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Dramatic Publishing

Meet Me in St. Louis

A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

BY

CHRISTOPHER SERGEL

DRAMATIZED FROM THE BOOK

BY

SALLY BENSON



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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CHRISTOPHER SERGEL

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(MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS)

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Meet Me in St. Louis

A Comedy in Three Acts

FOR SEVEN MEN AND NINE WOMEN

CHARACTERS

MR. SMITH.....	<i>A St. Louis business man</i>
MRS. SMITH.....	<i>his wife</i>
ROSE	} <i>their daughters</i>
ESTHER	
AGNES	
TOOTIE	
LON.....	<i>their son</i>
GRANDPA PROPHATER.....	<i>Mrs. Smith's father</i>
KATIE.....	<i>the cook</i>
MRS. WAUGHOP.....	<i>an irate neighbor</i>
IDA BOOTHBY.....	<i>sweet on Lon</i>
JOHN SHEPHARD.....	<i>sweet on Rose</i>
FRED GREGORY.....	<i>sweet on Esther</i>
LUCILLE PENTARD.....	<i>a "menace" from the East</i>
MR. DODGE.....	<i>Mr. Smith's boss</i>
MR. DUFFY.....	<i>who is up to no good</i>

PLACE: *The living-room of the Smith family in St. Louis.*

TIME: *Late spring, 1904.*

SYNOPSIS

ACT ONE: *Late afternoon.*

ACT TWO: *After dinner, the same day.*

ACT THREE: *Saturday evening, a week and a half later.*

NOTES ON CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES

MR. SMITH: He is in his forties, a kind, generous, loving father and a successful business man, to boot. He wears a business suit throughout, and may change for the last act.

MRS. SMITH: She, too, is in her forties, an attractive woman, with a firm but gentle manner. She has graciousness and charm, which the years and raising a family have mellowed. She wears the same costume in the first two acts and may change to something a little dressier in the third act.

LON: He is the oldest in the family, nineteen. Lon is good-looking and athletic. He wears sporty-looking collegiate clothes in Acts One and Two and changes in the last act to a more formal-looking suit.

ROSE: She is the oldest of the girls, eighteen, and the beauty of the family. She has a loyal, loving nature—and also a bit of a temper. She wears the same costume in the first two acts and changes to a very “special” one for the Fair in the final act.

ESTHER: Esther is a year and three months younger than Rose, attractive and effervescent. She tends to look up to Rose and clings to her in time of trouble. She, too, wears the same costume in the first two acts and something very “special” in the last act.

AGNES: She is about two years younger than Esther and inclined to be a tomboy. Agnes is independent and forthright, and greatly admired by Tootie. Her costume and appearance are somewhat mussed upon her first entrance. She changes in the last act to one of her “best” dresses.

TOOTIE: Tootie is the youngest in the family, a bright-eyed, serious-faced youngster with a slightly macabre sense of humor. She wears the same costume in the first two acts and one of her “best” dresses for Act Three.

GRANDPA: He is a spry old gent in his seventies, with a neat white beard and mustache. The children adore him and never tire of hearing his "tales." He may wear the same costume throughout the play.

KATIE: Katie is ageless; she might be anywhere from forty-five to sixty—you can't tell. She is good-humored, generous loving—and Irish. Her brogue is slight but musical. Throughout the play she wears a neat house-dress with a voluminous apron over it.

MRS. WAUGHOP: She is a fussy, irate, middle-aged woman who dresses severely and primly.

IDA: Ida is eighteen, a sweet, rather shy girl, and very much in love with Lon. She wears the same costume in Acts One and Two and an extra-pretty dress in the third act.

JOHN: He is slightly older than Rose, a nice strapping fellow, sincere and friendly. On his first appearance he is somewhat disheveled. He is dressed for a "special" occasion in the last act and wears the same suit in the first two acts.

FRED: Fred is a good-looking, well-mannered boy of Esther's age. He is very smitten with Esther, and she is with him. He, too, is dressed for a "special" occasion in Act Three and wears an everyday suit in Acts One and Two.

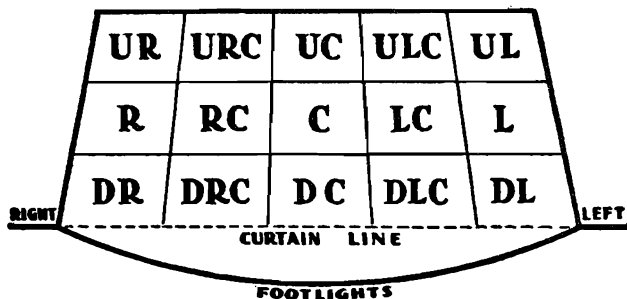
LUCILLE: She is eighteen, a very pretty but decidedly affected girl from the East. Her manner in front of the boys is arch and coy. Her clothes are very expensive and the very latest in fashion. She may change for each act.

MR. DODGE: He is a harrassed-looking business man, a few years older than Mr. Smith. His speech is clipped and brusque he is all business. He wears a business suit throughout the play.

DUFFY: Duffy is Mr. Dodge's shadow, a meek little "yes" man. He is somewhat younger than Mr. Smith and obviously envious of his importance in the firm. He, too, wears a business suit throughout the play.

CONDUCTOR: This part is not listed in the cast of characters, as he makes only a brief appearance at the curtain of Act One. He wears a streetcar conductor's uniform, with his cap pushed back on his head at a wild angle.

CHART OF STAGE POSITIONS

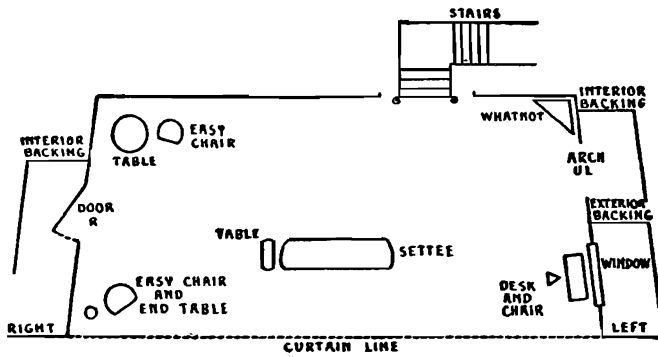


STAGE POSITIONS

Upstage means away from the footlights, *downstage* means toward the footlights, and *right* and *left* are used with reference to the actor as he faces the audience. R means *right*, L means *left*, U means *up*, D means *down*, C means *center*, and these abbreviations are used in combination, as: U R for *up right*, R C for *right center*, D L C for *down left center*, etc. One will note that a position designated on the stage refers to a general territory, rather than to a given point.

NOTE: Before starting rehearsals, chalk off your stage or rehearsal space as indicated above in the *Chart of Stage Positions*. Then teach your actors the meanings and positions of these fundamental terms of stage movement by having them walk from one position to another until they are familiar with them. The use of these abbreviated terms in directing the play saves time, speeds up rehearsals, and reduces the amount of explanation the director has to give to his actors.

STAGE CHART



PROPERTIES

PROPERTIES: Portières on rod; settee; small round table; lamp on table; lace curtains at windows; desk and chair; telephone and lamp on desk (among other accessories); easy chair; end table right of easy chair; larger round table; scarf, lamp, and other pieces of bric-a-brac on table; small easy chair left of table; tall whatnot, with treasured family possessions on shelves; books in bookshelves (optional); floral rug; pictures.

MR. SMITH: Extra large and fancy box of candy, pencil and pad, bill in wallet.

GRANDPA: Bill in wallet, pocket watch.

LON: Handkerchief.

TOOTIE: Cat (Act One and Act Three), chicken drumstick.

AGNES: Several hairs (supposedly from John's head), small towel, chicken drumstick.

KATIE: Saucer with two cooked chicken hearts, plate of fudge.

ROSE: Class pin on dress (Act One and Act Two), pen and thick sheaf of paper, handkerchief, black fan.

MRS. SMITH: Crocheting.

ESTHER: Cat (Act Two), several paper bags.

JOHN: Thick letter, corsage in box.

FRED: Corsage in box.

CONDUCTOR: Stuffed dummy.

ACT ONE

SCENE: *The scene is the living-room of the Smith family in St. Louis. The time is 1904, and of course the room is not a bit old-fashioned for then. It has rich color, warmth, and design that make the bleached and blond furnishings of today seem cold by comparison. A wide arch U L leads to the front hall and the outside door. Heavy portières on a rod hang on either side of the arch. A door R leads to the dining-room and kitchen. At the rear, U L C, stairs and a landing go to the upper part of the house. A large, well-upholstered settee is at C stage, facing the audience. Right of it is a small round table with a lamp on it. Below the arch U L is a wide window, almost reaching to the floor, with beautiful lace curtains. In front of this window are a desk and chair. Among other accessories on the desk are a telephone and lamp. There is a comfortable easy chair D R with a small end table right of it. In the U R corner of the room is another round table. On it are a scarf, lamp, and other pieces of bric-a-brac. Left of this table is a small easy chair. In the U L corner of the room is a tall whatnot, its shelves filled with treasured family possessions. Bookshelves may line the rear wall of the room, if desired, and there also may be windows similar to the one in the R wall. A floral rug and suitable pictures complete the setting.]*

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: *It is a warm and pleasant afternoon in late spring, and sunlight is streaming through the windows. MR. SMITH, in his forties, enters U L. He glances about and seems relieved not to see anyone. He puts down the extra large and fancy box of candy that he is carrying on the table right of the settee, while he takes off his hat and coat and places them out in the hall U L. He re-enters. Then,*

taking the box of candy, he approaches the door R in hesitating fashion. He almost reaches it and then loses his nerve. He stops short and decides to go over once more what he intends to say.]

MR. SMITH [*bis lips move in emphatic speech, but only a half whisper is heard.*] Anna—I want you to listen to me. This will be best for all of us, and I've made up my mind. [*Gesturing.*] And we'll just have to go through with it! [*Gestures again with satisfaction at how forcefully he has put it.*]

[LON, a good-looking boy of nineteen, comes bounding down the stairs. He is "de-dumming" a popular tune of the day. LON is excited and sings with gusto.]

LON [*coming to L C.*]. Hi, Dad! [*Clears his throat.*] Could you advance me another dollar on my allowance?

MR. SMITH [*at R C, preoccupied and concerned*]. You're already two weeks behind. Where's your mother?

LON [*indicating door R*]. Helping Katie in the kitchen.

MR. SMITH [*noncommittally*]. Mmmmm. . . .

LON [*brightly, crossing toward MR. SMITH*]. Shall I call her?

MR. SMITH [*quickly, nervously*]. No, no. Never mind.

LON [*noticing box in his hand*]. Hey—that's a big box of candy. [*Smiles, taking box.*] What have you been up to, Dad?

MR. SMITH [*frowning*]. Where are your sisters! [*Crosses up toward stairs.*]

LON. Around. [*His curiosity aroused.*] What is it, Dad?

MR. SMITH. It can wait till the family's all together.

LON [*replacing box on table, starting toward stairs*]. But you can tell me.

MR. SMITH [*starting up the stairs*]. Wait till we're all together.

LON [*calling after him*]. Not even a hint?

MR. SMITH. It's nothing to worry about. [*Half to himself.*] 'At least, you shouldn't worry about it.

LON. But, Dad—[*But MR. SMITH has completed his exit. LON crosses and picks up box of candy and looks thoughtful. He tosses it down.*]

[GRANDPA PROPHATER, a spry old gent in his seventies, and TOOTIE, the youngest in the family, enter U L.]

TOOTIE [*bright-eyed and excited, coming left of settee*]. Lon—Grandpa took me all over the fair grounds. They've almost finished the Transportation Palace and the Colonnade of the States, but the whole World's Fair isn't nearly as big as where Grandpa used to live when he was King.

GRANDPA [*who has paused by desk*]. Now, we weren't going to talk about that.

LON. Oh, he told me about it years ago. Grandpa was a big man. [*Crossing to GRANDPA.*] And I hate people who are small about things. [*Pauses.*] I mean, don't you think it's awful how small some people can be?

GRANDPA [*warily*]. What do you mean—small?

LON. I mean—Grandpa, could you lend me a dollar? [*Holds out hand.*]

GRANDPA [*sighing and reaching for wallet*]. That's a word that gets a lot of use around here. [*Hands him a dollar.*] I'm speaking of the word "lend."

LON [*enthusiastically, clapping him on back*]. Gosh, thanks! Remind me when I get my allowance that I owe it to you. [*Dashes up the stairs.*]

TOOTIE [*thoughtfully*]. Grandpa, you're just fooling me about once being a real king, aren't you?

GRANDPA [*with a twinkle, coming toward her*]. Now why would I fool my own granddaughter?

TOOTIE [*sitting on settee*]. But you never told me you were a king before, and I've known you all your life.

GRANDPA. This was long before you were born. [*Sitting beside her.*] Why, I used to eat off gold plates, and I ate whatever I wanted. Some days I'd decide on candy, and candy it would be. Other days I'd want nothing but chocolate cake.

TOOTIE. Golly!

GRANDPA. Or it might be that I expressed a desire for water-melons in mid-winter, and fresh watermelons would be brought to me by runners from thousands of miles away. [*Glances at his pocket watch.*] It's nearly five. Your mother won't like it that we stayed so long.

TOOTIE. What do you care what she thinks? You're a king.

GRANDPA. But that makes your mother a princess, and you can't get too gay with them. They're pretty high and mighty.

TOOTIE. If she's a princess, then what am I?

GRANDPA. You'd be a duchess. You see, your mother would have been a queen if she hadn't married your father—but he's just a commoner. So one day I made your sister, Rose, the queen—one day when she wasn't much older than you are.

TOOTIE. I think Rose is dumb. All she thinks about are boys. She was waiting there at the pavilion for John Shephard, only she wouldn't admit it.

GRANDPA. Just the same, Rose makes a pretty good queen.

[*LON comes tearing down the stairs again. He is putting a neatly-folded handkerchief in his breast pocket.*]

LON. I'm off. I may stop back with Lucille later.

TOOTIE. I think she's a pain.

LON [*indignantly, pausing by arch U L*]. She is not!

TOOTIE. Why bring her here?

LON [*coming downstage*]. Because maybe I want Lucille to meet the folks.

TOOTIE. What for?

LON. Because maybe I just do.

TOOTIE. She's so stuck-up. Why does she think she's so wonderful? I wouldn't marry a girl who thought she was so wonderful! I wouldn't marry a girl named *Lucille!* [*Turns her head from him.*]

LON [*irritated*]. Who's getting married? No one said a thing about it.

GRANDPA [*tapping her shoulder*]. Calm down, Tootie.

LON [*anxiously*]. And you be polite to Lucille when I bring her in.

TOOTIE [*stubbornly, rising, moving to R C*]. I won't.

LON [*between his teeth*]. You better.

TOOTIE. I'll jump out from behind the sofa and bite her leg!

LON [*crossing to R C, grabbing her*]. If you do, I'll shake you till your teeth rattle.

TOOTIE [*Joan of Arc*]. Go ahead—kill me.

LON [*giving up, completely disgusted*]. You're just a runny-nose little brat. [*Dashes out U L.*]

GRANDPA [*regarding TOOTIE a moment*]. Sometimes you go too far, Tootie. [*Shakes his head.*] You're all right till you go too far.

TOOTIE. Ida Boothby used to read stories to me. She's much nicer than Lucille.

GRANDPA [*as he starts up the stairs, chuckling*]. Can't say as I blame Lon for wanting to shake you.

TOOTIE [*primly*]. I think I'll get a dish of cream for Lady Babbie.

GRANDPA [*pausing*]. That cat of yours has been sharpening her claws on my chair again.

TOOTIE [*calling up to him*]. When you were a king, didn't you have hundreds of cats?

GRANDPA [*with scorn*]. Cats! I had griffins. They're half lion, and half eagle, and you call them griffins. Now *they* were something. [*Chuckles and goes up the stairs. TOOTIE whispers "Golly." She then starts looking for her cat.*]

TOOTIE [*as she looks under settee*]. Lady Babbie—Lady Babbie. . . . [*Crosses to arch, calls at the top of her lungs.*] Lady Babbie! . . . [*KATIE, a good-humored Irish cook, enters R. TOOTIE turns.*] Have you seen her, Katie?

KATIE [*speaking humorously*]. A while back she got in my way, so I kicked her down the cellar stairs.

TOOTIE [*horrified*]. No!

KATIE. And I could hear her spine hit on every step.

TOOTIE [*wildly, crossing to her*]. If you've killed my Lady Babbie, I'll stab you to death in your sleep. I'll tie your body to wild horses till you're pulled apart.

KATIE [*unimpressed*]. Won't that be terrible, now? Go on to the kitchen. Your cat's eating a can of sardines.

TOOTIE [*brightening instantly*]. She is—Lady Babbie! [*Rushes out R. KATIE smiles after a moment, and turns to go. She notices box of candy; her eyebrows go up at its size; picks it up and starts to look for a card.*]

[*ROSE and ESTHER, the two attractive older sisters, enter U L.*]

ROSE [*hurrying to KATIE*]. Is that a box of candy, Katie?

KATIE. Looks like one—[*Shakes it.*—shakes like one, too.

ROSE [*anxiously hopeful*]. Is there a card?

KATIE. Don't see one.

ESTHER [*who has paused at L C, laughing*]. Are you expecting an apology already?

ROSE. No, but maybe he sent it, anyway. I mean, there's a certain type of person that when he can't keep an appointment with another person, he sends along something with his apologies.

KATIE [*as ROSE takes box to inspect it*]. That should apologize for a whole lot. [*Starts toward door R.*]

ROSE [*disappointed*]. No card.

ESTHER. If John Shephard sent it, he'd have written something.

ROSE [*loftily, putting box down, moving to R C*]. I assure you that it doesn't matter to me in the least. I hate, loathe, despise, abominate, and abhor John Shephard.

KATIE [*laughing*]. I guess that settles him. We're having chicken fricassee tonight and I saved the hearts for you.

ESTHER. Wonderful!

ROSE. I couldn't eat a thing.

KATIE. 'Course you can.

ROSE. Honestly—I'm just not hungry.

KATIE [*as she starts out*]. Glory be! [*Goes out R.*]

ESTHER [*crossing D L, turning*]. Of all the idiotic things! The World's Fair about to open; all the wonderful exhibits, and everything; people coming from all over the world to St. Louis—and you're worrying about John Shephard.

ROSE. I'm *not*! [*Starting up the stairs.*] You must be out of your mind.

ESTHER [*following ROSE*]. I wonder who *did* send the candy.

ROSE. I only know that if John *had* sent it, I'd have sent it right back.

[*There is a knock on the door off U L.*]

ROSE [*whirling with pleasure, whisking down the stairs*]. Never mind—I'll see. [*ESTHER watches from the stairs as ROSE hurries out U L and flings open outside door, off U L. Then she backs into room in dismay.*]

[*An irate, middle-aged woman, MRS. WAUGHOP, follows ROSE into the room.*]

ROSE [*disappointed*]. Mrs. Waughop!

MRS. WAUGHOP. I suppose you expected a bunch of boys.

ROSE. No, I——What is it you want?

MRS. WAUGHOP. I suppose you thought I'd put up with anything.

ROSE. I didn't suppose at all.

MRS. WAUGHOP. Call your mother.

ESTHER [*hurrying down and crossing R*]. I'll get her. [*Hurries out R.*]

MRS. WAUGHOP [*drumming on desk with her fingers and looking grim*]. We'll—just—see—about—this. . . .

ROSE. About what, Mrs. Waughop?

MRS. WAUGHOP [*accusingly*]. You know perfectly well.

[*MRS. SMITH, an attractive woman in her forties, enters R, followed by ESTHER.*]

ESTHER. There she is, Mama.

MRS. SMITH [*crossing to settee*]. Yes, Mrs. Waughop?

MRS. WAUGHOP [*crossing to her*]. It isn't enough that Tootie ruined my lawn, or that last Hallowe'en they threw flour all over my best dress—

MRS. SMITH [*sighing*]. What's happened now?

MRS. WAUGHOP. Your daughter Agnes ran right directly across my flower beds, dragging some sort of scarecrow.

ESTHER. Scarecrow?

MRS. WAUGHOP. Right directly across! The sweet peas are ruined. If you weren't moving away, I'd get a bulldog for our yard.

MRS. SMITH [*smiling*]. I'm sorry to disappoint you, but we're not moving anywhere.

MRS. WAUGHOP. But I heard—

MRS. SMITH. You're quite mistaken.

ESTHER. Of all ideas—[*Crossing to the stairs.*] Come on, Rose.

ROSE [*with a mock evil look*]. Let's fill some paper bags with water and drop them out the window. [*Joins ESTHER on stairs.*]

MRS. SMITH. Rose—

MRS. WAUGHOP. You see—that's just the way they are!

[TOOTIE *enters R, carrying her cat in her arms.*]

MRS. SMITH. She was joking.

ESTHER. We weren't, either—beware, Mrs. Waughop! [ESTHER and ROSE *laugh and go on up the stairs.*]

MRS. WAUGHOP. I'm going to get that bulldog. They're just little hoodlums.

TOOTIE. I'm *not* a hoodlum. I'm a duchess. [*The last straw.* MRS. WAUGHOP *turns in disgust and goes out U L.* TOOTIE *turns to* MRS. SMITH.] Aren't I a duchess, Mother?

MRS. SMITH [*bugging her*]. Of course you are.

TOOTIE. I hate Mrs. Waughop.

MRS. SMITH. Mustn't hate anyone. I wonder where she got the idea that we were—[*Stops, as her eyes light on box of candy.*] Well, what in the world? [*Crosses to table.*]

TOOTIE [*crossing with* MRS. SMITH]. Open it up. Lady Babbie likes chocolate-covered cherries.

MRS. SMITH [*picking up box*]. I'm not sure it's for me.

[MR. SMITH *starts down the stairs; sees her with the box, and turns right around to go back up.*]

MRS. SMITH [*seeing him*]. Lonnie——

MR. SMITH. Yes?

MRS. SMITH [*indicating box*]. Where'd this come from?

MR. SMITH. Me. [*Turns to go back up the stairs.*]

MRS. SMITH [*laughing*]. Lonnie. . . . [MR. SMITH *turns.*] It's such an extravagant box—[*Notices.*]—Page and Shaw. [MR. SMITH *nods.*] No party—birthday—anniversary? [MR. SMITH *shakes his head nervously. There is a moment of perplexed silence.*]

TOOTIE [*breaking silence*]. Cat got your tongue, Papa? [MR. SMITH *glares at* TOOTIE.]

MRS. SMITH. I bet you've had a raise.

MR. SMITH [*coming down the stairs cautiously*]. Well, I have—in a way.

MRS. SMITH. Lonnie—that's wonderful!

MR. SMITH [*picking up courage, coming to left of settee*]. Yes—it is wonderful.

TOOTIE. Does it mean I get more allowance?

MRS. SMITH [*to* TOOTIE]. Why don't you see if you can locate Agnes?

TOOTIE. Come on, Lady Babbie. [*Goes on out U L.*]

MRS. SMITH. Now, Lonnie—what's all this?

MR. SMITH [*taking pose he was practicing when he first entered*]. Anna—I want you to listen to me——

MRS. SMITH [*smiling*]. I am.

MR. SMITH. Now, Anna—don't fly up in the air. There's nothing to lose your head over.

MRS. SMITH. I won't. [*Sits on settee.*] Lonnie, what is it?

MR. SMITH. It's going to be all right. I know it will be a lot of work for you and a lot of upset. But in the end it will be the wise thing.

MRS. SMITH. *What* will be the wise thing?

MR. SMITH [*tugging nervously at his collar*]. I'm trying to explain.

MRS. SMITH. I don't know what you're talking about. Now, see here, Lonnie, I'm as calm as a cucumber, and you're shaking like I don't know what.

MR. SMITH [*holding out his hand, as she takes it*]. I haven't mentioned it before, but there's been some talk downtown lately about sending me to New York.

MRS. SMITH. New York?

MR. SMITH [*nodding*]. And today it was decided they'd send me.

MRS. SMITH [*laughing*]. Well, we can live without you for a while. [*Patting his hand.*] Only I hope you won't have to stay so long you'll miss the opening of the World's Fair.

MR. SMITH [*taking her hand tightly, as he sits beside her*]. You don't understand. I mean—they're sending me to New York for good. [*As she doesn't say anything.*] To be the head of the New York office.

MRS. SMITH [*stunned*]. I don't believe it. Lonnie—I don't believe it.

MR. SMITH [*with a touch of pride*]. It's true. They were thinking of sending Duffy, but they thought he wasn't reliable enough.

MRS. SMITH [*horrified*]. Lonnie——

MR. SMITH [*rising, looking away, and talking rapidly*]. I'm to start a week from Saturday, and I'd like you and the children to follow as soon as you can.

MRS. SMITH [*slowly*]. New York. . . . Why, New York is a big city. Not that St. Louis isn't big. It just doesn't seem big out where we live. But New York! Why, what will the children do?

MR. SMITH. The same as they do here. Go to school, play, and have their friends over.

MRS. SMITH. What friends? Their friends are here.

MR. SMITH. They'll make new friends at school.

MRS. SMITH. But Rose is graduating this year. What about her graduation? And Agnes is doing so well, she's sure to be promoted. When you move, they put you back a grade.

MR. SMITH. They don't.

MRS. SMITH. I'm sure it's true. And Esther's going to be a senior. She's been dying to be a senior—a senior right here with her own class, and in her own school. Then there's Tootie, and——

MR. SMITH [*shaking his head*]. There's no use talking. There it is. We're going to have to move.

MRS. SMITH [*rising, moving away from him*]. Now I see what that awful Mrs. Waughop was talking about. *She* knew we were going to move before I did.

MR. SMITH. Duffy's her brother-in-law. Probably he told her.

MRS. SMITH. It makes me so ashamed.

MR. SMITH [*hurt*]. Anna——

MRS. SMITH [*uncomprehendingly*]. What is there about it that makes you so willing to move us lock, stock, and barrel to a perfectly strange place?

MR. SMITH [*crossing to her*]. Now, listen, Anna. I've got the future to think about. Lon's in college. Next year Esther will be ready for college, too. Rose has some blasted notion about a finishing school, and what with Tootie and Agnes, and all——

MRS. SMITH. Yes, but——

MR. SMITH. I'd like to know where the money's going to come from.

MRS. SMITH. Will you get so much more pay?

MR. SMITH. About a third more than now. And if I build up a good business there, it might lead to anything.

MRS. SMITH [*pacing to desk*]. But this is our home. And the whole wonderful Fair about to start. [*Pushing aside curtains,*

looking out.] They say there's never been anything like it in the world before. Why, people are coming from England and France—even China—just to see it. [*Dropping curtains, turning.*] And at just that moment you want us to pack up and——

MR. SMITH. It means a better business—that's more important.

MRS. SMITH [*crossing to him*]. Lon—even if there was no World's Fair, or anything like that—this is the place where we belong. Why, I can't even imagine us anywhere but here.

MR. SMITH. It'll just have to work out.

MRS. SMITH. But what would we do about Katie? She's been with us since Rose was born. And Grandfather—what about him? What will he do?

MR. SMITH [*gently*]. Anna—those are things we can talk over later. [*Pauses.*] Will you break the news to the girls?

MRS. SMITH [*shaking her head*]. No—I can't. [*Sinks on settee.*]

MR. SMITH [*not knowing what to say*]. Anna, please——

MRS. SMITH. I couldn't tell them. You'll have to do it yourself.

MR. SMITH. I—I think I'd better shave before dinner. [*Pauses.*]

It's really for the best, Anna. [*MRS. SMITH doesn't answer.*

MR. SMITH *crosses back of settee and hurries up the stairs.*

MRS. SMITH *sits still for a moment. Then she rises; her hands are held tightly together, and her eyes are shut for a moment. She reaches out and touches lamp on table by settee.*]

[*KATIE enters R.*]

KATIE. I thought you'd want to make the gravy yourself.

MRS. SMITH [*swallowing*]. You know, Katie, I think I could lay my finger on any object in this house with my eyes blindfolded.

KATIE. Now what in the world would you want to do that for?
[*MRS. SMITH bites her lip and hurries out R. KATIE looks after her in surprise and puzzlement.*]

[*ESTHER comes down the stairs.*]