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LAURENCE G. WORCESTER

CAT O' NINE TAILS



BAKER'S ROYALTY PLAYS

Walter H. Baker Company, Boston

CAT O' NINE TAILS

A Mystery Play in Three Acts

By

LAURENCE G. WORCESTER

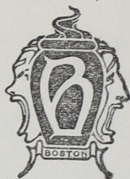
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CAT O' NINE TAILS

CAST

JAMES GORDON, SR., *master of "Gordon Lodge."*
MRS. JAMES GORDON, *his nervous wife.*
JIMMIE GORDON, *their "good-looking" boy.*
JACOB WEBBER, *the caretaker of "Gordon Lodge."*
BETTY WEBBER, *his lovable daughter.*
THEODORA MAITLAND, *a friend of the Gordons.*
HENRY, *the chore boy.*
FOX, *a detective.*
MISS SMITH, *a female "Sherlock Holmes."*
BRIDGET, *the cook.*
PEGGY, *her daughter.*
CAT O' NINE TAILS . . . ?

SYNOPSIS

ACT I. Living-room in the "Gordon Lodge," near the Canadian line in Maine.

—And the clock strikes twelve.

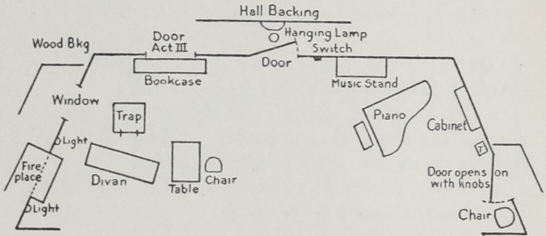
ACT II. Same—the next night.

—And the villain appears.

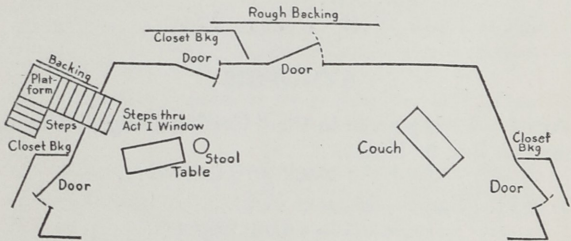
ACT III. An underground room of the lodge, a few minutes later.

—And the mystery is solved—GOOD-NIGHT.

Acts I II



Act III



(For Property and Lighting Plots refer to pages 116-121.)

CHARACTERISTICS

MR. GORDON. Fifty years, banker type, corpulent, clean-shaven, hair partially grey and thinning rapidly.

MRS. GORDON. Forty-seven years, slight, grey-haired, very nervous, aristocratic rather than mother type.

JIMMIE GORDON. Twenty-three years, medium height, athletic type, good looking, clean-shaven.

BETTY WEBBER. Twenty years, five feet two, with eyes of blue, not pretty perhaps, but attractive in personality.

JACOB WEBBER. Sixty years, very grey, clean-shaven, stooped a bit, and not strong of physique. On account of his outdoor life his complexion should be somewhat darker than rest of cast.

MISS SMITH. Thirty-five years, very prim and proper, yet able to see and appreciate a good joke. Hair black and combed straight back, carries herself erect—this can be made a very strong and unusual part so much care should be used in casting.

FOX. Forty years, tall, heavy set, truck driver type, black mustache, very loud spoken, would make an excellent basso profundo in any quartet. A good dramatic part.

HENRY. Thirty-five years, medium height, clean-shaven, well set physically but not mentally, always has a dumb-looking expression as if he were ready to laugh or cry as the spirit moves him. An excellent comedy part for the right comedian.

THEODORA (TED) MAITLAND. Twenty-five years, a beautiful girl, tall and slender, with dark eyes, and bobbed hair, languid and refined, but handicapped with a seemingly weak character.

BRIDGET. Forty-five years, short and plump Irish comedy type.

PEGGY. A winsome miss of sixteen. (BRIDGET and PEGGY are small bits appearing only in ACT I.)

CAT O' NINE TAILS

ACT I

SCENE.—*Living-room of the "Gordon Lodge."* Down R. is an ample fireplace with brick base, andirons, etc., and of sufficient space to hide a person. Above fireplace, an ordinary window, practical and curtained, with a window-seat. At back, R. C., is a door (not used till ACT III) in front of which stands a bookcase. At L. of bookcase a small table and a chair in front of same. In C. double doors, or a single door, with a small panel which is used when the scenery is reversed in ACT III, representing the cellar of the cottage. At L. of C. door stands a music cabinet. On the L. side of the set another bookcase, or cabinet and below it, a small table. Down L. a door with practical knob. The door opens on stage. Below this door a "winged" chair. A library table, on which stands a shaded reading lamp, with a false bottom containing documents, stands about R. C. At L. of table, a chair. Between table and fireplace, a commodious divan with pillows. Some feet up—back of divan—and opposite window is a trap in the floor. This trap is easy to construct, being a frame about 2 by 2 feet with a cover set in. The cover is hinged down stage and on being opened discloses a black cloth suggesting darkness and depth. Up L. C. stands a grand piano and seat, with vase of flowers. A snap button for lights in wall L. of C. door. Two light brackets, R. and L. of fireplace. These and the reading lamp are practical. A hanging lamp is seen in the hallway and a small, narrow table with books and vase of flowers against hallway backing. A few pictures occupy the walls. The room is well furnished but not elaborate and the floor covering consists of rugs only.

(At rise of curtain stage is dark except from light from shaded hall lamp and the blue medium through R. window. The wind whistles mournfully outside, R. The chimes of a distant clock in an adjacent room impressively strike "12." A slight noise as from tapping of window-pane is heard at window R. This is followed by the ray of a flashlight into the room. A pause, then the window opens and a cloaked, masked figure enters; stealthily goes up to hallway, looks off R. and L., then down to fireplace, where, with the aid of flashlight, the figure examines bricks on which the andirons rest. At this THEODORA MAITLAND slowly appears C. from L., dressed in negligée. She is apparently walking in her sleep. She stops for a moment under hall lamp to add impressiveness to the situation and then comes down to piano and sits. As she commences to play pp. a weird melody, the figure at fireplace turns quickly; puts out flashlight, secreting same on divan, and crouches behind R. end. Presently the figure slowly creeps toward THEODORA and grabs her by the throat. She gives a scream as the figure drags her to C. of stage. As she is released and falls she utters a muffled scream. The figure pauses a moment listening, then exits hastily through window, R. A pause as THEODORA lies groaning and mumbling, then JAMES GORDON, SR., enters C. from L. He is dressed in smoking jacket, trousers and sport shirt and carries a revolver. He pauses a moment up C., then switches on lights L. of C. door and, discovering THEODORA, hastily pockets revolver and drops to her side, above her.)

MR. GORDON (as he kneels and lifts her head). What happened, Theodora? (Chafes her wrists.) Theodora! Can you understand me?

TED (opens eyes, weakly). I—I—I saw — Oh! (Shudders and faints again.)

(MRS. JAMES GORDON, a timid woman of fifty, enters C. from L., dressed in one of MR. GORDON'S overcoats; down to C.)

MRS. GORDON (*teeth chattering*). Wh-wh—happened, dear?

MR. GORDON (*raising TED up*). Theodora has evidently been walking in her sleep again.

(*Carries her down to divan; lays her down.*)

MRS. GORDON. No wonder, in this place. (*Coming down to table by divan.*) I expect every minute to wake up some night and find myself—murdered.

MR. GORDON (*on R. of divan. Business of reviving TED*). Have you any smelling salts?

MRS. GORDON. I've used up every bottle myself. Oh, James, this place is driving me insane. Won't you go back to the city?

MR. GORDON. Will you please go to my den and bring me a bottle of brandy?

MRS. GORDON. What! James, haven't you always told me to stay out of your den?

(MR. GORDON *looks at her and sighs*. JACOB, *an old man above sixty, enters C. from R., carries shotgun; he is dressed in working clothes. He is followed by HENRY, a half-witted servant in his thirties, carries an old lantern which is out, dressed in an old overcoat which is open, disclosing at times his red flannel nightdress. [Neither of them wear hats.] They drop down C. a trifle.*)

MR. GORDON. Henry!

HENRY. Yes, sir.

MR. GORDON. Go into my study and bring that bottle of brandy! It's behind—

HENRY (*quickly*). I know where it is.

[*Exits down L.*]

JACOB (*drops down to back of divan*). Was it Miss Maitland who screamed?

MR. GORDON. Yes, Jacob; one of her spells again.

MRS. GORDON. Don't be surprised, Jacob, if you find my poor body floating in the mill pond some morning.

MR. GORDON (*sharply*). Fannie, will you stop this non-

sense? You're trying to work yourself into one of your hysterics again.

MRS. GORDON (*sobbing*). Well, if I do—who's to blame? (*TED sits up.*)

MR. GORDON. Ah! So you feel better, Theodora?

TED (*nods*). Yes—a little better, thank you. (*Rubs throat.*)

MR. GORDON (*to JACOB*). Will you get a wrap for Miss Maitland?

JACOB. Yes, sir.

(*Goes up rear, leans gun by music cabinet, exits c. to L.*)

MRS. GORDON (*drops down to divan, sits beside TED*). Oh, my dear! You never walked in your sleep when you were with us in the city.

TED (*smiles*). Yes—Mrs. Gordon—I've always been a sleep walker—it makes no difference where I am—but I have never experienced—the—the horrible—oh—— (*Covers face with hands.*)

(HENRY *enters L. with brandy and small glass on salver; crosses to back of divan.*)

MR. GORDON (*taking brandy and glass, pours out a glass*). Here, Theodora, drink this. It will put warmth into you.

TED. Thanks.

(*Drinks, hands glass to MR. GORDON, who gives bottle and glass to HENRY who sets them on table L. above L. door and then drops L. C. JACOB enters hall L. with a heavy coat, comes down to back of divan.*)

JACOB. Here you are, Miss Maitland.

TED (*stands up, JACOB puts it around her shoulders and joins HENRY, L. C.*). Thank you, Jacob. (*Sits. Feels flashlight, rises, picks it up.*) Is this yours, Mr. Gordon?

MR. GORDON (*takes it*). No—this is not mine. Jacob?

JACOB. No, sir.

MR. GORDON. Henry, did you leave this in here to-night?

HENRY. No, sir—don't belong to me; here's mine.
(*Indicates lantern.*)

MR. GORDON. It might be a good idea to light it once in a while.

JACOB. It's all the same to him. (HENRY *grins.*)

MRS. GORDON. Isn't that yours, dear? (To MR. GORDON.)

MR. GORDON (*shakes head*). And it certainly wasn't here when I went to bed. (To TED.) Do you feel strong enough to tell me just what happened?

TED. I can't remember much—only I had one of those terrible dreams. I imagined I was being chased by a most horrible looking creature. I ran as fast as I could but he seemed to gain on me at every step; finally I felt his hot breath on my shoulder—I turned and as I saw his face I started to scream and then he clutched my throat and—well—that's all I remember—until I saw you. Oh, I shall go mad if this continues.

(*Puts her head on MRS. GORDON'S bosom.*)

MRS. GORDON (*comforting*). Don't worry, dear!

MR. GORDON. Fannie, will you please take her to your room? She needs rest.

MRS. GORDON. Well, she'll never get it in my room.

MR. GORDON. You're right.

TED (*rises*). I feel better. (*Pause.*) I think I can sleep now.

MRS. GORDON (*rises*). I only wish I could. (To MR. GORDON.) But where's Jimmie—our son?

MR. GORDON. After midnight. Probably missed his train.

MRS. GORDON. What are you going to do?

MR. GORDON. I'm going to find out who owns this—(*Indicates flashlight.*) and why it was here.

MRS. GORDON. James, for twenty years you've been a model husband, with just one fault. You're too inquisitive.

MR. GORDON. Good-night, dear. (*Leads TED and MRS. GORDON up to hall.*) If you're frightened, just step to the door and call for me.

MRS. GORDON. Call? If I'm frightened I'll be lucky if I can whisper!

(TED and MRS. GORDON *exeunt* c. to L. JACOB *crosses to fireplace, facing c.*)

MR. GORDON (*smiles, turns as he comes down to c.*). Henry, I want you to take the shotgun—and your lantern—and go around the house. See if you can find footprints or anything that resembles a clue.

HENRY (L. c.). Huh!

MR. GORDON. A clue. Don't you know what a clue is?

HENRY. Yes, sir.

MR. GORDON. What is it?

HENRY. I don't know, sir. (*Grins.*)

MR. GORDON. Well, you ought to know—you read enough of Shakespeare. Do you remember the bloody knife in Macbeth?

HENRY. Yes, sir.

MR. GORDON. Well, that's a clue. Now go!

(*Drops down to divan.*)

HENRY. Yes, sir. (*Starts up c., turns, comes down a little.*) Mr. Gordon.

MR. GORDON. Well?

HENRY. If I can't find a bloody knife will a bloody axe do?

MR. GORDON. What are you talking about? There are no bloody axes around here.

HENRY. Yes, sir.

MR. GORDON. Where?

HENRY. Out in the hen coop. I killed ——

MR. GORDON. Get out before I lose my temper.

HENRY (*goes up to hall, takes gun, turns*). Mr. Gordon?

MR. GORDON. What is it?

HENRY. Want me to look for that too?

MR. GORDON. What?

HENRY. Your temper.

[HENRY *exits* c. to R.]

MR. GORDON (*turns to JACOB who crosses back of divan to c.*). Well, Jacob, what do you think about it?

JACOB. Mr. Gordon, I think it is the same person who tried to open your safe last night.

MR. GORDON. Yes, and if it hadn't been for you he would have succeeded. (*Goes to fireplace.*) I think I know what he's after. (*Kneels down, uses flashlight, business lifting brick.*) Oh! (*Takes out a paper.*) He left me a little note, it seems. (*Reads.*) "Mr. James Gordon, you're a very clever man. This makes the second time you have baffled me. But I have never failed on my third attempt. Yours anticipatigly, Cat o' Nine Tails." (*Looks at JACOB, crosses to him and hands him note. JACOB reads, hands it back to MR. GORDON who looks at it again.*) Printed—lead pencil. (*Puts note in pocket.*) Well, Jacob, there's one thing I'll give this Cat o' Nine Tails credit for—he's kept after me so persistently for the last week that I've actually forgotten that I've ever had indigestion. This man or woman must be either a saint or devil—he does his work so beautifully. (*Goes to table, lays flashlight on table and re-crosses to JACOB—hand on shoulder.*) Jacob, you've been working for me almost five years.

JACOB. Yes, sir.

MR. GORDON. You've been very faithful, and you've minded your own business. I want help and I feel I can trust you.

JACOB. Thank you, sir.

MR. GORDON (*gazing about and then with lowered voice*). Now, I'm going to tell you something that besides myself and my employer only three other persons know about. One is a man who holds a very high diplomatic position in the English government. The other holds an equally high office in the government of Japan, and the third person, of whom I know nothing, is the mysterious writer of this note—Cat o' Nine Tails. Certain papers, which are now in my possession, are of such value to England and Japan that each of them is trying to outbid the other. Ten million is a very fair estimate of their value.

JACOB. Ten million dollars?

MR. GORDON. Yes.

JACOB. No wonder this Cat o' Nine Tails wants them.

MR. GORDON. I believe that he or—it may be a woman—is an agent for either England or Japan. Now, Jacob, listen carefully; at the end of next week the time expires in which these papers are to be bid upon. After that I'm free. Until then I must guard them with my life! I want you to stay near me until the week is over; let no one into this house or about the grounds unless you know exactly who they are.

JACOB. Yes, sir.

MR. GORDON. And if the papers are delivered at the stipulated time and I'm still alive you shall have a substantial check deposited to your account at the First National Bank of Boston.

JACOB. But, sir, I'll gladly do it for nothing. You've been very kind to me and my daughter Betty.

MR. GORDON. I want to do more for you and in this way I think I can.

JACOB. Then you're not going back to the city?

MR. GORDON (*goes to table, business cigar*). No. I'm much safer here than in the city.

JACOB. Does your son know about these papers, sir?

MR. GORDON. No. No one outside of those I mentioned, and you.

JACOB. Mr. Gordon, I'll do my best to protect you. I'm sixty-odd years, but my eye is still accurate and my hand is still able to point a gun.

MR. GORDON. I hope you won't have to use it, Jacob. But if you do—shoot to kill! (*Hands JACOB his automatic.*)

JACOB (*puts gun in pocket, goes up to c.*). I guess I'll take a look around, Mr. Gordon, and see if everything is all right. (*A face appears at window R. long enough for audience to catch a glimpse of it; then disappears.*) Look! (*Rushes to window.*)

MR. GORDON (*as he goes up to JACOB*). What was it?

JACOB (*peering out into darkness*). A face—it looked like a woman's. (*A bell rings.*)

MR. GORDON. Who can that be?

JACOB. I don't know, sir.—Your son, sir, or maybe it's my Betty—back from college.

MR. GORDON. Jimmie wouldn't ring—he has his key.

JACOB. I'll go, sir. (*Taking automatic from pocket as he goes up to c. door.*) You never can tell and caution's the word, sir. [*Exits c. to R.*]

(MR. GORDON *comes down to table, lifts lamp, removes false bottom and takes out a roll of papers, puts them in his pocket, sets lamp back, turns as JIMMIE enters, followed by BETTY and JACOB, arm in arm, c. from R. JIMMIE is a nice appearing young man in his twenties, dressed in travelling clothes. BETTY is a beautiful young girl, barely out of her teens, dressed in a travelling suit. JIMMIE'S hat and coat have been left in hall.*)

JIMMIE (*as he comes down to meet Mr. GORDON at c.*). Hallo, Dad. (*Shake.*)

MR. GORDON. At this time of night—where's your key?

JIMMIE. I forgot it.

MR. GORDON (*suspiciously—pointing to BETTY*). You—and——

JIMMIE. Betty? Oh, just a coincidence, Dad.

MR. GORDON. Hum!

JIMMIE. Yes, Dad;—missed the express—caught a local—and who should be on board but Betty.

MR. GORDON. But that train goes only as far as the junction——

JIMMIE. Sure! But what's twenty miles for a hired flivver——

MR. GORDON. Hum!—and with an attractive girl.

(*They confer in front of divan.*)

BETTY (*up L. c. with JACOB*). Oh, I'm so glad to see you, Father.

JACOB (*shaking her hands*). My child!

BETTY. And tell me—my dog—my Rover?

JACOB. Gone, my dear.

BETTY. What? My Rover—gone! And I loved him so!

MR. GORDON (*crosses to c. as BETTY and JACOB drop down to L. c.*). Just as well, my dear. Only yesterday he broke his leash and when I tried to catch him I had a narrow escape from being bitten.

BETTY. Rover—dangerous? But didn't you call Henry?

MR. GORDON. I did.

BETTY. Ah, he's devoted to Henry!

MR. GORDON. Seems he is. He devoted a half-hour to tearing Henry's overalls into ribbons. (*To JIMMIE while BETTY confers with her father.*) By the way, on your arrival did you happen to see anybody outside?

JIMMIE. Outside? No. Did you, Betty?

BETTY. No, I didn't, Mr. Gordon.

MR. GORDON (*to BETTY*). Pardon my asking, my dear. (*Suddenly to JACOB.*) Did you lock the stable?

JACOB. Forgot it. I'll do it now, sir. (*To BETTY.*) I'll be back at once and take you home, Betty.

[*Exit JACOB c. to R.*]

JIMMIE (*with concern*). Say, Dad, what's up?

MR. GORDON. What do you mean?

JIMMIE. You don't seem yourself. I sort of sense something wrong—unusual.

MR. GORDON. Unusual? What do you mean, boy?

JIMMIE. First you ask if I saw anybody outside. Then you're anxious about the stable. Above all, what are you and Jacob doing up at this time of night?

MR. GORDON. Just a business matter—nothing that can interest you, my boy.

(*MR. GORDON goes to window R. and gazes out.*)

JIMMIE. Oh, very well. (*Crossing to BETTY at L. c.*) Betty, let me ring up Bridget—she'll fix a spare room for you.

BETTY. Thank you, Jimmie, but I'd rather go to the cottage with Father. You know he's not been well since I went away.

JIMMIE. But Henry's there ——

BETTY. Please, Jimmie—I'd rather not stay.

(MRS. GORDON *enters c. from L., fully dressed.*)

MRS. GORDON (*seeing JIMMIE*). Jimmie, my dear boy!

JIMMIE (*as he goes up stage*). Hello, Mother. (*Kisses her and leads her down c.*) What's the idea? (*Indicating her dress.*) Where are you going?

MRS. GORDON (*kisses BETTY*). Betty, you dear girl, I am so glad to see you. I didn't expect you until to-morrow.

JIMMIE (*laughs*). This is to-morrow.

MRS. GORDON. Oh, well, I can't be expected to know whether it's to-morrow, to-day or next week.

JIMMIE. What's the matter, Mother?

BETTY. Mrs. Gordon?

MRS. GORDON (*looks at BETTY and then at JIMMIE, strangely*). You don't know?

JIMMIE. Cross my heart!

MRS. GORDON. Then ask your father.

JIMMIE. No use. I did. He won't tell me.

MRS. GORDON (*looks around fearfully*). Then I will. James, there's something wrong with this lodge.

JIMMIE (*laughs*). Oh, I know that, Mother.

MRS. GORDON. You do!

JIMMIE. Why, certainly. First, there's too many rooms in it to be called a lodge. Second, it's too far off the main road. Third, you're not always sure of hot water for your bath, and the cellar——

MRS. GORDON. James, this is no joking matter.

BETTY. Jimmie, can't you see your mother is in earnest?

MRS. GORDON. I'm so much in earnest that I'm going back to the city on the first train in the morning.

(MRS. GORDON *turns, comes down, R. of divan.*)

JIMMIE. But what about Father?

MRS. GORDON. He can stay here if he's foolish, or come with me if he's wise.

JIMMIE. Well, Dad, there's your choice.

MR. GORDON. I shall stay right here.

(*A long piercing scream from TED is distantly heard off c. to L.*)

JIMMIE. Who was that? (*Goes up and off c. to L.*)

MRS. GORDON (*weakly*). It—it must be Theodora—I left her asleep. Perhaps she's murdered.

MR. GORDON (*as he goes up and off c. to L.*). No dead person ever let a yell out like that.

(*BETTY leads MRS. GORDON to divan, standing on her R. MRS. GORDON sits, weakly.*)

BETTY. Shall I get you your salts?

MRS. GORDON. Yes, please!—No—I haven't any.

(*TED in negligée enters c. from L., supported by JIMMIE on her L. and MR. GORDON on her R.*)

JIMMIE. What is it, Ted? What happened?

TED (*as MR. GORDON, JIMMIE and TED come down c.*). I fell asleep and when I woke up I saw the figure of a man trying to get in the bedroom window.

MRS. GORDON. I told you so! I'll be the next victim!

JIMMIE. You leave it to me. I'll get him!

[*JIMMIE exits quickly c. to L.*
MRS. GORDON (*rises*). Jimmie, don't go.

(*Sinks back on divan.*)

MR. GORDON. Are you sure, Theodora, that it wasn't another dream?

(*MR. GORDON leads THEODORA to chair below L. door. She sits.*)

TED. I'm sure, Mr. Gordon!

MRS. GORDON. Well, anyone with a grain of common-sense would know that that scream wasn't any dream.

MR. GORDON (*to TED*). Don't mind her. She is nervous to-night. (*Front door slams. Voices in hall. MR. GORDON turns. JACOB and HENRY enter with FOX, a large man of forty, dressed in overcoat, soft hat which*

he removes as he enters room. They stop up c. HENRY has shotgun held at FOX'S head, standing on his L. JACOB is on FOX'S R. MR. GORDON goes up to L. of them.)
Who are you?

FOX. If you'll call off this bloodhound perhaps I can get my mind off the muzzle of that howitzer long enough to explain. (*Shoves muzzle of gun away from his nose.*)

MR. GORDON. Henry, put the gun away.

HENRY. He's a dangerous man, Mr. Gordon. I found him trying to get in the cellar. I'll bet he's a detec-a-tive!

FOX. What would I want in the cellar?

HENRY. The coal.

MR. G. (*takes gun from HENRY and leans it by music cabinet*). Go sit down.

HENRY. Yes, sir.

(*Crosses behind FOX and JACOB to window bench R., sits. JACOB retires to L. of bookcase.*)

MR. GORDON. Now, sir, what is your name and what are you doing on my premises?

FOX. My name is Fox, Mr. Gordon.

MR. GORDON. I don't recall ever meeting you, Mr. Fox.

FOX. No, we've never met until now. But if I may have a word, privately, with you I can explain—er—a few matters. (*FOX crosses to R. c., above divan.*)

MR. GORDON. Very well. (*Comes down to c.*) Come, dear, let Betty take you to your room. (*To BETTY.*) Perhaps you'd better stay over here for the night to keep my wife and Theodora company.

BETTY. Very well, Mr. Gordon, I will.

(*Assists MRS. GORDON to rise.*)

MR. GORDON (*crossing L. to THEODORA, who rises*). Have no further fears, my dear—all will be well.

(*THEODORA smiles and joins MRS. GORDON and BETTY, c.*)

MRS. GORDON (c.). Oh, James, if you only knew how terrifying this all is to me.

MR. GORDON (L. C.). I shall do everything in my power to make you forget it; only hold your nerves in check until this is over. Please, for me.

MRS. GORDON. I'll try, dear. (MR. GORDON *goes up to hall with* MRS. GORDON, TED *and* BETTY.) Good-night.

MR. GORDON. Good-night. (MRS. GORDON, TED *and* BETTY *exeunt, c. to L.* MR. GORDON *stands at L. of c. door.*) Jacob, you and Henry go outside and keep a close watch.

(MR. GORDON *takes up gun at cabinet.*)

JACOB. Yes, sir. [Exits c. to R.

HENRY (*rises, crosses over and takes gun*). Mr. Gordon!

MR. GORDON. Yes?

HENRY. A man that will steal your coal will commit murder. As Shakespeare said in the third canto—
Woe——

MR. GORDON. Get out!

HENRY. Yes, sir. [Exits c. to R.

MR. GORDON. Well, Mr. Fox?

(Drops down stage to L. C.)

FOX. Just a minute. (*Goes up rear; lays hat on small table by bookcase; closes hall door, then comes down to c.*) You can never be too careful, these days. Now, Mr. Gordon, before I say anything I want you to have a look at my credentials. (*Business papers.*)

MR. GORDON (*reads, then looks up*). So you're from the Detective Agency?

FOX. I am, sir! (*Importantly.*)

MR. GORDON. How do I know that these papers are genuine?

FOX. I presume you've got a telephone here?

MR. GORDON. Yes, in my study. (*Indicates down L.*)

FOX. Call 169-W and ask for Mr. Snodgrass.

MR. GORDON. He keeps late business hours.

FOX. Our motto is "Open for business at all hours."

MR. GORDON. Have you any other references?

(Hands him back papers.)

FOX *(puts them in pocket, takes out a long envelope)*. I was given this to deliver to you by Mr. Krembs.

MR. GORDON *(as he takes envelope)*. Mr. Krembs! He's one of my employers.

FOX. I know it.

MR. GORDON *(looks at him, then crosses to divan, sits, opens letter, reads. FOX roams about room ad lib. examining walls, etc., peers out window, then comes down to fireplace. MR. GORDON rises, puts letter in his pocket as FOX comes down c.)*. Mr. Fox, I'm sorry I doubted your word. *(Crosses to FOX at c. and shakes hands.)*

FOX. I'm glad we understand each other now; it will make my work so much easier.

MR. GORDON. I shall aid you in every way possible. As Mr. Krembs says in his letter, it is of vital importance that these papers be guarded with utmost care.

FOX. May I ask where they are now?

MR. GORDON. Here in my pocket. I had them under one of those bricks, but something told me to change their hiding place; so this morning I took them out and put them in the bottom of that lamp. And a very wise move it was.

FOX. Why?

MR. GORDON. To-night I was paid a visit by this unknown Nemesis of mine—Cat o' Nine Tails.

FOX. Cat o' Nine Tails—hum! I never heard of him.

MR. GORDON. Neither had I, until about six months ago. *(Hands FOX note which he took from under brick.)* Here is a little sample of his penmanship.

FOX *(reads, looks up)*. So he never fails on his third attempt?

MR. GORDON. So he says.

FOX. Well, he'll find that we all slip up occasionally. Even the best of us. *(Hands note back to MR. GORDON.)*

MR. GORDON. It's late; I'll show you to a room if you're ready.

FOX (*indicates door down L.*). Did I understand you to say that is your study?

MR. GORDON (*crosses to study door*). Yes. Wish to see it?

FOX (*crosses to him*). Have you a couch in it?

MR. GORDON. Yes.

FOX. Then, if you don't mind, Mr. Gordon, I think I should like to stay in there for to-night.

MR. GORDON. But you won't be comfortable. A couch, you know, wasn't made to sleep on.

(MR. GORDON *goes up to light switch, L. of c. door.*)

FOX. I probably sha'n't use it.

MR. GORDON. Very well, just as you say.

[FOX *exits L. door.*]

(MR. GORDON *switches off all lights except the one in hall. Moonlight alone illumines room. He feels his way down to L. door and exits after FOX. A very brief pause—then MISS SMITH enters from out of fireplace, R. She quietly brushes her attire with her cap. She is a small, very prim woman with keen flashing eyes and wears tortoise shell glasses. She is dressed in a mannish suit—golf knickers and a hunting cap with two visors. She stands at R. of divan surveying the room. Then, as she moves toward table, R. C., she is gratified to find flashlight thereon which she uses at intervals. She crosses stealthily to door down L. and listens. Then up to C. door and pauses. Then to bookcase R. C. which she examines with flashlight. She is suddenly arrested by obvious approach of someone off C.—listens—and placing flashlight in pocket quickly reaches fireplace and crawls into chimney again.*

NOTE. *If fireplace is not practical MISS SMITH can make her entrance and exit by window, R. JIMMIE and BETTY enter C. from L. closing door. JIMMIE presses switch and lights on and then drops C. with BETTY, on her L. BETTY points to door L. and JIMMIE crosses and listens.)*

JIMMIE (*rejoining BETTY C.—in subdued voice*). Dad's in there with this—what did you say his name was?

BETTY. Fox.

JIMMIE. How does he look?

BETTY. Sleuthy.

JIMMIE. A detective?

BETTY. I think so.

JIMMIE. I knew something mysterious was going on. (*Points to L. door.*) Now I'm sure.

BETTY. Your mother's so agitated—I'll go to the cottage for my things.

JIMMIE. And I'll go with you.

BETTY. No, Jimmie. I won't be long and your mother or Miss Maitland may need you. Please—stay here!

(*She gazes appealingly at JIMMIE.*)

JIMMIE (*pauses as he admires BETTY's upturned face*). Gee! Betty, you look wonderful to-night!

(*He embraces her.*)

BETTY (*gently parting from him*). Will you always say that to me, Jimmie?

JIMMIE (*joyfully*). Always! Cross my heart! But, Betty, I wish you'd let me tell Dad.

BETTY (*imploringly*). No—please! At least, not yet. Wait till I graduate first.

JIMMIE. Gosh! He'll be tickled to death.

BETTY (*reflectively*). I'm not so sure, Jimmie.

JIMMIE. Why do you doubt it?

BETTY. Well, in the first place I'm only a poor girl.

JIMMIE. There you go!—The same old song. Listen, dear, I'd love you if you were the richest girl in the world!

BETTY. But you know your father's wish—the hope he has set his heart on—he wants you to marry —

(TED *enters C. from L., dressed in a loose gown. She drops down to L. C.*)

TED. I beg your pardon for intruding but Mrs. Gordon is so anxious that you come to her, Miss Webber.

BETTY. I'm on my way to the cottage for necessary things now. Please bid Mrs. Gordon be patient. I'll be back at once. (*Going up to c. door.*)

JIMMIE (*accompanying BETTY up*). You'll take care of yourself, Betty?

BETTY (*smiling*). Never fear—I was brought up in the woods. Besides, Father's outside within call.

[*Exits c. to r.*

(*As JIMMIE drops down to table r. c., TED, who has been regarding him wistfully, speaks.*)

TED. Jimmie!

JIMMIE. Yes. (*Absently gazing front.*)

TED (*crosses and lays her hand on his shoulder*). You—you love—this girl! (*Pause.*) You need not answer. (*With emotion.*) I know! I know! (*Pause.*) Have you forgotten what you once told me? (*Pause as JIMMIE moves quietly to fireplace, r.*) It's not mere friendship that gives me the right to speak—to appeal to you! Oh, (*Bitterly.*) she—she's only a common caretaker's daughter!

JIMMIE (*turns angrily*). Miss Maitland!

TED (*pleadingly*). Forgive me, I—I'm so upset to-night. I—I didn't mean it.

(*HENRY enters c. from r.—leaves door open. TED, embarrassed, crosses to l. HENRY'S coat is unbuttoned so that his red nightshirt dominates.*)

HENRY (*drops to c.*). I—I seen it—I saw it—I——

JIMMIE (*at foot of divan*). What's the matter with you? Button your coat.

HENRY. Yes—yes, sir. (*Buttons coat fumblingly.*)

JIMMIE. Anyone would take you for a fireman.

HENRY. Yes, sir. As Shakespeare said in the Third Canto:—Methinks 'twill be a misty night, so bestir yourselves, me lads—the wind——

JIMMIE. Never mind Shakespeare. What did you see?

HENRY (*dramatically*). A face—a head—no arms—no legs—no body——

JIMMIE. Have you been drinking?

HENRY. Not a drop; but I'm freezing all over.

JIMMIE. Then go and put on some clothes.

HENRY. Yes, sir. (*Goes up c.*)

JIMMIE. Bring some logs for the fire. I'm sure Miss Maitland finds it chilly here.

TED. Don't mind me, I shall go to my room —

HENRY. Yes, sir. You'll get a fire, as Shakespeare said:—With a crackle and a roar and a burst of flames —

JIMMIE (*starts up c. toward him*). I'll crackle and burst —

HENRY. Yes, sir! [*Hurriedly exits c. to L.*]

TED (*appealingly, as she advances c.*). Jimmie —

JIMMIE (*frankly, yet firmly*). Ted, I think a lot of you. I admire your accomplishments. You're gifted socially—you're entertaining and—wealthy. Believe me, I esteem you as a friend but —

TED. But you know your father's wish even if you flaunt my affection.

JIMMIE. I'm sorry, but Father and I don't agree on everything.

TED. But, Jimmie —

JIMMIE. Excuse me, Ted. I don't care to discuss the matter any further. [*Exits c. to L.*]

(*TED looks after him—stamps foot and clenches her hands in anger as she crosses to divan and sits staring front. MR. GORDON enters L. door. He pauses, looking at TED as he closes door.*)

MR. GORDON (*as he crosses to c.*). What's the matter, Theodora?

TED. Jimmie!

MR. GORDON. You've been talking to him—quarrelling?

TED (*hesitatingly*). I'm afraid he doesn't — Oh, I can't tell you!

MR. GORDON (*consolingly*). There—there! Come here, my dear. (*TED rises and crosses to MR. GORDON, at c. MR. GORDON places his hands tenderly on her*

shoulders.) Now, don't you worry about Jimmie. He's young and unsettled in his ways.

TED (*tearfully*). But this is different ——

MR. GORDON. I know! (*Smilingly.*) Been casting sheep's eyes elsewhere, eh? Be consoled, my dear, for Jimmie knows my dearest wish and he's ever been obedient. The night's events have unsettled you. Even I have to summon all my courage. So cheer up, my dear, and try to seek rest. (*Leading her up to c. door.*) Compose yourself, (*Kisses her on forehead.*) my daughter-to-be!

TED. Good-night—Father! [*Exits c. to L.*]

(MR. GORDON *comes slowly down to back of table; looks at table, starts, searches for flashlight.* HENRY, *dressed in overalls and shirt, enters c. from L. with several logs in arms.*)

MR. GORDON (*turns, HENRY enters*). Henry!

HENRY (*stops c.*). Yes, sir.

MR. GORDON. Did you take a flashlight from this table?

HENRY. No, sir.

MR. GORDON. Somebody has.

HENRY. Somebody's done a lot of things to-night, but it ain't me.

MR. GORDON (*as HENRY crosses to fireplace*). What are you going to do?

HENRY. Mr. Jimmie wants a fire.

MR. GORDON. Very well. (*Looks around room.*) I wonder where that flash is?

HENRY (*business arranging logs in fireplace*). Mr. Gordon, I've worked for you for five years, but I ain't never seen nothing to equal to-night's fancy business. As Shakespeare said in the forty-fifth canto ——

(*Lights match—it goes out. This business is repeated three or four times, each lighting being prefaced by "As Shakespeare said in the forty-fifth canto."*)

MR. GORDON (*at front of table, R. C.*). Well, what did Shakespeare say in the forty-fifth canto?

HENRY (*as MISS SMITH'S legs appear in fireplace*).
Shades of Methusalem!

(HENRY *jumps back, turns and runs into MR. GORDON.*)

MR. GORDON. *Oh!* (*Grabs HENRY and swings him to L.*) You idiot, look where you're going.

(MISS SMITH *pulls legs out of sight.*)

HENRY (*running up c.*). I don't dare to!

MR. GORDON (*pulls out automatic*). Come back here.

HENRY (*stops*). Don't shoot. I'm comin'.

(*Comes down to L. of MR. GORDON.*)

MR. GORDON. What's the matter with you? Another of your crazy spells?

HENRY (*whispering*). I—I saw something.

(*Pointing timorously with right hand toward fireplace but looking front.*)

MR. GORDON. You're always seeing something.

HENRY. I saw—I saw—a pair of legs without any body.

MR. GORDON. Where?

HENRY. There!

(*Points to fireplace—or window R., as the case may be.*)

MR. GORDON. We'll investigate.

HENRY (*grabs MR. GORDON'S arm*). Please don't, Mr. Gordon, please! As Shakespeare said in the ——

MR. GORDON. Shakespeare be blowed!

(*Pushes HENRY away to c. and crosses to fireplace.*)

HENRY (*goes above table*). You'll—you'll regret it!

MR. GORDON (*stoops, looking up chimney*). If there's anybody up there, come down before I count three or I'll smoke you out. One —— (*Pause.*)

HENRY. Oh, don't count so slow.

MR. GORDON. Shut up! Two ——

MISS SMITH. Don't shoot! I'm coming.

(*She scrambles out of fireplace as MR. GORDON cautiously backs to L. end of divan, covering her with automatic.*)

HENRY. Shakespeare was right—'tis many a chimney long and black that holds a thing that looks like that.

(*Points finger at MISS SMITH who is brushing clothes with cap.*)

MR. GORDON. Henry, you may start the fire now if Miss—Miss——?

MISS SMITH. Smith.

MR. GORDON. If Miss Smith hasn't any objection.

HENRY. I go, my lord!

(*Goes to fireplace and starts fire, but constantly watches MISS SMITH.*)

MISS SMITH. I'm deeply appreciative of your courtesies in not starting it sooner.

MR. GORDON. In that case——

MISS SMITH (*blandly*). My reception would have been decidedly warmer.

MR. GORDON (*holding automatic by his side*). Of course, you are aware that my humble home possesses doors——

MISS SMITH. And windows.

MR. GORDON. And yet you chose the chimney.

MISS SMITH. For the sole reason that I wished to examine a few details of its architecture though, I confess, it was a strain on my back and neck.

(*MR. GORDON motions her to sit on divan. She does so while he sits L. of table facing her.*)

MR. GORDON. Seems to me its interior details and decorations were somewhat obscure in the dark.

MISS SMITH (*rises—hands MR. GORDON flashlight*). Not with the aid of this which I gratefully return.

(*Sits again on divan. MR. GORDON places flashlight on table.*)

MR. GORDON. So you are the mysterious purloiner.

MISS SMITH. Exactly.

MR. GORDON. Do you know, your unique entrance at this hour interests me—keenly so.

MISS SMITH. Naturally, and I'm as keenly anxious to explain it—(*Nods toward HENRY.*) if Hamlet is to be trusted.

MR. GORDON. Henry, don't forget your duties outside.

HENRY (*rises*). Yes, sir. (*Reluctantly goes up c.*)

MR. GORDON. You know what your poet says—

HENRY (*grins*). Yes, sir: Caitiff, avaunt by yonder portal—(*Points to c. door.*) for a burnt child dreads the chimbley.

(*Exits c. to R. grinning significantly and leaves the door open.*)

MISS SMITH. Not such a fool as he looks. Now, Mr. Gordon, I will briefly state the reason of my coming here. (*Rises—goes to R. of table and speaks guardedly.*) I'm from the Department of Justice. (*Takes long envelope from pocket and hands it to MR. GORDON who takes it—placing automatic in pocket.*) A letter of introduction from the United States Marshal.

(*MR. GORDON rises to take letter—then sits and reads it while MISS SMITH leisurely sits on L. side of divan. At this instant the crouched figure of a man crosses the hall, c. from L. His slouch hat is pulled well down over eyes. A very brief pause as he looks at MISS SMITH and MR. GORDON—then exits R. in hall.*)

MR. GORDON. I'm relieved! (*Rises and hands letter to MISS SMITH.*) The marshal is a very good friend of mine. (*Sits again, L. of table.*) Pardon me, Miss Smith, but isn't it somewhat unusual for one of your sex to be in this game of hunting men?

MISS SMITH (*smiles*). Nothing's unusual these days; but you'll excuse me,—safety first! (*She rises—swings around R. of divan, goes up to c., throwing her cap on piano, and closes c. door. Then she returns, looking R.*

and L.,—*swings R. of divan and sits again.*) A few years ago in Paris there was a series of very daring breaks followed by one of the coldest-blooded murders ever recorded in the criminal dockets of Paris. The victim was one of the most celebrated detectives on either side of the water. His murderer had vanished without leaving the slightest clue except a small, long, peculiar shaped razor-like knife. A few hours after the murder—lo and behold, the victim and knife both disappeared, leaving the detectives with nothing to work on.

MR. GORDON. Quite remarkable.

MISS SMITH. It caused quite a stir at that time. But now comes the most striking feature of it all. About three months after the murder, a man walked into the office of the chief of the detective bureau and handed him a sealed envelope and then walked out. A few minutes later the chief opened the letter and to his amazement read something like this: "Paris and her blind detectives cease to hold any more thrills for me. I seek new lands and new adventures. Au revoir." Signed, "Cat o' Nine Tails."

MR. GORDON (*rises—facing front—speaks in awe-stricken voice*). Cat o' Nine Tails!

MISS SMITH (*rising and crossing to MR. GORDON*). Yes, the man with the nine lives.

MR. GORDON (*turns to her and instinctively places his right hand on her left shoulder*). Can it be the same one?

MISS SMITH. What do you mean?

MR. GORDON. Read that.

(*Hands her note which she reads.*)

MISS SMITH (*hands it back to MR. GORDON who puts it in pocket*). Mr. Gordon, that note confirms my belief that the man whom I've been trailing for the past six months—the man who baffled all of Paris with his crimes—and the writer of that note—is one and the same person.

MR. GORDON. And you think —

MISS SMITH. I know it—I followed him here myself.

MR. GORDON. You saw him come in here?

MISS SMITH. No—I trailed him to those woods back

of this house. Then he disappeared and I'm sure that somewhere near here, perhaps in this very house, this super criminal has his headquarters.

MR. GORDON (c.). Great Scott, this seems—impossible!

MISS SMITH. Why, Mr. Gordon, stop and think.—Here you are in a very remote section of the country—your nearest neighbors a half a mile away—the Canadian line within ten minutes' ride of here and the country covered with dense forests. Why, it's a haven for a man of his inventive skill.

MR. GORDON (*with awe*). I wonder! (*Holds up hand warningly.*) Sh! (*Crosses to door L., listens and then cautiously opens it and exits.* MISS SMITH *crosses to a trifle above L. door. A brief pause and MR. GORDON enters to L. c. and MISS SMITH drops to his L.*) He's gone! Can it be possible he is the one?

(*MRS. GORDON enters excitedly, c. from L., with a slip of paper. She drops down c. as MR. GORDON crosses to meet her. MISS SMITH remains at L.*)

MRS. GORDON. Look—read this! Oh, James, I warned you. (*MR. GORDON takes paper and reads.*) I warned you of this! (*Crosses and sits on divan.*)

MR. GORDON (*crosses to MISS SMITH, L. c.—reads*). “If your husband fails to leave certain papers in the living-room, and if everyone does not leave this house before another hour has passed—one of you must suffer the penalty—death! Yours affectionately, Cat o' Nine Tails.” (*Hands paper to MISS SMITH.*) What can I do?

MISS SMITH. May I keep this?

MR. GORDON. Certainly.

(*MISS SMITH puts paper in pocket.*)

MISS SMITH. I should like to ask your wife a few questions.

MR. GORDON (*speaking as he crosses back of divan to R. of same*). Fanny, this is Miss Smith who has just arrived in an official capacity.

MRS. GORDON. Pardon my not arising. How do you do?

MISS SMITH (*has crossed to table, R. C.*). Mrs. Gordon, may I ask where you found the note?

MRS. GORDON. On my dressing table. I had stepped into Miss Maitland's room awaiting the arrival of Betty——

MR. GORDON. The caretaker's daughter——

MRS. GORDON. And when I came back I found the dreadful note. (*To MR. GORDON.*) Oh, James, give up the papers, whatever they are, and let us leave this horrible place at once.

MR. GORDON. My dear, you don't realize what you are asking of me. (*To MISS SMITH.*) You can see her nerves are all unstrung.

MRS. GORDON. Unstrung? Nerves?—I haven't any!

MISS SMITH. Pardon me, Mrs. Gordon—there's no danger. You may feel perfectly safe.

MRS. GORDON. Safe? In this house? After what I've gone through to-night I'll be safe only after I'm dead—and cremated!

MR. GORDON (*consolingly, as he sits R. of her*). Fanny, my dear——

MRS. GORDON. James, won't you do something?

MR. GORDON. What do you want me to do—send for a constable?

MRS. GORDON. No—send for the National Guard.

(MISS SMITH, *amused, crosses leisurely to L.*)

MR. GORDON (*smiles*). Cheer up, my dear, everything will come out all right. Take pattern by Miss Smith. She is going to help us.

MRS. GORDON (*arising and crossing to C.*). Are you a policeman?

MISS SMITH. Not exactly, Mrs. Gordon; but I'm deeply interested in this character who signs himself Cat o' Nine Tails.

MRS. GORDON (*eagerly*). Do you think he'll do what he threatens?

MISS SMITH. You mean——

MRS. GORDON. Kill one of us before another hour?

MISS SMITH (*shakes head*). That's only a bluff—a threat to scare you into leaving the house.

(JIMMIE *enters c. from L., dropping L. c.*)

JIMMIE (*stops as he observes MISS SMITH*). Excuse me—

MR. GORDON (*coming to R. c.*). It's all right, my boy. Miss Smith, my son.

JIMMIE (*on R. of MISS SMITH, shakes hands*). How dee-do?

MR. GORDON (*speaks across to JIMMIE*). Miss Smith is our guest for a few days.

JIMMIE. Glad to have you with us, Miss Smith.

MRS. GORDON. Yes, and from all indications she'll be thoroughly entertained.

JIMMIE. Say, Dad, Ted said you wanted to see me.

MR. GORDON. Later, my son, later. (*Crossing to MRS. GORDON, c.*) Come, dear, you need a good night's rest. Are you ready? (*Leading MRS. GORDON up to c. door.*)

MRS. GORDON. Ready? (*Turns with eyes uplifted.*) I'm ready to die, if that's what you mean!

[MRS. GORDON and MR. GORDON *exeunt c. to L.*]

MISS SMITH. Your mother's uncommonly nervous.

JIMMIE. I should say so. And so would you be if you knew— (*Pause; MISS SMITH crosses to chair L. of table, R. c. and sits apparently unconcerned. JIMMIE crosses to L. of MISS SMITH—hesitates—then speaks.*) Miss Smith, I wonder if I can be frank with you?

MISS SMITH. Frankness is what I specialize in.

JIMMIE. Do you know, something tells me you are not a mere guest.

MISS SMITH (*smiles*). I am and I'm not. Your father has honored me with his confidence, to an extent. That should be a slight recommendation to the son.

JIMMIE. It is! There have been strange happenings here to-night and—

MISS SMITH (*lightly*). You're not going to tell me the house is haunted?

JIMMIE (*smiles*). No; there are no spirits here, I'm sure.

MISS SMITH (*humorously*). Not even in the cellar?

JIMMIE (*laughs*). No, not even there, and that's saying something with Canada only a few miles away.

MISS SMITH (*suddenly assuming the rôle of an investigator*). How many servants are here?

JIMMIE. There's Jacob, the caretaker and his assistant, Henry.

MISS SMITH. Henry—I've met him—a student of the classics.

JIMMIE. Shakespeare's his hobby. Every night he goes to bed with the Merchant of Venice, Macbeth or Julius Cæsar.

MISS SMITH. He certainly picks choice companions. How long has he been employed?

JIMMIE. A number of years.

MISS SMITH. And Jacob?

JIMMIE. About five, I think.

MISS SMITH. And besides your father and mother there's a Miss Maitland and a Miss Webber—

JIMMIE. You know of them?

MISS SMITH. I've heard them mentioned.

JIMMIE. Miss Maitland's a young lady—a guest, and Betty—Miss Webber—is the caretaker's daughter. Then there's Bridget, the cook and her daughter, Peggy.

MISS SMITH. None other?

JIMMIE (*reflects a moment*). Oh, yes—I forgot. Another just arrived.

MISS SMITH. Who?

JIMMIE. I'm not sure but I think he's a detective by the name of—er—er—Fox.

MISS SMITH (*rising*). A detective—Fox. A most appropriate name,—Fox. Listen, it's late, but could I prevail on you to send for Bridget and her daughter? I want to question them before this man Fox—whoever he is—interferes with my plans.

JIMMIE. I'll have them here shortly. I was right, Miss Smith. I had a hunch you weren't an ordinary "week-ender." (*Goes up to c. door.*)

MISS SMITH (*smiles*). Thank you.

JIMMIE (*laughingly*). Thank you! [*Exits c. to L.*]

(MISS SMITH takes from pocket a large magnifying glass and, starting from L. of stage moves around the set to R. examining different objects. Just as she reaches fireplace the muffled sound of HENRY'S voice is heard in the chimney. MISS SMITH jumps back.)

HENRY. Help! Help! Help!

MISS SMITH (*looks up fireplace*). Who is it?

HENRY. Help!

MISS SMITH. How can I help you if I don't know you?

HENRY. It's me.

MISS SMITH. Who's me?

HENRY. It's Henry.

MISS SMITH. Where are you?

HENRY. Up the chimney.

MISS SMITH. What are you doing up there?

HENRY. Roasting.

MISS SMITH. Get out and come down here.

HENRY. I can't.

MISS SMITH. Why?

HENRY. I'm in head first.

(MR. GORDON fully dressed enters door L. and crosses to c.)

MR. GORDON. What is it?

MISS SMITH. It's Henry.

MR. GORDON. Where?

MISS SMITH. Stuck in the top of the chimney.

MR. GORDON. What in the world is he doing in the chimney?

MISS SMITH. I don't know but I think you'd better find out.

MR. GORDON (*goes up c.*). Believe me, I will.

[*Exits c. to R. and leaves door open.*]

MISS SMITH (*speaking up chimney*). Cheer up, Henry, help will soon be with you.

HENRY. If you don't hurry up, I'll be with the angels.

(MISS SMITH *crosses to R. C. as JIMMIE enters C. from L. with BRIDGET and PEGGY. BRIDGET dressed in nightgown, night cap and bathrobe. PEGGY same; her hair done up in paper curls. They drop C. while JIMMIE drops L. C.*)

JIMMIE. This is Bridget our cook and her daughter Peggy. (*To BRIDGET.*) This is Miss Smith from the——

MISS SMITH. Department of Justice——

JIMMIE. Who only wants to ask you a few questions. So don't be frightened.

BRIDGET (*with Irish brogue*). Frightened? Sure, and don't worry, Mister Jimmie. After all the unearthly yells an' firecrackers Oi've heard this night 'tis nothin' short of an earthquake could make me tremble.

MISS SMITH. So you have heard strange sounds to-night?

BRIDGET. An' that I have.

MISS SMITH. Did you recognize any of them?

BRIDGET. Did I? (*Looks at her as if she were crazy.*) Shure, Miss Smith, if ye hoid the same noises what I did ye wouldn't ask me that question.

MISS SMITH. Have you seen anything suspicious while you've been up here?

BRIDGET. Suspicious? An' that I have. Everything is suspicious up here. Ye wake up in the mornin' and before ye get into yer bed at noight things begin disappearing and moving from one place to anither.

PEGGY (*childish voice*). I seen something.

BRIDGET (*reprovingly*). Sh! Child, where are ye manners?

PEGGY (*giggles*). Disappeared too.

BRIDGET (*to MISS SMITH*). Shure, I niver seen so many changes take place at once in all me loife.

PEGGY (*to MISS SMITH in an awed tone*). I know something.

MISS SMITH. What is it you know, child?

PEGGY (*giggles*). Even the trees are changing their leaves.

BRIDGET (*with nod*). That's my daughter.

PEGGY. I'm going to have a birthday next week, ain't I, Ma?

BRIDGET. Shure an' it's a wake ye'll be having if we don't git away from this haunted house.

PEGGY (*pointing dramatically at study door, down L.*). Oh, look, it's moving!

BRIDGET (*jumps, holds up bathrobe, disclosing pair of red and white stockings. In awed whisper*). The saints presarve us! (BRIDGET drags PEGGY up behind divan.)

JIMMIE. Sh!

(*The door knob of study door begins to turn slowly.*

MISS SMITH *draws her automatic, motioning JIMMIE to withdraw. He moves, at back, to L. of table, R. C., as MISS SMITH crosses quietly to L. door. The door knob continues to turn slowly. MISS SMITH suddenly pulls door open and JACOB stumbles in. MISS SMITH backs to L. C., up a trifle.*)

BRIDGET. Shure and I expected Saint Peter himself! Come, child—quick!

(*She drags PEGGY in a comedy exit c. to L.*)

JIMMIE (*drops to front of table, surprised*). Jacob!

(*MISS SMITH looks in room L.—then closes door and putting gun in pocket, remains L.*)

JACOB (*bowing and crossing to L. C.*). Excuse me, sir.

JIMMIE. What were you doing at the door?

JACOB. I was listening, sir.

JIMMIE. Why?

JACOB. I thought he was in here.

JIMMIE. Who?

JACOB. This man who calls himself Fox. I'm suspicious of him.

JIMMIE. But he isn't in here.

JACOB. He crawled through the study window just a few moments ago and as he wasn't in there I thought he might be in here.

(JIMMIE motions JACOB to retire. JACOB goes up R. and watches through window.)

MISS SMITH. I suggest we get hold of this man Fox and have him explain just exactly what his business is.

JIMMIE. A very good idea—but where is he?

MISS SMITH. We'll have to look for him.

(MR. GORDON, followed by HENRY, enters C. from R. HENRY'S face and shoulders are covered with soot. MR. GORDON carries shotgun. Both down to C. MR. GORDON on HENRY'S L. Positions: JIMMIE R. C. HENRY C. MR. GORDON L. of HENRY. MISS SMITH L. JACOB up at window, R.)

MR. GORDON. Now, Henry, give an account of yourself.

HENRY. Well, sir, it was like this. I was standing by the corner of the house by the porch when I thought I heard somebody creeping just around the corner and as Shakespeare said—my hair it stood——

MR. GORDON. Never mind Shakespeare—what did you do?

HENRY. I cocked my gun.

JIMMIE. Both barrels?

HENRY. Yes, sir. I wa'n't taking no chances. And then I waited for him to come. (Pause.)

MR. GORDON. Well?

HENRY. As I said before, I waited for him to come.

MR. GORDON (impatently). Yes—yes—go on.

HENRY. But he didn't come.

MR. GORDON. You're crazy.

(Crosses disgustedly and confers with MISS SMITH at L., first placing gun across piano seat.)

HENRY. Yes, sir, any man hanging around the corner

of a house with a shotgun in his hand at twelve o'clock at night sure is crazy.—A downy bed, a pillow cool, such is the life of a mother's fool.

JIMMIE. Will you cut out that Macbeth stuff and tell them how you happened to dive into the chimney?

HENRY. I didn't dive. I was shoved.

JIMMIE. Well,—out with it!

HENRY. Where was I before I was crazy?

JIMMIE. Around the corner waiting for someone.

HENRY. Oh, yes—well, when nobody came around the corner I thought I'd investigate.

MR. GORDON. That was a wonderful idea. (*To Miss SMITH.*) Eh?

MISS SMITH. Brilliant!

HENRY. I knew you'd think so. So I peeked around the corner and what did I see?

JIMMIE. Your shadow.

HENRY. No, sir, a man's feet disappearing over the edge of the porch roof.

MR. GORDON. And then —

HENRY. I laid my gun down and went right up after him.

MR. GORDON (*crossing to HENRY at c.*). Bravo!

HENRY (*rubbing head*). And now I wish I'd stuck to that corner.

MR. GORDON. What happened?

HENRY. When I got up on the roof I couldn't see him nowhere. So I went over and looked down into the chimbley thinking he might be down there, like she was to-night. (*Indicates Miss SMITH.*) Suddenly I felt myself lifted about ten feet in the air and jammed down head first! Mr. Gordon, when you hired me you didn't say I'd have to clean the chimbleys.

MR. GORDON. Never mind, Henry, you'll be paid for all the trouble you've been through.

HENRY. They ain't enough money in the world to pay for my injured feelings. As Shakespeare said—one ounce of wounded pride upon the scales of strife will out-balance a thousand pounds of gold—and such is life.

MR. GORDON. Too bad, Henry, that you and Shake-

spere didn't live at the same time. You'd have been of great comfort to each other. (*Joins MISS SMITH at L.*)

HENRY. Thank you, sir, I've often thought of that. (*Joins JACOB up near window.*)

(*TED enters c. from L. and drops down L. c.*)

TED. Excuse me, Mr. Gordon, but Mrs. Gordon wants to know why Miss Webber doesn't come to her.

JIMMIE (*anxiously*). Hasn't Betty returned?

TED. No. Please hurry her for your mother's sake. [*Exits c. to L.*]

JACOB (*advancing*). My Betty!

JIMMIE (*going up c.*). I didn't want her to go to the cottage alone.

JACOB (*up to JIMMIE*). I'll go, sir!

JIMMIE. No! You stay here, Jacob. (*Sees gun on piano seat—takes it—goes up to c. door again.*) Henry!

HENRY (*crossing up c. while JACOB drops to back of table, R. c.*). Ain't going to fool 'round chimbleys, be we?

JIMMIE (*threatens HENRY with barrel of gun*). Git!

HENRY. I'm gitting.

[*Exits c. to R., followed by JIMMIE.*]

JACOB (*to MR. GORDON who meets him c.*). Oh! If anything has happened to my child, my Betty.

MR. GORDON. There—there! There's nothing to worry about, Jacob. Betty's a brave girl. Patience, my man!

JACOB. But—I thought all the time she was safe with your wife.

MISS SMITH. How far is it to the cottage?

MR. GORDON. A few hundred yards, or so.

JACOB. I feel we'd better go, sir. I'm so worried—so worried!

MR. GORDON (*looks at MISS SMITH for approval*). All right. You're armed? (*MISS SMITH pats her gun pocket.*) Come!

(*They start up as JIMMIE and HENRY appear, c. from R. in doorway, supporting BETTY who is in a faint.*)

JIMMIE is R. of her, HENRY L.)

JACOB (*with a cry rushes up to L. of BETTY and HENRY drops down stage L.*). Betty, my child, my dear!

MR. GORDON (*has dropped to L. c. with MISS SMITH*). What happened?

JIMMIE (*as he and JACOB bring BETTY to divan and place her with head to R.*). We found her lying in a swoon, a few feet from the porch steps.

(JIMMIE *is R. of divan. JACOB on his knees at BETTY'S feet, chafing her hand. MR. GORDON stands near table R. c. and HENRY at L. MISS SMITH has crossed to table above L. door—pours a glass of brandy—and crosses to back of divan to administer it.*)

MISS SMITH. Here, this will revive her.

JIMMIE (*raising BETTY'S head while she sips a few drops*). Betty, are you better?

BETTY (*faintly and painfully*). Oh!—my head!

MISS SMITH. Take some more.

BETTY. No—no, thank—you!

(MISS SMITH *hands the glass to MR. GORDON who passes it to HENRY. HENRY, unobserved, drinks the contents as he crosses to table L. and replaces glass.*)

JACOB. What happened, Betty?

BETTY (*is assisted by JIMMIE to a sitting position*). I was coming across the lawn when suddenly a man jumped from behind the shrubbery and grabbed me by the throat and then threw me to the ground. I guess I must have fainted; I don't remember any more.

MR. GORDON. Was it that man Fox?

BETTY. I don't know. I didn't have time to see his face.

JIMMIE (*rising*). I'm going to find that man if it takes me all night.

BETTY. Jimmie! (*Rising, assisted by JACOB.*)

JIMMIE (*pats her hand gently*). Don't worry, Betty—he won't put me down any chimney. (*Goes up to c.*) Come on, Henry.

HENRY. What, again?

JIMMIE. Yes—again.

HENRY (*as he follows JIMMIE up rear*). As Shakespeare said—"Truly, me lads, 'tis a boisterous night."

[JIMMIE and HENRY *exeunt c. to r.*

BETTY. I forgot—I dropped my bag. I must get it—

MISS SMITH (*drops to r. of divan*). Allow me, Miss—

MR. GORDON (*introducing*). Miss Smith—Miss Webber. (*They shake hands.*)

MISS SMITH. I'll get your bag, Miss Webber.

BETTY. Thank you. I think it's near the steps where I fell.

MISS SMITH. Rest yourself, dear.

(MISS SMITH *goes up; exits c. to r.*)

JACOB (*sits with BETTY*). Why—why should anyone attack you?

BETTY. I don't know, Father.

MR. GORDON. If it takes a lifetime I'll bring this fiend—this Cat o' Nine Tails—to justice. (*Crosses to l.*)

(*On cue, "justice," a piece of paper tied to a stone comes crashing through the r. window.*)

BETTY (*rising, smothers a scream*). Oh!

JACOB (*rising, his arms about BETTY*). What was that?

MR. GORDON (*goes up c.*). Looks like a stone—(*Picks it up.*) with a message attached. (*Drops to l. c.—reads.*) "Don't forget to leave the papers on the table. You have ten minutes left. Cat o' Nine Tails."

BETTY (*anxiously*). Who is this man?

MR. GORDON. So far, a mystery.

BETTY (*quoting*). "—leave the papers on the table."

MR. GORDON. He's after some private documents I possess.

(MISS SMITH *enters c. from r. with small hand satchel and drops to back of divan.*)

MISS SMITH (*handing satchel*). Is this it, Miss Webber?

BETTY (*takes satchel*). Thank you so much, Miss Smith.

(*Enter TED, c. from L.—remains up c.*)

TED. At last! Miss Webber, Mrs. Gordon is anxiously awaiting you.

BETTY. Thank you; I'm coming. (*To MR. GORDON.*) Please—please be careful, Mr. Gordon.

MR. GORDON. I will.

BETTY (*kisses JACOB*). Good-night, Father. I wish you wouldn't sleep in the cottage to-night.

JACOB. Don't worry, daughter, I'll be all right.

MR. GORDON. You may stay here to-night, Jacob.

JACOB (*as he escorts BETTY up to c.*). Thank you, but I'm not afraid to sleep in the cottage.

BETTY (*to all*). Good-night!

(*All reply, "Good-night" as BETTY and TED exeunt c. to L. JACOB crosses to window, gazing out and MISS SMITH drops L. C. to MR. GORDON.*)

MISS SMITH (*has observed stone in MR. GORDON'S hand*). Hello, what's that?

MR. GORDON (*passes stone to her*). It just came through the window.

MISS SMITH (*reads message—holding stone. Then looks at wrist-watch*). Ten minutes to one. (*Goes up to window.*) Is the garden beneath here?

JACOB. On the other side of the house, Miss.

MR. GORDON. Thinking of footprints, Miss Smith?

MISS SMITH. I had that thought. (*Coming down to c.*)

MR. GORDON (*crossing to MISS SMITH, at c.*). I'm afraid you'll find it a waste of time. Henry and Jacob have been patrolling outside so constantly—

MISS SMITH. True. No objections if I do take a look about the grounds?

MR. GORDON. By no means; but I think you'd better take Jacob along. Henry might take a pot shot at you.

MISS SMITH. Good idea.

MR. GORDON. Jacob! (*Crossing to R. c.*) Show Miss Smith through the study.

JACOB. Yes, sir.

(JACOB *drops, at back, to door down L.*)

MISS SMITH (*gets cap on piano—then observing JACOB at door*). Oh, can we go this way?

MR. GORDON. Yes.

MISS SMITH (*going to L. door which JACOB holds open*). Do you mind if I keep this? (*Holding stone and paper.*)

MR. GORDON. Not if it's of any help to you.

MISS SMITH. You know, sometimes the merest trifles trap the craftiest criminal. [*Exit L., followed by JACOB.*]

(MR. GORDON [R. C.] *crosses to L. C. as he takes papers from pocket and looks at them. He thinks a moment and then replaces them. JIMMIE enters C. from R. and drops to L. of table, R. C.*)

MR. GORDON (*turns, to JIMMIE*). Well, my boy, any luck?

JIMMIE. No—I couldn't find a trace of him. I looked everywhere.

MR. GORDON. Where's Henry?

JIMMIE. Still scouting around the house.

MR. GORDON. I hope he looks before he shoots.

JIMMIE. Why?

MR. GORDON. Miss Smith and Jacob just went out to spy around the grounds.

JIMMIE. Say, Dad, you wanted to see me about something.

MR. GORDON (*crosses to c.*). Jimmie, this is hardly the time to discuss a subject so vital to us both, but since you've asked I'll speak. I think you know just what my feelings are with regard to Ted and yourself.

JIMMIE. Oh!

MR. GORDON (*goes to him, puts an arm about him in a fatherly manner*). My boy, the day you marry Ted will be one of the happiest of my life.

JIMMIE (*turns, looks squarely at MR. GORDON*). Dad, I'd do most anything for you but—but I can't marry Miss Maitland.

MR. GORDON. Can't marry? Your reasons?

JIMMIE. I'd rather not say.

MR. GORDON. Why, my boy—she's the greatest catch of the season—accomplished, attractive and wealthy.

JIMMIE. Yes, I know she is. (*Crossing to fireplace, R.*) A mighty fine girl!

MR. GORDON. Then why can't you—why won't you, ask her to marry you?

JIMMIE (*turns*). Dad, please don't force me to answer.

MR. GORDON (*crossing to front of divan*). It's your mother's wish—it's mine. You must!

JIMMIE (*pauses*). I can't ask Miss Maitland to marry me for the simple reason—I'm already married.

MR. GORDON (*taken aback*). What! Married!

(*Sinks on divan and stares front.*)

JIMMIE (*goes to him*). I'm sorry, Dad, if this news has upset you, but I know —

MR. GORDON (*jumps up*). Who did you marry? (*JIMMIE hesitates.*) Answer me.

JIMMIE. Betty.

MR. GORDON. Betty!

JIMMIE. Yes, sir.

MR. GORDON. But she isn't of age.

JIMMIE. She got her father's consent and we were married when she came home on her last vacation.

MR. GORDON. Her father's consent!

JIMMIE. Dad, won't you forgive us and give us your blessing?

MR. GORDON (*in tense anger*). Never! (*Crosses to c.—turns.*) I've a good mind to disown you!

JIMMIE (*quietly*). Thank you, Dad; in that case I may be of some use in the world.

MR. GORDON (*trying to command himself as he crosses to table, R. c.*). Oh, my boy, why did you do this?

JIMMIE (*enthused*). Because I loved her—because to me she's the most wonderful girl in the world—the girl I wanted for my wife.

MR. GORDON (*bitterly*). Puppy love —

JIMMIE. No!

MR. GORDON. Wait—wait until ten years from now—you won't whistle the same tune.

JIMMIE. I should hope not—I intend to whistle a happier one each year.

MR. GORDON. To think that this man Jacob connived at such a folly,—a man I harbored and trusted!

JIMMIE. But, Dad, what's wrong with Betty—what have you got against her?

MR. GORDON. Nothing—only she's ——

JIMMIE. A caretaker's daughter with no money to make her an attractive catch.

MR. GORDON. Enough! I had such high hopes for you and now—now my disappointment is too keen for words. Now, listen: once this night is over this man, this Jacob, will find to his cost that his duplicity will meet the reward it deserves! (*Bangs table with his right fist. Two distant shots in quick succession are fired outside the house, R.*) What's that?

JIMMIE (*going up c.*). Henry's shotgun.

MR. GORDON. Supposing he's shot the wrong man.

(*Crosses anxiously to L.*)

JIMMIE. It wouldn't make any difference to him. (*Looking off c. to R.*) Here he comes and by the shades of Shakespeare he's captured a prisoner.

(*FOX enters, c. from R., hands up—hat in one of his hands. HENRY follows him with gun pressed to FOX's back. They drop to c. HENRY is R. of FOX. JIMMIE R. of HENRY. MR. GORDON at L. C.*)

FOX (*to MR. GORDON*). Will you tell this crazy gazzoek here who I am?

MR. GORDON. I'm not so sure who you are myself.

FOX. But I told you who I am and what I am here for.

HENRY (*importantly*). I know what you're here for. Mr. Gordon, I caught him crawling out of the cellar window—trying to steal the coal.

FOX (*looking at hat*). Yes, and you've completely ruined a brand new hat.

HENRY. You ought to be glad it wa'n't your head.

MR. GORDON. That'll do, Henry.

HENRY. I don't trust him, Mr. Gordon, any man that'll chuck another head first down a chimney will kill you when you ain't looking, as Shakespeare said —

(JIMMIE *takes HENRY by ear and leads him to front of divan—then returns R. of FOX. HENRY sits.*)

MR. GORDON. Now, Mr. Fox, will you kindly explain your actions to-night?

FOX (*smiles*). Really, Mr. Gordon, I don't see why I should. (JIMMIE *R. C.*)

MR. GORDON. Why did you throw Henry into the chimney?

FOX. Because I thought that was the only place that would keep him quiet and out of my way.

JIMMIE. And may I ask, Mr. Fox, if you remember choking a young lady to-night?

FOX. I'm sorry—I thought she was someone else whom I was waiting for.

MR. GORDON. Who?

FOX. Cat o' Nine Tails.

(JACOB and MISS SMITH *enter c. from R. JACOB remains by bookcase up R. C. MISS SMITH speaks as she drops down L.*)

MISS SMITH. Who fired the shots?

HENRY (*rises*). I did. (JIMMIE *gives him a look.*)
Yes, sir. (*Sits.*)

MR. GORDON. Miss Smith, may I present Mr. Fox of the—er —

FOX. Eureka Detective Agency. (*Crosses and proffers hand to MISS SMITH.*) Glad to know you, Miss Smith.

MISS SMITH (*ignores hand*). How do you do?

FOX. And your business?

MISS SMITH. None of yours.

(HENRY laughs. FOX, recrossing to c., gives him a look. Pause.)

FOX (*looking from one to the other*). Well, what's everybody waiting for?

MR. GORDON. May I look at your credentials again?

FOX. Sure—you can frame 'em and hang 'em up on the wall if you want to.

(Hands MR. GORDON envelope, business, reads, hands it to MISS SMITH, same business.)

MISS SMITH. Looks all right.

(Hands back to MR. GORDON.)

FOX. Believe me it is all right, too; if you don't believe it try the 'phone again—it's pretty near one o'clock and Mr. Snodgrass is usually up around that time.

HENRY. He must be a night hawk.

(While dialogue continues JIMMIE orders HENRY up stage. HENRY rises and swinging to R. of divan goes up and sits on window-seat, up R. JIMMIE takes position at fireplace facing others.)

MR. GORDON (*hands FOX envelope*). What's the number?

FOX (*pocketing envelope*). One-six-nine-W.

(MR. GORDON crossing MISS SMITH exits door L.)

MISS SMITH (*coolly*). Have you seen this before?

FOX (*crosses to MISS SMITH—takes stone and message*). Hum! This fellow seems to want to get hold of those papers the worst way.

MISS SMITH. Yes—it looks that way—doesn't it?

FOX. Sure does—where'd this come from?

MISS SMITH. Through there. (*Indicates window*.)

FOX. Window, huh! (*Goes up to near window, examines it. Turns suddenly on HENRY. Snaps.*) What did you throw this through the window for?

HENRY (*jumps, aims gun at FOX*). What?

FOX. Nothing. (*Starts down c.*) Well, it looks to me as if there was somebody needed around here.

HENRY. Yeh! A first-class detective.

FOX (*stops*). What?

HENRY. Nothing.

FOX (*drops to MISS SMITH*). Have you any plans as to how we might catch this gentleman who writes such charming notes?

MISS SMITH. Have you?

FOX. I have!

(*Starts to put stone and paper in pocket.*)

MISS SMITH. That's fine. (*Reaches for stone.*) Don't trouble yourself.

FOX. Oh, excuse me.

(*Hands stone to MISS SMITH who crosses to L. MR. GORDON enters down L.*)

MR. GORDON (*crossing to FOX, at c.*). Well, Mr. Fox, you seem to be telling the truth.

FOX. I've never been caught in a lie yet.

HENRY (*dropping back of divan*). You ain't dead yet either.

MR. GORDON. Mr. Snodgrass furnished references—personal friends of mine, so I guess I owe you an apology.

FOX. Forget it, Mr. Gordon, and let's get down to business.

MR. GORDON. Just what do you mean?

FOX. At one o'clock you're to leave certain papers you have on this table or something will happen.

MR. GORDON. Someone in this house will die. I'm not to be moved by threats.

FOX. Here's my plan, Mr. Gordon. Put the papers on the table and I'll stay in this room with Henry and this lady. (*Indicates MISS SMITH.*) You and your caretaker post yourselves at the hall door and your son at the foot of the hall stairs. That, I believe, covers every possible entrance to this room.

HENRY. Don't forget the chimney.

FOX. That's your job.

HENRY. Don't worry; I'll never forget it. (*Rubs neck.*)

FOX. Well, Mr. Gordon, what do you think of my scheme?

MR. GORDON. It's worth trying. Just a minute. I'll get the papers. They're in my study. [*Exits down L.*]

FOX (*to HENRY*). All right, Henry the Eighth, over here. (*Indicates fireplace.*)

HENRY. You're a wise guy.

FOX. So my father used to tell me.

HENRY. He should see you now.

(*Takes position at fireplace as JIMMIE moves up R.*)

FOX (*to MISS SMITH*). Would you mind standing over here? (*Indicates L. below study door.*)

MISS SMITH. Thank you.

(*Crosses to L., sits. MR. GORDON enters, papers in hand.*)

FOX. Right here, Mr. Gordon. (*Pointing to table.*)

MR. GORDON (*goes to table, lays papers on table*). Now, Mr. Fox, where do you want me?

FOX (*speaks, going up to L. of c. door*). Out by the hall door. (*To JACOB.*) You too. (*JACOB exits c. to R., followed by MR. GORDON.—To JIMMIE.*) And you at the foot of the stairs. (*JIMMIE exits c. to L.*) Now we're all set. (*FOX drops down a few feet and pulls gun. MISS SMITH holds hers in readiness while HENRY tightens grip on gun and slowly raises it. All look at table. The chimes off stage R. strike one. A shot is heard in hall off R. FOX runs up and exits c. to R. JIMMIE crosses hall from L. to R. HENRY and MISS SMITH rush up to c. door. FOX and MR. GORDON enter c. from R. carrying JACOB and preceded by JIMMIE, who hurriedly moves chair, L. of table, R. C. up stage to R. At same time HENRY, placing his gun against bookcase, removes table, R. C. up R. out of the way. FOX and MR. GORDON place JACOB on divan—FOX to R. and MR. GORDON at L. MISS SMITH drops to back of divan and at once feels JACOB'S pulse and heart. JIMMIE drops to c.*)

and HENRY *waits up* R. C.) Who did it—does anyone know?

MR. GORDON (*with emotion*). I shall never forget it—never! Just as the clock struck one he put his gun to his heart and before I could prevent it—fired!

FOX. Suicide? Where's the gun?

MR. GORDON. Out in the hall—I think.

[FOX *exits quickly*, c. to R.

MISS SMITH. He's still breathing. Will you 'phone for a doctor? (JIMMIE *runs off* L. door.) Henry—a basin of water and some cloth for a bandage.

HENRY. Yes, miss.

[*Exits c. to L.*

MR. GORDON. This is terrible!

MISS SMITH. I'm afraid he's beyond help. Mr. Gordon, you're positive it was a case of self-destruction?

MR. GORDON. On my oath, I am! (*Turns despairingly to c.*)

(MRS. GORDON *enters c. from L., followed by* BETTY *and* TED. TED *drops to L.*)

MRS. GORDON (*drops to L. of* MR. GORDON). What has happened?

BETTY (*discovering* JACOB, *drops in front of* divan *on her knees and puts arms about him*). Father—Father!

(*Almost simultaneously* JIMMIE *enters from L. door to L. C., up.*—HENRY *c. from L. with towel and bowl of water*—and BRIDGET and PEGGY *appear in c. door from L. while* FOX *enters c. from R. with* JACOB'S *gun and drops to R. of* MR. GORDON.)

FOX (*placing a hand on* MR. GORDON'S *shoulder*). Mr. Gordon, I place you under arrest for the murder of that man! (*All gaze in amazement—and slow*)

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE.—*Same set as ACT I. It is seven in the evening. The lights are lit. The wind is heard off R. with rumbling of distant thunder and an occasional flash of lightning.*

(MR. GORDON, *conventionally dressed, is seated on divan smoking. MRS. GORDON enters C. from L. down to chair L. of table, R. C. and sits.*)

MR. GORDON. How is Jacob?

MRS. GORDON. Resting comfortably.

MR. GORDON. Still unconscious?

MRS. GORDON. Yes; the doctor said it may be days before he'll be able to speak.

MR. GORDON (*pause*). Who would have thought that this week would bring such changes in our lives?

MRS. GORDON. I know one thing; it's made a nervous wreck of me. James, why did this happen just when I was getting ready to go back to the city?

MR. GORDON. My dear, you may go.

MRS. GORDON. And leave you—with that detective?

MR. GORDON (*rises—moves to fireplace*). Now don't worry, dear. He can't trouble me so long as Jacob is alive.

MRS. GORDON. But he accused you——

MR. GORDON. Wrongly! You will learn the truth if Jacob recovers.

MRS. GORDON. Which, I pray, will be soon.

MR. GORDON. Where's Jimmie?

MRS. GORDON. He took Doctor Green home in his car.

MR. GORDON (*goes up to window R., looks out*). It's going to be a terrible night out. I hope Jimmie doesn't have a blowout or skid into a tree. (*Crosses down to L.*)

MRS. GORDON. And you should add—that you also hope that I don't have heart failure.

MR. GORDON (L.). Heart failure?

MRS. GORDON (*rises*). Because, my dear James, I feel

that another night in this house will give me every disease I haven't got now. (*Sighs and sits on divan.*)

(HENRY enters, c. from L., with logs for fireplace.
HENRY wears a raincoat.)

MR. GORDON (to HENRY). Where's the detective?

HENRY (*drops c.*). Which one, Mr. Gordon?

MR. GORDON. Fox.

HENRY. I ain't seen him since dinner time. I guess he's snooping around somewhere—ought to be familiar with the place by this time—he's been everywhere from the bathroom to the hog pen. As Shakespeare said—

(*Drops a log. As this and subsequent logs are dropped*
MRS. GORDON jumps up, each time, affrighted.)

MR. GORDON. Never mind—you've said your piece—go on with your work.

HENRY. Yes, sir.

(*Stoops to pick up log—drops another—comedy business ad lib.*)

MR. GORDON (*goes to HENRY, helps him pick up logs*). What's the matter with you?

HENRY. I don't know, sir. I ain't been myself since I got out of the chimney.

(MR. GORDON *crosses leisurely and sits below L. door.*)

MRS. GORDON (*on divan*). I can sympathize with you, Henry.

HENRY (c.). Was you in the chimney, too?

MRS. GORDON. Not yet—but I expect to be any minute.

HENRY (*crosses back of divan to fireplace*). I turned down a good job to take this one—now I'm sorry.

MR. GORDON. What job?

HENRY. With an undertaker—

MRS. GORDON (*despairingly*). Oh!

MR. GORDON. You would have made an excellent undertaker.

MRS. GORDON. Oh!

HENRY. Well, anyhow a graveyard's quieter than ——

MRS. GORDON. Henry!

HENRY. Yes, ma'am.

MRS. GORDON (*rising—forcefully*). Am I going to hear these things all my life—shooting and screams and undertakers and graveyards?

(FOX *enters hall R., adjusting clothes as if he had just taken off raincoat. HENRY alternately builds fire and listens.*)

FOX (*down to c.*). Hello—what's this I hear—graveyards?

MRS. GORDON (*goes to R. of FOX, at c.*). Mr. Fox, may I ask when my husband will be at liberty to leave this place?

FOX. Surely you're not thinking of leaving to-night!—Why, my dear Mrs. Gordon, there's a terrific storm on its way—and then you wouldn't spoil all my plans, would you?

MRS. GORDON. Plans? What plans?

FOX. You will learn later. (*Starts to L. c.*)

MRS. GORDON. You haven't answered my question yet.

FOX (*turns*). About your husband—well, I'm sorry to keep him here against his will.

MR. GORDON. Oh, don't worry, my dear sir—I'm as anxious to stay here as you are to keep me.

FOX. Well! That's nice.

MR. GORDON. I'm not worried over this murder charge—it's this Cat o' Nine Tails I'm after.

FOX. Good! I have a little note I received from him this morning. He seems to be generous with his—billets-doux.

MRS. GORDON. If you'll excuse me I'll go to my room and try to get a little sleep. (MRS. GORDON *goes up to c. door.*) I haven't had any for a week—it seems.

FOX (*swinging up to R. of c. door*). By all means do so, Mrs. Gordon—as Shakespeare said, Oh, beauteous

sleep, which unravels the sleeve of care and ties the apron strings of Beauty.

MRS. GORDON. Beauteous sleep—bah!

[Exits disgustedly, c. to L.

HENRY (at fireplace). Shakespeare never said that.

FOX. Excuse me for misquoting him.

HENRY. He said—(Dramatically.) Oh, slumber and dreams——

(Lightning and a crash of thunder off R. By this time glow in fireplace is on.)

FOX. You mean—thunder and lightning. (Crosses to window.)

MR. GORDON (rising, crossing to c.). Henry, go out and recite your Shakespeare to the hens.

HENRY (crossing to c.). Mr. Gordon, you think you're having a lot of fun with me, but if I told you what happened last week you'd change your mind.

MR. GORDON. What happened—so important?

HENRY. Last Friday night I went out in the hen coop and recited "A Midsummer's Night's Dream" and Saturday morning every hen had laid two eggs apiece.

FOX (drops to fireplace). Some dream.

MR. GORDON. I suppose if you'd read Romeo and Juliet each hen would have had a flock of chickens.

HENRY. Gee! I never thought of that!

MR. GORDON. Try it and make Shakespeare pay a dividend.

HENRY (heartily). I will, sir. [Exits c. to L.

FOX (significantly gazing after HENRY). I wonder if he's the half-wit we take him for, or—— (Takes note from pocket and, crossing, sits on divan.) I found this in my pocket when dressing this morning. Listen—(Reads.) "If you wish to leave this house alive, use your influence with Mr. Gordon and have him place the papers on the living-room table between seven and half-past. Cat o' Nine Tails." (Puts paper in pocket.) Well, what do you think of that?

MR. GORDON (sitting, chair L. of table—throws his cigar in ash tray). I think he's a fool!

FOX. Now wait a minute. Here's my plan. Put the papers there as you did last night. Then we'll wait, and when he comes for them—nab him.

MR. GORDON. Do you believe he's fool enough to walk into a trap with his eyes wide open?

FOX. It isn't a trap. He thinks by now that you're so frightened that you'll do anything to get rid of him.

MR. GORDON. Why didn't he show up last night?

FOX. He probably heard that shot—Jacob's mishap—and postponed——

MR. GORDON. And you think he'll come to-night?

FOX. I do.

MR. GORDON. Well, (*Pause in thought.*) there's nothing to lose; so we might as well try it.

FOX. Good. (*Looks at watch.*) It's after seven. Now get your papers, (*MR. GORDON rises and crosses to L.*) Mr. Gordon, the real papers.

MR. GORDON. Very well. [Exits L.]

(*FOX rises and goes up to window, looks out. Front door slams off R. FOX turns, crosses to R. C. as JIMMIE enters C. from R. and stands in doorway, raincoat, hat and a package in his hand.*)

FOX. Hello.

JIMMIE. Hello—where's my father?

FOX. In his study. Where have you been?

JIMMIE (*looks at him for a moment, sets package on table L. of bookcase*). The doctor's car wouldn't run, so I took him home in mine.

FOX. I'll bet it isn't a Ford.

JIMMIE. No—I think it's a Reo—1901.

(*Takes off hat and coat.*)

FOX. Then I see where there's no hope for Jacob. (*Indicates package—jocularly.*) Something good to eat?

JIMMIE. I don't know—it's for my father—I stopped at the post-office on my way back.

(*Exits C. to R. for a moment to hang up hat and coat.*)

FOX. Any mail for me?

(JIMMIE *reënters*—*both drop c.*—FOX *on* JIMMIE'S R.)

JIMMIE. Were you—expecting any?

FOX. Well, yes—I thought perhaps I might get another letter from our mysterious friend.

JIMMIE (C.). Have you got one from him?

FOX (*nods*). He's going to pay us a visit within a few minutes.

JIMMIE (*looks at him with a half smile*). Well, Mr. FOX, I certainly will give you credit for being about on par with Henry.

FOX. What do you mean?

JIMMIE. I mean that as a disciple of Sherlock Holmes you certainly equal Henry as a spouter of Shakespeare.

FOX. Trying to kid me, are you?

JIMMIE. A waste of time.

FOX. You're right! (MISS SMITH *enters c. from L., stands up c. unseen by others.*) Young man, suppose I should tell you that within five minutes I'll be able to lay my hand right on this criminal's shoulder. What would you say?

JIMMIE (*crossing to L. C.*). That you're making a pretty absurd statement.

FOX (*laughs, crossing a few steps toward JIMMIE*). Well, just stick around for five minutes and you'll learn a few things.

JIMMIE. Well, I'm willing to learn.

MISS SMITH (*drops L. of table, R. C.*). And so am I.

FOX. Hello—when did you blow in?

MISS SMITH. Blow in is right. I thought I'd never find my way back here.

JIMMIE. Pretty tough night.

FOX. It's going to be—for somebody.

(*Looks from MISS SMITH to JIMMIE.*)

MISS SMITH (*spoken across to JIMMIE*). I wonder which one of us he means?

(JIMMIE shrugs shoulders and crosses, at back, to window, R.)

FOX (to MISS SMITH). It would be very strange if I should mean you—a sister officer of the law.

MISS SMITH. Well, strange things do happen—even among relatives. (Crosses to fireplace, in front of divan.)

FOX. That's true.

(Crosses to L., starts to open door, MR. GORDON enters.)

MR. GORDON (a long white envelope in his hand). I'm sorry to have kept you waiting, but I had trouble getting into my safe. I think someone has been tampering with the combination. (Looks directly at FOX.)

FOX. Do you mean to say that I —

MR. GORDON (crossing to table R. C.). I mentioned no names. (Lays envelope on table. To MISS SMITH.) Did you have a pleasant afternoon, Miss Smith?

MISS SMITH. Very. Got wet through and dried off three or four times. Makes me think of the weather in Florida—go to a ball game in a car and come back in a boat.

FOX (coming to C.). Excuse me for interrupting a pleasant conversation, but prompt action is vital. Mr. Gordon, kindly sit there. (Points to divan.) Pretend you're enjoying an after-dinner smoke. (To MISS SMITH.) I'll trouble you, Miss, to come over here. (Indicates L. C. at which MISS SMITH crosses around to L. C.) Thank you. (To MR. GORDON.) Close your eyes and doze—realistic like.

(FOX places chair L. of table, to above table.)

MR. GORDON (goes to divan). Hum! Seems like a rehearsal in the movies. (Sits on divan.)

FOX. In the sense that the stage must be set, it is. Now your cigar. (MR. GORDON looks at FOX—grunts—takes cigar from pocket—lights it—and vigorously puffs.) I insist on coöperation if we are to land this criminal.

MISS SMITH (L. C.). Do you think you have a chance?

FOX. Never yet failed in my professional duties. Have you?

MISS SMITH. Yes. Once caught a poor devil stealing a loaf of bread—but let him go.

FOX. Ah! A tribute to your womanly instinct. (*To JIMMIE—at window.*) Do you mind standing up there and, at the word, switch off the lights?

JIMMIE (*going up to switch, L. of C. door*). Not at all.

FOX (*turning to MISS SMITH*). Now, Miss Smith, you and I will do the dirty work.

MISS SMITH. Sounds like the scrub women's convention.

FOX. No criticisms, please. Have you a gun?

MISS SMITH. Is that a fair question to ask an officer of the law?

FOX. Even the best of us slip up.

MISS SMITH. Quite true; but I'm on my feet this time. (*Pulls out gun.*)

MR. GORDON (*puffing cigar*). It's my turn now to interrupt a pleasant conversation but didn't someone say that prompt action was vital?

FOX (*taking the hint—to MISS SMITH*). Guard that door from there. (*Points to chair below L. door.*)

MISS SMITH. Mr. Fox, may I speak frankly——

FOX. And quickly.

MISS SMITH. If I weren't sure you were really a detective I'd take you for the iceman.

JIMMIE (*amused*). Bravo!

FOX (*nettled*). You mean——

MISS SMITH. To trap a man in this way—a man as consummately clever as I know the Cat o' Nine Tails to be, is preposterous!

FOX (*suavely bowing*). Thank you, sister. All I require of you is your professional support.

MISS SMITH (*crossing to chair, L.—significantly*). You'll need it! (*Getting behind chair.*) Just a moment—which window is he coming through, the hall, the skylight, or that one, there? (*Half-pointing revolver.*)

FOX. Keep your eye peeled and you'll find out.

MR. GORDON (*puffing cigar*). For my sake, Miss Smith, keep both eyes peeled.

MISS SMITH. It's a shame to waste a bullet on an innocent pane of glass.

FOX. Who told you to shoot?

MISS SMITH. My womanly instinct.

FOX (*authoritatively*). If there's any shooting, I'll do it!

MISS SMITH. The whole show, aren't you?

FOX. I'm responsible!

MISS SMITH. I'm dumb! (*Ducks behind chair.*)

FOX (*glancing about*). All set?

MR. GORDON. And puffing. (*Puffs cigar.*)

FOX (*goes up to R. of C. door—to JIMMIE*). When I whistle switch off the lights. When I shout "lights"—on they go. Understand?

JIMMIE. Do I? I'm glad my old boiler didn't have a blow-out. I wouldn't miss this for hundreds.

FOX. In a few minutes you'll change your tune, young fellow. [*Exits C. to R.*]

(*The following lines in loud whispers as MISS SMITH peeks over chair.*)

MISS SMITH. Sst?

JIMMIE. What?

MISS SMITH. Where is he?

JIMMIE. Who?

MISS SMITH. The clown.

(*A long, low police whistle from off R. JIMMIE snaps out lights, stage in semi-darkness. Firelight and light from hall only lights. In a moment noise at window may be heard, wind also howls down chimney. Window opens, a figure in a raincoat, slouch hat, a handkerchief concealing lower part of face, enters; has a flashlight and revolver. Comes slowly down to L. of table, picks up envelope, turns, flashes light on MR. GORDON, who rises—back to audience.*)

MR. GORDON. Well, Fox, I hope you've enjoyed yourself. (*Figure covering MR. GORDON with revolver moves*

backward up toward window, R.) I don't know what your idea is but it certainly belongs to the kindergarten class.

FOX (*enters window, revolver in hand; confronts figure*). Lights! (JIMMIE switches on lights.) Hand over those papers.

(*Figure hands FOX papers and backs quickly to c. where JIMMIE seizes him behind and disarms him and simultaneously MISS SMITH appears with leveled revolver—L. Directly FOX seizes papers he drops to fireplace and Mr. GORDON swings up R. of figure, at c.*)

MR. GORDON. Well, who is this? (*Pulls off hat and kerchief from figure. It is HENRY.*) Henry!

HENRY. Yes, sir—as Shakespeare said—"caught in the act."

MR. GORDON. What's the meaning of this masquerade?

HENRY (*points finger accusingly at FOX*). He got me to do it.

(HENRY drops down L. while MISS SMITH comes L. C.)

MR. GORDON (*to FOX*). Is this true?

FOX (*crossing to below table, R. C.*). It is.

MR. GORDON (*drops L. of table*). Will you kindly explain this crazy affair?

FOX. I told your son that within five minutes I'd surprise him. Mr. Gordon, to the attempted murder of Jacob Webber I also charge you with attempting to defraud your employers of papers worth millions. Cat o' Nine Tails, (*Lays hand on MR. GORDON'S shoulder.*) you are my prisoner! (*Covers MR. GORDON with revolver.*)

JIMMIE (*drops to back of table, R. C.*). Listen, Fox—this is my father!

HENRY. Don't talk to him—he ain't got no sense of honor.

(*As MISS SMITH crosses R. C. to FOX, MR. GORDON and JIMMIE go up stage consulting.*)

MISS SMITH (R. C.). Hold on, Fox. You've gone far enough. You can't prove anything against Mr. Gordon and you know it.

FOX (*pocketing revolver*). I can't, eh? Do you know the reason I planned this little act to-night—do you know why I wrote that little note to myself—do you know why I paid Henry to do this?

HENRY. You ain't paid me yet.

FOX (*to MISS SMITH*). Do you know why? There's the reason — (*Holds up envelope.*)

MISS SMITH. Then why do you accuse him of stealing something you've got yourself?

FOX. Ah! There you are!—these are not the real papers.

MR. GORDON. I know it.

(*Drops c. again with JIMMIE on his L. while MISS SMITH goes up R. C. reflecting.*)

FOX. Of course you know it—you have known it right along, but I didn't and I wanted to make sure.

(*Opens envelope, looks at papers, crumples them, crosses to fireplace and throws them in.*)

MR. GORDON. Do you think I'd be fool enough to put valuable papers on a table—with you around?

FOX (*crosses to front of divan*). No—and for a very good reason—you haven't got the papers.

MR. GORDON. You're crazy.

HENRY. Crazy! All in favor, remain standing. (*Looks around.*) Unanimous.

FOX (*spoken across to HENRY at L.*). You get out of here.

HENRY. You ain't my boss—and you owe me five dollars and if I can't collect I'll put you in the hands of a real policeman.

MISS SMITH (*drops to R. C.*). Now, listen to me, Mr. Fox. I know you want to do the right thing.

(*MISS SMITH and Fox confer.*)

HENRY. If he did he'd pay me my five dollars.

JIMMIE (*takes HENRY by ear*). I want to show you something, Henry. (*Leads him up to c. door.*)

HENRY. I don't want to see nothing but the color of his money.

JIMMIE (*pushes HENRY off c. to L.*). Tell it to Shakespeare.

(*Turns, comes down to L. c. Positions: FOX, R. c. at divan. MISS SMITH, L. of FOX. MR. GORDON joins JIMMIE at L. c.*)

FOX. Of course I want to do the right thing. That's why I'm going to take him back to the city with me.

MISS SMITH. You'll do nothing of the kind.

FOX. I was sent down here to protect the interests of his employers and I'm here to do it.

MISS SMITH. Will you listen?

FOX. Go on.

MISS SMITH. I pledge you my word, as an officer, that if you'll wait until to-morrow morning before you do anything you'll be sorry for, I'll have the real criminal under arrest.

FOX. I tell you, that's him there. (*Indicates MR. GORDON.*)

MISS SMITH. You're wrong.

FOX (*artfully*). Then let him show me the real papers and I'll offer an apology.

MR. GORDON. I refuse. I'm under no obligations to you, sir. And now I'll give you five minutes to leave my house.

MISS SMITH (*goes to MR. GORDON at L. c.*). Mr. Gordon, please don't be hasty. I'm sure Mr. Fox will apologize for his actions and everything will come out as I anticipate. Come, (*Crossing back to FOX.*) don't you think you owe an apology to Mr. Gordon? (*Pause.*) Will you not accept my professional word that Mr. Gordon showed me the original papers this morning?

FOX (*doggedly*). Well, why didn't you say so in the first place?

MISS SMITH. Why didn't you ask me?

FOX (*crosses to MR. GORDON, extends hand*). I'm sorry. I hope there's no hard feelings.

MR. GORDON (*shakes*). None at all, Mr. Fox. After all you were doing your just duty.

MISS SMITH. Now, gentlemen, I have a little bit of news. This afternoon I went to the telegraph office as I expected some information from headquarters—here it is—(*Business telegram, reads*.) “Five hundred thousand dollars' worth of jewelry stolen at the Embassy ball at London. Believed an attempt will be made to smuggle it into the States. Be on the lookout. Cat o' Nine Tails at the bottom of it.” (*Puts telegram in pocket*.) You see, I'll need every man I can get. If, as I firmly believe, this master of criminals has his headquarters near here, in all probability those gems will be brought to him to-night.

MR. GORDON. But where could he possibly hide?

FOX. Yes,—where? (*Crossing above table and divan to fireplace*.) I've searched this house from top to bottom. I've been everywhere within a radius of a half a mile——

MISS SMITH. That's because you didn't look in the right place.

FOX. I suppose you did.

JIMMIE. Then you've got a clue?

MISS SMITH. I think so. This afternoon after coming from the telegraph office I stopped at your little grocery.

MR. GORDON. Caswell's, at the corners.

MISS SMITH (*nods affirmatively*). After a little blarney and a little long green I managed to open the store-keeper's mouth long enough to find out that, beside his loose set of false teeth, he had some real information.

FOX. And to think I overlooked that old geezer. Well?

MISS SMITH. Last week Mr. Brown's little boy came to Caswell's store and bought this—(*Takes out flashlight*.) the only one in stock. (*Approaches MR. GORDON and JIMMIE, c.*) See, a number on the side—rather

dimly stamped, but plain enough to be recognized by the storekeeper as the one he sold to Brown's boy.

MR. GORDON. That's the flashlight left on the divan, there.

FOX. Pshaw! You don't imagine the boy broke in here?

MISS SMITH. Of course not. I stopped at Brown's on my way back and, after bribing the youth with candy, he told me everything. A woman gave him money to buy this flash. Warned him not to tell by threatening him —

MR. GORDON. But who is the woman?

MISS SMITH. The boy had only a vague idea of her appearance.

FOX. Hum! Then you think the Cat o' Nine Tails is a woman? (*Crossing to front of divan.*)

MISS SMITH (*crosses to L. of table*). Perhaps—and then again, perhaps she's just his accomplice.

MR. GORDON. But guesswork isn't getting us anywhere.

JIMMIE. No! Miss Smith, what are your plans?

MISS SMITH. Under secrecy I've engaged Brown and his three sons to help me. They ought to be here at any minute. I'm satisfied that in this house somewhere there's a hidden room.

MR. GORDON (*crossing to L.*). Impossible!

FOX. Haven't I searched every nook and corner?

MISS SMITH. Nevertheless, I'm resolved!

FOX. Well, suppose we find this hidden room.

MISS SMITH (*dropping down to Fox, in front of divan*). Then you may expect to meet your friend—the man with the nine lives.

FOX (*laughs*). Talk about my plans. Yours (*Points finger to his head.*) are nutty.

MISS SMITH. He who laughs last —

FOX (*laughs*). I know. That's why I'm laughing first. Search for these hidden rooms and Cat o' Nine Tails will give you the last one. (*Laughs.*)

MISS SMITH. We'll see! But about the sick man —

MR. GORDON (L.). I'll go with you.

(MISS SMITH *swings up to c. door—discovers box on table R. of door.*)

MISS SMITH. What's this? (*Picking it up.*)

(JIMMIE *advances, takes box, and hands it to MR. GORDON.*)

JIMMIE. Oh, I forgot. Dad, a package for you.

MR. GORDON. A package——

JIMMIE. Got it at the post-office this afternoon.

(MR. GORDON *starts to open box and FOX crosses to R. of MISS SMITH as all drop to c. Positions: MISS SMITH, C. FOX, R. of MISS SMITH. JIMMIE, L. of MISS SMITH. MR. GORDON, L. of JIMMIE.*)

MR. GORDON. I wasn't expecting any package.

FOX. Careful! It may be a bomb.

MR. GORDON. I'll take a chance. (*Takes off cover—stares at contents.*) Look out!

(*Throws box c. A large moccasin snake falls out, coiled on floor. A note is deftly secreted in the snake's jaws. Pause as all gaze at it.*)

JIMMIE. It doesn't move.

(JIMMIE *starts to pick it up and FOX reaches and grabs him, swinging him to FOX'S R. MISS SMITH alertly pulls revolver.*)

FOX. Here! (*Swinging JIMMIE.*) You want to die?

JIMMIE. Not just yet.

MISS SMITH (*goes toward it*). Now I know what it is.

FOX (*looks at her*). Well, any fool knows it's a snake.

MISS SMITH. It's a cotton-mouth moccasin, deadly poison. I've seen them many a time in the Florida swamps. They're more dangerous than a rattlesnake because they give no warning before they strike.

(*Others back up.*)

MR. GORDON. Better let the viper alone!

MISS SMITH. I think he's harmless.

FOX. Harmless? Put a bullet in his head for luck.

MISS SMITH (*goes to snake, kicks it*). He's dead!

FOX. Careful—maybe he's only shamming.

MISS SMITH (*pockets revolver and, on knees, picks up snake and box*). Dead as a door nail. (*Examines snake's mouth.*) What's this? Another note.

JIMMIE. Where?

MISS SMITH. Stuck in the jaws.

FOX. You can have it.

MISS SMITH (*extracting note*). I wonder if it's from our friend—

FOX. Box that critter again.—I warn you!

MISS SMITH (*she places snake in box and places box c. on floor—then rises*). Didn't think you were a drinking man.

FOX. No matter. What's the note say?

MISS SMITH (*reads*). "This is the last warning. I strike to-night. Cat o' Nine Tails."

FOX. Well, we'll be ready for him.

(MISS SMITH and FOX retire up R. C. consulting.
HENRY enters L. door.)

MR. GORDON (L. C., *observing HENRY*). Henry!

HENRY (L.). Yes, sir.

MR. GORDON (*points c.*). Take that box and throw it out behind the stable.

HENRY (*crossing to c.*). Yes, sir.

JIMMIE (R. C.). And don't take the cover off.

HENRY. Why? (*Picking up box.*)

MR. GORDON. Never mind why. Do as I tell you.

(MR. GORDON and JIMMIE go up c.—near door—conferring.)

HENRY. Yes, sir. (*Crosses L., stops, turns, looks slyly at group who are busy looking at note up R. C. He lifts cover, looks in, gives a whoop.*) Help! (*Drops box, starts up c.*)

JIMMIE (*stops him*). What's the matter with you?

HENRY. Let me go—let me go—I swear I'll never touch another drop as long as I live.

MR. GORDON. So you've been at my private stock again.

HENRY. Never again—never again. As Shakespeare said—"The sparkling cup shall ne'er touch these twa' lips again."

MR. GORDON. Go ahead, now, and do as I told you.

HENRY (*down on knees*). Please, Mr. Gordon—have mercy on me.

MR. GORDON. Get up on your feet. (*HENRY rises.*) That snake is harmless.

HENRY. Mother Eve thought so, too. Now look at the result.

MR. GORDON (*sternly*). I'll give you one minute to get out of here.

HENRY. You're sending me to an early grave. (*Turns suddenly on FOX, pointing.*) Let him do it. Nobody'll miss him but me. And I wouldn't miss him only for that five dollars.

JIMMIE. Come on, Henry. I'll help you. (*Leads HENRY down L. JIMMIE picks up box, hands it to HENRY, then picks up snake. Comedy business ad lib.*) Now open your eyes and go.

(*MR. GORDON drops to below piano watching business.*)

HENRY (*opens eyes*). Thank you, Mr. Jimmie. I'll pray for you to-night.

JIMMIE (*opens L. door*). That's very nice of you, Henry. I'm sure your prayers will come in handy.

(*HENRY exits L. JIMMIE, L. C. MRS. GORDON enters in hall from L.*)

MRS. GORDON (*agitated*). My dear James, I told you so—it's terrible—horrible.

MR. GORDON (*goes to her, leads her to piano seat, she sits*). What's the matter now, dear?

(*JIMMIE up to MRS. GORDON'S L. MR. GORDON on her R.*)

MRS. GORDON. He's gone.

(FOX and MISS SMITH drop to back of table, R. C., interested.)

MR. GORDON. Who?

MRS. GORDON. Jacob.

MR. GORDON. Jacob?

JIMMIE. Gone?

MISS SMITH. Impossible.

FOX. Just as I suspected.

MRS. GORDON. I went in to see how he was, and the bed was empty. I looked all around. He isn't up-stairs anywhere.

MR. GORDON. But, my dear, he hasn't strength enough to move his hand.

MRS. GORDON. He's gone!

MR. GORDON. James, stay here with your mother. I'm going to find out. (To MISS SMITH.) Coming, Miss Smith? [Exits c. to L., followed by MISS SMITH.]

FOX. I'm just as much interested in how Jacob flew the coop as they are. [Exits c. to L.]

MRS. GORDON. My boy, will you tell me how this is all going to end?

JIMMIE. There, there, Mother dear, don't worry. (Kisses her.)

MRS. GORDON. Look at me, Jimmie—be honest with me. Haven't I aged ten years overnight? Haven't my hair turned three shades grayer? Haven't I a dozen more wrinkles?

JIMMIE. Of course you haven't aged. And your hair isn't any grayer and you've no more wrinkles than I have. And if you had—Mother, I'd kiss every one of them away. (Helps MRS. GORDON to arise.)

MRS. GORDON (kisses). You dear boy—you've made your poor old mother feel ten years younger.

JIMMIE. Fine! (Laughs.) Now you're the same age that you were yesterday.

MRS. GORDON. But I won't be if I don't get out of this house.

JIMMIE (as they come down c.). Where's Betty?

MRS. GORDON. She went over to Brown's after her dog, Rover. Now there's another thing to add to my night's pleasures. A howling dog.

JIMMIE. What does she want him for—protection?

MRS. GORDON. Yes. Perhaps it would be a good idea to send the detectives home and keep the dog.

JIMMIE. Ted in her room?

MRS. GORDON. Yes, poor girl. She's suffered from a headache all day. (*Front door slams.*) What's that? (*Crossing to L. C.*)

JIMMIE. The front door. (*Goes up to L. of c. door.*)

MRS. GORDON. I wish they wouldn't slam that door.

(*BETTY enters hall L., raincoat, no hat. Has with her a ferocious looking bulldog attached to a leash. If dog is not available BETTY may enter alone.*)

BETTY (*comes down c.*). Hello! Think I was never coming back?

JIMMIE. Don't worry, dear, no one would ever molest you with Rover.

MRS. GORDON. Not if they had any sense. My dear, where have you left him?

BETTY (*smiles knowingly*). Rover is as gentle as a lamb. Where's Miss Smith?

JIMMIE. Up-stairs.

BETTY. I came over with Mr. Brown and the boys. He wants to see Miss Smith about something. (*Crossing to MRS. GORDON—L. C.*)

JIMMIE. I'll call her. (*Goes up to c. door, looks off L.*) Miss Smith.

MISS SMITH (*off L. Pause*). Yes. (*Pause. MISS SMITH enters c. opening.*) What is it?

JIMMIE. Mr. Brown is at the door. He wants to see you.

MISS SMITH. Oh, yes. Thank you.

JIMMIE. Did you find anything?

MISS SMITH. Not yet. [*Exits to R. in hallway.*]

MRS. GORDON. I'm going to see how Theodora is.

[*Exits c. to L.*]

(*JIMMIE drops c.*)

BETTY (*crosses to c.*). What do you want to tell me, Jimmie?

(JIMMIE *passes BETTY to his R. and leads her to divan.*)

JIMMIE. Your father ——

BETTY (*alarmed*). Not dead?

JIMMIE. No—he's gone.

BETTY. Gone? (*Sinks on divan.*)

JIMMIE. Mother went into his room a while ago and found his bed empty. It must be Cat o' Nine Tails' work.

BETTY. But why should he want to take Father away?

JIMMIE. It's a mystery, dear.

(*Sits L. of her—consolingly.*)

BETTY (*suddenly inspired*). Jimmie, I think I've something which may have an important bearing upon this mystery.

JIMMIE. What?

BETTY. This ——

(*Takes out a small white ivory elephant, hands it to him.*)

JIMMIE. Why, it's a little white elephant.

BETTY. Yes.

JIMMIE. Where did you get this?

BETTY. When I went over to Browns after Rover, instead of taking the road I took the short cut through the woods. I found this at the edge of the woods. I spied it partly hidden under some leaves.

JIMMIE. I wonder what it can mean?

BETTY. Jimmie, if I told you exactly what I thought you'd laugh at me.

JIMMIE. Of course I wouldn't.

BETTY. That's why I'm going to keep my thoughts to myself.

JIMMIE. Then you suspect someone?

BETTY. Yes. (*Takes elephant.*) The one to whom this belongs is the one who knows more about this affair than we may suspect. (*Rises.*)

JIMMIE (*rises*). Won't you tell me, dear—you know I'm your husband.

BETTY. Yes—and a darling husband, too. (*Kisses him.*) But if I told you I'm afraid it would spoil you.

JIMMIE (*laughing*). Then don't tell me.

BETTY. Come, Jimmie, I want to go over to the cottage. We may find something that may give us a clue to where my father is. (*Goes up c.*)

JIMMIE (*goes to her*). You think, then, he's in the cottage?

BETTY. Perhaps. We'll see. [*Both exit c. to R.*]

(HENRY *enters c. from L. Looks around before he comes down c. Stops, looks around cautiously—goes down L., enters study only to come out much faster than he went in—scared to death—rubs eyes—comedy business. FOX enters c. from L.—down c.—R. of HENRY.*)

FOX (*sees HENRY trembling*). What's the matter, Macbeth?

HENRY. Nothing.

FOX. H'm. (*Goes to table, takes a cigar from the box, looks for a match in pocket, turns to HENRY.*) Got a match?

HENRY. No, sir. (*Tremblingly, regarding L. door.*)

FOX. Well, do you know where there is one?

HENRY (*pause. Face lights up with an idea*). Yes, sir.

FOX. Where?

HENRY. In there. (*Indicates study.*)

FOX. Thanks. (*Crosses to study door.*)

HENRY. You're welcome.

(*Goes quickly up c. FOX exits. MR. GORDON enters c. from L. A growl and cry and scuffle may be heard in study.*)

MR. GORDON. Henry, what's that?

HENRY (*grins*). That's Mr. Fox after a match.

[*Exits c. to R.*]

(MR. GORDON *comes down to L. c. hastily. FOX enters with a flying leap, holding seat of his pants as he closes door, L.*)

MR. GORDON (*stops him as he starts to run up c.*). Here, where are you going?

FOX. Don't stop me, there's a lion in that room. Let me go.

MR. GORDON. What—a lion?

FOX. There may be two of them. Look at me, will you? (*Turns.*)

MR. GORDON. What's the matter with you? You're all there.

FOX. Don't try to kid me. (*Rubs leg.*) I felt his teeth as he made a grab at me.

MR. GORDON (*laughs*). Fox, I believe you're crazy.

FOX. Well, if that's the way you feel about it, go in there yourself.

MR. GORDON (*looks at him for a moment*). I will. Just to prove to you you've been seeing things.

(*Crosses FOX to L. FOX moves to c.*)

FOX (*c. As MR. GORDON stops at door*). Don't hesitate, walk right in.

MR. GORDON. I will. (*Opens door, steps half-way in, stops; backs out slowly, closes door with a slam, turns, wipes head with kerchief.*) Phew!

FOX. Well—what did you see?

MR. GORDON (*crosses to FOX, c.*). Great Scott, man—that thing has got two shining eyes as big as saucers!

FOX. Believe me, you got off lucky—you saw only his eyes. I felt his teeth.

MR. GORDON. What do you think it is?

FOX. If it isn't a lion I don't know what it is—but I'm not going to try to find out.

MR. GORDON. If we could only switch on the lights without entering, we could see through the window, outside.

FOX. A good idea—but when you speak about that room—use the first person singular.

(MRS. GORDON *enters c. from L.*)

MRS. GORDON (*as she comes down to L. of MR. GORDON*). James, dear, did you find Jacob yet?

MR. GORDON. No—but we've found something else.

FOX. I'll say we have.

MRS. GORDON. Why, what is it?

MR. GORDON. It's in that room. It's got eyes.

FOX. And teeth.

MRS. GORDON (*looks at door*). I'm all nerves but ———
Oh, you cowards!

MR. GORDON. It's pitch dark, Fanny—don't!

MRS. GORDON. Bah! I'm not afraid to enter!

[*Goes down L., exits.*]

FOX. By George, I'm going to make her a present of my badge.

(MR. GORDON *down L. c.*; FOX *on his R.* MRS. GORDON *enters.*)

MRS. GORDON. Come, look for yourselves.

(*Both go slowly to door.*)

MR. GORDON (*looks in*). Rover.

FOX (*looks in*). Rover, humph! That dog was mis-named.

MRS. GORDON. I'm surprised that you two grown men should let Rover frighten you.

(*Exits into study to snap off lights.* MR. GORDON and FOX *cross to c.*)

MR. GORDON. I'm not surprised—I've seen Rover in action before.

FOX. One mean pup!

MR. GORDON. Ask Henry.

(MRS. GORDON *enters L., closes door.*)

MRS. GORDON (*as she crosses to L. c.*). You haven't found anything that might lead to Jacob's whereabouts?

MR. GORDON. Not a thing.

MRS. GORDON (*screams*). Oh! Look! (*Points to*

window R. Both men turn; a large owl sits on window ledge, blinking at them. In a moment it disappears.)
James, I'm going to faint.

MR. GORDON (*goes to her, L. C.*). Why, that was nothing but an owl.

(*FOX goes up to window, looking out.*)

MRS. GORDON. I don't care—what business did it have lighting on that window?

MR. GORDON. I'm sure I don't know, dear. But if you wish, I'll ask him the next time I see him.

MRS. GORDON. Take me up-stairs, please. I'm ready to die!

MR. GORDON. Very well, dear. (*Leads her up C.*) Shall we get the minister?

MRS. GORDON. Now you're making fun of me.

MR. GORDON. Why, no, dear—if you're going to die—you might as well die right.

(*Winks at FOX as he exits with MRS. GORDON, C. to L. FOX crosses to hall, looks off L., then R. MISS SMITH enters C. from R.*)

FOX. Where have you been?

MISS SMITH. Patience, and I'll tell you about it.

(*They come down C., MISS SMITH closing door after her. FOX on L. of MISS SMITH.*)

FOX. Find a clue?

MISS SMITH. No—but I've set a trap.

FOX. A trap?

MISS SMITH. Yes—Mr. Brown and his three sons just came over and also the town constable and his two trusty sleuths.

FOX. Quite a delegation.

MISS SMITH. I've stationed them around the house. The minute anyone tries to leave or enter they signal me with two shots. Now there's another thing—

FOX. What is it?

MISS SMITH (*L. C.*). I learned this afternoon from one of the household that Mr. Gordon's son and Jacob's

daughter were married a short time ago. Mr. Gordon is deeply concerned over it—blames Jacob for permitting this marriage.

FOX (*down to L.*). Didn't I tell you so! By George, I can see it all as plain as day. Jacob and Gordon go to the door. Jacob pulls out his gun and Gordon in a fit of anger grabs it. Knowing that no one is watching him, kills Jacob in cold blood.

MISS SMITH. Not so fast. Your theory is possible but not exactly probable.

FOX. Why not?

MISS SMITH. In the first place Mr. Gordon has proven himself to be a level-headed man, not given to any outbursts of anger.

FOX. Yes, but—

MISS SMITH. Wait—if he didn't want his son to be the husband of this girl, a divorce could be more easily arranged than an acquittal of the charge of murder.

FOX. You don't mean to say that you think Jacob really shot himself?

MISS SMITH. My dear sir, there are hundreds of suicides for which the real motive will never be known.

FOX. Well, what do you think?

MISS SMITH. I have two theories. One is that Mr. Gordon is innocent. The other that he—

FOX (*interrupting*). —is the Cat o' Nine Tails himself!

MISS SMITH. Exactly. But it remains to be proven.

FOX. And Macbeth?

MISS SMITH. Who?

FOX. Henry—that student of Shakespeare.

MISS SMITH. Well, he may be in league with his employer, but candidly, I think his belfry's full of bats.

FOX. Just the same, I'm going to watch him. Told me there were matches in that room. (*Indicates L.*) And I ran right into the teeth of that bloodhound Rover.

MISS SMITH. A dog in there?

FOX. They call him a dog.

(*Two shots are fired outside house, R.*)

MISS SMITH. The signal.

(*Goes up c., opens door, exits c. to r. FOX starts to go up c.—stops as HENRY enters down L. door.*)

HENRY. Who shot them shots?

FOX (*turns*). How should I know?

HENRY. Well, you know most everything that's going on 'round here.

FOX. Perhaps—but there's one thing I don't know: how did you get by Rover?

HENRY. I gave him a bone and a dog biscuit—(*Grins.*) to change his mind.

FOX (*crossing to HENRY, L. C.*). Some wild animal trainer, eh?

HENRY. Oh, yes—as Shakespeare said—like a fickle woman he cheweth away the minutes.

(*BETTY, JIMMIE and MISS SMITH enter c. from r. Come down c. HENRY goes up rear, exits, closing doors after him. BETTY goes down R. and sits on divan. JIMMIE down back of divan to fireplace. MISS SMITH below table, R. C. FOX is L. C.*)

MISS SMITH. I'm sorry, Miss Webber, if you were given a scare. Orders were to signal, no matter who tried to enter or leave.

JIMMIE. But I say, how's a person going to get any sleep to-night?

MISS SMITH. I'm afraid there won't be much sleep for any of us.

BETTY. I do hope you find a clue to where my father is.

MISS SMITH. Then you didn't find anything at the cottage?

(*FOX crosses to window L., looks out.*)

BETTY. Nothing of any importance.

MISS SMITH. Oh, then you did find something?

BETTY. Yes—this handkerchief.

(*Hands MISS SMITH a lady's kerchief.*)

MISS SMITH. This looks like a lady's.

BETTY. It may be one of mine—it may be anybody's. There are no initials on it.

MISS SMITH. And where did you find it?

BETTY (*looks at JIMMIE quickly—then to MISS SMITH*). I—I found it by the kitchen door.

MISS SMITH. Mm! Well—this doesn't help any.

(*Gives kerchief to BETTY, who puts it in pocket.*)

JIMMIE. Miss Smith, may I offer a suggestion?

MISS SMITH. Fire ahead.

JIMMIE. Don't you think it might be a good plan to start at the garret and search the house right down to the cellar?

TED (*enters suddenly c. from L. Down c.*). Quick, somebody,—there—there's a man in my room.

(*Fox crosses to c.*)

JIMMIE. In your room?

TED. Yes—he came in through the window. I was lying down—couldn't sleep. I watched him as he crept toward me. As he kept getting closer I tried to scream, but my throat was dry from fear. Then I raised myself up and he ran into the closet.

MISS SMITH (*to JIMMIE*). You go through the hall. (*JIMMIE goes up to c.—To FOX.*) You, through the study. (*FOX starts to L. c. and stops looking at L. door, while TED goes up to R. of JIMMIE.*) I'll stay here with Betty.

FOX (*clears throat*). Er—if it's all the same to you, Miss Smith, I'll stay here.

MISS SMITH (*laughs*). Oh, I see—Rover. Very well. I'll go. (*To JIMMIE.*) All right. Now, on your way!

(*MISS SMITH crosses to L. and exits L. door.*)

TED. I'll go with you, Jimmie.

(*BETTY rises and looks at TED and JIMMIE.*)

JIMMIE. Hadn't you better stay here?

TED. No—I'll go with you!

JIMMIE. All right—but stay in back of me.

(JIMMIE *exits c. to L.*, followed by TED who closes doors after her.)

FOX (*L. c.*, pulls out gun). Now, if this bird comes in here—don't you be afraid, Miss.

BETTY (*significantly*). I'm sure, Mr. Fox, I feel perfectly at home with you—and Rover there. (*Indicates L.*)

FOX. You're safe, all right.

(*He starts up c.*, a piercing scream comes from hall.)

BETTY swings up *c.*, *r. of divan*. FOX opens *c. door*

—TED lies stretched full length in *c. hallway*—*picture*. FOX goes to TED, puts gun in pocket, picks her up, brings her down to *divan*—lays her on it.

BETTY down to *r. of divan*. *Business reviving TED.*)

BETTY. Miss Maitland. (*TED moves.*)

FOX. What happened to her?

BETTY. She fainted—she has these spells very often.

FOX. This is no time for spells!

(*Disgustedly crosses to L. c.*)

BETTY. Miss Maitland, can you speak?

TED (*feebly*). Yes—— (*Sits up.*) Oh, it was terrible—I shall never forget it.

FOX. What are you talking about?

(MR. GORDON enters *c. from L.*, comes down to back of table, *r. c.*)

MR. GORDON. What happened?

(MRS. GORDON enters, *c. from L.*, out of breath.)

MRS. GORDON (*as she comes down to r. c.*). James—don't—ever—run off—and—leave me—alone—in this—terrible house.

BETTY (*to MR. GORDON*). She fainted.

MRS. GORDON. I should think she would. (*Sits beside TED.*) Theodora, my dear, how do you do it? I'd

be the happiest woman in the world if I could faint—then I could forget some of these things, at least for a while.

MR. GORDON. Shall I get you some brandy, Theodora?

TED. No, thank you—I feel much better. Oh, but little did I realize that——

(MISS SMITH enters c. from L.—down to table, R. C.)

MISS SMITH (as she comes down). What happened? Where's Jimmie?

TED. He's gone.

ALL. What!

TED. Yes—just as I closed the door and turned—I saw—a man grab Jimmie by the throat—lift a gun as if to strike him—and then I fainted.

FOX (L. C., scratches head). Talk about your katz and jammer mad houses!

MISS SMITH. Did you see the man's face?

TED. It was covered with a mask,—a black mask.

MRS. GORDON. James, I want you to tell Henry to serve all of my meals right here. I shall not move from this spot until this scoundrel is behind prison bars!

(HENRY, very excited, enters c. from L. and drops c.)

HENRY. I got him. I got him. I got him.

FOX (on HENRY'S L.). Got who?

HENRY. I didn't ask him his name. But I got him.

MISS SMITH (crosses to HENRY'S R.). Where is he?

HENRY. Locked in the cellar, and there's the key.

(Positions: BETTY, R. of divan. TED and MRS. GORDON, on divan. MR. GORDON, back of table, R. C.

MISS SMITH, C. HENRY, L. of MISS SMITH. FOX, L. of HENRY.)

FOX (snatches key from HENRY'S hand). Come on, Miss Smith. (Pulls out gun as he goes up c., followed by MISS SMITH.)

HENRY. Here, give me that key to the cellar. (Follows FOX up.)

FOX (pushes him away). Go peddle your papers.

HENRY (*draws back fist*). I'll peddle you.

MR. GORDON. Henry!

HENRY. Yes, sir!

MR. GORDON. Come here.

(HENRY *reluctantly drops to L. of table, R. C.*)

MISS SMITH. Mr. Gordon, you'd better stay here with the ladies.

HENRY. Hey, I ain't a lady.

FOX. You're a sap.

[FOX and MISS SMITH *exeunt c. to L.*]

HENRY (*to MR. GORDON*). Did you hear what he called me? As Shakespeare—

MR. GORDON. Shut up, or I'll call you something worse. (*Drops around to L. C.*)

MRS. GORDON. Henry!

HENRY (*down to MRS. GORDON*). Yes, ma'am!

MRS. GORDON (*nervously*). Logs for the fire—I'm freezing!

HENRY. Yes, ma'am. (*Starts up c.*)

MRS. GORDON. Henry!

HENRY (*stops, down to her*). Yes, ma'am.

MRS. GORDON. Go to my room and bring me the book on my dresser by Laura Jean Libbey.

HENRY. Yes, ma'am. (*Up c.*)

(MR. GORDON *pacing up and down L., smoking.*)

MRS. GORDON. Henry!

HENRY. Yes, ma'am. (*Down again.*)

MRS. GORDON. I don't want that book—there's a murder in it. Bring me the one by—oh—what's her name? Oh—never mind—bring me a book.

HENRY. Yes, ma'am. [*Exits c. to L.*]

MRS. GORDON. I'm going to spend the rest of the night right here.

BETTY. But, Mrs. Gordon, you won't be able—

MRS. GORDON. My dear, after what I've gone through I can stand anything.

TED. It hardly seems possible that—that—Jimmie is gone.

MRS. GORDON. Theodora—all my life I've worried over my boy—but now something tells me not to worry. He is safe.

BETTY. I hope so.

(Fervently as she goes up R. C.—above divan.)

MR. GORDON *(crosses to BETTY)*. Betty, I'm going down cellar. *(Hands her gun.)* Take this and if anyone tries to enter ——— *(BETTY takes gun.)*

MRS. GORDON. James—I beg of you—be careful.

MR. GORDON. I will, dear. Now don't worry. You'll be all right with Betty.

(Exits C. to L.—closes doors after him. BETTY drops L. of table.)

MRS. GORDON. Betty, my dear—do be careful with that. A day hardly passes but you read in the papers of someone shooting themselves.

BETTY *(crossing to L.)*. Don't be alarmed, Mrs. Gordon. I'll be careful.

MRS. GORDON. Betty!

BETTY. Yes.

MRS. GORDON. Don't leave me!

BETTY. I won't. I want to see if Rover is all right.

(Opens study door, looks in, closes door.)

MRS. GORDON. Is he?

BETTY *(C.)*. Yes—asleep.

MRS. GORDON. Sleep—will that word ever mean the same to me again? *(TED seems to be in a daze.)*

BETTY. I'm sure it will, Mrs. Gordon. Why, when you get back to the city ———

MRS. GORDON. Will I ever get back?

BETTY *(L.)*. I'm sure ——— *(Stops as she sees hall door move slowly.)* Sh!

MRS. GORDON. What is it?

(Indicates up, levels gun at door. Lights go out. A man enters C. from L. Slams door.)

BETTY. Stop, or I'll shoot.

MAN. Don't shoot. (*Lights on, man is Fox.*)

FOX (*drops c.*). Did I startle you?

BETTY. Mr. FOX, if you only knew how close you were to death —

FOX. My dear girl, I've flirted so much with death that I'm really getting careless.

MRS. GORDON. Did you find anyone in the cellar?

FOX. No. The cellar window was open when we got down there. Probably made his escape that way.

MRS. GORDON. Where's my husband?

(*BETTY goes up to window R., looks out.*)

FOX. With Miss Smith. They're taking a look outside. I thought I'd better come in here. You ladies may need me. (*Crosses to front of table, R. C.*)

MRS. GORDON. How gallant of you.

FOX. Thank you. It's a pleasure.

BETTY (*R. C.*). Mr. Fox, who put out the lights?

FOX. I don't know. Probably Miss Smith or Mr. Gordon accidentally pulled the switch. I noticed down in the cellar.

(*HENRY enters c. from L.—book in hand—speaks as he enters.*)

HENRY (*to BETTY*). Who put out the lights?

(*FOX crosses to L.*)

BETTY (*at window*). I don't know.

HENRY (*as he comes down to MRS. GORDON*). Who put out the lights?

MRS. GORDON. How should I know? (*Takes book from him.*)

HENRY (*turns, goes to FOX at L.*). Who put out the lights?

FOX (*pause*). Shakespeare. (*Turns, goes up L.*)

HENRY. Then why didn't he put out yours?

MRS. GORDON (*looking at book*). Henry!

HENRY (*crosses to her*). Yes, ma'am!

MRS. GORDON. Do you know what you've brought me?

HENRY. Yes, ma'am—a book.

MRS. GORDON. Grimm's Fairy Tales.

HENRY. Just as I reached the lights went out so I just took the first one my hand got a hold of.

MRS. GORDON. Oh, well, this is better than nothing. Henry, don't forget—the wood.

(BETTY drops back of table, placing revolver thereon.)

HENRY. Yes, ma'am. (As he crosses c.) Did you get your match?

(FOX makes a motion toward him. HENRY exits up c. to L.—quickly.)

BETTY. Mrs. Gordon, do you want me to go up-stairs and get you a book?

MRS. GORDON. I wish you would, my dear. Somehow I've lost all interest in fairies.

BETTY (crosses to rear of divan, takes book from MRS. GORDON). What one do you want?

MRS. GORDON. "Glimpses of the Moon." I might as well finish it. Perhaps it will be my last glimpse of any moon. [BETTY exits c. to L.

FOX (crosses at back of divan to fireplace, to MRS. GORDON). Have you any theories as to the identity of this criminal?

MRS. GORDON. I always had the reputation of being the poorest mathematician of my class—and I'm sorry to say I haven't improved a bit.

FOX. Then you suspect no one? How about you, Miss Maitland?

TED (wearily). I beg your pardon?

MRS. GORDON (puts arm about TED). Poor girl—between her headaches and fainting spells she hasn't had much time to suspect anyone.

FOX. Excuse my asking, Miss—but are you troubled with these fainting spells?

TED. Yes—ever since I was six years old.

FOX. I suppose you—er—doctor for them?

TED. I've tried everything, but to no avail. The doctors consider my case—hopeless. (Pause a moment.) What time is it, please?

FOX (*crosses at back to L. C.*). About quarter to eight.

TED (*rises*). Oh, I forgot to take my headache powder. (*Starts up C.*)

MRS. GORDON (*rises and follows*). Theodora, my dear, don't go out in that hall alone.

FOX (*L. C.*). Shall I go with you?

TED. Thank you. I'm not afraid. Perhaps I'd better be protected though. Would you mind letting me take your gun?

FOX. Certainly. (*Hands her gun. MRS. GORDON, at sight of gun, seeks divan again.*) Be careful. It goes off at a very light touch.

TED. I will. [*Exits C. to L., closes doors after her.*]

FOX. Mrs. Gordon! (*Crosses and sits on divan—L. of her.*)

MRS. GORDON. Yes.

FOX. How long have you known Miss Maitland?

MRS. GORDON. Let me see—five—six—oh, I should say ten years at the least. Why?

FOX. You'll forgive me for speaking plainly——

MRS. GORDON. Surely.

FOX. But Miss Maitland impresses me as being of that type of woman who is very sensitive, very temperamental, very susceptible to outside influences.

MRS. GORDON. Do you mean——

FOX. In other words, I mean to say I don't think she's quite all there.

MRS. GORDON (*taken aback*). Why—how ridiculous. I never heard of such a thing.

FOX (*rises*). Please don't misunderstand me, Mrs. Gordon. I wouldn't hurt the girl's feelings for the world but I believe in being frank.

MRS. GORDON. Yes—I see that.

FOX. And to be still more frank—I think that girl knows something about this mysterious——

MRS. GORDON (*rises exasperated*). Why—I don't know what to say!

FOX. I thought you'd be surprised. (*Coolly, crossing to L. C.*)

MRS. GORDON. I'm dumbfounded! I don't believe it—I don't believe that Theodora is implicated in this affair any more than I am!

(MR. GORDON, followed by MISS SMITH, enters c. MR. GORDON drops R. of divan and MISS SMITH to front of table, R. C.)

MR. GORDON. Not a trace of him.

MRS. GORDON. James, can you imagine anyone accusing Theodora—

FOX (L. C.). Excuse me, Mrs. Gordon, I didn't accuse her.

MR. GORDON. My dear, I might as well confess that Theodora has been acting very strangely for the last week. Mind you I'm not intimating that she has had anything to do with these notes—with Jacob's or Jimmie's disappearance, but Miss Smith and I have our suspicions.

FOX. Which confirms my belief.

MRS. GORDON. Look what the poor girl's gone through. Is it any wonder she's acted queerly? It's a wonder to me someone hasn't accused me. (*Sitting helplessly.*)

MR. GORDON. My dear.

MRS. GORDON. Well, why not;—I've never acted so queerly in all my life as I have the last two days.

MR. GORDON. What are you talking about?

(*Impatiently crosses, at back to FOX, L. C.*)

MRS. GORDON. It's true. Why, James—right now I'm a fit subject for the insane asylum.

(*Quietly wrings hands and softly moans.*)

MR. GORDON (*to FOX*). Where's Miss Maitland?

FOX. Went to her room for a headache powder.

MR. GORDON. Miss Smith has suggested a plan as to how we might trap her.

(MISS SMITH crosses to MR. GORDON, at L. C.)

MRS. GORDON (*rises*). You sha'n't do it.

MR. GORDON. Now, listen, dear. (*Crossing back to L. of table.*) It's for the best. It will prove whether Theodora is innocent or guilty.

MRS. GORDON. Very well, James, but remember if you insult her, you must shoulder the blame yourself.

MR. GORDON (*reproachfully*). My dear! I'm going to put the papers on this table. Then, when she comes back we'll find some excuse to leave her. If she's innocent she won't touch them and our suspicions are unfounded. If she's guilty—well——

MRS. GORDON (*positively*). I know she won't touch them. (*Sits on divan.*)

MR. GORDON. We'll see. (*To MISS SMITH and FOX, as he crosses stage.*) I'll get them. [*Exits door L.*]

(*BETTY enters, with a book, c. from L.; holds door open for HENRY to enter c. from L. with an armful of wood. HENRY drops down to fireplace. BETTY down to R. of divan to MRS. GORDON, gives her the book.*)

BETTY. Is that the one? (*Sitting R. of MRS. GORDON.*)

MRS. GORDON. Yes, thank you. But I shall never read it now.

BETTY. Why?

(*MISS SMITH cautions MRS. GORDON not to tell BETTY their plan.*)

MRS. GORDON. I—I—I don't think I care to read about moons.

BETTY. Shall I get you another book?

MRS. GORDON. No, my dear—I've lost all my interest in everything human.

FOX (*L. c.*). My dear Mrs. Gordon, to-morrow you may view life differently.

MRS. GORDON (*nods*). Yes, Mr. Fox—to-morrow I may be with the angels.

(*TED enters c. from L., closing door. She holds a packet of headache powders in right hand and revolver in left. She drops to L. of FOX.*)

TED (*handing FOX revolver*). Thank you!

(*She then crosses to above table, R. C. and pauses as MRS. GORDON speaks.*)

MRS. GORDON. Do you feel better, Theodora?

TED. Very much so, Mrs. Gordon. I brought my powders. (*Holding them up.*)

(*At this instant MR. GORDON enters door, L., with blue envelope. He crosses stage to R. of MISS SMITH and FOX and pauses.*)

MR. GORDON (*R. of MISS SMITH—showing envelope*). Well, Miss Smith, here are the papers.

(*MISS SMITH takes them and at the same moment TED, unobserved, picks up revolver from table and secretes it.*)

MISS SMITH (*weighing envelope*). Millions in so small a package.

MR. GORDON (*takes envelope—crosses to L. of table*). A fortune for Japan or England. (*Placing envelope on table.*)

MRS. GORDON. Won't you sit by us, Theodora? (*Making room.*)

TED. No—please! I need the air.

(*TED goes to R. and raises window, looking out while MR. GORDON joins MISS SMITH and FOX, L. C.*)

MISS SMITH. I'll warrant our mysterious friend would give his life to possess those papers.

(*MR. GORDON, MISS SMITH and FOX confer, L. C.*)

HENRY (*at fireplace, rising*). Anything else, ma'am?

MRS. GORDON. No; that'll be all, Henry.

MR. GORDON. Henry, lock up before you go to bed.

HENRY (*crossing back of divan to L. of table*). I didn't figure going to bed, Mr. Gordon.

MRS. GORDON. You must have sleep.

HENRY. Yes, ma'am; I can bunk with Rover, if I wish. (HENRY goes up c., slowly.)

MR. GORDON (to HENRY). See to everything. (To MISS SMITH and FOX, in lowered voice.) Now's the time to test her.

(Nods head toward TED who still gazes out of window.)

HENRY (coming down R. C.). Shall I lock the cellar door?

MR. GORDON. By all means—and hurry!

(HENRY quickens walk to c. door and opens it. The hall light is out. In hall stands the CAT O' NINE TAILS, in dress suit, wearing a black mask. He holds a revolver trained on the occupants of the room. The instant HENRY discovers the masked figure he yells and, rushing down L., hides behind chair. All turn at yell. MRS. GORDON screams and, with BETTY, rises and seeks R. Simultaneously MR. GORDON starts for table to secure envelope but is confronted by TED who advances from window with pointed revolver.)

TED (at above table, R. C.). Everybody—raise their hands!

(All do so. As MR. GORDON slowly backs toward MISS SMITH and FOX, HENRY speaks.)

HENRY (in awed whisper). What's this—a poker game?

MRS. GORDON (fearfully—arms about BETTY). Theodora!

TED (coolly). Mr. Gordon, I'll trouble you for the real papers. (Picking up blue envelope from table.)

MR. GORDON. Those—those are the ones.

TED (fanning gun). You're wasting my time—be quick!

MR. GORDON (brief pause). They're—they're in the third book from the right in the bookcase.

TED. What row?

MR. GORDON. Second.

TED (*drops blue envelope on table—backs up to book-case—quickly turns—gets book—takes out envelope. A slight movement is made by others as her back is turned but one threatening step forward of CAT O' NINE TAILS arrests them*). If any one of you—(*Slowly crossing to c. door.*) tries to enter this hall before five minutes—it's death!

MR. GORDON. Theodora, who is this man and why are you at his mercy?

TED (*at R. of CAT O' NINE TAILS*). Mercy! (*Laughs in derision.*) He is Cat o' Nine Tails and I—I am his wife!

(*TED closes door—a pause—then FOX pulls revolver and, rushing up to door, pulls trigger—no report. As he drops back of divan, "breaks" revolver.*)

FOX. Not a cartridge! (*Crosses cautiously to window.*)

HENRY (L.). Now I know what bonehead means.

MR. GORDON. I can't believe it. (*Starts to go up c.*)

MISS SMITH (*crossing to above table, R. c.*). Wait, you don't know what's behind that door.

MR. GORDON (*exasperated*). But the papers—the papers?

MISS SMITH (*smiling*). Here are the papers! (*Picks up envelope. MR. GORDON approaches L. of table, amazed.*) I found your hiding place this afternoon and changed them. She's got only the blanks!

(*FOX, at window, turns,—all are elated.*)

MR. GORDON. Well, I'll be ——

(*Crossing to c., pockets envelope.*)

HENRY (*coming from behind chair L.*). As Shakespeare said, curses—foiled again!

(*FOX joins MISS SMITH up R. c.*)

BETTY (*crossing to c.—R. of MR. GORDON*). Mr. Gordon, are you sure the cellar under the outer kitchen—the one you searched—is the only one?

MR. GORDON. I'm sure.

BETTY. You're not positive, are you, sir?

MR. GORDON. Why do you ask?

BETTY (*slowly*). Years ago I recall—(*Pause.*) yes, it all comes to me now. (*Inspired.*) Now, I know!

MRS. GORDON. You know what, child?

BETTY. Now, I can account for Dad's and Jimmie's disappearance.

MR. GORDON. What?

BETTY. Yes, and the hiding place of Cat o' Nine Tails.

MISS SMITH. Careful. Don't take a chance. (*She goes to c. door with revolver—listens a moment—then opens door.*) Gone! (*MISS SMITH drops to L. C.*)

BETTY. Quick!

MRS. GORDON. Betty!

BETTY (*enthused*). Swing that table and divan up.

(*FOX, behind divan, quickly moves divan up c. against door. MR. GORDON, at same time, moves table and chair to L. C., up. BETTY, on knees—feels rug above the divan's first position—then casts it aside, discovering trap. She rises exultantly and points. FOX has taken position above trap.*)

FOX (*drops on knees*). At last, the mystery's solved!

(*Exclamations from all as he takes ring and raises trap. The others gather around.*)

MISS SMITH. A trap.

FOX (*peering into trap*). Pitch dark. (*MISS SMITH hands FOX her flashlight—he uses it.*) A winding stair—must be an underground room.

MR. GORDON. Be guarded, Fox!

MRS. GORDON (*at fireplace*). More horrors—oh!

BETTY (*spiritedly*). Your lantern, Henry—quick.

HENRY (*L.—dramatically*). Yes, ma'am. As Shakespeare says—into the infernal regions, dark, deep and diabolical!

(*Runs up c.—vaults over divan and exits c. to R.*)

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE.—*An underground chamber. This set is accomplished simply by reversing the scenery of the former acts thus exposing the framework which can be painted to represent a cellar. All the doors are in the same positions as before. The door, down L., is pin-hinged so that it opens off stage. The door, C., also pin-hinged to open off. This door has a small panel to open off. The door, R. C. (hidden by bookcase in former acts) is pin-hinged to open on stage, to R. The only substitution is a piece of scenery to take the place of the former fireplace at R. This piece has a door opening off stage. At former window, up R., long, old steps are inserted suggesting the entrance from trap, above. These steps are backed by rough backing. They lead to a platform off stage. Same lash lines to lash the set can be used—thrown over set and fastened to cleats off stage.—See plan of set. An old couch, battered, stands about L. C., above line of L. door. On it reclines THEODORA in a swoon. An old table stands R. C. with a stool or old chair to L. of it. An old lamp, practical, on table, and a box of matches. MR. GORDON'S revolver and blue envelope with contents also on table.*

(At rise of curtain, stage is dark. Voices of MISS SMITH and FOX heard off distantly and approachingly on steps.)

MISS SMITH. It's as dark as Hades!

FOX. Careful of the turn in the steps.

MISS SMITH. I'm making it.

FOX. Keep your eye peeled—gun ready?

(MISS SMITH before entering plays flashlight about cellar. A pause—then she comes down steps and stands R. C.—revolver in right hand, flashlight in left. Another pause as she flashes light toward steps.)

MISS SMITH (*calling*). Watch your step.

FOX (*off*). Everything all right?

MISS SMITH. Seems to be. You're safe. No Rover down here.

(*Pause—then FOX comes down to foot of steps and stands while MISS SMITH flashes light on couch L. C. and cautiously approaches it.*)

FOX. Phew! It's dark. Where are you?

(*MISS SMITH has crossed above and to L. of couch and with light gazes earnestly at TED, on couch—pocketing revolver.*)

MISS SMITH. Over here. (*Flashes light on FOX at R. C.*)

FOX. Anybody here?

MISS SMITH. Yes. (*Pause.*) Miss Maitland.

FOX (*crossing to R. of couch*). By George, can you beat it—here, and in another faint. (*He feels his way to foot of steps again—calls up.*) Ho, there! You can come down. (*Recrosses to R. of couch.*) Is it a swoon or —

MISS SMITH (*feeling TED's pulse and heart*). No; there's life, but there's something strange in her breathing.

MR. GORDON (*off*). Where's the light?

(*MISS SMITH hands FOX the flashlight and he crosses to foot of steps, flashing light up.*)

FOX. This way—careful!

MR. GORDON (*as he enters—foot of steps, followed by BETTY*). What a gruesome place! (*Calls.*) Miss Smith!

MISS SMITH. Here—over here.

(*MR. GORDON feels his way to R. of couch, feeling TED's face.*)

MR. GORDON (*in tense whisper*). Theodora.

(*In meantime FOX has dropped with flashlight to L. of table. BETTY drops to above table.*)

BETTY. Here's a lamp—and matches.

(BETTY quickly lights lamp while FOX picks up MR. GORDON'S revolver and blue envelope.)

FOX. Here's your gun and papers, Mr. Gordon.

MR. GORDON (*crossing to FOX*). I'll take the gun—you can keep the papers.

(BETTY, after lighting lamp, crosses to above couch, gazing at TED.)

FOX. They're useless.

MR. GORDON (*gazing about room*). Theodora, in this fearful place. Great Scott, the doors—look at all the doors.

MISS SMITH. Fox, go up-stairs and get the brandy. It may revive her and we'll learn something. (FOX starts to go.) Leave the flash. (FOX hands flashlight to MR. GORDON and goes to steps while MR. GORDON crosses to R. of couch and hands MISS SMITH the flashlight.) Tell Henry to hurry with the lantern—we can use more light.

FOX (*as he mounts steps*). I'll say so. [Exits.]

MR. GORDON. How is she?

MISS SMITH. Mr. Gordon, until this very minute I have carelessly let the most important phase of this case escape me.

MR. GORDON. Why, what do you mean?

MISS SMITH (*indicates TED*). That girl is in a hypnotic state.

MR. GORDON. What?

MISS SMITH. Just as sure as I'm standing here. I forgot to mention when I told you of this Cat o' Nine Tails that besides being a clever criminal he is also a remarkable hypnotist. Many of his victims were made his slaves by this remarkable power he has. Fool that I am for not thinking of this—that it escaped me till just now.

BETTY. Then you think he hypnotized her and compelled her to get the papers for him.

MISS SMITH. Yes; and finding that she didn't have

the real papers he left her helpless here and made his getaway.

MR. GORDON. But how—when did he hypnotize her?

MISS SMITH. That I can't say.

BETTY. When she comes to, won't we be able to learn who this man is?

MISS SMITH. I'm afraid not. (*BETTY crosses to above table, R. C., obviously to trim lamp.*) You see, the hypnotist has a remarkable power, a supreme control, over his subject. (*MR. GORDON reflectively crosses to stool, L. of table and sits while MISS SMITH, continuing speech, drops to C.*) By suggestion he can make his dupe forget everything while in a hypnotic state.

MR. GORDON (*seated on stool*). You mean to say she won't remember a thing she's done?

MISS SMITH. Not a thing.

MR. GORDON. Why, then, the girl could commit murder and know nothing about it.

MISS SMITH (*C.*). Yes. One case in particular occurs to me. A young woman, very nervous, very high strung, a perfect subject for hypnotism was arrested in the slums of New York on the charge of murder. When arraigned before the court she absolutely denied that she was guilty of the charge. Declared she was a daughter of a wealthy business man in Boston. Her father was sent for—identified her as his daughter, whom he supposed away on a visit. After an examination by an expert hypnotist it was found that the girl had been leading a double life.

MR. GORDON. Great heavens, do you think her case is like that?

MISS SMITH. It's hard to say.

BETTY. Miss Smith, don't you think if you'd question her you might be able to get some information? Perhaps she knows where my father and Jimmie are.

MR. GORDON. That's so. Try it.

MISS SMITH. I'm afraid it's useless in her present state.

(*At voices from off R. MISS SMITH returns to L. of couch watching TED.*)

HENRY (*off stage R.—to FOX*). Hey, be careful.

FOX (*off stage*). Hurry up, Macbeth.

HENRY. Wait a minute.

FOX. What's the matter?

HENRY. I'm stuck.

FOX. How?

HENRY. You've got your hoof on my hand.

FOX. Put your hands where they belong.

HENRY (*entering, at foot of steps*). If I did you'd be ashamed to look in a mirror.

MR. GORDON (*rising*). Henry!

HENRY (*drops to L. of MR. GORDON with unlit lantern*). Yes, sir. (*Hands lantern.*)

MR. GORDON (*taking lantern*). Why didn't you light it?

(*FOX enters from steps, crossing to R. of couch with brandy bottle.*)

HENRY. He's got all the matches. (*Pointing to FOX.*)

FOX. I've not. (*Handing bottle to MISS SMITH.*) Here's the brandy—what Macbeth left of it.

(*BETTY crosses, at back, to above head of couch as MISS SMITH tries to administer brandy.*)

HENRY. He drank it himself.

MR. GORDON (*lighting lantern*). Keep quiet, sir!

MISS SMITH. No use—she won't take it.

(*Hands bottle to BETTY who pours out some on kerchief and bathes TED's lips and temples.*)

HENRY (*indicating FOX*). Give it to him—he'll take it.

MR. GORDON (*placing lantern on table*). That's enough out of you!

MISS SMITH (*crosses to door down L.—tries it*). Locked—and no keyhole.

(*FOX drops to MISS SMITH'S R.*)

HENRY (R.). Gee, ain't that tough?

MRS. GORDON (*off R.*). James!

MR. GORDON (*placing bottle on table and going to foot of steps*). Yes, dear.

MRS. GORDON (*off R.*). It's too lonesome up here—I'm coming down.

MR. GORDON. You might fall.

MRS. GORDON. Well, I'd rather break my neck down there than ——

MR. GORDON. I'll help you.

(MR. GORDON *disappears up steps a moment*. MISS SMITH *has been working vainly to open door L*. FOX *is at R. of her.*)

FOX (*taking small jimmy from pocket—hands it to MISS SMITH*). Try this!

(MISS SMITH *tries various ways to pry door with jimmy.*)

HENRY (*R.—watching MISS SMITH working*). Don't want an able-bodied man to help, do you?

FOX (*turning—sharply to HENRY*). No!

HENRY (*imitating voice*). Oh!

MRS. GORDON (*coming down steps assisted by MR. GORDON*). Thank you. Oh, what a terrible place! Are there any rats here?

MR. GORDON. Haven't seen any. (*Crosses to FOX and MISS SMITH.*) Can you make it?

MISS SMITH (*still prying door*). It's giving some.

MRS. GORDON (*observing BETTY*). Betty, my dear, who is that?

BETTY. Miss Maitland.

MRS. GORDON (*crossing to BETTY*). Fainted again.

BETTY. She's not in a faint.

MRS. GORDON. No?

BETTY. She's in a hypnotic sleep.

MRS. GORDON. What?

MISS SMITH. Stand back, everybody—can't tell what may be hidden here.

FOX (*retreating a trifle with MR. GORDON*). Be careful!

(MRS. GORDON *drops to R. C.* BETTY *moves down stage a trifle to view interior of closet.* HENRY *moves up to R. of MRS. GORDON.* *All these positions are taken quickly as MISS SMITH, revolver in hand, pushes open door. Supposedly hanging in the dark closet is the complete skeleton of a man. At sight of skeleton all gasp and are struck with horror—uttering tense, subdued cries.*)

MR. GORDON (*as MISS SMITH opens L. door*). A skeleton!

MRS. GORDON (*gives scream*). Oh! (*Faints.*)

(HENRY, *at her R., catches MRS. GORDON.*)

HENRY (*holding MRS. GORDON*). Help! Help!

(MR. GORDON *swings up back of MRS. GORDON and holds her—releasing HENRY.*)

MR. GORDON. A chair. Henry, the brandy.

(BETTY *assists MR. GORDON in leading MRS. GORDON to chair, L. of table, while HENRY in his confusion turns two or three times in a small circle before finding bottle on table. As he tremblingly passes it to BETTY—[at MRS. GORDON'S head] he spills it on floor. MISS SMITH has closed L. door and with FOX solicitously advances to L. C.*)

MISS SMITH. Nothing serious?

MR. GORDON. Just a slight shock—seeing the skeleton.

HENRY (*R. of table*). Don't blame her. If she had flopped—'twould have been bye-bye, Henry.

MR. GORDON (*as BETTY tries to administer brandy*). Easy—she's coming to. (*MRS. GORDON starts to revive.*) Do you feel better, my dear?

MRS. GORDON (*slowly opens eyes—sighs*). Oh! What happened?

MR. GORDON. You were in a faint.

MRS. GORDON. Oh, James, why didn't you let me stay so?

MR. GORDON. But, my dear——

MRS. GORDON (*rises with help of MR. GORDON. She looks toward L. closet*). Henry, help me up the stairs.

(HENRY *goes up R. of table to steps.*)

MR. GORDON. Where are you going?

MRS. GORDON. Just as far away from that closet as my strength will carry me.

MR. GORDON (*leading her up to steps, R.*). Don't worry, everything will soon be over.

MRS. GORDON. If you open another of those doors I'm sure it will! (*She exits up steps supported by HENRY.*)

MISS SMITH (L. C.). Miss Webber, are you brave enough if I take another look in there? (*Points L.*)

BETTY (*placing brandy bottle on table*). I don't mind.

(BETTY *drops to R. and is joined by MR. GORDON—they confer, R. of table.*)

FOX (L. C.—R. of MISS SMITH). Who do you think that bunch o' bones belonged to?

MISS SMITH. That's what I want to find out.

(*Opens closet and disappears.*)

FOX (*crosses to near closet*). Gad, he must have been there some time.

MISS SMITH (*reëntering, holds up long slender knife*). Look!

FOX. A knife.

MISS SMITH. And an inscription on the handle. (*Reads a second, then crosses to MR. GORDON and BETTY. FOX closes closet door and crosses to L. of MISS SMITH.*) Mr. Gordon, the mystery of Paris is solved at last. Listen. (*Reads from handle.*) "On the thirteenth of June, 1918, another obstacle has been removed from my path. Adieu, Monsieur Curé,—a pleasant journey.—Cat o' Nine Tails."

MR. GORDON. The detective you told me about?

MISS SMITH. Yes—the one whose disappearance baffled all Paris.

MR. GORDON. But how did he get here?

MISS SMITH. Only the Cat o' Nine Tails knows.
(*Lays knife on table.*)

FOX. Say, Miss Smith, do you think we'll *ever* catch this bird?

MISS SMITH. I do.

FOX. What makes you so sure?

MISS SMITH. As long as the papers are in Mr. Gordon's possession, our bird will never leave this nest.

MR. GORDON. And I swear he'll never get them.

FOX. Then at that rate we might as well get set for a long winter.

BETTY (*swinging around R. of table and up to head of couch, L. C.—speaking as she goes*). She's coming to.

FOX. It's about time. (*Crosses up to R. of BETTY.*)

MISS SMITH (*as she goes up to L. of couch, followed by MR. GORDON who stands R. of couch*). Perhaps I can get some information, now. (*Takes TED's hand.*) Miss Maitland. (*Speaks low, but persuasively.*) Miss Maitland, are you feeling better? Do you think you can sit up? (*TED, assisted by MISS SMITH, sits up—opens eyes slowly—still dazed.*) Miss Maitland, do you know who I am?

TED (*looks at her steadily, shakes head*). No!

FOX. Can you beat that?

MISS SMITH (*looks warningly at FOX*). I'm your friend—I want you to feel that you're perfectly safe. You're among friends.

MR. GORDON. Ted, you know me, don't you?

TED (*nods*). Yes—Mr. Gordon.

MR. GORDON. And you know Betty?

TED (*looks at BETTY*). Yes.

MISS SMITH. Miss Maitland, you must try to recall exactly what happened to you from the time you left your home in the city until you got here to Mr. Gordon's. Can you recall anything?

TED. Yes—(*Pause.*) I remember leaving the city — (*Pause.*)

MISS SMITH. Yes. Go on.

TED. I got here during the afternoon—Mrs. Gordon met me at the depot.

MISS SMITH. Are you sure?

TED. Yes.

MISS SMITH. Now think—wasn't it Mr. Gordon that met you at the depot?

TED (*pause*). Yes, Mr. Gordon met me at the depot.

FOX. But you said——

MISS SMITH. Fox! (*Fox steps back—silent. To TED.*) Very well, Miss Maitland. Mr. Gordon met you at the depot and brought you here in his car?

TED. Yes.

MISS SMITH. You came directly here from the depot?

TED. Yes.

MISS SMITH. Or did you stop at the village a few moments?

TED. No. Er—er—I don't recall.

MISS SMITH. Miss Maitland—have you a lover?

TED (*pause*). No. (*Falls back.*)

MISS SMITH. Then you do love someone, don't you?

TED. Why—yes—er——

MISS SMITH (*quickly*). Someone in this house—who has been kind to you—who has declared his love for you—you love him, don't you?

TED. Yes.

MISS SMITH. His name is——

TED (*half rises*). No—no——

MISS SMITH (*takes her firmly by shoulder, looking into her eyes*). You must tell me his name—you must—Miss Maitland, what is his name?

TED (*struggling mentally to resist her power*). I—I—don't know.

MISS SMITH (*in a monotone*). Miss Maitland—you're very tired—you're very tired—you need sleep—sleep—you must sleep—sleep—Miss Maitland—sleep—sleep—and when you wake up—you will remember the name of this man—the man whom you love—do you understand, Miss Maitland—I want you to remember his name—now you may sleep—sleep——

(*Fox, who has felt a sneeze coming on and has been trying to hold it back, at the cue, "now you may*

sleep," backs to c., facing front and puts all the force of his pent-up energy into the sneeze.)

FOX. Kachew! (MISS SMITH and others jump.)
Excuse me. (*Business kerchief.*)

TED. Oh! (*Throws herself on couch.*)

MISS SMITH (*to FOX*). You bonehead!

FOX (*sheepishly*). It's so damp here, I couldn't help it. For the last two minutes I felt the darn thing coming—and when it was time to come—it came.

(*BETTY remains up with TED, soothing her head and hands.*)

MISS SMITH. Yes—it came all right. Well, it's no use now. You've ruined everything. (*Dropping down, L. C.*)

MR. GORDON (*drops to R. of MISS SMITH*). By George, Miss Smith, I really believe you had her hypnotized.

MISS SMITH. In five minutes I should have had the name of the man who was in the hall when she took your papers.

MR. GORDON. Then you think he's her lover?

MISS SMITH. I do.

FOX (*drops to R. of MR. GORDON*). Well, she said herself she was his wife.

MISS SMITH. Perhaps she is. But she didn't reveal his name. And that's just what I was going to find out when you—(*Pause.*) had the blow-out. (*Crosses to c.*)

FOX (*L. C.*). Well—I'm sorry.

MISS SMITH. It's all right, Mr. Fox. The breaks were against us.

MR. GORDON. We must get her out of this place. Perhaps after she's rested, you may get better results.

MISS SMITH. Yes; do so. In the morning I'll try again—if I'm alive.

FOX. Expecting to die?

MISS SMITH (*pointedly*). Well, we have some more doors to open.

(MR. GORDON goes to R. of couch and, assisted by BETTY, helps TED to her feet. At same time MISS SMITH goes up to c. closet and inspects it, while FOX crosses a trifle unsteadily and sits on chair resting arms on table.)

MR. GORDON (as he gets TED on feet). Come, my dear, you must be put to bed. (Leading TED, with BETTY holding her, to steps R.) Can you make it, Ted?

TED (bravely but faintly). I'll try.

(MR. GORDON and BETTY assist her up steps and ex-
eunt. FOX has begun to show symptoms which, by
degrees, develop into a spell of temporary insanity.
This phase must be developed carefully and logic-
ally.)

FOX (slightly groaning—holding head). Oh!

MISS SMITH (attracted—drops to L. of FOX). What's the matter?

FOX. Oh, nothing—but I had a drink or two up-
stairs. (Painfully.) I'm beginning to feel it.

MISS SMITH. It'll pass off.

FOX. I wonder if I took the wrong bottle.

MISS SMITH. Taste badly?

FOX (wry face). Like poison. (With an effort
throws off the feeling and rises.) Well—what's the ver-
dict?

MISS SMITH. About the girl?

FOX. Her lover. Who is he?

MISS SMITH. I don't know.

FOX. Who do you think he is?

MISS SMITH. Well, at present I'd rather ——

FOX. When those papers were stolen to-night we
were all in the room above with the exception of Jacob
and young Jimmie. You can't accuse old man Jacob as
the man in the mask. He was so weak; to say nothing
of standing alone. (Slight pause.) By George, I think
this girl's lover is Gordon's son, Jimmie.

MISS SMITH. How do we know it was either one of
them?

FOX. Well, it's one sure thing—it was no ghost.

MISS SMITH (*laughs*). It might have been.

FOX. What have *you* been drinking?

MISS SMITH (*sharply*). Let's act and theorize later—if you're able.

(*She goes up to c. door with skeleton key and flashlight—trying lock.*)

FOX. I'm ready.

(*Pulls revolver—staggers over to couch and facing c. door points revolver.*)

MISS SMITH (*turns to Fox*). What do you mean, you're ready?

FOX. If anyone's there, I'll — (*Fans revolver.*)

MISS SMITH (*pointing to Fox's revolver*). You're crazy—there's not a shot in it. Didn't that girl extract —

FOX (*disgusted—puts revolver in pocket*). I'm crazy! I'm a movie detective all right. Give me yours.

MISS SMITH (*hands FOX gun and returns up to c. door*). All ready?

FOX. Right! (*MISS SMITH pushes at door.*)

MISS SMITH. Humph! I thought I had it.

FOX. Try it again.

MISS SMITH. No use—it's secured on the other side. Well—(*Looking at door R. C. in flat.*) here's another.

(*MISS SMITH crosses to R. C. door—business with key. FOX reels up and leans against c. door.*)

FOX (*painfully*). Oh!

MISS SMITH (*pausing*). What's wrong?

FOX. I don't know. I never felt this way before. I was as weak as a baby just then. (*Braces up.*)

MISS SMITH. I guess we'd better wait until Gordon gets back.

FOX. No, go ahead;—I'm all right now.

MISS SMITH. Sing out if you feel dizzy again. (*Business at door. FOX must show signs of distress which he*

is trying to overcome.) All ready. (*Spoken in tense whisper.*)

FOX (*tensely*). Shoot. (*Holds gun in readiness. MISS SMITH pulls door open. This door opens on stage to R. Both MISS SMITH and FOX step back as they behold the form of JACOB suspended by his wrists from pegs driven into wall of closet. His feet barely touch floor. MISS SMITH goes to JACOB.*) Who is it? (*Crossing to L. of closet.*)

MISS SMITH (*as he looks*). Jacob.

FOX. Dead?

MISS SMITH. I think not. Help me!

(FOX puts gun in pocket, helps MISS SMITH. They carry JACOB to couch, lay him down. MISS SMITH goes to table, gets bottle; returns to R. of JACOB. FOX stands L. of couch.)

FOX. He's breathing.

MISS SMITH. Yes; I don't think he's been in there long.

FOX. Who put him there?

MISS SMITH. You're as much of a detective as I am.

FOX. It's got me.

(MISS SMITH bending over JACOB, business trying to revive him with brandy. FOX goes up to closet, goes inside, steps out, closes door. Suddenly is seized by a violent attack of insanity. Makes an effort to speak to MISS SMITH, but only whispers "Smith." Slowly his expression changes from that of a normal being into that of an insane person. Grins to himself and slowly starts creeping, catlike, down toward MISS SMITH, who is back to him. As FOX gets almost upon MISS SMITH, with hands ready to grasp MISS SMITH around throat, MISS SMITH turns, quickly placing bottle on floor.)

MISS SMITH (*taken aback*). Fox! (*Rises.*)

FOX (*springs upon MISS SMITH; as they struggle furiously across to R. C.*) Now I've got you, Cat o' Nine Tails!

(*Slowly FOX bends MISS SMITH over table. Suddenly she becomes limp. As he feels her relaxing he withdraws his hold on her and draws his gun as she falls to the floor. [NOTE. The chair, L. of table, breaks her fall.] FOX moves craftily above table with gun pointed at MISS SMITH'S prostrate form. Suddenly he observes knife, with inscription, on table. Chuckling and mumbling incoherently he casts gun on table and seizes knife—giving a tense cry of delight. Backing up he looks toward steps—crosses to foot of steps, looks up. MISS SMITH, who has been shamming, raises herself on her elbow, looks toward FOX, who turns. MISS SMITH feigns unconsciousness. FOX crosses quickly to MISS SMITH, drags her up to closet R. Opens door, pulls her in, stays in himself and pulls door partly shut. Just before BETTY enters down steps—FOX closes door. BETTY looks around, surprised at seeing no one—sees JACOB on couch—crosses to R. of couch.*)

BETTY. Why, Father! (*Kneels beside him, puts her arms about him. FOX slowly opens door—comes out—comes down toward BETTY, with knife in hand. When he is almost on her she turns. BETTY gasps.*) Mr. Fox!

FOX (*takes her by shoulder*). Sh! I won't hurt you—I want to show you something—I've got him—I've got him——

BETTY (*keeping her nerve*). Who—who have you got?

FOX. Cat o' Nine Tails. (*Laughs with fiendish glee.*)

BETTY. Are you sure you've got him?

FOX. Yes—and I'm going to—(*Makes motion with knife.*) skin him alive. (*BETTY steps back.*) Frightens you, does it—well—you're going to see me do it.

(*MISS SMITH comes out of closet, carefully.*)

BETTY. No——

FOX (*grabs her by shoulder again*). Yes, you are.

(*MISS SMITH pantomimes BETTY to agree to FOX'S wishes. MISS SMITH pulls closet door wide open to*

R., gets behind it, motions to BETTY to get FOX up to closet.)

BETTY. All right, Mr. Fox. I'll do anything you wish.

FOX (takes her wrist, leads her as he backs up to closet). Come, my dear girl and see him—writhe in torture!

(As both reach door of closet FOX takes his hand from BETTY'S wrist for a moment to look into closet. As he does so BETTY, with all her strength, pushes FOX into closet. MISS SMITH slams door and locks it with key which he has already put into lock while behind door.)

MISS SMITH (turns). Thank Heaven!

(FOX beats and kicks against door, trying to get out, as MISS SMITH and BETTY lean against flat exhausted for a moment or two.)

BETTY (wavers—MISS SMITH goes to BETTY—steadies her). Oh! What happened to him?

MISS SMITH. Crazy as a loon. He's got the strength of a demon.

(Feels throat. They come down a trifle. FOX quiet.)

BETTY. I never was so frightened in all my life.

(BETTY drops R. of couch—takes bottle and going to L. of JACOB—administers brandy to his lips.)

MISS SMITH (drops to head of couch). You're a plucky girl, my dear.

(MR. GORDON enters from steps.)

MR. GORDON (as he crosses to L. c.). Hello—(Sees JACOB.) who—why, it's Jacob. (Goes to R. of couch.)

MISS SMITH. Mr. Gordon, Fox and I found him suspended in that closet. (Indicates closet.) Tied up by the wrists.

MR. GORDON. Great Heavens! (*BETTY wets her kerchief and presses JACOB'S forehead. FOX pounds violently on door again. MR. GORDON startled, looks up at door.*) Who is in there?

MISS SMITH. Fox.

MR. GORDON. Fox!

MISS SMITH. Shortly after you went up-stairs, Fox began to complain of pains in his head—acted queerly. While I was trying to revive Jacob, he attacked me. If I hadn't feigned death he might have killed me. With Miss Webber's help I succeeded in locking him in that closet.

MR. GORDON. I can't understand. What do you think caused him to attack you?

MISS SMITH. A case of temporary insanity.

(HENRY, wearing hat, enters down steps R.)

MR. GORDON (*pondering*). Is it possible that Cat o' Nine Tails is at the bottom of this, too?

MISS SMITH. Yes!

HENRY (*at foot of steps*). That cat with the nine tails is at the bottom of everything.

MR. GORDON (*turns to HENRY*). What are you doing down here? Didn't I tell you to stay with my wife and Miss Maitland?

HENRY. Yes, sir.

MR. GORDON. Then why aren't you there?

HENRY. Because I'm here. (*MR. GORDON crosses to c., HENRY steps back.*) I mean because Mr. Brown sent me.

MR. GORDON (c.). Mr. Brown?

HENRY (R.). Yes, sir. He just called at the front door and told me to give this to Miss Smith.

MR. GORDON. Give what to Miss Smith?

HENRY (*searching through pockets as he crosses c. to MR. GORDON*). A piece of paper with some writing on it. As Shakespeare said—"There's a place for everything." (*Takes off hat and takes paper out of it, gives it to MR. GORDON, who passes it to MISS SMITH on his L.*) I put it next to my brain so I wouldn't forget it.

MISS SMITH (*reads; to HENRY*). Just a minute, Henry. I'll give you an answer.

(*Drops to table, R. C., business writing on back of note.*)

HENRY (*sees JACOB*). Who's that?

MR. GORDON. Jacob.

HENRY. What's the matter with him?

MR. GORDON. He's sick.

HENRY. From what? (MR. GORDON *gives HENRY a silencing look. HENRY looks around room.*) Where's the other one?

MR. GORDON. Other what?

HENRY. Detec-a-tive.

MR. GORDON. In there. (*Indicates closet.*)

HENRY. What's he doing—looking for cartridges or matches?

MISS SMITH (*with paper, crosses to HENRY*). Henry, take this right to Mr. Brown, and speed it up—it's very important. (*Crosses to couch.*)

HENRY. Yes, sir. (*Takes paper. As he crosses to steps.*) Speed it up. Huh! (*As he goes up ladder.*) As Shakespeare said—"Methinks 'twill be a distant day when my poor bones will hit the hay." [*Exits steps.*]

BETTY (*crosses to MR. GORDON at c.*). Mr. Gordon, don't you think I'd better call the doctor for Father?

MR. GORDON (*crossing with BETTY to steps, R.*). I doubt if you can get him, though. The 'phone's dead. The storm, I guess.

BETTY. I'll try.

[*Exits up steps.*]

MISS SMITH (*crossing to c.*). I've sent Brown a note to get an axe and a crowbar and to come down here with two of his men.

MR. GORDON (R.). Go as far as you like, but what's the idea?

MISS SMITH (*goes up c. to door*). This door is fastened on the other side. Once opened, I think we'll be nearer our goal.

MR. GORDON (R.). Perhaps my boy may be in there.

MISS SMITH. Possibly, but I'm inclined to believe it's an entrance to an underground passage.

MR. GORDON. And to think all this has been going on right under my nose.

MISS SMITH (*drops to R. C.—L. of MR. GORDON*). But you only occupy this place in the summer.

MR. GORDON. Yes.

MISS SMITH. This has been done while you were away.

MR. GORDON. But Jacob and Henry are here the year 'round.

(*Three raps are heard on door c. Both silently gaze at door. MISS SMITH reaches back and secures revolver from table. Pause—as both watch door. Two quick raps follow and a panel of door opens, leaving a small opening through which a hand is thrust, holding a small parcel. MISS SMITH goes up—takes parcel from hand which then disappears. Panel closes. MISS SMITH watches door for a second, then comes down to L. of MR. GORDON. Both back of table.*)

MISS SMITH. Can you beat that?

MR. GORDON. My brain refuses to function.

MISS SMITH. Let's see what it is. (*Opens box carefully, holds up handful of pearl and diamond necklaces.*) The Embassy jewels!

MR. GORDON. Then that was the Cat o' Nine Tails' agent.

MISS SMITH (*leaves box on table and pockets necklaces*). Yes! This agent must have expected the Cat o' Nine Tails. Palpably a mistake in signals. There's danger! Quick—guard that door (*Pointing up c.*) while I try this one. (*MISS SMITH quickly drops to door down R. as MR. GORDON crosses to c. and, with back to audience, points revolver at door up c. MISS SMITH, as she works on lock of R. door.*) A skeleton key is a wonderful invention.

MR. GORDON (*half-turning, to MISS SMITH*). Don't mention skeletons—please!

(*MISS SMITH opens door, steps in closet, and pulls*

out a low, long rack upon which JIMMIE is stretched. He is gagged, and tied, hands and feet.)

MISS SMITH. Your son!

(MR. GORDON has turned as JIMMIE comes in view—pockets revolver and rushes down to him, on his knees. MISS SMITH quickly takes gag out of JIMMIE'S mouth, and then enters closet.)

MR. GORDON (as he rushes down). Jimmie, my son—my boy!

JIMMIE. Thanks. Hello, Dad. I'd shake hands but—

MR. GORDON. My boy, how did you get here?

JIMMIE. The last thing I remember seeing, after going into the hall with Ted, is about two thousand stars and seventeen moons—full ones.

MISS SMITH (enters from closet, R.). Not a thing in there.

JIMMIE. No—I was quite alone except when the rats played tag across my chest.

(MR. GORDON and MISS SMITH hurriedly untie JIMMIE.)

MISS SMITH. We'll have you free in a minute.

JIMMIE. Gad! it will be a relief. I'm as stiff as a broomstick.

MR. GORDON. Can't you recall—don't you know who did all this?

JIMMIE. No, Dad, I don't. (He is unbound by this time and is assisted by MISS SMITH and MR. GORDON to a standing position.) But when I do find out—

(Before he can finish, the door up C. noiselessly opens and CAT O' NINE TAILS comes through. He is masked and in full dress suit. His revolver covers MR. GORDON, MISS SMITH and JIMMIE, all stationed R.)

CAT O' NINE TAILS. It will then be too late! (Comes down several feet.) Now, Miss Smith—the pearls. (MISS SMITH slowly goes up to him and gives pearls.)

Thank you. Kindly stand at that table where I can watch you. (MISS SMITH goes to above table.) Now, Mr. Gordon—the papers, please.

MR. GORDON (*down R.*). No!

CAT O' NINE TAILS (*fans revolver*). I'll give you one minute—then this (*Pointing revolver*.) or the rack!

JIMMIE (*leaning stiffly against R. wall—in tense whisper*). Don't, Dad, don't!

MR. GORDON. You villain—monster!

CAT O' NINE TAILS (*smiles*). Thank you. (MR. GORDON reluctantly goes up—sits on chair, L. of table,—takes off shoe—removes inner sole—and takes out envelope. Rises and is about to go to CAT O' NINE TAILS.) Stop! Miss Smith will do the honors. (MR. GORDON throws envelope on table.) Over there. (*Points down L. C.*) I'm a bit particular for safety's sake. (MR. GORDON drops to L. C. A motion from CAT O' NINE TAILS at which MISS SMITH picks up envelope from table and hands it to him—then she drops again to table. CAT O' NINE TAILS opens envelope which discloses numerous typewritten, official pages.) Good! (*Replaces contents*.) I regretfully leave you. (*Holding up envelope*.) The Japanese envoy is waiting. (*Pockets envelope*.)

MR. GORDON. Who are you?

CAT O' NINE TAILS. One who is under many obligations to you, sir—the man with nine lives.

(*Removes mask disclosing HENRY. MR. GORDON gasps in astonishment.*)

MR. GORDON. Henry!

JIMMIE. You thief —

(JIMMIE makes a movement but is arrested by CAT O' NINE TAILS' revolver.)

MISS SMITH. Tricked!

HENRY (*to MISS SMITH*). Sorry I couldn't deliver your note. Just think—months of hard work ruined by an axe and crowbar. (*Chuckles*.)

MR. GORDON. I—I can't believe it.

HENRY. Sorry, sir! (*Suddenly.*) But, Miss Maitland?

MISS SMITH (*alert*). Ah! You are the man who hypnotized her.

HENRY (*smiling*). For weeks she's been under my will.

MR. GORDON. Then she's not your wife?

HENRY. Unfortunately, no!—only my accomplice.

MISS SMITH (*points to couch*). And Jacob?

HENRY. Also a subject of mine.

JIMMIE. Then my father's innocent of —

HENRY (*interrupting*). Quite. Bothersome old chap. It was a simple matter to suggest he commit suicide, but he made a botch of it.

MISS SMITH. And Fox?

HENRY (*laughs*). The detec-a-tive? Drugged his drink. A good sleep (*Points to R. C. closet.*) in there will help some. But, pardon me, duty calls. (*Starts to back up, slowly.*) Enjoy yourselves till someone moves the piano off the trap, above.

(*Just as he reaches C. door BETTY enters to L. of HENRY, covering him with revolver.*)

BETTY. Don't move!

HENRY (*pause, smiling*). Thanks! I'll stay a little while longer.

BETTY. Drop that gun.

HENRY (*suavely*). And spoil a good firearm. Miss Smith, (*Holds revolver by barrel toward her.*) in your safe keeping.

(*MISS SMITH goes up to R. of HENRY. Takes gun and pockets it. Then removes necklaces and papers from his pockets and retires to above table while dialogue progresses.*)

HENRY. Betty, you're clever.

BETTY (*smiling*). Oh, it was easy after I found this. (*Holds up white elephant.*)

HENRY. My lucky omen.—I missed it.

BETTY. From the moment I found it on the edge of the woods I suspected. You never delivered Miss Smith's note to old Brown——

HENRY. So you followed me?

BETTY. You cast it aside and I delivered it.

HENRY. Thank you——

BETTY. Don't! I followed you to the old cabin—I saw you descend the trap that leads to that passage. (*Points to door up c.*)

MISS SMITH. I searched that cabin——

BETTY. The trap is under the fireplace.

(HENRY suddenly motions toward JACOB.)

HENRY (*to BETTY*). Your father!

(BETTY turns to look L., with pistol arm extended. Quick as a flash HENRY snatches the gun from her grasp and swings it pointedly toward MISS SMITH who has simultaneously taken HENRY'S gun from her pocket and aims at him.)

MISS SMITH. Hands up, or I fire!

HENRY (*coolly advances, smilingly, toward MISS SMITH*). Try it. (*MISS SMITH pulls trigger—no report—disgustedly “breaks” gun and casts it on table.*) The papers and jewels! (*MISS SMITH hands them to him. He backs up to c. door. BETTY has dropped crest-fallen to above couch.*) Thank you,—muchly! As Shakespeare said: “It really isn't the weapon, but our imagination that fools us.” Ta-ta! [*Exits, closing door.*]

(MISS SMITH rushes up—tries vainly to open door. Turns, and drops to table.)

MISS SMITH. There's nothing left but to go back to headquarters and resign.

BETTY (*with renewed hope crosses to L. of table—to MISS SMITH*). Don't, please,—don't despair!

(JIMMIE goes up to R. of table while MR. GORDON goes up to L. of BETTY.)

MISS SMITH. Gone!—papers, jewels—everything!

MR. GORDON. I was trusted with those documents, and now ——

MISS SMITH. In an hour he'll be across the border ——

JIMMIE. And we're trapped here ——

BETTY (*warningly*). Listen!

(*All stand quietly listening.*)

MISS SMITH (*after pause*). The distant growl of a dog.

MR. GORDON (*slowly dropping to L. C.*). Can it be ——

BETTY (*drops to R. of MR. GORDON at L. C.*). He can't hypnotize Rover.

JIMMIE (*has dropped to R. C.—slowly*). Hark! I think I heard a shot.

MISS SMITH (*drops to front of table*). Yes, and there's another.

(NOTE. *The above shots are imaginary. But with the cue:—"there's another"—a distant shot is actually heard by audience.*)

BETTY (*exultingly*). It's Brown and the boys!

(BETTY *rushes across to R. C. into the arms of JIMMIE who embraces her—as C. door opens and HENRY staggers on stage, hands upraised.*)

HENRY. As Shakespeare said: "It's hard to put anything over on a dog called Rover."

CURTAIN

PROPERTIES

ACT I

- Rugs.
- Fireplace—bricked.
- Andirons and fire irons.
- Mantel with candlesticks and vases with flowers.
- A written note beneath a brick in fireplace.
- Picture over mantel.
- Curtained window and window-seat up R.
- Bookcase against R. C. wall with books.
- Small table L. of bookcase.
- Music stand L. of C. door.
- Bookcase, or cabinet, against L. wall.
- Small table below cabinet with ash tray.
- A "wing"-chair below L. door.
- Library table R. C. with practical lamp, having a false bottom containing documents. Match safe, matches and ash tray on table.
- Chair L. of table, R. C.
- Divan R. of table with pillows.
- Fake trap up R. C., hinged to open.
- Piano and seat up L. C. Vase of flowers on top.
- Small table, or console, in hallway with flowers.
- Pictures on walls.
- Other properties may be added to emphasize comfort.

HAND AND SIDE PROPERTIES

- Flashlight for CAT O' NINE TAILS.
- Shotgun for JACOB.
- Old lantern for HENRY.
- Brandy bottle and small glass on salver off L. door.
- Heavy wrap off C. to L. for JACOB.
- Cigars for MR. GORDON.
- Revolver for MR. GORDON.
- Shotgun for HENRY.
- Papers in envelope (large) for Fox.

Logs of wood and box of matches off c. to l. for HENRY.

Extra revolver for MR. GORDON.

Large envelope and letter for MISS SMITH.

Slip of paper (written) for MRS. GORDON.

Magnifying glass for MISS SMITH.

Revolver for MISS SMITH.

Shotgun off c. to r. for MR. GORDON.

Stone with message wrapped around off window, on cue.

Small hand-bag off c. to r. for MISS SMITH.

Wrist-watch for MISS SMITH.

Envelope with papers off l. door for MR. GORDON.

Revolver for FOX.

Extra gun for FOX off c. to r.

Basin and towel off c. to l. for HENRY.

OFF-STAGE EFFECTS

Wind machine off r. on cue.

Chimes off l. on cue.

Door-bell off r. on cue.

Door slam off r. on cue.

Gun shots (muffled) off stage on cues.

ACT II

(Same set as Act I)

Humidor—or box of cigars, on table, r. c.

Long blue envelope hid in book, in bookcase, up r. c.

HAND AND SIDE PROPERTIES

Cigars and matches for MR. GORDON.

Two bundles logs for HENRY off c. to l.

Note (written) for FOX.

Watch for FOX.

Package containing coiled snake with written note in jaws—package is wrapped and postmarked,—for JIMMIE.

A large white envelope and contents for MR. GORDON off l. door.

Police whistle for FOX.

- Flashlight and revolver for HENRY.
 Telegram (written) for MISS SMITH.
 Flashlight (of ACT I) for MISS SMITH.
 Small ivory elephant and lady's handkerchief for BETTY.
 Old key for HENRY.
 Book (novel) for HENRY, off c. to L.
 Book (novel) for BETTY, off c. to L.
 Large blue envelope and contents for MR. GORDON, off L. door.
 Revolver and mask for CAT O' NINE TAILS.
 Package headache powders for TED off c. to L.

OFF-STAGE EFFECTS

- Wind machine off R. on cue.
 Thunder and lightning crash off R. on cues.
 Door slam off R. on cues.
 Large owl at window, R., on cue.
 Shots off R. on cues.

ACT III

- Ground cloth.
 Battered old couch.
 An old table, R. C., on which an old lamp which is practical; a box of matches; MR. GORDON'S revolver and a long blue envelope containing several typewritten sheets. (Same as in book, in bookcase, ACT II.)
 An old chair, or stool, L. of table.
 Other articles can be used to suggest an underground chamber.
- OFF L. CLOSET:
 A supposed skeleton.
 A slender knife, or dirk, with inscription on handle.
- OFF C. DOOR:
 Small parcel (wrapped) containing jewel box filled with pearl and diamond necklaces, which is passed through panel on cue.
- OFF R. C. CLOSET IN FLAT:
 Lash line attached to pegs to hold JACOB.

OFF R. CLOSET:

Long, low rack on which JIMMIE is bound with cords.
Gag for JIMMIE.

HAND AND SIDE PROPERTIES

Flashlight and revolver for MISS SMITH.

Revolver for FOX.

Unlit (but practical) lantern off R. for HENRY.

Bottle brandy (cold tea) off R. for FOX.

Small pocket jimmy, or screw driver, for FOX.

Skeleton key for MISS SMITH.

Fountain pen for MISS SMITH.

Revolver for HENRY, also written note.

Blue envelope with several typewritten pages for MR. GORDON.

Small ivory elephant for BETTY.

OFF STAGE EFFECT

Gun shot on cue.

LIGHTS

ACT I

———At rise.

Foots $\frac{3}{4}$ down.

Borders $\frac{3}{4}$ down.

Blue medium shines through R. window.

Swinging hall lamp lit.

Reading lamp on table—out.

Bracket lights at fireplace—out.

Small strip light off L. door—out.

———When MR. GORDON enters c. and presses switch.

Foots full.

Borders $\frac{2}{3}$ up.

Bracket lights lit. (Reading lamp optional.)

——— { MR. GORDON. "Very well, just as you say."
 } MR. GORDON switches off lights.

Foots $\frac{3}{4}$ down.

Borders $\frac{3}{4}$ down.

Bracket lights at fireplace—out.

_____ } As JIMMIE and BETTY enter c. JIMMIE
 } switches on lights.

Foots full.

Borders $\frac{2}{3}$ up.

Bracket lights lit. (Reading lamp optional.)

_____MISS SMITH. "—was a strain on my back and neck."

Red (or amber) light in fireplace.

ACT II

_____At rise.

Foots full.

Borders $\frac{2}{3}$ up.

Hall lamp lit.

Bracket lights at fireplace lit.

Reading lamp on table, R. C., lit.

Blue medium shines through window.

_____HENRY. "Oh, slumber and dreams —"

Red (or amber) light on in fireplace.

_____At long, low whistle from FOX, off R., JIMMIE switches off all lights except blue medium, at window, and red in fireplace.

(Short wait.)

_____FOX. "Lights." *(As he enters window.)*

JIMMIE switches on all stage lights.

_____MRS. GORDON. "Bah! I'm not afraid to enter."

Pause—then strip light on, off L. room.

(Short wait.)

MRS. GORDON. "Should let Rover frighten you."

Pause—then strip light out, off L. room.

_____ } BETTY. "Sh!"

_____ } MRS. GORDON. "What is it?"

Pause—then all stage lights out.

(Very short wait.)

_____ } BETTY. "Stop, or I'll shoot!"

_____ } FOX. "Don't shoot!"

All stage lights on.

———MR. GORDON. } “By all means, and hurry!”
 } (HENRY *opens c. door.*)

Hall lamp is out.

ACT III

———At rise.

Stage dark.

———When BETTY lights table lamp.

Foots up $\frac{1}{4}$.

No border lights.

———When MR. GORDON lights lantern.

Foots $\frac{2}{3}$ up.

No border lights.

BAKER'S PLAYS OF DISTINCTION

DORIS COMES TO TOWN. A Comedy in Three Acts. By Eugene Hafer. 4 m., 4 w. Scenery, a single easy int. Plays a full evening. Royalty, \$10.00 for the first and \$5.00 for each subsequent performance. A clean, wholesome, farcical comedy which is based on an absurdly boastful untruth, the author of which meets with a humiliating exposure. A lover in a great cheese factory in town boasts to his best girl in the country that he is the president of the concern, while in reality he is a very unimportant cog in the office wheels. The way in which he is exposed is "a scream." His girl comes to town on business with a lawyer who is the son of the real president. The lover has a brief, inglorious, wholesome, and very laughable setback, loses his girl to the young lawyer, and his job into the bargain. He is saved by a stroke of luck, which though undeserved is often the reward of reckless good nature. It is a merry little play with several good parts giving an equal opportunity to all members of the cast.

Price, 35 Cents.

MAIL ORDER BRIDES. A Farce Comedy in Three Acts. By J. C. McMullen. 6 m., 7 w. 1 simple int. setting. Plays full evening. This is a story of the Nevada Cattle Range, written by one familiar with his subject. While the play is broadly farcical in parts it tells its story in a way that brings before you the actual life of the Western Plains. Ruby Heart Ranch, the scene of the play, has plenty of men, but only two women and one of them is an Indian Squaw. Two of the cowboys decide to send to a Chicago mail order house for wives, but their order is tampered with and when the girls arrive the fun commences. There is one too many! Affairs finally adjust themselves for all concerned but there is a lot of fun while it is being done. The characters are all good, the part of the Indian Squaw, originally played by the wife of the author, being particularly effective in the hands of a capable character woman. Royalty, \$10.00. **Price, 35 Cents.**

BAKER'S PLAYS OF DISTINCTION

BACK HOME AGAIN. Comedy in Three Acts. By Clara B. Orwig. 4 m., 3 w. Scene, 2 easy ints. Plays a full evening. Roger Sheldon, juvenile lead, returns to his old home in Oldport, to settle his grandfather's estate. Contrary to prevailing opinion, the old gentleman seems to have left but a small estate and this is bequeathed to young Roger along with a deathbed note: "Remember the S. D." The unraveling of the mystery centering around this message makes one of the best acting plays of the year. There are rich possibilities for character work in the persons of Phineas Gardner, a shyster lawyer; his wife, a meek old lady; Jerusha Bascom, the Sheldon housekeeper; Seth Pittman, an old cabinet maker; and the auctioneer who has a small part but a good one. The pretty love story of Marcia Bartlett (leading woman) and Roger, runs trippingly through the plot and permeates the play with the freshness of a day in June. Here is a play of professional worth but written with the needs of amateurs fully in mind. Royalty, \$10.00. **Price, 50 Cents.**

SUNSHINE. A Comedy in Three Acts. By Walter Ben Hare. 4 m., 7 w. Scene, a simple ex., easily arranged with a small lot of potted plants and rustic furniture. The story leads the audience a merry chase from snappy farce to real drama with just a flavor of the melodramatic which modern audiences find so pleasing. Here we find a great character part in a popular baseball hero who succeeds in making a "home run" in more ways than one, a wonderful leading lady rôle in the part of Mary, a hypochondriac who finds his medicine most pleasant to the taste, an old maid who mourns the loss of her parrot and a pert little girl with an exuberance of spirit that will keep the audience on its mettle. The Major is a character of great possibilities and in the hands of a capable actor much can be made of it. We cannot recommend too highly this play written by an author with scores of successes behind him and not a single failure. Royalty, \$10.00.

Price, 50 Cents.

BAKER'S PLAYS OF DISTINCTION

CHEER UP. A Comedy of Inspiration in Three Acts. By Walter Ben Hare. 6 m., 9 w. characters with a group of children. Scenery, 2 easy ints., or 1 int. and one farm-yard. Although there is no sentimental love interest in the play, it is replete with comedy and dramatic situations and tells a story that is lovable, humorous, whimsical and uplifting. The trials of the little orphan whose baby charge is adopted by a wealthy lady appeal to every audience and the comical vagaries of the man-hating cook and the woman-hating yard-man who is too lazy to breathe will cause gales of laughter. The play is a novelty as most of the important rôles are played by boys and girls, or by children impersonators, making it an ideal offering for expression schools, Sunday Schools, and High Schools. Mulligan is a great part for a character comedian, but the other male rôles are relatively short and easy to play. Annie, the little orphan, is a star rôle worthy the talents of a Mary Pickford, and Sarah Upshot, the pert little Sue, who longs for "leming pie," Aunt Mary and Miss Stone are exceptionally well-defined characters. Royalty, \$10.00. **Price, 50 Cents.**

GOOD-EVENING, CLARICE. By J. C. McMullen. A Farce Comedy in Three Acts. 5 m., 6 w. Playing time, approximately, 2 hours. Costumes of the present day. Scene, a single int. Annette Franklin, a jealous wife, has been raising a little domestic war over her husband's supposed infatuation for a noted dancer, Clarice de Mauree. How Annette was proven wrong in her supposition, cured of her jealousy, and found her long-lost parents, makes a comedy which, while easy of production, proves very effective in the presentation. The part of Clarice, the dancer, gives the opportunity for an excellent female character lead. All of the other parts are of equal importance and the situations fairly radiate comedy and swift moving action. Royalty, \$10.00 for the first and \$5.00 for each subsequent performance. **Price, 50 Cents.**

BAKER'S PLAYS OF DISTINCTION

"THE BANTAM V. C." By Harold Brighthouse, Author of "Hobson's Choice," etc. A Farce in Three Acts. 6 m., 5 w. Plays a full evening. 2 easy ints. "The Bantam V. C." is the small and dapper Kittering. The Victoria Cross has been thrust upon him for his personal bravery at the Front, but he isn't brave with women—women scare him stiff. He'd rather meet a shell than a shop girl. Kittering won't admit his shyness and bluffingly boasts to his friends that he's a "devil of a lad." Tommy Ludlow and Bill Farrimond frame up an extraordinary plot to test him. They taunt him for his shyness until Kittering, driven to desperation, proposes to demonstrate to their satisfaction that he's the gayest kind of a gay dog. The devices—in a class by themselves—by which the sly as well as shy "Bantam V. C." outwits, baffles and flabbergasts his incredulous friends, are the making of something unique in farces. Easy to produce. All parts good. Full of action. A professional success. Royalty, \$25.00.

Price, 75 Cents.

BY GEORGE. A Comedy in Three Acts. By J. C. McMullen. 7 m., 6 w. Simple int. setting. Plays 2 hours. George and Margaret Brackton, after twenty-five years of struggling, find themselves in a position to build the home of their dreams. They move into their new home and then decide to give a house party to their friends of college days. The friends arrive and the Bracktons' troubles commence. The guests include a noted actress, a hypochondriac, a tired business man, a federal agent, a man who has been a traitor to his government, a budding playwright, a petty thief, and a pair of lovers. The resultant chaos is left to the imagination. While the play is a comedy, it has many dramatic touches and there is a strong vein of patriotism running through it. As in all of Mr. McMullen's plays the parts are of equal importance and the setting is simple. The play proved very successful in the hands of the Cardinal Players of Los Angeles for whom it was written. Royalty, \$10.00.

Price, 35 Cents.

BAKER'S PLAYS OF DISTINCTION

BILL AND COMPANY. A Comedy in Three Acts.

By Homer King Gordon. 4 m., 5 w. Scene, 2 simple ints. Plays a full evening. "Bill Will Tackle Anything"—that was the advertisement inserted in the New York newspapers by a serious minded young man of unlimited wealth, social standing, high ideals, and good intentions. His first client offers him one dollar for seven days' work, evenings included. To earn this princely sum, he has to make violent love to a very modern young lady whose objections involve him, and her grandfather who offers the job. But Bill tackles it. He kisses her on the first night of their acquaintance and proposes every day thereafter despite complications that would have staggered Romeo. There isn't a suggestive line or gesture in the play but it is modern and smart. It moves rapidly with deft, clean-cut dialogue, sparkling with wit and humor. Royalty, \$10.00.

Price, 50 Cents.

ANNE WHAT'S-HER-NAME. By Walter Ben Hare.

A Play in Three Acts. 7 m., 8 w. Two easy int. scenes, one of them a simple background of screens. Costumes, modern. Playing time, 2 hours. Tony Wheat, fleeing from the police, hides in the home of Judge Bunby, and allows the family to mistake him for their nephew, Ebenezer Whittle. The climax of his misfortunes is reached when he is married, much against his inclination, to a masked lady with a deep bass voice, called by the minister, Anne. The endeavors of Tony to ascertain the identity of his bride, the hysterics of Mooney, the maid, and the arrival of the real Ebenezer, later followed by his wife and two children, add to the mystery and the merriment. This is an original, American play, full of wit, snappy lines, electrifying surprises and clean, comedy situations. Tony is one of the best comedy leading man's rôles ever written, and Willie, the high school boy, Nancy, the leading lady, Bab, the Flapper, Mooney, the maid with nerves, and Gran'ma, aged eighty-two, are unusually appealing rôles. Royalty, \$10.00.

Price, 50 Cents.

BAKER'S PLAYS OF DISTINCTION

THE HEART OF MAINE. In Three Acts. By Gladys Ruth Bridgham. 6 m., 7 w. 2 easy interior sets. Plays 2 hours. A picturesque story of the Maine woods. Jonathan Blair is about to put through a deal by which his lumber business becomes one of the largest in the country. The son of a former enemy and business rival claims the land which controls the Tuscgo stream by which Jonathan gets his lumber out. Jonathan's daughter, Mehitable, in her youth was secretly married to his rival. Through fear of her father, she gives her infant son to her sister-in-law, Marie. Marie's husband dies and because of her hatred of the family she takes the boy away and brings him up as her own son. By the terms of the will, the boy was to inherit an interest in Jonathan's business if when eighteen years old he would place himself in his grandfather's hands for three years. On his eighteenth birthday, Marie brings him home and a clash ensues between the very modern youth and his grandfather who lives in the past. The boy proves to be the owner of the land which controls the Tuscgo Stream, thus saving his grandfather's business. In the end he wins his way to the old man's heart and is restored to the mother who has been deprived of her son for eighteen years. Royalty, \$10.00. **Price, 35 Cents.**

WHEN A FELLER NEEDS A FRIEND. Farce in Three Acts. By J. C. McMullen. 5 m., 5 w. Scenery, a single easy int. Plays a full evening. Royalty, \$10.00. Tom Denker and Bob Mills, trying to break into New York, have reached the point where their furniture consists of soap boxes, their diet what they can steal from the dog's milk and the parrot's cracker, and where one suit between them is the best they can do. How they climbed out of these social depths and what side-splitting complications arose from their efforts to do so form the plot of a mighty funny play which provides ten parts of about equal opportunity and is as easy to produce as it is effective. Especially for high school performance. **Price, 35 Cents.**

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The perennial success which has been played on the professional stage more than five thousand times and over fifteen hundred times by amateurs, with an increasing number of productions each year. One of those rare and really funny plays which acts itself, is always a success and has to be repeated. Easily produced. Each part a star part. Bobbie Baxter pursuing his little love affair with Jane against the opposition of his uncle, William Winkler, has occasion to disguise himself as a woman and is mistaken for Kitty, an actress and close friend of Winkler's, to the vast confusion of everything and everybody, which is intensified by the arrival of the real Kitty.

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"'The Arrival of Kitty' is a success." — *New York Dramatic Mirror*.

"'The Arrival of Kitty' is as funny as 'Charley's Aunt,' funnier in many places." — *Toledo Blade*.

"It is a pleasure to tell you of the tremendous success of the performance of 'The Arrival of Kitty' which we gave last night as the Senior Class Play. We had a good house and the applause and laughter were most hilarious." — *G. F. Morgan, Supt. of Schools at Athens, Ohio*.

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"The play was a wonderful success. The press and public are still talking about it." — *B. Jermyn Masters, Sec. Dunsmuir (Cal.) Dramatic Club*.

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