY!  
KING OF TRAGEDY!  
EMPEROR OF EMOTION!

*Just prior to these titles we have seen a Chinese, who has emerged from God knows where, but what is a ranch without a Chinese? The general idea is that the Chinese finds HAPPY on the doorstep and communicates his discovery to LARRY TOMS. There follows a title which explains all:*

THE DESERT WAIF WHO MADE  
A SOFTIE OF A BAD MAN

*The picture is further described as:*

THE BIG GOLD STRIKE  
OF MOTHER LOVE

*We see horses galloping, men falling, revolvers barking, and nice, big, wavy*

THRILLS

CHILLS

*The credit card is as follows:*

FROM A STORY BY H. G. WELLS  
ADAPTED BY J. CARLYLE BENSON AND ROBERT LAW  
DIRECTED BY SERGE BORODOKOV

*and, appropriately enough, in solitary grandeur:*

PRODUCED BY C. ELLIOT FRIDAY

## SCENE II

*The screen lifts, and once more we are in MR. FRIDAY's office.*

*C.F. is at his desk, MISS CREWS is seated upstage and at desk; BENSON is on the couch beside LARRY. ROSETTI is seated on the piano bench.*

BENSON. Read those figures, Miss Crews.

MISS CREWS. Twenty-six thousand eight hundred and seventy-five in Detroit.

MISS CREWS. Eighty-two thousand at the Music Hall. Forty-eight thousand five hundred and thirty-eight in Des Moines.

BENSON (to C.F.). And you sit there and tell me Happy isn't worth thirty-five hundred a week?

BENSON. Without a stage show.

C.F. But, Benson, be reasonable. I can't go to B.K. with any such fantastic figure.

LARRY. I always went big in Des Moines.

MISS CREWS. Twenty-eight thousand in Newark.

BENSON (sighing). Read that list again, Miss Crews.

C.F. Never mind, Miss Crews.

LARRY. That's one of my big towns.

MISS CREWS. Forty-two thousand three hundred and eighty-four in San Francisco.

LARRY. What about me? *Wandering Hearts* was my picture, wasn't it? Folks came to see me. They didn't come to see Happy.

LARRY. I'm big there, too.

BENSON (taking "Variety" from his pocket). Let me read "Variety" to



the assembled multitude. *Wandering Hearts* socko in Minneapolis despite Larry Toms . . .

LARRY. Huh?

BENSON. Mexico nuts about Happy but no like Larry Toms—

LARRY. Where? Where does it say that? (*He takes paper. ROSETTI rises and looks over LARRY's shoulder.*)

BENSON. This is an accidental business in an accidental world. Happy is going to get it while it's hot.

C.F. Benson, you owe me something.

BENSON. What?

C.F. Gratitude. . . . After all, the idea of a baby was mine—more or less.

BENSON. More or less.

C.F. I made that baby act.

BENSON. All right, Svengali.

C.F. Shall we say three hundred a week for Happy?

BENSON. Shall we say thirty-five hundred a week for Happy?

C.F. I've a good mind to have you thrown out of this studio.

BENSON. All right. Happy goes with us. We've still got that power of attorney.

C.F. Of course, I didn't mean that literally.

BENSON. I did. (*Telephone rings.*)

C.F. Hello. . . . Yes, Miss Goodwin. . . . What? You can't write about

Brussels because you've never been there? My dear girl, why do you think we have a research department? After all, Bernard Shaw wrote *Don Juan* and he never went to Bulgaria. Imagination, my dear girl—imagination. (*Hangs up*) Look here. Benson, I knew I couldn't deal with Law. I thought I could with you. After all, you're in no position to antagonize this studio. Some day you may need my friendship.

BENSON. I'm supposed to be working with our Mr. Law on a story. To wit: *Tiger Tamer*. Do you mind if I join my partner in a little English composition?

C.F. Some day you may be very sorry for this, Benson.

BENSON. What do you think, Miss Crews.

MISS CREWS. I think Happy ought to get it while it's hot.

C.F. Get back to your desk.

MISS CREWS. Yes, Mr. Friday. (*She exits.*)

LARRY (*waving "Variety"*). I said that baby'd ruin me! Well, he ain't going to steal no more pictures! I won't play that new scene.

C.F. (*irritably*). What new scene?

LARRY. I'm supposed to wash Happy.

C.F. That's a cute scene. I read it.

LARRY. Am I the type that washes babies?

C.F. Why not?

LARRY. 'Tain't manly!

BENSON. No. You want the baby to wash you!

LARRY. Listen!

BENSON. Any further business before the house? (*Turns to LARRY*) By the way, I saw you with Susie at the Trocadero last night. We don't approve of you as an escort. Remind me to speak to her about that.

C.F. Benson, I'm asking you once more. Be fair—be reasonable.

BENSON. I am. We're asking thirty-five hundred a week. We'll consider three thousand and settle for twenty-five hundred. But not a penny less. Incidentally, Fox'll pay twenty-five hundred for Happy. We promised to let them know by Saturday. No hurry, of course. (*Exits.*)

C.F. Have you ever seen anything more damnably unfair? Imagine writers holding up this studio at the point of a gun. It's nothing but blackmail.

ROSETTI (*rises*). I've got a hunch, C.F. When did you sign Happy? Do you remember?

C.F. Of course I remember . . . July fourteenth . . . Fall of the Bastille. I remember my wife pointing out the coincidence at the time. Why?

ROSETTI (*crosses to desk*). I've got a hunch that power of attorney expires pretty soon. I want to be prepared.

C.F. Rosetti, I'm not interested in the future. I'm interested in signing Happy right now—before we lose him to Fox. (*Phone rings.*)

ROSETTI. You've got to have vision in this business, C.F. (*He reaches for other phone, changes his mind, and then exits.*)

C.F. (*into phone*). Hello. . . . Yes, listen, Gregg. . . . I ran the sound track on *Young England* last night. I don't like the trumpets. They're sour. They spoil the whole mood. . . . What? . . . What's that? You can't walk out on a picture like that. What kind of a director are you if you can't take constructive criticism . . . hello . . . hello . . . (*Hangs up*) Gregg is walking out on *Young England*, I can't sign Happy—

LARRY. What about me?

C.F. Ten thousand feet of film sick—and he walks out. I'll have to run the picture all the afternoon and sit up all night cutting it. (*MISS CREWS enters.*)

MISS CREWS. Happy's through for the day.

NURSE (*wheeling in a streamlined baby carriage*). Through for the day.

DOCTOR (*as he enters*). Through for the day. Is his mother here?

MISS CREWS. No, Doctor, but she should be here very soon.

NURSE (*backing carriage in front of desk*). Say da-da to Mr. Friday.

C.F. (*waving obediently*). Da-da, Happy.

DOCTOR. Nurse, take the little trouper out into the garden and keep him in the sunshine.



LARRY. He's through for the day and I'm working until eight. He's sure got it soft.

(NURSE exits with HAPPY. ROSETTI enters.)

DOCTOR. They've been overworking you, have they?

LARRY. I ain't feeling so hearty, doc. I wish you'd look me over.

C.F. (rises and goes below desk). Just your imagination. I wish I had your constitution. I've got to see B.K. (He exits.)

DOCTOR. All you picture people are hypochondriacs. However, come up to my office and I'll look you over. (He exits.)

LARRY. I'm a star. I've been a star for ten years. I've worked hard to get where I'm at— (He rises. Phone rings.)

ROSETTI (at phone). Hello. . . . Yes . . . speaking—

LARRY. I don't drink. I don't smoke. I don't swear. I don't get into no scandal. And the girls I passed up!

ROSETTI (into phone). Oh, you've got that, Mr. Williams? Fine. When does it expire? . . . It *did* expire? Last week? . . . No, don't do that. I'll tell the boys. . . . You see, I may be handling Happy's new contract. Right. (He hangs up.)

LARRY. They ain't making pictures here no more. They're shooting nothing but close-ups of babies. Happy laughing! Happy crying! Happy! . . . Happy! . . .

ROSETTI. Larry, I've just checked with the Legal Department. The boys' power of attorney expired last week. And they don't even know it.

LARRY. What's that got to do with me?

ROSETTI. Larry, there's been something developing in the back of my mind for some weeks. Why do you think I asked you to take Susie to the Trocadero?

LARRY. She talked me deaf, dumb, and blind about going to high school. Set me back fourteen bucks. Lucky she don't drink.

ROSETTI (the dreamer). I wanted you to get friendly with her because I visualized a way for you and me to get Happy—for life.

LARRY. Huh?

ROSETTI (with Napoleonic intensity). Larry, here's the tactical move. You marry Susie.

LARRY. Marry her?

ROSETTI. That's what I said.

LARRY. I won't do it.

ROSETTI (who knows his client). All right, suit yourself.

LARRY. We got community property in California. If there's a bust-up the woman gets half.

ROSETTI. Larry, I don't want to hurt your feelings, but I can't get you a new contract the way things are now. B.K. is dickering to borrow Clark Gable or Gary Cooper for Happy's next picture.

LARRY (touched to the quick). What?

ROSETTI. I'd marry her myself if I was free. Show me a girl with a better heart—with more culture—

LARRY. You don't expect me to believe what the studio hands out—her husband was a prominent portrait painter who went down on the *Morro Castle*?

ROSETTI (indignantly). Who are you to cast the first stone?

LARRY. I don't want to marry nobody. Anyways, there's no sense to it.

ROSETTI (patiently). If you marry her, you're Happy's legal guardian and we control the situation. A father and son team off the screen as well as on! Is that practical or am I just an idealist? Look at Guy Lathrop! He argued with me when I told him to marry Betty Bird. But he finally had the sense to play along with me and we've been drawing top money ever since.

LARRY. I don't want to marry nobody.

ROSETTI. Larry, you're at the crossroads right now. One road leads to stardom and big pictures, with Happy and me. The other leads to Poverty Row and cheap Westerns. Will you put your hand in mine and let me guide you?  
(MISS CREWS enters.)

MISS CREWS. Mr. Toms, you're wanted on the set.

LARRY (growling). All right.

MISS CREWS. Oh, hello, Mrs. Seabrook . . . how nice you look. (For

SUSIE enters. She wears a white middie blouse and a navy blue, pleated skirt.)

SUSIE. We had gym today. . . . Hello, Larry. . . . Hello, Mr. Rosetti. I hope I didn't interrupt anything important.

ROSETTI. Not at all. . . . (Significantly) I'll be in the Legal Department, Larry. (He exits.)

SUSIE. Where's Happy?

MISS CREWS. Happy's in the garden with his nurse. He's all through for the day.

SUSIE. Oh, that's wonderful. I don't get to see him very much. He's working and I'm going to high school. (CHAUFFEUR enters.)

CHAUFFEUR. Excuse me, Miss.

SUSIE. What is it, Simpson?

CHAUFFEUR. You forgot your algebra book, Miss.

SUSIE. Oh, thank you, Simpson. That was very thoughtful. (CHAUFFEUR exits.)

MISS CREWS. And I have a new batch of fan mail for you and Happy (Exits.)

SUSIE. It's wonderful to get mail. Nobody used to write me before. Now I even get letters from Japan. (MISS CREWS enters with letters) All those letters? Thank you, Miss Crews.

LARRY (sighs). Miss Crews, call the set and tell 'em I may be a little late.

MISS CREWS. Very well. (She exits.)



SUSIE (*sitting on desk, poring over her hand-written, moronic literature*). Here's one from North Carolina. Oh, the poor thing! There's so much sadness in this world. (LARRY sighs; she looks up at him) You look sad, too, Larry. What's the matter?

LARRY. Well—(*He rises and crosses to SUSIE*)—uh—I been waiting a long time to talk to you, Susie. I couldn't go to the high school. All those girls would mob me for autographs, especially when I tell them who I am.

SUSIE. All the girls are crazy about Clark Gable.

LARRY (*clears his throat*). Susie—I can get two tickets for the opening at the Chinese—the de Mille picture.

SUSIE. Can you?

LARRY. I knew that'd knock you over.

SUSIE. Oh, it'll be wonderful.

LARRY. I'm always thinkin' of little things to make life wonderful—for you.

SUSIE (*nods*). Everybody is.

LARRY (*bridling*). What do you mean—everybody?

SUSIE. Only the other day Mr. Benson said something very true. He said: "Susie, you're Cinderella." And that's just what I feel like. And you know what else he said? He said: "All you need now is a Prince Charming."

LARRY. He did, huh? Who did he have in mind?

SUSIE. Oh, nobody.

LARRY. He didn't mention me, did he?

SUSIE. Oh, no. (LARRY grunts) Of course, I've never met a Prince Charming. I wouldn't know what he looks like. Although, one day an awful nice boy came in here.

LARRY. Who?

SUSIE. I don't even know his name. He was in uniform and I was in my condition—I've never seen him since.

LARRY. You shouldn't be thinking of him. You should be thinking of Happy.

SUSIE. But I do . . . only sometimes it gets lonesome for me, especially at night. And of course, Mr. Benson and Mr. Law are busy all the time. Happy used to say good night to them on the telephone. Not really good night—just goo-n'—just like that. But they're so busy they won't come to the telephone any more.

LARRY. Happy needs a father.

SUSIE. Do you think so?

LARRY. Well, you want him to be able to look the whole world in the face, don't you?

SUSIE (*twinkling*). He does!

LARRY. I mean when he grows up. He's gonna be ashamed when he finds out he never had a father.

SUSIE. Of course he had a father.

LARRY. I mean—a married father.

SUSIE. He was married—but I didn't know it.

(LARRY winces.)

LARRY. Uh—listen, Susie—I'm mighty fond of you and Happy. (*He tries playing the bashful Western hero*) Mighty fond.

SUSIE. Are you really, Larry?

LARRY. Mighty fond.

SUSIE. Who would have thought six months ago that I'd be sitting in the same room with Larry Toms and he'd be saying to me he was—

LARRY. Mighty fond.

SUSIE. Do you know something very odd? When I first came to California, it was raining very hard—oh, it rained for three weeks—it was very unusual—and I was looking for a job, and I couldn't find one—and I had fifteen cents—and I just had to get out of the rain—and I went into a theatre and there you were—on the screen—

LARRY. Mighty fond—

SUSIE (*awed*). That's just what you were saying to Mary Brian—and now you're saying it to me.

LARRY. What was the picture?

SUSIE. *Thunder over Arizona*. It was a beautiful picture. I don't remember what it was about, but I saw it four times. Until I got dry.

LARRY. Susie, soon's this picture's over, how'd you like to come up to my ranch? You and Happy—

SUSIE (*rises*). Ranch? Oh, that would be lovely! Maybe Mr. Benson and Mr. Law could come, too?

LARRY. Maybe they could, but they won't.

SUSIE. But I couldn't go alone—without a chaperon.

LARRY. Susie—you and Happy'll love that ranch. I got a mighty nice house, big and rambling. I got plenty of barns and a corral and plenty of livestock. But no baby.

SUSIE. I know Happy'll just love it.

LARRY. Susie—I know you don't expect this, and I don't want you to get too excited—but, Susie, I been thinkin' about you and Happy—thinkin' a lot. Ever since the day you come into this office and fell on that there floor, I said to myself: Larry, there's your leadin' lady—for life.

SUSIE. Me?

LARRY. Nobody else.

SUSIE. But I don't—you won't get mad?—but I'm not in love with you.

LARRY. You shouldn't be thinking of yourself—I'm not thinking of myself—you should be thinking of Happy.

SUSIE. I guess you're right. I don't know what to say. (*Pauses*) I'll ask Mr. Benson and Mr. Law—

LARRY. Huh?

SUSIE. They've been so good to me.

LARRY. I'm not proposing to them!

SUSIE. I know, but—



LARRY. You don't mean nothing to them. Before you came along they had a Spanish snake charmer until they got tired of her. And before that they had a broken-down pug who wiggled his ears. They was groomin' him for my place. There ain't nothin' holy to them!

SUSIE. But they've done everything for me.

LARRY (*crosses to SUSIE*). I'm offering you my ranch—my name—and a father Happy'll be proud of!

SUSIE. I know, but—

LARRY. Don't give me your answer now. Think it over. (*Pats her arm*) Only don't think too long. I'll be waiting for your answer in the Legal Department. You know where that is?

SUSIE. Oh, yes.  
(MISS CREWS *opens the door*.)

LARRY. I'll be there. (*He exits. SUSIE looks a little dazed.*)

MISS CREWS. Oh, Mrs. Seabrook—I've located that young man you were looking for. He's outside.

SUSIE. Oh, you have? Really?

MISS CREWS (*at door*). Come in. (*SUSIE tenses herself. A strange YOUNG MAN enters and stops.*)

SUSIE (*staring at him*). Oh! Oh, no, that's not him—I mean—he.

YOUNG MAN (*earnestly*). Won't I do? I've just finished a short for Hal Roach—I'm making a test for Metro tomorrow, and—

MISS CREWS (*firmly escorting him out*). Thank you for coming! (*YOUNG MAN shrugs and exits, and MISS CREWS closes the door.*)

SUSIE. He's not English.

MISS CREWS. English? We didn't have any English actors in *Young England*.

SUSIE. This boy was an extra.

MISS CREWS. Does he owe you a lot of money?

SUSIE. Oh, no. It was nothing like that.

MISS CREWS (*as it dawns on her*). Oh, I see! A personal matter! Well, I'll try again. (*Brightly.*)

SUSIE. I guess it's no use, Miss Crews. (*Sighs*) He probably swallowed his pride and went back to England.

(*BENSON and LAW enter. BENSON carries paper and pencil. BENSON sits upstage end of desk. LAW crosses to front of couch.*)

LAW. Hi, Susie! How's the little mother? Clear out. We're trying to work and a hundred chorus boys are practicing fencing underneath our windows. (*Turns to MISS CREWS*) Miss Crews, leave a note for C.F. He's got to change our office. We can't work with fencing fairies! (*Sits on couch.*)

MISS CREWS. Yes, Mr. Law. (*She exits.*)

SUSIE. Are you very busy?

BENSON. We still need an opening.

LAW. Fade-in. . . . A zoo!

SUSIE (*crossing to BENSON*). I just wanted to thank you, Mr. Benson, for the beautiful white teddy bear.

BENSON. What teddy bear?

SUSIE. Mrs. Benson brought it herself.

BENSON (*looking up from typewriter*). Oh, she did?

SUSIE. She played with Happy, too. And even after he went for his nap, she stayed and looked at him.

BENSON (*to LAW—covering*). Where were we?

SUSIE. When she left, she was crying. I think she ought to have a baby of her own.

BENSON (*angered*). Come on, Law—come on—fade-in on the zoo.

LAW. I've got it! Larry's carrying a hunk of meat for his pet tiger. He's crossing the road. Bang! The dame comes tearing down ninety miles an hour.

BENSON. Give her a little character.

LAW. She's a high-handed rich bitch. Bang! She almost runs the bastard down. . . . Where the hell do you think you're going? . . . She burns. . . . Society girl. . . . She's never been talked to like that before. . . . Why, you lousy bum, she snarls. . . . Listen, here's a cute piece of business. She bawls the hell out of him and he throws the hunk of meat right in her puss!

BENSON (*enthusiastically*). That's charming!

LAW. Listen, Susie, what are you standing there for? Go home and write in your diary.

SUSIE. Boys, I wanted to ask you something. . . .

BENSON. Fade-out!

LAW. Fade-in!

SUSIE. . . .and then I'll go.

LAW (*wearily*). What is it?

SUSIE. Do you think I should marry Larry Toms?

LAW. Who?

SUSIE. Larry Toms.

LAW (*rises, crosses below couch*). No. . . . Fade-in. . . .

BENSON. Better get a different background. We've been staying in the zoo too long.

LAW. Right! Girl's home—a Pan shot—fifteen hundred butlers with white socks. . . . (*Turns to SUSIE*) Did he ask you to marry him?

SUSIE. Yes.

LAW. Did you spit in his face?

SUSIE. He's taking me to the opening tonight. He says he's mighty fond of Happy and me.

LAW (*crosses to back of couch*). Why shouldn't he be? His contract depends on it. Even Wilkes Barre doesn't want him and they're still calling for Theda Bara—

SUSIE. Don't you think he'd be good for Happy? He's an outdoor man.



LAW. So is the fellow who collects my garbage.

BENSON. Listen, let's get on with this. Introducing the fiancé. A pale anemic louse. A business man!

LAW. Right! The minute the audience sees him they yell: Don't marry that heel.

SUSIE. I know you're very busy. . . .

LAW. Go away, Susie.

SUSIE. You boys were so sweet to me. I felt I had somebody. But lately I've been awfully alone. . . .

LAW. Sure! Everybody's alone. What do you think life is? Why do you have crowds? Because everybody's alone. (*Stops; crosses above couch to front*) That's a thought. That's what I should be writing instead of this titivating drivel. Life as it is. People as they are.

SUSIE. But that would be terrible. You don't know, Mr. Law; you don't know how awful life can be.

BENSON. When you philosophers are through I'd like to get on with this story.

SUSIE (*eagerly, to BENSON*). You wouldn't like to come out and say hello to Happy? He's in the garden. (*LAW waves her away; crosses and sits on couch. SUSIE is quite defeated now.*)

BENSON (*ignoring her*). I've got it. (*To SUSIE*) Don't bother me! (*SUSIE crosses to desk, gets mail, and fades from the scene*) I've got it! Introducing Happy! Back to the zoo—Larry gets up in the morning and there,

curled up with his pet tiger cub, is a baby! Happy!

LAW. Not bad!

BENSON. Larry looks at him. "How'd you get here?" (*He mimics LARRY's voice.*)

LAW. The baby can't answer. The tiger begins to growl. Happy cries. Larry takes the baby to his hut.

BENSON. We meet Larry's drunken pal, the comic. (*Rises and crosses to LAW*) That's where we have swell business. Two clumsy men pinning up his diapers—

LAW (*his enthusiasm gone*). Formula 284 . . . Diapers gag.

BENSON (*exulting*). Ah, yes, but the tiger runs away with the diapers! Fade-out! Now we need excitement. The tigers are loose—

LAW. How did they get loose?

BENSON (*crosses to LAW*). The comic's drunk. He opens the cages by accident. Christ! I see it! The city in uproar—the police—National Guard—the girl's come down to the zoo—she's trapped with Larry—and she baby. Fifty tigers snapping at Happy's throat.

LAW. And where does my priceless dialogue come in? (*Rises and crosses to chair back of desk*) That's the worst of hack writing. It's hard work.

BENSON. Suppose—Larry—thinks—it's—the girl's baby?

LAW. Society girls go around leaving foundlings in the zoo? (*Drinking*) Prostitution of a God-given talent!

(*Sits*) Pasteboard pictures of pasteboard people.

BENSON. Will you shut up? I've got to get this line-up today. Pearl expects me to take her to the opening.

LAW (*fiddling with the dictograph*). Eenie . . . Meenie . . . Mina . . . Mo . . . (*Dictograph buzzes*) Music Department?

GREEN'S VOICE. Yes, this is the Music Department. This is Mr. Green.

LAW (*mimics C.F.'s voice*). Not Mr. Green! This is C.F. . . . can you write me a roundelay with a symphonic undertone in about fifteen minutes? . . . Do it! (*Dictograph buzzes*) Yes?

GREEN'S VOICE. Look, Mr. Friday, did you say a lullaby?

LAW. No, I didn't say a lullaby. I said a roundelay. The sort of thing Beethoven dashes off. (*He clicks the dictograph off. ROSETTI enters.*)

ROSETTI (*genially*). Hello, boys . . . have a cigar.

LAW. Hello, buzzard. What's the occasion?

BENSON. Fade-out, stooge, we're busy.

ROSETTI. Same old boys! Anything for a gag! Well, I'm feeling pretty good myself. I've just set Larry to a long-term contract. And he didn't have to take a cut, either. I got him a nice little set-up. A joint contract with Happy!

BENSON. With Happy?

LAW (*rises*). Huh? You're crazy!

ROSETTI. Well, the mother came to me just now and said you two were tired of her. And I happened to look up your power of attorney, and it seems you didn't even care to get a new one when it expired.

BENSON. Is this on the level?

LAW. Where's that power of attorney?

BENSON. I thought you had it.

LAW (*aghast*). What'd you get for Happy?

ROSETTI. Three hundred!

LAW. Why, we turned down fifteen hundred from Fox!

ROSETTI. You should have taken it. But three hundred's a lot of money. Anyway, what's the difference? It's all in the family—now.

LAW. Where's Susie?

ROSETTI. She went out with Larry. They're going to the opening tonight. They're celebrating.

LAW. Who thought this up—you?

ROSETTI. Sure.

LAW. Why, you scavenging son of a—

ROSETTI. You better be careful how you talk to me. And you'd better be careful how you talk to Larry from now on. He's fed up with your gags and insults. You got away with a lot of stuff around here because you had Happy. Well, Larry's got



him now, and he's going to have plenty to say around here. I'm warning you. He'd like to see you boys off this lot. And he's in a position to do it—now. So be careful. If you want to keep your jobs. (*Turns away to door*) And if I had a wife who was throwing my money away before I even made it, I'd be plenty careful.

BENSON. Why, you— (*ROSETTI exits quickly. BENSON crosses to door, then turns to LAW*) Why the hell didn't you keep track of that power of attorney?

LAW. Why didn't I?

BENSON. Why the hell didn't you talk to Susie? She was in here.

LAW. Yeah.

BENSON. I see it—I see it now. Larry—Rosetti—and we let her walk right into it. Do you realize what this means? We're on our way out. (*Crosses to piano.*)

LAW. That's fine.

BENSON. Fine?

LAW. Now I'll have to go back to Vermont. Now I'll have to write.

BENSON. Pearl doesn't like Vermont.

LAW. The whims of your wife don't interest me. I've got a book—all planned.

BENSON. Listen—I want to stay in pictures. I love pictures. I'm knee-deep in debts. We've got to bust this Larry thing wide open. We've got to get Happy back.

LAW. But it's closed.

BENSON. Well, what of it? We'll open it. We've got to get Happy back.

LAW. How?

BENSON. Suppose we get Larry Tomas to break that joint contract.

LAW. All right—but how?

BENSON. He's scared green of scandal. Suppose we show up at the opening tonight with a drunken dame. *Larry's deserted wife!*

LAW. Has he got one?

BENSON. We'll get one of your tarts.

LAW. That's too damned obvious.

BENSON. Can you top it?

LAW. Let me think.

BENSON. How about a poor deserted mother? I'll bet he's got one.

LAW (*rises, carried away*). I know! *Happy's father!*

BENSON. Huh?

LAW. We're going to produce Happy's father on the air—tonight. (*Crosses to phone.*)

BENSON. Happy's father! That's swell! That's marvellous. . . . (*Pause*) But where'll we get a father?

LAW (*into phone*). *Central Casting, please. . . . Hello. I want a hand-some young extra, a gentleman, a little down at the heel, not too well*

fed, neat business suit—shiny but well pressed; quiet manner . . . (*Door opens and RODNEY enters.*)

BENSON. What do you want?

RODNEY. I received a message from Miss Crews but apparently she's stepped out. Is Mr. Friday here? I assume I've been called for a part.

LAW (*into phone, as his eyes refuse to leave RODNEY*). Never mind—cancel it. (*Hangs up.*)

BENSON. Will you shut the door, please? (*RODNEY complies*) So you're an actor, my boy? (*Paternaly.*)

RODNEY. Of course, I haven't had much experience. As a matter of fact, I never appeared in a picture. I almost did. Since then I've been out of the profession, so to speak. Odd jobs—barbecue stand, and when that closed I offered to show tourists homes of the movie stars. Unfortunately I haven't a motor car and they won't walk. . . . I don't mind saying this call was an extremely pleasant surprise.

LAW. He's perfect!

RODNEY. Do you really think I'll do?

LAW (*inspired*). Benson, take these lines. . . . (*BENSON goes to chair.*)

RODNEY. Oh, are there lines? Then the fee will be fifteen dollars, I assume?

LAW. Fifteen? One hundred for you.

RODNEY. I'm afraid I'm not worth that.

LAW. This is a trailer we're making tonight. We pay more for trailers.

RODNEY. Oh, I say!

BENSON (*at desk, with paper and pencil*). We're going to shoot this at Grauman's Chinese in the lobby. There'll be a girl at the microphone. Her name is Susie. You come running up . . . you say . . .

LAW (*at downstage end of desk*). "Susie, why did you leave me?" . . . Say it.

RODNEY. Susie, why did you leave me?

BENSON. With feeling.

RODNEY (*with feeling*). Susie, why did you leave me?

LAW. I'm Happy's father.

RODNEY. I'm Happy's father.

BENSON. Louder.

RODNEY. *I'm Happy's father.*

LAW. I did not go down on the Morro Castle. . . . Susie, I've searched for you in the four corners of the earth. . . . *Susie, why did you leave me?*

RODNEY (*who has been repeating the ends of the phrases in LAW's speech*). *Susie, why did you leave me?*

BENSON (*joyful*). Right!

BLACKOUT AND CURTAIN



## SCENE III

*A radio voice is heard in the theatre before the rise of the curtain. We're right in Grauman's Chinese Theatre in Hollywood*

RADIO ANNOUNCER. Folks, this is the première of Cecil B. de Mille's super-spectacle of Egyptian life—*King Saul*—at Grauman's Chinese. Your favorite stars, folks, in person—and the crowds. They're pushing and shoving and yelling for autographs, but it's all in good-natured fun. Only two hurt and they've refused medical treatment. There's Constance Bennett, folks, with her husband, the

Marquis de la Falaise. No, I'm wrong. Sorry. It's not the Marquis . . . it's not Constance Bennett. It's Mary Pickford. By the way, I've been reading our Mary's book, folks. She's selling God, folks, and that's something we all ought to be in the market for. Give a thought to God and He'll give a thought to you. That's the big lesson in *King Saul*, folks. Oh, there's Leotta Marvin. . . .

*As the curtain rises, the booming voice softens to the normal tone of a radio.*

*Again we are in MR. FRIDAY's office, later in the evening. At the rise of the curtain, C.F. is seated with A CUTTER, and BENSON sits a little apart from him, in chair back of couch, near the radio, which is on.*

RADIO ANNOUNCER. . . . And if you've seen her on the screen, I don't have to tell you she's blonde, beautiful and gorgeous. Folks, I want to tell you that this is the most thrilling première it's been my privilege to cover. *King Saul*, de Mille's super-spectacle of Egyptian life at Grauman's Chinese—

C.F. Benson, turn down that radio. We've got to get three thousand feet out of *Young England*. It's a sick picture, Benson. Where's Law? I left word at his hotel.

BENSON. He'll be here. I'm inside man tonight. He's outside.

C.F. (to CUTTER). Cut the coronation scene—it drags. And give me an

underlying something that means something. I want a stirring British quality. (BENSON turns up the radio.)

RADIO ANNOUNCER. . . . And that, folks, was Mr. Stanley Oswald, veteran of old silent films. . . . This is the première of *King Saul*, Cecil B. de Mille's super-spectacle at Grauman's Chinese . . .

C.F. Benson, turn to page 94 and read that scene. I want to lap-dissolve through Queen Victoria. Simmons, you're supposed to be a cutter. Give me some ideas.

RADIO ANNOUNCER. . . . And now, folks, I'm told that none other than Larry Toms is with us tonight. And

he's not altogether by his lonesome for hanging on his manly arm is none other than Mrs. Susan Seabrook, mother of America's Crown Prince—Happy!

BENSON. Hooray!

CUTTER. I got a way of cutting all that Boer War stuff so you won't even miss it.

RADIO ANNOUNCER. . . . And now I have the honor to present Mrs. Seabrook, the mother of Happy . . .

C.F. Will you turn that infernal thing off? (To CUTTER) I can't cut the Boer War. It's historically valuable.

RADIO ANNOUNCER. . . . And now I have the honor to present Mrs. Seabrook, the mother of Happy—

SUSIE'S VOICE. But I don't know what to say!

BENSON. Susie's on the air.

RADIO ANNOUNCER. Is it true, Mrs. Seabrook, that you and Larry have been window shopping?

SUSIE'S VOICE (and it's very nervous indeed). Well—

RADIO ANNOUNCER. The microphone is yours.

SUSIE'S VOICE. I would like to thank all of you for the thousands of letters and gifts that you've sent my baby Happy. I read all your letters and some of them make me cry—they're so pathetic. I would like to send all of you money only I haven't got that much and the studio won't let me. I'd like to say a few words about the

letters asking about Happy's diet. You read a lot of advertisements of what he eats but if Happy ate everything they said he ate I guess he'd be a giant, and he's really got a very little stomach.

BENSON. Good for Susie! Truth in advertising!

C.F. (struck by appalling thought). Benson, was Queen Victoria alive during the Boer War?

BENSON. If she's alive in the picture, she was.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (through this). Folks, this is the première of Cecil B. de Mille's super-spectacle of Egyptian life, *King Saul*, at Grauman's Chinese—

SUSIE'S VOICE. Can I say hello to all my girl friends at the Julia Marshall High School? . . . Hello!

C.F. Benson—

BENSON. Ssssh . . . Susie's talking.

SUSIE'S VOICE. A lot of you wonder in your letters how a grown woman can go to high school. Well, it's not easy. I'm a mother, and the other girls aren't . . .

BENSON. Let's hope not.

SUSIE'S VOICE (brightly). . . . although some of the girls are very developed.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (quickly). Folks, this is the première of *King Saul*, Cecil B. de Mille's super-spectacle of Egyptian life. . . .



C.F. Shut that infernal thing off.  
(BENSON lifts hand like traffic signal "Stop.")

SUSIE'S VOICE. I didn't finish. I wanted to explain that I'm going to high school so I can keep up with Happy when he goes to college. Because I'm the only one Happy can go to. He hasn't got a father, and—

RADIO ANNOUNCER (very, very firmly). That was Happy's mother, folks. . . . She was wearing a white evening gown. And folks, meet Larry Toms, the lucky man.

C.F. Benson, can we lap-dissolve through, do you think, on page 94?

LARRY'S VOICE. I know this is going to be a wonderful picture.

RADIO ANNOUNCER. A little bird has whispered to me that you and Mrs. Seabrook are contemplating marriage, Larry.

BENSON. Well, what do you know about that?

C.F. Will you come here, Benson, with that script?

LARRY'S VOICE. Well, to tell you the truth—

BENSON. He's blushing.

LARRY'S VOICE. I kinda missed the little fella after the day's work was done. So I guess pretty soon I'll be Happy's father off the screen as well as on—

BENSON. Who wrote his speech? You or Rosetti?

RODNEY'S VOICE. Stop! I'm Happy's father!

C.F. (rises). What's that?

RODNEY'S VOICE. I did not go down on the Morro Castle. I've searched for you in the four corners of the earth. Susie, why did you leave me?

C.F. (excitedly). Did you hear that?

BENSON (softly). Yes. I wonder what that was . . .  
(Cries are heard of "Here, Officer"—inarticulate shouts—a siren.)

RADIO ANNOUNCER. Folks, there was a slight interruption. That voice you heard was a young man . . . he . . . well, he threw his arms about Mrs. Seabrook and kissed her. There's some confusion—a police officer is making his way through—they've got the young man . . . no, they haven't got him . . . Folks, this is the opening of Cecil B. de Mille's super-spectacle of Egyptian life, *King Saul*, at Grauman's Chinese . . .  
(BENSON turns it off.)

C.F. (stunned). Good Gad! (Phone rings. He moves to it.)

BENSON (shakes his head). Strangest thing I ever heard.

C.F. Oh, hello, B.K. . . . Yes, I've just heard it over the radio . . . (Miserable) I'm sitting here trying to cut *Young England* . . . what? . . . But, B.K., . . . yes, of course, it's a serious situation . . . I agree with you . . . yes, . . . yes . . . of course . . . I'll get hold of the mother immediately. (He rises; hangs up, still dazed. To BENSON) B.K.'s coming down to the studio! (Phone rings) Yes . . . Look here, I've nothing to say to the press. It's a canard. (He hangs up. Phone rings again) I won't answer it.  
(MISS CREWS enters.)

MISS CREWS. Doctor Tompkins is calling you, Mr. Friday. He says it's important.

C.F. What's he want? I'm not in. Call Mrs. Seabrook's house and have her ring me the minute she comes in.

MISS CREWS. Yes, Mr. Friday. (She exits.)

C.F. Benson, do you think that young man was genuine?

BENSON (rises, crosses around downstage end of couch). Search me.

C.F. Well, we'll soon find out. B.K.'s set the police after him.

BENSON (a little disturbed). Why do that? Best thing the studio can do is ignore it.

C.F. We can't ignore it. This has brought up the whole paternity issue.

BENSON. What of it?

C.F. Suppose Happy has a skeleton in his closet?

BENSON (lies on couch). I don't even know if he's got a closet.

C.F. Save your gags for your pictures. They need them. I've never heard B.K. so excited. (Crosses to window) What do you think the reaction will be in the sticks—in the provinces? An illegitimate baby!

BENSON. This is 1935.

C.F. To me, yes. But how many intellectuals have we in America?

BENSON. One.

C.F. You don't seem to realize—

BENSON. Why, this is going to send Happy's stock up one hundred per cent. From now on he's not only cute, he's romantic.

C.F. He's illegitimate! I know America!

CUTTER (studying the script). What about Prince Albert? I can cut him out of the picture and you won't even miss him.

C.F. (crossing below desk). Yes, yes, Simmons. You go to the cutting room and do the best you know how. (SIMMONS rises and puts chair up against wall) I've something more urgent right now. (Crosses to SIMMONS) And, for God's sake, Simmons, get me some trumpets that sound like trumpets.

CUTTER (not gruffly, but politely). You sure you don't mean a trombone, C.F.?

C.F. No. I mean trumpets. I'm not a musician but I know what I mean. Trumpets—that slide. (He pantomimes a trombone, of course.)

BENSON (to CUTTER). He wants a slide trumpet.

(CUTTER exits. Simultaneously through other door GREEN and SLADY appear.)

GREEN. Well, we've got that roundelay.

C.F. What do you want? What roundelay?  
(Phone rings.)

GREEN. Park it, Otto. (Both go to piano.)



C.F. (at phone). Yes—yes—no, Mr. Friday is not here. He has nothing to say to the press. (He hangs up.)

GREEN. You're going to be enthusiastic about this. We've been up all night working on it. (SLADE starts playing Beethoven's Turkish March. As C.F. starts toward the piano, the phone rings) Smooth, ain't it?

C.F. (at phone). Miss Crews? Where's Mrs. Seabrook? Why haven't you got her? (To GREEN) I will not listen to any more music.

GREEN. Get a load of this. It's the real McCoy.

C.F. (at phone). Yes—I'm holding the line—all right, never mind. Call me. (Hangs up. To SLADE and GREEN) I'll call the studio guards if you don't stop that infernal din. I'll report you to B.K. for insubordination. I'll have your contracts torn up!

GREEN. Are you kidding, or is this on the level?

C.F. Get out!

GREEN. O.K. Don't get tough! Come on, Otto. (Crosses back of couch to door) But it's a fine how-do-you-do when you call up a couple of artists late at night and put 'em to work going through Beethoven's symphonies for a little inspiration and then give them the bum's rush just because you ain't in the mood. (GREEN and SLADE exit.) (LARRY and ROSETTI enter, both in tails and topers.)

ROSETTI. Now calm down, Larry, calm down—

LARRY. I'm not saying a word.

C.F. Where's Mrs. Seabrook? What did you do with her?

LARRY. I don't know, and I don't care.

BENSON (mockingly). "I kinda missed the little fella after the day's work was done—"

C.F. (quickly). Look here, Larry, I want to know what Susie said. Did she know the young man? What did she say?

LARRY. You listen to what I gotta say. I ain't goin' to go through with no contract to play with no unbaptized baby!

ROSETTI (placatingly). Just a moment, Larry—

LARRY. I'm through! (Overwhelmed with the memory) On the air—with all my fans listening in! I'm serving you notice now. I ain't marrying her. I ain't doing no more pictures with Happy.

ROSETTI. Larry, will you listen to reason?

LARRY. There's only one thing you can do for me, Rosetti. Get me a doctor. I'm going up to my dressing room. I need a sedative. (LAW enters quietly.)

BENSON. Don't stand there. Get him a doctor—

LAW. Take me. I'm a qualified veterinary. (ROSETTI exits with LARRY.)

C.F. Law—  
(BENSON sits up.)

LAW. Hello, C.F. I just got your message at the hotel. *Young England* in trouble? Well, the old salvaging crew will pitch in. (Takes off his coat.)

C.F. Were you there?

LAW. Where? At the opening? Yes. Extraordinary, wasn't it?

BENSON (significantly). We heard it over the radio.

LAW (casually). How'd it come over?

BENSON (admiringly). Clear as a bell!

LAW. It certainly broke Larry up. You should have seen our chivalrous hero running from the rescue. Why, the wind whistled right past me!

C.F. Law, do you think that fellow was a crank, or do you think he was really—

LAW (judicially). Hard to say. He had a sinister underlip.

C.F. (into phone). Miss Crews, did you get Mrs. Seabrook's house? No one answers? Someone *must* answer—she has a ménage! (Hangs up. Dictograph buzzes) Hello?

B.K.'s VOICE. Look here, Friday . . .

C.F. Yes, B.K.

B.K.'s VOICE. Did you get any dope on that young man?

C.F. No. I can't get any information. No one seems to know.

B.K.'s VOICE. Why not? I ask you to do the simplest little thing and, as usual, you fall down on me.

C.F. (piteously). Why blame me? I was sitting here cutting *Young England*.

B.K.'s VOICE. Don't bother me with *Young England*. You come up here—I want to talk with you.

C.F. Yes, B.K. I'll be right up. (He moves to the door; sighs) Sometimes I wonder if this industry is worth the sacrifice. (He exits.)

BENSON (smiles). What'd you do with him?

LAW. Put him in an office across the hall.

BENSON (aghast). What? Why here?

LAW. They won't look for him here.

BENSON. Why didn't you dump him somewhere else?

LAW. And leave him free to roam—and blab? Listen, Benson, B.K.'s called the Chief personally and the whole damn police department is scouring the town for Rodney. (Crosses to liquor cabinet; pours a drink) And you don't know what I've been up against with Rodney. (He drinks) In his own peculiar English fashion, he's not entirely nit-witted. I had to shove him at the mike, and he's been demanding explanations ever since.

BENSON. One question: What'll we do with him?

LAW (crossing back to couch; sits). Frankly, I planned everything but Rodney's disposal. I don't know. But given a little time we'll work this problem out.



BENSON (*really aghast now*). Time?

LAW. Rodney's all right. He doesn't know it, but I've locked him in.

BENSON. Listen: I've got a wife to support! I've got a job to keep! I haven't got Vermont on my mind! I like writing pictures! I'm no god-damn realist!

LAW (*soothingly*). Easy, there, easy—

BENSON. If B.K. even dreamed we had anything to do with this we'd be blacklisted in the industry.

LAW (*rising*). Give me a chance to think, will you? Why the panic? I'll admit I've overlooked a few details.

BENSON. Get that guy out of the studio. Put him on a plane to Mexico. Strangle him! I don't care what you do.

LAW. No—no. Murder leads to theft and theft leads to deceit. Haven't you read De Quincey?

BENSON. C.F. may breeze in here any minute. Will you get going?

LAW. Very well, my sweet—I go. (*He starts for door, remembers that he had a coat, looks around room and finally locates it on couch. Gets it and exits. Phone rings.*)

BENSON (*into phone*). Hello . . . Yes, right here. Oh, hello, darling. How are you feeling? (*Tenderly*) Of course I recognized your voice . . . Pearl, I'll be home in half an hour. . . . Less . . . Well, what are you crying about? . . . But I told you I couldn't take you to the opening. Well, if Louise was going why didn't you go with them? They'd be tickled

to have you . . . Listen, darling . . . I know . . . I know . . . Yes, I'm listening. . . . (*LAW re-enters—a changed LAW. He goes right to the second telephone.*)

LAW (*picking up the second telephone*). Give me the front gate!

BENSON (*into phone*). Yes, darling . . . yes . . . (*Sincerely*) Darling, please—please don't say that.

LAW. Smitty, this is Mr. Law. Any stranger go through the gate in the last ten minutes? . . . No?

BENSON (*sighs*). Yes, darling. . . .

LAW. Well, listen. The fellow that was on the air tonight—Happy's father—yes! He's loose in the studio . . . Yeah. . . .

BENSON (*turns to LAW, still holding the phone*). What?

LAW. Grab him and hold him. Don't let anyone come near him. Report to me personally . . . yeah . . .

BENSON. Darling, I'll call you back. (*Slams down the phone.*)

LAW (*hangs up*). The damn cleaning woman let him out!

BENSON (*apoplectic*). I told you, didn't I? I told you you shouldn't have brought him here! (*SUSIE enters. She has been magnificently decked out for the opening, but despite her splendor she seems extremely unhappy.*)

SUSIE. Oh, Mr. Benson . . . I tried to get you at your house but Mrs. Benson said you were here. I tried to get you, too, Mr. Law. at the hotel.

LAW. Now, now, Susie—I know—I know.

SUSIE. Oh, I should never have gone to that opening. I didn't want to go. When I was dressing I put my slip on the wrong side. I knew something terrible was going to happen. And then in the nursery when I went to say good night to Happy, he wouldn't eat his formula. And he wouldn't say good night to me. He was so cross. I told Larry I didn't want to leave Happy—but he insisted—and then the way Larry ran out on me—

LAW (*consolingly*). Now, now—

SUSIE. Why should he do that? Oh, I was so ashamed . . . I didn't even see the picture. And then when I got home—I knew I shouldn't have gone—I should never have left Happy. When I went to the hospital. . . .

LAW. Hospital?

BENSON. Hospital?

SUSIE. They won't let me in . . . not for two weeks.

BENSON (*crosses to SUSIE*). Happy's in the hospital?

SUSIE (*puzzled*). Happy's got the measles.

LAW. What?

SUSIE. And they won't let me come near him.

BENSON. Measles!

LAW. He certainly picked the right time for it!

SUSIE. That's why he wouldn't eat his formula.

C.F.'s VOICE (*offstage; grimly*). Well, we'll see— (*As he opens the door*) I brought you some visitors, boys. Come in. (*RODNEY enters with STUDIO OFFICER. To RODNEY*). Are these the men?

RODNEY. They most certainly are.

SUSIE (*crosses to RODNEY*). You know you're not Happy's father.

RODNEY. Of course not, but—

SUSIE. You couldn't be!

RODNEY. Of course not! My dear, I'm very sorry. Look here, we always seem to meet under extraordinary circumstances . . . I never dreamt . . . I'd no idea . . . It was all so spectacular . . . And to do this to you—You were so kind to me . . . They said it was a trailer . . . I didn't realize until I was in the midst of it . . . And then I found myself in a car . . . with him . . . (*Indicates LAW*) I asked him to bring me to you at once. Instead, he locked me in a dusty office.

C.F. So you boys put him up to it!

LAW. Before you say anything you'll be sorry for, C.F. . . . (*Turns to OFFICER*) Smitty, who called you to night to tell you this unfortunate young man was loose in the studio?

OFFICER. You did, Mr. Law.

LAW (*grandly*). That's all.

BENSON. Take him away.

LAW. It's an obvious psychiatric case, C.F.



BENSON (to C.F.). I wouldn't be surprised if he's the boy that's been springing out of bushes.

LAW. Certainly. Look at the way he kissed Susie!

RODNEY (appalled). But you coached me for hours. Both of you. Wait—here are my lines. (He fumbles in his pocket) I know I have them—unless I've lost them.

LAW. So you're an author, too! And I thought it was extemporaneous.

RODNEY. Here—here they are! My dear, will you please read these lines? (He hands the paper to SUSIE) They're the very words I spoke over the radio.

SUSIE (reads and backs away from RODNEY). You never said these lines. You must be a crank. Maybe you do spring out of bushes.

RODNEY (stares). Oh, I beg your pardon. My lines are on the other side.

LAW (grabs for paper). I'll take that! Susie—

C.F. (taking paper out of SUSIE's hand, brushes LAW aside). Just a minute. (Reads) "She's a high-handed rich bitch."—Tiger Tamer!—There it is in the corner. Tiger Tamer by J. Carlyle Benson and Robert Law!

LAW (hurt to the quick). It's a forgery. Benson, we've been framed!

C.F. (grimly). This is the last prank you'll ever play. (Clicks the dictograph.)

MISS CREWS (enters). The new trumpets are here. (For once, C.F. is not interested. The trumpets blare out.)

C.F. (into dictograph). B.K.? I just found out—Benson and Law put that young man on the radio.

B.K.'s VOICE. Are you sure of that?

C.F. I have the proof. The young man is in my office.

B.K.'s VOICE. All right, fire them. I don't want them on this lot. If they think they can get away with that—

C.F. Fire them? Of course I'll fire them.

(LARRY's voice is heard as he enters.)

LARRY. Don't tell me nothing—let go of me. (DOCTOR and ROSETTI enter, following LARRY and struggling with him.)

C.F. Quiet there—

LARRY. Let go of me!

C.F. Larry, I have neither the time nor the patience to pander to actors!

LARRY (bellowing with the hurt roar of a wounded bull). No? Babies, huh . . . (Turns on SUSIE) You—you—

SUSIE (frightened; runs to BENSON). What do you want?

LARRY. What do I want? That god-damn baby of yours has given me the measles!

CURTAIN

## ACT THREE

*A hospital corridor. Several weeks later. Facing us are several doors, punctuated by the little white cards identifying the patients within.*

*As the curtain rises, a white-clad NURSE is walking down the corridor bearing a covered tray. Before she disappears, BENSON enters. He knocks on the door of the room where HAPPY is ensconced. SUSIE opens the door.*

SUSIE. Oh, hello, Mr. Benson. I'd ask you to come in but Happy's still sleeping. The doctor says he can be discharged tomorrow or the day after, he's getting along so fine. Where's Mr. Law?

BENSON. I don't know. We haven't been patronizing the same barrooms.

SUSIE. You look as if you didn't get much sleep.

BENSON (slumping into a wheel chair). I didn't.

SUSIE (pityingly). Why don't you go home?

BENSON. Home?

SUSIE. Is there anything wrong?

BENSON. Not a thing! Everything's fine.

SUSIE. How's Mrs. Benson?

BENSON. She's fine.

SUSIE. That's good. I called your house to thank her for the radio for Happy but they said you moved.

BENSON. We were moved.

SUSIE. You mean you were thrown out?

BENSON. If you want to be technical about it, yes.

SUSIE. Oh, I'm sorry.

BENSON (broodingly). What hurts is Aggrafino Jesus.

SUSIE. Who?

BENSON. My favorite Filipino butler. He slapped a lien on my brand-new Packard.

SUSIE. Oh!

BENSON. That's what the missionaries taught him!

SUSIE. You boys shouldn't have played that joke on me. You only hurt yourselves. Please don't drink any more, Mr. Benson.

BENSON. So it's come to that! You're going to reform me.

SUSIE. Well, I feel just like a sister to you boys. That's why I couldn't stay mad at you. Please, Mr. Benson, if you need money—I can give you some. I mean—when the studio sends



Happy's checks. They haven't sent them yet.

BENSON (*looking up*). They haven't? How many do they owe you?

SUSIE. Two. I called Mr. Friday but he wouldn't talk to me. Do you think they're docking Happy?

BENSON. They can't do that. Measles are an act of God.  
(Nurse enters with a box of flowers.)

NURSE. Some flowers for you, Mrs. Seabrook.

SUSIE (*extending her hand for it*). Oh, thank you.

NURSE. And he'd like to know if he can come up to see you. He's downstairs.

SUSIE (*embarrassed*). Oh . . .

BENSON. Who's downstairs? Who's sending you flowers?

SUSIE (*reluctantly*). It's Mr. Bevan. You know—

BENSON. You haven't been seeing our Nemesis?

SUSIE. Oh, no. But he's been writing me every day and sending me flowers. I didn't tell you. I didn't want to get you excited.

BENSON (*to NURSE; sweetly*). Tell him to come up, Nurse. And stand by.

SUSIE (*quickly*). Oh, no, Nurse. He's not to come up. I don't want to see him. Ever. And give him back his flowers. (*She hands box back to NURSE.*)

NURSE (*taking it*). Very well. (*She exits.*)

BENSON. Why deprive me of the pleasure of kicking an actor?

SUSIE. It wasn't his fault. After all, you put him up to it.

BENSON (*outraged*). Are you defending him?

SUSIE. Oh, no, I'm just as disappointed in him as you are. But I'm trying to be fair. (*She pauses*) He writes very nice letters. (*A far-away look comes into her eyes.*)

BENSON (*suspiciously*). What kind of letters do you write him?

SUSIE (*hastily*). Oh, I don't write any letters.

BENSON. Good!

SUSIE. I'm afraid of my spelling.  
(LAW enters. *There's an air of on-my-way about him.*)

LAW. Hello, Susie. . . . And good-bye, Susie.

SUSIE. Hello, Mr. Law. Are you going away?

LAW. I am.

SUSIE. Where?

LAW. Where I belong. Vermont. Where you can touch life and feel life, and write it! (*Glances at BENSON.*)

BENSON. When does the great exodus begin?

LAW. In exactly thirty-five minutes. I'm flying back to my native hills,

like a homing pigeon. No stopping in New York for me! I've chartered a plane—right to Vermont.

BENSON. Chartered a plane! Where'd you get the money?

LAW (*grudgingly*). Well, there are twelve Rotarians coming along.

BENSON. You'll be back in a week.

SUSIE (*eagerly*). Will you, Mr. Law?

LAW (*scornfully*). Back to what? Sunshine and psyllium seed? Listen, I've got me a little shack overlooking the valley . . . I'm going to cook my own food, chop my own wood, and write—

BENSON (*sardonically*). At twenty below?

LAW (*rapturously*). Snow! . . . God, how I love snow! (*He raises his eyes to Heaven.*)

And since to look at things in bloom  
Fifty springs are little room,  
About the woodlands I will go  
To see the cherry—hung with snow!

SUSIE. That's poetry.

LAW. A. E. Housman! *Shropshire Lad*. (*He pats the book in his pocket.*)

BENSON. There's plenty of snow in Arrowhead.

LAW. Yeah; they deliver it in trucks. And even when it's real you think it's cornflakes.

SUSIE. You won't drink too much in Vermont, will you, Mr. Law?

LAW. Only the heady wine air that has no dregs!

SUSIE. Because you're crazy enough without drinking.

LAW (*defensively*). I drank for escape . . . escape from myself . . . but now I'm free! I've found peace!

SUSIE. You'll say good-bye to Happy before you go? I want him to remember you.

LAW. Right now!

SUSIE. Wait! I'll see if he's awake.  
(*She enters HAPPY's room.*)

BENSON. Will you send me a copy of the book—autographed?

LAW. You get copy number one—first edition.

BENSON. What's the book about?

LAW. I'm going to bare my soul . . . I'm going to write life in the raw. I've got the opening all planned—two rats in a sewer!

BENSON. Sounds delightful.

LAW (*scornfully*). You wouldn't appreciate real writing. You've been poisoned. On second thought, I won't send you a book.

BENSON. Tell me more about the rats. What's your story?

LAW (*slightly patronizing*). This isn't a picture that you paste together, Mr. Benson. I'm going to write *Life* isn't a story . . . it's a discordant overture to death!



BENSON. Well, if you want people to read it, the boy had better meet the girl.

LAW. There is no girl. There is no boy. These are people—real, live people—listen! I'm not even going to use a typewriter! I'm going to weigh every word—with a pencil!

BENSON. Well, maybe you're on the right track. You've got something to say—and the talent to say it with.

LAW. It's finally penetrated!

BENSON. You're probably doing the right thing.

LAW. The only thing. It's different with you—you've got a wife.

BENSON. I had.

LAW. Huh?

BENSON. Oh—uh—Pearl left last night.

LAW. No! I'm sorry.

BENSON (*shrugs*). You can't blame her. She wasn't wild about marrying me in the first place. I coaxed her into it. I painted some pretty pictures for her. It just didn't pan out.

LAW. You still want her?

BENSON (*almost to himself*). I guess I do.

LAW. Personally, I'd say the hell with her.

BENSON (*smiles bitterly*). The trouble is I don't mean it when I say it. (ROSETTI enters.)

ROSETTI. Hello, boys.

LAW (*cheerily*). Hello, louse. Get Benson a job, will you? He wants to stay in this God-forsaken hole.

ROSETTI. Listen! I'm not handling second-hand writers. Chicken feed! Right now I'm immersed in a three million dollar deal.

LAW (*interested*). Yeah?

ROSETTI. Yeah. With Gaumont British, and I'm underestimating when I say three million because B.K.'s turned down three million. Why should I bother with writers on the blacklist? So don't go calling me a louse! (SUSIE enters.)

SUSIE (*gaily*). Happy has his eyes open. You want to come in now, Mr. Law?

LAW. Coming, Susie. (*He follows SUSIE into HAPPY'S room.*)

BENSON. Rosetti— (*Going to him, whispering*) Law wants to leave. He's flying in half an hour. Can you call up the studios? Can you get us a one-picture contract? We'll make you our agent for life. *He's leaving!*

ROSETTI. Sure, he's leaving. Nobody wants him.

BENSON. How do you know? You haven't tried.

ROSETTI. I've tried. I don't let my personal feelings interfere with commissions.

BENSON. Listen, I've been a scene painter, prop boy, camera man, director, producer . . . I even sold film in Australia . . . They can't throw me out of this business!

ROSETTI (*crosses to a door and throws it back*). They won't touch you with a ten-foot pole. You, Law, or Happy.

BENSON. Or Happy?

ROSETTI. I gave B.K. a swell angle. Listen in on KNX this afternoon.

BENSON. Huh?

ROSETTI. The world is full of babies. You can get them two for a nickel. (*He opens inner door and meets LARRY coming out*) Hello, Larry. I was just coming in to see you. (NURSE pushes LARRY in wheel chair into corridor.)

LAW'S VOICE. Good-bye, Happy. (*He enters with SUSIE*) Good-bye, Susie.

SUSIE. Good-bye, Mr. Law.

LAW. Hello, Larry. How's every little spot?

LARRY. What's the idea?

LAW. What idea?

LARRY. What's the idea of sending me a box of dead spiders?

LAW. Didn't you like the box?

LARRY. You wait until I'm through convalescing!

NURSE. Now, don't excite yourself. You heard what the doctor said. You're going for your sun bath now. (*She wheels him out.*)

ROSETTI. I'll go along with you, Larry. I've got some great news for you. B.K.'s lending you out to Mascot! (*He exits.*)

LARRY (*as he goes out*). What?

LAW. Well, Susie, take good care of Happy.

SUSIE. Oh, I will.

LAW. Continue your education.

SUSIE. I'm doing that.

LAW (*quickly*). What's the capital of Nebraska?

SUSIE. Lincoln.

LAW. Who hit Sir Isaac Newton on the bean with an apple?

SUSIE. The law of gravity.

LAW. Who said, "Don't give up the ship?"

SUSIE. Captain James Lawrence in the battle of Lake Erie, 1813.

LAW. Don't give up the ship, Susie. I'll write you. (*He kisses her on the forehead.*)

SUSIE. Good-bye, Mr. Law. I've got to go back to Happy. (*Her voice breaks*) I feel awful funny—your going away. (*Exits.*)

BENSON (*finally*). Well, you bastard—get out of here.

LAW. I'm going, stinker. (*Crosses to BENSON. They look at each other. A pause. Then LAW extends hand. They shake. LAW moves to go.*)

BENSON (*without turning*). Say— (*LAW stops*) I don't suppose you'll be interested—Rosetti finally admitted Paramount wants us. Two thousand bucks a week to save Diet-



rich. We can close the deal in three or four days.

LAW (*turns slowly*). My plane leaves in twenty-five minutes. And you're a liar!

BENSON. I'm not trying to hold you back. But I figured this time you might save your money and—

LAW. I can live on twelve dollars a week in Vermont—in luxury!

BENSON. It would kind of help me out— If I could lay my hands on some ready dough Pearl might listen to reason.

LAW (*casually*). Well, we loaned out a lot of money in our time. Collect it. And send me my share.

BENSON. I thought of that. The trouble is I don't remember just who it was—and how much. The only one I remember is Jascha Simkovitch.

LAW. Who?

BENSON. Jascha Simkovitch. The fellow that came over with Eisenstein. Don't you remember? You made a wonderful crack about him. He said "There's a price on my head in Russia." And you said, "Yeah—two roubles." (*Laughs. He is flattering LAW smoothly.*)

LAW (*laughs with him*). Sure, I remember him. Why, we gave that bed-bug three thousand bucks! Get hold of him and collect it.

BENSON. He's in Paris. What's-his-name came over and said Jascha was living at the Ritz bar.

LAW. Then you can't collect it. Well, I'm off. (*He moves to exit once more.*)

BENSON (*as if struck with sudden thought*). Wait a minute! I've got a great gag for you! Let's call Jascha up in Paris—on Larry's phone! (*Chuckles, throws arms around LAW. Both laugh*) Can you imagine Larry's face when he gets the bill? A farewell rib!

LAW (*hesitates*). Have I got time?

BENSON (*reassuringly; looks at his watch*). You've got plenty of time.

LAW. I'll work fast. Stand guard, Benson. (*He enters LARRY's room. BENSON follows and partly closes door.*)

LAW'S VOICE. I'm talking for Mr. Toms. I want to put a call through to Paris, France. . . . I want Jascha Simkovitch . . . Hotel Ritz, Paris. . . . Listen, don't worry about the charges . . . That's right—Jascha, as in Heifetz . . . S-i-m-k-o-v-i-t-c-h. (*BENSON closes door on LAW. NURSE enters with registered letter, knocks on SUSIE's door. BENSON looks at his watch. SUSIE appears.*)

NURSE. Registered letter for you, Mrs. Seabrook.

SUSIE. For me?

NURSE. You'll have to sign for it. There's a return receipt on it. (*SUSIE signs.*)

SUSIE. Now what do I do?

NURSE. Now you give me the receipt back and I'll give it to the postman. He's waiting for it. Here's your let-

ter. (*NURSE exits. SUSIE opens letter.*)

SUSIE (*cheerily*). Why—it's from Mr. Friday. (*LAW emerges, as she opens the letter.*)

LAW. The service had better be good or there'll be no farewell rib. I haven't got much time.

SUSIE. Oh, didn't you go yet, Mr. Law?

LAW. I'm on my way!

SUSIE (*reading letter*). What does Mr. Friday mean when he says they're taking advantage of Clause 5A?

LAW. What? Let me see that. (*He reads the letter. BENSON looks over his shoulder*) Well, this is the god-damnedest . . .

SUSIE. You mustn't swear so much. I don't mind—I'm used to it—but Happy might hear you. What does it mean?

LAW (*reading*). Clause 5A—when an artist through illness—for a period of more than fourteen days—

BENSON. They're just using that for an excuse. It's the paternity issue!

SUSIE. What paternity issue?

BENSON. They're crazy! That kid's going to be as good as he ever was—better.

SUSIE. What does it mean?

LAW. It means, Susie—Happy is out.

SUSIE. Out?

BENSON. Yeah. Finished—done. At the age of eight months— In his prime!

SUSIE. Out of pictures?

BENSON (*turning on LAW*). And there's the man who did it. It was your brilliant idea!

SUSIE (*such a nice girl!*). Oh, no. After all, it was just like a dream. I had to wake up some time.

LAW (*as phone rings*). I guess that's Paris.

SUSIE. What's Paris? (*Phone still rings.*)

BENSON. Go ahead and have your farewell rib, and get out, author! (*Phone still rings. LAW enters room.*)

SUSIE. What's Paris?

BENSON (*going to door of LARRY's room*). A city in France.

LAW (*in room*). Hello—right here.—Yes—yes—I'm ready. Hello! . . . Hello—Jascha? Jascha Simkovitch? This is Bobby Law. Is it raining in Paris? . . . well, it's not raining here!

BENSON. Wonderful age we're living in!

LAW (*in room*). Listen, Jascha, are you sober? . . . How come? . . . Oh, you just got there! . . . You're going to London? . . . Today? . . . Hold the wire. (*LAW enters*) I've got an idea! Let's buy the studio!

BENSON. What?

LAW. You heard Rosetti. Gaumont British is offering three million. Let's



get Jascha to send a cable—sign it Gaumont British—offering four!

BENSON. Why be petty? Offer five!

LAW (*judicially*). Right! (*Exits into room.*)

SUSIE. You boys are very peculiar.

LAW (*in room*). Jascha—got a pencil and paper? Fine. Listen, Jascha, we want you to send a cable from London as follows: Quote. . . .

(LARRY *enters in his wheel chair*. BENSON *closes the door hurriedly*.)

LARRY. Hey, that's my room!

BENSON (*firmly shutting the door*). A private conversation should be private.

LARRY. What's the idea of using my phone?

BENSON. Do you object?

LARRY. Certainly I object. I ain't gonna pay for your calls.

BENSON. All right, if that's the way you feel about it—here's your nickell!

#### BLACKOUT AND CURTAIN

### SCENE II

*In Your Own Home. That is, if you have one, and if you listen to the raido.*

RADIO ANNOUNCER. Ladies and Gentlemen, this is Station KNX—the Voice of Hollywood. At this time we take great pleasure in announcing the winner of the Royal Studios' Baby Star Contest to find the successor to Happy, who retired from the screen after his illness. Ladies and Gentlemen, the lucky baby is Baby Sylvester Burnett, infant son of Mr. and Mrs.

Oliver Burnett of Glendale, California. Congratulations, Mr. and Mrs. Burnett. Contracts for your baby are waiting in Mr. C. Elliot Friday's office at the Royal Studios. Incidentally, Mr. Friday asks that you bring your baby's birth certificate and your marriage license. This is KNX, the Voice of Hollywood. (*Chimes are heard.*)

### SCENE III

MR. FRIDAY'S office, the following day. MR. FRIDAY is sitting at his desk, dictating to MISS CREWS.

C.F. My dear Mr. Pirandello. . . . On second thought, you'd better make that Signor Pirandello. . . . I

am writing to ascertain if possibly you have something in your trunk—every author has—which would be

suitable as a vehicle for our new baby star, Baby Sylvester Burnett. It can be either a short story or sketch or a few lines which you can jot down at your leisure and which we can whip up into suitable material. I am writing of my own volition as both Mrs. Friday and I are great admirers of you. Very truly yours. . . . Now take a letter to Stark Young. (*Dictograph buzzes*) Yes?

B.K.'S VOICE. Listen, Friday—

C.F. What, B.K.?

B.K.'S VOICE. Come right up here. I want to see you. We've got a new cable from Gaumont British.

C.F. Gaumont British? Yes, sir, I'll be right up. (*He rises*) Miss Crews, have you the contracts for the Burnett baby?

MISS CREWS. Right on your desk, Mr. Friday. And the parents are in the commissary.

C.F. Good. I've got to go up and see B.K. (*Exits.*)

GREEN (*who enters almost simultaneously, followed by SLADE*). Where is he? Where's C.F.?

MISS CREWS. You can't shoot him today.

GREEN. It's a wonder we don't. We're walking up and down in front of the projection room developing an idea when we hear a number—our number— We go in, and it's in *Young England*! Our song! They don't even tell us about it—they murdered it! They run dialogue over it. You got to spot a song—we ask for Guy Lombardo and they give us a six-piece symphony orchestra!

MISS CREWS. If you buy me a handkerchief I promise to cry. Lace, if you don't mind.

GREEN. Lissen—play her the number the way it should be.

MISS CREWS. Must you?

SLADE. Oh, what's the use?

GREEN. Give her the chorus.

SLADE. I'm losing my pep.

GREEN. You might as well hear it. Nobody else will. (*SLADE plays*) Will you listen to that? Ain't it a shame?

You promised love undying,  
And begged me to believe;  
Then you left, and left me crying  
With pain in my heart, and  
my heart on my sleeve.

I really shouldn't blame you  
Because you chose to leave;  
But one thing forever will  
shame you—  
It's the pain in my heart, and  
my heart on my sleeve.

(C.F. *has entered.*)

C.F. Miss Crews!

MISS CREWS. Yes, Mr. Friday?

C.F. Miss Crews, get hold of Benson and Law right away!

MISS CREWS. Who?

C.F. Have Benson and Law come here—immediately.

MISS CREWS. Yes, Mr. Friday.



GREEN (*as SLADE pounds away*). That's the chorus! That's the chorus that you murdered!

C.F. Wait a minute, Miss Crews! Get me the hospital. I want to talk to Happy's mother.

MISS CREWS. Yes, Mr. Friday. (*She exits.*)

C.F. Miss Crews! Call my florist and tell him to send Happy a bouquet of roses. And some orchids for his mother, right away. (*He turns to GREEN*) Will you stop that noise! (*He picks up telephone.*)

GREEN. Noise? The song that you murdered? We just wanna see if you got a conscience.

C.F. (*into phone*). Miss Crews, call up Magnin's and tell them to send a radio to the hospital for Happy. One of those slick, modernistic sets in white. And don't forget to have my card put in with the flowers. Did you get Benson and Law? . . . Well, did you get Happy's mother? . . . Well, get them! (*Hangs up.*)

GREEN. Is that a song that you run dialogue over, C.F.?

C.F. What are you babbling about, Green? I haven't used any of your songs in *Young England*!

GREEN (*outraged*). How about *Westminster Abbey in the Moonlight*? They wasn't our lyrics, but it was our tune!

C.F. I used an old Jerome Kern number we've had for years, out of the library.

GREEN (*crestfallen*). You did? (*To SLADE*) I thought you said it came to you in the middle of the night. Where? In the library?

C.F. Will you get out of my office?

GREEN (*with sudden enthusiasm*). We got a new number you'll be crazy about.

C.F. I've got too much on my mind to listen to your tinny effusions. I told the studio to hire Richard Strauss and no one else. One great composer is worth twenty of your ilk! (*ROSETTI enters with LARRY.*)

LARRY. Looka here, C.F., I just got out of a sick bed to see you.

C.F. What do you want, Larry? (*SLADE plays on*) What do you want? I'm very busy. (*Turns to GREEN*) Will you please go? I will not listen!

GREEN (*as the worm turns*). . . . O.K., music lover! (*GREEN and SLADE exit.*)

LARRY. I shouldn't be here. I should be on my ranch convalescing. I'm weak.

C.F. Come to the point, Larry. Come to the point.

LARRY (*bitterly*). What's the idea of lending me out to Mascot? I'm a star! I ain't goin' to degrade myself by playing in no undignified thirty-thousand-dollar feature.

C.F. Larry, face the facts—you're through.

LARRY. That's a nice thing to tell a sick man.

ROSETTI. Now, Larry, I told you. Your attitude is all wrong.

LARRY. Never mind about my attitude.

C.F. (*at the phone*). Miss Crews, have you got Benson and Law? . . . Who's gone to Vermont? . . . What about Susie? . . . What? They left the hospital? (*He hangs up.*)

ROSETTI (*eagerly*). What's up, C.F.?

C.F. (*finally*) This is confidential, Rosetti. (*Lowers his voice*) Gaumont British wants to buy the company intact.

LARRY. Gaumont British?

C.F. They want all our stars, including Happy. Naturally they want him. He's the sensation of London.

ROSETTI. But B.K. turned down three million. I've been handling that deal myself.

C.F. They've raised it. They've just cabled an offer of five million.

ROSETTI. They did? Say, that's marvellous. I'm in on that!

LARRY. Well, you better get me back from Mascot quick. Gaumont British wants *me*. Why, they made me an offer a year ago, only I was tied up.

C.F. They made no mention of you.

LARRY. What?

C.F. Rosetti, we've got to sign Happy immediately. Get hold of Susie and let's close.

ROSETTI. You can sign the three of 'em for a hundred a week. They're broke. And they're low. I'm going right after it. (*He starts for door.*)

LARRY. Come back here. You're supposed to be *my* agent! What are you going to do about *me*?

ROSETTI. You're all right where you are—with Mascot. I'll call you later C.F. (*Exits.*)

LARRY (*to C.F.*) My agent! I been dis-trustin' that guy for years. (*Exits.*)

C.F. (*Who can balance a budget, picks up phone*). Miss Crews, you didn't send those flowers off, did you? . . . What? . . . But they've left the hospital. What about the radio? . . . Well, call them up right away and cancel it. . . . Who? . . . She's here? Send her right in! (*He crosses to greet SUSIE. He is now cordial; hearty, a thing of beauty and a joy forever.*) Well, Susie, I'm delighted to see you. You're looking well. I must say we've missed you. I hear the boys are in Vermont.

SUSIE (*stands in door*). Mr. Law was going but he missed the plane.

C.F. (*taken aback*). Well, where are they?

SUSIE. They're in B.K.'s office, getting the contracts.

C.F. Without consulting me?

SUSIE. They said they don't trust you, Mr. Friday.

C.F. Gad! After all I've done for them!



SUSIE (*seating herself on the couch*). Do you mind if I sit here and do my homework? I'm way behind and I don't want to be left back. I'm supposed to wait here until they get B.K.'s signature, and then I'm going to sign.

C.F. I'm going right up to see B.K. (*MISS CREWS enters.*)

MISS CREWS. Mr. and Mrs. Burnett have had their coffee and now they want their contracts.

C.F. What contracts?

MISS CREWS. The parents of the other infant.

C.F. What other infant? What other infant is there except Happy?

MISS CREWS. But what'll I do with them?

C.F. Send them away. (*Now he sees RODNEY looking in through door.*)

RODNEY (*has a large box of flowers*). What do you want?

RODNEY. Here's the check for the milk—and other odd items.

C.F. Check.

RODNEY. I think you'll find it correct. I verified it at the commissary. And of course I included a service charge—and interest at six per cent. The total is two dollars and eighty-four cents. Thank you. (*Dictograph buzzes.*)

C.F. (*into dictograph*). Hello—

B.K.'s VOICE. Listen, Friday, you might as well be here. I'm settling

the Happy contract with Benson and Law.

C.F. Yes, B.K. I'm coming right up. (*Phone rings; into phone*) What? . . . I never asked for trumpets in the first place. I don't want any trumpets. I want a period of utter silence. See that I get it. (*Hangs up. To RODNEY*) You get out!

RODNEY (*firmly*). I've something to say to Mrs. Seabrook. (*SUSIE turns away. Softly*) I brought you some flowers.

C.F. Give her her flowers, and get out. And don't let me find you here when I come back. Miss Crews, I'll be up in B.K.'s office. (*He exits.*)

RODNEY. I know you don't want to see me. (*Extends flowers*) Won't you take them? (*MISS CREWS exits*) I wrote, you know. I explained everything.

SUSIE (*still not facing him*). Happy's not allowed to have flowers.

RODNEY. Oh, but they're for Happy's mother—from Happy's father.

SUSIE (*turning; aghast*). Are you joking about what you did?

RODNEY. I'm not joking. Lord, no. I mean it. Look here—will you marry me? (*SUSIE stares at him*) I've thought it all out. I owe it to you. Shall we consider it settled?

SUSIE. Did Mr. Law and Mr. Benson put you up to this, too?

RODNEY. Good Lord, no. I haven't seen them and, what's more, I don't intend to.

SUSIE. Then why do you want to marry me?

RODNEY. I owe it to you.

SUSIE (*angrily*). That's no reason.

RODNEY. My visa's expired—I've two days' grace. I must get a train this afternoon. Are you coming with me?

SUSIE. I don't think you'd make a very sensible father for Happy. I don't think so at all.

RODNEY. I'm not at all sensible. I'm frightfully stupid—impulsive—emotional—but I'm not really at my best these days. Most people aren't when they're infatuated.

SUSIE. You couldn't be infatuated with me!

RODNEY. But I am. Look here, it's no good debating. My mind's made up. I don't frequently make it up, but when I do, I stick to the end.

SUSIE. But you don't know about my past.

RODNEY. I've been through all that, in my mind. It doesn't matter.

SUSIE. But it does. I'm ashamed to tell you.

RODNEY. Please don't, then.

SUSIE. Happy's father was a bigamist.

RODNEY. Eh?

SUSIE. He married twice.

RODNEY. Is that it?

SUSIE. What did you think?

RODNEY. It doesn't really matter.

SUSIE. I didn't know he was married before.

RODNEY. But, good Lord, nobody can blame you.

SUSIE. His wife did.

RODNEY. Naturally.

SUSIE. How was I to know? And it wasn't his fault, either. He got a Mexican divorce and he didn't know it wasn't good.

RODNEY. Oh!

SUSIE (*drawing herself up à la Fairfax*). So I said to him, "Your duty is to your first wife." And I ran away. I didn't know I was going to have Happy, then.

RODNEY. Have you—heard from him?

SUSIE. Oh, no. Of course, he should have told me in the first place. But he was infatuated, too, and I didn't know any better.

RODNEY. Well, have you divorced him?

SUSIE. No.

RODNEY. You'll have to clear that matter up, I think—immediately.

SUSIE. I can't clear it up. He's dead.

RODNEY. Oh!

SUSIE. She shot him.

RODNEY. His wife?

SUSIE. Yes.



RODNEY. Good Lord!

SUSIE. I hear from her sometimes. She's awfully sorry.

RODNEY (*brightly*). Well then, you're free to marry, aren't you?

SUSIE. Oh, I'm free, but the point is—do I want to? After all, I don't know you very well, and every time we meet something terrible happens. I didn't know Jack very well, either, and look what happened to him. I've got to be careful.

RODNEY. But I'm not a bigamist.

SUSIE. Maybe not. You may be something else.

RODNEY. But the British Consul'll vouch for me. He knows my family. I haven't had much of a life, but it's an open book.

SUSIE. Oh, I believe you. But I can't listen to my heart. I've got to listen to my head.

RODNEY. Of course, I haven't much to offer you. I've just come into a little money, and on my thirtieth birthday I come into a great deal more. We can have a flat in London and one of my aunts is going to leave me a place in the country.

SUSIE. That's in Europe, isn't it?

RODNEY. Yes, of course.

SUSIE. Oh, I couldn't go to Europe.

RODNEY. But why not?

SUSIE. The boys want to put Happy back in pictures.

RODNEY. I wouldn't hear of it. That's no life for a baby. Thoroughly abnormal. And, furthermore, I don't like the California climate. Now in England we have the four seasons.

SUSIE. You have?

RODNEY (*ardently*). Summer, winter, spring and fall.

SUSIE (*finally*). I want to ask you something.

RODNEY. Certainly.

SUSIE. When I come into a room—does something happen to you?

RODNEY. Eh? Of course—very much so.

SUSIE (*rises and turns away*). Well, I'll think it over.

RODNEY (*rises and takes SUSIE'S arm*). Look here, I couldn't possibly take no for an answer.

SUSIE. Of course, when you come into a room, something happens to me, too.

RODNEY. Does it really? (*SUSIE nods. He takes her in his arms. They kiss. Door opens and LAW enters with BENSON.*)

LAW. Susie, did my eyes deceive me? Were you kissing an actor?

BENSON. What's that?

LAW (*to BENSON*). An English actor!

BENSON. What? Didn't I tell you—

SUSIE. Boys, I've been thinking it over—

BENSON (*wearily drops down to piano; LAW down to end of couch*). With what?

SUSIE. I'm going to marry Rodney and I'm going to Europe. They've got the four seasons over there, and Happy'll be normal.

RODNEY. Well put, my dear. (*C.F. enters.*)

SUSIE. So I don't think I'd better sign the contract.

RODNEY. Most certainly not!

C.F. You're not going to sign Happy?

LAW. Susie, I've just given up Vermont for a whole year—for you. A whole year out of my life—because B.K. begged me to stay and handle Happy. I've sacrificed a great book—for what? A paltry fifteen hundred dollars a week? I didn't want it!

C.F. If she doesn't sign, we'll break that contract with you, Law.

LAW. Try and do it.

SUSIE. I'm going to Europe with Rodney.

LAW. Do you want to tell Happy he's out of pictures? Do you want to break his little heart?

SUSIE. He'll understand.

BENSON (*suddenly*). Do you know who Rodney is? English Jack! Confidence man.

LAW (*quickly*). Yes! Ship's gambler, petty racketeer and heartbreaker. (*RODNEY tries to speak.*)

BENSON. Served two terms for bigamy!

SUSIE. Bigamy?

RODNEY. But that's absurd.

BENSON (*bitterly*). I've seen hundreds of your kind in Limehouse.

C.F. So have I!

BENSON (*quietly*). Listen, C.F., stay off our side!

RODNEY (*to SUSIE*). You don't believe this, of course. They can't possibly believe it themselves.

LAW. Brazening it out, eh? As sure as God made little green apples—and He did—you're not coming near Susie. We'll have you in the can and out of the country by morning.

BENSON. No sooner said— (*Into phone*) Get me the Department of Justice.

SUSIE (*to RODNEY*). You see? Something terrible always happens when you come.

LAW (*to SUSIE*). And you—sign that contract immediately.

RODNEY. She'll do nothing of the sort. You're not to intimidate her. Do you hear?

(*Door opens and LARRY enters, accompanied by middle-aged English gentleman.*)

LARRY. Come on in here, Major.

C.F. What do you want, Larry? I'm busy.



BENSON (*into telephone*). Department of Justice? I want two of your best operatives to come down to the Royal Studios immediately. Report to Mr. Friday's office.

SUSIE. Oh, but you can't do that—

LARRY (*angrily*). Just a minute. Major Thompson is the representative here of Gaumont British.

C.F. Oh! I'm sorry. We've been rather upset. How do you do, Major? I'm Mr. Friday.

MAJOR. How do you do, sir? I won't be a moment. Mr. Toms suggested I come down here. He told me you'd received a cable from my home office.

C.F. Yes—yes—

MAJOR. He was rather upset because his name wasn't mentioned.

C.F. Yes, yes—

MAJOR. I called my home office, and they assure me they never sent such a cable.

C.F. What?

LARRY. That's what! It was a phony!

RODNEY (*who has been trying to attract attention for some time*). Major!

MAJOR. Well! Aren't you— Why, how do you do? I thought I recognized you. Met up with your brother. By the way, I saw him a few weeks ago just before I sailed. Particularly asked me to look you up.

RODNEY. Is my name English Jack? Am I a ship's gambler? Have I served sentences for bigamy?

MAJOR. Good Gad, no!

RODNEY. Will you vouch for me?

MAJOR (*a bore of bores*). Vouch for Puffy Bevan? Delighted! His brother—splendid chap— I met him first in India—he's a captain in the Coldstream Guards. His father is Lord Severingham. His sister is Lady Beasley—lectures, I believe. Now, let me see—

LAW (*interrupting*). Did you say— Lord Severingham?

MAJOR. Yes.

BENSON. I beg your pardon, sir—his father? (*He indicates RODNEY.*)

MAJOR. Yes.  
(BENSON shakes his head in wonder.)

SUSIE. Is your father a lord?

RODNEY. It doesn't matter, does it?

SUSIE. If you don't care, I don't care.

MAJOR. If I can be of any further service—

RODNEY. No. I think we'll sail along beautifully now. Thanks.

MAJOR. Good afternoon. (*Shakes hands with RODNEY.*)

C.F. Who sent that cable? That's all I want to know! Who sent that cable! (*MAJOR and LARRY exit*) Who perpetrated this hoax? Who's responsible for this outrage? By Gad, I'll find out! (*Exits.*)

RODNEY (*turns to SUSIE*). Shall we go?

SUSIE. Good-bye, boys. Take care of yourselves.

LAW (*bows; bitterly*). Thank you, milady.

SUSIE. Don't drink too much.

LAW. Thank you, milady.

SUSIE. You were awful good to me. Yes, they were, Rodney. They were awful good to me sometimes.

RODNEY. In that case, I don't mind shaking hands with you. (*Starts toward LAW.*)

LAW (*quickly*). Don't shake hands. Just go. Dissolve—slow fade-out!

BENSON (*pantomiming*). Shimmer away!

RODNEY. Eh? (*Shrugs*) Well—come, Susie.

SUSIE (*waving a delicate little hand*). Good-bye, boys. (*Pause. They exit in silence.*)

LAW (*tense*). I wonder what C.F.'s up to?

BENSON (*struck all of a heap*). The hell with that. Look at it—it checks! Cinderella—Prince Charming—Boy meets girl. . . . Boy loses girl. . . . Boy gets girl! Where's your damned realism now?  
(C.F. enters. He looks grimly at the boys.)

C.F. (*finally*) Well—it's a good thing you boys are not mixed up in this! (*He goes to desk.*)

BENSON (*slowly*). What?

LAW (*slowly*). What happened, C.F.?

C.F. I don't understand it at all. The cable was sent from London all right. But B.K. should have known it was a fake. It was sent collect. (*He picks up phone.*)

LAW. Jascha always sends collect.

C.F. Huh? (*Into phone*) Miss Crews, get hold of the Burnett baby immediately. . . . Who? . . . the what is here? (*Puzzled. The answer comes in the clarion call of the trumpets, blaring their gay, lilting notes through the windows. Ta-ra-ta-ta-ta-ta-tata-tata! So much pleasanter than a factory whistle, don't you think?*)

CURTAIN