

Thor, Cora, Arry,

4 MORNING'S AT SEVEN [ACT I

sic ARRY. *She is looking down the drive between the houses toward the street beyond. She seldom takes her eyes from the street.*

THOR. Then he listened to my heart. With one of those ear things. Listened quite awhile. Didn't say a word. Scared me to death. Then he began to thump me. Chest, sides, back—all over. Still didn't say a word. Took my blood pressure. Wound a little sack around my arm, pumped a little machine, watched a needle, oh, he did everything you could think of! Examination lasted over an hour. Then you know what he said?

CORA. What?

THOR. He says, "Mr. Swanson, there's not a thing in the world the matter with you. You've got a good heart, sound lungs, fine stomach—I don't know when I've seen a man of your age as well off as you are." Now what do you know about that? He's just a lousy doctor, that's all.

CORA. Did you tell him about your neck?

THOR. Of course I did! Said it wasn't anything to worry about! By God, I don't know how a doctor like that gets the reputation he has! Didn't even say I had to give up smoking!

CORA. Well, that's silly. Everybody knows you ought to give up smoking.

THOR. [*Disgusted.*] Of course they do! I smoke much too much. Look at that. [*Refers to his cigarette.*] It stands to reason when a man gets along in his late sixties he's got to cut down on things like that! Well, I'll see old Doc Brooks tomorrow. He may be old but I bet he knows enough to tell me to quit smoking.

ACT I] MORNING'S AT SEVEN 5

CORA. You didn't say anything to the doctor about my side, did you?

THOR. By God, Cora, I didn't! I forgot all about it.

CORA. It doesn't matter.

THOR. I was so damned mad. I'll speak to Doc Brooks about it tomorrow. Does it hurt you? [*He rises—crosses to CORA.*]

CORA. Just when I lean over.

THOR. Want me to rub it for you?

CORA. It'll be all right.

THOR. Well, you want to watch those things. Can't be too careful. [*He crosses to chair down right—sits.*]

CORA. [*Whispering.*] Thanks for asking to rub it, though.

ARRY. [*From up on porch.*] What's that? What did you say?

THOR. Nothing!

ARRY. Cora did. I heard her. She was whispering.

THOR. Well, she told me she didn't want me to rub her back for her.

ARRY. I don't see what there is to whisper about. When your own sister talks behind your back—

THOR. [*After slight pause.*] See anything yet, Arry? Aronetta?

ARRY. [*Still looking down the street.*] What?

THOR. See anything yet?

6 MORNING'S AT SEVEN [ACT 1

ARRY. The Davises just drove by.

THOR. Which way they going?

ARRY. Toward town.

[CORA produces a banana and begins to strip it.]

THOR. Going to have supper down there and going to a movie— No sign of Homer and Myrtle?

ARRY. Not yet. [Rises and comes to head of porch steps.] Dear, I wonder why they don't come. Wouldn't it be awful if he didn't bring her after all?

CORA. Maybe her train's late.

ARRY. My, I bet Ida's excited! [Crosses down and takes a piece of banana just as CORA is about to eat it.] I wonder if I shouldn't go over there and see if there's anything I can do. [Starts cross center.]

CORA. No, you stay away from there. Ida's got that Allen girl in to help her. If she wants us for anything she'll call us.

ARRY. Do you think we'll meet her? Myrtle, I mean? [Crosses to THOR.]

THOR. Meet her? I guess Homer won't be bringing any girl of his home without introducing her to his old aunts and uncle.

ARRY. Well, there's something awful funny about it, if you ask me. How long has Homer been engaged to Myrtle now, Cora?

CORA. It must be nearly seven years. Of course they were going together four or five years before that.

ACT 1 MORNING'S AT SEVEN 7

ARRY. Well, don't you think it's funny, Homer's going with a girl for twelve years and none of us has ever seen her? Not even his own mother?

THOR. Well, Homer's shy. He can't be rushed into anything. Anyway, he's bringing her home now.

ARRY. Well, that's just because of that movie Ida saw the other day about the old bachelor. She said she felt so sorry for that old bachelor she came right home and gave Homer a terrible talking to. Said if he didn't bring Myrtle home she'd make him eat his dinners down town for a whole month.

CORA. Oh, she didn't either, Arry!

ARRY. [To CORA.] She told me she did! [To THOR.] She said she wasn't going to have any son of hers end up the way that old bachelor in the movie did.

THOR. Why? How'd he end up?

ARRY. He shot himself. [They all giggle. ARRY crosses center and takes last piece of banana as she goes.] Anyway, Ida's right about that old bachelor business. Homer's forty years old his last birthday, remember. If he's going to marry Myrtle he'd better do it pretty soon. [Sits stump.]

THOR. Well, I don't think Ida ought to rush him. You got to let a man work out these things for himself.

CORA. Homer likes his home. He likes it here with his mother.

ARRY. Well, I just wonder what Myrtle thinks. I see myself waiting twelve years for any man.

THOR. You been waiting sixty-five years for one! [He laughs heartily.]

End

IDA & Carl #2

14 MORNING'S AT SEVEN [ACT I

ARRY. Look! Look! Stop pushing, Thor. There they go.—Stop it, Thor.

THOR. [Taking the ball by the horns.] Good afternoon, Carl.

[ARRY and CORA look up guiltily and look over at CARL with a mixture of curiosity and embarrassment. They start moving away nonchalantly from their posts.]

CARL. [Quietly.] Good afternoon, Thor.

CORA. [Crossing to head of porch steps and down.] Oh, good afternoon, Carl.

CARL. [Crossing center a bit.] Good afternoon, Cora.

ARRY. [At the head of steps. With an embarrassed laugh.] Well, I see you've got company.

CARL. Yes. Homer brought Myrtle for over Sunday.

ARRY. Oh, is that it? Isn't that nice.

[Pause. CARL stands there quietly. The others don't know what to do. THOR crosses center—ARRY comes down the steps.]

THOR. [Heartily.] Well, begins to look as if you're going to have that house occupied pretty soon, Carl. Up there on Sycamore Drive.

CARL. [Trying to force a laugh.] Yes. Yes, it does, doesn't it?

THOR. [Encouraged.] Well, I'll be glad to see it happen. I always say all you have to do is to leave young people alone and pretty soon things will take care of themselves. Guess that's about the size of it.

ACT I MORNING'S AT SEVEN 15

[Pause. CARL hasn't been listening. He has been staring past them. Now he looks up quickly, noticing the silence.]

CARL. What's that?

THOR. [Lameley.] I say I guess that's about the size of it.

CARL. Oh!

[He crosses to tree down left and puts his hand against it and then leans his head on his hand. Pause. CORA, ARRY and THOR all stand watching him a minute.]

THOR. [In an awed whisper.] By God, he's having a spell all right!

CORA. Poor Ida! I'd better telephone her he's out of the kitchen. [She goes in house right.]

ARRY. [Following up the steps.] I think we ought to 'phone Esty about it all, too. It's only fair. Goodness knows she doesn't have much in her life any more. Come on, Thor. [She stands with screen door open.]

THOR. All right. I kind of hate to leave Carl. [Phone rings.] There! There's Cora talking to her now.

[They exit into house. CARL is still leaning against the tree. IDA enters—doesn't see CARL.]

IDA. Carl! [He makes no sign.] Carl! [Still makes no sign. She sees him. Crosses to him.] Carl! What is the matter? You're not really going to have a spell, are you? Answer me, Carl! [She shakes his arm.] Now you've got to stop this. Right away! Before it gets hold of you! You've got to shake it off and come right into the house with me and see Myrtle and Homer. They want you to come in.

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16 MORNING'S AT SEVEN [ACT I

CARL. They don't want to see me.

IDA. They do, Carl! They do! Myrtle asked for you especially. She wants to meet you.

CARL. Why should she want to meet me?

IDA. Stop talking that way, Carl!

CARL. Why should anybody want to meet a failure like me!

IDA. Oh, Carl, you're just giving in to it! Now stop it! Myrtle is here. You've got to help entertain her. You know how hard it is for Homer to talk in front of strangers. You're the host, Carl. You just can't have a spell now!

CARL. [*Strightens up—faces front.*] I never asked much out of life! Never made many demands! All I wanted to be was just a dentist!

IDA. Oh, my goodness! Never mind about that now, Carl!

CARL. That's not so much to ask! Just to be a dentist. Charlie Watson went on and became a dentist! But I wasn't up to it!

IDA. Of course you were, Carl! It just didn't work out that way.

CARL. I had a lofty ideal but I never achieved it.

IDA. You're just as good as anybody else, Carl.

CARL. I failed!

[*He leans on the tree again. HOMER and MYRTLE come out onto the porch at door stage left center. HOMER speaks.*]

ACT I MORNING'S AT SEVEN 17

HOMER. This's the back yard.

IDA. [*Pushing CARL off left—they both exit.*] Oh, my goodness! They're coming out! Carl! Carl!

—MYRTLE. [*Crosses to center opening on porch.*] The back yard! Oh, isn't it lovely!

HOMER. [*At head of steps—points stage left.*] That's the garage.

MYRTLE. Oh, yes! Isn't it nice!

HOMER. [*Crosses down—then center.*] That one's my father's and mine and that one's Uncle Thor's. My father built them both.

MYRTLE. He must be terribly clever.

HOMER. He's a good builder. [*Pause.*—HOMER points right.] That's the hedge.

MYRTLE. [*Following down.*] Oh, yes.

HOMER. That's where Aunt Cora thinks she heard a man hiding a couple of times.

MYRTLE. Oh, that's right. I remember.

HOMER. She says she heard him cough once just about dark.

MYRTLE. Well, does she think it's somebody watching the house?

HOMER. I guess so. Guess she just imagined it though.

MYRTLE. Oh!

HOMER. Uncle Thor says it's probably just one of Aunt Arty's men hanging around to check up on her.

END

Myrtle, Homer, Ida #3

16 MORNING'S AT SEVEN [ACT I

CARL. They don't want to see me.
IDA. They do, Carl! They do! Myrtle asked for you especially. She wants to meet you.

CARL. Why should she want to meet me?
IDA. Stop talking that way, Carl!

CARL. Why should anybody want to meet a failure like me!

IDA. Oh, Carl, you're just giving in to it! Now stop it! Myrtle is here. You've got to help entertain her. You know how hard it is for Homer to talk in front of strangers. You're the host, Carl. You just *can't* have a spell now!

CARL. [*Strightens up—faces front.*] I never asked much out of life! Never made many demands! All I wanted to be was just a dentist!

IDA. Oh, my goodness! Never mind about that now, Carl!

CARL. That's not so much to ask! Just to be a dentist. Charlie Watson went on and became a dentist! But I wasn't up to it!

IDA. Of course you were, Carl! It just didn't work out that way.

CARL. I had a lofty ideal but I never achieved it.
IDA. You're just as good as anybody else, Carl.

CARL. I failed!

[*He leans on the tree again. HOMER and MYRTLE come out onto the porch at door stage left center. HOMER speaks.*]

ACT I] MORNING'S AT SEVEN 17

HOMER. This's the back yard.

IDA. [*Pushing CARL off left—they both exit.*] Oh, my goodness! They're coming out! Carl! Carl!

MYRTLE. [*Crosses to center opening on porch.*] The back yard! Oh, isn't it lovely!

HOMER. [*At head of steps—points stage left.*] That's the garage.

MYRTLE. Oh, yes! Isn't it nice!

HOMER. [*Crosses down—then center.*] That one's my father's and mine and that one's Uncle Thor's. My father built them both.

MYRTLE. He must be terribly clever.

HOMER. He's a good builder. [*Pause.—HOMER points right.*] That's the hedge.

MYRTLE. [*Following down.*] Oh, yes.

HOMER. That's where Aunt Cora thinks she heard a man hiding a couple of times.

MYRTLE. Oh, that's right. I remember.

HOMER. She says she heard him cough once just about dark.

MYRTLE. Well, does she think it's somebody watching the house? . . .

HOMER. I guess so. Guess she just imagined it though.

MYRTLE. Oh!

HOMER. Uncle Thor says it's probably just one of Aunt Arty's men hanging around to check up on her.

MYRTLE. Oh, maybe that's it.

HOMER. No, that's a joke.

MYRTLE. Oh, I see. [*She laughs at the joke, nervously. Sees IDA who is backing on stage left—looking off after CARL. MYRTLE steps toward her.*] Oh, there you are! Did you find Mr. Bolton?

IDA. [*A bit flustered.*] I—I guess he must have gone for a little walk.

MYRTLE. [*Looking off left.*] Oh, dear. I do so want to meet him.

IDA. [*Blanking her eyes.*] Oh, he'll be back in time for supper. He often takes a little walk about this time.

MYRTLE. [*In her best social manner.*] I love your back yard, Mrs. Bolton. It looks so cool. It's simply heavenly.

IDA. Yes, we like it very much.

MYRTLE. All the trees and everything. I bet you sit out here all the time.

IDA. We sit out here a good deal of the time.

MYRTLE. Well, I should think you would. It's simply heavenly. I don't know when I've seen a more attractive back yard.

IDA. Yes, we're very fond of it.

MYRTLE. Well, I should think so. It's so nice and wild, too. Like being in a forest.

IDA. I'm glad you like it.

MYRTLE. Well, I certainly do. It's simply—heavenly, that's all there is to it.

End

IDA. Well, it's nice of you to say so.

MYRTLE. Well, I mean it.

[*Pause. Conversation comes to an end abruptly—HOMER steps forward.*]

HOMER. [*Suddenly.*] Have mosquitoes sometimes.

IDA. Yes, there are mosquitoes sometimes.

MYRTLE. How dreadful!

IDA. But I don't think we've had quite so many this year as usual. Have you noticed that, Homer?

HOMER. [*In a loud voice.*] Not so many. That's right.

MYRTLE. Isn't it interesting the way those things go? [*To HOMER.*] One year you'll have a lot of mosquitoes and the next year not so many mosquitoes. [*To IDA.*] Or a lot of caterpillars one year and the next year not so many caterpillars. I wonder why that is.

IDA. I don't know why that is. Do you, Homer?

HOMER. No. I don't know why it is.

MYRTLE. It's very interesting, isn't it? Anyway I suppose the mosquitoes and caterpillars and all those things have some purpose. They wouldn't have been put here if they hadn't.

IDA. No, I don't suppose they would have.

HOMER. Don't suppose so.

MYRTLE. It's all a part of some big plan. Some big—plan of some kind.

[*Pause. Conversation ends abruptly.*]

Myrtle of Homer #4

20 MORNING'S AT SEVEN [ACT I

HOMER. [Suddenly.] Want to sit down?
MYRTLE. All right. [Crosses to stump.] I'll take this cozy little place over here. Won't you sit down too, Mrs. Bolton?

IDA. [Starting up steps.] No, I really should be about supper.

MYRTLE. Oh, do sit down for just a minute.

IDA. [Reluctantly sits chair left center.] Well, for just a minute then. [In silence they sit. HOMER squats down and starts cutting weeds with his pen knife. MYRTLE and IDA smile at each other. IDA on the edge of her chair. Short pause. IDA rises.] And now I really must go in. [Crosses to head of steps. HOMER rises.] I'll leave you two youngsters out here by yourselves. I guess you can attend to yourselves all right.

MYRTLE. [Rises—giggling, embarrassed.] Well—maybe we can.

IDA. You probably have a lot to talk over.

HOMER. We haven't got anything to talk over.

IDA. Of course you have! I know! I'll come out again as soon as I can— If you should see your father tell him I want to see him, Homer.

HOMER. All right, Mother. [She goes into house left.]

MYRTLE. [Sits on stump.] Oh, I think your mother's too wonderful!

HOMER. She's pretty nice, all right.

MYRTLE. She's so friendly! She's just what a mother should be!

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HOMER. She's pretty nice. [He sits in chair left center.]

MYRTLE. Oh, she's more than that. She's so—human! [Pause. HOMER sits staring before him. MYRTLE rises—crosses up of stump—looks at the house right.] And that's where your Uncle Thor and Aunt Cora live.

HOMER. And Aunt Arry.

MYRTLE. Oh, yes. She's the maiden aunt, isn't she?

HOMER. She's the old maid.

[MYRTLE gives a little nervous laugh.]

MYRTLE. How long has she been living with them?

HOMER. About forty-five to fifty years.

MYRTLE. My goodness, that must be pretty hard on your Aunt Cora.

HOMER. Why? They're sisters.

MYRTLE. [Sits on stump.] Yes, but wouldn't you think a woman would want to live alone—I mean just alone with her husband?

HOMER. Aunt Arry didn't have any other place to go when her mother died so Aunt Cora took her in.

MYRTLE. Aunt Cora must be pretty nice, I think, to share her home like that.

HOMER. Aunt Cora's nice. Not as nice as mother.

MYRTLE. Oh, of course not! Of course not. My goodness— Anyway it must be awfully pleasant for all of them to live so close together now that they're getting older. They must be a lot of company for each other.

HOMER. Then there's Aunt Esther, too.

Begin →

MYRTLE. Oh, yes, Aunt Esther.

HOMER. [*Indicating with his finger.*] She lives up the street about a block and a half.

MYRTLE. And she's married to—?

HOMER. Uncle David.

MYRTLE. That's right. He's the one who studies all the time.

HOMER. He's a very highly educated man. He doesn't like us.

MYRTLE. Why not?

HOMER. He thinks we're morons.

MYRTLE. Morons? Why does he think that?

HOMER. I don't know. He says we don't think about important enough things.

MYRTLE. Does he think about important things?

HOMER. Practically all of the time.

MYRTLE. What does he do?

HOMER. Doesn't do anything now. He used to be a college professor. But he couldn't get along with the President.

MYRTLE. Oh.

HOMER. He said the President was a moron too!

MYRTLE. Well, he doesn't think *you're* a moron, Homer?

HOMER. He thinks we all are except my father.

MYRTLE. Why, what's the matter with your father?

HOMER. He says my father has something more than the rest of us. Something that makes him question life sometimes.

MYRTLE. Oh, I see.

HOMER. But the rest of us are all morons. That's why he never comes down here and never lets any of us come up there.

MYRTLE. He sounds awfully odd to me.

HOMER. He doesn't let Aunt Esther come down either. He's afraid we'll pull her down to our level.

MYRTLE. So she never comes down.

HOMER. Just when he doesn't know it. She hasn't been down now for over a week though.

MYRTLE. [*Rises—crosses left—takes off hat and leaves it on porch.*] I'm afraid I wouldn't like your Uncle David very well.

HOMER. Oh, I think you would. He's awfully nice. I've always sort of liked Uncle David.

[*Pause. MYRTLE turns to HOMER.*]

MYRTLE. Homer—do you think your mother liked me?

HOMER. She didn't say anything—I guess so though.

MYRTLE. Dear, I hope she did. I tried to make a good impression on her. I liked her so much.

HOMER. She's pretty nice all right.

MYRTLE. It was terribly sweet of her to ask me to come. [*Pause. She takes a quick look at him. Steps toward him.*] Of course I couldn't help but wonder why it just

End

Myrtle, Homer, Arry, #5

26 MORNING'S AT SEVEN [ACT I

[MYRTLE smiles at him and suddenly takes his arm and snuggles to him.]

MYRTLE. You silly!

HOMER. [Pulling away.] They'll see you from the other house, Myrtle.

MYRTLE. Oh! [She drops his arm. Pause. Then she rises and moves over by the trees left—stands looking off.] I get awfully lonesome sometimes about this time of day. Or maybe a little later. I guess it's really not so bad at the office. I'm usually pretty busy. But when I get through and have to go to my room.—And then when it starts getting dark— [Turns to HOMER.] Often when I know you're not going to be coming down I don't bother to get myself any supper. I just go right to bed. [They laugh—embarrassed. Pause.] Sometimes I wonder how I ever happened to get stuck with that job. It doesn't seem natural. I guess when you come right down to it what a woman really wants is a home of her own.

[Pause. HOMER makes no answer. ARRY wanders out from the porch at right, casually, as though she were not aware of the others. They watch her for a time without speaking. She fans herself energetically.]

HOMER. That's Aunt ARRY. [Pause as ARRY looks off right.] She knows we're here.

MYRTLE. Oh!

[They watch her as she wanders down center pretending not to notice them. Sees a weed and makes a great fuss over picking it up. Then notices HOMER and MYRTLE, with much surprise.]

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ARRY. Oh! Oh, hello, Homer.

HOMER. Hello, Aunt ARRY.

ARRY. [Throwing the weed over the hedge.] When did you get home?

HOMER. Little while ago.

ARRY. Well! [Pause. ARRY waits expectantly. As there is no move toward an introduction she bows politely to MYRTLE.] How do you do?

MYRTLE. How do you do?

ARRY. It has been a pleasant day, hasn't it?

MYRTLE. Hasn't it?

[Pause. Nothing more to say.]

HOMER. [Suddenly—rising.] This's Myrtle Brown.

ARRY. Oh! Oh, how do you do, Myrtle?

MYRTLE. How do you do?

ARRY. I'm Homer's aunt.

MYRTLE. Well, I guess I know that. You're Aunt Arry. You're the one that sent me that handsome linen luncheon set for my hope chest.

ARRY. [Confused.] Oh, my goodness, that wasn't anything.

MYRTLE. [Crossing center.] Well, I just guess it was something! That's about the most handsome linen luncheon set I've ever seen.

ARRY. [Laughs, embarrassed.] Did you really like it?

—Begin

MYRTLE. I certainly did. You'd be surprised how often I take that luncheon set out and look at it. Sometimes those flowers on the napkins seem to me to be absolutely real.

ARRY. [*Flattered—turns away a bit, laughs.*] They're appliqued, you know.

MYRTLE. I know they are. You must have used your eyes altogether too much doing that.

ARRY. Oh, my goodness! I don't have very much to do. I'm working on a quilt. It's appliqued, too. Perhaps you'd like to see it while you're here.

MYRTLE. I'd simply love to.

HOMER. [*Suddenly.*] Myrtle knits.

[*CORA is seen passing the screen door, house right.*]

ARRY. [*Bowing pleasantly.*] Oh?—Haven't seen your father yet, have you, Homer?

[*CORA listens in door.*]

HOMER. No.

ARRY. [*Crossing to steps.*] Dear, I hope he's going to be all right.

[*HOMER looks up suddenly, startled. At the same moment CORA sticks her head out of the door.*]

CORA. [*Hissing.*] Aity!

ARRY. [*Crossing to CORA.*] Oh, all right, Cora. [*Sweetly to others as she starts in.*] I guess I have to help with supper. I just came out for a breath of air.

HOMER. [*Rising abruptly.*] Where is Father?

ARRY. [*Crossing down the steps again.*] I don't know, Homer. He and Ida were out there in the yard when you came out. I just happened to notice them from the house. He must have gone off through the hedge.

[*HOMER turns suddenly and goes off to the house. MYRTLE watches him, startled.*]

MYRTLE. [*Crossing after him a bit.*] Well, Homer, what—?

HOMER. [*At the door.*] Mother!

[*MYRTLE turns back to ARRY who is nearly in the house again.*]

MYRTLE. Mr. Bolton isn't ill, is he?

ARRY. [*Crossing center on porch. Confidentially.*] Well, no, he isn't ill exactly but you see sometimes he has these awful sp—

[*This time CORA comes right out onto the back porch.*]

CORA. Aity!

ARRY. Oh, my goodness!

CORA. It's time to set table.

ARRY. [*Giving CORA a cross look—turns back to MYRTLE sweetly.*] Well, I'm very glad to have met you, Myrtle. Perhaps we'll see you after supper.

MYRTLE. I hope so.

[*ARRY bows politely to MYRTLE and starts in door.*]

ARRY. [*In an undertone to CORA.*] I wasn't going to tell her a thing!

End

Esther, Ida, David, Thor, Cora #6

50 MORNING'S AT SEVEN [ACT I

THOR. I've been in the house. David. She might have slipped in when—

CORA. She was only going to stay a second, David. She was just going home—

[ESTHER comes out of the house at left, hurriedly. The others freeze. DAVID stands center, watching ESTHER. She comes down left center, followed by IDA and CARL. HOMER and MYRTLE stay on the porch left.]

ESTHER. [Nervously.] Why, David, what are you doing here? I was just coming home. I really was. Myrtle is here, you see, and I just ran down to—

IDA. She's only been here a minute—

ESTHER. You see, Ida phoned me Carl was having a spell—

CARL. That's right, David. I had a spell.

ESTHER. But I'm all ready to go now. Come on, let's—

[DAVID has not moved. ESTHER stops suddenly and watches him. He is looking at her. The others watch in silence. Suddenly he looks at the group containing THOR, CORA and ARRY. They shrink back as he eyes them. He looks them over slowly, from head to foot, giving each a thorough inspection. Then he looks at the other group. He gives them the same individual, critical inspection. He stands a moment, throwing his head back in a puzzled way. He speaks to himself as though he were trying to reason something out.]

DAVID. [Softly.] "And God created man in his own image; male and female created he them." [After a

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moment's thought, he gives a sudden shrug, as though the entire problem were beyond him. He turns suddenly to THOR, as though seeing him for the first time.] Good evening, Theodore.

THOR. [Taken aback.] Good—evening, David—

DAVID. [Bowing pleasantly.] Cora—Aaronetta—

CORA. [As DAVID turns to the others.] Good—evening, David—

DAVID. [More genuine.] Good evening, Carl.

CARL. [Eagerly.] Good evening, David.

DAVID. Ida—Homer—. [He hesitates before MYRTLE.]

HOMER. This's Myrtle Brown.

DAVID. Ah! This is Myrtle Brown. Good evening, Myrtle.

MYRTLE. Good evening. I'm very pleased to—

[He turns to ESTHER. Formally as to the others.]

DAVID. Good evening, Esther.

ESTHER. [Bewildered.] Good evening, David—

[He bows to her formally and then surveys them all, smiling.]

DAVID. Well, well, here we all are together again. Our own little circle. I must say, you all seem to me very much the same as you always did.

[He beams on them. There is a rustling in the groups. They look at one another, bewildered.]

Begin →

CORA. That's—very nice of you, David.

DAVID. Yes, just about the same. A little older, perhaps, Grayer. Praises all a trifle slower, probably. But I can still see the same bright, intelligent expressions on your faces that I remember so well. [*Slight pause as he beams on them.*] And now before I leave you there is just one thing more. You have all been in my home at one time or another. You all know how the entry hall leads into the living room and so is the entrance to the lower floor. And from the entry hall the staircase leads to the second floor. Well, now since Esther has decided it will be better for us to live apart from each other—

ESTHER. [*Steps toward him.*] David—

—DAVID. From now on, I will be living on the lower floor; Esther on the second.

ARRY. What's he mean, Esty?

ESTHER. [*Crossing to her.*] Why, you know, David. He didn't mean—

IDA. [*Following ESTY.*] What's he mean?

CORA. He told Esty if she came down here—*Ad lib.* again she'd have to live on the second floor.

ARRY. He what? He did not.

IDA. I don't believe it.

CORA. S'fact!

THOR. By God, what d'ye know about that!

—DAVID. [*Raising his hand for silence.*] Esther is a free

agent now. She has a perfect right to come and go as she pleases and to have anyone she wishes visit her. Doubtless you will be there a great deal. Now none of you would come into the lower floor, of course. But may I suggest that as you pass through the entry hall and on up the stairs to be as—silent as possible?

[*Pause.*]

ESTHER. But David, you don't really mean it?

DAVID. [*Surprised.*] That was our understanding, was it not, Esther? It seems to me it was.

ESTHER. But, David, these are my sisters! They're all I have! I've got to have something in my life!

DAVID. And now you have your sisters. Who am I to deprive you of that?

ARRY. That's what I say! Who are you to—

CORA. Arry!

ARRY. I don't care! He hasn't got any right to treat Esty like that!

IDA. I don't think he has either!

ARRY. Esty ought to be able to come down and see us any time she wants to.

CORA. After all, we are her sisters, David. It's only natural.

ESTHER. [*Encouraged.*] We don't do any harm, David. We just talk. I have a good time with my sisters. I don't care how ignorant they are!

End

David, Arry, Esther, Ida, Cora, Thor

#7

CORA. That's—very nice of you, David.

DAVID. Yes, just about the same. A little older, perhaps. Crayer. Pulses all a trifle slower, probably. But I can still see the same bright, intelligent expressions on your faces that I remember so well. [*Slight pause as he beams on them.*] And now before I leave you there is just one thing more. You have all been in my home at one time or another. You all know how the entry hall leads into the living room and so is the entrance to the lower floor. And from the entry hall the staircase leads to the second floor. Well, now since Esther has decided it will be better for us to live apart from each other—

ESTHER. [*Steps toward him.*] David—

DAVID. From now on, I will be living on the lower floor; Esther on the second.

ARRY. What's he mean, Esty?

ESTHER. [*Crossing to her.*] Why, you know, David. He didn't mean—

IDA. [*Following ESTY.*] What's he mean?

CORA. He told Esty if she came down here again she'd have to live on the second floor.

ARRY. He what? He did not.

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[*Pause.*]

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CORA. After all, we are her sisters, David. It's only natural.

ESTHER. [*Encouraged.*] We don't do any harm, David. We just talk. I have a good time with my sisters. I don't care how ignorant they are!

ARRY. Of course she don't. Give it to him, Esty!

IDA. We're behind you, Esty.

ESTHER. I want to be able to come down here any time I want to!

ARRY. That's the ticket, Esty!

ESTHER. And I don't want to live on the second floor either!

IDA. 'Course she don't!

ARRY. Good for you, Esty!

CORA. She's got to have something in her life!

ARRY. Give it to him, Esty!

[*They are all clustered around ESTHER, facing DAVID, excited and angry. Sudden pause.*]

DAVID. [*Bowing courteously.*] Goodnight, Cora.

CORA. [*Taken aback.*] Well—goodnight—David—

DAVID. [*Bowing.*] Theodore—Ida—Aaronetta—

THOR. Goodnight, David—

[*They all watch him, bewildered. He turns to CARL.*]

DAVID. Goodnight, Carl.—By the way, Carl, in the houses you have built you have also installed the plumbing, haven't you?

CARL. [*Crossing to DAVID.*] Why, yes, I have, David.

DAVID. I am turning the little closet near my kitchen into a bathroom. Do you suppose you could do it?

CARL. Why, I guess so—

DAVID. Would it be much of an undertaking?

CARL. That all depends on the bathroom upstairs. Is it right over the closet?

DAVID. Ah, that I'm afraid I wouldn't know.

CARL. If it is it would be easy.

DAVID. Perhaps you would come up and look at it in the morning.

CARL. Well, I'd be glad to, David.

DAVID. Thank you, Carl. Goodnight, Carl.—Homer—Myrtle—

[*DAVID has started on. He stops, turns.*]

DAVID. [*Looks back.*] You won't forget my little reminder, will you? About being quiet when you visit Esther? I say it out of the utmost kindness. You know, of course, without my telling you, how much you all depress me?

[*He looks from one to another, smiling.*] Yes.—Well, goodnight, then. Goodnight. [*He bows and exits between houses.*]

THOR. By God! David can be awful nice when he wants to be. [*Crosses to chair right—sits.*]

ESTHER. [*Crossing to the edge of porch—sitting.*] Oh, dear. I never should have come down here. It's all my fault.