

VETA. Myrtle, you must be nice to Mrs. Chauvenet. She has a grandson about your age.

MYRTLE. But what difference will it make, with Uncle Elwood?

VETA. Myrtle Mae!- remember! We agreed not to talk about that this afternoon. The point of this whole party is to get you started. We work through those older women to the younger group.

MYRTLE. We can't have anyone here in the evenings, and that's when men come to see you- in the evenings. The only reason we can even have a party this afternoon is because Uncle Elwood is playing pinochle at the Fourth Avenue Firehouse. Thank God for the firehouse!

VETA. I know-but they'll just have to invite you out and it won't hurt them one bit. Oh, Myrtle- you've got so much to offer. I don't care what anyone says, there's something sweet about every young girl. And a man takes that sweetness, and look what he does with it! But you've got to meet somebody, Myrtle. That's all there is to it.

MYRTLE. If I do they say, That's Myrtle Mae Simmons! Her uncle is Elwood P. Dowd - the biggest screwball in town. Elwood P. Dowd and his pal-

VETA. (*Puts hand on her mouth.*) You promised.

MYRTLE. All right--let's get them into the dining-room.

VETA. Now when the members come in here and you make your little welcome speech on behalf of your grandmother be sure to do this. (*Gestures toward portraits on mantle.*)

MYRTLE. (*In fine disgust*) And then after that, I mention my Uncle Elwood and say a few words about his pal Harvey. Damn Harvey!

VETA. (*The effect on her is electric.*) Myrtle Mae-that's right! Let everybody in the Wednesday Forum hear you. You said that name. You promised you wouldn't say that name and you said it.

MYRTLE. I'm sorry, Mother. But how do you know Uncle Elwood won't come in and introduce Harvey to everybody?

VETA. This is unkind of you, Myrtle Mae. Elwood is the biggest heartache I have. Even if people do call him peculiar he's still my brother, and he won't be home this afternoon.

MYRTLE. Are you sure?

VETA. Of course I'm sure.

MYRTLE. But Mother, why can't we live like other people?

VETA. Must I remind you again? Elwood is not living with us -we are living with him.

MYRTLE. Living with him and Harveyr Did Grandmother know about Harvey?

VETA. I've wondered and wondered about that. She never wrote me if she did.

MYRTLE. Why did she have to leave all her property to Uncle Elwood?

VETA. Well, I suppose it was because she died in his arms. People are sentimental about things like that.

MYRTLE. You always say that and it doesn't make sense. She couldn't make out her will after she died, could she?

VETA. Don't be didactic, Myrtle Mae. It's not becoming in a young girl, and men loathe it. Now don't forget to wave your hand.

MYRTLE. I'll do my best.

Mrs Chauvenet, Veta & Myrtle ACT 1, Scene 1 p5

MRS. CHAUVENET. Veta Louise Simmons! I thought you were dead.

VETA. (*Rushing to her*) Aunt Ethel! Oh, no, I'm very much alive-thank you-

MRS. CHAUVENET. (*Turning to MYRTLE.*)-and this full-grown girl is your daughter-I've known you since you were a baby.

MYRTLE. I know.

MRS. CHAUVENET. What's your name, dear?

VETA. (*Proudly.*) This is Myrtle-Aunt Ethel. Myrtle Mae for the two sisters of her father. He's dead. That's what confused you.

MRS. CHAUVENET. Where's Elwood?

VETA. He couldn't be here, Aunt Ethel-now let me get you some tea.

MRS. CHAUVENET. Elwood isn't here?

VETA. No-

MRS. CHAUVENET. Oh, shame on him. That was the main reason I came. I want to see Elwood.

VETA. Come-there are loads of people anxious to speak to you.

MRS. CHAUVENET. Do you realize, Veta, it's been years since I've seen Elwood?

VETA. No-where does the time go?

MRS. CHAUVENET. But I don't understand it. I was saying to Mr. Chauvenet only the other night-what on earth do you suppose has happened to Elwood Dowd? He never comes to the club dances any more. I haven't seen him at a horse show in years. Does Elwood see anybody these days?

VETA. Oh, yes, Aunt Ethel. Elwood sees somebody.

MYRTLE. Oh, yes. .,

MRS. CHAUVENET. (*To MYRTLE.*) Your Uncle Elwood, child, is one of my favorite people. Always has been.

VETA. Yes, I remember.

MRS. CHAUVENET. Is Elwood happy, Veta?

VETA. Elwood's very happy .. Aunt Ethel. You don't need to worry about Elwood- (*Looks through R. doorway. She is anxious to get the subject on something else.*) Why, there's Mrs. Frank Cummings-just came in. Don't you want to speak to her?

MRS. CHAUVENET. (*Crosses above chair to peer out*) My--but she looks ghastly! Hasn't she failed though?

VETA. If you think she looks badly-you should see hill!

MRS. CHAUVENET. Is that so? I must have them over. She looks frightful. I thought she was dead.

Sanderson believes that Veta needs psychiatric treatment, while Nurse Kelly thought it was Elwood who needed it.

SANDERSON: *(On phone)* Main gate? This is Dr. Sanderson. Allow no one out of the main gate. We're looking for a patient. I shouldn't have left her alone, but no one answered my buzzer. *(Hangs up.)* Nurse Kelly, as soon as Wilson brings her back, have her taken to a room immediately, and I will prescribe preliminary treatment. I must contact her brother. Dowd, is the name. Elwood P. Dowd. Get him on the telephone for me, will you, Nurse Kelly?

NURSE KELLY: But, Doctor, I didn't know it was the woman who needed treatment. She said it was for her brother.

SANDERSON: Of course she did. It's the oldest dodge in the world—frequently used by a cunning type of psychopath. She apparently knew that her brother was about to commit *her*, so *she* came out here to discredit *him*. Get him on the telephone, please.

NURSE KELLY: But, Doctor, I thought the woman was all right, so I had Wilson take the brother up to the South Wing. He's there now.

SANDERSON: *(In horror.)* You had Wilson take the brother up? Don't joke, Kelly. You can't be serious.

NURSE KELLY: But I did, Doctor. I'm terribly sorry.

SANDERSON: *(Sarcastically.)* Oh, if you're sorry, that fixes everything. *(RUTH frantically dials the phone.)*

NURSE KELLY: Dunphy—will you please unlock the door to Number 24 and give Mr. Dowd his clothes and—*(looks questioningly at SANDERSON.)*

SANDERSON: Ask him to step down to the office right away.

NURSE KELLY: Ask him to step down to the office right away. There's been a terrible mistake, and Dr. Sanderson wants to explain—

SANDERSON: Explain! Apologize!

NURSE KELLY: *(Hangs up.)* Thank heaven they haven't put him in the hydro-tub yet. Doctor, I feel terrible. Judge Gaffney called and said Mrs. Simmons and her brother would be coming out here, and when she came in—

SANDERSON: Stop worrying. We'll squirm out of it some way. *(Starts out.)*

NURSE KELLY: Where are you going?

NURSE KELLY: He'll be furious. I know he will. He'll die. And then he'll fire me.

SANDERSON: The responsibility is all mine.

NURSE KELLY: But this man Dowd—

SANDERSON: Just don't let him get away. I'll be right back.

NURSE KELLY: But what can I say to him? He'll be furious.

SANDERSON: Look, Kelly, he'll probably be fit to be tied. . .but he's a man, isn't he?

NURSE KELLY: Yes, but what—

SANDERSON: Go into your routine. You know—the eyes—the swish—the works. *I'm* immune to it, but it's sure to work on other men. Keep him here, Kelly, even if you have to do a striptease to do it. (*He exits. RUTH is furious.*)

NURSE KELLY: "Go into your routine." Well, of all the—oh, you're wonderful, Dr. Sanderson.

SANDERSON. Miss Kelly--- This is for nothing-just a little advice. I'd be a little careful if I were you about the kind of company I kept.

KELLY. I beg your pardon, Doctor?

SANDERSON. (*Crosses c.*) You don't have to. I told you it was free. I saw you Saturday night-dancing with that drip in the Rose Room down at the Frontier Hotel.

KELLY. (*Putting books on desk.*) Oh, did you? I didn't notice you.

SANDERSON. I'd be a little careful of him, Kelly. He looked to me like a schizophrenic all the way across the floor.

KELLY. You really shouldn't have given him a thought, Doctor. He was my date--not yours.

SANDERSON. That was his mentality. The rest of him-well . . .

KELLY. But she was beautiful, though.

SANDERSON. Who?

KELLY. That girl you were with.

SANDERSON. I thought you didn't notice?

KELLY. You bumped into us twice. How could I help it?

SANDERSON. Not that it makes any difference to you, but that girl is a charming little lady. *She* has a sweet kind disposition and *she* knows how to conduct herself.

KELLY. Funny she couldn't rate a better date on a Saturday night.

SANDERSON. And she has an excellent mind.

KELLY. Why doesn't she use it?

SANDERSON. (*Crossing toward KELLY.*) Oh, I don't suppose you're to be censured for the flippant hard shell you have. You're probably compensating for something.

KELLY. I am not, and don't you use any of your psychiatry on me.

SANDERSON. Oh-if I could try something else on you-just once! Just to see if you'd melt under any circumstances. I doubt it.

KELLY. You 'll never know, Doctor.

SANDERSON. Because you interest me as a case history-that's all. I'd like to know where you get that inflated ego-

KELLY. *(Now close to tears.)* If you aren't the meanest person -inflated ego-case history! *(Turns and starts out c.)*

SANDERSON. Don't run away. Let's finish it.

JtELLY. Oh, leave me alone.

SANDERSON. Gladly. *(Exits.)*

ELWOOD: (*Bows.*) Good evening.

MRS. CHUMLEY: I'm Betty Chumley, Dr. Chumley's wife.

ELWOOD: I'm happy to know that. Dowd is my name. Elwood P. Dowd. Let me give you one of my cards. If you want to call me, call me at this number. Don't call me at that one because it's the old one. (*Looks around.*)

MRS. CHUMLEY: Is there something I can do for you?

ELWOOD: What did you have in mind?

MRS. CHUMLEY: You seem to be looking for someone.

ELWOOD: I'm looking for Harvey. I went off without him.

MRS. CHUMLEY: Harvey? Is he a patient here?

ELWOOD: Oh, no. Nothing like that.

MRS. CHUMLEY: Does he work here?

ELWOOD: Oh, no. He's what you might call my best friend. He is also a pooka. He came out here with Veta and me this afternoon.

MRS. CHUMLEY: Where was he when you last saw him?

ELWOOD: Sitting right there. He put his hat and coat on that table.

MRS. CHUMLEY: There doesn't seem to be a hat and coat around here now. Perhaps he left.

ELWOOD: Apparently. I don't see him anywhere.

MRS. CHUMLEY: What was that you called him. . . a pooka? Is that something new?

ELWOOD: Oh, no. As I understand it, that's something very old.

MRS. CHUMLEY: Really? I'd never heard it before.

ELWOOD: I'm not too surprised at that. I hadn't myself until I met him. I do hope you get an opportunity to meet him. I'm sure he'd be quite taken with you.

MRS. CHUMLEY: That's very nice of you to say so.

ELWOOD: Not at all. If Harvey happens to take a liking to people, he expresses himself quite definitely. If he's not particularly interested, he sits there like an empty chair. Harvey takes his time making up his mind about people. Choosey, you see.

MRS. CHUMLEY: That's not a bad way to be in this day and age.

ELWOOD: Harvey is very fond of my sister, Veta. That's because he is fond of me, and Veta and I come from the same family. Now you'd think the feeling would be mutual, wouldn't you. But Veta doesn't seem to care for Harvey. Don't you think that's rather too bad?

MRS. CHUMLEY: Oh, I don't know. I gave up a long time ago expecting my family to like my friends.

ELWOOD: But we must keep trying, mustn't we?. Because if Harvey has said to me once, he's said to me a million times, "Mr. Dowd, I would do anything for you." (*Changes subject.*) Mrs. Chumley, would you like to come downtown with me right now? I'll buy you a drink or a cup of coffee.

MRS. CHUMLEY: Thank you very much, but I'm waiting for Dr. Chumley. If he found me gone, he'd be irritated.

ELWOOD: We wouldn't want that. Some other time, then?

MRS. CHUMLEY: I'll tell you what I'll do.

ELWOOD: What will you do? I'm very interested.

MRS. CHUMLEY: If your friend comes in while I'm still here, I'll give him a message from you.

ELWOOD: (*Gratefully.*) Would you do that? I'd certainly appreciate it.

MRS. CHUMLEY: What would you like me to tell him?

ELWOOD: Ask him to meet me downtown. . .if he has no other plans.

MRS. CHUMLEY: Any particular place downtown?

ELWOOD: He knows where. Harvey knows this town like a book.

MRS. CHUMLEY: I'll tell you what. My husband and I are going downtown to a cocktail party at Dr. McClure's at 12th and Longview. We could give your friend a lift into town.

ELWOOD: I hate to impose on you, but I'd certainly appreciate that.

JUDGE GAFFNEY: Where's Veta Louise?

MYRTLE: Judge Gaffney, you know where she is. She took Uncle Elwood out to the sanitarium.

JUDGE GAFFNEY: I know that. But what did she call me at the club, half out of her mind? Hysterical, she was. I couldn't even get what she was carrying on about. I had to leave my canasta game partway through!

MYRTLE: That's strange. All she had to do is was commit Uncle Elwood. And as soon as Mother left the house with Uncle Elwood, I called a real estate office to put the house on the market.

JUDGE GAFFNEY: Now see here, Myrtle Mae. The house doesn't belong to you. It belongs to Elwood.

MYRTLE: But now that Elwood's locked up, Mother controls all his property, doesn't she?

JUDGE GAFFNEY: And I suppose you think you control your mother.

MYRTLE: Is the deed to the house in your office?

JUDGE GAFFNEY: Secure in my safe. Myrtle, I feel pretty bad about this locking Elwood up.

MYRTLE: Why? Mother and I can take a long trip now—buy anything we want.

JUDGE GAFFNEY: I always liked Elwood. He could have done anything—been anything—made a place for himself in this community.

MYRTLE: And instead all he did was get a big rabbit.

JUDGE GAFFNEY: He had everything. Brains, personality, friends. Men liked him. Women liked him. Even I liked him.

MYRTLE: You're telling me Uncle Elwood actually had girlfriends?

JUDGE GAFFNEY: Oh, not since he started running around with this big white rabbit. But he did once.

MYRTLE: I can't believe it.

JUDGE GAFFNEY: Of course, there was always something a little different about Elwood.

MYRTLE: That I can believe.

JUDGE GAFFNEY: Yes, he was always so calm about any change of plan. I used to admire it. Looking back, though, I should have been suspicious. Take your average man looking up and seeing a big white rabbit. He'd do something about it. But not Elwood. He took that calmly, too.

MYRTLE MAE is fascinated by WILSON. She lingers and looks at him. HE comes over to her grinning.

WILSON. So your name's Myrtle Mae?

MYRTLE. What? Oh-yes- *(She backs up. HE follows.)*

WILSON. If we grab your uncle you're liable to be comin' out to the sanitarium on visiting days?

MYRTLE. Oh, I don't really know-I

WILSON. Well, if you do, I'll be there.

MYRTLE. You will? Oh-

WILSON. And if you don't see me right away-don't give up. Stick around. I'll show up.

MYRTLE. You will-? Oh-

WILSON. Sure. *(He is still following her.)* You heard Dr. Chumley tell me to wait?

MYRTLE. Yeah-

WILSON. Tell you what-while I'm waiting I sure could use a sandwich and a cup of coffee.

MYRTLE. Certainly. If you'll forgive me I'll precede you into the kitchen. *(She tries to go. HE traps her.)*

WILSON. Yessir-you're all right, Myrtle.

MYRTLE. What?

WILSON. Doctor Chumley noticed it right away. He don't miss a trick. *(Crowds closer; raises finger and pokes her arm for emphasis.)* Tell you somethin' else, Myrtle—

MYRTLE. What?

WILSON. You not only got a nice build-but, kid, you got something else, too.

MYRTLE. What?

WILSON. You got the screwiest uncle that ever stuck his puss inside our nuthouse.

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WILSON. Now I'm askin' you a question, and if you don't button up your lip and give me some straight answers I'm gonna beat it out of you!

ELWOOD. What you suggest is impossible.

WILSON. What's that?

ELWOOD. You suggest that I button up my lip and give you some straight answers. It can't be done.

WILSON. Okay-okay-

ELWOOD. I am trying to be factual. I introduced Dr Chumley to Harvey.

WILSON. To who?

KELLY. A white rabbit. Six feet tall.

WILSON. Six feet!

ELWOOD. Six feet one and a half!

WILSON. Okay-fool around with him, and the Doctor is probably some place bleedin' to death in a ditch.

ELWOOD. If those were his plans for the evening he did not tell me.

ELWOOD. Dr. Chumley sat down in the booth with us. I was sitting on the outside like this. (*Shows.*) Harvey was on the inside near the wall, and Dr. Chumley was seated directly across from Harvey where he could look at him.

WILSON. (*Crosses a step R.*) That's right. Spend all night on the seatin' arrangements!

ELWOOD. Harvey then suggested that I buy him a drink. Knowing that he does not like to drink alone, I suggested to Dr. Chumley that we join him.

WILSON. And so?

ELWOOD. We joined him.

WILSON. Go on-go on.

ELWOOD. We joined him again.

WILSON. Then what?

ELWOOD. We kept right on joining him.

WILSON. Oh, skip all the joining

ELWOOD. You are asking me to skip a large portion of the evening-

WILSON. Tell us what happened-come on-please-

ELWOOD. Dr. Chumley and Harvey got into a conversation -quietly at first. Later it became rather heated and Dr. Chumley raised his voice.

WILSON. Yeah-why?

ELWOOD. Harvey seemed to feel that Dr. Chumley should assume part of the financial responsibility of the joining, but Dr. Chumley didn't seem to want to do that. I agreed to take the whole thing because I did not want any trouble. We go down to Charlie's quite often Harvey and I- and the proprietor is a fine man with an interesting approach to life. Then the other matter came up.

WILSON. Cut the damned double-talk and get on with it!

ELWOOD. Mr. Wilson, you are a sincere type of person, but I must ask you not to use that language in the presence of Miss Kelly.

CHUMLEY. Here, Mr. Dowd. Let me give you this chair. (*Indicates chair L. of table R.*) Let me give you a cigar. (*Does so.*) Is there anything else I can get you?

ELWOOD. (*Seated in chair.*) What did you have in mind?

CHUMLEY. Mr. Dowd-*(Lowers voice, looks toward office.)* What kind of a man are you? Where do you come from?

ELWOOD. (*Getting out card.*) Didn't I give you one of my cards?

CHUMLEY. And where on the face of this tired old earth did you find a thing like him?

ELWOOD. Harvey the Pooka?

CHUMLEY. (*Sits chair R. of table.*) Is it true that he has a function-that he - ?

ELWOOD. *Gets advance notice?* I'm happy to say it is. Harvey is versatile. Harvey can stop clocks.

DR. CHUMLEY. What?

ELWOOD. You've heard that expression, "His face would stop a clock"?

CHUMLEY. Yes. But why? To what purpose?

ELWOOD. Harvey says that he can look at your clock and stop it and you can go away as long as you like with whomever you like and go as far as you like. And when you come back not one minute will have ticked by.

CHUMLEY. You mean that he actually -- ? (*Looks toward office.*)

ELWOOD. Einstein has overcome time and space. Harvey has overcome not only time and space-but any objections.

CHUMLEY. And does he do this for you?

ELWOOD. He is willing to at any time, but so far I've never been able to think of any place I'd rather be. I always have a wonderful time just where I am, whomever I'm with. I'm having a fine time right now with you, Doctor.

CHUMLEY. I know where I'd go.

ELWOOD. Where?

CHUMLEY. I'd go to Akron.

ELWOOD. Akron?

CHUMLEY. There's a cottage camp outside Akron in a grove of maple trees, cool, green, beautiful.

ELWOOD. My favorite tree.

CHUMLEY. I would go there with a pretty young woman, a strange woman, a quiet woman.

ELWOOD. Under a tree?

CHUMLEY. I wouldn't even want to know her name. I would be-just Mr. Brown.

ELWOOD. Why wouldn't you want to know her name? You might be acquainted with the same people.

CHUMLEY. I would send out for cold beer. I would talk to her. I would tell her things I have never told anyone-things that are locked in here. (*Beats his breast. ELWOOD looks over at his chest with interest.*) And then I would send out for more cold beer .

ELWOOD. No whiskey?

CHUMLEY. Beer is better.

ELWOOD. Maybe under a tree. But she might like a highball.

CHUMLEY. I wouldn't let her talk to me, but as I talked I would want her to reach out a soft white hand and stroke my head and say, .. Poor thing! Oh, you poor, poor thing!"

ELWOOD. How long would you like that to go on?

CHUMLEY. Two weeks.

ELWOOD. Wouldn't that get monotonous? Just Akron, beer, and "poor, poor thing" for two weeks?

CHUMLEY. No. No, it would not. It would be wonderful.

ELWOOD. I can't help but feel you're making a mistake in not allowing that woman to talk. If she gets around at all, she may have picked up some very interesting little news items. And I'm sure you're making a mistake with all that beer and no whiskey. But it's your two weeks.

CHUMLEY. (*Dreamily.*) Cold beer at Akron and one last fling! God, man!

ELWOOD. Do you think you'd like to lie down for awhile?

CHUMLEY. No. No. Tell me Mr. Dowd, could he-would he do this for me?

ELWOOD. He could and he might. I have never heard Harvey say a word against Akron.