

MORTIMER. I couldn't eat a thing.

(*Martha goes out to kitchen.*)

ABBY. (*Calling after Martha.*) I'll come and help you, dear. (*She pushes chair R. into table.*) Well, I feel so much better now. Oh, you have to wait for Elaine, don't you? (*She smiles.*) How happy you must be. (*She goes to kitchen doorway.*) Well, dear, I'll leave you alone with your thoughts. (*She exits, shutting door.*)

(*The shutting of the door wakes Mortimer from his trance. He crosses to window seat, kneels down, raises cover, looks in. Not believing, he lowers cover, rubs his eyes, raises cover again. This time he really sees Mr. Hoskins. Closes window seat hastily, rises, steps back. Runs over and closes drapes over window. Backs up to above table. Sees water glass on table, picks it up, raises it to lips, suddenly remembers that poisoned wine comes in glasses, puts it down quickly. Crosses to cellar door, opens it. Elaine enters R., he closes cellar door with a bang. As Elaine puts her bag on top of desk he looks at her, and it dawns on him that he knows her. He speaks with faint surprise.*)

MORTIMER. Oh, it's you. (*He drops D.S. Elaine crosses to him, takes his hand.*)

ELAINE. Don't be cross, darling! Father could see that I was excited—so I told him about us and that made it hard for me to get away. But listen, darling—he's not going to wait up for me tonight.

MORTIMER. (*Looking at window seat.*) You run along home, Elaine, and I'll call you up tomorrow.

ELAINE. Tomorrow!

MORTIMER. (*Irritated.*) You know I always call you up every day or two.

ELAINE. But we're going to the theatre tonight.

MORTIMER. No—no we're not!

ELAINE. Well, why not?

MORTIMER. (*Turning to her.*) Elaine, something's come up.

ELAINE. What, darling? Mortimer—you've lost your job!

MORTIMER. No—no—I haven't lost my job. I'm just not covering that play tonight. (*Pushing her R.*) Now you run along home, Elaine.

ELAINE. But I've got to know what's happened. Certainly you can tell me.

MORTIMER. No, dear, I can't.

ELAINE. But if we're going to be married—

MORTIMER. Married?

ELAINE. Have you forgotten that not fifteen minutes ago you proposed to me?

MORTIMER. (*Vaguely.*) I did? Oh—yes! Well, as far as I know that's still on. (*Urging her R. again.*) Now you run along home, Elaine. I've got to do something.

ELAINE. Listen, you can't propose to me one minute and throw me out of the house the next.

MORTIMER. (*Pleading.*) I'm not throwing you out of the house, darling. Will you get out of here?

ELAINE. No, I won't get out of here. (*Mortimer crosses toward kitchen. Elaine crosses below to window seat.*) Not until I've had some kind of explanation. (*Elaine is about to sit on window seat. Mortimer grabs her by the hand. Phone rings.*)

MORTIMER. Elaine! (*He goes to phone, dragging Elaine with him.*) Hello! Oh, hello, Al. Hold on a minute, will you?—All right, it's important! But it can wait a minute, can't it? Hold on! (*He puts receiver on desk. Takes Elaine's bag from top of desk and hands it to her. Then takes her by hand and leads her to door R. and opens it.*) Look, Elaine, you're a sweet girl and I love you. But I have something on my mind now and I want you to go home and wait until I call you.

ELAINE. (*In doorway.*) Don't try to be masterful.

MORTIMER. (*Annoyed to the point of being literate.*) When we're married and I have problems to face I hope you're less tedious and uninspired!

ELAINE. And when we're married *if* we're married—I hope I find you adequate! (*She exits. Mortimer does take, then runs out on porch after her, calling—*)

MORTIMER. Elaine! Elaine! (*He runs back in, shutting door, crosses and kneels on window seat to open window. Suddenly remembers contents of window seat and leaps off it. Dashes into kitchen but remembers Al is on phone, reenters immediately and crosses to phone.*) Hello, Al? Hello... hello... (*He pushes hook down and starts to dial when doorbell rings. He thinks it's the phone. Abby enters from kitchen.*) Hello. Hello, Al?

ABBY. (*Crossing to R. door and opening it.*) That's the doorbell, dear, not the telephone. (*Mortimer pushes hook down...dials. Mr. Gibbs steps in doorway R.*) How do you do? Come in.