

*and opens it. Elaine Harper enters. Elaine is an attractive girl in her twenties; she looks surprisingly smart for a minister's daughter.)* Oh, it's Elaine. *(Opens door.)* Come in, dear.

*(Elaine crosses to c. Abby closes door, crosses to c.)*

ELAINE. Good afternoon, Miss Abby. Good afternoon, Miss Martha. I thought Father was here.

MARTHA. *(Stepping to L. of table.)* He just this minute left. Didn't you meet him?

ELAINE. *(Pointing to window in L. wall.)* No, I took the short cut through the cemetery. Mortimer hasn't come yet?

ABBY. No, dear.

ELAINE. Oh? He asked me to meet him here. Do you mind if I wait?

MARTHA. Not at all.

ABBY. Why don't you sit down, dear?

MARTHA. But we really must speak to Mortimer about doing this to you.

ELAINE. *(Sits chair R. of table.)* Doing what?

MARTHA. Well, he was brought up to know better. When a gentleman is taking a young lady out he should call for her at her house.

ELAINE. *(To both.)* Oh, there's something about calling for a girl at a parsonage that discourages any man who doesn't embroider.

ABBY. He's done this too often—we're going to speak to him.

ELAINE. Oh, please don't. After young men whose idea of night life was to take me to prayer meeting, it's wonderful to go to the theatre almost every night of my life.

MARTHA. It's comforting for us too, because if Mortimer has to see some of those plays he has to see—at least he's sitting next to a minister's daughter. *(Martha steps to back of table.)*

*(Abby crosses to back of table, starts putting tea things on tray. Elaine and Martha help.)*

ABBY. My goodness, Elaine, what must you think of us—not having tea cleared away by this time. *(She picks up tray and exits to kitchen.)*

*(Martha blows out one candle and takes it to sideboard. Elaine blows out other, takes to sideboard.)*

MARTHA. *(As Abby exits.)* Now don't bother with anything in the kitchen until Mortimer comes, and then I'll help you. *(To Elaine.)* Mortimer should be here any minute now.

ELAINE. Yes. Father must have been surprised not to find me at home. I'd better run over and say good night to him. *(She crosses to R. door.)*

MARTHA. It's a shame you missed him, dear.

ELAINE. *(Opening door.)* If Mortimer comes you tell him I'll be right back. *(She has opened door, but sees Mortimer just outside.)* Hello, Mort!

*(Mortimer Brewster walks in. He is a dramatic critic.)*

MORTIMER. Hello, Elaine. *(As he passes her going toward Martha, thus placing himself between Elaine and Martha, he reaches back and pats Elaine on the fanny. . . then embraces Martha.)* Hello, Aunt Martha.

*(Martha exits to kitchen, calling as she goes.)*

MARTHA. Abby, Mortimer's here!

*(Elaine slowly closes door.)*

MORTIMER. *(Turning R.)* Were you going somewhere?

ELAINE. I was just going over to tell Father not to wait up for me.

MORTIMER. I didn't know that was still being done, even in Brooklyn. *(He throws his hat on sofa.)*

*(Abby enters from kitchen. Martha follows, stays in doorway R.)*

ABBY. *(Crosses to Mortimer at C.)* Hello, Mortimer.

MORTIMER. *(Embraces and kisses her.)* Hello, Aunt Abby.

ABBY. How are you, dear?

MORTIMER. All right. And you look well. You haven't changed much since yesterday.

ABBY. Oh, my goodness, it was yesterday, wasn't it? We're seeing a great deal of you lately. *(She crosses and starts to sit in chair above table.)* Well, come, sit down. Sit down.

*(Martha stops her from sitting.)*

MARTHA. Abby—haven't we something to do in the kitchen?

ABBY. Huh?

MARTHA. You know—the tea things.

ABBY. *(Suddenly seeing Mortimer and Elaine, and catching on.)* Oh, yes! Yes! The tea things— *(She backs toward kitchen.)* Well—you two just make yourselves at home. Just—

MARTHA. —make yourselves at home.

*(They exit kitchen door, Abby closing door.)*

ELAINE. *(Stepping to Mortimer, ready to be kissed.)* Well, can't you take a hint?

MORTIMER. *(Complaining.)* No...that was pretty obvious. A lack of inventiveness, I should say.

ELAINE. *(Only slightly annoyed as she crosses to table, and puts handbag on it.)* Yes—that's exactly what you'd say.

MORTIMER. *(He is at desk, fishing various pieces of notepaper from his pockets, and separating dollar bills that are mixed in with papers.)* Where do you want to go for dinner?

ELAINE. *(Opening bag, looking in hand mirror.)* I don't care. I'm not very hungry.

MORTIMER. Well, I just had breakfast. Suppose we wait until after the show?

ELAINE. But that'll make it pretty late, won't it?

MORTIMER. Not with the little stinker we're seeing tonight. From what I've heard about it we'll be at Blake's by ten o'clock.

ELAINE. *(Crosses to U.S. C.)* You ought to be fair to these plays.

MORTIMER. Are these plays fair to me?

ELAINE. *I've* never seen you walk out on a musical.

MORTIMER. That musical isn't opening tonight.

ELAINE. *(Disappointed.)* No?

MORTIMER. Darling, you'll have to learn the rules. With a musical there are always four changes of title and three postponements. They liked it in New Haven but it needs a lot of work.

ELAINE. Oh, I was hoping it was a musical.

MORTIMER. You have such a light mind.

ELAINE. Not a bit. Musicals somehow have a humanizing effect on you. *(He gives her a look.)* After a serious play we join the proletariat in

the subway and I listen to a lecture on the drama. After a musical you bring me home in a taxi, (*Turning away.*) and you make a few passes. MORTIMER. (*Crossing D. C.*) Now wait a minute, darling, that's a very inaccurate piece of reporting.

ELAINE. (*Leaning against D.S. end of table.*) Oh, I will admit that after the Behrman play you told me I had authentic beauty—and that's a hell of a thing to say to a girl. It wasn't until after our first musical you told me I had nice legs. And I have too.

(*Mortimer stares at her legs a moment, then walks over and kisses her.*)

MORTIMER. For a minister's daughter you know a lot about life. Where'd you learn it?

ELAINE. (*Casually.*) In the choir loft.

MORTIMER. I'll explain that to you sometime, darling—the close connection between eroticism and religion.

ELAINE. Religion never gets as high as the choir loft. (*Crosses below table, gathers up bag.*) Which reminds me, I'd better tell Father please not to wait up for me tonight.

MORTIMER. (*Almost to himself.*) I've never been able to rationalize it.

ELAINE. What?

MORTIMER. My falling in love with a girl who lives in Brooklyn.

ELAINE. Falling in love? You're not stooping to the articulate, are you?

MORTIMER. (*Ignoring this.*) The only way I can regain my self-respect is to keep you in New York.

ELAINE. (*Few steps toward him.*) Did you say keep?

MORTIMER. No, no. I've come to the conclusion that you're holding out for the legalities.

ELAINE. (*Crossing to him as he backs away.*) I can afford to be a good girl for quite a few years yet.

MORTIMER. (*Stops and embraces her.*) And I can't wait that long. Where could we be married in a hurry—say tonight?

ELAINE. I'm afraid Father will insist on officiating.

MORTIMER. (*Turning away R. from her.*) Oh, God! I'll bet your father could make even the marriage service sound pedestrian.

ELAINE. Are you by any chance writing a review of it?

MORTIMER. Forgive me, darling. It's an occupational disease. (*She smiles at him lovingly and walks toward him. He meets her*

*halfway and they forget themselves for a moment in a sentimental embrace and kiss. When they come out of it, he turns away from her quickly...breaking U.S. near desk.)* I may give that play tonight a good notice.

ELAINE. Now, darling, don't pretend you love me that much.

MORTIMER. *(Looks at her with polite lechery, then starts toward her.)* Be sure to tell your father not to wait up tonight.

ELAINE. *(Aware that she can't trust either of them, and backing U.S.)* I think tonight I'd better tell him to wait up.

MORTIMER. *(Following her.)* I'll telephone Winchell to publish the banns.

ELAINE. *(Backing D.S.)* Nevertheless—

MORTIMER. All right, everything formal and legal. But not later than next month.

ELAINE. *(Runs into his arms.)* Darling! I'll talk it over with Father and set the date.

MORTIMER. No—we'll have to see what's in rehearsal. There'll be a lot of other first nights in October.

*(Teddy enters from balcony and comes downstairs dressed in tropical clothes and a solar topee. At foot of stairs he sees Mortimer, crosses to him and shakes hands.)*

TEDDY. Hello, Mortimer!

MORTIMER. *(Gravely.)* How are you, Mr. President?

TEDDY. Bully, thank you. Just bully! What news have you brought me?

MORTIMER. Just this, Mr. President—the country is squarely behind you.

TEDDY. *(Beaming.)* Yes, I know. Isn't it wonderful? *(He shakes Mortimer's hand again.)* Well, goodbye. *(He crosses to Elaine and shakes hands with her.)* Goodbye. *(He goes to cellar door.)*

ELAINE. Where are you off to, Teddy?

TEDDY. Panama. *(He exits through cellar door, shutting it. Elaine looks at Mortimer inquiringly.)*

MORTIMER. Panama's the cellar. He digs locks for the canal down there.

*(Elaine takes his arm and they stroll D. L. to R. of table.)*