EVERY FAMILY HAS ONE
Comedy. 3 acts. By George Batson. 5 males. 7 females. Interior. Modern costumes.
Given premiere performance at the Northwestern University Theatre, 1945 Summer Session. The Readlons are a typical American family. Laura, the mother, a social climber, has engineered a match between her daughter, Marcia, and wealthy Sherwin Parker. The youngest Readlon, Penelope, is a demon with a sling shot. Warry, the only son, is positive he is the coming Eugene O'Neill. Reginald, the father, would rather tinker with the automobile than tinker tape; and Nana, the wise-cracking grandmother, is concerned with getting rid of the Parkers. Nana succeeds with the help of Cousin Lily, an adorable liar with stage aspirations. Her performance on the skeleton in the Readlon closet is so convincing that the mighty Parkers take to their heels and Marcia is reunited with the boy she really loves. "One of the best for high schools. No director can go wrong with Every Family Has One. I recommend it sincerely."—W. N. Viola, Pontiac High School, Mich.
(Royalty, $25.00.) Price. 85 cents.

THE FIGHTING LITTLEs
Comedy. 3 acts. Adapted by Caroline Francke from the novel by Booth Tarkington. 5 males, 10 females. Modern costumes.
Every family in the world suffers from the misunderstandings of two generations but not many of them are as explosive about their conflicts as the Littles. The fireworks really begin when Daddy Little finds all his daughter's friends "young hoodlums" and Ham Eller's the "worst hoodlum of the lot." Mr. Little has his own candidate for his daughter's affections. In desperation daughter Goody tries to follow her father's advice—and the amazing results confuse everybody. Through three acts the quick-tempered Littles squabble their way through differences in viewpoint and ridiculous situations without even knowing how funny they are. Only when the battle royal is over do they discover that they have learned to understand each other and are really a united family. "... proved a real hit... delighted the audience... witty lines and humorous situations." Boulder Colo. Camera.
(Royalty, $25.00.) Price. 85 cents.
The Moon Makes Three

Comedy. 3 acts. By Aurland Harris. 7 males, 8 females. Interior. Modern costumes.

Sixteen year old Maray pretends to her two elder sisters that she would rather read psychology than get all bothered about boys and romance. But one night, as the sisters leave for a ball, Grandma sees the yearning in Maray's eye, and in a matter of minutes Maray, dressed in her Grandma's dress, is off to the ball in true Cinderella fashion. At the party a handsome Southerner (secretly arranged for by Grandma) appears and introduces Maray to the moon. Life becomes as gay as the colored lanterns, and she dances merrily until the clock strikes twelve. Then suddenly the masked stranger disappears, leaving hardly a trace. For three weeks Maray suspects every boy she meets, causing some humorous cases of mistaken identity. Finally she discovers that the Southern gentleman is none other than the neighboring boy, and that he is far more interesting than psychology.

(Royalty, $20.00.) Price, 85 cents.

Come Over to Our House

Comedy. 3 acts. By Marriane and Joseph Hayes. 8 males, 10 females (extra girls). Interior. Modern costumes.

A new play by the authors of the recent hits, And Come the Spring, and Life of the Party. This one is compounded of a rare mixture of comedy lines, fast and farcical situations, and serious sentiment with a worth-while theme. The story concerns the widowed Mrs. Eldridge, her two daughters, and son Jay—a serious lad with a great talent for classical music. When Jay meets the right girl, however, he learns that he also has a flair for boogie-woogie and musical patter. This lands him in the school vaudeville—and a carload of trouble. Therafter the play is full of exuberant fun, involving Mrs. Eldridge's two romances, a Hollywood scout, and a Russian symphony conductor. When both the scout and the conductor offer Jay a contract, the whole family is caught in the hilarious dilemma. It all leads to a clever, swift, and funny ending.

(Royalty, $30.00.) Price, 85 cents.
REHEARSAL FOR DEATH

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REHEARSAL FOR DEATH

STORY OF THE PLAY

There is to be a rehearsal of a play in the auditorium, and starring will be a has-been actress named Stella. There is a letter threatening dire consequences if the play continues. Among the actors are Peggy, her betrothed, Phil, and a gossip columnist who loves Peggy and who threatens to expose some event in Phil's past life. At the crucial scene of the play-within-a-play, Phil is supposed to shoot Stella. Unexpectedly, the gun goes off. After everything settles down, they discover the gossip columnist dead in a chair. Suspicion is everywhere. The cops come. Stella is hit on the head as the lights go out. It is surmised that the bullet had really been meant for Stella. Finally the Inspector gets the maid to confess that she knows the identity of the killer. Just as she is about to talk, she is killed by a knife. The Inspector has to book Phil on suspicion of murder. After the others leave, the murderer tries to get his ward Peggy, to take an overdose of pills. Twice there are interruptions, saving the innocent girl. The Inspector returns to arrest the guardian just in time. The guardian confesses and explains his motives. Suddenly the guardian pulls a gun on the cops and escapes. He commits suicide, and everyone else is happy.
REHEARSAL FOR DEATH

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(6 Males; 5 Females)

Carrie
Dodo Pomeroy
Eve Westman
Herb Grant
Bobby Jackson
Peggy
Phil
Charlie Witherspoon
Stella Carlisle
Inspector Burke
Carroll

THE SCENE

The auditorium-stage of the hall in a small mid-western city.

Rehearsal For Death

ACT ONE

We find a bare stage of the hall used by the Rough Rapids Drama Group. There are no essential features to this "stage," except, of course, an Entrance Right, and an Entrance Left—either wings or doors, as the case may be with the actual stage in use. There are no chairs or tables or other props on stage at opening—these being brought on by the actors as the play progresses. Whatever aisle arrangement the theatre in question has will be utilized in the performance—whether it be a center aisle or one on either side of the house. In the script, this will be referred to as "aisle," the action being flexible enough to conform to the side aisles, in which case, both may be used. The entrance to the theatre is assumed to be at the back of the house, but, again, the action can be changed to accommodate side doors. All props will be utilitarian, rather than suggestive of actual furnishings—e.g., the chairs will be plain straight chairs or undertaker-type chairs, dependent upon availability, and the tables can be of any type or size. In other words, this stage is the actual stage used in rehearsal for the play, and the props the same. There is no "set"—in the usual sense.

As the Curtain rises, we find Carrie Slate just about finished with her sweeping of the stage. She is busy with a dust-pan and broom, and is humming a
crude approximation of "The Man I Love," reciting only the title words when they occur, mumbling the rest with hm-m-m-m. Carrie is the combination fan-tissus-custodian of the hall and is a severe spinster type of middle years. She wears a cover-all Hoover apron, run-down mules and has a small feather duster sticking precariously out of the apron pocket. Her hair is drawn starkly back and knotted on top of her head. A persistent strand of hair continues to fall over her forehead and she, casually, keeps brushing it back in place.

After a moment, we hear a loud KNOCKING on the door at the rear of the auditorium and Carrie looks up angrily.

Carrie. Now, who could want to come in here at this hour? (She pays no more attention to the knocking, hoping they'll go away, and returns to her sweeping and humming. The KNOCKING is repeated, more insistently, and we hear a voice calling through the door.)

Dodo. (Voice from back of auditorium) Miss Slate! Miss Slate! Let me in!

Carrie. (Putting down her broom, brushes hair out of eyes, and shouts disgustedly to back of house) Who is it? What do you want? And besides, there ain't nobody here!

Dodo. (Still outside rear door, knocking) It's Mrs. Pomeroy. And don't tell me you're not there, Carrie Slate. I can hear you. Let me in, please.

Carrie. (Grudgingly comes down off stage and walks up aisle through auditorium, to back of house) Hold your horses. I'm coming as fast as I can. What do you want, anyway, coming here and bothering me. (She has reached rear door which she unlocks and opens)

Mrs. Pomeroy, do you think you're going to rehearse here tonight?

Dodo. (Gaily) I most certainly do! I got permission from Mr. Grant. (She bounds merrily in, bustling toward stage. She is an attractive and giddy matron)

How are you tonight, Carrie? It's such a beautiful evening. My, the moon was so divine I'd have tried to eat it—if I hadn't had such a big dinner.

Carrie. (Following her onto stage, scowling) If its so nice out what are you doing in here?

Dodo. We've got to get the play on. We've got to put our shoulders to the wheel and rehearse and rehearse. Don't forget. We've got the great Stella Carlisle working with us.

Carrie. (Unimpressed, picks up her broom and sweeps) What a waste of time. Causing me all the extra work and dragging all your friends to see you make fools of yourselves. (Leaning on her broom) Why do you go to all the trouble of putting on a play when there's a movie-theatre that shows good movies only a block away?

Dodo. You don't understand, Carrie. Every town needs the living theatre. Culture. (Gets chair from Left wing and brings it Center) We aren't only giving our community culture but the great Stella Carlisle as well.

(She sits on chair and searches through her handbag for her glasses and script) Imagine, Stella Carlisle on our stage! (Ignoring Carrie's disgusted glance) My, I do hope everyone arrives on time. They promised they would.

Carrie. (Who, likewise, has paid no attention to Dodo, picks up the last of her sweepings in the dustpan and takes it over to the Right wing to empty it) A lot of grown people, pretending to be something they ain't!

Dodo. (Addressing the world, expansively) But that's exactly it! It's such a wonderful outlet! People pretending to be something they aren't. (And then, to Carrie, who comes right back from wings) Haven't you ever wanted to be somebody else? Someone glamorous—exciting?
CARRIE. (Standing with hands on hips, observing Dodo) No! I certainly have not!

Dodo. But you must try it sometime, Carrie. Perhaps we can use you in our next play. (She views CARRIE critically. Then, not too convinced) Perhaps. (Back into her purse, takes out mirror, observes her own face with approval) Now, take this play. I'm supposed to be a silly, flighty society woman, without a brain in the world. (Laughs, merrily) Imagine! Me!

CARRIE. (Going off Right, disgustedly) Yeah. Just imagine!

Dodo. (Still humming merrily, takes one last look at her face, replaces mirror in purse, and stands up. She places script on chair and looks about the stage) Carrie! Oh, Carrie! Will you help me get the prop-table on stage? (She goes off into Left wing, and returns immediately carrying a large business-size envelope. CARRIE re-enters from the Right) Carrie, is this yours? It was on the prop-table, but I'm sure we don't use any letter in the play.

CARRIE. Never saw it before in my life.

Dodo. (Turning it over, examining it) Hmmm? Well, I suppose it belongs to one of the cast. I'll just leave it here. (She places envelope on chair, takes up her script, and starts to rehearse. Dodo's acting style is as florid as the lines of the play. She uses gestures that have no connection with the words she recites.) Fifi, my dear child, give up the man you love. Return to Gaston, even though he is a brute. And little Pierre, isn't he worth everything to you? (Consulting her script as CARRIE watches) Dear little Pierre of the angelic face. (Then very dramatically) Return to your child!

CARRIE. (Quietly) Trash.

Dodo. (Angrily) Trash, indeed! It's a French classic and for years it has been Stella Carlisle's greatest triumph.

Eve. (Enters from the rear of the auditorium and comes briskly down the aisle. She is thirty, attractive and efficient. She carries a briefcase) Good evening, Dodo.

Dodo. Eve, my dear! (As Eve comes up on the stage) And how is our brilliant young director this evening?

Eve. Tired. I had to correct so many poetry exams I feel like Hiawatha. (Sees CARRIE) Good evening, Carrie.

CARRIE. (Without enthusiasm) 'Evening.

Eve. Has Miss Carlisle shown up yet?

Dodo. No. I tried to reach her at the hotel but she wouldn't answer the phone. She was resting, I suppose rehearsals are very strenuous for a star. (Sighs deeply and moves towards Left wing) Well, come along, Eve. We'll have to hustle, you know, to get the stage set up before she arrives.

Eve. (Follows Dodo without too much enthusiasm) I wonder if we didn't make a mistake, introducing celebrities into our group.

(During the following dialogue, Dodo and Eve bring on the prop table, which they place downstage Left. On this table are a pitcher of water, glasses, an ornamental potted geranium plant, a knife, cigarette lighter, revolver, and whatever other items available.)

Dodo. Now, Eve, that's a negative thought. We must always think positively, you know. I think it was a stroke of genius that prompted me to persuade Stella Carlisle to appear as guest star with our tiny, but greatly talented group.

Eve. It didn't take much persuasion. Her agent practically bombarded us with telegrams.

CARRIE. (Watching Dodo move table with disapproval) Who is this Carlisle woman anyway? Never heard her on the radio.

Dodo. (Straightening props on table) Probably because she never has appeared on the radio. She must be seen to be appreciated.
Eve. I'll say! (She moves back to Left wing to collect chairs.)

Carrie. (Turning to Eve) Miss Westman, is this old gal really a star? I mean, like Betty Grable.

Dodo. (Helping Eve with chairs. Putting one upstage Right, surveying it and then moving it a tiny bit. She isn't at all like Betty Grable! But she was a great star. Carrie. (Tidying her hair, vainly) Of course she was probably before my time.

Dodo. (Taking another chair upstage Right) Nonsense! Stella Carlisle is approaching the age of forty!

Eve. (D dryly) Yes. But from which direction?

Carrie. Still don't see why she has to rehearse at night. Is she afraid to come out in the daylight?

Eve. She arrived late last night and wanted to rest all day. (To Dodo who is carefully rearranging the chairs) Do you suppose she'll want all her rehearsals at night, Dodo?

Dodo. Heavens, I don't know. Maybe. It is rather exciting working on the stage at night, I expect. So "professional", you know.

Eve. (Resigned) I guess we'll just have to put up with her whims. I do hope she likes our cast.

Dodo. I'm letter perfect in my part. Mr. Pomeroy has been so wonderful about it! He told me we should do another play right away. I was so afraid he'd miss me evenings. But Wilbur is so selfish.

Eve. I'm sure he is.

Dodo. (One last look at the chair arrangement she has made) There! Will that be all right to indicate the door?

Eve. Yes, it's fine (Notices chair Center which Dodo sat on) But, Dodo, what's this chair doing here?

Dodo. Oh! I just used it to sit on. I rehearsed a bit before you arrived.

Carrie. (Snickering) Hmph! I saw her. Some play this is going to be.

Eve. I'll move it upstage to indicate the window.

(Sh e goes to chair to move it, notices letter on chair)

What's this? (Picking it up, turning it over to examine it.)

Dodo. Oh, that letter? I found it on the prop table.

Eve. Do you know whose it is, Carrie?

Carrie. No. I thought you used it in the play. Along with all that other junk.

Eve. (Looking at it again) No. It isn't a prop.

Carrie. Mr. Witherspoon was here before. Maybe he left it.

Dodo. Oh dear, you don't think Charlie is dropping out of the play at this late date?!

Eve. Not Charlie. He likes to act too much.

Carrie. Mr. Grant was here too. But he said he'd left his cigarette lighter here yesterday.

Dodo. I'll bet Herb Grant has dropped out! Oh, dear, and men are so scarce! Eve, open that letter. I'm sure it's bad news. And with Stella Carlisle here and all!

Eve. But is it addressed to me.

Dodo. (Insistent) It isn't addressed to anybody. And you are the director of the group.

Eve. (Uncertainly) Yes, I know. But— (Opening the letter, reluctantly) Very well. (Reading it, stares at it confusedly) Why, how—!

Dodo. Who is it? Herb or Charlie?

Eve. Neither one.

Dodo. (Impatiently) Well—who then? What does it say?!

Eve. (Reading) "Stop rehearsals at once. Cancel this play. There will be dire consequences."

Dodo. What on earth—? "Stop rehearsals"?!

Eve. What a stupid sense of humor.

Dodo. (Looking over Eve's shoulder) Why, it isn't even signed. Who'd pay any attention to that?

Eve. It's printed, too.

Carrie. (Knowingly) Dire consequences! I'm not surprised.

Dodo. (An idea strikes her) Carrie Slate! I'll bet you wrote that note just to get us out of here.
CARRIE. (Suddenly) I saw it in the tea leaves last night!
Eve. You saw what, Carrie?
CARRIE. Death. Right there in my cup.
Eve. Well, switch to coffee. (Rolling up the note and throwing it on the prop table) I have no time for such nonsense. What do they think this is, a Dick Tracy Club?
DODO. I'll bet Charlie Witherspoon did it. He's so angry we didn't put on "The Man Who Stayed For Supper" so he could play the lead.
Eve. Charlie can be nasty. But he isn't that childish. (Dismissing it) Look, Dodo, let's not mention this to anyone. I don't want to give whoever did it the satisfaction.
DODO. Goodness, I won't say a word!
CARRIE. (Darkly, as she goes off Right) Murder! I saw it in the tea leaves.
DODO. (Looking after CARRIE, shivers and moves close to EVE) Eve, maybe you should keep that letter.
Eve. What for?
DODO. Evidence.
Eve. Dodo, stop it. Somebody is trying to be amusing. And somebody has certainly failed. (Looking around) I'd better get that cushion from the lounge. You know for that scene where FiFi meets little Pierre. I think this floor will be a trifle hard on Miss Carlisle's "re-tired" knees. (She exits Left.)

(DODO looks apprehensively at the letter, crosses to the prop table and picks it up. She drops it back quickly as HERB GRANT enters the auditorium. He is in his forties, kindly and with the air of a successful business man.)

HERB. Good evening, Dodo.
DODO. (As he comes down the aisle) Why, Herb, how nice of you to come!
HERB. Didn't I give you my solemn promise? (Com-
fore I came here and worked in the bank for Peggy's father.

Dodo (With a little laugh) Herb, don’t be ridiculous. You're one of us. But I do think Phil should do something about what Charlie is saying. He should tell us more about himself.

Herb. That's Phil's business, Dodo. I make it a point never to interfere.

Dodo. Please understand my motive, Herb. I'm so terribly devoted to Peggy.

Herb. I do understand, Dodo.

Dodo. I do hate Charlie Witherspoon. Always causing trouble. (Fanning herself with her script) Do you know your lines?

Herb. (Laughing) I sure do. All three of them.

Dodo. Good. I know mine, too. As I was telling Wilbur, in a way mine is the most important part in the play. After all, I open the door for the leading lady. If I weren't there to let her in—why, there just wouldn't be any play.

Herb. (Smiling) You've got something there, Dodo. (Sitting on corner of prop table) I hear our leading lady raised quite a rumpus at the hotel last night. At two o'clock in the morning she discovered there was ivy in her room—and had to have it removed.

Dodo. Heavens, why?

Herb. She said ivy was bad luck.

Dodo. Really? My!—isn't that interesting! I've had some in my dining room for years. Maybe that's why Wilbur hasn't any appetite!

Herb. I think the connection between the two is pretty remote.

Dodo. You never can tell, Herb. Life is very mysterious. Why, take that letter—

Herb. What letter?

Dodo. Oh dear, we aren't supposed to tell, but that letter all rumpled up on the table—well, it's a warning.

Herb. A warning? (Reaches for letter behind him on table, reads it, laughs) I'll bet Carrie wrote this. You know how she hates to have us here, cluttering up her hall.

Dodo. It's your hall, Herb.

Herb. I know. But ever since I hired Carrie to look after it, she's acted as though she built it herself.

Dodo. I don't think she's quite all right. (Indicating her forehead, to suggest insanity) You know.

Herb. (Laughing) Yes, I know. But she does a darned good job here for me. (Looking at letter) I think she just meant this as a joke.

Dodo. I don't. I don't even think she did it. I say Charlie Witherspoon did. You know he didn't want to do this play.

Herb. (Considering it) Well, I don't know— I certainly wouldn't put anything past our local gossip columnist.

Dodo. I simply hate Charlie! If he wasn't such a good actor I wouldn't even be polite to him.

Eve. (Re-enters from the Left, carrying a sofa cushion which she puts on the prop table) Polite to whom?

Dodo. (With venom) Charlie.

Eve. Oh. (Turns to Herb) Hello, Herb!

Herb. How are you, Eve?

Eve. All right, I guess. I'll be glad when we finally get this play on. The combination of directing it and teaching school at the same time is running me ragged.

Where's Peggy?

Herb. She'll be along in a minute. I saw Tom Burke, Eve. He said he'd pick you up at ten.

Eve. Good. But I don't believe we'll be finished.

Dodo. (Still thinking about Charlie) But I just love Tom Burke. He's so attractive for a police inspector! I mean, in the movies they're always fat, and they always keep their hats on.

Eve. Tom never goes to the movies—and he's not bald!

Dodo. You didn't see little Bobby Jackson, did you, Herb?
HERB. No, I did not. Is that little terror going to be in this play, too?
DODO. Of course he is. He has such talent. He's going to be my own personal contribution to the theatre.
EVE. (Drily) I don't know how the theatre can get along without him. But I bet it would sure like to try.
DODO. Now, Eve, you must admit he was splendid in Little Lord Fauntleroy.
EVE. I don't see how anyone could be bad after seven months of rehearsal.
DODO. His little mind just couldn't retain all those words. But the little cherub will be divine in this part. (Looking around) It's going to be pretty difficult to make this small stage look like a castle. But it's the play Stella Carlisle insisted upon doing.
EVE. Now that we're stuck with it and her let's make the best of it. (Consults her script) We'll need two chairs upstage center, Herb. They're to represent the little cherub's crib.
DODO. (As Herb goes to left wing and returns with two chairs) I wonder where Bobby can be. I told him I'd give him a half a dollar if he got here by seven. Oh, not as a bribe. A reward.
EVE. (Arranging the two chairs up Center) If I know Bobby he makes his own half dollars.

(Arrange point) Bobby Jackson enters from the rear of the auditorium. He is a typical boy. A bit cynical for his twelve years, he is very unhappy about having to rehearse and shows it.)

DODO. (Ignoring Eve's remark) Ah, there you are, Bobby. I was afraid you'd be late.
Bobby. (As he comes down the aisle) Naw. Mom made me come.
EVE. Good evening, Bobby.
Bobby. Are you sure you're gonna need me tonight, Miss Westman?
EVE. Yes, Bobby, very sure.
(We see that Phil is tall, good looking, in his late twenties. Peggy is attractive, alert. She carries a light coat.)

Peggy. We certainly are. (To Herb) Hello, Dad. I didn't know you'd beat me here.

Herb. (Looking knowingly at Phil) I had an idea you'd be delayed.

Eve. Phil, will you help us set up the stage?

Phil. Okay, Eve. (He leaps up on stage and turns back to help Peggy) Coming up, honey?

Peggy. (Going up on the stage) Right away, darling.

Dodo. Now, Phil, let me see. What do we need, Eve?

Eve. (Consulting her script again) Well, we'll need a chair downstage, left. It will indicate the chaise longue.

Herb. (Moving toward Left wing) I'll get it, Phil.

Phil. (Taking chair from Herb and placing it downstage, Left, just behind prop table) By the way, I read the play, Mrs. Pomeroy.

Dodo. Isn't it too thrilling? Do tell me your opinion.

Phil. Maybe as a revival it will have some curiosity value.

Bobby. (Bored) In other words he thinks it stinks.

(He exits Right.)

Peggy. (Trying to help Phil out) Phil doesn't like his part, Dodo.

Phil. I just don't think I'm right for it. I'm not the type for all that melodrama. Who'll believe I'm a killer?

Dodo. But in real life murderers never look like murderers! Besides this is a crime of passion. You kill for love.

Phil. Well, if Eve thinks I can get away with it—

Eve. I'm sure you can, Phil. (To Peggy) You think it's corny, too, Peggy?

Peggy. Oh, that doesn't matter. I was just wondering if Phil isn't a little young to play Miss Carlisle's brutal husband.

Dodo. (Cutting in urgently) Oh, no no no! What are

we—a group of doubters? Where's our confidence? Where's our spirit?

Herb. (Coming back on stage, sitting in chair behind table) Where's our leading lady?

Dodo. She'll be right along, I'm sure. The important thing is to have confidence in ourselves or else Miss Carlisle will regret having come all this way to lend us her talent and her name.

Eve. I wouldn't call it exactly "lending." Not at five hundred dollars.

Dodo. Don't be petty, Eve. Incidentally, where is Charlie? Everybody's here but Charlie!

Eve. He's probably out gathering more disgusting fodder for his column.

Peggy. I don't know what's come over Charlie lately. He doesn't write a society column any more. It's just all vicious gossip. I can't understand it.

Dodo. Wilbur was screaming about that at dinner tonight. Seems Charlie put in something about his behavior at the Country Club last Saturday night.

Herb. (Chucking) Yes, I read it. It was true.

Phil. Well, he doesn't have to print those things, does he, Mr. Grant?

Eve. Of course he doesn't, Phil. The Rough Rapids Free Press is not a New York tabloid.

Dodo. (Gigging) Well, personally, I think he's rather peppled up the old paper.

Eve. (Suddenly motioning for silence) Wait a minute!—(A short silence. They All look at Eve, expectantly) I'm sure I heard something.

(The following action will depend upon the set-up of the stage in use. If, as in many small theatres, there is a runner curtain along the back wall, Eve will tiptoe to this curtain and open it suddenly. If, on the other hand, it is a blank wall, she will walk stealthfully to the Left wing, upstage, and discover—in either case—Charles Witherspoon.)
He is tall, thin, immaculately dressed. His manner is always sardonic.)

DODO. (Frightened, as Eve discloses Charlie) Oh!! It's you, Charlie.
CHARLIE. (Coming out onto stage) Yes, Dodo, it is I. So you think I've "pepped up the old paper"?
DODO. (Still shaking a bit from the shock) Why—yes, I do.

CHARLIE. Wait until you see Monday's edition. Maybe you'll change your mind. However until then, my dear, I thank you for your approval. (Turning expansively to the Others) Good evening, all. I do hope I'm not late?

EVE. Hello, Charlie. Do you have to make sneak entrances like that all the time?

CHARLIE. But of course, darling. I get a great deal of my material that way.

PEGGY. You don't believe in ethics, do you?

CHARLIE. Not any more, darling, not any more.

PEGGY. I wish you wouldn't call me "darling."

CHARLIE. Indeed? You didn't used to mind.

HERB. Where did you come from, Charlie?

CHARLIE. (Smiling, refusing to see anything unusual or embarrassing in his sudden appearance) I got here early. I've been sprawled out on a sofa back-stage, snoozing.

PHIL. And listening to every word we've been saying, haven't you?

CHARLIE. That, my dear Philip, is a professional secret. (Then, menacingly) You do know all about secrets, don't you, Philip?

PHIL. (Stepping toward Charlie) And what do you mean by that?

CHARLIE. Merely making a comparison between you and me. I tell everything. But you—well, you haven't even told Peggy, have you?

PHIL. About what?

Peggy. (Taking Phil's arm) Don't listen to him, Phil. Nobody else does.

PHIL. For two cents I'd punch you in the nose, Witherspoon!

CHARLIE. A lot of people would do a lot more for much less.

EVE. Oh, Charlie, relax. I have enough to do managing the mighty Miss Carlisle without you dripping vitriol all over the stage. (Exasperated) And I don't give a hoot what you say about me in Monday's column.

CHARLIE. Your reputation, dear Eve, is spotless. Of course, it has taken you an awfully long time to snare Inspector Burke. (As Eve glares at him) But that is too old an observation to print.

(Eve's reply is halted by a blood-curdling SCREAM offstage.)

DODO. (Jumping up) Why, it sounded like little Bobby!

HERB. What do you suppose he's done now?

DODO. (As the SCREAM is repeated) Oh, save him somebody! Save him! I think he's being strangled.

EVE. (Wearily) And high time, too.

PHIL. Come on. We'll soon find out.

(Phil hurries off Right, followed by the Others. Charlie remains on stage. Alone, he walks casually over to the prop table and rummages among the articles. He finds the crumpled letter, unfolds it, reads it. He smiles slowly as he puts it down. After a moment Dodo comes stealthily back on stage, whispering to Charlie.)

DODO. Charlie—

CHARLIE. (In normal tones) Why, Dodo, I thought you were off to the rescue.

DODO. (Fingers to her lips) Sshh, the others mustn't hear. (At the prop table) I've got to talk to you.
CHARLIE. Indeed? And what about?
DODO. (Impatiently) You know very well what about!
(Anxiously) Did you get it?
CHARLIE. Yes. In the afternoon mail. (With a sarcastic bow) Thank you very much.
DODO. You—you're going to tell Wilbur?
CHARLIE. No, of course not. (As she sighs with relief he blasts her hopes) If I tell anything it won't be to Wilbur. It will be to the whole town. The whole town does read my column, you know.
DODO. (Glares at him murderously) Believe me, if you so much as breathe a word to anyone about this I'll— I'll— (As he smiles at her anger) Oh, someday somebody's going to do something about you, Charlie Witherspoon, and then—then the laugh will be on the other foot!
CHARLIE. (Wagging his finger at her) Temper, temper, Dodo, dear.

(They are interrupted by the voices of HERB and EVE as they rush back on stage. Before them marches an irate CARRIE, who drags BOBBY in by the ear. Before they arrive DODO gets a chance to pull herself together, and greets them with her usual nervous laugh.)

DODO. (When she sees CARRIE and BOBBY) Well! Whatever happened?
CARRIE. (Threatening BOBBY with angry gestures) If I ever catch this little hoodlum snooping around my private living-quarters again, I'll murder him—so help me!
BOBBY. (Who has been screaming and crying through all this) Waah! She hit me. She hit me!
DODO. Miss Slate! You didn't—!
CARRIE. I sure did. And I'll do worse than that if he ever snoops around again.
EVE. It was a false alarm.

ACT I

HERB. Carrie's right, Dodo. That kid has no right to go prying about her quarters.
DODO. Bobby—Bobby, did you do that? Don't you know what happens to little boys who snoop?
BOBBY. Wiping his eyes) Yeah.
DODO. (Surprised) What?
BOBBY. (Looking up) They get hep.
CHARLIE. (Impatiently as CARRIE exits Left) Really! How tiresome! (Sitting on chair above prop table) Well, I'm here. Shall we begin?
EVE. Miss Carlisle isn't here.
CHARLIE. Ah, yes. She's in the play, too. How dare that broken-down sot-carrier keep Charles Witherspoon waiting?
BOBBY. (Saunters over to prop table, eyeing CHARLIE) You know, sometimes I think that guy means the things he says he means. (Sits on corner of table.)
CHARLIE. (To BOBBY) Hush, my tiny terror, or I shall print an item about how your mother overcharges for those fashion-fiascos she calls hats.
DODO. Blackmail—that's what it is.
CHARLIE. (Cheerfully) But it sells the paper. Every family has a skeleton in its closet, you know. And naturally the poor skeleton must come out for a bit of air now and then.
HERB. What skeleton have you discovered now, Charlie? (He sits on downstage chair of the pair indicating castle door, stage Right.)
CHARLIE. Next Monday you'll find out, Herb. You'll all find out. I've got some really juicy items being served up on Monday. And about several prominent, if mysterious, citizens.
EVE. Charlie's bark is worse than his bite.
CHARLIE. Wait until Monday.
HERB. Is it written yet?
CHARLIE. No. Not yet. I want to serve it really fresh.
EVE. Well, Charlie, while you're giving your "cooking lessons" I'm going to check Miss Carlisle's dressing room.
Dodo. Just a minute, Eve. I'll go with you. (Following Eve off Left) Oh, I do wish we'd thought of flowers. One of those lovely horseshoe arrangements!

Herr. (Looking after Eve and Dodo) Charlie, doesn't Dodo seem especially distraught tonight?

Charlie. Doesn't she always?

Peggy. (Re-enters from the Right wing, looking at her script. She no longer carries her coat) Oh, I do wish I knew my lines. (She sits in upstage Right “entrance” chair.)

Herr. (Laughing) Thank heavens I know mine. (Re-entering) “Madame, the carriage awaits!”

Herr. (Laughing) Well, everything is spic-and-span for Miss Carlisle. We even put a red carpet down. Eve found it in the broom closet, and— (The LIGHTS go out, plunging stage into complete darkness. DODO shrieks) Eek!

Peggy. What's the matter with the lights?

Bobby. Hey! It's spooky!

Dodo. (Nervously) Bobby! Don't talk that way!

Herr. (Offstage) It's only me. Just testing.

(The LIGHTS go on. We discover that Bobby has picked up the gun from the prop table and is pointing it at Dodo.)

Bobby. Bang! Bang! Another Redskin bites the dust!

Dodo. (Hysterically) Stop that, Bobby!

Herr. Never point a gun at anybody, Bobby.

Bobby. Aw, this old thing ain't loaded.

Herr. Just the same, accidents happen. Now, put it down.

Bobby. (Putting the gun down on the prop table) Okey. Okey. (Restlessly) Golly, where is everybody? Let's get started.

Eve. (Re-entering from Left) I hope I didn't frighten you, testing the lights. I wanted to make sure everything would be all right when Miss Carlisle arrives—if she arrives.

Bobby. Gee, Miss Westman, aren't we ever going to get started? I'll never hear the fight at this rate.

Eve. We'll do your scene first, Bobby. You can leave right after that.

Bobby. Thanks.

Dodo. And just leave that gun alone, Bobby. What on
Eve. (Cleaves throat) May I see the letter, Miss Carlisle?

Stella. (Moving majestically over to Eve, thrusting letter at her) You certainly may. And I shall demand an apology if I have to go to the Mayor. (Putting her glasses away) This is the reward I get for bringing my Art to the hinterlands.

Eve. (Studying the letter) It's printed—just like the other one.

Peggy. What other one? (On this, Peggy rises and moves over to Eve, looking at letter over Eve's shoulder.)

Eve. There was one here when I arrived. It threatened "dire consequences" or something absurd like that. It said we mustn't go ahead with the play.

Bobby. (Who has been playing with the props, looks up) Golly! I'll bet there's a phantom killer hiding in the cellar or something. Just like in the comic books.

Charlie. (To Bobby) As long as you're the victim, it's all right with me.

Eve. (Going to prop table, picks up first letter) Look! (Comparing it with Stella's letter) It's written on the same paper.

Stella. It's obviously one of you—one of you who wanted to play my part. (Taking a deep breath) Let me assure you—you can't frighten Stella Carlisle. Nobody ever has and nobody ever will! It would serve all of you right if I went straight back to Broadway and accepted one of the numerous vehicles I have been offered.

Charlie. There's a train at ten.

Stella. (Ignoring him) However, I wouldn't leave even you people in such a miserable predicament.

Eve. Thank you, Miss Carlisle, and I sincerely regret this incident. I'm sure it's just some idiot's idea of a joke. Or perhaps it is some jealous person who wants to play the role. But doing 'The Angel of the Tower' without the great Stella Carlisle would be like—well, the sky without any stars—.
REHEARSAL FOR DEATH  ACT I

STELLA. (Somewhat mollified) Ah! How right you are. Very well, I shall stay. As Noel always said to me: 'Stella, Big Ben would cease to chime if you ever let me down.' And then Bernard Shaw—well, the things he used to whisper in my ear—!

BOBBY. (Innocently) Gee, did you know Shakespeare, too?

STELLA. (Glaring at him) Sweet little urchin! I wish he were my little boy for about two minutes. (To Eve) Well, let's begin.

EVE. We thought we'd do the last Act First, if you don't mind. It's near Bobby's bed time.

BOBBY. Besides, they're broadcasting the fight tonight.

STELLA. (Fishing in her purse again for spectacles, finds them and raises them to her eyes, looking at BOBBY) You mean he plays little Pierre?

EVE. Yes. He really has a lot of talent.

STELLA. Couldn't you have found a child who looks as though he at least had been born?

DODO. (Quickly, helpfully) Oh, Bobby was born all right. It's just what's happened to him since.

STELLA. Well, I hope all of you are up in your lines.

DODO. (Coming toward STELLA, full of enthusiasm) Oh, I am! (Striking a sorrowful pose, reciting loudly and with gestures) Fifi, as your old mother, I must beg you to come back. Gaston is a snail but he is the father of your little Pierre. Little Pierre needs you, Fifi. Needs you. (She stops and makes a small bow, as though expecting applause.)

STELLA. (Who has remained speechless with horror during Dodo's exhibition) Where is the woman who really going to play this part?

DODO. (Crestfallen) Oh dear!

EVE. I'm sure you'll find Mrs. Pomeroy excellent in the role. She's one of our best actresses.

CHARLIE. Besides, she sponsors the group. (Meaningfully to STELLA) You know, underwrites all the expenses?

STELLA. (Marching irately into position above
I do know where I'm supposed to be, Miss—Miss Whatever-your-name-is. I was playing this role before you were born! (Catching herself, quickly) I mean— I mean, I've studied my part and will need no help from you.

Eve. (Anxious to maintain peace) Very well, Miss Carlisle. And, incidentally, my name is Westman.

Stella. (Now in position) I hardly see that that matters.

Eve. (Ignoring this insult) Phil, you're off-stage right. Charlie—off-stage left. (They march off and take their places, waiting for their entrance cues) Peggy, you and Herb can wait anywhere. (They go up Right and stand against the back wall, above the two entrance chairs) All right. Let's begin. From Fif's entrance.

(There is much clearing of throats, testing of voices, etc., finally stopped by Eve.)

Eve. Curtain.

Stella. (Knocking on imaginary door, between entrance chairs) Mother—Mother, it's I— Fif!

Dodo. (Rising from the "chaise") Fif! (She rushes over to the entrance chairs, but, when nearly there, turns neatly around and races back towards the prop table.)

Eve. What's the matter?

Dodo. I forgot the cushion! (She grabs sofa-cushion from prop table and hurries back to doorway, dropping the sofa cushion in Center) Fif, my baby! My baby! (She opens the imaginary door and throws herself at Stella.)

Stella. (Struggling) Do you have to strangle me, you—you octopus. (Freeing herself from Dodo's clutches) Hug me! Don't wrestle with me! (Then, right back into her role) Yes, Mother. It is I, your little Fif.

Dodo. My baby has come home at last.

Stella. (Pushing Dodo aside and entering the room) But not to stay, Mother. Not with that beast, Gaston. I came to see my little baby—my little Pierre. Where is he?

Dodo. (Trips back to Center, stopping in front of Stella) The little darling is asleep. Shall I fetch him?

Stella. (Furiously to Dodo) Don't cover me, you idiot. Stand aside. (She thrusts Dodo to Left, and carries on with her scene) Where is Gaston?

Dodo. (Straightening her clothes, which the stage has disarranged) Gaston is in Paris. He'll be gone for hours—the brute!

Stella. How is my baby? How is my little Pierre?

Dodo. (She stalks about, sobbing, but trips on the cushion on the floor. Looks up, irritated) And what is this—if I may ask? Are you trying to kill me?

Eve. (Apologetically, rushes to pick up cushion) I'm sorry, Miss Carlisle. It was for you to kneel on in your scene with Pierre.

Stella. (Gesturing madly) Get it out of my sight! (Eve takes it quietly back to her director's chair and holds it in her lap, and Stella plunges on with her scene) My little baby, a benighted child who can never know his own mother! (Sobs some more.)

Dodo. (Reaches for her handkerchief and, instead of giving her next line, starts sobbing with Stella) Oh, I can't go on with it!

Stella. (Angrily) That isn't your line!

Dodo. (Sniffing into handkerchief) Oh, I know. But that scene always made me cry—when I was a little girl.

Stella. (Outraged) What!

Dodo. My mother took me to see this play twice and this scene broke my heart. I never dreamed that one day I'd be playing your mother!

Stella. (Controlling herself with difficulty) Let us continue with the play.

Dodo. (Stifling her sobs, but still with handkerchief) I shall go get little Pierre.

Stella. Awake the precious babe tenderly.

Dodo. (Tiptoeing up to chair where Bobby sits yvonning) I shall, my poor dear Fif.
REHEARSAL FOR DEATH

ACT I

STELLA. (Stopping her) And, remember, he must not know who I am. Tell him I am the mystery lady. He must never know his mother is the notorious Fifi la Rue.

DODO. The world may call you notorious, but your old mother knows you are the same simple little Fifi of yore. (She continues up to chair and pretends to look into crib.)

STELLA. (As soon as DODO has left her, STELLA tragically turns and waits. She spies the box of candy. Stepping out of her role) Ah! You remembered my chocolates! I hope there are lots of vanilla creams. (She moves down to prop table and examines box.)

HERB. (Who is still standing up Right) I couldn't get all creams, Miss Carlisle. But there are quite a few there.

STELLA. (Pleased) Good. (Then turning to squint at HERB) Have we met before?

HERB. Why yes. Last night. At the station when you arrived.

STELLA. No no. I mean before. Your voice sounds familiar.

HERB. (Laughing) I guess it's just a familiar type voice.

STELLA. (Dismissing it) Yes. I guess so. (Angrily, to DODO, who has been up Center helpless, not knowing what to do when STELLA stopped the scene) Well, hurry up! Bring on Pierre!

DODO. (Taking BOBBY by the hand and brings him downstage) Here he is, Fifi. Your little Pierre.

STELLA. (Eve quickly places cushion on floor and STELLA sinks onto her knees as though she always expected it) My little Pierre! (Grabbing BOBBY and pulling him to her) My Angel—!

BOBBY. (To DODO, reciting his lines in a piping monotone) Who is the lovely lady with the sad eyes, Grand-mere?

STELLA. (Tearfully) Just call me the mystery lady, little Pierre. I've come to kiss you good-night. (Dudo

vails uncontrollably) The mystery lady who loves you, mon Pierre.

BOBBY. (To DODO) Why is the lovely lady crying, Grand-mere?

DODO. Because she loves you, Pierre.

STELLA. Do you love your Daddy, Pierre?

BOBBY. Yes, I love my Daddy, mystery lady.

STELLA. And your mother—what do they tell you of her? Where is she?

BOBBY. My mother has gone to visit the angels.

STELLA. (Her eyes to heaven) Oh, what have I done?

What have I done?

CARRIE. (Marching angrily on from the Right wing) You've got the sofa cushion from the lounge. That's what you've done! A grown woman—playing leap frog!

STELLA. (Outraged) Who is this woman?

CARRIE. I'm custodian of this building, that's who I am! And you can't take sofa cushions out of the lounge.

STELLA. (Near hysterics) Take your sofa cushion! (Kicking, she throws the cushion at CARRIE) Never have I been so humiliated! I refuse to go on! I refuse to go on! (She starts to exit, Left, remembers the candy, goes to prop table, picks it up and exits.)

HERB. Now, really, we were right in the middle of a scene!

CARRIE. That doesn't matter to me. You people do enough damage to this—

HERB. (Gently but firmly) Carrie, don't interrupt a rehearsal again.

CARRIE. But, Mr. Grant, you pay me to look after this place! How can I when they keep moving the furniture around?

HERB. That will be all, Carrie.

(With a murderous look CARRIE marches off Right.)

DODO. (Nervously) Why, that woman is definitely unbalanced. Did—did you see the way she looked at us just then?
HERB. I tell you she’s harmless enough. Why, she’s been with us for years.

EVE. (Going to Left wing) She’s never been with us. She’s been against us from the start. (As she exits Left) I’d better go feed chocolate creams to Miss Carlisle.

DOO. (Going up and sitting in “crib” chair) And just when we were all doing so beautifully.

BOBBY. Hey, can I go home now?

DOO. (In a trance, thinking about the scene) No, dear little Pierre. (Realizing who he is, savagely) No, you can’t, you little monster!

BOBBY. I was only asking. (Crossing Right) What did I ever do to get roped into this corny play? I tell you there ain’t no justice.

DOO. (Correctly as he exits) Isn’t any justice, Bobby.

HERB. (Calling after Bobby) Stay away from Carrie. She swings a mean broom.

DOO. (Anxiously) Oh dear, I do hope Eve can placate Miss Carlisle.

HERB. While she’s trying I think I’ll get some fresh air. (Going to Right wing) Join me in a cigarette, Phil?

PHIL. No, thanks, Mr. Grant. I’ll stay here with Peggy. (As Hana exits) Oh well, they say rough rehearsals mean a smooth performance.

PEGGY. (Smiling as he sits beside her) Yes, but how rough can you get?

PHIL. We should be doing a comedy, anyway.

CHARLIE. (Sarcastically) Oh, aren’t we?

DOO. (Angrily) This play happens to be a great French classic! You’re only angry because we aren’t doing “The Man Who Stayed For Supper” so you can insult people on stage for a change.

CHARLIE. Doo, my dear, the reports that I collect human heads are a malicious rumor.

DOO. (Sharply) Obviously. If you collect human heads why would you wear the one you have now.

PHIL. Atta girl, Doo!

ACT 1

CHARLIE. (Mildly) Careful, Philip. Don’t forget the power of my pen.

PHIL. (To Peggy) Honey, maybe you won’t marry me after all. It seems I’m the rat Charlie’s going to expose on Monday.

PEGGY. I’ll still risk it, Phil. For all you know it could be my past he’s going to expose.

CHARLIE. (Airily) Go ahead and laugh. On Monday, to quote Doo, the laugh will be on the other foot.

DOO. If you live until Monday, to quote Bobby, there certainly ain’t no justice. (The LIGHTS go off quickly) Oh, goodness! Not again? (Calling) Eve, is that you? (There is a pause) Eve, did you turn off the lights? (Another silence) Phil, I’m—I’m afraid. Do something.

PHIL. Anybody know where the switch is? (Sound of BUMPING into one of the chairs) Ouch!—There goes my foot!

PEGGY. (Warningly) Phil, be careful. There’s something strange about those lights.

BOBBY. (Calling from off Right) Hey, the lights are busted. Can I go home now? (The LIGHTS go on again just as suddenly. BOBBY enters from the Right) Darn! Somebody fixed ’em.

DOO. Bobby, was that you playing with the lights?

CHARLIE. (Pointing to the prop table) Look!

DOO. What is it?

CHARLIE. (The Others all look at the table. CHARLIE picks up an envelope which has been placed there) It’s another letter.

DOO. (Pale) Oh dear! Not—not the same kind?

CHARLIE. (As Eve enters from the Left wing) Eve, here’s another one of those letters.

EVE. (Angrily) What? Now really, this joke has gone far enough. (Taking it from him, opens it) “This is the final warning. Stop rehearsal at once.” (Grunbles it up and throws it on the floor) Of all the melodramatic nonsense! I’m not going to read any more of those silly notes.
DODO. But, Eve, that's—that's the last one. It said so.

EVE. I hope so. Now, not a word of this to Miss Carlisle. She's feeling much better and is going on with the rehearsal.

PHIL. (Who has been thinking) Whoever put that note there also turned off the lights.

EVE. Phil, stop talking about it. It's some fool's idea of a joke and I'm tired of it. (As STELLA enters from the Left) All ready, Miss Carlisle?

STELLA. (Bristling) Yes. But I must warn you. No more interruptions.

EVE. I'm sure there won't be. (She resumes her place in chair down Left) Places, everybody. Bobby, are you ready? (They all obediently resume their places) We'll take it from "My mother has gone to visit the angels."

BOBBY. Okay. (In a very bored tone) My mother has gone to visit the angels.

STELLA. (First putting the box of candy on the prop table) Nobody else touch the chocolate creams. Help yourselves to the rest of it. (Turning to Bobby, dramatically) Ah, what have I done? What have I done?

CHARLIE. (Entering from Left) Madame, the Count is returning. I saw his carriage coming up the driveway.

STELLA. Heavens, I must fly!

DODO. Fifi, my darling, where are you going?

STELLA. Back to Paris. Back to being the notorious Fifi La Rue, but my heart stays here with little Pierre.

Goodbye, my Angel.

BOBBY. (Waving his hand) Au revoir, mystery lady.

(STELLA turns dramatically to go through the garden entrance but collides with PHIL, who enters.)

PHIL. (Scowling) So, Fifi, you have come back!

STELLA. (Backing away in terror) Gaston!

PHIL. You gave me your word you would stay away.

DODO. Gaston! Gaston! Have pity! Have pity!

PHIL. (Who has been forced to turn his back to the audience by STELLA'S "upstaging". He is down Center) All right. Take this!

(CHARLIE bows deeply, exits through the two chairs up Right, and comes back to sit down in upstage one. He takes script from pocket and sits reading with his back to the audience.)

STELLA. Gaston, I had to see little Pierre. I had to! You can't keep me from him. You have no right! No right!

BOBBY. (To DODO) Grand-mère, why is the pretty lady still crying?

DODO. (Pulling Bobby to her) Hush, Pierre. Hush.

PHIL. (Stalking over to prop table, takes up gun) Since you have failed to keep your word, there is only one way to deal with you.

STELLA. (Backing away, her arms covering her face) No! Not that!

DODO. Gaston, don't—! Not in front of little Pierre.

STELLA. (Opening her arms wide—her most famous gesture) Shoot me! Shoot me! What have I got to live for?

PHIL. You have spurned my love. You have forsaken your child—our child. (Advancing towards STELLA, the gun pointed) One last chance, Fifi. Will you stay here with me?

STELLA. No, you brute! Never. Go ahead. Kill me. My heart is dead. Let me join it! (Now her arms have shot upwards, still outstretched. This is the height of her florid art. She is standing well upstage, facing the audience full-front, between the entrance chairs and the "crib."

PHIL. (Who has been forced to turn his back to the audience by STELLA'S "upstaging". He is down Center) All right. Take this!

(DODO screams as he pulls the trigger. There is a loud report. They all jump. STELLA falls to the floor.)
Dodo. (Looking at Stella, breathless with admiration) Isn't she wonderful? So natural!

(WARN Curtain.)

Eve. (Getting up from director's chair) Well, that does it. There's the end of the last scene. (To Stella) Thank you, Miss Carlisle.

Stella. (Who has remained motionless since her fall) That blank cartridge you fired sounded like a cannon. (As Phil helps her up) You didn't have to load it for rehearsal.

Eve. I'm sorry. I didn't know it was loaded, Phil, you're our prop man. Did you put the blank in the gun?

Phil. No, I didn't. I checked it last night. It was empty. Naturally I thought—

Stella. (Cutting him off) Never take anything for granted, young man. That's what's wrong with the theatre today. (Going to the candy on prop table) I should like ten minutes rest.

Bobby. (Coming up to Eve, pleading) Can I go now, Miss Westman?

Eve. (With an exhausted sigh) Yes, Bobby, you can go.

Bobby. Hurray! (He starts to run off stage but is stopped by—)

Dodo. (Who is looking horrified at Charlie. Charlie slumps slowly in his chair) Look!

Eve. What is it?

Dodo. (IIoarsely) Look at Charlie!!!

Eve. (Turning) He's fallen asleep.

Phil. Don't know how he could sleep through that racket.

Dodo. (Clutching back of the crib chair) He's—he's not asleep. There's blood—blood all over his shirt!

Phil. (As he and Eve rush to Charlie's chair) Blood—?

THE CURTAIN FALLS QUICKLY

ACT TWO

It is an hour later. Inspector Tom Burke is on stage, questioning Herb as Eve watches. Tom is in his thirties, bright and assured. He paces as he talks.

Herb is seated in a chair, Center. Eve is seated in the chair above the prop table, down Left.

Herb. And when I came back in I heard about the accident.

Tom. You think it was an accident?

Herb. Well, none of us liked Charlie especially. But I can't believe he was disliked to the extent of being murdered.

Tom. (Looks carefully at Herb, then goes on) Tell me, did anything especially strange happen here tonight? I mean, besides the—accident. Did you notice anything?

Herb. Well, there were those notes, Of course, I thought they were a joke. We all did.

Tom. You have no idea who wrote them?

Herb. No. None at all.

Tom. And nothing else happened during rehearsal that seemed out of the ordinary?

Herb. Well, Charlie seemed in an extra-vitriolic mood. He let all of us know he had an article for Monday's paper that was going to cause someone quite a bit of embarrassment.

Tom. He didn't specify which someone?

Herb. No, he didn't. That wasn't the way he operated. He wanted to make all of us uncomfortable.

Tom. Who did he mention this article to?

Herb. Well, Mrs. Pomeroy and me. And then Phil came in and he told Phil about it.
Tom. It's true, isn't it, that Charlie had a romantic attachment for Peggy before Phil Stanhope came to town?

Herb. He did. But Peggy never was interested in him.

Tom. Was there bitterness between the two men?

Herb. Only on Charlie's part. I don't think Phil paid any attention to him.

Tom. What do you know about Phil Stanhope's back-ground before he came here and settled down?

Herb. I believe he comes from an average family. He inherited money and came here looking for some real estate to develop.

Tom. He's done very well, too.

Herb. Yes. He certainly has.

Tom. (Consulting his notes) Now, let me see. You were sitting out on the back steps and didn't even hear the shot.

Herb. That's right.

Tom. Well, thanks, Herb. Guess that takes care of you.

Herb. (Rising) Shall I go join the others?

Tom. Sure. Anything you like. I'll want all of you to stick around for a while.

Herb. That's okay with me.

Tom. Thanks again. (Herb exits Right. Tom looks over at Eve, who has been listening attentively to the foregoing) Still feel shaky?

Eve. (Shuddering) Unaccustomed as I am to murder, yes. (Rising, impatiently) But I still can't believe it was a murder.

Tom. What was that bullet doing in the gun?

Eve. (Walking slowly over to Center) Perhaps someone thought it was a blank.

Tom. You didn't really believe that.

Eve. I'd rather believe anything than that Charlie was killed deliberately! (Sitting in chair, Center) I feel responsible. I selected this old chestnut for the group to

ACT II

REHEARSAL FOR DEATH

do. Why didn't I let Charlie do "The Man Who Stayed For Supper"?

Tom. (Putting his hand on Eve's shoulder, tenderly) I imagine whoever was out to get Charlie would have done it regardless of the play you chose.

Eve. (Looking up at him, startled) Tom, you're talking about our friends!

Tom. (Casually) One of our friends is a murderer.

Eve. I still say it was an accident.

Tom. Then explain the accident.

Eve. (Desperately) Oh—oh, I don't know. It—it just happened, that's all. Accidents do happen.

Tom. (Patiently) Eve, it's my job to find out exactly how Charlie was killed. Even if I have to suspect our friends.

Eve. And I suppose one of our friends is a demented killer who is going to dispose of us, one by one. Perhaps it's little Bobby or Dodo. Or maybe it's me.

Tom. (Smiling) Could be. You're all under suspicion.

Eve. Oh, get on with your questioning! Then let them go home. (Rests her forehead on her hand, in weariness.)

Tom. (Crossing to Left and calling off) Carroll, will you send Mrs. Pomeroy in, please?

Carroll. (Off-stage) Yes, sure, Inspector. Right away.

Tom. (Coming back to Eve, tenderly) You're tired, honey. I told you you were overdoing it. Teaching school, directing this play—

Eve. (Standing up, brushes hair back) Nonsense. The play has been a lot of fun until this happened.

Tom. You've been at it night and day. No time for any recreation. Never any time for me.

Eve. This play has been my recreation, believe it or not. (Then, turning to him with much severity) And as for you, Mr. Burke—well, clear up this case tonight and I'll let you walk me home.

Tom. You know, I think I'll clear it up tonight regardless.
Dodo. (As she enters) Oh, hello, Inspector Burke. Hello Eve!
Eve. (Wearily, as she crosses back to chair above prop table) Hello, Dodo. (She sits.)
Dodo. (Crossing to Tom, jabbering away) My! It's all too exciting! There's such a crowd outside the building. And when I tried to leave so I could phone Wilbur, there were policemen at all the doors!
Tom. You'll be able to phone in a little while, Mrs. Pomeroy. (Indicating chair, Center) Now, will you please sit down here?
Dodo. (Going to chair) Certainly, Inspector. (Sitting, happily) Go ahead. Third degree me.
Tom. (Hiding a smile) I don't believe I'll have to do that, Mrs. Pomeroy. But I do want to ask a few questions.
Dodo. (Energetically) Fire away, Inspector! (As he walks towards her) Poor Charlie, he's quite, quite dead, isn't he?
Tom. According to the Coroner, quite.
Dodo. Do you know what I think?
Tom. I'm anxious to find out.
Dodo. I think he was murdered!
Tom. I've reached the same conclusion.
Dodo. Ah! But do you know how?
Tom. Yes, Mrs. Pomeroy. He was shot.
Dodo. But not from the gun Phil Stanhope fired.
Tom. No?
Dodo. (Shaking her head) No. The murderer was stalking his prey from behind. The gun in his evil hand. When Phil pulled the trigger, so did the maniac killer. Just so we'd think poor Phil had done it!
Tom. (Patiently) But the bullet didn't enter Charlie's back. It entered his chest.
Dodo. (In dismay) Oh dear. Really? (thoughtfully)
to Phil. Something about digging up his past or something.

Tom. And how did Phil take it?

Dodo. Oh, very well at first. Then he got a bit angry. He held Charlie to cut it out or he'd hurt him.

Eve. *Half rising* Dodo, for Heaven's sake!

Dodo. Well, he did say that. Oh, but he didn't mean it. He was just mad. Why, Phil didn't kill him. He has such lovely manners.

Tom. Is that all, Mrs. Pomeroy?

Dodo. Yes, I guess it is. I can't think of anything else.

Tom. The gun, I believe, was borrowed from your husband?

Dodo. Yes.

Tom. Did he check to see if it was loaded when he loaned it?

Dodo. Goodness, yes. Wilbur is so careful about guns. In fact he even took it out on the lawn and fired it into the air. At least he pulled the trigger a lot—and nothing happened. And then he rolled that thing around—

Tom. The magazine?

Dodo. *Startled* The what? Oh! Is that what they call it? How ridiculous! Well, anyway, it was empty because when he came back into the house he pointed it at me with the strangest expression on his face and went bang-bang-bang! *Laughing merrily* Wilbur is such a tease!

Tom. *Wearily* Thank you, Mrs. Pomeroy. That will be all.

Dodo. *Rising* Thank you, Inspector. I always hoped when I was arrested it would be by someone like you.

Tom. You're not under arrest, Mrs. Pomeroy. I'm merely questioning everybody.

Dodo. *Starts to exit Left, then stops* Oh—another thing.

Tom. Yes?

Dodo. I've been standing close to Stella Carlisle. Do you know she must be much more than thirty-eight. I don't care what "Who's Who" says.

Tom. Thank you, Mrs. Pomeroy. That will be all.

(Dodo waves and exits Left)

Eve. *Rises as Tom sinks into chair, Center, which Dodo has just vacated* Well, Sherlock Holmes, was it Dodo?

Tom. *Takes handkerchief from pocket and wipes forehead* I don't think so, but she nearly killed me with her jabbering. *Sighs and puts handkerchief back in pocket* However, I did get something out of her. She's the first of you to tell me that Phil had threatened Charlie.

Eve. Only in the heat of the argument! We all threatened Charlie!

Tom. But then Phil fired a gun and Charlie died.

Eve. *Walking over to Tom* Phil would hardly be so stupid, Tom! If he wanted to kill Charlie he'd find a less obvious way.

Tom. Or was it a very clever way?

Eve. I must say I don't think you're very clever, suspecting Phil. He's going to marry Peggy. He's built up an excellent business. Why would he jeopardize everything because of a grudge?

Tom. Maybe he was trying to protect everything. Don't forget Charlie's column. *Rising* I think I'll have one of the boys go look for Monday's article.

Eve. I heard Charlie say he hadn't written it yet.

Tom. *Thoughtfully* Oh, I see.

Eve. You think he was killed to prevent his writing it?

Tom. Could be.

Eve. Tom Burke, you know Charlie was always going to expose somebody. Then when the column appeared it exposed nothing more than that so-and-so had gained weight or that Mrs. Whosis served the worst soufflé in town.
Tom. Maybe. But this time might have been different.
Eve. You’re off on the wrong tangent. Call it
woman’s intuition or whatever you want, but I know.
Tom. This is my show, Eve. Just as the play was
yours. Let me run it my way, according to my instinct.
Carroll. (He enters from the Left. He is a typical
policeman) Who do you want to see next, Inspector?

(Eve goes wearily to the group of entrance chairs up-
stage Right and sits.)

Tom. (Consulting his book) Miss Carlisle. She’s the
last. (As Carroll starts to go) Oh, and Carroll, send
one of the boy over to the Free Press building. Have
him look up Witherspoon’s advance columns and bring
‘em over to me.
Carroll. Okay, Inspector. (He exits Left.)
Eve. This is going to be good. I’m anxious to see you
handle Stella Carlisle.
Tom. She’s no different from anybody else.
Eve. No? I’d like to hear you tell her that. (Sighing)
Oh well, she’ll probably welcome all the publicity. And
it will be awfully good for the play.
Tom. (Startled, turns to face her) You’re going to
put it on in spite of what happened?
Eve. Certainly. The Welfare Fund needs the money.
We’ll put it on—and on schedule. Charlie only had a
few lines, anyway. We’ll get somebody else. (Looking
at Tom intently) I wonder, Mr. Burke, how about you?
Tom. No thank you very much. I have a hunch I’ll be
busy.
Eve. If we have any trouble casting that role you’d
better not be busy.
Tom. Aw no, Eve. Have a heart. I’d feel like a fool,
acting in a play.

(He is protesting as Stella enters from the Left,
holding the opened box of candy.)

ACT II

Stella. (Irrately) Why did you have to wait until I
got here? Why didn’t you dreadful people dispose of
that creature before I arrived? Of all the unspeakable,
unpleasant, unnecessary— (Raging up and down the
stage) Never in all my life have I been subjected to
such indignities! What a horrible day and night I’ve
spent here! That disgusting hotel. That ivy in my room!
That threatening letter! And then that awful man get-
ing himself murdered! It’s all too much!
Tom. I don’t believe he did it deliberately, Miss
Carlisle.
Stella. (Stops, glares at Tom) And who are you?
(Holding her glasses up to her eyes) Oh, that Inspector
person! (Dropping her glasses) Well, why don’t you
start inspecting—arrest someone? Do you realize that
gun was pointed at me! At least it should have been.
I could have been the victim! What a miracle! What a
miracle! Divine Providence spared me! (Extending the
candy box) Candy, anyone?
Tom. No thanks.
Stella. Believe me, I shall tell my story to the Press!
They will tell it to the world!
Tom. (Indicating chair, Center) I wonder if you’d
mind sitting down in this chair and telling me first.
Stella. (Waving her arms about) What is there to
tell? We were rehearsing. The gun went off. The man
died. Now may I go home?
Tom. (Gently) I know all that, Miss Carlisle. Those
are the essentials. But surely a woman of your great
perception must have noticed something out of the
ordinary here tonight.
Stella. (Sitting in chair, Center) Everything’s
been strange! I might say this is the strangest town I
have ever played in. There was ivy in my room last
night!
Tom. Ivy?
Eve. Miss Carlisle is superstitious about ivy.
Stella. I have personal reasons. But any time there
is ivy in my room something terrible happens. Then I
got that ridiculous letter. I had no sooner got over that than I had another shock.

Tom. (Most interested) Yes? What was that?
Stella. I came here to rehearse and saw my supporting company! What a group! I have never seen such incompetence. Such interruptions! And then the miracle happened. He pointed the gun at me and that creature fell over, dead. (Holding up her glasses, looking at Tom) You don't look like a police Inspector.

Tom. But I am.

Stella. How can I be sure? How can I be sure of anything in this contemptible place? (Dropping her glasses) When do I see the Press?

Tom. The local Press already has the story. You can give them a personal interview later.

Stella. Wait until they hear that Stella Carlisle was almost murdered! Reporters will descend like locusts! I do think I had better wire my agent.

Tom. Later, Miss Carlisle. Please. (After a long sigh) Miss Carlisle, you didn't notice anyone handling the gun? You didn't see anyone putting a bullet in, by any chance?

Stella. Good heavens, no. I didn't have my glasses on. Frankly, without my glasses I couldn't see anyone put a cannon ball into a cannon.

Tom. Well, I guess that's all then. (Crossing towards Left wing) Carroll, they can come out now. I've questioned all of them.

Carroll. (Off-stage, Left) Okay, Inspector.
Stella. Are you quite through with me?
Tom. (Looks around) What? Oh! Yes.

Stella. (Rising majestically) Then at least have the decency to let me know. I shall retire to my dressing room for my beauty nap. (Crosses towards Left wing)

Tom. (Stops her) You won't leave the building, Miss Carlisle?

Stella. To do what, if I may ask? When I leave this building it will be to go directly to the station and back

to New York. (She moves towards the Left wing, stops, turns back dramatically and announces) I have given up the provinces! (She exits.)

Tom. (Looking after her, incredulously) Whew!

Eve. (Quietly) Tom, come here.

Tom. (Crossing to Up Right) Yes, Eve?

Eve. (When he reaches her, speaking quietly, motioning to the Left wing where Stella has just exited) She said something just then. The gun was supposed to be pointed at her. Tom, do you think she could have been the intended victim?

Tom. (Looking over his shoulder at Left wing) Who'd want to kill her? Besides a few critics.

Eve. Tom, don't you see? Whoever put that bullet in the gun had no way of knowing Phil wasn't going to aim it right at her!

Tom. That's why it looks bad for Phil. (His back is to entrance, stage Left, as Phil enters with Peggy)
If Phil was supposed to aim it at her, why didn't he?

Phil. (Coldly) Just a habit, I guess. I never would point a gun directly at anyone.

Tom. Except at Charlie?

Eve. (Annoyed) Tom! (Then, to Phil) Phil, Tom was merely theorizing.

Phil. (Crossing to Center with Peggy) Yes, I know. I overheard. I figured I was number one suspect. After all, I did fire the gun. Why not lock me up and let all the others go?

Peggy. (Clutching his arm) Phil, please don't talk that way. You had no way of knowing the gun was loaded!

Phil. I should have checked it, Peggy. But I did last night when Mrs. Pomeroy brought it here. It was empty then, I could swear to it.

Eve. (Going to Phil) We all know you didn't put that bullet in the gun, Phil. (Glaring back at Tom) It's the silliest thing I ever heard of.

Dodo. (Entering from Left wing with Bobby) My! It's too thrilling! I just looked out the window and
there's an absolute mob all around the building! Really, I feel just like a besieged fortress!

Bobby. (Double-take, observes her critically) Well? Dodo. Now, Bobby, hush! You know if it wasn't for me you'd never have been in this play.

Bobby. (Warning) And don't think I'll ever forget it, either.

Dodo. (To Tom) Which reminds me, Inspector, Bobby was pointing the gun at me before. (Shudders) It's the most ghastly thought! Why, I could have been — the victim! (Putting her arm around Bobby) You poor little boy, it would have ruined your life! I'll wager you never would have forgiven yourself.

Bobby. (Shrugging her arm away) Lady, if I was old enough to gamble I'd sure make money on that bet. (He crosses to the prop table.)

Herb. (Entering from the Right) Can we go now, Tom?

Tom. For a little while, yes. I'm going to need you all again in thirty minutes.

Eve. But, Tom, why—?

Tom. Because I've made no progress. Because not all of you have cooperated. I don't know what has happened to your memories, but I do know a way to make you remember.

Herb. What's that, Tom?

Tom. I'm going to ask you to run through the scene you were doing when the accident happened.

(There is a pause.)

Dodo. But — but how gruesome!

Eve. Tom, that will be too much of an ordeal.

Dodo. Besides, suppose someone loads the gun again!

Tom. The gun is at Headquarters, Mrs. Pomeroy.

Dodo. Oh, good! Then we're all perfectly safe.

(There is a sudden loud SCREAM from off-stage. They all stand rooted.)

Peggy. Good heavens, what's that?!

(Tom starts Right as FOOTSTEPS are heard and Carrie runs in from Right wing, a tea-cup in her hand.)

Carrie. (GASPING) Look! Look here!

Tom. What is it?

Carrie. (Thrusting the cup in his face) In the cup!

In the cup! The same thing I saw last night!

Tom. What did you see last night?

Carrie. Death! Death in the tea leaves. And now, here it is again! (The voice of the prophet) There's going to be another one!

Dodo. (Frightened, lets out a timid scream) Eek! (Catches herself) Oh, dear, was that me?

Eve. (Angrily, goes to Carrie and shakes her) Carrie, stop it. You tried to frighten us out of here before and now you're trying to do it again.

Carrie. (Breaking away from Eve) I have nothing to do with it. It's in the tea leaves!

Eve. Unfortunately, we're staying right here. Inspector Burke won't let us go, no matter how many pottles of tea you drink.

Carrie. (Darkly, urgently) You'd better go. You'd better go before something terrible happens. (Holding the cup up to Dodo) See — here it is, death!

Dodo. (Most interested, looks) Why! So it is! (Shudders, looks away) My! I'm so glad I drink coffee!

Tom. Carrie, do you know anything about those warning notes?

Carrie. No!

Tom. You have no idea how that letter got here before the rehearsal started?

Carrie. No. I can't be all over the building at once.

Tom. But nobody could get in this building without your knowing about it.

Carrie. (Confused, nervous) No — well, that is — yes! The place was open this afternoon. The Ladies'
Glee Club was in here practicing. Nice songs. (Sullenly) None of them left it. They're respectable, they are.

Tom. There was nobody here after they left.

Carrie. No. I locked up after them. Until Mrs. Pomeroy almost broke the door down about seven o'clock.

Tom. And nobody came in between the time the Glee Club left and seven o'clock?

Carrie. No.

Tom. You're positive?

Carrie. (Remembering) Oh yes, Mr. Witherspoon came. He said he wanted to rest a bit. Later on I saw him sleeping downstairs on the sofa, his topcoat spread over him. (Shaking her head) Poor man, I should have told him what I saw in the cup.

Tom. You let nobody else in?

Carrie. No. Nobody else. I cooked myself a bit of supper and then I cleaned up the stage. (Looks about) You'd never guess it now—not after these—these actors have messed it up.

Tom. All right. That'll be all, Carrie.

Carrie. (Crossing to the Right) I'm warning you now. You'd better clear out before the second murder happens! The tea leaves don't lie. (She exits Right.)

Eve. (Looking after her) Cheerful, isn't she?

Herb. (Chuckling) Don't let her upset you, Eve. Carrie's a little eccentric.

Eve. Eccentric? I'd say crazy is the word for Carrie!

Dodo. (Thinking it out) I don't know, Eve. I certainly did see death in that cup!

Eve. Really? What did it look like?

Dodo. Tea leaves. (Sighs, turns to Tom) You did say we could go for thirty minutes, Inspector?

Tom. Yes. I'll tell Carroll to have the men let you out. (He goes Left and exits into Left wing.)

Dodo. I must phone Wilbur. He'll be so worried!

Bobby. You got any money, Mrs. Pomeroy?

Dodo. (Looking in her purse) Why, let me see? Yes,
Peggy. (Rising) I'm not suspicious of you. Please believe—

Tom. (Entering from the Left, interrupting her) Well, I had one of my men check the newspaper office. Charlie hadn't turned in any columns at all. Maybe the whole thing was a bluff. If it was, it sure backfired!

Phil. He had it coming to him—however it happened.

Peggy. (Trying to stop him from saying too much) Phil, please—

Tom. Oh, another thing, Phil. The fingerprints on the gun have been checked.

Phil. Whose are they?

Tom. Yours—and Bobby's. Whoever loaded the gun must have worn gloves.

Phil. (Bitterly, as he goes off Right) Thanks, Inspector, for suspecting someone else besides Bobby and me.

Tom. (Surprised, looks at Peggy) You two have a quarrel?

Peggy. It's my fault, Tom. I don't know why, but I let some of those things Charlie said bother me.

Tom. (Looking at Right wing, thinking) Phil is hiding something.

Peggy. What do you mean?

Tom. (Still looking after Phil.) I don't know, Peggy. I wish I did.

Peggy. (Pleading) Tom, you don't think for a moment he's guilty of the murder?!

Tom. (Looking at her; sympathetically) No, Peggy. I don't think I do.

Peggy. (Brightening) May I tell him that?

Tom. Yes, sure. But don't tell anyone else.

Peggy. (Hurrying off Right) Thanks, Tom. Thanks a million.

(Alone, Tom sits in chair that Peggy moved from Center. He takes out his notebook and is consulting it
Stella. Inspector! Inspector, is that you? (She holds up her glasses and looks at him.) Oh yes, it is! (Crossing to Tom) I demand to know the meaning of this outrage!

Tom. (Rising; patiently) Yes, Miss Carlisle? What now?
Stella. I was in my dressing room, relaxing, when suddenly I felt a presence.
Tom. You mean there was someone in the room?
Stella. Not someone. Something! (Thrusting the ivy at him) This loathsome growth!

Tom. Oh yes. Ivy.

Stella. Someone put it there to frighten me. I demand you put a stop to this persecution! I demand you find the culprit!

Tom. (Patiently) Miss Carlisle, I'm doing my best. (Taking the ivy from her) Perhaps if you'd tell me why you are so superstitious about ivy—

Stella. (Interrupting) Personal reasons, Inspector. Every time I find ivy in a room something terribly unpleasant happens. (Pacing to and fro) At the hotel last night it could have been a coincidence. But this tonight is sheer malice.

Tom. Does everyone here know your feeling about ivy?

Stella. I believe I did mention it when I came in this evening. They were all here.

Tom. (Putting the ivy on the prop table) We'll check all the florists in town.

Stella. Are you going to force me to stay here? I demand to return to New York at once. I sense evil all around me! Someone is trying to hurt me. If I don't get away something awful might happen to me!

Tom. Miss Carlisle, that's exactly what the murderer wants. To get you out of town. If you'd cooperate we might find out why.

ACT II

Stella. I certainly don't know why! Everyone has always loved me! Adored me! Why, in London the crowds would wait for hours—

Tom. (Patiently) I'm sure of it. But right now I think if you would tell me a few of the unpleasant things connected with ivy it might give me a lead.

Stella. (After a pause, sits in chair down Left) Very well. It was a superstition of a maid I once had. I bought some for my apartment one day and she warned me something dreadful would happen. It did. That very day I met a man—a thief. Oh, he had charming manners but he was a vicious swindler who took all my money. He— (The LIGHTS swiftly go out) Why, what—!

(There is a moan from Stella. The LIGHTS go on for a second and die with the sound of a blown fuse. The brief flash of light reveals Tom, Center, his revolver drawn, and Stella, lying on the floor, to Right of prop table.)

Tom. Carroll! Carroll, where the devil are you? ! Carroll. (We can hear him puffing on in the wings) It's a blown fuse, Chief. I think we got some candles back here.

Tom. (Shouting) Well, get some candles, you idiot! Something's happened to Miss Carlisle!

Carroll. (Rushing off in the dark) Right away, Chief.

(We hear other FOOTSTEPS on stage and Tom turns briskly around.)

Tom. (Shouting) Who's that! Speak up or I'll shoot! Phil. (His voice coming from up Left) It's Phil, Tom. What's going on?

Tom. The lights went out. It's a fuse, blast it! Something's happened to Miss Carlisle. (Stella moans—a
quick blood-curdling sound) Quick—Help me, Phil. She’s down here.

(CARROLL rushes on with candles, which he lights and brings down to the prop table. In this light, we can make out TOM and PHIL bending over STELLA, down Left. CARROLL is placing another candle on the up Center crib chair. PEGGY is seen running in from the Right wing.)

PEGGY. Tom, what happened?

TOM. The fuse blew. Miss Carlisle evidently fainted. (As STELLA moans again) No. Wait! There's a bruise on her forehead. Just a slight one. Whoever hit her didn't have much strength.

PHIL. (Looking up) Shall I get a doctor?

STELLA. (As Tom lifts up her head) What—what hit me?

TOM. I don't know. Are you all right, Miss Carlisle?

STELLA. (Weakly) All right? I've never been so upset in all my life. (Sitting up) Help me up, please.

TOM. (Helping her to her feet) Shall I send for a doctor, Miss Carlisle?

STELLA. No. I don't need a doctor. What I need is the first train out of this town.

TOM. Phil, Peggy, help her to her dressing room—and stay there with her. I'm going to have a look around. Carroll, go find Carrie and see if there's an extra fuse in the building.

(PEGGY comes down Left and helps PHIL with STELLA. They help her off Left. CARROLL goes out Right.)

CARROLL. (As he exits) I hate to tangle with that dame again, Inspector.

EVE. (Entering from Left wing carrying a man's top-coat) Tom, what happened to Miss Carlisle? She wouldn't even speak to me when I passed her!

ACT II

TOM. She's darned lucky she can speak to anybody! Someone hit her when the lights were out.

EVE. (Concerned, looks off Left) Is she all right, Tom?

TOM. It looks like just a slight bruise, thank heavens. Stunned her, that's all.

EVE. Who would want to hit Miss Carlisle? (Then, eagerly) Tom, it's what I told you before! Miss Carlisle was the intended victim. Not Charlie.

TOM. I can't believe that, Eve. Why would anyone here try to kill her?

EVE. I don't know. But don't you see? Whoever it is has tried to kill her again!

TOM. I'll have Carroll assign a bodyguard. But I'll be hanged if I can believe anyone is after her. She only arrived in town last night. (He starts for the Right wing.)

EVE. Tom, just a minute.

TOM. (Turning) Yes?

EVE. (Holding up topcoat) This was in the lounge.

TOM. Well—?

EVE. It's Charlie's top-coat.

TOM. (Crossing back to her) Anything in it?

EVE. I didn't look—much as I wanted to. I thought you'd want to see it first.

(TOM takes coat from her and hurriedly goes through pockets. He finds a slip of paper, which he looks at quickly and puts in his own pocket.)

EVE. (Demandingly) Well—? What is it?

TOM. Nothing very important. I'm afraid.

EVE. Let me see it!

TOM. Not right now. We've got to work fast. This coat might come in handy.

EVE. How do you mean?

TOM. As bait. It's a long chance, but perhaps the murderer didn't know Charlie had a top-coat with him
tonight. Now, what if Charlie had been carrying his
column for Monday right here in this pocket?

Eve. (Excited) Oh! Was he?

Tom. No. Of course not. But we could pretend that—
Shhh!

Dodo. (Entering from Right, carrying box of candy,
unopened) Say! What's happening here anyway?
Candles and everything! (Regarding the younger couple
suspiciously) Am I interrupting something?

Tom. Nothing at all, Mrs. Pomeroy. A fuse blew and
we've set up these candles until it can be fixed. Nothing
to be frightened about.

Dodo. Oh, I see. My! I do think candlelight is so ro-
mantic, don't you?

Eve. (Shuddering) Not right now, I don't.

Dodo. Wilbur was just too sweet! He said I shouldn't
worry. He doesn't mind if you grill me all night. (Sit-
ing on lower entrance chair, up Right) However, he
did advise me not to sing until I had seen my lawyer!
(Laughing merrily) Imagine me! Why, I can't sing a
note.

Tom. I don't believe you'll need a lawyer, Mrs.
Pomeroy.

Dodo. Of course I won't. But it sounds so exciting. I
feel just like a gun-molly—or whatever they are.

Carroll. (Entering from the Right) Hey, Inspector.

Dodo. (Screaming) Eek! (Looks over her shoulder,
sees Carroll in the candlelight) Oh! You frightened
me in the dark.

Carroll. (Saluting Dodo) Sorry, Mrs. Pomeroy.
(To Tom) Inspector, I got something to show you.

Tom. What is it?

Carroll. Think maybe you'd better come with me.

Tom. Okay, Carroll. Right away. (Handing the top-
coat to Eve) Hold this, will you, Eve? (He hurries off
Right after Carroll.)

Dodo. (Looking at the coat) Whose is that?

Eve. It's Charlie's top-coat. I found it in the lounge.

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Dodo. Really? Look, Eve, will you come over and
sit here with me? I'm scared of this darkness.

(Indicates chair just above her own, which Eve takes
and moves a bit towards Center.)

Eve. (Sitting) Of course, Dodo. I don't blame you.

Dodo. (Looking sadly in silence at coat) Poor Char-
lie, he won't need that any more. He always hated the
cold so. (With a sigh) Well, he'll never be cold again.
(Looking around) Isn't it strange how spooky this
place has become? Just one murder and there's some-
thing so different about the atmosphere.

Eve. Just one—so far.

Dodo. (Shivering, holding her arms about herself)

Why, Eve, what a terrible thought! Are you expecting
another?

Eve. Don't forget Carrie and her tea leaves.

Dodo. But that's ridiculous— (Shivering again) I

hope. My, I feel the most awful chill in the air. Do you
think it would be just terrible if I threw Charlie's coat
over my shoulders?

Eve. Certainly not. (She leans over and helps Dodo
drape the coat over her shoulders) Is that all right?

Dodo. Yes. Much better, thank you. (Holding up the
cozy) I brought this candy for Miss Carlisle. All
chocolate creams. The drug store was full of them. And
Herb Grant said they didn't have any. (Looking over
her shoulder, off Right, nervously) Who's that? !

Eve. (Looking) Who's where?

Dodo. There's someone out there in the wings. (Call-
ing, timidly) Hello? Who's there, please?

Carrie. (From off Right) It's just me, Carrie.

Eve. (Coming on from wing, she looks frightened) I was
just going out for a breath of air.

Eve. I don't think the Inspector wants any of us to
leave again, Carrie. Not until the lights are fixed.

Carrie. Fuse blown—that's all it is.

Eve. Yes, we know. Did Mr. Carroll find you, Car-
rie? He wanted to know if there were any other fuses in the building.

CARRIE. No, there ain't. I know where I can get one though, Miss Westman, if only I can leave the building.

DODO. But we're all being held as suspects, Carrie. Don't you see? Just like a mystery movie.

CARRIE. (Going up to EVE, pleading, almost hysterically) You gotta help me get out of here, Miss Westman! Please! Something terrible is going to happen!

EVE. (As TOM and CARROLL enter from the Right wing) Tom, Carrie wants to go get another fuse.

(As soon as Carrie sees the policemen enter she turns quickly away and moves towards Left.)

TOM. I'm afraid that's impossible. But I'm glad you're here, Carrie. I want to ask you some questions.

CARRIE. (Her voice shaky) More questions?

TOM. (Taking from CARROLL a box of stationery and a bottle of red ink) Carroll found these in your closet.

CARROLL. In my closet?

TOM. Yes, on the floor. Hidden beneath some old clothes.

CARRIE. (Angrily, to CARROLL) What were you doing in my closet?

TOM. I told him to search the building.

CARRIE. What is that stuff?

TOM. Red ink. (WARN Curtain.)

CARRIE. What would I use red ink for? It ain't respectable. I use blue-black.

TOM. And this stationery. The same stationery that was used in those warning notes.

CARRIE. (Firmly) I never saw it before.

TOM. (Relentlessly) Weren't you trying to frighten these people out of the building?

CARRIE. I didn't write the notes! I don't know how that stuff got in my closet. You're trying to frame me! Yes, you are! Trying to frame me!

ACT II

TOM. (Crossing slowly Left, towards CARRIE) Carrie, did you have anything to do with the murder of Charlie Witherspoon? Did you touch that gun?

CARRIE. (Backing away toward prop table) No. No, I didn't! But I know who did! I know who did and I'm going to tell. (Taking a roll of bills out of her apron pocket and throwing it on the floor) I don't want this filthy money! Murderer's money! (She backs into the prop table; candle on table goes out, leaving just the candle up Center.)

TOM. (Still crossing slowly Left) Carrie, who is it? Who is the murderer?

(CARRIE turns pale. She clutches the prop table behind her and works her way around it. She seems to be trying to speak.)

DODO. For heaven's sake, Carrie, speak up! (To EVE) She's stalling for suspense.

CARRIE. (Still moving around table, toward Left wing) It's—it's—

TOM. (Now stopped, a little Left of Center) Yes! Who?

CARRIE. It's— Oh! (She staggers to the down Left chair, is between it and prop table. She grasps chair for support but crumples to the floor, tipping over the chair as she sinks down under the prop table.)

TOM. Carrie! (He rushes over to her, kneels beside her, as the others all stand quietly. Tom feels her pulse, turns her over, and we can make out the glittering handle of a knife in her back.* He looks up) She's—she's dead. A knife in her back.

(DODO screams loudly, just once, as THE CURtain QUICKLy FALLS)

*Note: This knife-handle can be put in place by the actor playing Tom before he turns Carrie over. It is important that Carrie be practically in the wings before she grasps for chair.
ACT THREE

The Curtain rises on candlelight. One candle is still in position on the prop table, down Left. The other candle has been moved to a chair, placed down Right. Between these two dim lights are six chairs—arranged in a semi-circle, in which sit, Left to Right, Herb, Bobby, Dodo, Eve, Peggy and Phil.

There is a moment of nervous silence broken by Dodo.

Dodo. (Tittering nervously) Eve?
Eve. (Impatiently) What is it now, Dodo?
Dodo. (Hesitantly) Well—I know Inspector Burke told us to sit here quietly until he gets back but—
Eve. (Hoping to cut her off) That’s right, Dodo.
Dodo. I just can’t do it. It’s so spooky here in this silence. Like a police lineup. (Looks about for support—receives none) Well, anyway, this candlelight is straining my eyes! I’m going to get my glasses, whether he likes it or not. (Whispers, “So there!” nod to the lot she gets up and starts timidly tiptoeing towards prop table. About half-way there, she catches herself and exclaims) Why am I tiptoeing? (She continues with heavy foot-steps to prop table, picks up her handbag and returns bravely to the chair she has just vacated.)

Phil. (Anxiously) What’s keeping Tom? How long is he going to hold us here?
Eve. He’s still trying to fix the lights.
Herb. All he needs is a new fuse.

Eve. He’s got that. Now he’s hunting for the fuse box. (Drily) That’s my Tom—always slothing.

Bobby. Hope he’s a better electrician than he is a detective.
DODO. (Sighing as she sits down again) Well, I thought you said—

TOM. (Interrupting) There's something I've got to ask you.

DODO. Oh! You mean I'm still under suspicion?

BOBBY. (With great conviction, to HERB) Told you all along she was the killer.

DODO. (Pointing Right) Tom Burke, you know I was away over there when Carrie was stabbed.

TOM. It isn't about Carrie. (Rising, walks over toward DODO) It's about this. (He takes a cheque out of his pocket.)

DODO. (Looking at it) What—what is it?

TOM. Something I found in the pocket of Charlie's topcoat.

DODO. I—I don't know anything about it.

TOM. You should. It's your cheque. Your signature.

DODO. (Takes a deep breath, then, desperately) It's—it was just a loan. Charlie needed some money. He had a—a sudden emergency of some sort. He needed a hundred dollars.

TOM. Why did he go to you?

DODO. (Defensively) Why not? My hundred dollars is as good as anybody else's!

TOM. (Taking sealed envelope from pocket) It wouldn't have anything to do with this, would it?

DODO. How should I know? What's in it?

TOM. It's a negative, Mrs. Pomeroy.

DODO. (Quietly, looking down) Where did you find it? (Then, violently, grabs for envelope) Give it to me!

TOM. (Pulling it out of her reach) Just a minute. (DODO relaxes, looking down at the floor) We found it in Charlie Witherspoon's desk. It's a photograph of you.

DODO. The beast! He told me he'd destroyed it!

TOM. What's it all about, Mrs. Pomeroy?

DODO. Oh, it's awful. Perfectly awful. Oh, if Wilbur ever found out—!

ACT III

EVE. (Rises, goes to DODO, sympathetically) What is the picture, DODO?

DODO. (Dabbing at her eyes with handkerchief) It's of me. I was terrified when Charlie found it in some old newspaper file. He threatened to use it. If it were published Wilbur would— (She cannot go on, sniffling into handkerchief. )

TOM. Tell us about it.

DODO. There was a contest. It was a bathing beauty contest. They were going to choose "Miss Perfect Flapper of 1930."

TOM. The negative says 1926.

DODO. (Looking up) Oh, does it! My, how time flies! (Putting her handkerchief back in her purse) I'd forgotten what year it was. Anyway, I entered the contest—

EVE. Well, what's so terrible about that?

DODO. But, don't you see—I lost!

EVE. (Walking away) Oh well, you didn't want to be a flapper anyway. It might have dated you.

DODO. Charlie promised he'd destroy it if I gave him a hundred dollars.

TOM. He might have—if he'd ever got back to the office.

DODO. (Finally getting the idea) Good heavens! You don't think I killed him?!

TOM. No, certainly not. Here's your picture now. And your cheque.

DODO. (Taking envelope and cheque) Thank you. (Tearing them both into shreds) What a relief! Now I'll be able to sleep nights.

HERB. Well, I'd hardly call that your solution, Tom.

TOM. No, Herb. I'm afraid the solution concerns Phil.

PHIL. (Rising) I've been expecting this, Tom. What's on your mind?

TOM. First of all, I'd like to know what you were doing over there in the wings when Carrie was stabbed.
PHIL. I was trying to find my way on stage in the dark. I'd just left Peggy with Miss Carlisle.

TOM. (Turning to Peggy) Is that right, Peggy?

PEGGY. Of course it is. But I don't understand—?

TOM. (Back to PHIL) You didn't notice anybody else in the wings?

PHIL. It was pitch black. I couldn't see. I wasn't paying any attention—there seemed to be so much happening on stage.

TOM. (Walking down Left, pacing it out) And yet Carrie was stabbed right here, facing us—(Looking into Left wing) And you were standing right there—behind her—Quite a coincidence. (Turning back to look straight at PHIL) The second coincidence tonight.

PHIL. I can't help the coincidences. I didn't kill Carrie. I had no reason.

TOM. No reason that we know of. Nevertheless, Phil, I have no choice but to—

PHIL. (Interrupting him) Go on and arrest me then. I did pull the trigger and kill Charlie. I was standing behind Carrie in the dark. I can't deny it. Go ahead—arrest me. What more proof do you need?

TOM. None.

PEGGY. (Jumps up and rushes to PHIL, grabbing his arm) Phil, please—!

PHIL. You think I'm guilty too. Everyone does.

PEGGY. You know I don't. You know I couldn't.

TOM. (Rising to Tom, pleading) Tom, Phil didn't—

HERM. (Rises, goes to Peggy, taking her from PHIL's arm, puts his arm around her, restrainingly) Peggy, we've got to let Tom handle this his own way.

PEGGY. Dad, you can't think—?

HERM. There there. It's going to be all right, Peggy. We'll find the best lawyer—

EVE. It doesn't make any sense, Tom Burke! If Phil killed Carrie he wouldn't have walked right on—practically announcing it!

TOM. Eve, will you just remember, this is my show.

EVE. (Turning from Tom) I wouldn't be very proud of it, if I were you. Of all the obvious—(Turning back to him) I'm glad I've seen this side of your character. You're the most obstinate—

CARROLL. (Entering from Right wing) Hey, Chief, we checked the fingerprints on the knife.

TOM. Well—? (CARROLL hesitates) It's all right, Carroll. Speak up. They'll all have to know sooner or later.

CARROLL. Only one set—Stanhope's.

(All eyes turn slowly toward PHIL, in amazement. There is a slight pause.)

PHIL. (In desperation) Of course my fingerprints were on the knife. It was one of the props in the play. I'm the prop man. My fingerprints are probably on all that stuff over there. (Indicates prop table.)

TOM. (Resigned) Sorry, Phil. There's nothing else I can do. I've got to take you in. (Starting over Right.)

PEGGY. (Sloping him) Tom, please—!

CARROLL. Need the handcuffs, Chief?

TOM. Not this time, Carroll.

DODO. Oh dear, how ghastly! But cheer up, Phil. After all, it's a brand new jail. It has all the new conveniences—(Quickly, catching herself) Of course, I've never been there myself, but—

BOBBY. Don't worry, Mrs. Pomeroy, you'll get there yet.

DODO. (Ignoring Bobby) Well—if you're finally through with me, do you mind if I dash? Wilbur must be frantic with fright.

TOM. Yes, you can go now, Mrs. Pomeroy.

DODO. Thank you, Inspector. You've been such a gentleman through all this. I can never thank you enough. And the next time I'm involved in murder I only hope you'll be in charge.

TOM. I trust there'll never be a next time.

DODO. As a matter of fact I was rather expecting a third one here tonight! I mean, things always happen
in threes, don't they? Oh well, I guess I'm just being technical. Wilbur always says that I'm—

Bobby: Hey, Inspector, can I go, too? Or are you gonna grill me some more?

Tom: No, Bobby, you've been grilled enough for one night. (Turning to Carroll.) Carroll, see that Bobby and Mrs. Pomeroy get home. There are a couple of squad cars outside. Take over one of them.

Carroll: Sure thing, Chief.

Dodo. (Thrilled) Goodness, me—in a patrol wagon! I do hope Wilbur will be looking out the window.

Carroll. (Dully) He will be. I'll sound the siren. In fact, for you, I'll sound the siren. In fact, for you, I'll sound a couple of 'em.

Dodo. (Clapping her hands together in excitement) A siren! You know, I think we must have the sweetest police force in the country! (Getting her things together) My, what a night this has been! I'll never be the same. (To Eve) Goodbye, darling. And don't worry about the play. In a month or so we'll start rehearsals on another. After all, the show must go on! (Going to Phil.) And, Phil, I'll come and visit you every visiting day. I'll even bake you a little surprise.

Phil. (Grimly) Thank you, Dodo.

Dodo. (Confidentially) You know—with a file in it? (Then, with a dramatic wave to the stage) Farewell, Angel Of The Tower. Farewell. Off I go to—

Carroll. (Impatiently) Hey, come on, lady. Your squad car awaits.

Dodo. (Taking Bobby's arm) Come, little Pierre of the angelic face. We go.

Bobby. (As they follow Carroll of Right) Gee, when the guys hear I been under suspicion of murder maybe they'll forget I was Little Lord Fauntleroy.

(They exit.)

Herb. (Looking after them with a smile) I'd like to hear Dodo's story to those reporters outside.

Act III

Eve. Poor Wilbur. He'll hear about this night the rest of his life.

Phil. Let's get this over with, Tom. Take me to the station.

Tom. You understand, Phil, you're just being booked on suspicion. This isn't a formal complaint.

Phil. I understand you've got to take somebody in and I'm elected.

Tom. You'll be able to communicate with your lawyer in the morning.

Phil. (Sarcastically) Thanks.

Tom. Well, we'll get going.

Peggy. Phil, let me go with you.

Phil. No, Peggy, you stay here. (Managing a smile) I'll be all right. I've been in worse jams than this, honey.

Peggy. (Rushes to Phil, who puts his arm around her) Phil! Oh, Phil, isn't there something I can do?

Phil. Keep your chin up, honey. That's all for the present.

Herb. (Putting Phil on the back) We'll be over to see you first thing in the morning, Phil.

Eve. It's utterly fantastic, Tom Burke. Phil's no more guilty than I am!

Tom. I'll call you later, Eve.

Eve. I won't be home.

Tom. (Going Left) We'll go this way, Phil. To avoid the reporters. And the crowd. (Phil follows him) You folks can go, too.

Herb. I'll have to lock up the building, Tom—now that Carrie isn't here.

Tom. Goodnight, then. (He indicates for Phil to go, and follows him off.)

Eve. (Looking after Tom) As a Sherlock Holmes he'd make an excellent Watson. I've told him what I thought time and time again but he just won't listen. Just because I'm a woman, I suppose. Hasn't he ever heard of intuition?

Herb. And what does your intuition tell you, Eve?

Eve. Oh—well, for one thing, Phil is innocent.
Peggy. Of course he is! Oh, I wish there were something we could do. I wish there were some clue—!
Herb. You need some sleep, Peggy, dear. Things will clear themselves up in the morning.
Peggy. I won't be able to sleep a wink all night. (She goes wearily to chair, Center, and sits.)
Herb. Anyway, you've got to try. (Crossing Right)
I'll check the windows and doors. (He exits Right.)

Eve. (Crossing to prop table and gathering up scripts) Well, 'The Angel Of The Tower' had an awfully short run. Poor Miss Carlisle—after coming all this way—(Thoughtfully) I still feel it was her being here. I still feel it was our doing this play—

Peggy. (Looking up) You don't think Miss Carlisle had anything to do with the murders?
Eve. I certainly don't think she did them, if that's what you mean. But I've got the strongest hunch she's involved somehow.
Peggy. But she just came to town last night.
Eve. She's been in a great many other towns. There might have been somebody here she met before.
Peggy. Who, Eve?
Eve. (Closing her briefcase) I don't know, Peggy. I can't think. I'm so tired and confused. But I do know Phil didn't do it. And somehow we'll prove it.
Peggy. Thanks, Eve. You've been a great comfort.
Eve. (Determinedly) There is something I was told tonight. It's lurking somewhere in the back of my mind. If only I could remember—!
Peggy. I guess Dad is right. Maybe we all need some sleep—(She rises and goes wearily towards Left wing) I'm going to get my coat. It's in the lounge.
Eve. I'll wait for you, Peggy. (Peggy exits. Eve idly starts pushing chairs back against the rear drapes, concentrating intensely. Herb appears from Right wing) All locked up, Herb?
Herb. Yes. (He comes to Center) Eve, I'm worried about Peggy.
Eve. Naturally she's upset about Phil.
I've got to see that—well, she doesn't do anything desperate.
Eve. (Surprised) Good heavens, Herb, you don't mean—?
Herr. She's very high strung. This has been a great blow to her.
Eve. I'm sure you're unduly alarmed. And I know all this trouble will blow over. They can't hold Phil. He didn't have any motive. (She starts towards prop table to get briefcase.)
Herr. I certainly hope so, Eve.
Eve. (Stops suddenly when she understands what he's said. Looking back at him, curiously) Herb, you certainly can't mean you think there—there might be?
Herr. I don't know. I really don't know, Eve. (Then, quickly) Oh, I'd surely never mention it to Peggy if I did. Not in her present state.
Eve. (Thinking it over) No. No, it wouldn't be wise. (She continues over to prop table) And I'll keep an eye on Peggy, too.
Herr. Thanks. I had to talk to someone. (He rises, looks off Right) You've been a great help, Eve.
Eve. (Picking up briefcase off table) Not at all. I'm very fond of Peggy. (Noticing something on prop table) Herb, isn't this yours?
Herr. (Looking at her) What?
Eve. (Picks up cigarette lighter from table) This lighter. Someone's left it here. Is it yours?
Herr. Nope. Never owned one. I don't smoke—you know that.
Eve. (Putting it back on table) That's right. (Suddenly) But—!
Herr. But what?
Herr. About the lighter?
Eve. (Nervously) Yes. I—I think it's Tom's. (Looks at it again, excitedly) Yes, I'm sure of it. I'll drop by the station and give it to him. He may be worried about it. (She picks up her briefcase and the lighter and crosses quickly Right) Herb, will you tell Peggy I couldn't wait?
Herr. Sure. I'll see that she gets home all right.
Eve. Thanks. Goodnight. (She hurries off, Right.)
Herr. (Deep in thought, doesn't look after her) Goodnight. (He looks at prop table, preoccupied, for a few seconds, then, turning abruptly, walks into Right wing. Evidently he is at light switch, for the LIGHTS go out with the exception of one overhead. He reappears and crosses to prop table, which is now empty, save for the blown-out candle and the pathetic potted plant and the pitcher of water with its glass. Herb pours water into the glass and—taking a small pill-box from his jacket pocket, drops several pills into the glass of water. Peggy enters from Left.)
Peggy. Hello, Dad. Where's Eve?
Herr. She just ran out. Tom forgot his lighter and she's taking it to him. (As Peggy puts coat over her shoulders and starts to cross Right) Feel better, dear?
Peggy. (Listlessly) I feel terrible. I can't get my mind off Phil. (Turning to face Herr) They can't possibly keep him there, can they, Dad?
Herr. He'll be out by morning. It's just circumstantial evidence. (As Peggy starts to walk towards Right wing) Why don't you sit down for a minute, honey? Just rest and talk to your old Dad for a minute and maybe the crowd will be gone.
Peggy. (Sitting wearily on the chair, up Right, that Herr used before) All right. I just couldn't face any people tonight.
Herr. What you need is rest, Peggy. (Holding up pill box) If you take this now you'll be really sleepy by the time we get home.
Peggy. What is it?
Herr. It's that nerve medicine you bought for me yesterday.
Peggy. Oh yes. I don't think I need any, Dad.
Herr. Sorry. As your old family doctor I insist. I
want my patient to get lots of sleep. (Takes out one more pill and drops it into glass) See? Just one pill and you'll be asleep as soon as you hit the pillow. (He walks over towards Peggy, glass in hand.)

Peggy. It didn't seem to work for you last night. You were up till all hours.

Herb. (Laughing) Because I'd forgot you bought it. (He hands her the glass) Here. It's all mixed. You just drink it.

Peggy. (Taking the glass) Thanks. (Thoughtfully, looking up at Herb) Dad, why do you suppose Phil has been so secretive about his background?

Herb. (Pulling up chair from rear wall) He hasn't been, has he?

Peggy. He never mentions his family, the way most people do. He never reveals any details of what happened before he came here—the trivial little things people tell each other.

Herb. (Smiling, as he sits in chair, facing her) Probably because they are so trivial. Now, drink your medicine, dear.

Peggy. (Raising the glass to her lips) It—it smells so bitter.

Herb. It tastes bitter, too. Medicine that is good for you always does.

Peggy. (Putting the glass down on the floor, rises impatiently, and crosses to down Left) Oh, this won't help me any. I feel so helpless—so useless. There must be something I can do for Phil.

Herb. (Watching her intently) You'll help him most by taking care of yourself. (Picks up glass and crosses to her, gently) Now drink this, like a good girl.

Peggy. (Taking the glass from him again) If you really think it will make me sleep.

Herb. I can promise you it will. Now drink up, Peggy.

Peggy. (Still hesitating) Perhaps I should go over to the station house. Even if Phil told me not to.

ACT III

Herb. (Impatiently) But you can't do anything for him. Not until morning.

Peggy. (Putting the glass on prop table) I'm going, Dad. I want to talk to him. At least I can tell him I believe in him, that I'm going to fight for—

Herb. (A command) Peggy, drink that medicine! Drink it, I tell you. (Catching himself, more gently) After all, honey. I'm worried about you. I want to make sure that you get some rest.

Peggy. (Looking at him puzzled) All right, Dad. (She raises the glass to her lips. There is a sudden loud noise—a door BANGING—off Right. Both look off startled) What was that?

Herb. (Nervously) I don't know. I'd better go see. (He hurries off Right. Peggy looks after him, tastes the liquid in the glass, makes a face and looks around for a place to empty the contents. She sees the potted plant on the table and goes behind table to pour the glass into it. Herb enters, Right, saying) Strange, I thought I'd locked that door. (Sees Peggy) What are you doing?

Peggy. (Nervously) I—I was pouring the rest of the medicine in here.

Herb. Why did you do that? (Crossing to her) What's the matter with you, Peggy? I told you to drink that. (He takes the empty glass from her and puts his hand on her arm.)

Peggy. (Shaking his hand away) But I don't understand! Why should I drink it if I don't want to?

Herb. Because you're nervous and upset and because I told you to. (Going to water pitcher, refills glass) Luckily, I have some more. And now you're going to drink it right down. (He takes glass from pocket, empties it into glass and returns to Peggy, handing her the glass) Here.

Peggy. (Starts to protest) But—

(He watches her grimly. She gives up and raises the glass to her lips. She is about to drink when)
Tom. (Entering from Right wing, followed by Eve, says loudly) Don't touch that, Peggy! (Startled, she turns and watches as Tom crosses to her and takes the glass from her hand) What's in this glass, Herb?
Herb. (Backing a little away) Just—just some nerve medicine. I—I thought Peggy would sleep if she took some.
Tom. (Handing glass to Eve, who crosses Left) Hold this will you, Eve. I'll have it analyzed.
Herb. (Attempting to laugh) What—what are you suggesting? That I was going to poison Peggy?
Tom. We'll find out soon enough.
Peggy. (Bewilderedly) Tom, Eve, what is this all about?!
Eve. (Go to Peggy and putting arm protectively around her) Easy, honey.
Tom. Herb, why didn't you tell us you came here before rehearsals started tonight?
Herb. Why should I tell you that when I didn't?
Tom. Carrie said you did. She said you told her you'd come for your lighter. You don't own a lighter. Then a little later Carrie conveniently forgot. She said only Charlie had come here. Fortunately Eve remembered Carrie's first story.
Herb. Carrie made a mistake. She must have lied to Eve.
Tom. I think Carrie lied to me. You had already got to her and offered her money to forget she had seen you here. Carrie also worked for you. To keep her job she agreed to remain silent. When she started to talk you were standing over there in the shadows—and stabbed her. (Watching him intently) Isn't that it, Herb?
Herb. Ridiculous! You must be joking, Tom.
Tom. I don't joke about things like that. You put the bullet in that gun before rehearsal tonight. You stabbed Carrie. Right now you were planning to poison Peggy.
Peggy. Dad! Tell him! Tell him! You couldn't have!
Tom. (Quietly, not taking his eyes off Herb) Yes, Peggy, he could. He even told Eve he was afraid you were so despondent and desperate you might do away with yourself.
Peggy. (Shocked) Eve, did he tell you that?
Eve. He most certainly did.
Tom. Phil would have been blamed for the first two murders and Peggy would have been judged a suicide. You certainly had it all worked out.
Herb. This is the most ridiculous—Why would I want to kill Peggy?
Tom. I don't know. But I'm going to find out.
Peggy. (Coming to Tom) But, Tom. I bought that medicine myself! It was just something for the nerves—sleeping pills. Not poison!
Tom. No. Not one tablet. But I have an idea there's a lot more than one tablet in that glass.
Peggy. (Backing away, looking at Herb in horror) And he—he had me buy it from the druggist. He wanted it to look as though I—Oh—! (She has backed up to rear wall, where she falls into a chair and buries her face in her hands.)
Tom. We'll find out soon enough, Peggy. I'll have that glass analyzed and—

(Herb has been looking at the glass in Eve's hand, and, before Tom can say any more, he lunges for it, his hand raised to smash it. Eve steps out of his way just in time. Tom moves quickly after him, restraining him. Herb struggles only for a second, then slumps in Tom's arms. They are now a little Right of Center.)

Herb. (Giving up) All right, all right. I'll tell you all about it.

(Tom helps him to chair, up Right. Herb sinks exhaustedly into it.)

Tom. You might just as well, Herb. (At his side) Why did you want Charlie killed?
HERB. (A hollow laugh) I didn't want Charlie killed. That was an accident. That gun was supposed to have been pointed at Stella Carlisle.

(There is a stunned pause.)

EVE. (Triumphantly, to Tom) There, I told you so! TOM. Why did you want Stella Carlisle killed?

HERB. Because years ago I had known her. I sold her a lot of worthless stock. I swindled a fortune from her. (PEGGY lowers her hands from her face, watching him weakly) I was afraid she'd recognize me. Last night when we met her I thought perhaps she did. That's why I tried to frighten her out of town.

EVE. With those threatening notes?

HERB. Yes. But it didn't work. I put more of those notes around over here. I put ivy in her dressing room.

Nothing worked. (He puts hand over his forehead) If only they had! If only she had stopped the rehearsals and gone away! I would have taken the bullet from the gun. (Looking up at Tom, pleading) You've got to believe me! I would have taken the bullet from the gun. It wouldn't have been necessary to try and kill her.

TOM. Was it necessary anyway?

HERB. If she had recognized me it would have ruined my other plan. (Looking at Peggy) You see, I had plans for Peggy.

EVE. (Driking) Obviously you did.

PEGGY. But, why, Dad, why—?!

HERB. (Looking straight out front, his eyes glassed with madness) Why? Because you were leaving me.

You were going to marry Phil and take your money away from me.

PEGGY. But my money—! You don't need my money!

HERB. Oh, but I do. It's all I have.

PEGGY. All?!

HERB. Yes, all. I've been living on you from the start. I lived on your father too, before his death. I convinced him to appoint me your guardian just so I could have access to your inheritance.

PEGGY. (Rising, coming down to Herb) I don't believe it! You're lying to me. Aren't you? Aren't you?! (She has grabbed the lapels of his jacket and is shaking him wildly.)

HERB. (Quietly, standing, removes Peggy's hands from his lapels. She rushes to Eve, who again puts her arm around her) No, I'm not, Peggy. I'm too tired to lie any more. (He clutches at back of chair for support) You see, Tom? Ever since her father's death I've gambled with Peggy's estate. I've made a lot of investments with money that wasn't mine—money at the bank, covering them with her funds. Peggy never questioned me about the inheritance. But I knew as soon as she married Phil and he took over her affairs I'd be found out. Then they'd have checked my short-ages at the bank. I'd be ruined, sent to prison—What could I do? I thought of the suicide scheme.

PEGGY. (Standing with Eve, upstage Center) How could you? How could you do it?

HERB. It isn't difficult. Not once you start. Funny—first Charlie. Then Carrie.

TOM. What about Carrie?

HERB. You figured that out correctly before. She promised not to tell that I'd been here earlier tonight and then she got panicky. I couldn't let that crazy old woman stand in my way. Nothing's ever stood in my way. (There is a sudden change in his manner and he turns suddenly, no longer the tired old man, but an animal, desperate for escape. He whips out a gun from his pocket) Nothing is going to stand in my way ever now! (He backs down to the apron of the stage, the gun trained on the group.)

TOM. Herb, put that gun away!

HERB. Oh, no. I'm going to get out of here.

TOM. You can't possibly. How far can you get? Be sensible, Herb.
HERB. (Wildly) Go on. Get your hands up—all of you.

(As they raise their hands, he jumps off into the orchestra. He backs up the aisle, breathing loudly, the gun still pointed at the group on stage. As he is backing up the aisle of the darkened auditorium, the door in the rear of the hall opens suddenly, letting in the light from outside. CARROLL stands in the door, his gun drawn. HERB wheels around, sees CARROLL, and rushes back to the stage. CARROLL advances down aisle, slowly, his gun drawn.)

HERB. (Shouting back at CARROLL as he clammers up on stage) Stay back there or I'll shoot them!

(CARROLL stops.)

TOM. It's no use, Herb. The place is surrounded.

(HERB searches wildly for another escape. He spots the Left wing, and rushes for it. As he reaches the wing, PHIL steps out, blocking his path. HERB lets out a yell and thrusts PHIL aside, racing off Left.)

TOM. (Drawing his gun as he runs off Left) Come on, Carroll.

(CARROLL rushes up on stage and follows TOM off Left.)

PHIL. (Picking himself up, where HERB's shove has thrown him) Peggy, Peggy! Are you all right?

PEGGY. (Rushing to him) Phil, oh, Phil!

PHIL. (Putting his arm around her) It's all right, honey. It's all right.

(EVE rushes to Left wing, trying to see what's happening. We hear the sound of running FOOTSTEPS

and then the sound of a GUN being fired. PEGGY buries her head in PHIL's shoulder. They all wait tensely. After a second TOM appears, panting.)

TOM. (Entering from Left wing) He's—he's killed himself.

EVE. (Quietly, after a stunned silence) How?

TOM. He ran back to the men's dressing room. It was all over before Carroll and I reached him.

PEGGY. How horrible—! (She covers her mouth, biting the back of her hand, and then starts impulsively for the Left wing.)

TOM. (Restraining her gently) No. It's better that you don't go to him. (She buries her face in Tom's chest.)

EVE. (Comfortingly) Peggy, it was the only way—

TOM. (Looking up, to PHIL) Phil, please take her home.

PHIL. (Crossing to PEGGY, takes her from TOM) Come on, darling. Let's get away from here.

PEGGY. (Drawing herself up, bravely) I'll be all right, Phil. I'll try.

PHIL. (Very tenderly) That's my girl.

(He starts to walk with her, his arm about her shoulder, towards the Right wing.)

TOM. Take the squad car if you like, kids.

PEGGY. (Looking back at TOM) No thanks, Tom. I'd rather walk. It'll help me get things straight in my head. (To PHIL) Come on, darling.

PHIL. Goodnight, Eve. Tom. Thanks for everything.

TOM. I didn't do very much.

EVE. I'll say he didn't. Any real detective work here tonight—I did.

TOM. (Grudgingly) I do have to hand it to you, Eve.

EVE. (Mock modestly) Think nothing of it. Just a woman's intuition.

PHIL. Well then, thanks for your intuition.
Eve. (Watches them go off, then turns to Tom) Well, Inspector Burke, got a job for me on the force?
Tom. (Smiling) Sure. The desk next to mine, too! Our 'intuition' sergeant. (At her side) And since you broke the case, could a poor old detective take you home?
Eve. If you think I'd dare walk home alone you are a poor detective.
Tom. Let's go, then. Everything's cleared up here.
No mysteries to be solved. No murderers loose—
Eve. (Stopping him) You know? There's one thing that still troubles me.
Tom. What is it?
Eve. The mystery of Phil. What has he been hiding all this time?
Tom. I guess that's about the only thing I did find out tonight. And he told me that himself on the way to the station house.
Eve. All right—so you're a good sleuth. What's the story?
Tom. Well, it seems that our Phil Stanhope is really Phillips Stanhope Waterbury, the third!
Eve. You mean—of the Waterbury's?!
Tom. The same.
Eve. (Blurs out) Why, that's the richest family in the state!
Tom. That's right. Phil came here to get a start for himself, to prove his own capabilities. He didn't want to be handicapped by the Waterbury name—or their millions. Imagine!
Eve. Tsk, tsk, tsk—and he calls that a handicap! Guess I'm just overprivileged.
Tom. You got me!
Eve. And, believe it or not, that's all I want. (Smiles at Tom and takes his arm) Well, can we go now?
Tom. Yes. I've put Carroll in charge. I don't think anything else will happen.

(At this moment, a blood-curdling SCREAM is heard, off Left. Both start with surprise.)

Tom. What was that?!
Eve. It was a scream—!

(They stand in stunned silence for a second. Then the voice of Stella Carlisle is heard, approaching the Left wing.)

Stella. (Impertiously, calling) Inspector! Inspector! Eve. Miss Carlisle! We forgot all about her!
Stella. (Entering, majestically, from Left wing) Inspector! Inspector! (Raises her glasses to her eyes)
Ah! There you are! (Lowering her glasses, coming towards Tom and Eve) Inspector, I must see you at once—alone!
Tom. It's all right, Miss Carlisle. You can speak in front of Miss Westman. She's my assistant, now.
Stella. (Observing Eve, critically) Oh. Well, I was asleep in my dressing room and I dreamed I heard a shot!
Carroll. (Entering from Right wing) It's all okay now, Chief. They took the body away.
Stella. Body? Is there another body? Then it was a shot?!
Eve. Yes, Miss Carlisle.
Stella. Good heavens, it's like rehearsing on a battlefield! (Casually) And who, may I ask, got it this time?
Tom. Herb Grant. He shot himself.
Stella. Was he in the play?
Eve. He was, Miss Carlisle.
Stella. How very, very inconsiderate. Couldn't he have waited until after the performance? (Raising her glasses to her eyes, looking at Tom) You, my good man, shall play his part. (WARN Curtain.)
Tom. (Backing away) Oh, now, Miss Carlisle—
REHEARSAL FOR DEATH  ACT III

STELLA. (Her glasses turned on CARROLL) And you are a perfect type for the other role.

CARROLL. (Pleadingly, to TOM) Hey, Chief, don't let her do this!

STELLA. Not another word. We'll have to use you both. (To EYE) Miss Wistful—or whatever your name is—have both these men here at rehearsal tomorrow night. After all, the show must go on.

EVE. (Helplessly) But do you think—?

STELLA. (Raising her hand) Silence! I have spoken.

(Starts off majestically toward Right wing. She stops at CARROLL.) And you, sir, may escort me to my hotel.

(CARROLL looks protestingly at TOM)

TOM. (Smiling) Okay, Carroll, you go with Miss Carlisle.

STELLA. (Still in command) Your arm, please.

(CARROLL, speechless, offers STELLA his arm and they exit. Right.)

TOM. (Catching his breath) Now, Eve, she can't be serious about going on with this—!

EVE. (Interrupting, mischievously) Why not? I'm sure you and Carroll are good studies. You'll know your lines in no time. Besides, it'll be fun working together. You in my play and me on the force.

TOM. That's right. The head of the 'Intuition' department.

EVE. (Taking his arm) Incidentally, don't I get a reward for solving this case?

TOM. (As they start off, Right) Guess you deserve one. What would you do if I gave you five thousand dollars?

EVE. Darling, if you gave me five thousand dollars, the first thing I'd do would be to count it.

(They are going off, arm in arm, as)

THE CURTAIN QUICKLY FALLS

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REHEARSAL FOR DEATH

PROPERTY PLOT

ACT ONE

Dustpan and broom (CARRIE)
Handbag, glasses, script
Mirror
Envelope with letter
Briefcase
Script
Pitcher of water
Glasses
Geranium
Cigarette lighter
Revolver
Box of candy (HERB)
Sofa cushion (EVE)
Script (PEGGY)
Letter
Furse
Glasses
Script (CHARLIE)

(Dodo)

(On prop table)

ACT TWO

Notebook (TOM)
Candy box (STELLA)
Tea cup (CARRIE)
Potted ivy (STELLA)
Revolver (TOM)
PROPERTY PLOT

Candles, matches (Carroll)
Topcoat (Eve)
Slip of paper (Eve)
Candy box (Dodo)
Box of stationery (Carroll)
Bottle of red ink (Carroll)
Roll of bills (Carrie)
Knife

ACT THREE

Candles
Cheque (Tom)
Sealed envelope (Tom)
Briefcase (Eve)
Pill box (Herb)
Revolver (Herb)
Revolver (Carroll)

OUR TOWN

Drama. 3 acts. By Thornton Wilder. 17 males, 7 females, extras. Bare stage. Costumes, 1901.

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize, 1939. The play begins in 1901 in Grover’s Corners where the Gibbs and the Webbs are neighbors. During their childhood George Gibbs and Emily Webb are playmates and their lives are inextricably woven together as neighbor’s lives are like to be. But as they grow older they pass from this period into a state of romantic but embarrassed interest in one another. And one day, after a slight quarrel, George proposes to Emily in the drug store over an ice cream soda. They are a fine young couple, but their happiness is short-lived, for Emily is taken ill and placed in the village cemetery on a rainy, dreary day. In the most vitally moving scene in the modern theatre is shown the peace and quiet of death which can never be understood by the living. Emily, at first, doesn’t understand it, and not until she has gone back to relive her twelfth birthday does she understand that life is a transient fleeting thing and death brings an eternal peace. She takes her place in the graveyard with her friends while George, unable to see beyond his grief, mourns for her.

(Royalty, $25.00) Price, 85 cents.

TEN LITTLE INDIANS


A superlative type of mystery comedy, first produced at the Broadway Theatre in New York. The play takes place in a weird old house on an island. In the house is a medal-piece on which there are ten little wooden Indians, and above which is an inscription of the nursery rhyme, telling how each little Indian died—until there were none. Ten people are gathered in the house as guests of a mysterious and unseen host. They hear the voice of the host accuse them, each in his turn, of complicity in a murder. Then one by one the guests suffer the different deaths predicted by the voice, and one by one the little wooden Indians topple. With seven down and three to go, the audience is still suspicious and in a fever of excitement. What follows is a tremendously gripping finale, expertly done by one of America’s top mystery writers.

(Royalty, $30.00) Price, 85 cents.
EVERY FAMILY HAS ONE

Comedy. 3 acts. By George Batson. 5 males, 7 females. Interior. Modern costumes.

Given premiere performance at the Northwestern University Theatre, 1918 Summer Session. The Reardon family is a typical American family. Laura, the mother, a social climber, has engineered a match between her daughter, Marcia, and wealthy Sherwin Parker. The youngest Reardon, Penelope, is a demon with a sling-shot; Warry, the only son, is positive he is the coming Eugene O'Neill. Reginald, the father, would rather tinker with the automobile than tickr tape; and Nana, the wise-cracking grandmother, is concerned with getting rid of the Parkers. Nana succeeds with the help of Cousin Lily, an adorable liar with stage aspirations. Her performance as the skeleton in the Reardon closet is so convincing that the mighty Parkers take to their heels and Marcia is reunited with the boy she really loves. "One of the best for high schools. No director can go wrong with Every Family Has One. I recommend it sincerely."—W. N. Viola, Pontiac High School, Mich.
(Royalty, $25.00) Price, 85 cents.

THE FIGHTING LITTLEs

Comedy. 3 acts. Adapted by Caroline Francke from the novel by Booth Tarkington. 5 males, 10 females. Modern costumes.

Every family in the world suffers from the misunderstandings of two generations but not many of them are as explosive as the Littlees. The fireworks really begin when Dally Little finds all his daughter's friends "young hoodlums" and Ham Eller the "worst hoodlum of the lot." Mr. Little has his own candidate for his daughter's affections. In desperation daughter Goody tries to follow her father's advice—and the amazing results confuse everybody. Through three acts the quick-tempered Littlees squabble their way through differences in viewpoint and ridiculous situations without even knowing how funny they are. Only when the battle royal is over do they discover that they have learned to understand each other and are really a united family. "...proved a real hit...delighted the audience...witty lines and humorous situations." Boulder Colo. Camera.
(Royalty, $25.00) Price, 85 cents.

Rehearsal for Death

A MYSTERY COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

by George Batson

Samuel French

PRICE, 85 CENTS