

*General Howell; also Fred, Lilli, Gangsters*

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## ACT TWO – SCENE FIVE

Scene: Fred and Lilli's Dressing Room

[Same as Act One, Scene Three]

*Present*—GENERAL HOWELL is talking on the phone, striding back and forth, in Lilli's dressing room.

*Begin*

GENERAL. Major Rogers? ... Change of plans, Major. The wedding's tomorrow ... No buts, Major. Thinking on your feet, that's the essence of command. Now, take this down. Wedding party, mobilize at 1400 hours. Guests assemble at the Cathedral at 1430 hours. Over the top with the Bishop; 1500 hours. Press conference, 1530 hours; then onward to LaGuardia. Depart, 1630. Got that?

FRED enters his dressing room.

Arrive Washington and advance on White House, 1745 hours.

FRED peeks into Lilli's dressing room.

Give President decision and honeymoon with wife.

FRED. (entering Lilli's room) Into battle, eh, General?

GENERAL. Detail, Graham, detail. That's the secret of total victory.

LILLI enters with the TWO MEN in attendance.

LILLI. Harrison! Thank God you're here!

GENERAL. (on phone) Those are your orders, Major. (hangs up the phone)

LILLI. Don't hang up, darling. I'm playing the show under duress. Call the F.B.I!

The GENERAL and FRED exchange glances.

GENERAL. Now, my dear, I accept—no, I positively enjoy—the caprices of a woman of talent and beauty whom I happen to adore.

LILLI. Caprices? Darling, these thugs threatened me.

GENERAL. Now, now, my dear.

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

FRED. Are you referring to two of the most promising graduates of the Group Theatre? These gentlemen have dedicated their lives to Truth and Beauty.

1ST MAN. Truth.

2ND MAN. Beauty.

LILLI. And you're in cahoots with them.

GENERAL. Lilli, dearest, I think this little joke of yours is beginning to wear thin.

LILLI. Can't you see they're gangsters?

1ST MAN. I guess it shows.

FRED. What can one say to libel?

1ST MAN. Should I say something?

FRED. No.

2ND MAN. Discretion is the better part of valor. "Famous Sayings", top shelf, under non-fiction, right-hand corner. Atlanta. No talking. No smoking.

LILLI. Harrison, darling, listen to me! I can't get out of this theatre! These thugs won't let me.

GENERAL. My dear, you're straining my patience. Judging by their costumes and their education, these men are obviously not what you say they are.

LILLI. But they have guns!

GENERAL. I should hope so. The right to bear arms is enshrined in our Constitution.

LILLI. But they're waving them around. I could get killed!

GENERAL. Dearest, guns don't kill people ...

TWO MEN. We do.

FRED. General, allow me. Lilli, you want to go? Very well then. Go! Leave the theatre. If that's what you want. And I can't say I blame you. After all, what is there to hold you here? What's ten percent of the gross compared to regular housekeeping and a dress allowance?

GENERAL. A generous dress allowance, Graham. People respect a uniform.

FRED. Hear that, Lilli? And all that meaningless excitement—the thundering applause of the crowd, the pictures in the papers, the parties, the adoration. I can't say I blame you for leaving all that, when you've got a chance for happiness—real happiness—under the General.

GENERAL. Good thinking, Graham. I believe I know what it takes to make a woman happy.

FRED. God bless you, sir.

LILLI. I never want to see the theatre again! Or you again. I've got a new life now with the most adorable man in the world!

GENERAL. And the President of the United States agrees with you, dearest one. Truman has asked me to be his running mate in November.

LILLI. Oh, darling! You said 'Yes'?

GENERAL. Hold your horses. Dewey's also asked me to be his running mate.

LILLI. Dewey or Truman! What a decision!

GENERAL. I told Dewey 'Yes'. I know a winner when I see one. And I want you to be there on the campaign trail beside me, my little running mate.

FRED. Running here, running there.

GENERAL. Dewey will do one term. I'll do the next.

FRED *sits*.

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

No. 18

**"From This Moment On"**

(General Howell & Lilli)

GENERAL. Now that we are close,  
 No more nights morose,  
 Now that we are one,  
 The beguine has just begun.  
 Now that we're side by side,  
 The future looks so gay,  
 Now we are alibied  
 When we say:

END