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SF PERUSALS

Samuel French Acting Edition

And Then I Wrote...

by Mel Buttorff & Jack Sharkey

SAMUEL FRENCH

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CHARACTERS
(*in order of appearance*)

BRONIAN PENDRICK—a theatrical producer
ANNABEL HOLMES—his secretary
RORY MADDEN—his general factotum
ANDREW KIMMER—a neophyte playwright
ALISON BLAIR—a well-known actress
FRIEDA NEBCOTT—a Broadway columnist
CHARLES CARPENTER—an amiable actor
V. NELSON SLOMBER—an undertaker

Locale: New York City
Time: The present

Act One: Bronian's Apartment, early evening, late summer
Act Two: The same, the following morning
Act Three: The same, a few hours later

[NOTE: "Bronian" rhymes with "Smithsonian".]

And Then I Wrote

ACT ONE

The Manhattan apartment of theatrical producer BRONIAN PENDRICK, in the East Seventies, on an evening in late summer. [See "Stage Setting" art.] A few sightline-details you should know about the set: When the four-section accordion-doors to the balcony are fully open, they are out of view of the audience; the cafe-curtains on the dinette window are short, in two rows, and "trim" the window rather than block much of the view through it; the dinette window itself starts about two feet from platform and ends about one foot from ceiling, so there is plenty of sky/skyline to be seen through it; when the balcony-drapes are closed, and the room-lighting dims [during daylight-hours, of course], the dinette area remains bright and cheery, but the rest *of the room goes to about half-normal brightness; during night-scenes, any visible buildings in the sky-line-part of backdrop should show a scattering of lighted windows, and—if possible—a* very *few stars [since Manhattan's lights tend to make star-gazing almost impossible] should be seen in sky-part of backdrop.*

At curtain-rise, the stage is empty of people; there is an untidy stack of mail upon hassock; room lighting is late-summer-evening dark; sky through dinette window and closed balcony doors [these are glass-paneled French doors] is sunset-hued, but this reddish look will fade to full night-darkness within first ten minutes of act.

A moment or two after curtain-rise, DOORBELL RINGS. After about five seconds, DOORBELL RINGS AGAIN. Then bedroom door opens, and BRONIAN enters from bedroom. He is in pajamas, and barefoot, and slipping into a bathrobe. When presentable, this man of forty-plus years is not unpleasant of aspect; right now, however, he looks unshaven and rumpled, hair mussed, eyes squinting and blinking blearily. As he lurches toward foyer, he manages to collide with sofa and almost trip over hassock. When he finally gets his sense of direction straight, and is headed directly toward foyer door, DOORBELL RINGS AGAIN. He staggers back a step, heels of hands to temples, as if the sound caused him physical pain, then stumbles forward and flips on lightswitch in foyer; ROOM LIGHTS UP FULL; he unlocks—but does not open—hall door, reels back a pace, changes direction and veers kitchenward as DOORBELL RINGS AGAIN. He shouts doorward, while still lurching doggedly kitchenward:

BRONIAN. It's open, it's open! (*exits into kitchen*)

(*ANNABEL HOLMES enters from hall. She is struggling with an armload of bound scripts, which she sets, with relief, beside mail on hassock. She goes to mirror to check her appearance. It is charming in an end-of-a-wearisome-day fashion. She makes the best of it with a few hair-pats, shoulder-squarings and skirt-tugs, then gives up with a wry shrug, crosses to bedroom and knocks.*)

ANNABEL. Mr. Pendrick? It's Annabel. It's almost half-past seven!

BRONIAN. (*enters from kitchen carrying cup of coffee*) A.M. or P.M.?

ANNABEL. P.M. . . . as in post mortem. (*She gestures toward terrace.*) Why do you think it's getting dark out?

BRONIAN. I thought I might be going blind. (*sips on coffee*)

ANNABEL. Mr. Pendrick, you're not even dressed!

BRONIAN. (*looks down at himself*) That's all right . . . I expect to be dead soon, anyway.

ANNABEL. Everyone will *be* here at eight!

BRONIAN. (*setting cup on pier table*) They'll never get in. There's barely enough room for my temples. (*leans forearm on* DS. *kitchen door jamb, head on forearm*) I'll be back in a minute.

ANNABEL. (*goes to him, takes his other arm*) What time did you get to bed anyhow?

BRONIAN. (*straightens, but keeps forearm over eyes*) It was either two-thirty or twelve past six. I couldn't tell which hand was longer.

ANNABEL. (*guiding him toward bedroom*) You'd better take a good cold shower.

BRONIAN. (*arm still over eyes*) Sadist! (*gropes way into bedroom, leaving door open as he exits*)

(*ANNABEL grabs coffee cup and pops briefly into kitchen to get rid of it, then comes down to mound of mail. Through bedroom doorway we hear the SHOWER go on and an instant later an ANGUISHED SHRIEK from BRONIAN. ANNABEL veers, shuts off sound by closing bedroom door, then returns to hassock and lifts heap of mail in both arms. DOORBELL RINGS. ANNABEL wavers, hovers, then drops mail fluttering to floor and answers door. RORY MADDEN enters, in suit*

but no topcoat, then stops, arms akimbo, surveying mail.)

RORY. Somebody mug a mailman?

ANNABEL. (*sarcastically*) HA HA HA . . . Rory, as long as you're early you can help me clean up this mess. (*on knees, starts handing him the mail*)

RORY. Where is Friend Bronian? Massaging his bent elbow?

ANNABEL. Our blithe and effervescent host is just going into shock in his shower stall. Will you see he gets back here alive and reasonably presentable?

RORY. (*placing last of mail on hassock*) Okay. If I'm not back in ten minutes, come after both of us. And bring a good-looking friend. (*exits into bedroom, shuts door*)

ANNABEL. (*gets up, sees mail*) This is where I came in! (*Starts to pick it up; DOORBELL RINGS; ANNABEL flings letters wildly into the air, starts for the front door while they're still fluttering down, opens it. ANDREW KIMMER enters in buttoned-up topcoat, smiles with taut uncertainty, then stands looking at her. She indicates mail on floor.*) Please say you're a vacuum cleaner salesman.

ANDREW. I'm looking for Mr. Pendrick.

ANNABEL. So is he. Come on in, whoever you are. (*Shuts door as he enters, then she enters room, kicks a fallen letter out of her way and slumps in left arm chair.*) I'm Annabel Holmes.

ANDREW. (*sees mail, stoops and starts to pick it up*) I'm Andrew Kimmer.

ANNABEL. I thought so. I typed all those nice long letters Mr. Pendrick sent you.

ANDREW. It's all been quite unsettling. I mean exciting.

ANNABEL. Don't give up on that first version yet. Is this—(*indicates pile of scripts*)—your first play?

ANDREW. Is *what* my first play? . . . You mean—those are *it?* It's *them?* (*straightens, drops mail*) It looks just like a real script! (*picks up a script*) And it's got my name on it!

ANNABEL. Well, there are laws.

ANDREW. I can't tell you how exciting this is for me. (*sits in upstage armchair, opens script*) Will you *look* at it! My words, exactly as I wrote them back in Peoria!

ANNABEL. Uh . . . don't get *too* attached to them, Andrew . . . (*BRONIAN enters from bedroom, clad only in shoes, socks and shorts, forearm over eyes and carrying an Alka-Seltzer bottle in his other hand; he is led by RORY, who is carrying a soaped back brush; as they cross up toward kitchen, ANDREW stands, hand extended to shake.*) Mr. Pendrick, this is Andrew Kimmer.

RORY. (*as he and BRONIAN continue onward*) Mr. Kimmer, this is Annabel Holmes.

ANDREW. (*tracking them with unshaken hand*) How do you—(*They exit into kitchen.*)—do? (*drops hand*)

ANNABEL. He'll shake it as soon as he can see it, Andrew. Try to relax.

ANDREW. (*sits back in armchair*) Which one was Mr. Pendrick?

ANNABEL. The one in the Emperor's new clothes.

(*BRONIAN and RORY enter from kitchen, BRONIAN carrying a paper cup filled with fizzing liquid, his eyes now open to a squint; RORY carries both back brush and Alka-Seltzer bottle; they cross bedroomward without pausing, during:*)

BRONIAN. Annabel, remind me to get refills for my paper-cup dispenser.

ANNABEL. Get refills for your paper-cup dispenser.

RORY. We'll be right with you Mr. Kimmer. (*ANDREW stands.*)

BRONIAN. Make yourself at home. (*ANDREW sits. BRONIAN and RORY exit into bedroom, shut door.*)

ANNABEL. Had enough excitement for one night?

ANDREW. What? Oh. I love it! Every minute. It's like the culmination of a dream. Just being here. Don't you?

ANNABEL. (*lost*) Don't I what?

ANDREW. Love just being here in New York, and all?

ANNABEL. (*musing aloud*) I suppose I did when I *first* arrived, but the thrill wore off in a few days.

ANDREW. How long have you been here?

ANNABEL. I was born here.

ANDREW. (*absorbs this; then*) Who did you say that other man was?

ANNABEL. The one with the brush? That's Rory Madden, our general poo-bah!

ANDREW. Is that an official title?

ANNABEL. Rory has too many slots to fit into for a really accurate job-title. He makes sure incoming scripts get read, outgoing scripts get posted, costumes arrive before opening night, hotel bills get paid—All the little odds and ends that have to get done to get the show on. None is enough to keep a full time man busy, so, Rory Madden does *everything*.

ANDREW. Then what does Mr. *Pendrick* do?

ANNABEL. He worries a lot.

ANDREW. Do *you* think "Noblesse Oblige" is a good show?

ANNABEL. I never heard of it.

ANDREW. That's *my* show.

ANNABEL. Oh! Um . . . actually, only Rory and Mr. Pendrick have had a chance to read it, except for Alison

Blair. She's going to let us know what she thinks tonight.

ANDREW. *The* Alison Blair?

ANNABEL. There's another one?

ANDREW. (*stands, wide-eyed*) Alison Blair! Here! Tonight! Right in the same room with me. Giving *her* opinion of *my* script!

ANNABEL. (*trying to curb his rapture a bit*) She's *only* five-foot-four, Andrew.

ANDREW. (*suddenly sits, apprehensive*) Gosh, what if she doesn't *like* it?

ANNABEL. She'll *still* be five-foot-four. (*remembers mess on carpet*) But she won't like the morning mail all over the carpet. (*starts to pick up letters*)

ANDREW. (*not hopefully*) Can I give you a hand?

ANNABEL. No thanks.

ANDREW. (*settles back gratefully*) Thanks. I wonder if the part's *big* enough for her?

ANNABEL. (*still cleaning up the mess*) What's your play *about,* Andrew?

ANDREW. Well, "Noblesse Oblige" is a French expression. It means that people in important positions have corresponding obligations.

ANNABEL. (*rising with letters*) Andrew—Promise me I'll be the last person you'll ever tell that.

ANDREW. (*embarrassed*) I wasn't trying to show off.

ANNABEL. Some people might not realize that. What's the *plot* about?

(*During the next speech, ANNABEL stashes mail on bar, returns to left armchair. She listens to ANDREW politely at first, then with incredulity, and by the end of his eager resumé, she is goggle-eyed with disbelief, in a dazed, dumbfounded trance.*

ANDREW remains oblivious to ANNABEL's reaction to his spiel, throughout.)

ANDREW. (*a self-enthralling author*) Well, it starts on a cotton plantation—in the South. There's this big family, The Calhouns, ruled by the grandmother, Letitia Calhoun. She's very hard on them, because they're all weaklings, but she likes them. Of course she doesn't let them know it. Well, one day her son Ralph gets the chance to sell the cotton crop to a northern blanket manufactureer, Harold Stebbins. Harold is really just interested in Ralph's daughter Olivia, and is using blanket manufacturing as a cover-up. Well, Letitia finds out, and tries to tell Ralph the mistake he's making. She figures that once the marriage takes place, Harold will call off the deal, and by then their regular cotton-buyers will be shopping elsewhere. Meanwhile, the daughter falls in love with Frank Jericho, the grocer in the town, who has secretly loved her for years, and has been helping the family survive by giving them free groceries. Frank, by the way, is the youngest son of Bill Jericho, the only man Letitia ever really loved, but her proud family wouldn't let her marry Bill because he was only a grocer, just like Frank. In memory of his father, at first, and then later because he loves Olivia, Frank has been helping the Calhouns survive. All they really have left is their social position. The servants all know the family's poor, but they stay on, anyhow, because they're all too loyal to work someplace else. Well, Olivia finds out there's no money, and she decides she'll have to go through with the marriage to the blanket manufacturer so the Calhouns will be rich again. But Frank the grocer thinks Olivia *loves* Harold, and—on the night Harold is coming to dinner—Frank refuses to send any free gro-

ceries. So Ralph, the father, goes into town to plead with Frank to let them have one last night's credit, because once he sells the cotton to Harold, he'll be able to pay off the grocery, bank loan, utilities, and everything. This makes Frank even madder, to think that Ralph thinks he kept them in groceries just to have a lot of income coming, so he pretends to go along with Ralph, and sends the groceries same as usual, except that he puts poison in the wine, so that when Harold toasts the bride-to-be, he'll die. Then, just as he's closing up the shop, one of the servants stops by with a message thanking him, from the daughter Olivia, who sends her love. In this same conversation, it comes out that Harold is a teetotaler, so it will be the grandmother who proposes the toast. So Harold starts racing for the house to stop her. But just as he bursts into the dining room, the grandmother has just finished the toast, and she falls dead. Frank confesses his crime, and is attacked by Harold, the blanket-manufacturer, from the north. Harold tries to make Frank drink the poisoned wine, and the sight of this is too much for Olivia, who loves Frank, and she goes out of her mind, talking to the grandmother's empty chair as if Letitia were still alive. Now Ralph, her father, realizes it's all his fault, because of his greed about the cotton, and he orders Harold out of his house. The sheriff comes for poor Frank the grocer, and the daughter is taken off to a madhouse, and Ralph falls on his knees beside the body of his dead mother and sobs for forgiveness, and we hear an unseen chorus singing *Swanee River* as the lights dim and the curtain slowly falls!

ANNABEL. *Wow,* what a *plot!*

ANDREW. You wanna hear what happens in Act *Two*—?

(*As ANNABEL reacts, the DOORBELL RINGS.*)

ANNABEL. Hold it, Tennessee! I want another witness. (*Answers door; ALISON BLAIR enters; she is only five-foot-four, just as postulated, but every inch an actress.*) Hello, Alison! Your watch must be fast. You're right on time.

ALISON. I couldn't wait to see Bronian another minute! . . . About this marvelous play! . . . All right, I couldn't wait to see Bronian.

ANNABEL. I didn't say a word.

ALISON. Your reticence was eloquent. (*She sees bound scripts; picks one up, sits in left armchair with it.*) Ah, yes, this is much better. The carbon Bronian sent me was a bit smudged in places.

ANDREW. I erase a lot.

ANNABEL. Andrew Kimmer, our talented author.

ANDREW. I'm not really.

ALISON. Then who the hell *are* you?

ANNABEL. He means not talented.

ALISON. You have no right to be modest about this play, Andrew. Don't you agree Annabel?

ANNABEL. So far, it's a regular "Gone With The Windy Little Foxes Into Another Part Of The Forest With A Cat On A Hot Tin Jezebel From Beulah Land!" . . . I can't speak for acts two and three.

ALISON. Wait till you *read* them. There's a maternity scene at the end of the second act that makes "Room Service" look like something out of Ibsen! (*ANDREW reacts with shock.*)

ANNABEL. You mean Olivia gets married after all?

ALISON. That's what's so hilarious. She can't *remember!* Her father is simply furious, of course. The family honor is at stake, but he doesn't know who to shoot!

ANNABEL. If she *is* married, why doesn't the *father* of the child admit it?

ALISON. He promised Olivia *she* could break the news to her family in her own way, but it's taken her nine months to build up her courage.

ANNABEL. And now she needs it all to face the delivery room?

ALISON. Not *quite* all: She *does* manage—just as her labor pains start—to run up to her father and shout, "Guess what!?" (*Both women shriek with laughter, then see ANDREW's face and sober slightly.*)

ANNABEL. Andrew—Is there anything wrong?

ANDREW. "Noblesse Oblige" isn't a comedy! . . . It's a deeply meaningful drama. Sorrow, pain, misery, raw emotion and endless pathos!

ALISON. (*to ANNABEL*) Does Bronian know that?

ANNABEL. I doubt it!

ANDREW. What do you mean?

ALISON. Darling, try to understand . . . Bronian Pendrick feels—Well. . . ? (*looks to ANNABEL for help*)

ANNABEL. He figures the average person's life is tough enough without spending two hours watching even *worse* troubles. His approach to theatre is—Well—? (*looks to ALISON for help*)

ALISON. There's enough rain falling into people's lives without him poking holes in their umbrellas.

ANNABEL. So Mister Pendrick provides a cozy comfort station between the eight-thirty curtain and the eleven o'clock news.

ANDREW. But, there are more important things in life than having a good time! You can't expect an audience to deny *that?*

ALISON. Nobody wants to *deny* it. They just want to *forget* it!

ANDREW. Isn't there any hope for a *serious* dramatist?!

ALISON. Of course! There are *plenty* of people around who feel their life isn't tough *enough* without a theatrical *assist!*

ANNABEL. And look on the *practical* side, Andrew—

ANDREW. What do you mean?

ALISON. Do you have *any* idea how *tough* it is to get a producer interested in doing the play of an *unknown* writer?

ANDREW. Well, certainly, but—!

ANNABEL. Take a friendly tip. Let Bronian do the show in his own way and make you a name. *Then* you can concentrate on making people miserable!

ALISON. The important thing, right now, is to get your play *done!*

ANDREW. But I want it done *properly.* I want it done *just* the way I first envisioned it. *Every* playwright does.

ANNABEL. But why should *you* be the first?

ALISON. And that *plot* of yours has such great comic *potential*—!

ANDREW. (*nearly in tears*) *Look* . . . I'll admit there may be a *slight* touch of the ludicrous in my show, but that's not actual *comedy.* It's what you call "humor of recognition." People always laugh at their own foibles when they see them on the stage. It can't be helped.

ALISON. (*dryly*) But it's been so *long* since I poisoned anybody's grandmother . . .

ANDREW. (*exasperation blows his misery away*) Not *specific* foibles! Just—*life* as it is *really lived!*

ALISON. (*to ANNABEL*) Remind me not to propose any toasts!

ANDREW. Miss Blair—be logical—how could you *play* the part as anything *but* tragic?

ALISON. (*shrugs*) I can *always* twine magnolia blossoms in my braids.

ANDREW. (*bemused*) Somehow I didn't *envision* the grandmother in braids.

ALISON. (*stiffens, sits up tall and wrathful*) *Who* said anything about the damn *grandmother?!*

ANNABEL. (*quickly*) Uh, Andrew—*Alison* is up for the role of *Olivia.*

ANDREW. (*without thinking; to ANNABEL:*) The *daughter?!* But—*she's* only seventeen years *old!* (*abruptly realizing he's on thin ice, he continues, after a pause, to ALISON:*) —uh—*aren't* you?

ALISON. (*holds pose, then relaxes and laughs, observing to ANNABEL:*) That's *pretty* neat choreography for a guy with *both feet* in his mouth!

(*BRONIAN enters from bedroom, now dapper, combed and shaven; he hurries immediately to ALISON.*)

BRONIAN. Alison-Baby!

ALISON. Bronian, my dear! (*They embrace, briefly, as RORY enters from bedroom, extends arms toward ANNABEL.*)

RORY. Sweetheart, it's been ages!

ANNABEL. Lets not over-excite Mr. Kimmer.

BRONIAN. (*breaks clinch, goes to ANDREW*) So you're Andrew Kimmer! I want to tell you I am honored to make your acquaintance. The moment I began reading your play I knew I was in cahoots with greatness. What keen insights! What a remarkable grasp of conflict, pathos, tragedy! (*ANNABEL and ALISON exchange a bewildered look with each other, then with ANDREW, who looks just as bewildered but definitely relieved.*) "Noblesse Oblige" is brilliant! A masterpiece

of inspired imagination and thrilling emotional catharsis!

ANNABEL. (*dryly*) And wait'll you read Act *Two!*

BRONIAN. (*annoyed*) Of course, it needs a bit of fixing, but that's why we're all *here* tonight!

ALISON. I was *wondering* about that . . .

RORY. Andrew, when *we* are through cutting and polishing your rough diamond it will sparkle like— Wondering about *what?*

ALISON. Why we're meeting *here* at *night,* instead of Bronian's *office* during the *day!*

BRONIAN. (*quickly*) Now, uh, *Alison*—!

ANDREW. Oh, *I* don't mind meeting at night. Though I *did* think *you'd* be at *work,* being an *actress.*

ALISON. Don't rub it in. But Bronian—Why *are* we meeting at night?

BRONIAN. (*quickly but lamely*) I couldn't *wait* till morning to talk to Andrew!

ANNABEL. (*to ANDREW*) If he's caught by the sunrise he turns to dust.

BRONIAN. (*irked*) Annabel, do something useful.

ANNABEL. (*shrugs, complies*) Here, Andrew, let me take your coat!

ANDREW. Thanks.

(*During next speech, he removes it, and stands revealed in a hot pink turtleneck shirt and a large-check tangerine-and-turquoise sportcoat.*)

BRONIAN. Yours is a drama of such power, such impact, such deep meaning, such . . . (*sees outfit and reacts*) . . . such an ensemble!

ANDREW. I ransacked *Peoria* to find it!

ALISON. Ye gods, *why?!*

ANDREW. I wanted to look like someone in *theatre.*

ANNABEL. (*aside, to RORY*) Theatre of the *absurd?*

BRONIAN. (*recovering*) Let's get down to business! Everybody grab a script and we'll begin our analysis!

(*Seating: BRONIAN to left armchair, ALISON to upstage armchair, with ANNABEL, RORY and ANDREW on sofa.*)

ALISON. Excuse me, but—*What* are we going to *analyze?*

BRONIAN. Structure related to character. The *motivations* bother me.

ALISON. The motivations are perfectly *clear!*

BRONIAN. That's what *bothers* me! In today's theatre, the more mystifying the spectators' experience, the bigger your chance for a hit.

ALISON. Bronian, the *last* mystifying drama that opened in this town had the theatre critics chorusing, "What's it all about, Albee?"!

BRONIAN. Bah, what do *critics* know?!

ALISON. A hundred easy ways to close a play.

BRONIAN. But damn it, this play *needs* symbolism, mysterious events, odd characters, strange references which are never explained—! (*to ANDREW*) Can't I even *suggest* a few of them to you?

ANDREW. (*warily*) Such as—?

BRONIAN. (*waxing enthusiastic*) Well, for instance—Letitia always goes around with an ivory-headed cane. *Why?*

ANDREW. (*shrugs*) She's got a bad back!

BRONIAN. You call that *motivation?!*

ANDREW. (*flustered*) Well—uh—*also,* the cane's her badge of *authority* . . . she *waves* it a lot during arguments.

BRONIAN. (*conspiratorily*) Ah, but *what if,* instead of walking with a cane, she always rides a *pogo stick?!*

RORY. (*enthused*) Hey, I *like* that!

ANDREW. (*going out of his mind*) *What* would an *old lady* be doing on a *pogo stick?!*

ALISON. Hanging on for dear life.

ANNABEL. And screaming a lot.

BRONIAN. *If* she actually *is* an old lady, sure! But . . . *is* she?

ANDREW. (*almost in tears*) The woman is a *grandmother!*

ANNABEL. Well, wait—Elizabeth Taylor's a grandmother, and you wouldn't call *her* an old lady . . .

ALISON. (*dryly*) If you valued your life.

ANDREW. I'm going to be sick.

BRONIAN. Wait till I finish my analysis!

ALISON. —and you'll be even sicker!

RORY. Bronian, what did you mean—*Is* she an old lady?

BRONIAN. What if she's a figment of the grocer's tortured imagination, a symbol of his guilt materialized from his own mind to plague him?

ALISON. How guilty can a man feel about poisoning his own figment?!

BRONIAN. Don't bother me with details. That's Andrew's problem. Annabel—aren't you taking notes?

ANNABEL. You said *everyone* grab a script. Who's got a pencil?

RORY. Here.

BRONIAN. (*as ANNABEL takes pencil from RORY*) By the way Alison, what do you think of Charles Carpenter as your leading man?

ALISON. (*incredulous*) What *can* I think of a man who calls his dalmatian "Spot"?

RORY. He *is* kind of an *oddball,* Bronian . . .

BRONIAN. Never mind. A director can *always* rely on a trained actor's *professional* instincts.

ALISON. But we were talking about Charles Carpenter!

ANNABEL. The last time a director trusted Charles' instincts he played Willie Loman like Benny Hill on vacation.

ALISON. Say, who *is* directing, come to think of it?

RORY. (*with shy pride*) *I* am.

ANNABEL. (*stunned*) Rory, *you've* never directed a play in your *life!*

BRONIAN. Nevertheless, Rory proved the best man of all the competition.

ANNABEL. Who did he beat out?

ALISON. Probably Charles Carpenter.

ANDREW. Could I have a brandy? My mouth is going dry.

ANNABEL. (*heading for bar*) I'll make it a double. Anybody else want anything?

ALISON. I hope somebody has a spare cigarette. I'm fresh out.

BRONIAN. (*patting his pockets*) So am I. Rory—run down to the delicatessen and get some. Oh, and get the evening paper. I want to see Frieda Nebcott's column.

RORY. (*en route to door*) You left her in shape to write it? (*exits*)

ANNABEL. So *that's* where you were till all hours of the morning.

BRONIAN. A producer has to stay in the columnists' good graces.

ALISON. Frieda Nebcott has the good graces of a pain-crazed tarantula.

ANDREW. (*surprised*) Just last week she wished you a happy birthday in her column. . . ?

ALISON. Did she have to mention *which* birthday?

BRONIAN. Now Alison, you're *not* exactly ready for *Medicare!*

ALISON. But I'm feeling *readier* every *day!*

ANDREW. How old *are* you? . . . I mean, how *young?* . . . I mean—

ANNABEL. Shall we get back to the *other* little old lady?

ALISON. (*with good-natured chagrin*) Thanks a *lot!*

BRONIAN. Where did we leave off?

ANNABEL. (*checks notes*) We just put Letitia on a pogo stick.

ANDREW. Look . . . I don't like to be a killjoy, but—*I'm* not fussy about a *line* here and there, or a slight shifting of sequence, you understand—but you're uprooting the entire *concept* of the role!

BRONIAN. (*flinging arms out in despair*) This is the thanks I get! I find a play, quite a good play, by an absolute unknown . . . I send him plane tickets to get him here to New York . . . I offer him a production, with big name stars . . . and then he stubbornly refuses to have experienced people in the profession make a few *simple* little suggestions—!

ANDREW. "Simple"? Figments on pogo sticks?!

BRONIAN. (*slumps back into chair*) Can somebody explain to this man what we are trying to accomplish?

ALISON. Love to . . . (*pause*) What *are* we trying to accomplish?

BRONIAN. Alison, if you had any grasp of today's theatre, you'd know! It's not *enough* to have a well-written play any more. A show must also be something the audience *wants!*

ALISON. Maybe I'm simpleminded, but I always thought they just wanted a *good show!*

BRONIAN. *Listen* . . . Between TV, movies, theatre, books and so on, there just isn't anything *new.* An author needs a *gimmick* to keep the audience interested. I'm *not* trying to do the entire play *over,* I just want to prop up the *sags!*

ANNABEL. Well, maybe if you just explained your ideas in *theory,* Andrew could do the rewrites in his *own* way, Bronian.

ANDREW. (*with a faint flutter of hope*) That *would* be a *big* help. Some of your *specific* suggestions have been a bit startling . . .

BRONIAN. But Andrew, the author with knowhow today *fills* his play with mystery and shock value. The more bizarre the better.

ANDREW. But an *imaginary* grandmother. . . ?! While we're at it why not make the daughter a Chinese laundress?!

(*ANDREW sees their overjoyed reaction to his absurd suggestion; during the following he looks lost and helplessly from one to the other.*)

BRONIAN. *Great!* Annabel—?

ANNABEL. (*scribbling furiously*) Got it!

BRONIAN. Terrific!

ALISON. Oh no! Not *my* role? Please? *I* can't play a *laundress!*

ANNABEL. Why not?

ALISON. My doctor told me to avoid *starches!* (*When OTHERS all glare at her joke, she pats at her tresses as she self-teases:*) Luckily, he said *nothing* about *bleach!*

BRONIAN. (*snaps fingers*) Bleach! What an idea!

Listen—She gets high on the fumes . . . and that's when . . .

ANDREW. (*almost sobbing*) No oh no oh no oh no oh no . . .

RORY. (*enters with newspaper and cigarettes*) Here you are. How's it going?

BRONIAN. (*business of opening pack, offering one to ALISON, lighting both, etc*) We'll test it out on you. What do you think about the daughter being a Chinese laundress?

ANDREW. (*slightly tipsy*) Does anybody want to know what *I* think?

ANNABEL. What *do* you think?

ANDREW. (*as others focus on him, waiting*) . . . I think I'll have another brandy.

RORY. (*to BRONIAN, handing him newspaper*) What did that Nebcott dame *promise* you, anyhow?

BRONIAN. (*looking through paper*) *I* did all the promising, Rory.

ALISON. (*reacts with more than casual interest*) Really? And what's *she* doing? Reminiscing in print?

RORY. For a dinner date that broke up at six A.M., her plug isn't very *long!*

BRONIAN. How do *you* know what time our dinner date broke up?

RORY. *That's* what time you fell over the *hassock* . . . and Frieda wasn't *with* you.

ALISON. (*sighs*) What a pity.

ANNABEL. (*to ANDREW, coming back with a full glass*) Careful. In large doses that stuff can be fatal.

ANDREW. Promise?

BRONIAN. What were you *doing* here at six A.M. this morning?

RORY. Keeping our appointment for ten P.M. last *night.*

BRONIAN. Rory! I'm sorry! I completely forgot! You should have gone home.

RORY. I probably would have, but I must've dozed off in the chair around eleven o'clock. Anyhow, no harm done. You'd never have gotten undressed without help.

BRONIAN. You put me to bed? I don't remember a thing.

RORY. I'll fill you in. I woke up at the sound of the crash, picked you up, got you into pajamas and bed, went downstairs and found your car illegally parked, the keys still in it and the headlights on, put it in a space three blocks away, came back to return your keys, found your milk and the morning mail and brought it in, left the keys on your dresser and staggered home myself.

BRONIAN. Strange. I *seem* to remember reading the *mail.* But—if Rory put me to bed at six—when did I get up again?

ANNABEL. Never mind that. What does La Nebcott have to say?

BRONIAN. (*finding item*) Ah! "On the Broadway scene, talented producer Bronian Pendrick confides to me—"

ALISON. How do you confide to a public address system?

BRONIAN. "—that he has a hot new property which is going to make the critics in this town sit up and take notice . . ."

ANDREW. (*muzzily*) "*Give* notice" is more like it! . . . Chinese pogo sticks. . . !

BRONIAN. Andrew, come up out of that well of self-pity and listen to this: "The author, a fresh new talent from Peoria, may be the very shot in the arm a drooping New York Stage needs." (*pauses*)

RORY. (*enthused*) Go *on*. . . !

BRONIAN. (*a little miffed*) That's *it!*

ALISON. It took you till *six* this morning to wangle *two* lousy lines? (*She stands as she says this and ANDREW — woozy & grateful — slips behind her and sinks leadenly into chair.*)

BRONIAN. Not to mention seventy-four dollars in cash and fifteen kilowatts of charm to get that item planted where my backers would see it.

ANDREW. (*awakened from his torpor*) I didn't know the New York stage was drooping.

ANNABEL. Frieda Nebcott just likes to go around scaring people with her column five days a week.

ANDREW. Why?

ALISON. It beats once a year on a broomstick.

ANDREW. Mr. Pendrick, why didn't she mention me or the play by name?

ALISON. He ran out of kilowatts.

BRONIAN. Listen, I'll be honest: I *asked* her not to. Play-production is a risky business. If Andrew had decided not to sign with me tonight, I'd have peddled somebody else's play to my backers. They'd never know the difference.

ALISON. Of course, the author would have to move to Peoria.

BRONIAN. I had to give her *some* kind of detail. Anyhow, this is all beside the point now that Andrew *has* signed.

ANDREW. But I haven't.

BRONIAN. Annabel! That was the very first thing you were supposed to attend to when he showed up.

ANNABEL. I was distracted by the Alka-Seltzer parade. And have you forgotten the very first thing *you* were supposed to attend to was to *give* me the contracts when I showed up?

ALISON. You mean after seventy-four bucks and fifteen kilowatts, Andrew is still walking around free?

ANDREW. Free to do what? How many other places could I peddle my play before my plane leaves in the morning?

BRONIAN. *Tomorrow* morning? What do you think I flew you in here for . . . an autograph?

ANDREW. I thought I was here to meet you and sign the contract. I have to be back at work tomorrow afternoon. I promised my boss.

BRONIAN. How do you expect to work on a script in Peoria?

ALISON. He did all right on the *first* draft, Bronian.

BRONIAN. *As* a first draft, *yes!* But that script still needs *tons* of rewrites, and my *author* is flying *home* in the morning!

ANNABEL. I wrote Andrew *exactly* what you dictated!

ANDREW. There wasn't a *word* about my staying on! How did *I* know the script wasn't perfect? I mean, *why* would a producer offer a *contract* for a script he didn't *like?!*

BRONIAN. You idiot, that's *show business!* Producers *never* get perfect scripts—they *expect* rewrites—a contract is just my way of placing a bet on the author's instincts for self-preservation!

ANDREW. I sure couldn't handle my *Peoria* job on that instinct.

ALISON. What line of work *doesn't* rely on self-preservation?

ANDREW. I'm an apprentice mortician.

ALISON. (*instantly snaps fingers, looks delightedly toward ANNABEL*) I *just* figured out his "humor of recognition"!

BRONIAN. Annabel, *where* are those *contracts?!*

ANNABEL. (*who has been going through the mail*) The contracts aren't here, just the empty envelope. Should I phone your lawyer?

BRONIAN. If he mailed me an empty envelope, he's *not* my lawyer!

ALISON. Bronian, are you sure you didn't put them someplace yourself?

BRONIAN. I wouldn't put it past me! But—Where? What the hell would I do with them?

ANDREW. Remember, I haven't said *yes*—

BRONIAN. You will!

ALISON. (*semi-vamps close to ANDREW*) We have *ways* of making people sign . . .

ANNABEL. We call them royalties.

ALISON. (*cheek-to-cheek with ANDREW, on the arm of his chair*) You'll sign, Andrew . . . For Alison? . . . Won't you? (*coaxing*) Pretty please?

BRONIAN. Conserve your kilowatts. We haven't even got the damn *contracts* yet! That dream . . . if I could only remember . . . There was a dragon . . .

ALISON. Well, we're back to Frieda again!

BRONIAN. Quiet! (*eyes shut, fists at temples:*) The dragon . . . was after me. I—I had the contracts in my fist, rolled up . . . like a sword. That's it! The dragon was dusty and shabby, and—somehow—I knew it represented approaching poverty! But the contracts represented potential profit . . . So I held them in my fist, and—and—I—

ANDREW. (*to ALISON, at this pregnant pause*) Are you sure we're here to analyze the *play?*

ANNABEL. (*calming BRONIAN*) Let's be logical. They must be someplace in the apartment.

RORY. A search! Come on, everybody just pick a room and *SEARCH!*

ANNABEL. I'll take the terrace—

RORY. I'll investigate the kitchen—

BRONIAN. Andrew, you check the bedroom and bath.

ALISON. (*when ANDREW hesitates*) Be a sport! We want your name on a contract, not your head on a platter.

ANNABEL. You shouldn't have told him. We could've appealed to his humor of recognition. (*exits to terrace*)

ANDREW. Oh . . . All right, all right!

(*RORY and ANDREW make their respective exits on:*)

ALISON. Bronian and I will search in here . . . (*sees OTHERS are out of earshot; then:*) Bronian . . . What's going on?

BRONIAN. (*very uneasily*) What do you mean?

ALISON. You know very well what I mean, Bronian Pendrick!

BRONIAN. I do?

ALISON. Yes . . . you do. Rory directing the show. . . ?! Really! And meeting here instead of at your office. *And* this insanity about a "deeply meaningful drama". Hmmm? Oh . . . and when I tried phoning you this morning your service didn't answer. (*pause*) Bronian—are you broke?

BRONIAN. (*with a deep sigh*) Yes, damn it! And that witch Frieda Nebcott knows it. You don't think I'd date that woman of my own volition?

ALISON. (*changing the subject*) Tell me—honestly now—what you think of Andrew's play. Not how good it is, but *what* it is.

BRONIAN. What do you *think* it is?

ALISON. I think your high-sounding praises of its dramatic merit are mere catering to Nebcott's constant

complaint about the theatre's lack of meaningful offerings. What are you up to?

BRONIAN. I promise I'll tell you, but I can't talk now in front of the others. Trust me . . . please?

ALISON. I think I do trust you, but what did you tell Frieda Nebcott?

BRONIAN. I told her that if my backers didn't find out how desperately I need them—I'd . . . well . . . I said I'd make it worth her while.

ALISON. Oh yeah? How? She's not interested in *money*.

BRONIAN. Everybody's interested in money.

ALISON. If her column could be bought for cash it would be a permanent fixture on every production budget . . . probably the first item! However . . . perhaps she *is* interested in "a certain talented producer" . . .

BRONIAN. Don't be ridiculous . . .

ALISON. (*interrupting him*) Hey! This is me! Remember? You taught me this business from the ground up when you gave me my first role. I know money isn't the only legal tender on Broadway, so don't try to. . . . (*She is interrupted by ANNABEL.*)

ANNABEL. Nothing out there but patio furniture and polluted air.

BRONIAN. Why don't you go give Andrew a hand?

ALISON. He's probably knotting bedsheets together and plotting an escape.

(*ANNABEL leaves and just as she exits, RORY enters.*)

BRONIAN. Rory? Anything?

RORY. Refrigerator, pantry and silverware drawers—no dice. *And* your cupboards make mother Hubbard look like a hoarder.

(*ANDREW re-enters from bedroom.*)

ALISON. Well?

ANDREW. Miss Holmes came in so I thought I should come out.

RORY. They do these things so well in Peoria.

BRONIAN. Get back in there! SEARCH! (*ANDREW goes back into bedroom.*) I've got to think . . . If I had the contracts right now . . . *where* would I hide them?

ALISON. If you had the contracts right now, *why* would you hide them?

BRONIAN. If I *wanted* to . . .

ALISON. A wall safe?

RORY. He hasn't got a wall safe.

ALISON. Well, that solves my Christmas shopping problem.

BRONIAN. CHRISTMAS! . . . Something about—Santa Claus—Why does *Santa Claus* ring a bell?

ALISON. So you can find that brass pot in a blizzard.

RORY. Hold it Alison—I think he's remembering . . .

BRONIAN. Quick . . . Start naming Santa Claus things. . . !

ALISON. (*looking hard at BRONIAN*) A big red nose?

BRONIAN. Har-de-har-har.

(*This next sequence should be done in rapid fire like a word-association test.*)

ALISON. Elves.

RORY. Toys.

ALISON. Milk and cookies.

RORY. Reindeer.

ALISON. North Pole.

RORY. Snow-covered rooftops.

ALISON. White Beard.
RORY. Sleigh bells.
ALISON. Three Wise Men!
RORY. "My Two Front Teeth!"
ALISON. (*sings*) ". . . and a partridge in a pear tree!"
BOTH MEN. (*give ALISON a disdainful look*) *Alison!*
ALISON. Sorry.
RORY. (*to BRONIAN again*) Fireplaces?
ALISON. Fire! You dreamed about a *dragon?!*
BRONIAN. There's a fireplace in my bedroom—!

(*ALL start for bedroom. They stop as ANNABEL comes out brandishing rolled-up contracts.*)

ANNABEL. Ta-dah!
ALISON. Right from the dragon's mouth.

(*ANNABEL is rather sooty and disheveled-looking.*)

ANNABEL. They were jammed in the flue. I nearly got wedged in the damper trying to retrieve them.
ALISON. Well. . . . Mary Poppins you ain't!
BRONIAN. Where's Andrew?
ANNABEL. Under the bed.
RORY. Doesn't he know that's the first place we'd look for him? (*He exits to bedroom to fetch ANDREW.*)
ANNABEL. I don't think he was hiding . . . just seeking.
BRONIAN. (*takes contracts, wipes off soot and unrolls them, etc.*) Alison, look in the kitchen drawers and see if you can find a pen.
ANNABEL. Excuse me while I clean up a bit.

(*Exits into bedroom as ALISON exits to kitchen;*

BRONIAN lays contracts on coffee table and RORY and ANDREW enter from bedroom.)

ANDREW. Before I sign anything I'd like to talk this over . . .

RORY. Come on Andrew, sign. You can always claim you weren't in your right mind when you did it.

ANDREW. But could I prove it?

BRONIAN. No one who signs a Broadway contract is in his right mind.

ALISON. (*entering from kitchen*) No pen no where! How about a swizzle stick dipped in Jack Daniels?

ANDREW. *Wait,* I've got a pen.

RORY. Alison was only joking. (*takes ANDREW's pen*) This is green ink. Is that legal?

(*ANNABEL re-enters, having cleaned up.*)

BRONIAN. On a contract, intentions are everything. Sign it in green.

ANNABEL. Andrew, about your plane tomorrow—

BRONIAN. Stop reminding him!

ANNABEL. I just want to know which flight he's booked on so I can cancel his reservation for him.

ANDREW. I'm not sure I want it canceled. What about my boss?

BRONIAN. Phone. Say you've got the flu. Your boss will believe you.

ALISON. How do you know?

BRONIAN. Morticians *love* believing people have the flu.

ANDREW. Well, if you feel it's absolutely necessary . . .

ALISON. Oh we do! We do! And once we start staging it so will you. You may want more changes than *we* will.

ANNABEL. And you should be with Rory at all times to make sure it *feels* the way it should.

ALISON. A man who's never directed a play can always use an extra mind.

RORY. What makes you think I want an extra mind?

ANNABEL. With Charles Carpenter in the cast, you'll need it to break even. Charles is the kind of person who visits the dentist to have wisdom teeth put *in*.

ALISON. For all his shortcomings, I must admit he's very co-operative.

ANNABEL. Charles isn't co-operative, he's just too scared to argue. I heard that one of his ancestors was a real live chicken.

BRONIAN. The Carpenters are descended from William the Conqueror. There's not a cowardly bone in his body.

ANNABEL. Then it's just coincidence that his family crest is a doormat licking a boot?

BRONIAN. Charles will be just fine. The critics were very pleased with his last show.

ALISON. Only because they hoped it *was* his last show.

RORY. Walter Kerr, who gave it the *best* review, wrote "It was a very pleasant evening. I laughed at witty dialogue from very talented and charming people. Then the curtain went up . . ."

ANNABEL. Never mind. . . . Please sign, Andrew. Mr. Pendrick won't let you down.

ANDREW. (*hesitating*) Will you leave all the actual alterations to me?

BRONIAN. If you'll promise to keep an open mind. I do think that your colleagues in this enterprise are entitled to make a *few* suggestions.

ANDREW. What *kind* of suggestions?

BRONIAN. *Little* things.

RORY. Tiny, almost unnoticeable things.

ALISON. Just a dab of the polishing cloth here—

ANNABEL. —a spot of paint there—

RORY. Not really changing anything, just . . . heightening certain spots.

BRONIAN. Injecting the characters with an extra spark of life.

ALISON. Take Letitia. She's realistic, in a folksy way, but . . .

RORY. She comes off kind of bland.

ALISON. She needs a few extra idiosyncrasies, Andrew.

BRONIAN. Things that etch her in the audience's mind.

RORY. Right now, she's loveable. With our help she'd be unforgettable.

ANNABEL. No one's saying she's not realistic.

ALISON. She simply needs something to make her different.

ANDREW. She's already got a Chinese granddaughter!!!

BRONIAN. Don't worry your head about details. Just sign the contract.

ANNABEL. All four copies, please.

ANDREW. I do wish I were sure you people know what you're talking about.

ALISON. Wellllll . . . that's part of the excitement.

BRONIAN. We're offering you our years of experience.

RORY. Our unswerving loyalty as companions in a common cause.

ANNABEL. Trust us.

BRONIAN. Sign the nice contract. . . ? (*ANDREW almost signs, hesitates.*) I'll make you a deal! (*ANDREW and others look up with interest.*) If you prom-

ise to follow my guidelines—on audience appeal, not specific alterations—I promise you I will insist on only one change, verbatim. The title! (*All look at ANDREW hopefully.*)

ANDREW. Only the title? And any other alterations are up to me?

BRONIAN. You have my solemn word in front of three witnesses.

ANDREW. (*steels himself, then signs all four copies with great care*) There!

(*OTHERS go limp with relief; BRONIAN takes pen, signs one copy, hands it to ANDREW.*)

BRONIAN. That's your copy Andrew. (*shakes his hand*) We're in business. This calls for a celebration. Let's everybody have a drink! (*All head for highboy bar.*)

ANNABEL. Now, the first thing to do, Andrew, is to cancel that airplane reservation. Do you have a place to stay?

ANDREW. Not yet. I thought it'd be easy to get a single for one night.

RORY. What about luggage?

ANDREW. Just shaving things and a toothbrush in my topcoat pocket.

BRONIAN. I'll lend you a typewriter.

RORY. I can lend you some clothes.

ALISON. Is there anything else you need?

ANDREW. Well, it's been a while since dinner.

BRONIAN. Rory, make the man a sandwich!

RORY. (*with hocus-pocus gesture*) Poof! You're a sandwich!

(*No one laughs. ANNABEL sighs in RORY's direction and heads toward phone, which she will bring down to coffee table.*)

ANNABEL. I'll start calling hotels.

ANDREW. While you're at it would you put a call through to my boss? It's the V. Nelson Slomber Funeral Home—

RORY. Come on, Andrew, before you become your boss's next customer.

(*RORY and ANDREW exit to kitchen; ANNABEL sits on sofa and starts making calls but cannot be heard.*)

ALISON. (*at bar with BRONIAN*) You're just *full* of promises these days. You really intend to change only the *title?*

BRONIAN. Don't worry. I have a plan.

ALISON. I hope it includes building up the female lead.

BRONIAN. Which part is the female lead?

ALISON. That depends on the buildup. The daughter has youth, good looks, and a great mad-scene, but Letitia gets to drink the poisoned wine and die. Luckily, she remains throughout the next two acts as a visualization of the mad daughter's deluded imaginings.

BRONIAN. No other female roles?

ALISON. Well, the cook has a four-line walk-on, waving a soup ladle. And there's a maid who gets to answer the door. Do you see me as either of those? And watch how you answer that!

BRONIAN. You know, seriously, there *is* a problem. You're hardly the grandmother type, but—you must admit—you're not a teen-aged southern belle either.

ALISON. Too bad Olivia hasn't got a *mother.* That'd be just about perfect.

BRONIAN. There's always the *father.* Can you grow sideburns?

ANNABEL. (*hangs up phone and trudges up to them on:*) I've tried three hotels, big ones, and they're all booked solid. There's some convention in town . . . dentists or adventists or something like that. . . .

ALISON. We could get Andrew a white jacket with a Bible in the pocket and let him take his chances.

ANNABEL. I placed the call to Peoria, but the line's busy. The operator's going to try again and ring me back. (*sets phone back on bar*)

BRONIAN. Better try a few more hotels.

ANNABEL. I can't remember any more numbers. Where's your directory?

BRONIAN. By the extension in the bedroom. Keep trying. (*ANNABEL exits into bedroom.*)

ALISON. I don't know why we're even *discussing* the female lead if all you're going to change is the *title.*

BRONIAN. Believe me, that title change will take care of *everything,* including the *sex* problem!

ALISON. There's hardly any sex *in* the script. Or is that the *problem?*

BRONIAN. It won't be when *I* finish with Andrew. *What* kind of realism leaves out sex problems? Everybody's got problems with sex. (*pause*) . . . and *bigotry!* We've *got* to get bigotry into the plot. Bigotry is big this season!

ALISON. Maybe it's an extra motivation for the grocer? It would make him even more likely to try to poison a yankee blanket manufacturer.

BRONIAN. But would a southern bigot fall in love with a Chinese laundress?

ALISON. *Somebody* has to wash his white sheet!

(*RORY and ANDREW enter from kitchen. ANDREW is munching on a sandwich.*)

RORY. Did you get Andrew a room yet?

BRONIAN. Annabel's fixing it up in the bedroom.

ANDREW. I should warn you—I snore.

BRONIAN. I mean. . . .

ALISON. (*interrupting*) Say! Why *can't* Andrew stay here, Bronian? You could work on the script without even having to get out of your pajamas.

RORY. Any new notions on the script?

ALISON. Well, besides the pogo stick and the Chinese laundress, we now have a bigoted grocer. Of course we've barely scratched the surface.

BRONIAN. We still need a character with a dark secret to conceal, a creepy stranger who goes around saying obliquely mysterious things which upset the other players, and I'm having a hell of a time deciding which member of the family will be the vicious dope peddler.

ANDREW. Hey, now, just a minute—!

RORY. How about the wastrel son? The family treats him with contempt, so pushing dope is his revenge against society.

ANDREW. Olivia is an only child! How can there be a wastrel son?

ALISON. Maybe she's schizophrenic?

BRONIAN. It's easy to work *in*. . . !

ANNABEL. (*leans head in from bedroom*) Andrew, do you know anything at all about teeth?

ANDREW. Brush three times daily and visit the dentist twice a year, avoid sugary snacks, floss when you brush—

ANNABEL. (*interrupting his spiel*) Never mind. I'll try a few more hotels. (*vanishes again*)

ALISON. Bronian, before Annabel gets a cauliflower ear—what *about* having Andrew stay here?

BRONIAN. We'd just get in each other's way.

ALISON. *Think!* If he stays here there won't be any hotel bills.

RORY. Not to mention restaurant meals and transportation.

ANDREW. You make it sound as if he's short on cash. . . ?

ALISON. Oh don't be silly, Andrew! A successful Broadway producer is *never* short on cash.

ANDREW. That's what *worries* me!

ANNABEL. (*entering from bedroom*) I don't know how many dentists have deserted their home towns for this convention, but I wish I had a few shares of stock in an aspirin company tonight!

BRONIAN. No luck? Well, I guess Andrew *will* have to stay here.

ANNABEL. Oh there are still a few places I can try. I just took a break to let my ear unflatten.

BRONIAN. You look exhausted. Why don't you go home and let Andrew get to work!?

ANDREW. And that's another thing! You said *I* could make the alterations. You gave me your solemn word. So *what's* all this about a bigoted grocer?

BRONIAN. Did I order you to change a *single word?* It's not *my* fault if you eavesdrop on a private conversation! Do it any way you want. You'll find a typewriter and some paper in the bedroom closet.

ANDREW. *You're* leaving, too?

BRONIAN. I'm taking Miss Blair home. We have things to talk over.

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