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SF PERUSALS

Every Family Has One

A Comedy in Three Acts

by George Batson

A Samuel French Acting Edition



SAMUEL FRENCH
FOUNDED 1830

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EVERY FAMILY HAS ONE

STORY OF THE PLAY

The Reardons are a typical American family whose eccentricities, if hilarious, are only normal. Laura, the mother, is a social climber who tells tales about her glorious ancestry. She is deliriously happy because she has engineered a match between her daughter, Marcia, and wealthy Sherwin Parker. The youngest Reardon, Penelope, is a demon with a slingshot and the piano. Warry, the only son, is positive he is the coming Eugene O'Neill. Reginald, the father, would rather tinker with the automobile than ticker tape, and Nana, the wise-cracking grandmother, is only concerned with Bing Crosby records and getting rid of the Parkers. Nana succeeds in doing this with the help of Cousin Lily, an adorable liar from down home with stage aspirations. Lily, arriving unexpectedly, agrees to impersonate another Cousin Lily if Nana will help her get an acting job. Her performance as the skeleton in the Reardon closet is so convincing and the lurid facts she reveals so hilariously shocking that the mighty Parkers take to their heels in a hurry and Marcia is reunited with the boy she really loves. Nana returns to her Crosby records with the satisfaction of a job well done and Warry decides that even though his distant relative is a bit on the daft side, she's the only girl for him.

DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERS

PENELOPE REARDON *is a precocious eleven.*

LAURA REARDON, *the mother of the family, is pretty, young and is fundamentally sound in spite of her often scatterbrained responses.*

MRS. PARKER (BESSIE) *is a tall, aristocratic woman in her late forties. She gives the impression of looking down on everybody and everything.*

NANA REARDON *is an active, vigorous, shrewd lady of sixty-odd years. She has a quick and sharp wit and the habit of saying what she thinks. People call her crotchety until they get to know the generous soul beneath her gruff exterior.*

ESSIE, *the maid of all work, is tall, woebegone, always expects the worst.*

REGINALD REARDON, *the man of the house, is pleasant, easy-going and in his late forties.*

MARCIA REARDON *is sweet, pretty and twenty.*

WARRY *is seventeen. He would be good-looking if he were better groomed.*

MR. PARKER (JAMES) *is big and blustering and fifty.*

SHERWIN PARKER *is twenty-five and good-looking in a plain way.*

LILY REARDON *is a pretty, vibrant girl of seventeen or eighteen.*

TODD GALLOWAY *is tall, good-looking, about twenty-two.*

The following is a copy of program of "EVERY FAMILY HAS ONE" as presented by Northwestern University Theatre, July 29, 30, 31 and August, 1942, in its premiere performances:

EVERY FAMILY HAS ONE

By GEORGE BATSON

THE CHARACTERS
(In the order in which they speak)

PENELOPE REARDON ..... *Janis Hays*
LAURA REARDON ..... *Florence Schram*
MRS. JAMES PARKER ..... *Dixie Fanckboner*
ESSIE ..... *Katherine Seyl*
NANA REARDON ..... *Barbara Cattin*
REGINALD REARDON ..... *Daniel Hauf*
MARCIA REARDON ..... *Caroline Johnson*
WARRY REARDON ..... *Charles Morrison*
JAMES PARKER ..... *James Horne*
SHERWIN PARKER ..... *Ralph Beeson*
LILY REARDON ..... *Jo Ann McKeown*
TODD GALLOWAY ..... *Tom Hayes*

THE SCENES

The action of the play takes place in the living room of the Reardons' home in Fernwood, a suburban town in New Jersey.

ACT ONE—*An afternoon in May—about 4 o'clock.*

Intermission—8 minutes.

ORIGINAL PROGRAM—*Continued*

ACT TWO—*Shortly after dinner that night.*

Intermission—8 minutes.

ACT THREE—*The next morning.*

Clarence A. Miller, Director

Setting designed by Hal Kopel

Every Family Has One

ACT ONE

DESCRIPTION OF SETTING: *The scene is the Reardons' living room in Fernwood, New Jersey, a suburb of New York City. It is a large, bright room of a prosperous, middle-class family, furnished with good taste in a modern adaptation of Georgian Colonial. The wallpaper is a warm yellow in tone, with a large pattern in light blue-green and touches of light magenta, while the woodwork is a warm oyster gray. The room opens off a hallway upstage where, to the Right, is the front door and, to the Left, the door to the dining room and kitchen. A stairway goes up Left to the rooms upstairs. There is a window between the front door and the stair. In the large archway between the room and the hall are two built-in bookshelves, with a fluted column running from each bookshelf to the top of the arch. In the room itself, downstage Right, is a French window opening into a garden. A built-in windowseat is on each side of the French window. Downstage Left is a door into the study. The furniture of the room consists of a sofa with a long table behind it on stage Left Center and an easy chair stage Right Center with a footstool in*

front of it, a gateleg table to the Left of it, and an ottoman to the Left of the table. In the upstage Right corner of the room is a spinet piano and a bench, and in the up Left corner a radio-phonograph and a ladder-back chair. The room contains many dainty touches, such as ivy in glass bowls hanging in the French window, flowers on the bookshelves, etc., that show Laura's decorative instinct. A pleasant, friendly place, it seems especially warm and cheerful this spring afternoon. French doors are partly open, allowing the sunlight to stream in from the garden. The furniture is mostly imitation Colonial with a few authentic pieces for effect. On the sofa are several cushions; behind sofa on the table are a large vase of flowers and several magazines. Telephone on stand in hall up Center. Envelopes piled on table above sofa.

TIME: *An afternoon in May—about four o'clock.*

As the Curtain rises terrible SOUNDS are in the air. PENELOPE REARDON, *a precocious eleven, is seated at the piano practicing her scales with grim and noisy determination.* PENELOPE *grows tired of playing scales, looks out French door, down Right, then upstairs—all clear, so she starts on "St. Louis Blues." She sings words of chorus, then emits an occasional "Ha-a-a!" in "boogey-woogey" fashion.* PENELOPE *hears* LAURA *singing off up Left on platform, so resumes scales.*

LAURA. *(Enters and stops on platform. She is carrying two vases of flowers)* Penelope, stop that dreadful banging, *please. (Comes down to above* R. *of table* L.C.*)* Mrs. Parker may be resting.

PENELOPE. *(Her hands dropping on her knees)* But Mother, I'm in the mood for music.

LAURA. *(Crosses to above* L. *end of table—begins arranging flowers after placing them on table)* That racket has nothing to do with music. A mystery why you're forever practicing lately. *(Suspiciously; turns to* PENELOPE*)* And it seems you only practice when Mrs. Parker is resting.

PENELOPE. I can't help it if she's resting *all* the time.

LAURA. *(Arranging the flowers in the vase)* She does rest a lot, but I guess it's the different climate or something.

PENELOPE. Why?

LAURA. Well, the altitude is higher or maybe it's lower. Anyway, it's different. *(Carries one vase up to bookcase* L.*)*

PENELOPE. *(Interested)* But why should that make her sleepy?

LAURA. *(Puts down vase)* I don't know *why, (Turns to* PENELOPE*)* Penelope. It just *does. (Crosses back to table)* I believe that in New York society women like Mrs. Parker take naps every afternoon.

PENELOPE. *(Sighing)* I wish she'd go back to New York and her society and her *naps.*

LAURA. *(Anxiously. Crosses up to up* C. *by step, carrying other vase)* Penelope, shh! Suppose Mrs. Parker heard you. She'd be terribly hurt. She might even call off the marriage. And Marcia is very lucky having Sherwin Parker— *(Up to bookcase* R.*)* one of *the* Parkers—for a fiancé. *(Puts vase on bookcase.)*

PENELOPE. Moms, you know somethin'?

LAURA. Oh, *(Turns to* PENELOPE*)* that expression! Of course I know something. *(Comes down half step)* What is it?

PENELOPE. *(Telling important news and good joke)* Nana said Sherwin is a codfish.

LAURA. *(In horror)* Nana should be ashamed. Evidently she doesn't appreciate a fine family. *(Crossing to the piano and patting* PENELOPE'S *shoulder)* Won't *you* be proud, dear, when your sister belongs to the four hundred?

PENELOPE. Four hundred what?

LAURA. Four hundred is what we call the society *set.*

PENELOPE. Why?

LAURA. I don't know why, Penelope. We just *do.*

PENELOPE. *(Thoughtfully, finger to forehead)* Well, if Marcia belongs will she have to take a nap every afternoon?

(MRS. PARKER *begins to come downstairs.)*

LAURA. *(Wearily)* Penelope, go outside and play. *(Crosses down* R.; *opens French door)* You're giving mother a headache. *(Crosses* L. *to down Center.* MRS. PARKER (BESSIE) *enters from* R. *A tall, aristocratic woman in her late forties, she gives the impression of looking down on everybody and everything.* LAURA *sees her; crosses to her)* Oh, Mrs. Parker, did we wake you?

MRS. PARKER. *(Going to the sofa)* No, I had set the alarm. (LAURA *motions* MRS. PARKER *to a seat on center of sofa.* MRS. PARKER *sits. As* PENELOPE *resumes her scales)* My, is she *never* away from that piano?

LAURA. *(Down to* MRS. PARKER. LAURA *turns toward* PENELOPE*)* I was the same way when I was a child. *(Half step toward* PENELOPE*)* Penelope, not now! *(Two more steps toward her)* Go play with lovely little *(Gesture)* whosis who moved next door yesterday. *(Turns back toward* MRS. PARKER.*)*

PENELOPE. *(Picks up slingshot from piano bench)*

Her name isn't whosis. *(Crosses down to French doors; begins playing with slingshot as she goes)* It's Maudie.

LAURA. Well, *(Turns toward* PENELOPE*)* play with her anyway. *(Reaction as she sees slingshot. By this time* PENELOPE *is down to French doors. Steps toward her)* And leave that slingshot here. (PENELOPE *turns toward* L.) I'm sure Maudie hasn't a slingshot.

PENELOPE. Maybe not *(Regretfully tossing the slingshot into the easy chair)* but she's got a peachy air rifle and lots of buckshot. *(Turns and skips out through French door.)*

LAURA. *(Reaction, then turns to* MRS. PARKER *with helpless gesture)* Children, they're so—so childish. *(Crosses to sofa, above* MRS. PARKER*)* Our new neighbors look lovely. *(Sits)* Anyway, I saw fine furniture going in. There's a rumor that they're related to *the* Winthrops. They signed the Declaration of Independence. Or was it the Emancipation Proclamation?

MRS. PARKER. The Plymouth Charter, I think.

LAURA. Well, something historical, anyway.

MRS. PARKER. *(Gushingly)* It's been *too* sweet of you to have me here while Mr. Parker and Sherwin were away. My little apartment in New York would have been so lonely without them. Twenty rooms, you know, *are* lonely when they're *empty*—in spite of all the servants. And then, too, this has given us the chance to become acquainted. You're such a remarkable family. Never a harsh word, never a quarrel—

LAURA. Oh, we get along famously. Of course, I have to make concessions, but then that's why mothers are born.

(There is the sudden sound of someone TYPING furiously on an old and noisy typewriter. Both

*(*WOMEN *look toward the study. TYPING continues softly.)*

MRS. PARKER. What's he writing now?

LAURA. *(Rises; crosses to study door)* Another book. (MRS. PARKER *moves* L. *on sofa and turns, facing study)* He just finishes one and goes right ahead with another. *(Closes door.)*

MRS. PARKER. *(As the noise of typing continues, but not so loudly)* He certainly *sounds* energetic. (LAURA *turns toward* MRS. PARKER) Does he just sit in there, writing all the time?

LAURA. *(Crossing toward* MRS. PARKER*)* Well, every now and then he gets up and *paces. (Sits* L. *of* MRS. PARKER.*)*

MRS. PARKER. You know Mr. Parker is still willing to give him that job.

LAURA. Just wait until he discovers his first book isn't the masterpiece he thinks it is. Why, none of the Reardons were writers. *(Airily)* No, they were all just adventurers. I *did* tell you that one of my ancestors was with Sir Walter Raleigh when he discovered the Fountain of Youth?

MRS. PARKER. It's such a comfort, tracing your family way back. And not being afraid of what you'll find. That's one thing Mr. Parker and I demanded, that our Sherwin marry into a family as fine as our own. *(TYPING makes a last spurt—then stops. After typing stops)* Couldn't he get a noiseless?

LAURA. He's—he's sentimental. *(With a sigh)* I do worry. He's not going through this stage as fast as he went through the others. You know, the fireman stage, the baseball player stage. Once he even wanted to go to the Klondike and yell *(Dramatize—arm up in air)* "mush—mush" at a lot of dogs.

MRS. PARKER. Often I've looked up and caught him staring at me *so* strangely. *(Mimic stare, using*

glasses) Such an expression. Oh, well, perhaps he was studying *(Smoothing down corset)* my character.

LAURA. Yes, he does write about practically *anything. (Hand to face)* Oh, dear, I mean— *(Quickly, reaching out and touching arm of* MRS. PARKER *reassuringly)* If I make him give up writing he'll blame me all his life. I just can't have that. There's nothing worse than wanting to do something and not get the chance to do it. *(Softly)* I—I always wanted to sing, but my parents wouldn't let me study it. I've always had regrets. That's why I want Warry to find out for himself.

MRS. PARKER. But remember *(CLOCK strikes five)* spare the rod and— *(Glancing at her watch. Rises on line)* Heavens, the train is due any moment. *(Crosses to up* C.*)* I'd better hurry if I'm to meet Sherwin and his father.

LAURA. *(Rises.* MRS. PARKER *turns toward* L.*)* Don't you want me to drive down with you? *(Up to* MRS. PARKER.*)*

MRS. PARKER. *(As they start up to arch)* No, thank you. I'll find the station easily enough.

LAURA. *(As they go off up through arch to* R.*) Do* hurry—for Marcia's sake. She hasn't seen Sherwin for three weeks. And when you're in love three weeks is just three eternities. *(Last part of line is from offstage. The stage is deserted for a second.)*

(NANA REARDON *enters through the French doors. An active, vigorous, shrewd lady of sixty-odd years,* NANA *has a quick and sharp wit and the habit of saying what she thinks. People call her crotchety until they get to know the generous soul beneath her gruff exterior. She dresses simply.* NANA *carries in box of chocolate mints and a record album of latest Bing Crosby cowboy songs—puts records and candy on table down*

R.C., *then starts taking off light-weight coat as* ESSIE *enters from dining room through center arch.* ESSIE, *the maid of all work, steps down both steps from level to floor in one step.* ESSIE *is tall, woebegone; always expects the worst. She is carrying a small tray with a glass of milk and several doughnuts on it.)*

NANA. *(Turns as she hears* ESSIE *enter)* Where are you going, my pretty maid?

ESSIE. *(Turns back to* NANA*)* Just taking some doughnuts in to Mr. Warry. (NANA *puts coat on chair)* If you ask me, he must be hungry, banging away in there all day. Of course, nobody asked me—

NANA. No wonder the boy is never hungry at mealtime. Well, go ahead, fill him up. Here—*(Crosses to* ESSIE *and takes two doughnuts)* Let me taste one. *(Tasting one)* Umm—good. (ESSIE *crosses down* L. *to door to study)* Not so light as the kind I made. But they're good, Essie.

ESSIE. *(At the study door, unhappily. Turns to* NANA*)* I know they're good. They're for the Parkers. I don't know what this house is coming to. Doughnuts for breakfast. *(With foreboding)* And tonight at dinner I'm to serve finger-bowls.

NANA. What—to eat?

ESSIE. No, to dip your fingers in. And I'm to put napkins on just the same. *(She shakes her head and goes into the study.)*

(NANA *smiles after her and crosses down to below table down* R.C., *eating the doughnut as* REGINALD REARDON *enters* C. *from* L. *carrying tools.* REGINALD, *the man of the house, is pleasant, easy-going and in his late forties. He is dressed in overalls and carries a hammer, a saw and a small kit of tools. He is singing "Heigh ho! Heigh ho! It's off to work we go" as he enters.)*

REGINALD. *(Sees doughnut held in* NANA'S *hand as he approaches her. He puts tools down on ottoman and kit on floor—takes doughnut, bites into it)* Yum, what doughnuts! Nothing like doughnuts after a hard day's work.

NANA. *(Drily)* I thought that was why you didn't go into the office today. You needed a rest.

REGINALD. *(Cheerfully)* I know, Mother—but all these little things around here needed fixing, so I thought—

NANA. I know what you thought. Can't fool me, my son. You're never happy unless you're all dressed up like a wrecking crew, putting something out of commission. *(Crosses to chair; picks up coat and slingshot.)*

REGINALD. You won't call me a wrecking crew when you see how I'm going to fix the car.

NANA. I remember that last time you fixed the car. *(Sits chair* R.C., *holding her coat in her lap; puts slingshot on table)* The bottom fell out.

REGINALD. Now, now, Mother—that's a slight exaggeration. It was only the motor that fell out. *(Finishing the doughnut)* Just like you used to make. Why don't you ever do any more baking, Mother?

NANA. Because according to Laura, a lady mustn't be seen in the kitchen in these parts. It just isn't done. *(Soberly)* Laura worries me, Reginald. What's gotten into her since Marcia met that Sherwin Parker? She just isn't herself.

REGINALD. Oh, you know how it is. The Parkers are mighty important society folks and Laura's trying to impress them.

NANA. Pooh! Pooh! There's something trickey about those Parkers. People who *really* are important don't go around talking about it all the time. Anyway, he's too anxious to get you to merge your business with his.

REGINALD. *(Quickly picks up tools and kit)* He just thinks it would be profitable for both of us. *(Crosses to the French door)* You're prejudiced.

NANA. I'm (REGINALD *stops and turns back to* NANA*)* also sure he knows about your being promised that Government contract. Do you think Laura told Mrs. Parker about it?

REGINALD. Laura talks a lot but she never tells secrets. Don't tell her I'm out in the driveway. *(He throws this line over his shoulder as he exits)* She never wants me to be seen in public in overalls.

NANA. *(Calling after him as he exits.* ESSIE *begins backing out of study, acting as if she had seen an apparition)* Be sure and put the brakes on this time. Oh, Essie, (ESSIE *turns with a start when* NANA *speaks to her)* will you hang my coat up, please?

ESSIE. *(Crossing to take coat—reaches for it with trembling hand)* Sure, ma'm.

NANA. *(Looking at her)* You look sort of pale.

ESSIE. *(Nervously)* Mr. Warry just read me the first chapter of his new book. If you ask me, this younger generation is something frightening. Of course, nobody asked me— *(Starts out up* C. NANA *picks up magazine from table and starts to look at it.)*

LAURA. *(Entering from* R. *in arch. As* LAURA *comes down off steps)* Oh, here you are, Essie. You can start the dinner. The Parkers will all be here any minute now.

ESSIE. Yes'm. *(Turns and starts out.)*

LAURA. *(Correctingly)* Yes, *Mrs. Reardon. (This stops* ESSIE, *who turns back toward* L.*)*

ESSIE. Yes'm, Mrs. Reardon. *(Exits off up* L. LAURA *reacts up* C.*)*

LAURA. *(As* ESSIE *goes—turns to* NANA*)* Nana, I don't know what to do about Essie. She simply has no *chic*. It's impossible to entertain with her here.

NANA. *(Smilingly)* She's been entertaining *me* for the past ten years.

LANRA. *(Crosses down to ottoman* R.C.*)* I know, but *now*—now that our Marcia is marrying into the *(Sits)* cream of New York society.

NANA. We're all just people.

LAURA. Perhaps, but there are people *and* people.

NANA. Well, I'm glad the Parkers aren't *my* people. *(Shuddering)* Been bad enough having her here the past two weeks. Now we're going to have them all for the week-end. I wish they'd go home so we could be ourselves again.

LAURA. Why, how ridiculous! We have been ourselves.

NANA. Laura Clark, I knew you when you were a little girl back in St. Peter's and Reginald used to carry your books home from school. I've known you almost as long as you've known yourself, but I've never seen you act as daffy as you have since you met these Parkers.

LAURA. *(Proudly. Up)* I've made a wonderful match for my daughter and nothing is going to ruin my plans. *(Crosses to up* L.C.*)* Oh, what's the use? I try to elevate my family but they just won't be elevated. *(Turns to* NANA*)* We should have stayed in St. Peter's and never moved here. *(Business of fixing hair and* NANA *reacts disgust and foot tapping)* But I wanted my babies to meet the right people.

NANA. What was wrong with the folks back in St. Peter's?

LAURA. *(Stiffly)* After all, Nana, Marcia could never have met a boy like Sherwin Parker in that little fishing village.

NANA. *(Grimly)* Don't I know it?

LAURA. *(At the sound of loud HAMMERING from the driveway)* Gracious, what's that knocking?

(HAMMERING momentarily stops.)

NANA. *(Simply)* Essie—shelling peas.

(Terrific BANGING, then continues lightly.)

LAURA. It sounds like— Can it be? Oh, can it be—? *(With growing suspicion as she marches toward the French doors)* If that's Reginald being mechanical—in *public*—I'll just scream. *(Opening screen and looking out—holds screen door open. Just inside the doorway)* It *is* Reginald— *(Calling sternly)* Reginald, you come in here this very minute. *(HAMMERING stops. Suddenly sweet as she spies her new neighbor across the driveway)* Oh, hello, Mrs. Winthrop— Yes, just a lovely day— How do you like it here in Fernwood? Oh, I couldn't think of living anywhere else— Oh— It's so—so select. *(Affectionately)* That's all right, Reginald darling. I just wondered where you were. *(Resume HAMMERING. Turning back to* NANA*)* Of all the disgraceful exhibitions! *(Lets screen door slam)* Out there under the car—in *overalls.*

NANA. What do you expect him to wear under the car— *(Leans toward* LAURA*)* a tuxedo?

LAURA. *(Going to extra chair against wall up* L.*)* Sometimes I feel like giving up. I try so hard and for what? *(Surveying the piles of envelopes as she moves chair to above table)* Oh, these invitations! I still haven't sent out half of them. I should have hired a social secretary. Mrs. Parker said she didn't know how I got along without one. *(Sits.)*

NANA. *(Getting record album)* Did you send any to our relatives back in the old home town?

LAURA. A few. St. Peter's is so far away none of them would come—thank goodness.

NANA. *(Angrily)* There is nothing wrong with our relatives.

LAURA. Just the same, I shouldn't want the Parkers to meet them. They're simple and poor. I told the Parkers they were aristocrats and millionaires.

NANA. *(Up, holding record album)* Then I wish some of them would come to the wedding. *(Begins to cross to phonograph)* It would serve you right.

LAURA. Oh, they won't! I sent an invitation to poor Lily. (NANA *stops up* C. *and exclaims: "Lily?")* I thought it would make her feel good. All of us have been unkind to her. After all, it was none of our business whom she married—as long as she keeps him up there.

NANA. Lily, our third cousin. Will you ever forget when she was thirteen and ran away with the circus? She wanted to be a bareback rider but she frightened all the horses.

LAURA. And when she was fourteen she stowed away on a boat bound for Brazil because she liked Brazil nuts.

NANA. Oh, well, *(Crossing to radio-phonograph)* she only got as far as Boston.

LAURA. *(Reflectively)* She was certainly full of girlish pranks—and things. (NANA *puts down album.* LAURA, *sadly)* But why did she marry that man? She knew he was engaged in an—illegal enterprise.

NANA. Come out and say it. *(Step toward* R.*)* He was a bootlegger.

LUARA. *(In horror)* Nana, ssh! Suppose the children heard you.

NANA. He wasn't the only bootlegger in St. Peter's.

LAURA. He was the only one who got caught.

NANA. *(Teasingly. Crosses behind* LAURA *and stops* R. *of her)* You know, you never can tell about Lily. She might get that invitation and come.

LAURA. All the way from St. Peter's when we haven't seen her in twenty years? Never. (NANA

over to bookcase up R.C. *Addressing envelopes)* After all, every family has a *skeleton.*

NANA. *(Gets workbasket off shelf and turns to* L.*)* Lily was no *skeleton.* The last time I saw her she was running a candy store and eating all the profits. She weighed a good two hundred.

LAURA. *(Looking up)* Oh, I'm sure she won't come. What a terrible thought! Lily *here. (Hopefully)* Perhaps she won't even get the invitation. I didn't know her husband's name, so I just addressed it to Miss Lily Reardon. *(Chewing the end of her pen)* Just to make sure, I'm going to go ask that fortune-teller in Newark. *(More HAMMERING can be heard from the driveway. On sound of hammering* NANA *comes down and looks out French doors)* What *is* Reginald doing?

NANA. *(Turns toward* L.*)* He calls it *fixing* the car.

LAURA. I wish he had some quiet hobby like stamps or guppies. *(As* REGINALD *ceases his hammering on the car the TYPING is resumed in the study.* LAURA *puts her hands to her head, throwing her pen down in despair)* And now *he* starts the Anvil Chorus.

(MARCIA *begins coming downstairs.)*

NANA. *(Looking toward the study. Crossing to chair* R.C.*)* Wonder what this new book is about. *(Sits.)*

LAURA. I couldn't even understand that first one. It frightened me.

NANA. Maybe he's a genius.

LAURA. *(Positively)* It wasn't *that* frightening.

(MARCIA REARDON *enters the room from upstairs. Sweet, pretty and twenty,* MARCIA *is wearing her wedding dress, a simple and attractive*

gown. MARCIA *also wearing her veil—simple, thrown back.)*

MARCIA. *(As she finishes coming downstairs. Standing up* C. *on steps)* Well, here's the finished product. Like it, Mother? Mrs. Daley says it's her greatest creation.

LAURA. *(Rising excitedly and going up* L.C.*)* Darling, how simply too beautiful!

MARCIA. *(Going to above the easy chair)* Your opinion, Nana?

NANA. *(Proudly)* You look almost as lovely as I did.

MARCIA. Then *(Kissing the top of her head)* I look pretty gosh-darned lovely!

LAURA. Turn around, dear. (MARCIA *comes around* NANA'S *chair to down* R. *and rotates)* My baby! I'm beginning to realize I'm losing my little girl. *(Tearfully)* If I had time I'd just sit down and cry.

MARCIA. Don't forget you still have Warry and Penelope.

LAURA. *(Standing* L.C. *by sofa)* Oh, wait until Sherwin sees you. But he mustn't. It's bad luck or something. Not that we could have any bad luck, not that we could have bad luck at all, but *do* take it off before he gets here.

ESSIE. *(Standing in the arch up* C., *holding large cooking spoon)* Pardon, ma'm. I mean, Mrs. Reardon. But I had two dozen doughnuts for breakfast tomorrow. Now I only got six.

LAURA. *(Puzzled)* Six?

ESSIE. I had them in the window cooling off. I had to go into my room and when I came back they were gone.

LAURA. *(Crossing up to* ESSIE*)* Why, someone must have taken them.

ESSIE. *(Drily)* If you ask me they'd be the first doughnuts I ever cooked that could *walk.*

LAURA. Penelope, of course.

ESSIE. Don't see how Penelope could eat—er—er— How many would that be? *(Tries mental arithmetic but gives up)* Six from two dozen, that leaves— Well, I don't see how little Penelope could eat all those doughnuts.

LAURA. Never mind, Essie. We shall have crepe suzettes for breakfast. *(Turns and starts to come down* L.C.*)*

ESSIE. *(Starts out up* L.*)* Crepe— *(Stops and turns in horror)* crepe what?!

LAURA. *(Turns up to* ESSIE*)* Pancakes, Essie—*pancakes.*

ESSIE. *(Relieved)* Oh, that's more like it. *(She exits.)*

LAURA. *(Crossing to down* C.*)* Marcia, is Mrs. Daley still upstairs?

MARCIA. *(Crossing to* LAURA*)* Yes, she wants to know if you like the dress.

LAURA. It's beautiful. *(Crosses* MARCIA *and goes up steps.* MARCIA *crosses* L.*)* And I'll go right up and congratulate her— *(In arch up* C. *Turns back)* My little girl—my *baby*—a bride. *(She sighs and exits.)*

NANA. *(Watching* MARCIA *as she starts removing veil and puts it on table* L.C.*)* Happy?

MARCIA. *(Sitting on the arm of the sofa)* Of course.

NANA. Don't act it. *(Sharply)* Do you really love this—this son-of-a-Plymouth-Rock?

MARCIA. *(Sharply almost)* I'd hardly marry him if I didn't.

NANA. Maybe it's the trend of the times, but when I was marrying your grandfather I was excited and happy and thrilled. And so proud I told the world.

MARCIA. *(Quietly, with gesture)* Ah, but we moderns don't show our emotions. We hide them.

NANA. Times have changed but love hasn't.

MARCIA. *(Nervously)* Shall I turn a few handsprings and giggle and blush?

NANA. No giggles, I warn you. But you could be a trifle gaga.

MARCIA. Don't worry about me. *(Rises)* Sherwin is a grand catch. Mother is crazy about him.

NANA. She's not marrying him. *You* are.

MARCIA. *(Step toward* NANA*)* He comes from a fine family.

NANA. *(Disgustedly)* Family again. The only prominent American they haven't claimed is Pocahontas. And they'll be saying her name was Pocahontas Parker before long.

REGINALD. *(Enters through the French doors, his face heavily streaked with grease)* Well, well, if it isn't my little girl!

MARCIA. *(As he stops, admiring her. Pointing in feigned horror)* Heavens, are you my father?

REGINALD. *(Admiringly)* And proud to be. *(He crosses to take her in his arms and she backs away)* You look like a million.

MARCIA. Just *look,* Dad—don't touch.

REGINALD. *(Turns to* NANA*)* Proud of your grandchild, Nana?

NANA. Certainly. Anyone can see whom she resembles.

REGINALD. *(Proudly patting abdomen and putting arms out)* Sure, she's the image of her old man.

NANA. With your face all streaked you look more like Topsy's old man.

REGINALD. *(With a loud sigh)* It seems I'm only getting to know Marcia when I'm losing her.

NANA. *(Acidly)* Ah, you're not losing your daughter. You're gaining a son.

REGINALD. *(Steps toward* NANA*)* Splendid chap, Sherwin. Going to go places, too.

NANA. I'd like to tell you where. *(Shaking her head)* I don't like prunes on the menu—less in the family.

MARCIA. He's the best to come along. *(Goes around downstage end of sofa and up to above table.)*

NANA. What about—Todd Galloway?

REGINALD. *(Quickly. Crosses to above* NANA'S *chair with hushing gesture)* Now, Mother, why bring him up? Marcia hasn't thought of him for months.

NANA. *(Unconvinced)* Oh, no?

MARCIA. *(Looking at the envelopes, but her voice betrays her feelings)* Fine husband material, that Todd Galloway. Reckless, irresponsible, selfish—

NANA. Reminds me of your grandfather. Can never be certain of him, but oh, how you do wish you could.

MARCIA. *(Drops envelopes and crosses down* L. *to end of sofa, with back to* NANA *and* REGINALD*)* He went away without saying goodbye. He never even wrote to me. Well, I'll show that Todd Galloway a thing or two!

REGINALD. *(Going toward her, comfortingly.* MARCIA *turns as* REGINALD *crosses)* Now, Marcia, don't think about him, Marcia. Nana shouldn't have mentioned him. *(Walking to the arch up* C.*)* Well, I've got to get a screwdriver. See you later. *(He exits* L.*)*

MARCIA. Why— *(Crosses above table)* why did you mention Todd?

NANA. Warry saw him downtown this morning.

MARCIA. *(Crossing down to ottoman)* Did—did Warry mention how he looked?

NANA. I guess Todd has managed to stay in one piece.

MARCIA. I thought he'd gone away for good.
NANA. Perhaps he has come home for *good.*

*(*MARCIA *is about to speak when* LAURA *re-enters from upstairs.)*

LAURA. *(Entering and coming down to above sofa)* Oh, darling, please change before Sherwin gets here. (MARCIA *starts up toward up* C.*)* Mrs. Daley is going to mail these invitations for me. (MARCIA *crosses to table for wedding veil as* LAURA *puts chair against back wall.)*

WARRY. *(Calling from the study)* Oh, say, Mother!

LAURA. *(Turns and steps toward study)* What is it, Warry?

WARRY. Which is a *household* word— (MARCIA *starts to cross up* C. *toward arch)* decapitate or assassinate?

LAURA. *(Angrily. Crosses down to study door) Neither* is a household word. (REGINALD *enters up* C. *from* L., *carrying screwdriver. Shuddering. Turns back toward* NANA*)* Another *horrible* book. *(Sees* REGINALD; *gasps)* Who are *you?*

REGINALD. *(Happily coming down* C.*)* I'm your husband—remember?

LAURA. *(Crossly)* Haven't I enough to worry about without you putting on a minstrel show?

REGINALD. *(Crossing to French doors)* I'll be finished out here in a minute.

LAURA. *(Steps toward* REGINALD *as he stops)* But the Parkers are arriving.

REGINALD. Laura, *(Turns toward* LAURA*)* the car will never bother us again.

LAURA. Will it ever *go* again?

REGINALD. Now, Mother, you know what I did to the sink.

NANA. No one in town will ever forget.

LAURA. *(Remembering. Crosses to* L. *of table by ottoman)* Oh, and Reginald, be sure you shave before dinner.

REGINALD. *(Protesting)* But this is my day of rest. I shaved yesterday.

LAURA. No matter. Mr. Parker shaves twice every day.

NANA. *(Thinking aloud)* I hope his razor slips.

(REGINALD *exits French doors and TYPING starts quietly.)*

LAURA. *(Crosses up to steps; turns)* Nana, you *are* dressing for dinner? *(Exits upstairs.)*

NANA. *(Rising and crossing to* C., *then up)* I'm putting on my comfortable shoes if that's what you mean. *(Turns)* If the Parkers don't like my dress they can eat in the kitchen. *(She follows* LAURA *out. Exits upstairs.)*

MARCIA. Warry, oh, Warry! *(TYPING stops)* You haven't seen my wedding dress.

WARRY. *(From the study)* Be right out. Just let me finish this sentence. (MARCIA *puts veil on as she comes down* C. WARRY *TYPES about a line.)*

(WARRY *comes out of the study. He is seventeen, dressed in a sweater and grey trousers. He would be good-looking if he were better groomed. He has an eyeshade pushed up on his hair. Crosses to below end of sofa. Whistles appreciatively. Begins cross to inspect her.)*

MARCIA. *(Posing for his inspection. As she turns and* WARRY *walks around her)* Well, Mr. Shakespeare?

WARRY. Golly, Sis, you look great!

MARCIA. *(As she curtsies)* Thank you, sir! Tell me, how's the new epic?

WARRY. *(Seriously)* Oh, all right. But heck, I

can't do it full justice. There's too much excitement around here. Too much noise. *(Holding hand on forehead)* I can't really concentrate.

MARCIA. It will be quiet enough after the wedding.

WARRY. Oh, yeah? *(Crossing to down* R.C., *dramatizing)* I'll have Penelope *(Piano-playing gesture)* and her piano and Mom and her bridge parties *(Gesture)* and Nana and her Bing Crosby records. *(Leaning against table and turning toward* MARCIA*)* No, Marcia, this atmosphere—well, it just isn't conducive for creating.

MARCIA. *(Amused and starting to remove veil)* I hear you can buy lovely mountain tops out West dirt cheap.

WARRY. *(Straightens up; snaps fingers)* Say! Not a bad idea, Marcia. I'll look into it. *(Steps* R., *thinking.)*

MARCIA. Before you buy Pike's Peak, young man, wait until you get your first check.

WARRY. *(Crossing, taking off eyeshade.* MARCIA *moves* R.*)* Oh, I'll get it soon. The publishers have had my first book two weeks. *(Throws eyeshade on table)* I guess they're giving it careful consideration, but I wish they'd hurry up.

MARCIA. *(Preparing him)* But you're so young, Warry—and you've had no experience.

WARRY. *(Turns. Stoutly)* I've had experience. *(Step and half toward her)* You can't call anyone who's gone through all that I have *in*experienced.

MARCIA. What are all these things you've gone through?

WARRY. Well, *(Sinks back to arm of sofa)* I had a brace on my teeth *(Sits on arm)* and high school, for example—and—

MARCIA. Good luck, anyway, Warry.

WARRY. Not that I'll win prizes right off—but eventually—

MARCIA. *(Putting veil down and picking up maga-*

zine from table R.C. *With much feigned pride)* And to think I'm *your* sister. *(Sits on ottoman. Casually)* Been writing all day?

WARRY. *(Sinks back on sofa, legs over end; reaches over head for pillow; puts pillow under his head)* Went downtown once. To get some carbon paper.

MARCIA. Anything exciting happen?

WARRY. No—just got the carbon paper.

MARCIA. *(Relentlessly)* Meet anyone?

WARRY. Ran into Minnie Tuttle.

MARCIA. Oh, *(Slams magazine down in lap)* hang Minnie Tuttle! *(Regains previous attempt at outward calm)* I mean, she's not very exciting.

WARRY. *(Swinging left leg down onto floor and raising head slightly)* Oh, yes, Todd Galloway. I ran into him, too.

MARCIA. *(Lightly and starting to look at magazine again)* Oh, is he back in town?

WARRY. Guess he must be if I met him.

MARCIA. How did he look?

WARRY. Same old Todd.

MARCIA. Did—did you talk to him?

WARRY. A bit. He asked for you. *(Swings right foot to floor and sits up)* Say, guess what?

MARCIA. *(Throws magazine on table, rises and crosses to* WARRY; *excitedly)* What?

WARRY. *(Stands)* I've got the most terrific ending for the book. Instead of them all committing suicide I'm going to have a couple of them guillotined. *(Hand cut off head from back)* Then the hero and the heroine can *(Exaggerated swimming motions as he crosses* R.C.*)* swim through the sharks and—

MARCIA. *(Crosses to below sofa and turns)* Sounds too cozy. (WARRY *turns)* I mean, how thrilling.

WARRY. *(Teasing—hands on hips. Wisely)* You mean, did *he* ask about you.

MARCIA. He? What *he?* What are you talking about?

WARRY. *(Knowingly, with hand)* That's all right. I know you're crazy about him.

MARCIA. *(Sits downstage end of sofa)* I don't know what you're talking about. *(Smoothing hair and turning away.)*

WARRY. *(Crosses to upstage end of sofa. Smiling infuriatingly)* Sister mine, you do everything but carry a sandwich board *(Kneeling and dramatizing)* with *I love Todd* written on it in big red letters.

MARCIA. *(Turning back to him)* You're being so silly. Your love of the dramatic has you on the wrong track this time. *(Turns head away again.)*

WARRY. *(Up)* You should just *(Leaning across end of sofa, head in left hand)* see yourself, Miss Lonelyhearts, when you were asking all these questions about him.

MARCIA. *(Facing him)* And I suppose Todd loves me, too?

WARRY. *(Straightening up. With conviction)* Sure he does.

MARCIA. He went away four months ago. Never even said goodbye.

WARRY. There could be a reason.

MARCIA. *(To front)* I can't think of any.

WARRY. Marrying one guy and loving another. *(Going to her)* Marcia, what's the matter with you?

MARCIA. Mother would never forgive me if I didn't marry Sherwin.

WARRY. *(Crossing c. In despair)* Women. I can't figure them out. *(Turns. Quickly)* At least, I can't figure *all* of them out.

MARCIA. If it will help you any, I *did* love Todd. At least, I was fond of him when we both were in high school. He's good-looking and romantic and he dances well but— Oh, those things aren't important.

WARRY. *(Crosses to sofa)* Hope you can tell your-

self that when you're Mrs. Sherwin Parker and not *(Sits on arm)* kick the *(Gesture up)* roof off the house.

MARCIA. *(Rises)* Oh—oh, *(Crosses to table* R.C.; *gets veil; starts out up* C.*)* let's not discuss it any more. Todd is completely out of my life.

WARRY. *(Maddeningly)* Says you. *(Picks up sofa pillow and hugs it.)*

MARCIA. *(Stops and turns. Angrily)* I tell you he is.

WARRY. *(Shrugging his shoulders)* Maybe.

(MARCIA *starts to go up onto steps; heads for stairs —stopped by* LAURA'S *entrance.)*

LAURA. *(Entering from upstairs)* Marcia, dear, *please* get dressed for dinner. (MARCIA *exits upstairs as* LAURA *comes down* C.*)* And, Warry, you're not going to sit at the table like that. Why do you insist upon wearing that horrible sweater?

WARRY. *You* knitted it.

LAURA. *(Crosses. Hurt)* I could hardly expect any appreciation from you. The way I simply slaved over that. And it's real Angora, too. *(Angora business—plucks fuzz.* WARRY *reacts. Angrily)* Stop grinning, Warry Reardon, and change your clothes. *(Pushing his hair back)* And do something about that mop of hair, too.

WARRY. Well, I could bleach it.

NANA. *(Enters from upstairs. She has changed to her comfortable shoes)* Here's Cousin Jessie's address, Laura. *(She hands* LAURA *a slip of paper.)*

LAURA. *(Going above table* L.C. *with it)* Thanks, Nana. Her husband is in the jewelry business. We *must* send them an invitation.

NANA. *(Going to the easy chair)* His last name is MacTavish. *(Sits)* They'll send a salt spoon.

LAURA. Well, we can hope, can't we? Now, Warry, go dress.

WARRY. *(Up, giving pillow a throw over head to floor front of sofa)* The Parkers are coming—hurray—hurray—hurray!

NANA. Oh— Pooh!

LAURA. Charming expression for a lady of culture.

NANA. Even Emily Post would forget her culture around the Parkers.

LAURA. *(Crossing to pick up pillow)* But, Nana, you're encouraging the children to be disrespectful toward them. Penelope called Sherwin a—a codfish. *(Bends to pick up pillow.)*

NANA. A masterpiece of understatement.

PENELOPE. *(She comes skipping in through the French doors)* Hy, folks!

LAURA. Oh, *(Straightening up with pillow)* Penelope, (PENELOPE *stopping in her tracks at* C.) I want to ask you about something.

PENELOPE. *(Turns)* Whatever it is I didn't break it.

LAURA. Nothing's broken—I hope. *(Puts pillow on sofa and crosses up to* PENELOPE.)

PENELOPE. Whew! *(Gesture of relief.)*

LAURA. It's about some doughnuts.

PENELOPE. *(Quickly)* I didn't take any doughnuts.

LAURA. *(Wisely)* Ah, but did you tell Maudie where they were and ask her to take them?

PENELOPE. *(With disgust)* I wouldn't give her a doughnut if she hadn't eaten for a week.

LAURA. Penelope, don't talk that way.

PENELOPE. I don't like Maudie. *(With gesture of distaste)* She's—she's odious. *(Sits with a bang on the couch. Punctuates each beat with bounce)* And-I-didn't-take-any-doughnuts. *(Bounce several times.)*

LAURA. Stop bouncing on that sofa. You'll break the springs.

PENELOPE. *(Bouncing to downstage end of sofa. Assuredly)* Pops-will-love-to-fix-'em.

LAURA. *(Sternly)* Because of this you'll not go to the movies on Saturday.

PENELOPE. *(Jumping up in anguish)* But it's chapter eighteen of the serial. *(Hands over head, standing on tiptoes as if holding on)* Last week Beulah Love was hanging from the cliff and the villain *(Jumping up and down)* was dancing on her manicure.

LAURA. *(Staring in horror at* PENELOPE'S *feet as she continues jumping)* That's no sight for any child to see.

PENELOPE. *(Sitting on leg on downstage end of sofa. Pleadingly)* But, Moms, they're giving out comic books, too.

LAURA. Those doughnuts never walked away.

PENELOPE. Someone else might have stolen them. Some tramp or something.

REGINALD. *(Enters hurriedly through the French doors;* LAURA *turns as* REGINALD *speaks)* Say, Laura, have we any bicarbonate in the house?

LAURA. Yes, there's some in the medicine chest. Don't you feel well?

REGINALD. I feel sort of— Oh, I feel *terrible. (He groans and exits up* L., LAURA *following to up* C., *puzzled.)*

NANA. *(Looking after him)* Something he ate, no doubt.

LAURA. *(Comprehending)* Oh, I see. *(Turning back to* PENELOPE*)* Very well, Penelope, dear. *(Crosses down to sofa)* Mother believes you. You can go see Beulah fall off the cliff.

PENELOPE. *(Rises)* How are you going to punish Pops, Moms?

LAURA. God will take care of your Pops, dear.

PENELOPE. If God doesn't, *(Holding abdomen)* the stomachache will.

(ESSIE *crosses from up* L. *to front door up* R.)

LAURA. Go upstairs and get ready for dinner. (PENELOPE *crosses by* LAURA *to* C. LAURA *lifts* PENELOPE'S *hair and looks behind her ears)* And remember your ears.

PENELOPE. *(Turns)* I washed my ears this morning!

LAURA. This time use *soap.* (PENELOPE *groans loudly—stamps foot—groans, and exits upstairs.* LAURA *crosses to end of sofa)* I'm all worn out and the company hasn't even arrived. *(Patting her hair)* If I had a mirror here I'd hate to believe it.

ESSIE. *(In the arch up* C.*)* The Parkers are here, ma'am—Mrs. Reardon.

LAURA. *(Rallying)* Good! *(As* ESSIE *exits up* L. MRS. PARKER *enters from up* R., *followed by her husband and* SHERWIN. MR. PARKER *is big and blustering and fifty.* SHERWIN *is twenty-five and good-looking in a plain way)* Hello, there! How marvelous seeing you again! Hello, Sherwin! *(She kisses him.)*

(MRS. PARKER *crosses behind sofa and sits on downstage end.)*

SHERWIN. *(Warmly)* Hello, Mrs. Reardon!

LAURA. *(With one hand in arm of each, looking from one to other as they come down)* Did you two big business men get everything attended to?

MR. PARKER. *(Proudly)* Everything came off splendidly. I let Sherwin handle most of the details and the boy acquitted himself nobly.

LAURA. *(To* MR. PARKER, *indicating the sofa)* Do sit down.

SHERWIN. *(Going to* NANA*)* How are you, Mrs. Reardon? But I suppose I'd better get in the habit of calling you Grandma.

NANA. *(With forced gaiety)* Ha, ha! And what shall I get in the habit of calling you?

SHERWIN. Why, whatever you like.

NANA. Remember I have your permission.

LAURA. *(Pointing to ottoman* R.C.*)* Sherwin.

(SHERWIN *sits on ottoman.)*

MR. PARKER. *(To* LAURA*)* Isn't Mr. Reardon home from business yet?

LAURA. He didn't go in town today. He wanted to take it easy.

NANA. He put the third floor bath out of commission, crossed the pipes in the kitchen sink and no one has dared look at the car.

MR. PARKER. I've got a lot to talk to him about, but if he doesn't feel well—

LAURA. *(Gets chair up* L. *and moves it down to up* L.C.*)* He's been taking medicine. He'll be all right later. *(Sits.)*

MRS. PARKER. Have *you* been a good boy about your medicine, James?

MR. PARKER. Haven't taken a pill for weeks, Bessie! I've never felt so fit.

MRS. PARKER. Oh, and they were such a pretty color.

MR. PARKER. *(In a loud whisper to* LAURA *as he looks across at* NANA*)* How's the old lady been doing?

NANA. *(Quickly)* If you mean me, I'm still breathing.

MR. PARKER. Eat regularly?

NANA. Yes, I can still swing a fork.

LAURA. Nana is the youngest in the family. She'll be with us forever.

NANA. *(Fervently)* Heaven forbid!

SHERWIN. And how is Marcia?

LAURA. *(Gushingly)* Too excited to eat or sleep. Oh, but she's happy!

MRS. PARKER. James tells me Sherwin has been in a positive coma. (SHERWIN, *bashful boy business)* Dear boy, it's his first marriage.

NANA. Who do you think Marcia is? Peggy Hopkins Joyce?

LAURA. *(Hurriedly)* Nana's not herself today. Been having a touch of her old complaint.

MR. PARKER. Sorry to hear that. *(To* NANA*)* What *is* your old complaint, Mrs. Reardon?

NANA. *(Sweetly)* People!

MR. PARKER. *(Puzzled)* People? *(Laughing heartily)* Ha, ha! I get it! Some kidder, eh, Grandma? Ha, ha!

(MRS. PARKER *doesn't "get it," so anticlimax laugh.* SHERWIN *joins in.* NANA *controls herself with effort.)*

LAURA. *(Eager to change the subject)* And how did you find business?

SHERWIN. Definitely a major pickup everywhere

MR. PARKER. Ten percent better for May than for April. And thirty percent more than for May of last year. Figures don't lie.

LAURA. And you want to let Reginald merge with you. Oh, you're so kind!

MR. PARKER. We're both in the canned foods business and since our children are marrying I think it would be wise to keep everything in the family.

LAURA. It would make everything so cosy, wouldn't it? And profitable, too.

MR. PARKER. Together we'd have the largest company on the market. Could afford extensive radio advertising and publicity. You can't doubt the advantages. After all, Parker & Company is one of the *oldest* firms there is.

NANA. *(Sharply)* We're not discussing a bottle of wine! We're discussing business and age has nothing to do with it—except when age *controls* it. *(Warningly)* Don't any of you forget that "Grandma" here owns fifty-one percent of the stock. I sold the first jar of Reardon preserves—and in my own kitchen, too.

LAURA. *(Rises and crosses to above table down* R.C.*)* Hush, Nana, darling. You know how to cook but you have no head for business.

MR. PARKER. That's right!

NANA. *(Rising. Crosses to slightly above* MR. PARKER *as* LAURA *goes* R.*)* I made Reardon & Reardon. My husband was out of a job and I sold jams. Pretty soon I had my husband selling them, too. And then we opened a store and then another store and the rest is history.

MR. PARKER. We know you're an admirable old lady but methods have changed. This is the day of big firms. The small fry haven't a chance.

NANA. *(Half step toward him)* We're doing all right, thank you. *(Meaningly)* And we shall continue doing all right. *(To* LAURA*—turns)* No head for business, eh? Have you forgotten the name they used to call me back in St. Peter's?

LAURA. *(Crossing to* NANA*)* Hush, Nana!

NANA. Don't worry, I shan't repeat it. *(Crosses to radio and looks at Bing Crosby album.)*

LAURA. *(Taking chair up to original position against back wall up* L. *Hurriedly)* Well—well, let's not discuss business *now. (Down to* SHERWIN*)* Sherwin, why not go upstairs and let Marcia know you're finally here? *(Coyly)* But do break it to her gently.

SHERWIN. *(Rises)* Not a bad idea. *(Crosses up* C. *and* LAURA *moves* R.*)* I'm so anxious to see her. *(Turns around to downstage)* If you'll excuse me—

(Exits, getting luggage off up R. *and taking it upstairs.)*

MRS. PARKER. *(As he exits)* Oh! *(Too thrilled)* I can just *taste* romance in the air. *(Sighing)* I feel like a bride again myself. Imagine, in three weeks the great event will take place.

NANA. *(Turns. Darkly)* Many a slip—

(WARRY *begins to come downstairs. He has changed into a blue suit but has neglected to do something with his hair.)*

LAURA. Nana, how ridiculous! *(Sits on ottoman)* What possibly could happen?

WARRY. *(Stopping in arch)* Well, hello! *(Coming down to shake hands with* MR. PARKER.*)*

MR. PARKER. Ah, here he is, the budding genius. *(They shake hands)* How are all the sonnets and love lyrics coming along?

WARRY. *(Drawing hand away. With distaste)* I write *books,* Mr. Parker.

MRS. PARKER. They say everyone has a book in his system. Always wanted to write one myself but never had the time. I suppose it's as well you get it out of your system when you're young.

WARRY. You make it sound like laying an egg.

MR. PARKER. Well, son, when you've given up your writing and you're looking for a job, come see me.

WARRY. Thanks, *(Crossing to* LAURA*)* but I'd be too old to work.

MR. PARKER. Suppose you're going to be another Zane Grey *("Zane Grey" stops* WARRY*)* or maybe write some Tarzan stories. You like Tarzan?

WARRY. *(Folding arms, drawing up as he turns. Shuddering)* No, I've always preferred Superman.

MR. PARKER. *(At a loss) Superman?* Who's he?

LAURA. *(Sweetly)* Oh, some character in Shake-

speare, (WARRY *reacts away to up* R.) I guess. Warry adores Shakespeare. *(Politely. Rising)* But I'm sure you'd like to go upstairs and freshen up.

MR. PARKER. *(Rising)* Not a bad idea. Those Lackawanna tunnels are like coal mines. (LAURA *and* MRS. PARKER *both laugh as* MRS. PARKER *crosses to* C. *Turns to* NANA) Excuse us, Mrs. Reardon?

NANA. *(With a gentle smile)* Ah, but with pleasure.

MRS. PARKER. *(As she and* MR. PARKER *follow* LAURA *upstairs)* But, James, were you *ready* to give up those pills?

MR. PARKER. *(As they exit out of sight)* Haven't had a sick day in months, Bessie.

WARRY. *(Banging keys of piano and crossing down* R.*)* I'll give him a sick day! Tarzan! He must think I'm a great writer. *(Crossing below easy chair* R.C. *With dignity)* And here I am striving to put the spirit of America on paper.

NANA. *(Crossing to below* C. *of sofa)* Oh, was that what that book was about? *(Sits.)*

WARRY. Certainly. *(Crossing to* C.*)* Something that clamored for release, something that— *(Revolving movement with hands)* well, it just boiled up inside me.

NANA. And *(One revolution)* boiled over on your mother.

WARRY. *(Crossing to her)* Don't *you* think I captured the joys and sorrows of a typical household?

NANA. *(Hedging)* Well, sort of typical.

WARRY. My heroine, isn't she genuine? In the first chapter where she rebukes her father and *(Dramatizing—shoving)* shoves him into the well, *(Push down, then step down)* isn't that what you'd do under *those* circumstances?

NANA. Maybe, under those circumstances.

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