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*An
Early Bird*

by

Walter Ben Hare



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154 West Randolph Street

CHICAGO

AN EARLY BIRD

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BY

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“YOU see that door? On the outside it says Pull, but on my side it says Push! Get the idea? I had no pull to make my way, only push! And it made me a millionaire. Understand? Push!”—*The Wisdom of Cyrus B. Kilbuck.*



RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED TO
MISS ANNABEL LAWRENCE

THE AUTHOR OF
“Ruth”—a Biblical Drama
“The Carpenter’s Daughter,” etc.

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AN EARLY BIRD

FOR SEVEN MEN AND SEVEN WOMEN

CHARACTERS REPRESENTED.

CYRUS B. KILBUCK. *President of the P. D. Q. Railroad*
TONY KILBUCK. *His Son, Just Out of College*
MR. BARNABY BIRD. *The Boss of Flagg County*
MR. MULBERRY. *Chief Attorney for the Road*
BRUCE FERGUSON. *A Clerk in the General Offices*
ARTIE *An Office Boy*
MR. PERRY ALLEN. *A Young Gentleman Farmer*
JESSAMINE LEE *The Girl*
MRS. VAN DYNE. *An Agent for the P. D. Q. Railroad*
IMOGENE McCARTY *A Stenographer*
MRS. BEAVERS. *From Flagg Corners*
ROSA BELLA BEAVERS. *The Belle of Flagg Corners*
MRS. PERRY ALLEN. *Jessamine's Chum*
DILLY *Mrs. Beavers' Hired Girl*

NOTE.—The characters of Artie and Mr. Perry Allen may be assumed by the same person: and Imogene and Mrs. Beavers, thus reducing the cast to 6 male and 6 female characters.

ACT I. Private Office of Cyrus B. Kilbuck. A morning in March. The Bird in the Tree.

ACT II. Sitting-room of Mrs. Beavers' Boarding House, Flagg Corners. A morning in July. The Bird in the Bush.

ACT III. Same as Act II. The afternoon of the same day. The Bird in the Hand.

TIME OF PLAYING—*About Two Hours and Thirty Minutes.*

THE STORY OF THE PLAY.

An Early Bird is a modern American comedy built along business lines. Its hero, the light-hearted, merry college boy, Tony Kilbuck, is being trained in a systematic manner by his father, the President of the P. D. Q. Railroad. The father thinks this training will result in making Tony a wonderful business man, but "the best laid plans of mice and men gang aft agley," and Tony becomes involved in debt and is expelled from college. The father decides that he has been too lenient with him and decides that in the future he must shift for himself. Tony, nothing daunted, decides that he will show his father that he can be a success without paternal aid and starts out with unlimited nerve and a light heart to carve his way to fame and fortune and the hand of the girl, Jessamine Lee.

The P. D. Q. Railroad plans an extension across Flagg County and there are two routes possible, the River Road and the North Road. Both are owned by a pompous old flirt, one Barnaby Bird. Tony gets inside information that the River Road is to be chosen and, with the help of the faithful Jessamine, buys that road from the prudent Mr. Bird, who knows that the extension is going in over the North Road. Mr. Bird has obtained his information from Bruce Ferguson, a clerk in the P. D. Q. offices, who brings him the approved blue-print plans of the extension over the River Road. Poor Tony, seeing these plans, and having spent his all on the River Road, is forced to admit his failure as a regular business man and goes back to his old job, that netted him \$7.50 in four months, selling life-insurance.

Mrs. Van Dyne is the purchasing agent for the Road,

and Bird, mistaking Jessamine for Mrs. Van Dyne, is forced to believe that Bruce Ferguson deceived him and that the P. D. Q. is going to buy the River Road and not the North Road. In desperation he offers Tony his North Road in exchange for the latter's River Road and \$1,000 to boot. The exchange is effected just in time as Mrs. Van Dyne and the President of the Road arrive in Flagg Corners to open negotiations for the purchase of the North Road, now owned by the effervescent Tony. Tony sells his property to his father for half a million dollars and is a regular business man at last.

Comedy features are introduced throughout the play by the coquettish Imogene, stenographer for the Road, a fresh office boy, a country belle, Miss Rosa Bella Beavers, and her mother, the landlady of a Flagg Corners hotel, and last, but by no means least, Dilly, the hired girl, who is corresponding secretary of the Young Ladies' Cold Water Society and is shocked beyond measure by the falling from grace of the impeccable Mr. Bird.

This comedy is bright, new and strictly up-to-date. It contains no objectionable features and is highly recommended for college and high-school performances, as well as for general amateur production.

COSTUMES.

Modern costumes are worn throughout the play. Those in Act I should be suitable for March, those in Acts II and III suitable for July. Mr. Bird, Mrs. Beavers and Rosa Bella should wear somewhat exaggerated country clothes. Imogene and Dilly may dress their parts as caricatures of city and country styles.

LIST OF PROPERTIES.

ACT I.

Elegant office furnishings.

Neat dark carpet.

Oil paintings of distinguished-looking men.

Large desk. On it are papers, blotters, letters, vase, picture of Tony in silver frame. Waste basket.

Desk chair.

Small typewriter-stand and chair.

Typewriter.

Desk and chair. (Standing desk and high stool preferred.)

Two large leather chairs.

Coat-rack.

Screen.

Water cooler.

Colored newspaper supplement for ARTIE.

Three pieces chewing gum for ARTIE.

Two calling cards for ARTIE.

Roll of blue-print drawings for IMOGENE.

Bunch of pink roses for JESSAMINE.

Small satchel for MRS. VAN DYNE.

Telegram in envelope for ARTIE.

Documents (the Greer papers) for IMOGENE.

Check book for KILBUCK.

Check book for MR. MULBERRY.

ACT II.

Old-fashioned horse-hair furniture.

Dark carpet.

Organ or old piano.

Fireplace (not used), fender.

Mantel with ornaments.

Large round table, fancy cover, ornaments.

Old-fashioned sofa.

Rocking chair.

Arm chair.

Four parlor chairs. Tidies on all chairs.

Fancy lamp.

Small desk with book for register.

Pail of water, rags, cake polish for DILLY.

Parasol and bundles for ROSA.

Watch for Mrs. Allen.

Check book for JESSAMINE.

Newspaper and check book for BIRD.

ACT III.

Cigar for PERRY.

Coin for JESSAMINE.

Two bottles of champagne (quart size) for BIRD.

Basket for DILLY.

SYNOPSIS

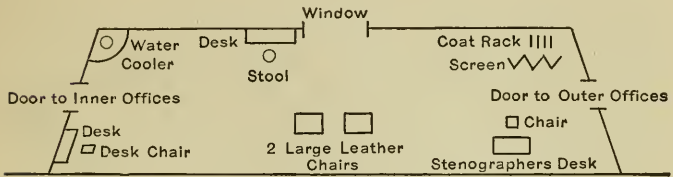
ACT I. The private office of Cyrus B. Kilbuck on a morning in March. Cupid gets busy in a railroad office. Jessamine visits the president of the road. "I've got it all planned out, by the time my boy is 40, he'll be the president of the road!" Barnaby Bird, from Flagg Corners, a wise old Bird. The insulted office boy. Bad news from college. "Turn on the lights, hang out the American flag, kill the fatted calf and let the band play—the Prodigal has returned!" "I was in the Freshman Class four years and I was just beginning to enjoy the place." Father and son. A stormy interview. "Get out, earn your own living—and make good!" Exit Tony.

ACT II. The sitting room in Mrs. Beavers' boardinghouse, Flagg Corners. A morning in July. A lazy

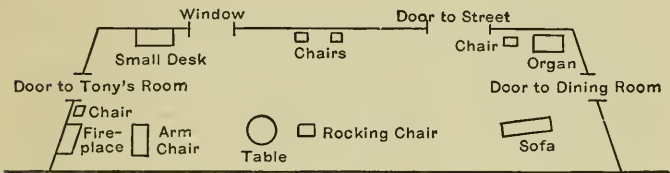
boarder. "I'll get him up if I have to throw a bucket of hot suds through the transom." Rosa Bella Beavers, the belle of Flagg Corners. "I've been working this life-insurance gag for three months now and I've earned just \$7.50." Mr. and Mrs. Perry Allen arrive to meet Jessamine. Tony blossoms out as a regular business man. Mr. Bird gets inside information concerning the P. D. Q. extension. Tony buys the River Road. "Ruined, ruined! Just when I thought I'd coaxed the bird into my hand, I find he's farther away than ever. Tough luck, old kid, tough luck!"

ACT III. After dinner. "The extension is to be built over the North Road. I'm a failure!" Jessamine shows her faith in Tony. "I'm going to be a man!" Mr. Bird takes a drop too much and is rebuked by Dilly, the hired girl and the corresponding secretary of the Young Ladies' Cold Water Society. Jessamine traps the bird and Tony buys the North Road. Sold for half a million dollars. "He's a regular business man at last!"

SCENE PLOT.



ACT I.



ACTS II AND III.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

R. means right of stage; *C.*, center; *R. C.*, right center; *L.*, left; *1 E.*, first entrance; *U. E.*, upper entrance; *R. 3 E.*, right entrance, up stage, etc.; up stage, away from footlights; down stage, near footlights. The actor is supposed to be facing the audience.

AN EARLY BIRD

THE FIRST ACT.

SCENE: *The private office of Mr. CYRUS B. KILBUCK on the first floor of the P. D. Q. Railroad office building. Elegant office furnishings. Neat carpet on floor. Entrances R. and L. Window at rear. Oil paintings of distinguished-looking men on walls. Dark background. Large desk down R. facing R. wall, so that person sitting at desk has his left profile toward audience. On this desk are papers arranged in neat piles, writing material, blotters, etc., and a picture of TONY in a silver frame. Desk chair in front of desk.*

Down L. facing audience is a stenographer's desk, with typewriter and desk chair. Up C. facing rear wall is Mr. FERGUSON'S desk, with chair. Two large leather chairs are down C. Coat-rack with screen in front of it up L. Water cooler up R.

Other office furniture may be used to dress the stage, but is not essential. Potted palms, an adding machine, dictaphone, etc., as desired. Telephone on desk down R.

TIME: *A morning in March.*

LIGHTS: *On full throughout the act. Bunch-lights of yellow may be used behind the scenes at the two doors and at the window.*

MUSIC: *Bright music takes the curtain up but ceases as soon as ARTIE speaks.*

DISCOVERED: *IMOGENE McCARTY busily typing down L. ARTIE reading colored supplement down R. at desk, his feet on desk and chair tilted back.*

ARTIE (*after curtain is well up, takes feet down from desk, swings around in chair, facing IMOGENE*). Say, Miss McCarty!

IMOGENE (*stops work, looks up, speaks sweetly*). Yes, Artie?

ART. (*bashfully*). Are—are—that is—are you doing anything tomorrow night? I mean—have you got anything on? I mean—oh, you know what I mean.

IMOGENE. I'm afraid I have, Artie. I got to study my Sunday School lesson tomorrow night, it being Saturday.

ART. There's a awful swell picture show on over at the Gem. The thirty-third installment of the Mysterious Madness of Mary Bell. (*Rises, comes to C.*) I was thinking that we might go, maybe. I ain't never took you to no picture show yet. And I'll get you some ice cream afterwards. We'll go over to the Greek's, and you kin go as fur as you like.

IMOGENE. I'd jest love to go, Artie, honest I would, but mamaw is that particular. She always makes me stay in and study on a Saturday night. Ain't that fierce? And I'm just dying to see the Mysterious Madness of Mary Bell. I'll bet it's awful romantic.

ART. (*enthusiastically*). I should say it is. There's a kid in it who has to work fer his livin' jest like me. He's the hero, and the hero-ine (*gives long sigh*), gee, you ought to see the hero-ine. She's got the grandest—

IMOGENE (*listens*). Wasn't that the buzzer, Artie? (*Rises and crosses to L. door.*)

ART. I didn't hear nothing. (*Comes to her.*) The hero-ine has got hair jest like yours, Miss McCarty. Honest she has. That's why I go so often.

Enter BRUCE FERGUSON from L., wearing overcoat

and carrying derby hat. He does not see ARTIE and starts to take both of IMOGENE's hands.

BRUCE. Imogene!

IMOGENE (*motions with her head that ART. is present*).

BRUCE. Ah, yes. Good morning, Miss McCarty! Good morning, Artie. (*Goes behind screen and hangs up hat and overcoat.*)

ART. (*disgusted*). Humph! (*Goes to C. desk and arranges papers, etc.*)

IMOGENE (*resumes her typing down L.*). I jest gotta get these letters out this morning. The boss has got a grouch on. (*Works rapidly.*)

BRUCE (*comes down L. of IMOGENE*). Artie, go up to the Claim Department and tell Mr. Sanders to send down the papers in the Calumet Case.

ART. (*comes down C.*). The governor is up there seeing about that case now.

BRUCE. He is? Well, go and ask him if he wants me.

ART. (*truculently*). He don't. If he does, he'll ring the bell fer you. I don't want to butt in up there. He's got an awful grouch on.

IMOGENE. Artie, come here. (*ART. crosses to her.*) Run over to the drug store and get me a pack of gum. I was in such a hurry this morning I clean forgot it.

ART. (*produces three picces of gum*). Here. I got almost a whole pack. (*Presents two pieces.*) With my compliments, Miss McCarty.

IMOGENE. Thanks. (*Puts them in her mouth.*)

ART. (*chewing the remaining piece*). Oh, don't mention it.

BRUCE. Darn it! Go on outside, Artie. I got some private dictation for Miss McCarty.

ART. You have! (*Glowers at him.*)

BRUCE. Yes, and hurry up. The governor's liable to come in any minute.

ART. Private dictation! Darn! (*Exit L.*)

BRUCE. Imogene! My own! (*Takes both her hands.*)

IMOGENE (*sighs happily*). Only three months and twelve days, darling!

BRUCE. And I got the engagement ring most paid for. (*Sighs happily.*)

Enter CYRUS B. KILBUCK *from R. in shirt sleeves. He sees them.*

KILBUCK. Ferguson!

BRUCE (*starts back, very much confused, IMOGENE types furiously*). Sir?

KILBUCK. This is a business office and not a dark corner of a park.

BRUCE. I was only giving Miss McCarty some private dictation, Mr. Kilbuck.

KILBUCK. Yes, I noticed it. Seemed to me it was pretty darned private.

IMOGENE. He was only (*pauses*). He was only— (*pauses*).

KILBUCK. Never mind the rest of it. Ferguson, go up to the Claim Department. Sanders wants you.

BRUCE. Yes, sir. (*Exits R.*)

KILBUCK (*seated at desk R.*). Have you got those letters in the Greer Case typed?

IMOGENE. All but the last one.

KILBUCK. Then don't let me interrupt you. Has Nora Van Dyne been in here this morning?

IMOGENE. No, sir.

KILBUCK. Well, if she comes in when I'm not here, send for me at once.

(*Opens several letters and reads them hurriedly. IMOGENE types.*)

IMOGENE. Mr. Kilbuck?

KILBUCK. Well?

IMOGENE. Is Beaver Dam in Massachusetts or in Oregon?

KILBUCK. Look in the dictionary. (*She complies.*)

Enter ART. from L.

ART. Gentleman outside to see you, Mr. Kilbuck. Name of Flanders.

KILBUCK. Got a card?

ART. Yes, sir. (*Gives him calling card.*)

KILBUCK. Humph! President of the Ninth National Bank. Tell him I can't see him this morning. I'm busy. I can see him at three fifteen tomorrow afternoon. Anyone else out there?

ART. Been six or seven, but he's the only one who got past the doorkeeper.

KILBUCK. Tell him three fifteen tomorrow.

IMOGENE. Excuse me, Mr. Kilbuck, but there's a directors' meeting at four tomorrow.

KILBUCK. That's all right. I can get rid of him in ten minutes.

ART. Yes, sir. (*Exits L.*)

KILBUCK (*resumes reading, pause, then he says sharply*). Ferguson!

IMOGENE. He's gone up to the Claim Department, Mr. Kilbuck.

KILBUCK. Sound the buzzer and call him down. (*She presses button on her desk. Note: No button is necessary, as the pantomime is sufficient.*) Now get me those blue-prints of Flagg County. Tell Morgan to

give them to you. They're in the fourteenth file. Flagg County blue-prints.

IMOGENE. Yes, sir. (*Exits R.*)

KILBUCK (*opens letter and reads*). "Mr. Cyrus B. Kilbuck, President of the P. D. Q. Railroad—Dear Sir: I am the father of thirteen children and I have got to travel from Pittsburgh to Salt Lake City. Would like a pass for myself and wife and reduced rates for the thirteen. I'll vote for you at the next election." (*Tears up letter and throws it in waste basket.*)

Enter BRUCE from L. with papers.

BRUCE. I've looked over the papers in the Calumet Consolidation Case, Mr. Kilbuck, and they're all ready for the directors tomorrow.

KILBUCK. You've looked them over, hay? (*Sarcastically.*) And the proposed merger meets your approval, I suppose?

BRUCE. If our Company takes over the Calumet Railroad, it will be the biggest consolidation of interests this country has ever known. It will make history.

KILBUCK. It will, hay? Well, we've got enough history now. Ask Mr. Mulberry to step here a moment.

BRUCE. Yes, sir. (*Exits L.*)

Enter IMOGENE from R. with a roll of blue-print drawings.

IMOGENE. Here they are, Mr. Kilbuck. The blue-prints of Flagg County.

KILBUCK (*opens bundle, takes out one, spreads it on desk and studies it, tracing on it with blunt end of pen*). Thirty-four and two-tenths miles across, and we don't own a rod of land in the county. (*To IMOGENE, who is looking over his shoulder at prints.*) That will do, Miss McCarty. When I want your advice, I'll ask you.

IMOGENE. Yes, sir. (*Returns to her desk and types.*)
Enter from L. BRUCE, followed by MR. MULBERRY.

MR. M. (*goes to KILBUCK*). You sent for me, Mr. Kilbuck?

KILBUCK. Yes. Here's the plans of Flagg County. We're going to run our road straight across the county from here to here. Draw up a chair. (*MR. M. does so and they study the plans. BRUCE comes down L. of IMOGENE and takes her hand, watching KILBUCK to see that he does not observe them.*)

BRUCE (*tenderly*). Only three months and twelve days, Imogene.

KILBUCK (*without looking up from plans*). Get to work, Ferguson.

BRUCE. Yes, sir. (*Crosses to his desk and works on ledger, exchanging languishing glances and sighs with IMOGENE.*)

MR. M. Let me see. This is just north of Washington County, isn't it? Have we got a clear title all through Washington County?

KILBUCK. I expect Mrs. Van Dyne in this morning.

MR. M. Ah, she's a wonderful woman, is Nora Van Dyne. She's saved the road over three million dollars since last July. I wonder how she does it!

KILBUCK. I guess she hypnotizes 'em. If I need a piece of land, and need it bad, all I have to do is to send her along the road and she gets it for about a tenth of its value.

MR. M. She's a wonderful woman.

KILBUCK. It's a woman's delight to make a bargain. Some women use their instincts to get a silk shirt worth a dollar for ninety-nine cents. Mrs. Van Dyne uses hers to get the road a thousand dollars' worth of land for a hundred.

Enter JESSAMINE LEE from L. She comes down C.

JESSAMINE. I walked right in. They tried to stop me at the door, but all the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't stop me this morning. (*Gives bunch of pink roses to KILBUCK.*) See what I brought you. Right from my own garden. Aren't you glad to see me?

KILBUCK. I should say I am. (*Takes both her hands.*) You're like a cool summer wind blowing over a sandy desert.

JESSAMINE. Do you mean to say I'm too windy?

KILBUCK. I mean to say you're the dearest little girl in the world. That will do, Mulberry. We'll discuss the right of way later.

MR. M. Yes, sir. Thank you, sir. (*Exits L.*)

KILBUCK. Miss McCarty, you can take your work in the outer office.

IMOGENE. Yes, sir. (*Exits L. BRUCE starts to follow.*)

KILBUCK. Hold on, Ferguson. You work in there. (*Points to R.*) I can't have you and Imogene in the same office without a chaperone. Business is business.

BRUCE (*gives a long sigh*). Yes, sir. (*Exits R.*)

JESSAMINE. You'll never guess why I came down to the offices this morning.

KILBUCK. To see me, of course. Sit down.

JESSAMINE. Wait till I put the roses in water. (*Gets vase from desk, takes it to water-cooler and fills it, places roses in it and puts it on KILBUCK's desk.*) I just got a telegram from Tony.

KILBUCK. What's happened to him? Has he won another game of football, or been elected first base of the College Glee Club?

JESSAMINE. No, he's coming home.

KILBUCK. What for?

JESSAMINE. I don't know. He didn't say. Just said he'd arrive on the ten-ten. I'm on my way over to the station now.

KILBUCK. You have half an hour. I wonder why he's coming home.

JESSAMINE. Why, to see his daddy, of course.

KILBUCK. And his fiancée. It's a good thing for Tony Kilbuck that I'm not twenty years younger.

JESSAMINE. Why?

KILBUCK. I'd cut him out and make you my wife instead of my daughter-in-law.

JESSAMINE. You're an old dear. Don't you want to put on your hat and come over to the station with me?

KILBUCK. Haven't got time. With the Calumet merger on and our new extension in the northeast, I don't have time to eat my luncheon.

JESSAMINE. I'm awfully afraid I'm interrupting you.

KILBUCK. I'm glad of it, Jessamine. It's moments like these that make life worth the living. Ah, if you were only twenty years older.

JESSAMINE. Well, since you won't make me your wife, I suppose I'll have to be content with Tony. (*Sees picture on desk.*) Oh, you've got his picture, haven't you?

KILBUCK. Yes, I always keep it in my desk. Tony is all I have, you know.

JESSAMINE. And I'm going to take him away from you.

KILBUCK. That won't be for several years yet. He has to make a name for himself first. I've got it all planned out. By the time he's forty, he'll be the presi-

dent of the road. He'll be ahead of me. I never had the advantage of a college education.

Enter ART. from L.

ART. (*goes to MR. KILBUCK and hands him calling card*). The gent says it's very important.

KILBUCK. Tell him to go to blazes. I'm too busy to be interrupted.

ART. I took his card to Mr. Mulberry and he said you'd see him. It's Mr. Bird.

KILBUCK. Bird? Bird from Flagg County?

ART. Yes, sir.

KILBUCK. Tell him to come in. (*Exit ART., L.*)

JESSAMINE. I'll go now.

KILBUCK. Not at all. It won't take me two minutes to get rid of the bird. He owns some land up in Flagg County. Our new road is to go right through his property, and we'll have to make a bid on the land.

Enter BARNABY BIRD from L.

BIRD (*crossing to KILBUCK*). Mr. Kilbuck?

KILBUCK (*shaking hands with him*). Yes. Glad to meet you, Mr. Bird.

BIRD. I came on a little business. (*Glancing at JESSAMINE who is seated at L.*) Private business.

KILBUCK. That's all right. You can speak right out in front of that young lady.

BIRD. There's a rumor up in Flagg County that your new road is going right straight across the county.

KILBUCK. We haven't decided just where we *are* going.

BIRD. Well, my name's Barnaby Bird, you know. I'm the little early bird, as it were. I own nearly a thousand acres of land in Flagg County and if the railroad wants to buy it, why its in the market.

KILBUCK. Mrs. Van Dyne attends to all our land purchasing, Mr. Bird.

BIRD. A woman?

KILBUCK. A lady.

BIRD. Surely you don't allow a woman to go 'round buying the railroad land, do you?

KILBUCK. Yes, we've been doing that for some years now. Mrs. Van Dyne is quite capable in her way.

BIRD. But she's a woman.

KILBUCK. Exactly, we find it doesn't handicap her in that position.

BIRD. Then you don't want to make me an offer right now.

KILBUCK. It's out of the question. We haven't decided just where the road bed is to be.

BIRD. Well, as soon as you decide call me up over the long-distance. You won't forget the name. Remember, I'm the little early bird.

KILBUCK. I'll remember. Very glad to have met you, Mr. Bird.

BIRD. Sure you don't want to buy the land today?

KILBUCK. Yes, I'm quite sure. In fact, the matter is entirely in the hands of Mrs. Van Dyne.

BIRD. I'd like to meet the lady. (*Looks at JESSAMINE.*)

KILBUCK. I have no doubt you'll have ample opportunity, some time.

BIRD. I'm always glad to meet the ladies. I make it a point to never miss nothin'.

KILBUCK. Yes, I understand.

BIRD. And the ladies is always glad to meet me. I'm forty-nine, but I'm jest as young as I used to be.

KILBUCK. A widower, I presume?

BIRD. Who, me? Not on your tin-type. I'm a bach-

elor. Every eligible woman in Flagg County's got her eyes on me; but I'm a wise old bird, Kilbuck, a wise old bird.

KILBUCK. As soon as the company decides upon the exact course of our road bed, I'll let you know, Mr. Bird. (*Pushes button on desk in pantomime.*)

BIRD. All right. Jest send a wire or call me up over long-distance. You see I—

Enter ART. from L.

KILBUCK (*shakes hands with BIRD*). Good morning. Artic, show Mr. Bird out.

BIRD. Good morning. Don't forgit the name. Barnaby Bird. Jest remember the little early bird; that's me. (*Exit L., followed by ART.*)

JESSAMINE. Disgusting creature!

KILBUCK. Wasn't he? Yet he owns nearly half of Flagg County.

JESSAMINE. Who is this Mrs. Van Dyne you were talking about?

KILBUCK. One of our agents. She buys the land for the company when they want to build a new line.

Enter ART. from L.

ART. Excuse me, Mr. Kilbuck, but Miz' Van Dine's outside.

KILBUCK. Tell her to come in. I want you to meet her, Jessamine. As the future wife of the future president of the P. D. Q. Railroad, you should take an interest in our agents.

Enter MRS. VAN DYNE from L., carrying small satchel.

KILBUCK. Mrs. Van, I'm glad to see you. We were just talking about you. Let me introduce Miss Jessamine Lee. Miss Lee, this is Mrs. Van Dyne.

JESSAMINE. Charmed to meet you.

MRS. V. (*gravely*). The pleasure is mine.

KILBUCK. Sit down, Mrs. Van. (*Draws her a large easy chair to R. C., JESSAMINE sits at L., KILBUCK at R.*) Won't you take off your things?

MRS. V. I can only stay a few moments, Mr. Kilbuck. I have had a telegram from Arizona. My boy is worse. I am leaving on the noon train.

KILBUCK. Worse, is he? The poor little fellow. Is there anything I can do for you, Mrs. Van?

MRS. V. Nothing, thank you, Mr. Kilbuck, only I'd like to take a month's vacation. I've cleared the entire right of way through Washington County, and I have my full report in here. (*Extends satchel.*) Mr. Mulberry was kind enough to say that I had saved the company a quarter of a million dollars. But it's been a long, hard job. I need a rest.

KILBUCK. Of course you do. The fresh, dry air of Arizona will do you a world of good.

MRS. V. But there's Flagg County to be gone over—

KILBUCK. Don't you worry about Flagg County. I guess we can wait thirty days. Flagg County won't run away.

MRS. V. Shall I go over the papers with you?

KILBUCK. It isn't necessary. You say Mulberry has looked at them?

MRS. V. Yes, sir.

KILBUCK. That's all that's necessary. I trust Mulberry as much as I trust you. (*Rises.*) Now forget all about the new road and all about Flagg County and be off on your vacation.

MRS. V. Oh, thank you. (*Rises.*) If there is nothing more to do, I'd rather leave at once.

KILBUCK (*escorts her to door L.*). You go and enjoy

the trip. Then bring the boy back home with you. The sight of his mother's face will do him more good than all the medicine in Arizona. Good-bye.

MRS. V. Good-bye, and God bless you. (*Exit L. after bowing to JESSAMINE.*)

KILBUCK (*resuming his seat*). She's a widow and her only boy is sick way out there in Arizona. Well, I guess our friend, the early bird, will have to wait a month or so before he sells us his thousand acres.

JESSAMINE (*looks at watch*). Oh, I'll have to hurry. It's nearly time for Tony. Are you sure you can't come along with me?

KILBUCK. As sure as shootin'. But bring him here as soon as he lands. You will have plenty of time for love's young dream afterwards.

JESSAMINE. Why, Mr. Kilbuck, we never think of such a thing. (*Going toward L. door.*)

KILBUCK (*pushes button on his desk*). Wait a minute, I'll go as far as the door with you.

Enter IMOGENE from L.

IMOGENE. Did you ring, Mr. Kilbuck? .

KILBUCK. Yes. Just finish that dictation in the Greer Case. I'll be back in a minute. (*Exit L. with JESSAMINE.*)

Enter BRUCE from R.

BRUCE. Imogene! (*Goes to her.*)

IMOGENE. Only three months to wait!

BRUCE. And twelve days.

Enter ART. from L.

ART. (*loudly*). Say!

(IMOGENE and BRUCE spring apart and begin to work rapidly.)

ART. That guy Bird's out here again. He says he's lost his umbrella, and wants to know if he left it in here.

IMOGENE. I don't see it anywhere.

BRUCE. Who is he, Artie?

ART. Oh, some old kangaroo who thinks he owns the earth.

Enter BIRD from L.

BIRD. Perhaps Mr. Kilbuck saw my umbrella.

ART. Mr. Kilbuck ain't here now.

BIRD (*sits at R. C.*). I'll wait till he comes back.

ART. It's agin orders. You'll have to wait in the outer office.

BIRD (*looking admiringly at IMOGENE*). Oh, no, little boy, I prefer to wait here.

ART. (*in great indignation*). Little boy! He called me little boy! (*To audience.*) Did you get that? (*Exit L.*)

BIRD. I am sure Mr. Kilbuck won't object to my waiting here. You see, I am Mr. Bird of Flagg County. I own nearly a thousand acres up there, and I understand the Company is going to build their road right across my land. So I'm right here on the job, to have them make me an offer. I'm the little early bird, as it were. See?

IMOGENE. And the little early bird usually catches the worm, don't he?

BIRD (*leaning over her chair and looking in her eyes*). Yes, my little charmer, he does.

IMOGENE. Well, you might be a bird, all right, but I want you to get wise to the fact that I ain't no worm. Get me? (*BIRD crossed to R.*)

BIRD. Mrs. Van Dyne isn't down yet, is she?

IMOGENE. Yes, sir. She was in here just a minute ago talking to Mr. Kilbuck.

BIRD. She was? So that little lady was Mrs. Van Dyne, was it? And he didn't even introduce me. Charming little lady she was, too.

Enter KILBUCK from L.

KILBUCK (*seeing BIRD*). Well, Mr. Bird?

BIRD. Yes, quite well thank you.

KILBUCK. I'm afraid you can't see Mrs. Van Dyne this morning. She has just left.

BIRD. Too bad, too bad. Why didn't you introduce me?

KILBUCK. We're not ready to make a bid on the land yet. When we are, I'll let you know. Mrs. Van Dyne will see you.

BIRD. I saw her when she was talking to you. Say, Kilbuck, she's a hum-dinger. I'm crazy to meet her.

KILBUCK. No doubt.

BIRD. I lost my umberella. You ain't seen it, have you?

KILBUCK (*shortly*). No, it isn't in here. You may look in the outer office. Good morning.

BIRD. But I—

KILBUCK. Good morning. (*Turns his back on BIRD and works at desk.*)

BIRD. Good morning. (*Exit L. trying to flirt with IMOGENE.*)

KILBUCK. Ferguson, the next time that man calls, don't let him get beyond the front door. He calls himself the early bird. By George, he looks more like a jail-bird to me.

Enter ART. with telegram.

ART. Telegram, Mr. Kilbuck.

KILBUCK. All right. (*Takes it. ART. exits L.*)

IMOGENE (*crosses to KILBUCK with papers*). The Greer papers are all ready for your signature, Mr. Kilbuck.

KILBUCK (*opens telegram, reads, starts, reads it again, paying no attention to IMOGENE.*) Ah. (*Gives a deep sigh and sits staring into space.*)

IMOGENE (*softly*). The papers in the Greer Case, Mr. Kilbuck.

KILBUCK (*starts*). Take 'em to Mulberry. Get out. I want to be alone. I want to think. You, too, Ferguson.

IMOGENE (*starts to exit L.*). Yes, sir.

KILBUCK. Just a moment. Let those papers rest a few minutes. Send Mr. Mulberry in here.

IMOGENE. Yes, sir. (*Exchanges surprised looks with BRUCE and both exeunt at L.*)

KILBUCK (*staring at telegram*). Expelled. Kicked out of college. (*Pause, takes up TONY'S picture, looks at it sadly, shakes head, replaces picture. Sits staring straight in front of him. Pause.*)

Enter Mr. M. from L.

MR. M. (*crosses to KILBUCK, touches him on arm*).

KILBUCK (*starts, looks at MR. M.*). Sit down, Mulberry. Read that. (*Hands telegram to MR. M.*)

MR. M. (*slowly reads telegram, pauses, looks at KILBUCK*). Well?

KILBUCK. And I had such high hopes for him, such great ambitions, and now—that telegram.

MR. M. Pooh, that telegram doesn't matter. What if he is expelled from college? That doesn't mean that he is ruined for life.

KILBUCK. It's a bad beginning, Mulberry. It shows that he lacks definite aim and distinction.

MR. M. Not at all. He has plenty of ability locked up in him. It just needs something to turn the lock.

KILBUCK. I've tried everything. Money. A good home, a college education—

MR. M. You haven't tried the right thing.

KILBUCK. What do you mean right thing?

MR. M. I mean hard work. I mean throwing him on his own resources. I mean throw him overboard in the deep water and tell him to sink or swim. You know my second boy, Rufus? Well, he was just such a young cub as your Tony. His highest ambition was to win a polo game or lead a cotillion. Look at him now!

KILBUCK. He's one of the liveliest young men in the business world today. He went out for the Rock Rib Wire and Iron Works and brought in enough orders to put the concern on its feet. Your boy is a boy to be proud of.

MR. M. He started out even worse than Tony. Instead of getting expelled from college, he married a stenographer.

KILBUCK. Yes, I remember.

MR. M. I told him he'd have to cut loose from me. I cast him off. I threw him out of the house. And, what was the result? He went to work, and now he's making three times as much as I am. The ability was locked up in him, just as it is in your Tony. I simply opened the door and let it out.

KILBUCK (*rises, crosses to Mr. M. and shakes hands with him, pause*). Just watch me, that's all. Just keep your eye on me.

MR. M. Are you going to follow my plan?

KILBUCK. I'm going to go you one better. It'll be

hard, but I'm going to make a man of my boy. He'll be here in half an hour and then look out for fireworks.

Enter ART. from R.

ART. Mr. Kilbuck, the president of the Calumet road is in the outer office.

KILBUCK. Tell him I'll see him at once. Come on, Mulberry. Business is business.

ART. Yes, sir. (*Exits R.*)

KILBUCK (*going out R. with MR. M.*). But when that young rascal does show up you want to watch the fireworks, that's all; just watch the fireworks. (*Exeunt R.*)

Slight pause. Then enter from L. TONY KILBUCK. He comes rapidly in and down C. He walks rapidly on his toes, with knees held rather stiff. This is a characteristic walk all through the play and should be practiced until it appears perfectly natural. It is an index to the character who always moves with a rush.

TONY. Dad, dad! (*Looks around.*) He isn't here. And I had my first entrance all planned out.

Enter JESSAMINE from L.

JESSAMINE. The clerk told me your father was up in the directors' room.

TONY. In the directors' room, when his only son and heir has just returned from college? We'll have him down. Which button shall I push? (*At desk at R.*)

JESSAMINE. I don't know.

TONY. I'll push them all, then I'll be sure to get him. (*Pushes buttons on desk in pantomime.*)

JESSAMINE. Oh, I'm so glad to have you home again.

TONY (*crosses to her*). I'm glad to be home, believe me!

Enter ART., IMOGENE and BRUCE from L.

THE THREE. Did you ring for me?

TONY (*down L.*). Oh, look at the office force. Kindly run out and find the governor. Tell him to turn on all the lights, hang out the American flag, kill the fatted calf, and let the band play—the Prodigal has returned.

ART. Yes, sir. (*Exits R.*)

BRUCE (*down L. C.*). Can I do anything for you, Mr. Kilbuck?

TONY. Yes. Go across the street and order me four Martini cocktails and keep them on ice. After I've seen father I'll need a stimulant.

BRUCE. Yes, sir. (*Exits L.*)

IMOGENE (*coming down L. C.*). I'm glad to see you home again, Mr. Kilbuck.

TONY (*shakes hands with her*). And I'm glad you're glad.

JESSAMINE (*at L., pulls TONY by coat*). Ahem!

TONY (*looks at her*). Oh, yes. I forgot I was an engaged man. (*To IMOGENE.*) Just wait outside, Little Sunshine, I think father will have some dictating to do as soon as he sees me.

IMOGENE. Yes, sir. (*Exits L.*)

JESSAMINE. Oh, Tony, I'm so frightened. What will your father say when he learns you aren't going back to college any more?

TONY. You want to stick around and hear what he says. If you're here, it won't be as strong as if I were all alone.

JESSAMINE. But what do you intend to do?

TONY. Get married right away.

JESSAMINE. But suppose your father doesn't approve?

TONY. We won't tell him anything about it until it's all over.

JESSAMINE. He might cut you off.

TONY. That's so. He might. Would you care?

JESSAMINE. I? No, indeed. I was only thinking of you.

TONY. Don't worry about me. After we're married—

JESSAMINE. But it wouldn't be right. Suppose you go into business. Make a big name for yourself, make me awfully proud of you, earn a couple of hundred thousand or so—and then—

TONY. You talk just like the heroine of a play I saw last week. She kept insisting on the hero going to work and finally he did, and then for four acts everybody suffered.

JESSAMINE. But you are ambitious, aren't you?

TONY (*yawns*). Oh, yes, I'm awfully ambitious.

JESSAMINE. And you want to be a success, don't you?

TONY (*lazily*). Oh, yes. Yes, indeed.

JESSAMINE. The only road to success is hard labor.

TONY. You talk like a copy book.

JESSAMINE. I mean it. You want to work, don't you?

TONY. Well (*hesitates*), I'm not so sure about that. It must be an awful thing to have to go to bed every night and know that you must get up in the morning at ten o'clock and go to work.

JESSAMINE. But you'd be so much happier if you had a position.

TONY. Now you're talking like father. He's been

harping on that position ever since I went to college six years ago.

JESSAMINE. But now you're through with college.

TONY. College is through with me. They won't let me come back. I was in the freshman class four years, and I was just beginning to enjoy the place.

JESSAMINE. But you must be something. Be something big. Carve your own way to fame and fortune.

TONY. That's just the way the girl in the show talked. And they had an awful time. I believe I'd rather just settle down here and work for father. I'd have a private office all finished in oak and a blonde stenographer and an office boy in brass buttons. And I'd start in on six thousand a year.

JESSAMINE. But do you think your father would consent?

TONY. Of course he will. And we can be married next week. We'll get a little apartment at first and be as happy as two little turtle doves.

JESSAMINE. I've always wanted a little apartment. Ten or twelve rooms and a little garage.

TONY. We could do all our own work—that is, all except the chauffeur. Of course we've got to have a chauffeur.

JESSAMINE. And a chef. I've always wanted a French chef. And one or two maids. Oh, it will be heavenly.

TONY. Won't it? I've got lots more sense than the hero of that play had. He let his father turn him out and had an awful time until the last act. I'll have more sand. I'll tell dad what is what.

Enter ART. from R.

ART. Mr. Kilbuck says he can give you fifteen minutes.

TONY. Fifteen minutes? Well, that's better than giving me thirty days.

ART. He'll be right down. (*Exits L.*)

JESSAMINE (*coming to C.*). I'd better go, Tony. You and your father will have things to talk over by yourselves.

TONY (*nervously*). Maybe you'd better stay. Father is liable to get excited.

JESSAMINE. No. I'll wait for you outside in the car. Good-bye. (*Exits L.*)

TONY. No, wait a minute. You'd better stay. (*Crosses up L.*)

Enter KILBUCK from R.

KILBUCK (*comes to C.*). So you're home, are you?

TONY (*comes to him, speaks cheerfully*). Yes, I'm home.

KILBUCK. Thrown out of college in disgrace.

TONY. Well not exactly thrown. I folded my tents like the Arab and gently stole away.

KILBUCK. And that was a grand college, too. Just look at the list of graduates. Every year they turn out a crop of fine young fellows.

TONY. That's right. They turned *me* out.

KILBUCK. Bah! (*Sits at desk R.*). Now you listen to me!

TONY (*sits at L. C.*). Shoot ahead.

KILBUCK. I'm a man of few words.

TONY (*to audience*). Now he's going to tell me the history of his life.

KILBUCK. At ten years of age—

TONY (*as before*). I thought so.

KILBUCK. I had completed my education.

TONY. Yes, sir.

KILBUCK. At twenty I was a railroad clerk. At thirty I was the head of a department.

TONY. Yes, sir. The head of a department.

KILBUCK. At fifty I am a millionaire. Now, sir, by what means have I reached this pinnacle?

TONY. I give it up.

KILBUCK. By planning a line of action, sir, and by following that line with industry and undeviating rule. Understand? Undeviating rule.

TONY. Yes, sir, that's a good word—undeviating.

KILBUCK. In all my career I have never made a mistake.

TONY. I congratulate you, father.

KILBUCK. And now, on the other hand, look at yourself.

TONY (*stands up, throws back shoulders*). Yes, have a look!

KILBUCK. Bah! You are hopeless, sir, hopeless!

TONY. I'm just a little nervous, that's all.

KILBUCK. I have given you every opportunity, and what have you done with them?

TONY. I don't know. Lost them, I guess.

KILBUCK. Lost them? No, you have destroyed them. Wilfully destroyed your golden opportunities. I have lavished money on you, and you are nearly ten thousand dollars in debt.

TONY. Only eight thousand, father.

KILBUCK. I have sent you to college and you have been expelled.

TONY. I am afraid I never was intended for a student. I'm going to be a business man, a regular business man.

KILBUCK. In the first place what do you mean by overdrawing your allowance?

TONY. It just proves I was right when I said my allowance wasn't big enough.

KILBUCK. What!

TONY. And if it isn't big enough for one, I'm sure it's much too small for two.

KILBUCK. For two?

TONY. Of course I intend to get married.

KILBUCK. I don't doubt it. You're fool enough for anything.

TONY. Very well. I'll go. I'm not going to be insulted. (*Starts off at L.*)

KILBUCK (*rises at R.*). Wait a minute. Remember, I'm your friend, even if I am your father. Sit down.

TONY (*hesitates, then comes down to L. C. slowly and sits down*). Well?

KILBUCK. The secret of the whole matter is I've been too easy with you. Too damned easy.

TONY. Father, I saw a play last week. The father of the hero forced him to go to work. And everybody was perfectly miserable for four acts.

KILBUCK. That's just what I am going to do.

TONY. I'm willing. I've always wanted to work. Give me a nice easy job here at the offices, a blonde stenographer and a set of offices furnished in oak and just watch me work.

KILBUCK. Bah, you can't work. You're not a producer, you're just a consumer. You couldn't earn five dollars a week. But you'll get a chance. You get out of my house tonight, or I'll have you thrown out.

TONY. But I want to work you, I mean work for you.

KILBUCK. You'll work for yourself. If there's anything in you, it's up to you to bring it out. I won't give you a job. I won't give you a home. Get out. Earn your own living. Make good!

TONY. But, father—

KILBUCK. You see that door? (*Points to door at L.*)

TONY (*pleasantly*). Yes, it's a nice door.

KILBUCK. On the outside it says Pull, but on my side it says Push! Get the idea? I had no pull to make my way, only push! And it made me a millionaire. Understand? Push!

TONY. And now you want me to push?

KILBUCK. You've got to swim if you don't want to sink. From this minute you are your own boss. I'm going to see what's in you.

TONY. But—

KILBUCK. Not another word. Get out. Go to work.

TONY (*rising, speaks to audience*). This is getting more like that damned play every minute.

KILBUCK. Now your fifteen minutes is up. Get out and make good.

TONY. Aren't you going to give me a little money to start on?

KILBUCK. Not a single penny. In two months you'll be twenty years old. On your twentieth birthday you'll get a thousand dollars.

TONY. Would you mind writing out that check now?

KILBUCK (*at desk*). What for?

TONY. Oh, you're liable to forget it by my twentieth birthday.

KILBUCK. Very well. (*Writes check.*) But I'll date it two months ahead. (*Writes.*)

TONY. I will show you that I'm no piker. I *will* leave your house tonight, I will go to work, I will make good.

KILBUCK. There's the check. And now, get out, I'm busy. (*Pushes button.*)

TONY (*takes check*). You're turning me out like a beggar, but in spite of all—you are my father. I forgive you.

KILBUCK (*spluttering with rage*). You forgive me?

Enter Mr. M. from R.

MR. M. You rang for me, sir?

KILBUCK. Yes, let us go over the Greer Case. (*To TONY.*) That will be all, Mr. Kilbuck.

TONY. Just a moment. (*Comes to Mr. M. at C.*) Mr. Mulberry, look at this check. (*Shows it.*) Is it good?

KILBUCK (*splutters with rage*). Good? Good? You young jackanapes!

TONY. I mean is it worth anything, Mr. Mulberry?

MR. M. Certainly it is. But it's dated two months ahead.

TONY. How much is it worth now?

MR. M. It's worth about \$990.

TONY. Good. (*Takes note and endorses it at C. desk.*) Will you let me have \$950 for it?

KILBUCK (*spluttering with rage*). What! You young scoundrel!

MR. M. Certainly I will. (*Sits at desk L. and writes a check.*)

TONY. You'd be doing me a great favor, Mr. Mulberry. I need a little capital to start in business for myself.

MR. M. (*handing his check*). There you are. Nine hundred and fifty dollars.

TONY (*giving him the other check*). And there you are. One thousand dollars.

KILBUCK (*pushes button*). Get out or I'll have the office boy throw you out.

MR. M. But why didn't you keep the original check?

TONY. A bird in the hand is worth ten in the bush.

Enter IMOGENE and ART.

KILBUCK. Artie, show that gentleman to the door.

TONY. Oh, it isn't necessary. I'll go now. But I'll be back in a year with ten thousand dollars. I'll make you eat your words done up in a hamburger sandwich. Good-bye, Mr. Mulberry. Au revoir, mon pere. (*To IMOGENE, who is down L.*) Farewell, Little Sunshine. (*To ART., who is up L. C.*) Ta, ta, Small Boy! (*At door L.*) I'm off! Rah, rah, rah! (*Dashes out L.*)

CURTAIN.

AN EARLY BIRD

THE SECOND ACT.

SCENE: *Living room in MRS. BEAVERS' boarding house at Flagg Corners. Entrances L. of C. (from street), L. (from dining room) and R. (from TONY'S room). Window at rear, with white muslin curtains.*

Old-fashioned furniture covered with horse-hair cloth, if possible. Dark carpet on floor. Organ or old piano up L. Fireplace down R. No fire. Mantel with ornaments, fender, etc. Large round table down R. C. with fancy cover. Wax flowers with glass cover, family album, framed photograph, etc., neatly arranged on table. Old-fashioned sofa down L. Rocking chair at L. of table, arm chair at R. Four chairs placed primly against walls. Tidies in profusion. Pictures on the walls and beribboned fancy articles around the room are silent witnesses of ROSA BELLA'S artistic ability. Fancy lamp.

Small desk with writing material up R. A large book on this desk serves as a register. The entire setting suggests prim, rural, deadly conventionality.

TIME: 10 a. m. on the first of July.

LIGHTS: *On full throughout the act. Bunch-lights may be used at the doors and window.*

MUSIC: *"Way Down Upon de Swanee Ribber" played very loud and fast takes up the curtain, but ceases as soon as DILLY speaks.*

DISCOVERED: *DILLY kneeling at fireplace polishing the fender. She has a pail of water, rags and a cake of polish.*

MRS. BEAVERS (*heard off L. calling in a high-pitched, long prolonged tone*). Dilly! (*Pause.*) Dilly!

DILLY. Yes'm. I'm polishing the fender.

MRS. B. (*off stage*). Hurry up and come here and peel these p'taters. It's after ten o'clock.

DILLY (*rises*). Yes'm. I'm coming. (*Takes pail, wrings out cloth in it and starts out L.*)

MRS. B (*outside*). Is everything tidied up in that room?

DILLY (*at L. C.*). Yes'm.

Enter Mrs. B. from L. Flour marks on her face, hands and arms. She is wiping her hands on her apron.

MRS. B. (*at L.*). Where's Rosa Bella?

DILLY. She ain't got back yet. She said to tell you she'd gone to the dressmaker's to have her last try-on.

MRS. B. She'd orter been home an hour ago. Did you finish Kilbuck's room?

DILLY. No'm, I didn't.

MRS. B. My stars and seeds! Why didn't you?

DILLY. He ain't up yet. You kin hear him snorin' like a steam engine buzz-saw.

MRS. B. And it's after ten o'clock. I'll bet I'll get him up if I have to throw a bucket of hot suds through the transom. (*Crosses to door R.*) The idea! (*Raps sharply at door.*)

(*Pause.*)

DILLY. That won't wake him up. I tried that myself.

MRS. B. You go and peel them p'taters. There's liable to be seven or eight in on the morning train. And call up the butcher shop and tell 'em if they don't send that meat right away I'll know the reason why. And hurry up!

DILLY. Yes'm. I'm ahurrying. (*Exits at L. slowly.*)

MRS. B. (*pounds on door at R.*). Mr. Kilbuck! Get up. Mr. Kilbuck! It's most noon.

TONY (*inside at R., sleepily*). What's the matter? What's matter?

MRS. B. Get up. It's me. Mrs. Beavers.

TONY. All right. I'm getting up. (*Pause.*) What time is it?

MRS. B. It's after ten o'clock. (*Bangs on door.*) Don't you go to sleep again. I've got to clean your room.

TONY. All right.

MRS. B. He's the laziest man I ever had in my house, and I've been keeping boarders in Flagg Corners fer thirty years.

Enter ROSA BELLA from C. D. wearing large summer hat and carrying parasol and numerous bundles.

ROSA BELLA. Oh, maw, I got the loveliest bargains down at the General Store. 'Twelve yards of gauze ribbon and the dearest little pink dimity.

MRS. B. You did? How much did you spend?

ROSA BELLA. Only thirteen dollars, and I paid the dressmaker three dollars on account.

MRS. B. Sixteen dollars! My stars and seeds! We'll end up in the poor-house yet.

ROSA BELLA. Now maw, don't scold. I simply got to have something to wear at the Fourth of July picnic. (*Removes hat.*)

MRS. B. I guess that black and white organdie was plenty good enough.

ROSA BELLA. It's as old as the hills. Every girl in town has seen it.

MRS. B. And there's your green spotted lawn. You ain't worn it more'n a dozen times.

ROSA BELLA. Now, maw, you know green ain't becoming to my complexion.

MRS. B. There's your blue and purple—

ROSA BELLA. I look like a giraffe in that. Harry Summers said it looked like a plum pie.

MRS. B. Well, if Harry Summers had to pay fer some of your clothes, he wouldn't be making such remarks. Harry Summers! Humph! Them Summerses always did make me sick. Who you going to the picnic with?

ROSA BELLA. I dunno, maw. I can't decide.

MRS. B. Didn't Mr. Bird ask you?

ROSA BELLA. Oh, him!

MRS. B. Now don't you go talking disrespectful about Barnaby Bird. He's the richest man in Flagg County.

ROSA BELLA. I don't care if he is. He's old enough to be my paw.

MRS. B. He ain't neither. And he's real attentive to you, Rosa Bella. He brung you a box of candy last week.

ROSA BELLA. Yes, half a pound from the corner grocery store.

MRS. B. Mr. Bird is a wealthy, refined gentleman, Rosa Bella, and you orter be proud of his attentions. He means business. I suppose you'd rather gad around with that Kilbuck boy.

ROSA BELLA. Mr. Kilbuck is a gentleman, too.

MRS. B. And a life insurance agent! Humph! He's been in Flagg Corners two weeks and he ain't earned fifty cents. You think just because he's cute and funny and wears city clothes he'd make a good husband. Rosa Bella Beavers, you mark my word, there's a mystery connected with that boy. He don't earn nothin'

and yet he always has some money. Maybe he's a bank robber or something like that.

ROSA BELLA. I don't care what he is, maw, he's the cutest thing I ever met, so there!

MRS. B. Are you going to the picnic with him?

ROSA BELLA. He ain't asked me yet.

MRS. B. Well, you ain't. Now you listen to me, young lady. Here I work like a slave in a country boarding-house jest to make a fine lady out of you, and when you get a chance at Barnaby Bird, the richest man in Flagg County, you want to go galavantin' around with some no-count do-nothing who nobody knows and who don't earn a cent from week's end to week's end. Insurance agent, humph! Loafer is what I call him.

Enter TONY from R. in time to hear the last remark.

TONY. Good morning, Mrs. Beavers. Lovely morning, isn't it?

MRS. B. (*dumfounded*). I dunno whether it is or it ain't. I know I've got my dinner to get and half the house to clean and here you are jest getting up.

TONY. Yes, that's a fact. I'm a little late this morning.

MRS. B. 'Pears to me you're a little late every morning.

ROSA BELLA (*comes between them*). Now, maw!

MRS. B. Don't you "now maw!" me! (*Crosses to door at L.*) I got to see to my dinner. Rosa Bella, you'd better come and help me.

ROSA BELLA. All right. In a minute.

MRS. B. Remember what I told you, if you don't want us all to end our days in the poor-house. (*Exits L.*)

TONY. Poor-house. Where have I heard that name before? I've been working this life-insurance gag for three months now and I've earned just seven dollars and fifty cents.

ROSA BELLA (*cooly*). Now, Mr. Kilbuck, you mustn't get discouraged. What you need is a home of your own and a wife.

TONY (*on sofa at L.*). I'm afraid seven dollars and fifty cents wouldn't keep a wife very long in this town.

ROSA BELLA. We girls are getting up a little picnic down to the Spring for the Fourth of July. That'll be Friday. I don't suppose you'd care to go, would you, Mr. Kilbuck?

TONY. I don't think I'll be here by Friday. I am sure I have exhausted all the insurance opportunities in Flagg Corners and must be on my way.

ROSA BELLA. Why don't you take up some other line of business?

TONY. I think the only thing that would pay around here is a good live undertaker.

ROSA BELLA. Maybe Mr. Bird could get you a job.

TONY. Nothing doing. I've met Mr. Bird and I don't like the color of his neckties. I never could work for a man who wears a red and purple necktie.

ROSA BELLA. Yet he's a real nice man.

TONY. And the richest man in Flagg County. I've heard that nine thousand times since I had the honor of meeting the gentleman. By the way, Miss Beavers, I wonder if I could persuade the effervescent Dilly to get me a cup of coffee?

ROSA BELLA. You poor boy! You ain't had a bite to eat, have you? I'll get you the coffee myself.

TONY. Awfully kind of you, I'm sure. You've been the proverbial friend in need to me, Miss Beavers.

ROSA BELLA. Them that likes me calls me Rosa Bella.

Enter DILLY from L.

DILLY. Excuse me for buttin' in, as they say, but your maw wants you in the kitchen right away.

ROSA BELLA. Very well, Dilly. Come along, Mr. Kilbuck, I'll see if I can get you a bite to eat. (*Exits L. with TONY.*)

DILLY (*looking after her and mimicing her voice*). "Come along, Mr. Kilbuck, and I'll see if I can get you a bite to eat." Stuck-up thing. If she gits him anything to eat I'll bet a doughnut it'll pizen him. (*Loud knock heard off stage at C.*) Somebody's at our front door. (*Looks out of window.*) A man and a woman and they come in an automobeel. (*Crosses to C. D. and exits.*)

After a slight pause re-enter DILLY, C. D., followed by MR. and MRS. PERRY ALLEN.

PERRY. We'd like to get dinner here for three.

DILLY. Three?

MRS. A. Yes, we're expecting a young lady on the morning bus. I suppose we can wait here until it comes.

DILLY. Yes'm. I suppose you kin. I'll tell Mis' Beavers. (*Exits L.*)

PERRY. The old lady generally has pretty good meals.

MRS. A. Isn't it strange, Perry, there isn't a hotel in town?

PERRY. Forty houses, two stores and a meeting-house don't make a town, Kit, they only make a Flagg Corners.

MRS. A. Do you suppose you can get some gaso-line here?

PERRY. Oh, sure. You can get anything from a monkey-wrench to a Manhattan cocktail.

Enter MRS B. from L., wiping hands on her apron.

MRS. B. Good morning.

PERRY. Good morning, Mrs. Beavers. Can you accommodate three more for dinner?

MRS. B. I reckon I can. Did you register?

PERRY. Not yet.

MRS. B. (*goes to desk*). Jest sign here.

PERRY (*signs register*).

MRS. A. (*down L.*). I wonder if the morning bus will be on time?

MRS. B. (*at C.*). It's generally a little late. Are you looking fer some one in on the bus?

MRS. A. Yes.

PERRY (*comes down R.* Mrs. B. *goes up, puts on glasses and reads the register*). We'd like to rest here until the bus comes.

MRS. B. Very well, Mr. Allen, but that'll be extry.

MRS. A. I know I must look a fright. (*To Mrs. B.*) We drove in over the North Road.

MRS. B. Did you come fur?

PERRY. Eighteen miles in two hours and ten minutes.

MRS. A. And the road was awful.

MRS. B. Well, it won't be long before we get a railroad of our own. The P. D. Q. is going to build an extension right across the county.

PERRY. Are they going up the North Road or along the River Road?

MRS. B. Nobody knows fer certain, but I've heard Mr. Bird say the North Road would be the straightest.

PERRY. Well, I suppose Mr. Bird ought to know.

MRS. B. Yes. He rooms here and is quite a friend of the family. He's the richest man in Flagg County.

MRS. A. Could you show me to my room, Mrs. Beavers?

MRS. B. Yes, ma'am. But it will be extry. Walk this way. (*Waddles out C. D.*)

MRS. A. (*laughs*). I don't think I can walk that way, but I'll try. (*Imitates her and exits C. D. laughing.*)

Enter TONY from L.

PERRY (*recognizing him*). Tony Kilbuck!

TONY. Perry Allen! (*They shake hands warmly.*)

PERRY. I didn't know you were in this neck of the woods. I thought you were still dazzling the faculty at college.

TONY. Not me. I'm a regular business man now.

PERRY. What you doing?

TONY. Selling life insurance. By the way, can't we do a little business? (*Oratorically.*) I represent the greatest, grandest, safest, soundest company—

PERRY. No use, Tony. I'm all insured and so is Kit.

TONY. What are you doing here in Flagg Corners?

PERRY. Kit and I drove over this morning to meet—(*suddenly*). By Jove! Who do you think is coming in on the bus?

TONY. (*Insert the name of some prominent citizen of the town in which the play is given.*)

PERRY. No. Jessamine Lee. You remember Jessamine, don't you?

TONY. Jessamine coming here?

PERRY. Yep. Be in this morning. Coming for a week end with Kit. Our place is about eighteen miles up the North Road. Come and join the merry party.

TONY. I can't Perry. I can't neglect my business.

PERRY. You must be awful busy. You and Jessamine used to be real chummy, didn't you?

TONY. That's just it, Perry. She's the only girl I ever saw who'd tempt me to buy a double ticket to Niagara Falls.

PERRY. Then why won't you join us?

TONY. I'll tell you. They tied the can onto me good and hard at college, and I had an awful row with the governor and told him I wouldn't come back until I had made good. And Jessamine (*pause*), well, she thinks I *am* making good.

PERRY. But aren't you?

TONY (*hastily*). Oh, yes, of course. But not quite as good as she thinks I am. I'm going up to Yellville tonight. I've got a hunch that they're just pining for life insurance up at Yellville and I want to be Johnny on the spot.

PERRY. I understand your father is going to build an extension of the road up this way.

TONY. Is he?

PERRY. Folks say it will go straight across the county. Why don't you buy up some of the land around here and then sell it back to your father?

TONY. Buy some land? That's good. What would I buy it with? Sand?

PERRY. It would be a good investment. Do you know this man Bird?

TONY. Barnaby Bird, the richest man in Flagg County. That's the first lesson I learned as soon as I hit this town. That's all they talk about here.

PERRY. He owns nearly all the land around here, doesn't he?

TONY. Yes, and everything else.

PERRY. The rumor is that the road will be built along the old North Road that runs right by my place.

TONY. That'll be a good thing for you.

PERRY. It will (*pause*) not. I'll let you into something, Tony. (*Comes close to him and speaks confidentially.*) The P. D. Q. Extension isn't going over the North Road.

TONY. It isn't? How do you know?

PERRY. Last week Kit and I were taking a midnight, moonlight ride over the River Road, and what do you think we saw?

TONY. What?

PERRY. A bunch of the P. D. Q. surveyors taking the lay of the land.

TONY. Are you sure?

PERRY. You bet I am. Freddy Remson was in charge of the gang.

TONY. Then why don't you buy up some of the River land?

PERRY. For the same reason you don't. Lack of ready cash.

TONY. How long is Jessamine going to be out to your place?

PERRY. Over the Fourth. Come on, Tony, be a sport, come on out.

TONY. I'd like to, Perry, but I won't. Jessamine thinks I'm earning a couple of thousand a month. If she sees me the gag is all off.

PERRY. Don't say anything about the River Road. The landlady just told me that Bird thinks the extension is going over the North Road. He's such a wise old bird, it'll do him good to get fooled.

Enter Mrs. A. from C. D.

MRS. A. Let's take a walk and see what the village looks like, Perry. (*Sees TONY.*) Why, Tony Kilbuck, where on earth did you drop from?

TONY. From the sky in my flying-machine. Just took a drop to get a good view of Flagg Corners.

MRS. A. Believe me, it's some view. I'll bet you knew Jessamine Lee was coming in this morning.

TONY. No, I declare I didn't.

PERRY. I've been trying to get Tony to come out to the place, but he can't see it that way.

MRS. A. Why not?

TONY. Oh, haven't got time. I'm a regular business man, you know.

MRS. A. (*looks at her watch*). She ought to be here now. Let's all go out and meet the bus.

TONY. I'm afraid I can't. Awfully busy this morning, Kit. I've got to meet the directors of the Steenth National Bank at eleven.

MRS. A. You mean the river bank. That's the only bank in Flagg Corners.

Enter BARNABY BIRD, C. D.

BIRD (*meeting TONY, who is near C. E.*). Ah, good morning, young man.

TONY. Yes, it's a lovely morning.

BIRD (*looking at PERRY and Mrs. A., who are down R.*). Friends of your'n, young man?

TONY. Yes.

BIRD (*coming to PERRY*). It's Mr. Allen, ain't it? (*Extends hand.*)

PERRY. Yes.

BIRD. I'm Mr. Bird. Mr. Barnaby Bird. You've heard of me, I reckon?

PERRY. I reckon. (*Crosses him and goes to C. E.*

with Mrs. A.). Come on, Tony, let's get out in the sunshine. (*Exits C. D. with Mrs. A., followed by TONY.*)

BIRD. Insulting young puppy! Wonder why he didn't interduce me to the girl. Maybe he thinks I hain't good enough fer 'em, and me the richest man in Flagg County.

Enter Mrs. B. from L.

MRS. B. (*effusively*). Ah, good morning, Mr. Bird.

BIRD (*looks at her and grunts*).

MRS. B. We're goin' to have some extrys fer dinner today. Mr. Perry Allen and his wife. Do you know 'em?

BIRD. Yes. Stuck-up young fool who bought the Deems place up the North Road. Trying to be a gentleman farmer, he says. Humph! Got about as much sense as a last year's bird's nest. Where's Rosa Bella?

MRS. B. Out in the kitchen helping me. Oh, Mr. Bird, she's such a domestic little thing. I don't know how I kin do without her when she leaves me.

BIRD. What's she goin' to leave you fer?

MRS. B. Oh, I can't expect to keep her forever, Mr. Bird. The young men simply won't give her a minute's peace.

BIRD. Tell her to come here. I want to see her.

MRS. B. (*tearfully*). Oh, Mr. Bird, you ain't goin' to take my little girl away from me, are you?

BIRD. Well, I ain't goin' to kidnap her. I reckon Rosa Bella's old enough to take care of herself.

MRS. B. Yes, but she's all I have, Mr. Bird.

BIRD (*impatiently*). All right, all right.

MRS. B. And there ain't a better girl in Flagg County. (*Crosses to door at L., turns.*) And she's so domestic. She'd make a lovely wife. (*Exits L.*)

BIRD (*picks up newspaper, sits at R. C. and reads*). "It is with great pleasure that we announce the welcome tidings that the P. D. Q. Railroad is soon to begin operations in our midst. They ain't come out officially and said so as yet, but it is understood well enough to make the land owners in this vicinity very anxious to learn whether the Extension is going up the North Road or up the River Road. Whatever the outcome may be, we are glad to welcome the railroad in our midst." (*Speaks.*) The North Road or the River Road, that's the question, hay? Well, I don't give a continental which way they build the road, 'cause I own all the land either way they take it. (*Goes to R. and sits on sofa.*)

Enter ROSA BELLA from L.

ROSA BELLA. Maw said you wanted to see me, Mr. Bird.

BIRD. Yes, I do, Rosa Bella. Set down. I want to have a little talk with you.

ROSA BELLA (*sits at L.*) What can a great big man like you want to say to a little innocent girl like me?

BIRD. I want to ask you about this young whipper-snapper who rooms here.

ROSA BELLA (*surprised*). You mean Mr. Kilbuck?

BIRD. Yes, that's what he calls himself. Do you know anything about him?

ROSA BELLA. Nothing very much. He's a perfect gentleman and has the loveliest nose—

BIRD. I ain't inquiring about his nose. What I want to know is about his business.

ROSA BELLA. He's in the life insurance business.

BIRD. I know that's what he says, but he ain't sold any insurance in this town and I'm beginning to think he's here in disguise.

ROSA BELLA. What would he be in disguise for?

BIRD. That's just what I'm going to find out. Maybe he's an agent for the P. D. Q. Railroad.

ROSA BELLA. He never gets no letters from nobody. And he never writes none neither. I asked down at the postoffice.

BIRD. You seem to take an awful interest in him, Rosa Bella.

ROSA BELLA. You better put it the other way 'round. He takes an awful interest in me.

BIRD. He ain't sparking you, is he?

ROSA BELLA. What do you want to know for? (*Pause.*) Huh? (*Pause.*) You wouldn't care if he was. (*Pause, waiting for him to speak, but he coughs and looks away.*) Now, would you?

BIRD. Yes, I would. I take a lot of interest in you, Rosa Bella, and I wouldn't want you to fall in love with somebody that nobody knows anything about.

ROSA BELLA. Well, I got to fall in love with somebody, ain't I?

BIRD (*rises and comes to her*). I ain't going to have no stranger come down here and cut us all out. (*Clears his throat.*) Rosa Bella, I'm the richest man in Flagg County—

ROSA BELLA. Yes, I heard so.

BIRD. And I ain't as young as I used to be, now am I?

ROSA BELLA. Oh, you ain't old at all, Mr. Bird. You're just right.

BIRD. Now, I've been figgerin' this thing out fer some time and at last I've decided to ask you—

Enter DILLY from L.

DILLY. The bus is driving in, Rosa Bella. I'm go-

ing over to see if there's any traveling men on board.
(*Exits C. D.*)

ROSA BELLA. What were you going to say, Mr. Bird?

BIRD. Don't call me Mr. Bird, Rosa Bella. Call me Barnaby.

ROSA BELLA. Oh, I never would darst to call you so familiar like.

BIRD. You know I'm a rich man, Rosa Bella, and when the P. D. Q. extension is built I reckon I'll be the richest man in this part of the state. Then I'm going into politics and git elected to the legislature.

ROSA BELLA. Oh, that'll be just grand.

BIRD. But what I need most of all is a little—

Enter Mrs. B. from L.

MRS. B. Excuse me. I've got to go and see if there's anyone on the bus who wants dinner. (*Exits C. D.*)

BIRD. I never see such a place for interruptions.

ROSA BELLA. Let's walk over and see the bus come in. (*Gets her hat.*)

BIRD (*rises*). Well, maybe I can git a chance out there.

ROSA BELLA. It's such a lovely morning. Real cool for July.

BIRD. Cool? I'm burning up. Come on! (*Exeunt C. D.*) *Enter TONY and PERRY from L.*

PERRY. What a coward you are, Tony. Sneaking in the back way.

TONY. I'm not a coward. I'm just cautious.

PERRY. Aren't you going to see Jessamine at all?

TONY. I can't, Perry. She thinks I'm in Chicago earning ten thousand a year.

PERRY. Why don't you tell her the truth?

TONY. Tell her that I'm a failure? I can't do it. You go out and meet her and I'll hide in my room until after dinner.

Enter Mrs. A. and JESSAMINE, C. D.

JESSAMINE (*seeing TONY, who is down R., just about to enter door R.*). Tony!

TONY (*goes up C., takes both her hands*). Jessamine! Well, this is a surprise.

JESSAMINE. I thought you were in Chicago.

TONY. Oh, no. I was in Chicago, but I just dropped into Flagg Corners. Business, my dear. Business.

MRS. A. Come on, Perry, let's go and take a look at the carburetor.

PERRY. But, Kit—

MRS. A. I'm sure it needs your attention. Hurry! (*Exits C. D.*)

PERRY (*looks at TONY and JESSAMINE, who are busily talking at R. C. and paying no attention to him*). I guess you're right. I'd better go and look at the carburetor. (*Exit C. D.*)

JESSAMINE. Now, Tony Kilbuck, what does this mean?

TONY. What does what mean?

JESSAMINE. You're being here. And I haven't heard from you for days. I suppose you're engaged to someone else by this time.

TONY. Now, Jessamine—

JESSAMINE. Don't you Jessamine me! I want an explanation.

TONY. Well, I'll tell you the truth.

JESSAMINE. That's just what I want. Tell me everything.

TONY. I'm not a successful business man in Chicago, Jessamine. I'm not a successful business man any place. I'm a failure. The governor was right, and that darned play was all wrong. It isn't in me, that's all. I've been trying to peddle life insurance and I can't even do that. I'm a failure, Jess—a failure!

JESSAMINE. Tony!

TONY. I stand by and see other men succeed who haven't got any more sense than I have. There's a man here named Bird, the richest man in Flagg County—and he's a dazzling success. I have no right to ask you to marry me. I have no right to ask anyone anything. Why, I can't even support myself.

JESSAMINE. Tony Kilbuck, how dare you?

TONY (*puzzled*). How dare I what?

JESSAMINE. How dare you insult the man I love?

TONY. Jess!

JESSAMINE. I mean it. You've been handicapped by having things too easy for you from the very start. You thought all you had to do was to whistle and the little bird Success would drop into your hand.

TONY. That's right. That's just what I thought. But I know better now. The little bird Success has got to be coaxed.

JESSAMINE. And the only way to coax it is by good, hard work. Now we're going to work together.

TONY. You're not going to throw me over?

JESSAMINE. Throw you over? (*Comes closer to him, takes his hand.*) Why, boy, I believe in you. I believe in you, even if you don't believe in yourself. I know you can win. You're the son of your father. The son of the president of the P. D. Q. Railroad, the son of Cyrus B. Kilbuck, and you're going to win! You're going to win! You're going to win!

TONY (*throws up head and speaks with determination*). You're right, Jessamine, I'm going to win!

JESSAMINE. You must go into some other business right away. Have you thought of anything?

TONY. If I only had a little money I might buy some land around here. The road is going to build an extension right across the county.

JESSAMINE. How much do you need?

TONY. Oh, it's out of the question. It would take three or four thousand dollars.

JESSAMINE. It would. (*Turns, goes to desk, takes check book from purse, deliberately writes check and signs it.*)

TONY. What are you doing?

JESSAMINE. I'm going to lend you five thousand dollars.

TONY. Oh, no—I couldn't—

JESSAMINE. It's a business proposition. You've got to pay me six per cent.

TONY. But I can't give you any security.

JESSAMINE (*holds up third finger of her left hand, showing solitaire*). See that ring?

TONY. Our engagement ring.

JESSAMINE. That's my security. Here's your check, Mr. Kilbuck.

TONY. Miss Lee, I thank you. (*Bows.*)

JESSAMINE. Don't mention it. (*Bows.*)

TONY (*eagerly*). You see it's this way. All the hicks around here know the extension is going to be built, but there are two roads, the North Road and the River Road. *They* think the extension is coming over the North Road.

JESSAMINE. And isn't it?

TONY. Not on your life. It's coming in over the

River Road. I've got inside information. Now I'll buy up that River Road land for a song, hold it and then sell it to father for half a million. Oh, it's a great scheme.

JESSAMINE. Tony, you're a wonder.

Enter PERRY and MRS. A., C. D.

PERRY. Can we come in?

TONY. Oh, yes. Awfully glad to see you. (*Down R.*)

MRS. A. Now perhaps you'll reconsider and accept my invitation out to the house. (*Joining TONY and JESSAMINE down R.*)

TONY. That's just what I was going to ask you. We'll stay a month. We've just been getting engaged over again.

Enter DILLY from C. D.

DILLY. Dinner'll be ready in about fifteen minutes. (*Exit L.*)

JESSAMINE. I must look a perfect fright.

MRS. A. Come with me. My things are in the little room over at the side of the house. (*Exit C. D., followed by JESSAMINE.*)

TONY. Perry, are you sure about that dope on the River Road?

PERRY. Dead sure. I wish I had three or four thousand lying around loose. I'd make a fortune.

TONY (*at R. door*). Come on in my room. I want to talk to you about it. (*Exit R., followed by PERRY.*)

Enter from C. D., MRS. B., followed by BRUCE.

MRS. B. Come in and set down. I'll see if I can find Mr. Bird for you. You wouldn't want to stay for dinner, would you?

BRUCE. No, it's impossible. I've got to ride over to the junction and catch the noon train for the city. It's very important that I see Mr. Bird at once. There isn't a minute to spare.

MRS. B. Well, I'll see if I can see him down town. (*Exits C. D.*)

Enter DILLY from L.

DILLY. Dinner'll be ready in about fifteen minutes.

BRUCE. I'm not going to be here for dinner.

DILLY. Oh, hain't you? We're going to have pie. You'd better stay. Hain't no other boarding house in town.

BRUCE. No, I can't stay.

DILLY. Well, if you don't you've got only yourself to thank. That's all. (*Exit L.*)

Enter BIRD, C. D.

BIRD. You looking for me, young man? I'm Barnaby Bird.

BRUCE (*shakes hands with him*). My name is Ferguson, Mr. Bird. Bruce Ferguson. I am a clerk in the P. D. Q. general offices.

BIRD. Yes, yes. I got your letter. What you want with me? What you want with me?

BRUCE. I understand you own some land around here, Mr. Bird.

BIRD. Well, what about it, what about it?

BRUCE. And if the P. D. Q. extension runs across your land it will naturally make it more valuable.

BIRD. Well, I know that. Are you here in the interest of the road?

BRUCE. Not at all. I'm here in my own interest. Now, I know just exactly where the extension is going.

BIRD. You do? Well, where *is* it going?

BRUCE. How much will you pay for the information?

BIRD. Humph! (*Looks at him a moment, pauses, then:*) You ain't such a fool as you look. How much you want?

BRUCE. The information ought to be worth about a thousand dollars to you.

BIRD. Go 'long, sonny, you ain't talking to me.

BRUCE. Suppose somebody comes along and buys up the land. They could hold it at a fancy price.

BIRD. I know that.

BRUCE. I have here the blue print drawings of the proposed extension.

BIRD (*eagerly*). You have? Let me see them.

BRUCE. My price is one thousand dollars.

BIRD. I won't pay it. The extension will either go by the way of the North Road or by the River Road. I own most of the land either way. So I don't think I'll worry.

BRUCE. And yet if you knew exactly and for a certainty which way it was going, you might unload the other land on the innocent bystander.

BIRD. That's a good idea. You ain't such a fool after all. See here! I'll give you five hundred dollars to know exactly which way the extension is going.

BRUCE. It's a bargain.

BIRD. I'll pay you the money after I sell my land.

BRUCE. Nothing doing. You'll pay me right here and now. I've got to hurry as I must be back in town to-night. Come, is it a bargain?

BIRD. Let me see them blue print things.

BRUCE. Certainly.

BIRD (*reaches for them*).

BRUCE. Just as soon as you hand me the check.

BIRD (*sits at desk and writes check*). You sure you got the right dope?

BRUCE. Sure? Well, I reckon I am. I took all the notes at the directors' meeting last week. Mrs. Van Dyne will be down to see you tomorrow.

BIRD. Mrs. Van Dyne?

BRUCE. She's the agent for the road. She always buys the land for 'em.

BIRD. I remember her. I saw her the day I was at the office. Pretty little woman, ain't she?

BRUCE. She's one in a thousand.

BIRD (*finishes writing check*). Five hundred dollars! It's a good round sum. Now, gimme the blue print things.

BRUCE (*looks at check*). Beg pardon, Mr. Bird, you've forgotten to sign.

BIRD. So I did. (*Takes check.*) Gettin' careless in my old age. (*Signs.*) There you are. But if you play me a trick, young man, this check will go straight to Cyrus B. Kilbuck, the president of the road.

BRUCE. I'll act square with you. See (*exhibits blue prints*) this represents Flagg County. Here is the River Road and here is the North Road. The extension will enter the county at this point (*points to print*) and will cross the county right here (*tracing route*) and will branch out toward Millertown right here.

BIRD. Then it's going to follow the North Road.

BRUCE. Precisely. Right straight across the county.

BIRD. But the surveyors was out looking at the River Road.

BRUCE. Both roads were surveyed, but the directors finally decided on the North Road as the straightest route. Now, are you satisfied?

BIRD. I reckon I am. If they take the North Road

my fortune is made 'cause I own all the land from here to here. (*Points.*)

BRUCE (*rolls up blue prints*). Look out for Mrs. Van Dyne. She'll try to get the land as cheap as she can.

BIRD. Leave that to me. I might be a Bird, but I ain't no mark. Fifty thousand is my price and I won't drop a penny.

BRUCE. That's right. (*Rises.*) Glad I met you, Mr. Bird. (*Shakes hands.*)

BIRD. When did you say this Van Dyne lady was coming?

BRUCE. She'll be here tomorrow or the next day. They're going to start operations at once. (*Gives blue prints to Bird.*)

BIRD. You'd better stay to dinner.

BRUCE. Much obliged, but I got to be back in town to-night. I'm going to drive over to the Junction and catch the noon train. Good morning.

BIRD. Morning.

BRUCE (*at C. door*). Remember, mum's the word. (*Exit C. D.*)

BIRD. The North Road, hey? And I own the right of way clean across the county. Dilly! (*Puts blue prints on table.*)

DILLY *sticks her head in at L.*

DILLY. Huh?

BIRD. How long before dinner is ready?

DILLY. In about fifteen minutes, Mr. Bird. We're a-goin' to have pie. (*Exit L.*)

Enter TONY and PERRY from R.

TONY. Mr. Bird, I'd like a word with you.

BIRD. Go as fur as you like.

TONY. You own the land on either side of the River Road, don't you?

BIRD. Most of it. Why?

TONY. I was thinking of buying a little land, that's all.

BIRD. How much you want?

TONY. Just a strip across the county on either side of the road.

BIRD. What you going to do with it? Start a landscape garden?

TONY. No, I'm going to plant catalpa trees.

BIRD. I dunno's I want to sell that land. You see the P. D. Q. Extension might go down the River Road.

TONY. Oh, no; not a chance in the world. They're going by the North Road. It's straighter.

BIRD. How do you know?

TONY. I don't know. But is your River Road land for sale?

BIRD. Anything I got is fer sale, young man. I'd jest as soon sell to you as to the railroad.

TONY. The land is not worth very much, is it?

BIRD. I wouldn't take a cent less'n twenty-five hundred.

TONY. Have you got a clear title?

BIRD. Clear? Well, I reckon I have. Come over to the County Office and look it up if you want to.

TONY. That's a good idea. Get your hat, I'm in a hurry.

BIRD. But we can go after dinner.

TONY. A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, Mr. Bird.

BIRD. Oh, you think I'm a bird in the hand, do you?

TONY. I always like to strike while the iron is hot. Come on.

BIRD. I'll go ye. (*All start toward C. D.*) You sure it's the River Road you want, are you?

TONY. Yes, that's it. A strip clear across the county.

BIRD. Then I'm your man. Come on. (*Exits C. D.*)

TONY (*shakes hands with PERRY*). It's all right, Perry. It's all right. I've caught the bird. I'm a regular business man at last. (*Exit C. D. followed by PERRY.*)

Enter MRS. B. from L.

MRS. B. (*speaking toward L. as she enters*). Now, you hurry up and set the table, Dilly. These city folks want everything right on time.

DILLY (*outside*). Yes'm. It'll be ready in about fifteen minutes.

MRS. B. (*looks around*). I wonder where everybody is.

Enter ROSA BELLA from C. D.

ROSA BELLA. Where's Mr. Bird, maw?

MRS. B. He was in here jest a minute ago. Did you have a pleasant walk, Rosa Bella?

ROSA BELLA. Oh, kind o'.

MRS. B. How fur did he git?

ROSA BELLA. He said he was rich and that he needed a wife.

MRS. B. Is that all?

ROSA BELLA. That's all. Jest as he said that he was trying to look into my eyes and he stepped in a big mud puddle in front of the Postoffice, and nearly lost his balance. Then he got mad and shut up.

MRS. B. Oh, ain't men the most exasperating critters on earth? Talk about mules and setting hens!

ROSA BELLA. I told him I was real domestic.

MRS. B. That's right, and go strong on economy, too. There ain't nothin' pleases a man as much as economy.

Enter MRS. A. *and* JESSAMINE *from C. D.*

MRS. A. Shall we wait in here?

MRS. B. Yes, set down. This is my daughter, Rosa Bella. Dilly!

DILLY (*sticks her head in at L.*). Ma'am?

MRS. B. How long before dinner'll be ready?

DILLY. In about fifteen minutes. (*Exit L.*)

MRS. B. I have to see to the cabbage. Excuse me! (*Exit L.*)

JESSAMINE. What's happened to the men?

MRS. A. (*goes to door R. and raps*). Perry! Oh, Perry!

ROSA BELLA. I think they've gone down town to look at the drug store. This is a dry town, you know, and the men folks are always looking in at the drug store. (*To JESSAMINE.*) My, that's a awful pretty dress you got on.

JESSAMINE (*distantly*). Thank you.

ROSA BELLA. I'm jest getting some new things made and I think I'll have two or three made after that pattern. The goods is real tasty, too. Must have cost as much as forty cents a yard. It don't set very good in front, though.

MRS. A. (*indignantly*). Indeed it does, Jessamine; it's a dream.

ROSA BELLA. Oh, it might look right to some folks, but I got a awful keen eye for the setting of a dress.

Enter MRS. B. *from L.*

MRS. B. Dinner'll be ready in about fifteen minutes. Jest make yourselves to home. Rosa Bella will amuse you. (*Exit L.*)

Enter TONY and PERRY from C. D.

TONY (*crossing to JESSAMINE and Mrs. A. down R.*). Congratulate me, girls, I have just finished a big business deal. At last I'm going to make things hum.

JESSAMINE. Oh, I'm so glad. (*They converse in pantomime.*)

PERRY (*at R. C.*) Tony has just bought the River Road strip.

MRS. A. He has? Good boy. That strip is worth half a million.

ROSA BELLA (*at L. C., to PERRY*). Say, what's become of Mr. Bird?

PERRY. He isn't coming back for dinner. He's content with the drug store.

ROSA BELLA. I guess I won't wait no longer. (*Exits L.*)

MRS. A. I'm nearly starved. The hired girl has been saying dinner would be ready in fifteen minutes for the past two hours.

Enter MRS. B. from L.

MRS. B. Come in to dinner. (*Exit L.*)

MRS. A. Come on, Jessamine, I can't wait another minute. (*Exit with JESSAMINE, followed closely by PERRY.*)

TONY (*at table*). I can't eat, I can't drink, I can't think—I'm too excited. I own every inch of the River Road and I'll make the Governor shell out half a million for it. I'll show him who's a business man! I'll bet in ten years I'll have more money than he has. I'll buy the controlling interest in the Road and move to New

York. I'll— (*sees the blue print. Plaintive music*).
What's this? The Surveyors' Plan of the P. D. Q.
Extension. It crosses the county from here to here.
(*Points.*) It's the North Road. I'm ruined, ruined!
(*Puts blue print in inside pocket. Noise and laughter
from dining room at L. He crosses and looks at them
through door. Pause.*) Oh, there must be some mis-
take, or it's a horrible dream. (*Takes out print again,
looks at it.*) No, there it is in black and white. Gee,
this is tough, old kid, this is tough! (*Sinks in chair,
staring straight before him. Pause.*) Old Bird was too
cute for me. (*Sadly and slowly.*) And—now—I've—
got to—begin all over again! Just when I thought
I'd coaxed the bird into my hand, I find he's farther
away than ever. Tough luck, old kid, tough luck!
(*Sobs.*)

CURTAIN VERY SLOW.

AN EARLY BIRD

THE THIRD ACT.

SCENE: *Same as Act II. Furniture, etc., as in Act II.*

TIME: *About 1:00 p. m.*

LIGHT: *On full throughout the act.*

No music at rise.

Enter PERRY, MRS. A., JESSAMINE *and* TONY *from L.*

MRS. A. (*sitting on sofa down L.*) Perry, I was ashamed of you at the table. You ate six roasting ears.

PERRY (*sitting beside her*). Sure, I did. Mrs. Beavers' roasting ears were worth eating. And the string beans, right off the vines.

JESSAMINE (*down R. with TONY*). Vines? String beans don't grow on vines, Perry. I thought you were a farmer.

PERRY. What do they grow on, Miss Encyclopedia?

JESSAMINE. They grow on bushes, of course. (*Others laugh.*) Don't they, Tony?

TONY. Sure, they do. And sometimes the bushes grow as big as trees, especially in Kansas.

JESSAMINE. Tony!

MRS. A. And I never saw such a teeny, weeny little dining room. It was like eating in a touring-car.

PERRY. More like a lunch wagon in the city. Remember the old lunch wagon at college, Tony?

TONY. Sure. Wasn't much room in there, was there?

PERRY. The minute you opened the door you'd beg everybody's pardon, and everybody'd beg yours. Then

you'd go inside and stand on everybody's feet but your own, and you'd finish up by treading on your own toes and begging your own pardon.

TONY. That was a great old wagon, Perry. I wonder if Old George still runs it.

PERRY. The last time I was in there there was such a crowd that the man next to me said, "Excuse me, but will you please take your face out of my face?" I hadn't missed my face until he called my attention to it. He had the most open countenance of any man I have ever seen—it was wide open. He was filling it with blackberry pie. But he couldn't swallow it in there. There wasn't room enough. Anything with a crust on, you'd chew it up, fill your face, and swallow it when you got home. (*All laugh.*)

MRS. B. *appears at door L., unobserved.*

MRS. A. Oh, Perry!

PERRY. I didn't dare turn my head for fear I'd bite into someone else's lunch. The man next to me was eating his own necktie and didn't know it.

MRS. B. (*comes down C., and speaks to PERRY*). I'd have you understand, sir, that although my dining room is small, it is amply sufficient for the occasion, and if you don't like it you can leave.

PERRY (*rises*). But, Mrs. Beavers, I wasn't talking about your dining room at all. I was telling about a lunch wagon at college.

MRS. B. Lunch wagon? Humph! I ain't as green as I look, young man. I never heard tell of a lunch wagon.

MRS. A. (*rises*). Come on, Jessamine, let's take a look at the garden. (*Goes to C. D.*)

MRS. B. Maybe if you're going to be here for supper I can serve you out in the yard.

PERRY. Oh, no. I don't think we'll be here for supper. Awfully good of you, just the same. (*Takes out cigar.*) You don't object to smoking, do you, Mrs. Beavers?

MRS. B. I can't say as I do, but smoking in the house'll be extry. (*Exits L.*)

JESSAMINE (*at door C. with Mrs. A.*). Don't you want to see the garden, Tony?

TONY. We'll join you in a minute. (*Exeunt JESSAMINE and Mrs. A., C. D.*)

PERRY. Just as soon as it gets a little cooler we'll start for the shack.

TONY (*seated down R.*). I don't think I can go, Perry.

PERRY (*goes to him*). Say, what's the matter with you? Why so glum? You look as if you'd lost your last friend on earth instead of just happening to run across your fiancee. What's wrong?

TONY. It's my luck, Perry. My usual streak of blue Monday luck.

PERRY. Luck? I call it good luck. Here you meet Jessamine and you pull off a big business deal all in the same morning, and then you kick about your luck.

TONY (*sarcastically*). Yes, that was a great business deal, that was.

PERRY. What do you want, the earth? You bought the River Road, didn't you?

TONY. Oh, yes, I bought it, all right.

PERRY. Well, it's yours. You can ask them any price you want.

TONY. What'll I do with it now I've got it?

PERRY. Sell it. Sell it to the P. D. Q. road for half a million.

TONY. Nothing doing, Perry. I've been stung again.

PERRY. Stung?

TONY (*rises, crosses to table, picks up blue print*). Look here.

PERRY (*looks over his shoulder*). That's a blue print of the North Road.

TONY. And that's where they're going to build the railroad. My River Road isn't worth a penny.

PERRY. Oh, there must be some mistake.

TONY (*points to corner of blue print*). Look there. Do you know what that is?

PERRY. Looks like a Chinese war-poem to me.

TONY. That's the Governor's signature of approval. That little mark means that the directors of the P. D. Q. Railroad have decided that the extension is to be built over the *North* Road, that little mark means that my River Road property isn't worth a continental, that little mark means that I am a little mark, too, it means that I'm a rotten business man, it means that I'll have to begin all over, Perry. It means that I'm a failure.

PERRY. I have an idea.

TONY. You're just full of ideas, aren't you?

PERRY. See this man Bird and sell him the River Road back again.

TONY. This man Bird knew just exactly which way the Extension was going when he sold me that property. He played me for a sucker, and won the game. He's got my money and I (*bitterly*), I've got the River Road.

PERRY. Maybe you could persuade your father to change his plans and run the extension over your land.

TONY. Nothing doing with father. And besides, the

directors have chosen the other road. These plans have been approved.

PERRY (*takes his hand*). Tough luck, old man, tough luck.

JESSAMINE *appears in C. D.*

JESSAMINE. Aren't you coming, Tony?

TONY. Not just yet.

JESSAMINE (*comes to him down R.*) What's the matter? What's happened? Didn't you get the land you wanted?

TONY. Oh, yes, I got the land all right, and I got stung when I got it.

JESSAMINE. Stung?

PERRY (*L. of table*). Tony bought the River Road land and now we find that the extension is going in over the North Road.

JESSAMINE. Well, buy the North Road.

PERRY. Easier said than done. Mr. Bird owns the North Road. (*Goes to C. D.*) Where's Kit?

JESSAMINE. Under the big tree at the side of the house.

PERRY. I'll find her. Some of these Flagg Corner beaux are liable to kidnap Kit if I'm not there to protect her. (*Exit C. D.*)

JESSAMINE. Don't worry, Tony, it will all come out all right. Even if you didn't make a success of this deal, there's lots of other things.

TONY. You're right, Jessamine. I'm going to be a good loser. If I got stung on the River Road I'm going to turn around and sting someone else. That's modern business. (*Takes her hands.*) You believe in me, don't you?

JESSAMINE. Believe in you, Tony? Do you doubt me?

TONY. No, Jessamine, I don't. That's all. (*Shakes hands with her.*) Thank you. (*Goes rapidly to C. D.*)

JESSAMINE. What are you going to do?

TONY (*loudly and assertively*). Do? I'm going to show you the stuff that's in me! I'm going to be a man! I'm going to be a success. I'm going down town and do one of two things, either sell the River Road and buy the North Road or throw Barnaby Bird in the river. (*Quick exit C. D.*)

JESSAMINE (*after slight pause, speaking to audience*). And he'll do it, too. (*Picks up the blue prints.*) "Proposed plan for the extension of the P. D. Q. Railroad through Flagg County. The North Road. Accepted, Cyrus B. Kilbuck, President." (*Looks up from reading.*) And this Bird person knew it all the time. (*Indignantlly.*) Oh, I'd like to meet him and tell him just what I think of him. I'd make him give us our money back, at any rate.

Enter ROSA BELLA from L.

ROSA BELLA. Oh, I beg pardon, I didn't know the parlor was occupied.

JESSAMINE. Don't mind me. I was just looking over these papers. (*Replaces blue prints on table.*)

ROSA BELLA. What are they?

JESSAMINE. Something about the railroad extension through this county.

ROSA BELLA. They must belong to Mr. Bird. He's bought up all the land around here and is going to sell it to the Road. He's a awful good business man, Mr. Bird is.

JESSAMINE. Yes, I know what a good business man he is. I'd like to meet him.

ROSA BELLA. You would? He's engaged to me.

JESSAMINE. I mean on business. I'd like to talk to him about this North Road that he owns.

ROSA BELLA. He ought to be here now. I dunno why he wasn't here for dinner.

JESSAMINE. He seems quite an influential man hereabouts.

ROSA BELLA. Influential? Him? I guess he is. He's the richest man in Flagg County.

JESSAMINE. And you're engaged to him? Congratulations.

ROSA BELLA. Well, we ain't exactly engaged as yet, that is, the ring ain't bought, but we've come to a pretty good understanding. I've decided that we're going to move to the city just after the wedding. Anyone can see that I belong in a bigger place than Flagg Corners.

Enter DILLY from L.

DILLY. Your maw wants you!

ROSA BELLA (*to JESSAMINE*). That's always the way. Just as soon as I git comfortable, maw wants me. (*Crosses to door L.*) I'll tell Mr. Bird that you'd like to speak to him.

JESSAMINE. Thank you.

ROSA BELLA. On business, mind! On business.

JESSAMINE. Yes, concerning the North Road.

ROSA BELLA. Maybe he'll have time to see you this afternoon.

JESSAMINE. I hope so. We're going away about sundown.

ROSA BELLA. What does maw want, Dilly?

DILLY. The dressmaker's come, and they want you to try-on.

ROSA BELLA. Where are they?

DILLY. Upstairs in the back room.

ROSA BELLA. I'll go right up. (*Exit L.*)

JESSAMINE. Please let me know when Mr. Bird comes. I'll be out on the lawn. (*Gives her a quarter.*)

DILLY. What's this fur?

JESSAMINE. Just a little remembrance, that's all.

DILLY. But it's a hull two-bits.

JESSAMINE. Yes. Get yourself a nice pink ribbon to match the roses in your cheeks. (*Exit C. D.*)

DILLY (*looks at quarter*). Well, I'll be dog-goned! She done gimme two bits. I wisht she'd eat dinner here every day. (*Arranges table, puts chairs in place, etc.*) If she ain't a fallen angel dropped right down out'n Heaven, then I never saw one. Two bits! That'll almost pay my way into the circus. (*Sings.*) "It was a happy day, it was a happy day—" (*Works vigorously.*)

Enter BARNABY BIRD from C. D. His hat is on the back of his head, necktie awry, and he is slightly intoxicated. He carries two quart-sized bottles supposed to be full of champagne. He comes in C. D. happily singing and comes down C. a little unsteadily. NOTE: Do not play this scene too broadly. BIRD is simply "happy" and a little unsteady on his feet. Avoid any suggestion of coarseness.

BIRD (*coming down C. unsteadily, singing*):

"Every time I come to town,
Boys start kickin' my dawg around,
Makes no difference if he is a hound,
They gotta quit kickin' my dawg around."

DILLY (*who has been stooping on the other side of the table, picking up paper, etc., from floor, suddenly confronts BIRD*). Well!

BIRD (*not having seen DILLY before, is much startled by her sudden rising from the other side of the table, he looks at her a moment, rises on his heels, blinks at her, pauses, then says calmly:*) Quite well, thank you.

DILLY. If it ain't Mr. Bird!

BIRD. Yes, my little Daffy-down-Dilly, it's Mr. Bird.

DILLY (*bashful business, twisting apron, turning in R. toe*). Now you stop making up to me.

BIRD. Never thought of such a thing, Daffy-down-Dilly. But I'm jusht, jusht too happy for words.

DILLY. You're too late for dinner. We had extrys and there ain't nothin' left. Heavings, how they did eat! I only got two pieces of pie.

BIRD. Never mind, Daffy-down-Dilly. (*Waves bottles.*) What's pie? I shay, what's pie?

DILLY. Laws, Mr. Bird, I dunno what you're talking about. Pie's pie.

BIRD. It'sh beneath our notice, Daffy-down-Dilly. Pie, indeed! I've got two quarts of champagne.

DILLY. What's champagne?

BIRD. Champagne, my dear Daffy, is the conshe-n-trated essence of the joys and bubblings of life. And we're going to have some of the bubblings. Here, put these on the ice.

DILLY. It ain't spirits, is it?

BIRD. Spirits? Banish the thought. It's joy water, Daffy, from the Isles of Happiness.

DILLY. Is it anything like ginger ale?

BIRD. There's nothing like it. I'm shelebrating to-day, Daffy. Shelebrating. Un'erstand? Take it out and put it on the ice.

DILLY. Are you going to drink it all, Mr. Bird? There's about a gallon of the stuff.

BIRD. I'll let you taste it.

DILLY. Me? No, sir. I'm the corresponding secretary of the Young Ladies' Cold Water Society, I am. And I don't drink nothin' that comes in bottles. (*Crosses to door L.*) I ain't that kind of a girl. (*Starts to exit L.*)

BIRD. Just a moment, little Daffy-down-Dilly. Come here. (*At R. C.*)

DILLY (*coming to him slowly*). What you want, Mr. Bird?

BIRD. I've just had a stroke of luck today. Shold the River Road property for about ten times what it's worth and got a sure thing on the P. D. Q. Extension. Sho I'm going to have shel'bration.

DILLY (*looking at him severely*). It's my idea that you've been having your hair cut at the Temperance barber shop. You ain't right.

BIRD. Don't shay anything about it to Roshy Bella. 'Cause Roshy Bella, she's my girl. Here's a dollar for you. (*Gives her a dollar.*)

DILLY. A dollar! Smothering Seedcakes, this shore is my lucky day.

BIRD (*puts arm around her waist*). I'm going to start in and have big shel'bration, Daffy-down-Dilly.

Enter ROSA BELLA from L.

ROSA BELLA. Dilly! Mr. Bird! I am surprised.

BIRD (*stands on heels, looks at her, pauses, blinks*). Roshy Bella, I am somewhat surprised myself. I was just giving Daffy-down-Dilly a little spiritual consolation. Go on, now, Dilly, and put it on the ice. That's a good little girl.

DILLY. Yes, sir. That's just what I was going to do. (*Exits L.*)

ROSA BELLA (*down L.*). Barnaby Bird, all is over between us!

BIRD (*taking her hand.*) Now, Roshy Bella.

ROSA BELLA (*snatching her hand away*). Don't try to soft-soap me. You was flirting with the hired girl. I'm ashamed of you.

BIRD. No, Roshy Bella, you wrong me. I was only shel'brating, that's all.

ROSA BELLA. What was you celebrating?

BIRD. Big business deal I just pulled off this morning. Oh, I'm a dabster hand at big business deals. Roshy Bella. I sold the River Road for over ten times its real value and I've got the North Road all ready to sell just as soon as Mrs. Van Dyne comes along.

ROSA BELLA. Who is Mrs. Van Dyne?

BIRD. She is a pretty little lady who works for the P. D. Q. Railroad. She goes out and buys up the land for them when they want to make extensions.

ROSA BELLA. Is she a blonde? (*Give accurate description of the actress playing the part of JESSAMINE.*)

BIRD. That's the little lady. I met her once when I went up to the city to call on the president of the road.

ROSA BELLA. If that's the lady, she's here now.

BIRD. Here? Here in Flagg Corners?

ROSA BELLA. Here in this house. She came this morning and was here for dinner. She said she wanted to see you on business about the North Road.

BIRD. Where is she? I've got everything all ready for her. Roshy Bella, here's where I make half a million dollars.

ROSA BELLA. I came in here after dinner and she was standing right there by the table looking at them blue picture things.

BIRD. Looking at the blue prints? I ought to've put them in my room.

ROSA BELLA. Then she said she wanted to see you on business about the road.

BIRD. Where is she now?

ROSA BELLA. Out in the yard. I'll find her for you. (*Exit C. D.*)

BIRD. Thish is certainly my lucky day. First I sell the River Road and now I'm going to sell the North Road. Barnaby Bird, you're a wise old bird all right, all right.

DILLY (*heard outside L., screaming*). Oh, Mr. Bird! Mr. Bird! Help, help!

She enters from L., vainly trying to stop the effervescing from an open bottle of champagne. She runs wildly around the stage with her hand over the mouth of the bottle. Note: Have the druggist prepare the bottle with some fluid that will readily effervesce when the bottle is opened.

BIRD (*running around after her*). What'sh matter? Daffy, what'sh matter?

DILLY. Take it, take it. It's all runing out. (*Gives him the bottle. He tries to stop the flow and finally puts it to his mouth and drinks.*) Lawsy, they must a stuffed 'bout seven gallons in a one-quart bottle. I never seen such fizin' in all my born days. I cut the string and the cork exploded right to the ceiling. Miz' Beavers thought she was shot and fell into the pan o' bread dough. I never see such carryin'-on in all my born days.

BIRD. That'sh all right, Dilly. It wasn't all wasted. Where'sh other bottle?

DILLY. On the ice.

BIRD. Well, don't open it till I come.

DILLY. Open it? I wouldn't touch it with a ten-foot pole. It worse'n dynamite. And me the Secretary of the Young Ladies' Cold Water Society. (*Exits L.*)

Enter JESSAMINE from C. D.

JESSAMINE (*coming down C. to BIRD*). Mr. Bird?

BIRD. Yes, ma'am, I'm Mr. Bird. I met you in the city last March. In Mr. Kilbuck's office. Don't you remember?

JESSAMINE (*shaking hands with him*). Of course I do. You wanted to see Mr. Kilbuck about some land you had, didn't you?

BIRD. Yes, and he referred me to you. He said you bought all the land for the company.

JESSAMINE. I?

BIRD. Sure. He said you were quite capable in your way and that the whole transaction was in your hands.

JESSAMINE. Did Mr. Kilbuck say that?

BIRD. Yes, ma'am, Mr. Kilbuck said that.

JESSAMINE. Let me see, you own most of the property around here, don't you?

BIRD. I reckon I own the piece of property you're most interested in.

JESSAMINE. The River Road?

BIRD. The *River Road*?

JESSAMINE. Yes, the strip of land running by the river. That's the property I'm most interested in.

BIRD. Do you mean to tell me that the P. D. Q. extension is going to be built along the River Road?

JESSAMINE. I said nothing about the P. D. Q. extension, Mr. Bird. But the property I am interested in is the River Road.

BIRD (*takes blue prints and looks at them*). Are you sure you ain't making a mistake? Sure it ain't the North Road you want?

JESSAMINE. The North Road? Certainly not. I don't care a rap for the North Road.

BIRD (*tears blue print once across*). I've been stung. I wish I had that young puppy here who sold me these blue prints. I'd pulverize him, I would. And I thought I had a dead sure thing.

JESSAMINE. You own the River Road, don't you, Mr. Bird?

BIRD. Well, I did own the River Road, but the fact is I sold it this morning.

JESSAMINE (*rises*). Very well. That's all. I must find the owner of the River Road.

BIRD. Can't I sell you the North Road? I'll sell it cheap.

JESSAMINE. I'm not in the market for grazing land, Mr. Bird. By the way, who owns the River Road now?

BIRD. A young life insurance agent that's here. Stay, wait a minute! I'll see this young man and buy the River Road back again. You don't care which of us sells it to you, do you?

JESSAMINE. Not in the least.

BIRD. He said he wanted to set out some catalpa trees. Maybe I can swap him the North Road for the River Road. The catalpas would do just as good on the North Road. Now, Mrs. Van Dyne, you're sure it's the River Road you want, are you?

JESSAMINE. Mrs. Van Dyne?

BIRD. Yes, I know you. You can't fool the wise old bird. I knowed you when I seen you in Mr. Kilbuck's private office.

Enter TONY, C. D.

TONY. Mr. Bird! You're just the man I've been looking for.

BIRD. And you're just the man I've been looking for.

TONY. Do you want to sell me another strip of land?

BIRD. Sure. How do you like the North Road?

TONY (*starts*). The North Road?

BIRD. It's just as good for catalpas as the River Road.

TONY. Do you want to sell the North Road?

BIRD. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll make a clean cut trade. I'll give you the North Road clear across the county for the strip of River Road I sold you this morning.

TONY (*looks at JESSAMINE, who shakes her head, unseen by BIRD*). Well—er—(*sees JESSAMINE shaking her head*). I don't think I'll make the trade.

BIRD. How much will you take to boot?

TONY. I don't know. (*Thinks.*) That River Road property just about suits me.

BIRD. Say five hundred dollars to boot?

TONY. Couldn't think of it

BIRD. Six hundred—eight hundred—a thousand dollars?

TONY. I don't know. (*Looks at JESSAMINE, who nods her head.*) Will you pay me a thousand dollars cash down?

BIRD. I will. I'll write the check right here. (*Goes to desk.*) What do you say?

TONY. I'll do it. (*BIRD writes check. TONY shakes hands delightedly with JESSAMINE unseen by BIRD.*)

BIRD. Now you just sign this note of transfer right here.

TONY. Right there. (*Signs.*)

BIRD. Now the River Road belongs to me.

TONY. And the North Road belongs to me.

BIRD. We'd better go over to the County Land office and make the transfer. I want to have everything done in a legal way.

TONY. Are you sure I can raise catalpas on the North Road?

BIRD. You can raise anything you want.

TONY. I think I'll raise the price. (*To JESSAMINE.*) Who says I'm not a regular business man?

BIRD. The land office is right down town. Come on. (*Exits C. D.*)

TONY. Jessamine, you're a wonder! (*Runs out C. D.*)

Enter Mrs. B. from L.

MRS. B. Excuse me, have you seen anything of my Rosa Bella?

JESSAMINE. I think she's playing croquet out in front.

MRS. B. And the dressmaker waiting for her upstairs. What with her and Dilly and Mr. Bird with his bottles of loaded dynamite, I ain't got a whole nerve left in my body. (*Calls.*) Rosy Bella! Rosy! (*Exit C. D.*)

JESSAMINE (*taking up the pieces of the blue print dropped by BIRD*). Poor old Mr. Bird. You've been a wise old owl, Mr. Bird, but at last we've caught you. A bird in the hand is worth a whole nest in the tree.

Enter Mrs. B., ROSA and Mrs. A. from C. D.

MRS. B. You just hurry upstairs, Rosy Bella. The dressmaker can't wait all day. And me with biscuits in the oven. (*Exit L.*)

ROSA BELLA. Did you see Mr. Bird?

JESSAMINE. Oh, yes, thank you. I saw him and he was well worth seeing.

ROSA BELLA. Mr. Bird ain't what you might call a handsome man, but he's got more money than any man in Flagg County. And he's got real taking ways.

JESSAMINE. Yes, that's one thing I noticed particularly, his taking ways.

ROSA BELLA. Excuse me. I've got to get fitted.
(*Exit L.*)

MRS. A. Jessamine, what's all the excitement? Tony just interrupted our croquet game and took my husband away to be a witness. I hope he isn't going to do anything desperate.

JESSAMINE. Oh, no; not at all. He's only going to prove that he's a regular business man.

Enter DILLY from L., wearing hat and carrying basket.

DILLY. Dozen and a half of eggs, can of baking powder, new mop, and fifteen cents worth of prunes.

JESSAMINE. Where are you going, Dilly?

DILLY. Grocery. Dozen and half of eggs, can of prunes, new mop and fifteen cents worth of baking powder. It's hard to remember all them things.

MRS. A. Do they have talcum powder at the grocery, Dilly?

DILLY. Yes'm, I think they do. Dozen and a half prunes, can of eggs, talcum powder and fifteen cents worth of mops. (*Exit C. D.*)

JESSAMINE. Kit, I believe that everything is going to come out all right after all. Tony has bought the North Road.

Enter DILLY from C. D.

DILLY (*calling*). Miz' Beavers! Miz' Beavers!

There's a great big 'leven thousand horse-power flivver stopping right out in front of our house. Miz' Beavers!

Enter Mrs. B. from L.

MRS. B. What is it, Dilly? What's the matter?

DILLY. It's the biggest automobile I ever seen in all my born days, that's what it is. And it's come to call on us.

MRS. B. More visitors! Who was in it, Dilly?

DILLY. A couple of men and a woman and a shover. The shover had a big mustache. And here they come.

Enter from C. D., KILBUCK, MR. M. and Mrs. V.

JESSAMINE (*down R. with Mrs. A.*). Mr. Kilbuck! Tony was just in time.

KILBUCK (*coming down and taking both of JESSAMINE'S hands.*) Well, well, Pussy Willow, what are you doing here in Flagg Corners?

JESSAMINE. Just a little business deal, Mr. Kilbuck, that's all. (*Introducing.*) This is Mrs. Perry Allen, Mr. Kilbuck.

KILBUCK. Glad to meet you, ma'am. I know your husband. Jessamine, you know Mr. Mulberry and Mrs. Van Dyne. (*JESSAMINE and Mrs. A. join Mr. M. and Mrs. V. up C.*) This is Mrs. Beavers, I believe?

MRS. B. (*down L. C.*). Yes, sir.

KILBUCK. We are looking for a Mr. Bird. I was told he stopped here.

MRS. B. Dilly, run down town and see if you can find Mr. Bird.

DILLY. Yes, ma'am. That's just what I was going to do.

KILBUCK. Tell him Cyrus B. Kilbuck wants to see him. The president of the P. D. Q. Railroad.

DILLY. Yes, ma'am. I mean, yes, sir. Mr. P. D. Q. Kilbuck wants to see him.

KILBUCK. No! C. B. Kilbuck wants to see him P. D. Q. Now, hurry!

DILLY. Yes, ma'am. P. D. Q. (*Exit C. D.*)

MR. M. Perhaps we could wash up a bit. We had a long, dusty drive from town.

MRS. V. Thirty miles over a dirt road in July.

MRS. B. Come with me. I can fix you a place, but it will be extry. (*Exit L.*)

MRS. V. Any port in a storm. (*Starts L.*) Is this the way?

MRS. A. Come with me. (*Exits L. with Mrs. V., Mr. M. and KILBUCK.*)

JESSAMINE. Now to face the music.

Enter BIRD from C. D.

BIRD (*comes merrily down C.*). It's mine. The River Road belongs to me. Now, Mrs. Van Dyne, we can come to terms.

JESSAMINE. Mrs. Van Dyne? Why do you call me Mrs. Van Dyne?

BIRD. Because it's your name. You're the purchasing agent of the P. D. Q., ain't you?

JESSAMINE. Why, Mr. Bird, I'm afraid you've made an awful mistake. My name is Jessamine Lee, and I'm not the purchasing agent of anything.

BIRD (*splutters*). But—but—you said you wanted the River Road.

JESSAMINE. Oh, no. I merely said I was interested in the River Road. I was interested in it because it belonged to Mr. Tony Kilbuck. But now it belongs to you, and really, I've lost all interest. Just at present I'm interested in the North Road.

BIRD. Then the railroad doesn't want to buy the River Road?

JESSAMINE. I don't know. The president of the road is here now with Mrs. Van Dyne. Perhaps they can enlighten you.

Enter KILBUCK from L.

KILBUCK. Mr. Bird! I'm glad to see you. (*Shakes hands.*)

BIRD. I didn't look for you today, Mr. Kilbuck.

KILBUCK. It's part of our business to spring a little surprise now and then. I want to see your property, Mr. Bird.

BIRD. The River Road?

KILBUCK. Certainly not. The North Road. That's where we want the right-of-way.

BIRD. The North Road?

KILBUCK. Certainly.

BIRD (*pauses, looks helplessly at JESSAMINE, shakes his fists*). Buncoed, by thunder!

KILBUCK. What do you mean?

BIRD. I mean I've been buncoed. But I'll have the law on 'em.

KILBUCK. You mean that you no longer own the North Road?

BIRD. I'll get it back. They can't catch me with that bait. I'll have them arrested for obtaining property under false pretenses.

KILBUCK. Whom are you talking about? Who's buncoed you? Who owns the North Road?

Enter TONY from C. D.

TONY. I'm the man you're looking for. I own the North Road.



KILBUCK. You!! Tony Kilbuck! Well! (*Sinks into chair.*)

TONY. Surprised, aren't you, father? I told you it was in me and it was bound to come out. Mr. Bird, the wise old bird, has been trapped. The bird in the tree became the bird in the bush, and the bird in the bush calmly became the bird in the hand. Bird, you're a gone bird!

BIRD. I'll have the law on ye. I'll show ye. (*Exit C. D. furiously.*)

TONY. And now, Mr. Kilbuck, we can talk business. The price of the North Road is half a million dollars. Are you on?

KILBUCK. Half a million dollars? Preposterous. You talk like a child.

TONY. Oh, no, I talk like a business man, a regular business man. The price sticks. Are you on? If not, I'm going to plant catalpas.

KILBUCK. Half a million dollars! But we've got to have the land. (*Rises.*) Tony, there's my hand! We'll buy the North Road.

TONY. Then I won't have to plant catalpas?

KILBUCK. No, we need you in our office. You said you'd make me eat my words done up in a hamburger sandwich. Jessamine, tell the landlady to bring on the hamburger. He's a regular business man at last.

TONY (*to JESSAMINE*). And I owe it all to you. (*Embrace.*)

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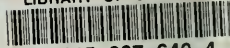
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