

SIDE 'L' ELMA, LYMAN, BO, VIRGIL

... what light through . . . yonder window breaks? It is the East . . . and Juliet is the sun . . . Arise, fair . . ." (He has got this fairly with difficulty, stumbling over most of the words. Pirgil takes the book away from him here.)

~~VIRGIL. Shh, Bo! (Pirgil comes forth to introduce the act as Dr. Lyman clears the counter.)~~

START
SIDE 'L'

ELMA, LYMAN
BO, VIRGIL

ELMA. (Crosses to C.) Ladies and gentlemen! you are about to witness a playing of the balcony scene from Romeo and Juliet. Dr. Gerald Lyman will portray the part of Romeo, and I'll play Juliet. My name is Elma Duckworth. The scene is the orchard of the Capulets' house in Verona, Italy. (Dr. Lyman takes a quick drink.) This counter is supposed to be a balcony. (Dr. Lyman helps her onto the counter where she stands, waiting for him to begin.) O.K.? (Dr. Lyman takes a quick reassuring drink from his bottle, then tucks it in his pocket, and comes forward in the great Romantic tradition. He is enjoying himself tremendously. The performance proves to be pure ham, but there is pathos in the fact that he does not seem to be aware of how bad he is. He is a thoroughly selfish performer, too, who reads all his speeches as though they were grand soliloquies, regarding his Juliet as a prop.)

DR. LYMAN.

"He jests at scars, that never felt a wound.

But soft! what light through yonder window breaks?

It is the east, and Juliet is the sun!

(He tries to continue, but Elma, unmindful of cues and eager to begin her performance, reads her lines with combustion.)

Arise . . . fair sun, and . . . kill the envious. . ."

ELMA. (At same time as Dr. Lyman)

"O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou, Romeo?

Deny thy father, and refuse thy name:

Or if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,

And I'll no longer be a Capulet."

DR. LYMAN.

"She speaks, yet she says nothing: what of that?

Her eye discourses; I will answer it.

I am too bold—"

BO. (To Pirgil,) Bold? He's drunk.

VIRGIL. Ssssh!

DR. LYMAN.

" . . . 'tis not to me she speaks:

Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven,

Having some business, do entreat her eyes

To twinkle in their spheres till they return."

ELMA.

"Ay, me!"

DR. LYMAN.

"O! speak again, bright angel; thou art

As glorious to this night, being o'er my head

As is a winged messenger of heaven

Unto the white-upturned . . ."

(Dr. Lyman continues with this speech, even though Bo talks over him.)

BO. I don't understand all them words, Virge.

VIRGE. It's Romeo and Juliet, for God's sake. Now will you shut up?

DR. LYMAN. (Continuing uninterrupted.)

" . . . wondering eyes

Of mortals; that fall back to gaze on him

When he bestrides the lazy-pacing clouds,

And sails upon the bosom of the air."

(He is getting weary but he is not yet ready to give up.)

ELMA.

" 'Tis but thy name that is my enemy;

Thou art thyself though, not a Montague.

What's a Montague? it is not hand, nor foot,

Nor arm, nor face, or any other part

Belonging to a man. O! be some other name:

What's—"

DR. LYMAN. (Interrupts. Beginning to falter now. Leans on back of chair.)

"I take thee at thy word.

Call me but love, and . . . I'll be new baptiz'd;

Henceforth . . . I never . . . will be Romeo."

(It is as though he were finding suddenly a personal meaning in the lines.)

ELMA.

"What man art thou, that, thus bescreen'd in night,

So stumblest on my counsel?"

♦♦

DR. LYMAN. (Beginning to feel that he cannot continue.)

"By a name

I know not how to tell thee . . . who I am:

My name, dear saint, is . . . is hateful to myself."

(He stops here. For several moments there is a wondering silence.

Elma signals Virgil.)

VIRGIL. (Prompting.) "Because it is an enemy to thee."

DR. LYMAN. (Leaving the scene of action, repeating the line dumbly, making his way stumbingly back to the counter.)

"My name . . . is hateful . . . to myself . . ."

(Elma hurries to Dr. Lyman's side. Virgil grabs hold of Bo, pulls him back to the floor and shames him.)

ELMA. Dr. Lyman, what's the matter?

DR. LYMAN. My dear . . . let us not continue this meaningless little act!

ELMA. Did I do something wrong?

DR. LYMAN. You couldn't possibly do anything wrong . . . if you tried.

ELMA. I can try to say the lines differently.

DR. LYMAN. Don't. Don't. Just tell your audience that Romeo suddenly is fraught with remorse. (He drops to a stool, Elma remaining by him a few moments, uncertainty. Bo turns to Virgil.)

BO. Virge, if thass the way to make love . . . I'm gonna give up.

ELMA. (Crosses r. to Virgil.) I'm afraid he isn't feeling well.

VIRGIL. (To Elma.) I tried to prompt him.

ELMA. (To herself.) Well, we've only got one more number.

(Crosses to Cherie.) Are you ready?

CHERIE. (Rises.) Sure.

ELMA. (Crosses r. above table.) Ladies and gentlemen, our next number is Mademoiselle Cherie, the international chanteuse, directed from the Blue Dragon night club in Kansas City, Cherie! (All applaud as Cherie comes forth, Virgil playing an introduction for her. Bo puts his fingers through his teeth and whistles for her. Cherie bands her robe to Virgil. Elma clears central table. Cherie climbs up on it.)

CHERIE. (Whispering to Elma.) Remember, I don't allow no table service during my numbers.

ELMA. O.K. (She crosses to counter, sits on D. S. stool. In the background now, we can observe that Dr. Lyman is drinking heavily from the bottle in his overcoat pocket. Cherie gets up on

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STOP SIDE L

one of the tables and begins singing her song with a chord accompaniment from Virgil. Her rendition of the song is a most dramatic one, that would seem to have been created from Cherie's observations of numerous torch-singers. But she has appeal, and if she is funny, she doesn't seem to know it. Anyway, she rekindles Bo's most fervent love, which he cannot help expressing during her performance.)

BO. (About the middle of the song.) Ain't she beautiful, Virge?

VIRGIL. (Trying to keep his mind on his playing.) Shh, Bo!

BO. I'm gonna git her, Virge.

VIRGIL. Sssh!

BO. (Pause. He pays no attention to anyone.) I made up my mind. I told myself I was gonna git me a gal. Thass the only reason I entered that rodeo, and I ain't takin' no fer an answer.

VIRGIL. Bo, will you hush up and lemme be!

BO. Anything I ever wanted in this life, I went out and got and I ain't gonna stop now. I'm gonna git her. (The song ends now and Cherie is enraged. She jumps down from her table and wails her audience applauds. She goes straight to Bo and slaps him stingingly on the face.)

CHERIE. You ain't got the manners God gave a monkey.

BO. (Stunned.) Chery!

CHERIE. . . . and if I was a man, I'd beat the livin' daylight out of ya, and thass what some man's gonna do some day, and when it happens, I hope I'm there to see. (She flounces back to her dressing room and crouches down behind counter, as Bo gapes. By this time Dr. Lyman has drunk himself almost to insensibility, and we see him weaving back and forth on his stool, numbing almost incoherently.)

DR. LYMAN. "Romeo . . . Romeo . . . wherefore art thou? Wherefore art thou . . . Romeo?" (He laughs like a loon, falls off the stool and collapses on the floor. Elma and Virgil rush to him. Bo remains rooted, glaring at Cherie with puzzled but

ELMA. (Deeply concerned.) Dr. Lyman! Dr. Lyman!

VIRGIL. The man's in a purty bad way. Let's get him on the bench. (Elma and Virgil manage to get Dr. Lyman to his feet as Bo glides across the room, scales the counter in a leap and takes Cherie in his arms.)

BO. I was tellin' Virge I love ya. Ya got no right to come over and slap me.

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