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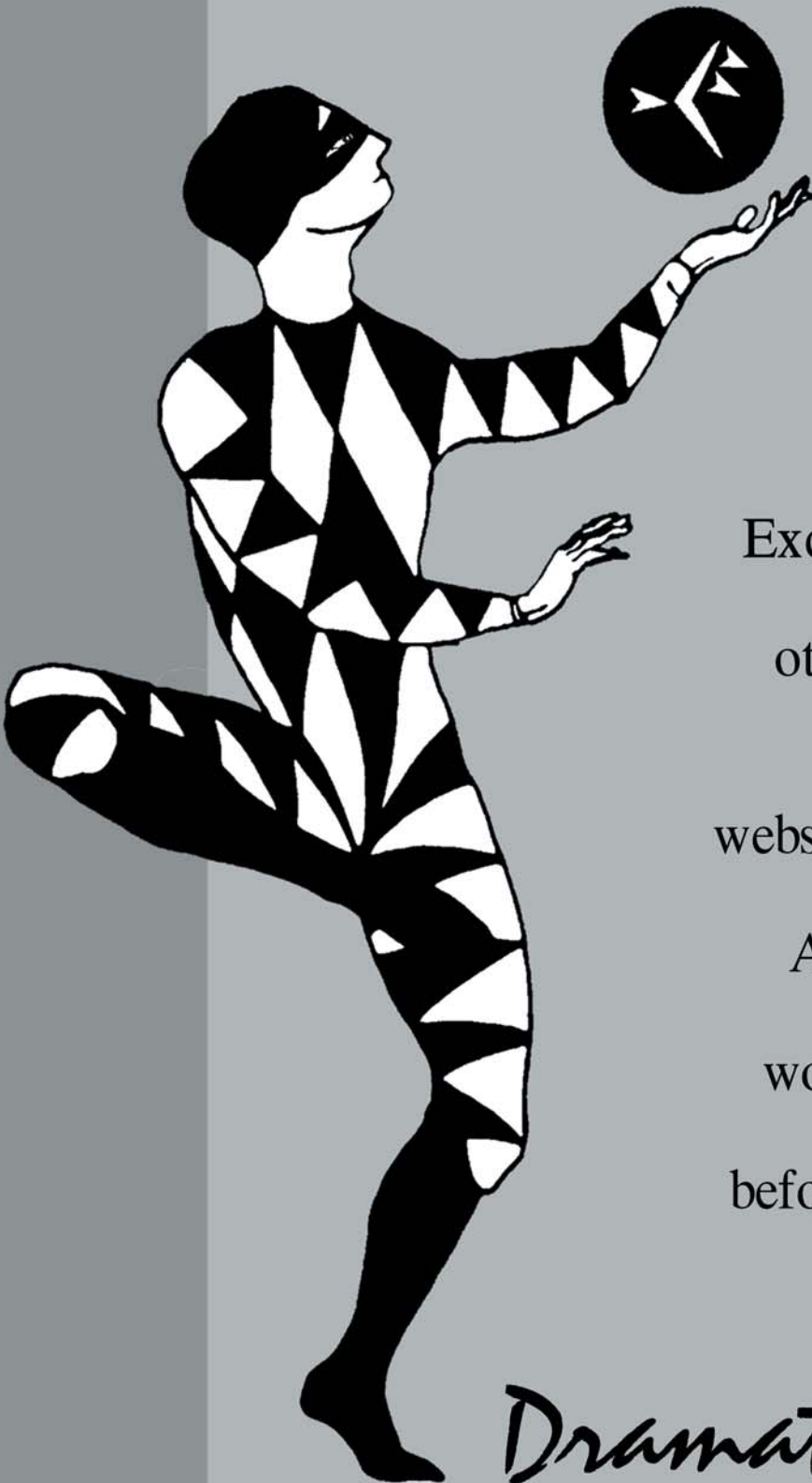
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Dramatic Publishing



A Comedy in Three Acts
by
ANNE COULTER MARTENS

Don't Take My
Penny!

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(DON'T TAKE MY PENNY)

Don't Take My Penny!

A Comedy in Three Acts

FOR EIGHT MEN AND NINE WOMEN

First presented by the *Spectator Players, Chicago, Illinois*, June 25, 1940, under the direction of *Thomas F. Guider*, with the following cast:

SALLY, *a maid with a purpose* Lorraine Curtin
NORMAN PORTER, *a publicity man* Timothy Cotter
PENNY, *a pretty little miss* Mary Kennedy
CALEB, *her absorbed father* Arthur Hassel
MARK, *her farm-minded brother* Norman Nagel
MAVIS, *her attractive sister* Edna Swanson
LYDIA, *her busy mother* Dorathea Kercher
JOANNA, *her loyal girl friend* Gladys Reinhart
KERRY, *her resourceful boy friend* Gordon Clarke
GREG, *his pal with ideas* Jack Morrissey
GRAM, *just herself* Jerry Kelly
MONSIEUR HENRI, *a French designer* Jean Jordan
CLAIRE }
ELSIE } *pretty young models* { Vera Mutzbauer
LUCILE } { Mary Ellen Evans
RED, *a delivery boy* James Lynch
HARRISON DAY, *a young author* Fred Seaberg, Jr.

PLACE: *The living-room of the Pringle home in a small city.*

TIME: *The present. A Saturday in late June.*

SYNOPSIS

ACT ONE: *The Pringle living-room. Eight A. M.*

ACT TWO: *The same. Four P. M.*

ACT THREE: *The same. Eight P. M.*

NOTES ON CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES

SALLY: She is a very pretty girl of nineteen, who is too pert and gay for the sober black of her maid's uniform. The frilly little white cap and apron are more like Sally's disposition. She can be demure and proper when necessary, but she is a girl with dancing eyes and dancing feet. In Act Two she wears the same black dress, but with a white collar and belt. She also wears a white hat, white shoes, white gloves, and carries a white purse. She wears the maid's uniform again in Act Three.

PENNY: Sixteen-year-old Penny is adorably pretty. She has an appealing little voice, and a quick, light way of walking. There is an intensity about her, a zest for getting the most out of life at every moment. In Act One she wears a silk sports dress. In Acts Two and Three she wears her very best dress, and has attempted a sophisticated "hair-do." For the "Lady Macbeth scene" in Act One she wears a pastel-colored house coat that falls to her ankles.

GRAM: She is a short, stout, white-haired woman of sixty-five, extremely practical, and with an understanding heart. She wears a gingham dress in all three acts, sometimes covered by a voluminous apron. When she goes marketing in Act One she wears a hat.

CALEB: He is a stout man of forty-five. He is fond enough of his family, but is too absorbed in his business to pay much attention to them. He wears a dark business suit and hat.

MARK: He is a long-legged, rather serious young fellow of twenty-two. He wears light trousers and a slipover sweater in Acts One and Two. In Act Three he wears his suit coat.

LYDIA: She is a slim woman of forty-five, so wrapped up in her own affairs that she has very little time for her children. She

speaks in a rapid, high-pitched voice, and is somewhat of a delightful scatterbrain. In Acts One and Three she wears a smart summer outfit with suitable accessories.

JOANNA: She is a good-natured girl of sixteen, easily influenced, and completely devoted to Penny. She wears a summer sweater and skirt in Act One. For the "Lady Macbeth scene" she flings a colored beach cape over her shoulders. In Acts Two and Three she, like Penny, wears her very best dress.

KERRY: He is about nineteen, a blond, athletic young fellow whose main interests in life are tennis and Penny. In the first part of Act One he wears tennis clothes and tennis shoes. As Harrison Day, at the end of Act One, he changes to a gray suit, with a bright red, rather flowing tie, and dark shoes. He wears a black wig, cut rather long, and his hair droops on his forehead. Horn-rimmed glasses and a little black mustache complete his disguise. He speaks in a high, affected voice, quite different from his normal way of speaking. In Act Three he appears as himself, in a sports suit.

GREG: He is a nonchalant, breezy youth of Kerry's age. In Act One and part of Act Two he wears tennis clothes. At the end of Act Two and in the beginning of Act Three, he dresses as Miss Gloria Lovely, the gorgeous brunette model. He has on a wig and a great deal of make-up. He wears a modish traveling ensemble, consisting of a sports coat and a suit. A cute little hat is perched on top of his head. He carries a large purse, and wears gloves. He wears silk stockings and pumps. At the end of Act Three he wears a sports suit.

HENRI: He is a dark-haired, excitable little Frenchman of about twenty-five, who speaks with a decided accent. He wears a dark coat with a flower in his buttonhole, and striped trousers.

CLAIRE: She is a pretty, rather haughty girl of about eighteen. She wears a very smart sports outfit with appropriate accessories.

ELSIE: She is an attractive girl of the same age who speaks with a cute little lisp. She wears a smart afternoon dress with appropriate accessories.

LUCILE: She is a tall, graceful girl who speaks with a Southern accent. She wears a very attractive evening gown suitable

for a girl of Penny's age. Over the gown she wears a long evening wrap.

RED: He is a little delivery boy, sixteen or seventeen years old. He wears a dark suit and a peaked cap with "Hathaway's" lettered on the band. He is loaded down with dress boxes.

MAVIS: She is a slim, self-reliant girl of twenty, with a low, attractive voice. She wears a summer suit and hat, and carries a purse and gloves. In Act Three she may wear a simple dinner gown.

HARRISON DAY: He is an earnest young man of medium build, with neatly-combed dark hair, a small mustache, and horn-rimmed glasses which give him the look of a friendly young owl. He wears a business suit.

NORMAN PORTER: He is a man of about forty-five, the vigorous, go-getter type. His clothes are a little on the loud side, suggesting Hollywood—a checked coat and darker trousers. He may wear a hat, if desired.

PERSONAL PROPERTIES

SALLY: Dishes and silverware to set table; plate of rolls; tray, containing a glass of orange juice and a plate of toast; percolator of coffee and a glass of orange juice; glass of orange juice; empty tray; silverware, cup, saucer, and plate; glass of orange juice; cup of coffee. The following articles are on the table in Act One for Sally when Sally and Mark plan their chicken farm: sugar bowl, cup, two spoons, cream pitcher, knife, and salt and pepper shakers. Glass of water; white gloves and purse; bag, supposedly containing chicken feed; egg.

PENNY: Slim book; book, in bookcase; newspaper, on divan; lighted candle, in holder; pebbles, in bowl on bookcase; book, on table R C; tennis racquet.

CALEB: Newspaper.

GRAM: Plate of scrambled eggs; pencil and pad; market basket; plate of tea cakes; work bag, containing embroidery or quilt patch; tray, containing tea things for three.

MAVIS: Purse, gloves, and typed radio script in folder.

MARK: Magazine; fork, on table R C; array of books, seed catalogs, leaflets, and sheets of paper; pencil; car keys; brown sack, supposedly containing a chicken; water pan and feed trough for chickens.

LYDIA: Brief case, containing several typewritten speeches; purse and gloves; package, containing black purse; paper and pencil, on desk at L stage.

KERRY: Tennis racquet; large dictionary, in bookcase; small change and bills.

GREG: Tennis racquet and ball, woman's large purse, compact.

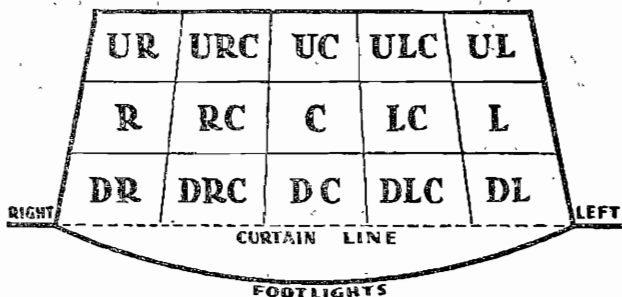
JOANNA: Small book, in bookcase.

HENRI: Large box, containing a bolt of dress material.

HARRISON: Telephone book, on desk at L stage.

RED: Load of dress, hat, and shoe boxes.

CHART OF STAGE POSITIONS

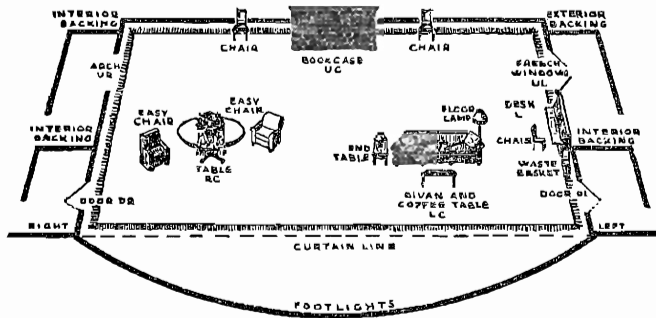


STAGE POSITIONS

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



Act One

SCENE: *The Pringle living-room is doing double duty this morning while the dining-room is being redecorated. A table at R C has been spread with a white cloth, and partially set for breakfast. On either side of the table are easy chairs. At U C is a divan, with an end table right of it and a floor lamp behind the left end. A coffee table is in front of the divan. Against the center of the L wall are a knee-hole desk, a chair, and a wastebasket. On the desk is a telephone. Against the rear wall, U C, is a bookcase, containing, among other books, a very large dictionary. On top of the bookcase is a bowl of water with colored pebbles, containing narcissuses. On either side of the bookcase are straight chairs. A door or archway U R leads upstairs; a door D R leads to the kitchen; French windows U L lead to the terrace, and a door D L leads to the front hall. A nice rug and several good-looking pictures complete the room.]*

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: *SALLY, the maid, is standing back of the table R C, setting it for breakfast. She is a very pretty girl of nineteen, who is too pert and gay for the sober black of her maid's uniform. The frilly little white cap and apron are more like SALLY'S disposition. She can be demure and proper when necessary, but she is a girl with dancing eyes and dancing feet. Her feet are dancing now as she moves about the table. She puts the cups and saucers in place, humming a merry tune as she does so. Having set three places, she seizes a plate of rolls which is already on the table, holds it high in one hand, and pirouettes to C stage. While she is dancing, NORMAN PORTER enters from the terrace U L, and stands just inside the French windows. He is about forty-five, the vigorous, go-getter type. His clothes are a little on the loud*

side, suggesting Hollywood—a checked coat and darker trousers. He may wear a hat, which he doesn't take off. While SALLY pirouettes, he claps softly. She stops, alarmed, and then sees him.]

SALLY. Norman! How did you get in here?

NORMAN. From the terrace. That was a neat little number. Do it again.

SALLY [*disturbed*]. You shouldn't have come. [*She glances DR nervously.*]

NORMAN [*coming left of the divan*]. From the terrace? The maid's callers should enter by the kitchen door, I suppose. [*He tilts his hat back on his head.*]

SALLY [*hastily*]. No, no! Gram Pringle is in the kitchen, and the others are coming downstairs for breakfast any minute.

NORMAN. I'll scam in a split second. How are things going?

SALLY. Fine. Now, please go, Norman. [*She glances DR again.*]

NORMAN [*crossing to her*]. How do you like being a maid?

SALLY [*ruefully*]. There's a whole lot more to it than I thought. But Gram Pringle is a big help, and I'm getting along.

NORMAN [*putting his arm about her*]. Atta baby! I had quite a time persuading their faithful Hulda to take a few days off so I could recommend you as the new maid, but when Norman Porter sets out to do a thing, he does it right. [*He sits confidently on the right arm of the divan.*]

SALLY. Is everything all set?

NORMAN. Listen, baby. Am I, or am I not the best publicity man in Hollywood?

SALLY. Have it your own way.

NORMAN. This setup is foolproof. I gave the author a hot tip, and he'll be here looking for you. [*He gets up, walks DL, and turns.*] Baby, I can see the headlines already. "New star discovered in kitchen! Harrison Day, author of 'Stars in Her Hair,' finds ideal girl to play in Gigantic's new picture of that name!"

SALLY. You really think I'll be back in the movies again, after all these years?

NORMAN. I made you the greatest child actress on the screen twelve years ago—little Sally Sunshine—didn't I?

SALLY. I know all you did for me. Don't think I'm not grateful for looking me up again.

NORMAN [*moving toward her again*]. Had a hard time finding you.

SALLY. When you walked into the candy store, I could hardly believe my eyes.

NORMAN [*sitting on the right arm of the divan again*]. You've worked your last in the New York candy store, baby. You're going to play the part every girl in America wants—Dimity West, in "Stars in Her Hair."

SALLY. You're sure? [*She moves over to the table R C and continues her work.*]

NORMAN. It's a pushover. We'll be on top of the world again, you and I.

SALLY. It's hard to realize.

NORMAN. This Harrison Day is a good scout, but he's already dizzy from interviewing hundreds of girls all over the country—and none of them his idea of Dimity West. So, when he sees you—

SALLY. Just how will he see me?

NORMAN. Sit tight, baby, and wait. I've got it all fixed.

SALLY. You *are* good to me, Norman.

NORMAN. Good to myself, too—[*He crosses to her.*—for I know little Sally Sunshine won't forget her old manager.

SALLY. Of course I won't!

PENNY [*offstage U R*]. All right, Dad. I'll tell her.

SALLY [*seizing NORMAN's arm*]. Hurry, hurry! They mustn't find you here! [*She pushes him U L.*]

NORMAN [*pausing U L*]. I'll be back. Good luck, baby!

[*NORMAN goes out U L. SALLY gives a little inexpressible whirl on her toes as she comes back to left of the table R C.*]

PENNY [*offstage U R, coming closer*]. I said yes, Dad.

[PENNY PRINGLE *comes in U R, and SALLY stops her dance abruptly. There is no one else quite like sixteen-year-old PENNY. It isn't just because she is adorably pretty, or that her silk sports dress is unusually becoming. Neither is it altogether because of her appealing little voice, or the quick, light way she walks. It is perhaps her zest for getting the very most out of life at every moment. There is an intensity about PENNY. What she wants, she wants terribly—for the moment. She can see or hear nothing else. Just now, she is in the throes of a great ambition. She carries a slim book in her hand as she enters.*]

PENNY [*speaking, as she enters and comes to C stage*]. Dad says he wants orange juice and two scrambled eggs and toast and coffee, and please hurry because he's late and may miss his train. [*She opens her book and reads intently to herself at C stage.*]

SALLY. Yes, Miss Penny. Your grandmother is helping me in the kitchen, because I'm not used to things yet.

[GRAM PRINGLE *comes in D R. She is a short, stout, white-haired woman of sixty-five, extremely practical. She wears aingham dress and a voluminous apron.*]

GRAM [*pausing D R*]. Did I hear you say scrambled eggs, Penny?

PENNY [*moving to in front of the divan, reading the book as she talks*]. Yes, Gram. And two slices of toast.

GRAM. You finish setting the table, Sally, and I'll tend to the eggs. [*To PENNY.*] Your mother coming down to breakfast?

PENNY [*still intent on the book*]. Yes. She's taking the early train with Dad.

GRAM. What about Mavis?

PENNY. She doesn't have to be at the broadcasting station till ten.

GRAM. And Mark?

PENNY [*moving D L, her eyes still glued to the book*]. He'll be down in a minute.

GRAM. Sakes alive, a body'd think they were living in a hotel!

[GRAM *shakes her head and goes out D R.*]

PENNY [*at last looking up from her book*]. Dad's mad because we have to eat breakfast in the living-room again, but the dining-room won't be redecorated for a whole week, and—— Sally, were you dancing when I came in?

SALLY [*hastily*]. It's just that I have new shoes, miss, and I'm breaking them in.

[SALLY *rises on her toes once or twice to prove it, and then goes out D R hastily. PENNY goes to the table R C and lays her book upon it.*]

PENNY [*standing beside the table and reading from the open book in front of her*]. "How to improve your carriage. Good carriage is essential to an actress." Let me see, now. [*She reads a moment silently, then goes to the bookcase U C, and selects a book of medium size. She reads the title.*] "Stars in Her Hair." Just the thing! [*She balances it on her head and walks back to the table, holding her head high.*]

[SALLY *comes in D R with a little tray on which are a glass of orange juice and some toast.*]

PENNY. Look, Sally! I'm acquiring a graceful carriage. It's one of the first essentials of a successful actress.

[PENNY *walks about slowly, from R C to D L. SALLY sets out the breakfast at the left side of the table, and then she glances at the book on the table.*]

SALLY [*holding it up and reading the title*]. "So You Want to Be an Actress!" Do you expect to go on the stage, Miss Penny?

PENNY [*carefully holding her head high, so as to balance the book*]. Oh, no! In the movies. [*She speaks confidently.*] I'm

going to play the part of Dimity West, from the book, "Stars in Her Hair."

SALLY [*startled*]. What! [*She drops the book on the table.*]

PENNY. Didn't you see last night's paper? [*She picks up the paper from the divan, bending awkwardly to keep from dropping the book.*] Here's his picture. The author, Mr. Harrison Day. Sort of funny-looking, with those big glasses, isn't he?

SALLY [*crossing toward PENNY*]. But—

PENNY. Haven't you read *anything* about him? The movies paid a simply fabulous sum for his book, and they're sending him all over the country—to find a girl to play the part of Dimity West, the heroine. [*She tosses the paper down on the divan.*]

SALLY. But, Miss Penny—

PENNY. Letting the author pick the girl is a good idea, don't you think? *His ideal Dimity West*. Of course, I hadn't thought much about it till I was reading the paper last night over at Joanna's house. He's expected here in Glen City tomorrow.

SALLY [*having recovered from the shock*]. Is he, really? [*She picks up the paper.*]

PENNY. And it came over me suddenly that I am to be Dimity West! I feel it—here! [*She clasps her hands to her heart, throws back her head, and the book falls to the floor.*] Oops! [*She picks it up again, puts it on her head, and walks D L, her head held high.*]

SALLY [*amused*]. Aren't you a little young? As I remember the book, Dimity was about nineteen in the very first chapter.

PENNY [*airily*]. Merely a matter of make-up! Perhaps I'll change the way I wear my hair.

SALLY. So you bought a book on how to be an actress!

PENNY [*practicing her perfect carriage, moving toward SALLY again*]. Uh-huh! Joanna and I talked it all over. She's my best girl friend.

SALLY. I see.

PENNY [*taking the book from her head and sitting on the divan*]. I expect you're not very much interested, being new here, and all. Did you know Hulda, Sally, before you came here?

SALLY [*nervously*]. She's—er—she's my cousin. [*She pretends to busy herself at the table.*]

PENNY. But Hulda is Swedish.

SALLY [*hastily*]. My—er—my grandmother is Swedish.

PENNY [*in a very grown-up manner*]. I hope you get along with us till Hulda comes back from taking care of her sick aunt, or whatever it was. You'll find my family a little peculiar—all but *me*, that is. But they're good at heart.

SALLY. I'm sure they are, miss. [*She is studying the paper.*] The paper speaks about a Mr. Norman Porter, too.

PENNY. Mr. Porter's the movie publicity agent. He's in town already, looking for possibilities, and I expect—[*She rises.*]—he'll blazon it to the world as soon as Mr. Day finds Dimity West. [*She speaks raptly.*] Finds *me*! Would you like to be a great actress, Sally? [*She puts the book on her head again.*]

SALLY [*hiding a smile*]. Well——[*She puts the paper down on the table.*]

PENNY. I expect you have never thought of it, being a maid, and all. A person has to feel something—here——[*She clutches her heart with one hand, and steadies the book on her head with the other.*] Let me read you what it says in my book. [*She picks up the other book from the table and moves to the divan.*]

[GRAM enters D R with a plate of scrambled eggs.]

GRAM [*coming to right of the table*]. If your father doesn't come downstairs soon, his breakfast will be cold. Aren't you going to eat, Penny? [*She bends over and puts the plate down on the left side of the table.*]

PENNY [*one book on her head, the other in her hand*]. Certainly, I'm going to eat. [*She crosses R C, picks up a roll, and begins to munch on it as she moves L C and looks through her*

book.] Here's the part. You listen, too, Gram. [*She reads with the fervent intensity of one who believes sincerely.*] "To the real actress, the personal life is nothing. The career is all."

GRAM [*calmly*]. Going to be an actress now, are you? I thought you and Kerry were going to win the tennis tournament.

PENNY [*taking another bite of the roll*]. Oh—tennis! That's all over for me.

GRAM. After Mavis bought you a new racquet last week?

PENNY. It is a swell racquet, but Mavis will understand. [*She reads.*] "Are you prepared to sacrifice? Are you prepared to suffer? Are you prepared to climb the dizzy heights alone? Then here's to fame—and you!" [*She takes another bite of the roll.*]

GRAM. Hmm. Very pretty.

SALLY [*to PENNY*]. I'll get you some orange juice if you wait a minute.

{SALLY goes out D R.}

PENNY [*haughtily*]. I have a soul above orange juice, my good girl.

[PENNY walks D L as her father comes in U R. CALEB PRINGLE is a stout man of forty-five. He is fond enough of his family, but is too absorbed in his business to pay much attention to them. He wears a dark business suit and carries a hat, which he tosses on the divan.]

CALEB [*grunting*]. Huh! Breakfast in the living-room again. When will your mother—

PENNY. Next week. The dining-room's going completely modern.

CALEB [*going over to the table R C*]. Huh! Next thing, my bed will be going modern, and I'll have to sleep on the roof.

GRAM. Think of the nice breeze you'll get, Caleb!

{GRAM chuckles and goes out D R.}

CALEB [*glancing about*]. Where's my newspaper?

[*SALLY comes in D R with a percolator of coffee and a glass of orange juice. The morning paper is right under CALEB'S nose on the table.*]

SALLY. Here it is, sir. [*She sets the percolator down and hands him the paper.*]

CALEB [*opening it, as he sits down left of the table*]. Huh! Another elevator strike threatened.

[*CALEB props the paper up against the sugar bowl and begins to read and eat at the same time. SALLY leaves the glass of orange juice on the table for PENNY, pours CALEB'S coffee, and goes out D R again. PENNY continues to parade around with the book on her head as she eats her breakfast.*]

PENNY [*on the spoken cue, "—strike threatened," picking up the orange juice and beginning to sip it*]. Dad, do you notice anything different about me? [*She moves to C.*]

CALEB [*not looking up, still interested in the paper*]. Huh? If it's called today, I'll have to walk up fifteen flights.

PENNY [*insistently*]. I'd like to consult you about my career, Dad.

CALEB [*still looking at his paper*]. Think they work too hard, riding up and down in a cage all day.

PENNY. Dad—

[*But PENNY is interrupted by the entrance, U R, of MARK, her brother. He is a long-legged, rather serious young fellow of twenty-two. He wears light trousers and a slipover sweater. He has a magazine in his hand.*]

MARK [*coming above the table R C*]. Good morning, Dad.

CALEB [*barely glancing up*]. Huh! Is it? Your mother ready yet?

MARK. She'll be down in a minute. [*At the sight of PENNY walking with the book on her head, he starts.*] What's the matter with you?

PENNY [*haughtily*]. Must there be something the matter with a person merely and simply because——

MARK. Skip it! [*He pulls a chair from right of the bookcase and sits above the table.*] Dad, there's an ad here I want to ask you about. For a farm. Sounds like a bargain, too. [*He pushes the magazine toward CALEB.*]

[*PENNY continues to walk rapidly about at L stage, sipping her orange juice.*]

CALEB [*deep in his paper*]. Huh? I see the steel companies are booming.

[*MAVIS comes in U R. She is a slim, self-reliant girl of twenty, with a low, attractive voice. She wears a summer suit and hat. She carries a purse, gloves, and a folder.*]

MAVIS [*coming right of the table R C*]. Morning, everybody.

CALEB [*irritably*]. What's keeping your mother?

MAVIS. She'll be right down. [*She stares at PENNY.*] Penny, what are you doing?

PENNY. I'll explain later, Mavis. Just now, I'm concentrating. [*She closes her eyes and moves slowly about at L stage.*]

MAVIS [*smiling*]. Oh!

[*MAVIS crosses L C, sits on the divan, tosses down her gloves and purse, opens the folder, and takes out a script, which she studies a moment. As MARK continues his talk with CALEB, she looks up, interested.*]

MARK [*indicating his magazine*]. Look, Dad! This is the "American Farm Magazine," and it's reliable. [*He reads.*] "Thirty-acre farm on main highway, five miles from Glen City."

CALEB [*finishing his coffee*]. Business can't boom any too fast for me. Does your mother want to ride down with me? I'll miss my train if I have to wait any longer.

MARK [*persisting*]. Thirty acres. I thought if I had the money for a down payment, and a few chickens—