

The Royal Family

(The sound of the door closing. GWEN comes down immediately, followed by Perry. He is speaking the next line as he comes.)

Perry: Come on, get your bonnet on. I'd like to stop at the Riding Club and look at that horse, wouldn't you? It'll only take a minute.

Gwen: Oh, Perry!

Perry: What's the matter?

Gwen: I can't go.

Perry: What do you mean—you can't go!

Gwen: They're going to read the play down at Wolfe's office.

Perry: What?

Gwen: The author's going to read the play. And of course they had to pick this afternoon.

Perry: What are you talking about?

Gwen: I can't go with you, Perry. I've got to go to Wolfe's office to hear the play read. There's no way out of it. I've got to do it. Isn't that damn!

Perry: You're joking.

Gwen: But Perry, I'm not! I know it sounds silly—

Perry: Silly! It's cuckoo! I never heard anything so ridiculous in my life. You can't mean you're breaking this date just to go and hear somebody read a play... What play?

Gwen: The play! The play that goes into rehearsal on Monday. That Mother and I are doing.

Perry: Why, good God, you've read it a thousand times. You read it to me!

Gwen: But this is different. The author's going to read it.

Perry: Well, let him—the silly ass! What do you care!

Gwen: Now, Perry, please try to understand this. It's part of my job, and it's important.

Perry: Important to hear some idiot read a play that you've read again and again!

Gwen: But it's more than that—it's a ceremony!

Perry: Gwen, you know as well as I do that we planned this thing a week ago. Mother's no Victorian, but listen, you can't do a thing like this. She wouldn't understand.

Gwen: Perry! I want horribly to go! I made an awful fuss. But what could I do?

Perry: You know, Gwen, this isn't the first time you've done this to me.

Gwen: Perry, please don't be unreasonable.

Perry: I don't think I was unreasonable about New Haven, when we were all set to go to the game—

Gwen: But I explained. I told you. You said you understood. Wolfe suddenly phoned—I had to go down to see the chap he'd got as juvenile. If it was somebody I couldn't stand—And Wednesday I had to be photographed with Mother.

Perry: Yes. I know. I know.

Gwen: Don't look so stern. You know this is all just because of the new play.

Perry: Yeah. But there'll always be a new play. Won't there?

Gwen: I realize it's inconvenient sometimes. It is for me too.

Perry: But what are we going to do about it, Gwen?

Gwen: If I can't go—I can't.

Perry: I'm not talking about that. I mean us! Look here, Gwen. You're no blue-eyed babe. I haven't dropped down on one knee and said will-you-be-mine, but you know I'm absolutely crazy about you. Don't you?

Gwen: Uh-hm.

Perry: But what are we heading for? That's what I'd like to know. How's it all going to work out?

Gwen: Why—I don't know. What is there to work out?

Perry: After all, you marry the person that you'd rather be with than anyone else in the world. But where'll you be half the time? Rehearsing, or something.

Gwen: Now, don't be fantastic! Rehearsals last three weeks.

Perry: All right. And then what! You're at the theatre every night. Your work will just begin when mine is all over. You'll have dinner at six. I'll probably not even be home. By midnight you're all keyed up and ready to start out, but I've got to be at work in the morning.

Gwen: But those things adjust themselves. Lots of other people have got around it.

Perry: I'd do anything in the world for you, Gwen. I'd die for you! But I can't be one of those husbands. Hanging around the dressing rooms! Side-stepping scenery. Calling up the costumer. What am I going to do every night. See the show?

Gwen: But you wouldn't want me to be one of those wives, would you? Bridge and household and babies!

Perry: Well, why not! What's the matter with that!

Gwen: Because I can't do that sort of thing any more than you can do the other. I'm an actress, Perry. An actress!

Perry: Oh, what does that mean! Suppose you turn out to be as good as your mother—or better! What is there to it when it's all over? Get your name up in electric lights, and a fuse blows out—and where are you!

Gwen: I won't let you belittle my work. It's just as important as yours. I suppose the world would go to pieces if you didn't sell a hundred shares of Consolidated Whatnot for ten cents more than somebody paid for it!

Perry: You can't compare business with acting.

Gwen: Is that so? I can give you the names of actors and actresses of three hundred years ago—dozens of them! Name me two Seventeenth Century stock brokers.

Perry: All right, I'll give up my work. That'll be dandy! And trail along behind you carrying your Pekinese, huh?...Not me!

Gwen: It's not a Pekinese! Oh, Perry, what are we talking like this for! It's horrible. (*Goes to him.*) Forgive me! How could I talk like that to you!

Perry: It's my fault. I didn't know what I was saying.

Gwen: Perry—dear!

Perry: Oh, what does anything matter!

Gwen: Weren't we a couple of idiots! We've never quarreled before.

Perry: And we won't again. There isn't anything that matters to me except you. Business and acting. We must have been crazy!

Gwen: And you're all that matters to me.

Perry: Gwen darling! You're wonderful. Now, come on, honey. It's late.

Gwen: What?

Perry: Why, you are coming with me, aren't you?

Gwen: Oh, Perry!

Perry: Huh?

Gwen: You haven't heard a word I've said.

Perry: I heard everything you said. You heard what I said too, didn't you!

Gwen: Oh, Perry, we're not going to go all over this again, are we!

Perry: No. We're not going all over it again. It just comes down to one thing, that's all.

Gwen: It's like a bad dream! I can't go Perry! Haven't I explained to you that I can't.

Perry: Oh!...Yes...Well, I've got to get started, of course, if I'm going to get there. Good-bye.