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Dr. Herman Middleton. pp.

The purpose of this thesis is to analyse the script, to produce the play, and to evaluate the production of William Inge's Picnic.

The first chapter includes the following: (1) research of the playwright's background, (2) research of the play's background, (3) character description and analysis, and (4) a discussion of the setting.

The second chapter consists of the prompt book for the production, performed on January 8, 9, and 10, 1971, in Taylor Theatre at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Type of notations included are: (1) movement, composition and picturization, (2) tempo, (3) stage business, and (4) sound and lights. Six production photographs are included.

The third and concluding chapter is the director's critical evaluation of the production. Discussed in this chapter are: (1) achievement of interpretation for the production, (2) actor-director relationships during the rehearsal period, and (3) audience reaction to the production.

A program and a letter of permission from the playwright for script changes comprise the appendices.

A PRODUCTION OF WILLIAM INGE'S PICNIC

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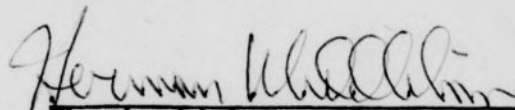
by

NELSON B. ALLISON

A Thesis Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
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Approved by


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APPROVAL PAGE

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my father, William
Burgen Allison, who taught me the value of an education.

To Mr. David Anderson and Miss Virginia Sawyer for serving
as the advisors, and to the staff and press for their work
in the production.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Grateful acknowledgement is made to Dr. Herman Middleton for his help and encouragement as thesis adviser; to Dr. David Batcheller and Miss Virginia Moomaw for serving on the committee, and to the cast and crews for their work in the production.

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CHAPTER I

ANALYSIS OF "PICNIC"

Background of Playwright

William Inge was born May 3, 1913, in Independence, Kansas. His interest in theatre was apparent as a child when he would enjoy developing short monologues. He acted in high school and college plays, doing summer stock in between, and even left school for one year to travel with a tent show. In 1935, Inge graduated from the University of Kansas with a Bachelor of Arts degree. In 1938, he received his Master of Arts degree from Peabody College.

Lacking money to further his acting career on Broadway, Inge turned to teaching as an instructor at Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri from 1938 to 1943. While in this position he had the opportunity to work under the celebrated Maude Adams who was the head of the drama department at that time. Inge left Stephens College to become drama, music, and movie critic for the St. Louis Star-Times. While occupying this position, Inge went to see the pre-Broadway production of Tennessee Williams' The Glass Menagerie in Chicago. Inspired by what he later called "the first real experience I had felt in theatre for years," he proceeded to write his first play, Farther Off From Heaven.

In 1946, Inge returned to teaching with an extension course in Playwriting at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. Three years later, in 1949, Inge left Washington University to work on his first New York play, Come Back, Little Sheba, which introduced him to Broadway as a talented and successful playwright in 1950.

Philosophy of Playwright

To Inge the success of a play is meaningless if it fails as a creative effort. He believes that the author who writes only for audience consumption is engaging only in a financial enterprise. Inge recognizes that there are two types of theatre: the commercial and the creative. Inge states, "The commercial theatre only builds on what has already been created, contributing only theatre back into theatre. Creative theatre brings something of life itself, which gives the theatre something to grow on."¹

Writing for a large audience, Inge deals with surfaces in his plays, and lets whatever depth there is in his material emerge unexpectedly so that his plays bring something of the suddenness and shock which accompany the discovery of truths in actuality. He explains that his plays are meaningless unless seen as a composite, because he sees dramatic values in a relative way. That is, one

¹William M. Inge, Four Plays by William Inge (New York: Random House, 1958), p. vi.

character in a play of his might seem quite pointless unless seen in comparison with another character.²

Inge neither attempts to write plays that primarily tell a story; nor does he seek deliberately to create new forms. He states:

I have been most concerned with dramatizing something of the dynamism I myself find in human motivations and behavior. I regard a play as a composition rather than a story, as a distillation of life rather than a narration of it.³

With Inge's plays there also is no intended theme or asserting of any particular idea. He fears in this type of playwrighting the characters would be props brought on only to illustrate those elements which apply to the theme or idea. Inge explains:

I am moved to write a play only when I find, sometimes with a little shock to myself, that I have seen inside a person's heart. Then, with a little feeling of identification, I can begin. And then I love more than anything to bring people together, to relate them in whatever way possible and find something meaningful in the relationship, something that brings out the depths of their feeling. I want my plays only to provide the audience with an experience which they can enjoy (and people can enjoy themselves crying as much as laughing) and which shocks them with the unexpected in human nature, with the deep inner life that is publicly presented. If I wrote plays of theme and idea, I don't think I would be able to write of people themselves as fully as I hope to do.⁴

²Ibid., p. viii.

³Ibid., p. vii.

⁴William M. Inge, "From 'Front Porch' to Broadway," Theatre Arts, April, 1954, p. 33.

Inge strives to bring meaning to his plays. As he points out:

I despair of a play that requires its audience to sit through two hours of plot construction, having no reference outside the immediate setting, just to be rewarded by a big emotional pay-off in the last act. This I regard as a kind of false stimulation. I think every line and every situation in a play should "pay off," too, and have its extensions of meaning beyond the immediate setting, into life. I strive to bring meaning to every line, every moment, every action.⁶

After his first Broadway play Inge admitted to himself that what he most wanted his plays to have was entertainment value. He realized that to accomplish this he must conceive his plays in terms of audience reaction. This course of action led Inge to write three more Broadway hits and an "Oscar" winning screen play.

Plays of Playwright

Inge's first play produced in New York, Come Back, Little Sheba, was first presented by the Theatre Guild at The Booth Theatre on February 15, 1950. It was directed by Daniel Mann and the setting and lighting were designed by Howard Bay. The production won the George Jean Nathan Award and Theatre Time Award.

Inge's second production was Picnic, which was produced by the Theatre Guild and Joshua Logan, at the Music Box Theatre, New York City, on February 19, 1953. It was directed by Joshua Logan with scenery and lighting by

⁶Ibid., p. viii.

Jo Mielziner. The production won the Pulitzer Prize in Drama, Outer Circle Award, Donaldson Award, and the New York Drama Critics Circle Award.

Inge's third production was Bus Stop, which was presented by Robert Whitehead and Roger L. Stevens at the Music Box, New York City, on March 2, 1955. It was directed by Harold Clurman with setting done by Boris Aronson. Bus Stop was presented with even greater success than either of his previous plays, running sixty weeks in New York and then being presented on tour by two separate companies.

His fourth Broadway play, The Dark at the Top of the Stairs, was first presented by Saint Subber and Elia Kazan at the Music Box, New York City, on December 5, 1957. It was directed by Elia Kazan with the setting done by Ben Edwards. The play was based on Inge's initial script, Farther Off From Heaven, which was brought to the attention of Margo Jones by Tennessee Williams, and produced by her in 1947.

In 1961, Inge won an "Oscar" from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for his screen play, Splendor in the Grass. His last three plays, A Loss of Roses produced in 1959, Natural Affection produced in 1961, and Where's Daddy produced in 1966, met with failure. In 1962, Inge published a book titled Summer Brave, and Eleven Short Plays. Summer Brave is a further development of Picnic.

Background of Play

Picnic was developed from the second play ever written by Inge, which he first called Front Porch. Inge admits that by the time he started writing Front Porch, he had learned just enough about writing plays to be confused. Although some of the characters and situations came off satisfactorily, others did not, for without realizing it he was trying to reduce them to a formula, trying to make the characters behave not as they had to **behave** but as he thought they should. And, as Inge points out, "A playwright can never tell a character what to do."⁷ Front Porch was a mixture of reality and contrivance, but it had enough reality to cause Inge to shelve it with the hope of getting back to it one day when he would be able to give the play more substance. The day for more substance came in the summer of 1950 as Inge reports,

I resumed work on Front Porch in the summer of 1950, when my first New York play, Come Back, Little Sheba, was still playing at the Booth Theatre. It was refreshing to me then, for after my long concern with Sheba's gloomy interior I felt invigorated to be working with people out of doors, with people young and old who were still living their lives and not just remembering what their lives had been. And I hoped to find great variety in the play, to create out of the lives I was working with a fine mixture of humor and pathos, again getting away from the singular melancholy of Sheba.⁸

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

The first writing of Front Porch began with a scene of women sitting on a front porch at the close of a summer day. After writing it, Inge was fascinated to find how protectively feminine it was, how the women seemed to have created a world of their own, a world in which they seemed to be pretending men did not exist. It was a world that had to be destroyed, at least for dramatic values. So Inge lets Hal enter, and Hal lives in a world as protectively male as the women's world is female. Hal has been attracted to many women in his young life, but none has ever had a serious influence on him as a person. He causes the conflicts of the play as Inge explains:

His mere presence in this little fortress of femininity brings the conflicts out of which I have fashioned the play. There is no tragic and noble death, nor does any glorified and inspiring rebirth come about as the resolution of these conflicts, but I feel that each character in the play is brought to some new realization. If this does not sound impressive, I shall try to recommend the play as I would a short trip, to be enjoyed not for the hope of its destination but for what one sees along the way.⁹

First Production of Play

Inge worked on Picnic with Joshua Logan, the director, for a year and a half. During this time, Inge was prevailed upon to incorporate many suggestions from outside sources into his script. He was subjected to criticism from volunteer analysts on his original script and persuaded to give ear to the criticism. At one point,

⁹Ibid.

in the rehearsals of Picnic. Inge was so upset over what the director had done to his play that he left the rehearsal, went to a bar, and began to drink.¹⁰ Inge says:

Joshua Logan, with Picnic, was my second director. We had our ups and downs with that play, which I attribute mainly to my second-play nervousness and indecision. An unstable author, who isn't sure what he wants, is a great liability to a director; so if Picnic did not come off entirely to please me (as rumor had it), it was my own fault. Josh only sensed my indecision and tried to compensate for it.¹¹

Opening night for Picnic was February 19, 1953, at the Music Box Theatre in New York City. Performing in Jo Mielziner's practical, realistic setting, which pictured two shabby houses and the yard between them, was a first-rate acting company. Ralph Meeker played the part of the stranger who caused all the trouble, and Janice Rule played the heroine who was the dumbest and loveliest girl in town. The sub-plot consisted of Arthur O'Connell as the milky shopkeeper caught in the sex web of his spinning, and Eileen Heckart as the spinster school teacher caught in the same web. Paul Newman played the part of the college friend who was betrayed by the intruder. Kim Stanley was cast as the smart, ugly, and lovelorn sister of the heroine and Peggy Conklin played the mother of the two girls. Ruth McDevitt played the part of the next-door neighbor whose

¹⁰George Jean Nathan, The Theatre in the Fifties (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1953), pp. 73-74.

¹¹Inge, Four Plays by William Inge, pp. ix-x.

life was spent looking after her invalid mother. Morris Miller played the newspaper boy and Reta Shaw and Elizabeth Wilson Played the old maid school teachers.

As for the plot of the play, George Nathan's critical review best sums it up.

In William Inge's new play, Picnic, we return to the male tonic and engage the entrance into a small Kansas town and into the midst of a coterie of women, long without the satisfactions of masculine society, of a husky young ne'er-do-well who, pursuant to the chronic formula, gradually inculcates in them a sense of what they have been missing in life, overcomes the virginity of the customary romantic young daughter of one of the women, stirs up the repressed libidos of several others, both young and not so young, and leaves in his wake, if no illegitimate offspring, at least a comprehensive wistfulness.¹²

Critical Reviews of Play

Critics praised the production as a Broadway success, but the question was whose success was it, the playwright's or the director's? Harold Clurman, who rode the fence on the issue, wrote:

Here at any rate is a solid success. But I am not sure whether the author should get down on his knees to thank the director for having made it one or **punch him in the nose for having** altered the play's values. It is a question of taste.¹³

Other critics took sides either with the director or with the author. Eric Bentley felt that if a script is deficient then it is up to the director to make good the deficiency.

¹²Nathan, The Theatre in the Fifties, p. 72.

¹³Harold Clurman, "Theatre," The Nation, March, 1953, p. 213.

For my part, I am not so sure that it is the writing which gives the evening its undoubted interest. Mr. Inge's main story seems to me tiresome in the extreme . . . I can accept it only as a libretto for Mr. Logan's directorial music¹⁴

George Nathan felt that many of the alterations, while probably beneficial to the box-office, damaged what was doubtless a finer and prouder piece of dramatic writing.

The production is an excellent one by Broadway standards but is so over-elaborated one has a suspicion that what was very probably a play as relatively simple and effecting as something like "Home, Sweet Home" has been orchestrated Hollywoodwise for the Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra reinforced by a Sousa band, the Seventh Regiment Fife and Drum corps and the Andrews Sisters. While there periodically emerges from it clear evidence of Inge's faithful observance of life, sharp appreciation of character and gift for beautifully accurate dialogue, there are many more times when the playwright seems to be shoved into the background by way of allowing the director to make a name for himself.¹⁵

Some critics were too busy searching for a meaning in the play to worry about who made the play a success. As Walcott Gibbs put it, "There is presumably some large, central message embedded in Picnic, but since it seems to elude me, I'll just confine myself to the facts."¹⁶

Other critics saw the play as a play of universal characters whom the audience could identify with, " . . . we know just enough about them to be able to fill in the

¹⁴Eric Bentley, "Pity the Dumb Ox." New Republic, March 16, 1953, pp. 22-23.

¹⁵Nathan, The Theatre in the Fifties, p. 73.

¹⁶Walcott Gibbs, "The Theatre," The New Yorker, February 28, 1953, p. 65.

blank spaces with the real life facts we know about friends who resemble Mr. Inge's universal characters."¹⁷

Obviously Inge knew his people, and how to keep himself outside of them without involvement. The New York Times reviewed the opening of Picnic with, "Mr. Inge knows his characters so well that you cannot distinguish them from the drama. Everything seems to progress under its own momentum once the characters are defined and the situation created."¹⁸ This review reflects the essence of Inge's purpose in the writing of Picnic. His characters under their own momentum take the audience on, ". . . a short trip, to be enjoyed not for the hope of its destination but for what one sees along the way."¹⁹

Theme

Inge did not write Picnic with an intended theme in mind; rather, he created characters who when brought together formed meaningful relationships. His characters are lonely, uncertain people with deep inner lives which exist privately behind the lives that are publicly presented.

Even though a theme was not intended one has evolved which deals with the hunger for love--a need within all

¹⁷Henry Hewes, "Broadway Postscript," Saturday Review, March 7, 1953, p. 33.

¹⁸Brooks Atkinson, "Reviews," New York Times, February 20, 1953, p. 14.

¹⁹Inge, "From 'Front Porch' to Broadway," p. 33.

human beings. There are many types of love but Picnic deals predominantly with the love between a man and a woman. This love differs from all other types because with it comes the physical side of love---the instinctive, the animalistic, the uncontrollable pounding of the heart and spine tingling side of love.

The play is dominated by women who hunger for this type of love either because they had it and lost it, or because they have never had it. Into this dominion of women steps a man, not an ordinary man but a man who is the epitome of virility, strength, and brute animalistic passion. Thus, with this added ingredient a chemical reaction evolves which affects the lives of all.

Form

Inge wanted to create in Picnic a " . . . fine mixture of humor and pathos."²⁰ Upon completion of the play he labeled it a romantic comedy and rightly so for it seems to fit to the letter the definition of a romantic comedy as given by Nevill Coghill in his essay, "The Basis of Shakespearian Comedy."

The Romantic (Comedy) expresses the idea that life is to be grasped. It is the opposite of Tragedy in that the catastrophe solves all confusions and misunderstandings by some happy turn of events. It commonly includes lovemaking and running off with girls.

²⁰Ibid.

The making of this distinction is neither wholly arbitrary nor original; something like it was formulated by Isidore of Seville (C. 560-636) in his Etymologies. He tells us that Comedies by word and gesture, sing the doings of private people and portray the loves of courtesans and the rape of virgins (Etymologies, IVIII.xlvi).²¹

Style

The style for this production will be realism. The set is to simulate the exterior of two houses using only those selected elements needed to create the illusion of realism. The set will also serve as a symbol of the inhabitants of the houses. For instance, both houses are designed so that the curved line is predominant-- the curved line more than any other line is associated with the form of the female. Along with this--well kept flowers grow along side each house, lacy curtains on windows, fancy slip covers on porch furniture, and an all round neatness gives the houses the characteristic signs of female inhabitants. The set, along with the female symbol, must show the long absence of the male species which can be implemented by the neglected maintenance of both houses such as the need of minor repair work and new coats of paint.

The actors are to create and nourish an illusion of reality through convincing characterizations. If done successfully the audience will derive gratification from identification with the actors as momentarily real persons in real-life action.

²¹Anne Ridler, ed., *Shakespeare Criticism 1935-60* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 20]-227.

Characters

Flo Owens is a woman in her early forties who has been both mother and father to her two daughters, Madge and Millie, for the last ten years. Her basic drive is to see that Madge does not follow in her footsteps. Flo lives for her daughters and knows there is a little of her in both of them. When she sees Hal she sees the rugged type of man she was once attracted to many years ago and married. She fears that Hal is a potential threat to her plans for Madge to marry Alan. When Madge chooses Hal over Alan, Flo tries to talk her out of it; but, as no one could stop Flo, likewise, she can not stop Madge. In her younger years Flo, like Millie, repressed her desires for love and developed a highly independent spirit which made her incapable of coping with the love for a man.

Madge Owens is a beautiful eighteen year old girl who wants more out of life than just being observed as a beautiful object. She does not feel that beauty alone gives her life substantial meaning, and she dreams of the day when someone will get off the train and make her feel needed and valued for herself. Madge resents Millie, because Millie is smart and Madge places a higher value on a good mind than on beauty. Madge loves Flo and Mrs. Potts and she thinks she loves Alan, but resents his always referring to her beauty rather than to her. She doesn't really care for Rosemary and her loud girl friends.

When Hal comes into Madge's life, she is attracted to him first by his physical appeal and then by his desperate need for someone to love and understand him. She follows after him when she realizes that he is the answer to her dreams.

Millie Owens is a very bright young girl of sixteen who, on the surface, takes after her mother with a highly independent spirit. Under this hard surface, however, is a shy little girl who wants love but feels rejected, because she is not beautiful like Madge. Millie is attracted to Hal enough to turn to drinking when Madge takes him away from her. Millie also has a crush on Alan but she realizes it is a hopeless situation, since he would never give her a second look and is in love with Madge.

Rosemary Sydney is an unmarried teacher in her mid-forties who lives in the Owen's house as a roomer. She has developed a highly independent spirit to hide her repressed desire for a man. As with most repressed desires, negative rather than positive actions are brought to the surface. When Rosemary sees Hal without his shirt on she is stimulated, but she acts offended. It isn't until she drinks liquor and becomes inebriated that this repressed desire begins to show its true color, as she becomes so stimulated by Hal's physical presence that she throws herself at him. Still under the influence of the liquor she lets herself go and makes love to Howard. Afterwards, she realizes how much she really needs a man and that she can no longer hide behind her pseudo-independent spirit.

In total desperation she sinks to her knees with suffering humility and begs Howard to marry her. On seeing Howard the next morning Rosemary takes his mere presence as an acceptance of her plea. Before Howard can resist, Rosemary announces the wedding plans to everyone and in so doing sets off a whirlwind of excitement which ends with Rosemary leading Howard off to fill the loneliness in her life.

Mrs. Potts is a merry little woman, close to sixty, who lives alone with her aged and invalid mother. She long ago missed the chance of becoming a complete woman when her mother had her marriage annulled on the wedding day. Now she derives her greatest pleasure out of being around young people who are full of life. When Hal knocks on her door to ask if he can work for his breakfast, Potts lets him in because for a moment while he is there she can pretend and feel a complete woman.

Irma Kronkite and Christine Schoenwalder are both teachers and friends of Rosemary. Irma, in her early forties, is working on her master's degree. Christine, a little younger and more naive, is the new teacher of Feminine Hygiene. Both women are extensions of Rosemary with the same characteristics of being unmarried, well-dressed, and boisterous. They all share the same desire in life which is to get a man. Insight into the depth of loneliness for male companionship is gained as Irma relates her story of how she gets a date to the Stork Club.

Hal Carter is a young man of twenty-five in search for his place in this world, a place where he can find value and meaning to his life. Like an animal, running wild from the encircling forest fire, Hal runs from his past. He fears he will follow in his father's footsteps with a meaningless existence and death in the gutter. He feels that material wealth is the answer to his feelings of inferiority; if he could only make it up the ladder of financial success, he would be of value. But, until then, he feels he must lie in order to keep a little of his self-respect and pride. He lacks the patience to attain his wants because he is young, alone, scared, and hurt. When Madge comes into Hal's life, he realizes that her understanding, human warmth, and love are the things he needs to become patient and give meaning and value to his life.

Alan Seymour is a wealthy, well-bread, well-educated young man of twenty-three. At heart he is a romantic who is in love with love. He loves Madge not for herself but for her beauty. He likes Hal because in some ways he can feel superior to Hal and in other ways he can feel awe and admiration for Hal's way with women, his ability as a star football player, and his exciting life. It is not until Hal runs off with Madge that Alan is awoken from his romantic dream and sees the light of reality.

Howard Bevans, a small-town businessman rapidly approaching middle age, wears a permanent smile of greeting which most of the time is sincere. As a bachelor Howard

feels that, although his life is no bed of roses, there are some bad things in every life. He also feels that he is too old to change. Unable to escape Rosemary's desire for marriage, Howard gives in to his fate.

Bomber Gutzel is the newspaper boy who delivers to the Owen's and Potts' houses every morning. He loves to tease Millie and make passes at Madge. Bomber is the least developed character in the play and is used to gain insight into other characters and to give needed exposition.

Plot

The opening act of Picnic sets the mood and style of the play. The characters are revealed as real people each with his or her own little problems, fears, and dreams.

It is early morning on Labor day--a holiday which is celebrated in this small mid-western town with a picnic in the park. The Owens house comes alive with the buzzing of women talking about everyday affairs which on the surface seem irrelevant to the development of the play yet give insight into their characters. The first significant action occurs when the young man working for Mrs. Potts (in payment for his breakfast and referred to by Mrs. Owens as "another tramp") is recognized by Alan to be his best friend and fraternity brother, Hal Carter. Alan and Hal's reunion gives the needed exposition of Hal's past to gain

insight into his character. Mrs. Potts takes it upon herself to invite Hal to the picnic as an escort for Millie. The progression of Act I can best be seen through the eyes of Mrs. Owens; the "tramp" she was displeased with has progressed through the act to become her daughter's date for the picnic. Mrs. Owens is uneasy about the complicated turn of events and exits with, "Oh, dear, why can't things be simple?"

Act II takes place in the late afternoon of the same day. Mrs. Owens' house is still buzzing with the women preparing for the evenings festivities. Howard, Alan, and Hal arrive to take the ladies to the picnic. Rosemary makes Hal self-conscious by asking, "Where'd you get those boots?". Hal apologizes for the way he looks and begins to make up stories about being robbed and his father having important friends who were prepared to give him a position in a big oil company. Hal is driven to this action because he fears people will reject him as a bum if he tells the truth. Mrs. Owens has Alan come in to help her and sends Madge in to dress for the picnic. Howard brings out a bottle from which he, Hal, and Rosemary all take a drink and then begin to dance to the music of a nearby band. Hal tries to teach Millie how to dance but she soon gives up. Madge, who has put on her new dress against her mother's orders, now appears and begins to

dance with Hal. Rosemary, who has taken a few more drinks and is stimulated by Hal's physical presence, breaks in and forces Hal to dance with her. Hal, embarrassed and repelled, tells her he doesn't feel like dancing. Rosemary is hurt by this rejection especially when Howard says, "Let 'em alone. They're young people." During the dancing Millie has been drinking out of Howard's bottle to ease the pain of losing Hal to Madge. Now Millie runs into the house sick. Rosemary, finding a way for revenge, blames Hal and proceeds to rip away the stories of fantasy he has built around himself. When Rosemary is finally stopped by Howard, Hal is left stripped of all fantasy with his manly ego crushed beyond repair. Mrs. Owens appears and announces there is to be no more drinking on the picnic. She sends Madge inside to change out of her new dress with instructions to come later with Rosemary and Howard. She then takes Millie and proceeds to leave with Mrs. Potts and Alan. Rosemary decides she doesn't want to go on the picnic and she and Howard leave. Madge, now alone with Hal, attempts to build his ego back up and bring him out of his deep depression. Her attempts turn into unexpected passion which results in Hal carrying her off with the line, "We're not goin' on no God-damn picnic."

Act III, scene I opens with the return of Rosemary and Howard early the next morning, before daylight. The dialogue between them reveals that Rosemary has made love to Howard and now pleads with him to marry her. Howard leaves with the promise of coming back later in the morning to talk with her on the subject. After Rosemary exits into the house, Madge and Hal appear and the dialogue between them reveals that Madge has made love to Hal. They both regret their impulsive actions. The scene ends with Madge, tearing herself away from Hal's passionate embrace, shrieking: "I never wanta see you again. I might as well be dead."

Act III, scene II is the same morning, after daylight. Howard has come to see Rosemary alone but Mrs. Potts, Miss Kronkite, and Miss Schoenwalder are all with her. Before he can escape he is discovered by Rosemary and so he surrenders to fate and the wishes of Rosemary. As Howard and Rosemary leave for their wedding, amid rice throwing and a loud shivaree, Hal enters and talks to Madge. He explains that the police are after him for stealing Alan's car and resisting arrest so he must leave town. Alan, who reported his car stolen just to get back at Hal for taking Madge off, enters and tries to force Hal to leave, but Hal, the stronger of the two, easily overpowers Alan. Hal pleads with Madge to leave town

with him, but to his disappointment she refuses. After he leaves, she realizes she does love him and she packs her suitcase and follows after him, leaving her mother behind in tears.

Choice of Script

This director chose to produce Picnic because he felt that one should be able to deal effectively with a long realistically styled play in proscenium type staging before considering period or more abstract plays in other types of staging. Also taken into consideration was that Picnic is a play of three-dimensional characters which are not too difficult to portray because their clear-cut personalities may be readily grasped by the actors. Other considerations include: (1) A large cast consisting mostly of women, (2) A one-set show, (3) A universal appeal to the audience, and (4) An award-winning play by a well-known author.

Director's Note

Various lines in the acting script of Picnic have been changed for this production. These line changes come from one of three sources: (1) the hard back edition of Picnic, published by Random House, (which varies slightly from the acting script), (2) the revised edition of Picnic titled Summer Brave, also published by Random, (which varies a great deal from the acting script), and (3) the director (who changed very few lines using his own words).

If a line has been taken from the hard back edition of Picnic one asterisk (*) will appear at the end of the line. If the line has been taken from Summer Brave two asterisks (**) will appear at the end of the line. And for those few by the director--three asterisks (***) will appear.

The director was given permission by the playwright to make these changes. The letter of permission can be found in the appendices of this thesis.

Key to Line Changes:

Acting script of <u>Picnic</u> No asterisk
Hard back edition of <u>Picnic</u> One asterisk (*)
<u>Summer Brave</u> Two asterisks(**)
DirectorThree asterisks(***)

CHAPTER II

PROMPT BOOK

ACT ONE

HOUSE LIGHTS DIM TO HALF. MUSIC (TWO MINUTES). "LOVE THEME".

SCENE: THE ACTION OF THE PLAY IS LAID ON THE PORCHES AND IN THE YARDS OF TWO HOUSES THAT SIT CLOSE BESIDE EACH OTHER IN A SMALL KANSAS TOWN. THE HOUSE ON STAGE RIGHT BELONGS TO FLO OWENS. THE HOUSE ON STAGE LEFT BELONGS TO HELEN POTTS. (FIGURE 1.)

TIME: LABOR DAY, 1953.

AT RISE: IT IS EARLY MORNING AND THE STAGE IS EMPTY. A DOG BARKS AND A MOMENT LATER MRS. POTTS APPEARS UP LEFT ON HER PORCH AND GOES DOWN THE STEPS TO THE DOOR OF THE SHED BEHIND HER PORCH. SHE OPENS THE SHED DOOR AND DISAPPEARS INSIDE. HAL CARTER APPEARS ON THE PORCH CARRYING A TRASH BARREL ON HIS SHOULDER. HE LOOKS AROUND FOR A MOMENT. MRS. POTTS RETURNS FROM THE SHED WITH A LEAF RAKE WHICH SHE LEANS AGAINST THE UP STAGE CORNER OF THE SHED AS SHE SPEAKS.

MRS. POTTS

You just had a big breakfast. Wouldn't you like to rest a while before you start to work?

HAL

(CROSSING DOWN STEPS EMBARRASSED.) Work's good for my digestion, Mam.

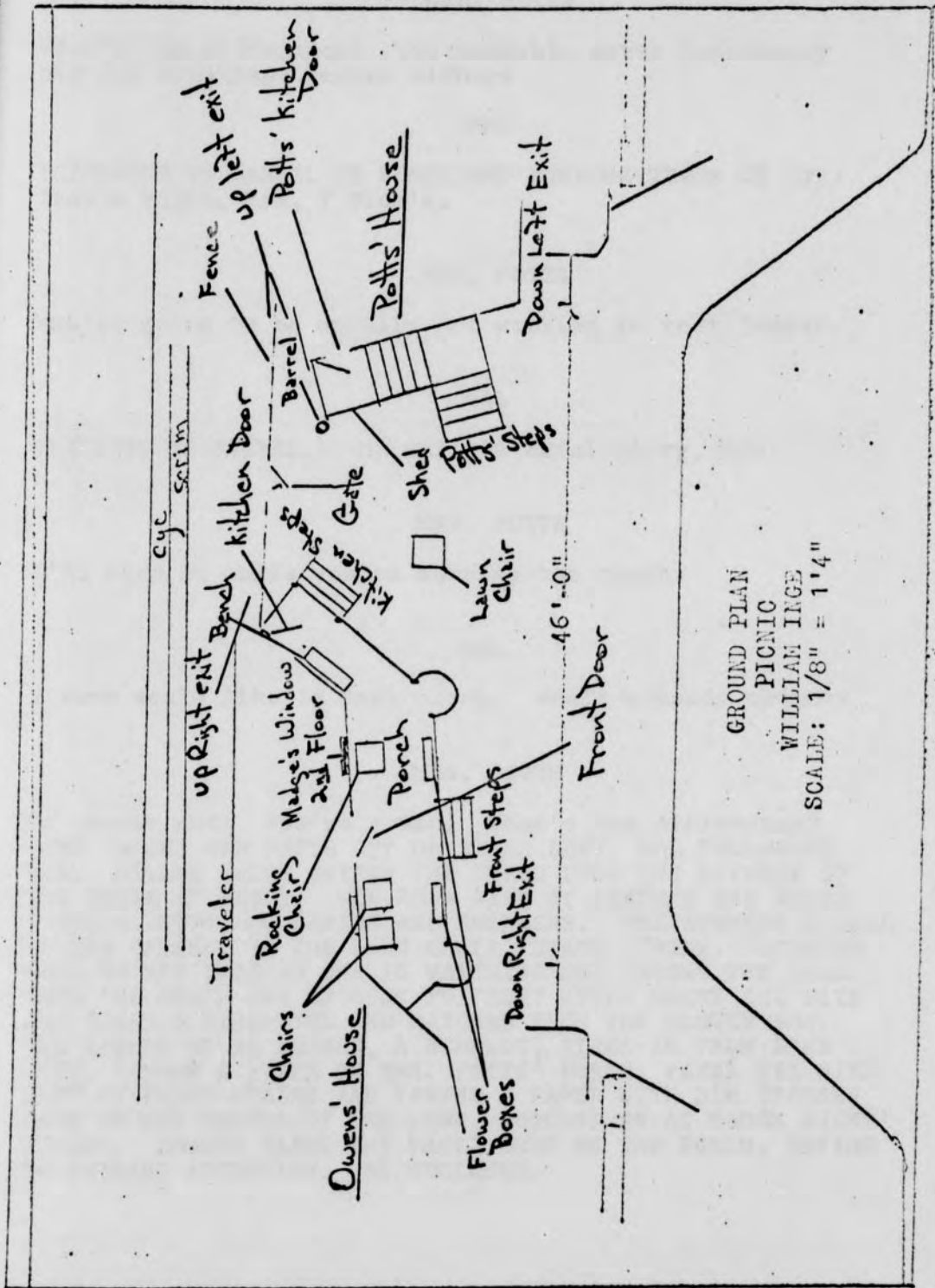
MRS. POTTS

(CLOSING SHED DOOR.) Now, stop being embarrassed because you asked for breakfast. That's nothing.

HAL

I never done it before.

FIGURE 1



GROUND PLAN
 PICNIC
 WILLIAM INGE
 SCALE: 1/8" = 1'4"

MRS. POTTS

What's the difference? You probably never had cherry pie for breakfast before either!

HAL

(CROSSING TO BARREL UP STAGE AND DUMPING TRASH IN IT.)
That's right, Mam, I didn't.

MRS. POTTS

You're going to be awfully hot working in that jacket.

HAL

(PICKING UP BARREL.) My shirt's awful dirty, Mam.

MRS. POTTS

I'll wash it while you're burning the trash.

HAL

I sure would like to feel clean. Would anybody object?

MRS. POTTS

Of course not! You're a man! What's the difference?
(SHE LAUGHS AND EXITS OFF UP STAGE LEFT, HAL FOLLOWING HER. MILLIE OWENS ENTERS THE PORCH FROM THE KITCHEN OF THE HOUSE AT RIGHT. SHE IS A GIRL OF SIXTEEN AND WEARS A DENIM SHIRT, DUNGAREES AND SNEAKERS. SHE BOUNCES A BALL AS SHE CROSSES TO THE LAWN CHAIR, STAGE CENTER. LOOKING BACK TO SEE THAT NO ONE IS WATCHING SHE THROWS THE BALL INTO THE CHAIR AND CROSSES TO FRONT STEPS WHERE SHE SITS AND TAKES A CIGARETTE AND MATCHES FROM THE FLOWER BOX. SHE LIGHTS UP AS BOMBER, A NEWSBOY, RIDES IN FROM DOWN LEFT, THROWS A PAPER ON MRS. POTTS' PORCH, PARKS HIS BIKE LEFT OF FRONT STAIRS AND TAKING A PAPER WITH HIM CROSSES DOWN TO THE CENTER OF THE LAWN, LOOKING UP AT MADGE OWENS' WINDOW. BOMBER SLAMS THE PAPER DOWN ON THE PORCH, TRYING TO ATTRACT ATTENTION. HE SUCCEEDS.

MILLIE

(THREATNING.) Hey, Crazy, you want to knock the house down?

BOMBER

I don't hear you. (STILL STANDING CENTER LAWN.)

MILLIE

If you ever break a window you'll hear me!

BOMBER

Go back to bed and tell your pretty sister to come out. It's no fun lookin' at you! (MILLIE IGNORES HIM. BOMBER CROSSES TO STEPS, RIGHT FOOT UP.) I'm talkin' to you, Goonface!

MILLIE

(THROWING CIGARETTE DOWN, JUMPING UP AND POISING HERSELF FOR A FIGHT. BOMBER JUMPS BACK JUST OUT OF REACH. SHE YELLS AT HIM IN A MAD RAGE.) You ornery bastard, take that back!

BOMBER

Listen to her! She cusses just like a man!

MILLIE

(GOES AFTER HIM WITH DOUBLED FISTS.) I'll kill you, you ornery bastard! I'll kill you! (BOMBER DUCKS THE FIRST BLOW WHICH IS AIMED AT HIS HEAD AND TAKES THE REST ON HIS ARMS AS HE JEERS.)

BOMBER

Lookit Mrs. Tar-zan! Lookit Mrs. Tar-zan!

MADGE

(COMES ON TO PORCH FROM FRONT DOOR. SHE IS EIGHTEEN AND VERY BEAUTIFUL. SHE IS DRYING HER HAIR WITH A TOWEL.

SHE SITS ON THE RAILING AT STAGE RIGHT CORNER OF PORCH.)
Who's making all this noise? (BOMBER LOOKS UP SEEING
MADGE AND THE FIGHT STOPS.) (FIGURE 2.)

BOMBER

(CROSSES UP ON PORCH TO LEFT OF MADGE.) Hi, Madge!

MADGE

Hi, Bomber.

BOMBER

I hope I didn't wake you, Madge, or bother you or anything.
(MILLIE CROSSES AND PICKS UP PAPER WHICH BOMBER THREW ON
PORCH.)

MADGE

Of course not.

BOMBER

Hey, Madge, a bunch of us guys are chippin' in on a hot-
rod--radio and everything. I get it every Friday night.
(MILLIE PICKS UP CIGARETTE, CROSSES TO LAWN CHAIR CENTER,
AND OPENS PAPER.)

MADGE

I'm not one of those girls that jump in a hot-rod every
time you boys turn a corner and honk.

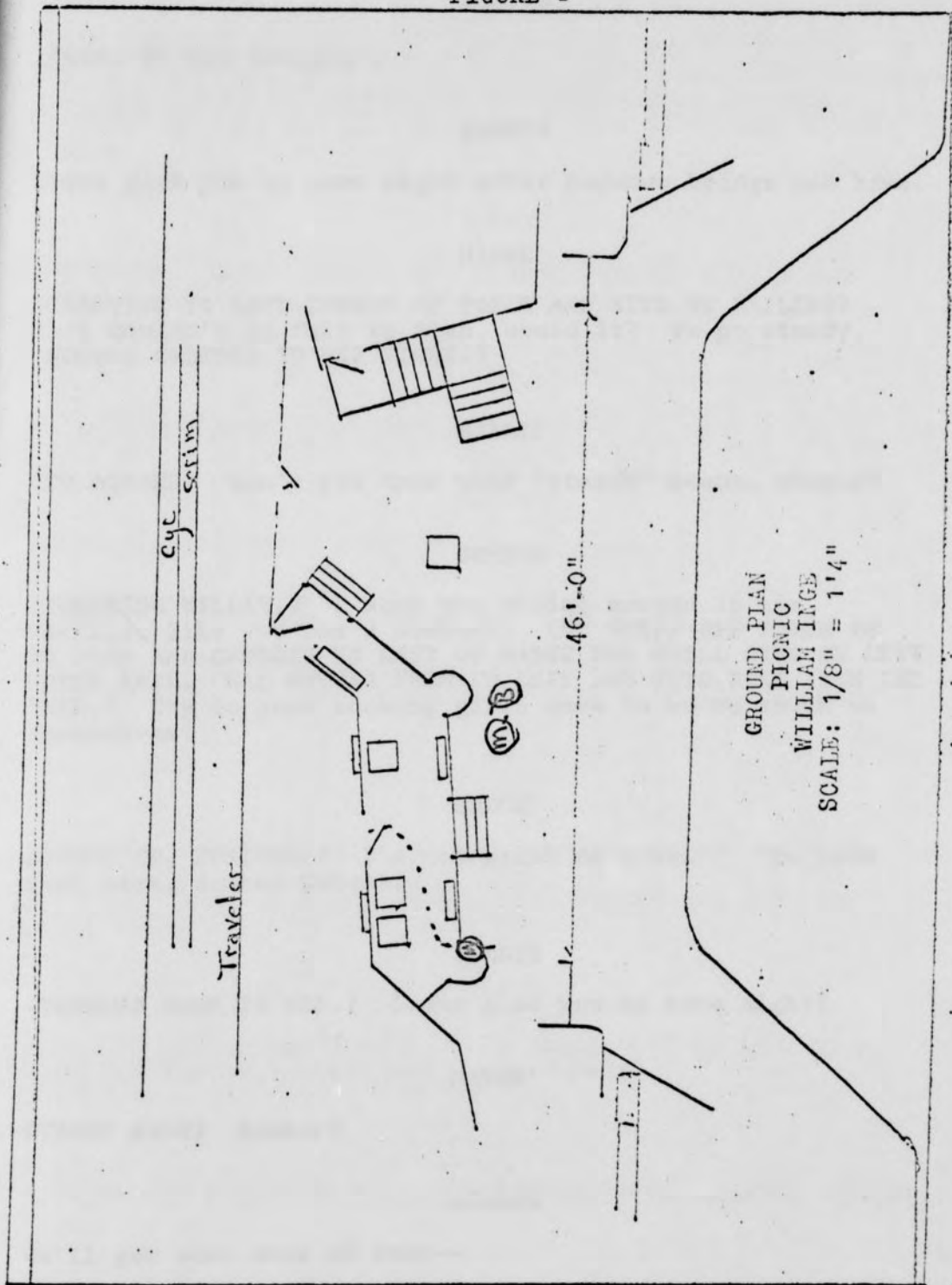
MILLIE

Alan Seymour sends her flowers every time they go out.

BOMBER

(TO MADGE.) I can't send you flowers, Baby---but I can
send you!

FIGURE 2



MILLIE

Listen to him braggin'.

BOMBER

Lemme pick you up some night after Seymour brings you home.

MADGE

(CROSSING TO LEFT CORNER OF PORCH AND SITS ON RAILING)
That wouldn't be fair to Alan, would it? We go steady.
(BOMBER CROSSES TO HER RIGHT.)

MILLIE

(TO BOMBER) Don't you know what "steady" means, stupid?

BOMBER

(IGNORING MILLIE.) I seen you riding around in his Cadillac like you was a Duchess. (HE STEPS OFF PORCH IN TO YARD AND CROSSES TO LEFT OF MADGE WHO STILL SITS ON LEFT PORCH RAIL. HAL ENTERS FROM UP LEFT AND GETS RAKE FROM THE SHED.) Why do good looking girls have to be so stuck on themselves?

MADGE

(JUMPS UP, FURIOUS.) I'm not stuck on myself! You take that back, Bomber Gutzel!

BOMBER

(TURNING BACK TO HER.) Lemme pick you up some night!

MADGE

(TURNS AWAY) Bomber!

BOMBER

We'll get some cans of beer--

MILLIE

(HAL, GROWING INTERESTED, LEANS RAKE AGAINST POTTS' STAIRS THEN AMBLES TO CENTER STAGE.) Why don't you leave her alone! (MILLIE STANDS ON LAWN CHAIR AND THROWS BALL AT BOMBER. IT BOUNCES OFF HIM AND IS PICKED UP BY HAL DOWNSTAGE OF LAWN CHAIR.)

BOMBER

(GRABBING MADGE'S ARM.) Aw, c'mon, Madge! Give a guy a break!

HAL

(TO BOMBER.) On your way, lover boy!

BOMBER

(CROSSES LEFT TO MEET HAL.) Who're you?

HAL

(SMILING.) What's that matter? I'm bigger'n you are. (HAL BOUNCES BALL OFF OF BOMBER'S HEAD. BOMBER RETREATS HURRIEDLY.)

MILLIE

(CALLING AFTER BOMBER.) Go peddle your papers! (SHE GIVES HIM A RASPBERRY AS HE CROSSES TO HIS BICYCLE AND QUICKLY RIDES OFF STAGE RIGHT. SHE CROSSES TO THE FRONT STEPS WHERE SHE ENDS THE RASPBERRY.)

HAL

(CROSSES TO LEFT OF MILLIE, PUTS RIGHT FOOT ON LEFT SIDE OF FRONT STAIRS.) Hey, kid, got a smoke?

MILLIE

(TAKING OUT CIGARETTE FROM FLOWER BOX.) You workin' for Mrs. Potts?

HAL

Yeah, I'm doin' a few odd jobs around the yard.

MILLIE

(HANDS HIM MATCHES.) She give you breakfast?

MADGE

(DISAPPROVINGLY.) Millie!

HAL

(TURNING TO MADGE--QUICK SMILE.) Hi.

MADGE

(RETURNING SMILE.) Hi.

FLO

(COMES OUT OF KITCHEN ONTO PORCH, CARRYING AN EVENING DRESS ON WHICH SHE WORKS DURING THE FOLLOWING SCENE AND A SEWING BASKET AND MADGE'S MANICURE SET. SHE CROSSES TO THE EDGE OF PORCH, STAGE RIGHT OF MADGE. AS FLO ENTERS, MILLIE PUTS OUT HER CIGARETTE ON FRONT STEPS. FLO SEES HAL.) Young man, this is my house and these are my daughters.

HAL

They are?

FLO

Is there something you want?

HAL

(LOOKS AT MADGE.) Just loafin', Mam.

FLO

This is a busy day for us. You better run along.

HAL

It's your house, lady. (CROSSES LEFT TO SHED, TAKES RAKE AND EXITS UP LEFT.)

FLO

(MILLIE CROSSES TO LAWN CHAIR AND READS PAPER.) Has Helen Potts taken in another tramp?

MADGE

I don't see why he's a tramp just because Mrs. Potts gave him breakfast.

FLO

I'm going to speak to her about the way she takes in every Tom, Dick and Harry!

MADGE

He wasn't doing any harm.

FLO

I bet he'd like to. (CROSSES TO ROCKING CHAIR ON PORCH AND SITS.) Have you called Alan this morning?

MADGE

No, I haven't had time.

MILLIE

He's coming by pretty soon to take us swimming.

FLO

(TO MADGE.) Tell him they're expecting a big crowd at the park this evening, so he'd better use his father's influence at the City Hall to reserve a table. Oh, and tell him to get one down by the river, close to a Dutch oven.

MADGE

He'll think I'm being bossy.

FLO

Alan doesn't mind if a woman's bossy. (A TRAIN WHISTLE IN THE DISTANCE OFF LEFT.)

MADGE

(DAY DREAMING.) Whenever I hear that train coming into town, I always get a feeling of excitement...in here. (HUGGING HER STOMACH. STILL SITTING ON LEFT PORCH RAIL.)

MILLIE

Whenever I hear it, I tell myself some day I'm going to get on that train and I'm going to go to New York.

FLO

That train only goes as far as Tulsa.

MILLIE

Well, in Tulsa I could catch another train.

MADGE

I always wonder, maybe some wonderful person is getting off here, just by accident, and he'll come into the dime store for something and see me behind the counter, and he'll study me very strangely and then decide I'm just the person they're looking for in Washington to carry on

an important job in the Espionage Department. Or maybe he wants me for some great medical experiment!

FLO

Those things don't happen in dime stores. (MILLIE RUSTLES HER PAPER.) Madge-- (SHE WANTS TO GET RID OF MILLIE.) Millie, would you take the milk in, please? (MILLIE LOWERS PAPER, LOOKS AT HER MOTHER, RISES SLOWLY AND CROSSES UP.)

MILLIE

(AS SHE EXITS INTO KITCHEN WITH MILK, SHE MAKES A SOUND OF DISGUST.) Awww...

FLO

Did you and Alan have a good time on your date last night?

MADGE

(CROSSES TO FLO AND PICKS UP MANICURE SET.) Uh-huh.

FLO

What'd you do? (SHE CONTINUES TO WORK ON DRESS.)

MADGE

(TRYING TO AVOID THE QUESTIONING CROSSES TO MIDDLE OF FRONT STEPS AND SITS.) We went over to his house and played some of his classical records.

FLO

(AFTER A PAUSE.) Then what'd you do?

MADGE

Drove over to Cherryvale and had some barbecue.

FLO

(A HARD QUESTION TO ASK.) Madge, does Alan ever . . .
make love?

MADGE

When we drive over to Cherryvale we always park the car
by the river and get real romantic.

FLO

Do you let him kiss you? After all, you've been going
together all summer.

MADGE

Of course I let him.

FLO

Does he ever want to go beyond kissing?

MADGE

(EMBARRASSED.) Mom!

FLO

I'm your mother, for heaven's sake! These things have to
be talked about. Does he?

MADGE

Well . . . yes.

FLO

Does Alan get mad if you . . . won't?

MADGE

No.

FLO

(TO HERSELF, PUZZLED.) He doesn't.

MADGE

He doesn't get mad.

FLO

Do you like it when he kisses you?

MADGE

Yes.

FLO

You don't sound very enthusiastic.

MADGE

What do you expect me to do--pass out every time Alan puts his arm around me?

FLO

No, you don't have to pass out. But it seems to me you could at least--

MADGE

(TURNING TO HER.) What?

FLO

Hold this dress up in front of you. (MADGE RISES, CROSSES TO FLO AND HOLDS DRESS. FLO CONTINUES TO WORK ON IT.) Madge, it'd be awfully nice to be married to Alan. You'd have charge accounts at all the stores--automobiles--trips. You'd be invited by all his friends to parties in their homes and at the country club.

MADGE

(UNCOMFORTABLY) Mom, I don't feel right with those people.

FLO

What do you mean? You're just as good as they are. My father was in the State Legislature and my mother's family was one--

MADGE

(SHE GIVES DRESS TO FLO AND CROSSES TO DOWN LEFT EDGE OF PORCH.) I know, Mom, but all of Alan's friends talk about colleges and trips to Europe. I feel left out.

FLO

You've just got to get over those feelings. Now, Alan will be going back to school in a few weeks. There won't be many more opportunities like the picnic tonight. You better get busy.

MADGE

Busy what?

FLO

Madge, a pretty girl doesn't have long--just a few years when she's the equal of kings and can walk out of a shanty like this and live in a palace with a dotting husband who'll spend his life making her happy.

MADGE

(TURNING AWAY.) I suppose, but--

FLO

Because once, once she was young and pretty. If she loses that chance, she might just as well throw all her prettiness away.

MADGE

I'm only eighteen.

FLO

And next summer you'll be nineteen, and then twenty, and then twenty-one, and then forty. (CROSSING WITH DRESS TO MADGE WHO HOLDS IT AGAINST HER AGAIN. FLO SQUATS IN FRONT OF HER. MILLIE ENTERS FROM FRONT DOOR WITH SKETCH PAD AND CHARCOAL, LOOKS AT NEW DRESS THEN SITS ON RIGHT EDGE OF FRONT STEPS.)

MILLIE

(DISGUSTED.) Everyone around here gets to dress up and go places except me. (LOOKING OFF RIGHT SKETCHING.)

MADGE

Alan said he'd try to find you a date for the picnic tonight.

MILLIE

I don't want Alan asking any of these crazy boys in town to take me anywhere.

MADGE

Beggars can't be choosers!

MILLIE

You shut up.

FLO

(PINNING UP HEM.) Madge, that was mean. There'll be dancing at the pavilion tonight. Millie should have a date, too.

MADGE

If she wants a date, why doesn't she dress up and act decent?

MILLIE

'Cause I'm gonna dress and act the way I want to, and if you don't like it you know what you can do!

MADGE

Always complaining because she doesn't have any friends, but she smells so bad people don't want to be near her!

FLO

Madge!

MILLIE

La-de-da! Madge is the pretty one--but she's so dumb they almost had to burn the schoolhouse down to get her out of it!

MADGE

That's not so!

MILLIE

Oh, isn't it? You never would have graduated if it hadn't been for Jumpin' Jeeter.

FLO

Who's Jumpin' Jeeter?

MILLIE

Teaches history. Kids call him Jumpin' jeeter 'cause the pretty girls in his classes make him so jumpy. He was flunking Madge till she went in his room and cried: (AN

IMITATION.) "I just don't know what I'll do if I don't pass history!"

MADGE

Mom, she's making that up.

MILLIE

Like fun I am! You couldn't even pass Miss Sydney's course in shorthand and you have to work in the dime store!

FLO

Millie!

MADGE

You are a goon!

MILLIE

(FURIOUS.) Madge, you slut! (SHE STARTS FOR MADGE WHO SHRIEKS AND RUNS UP STAGE ON PORCH, DOWN KITCHEN STAIRS AND AROUND LAWN CHAIR. MILLIE FOLLOWS.) You take that back or I'll kill you!

FLO

Millie! Madge! (SHE RUNS AFTER GIRLS.) Girls! Girls! Stop it! What will the neighbors say! (MILLIE GRABS MADGE'S HAIR AND PULLS IT. MADGE SWATS MILLIE WITH TOWEL. MILLIE LETS HER GO. FLO BREAKS BETWEEN THEM. MADGE IS DOWN STAGE OF LEFT PORCH CORNER. FLO IS UP LEFT OF MADGE AND MILLIE IS DOWN RIGHT OF LAWN CHAIR.)

MILLIE

Nobody's gonna call me a goon and get by with it!

FLO

You called her worse names!

MILLIE

It doesn't hurt what names I call her! She's pretty, names don't bother her at all! (SHE EXITS THROUGH KITCHEN DOOR, NEAR TEARS.)

FLO

Poor Millie! (CROSSES LEFT TO LAWN CHAIR AND SITS.)

MADGE

(CROSSES LEFT OF LAWN CHAIR.) That's all I hear--"poor Millie." and poor Millie won herself a scholarship for four whole years of college!

FLO

A girl like Millie can need confidence in other ways.

MADGE

(SITS ON GROUND LEFT OF LAWN CHAIR) Mom?

FLO

Yes?

MADGE

Do you love Millie more than me?

FLO

Of course not!

MADGE

Why do you act as if you did?

FLO

(TAKES MADGE'S HEAD IN HER LAP.) Madge! Madge, listen to me! You were the first born. Your father thought the sun rose and set in you. He used to carry you on his shoulder for the neighborhood to see. But when Millie came things were different.

MADGE

How?

FLO

They were just . . . different. Your father wasn't home much of the time then. He'd found . . . other things. The night Millie was born he was with a bunch of his wild friends at the road house.

MADGE

Was he sorry?

FLO

Yes. He was always sorry. And I always forgave him. Our life was a succession of fights and endearments.

MADGE

Anyway, you loved him.

FLO

What if I did? It takes a lot more than love to keep people happy.

MADGE

Mom . . .

FLO

Yes?

MADGE

What good is it to be pretty?

FLO

(LOOKS AT MADGE--PUZZLED.) Well . . . pretty things are rare in this life.

MADGE

But what good are they?

FLO

Well . . . pretty things . . . like flowers and sunsets and rubies and pretty girls, too . . . they're like billboards telling us that life is good.

MADGE

But where do I come in?

FLO

What do you mean?

MADGE

Maybe I get tired being looked at.

FLO

Madge! Don't talk so selfish!

MADGE

I don't care if I am selfish. It's no good just to be pretty. It's no good!

HAL

(COMES IN FROM MRS. POTTS' YARD UP LEFT, JACKET IN HAND.)

CROSSES UP LEFT OF FLO.) Mam, is it all right if I start a fire?

FLO

(NOT PAYING ATTENTION, STILL CONCERNED ABOUT MADGE.)
What? (SHE LOOKS UP, SEES THAT HAL IS BARE CHESTED.)

HAL

The nice lady said it's a hot enough day already and maybe you'd object. How about it, Mam--mind a little fire?
(MADGE LOOKS UP AT HAL.)

FLO

(STILL SITTING IN LAWN CHAIR. SHE IS COLD TOWARDS HIM.)
No, I don't mind.

HAL

(CROSSES UP LEFT AND HANGS HIS JACKET ON SHED DOOR.) I didn't think you would. (HE EXITS UP LEFT.)

FLO

(CROSSES TO UP LEFT OF LAWN CHAIR, LOOKING AFTER HAL.)
He's got no shame! He just moves right in whether you want him to or not!

MADGE

I knew you wouldn't like him when I first saw him.

FLO

Do you?

MADGE

(STILL SITTING ON GROUND BY THE DOWN LEFT EDGE OF LAWN CHAIR.) I don't like him or dislike him. I just wonder what he's like.

FLO

(CROSSES TO RIGHT OF LAWN CHAIR.) I know what he's like. (ROSEMARY SYDNEY COMES OUT OF FRONT DOOR OF THE HOUSE, WEARING A DRESSING GOWN AND CARRYING A JAR OF FACE CREAM AND A HAND MIRROR.)

ROSEMARY

Anyone mind if an old maid schoolteacher joins their company?

FLO

'Morning, Rosemary. (CROSSES RIGHT TO ROCKING CHAIR ON PORCH.)

ROSEMARY

Mail come yet? (CROSSES TO LEFT EDGE OF PORCH AND SITS ON RAIL. MADGE CROSSES TO FRONT STEPS, SITS AND PICKS UP MANICURE SET.)

FLO

No Mail today. It's Labor Day. (FLO SITS IN ROCKER AND CONTINUES TO WORK ON DRESS.)

ROSEMARY

I forgot. I thought I might be getting a letter from that man I met at the high school picnic last spring. (A BAWDY LAUGH. SHE STARTS TO CREAM FACE.) **Bean** wantin' to marry me ever since. A nice fellow and a peck of fun, but I don't have time for any of 'em when they start gettin' serious on me.

FLO

You schoolteachers are mighty independent! (MILLIE WANDERS ONTO PORCH FROM FRONT DOOR, READING A BOOK. SHE SITS ON FRONT STEPS, LEFT OF MADGE.)

ROSEMARY

Shoot! I lived this long without a man. I don't see what's to keep me from getting on without one.

FLO

What about Howard?

ROSEMARY

Howard's just a friend-boy . . . not a boy-friend. (MADGE AND MILLIE LOOK AT HER. ROSEMARY SNIFFS THE AIR.) I smell smoke. (RISES, LOOKS UP LEFT.)

FLO

Helen Potts is having her leaves burned. Smells kind of good, don't you think?

ROSEMARY

(SEEING HAL OFFSTAGE LEFT.) Who's the young man?

FLO

Just another no-good Helen Potts took in.

ROSEMARY

(VERY CONCERNED.) Mrs. Owens, he's working over there naked as an Indian. I don't think that's right in the presence of ladies. (MILLIE JUMPS UP AND RUNS TO FAR UP LEFT.)

FLO

Millie! Come back here!

MILLIE

(CROSSES BACK TO FRONT STEPS.) Gee whiz! I go swimming every day and the boys don't have on half as much as he

does now.

FLO

Swimming's different!

MILLIE

Madge can I use your manicure set, just for kicks?

MADGE

If you promise not to get it messy. (MILLIE SITS LEFT OF MADGE ON STEPS--MADGE GIVES HER MANICURE SET. MILLIE PROCEEDS TO PUT NAIL POLISH ON.)

FLO

Look at the way he's showing off!

ROSEMARY

Who does he think is interested? (AND SHE LOOKS OFF AT HIM.)

FLO

(TO ROSEMARY.) What's that you're rubbing in?

ROSEMARY

Ponsella Three-Way Tissue Cream. Makes a good base for your makeup. (CROSSES BACK TO RAIL LEFT CORNER OF PORCH AND SITS.)

FLO

There was an article in The Readers' Digest about some woman who got skin poisoning from using all those face creams.

ROSEMARY

Harriett Bristol . . . she's the American History teacher . . . she got ahold of some of that beauty clay last winter and it darn near took her skin off. All we girls thought she had leprosy!

MILLIE

Madge, how do you do your right hand?

MADGE

If you were nice to people, maybe people would do something nice for you.

ROSEMARY

You got a beau, Millie?

MILLIE

No!

ROSEMARY

You can't kid me! Girls don't do their fingernails without a reason!

FLO

(RISES AND CROSSES TO MADGE.) Madge, will you try this dress on now, dear? (MRS. POTTS ENTERS FROM UP LEFT AND CROSSES TO LAWN CHAIR. HAL ENTERS BEHIND HER CARRYING A LARGE BASKET OF CLOTHES.)

MRS. POTTS

Flo!

FLO

(CALLING BACK, A NOISE LIKE AN OWL. SHE HANDS DRESS TO MADGE WHO EXITS BY FRONT DOOR.) Hoooo?

MRS. POTTS

Are you going to be using the clothesline this morning?

FLO

No. (MRS. POTTS TURNS, SIGNALS TO HAL AND STARTS OFF UP LEFT.) (FIGURE 3.)

HAL

(TO ROSEMARY.) Hi.

ROSEMARY

(SURPRISED, SELF-CONCIOUS.) How d'ya do? (HAL STARTS OUT UP LEFT.)

VOICE

(OFFSTAGE LEFT FROM MRS. POTTS' HOUSE.) Helen! Helen!

MRS. POTTS

(STOPS.) I'm hanging out the clothes, Mama. I'll be right back. (SHE AND HAL EXIT UP LEFT.)

FLO

(TO ROSEMARY--CROSSES TO ROCKING CHAIR.) Poor Helen! She told me sometimes she has to get up three times a night to take her mother to the bathroom. (SITS.)

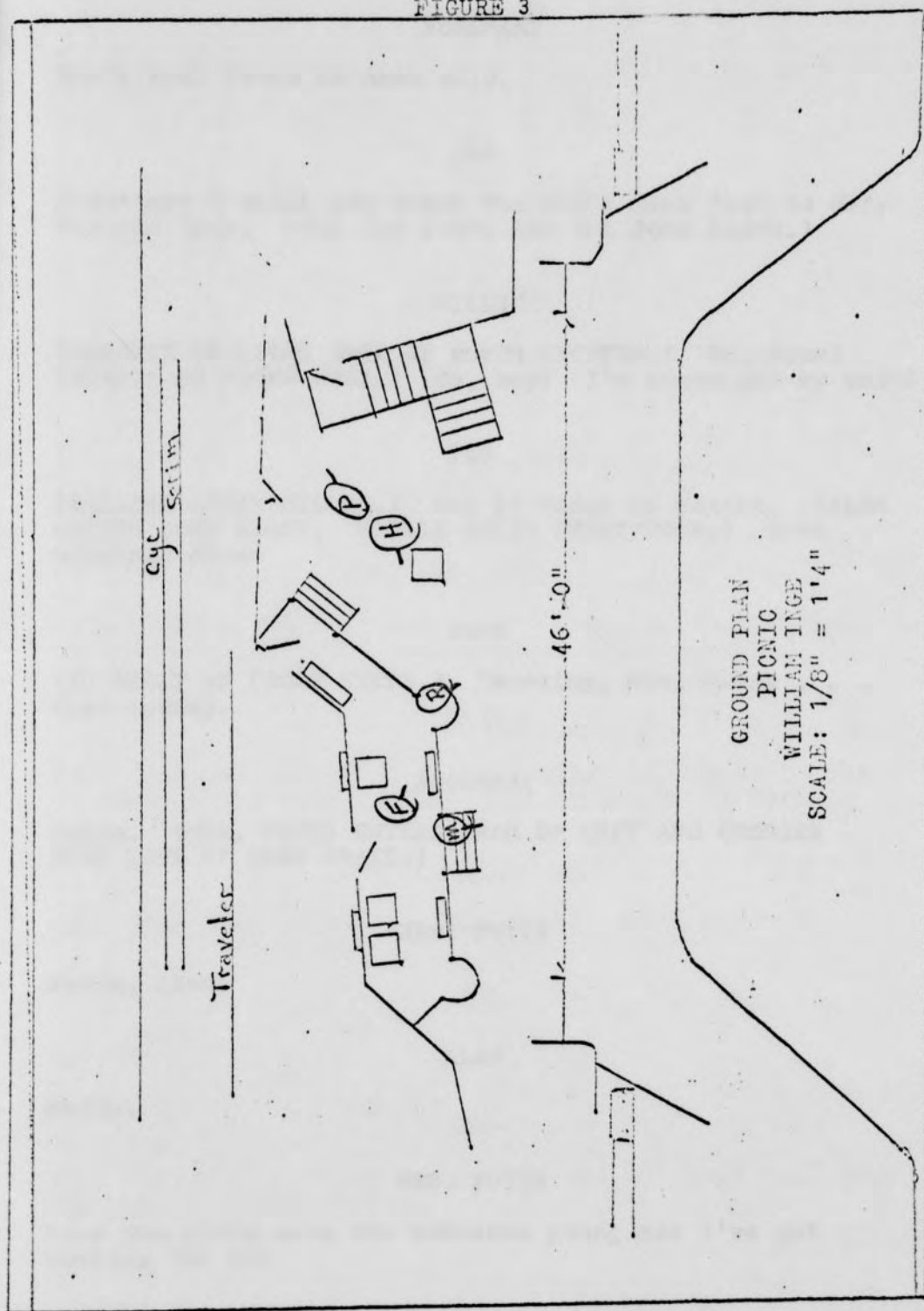
ROSEMARY

Why doesn't she put her in an Old Ladies' Home?

FLO

It is true! Helen and the Potts boy ran off and got married. Helen's mother caught her that very day and had the marriage annulled! (THE SOUND OF AN APPROACHING CAR IS HEARD OFF RIGHT.)

FIGURE 3



ROSEMARY

She's Mrs. Potts in name only.

FLO

Sometimes I think she keeps the boy's name just to defy the old lady. (THE CAR STOPS AND THE DOOR SLAMS.)

MILLIE

(CROSSES TO RIGHT EDGE OF PORCH EXCITED.) Hi, Alan!
(STARTS TO FRONT DOOR.) Oh, boy! I'm gonna get my suit!

FLO

(CALLING AFTER MILLIE.) See if Madge is decent. (ALAN ENTERS DOWN RIGHT. MILLIE EXITS FRONT DOOR.) Good morning, Alan!

ALAN

(TO RIGHT OF FRONT STEPS.) 'Morning, Mrs. Owens . . . Miss Sydney.

ROSEMARY

Hello. (MRS. POTTS ENTERS FROM UP LEFT AND CROSSES DOWN LEFT OF LAWN CHAIR.)

MRS. POTTS

Hello, Alan.

ALAN

Hello.

MRS. POTTS

Have you girls seen the handsome young man I've got working for me?

ROSEMARY

(SCOFFINGLY.) Handsome!

FLO

Helen Potts, I wish you'd stop taking in all sorts of riff-raff!

MRS. POTTS

(CROSSES TO RIGHT OF LAWN CHAIR.) He isn't riff-raff. He's been to several colleges.

FLO

Colleges--and he begs for breakfast!

MRS. POTTS

He's working for his breakfast! Alan, he said he knew you at the University. I told him you might be by.

ALAN

Who? (MILLIE DASHES ON THROUGH FRONT DOOR DOWN TO TOP OF FRONT STEPS WITH BATHING SUIT ROLLED UP IN TOWEL.)

MILLIE

Hey, Alan. We going swimming?

ALAN

You bet.

FLO

Alan, why don't you go up and see Madge? Just call from the bottom of the stairs.

ALAN

Okay. (GOES OUT FRONT DOOR, CALLING.) Hey, Delilah!
(MILLIE FOLLOWS ALAN.)

FLO

Millie! (MILLIE TURNS, CAUGHT JUST INSIDE FRONT DOOR.
FLO SIGNALS FOR HER TO COME OUT. MILLIE CROSSES TO FRONT
STEPS, PICKS UP BOOK, SITS AND BEGINS TO READ.)

ROSEMARY

Do you think Alan's going to marry Madge? (SHE STILL SITS
ON LEFT PORCH RAIL.)

FLO

(NONCHALANT.) I hadn't thought much about it. (MILLIE
LOOKS AT FLO FROM UNDER HER BOOK. ROSEMARY LOOKS AT MILLIE.)

MRS. POTTS

(AFTER A MOMENT.) It's so hot and still this time of
year. When it gets this way I'd welcome a good cyclone
. . . even if it blew everything away.

FLO

Hm . . . not me.

MRS. POTTS

(LOOKING OFF AT HAL WHO IMPRESSES HER.) Look at him lift
that wash tub as if it was so much tissue paper!

VOICE

(OFFSTAGE FROM MRS. POTTS' HOUSE.) Helen! Helen!

MRS. POTTS

I'm visiting Flo, Mama. You don't need me. (CROSSES
LEFT TO LAWN CHAIR AND SITS.)

FLO

What did you feed him?

MRS. POTTS

Biscuits.

FLO

Helen Potts--you went to all that trouble?

MRS. POTTS

He was so hungry. I gave him ham and eggs and all the hot coffee he could drink. Then he saw a piece of cherry pie in the icebox and he wanted that, too!

ROSEMARY

(LAUGHS BAWDILY.) Sounds to me like Mrs. Potts has herself a new boy friend!

MRS. POTTS

(GETS UP, INJURED.) I don't think that's very funny.

ROSEMARY

Shoot, Mrs. Potts, I'm just a tease.

MRS. POTTS

(STILL TOUCHY.) I could sit on my own porch, but I hate for the neighbors to see me there all alone. I like to sit over here where there's young people coming and going. (MADGE AND ALAN COME OUT THE FRONT DOOR TOGETHER, MADGE IN HER NEW DRESS. THEY MARCH OUT HAND IN HAND IN A MOCK CEREMONY AS THOUGH THEY WERE GOING DOWN THE AISLE AND STAND ON TOP STEP, MADGE AT RIGHT.)

ROSEMARY

Mrs. Potts, if I said anything to offend you--

FLO

(SEES MADGE AND ALAN, SIGNALS ROSEMARY TO BE QUIET, POINTS TO MADGE AND ALAN.) Look! Bride and groom! (MRS. POTTS CROSSES TO LEFT PORCH CORNER. FLO SPEAKS TO MADGE.) How does it feel, Madge? (LAUGHS AT HER UNCONSCIOUS JOKE.) I mean the dress? (Figure 4.)

MADGE

(CROSSING TO HER MOTHER, STANDS FACING UPSTAGE.) I love it, Mom, except it's a little tight right back here.

ALAN

(SQUATS RIGHT OF MILLIE.) What are you reading, Millie?

MILLIE

(TURNS TO HIM, HOLDING BOOK OPEN FOR HIM TO SEE.) The Ballad of the Sad Cafe. It's wonderful!

ROSEMARY

(SHOCKED.) Good Lord, Mrs. Owens, you let your daughter read filthy books like that?

FLO

(WORRIED.) Filthy?

ROSEMARY

Everyone in it is some sort of degenerate!

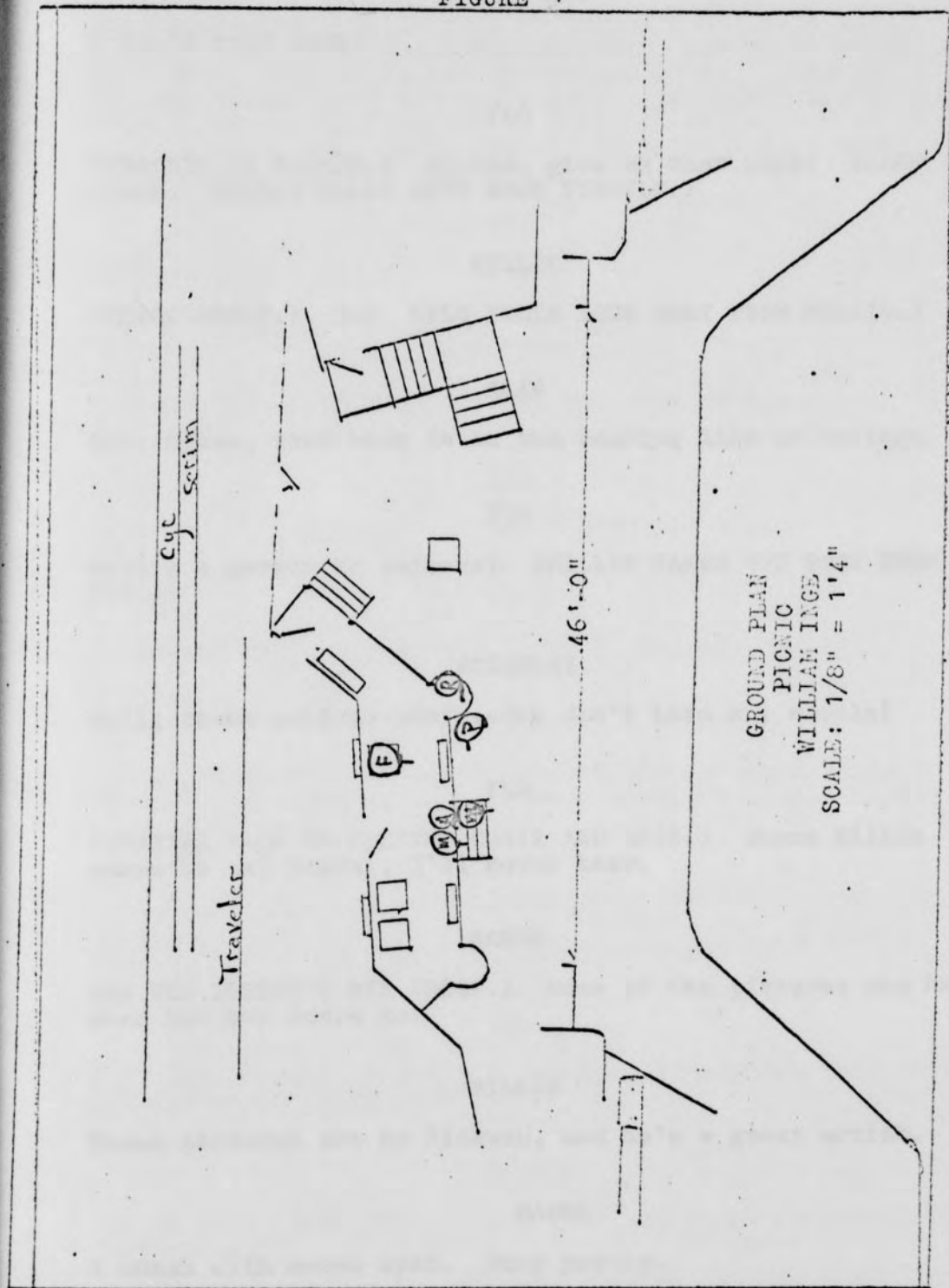
MILLIE

That's not so!

ROSEMARY

It was banned from the library!

FIGURE 4



MRS. POTTS

I don't read much.

FLO

(CROSSES TO MILLIE.) Millie, give me that book! (ALAN RISES. MILLIE HOLDS ONTO BOOK TIGHTLY.)

MILLIE

(TENACIOUSLY.) No! (FLO PULLS BOOK AWAY FROM MILLIE.)

ALAN

Mrs. Owens, that book is on the reading list at college.

FLO

What's a person to believe? (MILLIE TAKES THE BOOK FROM FLO.)

ROSEMARY

Well, those college professors don't have any morals!

FLO

(CROSSES BACK TO ROCKING CHAIR AND SITS.) Where Millie comes by her tastes, I'll never know.

MADGE

(AS FLO INSPECTS HER DRESS.) Some of the pictures she has over her bed scare me.

MILLIE

Those pictures are by Picasso, and he's a great artist.

MADGE

A woman with seven eyes. Very pretty.

MILLIE

(DELIVERING HER ULTIMATUM.) Pictures don't have to be pretty! (A SUDDEN EXPLOSION FROM MRS. POTTS' BACKYARD OFF LEFT. MILLIE CROSSES TO KITCHEN STEPS. ALAN CROSSES OFF THE PORCH TO UP CENTER OF YARD. FLO RISES AND CROSSES WITH MADGE AND ROSEMARY TO UP LEFT END OF PORCH DOWN STAGE OF KITCHEN STEPS. POTTS CROSSES UP LEFT OF LAWN CHAIR.) (FIGURE 5.)

FLO

(DISTURBED.) Helen!

MRS. POTTS

(STARTS OFF UP LEFT.) I'll go see what it is.

FLO

(EXCITED.) Stay here! He must have had a gun!

VOICE

(OFFSTAGE FROM MRS. POTTS' HOUSE.) Helen! Helen!

FLO

(MRS. POTTS EXITS UP LEFT. FLO SHOUTS IN DESPERATION.) Don't go over there, Helen! Your mother's old. She has to go soon anyway!

MRS. POTTS

(OFF LEFT.) What happened out here, young man?

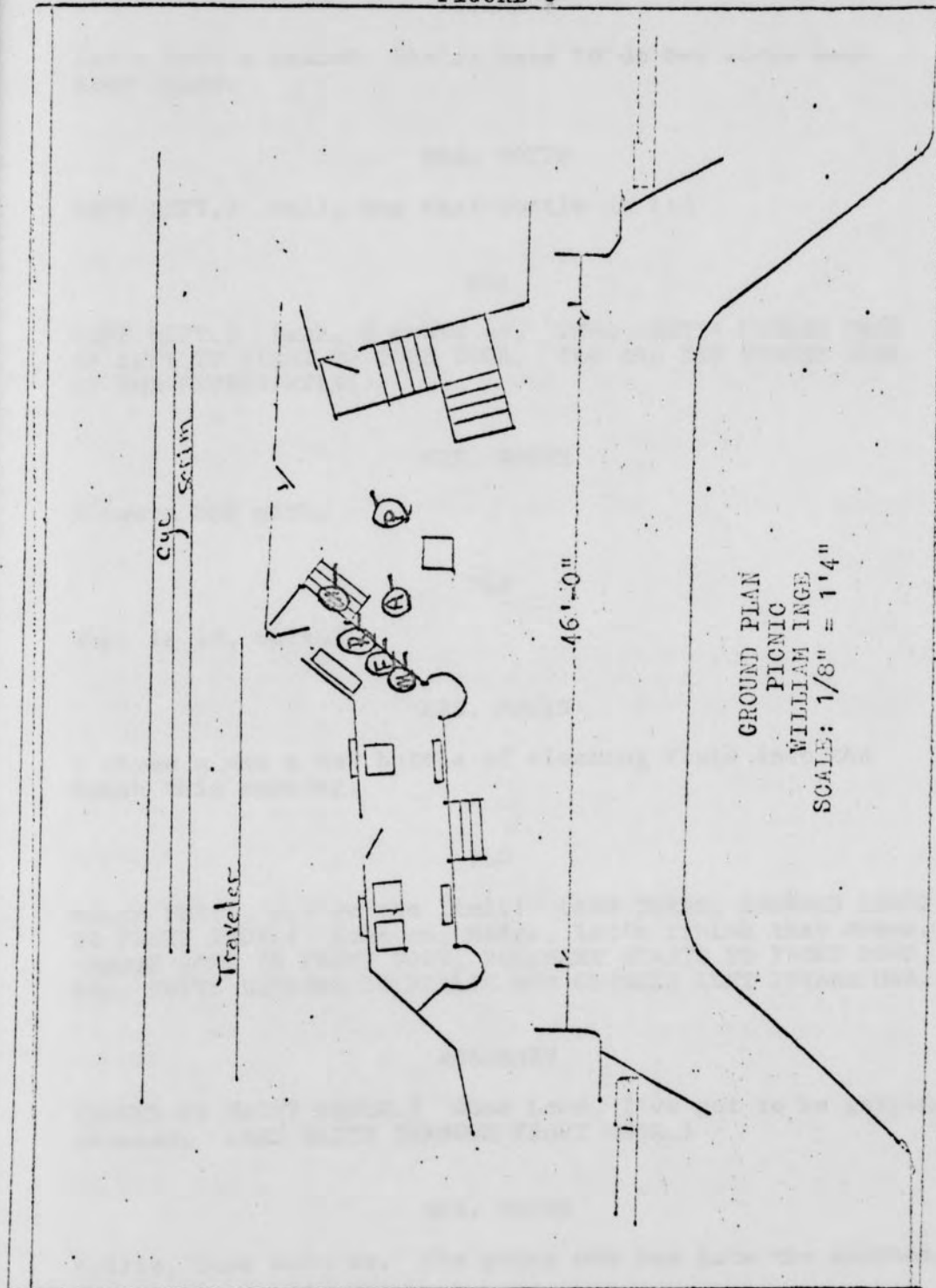
HAL

(OFF LEFT.) Gee, I don't know, Mam, I just lit this stuff and the whole thing went up.

ALAN

(AS HE LOOKS OFF LEFT.) Say, that guy looks like--No, it couldn't be.

FIGURE 5



ROSEMARY

Isn't that a shame? She'll have to do her whole wash over again.

MRS. POTTS

(OFF LEFT.) Well, was that bottle in it?

HAL

(OFF LEFT.) Yeah, I guess so. (MRS. POTTS ENTERS FROM UP LEFT TO RIGHT OF SHED DOOR. FLO AND THE OTHERS LOOK AT HER EXPECTANTLY.)

MRS. POTTS

I was a bad girl.

FLO

What is it, Helen?

MRS. POTTS

I threw a new a new bottle of cleaning fluid into the trash this morning.

FLO

Helen Potts, you're the limit! (SHE TURNS, CROSSES RIGHT TO FRONT DOOR.) Come on, Madge, let's finish that dress. (MADGE GOES IN FRONT DOOR, ROSEMARY STARTS TO FRONT DOOR, MRS. POTTS BECKONS TO MILLIE WHO CROSSES LEFT TOWARD HER.)

ROSEMARY

(LOOKS AT WRIST WATCH.) Good Lord, I've got to be getting dressed. (SHE EXITS THROUGH FRONT DOOR.)

MRS. POTTS

Millie, come help me. The young man ran into the clothes-

line trying to get away. (SHE AND MILLIE EXIT UP LEFT.)

FLO

Alan, Madge will be right down. Would you wait down here?

ALAN

Oh, sure.

MRS. POTTS

(OFF LEFT.) You go ahead, young man. We'll take care of this.

HAL

(OFF LEFT.) Gee, I'm awful sorry, Mam. I didn't mean to--

MRS. POTTS

(OFF LEFT.) That's all right. Millie will help me. (HAL BACKS ON FROM UP LEFT DURING THIS AND ALAN, HEARING THE VOICE, TURNS AND STARES AT HAL UNBELIEVINGLY BUT FINALLY HE IS CONVINCED.) (FIGURE 6).

ALAN

(WITH A ROAR.) It is!

HAL

(TURNS AND ALSO WITH A ROAR.) Kid! (HE CROSSES DOWN RIGHT WHERE ALAN MEETS HIM UP STAGE OF LAWN CHAIR. THEY CLASP HANDS IN AN ENTHUSIASTIC SHAKE.) The lady said you'd be around!

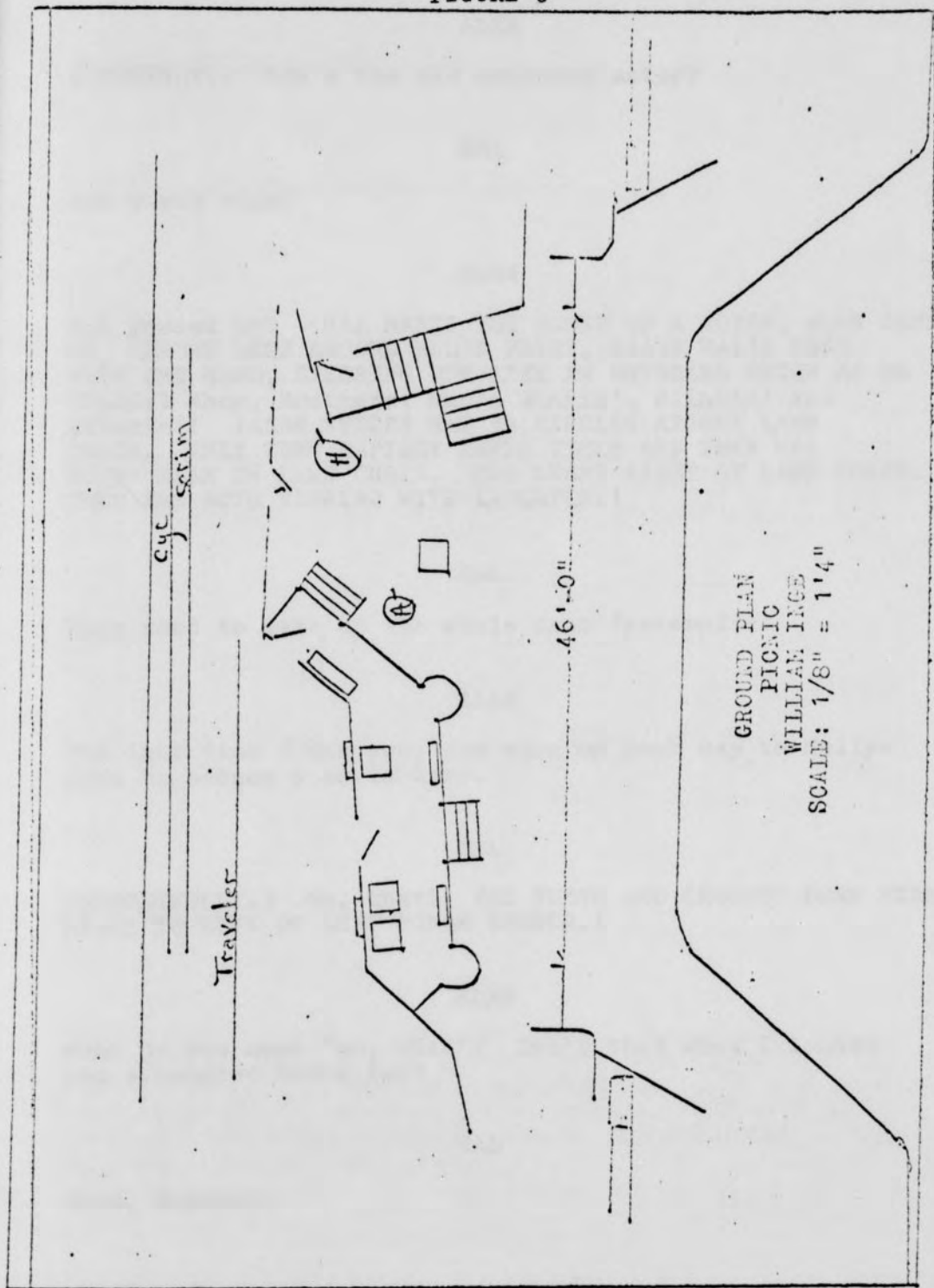
ALAN

Hal Carter!

HAL

I was comin' to see you!

FIGURE 6



ALAN

(SUDDENLY.) How's the old outboard motor?

HAL

You wanta ride?

ALAN

All gassed up? (HAL MAKES THE SOUND OF A MOTOR, ALAN JUMPS UP, THROWS LEGS AROUND HAL'S WAIST, GRABS HAL'S NOSE WITH ONE HAND, STEERING HIM LIKE AN OUTBOARD MOTOR AS HE YELLS:) Ahoy, Brothers, who's Winkin', Blinkin' and Stinkin'! (ALAN STEERS HAL IN CIRCLES AROUND LAWN CHAIR. THEY TURN RAPIDLY THREE TIMES AND THEN HAL DUMPS ALAN IN LAWN CHAIR. HAL LEANS RIGHT OF LAWN CHAIR. THEY ARE BOTH ROARING WITH LAUGHTER.)

HAL

That used to wake up the whole damn fraternity!

ALAN

The last time I saw you, you were on your way to Hollywood to become a movie hero.

HAL

(REGRETFULLY.) Oh, that! (HE TURNS AND CROSSES DOWN STAGE RIGHT TO LEFT OF LEFT PORCH CORNER.)

ALAN

What do you mean "oh, that"! Isn't that what I loaned you a hundred bucks for?

HAL

Sure, Seymour.

ALAN

Well, what happened?

HAL

Things just didn't work out, that's all.

ALAN

I tried to warn you, Hal. Every year some talent scout promised screen tests to all the big athletes.

HAL

Oh, I got the test okay! I was about to have a big career. They were gonna call me Brush Carter. How d'ya like that? (TURNS AND CROSSES UP LEFT TO RIGHT OF LAWN CHAIR.)

ALAN

Yeah?

HAL

Yah! They took a lotta pictures of me with my shirt off. Real rugged! Then they dressed me up like the Foreign Legion.

ALAN

No kidding?

HAL

Then they put me in a pair of tights--those pants that fit you down here like a glove--(RUNS HIS HANDS DOWN HIS LEGS TO SHOW.) and they gave me a big hat with a plume, and had me poking at things with swords. (HE GETS INTO DUEL-LING POSITION, PARRIES, LUNGES AND WITHDRAWS.) Touche, mug! It was real crazy!

ALAN

Did they give you any lines to read?

HAL

Yah, that part went okay. It was my teeth.

ALAN

Your teeth?

HAL

Yah! Out there, you gotta have a certain kind of teeth or they can't use you. Don't ask me why. This babe said they'd have to pull all my teeth and give me new ones, so naturally--

ALAN

Wait a minute. What babe?

HAL

The babe that got me the screen test. She wasn't a babe exactly. She was kinda beat up--but not bad.

ALAN

Uh-huh. What are you doing here?

HAL

I came to see you.

ALAN

Yeah? Why?

HAL

Well, you see, after Hollywood I took a job on a ranch in Nevada. Seymour, you'da been proud of me. In bed every night at ten, up every morning at six. No liquor --no babes. I saved up two hundred bucks!

ALAN

Oh, you came to pay me back. (HE STANDS AND HOLDS OUT RIGHT HAND.)

HAL

Well, Seymour, I was gonna--but I got rolled. (HE TURNS AWAY, DOWN RIGHT.)

ALAN

Rolled? You?

HAL

Yeah, and by two babes. See-- (HE CROSSES UP CENTER-- LOOKS LEFT THEN RIGHT, SEES NO ONE, CROSSES DOWN--PUTS FOOT ON RIGHT ARM OF LAWN CHAIR.) See--I was gonna hitchhike down to Texas to try my luck. I got as far as Phoenix when two babes pull up in this big yellow convertible. And this one babe slams on the brakes and she hollers, "Get in, stud!" So I got in. Seymour, it was crazy. They had a shakerful of martinis right there in the car! (A SCREEN DOOR SLAMS OFF UP LEFT AND MRS. POTTS APPEARS AT THE TOP OF HER STAIRS FOLLOWED BY MILLIE. MRS. POTTS CARRIES A LARGE CHOCOLATE CAKE.)

MRS. POTTS

Oh, you boys talking over old times? Millie helped me ice the cake. (SHE CROSSES TO FLO'S KITCHEN DOOR, MILLIE OPENS DOOR FOR HER.)

HAL

(CROSSES LEFT TO SHED.) Any more work, Mam?

MRS. POTTS

No. I feel more than paid for the breakfast.

HAL

(OPENS SHED DOOR, PUTS RAKE INSIDE, CLOSSES DOOR.) S'pose there's any place I could wash up?

MILLIE

We got a shower in the basement. Come on, I'll show you.
(MRS. POTTS EXITS INTO KITCHEN. HAL CROSSES TO UP CENTER
LAWN.)

ALAN

(CROSSES TO INTERCEPT HAL.) He'll be there in a minute.
(ALAN TURNS TO HAL.) Okay, so they had a shakerful of
martinis right in the car!

HAL

(HAL STOPS ALAN AND THEY BOTH LOOK AT MILLIE STILL STAND-
ING AT KITCHEN DOOR. HAL TAKES ALAN LEFT TO MRS. POTTS'S
STEPS, ALAN AT HIS RIGHT. MILLIE TAKES THE HINT AND EXITS
INTO KITCHEN.) And one of these babes was smokin' the
weed!

ALAN

(CROSSES RIGHT TO LAWN CHAIR) Nothing like that ever hap-
pens to me! (TURNS.) Well--go on with the story--

HAL

(EMBARRASSED.) Seymour, you wouldn't believe it, the
things those two babes started doin' to me.

ALAN

Were they good looking?

HAL

What do you care?

ALAN

Makes the story more interesting. Tell me what you did
exactly.

HAL

Well, you know me, Seymour. I'm an agreeable guy.

ALAN

Sure.

HAL

So when they took me to this tourist cabin, I said, "Okay, girls, if I gotta pay for the ride--" Well-- (HE SHRUGS AND TURNS AWAY.) you know, they musta thought I was Superman.

ALAN

You mean . . . (CROSSES TO HAL.) both of them?

HAL

Sure.

ALAN

(CROSSES RIGHT TO LEFT OF LAWN CHAIR.) Golly!

HAL

Then I said, "Okay, girls, the party's over--let's get goin'." Then this dame on the weed, she sticks a gun in my back. (HAL STICKS FINGER IN ALAN'S BACK AS IF IT WERE A GUN.) She says, "This party's goin' on till we say it's over, Buck!" You'da thought she was Humphrey Bogart!

ALAN

What happened?

HAL

Finally I passed out! And when I woke up, the dames

were gone and so was my two hundred bucks! I went to the police and they wouldn't believe me--they said my story was wishful thinking! How d'ya like that!

ALAN

Mmmm. (SITS IN LAWN CHAIR.)

HAL

I'm telling you, Seymour, women are gettin' desperate. Well, that did it. Then I thought, what's a poor bastard like me ever gonna do.

ALAN

You don't sound to me like you'd had such a bad life.

HAL

(CROSSES TO ALAN.) Then I got thinking of you, Seymour, at school--how you always had things under control.

ALAN

Me?

HAL

Yah. Never cut classes . . . understood the lectures . . . took notes! (ALAN LAUGHS.) What's so funny?

ALAN

The one authentic hero the University had, and he envied me!

HAL

(CROSSES TO DOWN RIGHT OF LAWN CHAIR.) Yah! Big hero, but just between the goal posts. (TURNS TO ALAN.) Seymour, you're the only guy in the whole fraternity ever treated me like a human being.

ALAN

I know.

HAL

(TURNS AWAY BITTERLY.) Those other phonies always watch-in' to see if I used the singular instead of the plural.

ALAN

You just imagined that.

HAL

(TURNS BACK TO ALAN.) In a pig's eye, I did!

ALAN

Why do you feel you're any worse than everybody else?

HAL

(CROSSES UP LEFT BEHIND LAWN CHAIR.) Maybe I'll tell you some day.

ALAN

Your father drinks. So what? It happens in the best of families.

HAL

(CROSSES DOWN TO FOOT OF POTTS' STEPS.) He died in jail, Seymour, the last time they scraped him up off the sidewalk.

ALAN

Gee, Hal, I'm awfully sorry to hear that.

HAL

The old lady wouldn't even come across with the dough for the funeral. They had to bury him in Pauper's Row.

ALAN

What about the filling station?

HAL

Oh, he left it to me in his will, but the old lady wanted it so bad she was gonna have him declared insane. So I let her have it. Who needs it?

ALAN

Yeah. When did you get into town?

HAL

This morning, on a freight.

ALAN

Why didn't you come to see me right away?

HAL

I didn't want to walk into your mansion lookin' like a bum.

ALAN

That wouldn't have made any difference.

HAL

I wanted to pick up some change and buy a new shirt. I was hoping maybe you and your old man, between you, might fix me up with a job.

ALAN

What kind of a job, Hal?

HAL

What kinda jobs you got?

ALAN

What did you have in mind?

HAL

Oh, something in a nice office where I can wear a tie . . . and have a sweet little secretary . . . and talk over the telephone about enterprises and . . . things. I've always had the feeling, if I just had the chance, I could set the whole world on fire.

ALAN

(RISES.) Lots of guys have that feeling, Hal. I'll help you out as much as I can.* (MRS. POTTS ENTERS FROM FLO'S KITCHEN AND CROSSES DOWN CENTER ON PORCH.) Mrs. Potts, Sinclair is hiring new men, aren't they?

MRS. POTTS

Yes, Alan. Carey wants a hundred men for the pipeline.

HAL

Pipeline?*

ALAN

(CROSSES TO HAL.) If you wanta be president of the Company, Hal, I guess you'll just have to work hard and be patient.*

HAL

Yah. Thats something I gotta learn, patience!*

ALAN

Come on, I'll show you where to wash up.*** (ALAN CROSSES TO KITCHEN DOOR AND OPENS IT FOR HAL. HAL EXITS INSIDE.)

MRS. POTTS

(TO ALAN.) I feel sorry for young men today.* (ALAN EXITS INTO KITCHEN.)

ROSEMARY

(ENTERS FROM FRONT DOOR IN A BRAND NEW OUTFIT, A FALL SUIT AND AN ELABORATE HAT.) Where is everyone?***

MRS. POTTS

(CROSSES DOWN TO ROCKING CHAIR.) My, you're dressed up!

ROSEMARY

(CROSSES DOWN TO STEPS.) 'S my new fall outfit. Got it in Kansas City. Paid \$22.50 for the hat.

MRS. POTTS

You school teachers do have nice things. (CROSSES TO LEFT CHAIR ON RIGHT SIDE OF PORCH AND SITS.)

ROSEMARY

And don't have to ask anybody when we wanta get 'em, either. (FLO ENTERS FROM KITCHEN WITH BOWL OF DEVILLED EGGS AND A SPOON.)

FLO

Be here for lunch today, Rosemary? (CROSSES DOWN TO ROCKING CHAIR.)

ROSEMARY

No. There's a welcome home party down at the hotel. Lunch and bridge for the new girls on the faculty. (MADGE ENTERS FROM KITCHEN--CROSSES DOWN TO LEFT OF FLO.)

MADGE

Mom, can I go swimming?

FLO

Who'll fix lunch? I've got a million things to do.

MADGE

It wouldn't kill Millie if she every did any cooking.

FLO

No, but it might kill the rest of us. (SHE SITS IN ROCKER. THE VOICES OF IRMA KRONKITE AND CHRISTINE SCHOENWALDER ARE HEARD, OFF DOWN LEFT.)

IRMA

(OFFSTAGE DOWN LEFT.) Rosemary! Let's get going, girl! Don't wanta be late! (AS THEY COME INTO SIGHT DOWN LEFT, IRMA TURNS TO CHRISTINE. ROSEMARY CROSSES DOWN ONTO STEPS, FACING FRONT, PREPARING FOR THEM.) You'll love Rosemary Sydney. She's a peck of fun!

ROSEMARY

(WITH PLAYFUL SUSPICIOUSNESS.) What're you saying about me, Irma Kronkite? (THEY RUN TO HUGH EACH OTHER LIKE EAGER SISTERS WHO HAD NOT MET IN A LONG WHILE. IRMA CROSSES UP TO CENTER. ROSEMARY CROSSES TO HER. CHRISTINE FOLLOWS IRMA.) (FIGURE 7.)

IRMA

Rosemary Sydney!

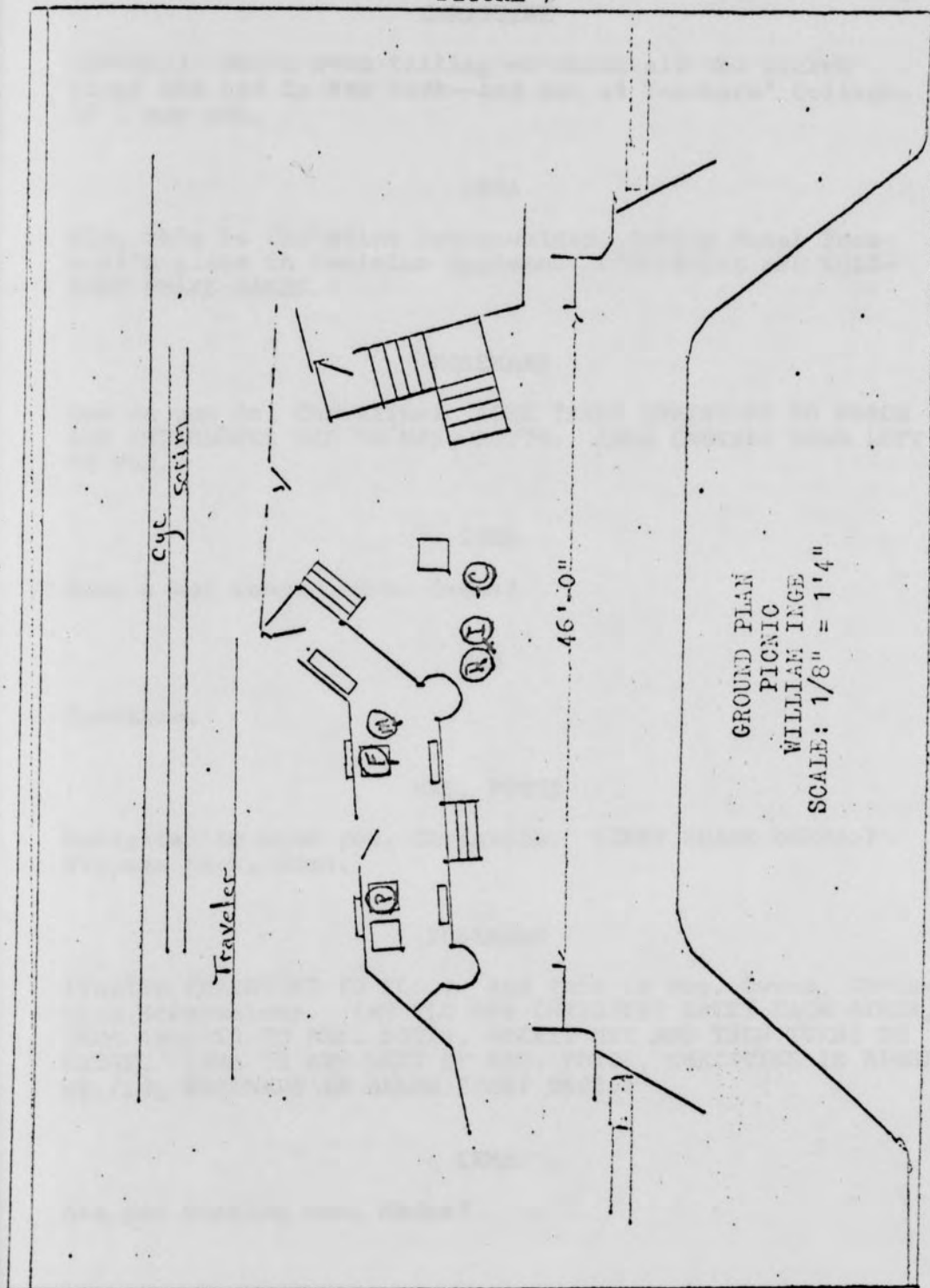
ROSEMARY

Irma Kronkite! How was your vacation?

IRMA

I worked like a slave. But I had fun, too. I don't care if I never get that Masters. I'm not going to be a slave all my life.

FIGURE 7



GROUND PLAN
PICNIC
WILLIAM INGE
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'4"

CHRISTINE

(SHYLY.) She's been telling me about all the wicked times she had in New York--and not at Teachers' College, if I may add.

IRMA

Kid, this is Christine Schoenwalder, taking Mabel Freemont's place in Feminine Hygiene. (CHRISTINE AND ROSEMARY SHAKE HANDS.)

ROSEMARY

How do you do, Christine? (SHE TAKES CHRISTINE TO PORCH AND INTRODUCES HER TO MRS. POTTS. IRMA CROSSES DOWN LEFT TO FLO.)

IRMA

Been a hot summer, Mrs. Owens?

FLO

Terrible.

MRS. POTTS

Delighted to know you, Christine. (THEY SHAKE HANDS.) Welcome back, Irma.

ROSEMARY

(TAKING CHRISTINE TO FLO.) And this is Mrs. Owens, Christine Schoenwalder. (AS FLO AND CHRISTINE GREET EACH OTHER, IRMA CROSSES TO MRS. POTTS, GREETS HER AND THEN TURNS TO MADGE. IRMA IS NOW LEFT OF MRS. POTTS, CHRISTINE IS RIGHT OF FLO, ROSEMARY IS BELOW FRONT DOOR.)

IRMA

Are you working now, Madge?

MADGE

Yes. (CROSSES TO LEFT CORNER AND LEANS ON UP LEFT POST.)

FLO

(HURRIEDLY.) Yes, Madge took a job downtown this summer --just to keep busy. (HAL BURSTS OUT OF KITCHEN AND INTO YARD WITH MILLIE ON HIS BACK. BOTH ARE YELLING AND LAUGHING LOUDLY. HAL IS STILL BARE-CHESTED AND THE SIGHT OF HIM IS A GREAT SHOCK TO THE LADIES.) Why, when did he--? (FLO RISES. CHRISTINE CROSSES BETWEEN IRMA AND ROSEMARY.)

ALAN

(COMES OUT OF KITCHEN.) Hal! Hal! Millie! (HAL FINALLY DROPS MILLIE INTO LAWN CHAIR--ALAN LEADS HAL TO LEFT OF FLO. ALAN TO HER RIGHT.) Mrs. Owens, I'd like you to meet a friend of mine--Hal Carter. Hal is a fraternity brother. (FIGURE 8.)

MRS. POTTS

(TO FLO.) See?

FLO

(STUNNED.) Fraternity brother, really? (MAKING THE BEST OF IT.) Well, any friend of Alan's is a friend of ours.

HAL

Thanks, Mam. Pleased to make your acquaintance.

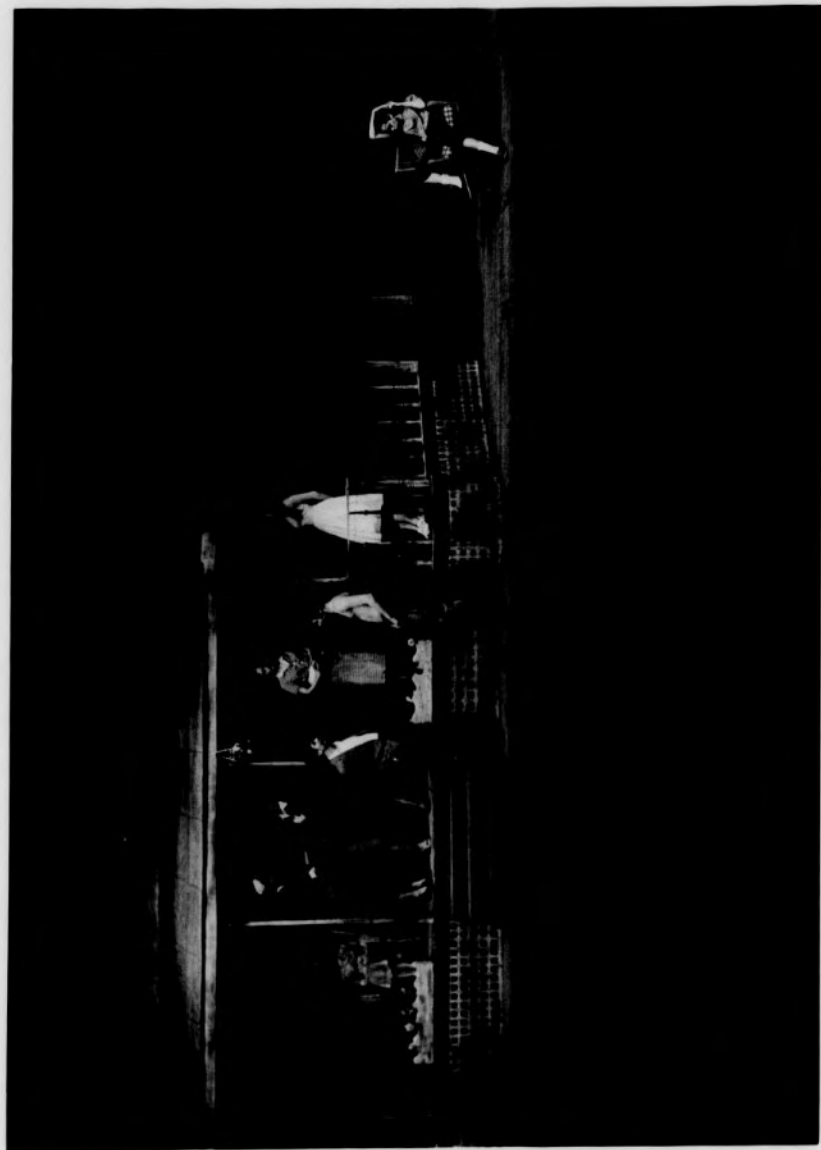
ALAN

Hal, don't you have a shirt?

MRS. POTTS

I washed it and--it isn't dry yet.

FIGURE 8



HAL

Yeah, it was all sweaty. (THE LADIES REACT TO THIS AND HAL REALIZES HE HAS SAID THE WRONG THING. HE GOES TO JOIN MILLIE--THEY BEGIN TO TOSS A BALL BACK AND FORTH. ALAN JUMPS ONTO PORCH AND CROSSES TO RIGHT OF MADGE.)

ROSEMARY

Girls, we better get a hustle on. (ROSEMARY CROSSES DOWN RIGHT OF STEPS. CHRISTINE FOLLOWS TO MIDDLE OF STEPS, STOPS AND TURNS TO IRMA. IRMA STOPS ON RIGHT OF TOP STEP.)

CHRISTINE

(TO IRMA.) Tell them about what happened in New York, kid.

IRMA

(MILLIE THROWS BALL BEHIND MRS. POTTS' HOUSE--MILLIE AND HAL EXIT UP LEFT AFTER IT. IRMA IS NOW THE CENTER OF ATTENTION.) I went to the Stork Club! (FIGURE 9.)

ROSEMARY

How did you get to the Stork Club?

IRMA

See, there was this fellow in my Educational Statistics class . . .

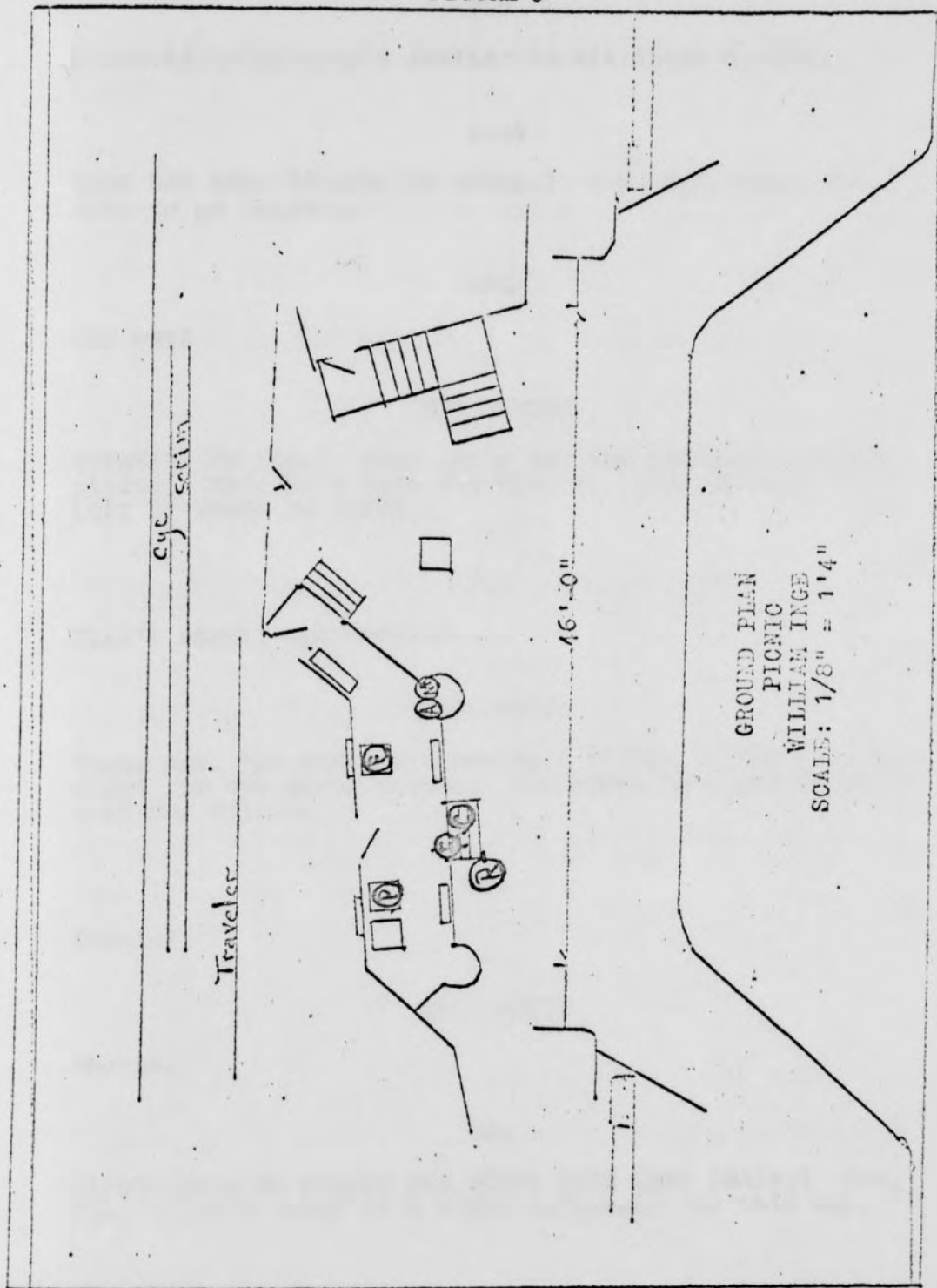
ROSEMARY

I knew there was a man in it.

IRMA

Now, girl! It was nothing serious. He was just a good sport, that's all. We made a bet that the one who made the lowest grade on the final had to take the other to the Stork Club--and I lost! (TO CHRISTINE AND ROSEMARY.) Come on. (AS THE TEACHERS EXIT DOWN RIGHT CHATTERING TO EACH OTHER, HAL AND MILLIE ENTER FROM UP LEFT WITH BALL.)

FIGURE 9



FLO

I should think they'd smother in all those clothes.

ALAN

(WHO HAS BEEN TALKING TO MADGE.) Say, Hal, would you like to go swimming?

HAL

Why not?

MRS. POTTS

(CROSSES TO FLO.) Flo, let's ask the young man on the picnic. He'd be a date for Millie. (SHE CROSSES UP TO LEFT OF BENCH ON PORCH.)

FLO

That's right, but--Helen--

MRS. POTTS

Young man, Flo and I are having a picnic at the part tonight for the young people. You come, too, and be an escort for Millie.

HAL

Picnic?

MRS. POTTS

Uh-huh.

HAL

(LOOKS BACK AT MILLIE WHO SINKS INTO LAWN CHAIR.) Gee, Mam, I don't think it's right me bargin' in this way.

MRS. POTTS

Nonsense. A picnic's no fun without lots and lots of young people.

ALAN

Hal! (ALAN AND MADGE ARE STANDING AT LEFT CORNER OF PORCH.) I want you to meet Madge.

MADGE

Oh, we've met already. That is, we saw each other.

HAL

Yah, we saw each other.

ALAN

(TO MADGE.) Hal notices every beautiful girl.

MADGE

(PRETENDING TO PROTEST.) Alan.

ALAN

Well, you're the most beautiful girl in town, aren't you? (TO HAL.) The Chamber of Commerce voted her Queen of Neewollah last year.

HAL

What?

MILLIE

Neewollah. Neewollah is Hallowe'en spelled backwards.

MRS. POTTS

Every year they have a big coronation ceremony in Memorial Hall.

MILLIE

Madge had to sit through the whole ceremony till they put a crown on her head.

HAL

(IMPRESSED.) Yah?

MADGE

I got awfully tired.

MRS. POTTS

The Kansas City Star ran color photographs in their Sunday magazine.

MADGE

Everyone expected me to get real conceited, but I didn't.

HAL

You didn't?

MILLIE

Well, it'd be pretty hard to get conceited about those pictures.

MADGE

The color got blurred and they printed my mouth right in the middle of my forehead.

HAL

(SYMPATHETIC.) Gee, that's too bad.

MILLIE

(RUNS TO LEFT OF FRONT STEPS AND PICKS UP ROLLED TOWEL FROM PORCH. TO HAL.) Come on--Let's go swimming. I'll race you to the car.

HAL

(CROSSES TO MILLIE.) Isn't your sister goin' with us?

MILLIE

No, Madge has to cook lunch.

HAL

Do you mean she cooks?

MILLIE

Sure! Madge cooks and sews and does all those things that women do. Come on. (SHE PUNCHES HIM. HAL SQUATS DOWN IN POSITION OF RACING START.)

HAL

On your mark!

MILLIE

(GETTING INTO SIMILAR POSITION.) I'm on my mark.

HAL

Get set!

MILLIE

I'm set!

HAL

Go! Go--go--go--go! (MILLIE STARTS OFF BUT HAL HOLDS HER BY THE SEAT OF HER PANTS UNTIL HE CAN TAKE OFF IN FRONT OF HER. SHE FOLLOWS YELLING AFTER HIM.)

MILLIE

Hey, that's no fair! (HAL AND MILLIE EXIT DOWN RIGHT.)

FLO

(RISES FROM ROCKING CHAIR.) Alan!

ALAN

(TURNS AND CROSSES TO LEFT OF FLO.) Yes?

FLO

How did a boy like him get into college?

ALAN

On a football scholarship.

FLO

Oh.

ALAN

He made a spectacular record in a little high school down in Arkansas.

FLO

But a fraternity! Don't those boys have more . . . breeding?

ALAN

Maybe, but fraternities like to pledge big athletes--for the publicity. And Hal could have been All-American--

MRS. POTTS

(DELIGHTED.) All-American!

ALAN

--if he'd only studied.

FLO

How did the other boys feel about him? Was he popular?

ALAN

They didn't like him, Mrs. Owens. They were pretty rough on him. Every time he came into a room, the other fellows seemed to bristle. I didn't like him either, at first, then we shared a room and I got to know him better. Hal's really a nice guy. About the best friend I ever had.*

FLO

Is he wild?

ALAN

Oh . . . not really. He just . . .*

FLO

Does he drink?*

ALAN

A little. (TRYING TO MINIMIZE.) Mrs. Owens, Hal pays attention to me. I'll see he behaves.

FLO

I wouldn't want anything to happen to Millie.

MADGE

Mom, Millie can take care of herself.

FLO

Maybe you're right. Come on, Helen. Oh, dear, why can't things be simple? (MRS. POTTS EXITS FRONT DOOR--FLO FOLLOWS HER. ALAN WHO IS LEFT OF ROCKING CHAIR TURNS TO MADGE STANDING LEFT CORNER OF PORCH.)

ALAN

Madge, I'm sorry I have to go back to school this fall.
It's Dad's idea.

MADGE

(CROSSES TO LEFT OF FRONT STAIRS.) I'm sure of that.

ALAN

(CROSSES TO HER LEFT.) What? Wasn't Dad nice last night
while I was out fixing the drinks?

MADGE

Oh, yes, he's always very nice to me--very polite. He
explained how sorry he was you had to go away.

ALAN

Are you sorry?

MADGE

Of course. (SITS ON LEFT OF FRONT STEPS.) There'll be
lots of pretty girls at college.

ALAN

Honestly, Madge, my entire four years I never found a girl
I liked.

MADGE

I don't believe that.

ALAN

It's true. They're all so affected, if you wanted a
date with them you had to call them a month in advance.

MADGE

Really?

ALAN

(CROSSES RIGHT AND SITS ON STAIRS RIGHT OF MADGE.)
Madge, it's sort of hard for me to say this, but I
honestly never believed that a girl like you could
care for me.

MADGE

(TOUCHED.) Alan . . .

ALAN

I . . . I hope you do care for me, Madge. (HE KISSES HER.
HAL RUNS IN DOWN RIGHT, STOPS RIGHT OF FRONT STEPS WHEN
HE SEES THEM.)

HAL

Hey, Seymour . . . (MADGE AND ALAN BREAK APART ABRUPTLY.
SHE CROSSES DOWN LEFT INTO YARD. HE TURNS TO HAL.)

ALAN

What's the matter, Hal? Can't you stand to see anyone
else kiss a pretty girl?

HAL

What the hell, Seymour . . .

ALAN

(STANDS.) Hal, will you watch your language!

MADGE

Alan! It's all right.

HAL

I'm sorry. (BECKONS ALAN TO HIM.)

ALAN

(CROSSING TO HIM.) What's the trouble? (MADGE WALKS AWAY TO DOWN LEFT OF LAWN CHAIR, SENSING THAT HAL WANTS TO TALK PRIVATELY.)

HAL

Look, Seymour, I . . . I never been on a picnic.

ALAN

Not even when you were a kid?

HAL

No.

ALAN

Why, that's impossible! Everybody's been on a picnic.

HAL

Not me. I wouldn't go on picnics. I was too busy shooting craps or stealing milk bottles.

ALAN

You went on the steak fries in the fraternity, didn't you?

HAL

Yeah, and you know what they turned out to be.

ALAN

Well, Mrs. Potts' picnic won't be quite as primitive.

HAL

That's what I mean. I wouldn't know how to behave in front of all these . . . women.

ALAN

Sure you would.

HAL

But, Seymour, these are . . . nice women. What if I say the wrong word or what if my stomach growls--or--

ALAN

You're a psycho! Run along--I'll be there in a minute. (HAL STARTS OUT DOWN RIGHT. ALAN CROSSES LEFT. HAL STOPS.)

HAL

Hey, hurry it up, will you? (HE EXITS DOWN RIGHT. ALAN STOPS, LOOKS BACK AT HAL IN DISGUST THEN CROSSES LEFT TO MADGE.)

ALAN

I'll see you tonight, Madge.

MADGE

All right, Alan.

ALAN

(HE TAKES HER HANDS.) Madge, after we have supper tonight maybe you and I can get away from the others and take a boat out on the river.

MADGE

All right, Alan.

ALAN

I want to see if you look real in the moonlight.

MADGE

Alan! Don't say that!

ALAN

Why? I don't care if you're real or not. You're the most beautiful thing I ever saw.

MADGE

Just the same, I'm real. (AS ALAN STARTS TO KISS HER, SEVERAL BLASTS OF AN AUTOMOBILE HORN ARE HEARD OFF RIGHT.)

HAL

(OFFSTAGE RIGHT.) Hey, Seymour--get the lead outa your pants! (ALAN GOES OFF, IRRITATED. MADGE CROSSES TO CENTER LAWN, WATCHES THEM AS THEY DRIVE AWAY, WAVING TO THEM.)

FLO

(INSIDE HOUSE.) Madge! Come on in, dear!

MADGE

All right, Mom. (AS SHE STARTS IN KITCHEN DOOR, A TRAIN WHISTLE IS HEARD IN THE DISTANCE. MADGE HEARS IT AND LEANS AGAINST DOWN STAGE KITCHEN PORCH POST, LOOKING OFF UP LEFT LISTENING TO THE WHISTLE. MUSIC--"LOVE THEME".)

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

HOUSE LIGHTS DIM TO HALF. MUSIC (TWO MINUTES). "HAL'S THEME".

SCENE: SAME AS ACT I.

TIME: LATE AFTERNOON, THE SAME DAY.

AT RISE: MILLIE IS IN THE FRONT DOORWAY, HOLDING THE SCREEN DOOR OPEN. SHE WEARS A BECOMING, FEMININE DRESS. PIANO MUSIC CAN BE HEARD OFFSTAGE, SOMEWHERE PAST MRS. POTTS' HOUSE, AND MILLIE STANDS LISTENING TO IT FOR A MOMENT. (THIS IS THE SAME 'BEFORE ACT' MUSIC CONTINUED ONLY FADED OFF HOUSE SPEAKERS WITH RISE OF CURTAIN.) MILLIE BEGINS TO SWAY TO THE MUSIC AND IN A MOMENT IS DANCING A STRANGE, IMPROMPTU DANCE OVER THE PORCH AND YARD. THE MUSIC STOPS SUDDENLY AND MILLIE'S MOOD IS BROKEN. SHE RUSHES UPSTAGE AND CALLS OFF LEFT.

MILLIE

Don't quit now, Ernie! (SHE CANNOT HEAR ERNIE'S REPLY.)
Huh? (MADGE ENTERS FROM KITCHEN. MILLIE TURNS TO MADGE.)
Ernie's waiting for the rest of the band to practice.
They're going to play out at the park tonight.

MADGE

I don't know why you couldn't have helped us in the kitchen.

MILLIE

(LIGHTLY, GIVING HER VERSION OF THE SOPHISTICATED BELLE.)
I had to dress for the ball.

MADGE

(CROSSES DOWN---SITS IN LAWN CHAIR.) I had to make the potato salad and stuff the eggs and make three dozen bread-and-butter sandwiches.

MILLIE

(IN A VERY AFFECTED ACCENT. SHE CROSSES DOWN TO LEFT OF MADGE.) I had to bathe . . . and dust my limbs with powder . . . and slip into my frock.

MADGE

Did you clean out the bath tub?

MILLIE

Yes, I cleaned out the bath tub. (SHE BECOMES VERY SELFCONSCIOUS.) Madge, how do I look? Now tell me the truth.

MADGE

You look very pretty. I always knew you could.

MILLIE

I feel sorta funny.

MADGE

You look wonderful in the dress. You can have it if you want to.

MILLIE

Thanks. (A PAUSE.) Madge, how do you talk to boys?

MADGE

Why, you just talk, silly.

MILLIE

How d'ya think of things to say?

MADGE

I don't know. You just say whatever comes into your head.

MILLIE

Supposing nothing ever comes into my head?

MADGE

You talked with him all right this morning.

MILLIE

But now I've got a date with him, and it's different!

MADGE

You're crazy.

MILLIE

(CROSSES TO DOWN RIGHT OF MADGE.) I think he's a big show-off. (TURNS TO MADGE.) You should have seen him this morning on the high diving board. He did real graceful swan dives, and a two and a half gainer, and a back flip . . . the kids stood around clapping. He just ate it up.

MADGE

(HER MIND ELSEWHERE.) I think I'll paint my toenails tonight and wear sandals.

MILLIE

And he was braggin' all afternoon how he used to be a deep-sea diver off Catalina Island.

MADGE

Honest?

MILLIE

And he says he used to make hundreds of dollars doin' parachute jumps out of a balloon. (SHE CROSSES TO LEFT OF PORCH CORNER THEN TURNS FACING MADGE.) Do you believe it?

MADGE

I don't see why not.

MILLIE

You never hear Alan bragging that way.

MADGE

Alan never jumped out of a balloon.

MILLIE

(CROSSES LEFT TO POTTS' STEPS AND SITS DOWN LEFT.) Madge,
I think he's . . . er. . . girl crazy, too.

MADGE

You think every boy you see is something horrible.

MILLIE

Alan took us into the Hi Ho for cokes and there was a gang of girls in the back booth--Juanita Badger and her gang. When they saw him, they started giggling and tee-heeing and saying all sorts of crazy things. Then Juanita Badger comes up to me and whispers, "I think he's the cutest thing I ever saw." Is he, Madge?

MADGE

(NOT WILLING TO GO OVERBOARD.) I wouldn't say he was "the cutest thing I ever saw."

MILLIE

Juanita Badger's an old floozy. She sits in the back row at the movie so the boys that come in will see her and sit with her. One time she and Rubberneck Krauss were asked by the management to leave--and they weren't just kissin', either!

MADGE

I never even speak to Juanita Badger.

MILLIE

(STANDS--CROSSES RIGHT TO LEFT OF PORCH CORNER.) Madge, do you think he'll like me?

MADGE

Why ask me all the questions? You're supposed to be the smart one.

MILLIE

I don't really care. I just wonder.

FLO

(COMING OUT OF KITCHEN CROSSES DOWN TO RIGHT OF MADGE.) Now I tell myself I've got two beautiful daughters.

MILLIE

(EMBARRASSED.) Be quiet, Mom!

FLO

Doesn't Millie look pretty, Madge?

MADGE

When she isn't picking her nose.

FLO

Madge! (CROSSES TO MILLIE.) She doesn't want anyone to be pretty but her.

MILLIE

You're just saying I'm pretty because you're my mom. People we love are always pretty, but people who're pretty to begin with, everybody loves them.*

FLO

Run over and show Helen Potts how nice you look.*

MILLIE

(CROSSES UP POTTS' STEPS AND ANNOUNCES HERSELF WITH BROAD GESTURES AND LOUD VOICE.) Here comes Millie Owens, the great beauty of all times! Be prepared to swoon when you see her! (SHE EXITS INTO POTTS' HOUSE.)

FLO

Whatever possessed me to let Helen Potts ask that young hoodlum to take Millie on the picnic?

MADGE

Hal?

FLO

Yes, Hal, or whatever his name is. He not only left every towel in the bathroom black as dirt, he left the seat up, too.*

MADGE

It won't hurt anyone just to be nice to him.

FLO

(CROSSES LEFT TO MADGE.) Madge, if there's any drinking tonight, I want you to put a stop to it.

MADGE

I'm not going to be a wet blanket.

FLO

If the boys feel they have to have a few drinks, there's nothing you can do about it, but you can keep Millie from taking any.*

MADGE

She wouldn't pay any attention to me.*

FLO

(CROSSING BEHIND MADGE AND CHANGING THE SUBJECT.) Well, you'd better start getting dressed, darling. And don't spend the whole evening admiring yourself in the mirror.

MADGE

(RISES, CROSSES TO SHED.) Mom, don't make fun of me.

FLO

(CROSSES TO MADGE.) Madge, you shouldn't object to being kidded when it's well meant.

MADGE

It just seems that when I'm looking in the mirror that's the only way I can prove to myself I'm alive.

FLO

Alive?

MADGE

Yes. Lots of the time I wonder if I really exist.

FLO

Madge! You puzzle me. (IRMA ENTERS FROM DOWN RIGHT FOLLOWED BY CHRISTINE AND ROSEMARY, RETURNING FROM THEIR AFTERNOON PARTY. THEY ARE EXHAUSTED AND BORED.)

IRMA

We've brought home your wayward girl, Mrs. Owens! (MADGE
CROSSES UP ON MRS. POTTS' STEPS AND SITS ON SECOND STEP
OF SECOND LEVEL, TO AVOID THE TEACHERS.)

FLO

(CROSSES TO LAWN CHAIR.) Oh, hello, Have a nice party?

IRMA

(CROSSES LEFT TO LEFT CORNER OF FLO'S HOUSE.) It wasn't
a real party. Each girl paid for her own lunch. Then we
played bridge all afternoon. (CHRISTINE SITS ON PORCH
RIGHT OF STEPS. ROSEMARY CROSSES UP ON PORCH, PUT HAT AND
JACKET ON BENCH, MOVES TO ROCKING CHAIR AND SITS.)

FLO

(SITS IN LAWN CHAIR.) (FIGURE 10) Food's good at the
hotel, isn't it?

IRMA

Not very. But they serve it to you nice, with honest-to-
goodness napkins. Lord, I hate paper napkins!

CHRISTINE

I had a French-fried pork chop. Mostly fat. What'd you
girls have?

ROSEMARY

(WITHOUT ENTHUSIASM.) I had the stuffed peppers.

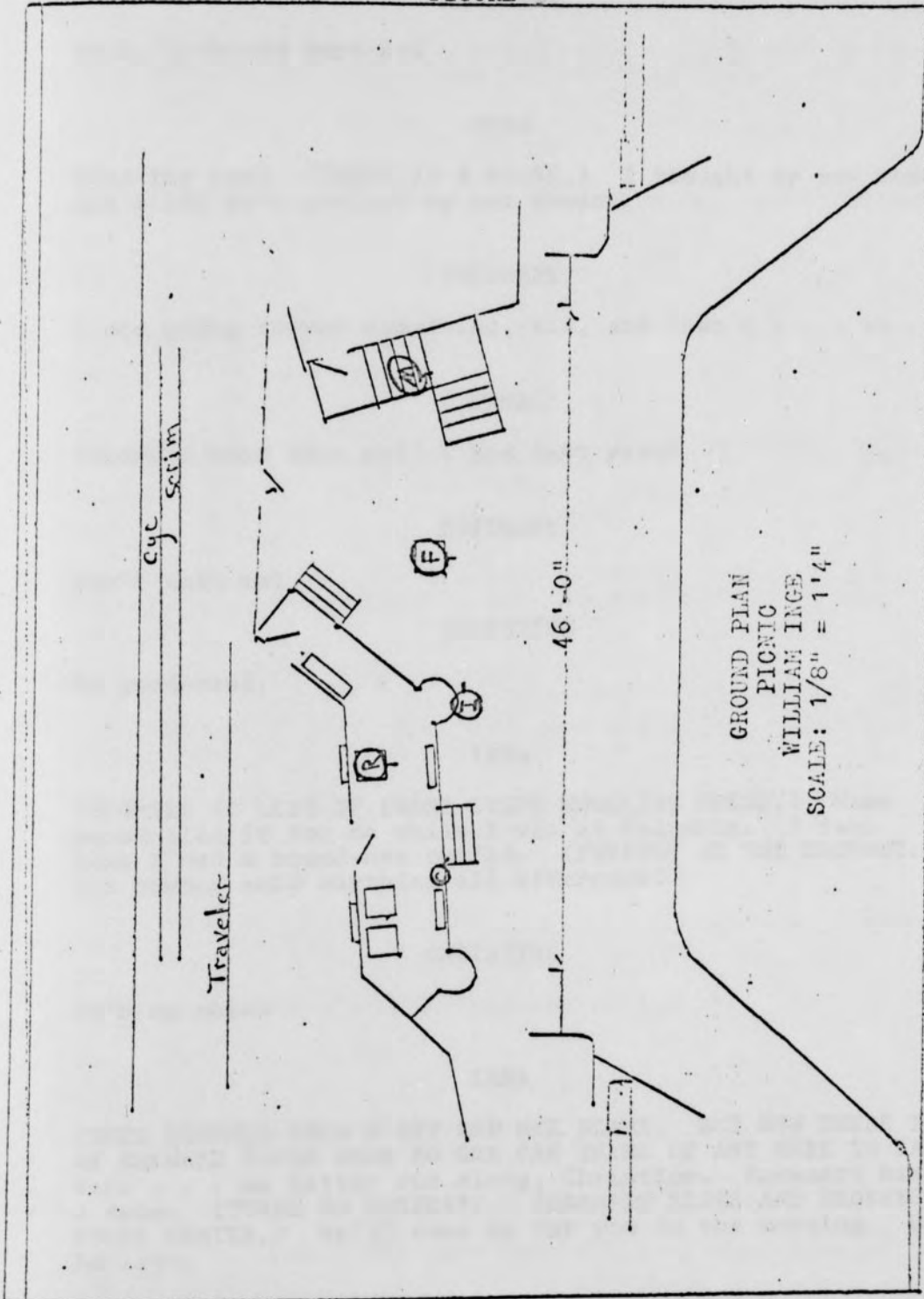
IRMA

(DISQUIETED.) I had the Southern fried chicken.

CHRISTINE

Linda Sue Breckenridge had pot roast of veal. Hm! There
was only one little hunk of meat in it. All we girls at
her table made her call the waiter and complain.

FIGURE 10



ROSEMARY

Well, I should hope so!

IRMA

Good for you! (THERE IS A PAUSE.) I thought by now someone might have noticed my new dress.

ROSEMARY

I was going to say something, kid, and then I . . . uh . .

IRMA

Remember that blue suit I had last year?

ROSEMARY

Don't tell me!

CHRISTINE

My goodness!

IRMA

(CROSSES TO LEFT OF FRONT STEPS MODELING DRESS.) Mama remodelled it for me while I was at Columbia. I feel like I had a brand-new outfit. (FURIOUS AT THE THOUGHT.) But nobody said anything all afternoon!

CHRISTINE

It's so chic.

IRMA

(THIS SOOTHES IRMA A BIT AND SHE BEAMS. BUT NOW THERE IS AN AWKWARD PAUSE WHEN NO ONE CAN THINK OF ANY MORE TO SAY.) Well . . . we better run along, Christine. Rosemary has a date. (TURNS TO ROSEMARY. ROSEMARY RISES AND CROSSES TO STEPS CENTER.) We'll come by for you in the morning. Don't be late.

CHRISTINE

(PUTTING OUT HER HAND.) Girl, I want to tell you in one afternoon I feel I've known you my whole life.

ROSEMARY

(SHAKING HANDS.) I look upon you as an old friend already.

CHRISTINE

(OVERJOYED.) Aw . . .

ROSEMARY

(AS CHRISTINE AND IRMA CROSS DOWN LEFT.) Good-bye, girls!

IRMA

(AS SHE CROSSES BY FLO AND THEN MADGE.) Good-bye, Mrs. Owens, Good-bye, Madge. (IRMA AND CHRISTINE EXIT DOWN LEFT.)***

FLO

(TO ROSEMARY.) What time's Howard coming by? (MADGE RUNS ACROSS TO KITCHEN DOOR.)

ROSEMARY

Any minute now.*

MADGE

(TURNING.) Mom, is there any hot water?

FLO

You'll have to go see, darling.

MADGE

Miss Sydney, would you mind terribly if I used some of your Shalimar?

ROSEMARY

Help yourself!

MADGE

Thanks. (SHE GOES INSIDE KITCHEN.)

ROSEMARY

Madge thinks too much about the boys, Mrs. Owens.

FLO

(DISBELIEVING.) Madge? (THE CONVERSATION IS STOPPED BY THE EXCITED ENTRANCE OF MRS. POTTS FROM HER HOUSE. SHE IS FOLLOWED BY MILLIE WHO CARRIES ANOTHER CAKE. MRS. POTTS CROSSES TO RIGHT OF LAWN CHAIR WHERE FLO IS SITTING. MILLIE CROSSES TO LAWN CHAIR AND SITS ON LEFT ARM.)

MRS. POTTS

It's a miracle, that's what it is! I never knew Millie could look so pretty. It's just like a movie I saw once with Betty Grable . . . or was it Lana Turner? Anyway, she played the part of a secretary to some very important business man. She wore glasses and did her hair real plain and the men didn't pay and notice to her at all. Then one day she took off her glasses and her boss wanted to marry her right away! Now I tell Millie--all the boys are going to fall in love with her!

ROSEMARY

Millie have a date tonight?

FLO

Yes, I'm sorry to say.

MRS. POTTS

Why, Flo!

ROSEMARY

Who is he, Millie? Tell your Aunt Rosemary.

MILLIE

Hal.

ROSEMARY

Who?

FLO

The young man over at Helen's turned out to be a friend of Alan's.

ROSEMARY

Oh, him! (MILLIE EXITS INTO KITCHEN CARRYING CAKE.)

FLO

Helen, have you gone to the trouble of baking another cake?

MRS. POTTS

An old lady like me, if she wants any attention from the young men on a picnic, all she can do is bake a cake! I feel sort of excited, Flo. I think we plan picnics just to give ourselves an excuse . . . to let something thrilling and romantic happen to us--

FLO

Such as what?

MRS. POTTS

I don't know. That's what's so exciting.

MADGE

(BURSTING OUT THE FRONT DOOR, CROSSING TO LEFT CORNER OF PORCH.) Mom! Millie makes me furious! Every time she takes a bath, she fills up the whole bathtub. Now there isn't any hot water at all.

FLO

You should have thought of it earlier.

ROSEMARY

(HEARS HOWARD'S CAR DRIVE UP AND STOP OFF RIGHT. SHE MOVES EXCITEDLY TO RIGHT CORNER OF PORCH.) It's him! It's him!

MRS. POTTS

(CROSSES TO LEFT OF FRONT STEPS, LOOKS OFF RIGHT.) Who? Oh, it's Howard. Hello, Howard!

ROSEMARY

(CROSSES LEFT AND SITS IN FIRST ARMCHAIR RIGHT OF FRONT DOOR.) If he's been drinking, I'm not going out with him. (HOWARD BEVANS ENTERS FROM DOWN RIGHT.)

HOWARD

Howdy, ladies.

FLO

Hello, Howard. (MRS. POTTS SITS STAIRS LEFT.)

HOWARD

(CROSSES TO RIGHT OF FRONT STEPS.) You sure look nice, Rosemary.

ROSEMARY

Seems to me you might have left your coat on.

HOWARD

Still too darn hot, even if it is September. Good evening, Madge.

MADGE

Hi, Howard.

FLO

How are things over in Cherryvale, Howard?

HOWARD

Good business. Back to school and everybody buying.

FLO

When business is good, it's good for everyone.

MILLIE

(COMES OUT OF FRONT DOOR, CROSSES TO CENTER OF STEPS.)
Hi, Howard!

HOWARD

(TO FLO, MAKING A DISCOVERY.) Hey, Millie's a good lookin' kid. I never realized it before.

MILLIE

(CROSSES DOWN LEFT TO FLO.) Mom, what time did the fellows say they'd be here?

FLO

At five-thirty. You've asked me a dozen times. (A SOUND OF APPROACHING AUTOMOBILES. FLO RISES, CROSSES TO FRONT STEPS LOOKING OFF RIGHT.) It's Alan! He's brought both cars! (MILLIE RUNS INTO THE HOUSE THROUGH FRONT DOOR. ROSEMARY CROSSES TO RIGHT EDGE OF PORCH--HOWARD FOLLOWS.)

MRS. POTTS

(RISES.) One of these days you'll be riding around in that big Cadillac. (ALAN ENTERS FROM DOWN RIGHT--CROSSES TO FLO.)

ALAN

Everyone ready?

FLO

(CROSSES UP ON TO PORCH AND SITS IN ROCKING CHAIR.) Come sit down, Alan.

ROSEMARY

The more the merrier!

ALAN

I brought both cars. Hal's parking the Ford. (THE OTHER CAR IS HEARD STOPPING WITH A SQUEAL OF BRAKES.) The trunk in the Cadillac won't hold everything. Whatever's left over, Hal and Millie can drive out in the Ford. (CROSSES LEFT TO LEFT OF MADGE, WHO IS NOW SITTING ON LEFT CORNER PORCH RAILING.) Hi, Beautiful!

MADGE

Hi, Alan!

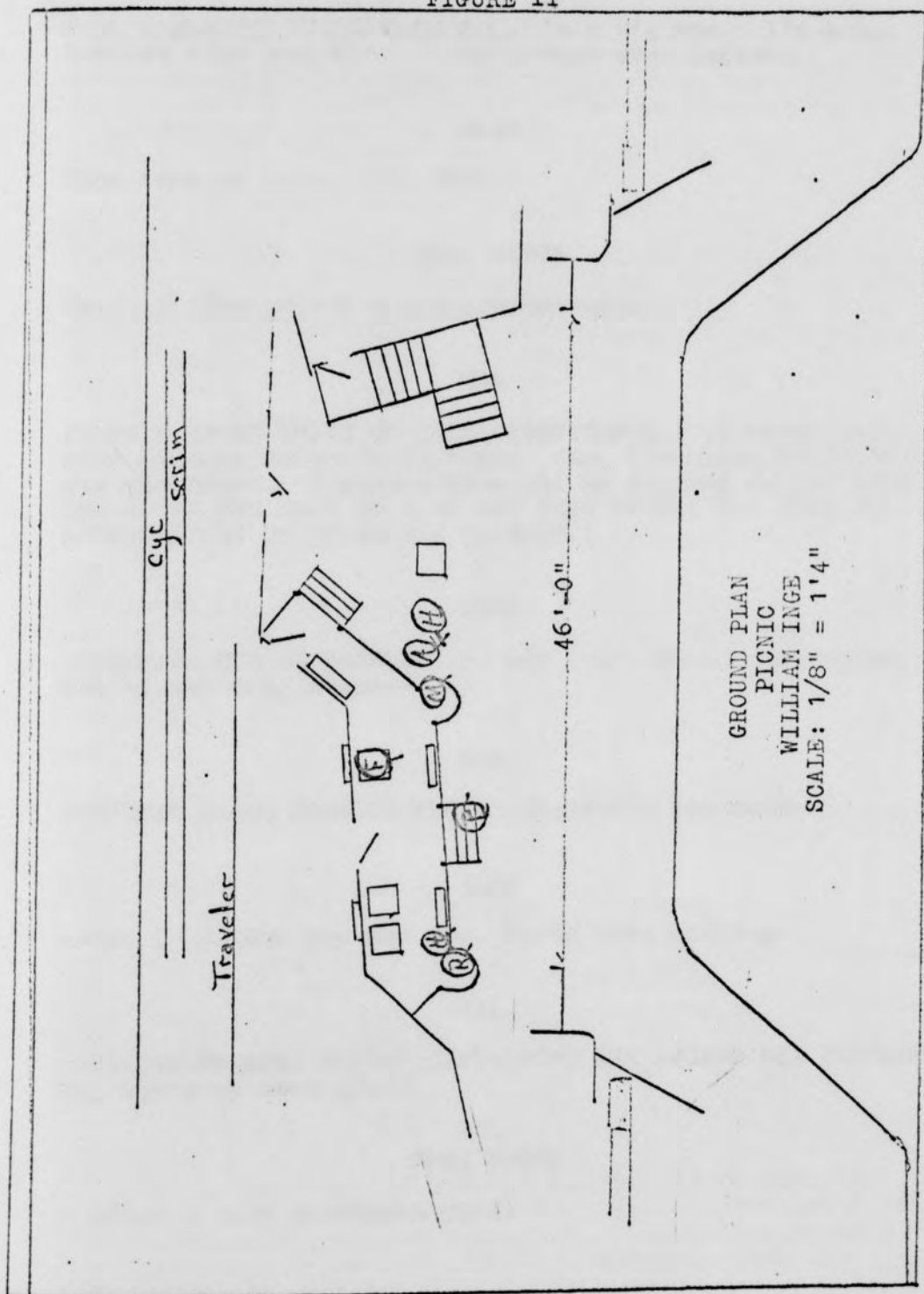
ALAN

(CALLING OFF UP RIGHT.) Hal!

FLO

Is he a careful driver, Alan? (THIS QUESTION DOES NOT GET ANSWERED. HAL COMES RUNNING ON UP RIGHT, TUGGING UNCOMFORTABLY AT THE SHOULDERS OF HIS JACKET. HE CROSSES TO ALAN'S LEFT.) (FIGURE 11.)

FIGURE 11



HAL

Hey, Seymour! Look, Seymour, I'm a big man. I'm a lot huskier than you are. I can't wear your jacket.

ALAN

Then take it off. (HAL DOES.)

MRS. POTTS

Yes. I like to see a man comfortable.

HAL

(WITH A BROAD SMILE OF TOTAL CONFIDENCE.) I never could wear another fellow's clothes. See, I'm kinda beefy through the shoulders. I should have all my clothes tailor made. (HE GIVES THE COAT TO ALAN AND THEN SWINGS HIS ARMS IN APPRECIATION OF THEIR NEW FREEDOM.)

ALAN

(CLAPPING HIM ON SHOULDER.) Hey . . . uh . . . Hercules, you've met Mrs. Owens--

HAL

(CROSSES BELOW ALAN TO FLO.) Oh, she's the mother!

ALAN

--And I believe you met Mrs. Potts this morning.

HAL

(CROSSES TO MRS. POTTS' LEFT--PUTS ARM AROUND HER SHOULDERS.) Oh, she's my best girl!

MRS. POTTS

I baked a Lady Baltimore cake!

HAL

(EXPANSIVELY, AS THOUGH MAKING AN ANNOUNCEMENT OF PUBLIC INTEREST.) This little lady, she took pity on me when I was practically starving. I ran into some hard luck on my way here. Some characters robbed me of every cent I had. You see, these two characters--

ALAN

(INTERRUPTING. CROSSES TO DOWN RIGHT OF ROSEMARY.) And . . . er . . . this is Rosemary Sydney, Hal. (HAL CROSSES TO DOWN LEFT OF HOWARD, WHO IS STANDING NEXT TO ROSEMARY AT RIGHT CORNER OF PORCH.) Miss Sydney teaches shorthand and typing in the local high school.

ROSEMARY

Yes, I'm an old-maid schoolteacher.

HAL

(WITH UNNECESSARY EARNESTNESS.) I have every respect for schoolteachers, Mam. It's a lotta hard work and not much pay. (ROSEMARY CANNOT DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT THIS IS A COMPLIMENT.)

ALAN

And this is Howard Bevans, Hal. Mr. Bevans is a friend of Miss Sydney.

HOWARD

(AS THEY SHAKE HANDS.) I run a little shop over in Cherryvale. Notions, novelties and school supplies. You and Alan drive over sometime and get acquainted. (MILLIE ENTERS FROM FRONT DOOR AND STANDS ON THE PORCH, ELABORATELY PRETENDING TO BE NONCHALANT AND AT EASE.)

HAL

Sir, we'll come over as soon as we can fit it into our schedule. (HE SPIES MILLIE.) Hey, kid! (CROSSES UP TO MILLIE.) You got a little more tan today, didn't you? You folks shoulda seen Millie this morning. She did a fine jackknife off the high diving board!

MILLIE

(SITTING ON RIGHT END OF TOP STEP.) Cut it out!

HAL

What'sa matter, kid? Think I'm snowin' you under? (TO WHOLE GROUP.) I wouldn't admit this to many people, but she does a jackknife almost as good as me! (REALIZES THAT THIS SOUNDS BRAGGING SO GOES ON TO EXPLAIN.) Oh, you see, I was diving champion on the West Coast, so I know what I'm talking about! (HE LAUGHS TO REASSURE HIMSELF AND SITS BESIDE MILLIE ON FRONT STEPS.)

FLO

(AFTER A MOMENT.) Madge, you should be getting dressed.

ALAN

(CROSSES TO DOWN RIGHT OF MADGE AND SITS ON PORCH.) Go on upstairs and get beautiful for us.

MADGE

Mom, can I wear my new dress?

FLO

No. I made you that dress to save for dances this fall.

ROSEMARY

(ROSEMARY AND HOWARD CROSS TO CHAIRS ON RIGHT OF PORCH. ROSEMARY SITS IN THE LEFT ONE AND HOWARD PUTS HIS FOOT ON THE RIGHT ONE AS HE LEANS FORWARD ON HIS KNEE. HAL TAKES BOOT OFF TO REMOVE A STONE. TO HAL.) Where'd you get those boots?

HAL

I guess maybe I ought to apologize for the way I look. But you see, those characters I told you about made off with all my clothes too. And I went to the police--(ALAN CLEARS HIS THROAT. HAL TAKES HINT AND STOPS.)

MRS. POTTS

What a pity!

HAL

You see, I didn't want you folks to think you were associatin' with a bum.* (HE LAUGHS UNCOMFORTABLY.)

MRS. POTTS

Clothes don't make the man.

HAL

That's what I tell myself, ma'am.*

FLO

Helen, is your mother taken care of?

MRS. POTTS

Yes, Flo. I've got a baby sitter for her.

FLO

Come on, Helen, let's start packing the baskets. (SHE RISES AND CROSSES TO EXIT FRONT DOOR. MRS. POTTS CROSSES TO FRONT DOOR BUT HAL'S STORY FASCINATES HER AND SHE STOPS AND TURNS.)

HAL

(TO ROSEMARY.) See, Mam, my old man left me these boots when he died.

ROSEMARY

(IMPISHLY.) That all he left you--just a pair of boots?

HAL

He gave me these boots and he said, "Son, the man of the house needs a pair of boots 'cause he's gotta do a lot of kickin'." And he made up a little poem.

"Your wages all are spent.
The Landlord wants his rent.
You go to your woman for solace,
And she fills you fulla torment."

(MRS. POTTS LAUGHS--SITS IN ROCKING CHAIR.) He says, "Son, there'll be times when the only thing you got to be proud of is the fact you're a man. (RISES TO PORCH.) So wear your boots and people can hear you comin', and keep your fists doubled up so they'll know you mean business when you get there." (HE LAUGHS.) My old man, he was a corker!

ALAN

(LAUGHING.) Hal's always so shy of people before he meets them. Then you can't keep him still!*

HAL

(LAUGHING, AGREEING WITH ALAN.) Yeah! (HE LEANS AGAINST PORCH POST AND SEES MADGE.) Hi! (FIGURE 12.)

MADGE

Hi!

HOWARD

What line of business you in, son?

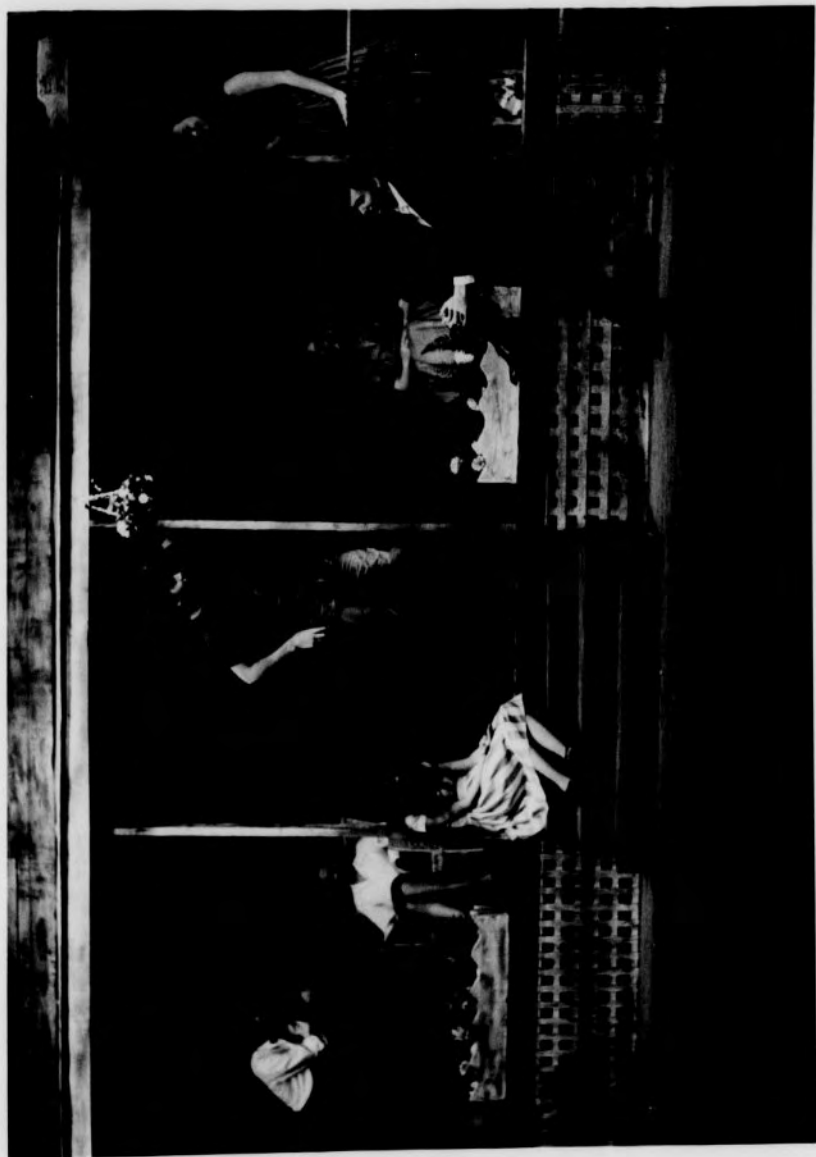
HAL

Sir, I'm about to enter the oil business.

HOWARD

Oh!

FIGURE 12.



HAL

You see, while my old man was no aristocratic millionaire or anything, he had some very important friends who were very big men . . . in their own way. One of them wanted me to take a position with this oil company down in Texas, but--

ALAN

(INTERRUPTING.) Dad and I have found a place for Hal on the pipeline.

HAL

Gee, Seymour, I think you oughta let me tell the story.

ALAN

(KNOWING HE MIGHT AS WELL LET HAL GO ON.) Sorry, Hal.*

HAL

(WITH DEVOUT EARNESTNESS TO ALL.) You see, I've decided to start in from the very bottom, 'cause that way I'll learn things lots better--even if I don't make much money for a while.*

MRS. POTTS

Money isn't everything.*

HAL

That's what I tell myself, ma'am. Money isn't everything. I've learned that much. And I sure do appreciate Alan and his old . . . (THINKS A MOMENT AND SUBSTITUTES FATHER FOR MAN.) father . . . giving me this opportunity.*

MRS. POTTS

I think that's wonderful!

HOWARD

It's a good business town. A young man can go far.

HAL

(REGAINING CONFIDENCE.) Sir, I intend to go far.

ROSEMARY

A young fellow just coming to town, he's gotta be a good mixer.

MRS. POTTS

Wouldn't it be nice if he could join the Country Club and play golf? (HAL LIKES THIS IDEA.)

ALAN

He won't be able to afford that.* (HAL NODS IN AGREEMENT.)

ROSEMARY

The bowling team's a rowdy gang!* (THIS SOUNDS GOOD TO HAL.)

MRS. POTTS

And there's the youngmen's Bible class at the Baptist Church. (HAL'S HEAD HAS BEEN SPINNING WITH THESE PLANS FOR HIS FUTURE. NOW HE REASSURES THEM.)

HAL

Oh, I'm gonna join clubs and go to church and do all those things.* (SITS BACK ON STEPS LEFT OF MILLIE.)

FLO

(ENTERS FROM THE KITCHEN AND CROSSES DOWN TO MADGE.)
Madge! Are you still here?

MADGE

(RUNNING ACROSS TO THE FRONT DOOR.) If everyone will pardon me, I'll get dressed. (EXITS FRONT DOOR.)

FLO

It's about time.

ALAN

(CALLING AFTER MADGE.) Hurry it up, will you, Delilah?

MILLIE

You oughta see the way Madge primps. She uses about six kinds of face cream and dusts herself all over with powder, and rubs perfume underneath her ears to make her real mysterious. It takes her half an hour just to get her lipstick on. She won't be ready for hours.*

FLO

Come on, Helen. Alan, we're going to need a man to chip the ice and put the baskets in the car. (MRS. POTTS CROSSES TO KITCHEN DOOR AND EXITS.)

HAL

(RISING.) I'll help you, Mam.

FLO

No, thank you. Alan won't mind.* (FLO CROSSES TO KITCHEN DOOR.)

ALAN

Mind your manners, Hal. (HE CROSSES UP, HOLDS KITCHEN DOOR OPEN FOR FLO.)

MILLIE

(RUNNING UP TO CORNER OF HOUSE.) Mom!

FLO

Why don't you show the young man your drawings? (FLO EXITS TO KITCHEN. ALAN FOLLOWS HER. MILLIE JUMPS OFF LEFT EDGE OF PORCH.)

MILLIE

(TURNS TO HAL.) Wanta see my art?

HAL

You mean to tell me you can draw pictures? (MILLIE CROSSES TO LAWN CHAIR AND GETS HER SKETCH PAD FROM UNDER THE CHAIR. HAL FOLLOWS HER.)

MILLIE

(OPENS PAD TO A SKETCH, HANDS PAD TO HAL.) That's Mrs. Potts.

HAL

(IMPRESSED.) Looks just like her.

MILLIE

I just love Mrs. Potts. When I go to heaven, I expect everyone to be just like her.

HAL

Hey, kid, wanta draw me?

MILLIE

(TAKES PAD--SITS LAWN CHAIR.) Well, I'll try.

HAL

I had a job as a model once. (GETTING UP ON POTTS STEPS.) They made me pose raw in front of a whole class. (STRIKES A POSE.) How's this? (MILLIE SHAKES HER HEAD.) That's okay. I got plenty more. (SITS IN ANOTHER POSE.) Okay?

MILLIE

Why don't you just try to look natural?

HAL

Gee, that's hard. (HE THINKS A MOMENT, THEN BENDS WAY OVER, SHAKES HIMSELF, SLOWLY STRAIGHTENS UP, RESTING HIS ELBOWS EASILY ON HIS THIGHS, HEAD ERECT. MILLIE BEGINS TO SKETCH. ROSEMARY, BECOMING CONSCIOUS OF THE BRILLIANT SUNLIGHT FROM RIGHT, TURNS TO LOOK INTO IT.)

ROSEMARY

Howard, look at that sunset!

HOWARD

(TURNS TO LOOK.) Pretty, isn't it?

ROSEMARY

That's the most flaming sunset I ever did see.

HOWARD

If you painted that in a picture, no one'd believe you.

ROSEMARY

It's like the daylight didn't want to end, isn't it?

HOWARD

(NOT FULLY AWARE OF WHAT SHE MEANS.) Oh . . . I don't know.

ROSEMARY

Like the daytime was gonna put up a big scrap and maybe set the world on fire . . . to keep night-time from creepin' on.

HOWARD

Rosemary . . . you're a poet.* (MILLIE CHANGES POSITIONS
IN LAWN CHAIR.)

HAL

(AS MILLIE SKETCHES HIM HE STARTS THINKING OUT LOUD.)
You know, there comes a time in a guy's life when he's
gotta settle down . . . quit rolling around like a pinball.
(ROSEMARY SITS UP ON EDGE OF HER CHAIR.)

ROSEMARY

No, Howard, I don't think there ought to be any drinkin,
while Millie's here.*

HAL

What's that?

ROSEMARY

We were just talkin'.*

HAL

(TO MILLIE.) What'd you do this afternoon, kid?*

MILLIE

Read a book.

HAL

You read a whole book in one afternoon?

MILLIE

Sure. Hold still.

HAL

I'm a son of a gun. What was it about?

MILLIE

There wasn't much story. It's just the way you feel when you read it--kind of warm inside and sad and amused--all at the same time.*

HAL

Yeah--sure. (AFTER A MOMENT.) I wish I had more time to read books. (PROUDLY.) That's what I'm gonna do when I settle down. I'm gonna read all the better books--and listen to all the better music. A man owes it to himself. I used to go with a girl who read books. She joined the Book-Of-the Month Club and they had her readin' books all the time! She wouldn't any more finish one book than they'd send her another!*

(HOWARD RISES AND CROSSES DOWN FRONT STEPS.)

ROSEMARY

Where you goin', Howard?

HOWARD

I'll be right back, Honey. (HE EXITS DOWN RIGHT. ROSEMARY FOLLOWS HIM TO RIGHT OF FRONT STAIRS, AND WATCHES HIM WHILE HE IS OFF.)

HAL

(AS MILLIE TURNS THE SKETCH TO HIM.) Not bad. (CROSSES TO MILLIE AND TAKES PAD.) I sure do admire people who are artistic. Can I keep it?

MILLIE

Sure. (RISES, TAKES PAD, TEARS SKETCH OUT, STOPS, SHYLY.) I write poetry, too. I've written poems I've never shown to a living soul.

HAL

No kidding.

ROSEMARY

(CALLING OFF TO HOWARD.) Howard, leave that bottle right where it is!

HAL

(CROSSES TO LEFT CORNER OF HOUSE.) Did she say "bottle"?

ROSEMARY

He's been down to the hotel, buying bootleg whiskey off those good-for-nothing porters! (MILLIE CROSSES TO LEFT OF HAL.)

HOWARD

(COMING BACK FROM DOWN RIGHT, HOLDING OUT A BOTTLE, TO HAL'S RIGHT.) Young man, maybe you'd like a swig of this.

HAL

Hot damn! (HE TAKES THE BOTTLE, TAKES A SWIG.)

ROSEMARY

(CROSSES DOWN FRONT STEPS.) Howard, put that away.

HOWARD

Millie's not gonna be shocked if she sees someone take a drink. Are you, Millie?

MILLIE

Gosh, no!

ROSEMARY

What if someone'd come by and tell the school board? I'd lose my job quick as you can say Jack Robinson.

HOWARD

Who's gonna see you, Honey? Everyone in town's at the picnic.

ROSEMARY

I don't care. Liquor's against the law in this state, and a person oughta abide by the law. (TO HAL WHO IS TAKING ANOTHER SWIG.) Isn't that what you say, young fellow?

HAL

Oh, sure! A person oughta abide by the law. (HE HANDS THE BOTTLE TO HOWARD.)

HOWARD

Here, Honey.

ROSEMARY

(CROSSES DOWN RIGHT OF FRONT STEPS WITH BACK TO HOWARD.) No, Howard, I'm not gonna touch a drop. (HAL SITS ON FRONT STEPS LEFT. MILLIE STANDS TO HIS LEFT AND GIVES HIM THE SKETCH.)

HOWARD

One little drink won't hurt you.

ROSEMARY

I said "no" and I mean "no."

HOWARD

(CROSSES TO HER.) Come on, Honey, have one little drink just for me. (BUMPS HER WITH HIS KNEE.)

ROSEMARY

(BEGINNING TO MELT.) Howard, you oughta be ashamed of yourself.

HOWARD

(INNOCENT.) I don't see why.

ROSEMARY

I guess I know why you want me to take a drink.

HOWARD

Now, Honey, that's not so. I just think you should have a good time like the rest of us. (TO HAL.) Schoolteachers gotta right to live. Right?

HAL

Right!

ROSEMARY

Now, Millie, don't you tell any of the kids at school.

MILLIE

(DISGUSTED AT BEING TAKEN FOR A CHILD.) What do you take me for?

ROSEMARY

Anyone coming? (ALL LOOK AROUND.)

HOWARD

Coast is clear. (GIVES HER THE BOTTLE.)

ROSEMARY

(TAKES A HEARTY DRINK.) Whew! I want some water!

HOWARD

Millie, why don't you run in the house and get her some?
(MILLIE STARTS UP STAIRS.)

ROSEMARY

Mrs. Owens'd suspect something. I'll get a drink from the
hydrant!* (SHE RUNS OFF TO MRS. POTTS' YARD UP LEFT.
MILLIE COMES DOWN TO ABOVE AND BETWEEN HAL AND HOWARD.)

HOWARD

Millie, my girl, I'd offer you one, but I'm afraid your
old lady'd raise Ned.

MILLIE

What Mom don't know won't hurt her! (SHE COMES DOWN STEPS
REACHING FOR THE BOTTLE.)

HAL

(HE GRABS THE BOTTLE FIRST.) No, kid. You lay off the
stuff! (HE TAKES A DRINK AS HE CROSSES DOWN LEFT OF STAIRS
TOWARD CENTER STAGE.)

ROSEMARY

(CALLING FROM OFFSTAGE UP LEFT.) Howard, come help me!
I see a snake!

HOWARD

You go, Millie. She don't see no snake. (MILLIE GOES OFF
UP LEFT.) Drink up. (AS HAL TAKES ANOTHER DRINK, HE SEES
A LIGHT GO ON IN MADGE'S WINDOW. HOWARD FOLLOWS HAL'S
GAZE.) Look at her there, powdering her arms. You know,
every time I come over here I look forward just to seein'
her. I tell myself, "Bevans, old boy, you can look at that
all you want, but you couldn't touch it with a ten-foot
pole."*

HAL

She's the kind of girl a guy's gotta respect.*

HOWARD

Look at her, putting lipstick on that cute kisser. They tell me every boy in town has been on the make for that since she was old enough to go to Sunday School. Seems to me, when the good Lord made a girl as pretty as she is, He did it for a reason, and it's about time she found out what that reason is. (HE GETS AN IDEA.) Look, son, if you're agonizin', I know a couple of girls down at the hotel.

HAL

Thanks a lot but you see, I never had to pay for it. (HE HANDS BOTTLE BACK TO HOWARD.)

HOWARD

I think that's a very fine attitude. (TAKES A DRINK AS ROSEMARY ENTERS UP LEFT FOLLOWED BY MILLIE.)

ROSEMARY

(CROSSES DOWN RIGHT.) Lord, I thought I was going to faint!

MILLIE

(CROSSES DOWN RIGHT.) It was just a piece of garden hose.

ROSEMARY

(CROSSES TO RIGHT OF HOWARD. SUSPICIOUSLY.) What've you two been talking about?

HOWARD

(TURNS STAGE FRONT LOOKING AT SKY.) Talkin' about the weather, Honey. Talkin' about the weather.*

ROSEMARY

(LOOKING UP AT MADGE IN THE WINDOW.) I bet.

MILLIE

(CROSSES TO LEFT OF HAL. SEES MADGE IN THE WINDOW.) Hey, Madge, why don't you charge admission? (MADGE'S CURTAINS CLOSE.)

ROSEMARY

(SITS FRONT STAIRS LEFT.) Shoot! When I was a girl I was just as good looking as she is! (MUSIC, "MOON GLOW", BEGINS TO PLAY OFF UP LEFT.)

HOWARD

(CROSSES TO ROSEMARY'S LEFT.) Of course you were, Honey.

ROSEMARY

(TAKING THE BOTTLE FROM HOWARD.) I had boys callin' me all the time.* But if my father had ever caught me showing off in front of a window he'd have tanned me with a razor strap. (SHE TAKES A DRINK.)

HOWARD

'Course, Honey.

ROSEMARY

'Cause I was brought up strict by a God-fearing man.*

MILLIE

Listen, Miss Sidney, it's Ernie Higgins and his Happiness Boys. (SHE CROSSES UP STAGE TO FENCE GATE.) Hey, hit it, Ernie!

ROSEMARY

(RISES, HANDING BOTTLE TO HOWARD, BEGINS TO SWAY RAPTUROUSLY. CROSSES TO LEFT OF FRONT STEPS ON PORCH.) Lord, I love that music! Come dance with me, Howard!

HOWARD

Honey, I'm no good at dancin'.

ROSEMARY

That's just what you menfolks tell yourselves to get out of it. (TURNS TO MILLIE.) Come dance with me, Millie! (MILLIE CROSSES UP ONTO THE PORCH AND THEY PUSH THE ROCKER OUT OF THE WAY. HOWARD CROSSES TO LEFT CORNER OF PORCH AND STARTS DRINKING. HAL BEGINS TO DANCE BY HIMSELF, SENSUOUSLY LEFT CENTER.)

MILLIE

I gotta lead! (ROSEMARY AND MILLIE DANCE TOGETHER IN A TRIM, AUTOMATIC WAY THAT KEEPS TIME TO THE MUSIC BUT LITTLE ELSE. BOTH WOMEN SEEM TO SHOW A LITTLE ARROGANCE IN DANCING TOGETHER, AS THOUGH BOASTING TO THE MEN OF THEIR INDEPENDENCE. THEIR RHYTHM IS ACCURATE BUT UNINSPIRED. HOWARD LOOKS UP AT THEM.)

HOWARD

S'posin' Hal and I did that.

ROSEMARY

Go ahead for all I care. (HOWARD CROSSES LEFT AND SITS BOTTLE ON POTTS' STEPS THEN TURNS AND TAPS HAL ON THE SHOULDER. HAL TURNS AND HOWARD HOLDS OUT HIS ARMS CEREMONIOUSLY. HAL TURNS, TWISTS AWAY IN EXAGGERATED SHYNESS THEN TAKES HOWARD'S HANDS AND THEY START DANCING TOGETHER, HAL GIVING HIS OWN CLOWN'S VERSION OF A COY FEMALE. ROSEMARY IS IRRITATED BY THIS. SHE AND MILLIE STOP DANCING AND WATCH. HAL AND HOWARD DANCE TO LEFT CORNER OF PORCH. ROSEMARY CROSSES LEFT TO THEM AND GRABS HOWARD'S SHOULDER.) Stop it!

HOWARD

I thought we were doin' very nicely. (ROSEMARY PULLS HIM UP ON THE PORCH LEFT OF FRONT DOOR WHERE THEY DANCE.)

HAL

Hey, Millie! Come and dance with me!

MILLIE

(CROSSES DOWN TO HAL.) Well . . . I never danced with boys.

HAL

Honest?

MILLIE

I always have to lead.

HAL

Just relax and do the steps I do. Come on and try.
(THEY DANCE TOGETHER BUT MILLIE HAS AN AWKWARD FEELING OF
UNCERTAINTY THAT SHOWS IN HER DANCING. HOWARD, DANCING
WITH ROSEMARY, HAS BEEN CUTTING UP.)

ROSEMARY

(STOPS, PUSHES HIM OFF.) Quit clowning, Howard, and dance
with me.

HOWARD

Honey, you don't get any fun out of dancing with me.
(ROSEMARY AND HOWARD BEGIN TO DANCE AGAIN.)

HAL

(TO MILLIE, WHO CAN NOT RELAX.) Just relax, kid.**

MILLIE

I . . . I can't.**

ROSEMARY

(SHE IS DANCING WITH HOWARD BUT HER WORDS ARE MEANT FOR
HAL.) Lord, I love to dance. At school, kids all called
me the Dancin' Fool. Went somewhere dancin' every night!
(MRS. POTTS ENTERS FROM KITCHEN, CROSSES DOWN RIGHT OF
KITCHEN STAIRS.)

MRS. POTTS

(WATCHING.) I can't stay in the kitchen while there's dancing! (SITS ON PORCH RAIL.)

HAL

(STOPS TO DELIVER THE NEEDED INSTRUCTIONS.) Now look, kid, you gotta remember I'm the man, and you gotta do the steps I do.*

MILLIE

I keep wantin' to do the steps I make up myself.*

HAL

The man's gotta take the lead, kid, as long as he's able.*

MRS. POTTS

Just relax, Millie.**

MILLIE

I'm doing the best I can.**

HAL

You're doin' great, kid!

ROSEMARY

One night I went dancin' at a big Valentine party. I danced so hard I swooned! That's when they called me the Dancin' Fool.

HAL

(STOPS DANCING FOR A MOMENT.) Look, kid, you just don't get the idea. I'm the leader. I make up the steps we do. Just relax and follow me.**

MRS. POTTS

Tray again, Millie. Try again.**

MILLIE

Well . . . (STUMBLES.) I'm sorry.**

HAL

That's all right, kid. Don't let it get you down. Rome wasn't built in a day.**

MILLIE

(STUMBLES AGAIN.) I'm awful sorry.**

HAL

Forget it.**

MILLIE

(GIVING UP. SHE CROSSES UP RIGHT TO KITCHEN STEPS AND SITS.)
I . . . I don't want to . . . anymore.**

MRS. POTTS

(CROSSES TO MILLIE.) Don't give up, Millie. Keep trying. Go back and dance with the young man. He wants someone to dance with. Go back and try.** (HAL CROSSES TO POTTS' STEPS AND HAS ANOTHER DRINK FROM HOWARD'S BOTTLE.)

MADGE

(ENTERS FROM FRONT DOOR, CROSSES DOWN TO TOP OF FRONT STAIRS.)
Is everyone dancing? ** (SHE CROSSES DOWN STEPS TOWARD HAL.)

HAL

(TURNS AROUND AND SEES MADGE.) Hey! (HE PUTS BOTTLE BACK ON STEPS AND STARTS TO DANCE TOWARD HER. SHE BEGINS ALSO. THE OTHERS ALL STAND RIVETED AS THEY WATCH MADGE AND HAL DANCE TO EACH OTHER, GO THROUGH A SLOW GRACEFUL JITTERBUG ROUTINE AT

CENTER (FIGURE 13) AND THEN DANCE TO FAR UP LEFT WHERE THEY CONTINUE TO DANCE A CONVENTIONAL STEP, CLOSE TOGETHER, FORGETTING THE OTHERS COMPLETELY.)

MRS. POTTS

It's like they were made to dance together, isn't it?
(THIS REMARK BREAKS THE SPELL. MILLIE MOVES TO MRS. POTTS' STEPS AND SITS QUIETLY IN THE BACKGROUND.)

ROSEMARY

Howard, can't you dance that way?*

HOWARD

Me?*

ROSEMARY

That's the way t'dance, Howard. That's the way.**

HOWARD

Honey, if I danced that way, all my customers'd think I was unreliable.** (ROSEMARY DANCES BY HERSELF, KICKING HER LEGS IN THE AIR. MILLIE TAKES AN OCCASIONAL DRINK FROM THE WHISKEY BOTTLE DURING THE FOLLOWING SCENE, UNOBSERVED BY THE OTHERS.)

ROSEMARY

Lord, I love to dance. I danced so hard one night, I swooned! Right in the center of the ballroom!** (KICKS LEG HIGH.)

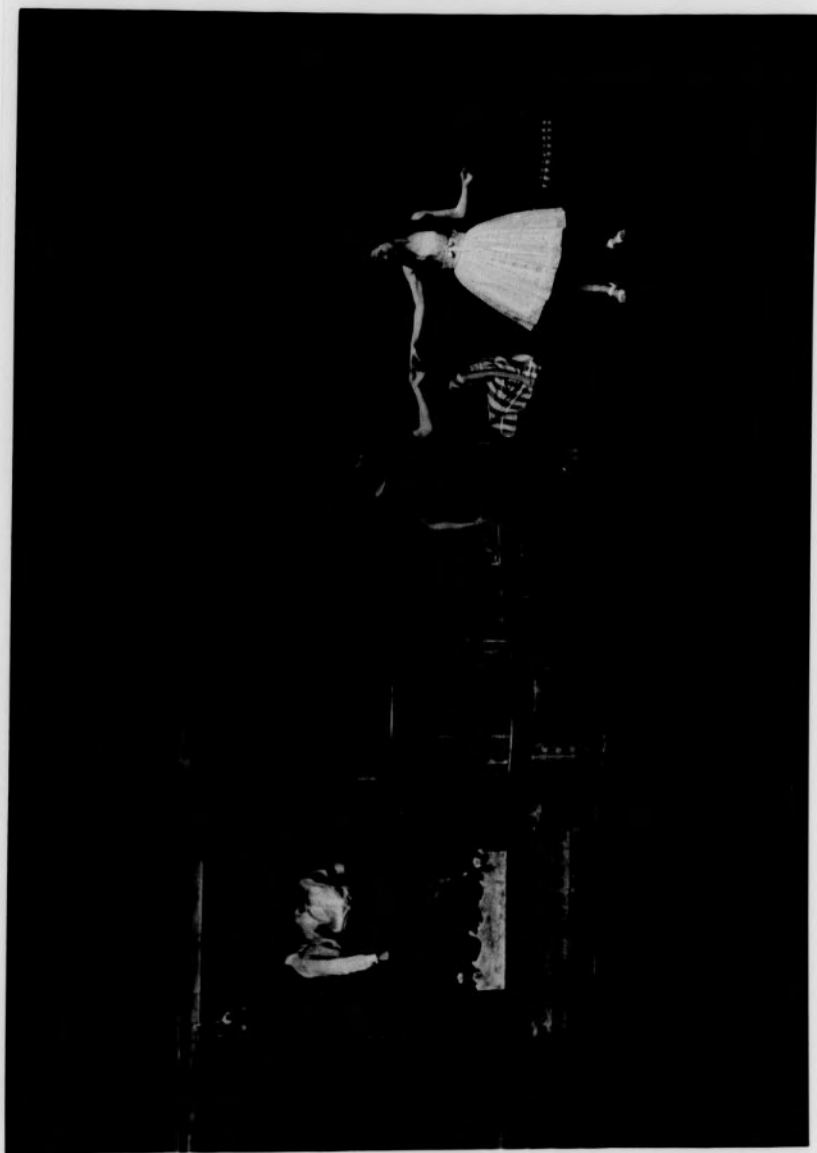
HOWARD

Rosemary's got pretty legs, hasn't she?

ROSEMARY

Can't you men talk about anything but women's legs?

FIGURE 13



HOWARD

I just noticed they had a good shape.

ROSEMARY

How would you like it if we women went around talkin' 'bout your legs all the time?

HOWARD

(READY TO BE A SPORT, LIFTS HIS TROUSERS TO HIS KNEES.) All right! There's my legs if you wanta talk about them.

ROSEMARY

(SHE EXPLODES WITH LAUGHTER.) Never saw anything so ugly. Men's big hairy legs! (CROSSES DOWN OFF STEPS.) Never saw anything so ugly! (ROSEMARY GOES OVER TO HAL, WHO IS STILL DANCING WITH MADGE.) Young man, let's see your legs. (SHE PUSHES THEM APART. THEY ARE BOTH STARTLED.)

HAL

Huh?

ROSEMARY

We passed a new rule here tonight. Every man here's gotta show his legs. (SHE PULLS HAL'S RIGHT TROUSER LEG OUT OF THE BOOT.)

HOWARD

(CROSSES DOWN STEPS TO LEFT CORNER OF PORCH.) Honey, he's got on boots.

ROSEMARY

Okay, then he's gotta dance with me. I may be an old maid schoolteacher, but I can keep up with you. Ride 'em cowboy! (MADGE RETREATS TO FENCE GATE UP LEFT AS ROSEMARY PULLS HAL TO HER. HE DANCES WITH HER.) I used to have a boy friend was a cowboy. Met him out in Colorado. He was in love with me cause I was an older woman and had some sense. Took

me up in the mountains once and proposed. Wanted me to marry him right there on the mountain top. Said God'd be our preacher, the moon our best man. Ever hear such talk?*" (HAL PULLS AWAY FROM HER.)

HAL

Mam, I'd like another li'l drink now.* (TRYING TO GET AWAY.)

ROSEMARY

(JERKING HIM CLOSER TO HER.) Dance with me, young man. Dance with me. I can keep up with you. You know what? You remind me of one of those ancient statues. There was one in the school library until last year. He was a Roman gladiator. All he had on was a shield. (SHE GIVES A BAWDY LAUGH.) A shield over his arm. That was all he had on. All we girls felt insulted, havin' to walk past that statue every time we went to the library. We got up a petition and made the principal do something about it. (SHE LAUGHS HILARIOUSLY DURING HER NARRATION.) You know what he did? He got the school janitor to fix things right. He got a chisel and made that statue decent. (ANOTHER BRAWDY LAUGH.) Lord, those ancient people were depraved.* (DURING THIS NARRATION THEY HAVE DANCED DOWN LEFT OF LAWN CHAIR.)

HAL

(VERY UNCOMFORTABLE.) Ma'am, I guess I don't feel like dancin' anymore.** (FIGURE 14.)

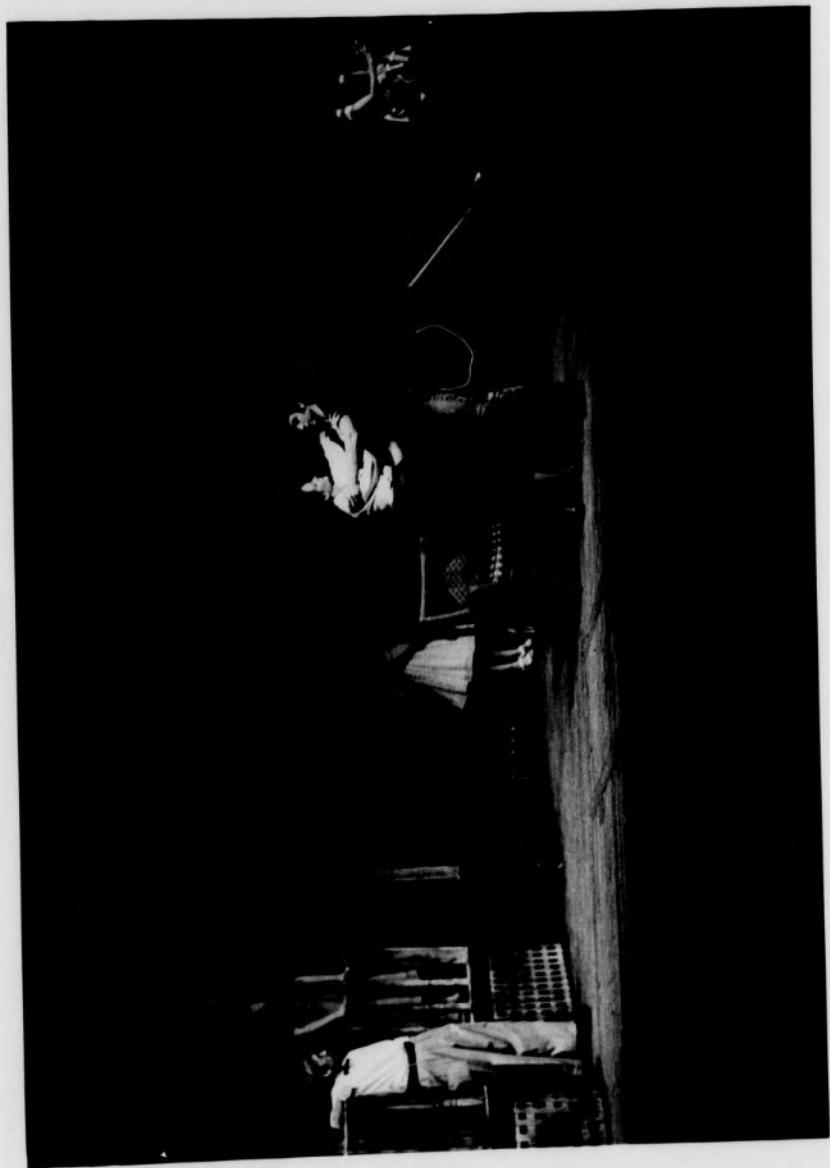
ROSEMARY

(SHE HOLDS ON DESPERATELY.) I can keep up with you! I can keep up with you! (HOWARD CROSSES TO ROSEMARY.)

HOWARD

Rosemary! Rosemary! (HE TRIES TO PULL HER AWAY FROM HAL AS ROSEMARY HOLDS ONTO HAL'S SHIRT COLLAR. AS HOWARD BREAKS HER LOOSE FROM HAL SHE RIPS THE BUTTONS OFF HAL'S SHIRT.) He's dancing with Madge. They're young people. (MUSIC STOPS.)

FIGURE 14



ROSEMARY

(STUNNED BY HAL'S REJECTION.) Young? What do you mean, they're young?

MILLIE

(A Groan.) Oh, I'm sick!

MRS. POTTS

Millie!

MILLIE

(CROSSING TOWARDS THE KITCHEN.) I wanna die! I wanna die! (HAL CROSSES UP TO MILLIE.)

HOWARD

(CROSSES TO POTTS' STEPS.) What'd the little Dickens do? Get herself tight?

HAL

(HOLDING MILLIE.) Take it easy, kid.

ROSEMARY

(CROSSES TO LEFT CORNER OF PORCH.) I suppose that's something wonderful--they're young.

MADGE

(ARM AROUND MILLIE.) Let's go inside, Millie. (THEY START UP KITCHEN STAIRS, HAL FOLLOWS.)

MILLIE

(TURNING ON MADGE AND PUSHING HER OFF STAIRS. HAL CATCHES MADGE BEFORE SHE FALLS.) I hate you!

MADGE

(HURT.) Millie!

MILLIE

(SOBBING, SHE CROSSES TO KITCHEN DOOR.) Madge is the pretty one . . . Madge is the pretty one. (SHE GOES INSIDE.)

MRS. POTTS

Millie! (SHE FOLLOWS HER IN.)

MADGE

What did she have to do that for? (HAL AND MADGE CROSS TO LAWN CHAIR.)

HOWARD

(DOWN LEFT OF POTTS' STEPS.) She must have had several good sniffers. (HAL CROSSES DOWN TO HOWARD AND BOTH EXAMINE BOTTLE.)

ROSEMARY

Young man, this is **all** your fault.**

HOWARD

Now, Honey . . .

ROSEMARY

Millie was your date. You shoulda been looking after her. But you were too busy making eyes at Madge.

HOWARD

Honey . . .

ROSEMARY

And you're no better than he is, Madge. You should be ashamed.

MADGE

I don't see why.**

ROSEMARY

(CROSSES UP LEFT TO MADGE ON LINE.) You come out here on the front porch, wearing your new dress, wearing my expensive perfume stuck behind your ears, and take him right out of Millie's arms. I saw you. Don't deny it.**

MADGE

Millie didn't want to dance.* (RUNS TO LEFT CORNER OF PORCH AND CRIES ON RAILING.)

ROSEMARY

(TO HAL.) There's just too many worthless young men like you, runnin' loose over the country today. No jobs, no responsibilities, spongin' off decent, self-respecting people, tryin' to make yourself at home where you're not wanted.**

HAL

I . . .**

HOWARD

Rosemary, take it easy. He's not done anything.**

ROSEMARY

I know what I'm doin', Howard. Oh yes, you come stompin' around here in your boots like you owned the place . . .**

HAL

Huh?*

ROSEMARY

(CROSSING BACK AND FORTH BEHIND LAWN CHAIR, LIKE A CAT LOOKING FOR THE BEST AVENUE OF ATTACK.) Showin' decent ladies the hair on your chest, struttin' around like some-one's prize rooster, thinkin' every woman you saw was gonna fall madly in love. But here's one woman that didn't pay you any mind. I saw through you right from the start.** Aristocratic millionaire, my foot! You wouldn't know an aristocratic millionaire if he spit on you. Braggin' about your father, and I bet he wasn't any better'n you are.* It's all a pack of lies. You never had a pot.**

HOWARD

Rosemary!**

ROSEMARY

Be quiet, Howard. (SHE BEGINS TO CLOSE IN ON HAL.) I'm gonna read all the better books and listen to all the better music. I'll bet you couldn't recite the alphabet, and you couldn't tell music from thunder.**

HOWARD

Rosemary, what's got into you? **

ROSEMARY

(CLOSES IN UP STAGE RIGHT OF HAL.) And you'll never amount to a hill of beans because you're no good, and a person can tell that just by lookin' at you. (IN HAL'S FACE.) You're nothin' but Arkansas white trash, and you'll end your life in a gutter.** (HAL FALLS TO POTTS' STEPS.)

HOWARD

(GRABS ROSEMARY FROM BEHIND AND TURNS HER STAGE FRONT.) Rosemary, shut your damn mouth.**

FLO

(ENTERS FROM KITCHEN.) What's been going on out here? Who fed whiskey to my Millie? **

ROSEMARY

It was . . . (POINTING WITH HER LEFT HAND TO HAL BUT UNABLE TO TALK WITH HOWARD'S HAND OVER HER MOUTH.)

HOWARD

(HOLDS ROSEMARY AND TURNS TO FLO.) Mrs. Owens, I'm mighty sorry. I had a bottle of whiskey, and we were cuttin' up, (ROSEMARY BREAKS AWAY AND CROSSES DOWN LEFT.) not payin' attention to what was goin' on, and Millie took a good snifter without anyone knowing.** (FLO CROSSES FROM STEPS TO LAWN CHAIR.)

MADGE

(TURNING TO FLO.) That's right, Mom. She did it just to be mean.**

MRS. POTTS

(ENTERS FROM KITCHEN WITH PICNIC BASKET.) Millie's going to be perfectly all right, Flo. Alan held her head and let her be sick. She's going to be perfectly all right now.* (CROSSES DOWN RIGHT ON PORCH.)

FLO

I want it understood by everyone that there's to be no more drinking on this picnic. (HER EYES ARE ON HAL.)

HOWARD

It was all my fault, Mrs. Owens. My fault. (ALAN ENTERS FROM KITCHEN WITH ICE COOLER AND MILLIE. SHE CROSSES TO MRS. POTTS' LEFT AND HE CROSSES UP RIGHT OF HAL. HOWARD CROSSES TO BEHIND ROSEMARY WHO IS FACING OFF DOWN LEFT.)

MRS. POTTS

Here's Millie now, good as new. And we're all going on the picnic and forget it.

ALAN

(QUICK TO ACCUSE HAL.) Hal, what's happened? (FIGURE 15.)

FLO

Millie will come with us, Alan.

ALAN

Sure, Mrs. Owens. Hal, I told you not to drink! (HAL IS STILL SILENT.)

FLO

Madge, why did you wear your new dress?

MADGE

I don't know. I just put it on.

FLO

Go upstairs and change, this minute. I mean it! You can come later with Rosemary and Howard! (MADGE EXITS FRONT DOOR.)

MRS. POTTS

Let's hurry. All the tables will be taken.* (POTTS AND MILLIE CROSS DOWN KITCHEN STEPS TO EXIT DOWN RIGHT.)

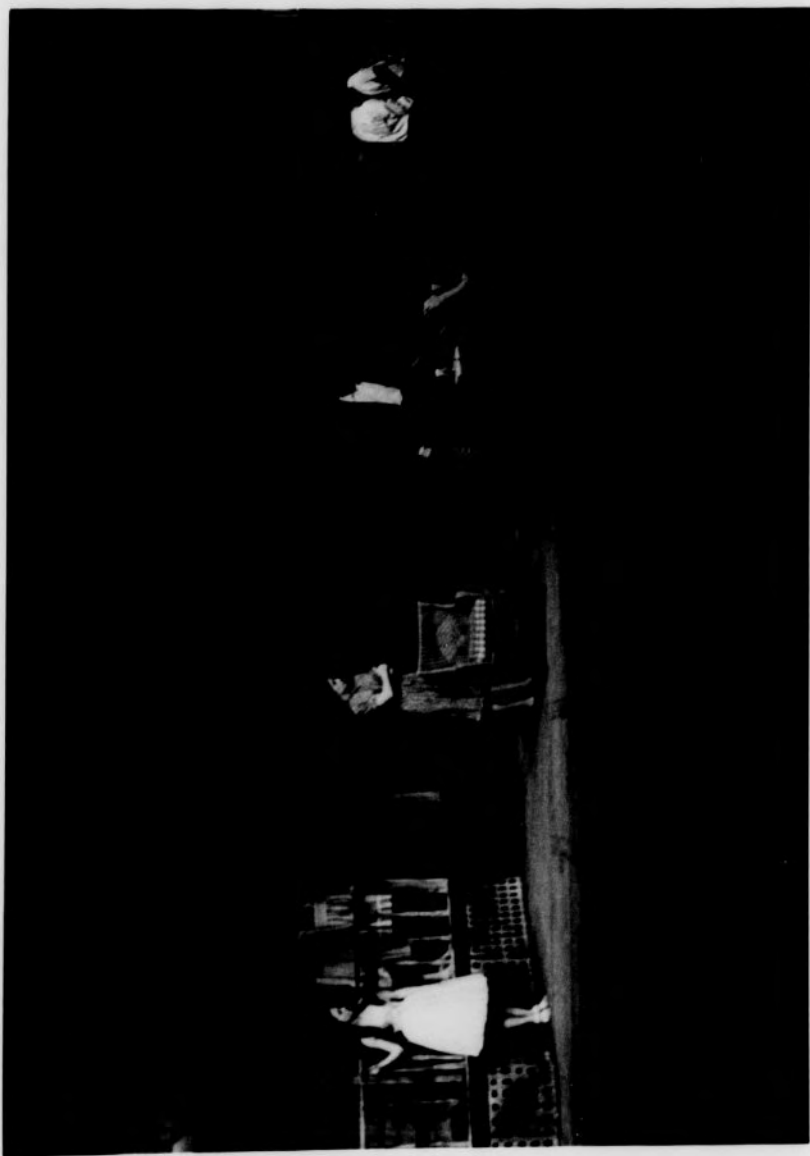
ALAN

Mr. Bevans, tell Madge I'll see her out there. Hal, the baskets are in the Ford. Get goin'.* (HAL DOESN'T MOVE. ALAN EXITS OFF DOWN RIGHT.)

FLO

(WITH ARM AROUND MILLIE--EXIT DOWN RIGHT.) Millie, darling, are you feeling better?*

FIGURE 15



MRS. POTTS

(TO HAL.) Young man, you can follow us and find the way.*
(EXITS DOWN RIGHT.)

HOWARD

He's just a boy, Rosemary. You talked awful.*

ROSEMARY

(WITH HER BACK STILL TO HOWARD AND FACING OFF DOWN LEFT.)
Did I, Howard?*

HOWARD

You gotta remember, men have feelings, too--same as women. (TO HAL.) Don't pay any attention to her, young man. She didn't mean a thing.

ROSEMARY

(TURNS TO HOWARD.) I don't want to go on the picnic, Howard. This is my last night of vacation and I want to have a good time.

HOWARD

We'll go for a ride, Honey.*

ROSEMARY

I want to drive into the sunset, Howard! I want to drive into the sunset!* (SHE RUNS ACROSS STAGE AND EXITS DOWN RIGHT. HOWARD PICKS UP BOTTLE LOOKS AT HAL AND SETS BOTTLE DOWN LEFT ON POTTS' STEPS. THEN HE FOLLOWS ROSEMARY.)

HOWARD

Wait up Rosemary. Wait up.*** (HE EXITS DOWN RIGHT. HAL CROSSES UP TO BOTTLE AND SITS ON THE FIFTH STEP UP, DOWN LEFT SIDE--HE DRINKS. HOWARD'S CAR DRIVES AWAY. MADGE ENTERS FROM KITCHEN IN ANOTHER DRESS. HAL MAKES NO RECOGNITION OF HER PRESENCE. SHE CROSSES TO LAWN CHAIR.

MADGE

(LOOKS AT HAL FOR A MOMENT AND FINALLY SPEAKS IN A SOFT VOICE.) You're a wonderful dancer . . .*

HAL

(HARDLY AUDIBLE.) Thanks.* (TAKES ANOTHER DRINK.)

MADGE

. . . and I can tell a lot about a boy by dancing with him. (CROSSES UP RIGHT OF POTTS' STEPS.) Some boys, even though they're very smart, or very successful in some other way, when they take a girl in their arms to dance, they're sort of awkward and a girl feels sort of uncomfortable.*

HAL

(HEAD DOWN, STILL DEFEATED.) Yah.* (TAKES ANOTHER DRINK.)

MADGE

(MADGE SITS UP RIGHT ON THIRD STEP UP, BELOW HAL.) But when you took me in your arms--to dance--I had the most relaxed feeling, that you knew what you were doing, and I could follow every step of the way.*

HAL

Look, Baby, I'm in a pretty bad mood.* (TAKES ANOTHER DRINK.)

MADGE

You mustn't pay any attention to Miss Sydney. Women like her make me mad at the whole female sex.*

HAL

Look, Baby, why don't you beat it?*(HE IS UNCOMFORTABLE TO BE NEAR HER, FOR HE IS TREMBLING WITH INSULT AND RAGE.)

MADGE

What's the matter?*

HAL

(GIVES UP AND BEGINS TO SHUDDER, HIS SHOULDERS HEAVING AS HE FIGHTS TO KEEP FROM BAWLING.) What's the use, baby? I'm a bum! (HE BREAKS BOTTLE IN TRASH CAN DOWN LEFT OF STEPS AS HE STANDS UP AND CROSSES DOWN STEPS.) She saw right through me like a goddamn X-ray machine. There's just no place in the world for a guy like me.*

MADGE

(RISES.) There's got to be.*

HAL

Yah?* (CROSSES RIGHT TO LEFT CORNER OF PORCH.)

MADGE

(FOLLOWS HAL.) Of course. You're young, and--you're very entertaining. I mean--you say all sorts of witty things, and I just loved listening to you talk. And you're strong and--you're very good-looking. I bet Miss Sydney thought so, too, or she wouldn't have said those things.*

HAL

(TURNS TO MADGE.) Look, baby, lemme level with you. When I was fourteen, I spent a year in the reform school. How ya like that?*

MADGE

Honest?*

HAL

Yah!*

MADGE

What for?*

HAL

For stealin' another guy's motorcycle. Yah! I stole it. I stole it 'cause I wanted to get on the damn thing and go so far away, so fast, that no one'd ever catch up with me.*

MADGE

I think--lots of boys feel that way at times.*

HAL

(TURNS BACK AND HOLDS PORCH RAILING.) Then my old lady went to the authorities. (HE MIMICS HIS "OLD LADY") "I've done everything I can with the boy. I can't do anything more." So off I go to the goddamn reform school.*

MADGE

Gee!*

HAL

Finally some welfare league hauls me out and the old lady's sorry to see me back. Yah! She's got herself a new boy friend and I'm in the way.*

MADGE

It's awful when parents don't get along.*

HAL

I never told that to another soul, not even Seymour.*

MADGE

(AT A LOSS.) I--I wish there was something I could say--or do.*

HAL

(TURNS BACK TO MADGE.) There you are, baby. If you wanta faint--or get sick--or run in the house and lock the doors --go ahead. I ain't stoppin' you. (MADGE, SUDDENLY AND IMPULSIVELY, TAKES HIS FACE IN HER HANDS AND KISSES HIM. HAL LOOKS AT HER IN AMAZEMENT.) Baby! What'd you do?*

MADGE

I . . . I'm proud you told me.*

HAL

(WITH HUMBLE APPRECIATION.) Baby!*

MADGE

(CROSSES UP OF LAWN CHAIR.) I . . . I get so tired of being told I'm pretty.*

HAL

(CROSSES TO HER AND HOLDS HER IN HIS ARMS.)
Baby, baby, baby.*

MADGE

(RESISTING VERY LITTLE.) Don't. We have to go. We have all the baskets in our car and they'll be waiting. Really --we have to be going. (HAL KISSES HER PASSIONATELY. THEN MADGE UTTERS HIS HIS NAME IN A VOICE OF RESIGNATION.) Hal!*

HAL

Just be quiet, baby.*

MADGE

Really . . . We have to go. They'll be waiting.*

HAL

(PICKING HER UP IN HIS ARMS AND STARTING OFF.) We're not goin' on no goddamn picnic.* (HE CARRIES HER UP STAGE TO EXIT UP RIGHT THROUGH FENCE GATE. MUSIC, "TORN SHIRT," IS HEARD AS CURTAIN COMES DOWN AND HOUSE LIGHTS FADE UP.)

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE ONE

HOUSE LIGHTS DIM TO HALF. MUSIC (TWO MINUTES). "ROSEMARY PLEADS".

SCENE: SAME AS ACTS I and II.

TIME: AFTER MIDNIGHT.

AT RISE: STAGE LIGHTING IS DIM TO GIVE THE EFFECT OF MOON LIGHT. HOWARD'S CAR IS HEARD COMING TO A STOP BY THE HOUSE, THEN HOWARD AND ROSEMARY COME ON DOWN RIGHT. ROSEMARY WEARILY MAKES HER WAY TO THE FRONT STEPS AND SITS CENTER. SHE SEEMS PREOCCUPIED AT FIRST AND HER RESPONSES TO HOWARD ARE MERE GRUNTS. HOWARD STANDS RIGHT OF FRONT STEPS.

HOWARD

Here we are, Honey. Right back where we started from.

ROSEMARY

(HER MIND ELSEWHERE.) Uhh.

HOWARD

(LOOKS AROUND TO MAKE SURE NO ONE CAN HEAR.) You were awful nice to me tonight, Rosemary.

ROSEMARY

Uhh.

HOWARD

Do you think Mrs. Owens suspects anything?

ROSEMARY

I don't care if she does.

HOWARD

A business man's gotta be careful of talk. And after all, you're a schoolteacher. (FUMBLING TO GET AWAY.) Well, I guess I better be gettin' back to Cherryvale. I gotta open up the store in the morning. Good night, Rosemary. Good night. (HE KISSES HER CHEEK.) Maybe I should say, good morning. (HE STARTS OFF DOWN RIGHT.)

ROSEMARY

(JUST COMING TO.) Where you goin', Howard?

HOWARD

(STOPS.) Honey, I gotta get home.

ROSEMARY

You can't go off and leave me.

HOWARD

(TURNS TO HER.) Honey, talk sense.

ROSEMARY

You can't go off without me. Not after tonight. That's sense.

HOWARD

(CROSSES BACK TO HER. A LITTLE NERVOUS.) Honey, be reasonable.

ROSEMARY

Take me with you.

HOWARD

What'd people say?

ROSEMARY

(ALMOST VICIOUS.) To hell with what people'd say!

HOWARD

(SHOCKED--LOOKS AROUND TO SEE IF THIS IS OVERHEARD.)
Honey!

ROSEMARY

(RISES.) What'd people say if I thumbed my nose at them?
What'd people say if I walked down the street and showed
'em my pink panties? What do I care what people say?

HOWARD

(CROSSES LEFT OF FRONT STEPS TO LOOK UP LEFT, AGAIN TO MAKE
SURE NO ONE IS LISTENING.) Honey, you're not yourself to-
night.

ROSEMARY

Yes I am. I'm more myself than I ever was. Take me with
you, Howard. If you don't, (SHE SITS BACK ON STEPS CENTER.)
I don't know what I'll do with myself. I mean it.

HOWARD

(CROSSES TO HER LEFT, LEANS OVER HER.) Now look, Honey,
you better go upstairs and get some sleep. You gotta
start school in the morning. We'll talk all this over
Saturday.

ROSEMARY

(GRABS HIS ARM.) Maybe you won't be back Saturday. May-
be you won't be back ever **again**.

HOWARD

Rosemary, you know better than that.

ROSEMARY

Then what's the next thing in store for me? To be nice to the next man, then the next . . . till there's no one left to care whether I'm nice to him or not. Till I'm ready for the grave and don't have anyone to take me there.

HOWARD

Now, Rosemary!

ROSEMARY

(LOOKING HIM IN THE EYES.) You can't let that happen to me, Howard.

HOWARD

I don't understand. When we first started going together, you were the best sport I ever saw, always good for a laugh.

ROSEMARY

I can't laugh any more.

HOWARD

(STARTS OFF.) We'll talk it over Saturday.

ROSEMARY

(STOPS HIM ON RIGHT OF STAIRS.) We'll talk it over now.

HOWARD

(SQUIRMING.) Well . . . Honey . . . I . . .

ROSEMARY

(LOOKING AT HIM.) You said you were gonna marry me, Howard. You said when I got back from my vacation, you'd be waitin' with the preacher.

HOWARD

Honey, I've had an awful busy summer and . . .

ROSEMARY

Where's the preacher, Howard? Where is he?

HOWARD

Rosemary, I'm 42 years old. A person forms certain ways of livin', then one day it's too late to change.

ROSEMARY

(RISES, CROSSES TO CENTER.) I'm no spring chicken either. Maybe I'm a little older than you think I am. I've formed my ways, too. But they can be changed. (TURNS, CROSSES RIGHT TO FRONT STEPS.) They gotta be changed. It's no good livin' like this, in rented rooms, meetin' a bunch of old maids for supper every night, then comin' back home alone.

HOWARD

(CROSSES TO ROSEMARY.) I know how it is, Rosemary. May life's no bed of roses either.

ROSEMARY

Then why don't you do something about it?

HOWARD

I figure . . . there's some bad things about every life.

ROSEMARY

(CROSSES TO CENTER STAGE.) There's too much bad about mine. Each year, I keep tellin' myself, is the last. Something'll happen. Then nothing ever does . . . (TURNS FRONT.) except I get a little crazier all the time.

HOWARD

(HOPELESSLY.) Well . . .

ROSEMARY

A well's a hole in the ground, (SHE TURNS LEFT IN TEARS.)
Howard.

HOWARD

I wasn't tryin' to be funny, Rosemary.

ROSEMARY

All this time you just been leadin' me on.

HOWARD

(CROSSES TOWARD ROSEMARY.) Rosemary, that's not so! I've
not been trying to lead you on.

ROSEMARY

I'd like to know what else you call it.

HOWARD

Well . . . can't we talk about it Saturday? I'm dead
tired and I got a busy week ahead, and . . .

ROSEMARY

(TURNS AND RUNS TO HIM, EMBRACES HIM DESPERATELY.) You
gotta marry me, Howard.

HOWARD

(TORTURED.) Well . . . I can't marry you now.

ROSEMARY

You can be over here in the morning.

HOWARD

Sometimes you're unreasonable.

ROSEMARY

You gotta marry me.

HOWARD

What'll you do about your job?

ROSEMARY

(ENCOURAGED.) Alvah Jackson can take my place till they get someone from the agency.

HOWARD

I'll have to pay Fed Jenkins to take care of the store for a few days.

ROSEMARY

Then get him.

HOWARD

(TURNS AWAY DOWN RIGHT.) Well . . .

ROSEMARY

(FOLLOWS HOWARD.) I'll be waitin' for you in the morning, Howard.

HOWARD

(AFTER A MOMENT'S TROUBLED THOUGHT CROSSES DOWN RIGHT A FEW STEPS.) No. I'm not gonna marry anyone that says, "You gotta marry me, Howard." I'm not gonna.

ROSEMARY

(A MUFFLED CRY.) Howard!* (SHE CROSSES TO LEFT CORNER OF PORCH AND WEEPS PATHETIC TEARS ON RAILING.)

HOWARD

(SLOWLY RECONSIDERS.) If a woman wants me to marry her-- she can at least say "please."

ROSEMARY

(BEATEN AND HUMBLE, SHE CROSSES TO HOWARD.) Please marry me, Howard.

HOWARD

Well . . . you got to give me time to think it over.

ROSEMARY

(GRABS HOLD OF HOWARD.) Oh, God! Please marry me, Howard. Please . . . (STILL HOLDING ON SHE SINKS TO HER KNEES.) Please . . . please . . .

HOWARD

(EMBARRASSED BY HER SUFFERING HUMILITY, HOWARD HELPS HER TO HER FEET.) Rosemary don't** . . . I . . . I gotta have some time to think it over. You go to bed now and get some rest. I'll drive over in the morning and maybe we can talk it over before you go to school. I . . . *

ROSEMARY

You're not just tryin' to get out of it, Howard?*

HOWARD

I'll be over in the morning, honey.*

ROSEMARY

Honest?*

HOWARD

Yah. (TAKES ROSEMARY UP STEPS ON TO PORCH.) I gotta go to the courthouse anyway. We'll talk it over then.*

ROSEMARY

Oh, God, please marry me, Howard. Please.*

HOWARD

(TRYING TO GET AWAY.) Go to bed, honey. I'll see you in the morning.* (TURNS AND CROSSES DOWN STEPS.)

ROSEMARY

Please, Howard!*

HOWARD

I'll see you in the morning. Good night, Rosemary.* (STARTING OFF DOWN RIGHT.)

ROSEMARY

(IN A MEEK VOICE AS SHE LEANS AGAINST PORCH POST RIGHT OF FRONT STAIRS.) Please!*

HOWARD

Good night, Rosemary.* (EXITS DOWN RIGHT.)

ROSEMARY

(AFTER HE IS GONE.) Please.* (ROSEMARY STANDS ALONE ON THE PORCH. HOWARD'S CAR STARTS UP AND DRIVES OFF, CHUGGING AWAY IN THE DISTANCE. ROSEMARY IS DRAINED OF ENERGY. SHE PULLS HERSELF TOGETHER AND GOES INTO THE HOUSE. THE STAGE IS EMPTY FOR SEVERAL MOMENTS. THEN MADGE RUNS ON FROM THE BACK, RIGHT. HER FACE IS IN HER HANDS. SHE IS SOBBING. HAL FOLLOWS FAST BEHIND. HE REACHES HER JUST AS SHE GETS TO THE KITCHEN STEPS, AND GRABS HER BY THE WRIST. HE HOLDS HER CLOSE IN HIS ARMS.)

HAL

Baby . . . you're not sorry, are you?* (THERE IS A SILENCE.
MADGE SOBS.)

MADGE

Let me go.*

HAL

Please, baby. If I thought I'd done anything to make you
unhappy, I . . . I'd almost wanta die.*

MADGE

I . . . I'm so ashamed.*

HAL

Don't say that, baby.*

MADGE

I didn't even know what was happening, and then . . .
(TURNS AWAY, SITS CENTER OF KITCHEN STEPS AND CRIES.)
all of a sudden, it seems like my whole life was changed.*

HAL

(WITH BITTER SELF-DISPARAGEMENT HE CROSSES UP LEFT CORNER
OF POTTS' HOUSE.) I oughta be taken out and hung. I'm
just a no-good bum. That schoolteacher was right. I oughta
be in the gutter.* (HE HITS HIS FIST AGAINST SHED DOOR.)

MADGE

(STOPS CRYING AND TURNS TO HIM.) Don't talk that way.*

HAL

Times like this, I hate myself, baby.*

MADGE

(STANDS.) I guess . . . it's no more your fault than mine.*

HAL

Sometimes I do pretty impulsive things.* (MADGE STARTS UP STAIRS. HE TURNS TO HER.) Will I see you tomorrow?*

MADGE

(STOPS ON STAIRS WITH BACK TO HIM.) I don't know.*

HAL

Gee, I almost forgot. I start a new job tomorrow.*

MADGE

I have to be at the dime store at nine.*

HAL

What time you through?*

MADGE

Five.*

HAL

Maybe I could see you then, huh? Maybe I could come by and . . . *

MADGE

(TURNS TO HAL.) I've got a date with Alan--if he'll still speak to me.*

HAL

(A NEW PAIN.) Jesus, I'd forgot all about Seymour.*

MADGE

So had I.*

HAL

I can't go back to his house. What'll I do?*

MADGE

Maybe, Mrs. Potts could . . .*

HAL

I'll take the car back to where we were, stretch out in the front seat and get a little sleep. (HE THINKS A MOMENT.) Baby, how you gonna handle your old lady?*

MADGE

(WITH A SLIGHT TREMOR.) I . . . I don't know.*

HAL

Jesus, I ought to be taken out and shot.**

MADGE

I . . . I'll think of something to tell her.*

HAL

(AWKWARD.) Well--good night.*

MADGE

(STARTS TO EXIT KITCHEN DOOR.) Good night.*

HAL

(CROSSES TO FOOT OF KITCHEN STAIRS.) Baby--would you kiss me good night . . . maybe? Just one more time.*

MADGE

I don't think I better.*

HAL

Please!*

MADGE

It . . . It'd just start things all over again. Things I better forget.*

HAL

Please baby.**

MADGE

Promise not to hold me?*

HAL

I'll keep my hands to my side. Swear to God!*

MADGE

Well . . . (SLOWLY SHE GOES TOWARD HIM, TAKES HIS FACE IN HER HANDS AND KISSES HIM. THE KISS LASTS. HAL'S HANDS BECOME NERVOUS AND FINALLY FIND THEIR WAY AROUND HER. THEIR PASSION IS REVIVED. THEN MADGE UTTERS A LITTLE SHRIEK, TEARS HERSELF AWAY FROM HAL AND RUNS INTO THE HOUSE, SOBBING.) Don't. You promised. I never wanta see you again. I might as well be dead.* (SHE RUNS INSIDE THE KITCHEN DOOR, LEAVING HAL BEHIND TO DESPISE HIMSELF. HE CROSSES TO FENCE GATE, LOOKS BACK AT KITCHEN DOOR AND SLOWLY EXITS UP RIGHT AS LIGHTS DIM TO TOTAL BLACK OUT.)

ACT THREE

Scene Two

TIME: EARLY THE NEXT MORNING

FROM BLACK OUT, STAGE LIGHTING COMES UP TO BRIGHTNESS OF ACT I. A DOG BARKS IN THE DISTANCE. MILLIE ENTERS FROM FRONT DOOR, SITS ON FRONT STEPS, AND BEGINS TO SMOKE A CIGARETTE. FLO BREAKS OUT OF THE FRONT DOOR. SHE IS A FRANTIC WOMAN. MILLIE PUTS OUT HER CIGARETTE QUICKLY. FLO HAS NOT EVEN TAKEN THE TIME TO DRESS. SHE WEARS AN OLD ROBE OVER HER NIGHTDRESS. SHE SPEAKS TO MILLIE.

FLO

Were you awake when Madge got in?*

MILLIE

No.* (FLO CROSSES TO MILLIE.)

FLO

Did she say anything to you this morning?*

MILLIE

No.* (FLO CROSSES DOWN FRONT STEPS AND LOOKS UP AT MADGE'S WINDOW. MILLIE HIDES CIGARETTE BUTT IN FLOWER BOX RIGHT.)

FLO

Dear God! I couldn't get two words out of her last night, she was crying so hard. Now she's got the door locked.*

MILLIE

I bet I know what happened.* (FLO CROSSES BACK TO MILLIE.)

FLO

You don't know anything, Millie Owens. And if anyone says anything to you, you just . . . (SNIFFS THE AIR.) Have you been smoking?*

MRS. POTTS

(ENTERS COMING DOWN THE BACKSTEPS OF HER HOUSE.) Did Madge tell you what happened?*

FLO

(TURNING TO POTTS, SHE STANDS ON TOP STEP HOLDING ON TO PORCH POST LEFT.) The next time you take in tramps, Helen Potts, I'll thank you to keep them on your own side of the yard.*

MRS. POTTS

Is Madge all right?*

FLO

Of course she's all right. She got out of the car and left that hoodlum alone. That's what she did.*

MRS. POTTS

(CROSSES RIGHT TO LEFT OF FRONT STEPS.) Have you heard from Allen?*

FLO

He said he'd be over this morning.*

MRS. POTTS

Where's the young man?*

FLO

I know where he should be! He should be in the penitentiary, and that's where he's going if he shows up around here again!*

ROSEMARY

(ENTERS FROM FRONT DOOR, CROSSES TO RIGHT CORNER OF PORCH, AND LOOKS OFF RIGHT.) Has anyone seen Howard?*

FLO

(SURPRISED.) Howard? Why, no, Rosemary!*

ROSEMARY

(NERVOUS AND UNCERTAIN.) He said he might be over this morning. (CROSSES BACK TO FRONT DOOR.) Mrs. Owens, I'm storing my summer clothes in the attic. Could someone help me?*

FLO

We're busy, Rosemary.

MRS. POTTS

I'll help you, Rosemary.* (FLO STEPS UP ON PORCH OUT OF POTTS WAY AS POTTS CROSSES UP STEPS TO PORCH.)

ROSEMARY

(EXITS IN FRONT DOOR.) Thanks, Mrs. Potts.*

FLO

(TO MRS. POTTS.) She's been running around like a chicken with its head off all morning. Something's up! (POTTS EXITS FRONT DOOR. FLO TURNS TO MILLIE.) You keep watch for Allen.* (FLO EXITS FRONT DOOR. IRMA AND CHRISTINE ENTER DOWN LEFT.)

IRMA

Girl, I hope Rosemary is ready. I promised the principal that I'd be there early to help with registration. (BOTH GIRLS CROSS TO CENTER STAGE. CHRISTINE STOPS CENTER.)

CHRISTINE

How do I look, Irma? (IRMA TURNS TO HER.)

IRMA

It's a cute dress. Let me fix it in the back. (IRMA
ADJUSTS THE HANG OF THE DRESS AS CHRISTINE TURNS HER BACK.)

CHRISTINE

I think a teacher should dress up first day of school,
to give the students a good first impression.

IRMA

(CROSSES TO LEFT OF FRONT STEPS.) Good morning, Millie!
(CHRISTINE FOLLOWS CLOSE BEHIND.)

MILLIE

Hi.

IRMA

(IRMA AND CHRISTINE CROSS UP STAIRS TO PORCH.) Is Rosemary
ready?

MILLIE

Go on up if you want to. (IRMA STARTS IN FRONT DOOR AND
IS STOPPED BY CHRISTINE SAYING:)

CHRISTINE

(TO MILLIE.) We missed seeing Madge on the picnic last
night.

MILLIE

So did a lot of other people.*

IRMA

(GIVES CHRISTINE A SIGNIFICANT LOOK.) Come on Christine.
(THEY EXIT FRONT DOOR. BOMBER RIDES ON, FROM DOWN LEFT,
THROWS A PAPER ON MRS. POTTS' STEPS, THEN ON FLO'S PORCH
AS HE STOPS DOWN LEFT OF FRONT STEPS.)

BOMBER

(LOOKING UP AT MADGE'S WINDOW.) Hey, Madge! Wanta go dancin'? Let me be next, Madge!

MILLIE

(STANDS.) You shut up, crazy.

BOMBER

My brother seen 'em parked under the bridge. Alan Seymour was lookin' for 'em all over town. I knew she liked guys. (HE SEES ALAN APPROACHING OFF BEYOND THE OWENS HOUSE DOWN RIGHT, AND LEAVES QUICKLY DOWN LEFT.)

MILLIE

(CROSSES DOWN FRONT STEPS, NOT AWARE THAT ALAN IS APPROACHING OFF RIGHT.) Some day I'm really gonna kill that ornery bastard. (ALAN ENTERS DOWN RIGHT. SHE TURNS AND SEES HIM.)

ALAN

(CROSSES TO MILLIE.) Could I see Madge?*

MILLIE

I'll call her, Alan.* (CROSSES UP TO FRONT DOOR AND CALLS IN TO MADGE.) Madge! Alan's here! (BACK TO ALAN.) It'll probably take her a few minutes.

ALAN

(CROSSES TO CENTER STAGE.) I'll wait.* (CROSSES TO LAWN CHAIR, FACES UP STAGE.)

MILLIE

(CROSSES TO LEFT CORNER OF PORCH.) I . . . I always liked you, Alan. Didn't you know it?

ALAN

(WITH SOME SURPRISE TURNS AROUND.) Like me?

MILLIE

(NODS HER HEAD.) It's awfully hard to show someone you like them, isn't it?

ALAN

(A LITTLE BITTERNESS AS HE SITS.) It's easy for some people.

MILLIE

It makes you feel like such a sap. I don't know why.

ALAN

(LOOKS AT HER.) I . . . I'm glad you like me, Millie.

MILLIE

I don't expect you to do anything about it. I just wanted to tell you. (HOWARD COMES BUSTLING ON FROM DOWN RIGHT AND CROSSES TO RIGHT OF FRONT STAIRS.)

HOWARD

(VERY UPSET, HE ADDRESSES MILLIE.) Could I see Rosemary?*

MILLIE

(CROSSES TO PORCH POST LEFT OF FRONT STAIRS.) My gosh, Howard, what are you doing here?*

HOWARD

I think she's expecting me.* (CROSSES UP ON TO PORCH.)

MILLIE

You better holler at the bottom of the stairs--(HOWARD IS ABOUT TO GO IN THE FRONT DOOR, BUT TURNS BACK AT THIS.) 'cause all the others are up there, too.

HOWARD

The others?

MILLIE

Mrs. Potts and Miss Kronkite and Miss Schoenwalder.

HOWARD

(CROSSES AND STEPS DOWN ONE STEP.) Golly, I gotta see her alone.*

ROSEMARY

(CALLING FROM INSIDE HOUSE.) Howard!

HOWARD

Huh?

ROSEMARY

(INSIDE, TO ALL THE WOMEN.) He's here! (A JOYFUL BABBLE OF WOMEN'S VOICES CAN BE HEARD FROM INSIDE. HOWARD GIVES ONE LAST PITIFUL LOOK AT MILLIE, THEN GOES IN FRONT DOOR. MILLIE FOLLOWS HIM IN AND ALAN IS LEFT ALONE IN THE YARD. AFTER A MOMENT, MADGE COMES OUT THE KITCHEN DOOR, CROSSES TO LEFT CORNER OF PORCH AND SITS ON RAIL.)

MADGE

Hello, Alan. (HER FACE IS SAD AND SHE LOOKS A LITTLE GUILTY.)

ALAN

(RISES.) Madge!

MADGE

I . . . I'm sorry about last night.*

ALAN

(CROSSES TO HER LEFT.) Madge, whatever happened . . . it wasn't your fault. I know what Hal's like when he's drinking.* (TURNS STAGE LEFT.) But I've got Hal taken care of now! He won't be bothering you any more!

MADGE

Alan? What do you mean?

ALAN

(CROSSES LEFT, DOWN RIGHT OF LAWN CHAIR.) At school I spent half of my life getting him out of jams. I knew he'd had a few tough breaks, and I tried to feel sorry for him. But this is the thanks I get.*

MADGE

(CONCERNED, BUT TRYING NOT TO SHOW IT.) Where is he? I mean, is he all right?

ALAN

(TURNS AND CROSSES BACK TO MADGE.) Don't worry about Hal! He's all right. And I'll take it on myself to offer you his official good-bye!

MADGE

(TURNING QUICKLY TO HIM. THIS IS A JOLT TO HER.) Good-b--? Is he gone?

FLO

(ENTERS FROM KITCHEN DOOR, CROSSES TO RAILING DOWN RIGHT OF KITCHEN STEPS. NOTICING ALAN.) Alan, I didn't know you were here! (MRS. POTTS COMES HURRYING OUT OF THE FRONT DOOR EXCITED AND SMILING.)

MRS. POTTS

Flo! Flo! (MRS. POTTS IS FOLLOWED CLOSELY BY IRMA, CHRISTINE, ROSEMARY AND HOWARD. MILLIE COMES OUT OF THE KITCHEN DOOR CARRYING TWO BOXES OF RICE. HOWARD AND ROSEMARY, SHE ON THE LEFT, HE CARRYING TWO SUITCASES, CROSS DOWN TO PORCH STEPS AND STAND, SHE CLINGING TO HIS ARM. IRMA CROSSES DOWN TO RIGHT OF HOWARD AS MRS. POTTS CROSSES DOWN TO RIGHT OF STEPS AND CHRISTINE CROSSES DOWN TO LEFT OF STEPS. THEY ARE ALL TALKING HAPPILY EXCEPT FOR HOWARD, WHO LOOKS BEWILDERED, AND MILLIE, WHO JUST LOOKS. MILLIE HAS A HANDFUL OF RICE WHICH SHE THROWS ON THE ENGAGED COUPLE. SHE HANDS ONE BOX TO CHRISTINE AND ONE TO IRMA. IRMA POURS SOME RICE INTO MRS. POTTS' HANDS AND WHILE THEY CONTINUE CHATTERING, IRMA, CHRISTINE AND MRS. POTTS THROW HANDFULS OF RICE OVER HOWARD AND ROSEMARY. MILLIE CROSSES TO POST AT RIGHT CORNER OF PORCH AND WATCHES FROM THERE. ROSEMARY WEARS A BEAUTIFUL GOING-AWAY OUTFIT.) (FIGURE 15.)

IRMA

May all your troubles be little ones!

CHRISTINE

You're getting a wonderful girl, Howard Bevans!

IRMA

Rosemary's getting a fine man!

CHRISTINE

They don't come any better than Rosemary!

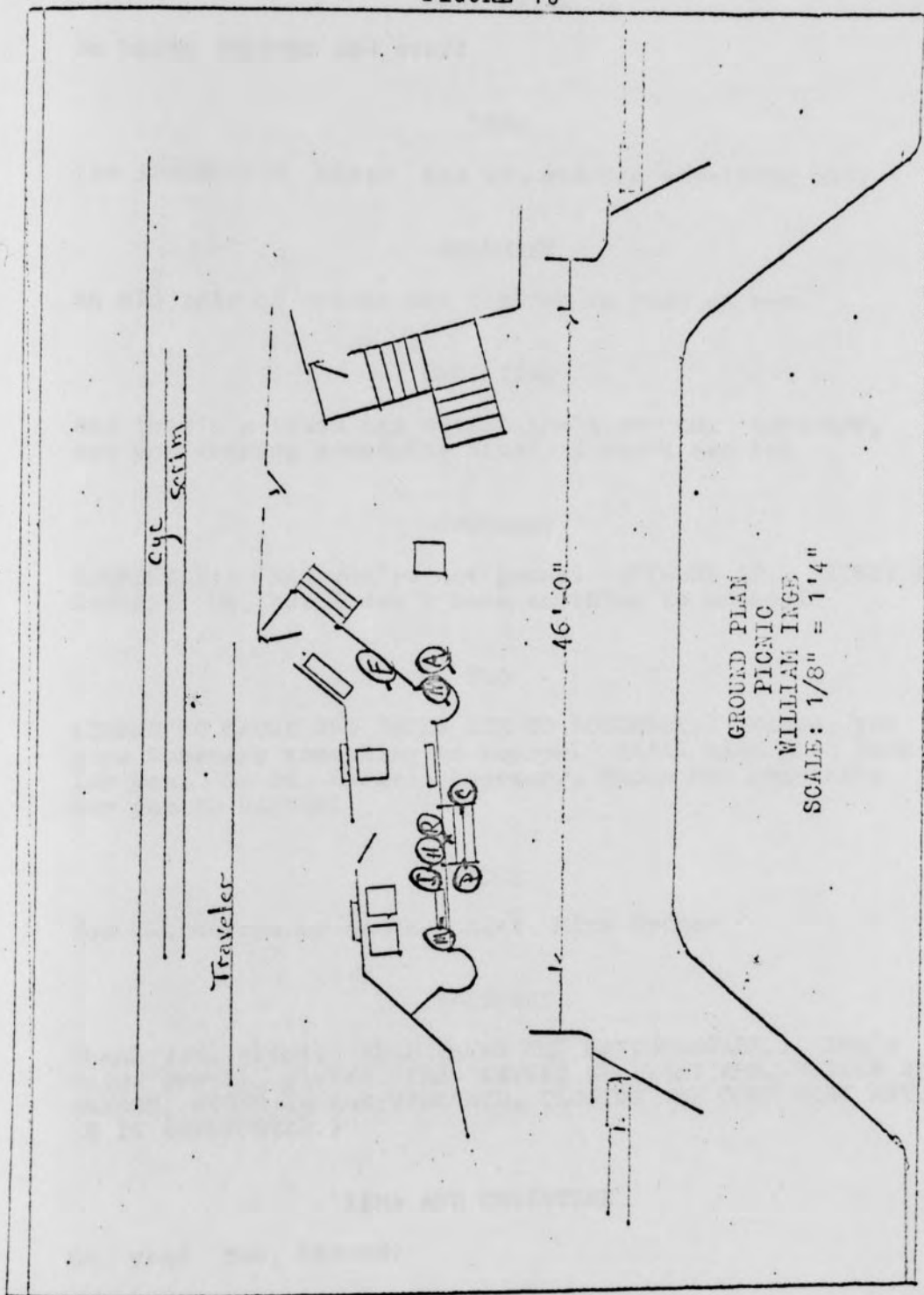
MRS. POTTS

Be happy!

IRMA

May all your troubles be little ones! (FLO CROSSES DOWN RIGHT, BELOW ROCKING CHAIR. ALAN CROSSES RIGHT, DOWN LEFT OF FLO, AND LEANS AGAINST PORCH POST. MADGE GETS OFF RAILING AND STANDS ON PORCH BEHIND ALAN.)

FIGURE 16



MRS. POTTS

Be happy forever and ever!

IRMA

(TO ROSEMARY.) Girl! Are you wearing something old?

ROSEMARY

An old pair of nylons but they're as good as new.

CHRISTINE

And that's a brand new outfit she's got on. Rosemary, are you wearing something blue? I don't see it!

ROSEMARY

(DARINGLY.) And you're not gonna! (FIGURE 17.) (THEY ALL LAUGH.) Oh, but I don't have anything to borrow!

FLO

(TURNS TO MADGE AND TAKES HER TO ROSEMARY.) Madge, you give Rosemary something to borrow. It'll mean good luck for you. Go on, Madge! Rosemary, Madge has something for you to borrow!

MADGE

You can borrow my handkerchief, Miss Sydney.

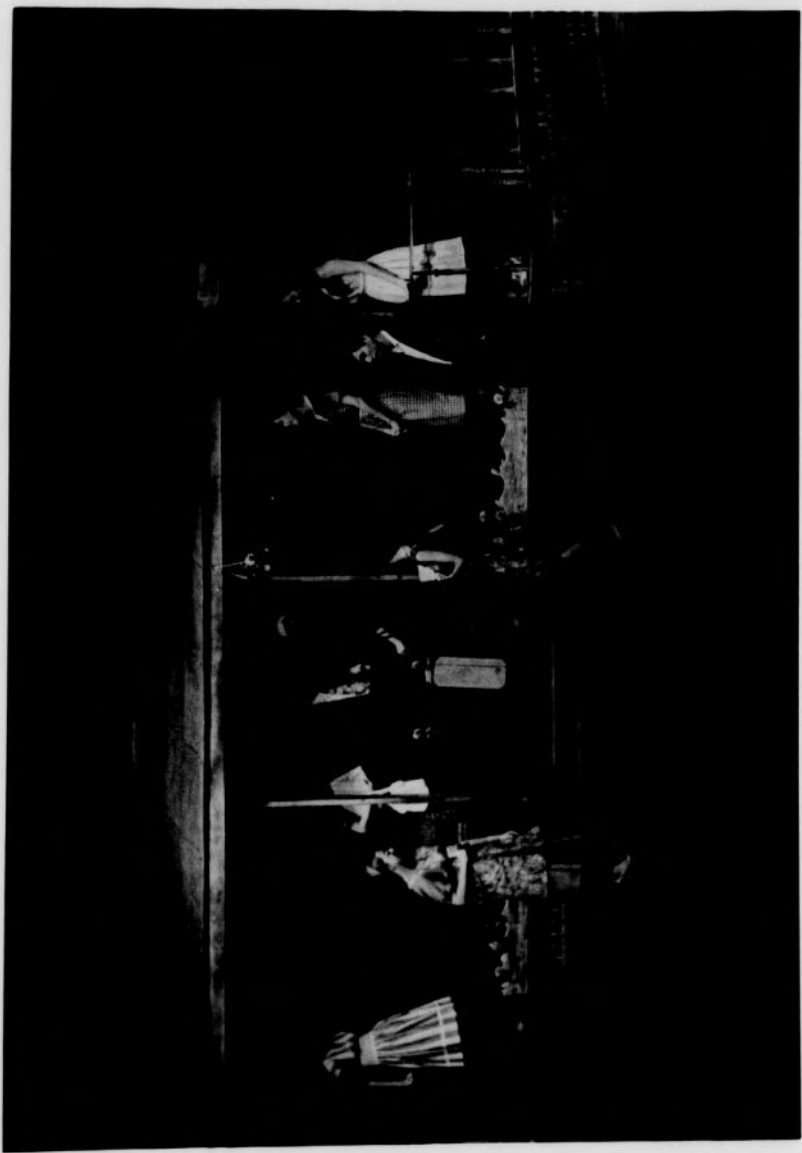
ROSEMARY

Thank you, Madge. (SHE TAKES THE HANDKERCHIEF.) Isn't Madge pretty, girls? (HAL ENTERS UP RIGHT AND, UNSEEN BY ANYONE, HIDES IN THE WOODSHED, CLOSING THE DOOR PART WAY. HE IS BAREFOOTED.)

IRMA AND CHRISTINE

Oh, yes! Yes, indeed!

FIGURE 17



ROSEMARY

A girl as pretty as Madge can sail through life without a care! (MADGE TURNS AND AS SHE CROSSES BACK TO LEFT CORNER OF PORCH SHE SEES HAL CLOSING THE SHED DOOR. HE SIGNALS TO HER TO BE QUIET, AND CLOSSES THE DOOR. MADGE TURNS QUICKLY TO SEE IF ANYONE HAS SEEN HIM, THEN SITS ON THE RAILING.) This all happened so fast I just can't believe it! (FLO CROSSES TOWARDS MADGE. ROSEMARY FOLLOWS FLO.) Mrs. Owens, I left my hot-water bottle in the closet and my curlers are in the bathroom. You and the girls can have them. I stored the rest of my things in the attic. (LOOKS AT HOWARD.) Howard and I'll come and get 'em after we settle down. Cherryvale's not so far away. We can be good friends, same as before.

FLO

I hate to bring this up now, Rosemary, but you didn't give us much notice. Do you know anyone I could rent the room to?

IRMA

(CROSSES TO ROSEMARY.) Didn't you tell her about Linda Sue Breckenridge?

ROSEMARY

Oh, yes! Linda Sue Breckenridge--she's the sewing teacher!

IRMA

And she's a darling girl!

ROSEMARY

She and Mrs. Bendix had a fight. Mrs. Bendix wanted to charge her twenty cents for her orange juice in the morning and none of us girls ever paid more'n fifteen. Did we, girls?

IRMA

No! I never did! Whoever heard of such a thing!

CHRISTINE

No! Never! I wouldn't! I never heard of such a thing!
Twenty cents!

ROSEMARY

Irma, you tell Linda Sue to get in touch with Mrs. Owens.

FLO

Thank you, Rosemary. (ROSEMARY TURNS AND LOOKS AT HOWARD
ADORINGLY.)

HOWARD

Rosemary, we better hurry. I still have to pick up the
license.

ROSEMARY

(EMBRACING IRMA AND CHRISTINE WHO CROSSES TO HER.) Good-
bye, girls! We've had some awfully jolly times together!
(HOWARD CROSSES DOWN STEPS TO MRS. POTTS AS ROSEMARY
CROSSES TO ALAN AND MADGE.)

MRS. POTTS

Good-bye, Howard.

ROSEMARY

I know you're both going to be just as happy as Howard and
I will be. (ROSEMARY TURNS AND CROSSES DOWN RIGHT TO MRS.
POTTS. FLO SPEAKS QUICKLY TO ALAN.)

FLO

Alan, will you help with the bags. (ALAN HURRIEDLY TAKES
ONE OF THE SUITCASES FROM HOWARD.)

HOWARD

(TO ALAN.) A man's gotta get married sometime.

ROSEMARY

You've been a wonderful friend, Mrs. Potts.

ALAN

(TO HOWARD.) Of course.

MRS. POTTS

I wish you all sorts of happiness, Rosemary.

HOWARD

(TO ALAN.) And folks'd rather do business with a married man.

ROSEMARY

(CROSSES TO MILLIE WHO HAS JUMPED OFF THE PORCH INTO YARD DOWN RIGHT. ROSEMARY EMBRACING HER.) Millie, you're going to be a famous author some day and I'll be so proud I knew you!

MILLIE

Thanks, Miss Sydney.

HOWARD

(TURNS TO ROSEMARY.) All set?

ROSEMARY

And rarin' to go! (A SUDDEN THOUGH.) But where are we goin'?

HOWARD

(AFTER AN AWKWARD PAUSE.) I got a cousin. He and his wife run a tourist camp in the Ozarks, but I don't know whether--

ROSEMARY

Oh, I love the Ozarks! (SHE GRABS HOWARD'S ARM AND PULLS HIM OFF DOWN RIGHT. ALAN CARRIES THE SUITCASE OFF AFTER THEM. IRMA, CHRISTINE, MRS. POTTS AND MILLIE FOLLOW THEM, ALL THROWING RICE AND CALLING AFTER THEM.)

ALL

(AS THEY GO OFF DOWN RIGHT.) The Ozarks are lovely this time of year! Be happy! May all your troubles be little ones! You're getting a wonderful girl! You're getting a wonderful man!

FLO

(CROSSES TO MADGE.) Madge, what happened last night? You haven't told me a word.*

ROSEMARY

(OFF RIGHT.) Mrs. Owens, aren't you going to say good-bye?

FLO

(CALLING.) I will in a minute! (BACK TO MADGE.) What did Alan say? Was he upset?

MADGE

I don't know, Mom.

ALAN

Mrs. Owens!

FLO

Now don't budge from this spot until I get back. I'll bring Alan right back. (SHE STARTS OFF.)

MRS. POTTS

(ENTERS DOWN RIGHT.) Come on, Flo! I never thought she'd do it! (FLO AND POTTS EXIT DOWN RIGHT.)

MADGE

(AS HAL OPENS THE SHED DOOR, SHE CROSSES UPLEFT AND DOWN KITCHEN STEPS TO MEET HIM.) Hal! What happened? (HAL APPEARS FROM THE WOODSHED. HIS CLOTHES ARE DRENCHED AND THERE IS BLOOD ON HIS SHIRT.)

HAL

Baby, I'm in a bad jam! Seymour had his old man set the cops on my tail! I had to knock one of the bastards cold and swim the river to get away. If they ever catch up with me, it'll be too bad.**

MADGE

Oh! What can you do?

HAL

I can get out of town. There's a freight train by pretty soon. I'll hop a ride. I done it lotsa times before.**

MADGE

Oh, Hal. (GOOD-BYES BEING SHOUTED AND HOWARD'S CAR DRIVING AWAY CAN BE HEARD OFF STAGE RIGHT. ALAN AND FLO ENTER DOWN RIGHT.)

FLO

(SEES HAL AND MADGE, CROSSES TO LEFT CORNER OF PORCH.)
Madge!

ALAN

(CROSSES TO DOWN RIGHT OF LAWN CHAIR. TO HAL.) What are you doing here?

HAL

(CROSSES TO LEFT OF LAWN CHAIR.) Look, Seymour, I didn't swipe your lousy car. Get that straight!*

ALAN

(CROSSES UP TO RIGHT OF LAWN CHAIR.) You better get out of town if you know what's good for you.*

HAL

I'll go when I'm ready. (MRS. POTTS ENTERS DOWN RIGHT AND CROSSES TO LEFT OF FRONT STAIRS. MILLIE COMES RUNNING IN DOWN RIGHT AND IS STOPPED BY MRS. POTTS WHO HOLDS ON TO HER. IRMA AND CHRISTINE ENTER DOWN RIGHT AND STAND AT RIGHT CORNER OF PORCH.) (FIGURE 18.)

ALAN

No, you won't. You're going now! (ALAN THROWS LAWN CHAIR AT HAL WHO DODGES IT.)

HAL

Now, look, Seymour, I don't want to fight with you. You're the only friend I ever had.

ALAN

I'm not your friend any more. You saw another pretty girl and you had to add her to your list!

HAL

That's not so! (MADGE RUNS TO POST OF THE PORCH BY KITCHEN. ALAN SPRINGS AT HAL'S THROAT BUT HAL BREAKS THE HOLD. ALAN GRABS AGAIN BUT HAL SWINGS HIM AROUND AND PINS HIS ARMS BEHIND HIM, THROWING HIM TO HIS KNEES.)

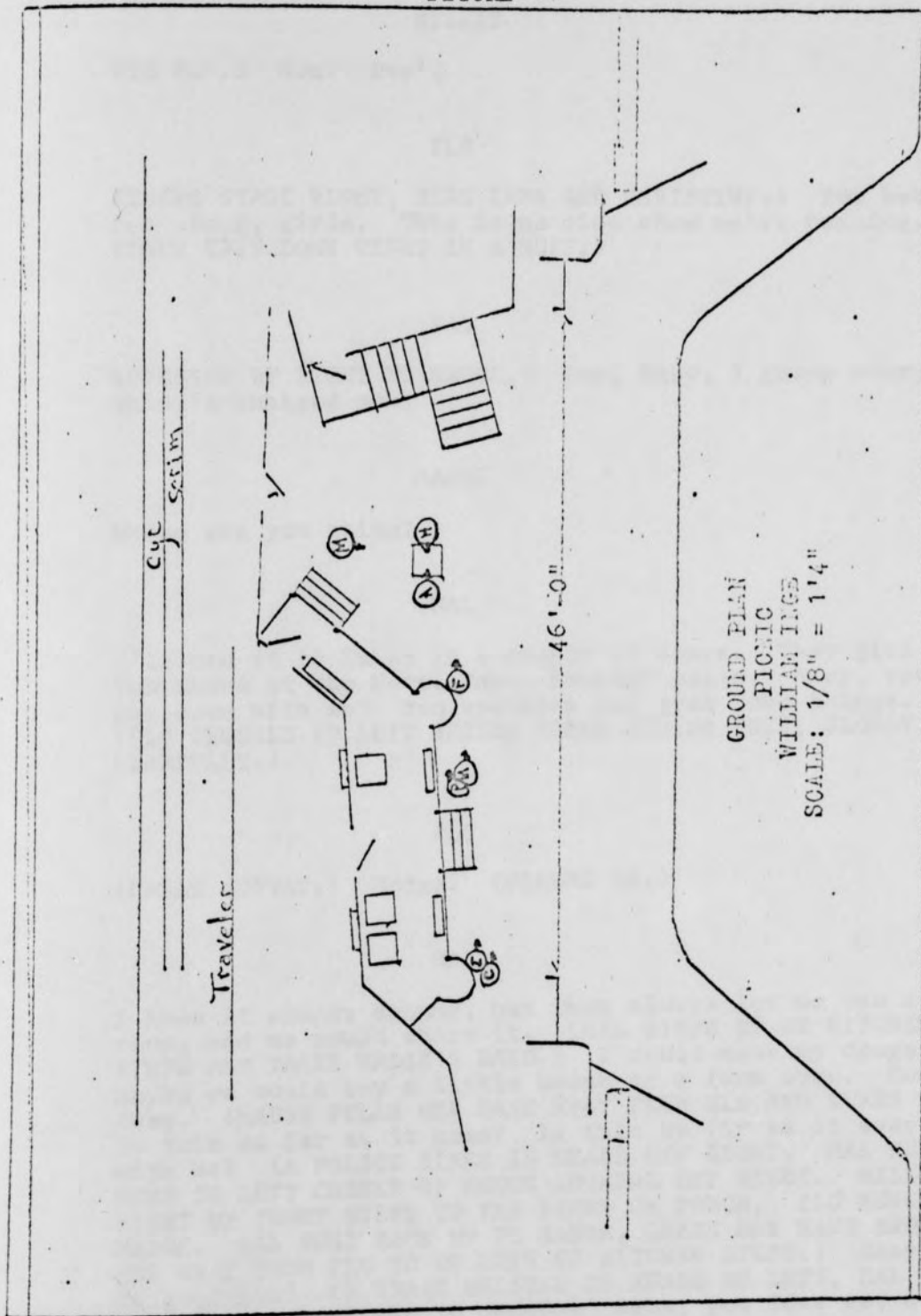
ALAN

Let go of me! You goddamn tramp! Let me go!*

FLO

(TO HAL.) Take your hands off him, this minute. (HAL RELEASES ALAN. ALAN PULLS HIMSELF UP AND CROSSES TO MRS. POTTS' STAIRS WHERE HE LIES ON THE STEPS, HIDING HIS SHAME. FLO STARTS TO CROSS TO HIM.) Alan, are you all right?

FIGURE 18



MILLIE

(TO FLO.) Mom! Don't

FLO

(TURNS STAGE RIGHT, SEES IRMA AND CHRISTINE.) You better run along, girls. This is no side show we're running.*
(THEY EXIT DOWN RIGHT IN A HUFF.)

HAL

(CROSSES UP RIGHT TO MADGE.) Gee, Baby, I guess everything's changed now.

MADGE

Where are you going?

HAL

I'll can it to Tulsa in a couple of hours. They give me a job there at the Hotel Mayo, hoppin' bells. Baby, would you come with me? Run upstairs and grab some things.
(FLO CROSSES UP LEFT BESIDE PORCH DURING THIS, SLOWLY, FEARFULLY.)

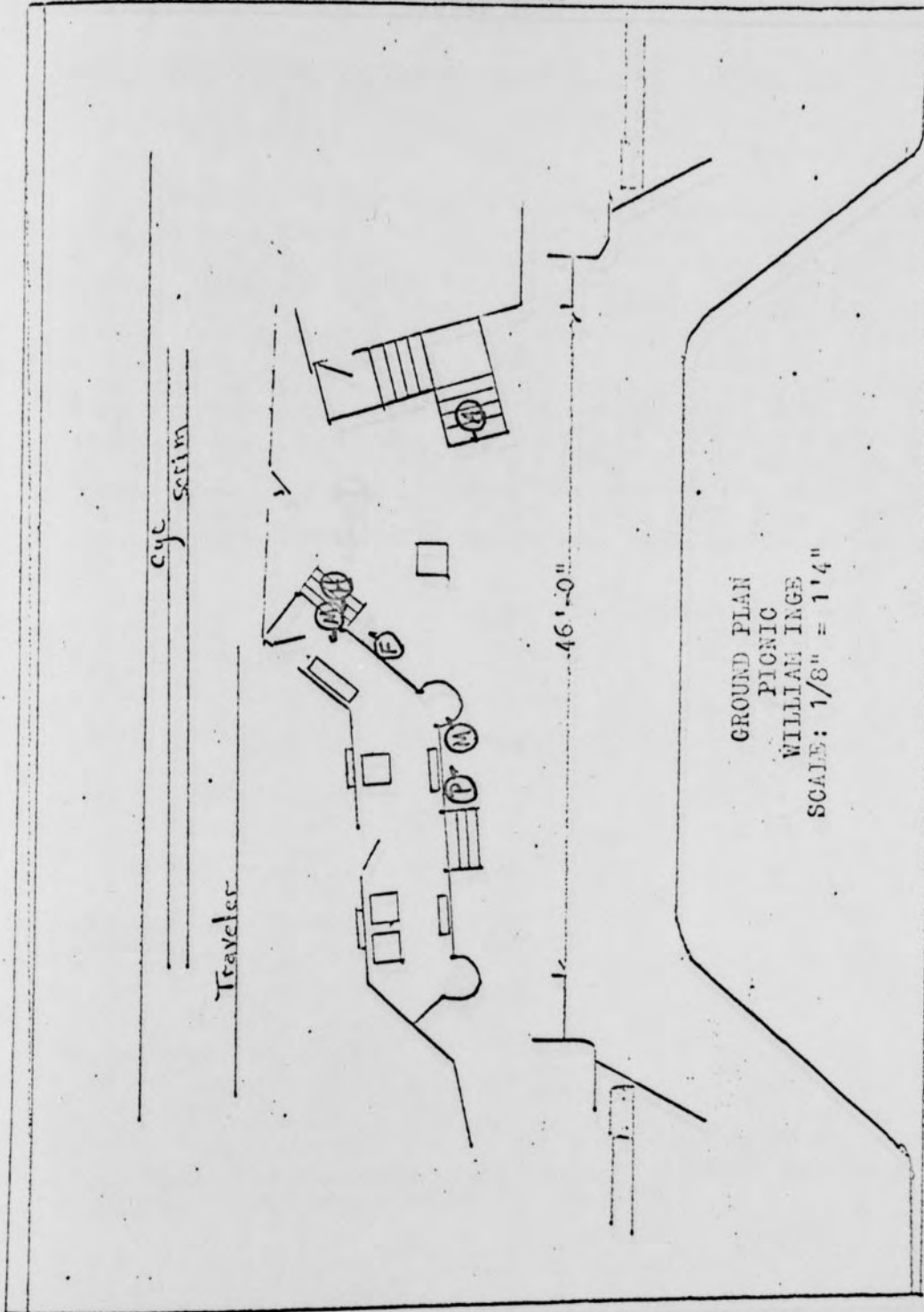
FLO

(CALLS SOFTLY.) Madge! (FIGURE 19.)

HAL

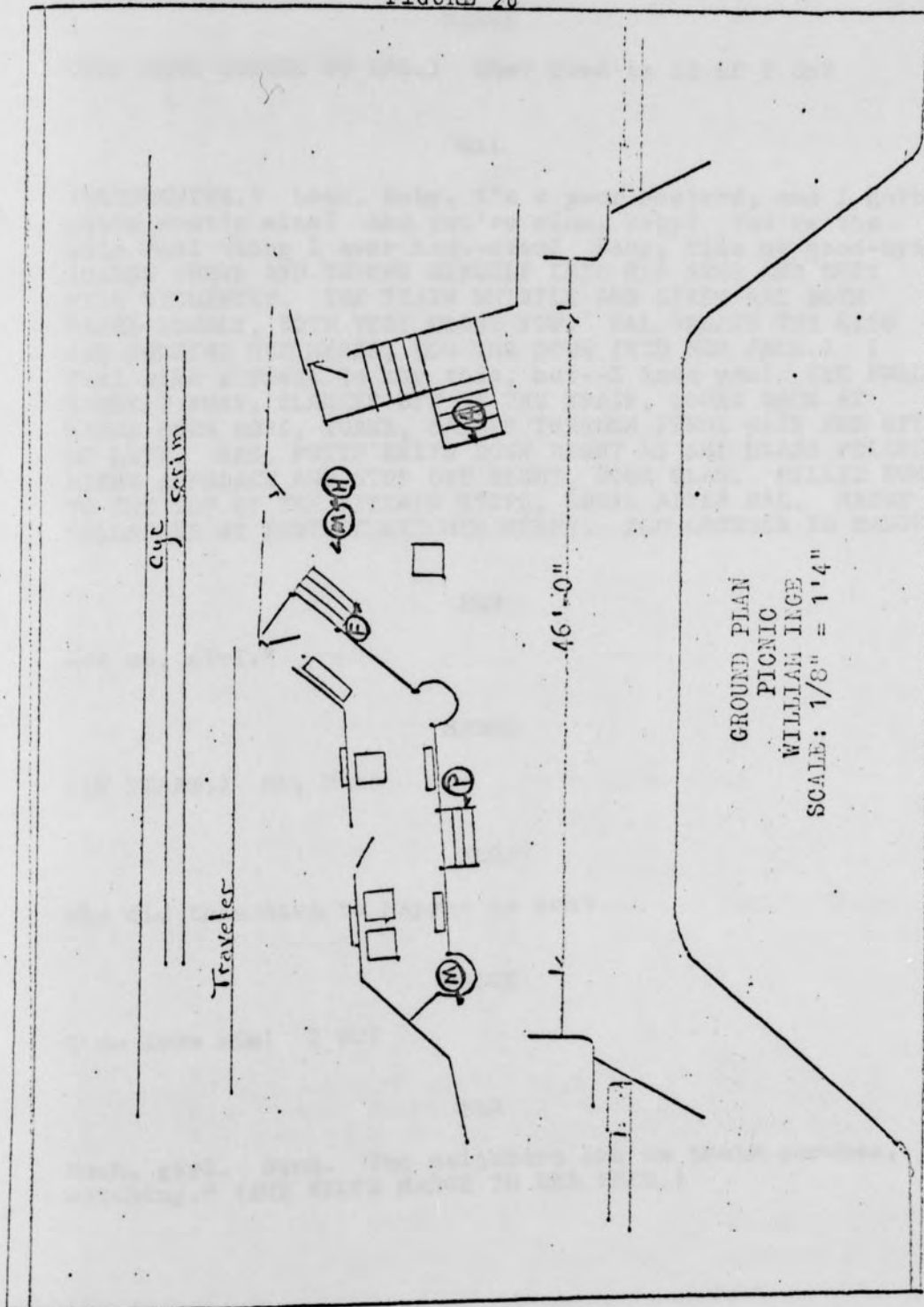
I know it sounds crummy, but they always let me use a little room, and we could share it. (HAL STEPS UP ON KITCHEN STEPS AND TAKES MADGE'S HAND.) I could save my dough and maybe we could buy a little house or a farm even. Come on, Baby. (MADGE PULLS HER HAND AWAY FROM HIS AND TURNS RIGHT.) Is this as far as it goes? Is this as far as it ever goes with me? (A POLICE SIREN IS HEARD OFF RIGHT. HAL RUNS DOWN TO LEFT CORNER OF HOUSE LOOKING OFF RIGHT. MILLIE RUNS RIGHT UP FRONT STEPS TO FAR RIGHT ON PORCH. FLO RUNS TO MADGE. HAL RUNS BACK UP TO MADGE, GRABS HER HAND AND PULLS HER AWAY FROM FLO TO UP LEFT OF KITCHEN STEPS.) Baby, kiss me good-bye! (A TRAIN WHISTLE IS HEARD UP LEFT, HAL TURNS LOOKS OFF THEN TURNS TO MADGE.) Baby, you love me, don't you? (FIGURE 20.)

FIGURE 19



GROUND PLAN
PICNIC
WILLIAM INGE
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'4"

FIGURE 20



MADGE

(HER BACK TURNED TO HAL.) What good is it if I do?

HAL

(BESEECHING.) Look, Baby, I'm a poor bastard, and I gotta claim what's mine! And you're mine, Baby! You're the only real thing I ever had--ever! Baby, kiss my good-bye! (MADGE TURNS AND THROWS HERSELF INTO HIS ARMS AND THEY KISS VIOLENTLY. THE TRAIN WHISTLE AND SIREN ARE BOTH HEARD LOUDLY, BOTH VERY CLOSE NOW. HAL BREAKS THE KISS AND HOLDING HER HANDS, LOOKING DOWN INTO HER FACE.) I feel like a freak to say this, but--I love you! (HE PULLS HIMSELF AWAY, GLANCES OFF AT THE TRAIN, LOOKS BACK AT MADGE ONCE MORE, TURNS, DASHES THROUGH FENCE GATE AND OFF UP LEFT. MRS. POTTS EXITS DOWN RIGHT AS SHE HEARS POLICE SIREN APPROACH AND STOP OFF RIGHT, DOOR SLAM. MILLIE RUNS TO THE TOP OF THE KITCHEN STEPS, LOOKS AFTER HAL. MADGE COLLAPSES AT FOOT OF KITCHEN STEPS. FLO CROSSES TO MADGE.)

FLO

Get up, girl.*

MADGE

(IN TEARS.) Oh, Mom!

FLO

Why did this have to happen to you?

MADGE

I do love him! I do!

FLO

Hush, girl. Hush. The neighbors are on their porches, watching.* (SHE HELPS MADGE TO HER FEET.)

MADGE

I never knew what the feeling was. Why didn't someone tell me?*

MILLIE

(STILL LOOKING OFF AT HAL.) He made it. He got on the train.* (TRAIN WHISTLE IS HEARD IN DISTANCE.)

MADGE

(A CRY OF DEEP REGRET.) Oh . . . now I'll never see him again.

FLO

Madge, believe me, that's for the best.

MADGE

Oh, no, Mom. . . no!

FLO

(HOLDS MADGE.) At least you didn't marry him.

MADGE

Oh, Mom, what can you do with the love you feel? Where is there you can take it?

FLO

(BEATEN AND DEFEATED.) I . . . I never found out. (MADGE THROWS OFF FLO AND GOES INTO THE HOUSE THROUGH KITCHEN DOOR, CRYING. MRS. POTTS RETURNS DOWN RIGHT, CARRYING HAL'S BOOTS. SHE PUTS THEM ON THE PORCH LEFT OF FRONT STAIRS.)

MRS. POTTS

The police found these on the river bank. (SHE SEES FLO LOOKING AFTER MADGE.) Flo!

ALAN

(RISES, COMES DOWN MRS. POTTS' STAIRS TO BOTTOM STEP.)
Girls have always liked Hal. Months after he left the
fraternity, they still called. "Is Hal there?" "Does
anyone know where Hal's gone?" Their voices always sounded
so forlorn.

FLO

(CROSSES TOWARD ALAN.) Alan, come and have supper tonight.
I'll make all the things you like--sweet potato pie--

ALAN

(CROSSES TO CENTER STAGE.) I'll be gone, Mrs. Owens.

FLO

Gone?

ALAN

Dad's been wanting me to take him up to Michigan on a fish-
ing trip. I've been stalling him, but now I--

FLO

You'll be back before you go to school, won't you?

ALAN

I'll be back Christmas, Mrs. Owens.

FLO

Christmas! Alan, go inside and say good-bye to Madge!

ALAN

(RECALLING HIS PAST LOVE.) Madge is beautiful. It made
me feel so proud--just to look at her--and tell myself
she's mine.* (HE LOOKS UP AT MADGE'S WINDOW.)

FLO

Alan, see her one more time!

ALAN

(HIS MIND IS MADE UP.) No! I'll be back Christmas. I'll stop in and . . . say hello. (HE RUNS OFF DOWN RIGHT.)

FLO

(A CRY OF LOSS.--SHE CROSSES DOWN TO LEFT OF POTTS.) Alan!

MILLIE

(CROSSES DOWN TO LEFT CORNER OF PORCH.) Good-bye, Alan!
(SHE WAVES.) Good-bye, Alan!

MRS. POTTS

(CONSOLINGLY.) He'll be back, Flo. He'll be back.*

FLO

(IN A FLAT VOICE.) Millie, you'll be late for school.

MILLIE

Gee, I almost forgot. (CROSSES AND PICKS UP HER NOTEBOOK FROM CHAIR DOWN RIGHT ON PORCH. CROSSES TO FRONT STEPS.) I'm never going to fall in love.

MRS. POTTS

Wait till you're a little older, Millie-girl, before you say that.

MILLIE

When I get out of college I'm going to New York, and I'll write novels that'll shock people right out of their senses. I'll become so great and famous . . . I'll never have to fall in love.

FLO

You be just as great and famous as you want to be. Now go on to school. (MILLIE STARTS OUT DOWN RIGHT.--STOPS RIGHT OF FRONT STEPS.)

BOY'S VOICE

(OFF RIGHT.) Hey, Goon girl!

MILLIE

(LOOKING OFF RIGHT.) Poopdeck McCullough! He thinks he's so smart.

FLO

Keep peace and let him think so.

BOY'S VOICE

(OFF RIGHT.) Hey, Goon girl! Come kiss me! I wanna be sick! Ha! Ha! Ha!

MILLIE

If he thinks he can get by with that, he's crazy! (LOOKS AROUND FOR A WEAPON, RUNS UP ON LAWN, FINDS A STICK BY PORCH, PICKS IT UP.)

FLO

Millie! Millie! You're a grown girl now.* (MILLIE CHANGES HER MIND, THROWS THE STICK DOWN DISDAINFULLY AND STARTS OFF.)

MILLIE

See you this evening. (SHE EXITS DOWN RIGHT.)

FLO

(TURNS, LOOKS OFF UP LEFT.) Helen, you liked the young man, didn't you?

MRS. POTTS

With just Mama and me in the house, I'd got so used to things as they were, everything so prim, occasionally a hairpin on the floor, the geranium in the window, the smell of Mama's medicines . . .*

FLO

I'll keep things as they are in my house, thank you.*

MRS. POTTS

Not when a man is there, Flo. He walked through the door and suddenly everything was different. He clomped through the tiny rooms like he was still in the great outdoors, he talked in a booming voice that shook the ceiling. Everything he did reminded me there was a man in the house, and it seemed good.*

FLO

(SKEPTICALLY.) Did it?

MRS. POTTS

And that reminded me . . . I'm a woman, and that seemed good, too.*

FLO

(WANTING REASSURANCE, TURNS TO MRS. POTTS.) Alan will be back, don't you think so, Helen?*

MRS. POTTS

Of couse he'll be back, Flo. He'll be back at Christmas time and take her to the dance at the country club, and they'll get married and live happily ever after.*

FLO

I hope so.* (SUDDENLY MADGE COMES OUT THE FRONT DOOR. SHE CARRIES A SMALL SUITCASE. FLO IS STUNNED.) Madge!

MADGE

I'm going to Tulsa, Mom.

MRS. POTTS

(TO HERSELF.) For heaven's sake.*

MADGE

Please don't get mad. I'm not doing it to be spiteful.*
(CROSSES TO RIGHT OF FRONT STEPS.)

FLO

(CROSSES UP STEPS.) Madge--Alan's coming back at Christmas time. He's going to take you to the dance at the Country Club. He's going to forget the whole thing and--

MADGE

(CROSSES DOWN STEPS.) I have to go, Mom.

FLO

(FRANTIC.) Madge!

MRS. POTTS

(RESTRAINING FLO.) Now, Flo . . .

FLO

(CROSSES AND STOPS MADGE DOWN RIGHT OF FRONT STEPS.) Now, Madge, listen to what I've got to say!

MADGE

My bus leaves in a few minutes, Mother.

FLO

Maybe you think you love him now, but in a few years you'll hate the day he set foot on our porch!

MADGE

He needs me, Mom.

FLO

He needs you because he's no good! He'll never be able to support you. And when he does have a job he'll spend all his money on drink! I know! And after a while there'll be other women!

MADGE

I love him, Mom.***

FLO

Darling, even if you do love him, try to forget it! Try!

MADGE

(PULLS AWAY.) It's no use, Mom.

FLO

(CRIES AND TURNS TO POST RIGHT OF FRONT STAIRS.) Oh, God! Oh, God! (THE SOUND OF A HOT-ROD SLOWING DOWN AND SOME BOYS YELLING TO MADGE CAN BE HEARD OFF RIGHT.)

BOYS' VOICES

Hey, Madge! Hi, Beautiful! Come on, get in! Yeah, come on, Madge! (MRS. POTTS CROSSES TO RIGHT CORNER OF PORCH.)

MRS. POTTS

(LOOKING OFF DOWN RIGHT AT BOYS.) Who are those boys?

MADGE

Some of the gang in their hot-rods--just kids. (MADGE PUTS DOWN SUITCASE, CROSSES TO MRS. POTTS AND EMBRACES HER, HER EYES FILLING WITH TEARS.) Mrs. Potts, take care of Mom for me, will you?

FLO

(WEEPING BITTERLY.) Madge! Madge! (FLO TURNS TO MADGE. MADGE TURNS AND CROSSES TO FLO. THEY EMBRACE.)

MADGE

I'll write, Mom. Mom, don't worry. I've got some money I've been saving and there are lots of jobs in Tulsa. I can always work. (FLO STILL LOOKS BITTERLY UNHAPPY. MADGE PUTS HER HEAD AGAINST HER.) Oh, Mother! Tell Millie I never meant it all those times I said I hated her. Tell her I've always been very proud that I had such a smart sister. (SHE PULLS AWAY FROM FLO WHO HOLDS HER HANDS UNTIL BOTH THEIR ARMS ARE OUTSTRETCHED AND MADGE HAS TO PULL HARD TO BREAK AWAY. MADGE LOOKS AT HER MOTHER FOR A MOMENT THEN CROSSES, PICKS UP HER SUITCASE AND WALKS DETERMINEDLY OFF DOWN RIGHT.)

FLO

(CROSSES DOWN RIGHT.) Helen! Helen! could I stop her?

MRS. POTTS

Could anyone have stopped you, Flo?

FLO

(WATCHING MADGE IN THE DISTANCE.) She's so young. There are so many things I meant to tell her, and never got around to it.*

MRS. POTTS

Let her learn them for herself, Flo.

VOICE

(OFF LEFT.) Helen! Helen!*

MRS. POTTS

Be patient, Mama.* (SHE PATS FLO ENCOURAGINGLY, TURNS AND STARTS TOWARD HER HOUSE. MUSIC FADES IN, "MADGE DECIDES", AS FLO CROSSES SLOWLY TO FRONT STEPS, SEES BOOTS, PICKS THEM UP, TURNS, LOOKS OFF RIGHT FROM PORCH, TURNS, EXITS SLOWLY IN FRONT DOOR AS LIGHTS DIM AND MUSIC REACHES A CRESCENDO.)

CURTAIN

CHAPTER III

CRITICAL EVALUATION

Four areas will be discussed in this chapter. They are: (1) achievement of interpretation for the production, (2) actor-director relationships, (3) audience reaction, and (4) personal observations.

Achievement of Interpretation
for the Production

Three performances of Picnic were produced in W. Raymond Taylor Drama and Speech Building on January 8, 9, and 10, 1970. After seeing these performances this director feels that his interpretation of Picnic was successfully achieved and true to the playwright's intent. This trueness to the playwright's intent gave a unity to the production which was a major factor in its overall success.

As previously established in Chapter I of this thesis, the director's interpretation gave the form of Picnic as a romantic comedy. To harmonize with and to project the emotion of this form the curved line was used predominantly for actors' movement. This type of movement gave a softer, almost liquid, quality to the blocking. Short, straight lines that turn at abrupt angles are probably more characteristic of a farce. Long, straight lines are probably more characteristic of a tragedy.

An example of using the curved line in stage movement is found at the end of Act II. After Madge kisses Hal, she crosses in a curved line (half moon) to behind the lawn chair. Another example is found in Act II as Rosemary crosses in a double curve line (S shape) to Hal as she blames him for Millie's drinking.

The director's interpretation called for realism in which the actors were to create and nourish an illusion of reality through convincing characterizations. At the end of the first quarter of the rehearsal period, the director asked the cast to give him written interpretations of their own characters. In comparing these interpretations with those of the director's no distinguishable amount of difference could be found. The cause for such parallel interpretations can be found in Inge's ability to clearly define his characters.

The director used various methods of emphasis to aid in gaining insight into the characters. An example of this is seen in Act I as the three old maid school teachers are about to exit and as Irma is telling the story of how she got a date to the Stork Club. This story is important in that it points up the loneliness and desperation of these women. The director was able to achieve focal emphasis on Irma in six ways: (1) By use of the visual line--everyone on stage looks at Irma; (2) By use of levels--Irma stands on top

step of front porch above everyone else; (3) By use of actual line--Christine is down right of Irma on steps and Rosemary is down right of Christine in yard thus forming a diagonal line centering attention on the last person in line--Irma; (4) By use of body positions--Rosemary and Christine are profile while Irma is facing front (Flo and Potts are also facing front but from seated positions); (5) By use of a frame--Irma stands between the two posts on the right and left of the front steps and (6) by cutting out distractions which would take away emphasis. The playwright had placed Hal and Millie up stage center doing an acrobatic trick during the story. This business was changed to tossing a ball which Millie throws off stage causing both to exit in an attempt to retrieve it.

The realistic set was highly functional to the director in achieving his interpretation of realism. As an example the porch railing not only lent itself to very natural use by the actors for leaning against or for sitting, but also helped to achieve various levels.

The only points about the set that fell short were small things such as: the cyclorama (which never gave the illusion of a sky), the porch roof (which caused lighting problems), the window curtains and the slip covers (which could have added an additional element of femininity).

One reason for trouble with the cyclorama was that light would reflect off the bare stage floor on to the

scrim and thus kill the illusion of depth. Another reason was because the roof over the porch blocked out so much light that lighting instruments had to be concealed under the porch roof. These instruments spilled enough light on the scrim so that when an actor stood on the upstage end of the porch a shadow was cast on the scrim. The director was disappointed that the set designer did not allow himself enough time to put all the finishing touches on the set.

The cyclorama was to aid in creating the atmosphere of a small Midwestern town with a church steeple, a grain elevator, and a silo rising out of the sloping terrain. Another finishing touch that was not given enough time was the cone shaped ends of the porch roof. These were distracting because they seemed to be too large and when placed on the roof they seem to be tilting forward. Other finishing touches such as lacy curtains on the windows and fancy slip covers on the porch furniture never materialized. Although there were curtains on the windows they were not the lacy type which with the fancy slip covers would have aided in giving the set an aura of femininity. Taking all aspects into consideration, however, the set was very successful in creating the illusion of reality and setting the mood for the play.

Also very successful in creating the illusion of reality and setting both the mood and period of the play

were the costumes. Everyone, including the director and actors, helped to find costumes which would set the period and yet look attractive on the actors. This was no easy task but the end result more than justified the time and effort. One costume which seemed to help the entire cast was the costume of Mrs. Potts. This sixty-year-old character was played by a seventeen-year-old girl. The cast could not relate to her as an old woman until she stepped on stage in her costume. They were amazed at the transformation. Knowing that now she looked like the character, the actress began more to feel her part.

The director feels that effective music and sound effects were highly responsible for enhancing the mood of the play and the feeling of realism. Two minutes of music played before each act. This music set the mood for each act whether the act was to open on a light romantic mood or on a dark somber mood. Music was also used at the end of each act to carry the mood until the curtain was down.

The director first read Picnic in a hard back cover published by Random House. Afterwards, he read the final revision of Picnic which Inge titled Summer Brave, also published by Random House. Many differences existed between the two plays. Parts of Summer Brave were more polished than Picnic; thus, the director wrote the playwright and asked if these parts could be interchanged for this production. Inge replied with approval. All was

well until the scripts for Picnic came in and the director discovered, to his horror, that there were differences between the script and the book. As a result the director took the most polished dialogue from each of the three versions and incorporated them. This meant cutting out complete sections of the script and replacing them with typed mimeographed copies of the revisions. Throughout the entire script lines were cut, changed, and inserted. Very few lines were inserted that did not appear in one of the three versions of the play, but a few were found to be needed in order to keep the action flowing and focus from dissipating. An example of a line inserted by the director is Rosemary's line on her second entrance in Act I: "Where is everyone?". This line was changed from, "Is this a private party I'm crashing?". The reason for this change was that the playwright had let Hal go inside and Mrs. Potts and Allen were left outside for Rosemary to deliver her original line to. However, Allen did not have a line for two pages and during that time none of the characters had lines which could relate to him. It was written as if he were not there. Therefore, the director had Allen exit and re-enter with Hal.

Taking all aspects into consideration the director feels that his interpretation and goals were successfully accomplished in this production.

Actor-Director Relationships

This director has been involved with many casts in the past but never a cast with as much esprit de corps as the cast of Picnic. This quality was one of the greatest assets to the success of the production. As the director told the cast in a pep talk on opening night, "You were chosen out of over fifty people who tried out. If I had it to do over again, nothing would change."

The director wanted from the beginning to establish his authority as a director and his attitude as a serious student of theatre. The entire first rehearsal was used in making changes in the script. The cast could see that the director had done much work with the script. This impressed them and helped to establish in their minds the serious attitude of the director towards creating good theatre. During the second rehearsal the director was given his first opportunity to establish his authority as a director. During this second rehearsal notes on blocking were being given and one actress stepped into the hallway to talk to a friend. After a few moments when she did not return the director called into the hall to ask her what she was doing. She replied that she was talking to a friend but assured the director that she could hear his every word and was writing her blocking down as she sat in the hall. This

was the crucial moment. Was the director to be the weak type who would shrug his shoulders and say "okay," and from then on be taken advantage of or was he to be the strong tackless type who would embarrass the offender with a verbal tongue lashing, taking the joy out of the creative effort? The director solved this situation by asking the actress: "What if the rest of the cast decided to do the same thing?". The point was made. The actress returned to the room. This same actress during the first rehearsals began to tell other actors what they were doing wrong and began to make critical remarks about the director's blocking even when it did not concern her part. The director took the actress aside and explained to her that he understood she was trying to be helpful but that she must not correct her fellow cast members: "This is the director's job and the cast expects him to do it." When a fellow actor is always correcting them, actors dislike and begrudge such help. Also, critical remarks about the blocking are not justifiable in the early stages of rehearsals. Rough spots are expected when walking through the blocking for the first time. The actress was informed that if she wanted to make positive suggestions about her own blocking or blocking which affected her, she was free to do so. The director made this point clear to the entire cast. Everyone was free to make positive suggestions about his or

her own part, but only when another actor directly affected their part could suggestions be made concerning the other actor. The director would often ask the cast to show their suggestions rather than state them.

Each cast member had his or her own obstacles to overcome before reaching the depth of his part. Most of these obstacles stemmed from their lack of experience in the theatre. The director had to teach at least one-third of the cast the basic techniques and terminology used in a proscenium type production.

The actor, playing the part of Hal, had never played a major role before and was cast primarily for his vocal quality and physique. When he first tried out for the play the director asked him if he had read the play. The actor replied that he had started but lost interest and never finished reading it. The director spent several sessions after rehearsals trying to breathe life into the play for this actor. Eventually the play slowly came to life for him and he began to relate to the character he was playing. He began to feel the part, but the director pointed out that this was not enough. The actor must project this feeling to the audience with his entire physical body. This actor's problem was that he was too stiff on stage. He would give no gestures at all. His hands were always at his side. The director had to direct the actor as to when and what gestures to use. The point was finally made that on stage action had

to be bigger than life in order to project it.

The end result was a more natural and believable character.

The more advanced cast members had their problems too. One problem was in a scene in which the character of Rosemary was to rip away at Hal, like a wild cat tearing away at its prey. The actress playing Rosemary could not build this scene to an effective climax. She was asked to play a cat and mouse game with Hal in which she was to try to capture him. Her attempts built up a tension of frustration as she was unable to capture him. The game was stopped and she was asked to play the game again and this time with her lines. The effect of the game could be heard in her voice as she built to a climax at which time she captured Hal. This exercise gave her a grasp on the emotional build up this scene required. Now, she had a feeling of the scene which she was able to work with and polish to the point that this scene became one of the most dramatic scenes in the entire play.

The actress who played the part of Madge had a problem with voice projection. She could project when she was reminded but would become involved with her character and soon forget projection. The director overcame this problem by shouting the word "project" whenever he had trouble hearing her. She was asked not to break character when she heard the word but to continue with the action. This technique eventually made her aware of projection throughout the production.

Another problem the director had to overcome dealt with the actress playing the part of Millie. This actress had so much stage presence and talent that whenever she was on stage she would steal the scene. To overcome this the director had to block this actress into very weak positions on stage and keep her very still for the scenes in which she was not to take stage.

As stated earlier, the esprit de corps of this cast was a great asset to the production. To achieve the realistic qualities of the characters relating to one another, it was essential that the play have a cast that could relate to one another both on and off the stage. The director, also caught up in this esprit de corps, demanded the respect of his position as the director, but outside of this he was a friend to each cast member.

Audience Reaction

The director's aim for audience response was stated in Chapter I: The actors are to create and to nourish an illusion of reality through convincing characterizations. If done successfully, the audience will derive gratification from identification with the actors as momentarily real persons in real-life action.

General evidence of a favorable response from the audience may be drawn from the fact that with each performance the audience grew larger, until for the last

performance tickets were sold for standing room only and this was after the observation booth and projection booth had both been filled. More specific evidence of a favorable response is shown in the critics' reviews.

Jim McAllister, The Greensboro Daily News Entertainment Editor stated:

Here they were wearing the old-fashioned clothes of the 1940s, talking about such corny things as honor, chastity and family picnics--and the audience was eating it up. They loved it. And, I must add, so did I.

. . .The attraction lies in the development of the characters. Director Allison has assembled a talented group of actors who bring them interestingly to life.²²

Rose Holder, The Greensboro Daily News Staff

Writer wrote:

. . . a master's thesis production that asked no odds of professionalism from anybody. . . . For a bunch of college kids, they did a bang-up job of making each characterization distinct and whole The play was real, and special, from the wicker rockers on a Kansas porch to the lonesome whistle of a train passing through A middle century, middle America, middle class drama that the young players brought to vivid life.²³

²²Jim McAllister, "Audience 'Eate Up' 'Picnic' with Relish," The Greensboro Daily News, January 9, 1971, sec. B., p. 10.

²³Rose Holder, "Good Play Shows Life As It Is," The Greensboro Daily News, January 17, 1971, sec. B, p. 4.

In Chapter I the director's analysis of the theme was in part: There are many types of love but Picnic deals predominantly with the love between a man and a woman. This love differs from all other types because with it comes the physical side of love--the instinctive, the animalistic, the uncontrollable pounding of the heart and spine tingling side of love. June Milby, The Review Staff Writer caught this theme of animalistic passion.

. . .the muscular boyfriend who lures the beautiful young girl away from her prized virginity, is marvelously stupid and emotional. The emphasis placed on the weakness in this character add tremendously to the theme of animal passion versus intellectual understanding, making the play more allegorical than it was written

Overall the play was wistful sad, very well handled from all standpoints, and very much worth seeing.²⁴

Further evidence of favorable response may be drawn from comments of the audience during and after the performances. One comment that summed up the majority of these was made by Mr. Mutt Burton, an experienced actor and man of the theatre. Mr. Burton stated that people were starved for this kind of theatre, that avant-garde and Shakespeare were great but that people want to be able to relate to a play. He said he could easy relate to this play for it brought back an era full of fond memories for him.

²⁴June Milby, "'Picnic' Takes On New Aspect At UNC-G," The Review, January 11, 1971, sec. A, p. 3.

The director wanted the audience to become involved in the play. He wanted them to enjoy themselves laughing as well as crying together. As the final curtain came down and the audience burst into the physical release of their emotions through applause, the director turned and saw eyes glitter from repressed tear drops. This physical reaction, with the favorable criticism from audience members and critics, leads the director to believe that he achieved his desired response from the audience.

Personal Observations

The personal observations of this director seem to point toward unity as the key factor for which a director should strive within a production. The cast and set designer must be in unity with the director who in turn must be in unity with the playwright.

To attain unity with the playwright the director must read and re-read the play until he understands the relevance of every word. To gain further understanding research should be made on the playwright and his other works. One may even go as far as this director and correspond with the playwright to make changes in the script which enable the director to become more comfortable with the play.

To gain a unity with the set designer a director must do more than approve a floor-plan. The director

must be aware of all technical aspects. He must work day by day with the set designer trying to visualize the completed set and therefore avoid problems before they are built in.

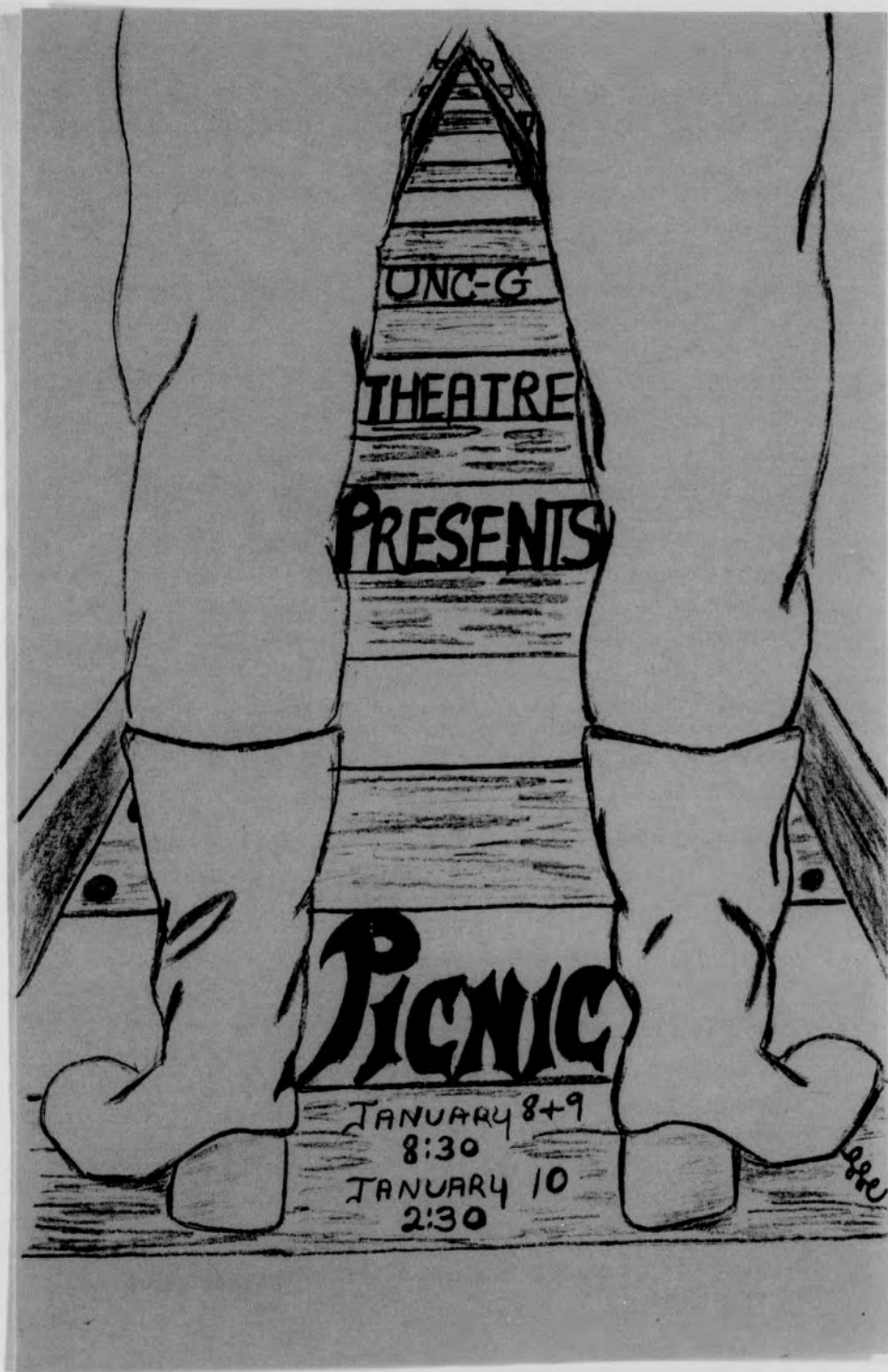
To attain a unity with the cast the director must communicate his interpretation of the play and of the characters so that each member understands. The director must work with the cast in an atmosphere of mutual respect, confidence, and friendship.

The playwright can create a play, the set designer a set, the actor a character, but it is up to the director to take these creations and unite them into a whole which, if done successfully, will reflect truth in the art.

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APPENDICES



UNC-G THEATRE
presents
The M. F. A. Thesis Production of

PICNIC
by William Inge

Directed by Nelson B. Allison
Set, Lights, Costumes designed by . . . Carlton Ward

CAST
(in order of appearance)

Helen Potts	Ellen Lane
Hal Carter	Robert Plante
Millie Owens	Sybil Rosen
Bomber	Michael Lilly
Madge Owens	Sue Atherton
Flo Owens	Shannon Campbell
Rosemary Sydney	Penn Linder
Alan Seymour	John Morrow
Irma Kronkite	Betty Northcott
Christine Schoenwalder	Terry Miller
Howard Bevans	Ron Hall

Scenes

The action of the play takes place in a small Kansas town in the yard shared by Flo Owens and Helen Potts.

Act I

Labor Day, early morning.

Act II

Same day, just before sunset.

Act III

Scene 1: Early next morning, before daylight.

Scene 2: Later the same morning, after sunrise.

There will be two ten minute intermissions between the acts.

Produced by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc.

PRODUCTION STAFF

Stage Manager
Assistant Stage Manager
and understudy for Madge . . .
House Manager

Scenery
Liz Ball, Laurie Conway, Lynn O
Garland, Paula Harmon, Bette H
Jacqueline Morris, Tim Morris, I
Underwood.

Lights I
Marcie Garland, Carol Ingram, C
Morris, Martha Underwood.

Costumes I
Michael Berg, Lois Butner, Jerri

Box Office and Publicity W
Debbie Blystone, Gail Cowan, Le
Kraeuter.

Sound S
Jo

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

WFMY-TV, WSJS-TV and RADIO, WGF
RADIO, WGBG-RADIO, WCOG-RADIO
WEHL-RADIO, Greensboro Daily New
Record, UNC-G News Bureau, The C
West Market Street Players, Bob Lan
Co.

PRODUCTION STAFF

Stage Manager	Daniel Seaman
Assistant Stage Manager and understudy for Madge . . .	Kathleen Larkin
House Manager	Jacqueline Morris
Scenery	Mitchell Grayson, head Liz Ball, Laurie Conway, Lynn Crombie, Marcie Garland, Paula Harmon, Bette House, Carol Ingram, Jacqueline Morris, Tim Morris, Kay Taylor, Martha Underwood.
Lights	David Brinkley, head Marcie Garland, Carol Ingram, Cassandra Lowe, Tim Morris, Martha Underwood.
Costumes	Diane Berg, head Michael Berg, Lois Butner, Jerri McBride, Hall Parrish.
Box Office and Publicity	Wilma Wilson, head Debbie Blystone, Gail Cowan, Leif Crowe, Nancy Kraeuter.
Sound	Steve Cauble, head John Morrow

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WFMY-TV, WSJS-TV and RADIO, WGHP-TV, WBIG-RADIO, WGBG-RADIO, WCOG-RADIO, WQMG-RADIO, WEHL-RADIO, Greensboro Daily News, Greensboro Record, UNC-G News Bureau, The Carolinian, The West Market Street Players, Bob Landreth Wrecking Co.

October 20, 1970

Nelson B. Allison
P.O. Box 5274
Greensboro, N. C.
27403

It's OK with me.

WMA

Mr. William Inge
Dramatists Play Service
440 Park Ave South
New York, N. Y.

SUBJECT: Picnic and Summer Brave'

Dear Sir:

The purpose of this letter is to request your permission to exchange some of the dialogue of Picnic for that of Summer Brave.

I am a graduate student at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro where I am preparing to direct Picnic for January 8, 1971, as a thesis production for my MFA.

My reason for such a request is that parts of the dialogue in Summer Brave are more polished than in Picnic and I prefer to do Picnic rather than Summer Brave because I feel it would make the better show for my audience.

I have enclosed an example of how I should like to have the dialogue read. If you feel there is a chance that this idea might be acceptable please write and I shall proceed with the script. Upon completion, if you wish, I shall send you a copy for the final decision.

I hope to hear from you soon. Thank you for your time.

Yours truly,

Nelson B. Allison
Nelson B. Allison

enclosure/nba