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SF PERUSALS

Samuel French Acting Edition

Once in a Lifetime

by Moss Hart and
George S. Kaufman

SAMUEL FRENCH

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The following is a copy of program of the first performance of "ONCE IN A LIFETIME," as produced at the Music Box, New York City:

SAM H. HARRIS

Presents

"ONCE IN A LIFETIME"

A Comedy In Three Acts

By MOSS HART *and* GEORGE S. KAUFMAN

Staged by George S. Kaufman

GEORGE LEWIS ..... *Hugh O'Connell*
MARY DANIELS ..... *Jean Dixon*
JERRY HYLAND ..... *Grant Mills*
THE PORTER ..... *Oscar Polk*
HELEN HOBART ..... *Spring Byington*
SUSAN WALKER ..... *Sally Phipps*
CIGARETTE GIRL ..... *Clara Waring*
COAT CHECK GIRL ..... *Otis Schaefer*
PHYLLIS FONTAINE ..... *Janet Currie*
MISS FONTAINE'S MAID ..... *Marie Ferguson*
MISS FONTAINE'S CHAUFFEUR ..... *Charles Mack*
FLORABEL LEIGH ..... *Eugenie Frontai*
MISS LEIGH'S MAID ..... *Dorothy Talbot*
MISS LEIGH'S CHAUFFEUR ..... *Edward Loud*
BELLBOY ..... *Payson Crane*
MRS. WALKER ..... *Frances E. Brandt*
ERNEST ..... *Marc Leobell*
HERMAN GLOGAUER ..... *Charles Halton*
MISS LEIGHTON ..... *Leona Maricle*
LAWRENCE VAIL ..... *George S. Kaufman*
WEISSKOPF ..... *Louis Cruger*
METERSTEIN ..... *William McFadden*
FIRST PAGE ..... *Stanley Fitzpatrick*
SECOND PAGE ..... *Edwin Mills*
THREE SCENARIO WRITERS—*Kempton Race, George Cassel-bury and Burton Mallory*
RUDOLPH KAMMERLING ..... *Walter Dreher*
FIRST ELECTRICIAN ..... *Jack Williams*
SECOND ELECTRICIAN ..... *John O. Hewitt*
A VOICE PUPIL ..... *Jane Buchanan*
MR. FLICK ..... *Harold Grau*

ORIGINAL PROGRAM—*Continued*

MISS CHASEN ..... *Virginia Hawkins*
FIRST CAMERAMAN ..... *Irving Morrow*
THE PISHOP ..... *Granville Bates*
THE SIXTH BRIDESMAID ..... *Frances Thress*
SCRIPT GIRL ..... *Georgia MacKinnon*
GEORGE'S SECRETARY ..... *Robert Ryder*

THE SCENES

ACT I. SCENE I. *A room in the West Forties, New York.*
SCENE II. *A Pullman Car.*
SCENE III. *The Gold Room of the Hotel Stilton, Los Angeles.*

ACT II. *Reception Room of the Glogauer Studio.*

ACT III. SCENE I. *On the set.*
SCENE II. *The Pullman Car.*
SCENE III. *The Reception Room.*

DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERS

GEORGE: *A magnetic, fair-haired young vaudeville actor. Good-natured and inclined toward stoutness. Age 30.*

MAY: *A wholesome, common-sense, substantial vaudeville actress. Dry sense of humor. Age 25.*

JERRY: *Tall, slender and good-looking. Age 32.*

PORTER: *Colored man.*

HELEN: *Plump, aggressive, talkative, good-looking. Age 35.*

SUSAN: *A typical pretty, small city girl.*

PHYLLIS *and* FLORABEL: *Two contrasting types of movie stars.*

MRS. WALKER: *Well dressed; ambitious for her daughter. Aged 45-50.*

GLOGAUER: *A good-natured, nervous, energetic little Jewish picture magnate. Aged 50.*

MISS LEIGHTON: *Is pretty, much like the furniture of the studio. She wears a flowing black evening gown, although it is early morning, fondles a long string of pearls, and behaves very much like Elinor Glyn.*

LAWRENCE VAIL: *A slim, black-haired young man.*

KAMMERLING: *A big, brusque, excitable German. Aged 40.*

BISHOP. *A stout, benevolent-looking man of 55.*

Other characters to be of variegated types.

Once In A Lifetime

ACT ONE

SCENE I

SCENE: *The scene is a furnished room in the West Forties, New York. The wall Right rakes toward Center, with a door down* R. *In the back wall,* R.C., *there is a window. At a jog in the back flat* L.C. *there is a washbowl. There is a double bed in the corner up* R., *and a Morris chair down* L.C. *with a table beside it on which is a reading lamp. There is a tabloid newspaper on the bed, and a "Saturday Evening Post" and a box of Indian nuts on the table.*

At the rise, GEORGE LEWIS *is discovered deep in the Morris chair, immersed to the exclusion of all else in a copy of "Variety." He has a box of Indian nuts beside him, and these he proceeds to crack and eat with a methodical thoroughness. After two have been cracked, there is a knock at the door.*

GEORGE. Come in!
MAY DANIELS. *(Enters* R.*)* Hello, George.
GEORGE. Hello.
MAY. Jerry not back yet, huh?
GEORGE. No.

MAY. Anything new since this afternoon? You haven't heard anything, have you? *(She sits on bed.)*

GEORGE. No. Are you going to stay and talk, May? I'm reading.

MAY. What time's Jerry coming back, do you know?

GEORGE. *(Shakes his head)* He went to a show.

MAY. It's wonderful how you two take it. You off to ball games every day, Jerry going to shows! What about the old vaudeville act? Are we gonna get some bookings or aren't we?

GEORGE. I don't know anything about it, May. I'm reading.

MAY. Still *"Variety"?*

GEORGE. Uh-huh.

MAY. One of these days you'll pick up a paper that's written in English—and you'll have to send out for an interpreter.

GEORGE. What do you mean? *"Variety"* is in English.

MAY. All right.

GEORGE. It has news of the show world from different countries, but it's all in English.

MAY. *(Rising, crossing* C.*)* I said all right, George.

GEORGE. Want some Indian nuts?

MAY. No, thanks. *(Watches him as he goes back to the nuts)* Don't your teeth ever bother you?

GEORGE. No. Why?

MAY. I dunno—after all those damn things you've eaten. Do you realize, George, that you've left a trail of Indian nuts clean across the United States? If you ever commit a crime they could go right *to* you.

GEORGE. *(Going back to his reading)* Aw!

MAY. You've thrown them shells under radiators in every dollar-and-a-half hotel from here to Seattle. I can visualize hundreds of chambermaids, the coun-

try over, coming in the morning you check out and murmuring a blessing on your head. Don't you ever have bad dreams, George, with that on your mind?

GEORGE. Listen, May, are you gonna keep talking till Jerry gets here?

MAY. *(Pacing* R. *and* L.*)* What's Jerry up to, George? Is he going to land us something, or isn't he? How much longer are we going to lay around here?

GEORGE. Don't ask me—ask Jerry.

MAY. *(Still pacing up and down* R.*)* I'm gonna. And we'll have a showdown tonight. The Automat don't spell home to me.

GEORGE. We don't live there.

MAY. We do everything but sleep there, and we'd be doing that if they could get beds into them slots.

GEORGE. You oughta have patience, May. We've only been here four weeks.

MAY. George, listen. Dumb as you are, you ought to be able to get this: The bankbook says there's just one hundred and twenty-eight dollars left. One hundred and twenty-eight dollars. Get that?

GEORGE. Sure.

MAY. Well, how long do you think three people can live on that, with Jerry going to opening nights and you taking in the World Series?

GEORGE. Something'll turn up. It always does. *(He cracks a nut.)*

MAY. *(At window; turns)* Well, I'm glad you like those goddam things—you're certainly a lucky fellow. Because the way things are going you may have to live on 'em in another week.

GEORGE. Go on, May—nobody could live on Indian nuts. There isn't enough to 'em. Look—that's all they are. *(Showing her as he eats one.)*

MAY. All right, George. *(A moment's restless pacing)* Well, I suppose it's another week of hang-

ing around offices, and another series of those nickel-plated dinners. I'm so sick of the whole business I could yell.

GEORGE. You're just blue, May.

MAY. I wouldn't wonder. Living alone in that hall bedroom—without even the crack of an Indian nut to cheer you up. Well! I wanted to do it, and here I am. I guess it's better than selling ninety-cent perfume to the feminine population of Connelsville, Pa., but there's times when I wish I was back there.

GEORGE. Maybe we'll play there some day.

MAY. It wouldn't surprise me.

GEORGE. I wonder if we'll ever play Medallion—I haven't been back for four years.

MAY. Has it got an Automat?

GEORGE. I don't think so.

MAY. *(Sits on bed)* We'll never play it.

GEORGE. Jerry did play it once—that's where he discovered me. He played the theatre I was working in—I was an usher.

MAY. Yah, I remember. Too bad that was pre-Roxy, George—you'd have had a career.

GEORGE. If I'd have stayed I might have been a lieutenant. One of the boys I started with is a major.

MAY. Do you think they'll ever have conscription for theatre ushers?

GEORGE. Then Jerry came along and he offered me this job. He said I was just right for it.

MAY. He had a good eye. As far as I'm concerned you're the best dead-pan feeder in all show business.

GEORGE. Don't the audiences like me too?

MAY. No one ever gave birth in the aisle, George, but you're all right.

GEORGE. I love doing it, too. The longer we play the act the more I like it.

MAY. George, you and Jerry have been bunking together for four years. Isn't Jerry a swell guy?

GEORGE. He's been a wonderful friend to me.

MAY. *(Looking at him)* I wouldn't tell this to him, George, but I'll never forget what I owe Jerry Hyland. *(Quickly)* And don't you go telling him, either.

GEORGE. I won't tell him. How much do you owe him?

MAY. George, please stop eating those things—they're going to your head. I don't mean I owe him any money. But he's never made me feel that we were anything but good friends, or that I'd have to feel anyways else to keep the job.

GEORGE. He never made me feel anything, either.

MAY. Well, that's just dandy.

GEORGE. Shall I tell you something, May?

MAY. I wish you would.

GEORGE. I think Jerry likes you.

MAY. All right, George.

GEORGE. No—I mean he *really* likes you—a whole lot.

MAY. *(Rises)* O. K., George. The question is: What do we do about bookings? Are we going to crash the big time or aren't we?

GEORGE. We were doing all right on the small time. We could be working right along—you know what the Booking Office told us.

MAY. And you know where the Booking Office books us. Bellows Falls, Vermont.

GEORGE. I liked it there.

MAY. What?

GEORGE. We had a good dinner there. With jello. *(Cracks nut.)*

MAY. Look, George. Don't you want to do anything else all your life but knock about all over the map as a small-time vaudeville actor?

GEORGE. No.

MAY. You don't?

GEORGE. No.

MAY. Well, I guess that settles that, doesn't it? You might as well go ahead and read.

GEORGE. No, I feel like talking now.

MAY. I feel like reading now. (JERRY HYLAND *enters* R.) Well, here we are. When do we play the Palace?

GEORGE. Hello, Jerry.

MAY. Or did you settle for the last half in Bridgeport?

JERRY. May, it's here!

MAY. You got bookings?

GEORGE. Is it the Palace?

JERRY. *(Crosses to table; throws hat down)* Never mind about that. I've got some news for you. I saw history made tonight!

MAY. What are you talking about?

GEORGE. *(Simultaneously with* MAY*)* You saw what?

JERRY. I've just been to the opening of Al Jolson's talking picture, "The Jazz Singer."

MAY. Well, what of it?

JERRY. And I'm telling you it's the greatest thing in the world.

MAY. There've been good pictures before, Jerry.

JERRY. I'm not talking about the picture. I mean the Vitaphone.

MAY. The what?

JERRY. The Vitaphone—the talkies.

GEORGE. They talk.

MAY. Oh, that!

JERRY. That! You ought to hear them cheering, May! Everybody went nuts! I tell you, May, it's going to revolutionize the entire industry. It's something so big I bet even the Vitaphone people don't know what they've got yet. You've got to hear it, May, to realize what it means.

MAY. Come out of it, Jerry——
JERRY. *(Continuing)* Why, in six months from now——
MAY. *(Continuing)* What are *you* getting so het up about? It's no money in your pocket even if it is good. *(Together)*

GEORGE. No.

JERRY. No? *(A pause)* Well, we're leaving for Los Angeles in the morning.

MAY. What did you say?

JERRY. We're leaving for Los Angeles in the morning.

GEORGE. What time?

MAY. Are you out of your mind?

JERRY. *(Just about as fast as he can talk)* Don't you understand, May? For the next six months they won't know which way to turn. All the old standbys are going to find themselves out in the cold, and somebody with brains and sense enough to use them is going to get into the big dough. The movies are back where they were when the De Milles and the Laskys first saw what they were going to amount to! Can't you see what it would mean to get in *now?*

MAY. What do you mean, get in, Jerry? What would *we* do there—act, or what?

JERRY. No, no! Acting is small potatoes from now on. You can't tell what we'll do—direct, give orders, tell 'em how to do things! There's no limit to where we can go!

MAY. *(Vaguely groping)* Yah, but what do we know about——

JERRY. Good Lord, May! We've been doing nothing but playing the act in all the small-time houses in the country. Suppose we *do* cut loose and go out there? What have we got to lose?

GEORGE. A hundred and twenty-eight dollars. *(Cracks nut.)*

MAY. Shut up, George! I don't know, Jerry——

JERRY. We gotta get out there, May! Before this Broadway bunch climbs on the bandwagon. There's going to be a gold rush, May. There's going to be a trek out to Hollywood that'll make the Forty-niners look sick.

MAY. Y'mean thar's gold in them hills, Jerry?

JERRY. *(He has hardly paused for breath)* Gold and a black marble swimming pool, with the Jap chauffeur waiting outside the iron-grilled gate—all that and more, May, if we can work it right and get in *now*. They're panicstricken out there. They'll fall on the neck of the first guy that seems to know what it's all about. And that's why we gotta get there quick.

MAY. Yah, but give me time to think, Jerry. *(Sits on bed)* Suppose we don't catch on right away—how are we going to live? You heard what the boy wonder said—a hundred and twenty-eight dollars.

JERRY. *(A moment's pause)* I've got five hundred more.

MAY. *(Rises)* What!

JERRY. I've got five hundred more. Right here.

MAY. Where'd you get it?

JERRY. Now don't yell, May. I sold our act.

MAY. What?

JERRY. I sold the act! I took one look at that picture and sold the act outright to Eddie Garvey and the Sherman Sisters for five hundred cash. Now don't get sore, May. It was the only thing to do.

MAY. *(Slowly)* No. I'm not getting sore, Jerry, but——

GEORGE. *(Coming to life)* You sold the act to the Sherman sisters?

JERRY. *(Again the sales talk)* My God, if people once took a mule and a covered wagon just because they heard of some mud that looked yellow, and en-

dured hardships and went all the way across the country with their families—fought Indians, even—think what it'll mean, May, if we win out! No more traveling all over the country—living in one place, instead of——

MAY. Okay, Jerry—I'm with you. You had some helluva nerve, but count me in.

JERRY. Good for you! How about you, George?

GEORGE. What?

JERRY. Are you willing to take a chance with us—leave all this behind and cut loose for Hollywood?

GEORGE. Well, but look—if you sold the act——

JERRY. Sure I sold the act. We're going out and try this new game. Now what do you say?

MAY. Come on, George!
JERRY. It's the chance of a lifetime! } *(Together)*

GEORGE. But what'll we do there?

JERRY. We can talk that over on the train. The important thing is to get out there and to get there fast!

GEORGE. But if you've sold the act——

JERRY. Oh! *(A turn upstage.)*

MAY. George, listen. We're giving up the act. We're not going to do the act any more. Don't you understand that?

GEORGE. Yah, but he sold the act——

MAY. I *understand* that he sold the act. Look, George. *(As to a small child)* There is a new invention called talking pictures. In these pictures the actors will not only be seen but will also talk. For the first time in the history of pictures they will use their voices. *(She pauses; resumes in an altered tone)* I've got an idea.

JERRY. What?

MAY. I think I know what we're going to do out there.

JERRY. Well?

MAY. Most of these bozoes haven't ever talked on a stage. They've never spoken lines before.

JERRY. They gotta learn, that's all.

MAY. Yah. You bet they do. And who's going to teach them? *(Her eye travels to the two of them)* We'll open a school of elocution and voice culture.

JERRY. What?

MAY. We'll open a school, Jerry—teach 'em how to talk. They're sure to fall for it, because they'll be scared stiff. We'll have them coming to us instead of our going to them.

JERRY. Yah, but—but *us* with a school, May. We don't know anything about it.

MAY. Maybe *you* don't, but *I* went to one once. And it's easy.

JERRY. But what do you have to do? Can I learn it? *(Warn BLACKOUT and CURTAIN.)*

MAY. Sure! Anyhow, I'll do all that.

GEORGE. *What* are you going to do?
MAY. I tell you it's natural, Jerry. *(Together)*

JERRY. *(Quieting* BOTH *of them)* Shut up a minute, will you? Let me think. Maybe you got hold of something! A school of elocution. It might not be a bad idea.

GEORGE. What's elocution?

MAY. It's a swell idea. And if I know actors, Jerry, they'll come running. Why, between you and I and the lamp-post here—*(She takes in* GEORGE*)* —it's the best idea anybody ever had. How soon we gonna leave?

JERRY. Tomorrow! As soon as you see the picture. I want you to see the picture first.

MAY. O. K. Twenty-five of that five hundred goes for books on elocution first thing in the morning. I'll learn this racket or know the reason why.

GEORGE. *(Rises)* But what'll *I* do? I don't know anything about elocution.

MAY. George, you don't know anything about anything, and if what they say about the movies is true, you'll go far. *(Swinging to* JERRY*)* So help me, Jerry, it'll work out like a charm—you watch if it doesn't! It's coming back to me already—I remember Lesson Number One. *(Paces down* L.*)*

JERRY. Well, if you're sure you can get away with it, May——

MAY. It's a cinch! Just watch! Come here, George! I'll try it on George! *(She is* L. *of* GEORGE. JERRY *is on his* R.*)*

GEORGE. What?

MAY. Say "California, here I come."

GEORGE. Why should I?

MAY. Don't argue—say it!

GEORGE. "California, here I come."

MAY. Now, then—stomach in, chest out. Wait a minute—maybe it's the other way around. No, that's right—stomach in, chest out. Now say it again.

GEORGE. *(Better this time)* "California, here I come."

MAY. Now this time with feeling. You are about to start on a great adventure—the covered wagon is slowly moving across the plains to a marble swimming pool!

JERRY. Let's have it, George—give it everything!

GEORGE. *(With feeling)* "California, here I come."

JERRY. Yay!

MAY. Yay! It works, Jerry—it works! } *(Together)*

JERRY. And if it works on George it'll work on anybody!

MAY. California, here we come!

BLACKOUT

ACT ONE

SCENE II

The scene is a corner of a Pullman car, en route to Los Angeles.

At the rise MAY, JERRY *and* GEORGE *are discovered.* MAY *is looking straight out, a troubled expression in her eyes.* JERRY *is doing his two or three hundredth cross word puzzle, and* GEORGE *is eating nuts and reading "Variety," as usual. There is a silence, broken only by the cracking of shells.*

Two sections of the Pullman are shown. JERRY *is seated on the Left seat of the Left section,* MAY *on the Right seat, and* GEORGE *on the Left seat of the Right section, his back to the* OTHERS.

As the Curtain rises, the WHISTLE of the train is heard. GEORGE *cracks an Indian nut.*

MAY. This dust is about an inch thick on me. *(Pause.* GEORGE *cracks another Indian nut.)* George!

GEORGE. Yeah?

MAY. Do those things come without shells on them?

GEORGE. I don't think so. Why?

MAY. A few more days of hearing you crack those things and I'll go bugs.

GEORGE. I didn't know they were bothering you, May.

MAY. I was keeping it secret. *(Opens the book on her lap. Reads with venom)* "To teachers of the culture of the human voice——"

JERRY What's a four-letter word for actor?

MAY. Dope. *(Reading again)* "We strongly urge the use of abdominal breathing as a fundamental principle in elocutionary training." *(The* PORTER *enters* L.*)* "This is a very simple operation and the following methods may be used."

PORTER. You ready to have your berth made up?

MAY. No.

PORTER. Yes, ma'am. *(Starts to go* L.*)*

MAY. All you people know is make up berths. The minute it gets dark you want to make up berths.

PORTER. Lots of times folks want 'em made up.

MAY. Where are we now—pretty near out of this desert?

PORTER. No'm, I guess we're still in it. Pretty dusty, all right.

MAY. It is, huh?

PORTER. Yes, ma'am, it's dusty, all right. Dust all over. See here? *(Runs his hand over arm of seat; shows her.)*

MAY. Thanks.

PORTER. You welcome. *(Nonchalantly wipes his hand off on the pillow he is carrying)* Anything else you want?

MAY. No, that's all, thank you. I just wanted to know if it was dusty.

PORTER. Yes, ma'am, it is.

MAY. I'm ever so much obliged.

PORTER. I guess this your first trip out, ain't it, ma'am?

MAY. How did you know?

PORTER. 'Count of your noticing the dust that way. I've taken out lots of folks—I mean—that was going out for the moving pictures, like you folks—and they always notices the dust.

MAY. They do, huh?

PORTER. Yes, ma'am. But coming back they don't generally care so much. *(Exit* L.*)*

MAY. Did you hear that? Coming back they don't generally care so much.

JERRY. Oh, come out of it, May. If we don't put up a front like a million dollars, we're lost.

MAY. You know how much of a bankroll we've got, Jerry, and how long it's going to last. And this elocution idea—how do we know it's going to work?

JERRY. It's just around the corner, if we keep our nerve. Think what it'll mean, May, if we put it over.

MAY. Well,—I mustn't go out there this way; it's aging me. But my God, wouldn't you think the railroad would have put a couple of mountains in here somewhere? I'm so sick of looking at wheat and corn—*(A nut cracks)* —and those nuts cracking are beginning to sound like cannons going off.

GEORGE. Why, May——

MAY. *(Rising)* Oh—go ahead and crack two at a time and see if I care. I'm going out to the ladies' smoker. Maybe I'll hear a good dirty story. *(The train WHISTLE is heard.* MAY *goes out* L. *There is another heavy silence.* GEORGE *goes back to his paper and the nuts.)*

JERRY. *(Leaning over back of* GEORGE'S *seat)* George——

GEORGE. Uh-huh.

JERRY. Listen, you and I have got to pull May out of this. Y'understand?

GEORGE. Sure, but——

JERRY. We've got to keep her spirits up—keep telling her we're going to get away with it.

GEORGE. All right.

JERRY. If she starts anything with you, come right back at her. We can't fall. We're pioneers in

a new field. The talkies are the thing of the future and there's going to be no stopping them. Got that?

GEORGE. *(Nods. Rises)* The legitimate stage had better look to its laurels.

JERRY. What?

GEORGE. The legitimate stage had better look to its laurels. It's in *"Variety."*

JERRY. Sure! That's the idea.

GEORGE. *(Reciting)* "Here is a medium that combines the wide scope of the motion picture with the finer qualities of the stage proper." It's an interview with Mr. Katzenstein.

JERRY. Let me see it. *(Takes "Variety.")*

GEORGE. *(Wound up)* "It affords opportunities for entertainment——"

JERRY. All right, all right.

MAY. *(Returns from* L.*)* Say, what do you think?

GEORGE. What?

MAY. I just saw somebody I know—anyhow, I *used* to know her.

JERRY. Who is it?

MAY. This may mean something, Jerry—maybe the luck's changing.

JERRY. It's Gloria Swanson and she wants to take lessons.

MAY. Gloria Swanson nothing. It's Helen Hobart.

GEORGE. Helen Hobart! I read her stuff.

MAY. Sure you do, and a million like you. America's foremost movie critic.

GEORGE. And she's on this train.

JERRY. How well do you know her?

MAY. We used to troupe together. I knew her well enough to tell her she was a rotten actress.

JERRY. What'll we do? Can we get her in here?

MAY. We've got nothing to lose.

JERRY. Ring the bell, George!

GEORGE. *(Pressing buzzer)* Helen Hobart! *(Picks up paper.)*

JERRY. *(Crossing to* R.*)* Say, if she ever sponsored us we'd have all Hollywood begging to get in. She's a powerful important lady, and don't you forget it.

MAY. I don't know whether she'll remember me or not—I didn't dare stop and say hello. The way I feel today I'd break down and cry if anybody ritzed me. (PORTER *enters* L.*)*

JERRY. *(Crossing* L.*)* There's a woman named Miss Helen Hobart in the next car——

MAY. Talking to a young girl. You page her and tell her Miss May Daniels would like to see her.

PORTER. Yes, ma'am.

MAY. And come right back and tell me what she says. *(The* PORTER *goes* L.*)* I'd like to talk to the old battleship again, if only to see her strut her stuff. She's the original iron horse, all right.

JERRY. How long is it since you knew her?

MAY. Plenty. Now listen. If you ever let her know we're just a small-time vaudeville act you'll get the prettiest freeze-out you ever saw. Unless she thinks you're somebody she won't even notice you.

JERRY. Well, what'll we tell her? Let's get together on a story.

MAY. Leave it to me. This is my party.

GEORGE. Don't make up any lies about me.

JERRY. Say, if we could ever get her interested! Her stuff is syndicated all over the country.

GEORGE. It's in two hundred and three newspapers. I was just reading it.

MAY. Yah. It's an awful thought, Jerry, but there must be thousands of guys like George reading that stuff every day.

GEORGE. But it's good.

MAY. And thinking it's good, too. *(Takes paper*

from GEORGE) Get this, Jerry. *(Reading)* "Hollywood Happenings, by Helen Hobart. 'Well, movie fans, Wednesday night was just a furore of excitement—the Gold Room at the Stilton just buzzed with the news. But your Helen has managed to get it to you first of all. What do you think? Tina Fair is having her swimming pool done over in eggshell blue.'" How do you like that?

GEORGE. Nice color.

JERRY. They've *all* got swimming pools!

MAY. And if I know Helen she lives and acts just like this column of hers. *(A DOOR CLICKS off* L.*)* Did I hear that door? I did. *(She has taken a quick peep)* Here she comes.

HELEN HOBART. *(Enters* L.*)* My dear! How perfectly lovely! How nice to think of your being on this train.

MAY. Helen, you look marvelous! *(And as a matter of fact,* HELEN *does look little short of marvelous. She literally sparkles with gems. Her ensemble is the Hollywood idea of next year's style a la Metro-Goldwyn.)*

HELEN. Thank you, dear. You haven't changed at all.

MAY. Really? I expected living abroad would change me somewhat.

HELEN. What?

MAY. *(Not stopping)* But let me introduce you to my business manager, Mr. Jerome Hyland——

HELEN. How do you do?

MAY. —and my technical advisor, Doctor Lewis.

HELEN. How do you do, Doctor? (JERRY *murmurs an acknowledgment, but* GEORGE *is too stunned to speak; goes into seat* R.C.*)*

MAY. Please sit down, Helen, and chat awhile. *(They sit.* HELEN *in the* L. *seat of the* L. *section.* MAY R. GEORGE *is hiding in his own seat.* JERRY *is standing* R.*)*

HELEN. Thanks, I will. There's some little girl back in my car who discovered I was Helen Hobart, and she simply won't let me be. That's why I was so glad to get away. She's been reading my column, and she just can't believe I'm human like herself—ha-ha—thinks I'm some sort of goddess. If you *knew* how much of that sort of thing I get.

MAY. *(Innocently)* You're doing some sort of newspaper work, aren't you?

HELEN. *(Amazed—for a full pause)* My dear—didn't you *know?*

MAY. Don't tell me you're a film actress?

HELEN. *(With measured definiteness—from a great height)* I write the most widely syndicated column in the United States. Anybody who reads the newspapers——! But where on earth have you *been,* my dear, that you haven't heard about *me?*

MAY. I've been living in England for the last eight years, Helen. That's probably why I didn't know. But go on and tell me. I'm frightfully interested.

HELEN. Well——! *(She settles herself—after all, this is the thrill that comes once in a lifetime)* If you don't *know,* my dear, I can't quite tell you *all.* But I think I can say in all modesty that I am one of the most important figures in the industry. You know it was I who gave America Gary Cooper, and Rex, the Wonder Horse. Yes, I've done very well for myself. You know I always *could* write, May, but I never expected to be *the* Helen Hobart—ha-ha! (GEORGE *rises; leans, enthralled, over the back of his seat.)* Oh, I can't tell you *everything* one-two-three,—but movie-goers all over the country take my word as law. Of course I earn a perfectly fabulous salary—but I'm hardly allowed to *buy anything* —I'm simply *deluged* with gifts. At Christmas, my dear—well, you'll hardly believe it, but just before

I came East they presented me with a home in Beverly Hills!

MAY. *(In spite of herself)* No kidding!

HELEN. They said I deserved it—that I simply *lived* in the studios. I always take an interest in new pictures in production, you know, and suggest things to them—and they said that I ought to have a home I could go to and get away from the studios for a while. Wasn't that marvelous?

MAY. Marvelous!

HELEN. I call it Parwarmet. I have a penchant for titles.

MAY. You call it *what?*

HELEN. Parwarmet. You see, I always call my gifts after the people who give them to me—rather a nice thought, you know. And I didn't want to offend anybody in this case, so I called it after the three of them—Paramount, Warner, Metro-Goldwyn—the first syllable of each—Parwarmet.

GEORGE. Well, won't Fox be sore?

HELEN. Oh, no, Doctor. Because the Fox Studios gave me a wonderful kennel. And I have twelve magnificent dogs, all named after Fox executives. But listen to me rattling on and not asking a word about *you*. Tell me what you've been doing. And what in the world took you abroad for eight years? The last I heard of you——

MAY. *(Quickly)* Yes, I know. Well, of course, I never expected to stay in the theatre—that is, not as an actress. I always felt that I was better equipped to teach. *(Turns to* JERRY.*)*

HELEN. Teach?

MAY. Voice culture. I began with a few private pupils, and then when I was abroad Lady Tree persuaded me to take her on for a while, and from that I drifted into opening a school, and it's been very successful. Of course I accept only the very

best people. Mr. Hyland and Doctor Lewis are both associated with me, as I told you. (GEORGE *sits at the mention of his name.)*

HELEN. And now you're going to open a school in Hollywood!

MAY. What? Why, no—we hadn't expected—ah—— *(Turning to* JERRY.*)*

JERRY. Hollywood? We hadn't thought about it.

HELEN. *Wait* till I tell you! Of course you don't know, but something is happening at the present time that is simply going to revolutionize the entire industry. They've finally perfected *talking pictures!*

MAY. No!

HELEN. Yes—and you can't imagine what it's going to *mean.* But here's the point. Every actor and actress in the industry will have to learn to talk, understand? And if *we* were to open the first school, —my *dear!*

MAY. But Helen, we couldn't *think* of such a thing!

JERRY. Oh, no, Miss Hobart!

GEORGE. Sure! That's why we're going—— (JERRY *silences him.)*

HELEN. I simply won't take "No" for an answer!

MAY. But what about our school in London?

JERRY. We've got a good deal of money tied up in London, Miss Hobart.

HELEN. May—America needs you. You're still, I hope, a loyal American?

MAY. Oh, yes, yes. But-——

HELEN. Then it's settled. This is Fate, May—our meeting—and in the industry Fate is the only thing we bow to.

MAY. But—— Really, Helen——

HELEN. Now, please—not another word. Oh, but this is marvelous—right at this time. Of course it'll take a certain amount of money to get started, but I

know just the man we'll take it to—Herman Glogauer! You know—the Glogauer Studios!

MAY. Well, I'm not sure——

JERRY. Oh, yes, of course!
GEORGE. Yah! } *(Together)*

HELEN. I'll send him a telegram, right away, and ask for an appointment.

JERRY. That's a good idea! George! (GEORGE *presses buzzer.)*

MAY. Is he important?

HELEN. Oh, my dear!

JERRY. *Is* he important?

GEORGE. You bet!

HELEN. One of the biggest! And he's the man who first turned down the Vitaphone!

MAY. He did?

HELEN. So he buys *everything* now! You know Mr. Glogauer—— Why, he just signed that famous playwright—you know, May—that Armenian who writes all those wonderful plays and things.

MAY. Noel Coward.

HELEN. That's right. Of course you people can't realize, but a school of voice culture, opening up at this time—well! I should say my half interest alone would bring me in I just don't know how much! *(A look from* MAY *to* JERRY.*)* Because there's absolutely no limit to where the talkies are going—just no limit! Tell me, Doctor—— (GEORGE *fails to respond.)* Doctor—— (GEORGE, *spurred on by* JERRY, *pays attention.)* —what do *you* think of this marvelous development in the motion pictures? Just what is your opinion?

MAY. Well, the Doctor hasn't had much time——

JERRY. He looks after the scientific end.

GEORGE. I think the legitimate stage had better look to its laurels.

HELEN. My words exactly! Just what I've been

saying in my column! *(A look from* MAY *and* JERRY *to* GEORGE, *who suddenly swells with pride.)*

GEORGE. Here is a medium that combines the wide scope of the motion picture with the finer qualities of the stage proper.

HELEN. That's *very* true. May, you've got a great brain here. *(To* GEORGE *again)* I *do* want to talk to you some time, Doctor.

GEORGE. It affords opportunities for entertainment—— (SUSAN WALKER *enters* L. *A young girl about nineteen.)*

HELEN. *(Not stopping)* I want to discuss voice and body control with you.

SUSAN. Oh, hello, Miss Hobart. You said you were coming back, and I waited, and——

HELEN. Yes, dear, but this is very important. I can't talk to you now.

SUSAN. When *can* you talk to me?

HELEN. *(Never giving* SUSAN *a chance to finish)* I'm sure I don't know. Later.

SUSAN. I only want to ask you some questions.

HELEN. I understand, but I'm busy, dear.

SUSAN. Because you could be of such help to me.

HELEN. *Yes,* dear.

GEORGE. *(Who has been showing a growing interest)* Wouldn't you like to sit down?

(WARN Curtain.)

SUSAN. Oh, thank you. I——

HELEN. *(Compelled to introduce her)* This is little Miss—ah——

SUSAN. Susan Walker.

HELEN. Susan Walker. She's the little girl I was telling you about.

GEORGE. *(To* SUSAN*)* Are you going to act in pictures?

HELEN. She wants to—yes. Tell me, Doctor——

SUSAN. I'm going to try to, if I can get started. I don't know very much about it.

HELEN. *(In* SUSAN'S *tone)* She doesn't know very much about it.

GEORGE. You could go to our school! May!

SUSAN. What?

HELEN. Yes, yes, of course. Now run along, dear, and read the Book of the Month or something. We're very busy.

SUSAN. Well, but you *will* let me talk to you later, won't you?

HELEN. Yes, of course, dear.

SUSAN. Goodbye. *(Her glance sweeps the* OTHERS; *rests timidly on* GEORGE *for a second.)*

GEORGE. Are you right in the next car?

SUSAN. No, I'm in Number Twenty—with my mother.

HELEN. She's with her mother.

GEORGE. I'll take you back, if you want.

MAY. Yes, you do that, George. That'll be fine.

SUSAN. Oh, thank you very much.

HELEN. *(As* GEORGE *crosses to* SUSAN*)* You won't stay long, will you, Doctor? Because I want to hear more of your ideas. I can see that you've given it thought.

GEORGE. *(Piloting* SUSAN *out)* No, I'll be right —that is, unless—— *(He takes refuge in turning to* SUSAN*)* What's your mother's name? Mrs. Walker? *(Exit* GEORGE *and* SUSAN L.*)*

HELEN. What a man! He must have been enormous in England!

MAY. Very big! Wasn't he?

JERRY. Yes, indeed!

HELEN. May, *do* you think we can keep him in America?

MAY. Jerry, can we keep him in America?

JERRY. I think we can keep him in America.

MAY. I guess we can keep him in America—— *(The CURTAIN starts down medium slow. The train WHISTLE is heard.)*

HELEN. Marvelous! How much would it cost, May, to start things going?

JERRY. Fifty thousand!

MAY. A hundred thousand!

(Together)

HELEN. Oh, that's more like it. Because Mr. Glogauer is a big man and he does things in a big way!

JERRY. I guess you're right, May. It would cost a hundred thousand——

MAY. It would take at least that—

(Together)

HELEN. Now, we get to Hollywood on Thursday—— *(All* THREE *are talking excitedly, simultaneously, as the CURTAIN falls.)*

ACT ONE

SCENE III

SCENE: *The Gold Room of the Hotel Stilton, Los Angeles. Double doors* R. *and* L., *opening offstage. An arch up* C., *to which two steps lead, with a balcony beyond, overlooking the dining room and dance floor. A settee and end table* R.C., *another* L.C. *At the raked corner up* R. *and up* L., *console tables and small stools; lamps on the tables. Side chairs below doors* R. *and* L. *The room is gaudy and ornate in the extreme. An offstage orchestra plays "Sonny Boy" continuously throughout the scene.*

(FIRST COUPLE *enters from* L *and cross upstage to* R.)

FIRST MAN. So I said to him, "Listen, what's there to be scared of? They'll still need scenario writers."

(SECOND COUPLE *enter from* R. *and cross downstage. The two scenes are played simultaneously)*

FIRST GIRL. Well, I think you've very good. I liked that last picture of yours an awful lot

SECOND MAN. What's the use of your meeting him? The part isn't your type. This girl is eigh-

FIRST MAN. Oh, that wasn't anything. Wait till you see my next one.

FIRST GIRL. Oh, I'm just crazy to! *(They exit to* R.*)*

*(*A MAN *enters from* R.; *crosses downstage.)*

teen years old and a virgin.

SECOND GIRL. I look eighteen under lights and I can talk like a virgin.

SECOND MAN. Oh, all right. I'll have you meet him if you want to. But it won't do any good.

SECOND GIRL. Listen, if I meet him it will do some good. *(They are off* L.*)*

(A CIGARETTE GIRL, *dressed in Spanish costume, and humming "Sonny Boy," enters from* L. *As the* SECOND COUPLE *exit* L., *a* COAT CHECK GIRL *enters* L.*)*

CIGARETTE GIRL. *(Who has crossed above the settee, to the* MAN *who has entered* R. *and is crossing downstage)* Cigars, cigarettes! *(He shakes his head and continues without stopping, leaving the* CIGARETTE GIRL *and the* COAT CHECK GIRL *alone.)*

COAT CHECK GIRL. Say, I got a tip for you, Kate.

CIGARETTE GIRL. Yah?

COAT CHECK GIRL. I was out to Universal today. I heard they was going to do a shipwreck picture.

CIGARETTE GIRL. Not enough sound. They're making it a college picture—glee clubs.

COAT CHECK GIRL. That was this morning. It's French Revolution now.

CIGARETTE GIRL. Yah? There ought to be something it that for me.

COAT CHECK GIRL. Sure! There's a call out for prostitutes for Wednesday.

CIGARETTE GIRL. Say, I'm going out there! Remember that prostitute I did for Paramount?

COAT CHECK GIRL. Yah, but that was silent. This is for talking prostitutes. *(She drops into a respectful silence as* PHYLLIS FONTAINE *and* FLORABEL LEIGH *enter. They are movie stars—ermined and orchided to the ears. They are followed by* TWO MAIDS, *each carrying an extra ermine wrap, and the* MAIDS, *in turn, are followed by* TWO CHAUFFEURS, *each with an automobile robe. The* CIGARETTE *and* COAT CHECK GIRLS *greet them with a mumbled "Good evening, Miss Fontaine" and "Good evening, Miss Leigh." They receive little nods in reply.)*

FIRST CHAUFFEUR. Is the staircase clear?

COAT CHECK GIRL. Yes, it is.

FIRST CHAUFFEUR. *(To* FIRST MAID*)* The staircase is clear.

FIRST MAID. The staircase is clear, Miss Leigh.

SECOND MAID. The staircase is clear, Miss Fontaine. *(At a gesture from their* MISTRESSES, *the* TWO MAIDS *assist them to slip out of their respective ermine wraps, and in their place they substitute the spares.)*

FLORABEL. *(Exiting* L.*)* If they put us at that back table I'm going to raise an awful stink.

PHYLLIS. *(Following)* Yes, goddam it, they ought to know by this time—— (PHYLLIS *and* FLORABEL *exit* L. MAIDS *and* CHAUFFEURS *remain behind.)*

FIRST MAID. *(To* CIGARETTE GIRL*)* Hello.

CIGARETTE GIRL. Hello.

FIRST CHAUFFEUR. You girls working this week?

CIGARETTE GIRL. No, we ain't.

SECOND CHAUFFEUR. Universal's doing a college picture. (MAIDS *and* CHAUFFEURS *have crossed to door* R. *A* BELLBOY *enters* L.*)*

BELLBOY. Say, I hear you boys are all set out at Universal. French Revolution picture.

SECOND CHAUFFEUR. No, they changed it. It's a college picture.

BELLBOY. It's Revolution again—they just changed it back down in the Men's Room.

CIGARETTE GIRL. Oh, that's good.

BELLBOY. Yah, on account of the sound. The sound, you know. They're going to be playing the guillotine all through. *(He strums an imaginary banjo.)*

SECOND MAID. That means I'm out of it.

FIRST CHAUFFEUR. You can't tell—
SECOND MAID. I don't know one note from another. *(Together)*

FIRST MAID. Me too.
SECOND CHAUFFEUR. Let's see what it is in the morning. *(The* MAIDS *and* CHAUFFEURS *are out,* R.*)* *(Together)*

BELLBOY. What do you think happened about five minutes ago? I was down in the Men's Room—singing—and Mr. Katzenstein came in.

COAT CHECK GIRL. That's a break!

CIGARETTE GIRL. Did he hear you?

BELLBOY. You bet he heard me. Said I had a great voice and told me to come and see him.

CIGARETTE GIRL. Say—— *(Exits* L.*)*

BELLBOY. What do you think of that? *(Exits* L.*)*

COAT CHECK GIRL. Gosh, I wish he'd come into the ladies' room. *(Exit* CIGARETTE GIRL, COAT CHECK GIRL, BELLBOY, L., *just as* SUSAN *enters* R. *She runs on excitedly.)*

SUSAN. *(Hurrying to balcony)* Mother! Come on! Hurry up!

MRS. WALKER. Yes, dear. *(Enters* R.*)*

SUSAN. This is wonderful here! Look! *(She hurries to the railing,* MRS. WALKER *following)* There's where they're all going to eat! (MAN *crosses* R. *to* L., *whistling.)*

MRS. WALKER. Yes, dear. Don't over-excite yourself.

SUSAN. But, Mother, imagine! Practically every big star in Hollywood will be there.

MRS. WALKER. *(Following her downstage)* Yes, I know, dear.

SUSAN. This is where they come every Wednesday. They're—they're all over the place now. *(Coming downstage, looking off* L. *Excitedly)* Look! Can you recognize anyone?

MRS. WALKER. *(Looking)* Isn't that John Gilbert?

SUSAN. Where? Where?

MRS. WALKER. Over there! Right near that post.

SUSAN. Mother! That's a waiter!

MRS. WALKER. *(Crossing to below the settee* L.*)* Well, I'm sure I don't know how one is to tell. Every man we see looks more and more like John Gilbert.

SUSAN. Well—we'll see some of the real ones tonight, Mother. Doctor Lewis said we're sure to see everyone.

MRS. WALKER. If there're so many people trying to be picture actors, I'm afraid they'll never give *you* a chance.

SUSAN. Oh, but it's different now——

(ERNEST, *the headwaiter, enters* R., *crosses to above the settee* R., *stops, and poses for a moment as* SUSAN *and* MRS. WALKER *gaze admiringly. He starts upstage as a* MAN (NORTON) *and a* WOMAN *enter* L. *and cross above the settee.)*

NORTON. I just saw her downstairs. Wouldn't you think, after the preview of that last picture, she'd stay home and hide? *(As they reach just* L. *of* C. NORTON *notices* ERNEST*)* Oh, Ernest!

ERNEST. Yes, Mr. Norton.

NORTON. I'm expecting some guests—two gentle-

men and a lady. Will you see that they're brought to my table?

ERNEST. Yes, sir. Very good, sir. (SUSAN *and* MRS. WALKER *exchange looks of disappointment.* NORTON *and the* WOMAN *continue* R., *talking as they go, and* ERNEST *comes down to* SUSAN *and* MRS. WALKER. *The* WOMAN *and* NORTON *continue their conversation simultaneously with the scene between* ERNEST, SUSAN *and* MRS. WALKER *until they are offstage.)*

WOMAN. Who is the man that came over to Diane's table? Must be one of her new ones, eh?

NORTON. Must be.

WOMAN. I give him just about three weeks. *(They exit* R.*)*

ERNEST. *(As he comes downstage after talking to* NORTON*)* Anything I can do for you, Madam?

MRS. WALKER. Why, no, I guess not.

SUSAN. Have any of the stars arrived yet?

ERNEST. Very few, Miss. It's only nine-thirty. There are one or two cowboy stars here, but I don't suppose you'd be interested in them.

SUSAN. Oh, no.

MRS. WALKER. I don't like Westerns very much.

ERNEST. Of course no one of any consequence gets here before ten. You get a smattering of First National and Pathe about nine-thirty, but you don't get United Artists until ten-fifteen.

SUSAN. But they'll all *be* here, won't they?

ERNEST. Oh, yes. Everyone who is of any importance in the industry comes here every Wednesday night.

MRS. WALKER. My, you must find it interesting!

ERNEST. Yes, you get *life* out here. In fact, I get most of the ideas for my scenarios right here in the hotel.

SUSAN. Scenarios? Mother, he's a scenario writer!

MRS. WALKER. Really?

ERNEST. I dabble a bit, that's all.

SUSAN. Have you had any produced? Who was in them?

ERNEST. Well, Paramount is dickering for something of mine right now.

SUSAN. Mother, did you hear that? Paramount is dickering!

MRS. WALKER. It is? } *(Together)*
SUSAN. How proud you must feel! }

ERNEST. Well, of course, one never knows.

SUSAN. But to have Paramount dickering!

SUSAN. Who is the story for? I hope it's Greta Garbo. } *(Together)*
MRS. WALKER. It's wonderful!

ERNEST. Miss Garbo's all right, but—— *(Breaks off as he sees someone offstage; crosses up* C. *to get a better view.)*

SUSAN. Who is it?

ERNEST. I *think*—yes, it is! It's Buddy Rogers!

MRS. WALKER. Really? Where? } *(Together)*
SUSAN. It is? }

ERNEST. You're very lucky, ladies. Only nine forty-five, and you've got Buddy Rogers.

SUSAN *and* MRS. WALKER. *(As they exit* L.*)* O-o-oh! *(As* ERNEST *starts to follow them out,* METERSTEIN *and* MISS CHASEN *enter from* R. *and cross upstage.)*

METERSTEIN. So I said to Katzenstein, "Why don't we buy it? It's the biggest thing in New York today. 'Strange Interlude'! And look at the name you get! Eugene O'Neill!" (GEORGE *enters* R. *and takes in the scene.)*

MISS CHASEN. Well, did he write the music, too?

(The SECOND COUPLE *who were seen at the opening of the scene enter from* L. *and cross downstage. The* TWO COUPLES *talk simultaneously.)*

METERSTEIN. No, he just did the libretto. But if we can get him out here I've got a great guy to team him up with. He's a little Jewish fellow—— *(They exit* L.*)*

(GEORGE, *a little taken aback by this, crosses to down* R.C. *The* CIGARETTE GIRL *enters* L., *unseen by* GEORGE.)

CIGARETTE GIRL. *(Coming close to* GEORGE, *her voice turning him toward her. In the well-known Garbo manner)* Will--you have—some—cigarettes?

GEORGE. *(Scared)* Why —no.

CIGARETTE GIRL. *(Acting to beat the band, and beating it seven to three)* Very well. I'm—sorry—I—intruded. *(Exits* L. GEORGE *decides to get out of there. Before he can reach the door* R. SUSAN *reenters* L..*)*

SUSAN. Hello, George.

GEORGE. *(Returning)* Oh, hello.

SUSAN. Isn't it exciting? Seeing all the stars and everything!

GEORGE. I should say so!

SUSAN. I left Mother at the staircase, watching them all walk down. Hollywood is even better than I dreamed it would be! Aren't you crazy about it?

GEORGE. It's wonderful, all right. It kinda re-

SECOND GIRL. Why didn't you introduce me to him? I just stood there like a fool.

SECOND MAN. It wasn't the right moment. I'll take you to him when they're ready to cast the picture.

SECOND GIRL. Oh, it wasn't? Well, you're coming right downstairs and over to his table and introduce me as the best goddam actress in Hollywood!

SECOND MAN. Now, listen, honey. You know I want you to get the part. *(They exit* R.*)*

minds me of the first time I went to the circus—only there's no elephants.

SUSAN. I can hardly wait till I become a star—when I can do the things they do, and have myself pointed out to tourists.

GEORGE. I'll tell you something, Susan, if you promise not to breathe it. Who do you think we're going to meet here tonight?

SUSAN. Who?

GEORGE. Herman Glogauer, one of the biggest motion picture producers in the country.

SUSAN. Really? Oh, George, will you tell him about me—see if he'll give me a part?

GEORGE. Sure. That's what I'm meeting him for. (MRS. WALKER *enters* L. *The* THREE *are standing down* C.)

SUSAN. Oh, George!

MRS. WALKER. Susan, I just saw——

SUSAN. Mother, what do you think? Doctor Lewis is meeting Herman Glogauer here tonight and he's going to tell him all about me!

GEORGE. Hello, Mrs. Walker.

MRS. WALKER. Well, isn't that fine? A big man like that coming here to talk about Susan!

SUSAN. Where's he going to be? Right here?

GEORGE. Yes.

SUSAN. Will you introduce me to him?

MRS. WALKER. You just leave it to Doctor Lewis, dear.

GEORGE. I think you'd be just great in talkies—the way you recite and everything. I told May all about those poems you recited. Especially that one—What was it?

MRS. WALKER. "Boots"? By Rudyard Kipling?

GEORGE. Yes, that's it.

SUSAN. *(To a pedal accompaniment)* "Boots, boots, boots, boots, movin' up and down again. Five, seven, nine, eleven——"

GEORGE. *(Trying to stop her)* Yeah, yeah, that's it—that's it—— Yah—that's the one. (SUSAN *stops.)* She told me she sort of felt Susan recited "Boots" from the minute she laid eyes on you. Does she do that one about "It Takes a Heap of Loving to——"

SUSAN. "To Make a House a Home"? Oh, yes.

MRS. WALKER. That's one of her best.

GEORGE. Miss Daniels said you probably did. She felt a lot more things about you, too. I guess she's pretty interested.

MRS. WALKER. Would she want to give her an audition?

GEORGE. I don't think she'll have to. I told her how Susan made me feel—when that man in the poem goes crazy, how I felt sort of weak myself—and she said she wouldn't want to take a chance.

MRS. WALKER. You've been wonderful to us, Doctor. I'd just trust Susan anywhere with you—I told her today I thought you were the most harmless motion picture man in the business. (MAY *and* JERRY *enter* R.)

MAY. Good evening! What's going on here?

MRS. WALKER. Hello, Miss Daniels. Hello, Mr. Hyland.

GEORGE. Oh, May! Susan does know that poem about living in a house or something.

MAY. Sure she does. She knows "Ring Out, Wild Bells," too, don't you, Susan?

SUSAN. Oh, yes.

MRS. WALKER. That was one of her first ones. } *(Together)*

MAY. *(To* JERRY*)* That's five you owe me.

JERRY. Huh?

MRS. WALKER. Well, come on, Susan. We'll get on out. We know you're going to meet Mr. Glogauer.

MAY. *(Very sweetly)* Oh, did George tell you we're going to meet Mr. Glogauer?

SUSAN. Oh, yes.
JERRY. Isn't that fine? } *(Together)*

GEORGE. I just mentioned it.

MRS. WALKER. I think it's just wonderful what Doctor Lewis has accomplished.

MAY. How's that?

MRS. WALKER. Just wonderful!

SUSAN. Goodbye.

GEORGE. Goodbye.

MAY. Take care of yourselves. *(Exit* SUSAN *and* MRS. WALKER L.*)* Jerry!

JERRY. Huh?

MAY. Would there be some way of making him silent as well as dumb?

GEORGE. I didn't hurt anything.

JERRY. Well, kid, here it is! Hollywood! And was I right? Did you hear 'em downstairs? Scared stiff!

MAY. *(Sitting settee* R.*)* Not nearly as scared as I am.

JERRY. All we got to do is play our cards right. This is the time and place. Chance to make a million or lose a million.

MAY. Which do you think we ought to do?

JERRY. If things go right for us, May, it won't be long now. And we'll do it in style, too.

GEORGE. What do you mean, Jerry—that you and May are going to get married? Are you, May?

MAY. Look, George, we've got all kinds of things on our mind. You'll be the first to know.

JERRY. Yes, sir, it's all up to how we click with Glogauer—and we'll click with him, too!

GEORGE. He's pretty lucky we came out here.

MAY. *(Crossing* L. *to* GEORGE*)* George, when Mr. Glogauer gets here and you're introduced to

him, just say, "Hello." See? In a pinch, "Hello, Mr. Glogauer." Then from that time on—nothing.

GEORGE. Yeah! But suppose I have a good idea? Huh?

MAY. That's when I sing "Aida."

JERRY. Say, Glogauer ought to be getting here. Where's Helen?

MAY. Down talking terms with a couple of hundred movie stars. I was out at Parwarmet today. Only twenty-two rooms—just a shack, really.

JERRY. *That* part's all right. She's been damned nice to us.

MAY. Sure. For fifty percent of the gross she'd be damned nice to Mae West.

GIRLS. *(Voices off* R.*)* Oh, Miss Hobart, may we see you a minute——?

HELEN. *(Entering* R.*)* Not now, dears. *(To* MAY *and* JERRY*)* My dear, *everyone* is here tonight. And such excitement! Nobody knows where they're at. *(There are greetings from the* THREE, *which* HELEN, *in her excitement, rides right over)* And of course, wherever you turn all you hear is sound. One has to be very careful whom one insults these days—they may be the very ones to survive.

MAY. Things are pretty well topsy-turvy, aren't they?

HELEN. I should say so! What do you think I just heard? You know that tremendous spectacle the Schlepkin Brothers are putting on—"The Old Testament"? Well, Mr. Schlepkin—I mean the oldest of the twelve brothers—the real brains of the business—he used to have the cloakroom privilege in all the West Coast theatres—he just told me that they've stopped work on the picture and they're scrapping the whole thing. They're not going to make anything but talkies from now on.

JERRY. Big people, the Schlepkins. I'd like to meet them.

MAY. Are they all here tonight?

HELEN. Oh, all twelve of them. That shows you what they think of the talkies—it's the first time in years that they've all been in Hollywood at the same time. They generally keep two with their mother—she lives in Brooklyn and they fly back and forth. Such a lovely thought! Why, their aeroplane bill alone is ten thousand dollars a month.

(BELLBOY *and* POLICEMEN *enter from* L. *March across upstage.)*

HELEN. Oh, Mr. Glogauer must be coming now. *(To* BELLBOY*)* Is that for Mr. Glogauer?

BELLBOY. Yes, Miss Hobart. His car just drew up. (BELLBOY *and* POLICEMEN *exit* R.)

HELEN. They always give him an escort, so he can get through the lobby. If he says "yes" to our little proposition we can turn this into a celebration.

MAY. It's marvelous you were able to get him to come.

JERRY. Yes, indeed.

HELEN. Oh, they'll all come running now. Even the big ones. Besides, Glogauer is scared stiff. He's the man who first turned down the Vitaphone—I told you.

MAY. Oh, yes.

HELEN. Anyhow, that's the story. Of course, he's never admitted it, and no one's ever *dared* mention it to him.

JERRY. I wouldn't think so.

GEORGE. *(Ever literal)* What did he turn it down for?

HELEN. *(Crossing to him)* He just didn't know, Doctor, what it was going to amount to. He didn't have enough vision.

GIRL. *(Entering* L.*)* Oh, Miss Hobart——

HELEN. *(Crossing to her)* No, dear, not now.

Later on, maybe. *(She waves the* GIRL *out)* Someone wanted to meet the Doctor.

GEORGE. What?

HELEN. Oh, I lost no time, Doctor, in telling them about you. Isn't it marvelous, May—— *(A* CROWD *is heard off* R., *which surges on stage, bearing* GLOGAUER *with it.)* Oh, here he is now—— (HELEN *crosses to* R.)

(A rising NOISE offstage has interrupted her. Any number of VOICES are saying, "Mr. Glogauer! Mr. Glogauer!" HERMAN GLOGAUER *enters, followed by a streaming and screaming* MOB, *which the* BELLBOY *and the* POLICE *are trying to hold in check.)*

HELEN. *(To* MAY *and* JERRY*)* Here he is now!

GLOGAUER. *(As he enters)* No, no, no, no! I can't see anyone now! No one!

HELEN. *(Through the commotion)* Well, well, here's the great man himself. And on time, too.

BELLBOY. *(Has entered with* GLOGAUER; *now pushes back the* CROWD*)* Mr. Glogauer can't see anyone. Please go on out.

GLOGAUER. That's it. Close the door. Let's have a little peace here.

HELEN. *(As the doors close and the NOISE subsides)* Mr. Glogauer, this is Miss Daniels, Mr. Hyland, and Doctor Lewis. *(They murmur acknowledgements.)*

GLOGAUER. How are you?

BELLBOY. *(Who is standing at door with* POLICEMEN*)* Mr. Glogauer!

GLOGAUER. Yes—what is it?

BELLBOY. Are you in the market for a great trio?

GLOGAUER. What? (BELLBOY *and* POLICEMEN *immediately burst into "Pale hands I loved——" They get just about that much out.)*

GLOGAUER. *(Wincing)* No, no, no! Nothing! Go away! *(The* BELLBOY *and* POLICEMEN *go out* R. *reluctantly. You hear the* CROWD *as the door opens.)*

MAY. What's all that about?

GLOGAUER. These people!

HELEN. You see, they all know Mr. Glogauer, and they try to show him they can act.

GLOGAUER. It's terrible! Terrible! Everywhere I go they act at me. Everyone acts at me! If I only go to have my shoes shined, I look down and someone is having a love scene with my pants.

HELEN. That's the penalty of being so big a man.

GLOGAUER. All over the hotel they come at me. Ordinarily I would say, "Let's go out to my house, where we got some peace." But Mrs. Glogauer is having new fountains put in the entrance hall.

HELEN. It's the most gorgeous house, May. You remember—we saw it from the train.

MAY. Oh, yes. With the illuminated dome.

HELEN. And the turrets.

GLOGAUER. In gold leaf.

HELEN. But the *inside,* May! I want you to see his bathroom! You must see his bathroom!

MAY. I can hardly wait.

HELEN. It's the show place of Hollywood! But they can see it some other time—can't they, Mr. Glogauer?

GLOGAUER. Any Wednesday. There is a guide there from two to five. I tell you what you do. Phone my secretary—I send my car for you.

MAY. Why, that'll be wonderful.

HELEN. Yes, and what a car it is! It's a Rolls-Royce!

MAY. You don't say?

GEORGE. What year?

JERRY. *(Coming to the rescue)* Well, Mr. Glogauer, we understand that you're in the midst of quite a revolution out here.

HELEN. I should say he is!

GLOGAUER. Is it a revolution? And who have we got to thank for it? The Schlepkin Brothers. What did they have to go and make pictures talk for? Things were going along fine. You couldn't stop making money—even if you turned out a *good* picture you made money.

JERRY. There is no doubt about it—the entire motion picture is on the verge of a new era.

HELEN. Mr. Glogauer, I tell you the talkies are here to stay.

GEORGE. *(Rises; crosses to join the* GROUP*)* The legitimate stage had better——

MAY. All right, George. (GEORGE *cracks nut as he retires to settee* L.*)*

GLOGAUER. Sure, sure! It's colossal! A fellow sings a couple of songs at 'em and everybody goes crazy! Those lucky bums!

HELEN. He means the Schlepkin Brothers.

GLOGAUER. Four times already they were on their last legs and every time they got new ones. Everything comes to those Schlepkin Brothers! This fellow Lou Jackson—sings these mammies or whatever it is—he comes all the way across the country and goes right to the Schlepkin Brothers.

BELLBOY. *(Enters* R.*)* I beg your pardon, Mr. Glogauer?

GLOGAUER. Yes, yes? What is it?

BELLBOY. The twelve Schlepkin Brothers would like to talk to you. They're downstairs.

GLOGAUER. Tell 'em later on. I come down later.

BELLBOY. Yes, sir. *(Goes off* R.*)*

GLOGAUER. Schlepkin Brothers! I know what they want! They're sitting on top of the world now—with their Lou Jackson—so they try to gobble up everybody! All my life they been trying to get me. Way back in the fur business already, when I had nickelodeons and they only had pennylodeons. Al-

ways wanting to merge, merge! And because there's twelve of them they want odds yet!

JERRY. But you can teach your own people to talk. Why not let us take them in hand and give them back to you perfect in the use of the English language?

HELEN. I told you about their school in London—Lady Tree——

MAY. It's entirely a matter of correct breathing, Mr. Glogauer. Abdominal respiration is the keynote of elocutionary training.

JERRY. We'll not only teach your people to talk, Mr. Glogauer, but we'll have them talking as well as you do.

GLOGAUER. Well, I don't ask miracles.

BELLBOY. *(Enters* R.*)* Mr. Glogauer!

GLOGAUER. Well? Well? What now?

BELLBOY. The Schlepkin Brothers are flying to Brooklyn in half an hour. They say they've got to see you right away.

GLOGAUER. Tell 'em in a minute. And tell Phyllis Fontaine and Florabel Leigh I want to see 'em up here right away. *(To the* OTHERS*)* Two of my biggest stars. *(To the* BELLBOY*)* Tell 'em to come up alone—without any of the Schlepkin Brothers.

BELLBOY. Yes, sir. *(Goes* R.*)*

GEORGE. Excuse me—I'll be right back. *(Dashes off* L.*)*

GLOGAUER. Phyllis Fontaine—seventy-five hundred dollars a week she draws down. And in the old days she was worth it! Every time she undressed in a picture it was sure fire!

HELEN. The most beautiful legs in America!

GLOGAUER. But you can't hear 'em! You know what I do now? The biggest stage actress in America I am bringing out—from New York. Ten thousand a week I'm paying her! I never heard of her before. (PHYLLIS *and* FLORABEL *enter* L.*)*

PHYLLIS *and* FLORABEL. *(In those awful voices)* Hello, Hermie.

GLOGAUER. Ah, here we are, girls! This is the ladies I was telling you about. Phyllis Fontaine and Florabel Leigh.

HELEN. Hello, darlings!

FLORABEL. Hello, Helen!

GLOGAUER. Listen, girls—this is Miss Daniels and Mr. Hyland—voice specialists from England.

PHYLLIS. Voice specialists! } *(Together)*
FLORABEL. Whaddye know? }

GLOGAUER. Well, here they are, Miss Daniels. This is what I'm up against.

MAY. I'd like to listen to their breathing, if I may, Mr. Glogauer.

HELEN. You know, it's all a question of breathing.

JERRY. That's the whole story.

MAY. May I ask if you ladies have ever breathed rhythmically?

PHYLLIS. What? } *(Together)*
FLORABEL. Why, not that I know of. }

MAY. You see, rhythmic breathing is the basis of all tonal quality.

JERRY. It's the keynote.

MAY. If you are able to breathe rhythmically then there is every reason to believe that you will be able to talk correctly.

HELEN. That's right!

GLOGAUER. Well—what about it? *(To the* GIRLS*)* Can you do it?

MAY. *(As the* GIRLS *look blank)* If you'll permit me, I think I can tell you.

GLOGAUER. *(Impressed)* Sure, sure. *(There is an impressive silence as* MAY *goes to* FLORABEL *and puts her head to her chest.)*

MAY. Will you breathe, please?

FLORABEL. Yes, ma'am. (MAY *raises her head. They expect some word. The suspense is terrific.)*

GLOGAUER. Well?

HELEN. Sssh! (MAY *passes on to* PHYLLIS; *repeats the operation.)*

MAY. Please breathe. (PHYLLIS *gives her a terrified look.)* *(WARN Curtain.)*

GLOGAUER. *(When it is over)* Well? How about it? (MAY *nods sagely.)* We got something?

MAY *(Quietly)* Absolutely.

HELEN. Isn't that wonderful?
PHYLLIS. We can do it? } *(Together)*

GLOGAUER. Keep still, girls! We got something, huh? We ain't licked yet? What's next? What do they do now?

MAY. For the present they should just keep breathing.

GLOGAUER. Hear that, girls? Wait around—don't go home. *(He motions them out of the way.* FLORABEL *sits settee* L. PHYLLIS *stands above settee.)* Now I tell you how we handle this! I give you rooms right in the studio and as fast as you turn 'em out we put 'em right to work! We got to work fast, remember?

JERRY. Right!
MAY. Right! } *(Together)*

GLOGAUER. You teach these people to talk and it's worth all the money in the world!

JERRY. We'll teach 'em.

GLOGAUER. *(Barely stopping)* You people came out here just in time! We'll show 'em with their Lou Jackson! This is a lifesaver. (GEORGE *rushes on* L. *with* SUSAN.) To hell with the Schlepkin Brothers!

GEORGE. There he is, Susan! Right there!

SUSAN. *(Goes up to* GLOGAUER; *turns him around to face her)* "Boots" by Rudyard Kipiing.

GLOGAUER. What?

SUSAN. *(Starts reciting, and continues until the Curtain is down)* "Boots, boots, boots——" (BELLBOY *enters* R.)

GLOGAUER. What do you mean, "Boots"? I don't want any boots. What are you talking about?

SUSAN. *(Continuing)* "—moving up and down again——"

BELLBOY. *(Announcing through* GLOGAUER'S *speech)* The twelve Schlepkin Brothers!

(The TWELVE SCHLEPKIN BROTHERS *start to march on from* R., *two abreast.)*

SENIOR SCHLEPKIN BROTHER. Listen, Herman—we're flying back to New York tonight——

(As the first FOUR SCHLEPKINS *get on stage the Curtain starts to fall.* SUSAN *is still reciting.)*

GLOGAUER. No, sir! I wouldn't merge! I got something better! I wouldn't merge!

THE CURTAIN IS DOWN

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