

Twentieth Century

by
Ben Hecht
and Charles MacArthur

Based on a play by Charles Bruce Millholland in a
new adaptation by

Ken Ludwig

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



New York Hollywood London Toronto

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TWENTIETH CENTURY

by

Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur

Based on a play by Charles Bruce Millholland in a new adaptation by
Ken Ludwig

This Adaptation was First Produced in New York City in 2004 by Roundabout Theatre Company. Todd Haimes, Artistic Director

Originally Produced at The Signature Theatre in 2003, Eric D. Schaeffer, Artistic Director. Sam Sweet, Managing Director. Ronnie Gunderson, Producing Director.

TWENTIETH CENTURY premiered on Broadway at the Roundabout Theatre Company’s American Airlines Theatre on March 25, 2004. It was produced by The Roundabout Theatre Company, Todd Haimes, Artistic Director; Ellen Richard, Managing Director; and Julia C. Levy, Executive Director, External Affairs. It was directed by Walter Bobbie. The set was designed by John Lee Beatty, the costumes by William Ivey Long, the lighting by Peter Kaczorowski and sound by ACME Sound Partners. The hair/wig design was by Paul Huntley. The General Manager was Don-Scott Cooper, the Production Stage Manager was James Harker, the Technical Supervisor was Larry Morley, the Company Manager was Denys Baker, and casting was by Jim Carnahan, C.S.A. and Mele Nagler. The cast, in order of appearance was as follows:

ANITA HIGHLAND.....	Kellie Overbey
DR. GROVER LOCKWOOD.....	Jonathan Walker
PORTER.....	Robert M. Jimenez
MATTHEW CLARK.....	Tom Aldredge
OWEN O’MALLEY.....	Dan Butler
CONDUCTOR.....	Terry Beaver
IDA WEBB.....	Julie Halston
OSCAR JAFFE.....	Alec Baldwin
LILY GARLAND.....	Anne Heche
GEORGE SMITH.....	Ryan Shively
BEARD.....	Stephen DeRosa
DETECTIVE.....	Patrick Boll
MAX JACOBS.....	Stephen DeRosa
RED CAPS, PASSENGERS, REPORTERS.....	Patrick Boll,
	Todd Cerveris, Darian Dauchan,
	Bill English, Virginia Louise Smith

TWENTIETH CENTURY had its world premiere production in Arlington, Virginia on August 25, 2003. It was produced by the SIGNATURE THEATRE, Eric Schaeffer, Artistic Director; Sam Sweet, Managing Director; and Ronnie Gunderson, Producing Director. It was directed by Eric Schaeffer. The set was designed by James Kronzer, the costumes by Anne Kennedy, the lighting by Jonathan Blandia and sound by Toni Angelini. The hair design was by Christe Kelly and the properties were by Elsie Jones. The Assistant Director was Ronnie Gunderson, the Production Stage Manager was Sandra Barrack, and casting was by Tara Rubin Casting. The cast, in order of appearance, was as follows:

ANITA HIGHLAND.....	Rachel Gardner
DR. GROVER LOCKWOOD.....	Thomas Adrian Simpson
PORTER.....	Rick Hammerly
OLIVER WEBB.....	Harry A. Winter
OWEN O'MALLEY.....	Christopher Bloch
CONDUCTOR.....	Frederick Strother
MYRTLE CLARK.....	Donna Migliaccio
OSCAR JAFFE.....	James Barbour
LILY GARLAND.....	Holly Twyford
GEORGE SMITH.....	Will Gartshore
BEARD.....	Rick Hammerly
DETECTIVE.....	Rick Hammerly
MAX JACOBS.....	Rick Hammerly

Author's Note by Ken Ludwig

The Cast

This adaptation of *Twentieth Century* was written for performance by ten actors, 3 female, 7 male. One actor plays 4 parts – the Porter, the Beard, Max Jacobs and the Detective. Thus, the cast list is as follows:

Oscar Jaffe	Conductor
Lily Garland	Dr. Grover Lockwood
Ida Webb	Anita Highland
Owen O'Malley	Max Jacobs (doubled)
George Smith	Beard (doubled)
Matthew Clark	Detective (doubled)
	Porter (doubled)

In the world premiere production by the Signature Theatre, Rick Hammerly played Max Jacobs, the Beard, the Detective and the Porter and virtually no one in the audience knew that there was any doubling. Rick, of course, did his best to disabuse them at the curtain call.

In the Broadway production by the Roundabout Theatre Company, additional actors were hired to play the Detective and the Porter. In addition, there were actors playing a maid, a policeman and two red-caps, all to provide atmosphere. This decision was made because of the size of the stage and the resources of the company and is not in any way required.

Finally, it should be noted that in the Signature cast, Matthew Clark was named Myrtle Clark and was played by a woman. And in the original Broadway production, Ida Webb was Oliver Webb and was played by a man. The Theatre is the consummate arena to adapt to the resources available – and you should feel free to do whatever is necessary to get this play produced and create a joyful two hours.

The Set

In the original 1934 Broadway production, and in the 1952 Broadway revival, the train set did not move. The curtain rose to reveal all three rooms and all of the action took place as it would on any unit set, shifting as the action required with the aid of lighting. In both the Signature and the Roundabout productions of this adaptation, the set moved sideways, so that at any one time the audience could see only two rooms. Both approaches are equally satisfactory.

Also, the final scene of the play is meant to be played simply on the platform area in front of the train (where the opening action of the play takes place). In the Roundabout production, John Lee Beatty created a beautiful, soaring vertical “gate” for this scene. At the Signature Theatre, Jim Kronzer ingeniously created a “skin” which looked like the outside of the train car and slid into place for the opening and closing scenes of the play. However, the simple stage area in front of the train with nothing but the open train in the background works equally well.

Preface by Ken Ludwig

This play came about thanks to a wonderful man named Roger Stevens. Roger was a great Broadway producer and – at the time I got to know him in the late 1980s – the Chairman of the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. At this time, the Kennedy Center was producing one of my early plays, *Sullivan and Gilbert*, which was the last play Roger produced in his capacity as Chairman before he retired.

During the weeks leading up to the production, Roger and I became warm friends. He was one of those truly great men that we all hope to have as a friend: wise, avuncular, funny; and he cared as deeply about the theatre as anyone I have ever known. Typically, I would wander into his office around noon and wait happily while he finished up business. Then we'd muse about life and the theatre for an hour; and sometimes we'd go to lunch. As a young playwright, I simply loved being anywhere in this giant's orbit. He'd point to a picture on the wall from one of his *hundreds* of Broadway productions – Lunt and Fontanne in *The Visit*; or Ralph Richardson in *The Waltz of the Toreadors* – then he'd tell an anecdote about “Larry” or “Viven” or “Helen” – always in a way that made me feel part of this great tradition; as though Larry and Vivien would have been thrilled to have me as a colleague. Looking back, I know that Roger was aware of the effect he was having on me, and that it amused him in a genuinely fatherly way.

One day, as Roger and I gazed up at the library of plays he kept in his office, he put his hand on my shoulder and said, “Kenny, I think you should take a look at this.” He pulled down a volume entitled *The Plays of Charles MacArthur*. “Take it with you. It's a present.”

At home that night, I devoured the entire volume. I knew *The Front Page*, of course. But I didn't know the others; and I was struck at the time by one in particular, *Twentieth Century*. Funny, fast, touching, theatrical. I loved it. The next day in his office, I learned that the play had last been performed on Broadway in the early 1950s with Jose Ferrer and Gloria Swanson. I was intrigued. However, about this time, preparations for

Sullivan and Gilbert were heating up, and I put the book aside and forgot about it.

Fifteen years later, I was in that agonizing state of being called “between plays.” By this time I had several Broadway plays under my belt, including *Lend Me A Tenor*, *Crazy For You*, and *Moon Over Buffalo*. I had just finished staging *Moon* at the Old Vic in London with Joan Collins and Frank Langella. And I was tying myself in knots trying to come up with an idea for a new play. The Kennedy Center was back in my life at that moment – they were playing my musical adaptation of *Tom Sawyer* – and perhaps that’s why, in perusing my shelves for an idea, I plucked down the MacArthur volume and started to reread it. An hour later I had an idea. *Twentieth Century*. It had everything I love about classic comedies: a great comic premise; an interesting story with a strong motor; larger-than-life characters; rip-roaring set pieces that are genuinely funny; and a touching romance in the center of it all.

I did some research and found out that *Twentieth Century* hadn’t been done on Broadway since that Ferrer-Swanson outing in the 1950s. And then I found it that it was rarely done by *anybody*. Indeed, it was out of print. I reread the play and realized instantly why it was so neglected: it called for 28 actors. And *nobody* produces a straight play with 28 actors any more. You might get away with 10 or 12, if you’re lucky. So I got to thinking: What if I wrote an adaptation for, say, 10 actors. I knew I could retain the spirit of the piece. But could I retain the atmosphere and the stunning architecture? I thought I could.

That very day, I contacted James MacArthur, son of Charles MacArthur and Helen Hayes. I told him about my idea and he was supportive from the first minute. All his life he has proudly championed the great theatrical legacies of both of his adored parents, and he was thrilled with the idea of giving *Twentieth Century* a new life. From that moment on, Jim has been the greatest of boosters, the best of critics and the nicest of friends – and I’m happy to thank him now, in print, for all his help in bringing *Twentieth Century* back to the audience it deserves.

Once I'd finished writing the adaptation, the next step was getting it produced. I sent it to my good friend Eric Schaeffer, and he immediately agreed to produce it – and direct it – at his own theatre, one of the most creative, adventurous theatre spaces on Earth, The Signature Theatre in Arlington, Virginia. It starred James Barbour and Holly Twyford and was a bona fide hit. By this time, my friend Walter Bobbie had read a copy of the play, and he offered it, with my blessing, to Todd Haimes and the Roundabout Theatre for a Broadway outing. We opened on Broadway in March of 2004 with Alec Baldwin and Anne Heche in the leads. Again, we were a hit, and the play was virtually sold out for its entire run.

Ever since these two productions opened, I'm frequently asked the same question: Did I make a lot of changes in the text of the original script? The answer is that in cutting the cast from 28 to 10, I had to. Indeed, I'd say that at least 50% of the dialogue on the following pages is mine, including some entire scenes, while the other 50% is pure Hecht and MacArthur. But my goal has always been to retain the essence and exuberance of the original: the sly wit, the smart-mouthed commentary, the outsized egos and the relentless plot. With the memory of Roger Stevens in mind, I hope I've succeeded.

Ken Ludwig
Washington, DC

For Mom and Dad, always

Ken

ACT I

ANNOUNCER'S VOICE. *(In the dark, over a loud speaker.)*
Attention, please, Twentieth Century Limited for New York and
Boston now ready on Track 14. All aboard!

*(The lights come up on the interior of the Twentieth Century
Limited just before departure from La Salle Street Station,
Chicago. The time is March, 1933.)*

*We see three compartments on the train. From left to right:
Drawing Room B, Drawing Room A, and the Observation Car.
The two Drawing Rooms each have a door at the back, lead-
ing to a corridor that runs along the back of the train. This
corridor leads to the main entry door of the Observation Car.
Most communication between these three rooms is along the
corridor and through these doors.*

*In addition, there is a door connecting the two Drawing Rooms,
along the common wall – although this door is normally kept
locked. Also, along the outer wall, Drawing Room B has a
door leading to the bedroom.*

*The Twentieth Century Limited is spacious and beautifully
appointed. Each drawing room has chairs, a writing desk,*

mirrors, lamps, curtains, etc. The Observation Car is essentially a lounge, with an open central area and some easy chairs. Our first impression as the lights come up is one of hustle and bustle up and down the corridor and through the rooms and the Observation Car. For purposes of this opening, we might see the platform as well.)

CONDUCTOR. Attention, please, Twentieth Century Limited for New York and Boston now ready on Track 14. All aboard!

(After a moment, we meet DR. GROVER LOCKWOOD and his somewhat younger companion, ANITA HIGHLAND. LOCKWOOD normally projects an air of confidence, but at the moment, he's a nervous wreck. ANITA is his attractive, down-to-earth office manager who's ready for some excitement in her life. They both carry luggage; and the PORTER, an efficient fellow who knows his job, is just approaching them.)

ANITA. I've got to admit, this is exciting, Grover.

PORTER. May we take your bags, sir? Madam?

ANITA. Why thank you, Porter. That's very kind.

PORTER. And you're in?

DR. LOCKWOOD. *(Checking the tickets.)* Drawing Room A, Car 186.

PORTER. *(Taking their luggage.)* I'll meet you there.

DR. LOCKWOOD. Good, good ...

(ANITA and GROVER whisper as they move away:)

ANITA. Stop making faces, Grover. Nobody saw us get on the train.

DR. LOCKWOOD. If my wife knew about this, she'd take every penny ...

ANITA. Grover, would you please stop worrying and just relax! Try to smile.

(He does.)

DR. LOCKWOOD. How do I look?

ANITA. Like you've been electrocuted.

(They exit.)

By this time, MATTHEW CLARK has entered carrying a black leather satchel and a Bible. He's in late middle age, an odd little man, pale and upright, neatly dressed in an old-fashioned suit and tie.)

PORTER. May I help you with your bag, sir?

CLARK. Oh, no no no. No no. No thank you. *(He hold the satchel to his chest.)* It's very kind of you to offer, though. Very charitable. Do you read the Bible?

PORTER. Yes sir, I do.

CLARK. In that case, here's a dollar for you.

PORTER. Thank you, sir!

CLARK. Do you read it every day?

PORTER. I have to admit I don't sir.

CLARK. Then I'll take the dollar back.

(He does, then walks away. The Porter watches him, puzzled, then heads straight to Drawing Room A.)

ANNOUNCER. *(On loud speaker.)* Track 14! Twentieth Century! All aboard!

(By this time, the PORTER has reached Drawing Room A. ANITA and LOCKWOOD follow him in.)

ANITA. Well this looks nice and comfortable.

PORTER. *(To LOCKWOOD.)* And may I have your name, please?

DR. LOCKWOOD. *(Panicked)*... My-my name? ... What for?

PORTER. It's customary, sir, in case you get any telegrams.

DR. LOCKWOOD. Oh. Why, it's uh ... I'm glad you asked me that, because uh ... generally, I find that it's not something that generally gets ...

ANITA. Dr. Grover C. Lockwood.

DR. LOCKWOOD. *(Hoarsely)* Right. And wife. Mrs. Doctor. Lockwood. Mrs. Lockwood. I'm the doctor. She's the wife. We're married.

PORTER. Thank you very much.

(He exits, closing the door.)

ANITA. That was very smooth, Grover. Now they'll never suspect a thing.

DR. LOCKWOOD. Are you crazy! Giving out my name?!

ANITA. I had to say something. You just stood there.

DR. LOCKWOOD. Oh God, if my wife knew about this ...

ANITA. Why don't you talk about your wife some more, Grover. Or better still, you could pull out her picture and have a good cry.

(They cuddle up together, as —

The action moves to the Observation car, where OWEN O'MAL-

LEY is arguing with the PORTER. O'MALLEY is a harassed and bellicose Irishman, not without a certain charm and even poesy. He is cynical and assured, but disposed to fight about anything at the drop of a nuance.)

O'MALLEY. You've got a lot of nerve, you foul Corsican!

PORTER. I only asked to see your ticket.

O'MALLEY. And I told you to put them bags into Drawing Room A before I flatten you. Mr. Jaffe needs that room.

PORTER. But there's somebody in there already!

O'MALLEY. Then throw 'em out! They don't belong there, trust me!

PORTER. *(Intimidated)* Well maybe there's a mistake or something. I'll go see.

O'MALLEY. I'll go with you.

CONDUCTOR. *(Offstage)* Track 14. All aboard!

(The Porter heads for Drawing Room A and O'MALLEY follows. The lights come up in A and we see LOCKWOOD in a clinch with ANITA. The buzzer sounds and LOCKWOOD jumps.)

DR. LOCKWOOD. Yes?! Who is it?

PORTER. *(Off)* Porter.

DR. LOCKWOOD. Wait! ...Just a minute ...! *(He straightens his hair and tie.)* All right, come in.

PORTER. *(Entering)* Beg pardon, sir, but can I see your tickets?

DR. LOCKWOOD. Why certainly.

ANITA. What is it Grover? Darling.

DR. LOCKWOOD. Porter?

PORTER. Gentleman here say's it's his room.

DR. LOCKWOOD. It is not!

O'MALLEY. Oh it isn't, huh? Well tell me something. Do you lift weights? Huh? Have you got any muscles on them bones?!

DR. LOCKWOOD. *(Thrown)* Well, not really ...

O'MALLEY. Then step outside. We'll settle this like real men.

ANITA. Grover, he's drunk. I can smell it from here.

O'MALLEY. That's a lie! Not a drop has touched these lips in over ten minutes!

PORTER. *(Hurrying away.)* I'll call the conductor.

O'MALLEY. Fine! Call the conductor! Call the whole damn orchestra! *(To LOCKWOOD.)* I'll take care of you and that alleged squaw of yours later.

(He heads back to the Observation Car, where the PORTER is having a whispered conversation with the CONDUCTOR – a dignified specimen in a tailcoat with a heavy gold watch chain.)

PORTER. That's the gentleman there.

CONDUCTOR. All right, I'll attend to him. *(Coldly, to O'MALLEY.)* What seems to be the trouble, young man?

O'MALLEY. "Young man." You call me a "young man?" I'll have to give you a kiss for that one.

CONDUCTOR. Get away from me! Now listen here -

O'MALLEY. No, you listen, General. There's a pair of foul turtle-doves in Drawing Room A, and I've got to shoo 'em out before Mr. Jaffe gets here.

CONDUCTOR. *(Thawing)* Do you mean Oscar Jaffe., the theatrical man?

O'MALLEY. The earth-shaker himself. I'm his Press Agent. Now let's have some action.

CONDUCTOR. May I see your ticket?

O'MALLEY. How many times do I have to go over this? I ain't got a ticket!

CONDUCTOR. Then I'm afraid you're out of luck, Mr. Jaffe. or no Mr. Jaffe.

O'MALLEY. Listen, you keep this up and I'll EAT THEM BUTTONS OFF YOUR COAT!!

(IDA WEBB enters and begins to function at once. IDA is a tough, efficient, smart-mouthed dame who plays poker with the boys – and wins. She's been married three or four times – she can't remember which – but since none of the men were as tough or romantic as she is, she sent them packing.)

WEBB. Owen, is everything all fixed?

O'MALLEY. NO! Diplomacy ain't workin'! *(To CONDUCTOR.)* This is Miss Ida Webb, Jaffe's general manager and fixer-upper. Ida, fix him up.

CONDUCTOR. Now listen you – !

WEBB. Owen, what's the problem?

O'MALLEY. Oscar wants room A. There's somebody in there already and he won't throw 'em out!

WEBB. Why Room A?

O'MALLEY. I have no idea, but Oscar says it's life and death.

WEBB. I see. Right. Conductor. Take a telegram.

CONDUCTOR. *(Flustered)* A telegram ...?

WEBB. To Mr. A. L. Johnson, Vice-President, New York Central Line. "My Dear Albert –" *(At these magic words, the Conductor turns white.)* "I'm having some difficulty getting proper service on the Century in charge of Conductor –" What's your name?

CONDUCTOR. Listen, Miss Webb...

WEBB. (*Coldly*) Well, speak up.

CONDUCTOR. There's no use wiring anybody about this. I'm perfectly willing to give Mr. Jaffe every consideration – I've carried Mr. Jaffe before – but you'll have to make your own arrangements with the people in A.

WEBB. Happy to, Conductor. Who is in A?

PORTER. A Dr. and Mrs. Lockwood.

O'MALLEY. Dr. and Mrs. Hell! It's Romeo and Juliet without the blood test.

WEBB. Come on, Owen.

(*They cross to Drawing Room A and sound the buzzer – at which point we see LOCKWOOD and ANITA entwined.*)

DR. LOCKWOOD. Oh, now what?!

O'MALLEY. (*Thumping on the door.*) Open the door.

ANITA. (*Frightened*) My God!

DR. LOCKWOOD. Don't get rattled. You'll give everything away. (*He opens the door, taking an outraged air.*) What's the idea of this continual intrusion?

WEBB. Are you Dr. Lockwood?

DR. LOCKWOOD. Yes! Who are you?

WEBB. And is this lady here Mrs. Lockwood?

ANITA. Conductor, I'm beginning to feel persecuted.

WEBB. I'll be right back.

O'MALLEY. Where are you going?

WEBB. I'm going to call up his real wife and have a chat. The poor little thing.

DR. LOCKWOOD. (*Panic-Stricken*) Just a minute! Please! Wait!

WEBB. On the other hand, we don't really want to cause any

trouble, now do we, Owen?

O'MALLEY. Not me. I hate conflict.

WEBB. Look, doctor, I've got two tickets here, an upper and lower two cars ahead. The difference in price is fifteen dollars in your favor. We'll call it twenty.

(She peels off \$20 and hands it to LOCKWOOD along with the tickets.)

WEBB. Here you are.

DR. LOCKWOOD. *(Astounded)* What?

WEBB. I strongly advise you to take it. There will be no more questions.

ANITA. *(In rage)* Are you going to stand for this, Grover?

DR. LOCKWOOD. It'll be all right, honey. Come on.

ANITA. But Grover – !

DR. LOCKWOOD. Don't argue with me! Porter, bring the bags!

PORTER. Yes sir!

(LOCKWOOD drags ANITA out, and the CONDUCTOR and PORTER follow.)

O'MALLEY. Bye, honey.

(WEBB. and O'MALLEY remain in A, closing the door.)

O'MALLEY. Okay, we got the room. Now all we need is Oscar.

WEBB. I'd like to know what he would ever do without us.

O'MALLEY. I'm glad you fixed the train. Now why don't

you fix one of his plays?

WEBB. "Joan of Arc." That was his biggest turkey yet.

O'MALLEY. I didn't know whether to watch it or stuff it and serve it with cranberries.

WEBB. That's three flops in a row. We haven't had a hit since Lily left him.

WEBB. I told him Joan of Arc wouldn't run a week. Right to his face I told him. I said people don't want to see some dame in an iron petticoat. (*O'MALLEY has pulled out a liquor flask.*) Hey. You said you weren't going to take a drink on this train.

O'MALLEY. I conquered my will power.

(*A knock on the door.*)

WEBB. Come in!

(*LOCKWOOD enters.*)

DR. LOCKWOOD. Excuse me ...?

O'MALLEY. (*Rising*) You, again.

DR. LOCKWOOD. Wait! The Porter said ... Is it true you're with Oscar Jaffe? The big producer?

WEBB. That's right.

DR. LOCKWOOD. Well, I ... (*Proudly*) I've written a play!

O'MALLEY. Oy vey ...

DR. LOCKWOOD. (*Pulling out a copy*) Could you show it to him? When he arrives? I'd really appreciate it.

WEBB. I don't think Mr. Jaffe would be interested right now.

DR. LOCKWOOD. Oh, he'll be interested in this play, I guarantee it. It's unique. It's about ... Joan of Arc.

Listen. You've got to admit, you owe me a favor. Right? I'll tell you what, I'll come back later. Then he can decide. Okay? All

right?

WEBB. Fine, come back later.

DR. LOCKWOOD. Thanks ... fellow Thespians.

(As WEBB closes the door on LOCKWOOD –

– the action shifts to the Observation Car; as MATTHEW CLARK hurries in. He looks sharply in both directions to make sure he's alone, then he calls out:)

CLARK. Repent! For the time is at hand!

(He begins slapping round, colorful stickers on the windows and pulls the shades down to cover them. The stickers say: "Repent for the time is at hand!" As he does this, he sings:)

CLARK.

“Take my hand, take my hand,
Take me to the promised land,
Blessed Jesus, O blessed Jesus.
Take my hand, take my hand,
Take me to the promised land ...

(The CONDUCTOR enters, followed by the PORTER, and CLARK stops abruptly, hiding his stickers. The CONDUCTOR calls out:)

CONDUCTOR. Last call! All aboard! Last call!

(In Drawing Room A, WEBB. jumps up.)

WEBB. Oh my God!

(She and O'MALLEY rush into the Observation Car.)

WEBB. *(Wildly)* Just a minute! Hold it, Conductor. Stop!
Stop!

CONDUCTOR. What's the matter?

WEBB. You can't start the train yet! Mr. Jaffe isn't on board!

CONDUCTOR. Sorry, this train waits for no man. Not while I'm alive.

O'MALLEY. That sounds like a solution to me.

(Suddenly, the train gives a lurch – putting WEBB and O'MALLEY into an even greater panic.)

WEBB. Owen, do something!

O'MALLEY. Where's the emergency rope?

PORTER. You can't touch that!

O'MALLEY. There it is!

WEBB. Grab it, Owen!

CONDUCTOR. Stop that right now! Porter! Stop him!

(As they struggle, WEBB pulls out a pad and pencil and starts writing a wire – trying to frighten the CONDUCTOR. The following five speeches are spoken simultaneously:)

WEBB. To A.L. Johnson, Vice-President, New York Central Line ...

CONDUCTOR. You can wire God Almighty if you want to! This train starts now and on time and I am not to be intimidated!

WEBB. Dear Al ... How are the wife and kids! I regret to inform you of the behavior of one of your so-called Conductors -

PORTER. *(Struggling)* Let go of that bell rope! I'm warning

you! That'll send ya to prison, sure as shootin' !

O'MALLEY. Get off o' me, you foul Corsican! This train is goin' no place till Mr. Jaffe gets here if I have to stand in front of it!

(As the argument continues, OSCAR JAFFE. enters Drawing Room A. He goes straight to the door communicating with Drawing Room B and tries to open it, but it's locked. He rattles the handle, but it won't open – and so he starts screaming at the top of his lungs:)

JAFFE. *(Cutting through all the noise)* OWEN, IDA, GET ME A PORTER! *(WEBB and O'MALLEY stop cold and look up.)*
I WANT A PORTER THIS INSTANT!

O'MALLEY. My God! The earth-shaker's on board.

WEBB. It's okay, Conductor. Sorry for the trouble. Porter, come with me!

(WEBB, O'MALLEY and the PORTER hurry to Drawing Room A. As they go – and as the CONDUCTOR mops his brow – we have a moment to look at the great OSCAR JAFFE. He is a man in his prime, in a fur-collared coat equipped with frogs across the chest and wearing a black velour hat and Windsor tie. He carries a cane of black ebony with a silver tip, once the property of the late Edwin Booth. He lives, breathes, eats and dreams about the theatre and nothing else.)

It should be noted at this point that MR. JAFFE's voice, when he isn't screaming, is a lofty instrument, designed to meet the great moments in life. It is sibilant and judicial. Behind its measured beat is a continual tremolo of emotion. When MR. JAFFE. speaks he gives the effect of one who is playing his

simplest words on a Cremona cello. Fate and Weltschmerz lie behind the most accidental of the JAFFE utterances. He is an Actor.)

O'MALLEY. (*Entering*) Hello, Maestro. Welcome to the Titanic.

WEBB. Here's your Porter, Oscar.

JAFFE. How do you do, young man, it's a pleasure to be riding on your magnificent railroad. Now open this door.

PORTER. I'm afraid that's against the rules, sir.

JAFFE. Ida, have you got five dollars?

WEBB. No.

JAFFE. Liar. Just give it to him. I'll reimburse you.

O'MALLEY. He can pay you back with tickets for "Joan of Arc."

JAFFE. Go ahead, Porter. It's all right.

(The PORTER takes the money and unlocks the door to Drawing Room B. JAFFE peeks in, sees no one there and goes right in.)

JAFFE. It's empty.

PORTER. Yes sir.

JAFFE. Wasn't it reserved?

PORTER. Yes sir, maybe the party's getting on at Englewood. Lots of 'em do.

JAFFE. And when do we arrive in Englewood, pray tell?

PORTER. About ten minutes.

JAFFE. Good. Thank you, Porter. You may go. (*The PORTER exits.*) Owen. Where are the flowers?

O'MALLEY. What flowers?

JAFFE. I distinctly told you to bank Drawing Room B with gardenias. I sent word to the box office.

O'MALLEY. The box office? Well, what would I be doing around there?! With sixteen process servers lying in ambush for us. I can get arrested all by myself, thank you.

JAFFE. (*The good shepherd.*) You'll have to stop drinking, Owen. You're no good to me this way, it's discouraging. Ida, wire Maurice the florist in Toledo to send all the gardenias he has to this car. I want a card with a message. Let me think ... "To the little lady of the snows..." No. I used that last time. Just a minute ... "From the grave of someone you loved yesterday." How's that?

O'MALLEY. That's nice and cheerful.

JAFFE. It's perfect. Why can't I get a few playwrights to write like that?

WEBB. You did. That's why we're out of money.

(*The three walk back into Drawing Room A, closing the connecting door behind them.*)

JAFFE. Owen, go order lunch. I'm famished.

O'MALLEY. The diner's packed.

JAFFE. Tell them it's for me. See that they put me by myself at a very large table.

O'MALLEY. If you want privacy why don't you travel in a balloon?

(*O'MALLEY exits.*)

JAFFE. What started O'Malley drinking again? Is it a woman?

WEBB. Yeah, it's a woman. "Joan of Arc."

JAFFE. Do you know what I was thinking on my way to the train? I was thinking that of all my sixty-eight productions the most beautiful was "Joan of Arc." I cried like a baby at every perform-

ance.

WEBB. So did I, but for a different reason.

JAFFE. That fire effect I did at the end was pure genius.

WEBB. So was that disappearing trick where you made the audience vanish.

JAFFE. Well I liked it!

WEBB. I'm glad, because we lost seventy-four thousand dollars on it.

JAFFE. (*Awed by his own greatness.*) God, what a magnificent failure! If I am a genius, Ida, it's because of my failures. Always remember that.

WEBB. I'll put it on a sign and you can wear it on street corners holding a little cup: "I'm a genius, please feed me." Now listen, Oscar, this trip from Chicago to New York takes sixteen hours, we arrive at Grand Central at nine tomorrow morning and the banks open at ten –

JAFFE. Don't worry me about money right now, do you mind?

WEBB. Oscar, listen! If we don't find some cash by tomorrow, they're going to take the Jaffe Theatre, and I'm not kidding.

JAFFE. They wouldn't dare.

WEBB. They issued a writ on Friday.

JAFFE. (*The one subject that makes him go totally wild.*) And who do you think is behind it, huh?! I'll tell you who!

WEBB. Boss –

JAFFE. Max Jacobs! That so-called producer! That cheap little crook I picked out of the gutter! I gave him life and he betrayed me! Don't you remember? When I fired him he said he'd have his revenge.

WEBB. Oscar, it's not Max Jacobs. It's the banks. All the banks. They got together last week.

JAFFE. They did, huh? Well, I'll tell you something, Ida. Skies were never bluer. Who do you think is getting on the train at Englewood. Hm? I'll give you a hint. She's an old friend of ours. She has bright blonde hair and sparkling eyes, she's five foot six with a splendid figure, and if she ever fell into a swamp and met a starving crocodile, she'd strangle him, turn him inside out and make him into a purse with matching shoes.

WEBB. Lily Garland?

JAFFE. Right!

WEBB. She's coming back with us?

JAFFE. You bet she is! Ha ha! Starring in my next production. Back in the fold where she belongs.

WEBB. Oh my God. That's the best news I've heard in years.

JAFFE. I knew you'd like it.

WEBB. When you split up with Lily I never opened my yap, but I just knew you were cutting your throat.

JAFFE. So you thought I was through, eh? Well let me tell you something. That is when I'm at my best, my girl. With my back against the wall. Disaster staring me in the face. "Henry the Eighth." "The Bride of Baghdad." "Chaim Pipick." They had me down, but I'm like a prize-fighter, up at the count of nine, can he get to his feet?, he staggers for a moment, can he recover?, then swings with the fury of a wounded lion. Ha ha!

WEBB. I'll tell you one thing. When those bankers see her name on a contract, they'll be giving us money. We can write our own ticket. She's the biggest draw in the country!

JAFFE. And now we have compartments next to each other. That's why I needed Drawing Room A.

WEBB. So that was it.

JAFFE. Now here's my plan. I want you to bump into her, accidentally, and tell her I have in hand the most unbelievable new

play with a part that fits her like a glove. Half-devil, half-woman. The greatest character ever put on stage.

WEBB. Wow! What's the play?

JAFFE. I have no idea. Now I'll have to find somebody who can write it. Remind me to find out if Bertolt Brecht is available.

WEBB. Oscar –

JAFFE. Or maybe that new chap, Noel Coward. We could add music –

WEBB. Osc –

JAFFE. Or Ibsen. Find out if he's still alive –

WEBB. Oscar, listen! Have you got Lily under contract or not?

JAFFE. Don't get technical on me, Ida.

WEBB. But it's the contract that'll make all the difference!

JAFFE. Oh, she'll sign for me. I created her.

WEBB. Was she glad to see you at least?

JAFFE. See me when? I haven't seen her for years.

WEBB. Oscar!! Oh my God!!

JAFFE. Oh, stop worrying. I'll get her signed up. And remember – I never closed the iron door on her.

WEBB. Oscar, listen to me – Would you just listen! The banks will not stop foreclosing on your assets until they actually see her name on a contract. In black and white. Signed.

JAFFE. I understand that. Which is why you will bump into Lily accidentally and tell her I'm on the train. She'll be ecstatic, but she'll try to hide it. And tell her the part in question is promised to Loretta Young. She hates her. It was Loretta she caught me in bed with. (*Dreamily*) It broke her heart.

WEBB. Loretta Young?

JAFFE. I told her that Shirley Temple was our love child.

WEBB. She's going to be pretty snooty after the hit she's made.

JAFFE. What hit?

WEBB. The movies!

JAFFE. She'll never be any good in the movies.

WEBB. What are you talking about? She won the gold statue.

JAFFE. What gold statue?

WEBB. A gold statue that some academy gives away every year, for best performance. They're calling her another Marlene Dietrich.

JAFFE. That's impossible. She can't be any good in the movies. She's got a face like a soft shell crab. It took me four years to make her look vaguely human.

WEBB. Listen, Oscar, as long as the Lily Garland thing isn't definite, I've got something to suggest. I got a telegram this morning from Max Jacobs.

JAFFE. Looking for a job, I suppose.

WEBB. Max wired me of his own accord –

JAFFE. I forbid you ever to mention the name Max Jacobs to me again. That's final! Besides, his real name is Mandelbaum. Max Mandelbaum. He started out selling herring on 34th Street till they arrested him for unclean practices. I fired him for stealing.

WEBB. Oscar, you fired him because of "Carmen."

JAFFE. Who's Carmen?

WEBB. The opera "Carmen?" The one you produced together. You insisted on putting a real bull on stage.

JAFFE. He was a magnificent animal.

WEBB. He fell into the orchestra pit! They had to shoot him in front of the audience!

JAFFE. That was tragic.

WEBB. You had him ground up into hamburgers!

JAFFE. I was trying to salvage our investment!

WEBB. That's not the point! The point is, Max disagreed with you.

JAFFE. The point is, what does Max Jacobs know about the theatre!

WEBB. He knows enough to produce three straight hits in a row while you've been laying one egg after another. That's just facts!

JAFFE. I've had enough of your treachery. Get out of my sight!

WEBB. Just listen to this wire.

JAFFE. You've shown your true colors, now get out! You're fired! You're like Brutus in the marketplace, stabbing the only man who was ever good to you! Go to Mandlebaum and sell her-ring together!

WEBB. Oscar —

JAFFE. Out! Out! Out! You traitor! I close the iron door on you!

(JAFFE who has backed WEBB through the door, slams it in her face.

A train passes with a mighty roar, and the action shifts to the Observation Car. The CONDUCTOR and ANITA are having an animated discussion. MATTHEW CLARK sits nearby looking on with interest.)

ANITA. *(Slightly hysterical)* It was awful! I hardly knew what was happening! I was sitting reading a magazine when all of a sudden I felt something hit me on the head!

CONDUCTOR. Did you see anyone go by?

ANITA. No. But when I took my hat off, this sticker was on it. Look! "Repent for the time is at hand."

CONDUCTOR. That's the one. There's hundreds of 'em, all over the train.

CLARK. I'm sure whoever's doing it means no harm.

CONDUCTOR. Maybe. Or he could be some crackpot with a

gun.

CLARK. Oh, Lord, I certainly hope not.

(He exits.)

ANITA. I just don't understand it, Conductor. First it was the drawing room, now this. It isn't fair!

CONDUCTOR. I can assure you, madam, it's just a coincidence. Unless that Jaffe and his crew have something to do with it. And I wouldn't put it past them –

ANITA. Conductor, look!

(WEBB has just entered from the direction that Clark exited – and she has an identical sticker on her hat, to which she's oblivious.)

ANITA. *(Whispering)* I'll bet she did it.

CONDUCTOR. *(Vengefully)* That wouldn't surprise me in the least. *(Approaching WEBB.)* Well, my good woman, this time you've gone too far.

WEBB. I beg your pardon.

CONDUCTOR. Oh, you don't know what I'm talking about, huh? What's that on your hat?

(The CONDUCTOR tries to get WEBB's hat and WEBB fights him off.)

WEBB. Keep your hands off me!

CONDUCTOR. Give me that!

WEBB. What the hell is going on here?!

CONDUCTOR. You're going right through this train with soap and a pail of hot water and take every one of these sticker

down!

WEBB. "Repent for the time is at hand?" You're nuttier than a fruit cake. What the hell would I be doing with stickers? I've got enough trouble.

PORTER. (*Entering from hallway, excitedly to the CONDUCTOR.*) Conductor! Conductor! Somebody just went through the dining car, this minute, and stuck 'em on all the windows!

CONDUCTOR. Did you see him?

PORTER. No, sir. Just the back of him. He's heading towards the caboose!

CONDUCTOR. Come on. He won't get away this time. (*To WEBB.*) Sorry, Miss. I guess you're not guilty. This time

(The CONDUCTOR and the PORTER race out. O'MALLEY enters and sees IDA sitting there and looks at her quizzically, wondering why she isn't with JAFFE.)

WEBB. He closed the iron door.

(A train whistle sounds, as O'MALLEY continues to Drawing Room A. JAFFE is alone, as O'MALLEY comes through the door.)

O'MALLEY. Hey, boss, where's Ida?

JAFFE. Miss Webb. is no longer with us. There are only two musketeers left now, but we'll fight all the harder. Like Damon and Pythias. Robin Hood and Little John. Sherlock Holmes and a slightly drunken Doctor Watson. Now take out your pad and sit down. First, I want you to wire all the dramatic editors in New

York and tell them that I closed "Joan of Arc" as a gesture.

O'MALLEY. A gesture of what?

JAFFE. Of defiance. Because the play was unworthy of me.

O'MALLEY. Shows what I know. I thought it was because the play stank.

JAFFE. You have no soul, Owen. There were beautiful moments in that play.

O'MALLEY. I'm sure you're right. I saw it at a disadvantage. My seat was facing the stage.

(The buzzer sounds.)

JAFFE. That's Ida, coming to beg my forgiveness. Tell her to go.

(DR. LOCKWOOD enters.)

DR. LOCKWOOD. Dr. Jaffe.?

JAFFE. Yes?

DR. LOCKWOOD. How do you do? I'm Dr. Lockwood.

JAFFE. Did you send for a doctor, Owen?

DR. LOCKWOOD. No, I'm here in a private capacity. I ... have written a play, sir, especially for you. It's called ... "Joan of Arc." *(JAFFE reacts.)* You see, by day I may be a doctor, but at night, alone in my bedroom, using nothing but a simple pen, I explore my inner reaches.

JAFFE. I don't want to even think about that.

DR. LOCKWOOD. Will you read it?! You must! It's magnificent! I've taken a whole new approach to the subject. You see, I've given Joan a friend, a strong, dedicated man she can rely on. The kind of man every girl dreams of. A doctor!

JAFFE. Give the play to my secretary. I'll read it later.

DR. LOCKWOOD. (*Giving it to O'MALLEY.*) Take good care of it. It's the only copy in the world.

O'MALLEY. I'll memorize it, Doc.

JAFFE. Don't be funny, Owen. A play is a sacred trust. It is the earth in which the rest of us grow.

DR. LOCKWOOD. Thank you, Mr. Jaffe.

JAFFE. You're welcome. Now if you don't mind, I'm very busy. (*LOCKWOOD exits.*) Flush that thing down the toilet, Owen. (*O'MALLEY throws it into the bathroom and closes the door.*) Owen, did you read that telegram from Max Jacobs?

O'MALLEY. I sure did.

JAFFE. What did it say?

OWEN. He wants you to direct a new play for him, and he said he'd give you ten percent.

JAFFE. "Give me?" "Give me?!" The man is in an opium stupor. He takes drugs! I never told you that part. He's a drug addict. Take a wire, Owen. "To Max Jacobs, né Mandelbaum: I have it on good authority that you carry more diseases on your body than are believed to exist on the Asian continent –"

O'MALLEY. It'll never get through.

JAFFE. All right, start again. "Dear Max: You are the foulest, most vile, putrid piece of trash that ever walked this earth – and I say that with all due respect. In reply to your impudent offer, I am holding open your old job as office boy, feeling that you will need it when even that part of the public which enjoys filth in the theatre has been nauseated beyond endurance by your degenerate offerings!"

O'MALLEY. That'll teach him not to point.

CONDUCTOR. (*Off*) Englewood! Now arriving Englewood, Illinois!

(JAFFE freezes. He holds his heart in pain, looks up and sighs deeply. This is it.)

JAFFE. *(Hoarsely)* Owen ... she's getting on here ... Lily ... Lily Garland.

O'MALLEY. Lily's back?

JAFFE. I've tried for years to tear her out of my brain, but I've failed. She's in here, eating at my heart like some grey rat. Owen, when I love a woman I'm an Oriental. It never goes. It never dies. The only way I can breathe again is to get her back. *(With something like hatred.)* Make her pay for what she's done to me.

O'MALLEY. If she doesn't throw her arms around you the minute she sees you, she's a bigger fool than I ever thought she was.

JAFFE. Irishman, once in a blue moon you say just the right thing. We've stopped.

CONDUCTOR. *(Off)* Englewood!

JAFFE. Let's go to the platform and watch her get on. Shh. We've got to be Indians.

(They exit. As the train pulls in, we hear voices calling "Telegrams!" "Newspaper!" "Car 186!" "Red Cap!" etc.

The lights come up on Drawing Room B. LILY GARLAND opens the door with a dramatic gesture. LILY is a kind of female OSCAR JAFFE – stunning, histrionic, glamorous, egotistical and totally magnetic. She's used to being pampered, getting her own way and being told that she's the center of the universe. In short, she's a Star.)

LILY. *(The tragedienne; to the world; strewing her gloves and at on the floor.)* My God, my God, my God. Another compartment.

Another lonely room. No one cares if I'm...*(She leans her head into the corridor and yells.)*... Lily Garland! *(She enters the room.)* All they want is more of me. More, more. I could be a rag doll, or an animal in a circus. *(She pulls her Academy Award out of her purse and admires it.)* What do they care? Oh, God, I'm so tired.

(GEORGE SMITH, her agent and current lover, enters. GEORGE is a collar ad with temperament. Not bright, but tenacious. He's considerably younger than LILY.)

GEORGE. You poor thing.

LILY. Why do I do it, George? It's not for the money. I despise money. I despise all those trappings, those baubles, those symbols of emptiness ...Where's my luggage?

GEORGE. The Porter said it'll be right in.

LILY. All of my jewelry is in there!

GEORGE. Lily, it's fine –

LILY. The necklace that Louis Mayer gave me. The tiara – !

GEORGE. Lily –

LILY. I put you in charge of the luggage, you blockhead! That jewelry is worth a fortune!

GEORGE. *(Holding up his briefcase.)* Lily, I have your jewelry right here! I kept it separate.

LILY. Oh, George, don't ever scare me like that again. It's not the money I care about, you know that, George. It's because I grew up poor and frightened. All alone, like some orphan in the rain.

GEORGE. Well you're doing all right now. Just look at this place. It's like a fancy French chapeau. By the way, I've got that new contract with Paramount.

LILY. Oh I'm so glad you mentioned that. I want it changed. I want eighty thousand dollars for the next picture. Fifty is ridicu-

lous.

GEORGE. But you signed it already.

LILY. I don't care what I signed. You're not just my lover, you're my agent now, so fix it. If they say no, let them go to hell. My public wants me back on Broadway anyhow.

GEORGE. "Broadway." That's peanuts. Forget about acting. You're a star. I know what's good for my little girl.

LILY. (*To her lover now, all peaches and cream.*) Oh, George, when I'm in New York I'll miss you terribly.

GEORGE. Lily –

LILY. One last kiss before you go, my darling. I'll be dreaming about your arms holding me every night, your little head on the pillow.

GEORGE. Lily, you don't have to dream. I'm staying on the train.

LILY. (*Out of her mood in a flash.*) What?

GEORGE. I'm staying.

LILY. What are you talking about?

GEORGE. I've decided to come with you.

LILY. George, you'll do as I tell you and get off right now.

GEORGE. And leave you alone in New York with all those men? Not a chance.

(*He takes his overcoat off and throws it on a seat. The train starts.*)

LILY. George! Oh, George, we're moving! (*She grabs his coat and tries to push him out the door.*) Get off, quick!

GEORGE. No!

LILY. Jump! Jump! Just do as I tell you!

GEORGE. Look! It's too late. The doors'll be locked.

LILY. Then jump out the window! (*Witheringly*) Oh, this is

fine, this is. You seem to forget entirely that I'm paying you ten percent of my earnings. As if I needed an agent. Thousands of dollars for doing absolutely nothing. And you take them, you worm!

GEORGE. Go on. Keep it up. I like seeing your true colors.

LILY. (*Trying to melt him.*) Oh, George, please. I can't stand fighting. You can still get off at the next stop. For me, darling ...?

GEORGE. Lily, you're cooling off. I can tell.

LILY. That's not true! Darling. I adore you. I have nothing in the world but you. What else is there? Fame? Success? Empty words. Empty gestures.

GEORGE. Would you stop acting.

LILY. I beg your pardon?

GEORGE. I can always tell when you're acting. You repeat things. "Empty words, empty gestures." "Those baubles, those symbols." It sets up a kind of rhythm.

LILY. How dare you second guess me! How dare you!

GEORGE. See what I mean? "How dare you, how dare you —"

LILY. Ahhh!

(At this moment, the door opens, and O'MALLEY enters.)

O'MALLEY. Hello, you peculiar witch. How's the Baby Bernhardt?

(LILY instantly brightens up. Whenever she's around JAFFE and his crew, she's a whole new woman.)

LILY. Well, son of a gun. The foul Corsican himself. Who let you on this train?

O'MALLEY. Do you know all the trouble you've caused around this gondola the last half hour? We've torn it to shreds.

LILY. Who's we?

O'MALLEY. Guess.

LILY. My God! Is Oscar on the train?

O'MALLEY. The little corporal is returning from Moscow. His head bloodied, but still unbowed.

GEORGE. Jaffe's here? Oscar Jaffe? I should have guessed it. That's why you wanted me to get off this train. So you could cuddle up together.

LILY. Oh, don't be an ass. I had no idea he was on the train.

GEORGE. Are you going to see him? Huh? Tell me the truth.

LILY. See him? Do you think I'm out of my mind?! *(To O'MALLEY.)* Thank God you told me. I'm not stepping out of this room till we get to New York, I swear to God, I swear to God! That man belittled me and tortured me for six years. He ran around telling everybody "Where would Lily Garland be without the great Oscar Jaffe." Well, I think I showed him. Right to the top of the ladder, kid – and going up. Ha!

WEBB. Ha! Hiya, Lily.

(IDA has appeared in the doorway and now joins them. LILY is delighted to see her.)

LILY. Ida! You too, huh?

WEBB. Are you coming back into the fold?

GEORGE. *(Outraged)* Is she what?

WEBB. Coming back.

O'MALLEY. Two words. Rhymes with "slumming hack."

GEORGE. Oh, yeah? Well so does..."humming sack!"...

(The others look at each other and shake their heads.)

LILY. Did Jaffe tell you to come in here?!

WEBB. Now, don't fly off the handle, Lily. Confidentially, I'm not with Jaffe any more. I just wanted to tip you off to something. *(She's in front of GEORGE now and rubs the sides of his arms and feels his muscles.)* Ooh. Can we talk in front of Einstein here?

GEORGE. Listen, you can get the hell out of here. That's what you can do.

LILY. George, behave yourself and be quiet.

WEBB. Lily, I want you to listen a second. Oscar's broke. They're taking his theatre away from him.

LILY. Really?

WEBB. They've got him over a barrel with his pants down.

O'MALLEY. That's quite an image.

WEBB. I'm afraid he's going to do the Dutch act.

(She pantomimes a gun at her temple, and clicks with her tongue to indicate the shot.)

GEORGE. Kill himself?

O'MALLEY. No, point his finger at his head and click his tongue.

LILY. Is he doing that again? You know, committing suicide is an old habit of his.

WEBB. Remember the night he was going to hang himself and you stayed up all night and talked him out of it?

LILY. Well, we all make mistakes.

WEBB. It's serious, Lily. Unless you come to his rescue, it's curtains for him. You're his last chance.

LILY. Ida, I would rather drop dead where I'm standing than ever do another play for him. Now go back and tell that fake Svengali that I wouldn't wipe my feet on him if he was starving.

And I hope to God he is!

GEORGE. And she means every word of that. There wasn't single double repeat in the whole speech.

LILY. Oh George shut up.

WEBB. Lily, you can't turn your back on him. He made you!

LILY. He what?

WEBB. You know it's true. You were begging for a job. He taught you how to walk and talk and -

LILY. Get out of here! George, throw them out!

GEORGE. Gladly!

O'MALLEY. Watch it, you!

WEBB. I thought you were a bigger woman than this, Lily. I see that I was deeply mistaken.

LILY. Get out, get out, get out! (*WEBB and O'MALLEY exit. Hysterical.*) Why do they do this to me? What do they think I'm made of? Iron? Hammering and hammering at me, wherever I go. All of them, tearing at my nerves. All I want is a little peace! Oh my God, I'm having a breakdown! I'm all hot! I can feel it coming on! I won't be good for anything, and you'll all starve! You'll all starve!

GEORGE. Lily ... Lily, calm down! Now listen to me. I want the simple, honest truth about you and Jaffe. Has he ever been your lover?

LILY. My lover?

GEORGE. Have you ever had sex with him.

LILY. I know what lover means, you idiot! (*With dignity.*) George, on my mother's grave, Oscar Jaffe has never laid a finger on me.

GEORGE. ... I don't believe you.

LILY. Oh, George, why must you aggravate me?

GEORGE. Because I hate it when you're with other men. It

makes me nuts.

LILY. Oh, I don't know what I see in you! Either you bore me to death or you're so jealous you drive me crazy.

GEORGE. In other words, you don't love me at all. I'm nothing to you but a-a rag doll you can drag around! A piece of paper you can tear up! A flag pole you can sit on!

LILY. Oh, my precious. Forgive me. Please forgive me, I adore you so much ...

GEORGE. Then tell me the truth about Jaffe. Please.

LILY. It is the truth. I've told you about all my lovers, every one of them. The Chinese acrobat who tried doing everything upside-down. He almost killed me. The little Philippino monk with the black hood and the candles. Even the Italian midget with the huge hands. Oh, the midget was hard to confess. And now you think I'm just a wanton. A country wench. Oh, forgive me. Please, darling, don't look down on me.

GEORGE. Look down on you? Oh, Lily, your honesty is the only thing that's saved our love. This will be the last time I'll ever ask. I promise. Did Jaffe ever touch you as a woman?

LILY. *(With great conviction.)* Never. I swear to God.

(They fall into each other's arms, and GEORGE covers her with kisses.)

GEORGE. Oh, thank God, thank God, thank God ...

(Drawing Room A, JAFFE and O'MALLEY enter.)

JAFFE. The first time I slept with Lily Garland was the greatest night of my life. I remember it like it was yesterday, Owen. Now what did she say? Tell me everything.

O'MALLEY. You know her. She screamed like a fish wife.

JAFFE. Good sign. It shows the battery isn't dead. You didn't make her feel necessary, did you?

O'MALLEY. Not a word.

JAFFE. Good. Ha, ha. Now for a little surprise. I'm going to sweep her off her feet.

(He glances in a mirror, musses his hair just right and pulls open the connecting door.

Lights up in B.

JAFFE sees LILY and GEORGE in their clinch, nuzzling and kissing with great abandon. They don't see JAFFE.)

LILY. Oh, my darling, my darling ...

GEORGE. You're so beautiful ... so gentle ...

(JAFFE closes the door and reels backward. The room is spinning.)

JAFFE. My God ... Did you hear that ...? Who's that man?

O'MALLEY. That's her agent. I think he's negotiating.

JAFFE. Can you believe it?! That trollop! That baggage! Mousing around with boys after what she's had. I always knew she'd head for the gutter! Get me Ida right away.

O'MALLEY. You want her back?

JAFFE. Get her back this instant! *(Through the door.)*
IDAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!

(The train whistle blows, and the sound of it merges with OSCAR'S scream.

The action shifts to the Observation Car. The CONDUCTOR is reading a telegram while the PORTER looks on.)

CONDUCTOR. Oh my God. I wouldn't have believed it.

PORTER. What?

CONDUCTOR. The fellow that's been putting them stickers up. It's Mr. Clark, the little guy in room D. This telegram's from his nephew. It says that Clark escaped from an asylum. He's a religious nut and does this all the time. Used to be president of some big company. (*Reading*) "Will pick him up at Toledo. Accept no checks."

PORTER. I just saw him walking out toward the dining car.

CONDUCTOR. Come on. We'll take him into custody.

PORTER. Wait! There he is! He's coming this way.

CONDUCTOR. All right, all right. Keep cool. Nice and quiet. He may be dangerous ...

(*CLARK enters.*)

CONDUCTOR. (*Quietly*) Is your name Matthew Clark?

CLARK. (*Meekly*) Yes, sir.

(*They pounce with a bang.*)

CONDUCTOR. All right, Jimmy. Grab him!

PORTER. I got him! I got him!

CLARK. Please ... please! This isn't necessary.

CONDUCTOR. Oh, it isn't, huh? Then what's the idea of pasting up all those stickers?

CLARK. Oh, dear. I'm so ashamed of myself.

CONDUCTOR. You nearly caused a panic among the passengers. "The Time is at and."

PORTER. We were worried about a wreck!

CLARK. Oh, no, that's awful.

CONDUCTOR. Why do you do it?

CLARK. Well, I feel so strongly about the spiritual aspect of

our lives and I get this urge to save people. Sometimes it's overwhelming.

CONDUCTOR. (*Concerned*) How do you feel now?

CLARK. I'm perfectly normal, now, I assure you.

CONDUCTOR. We got a wire here from your nephew, says you escaped out of some asylum.

CLARK. A sanitarium, sir. For some rest. And it was very wrong of me. But you see there's a convention in New York for the pharmaceutical people. That's my line. (*He pulls out a card.*) "Laxo Fruit Tablets. They keep you moving."

PORTER. They sure do.

CLARK. I'm the President of the company. And please, let me pay for what I've done.

CONDUCTOR. We don't want your money, sir. I'm sorry you've got this problem, though.

CLARK. Thank you very much. You can trust me. It's over now. Here's the rest of the stickers.

(*He hands his satchel to the CONDUCTOR.*)

CONDUCTOR. Thanks. You'd better go back to your room now, Mr. Clark. We'll see that you're taken care of.

CLARK. Thank you, sir. You are good people. I only wish I could feed you on loaves and fishes. Conductor.

(*CLARK walks out – and the CONDUCTOR and PORTER look at each other uneasily.*

The action shifts to Drawing Room A. JAFFE and WEBB.)

JAFFE. Take out your pencil, Ida. We're going to draw up a

contract between Oscar Jaffe and Lily Garland. Incidentally, I want you to know that I took you back on account of your aging mother.

WEBB. She's dead.

JAFFE. Your father, then. There's no need making the innocent suffer.

WEBB. Thanks, Oscar.

JAFFE. Draw up the contract in legal form. We'll get her a car to go to and from the theatre. Catering on matinee days.

WEBB. Oscar, at the risk of losing my job again, I have to tell you – I think this is getting us nowhere. What we need is a play. She won't sign a contract until we have one. Something she can read.

JAFFE. Oh, I'll find a play.

WEBB. Where? That's the trouble. You of all people know that you can't just pull a play out of a hat. Not a real play.

JAFFE. (*Drawing an imaginary bow and beaming.*) I was born under the sign of Sagittarius. That's the archer. It means I find things. Draw up the contract, Ida.

(*The buzzer sounds.*)

WEBB. Come in!

(*The door opens and the BEARD appears. He's a strange, foreign-looking gentleman with a luxuriant beard. He has a heavy German accent.*)

BEARD. Exgoose me, plis ... (*He sees JAFFE.*) Maestro! Maestro! Iss you. I recognize you from der pictures!

(*He reverently kisses JAFFE's hand.*)

WEBB. Run along, we're busy!

BEARD. You are genius! You are greatest theatre-man in world! I k-neel at your feets!

JAFFE. Let him stay, Ida. I turn away no one. What is it you wish, my son?

BEARD. Herr Maestro, diss iss grade, grade honor. My friends in der back of train vill be so chelous. But maybe you have seen us somedime. Ja? On der stage?

WEBB. Oh, not actors!

BEARD. Ja, Ja. Actors. Ve are pelonging to der Passion Play. In Chermany.

JAFFE. Oh my God, of course! The Oberammergau Players! I should have recognized you. They're an institution, Ida. The purest branch of theatre in the world. They've been putting on the Passion Play every year for centuries.

BEARD. Ja, ja!

WEBB. Glad to meet you.

JAFFE. They are the only true actors we have left. Not like our cheap Broadway hams. These people are consecrated to their art from infancy. For hundreds of years they have made the name of Oberammergau famous. It must have started in ...

BEARD. Sixdeen hundred und thirdey-three.

JAFFE. What part do you play?

BEARD. I am der Christus.

JAFFE. Sir, I'm honored. ...

(JAFFE stops cold. He looks Heavenward and stops breathing. He gets a faraway look in his eyes. The BEARD and WEBB look at each other in perplexity.)

JAFFE. Wait!

BEARD. What ...?

WEBB. Oscar – ?

JAFFE. Be quiet! *(Another pause. He's thinking like mad. His eyes glow like hot coals.)* I've got it.

WEBB. Got what?

JAFFE. *(To the BEARD, brimming with mystery and purpose.)* Sit down, sir. Please, sit down. *(Softly, to himself:)* It's an inspiration! At the eleventh hour. With my back against the wall.

WEBB. What the hell are you talking about?!

JAFFE. The Passion Play! The greatest drama in the world! With Lily Garland as the Magdalene. It's perfect. Oh, my God. At last I've got something worthy of me. Sign him up. Wait. Is the whole troupe on board?

BEARD. Ja. Ve got all ten.

JAFFE. Sign them up immediately.

WEBB. May I see you alone, Oscar?

JAFFE. Not now.

WEBB. Just for a minute. *(To the BEARD, leading him to the door:)* I'm sorry, could you leave us now?

JAFFE. Ida, stop it. Are you crazy?

WEBB. *(Starting to lose control of himself.)* Never mind who's crazy.

JAFFE. Ida, what are you doing?!

(JAFFE grabs WEBB and holds him back. They struggle.)

WEBB. Oscar, you can't sign him up! I won't let you!

JAFFE. Ida -! This man is an artist! Apologize this instant!

WEBB. *(Pleading)* Oscar, please! You may not think so, but I'm more than just your manager. I'm your best friend on earth and this is crazy! You'll lose everything! Oscar, please!