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Cactus Flower

A Comedy in Two Acts

by Abe Burrows

Bases on a play by
Pierre Barillet and Jean-Pierre Gredy

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



New York Hollywood London Toronto

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CACTUS FLOWER, by Abe Burrows, based on a play by Pierre Barillet and Jean Pierre Cedy, scenic production by Oliver Smith, associate producer, Samuel Liff, directed by Mr. Burrows, was presented by David Merrick at the Royale Theatre, N.Y.C., December 8, 1965.

CHARACTERS

(In Order of Their Appearance)

TONI SIMMONS	<i>Brenda Vaccaro</i>
IGOR SULLIVAN	<i>Burt Brinckerhoff</i>
STEPHANIE DICKINSON	<i>Lauren Bacall</i>
MRS. DIXON DURANT	<i>Eileen Letchworth</i>
DR. JULIAN WINSTON	<i>Barry Nelson</i>
HARVEY GREENFIELD	<i>Robert Moore</i>
SEÑOR ARTURO SANCHEZ	<i>Arny Freeman</i>
CUSTOMER	<i>Will Gregory</i>
WAITER	<i>Michael Fairman</i>
BOTICELLI'S SPRINGTIME	<i>Marjorie Battles</i>
MUSIC LOVER	<i>Michael Fairman</i>

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

The action of the play takes place in 15 scenes scattered around uptown and downtown Manhattan. There is one intermission.

Cactus Flower

ACT ONE

SCENE 1

Toni's apartment. This is somewhere in Greenwich Village. It's one of those apartments where everything is visible on entrance: the bed, stove, cooking equipment, and maybe some pieces of "living room" furniture. There should be a door leading to a bathroom and a large window U. S. Beyond it we see a fire escape. The time is around four a.m. The lights in the apartment are off, but DIM LIGHT filters through the window, revealing TONI. She is lying on the bed, face down, unconscious, her head hanging off the front of the bed. She's a beautiful girl, wearing an attractive short nightgown. A small radio on the shelf at window is on and rock 'n roll MUSIC is playing. We hear SOMEONE pounding at the door.

IGOR'S VOICE. (Offstage.) Hey, in there . . . something wrong? (Another knock on the door.) Hey, I smell gas!

(IGOR appears on the fire escape. He tries to open the window, can't, then smashes one of the panes, which enables him to open the lock and get in. He's a good looking young fellow. Very athletic and quick in his movements. He is dressed in T-shirt and chino pants. He looks around the apartment quickly, sniffing as he looks. He glances quickly at TONI and rushes to the stove, turning on LIGHT SWITCH by door as he passes. He turns off the burners, closes oven door, opens window over sink. He then rushes back, turns off RADIO, turns to TONI. He leans over and puts

his ear against the upper part of her back in order to listen to her heartbeat. He then makes a move as though to give her artificial respiration while she is still lying face down. He then decides to turn her over, face up. He turns her over, holds her in his arms and gets ready to give her mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. He takes three preparatory deep breaths, then as he leans forward to put his mouth to hers, she kisses him, wiggles her toes. After a moment, her arms go around his neck. He very sensibly holds still for a long kiss. Then he pulls back.)

TONI. (*In a very sleepy voice her arms still around his neck.*) Julian. Julian . . .

IGOR. Hey, I'm not Julian . . . Wake up, wake up.

TONI. (*Same sleepy voice.*) Julian, kiss me.

IGOR. (*Looking around.*) Sorry, Julian, whoever you are.

(*They kiss again.*)

TONI. (*Pulling away.*) Who are you—what are you doing?

IGOR. Mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

TONI. You were kissing me.

IGOR. (*Releasing her.*) It sort of got away.

TONI. Wait a minute, where am I? I was trying to—

IGOR. Look, I live next door and I smelled gas.

TONI. Gas? I'm alive! I fizzled it! (*She falls back into her former position and bangs on floor.*) I fizzled it! Oh boy, I really fizzled it!

IGOR. (*Leaning over her.*) Hey, take it easy. Boy, you're lucky I busted in.

TONI. Why did you?

IGOR. I thought you were dying.

TONI. That was the whole *idea*! Why didn't you keep out of it, you snooper?

IGOR. (*Crossing below bed to door.*) Sorry. Next time you turn on the gas, leave a "Do Not Disturb."

TONI. (*Throwing pillow at him.*) Dammit, you made ~~me~~ fizzle it.

IGOR. It happens you were going about it all wrong. I believe you're supposed to put your head *in* the stove. (*He puts pillow on bed.*)

TONI. (*In kneeling position on bed.*) It's a second-hand stove. There were no directions.

IGOR. (*Crossing back to her to L. end of bed.*) Why are you so anxious to shuffle off? Is it Julian?

TONI. How do you know about Julian?

IGOR. You called me that while you were kissing me.

TONI. I wasn't kissing you, you were kissing me. By the way, is that all you did?

IGOR. You'll never know, will you?

TONI. I'm sorry. I guess I should be grateful. What's your name?

IGOR. My name is Igor . . . Igor Sullivan.

TONI. Igor Sullivan. That's wild.

IGOR. I made it up.

TONI. How come you picked Igor?

IGOR. Igor's my own. I made up the Sullivan.

TONI. Oh.

IGOR. Igor Sullivan is a good strong name for a writer.

TONI. Oh, you're a writer. (*Suddenly recovering some of her strength, kneels.*) Oh, you're *the* writer. The one who keeps pounding that typewriter all night. Your typing has been driving me crazy.

IGOR. Oh, it has?

TONI. Yes.

IGOR. Well, it's a lucky thing for you I was in there typing tonight or you'd have been—

TONI. I wish I was. (*Falls back down, her head toward foot of bed.*)

IGOR. (*Crossing to her.*) That's crazy. You should be happy that you're all right. I know *I'm* happy that you're all right. (*Stoops over her.*) Listen, uh—uh—what's your name?

TONI. (*Mumbles.*) Antoinette Simmons.

IGOR. What?

TONI. Antoinette Simmons.

IGOR. Look, Antoinette . . . (*Rises, crosses away L.*)

TONI. Toni.

IGOR. Look, Toni, what did this Julian do to you?

TONI. Nothing. (*Sits up and starts to put on her slippers.*)

IGOR. (*Crosses close to her.*) He must have done something. Did he cheat on you? (*TONI shakes her head.*) Beat you? Is he a drunk? A crook?

TONI. Worse.

IGOR. Oh, he's married. (*Sits left of her on bed.*)

TONI. For life. He has three kids. I don't know why I'm telling you all this. Like you were my mother.

IGOR. Well, I did snatch you from the Valley of the Shadow.

TONI. Boy, you must be a pretty corny writer.

IGOR. I thought it was rather picturesque.

TONI. But you *did* save my life and I'm beginning to feel better about it. So, anyway, where was I?

IGOR. You just found out that that dirty rat Julian—

TONI. (*Indignant.*) He's not a dirty rat, he's a dentist! A fine dentist. (*Crawling over to headboard.*) Park Avenue. (*From headboard she picks up a card, hands it to Igor proudly.*) Here's his card. (*Sits beside him again.*)

IGOR. (*Looking at it.*) Well, let me rephrase my statement. You just found out that Dr. Julian Winston, D.D.S., Park Avenue, has a wife and three children.

TONI. I *didn't* just find it out. Julian told me he was married the first time we met. That's one of the things that attracted me to him. Made me love him more.

IGOR. You go for married men, huh?

TONI. I like honesty. All my life people have lied to me and I can't stand it. Julian had the decency to warn me right away that he had a wife and a family. I was in love with him and I accepted it.

IGOR. So what's the problem?

TONI. I couldn't accept it. At first I thought it was all going to be a carefree, gay fling. Whoopee. Then came all those times when he couldn't see me. Night after night I'd be ready and waiting, then, bang! there'd be a phone call or a note.

IGOR. Tough.

TONI. Boy, I tell you when he cancelled last night, I wanted to . . . (*She rises, makes violent Karate-like gestures with her hand.*) It was our anniversary. (*Crosses to post, gets robe off hook.*)

IGOR. Anniversary of what?

TONI. Julian and I met one year ago at the L.P. That's the record shop where I work.

IGOR. (*Rises.*) The Village L.P.? I've been there. I never noticed you. (*IGOR helps her on with robe.*)

TONI. Well, Julian did. And I noticed him. And he was charming. A gentleman. Good looking, beautifully dressed . . . (*A look at IGOR's clothes.*) No T-shirts.

IGOR. (*Looking at his clothes.*) Sorry, I didn't know this suicide was black tie.

TONI. (*Crosses to chair R. of table, sits.*) You look all right.

IGOR. But, Toni, after putting up with it for a year, why did you suddenly—? (*Crosses above table to stove.*)

TONI. I don't know. I became completely unglued. Maybe because it was our anniversary . . . But I suddenly had the sickening feeling I had thrown away my whole life. You know, Igor, I'm twenty-one.

IGOR. You poor old bat.

TONI. You're not a girl.

IGOR. (*Looking at the stove.*) Hey, what's this mess all over the stove?

TONI. (*Looking at it.*) Chicken cacciatore.

IGOR. Chicken cacciatore?

TONI. Julian is mad about it. His wife won't make it for him. He says she's one of those health nuts.

IGOR. Hey, Toni. The pot boiled over while you were trying to do yourself in, and it blocked up all the burners.

TONI. Hurray!

IGOR. Miss Simmons, it was not the brave Sullivan who saved you, it was chicken cacciatore. (*He has crossed U. to R. of TONI.*)

TONI. (*Amused.*) You're a very cute youngster. What sort of things do you write?

IGOR. Plays.

TONI. What kind of plays?

IGOR. (*Crosses R. to C.*) Unproduced. I've written eight plays . . . at least *I* think they're plays. No one else does.

TONI. And you're growing bitter.

IGOR. (*Pacing back and forth.*) It's tough sitting there, all alone, typing away, thinking you have talent, thinking you have something to say . . . and nobody cares whether you live or die. You feel rejected by the whole world.

TONI. How do you manage to live?

IGOR. I get an allowance from my father.

TONI. Uh huh.

IGOR. (*Suddenly realizing how it sounds. Crossing U. L.*) Well, you see, when I got out of the Army, he let me have one year to try writing.

TONI. Oh, boy! And I was feeling sorry for you.

IGOR. (*Sits on U. S. edge of table.*) I can't help it if I'm not poor. Say, Toni, now that you're through with this Julian, how about one of these nights you and me—?

TONI. (*Sudden thought.*) Hey, what time is it?

IGOR. (*Looking at his watch with a rueful smile.*) Four a.m.

TONI. Four a.m.! Oh, my God!

IGOR. What's the matter?

TONI. I've got to get up and go to work tomorrow. I don't know how I'll do it. (*As she says this, she leaps up, takes off robe, rushes onto the bed.*) Go away. I have to sleep. (*IGOR rises. She drops her head to the bed as though falling into a deep sleep. She gets right up.*) I won't try to work. I'm going to take the day off.

IGOR. (*He has followed her and is now standing alongside the post.*) Yeah, why kill yourself?

TONI. That's very witty.

IGOR. I'm sorry. Is there anything I can get you?

TONI. (*Making herself comfortable, head on the pillow.*) Thanks, I just want to sleep.

IGOR. (*Crossing to door.*) Sleep well. If you need me I'll be next door. Just pound on the wall. (*He pounds on wall just L. of door.*) I'll come right away.

TONI. Thanks, Igor.

IGOR. (*Switching off LIGHTS.*) Good night.

(*He goes. The LIGHTS are now back to the opening dim reading. TONI sits bolt upright and screams.*)

TONI. Oh, my God, my letter! My letter! (*She runs to wall, pounds on it at same spot as IGOR did.*) Igor! Hey, Igor!

IGOR. (*Rushing back and throwing LIGHTS back on.*) What's the matter?

TONI. My letter. I mailed a letter.

IGOR. What letter?

TONI. (*Crossing below IGOR to c.*) To Julian. I wrote him a letter telling him what I was going to do.

IGOR. (*Crossing down to her.*) What did you do that for?

TONI. What would be the point of my killing myself if he didn't know about it? But now that I fizzled it, he's got to be told before he reads my letter. Igor, you must call him for me.

IGOR. Why don't you call him yourself?

TONI. (*Crossing up to bed.*) First of all, I'll be sleeping. Second of all, I'm through with him and I won't give him the satisfaction of hearing me cry. (*Lying down on the bed.*) Besides, he's liable to call the cops or something.

IGOR. (*Giving up.*) Okay. Nine a.m.

TONI. (*Getting herself comfortable and covering herself with blanket.*) Thanks, Igor. You're sweet. Will you turn on the radio? It's too quiet in here.

IGOR. (*Walking towards radio and looking at card.*) Say, what will I tell this guy?

TONI. Just tell him I'm alive.

IGOR. Oh, great. (*Turns on radio. Rock 'n roll MUSIC is heard.*) That's all? (*Touches her; she's asleep.*) Okay, kid, sleep. You need it. (*Crosses D. S. of bed towards door, stops momentarily and pantomimes talking into imaginary telephone.*) "Hello, Dr. Winston. I have very upsetting news for you. Toni is alive." (*He goes.*)

BLACKOUT

ACT ONE

SCENE 2

Dr. Julian Winston's office. Nine o'clock. The main part of the set will be the reception room. C. is the desk of Stephanie Dickinson, Dr. Winston's secretary-assistant. On her desk is a small cactus plant, among the other things that a dentist's assistant might have on her desk. Telephone, etc. Among the details that are planned for the office are a large stereo-hi-fi built into the wall. It's playing MUSIC. On the walls are several modern paintings. U. R. is the door of Dr. Winston's working office or the operating room. Every time the door of this office opens, we will get a strong flare of fluorescent light. STEPHANIE enters from the operating room. STEPHANIE is the completely efficient nurse. She's dressed in a white uniform, low-heeled shoes, very little makeup. She walks to the desk and picks up mail, looks through it quickly. PHONE rings. She goes L. to the stereo, turns down the SOUND. The MUSIC keeps playing, but at a much lower level. She crosses back to the phone and picks it up and answers it. When STEPHANIE speaks, her voice is soft, soothing, yet impersonal. Her voice, plus the soft music, creates an effect that is supposed to be very soothing for the patients.

STEPHANIE. Hello, Dr. Winston's office . . . Oh, good morning, Mrs. Andrews . . . Well, let me see. (*She sits. She ruffles the appointment book.*) I'm afraid I have nothing open for the next two weeks. I can squeeze you in a week from Thursday, the twenty-seventh, at nine-fifteen, Friday the twenty-eighth at four-thirty, or Monday the thirty-first at . . . Oh, well, as long as you're in pain, make it a week from Thursday. That'll be nine-fifteen, and, remember, the doctor insists on punctuality. Thank

you. (*Hangs up. Starts going through some mail on her desk. She goes through the letters quickly, comes to one that stops her. She looks at it with interest.*) Hhmmmmmmmm. "Personal and confidential." (*PHONE rings as she says the above. She picks it up.*) Hello, Dr. Winston's office . . . Who's calling? . . . Igor Sullivan? Is it about an appointment? . . . I'm sorry, Mr. Sullivan, you can't talk to the doctor now. He's with a patient. If you'll just give me the message . . . (*Doorbell CHIMES.*) Well, if you insist on speaking to him personally, you'll have to call back later. (*Doorbell CHIMES.*) I have to go now.

(*Hangs up, goes to door to admit MRS. DIXON DURANT, a society matron. She is carrying a lighted cigarette.*)

MRS. DURANT. (*Crossing to L. of desk.*) A caramel. One lousy caramel, and the whole damned filling came out.

STEPHANIE. (*Follows her, picks up ash tray and holds it for MRS. DURANT's ashes.*) Mrs. Durant, it was only a temporary filling and you were warned to be careful. Caramels! (*Puts ash tray on desk.*)

MRS. DURANT. (*Stamping out cigarette in tray.*) Good God, I've given up everything else! Where's the doctor?

STEPHANIE. (*Crossing to R. C.*) He'll see you in a moment, Mrs. Durant. Since you were delayed, he gave your time to another patient who was on time.

MRS. DURANT. (*Annoyed.*) Just because I'm a minute late—

STEPHANIE. (*Sweetly.*) Twenty minutes, Mrs. Durant. (*Indicating waiting room.*) Now if you'll just wait out here . . .

MRS. DURANT. (*Crossing below STEPHANIE to door.*) Please hurry the doctor. I must be through in half an hour. Charles will be waiting.

STEPHANIE. Charles?

MRS. DURANT. Mr. Charles. The hairdresser. Today he's taking care of me personally. I can't keep him waiting.

STEPHANIE. Really, Mrs. Durant, your teeth are more important than your hair.

MRS. DURANT. (*Looking at her for a moment.*) You really think that, don't you? How sad.

(*She goes into waiting room. STEPHANIE is thrown by this for a moment, reaches up and touches her hair. She closes door, crosses back to desk and sits. The door of the operating room opens. We hear JULIAN'S VOICE.*)

JULIAN'S VOICE. That's all for now, Harvey. Get your coat on.

(*JULIAN enters, crosses down to R. of desk. He starts making a few notes on a card he takes from his pocket.*)

STEPHANIE. Mrs. Durant is here. Ate a caramel, lost her filling.

JULIAN. Serves her right. (*Puts card down.*) Mr. Greenfield will be out in a minute. Give him the same appointment next week. (*Drifts D. R.*)

STEPHANIE. (*Crossing to file with card.*) Doctor, I've been meaning to speak to you about Mr. Greenfield's bills.

JULIAN. Miss Dickinson, you know he's an old friend of mine.

STEPHANIE. Well, I think he's taking advantage of you. (*Crosses back to desk.*)

JULIAN. Miss Dickinson, there are some things a man just can't do. I won't push Harvey for money. I've known him too long. You do it. (*Crosses D. R.*)

STEPHANIE. I'll be happy to. (*Sits at desk.*)

(*HARVEY GREENFIELD enters from operating room, carrying his jacket. He crosses to JULIAN.*)

JULIAN. Well, Harvey, how does your mouth feel?

HARVEY. My mouth feels fine. My teeth hurt.

JULIAN. Oh, that'll go away in three or four days.

HARVEY. (*Putting on jacket.*) Thanks. Hey! Been a lot of changes since I was last here. Very classy.

JULIAN. Oh, a few changes. New furniture, sound proofing, a few new paintings.

HARVEY. (*Going to stereo, crossing below desk.*) What's that? Looks like a jet cockpit.

JULIAN. (*Crosses U. R. of desk.*) It's stereo. Music has become a very important part of modern dental therapy. It's very soothing to the dentist. (*Crosses D. R. C.*)

HARVEY. At your prices you can afford Heifetz in person. (*Reaches up and turns knob on the stereo. SOUND blares.*)

STEPHANIE. (*Jumping up quickly and turning off STEREO.*) Mr. Greenfield, that's a very sensitive instrument.

HARVEY. (*Cutting in and retreating L. a bit.*) All right, all right! I hardly touched it. But I do have the right, if I so wish. After all, as a patient I pay for that thing. I really do.

STEPHANIE. You really should. (*Sits.*)

HARVEY. (*Crossing below desk to JULIAN.*) Julian, I feel insulted. It isn't as if I'm planning to stick you.

JULIAN. It isn't as if you were planning to *pay* me, either.

HARVEY. Well, I figure you make it up on your other patients. (*Crosses below JULIAN to R. towards door.*)

STEPHANIE. Mrs. Durant is waiting, Doctor.

HARVEY. (*Quickly.*) Mrs. Durant?

JULIAN. Mrs. Dixon Durant. Frozen foods.

HARVEY. Boy, I'll bet you soak her plenty!

JULIAN. Sssshhhh. Even with the sound proofing . . .

STEPHANIE. (*Rising.*) Doctor, I don't think you should keep Mrs. Durant waiting. I'll make the room ready.

JULIAN. Good.

STEPHANIE. (*Looking at her watch as she crosses up to operating room door.*) You're already running very late today. *Very* late. (*She goes into operating room.*)

HARVEY. That dame makes me feel like I'm back with the Seabees.

JULIAN. She is very efficient.

HARVEY. (*Tone of disgust.*) Come on. I always figured you'd have a nurse who was a . . . nurse. You're Julian Winston. Bachelor, connoisseur—

JULIAN. (*Cutting in.*) Harvey, Miss Dickinson is my assistant for the very reasons you complain about. (*Crossing to above desk and pushing chair in to desk.*) She's like a wife, a good wife . . . devoted, efficient, takes care of all my needs . . . during the day! (*R. of desk.*) And at night she goes home, to *her* home. And I, with no cares, no problems, go to my girl. My life is arranged the way I like it. (*Sits on desk.*)

HARVEY. (*Sudden take, crossing to JULIAN.*) Hey, did you say "your girl"?

JULIAN. Yes.

HARVEY. Did you use the singular—?

JULIAN. Yeah.

HARVEY. Girl? One girl?

JULIAN. Didn't I tell you? It's been a year now.

HARVEY. But you—you're Julian Winston. Captain of the basketball team. Track star. A different girl every night. Boy, how we guys on the debating team used to envy you!

JULIAN. You guys talked too much.

HARVEY. All those girls . . . Marie . . .

JULIAN. Mmmmmm.

HARVEY. Sally . . . Frank—

JULIAN. Frank?

HARVEY. Sally's brother. He nearly killed you. Boy, you managed to duck out on all of them.

JULIAN. (*Rises, crosses R., puts arm around HARVEY. They drift R.*) Harvey, I find your hero worship very sweet, but Toni has changed all that. I don't want anyone else.

HARVEY. Julian, with a little moral courage, that sort of illness can be fought.

JULIAN. Tried to fight it. Take last night. I cancelled

a date with Toni and I deliberately made a date with another girl. An airline stewardess. Spectacular looking. A Swedish blonde. Tall. Built. (*Crosses D. R.*) We went to her place, we had a few drinks . . .

HARVEY. (*Excited.*) Yeah?

STEPHANIE. (*Re-enters from operating room.*) The room is ready. I'll get Mrs. Durant. (*Starting for waiting room.*)

JULIAN. Good. (*He crosses below STEPHANIE and starts towards operating room.*)

HARVEY. (*Turns, finds himself confronting STEPHANIE by mistake.*) You can't leave me hanging! (*Crosses up.*)

(*Crossing below HARVEY, STEPHANIE opens door. MRS. DURANT hurries in. Her manner in the presence of DR. WINSTON is subdued and penitent.*)

MRS. DURANT. (*Crossing in to R. C.*) Dr. Winston, I'm so sorry I was late.

JULIAN. (*A real bedside manner, crossing down to MRS. DURANT.*) Oh, that's all right, dear lady, however . . . (*He takes her hands.*) I hear we've been very naughty . . . caramels!

MRS. DURANT. (*Looking accusingly at STEPHANIE.*) You told.

STEPHANIE. It's my job. (*Crosses to desk.*)

MRS. DURANT. I only had one.

JULIAN. One too many. You know, Mrs. Durant, outside of the fact that they're bad for you teeth, (*He spreads her arms wide.*) think how caramels can hurt those splendid hips. (*During above, HARVEY crosses D. R.*)

MRS. DURANT. (*To HARVEY.*) Is he your dentist?

HARVEY. (*Nodding.*) Great, isn't he?

MRS. DURANT. Great. He's a magnificent dentist, but he would have made a simply marvelous obstetrician.

(*She goes into operating room, followed by STEPHANIE. JULIAN looks back at HARVEY.*)

HARVEY. Obstetrician!

JULIAN. (*Crossing down to HARVEY, rubbing his hands*

together.) Hot water! Plenty of hot water! (*He starts for the operating room.*)

HARVEY. Wait a minute, Julian, you didn't finish with the stewardess. What happened?

JULIAN. (*Stops, crosses down to HARVEY.*) Nothing.

HARVEY. Nothing?

JULIAN. Toni stopped me.

HARVEY. Toni? She showed up?

JULIAN. In my mind. I suddenly thought of her . . . saw her face . . . I couldn't shake it . . . I got up and left. Walked out.

HARVEY. You mean you wasted a whole stewardess? With the world full of so many hungry guys?

JULIAN. I'm not going to romance a different girl every night just to make you happy.

HARVEY. You're going to get married.

JULIAN. Married? (*Crossing down to HARVEY, grabbing him by the lapels.*) Who said anything about getting married?

HARVEY. Well, if you feel that way about your girl . . .

JULIAN. I feel that way *because* she's my girl. You'd never catch me feeling that way about a wife. Do you think I'm crazy? (*Circling above desk to D. L., indicating office, etc.*) I have a wonderful office, a wonderful practice, and a wonderful girl. Marriage would ruin all that.

HARVEY. (*Crosses to C.*) That's a very healthy outlook. But what about her?

JULIAN. No problem.

HARVEY. Girls want to get . . . (*Does wedding walk across stage to L.*)

JULIAN. Not Toni Simmons. She thinks I'm already married.

HARVEY. Julian. You pulled that old stunt on her?

JULIAN. I've never done it before, but this time I had to. When I first set eyes on Toni I knew this was the one. She could make me do anything.

HARVEY. It's scary.

JULIAN. She could change this whole pleasant life of mine. So . . . I told her I had a wife and three children.

HARVEY. The three children is a nice touch.

JULIAN. And I told it to her right away. Five minutes after we met—so that everything between us would be open and aboveboard.

HARVEY. Very good. Very good. It's such a big dirty rotten lie that it has class.

JULIAN. Thanks!

(JULIAN starts for operating room. HARVEY stops him.)

HARVEY. By the way, Julian, I too am having trouble with a girl. She's a very beautiful—

STEPHANIE. (*Coming out of operating room, crossing to desk and sitting.*) Mrs. Durant is ready for you, Doctor.

JULIAN. See you next week, Harvey.

HARVEY. (*Indignantly, grabbing JULIAN's arm, stopping him.*) Wait a minute! I listened to you about *your* girl. Let me tell you about *mine*.

STEPHANIE. Doctor—

HARVEY. I need some help.

JULIAN. (*Impatiently.*) But, Harvey, I—

HARVEY. (*Going on.*) She's beautiful . . . think of Botticelli's Springtime. Great figure—

JULIAN. Uh huh.

HARVEY. Beautiful eyes—

JULIAN. Uh huh. But her teeth need work.

HARVEY. They overlap a little, and I promised her that—

STEPHANIE. Doctor . . . Mrs. Durant—

JULIAN. You've pulled this before.

HARVEY. Julian—

JULIAN. (*Giving up, crossing u. c.*) Oh, send her around and I'll see what I can do. But don't you know any girls with straight teeth? (*He crosses below desk and up into operating room.*)

(STEPHANIE is working on her appointment book. She ignores HARVEY completely. He crosses R., turns to her.)

HARVEY. (*Approaching STEPHANIE carefully.*) Excuse me, Sergeant, uh, Miss Dickinson, Dr. Winston said I was to make an appointment for a lady friend of mine.

STEPHANIE. (*Trying to get rid of him quickly.*) How about two weeks from Wednesday at seven a.m.

HARVEY. You're kidding. I'm asleep at seven a.m.

STEPHANIE. I thought the appointment was for a lady.

HARVEY. That's right. We're both asleep at seven a.m. (*He chuckles, then quickly.*) I'm sorry. I hope I'm not shocking you. (*Leans on desk.*)

STEPHANIE. No, but it must be a terrible shock for her. Incidentally, who's paying for the treatment?

HARVEY. (*Crosses R. to pick up hat on seat by door.*) Put it on my tab.

STEPHANIE. There's no more room on your tab.

HARVEY. (*Cutting in.*) I'll take care of it. It's just that right now I'm between employment.

STEPHANIE. You know, Mr. Greenfield, I've never known what your employment is.

HARVEY. I'm an actor.

STEPHANIE. An actor?

HARVEY. Why do you look so startled? (*Growing a little annoyed, crossing back to STEPHANIE.*) Haven't you ever seen me on television?

STEPHANIE. No, I don't think so.

HARVEY. You're kidding. I'm on that tube all the time.

STEPHANIE. I'm sorry, Mr.—

HARVEY. Come on, Miss Dickinson, you must have seen me.

STEPHANIE. No, I swear it.

HARVEY. (*Refusing to believe.*) Everyone has seen my big hit. You know, woman is in the kitchen crying, her washing machine won't work. Then I walk in, carrying a little tool kit, and I say . . . (*Commercial voice.*) "Madam, your problem is an overabundance of suds. Try Sloslo. It contains Hexosloshinol to slosh those suds away." (*Posing as though holding a bottle.*) "Sloslo." You never saw that?

STEPHANIE. I hate myself for missing it.

HARVEY. (*Crossing to door.*) What about the appointment for my girl?

STEPHANIE. How about Thursday the fourth and five-thirty in the afternoon? Or is that too early?

HARVEY. We'll set the alarm. (*He goes.*)

(*JULIAN enters from operating room, turns and speaks to MRS. DURANT, whom we don't see.*)

JULIAN. Mrs. Durant, that will be set in a moment. Don't move and please keep your mouth open. (*He goes to STEPHANIE.*) Next patient here yet? (*Crossing D. L. C.*)

STEPHANIE. Not yet. You know, you'll have no time to go out for lunch. So I've prepared something.

JULIAN. Thank you.

STEPHANIE. I made some of your favorite sandwiches—chicken and egg salad.

JULIAN. Again?

STEPHANIE. You always like them.

JULIAN. I guess I do.

STEPHANIE. It's your sister's birthday today. I sent an azalea plant with your card on it.

JULIAN. (*Looks at her.*) She likes roses.

STEPHANIE. I know, but they were much too expensive. (*She hands him envelope.*) And this came for you—'Personal and Confidential.' (*JULIAN walks over, takes letter and starts to open it, crosses away L.*) And, Doctor, your tailor has called several times. You simply must find time to get in for fittings.

JULIAN. (*Cutting in.*) Okay, okay, okay. I'll try.

STEPHANIE. You always say that. I can't very well go in your place, any more than I can go to the barber for you, which, by the way, you could use as well.

JULIAN. Yes, yes!

STEPHANIE. I'm sorry if I annoy you.

JULIAN. (*As he reads the letter.*) Oh, God!

STEPHANIE. What's wrong, Doctor?

JULIAN. (*Crosses below desk, taking off white coat, goes into closet.*) I have to go out for a moment.

STEPHANIE. (*Rising.*) What about Mrs. Durant?

JULIAN. (*Off, his voice rising.*) I tell you I have to go!

STEPHANIE. Dr. Winston, please explain it calmly to me.

JULIAN. (*Off.*) Miss Dickinson, I have nothing to explain to you.

STEPHANIE. What will I say to the patients?

JULIAN. (*Re-appears in suit jacket, heads for door.*) Whatever you want. Get out of it somehow. Oh, God, I hope I don't get there too late. (*Hurries to door, followed by STEPHANIE.*)

STEPHANIE. Doctor, I know that letter came from a woman. Really, if your girl friends start coming before your patients—

JULIAN. (*Opens door, turns back to her.*) Miss Dickinson, shut up!

STEPHANIE. (*Shocked.*) Doctor, you've never said that to me before.

JULIAN. Remind me to say it more often. (*He goes.*)

STEPHANIE. Doctor— (*She is really shaken. PHONE rings. She crosses to desk, picks up phone.*) Hello, Dr. Winston's office . . . No, he's not here. Now look, Mr. Sullivan, if you have a message for the doctor, you had better give it to me . . . What? Toni is alive? But who is Toni? Hello . . . Hello? . . . (*She hangs up phone.*)

(MRS. DURANT comes running out of the operating room. She is covered with all the stuff dentists put on you and her mouth is still open, according to the doctor's instructions. Her cheeks are packed with stuff and when she speaks, she speaks through all this. Just sounds come out.)

MRS. DURANT. Where's the doctor?

(STEPHANIE waves off MRS. DURANT. The MUSIC blasts out loudly.)

BLACKOUT

ACT ONE

SCENE 3

Toni's apartment. We light up on TONI, sitting at the table L., in chair L., eating potato chips, drinking Coke and leafing through a magazine. Rock 'n Roll MUSIC is coming from radio. The door bursts open. JULIAN enters, doesn't see TONI, crosses R., looking for her.

JULIAN. Toni! Toni! You all right?

TONI. (*Calmly.*) I didn't know dentists made house calls.

JULIAN. (*Crossing back below bed to c.*) I knew it, I knew it, I knew it. Anyway, I should have known it. As a matter of fact, I did know it.

TONI. Know what?

JULIAN. That you wouldn't do it. (*Crosses to RADIO, turns it off.*)

TONI. I almost did. But then I had somebody phone you and say I didn't.

JULIAN. (*Crosses to c.*) Nobody phoned me. All I got was the letter. A whole day full of appointments, twenty patients coming, and you send a letter that you're going to kill yourself and then you don't. (*Crosses D. C.*)

TONI. Well, I'm sorry to disappoint you.

JULIAN. The whole thing was a fake, wasn't it?

TONI. Everything's a fake, Julian, including our love affair. There's no room for *me* in your life.

JULIAN. (*Crosses toward her.*) Toni, this doesn't sound like you.

TONI. I know. I must always be sweet . . . fun . . . accept everything with a smile, even when you break a date at the last minute.

JULIAN. Now we're getting to it. You mean all this is because I broke one lousy little date? It happens I had a meeting last night with a Swedish dentist. We were talking

shop. (*He crosses to her, tries to take her hands.*) Oh, sweetheart, why do we try to hurt each other?

TONI. (*She stops him with a hand gesture.*) Don't, Julian, I've made a decision. We're through.

JULIAN. Through? What are you talking about? We're so happy together.

TONI. We are?

JULIAN. Well, I'm happy together.

TONI. (*Rises.*) I'm fed up. When I love, it's all or nothing. I want a man of my own. For me alone. (*Crossing to kitchen cabinet and getting shopping bag.*) So here, I packed your pajamas and your cough syrup and your slippers and your robe— (*Throws it at him.*)

JULIAN. (*Cutting in.*) Stop it, Toni. (*He tosses the bag behind bed. There is a KNOCK on the door.*) Here everything was going so smoothly.

(*JULIAN opens the door. IGOR stands in the entrance with a paper bag in his hand. TONI sits L. of table again.*)

IGOR. I brought Toni some fruit.

JULIAN. (*Taking fruit.*) Thanks. (*Starts to close door.*)

TONI. Wait a minute, that's Igor.

IGOR. I didn't know you had company.

TONI. It's only Julian.

(*JULIAN has been looking at him very coldly.*)

IGOR. Oh, hello, Dr. Winston. I'm Igor Sullivan. (*Takes back bag of fruit.*) I just spoke to your nurse on the telephone.

JULIAN. (*Coldly.*) Something wrong with your teeth?

IGOR. (*Smiling.*) No, I just called to tell you that Toni was alive and you didn't have to worry about her letter. (*Crossing above table to refrigerator.*)

JULIAN. (*Stunned.*) Alive?

IGOR. Feeling all right, Toni? (*Putting fruit in refrigerator.*)

TONI. Oh, fine.

IGOR. (*Crossing back above table.*) I'll stop by later this evening, anyway, just to make sure you've turned off the gas.

JULIAN. (*Startled.*) The gas?

IGOR. The gas. (*He goes.*)

TONI. The gas.

JULIAN. The gas. (*He has been standing there, feeling miserable.*) Toni, I'm a bastard.

TONI. Now, Julian—

JULIAN. (*Sits in R. chair at table. Going on.*) A real bastard—

TONI. Please—

JULIAN. You really *did* try to kill yourself! And because of me.

TONI. I saw no other way out.

JULIAN. I'm a bastard. The biggest bastard in the whole world.

TONI. Julian, please, you're starting to make it sound like bragging. (*She rises, crosses and stands directly behind him.*) It wasn't really your fault. I knew what I was getting into. You've always told me the truth.

JULIAN. I should have kept my mouth shut.

TONI. You couldn't, Julian. You're a decent guy. And that's why I've loved you. And now I'm returning you to your wife and children, and I hope you will be very happy. (*Making motion as though hitting him in back of head.*)

JULIAN. No, Toni, no! It's going to be all right with us. I'm going to make up for everything.

TONI. (*Crosses to bed.*) Oh, I know how it will be. We'll go to Easthampton for a week end . . . we'll be happy. (*Sits on bed.*) Then I'll get another one of your cancellations and I'll feel worse than before.

JULIAN. (*Rises, crosses in a few steps.*) No, Toni, no week ends. I'm talking about a whole lifetime. Toni, I'm going to marry you.

TONI. What do you mean, "marry"?

JULIAN. You know, "Do you? I do. Do I? You do" . . . Marry. Right away.

TONI. What about your wife?

JULIAN. My wife? I'll divorce her.

TONI. What about your children?

JULIAN. I'll divorce them too.

TONI. Julian, this isn't funny.

JULIAN. I'm very serious. I should've thought of this long ago. Oh, baby, when I think you were ready to die because of me. (*Crosses, sits by her on bed.*)

TONI. Then you really do love me, Julian?

JULIAN. (*Tenderly.*) Are you just now finding it out?

(*They embrace.*)

TONI. (*Pulling away.*) Julian, not now.

JULIAN. (*Unhearing.*) I'm crazy about you.

TONI. (*Rises, crosses D. R.*) Not now.

JULIAN. Why not now?

TONI. (*Points.*) Igor is right next door . . . he can hear everything.

JULIAN. Igor's been right next door before.

TONI. But I hadn't met him then.

JULIAN. (*Rises.*) The sooner we move you out of here, the better. Soon you'll be Mrs. Julian Winston . . . (*Goes to her, puts his arms around her, holds her head against his shoulder with his right hand.*) "Mrs. Julian Winston." Imagine that. Me, a married man. (*She is startled and lifts her head. He quickly pushes it back on his shoulder.*) I mean, me, married to you.

TONI. (*Breaking loose.*) Julian, what will become of her? Your wife.

JULIAN. (*Walking away in annoyance.*) Why do we keep talking about my wife?

TONI. You'll have to make some arrangement about her. What do you figure on doing?

JULIAN. Simple. (*Snaps fingers.*) Hup. Out!

TONI. Is that what you'll say when you tire of me? (*Snaps fingers.*) "Hup. Out?"

JULIAN. Toni, this is different. I love you. My wife and I . . . why, I never even knew her.

TONI. How did the three children come, United Parcel?

JULIAN. Well, at the beginning I was polite. (*Sits on bed. Reaches for her hand. She pulls away.*) Don't worry about my wife. She'll be taken care of.

TONI. What if she refuses to give you a divorce?

JULIAN. She wouldn't dare. Let's forget her. (*Keeps reaching for her.*)

TONI. (*Crosses L.*) I can't, I can't. The thought of breaking up a home sort of spoils things.

JULIAN. (*Rising.*) I never thought you'd be like this. I think of you as so happy and carefree. (*He does a little happy movement with his hands and feet.*)

TONI. (*Imitating his movement.*) You don't really know me. I may do a lot of strange things . . . bad things . . . but I have standards.

JULIAN. (*Pacing in thought.*) What if . . . Toni, I haven't wanted to go into this, but what if . . . what if, it's my wife who wants the divorce?

TONI. Oh, God, you mean she found out about us?

JULIAN. Let's just say she wants the divorce too.

TONI. (*Thoughtfully.*) Well, if that's true . . .

JULIAN. (*Going to her and taking her hands.*) It is! It is!

TONI. (*Looks at him.*) Julian, in that case, I'd be proud to marry you.

JULIAN. Oh, darling! (*Embraces her.*)

TONI. (*Breaking away.*) But there is one thing you've got to do for me.

JULIAN. (*Holding her hands in a wide expansive gesture.*) Anything, darling, anything.

TONI. I'd like to meet her.

JULIAN. Who? (*Suddenly.*) My wife? (*He starts to pull away. TONI hangs onto his left hand. He crosses R., dragging TONI with him during the following.*)

TONI. Yes. I'd like to get things straight with her.

JULIAN. Oh, come on, Toni.

TONI. (*Doggedly.*) I want her to tell me herself that she wants to leave you.

JULIAN. (*Breaking free.*) She does! Have I ever lied to you?

TONI. (*Going right on.*) It's very important to me that she doesn't think of me as some evil homewrecker. (*Crossing L. C.*) I don't want to have to hide every time I see her somewhere. (*Sits on bed.*) Julian, if I don't meet her, we'll never have a happy day together.

JULIAN. (*Crossing to her.*) But . . .

TONI. (*Reaching her hand to him.*) Oh, baby—

JULIAN. (*Sits on bed. Melting.*) Oh, baby . . .

(*They embrace.*)

TONI. You'll arrange for us to meet, won't you, Julian?

JULIAN. (*Right now he'd promise anything.*) Yes, yes, honey. I'll arrange it.

(*Just before the LIGHTS are all out, we hear TONI.*)

TONI. (*Very firm again.*) Julian . . .

JULIAN. (*Sleepy-sounding.*) Yes, Toni, dear.

TONI. (*Deadly sure.*) I want to meet her.

JULIAN. Don't worry. You'll meet her.

BLACKOUT

ACT ONE

SCENE 4

Dr. Winston's office. STEPHANIE is at her desk. It's the afternoon of the same day. STEPHANIE is not at the moment the efficient, hard-working nurse that we saw at the beginning of the play. There are no patients around, no phone calls, her work is evidently all done and she is quite impatient. She sits there tapping a pencil and waiting. The door CHIME rings. She rises, goes to door and opens it.

STEPHANIE. Come in, Senor Sanchez.

(SENOR ARTURO SANCHEZ *crosses into room. He is a well-dressed South American. He looks tense and worried.*)

SANCHEZ. (*His English is fairly good with a pleasant Spanish accent.*) The doctor . . . he is waiting?

STEPHANIE. (*Closes door, crosses to desk.*) I tried to phone you at the U.N. but you had already left.

SANCHEZ. (*The fact is, he's scared.*) I was given an appointment for five o'clock.

STEPHANIE. I know, but the doctor had to go out this morning and he hasn't returned. He can't keep the appointment.

SANCHEZ. (*Straightens up and suddenly happy and blooming.*) Oh, really. Well, isn't that too bad! (*By now he is positively beaming.*)

STEPHANIE. (*The reproving, motherly nurse.*) You know, Señor Sanchez, I would say you sound relieved. (*SANCHEZ chuckles.*) You're not afraid of Dr. Winston? He's very gentle.

SANCHEZ. (*Puts down hat, crosses to her.*) It's funny . . . I'm not by nature a coward. In my own country I'm known as "El Bravo."

STEPHANIE. (*Acting impressed, sits.*) "El Bravo"! Wow!

SANCHEZ. I've been through six bloody revolutions. I've played a whole game of polo with a broken leg. I have sat in my seat at the United Nations and, without flinching, I have listened to ten full-length Cuban speeches. But dentists . . . (*Shakes his head.*)

STEPHANIE. (*Soothingly.*) I'll give you an appointment for next week.

SANCHEZ. No hurry. (*STEPHANIE looks in appointment book.*) You can make it next year. (*Small laugh.*) I'm really not a coward. (*He takes her hand.*)

STEPHANIE. (*Removes hand.*) We all have our little weaknesses.

SANCHEZ. (*Takes her hand again.*) I have several big ones. (*STEPHANIE looks at him a little startled.*) You

know, my dear, you're very charming . . . and so easy to talk to.

STEPHANIE. (*Removes hand again, picks up pencil.*) Gracias, señor. Now, how about—?

SANCHEZ. (*Taking pencil from her hand and crossing D. R.*) Miss Dickinson, I've been watching you ever since coming here. You are a very attractive woman and yet you try to conceal it.

STEPHANIE. (*Wryly.*) Very successfully, I'd say.

SANCHEZ. That uniform doesn't fool me. We Latins have a great eye for hidden beauty. You see, for centuries our women were all covered up—mantillas, long dresses, veils—so in self-defense Latin men had to develop an instinct for guessing what was underneath. (*STEPHANIE takes another pencil.*) You are a woman worth knowing.

STEPHANIE. What about next Thursday?

SANCHEZ. (*Crossing toward her.*) Wonderful! Where shall we meet?

STEPHANIE. This is you and Dr. Winston!

SANCHEZ. (*Crossing to her.*) Oh. But I'd like for us to have dinner together one of these evenings . . . a small dinner . . . candlelight, guitars—

STEPHANIE. (*With a twinkle.*) Will you bring along your wife?

SANCHEZ. (*Dead serious.*) My WIFE? You wouldn't like her. Nobody likes her. Now let's make it next Thursday after my appointment.

STEPHANIE. (*A bit more sharply.*) Señor Sanchez, I can't. You're a married man.

SANCHEZ. (*Crossing away R.*) I don't understand. If I'm married, that's my problem. What has that got to do with you? I would not be prejudiced if you were married. (*STEPHANIE writes in book. He sighs.*) Americans . . . (*He picks up hat on chair, opens door, then stops and turns.*) I still think you're very attractive. What is your first name? (*Crossing toward her.*)

STEPHANIE. Stephanie. They call me "La Brava."

SANCHEZ. (*Salutes her.*) Hasta la vista, La Brava.

STEPHANIE. Hasta la vista.

JULIAN *enters suddenly through the door. SANCHEZ turns, freezes for a moment in fright at sight of JULIAN.*)

JULIAN. (*Indicating operating room.*) Senor Sanchez! Come, I can take you now.

SANCHEZ. (*Quickly.*) I can't take you now. (*He scoots out.*)

STEPHANIE. Well, you made him happy.

JULIAN. (*Closes door.*) I'm glad. Miss Dickinson, I'm sorry I ran out on you this morning. (*Crosses to desk.*)

STEPHANIE. (*Coldly.*) I managed.

JULIAN. I knew you would.

STEPHANIE. (*Irritated.*) Oh, you knew I would. Well, I didn't know I would. But I did. Everything got straightened out. I told Mrs. Durant some story about your mother being bitten by a tsetse fly or something. (*Very sarcastic.*) And I gave new appointments to all the other patients.

JULIAN. I can always count on you in a jam.

STEPHANIE. Thanks, Doctor. (*Rises.*) Now, if you don't need me for anything else tonight— (*PHONE rings.*) Dr. Winston's office . . . Is it about an appointment? . . . Oh. (*Hands phone to JULIAN.*) It's personal. (*She turns away from him.*)

JULIAN. (*Into phone.*) Hello. (*Moves away from desk.*) I'm busy now . . . Don't worry, you'll meet her . . . 'Bye. (*Hangs up.*)

STEPHANIE. I'll just straighten up inside and leave. (*Crosses to operating room.*)

JULIAN. Miss Dickinson . . .

STEPHANIE. (*Stops and turns.*) Doctor?

JULIAN. Are you in a hurry this evening? (*Crosses L. of desk.*)

STEPHANIE. Why no, Doctor. If there's anything I can do for you, I'd be—

JULIAN. Well—

STEPHANIE. —glad to stay.

JULIAN. I'd like to have a little talk with you.

STEPHANIE. Talk? With me? What about? (*She slowly sits at her desk.*)

JULIAN. You know, you and I have worked side by side for years and I've suddenly realized how little I know about you. I really don't know who you are.

STEPHANIE. I'm Stephanie Dickinson. You see me at my desk. I'm out in the open.

JULIAN. But once you leave here at night you . . . you do continue to exist? Who is Stephanie Dickinson?

STEPHANIE. Why would you want to know?

JULIAN. Go on. I want to hear. Everything. All about you.

STEPHANIE. This is silly. (*Laughs, pulls dress down.*)

JULIAN. No, go ahead.

(*Crossing below to R., STEPHANIE thinks for a moment, then begins to talk in the manner of a person discussing something she's never discussed before. Or even thought about. The words will come out fairly slowly and carefully as she goes through her life, item by item.*)

STEPHANIE. I live in Jackson Heights . . .

JULIAN. Alone?

STEPHANIE. Yes. I mean, no. I live with my mother. We have three rooms, actually three and a half—there's a dining alcove. It's a very big dining alcove so you could really call it four rooms. That's where we keep the television. (*JULIAN crosses L. of desk.*) We like to watch the news when we're eating. I like Walter Cronkite. My mother likes Huntley and Brinkley better. So we don't often watch Walter Cronkite.

(*There is a long silence. JULIAN has been studying her carefully, during this long recital. Now, when the silence happens, he helps her a bit.*)

JULIAN. And what do you do after Huntley-Cronkite . . . after dinner?

STEPHANIE. I go for a walk with Frieda, my cocker spaniel.

JULIAN. Frieda? That's a hell of a name for a cocker spaniel.

STEPHANIE. Frieda loves it. And some evenings I visit my sister. She and my brother-in-law and I like to play Scrabble.

JULIAN. Scrabble. That's fun.

STEPHANIE. My brother-in-law is very good at it, but he cheats. They have two little boys. I'm very fond of my nephews. On my day off I like to take them to the park or the circus. Other times I go to the movies. I like movies. Foreign movies. Italian. I like Mr. Marcello Mastroianni. He seems very intelligent.

JULIAN. What do you do on your vacation?

STEPHANIE. Ah, that's when I change. I become another person. I saddle up my little MG.

JULIAN. A sports car! Hey!

STEPHANIE. I told you I change in the summer. I break away from everything and go zooming up to Cape Cod.

JULIAN. Alone.

STEPHANIE. No, with my mother. Mother loves the Cape and she's marvelous company. Of course we also take Frieda.

JULIAN. Naturally.

STEPHANIE. We rent a little cottage by the water. It's part of an artists' colony. Quite Bohemian.

JULIAN. Bohemian! Really wild, huh?

STEPHANIE. Mother wears blue jeans. You ought to see her.

JULIAN. I'd love to. But . . . Miss Dickinson, I've enjoyed hearing about your family and your mother and Frieda. But, what about you . . . your personal life? I mean . . . *(He gropes for the right word.)*

STEPHANIE. *(Calmly.)* You mean men?

JULIAN. Yes. What I'd like to know is . . . I don't want to pry . . . *(A little embarrassed chuckle.)*

STEPHANIE. At the moment there are no men in my life.

JULIAN. Ah, you said "at the moment." Then there have been men.

STEPHANIE. Doctor, I'm no sex goddess, but I haven't spent my life in a tree. I was even in love once.

JULIAN. Oh!

STEPHANIE. Astounding, isn't it? But I was. Terribly in love . . . it lasted almost three years. But . . .

JULIAN. But?

STEPHANIE. He was married.

JULIAN. (*Not thinking.*) Him too?

STEPHANIE. What do you mean, "him too"?

JULIAN. Nothing. I was thinking of a similar case.

STEPHANIE. (*She looks at him.*) Yes, I sent him back to his wife and children. I went out with a couple of other men. Very attractive, but they were married too. It's strange, Doctor, I seem to be the type that attracts married men. I guess I look safe or something. Frankly, I hadn't planned on being an old maid.

JULIAN. An old maid? You've a long way to go.

STEPHANIE. Yes, but I'm making very fast progress. (*Rises.*) Well, I've talked an awful lot, Doctor. I'm afraid I'm going to be late for dinner. (*She starts to go again.*)

JULIAN. Miss Dickinson . . .

STEPHANIE. Doctor?

JULIAN. I'm glad we had this little talk. You're a very rare person. Sensitive and generous.

STEPHANIE. (*Modestly.*) Oh, I guess I'm all right.

JULIAN. I have a feeling that if I found myself in trouble, I could count on you to be on my side . . . to help me.

STEPHANIE. (*She puts left knee on her chair and very earnestly leans toward JULIAN.*) You know that's true, Doctor.

JULIAN. But sometimes a problem comes up that's so difficult that . . . (*He's stuck.*)

STEPHANIE. Why don't you try me?

(*He looks into her eyes momentarily, then starts L.*)

STEPHANIE is watching him intently. Her knee is still on the chair and she's leaning forward on the desk.)

JULIAN. (*Speaking as he crosses D. L.*) You could do me a great service. Miss Dickinson, I'm greatly in need . . . of a wife.

(*As he says the word "wife," STEPHANIE'S chair slides from under her and she falls forward on the desk. This is a quick fall. She catches herself with her arms and recovers quickly.*)

STEPHANIE. A wife! Doctor, I . . . (*She is tremendously flustered. She straightens her desk, puts on her glasses.*) I . . . this is something I never expected. Wife!

JULIAN. (*Suddenly realizing what she thinks.*) Oh, please understand something . . . (*Crossing to her.*) I need a wife temporarily . . . fifteen or twenty minutes.

STEPHANIE. (*Dazed.*) Fifteen or twenty . . .

JULIAN. (*Crossing R.*) I'm telling this all very badly. Miss Dickinson, I want someone to play the part of my wife.

STEPHANIE. (*Suddenly stonefaced.*) Someone like me.

JULIAN. (*Going to her.*) If you only would. It wouldn't involve any . . . uh . . . All you'd have to do is to tell a certain person that you want a divorce. (*Crossing right again.*) You see, Miss Dickinson, I've suddenly decided to get married. (*He stops and turns.*) Oh, I didn't tell you.

STEPHANIE. (*Quickly.*) No, you didn't.

JULIAN. Well, I have.

STEPHANIE. Congratulations.

JULIAN. Thanks. But the girl I want to marry—her name is Toni Simmons—

STEPHANIE. How do you do?

JULIAN. (*Crosses D. R. C.*) She thinks I'm already married.

STEPHANIE. (*Ironically.*) Now, whoever could have told her that?

JULIAN. At the time I had my reasons. I'll straighten it out later on. But right now I've got to dig up a wife. (*Going back to her.*)

STEPHANIE. (*Takes glasses off.*) Right now stop digging and tell the girl the truth. Good night. (*She starts to go.*)

JULIAN. I can't tell her now. She's liable to . . . she's so . . . so young. She has suffered from so many unfortunate episodes. I'm the first decent man she's ever known.

STEPHANIE. Are you quoting her or you?

JULIAN. (*Taking few steps R.*) Toni's a very sensitive girl. Won't marry me till she meets my wife. She doesn't want to be a homewrecker. Isn't that sweet?

STEPHANIE. Just darling.

JULIAN. (*Crosses to desk, takes pencil and writes address on a pad.*) She works at the Village L.P., and if you'd just go to see her and—

STEPHANIE. I'm sorry, Doctor, but I loathe lies. (*Turns her back on him.*)

JULIAN. No more than I do, Miss Dickinson, no more than I. (*Throws pencil down.*) But I don't know how to get out of this one. Miss Dickinson, you hold my happiness in your two hands. (*Extending hands.*)

STEPHANIE. (*Extending hands, faces him.*) Doctor, for many years these two hands of mine that now hold your happiness, have only handled your surgical instruments and your appointment book. You've managed to handle your happiness without any help from me. Now you want to use me in this disgusting way. You just tricked me into talking about myself so I'd break down and . . . (*She's getting a little shaky. Takes tissue from box on desk.*) What you did wasn't very pretty, Doctor— (*Crosses R.*) not very pretty. (*She goes into operating room.*)

JULIAN. (*Left alone.*) You can't get decent help these days.

BLACKOUT

ACT ONE

SCENE 5

The L.P. Record Shop in the Village. It's afternoon a few days later. We hear some MUSIC playing in the back of the shop. TONI is putting records on a shelf. MUSIC stops. A MAN comes on from L. carrying a few records which he has evidently been trying out. He crosses to R. of her.

MAN. I don't like any of these. (*Hands her the records.*)

TONI. Too bad.

MAN. What have you got there?

TONI. Albinoni.

MAN. Oh, I like him. I'll try it. (*Takes record.*)

TONI. Hey, you've been playing records all day. Why don't you ever *buy* one?

MAN. I'm a music lover. (*He goes L.*)

(*TONI looks at the pile of records with a sigh, starts putting them away on the top shelf. STEPHANIE enters from the street door R. Actually, it's her first change of clothes in the play. She's wearing a very attractive suit and very smart hat and shoes. She carries gloves and a good looking purse. As she comes in, she spots TONI and looks her over.*)

TONI. (*From the ladder.*) May I help you, Madam?

STEPHANIE. (*Every inch the upper middle class lady.*) I'm really not looking for anything in particular. I just thought I'd browse a bit. (*Crosses R.*)

TONI. Fine. I'm here if you want me.

STEPHANIE. (*Looks at TONI, crosses D. L. C.*) I've heard there's a marvelous recording of uh . . . (*Trying to think of something.*) of Horowitz's last concert. Do you have it?

TONI. Horowitz? We're all out, but I can send it to you.

STEPHANIE. (*Crossing D. R.*) That will be fine. I believe

my husband has a charge account here. Send the record to . . . (*Laying it on.*) Mrs. . . . Julian . . . Winston.

(TONI *has been putting records away as she talks. Now when she hears JULIAN's name, she misses the shelf with a record and it drops.*)

TONI. (*Coming down ladder and crossing to STEPHANIE.*) You?

STEPHANIE. (*Nodding.*) Me.

TONI. You didn't come on account of Horowitz?

STEPHANIE. No. You see, Miss Simmons—

TONI. Call me Toni.

STEPHANIE. (*Graciously.*) Thank you. Toni . . . Dr. Winston, my husband, said that you were most anxious to meet me. Well, here I am. (*She sits chair R. and crosses her legs.*)

TONI. (*After a moment, a bit impatiently.*) Did he . . . did he tell you about his—our plans?

STEPHANIE. (*Same gracious smile.*) The divorce? Naturally.

TONI. (*After another pause.*) Well?

STEPHANIE. Well what?

TONI. You don't mind?

STEPHANIE. My husband and I are in complete agreement about the divorce.

TONI. (*Letting out a sharp breath of relief.*) Whew! That makes me very happy!

STEPHANIE. (*As sweetly as possible.*) I'm glad.

TONI. You see, Mrs. Winston— (*Sudden thought.*) You know, I don't know your first name.

STEPHANIE. (*Thinks for a moment.*) Mrs. Winston will do very nicely. Of course I won't be Mrs. Winston very much longer. (*There is a slight touch of real and fake sadness in that last phrase.*)

TONI. (*Suddenly.*) Then you do mind.

STEPHANIE. Of course I don't. Things between the doctor and me have become . . . impossible.

TONI. I can't tell you how *good* that makes me feel.

STEPHANIE. (*Looking at her with a smile.*) I've really made your day.

TONI. It's just that I didn't want to be the cause of your divorce. I never pushed Julian into it. I am no home-wrecker.

STEPHANIE. I'll remember that. (*Rises, speaks gravely, crossing to TONI.*) Now, Toni, may I ask you a question?

TONI. Anything.

STEPHANIE. Are you absolutely sure you love Julian?

TONI. You *can't* ask *that*!

STEPHANIE. I just did. Do you love him?

TONI. Madly! Wildly! Desperately!

STEPHANIE. (*Cutting in and crossing D. L.*) Just so long as you're fond of him. I don't want him to end up unhappy and bitter.

TONI. (*Crossing to her.*) Oh, I understand, especially after he's just had such a terrible marriage.

STEPHANIE. (*Stiffening.*) Not so terrible! Our marriage, after all, lasted ten years and we still have a very deep respect for each other.

TONI. Of course.

STEPHANIE. I've always had to look after Dr. Winston, my husband. You know, aside from his profession, at which he's a master, the doctor is a very vulnerable man. An idealist . . . a child . . . a silly child . . . damned silly child. (*Crosses L.*)

TONI. (*Following.*) Also an adorable child.

STEPHANIE. I guess you *do* love him. Well, now that you've heard what you wanted to hear, I'll be running along. (*Holds out her hand to TONI. TONI takes it.*) I do hope you have better luck with Julian than I did.

TONI. Mrs. Winston . . . What about you? What are you going to do?

STEPHANIE. Forget about me. I'll ride off into the sunset . . . or something.

TONI. It's just that . . . I want to be sure you're all right.

STEPHANIE. I'll write you every day. (*She starts for street door.*)

TONI. (*Hurrying after her and stopping her.*) Mrs. Winston, who's going to tell the children?

STEPHANIE. (*Stopping dead. No one has told her about this.*) The children. (*Crossing D. R.*) The children.

TONI. (*Crossing toward her.*) It's going to be tough explaining such a horrible thing to those three little children.

STEPHANIE. (*Pulling herself together and crossing down.*) Three. We will have to tell the children . . . Three. (*Thinking rapidly.*) I'll tell them. Julian's no good at that sort of thing.

TONI. How will they take it?

STEPHANIE. Oh, they'll get used to it. At least now I'll be able to devote myself to them full time. I'm afraid, I haven't been a very good mommy because I've spent so much time with Julian, helping him with his work. (*Catches herself.*) Of course, he does have a nurse.

TONI. I know. I hear Miss Dickinson is marvelous.

STEPHANIE. She is.

TONI. One of those sterling old maids. Probably madly in love with the boss.

STEPHANIE. Did Julian tell you that?

TONI. No. But the way he described her—

STEPHANIE. How *did* he describe her?

TONI. He didn't really describe her. But once when he was working late, I felt a sudden pang of jealousy about Miss Dickinson, and I told Julian about it and he laughed and laughed . . . (*TONI laughs.* STEPHANIE *responds by laughing rather painfully.*) Have you ever been jealous of her?

(*MUSIC begins.*)

STEPHANIE. No. Besides, any woman who's married to the dashing Dr. Julian Winston had better not be the jealous type. She'd have no time for anything else. I shouldn't be saying this to you.

TONI. It's all right. I know Julian must have played around. But, after all, when a man has a terrible marriage—

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