

ACT II

(It is now evening of the same day. Bugs and Becky are seated on the bench Up Center, chin in hands, looking very dejected. Gladys is busy at the counter with a customer who is interested in the souvenirs. Jennie is at the table, Right, eating greedily. She has a large sandwich and a small pie. The drapes at the alcove are closed.)

BUGS. Don't you think he'll ever forgive you?

BECKY. There's no forgiveness in his soul. I have committed the unforgivable sin. I have insulted Nathaniel W. White!

BUGS. *(Giggling.)* I'll bet it's the first time he ever made an inspection tour on the end of a fishhook.

BECKY. *(Reproachfully.)* How can you laugh? Here my life is over and you're making silly remarks.

BUGS. I'm sorry, Becky. Gosh, no banana splits for a year. How will you ever live?

BECKY. *(With a huge sigh.)* I'll manage — somehow.

BUGS. Where's Mr. White now?

BECKY. Inspecting Washington's Headquarters. I think he's convinced Dad is crazy and that the whole place is crawling with lunatics.

GLADYS. *(Handing the tourist a souvenir in a bag.)*

Thank you. Do come to visit us again.

(The tourist exits at Right.)

BECKY. Oh, Mom—

GLADYS. *(Glaring.)* What do you want?

BECKY. I was wondering if there wasn't something I could do.

GLADYS. You've done enough already! I'm going to make up the beds for our guests.

(*Gladys exits at Left.*)

BUGS. Wow.

BECKY. See? That's what I told you on the telephone. (*With great tragedy.*) They've disowned me.

BUGS. It wouldn't be so bad if all this had made us attractive to boys.

BECKY. It hasn't. We're still dull.

BUGS. Johnny Norton yawned in my face when I passed him on my way here.

BECKY. Maybe he was just tired.

BUGS. Yeah, but I affect boys like that. They get very tired when they look at me.

(*Jack Fisher enters at Right.*)

JACK. Well, I guess that's about the last of the tourists for today — Hi there, Jennie.

JENNIE. (*With mouth full.*) Hi.

JACK. (*Looking at the girls.*) Oh, come now! Things aren't as bad as all that.

BUGS. That's what you think!

BECKY. Maybe it wouldn't have been so bad if Dad hadn't told them about seeing the ghost too.

JACK. (*Coming Center.*) He was excited. Look, Mr. White's a reasonable man. When he sees how nicely this place is run he'll forget the — Uh, slight misunderstanding that happened when he came. Don't worry about it.

BUGS. She's worried about her banana splits.

JACK. What?

BECKY. As a punishment I can't have any banana splits for a year. I'm not crazy about the stuff the way Jennie is, but gee — ! A girl's got to go down to the corner and splurge once in a while.

JACK. (*Winking.*) Well, maybe we can slip away and get one sometimes.

BECKY. Gee . . .

JACK. That's a promise, Becky.

BECKY. Can we go now?

JACK. Hold on there! I think you at least ought to wait until the order's a few days old, don't you? I'd better go see how Mr. White's tour of headquarters is coming along.

(*Jack exits Up Left Center.*)

BUGS. He's nice.

BECKY. Yeah, if only he weren't such an older man.

JENNIE. Know what's wrong with you two?

BUGS. Yeah. We're dull.

JENNIE. Uh uh. You don't eat enough. If you ate more, the blood would go to your stomach to digest food instead of staying up in your head and giving you crazy ideas.

BECKY. Talk about crazy ideas! I suppose draping Dad in that Mother Hubbard was a *good* idea!

JENNIE. I explained all that.

BECKY. Somebody told you to do it. What a story.

JENNIE. It's true. And if you two weren't so filled up with thinking about boys you'd realize we've got a problem on our hands.

BECKY. What problem?

JENNIE. Dad's ghost.

BUGS. Not that again!

JENNIE. There's something funny around here.

BECKY. There sure is, so why don't you leave?

JENNIE. (*Rising and going to them.*) Don't you see? It's all part of some plot. We've got to help Dad.

BECKY. The only way we can help Dad is by culling a doctor.

JENNIE. (*Angrily.*) Don't you say that! If he says he saw a ghost, I believe him! He could have been mistaken once, but not twice.

BUGS. Well, she's excited about something other than food for a change.

JENNIE. All right, if that's the way you two want to act! I'll help him all by myself.

BECKY. You'd better be careful what you do, Jennie!
(*But Jennie, head held high, exits Up Left Center.*)

BUGS. Could be trouble when she starts to help people.

BECKY. Don't I know it!

(*The door Right opens and Rodney gallops on stage. He crosses without a word and gallops off at Left. The girls look after him. The door Right opens again and Nancy Talbot steams in.*)

NANCY. Where is he? Where'd he go?

BECKY. Who?

NANCY. You know who! Rodney, of course.

BUGS. Nancy, why don't you give up?

NANCY. (*Suddenly sniffling and sitting at table.*)
B-because I love him! I loved him all through h-high school and n-now that we're out of h-high school I thought maybe... (*Waiting.*) But I guess he doesn't like meeeeeee!

BUGS. (*Holding her ears shut.*) Oh, brother.

BECKY. Whatever gave you that idea?

NANCY. W-Well, he never asks me for a date. When I'm around he's always trying to get away from me. Of course he — he doesn't go with any other girls so that's why I thought that he'd get to like me if I hung around.

BUGS. So okay, it didn't work. Forget him.

NANCY. I can't! (*Waiting again.*) I love himmmmm!

BECKY. Well, you're never going to catch him by chasing him. Why don't you run the other way for a change?

NANCY. Huh?

BECKY. Give him a little competition. Maybe it'll wake him up.

BUGS. Reason we know all this stuff, we're so popular with boys ourselves, we know just how to handle them.

BECKY. Yeah.

NANCY. Gee, maybe it would work.

BECKY. You try it. (*Rising.*) I'll call Rodney. (*Goes Left.*) Hey, Rod! Ho, Rodney! C'mere!

NANCY. But who'll I use to make him jealous?

(*Jack enters Up Left.*)

BUGS. (*Waving a hand in his direction.*) The answer to a maiden's prayer.

JACK. Things are going just fine, you worry-warts will be happy to know, Mr. White is very pleased with the headquarters.

BECKY. (*Smirking a little and moving in to counter.*)

Oh, Jack, do you know Nancy Talbot?

NANCY. (*Rising hopefully.*) How do you do?

(*Rodney pops in at Left.*)

RODNEY. Becky, has she gone —? (*Sees Nancy.*)
Oops.

NANCY. (*Advancing to Jack and ignoring Rodney.*)

You know so much about this old house and all its history, don't you, Mr. Fisher?

JACK. (*Grimacing.*) That's my job.

NANCY. You know I've lived around here all my life but I haven't taken the tour through the headquarters since I was a little girl. Would you mind awfully — taking me through? Just on my own little, personal tour?

JACK. (*Slipping her hand through his arm.*) I'd be only too happy to, Miss Talbot.

NANCY. Nancy.

JACK. And you call me Jack.

NANCY. Oh, I will!

(*With a glance at Rodney over her shoulder, Nancy exits Up Left with Jack.*)

RODNEY. (*Who's been staring open-mouthed.*) What's with her?

BECKY. (*Coming to sit beside Bugs again.*) Maybe she just developed a sudden interest in American History. One has to have interests you know or one becomes so dull! And then one does silly things like

- trying to fish and catching the head of the Department of the Interior.
- RODNEY. (*Moving up to the girls.*) Holy cow! Will you quit blaming that mess on me? I can't help it if you're stupid enough to throw a fly line into a group of people.
- BECKY. Ooh! I hope you never get that old car you want! You and your crazy ideas!
- RODNEY. It was a crazy idea — but not the way you mean! (*Moving Right.*) It was real gone. Cool, girl. Crazy cool.
- BECKY. Cool! You're so cool, boy, you practically freeze me. (*Sarcastically.*) Bugs, what shall we do so we aren't so dull for these bright boys?
- BUGS. Well, maybe we could interview some little men from Mars. Some with two heads—like your brother.
- BECKY. (*Standing up on the bench and waving her arms.*) Or we could pretend we're birds. That ought to make us interesting.
- BUGS. (*Following Becky's lead.*) Just the thing! Since they're such bird brains they ought to understand it! (*Lyndon and Mr. and Mrs. White enter Up Left Center.*)
- LYNDON. Rebecca!
- BECKY. Oh . . .
- BUGS. (*Jumping down.*) I think I'll go home.
- BECKY. (*Jumping down.*) I think I'll go with you.
- LYNDON. Rebecca, go to your room.
- WHITE. Mathews, does this run in your family?
- LYNDON. Oh, children will be children, Mr. White.
- WHITE. (*Glaring at him.*) Yes, but unfortunately some grown-ups will act like children too, Mathews.
- LYNDON. Rebecca, no banana splits for two years!
- BECKY. (*Groaning.*) Pop, you're making me old before my time!
(*Becky exits at Left; Bugs has sneaked hastily off at Right.*)

- LYNDON. And as for you, Bugs Rafferty — (*Seeing that she has gone.*) I'll have to speak to her parents.
- MRS. WHITE. (*Moving Down Left behind counter.*) Really, Mr. Mathews, I find all of this a bit tiring.
- LYNDON. (*Up Center with Mr. White.*) I'm terribly sorry, Mrs. White, but —
- MRS. WHITE. Are our quarters ready? I'm quite exhausted from all these — childish displays.
(*Miss Lilibet enters Up Left Center; Rodney slides to the bench and sprawls at length upon it.*)
- MISS LILIBET. (*Dashing to Mr. White.*) Oh, there you are! You naughty boy, Mr. White! You ran off before I got a chance to finish telling you about the ghost.
- WHITE. (*Backing away.*) Oh — er, I was wondering where you were, Miss —
- MISS LILIBET. Lilibet.
- LYNDON. Er, Miss Lilibet, I'm sure Mr. White has heard enough ghost stories for one day.
- WHITE. More than enough.
- MISS LILIBET. But it's so interesting! You see, I've been doing research for my novel — about George Washington, Mr. White. Great man, George Washington! Anyway, I came across this old document in the library. All about the ghost. There was this Continental soldier who was Washington's aide. Well, he died — the aide, not Washington. But he was such a faithful aide that he just couldn't stop doing chores around Washington's Headquarters so for years afterward —
- LYNDON. (*Taking her arm.*) Please, Miss Lilibet! We're very interested but —
- MISS LILIBET. I know you are. So as I was saying, people kept seeing this ghostly figure flitting about Washington's Headquarters and —
- LYNDON. (*Gently forcing her to the Right.*) Besides, it's past hours. We must obey the rules, Miss Lilibet,

and close promptly. Washington's very strict on obeying the rules.

MISS LILIBET. Yes, I know he was.

LYNDON. I meant the city.

MISS LILIBET. Oh. Well, anyway, for years people saw this ghost. It was really a very well-mannered ghost. Never actually tried to frighten people. Just went around minding its own business. I think that sort of ghost is all right, don't you?

(By this time they have reached the door Right. Miss Libbet is still talking as Lyndon gently shoves her off Right and closes the door.)

WHITE. *(Coming to Center.)* You do attract that kind, don't you, Mathews? Has she been telling many people that ghost story?

LYNDON. Why—yes, I guess so.

WHITE. Have you been telling many people your ghost story?

LYNDON. *(Uncomfortably; coming to him at Center.)* No, sir. That is—not very many.

MRS. WHITE. As I said before, I find all this quite boring. Will you show me to my quarters, Mr. Mathews?

LYNDON. *(Crossing Left.)* Yes, certainly! My wife is getting everything ready for you.

MRS. WHITE. Coming, Nathaniel?

WHITE. In a little while.

LYNDON. I'll be right back, sir.

WHITE. *(Privately.)* Don't hurry.

(Lyndon and Mrs. White exit at Left. Rodney looks half asleep as he sprawls on the bench. Mr. White hesitantly looks around to make sure no one is watching him, then goes up to alcove and suddenly jerks apart the drapes. Nothing is there but George Washington's chair.)

RODNEY. *(If he wasn't as near asleep as he appeared.)* What are you looking for?

WHITE. *(Hastily closing the drapes.)* Er—nothing. *(Jack Fisher and Nancy enter Up Left.)*

NANCY. It was a lovely tour. Thank you so much, Jack.

JACK. *(Strolling Right with her.)* My pleasure. Don't forget tomorrow night. I'll be off duty at six.

RODNEY. *(Rising.)* Huh? What about tomorrow night?

JACK. *(They ignore Rodney.)* Shall I walk you home?

WHITE. Er, pardon me, young man. I'd like to talk to you.

JACK. Oh—Yes, sir.

NANCY. Never mind, Jack. I'll be all right. See you tomorrow.

JACK. I can't wait.

RODNEY. Nancy—!

(Nancy exits at Right, completely ignoring him.)

RODNEY. Nancy! Hey, wait!

(Rodney exits at Right. Jack grins after him.)

JACK. I guess all he needs is a little competition. That poor girl's been after him for years.

WHITE. *(Coming down.)* I want to talk to you.

JACK. At your service, sir.

WHITE. Sit down.

JACK. *(Sitting at table.)* Thank you.

WHITE. *(At Center.)* Tell me, how long has Mr. Mathews been seeing ghosts?

JACK. *(Embarrassed.)* Excuse me, sir, but couldn't you ask him these questions? He's my employer . . . I mean, I don't want to say anything that

WHITE. *(Moving to him.)* It'll just be between you and me, Fisher.

JACK. Well, Mr. Mathews is all right, Mr. White. I don't know what this ghost business is all about but I'm sure it's just some kind of a joke or something.

WHITE. *(Sitting at table.)* Does he play these weird jokes often?

JACK. No! He's never done anything except attend to business. He really knows a lot about the history of this place. He even helped out some on the archaeological work.

WHITE. (*Intently leaning across table.*) But the ghost business. When did you first hear him talk about ghosts?

JACK. Just this morning.

WHITE. Did you see anything strange around here?

JACK. No, sir.

WHITE. Did anybody except Mr. Mathews see anything strange?

JACK. Not that I know of.

WHITE. (*Leaning back.*) That's what I thought. Keep your eyes open, son. If Mathews starts acting strangely, you tell me. Understand?

JACK. But I—

WHITE. That's an order! You want your job, don't you?

JACK. Yes, sir!

WHITE. All right! You'd better cooperate in that case. I'm going to my quarters now. It's getting late. Had a hard day.

(*Mr. White rises and goes to exit at Left just as Lyndon enters.*)

LYNDON. Oh, Mr. White! I'll show you to your—

WHITE. Don't bother, Mathews. I'll find it.

(*Mr. White exits at Left. Lyndon comes into the room, but worriedly looks after White.*)

LYNDON. Boy, he's as cold as the North Pole.

JACK. (*Sighing.*) Yes, he is.

LYNDON. (*Coming Center.*) Jack, did he —? Was he asking you questions?

JACK. Yeah.

LYNDON. About me?

JACK. (*Unhappily.*) You and the ghost. (*Lyndon groans; Jack rises.*) Look, Mr. Mathews, I guess it's none of my business but couldn't you tell him it was some kind of a joke the kids rigged up? It would take you off the spot.

LYNDON. (*Moving Up Right.*) No, Jack. I saw something in this alcove. I know I did.

JACK. (*Uncomfortably.*) Yes, Mr. Mathews.

LYNDON. (*Turning.*) You don't believe me, do you?

JACK. (*Quickly.*) Sure, I do! It's just that— Well, it would help if somebody else would see it too.

LYNDON. (*Coming Center again, rubbing a worried hand on the back of his neck.*) Yeah, it sure would.

JACK. I'm sorry, Mr. Mathews. Look, it's past hours. All right if I go?

LYNDON. Sure, Jack. I'll lock up.

(*Jack exits Right. There is a sudden noise from behind the drapes at the alcove—a chair being scraped back. Lyndon is alert instantly. Carefully he sneaks Up Right. He jerks back the drapes and there is—*)

LYNDON. Jennie!

JENNIE. Oh— Hi, Pop!

LYNDON. What are you doing in there?

JENNIE. (*Coming out.*) Looking for clues.

LYNDON. Clues?

JENNIE. Sure. Clues about the ghost. I decided you need some help.

LYNDON. Maybe I do, Jennie, but I think you're a little young to help out this time.

JENNIE. Gee, Pop! I can look for ghosts as good as anybody.

LYNDON. We're not hunting for ghosts!

JENNIE. We'd better. There's something strange going on around here.

LYNDON. (*Placing his hands on her shoulders and gently turning her to face him.*) Jennie, dear, we're all nervous. I—I didn't mean to get you kids all worked up. Look, I've been worried about Mr. White's visit. I— Well, I just was imagining things. Everybody's getting ready to turn in and close up shop for the night. I think we'd better do the same thing and forget all this. Turn on the night light. (*Lyndon goes Right to use the light switch on wall there. Stage lights dim.*)

JENNIE. (*Turning on small lamp on counter.*) Pop . . .
 LYNDON. Yes, Jennie?

JENNIE. Suppose it wasn't your imagination. (*There is silence for a second as they stand there in the darkened room. Lyndon scowles loudly.*) H— If you did see something, won't something bad happen to-night? Nighttime is when ghosts roam and do their dirty work.

LYNDON. It is? (*Suddenly firm and striding Left.*) That was no ghost! We'd better get to bed.

JENNIE. (*Following him.*) Pop, you didn't believe me when I told you about that school teacher who paid me to put that dress on you, but it was true! Why would anybody do that? Don't you think it might be mixed up with the ghost?

LYNDON. (*Pausing Down Left.*) Are you sure you weren't imagining that?

JENNIE. (*Showing him the five dollar bill.*) Here's the money she gave me.

LYNDON. (*Looking at it.*) It's so senseless!

JENNIE. I looked all over for her this evening but she wasn't any place around. She sure never came back for the dress she said she wanted.

LYNDON. Probably some harmless old crank like Miss Libbet.

JENNIE. Well, what about Miss Libbet? She's been hanging around here a lot and she's been awfully interested in ghosts lately.

(*Rodney enters at Right.*)

RODNEY. (*Discouraged.*) Nancy has a date with Jack tomorrow evening.

LYNDON. That's nice.

RODNEY. Nice!

LYNDON. Well— sure. She won't be hanging around here annoying you if she's going out with Jack.

RODNEY. Yeah, I don't want her hanging around. But he's old enough to be her father!

LYNDON. Don't be silly, Rod. He's just a couple of years older than you are.

RODNEY. Well, I'd like to punch his teeth in, that's what I'd like to do!
 (*Rodney exits at Left.*)

JENNIE. What he needs is some food.

LYNDON. (*Staring after him.*) Isn't that an odd reaction?

JENNIE. Pop, you just don't understand this younger generation.

LYNDON. Guess you're right. Come now. Off to bed.

JENNIE. But what about the ghost?

LYNDON. Let him go to bed too.

(*Jennie and Lyndon exit at Left. The stage is empty for an instant then the door Right opens and Miss Libbet, carrying a flashlight, enters quietly.*)

MISS LIBBET. Yoo hoo! Where are you?
 (*Peering about with her flashlight, she crosses Up Left and exits. A moment later Bugs Rojfererty enters at Right.*)

BUGS. (*Softly.*) Becky . . . Oh, Becky! You here?
 (*Becky enters at Left.*)

BECKY. Bugs! I was hoping you'd come back.

BUGS. (*Meeting her at Center.*) Yeah, Boy, we sure can't seem to do anything right around here, can we? What'd your Pop do this time?

BECKY. No banana splits for two years.

BUGS. No kidding?

BECKY. Bugs, what am I going to do?

BUGS. Well . . . why don't we find his ghost for him? Then maybe he won't feel so badly about everything.

BECKY. Find his ghost!

BUGS. We ought to be able to find some kind of a ghost if we look hard enough.

BECKY. Oh, Bugs! That's crazy.

BUGS. As Rod says, Crazy cool. Look, Becky, you can't go without banana splits for two years. Why,

that's like going without your right arm! If we can't find a ghost we'll make one — or even two!

(Bugs drags Becky off Up Left Center. After another moment Lyndon enters at Left carrying pillow, blankets, and a sheet. He places them on the bench and lies down, trying to make himself comfortable. It is, however, uphill work. He's thrashing about when Gladys enters at Left and stares at him.)

GLADYS. *(Coming in front of counter.)* Lyndon Mathews, just what do you think you're doing?

LYNDON. Oh. Oh, hello, Gladys.

GLADYS. What are you doing?

LYNDON. Trying to get comfortable.

GLADYS. Out here?

LYNDON. Yes, I thought I'd . . .

GLADYS. Are you still looking for that ghost?

LYNDON. *(Ashamed of himself.)* Gladys, you're probably right and it wasn't anything. But just in case I thought I'd —

GLADYS. Make more of a fool of yourself than you have already.

LYNDON. Yes, I — No! I'm just keeping an eye on things.

GLADYS. I don't see anything to keep an eye on!

(Miss Lilibet enters Up Left, ignoring them.)

MISS LILIBET. *(Peering everywhere and working her way to the alcove as Lyndon and Gladys stare at her.)*

Where are you? Come out, please. I won't hurt you.

(She peers into alcove.) Are you in there? Come out, come out, wherever you are! *(She finds nothing and starts Up Left again.)*

LYNDON. *(Recovering from his surprise.)* Miss Lilibet! What on earth are you doing?

MISS LILIBET. *(Brightly.)* I'm hunting for the ghost, Mr. Mathews. I know he's around here somewhere.

(Miss Lilibet exits Up Left Center.)

GLADYS. Lyn! If Mr. White finds her prowling about here!

LYNDON. *(Jumping to his feet.)* Miss Lilibet! You can't do that! Washington's Headquarters is closed! You can't stay here!

(Lyndon exits Up Left Center. Gladys moves up to look after him. Mrs. White enters at Left.)

MRS. WHITE. Oh, there you are, Mrs. Mathews.

GLADYS. *(Quickly closing the door Up Left Center and coming down behind counter.)* Yes, Mrs. White? What can I do for you?

MRS. WHITE. *(Moving Center.)* It's my pillow! My allergy simply will not allow me to sleep on a feather pillow. I won't sleep a wink all night if you can't find another kind for me.

GLADYS. Oh, I'm terribly sorry. I'm sure I can find something else. We have some foam rubber cushions on our sofa.

MRS. WHITE. *(Looking at bench.)* Do you use this for a bed, Mrs. Mathews?

GLADYS. Oh — that. Why — Ah, my husband sometimes sleeps out here. To — Uh, to guard George Washington's chair.

MRS. WHITE. How loyal.

GLADYS. Oh, yes! He's very loyal. Takes his job very seriously, you know. And Washington's chair is quite valuable.

MRS. WHITE. I know. Perhaps your husband is aware of the importance of his position, after all. I was just becoming convinced that he wasn't quite the man for this job.

GLADYS. Whatever gave you that idea? He loves his job — the tourists find everything here most satisfactory. He knows so much about Washington too.

MRS. WHITE. But he sees ghosts.

GLADYS. Oh — That was just something the children had cooked up. You know how children are, Mrs. White. I promise we'll try to keep them under better control after this.

MRS. WHITE. Well, perhaps my husband and I have been a trifle hasty, Mrs. Mathews.

GLADYS. Oh, thank you!

MRS. WHITE. Where is your husband? I'm afraid we've been a bit hard on him and I'd like to apologize.

GLADYS. He's — Well, he's —

MRS. WHITE. Not out chasing ghosts, I hope.

GLADYS. Oh, no! Just checking through the headquarters to make sure everything's all right for the night.

MRS. WHITE. I'll wait for him here.

GLADYS. (*Nervously.*) I'll tell him you're waiting.

MRS. WHITE. Don't loiter. You just go and get me another pillow. Anything but feathers.

GLADYS. Oh . . . yes. Of course. You just wait there. I'll be right back.

(*Gladys exits at Left. The stage lights dim further. Mrs. White looks about with annoyance, then glances over her shoulder.*)

VOICE. (*From alcove.*) Come . . . I'm waiting for you.

MRS. WHITE. Mr. Mathews? Is that you, Mr. Mathews?

(*Mrs. White goes to alcove and pushes aside the drapes. The Ghost is sitting there. She screams. Quickly the ghost pulls her into the alcove and pulls shut the drapes. She screams again, then all is quiet. Gladys enters hurriedly at Left.*)

GLADYS. (*Frightened.*) Mrs. White! What's the matter? (*Kushing to Center and looking about.*)

Mrs. White?

(*Lyndon enters Up Left dragging Miss Lilibet by the hand.*)

LYNDON. Gladys, what's wrong?

GLADYS. Nothing, but —

(*Rodney and Mr. White enter at Left. Mr. White has removed his coat and tie.*)

RODNEY. Mom! Are you okay?

WHITE. Where's my wife?

GLADYS. I don't know! I —

LYNDON. Gladys, did you scream?

MISS LILIBET. Somebody screamed! I heard somebody scream! And I wanted to be the first one to find him.

RODNEY. Find who?

MISS LILIBET. The ghost, of course! Mrs. Mathews screamed when she saw him.

GLADYS. I didn't —

WHITE. WHERE'S MY WIFE?

LYNDON. (*Still Up Left.*) In her room?

WHITE. She came to find Mrs. Mathews.

GLADYS. (*Facing them.*) I didn't scream! Mrs. White was in here all alone. She must have screamed.

WHITE. (*Folding arms.*) Hyacinth never screams.

RODNEY. Where is she? (*He begins to search around the room, moving Right.*) She didn't come into our part of the house because Mr. White and I would have seen her.

LYNDON. She didn't come into Washington's Headquarters.

GLADYS. (*Collapsing on bench and nervously clasping and unclasping her hands.*) Then where is she?

MISS LILIBET. Maybe the ghost carried her away. Although that's hard to believe because he's always been a very peaceful, harmless ghost.

WHITE. (*Striding Up Left to them.*) Will you stop jabbering about that confounded ghost? Mathews, what's she doing here?

MISS LILIBET. (*Offended.*) You needn't shout. I'm in tune with the spirits. I was looking for Mr. Mathew's ghost.

LYNDON. My ghost!

GLADYS. (*Frightened.*) Do you suppose something really is wrong in this house?

WHITE. Something's wrong all right! (*Glaring at Lyndon.*) Wrong personnel!

LYNDON. Please, Mr. White! Let's think about your

wife. She — The ghost has always been in the alcove. Maybe she went in there. *(They stare at the alcove as Lyndon cautiously approaches it.)* Rod, be ready to grab anything that might be in there! You too, Mr. White.

WHITE. *(Moving Up Right as does Rodney.)* Of all the asinine —

LYNDON. Your wife's life may be at stake! *(Rodney and Mr. White assume positions beside the alcove, each poised to spring. Gladys rises nervously; Miss Lilibet moves a few steps Right, very expectant; Lyndon makes a great show of cautioning them to silence, then craftily gets hold of the drapes and dramatically yanks them apart. Nothing is in the alcove but Washington's chair.)*

LYNDON. Oh, *(Gladys sits down again. Lyndon deflates and moves down a few steps.)*

WHITE. *(Striding down to in front of counter.)* I should have known better than to listen to your huncic ideas! My wife is a woman with a strong mind. *(Turning to glare at Lyndon.)* When she's had enough of a situation, she's had enough! She probably got fed up and went out to a hotel. All you masterminds didn't stop to think that the front door is open.

RODNEY. *(Moving Down Right to perch on table.)* Then why did she scream?

WHITE. *(After a second's silence.)* I don't know. *(To Gladys.)* Are you sure it wasn't you who—? *(Gladys shakes her head; he turns to Miss Lilibet.)* How about you?

MISS LILIBET. *(Moving down to stand behind bench.)* Bless you! I wouldn't scream if I saw a ghost. I told you I'm in tune with the spirits.

WHITE. *(Going back to Lyndon and glaring into his face.)* You find my wife!

LYNDON. How can I find her if I don't know where she is?

WHITE. That's your problem! You'd better find her and soon! Or you'll find yourself out of a job! I'll fire you so quickly you'll think a hurricane blew Washington's house away!

LYNDON. Mr. White —

WHITE. *(Shouting into his face.)* Don't you "Mr. White" me! You find my wife! I know this is somehow all your fault! I haven't had a moment's peace since I walked into this place — or was dragged in like a fish!

GLADYS. You aren't being fair, Mr. White.

WHITE. *(Turning to her.)* Stop arguing and find my wife!

GLADYS. If she's really disappeared, there isn't much we can do. We'd better call the police.

MISS LILIBET. *(Clapping her hands.)* Oh, yes! Let's do! I always wanted to see police in action. It would give me lots of realistic material for a book.

WHITE. *(Swinging to bench and seizing Gladys' arm.)* No! That's the last thing I want you to do! We only notify the police as a last resort.

LYNDON. *(Moving down to Left Center.)* But your wife may be in danger —

WHITE. In danger of being made a ridiculous public spectacle! *(Letting go of Gladys and turning to Lyndon.)* I don't know what kind of games you're playing here, Mathews, but I daren't become publically involved in them. Think of what such publicity would do to the Department! Think of what it would do to me! Police mean reporters. I can see the headlines now — "Department of Interior Head Spends Weekend Hunting Ghosts" or "Nathaniel W. White Turns Whiter When Seeing Ghost."

RODNEY. Or "Ghost Haunts Headquarters; Sees White."

MISS LILIBET. This is fun! See if I can think of one

now. How about "Ghost Gets Hyacinth; White Says Something Smells."

WHITE. It isn't funny!

LYNDON. We'll search the house. Rodney —

RODNEY. (*Rising.*) I'll look through the headquarters just to make sure.

WHITE. (*Turning Left.*) I'll look in our room.

MISS LILIBET. I'll help! It's so exciting.

(*Rodney exits Up Left Center; Mr. White exits Left with Miss Lilibet following him.*)

GLADYS. (*Rising and going to him.*) Oh, Lyndon! What are we going to do?

LYNDON. (*Going to table Right where he leans on it with both hands, head hanging.*) I don't know.

GLADYS. I still think we ought to call the police.

LYNDON. Maybe. But White's right about one thing: The papers'll make fools of us if they get hold of it. We've got to keep it quiet.

GLADYS. But poor Mrs. White —

LYNDON. Probably there's a very simple explanation of the whole thing.

GLADYS. (*Coming to pat his shoulder.*) Maybe.

(*Enter Jennie at Left, in her night clothing.*)

JENNIE. Boy, the joint's jumpin' tonight. What's everybody doing?

LYNDON. (*Restlessly moving Left.*) Looking for Mrs. White.

JENNIE. Why?

LYNDON. Because we can't find her!

JENNIE. Good a reason as any, I guess.

GLADYS. (*Warily leaning against table, Right.*) Go back to bed, Jennie.

JENNIE. See, Pop? I told you something was going to happen tonight.

GLADYS. We're not sure anything's happened, Jennie. Go back to bed.

JENNIE. Did you look in the alcove?

LYNDON. Yes.

JENNIE. I'll look again, just to make sure.

(*Jennie exits into the alcove, behind the curtain.*)

GLADYS. Jennie! I do wish you'd go back to bed.

LYNDON. Let her alone, Gladys. She's not going to sleep with all this commotion anyhow.

GLADYS. You don't suppose she saw a mouse or something?

LYNDON. Jennie?

GLADYS. Mrs. White! She must have seen something to make her scream.

LYNDON. If she saw the thing I saw sitting in Washington's chair, it would be enough to make anybody scream. (*Moving Up Center.*) Jennie, come out of there.

(*Rodney enters from Up Left Center.*)

RODNEY. Pop, those rooms are quiet as a tomb. I swear Mrs. White's not in there.

LYNDON. I was sure she wasn't. Miss Lilibet and I would have seen her if she'd come that way.

GLADYS. But people don't just disappear into thin air! Jennie, come out now please.

(*Mr. White and Miss Lilibet enter at Left.*)

WHITE. (*Worried.*) Confound it, Mathews! What have you done with my wife? I can't find any trace of her.

LYNDON. I haven't done anything with her. Jennie!

MISS LILIBET. I know what we could do but Mr. White won't listen to me.

GLADYS. Lyn, make Jennie come out. She makes me nervous poking around in that alcove.

LYNDON. (*Striding up to alcove.*) Jennie, come out of there! We've had enough nonsense for one day.

GLADYS. (*Straightening.*) Why doesn't she answer? (*Lyndon strides to the alcove and jerks the drapes apart. It is empty. Gladys screams.*)

LYNDON. W-Where'd she go?

GLADYS. (*Rushing Left to phone on counter.*) Call the police!

WHITE. (*Hurrying up behind counter to slam his hand on the telephone before she can reach it.*) No! I've seen enough samples of the crazy stunts your kids pull not to get very concerned about this. She'll turn up.

LYNDON. (*Coming in to Center.*) He's probably right, Gladys. I found her in the alcove earlier. You know the crazy stunts Jennie's always pulling. She'll turn up.

MISS LILIBET. (*Still Down Left.*) Oh, I don't know. The ghost probably spirited her away too.

GLADYS. (*Whirling to her.*) Don't say that!

MISS LILIBET. (*Moving up a few steps.*) I don't know why you won't be reasonable. You've got to try to contact the ghost. Find out why he's restless and what he wants. It's the only practical solution.

LYNDON. (*Dismayed.*) You mean hold a seance?

MISS LILIBET. Exactly!

WHITE. Now that's the limit! Now I've heard everything! Oi all the —

GLADYS. Please, Mr. White! Maybe she's right.

LYNDON. Gladys!

GLADYS. Mrs. White and Jennie have both disappeared. What harm could it do if we hold a seance? Nobody would know about it but us.

WHITE. I won't be part of any such tom-foolery!

GLADYS. (*Putting hand on phone and trying to get it away from Mr. White.*) Then we'll call the police!

WHITE. No!

GLADYS. I don't care what you say, Mr. White! If you won't at least try to do everything to find them, I'm going to call the police.

LYNDON. Mr. White, what harm could it do?

WHITE. (*Sullenly.*) I don't believe in ghosts.

LYNDON. None of us do but still . . .

RODNEY. (*Who has remained up stage now quietly moves around to the Right.*) There's something around here. If it's not a ghost, it's something else.

MISS LILIBET. (*Prancing Right.*) It's a ghost! Sit around the table, everybody! We'll have to hold hands.

RODNEY. I don't think I want to be in this.

WHITE. (*Dismantled; coming Right.*) If we're doing it, you'll be in on it! I'm not having any tricks if I can help it.

LYNDON. Rodney . . .

RODNEY. Okay.

WHITE. Where's the other girl?

GLADYS. Asleep.

WHITE. Well — all right.

(*They all sit around the table Right. The men bring occasional chairs from around the wall and behind the counter. Miss Lilibet stands, Right Center, directing them.*)

MISS LILIBET. You sit here, Mrs. Mathews. Here, Mr. White. Rodney — Is everybody comfy and cozy? I'll turn out the light.

RODNEY. (*Uncomfortably.*) Why?

MISS LILIBET. (*Moving Left.*) Oh, ghosts don't like light! It's customary to conduct seances in the dark.

WHITE. Of all the foolish stunts —

MISS LILIBET. Hush, Mr. White, or the spirits will think you're not in tune.

WHITE. I've never been more out of tune in my life.

(*Miss Lilibet turns out the night light on the souvenir stand and the stage is in complete darkness. Gladys screams.*)

MISS LILIBET. What's the matter? Did you see a ghost already?

GLADYS. N-No. It's dark. Can't we have any light?

MISS LILIBET. Oh, yes! (*She gets a candle from souvenir stand and lights it.*) Here we are. Here I come . . .

(*She speaks and looks like a ghost herself as she moves softly toward them carrying the candle which*

the places in the center of the table. Stage lights up just a notch.)

GLADYS. I wish you wouldn't do that.

MISS LILIBET. What?

GLADYS. T-Talk so softly.

MISS LILIBET. We must be in tune, Mrs. Mathews. *(She sits with them and they all join hands.)* Now just look at the light. Concentrate on the light. Oh, Ghost! Spirit! Come forth and communicate with us.

(There is a slow knocking sound from under the table. This can be Rodney tapping his foot on the floor.)

GLADYS. What's that?

MISS LILIBET. We've contacted them!

RODNEY. N-No, you haven't. That's just my knees knocking together.

LYNDON. Well, make your knees stop knocking.

RODNEY. How?

LYNDON. I don't know how? Just do it!

RODNEY. I'll try.

MISS LILIBET. You're breaking the spell. Everybody stare at the candle. Concentrate . . . Spirits, come forth!

(Jennie, covered with a white sheet, has slipped in during the complete blackout and hidden behind the table where Gladys and Lyndon are seated. Now she rises and stands between them.)

GLADYS. Please, Lyndon, don't get so close.

LYNDON. I'm not any closer to you than I was.

GLADYS. *(Eyes still on candle, she shoves Jennie with her shoulder.)* Move away! That's better.

(Jennie is shoved backward, but silently moves forward again to stand beside her mother.)

GLADYS. Lyn, I told you to move away.

LYNDON. *(Looking at Jennie.)* I tell you I am away. I — Yi, yi, yi, yi, yi!

MISS LILIBET. The ghost!

(Jennie moves Center.)

WHITE. Catch it!

(Miss Lilibet blows out the candle immediately. Lyndon scrambles to his feet, knocking over his chair. Everybody rises. Bugs and Becky, also dressed in sheets enter Up Left. Jennie sees them, screams, and rushes Right, colliding with Lyndon who is trying to catch her. Gladys is screaming. Miss Lilibet rushes Left to counter where she turns on the lamp. Stage lights up half. The sheet comes off Jennie as she and Lyndon collide and it gets over Lyndon's head. Rodney rushes up to Bugs and Becky who each turn to run and bump into each other.)

GLADYS. Jennie!

JENNIE. Just trying to be helpful! We needed a ghost! *(Mr. White rushes to grab Bugs who kicks him on the shin. He is holding his shin and hopping about at Left, howling. Lyndon is staggering about with the sheet over his head at Center. Gladys is still screaming at Right. Jennie grabs a vase from counter and stands on bench to knock one of the two new ghosts over the head. Rodney is trying to get the sheet off Becky at Left. Bugs stumbles into the stand and brings down a tray of souvenirs . . . souvenirs and Bugs falling with a crash to the floor. In the midst of this the door Right opens, stage lights go up full as two newspaper men enter.)*

DICK. This is it, Joe!

JOE. There's the big boy from Washington!

DICK. Get the picture!

(There is another tableau with everybody holding his position, as Joe raises his camera and also freezes. After the tableau is a

QUICK CURTAIN