

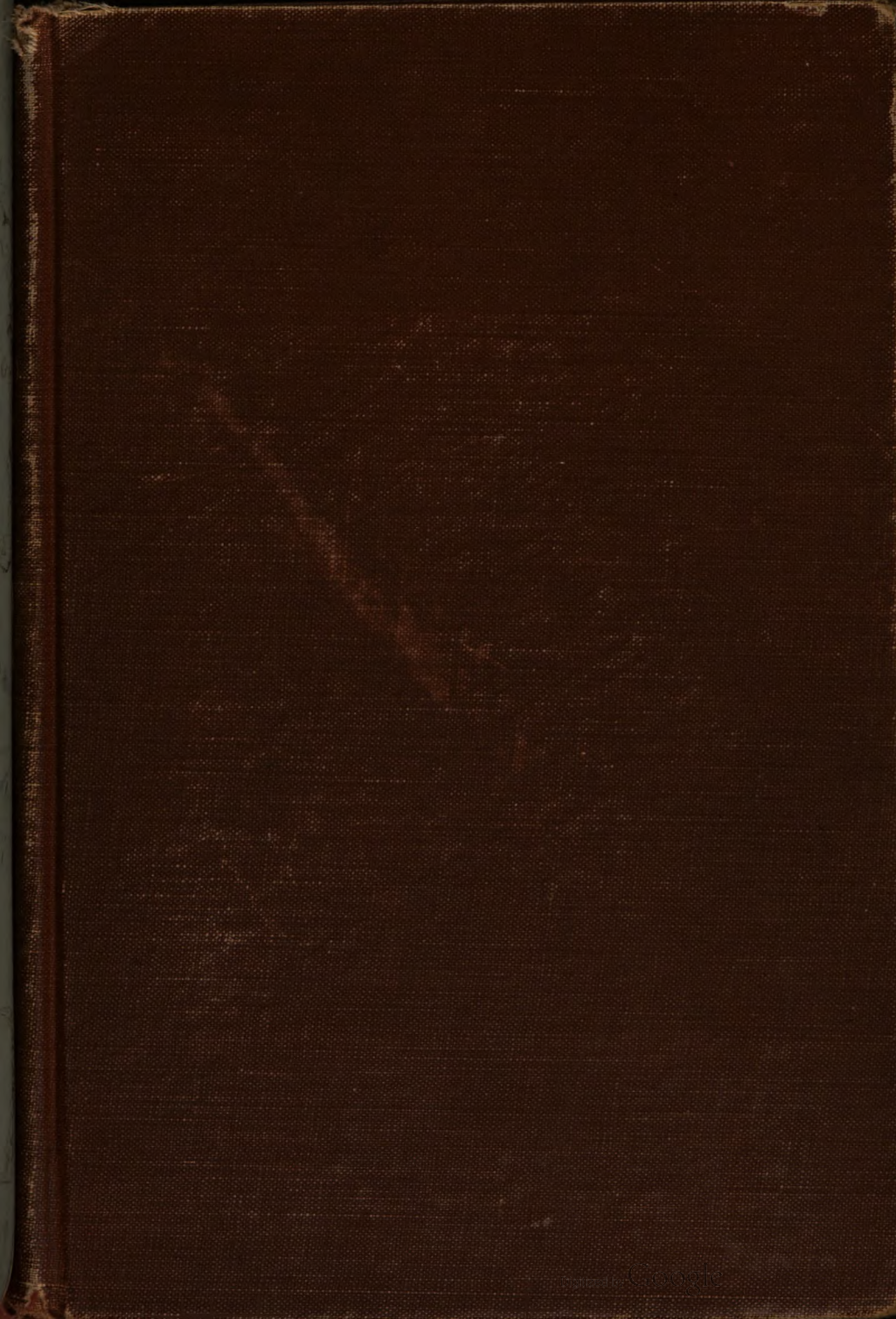
---

This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

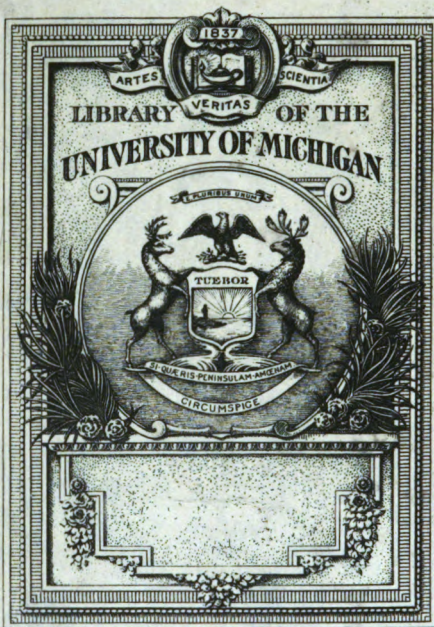
Google™ books

<https://books.google.com>









822.8

K215 loc







# THE BUTTER AND EGG MAN





# THE BUTTER AND EGG MAN

*A Comedy in Three Acts*

BY

GEORGE S. KAUFMAN



BONI AND LIVERIGHT  
PUBLISHERS    ::    ::    NEW YORK

---

**COPYRIGHT 1926 :: BY  
BONI & LIVERIGHT, INC.  
PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES**

---



**NOTE:**

**“The Butter and Egg Man” is the sole property of Crosby Gaige, Selywn Theatre Building, Forty-Second Street, New York, and is fully protected by copyright. It may not be acted, either by professionals or amateurs, without the permission of Mr. Gaige and the payment of a royalty. Public readings and radio broadcastings are likewise forbidden.**





libt.  
W 21-26  
6-21-26  
13404

# THE BUTTER AND EGG MAN

Produced by Crosby Gaige at the Longacre Theatre, New York, September 23rd, 1925, with the following cast:

Peter Jones .....	GREGORY KELLY
Jane Weston .....	SYLVIA FIELD
Joe Lehman .....	ROBERT MIDDLEMASS
Fanny Lehman .....	LUCILLE WEBSTER
Jack McClure .....	JOHN A. BUTLER
Mary Martin .....	MARION BARNEY
A Waiter .....	TOM FADDEN
Cecil Benham .....	HARRY NEVILLE
Bernie Sampson .....	HARRY STUBBS
Peggy Marlowe .....	ELOISE STREAM
Kitty Humphreys .....	PURITAN TOWNSEND
Oscar Fritchie .....	DENMAN MALEY
A. J. Patterson .....	GEORGE ALISON

Staged by James Gleason



## THE SCENES

**Act One:** Office of Lehmac Productions, Inc.,  
New York City.

**Act Two:** A Hotel Room in Syracuse.  
Scene 1—Just Before the Opening.  
Scene 2—Just After the Opening.

**Act Three:** The Office Again. A few Weeks later.



# THE BUTTER AND EGG MAN





# THE BUTTER AND EGG MAN

## ACT ONE

[*Scene: The office of Lehmac Productions, Inc. It is situated in any one of two-score buildings that sprinkle Broadway above Forty-second Street, and even just below it. It is the kind of building whose elevators are invariably a trifle too small. They are filled (the elevators) with girls who look exactly alike and men likewise cut to a pattern. One and all are in show business or on the fringe of it, and easy phrases about "on No. 2 at the Palace" and "Ain't no call for them short subjects" are shot back and forth. They are mainly given up, these buildings, to the offices of vaudeville and film men, and it is the mark of Joe Lehman's vaudeville training that he has taken an office in one of them. For the established legitimate producer, be it known, is generally to be found in none too opulent quarters over somebody's theater, or else in a decayed brownstone front in Forty-fifth Street.*

*The Lehman office has been only lately taken possession of, for Joe Lehman's vaudeville days are*

*extremely recent. As a matter of fact, a pile of miscellaneous junk from the old vaudeville office occupies a large part of the rear wall. There are great bundles of newspapers, most of them copies of Christmas issues of the The Morning Telegraph, containing Mr. Lehman's advertised seasonal greetings to all artists everywhere; there are a few moldy box files, part of a stray, bespangled costume, and even a ballet dancer's slipper. Except for a huge and shining and obviously new desk, the pile is the most prominent object in the room.*

*The other furniture is likewise new—a swivel chair at the desk, a visitors' chair in front of it, a smaller chair far at one side. There is a filing cabinet, but from the outside it looks as if there were nothing in it. A water cooler completes the furniture list. Mr. Lehman has carried over into his new quarters, however, some sixty or seventy photographs of artists who have passed at various times under his agent's eye, and these are up on the walls in interesting disarray. They are all inscribed. "With love to Joe," "To Joe from La Belle Marguery," "To the Greatest Agent in the World"—inscriptions, plainly, that bespeak a business affiliation rather than a personal bond.*

*There are two doors—one to a small office at the right, the other directly to the outer hallway.*

*The door at the right is unlettered; when it is opened one catches a glimpse of the reception room without. The other door is exactly center, and is lettered as follows on the reverse side of its frosted glass:*

ROOM 806  
LEHMAC PRODUCTIONS,  
INC.  
Entrance Room 805

*Across the hall, when this door is opened, one gets a glimpse of another office door—a door announcing that it is the office of STEIN, BIRCHFELDER, & BLAUMANN, ATTORNEYS-AT-LAW, and setting forth, in a corner below, the additional names of LEO HEYMANN and A. J. CARMODY. But all that, of course, is not vastly important to the office of Joe Lehman.*

*The rising curtain reveals Mr. LEHMAN and his confrère, JACK McCLUBE, deeply and none too amiably in thought. JOE LEHMAN is a more emphatic edition of the type that rides in the elevators. Except for a colored shirt, his clothes are not of the kind known as loud, and yet he has*

*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.]*

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.



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?

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.

**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.

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?

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.

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*

*of vision. She has fortified herself with evidence with which to continue the battle begun at home, and she feels pleasantly sure of herself. There is a world of insolence in her opening speech.]*

FANNY

I just been taking a peep at that trick troupe of yours.

LEHMAN

*[Flaring up.]*

Yah? Well, you keep out of them rehearsals, you hear me?

FANNY

You got a show there that's going to make history, do you know it? They're going to date things from the time you open this one.

LEHMAN

*[Walking away from her.]*

I ain't asked you what you think about it!

FANNY

*[Fondly reminiscing.]*

I caught that bit where the leading lady was supposed to be sixteen or something, climbing up apple trees. The stuff to make them trees out of is reinforced concrete.

LEHMAN

All right! It ain't *your* money, is it?

FANNY

You bet it ain't, dearie. And I gather that so far it ain't nobody else's.

MAC

Now listen, Fanny—Joe's in a hole.

FANNY

Well, if it ain't Close-Mouth.

MAC

I only want to help you both. Now, Joe's got a nice little entertainment—that's all it is, a good entertainment, ain't it, Joe?—and he can ring up on it for ten thousand. Now, you're his own wife and he's your husband, and you got all this property—

FANNY

*[Stops him with a warning hand.]*

You're going to need your voice for the sucker.

LEHMAN

Let her alone! She don't care nothing about me! That's women!

*[Swings on to Fanny.]*

You wouldn't 'a' had a sou if I hadn't dug you out of that Texas honky-tonk and steered you onto Broadway! I put you in regular vaudeville, that's what I done for you!

FANNY

Well, you got yours, didn't you? All the acts is on to agents like you. Twenty-per-cent Joe.

LEHMAN

[*With incredible scorn.*]

Fanita, the world's greatest juggler! Hah! If it wasn't for me you'd be keeping four clubs in the air right now for some Gus Sun that nobody ever heard of!

FANNY

Don't you go four-clubbing me! I done six clubs for the wow at the finish, and done it for years!

LEHMAN

Aaah! There ain't a stage between here and California ain't got dents in it from them clubs of yours! They wouldn't let nobody sit in the first five rows! Fanita!

FANNY

Yes, Fanita! And I'm as good today as I ever was.



LEHMAN

Just about!

FANNY

All right, all right! I was a bum juggler and you were a great agent. But I got the house and lot in Freeport and you're trying to get it.

MAC

What are you going to do with your money, Fanny—leave it to a home for jugglers?

FANNY

You lay off the jugglers! They can take care of themselves! They ain't none of them hanging on to the edge of show business, pretending to know all about it just because they bum a lunch at the Astor every day! And what are you doing in here anyhow? Me and Joe can get along without you!

MAC

[*Works toward the door; turns to LEHMAN.*]  
I'll go down and meet that certain party.

[*LEHMAN, his eyes fixed on Fanny in a steady glare, circles slowly around her and back to his chair behind the desk. He gives his derby hat a push down over his eyes—a characteristic gesture. Then he explodes.*]

LEHMAN

Why don't you go home if you're so crazy about it?

FANNY

Now listen, Joe—this ain't your game. Why don't you go back to agenting, where you know the ropes?

LEHMAN

Because I don't want to, see? I'm in the legit from now on.

FANNY

[*A sigh.*]

All right. But you ain't going to find nobody to back that junk show. I seen a rehearsal.

LEHMAN

I don't want no advice! Go on home!

FANNY

All right, then—go on and produce it. Produce it with some butter and egg man's coin and that dame of the Colonial Revolution that you got in the leading rôle.

LEHMAN

Never you mind about Martin! She's going to make the hit of her life!

FANNY

[*Entirely too sweetly.*]

I ain't got nothing against her. I suppose she either had to join up with your troupe or go back to her original rôle in "The Two Orphans." Who tipped you off to her, The Evening Post?

LEHMAN

Just because you ain't never heard of her don't say she ain't good.

FANNY

Say, my not hearing of her don't prove nothing. They didn't have no rotogravure sections in them days. What's her name again?

LEHMAN

Her name is Mary Martin! And it'll be in the lights!

FANNY

[*Thoughtfully.*]

Mary Martin. And what a temper *she's* got. Why, I wasn't even talking to *her*.

LEHMAN

[*Taking a moment for it to sink in.*]

You mean you let fly one of them wise cracks at that rehearsal?

FANNY

I didn't open my mouth.

LEHMAN

*[Not deceived for an instant.]*

What did you say?

FANNY

*[Innocently.]*

I only asked a question.

LEHMAN

What was it—when was she born?

FANNY

I told you I caught that scene where she's mama's little darling—climbing up that cherry tree.

LEHMAN

Yah—and what was your question?

FANNY

I says to the director—"What does she wear in that scene?"

LEHMAN

Go on!

FANNY

And he says—"Blue pants."

LEHMAN

*[Fearing the worst.]*

Then comes the gag.

FANNY

I just says—"Drop your curtain on that laugh."

LEHMAN

Oh, you did, did you? And if Martin goes and has hysterics on me I suppose that don't mean nothing to you, does it—but what about me? I suppose you're trying to see how much you can help, when here I am sweating blood to get this show on, and worried all the time whether—

*[JANE WESTON enters somewhat uncertainly from the reception room. She is twenty or so, and, since she is the heroine of this fable, she is good-looking and neatly dressed. She is LEHMAN's stenographer and office girl.]*

I'd think the least a man's wife—

*[He breaks off as he sees Jane.]*

What is it?

JANE

Miss Martin is outside.

FANNY

Wheel her in!

LEHMAN

Take them small time jokes and get out of here!

[*To JANE.*]

Is she behaving all right?

JANE

Why, yes, sir.

LEHMAN

Not crying or nothing?

JANE

No, sir.

FANNY

Has she got a knife?

LEHMAN

You get out!

[*To JANE.*]

Bring her in!

[*Again to FANNY.*]

Go on—I don't want no scenes in here!

FANNY

I just want to time her to the desk.

LEHMAN

If you—

[*He stops as JANE ushers in MARY MARTIN.*

*The latter is the familiar type of slightly*

*passè actress. She stops short as she sees FANNY; draws herself up. FANNY strolls slowly and impudently toward the center door; flips it open. She gives another look to MARY, then turns to LEHMAN.]*

FANNY

Yes, sir—blue pants!  
[*She goes out.*]

MARTIN

Well!

LEHMAN

Don't pay no attention to her—she's loco!  
What's on your mind?

MARTIN

It's a check of yours, Mr. Lehman.  
[*She produces it.*]

It just came back to me for the third time. What does that entitle me to—permanent possession?

LEHMAN

Wait a while and put it through again.

MARTIN

[*Quietly insistent.*]  
I want the money, Mr. Lehman. I need it.

LEHMAN

All right—you're going to get it! You just got to wait, that's all.

MARTIN

Mr. Lehman, I think a shoestring would be big for what you're operating on. And unless I get fifty right now I'm going straight to Equity and tell the whole story. They'll call out the company.

LEHMAN

[*Placatingly.*]

Now listen, sweetheart! You got a great part in a great show and you're going to be great in it. We're all going to make a pile of coin, and if you just string along with us—

MARTIN

That's what you said the last time. This time I want the money.

LEHMAN

[*Flares up again.*]

Well, you don't get it, see? Not till I'm good and ready! Lots of real stars would give their eye teeth to play the part you got!

MARTIN

Well, if that's the way you feel about it—

[*The phone rings. LEHMAN takes it up.*]



LEHMAN

Yah? . . . Mac? Well, what is it? . . . She's gone—what is it? . . .

*[He grows interested.]*

What? . . . A live one?

*[He is now genuinely excited.]*

Bring him up! Where are you—downstairs? . . .  
Right!

*[He starts to hang up; gets an afterthought.]*

Hey! Keep hold of his arm!

*[He hangs up; leaps to his feet.]*

Now clear out! I got business!

MARTIN

And the money?

LEHMAN

*[Stopping in his stride toward the side door.]*

Listen—you'll get your money! We're taking in a partner—a millionaire, see?

*[Another step toward the door.]*

Miss Weston!

MARTIN

When do I get it?

LEHMAN

Come back in half an hour you can have all the

money you want! I tell you he's a big millionaire!

*[Throws open the door.]*

Miss Weston!

JANE

*[Entering.]*

Yes, sir?

LEHMAN

Now get this—

*[He wheels rapidly on MARY MARTIN.]*

Will you get the hell out of here?

MARTIN

*[With emphasis.]*

I'll give you just half an hour. Then I'm coming back.

*[She goes out at center.]*

LEHMAN

*[Going back to his desk.]*

Clean this place up! There's a big butter-and-egg man coming!

JANE

Yes, sir.

LEHMAN

And shake a leg!

JANE

Yes, sir.

[*A moment of cleaning up; then, puzzled, she turns to LEHMAN.*]

Who did you say was coming, Mr. Lehman?

LEHMAN

[*Shouting at her.*]

A butter-and-egg man! Don't you know what a butter-and-egg man is? A millionaire! A millionaire! He's going to put money in the show!

JANE

Oh, I'm glad of that.

LEHMAN

I thought you'd get it after while.

JANE

Yes, sir.

[*Another pause; she picks up a piece of paper from the floor.*]

Does that mean you'll pay me my salary then?

LEHMAN

You're going to begin, too, huh?

JANE

I've been here four weeks.

LEHMAN

All right! You'll get it! And look here—when this guy's been in here awhile, you make an entrance with a piece of paper, see? A letter, anything—make it busy! Put it on my desk!

JANE

Yes, sir.

LEHMAN

Don't stop to take no bows—just exit!

JANE

Yes, sir.

*[MAC, vastly pleased with himself, slides in at the side door.]*

LEHMAN

Is he there?

MAC

With his hat off.

LEHMAN

What's the low down?

MAC

Built to order. A big butter-and-egg man from the West.

LEHMAN

Where'd you get him?

MAC

I'm waiting for this other bird when up blows Sid Bloom with this kid in tow—he's just a kid. I seen in a minute he was our oyster, and a second later he tells me he's looking to get into show business.

*[He indulges in a gesture.]*

With watercress.

LEHMAN

Shoot him in!

*[Turns to JANE.]*

All right, you! And don't forget that letter stuff!

*[JANE opens the door.]*

MAC

*[Honey in his tone.]*

Come right in, Mr. Jones.

*[PETER JONES enters. PETER is a boy of twenty-one or so, and it may be said without exaggeration that there are some things he does not know about the world. For the rest, he is simple, likable, and just about average. He enters rather timidly; his gaze is on the room at large, and his eyes never go to JANE WESTON. JANE, however, notices him. She*

*goes quietly out, closing the door behind her.*  
*MAC continues.]*

This is Mr. Peter Jones. Mr. Lehman, Mr. Jones.

PETER

*[His first glimpse of LEHMAN finds him sitting characteristically at his desk, hat tilted back, feet up on the desk. LEHMAN does not move as PETER speaks to him.]*

I'm very glad to meet you, Mr. Lehman.

LEHMAN

How are you, sweetheart!

*[PETER looks behind him to see if perchance someone else is being addressed. MAC places the guest chair for him.]*

Sit down!

*[PETER gingerly settles himself, hat in hand. He notices then that the other two are wearing their hats; tries to put his on his head, but is not quite equal to it.]*

Have a cigar?

PETER

No, thank you.

LEHMAN

Where you from?

2

PETER

Chillicothe.

LEHMAN

Hm!

PETER

Ohio.

LEHMAN

Great place! I never played it myself, but they all tell me.

PETER

Mr.—

[*He indicates* MAC.]

this gentleman said you were about to make a theatrical production.

LEHMAN

I'm doing a wow.

PETER

Sir?

LEHMAN

Listen, sweetheart—I got a show that's the greatest dramatic novelty in twenty years. There ain't never been nothing like it, see?

MAC

I was telling Mr. Jones that providing he acts quick, maybe he could get in on it.

LEHMAN

Ever been in show business, Mr. Jones?

PETER

Oh, yes. We put on two shows last year in Chillicothe—during the hospital drive.

LEHMAN

I see.

PETER

During the second one I had charge of everything—told them what to do—the actors. We made over a hundred dollars.

LEHMAN

Then you know how them things are.

PETER

Yes, sir.

LEHMAN

Of course, here in New York, it's just like Mr. McClure says. You got to make quick decisions—think on your feet.



PETER

Yes, sir.

MAC

There was a friend of ours could have bought in on "Abie's Irish Rose" if he'd snapped it up. He waited till the next day and it was too late.

LEHMAN

*[Snaps his fingers.]*

*That's* the show game.

PETER

Well, I'm a believer in quick decisions myself, if it's an A-Number One proposition. Only, of course, I've got to be careful.

LEHMAN

Just the kind of man I like, sweetheart. What line you been in?

PETER

I was—in a hotel.

LEHMAN

Working there, you mean—had a job?

PETER

Yes, sir.

LEHMAN

Out in that town?

PETER

Chillicothe.

LEHMAN

*[Thoughtfully.]*

This coin—you didn't make it yourself, then?

PETER

No, sir. It was—left to me.

LEHMAN

How much you want to put up?

PETER

Oh, I'd want to know more about your proposition first. I've got to be careful.

LEHMAN

I ain't asking you to go in blindfold. I got a great gag and I ain't afraid to show it. I got a show that's going to catch everybody, see? It ain't highbrow and yet it ain't lowbrow.

PETER

Sort of medium brow?

LEHMAN

That's it! It's the first good medium-brow show they've had, and it's going to be a knockout.

PETER

How much money do you figure it's going to make?

LEHMAN

Say—ask Sam Harris what he's knocking down out of this "Rain" show! Ask that woman what she's making out of "Abie's Irish Rose!" Ask Bill Brady what he cleaned up out of "The Man Who Come Back!"

PETER

You want me to ask them?

LEHMAN

I'll tell you, sweetheart! Millions!

PETER

That's what I'd like. Only I'd want it to be safe.

LEHMAN

I'll guarantee it personally. So will my friend here. Won't you, Mac?

MAC

Sure!

LEHMAN

Now—what do you say?

PETER

Well, I—I—

MAC

Think on your feet—that's show business.

PETER

I couldn't decide in as big a hurry as that.

LEHMAN

[*Disappointed.*]

You couldn't?

PETER

No, sir. I've got to be careful.

LEHMAN

Oh!

[*A pause.*]

Well, when do you think you *could* decide?

PETER

I'd want to investigate it first. Read the play or something.

LEHMAN

H'm. Think we can dig up a script for Mr. Jones, Mac?

*[His tone tells MAC that he is expected to say no.]*

MAC

Afraid not. You see, the troupe's in rehearsal, Mr. Jones, and they're using 'em all.

LEHMAN

I'll show you where it's sure-fire. Now look!

*[With one sweeping gesture he pushes all the desk objects out of his way.]*

It's a play about a dame, see? Only it starts this way. There's a prologue—with a playwright in it, that's in love with this skirt. So he asks a bunch of people to come around and hear him read his new play. Now!

*[He rises.]*

He starts in to read, and he says, "The first scene is in an orchard." And when he says "Orchard," instead of his going on reading, we work that new trick everybody's talking about.

PETER

What's that?

MAC

We call it the "cutback."

PETER

Oh!

LEHMAN

Black out, quick change, lights up, and it's this orchard! Get it?

PETER

[*Nods.*]

Just the way he said.

LEHMAN

You got it! Then all the rest of it is his play. First, here she is in the orchard, only it's the same dame you seen in the prologue. Neat?

PETER

You bet.

LEHMAN

She's younger, see? About seventeen, and playing around the trees. Then along comes this guy—

PETER

Who?

MAC

The same fellow that was the playwright.

LEHMAN

He makes love to her, only he's too nice about it.

She wants some bozo that'll give her a lot of hot stuff. You know women.

PETER

*[With a wiseness that hardly fits him.]*

Say!

LEHMAN

So this fellow does a getaway and in blows this other baby. From New York, see, and dressed sorta loud. He gives her an earful about how beautiful she is, and anyhow, she falls for him.

MAC

*[Casually.]*

Don't forget the priest.

LEHMAN

Oh, yah! There's a priest comes in, see, and there's some gab with him. Now! The next scene the dame's hitched up to this baby, and having a swell time. It's a big cabaret in New York, music and dancing—you know. One thing and another happens—anyhow, a guy comes along and insults her. And her husband he says what the hell, and back and forth, and out with a gun and—

*[He climaxes the episode with an explosive snap of the fingers.]*

PETER

[*Excited.*]

Who does?

MAC

The fellow she's married to croaks the guy that insulted her.

PETER

That's good, all right.

LEHMAN

[*By this time giving a performance that the elder Guitry would have been proud of.*]

Music stops, police—who done it?

[*He leans far across the desk.*]

She says she done it!

PETER

[*Mildly puzzled.*]

But—weren't there a lot of people around?

LEHMAN

Sure they was.

PETER

Then don't they see the husband shoot him?

LEHMAN

[*With vast scorn for Peter's ignorance of stage mechanics.*]

No! They're all looking the other way.



PETER

Oh! All right, then.

LEHMAN

[*Getting ready for a new climax.*]

And now comes the trial scene! She don't recognize this judge, see?

MAC

He has a beard on!

LEHMAN

Yah—the judge has got a long beard on, and she don't—

[*A snap of the fingers.*]

—I forgot to tell you this part. When she run off with this guy her father kicked her out, see—didn't want no more to do with her, and she ain't seen him since. Got it?

PETER

Well, I'm not—

LEHMAN

Wait for the surprise!

[*He takes a breath.*]

A lot of trial stuff—so-and-so and so-and-so and so-and-so, she keeps on saying she done it, and finally this judge he gives her fifteen years!

PETER

Gee!

LEHMAN

Then everybody does an exit, she's just there with him, and who does the judge turn out to be but her *own father!*

*[He is exploding a bombshell.]*

PETER

Say! That's a great—coincidence.

MAC

Well, the father used to be a lawyer.

LEHMAN

Yah! Anyhow, it goes back and forth, and she gets crying, and more and more, and goes crazy sorta—and finally they drag her off, cursing like a trooper. That's your first act!

*[He strips off his coat.]*

PETER

It's a great start, all right.

MAC

The name of it is "Her Lesson."

LEHMAN

Yah—"Her Lesson." It's a big moral play, see—we get all the women.

PETER

That's fine.

LEHMAN

Now! Second act! Ten years later, and she's just getting out of jail. And she's sore. She's out to get square, and she's doped out a way skin rich men out of their coin, and still they can't do nothing to her.

MAC

She stays within the law.

PETER

"Within the Law" would be a good title.

LEHMAN

Now! She's laying plans to fleece a guy that's coming to see her! She don't know his name, see? And who does it turn out to be but this other guy that wanted to marry her!

PETER

What's he say?

LEHMAN

He gives her a long spiel, and she makes up her mind to go straight. Only she can't. She tries it on the next guy and he won't stand for it. So she

says what the hell, and men is all alike, and me for the easiest way!

PETER

That was the name of a play.

MAC

Made half a million.

LEHMAN

Sure fire!

*[He straightens up.]*

And now comes the big punch! Next is the brothel scene!

*[He waits expectantly for the effect of this revelation on PETER, but so far as PETER is concerned it might as well have been a kitchen.]*

PETER

*[Blandly.]*

Yah?

LEHMAN

The dame's been going down hill and there she is, see? Only—before anything terrible can happen, who comes along but this priest. Remember him?

PETER

He was in the orchard.

LEHMAN

That's him!

MAC

He's trying to close this place up!

LEHMAN

Of course there's a big scene when he finds the girl in there. Everybody's standing around, he opens up on her, then zowie—she comes back at him!

PETER

I thought she would.

LEHMAN

That's where we bring in the strong talk. She calls him all kinds of names—we go the limit. Then she says, "you priests and missionaries is all alike, you don't give a girl no chance." And so-and-so and so-and-so and so-and-so—she faints dead away, somebody says everybody get out of here, she's sick—that's your second act!

*[There is a moment's pause for breath.]*

PETER

We've got a good one, all right.

MAC

Want me to tell the rest?

LEHMAN

*[Shakes his head; plunges into it again.]*

Act Three is her dream! She's delirious, see, and dreams she's dead and gone to heaven. Here's where we got all these angels coming down the aisles—

MAC

Long veils over them.

LEHMAN

There was a show done it last year and it was a wow. Everything's all mixed up in this act. Her father's up there—the judge, see—only he's supposed to be God.

PETER

Is that all right to do?

LEHMAN

*[In a tone calculated to lay all doubts.]*

There was a big hit done it. Anyhow, we don't really say it.

MAC

*[His most important contribution.]*

Don't forget the priest.

LEHMAN

Oh, yah! This priest comes in and he's got a rabbi with him, see? And they talk about how every-

*Miss  
Junk  
Box!*

body's the same underneath, and it don't matter none what religion they got. Anyhow, just as they're starting to execute her, she wakes up. And this fellow, the good one, has got her in his arms, and she says the blue-bird of happiness was at home all the time; kiss, lights out, finishing reading the play, everybody says great, the fellow and girl gets married, fade out, and curtain!

[*Anyone else would be exhausted; LEHMAN is merely winded.*]

PETER

Gosh!

MAC

How do you like it?

PETER

[*A shake of the head—he cannot find words.*]  
I tell you! Who wrote it?

MAC

It used to be a short story.

LEHMAN

Yah, it was a story, see? A story in a highbrow magazine. Then some fellow makes a play out of it—a long time ago. Only he died, so of course we don't have to pay no royalties. You can't lose with

it, sweetheart. Can you imagine what a picture it'll make for this Swanson baby?

PETER

*[Now definitely hooked.]*

Would it take very much money to produce it?

LEHMAN

*[Taking his time.]*

Here's the angle. We're willing to let you have half of it, see—forty-nine per cent.

PETER

Of course I'd be a producer too?

LEHMAN

Sure! Now—how much was you thinking of putting up?

PETER

*[Considers.]*

I'd rather you'd tell me, first.

LEHMAN

I'll let you in on the ground floor. You can have forty-nine per cent for—

*[He measures his man.]*

thirty thousand dollars.



PETER

Oh, I couldn't think of paying that much.

MAC

Can't you shave that a little, Joe, for Mr. Jones?

LEHMAN

I'll tell you what I'll do. Give me a quick yes and I'll take twenty-five.

PETER

*[Reaching for his hat.]*

I guess we've got to let the whole matter drop.

LEHMAN

Now, hold on!

*[They settle him in the chair again.]*

This coin of yours—you ain't got it some place out West, have you?

PETER

Why?

LEHMAN

Well, if it was where you could dig it up in a hurry, maybe we can do business.

PETER

It's right down the street—in a bank.

LEHMAN

I wasn't going to let it go for this, but you give me your check for twenty thousand and forty-nine per cent of the show is yours. And that's a bargain—ain't it, Mac?

MAC

He couldn't have bought in on "Sally" for that.

LEHMAN

And that was a big hit too. Now, what do you say?

PETER

Twenty thousand?

LEHMAN

That's the dope!

PETER

Twenty thousand?

LEHMAN

And it's a bargain!

PETER

Twenty thousand?

MAC

Think on your feet.

PETER

[*Slowly rises.*]  
Well—I might—

LEHMAN

Set!

[*He and MAC leap to action. With a quick movement LEHMAN dips a pen in the ink and proffers it to PETER; MAC simultaneously clears a space on the desk. Before he knows it the bewildered PETER is made to feel that immediate action is expected. For a moment he faces the two of them, then slowly begins to draw out his check-book. Two pairs of eyes follow his every movement; it is with difficulty that the two men keep from taking the book out of his hands and spreading it open on the table. PETER, with another look at the two, opens the book himself, takes the pen from LEHMAN'S hand. He starts to write.*]

PETER

It's Check No. 1.

MAC

[*Peering over his shoulder.*]  
Chatham and Phenix, eh?

PETER

*[Still writing.]*

Yes, sir.

MAC

*[Slowly dictating.]*

Joe L-e-h-m-a-n.

LEHMAN

*[As he writes a receipt.]*

You're a smart baby, Mr. Jones. And you're going to clean up.

MAC

*[As PETER nears the end.]*

Now just sign it.

*[PETER poises the pen in air—and as he does so the center door is flung open explosively. It is an irate FANNY who enters—the door slams shut behind her with a devastating bang.]*

FANNY

Well!

LEHMAN

*[At her side in one bound.]*

Ain't you got no sense at all? Get out of here!  
Get out of here!

FANNY

Listen, you four-flushing bum!

LEHMAN

Now, Fanny—

MAC

Fanny, for the love of—

FANNY

[*Fairly screaming.*]

I just come from my bank! And the paying teller says there was a guy around there this morning with black hair and a check suit and a trick tie trying to find out how big my balance was!

LEHMAN

[*With apprehensive glances at PETER, huddled in his chair.*]

Now, now, I don't know nothing about it! Come back after while!

FANNY

If you show up around there again they got instructions to shoot on sight! That's all I come to tell you!

LEHMAN

Then get out!

FANNY

I ain't staying!

[*She moves to the door.*]

I'm only telling you not to go snooping around

my money, because you ain't going to get a nickel of it!

*[She flings open the door; for a fraction of a second she stands framed in the doorway.]*

Not for a rotten show like that!

*[She goes; the door crashes shut behind her.]*

*[For five seconds after this bombshell neither LEHMAN nor MAC moves—their eyes have shifted to PETER, who still sits motionless in his chair. Then LEHMAN begins to move back to his place at the desk—slowly, casually, as though to pretend that nothing had really happened. MAC likewise shifts his position, but the eyes of neither of them leave PETER for a second. Then finally comes the first movement from PETER. He reaches over and dips the pen in the ink, and the spell is broken. LEHMAN and MAC exchange looks; the tautness is gone. PETER touches pen to paper, then suddenly looks up.]*

PETER

Did she say rotten?

LEHMAN

*[Quickly.]*

She wasn't talking about this show!

MAC

It's another one we got!

**LEHMAN**

She don't even know nothing about this one!

**PETER**

[*A pause.*]

Who was it? A friend of yours?

**LEHMAN**

It was my old lady.

**PETER**

Your mother?

**LEHMAN**

Now listen, sweetheart—you got judgment of your own, ain't you? A smart guy like you. I told you about the show. Don't it sound like a wow?

**PETER**

But you see—there are reasons why I don't want to lose this money.

**LEHMAN**

You ain't going to lose it. Did I tell you about the bookings? Did I tell him about the bookings?

**MAC**

Not yet.

PETER

Bookings?

LEHMAN

The towns we play in—the theaters.

*[He reaches into the drawer for the route sheet.]*

PETER

Oh!

LEHMAN

We got the cream! Look! We open in Syracuse, see? A great show town! And we play there a full week!

PETER

A week, huh?

MAC

Most shows only get three days.

LEHMAN

Then we go to Providence, Worcester, Albany—all them soft spots.

PETER

I guess they're nice towns, but—

LEHMAN

They're great!



PETER

But I don't know. You see, it's just as I was telling you. I've got a special reason why I wouldn't want to lose this money, and—

*[He breaks his speech as he hears the door open at right. It is JANE who enters, obediently bringing the decoy letter. PETER is plainly interested, but for a moment he continues to talk.]*

—you see, if anything should—

*[His thoughts have strayed from the subject; he watches JANE as she crosses to the desk. She lays the paper in front of LEHMAN, then, as she turns, unsettles PETER completely by giving him a friendly smile. She crosses and goes out again; PETER'S eyes follow her. Then he tries to bring himself back to the matter in hand, but it is difficult.]*

I say, I wouldn't want to—I mean—

*[Another look toward the outer office; a slight struggle with himself; he gives up.]*

Would I work right in this office?

LEHMAN

Sure! Give you a desk right in here.

PETER

Well—either in here or—out there.

LEHMAN

Whatever you say.

*[Another struggle with himself; then, with sudden resolution, PETER signs the check. In an instant LEHMAN is reaching for it.]*

PETER

It's wet!

LEHMAN

I'll dry it. You're a partner now, sweetheart. There's your receipt, and we'll draw up the papers later.

*[MAC has thrown open the center door; the two are already half way out of the office.]*

PETER

*[Panicky.]*

Wait a minute! Maybe I shouldn't have done it.

LEHMAN

You ain't going to start worrying?

PETER

Shouldn't I?

LEHMAN

I should say not! Now Mac and me'll be right back—you wait here, see? Right in this room.

PETER

But shouldn't I go with you to the bank?

LEHMAN

You look after things here, see?

PETER

But you see, my check—

MAC

The bank knows us.

PETER

But that isn't what I meant. I—

LEHMAN

Now don't you worry! Just stay right here, because we want to talk to you when we get back, see? I'll tell you what! Miss Weston!

PETER

Is that the name of—

MAC

That's her.

LEHMAN

Miss Weston!

*[He throws open the door; JANE enters.]*

Look out for Mr. Jones here till we come back!  
He's a regular partner. Come on, Mac.

[*LEHMAN and MAC slip quickly out the center door; before they know it PETER and JANE find themselves facing each other. There is a moment's pause.*]

JANE

It wasn't much of an introduction, was it?

PETER

I don't mind if you don't.

JANE

[*Another pause.*]

Mr. Lehman says you've invested money in the play.

PETER

Yes, I—did put some in.

JANE

I hope it'll be very successful.

PETER

[*Rather stiffly.*]

Thank you.

JANE

[*Leading the conversation.*]

I've often wondered how it would feel to be able to do that.

PETER

You mean to be a producer?

JANE

Anyhow, to have enough money to be one.

PETER

It—doesn't feel any way in particular.

JANE

Then if I had a great deal of money—well, like you—I might go ahead and *be* one.

PETER

[*Not quite getting the full implication, but coming close enough to be disturbed.*]

How's that?

JANE

I say, if I could afford to risk part of the money, I'd be a producer.

PETER

Risk it? Don't you think it's a good business, putting plays on?

JANE

Well, of course, it depends. You see—

PETER

*[Now a little frightened.]*

But this—this play of Mr. Lehman's—it's good, isn't it? I mean, you think it'll be a hit?

JANE

*[A new doubt has come to her; regards him, then speaks.]*

Tell me something.

PETER

Don't you?

JANE

*[Now sparring for information.]*

It—it will be a hit, of course. But—I'm sure you wouldn't care, would you? A millionaire like you?

PETER

Who—me? I'm not anything like that. It was all I could do to—well, I hope it turns out all right.

JANE

*[Still sizing him up.]*

You're not a New Yorker, are you, Mr. Jones?

PETER

No, I'm from Ohio.

JANE

Oh!

PETER

Chillicothe.

JANE

Well—

*[She stops, uncertain as to how to phrase it.]*

PETER

Huh?

JANE

You—you haven't been connected with the theatrical business before, then?

PETER

Oh, yes. I had a company—that is, we made several productions in Chillicothe, sort of.

JANE

I see.

PETER

*[Anxiously.]*

It's all right, isn't it? Mr. Lehman's play, I mean? You don't think anything could happen to it?

JANE

No, it isn't that, but—

PETER

It sounded great, I thought. But it'd be terrible if it wasn't a go.

JANE

What I was going to ask you was—of course it isn't any of my business, but—I was wondering how you happened to be here. In this office, I mean. How you ever happened to pick the theatrical business to invest in.

PETER

Oh, I don't know. It's always appealed to me.

JANE

Did you give Mr. Lehman—much money?

PETER

Why? There isn't anything the matter, is there?

JANE

No, no! The only reason I asked—

PETER

Oh, if there were! Plays do make a lot of money, don't they?



JANE

I'm sure it'll be all right. You mustn't worry.

PETER

All right. If you feel that way, why—all right.

JANE

Well, I—I appreciate your trusting me, of course, but—

PETER

Why—you're being here is one of the reasons I went into it, partly.

JANE

How's that?

PETER

I say, I felt pretty sure it was all right or you wouldn't be connected with it.

JANE

*[Slowly.]*

I'm not sure that I understand.

PETER

Well, when you came in, while they were here, you—sort of smiled at me. That is, I thought you did—maybe you didn't.

JANE

You did it because—I smiled?

[*He starts to protest.*]

Oh, it's all right, only—it just makes me feel a good deal of responsibility, that's all.

[*A pause.*]

Was it *all* your money, that you invested?

PETER

Oh, no! I've got—some left. A little.

JANE

Money you'd—saved?

PETER

We couldn't save much. I didn't earn enough.

JANE

Your folks, you mean?

PETER

Mother and grandfather. You see, we were all living together in Chillicothe, and I was working in the hotel there. Sort of in the office. Grandfather had this money he'd saved, and then last June he died. And he left the money to us—mother and me.

JANE

Was it much?

PETER

Oh, yes. Twenty-two thousand, four hundred dollars.

JANE

How much did you—invest?

PETER

Well, first I want to tell you. You see, if you just take the interest on that, why, it isn't very much to get along on. Then Mr. Madden—that's the man at the hotel—he heard I was getting this money, only he thought it was more—and he was sort of tired of running the hotel, anyhow—and he said if I could pay him fifty thousand dollars he'd let me have it. It makes a lot of money.

JANE

I see.

PETER

That's when I thought, if I could take this money we had and make more out of it, quickly—everything would be fine. So of course I thought of the theatrical business, because I'd read about that sort of thing happening—and anyhow I'd been connected with it, sort of. Mother thought too it would be a good thing, and so I left fourteen hundred dollars with her, and I came to New York to look around. That was last week.

JANE

You brought twenty-one thousand with you?

PETER

Well, the bank there put it in a bank here for me. So all I had to do was give Mr. Lehman a check.

JANE

For—all of it?

PETER

Oh, no. Only twenty thousand.

*[She rises, angrily.]*

What's the matter?

JANE

Nothing.

PETER

You're not—going, are you?

JANE

*[Still half afire with rage at LEHMAN.]*

Yes, I—I think I must.

PETER

Well, much obliged for coming in and talking to me.

JANE

[*Her mind half on LEHMAN.*]

I—I hope again that it's a big success. The play.

PETER

Oh, I feel better about that now, since you talked to me. You see, it's the first time I've talked regularly with anyone since I left home. I mean, you're the first person that's—

[*The door at right opens abruptly. It is MARY MARTIN making her promised return.*]

MARTIN

Oh! Sorry. Mr. Lehman's not here, I see.

JANE

He'll be back soon, Miss Martin.

MARTIN

I'm afraid I can't wait. I told him I was coming back, and it's important.

[*She turns to go.*]

PETER

[*Conscious of new responsibilities.*]

Is it—is it something to do with the firm?

MARTIN

How's that?

PETER

I say, if it's something to do with the firm, maybe I can do it.

MARTIN

*[A questioning graciousness in her tone.]*

I wonder if this is the young man that Mr. Lehman spoke about? That was—coming into the company?

PETER

Yes, ma'am.

MARTIN

Oh!

*[She lets loose her full battery of charm; advances toward him.]*

Then of course you can do it!

PETER

*[As JANE turns to depart.]*

You needn't go, Miss Weston.

JANE

I will if you don't mind.

PETER

Well—

*[JANE goes; MISS MARTIN prepares to be just lovelier than ever.]*

**MARTIN**

I don't believe Mr. Lehman mentioned your name.

**PETER**

Peter Jones.

**MARTIN**

*[Taking his hand for a moment.]*

I'm Mary Martin, Mr. Jones. I'm in the show.

**PETER**

Really? Our show?

**MARTIN**

So you and I will probably see a good deal of each other.

**PETER**

We will?

**MARTIN**

*[Gushingly.]*

Indeed, yes.

**PETER**

Which one are you? In the show, I mean?

**MARTIN**

Oh, the lead.

**PETER**

Ma'am?

MARTIN

The leading rôle.

PETER

Oh! It's a good part, all right. I mean, she gets in a lot of trouble.

MARTIN

You're coming to rehearsals soon, aren't you, Mr. Jones? I'm sure we all want to get your ideas.

PETER

My ideas?

MARTIN

Of course! And I do especially!

PETER

Oh, I don't know that I'd be much good at—

MARTIN

You'd be wonderful! And I can tell!

PETER

I did make a few productions out in Chillicothe that seemed to go pretty well.

MARTIN

You see! I knew the minute I saw you! Now, I want you to promise me you'll come to rehearsals



and that whenever you have any suggestions for me, you'll tell me.

PETER

[*Weakly.*]  
All right.

MARTIN

I'm so glad! And I can't tell you how relieved I am that you've come in to take charge of things.

PETER

I probably won't do much. You see—

MARTIN

[*Feigning sudden recollection.*]  
I knew there was something, Mr. Jones. I wonder if you'd do me a very great favor?

PETER

Surely.

MARTIN

I don't like to trouble you, but I left my check-book at home this morning. And just now I saw the darlinest little dress, and they won't hold it.

[*For one terrible second she skirts the edge of baby talk.*]

PETER

Why—that's all right.  
[*The check-book comes out again.*]

MARTIN

Oh, thank you, so much. It'll be taken out of my salary. Just a hundred.

PETER

Just a hundred.

*[Starts to write.]*

MARTIN

Just make it to cash. I think it's wonderful, your coming in with us, Mr. Jones. It makes everything seem different. Oh, that's just fine. I'm ever so much obliged.

*[She takes the check.]*

Thank you. Now, don't forget! You're coming to rehearsals, and you're going to tell me just what you think.

PETER

Oh—I was thinking, a little while ago—if you don't mind?

MARTIN

Mind? I'm crazy for suggestions.

PETER

You know that part where you're in—that place?

MARTIN

Place? I'm not sure just which scene—

PETER

You know. The place—that you go to?

MARTIN

You don't mean the heaven scene?

PETER

No, ma'am. Just before that.

MARTIN

Oh, the brothel.

PETER

Yah. That's where, if I were you, I'd really do some of my best acting—where you bring in the strong talk. You priests are no better than a lot of rabbis—I'd really give it to them—like that.

MARTIN

Oh, yes! Indeed I will, Mr. Jones. And thank you.

PETER

I'll come to rehearsals myself, tomorrow.

MARTIN

Yes, indeed.

*[Heads for the center door.]*

I can go out this way, can't I?

PETER

Yes, ma'am. I guess so.  
[*He opens the door.*]

MARTIN

[*Takes his hand again.*]  
It's been a great pleasure, Mr. Jones.

PETER

It has been for me, too.

MARTIN

Something tells me we're going to be very good friends. Because I know you'll produce other plays too, won't you?

PETER

I don't know.

MARTIN

Of course you will—a man like you.

PETER

Well, a few.

MARTIN

And now good-bye—until tomorrow. And I want to tell you what a pleasure it is to be under your management. Good-bye.

## PETER

Good-bye.

[*She goes. For a second PETER watches her down the hallway, then turns and looks the office over before he closes the door. The interview with MISS MARTIN has plainly left him in a glow, and any earlier apprehensions are forgotten in the greater pleasures of this new-found proprietorship. For a satisfied second or two his glance roams over the autographed photographs, then goes to LEHMAN'S opulent-looking desk. He approaches it, looks at a letter or two, inspects the route sheet. He is vastly pleased with himself. His glance falls on that important-looking swivel chair; he tests it, rather gingerly. Then, finding that it tips comfortably back, he gets an idea. He reaches for his hat. Leaning far back in the chair, he puts the hat on his head and both feet up on the desk. In the manner of LEHMAN, he gives the hat a little push over one eye. He surveys the office with satisfaction. He is a theatrical manager.*]

C U R T A I N

## ACT TWO

### SCENE ONE

*Scene: A hotel room in Syracuse, shortly before the curtain rings up on "Her Lesson." It is in all respects a typical hotel room, from the heavy maroon hangings on the windows to the picture of the signing of the Declaration of Independence on the wall. There is but a single door, set in an alcove up left, and when it swings wide enough you can read the room number, 726. Across the outside hall the edge of another door is barely visible.*

*The room is our hero's, of course. Being the gentleman who made the production possible, he has been favored with ample quarters. At the right are two windows, and between them a dresser. Set in the rear wall, toward the right, is a clothes closet; adjoining it on the left is a chiffonier, and then comes the inevitable bed, set at right angles to the footlights. There is a writing table against the wall at right; there are two or three small chairs and one more comfortable.*

*It is evening—eight o'clock or thereabouts—and the rising curtain finds PETER busily com-*

*pleting his toilet. He is resplendent in evening clothes—as resplendent, that is, as a Chillicothe dress suit can make him. His tie is untied, and he has not as yet donned his swallow-tail coat. He brings the coat out of the closet; hangs it on a clothes tree. Then he goes to the mirror and makes an ineffectual attempt to tie a bow tie. There is a knock on the door.*

PETER

*[Not turning.]*

Come in!

*[It is LEHMAN who enters. The derby hat is still on his head; he is all eager expectancy and good fellowship.]*

LEHMAN

How are you, sweetheart?

PETER

Oh, hello! I was looking for you.

LEHMAN

*[Observing PETER's attire.]*

Say!

PETER

What's the matter? Aren't the rest of them doing it?

LEHMAN

That don't make no difference. How's the kid?

PETER

I thought—being an opening—

LEHMAN

Sure! And it's going to be some opening! The biggest Syracuse has ever seen!

PETER

Well, then look. What I wanted to say was—if a lot of people come to see it this week—and they will, won't they?

LEHMAN

We'll be turning 'em away!

PETER

Then would it be possible for you, before we leave here, to let me have a little money back? Just some of the profits?

LEHMAN

*[Losing a little of the hail-fellow-well-met manner.]*

I'll tell you, sweetheart. This is sort of an expensive show, see? We might be out on the road a couple of weeks before we really start cleaning up. Big, I mean.



PETER

You won't—have any money, here?

LEHMAN

Not to split up. But don't you worry none about your coin. If this show ain't a hit I'll eat it.

PETER

Well, as long as I get some pretty soon—

LEHMAN

Sure you will. Ready? Pretty near curtain time.

PETER

Why—just about.

*[He feels for his tie.]*

I don't suppose you could tie a bow tie, could you, Mr. Lehman?

LEHMAN

Afraid not.

PETER

Well, I'll try it again.

*[MAC enters, jauntily.]*

MAC

Are you coming? How are you, Mr. Jones?

PETER

Good evening.

LEHMAN

What room's Weston in?

MAC

Down the way. You want her?

LEHMAN

Yah. And tell Fanny I'm here in twenty-six.

MAC

O. K.

[*He goes.*]

LEHMAN

The—er—the reason I come in, sweetheart—you got such a nice big room I thought maybe you wouldn't mind if we was to get together up here after the show.

PETER

Tonight?

LEHMAN

Sure.

PETER

You mean—to celebrate?

LEHMAN

Well—sort of talk things over. There might be some changes or something.

PETER

Changes—in the play?

LEHMAN

In case there is any.

PETER

Isn't it all right?

LEHMAN

Great! But there might be something, see? Just a line.

PETER

Oh!

LEHMAN

I and the wife is cooped up in twenty-eight next door—but this is good and big so we can all get in.

PETER

All who?

LEHMAN

Well—whoever comes. You see, after a show's opened you always have a sort of conference—talk it over.

PETER

You mean for me to be here too, don't you?

LEHMAN

Sure. We'll want to know what everybody thinks, see? I'll tell you—you take a wad of paper at the show tonight and put down anything you see that's wrong.

PETER

Anything about the play?

LEHMAN

Play, acting, scenery, anything. Make a note of it—then we'll talk it over.

PETER

What I thought you did after a play has opened, is—sort of have a supper, and celebrate it.

LEHMAN

We can do that too. Great!

PETER

I'd like that. Miss Weston could come, couldn't she?

LEHMAN

Sure! You invite her.

PETER

And don't they usually—do you think they'd let us have some champagne? If I asked them.

LEHMAN

I'll introduce you to the manager. Only look out out for him—he's show-crazy.

PETER

He's what?

LEHMAN

Show crazy. Off his nut about show business.

PETER

Why?

LEHMAN

*[A gesture of impatience.]*

Are you coming?

*[JANE enters—a bit uncertainly.]*

JANE

Yes, Mr. Lehman?

LEHMAN

Oh! I want you right beside me during the play, see? Take notes as I dictate 'em. We're going right over.

*[MAC appears in the doorway.]*

Oh, Mac! Now here's the angle—

*[He goes down the hall with him, talking as he disappears. PETER, as he caught sight of JANE, has flown to the clothes tree and hurried into his coat. His voice catches her just as she is about to go.]*

PETER

Oh, Miss Weston! Miss Weston!

JANE

*[Uneasily.]*

Hello.

PETER

Would you come to—a sort of party to-night, here in this room, to celebrate the success of the show? There'll be other people here.

JANE

Why—of course. I'd be delighted.

*[She starts to move away.]*

PETER

Please don't go yet. I haven't seen you for a long time—to talk to at all. I almost thought you—didn't want to talk to me.

JANE

*[Knowing that the truth cannot be kept from him much longer, and plainly fearful lest the conversation get on to the play.]*

Why shouldn't I want to talk to you?

PETER

Won't you, for a minute, then? The door's open—that makes it all right.

JANE

*[Still looking for an excuse.]*

I think Mr. Lehman wants me soon.

PETER

He'll call you again. You—you haven't said anything to me about the play, and it's the opening night. I'm a producer.

JANE

I wish you the best of luck. I can't bear to think of it's being anything but a—great success.

PETER

Neither can I. It's bound to be, don't you think?

JANE

Well—remember, if it isn't just perfect to-night, it can probably be fixed.

PETER

Oh, sure. I'm going to take notes of whatever's wrong.

JANE

That's right.

*[Starts away again.]*

PETER

Oh, please! Do you think—I didn't want to ask Mr. Lehman about this, but you don't think there's any chance of—my having to make a speech, do you—to-night?

JANE

I—I—don't think so.

PETER

That's good. I didn't really think there was, but—just in case it should happen—that was the reason I wore this. One of them. The reasons.

JANE

I see.

PETER

Can you tie a bow tie?

JANE

I'll try.



PETER

[*As she ties it.*]

You see, at home my mother always did it for me when I wore it. But I only wore it once. They gave a big dance at the hotel. We had it all fixed up—

JANE

There!

PETER

Oh! Finished? Thanks. Oh—wait a minute.

[*He goes to the closet; brings out a great box of flowers.*]

I got these for you for the opening.

JANE

Oh! Why—that was lovely of you.

PETER

[*A quite gratuitous bit of information.*]

They're flowers.

JANE

[*Taking out an enormous bunch of extremely red roses.*]

They're beautiful. You shouldn't have done that.

PETER

Well, on account of the opening, and besides—I wanted to. You know, you look awfully lovely with

them—I mean—the way you’re standing there—  
and the way—gosh!

[*With sudden recollection she comes back to  
reality; she puts the flowers down on the bed.*]

What’s the matter?

JANE

I’m the last person—that you should give flowers  
to.

PETER

How do you mean? Why, you’re the first. You’re  
the only one I want to give any to—the only one I  
ever wanted to give any to. That’s—the truth.

JANE

I can’t let you say those things.

PETER

But I can’t help it. And I’ve got to say some-  
thing more. I’ve got to ask you a question. I—I’ve  
just got to. I want to know whether—some day—  
you think you could ever—marry a theatrical pro-  
ducer.

JANE

Please!

PETER

I don’t mean just a producer with forty-nine per  
cent of one show—but there’ll come a time when I’ll  
have my own theater—and—

JANE

Peter, don't! You're going to hate me! Just—  
hate me!

PETER

Not much. I'm going—to love you. I do now,  
Jane. That's what I've been trying to get at—only  
I guess—

JANE

Oh, Peter!

PETER

I realize it's sort of nervy of me, but—  
[LEHMAN strides in, followed by MAC.]

LEHMAN

[As he enters.]

How about you in there? Ready?

[He sees that he has interrupted something.]

PETER

[Breaking away.]

I'll get my things.

JANE

[Turns to go.]

I'll be at the theater.

PETER

Aren't you going over with us?

JANE

I've some things—to attend to—if you don't mind.

*[She goes out.]*

PETER

*[Calling after her.]*

See you over there!

LEHMAN

*[Expansively.]*

Well! Ready?

PETER

Yes, sir.

*[He goes to the closet; brings out a light coat, a cane, and a high hat. He turns—the coat flung carelessly over his arm, the stick and silk hat held in his hand in what is meant to be a casual manner.]*

Well! Here we go!

LEHMAN

Right! And it's going to be a big night! Come along!

PETER

Well—shouldn't we wish each other—good luck or something?

LEHMAN

Why, of course.

*[Strides across to him; shakes his hand.]*

Good luck, Mr. Jones!

PETER

Good luck to you!

MAC

*[Likewise shaking his hand.]*

Good luck!

PETER

*[Making quite a ceremony out of it.]*

Good luck to you, Mr. McClure!

LEHMAN

*[Booming it out.]*

A whale of a hit, sweetheart! That's what we're going to have—a whale of a hit!

MAC

You bet we are!

*[He gives PETER an affectionate clap on the back.]*

Aren't we?

PETER

*[Likewise determined to be a good fellow.]*

Yes, sir! A whale of a hit!

*[He settles the high hat on his head; gives it a reassuring tap. Then he seems to remember that his last sentence is uncompleted. He hesitates a second, then fortifies himself with a gay swing of the walking stick as he starts to*

*walk toward the door. With not a little effort he brings out the final, rounding word.]*

Sweetheart!

*[The trio are walking towards the door as*

**THE CURTAIN FALLS.]**

## SCENE TWO

*It remains down only a few seconds, however—thereby providing for the lapse of several hours. Some day, in this situation, a curtain will remain down for several hours to indicate the lapse of ten seconds, but that's another story. When it rises, at all events, the room is in near-darkness—only a small lamp on the bed table is lighted. Immediately the sound of a key is heard in the door. The door opens, and for a second the figure of PETER, stick, high hat and all, is silhouetted against the brightly lighted hallway. He presses the lights on; leaves the door open behind him and comes into the room, whistling gayly. Still whistling, he hangs up his coat. And then the truth begins to come out. LEHMAN, a disconsolate figure with hands in pockets and eyes on the floor, comes slowly into the room. He is followed, at a respectful distance, by MAC—a much repressed MAC, it should be added. LEHMAN drops onto the bed, with a sigh that could be heard in Spokane, and MAC slumps into the chair at the writing table. PETER is vastly puzzled. He regards them for a second,*

*then finally gets up courage to ask LEHMAN a question.]*

PETER

Is something the matter?

*[He gets no answer.]*

I thought it was all right.

*[LEHMAN's intense silence leads PETER to qualify the statement a trifle.]*

Except—here and there, maybe.

LEHMAN

*[Gets up; drops into the easy chair.]*

Oh!

*[It is a syllable of resignation and suffering, not an ejaculation.]*

PETER

Isn't it any good at all?

*[And then FANNY enters. Victory is so completely hers that she hardly feels that words are necessary. PETER contributes a weak "Hello," but FANNY has other matters on her mind. She comes well into the room; picks a prominent spot, and settles herself to begin.]*

FANNY

*[Starting on what is evidently meant to be a list.]*

First!



LEHMAN

*[On his feet in a second.]*

Now one thing we ain't going to have none of is wise cracks! They can't nobody tell me we ain't got a great show—when it's fixed. Just because this bunch to-night give us the raspberry don't prove nothing. Syracuse is the bummiest show town in the world.

*[This news is mildly surprising to PETER, who had been told otherwise. Before he can say anything about it, however, there is a new interruption in the shape of a WAITER. In fact it is a WAITER. He brings a folding table and a few other supper accessories.]*

WAITER

*[Posed in the door.]*

Is this where the party's going to be?

FANNY

It certainly is.

PETER

*[Absently.]*

If you'll just bring the things——

*[Turns back to LEHMAN.]*

It's just a little thing, isn't it—the matter? I mean, the play's a success?

WAITER

Mr. Fritchie says he'll be up later to see if everything is all right.

PETER

What?

WAITER

Mr. Fritchie, the assistant manager. He says—

LEHMAN

[*Snapping at him.*]  
Never mind!

WAITER

Yes, sir.  
[*He goes.*]

LEHMAN

All I need is that nut!

FANNY

[*Entirely too sweetly.*]  
May I ask a question?

LEHMAN

Go easy with me!

FANNY

Are you going to put anything in that five-minute spot where Martin couldn't think of the next line?

PETER

Oh, yes! I noticed that.

FANNY

Because if she's going to wait like that every night I figure it'd be a great place for a specialty. I could come on with the clubs—

LEHMAN

I know you don't like her! Now lay off!

[*To Mac.*]

Did you tell that ham director we was meeting here?

MAC

Be here any minute.

LEHMAN

How about Bernie—is he ever coming?

MAC

I give him the room.

LEHMAN

And where's Weston with them notes? I don't get no coöperation.

MAC

I'll get her.

PETER

Here are my notes, Mr. Lehman, if—

LEHMAN

Better give Bernie a ring—get him up here!

MAC

Right!

[*Departs.*]

LEHMAN

[*Calling after him.*]

Was he at the show? I didn't see him.

FANNY

I saw him.

LEHMAN

What did he say?

[*FANNY's face lights up.*]

Don't tell me.

PETER

[*Still hopeful.*]

Mr. Lehman, here are the notes that I put down,  
if—

LEHMAN

What? Oh!

[*JANE enters, bringing the manuscript of the evening's horror, an ample sheaf of MR. LEHMAN'S notes, and an assortment of well-sharpened pencils.*]

JANE

Did you want me, Mr. Lehman?

[MAC also returns—goes to the telephone, on the bed table.]

LEHMAN

Give me them notes! And bring that table over here to the light!

[He indicates the writing table. JANE moves toward it, but PETER runs ahead of her.]

PETER

Wait a minute! I'll get it.

MAC

[At the telephone.]

Give me four-thirteen, Kitty.

[PETER is staggering across the room with the writing table in his arms.]

How'd you like the show, Kitty?

PETER

[Pausing en route to have a word with JANE.]  
Didn't you like it, either?

LEHMAN

[Impatiently.]

Hey!

[PETER puts down the table. LEHMAN reaches for a chair, and PETER blandly takes it from

*him and places it for JANE. At LEHMAN'S glare he rushes over for the writing table chair; brings it for LEHMAN. In the interim MAC has apparently been receiving none too good news from KITTY, over the wire.]*

MAC

Well, I wouldn't go as far as that. Of course you've got to understand it's still new yet. By the time we hit the big town it'll be clicking all along the line.

LEHMAN

*[Finally settled at the table; addresses JANE, who sits beside him.]*

Now you take down anything that comes up, see?

*[PETER is at JANE'S elbow, eager to talk to her.]*

Let her alone!

*[The WAITER returns—this time bringing several bottles of champagne. FANNY'S eyes follow him as he crosses the room.]*

FANNY

Well! Who did all this?

PETER

What? Oh, it's to celebrate the success of the play. It's champagne.

FANNY

*[Taking up a bottle.]*

Do they open?

PETER

Yes, ma'am.

FANNY

*[Not giving up for a second.]*

Soon?

PETER

Oh, excuse me! Waiter, will you—open some champagne?

MAC

*[Having finally got his party.]*

Bernie? . . . Mac.

LEHMAN

Tell him to hurry up!

MAC

We're getting together up here in 726, whenever you're ready . . . O. K.

*[He hangs up.]*

FANNY

*[As the WAITER fills a few glasses.]*

I don't like to seem in a hurry, but you see I saw all three acts.

LEHMAN

[*To JANE.*]

Where's all them second act notes? Lose 'em?

JANE

No, sir. They're right here.

LEHMAN

Oh!

PETER

Will anyone else—have some champagne? Miss Weston?

JANE

No, thank you.

LEHMAN

[*Turning on FANNY.*]

You're beginning that, huh?

PETER

Why, she just—

LEHMAN

[*Barking again.*]

Is that director coming or ain't he? And where's Bernie?

MAC

They'll be along.



WAITER

*[Pausing on the way out.]*

Mr. Fritchie says—how soon do you want the food served?

PETER

Oh, yes! Do you want the food served right away? Chicken à la King?

LEHMAN

I don't care! Only keep that Fritchie away from here!

WAITER

Yes, sir.

*[He goes.]*

FANNY

*[Raising her glass.]*

To Mary, queen of stage waits!

LEHMAN

*[Shouting after the waiter.]*

Shut that door!

*[The WAITER is gone, however, and it is PETER who closes the door.]*

Now where is everybody? I don't get no cooperation—that's the trouble! I pay a director three hundred a week—where is he? I bring Bernie Sampson up from New York—where is he?

PETER

Three hundred *dollars*, did you give him?  
[*There is a knock on the door.*]

LEHMAN

Answer that, will you?

PETER

[*Mildly surprised at this treatment.*]  
Who? Me?

LEHMAN

If you don't mind!

[*As PETER goes to the door FANNY quietly settles herself in the easy chair, taking the precaution to have a bottle of champagne and a glass in her hand. It is CECIL BENHAM who enters when PETER opens the door—a calm, reserved, and dignified Englishman, who is even able to wear a monocle without suggesting musical comedy. He comes placidly into the room, and instantly LEHMAN turns on him.*]

Thank God! What the hell happened to that scenery?

BENHAM

[*With great poise.*]  
I beg your pardon?

LEHMAN

I said, what happened to the scenery? It was crooked—all through the show!

PETER

*[Tagging along.]*

I've got that down.

BENHAM

My dear Mr. Lehman, I was hardly in a position to prevent that.

LEHMAN

You're the director, aren't you?

BENHAM

Permit me to point out that not even a director can be everywhere. You may not realize it, but I was holding book all evening.

PETER

What was he doing?

LEHMAN

Oh! Well, if you were holding book where were you during that stage wait of Martin's in the second act? Couldn't you throw her the line?

BENHAM

I gave Miss Martin the line four times. She seemed to be nervous.

PETER

She wasn't feeling well.

LEHMAN

What?

PETER

I say, she told me she wasn't feeling well.

LEHMAN

When did *you* see her?

PETER

In her dressing room between the acts. I was giving her some suggestions.

LEHMAN

*You* were?

PETER

Yes, sir.

LEHMAN

Well, for—

[*There is a knock on the door. PETER, plainly, has been saved by the bell.*]

Would you mind opening the door?

[*You feel that he is about to add: And try*

*refusing and see where you land, but he doesn't. PETER goes to the door.]*

If that's Bernie we can get at this.

MAC

*[Taking a quick look as PETER opens the door.]*

It's Bernie.

*[It is not only BERNIE, as a matter of fact, but likewise a young lady. BERNIE SAMPSON is a slightly Semitic young man with that air of sophistication about him that can be acquired only through long service on Broadway. In his day he has seen several hundred plays open and close, and with each one he has participated in just such a bedroom conference as this. Once, many years before, he had made a suggestion for the improvement of a play that had just opened out of town. The suggestion was misunderstood by the producer, and the mistaken suggestion saved the play. Ever since then BERNIE SAMPSON has been a recognized play fixer. As for the young lady who comes with him, her name is PEGGY MARLOWE, and she is not unknown to the choruses of Broadway. It is her custom to appear for about a month in one of the most prominent musical comedies of the town—and then to desert abruptly for Flor-*

*ida. She is smartly dressed, and ever so good-looking.]*

BERNIE

Hello, people!

*[He tosses his hat onto the bed.]*

Hello, Joe! How are you, Mackie?

*[A wave of the hand toward PEGGY; a completely casual manner.]*

I just happened to have a young lady with me.

MAC

Sure—that's all right.

BERNIE

This is Miss Marlowe, folks.

PEGGY

How are you?

*[She is smoking, and accompanies the salutation with a cloud of smoke.]*

MAC

Let's see. This is Mrs. Lehman—Mr. Benham—and Mr. Jones.

*[There are sundry casual greetings.]*

PEGGY

Aren't there any chairs in this dump?

BERNIE

Sit on the bed!

PEGGY

Sit on it yourself!

PETER

I'm sorry—there don't seem to be any more chairs.  
Maybe—

MAC

Mr. Jones, will you run into my room and get  
some? Twenty-two—the door's open.

PETER

Well—don't decide anything 'till I come back.  
[*He leaves.*]

PEGGY

[*Observing the champagne.*]  
Ah! Mucilage!

LEHMAN

Now, Bernie, I want you to tell us just what you  
think of it.

[*To BENHAM.*]

Mr. Sampson here come up from New York to  
see the show, and maybe do some work if it needs it.

BENHAM

[*None too pleased.*]  
Is that so?

LEHMAN

Now we're all going to give our frank opinions, see?

FANNY

*[Starts to rise.]*

Well—

LEHMAN

*[Silencing her.]*

That's enough!

*[Turns back to BERNIE.]*

Bernie, you're first!

*[To JANE.]*

Take this down!

PEGGY

*[Holding up a knife and fork.]*

Does anything go with these?

LEHMAN

Shut up! Oh—I thought it was Fanny. All right, Bernie.

BERNIE

Well, I'll tell you—

*[PETER stumbles on with two chairs.]*

PETER

Was anything decided?



LEHMAN

Will you shut that door, please?

[PETER *does so.*]

Bernie! Go ahead!

BERNIE

Well, of course there ain't no doubt but what it needs some work. Now, when I catch a show I don't look at the show so much; I look at the audience. They'll tell you every time. Now, your prologue is great. It's a great idea—him reading the play. And it held 'em. It's a novelty. But after that they begun to slip away from you.

PETER

I'd like to talk to you about that.

BERNIE

Who's the kid?

LEHMAN

If you don't mind, Mr. Jones—

PETER

Well, I just wanted to—

LEHMAN

All right!

[*An extra glare at PETER.*]

Go on, Bernie!

BERNIE

Well, I'll tell you. Some of them scenes, they don't quite click. Now I got a scene that I done in a show called—ah—

PEGGY

[*Having discovered PETER.*]  
Hello, Cutie!

PETER

Hello!

BERNIE

What's going on here?

PEGGY

Mind your business!

LEHMAN

Bernie, can't you get rid of her somehow?

PEGGY

Let him try! What I got on him!

LEHMAN

Are we going to get anything done here, or aren't we?

FANNY

I vote "no."

LEHMAN

Go ahead, Bernie! You was saying?

BERNIE

Well—ah—

[*Eyes* PETER.]

PETER

I didn't do anything.

LEHMAN

Oh—go on, Bernie!

BERNIE

Where was I?

LEHMAN

You was saying you got a scene.

BERNIE

Oh, yah. You got to put something in the place of that cabaret scene. Of course, it may be the way it was put on. I don't know who done it for you, but of all the lousy directing—

BENHAM

[*Rising to his full height.*]

I beg your pardon, Mr. Jackson!

MAC

Now, that's all right!

**BERNIE**

Bernie *Sampson* is my name.

**BENHAM**

It's quite possible that you don't know who I am!

**BERNIE**

That's only part of it.

**BENHAM**

I was associated for ten years with Sir John Hare, and I've been with Sir Charles Wyndham and Sir Beerbohm Tree.

**FANNY**

[*By this time slightly over the edge.*]

And where are they now?

**BENHAM**

I am not accustomed to having my direction described by that adjective.

**BERNIE**

Listen—I come up from New York as a favor to Joe here—

**BENHAM**

Nevertheless, I must insist—

**LEHMAN**

Now don't let's get scrapping!

BENHAM

But if he's to be permitted—

MAC

Now, there's no use flying off the handle—

BENHAM

Yes, but—

MAC

He didn't mean anything!

[BENHAM *finally quiets down; takes his seat.*]  
That's the stuff!

PEGGY

Is that going to be all?

BERNIE

Now, Baby!

PEGGY

Well—call me for the next round.

[*She stretches full length on the bed.*]

LEHMAN

Go on, Bernie.

BERNIE

[*A nod of the head toward BENHAM.*]  
What's this guy so touchy about?

[BENHAM *starts to rise; MAC lays a restraining hand on his shoulder.*]

LEHMAN

Now, please!

[*To BERNIE.*]

Bernie! What's this scene you got?

BERNIE

Well, I'll tell you. It'll drop right in where your cabaret is, see? It was a wow scene, but the show never come into New York, so it'll be new. It was a hop joint in Hongkong.

BENHAM

[*With great dignity.*]

It would not possibly do.

LEHMAN

We got to stick to the story, Bernie. We can't throw away the whole play.

FANNY

Why not?

LEHMAN

Now, I'll tell you. Suppose we start at the beginning—

[*There is a knock on the door.*]

Who's this?

FANNY

You can't tell.

[*PETER opens the door. It is MARY MARTIN*

*who enters—a MARY already slightly indignant at possible attacks on her. As she enters the room FANNY starts things going nicely by giving her a little applause. Strangely enough, it does not please MARY in the least.]*

MARTIN

Before anything is said—that stage wait wasn't my fault.

LEHMAN

All right, all right.

MARTIN

Maxwell gave me the wrong cue—a cue out of the third act. So of course I had to stop and think.

FANNY

You certainly had a lovely evening for it.

MARTIN

And then—you'd think there'd be someone in the wings to throw me a line. But no!

*[She is firing this at BENHAM.]*

BENHAM

That's not true, Miss Martin! I gave you the line distinctly.

MARTIN

[*Her voice rising.*]

Well, I certainly didn't hear it.

PEGGY

[*Sitting up at the prospect of a scrap.*]

Oh, goody!

LEHMAN

Now, stop!

MARTIN

Besides, I've had a raging headache all day.

[*Her gaze focuses on PETER.*]

And if you think it's easy to give a performance of a star part, with people coming back into your dressing room all the time—trying to tell you what to do—

PETER

You said if I had any suggestions—

MARTIN

Well, really, Mr. Jones, I've been in the profession longer than you have.

FANNY

And *that's* no fairy tale.

MARTIN

I beg your pardon!



LEHMAN

Oh, stop it, you two! Sit down, Mary! Now—we're going to begin at the beginning and go right through the show.

MAC

Joe—do you want some good straight dope? A fresh viewpoint?

LEHMAN

Who?

MAC

There's a little girl down on the switchboard, smart as a steel trap. She sees everything that comes here, and I slipped her a couple to-night. Now—

LEHMAN

Good idea, get her up. Anybody but that nut manager.

MAC

Right!

PEGGY

Did he say on the switchboard?

BERNIE

Now, Baby!

(SIMULTANEOUS)

PEGGY

Is there more than one  
operator in this hotel?

MAC

[*At the telephone.*]  
Kitty? . . . This is  
Mr. McClure . . . You  
know—Jack. Say, can  
you leave there for a  
minute and come up to  
726? . . . I'll tell you  
when you get here . . .  
That's right. Thanks.  
[*Hangs up.*]

BERNIE

Never mind!

PEGGY

Because I just had a  
run-in with one of them  
and I'd like to know.

LEHMAN

Bernie, can't you get  
this dame to—

BERNIE

Some other time,  
Baby!

PEGGY

Well, just in case she  
is the one, I'll take an-  
other drink.

LEHMAN

Now—please! We ain't going to have no more  
interruptions. We're going to take up the scenes

as they come along. Now—we're set on the prologue.

BERNIE

Right!

MAC

O. K.

LEHMAN

How about you, Benham—prologue O. K.?

BENHAM

Oh, I am quite satisfied.

LEHMAN

Well, don't get sore about it.

[To JANE.]

Make a note—Prologue O. K.

PETER

[*A gratuitous indorsement.*]

O. K.

MARTIN

May I say something?

LEHMAN

What is it?

MARTIN

*[As though addressing children.]*

The trouble with your play is that the leading character doesn't have sympathy. I'm fighting the audience all the time. I feel it. They don't like me.

FANNY

*[Going to all the trouble of getting up.]*

Well, I think you were fine. I really do.

*[She sits.]*

That'll give you a rough idea of my condition.

MARTIN

Really, Mr. Lehman, if I'm to be required—

LEHMAN

Shut up, Fanny!

*[To MARTIN.]*

Now, what was it?

MARTIN

I'm trying to tell you that I'm not getting sympathy. Something ought to be put in to show that I'm really all right at heart.

PEGGY

How about giving out pamphlets?

BERNIE

Hey!

MARTIN

[*A glare at PEGGY, then turns to LEHMAN again.*]

If I could have a scene very early that would show me in a more sympathetic light—maybe a scene with a baby.

LEHMAN

We'll come back to it.

[*To JANE.*]

Make a note. Sympathy for Miss Martin.

PETER

If it's early in the play it can't be a baby, though, because she isn't married.

LEHMAN

All right, all right!

[*There is a knock on the door.*]

See who that is.

[*PETER goes.*]

Now, we're going ahead from the prologue.

[*PETER opens the door. The WAITER enters with food.*]

PEGGY

Ah! The troops!

BERNIE

Ssssh!

LEHMAN

[*With emphasis.*]

We are going ahead from the prologue. The next is the orchard scene.

PETER

I want to say something about that, Mr. Lehman.

LEHMAN

You don't tell me!

PETER

Yes, sir. I was just waiting till you reached it. You see—

LEHMAN

Would you mind letting *me* talk for a minute?

PETER

No, sir.

LEHMAN

Much obliged.

[*To JANE.*]

Give me that stuff.

[*KITTY HUMPHREYS enters—the girl from the switchboard.*]

MAC

Oh, here's Kitty, Joe!

LEHMAN

What?

MAC

Here's Kitty from the switchboard.

LEHMAN

Oh!

FANNY

Now we're going to get the real lowdown.

MAC

This is Miss Humphreys, everybody. Kitty, here's the angle. We want you to tell us just what you think of the show to-night, see? Straight from the shoulder. Now, you see all the shows that come here. We want to know your real opinion.

[PEGGY has a speculative eye on KITTY, and keeps it there.]

KITTY

Well, I'll tell you, Jack—er—Mr. McClure. You see, Syracuse is a funny town.

FANNY

Oh, *that's* it?

KITTY

[*Speaking the speech of every small-town play-goer.*]

It's a hard town to please, sort of—because you

see we get all the new shows. The managers all bring their shows here, because they know if it goes here, it'll go any place. You see, the people here are funny, sort of. If they like a show, they'll go to it, but if they don't like it—they won't.

LEHMAN

That's a hot lot of news.

WAITER

Excuse me, but I can tell you what's wrong with your show. I wasn't there, but the chambermaid on Number Four—

LEHMAN

Mac! Mac!

MAC

Just a minute! We want this young lady to—

WAITER

Oh, I beg your pardon.

KITTY

Well—

PEGGY

[*Rising to the attack.*]

Are you the operator that took a New York call out of four thirteen this evening?



BERNIE

Now, Baby—

PEGGY

Are you?

KITTY

I may have been.

BERNIE

Now don't—

[MAC and LEHMAN are likewise trying to stop them.]

PEGGY

You were pretty fresh, weren't you?

KITTY

I don't think so.

MAC

Kitty—

PEGGY

Well, I do!

BERNIE

Now—now—

PEGGY

And if you ever try it on me again—

LEHMAN

Get them out of here, will you?

MAC

Now listen, girls—

PEGGY

Are you or are you not supposed to be respectful?

BERNIE

Now, Baby—

KITTY

I'm always respectful, Madame, when I'm speaking to a lady.

MAC

Kitty—

PEGGY

I'll push your God-damned face in!

*[It is said casually, easily. PEGGY is a veteran of fifty dressing-room fights, and she is not even mildly excited. Her statement, however, comes close to breaking up the meeting. FANNY indulges in a tipsy "Hurrah!" BERNIE and MAC start to pull their respective clients apart.]*

KITTY

*[As MAC drags her out.]*

You know where you can find me!

PEGGY

*[Shouting after her.]*

I can guess!

BERNIE

Now stop it!

LEHMAN

Stop, everybody!

*[The door slams. There is a moment of complete and grateful calm.]*

How are we going to get anything decided with all this—

*[He finishes with a gesture.]*

FANNY

I move we make this a permanent organization and meet every week.

LEHMAN

We're here to decide about this show.

WAITER

I was going to tell you what this chambermaid said—

LEHMAN

I don't want to know! Get out!

WAITER

Yes, sir. Here's the check.

*[It is PETER, of course, who takes it.]*

PETER

Gee!

LEHMAN

Where were we?

MAC

You were up to the prologue.

PETER

[*To the WAITER.*]

All right.

WAITER

Much obliged.

[*He goes.*]

LEHMAN

All right. Now—the orchard scene.

PETER

The trees aren't planted right.

[*LEHMAN rises to his full height.*]

MAC

Take it easy, Joe.

LEHMAN

• Oh, they aren't, huh?

PETER

No, sir. In a real orchard—

LEHMAN

Now, listen! I'm pretty near fed up—get me? You been interrupting all night long—one fool idea after another—and I had all I can stand.

PETER

But—but this isn't a fool idea. I'm right about it. There's—

LEHMAN

All right, and I tell you I don't want to hear about it. Who's producing this show, anyhow?

PETER

Well, I'm part producer, and—

LEHMAN

Yah? Well, I'm the main producer—get me? And I'm going to do the talking! Forty-nine per cent—that's what you got!

PETER

Well, I didn't mean to—do anything, but—you told me to take notes, and—

LEHMAN

You're going to keep on, are you?

PETER

No, sir, but if I see something I know is wrong—and an orchard isn't planted that way. The trees—

LEHMAN

Good heavens! You half wreck the show, prowling around backstage, and then come here and—what in blazes do you know about show business? I been all my life in it and you come green out of the country, trying to tell me—I'm running this show—you're nothing but a butter-and-egg-man! And now, keep still!

MAC

Now, this ain't no way—

PETER

What—what did he say I was?

LEHMAN

Never mind! Only I want you to butt out of this show, see? I had all I can stand, and I want you to keep out!

JANE

[*Finally springing to action.*]

Mr. Lehman, that isn't fair! He hasn't done half as much as the others!

LEHMAN

Oh—now it's your business, is it?

JANE

I simply say you're being unfair to him! I

think—I think it’s an outrageous way to treat him! You take his money—all you can get—for a play you must have known was worthless—

LEHMAN

Oh, I did, eh? And who asked you to say anything? Huh?

JANE

I’ve stayed silent as long as I can!

LEHMAN

Then suppose you try getting out of here—and you needn’t come back!

PETER

Hold on, there!

JANE

Peter!

LEHMAN

What?

PETER

This is my room! You can’t order her out!

LEHMAN

I can’t, eh?

PETER

No sir. I mean NO.

LEHMAN

I warn you to lay off me!

PETER

Well—well, I won't. You—you can't talk to her like that—here—or any other place.

LEHMAN

I'll talk to her anyway I want to—and you too!

PETER

Well, you won't. Because—I won't let you.

LEHMAN

Oh! Besides running the show you're going to run me? Go on back to your sap town, whatever it was! And you can take her with you, because she's fired!

PETER

She wouldn't work for you anyhow, any longer. Do you want to know why?

LEHMAN

I'd love to!

PETER

Because she's going to work for me. You think I don't know anything, huh? I'm just a bread-and-



butter man? And I don't know anything about shows, huh?

LEHMAN

How'd you guess it?

PETER

Well, I'll show you whether I know anything about them. And I'll show you whether you can talk to people like that. Do you want to sell the rest of it to me—the show?

JANE

Peter, you can't!

PETER

DO you?

LEHMAN

*[Taking his time. A look to MAC—a glance in return.]*

I might—for a price. It's a valuable property.

PETER

How much?

LEHMAN

What do you say, Mac?

MAC

Up to you.

LEHMAN

McClure and me is in together. Give us—ten thousand apiece, and the show's yours.

PETER

I'll give you five thousand apiece.

LEHMAN

Seventy-five hundred.

PETER

Five thousand.

LEHMAN

Cash?

PETER

You give me—an option—'til this time tomorrow—and I'll give you—five hundred dollars for it. It's all I have—with me.

JANE

Peter, you can't.

PETER

You're all witnesses.

LEHMAN

Five thousand apiece for the rest of the show!  
Ten thousand altogether!

PETER

For Lehmac Productions—all of it.

LEHMAN

And a one-day option! That goes! Give me the five hundred.

PEGGY

If there's anything I hate it's business men.

BERNIE

Ssh!

PETER

You all know the arrangement?

FANNY

I'm a witness.

LEHMAN

*[Preparing to depart.]*

Well, I guess that's that.

PEGGY

Can we go now?

MARTIN

*[Fulsomely.]*

Well, Mr. Jones—

PETER

Hello. Now, if you all wouldn't mind leaving—

PEGGY

Mind—did he say?

LEHMAN

I wish you luck and I hope you take up the option.

PETER

I'll take it up.

LEHMAN

Coming, Fanny?

FANNY

Ya.

MAC

Good night, Mr. Jones. You know me.

PETER

Yah.

[*LEHMAN and MAC depart.*]

BENHAM

Will you require my services, Mr. Jones?

PETER

I'll let you know to-morrow.

PEGGY

A sleeper jump for this!

BERNIE

You got a great show. All you need to do is to fix it.

MARTIN

Don't forget! Anything at all that you want to tell me!

*[They are all gone now except PETER, JANE, and FANNY.]*

FANNY

Something tells me you haven't got the money.

PETER

I'll get it—some place.

FANNY

*[An instant's hesitation.]*

Well, anyhow—

*[She goes. JANE and PETER are alone.]*

JANE

Peter, why did you do it? Why?

PETER

What?

JANE

Why did you give him that money?

PETER

He got me mad. I'd just as lief go out there and tell him a lot of other things.

JANE

Peter, listen to me! What are you going to do?

PETER

What was that he said I was—about butter?

JANE

Never mind.

PETER

Butter—a butter-and-egg man, that was it. What's that?

JANE

It isn't anything.

PETER

It must be something.

JANE

It's—it's just a man that invests money, that's all. That puts money into something.

PETER

Oh!

JANE

Peter, you must think of what you're going to do. You gave him all your money, didn't you—that five hundred?

PETER

[*The first sign of weakening.*]

Well?

JANE

Oh, Peter, it was foolish!

PETER

But I had to show him, didn't I? I couldn't help it, when he started talking to you like that.

JANE

I got you into it again.

PETER

No, no! I mean, I'm glad you did. I'm glad I feel that way about you. I know now why you thought I was going to hate you. Because the play wasn't any good. As if I could.

JANE

But, Peter, where are you going to get the money? Ten thousand dollars.

PETER

[*Considers.*]

I guess it will be—hard, won't it?

JANE

And with only one day.

PETER

He—he got me so mad I thought sure I could get it some place.

JANE

Do you know anyone here in Syracuse?

PETER

[*Shakes his head.*]

I don't know anyone anywhere, with—ten thousand dollars.

JANE

Think hard! Is there—is there anyone in Chillicothe?

PETER

[*As the mention of Chillicothe reminds him.*]

I sent her a telegram just after the show, saying it was a big success. My mother, I mean.

JANE

Oh, Peter! Now, it's going to be one yet!



PETER

*[Shakes his head.]*

I—I'm just beginning to realize what's happened. I've given him—everything I had left and—that's all there is to it. It's gone. I guess I'm done for.

JANE

Peter, you're not! Now, we're going to think of a way out.

PETER

No. It's gone, all right. And she expected me to—I'm not ever going home again.

JANE

Peter! Don't say that!

PETER

I was a fool, all right—thinking I knew anything about shows. She was depending on me to—and now look what I've done to her—I'm going to kill myself.

JANE

Peter, don't talk like that! Don't! Now—now something will happen, I know. Peter—you're breaking my heart. I know things are going to be better. I just feel that something is going to happen.

*[The phone rings.]*

That may be something now.

PETER

*[At the phone.]*

Hello . . . Yah, this is Mr. Jones . . . Why, no—oh, yes. There is . . . All right . . . All right.  
*[Hangs up.]*

JANE

Well?

PETER

You aren't allowed to stay here. It's against the rules.

JANE

They're mean, aren't they? We'll meet first thing in the morning and plan something. Won't we? And you're not going to be unhappy?

PETER

I'll try. No matter what happens, I met you.

JANE

If only you hadn't.

PETER

Oh, but I love you, Jane. I do, terribly. And if ever I get out of this trouble—don't you think—really—

JANE

Peter—I think you're just the finest person that ever lived. But I've got you into an awful mess—

PETER

No—

JANE

I didn't mean to, but I have. And that's why you mustn't say anything that—

PETER

Well, I'll get out of it some way, if that's all you mean. You just watch me. I'll get the money, some place, and—the play—it might be a success in New York, don't you think?

JANE

It—might.

PETER

I mean—even if it isn't awfully good. That isn't supposed to matter so much in New York, is it?

JANE

Oh Peter, I'm afraid—

PETER

It—it just can't be a failure, that's all. If we can just get the money, I'll bet you they'd like it. Why—

*[There is a knock on the door. PETER breaks off—works slowly over toward the door. The knock is repeated.]*

Who's there?

OSCAR

[*From the hall.*]

This is Mr. Fritchie.

PETER

Who?

OSCAR

[*Slightly louder.*]

Mr. Fritchie. The assistant manager.

PETER

[*In a whisper to JANE.*]

He's the man that gave us the champagne.

[*Aloud.*]

What do you want?

OSCAR

May I come in?

[*PETER, realizing that he has no choice, opens the door. OSCAR FRITCHIE, who steps in is a sufficiently nice-looking young man, but just a little dumb.*]

PETER

[*Anxious to explain.*]

It wasn't locked.

JANE

I was just leaving.

**OSCAR**

Huh?

[*A look around.*]

Oh, broke up early, eh?

**PETER**

This is—Mr. Fritchie, Miss Weston.

**JANE**

How are you?

**OSCAR**

Hello.

**PETER**

Miss Weston was just going out when you—she was just going out.

**OSCAR**

Oh! Well, don't let me disturb you. I just—

**PETER**

Isn't that what you came about?

**OSCAR**

What?

**PETER**

They just telephoned me from the office—on account of Miss Weston being here.

OSCAR

Oh, they didn't know you was friends of mine.  
That's all right.

PETER

Oh? Well—that's fine, isn't it? But—then what  
are you—I mean—is there something we can do for  
you?

OSCAR

Oh, no. No—no.

PETER

I see.

OSCAR

I just—how was everything, all right? The  
supper?

PETER

Oh, yes. Thank you.

OSCAR

And the champagne—did you get it all right?

PETER

Oh, yes. Thanks.

*[The situation is not what you might call hot.]*

OSCAR

You see, we get show-troupes right along, up here,

and—I know they got the habit of getting together sort of—and I like to—do whatever I can.

PETER

Well—thanks.

OSCAR

I—I'm kind of sorry your party's broken up.

JANE

Yes. We are, too.

OSCAR

I've always a kind of a liking for theatrical people, and of course, they stop here at the hotel a lot—and some of them sort of let me come around. Just talk.

PETER

Why, sure—we—

[Turns to JANE in desperation.]

—what?

JANE

Why—yes.

PETER

Yes.

OSCAR

Louis Mann was here last year. We had quite a long talk.

PETER

Well, we don't mind talking—if—is there something you want to talk about?

OSCAR

Oh, no—no—nothing in particular. You know how it is—you get a liking for something—the theater. All my life I've—I've just kind of liked to talk about it, that's all. I guess maybe it's because I've always had a sort of feeling that some day I might get into it myself.

PETER

*[Slowly digesting this.]*

Would you mind saying that over again?

OSCAR

The show business. I say—some day I'm going to get into it.

PETER

You mean—as a producer?

OSCAR

That's what.

PETER

*[Considers for a second; works himself up to the point; places a chair.]*

Sit down, sweetheart!



OSCAR

Me?

PETER

Sure thing.

OSCAR

I don't mean to butt in. I just—

PETER

That's all right.

OSCAR

Well—much obliged.

JANE

You—you said you were the assistant manager,  
Mr.—

OSCAR

Yah. Mr. Hemingway is the manager.

PETER

[*Eagerly.*]

I worked in a hotel, too, before I went into the  
theatrical business.

OSCAR

That so?

PETER

I suppose that's a pretty good position you have

—in a hotel like this? You must make a lot of money?

OSCAR

Oh, I don't suppose you folks would call it much.

JANE

Oh, yes we would!

PETER

Have you—that is, have you been able to—in all this—have you got any saved up?

OSCAR

Huh?

JANE

Mr. Jones has known so many hotel men who didn't save. He just hopes you're different.

OSCAR

That's right. A lot of them don't.

PETER

But you do, don't you? That's what we want to get down to.

OSCAR

You bet your life I do!

[PETER *breathes a sigh of relief.*]

What's the matter?

JANE

Not a thing.

PETER

Would you like a glass of champagne?

OSCAR

Say—that's not a bad idea. You know, I like you folks. You make a fellow feel nice.

PETER

*[Bringing him a drink.]*

Here, drink this first.

OSCAR

Well, here's to you!

*[He drinks.]*

JANE

Some more?

OSCAR

I'm not robbing you?

PETER

That's all right.

OSCAR

Yes, sir—I always say show-folks are nice people. Not stuck up—you know—make a fellow feel at home.

*[JANE brings him another drink.]*

Oh, thanks! I guess maybe that's why I've always sort of liked it—the theatrical business.

PETER

Er—

OSCAR

Huh?

PETER

Nothing yet.

OSCAR

Say—what's up?

JANE

*[Leaping into the breach.]*

Mr. Jones has a proposition to make to you! He's going to give you a chance to invest in this play that opened tonight! It's going to make an awful lot of money—

PETER

You bet it is.

OSCAR

Oh—now—er—

PETER

Now wait! Wait! This is going to be great, see? You didn't see it to-night, did you?

OSCAR

No.

PETER

That's fine. It's going to be much better. It's a big drama, see, with this girl in it and—and—do you know how much money a lot of shows have made? Do you?

OSCAR

You bet I do.

PETER

Oh!

OSCAR

"Madame Sherry" made seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars. "Potash and Perlmutter" made half a million. "Within the Law" made—

PETER

Really? Isn't that wonderful?

JANE

Mr. Jones'll tell you what a wonderful play this is, Mr. Fritchie! And he has a chance to get hold of the whole thing—all of it. It's a real chance—the chance of a lifetime!

PETER

Do you know what a brothel is—do you?

OSCAR

Huh? Why—yes. I guess I do.

PETER

Well, there's one in this play, and it's great. A priest and a rabbi come in—

OSCAR

Huh?

PETER

It's going to be a knockout. Everything happens to this girl—she marries a fellow, only she's going to have more sympathy. There's never been anything like it, Mr. Fritchie. It's going to make millions of dollars—thousands. It's going to be the biggest thing that ever was in the theater.

OSCAR

Now hold on! Wait a minute—

PETER

And it's going to have Hongkong in it! A great big scene instead of where it's a trial! It's wonderful—it's a hop joint and he turns out to be her father and she comes back at him with the strong talk and so-and-so and so-and-so and so-and-so. It just can't help making a lot of money!

JANE

I've been working in the theater, Mr. Fritchie, and I know. Why, if you invest in this—

PETER

Look! In one scene everybody goes to heaven, and they put on wings, and they're all blue-birds—

OSCAR

Now—now—you got to stop if you want me to—  
[*Stops to think.*]

—go into the theatrical business, eh? It would be fun.

PETER

Oh, it's an awful lot of fun—you haven't any idea.

OSCAR

Would it cost much money?

PETER

No. You can have half of it—forty-nine per cent—for thirty thousand dollars.

OSCAR

Thirty thousand dollars?

PETER

Twenty-five thousand!

OSCAR

Twenty-five thousand?

PETER

Twenty!

OSCAR

Twenty thousand dollars?

PETER

Fifteen!

JANE

But that's the very lowest, Mr. Fritchie!

OSCAR

It's a lot.

JANE

Oh, no, it isn't, Mr. Fritchie! It's a bargain!

PETER

Yes! Only you've got to decide quick if you want it, because the price is going to go right up. You see, in the theatrical business it's all this way—  
[*Snaps fingers.*]

—and the man that decides right away—standing up—he's the man that's going to come out ahead! Why, there was a fellow we know could have bought



some of the "Follies" or something, only he didn't—  
and look—it's gone now!

OSCAR

Now wait! I—I don't know what to say. I know  
I'd like the theatrical business, and I been getting  
kind of tired of the hotel lately—

PETER

Sure! I did too! Why—you're not the kind of  
man to stay cooped up in a hotel all his life.

JANE

Mr. Jones got out, and look at him!

PETER

Yah. [OSCAR *looks.*]

OSCAR

I'd love to quit and tell Mr. Hemingway what I  
thought of him.

PETER

That's the stuff!

JANE

Then, why don't you?

OSCAR

I'm scared.

PETER

Well, this is your chance!

JANE

A chance to leave this old hotel behind you!

PETER

I guess for a man to look back at an opportunity he's missed, like this, that must make him feel pretty terrible. When it's a big hit in New York—

OSCAR

Now—now wait! I haven't said I wouldn't, yet.

PETER

You've got to act quick with us, Mr. Fritchie!

OSCAR

You say it's—a good play?

PETER

Good! There's never been anything like it!

OSCAR

There are certainly some things I'd tell Mr. Hemingway, the big stiff!

PETER

Write a receipt!

JANE

All right!

OSCAR

Now wait!

PETER

Only, unless you give us your check right now, Fritchie, we couldn't do it. Can you?

OSCAR

I haven't said I was going to at all, yet.

JANE

But if you do it right away, Mr. Fritchie, you can go to Mr. Hemingway tonight and tell him all those things! Just think!

OSCAR

He made me work twelve hours a day.

PETER

You don't have to work at all in the theater! It's just fun.

OSCAR

He'd be sore, all right.

PETER

And look! There's no reason why we have to

produce just this one show. We could go ahead and do a lot more.

OSCAR

*[Drawing out a check-book.]*

Could we?

PETER

Of course—when this is a big success. Can't we?

JANE

Of course!

PETER

Why, we can be the biggest producers there are. All kinds of shows—

*[Clutching at the check-book.]*

—shall I open this for you?

OSCAR

No, no! I can do it!

PETER

Well, here's ink and everything—and here's the pen! You just make the check out to me—Peter Jones!

JANE

What's your first name, Mr. Fritchie, and how do you spell this one?

OSCAR

Oscar Fritchie. F-r-i-t-c-h-i-e. But I haven't made up my mind yet.

PETER

F-r-i-t-c-h-i-e. Got it?

JANE

Yes!

PETER

How are you getting along? Have you started yet?

OSCAR

You've got me all excited—

JANE

Here's the receipt! It just says you're giving us the money for forty-nine per cent of it. Is that all right?

PETER

That's fine! Now all you have to do is to write the check, see?

OSCAR

Do you think I ought to?

PETER

Of course you ought to! It's a great big drama,

and there's an orchard in it, and Mr. Hemingway comes in—

PETER

[OSCAR is feverishly writing the check.]

Oh! Have I told you about the bookings? Did I tell him about the bookings?

JANE

No!

PETER

We've got the greatest ever! Look! We go from here to Providence—then Albany and Seattle—all those soft spots!

[He clutches the check.]

OSCAR

Look out! It's wet!

PETER

I'll dry it!

[The CURTAIN starts down as PETER continues talking.]

It's going to be a whale of a hit, sweetheart—a whale of a hit!

C U R T A I N

## THE BUTTER AND EGG MAN

### ACT III

*Scene: It is the office again; the time, a few weeks later. With one exception it is the same office that was revealed in the first act; all that is missing is the overwhelming pile of papers that had stood against the rear wall. As the curtain rises, JANE comes on from the waiting room, a pile of newspapers under her arm. As she nears the desk the telephone rings.*

JANE

*[At telephone.]*

Hello. . . No, Mr. Jones hasn't come in yet. . . Well, if you try a little later. . . . Yes, it looks like a very big hit. At least, they seem to think so at the theater, but of course it's a little early to tell. Good-bye.

*[She hangs up; is turning her attention again to the newspapers when a knock comes at the side door.]*

Come in!

*[The gentleman who enters has rather a formidable manner, to say nothing of a business-*

*like brief case. His name is A. J. PATTERSON.]*

PATTERSON

Pardon me—Mr. Jones is not in?

JANE

No, sir—he isn't. Is there anything I can do for you?

PATTERSON

His partner is not here either?

JANE

Mr. Fritchie? No. I'm expecting them any minute.

PATTERSON

*[Considers; nods.]*

I'll return.

JANE

Isn't there any message? Can't I give them your name?

PATTERSON

*[Turns as he is about to go out.]*

I understand that their new production is successful—is that right?



JANE

Yes, sir—I think so. But of course it only opened last night.

PATTERSON

I see. Thank you.  
[Turns to go.]

JANE

You—you still won't tell me who it is?

PATTERSON

[*And you gather that he means it.*]  
You needn't worry. I shall return.  
[*He goes out. JANE, impressed by his manner and a little worried, stands for a second looking at the closed door, then turns back to the desk. She has just taken up a newspaper again when PETER enters. It is a new PETER—jaunty and businesslike.*]

PETER

Good morning!

JANE

Peter!

PETER

Well, I guess I was right, wasn't I?

JANE

What?

PETER

The play's a hit. Remember—I told you it would be, when it came to New York?

JANE

Yes, Peter! I can hardly believe it! People are lined up over at the theater, buying tickets. Isn't it wonderful?

PETER

Oh, I don't know. It wasn't any surprise to me. It's what the public wants—that's all. What the public wants. Is there any mail?

JANE

*[Noting the change in him.]*

Ah—why, no. Some people have been telephoning, and there was a gentleman here just now, but he wouldn't leave his name.

PETER

*[Businesslike.]*

Did he state his business?

JANE

No, he didn't.

PETER

Always ask them to state their business. And—ah—and bring in their cards first, to see if I'll see them.

JANE

Very well. I shall.

PETER

[*Expansively.*]

You see, Jane, the reason you mustn't ever be surprised at a play like this being a hit is that it's so full of heart interest. That's what the public wants—heart interest—and menace. The moment I heard about this play I knew it would be a success.

JANE

[*Quietly.*]

I'm terribly happy, Peter, that you were right.

PETER

Did you read these—the criticisms?

JANE

Yes.

PETER

[*Musing over the papers.*]

Funny how they missed the whole idea of the play.

And this fellow—he thought the performance was only adequate. A lot they know about it—the critics. I'm thinking of not letting them come at all the next time.

[*The phone rings.*]

Hello. . . . Yes, this is Mr. Jones speaking. . . . Thank you. . . . Yeh, I guess it's about the biggest that's ever been produced. . . . Huh? . . . Oh, no—I'm going to produce it myself in London. . . . No—Budapest too. . . . Yeh—a sort of international producing company. . . . Well, it wouldn't be any use of your coming over, because when I make a decision I'm like that. Good-bye.

[*Hangs up.*]

I'm going to produce it all over the world.

[*Turning.*]

JANE

If you don't need me any more, I'll go.

PETER

What's the matter, Jane?

JANE

Why, nothing.

PETER

Aren't you glad the play's a success?

JANE

Of course. I'm very happy for you, Peter. I wish you just all the success in the world.

PETER

It means an awful lot to us, Jane.

JANE

[*Melting.*]

Does it, Peter?

PETER

Oh! I forgot to tell you about a man I met this morning! He wants to build a theater for me—the Peter Jones Playhouse!

JANE

I'll hardly know you, will I?

PETER

I knew there was something else! What would you say to changing the name of the company, now that they're out of it? Don't you think it would be simpler if it was just Peter Jones Productions, Inc.?

JANE

Yes, I suppose it would be simpler.

PETER

And listen! Do you think—do you think my picture would make a good trade-mark?

JANE

If you—want it.

PETER

And oh! Jane—

*[The other partner enters. He is OSCAR FRIT-  
CHIE—much the same as he was in the hotel  
room, but very, very scared.]*

PETER

Well?

OSCAR

Good morning! Good morning, Miss Weston!

JANE

Good morning, Mr. Fritchie.

PETER

What have you got to say now?

OSCAR

*[Genuinely worried.]*

What are all those people doing over at the theater?

PETER

The play's a big success!

OSCAR

Who says so?

PETER

Everybody! We're nearly sold out for tonight!

OSCAR

Yes—but who'll come tomorrow night?

PETER

Wait 'til you hear all the plans I've got! Get Jane here to tell you about the Peter Jones Playhouse!

JANE

I—I think there's someone in the outer office.

PETER

Well, don't forget about bringing in their cards.

JANE

I'll try not to.

*[She goes.]*

OSCAR

*[Waiting for the door to close.]*

Now on the level, how are things?

PETER

It's one of the biggest successes ever produced!

OSCAR

No, no. She's gone—you can tell me.

PETER

People are calling up to buy it for London and every place.

OSCAR

How much did you get?

PETER

I wouldn't sell it.

OSCAR

Now look—I think if we can get any money we ought to, because—I don't feel just right yet, see?

PETER

When we go ahead and produce the Peter Jones "Follies" you'll feel right.

OSCAR

Do you think we ought to do that?

PETER

And this afternoon I'm seeing a man about the Hippodrome.

OSCAR

[*Reaches for his hat.*]

I think maybe I ought to get out.

PETER

All right! I can handle it myself.



OSCAR

Would you be willing to buy my share back?

PETER

You bet I would.

OSCAR

Well—then I don't know.

PETER

Do you know what I'm going to do, if you stay with me? I'm going to get all the big playwrights there are in this country, and put them under contract, and then I'm going to buy up all the foreign plays.

OSCAR

But suppose something happens?

PETER

What can happen in the theatrical business? Now, look! When we've got all the plays tied up, then the thing to do is to get the theaters.

OSCAR

Yah?

PETER

Sure!

OSCAR

You don't think it could go wrong any place?

PETER

You can't make a mistake—all you've got to do is to give the public what they want.

OSCAR

Yah, but—but—but how do you know what they want?

PETER

It's easy. They always want the same thing.

OSCAR

*[Shakes his head.]*

Sure as I went into it they'd change their minds.

*[JANE returns, carefully bearing a card.]*

PETER

Now, listen! We'll put another company in Chicago—

*[Sees JANE.]*

Ah, a card! See? People are starting to come in already.

JANE

It's the gentleman who was here before.

PETER

*[Looking at the card.]*

I haven't ever heard of him.

*[To OSCAR.]*

Have you?

OSCAR

[*Looks at card; shakes head.*]

No. And I don't know why, but I've got a feeling it's bad news.

PETER

[*Looking over his shoulder.*]

"A. J. Patterson."

OSCAR

[*Also reading.*]

"Attorney-at-law." That's the part I don't like.

PETER

[*To JANE.*]

Did he say what he wanted?

JANE

No, he didn't.

PETER

He's probably just come to make an offer.

OSCAR

No—not attorney-at-law. They don't make offers.

PETER

You're getting me nervous now.

OSCAR

I'll bet we've got the show in the wrong theater.

PETER

Will you tell him to come in?

JANE

Yes, sir.

*[Opens the door.]*

OSCAR

It couldn't be something you did before this, huh?

*[Mr. PATTERSON and his brief case return. If possible, Mr. PATTERSON looks even more formidable than he did before. For a moment he faces PETER and OSCAR, boring them with his eyes. OSCAR shifts, uneasily. PETER finally breaks the silence.]*

PETER

Did you want to see me?

PATTERSON

*[A voice of steel.]*

Which is Mr. Peter Jones?

OSCAR

*[With vast relief.]*

He is.

PETER

I'm Mr. Jones.

PATTERSON

Is this Mr. Oscar Fritchie?

OSCAR

[*The jig is up.*]

Yep.

PATTERSON

I called on you gentlemen earlier and left word that I would return.

OSCAR

Yah? I wish I'd known.

PATTERSON

You have my card?

PETER

Yes.

PATTERSON

My name is Patterson.

PETER

[*Consults the card.*]

That's right.

PATTERSON

I'm an attorney-at-law.

OSCAR

*[Trying to be friendly.]*

A lawyer, huh?

PATTERSON

*[With emphasis.]*

An attorney-at-law.

OSCAR

Oh!

PETER

Is there something we can do for you, Mr. Patterson?

PATTERSON

There is. May I—

*[Indicates with a gesture that he would like to use the desk.]*

PETER

Certainly.

*[PATTERSON goes to the desk, opens the brief case, and takes a package of documents out of it. He puts the package down on the desk in a businesslike manner, at the same time shooting a glance at PETER and OSCAR. He brings out a second package and slaps it down beside the first—gives another glance at PETER and OSCAR. Then a third bundle—*

*a third glance. He adjusts a pair of glasses on his nose; clears his throat; takes up one of the documents and unfolds it. You gather, from a look at PETER and OSCAR, that they would much rather be somewhere else. JANE, standing quietly in the background, seems thoroughly possessed, however.]*

PATTERSON

*[With the air of a man trying a case in court.]*

You are the owners of Lehmack Productions, Incorporated, Fourteen Hundred and Sixty-eight Broadway, New York, New York.

*[A second's pause; he reads the next few words as though they constituted deadly evidence.]*

A New York corporation.

PETER

*[Much impressed; raises his right hand on high.]*

We are.

OSCAR

*[Still hoping to get out of it.]*

He owns most of it.

PATTERSON

Said corporation being the producers of a dramatic composition, or play, entitled "Her Lesson."

PETER

Is it—something about the play?

PATTERSON

*[Ignoring the question and taking a magazine out of the brief case.]*

In November, Nineteen Hundred and Sixteen, there appeared in this magazine, "Peppy Tales," published in New York City, an article of fiction, or short story, entitled "A Woman's Honor." Said story having been written by my client, Mr. Rodney Rich, of Northampton, Massachusetts.

*[A deadly pause.]*

And, as we shall duly prove in court—

OSCAR

Court?

PATTERSON

In court.

OSCAR

I thought you said court.

PATTERSON

The said story was, on January eighth, Nineteen Hundred and Seventeen, accepted as the basis of a play by one Harley Thompson, since deceased.



PETER

[*To OSCAR.*]

Dead.

PATTERSON

Subsequently, as we shall prove, the said play was purchased or acquired by one Joseph Lehman, and by him duly produced.

[*He takes a breath.*]

It will be shown that the said dramatic composition, or play, is similar to the aforesaid short story at—one hundred and forty-six points.

PETER

One hundred and forty SIX?

PATTERSON

And that no less than six characters in the aforesaid play bear the same names as those in the aforesaid short story.

PETER

Well, was the aforesaid—

PATTERSON

One moment, please.

[*An impressive pause.*]

My client, Mr. Rodney Rich, has received no payment for this play, nor has his permission been sought

in any way. It is, gentlemen, a clear case of plagiarism, and one of the most flagrant that it has ever been my privilege to encounter.

OSCAR

But—but—but—look here—

PETER

We didn't know anything about it. I bought it from Mr. Lehman, and then Mr. Fritchie here—

PATTERSON

Unfortunately—

OSCAR

That's a bad word.

PATTERSON

My client cannot take that matter into account. His composition has been produced in dramatic form without his permission. Not unnaturally, he seeks redress.

OSCAR

Seeks what?

PATTERSON

Redress.

PETER

Money.

PATTERSON

My purpose in laying these facts before you, prior to bringing suit, is to afford you the opportunity, if you so desire, of adjusting the matter outside of court.

PETER

Well——well——what are we supposed to do?

PATTERSON

[*More impressively than ever.*]

My client will accept sixty-six and two-thirds per centum of all profits derived from said play, when, if and as produced, and in those circumstances will permit the play to continue. Failing to receive sixty-six and two-thirds per centum—

OSCAR

That's money too.

PATTERSON

He will apply for an injunction and cause the play to be closed at once.

PETER

He'll close it?

PATTERSON

He will close it.

OSCAR

Close it?

PATTERSON

You understand me.

OSCAR

Yah.

[*To PETER.*]

Look! Most of it's yours, see? I don't know much about lawyers. You—do something and I'll go over and see if the theater's burned down.

[*He leaves.*]

PETER

What do you think we ought to do, Jane?

JANE

[*To the lawyer.*]

Must you—must Mr. Jones give an answer immediately?

PATTERSON

I regret that he must.

PETER

But it's—I haven't had time—

JANE

Can't we—even talk it over? That is, Mr. Jones and I?

PATTERSON

This young lady is your adviser?

PETER

Yes, indeed.

PATTERSON

At best, I could allow but a brief time.

PETER

Well, that would be better than—

PATTERSON

Shall we say—fifteen minutes?

PETER

Shall we?

PATTERSON

Very well. I shall return for your decision in fifteen minutes.

*[He departs; JANE and PETER are alone again.]*

PETER

Oh, Jane!

JANE

Peter, don't you care. Don't! I can't bear it.

PETER

But—just when everything was going along so fine, to have—

JANE

But you mustn't get discouraged. He—may not be right at all.

PETER

Oh, yes he is. I remember Mr. Lehman said something about it's being a short story, that very first day.

JANE

But this may not be it. Now when he comes back we'll make him show all his proofs—

PETER

No—you can tell.

[*He looks at the lawyer's card, still in his hand.*]

Sixty-six and two-thirds per centum. And I was going to do such big things.

JANE

You will yet, Peter.

PETER

I guess I wasn't supposed to do them. There are some people that sort of naturally do big things, and others that—I don't know. I wouldn't care if it weren't for—everything.

JANE

Peter, you mustn't mind it.

[*But he does.*]

Peter—may I tell you something?

*[He is silent.]*

I love you, Peter.

PETER

Oh, Jane! Do you?

*[He reaches for her hand.]*

JANE

Wait! I wanted to tell it to you now, when things are—looking black. It—it may be wrong, but—I'm glad this has happened.

PETER

Glad?

JANE

I'm sorry about the money, of course, but I'm awfully glad for you.

PETER

How do you mean?

JANE

I did want you to be successful, but somehow you lost something that was you. It's just as you said, Peter—you're not that kind of person—you never could be. You belong back in Chillicothe, in the hotel. You're—simple, and—sweet, and—you don't really like all this, do you?

PETER

I don't know. I thought I did, but—I don't know.

JANE

Don't you realize—how little it amounts to, really? You're too fine for it, Peter.

PETER

Did you mean what you said, about—loving me?

JANE

More than anything that ever was. I thought for a while you'd gone away from me, but now I know you never can. It made me so unhappy to think that—but now it's all over.

PETER

It's over, all right. Being a success is over.

JANE

You mustn't mind.

PETER

We've got to decide what to do. He'll be coming back pretty soon, that lawyer.

JANE

Suppose you gave him what he wanted?



PETER

I'd hardly have any left. Besides, I got Oscar to go into it and—

*[There is a knock on the hall door.]*

He wouldn't be here already, would he?

*[JANE opens the door. It is FANNY who enters.]*

JANE

Mrs. Lehman!

FANNY

Hello, children!

PETER

Oh—hello.

FANNY

Well, you ought to be peppier than this. Do you know you've got a hit?

PETER

Yes, ma'am.

FANNY

Yes, sir—a hit. What that proves about the public I don't know, but it's certainly something.

PETER

How's that?

FANNY

I said—

JANE

Wait! You've come to tell us something.

FANNY

You're pretty cute.

JANE

Well?

FANNY

You've got company coming.

JANE

Mr. Lehman?

FANNY

Right!

JANE

Soon?

FANNY

On the fire.

PETER

What's he coming for?

FANNY

*[Giving full weight to the announcement.]*

He's smoked out a bankroll and he wants to buy back the show.

PETER

No?

[*He begins to realize his opportunity.*]

Oh, say! Now, look! Will he get here in less than fifteen minutes, do you think?

FANNY

What's going on?

PETER

Do you think he will?

FANNY

[*Nods.*]

I just shot ahead of him to tell you that he's picked up a little tip.

PETER

Huh?

JANE

What is it?

FANNY

You know, I got a kind of fool liking for you two. Somehow, suckers always appealed to me.

PETER

But—what were you going to tell us? He might get here, and—

FANNY

It's this. You've got about three times as big a hit as you think you have.

PETER

What?

FANNY

You know that brothel scene?

PETER

Yes, indeed!

FANNY

The police are going to try to close the show. That means you'll be hanging 'em on the rafters.

PETER

Gee!

*[There is a knock on the hall door. FANNY lowers her voice.]*

FANNY

Joe raised the money on that tip! He's got it on him now in certified checks!

JANE

How much?

FANNY

I don't know. He—

*[The knock comes again. A smile spreads over the face of MR. JONES.]*

PETER

*[A gesture toward the center door.]*

A butter-and-egg man.

*[He goes to his desk, settles the derby hat on his head, leans far back in the swivel chair and lifts his feet up onto the desk. He nods to JANE that the scene is set—she opens the door. LEHMAN greets JANE cordially; then notices FANNY. A glare. Then he turns and regards PETER, who is enjoying the situation too much to break it. Finally, however, he deepens his voice to an approximation of LEHMAN's tone.]*

How are you, sweetheart?

LEHMAN

*[He swallows this, then turns to FANNY to relieve his feelings.]*

What are you doing here?

FANNY

Just visiting.

LEHMAN

Get out!

JANE

I—I think Mrs. Lehman ought to stay.

PETER

You're not going to start putting people out of places again, are you? Now let's all sit down and visit. Unless there's something particular you want to say.

LEHMAN

I don't know what she's been handing you, but don't start in believing it.

PETER

About what?

LEHMAN

We can skip all that. I come around to give you your coin back—let you out clean.

PETER

You mean you want to buy the show?

LEHMAN

I'll give you just what you paid for it—twenty and ten—thirty thousand. You won't lose a thing.

PETER

You won't either, will you?

LEHMAN

What?

PETER

The point is, it's a valuable property, see? It starts with a prologue—

LEHMAN

You're going to believe that stuff of hers, huh? Listen, sweetheart, I'm an old hand at this game. I can make something out of this show, but you can't.

PETER

It's the biggest dramatic novelty in twenty years.

LEHMAN

I'll give you forty—and I've got the certified checks in my pocket. Set?

[JANE's eyes flash a negative to PETER. PETER shakes his head.]

Forty-five, and that's all! That's netting you fifteen.

[JANE signals again; PETER says no.]

LEHMAN

I only got fifty—do you want it all?

[MAC bursts in through the center door.]

MAC

So!

FANNY

The boy friend!

MAC

[*Accusingly.*]  
I thought so!

LEHMAN

Thought what?

MAC

Trying to double-cross me, eh? Have you sold it to him yet?

PETER

Why?

MAC

If you haven't, don't—because he's going to skin you.

PETER

[*Innocently.*]  
Mr. Lehman?

MAC

He didn't tell you about the police, did he?

FANNY

I did.



LEHMAN

[*Giving her a look that just misses killing her.*]  
Just a pal.

MAC

Look here! I'll give you fifty thousand dollars.  
I've got it right here.

PETER

Fifty thousand? Why, even Mr. Lehman offered  
that much.

MAC

He did?

PETER

Do you want to go any higher? It's a great play.  
There's a priest in it—

MAC

Fifty thousand—that's a lot of jack.

PETER

How about you, Mr. Lehman?

LEHMAN

[*To FANNY.*]  
I'm going to brain you.

PETER

Well then, I guess we're—

[*Almost as a matter of course, he turns to*  
JANE.]

JANE

I know a way to fix things. Mr. Lehman has fifty thousand dollars and so has Mr. McClure.

LEHMAN

Well?

JANE

Why shouldn't they—buy it together?

PETER

*[As it dawns on him.]*

Oh, say! That's an idea.

*[He gives JANE an approving pat on the shoulder.]*

Very good.

*[He faces his late partners.]*

One hundred thousand dollars!

LEHMAN

What?

JANE

That's the price, Mr. Lehman.

LEHMAN

A hundred thousand?

*[MAC sinks slowly into a chair.]*

PETER

And think on your feet!

*[MAC rises again—this time quickly.]*

LEHMAN

Is that—final?

PETER

Yep!

FANNY

Five-star!

PETER

Only I got to know right away.

*[Snaps his fingers.]*

That's the show game!

LEHMAN

Come out here a minute, Mac.

MAC

O. K.

LEHMAN

We'll be right back.

*[They go through the center door.]*

PETER

Do you think they'll do it?

JANE

I think so! Oh, I hope so!

PETER

But suppose that lawyer comes back before they decide?

FANNY

What lawyer?

PETER

Don't tell them, see—but there was a lawyer came in—

[OSCAR comes in the side door.]

OSCAR

Has he gone?

PETER

Listen! Things have changed, see? I haven't got time to tell you, but don't be nervous, and—and don't ask any questions.

OSCAR

Huh?

JANE

Don't say anything!

OSCAR

What's going on?

[LEHMAN and MAC return. OSCAR, not unnaturally, is a bit surprised to see them.]

Look, look!

[He addresses them.]

Hello!

MAC

How are you?

OSCAR

[*Thinking he means it.*]

Not bad. My throat's sort of—

PETER

[*Quieting him.*]

Sssh!

[*To LEHMAN.*]

Have you decided?

LEHMAN

Now, look here a minute—

[*There is a knock at the side door. The fifteen minutes are up. Plainly, it is PATTERSON.*]

OSCAR

[*Ever obliging.*]

I'll go!

PETER

[*Stopping him.*]

No, no!

OSCAR

Huh?

PETER

It's—it's only—I know what it is, see?

[*He goes over and locks the door; returns to*

LEHMAN.]

What were you going to say?

OSCAR

But if there's somebody out there—

PETER

There isn't anybody out there.

*[Whereupon there is a loud, loud knock.]*

OSCAR

*[Thinking it over.]*

Well, I'll take your word for it.

PETER

*[To LEHMAN.]*

The point is whether you've decided.

LEHMAN

Who's out there?

PETER

It isn't anybody. Maybe a book agent. He was going to—

*[He is growing desperate.]*

—do you want it or don't you?

LEHMAN

Now look here, sweetheart—that's a big bundle of coin. You can't expect us to—

*[The knock is repeated.]*

For Heaven's sake, why don't you send him away?

PETER

*[Highly nervous.]*

He doesn't matter. Now the point is—

*[Suddenly he gets an idea. Perhaps not a scrupulously honest one, but we really have to get the curtain down. He makes his announcement emphatically.]*

I can't send him away.

LEHMAN

*[Not much interested.]*

What?

PETER

You want to know who he is? I'll tell you.

LEHMAN

I don't care, as long as he stops his racket.

PETER

That's all right. I'll tell you who it is, if you really want to know. That's a man that wants to take over most of the show—that's who that is.

LEHMAN

What!

PETER

You'd be surprised if you knew his name. He's a man who does things just like that.

*[He snaps his fingers.]*

So if you don't want it just say the word and I'll let him in!

LEHMAN

*[Frantically stopping PETER as he starts for the door.]*

Wait! We'll take it! Hurry up, Mac!

*[They pull out checks; PETER takes them.]*

Now it's ours!

OSCAR

Say, what's going on here?

PETER

*[Hands the checks over to JANE.]*

Just a minute—I'll tell you. There's your receipt.

*[Turns to Oscar.]*

Now I can tell you about it. These gentlemen have just bought the show back.

OSCAR

And I get my money back?

PETER

You get a lot more. They've just paid a hundred thousand dollars—

*[He pauses; shoots a glance at them.]*

—for thirty-three and one-third per centum.



LEHMAN

[*Not what you might call pleased.*]  
For what?

PETER

[*Throwing open the door.*]  
This gentleman will tell you all about it!  
[*MR. PATTERSON enters.*]  
This is Mr. Patterson—  
[*He consults the card.*]  
—Mr. A. J. Patterson. He's a lawyer.  
[*He remembers that this is not just accurate;  
makes a hasty addition.*]  
At law. And he wants sixty-six and two-thirds  
per cent. on account of that short story. Remember?

LEHMAN

Oh, he does, eh?

PETER

Mr. Lehman has just bought the show back again.

PATTERSON

Indeed?

OSCAR

[*Emphatically.*]  
Yes, indeed!

LEHMAN

Yah, and I know all about this phony case. You ain't got no more grounds than a rabbit.

PATTERSON

We have a perfect case.

LEHMAN

Yah? Well, there's one thing you don't know.

*[Taking him into the hall.]*

There ain't been a hit produced in twenty years that some guy ain't said it was swiped from him.

*[They are gone.]*

MAC

*[Following them; turns to PETER.]*

You disappointed me.

OSCAR

This is great. You mean it—I get my money back?

PETER

You get a lot more. You get forty-nine thousand dollars.

OSCAR

This has been an awful lesson to me.

LEHMAN

[*A voice comes from outside the door.*]

And I'll tell you something more about this show—

OSCAR

I want to hear what he's saying.

LEHMAN

[*As OSCAR opens the door.*]

—ten years ago from a fellow named Sheridan—

[*OSCAR goes.*]

[*FANNY, JANE and PETER remain.*]

FANNY

And I came here to look after you two.

JANE

We couldn't have done it without you. And we do appreciate it—enormously.

PETER

I should say we do. I'll never forget it. I'll never forget the whole thing. And if Mr. Lehman does anything to you, you let me know.

FANNY

I'll get along.

[*OSCAR opens the door again—you hear the voice of LEHMAN.*]

LEHMAN

And you're getting a bargain, too.

OSCAR

*[Closes the door.]*

I just come in to tell you the good news.

PETER

What?

OSCAR

*[With a broad grin.]*

Mr. Lehman is going to let me buy my share back again.

FANNY

Let me out first!

*[She goes to the door; turns to PETER.]*

At that maybe you're not such a sucker. You certainly put it over. But how that charade ever turned out to be a hit is a mystery to your Aunt Sadie.

*[She departs.]*

LEHMAN

*[Heard as the door opens.]*

And another thing. The girl in that story was named Honora—

OSCAR

Could you let me have my share of the money right away—to give Mr. Lehman?

PETER

Now—now look here, Oscar—

OSCAR

But I'm afraid Mr. Lehman won't wait.

PETER

He'll wait. You don't want to go back into the theatrical business.

[To JANE.]

Does he?

JANE

Of course not.

OSCAR

Don't I?

PETER

A man like you ought to be in the hotel business. Shouldn't he?

JANE

Of course.

OSCAR

But last time you said I ought to get out of it!

**PETER**

Oh, that was different. Listen, have you ever been in Chillicothe?

**OSCAR**

No.

**PETER**

Well, it's a wonderful place—wonderful. Jane and I are going there. Aren't we?

**JANE**

I hope so.

**PETER**

You bet we are. We're going back to Chillicothe, and buy the hotel—for fifty thousand dollars—and with your money too it could be made one of the greatest hotels in the world—anywhere.

**OSCAR**

But now—now, wait—

**JANE**

It's a real chance, Mr. Fritchie—the chance of a lifetime!

**PETER**

Oh, it'll be wonderful! Look! We'll build a great

big addition—it'll be the greatest hotel that ever—  
I'll tell you what I'll do!

*[In an instant he is the salesman of Act II  
again.]*

I'll sell you forty-nine per cent. of it for—

*[He quickly steers OSCAR toward a chair.]*

Sit down, sweetheart!

*[The curtain is falling.]*

Now here's the idea! You and Jane and I—

*[And by that time it ought to be down.]*













