

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 The question is withdrawn.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.

MARY. If I had a brain in my head, I'd have taken it with me and we could have dropped it off at the Biltmore. (*Mary is holding the suitcase in her hand. As Dirk goes to take it from her, his hand rests on hers a moment.*)

DIRK. Does everybody tell you how pretty you are?

MARY. (*Takes her hand away—flustered.*) Oh, you are a good actor! You could play anything. (*Changing the subject.*) You know what? It's really idiotic, our going back out in that blizzard. We're not delivering the serum, or anything. (*She crosses D. C., puts her handbag on table C. and turns on the lamp.*) Why don't I just stay here? (*Dirk puts bag down and looks toward the bedroom. In answer to his unspoken question.*) Oh, he's safely in Goshen with a beautiful, lovely girl with a head on her shoulders. (*Crosses L. and turns on sofa table lamp. She has remembered Bob's description word for word. Dirk stares at her a second, then heads for the bar table.*)

DIRK. (*Hangs up his coat.*) Do you suppose we can have a drink, or did Bob get the custody of the liquor?

MARY. (*Puts her coat on chair U. L. She is already a couple of cocktails in, and is beginning to like it.*) Sure, let's have a drink. But make mine light. I'm beginning to feel that champagne. (*Crosses D. L. and turns on D. L. lamp.*) Do you realize we were three hours in that restaurant? That's the nice thing about having dinner with somebody you're not married to. (*She starts to sit on the sofa, then after a glance at Dirk who is making drinks, crosses and sits chair C.*) You have so much more to talk about.

DIRK. All I found out about you is that you're allergic to penicillin and you love "The Catcher in the Rye."

MARY. That's all? That's a lot. I want to hear about you. Are you going to get your book published?

DIRK. (*Crosses R. of Mary.*) I am going to make every possible effort. (*Hands her a drink.*) That's mostly water. (*He moves chair L. of desk closer to her and sits in it.*) You and Bob must have spent a lot of time with authors. What do they talk about?

MARY. You don't think they talk about books? They talk about first serial rights, second serial rights, movie rights, and

how they're going to form a corporation to publish their next one so they can call it a capital gain and move to Jamaica.

DIRK. They sound just like actors.

MARY. It's terrible when you feel a writer is trying out his material on you. You never know exactly what reaction they expect, but you have to keep looking so interested your eyebrows get tired. (*She has made a concentrated face to show what she means. Dirk grins.*)

DIRK. I know a guy who used to work with Disney. He'd actually tell you the whole plot of an animated cartoon—frame by frame. But he was a classic case. He could bore the birds back onto the trees. He never stopped talking—never. If he took a drink, he'd hold his hand up— (*He demonstrates this.*) —so you couldn't put a word in until he was back with you. (*Mary laughs at the demonstration, then calms down into a small silence, which Dirk fills.*) Your eyes are so blue—and so liquid. I feel they might spill right down your cheeks.

MARY. (*Quick with the answer, puts her drink on table C.*) That's because I need glasses and won't wear them. (*Crosses to sofa and gets cigarette from coffee table.*)

DIRK. (*Curious and interested.*) Why do you do that?

MARY. Do what?

DIRK. You jump when you get a compliment.

MARY. (*Too quickly.*) No, I don't.

DIRK. You're actually embarrassed.

MARY. (*A shade defensively, lighting cigarette.*) Why should I be embarrassed?

DIRK. I don't know. But you are. You come bustling in to change the subject, like a nervous hostess who's discovered that two of the guests are quarreling. (*Imitating the hostess.*) "Now, come along, Harry—there's somebody very nice I want you to meet."

MARY. (*Sits L. end of sofa.*) All right. Pay me pretty compliments and I won't change the subject.

DIRK. And you won't make jokes? (*Mary is stunned by the echo of Bob's remark.*)

MARY. What? What?

DIRK. Shouldn't I have said that?

MARY. No, that's all right. It's been said before. Just recently,

in fact. (*Dirk crosses L. with Mary's drink. Puts it on coffee table and crosses below to ottoman.*) I suppose I should take a course and find out what a girl should answer when a gentleman says "Tell me, pretty maiden, are there any more at home like you?" Though it would hardly pay. It doesn't come up that often.

DIRK. I thought little girls learned things like that when they were three years old. (*Sits on the ottoman.*)

MARY. Oh, but I'm a very retarded case. It's only just this year I learned how to put my hair up in rollers.

DIRK. What did you do before that?

MARY. I wore it pinned back in a bun. And when it had to be cut, I cut it, or I went somewhere and *they* cut it. Lately I've been going to Elizabeth Arden, and I want you to know that it's a whole new way of life.

DIRK. So I'm told.

MARY. At Arden's they don't just cut your hair—never. They *shape* it. And they honestly think a good shaping is as important as a cure for cancer. The hairdresser really blanched when he saw my bun. I could hear him thinking, "Thank God she came to me—another month and it might have been too late."

DIRK. (*Rises, crouches L. of sofa.*) Well, I think your hair looks lovely. Now say thank you.

MARY. Thank you.

DIRK. See how easy it is?

MARY. (*Jumping up, self-conscious.*) I—oh—tell me about your book. (*Picks up manuscript and crosses c.*)

DIRK. (*Crosses c. takes manuscript from Mary.*) What can I tell you? It weighs three quarters of a pound. It takes eighty-four cents in stamps to mail it. (*Tosses it on sofa table, crosses to bar for drink.*)

MARY. Don't talk like that. You mustn't lose faith in it just because Bob didn't like it. Bob's a good publisher but he makes mistakes. (*Crosses u. c., R. of Dirk.*) Did you have any help with this book?

DIRK. You mean, did I *tell* it to somebody? No.

MARY. (*Crosses L. above sofa to fireplace.*) I'm glad. All these 'as told to' books have such a spooky flavor about them.

First the personality is all drained off. Then to compensate something else is pumped in—sex or religion or Scott Fitzgerald. I fully expect that any day now we're going to have The Confessions of Saint Augustine—as told to Gerold Frank. DIRK. (*Crossing d. c.—R. of sofa.*) Mary—

MARY. (*Puts out cigarette on mantel.*) What?

DIRK. You just said Bob makes mistakes. But how did he ever let you slip through his fingers?

MARY. Just lucky, I guess.

DIRK. (*Sits R. end of sofa.*) I think I am beginning to see the clue to this little puzzle.

MARY. What puzzle?

DIRK. You.

MARY. (*Crossing to below L. of sofa.*) I'd love to think I was a puzzle. A woman of mystery. Smiling and enigmatic on the surface—but underneath, a tigress. (*Change of mood, straight-forward.*) I hate to admit it, but what you see is all there is. Underneath this plain, girlish exterior, there's a very plain girl.

DIRK. Ah, but what happened to make you *decide* it was such a plain exterior? It was the divorce, wasn't it? It was Bob.

MARY. Bob? I decided *that* when I was thirteen years old. We can't blame Bob for everything.

DIRK. At thirteen, all by yourself, you decided that?

MARY. (*Steps L. and sits ottoman.*) Oh, there were people around, but I can't say they gave me any argument. Do you ever look at little girls?

DIRK. How little?

MARY. (*Rather intensely, as she remembers and thinks about it. The intensity is perhaps increased by the amount she's had to drink.*) You take two little girls. One of them is pink and round, with curly hair and yards of eyelashes. The other one is pale and bony, with thin, wispy hair and two little ears poking through—like the handles on a sugar bowl. Okay, which one of these little girls is going to have to wear braces on her teeth?

DIRK. The wispy one.

MARY. (*As though awarding him a prize.*) You've got it. (*Seeing herself again, taking a sip of her drink.*) That was me. Braces on my teeth, band-aids on my knees, freckles on my

nose. All elbows and shoulder blades. For two years running I got picked to play the consumptive orphan in "Michael O'Halloran."

DIRK. That was talent.

MARY. That was typecasting.

DIRK. All adolescents go through something. I had the worst case of acne in the history of the world. For three years I was a technicolor marvel. You wouldn't remember when Fleischmann's Yeast was the big thing. I used to eat Fleischmann's Yeast and drink water until I couldn't move without gurgling. I imagine I was actually fermenting.

MARY. I never ate yeast, but once I sent away secretly for Stillman's freckle cream. I guess I used too much, because I just peeled and peeled. I had to pretend it was a sunburn.

DIRK. I used to pretend I hated everybody. Especially girls, because I was too self-conscious to talk to them.

MARY. You made a spectacular recovery.

DIRK. I may even have overdone it. But why didn't you—

MARY. Make a recovery? Well, it was sort of different with me. When I was a kid, I mean really a kid, I never worried about the way I looked, because I thought—I *knew*—I'd grow up to be beautiful just like my sister Clara.

DIRK. Was she so beautiful?

MARY. Clara? She had bright red hair and brown eyes and she always had a faintly startled look, as if she'd just come out of a dark theater into the sunlight. People who met her would be so busy staring they'd forget to finish their sentences.

DIRK. I can see that would have been something of a cross for you.

MARY. No, I thought it was insurance. Clara was six years older than I was, and I thought 'I'll grow up to look just like that.' One day I was measuring myself—I was about fourteen—and I realized I hadn't grown at all, not an inch, in a whole year. And then it came to me. I wasn't going to grow any more. I was *up*. And I didn't look anything at all like Clara.

DIRK. And you weren't satisfied to look like Mary?

MARY. I certainly was not. I went rushing to my father, and I asked him when I was going to look like Clara. Poor man. He didn't know what to say.

DIRK. What did he say?

MARY. He said "Darling, we wouldn't want two Claras. You're the bright one." That did it. I could have faced being plain, but to be plain *and* bright! In the high school I went to, that was a beatable combination.

DIRK. So you decided to get on the debating team.

MARY. How did you know?

DIRK. Girls who feel they are not going to be invited to dances always get on the debating team.

MARY. (*Rises to L. of sofa.*) And I worked on the school newspaper. And I imagined all the time that I was really Catherine Earnshaw.

DIRK. Catherine who?

MARY. The girl in "Wuthering Heights." Cathy.

DIRK. Oh, Merle Oberon.

MARY. That's right. I used to dream that somewhere there was a strange, dark man whose heart was quietly breaking for me. On rainy nights I'd open the window and imagine I could hear him calling—"Oh, my wild, sweet Cathy!" The colds I got! And of course the only dark man I ever saw was the middle-aged dentist who used to adjust the braces on my teeth. (*Sits sofa.*)

DIRK. And you're still cross about it.

MARY. Is that how I sound? I don't feel that way. I feel wistful. I think of that sappy little girl and I wonder what happened to her.

DIRK. Nothing happened. She hasn't changed at all.

MARY. You mean I haven't changed at all? That's a hell of a thing to say.

DIRK. Oh, I'm certain you've changed in appearance. That's clear enough. But you yourself haven't changed. Somewhere inside you, you're *still* wearing braces on your teeth.

MARY. Oh, come, come. I came to the big city. I learned to tip waiters. I read the New Yorker. I got married.

DIRK. And nothing took. Do you know what's strange?

MARY. What?

DIRK. Here you are—so lovely. And nobody falls in love with you.

MARY. Oh, is that so? And where did you get that idea?

enters. Bob, too, is snowy as he comes in the main door. He stops dead at what he sees.)

BOB. Mary. What are you doing here?

DIRK. Don't ask rhetorical questions. Surely you can see what she's doing.

BOB. (*Puts hat on u. c. bookcase. Embarrassed, bothered by some instinctive reaction he doesn't understand, and trying to be cordial. After all, it's what he hoped for. His reactions are actually disturbingly mixed.*) All I meant, really, was to indicate my surprise that Mary was *here*. I thought we left it that she was going to the Biltmore. I mean—what is the situation now? (*To Mary, and still floundering.*) I mean, are you just coming or going? (*Crosses R. and puts gloves on low bookcase.*)

MARY. (*Sweetly. She's a little bit high.*) I'm staying. What about you?

DIRK. We thought you were on your way to Goshen.

BOB. (*Takes off coat.*) I was on my way to Goshen, but there's a blizzard out there. We couldn't even get on the thruway. (*Puts coat on window seat.*)

MARY. And I wasn't privy to your change of plans. (*Turns to Dirk.*) Do you know I never in my whole life used the word privy before?

DIRK. Not even for—?

MARY. (*Shaking her head rapidly.*) Nope, never. Don't you hate places where they have cute names for the men's room?

DIRK. I hate places where they have cute names for the places. Did you ever hear of a nightclub called the Chez When? (*Bob moves the desk chair back to its regular position.*)

MARY. (*Eyes widening.*) No.

DIRK. What do you call it when the words are accidentally twisted? Where the minister says the Lord is a shoving leopard—?

MARY. I think that's a spoonerism. I'm always getting words twisted like that. I was buying a hammock for the porch at home. And in a crowded elevator I said, "Miss, where do you have perch furniture?"

DIRK. Perch furniture?

MARY. Don't you just know the unsuitable things that would go on in perch furniture? (*Bob crosses to R. of c. chair from*

D. R. *As they laugh, they become more aware of Bob, who is feeling very much like a fifth wheel and not liking it.*)

DIRK. Bob, why don't you get yourself a drink?

BOB. (*Crosses to bar table and makes drink.*) Thank you. You're the soul of hospitality.

DIRK. Well...

MARY. Pay no attention to Bob. It's just that he's systematic. He has his day all planned out. He makes a list. And the snow wasn't on his list and you weren't on his list.

DIRK. (*A sly look at Bob.*) But we had such an interesting chat at six o'clock. I thought I was definitely in his plans—on his list.

BOB. (*Crosses L. to fireplace with drink.*) I'm sorry if I sounded rude. But it happens to be one-thirty, and any hour now I'd like to know where I'm going to lay my head. (*To Mary.*) Did I understand you to say you were staying here?

MARY. Yes. I'm sleepy. I do not wish to go out into the night that covers me black as the pit from pole to pole. Remember, women and children first. That's the law of the sea. And I'm sure it goes for snowstorms.

BOB. Naturally I don't expect you to go out in this. (*Unable to restrain a note of irony.*) Would it be all right if I slept here on the couch?

MARY. Certainly. Be your guest.

DIRK. (*To Mary.*) Our host is beginning to look glassy-eyed. And since we seem to be sitting on his final resting-place, I'd better leave. (*Rising.*) But it was a lovely evening. (*Takes Mary's hand.*)

MARY. (*Rising with Dirk.*) I thought so. I really thought so. (*They go u. c. hand in hand. Dirk gets his coat.*)

DIRK. I'll call you first thing in the morning. Is ten o'clock too early?

MARY. Ten o'clock is fine. (*Dirk kisses her lightly but definitely.*)

DIRK. (*To Mary.*) Good night— (*To Bob.*) Good night!

BOB. 'Night. (*Dirk goes, closing main door behind him. Slight moment of awkwardness, then Bob moves, puts drink on mantel and crosses to storage closet.*) Well, I'll get myself a blanket and some sheets. I imagine that extra blanket is still

in the storage closet. (*Brings sheet and comforter and crosses to window.*)

MARY. (*Hasn't stirred.*) I imagine.

BOB. (*Puts comforter and sheet on window seat.*) Too bad we can't open the window. This place is full of smoke. (*Crosses c. waving his arms about to dispel imaginary smoke.*)

MARY. Uh hm.

BOB. (*Picks up large ashtray from coffee table, dumps contents of sofa table ashtray and ashtray on mantel into it. Dumps it in fireplace and replaces it. Finally speaks his mind.*) I must say that I'm rather surprised at you.

MARY. (*Bright, cheery.*) Yes, I'm a little surprised at me, too.

BOB. You've been drinking.

MARY. (*Crosses D. C. sits R. arm of sofa.*) Yep, that's exactly what I've been doing. It's taught me a valuable lesson. You know what's the matter with this country? Too much sobriety. Too many sober persons.

BOB. (*L. of sofa.*) May I suggest that you get yourself to bed before you pass right out?

MARY. No, you may not suggest one thing. I do not require your solasitude.

BOB. Solasitude? Solicitude!

MARY. (*Rises, crosses to below and stretches out on sofa.*) All right, that's what I do not require. I feel fine, splendid, top of the morning.

BOB. (*Crosses above sofa to c., picks up ashtray on table c.*) I don't get it. I thought you were the conservative, slow-to-warm-up type. Miss Birdseye Frozen.

MARY. There *was* a rumor like that going round. Isn't it nice to know there's nothing in it. (*Bob dumps contents of low bookcase and desk ashtray and c. ashtray into wastebasket D. R.*)

BOB. Mary, look. What you do is none of my business. I know that.

MARY. I'm glad you know that.

BOB. (*Replacing c. ashtray and sitting chair.*) I never wanted to see you retire to a convent. You *ought* to go out with men. You should get married again. To some man who's in love with you.

MARY. (*Listening.*) What other kind of man would marry me?

BOB. There are men and men. And—well, you don't know what you're getting into here. The idea of you sitting around necking with that bum! What the hell do you know about him?

MARY. Well, let's see. He had a very bad case of acne when he was fourteen years old.

BOB. That clarifies everything. I'm telling you this league is too fast for you, dearie. These glamor boys collect women like stamps—if you want to be added to the collection.

MARY. (*Sits up on sofa, finally speaking up for herself.*) All right. I'll tell you something. He thinks he's falling in love with me.

BOB. (*Alarmed; feeling responsible.*) He said that? Oh, that bastard! But you *couldn't* have believed him?

MARY. Why not?

BOB. Now, honestly. Does it seem very likely that that big, caramel-covered movie idol would come along and just one, two, three, bang, fall in love with a girl like you?

MARY. (*Sharply hurt, and now fighting tears.*) I guess I thought it was possible—even with a girl like me. Isn't that the height of something or other?

BOB. (*Distressed at what he has said.*) Wait, I didn't mean a girl like *you*—I meant any ordinary—

MARY. I *know* what you meant. How could you be clearer? I'm the drab, colorless type and I should know better than to believe it when somebody tells me I'm—pretty— (*She can't help the catch in her voice, try as she may.*)

BOB. (*Rises—unsettled.*) Are you going to cry about it?

MARY. Maybe. Maybe. Why not?

BOB. Because you never cry.

MARY. How do you know I never? How do you know? I'll cry if I please! And I please! (*And she lets herself go, having a real, satisfactory cry.*)

BOB. (*Crosses to R. of sofa.*) Mary—

MARY. (*Lies face down crying.*) Don't you Mary me!

BOB. (*Crosses to window then above sofa to L. of sofa, out of his depth and railing against it.*) It must have something to do with the position of the moon—I don't get it. Some joker tells

you you're beautiful and you go all to pieces. I used to tell you you were beautiful and your detachment was marvelous to behold! (*Leans over her.*)

MARY. (*Sits up—flaring.*) You never, never, never told me I was beautiful!

BOB. Of course I did!

MARY. No, you didn't. You said you liked the way I looked.

BOB. That's the same thing.

MARY. It most certainly is not the same thing! The world is full of people that you like the way they look, but you wouldn't say they were beautiful!

BOB. Like who, for instance?

MARY. Like Mrs. Roosevelt!

BOB. (*Incredulous, entirely serious, and wonderfully maddening.*) You don't think Mrs. Roosevelt is beautiful? My God—the character in that face—!

MARY. See? Now I'm a Communist. I'm picking on Mrs. Roosevelt! I love Mrs. Roosevelt. And I'm not talking about character. If there is one thing I'm not interested in having any more of—if there's one thing I'm lousy with—it's character! Oh, why did you come back here tonight? I felt so good. Now I'm cold sober and everything is spoiled!

BOB. (*Backtracking.*) I see that you're upset. I'm sorry if I—

MARY. You're not sorry. You're merely embarrassed.

BOB. What I *am* is surprised. I never thought I'd find you sobbing on the sofa. For all the world like any other woman. Actually, it's quite becoming. (*Sits L. of Mary on sofa and offers his handkerchief.*)

MARY. (*Taking it and wiping her eyes.*) Thank you. I'm so relieved to know that.

BOB. Funny you never cried in the whole five years we were married.

MARY. I figured you were sensitive enough for both of us. You decided right at the beginning that I was the airy type—impervious to wind and weather and small disappointments.

BOB. You make it sound as though I invented your character. For that matter, what's wrong with being the airy type?

MARY. (*Rises, crosses R. c. below c. chair.*) It got to be a

bit of a strain. I felt like I was on some damn panel show, twenty-four hours a day. Smiling, affable, humming little snatches of song. Laughing when I didn't know the answers. But affable, affable, affable! You don't know how I longed to get up some morning and feel free for once to be depressed, to be constipated, to be boring. (*Crosses to window, pause.*) All right. I was boring.

BOB. No, you were not boring. It's strange we talked so much without communicating. (*The fact has hit him, and he's considering it.*)

MARY. It was hard to communicate with you. You were always communicating with yourself. The line was busy.

BOB. (*Surprised.*) Is that the way it seemed to you?

MARY. It seemed to me that you were taking your emotional temperature six times a day. I could almost hear you asking yourself "Am I nervous? Am I tense? Did that upset me?" How are you feeling right now? (*Bob almost doesn't hear this last thrust. He is seriously and soberly thinking back. Mary picks up comforter and sheet from window seat.*)

BOB. You're right, of course. I do have a bad habit of asking myself questions—silly questions. But—am I nervous, am I tense? That's more or less reasonable. (*Looking at her.*) It was really more foolish than that. I used to ask myself—why doesn't she love me?

MARY. (*Crosses to R. of sofa—shocked, unbelieving.*) You asked yourself—that?

BOB. All the time.

MARY. (*Throws bedclothes on sofa, exploding.*) That's why I hate intellectuals! They're all so dumb!

BOB. What kind of a statement is that?

MARY. (*Sits R. arm of sofa with back to Bob.*) An idiotic statement. I should save my breath and remember that I'm talking to the most sensible man in the western hemisphere.

BOB. Why do you harp on that? I'm not all that sensible.

MARY. But you are! You lead a sensible life. You eat a sensible breakfast. You limit yourself to one pack of cigarettes a day—no more than two cocktails before dinner. You're even sensible about sex.

BOB. Would you like to explain that crack?

MARY. Any man that would tap his wife on the shoulder at eleven o'clock and say "Are you in the mood tonight—because if you're not, I'm going to take a sleeping pill" is just about as sensible as you can get!

BOB. (*Rises, crosses to fireplace—blanching.*) Of course, I don't have Mr. Dirk Winston's technique in these matters.

MARY. No, you don't, more's the pity.

BOB. Look, I didn't mean to bring out your heavy artillery. I merely wanted to save you—

MARY. (*Picks up bag and gloves from c. table.*) From what? From Dirk? But I don't want to be saved.

BOB. (*Crosses below to c. of sofa.*) Just a minute. Surely you—

MARY. If he's just toying with my affections, okay. Maybe I'm in the mood to have my affections toyed with. (*Crosses u. l. to get coat.*)

BOB. (*Circles sofa to u. l. c.—a little desperate.*) Mary, I promise you—you don't have the whole picture—

MARY. (*Crosses below sofa.*) But I've seen the previews. And there's not one thing in this whole world you can do about it. (*Crosses u. c. on platform.*)

BOB. (*Starts to follow her, but stops l. of sofa—steeling himself.*) Mary, I'm ashamed to tell you this, but I think I just have to—

MARY. (*Fiercely.*) No, you don't have to, and you're not going to! I won't listen. I had a lovely time—a lovely time, do you hear? And you're not going to spoil it for me! Good night! (*She slams off into the bedroom, letting the door bang behind her firmly. Bob sees Dirk's manuscript on sofa table. Picks it up and starts to throw it into the fireplace, thinks better of it. Crosses r., puts manuscript on chair l. of desk, turns on alcove light and goes to the telephone.*)

BOB. Mr. Winston's apartment, please. (*He fidgets, but the wait is not long. Into phone.*) Dirk? You asleep? No, I didn't call to ask if you were asleep. I'm coming down there. I've got to talk to you. (*Pause to listen.*) Who's there with you—your agent? Is she pretty? Oh, all right, all right. I believe you. Then you've got to come up here . . . you make it sound

like I was asking you to drive to New Rochelle. It's only one flight up. No, it won't keep until Monday. Listen, it'll only take five minutes—okay, okay. (*Hangs up. Mary appears from the bedroom with alarm clock. Bob crosses quickly to u. r. bookcase.*)

MARY. (*On platform—coolly.*) Do you want the alarm or shall I keep it?

BOB. (*Crosses above sofa to d. l. and turns off lamp d. l.*) You can keep it. I'm hardly likely to oversleep on that damn sofa. I'm lucky if I get to sleep.

MARY. (*Crosses d. c., puts clock on coffee table.*) All right. I'll take the sofa. It doesn't bother me. (*She picks up sofa cushions and puts them on the floor above the ottoman.*)

BOB. (*Quickly, alarmed that she'll still be on hand when Dirk arrives.*) No, no, absolutely not. That's out of the question. Now if you're going to bed, would you go to bed? (*He starts pacing to the window and back to the bar table.*)

MARY. (*Crosses below sofa to alcove bookcase.*) What's the matter with you? What are you pacing up and down like that for?

BOB. (*Stops pacing.*) I'm waiting for you to go, instead of which—what are you doing?

MARY. Looking for something to read.

BOB. (*Crosses d. r. below desk.*) The place is full of books. What do you want?

MARY. I want something guaranteed not to improve my mind. (*Glancing at books.*) "The Gathering Storm" . . . "The Riddle of Rilke" . . . (*Spies Dirk's manuscript on chair l. of desk.*) Oh, Dirk's book. The very thing. (*She starts for the bedroom and slows down on the platform, her interest caught by something in the manuscript.*)

BOB. Okay, now. Will you go to bed?

MARY. (*Slightly puzzled by his urgency.*) I'm going. I'm going. (*Taking suitcase, she goes into the bedroom, closes door. Bob breathes a sigh of relief, goes to main door, opens it slightly so that Dirk will not have to ring, then returns to finish making himself a drink. At just this moment Dirk can be seen arriving in corridor. As he is about to put his finger to the bell, Bob notices and dives for the door.*)

BOB. *Don't* push that damn buzzer!

DIRK. What's the problem?

BOB. I simply don't want Mary to hear that bell.

DIRK. Shall I come in?

BOB. (*Closes the door and steps down L. of Dirk.*) Yes, of course. (*Dirk crosses D. R. C.*) Listen, can I make you a drink?

DIRK. No, I don't want a drink. I merely want to know why you hauled me up here in the middle of the night.

BOB. Actually, it's only two o'clock. The thing is, I thought that we should—really, what I mean is that I should—(*Doesn't know how to begin.*) You're sure you don't want a drink?

DIRK. Positive.

BOB. (*After staring at him, helplessly, for a second.*) Well, I want a drink. (*Goes and gets the one he was making.*)

DIRK. (*Crosses to L. of desk taking a cigarette from top of low bookcase on the way.*) All right. Let's have it.

BOB. (*Gulping a shot, and taking the plunge.*) Look here, Winston . . . (*Crosses to L. of Dirk.*) you know damn well that all this talk about you and Mary—and my publishing your book—was supposed to be a joke.

DIRK. (*Sits L. edge of desk.*) I thought it was funny.

BOB. Okay, you knew I wasn't serious. Then why—why—?

DIRK. Ah, but you *were* serious! You had the wild-eyed look of a man who knows he has just spoken a true word in jest.

BOB. Look, I shot off my face. A bad habit I must nip in the full bloom. However, I wish to make it absolutely clear that I never intended at any time to make a deal with you involving Mary.

DIRK. And I thought it was an admirable plan! You wouldn't have been losing a wife, you'd have been gaining an author.

BOB. But you've got the whole thing straight now?

DIRK. Certainly.

BOB. (*Crosses C. to L. of sofa.*) I never dreamt that you were *this* anxious to get into print. And I certainly never thought that Mary—of all people—would sink into girlish incoherence at her first exposure to an actor.

DIRK. Why do you say "of all people—Mary"?

BOB. Because she's got some sense. That she could swallow that corny line!

DIRK. Do you describe everything you don't understand as corny?

BOB. What do you mean?

DIRK. Nothing. (*Getting up.*) I suppose it's all right for me to go now—or did you have some other little confidence to tell me?

BOB. (*Crosses D. R. then to behind desk.*) No, that's all. And thank you for coming. (*Dirk puts cigarette out on low bookcase.*) You can see I had to clear this up. I'll make your excuses to Mary in the morning.

DIRK. You will what?

BOB. I'll tell her you had to go back to Hollywood—for re-takes, or whatever people go back to Hollywood for.

DIRK. And why will you tell her that?

BOB. Well, you don't think you'd be doing her a kindness to continue this little farce?

DIRK. I'm not interested in doing her a kindness. And I am going to see her.

BOB. (*Not understanding at all.*) But why? I thought we understood each other. I thought we talked things out!

DIRK. Yes, and you listened very carefully to every word you had to say.

BOB. What do you mean by that?

DIRK. (*Crosses to L. of desk.*) I mean you should take that paper bag off your head. You notice everything but the obvious. What kind of a jerk are you? How dare you suppose that Mary is some kind of a charity case? How do you get off to suggest that any man who's interested in her has to have three ulterior motives?

BOB. (*At a real loss now.*) I don't think *that*. I never thought—

DIRK. Well, you gave a very good imitation of somebody who thought that. What I told Mary may well have sounded corny. It seems that I lack literary qualities everywhere. (*Levelly.*) But it wasn't a line. (*Bob sits at desk. Dirk starts U. C., stops and turns sizing Bob up.*) You know, talking to you, I begin to see why Mary is so shy.

BOB. (*Aghast.*) Mary? *Shy?*

DIRK. That's right. *Shy and insecure.* You probably don't believe that, either, even though you're at least two-thirds responsible.

BOB. (*He can't be hearing anything right.*) How could I be responsible?

DIRK. I don't know. My guess is that you treated her as though she were intelligent.

BOB. She *is* intelligent.

DIRK. (*Waving it aside.*) Shhh!—she'll hear you! (*Crosses u. c. on platform.*) Where did you get the habit of making assumptions based only on assumptions? Was your father a lawyer?

BOB. (*Staring at him.*) I'll put it all in a letter.

DIRK. (*Crosses to door and opens it.*) All right. Before I go, I want to say only one thing. Leave her alone. Just leave her alone. Okay? (*Bob isn't grasping.*) I mean—tonight. (*With a gesture to the sofa.*)

BOB. (*Rises to L. of desk, as it penetrates, dumbfounded.*)

Are you nuts? I'm getting married in two weeks!

DIRK. Dandy. I'll send you a pair of bookends. (*He exits. Bob crosses to door and angrily shoots the bolt. Starts to knock on bedroom door but doesn't. Turns out the hall light, takes off jacket, puts it on chair u. l. Crosses d. c., picks up sheet, throws it down and starts for the bedroom again. Stops. Crosses down, turns off lamp c. Crosses r. to turn off alcove light but instead goes to the telephone.*)

BOB. (*Having dialed once for Operator.*) Operator? Would you ring this number for me? *My number.* Thank you. (*He hangs up until the phone rings. Then he waits until it stops ringing after three rings. Picks it up.*) Mary? This is Bob. I'm in the living room. (*Pause while he listens for her to speak. Then the bedroom door whips open and Mary appears in the doorway, in light pajamas, with the bedroom receiver in her hand.*)

MARY. My God, you *are* in the living room! (*Stares at receiver in her hand, then at him.*) What do you want? (*Holds up one finger, getting into the spirit of the thing, and is re-*

peating her question into receiver as she returns to bedroom.) What do you want?

BOB. (*Exasperated now, into phone.*) Oh, stop it! Hang up! You're just trying to make me feel foolish!

MARY. (*Appearing in bedroom doorway again, with receiver.*) I'm trying to make you look foolish! Who called who from the living room?

BOB. Well, I wasn't going to go barging into your bedroom! (*He takes phone to desk and hangs up.*) I had something to say to you and there seemed to be no reason why I couldn't say it on the telephone.

MARY. (*Turning to go.*) I'll go back in. You call me again.

BOB. (*Rises.*) Stay right there! (*Mary just reaches into bedroom and hangs up her receiver. Bob crosses u. c. to below bar table.*) This won't take one minute. I just feel—in all fairness—that I have an obligation to tell you— (*It's a struggle for him, but he's game.*) —that I was wrong, apparently, about Mr. Winston.

MARY. (*On the platform.*) And by what curious process did you arrive at this conclusion?

BOB. (*Crosses d. l.*) I talked to him. He was just up here.

MARY. (*Her eyes popping.*) He *wasn't*—you *didn't*—!

BOB. It was all right. Don't worry. (*Facing her.*) He merely told me that I was an insensitive clunk who never appreciated you.

MARY. (*Crosses d. off platform.*) And what did you say?

BOB. (*Crosses to below l. end of sofa.*) Oh, a number of stupid things. It was not my finest hour. Of course, when he says I didn't appreciate you, that's hogwash. I appreciated you, all right. (*Sits.*) I just wasn't able to handle you.

MARY. (*Softened by Bob's direct attitude and drifting into the room above c. of sofa.*) Don't reproach yourself. I didn't win any prizes for the way I handled you. It takes at least one to make a marriage.

BOB. Do you know how helpless you feel if you have a full cup of coffee in your hand and you start to sneeze? There's nothing to do but just let it splash. That's how I feel in all my relationships any more. Helpless—unable to coordinate—splashing everybody.

MARY. You're just tired. (*Without thinking about it, they seem to have drifted into a perfectly familiar domestic situation.*)

BOB. Listen, you should have heard my various exchanges with Winston today! And thank God you didn't! Talk about a comedy of errors! I try to grasp all sides of the picture. Nobody believes that—but I try.

MARY. (*Crosses D. L. of sofa.*) Bob, honey—I mean, Bob—I believe it. I certainly believe it. I honestly think you're so busy grasping all sides of the picture that you never stand back and see it.

BOB. (*Willing to consider this.*) Okay. Give me an example.

MARY. (*Sits on magazine rack L. of sofa.*) All right. I've been reading Dirk's book. I haven't got very far, but I think it's good.

BOB. Come on now—

MARY. No, you're going to let me finish. It may not win a Pulitzer Prize, but it's readable. It's so nice and gossipy. I think it would sell.

BOB. I never said it wouldn't sell. I said I didn't want to do it.

MARY. But why not?

BOB. Oh, we've had this out a hundred times.

MARY. Bob, you won't believe this but I'm glad you have standards. I wouldn't want you to settle for trash. But it's no crime to stay in business. You've got to keep the shop open or you won't be there when a masterpiece comes along. (*Jumping up.*) Let me get it. (*She ducks briefly into the bedroom for the manuscript, talking as she does, while Bob sits and stares at her.*) I'm willing to make you a small bet that you can open it at any page at all and find something that's—nice, interesting. (*Coming back and sitting R. end of sofa. The atmosphere is casual and they are, for all intents and purposes, man and wife at home alone.*) Maybe it goes to pieces at the end, but I wouldn't know about that. Okay, we'll just open it anywhere. (*Reading from manuscript.*) “. . . Starlets have a reputation for being dumb only because they have such blank expressions. And the smarter they are, the blanker they look, because they've learned that it's impossible to register any emotion without

using some muscle which, in time, will produce a wrinkle. Even to look a tiny bit puzzled causes twin lines over the bridge of the nose. (*Glancing at Bob to do the expression for him; it strikes her as amusing. Bob is simply looking at her. She goes on.*) “By the time she is thirty, a starlet has been carefully taught to smile like a dead halibut. The eyes widen, the mouth drops open, but the eye muscles are never involved.” (*Turning to Bob to explain.*) They don't smile like this— (*She smiles as most people do.*) See? You get all these wrinkles. (*Touching her forehead with her fingers to show him.*) They go like this. (*She lets her mouth drop open in a mechanized, slack smile that doesn't involve the eyes. Bob is not really hearing her as he looks at her. She becomes aware he isn't responding.*) You don't think that's funny.

BOB. (*Forced to say something, unable to identify what he's really feeling, the wrong thing pops out—rises, crosses to fireplace.*) Haven't you got a robe?

MARY. (*Blank.*) What do you mean, haven't I got a robe?

BOB. (*Awkward.*) Well—do you think it's right for you to be sitting here in your night clothes?

MARY. (*Blowing.*) My night clothes! Good Lord, you'd think it was a black lace Bikini! Eight million times you've seen me in pajamas!

BOB. (*Crossing above sofa to c.*) We were married then.

MARY. (*Staring after him.*) Well, look at it this way. The divorce won't be final for two weeks.

BOB. (*Turns on lamp c. turning to her.*) That may be precisely the point. (*Crosses to window and back to above R. end of sofa.*)

MARY. Oh, my, we are so proper! Do you feel yourself in danger of being compromised? (*Rises, crosses R. to below R. of c. chair.*) Don't worry so much. If I should suddenly throw myself upon you, you could always scream.

BOB. (*Above R. end of sofa.*) Oh, shut up.

MARY. (*Continuing blithely.*) However, as it happens, I don't have a robe but there must be something around here. (*Sees his overcoat on window seat.*) (*Bob crosses below c. chair to D. R. of desk.*) Yes, here we are. (*Puts it on and crosses above c.*

chair to L. of sofa.) I trust this will show my good faith and restore your sense of fitness.

BOB. (*Below desk.*) And how do you think you look in that?

MARY. (*Sweetly.*) I don't know. Kind of cute, maybe?

BOB. (*Crosses in to R. of c. chair.*) Boy! All of a sudden you're cocky as hell, aren't you?

MARY. All of a sudden? It took months. It was work, work, work every minute!

BOB. But it's been worth it. Think of having Dirk Winston making passes at you! It must be like getting the Good House-keeping Seal of Approval.

MARY. Um—sort of.

BOB. When you kissed him, I just hope you didn't damage his porcelain crowns. (*Crosses D. R. to below desk.*)

MARY. (*Giggling.*) Well, we can't worry about everything. But never mind his crowns, let's talk about his book. (*Reaching for the manuscript on sofa, secretly pleased at Bob's attitude.*)

BOB. I refuse to talk about anything with you in that damn coat. You look like Jackie Coogan in "The Kid." (*Crosses to Mary R. of sofa.*) Here—take it off! (*Reaches for the coat.*)

MARY. (*Pretending to be shocked, as though fighting for her virtue.*) Oh, no—no—please!

BOB. (*Starting to unbutton it.*) Take it off. You only put it on to make me feel like an idiot.

MARY. (*Struggling.*) You're going to break the buttons.

BOB. To hell with the buttons. (*He finally gets the coat off—and they stand facing each other in a moment of nervous intimacy. Instinctively, Mary puts her hand to the top of her pajamas. Bob backs away, slightly.*) No, that's as far as I mean to go. (*Crosses U. C. and hangs up coat on rack.*) Now would you do me a favor, please? Will you please go to bed?

MARY. (*Below sofa, unsettled herself, now.*) Certainly. But what are you so intense about?

BOB. (*Crosses D. C.*) I'm the intense type. Surely you've remarked on that before. I'm asking myself how I feel. And I feel wretched.

MARY. What's the matter?

BOB. (*Crosses to window.*) You know damn well what's the

matter! I feel all involved again. And I won't have it! I will not have it! I was getting over you so nicely. I was cured. (*Crosses L. above sofa to D. L.*) My God, I feel like somebody who was getting out of the hospital after nine long months and fell down in the lobby and broke a leg. (*Because he is angry with himself.*) And you did it deliberately!

MARY. Did it—did what?

BOB. (*Crosses in below sofa and to D. L. again.*) If you want to pretend that your only purpose in the last half hour was to change my opinion of that book—all right!

MARY. (*Turns away—crosses R. to below c. chair—more quietly.*) But I gather I'm not fooling you—great student of character that you are.

BOB. Okay, what *did* you have in mind—curling up on the sofa, cute as all get-out in your little blue pajamas? No, I'll tell you. (*Crosses below sofa.*) You were conducting a little experiment.

MARY. (*Sits chair c.*) I was?

BOB. You wanted to see—just for the record—if Old Bob wouldn't leap to the bait like our friend Mr. Winston. (*Crosses to L. of chair c.*) You just wanted to check and see if I had any little twinges left. (*She says nothing.*) Well?

MARY. (*Very quietly.*) I'm just wondering if that could possibly be true.

BOB. (*Circles above chair c. to R. of Mary.*) There's no reason for you to be kept in suspense. Yes, if you want to know, I do still feel twinges. God help me. Every now and then a sharp one. Now what do you say?

MARY. (*Thoughtful for a split second, then in her perplexity, reverting to type.*) Well, I don't know—it *sounds* like a gall bladder attack. (*Bob stares a second, crosses to above L. of desk then to chair U. L. and grabs his jacket. Mary, impulsively, and now all regret.*) Bob, where are you going?

BOB. (*Putting on his jacket and crossing c.*) Where am I going? Out! What am I going to do? Nothing! (*Crosses U. C. and struggles to get quickly into his overcoat which he has taken from the rack.*)

MARY. (*Crosses U. C.*) Bob, don't be silly! It's still snowing! You'll get pneumonia.

BOB. (*Hurls his overcoat to the floor and storms out.*) Don't you worry your little head. (*Leaving the door open.*)

MARY. (*Shouting after him.*) But where can you possibly go at this hour in the morning? They'll think you're crazy—! (*She stands there a moment in silence, then slowly closes the door. Then she turns and picks up Bob's coat. Crosses D. and sits in the chair C., the coat clutched in her arms. After a second or so, she begins to recite mechanically, like a child writing 'lines' as a punishment.*) I must keep my big mouth shut . . . I must keep my big mouth shut . . . I must keep my big mouth shut . . . (*As the curtain falls.*)

CURTAIN

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

Next morning, rather early.

At rise, the stage is empty but the doorbell is ringing. In a moment Mary comes from the bedroom, still half asleep. She is in her pajamas.

MARY. Bob . . . (*Staring at the sofa.*) Oh. He didn't come back at all. (*She stumbles to the phone.*) Hello. (*Doorbell.*) Hello. For heaven's sakes, hello. (*Doorbell again. Mary now realizes it isn't the phone.*) Oh. Excuse me. (*Hangs up.*) I'm coming. (*She gets to U. R. C. when the main door opens. Tiffany is standing there.*) Oh, hello. Good morning. Oh—you're—I mean, you must be—

TIFFANY. (*After a moment of staring at Mary, not showing her surprise, she closes the door and speaks cheerily.*) I'm Tiffany Richards. And you're Mary, aren't you? (*Crosses to Mary and shakes her by the hand.*) Well, I'm delighted to meet you. May I come in? (*Crosses D. L. below sofa.*)

MARY. Certainly. By all means. I don't know *where* Bob is—
TIFFANY. (*Takes off her coat and puts it on the ottoman.*) He's probably taking a walk. Lately I've been getting him to take a walk before breakfast. It's the very best thing for a sluggish colon.

MARY. (*Vaguely, still sleepy and not knowing where to settle or what to do next.*) Yes, I can imagine it would be.

TIFFANY. (*Crosses above sofa to window and opens the curtains.*) But I never dreamt I'd find you here. (*Crosses to R. of Mary.*) But I'm so pleased it worked out this way. I've been dying to meet you. And it's a good thing Bob isn't here.

MARY. Why?

TIFFANY. (*Leads Mary D. C.*) Oh, he'd be bustling me right out the front door. For some reason, he was determined I