

16      THE BUTTER AND EGG MAN

*the knack of making them seem a bit exaggerated. He bulks large and forceful as he sits in his desk chair—cigar in mouth, derby hat on head, one clenched fist thoughtfully pounding an open palm. JOE LEHMAN gets his effects by solid driving; JACK MCCLURE is a more ingratiating type. MAC, as a matter of fact, is even rather attractive. His attire is up to the minute and a shade beyond it; he wears a fashionable gray soft hat. The hats of Lehman and McClure remain on their heads throughout the three acts; they are a part of them, and you could hardly imagine them bare-headed.*

*MCCLURE, seated in the chair customarily reserved for visitors, leans thoughtfully back as the curtain rises, strikes a reflective match, and absently lights a cigarette. LEHMAN rises and paces, then snaps his fingers in sudden decision and reaches for the telephone.]*

BEGIN

LEHMAN

Get me Sol David!

[*He hangs up; turns to MAC.*]

He come through for that Jenny show last year.

MAC

Never got a nickel back. I saw the statements.

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LEHMAN

*[Belligerently.]*

Anybody comes in on this trick'll clean up! I can do it for fifteen thousand. I'd take twelve.

MAC

You'd take one.

LEHMAN

You don't say? Let me tell you this, sweetheart, there ain't going to be no bargains, not if I have to throw it in the ash-can!

*[The phone rings. LEHMAN picks it up, but continues his harangue to MAC.]*

This show's a pipe, and any bird that comes in is going to make plenty.

*[He gives his attention to the phone.]*

Right! . . . Is Sol David there? . . . This is Joe Lehman talking. . . Oh! . . . NO!

*[Hangs up.]*

Bermuda! Beats hell how far away they can get when you're trying to raise coin.

MAC

*[A snap of the fingers.]*

Here's a slant! Remember them income lists the papers published—taxes?

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LEHMAN

We ain't got no time to follow them up!

*[He is now pacing the floor.]*

I got to get a bankroll before morning or I can't rehearse no longer. Huh! That's Equity for you!

MAC

Tough luck they had to grab Ackerman just when they did.

LEHMAN

I would'a had his check this morning. Then he has to go and get pinched with them four cases in the car. I don't link up with no more bootleggers.

MAC

*[Thoughtfully.]*

There's a fellow makes lithographs. He sunk some coin in a two-for-one last year—Everson.

LEHMAN

A bowl of cherries! When you going to meet this other bird?

MAC

Lots of time—it's right downstairs. Anyway, he wants a musical—girl stuff.

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LEHMAN

[*After a second's thought.*]

*Ten* thousand, I could do this trick of mine for!

MAC

Say! There was two fellows named Levi, in ladies shirt-waists—

LEHMAN

They got bit! When I think the way them ham managers can go out and get bank accounts for bum shows—and here I got the best proposition in twenty years!

MAC

You know what that downtown bunch got set back for half of Sid Ehrman's show? I got the inside on it—ninety!

LEHMAN

You'd think they'd get wise after while, with them shows they put on! Ain't nothing but luck puts half of 'em over! That one of Ziegfeld's the other night! *You* seen it!

MAC

A turkey.

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LEHMAN

Junk scenery—bunch of costumes I wouldn't send over the Pan time! But he gets away with it! Dumb luck!

MAC

The public'll get on to him.

LEHMAN

Comedy bits they kicked off the Columbia Wheel ten years ago! And here I am with a compack little drama, up to the minute, and I can't grab even eight, ten thousand to get the curtain up.

MAC

*[Returning to an old argument.]*

Listen, Joe! On the level, can't you get it out of Fanny?

LEHMAN

Do I look like a sap? Ain't I told you me and her was up to six o'clock this morning, jawing about it? There ought to be some law against a wife having a lot of property in her own name.

MAC

But look what you done for her! You took her out of that five-a-day and put her on Broadway! Didn't you tell her that?

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LEHMAN

*[Now almost shouting.]*

I didn't tell her nothing else for four hours. And she ain't only got the shack in Freeport—she's got a hunk in the bank come due on a bond or something, and she's going to buy another slice of Long Island with it. Beats all how them vaudeville hams ain't happy unless they're buying up a bunch of bum lots.

MAC

*[A sigh.]*

Well! It's about time for me to slide down.

END

LEHMAN

Don't bring nobody up here without you ring me.

*[There is an emphatic knock on the center door—a slap rather than a knock.]*

Open up—it's Fanny!

*[MAC throws open the door. FANNY LEHMAN stands without—a woman in the late thirties, perhaps, with an enormous poise and an insolent assurance acquired in years of touring the South Bends and the Wichitas. She does not even give MAC a contemptuous glance. Instead, her eyes go to LEHMAN, who is leaning far back in his swivel chair, his feet on the desk. FANNY drifts down to the desk and plants herself squarely in LEHMAN'S line*