

ACT III

(It is the next day, early morning. The drapes are closed, the lights are out, and sunshine is beginning to come through the window. The door Right opens and Mary lumbers in with her equipment, mop, dust cloth, and bucket. It takes some effort for her to get the door shut because newsmen are outside Right, hollering and trying to get in.)

MARY. No! You can't come in unless Mr. Mathews says so! *(She takes a breath then looks about, disgruntled again.)* Same darn thing every morning. Gotta get up, eat breakfast, and go to work. Always go to work. A body gets to think' there ain't anything but work in this life. Shine Washington's boots, dust Washington's table. Maybe it wouldn't be so bad if Washington was still here to wear his boots and use his table. This way it's just work . . . work . . . work . . .

(She exits Up Left Center. Lyndon staggers in at Left with an ice cap on his head. He pauses for a second to look toward the alcove.)

LYNDON. *(Groaning and sitting on bench.)* Listen, Ghostie, if you're lurking out there in the alcove will you do me a favor and stay there? From here on I'm ignoring you.

(The telephone starts to ring. Lyndon groans and puts a pillow over his head. The telephone keeps ringing and is joined by the doorbell. Gladys enters at Left.)

GLADYS. For goodness sakes, Lyndon! Answer the

phone. *(He remains motionless beneath the pillow.)* Lyndon! *(She goes to him and shakes him.)* Lyndon! Get up.

LYNDON. Why?

GLADYS. The phone's ringing.

LYNDON. Let it ring.

GLADYS. What's the matter with you?

LYNDON. *(Groaning again.)* I had a hard night.

Chasing ghosts — looking for Mrs. White — Then Mr. White lectured me until four o'clock this morning on the dignity of the Department of the Interior.

GLADYS. *(Going to phone.)* Oh, really! Lyn, please answer that door!

(Lyndon, with groans, crawls from the bench and moves to door Right. As soon as he opens it there is a general hubbub outside. The two reporters, Dick and Joe, try hard to squeeze into the room.)

JOE. How about an interview, Mr. Mathews?

DICK. Is Mrs. White still missings?

JOE. Find any more ghosts, Mr. Mathews?

DICK. How about another picture showing the chair the ghost sits in?

LYNDON. Out! Get out! No statements!

JOE. Come on! Have a heart!

LYNDON. *(Struggling to close the door and keep them out.)* Out! We don't know what you're talking about!

(He succeeds in getting the door closed and stands panting with back against it.)

GLADYS. *(Into telephone.)* No! We're not giving out any interviews — to Life Magazine or anybody else . . . No! We don't want any publicity . . . I don't know anything about a ghost! *(She slams down the receiver.)* Oh, Lyndon! Do you see what those silly ghost stories of yours have done?

LYNDON. *(Returning to bench to sit.)* If it's all so silly and there's nothing to it, where's Mrs. White?

GLADYS. I don't know. But I'm certainly glad Nathaniel W. White allowed us to notify the police.
LYNDON. He had nothing to lose. The news was out anyway.

GLADYS. Who do you suppose called those newspapermen?

LYNDON. One of the kids, I guess. After last night, I'm willing to believe they're capable of anything.

GLADYS. Last night they were only trying to help.

LYNDON. Oh, sure!

GLADYS. (*Coming to him.*) Well, you needed a ghost, so they wanted to supply you with one.

LYNDON. Such help I can do without.

GLADYS. My goodness, what are we going to do? Do you think he'll discharge you?

LYNDON. I don't know.

(*The telephone rings again. With a sigh, Gladys goes to answer it.*)

GLADYS. (*Into phone.*) No! I don't care if you are the Associated Press, we have nothing to say!

(*She hangs up. Jennie enters at Left, very bright and cheerful, and eating a banana.*)

JENNIE. When's breakfast? I'm starved.

GLADYS. Oh! How can you think of eating at a time like this?

JENNIE. It's easy.

GLADYS. Well, I guess your father *could* use some coffee.

LYNDON. With a touch of arsenic in it.

(*Gladys shakes her head and exits at Left.*)

JENNIE. (*Crossing Right.*) Ghost around this morning?

LYNDON. Now stop that!

JENNIE. (*Sitting at table.*) I was just trying to make conversation.

LYNDON. Well, make it with somebody else, will you?

(*Mary enters Up Left Center with her mop, etc.*)

MARY. If I've cleaned this place once, I've cleaned it a

thousand times. I've never seen a place that gets dirtier.

JENNIE. Mary, have you heard about the excitement we've been having around here?

MARY. No. And I don't want to. People missing and ghosts and stuff.

JENNIE. How did you know it was about people missing if you didn't hear anything about it?

MARY. (*Sullenly passing behind counter.*) I don't know. Guess I must have heard.

LYNDON. How could she have missed hearing? The whole country must be talking about it by this time!

MARY. (*Placing cleaning materials along wall behind counter.*) What extra stuff gets done this morning?

LYNDON. Oh, I don't know. You'd better ask my wife.

JENNIE. Mary, did you see Becky?

MARY. I don't see anybody. I have to work too hard.

(*Mary exits at Left.*)

LYNDON. What about Becky?

JENNIE. She went out early this morning.

LYNDON. Probably stopped down to see Bugs.

JENNIE. Yeah. I guess she wanted to get out before you woke up.

LYNDON. Whatever possessed them to dress up as ghosts?

JENNIE. Just wanted to help.

LYNDON. You just wanted to help too, I suppose.

JENNIE. Sure, but I'm smarter than they are. I discovered a secret panel in the alcove. (*Leaning forward intently.*) Don't you see, Pop? Your ghost

must get in and out through that panel. It was probably put in during the Revolution. Lots of secret meetings and stuff going on then. They had a regular spy system.

LYNDON. All right! — So what if there is a secret panel? Couldn't you have just told us about it instead of —

JENNIE. Gee, Pop, I just wanted to —

LYNDON. I know. Help. *(The telephone rings; he rises angrily and goes to answer it; bellows into phone.)* Will you lunkheads quit ringing this telephone? You're the worst lambrain, nincom — . . . What? . . . Who? . . . *(Very small voice.)* Oh, Well, yes! . . . *(Quickly.)* Look, I'm sorry about what I — . . . Yes, sir! . . . Yes, sir! . . . Right away! Hold on! *(He drops telephone, rushes Down Left, then dashes back to phone and shouts into it, "Don't go 'way! I'll get him!" then rushes off at Left. Jennie stares after him.)*

JENNIE. Pop, who — ?

(Miss Lilibet enters Up Left Center.)

MISS LILIBET. Good morning. Good morning. Good morning.

JENNIE. Hi. How did you get in there?

MISS LILIBET. *(Coming Center.)* Through a back window. All those dreadful reporters are out front. Isn't this exciting? It's almost as good as a hurricane or a fire or something like that.

JENNIE. Yeah. Now if only somebody would get killed, we could really have ourselves a ball.

MISS LILIBET. *(Happily.)* Maybe somebody has been killed! Have they found Mrs. White yet?

JENNIE. Not yet. You know, Miss Lilibet, somehow I don't think Pop's going to be very happy to see you here this morning.

MISS LILIBET. I can't imagine why not.

JENNIE. That seance didn't turn out very well, you know. Mr. White was awfully angry.

MISS LILIBET. *(Coming Right.)* Oh, now. We mustn't let these little things upset us. Just think how all this will read in my book!

JENNIE. Maybe that's what they are thinking of. *(Lyndon and Mr. White enter at Left. Lyndon is beside himself.)*

LYNDON. It's the President! Calling here, Mr. White!

WHITE. *(Angrily.)* I knew it! I just knew it! Your

tom-foolery has gotten me on the carpet too, Mathews! LYNDON. *(Coming around counter to Center.)* Now, Mr. White . . .

WHITE. *(Into telephone; Lyndon turns expectantly to watch him.)* Hello? White speaking . . . Oh, good morning, sir! How are you this morning, sir? . . . Just a little misunderstanding here, sir. *(With a hollow laugh.)* Everything's under control now . . . *(Glaring at Lyndon.)* We're discharging those responsible for all this unfortunate publicity from the service of the Department of the Interior! *(Lyndon groans aloud.)* . . . I'm taking care of it personally, sir. That's why I'm here . . . No, sir! I had nothing to do with it! . . . Well, yes, I did sit in on the seance as the papers say but — . . . I know, but — . . . yes, but — . . . No, but — . . . *(Meekly.)* Yes, sir. *(He hangs up as Lyndon has been sneaking Left.)*

WHITE. *(Barking.)* Mathews!

LYNDON. *(Turning meekly.)* Yes, Mr. White?

WHITE. I want to talk to you!

LYNDON. But you talked to me for six hours last night.

WHITE. *(Coming down to glare into his face.)* And I'm going to talk to you again! *(Pointing at telephone.)* Do you know who that was?

LYNDON. *(Gulping.)* I've got a faint idea.

WHITE. And do you know what he wanted? He blames me — me — for this mess! So do you know what I'm going to do?

(White and Lyndon exit at Left.)

JENNIE. Poor Pop.

MISS LILIBET. *(Dashing Center with her ever trusty notebook.)* I'm going to follow them! Raw, rugged emotions! That's what I need for my book! *(Miss Lilibet exits at Left. Jennie shaves her head and rises.)*

JENNIE. I wonder if I can find anything to eat. *(She starts Left as the telephone rings, then changes her course and goes to answer the telephone.)* Hello?

. . . I'm sorry but we're not giving out any publicity . . . We refuse to answer any and all questions about ghosts . . . Who? . . . Who did you say you were? . . . The PEOPLE IN THE NEWS television program? . . . (*Dismayed and delighted.*) You want us to appear on the show? . . . I'm Jennifer Mathews, the youngest daughter . . . (*Suddenly as hard as nails.*) What would we get out of it? . . . (*Listening, her face growing happier by degrees.*) Oh, boy . . . Oh, boy! . . . OH, BOY! . . . (*Lowering telephone and staring straight ahead.*) I really shouldn't, you know. It's definitely against my better judgement when I know Pop's trying to keep all publicity at a minimum. (*Shrugging.*) Oh, well. (*Into telephone again.*) Hello? . . . We've just decided to accept your offer . . . Yes, sir! You just bring the cameras right over here! . . . We'll do it! We'll be on TV! (*Hangs up and dusts her hands.*) That's that! (*Rodney enters at Left.*)

RODNEY. Aren't you going to eat, Little One?

JENNIE. Eat? Oh — eat! I forgot all about it.

RODNEY. (*Pausing in dismay.*) You forgot about eating?

JENNIE. (*Moving up behind bench with proud air.*) There are a few things more important than food.

RODNEY. (*Grimacing and moving up to sit on bench.*) I'm glad to hear you think so.

JENNIE. (*Leaning over back of bench and looking at him.*) For instance, there's a convertible.

RODNEY. (*Turning away from her.*) Why remind me of that? I'll never get a car. Dad hasn't got the money.

JENNIE. (*Straightening but still hanging on bench.*) It's going to be mighty unhandy — being away at college without a car.

RODNEY. If Dad loses his job, maybe I won't even get to college.

JENNIE. Oh, Pop's smart. He'll figure some way out

of this. (*Counting on her fingers.*) Then there's a vacation in Europe. Mom's always wanted to take a swell vacation. We're always stuck here entertaining other people who are on vacations.

RODNEY. Yeah, I know she's wanted to take a nice trip for a long time.

JENNIE. Becky'd like a pile of new clothes. I'd like a triple decker banana malted float every day. We could get new furniture —

RODNEY. (*Twisting his body to stare at her.*) What are you talking about?

JENNIE. (*Jumping around to stoop at side of bench where she hangs onto the arms.*) We could have all these things if we got on the PEOPLE IN THE NEWS TV program!

RODNEY. (*Twisting the other way to look at her.*) But only people who are in the news get on that.

JENNIE. We're in the news!

RODNEY. Yeah, I guess we are at that.

JENNIE. (*Jumping up.*) Sure, we are. Look at this. (*She goes Right, opens the door, and the hubbub of reporters asking questions is heard. She shoves them out and closes the door before she dashes back to Center.*) They called, Rod! The TV program called and asked us to be on. I told them we would!

RODNEY. (*Rising.*) You what? Jennie, you know Dad won't —

JENNIE. (*Coming to him.*) Maybe he will if we do something for him! I'm going to do something for him.

RODNEY. What? (*Jennie is dashing Left.*) Jennie, wait! You be careful what you do! You'll make more of a mess than we've got now!

(*But it's no use. She's gone, exiting Left. Rodney, in a daze, sits again. Jack squeezes in through door Right.*)

JACK. No! No statement! I just work here! (*Turning.*) Man! What's going on around here? Rod,

the papers are full of some crazy stuff about Mr. Matthews' ghost and Mrs. White disappearing! What's it all about? (*Rodney ignores him as he comes Center.*) Rodney? Hey, fellow! What gives?

RODNEY. (*Coldly.*) I wouldn't know.

JACK. You're acting awfully funny.

RODNEY. (*Proudly looking the other way.*) Ha ha.

JACK. You — Uh, wouldn't be thinking about Nancy, would you?

RODNEY. (*Turning with sudden venom.*) I chased after her last night and she said she had a date with you! I thought your date was for tonight.

JACK. Tonight and last night. We just went out for a hamburger and coke last night. (*Eyeing him.*) Don't you think I should have taken her out?

RODNEY. (*Looking away again.*) I'm sure I don't care.

JACK. (*Straddling chair at table, Right.*) Then why are you so worked up about it?

RODNEY. (*Turning to him again.*) So who's worked up?

JACK. You are.

RODNEY. If I'm worked up it's because of this business with Dad. Not because of you and Nancy!

JACK. Well, I'm glad to hear that. Then you won't mind if I see her every night.

RODNEY. Every night!

JACK. Rod, Nancy's only five years younger than I am. You don't think that's too much of an age difference, do you?

RODNEY. (*Rising and going Right to face him.*) For what? Jack, you're kidding me, aren't you? You're only dating Nancy to make me jealous!

JACK. Maybe I was. But she and I got to talking last night . . . I like her. I like her an awful lot.

RODNEY. Well, she doesn't like you! Why, she's always been crazy about me. All through school she was after me and —

JACK. (*Rising.*) But you're not in school any more. You're a boy who doesn't even know where he's going or what he wants. You haven't got much money to spend on dates. You've treated her like a sore thumb and she's tired of it. I pay her attention; I'm older, settled. (*Pause.*) Which one do you think Nancy'll choose?

(*Jack looks at him for a moment, then strides Up Left Center and exits. Rodney stares after him, then sinks with a groan back onto the table. Becky and Bugs enter at Right, followed by a group of drooling, worshipping boys.*)

BECKY. Hey, look! We're exciting enough now!

BUGS. The ghost stories in the newspapers did it!

BECKY. We're celebrities!

(*They cross Left, the boys following, and exit at Left. Lyndon dashes in at Left, fighting his way through the boys.*)

RODNEY. (*Coming to life.*) Did you get fired yet, Pop?

LYNDON. (*Desperately at Center.*) It'd be a relief if he would fire me. He just keeps yaking and yaking. I need an aspirin.

WHITE. (*Off Left.*) Mathews!

LYNDON. (*Frantically dashing Right and crouching behind the table.*) Tell him I just left for the Amazon! Tell him I'm going to join the head hunters! Tell him I caught a plane for Europe! Tell him I shipped out for the Foreign Legion!

RODNEY. (*Concerned.*) Gee, Pop. You got it bad. (*White charges on stage from Left.*)

WHITE. Mathews! Where are you? I saw you come in here! Mathews!

RODNEY. (*Pointing Up Left.*) I think he went that way.

WHITE. Thanks, Mathews!

(*White exits Up Left Center. Lyndon rises with a grateful sigh.*)

LYNDON. (*With a weak hand on Rod's shoulder.*)

Thank you, my boy. You've helped your poor old father.

(Jennie and Miss Lilibet enter at Right, dragging Miss Snyder who is struggling. They move to Center.)

MISS SNYDER. Let me go! I've told you all I know. Why must I come back here?

JENNIE. I want you to tell my Pop. Hey, Pop! I'm helping you.

LYNDON. *(Striding to them.)* Jennifer, have you gone completely out of your mind? Let that woman go!

MISS LILIBET. *(Holding an arm of the struggling Miss Snyder.)* Now, Mr. Mathews, we're only helping you.

LYNDON. *(Clapping a hand to his head.)* Everybody's helping me so much I'm going to end up in jail! Madam, I'm terribly sorry, I —

JENNIE. Pop, she's the one who said she was a school teacher and hired me to put that crazy dress on you!

MISS SNYDER. *(Stopping the struggle and attempting to regain her dignity.)* I certainly didn't mean any harm. I was informed it was merely a joke.

MISS LILIBET. *(With Jennie, releasing the woman but keeping a watchful eye on her.)* She was given fifty dollars to get somebody to dress you up.

LYNDON. But why would anybody — ? Who was it?

MISS SNYDER. *(Sullenly.)* I don't know. I was approached over the telephone and paid by mail. I couldn't see any harm in it so I agreed to get this child to dress you up, Mr. Mathews. Frankly, I've been ill and I needed the money they offered me.

LYNDON. That's the craziest thing I've ever heard of!

MISS SNYDER. Yes, utterly crazy. I — I told you I thought it was just a practical joke.

LYNDON. *(To Jennie.)* How'd you find her? Before you said you —

JENNIE. I got Miss Lilibet to help.

MISS LILIBET. I know just everybody in town and in

all the motels. I like to talk to people, you know. Gives me fresh viewpoints for my writing.

(White enters at Up Left Center.)

WHITE. Ah, there you are, Mathews!

LYNDON. Mr. White, this lady was hired to make me look silly.

WHITE. *(Above Center, Up Left.)* Mathews, I don't think you need any help to look silly. You do a pretty good job of that by yourself!

LYNDON. *(Crossing to counter.)* Now, Mr. White —

MISS SNYDER. *(Smoothing her dress with dignity and moving Right.)* If you don't mind, I'd like to leave now.

LYNDON. Was it a man's voice or a woman's voice you heard over the telephone, Miss — ?

MISS SNYDER. Snyder, I — I'm not sure. It was muffled.

JENNIE. Probably held a handkerchief over the telephone. That's what they do in detective stories!

LYNDON. But couldn't you make a guess?

MISS SNYDER. In addition to being muffled, the person was obviously trying to disguise the voice. I can't tell. A man can talk falsetto and a woman can speak pretty low if she really wants to. If you'll excuse me.

JENNIE. *(Following her Right to let her out.)* Thanks for coming!

MISS SNYDER. Humph!

MISS LILIBET. *(Sitting at table and getting out her notebook to catch up on her notes.)* I'll keep in touch with you.

(Miss Snyder exits at Right.)

LYNDON. *(Suddenly it dawns on him that no reporters bothered her when she left.)* Hey! The reporters have gone!

JENNIE. Oh, they've been gone for some time. I'm helping you, Pop. I got rid of them.

WHITE. (*Moving down behind counter.*) How? How did you get rid of them?

JENNIE. (*Moving in to Right Center.*) Told them the chemical plant in Somerville blew up and half the town was destroyed. They all rushed over there.

LYNDON. (*Horrified.*) Jennie!

RODNEY. (*Straightening.*) Holy smokes! What's going to happen when they find out it's not true?

JENNIE. (*Smugly.*) We'll worry about that when the time comes.

LYNDON. (*A shattered man.*) I'm worried about it right now.

JENNIE. Now, Pop. (*Dramatically.*) I'm hot on the trail of that ghost. We'll have a ghost to show them when they get back and all your troubles will be over.

WHITE. (*Barking.*) Mathews!

LYNDON. Not all my troubles!

WHITE. Why can't you control these children? If I hear one more word about ghosts —!

JENNIE. (*Crossing in front of Lyndon to lean over counter toward White.*) But, Mr. White, if we solve the mystery everything'll be okay. Then we can get on PEOPLE IN THE NEWS TV Program and clean up.

WHITE. (*Exploding.*) What!

LYNDON. (*Grabbing her arm and whirling her around.*) Jennie, you haven't —! You didn't —!

JENNIE. Sure. They called and I told them we'd be glad to be on the program. Rod'll get his car, Mom can have a vacation, I can have —

LYNDON. (*Almost too choked up for words.*) Jennie!

WHITE. (*Raising a threatening finger.*) Mathews, if you dare to stick your nose on television at a time like this —

(*Nancy enters at Right.*)

NANCY. Hi, everybody! Looks like we're having a party.

LYNDON. It's no party, believe me.

NANCY. (*Coming Right Center.*) Where's Jack?

RODNEY. I don't know.

LYNDON. (*Vaguely; he can't quite get back to normal. Jennie uses this distraction to slip away from him and sit on bench.*) Jack? I guess he must be getting the headquarters ready to open.

NANCY. Mind if I go in?

RODNEY. (*Vehemently.*) Sure we mind! It's closed! It's not open yet! You can't go in there.

LYNDON. What's the matter with you, Rodney? The rules aren't that rigid. Of course she can go in to see Jack!

NANCY. (*Turning her nose up at Rodney.*) Thank you, Mr. Mathews. You're so nice and polite. Too bad your son didn't take after you.

(*Nancy exits Up Left.*)

LYNDON. Well, son, looks as if you finally succeeded in getting Nancy Talbot off your neck.

RODNEY. (*Gloomily.*) Yes.

LYNDON. (*As Rodney sags toward the Left.*) Where are you going?

RODNEY. To the kitchen. I think I'm the one who needs a cup of coffee this morning.

(*Rodney exits Left.*)

LYNDON. Strange . . . that boy acts almost as if he were in love.

WHITE. (*Coming down around counter to face him.*)

I'm not interested in your private affairs, Mathews. All I want to know is what you're going to do about this mess?

JENNIE. Don't worry. We'll take care of everything.

WHITE. (*Furious.*) Mathews, will you tell that little —! daughter of yours to go play with her dolls and keep her nose out of this?

JENNIE. I'm much too old to play with dolls.

LYNDON. Jennie —

JENNIE. (*Rising.*) All right, all right. I'll go do my detective work someplace else. But you'll be sorry.

Things will go wrong if I'm not here to take care of you people and keep you out of trouble.

(*Jennie exits Up Left Center.*)

LYNDON. (*Expansively throwing out his hands and moving Right.*) Mrs. White's still missing. We've found a crazy woman who was hired to make me look silly. I don't understand . . . (*Appealing to the ceiling.*) What in the world are we going to do?

MISS LILIBET. (*Looking up from her notes.*) We can hold another seance.

LYNDON. Will you get out of here? I've had enough of your silly ideas! Out! Go!

(*He shouts so loudly that Miss Lilibet rises, startled. Lyndon literally shoves her out the door Right.*)

WHITE. I think I ought to fire you. Right now.

LYNDON. (*Turning back into room.*) Now, Mr. White, that won't get you off the spot with Washington. Look, if you're fair you'll admit yourself that something's going on around here. The police haven't been able to locate your wife at any of the hotels or motels, so it's obvious that she didn't leave here of her own free will. Someone hired that woman Jennie dug up. If we can get to the bottom of the problem, that might get both of us off the hook.

WHITE. And how do you suggest we do this? Play detective like a couple of kids?

LYNDON. We could at least go back over everything that happened. Maybe we'd see a pattern or get some ideas.

(*Becky, Bugs, and the boys enter at Left.*)

LYNDON. (*This is almost the last straw.*) Becky, what do you think you're doing?

BECKY. Being exciting.

BUGS. Yeah, but it's getting a little boring, don't you think? Being exciting, I mean. (*Glancing over her shoulder.*) Do you think we'll ever get rid of them?

BECKY. Bugs Rafferty! We go to all this trouble to get boys and now you're tired of them!

BUGS. But I like privacy!

(*Becky, Bugs, and boys exit at Right.*)

WHITE. (*Shaking his head.*) I've got to hand it to you, Mathews. I don't see how you stand it!

LYNDON. It isn't easy. Now let me think . . . (*Pacing thoughtfully.*) It started like any other day. Except that I got up earlier than usual because we were expecting you. I came in here. The drapes in front of Washington's chair were open. (*He goes up to open them.*) Like this. (*He is deep in his reconstruction and doesn't look directly at the chair, so he doesn't see Mrs. White slumped there, unconscious. Mr. White points, and stares, unable to speak, he is so surprised.*) I'd just heard Mary, the maid, come through as I remember and I wanted to tell her to be sure to get the place extra clean because—What's the matter with you, Mr. White? (*Rushing down to him.*) It's the excitement. You're not used to this place. I am. I can take it better than you.

WHITE. (*Rushing Up Right.*) Hyacinth!

LYNDON. Huh? (*Whirling.*) Mrs. White!

WHITE. (*Dashing into the alcove and patting her wrists.*) Hyacinth! Speak to me . . . Mathews! She's dead!

LYNDON. (*Rushing up.*) What? (*Looking closely at her.*) She's not dead, Mr. White—just unconscious. You can see that she's breathing.

WHITE. Thank heavens we found her!

LYNDON. (*Yelling.*) Gladys! (*To White.*) Come on, let's get her to bed and call a doctor.

WHITE. Poor, sweet, little Hyacinth.

LYNDON. (*Staring at him.*) What? Oh, yes . . .

(*Together, with much heaving and grunting, they half-drag, half-carry the unconscious Mrs. White across the stage and off Left. Off Left, Gladys can be heard. "Oh, you found her! The poor dear! Bring her right in here!" Mary enters at Left just before they exit there with Mrs. White and stares at*

them. After they have gone, she looks out the door after them, then firmly closes it.)

MARY. Work's bad but this is even worse! (Looking around.) Hey! You around here anywhere? Hey, you! (The Ghost moves into the alcove; the blue light shines on him. Mary strides up to speak to him.) There you are! Listen, I'm tired of all this. I'm leaving. You just say I got tired of the whole thing. Too hard on the nerves. With all the work I do I've got to keep my nerves calmed down. You know how it is . . . (She is partially hidden by the drapes because she has entered the alcove with the Ghost. The Ghost has a short bit of pipe or other metal for a weapon and raises it. Mary screams. Then he appears to hit her and she sinks to the floor, again hidden by the drapes.)

JENNIE. (Off Up Left.) I heard something! Somebody screamed! Miss Lilibet! How did you get in here again?

MISS LILIBET. (Also off Up Left.) Through the window.

(The Ghost stands for a minute undecided, then sits calmly in Washington's chair in a very ghostly attitude as Jennie and Miss Lilibet enter Up Left Center.)

JENNIE. Pop? Mr. White? Where is everybody?

MISS LILIBET. Maybe they saw a — (Sees the Ghost.) G-g-g-ghost! (She screams.)

JENNIE. (Also seeing him.) Jeepers!

MISS LILIBET. Ohhhhh. . . I think I'm going to faint!

JENNIE. (Shaking her.) You can't faint now! Remember! You're in tune with the spirits!

MISS LILIBET. I just got out of tune. (She screams again, off key.)

JENNIE. (Seizing her arm.) Let's get Pop!

(They dash off to Left. As soon as they have gone the Ghost springs into action and jerks the drapes closed. He and Mary exit when the drapes are closed.)

A moment later Jennie, Miss Lilibet, Lyndon, Rodney, and Mr. White enter at Left. White pauses Down Left; Miss Lilibet, Jennie, and Rodney rush Up Right. Lyndon stops uncertainly at Left Center.)

JENNIE. We saw it!

MISS LILIBET. We really did! In Washington's chair.

JENNIE. Just the way you described it, Pop!

WHITE. Mass hypnotism. Or more tom-todology.

JENNIE. (Pointing.) The drapes weren't closed!

RODNEY. (Inspecting them.) They're closed now.

LYNDON. Be careful, boy.

(Rodney jerks aside the drapes.)

LYNDON. Gone again.

WHITE. Just as I thought.

JENNIE. But it was there!

MISS LILIBET. (Peering into alcove.) It really was! And we didn't pull the drapes closed.

LYNDON. (Quietly.) I believe you.

JENNIE. (Coming down to above table, Right.) We heard screams too.

WHITE. So did I! From this — this — (He points to Miss Lilibet.) What do you characters think you're pulling here?

JENNIE. She wasn't the one who screamed. Pop, let's follow the ghost! He must have gone through the secret panel!

LYNDON. (Following as Jennie dashes into the alcove.) Jennie! Jennifer, don't you dare —!

RODNEY. Pop! I want to come too!

(Jennie, Lyndon, and Rodney exit Up Right Center into alcove.)

WHITE. (Going Up Right.) They've disappeared!

MISS LILIBET. (With relish.) Secret panel. Ooh!

What a story I'm going to have!

(Becky and Bugs rush in at Right and slam the door.)

BUGS. Becky, let's be dull again.

BECKY. I don't want to be dull but I wish we could be just a little less exciting.

(Gladys appears at door Left.)

GLADYS. Mr. White, the doctor's here. He came in the other way.

WHITE. *(Crossing Left.)* Good!

MISS LILIBET. *(Following him.)* Is she going to — ?

GLADYS. *(Glaring at her.)* She's going to be all right.

MISS LILIBET. *(Disappointed.)* Oh. *(Then cheering up.)* Well, doctor's have been wrong before, you know.

(Mr. White and Gladys exit at Left, with Miss Lilibet crowding after them. Jack enters Up Left Center.)

JACK. Hi, kids.

BECKY. *(Moving in to sit on bench.)* 'Morning! Did anything happen while we were gone?

JACK. I don't know. Everybody seems to be rushing around here.

BUGS. *(Kneeling on chair at table.)* Oh, they always are. It's that type of a place.

JACK. *(Coming Center.)* I wonder when Mr. Mathews is going to open for the tourists?

BECKY. Maybe he's not going to open today.

JACK. *(Going Down Right to window and looking out.)* That's true. With all this excitement, it might be just as well not to. Think I'll go down to the storerooms and sort out the new shipment of souvenirs until he decides what he does want to do. Want to come along?

BECKY. Oh, some of those new things are dandies, Pop said. But it's kind of dark and dreary down there in the storeroom.

BUGS. So what? We've got Jack to protect us if any old ghosts come along. It'll be a relief to look at something other than boys for awhile.

JACK. *(Laughing and moving up to door Right.)* And here I thought you two were so fond of boys.

BECKY. We are.

BUGS. But enough's enough.

JACK. Well, come along if you're coming. I don't want to be gone too long in case your father does decide to open today.

BECKY. *(Rising.)* Right!

BUGS. *(Getting off chair.)* I wonder if they got any little statues of ghosts as Miss Lilibet suggested. Boy! They ought to sell around here now!

(Jack, Bugs, and Becky exit at Right. Jennie and Lyndon enter Up Left Center.)

LYNDON. Nothing! A long passageway into the kitchen of Washington's Headquarters and nothing else.

JENNIE. Aw, we'll get a break soon. Pop, do you think that secret passageway is big enough to get a television camera through?

LYNDON. Jennifer, we are *not* having anything to do with that television program.

JENNIE. Now, Pop, You don't mean that. *(Going Left.)* Oh, I must tell Mom to wear her blue dress. They say blue looks good on TV.

LYNDON. *(Following her.)* Jennie, I forbid it! The Department of the Interior doesn't like its employees to have that kind of publicity. We definitely are not —

(They exit at Left. Mary, quite disheveled, staggers in from the alcove, looking back over her shoulder.)

MARY. *(Panting.)* I got away from him . . . *(She stands swaying for a minute then staggers to the bench and sits on it holding her head in her hands.)* I — I must get away . . . He'll . . . He'll . . . *(She collapses on the bench and lies still.)*

(Nancy and Rodney enter Up Left Center.)

RODNEY. Listen to me, Nancy!

NANCY. *(Haughtily.)* I don't know why I should.

RODNEY. You should because — because —

NANCY. *(Moving down to Center.)* Because why?

RODNEY. *(Lamely as he follows her.)* We're old friends.

NANCY. We aren't. I've been your friend but you've never been mine. It's all been very one-sided.

RODNEY. (*Miserably.*) I know.

NANCY. (*Looking at Mary.*) Oh, for goodness sakes! Why don't you get a different cleaning woman? Every time I come here she's complaining like mad about all the work she has to do and now she's sleeping on the job.

RODNEY. Never mind her. (*Pleading.*) Nancy, you can't go out with Jack.

NANCY. (*Crossing in front of him to sit at table.*) And why not? What's wrong with Jack?

RODNEY. Nothing. He's a great guy but —

NANCY. But? I should think you'd be only too happy to have me going out with a nice guy.

RODNEY. (*Savagely as he goes to her.*) Nancy, I don't want you going out with anybody but me!

NANCY. Rodney . . .

RODNEY. (*Turning away, hands shoved into pockets. This is hard for him to say.*) I'm sorry about the way I've treated you. I really took you for granted. But it won't be like that any more. Oh, I won't be able to spend much on dates or flowers and stuff but I'll try to make it up in other ways. (*Turning to her.*) Please, Nancy. Don't go out with him. I — I want you to go steady with me.

NANCY. (*Casually.*) Okay.

RODNEY. (*Almost stunned.*) W-What?

NANCY. (*Rising.*) You don't know how long I've waited for you to say that, Rod. It's all you've ever had to say. I wouldn't go with anybody else.

RODNEY. (*Hugging her.*) Gee, honey! You're a gasser!

NANCY. Rod — there's something I wanted to tell you. But I couldn't because I wasn't speaking to you. Last night Jack and I were talking very seriously. He likes me a lot. Maybe as much as you do and —

RODNEY. (*Releasing her and moving Center a few steps.*) I don't want to talk about Jack Fisher!

NANCY. (*Following him.*) I think you'd better. We were having a great conversation . . . You know how it is. You get talking with somebody you like pretty well and sometimes you say things you wouldn't ordinarily talk about.

RODNEY. (*Facing her.*) So what did you tell Jack?

NANCY. It's what he told me.

RODNEY. (*Interested.*) What?

NANCY. Rod, he wants your father's job. He wants it in the worst way.

RODNEY. Jack Fisher?

NANCY. Yes. If your father were fired, he'd be the logical one to step into his shoes, wouldn't he?

RODNEY. Sure, I guess so, but —

NANCY. He's bought some land aside of the Headquarters and he's figuring to spread out there. More souvenirs, a lunch counter, and maybe even a motel. It'd be worth money if it works the way he figures, Rod. And if he were in charge here, he could run things pretty much as he wanted. He could swing the deal with the raise in salary.

RODNEY. But what does this have to do with — ? (*Thoughtfully.*) Most of the stuff that happened here made Dad look pretty silly!

NANCY. And might get him fired too!

RODNEY. (*Grabbing her hand.*) Come on!

NANCY. Where are we going?

RODNEY. To find Pop and ask where Jack is!

NANCY. You'd better call the police again. There just might be trouble.

RODNEY. We will! From the living room phone. Jack might wander in here.

(*They are just about to exit at Left when doorbell rings. Jennie, Off Left, yells, "Answer the door!"*)

RODNEY. Answer it yourself.

(Rodney and Nancy exit at Left. An instant later, Jennie enters at Left.)

JENNIE. I don't get it. Nobody ever rings here. *(She crosses to the door right.)* Yes?

MISS EWELL. *(Entering.)* I'm Miss Ewell of PEOPLE IN THE NEWS television program.

JENNIE. Oh, boy!

MISS EWELL. We contacted you —

JENNIE. You bet. We're all very anxious.

LYNDON. *(Off Left.)* I tell you, Gladys, I don't care if we get a hundred vacations out of it, I will not go on television.

MISS EWELL. What was that?

JENNIE. Oh, that must be the TV set. We have it on all the time.

MISS EWELL. I see. Well, as you know I'm sure, our program is on film. We'd like to take some background shots — then pictures of the family. I don't suppose we could get a shot of the ghost?

JENNIE. I'm afraid not.

MISS EWELL. Well, I really didn't think we could.

JENNIE. Where do you want to start?

MISS EWELL. Out on the front lawn, I think. We'll be ready for the family in about ten minutes.

JENNIE. We'll be there.

(Miss Ewell exits at Right. Jennie briskly rubs her hands together, goes Center, and stops suddenly to stare at Mary.)

JENNIE. Hey, wake up, Mary! For Pete's sake, all the things that are going on around here and you sleep right through it. *(She starts to go, then stops again and turns thoughtfully.)* We heard somebody scream . . .

(Miss Lilibet enters at Left.)

MISS LILIBET. Oh, Jennifer! Do you think I could be on the television program too?

JENNIE. I don't see why not.

MISS LILIBET. How thrilling! Maybe when they see

how I can act they'll give me a program of my own! JENNIE. I thought you were a writer.

MISS LILIBET. *(At Left Center, tossing her notebook and pencil away.)* This is the turning point in my career! *(Gesturing dramatically, hands on chest, elbows out, she speaks now in an "acting" voice, very grandly.)* From now on I'm giving myself to the Acting Profession.

JENNIE. Well, lucky acting profession. How's Mrs. White?

MISS LILIBET. *(Sadly.)* Coming around nicely. The doctor says she's had a terrible shock but she'll regain consciousness soon.

JENNIE. Miss Lilibet, that scream we heard — *(Pointing to Mary.)* Do you suppose — ?

MISS LILIBET. *(Coming up to inspect Mary.)* It could be. She looks a bit weird.

JENNIE. *(At Right side of bench.)* Mary always looks weird.

MISS LILIBET. Let's throw water in her face!

JENNIE. Good idea.

(Lyndon, Gladys, Rodney, and Nancy enter at Left. Nancy and Gladys move up behind counter.)

LYNDON. *(Coming Center.)* Where's Jack?

JENNIE. Huh?

RODNEY. *(Below counter.)* Jack! Have you seen him?

JENNIE. Oh, sure. He went out to the storage rooms with Becky and Bugs. To look over the new souvenirs, I guess. I saw them from the window.

GLADYS. The girls!

JENNIE. What's wrong?

RODNEY. Come on!

(Rodney and Lyndon dash out door Right.)

JENNIE. If they're hurrying because of the television, they don't have the cameras set up yet.

GLADYS. We think Jack's behind all this. He wants Lyndon's job. Mr. White agrees.

JENNIE. B-But he couldn't have been the ghost.

GLADYS. (*Coming to Left side of bench.*) Mary, can't you nap on George Washington's bed if you must nap?

JENNIE. Oh — Mary.

MISS LILIBET. The water!

(*Miss Lilibet rushes Left and exits.*)

NANCY. Jack must be crazy to do all this.

GLADYS. (*Coming Center.*) I don't think so. I imagine it just started as a simple scheme to make Lyndon look bad while Mr. White was here. But he needed somebody's help and the schemes got bigger and more elaborate until things got out of hand. I believe they only intended to have Lyndon see the ghost so everybody would think he was crazy. Then Mrs. White saw it by mistake and they got frightened and hit her.

NANCY. But what might they do if they get frightened again?

(*Lyndon and Rodney enter at Right and pause above table.*)

RODNEY. They're gone!

LYNDON. Did they come in here?

NANCY. No!

GLADYS. (*Coming Right Center.*) What're we going to do?

RODNEY. It's good we called the police again. If he's in the house, he can't get out. They're all over the place.

GLADYS. But the girls —

(*Rodney moves Down Right to the window, Miss Lilibet enters at Left with a glass of water which she brings to bench and throws in Mary's face.*)

MISS LILIBET. That ought to do it!

GLADYS. What are you doing?

JENNIE. (*Moving behind bench.*) She must have been the one who screamed!

LYNDON. Mary?

MARY. (*Sputtering and trying to sit up; Miss Lilibet*

moves above counter where she places the glass.)

W-w-w-who? Where — Where is he?

GLADYS. (*Kneeling beside bench.*) Mary, what's the matter?

JENNIE. He's not here, Mary. Did he hit you?

MARY. Yes . . . I — I didn't want t-to be mixed up in it any more.

LYNDON. (*Coming up to Right side of bench.*) Mixed up in what?

MARY. Jack Fisher told me h-he'd give me a nice job — a good job where I w-wouldn't have to work hard after he — he ran things around here. So — so I was helping h-him by snooping around and telling him when Mr. Mathews was — alone so Mr. Ambrose could scare him with the ghost bit.

LYNDON. Who's Mr. Ambrose?

MARY. A friend of Jack's who was playing ghost. He was going to get a job here too. But I never felt right about it! That's why I left yesterday. I — I didn't really want to do it.

LYNDON. Well, I'll be darned! Wait'll I tell Mr. White!

GLADYS. Why, that — that — ! And I always thought Jack Fisher was such a nice boy!

JENNIE. A snake in the grass!

MISS LILIBET. Where is he?

LYNDON. Maybe he left.

GLADYS. With the girls?

LYNDON. I'll get the police to search the place!

(*Lyndon starts Right just as Jack enters Up Left Center, herding Becky and Bugs before him. He has a gun pointed at them.*)

JACK. Hold it, Mathews! No cops.

GLADYS. (*Rising and rushing Up Left.*) Becky! Are you all right?

BECKY. (*As Jack shoves Gladys aside.*) Sure. Mom, he's the one who —

LYNDON. We know. What do you want, Fisher?

JACK. (*Coming in to back of bench; Jennie backs Up Right.*) To get out of here! Things got too complicated . . . I didn't mean for all this to happen. Nobody was supposed to see the ghost but you. Then Ambrose got scared when Mrs. White saw him. (*Raising his gun menacingly above Mary's head.*) If you'd stayed on the job to tell us when Mathews was alone! I ought to —

GLADYS. (*As Mary shrinks back with a cry.*) Oh — you! You ugly thing! You're the one who called in all those reporters too, I'll bet.

JACK. Right.

LYNDON. You won't get out! There are police all over the place.

JACK. (*Seizing Becky's arm, twisting it behind her, and holding her in front of him, the gun trained at her back as he moves Right; Lyndon gives ground, moving upstage.*) Oh, yes I will! And you'll help.

GLADYS. Don't you dare hurt her!

JACK. I won't — if I get out of here.

BUGS. (*Leaning on back of bench.*) How exciting can you get?

GLADYS. Lyn, do something!

LYNDON. What?

(*The door Right bursts open and Miss Ewell enters, briskly clapping her hands.*)

MISS EWELL. All right, everybody! We're ready for the pictures! This is PEOPLE IN THE NEWS TV don't forget! Please keep in mind that a million people will be watching you. (*Suddenly going to Jack and jerking the gun from his hand.*) Here, put that away! What do you think this is? "Dragnet" or something?

JACK. Hey — !

MISS EWELL. (*Taking Becky away from him.*) Here, girl, don't stand like that! It looks too awkward! (*Jack starts to run Right.*) Come back, you! The

cameras have started! Walk properly! Look dignified!

(*Jack bolts off at Right. There is instant shouting and sounds of scuffling off Right. Lyndon and Jennie rush to window, Down Right. Rodney is still there.*)

JENNIE. They got him!

RODNEY. Bless those policemen!

JENNIE. Look! There's the fellow dressed like a ghost running through the trees over there!

RODNEY. The cops are after him too!

LYNDON. They got him! Wait! Mr. White hears about this. Our troubles will be over.

MISS EWELL. (*Rushing to door Right.*) Here, stop that, you people! Oh, everybody always wants to get into the act. You're ruining our show! Who do you think you are? Perry Mason? Stop the cameras! Now start all over again! Be dignified! This way, everybody! All right — start them rolling again!

GLADYS. (*Coming Center.*) Come, Lyndon.

LYNDON. Confound it! How many times must I tell you that —

GLADYS. Lyndon!

LYNDON. I won't be on television!

RODNEY. I want that new car, Pop!

BECKY. I want some new clothes!

GLADYS. I want a vacation!

(*Miss Ewell stands at the door Right, pointing out. Miss Lilbit, holding her skirt out, little-girl-style, and smiling broadly prances Right. Behind her, parade-fashion, comes Nancy, strutting like a fashion model. Bugs is next, slouching along as usual. Jennie comes after her, holding one of her father's hands and dragging him. Rodney is behind Lyndon, shouting hard. Gladys is behind Rodney, also shouting. Mary rises, gets her mop, etc. and brings up the rear of the parade. Lyndon is, of course, loudly objecting to going out, and struggling like mad. Mr. White bursts in through the door Left.*)

WHITE. Listen, everybody! You're all behind times
and don't know the latest developments around here.
You can stop looking for a criminal!

JENNIE. What?

WHITE. My wife has regained consciousness. She has
cleared up any mystery. It was a real ghost, after all.
She swears to it. Of course, I knew it all the time!
*(He stands, hands on hips, proudly beaming at them.
They freeze into a tableau as there is a*

QUICK CURTAIN