

the stairs. The doorbell rings. The sound electrifies GWEN into sudden action.)

(DOORBELL. PERRY.)

GWEN. I'll go, Jo. (Exits outer door.)

(Jo picks up TONY's fur coat and hat. Exits under stairs.)

*Begin*  
PERRY. (Off. With exaggerated elegance) Why! Fancy meeting you here!

GWEN. (Off) Oh, shut up, Perry!  
(DOOR Slam.)

(The sound of the door closing. GWEN comes down immediately, followed by PERRY. He is speaking the next line as he comes.)

PERRY. Come on, get your bonnet on. I'd like to stop at the Riding Club and look at that horse, wouldn't you? It'll only take a minute.

GWEN. Oh, Perry!

PERRY. What's the matter?

GWEN. I can't go.

PERRY. What do you mean—you can't go!

GWEN. They're going to read the play down at Wolfe's office.

PERRY. What?

GWEN. The author's going to read the play. And of course they had to pick this afternoon.

PERRY. What are you talking about?

GWEN. I can't go with you, Perry. I've got to go to Wolfe's office to hear the play read. There's no way out of it. I've got to do it. Isn't that damn!

PERRY. You're joking.

GWEN. But Perry. I'm not! I know it sounds silly—

PERRY. Silly! It's cuckoo! I never heard anything

so ridiculous in my life. You can't mean you're breaking this date just to go and hear somebody read a play. . . . What play?

GWEN. The play! The play that goes into rehearsal on Monday. That Mother and I are doing.

PERRY. Why, good God, you've read it a thousand times. You read it to me!

GWEN. But this is different. The author's going to read it.

PERRY. Well, let him—the silly ass! What do you care!

GWEN.  Now, Perry, please try to understand this. It's part of my job, and it's important.

PERRY. Important to hear some idiot read a play that you've read again and again!

GWEN. But it's more than that—it's a ceremony!  
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PERRY. Gwen, you know as well as I do that we planned this thing a week ago. Mother's no Victorian, but, listen, you can't do a thing like this. She wouldn't understand.

GWEN. Perry! I want horribly to go! I made an awful fuss. But what could I do?

PERRY. (~~Crosses her~~) You know, Gwen, this isn't the first time you've done this to me.

GWEN. Perry, please don't be unreasonable.

PERRY. I don't think I was unreasonable about New Haven, when we were all set to go to the game—

GWEN. But I explained.  I told you. You said you understood. Wolfe suddenly phoned—I had to go down to see the chap he'd got as juvenile. If it was somebody I couldn't stand— And Wednesday I had to be photographed with Mother.

PERRY. Yes, I know. I know.

GWEN. Don't look so stern. You know this is all just because of the new play.

PERRY. Yeh. But there'll always be a new play.  
~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ Won't there?

GWEN. I realize it's inconvenient sometimes. It is for me, too.

PERRY. But what are we going to do about it, Gwen?

GWEN. If I can't go—I can't. ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~

PERRY. ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ I'm not talking about that. I mean us! Look here, Gwen. You're no blue-eyed babe. I haven't dropped down on one knee and said will-you-be-mine, but you know I'm absolutely crazy about you. Don't you?

GWEN. Uh-hm.

PERRY. But what are we heading for? That's what I'd like to know. How's it all going to work out?

GWEN. Why—I don't know. What is there to work out?

PERRY. After all, you marry the person that you'd rather be with than anyone else in the world. But where'll you be half the time? Rehearsing, or something. ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~

GWEN. Now, don't be fantastic! Rehearsals last three weeks.

PERRY. All right. And then what! You're at the theatre every night. Your work will just begin when mine is all over. You'll have dinner at six. I'll probably not even be home. By midnight you're all keyed up and ready to start out, but I've got to be at work in the morning.

GWEN. But those things adjust themselves. Lots of other people have got around it. ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~

PERRY. I'd do anything in the world for you, Gwen. I'd die for you! But I can't be one of those husbands. Hanging around dressing rooms! Side-stepping scenery. Calling up the costumer. What am I going to do every night. See the show?

GWEN. But you wouldn't want me to be one of

those wives, would you! Bridge and household and babies!

PERRY. Well, why not! What's the matter with that!

GWEN. ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ Because I can't do that sort of thing any more than you can do the other. I'm an actress, Perry. An actress!

PERRY. Oh, what does that mean! Suppose you turn out to be as good as your mother—or better! What is there to it when it's all over? Get your name up in electric lights, and a fuse blows out—and where are you!

GWEN. I won't let you belittle my work. It's just as important as yours. I suppose the world would go to pieces if you didn't sell a hundred shares of Consolidated Whatnot for ten cents more than somebody paid for it!

PERRY. You can't compare business with acting.

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~  
GWEN. Is that so? I can give you the names of actors and actresses of three hundred years ago—dozens of them! Name me two Seventeenth Century stock brokers.

PERRY. All right, I'll give up my work. That'll be dandy! And trail along behind you carrying your Pekinese, huh? . . . Not me!

GWEN. It's not a Pekinese! Oh, Perry, what are we talking like this for! It's horrible. ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~  
~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ Forgive me! How could I talk like that to you!

PERRY. It's my fault. I didn't know what I was saying.

GWEN. Perry—dear! ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~

PERRY. Oh, what does anything matter!

GWEN. Weren't we a couple of idiots! We've never quarreled before.

PERRY. And we won't again. There isn't any-

thing that matters to me except you. Business and acting. We must have been crazy!

GWEN. And you're all that matters to me.

PERRY. Gwen darling! ~~She's in a hurry.~~ You're wonderful. Now, come on, honey. It's late. ~~Get~~

GWEN. What?

PERRY. Why, you are coming with me, aren't you?

GWEN. Oh, Perry!

PERRY. Huh?

GWEN. You haven't heard a word I've said.

PERRY. I heard everything you said. You heard what I said, too, didn't you!

GWEN. Oh, Perry, we're not going to go all over this again, are we!

PERRY. No. We're not going all over it again. Not at all. We're not going over any of it again. It just comes down to one thing, that's all. ~~Get~~

GWEN. It's like a bad dream! I can't go, Perry! Haven't I explained to you that I can't.

PERRY. Oh! . . . Yes. . . . Well, I've got to get started, of course, if I'm going to get there. Good-bye. ~~(He has been making a confused withdrawal. He has gone on near the door bang.)~~

~~(Gwen sits her head up, defiantly. Then as the realization of what has happened creeps upon her, she becomes less confident. Fanny terrified. Julie appears on balcony from Fanny's room. She is in her maid coat. She is just heard talking over her shoulder to DEAN and KITTY, who are unseen in the hallway off balcony.)~~

JULIE. If he'd only try persuasion now and then instead of knocking people down right away. . . . (Glances at her wrist watch.) Good Lord! (Com-

ing down stairs, calls over the railing) Are you ready, Gwen?

DEAN. (Entering) Well, I'll be on my way, too.

KITTY. Where are you going?

JULIE. (Descending the stairs. Sees that GWEN is not dressed for the street) Good heavens, Gwen! Get your things on! What have you been doing? I must say you weren't much interested in Tony. (Exit into library.)

(FANNY enters on balcony from center door. She is talking in a rather high-pitched voice to an unseen TONY in the room she has just left.)

FANNY. Stay on the stage where you belong you wouldn't get mixed up with all that riff-raff! (A mumble to herself as she stumps along the balcony and toward the stairs.)

JULIE. (From the library) Is the car downstairs?

DEAN. (Has gone up to alcove. Starts to plunge into his coat) Drop me at the Lambs', Julie?

KITTY. (Goes right) You're late, aren't you? Lackaye'll be worried. (Into her coat.)

(TONY enters from center door balcony, carrying a snow-shoe, singing a snatch of an aria. He is wearing a gay silk bathrobe, monogrammed, embroidered, tasseled. He advances with a romantic swing to the balcony rail. Reaching it, he strikes a magnificent pose aided by a high top-note. FANNY picks up the melody and carries it a phrase further.)

JULIE. (Re-enters from library, pulling on her gloves) Lord, we're terribly late!

TONY. (Shouts toward door right) Jo, where the hell's my lunch!

JULIE. (Making a last dash) Gwen, will you get