

HERE COME THE BRIDES

A FARCE IN THREE ACTS

By William D. Fisher

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By William D. Fisher

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(FOUR MEN, SEVEN WOMEN)

JIMMY TOOK (m) A likable, lazy, but well-meaning young man (about twenty-three) who needs a bride in a hurry. Good-looking, intelligent, quite normal. *(343 lines)*

BILL THOMPSON (m) Jimmy's buddy, who becomes his wife. About Jimmy's age, he is a sincere friend even in the most extreme cases. *(219 lines)*

MR. OSWALD (m) An enterprising young business man, who also becomes Jimmy's wife. Studious in appearance, he wears a dark business suit and horn-rimmed glasses. About twenty-five, work is very important to him. *(113 lines)*

MADGE BURNS (f) Jimmy's sweetheart, who might become his wife. She is dressed in the latest fashion. Clever, with an attractive personality. *(121 lines)*

UNCLE DAN TOOK (m) Jimmy's wealthy uncle, who has come to meet Jimmy's bride. About fifty, he is a sturdy, prosperous man with graying temples. A bachelor, he thinks highly of Jimmy and treats him generously. *(110 lines)*

AUNT ELLEN (f).....Bill’s aunt and Jimmy and Bill’s housekeeper. She is about fifty. (154 lines)

PEG WESTFIELD (f).....Uncle Dan’s ward, who wants to meet Jimmy’s wife and especially Bill Thompson. Twenty, she is a pretty, well-dressed young woman with a large fortune of her own. She reflects culture and excellent taste. (102 lines)

MRS. DUVALLE-SMYTHE (f)...An ambitious, thirty year old woman, who follows Uncle Dan everywhere. She is flashy and dresses expensively in furs and jewelry. She wears too much makeup and is slightly brazen in her attitude toward men. (48 lines)

“BUBBLES” DUVALLE (f).....Her younger sister, who will take a man if she can find one. About twenty, she seems much younger. She is dressed in styles that are too young for her which heightens her immaturity. (23 lines)

LADY MACBETH (f).....A stranger who comes from nearby “Green Gables.” She is strangely dressed in a flowing white robe. Her skin is perfectly white, her hair is pulled straight back from her face. She always carries a candle thrust outward in her right hand.

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McDANIEL (f)A nurse from “Green Gables.” A stout, husky woman with a touch of Irish in her loud voice. She seems to bubble over with energy and lack of culture. About forty-five (she could be any age), dressed in a khaki or white uniform. This part could be played by a man. (39 lines)

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE:A late summer morning.

ACT TWO:Early that afternoon.

ACT THREE:Later that afternoon.

MAKEUP SUGGESTIONS

Uncle Dan and Aunt Ellen are the two most mature characters in the play. Uncle Dan’s temples should be whitened with white grease paint and his hair lightly dusted with corn starch, which is more effective than powder for whitening hair. He is a healthy, robust man so he should have ruby cheeks and only a few face wrinkles. Aunt Ellen should have light gray hair and similar makeup to that of Uncle Dan. A few wrinkles and a small amount of blush and lipstick.

Lady Macbeth should enhance her “strangeness” with very pale makeup. Her eyes should be darkened to give her an unusual, insane appearance.

Mr. Oswald may have slightly grayed temples to give him a slightly older look than Jimmy and Bill. However, all three should be made up similarly with lines around their eyes and some rouge, NO lipstick. When the men are dressed as women, they should wear heavy makeup. McDaniel should be ruddy and healthy looking. The other young women - Peggy, Madge, Bubbles, and Mrs. Smythe should wear standard makeup. Mrs. Smythe somewhat heavier than the others, Bubbles somewhat less. All of them will

need eyeliner. Every actor should wear eyeliner, it is one of the most important steps. From a distance, eyes lose their definiteness of shape. These lines should be very fine, drawn at the very edge of the eye on the upper and lower lids about two-thirds of the way from the outside corner to the inside corner.

PROPS

ACT ONE:

- Dust cloth, Aunt Ellen
- Apple, Jimmy
- Piece of bread and butter, Bill
- Overnight letter, Aunt Ellen
- Hat, Mr. Oswald
- Whistle, McDaniel

ACT TWO:

- Wristwatch, Jimmy
- Whistle used in Act One, Aunt Ellen
- Wallet with a check in it, Uncle Dan
- Hat box with a small hat in it, Peggy

ACT THREE:

- Hat box and hat, on table, up left
- Handkerchief, Uncle Dan
- Whistle, Aunt Ellen
- Match box, McDaniel

SOUND EFFECTS

- Telephone, off left
- Doorbell, off left

SET

The attractive living room of Jimmy Took's house, located in the suburbs of a large city.

- Telephone stand and telephone, down left
- Sofa, left center
- Narrow library table, left center
- Easy chair, right center
- Desk and chair, up right
- Table, up left; Tablecloth; Table Lamp; Books for Table
- Straight chair, right center
- Rug
- Flowers for library table
- Pictures, drapes, etc.

DO NOT COPY

ACT ONE

SETTING:

Jimmy Took's living room. A bright, attractive room furnished with excellent taste. Down left is a telephone stand with a telephone. A sofa and library table are left center. A stage left door leads to the front hallway. Upstage center are French doors through which you can see a balustrade and garden backing. Bright sunlight pours in. Right of the French doors is a small writing desk and chair, left of the French doors is a decorative table. This table holds a lamp, books, etc. There are two doors on the right wall. The upper door leads to the bedrooms, the lower door leads to the dining room and kitchen. A straight chair stands between the doors. Right center stage is an easy chair. An area rug, flowers, and pictures complete the set.

AT RISE:

As the curtain rises, AUNT ELLEN is up right with a dust cloth dusting the lamp and table. JIMMY is lying on the sofa.

AUNT ELLEN: *(Turning from her dusting toward Jimmy.)* I don't care what you say, Jimmy, it isn't right!

JIMMY: *(Yawning.)* What's wrong with it? I think it's perfect!

AUNT ELLEN: *(Finishing off the lamp.)* When I was growing up we were taught that people **work** for their money!

JIMMY: That's what I've been trying to tell you – you're old fashioned!

AUNT ELLEN: *(Glaring at him.)* I'm ignoring you, James Took! I'm not half as old as you might think!

JIMMY: *(Grinning.)* If you were only half as old – you still wouldn't be any spring chicken!

AUNT ELLEN: *(Stopping her work to firmly place her hands on her hips angrily.)* If I thought for one minute that you were serious – I'd – I'd – *(She stops, at a loss for words.)*

JIMMY: *(Smugly.)* You'd what?

AUNT ELLEN: *(Flatly.)* I'd take you over my knee and spank you like I would any other young smart aleck!

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JIMMY: *(Smiling.)* Okay, then. I didn't mean a word of it. *(Smiling.)*
You're the biggest, shiniest, most delectable apple of all the
apples of my eye!

AUNT ELLEN: *(Wisely.)* And I suppose the next thing you'll say is
that you want chocolate cake for dinner!

JIMMY: Strangely enough, I was thinking about chocolate cake for
dinner. How'd you know?

AUNT ELLEN: I know men well enough to recognize blarney when I
hear it. And when men start talking blarney, they usually want
something.

*BILL appears at the door up right. He is wearing an old robe tied
loosely over his shirt and trousers. His hair is tousled and he is very
sleepy.*

BILL: *(Scratching his head sleepily.)* "Blarney's" no name for it! I
don't see how you expect a fellow to sleep with all of this noise.

JIMMY: Well, if it isn't the early bird! Out to catch a few worms?

BILL: *(Making a wry face.)* Don't even mention worms! I haven't
had my breakfast yet.

AUNT ELLEN: If you'd get up at a decent time in the morning you
could eat when I do!

BILL: You mean if you got up at a decent time!

AUNT ELLEN: It's after ten o'clock. Most men have a half a day's
work done by this time.

BILL: *(Yawning and stretching.)* That's a good idea.

AUNT ELLEN: Then why don't you do it?

BILL: *(Yawning.)* It's a good idea for most men. But not for me. *(To
Jimmy.)* How about loaning that sofa for awhile?

JIMMY: *(Lightly.)* Go peddle your papers somewhere else, little boy.
You had it all day yesterday. Today's my turn.

BILL: Aw, come on! Be a pal. Can't you see I'm sick?

JIMMY: Sure. Sick of standing up.

BILL: *(Shrugging his shoulders.)* Okay, then. If that's the way you
feel about it. *(He moves slowly up toward the French door.)*

AUNT ELLEN: *(Suddenly stops dusting.)* It isn't right! It just isn't
right!

JIM: What isn't right?

AUNT ELLEN: (*Firmly.*) What I've been talking about! It isn't right that two perfectly healthy young men like you two should . . .

BILL: (*Suddenly bursting out, he points through the French door and shouts.*) Look! Holy smokes! Look out there!

JIMMY: (*Startled, sitting bolt upright on the sofa.*) What is it? Where?

BILL: (*Excitedly, still pointing out through the door.*) Come here, quick! It's awful!

Aunt Ellen and Jimmy dash up center to look out where Bill is pointing.

AUNT ELLEN: What is it, an accident?

While Jimmy and Aunt Ellen stare out through the door, Bill haughtily walks down to the sofa which Jimmy has vacated and lies down comfortably.

JIMMY: (*Starting to turn toward Bill.*) I don't see anything. What is . . . ? (*He doesn't see Bill standing there and whirls to see him lying at ease on the sofa.*)

BILL: (*Brightly.*) The sun, of course. It's awful, isn't it? So bright!

JIMMY: (*Clenching his fists and starting toward the sofa.*) Why, you double-crosser, you!

AUNT ELLEN: (*Soothingly.*) Hey guys!

BILL: (*Shaking his finger at Jimmy.*) Mustn't lose your temper!

JIMMY: (*Glaring down at him.*) I should knock your block off!

BILL: I'm a sick man and besides, Aunt Ellen was talking. You shouldn't interrupt people when they're talking. (*To Aunt Ellen.*) Go ahead, Aunt Ellen. We'll ignore him.

JIMMY: (*Disgustedly.*) I give up! (*He slumps down in the easy chair, right.*)

AUNT ELLEN: I merely wanted to say that you should be ashamed of yourselves!

BILL: (*To Jimmy.*) See what people think of your bad temper? Shame on you!

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AUNT ELLEN: You, too, Bill! Both of you.

BILL: *(Taken aback.)* Me? I haven't done anything.

AUNT ELLEN: That's exactly what I mean. For the last six months neither one of you has done anything. Unless you want to call fighting over the couch "doing something."

JIMMY: We eat three or four big meals a day!

BILL: And we sleep ten hours at night and eight or ten during the day! What more could you ask for?

AUNT ELLEN: Careers, jobs.

BILL: *(Pointing at himself.)* Me? Aunt Ellen, I thought you knew me better than that!

JIMMY: Why should we? I've got all the money I need, I have you to take care of the house and Bill to keep me company.

AUNT ELLEN: That's true all right. And Bill and I enjoy living here, but what if your uncle runs out of money? What then?

JIMMY: *(Shaking his head.)* Not a chance! Uncle Dan owns half of California and two-thirds of the oil wells! This is the first of the month and that good old check will arrive today as it always does.

BILL: *(Happily.)* Good old Uncle Dan!

AUNT ELLEN: *(Shaking her head.)* I still don't like it . . . two young men frittering away their lives doing nothing just because they don't have to!

JIMMY: Is it my fault that Uncle Dan likes me?

AUNT ELLEN: No it isn't. But you don't have to take his money just because he wants to give it to you. Or if you do take it, you could save it and live off the money you'd get from your job.

BILL: But if Jimmy and I worked that would mean that someone else would be out of a job. And we couldn't do that!

AUNT ELLEN: Never mind! Nothing good is going to come out of this, you just wait and see! I've told you that before.

BILL: Maybe so, but it sure is a great life while it lasts. *(He rises.)* Come on, Jimmy, I want to get some breakfast. How about joining me? *(He starts down right, to exit.)*

JIMMY: *(Rising and following him.)* Don't mind if I do. I haven't eaten in almost an hour! *(He turns at the door, down right, to speak to Aunt Ellen.)* Don't worry about us, Aunt Ellen. We may get tired of loafing one of these days and then we'll go to work. *(He exits, down right.)*

AUNT ELLEN shakes her head unhappily and continues dusting. After a moment MADGE BURNS, JIMMY'S sweetheart, appears in the French door, up center.

MADGE: *(Knocking on the door frame.)* Good morning, Mrs. Thompson. Are Jimmy and Bill here?

AUNT ELLEN: *(Turning toward her.)* Oh, good morning, Madge. You startled me.

MADGE: *(Stepping inside the room.)* I'm sorry, I just stopped by to see if the guys were up and around yet.

AUNT ELLEN: *(Snorting.)* They're up, but they're not around much. As usual, they're out in the kitchen getting something to eat.

MADGE: I don't have much time, but I wanted to see if they have changed their minds about the jobs down at the agency.

AUNT ELLEN: *(Disgustedly.)* Fat chance. As long as Jimmy's uncle keeps sending him money, they'll never work.

MADGE: *(Moving down right toward the easy chair.)* I wish there was something we could do about them. I hate to see them wasting so much time, loafing.

AUNT ELLEN: I don't know what possesses Jimmy's uncle to keep sending him so much money.

MADGE: *(Sitting, down right.)* He's so likable and intelligent—they both are for that matter. Mr. Burns at the agency thinks Jimmy would make an excellent advertising man.

AUNT ELLEN: *(Sitting left.)* You like him, don't you, Madge?

MADGE: *(Smiling.)* Of course I do. *(Frowning.)* I just want him to have a little more ambition.

AUNT ELLEN: Have you told him so?

MADGE: *(Smiling wryly.)* Not yet. I – I hate to until I am sure this lazy prosperity is more than a temporary thing.

AUNT ELLEN: If it's permanent, nothing good will come of it!

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MADGE: I just can't imagine myself married to a man who sleeps sixteen hours a day and eats seven meals a day!

AUNT ELLEN: (*Nodding emphatically.*) I think you should tell him! If he likes you as much as I think he does, he'll change his ways in a hurry.

MADGE: And Bill would follow suit.

AUNT ELLEN: (*Emphatically.*) Exactly!

MADGE: Mr. Burns told me to ask them to come down and see him today. If Jimmy won't go – (*With finality.*) – then I'll have to tell him.

The doorbell rings, left.

AUNT ELLEN: (*Rising, exiting left.*) Excuse me, Madge.

AUNT ELLEN exits left. As she does, MADGE rises and JIMMY, eating an apple, enters down right, followed by BILL who is munching on a piece of bread and butter, his hair still tousled.

JIMMY: (*Seeing Madge.*) Hi there, Madge! What brings you out so bright and early this morning? (*He crosses toward her.*)

MADGE: Hello, Jimmy.

BILL: (*His mouth full of bread and butter.*) Mornin', Madge.

MADGE: You look a little sleepy, Bill.

BILL: (*Crossing left to flop down on the sofa.*) Who wouldn't be at this awful hour of the night?

MADGE: It's ten o'clock in the morning, Bill.

BILL: (*Taking a bite of bread and butter.*) For me, the sun doesn't rise 'til noon.

JIMMY: Aren't you working today, Madge?

MADGE: I don't have to go in until eleven.

JIMMY: (*Happily.*) That just about makes my morning complete then.

MADGE: Jimmy, Mr. Burns, down at the agency -

BILL: (*Interrupting.*) That guy? Boy is he a drip! Always wanting people to go to work! (*Shuddering.*) Ugh!

MADGE: He isn't a drip! He's a very nice man!

BILL: (*Philosophically.*) Better take it easy or Jimmy'll get jealous!

JIMMY: (*To Bill in friendly fashion.*) Quiet, Junior! She wasn't talking to you. (*To Madge.*) What about Mr. Burns, Madge?

MADGE: He asked me to drop by and tell you that those jobs are still open. He wants to talk to you about them.

BILL: (*Loudly, sitting bolt upright.*) See? What'd I tell you? Always wanting someone to put their shoulders to the millstone!

MADGE: That isn't true!

BILL: Then I don't know what you'd call it?

MADGE: (*Flaring up a bit.*) It was very generous of him!

BILL: (*Barking at her.*) Generous of him? To get us to make him more money? (*Sarcastically.*) Ha!

MADGE: (*Tossing her head.*) It certainly is! He didn't have to offer you the jobs!

BILL: Yeah and we don't have to take them!

JIMMY: (*Solicitously.*) Hey, take it easy guys.

MADGE: (*Whirling at him.*) Well, all I want to know is do you or don't you want those jobs? (*She is fairly shouting at the end of the speech.*)

JIMMY: Really, Madge, a decision like that requires a lot of thought.

BILL: (*Shaking his head.*) Not for me it doesn't!

MADGE: (*Harshly.*) You've known about this for over two weeks and Mr. Burns wants an answer!

JIMMY: (*Thoughtfully.*) Well Madge . . . (*He pauses thoughtfully.*)

AUNT ELLEN enters left with an "overnight letter" in her hand.

AUNT ELLEN: (*Seeing Jimmy.*) Here's an overnight letter for you, Jimmy. (*She carries it to him.*)

JIMMY: (*Taking it.*) For me? (*Looking at it carefully.*) I wonder who it's from?

BILL: Maybe it's more money from Uncle Dan.

AUNT ELLEN: (*Nodding knowingly.*) Remember what I told you this morning about no good coming to you? Well, I have a feeling this is it!

JIMMY: You shouldn't talk like that, Aunt Ellen!

MADGE: Can you see what it says without opening it?

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JIMMY: (*Holding it up and gazing at it.*) The paper's too thick!

BILL: (*Disgustedly.*) Good grief, open it!

JIMMY: (*To Bill.*) If you're in such a hurry to read it – you open it!
(*He flips the package to Bill.*)

BILL: (*Holding it gingerly.*) Oh no you don't! (*He flips it back at Jimmy, who catches it.*) It's your letter, open it yourself.

AUNT ELLEN: Well, someone has to open it! (*As Jimmy starts to hand it to her. Emphatically.*) But not me!

JIMMY: I don't want to. (*Brightly.*) So that leaves you, Madge. (*He hands it to her and she takes it automatically.*) Thank you very much. (*As he crosses to sit in the easy chair.*) Read on, Macduff.

MADGE: (*Tears open the envelope.*) What if it's personal?

JIMMY: (*Grandly.*) I don't have any secrets from you, Madge.

MADGE: Okay, then. It's a letter. (*She opens the letter and reads.*)
"My dear nephew Jimmy . . ."

JIMMY: (*Rising from the chair as though shocked.*) What??!

MADGE: (*Looking at him startled.*) That's what it says. (*Reading again.*) "My dear nephew **JIMMY:** This month I have decided to deliver your check in person. I will arrive today shortly after noon and I am looking forward to seeing your new . . ."

JIMMY: (*Rushing to her wide-eyed and snatching the letter from her hands.*) Give me that letter!!!

MADGE: (*Startled.*) But . . .!

BILL: (*Leaping to his feet.*) Secrets, huh?! (*As he makes a dive for Jimmy.*)

JIMMY starts to dash around the chair, right, and BILL races after him. As JIMMY dashes around the chair and starts left stage, BILL cuts him off, grabs him from behind with one arm and snatches the letter from his hand. Then tripping and shoving him, he pushes him sprawling onto the sofa, left. BILL then leaps to the seat of the easy chair and strikes a dramatic pose.

AUNT ELLEN: (*While their scuffling.*) Boys, for goodness sake!

BILL: (*From his lofty perch.*) To the victor belongs the spoils!

JIMMY: (*Breathlessly unable to move.*) Don't read it, Bill! Please!

BILL: (*Smoothing the wrinkled sheet.*) Nonsense, my boy! You have no secrets we can't share. (*He reads grandiloquently and with great gusto.*) "My dear nephew Jimmy, this month I have decided to deliver your check in person." (*Looking up from his reading.*) Good old check! That's what we've been waiting for! (*He reads on.*) "I will arrive today shortly after noon and I am looking forward to meeting your new bri— (*He stops, amazed, and looks at Jimmy.*) Ugh-oh, Jimmy! Do you know what this says?

JIMMY: (*Sitting up, dejectedly.*) Yeah, I know. (*Dully.*) Go ahead and finish it.

BILL: (*Doubtfully.*) You sure?

JIMMY: You might as well. You'll find out this afternoon when Uncle Dan gets here anyway.

BILL: (*Steps down from the chair.*) Well, all it says is, "I'm looking forward to meeting your new bride."

MADGE: (*Taken aback.*) Bride! What does he mean?

BILL: (*Interrupting.*) Let me finish it. (*He reads on.*) "Peggy will be with me and we send our best wishes to you and my new niece." It's signed "Uncle Dan." (*He plops into the easy chair.*) Oh, great.

MADGE: (*Her chin in the air.*) I think you owe me an explanation, Jimmy.

JIMMY: (*Shaking his head.*) There isn't anything to explain.

AUNT ELLEN: (*Nodding emphatically.*) I knew it! I knew it! It's a sorry state when a person has to get married because he doesn't have anything else to do!

MADGE: (*To Jimmy.*) You could have told me.

JIMMY: I didn't.

BILL: I'll say you didn't, or me either! What kind of friend are you?

AUNT ELLEN: I certainly didn't know anything about it!

JIMMY: I mean I didn't get married!

BILL: Then somebody's crazy!

JIMMY: (*Emphatically.*) Honestly I'm not married. It's – it's just a mis – a misunderstanding!

BILL: Boy, it must be if your uncle is coming to see a wife that doesn't exist!

MADGE: It's not a very good explanation, Jimmy.

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JIMMY: (*Shaking his head sadly.*) I know it isn't. It's all because Uncle Dan misunderstood a letter I wrote him.

AUNT ELLEN: (*Sternly.*) James Took, did you lie to your uncle?

JIMMY: (*Defensively.*) No! (*He looks at her and weakens.*) Well, not exactly.

MADGE: (*Haughtily.*) I think perhaps I'd better leave.

JIMMY: (*Rushing to her and stopping her.*) Please don't, Madge. I can explain.

MADGE: (*Tossing her head.*) I don't know if I'm interested.

BILL: (*Eagerly.*) Aw, come on, Madge, stick around. This ought to be good!

MADGE: (*Hesitating.*) Well, I don't know.

JIMMY: (*Hopefully.*) You should give me a chance to explain.

MADGE: (*Giving in.*) Very well, I'll stay. (*She moves to sit, left, as Aunt Ellen moves around the left end of the sofa to sit beside her. Jimmy is center, Bill is sitting right.*)

BILL: Come on, spill it.

JIMMY: (*Lamely beginning.*) Well – as I said – it's all a huge misunderstanding. As you know, Uncle Dan sends me spending money every month.

BILL: And how we know it!

AUNT ELLEN: Quiet, William!

JIMMY: (*Continuing.*) Well, when Bill first came to live with me, I told Uncle Dan that a very good friend of mine was coming to stay with me. The next letter contained a large check and a note congratulating me on my marriage.

MADGE: You mean he thought you got married.

JIMMY: Yep. Uncle Dan is a little old fashioned so to him a very good friend is the same as a sweetheart.

BILL: (*Pugnaciously.*) Hey, take it easy how you talk about me!

AUNT ELLEN: Why didn't you send the check back and tell him the truth?

JIMMY: (*Sadly.*) That's the problem. Since the marriage, he's tripled my allowance; we've been living high, wide, and handsome . . . and now the whole thing's going to blow up in my face! When Uncle Dan finds out, he'll hang my skin out to dry.

BILL: Just so it's yours and not mine! I'm just an innocent bystander.

MADGE: Couldn't you pay him back the money and explain?

JIMMY: (*Sadly.*) If battleships were a dime a dozen, I couldn't even buy an anchor! I've spent all the money.

MADGE: What are you going to do, Jimmy?

JIMMY: (*Frowning.*) I don't know. He's going to disown me.

MADGE: You really think so?

JIMMY: (*Unhappily.*) He would disown me on principle.

AUNT ELLEN: And I wouldn't blame him a bit.

BILL: (*Emphatically.*) Personally, I'd say we have to do something, and right away! Let me think!

JIMMY: Huh! You trying to think is like trying to cut down a tree with a baseball bat!

BILL: I'll think of something.

AUNT ELLEN: Whatever it is, I don't want any part of it. Dishonesty only leads to misfortune.

MADGE: I'm awfully sorry, Jimmy. Really, I am. Even if you deserve it.

JIMMY: Oh, I deserve it all right. It's going to be an awful shock to Uncle Dan though.

BILL: (*Unhappily.*) How do you think it affects me?

MADGE: (*Suggestively.*) Mr. Burns still needs two young men in his office.

BILL: (*Unhappily.*) You mean we have to go to work? Just because Jimmy isn't married? (*His face suddenly lights up.*) That's it!

JIMMY: (*Startled.*) What's it?

BILL: (*Excitedly.*) That's our plan!

MADGE: What plan?

BILL: (*Happily.*) To save Jimmy's skin!

AUNT ELLEN: (*Distrustfully.*) No more tricks, Bill.

BILL: Don't worry, Aunt Ellen.

JIMMY: (*Impatiently.*) Well, out with it. What is it?

BILL: (*Confidently.*) It's all very simple. Your Uncle Dan thinks you're married. Okay. So all you have to do is run down to the minister and get married. (*Looking at them, proudly.*) Simple, eh?

JIMMY: (*Disgustedly.*) Yeah – like a jigsaw puzzle.

BILL: (*Disappointed.*) What'd'ya mean?

JIMMY: I mean that idea is full of holes.

HERE COME THE BRIDES

BILL: (*Defensively.*) You think so, eh? Well, let's see you come up with a better one.

JIMMY: (*Shaking his head.*) No thanks! I made this bed and I'm going to have to lie in it!

AUNT ELLEN: (*Nodding.*) That's the honorable thing to do, Jimmy.

BILL: (*Explosively.*) Oh, no you don't! I count in this thing, too, and I'm not going to have you give up my fun so easily!

JIMMY: Then you'll have to think up something better than that in a hurry. It's the craziest thing I ever heard of.

BILL: (*Argumentatively.*) Yeah? That's what they said about the Wright Brothers, and Edison and Macaroni – or Macaroon – or whatever his name was.

MADGE: Jimmy's right, Bill. A plan like that is preposterous.

BILL: (*Defensively.*) Tell me why! That's all – tell me why?

JIMMY: In the first place, I need a marriage license!

BILL: (*Nonchalantly.*) Fifteen minutes work at the nearest courthouse!

MADGE: In the second place, he doesn't have anyone to marry!

BILL: (*Wisely.*) That's what you think!

MADGE: (*Startled.*) What do you mean?

BILL: (*Pointedly.*) I mean you!

MADGE: (*Surprised.*) You mean me? (*Shaking her head violently.*) Oh no you don't!

JIMMY: (*Breaking in.*) Hey, now! Wait a minute! What's so bad about me?

BILL: (*As a salesman might.*) Sure, Madge, look him over. What's the matter with him? He's young, intelligent, and only a little bit repulsive. What more could you ask for?

AUNT ELLEN: (*Firmly.*) That's enough guys. (*Shocked.*) Why you'd think this was a meat market! Madge has said that she doesn't want any part of your plan and that's all there is to it!

JIMMY: (*Doggedly.*) I still don't know what's wrong with me. Personally, I think I'd make a mighty good husband!

BILL: (*Happily.*) That's right, Madge. And it might as well be you! (*Emphatically.*) All that and money, too! It's a great deal!

AUNT ELLEN: (*Forcefully.*) That's all, I said. Not another word!

MADGE: (*Lightly.*) Sometime when I'm not so busy I might be interested in buying. But not today, thanks!

JIMMY: You know, I could resent that!

MADGE: (*Cuttingly.*) Why, Jimmy! Whatever gave you that idea?

BILL: I still think it'd work! If you could just **pretend** that you were married! (*Snapping his fingers happily.*) Why didn't I think of that before!

AUNT ELLEN: (*Harshly.*) Not another word, Bill Thompson! Not one more word!

BILL: (*Coaxing.*) Aw, Aunt Ellen, all I was going to say was that if Madge would just **pretend** to be Jimmy's bride it would solve the entire problem.

AUNT ELLEN: (*Threateningly.*) Bill.

BILL: (*Cowed.*) All right, all right. (*Whispering to Madge and Jimmy.*) What do you think?

JIMMY: (*Wrinkling his nose.*) Honestly?

BILL: (*Hopefully.*) But it's so simple! If I know your Uncle Dan he'll be here at noon and gone by evening. A few hours and we're all set!

JIMMY: (*Thoughtfully.*) Uh, huh. We might be at that!

BILL: (*Full of pep.*) Sure! Uncle Dan comes; Uncle Dan greets new niece; Uncle Dan leaves check; Uncle Dan leaves! (*Snapping his fingers.*) Just like that!

JIMMY: (*Thoughtfully.*) It would really get me out of a hole.

BILL: Then let's do it, huh? What do you say?

MADGE: (*Very emphatically.*) I say no! Don't I have anything to say about what happens to me?

AUNT ELLEN: (*Sternly.*) These shenanigans have gone far enough! Madge has more important work to do than fiddle-faddle around with two loafers!

MADGE: (*Nodding.*) That's right, Jimmy. I'm sorry, but I have to be at work by eleven.

BILL: (*Sarcastically.*) It's a fine thing when a person won't help out a couple of old friends!

MADGE: (*Defensively.*) That isn't the idea at all, Bill, and you know it!

HERE COME THE BRIDES

JIMMY: (*Hurt.*) That's all right, Madge, forget it. We'll just have to take it as it comes.

BILL: (*Cuttingly.*) We shouldn't have asked you in the first place.

MADGE: (*Harshly.*) Hmph!

AUNT ELLEN: (*Haughtily.*) Don't waste your breath on them, Madge. I've been telling them for six months that their sins would catch up with them. (*With finality.*) And today's the day!

JIMMY: Sure. This is it! The works!

MADGE: I'm sorry, Jimmy. But you know how it is.

JIMMY: Yes, I know how it is, Madge. Let's skip the whole thing shall we?

BILL: (*Bursting out.*) Of course! Of course! What's a few measly bucks a month anyway? Chicken feed, that's all. If we work hard enough, we may be able to earn that much – in a year!

The doorbell rings, left.

AUNT ELLEN: (*Rising, exiting left.*) My goodness.

BILL: (*Hopefully.*) Hey Jimmy, you don't suppose your Uncle Dan would change his mind at the last minute?

JIMMY: (*Shaking his head.*) Not a chance. When Uncle Dan says he's going to do something, he does it!

BILL: (*Less happily.*) That's what I was afraid of. (*To Madge.*) You wouldn't like to change your mind would you, Madge?

MADGE: I can't, Bill. Really.

BILL: (*Slumping down, unhappily.*) I was afraid of that, too.

AUNT ELLEN enters left followed by MR. OSWALD, who carries his hat.

AUNT ELLEN: Jimmy, this is Mr. Oswald.

JIMMY: (*Nervously, rising to cross toward Mr. Oswald.*) Yes, I know Mr. Oswald.

MR. OSWALD: (*Timidly.*) I don't want to interrupt, but I wanted to talk to you about that –

JIMMY: *(Very loudly and emphatically.)* Yes, I know! I'm very glad you came! *(To Bill, suggestively.)* Bill, this is **the** Mr. Oswald I was telling you about.

BILL: *(Blankly.)* Who?

JIMMY: *(Emphatically.)* You know – the one I was telling you about! THE Mr. Oswald?

BILL: *(Rising with a startled rush.)* Not THE Mr. Oswald?

JIMMY: *(With decision.)* The same - I believe we'd better take Mr. Oswald out on the terrace to talk to him. *(To the ladies.)* If you'll excuse us. *(To Bill.)* Come on, Bill, we'll escort Mr. Oswald outside.

BILL: Excuse us, please.

BILL and JIMMY each take one of Mr. Oswald's arms, and half lifting, half leading him, they rush him off through the French door.

MR. OSWALD: *(As they half carry him off, speaking back over his shoulder.)* It was nice meeting you ladies.

MADGE: *(Coming left.)* I – I hope I did the right thing, Aunt Ellen.

AUNT ELLEN: *(Patting her on the shoulder.)* You did exactly right.

MADGE: I – I hope so!

AUNT ELLEN: *(Soliloquously.)* Don't worry about a thing!

MADGE: I've got to get going, Aunt Ellen, or I'm going to be late.

AUNT ELLEN: Okay, Madge, we'll see you soon. *(Madge exits left.*

Aunt Ellen closes the door and immediately moves to the French doors, up center. She calls off.) Jimmy, you can bring Mr. Oswald in now! Madge is gone! *(She picks up her dust cloth and moves toward the exit, down right. As she exits, JIMMY, talking back over his shoulder, enters, up center, followed by MR. OSWALD and BILL.)*

JIMMY: *(Emphatically.)* But I'm telling you it's impossible, Mr. Oswald. I don't have a penny to my name.

BILL: But you can't! Didn't you just hear him say he doesn't have any?

MR. OSWALD: *(Wide-eyed.)* Then maybe you have some.

BILL: Me?—have money? Are you crazy?

HERE COME THE BRIDES

MR. OSWALD: *(Mildly.)* No, I'm not crazy. Are you?

JIMMY: *(Taking Mr. Oswald by the arm and leading him to the easy chair, down right.)* Look, Mr. Oswald, you sit right down here where you'll be nice and comfortable, and we'll see if we can work something out.

BILL: *(Rushing ahead of them and patting the seat and back of the chair very solicitously.)* That's right, Mr. Oswald. Make yourself very comfy!

MR. OSWALD: *(Naively.)* Do you think that will make me change my mind?

JIMMY: *(Followed his original lead.)* Why, of course not. We merely want you to feel at home here.

MR. OSWALD: I do. If you don't pay me that money by this evening, this will be my furniture. *(He leans back comfortably.)*

BILL: *(Lightly.)* Oh, you don't want this old stuff. *(Leaning down and examining the side of the easy chair.)* See here! There's a moth hole.

MR. OSWALD: *(Mildly.)* It's very comfortable. This chair would look very nice in front of my fireplace.

JIMMY: *(Raising his voice.)* But we don't have any money. So how can we pay you back?

MR. OSWALD: You should have thought of that when you borrowed it from me.

BILL: But this furniture is worth five times what we borrowed?

MR. OSWALD: That's why I like it so much.

JIMMY: *(Desperately.)* Look, Mr. Oswald! We have guests coming this afternoon. You can't take our furniture today!

MR. OSWALD: *(Definitely.)* I can have a truck here at two o'clock.

BILL: But what'll our guests think?

MR. OSWALD: *(Shaking his head sadly.)* They'll think it's very peculiar indeed. A house without any furniture.

JIMMY: *(Hopefully.)* Maybe I can raise the money by tomorrow.

MR. OSWALD: *(Suggestively.)* My wife will love this furniture.

JIMMY: *(Starting up stage toward center.)* Bill, come here.

Bill goes up stage with him and they stop by the French doors. They whisper for a moment, Jimmy doing most of the talking, gesturing wildly as he talks. BILL nods in agreement very definitely. Then they start down stage with exaggerated sureness. BILL to the right of the chair MR. OSWALD is in, JIMMY to the left of it. MR. OSWALD has been whirling his hat on his finger. As they come to a halt, BILL speaks explosively.

BILL: *(Loudly, startling Mr. Oswald.)* Mr. Oswald, are you a man or a machine?

MR. OSWALD: *(Taken aback.)* Why, I'm — *(He looks up at Bill.)*

JIMMY: What kind of grinch are you?

MR. OSWALD: Why I — *(Startled, he looks up at Jimmy.)*

BILL: Do you pinch little babies?

MR. OSWALD: *(His head whirling back.)* Of course I —

JIMMY: Do you feed your dog cat food?

MR. OSWALD: *(His head swinging back.)* Certainly n—

BILL: *(His face close to Mr. Oswald's head.)* Do you steal candy from children?

MR. OSWALD: *(Turning quickly, then ducking back when he finds himself looking directly into Bill's face.)* Oh! No!

JIMMY: *(Fiercely.)* Have you no heart, scrooge.

MR. OSWALD: *(Becoming a little dazed. Twisting his head to look at Jimmy, who is coming closer to his left.)* No! *(Catching himself.)* I mean yes!

BILL: *(Sharply.)* Have you no soul?

MR. OSWALD: *(Whirling his way again.)* I most certainly -

JIMMY: Do you know what sympathy is?

MR. OSWALD: Of course I -

BILL: Do you love your fellow man?

MR. OSWALD: *(Whirling back again.)* Yes!

JIMMY: Do you like to see people happy?

MR. OSWALD: *(Back again.)* Yes! Of course I - *(He is shaken and dazed,)*

BILL: *(Rushing along.)* Will you help us?

MR. OSWALD: *(Hardly knowing what he is saying.)* Yes, I - I - guess so!

HERE COME THE BRIDES

JIMMY: *(Still not letting up.)* Do you think we're honest?

MR. OSWALD: *(Almost in tears.)* I think so!

BILL: *(Explosively, startling Mr. Oswald.)* You think so? Answer "yes" or "no!"

MR. OSWALD: *(Whirling toward Bill.)* No!

JIMMY: *(At his ear, fairly shouting.)* You mean "yes!"

MR. OSWALD: *(Fearfully, turning toward him.)* Yes!

BILL: *(Loudly.)* May we keep our furniture?

MR. OSWALD: *(Turning sharply.)* No!

JIMMY: You mean "yes!"

MR. OSWALD: *(Back toward Jimmy.)* I mean "no!"

BILL: *(Shouting at his ear.)* You mean "yes!"

MR. OSWALD: *(With finality,) I mean "no!" (Now in charge of his faculties again, he adjusts himself in the chair and speaks very calmly and meaningfully.)* My wife will like your furniture very much.

JIMMY: *(Taken aback, his mouth hanging open.)* But you just said you'd help us!

BILL: *(Also shocked.)* And that you think we're honest!

MR. OSWALD: I'll know better when you pay your bill.

JIMMY: Won't you even wait until tomorrow?

MR. OSWALD: *(Ignoring his question.)* May I use your phone, I need to call my wife and tell her about her new furniture.

BILL: *(As Mr. Oswald starts to rise, pushing him back down into the chair.)* Let's not be hasty about this thing, Mr. Oswald.

MR. OSWALD: *(Mildly.)* But I'm sure she'd like to know.

JIMMY: *(To Mr. Oswald.)* You just sit there for a minute, Mr. Oswald.

(To Bill.) Come here a minute, Bill. *(He starts up center.)*

The two young men huddle in the same position they were formerly. They whisper with lots of gesturing. In the meantime, Mr. Oswald, very much at ease, whirls his hat on his finger again and gazes at the ceiling, whistling under his breath. The huddle breaks, and the two boys, moving to the same position they formerly held by Mr. Oswald, try different tactics.

JIMMY: *(With a great deal of drama and pathos in his voice, speaking very sadly.)* Mr. Oswald, you look to me like a man of great sympathy and great understanding.

MR. OSWALD: *(Embarrassed.)* Well, I don't know about that. *(With cheerful pride in his voice.)* But I do like dogs.

JIMMY: *(With great depth of feeling.)* Mr. Oswald, I want to tell you a story.

MR. OSWALD: *(Brightly.)* How nice! I like stories!

BILL: *(Drawing a pitiful word picture.)* Imagine, if you can, two hungry, tired young men – barely more than boys – facing a world that is cruel, and cold, and cheerless.

MR. OSWALD: *(Calmly.)* My, my! Sad, isn't it?

JIMMY: Imagine them struggling against every imaginable hardship, trial, and tribulation to make for themselves and their poor old housekeeper – a home! *(With great pathos.)* Not a great mansion, but just a little cottage where they could live and be happy.

MR. OSWALD: *(Pointedly.)* You mean – something like this one.

JIMMY: Only a little smaller, perhaps.

MR. OSWALD: *(Nodding.)* I see. *(With sadness in his voice.)* My, my!

BILL: *(With stark melodrama in his voice.)* And then one day there comes to this house a wicked man who wants to throw them from their home into the street.

MR. OSWALD: *(Suggestively.)* Or take away their furniture, maybe?

BILL: *(Taken somewhat aback.)* Well – maybe.

JIMMY: *(Rushing into the story again.)* Imagine the sorrow and tragedy that suddenly strikes to the hearts of these fine people! Imagine the tears that will fall!

MR. OSWALD: *(Sadly.)* My, my.

BILL: *(Looking at him closely.)* It's sad, isn't it, Mr. Oswald?

MR. OSWALD: *(Shaking his head sympathetically.)* Very sad. *(Suddenly, and very brightly.)* You know, I was just thinking how nice this chair is going to look in front of my fireplace. *(He rises, all in the same breath. Cheerfully.)* Thank you for telling me the story. *(He starts left.)* I'll be back about two o'clock with the truck.

HERE COME THE BRIDES

JIMMY: (*Stepping in front of him to bar his path.*) Look, Mr. Oswald, you can't leave until we get this thing settled.

MR. OSWALD: Thank you for asking me to stay, but I really must be going.

JIMMY: (*To Bill.*) I don't think Mr. Oswald should run off so soon, do you, Bill?

BILL: (*Going into action and crossing toward them.*) Of course not! He's only been here a few minutes.

JIMMY: Do sit down, Mr. Oswald.

MR. OSWALD: (*Objecting.*) Really, I mustn't stay a minute—

With this, JIMMY takes one arm, and BILL takes the other, and they walk forward. MR. OSWALD walking backward under their force, they deposit him none too gently back in the chair he has just come from.

BILL: (*As they set him down.*) There you are, Mr. Oswald. Nice and comfortable.

MR. OSWALD: (*A little bewildered.*) Th—Th—Thank you.

JIMMY: (*Definitely.*) Mr. Oswald, we have to keep this furniture for the rest of the day.

MR. OSWALD: (*Stubbornly.*) I'm sorry, Mr. Took, but I—

JIMMY: (*Desperately.*) Wouldn't you rather have the money we owe you than have our furniture?

MR. OSWALD: (*Doubtfully.*) I don't know. My wife would like it very much!

JIMMY: (*With a rush of breath.*) Plus a fifty dollar bonus?

MR. OSWALD: (*Brightly.*) Well, now I begin to understand what you mean! (*Slowly changing expression to one of doubt.*) But if you can't pay me the loan, how can you pay me the bonus?

BILL: (*Hopefully.*) Tomorrow we'll have lots of money! (*With a sick look on his face.*) Maybe.

JIMMY: What Bill means Mr. Oswald, is that my uncle is arriving this afternoon and bringing me a nice, fat check.

MR. OSWALD: Well, this is very interesting.

BILL: But there's a catch to it!

MR. OSWALD: (*His face dropping.*) That's what I was afraid of. Maybe it would be better if I just had the truck come over at two o'clock and –

JIMMY: (*Breaking in.*) But if you'll help us we can pay you the loan plus the bonus!

MR. OSWALD: (*Uncertainly.*) Well, I might arrange to leave the furniture here until tomorrow morning . . .

BILL: Sure! It'll be just as good then as it is now.

MR. OSWALD: If I can be assured that I will be paid, plus the bonus.

JIMMY: (*Crossing his heart.*) You have my solemn word.

MR. OSWALD: Very well, then. I'll be back at eight o'clock in the morning. (*He prepares to rise.*) I must be running along now so if you'll ex—

JIMMY: (*Explosively.*) Just a minute, Mr. Oswald! (*Mr. Oswald drops back into the chair, surprised.*) There's just one more thing.

MR. OSWALD: I really don't have time to discuss—

JIMMY: (*Breaking in.*) How would you like to make fifty dollars more?

MR. OSWALD: (*Interested.*) You mean besides the bonus?

JIMMY: That's right.

MR. OSWALD: In that case I wouldn't like it—I'd love it.

BILL: (*Breaking in.*) Hey, now, wait a minute, Jimmy! You're going to break us up in business, giving away all our money!

JIMMY: (*To Bill.*) Don't interrupt, junior. There's still the case of Mrs. James Took to be settled. Mr. Oswald might be the answer to the problem.

BILL: (*With a sudden smile.*) Yeah! He might be at that!

MR. OSWALD: I don't like to seem curious, but if it's family trouble you're asking me to interfere in, Mr. Took, I don't believe I am interested.

JIMMY: It's really very simple, Mr. Oswald.

MR. OSWALD: Not if your wife's like mine!

BILL: That's all right, Mr. Oswald. Jimmy doesn't have a wife – yet.

JIMMY: (*Finishing for Bill.*) And that's where you come in.

MR. OSWALD: (*Uncertainly.*) I – I don't understand.

BILL: You're going to be Jimmy's wife!!!

MR. OSWALD: What?!

HERE COME THE BRIDES

JIMMY: *(Nodding.)* Exactly!

MR. OSWALD: *(Firmly.)* This isn't where I come in! This is where I go out! *(He starts to plunge out of the chair.)*

JIMMY: *(Quickly.)* Catch him, Bill!

BILL, who has been slightly behind the chair makes a dive over the back and grasps MR. OSWALD around the neck as he is leaving the chair and tugs him back into the chair and holds him around the neck.

BILL: *(Triumphantly.)* I've got 'im!

MR. OSWALD is mumbling and puffing, getting blue in the face.

JIMMY: Watch out, Bill. You're choking him!

BILL: *(Looking down at the head he is holding.)* Yeah? *(He releases Mr. Oswald.)* Sorry, Mr. Oswald. I guess I don't know my own strength!

MR. OSWALD: *(Rubbing his neck angrily.)* What – What is the meaning of this?

JIMMY: I'm sorry we had to be a little rough, Mr. Oswald, but you have to hear our story!

MR. OSWALD: *(Iratel.)* I'm not interested!

JIMMY: *(Suggestively.)* It means money in your pocket!

MR. OSWALD: How much money?

JIMMY: The hundred dollars we were talking about.

MR. OSWALD: *(Nodding.)* Then I am interested. *(Angrily.)* But no more of the strong-arm business!

BILL: *(Meaningfully.)* Not a bit if you just sit quiet!

MR. OSWALD: *(Ducking a bit and looking back at Bill to be sure he isn't about to grab him again.)* Well – go ahead with your story.

JIMMY: *(Quickly.)* I'll tell you how it is, Mr. Oswald. My uncle is a very wealthy man. He's coming today to bring me a big check as a wedding gift. *(He hesitates slightly.)* The only trouble is that I'm not married!

BILL: *(Quickly.)* So all you have to do is marry Jimmy!

MR. OSWALD: *(Jumping up.)* No!

BILL: *(Grabbing him by the shoulders from the rear and pulling him back down.)* Sit down! *(Mr. Oswald flops down forcibly.)*

JIMMY: You don't really marry me. We just pretend you're my wife.

MR. OSWALD: *(Angrily.)* Do I look like a bride?

BILL: You might not be so bad when we get rid of those glasses.

MR. OSWALD: That's impossible! I'm blind as a bat without my glasses! Can't see an inch in front of my face!

BILL: *(Ignoring the complaint.)* And then we put a dress on you and a little rouge and lipstick and then –

MR. OSWALD: *(Placing his hands on the arms of the chair forcibly.)* Now listen to me! I like my job very much. But if I ever get to the point where I have to dress up like a woman and kiss a lot of relatives who aren't my relatives, I refuse! *(Bracing himself on the arms of the chair, he starts to fling himself from the chair. However, as he goes up, Bill with a flying tackle, catches him as he gets halfway up and pulls him back into the chair with great force.)*

JIMMY: Be reasonable, Mr. Oswald! After all, a hundred dollars is a hundred dollars!

MR. OSWALD: Not if you offer me five hundred dollars!

JIMMY: *(Slyly.)* A hundred and twenty-five?

MR. OSWALD: *(The bidding bug biting him.)* Four hundred!

BILL: A hundred and thirty.

MR. OSWALD: *(Quickly.)* Three hundred and fifty!

JIMMY: A hundred and forty!

MR. OSWALD: Three hundred!

BILL: A hundred and fifty!

MR. OSWALD: Two hundred and fifty!!

JIMMY: A hundred and sixty!!

MR. OSWALD: Two hundred twenty-five and not a cent less!

BILL: A hundred seventy-five, and not a cent more!

MR. OSWALD: *(Quickly.)* Two hundred!

JIMMY: *(Quickly.)* Sold!

BILL: Congratulations, Mr. Oswald!

MR. OSWALD: *(Vaguely.)* What did I buy?

BILL: A job as Jimmy's wife! *(Laughing.)* He'll make you a fine husband, too.

HERE COME THE BRIDES

MR. OSWALD: (*Exploding.*) No! I won't do it!

JIMMY: But you just said you would – for two hundred dollars!

MR. OSWALD: I—I didn't know what I was doing. Every time some one starts to bid, I have to, too.

BILL: (*Sarcastically.*) There's help out there for people like you.

MR. OSWALD: I'm – I'm sorry, but I just can't do it! My wife wouldn't understand if she found out I was married to someone else!

JIMMY: (*Exasperated.*) But this isn't really marrying—

MR. OSWALD: (*Breaking in.*) I'm sorry, but I have to leave now. (*He rises.*) So if you'll excuse me—

BILL: (*As Mr. Oswald goes left.*) Fine stuff!

JIMMY: (*Following Mr. Oswald left.*) If you change your mind, call us. But it'll have to be before one o'clock!

MR. OSWALD: (*At the door, left.*) I don't think I'll change my mind. Goodbye. (*He opens the door and exits left.*)

JIMMY: (*As he exits.*) Goodbye, Mr. Oswald. (*As the door closes, he turns to Bill.*) Well, how do you like that! (*The telephone rings, left.*) Now what? (*The telephone rings again.*) Answer it, will you, Bill? (*He jerks his thumb at the phone.*)

BILL: (*Cautiously.*) Why don't you answer it? (*The telephone rings again.*)

JIMMY: Aw, go on and answer it. It won't bite you.

BILL: (*Defensively.*) It won't bite you either. (*The telephone rings again.*) I think you're afraid to answer it.

JIMMY: After what's happened so far today, why shouldn't I be?

The telephone rings again.

BILL: Me, too. It's your phone, so you have to answer it.

The telephone rings again.

AUNT ELLEN: (*Entering down right, wiping her hands on her apron.*)

Mercy sakes are you boys deaf? (*She crosses toward the telephone.*) Here you are, right in the room, and I have to come all the way from the kitchen to answer the telephone! (*She picks up the receiver.*) Hello. (*Pause.*) Long distance? (*Pause.*) Mr. Took? Just a moment, please. (*She turns toward Jimmy.*) Just as I thought! It's for you, James. Long distance.

JIMMY: (*Crossing toward the telephone happily.*) Maybe Uncle Dan can't come! (*He takes the telephone from Aunt Ellen.*) Thanks, Aunt Ellen. (*Into the mouthpiece.*) Hello? Hello, Uncle Dan! Yes, this is Jimmy. (*He turns to the others and gives them a broad, happy wink.*) You are? (*Pause.*) You what? (*Pause. With great feeling.*) Oh no! (*Pause.*) No, oh no! What I meant was it'll tickle us to death. (*Weakly.*) Ha, ha, ha. (*Pause.*) Oh, she's fine – just fine! I know you'll love to meet her. (*Pause.*) Yes, it's driving me crazy! (*Quickly correcting himself.*) What I mean is I'm crazy to have her meet you! (*Pause.*) All right, Uncle Dan. Thanks for calling. Goodbye. (*He slowly hangs up the receiver and stands crushed.*)

BILL: (*Happily.*) He isn't coming, eh?

JIMMY: (*Sadly, with no expression.*) He isn't coming at one o'clock.

AUNT ELLEN: (*Disappointed.*) Oh, that's too bad.

BILL: (*Happily.*) Just horrible!

JIMMY: He isn't coming at one! He'll be here in less than an hour.

BILL: (*Dumbfounded.*) What?!

JIMMY: (*Sadly.*) They missed their connection, so they flew into Newton City. They're on their way over now.

BILL: (*Collapsing into the chair.*) What're we going to do?

AUNT ELLEN: I'm going to finish straightening up the kitchen so I can get lunch!

JIMMY: (*Gritting his teeth.*) There's just one thing left to do.

BILL: Yeah?

JIMMY: (*With determination.*) Bill, you and I have to get married!

BILL: (*Taken aback.*) Me? (*As he realizes what Jimmy has said.*) Oh, no! Not me, Jimmy! Please!

JIMMY: It has to be done, Bill. You're the last chance!

AUNT ELLEN: I'll have no part of your scheming, you swindlers! Your Uncle Dan is too nice a man to fool!

JIMMY: You won't have to, Aunt Ellen. We'll take all the consequences.

BILL: You mean I'll have to. (*Hopefully.*) Look, Jimmy, there must be some other way out of this!

JIMMY: You've been happy here, haven't you, Bill?

BILL: Why, sure!

HERE COME THE BRIDES

JIMMY: And you want to stay, don't you?

BILL: Of course!

JIMMY: Then you are the new Mrs. Took! One of Aunt Ellen's dresses, a little lipstick, some rouge, and that old wig we have up in the attic will make a lot of difference.

AUNT ELLEN: It's contrary to nature! That's what it is! Contrary to nature.

BILL: *(Hopelessly.)* How do you think I feel about it?

AUNT ELLEN: *(Shaking her head.)* It's the craziest thing I ever heard of!

JIMMY: It may be crazy, but it's our only chance.

McDANIEL appears in the French door, up center. She knocks, loudly. The others turn toward her, surprised.

MCDANIEL: Pardon me, but have you folks seen a crazy woman around here? *(She comes into the room.)*

JIMMY: What? *(He crosses and drops onto the sofa, dejectedly.)*

AUNT ELLEN: *(Shocked.)* A crazy woman!

MCDANIEL: I'm from over at "Green Gables." One of our patients got loose this morning and we're trying to find her.

BILL: *(Startled.)* Holy smokes! A crazy woman! That makes three of us!

JIMMY: I'm sorry, but we haven't seen her.

MCDANIEL: Well, if you do, let me know. We don't think she's violent, but you never know about those things!

AUNT ELLEN: Don't you know whether she's violent or not?

MCDANIEL: It's kind of hard to say. Sometimes they aren't and then – bang! *(She snaps her fingers.)* They're all over the place killing people.

BILL: *(Frightened.)* Holy smokes!

MCDANIEL: If any one gets hurt or you see her, call me. *(Suddenly thinking of something.)* Better yet, take this whistle. *(She takes a whistle from her uniform pocket.)* If you'll just blow a few blasts on this I'll come running.

AUNT ELLEN: *(Taking the whistle.)* I'll take it. *(Defensively.)* After all, I'm a woman.

MCDANIEL: Sorry to have bothered you. I'll be in the neighborhood if you need me. *(Crossing up center.)* Thanks. *(McDANIEL exits, up center.)*

BILL: Aunt Ellen, maybe I'd better keep the whistle. I can blow louder than you can. *(He reaches for it.)*

AUNT ELLEN: *(Slapping his hand.)* Never you mind that. If I see a crazy person, I want to do my own whistling!

JIMMY: *(Dejectedly.)* It isn't bad enough that I need a wife and can't get one—that I'm going to lose my furniture and my uncle! Now there's a crazy woman mixed up in it!

BILL: *(Suddenly.)* Say, Jimmy! Maybe we could get her to marry you! She's probably crazy enough for that!

JIMMY: *(Coming off the sofa with a leap.)* Why, you! I'll make you eat those words! *(He starts chasing Bill around the room wildly.)*

AUNT ELLEN: Eat! Oh, my! Maybe she's out in the kitchen after that cake I baked! *(She rushes down right and off.)*

JIMMY is still determined to make BILL eat his words and the chase continues. BLACKOUT.

ACT TWO

SETTING:

Same as ACT ONE.

AT RISE:

Forty-five minutes later. Jimmy is discovered pacing anxiously back and forth across center stage. Aunt Ellen is straightening the pillows on the sofa, then touches up the arrangement of flowers, then adjusts the drapes. After a few nervous paces across the room, Jimmy goes to the door, up right, and shouts off.

JIMMY: *(Shouting.)* Bill! Aren't you ready yet?

BILL: *(From offstage, with a muffled voice.)* Take it easy, will you!

JIMMY: *(Anxiously shouting.)* But they'll be here any minute!

BILL: Did you ever try to get into one of these things?

JIMMY: Well, shake it up!

BILL: *(Shouting back disgustedly.)* Okay!

JIMMY: *(Turning to Aunt Ellen.)* It's a good thing women are noted for their inability to get ready on time!

AUNT ELLEN: Humph! Maybe you and Bill will be able to see the woman's side of it, after this!

JIMMY: Maybe, but if I know Uncle Dan, he won't want to wait.

AUNT ELLEN: *(Definitely.)* Jimmy, I know how important this is to you and for that reason, I won't interfere. But I think you ought to be ashamed of yourself, doing a thing like this!

JIMMY: I don't see much use in making Uncle Dan unhappy. He likes the idea of me being married and him having a niece. Why should I disappoint him?

AUNT ELLEN: I know what it means to him, so I won't carry tales. *(Definitely.)* But mind you – I'll have no part of your schemes!

JIMMY: *(Smiling.)* We won't ask you to, Aunt Ellen.

AUNT ELLEN: *(Suddenly remembering,)* Oh, my! That chocolate cake! *(She walks rapidly down right and exits.)*

Jimmy, shaking his head, anxiously looks at his watch. Then he paces for a moment, then rushes to the door, up right, and calls off.

JIMMY: (*Calling off, up right.*) Bill! How are you doing up there?

BILL: (*With muffled voice.*) I'd be doing swell if you'd just leave me alone. (*Suddenly, with great pain.*) Ouch! Ohhh!

JIMMY: (*With apprehension.*) What's the matter?

BILL: (*Angrily.*) I pinched myself! Now stop bothering me. I have enough trouble without you!

JIMMY: Well, get moving! (*The doorbell rings, left.*) Hey! They're here! Turn on the heat!

AUNT ELLEN: (*Entering, down right.*) Wasn't that the doorbell?

JIMMY: (*Nervously.*) It – it wasn't Santa Claus! (*Hesitating.*) Would – would you mind answering it, Aunt Ellen? I – I'm afraid to.

AUNT ELLEN: (*Nodding, as she crosses left. With great satisfaction.*) The heads of the wicked seldom rest easily!

JIMMY: (*As she crosses off.*) I don't think I'll ever sleep well again! (*As she exits, Jimmy adjusts his coat, fixes his tie, smooths his hair. Then, with sudden inspiration, he dashes right, opens the door and shouts off.*) Hurry up. (*He then closes the door quickly and moves to right of center stage and stands waiting, as the door left opens, and Aunt Ellen enters. Holding the door, she lets Mrs. Smythe and Bubbles enter.*)

MRS. SMYTHE: (*Spotting Jimmy. With great affection, she rushes across the stage toward him, her hand extended.*) And you must be Jimmy! My dear, dear boy! (*She takes his limp hand as he stands amazed, Aunt Ellen still by the door, left, surprised by it all.*)

JIMMY: (*Weakly, amazed at it all.*) He – he – hello!

MRS. SMYTHE: My dear boy! I really should kiss you, you know! But I'll wait until we know each other a little better!

JIMMY: (*Weakly.*) That's - that's a good idea! (*Quickly.*) I – I mean waiting!

MRS. SMYTHE: (*With great exaggeration and effervescence.*) Of course! (*To Bubbles.*) Bubbles, come here dear! I want you to meet your new cousin.

JIMMY: (*Shocked.*) Cousin?

HERE COME THE BRIDES

MRS. SMYTHE: (*Lightly.*) Of course, you silly boy! (*As Bubbles stops beside her.*) Bubbles, this is Jimmy, your Uncle Dan's favorite nephew! (*To Jimmy, her arm around Bubbles.*) Jimmy, this is Bubbles Duvalle, your new cousin.

BUBBLES: (*Embarrassed.*) Hello, Jimmy! (*She giggles shrilly.*)

JIMMY: But – but I don't understand! Uncle Dan didn't tell me!

MRS. SMYTHE: (*Flippantly.*) Oh, that's quite understandable, Jimmy. Your Uncle Dan doesn't know it yet, himself! But it won't be long, will it Bubbles?

BUBBLES: (*Admiringly.*) Not with you after him! (*She titters.*)

JIMMY: (*Relieved.*) Then you're not married yet?

MRS. SMYTHE: (*Lightly.*) Oh, no! But I'm sure we will be soon! (*Bubbles giggles, knowingly.*)

AUNT ELLEN: (*Crossing center.*) You might ask them to sit down, Jimmy.

JIMMY: (*Realizing his impoliteness.*) Oh, sure Aunt Ellen. (*Indicating the davenport, left.*) Won't – won't you sit down?

MRS. SMYTHE: (*Crossing toward the sofa to sit, Bubbles after her.*) Did you say "Aunt Ellen?" I didn't know Mr. Took had any relatives other than you, Jimmy.

AUNT ELLEN: (*Answering the question.*) Oh, I'm not really his aunt, Mrs. Smythe. He just calls me that. I'm Bill's aunt.

MRS. SMYTHE: Bill? I don't believe I know who you mean.

JIMMY: (*Realizing the break. Quickly trying to cover up.*) Oh – ah – what she means is that she's my – ah – wife's aunt! We – we call her "Bill" for short!

MRS. SMYTHE: (*Lightly.*) How very, very unusual! Then your wife's name must be Wilhelmina?

JIMMY: (*Mouth dropping open.*) Yeah, that must be it! (*Quickly.*) What I mean is – sure! Sure! Wilhelmina, that's it. (*Red in the face, he takes out his handkerchief to mop his brow.*)

MRS. SMYTHE: (*Affectedly.*) We do so want to meet her. After all, she'll soon be my new niece, too! Won't she Bubbles, dear?

BUBBLES: She sure will! (*She giggles shrilly.*)

JIMMY: (*Hesitating.*) She's – dressing right now.

MRS. SMYTHE: (*Chattering on.*) Poor dear! It's such a strain getting ready to meet new relatives. But there will be plenty of time. We have made reservations at the hotel.

AUNT ELLEN: Does Mr. Took expect you to meet him here?

MRS. SMYTHE: No he doesn't dear man. He was in such a hurry he left without even telling me. But I called his office and found out where he was going. We thought we'd surprise him, didn't we, Bubbles dear?

BUBBLES: I'll say! (*She giggles, knowingly, putting her hand to her mouth with glee.*)

JIMMY: We're expecting him any minute.

MRS. SMYTHE: If you don't mind we'll wait here for him. (*Chattering affectedly on.*) Poor man, he has been so busy he has had little time for me. But as long as he's busy making money, I'll be happy. My time will come soon!

JIMMY looks across at AUNT ELLEN, frowning. AUNT ELLEN grits her teeth and nods, knowingly.

BUBBLES: (*Bursting out.*) When it does, he won't even know what hit him! (*She is innocently wide-eyed.*)

MRS. SMYTHE: (*Reprimanding her.*) Bubbles! You mustn't say such things. (*Bubbles giggles. Mrs. Smythe turns apologetically to Aunt Ellen and Jimmy.*) Poor child! She just doesn't understand affairs of the heart! (*Bubbles giggles silently, her hand to her mouth.*)

Suddenly BILL'S anxious voice is heard shouting off stage, up right. His voice reveals anxiety and impatience.

BILL: (*Loudly.*) Jimmy! (*Jimmy jumps, startled.*)

MRS. SMYTHE: (*Looking around.*) My goodness, what was that?

JIMMY: (*Looking around, innocently.*) What was what?

MRS. SMYTHE: That voice!

JIMMY: (*Innocently.*) Voice?

MRS. SMYTHE: Yes. It sounded like someone calling your name.

JIMMY: Really? I didn't notice.

HERE COME THE BRIDES

MRS. SMYTHE: Oh yes. I'm sure I heard –

AUNT ELLEN: (*Breaking in.*) If you'll excuse me for a moment, I have a cake in the oven.

MRS. SMYTHE: Oh, yes, by all means. We don't want to interfere with any of your plans. We'll just wait here until dear Dan arrives!

AUNT ELLEN: (*Cuttingly, as she starts down right.*) Yes, I'm sure you will! (*She exits down right.*)

BUBBLES: (*Blandly.*) I don't think she likes us very well. Maybe she likes Mr. Took, too! (*She giggles.*)

MRS SMYTHE: (*Sharply.*) Nonsense, Bubbles! You mustn't say such things!

BILL'S terror-infested voice is again heard shouting.

BILL: (*From offstage right.*) Jimmy! Help!

MRS. SMYTHE: There! There's that voice again!

JIMMY: (*Still trying to ignore the issue.*) Really?

MRS. SMYTHE: Yes! Didn't you hear it?

JIMMY: It did seem to me that I heard a sound of some kind.

BILL: (*Wildly, off right.*) Jimmy!

MRS. SMYTHE: There it is again!

JIMMY: It must be Bill – I – I mean Wilhelmina! (*Apologetically.*) She's always having trouble with those do-jiggers and things.

MRS. SMYTHE: Would you like me to go help her?

JIMMY: (*Exploding.*) Oh, no! (*Retreating right, backwards.*) No, you just wait right there. I – I wouldn't think of asking you to put yourself to any bother!

MRS. SMYTHE: Oh, it wouldn't be any bother at all!

JIMMY: (*Almost at the door, up right.*) You sit right there and rest. I – I can help her all right. I'm – I'm used to it! (*He is at the door, up right. Quickly.*) Excuse me! (*He bolts through the door and off up right.*)

MRS. SMYTHE: (*Looking after Jimmy.*) A very strange young man, Bubbles. Either he's very deaf or I have a remarkable sense of hearing.

BUBBLES: (*Giggling.*) I think he's cute!

MRS. SMYTHE: You think any young man is cute. I can't understand why he couldn't hear that shouting.

BUBBLES: She has an awful deep voice, doesn't she?

MRS. SMYTHE: Very unladylike, I imagine. I had hoped she would be more like you.

BUBBLES: But she's Uncle Dan's favorite nephew's wife!

MRS. SMYTHE: (*Sighing.*) Yes, and we must be content to take the chaff with the wheat. Oh well, it will be worth it.

BUBBLES: Do you think you can hook him pretty soon?

MRS. SMYTHE: (*Sharply.*) Bubbles! You should not talk that way!

BUBBLES: (*Pouting.*) Well, I'm getting tired of running all over the country trying to catch up with him!

MRS. SMYTHE: (*Confidently.*) I think our chasing days are nearly over. Unless I'm wrong he's beginning to get tired out.

BUBBLES: (*Hopefully.*) And then you'll get me a fellow?

MRS. SMYTHE: I'll get you a dozen of them if you want them.

BUBBLES: (*Delighted.*) Oh, gee! (*She giggles gleefully.*)

Suddenly "Lady Macbeth" enters through the French door, up center. Unhurriedly, as though walking in a trance, carrying the candle, which is not lighted, she walks with measured tread toward the door, down right. MRS. SMYTHE sees her.

MRS. SMYTHE: (*Forced smile and exaggerated voice.*) Oh, hello, there! (*Lady Macbeth continues walking slowly toward the door, down right, not heeding.*) Young lady, I wonder if you could tell me? (*She gets no answer. More sharply.*) Young lady! (*Lady Macbeth exits through the door down right. Mrs. Smythe speaks to Bubbles.*) I have never seen such a lack of civility before in my life. I wonder what will happen next?

HERE COME THE BRIDES

In answer to her question there is the frantic and ear-splitting sound of the continuous and startling blasting of the police whistle which McDANIEL has given AUNT ELLEN. This sound continues steadily for a moment offstage, down right, and then AUNT ELLEN, the whistle clenched in her lips, blowing it frantically, dashes through the door, down right, frightened. MRS. SMYTHE and BUBBLES leap to their feet at the first sound of the whistle and stand frightened in front of the sofa. AUNT ELLEN takes the whistle from her lips for a moment.

AUNT ELLEN: *(Wildly.) Run for your lives! (She then dashes to the French door and stands blowing the whistle for all she is worth. Mrs. Smythe and Bubbles back away up left.)*

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