

Side 1: Klein, Teddy, Brophy and Rev. Harper

(Teddy has reached first landing on stairs where he stops and draws an imaginary sword.)

TEDDY. *(Shouting.)* CHARGE! *(He charges up stairs and exits off balcony. The others pay no attention to this.)*

BROPHY. Oh, she's better now. A little weak still—

ABBY. *(Starting toward kitchen.)* I'm going to get you some beef broth to take to her.

BROPHY. Don't bother, Miss Abby! You've done so much for her already.

ABBY. *(At kitchen door.)* We made it this morning. Sister Martha is taking some to poor Mr. Benitzky right now. I won't be a minute. Sit down and be comfortable, all of you. *(She exits into kitchen.)*

(Harper sits again. Brophy crosses to table and addresses the other two.)

BROPHY. She shouldn't go to all that trouble.

KLEIN. Listen, try to stop her or her sister from doing something nice—and for nothing! They don't even care how you vote. *(He sits on window seat.)*

HARPER. When I received my call to Brooklyn and moved next door my wife wasn't well. When she died and for months before—well, if I know what pure kindness and absolute generosity are, it's because I've known the Brewster sisters.

(At this moment Teddy steps out on balcony and blows a bugle call. They all look.)

BROPHY. *(Stepping U.S.... Remonstrating.)* Colonel, you promised not to do that.

TEDDY. But I have to call a Cabinet meeting to get the release of those supplies. *(Teddy wheels and exits.)*

BROPHY. He used to do that in the middle of the night. The neighbors raised Cain with us. They're a little afraid of him, anyway. HARPER. Oh, he's quite harmless.

KLEIN. Suppose he does think he's Teddy Roosevelt. There's a lot worse people he could think he was.

BROPHY. Damn shame—a nice family like this hatching a cuckoo.

KLEIN. Well, his father—the old girl's brother, was some sort of a genius, wasn't he? And their father—Teddy's grandfather—seems to me I've heard he was a little crazy too.

BROPHY. Yeah—he was crazy like a fox. He made a million dollars.

HARPER. Really? Here in Brooklyn?

BROPHY. Yeah. Patent medicine. He was a kind of a quack of some sort. Old Sergeant Edwards remembers him. He used the house here as a sort of a clinic—tried 'em out on people.

KLEIN. Yeah, I hear he used to make mistakes occasionally, too.

BROPHY. The department never bothered him much because he was pretty useful on autopsies sometimes. Especially poison cases. KLEIN. Well, whatever he did he left his daughters fixed for life.

Thank God for that—

BROPHY. Not that they ever spend any of it on themselves.

HARPER. Yes, I'm well acquainted with their charities.

KLEIN. You don't know a tenth of it. When I was with the Missing Persons Bureau I was trying to trace an old man that we never did find *(Rises.)*—do you know there's a renting agency that's got this house down on its list for furnished rooms? They don't rent rooms—but you can bet that anybody who comes here lookin' for a room goes away with a good meal and probably a few dollars in their kick. BROPHY. It's just their way of digging up people to do some good to.

Side 2: Martha, Abby and Mortimer

MORTIMER. (*Trying to be calm.*) Listen, darlings, I'm frightfully sorry, but I've got some shocking news for you. (*The aunts stop work and look at him with some interest.*) Now we've all got to try and keep our heads. You know we've sort of humored Teddy because we thought he was harmless.

MARTHA. Why he is harmless!

MORTIMER. He was harmless. That's why he has to go to Happy Dale. Why he has to be confined.

ABBY. (*Stepping to Mortimer.*) Mortimer, why have you suddenly turned against Teddy?—your own brother?

MORTIMER. You've got to know sometime. It might as well be now, Teddy's—killed a man!

MARTHA. Nonsense, dear.

(*Mortimer rises and points to window seat.*)

MORTIMER. There's a body in the window seat!

ABBY. Yes, dear, we know.

(*Mortimer "takes" as Abby and Martha busy themselves again at table.*)

MORTIMER. You know?

MARTHA. Of course, dear, but it has nothing to do with Teddy. (*Gets tray from sideboard—arranges silver and plates on table: three places, U. L. and R.*)

ABBY. Now, Mortimer, just forget about it—forget you ever saw the gentleman.

MORTIMER. Forget?

ABBY. We never dreamed you'd peek.

MORTIMER. But who is he?
ABBY. His name's Hoskins—Adam Hoskins. That's really all I know about him—except that he's a Methodist.
MORTIMER. That's all you know about him? Well, what's he doing here? What happened to him?
MARTHA. He died.

MORTIMER. Aunt Martha, men don't just get into window seats and die.

ABBY. (*Silly boy.*) No, he died first.

MORTIMER. Well, how?

ABBY. Oh, Mortimer, don't be so inquisitive. The gentleman died because he drank some wine with poison in it.

MORTIMER. How did the poison get in the wine?

MARTHA. Well, we put it in wine because it's less noticeable—when it's in tea it has a distinct odor.

MORTIMER. You put it in the wine?

ABBY. Yes. And I put Mr. Hoskins in the window seat because

Dr. Harper was coming.

MORTIMER. So you knew what you'd done! You didn't want

Dr. Harper to see the body!

ABBY. Well, not at tea—that wouldn't have been very nice. Now, Mortimer, you know the whole thing, just forget about it. I do think Martha and I have the right to our own little secrets.

Side 3: Mortimer, Abby and Martha

MORTIMER. All right—now—who was the first one?

ABBY. (*Crossing from above table to Mortimer*) Mr. Midgeley. He was a Baptist.

MARTHA. Of course, I still think we can't claim full credit for him because he just died.

ABBY. Martha means without any help from us. You see, Mr. Midgeley came here looking for a room—

MARTHA. It was right after you moved to New York.

ABBY. —And it didn't seem right for that lovely room to be going to waste when there were so many people who needed it—

MARTHA. —He was such a lonely old man...

ABBY. All his kith and kin were dead and it left him so forlorn and unhappy—

MARTHA. —We felt so sorry for him.

ABBY. And then when his heart attack came—and he sat dead in that chair (*Pointing to armchair*) looking so peaceful—remember, Martha—we made up our minds then and there that if we could help other lonely old men to that same peace—we would!

MORTIMER. (*All ears*) He dropped dead right in that chair! How awful for you!

MARTHA. Oh, no, dear. Why, it was rather like old times. Your grandfather always used to have a cadaver or two around the house. You see, Teddy had been digging in Panama and he thought Mr. Midgeley was a Yellow Fever victim.

ABBY. That meant he had to be buried immediately.

MARTHA. So we all took him down to Panama and put him in the lock. (*She rises, puts her arm around Abby*) Now that's why we told you not to worry about it because we know exactly what's to be done.

MORTIMER. And that's how all this started—that man walking in here and dropping dead.

ABBY. Of course, we realized we couldn't depend on that happening again. So—

MARTHA. (*Crosses to Mortimer*) You remember those jars of poison that have been up on the shelves in Grandfather's laboratory all these years—?

ABBY. You know your Aunt Martha's knack for mixing things. You've eaten enough of her piccalilli.

MARTHA. Well, dear, for a gallon of elderberry wine I take one teaspoonful of arsenic, then add a half teaspoonful of strychnine and then just a pinch of cyanide.

MORTIMER. (*Appraisingly*) Should have quite a kick.

ABBY. Yes! As a matter of fact one of our gentlemen found time to say "How delicious!"

MARTHA. (*Stepping U.S.*) Well, I'll have to get things started in the kitchen.

ABBY. (*To Mortimer*) I wish you could stay for dinner.

MARTHA. I'm trying out a new recipe.

MORTIMER. I couldn't eat a thing.

Side 4: Teddy, Jonathan, Einstein, Martha and Abby

TEDDY. (*Descending stairs.*) I found it! I found it!

JONATHAN. What did you find, Teddy?

TEDDY. The story of my life—my biography. (*He crosses above to L. of Einstein.*) Here's the picture I was telling you about, General. (*He lays open book on table showing picture to Einstein.*) Here we are, both of us. "President Roosevelt and General Goethals at Culebra Cut." That's me, General, and that's you.

(*Einstein looks at picture.*)

EINSTEIN. My, how I've changed.

(*Teddy looks at Einstein, a little puzzled, but makes adjustment.*)

TEDDY. Well, you see that picture hasn't been taken yet. We haven't even started work on Culebra Cut. We're still digging locks. And now, General, we will both go to Panama and inspect the new lock.

(*Hands him topoe.*)

ABBY. No, Teddy—not to Panama.

EINSTEIN. We go some other time. Panama's a long way off.

TEDDY. Nonsense, it's just down in the cellar.

JONATHAN. The cellar?

MARTHA. We let him dig the Panama Canal in the cellar.

TEDDY. (*Severely.*) General Goethals, as President of the United States, Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy and the man who gave you this job, I demand that you accompany me on the inspection of the new lock.

JONATHAN. Teddy! I think it's time you went to bed.

TEDDY. I beg your pardon! (*He crosses above to L. of Jonathan, putting on his pince-nez as he crosses.*) Who are you?

JONATHAN. I'm Woodrow Wilson. Go to bed.

TEDDY. No you're not Wilson. But your face is familiar. Let me see—You're not anyone I know now. Perhaps later—On my hunting trip to Africa—yes, you look like someone I might meet in the jungle.

(*Jonathan stiffens. Abby crosses in front of Teddy, getting between him and Jonathan.*)

ABBY. It's your brother, Jonathan, dear.

MARTHA. (*Rising.*) He's had his face changed.

TEDDY. So that's it—a nature faker!

ABBY. And perhaps you had better go to bed, Teddy—Jonathan and his friend have to go back to their hotel.

JONATHAN. (*Rising.*) General Goethals, (*To Einstein.*) inspect the canal. (*He crosses to U. C.*)

EINSTEIN. (*Rising.*) All right, Mr. President. We go to Panama.

TEDDY. Bully! Bully! (*He crosses to cellar door, opens it.*) Follow me, General. (*Einstein goes up to L. of Teddy. Teddy taps solar topoe in Einstein's hand, then taps his own head.*) It's down south you know. (*He exits downstairs.*)

Side 5: Einstein, Jonathan, Abby and Martha

(They exit through arch. Jonathan comes to foot of stairs.)

EINSTEIN. Chonny, when I go down in the cellar, what do you think I find?

JONATHAN. What?

EINSTEIN. The Panama Canal.

JONATHAN. *(Disgusted, crossing to C.)* The Panama Canal.

EINSTEIN. It just fits Mr. Spenalzo. It's a hole Teddy dug. Six feet long and four feet wide.

JONATHAN. *(Gets the idea. Opens cellar door and looks down.)*

Down there!

EINSTEIN. You'd think they knew we were bringing Mr. Spenalzo along. That's hospitality.

JONATHAN. *(Closing cellar door.)* Rather a good joke on my aunts—their living in a house with a body buried in the cellar.

EINSTEIN. How do we get him in?

JONATHAN. *(Drops D.S.)* Yes. We can't just walk him through the door. *(He sees window in L. wall.)* We'll drive the car up between the

house and the cemetery—then when they've gone to bed, we'll bring Mr. Spenalzo in through the window.

EINSTEIN. *(Taking out bottle flask.)* Bed! Just think, we've got a bed tonight! *(He starts swigging.)*

JONATHAN. *(Grabbing his arm.)* Easy, Doctor. Remember you're operating tomorrow. And this time you'd better be sober.

EINSTEIN. I fix you up beautiful.

JONATHAN. And if you don't—*(Gives Einstein shove to door.)*

ABBY. *(She and Martha enter on balcony.)* Jonathan! Your room is ready.

JONATHAN. Then you can go to bed. We're moving the car up behind the house.

MARTHA. It's all right where it is—until morning.

JONATHAN. *(Einstein has opened door.)* I don't want to leave it in the street—that might be against the law. *(He exits.)*

(Einstein follows him out, closing door. Abby and Martha start downstairs and reach below table.)

MARTHA. Abby, what are we going to do?

ABBY. Well, we're not going to let them stay more than one night in this house for one thing. What would the neighbors think? People coming in here with one face and going out with another. *(She has reached table D.S. Martha is at her R.)*

MARTHA. What are we going to do about Mr. Hoskins?

ABBY. *(Crosses to window seat. Martha follows.)* Oh, Mr. Hoskins. It can't be very comfortable for him in there. And he's been so patient, the poor dear. Well, I think Teddy had better get Mr. Hoskins downstairs right away.

MARTHA. *(Adamant.)* Abby—I will not invite Jonathan to the funeral services.

ABBY. Oh, no. We'll wait until they've gone to bed and then come down and hold the services.

Side 6: Elaine and Mortimer

ELAINE. Mortimer! What's going on in this house?

MORTIMER. (*Suspicious.*) What do you mean—what's going on in this house?

ELAINE. You were supposed to take me to dinner and the theatre tonight—you called it off. You asked me to marry you—I said I would—and five minutes later you threw me out of the house. Tonight, just after your brother tries to strangle me, you want to chase me home. Now, listen, Mr. Brewster—before I go home, I want to know where I stand. Do you love me?

MORTIMER. (*Taking her hands.*) I love you very much, Elaine.

In fact I love you so much I can't marry you.

ELAINE. Have you suddenly gone crazy?

MORTIMER. I don't think so but it's just a matter of time. (*They both sit on sofa as Mortimer begins to explain.*) You see, insanity runs in my family. (*He looks upstairs and toward kitchen.*) It practically gallops. That's why I can't marry you, dear.

ELAINE. Now wait a minute, you've got to do better than that.

MORTIMER. No, dear—there's a strange taint in the Brewster blood. If you really knew my family it's—well—it's what you'd expect if Strindberg had written *Hellzapoppin*.

ELAINE. Now just because Teddy is a little—

MORTIMER. No, it goes way back. The first Brewster—the one who came over on the Mayflower. You know in those days the Indians used to scalp the settlers—he used to scalp the Indians.

ELAINE. Mortimer, that's ancient history.

MORTIMER. No, the whole family... (*He rises and points to a picture of Grandfather over the sideboard.*) Take my grandfather—he tried his parent medicines out on dead people to be sure he wouldn't kill them.

ELAINE. He wasn't so crazy. He made a million dollars.

MORTIMER. And then there's Jonathan. You just said he was a maniac—he tried to kill you.

ELAINE. (*Rises, crosses to him.*) But he's your brother, not you. I'm in love with you.

MORTIMER. And there's Teddy, too. You *know* Teddy. He thinks he's Roosevelt. No, dear, no Brewster should marry. I realize now that if I'd met my father in time I'd have stopped him.

ELAINE. Now, darling, all this doesn't prove you're crazy. Look at your aunts—they're Brewsters, aren't they?—and the sanest, sweetest people I've ever known.

(*Mortimer crosses above table to window seat, speaking as he goes.*)

MORTIMER. Well, even they have their peculiarities.

ELAINE. (*Turning and drifting R.*) Yes, but what lovely peculiarities!—Kindness, generosity—human sympathy—

(*Mortimer sees Elaine's back is to him. He lifts window seat to take a peek, and sees Mr. Spauldo instead of Mr. Hostens. He puts window seat down again and staggers to table, and leans on it.*)

MORTIMER. (*To himself.*) There's another one!

ELAINE. (*Turning to Mortimer.*) Oh, Mortimer, there are plenty of others. You can't tell me anything about your aunts.

MORTIMER. I'm not going to. (*Crossing to her.*) Look, Elaine, you've got to go home. Something very important has just come up.

ELAINE. Up, from where? We're here alone together.

MORTIMER. I know I'm acting irrationally, but just put it down to the fact that I'm a mad Brewster.

ELAINE. If you think you're going to get out of this by pretending you're insane—you're crazy. Maybe you're not going to marry me, but I'm going to marry you. I love you, you dope.

MORTIMER. (*Urging her to R door.*) Well, if you love me will you get the hell out of here!

ELAINE. Well, at least take me home, won't you? I'm afraid.

MORTIMER. Afraid! A little walk through the cemetery?

(*Elaine crosses to door, then changing tactics, turns to Mortimer.*)

ELAINE. Mortimer, will you kiss me good night?

MORTIMER. (*Holding out arms.*) Of course, dear. (*What Mortimer plans to be a desultory peck, Elaine turns into a production number. He comes out of it with no less of poise.*) Good night, dear. I'll call you up in a day or two.

ELAINE. (*She walks to R door in a cold fury, opens it and turns to Mortimer.*) You—you critic! (*She slams door after her.*)