

MARY, MARY

ACT ONE

AT RISE.

Bob is on the telephone with the book pages of several newspapers spread out in front of him. He dials a number.

BOB. I want to speak to Mr. Howard Nieman. (*Doorbell.*) Okay, I'll hold on.

TIFFANY. (*Entering by the front door using her own key and carrying a jar of wheat germ.*) Bob!

BOB. Hi, Honey.

TIFFANY. (*Leaves door ajar and comes down steps into the room, puts purse on sofa table.*) I've read the reviews. How are you feeling?

BOB. I'm not exactly dancing with glee.

TIFFANY. Well, it's not fair! (*Puts jar on bookcase U. R. C.*)

BOB. (*Rising.*) SSSHHH! This is Nieman. I'm waiting for him to get off the other line.

TIFFANY. (*Crossing to Bob at desk.*) But it isn't fair. You publish books of quality and distinction and you should get the credit.

BOB. You're one hundred percent correct and beautiful besides. (*They kiss. Into the phone.*) Hello, Howard! How are you? (*Sits.*) Yes, sure I read the notices. Well, Howard, we were both hoping for a better break, but on the other hand there are a lot of good quotes here. "A magician with words" and so forth. (*Tiffany crosses U. C., hangs coat on railing, then crosses D. L. with jar and feeds fish.*) And with a book like yours we can hope for something more in the weeklies. I'm confident we'll go into another printing. What did you think about the notices? Sure, we all wish Orville Prescott would write a novel. Look, Howard, please calm down. I hope you're

not going around talking this way. Well, for one thing, people don't read reviews that carefully. All you do is spread the bad word. (*Rise.*) Let me give you some advice from Jake Cooper, in publicity. In his coarse but memorable phrase, nobody knows you've got a boil on your behind if you don't tell them. (*Bob listens a second longer, then shrugs and hangs up.*)

TIFFANY: (D. L. at fish bowl.) What did he say?

BOB. He said the boil was not on his behind. (*Picks up a newspaper.*) It was on page thirty-four of *The New York Times*.

TIFFANY. (*Crosses to below c. of sofa.*) Why shouldn't he be mad? It's a wonderful book!

BOB. (*Crosses to R. of sofa.*) That's what I like. Loyalty. (*Puts paper on sofa table and picks up a box of candy.*) I have a present for you and I forgot about it.

TIFFANY. A present?

BOB. (*Handing her a big heart-shaped box.*) It's Valentine's Day. (*Crosses to R. of sofa.*) Did you forget? To the sweet. Will you be my Valentine? (*Kiss.*)

TIFFANY. Sure I'll be your Valentine. (*Pulls Bob down on the sofa. He is kissing her as Oscar appears from the corridor with briefcase.*)

OSCAR. (*Pushing door wide.*) The door is open. Shall I come in?

BOB. (*Crosses U. C., greets Oscar and hangs up Oscar's coat.*) Oh, Oscar—by all means. Tiffany, I want you to meet Oscar Nelson. My old friend and my new tax lawyer.

TIFFANY. (*Puts candy on ottoman, crosses D. L. of sofa to U. C.*) Hello.

BOB. And this is Tiffany Richards. We're getting married next month.

OSCAR. And she'll be deductible. (*Crosses D. and shakes hands with Tiffany.*) Congratulations. (*Bob closes door.*)

TIFFANY. Well, I'm very happy he's got you as a tax lawyer. Don't you think it's just outrageous—the government investigating his back taxes just like he was Frank Sinatra?

OSCAR. Under the law we're all equals. (*Crosses D. C. with case, sits R. end of sofa. Tiffany crosses D. C., sits L. arm of chair C.*)

BOB. (*Crosses D. C. to R. of chair C.*) Oscar—think of that clunk from the F.B.I. who came charging in here and accused me of fleecing the government of six thousand dollars.

OSCAR. Wait, wait, wait. In the first place, this clunk is not from the F.B.I. He's from the Internal Revenue Service, a small but real distinction. In the second place, he is not accusing you of anything. He is merely asking you to produce proof that this six thousand dollars was legitimate professional expenses.

BOB. All I can tell you is that I am not coughing up any six thousand dollars. (*Sits chair C.*) I'll move to Alaska.

OSCAR. You're too late. It's come into the union.

TIFFANY. Darling, there's nothing to be upset about. Mr. Nelson will handle this man. (*Rises, crosses below sofa to D. L.*) Now I'm going to get you your mid-afternoon cocktail. (*To Oscar.*) Would you like one?

OSCAR. Not this early, thank you.

TIFFANY. It's not alcohol. It's raw milk, brewer's yeast, and wheat germ. (*Showing Oscar the jar.*)

OSCAR. Not this early, thank you. (*Tiffany crosses above sofa to C.*)

BOB. (*Aware of Oscar's expression.*) It does sound awful, but it's incredible the energy it gives you.

OSCAR. I'll have to try it sometime.

TIFFANY. (*Stopping C.*) You have no intention of trying it. And you know what? You should, because you're definitely undernourished. Look at your ears.

OSCAR. What about them? I know they stick out.

TIFFANY. (*Sits R. arm of sofa.*) They're whitish. Here, let me look at your fingernails. (*She picks up his hand.*) See how pale they are? A really healthy person will have pink ears and pink fingernails. Another thing—a healthy person will have a tongue the color of beeksteak.

OSCAR. (*Backing away, hand to mouth.*) No, no—I will spare you that.

TIFFANY. (*Rises.*) I'm going to bring you a cocktail, and you try it. (*She goes off to kitchen and closes door.*)

BOB. You think that's a lot of damn nonsense.

OSCAR. How did you know?

BOB. Because that's what I thought, in the beginning. But I have seen the results and I am completely sold. And if you want to know—I *love* being clucked over.

OSCAR. I'm delighted to hear it. (*Rises.*) And your ears were never lovelier. Now, (*Crosses to desk with briefcase.*) shall we get down to business?

BOB. (*Rises, crosses U. C. to above sofa table.*) Please, let's. I'm in a real mess, Oscar. Actually, it's been a muddle ever since I started to pay alimony. And now this tax thing. What am I going to do? You probably read those notices today. I won't make anything on the Nieman book. Somewhere, something's got to give. And it's got to be straightened out before Tiffany and I get married.

OSCAR. (*Spreading out various papers on the desk.*) We'll see what we can do.

BOB. (*Crosses to above c. chair.*) What I want is a bird's-eye view of my whole financial picture. What I'm spending. What I should be spending. Where I should be cutting corners.

OSCAR. All right. I've already come to a few conclusions, but I'll want to look at your files—(*Sits desk and puts case under desk. Makes a gesture toward inner office.*)

BOB. (*Steps R. to L. end of low bookcase.*) Thanks, Oscar. And I appreciate your coming over here on a Saturday. In fact, I appreciate your taking on this whole dumb job. I didn't think you would.

OSCAR. Why not?

BOB. Well, (*Looks toward kitchen door.*) you wouldn't handle the divorce. (*Sits chair L. of desk.*)

OSCAR. Bob, how could I have handled the divorce? Mary was just as much my friend as you were. Besides, I never thought you'd go through with it. I thought of you as the golden couple—smiling over steaming bowls of Campbell's chicken soup—

BOB. Oh, brother.

OSCAR. What happened?

BOB. (*With a shrug.*) What happens to any marriage. You're in love, and then you're not in love. I married Mary because

she was so direct and straightforward and said just exactly what she meant.

OSCAR. And why did you divorce her?

BOB. Because she was so direct and straightforward and said just exactly what she meant.

OSCAR. When did you see her last?

BOB. Eight, nine months ago.

OSCAR. Well, you're going to see her this afternoon.

BOB. (*Taking cigarette from box on low bookcase.*) Like hell.

OSCAR. Bob, I called Mary in Philadelphia and asked her—as a special favor—to come up here this afternoon.

BOB. (*Rises and lights cigarette.*) But why would you do that? Why in God's name would you—?

OSCAR. Why? Because you have five thousand dollars' worth of cancelled checks that you can neither identify nor explain. Some of them Mary signed. I'm hoping that her memory will be a little better than yours.

BOB. (*Crosses above low bookcase to window.*) But I've got an appointment here in ten minutes. Do you remember Dirk Winston?

OSCAR. The movie actor? Sure.

BOB. We were in the Navy together. Now he's moved into this building.

OSCAR. Well, it's nice you two old sailors can get together. There ought to be many a salty story, many a hearty laugh.

BOB. You don't get the picture. He's written a book.

OSCAR. A book?

BOB. That's right. The story of his life in three hundred and eighteen ungrammatical pages. (*Hands him the manuscript from the low bookcase.*)

OSCAR. (*Glancing at it.*) "Life Among the Oranges." Not a bad title.

BOB. It's all right, I suppose. (*Sits L. of desk, picks up a small bowl of dried apricots and begins to eat one.*) I can't imagine it on our lists.

OSCAR. I gather you're not going to do it.

BOB. Of course I'm not going to do it. But I dread talking to him. There is no right way to tell an author you don't want to publish his book.

OSCAR. If it's not going to be sweet, make it short. I can take Mary into the office—

BOB. Oh—Mary. (*Rises.*) Don't you leave me alone with her for one minute, do you hear?

OSCAR. She's only five feet three.

BOB. Never mind that. (*Going to the file cabinet, upset, and picking up galleys.*) And when will I get to these galleys? They have to be back to the printer on Monday.

OSCAR. What are you eating?

BOB. Dried apricots. (*Oscar remains silent.*) They're full of vitamin C.

OSCAR. The things I'm learning today! (*Indicating the galleys Bob is fretting over.*) What's that one like?

BOB. It's absolutely fascinating. I want you to read it. (*Enthusiasing, partly to distract himself.*) It's told in the first person, and when the story opens we're coming back from a funeral. But only gradually do we come to realize that the narrator of the story is the dead man.

OSCAR. It sounds sensitive, very sensitive.

BOB. (*Crosses above desk and puts galley on sofa table. An extravagant little flareup.*) Oscar, I can think of only one sure way to clean up in this business. A new series. I could take the great sex novels—Lady Chatterley, Peyton Place—and have them rewritten for the ten-to-twelve age group. (*Tiffany enters with drinks. Bob stops because Tiffany has returned with three small glasses. She gives him one.*)

TIFFANY. It took me longer because the Waring Blendor was broken . . .

BOB. Thank you, darling.

TIFFANY. And I had to use an egg beater. (*Handing glass to Oscar who rises.*) You've got to taste it, anyway. (*He doesn't.*)

BOB. (*Crosses L. of chair c.—taking over.*) Honey, I want you to put on your new grey bonnet and get out of here.

TIFFANY. (*Surprised.*) Bob! Aren't we driving up to Goshen? Dad's expecting us!

BOB. Certainly. I'll pick you up at five-thirty. No, make it six.

TIFFANY. (*Really puzzled.*) But why do I have to go?

BOB. Because in my winning, boyish way, I'm asking you—

TIFFANY. (*Crosses to Bob below chair c.*) I know why. Be-

cause that sexy movie actor is coming. You think in ten minutes I'll be sitting on his lap giving little growls of rapture.

BOB. Nonsense. Why should you care about vulgar good looks when you have me? No— (*With a sigh and crossing to bookcase above desk.*) —the truth is my ex-wife is descending upon me this afternoon.

OSCAR. It was my suggestion. I thought she might be able to shed some light on this tax matter.

TIFFANY. (*Abruptly.*) I'm delighted. I've been dying to meet her.

BOB. Well, you're not going to meet her—

TIFFANY. (*Sitting down, firmly, in chair c.*) Yes, I am. (*Oscar, sensing that he'd better, slips away into the inner office with his papers and closes door.*)

BOB. (*Puts cigarette out in ashtray on low bookcase.*) Darling, you are a sweet, reasonable girl, and I insist that you stay in character. Besides, I have those galleys to finish. (*Crosses to R. of Tiffany.*) Kiss me, and stop all this nonsense.

TIFFANY. I won't. I am not going to turn into Joan Fontaine.

BOB. What the hell are you talking about?

TIFFANY. (*Rises and crosses L. to below sofa.*) Don't you remember Joan Fontaine in "Rebecca"? She was always thinking about the first Mrs. de Winter. She used to imagine that she could see her ghost on the staircase with the straight black Indian hair floating out behind her. Don't you remember? And she'd shudder when she saw the monogram on the silver brushes.

BOB. (*Crosses to R. of sofa.*) Silver brushes. Mary used to use plastic combs with little tails, and she'd crack off the tails so they'd fit in her purse. And her hair was tied back in a bun. Tiffany—this is so silly!

TIFFANY. (*Sitting c. of sofa and putting her glass on sofa table.*) I'll tell you another reason why I ought to meet Mary. We'd probably have a lot in common. Daddy says that a man goes on making the same mistake indefinitely.

BOB. Is that supposed to be an epigram? Because I don't get it.

TIFFANY. Practically everybody Daddy knows is divorced. It's not that they're worse than other people, they're just richer. And you do begin to see the pattern. You know Howard

Pepper. When he divorced his first wife, everybody said "Oh, what he endured with Maggie! It was hell on earth!" Then when he married the new girl, everybody said "She's so *good* for him." Except when you met her she looked like Maggie, she talked like Maggie, it was Maggie all over again. And now his *third* wife—

BOB. (*Puts his glass on table c.*) Okay, okay. I get the whole ghastly picture. But I promise you on my sacred oath as a Yale man that you don't resemble my ex-wife in any way, shape, or form.

TIFFANY. Is that good?

BOB. (*Sits next to Tiffany on sofa.*) Good? It's a benediction from heaven. You—sweet, idiot child—soothe my feathers. Mary always, always ruffled them. Life with Mary was like being in a phone booth with an open umbrella—no matter which way you turned, you got it in the eye.

TIFFANY. Well, at last—a plain statement! Now that you've opened up a little, tell me, where did you meet her? Who introduced you?

BOB. I don't think we *were* introduced.

TIFFANY. You picked her up.

BOB. In a way. Do you remember that novel we published—"Our Kingdom Come"? It was sort of an allegory—the pilot of the plane turned out to be God?

TIFFANY. I don't think so.

BOB. Well, they made a play out of it. So of course I had to go to the opening night. And it was awful. Really grisly. After the second act, we were all standing out on the sidewalk. We were too stunned to talk. In fact, there didn't seem to be anything to say. Finally this girl spoke. She was standing there by herself in a polo coat, smoking—and she said, "Well, it's *not* uneven." So I laughed, as we started to talk—

TIFFANY. And you said, "We don't have to go back in there, let's have a drink—"

BOB. (*Rises, crosses u. c. for Tiffany's coat.*) See? I don't have to tell you. You know.

TIFFANY. (*Rises, crosses c.*) Did you kiss her that night?

BOB. (*Crosses d. c. with coat and helps her into it.*) Come on. Put on your coat. You're just stalling for time.

TIFFANY. I'll bet you did.

BOB. What?

TIFFANY. Kiss her that night. (*She is getting into her coat.*)

BOB. (*Steps L. of Tiffany.*) I didn't kiss her for weeks.

TIFFANY. I don't believe it. You kissed me on the second night—in the elevator—do you remember?

BOB. Oh, I made certain fumbling attempts—but she'd make some little joke, like "Let's not start something we can't finish in a cab on 44th Street"—

TIFFANY. Well, for goodness sake, where was she when you finally did kiss her? On an operating table, under ether?

BOB. No, as it happens she was in a cab on 44th Street. (*Sits R. arm of sofa and takes Tiffany by the hand.*) Somehow or other she got her fingers slammed in the door. She pretended it was nothing, and we were chatting along. Then suddenly—this was blocks later—she started to cry. I looked at her fingers. (*Looks at her hand.*) Two of the nails were really smashed. And it started out I was just trying to comfort her, and—

TIFFANY. That is the most *unromantic* story I ever heard!

BOB. They certainly won't get a movie out of it. (*Takes her u. c.*) I told you it wasn't worth discussing.

TIFFANY. (*Picks up her handbag.*) I know, I kept fishing. Did she cry a lot in taxicabs?

BOB. She never cried again. Not anyplace—ever—not once. (*Oscar appears from inner office, frowning over a sheaf of papers.*)

OSCAR. (*Closing door.*) These figures for 1960—can that represent the *total* profit?

BOB. I'm afraid so. (*Doorbell.*) Oscar, will you get that? (*Oscar crosses u. c. to front door.*)

TIFFANY. (*Crosses below sofa to D. L. for candy.*) Just let me *meet* her. Two minutes and I promise I'll go.

BOB. (*Follows—takes her by the hand and pulls her to the kitchen.*) We'll go out the back door and I'll get you a cab.

TIFFANY. I feel like I was caught in a raid. (*She exits into the kitchen. Oscar has been looking on.*)

BOB. (*Retrieving his glass from table c.*) I'm *not* adult and Noel Coward would wash his hands of me. (*Exits to kitchen*)

and closes door. Oscar has now gone to main door and opened it not to Mary but to Dirk Winston, who has a large partially-wrapped piece of wood-carving in his arms.)

OSCAR. Hello. Come in.

DIRK. (Steps in.) I'm an old friend . . .

OSCAR. Yes, I know. You're Dirk Winston. Bob will be right back. My name is Oscar Nelson. (We hear Tiffany giggling and protesting, "Please, Bob—please!" off in kitchen area. Oscar and Dirk hear it, too.) Her name is Tiffany Richards. (Squeals from Tiffany, off.)

DIRK. It kind of makes me homesick for the back lot at Paramount. I thought I was late, but er . . . (Oscar steps D. R. C., looking at the package in his arms.) Suppose I take this thing downstairs and I'll be back in ten minutes.

OSCAR. I think recess should be over by that time.

DIRK. (Feeling he should explain the package.) I saw this in an antique shop. (Crosses to front door.) It's supposed to be Geronimo, but it looks so much like Jack Warner I couldn't resist. (Exits, closes door. Oscar crosses back to the desk, notices drink Tiffany has left for him. He tastes it, crosses to liquor table and pours a generous slug into the drink. He takes a sip. It's better. He looks at his fingernails, then crosses to the mantel, puts down his drink, picks up a mirror and examines his tongue. While he is doing so, Mary enters U. C. She puts down her overnight bag and sees Oscar. She leaves the door open.)

MARY. Oscar!

OSCAR. Mary, darling.

MARY. Are you sick?

OSCAR. (Puts down the mirror and crosses to Mary.) Of course not. I'm out of my mind. Hey! I want you to concentrate and give me a better hug than that! (We are aware that Mary is somewhat abstracted and apprehensive. Also that she is getting her feel of the room again, after all this time.)

MARY. Oscar—dear Oscar—it's lovely to see you. (Mary crosses D. C. then to R. of chair c.) Where's—?

OSCAR. He'll be right back. He just— (Interrupting himself, staring at her.) Wait a minute! What's happened to you? You look absolutely marvelous.

MARY. Did you say that right? (Crosses up to window.)
OSCAR. (Crosses D. C., R. of sofa.) Apparently not, because I didn't get an answer.

MARY. (Puts her coat and handbag on window seat. Adopting a television commercial tone, mechanically.) Well, you see, I had been using an ordinary shampoo, which left a dull, unattractive film on my hair.

OSCAR. Come on, I'm interested. The hair is different—the clothes—the makeup. Clearly loving hands have been at work.

MARY. (Crosses D. C. and sits chair c.) Yes, but you're not supposed to notice. I mean you're supposed to have an appreciative gleam in your eye, but you don't have to remind me of the dreary hours at Elizabeth Arden's—

OSCAR. Appreciative gleam? I've been casting you lustful glances. You're just too pure to notice. What caused the transformation?

MARY. (Still not located in space.) Well, being divorced is like being hit by a Mack truck. If you live through it, you start looking very carefully to the right and to the left. While I was looking I noticed that I was the only twenty-eight-year-old girl wearing a polo coat and no lipstick. (Puts her gloves on table c.)

OSCAR. You were? I never noticed. (Starting toward kitchen.) But let me see if I can locate our—

MARY. (Takes a cigarette from table c.) No, no—please—wait. Let me have a cigarette first.

OSCAR. (Crosses D. to R. of Mary and lights her cigarette.) You nervous?

MARY. Certainly not. But I haven't seen Bob in nine months. I guess I can last another five minutes. Besides, you and I have a lot to talk about. How's Jennifer?

OSCAR. (Quiet and offhand tone.) Well, she had this illegitimate baby after she met that man from Gristede's, but it's all right now—

MARY. (Nodding, looking about the room.) Oh? Good! And how's everything at the office?

OSCAR. You haven't heard one word I said.

MARY. You're right. I'm not listening. And I *am* nervous. I shouldn't have come.

OSCAR. (*Puts his hands on the arm of her chair. Sympathetically.*) Mary, do you still—?

MARY. (*Quickly.*) I don't still—anything.

OSCAR. (*Steps to L. of desk.*) I'm sorry. I should have realized that—

MARY. Stop it. Don't give me that sad spaniel expression, as though you'd just looked at the X-rays. I'm all right, Doctor. Just fine. (*Bob appears from kitchen, stops short. His words are awkwardly spaced.*)

BOB. (*Crosses to R. of Mary.*) Well. Hello. You did get here.

OSCAR. Of course, she knew the address. (*Oscar starts toward office.*)

BOB. (*Not wanting to be left alone.*) Oscar! (*Mary rises to u. R. of chair c.*)

OSCAR. Be right back. (*Oscar goes into office, leaving the door open. Mary turns toward Bob and her nerves now vanish. But Bob's are quickly in bad shape.*)

MARY. Hello.

BOB. (*A step to her.*) You look very different. You've changed. I was going to ask you how you've been. But I can see. You've been fine.

MARY. How about you? Did you ever clear up that case of athlete's foot?

BOB. (*Almost under his breath.*) No—you haven't changed. (*Crosses c. to R. of sofa.*)

MARY. (*This flusters her briefly. She crosses to the desk, dips a hand into the bowl of dried apricots.*) Well, you know what they say—the more we change, the more we stay the same. Good Lord! These are dried apricots.

BOB. What did you think they were?

MARY. Ears.

BOB. (*Stepping to behind chair and leaning on it.*) I want to say that I appreciate your coming. I'm sure you didn't want to.

MARY. (*Circles below desk to plant on low bookcase.*) Nonsense. It put my mind at ease. You can't think how often I've worried about the philodendron.

BOB. (*Crosses to desk and picks up tax papers.*) I'm sure. Now, Oscar has explained to you that my—our—'60-'61 income tax returns are being—

MARY. I advise you to make a clean breast of it. Admit everything.

BOB. This does not happen to be a subject for comedy. I've got to get this straightened out. I'm getting married in two weeks.

MARY. (*Really stunned.*) Oh?

BOB. I thought you knew. Surely Oscar must have—

MARY. Of course! And it went right out of my head. (*Sits L. of desk.*) But how nice! Do I know her?

BOB. No, you don't.

MARY. Do you?

BOB. (*Chooses to ignore this.*) Her name is Tiffany Richards.

MARY. Tiffany. I'll bet she uses brown ink. And when she writes she draws little circles over the 'i's.

BOB. (*Sits desk.*) She is a beautiful, lovely girl with a head on her shoulders.

MARY. How useful!

BOB. (*Spluttering with irritation.*) You really do have a talent for—you've been here five minutes, and already I'm—

MARY. (*With maddening calm.*) Have a dried apricot.

BOB. (*Striding to office door.*) Oscar, have you fallen asleep in there?

OSCAR. (*Off.*) Coming!

BOB. (*Crosses below desk to chair c. as Oscar appears from office.*) Shall we get on with this? (*To Mary.*) I know you have to get back to Philadelphia—

MARY. I'm staying in town tonight, so you may consider that my time is your time.

OSCAR. (*Sits on the desk handing Mary a batch of cancelled checks.*) Okay, Mary, will you look through these checks? (*Bob sits c. chair.*) Most of them you've signed.

MARY. Oh, dear—I'm not going to remember *any* of those, Oscar—

OSCAR. It'll come. Just give yourself time. You understand that we're particularly looking for items that might be deductible. Business entertaining, professional gifts, and so forth.

MARY. (*Working her way through the checks.*) L. Bernstein—seventy-eight dollars. That's impossible. The only L. Bern-

stein I know is Leonard Bernstein and I don't know Leonard Bernstein.

OSCAR. (*Pointing it out.*) This is L. Bernstein, D.D.S. A dentist.

BOB. (*Shaking his head.*) I told you—Sidney Bauer is my dentist.

MARY. Dentist, dentist, dentist. (*Snapping her fingers.*) Listen—it's that man in Boston!

BOB. What man in Boston?

MARY. Don't you remember that crazy restaurant where you go down all the stairs? And you thought you got a stone in the curry—but it was your inlay?

BOB. Oh.

MARY. And we drove all the way out to Framingham because he was the only dentist who'd take you on Sunday?

BOB. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MARY. By the way, how is that inlay?

BOB. Just grand. How are your crowns? (*They turn from each other.*)

OSCAR. (*Stopping this.*) And we have Mrs. Robert Connors—three hundred dollars.

BOB. Mrs. Connors?

MARY. I thought so long as you walked this earth you'd remember Mrs. Connors. Bootsie Connors and her fish?

BOB. Oh, God. That ghastly weekend in Greenwich.

OSCAR. Okay, tell Daddy.

BOB. Do you remember that young English critic, Irving Manix?

OSCAR. The angry young man?

BOB. This was two years ago, when he was just a cross young man. At that time he was writing long scholarly articles proving that Shakespeare was a homosexual.

MARY. Sort of the intellectual's answer to Photoplay.

BOB. Anyway he was staying here. And we'd been invited to a party at the Connors'.

MARY. So we brought along dear old Irving.

BOB. Do you know the Connors' place in Greenwich?

OSCAR. No.

BOB. Well, the living room is about the size of the ballroom at

the St. Regis. You feel it would be just the place to sign a treaty. (*As they become interested in the details of the story Bob and Mary gradually forget their present situation and relax.*) Anyway, it was all too rich for Irving and he started to lap up martinis. In fifteen minutes he was asking our hostess if it was true that the Venetian paneling had been brought over piece by piece from Third Avenue.

OSCAR. Why didn't you take this charmer home?

BOB. Because he passed out. In the library.

MARY. (*It comes back.*) On that damn velvet sofa.

BOB. But, he came to just long enough to light a cigarette. Presently the sofa was on fire—really on fire. Our hero jumped up and, with stunning presence of mind, put out the blaze with a tank of tropical fish.

MARY. And these were no run-of-the-bowl goldfish. They came from Haiti and were friends of the family. I mean, they had names.

OSCAR. Well, he was a writer. I think we can call that professional entertainment. Okay—we have twenty-five dollars to the Beach Haven Inn.

MARY. That must be yours.

BOB. Nonsense! I was never in . . . (*And then he remembers.*)

The Booksellers—

MARY and BOB. (*Together.*) Convention.

BOB. That awful hotel with the iron deer in front.

MARY. (*Nodding, her eyes lighting up.*) With the night clerk who looked like Norman Vincent Peale and was so suspicious.

BOB. (*Crosses above Mary to between Oscar and Mary at desk.*) No wonder he was suspicious! (*To Oscar, indicating Mary.*) He turns around to get the key and this one says just loud enough for him to hear, "Darling, are we doing the right thing? Maybe we ought to wait."

MARY. He was *delighted* to come face to face with sin.

BOB. That's probably why he charged us four bucks to bring up three bottles of beer.

MARY. (*To Oscar.*) He forgot the bottle opener, and we had to pry them open on the handle of the radiator.

BOB. And one of them was warm or something, so it shot up to the ceiling and all over one of the beds. So we both had to

sleep in the other twin bed— (*His voice has slowed down on this last thought. The remembering is suddenly a bit painful. There is a short awkward silence before Mary gets to her feet, deliberately breaking the mood.*)

MARY. (*Rises with checks.*) Oscar, we're being inefficient. We don't need total recall—just the facts. I'll take these checks into the office and make notes on the ones I can remember— (*Exits D. R. and closes door. Almost before they realize it, she has left them. Oscar and Bob look at one another, then Bob looks away. Bob crosses L. to below sofa.*)

OSCAR. Mary looks wonderful, don't you think?

BOB. Great.

OSCAR. Like a million bucks.

BOB. (*Above coffee table—nettled.*) I'm afraid the figure that comes into my mind is five thousand bucks in alimony.

OSCAR. (*Notices Dirk, who has just stuck his head in at main door.*) Your friend from California. (*Dirk closes the door.*)

BOB. (*Crosses U. C.*) Dirk! It's good to see you! How long has it been?

DIRK. I don't know. We were still in sailor suits.

BOB. (*Ushering Dirk to chair c. Indicating Oscar; Bob's exuberance is a bit excessive out of sheer relief after the strain with Mary.*) By the way, do you know—?

OSCAR. We've met.

BOB. (*Crosses to Oscar at desk.*) You know, Dirk is the expert we *should* consult! (*To Dirk.*) You've been married four or five times. How the hell did you manage it?

DIRK. (*Sits chair c.*) I feel like a failure to admit that I was only married three times. Actually, I married my first wife twice—so while there were three marriages, there were just two wives involved.

BOB. Now what? Do you pay both of them alimony?

DIRK. No, my second wife just married a very nice plastic surgeon. He fell in love with her while removing a wart from her shoulder blade. I always thought there was a popular song in that.

BOB. What about your first wife?

DIRK. She died.

BOB. See? Them that has, gets!

OSCAR. (*Rises, picks up manuscript from desk and gives it to Bob.*) I know you two have business to talk about— (*Bob glances at Dirk's manuscript, and his face shows his dismay at having to deal with it.*) —so I'll get back to my arithmetic. (*Exits D. R.*)

DIRK. (*Rises to R. of chair c. as Oscar goes into the office and closes the door.*) Yes! Down to business.

BOB. (*Crosses to behind desk and sits to avoid the subject, and to hold onto his own momentary better spirits.*) Dirk, you look great. Younger than ever. How do you do it?

DIRK. (*Turns up and steps to low bookcase.*) I'll tell you this—it gets harder and harder. If I don't get ten full hours' sleep, they can't do a closeup. If I eat a ham sandwich after four o'clock, it shows on the scale. Ham sandwich, hell. I can gain weight from two Bayer aspirins.

BOB. You sound like the curator of your own museum. Come on, now. It's been worth it, hasn't it?

DIRK. Sure. Except that you develop such nutty habits. Do you know what all middle-aged actors do when they're alone in taxicabs?

BOB. What do they do? (*Dirk now demonstrates the business of biting, open-mouthed, from left to right, to strengthen the jaw muscles.*) What's that for?

DIRK. (*Crosses to L. of desk.*) It firms up the jawline, old boy. I'll tell you what I dream of doing. My dearest ambition in life is to let my damn jawline go. In fact, that's why I wrote this book. (*Sits L. of desk.*)

BOB. (*Brought back to the subject, embarrassed.*) I see. But—uh—

DIRK. Have you read it?

BOB. Certainly I've read it. Now—the question is, shall I be perfectly frank? (*Dirk immediately rises with manuscript as if to go.*) You bruise easily— (*Rises to D. R. of desk.*) Have you shown this to anybody else?

DIRK. (*Below steps at c.*) My agent, who thought it was brave, haunting, and hilarious. I brought it to you first because I knew you.

BOB. (*Crossing L. to below sofa.*) I'm sorry, Dirk—but the

truth is it's not a book at all. For the moment we'll rule out the quality of the writing.

DIRK. Let's not rule out anything. What about the quality of the writing?

BOB. (*Above coffee table.*) Well, it's—it's—

DIRK. Is 'lousy' the word you're groping for?

BOB. (*Crossing to D. L. of sofa.*) Well, let's say it's not prose. Actually, it's not even punctuated. I get the feeling that you waited until you were out of breath and then threw in a semi-colon.

DIRK. Hm.

BOB. (*Turning back to Dirk.*) However, that could be fixed. What can't be fixed is the content. It's nothing but anecdotes, really. It's as though you were just taking up where Louella left off.

DIRK. (*Crosses D. to R. of sofa.*) I gather you do not wish to publish this book. Do you think someone else would take it?

BOB. There are a couple of fringe outfits that I imagine would—

DIRK. I don't want a fringe outfit. Tell me this. How much does it cost to publish a book? Any book?

BOB. It depends on the size of the first printing, the length of the book, the kind of promotion—

DIRK. (*Sits R. side of sofa.*) Let's get down to cases. How much would it cost to bring out my book with a first printing of, say, twelve thousand copies?

BOB. Oh—eight, nine thousand dollars.

DIRK. (*Taking out a cigarette.*) Let's say I made a check out to you for eighteen thousand dollars. Would you do the book?

BOB. (*Sits on ottoman.*) If you proposition women with this same kind of finesse you must get your face slapped a lot.

DIRK. I thought it was worth a try, but don't get mad. (*Lights cigarette.*)

BOB. I'm not mad. I'm surprised. Why does that book mean so much to you? Obviously it isn't the money.

DIRK. It may sound naive to say it—but being a star has never killed my urge to become an actor. Ten years ago I started to campaign for real parts. But the formula was still making money. So I went right on—passionate kisses and then I'd

build the Suez Canal—passionate kisses and then I'd open the golden West—

BOB. What do you figure—you're all through in Hollywood?

DIRK. Technically, no. I have two more pictures to go on my present contract. But when I left, they knew and I knew that I was the sinking ship leaving the rats.

BOB. But why this jump into literature?

DIRK. Well, my press agent thought—what the hell, why blame him? I thought—it might stir up a little interest in me as a man instead of a wind-up toy. In my fantasies, I imagined it would be serialized in the Saturday Evening Post with pictures of me looking very seedy. And all of a sudden producers would be saying, "Don't laugh, but do you know who'd be perfect for the degenerate father—Dirk Winston!" (*Mary enters from the office, leaving the door open.*)

MARY. Bob, I've done my half. Oscar would like to see you. (*Seeing Dirk.*) Oh, excuse me, (*R. of C. chair.*)

DIRK. (*Rising—pleasantly.*) Hello, there.

BOB. (*Rising.*) This is my—former wife, Mary McKellaway. (*Crosses U. L.*)

MARY. (*Crosses in a step.*) You're Dirk Winston. And your real name is Winston Krib. Dirk is Krib spelled backwards.

DIRK. Good Lord, how did you remember that?

MARY. Oh, I have a head full of the most useless information. I still remember the names of each of the Dionne quintuplets, and the width of the Amazon River.

DIRK. Oh?

MARY. You have no idea how few people care about the width of the Amazon River. (*Crosses to Dirk.*) I understand you've written a book.

DIRK. That's what I understood, until I talked to Bob here.

MARY. (*Picks up gloves from table C.*) Bob's a special case. He was frightened at an early age by a best-seller. (*Crosses to window seat, picks up coat and handbag.*)

DIRK. He was?

BOB. (*Crossing C.*) I was not. (*Crosses to above L. end of desk.*) Why do you say that? It's simply not true. I happen to believe that there's great wisdom in Emerson's remark that you should never read any book until it's a year old. And I'd

like to think I'm publishing the kind of books that will be around next year. I'm fed up with novels about tangled lives in Scarsdale—or Old Salem for that matter: (*Quoting, in a mock literary rhythm.*) "All he knew was that he was a man and she was a woman or had he made some dreadful mistake."

OSCAR. Bob! Are you coming?

BOB. (*On his way to office.*) Be right back, Dirk.

DIRK. Don't think about me. We're all through. I wouldn't want you to be any clearer.

MARY. Bob, I suppose I might as well go too.

BOB. (*Turns back to Mary.*) Right now?

MARY. Well, don't you have a date?

BOB. I am meeting Tiffany—but couldn't you spare just five minutes? There's something I'd like to ask you. (*Bob crosses above desk. Exits into office, leaves the door open. Mary puts handbag and coat on chair L. of desk and takes a cigarette from box on low bookcase. Just then she becomes aware of Dirk, who has put his cigarette out at the bar table and is now watching her from U. C.*)

MARY. (*Turning and seeing Dirk.*) I used to love your movies. Of course, I didn't see all of them. My mother wouldn't let me.

DIRK. That's all right. I didn't see all of them, either. My agent wouldn't let me. Are you a writer?

MARY. No, I work for the Ladies' Home Journal. I edit the letters to the editor.

DIRK. You mean they have to be edited?

MARY. (*Nodding.*) It does seem a little like incest, doesn't it? (*Crosses D. C. and sits R. end of sofa and lights cigarette.*)

DIRK. (*Crosses above to D. L. of sofa.*) Bob did say you were his former wife, didn't he?

MARY. That's right.

DIRK. I'm so glad.

MARY. Why?

DIRK. Because I can ask you to dinner. Will you have dinner with me?

MARY. Tonight?

DIRK. You have a date?

MARY. No—no.

DIRK. Then what's wrong with tonight?

MARY. I guess I think we should have known each other longer—like, say, another five minutes.

DIRK. (*Sits L. of Mary on sofa and puts manuscript on coffee table.*) You think you're letting yourself in for an orgy. You think I will ply you with liquor, lure you to my sinful bachelor lodgings, and chase you around the king-size bed.

MARY. (*With a look toward the office.*) Well, I've never been plied with liquor. Maybe I'd like it, but—

DIRK. Come on, we'll have dinner. And "Duck Soup" is playing at the Museum of Modern Art. I promise you I'll be so respectable you'll find me quite tiresome.

MARY. (*On an impulse.*) I have a new dress that would look pretty silly all by itself in Schrafft's. Why not? I'd love to. (*Both rise.*) Do you want to pick me up here? What time?

DIRK. Half an hour? (*Crosses C., stops and turns to her. It occurs to him he'd better check.*) By the way, you don't—live here, do you?

MARY. Oh, no. We're not as civilized as all that. This is business.

DIRK. Fine. (*Passing office door, and calling in.*) See you, Bob. I've got a call in to the coast. (*On his way to the main door.*) Half an hour? (*Mary nods, smiling. Dirk goes, closing the door. Mary turns, a little unsure of herself, sees the galleys on the sofa table, abstractedly picks them up, and puts her cigarette on an ashtray on the R. end of sofa table. At almost the same time, Bob appears from the office, as though in response to Dirk's farewell, then realizes he is alone with Mary.*)

BOB. (*Crosses above chair C.*) Oh, Mary—thanks for waiting—I—

MARY. (*Has been aware of his return, but has not looked at him. Now she deliberately reads from the galleys, in a somewhat questioning voice—crosses D. to below R. of sofa.*) "He was alone in the middle of the field. He was grateful once again to be in possession of his own body. The Queen Anne's Lace waved in the breeze like a thousand tiny handkerchiefs . . ." (*Sits C. of sofa, looks up.*) This sounds suspiciously like our friend O'Brynnner. (*Glancing at top of galleys.*) And no wonder. I thought you weren't going to do this one.

BOB. Why?

MARY. Because this man writes like a sick elf. (*Puts galley on coffee table.*)

BOB. (*Crossing above sofa to D. L., wanting to brush it aside before he is irritated again.*) Let's skip that. (*In a hesitant, slightly strained voice.*) Mary—

MARY. (*Adopting his tone.*) Bob—

BOB. I've been thinking. (*Starts to sit on the ottoman.*)

MARY. I thought you had an odd expression.

BOB. (*Jumping up again, a sudden, desperate explosion.*) Could you—would it be absolutely impossible for you to listen to me for three minutes without making one single wise-crack?

MARY. (*Stung—but concealing it.*) I could try.

BOB. (*Earnestly.*) I wish you would. I really wish you would. There is something I want to ask you and I can't do it through a barrage of flippantries.

MARY. You'd be surprised. I don't feel flippant at all. What is it you want to ask me?

BOB. (*Sits on the ottoman.*) You—know I'm getting married again.

MARY. Yes, I know that.

BOB. Well, I find myself stewing over a very curious thing Tiffany said today.

MARY. Oh?

BOB. Her idea was that people go right on making the same mistakes. I had an eerie feeling that there was something true about that. (*Realizing that he is groping.*) What I'm trying to say is that I have by God got to make a better job of it this time. (*Mary turns her head away. Bob leans toward her.*) Yes?

MARY. I didn't say anything.

BOB. But you were thinking—

MARY. (*Turns back to him sharply.*) Look, you say your lines, I'll say my lines. You're hoping for better luck this time. I hope you'll have better luck this time. Beyond that, I don't see—

BOB. You could tell me what I did wrong. When we broke up, I spent many drunken hours thinking how it was all your fault. (*Mary starts to speak.*) Yes, I know I'm painting a charming

portrait of myself—Bob McKellaway as a slob and sorehead. But that's how I felt.

MARY. And that's how you still feel.

BOB. No, by the time I calmed down and cleared the last of your bobby-pins out of the bathroom, I realized that half the trouble had to be me.

MARY. You think it can be divided into two equal parts—like a sandwich?

BOB. I think success has no rules, but you can learn a great deal from failure.

MARY. I see. And what you're really looking for is the formula for instant marriage.

BOB. No, I'm not as sappy as that. I'm prepared to make a number of different mistakes this time. I would like not to make the same ones. And I would like some advice.

MARY. Had you thought of writing to Dear Abby? (*He rises and crosses up to fireplace. She is immediately penitent.*) Bob, I'm sorry for that. That's the kind of thing I promised not to say. (*Bob crosses D. L. below ottoman hopefully.*) But what you're asking is impossible. I can't give you a report card. Is he punctual? Does he complete the task assigned? But you know what? This is so like you. This determination to be sensible in a situation where it isn't sensible to be sensible. You want to analyze, analyze. Like those people who take an overdose of sleeping pills, and sit there making notes while they're dying. "Four A.M. Vision beginning to blur." You'd do that. You would.

BOB. Maybe.

MARY. What shall I say? That you used to leave your ties on the coffee table? And you always grabbed the New Yorker first and took it to the bathroom? And you never talked to me in cars?

BOB. Of course I talked in cars.

MARY. Yes, to the traffic signals. "Come on, dammit, turn green."

BOB. (*Crosses below sofa to L. of chair c.*) I concentrate when I drive.

MARY. And you were always asking solemn, editorial-type questions beginning Don't You Ever. Don't You Ever order

lunch meat? Don't You Ever put the lid back on the mayonnaise? Don't You Ever put your cigarettes out?

BOB. (*Brandishing Mary's still smoking cigarette and putting it out table c.*) Because you never in your life put a cigarette out!

MARY. And you always, always put the ice-cube trays back without filling them.

BOB. (*Gesturing toward the kitchen.*) Ice-cube trays? Is that all you remember?

MARY. Aren't you forgetting one small detail? You're the one who walked out.

BOB. (*Crosses D. R. of c. chair.*) Technically, I suppose that's true.

MARY. Technically? There was nothing technical about it. You got up in the middle of the night and slammed out of here. And you know what? I never knew why.

BOB. Like hell you didn't.

MARY. All I knew was, one moment you were in bed, and the next minute you were banging drawers and dumping shirts into a suitcase.

BOB. And that's *all* you remember? (*Crosses to sofa.*) Let me reconstruct the scene for you. (*Sits R. of Mary.*) You were in bed reading McCalls. I was in the bathroom brushing my teeth. Then I put the lights out, came to bed, put my arms around you, and you said—"Okay, let's get those colored lights going."

MARY. I said that?

BOB. I wouldn't be capable of inventing it.

MARY. And was that so terrible?

BOB. Maybe not. But let us say that it had the effect of a cold shower when I wasn't in the mood for a cold shower.

MARY. I see.

BOB. I grant you it was a very small straw to be the last straw. Another time it would have bounced off me. But it had been such a stinker of a day. We got bad notices on the Caine book. The deal for the serial rights fell through. Oh, the usual. Except that I felt a peculiar need for some warmth. I guess I felt I needed a wife.

MARY. I think I was wifely—a lot.

BOB. Sure. On and off. Between jokes. (*Oscar enters, closes door. Mary hits Bob with the sofa cushion. Oscar has entered in time to see her do this. Mary crosses L. then above sofa to window. Bob crosses to fireplace.*)

OSCAR. (*Crosses U. R. C., eyeing them both.*) Please don't be embarrassed on my account. I'm delighted. I hate a friendly divorce. A lawyer is never entirely comfortable with a friendly divorce, any more than a good mortician wants to finish his job and then have the patient sit up on the table. (*Mary, without saying a word, picks up her coat, her suitcase, gloves and handbag and leaves by the main door. Oscar looks at Bob and crosses D. to above chair c.*) Did you read Walter Lippman today? I thought it was an awfully good piece.

BOB. Oscar, don't be urbane all the time. I can't stand it. (*Crosses to Oscar, fuming.*) You see why I didn't want to see her again? When you said she was coming, I should have walked out that front door! (*Crosses D. C. then to D. L.*) I don't understand it. I thought she had lost the power to enrage me. Maybe I took the bandages off too soon. Maybe I— (*Stops as he sees Mary returning with her suitcase. Oscar crosses to below kitchen door.*) Did you forget something?

MARY. No, dammit, I *remembered* something. Having made my dramatic exit, I realized that this is where I'm being picked up. I *have* to stay here for another ten minutes.

BOB. I see.

MARY. And furthermore, I will have to use your room to change in. (*To Oscar.*) Oscar, if the phone rings, it may be for me. Will *you* take it? The Algonquin is supposed to call and confirm my room for tonight.

BOB. There's a new telephone in the . . . (*Mary goes off to the bedroom, not exactly slamming the door but letting it close pretty arrogantly behind her. Bob starts to follow but is stopped U. C. by Oscar.*)

OSCAR. Never mind her. We have something more important to talk about. (*Crosses to desk and sits.*) I have been over all the figures and am now ready to give my state of the union address.

BOB. (*U. C. trying to tear his mind away from Mary, but still edgy and upset.*) First, tell me about that tax thing.

OSCAR. Oh, my guess is that we'll get it down somewhere in the neighborhood of eighteen hundred, two thousand dollars.

BOB. (*Crossing to R. of chair c.*) That would be more like it.

OSCAR. You said you wanted my advice on the over-all picture. Let me ask you a couple of questions. Tiffany comes from a wealthy family, doesn't she?

BOB. What has that got to do with anything?

OSCAR. A lot. She has to be supported. You can't support her. I have now been through what we shall laughingly call your books, and you're not supporting yourself.

BOB. You're joking.

OSCAR. Then why aren't you laughing?

BOB. (*Crosses to L. of desk.*) Look. If you're trying in some left-handed way to tell me I can't get married, you're wasting your breath. I'm thirty-six years old, and this is a—

OSCAR. Free country? Don't you believe it. People pick up the most erroneous ideas from popular songs. Let me tell you something. If all you've got is the sun in the morning and the moon at night, you're in trouble.

BOB. (*Crossing L. to L. c.*) What are you talking about? I take eighteen thousand a year out of the company—plus bonuses.

OSCAR. That's right.

BOB. (*Crosses to above c. chair.*) That may be cigarette money to the Rockefellers, but it still feels like a lot to me. Hell, my father never made more than five thousand a year in his life and he put four boys through college. (*Leans on back of chair—facing up.*)

OSCAR. Let's not dwell on the glories of the past. I have the figures for *this* year. Do you want to hear them?

BOB. No. (*Starts for bedroom and stops.*) Oh, yes, I suppose so. (*Crosses D. R.—sits L. of desk.*)

OSCAR. (*Referring to a worksheet.*) We start with your base salary—eighteen thousand—plus one thousand dollars sales bonus. By the way, that was down from preceding years.

BOB. Sales were down.

OSCAR. So that's nineteen thousand dollars. Against that, we have: thirty-two hundred, rent; two thousand, eighty, maid service; four thousand, nine hundred, food and liquor; five thousand, alimony to Mary—

BOB. And that's ridiculous. (*Shouting at the bedroom door.*) She's working.

OSCAR. That was the decision of the court. You can't do anything about it. (*Picking up where he left off.*) Five thousand to Mary. Six hundred and eighty, club dues and entertainment. Six hundred, clothes. Nine hundred, books, furnishings, dry cleaning. Eleven hundred, insurance and medical. Twenty-seven hundred, taxes. We now have a total of twenty-one thousand, two hundred and ten dollars. You do have three thousand in available savings, but most of that will go for that old tax bill.

BOB. Here, let me see that thing. (*Takes worksheet from Oscar.*)

OSCAR. You can juggle those figures any way you want to. But you're not going to change the fact that you are already spending twenty-one thousand on an income of nineteen. It's not just that you can't support another wife. You'd be ill-advised to buy a canary.

BOB. It can't be as complicated as you're pretending—

OSCAR. Actually, it's even more complicated. You must keep in mind that if you ever wanted to divorce Tiffany, you'd be in a hopeless position, financially.

BOB. (*Outburst.*) I'm not going to divorce Tiffany! Why would I divorce Tiffany?

OSCAR. Your attitude does you credit.

BOB. Here. Some of these expenses I can cut.

OSCAR. Yes, you could move to a cheaper apartment. You don't have to belong to the New York Athletic Club. You might save seven or eight hundred dollars. However, I have met Tiffany. I doubt that you could keep her in cashmere sweaters for that. She doesn't work, does she?

BOB. Oh, she does volunteer things.

OSCAR. Maybe her father would give her an allowance.

BOB. Maybe we could take in boarders. Any more bright ideas? (*Rises to L. of desk.*) What the hell am I supposed to do? Stay single for the rest of my life and sleep around? Or do I remain celibate and take cold showers and get plenty of exercise?

OSCAR. Fortunately, you belong to the Athletic Club. (*Bob crosses to window. Telephone rings. Into phone.*) Hello. That's

right. Can I take the message? (*Mary, in dressing gown, pokes her head out of bedroom door.*) I see. Will you wait one minute? They haven't got a single but they can give you a suite.

MARY. Tell them never mind. I'm not paying twenty-four dollars for one night. I'll go to the Biltmore.

BOB. (*Not graciously, just realistically.*) If you want to, you can stay here. I'm going to be in Goshen for the weekend.

MARY. Stay here?

BOB. I won't be here. You'll be perfectly safe.

MARY. I'm not worried. I was perfectly safe when you *were* here. (*Mary disappears, shutting the door again.*)

BOB. I shouldn't have divorced her. I should have shot her.

OSCAR. (*Into phone.*) Thank you, she'll make other arrangements. (*Doorbell. Oscar hangs up.*)

BOB. (*Crosses to front door.*) With my luck, this'll be a telegram saying that my rich old uncle died and left his money to a kindly waitress. (*Bob opens the main door to Dirk, and is surprised to see him.*) Oh. Hello again.

DIRK. Hello. Is she ready?

BOB. Who? (*Bob closes door.*)

DIRK. Do I get a choice? (*Crosses D. C.*) I'm calling for Mary.

BOB. For Mary? (*Crosses to L. of Dirk.*) For what?

DIRK. For dinner. Isn't that all right? Should my mother have called your mother?

BOB. (*Crosses L. to above sofa.*) Don't be ridiculous. I just didn't know, that's all.

OSCAR. (*With papers, steps to R. C.*) You see, Bob thinks when he brings a book back to the library, it'll never go out again.

BOB. Bob doesn't think anything. (*Crosses to D. L. of sofa.*) I had always supposed that Mr. Winston only went out with women whose names ended in 'a'. Like Lana. Or Ava. And I'm a little puzzled as to why he wants to take my ex-wife to dinner.

DIRK. Because she looked hungry. You damn fool. Because she strikes me as an exceptionally attractive girl.

BOB. And you would know.

DIRK. That's right. I don't want to pull rank or anything—but I think it might be fair to assume I know at least as much about women as you do about books. Perhaps more.

BOB. Look, you misunderstand me. I am delighted that you find my former wife attractive. I'm charmed that you are taking her out. If you decide to marry her, I'll send up rockets.

In fact, you can count on me as your best man. (*Sits sofa.*)

OSCAR. (*R. of c. chair.*) Marry her and you count on him as your publisher. (*Dirk crosses D. L. of sofa.*)

BOB. (*Overheated.*) Absolutely! Now, there's a brilliant idea! Why didn't I think of it? Oscar's got a head on both his shoulders. I could solve your problems, you could solve my problems.

DIRK. (*At ottoman.*) You've got to be joking.

BOB. (*Lying back and kicking off his loafers.*) Why? This is the age of the deal! You scratch me and I'll scratch you! Don't you read the papers? Why should I be out of touch?

OSCAR. (*Sits chair c.*) Bob—

DIRK. No, let's listen to him. I couldn't be more impressed. It stirs memories of the past—I keep thinking, "Louis B. Mayer, thou shouldst be living at this hour!"

BOB. (*To Oscar.*) See? You're shocked. But he's been around!

DIRK. (*Sits ottoman.*) And back. It couldn't be more reasonable. He has an unmarketable wife and I have an unmarketable book. He thinks we should pool our lack of resources. I haven't had such a fascinating offer in years. (*The bedroom door opens and Mary appears, beautiful in a low-cut dress, and puts her coat on the railing.*)

MARY. Hello! I think I'm all collected. (*All rise. She senses the tension in the air.*) What are you all staring at? Is something showing?

DIRK. (*Crosses U. C. to Mary's L.*) Yes, and it looks delicious. Are we ready? (*Crosses up—opens door—gets Mary's coat.*)

MARY. (*Crosses to Oscar and kisses him. To Bob.*) I suppose it's all right if I pick up that bag later tonight?

BOB. (*Crosses to D. L. of soft—stiffly.*) Certainly. But how will you get in? (*Dirk helps Mary into her coat.*)

MARY. (*Waving a bunch of keys from out of her handbag.*) I still have my keys. Have you been missing things?

DIRK. (*Stepping R. of Mary.*) Shall we run along? I double-parked down there.

MARY. (*Breezing through doorway, calling back to Oscar and Bob.*) Good night!

BOB and OSCAR. (*She's already gone.*) Good night.

DIRK. (*Ready to go in doorway, back to Bob, grinning.*) I think you've got yourself a deal. (*Dirk goes, closing door behind him. Bob heaves a great sigh of exasperation and disgust, goes to sofa and sits and snatches up the galleys.*)

OSCAR. (*Crosses to R. of sofa. After watching Bob for a moment.*) I've known you for twenty years and I never realized you had this flair for comedy. (*No answer from Bob, trying to concentrate on galleys.*) You were joking?

BOB. (*Crossly.*) Of course I was joking. (*Looking up as the thought crosses his mind.*) But wouldn't I like to see him try! It'd be an education for him. (*Oscar pokes the worksheet under his nose. Bob crosses R. to desk.*) Don't, don't, don't. I don't want to hear another word about my untidy affairs. (*Turns his attention to galleys again.*)

OSCAR. (*Following Bob to the desk.*) What's the matter with you?

BOB. (*Sharply, not lyrically, and without looking up.*) Say I'm weary, say I'm sad, say that health and wealth have missed me, and you've said it. (*Bob is now rapidly crossing out great sections of the galleys.*)

OSCAR. Why are you *slashing* at those galleys?

BOB. Because this man writes like a sick elf! (*And Bob is going at it with renewed vigor as the curtain falls.*)

CURTAIN

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

The moment the curtain is up, Dirk and Mary enter by the main door, stomping their feet and brushing snow from their clothes. It is shortly after midnight and the room is dark except for the glow from the window. We can see that it is snowing outside. Mary turns on the hall light just inside the front door.

DIRK. Did you get wet?

MARY. No, except for my hair. (*She has turned on a single light.*)

DIRK. It doesn't look wet.

MARY. No, but you watch. In five minutes it'll be so fuzzy I'll be able to cut a piece off and clean my suede shoes.

DIRK. Would you feel safer if I left the door open?

MARY. Oh dear! I felt perfectly safe until you asked that question.

DIRK. The question is withdrawn.

MARY. Isn't this the silliest snowstorm? (*Crosses to window.*)

DIRK. (*Closing the door and following her.*) I come from California. I think it's a lovely snowstorm.

MARY. But those great big flakes swirling around! It looks so phoney. Like—do you remember those big glass paperweights and you turned them upside down and it snowed? That's how it looks. (*Turns and is surprised to find him right behind her. Points at bag on platform and crosses U. C.*) Here's that damn bag. Remember—you're not coming back out with me. I'll get a cab.

DIRK. (*Crosses U. C. to L. of Mary on platform.*) In this? You'd never. And here I am—ready—willing—cheaper.