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SF PERUSALS

Samuel French Acting Edition

The Adding Machine

by Elmer Rice

SAMUEL FRENCH

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ISBN 978-0-573-60508-6

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The cast of the THEATRE GUILD PRODUCTION as originally presented at the GARRICK THEATRE, March 19th, 1928

THE ADDING MACHINE

A Play in Seven Scenes
By ELMER L. RICE

PRODUCTION DIRECTED BY PHILIP MOELLER
SETTINGS AND COSTUMES BY LEE SIMONSON
INCIDENTAL MUSIC BY DEEMS TAYLOR

CHARACTERS (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

MR. ZERO.....*Dudley Digges*
MRS. ZERO.....*Helen Westley*
DAISY DIANA DOROTHEA DEVORE.....*Margaret Wycherly*
THE BOSS.....*Irving Dillon*
MR. ONE.....*Harry McKenna*
MRS. ONE.....*Marcia Harris*
MR. TWO.....*Paul Hayes*
MRS. TWO.....*Theresa Stewart*
MR. THREE.....*Gerald Lundegard*
MRS. THREE.....*Georgiana Wilson*
MR. FOUR.....*George Stehli*
MRS. FOUR.....*Edith Burnett*
MR. FIVE.....*William W. Griffith*
MRS. FIVE.....*Ruby Craven*
MR. SIX.....*Daniel Hamilton*
MRS. SIX.....*Louise Sydmeth*
POLICEMAN.....*Irving Dillon*
JUDY O'GRADY.....*Elise Bartlett*
YOUNG MAN.....*Gerald Lundegard*
SHRDLU.....*Edward G. Robinson*
A HEAD.....*Daniel Hamilton*
LIEUTENANT CHARLES.....*Louis Calvert*
JOE.....*William W. Griffith*

SCENE 1 A bedroom
SCENE 2 An office
SCENE 3 A living room
SCENE 4 A place of justice
SCENE 5 A graveyard
SCENE 6 A pleasant place
Scene 7 Another office

STAGE MANAGER, LEWIS BARRINGTON

THE THEATRE GUILD, INC.

Board of Managers

Theresa Helburn — Philip Moeller — Lee Simonson
Lawrence Langner — Maurice Wertheim — Helen Westley

Executive Director: Theresa Helburn

Scenic Director — Lee Simonson
Technical Director — Carolyn Hancock
Business Manager — Warren P. Munsell
Play Reading Dept. — Courtenay Lemon — Ernest Boyd
Press Representative — Ruth Benedict
Stage Manager — Robert L. Cook

A FOREWORD

BY

PHILIP MOELLER

Before he wrote "The Adding Machine," Elmer Rice's name was associated with that type of theatrical production known as melodrama. Perhaps melodrama is best defined as the type of play in which the situation so to speak "creates" the people as over against that mightier form called tragedy in which the inevitable character of the dramatis personæ creates the situation. Undoubtedly it is much easier to work up a smashing idea for a scene and then invent the types that would fall into it than to breathe life into a list of characters that would have to evolve, because they are what they are, in the direction of this or that dénouement. Rice has worked assiduously and with great success at this type of play, and genuine praise is due to him. Though the average person doesn't suspect it, even the lesser thing when it comes to playwriting isn't easy. And to have written so great a hit in this genre as "On Trial" was something of an event in the American theatre. Probably no play of its type has had so great an acclaim as this, and it

was definitely interesting from the point of view of mere craftsmanship because aside from its merits as a thriller it was based on a scheme of dramatic technic which up to its time was probably unique, though since then the ever-recurrent "flash back" of the movies has made the trick an old story.

After "On Trial" Rice kept on writing this sort of play. Several others of this kind have been produced, and all of them with more or less success, but what must have been going on in his head all the time was something he probably but half realized, something which amounted to a desire in the creator's mind not only to do something else but to do something deeper. Perhaps the play of "the situation" was beginning to tire Mr. Rice a bit though not his public. Perhaps somewhere his subconscious mind was beginning to wonder just how tragedies evolved, perhaps the varied Muses that watch over the successful playwright were whispering in his ears and urging him to try something other, and these intimations of inspiration and his response thereto have resulted in "The Adding Machine," which to date is undoubtedly his most important work.

Now under what category of play does "The Adding Machine" belong? Recently there has crept into the mental vocabulary of people interested in the drama a term which originated in Germany and which is called "expressionism." The "expressionist" school is concerned with the difference between interpreting a char-

acter from the objective and the subjective point of view. Now if "expressionism" is objective seeing, as all observation must be, it is *subjective* projection; that is, all the half-understood "hinterland" thoughts, all the yearnings and unknown suppressions of the mind, are exposed, so to speak, in spite of the character, just as an X-ray exposes the inner structure of a thing as against its outer, more obvious and seeming form.

Thus expressionistically Mr. Rice has exposed the minds and souls of his people. Thus he has made their souls and shown us through their minds the way they use them. Pitilessly and pityingly, with a curious conglomeration of tenderness and scorn, he has studied the rich barrenness and the ridiculous unbeauty of these "white-collar" slaves. How many machine-forced minds are there who as the grind goes on and on are wishing to others these calamities of hate and for themselves these escapes in stumbling and half-articulate dreams. How many sex-starved Zeros are there who pilfer their poor gratification by peeping across the tenement airshafts, how many terrible parties are there such as Mr. Rice shows us which are going on night after night and in which people such as Mr. One and Mrs. Two and others like them are gathered "to give the air" to such baleful profundities. In short, how many souls are there who here, or hereafter, will be able to live up to a paradise—if there is one either here or hereafter—where everything will be of a bliss,

of a sort, that such souls can profit in and understand.

To my mind this is the real importance of Mr. Rice's play. I do not think that for a moment he means to imply that he believes necessarily in the philosophy of the hereafter which is expressed in his play, that his idea is that the Zero soul must of necessity go on and on through endless eternities to end in the endless sameness. This question of questionable immorality is secondary. What he has done and with withering insight is to expose the starved and bitter littleness and at the same time the huge universality of the Zero type, of the slave type, that from eternity to eternity expresses the futility and the tragedy of the mediocre spirit.

The Theatre Guild is proud to have produced Mr. Rice's play, and I cannot close this foreword without a word of thanks to him for his help through rehearsals, and for the splendid spirit of coöperation he has shown in our attempt to project "The Adding Machine," which to our minds ranks high among the contribution of the newer school of American drama, of that school already so rich in its accomplishment and so infinite in its possibilities.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MR. ZERO
MRS. ZERO
MESSRS. ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR, FIVE, SIX,
and their respective wives
DAISY DIANA DOROTHEA DEVORE
THE BOSS
POLICEMAN
TWO ATTENDANTS
JUDY O'GRADY
A YOUNG MAN
SHRDLU
A HEAD
LIEUTENANT CHARLES
JOE

THE ADDING MACHINE

SCENE ONE

[*SCENE: A bedroom.*

A small room containing an "installment plan" bed, dresser, and chairs. An ugly electric light fixture over the bed with a single glaring naked lamp. One small window with the shade drawn. The walls are papered with sheets of foolscap covered with columns of figures.

MR. ZERO *is lying in the bed, facing the audience, his head and shoulders visible. He is thin, sallow, under-sized, and partially bald.* MRS. ZERO *is standing before the dresser arranging her hair for the night. She is forty-five, sharp-featured, gray streaks in her hair. She is shapeless in her long-sleeved cotton night-gown. She is wearing her shoes, over which sag her ungartered stockings.*]

MRS. ZERO

[*As she takes down her hair*]: I'm gettin' sick o' them Westerns. All them cowboys ridin' around an' foolin' with them ropes. I don't care nothin' about that. I'm sick of 'em. I don't see why they don't

have more of them stories like "For Love's Sweet Sake." I like them sweet little love stories. They're nice an' wholesome. Mrs Twelve was sayin' to me only yesterday, "Mrs. Zero," says she, "what I like is one of them wholesome stories, with just a sweet, simple little love story." "You're right, Mrs. Twelve," I says. "That's what I like, too." They're showin' too many Westerns at the Rosebud. I'm gettin' sick of them. I think we'll start goin' to the Peter Stuyvesant. They got a good bill there Wednesday night. There's a Chubby Delano comedy called "Sea-Sick." Mrs. Twelve was tellin' me about it. She says it's a scream. They're havin' a picnic in the country and they sit Chubby next to an old maid with a great big mouth. So he gets sore an' when she ain't lookin' he goes and catches a frog and drops it in her clam chowder. An' when she goes to eat the chowder the frog jumps out of it an' right into her mouth. Talk about laugh! Mrs. Twelve was tellin' me she laughed so she nearly passed out. He sure can pull some funny ones. An' they got that big Grace Darling feature, "A Mother's Tears." She's sweet. But I don't like her clothes. There's no style to them. Mrs. Nine was tellin' me she read in *Pictureland* that she ain't livin' with her husband. He's her second, too. I don't know whether they're divorced or just separated. You wouldn't think it to see her on the screen. She looks so sweet and innocent. Maybe it ain't true. You can't believe

all you read. They say some Pittsburgh millionaire is crazy about her and that's why she ain't livin' with her husband. Mrs. Seven was tellin' me her brother-in-law has a friend that used to go to school with Grace Darling. He says her name ain't Grace Darling at all. Her right name is Elizabeth Dugan, he says, an' all them stories about her gettin' five thousand a week is the bunk, he says. She's sweet, though. Mrs. Eight was tellin' me that "A Mother's Tears" is the best picture she ever made. "Don't miss it, Mrs. Zero," she says. "It's sweet," she says. "Just sweet and wholesome. Cry!" she says, "I nearly cried my eyes out." There's one part in it where this big bum of an Englishman—he's a married man, too—an' she's this little simple country girl. An' she nearly falls for him, too. But she's sittin' out in the garden, one day, and she looks up and there's her mother lookin' at her, right out of the clouds. So that night she locks the door of her room. An' sure enough, when everybody's in bed, along comes this big bum of an Englishman an' when she won't let him in what does he do but go an' kick open the door. "Don't miss it, Mrs. Zero," Mrs. Eight was tellin' me. It's at the Peter Stuyvesant Wednesday night, so don't be tellin' me you want to go to the Rosebud. The Eights seen it downtown at the Strand. They go downtown all the time. Just like us—nit! I guess by the time it gets to the Peter Stuyvesant all that part about kickin' in the door will

be cut out. Just like they cut out that big cabaret scene in "The Price of Virtue." They sure are pullin' some rough stuff in the pictures nowadays. "It's no place for a young girl," I was tellin' Mrs. Eleven, only the other day. An' by the time they get uptown half of it is cut out. But you wouldn't go downtown—not if wild horses was to drag you. You can wait till they come uptown! Well, I don't want to wait, see? I want to see 'em when everybody else is seein' them an' not a month later. Now don't go tellin' me you ain't got the price. You could dig up the price all right, all right, if you wanted to. I notice you always got the price to go to the ball game. But when it comes to me havin' a good time then it's always: "I ain't got the price, I gotta start savin'." A fat lot you'll ever save! I got all I can do now makin' both ends meet an' you talkin' about savin'. [*She seats herself on a chair and begins removing her shoes and stockings.*] An' don't go pullin' that stuff about bein' tired. "I been workin' hard all day. Twice a day in the subway's enough for me." Tired! Where do you get that tired stuff, anyhow? What about me? Where do I come in? Scrubbin' floors an' cookin' your meals an' washin' your dirty clothes. An' you sittin' on a chair all day, just addin' figgers an' waitin' for five-thirty. There's no five-thirty for me. I don't wait for no whistle. I don't get no vacations neither. And what's more I don't get no pay envelope every

Saturday night neither. I'd like to know where you'd be without me. An' what have I got to show for it?—slavin' my life away to give you a home. What's in it for me, I'd like to know? But it's my own fault, I guess. I was a fool for marryin' you. If I'd 'a' had any sense, I'd 'a' known what you were from the start. I wish I had it to do over again, I hope to tell you. You was goin' to do wonders, you was! You wasn't goin' to be a bookkeeper long—oh, no, not you. Wait till you got started—you was goin' to show 'em. There wasn't no job in the store that was too big for you. Well, I've been waitin'—waitin' for you to get started—see? It's been a good long wait, too. Twenty-five years! An' I ain't seen nothin' happen. Twenty-five years in the same job. Twenty-five years to-morrow! You're proud of it, ain't you? Twenty-five years in the same job an' never missed a day! That's somethin' to be proud of, ain't it? Sittin' for twenty-five years on the same chair, addin' up figures. What about bein' store-manager? I guess you forgot about that, didn't you? An' me at home here lookin' at the same four walls an' workin' my fingers to the bone to make both ends meet. Seven years since you got a raise! An' if you don't get one to-morrow, I'll bet a nickel you won't have the guts to go an' ask for one. I didn't pick much when I picked you, I'll tell the world. You ain't much to be proud of. [*She rises, goes to the window, and raises the shade. A few lighted win-*

dows are visible on the other side of the closed court. Looking out for a moment]: She ain't walkin' around to-night, you can bet your sweet life on that. An' she won't be walkin' around any more nights, neither. Not in this house, anyhow. [*She turns away from the window*]: The dirty bum! The idea of her comin' to live in a house with respectable people. They should 'a' gave her six years, not six months. If I was the judge I'd of gave her life. A bum like that. [*She approaches the bed and stands there a moment*]: I guess you're sorry she's gone. I guess you'd like to sit home every night an' watch her goin's-on. You're somethin' to be proud of, you are! [*She stands on the bed and turns out the light... A thin stream of moonlight filters in from the court. The two figures are dimly visible.* MRS. ZERO *gets into bed*]:

You'd better not start nothin' with women, if you know what's good for you. I've put up with a lot, but I won't put up with that. I've been slavin' away for twenty-five years, makin' a home for you an' nothin' to show for it. If you was any kind of a man you'd have a decent job by now an' I'd be gettin' some comfort out of life—instead of bein' just a slave, washin' pots an' standin' over the hot stove. I've stood it for twenty-five years an' I guess I'll have to stand it twenty-five more. But don't you go startin' nothin' with women—— [*She goes on talking as the curtain falls.*]

SCENE TWO

[*SCENE: An office in a department store. Wood and glass partitions. In the middle of the room, two tall desks back to back. At one desk on a high stool is* ZERO. *Opposite him at the other desk, also on a high stool, is* DAISY DIANA DOROTHEA DEVORE, *a plain, middle-aged woman. Both wear green eye shades and paper sleeve protectors. A pendent electric lamp throws light upon both desks.* DAISY *reads aloud figures from a pile of slips which lie before her. As she reads the figures,* ZERO *enters them upon a large square sheet of ruled paper which lies before him.*]

DAISY

[*Reading aloud*]: Three ninety-eight. Forty-two cents. A dollar fifty. A dollar fifty. A dollar twenty-five. Two dollars. Thirty-nine cents. Twenty-seven fifty.

ZERO

[*Petulantly*]: Speed it up a little, cancha?

DAISY

What's the rush? To-morrer's another day.

ZERO

Aw, you make me sick.

DAISY

An' you make me sicker.

ZERO

Go on. Go on. We're losin' time.

DAISY

Then quit bein' so bossy.

[*She reads*]: Three dollars. Two sixty-nine. Eighty-one fifty. Forty dollars. Eight seventy-five. Who do you think you are, anyhow?

ZERO

Never mind who I think I am. You tend to your work.

DAISY

Aw, don't be givin' me so many orders. Sixty cents. Twenty-four cents. Seventy-five cents. A dollar fifty. Two fifty. One fifty. One fifty. Two fifty. I don't have to take it from you and what's more I won't.

ZERO

Aw, quit talkin'.

DAISY

I'll talk all I want. Three dollars. Fifty cents. Fifty cents. Seven dollars. Fifty cents. Two fifty. Three fifty. Fifty cents. One fifty. Fifty cents.

[*She goes bending over the slips and transferring them from one pile to another.* ZERO *bends over his desk, busily entering the figures.*]

ZERO

[*Without looking up*]: You make me sick. Always shootin' off your face about somethin'. Talk, talk, talk. Just like all the other women. Women make me sick.

DAISY

[*Busily fingering the slips*]: Who do you think you are, anyhow? Bossin' me around. I don't have to take it from you, and what's more I won't.

[*They both attend closely to their work, neither looking up.*]

ZERO

Women make me sick. They're all alike. The judge gave her six months. I wonder what they do in the work-house. Peel potatoes. I'll bet she's sore at me. Maybe she'll try to kill me when she gets out. I better be careful. Hello, Girl Slays Betrayer.

Jealous Wife Slays Rival. You can't tell what a woman's liable to do. I better be careful.

DAISY

I'm gettin' sick of it. Always pickin' on me about somethin'. Never a decent word out of you. Not even the time o' day.

ZERO

I guess she wouldn't have the nerve at that. Maybe she don't even know it's me. They didn't even put my name in the paper, the big bums. Maybe she's been in the work-house before. A bum like that. She didn't have nothin' on that one time—nothin' but a shirt. [*He glances up quickly, then bends over again*]: You make me sick. I'm sick of lookin' at your face.

DAISY

Gee, ain't that whistle ever goin' to blow? You didn't used to be like that. Not even good mornin' or good evenin'. I ain't done nothin' to you. It's the young girls. Goin' around without corsets.

ZERO

Your face is gettin' all yeller. Why don't you put some paint on it? She was puttin' on paint that time. On her cheeks and on her lips. And that blue stuff on

her eyes. Just sittin' there in a shimmy puttin' on the paint. An' walkin' around the room with her legs all bare.

DAISY

I wish I was dead.

ZERO

I was a goddam fool to let the wife get on to me. She oughta get six months at that. The dirty bum. Livin' in a house with respectable people. She'd be livin' there yet, if the wife hadn't o' got on to me. Damn her!

DAISY

I wish I was dead.

ZERO

Maybe another one'll move in. Gee, that would be great. But the wife's got her eye on me now.

DAISY

I'm scared to do it, though.

ZERO

You oughta move into that room. It's cheaper than where you're livin' now. I better tell you about it. I don't mean to be always pickin' on you.

DAISY

Gas. The smell of it makes me sick.
[ZERO *looks up and clears his throat.*]

DAISY

[*Looking up, startled*]: Whadja say?

ZERO

I didn't say nothin'.

DAISY

I thought you did.

ZERO

You thought wrong.
[*They bend over their work again.*]

DAISY

A dollar sixty. A dollar fifty. Two ninety. One sixty-two.

ZERO

Why the hell should I tell you? Fat chance of you forgettin' to pull down the shade!

DAISY

If I asked for carbolic they might get on to me.

ZERO

Your hair's gettin' gray. You don't wear them shirt waists any more with the low collars. When you'd bend down to pick somethin' up——

DAISY

I wish I knew what to ask for. Girl Takes Mercury After All-Night Party. Woman In Ten-Story Death Leap.

ZERO

I wonder where'll she go when she gets out. Gee, I'd like to make a date with her. Why didn't I go over there the night my wife went to Brooklyn? She never woulda found out.

DAISY

I seen Pauline Frederick do it once. Where could I get a pistol though?

ZERO

I guess I didn't have the nerve.

DAISY

I'll bet you'd be sorry then that you been so mean to me. How do I know, though? Maybe you wouldn't.

ZERO

Nerve! I got as much nerve as anybody. I'm on the level, that's all. I'm a married man and I'm on the level.

DAISY

Anyhow, why ain't I got a right to live? I'm as good as anybody else. I'm too refined, I guess. That's the whole trouble.

ZERO

The time the wife had pneumonia I thought she was goin' to pass out. But she didn't. The doctor's bill was eighty-seven dollars. [*Looking up*]: Hey, wait a minute! Didn't you say eighty-seven dollars?

DAISY

[*Looking up*]: What?

ZERO

Was the last you said eighty-seven dollars?

DAISY

[*Consulting the slip*]: Forty-two fifty.

ZERO

Well, I made a mistake. Wait a minute. [*He busies himself with an eraser*]: All right. Shoot

DAISY

Six dollars. Three fifteen. Two twenty-five. Sixty-five cents. A dollar twenty. You talk to me as if I was dirt.

ZERO

I wonder if I could kill the wife without anybody findin' out. In bed some night. With a pillow.

DAISY

I used to think you was stuck on me.

ZERO

I'd get found out, though. They always have ways.

DAISY

We used to be so nice and friendly together when I first came here. You used to talk to me then.

ZERO

Maybe she'll die soon. I noticed she was coughin' this mornin'.

DAISY

You used to tell me all kinds o' things. You were goin' to show them all. Just the same, you're still sittin' here.

ZERO

Then I could do what I damn please. Oh, boy!

DAISY

Maybe it ain't all your fault neither. Maybe if you'd had the right kind o' wife—somebody with a lot of common-sense, somebody refined—me!

ZERO

At that, I guess I'd get tired of bummin' around. A feller wants some place to hang his hat.

DAISY

I wish she would die.

ZERO

And when you start goin' with women you're liable to get into trouble. And lose your job maybe.

DAISY

Maybe you'd marry me.

ZERO

Gee, I wish I'd gone over there that night.

DAISY

Then I could quit workin'.

ZERO

Lots o' women would be glad to get me.

DAISY

You could look a long time before you'd find a sensible, refined girl like me.

ZERO

Yes, sir, they could look a long time before they'd find a steady meal-ticket like me.

DAISY

I guess I'd be too old to have any kids. They say it ain't safe after thirty-five.

ZERO

Maybe I'd marry you. You might be all right, at that.

DAISY

I wonder—if you don't want kids—whether—if there's any way——

ZERO

[*Looking up*]: Hey! Hey! Can't you slow up? What do you think I am—a machine?

DAISY

[*Looking up*]: Say, what do you want, anyhow? First it's too slow an' then it's too fast. I guess you don't know what you want.

ZERO

Well, never mind about that. Just you slow up.

DAISY

I'm gettin' sick o' this. I'm goin' to ask to be transferred.

ZERO

Go ahead. You can't make me mad.

DAISY

Aw, keep quiet. [*She reads*]: Two forty-five. A dollar twenty. A dollar fifty. Ninety cents. Sixty-three cents.

ZERO

Marry you! I guess not! You'd be as bad as the one I got.

DAISY

You wouldn't care if I did ask. I got a good mind to ask.

ZERO

I was a fool to get married.

DAISY

Then I'd never see you at all.

ZERO

What chance has a guy got with a woman tied around his neck?

DAISY

That time at the store picnic—the year your wife couldn't come—you were nice to me then.

ZERO

Twenty-five years holdin' down the same job!

DAISY

We were together all day—just sittin' around under the trees.

ZERO

I wonder if the boss remembers about it bein' twenty-five years.

DAISY

And comin' home that night—you sat next to me in the big delivery wagon.

ZERO

I got a hunch there's a big raise comin' to me.

DAISY

I wonder what it feels like to be really kissed. Men —dirty pigs! They want the bold ones.

ZERO

If he don't come across I'm goin' right up to the front office and tell him where he gets off.

DAISY

I wish I was dead.

ZERO

"Boss," I'll say, "I want to have a talk with you." "Sure," he'll say, "sit down. Have a Corona Corona." "No," I'll say, "I don't smoke." "How's that?" he'll say. "Well, boss," I'll say, "it's this way. Every time I feel like smokin' I just take a nickel and put it in the old sock. A penny saved is a penny earned, that's the way I look at it." "Damn sensible," he'll say. "You got a wise head on you, Zero."

DAISY

I can't stand the smell of gas. It makes me sick. You coulda kissed me if you wanted to.

ZERO

"Boss," I'll say, "I ain't quite satisfied. I been on the job twenty-five years now and if I'm gonna stay I gotta see a future ahead of me." "Zero," he'll say, "I'm glad you came in. I've had my eye on you, Zero. Nothin' gets by me." "Oh, I know that, boss," I'll say. That'll hand him a good laugh, that will. "You're a valuable man, Zero," he'll say, "and I want you right up here with me in the front office. You're done addin' figgers. Monday mornin' you move up here."

DAISY

Them kisses in the movies—them long ones—right on the mouth——

ZERO

I'll keep a-goin' right on up after that. I'll show some of them birds where they get off.

DAISY

That one the other night—"The Devil's Alibi"—he put his arms around her—and her head fell back and her eyes closed—like she was in a daze.

ZERO

Just give me about two years and I'll show them birds where they get off.

DAISY

I guess that's what it's like—a kinda daze—when I see them like that, I just seem to forget everything.

ZERO

Then me for a place in Jersey. And maybe a little Buick. No tin Lizzie for mine. Wait till I get started—I'll show 'em.

DAISY

I can see it now when I kinda half-close my eyes. The way her head fell back. And his mouth pressed right up against hers. Oh, Gawd! it must be grand! [*There is a sudden shrill blast from a steam whistle.*]

DAISY AND ZERO

[*Together*]: The whistle!

[*With great agility they get off their stools, remove their eye shades and sleeve protectors and put them on the desks. Then each produces from behind the desk a hat*—ZERO, *a dusty derby,* DAISY, *a frowsy straw*...DAISY *puts on her hat and turns toward* ZERO *as though she were about to speak to him. But he is busy cleaning his pen and pays no attention to her. She sighs and goes toward the door at the left.*]

ZERO

[*Looking up*]: G'night, Miss Devore.

[*But she does not hear him and exits.* ZERO *takes up his hat and goes left. The door at the right opens and the* Boss *enters—middle-aged, stoutish, bald, well-dressed.*]

THE BOSS

[*Calling*]: Oh—er—Mister—er——

[ZERO *turns in surprise, sees who it is and trembles nervously.*]

ZERO

[*Obsequiously*]: Yes, sir. Do you want me, sir?

BOSS

Yes. Just come here a moment, will you?

ZERO

Yes, sir. Right away, sir. [*He fumbles his hat, picks it up, stumbles, recovers himself, and approaches the* Boss, *every fibre quivering.*]

BOSS

Mister—er—er——

ZERO

Zero.

Boss

Yes, Mr. Zero. I wanted to have a little talk with you.

Zero

[*With a nervous grin*]: Yes sir, I been kinda expectin' it.

Boss

[*Staring at him*]: Oh, have you?

Zero

Yes, sir.

Boss

How long have you been with us, Mister—er—Mister——

Zero

Zero.

Boss

Yes, Mister Zero.

Zero

Twenty-five years to-day.

Boss

Twenty-five years! That's a long time.

Zero

Never missed a day.

Boss

And you've been doing the same work all the time?

Zero

Yes, sir. Right here at this desk.

Boss

Then, in that case, a change probably won't be unwelcome to you.

Zero

No, sir, it won't. And that's the truth.

Boss

We've been planning a change in this department for some time.

Zero

I kinda thought you had your eye on me.

BOSS

You were right. The fact is that my efficiency experts have recommended the installation of adding machines.

ZERO

[*Staring at him*]: Addin' machines?

BOSS

Yes, you've probably seen them. A mechanical device that adds automatically.

ZERO

Sure. I've seen them. Keys—and a handle that you pull. [*He goes through the motions in the air.*]

BOSS

That's it. They do the work in half the time and a high-school girl can operate them. Now, of course, I'm sorry to lose an old and faithful employee——

ZERO

Excuse me, but would you mind sayin' that again?

BOSS

I say I'm sorry to lose an employee who's been with me for so many years——

[*Soft music is heard—the sound of the mechanical player of a distant merry-go-round. The part of the floor upon which the desk and stools are standing begins to revolve very slowly.*]

Boss

But, of course, in an organization like this, efficiency must be the first consideration——

[*The music becomes gradually louder and the revolutions more rapid.*]

Boss

You will draw your salary for the full month. And I'll direct my secretary to give you a letter of recommendation——

Zero

Wait a minute, boss. Let me get this right. You mean I'm canned?

Boss

[*Barely making himself heard above the increasing volume of sound*]: I'm sorry—no other alternative—greatly regret—old employee—efficiency—economy—business—*business*—BUSINESS——

[*His voice is drowned by the music. The platform is revolving rapidly now.* Zero *and the* Boss *face each other. They are entirely motionless save*

for the Boss's *jaws, which open and close incessantly. But the words are inaudible. The music swells and swells. To it is added every off-stage effect of the theatre: the wind, the waves, the galloping horses, the locomotive whistle, the sleigh bells, the automobile siren, the glass-crash. New Year's Eve, Election Night, Armistice Day, and the Mardi-Gras. The noise is deafening, maddening, unendurable. Suddenly it culminates in a terrific peal of thunder. For an instant there is a flash of red and then everything is plunged into blackness.*]

[*Curtain*]

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