

ACT TWO

Scene 5

ELECTRIC CUE #1

SCENE:

Lilli's Dressing Room.

AT RISE:

HARRISON HOWELL is on the telephone.

HOWELL

(At D.R. table; as unit moves down he speaks)
This is Harrison Howell. Give me my secretary...Timothy?
I'm waiting here for Miss Vanessi, and I thought I'd jot down
my wedding itinerary...Ready? We'll be married in St. Thomas'
2:30. Got that?

(Consults notes)

Wedding reception at the Waldorf, 4:15. Got that? Press
conference, 5:38. Arrive Grand Central, 6:25. Depart, 6:30.
Got that?

(FRED enters, X's to lounge and sits)

Arrive Washington, 9:35. Arrive White House, 9:55. Got that?
Conference with President and honeymoon with wife.

FRED

It's a good trick if you can do it.

(LILLI enters, followed by TWO GUNMEN
who post themselves back of lounge)

LILLI

(Xes to HOWELL)

Harrison! They told me you were here!

HOWELL

That's all, Timothy.

LILLI

Don't hang up, Harrison. I'm playing this show under duress.
Call the F.B.I.

(HARRISON looks at FRED)

FRED

What did I tell you?

HOWELL (Cont'd)

(Hangs up phone)

Now, my dear - I don't mind bringing an ambulance and a doctor and two nurses. They're on my payroll. But the F.B.I. is not. I'm perfectly willing - in fact I enjoy humoring the caprices of a beautiful woman whom I happen to adore --

LILLI

Caprices? These thugs threatened me!

HOWELL

What?

LILLI

They're making me play at the point of a gun. They won't let me leave the theatre.

(HOWELL looks at FRED. FRED shrugs)

HOWELL

Now, my dear --

LILLI

Can't you see they're gangsters?

1st GUNMAN

I guess it shows.

FRED

(Rises and goes toward TWO GUNMEN)

Are you referring to two of the most promising graduates of the Group? Not to mention the Guild Theatre, Inc., the Civic Repertory, and Miss Pennyfeather's School of Charm, whose faculty they grace!

LILLI

And you're in cahoots with them!

HOWELL

What?

FRED

What can one say to libel?

1st GUNMAN

Should I say something?

FRED

No.

2nd GUNMAN

Discretion is the better part of valour.

1st GUNMAN

Famous Sayings...Top Shelf, under non-fiction, right hand corner, Atlanta...No talking...No smoking.

HOWELL

(Xs to couch, and sits)

Obviously,, my dear, judging by their costumes, and their speech, these men are not what you say they are.

LILLI

(Xs to HARRISON)

Harrison, darling, I tell you --

FRED

(Xes to LILLI by chair)

Do you realize what it means to blast a reputation? Of course not. You think nothing of dragging Harrison down here -- and an entire Medical Corps -- for a whim!

HOWELL

Now, my dear, I'd like to go over my wedding itinerary - I just dictated it to Timothy. Now, I thought we'd be married a week from Monday. At 2:30. St. Thomas's. That'll give you just enough time to assemble a trousseau.

LILLI

(Sits chair)

Harrison darling, listen to me. I can't get out of this theatre!

HOWELL

Why not?

LILLI

These thugs won't let me.

FRED

Why don't you try it?

LILLI

What?

FRED

Go! ... Of course you can leave the theatre.

(Hushing the GUNMEN. GUNMEN stand by door between rooms)

FRED (Cont'd)

That's what you want, and I can't say I blame you. After all, what is there in the theatre to hold you? It's so tawdry... The dreary business of creating a part...the dull routine of watching a character come to life. The meaningless excitement of opening night. The boring thundering applause of the crowd...

(Xes front of lounge to C.)

The pictures in the papers...The parties...the idiotic men and women who stare and whisper: There goes Lilli Vanessi! Dreadful! I don't blame you for leaving all that - when you've a chance for happiness --

(Xes to back of lounge)

real happiness -- with Harrison.

HOWELL

Thank you, Graham. I think I can make the little woman happy.

LILLI

I never want to see the theatre again!

(To FRED)

Or you again.

(Rises and Xes behind lounge L. end)

FRED

(Sits R. end of couch)

I envy you, Harrison. Never has a man acquired a woman with more sweetness of disposition, who's more even tempered, has more poise, more gentleness, more sheer unadulterated goodness. Yum, yum, yum --

(Rises. Xes C. In the style of a radio commercial)

Yes, Lilli Vanessi is the wife for you. Get Lilli Vanessi today! This is N.B.C.!

LILLI

(Xes to FRED)

I hope you're enjoying yourself.

FRED

Enormously...And envying you.

LILLI

Me?

FRED

The life you're going to lead with Harrison. So different than the one you had with me.

LILLI

I'll see to that.

FRED

No quarrels...no bickering...

LILLI

(Xes to Pouffe)

I want peace.

FRED

And you shall have it...peace...quiet...stability.

HOWELL

I've got a place down in Georgia...thirty thousand acres.
Ride for days, and not see a soul, except my tenant farmers!

FRED

You won't have to talk to a soul.

LILLI

(Sits pouffe. Sensing what he's up to)

I shall adore it!

FRED

Of course you will.

HOWELL

Wonderful life.

FRED

What do you call the place: Solitude?

HOWELL

No. Contentment.

FRED

Ah! Contentment.

(Xes to chair at dressing table and sits)

Just think. No cocktail parties. No malicious gossip. No
backbiting friends. In fact, no friends at all, except an
occasional mongoose who'll drop in for dinner.

LILLI

Go on! Go on!

HOWELL

We'll see all the people we want to see in Washington.

FRED

Certainly. Just think of those intimate little dinner parties for the sparkling Supreme Court. Just think of the privilege of sitting next to one of the Great Judicial Brains while he tells you the inside story of his sciatica.

HOWELL

(Indicating his back)
It always hits me here...

FRED

(Leaning forward)
Oh, it'll be a mad whirl...

LILLI

I'll still love it.

HOWELL

I always rest up in my place in Aiken. Got a dining room there can seat a hundred.

(GANGSTERS move D. to R. end of sofa)

FRED

Marvellous.

1st GUNMAN

Eight years I et in a dining room that could seat twelve hundred.

LILLI

Where did you say this was?

FRED

(Quickly. Xes to L. end of lounge)
The commissary at M.G.M.

HOWELL

Got my own projection room in Aiken. Got the finest collection of Mickey Mouses in the country.

1st GUNMAN

Where's your grammar? Mickey Mice.

2nd GUNMAN

Don't be a purist.

HOWELL

Mickey Mice?

(The GUNMEN exit satisfied)

FRED

Yes, I can just see life at Aiken. Morning. Harrison rises - with the aid of a valet --

HOWELL

Been with me thirty years --

FRED

Into his riding clothes. You into yours. A brisk canter.

LILLI

I'm mad about horses.

FRED

And eventually you'll stop falling off...It's Yoicks and away ...Back to the castle. A brisk shower. A massage: An injection of Vitamin B1.

HOWELL

Making a new man out of me.

FRED

(Xs back to C.)

And then -- Harrison takes a nap.

HOWELL

Oh, no. Breakfast first.

FRED

Ah, yes, breakfast. You sit at one end of the long, long table, Harrison at the other. You pick up your telescope and watch fondly as Harrison slops his Wheaties.

HOWELL

Wheaties are good eatin'! There's nothing finer.

FRED

And then the nap!

HOWELL

Twenty minutes. Rests the brain.

FRED

(Xs back of lounge to LILLI)

Then up. You dress. You contemplate the luxurious swamps. You toy with your toilette. Harrison wakes. You discuss this

FRED (Cont'd)

and that, topics of the day. Will Big Frost escape Dick Tracy?

HOWELL

I very much doubt it!

FRED

Time for another nap.

(Xs back of lounge)

HOWELL

Lunch first.

FRED

(Stops back of lounge)

Correction accepted. Lunch first.

(FRED continues X to C.)

HOWELL

Got the finest chef in the country. But I've got to watch my diet. Stick to yolk of an egg, shredded raw carrot, and a glass of milk. Done wonders for me.

FRED

As you'll be able to see through your telescope. And then -- a nice, soothing, refreshing nap!

HOWELL

(Lies back)

Thirty minutes. Rests the brain.

FRED

(Xes back of lounge to LILLI)

You, too, will nap, Miss Vanessi. Thirty minutes. Rests the brain. Then up. Dress. Walk in the formal gardens. Time for tea. High tea.

HOWELL

Always refreshes me.

FRED

(Xes to back of lounge)

Time for a nap -- before dinner.

HOWELL

Fifteen minutes.

FRED

A quickie...Rested, you rise.

(HOWELL starts to sit up. FRED pushes
him back)

You dress for dinner. You dine in that cozy little hundred
seater. Then a brisk game of dominoes.

HOWELL

Wonderful game...

FRED

(By HOWELL's head)

The mocking bird sings...The air is still...You feel drowsy...
You yawn deliciously...

(And HARRISON yawns)

Time for the final nap of the day...the long one... You
stretch out...

(HARRISON does so)

Your eyes close...

(HARRISON does so)

LILLI


(Rises, Xes to FRED. Whispering fiercely)

Get out!

FRED

Sh - And so the little Momma bear said to the Poppa bear:
You bore me...

(HARRISON snores loudly)


ELECTRIC CUE #2

B L A C K O U T