

THE MASKS OF REALITY

An Original Ninety Minute Drama for Television

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Malcolm Sharpe

1959



7145018



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An Original Ninety Minute Drama for Television

By

MALCOLM SHARPE

AN ABSTRACT

Submitted to the College of Communication Arts  
Michigan State University in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Television, Radio, and Film

1959

Approved

*R. S. M. T. / 10/1/59*



## ABSTRACT

MALCOLM SHARPE

The Masks of Reality is based on the premise that communication, primarily through the mass media, which distorts reality can often have a harmful effect upon the values of our society.

Research on this concept was done before, during, and after the writing of the play. The results of this research are shown in Chapter I. Here psychiatrists, social scientists, and critics of the mass media bring forth their ideas on what effect distortion can have on the American public. Their comments generally indicate that the media can and do influence our culture to accept the values of conformity, passivity, and immaturity.

The play itself deals with a protagonist who is unhappily involved in creating a world of fantasy in which his wife lives. He creates this distortion partially through the medium of television and partially through personal communication. When this false life is in jeopardy of being destroyed, conflict arises. It is at this point that the protagonist must make a decision: should he attempt to keep his wife living a life of fantasy or should he force her to face reality?

While the play is primarily concerned with the theme of distorted communication, it also touches upon concepts involving the television network's responsibility to the public, the

## ABSTRACT

MALCOLM SHARPE

sponsor's responsibilities to both his program and the public, and the growth of the organization resulting in the decline of the individual.

The third chapter deals with the problems which arose in the writing of the play, and also the problems which would arise in the production of the play. Here solutions are stated and suggestions are given. The chapter concludes with a reemphasis of the play's premise stressing its importance to the drama's interpretation.

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### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writing of this thesis and this enlightening year of graduate study have been made all the more pleasant due to the encouragement, friendship, and constructive criticism of Dr. Roger Busfield, Dr. Colby Lewis, June Krane, and Jim Carver. I thank you.



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## **CHAPTER I**

### **THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PREMISE**

In writing a creative thesis, I have attempted to attain two objectives: the first, to create a ninety minute television drama which would possess a certain degree of literary merit; and the second, to comment on some problem involving communications and our modern American society.

Most people are aware of the fact that the civilization in which we live today is bound together by channels of communication. These channels range from solitary street signs to huge electronic mazes, and their development, along with other technological advances, have not only added to our culture, but also complicated it.

The mass media, in particular, have made a tremendous impact on the personality of our nation. Today, at mid-century, our social scientists are only beginning to fathom the nature and scope of these media. There are many questions and problems waiting to be fully answered, and among them is this one: Are the mass media presenting a realistic picture of society to man? And if the media are not doing this, the question then follows: What effect does this distorted picture have on the modern man?

How does one determine what is real and what is distorted? Scientists have realized for many years now that there is a difference between that which is assumed to exist in reality and that which is actually perceived by man. The fundamental difference between these two is caused by the

limitations and peculiarities of the human mind.<sup>1</sup>

The human observer lives in a real environment which is altogether too big and complex for him to handle. There is so much subtlety, variety, permutation and combination that he is forced to reconstruct it, in a simpler model before he can manage it.<sup>2</sup>

The only method that the social scientists and psychiatrists possess to infer the existence of a real world is to compare one observer's views with the views of others. Discrepancies in these views permit them to make some inferences about the psychological processes of the observer, and then, by combining these various observations they can construct a picture of what one might call "assumed reality." Whether this assumed picture of reality is a true picture or not is a rather difficult statement to verify. Nevertheless, the assumption of some "reality" is an extremely helpful tool to man.<sup>3</sup>

Hence, we see that man lives in a world which is not based on accurate knowledge, but rather on pictures which he often creates himself. Furthermore, these pictures, these perceptions determine at any moment how man will act, and yet these acts themselves do not take place in the pseudo-environment where the behavior is stimulated. They take place rather

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<sup>1</sup>Jungen Ruesch and Gregory Bateson, Communication (New York, W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1951), p. 273.

<sup>2</sup>Walter Lippmann, Public Opinion (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1922), p. 16.

<sup>3</sup>Ruesch, loc. cit.



in the real environment where the action eventuates.<sup>4</sup>

Thus while the imagined world determines man's actions, it cannot determine the results of his actions. Therefore, when man feels frustration and maladjustment, it is often because he is coming to grips with reality. It is through this contact with reality that man learns to adjust to his environment.<sup>5</sup>

According to Walter Lippmann, most of man's contact with reality takes place through the medium of fictions. By fictions he does not mean lies, but rather presentations of the environment which are, in lesser or greater degree, made by man himself. Fictions extend from hallucinations to scientific models. Furthermore, a work of fiction may have almost any degree of fidelity, and as long as the degree can be taken into account, the fiction is not misleading.<sup>6</sup>

As we have already stated, most of the world is out of the reach of man. His ability to live and to experience all is limited. Despite his frailties, however, man has been making many advances on this unknown world. Through

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<sup>4</sup>Lippmann, op. cit., p. 45.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid. p. 16.

scientific progress he is able to see, touch, smell and taste vast portions of reality that have never before been available. Through the use of his faculties and the facilities of science, man is now developing new pictures, which are often merely fictions, of the world beyond his reach.<sup>7</sup>

The mass media's place in this system is rather obvious. Being the suppliers of much of the sight and sound in our environment, their ability to convey reality is unmistakable. Yet are they aiding in this capacity? Are they providing our society with a useful and accurate set of values and descriptions?

The importance of such media as radio, television and films cannot be lightly overlooked in this respect. Not only are they bringing us images of various phenomena, but through the characters and situations in their dramas, soap operas and westerns, they are involving us in the very lives of persons whom we have never met. Arnhiem, in his study, "The World of the Daytime Serial," warns us that the serials hold almost a monopoly on the mental lives of many women.<sup>8</sup>

What happens to our lives when we allow our mental capacities to be influenced by such things as soap operas?

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p. 29.

<sup>8</sup> Rudolf Arnhiem, "The World of the Daytime Serial," Public Opinion and Propaganda, ed. Daniel Katz, Dorwin Cartwright, Samuel Eldersveld, and Alfred McClund Lee, (New York: The Dryden Press, p. 262.)



Soap operas, as well as much of the other drama that we see and hear, bear little or no relation to the lives of us, the listeners, and quite often anything that we can learn from these shows is wholly inapplicable to our every day existence.<sup>9</sup>

Yet, in a study by Herta Herzog, we find that the distorted world of the soap operas and its spokesmen are nevertheless regarded as trustworthy guides and models by a large number of listeners. Listeners felt that they had learned a great deal about personal relations, manners, what to do in certain crises and, above all, how to be resigned to catastrophe.<sup>10</sup>

Both Herzog and Joseph Klapper warn us that when this unrealistic material, fit only to serve in an escapist function, is used as a presumably valid source of information and advice, the results are clearly undesirable. They claim that the advice is often impractical and if put to use in real life would likely prove futile and might conceivably cause serious harm. In addition, much of the escapist communication, if taken seriously, lulls the audience into a blind resignation to trouble, and into an equally blind faith that everything will come out all right in the end.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Joseph T. Klapper, The Effect of Mass Media (New York, the Bureau of Applied Social Research, Columbia University, 1949), p. III - 14.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. III - 15.



The words "lull," "resignation," and "blind faith" are important facets of the preceding paragraph because they spell out "passivity." Gilbert Seldes attacks the broadcasters because he feels that they are attempting to create a climate of passive acceptance on the airwaves. Seldes claims that they are trying to capitalize on the average man's weariness after a hard day's work, and the housewife's daydreams during her day's work. "The audience must be receptive, nearly as passive as possible. As a service to his clients, the broadcaster must paralyze the critical questioning of the mind."<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, the commercials will appeal to the customers' ambitions, offer him a way to success and solutions of his personal problems. They will hammer away, and their audience must never sense the exaggeration and distortion, they must never ask for proof. This, concludes Seldes, is the engineering of consent, for it induces a mood of friendliness and it blankets and suffocates all those faculties which interfere with the creation of the empty mind.<sup>13</sup>

Now we can clearly see that distortions created by the media can have a dangerous effect on the American public. A psychiatrist, Dr. Eugene Glynn, writing in Television's

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<sup>12</sup>Gilbert Seldes, The Great Audience (New York, The Viking Press, 1951), p. 237.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

Impact on American Culture delves deeper into these effects.

Concluding that passivity is the chief effect of television, Glynn compares it to what is known in Freudian psychology as the oral age. This is the age of intake, when the mouth is the most vital organ in relation to the world. The extensions of this include the taking in of sounds, voices, and the absorption of ideas. There is also the continual counting on someone else to supply satisfaction and security, and finally, a poor tolerance of frustration, which results in the demand for immediate satisfaction. The television set, claims Glynn, is easily and agreeably a mother to whom the child can turn to, expecting the same satisfactions.<sup>14</sup>

Glynn believes that television satisfies other needs, too, needs centering around the wish for someone to care, to nurse, to solace. Adults often have difficulty finding someone to take over this role once their own mothers give it up. Hence their infantile longings must often be satisfied symbolically, and the television set easily fills the function. Warmth, sound, constancy, availability, a steady giving without a demand for return, the encouragement to complete passive surrender and envelopment; all this, states Glynn, and active fantasy besides.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Eugene Glynn, "Television and the American Character," Television's Impact on American Culture, ed. William Y. Elliot (East Lansing, Michigan State University Press, 1956), p. 180.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

Seldes also sees the listener in this light. He claims the receptive listener neither thinks nor acts. He is being entertained in an America gone "static."<sup>16</sup>

The picture of the American character looks familiar after studying the preceding symptoms. In modern America, the world supplies and the individual feasts, and along with this, we see the cherished values of conformity, comfort, and security.<sup>17</sup> Activity, self-reliance, and aggression are notably absent.<sup>18</sup>

Glynn then asks the question, which is extremely vital to this discussion: Will reality match up to the television fantasies that our current generation is being nursed on? Today's children are in a peculiar position, since their experience is exhausted in advance. There is little they have not seen, done or lived through, and yet this experience is second-hand. When the real experience finally arrives, it is watered down for it has been half lived already, but never truly felt.<sup>19</sup>

Glynn concludes by warning us that if television is not properly used, it will be degraded into an instrument

<sup>16</sup>Seldes, op. cit., p. 269.

<sup>17</sup>Glynn, op. cit., p. 180.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid. p. 178.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid. p. 181

for the shaping of the group man, the man who is dependent, and outward seeking, the natural foil of any authoritarianism.<sup>20</sup>

The passive man--is this what we are really like today? This is difficult to imagine since the media usually portray the typical American citizen as an uncommonly shrewd and thoughtful person, a rugged individualist, a considerate voter and a hardheaded consumer. Man as depicted by the media is the flowering of twentieth century progress and enlightenment. According to Vance Packard, the men who create these images, the professional persuaders, do so with tongue in cheek. They see us in far less flattering terms. To them, we act irrationally and emotionally. We are bundles of daydreams, hidden yearnings, and guilt complexes. This is how they see us and this is the insight they are using to influence our very own behavior.<sup>21</sup> Hence we see an interesting paradox and another glaring distortion of reality created by the media.

It appears, so far, that the human mind has been influenced a great deal and that there is little room left any more for intelligence or creative thinking. Seldes feels that the broadcasters are even attempting to condition their audiences to despise intellectualism itself and to especially degrade the "thinking man." (His book was obviously written before the Viceroy commercial.) He claims that there is

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 132.

<sup>21</sup>Vance Packard, The Hidden Persuaders, (New York, David McKay, Inc., 1957), p. 7.





a persistent, unrelenting, successful attack being made on the man of intelligence who has so far escaped the contagion of mass thinking. One manifestation of this anti-intellectualism is the image which radio, television and the movies are constantly placing around education. The absent-minded professor and the angular spinster are continually fed to the public, and the professional man of any stature is regularly used as a foil for the "triumphant age."<sup>22</sup>

We are beginning to completely accept a teenage standard of life, continues Mr. Seldes, nothing must interfere with our having a good time. We strive to have a life of leisure as exemplified in the magazines, but it eludes us. The young bride becomes disillusioned when she finds out that she is doing housework and not, as the media always presented it, playing house. The realities of adult life arrive as a series of shocks since they do not correspond to the promises made to us. Hence we reject them, and cling to the sensations of youth.<sup>23</sup>

Many years ago, Hollywood found out that by catering to these sensations and by giving the people compensatory illusions it could bring customers back again and again into the theaters. The movies did not attempt to give people information with which they could solve their problems; instead they aimed at giving them a dream that was so thrilling in comparison with reality that they would

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<sup>22</sup>Seldes, op. cit., p. 251.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

return for further hours of daydreaming. Even fine novels and dramas came out of the movie mill revised to fit the daydreams of the public. This fulfillment by fantasy, claims H. A. Overstreet, is the pattern of psychological immaturity, and because Hollywood has usually favored depicting life in glamorous fantasy, it has had a vested interest in the emotional immaturity of the public.<sup>24</sup>

Seldes feels it is the function of the popular arts to divert but not to deceive. Continuing Overstreet's idea one step further, he states that, if the media present a view of life that is dangerous to us, that prevents us from raising mature citizens, then their function of entertainment is not fulfilled.<sup>25</sup>

In the preceding pages there have been some rather strong indictments leveled at the media. I doubt whether I, or any of the quoted authors, however, would go as far as to say that the media were the entire cause of all the conformity, passivity, and immaturity in our culture. Naturally, the media are just a part of our society, and, therefore, they often merely reflect many of its values.

It is interesting to note, however, that there are many people aware of the fact that there is danger in what is shown to the public, and that this danger often lies in the fact that the public is not always being presented with a realistic valuable picture of life. The media often distort reality, sometimes for entertainment's sake, sometimes

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<sup>24</sup>H. A. Overstreet, The Mature Mind, (New York, W.W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1949), p. 221.

<sup>25</sup>Seldes, op. cit. p. 251.

for sales value, and sometimes for no discernible reason at all.

What happens to a public which is bombarded, night after night with frivolous westerns, stock-situation detective shows, and meaningless quiz games? Are we being lulled into passivity, as Glynn suggests?

It seems that the American public is being given more and more of a chance to lull itself into a degenerate state, a state where all decisions will be made for us or pressured upon us, a state in which we will have to do very little thinking or acting. Today we sit in front of our television sets and listen; we sit in our cars and listen; we sit in drive-in movies and listen; we sit on the bench and listen. Teenagers walk down the street and listen. We sit in cafeterias and listen. We sit in our offices and, thanks to Muzak, we listen. It is getting difficult to go anywhere anymore without being forced to listen.

One cannot condemn listening itself; rather it is what we listen to and how we listen to it that is the danger. Walter Lipmann's book, Public Opinion, contains a paragraph which is as apropos today as it was when written many years ago.

Thus the environment with which our public opinions deal is refracted in many ways by censorship and privacy at the source, by physical and social barriers at the other end, by scanty attention, by the poverty of language, by distraction, by unconscious constellations of feeling, by wear and tear, violence and monotony. These limitations on our access to that environment combine with the obscurity and complexity of the facts themselves to thwart clearness and justice

of perception, to substitute misleading fictions for workable ideas, and to deprive us of adequate checks upon those who consciously strive to mislead.<sup>26</sup>

Hence we see the difficulties involved in being a listener and the complications involved when the source itself sends a distorted message.

As members of a society which spends so much of its time being acted upon by the mass media, it is our duty to realize the nature of the concepts and the values that are being heaped upon us.

It was the realization of the importance of this concept that gave me the impetus to write the following play. The play concerns itself with some of the problems which arise not only out of distorted media communication, but also out of distorted human communication.

In Thomas Griffith's excellent book, The Waist-High Culture, he claims that "we are faced with the likelihood that all our luxuries will diminish us as people as they increase their saturation. We are all prisoners of what we have called progress." He goes on to say that "it would be dangerous to think that left to its own, the situation would provide its own corrective. It wasn't so in the days of laissez-faire," he warns us, "and it will not be so culturally."<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Lippmann, op. cit. p. 76.

<sup>27</sup>Thomas Griffith, The Waist-High Culture, (New York, Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1951), p. 280.

I would like to hope that the following drama serves in some small way to awaken someone to a problem which I feel needs attention, study and correction.

## CHAPTER II

### THE MASKS OF REALITY

"To part from actual things  
is nothing, but from our  
memories, how different!  
For the heart breaks when  
it is torn from its dreams,  
so small a part does reality  
play in the consciousness of  
men."

Francois Mauriac, "Questions of  
Precedence", Esquire. August, 1959.  
p. 74.

THE MASKS OF PITY

SCENE I

(The waiting room of a hospital. Seated on wooden bench is LESLIE JENNINGS, a tall, slender, noble, attractive woman, about thirty-two years old. She looks around nervously. A DOCTOR enters.)

LESLIE

Doctor!

(She gets up and runs to the DOCTOR.)

DOCTOR

Now relax, Leslie. Everything will be all right.

LESLIE

Will he need an operation, Doctor? Will he?

DOCTOR

(He looks at Leslie thoughtfully; then motions her toward a bench.)

Let's sit down over here for a moment.

(They sit.)

LESLIE

(Still pleading)

Will he need an operation?

DOCTOR

Your son has been very fortunate. If he'd been looking in the direction of the explosion, he would have lost his vision completely. As it stands now, we have a good chance of saving it.

LESLIE

(Sobbing and burying her face in her hands.)



Oh, my poor Jimmy! Why must it happen to him? He's just a child.

DOCTOR

He'll be all right, Leslie. You and Harold will have to have faith through this . . . you must.

LESLIE

If Harold were only here. I don't know if I can take this without him.

DOCTOR

You can call him long distance from my office, if you like. I'm sure he'll fly home immediately.

LESLIE

No! No! He mustn't know anything about it now. There's nothing he can do by being here. If he doesn't get this contract in Los Angeles, the business will be gone. He'll be wiped out . . . he mustn't know.

DOCTOR

I think you're being very wise, Leslie. Very wise. I'll operate tomorrow. You'll be able to visit Jimmy in the evening.

LESLIE

(Nods head in discouragement and disbelief.)

Tomorrow! So soon!

(Organ music swells up in background, and the camera cuts to reveal that this has all been taking place in a television studio. The DIRECTOR'S voice suddenly booms in over the public address system.)

DIRECTOR

O.K. That's it, kids. Hang on. The rehearsal for tomorrow's show is up in twenty minutes.

(There is the sudden burst of activity that follows every telecast. The DIRECTOR, who has come out of the control room, strides onto the set.)

DIRECTOR

(He looks briefly at clipboard and then addresses the crew.)

We might as well strike the living room set . . . we won't be using it for a week. Let's drag a few chairs over to the waiting room area for rehearsal.

(A voice, it's owner at first unseen by the camera, addresses the DIRECTOR.)

VOICE

Nico show today, Gerry. Corry, as usual, but nice.

(GERRY, the DIRECTOR, turns to face SAM FOWLER. Sam is in his early fifties. He's a little on the short and stocky side. He dresses well, but his clothes are not stylish. His voice is husky, but in a gentle sort of way. He emits a feeling of warmth through his voice and his mannerisms.)

DIRECTOR

(Surprised)

Well, where the devil have you been all afternoon? I missed you.

SAM

Is there some law that says the producer has to hang over the director's shoulder during every performance?

DIRECTOR

Yea, but, Sam, you've been doing it now for eight years.

SAM

Well, today I got tied up in the office . . . you know, all that paper work this time of the month.

DIRECTOR

Oh, that paper work's bad for you, Sam. It'll turn you into an organization man. It will.

(SAM shrugs.)

How about some coffee?

SAM

Look, Gerry, I don't have too much time to . . .

DIRECTOR

Now you're getting nervous from that office, Sam.

(He turns and hollers.)

Hey, Chuck, bring two blacks out here, on the double.

SAM

(Growing serious.)

Truthfully, Gerry, I don't have much time today, and I know you're rushed too, but I thought I ought to come down here before I left for home.

DIRECTOR

C'mon, Sam, we have enough melodrama around here already. What's up?

SAM

I don't know. To tell you the truth, Gerry, I don't know. I just have a feeling, that's all . . . just a feeling.

DIRECTOR

Has somebody said something? Is the sponsor unhappy?

SAM

Happy, unhappy. Who knows. Nobody says anything. They look at you, and you look at them, and somehow you get to feeling something's up . . . that's all.

DIRECTOR

(Jesting)

Maybe they want Leslie to become pregnant again. That boosted the rating last time.

SAM

(He sees no humor in Gerry's jest.)

Look, Gerry. I wouldn't come down here and speak to you if I didn't somehow feel that it was something really important. Now you're a smart boy, and you've always done a nice job, and believe me, I've appreciated it . . . but please try and

do a little bit better than usual the next few days. Huh?

(He pats GERRY affectionately  
on the back.)

DIRECTOR

(Bewildered at Sam's seriousness)

Sure . . . sure, Sam. I didn't realize it was anything  
that bothered you so much. Don't worry about it. We'll  
make out all right.

SAM

(A bit chagrined at his own  
seriousness)

Eh! There's probably nothing wrong at all. Maybe it's just  
my nerves. Every day up there the hatchet's falling on some  
poor schmoe's head. Snip, snip, snip, like they were trim-  
ming a bush.

DIRECTOR

Yeah. It's probably just your imagination.

(He looks at his watch.)

Well, I'm going to start rehearsal. Why don't you stick  
around for awhile . . . relax.

SAM

Relax, huh. Tomorrow morning I've got an appointment with  
George Gessler . . . at his request. You try and relax.

DIRECTOR

(Lets out low whistle.)

No wonder you're worried. Gessler's been making changes  
left and right the last few months.

SAM

You're telling me. He's the lead bush trimmer, that fellow.

DIRECTOR

Look, Sam, stick around here for another hour. Then we'll  
go out, have a few drinks and a nice supper. It'll take the  
edge off things for you.

SAM

Thanks, but Selma expects me home in an hour. You know how punctual we on are with their supper.

DIRECTOR

So call her up. Tell her to forget making supper tonight and have her meet us downtown. I'll call Diane, and we'll make it a foursome.

SAM

Some other time, Gerry. I'm not in the mood for stepping out tonight.

DIRECTOR

You know something, Sam? Eight years we've worked together. Eight years! And we've never gotten together for an evening. I'd like to meet that wife of yours someday. She must be some cook.

SAM

Some cook.

(He laughs to himself somberly.)

She certainly is.

(There's a pause for a second as Sam is lost in thought.)

Well, I've got to be running along now. Do a nice job tomorrow, huh?

(He shakes GERRY'S hand solemnly. Then turns and heads for exit.)

DIRECTOR

Sure.

(He watches SAM walk away, then shouts after him.)

Give me a buzz after the meeting and tell me what happened . . . I'll be in at eleven!

(SAM continues to walk, too pre-occupied in his own thoughts to hear this last remark.)

End of Scene One

SCENE II

(SAM enters his apartment. In the vestibule, he takes a newspaper from his pocket, then hangs up his hat and coat. His wife's voice is heard from the other room.)

SARMA

(She speaks in a full voice, yet there is a feeling of weakness about it.)

Sam, is that you?

SAM

That's right. I'm home.

SARMA

I'll bet you forgot the paper!

SAM

(Reading the headlines as he walks toward the living room)

You know I wouldn't forget your paper, dear.

(As he enters the living room, we see that this is not the type of home that we would expect to find a television producer living in. The furnishings are those found in the homes of our grandparents. Family photographs from the turn of the century through the early thirties line the walls. SARMA is seated in a soft chair. She is unwell-looking. Her hair is gray and tied in a bun. She has a large frame, and yet her dress seems to hang on her, reminding us of the woman she used to be. She looks and talks much older than she actually is. She's seated in

front of the only modern park in the room, a television set, which is on.)

SAM

Well, how do you feel today?

SELMA

(Listlessly)

Feel? I feel like I do every day. What do you expect . . . a miracle to happen while you're away?

SAM

Let's not give up on miracles. You never can tell what God will do.

SELMA

Well, I wait. Maybe tomorrow.

SAM

Here's the paper, dear. I'll read it later.

(He hands her the paper.)

SELMA

(She briefly looks at the paper, then folds it and places it on the table beside her.)

I'll look at it in a little while. My eyes seem tired now.

SAM

Here, I'll put on another light. It'll be better to see in.

(He snaps on floor lamp.)

SELMA

(Affectionately)

Honestly, Sam, the way you spoil me, someone would think we were newlyweds.

SAM

You're still my bride, Selma. You can't deny that.

SALMA

(Nistfully)

No, no, I can't. But maybe, for your sake, it would have been better if we'd never married . . . maybe.

SAM

(Attempting to pass off her seriousness lightly)

What? And have me grow up to be a lovely old man? That's better, huh?

SALMA

Who knows.

SAM

(Tries to pep her up by changing the subject.)

Well, what's for supper tonight?

SALMA

The butcher left the order on the kitchen counter. I think there's some liver, if you want it, or some lamb chops.

SAM

Liver would be nice for a change. How about you?

SALMA

Liver, I suppose. What's the difference.

(SAM goes into the kitchen. He unwraps the meat and starts to prepare the meal. He can still see her from the kitchen.)

SAM

So, what's new today?

SALMA

(She talks, but because of her distance from him and the noise from the television set, he cannot hear her.)



SAM

Huh?

(SELMA talks again inaudibly.  
SAM turns and walks back into  
the living room.)

Look, why don't you turn the set off and come sit in the  
dining room, where we can talk.

SELMA

I might as well, I suppose. I get a little tired watching  
this time of night. The day is different . . . it doesn't  
bother me, but in the evening . . .

(SAM shuts off the set and helps  
her out of the chair. He sup-  
ports her and guides her towards  
the dining room table. Her legs  
are weak and move forward in  
planned, hesitant motions.)

SAM

(Humoring her)

It seems to me your legs are stronger today. You'll be up  
and around pretty soon if you keep this up.

(He helps her sit down at the  
dining room table.)

SELMA

(Sighing)

Hum! Stronger. Every night for eleven years I've been get-  
ting stronger. From listening to you, I should be a regular  
lady wrestler by now.

SAM

(Goes back into kitchen and con-  
tinues to prepare supper.)

I knew there was something I forgot tonight, vegetables!  
I'm afraid we're going to have beans again . . . that all  
right?

SELMA

You've got so much to do at the store you can't go across  
the street for some vegetables?

(On hearing the word "store," SAM looks up. There is concern and guilt on his face.)

SAM

(Uncomfortably)

Well, you know how busy it is this time of year.

(He changes the subject.)

So what did you do today?

SELMA

What did I do today? I did what I do every day after you leave. I washed the dishes . . .

SAM

Now you don't do that every day. Your legs feel better in the morning, huh?

SELMA

Ya. Enough to do a little work. You've got to keep busy doing something . . . then I read the morning paper and watched the TV.

SAM

How did that woman make out on that giveaway program?

SELMA

They gave her the easiest question in the world, and she missed it.

SAM

That's too bad.

SELMA

She could have used the money, believe me . . . five children she's got, five. But at least they gave her a toaster and some dresses and a bicycle for her boy.

SAM

Well, even if she didn't win, at least she got something. Perhaps somebody who saw the show will help her out.

SARAH

Perhaps. Just the same, it was terrible . . . then they had a movie on . . . an old one. I think I saw it years ago. One of those pictures with Edward G. Robinson

SAM

He played a gangster, I suppose.

SARAH

Ya, some kind of racketeer. He's a terrible man, that Robinson . . . so cruel.

SAM

He always seems to be that way, doesn't he? But he's just an actor.

SARAH

But to be so cruel.

SAM

Do you want me to put some onions on the liver?

SARAH

No. Don't bother.

SAM

And that was your day, huh?

SARAH

I wish that was my day. Oh, I'm telling you, Sam, it's just tragic . . . tragic . . . the things that have happened to Leslie Jennings.

(SAM again looks up with concern. He speaks, not his thoughts but merely words to make conversation.)

SAM

What's it this time?

SARAH

Her boy, Jimmy. You know, the boy I told you about yesterday, who was near the explosion?

SAM

Yes.

SALMA

He may lose his sight. He needs an operation.

SAM

That's . . . that's too bad.

SALMA

That poor woman. I don't know why one person should have such heartache in life.

SAM

I'm sure the boy will be all right.

SALMA

(Becomes slightly emotional)

But to have such troubles, Sam. It isn't fair. She tries so. She's so good. Why her? Why?

SAM

(He becomes annoyed and enters the dining room.)

Selma, please. It's just a story on the television. That's all. There's no need to get so upset.

SALMA

(Shrugs and becomes more emotional)

A story on the television? It's a life, Sam. Somebody's life . . . and to have such trouble.

SAM

You're right, Selma. It's a tragic thing; it is. But there's no need to cry over Leslie Jennings' problems every night. It certainly isn't going to help her boy get better.

SALMA

(Trying to control herself)

Well, I suppose it will turn out all right for her. She's

got courage, that girl.

(She smiles faintly.)

Well, how did it go at the store today?

SAM

(He again becomes nervous and annoyed. He replies as if he'd rather not answer.)

Oh, it went fine, dear . . . fine.

SELMA

I suppose they're starting to buy for spring already.

SAM

(He turns and heads back toward kitchen.)

The spring stock is starting to move all right. Mrs. . . . Kessel was in with her son, Jackie . . . got him a new suit. She . . . she asked for you.

SELMA

I'll bet Jackie's a big boy now . . . must be tall like his father.

SAM

Oh, he's tall all right, and getting husky too.

SELMA

Did you get in those bathing suits you've been waiting for?

SAM

Neh! Every time I call the manufacturer, he says, "They're coming . . . They're coming." "So is summer," I tell him.

SELMA

Pa never had trouble with those manufacturers. One peep from him, and they'd come down and make the delivery themselves.

SAM

Your father, God rest his soul, didn't live in a day when

his store was just a drop in the bucket to those big manufacturers.

SARMA

Even so, they ought to deliver on time.

(She pauses for a moment.)

Sh, but I shouldn't complain. You're doing the best you know how. It was enough that you carried on the business after Pa died. After all, I grew up in that store. What would my life have been for the last eleven years if I couldn't have heard about it.

SAM

Your father and mother certainly had their hands full. Bringing up two kids and running that place.

SARMA

It was the only way for them to live.

SAM

Some life, they had. . . Some life.

SARMA

It was a beautiful thing, that life . . . beautiful.

SAM

You were so young and active then. They had more pride in you than they ever had in the store.

SARMA

It was all so beautiful, Sam . . . so beautiful.

SAM

(SAM is momentarily lost in thought.)

Selma, I've been thinking. There's no reason for you to stay cooped up here on the fourth floor. Maybe you'd feel healthier if we moved into a street level flat. You could take short walks. It would be good for you . . . a new life.

SELMA

Sam . . . Sam, how many times a year does the talk end up with you trying to get me to move!

SAM

All right! All right, Selma. I'm sorry. Forget it.

(He shrugs his shoulders.)

This is your father's house . . .

SELMA

(Interrupting SAM)

It's not just my father's house, Sam. It's my home. It's the only home I've ever known. Even after we got married we lived here with Pa. How could I exist without being in this house? The house and the store, they're not just things, places . . . they're my life . . . the only bit of life I've got left.

SAM

(Dejectedly, to himself)

The house . . . the store . . . and Leslie Jennings . . .

(Addresses SELMA)

I'm sorry. I'm sorry I mentioned it again. You're right. We can't leave here. Come, let's eat; the food will get cold.

End of Scene II

SCENE III

(The receptionist's room outside the office of George Gessler. SAM enters.)

SECRETARY

(Looks up from typing)

Good morning, Mr. Fowler.

SAM

Good morning, Ann. Well, when's the big day?

SECRETARY

June 27th, if that big lug doesn't run off when the track opens.

SAM

Oh, well, don't worry about that; from the size of that ring I doubt if he's got enough money to take a bus to the two dollar window.

SECRETARY

He'll find a way.

SAM

I suppose George is expecting me?

SECRETARY

He's always expecting somebody. Go on in.

(SAM enters the office of George Gessler. GESSLER is seated at his desk, speaking urgently into the phone. He is a large, solid looking man in his early fifties. He is extremely well dressed and smooth in appearance. His face has almost a bronze-like hardness to it, which can melt into an overbearing smile.)



(He continues talking as SAM approaches his desk and then waves SAM into a chair with his cigar.)

GEORGE

(Into phone)

Ya . . . ya, look, Ted. There's no need for it, understand. No need. Have him drop the whole thing. If you have to settle outside of court, then do it . . . ya . . . ya . . . Just make sure it's taken care of . . . uh huh . . . uh huh . . . ya. O.K., Teddy, drop over with a report tomorrow . . . Right. Bye.

(He hangs up phone and molts into smile.)

Well, Sam, how the devil are you?

SAM

Not bad . . . and you?

GESLER

Great, great! Played a little squash before work this morning . . . a dip in the pool. Oh, I'm telling you, Sam, you ought to drop down to my club someday. It's great . . . simply great.

SAM

(Halfheartedly)

Maybe I'll drop over next week. We'll play a little handball.

GESLER

Glad to have you, of course. I'm a bit tied up next week. Perhaps the week after. I'll have Ann give you a call when I have some time. How's that?

SAM

Fine.

GESLER

By the way, how's the little woman?

SAM

The same as usual, perhaps a little better.

GESLER

Let's see, the last time I saw her was at the Christmas party, wasn't it?

SAM

I don't think you've met my wife, George. She's been ill for quite a few years now.

GESLER

Oh, yes. Excuse me. I must have confused her with Jim Rachen's wife. Tragic thing about your wife, Sam, tragic. . . . If there's anything I can personally do to help, why I'd be glad to . . .

SAM

She's been getting along fine, George . . . just fine.

GESLER

Well now, let's get down to business.

(He relights his cigar.)

Up till this time, you've handled just one show for us, Sam, just one, and you've done a nice job too, I might add, very nice. But we feel that perhaps you ought to have a change . . . do something different.

SAM

A change?

GESLER

Now there's a possibility, just a possibility, that we'll be adding a new show to the programming, and I think you're the man to handle it.

SAM

I suppose it depends on what type of program it is, George. You know I haven't had that much experience in . . .

GESLER

Don't worry about it. The Staley and Ross Agency will do

the production work. You'll just oversee it from our end . . . . . as sort of a production supervisor.

SAM

Well, it's about time you gave me a little more work around here. When do I start?

GEORGE

This may sound a bit strange, but we're not sure yet. It may be next week, then again it may not.

SAM

Next week! The beginning of June! That's awfully quick isn't it?

GEORGE

We're taking a gamble, I know, but I think we'll be all right.

SAM

You're the boss.

GEORGE

(He gets up, turns and looks out the window. He speaks the next sentence rather gingerly.)

The show will run Monday through Friday from 4:00 to 4:30.

(SAM chuckles. On hearing the laughter, GEORGE turns around with surprise.)

Well, I didn't think you'd be that happy about it.

SAM

To tell you the truth, George, neither did I.

(He laughs again.)

So you finally got a summer replacement for Leslie Jennings. My goodness, that girl's been going ten years now without a break.

GEORGE

This isn't just a summer replacement, Sam. This is it. Leslie Jennings is out.

SAM

(Angrily)

What do you mean she's out? Who said she's out?

GESSLER

Look, Sam. Don't get mad at me. The sponsor's just changing shows; that's all. You still have a job.

SAM

How can you just take a show like that . . . that people have been following for ten years, and just end it ... How?

GESSLER

For crying out loud, don't get so excited. Look, Jennings is getting killed in the ratings. Sue she's got some loyal listeners, a few old ladies and some tired housewives, but they can't justify our keeping the show on in that slot.

SAM

What's there to justify? The show's justified itself for the past ten years.

GESSLER

All right, Sam. The show's justified itself. But you've got to take into consideration that we've got other programs that come on right after Jennings . . . that we've got advertising time to sell there.

SAM

So?

GESSLER

So who wants to advertise on a show that follows Jennings. The only audience left listening is a group of old ladies. The sponsors won't touch the time.

SAM

And Harry Marks over at Healthglo Drugs has agreed to go along with this, huh?

GESSLER

Just about. We've been talking about it with his agency, Staley and Ross, for the past month now. They've done some survey work and found a change would be good for them, too.

SAM

So they've counted a few noses on Fifth Avenue and everyone's deserting the ship, huh?

GESSLER

Sam, I'm a busy man. I've told you the reason, so let's not continue this any further.

SAM

Mister Gessler, how can you honestly do this? How can you do it? People have listened to this show for ten years. I'll take you to my office and show you all the letters . . . the Christmas cards . . . the telegrams. It's been a part of their lives.

GESSLER

Sentiment. That's all, Sam . . . sentiment. Unfortunately, it doesn't sell nose spray.

SAM

I'm afraid I have to turn down your offer, Mr. Gessler. I'd feel funny about having anything to do with taking the Jenkins show off the air. It's . . . it's more a personal reason than anything else; you wouldn't understand, I'm sure. You can put me on another assignment, if you like.

GESSLER

Oh, I can, can I? Evidently, you're forgetting the facts of life, Sam. When Harry Marks came to me and offered to sponsor a show on radio in 1940, I jumped at it. Radio was dying in those days, Sam, dying. But suddenly, there they were, a show and a sponsor, and also one little technicality. Harry Marks wanted one ex-haberdasher to be given a position on the staff.

SAM

There's no need to go over all this. I remember what happened.

GESSLER

You remember, don't you, how we made the pants salesman into a producer. Of course, we gave you the best staff in the station. There were plenty of topnotch men sitting on their cans in those days. All you had to do was to make an appearance once a day to see that everybody was getting sugar with their coffee.

SAM

I did plenty of work on that show, more than most people realize.

GESSLER

Oh, you improved, Sam. You did, and when the show went to TV, you went too. Marks saw to that.

SAM

(Almost hollering)

That show has run for ten years like a clock. What complaints have you ever had about my work?

GESSLER

Don't holler at me, Fowler. As far as I'm concerned, you can take that antique junk out of your office and clear out of here today. God only knows why Marks still wants you . . . now if you don't want to be connected with this operation, then leave - that's all, leave!

SAM

Leave . . . just leave. It's so easy for you to say.

GESSLER

Sure it is easy for me to say. I say it ten times a day.

SAM

(Astonished)

Ten times a day! Ten times a day! And what if I did leave? What do you think Mr. Marks would say to that? Would he still believe that George Gessler was a talent in shining armor?

GESSLER

If you want to leave, you can, Fowler. You're fifty-three years old and big enough to make decisions for yourself. You could probably find employment in some haberdashery, or maybe your wife could go out and work . . . but, if you're not leaving, you'll work with me, and the agency, and Marks as if nothing had ever happened. As a matter of company policy, I'll give you a week to make up your mind.

SAM

One week!

(No laughs.)

One week you're giving me, huh? You already know what my answer will be . . . Like you said, I'm a grown up man, and so are you, and another thing that we have in common is that we both need each other very badly. I need you for a paycheck, and you need me to keep a million dollar sponsor happy.

GESSLER

If that's the way you see it.

SAM

But you're still afraid of old Sam Fowler . . . afraid he won't go along with your plans, maybe he'll whisper something in Harry Mark's ear, afraid enough that you have to drag him in here like a young kid and try and scare him with your loud talk!

GEORGE

Nobody's trying to scare you. I told you the way things stand and that's the way they're going to be. Now that we both know the other's position, let's end this ridiculous discussion. I'm a busy man.

SAM

I'm glad you know the way things are going to be because I'm not so sure.

GESSLER

All right, Sam. I'm not going to sit here all morning and haggle. If you want to fight me and City Hall - - good luck!

SAM

(Sarcastically)

So now you're equating yourself with City Hall, huh?

GESSLER

I was afraid you'd take this kind of an attitude, Sam. Perhaps if you won't listen to me, you'll listen to the agency.

SAM

(Making a gesture as if bowing  
toward the east)

The agency!

GEORGE

I took the liberty to schedule a meeting for you with an agency representative. He'll be at your office at ten o'clock.

SAM

(Sarcastically)

Ten o'clock! He'll be here in fifteen minutes, huh?

GEORGE

That's right.

SAM

In fifteen minutes I intend to be in the office of Harry Marks. So perhaps you'd better have your secretary drop down to my office to keep him company.

GEORGE

I wouldn't attempt anything rash, Sam. You'll regret it, I'm sure.

SAM

I appreciate your concern, George.

(He prepares to leave.)

Well, I always like to start the day off with an invigorating conversation. Today's was more stimulating than a game of squash. Perhaps we'll get together and do this again sometime.

GEORGE

Perhaps.

SAM

I'll have my secretary give you a call when I have some spare time.



GASSER

(Looks up menacingly)

You do that, Sam. You do that!

(SAM exits.)

End of Scene Three

SCENE IV

(The outer office of Sam Fowler. The SECRETARY is typing as SAM enters. He shows signs of concern from his recent conference with Gessler.)

SAM

Look, Joan, I'm going over to Harry Marks' offices at Healthglo. I won't be back till late this afternoon.

JOAN

Do you want me to call you there if anything urgent comes up?

SAM

I guess so . . . and by the way, there'll be a man here shortly from Staley and Ross. Tell him I'm ill . . . I didn't come in today . . . you don't know when I'll be back. Tell him anything, but get rid of him.

JOAN

I'm afraid you're too late, Sir.

SAM

Too late?

JOAN

He's already here.

SAM

(Looks around)

Where?

JOAN

Well, I told him you were in a meeting so he said, "That's all right. I'll wait in his office," and he barged right by me and made himself at home.

SAM

In my office?

JOAN

What could I do, sir?

(The door to Sam's office opens and LEONARD MERWIN steps out. He is young, about twenty-eight, bespectacled, and possessed of a bright smile. His blond hair is cut short and sticks out of his scalp like porcupine needles. He is wearing a light checkered suit and loud tie. He's not at all the Madison Avenue stereotype.)

MERWIN

(Overflowing with friendship)

You did just the right thing, Miss.

(He turns to SAM.)

Leonard Merwin is the name, Mr. Fowler. Leonard Merwin.

(He thrusts out his hand for a handshake, and SAM reluctantly shakes it.)

SAM

(Wearily, as if sorry he's been caught.)

How do you do.

MERWIN

Well, it certainly is a bright, cheery morning, isn't it, sir? Shall we step into your office and get down to the old brass tacks?

SAM

Look, I'm very sorry, believe me, but something unexpected has come up. I'm afraid I'll have to cancel our meeting for today.

MERWIN

Come, come, Mr. Fowler. An appointment is an appointment.

Here it is . . . in black and white.

(He takes out his appointment book, opens it up and reads.)

Ten A.M. Sam Fowler, room 664.

(He thrusts the book at SAM.)

Here it is, sir.

SAM

(Unimpressed by his actions)

Joan, look through my book. See if I have any available time later in the week, please.

JOAN

Well, let's see. You're pretty well tied up this week . . . Contract meetings, budget conferences.

MERWIN

(Eloquently)

Grant me my stated appointment, and it will be the bright spot in your week of financial drudgery.

(SAM looks at JOAN as if to say, "Where did this guy come from?" and JOAN replies with an "I don't know" look.)

SAM

All right. All right. I suppose it is my duty to hear what the "agency" has to say. Hold all calls, Joan.

(He motions MERWIN into his inner office. After they enter, he shuts the door and leans back on it.)

Well, Merwin, what's the lowdown . . . what have they got in store for old Sam Fowler?

MERWIN

Now, now! You're rushing me, Mr. Fowler. I don't come to that line for twenty-five minutes yet.

SAM

Look, I've had a trying day today, and I've still got a lot

to do, so if you'd . . .

ERWIN

Try and see it from my point of view, sir. The agency gives me a pitch to give you that should take twenty-five minutes. How does it look if I tell you the whole bit in five minutes? Patience, please, Mr. Fowler. Patience!

SAM

You mean I've got to listen to you for twenty-five minutes before I know what the devil you're here for?

ERWIN

I'll try and cut it a little short, but I can't go back to the office till at least 10:45, and I really hate to kill time in drugstores and bars.

SAM

Oh boy, this takes the cake! This is the last straw!

ERWIN

Come now. Let's not waste time. If you'll let me start now, I'll make it brief. Believe me, I will.

SAM

I haven't got the strength to argue.

ERWIN

(He places an attache case on Sam's desk and opens it up. It contains a small stand on which are a series of flip charts. He flips the first chart.)

O.K., Mr. Fowler. Now here, look at this.

SAM

(SAM, rather fed up and lost in thought, has little interest in Erwin's pitch.)

It's . . . It's very nice.

ERWIN

Do you know what this represents? Do you?

SAM

No. I don't.

MURKIN

This chart shows that Healthful Drugs control one-third of the non-prescription market.

SAM

So why don't you say it? What's with the paper?

MURKIN

(Exasperated)

Do you think I'd show you this if I didn't have to? Do you?

SAM

Is that all you do is ask questions? What is it with you guys?

MURKIN

(He clears his throat and continues as if not hearing the last remark. He flips to the next chart.)

Now on this chart, Mr. Fowler, this bar graph. Look at what it shows us. Cough syrup sales are up point 3342, nasal spray is up point 2143, chest rub is up point 1333, and while aspirin is down point 0035, while aspirin is down, Healthful's new hemorrhoid compound is rising quickly.

SAM

So Harry is in hemorrhoids now?

MURKIN

Bringing new ease to millions, Mr. Fowler, to millions!

SAM

I always said, let Harry Marks sit around long enough and he'll come up with something new.

MURKIN

(Shocked)

Really, Mr. Fowler!

SAM

(Bo grudgingly)

I'm sorry. So what else have you got there?

MURKIN

(He flips swiftly to the next chart.)

This pie graph. This pie graph, Mr. Fowler, shows us that eighty-eight per cent of the people who buy Healthlo Drugs are over the age of twenty-one. Now . . . if eighty-eight per cent are over twenty-one, this means that only twelve per cent are under twenty-one. Right?

SAM

Right.

MURKIN

And if only twelve per cent are under twenty-one, this shows that -

SAM

(Becomes antagonistic)

Adults are sicker than kids.

MURKIN

You certainly have a ready wit, sir. . . a ready wit . . . Now, what does this tell us? Ah, let me answer . . . It tells us that kids aren't buying Healthlo products. Right?

SAM

Maybe they don't know they got hemorrhoids?

MURKIN

(Forces a laugh)

Ed - heh, yes. Now, thanks to the Staley and Ross Agency, Harry Marks has seen the light and is going all out to bring home the teenage consumer.

SAM

And what has he found to give in teenagers?

MERWIN

Very simple, Mr. Fowler . . . pimples.

(As he says this last word, he flips to a chart with a photo of a teenager with a horrible complexion.)

SAM

Pimples?

MERWIN

Right. Healthglo will have a new complexion cream on the market in ten days.

SAM

Is that what you came here to tell me?

MERWIN

Mr. Fowler, do you have to be so antagonistic toward me? Am I trying to put anything over on you? Am I wearing a Brooks Brothers suit . . . do I stand before you in black Italian shoes? No! I'm just plain old down-to-earth Leonard Merwin. So why the antagonism? Why?

SAM

How does Staley and Ross ever come to hire nuts like you?

MERWIN

Usually they don't, but I saved Staley's daughter from drowning down at Jones Beach three summers ago. Ever since then he's thought of me as some sort of messiah.

SAM

(With disbelief)

You couldn't have been a lifeguard!

MERWIN

No. Believe it or not, I worked in a boardwalk concession, selling sliced pizza.

SAM

Well, now that you're dealing in all this fancy research, you've sort of moved from one counter to another, huh?





MORWIN

I'm afraid I don't understand what you . . .

SAM

Forget it. Forget it. Look, let's cut out the rest of the malarkey and get down to business? What's the story? What's behind all these charts and everything?

MORWIN

This is it, Mr. Fowler. We've got to sell complexion cream, and Leslie Jennings couldn't grab a teenage audience if her youngest son wore a motorcycle jacket in an iron lung.

SAM

So they're going to change the program to hit the kids.

MORWIN

That's it.

SAM

But Harry Mark's stuff has been selling. Why should he quit when he's ahead?

MORWIN

Evidently you don't know the size of the teenage crowd, Mr. Fowler. There's thousands of them. They swarm home after school. They recapture the TV sets. They turn up the sound . . . everybody within an eight mile radius can hear the program they're listening to.

(He spreads his arms out in an immense arc.)

A whole household, from children to grandparents, captured for healthyle!

SAM

And you? What do you think of the change, Morwin?

MORWIN

Think? Who thinks? I wouldn't have been selling pizza's when I was twenty-five if I ever thought. I'm just paid to deliver the figures, Mr. Fowler . . . just the figures.

SAM

Ehh, it's so easy for a guy like you. You don't think of people. Everything is just a number, a pie graph. I'm different, I guess. I become involved. Sure, to some Leslie Jennings seems like nothing, but to others she's not. Here, look at today's mail. It's full of letters addressed to Leslie . . . look.

(He holds up a fist full of letters. Then he pulls one out, rips it open and unhesitatingly reads it.)

"Dear Leslie,

    Please don't give up hope now. I have faith that Jimmy . . . "

(He looks up for a moment)

That's Leslie's son.

(He resumes reading)

. . . will regain his vision. My boy was stricken with blindness when he was nine and will soon have an operation to partially restore his sight. We are praying for you and Jimmy too." Signed Mrs. Joseph Monato . . . Is that such a joke?

MERWIN

Oh, there's always a thousand of those crackpot letters coming into every program.

SAM

(Genuinely hurt by Merwin's remark)

Crackpot? Here . . . here is another.

"Dear Leslie,

    A million times I've tried to sit down and write to you and this is the first time I've ever been able to do it. Your son is very sick, and I know what a terrible thing this is for you. I hope that his sickness, unlike mine, will not drain the life from him. I hope each day that he gets better and that such a lovely woman like you will be happy again. Please don't think I'm silly for writing to you like this, but it was something I felt I should do. Sincerely yours, Selma Fow . . .

(The color seems to drain from Sam's face. He repeats the name



in a hurt whisper as he stares at the letter.)

Salma . . . Salma!

(He crumples up the letter and rapidly stuffs it in his pocket. He stares blankly ahead, and Merwin's words fall on deaf ears.)

MERWIN

Well, Mr. Fowler, you won't have to worry about those letters anymore, will you?

(SAM just stares ahead. MERWIN looks at him, waiting for a reply, then awkwardly answers his own question with a forced laugh.)

No, sir. It'll all be over in a week, and dear old Leslie Jennings will be replaced by a worried kid and a tube of complexion cream.

SAM

(He looks at MERWIN blankly, still somewhat in a shocked state.)

What . . . what's that?

MERWIN

I said, forget it. In a week Leslie Jennings will be all over.

SAM

All right . . . all right. You don't have to rub it in.

(SAM, now satisfied that MERWIN has nothing of importance to say, lets his mind wander back to his innermost thoughts. MERWIN continues to talk with his incessant flow of meaningless words.)

MERWIN

That's right. You don't have to rub it in.

(He goes into a salesman's pitch)

Yes, boys and girls, it's the first complexion cream that actually rolls on. Just take off the cap and whisk away

your social problems.

(He finishes with a broad smile, awaiting SAM's approval. SAM barely looks at him.)

SAM

Look, Mr. Merwin, please I'd appreciate it if we could finish this at some other time, maybe tomorrow. . . please.

MERWIN

(Looks at his watch.)

Well, I see I only have a minute to go anyhow. Right on the button, huh? Well, here's the punch line. Tomorrow morning, at 11:00 A.M., there'll be a preview of the show that Healthglo's considering for sponsorship. It'll be held at the agency's studio, and they'd like you to be there.

SAM

(Still blankly)

What time was that?

MERWIN

Here, why don't you write it down?

(SAM automatically reaches for his pen and the pad of paper on his desk.)

Wednesday, 11:00 A.M. . . . Staley and Ross.

SAM

(Bitterly to himself)

Nice of them to let me in on it so soon.

MERWIN

Well, that's about it.

(He folds his case and prepares to leave.)

It was a pleasure meeting you, Mr. Fowler.

(He pumps SAM'S hand.)

See you tomorrow at 11:00. Right?

SAM

(Somberly)

Tomorrow . . . 11:00.

MURWIN

Look, Mr. Fowler. Don't take these letters so hard. What if a few people do miss the thing, it's got nothing to do with you. You'll never meet any of those misfits anyhow.

SAM

(Laughs softly and ironically)

Sure. What contact does a man in my business have with people like that?

MURWIN

That's the spirit!

(He opens the door.)

Well, till tomorrow . . .

(He waves and exits.)

SAM

(As MURWIN exits, SAM picks up Selma's picture from his desk and stares at it.)

Till . . . tomorrow.

End of Scene Four

SCENE V

(The living room of Harry Mark's lavish apartment. It is late afternoon. HARRY, a middle-aged man with a rather soft, benevolent face is putting golf balls across the thickly carpeted floor into a small ring. HARRIET, the negro maid, is standing beside him.)

HARRY

All right, Harriet. Let's try it. Now pretend you're in the gallery at the tournament.

(He strikes his putting position.)

O.K. Try and rattle me.

HARRIET

But, Mister Marks, ah ain't never been to any golf tournament.

HARRY

(Exasperated)

Harriet, the club championship is important to me. The only thing that licked me last year was nerves.

HARRIET

Well, all right.

(HARRY prepares to putt, and she yells out like a baseball fan in the center field bleachers.)

Look out there, Mr. Marks . . . Heey, watch it there! Look out baby!

HARRY

(He looks up completely startled.)

That's nice, Harriet, but on a golf course it's a little more subdued. Like . . . you know . . . soft whispers and shuffling feet.



HARRIET

Yes, sir.

(HARRY resumes his putting position, and HARRIET starts again. This time in a whisper.)

I wonder if Mr. Marks is goin' to make this core shot. Lookit how he's hunched over there and his clubs shakin'.

(Just as HARRY putts, the door-bell rings, and his ball misses the circle by six inches.)

I'd better get that, sir.

(HARRIET exits.)

HARRY

I don't know. Whoever said golf was relaxing should . . .

HARRIET

(Re-entering)

Excuse me, Mr. Marks, Mr. Fowler is here to . . .

HARRY

(He brightens up as SAM enters the room.)

Sam, for crying out loud! Where have you been hiding yourself?

(They shake hands.)

SAM

Oh, you know how busy the program keeps me . . . I'm sorry to bother you at home like this, but they told me at the office that you take Tuesdays off.

HARRY

After thirteen years of work, the President should be able to take some liberties, right?

SAM

He certainly should.

HARRY

How do you like this club, Sam. Bernice just gave it to me.

(He thrust the club toward SAM.)

SAM

From what I know about golf, it looks good.

HARRY

Watch this one.

(He putts and twists as the ball just misses the circle.)

Eh, this darn lumpy rug!

SAM

Look, Harry, I really don't have much time, and it's a bit important.that . . .

HARRY

Oh, excuse me, Sam. I get so darned wrapped up in the game I can't break away. By the way, how's Selma getting along?

SAM

She's the same as always. No change.

HARRY

That's a shame, a shame. Well, I guess you heard about the program, huh, Sam?

SAM

This morning.

HARRY

Look, Sam, I tried to keep it. Believe me, I did.

SAM

Why take it off, Harry? Why?

HARRY

Look, Sam, what was there that I could do? I even tried to switch networks. Nobody will touch the thing with a ten foot pole. It's a dud. It loses listeners.

SAM

But you're selling, Harry. The goods are moving.

HARRY

So the goods are moving. We've got distribution. We advertise in magazines and newspapers.

SAM

And now you want to grab the teenagers with television, huh?

HARRY

You understand the problem. Look, Sam, I love the show. After all, whose idea was Leslie Jennings in the first place?

SAM

It was yours.

HARRY

It was mine, and now it's over. What can I do? I'm in business.

SAM

Harry, believe me, it's more than just business, it's people. The people who've followed that show for years.

HARRY

Please, Sam, I don't want to discuss it. Believe me when I say I know how you feel. But there's nothing to be done. I'm handcuffed.

SAM

Let's just spend a . . .

HARRY

Hold it a second. I want to tell Bernice you're here.

(He walks to hallway and yells through.)

Bernice! Bernice! Sam's here. C'mon in for a second.

(He turns back toward SAM.)

Day and night she putters around with cosmetics and cards and goodness knows what else.

SAM

Couldn't we just spend a few minutes to discuss . . .

HARRY

(Continues talking, trying to keep SAM off the subject.)

Gosh, it's been so long since I've seen you. I do wish you'd come over once and a while. You're still my brother-in-law, you know.

(BARNICE enters from the hallway. She is short, a little on the stout side. She is heavily made up, and her hair is a shade of dyed black. She is extremely well dressed.)

BARNICE

Well, Sam, what brings you here?

SAM

Just a little business with Harry. You're looking good, Barnice. Lost a little weight, I see.

BARNICE

A little. I don't suppose you brought Selma with you.

SAM

She's still sick. Legs don't get better so fast.

BARNICE

Oh.

SAM

Why don't you go up to see your sister once and a while?

BARNICE

I've been so busy. You know, bridge clubs and charities.

HARRY

Sam's upset because Leslie Jennings is going off the air.

BARNICE

Really, Sam. That show is so corny. On radio it was all right, but on TV . . .

HARRY

See what I mean? The public thinks it's junk today.

SAM

All right. All right. Let's not get in an argument over the thing. I didn't come here to argue. I came because I have something to say, something to get off my chest.

BERNICE

Excuse me a second, Sam. I've got a few things to do before supper.

SAM

Bernice, please. I know we haven't been a close family, but what I have to say affects us all, in more ways than one. So please, for a second, sit down.

HARRY

(To Bernice)

Whatever you're doing can wait!

BERNICE

Really, Harry! You're the first one to holler when everything isn't just right around here.

HARRY

Bernice!

(Turns to SAM.)

Well, Sam, what is it?

SAM

You know what the Leslie Jennings show has meant to people over the past few . . .

HARRY

Sam, if you're going to start that again, I don't want to listen.

SAM

But it isn't just people in general, it's . . . it's, Selma too.

HARRY

Selma?

SAM

Please, try and understand this. Selma believes in the show. To her, Leslie Jennings and her family are real people.

BESSIE

So what? After the show's off the air, she'll forget about them.

SAM

That's what I used to think. How can actors on a twenty-one inch screen mean anything to anybody . . . but they do.

HARRY

(Astonished)

You're the producer of the show, Sam. For crying out loud, it should be easy enough for you to tell her.

SAM

Ten years ago maybe I could have. In those days I thought it was funny. Here I was producing a show and my own wife took the lousy thing seriously . . . so I humored her. She was sick. Then . . . then I began to see that those people really meant something to her.

BESSIE

It's still absurd, Sam. Nobody is really taken in by a soap opera.

SAM

Nobody's taken in huh? Tell me, what else was there for her. She was a cripple, living in a lonely apartment. Who could she meet? Who did she see? It isn't so ridiculous that the world became Leslie Jennings. It wasn't so hard, believe me.

HARRY

And you never told her!

SAM

If you could have been there the nights I'd come home and listen to the problems that Leslie had. Night after night, Harry. It was like the Jennings family were her own flesh

and blood. How could I tell her otherwise? It gave her something to do . . . to think about.

BERTICE

To think about! The way you kept her up there on the fourth floor it's no wonder she had nothing to think about.

SAM

She wanted to stay in that apartment. You know that. Tell me, how many times have you been up to visit with your sister in the past few years?

BERTICE

I tried to see her. How many times did I go up there when she first got sick and she wouldn't allow me in the door?

SAM

Ha! That's the first time I've ever heard you admit that you'd even tried to see her.

BERTICE

Sure I tried. She's my own sister. The nerve of her not allowing me in that door.

SAM

The nerve of her! After what you did!

HARRY

Sam, please. It's been thirteen years. There's no need to go into this.

SAM

Thirteen years! Thirteen years I've kept it inside me. Do you know what you did to that woman, Bertice?

BERTICE

Why me? Who says it was me?

HARRY

Look, Sam, what does this have to do with the show?

SAM

We're not talking about the show. We're talking about my wife. We're talking about the day her father died and left

the store to his two daughters.

BERNICE

It was my privilege to do anything I wanted with my half of the property!

SAM

Sure, it was your privilege. So why couldn't you have sold it to me? Why a stranger?

BERNICE

The war had just ended. You'd just gotten out of the army. What money did you have?

SAM

It would have taken a few years. I would have paid you.

BERNICE

It was my half. I could do anything I wanted with it.

SAM

It just about killed your sister when that . . . that "stranger" walked in and took half of the store . . . your own father's store. It was like taking away half of his memory . . . his life. Do you know what that did to your sister, Bernice? Do you?

BERNICE

If you're trying to say that it was that that crippled her legs, you're crazy, Sam! Any doctor can tell you that!

SAM

I've had every specialist in the city look at her legs, and they can't tell me a thing. They can't tell me why a perfectly healthy woman should lose the use of her legs one week after her sister sells the store to a stranger!

BERNICE

It had nothing to do with it, Sam!

SAM

It had plenty to do with it! She didn't want to see that store anymore. Can't you understand that? That store was her life. She wanted to remember it the way it was, so she left one day and never went back!



BERNICE

If my selling had that effect on her, what happened when you and the "stranger" as you call him, ran the place into bankruptcy one year later?

SAM

Nothing.

BERNICE

Nothing? You mean she didn't care that the store was lost completely?

SAM

She never knew. It wasn't difficult to keep it a secret from her. The lawyers understood, thank God.

HARRY

You mean she thinks you still have the store?

SAM

Yes.

HARRY

All these years?

BERNICE

How could you do such a thing?

SAM

How could I do it? How couldn't I do it? She was my wife. I loved the woman. Could I see her destroyed because of a lousy store? Wasn't it enough that she lost the use of her legs?

HARRY

But Sam, when I got you the job at the network . . . you could have told her . . . she would have understood.

SAM

What job, Harry? I work in the store from nine to five every day, except Friday, of course, when we're open till eight.

HARRY

And when you come home at night?

SAM

I talk about the store.

HARRY

My God, what you've done to that woman's life.

SAM

What I've done! I've made her as happy as she could ever be in her condition. I've given her the only life she wants.

BENNIE

I'm shocked! I can't believe it!

SAM

I'm glad you're finally moved in some direction in regard to your sister's condition. Maybe now you'll understand why it's important to me that her life remains unchanged, that she keeps on hearing about who's buying new underwear, and that Leslie Jennings keeps on having troubles upon troubles.

HARRY

You mean you're asking me to keep the pro ra: on just because of one woman . . . Silvia?

SAM

I'm not asking, Harry. I'm begging you.

BENNIE

She'd find something else to become attached to if Jennings left the air.

SAM

Once already you've taken a family and a life away from her. Do I have to go through the agony of seeing it happen again?

HARRY

Sam, I want you to realize something. Remember when we were kids how we were always together.

(No laughs reminiscently.)

People used to ask us if we were brothers. Remember?

(SAM nods.)

I've never forgotten those days, Sam, and when Bennie sold

her half of the store, I knew it wasn't the proper thing to do to you. I never felt right about it.

BERNICE

Proper thing! You took the money quick enough. It built your business.

HARRY

I took the money because you wouldn't leave me alone till I did . . . You wanted to be the big manipulator behind Healthglo's success.

BERNICE

You were nothing till you had that money!

HARRY

An you think that a few thousand bucks made us one of the nation's biggest drug firms? I'm sorry I ever saw that money. It's been on my conscience ever since.

BERNICE

I'll bet it has.

HARRY

Sam, believe me. My hands were tied. I knew how much the place meant to you and Selma, but there was nothing I could do . . . later, when I saw a chance to help you out, I did. I got you the job.

BERNICE

This is the thanks you get for doing him a favor!

HARRY

Bernice, please! But times have changed, Sam. Ten years ago Healthglo was a small company, remember? We sold a few cough drops and some aspirins and that was it. But we've grown. You've seen it. Sure I'm the president, but I can't call the shots just like that anymore. We have stockholders, a board. I just don't run around making decisions. There's college boys working for me . . . research men . . . advertising men . . . accountants. They tell me what to do and I do it. If I don't, I look like a fool.

SAM

You mean you . . . Harry Marks, the president of Healthglo, can't make a simple decision?

HARRY

Sam, for crying out loud, I told you one . . . the networks wouldn't let us, and two, . . . we've got a new consumer group to hit.

BERNICE

You might as well face it, Sam, Leslie Jennings is finished.

HARRY

She is, Sam.

SAM

Finished. I wish I could tell you how many times I've wished that damn show was finished . . . but somehow, somehow I've had the feeling that once Leslie Jennings went, everything would crumble. That so show Salva would find out about the store, and about me. I don't know what I felt that way, but I just had to keep her happy. I had to keep her in her own world.

BERNICE

You've kept her happy all right.

SAM

(Frustrated and beaten)

What can I do to make you understand? What does it take?

(He reaches in his pocket and slowly pulls out the crumpled letter.)

I wish I didn't have to show you this. I guess there's no need for pride anymore.

(He hands the letter to HARRY. HARRY scans the letter lightly at first, then stares unbelieving at the signature. When he looks up, he understands the urgency of SAM's plight for the first time.)

HARRY

(Softly)

Sam . . . Sam, there's no need for this. I'll go back with you now. We'll tell her the truth. It won't be as bad as you think . . . We've got to try.

(BERNICE grabs the letter from HARRY'S hand and begins to read it.)

SAM

We'll tell her nothing . . . Nothing has happened yet.

HARRY

Tomorrow, at 11:00, we're looking at the new show. What other evidence do you need?

SAM

(Wearily)

I know. I know. But I can't believe it yet. God only knows what will happen . . . maybe . . .

HARRY

Maybe you'll think about it tonight.

BERNICE

(Finishing the letter)

Maybe you'll come to your senses.

(She waves the letter at SAM.)

Allowing this to happen to your own wife. It's disgraceful.

SAM

(Beaten, he prepares to leave.)

Maybe this and maybe that . . . who knows? Who knows that a life would ever come to something like this.

HARRY

You'll be there tomorrow at 11:00, won't you? I told Gessler and Staley that I wanted your O.K. on the thing before it went through.

SAM

A courtesy toward me, huh, Harry?

HARRY

You deserve it, Sam . . . perhaps the new show will be something that Selma will like.

SAM

She'll watch it whether she likes it or not. What else is there for her to do?

HARRY

(Pleading)

Sam . . . Sam, let me go with you now. Let's straighten this thing out . . . for Selma's sake.

SAM

(Restraining him)

Please, Harry . . . Please.

(He opens the door to exit.)

Goodbye, Bernice. I'll give your regards to Selma.

B. HILL

If it won't upset her.

HARRY

Sam?

(Trying to make a last minute appeal.)

SAM

(SAM only nods solemnly.)

Goodbye, Harry.

(Fade to black)

SCENE VI

(SAM wearily enters his apartment. He hangs up his coat and stands still for a second, rubbing his eyes, trying to relieve the day's strain.)

SELMA

Sam, is that you?

SAM

Ya. It's me.

SELMA

Did you bring a paper?

SAM

I forgot.

SELMA

You come home late and on top of that you forgot the paper!

(SAM enters the living room.)

SAM

I'm sorry, dear. Believe me.

SELMA

(Astonished)

Sam! What's wrong . . . your face!

SAM

Nothing's wrong.

SELMA

Something happened at the store.

SAM

( ruff)

Nothing happened at the store. Nothing's wrong.

SARMA

You don't have to yell.

SAM

That darn television is on so loud; who can hear himself speak!

SARMA

So turn it off now. You're home. We'll talk.

(SAM walks over and shuts off  
the set.)

So tell me, what happened?

SAM

Nothing at all. Nothing. It was just an ordinary day . . .  
an ordinary day.

SARMA

I put a couple of chicken pies in the oven. They're pro-  
bably warm now.

SAM

You shouldn't have bothered. I could have done it.

SARMA

Well, you were so late, I thought you'd be hungry when you  
got home.

SAM

Your legs feel stronger?

SARMA

Ya. A little.

SAM

(He goes to the oven and takes  
out the chicken pies.)

I think they're done now.

(He carries them to the dining  
room table, and then goes into



the living room to help SELMA.)

SELMA

Oh, Sam, I wish I wasn't such a burden on you. Maybe some day . . .

SAM

Sure . . . sure, some day . . .

(He helps her into the dining room and seats her. Then he puts down some silverware and they begin to eat.)

Needs a bit of salt.

SELMA

They never have enough seasoning in these things. By the way, Harold called today.

SAM

Called me? Harold who?

SELMA

Not you. He called Leslie Jennings, his wife. He had a feeling something was wrong at home.

SAM

Please, Selma. Do I have to hear about that woman every night?

SELMA

Sam, she's in trouble.

SAM

Please, not tonight, dear . . . please!

SELMA

Something happened today. I know it.

SAM

Look, dear. Leslie Jennings is an actress. Her problems are just made up. It's a play . . . a TV show.

SELMA

So, how many people's problems aren't made up?

SAM

That . . . that's not the point.

SELMA

Today, Sam, she was waiting at home. She knew Jimmy was being operated on . . . and then the call. What can she say to Harold? How can she keep a secret from him?

SAM

It's just a story!

SELMA

(She becomes emotional)

But if she only had a little happiness in her life, instead of one thing after another. Just a little happiness.

SAM

If she makes you so miserable, why watch her? There's other programs on.

SELMA

(Almost sobbing)

I can't . . . I can't . . .

SAM

(Almost hollering)

I don't want to have to say this again, Selma. She's not real . . . the whole thing's a fake. It's just there to sell aspirins!

SELMA

Why do you have to yell at me like that, Sam? What else do I have to do all day? You're at the store. I'm along, so she's my companion. What's so wrong?

SAM

It's wrong for you to be attached to her.

SELMA

She's in trouble . . . I have a little sympathy for her, that's all.

.....

.....

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SAM

(Blurts out words before realizing it.)

And you send her letters.

SELMA

How do you know?

SAM

I ... I ...

SELMA

How do you know?

SAM

The postman told me.

SELMA

(Sobs)

I can't help it . . . I can't help it, Sam . . . that's just the way I am.

(She cries embarrassedly to herself. SAM is overought and uncomfortable, both with himself and Selma. SELMA looks up and attempts to regain her composure. She attempts a faint smile.)

Well, did the manufacturer come through with the delivery yet . . . the bathing suits?

The bathing . . . the bath . . .

(He is too overcome by his conflicting emotions to answer. He throws down his fork and hurriedly leaves the table.)

SELMA

(Astonished)

Where are you going?

SAM

Out for a walk . . . so a air.

SUELA

But your supper. It isn't finished!

SAM

I'll be back in a while. Leave the dishes.

SUELA

I didn't mean to . . .

SAM

I'll be back.

(He slams the door.)

SUELA

Sam!

The end of Scene Six

SCENE VII

(A room just outside of the Staley and Ross Television Studio. Seated around a TV set are ED STALEY, an immaculately dressed man with a very gracious air about him; HARRY MARKS and GEORGE GESSLER. LEONARD MERWIN enters.)

MERWIN

Barlow says he'll be ready to take it right at 11:00, Mr. Staley.

STALEY

Fine . . . Fine.

(MERWIN exists and STALEY turns to HARRY.)

Well, Harry, I think we've got a real winner for you . . . a real winner.

(He pats him on the knee.)

Wait and see.

GESSLER

We're behind it a hundred per cent, Ed . . . a good popular music show is just what the Doctor ordered.

HARRY

I'm sure it'll be fine.

(He looks around anxiously.)

I wonder where Sam is? He know it was to be at 11:00.

STALEY

He'll be right along. He's always punctual . . . always.

GESSLER

Well, if he doesn't make it, we can roll it without him. I'm sure he'd go along with any selection we made.

HARRY

We'll wait for Sam. He'll be here.

GEESLER

Look, Harry, you're pretty well set on this kind of a show, aren't you?

HARRY

Unless the thing's a real dud, the company will take it.

GEESLER

Then why the concern over Fowler's presence?

HARRY

Because the man's been connected with us for a long time, that's all.

STALEY

And he's done a splendid job, too.

GEESLER

But right from the very start we all felt he might not like the idea of this change . . . didn't we?

STALEY

We all knew he was rather attached to the show, after all, it was ten years of his work.

GEESLER

I don't know. It just seems strange to have all this sentiment over a business transaction.

HARRY

I want Sam's decision. It's important.

GEESLER

But suppose he says no. If he's so attached to this Jennings thing, there's a good chance he will.

STALEY

Oh, I'm sure he'll . . .

HARRY

I don't care whether he says yes or no, George. I just want Sam to make a decision, that's all.

GUSSELER

And you'll accept the show in either event?

HARRY

My advertising man has been working on the thing for two months. He says it's good. What's left for me to decide?

STANLEY

Now, don't feel that way about it, Harry. I'm sure you'll like it too . . .

HARRY

I'm sure.

(MURKIN enters - with SAM following behind him.)

MURKIN

Look who I found outside.

STANLEY

Sam! Glad you could make it.

SAM

(Rather somberly)

Good morning, Ed.

(They shake hands. Then he looks at GUSSELER.)

Well, George, I didn't expect to see you here. Another invigorating morning, huh?

(They shake hands.)

GUSSELER

(Forced joviality)

Thought I'd drop in . . . like to keep on top of things, you know.

SAM

(Reaches over and shakes HARRY'S hand.)

Harry.



HARRY

(Quietly)

Sam . . . I . . . You thought it over didn't you . . . our discussion?

SAM

Don't worry, Harry.

WINNIE

Well, there's just one minute to go . . . if anybody has to.

STALBY

Please, Leonard, we'll dispense with the studio warmup today.

WINNIE

Just trying to add a little auspiciousness to the occasion.

STALBY

(Laughs embarrassedly and looks around nervously at the others.)

Saved my daughter's life, you know . . . wonderful boy!

GEORGE

Looks like they're starting.

STALBY

Right you are, George. Kill those lights over there, Leonard.

(The lights go off and only the glow from the screen illuminates their faces.)

Wait till you see the quartet that we've got to open the show with. Great entertainers . . . just great.

(The show begins, and the announcer's voice is heard.)

ANNOUNCER

Glow, the roll-on complexion cream presents - THE TEEJAGE  
PERFORMERS.

(The picture is now filled by four swarthy, greasy haired entertainers in long lapelled tuxedos. They're

standing in a row sideways to the camera. Throughout their opening number they make a number of noticeably rehearsed movements en masse. Raucous music heralds their opening lines. )

### The Quartet

Ba - Ba - Ba, Ba - Ba - Ba -  
Ba - Ba - Ba, Ba - Ba - Bah  
Baaa - Dew - wee

You're listening to Teenage Turntable  
Brought to you by Glow  
Shoe-Bee-Dew, Dew-Bee

For the rock 'n roll sounds,  
It's the Turntable Show, you know  
Shoe-Bee-Dew, Dew-Bee

So gather round kids while  
The wildest cats do blow  
Shoe-Bee-Dew, Dew-Bee

We got Gee-tarr music  
To chill your little spines  
Shoe-Bee-Dew, Dew-Bee

And some really gutty sax  
To make you feel just fine  
Shoe Bee-Dew, Dew-Bee.

So set your deals for a  
Thirty minute swinging time.

(The camera pulls back to reveal a hoard of gum chewing teenagers packed together in the small studio area, doing a varied assortment of so called dance steps. The quartet now loosely claps their hands as they go into their final chorus.)

Well now, Glow eveebody, Glow  
Well now, Glow everybody, Glow  
Well now, Glow everybody, Glow.

(FREDIE PRITCH, the M.C., a slick-haired man in a three button suit, barges through the dancers and then nonchalantly steps through the quartet. A huge, snoring sort of grin spreads

across his face as he waves to the TV audience.)

FREDDIE

Well, now, Glow everybody, glow, and welcome to the Teenage Turntable Show.

(There's a burst of clapping, whistling and yelling.)

This is your old D.J., Freddie French, bringing you thirty more big minutes of all the tops in pops, thanks to that wonderful new complexion cream . . . Glow. Roll on Glow, and Roll away complexion cares. And now let's get rolling ourselves with the number ten platter all across the nation today. It's the Four Eagles and their waxing of "La-La Mama."

(The music bursts out and the kids again begin dancing at a feverish pace. The camera takes different shots of the boys' haircuts, the girls' tight skirts and the glassy-eyed lovebirds lost in each others arms. The camera then cuts back to the viewing room.)

SEALBY

That Freddie French can really sell it, huh, George?

GEORGE

Great entertainer . . . Great.

(Music plays for an instant then we cut to close-up of FARRY'S face. It is filled with bewilderment. He looks at the others nervously. The picture cuts back to Freddie French, who is now interviewing two teenagers. They nervously shift and gawk at the camera as he talks to them.)

FREDDIE

(To girl)

And what's your name, please?

HEL

Patricia Donovan.

FREDDIE

And what brought you down to THE ALE PONTIABLE today?

GIRL

(Shifts her eyes around and nervously clicks her gum.)

I dunno, I guess ta dance on TV or somethin'.

FREDDIE

And how about you, young fella?

BOY

(Stares solemnly at the floor)

I dunno, ta dance, I guess.

FREDDIE

(Trying to end the dismal interview jovially.)

Ah, hah, well let's give them their chance to dance now as they lead it off with the Gringles recording of "Mamoorita."

(The dancers swarm around them as the music starts. The camera cuts to the face of GOSSETT. His expression is black. After a moment, it cuts back to FREDDIE who is now holding a tube of Glow.)

FREDDIE

So don't spend any more dateless weekends. All your problems can be solved by merely rolling on Glow and rolling away care. Live like the movie stars do and do it with Glow.  
 . . . Now, Number Three this week, two places up on the charts.  
 . . . The Hot Rods and "No - No Baby."

(The music and the dancing starts. The camera cuts to face of STANLEY. He too is virtually stoic and unimpressed by the proceeding. Perhaps bewildered like the others. After a moment, the camera cuts back to Freddie who is now standing with a quartet. Three of them stand there rather bored at it all, while the fourth tries to exit the personality of the entire group, through his interview with Freddie.)

FREDDIE

And you've been singing together for how long?

LEADER

Well, ah, I'd say now on an' off for, ah, about eight months or so that we been singin' together as a group.

FREDDIE

And "Drive-In Dolly" has been the first one to really out for you, huh?

LEADER

Yes, ah, I'd say that "Drive-In Dolly" on the Gringo Label, has been our most prominent seller in sales so far to date.

FREDDIE

O.K., kids, let's listen to The Pidgeons as they do "Drive-In Dolly."

(As the Pidgeons go into their number the camera cuts to a close-up of SAM. His face shows disillusionment, bewilderment and almost tears. The picture then cuts back to FREDDIE.)

FREDDIE

So make it back again tomorrow at this same time. We'll have more platters, patter and dancing, all for you on the TEEWEE TURNTABLE SHOW!

(The camera zooms out and with this the greasy quartet jogs back on stage and in front of the dancing heard they go into their rollicking finale.)

THE QUARTET

You've been listening to TEEWEE TURNTABLE  
Brought to you by Glow  
Shoe-Be-Dew-Dew-Dee

For the rock 'n roll sounds  
It's the . . .

(ED STALLEY steps forward and shuts off the set. The lights in the room go on.)

GEISLER

Well, Harry, I think you've got a real smash here. Congratulations.

(He pats HARRY on the back, and HARRY smiles at him politely.)

STALEY

(Turns to HARRY.)

I know you'd love it, George. Plenty of sponsor identification through the thing. It'll really sell. What do you think, Harry?

HARRY

(Dejectedly)

Fine . . . It will do just fine.

MURWIN

(MURWIN talks, but no one listens.)

I thought Freddie was just stirring today . . . stirring! What talent!

HARRY

(He turns to SAM.)

Well, Sam.

(There's silence in the room.)

SAM

(Halfheartedly)

I liked it very much, Harry. Very much.

HARRY

(Shaken and Surprised)

Well . . . er . . . I guess we have a hit on our hands, huh, boys?

(He smiles.)

GEISLER

Harry, old boy, the kids will eat this thing right up. A rock 'n' roll show hasn't missed yet.

SPALLEY

How about dropping down to my office for a little toast? Profile will be down there. I know he'd like to meet you boys.

GILBERT

Great idea, Ed. Oh, by the way, Sam. I think it would be a good idea if you went over the publicity releases. They'll be going out in time for the Sunday papers.

SAM

I'll get right to it.

SPALLEY

C'mon on. Let's not talk shop now. Not with that scotch downstairs.

(SPALLEY, GILBERT and BOB HARR pour through the door laughing and talking. HARRY trails behind them. SAM, who's still in the room, calls to him.)

SAM

Harry . . . Harry, what did you think of it?

HARRY

(He shrugs his shoulders.)

Who knows? What could I do?

(GILBERT re-enters, looks at SAM suspiciously and then slaps HARRY on the back.)

GILBERT

C'mon, Harry, old boy. Never turn down a free drink, even if it is charged to your own account.

(HARRY looks searchingly at SAM for a moment, then exits, leaving SAM alone.)

End of Scene Seven

SCENE VIII

(The tailor comes out Sunday morning. SAM is sitting at a table of sewing while MAM lights his pipe and picks up the Sunday paper.)

SAM

Ah, Sunday. One day a week of relaxation.

MAM

It's a beautiful day. The first real warm one we've had.

SAM

The draft from that window isn't too much for you?

MAM

No, it's nice for a change. I can remember how it used to sit by that window on Sundays and holler down to the kids on the street to keep quiet.

SAM

And they never paid any attention to him.

MAM

He didn't care. He like kids, he liked noise, and he liked to holler.

SAM

The only people he never hollered at were his customers. I don't know how he controlled himself.

MAM

And on Sundays he would stand in the kitchen all day while he'd make enough pie and cake to last the whole year.

SAM

It was the aroma of war up to pie that attracted us to this house.



SARAH

Ah, you can't fool me. It wasn't a girl like you were looking for in those days.

RAY

And it wasn't your sister either, like you used to think.

SARAH

Such silly times we had then.

SIM

(Carefully looking through the paper, page by page.)

Ya . . . they, sure were.

SARAH

Sam, were you ever attracted to my sister?

SIM

(Not hearing her)

What?

SARAH

What's so important in the paper that you can't listen to me.

SIM

Oh . . . nothing; . . . nothing . . .

SARAH

Did Louise ever attract you, Sam?

SAM

(Disconcertedly)

Of course not . . . why?

SARAH

You might have been better off with me instead of me, a cripple.

SAM

You're not a cripple . . . and I'm perfectly happy. So why the discussion?

SILVA

Oh, just talking, that's all.

SAM

Well, whattya know. I guess you're going to loose a friend.

SILVA

Loose a friend?

SAM

Yep. Listen to what Jimmy Kien says here in his TV column. "For the first time in ten years Leslie Jennings, the perpetually troubled housewife, will not be seen or heard on the airwaves. Starting this Monday, TV's oldest soap opera will be replaced by a new teenage rock 'n roll party. The new show, THE AGE TEENABLES, will be M.C.'d by former jazz musician turned disc jockey, Freddie French, and will be supported by Leslie Jennings' longtime sponsor, Health-Alo Drugs. The reason for the sudden switch, according to network officials is to keep pace with the public's demand for more popular music on TV."

SILVA

It's some kind of joke . . . for publicity . . . they would 't take Leslie off the air.

SAM

(He gets up and brings the paper to her.)

Here . . . look . . . read it for yourself.

(He thrusts the paper at her.)

SILVA

(Pushing the paper away)

Sam, please. I don't want to see it. It's not true . . . you know it . . .

SAM

How long are you going to go on like this?

SILVA

Go on like what?

SAM

Go on believing just what you want to and nothing else.

SARMA

You're talking crazy, Sam.

SAM

I'm talking crazy. You're right . . . I've been talking crazy for ten years. It's all going to end now!

SARMA

Calm down, Sam. The neighbors . . .

SAM

You're coming with me, Sarma. We're going out.

(He grasps her roughly by the arms and tries to lift her from the chair.)

SARMA

Out where? What are you doing?

SAM

We're going downstairs . . . outside . . . you'll enjoy it.

SARMA

My legs, Sam . . . you remember the last time I tried it . . . my legs!

SAM

That was eight years ago. You're stronger now . . . you won't fall.

SARMA

You're hurting me.

SAM

We've got to go out, Sarma.

SARMA

Why?

SAM

We're going to the store. I'm taking you to the store.

SELMA

I know what the store's like . . . there's no need to go .

(He lets go of her and tries  
to sway her by reason.)

There's been a change. I want you to see it.

SELMA

Just tell me about it. That's enough.

SAM

It won't be. You don't believe anything I tell you anymore. You just believe what you want to . . . what you see on that . . . that screen.

SELMA

I'm crippled. It's the best I can do.

SAM

It's not, damn it, it's not. That screen isn't life, and that newspaper isn't life, and me speaking to you isn't life. For a life you have to live, see, feel, touch, experience.

SELMA

I'm sick now, but I can remember.

SAM

You can remember your mother and your father and the store, and that's all . . . but that's over . . . they're ghosts . . . they've been ghosts for fifteen years, can't you understand that?

SELMA

I can't forget those days. They were beautiful . . . beautiful.

SAM

You're going down these stairs, Selma. Four flights. Then we'll drive to the store. Just one look, that's all I want you to take, one look.

SOLMA

I'm not . . . not going. Pa's gone . . . Ma . . . the family. I don't want to see it . . . not anymore. As long as I know it's there, and you're working, I'm happy.

SAM

(He grabs her by the shoulders and turns her toward him.)

Solma, look at me. Please look at me. Believe what I'm going to tell you . . . believe it! The store is different now. There's been more changes than you think.

(There is a loud knocking at the door. SAM freezes.)

SAM

It's Sunday. Who could be here on Sunday?

SOLMA

I don't know.

SAM

(Hollers)

Who is it!

(The knocking persists. SAM looks briefly at SOLMA. Then turns.)

Who is it!

(Knocking persists.)

All right. I'm coming.

(Sam goes to the door and opens it. HARRY HARRIS stands before him.)

Harry!

HARRY

I'm sorry to bother you, Sam, but ever since the show I've felt so guilty, forcing you into a position like that. I don't know how I ever . . .

SALMA

(Hearing voices from other room)

Who is it?

HARRY

(To SAM)

Salma! After all these years. Sam . . . Sam, could I see her? Please.

SALMA

Bring them in, whoever it is.

SAM

Look, Harry. Go. Please go. It'll do no good.

HARRY

I'd like to see her, Sam. I couldn't help what Bernice did . . . I never wanted that money!

SAM

You know the situation . . . Selma's condition. You mustn't say anything.

HARRY

Sam, please, I promise!

SAM

(Leads HARRY into the living room)

It's Harry. Harry Marks.

SALMA

(She's a little shaken at seeing him and acts coolly toward him.)

Oh, Harry. It's such a surprise to see you here.

HARRY

(Nervously)

You look wonderful, Selma. You haven't changed much . . . just wonderful!

SALMA

Oh, I'm a sick woman. Who looks good when they're sick? You're looking nice, though, grayer a little.

HARRY

We're all getting older.

SALMA

That's right. Well, I suppose Bernice is getting along just fine.

HARRY

(Nervously)

She is. She's very busy now. You know, clubs, committees . . . clubs.

SALMA

That's nice.

HARRY

I'd like to bring Bernice over to see you sometime. Maybe we could get together some night . . . play gin . . . like the old days.

SALMA

(Softly)

We'll play cards, and it will be the old days, huh?

HARRY

(Anxiously)

Look, Selma, Bernice . . .

SAM

(Interrupting Harry)

Would you like something to eat, Harry? Some fruit, a piece of cake?

HARRY

(Becoming flustered by the situation)

No . . . no, Sam.

(He blurts out the next sentence before he realizes what he's saying.)

I just came to tell you that I was sorry about . . .

(He catches himself.)

SAM

(Attempting to cover up the slip)

Sorry about the change in the store. What's it got to do with you?

SALMA

You saw it, Harry? The change?

HARRY

(Caught in the web of the conversation)

Yes . . . yes, of course.

SALMA

Sam was just about to tell me about it when you came in.

SAM

I don't like to make changes; you know how nice the store was . . . it makes me nervous to tell Salma.

HARRY

Yes . . . yes, certainly.

SALMA

You wouldn't believe how conscientious Sam is about the store. Twenty years ago he wouldn't step foot in the place. He wanted to be a big executive, a millionaire.



HARRY

The war . . . the army . . . it changed a lot of people.

SELMA

He works now. Just like Pa. Pa would be so proud of you, Sam. So proud.

(She turns to HARRY.)

You remember Mrs. Morris, don't you, Harry?

HARRY

Mrs. Morris, the woman who lived two floors above me?

SELMA

She's living in Florida now. Sam tells me her boy was in the other day for some slacks.

HARRY

Lennie? I thought in the war he was . . .

SAM

(Interrupts HARRY)

He was wounded.

HARRY

(Shaken)

Yes . . . yes, he was wounded.

SELMA

I always liked that boy so much. Maybe he'll come to visit someday.

HARRY

That would be nice. I . . . I've got to be going now. Bernice is making lunch. It . . . it was so nice to see you again, Selma, so nice.

SELMA

You know, we've had our differences, Harry, but somehow I've always thought of you as a gentleman. It was nice seeing you again.

HARRY

Thank you, Selma. Goodbye.

(He turns quickly and heads for the door. SAM follows him. Before leaving, HARRY turns to SAM.)

Sam, . . . if I'd known sooner . . . If we'd kept in touch . . .

SAM

Is! We're brother-in-laws and what do we know of each other?

HARRY

Sam . . . Sam, I don't know how to say this to you. Ever since the show the other day I've had trouble saying it to myself, Sam. I looked at that TV screen and I saw those dancers and that music - that noise - and I said to myself, "That's what I stand for. After fifty-three years of my life, that's what Harry Marks stands for." But, Sam, try and understand. There's nothing I can do. I'm not even Harry Marks anymore. I'm Healtalo. I'm a figure on the stock report . . . How do you think I felt when I saw that . . . that "show," when I thought of Selma. I felt sick, Sam, sick to my stomach.

(He lowers his voice.)

And what made it worse was that I dragged you along with me. If you walked away from me now and never spoke to me again, you'd be right in doing it, Sam.

SAM

Keeping Jennings on wouldn't have done any good, Harry. This had to come.

HARRY

Sure, this had to come for Selma, and God only knows how many others. But what now, Sam? What about this . . . "music" show that I'm sponsoring . . . the kids who'll watch it? They're not just percentages, like my agency wants me to think . . . They're people. I'm handling people's lives and I haven't been able to handle my own . . . or my family's.

SAM

Harry, there's no need to . . .

HARRY

(Pleading)

Do me one favor, Sam. Stay with me through this . . . please. I've made some mistakes . . . you . . . Silvia . . . but maybe we'll straighten this mess out. Maybe we'll have a chance to do some sort of good. I'll try . . . who knows, maybe it's too late, but I'll try.

SAM

Try? I've tried to do what's right for so long. I don't know right from wrong anymore.

HARRY

Please, Sam!

SAM

I'll go along with you, Harry. I always have.

HARRY

(He is deeply moved. He clasps SAM'S hand between his.)

Sam . . . . .

(HARRY stops for a moment to regain his composure.)

And what about the show . . . when the new show goes on? Have you told her about it?

SAM

I've told her.

HARRY

And she understands?

SAM

Sometimes I think she'll never understand. She'll tune in at four and when there's a different program, Leslie Jennings will become a ghost - - a dream along with the others she lives with

HARRY

Sam!

SAM

Maybe this time it'll be different, Harry. Maybe she'll realize what Leslie Jennings is. Perhaps it'll be the beginning. I hope it is . . . Oh, God, I hope it is.

The End of Scene Eight

SCENE IX

(A slide used as a station promo, reading "Next in Sight", is seen on the screen.)

## ANNOUNCER

Next in sight on Channel Three, the premiere of "THE TUNABLE SHOW," Stay tuned.

(The picture goes to black and then comes up on a slide that reads "THE TUNABLE SHOW." Rock 'n roll music is brought up in the background.)

## ANNOUNCER

Glow, the new roll on complexion cream presents THE TUNABLE SHOW with Freddie French,

(The picture cuts to the grousy quartet who begin their song.)

## THE QUARTET

Ba-Ba-Ba, Ba - Ba - Ba, - Ba - Ba - Ba, Ba - Ba - Ba, Baaaa,  
Dew - Weee

(The picture cuts to the control room. SAM is standing quietly in the back watching the monitors. Cut back to show. FREDDIE is now on stage and after the brief opening bit, he is starting the show.

## FREDDIE

So let's glow everybody and swing out to the music of the Suedes and their recording of "DON'T."

(The music starts, and the kids begin to dance. We cut back to a closeup of SAM. The music becomes loud and grotesque. It's intermingled with bits of chatter denoting the passage of time in the show. We cut back

momentarily to a shot of the dancers spinning wildly and then cut to a long shot of the Fowler living room. SAMMA is seated with her back toward the camera. The THUNDER show shatters the stillness of the room. The picture cuts back to the whirling dancers, then to Freddie French.)

# FREDDIE

Yea. That was the Calcuttas with "NEW YORK NEW, N.Y." Say, don't forget, kids . . . if you want to become a member of the Freddie French Dance Club, just send your name, address and age, along with \$0.25 to Dance Club, care of the station to which you are now listening. For that quarter you'll get an autographed membership card, a Freddie French button, a free subscription to our semi-annual newsletter, plus a special place on our teen scene mailing list. So do it now. Number one this week, you guessed it, the Drifters and "Cochise."

(Music and dancing begins. We cut to the control room. SAM looks distastefully at the monitors and prepares to leave. He steps behind the DIRECTOR'S shoulder.)

# SAM

(To DIRECTOR)

You did a nice job today. It looked fine . . . fine.

# DIRECTOR

(Twists halfway around in his seat)

Thanks, Mr. Fowler. Are you leaving already.

# SAM

Everything's under control, I guess. We'll talk it over in the morning, O.K.?

# DIRECTOR

Got it!

(He twists back and resumes working. SAM looks about, trying to determine which way to leave. One of the staff in the control room notices SAM'S plight.)

MAN

Why don't you cut across the studio, sir? The show will be over in a minute. I 's the quickest way out.

SAM

Thanks . . . It's the first time I've been in this studio . . . kind of confusing - you know?

MAN

(Points to exit)

Right through that door, sir.

(SAM leaves the control room. He enters the studio. The music fills the air. He slowly makes his way across the cable filled floor. Suddenly he stops and becomes interested in seeing the show close up. He walks forward and stands beside a camera, intently watching the strange spectacle. The music ends.)

FREDDIE

Well, that's it, kids. Don't forget - Glow brings you the THURSDAY FIVE five times a week. So don't miss it - and don't miss Glow either. Tomorrow, Ricky Tarlo and the Hatchets plus a big batch of new releases. So be on hand. Till then, this is Freddie French sayin' . . .

(He gets a sign from the Floor Manager.)

What's that? We got one more minute? Wow! Whattya say we give the folks at home a shot of our crew here. First of all, there's Charlie Fredricks on camera One.

(The picture cuts to a shot of a camera man waving.)

And there's old Bill Hall on camera Two.

(Cut to shot of second camera man waving)

O. K. now, back on me, please. I'm the star.

(The camera pans past Camera Two to pick up FREDIE and while doing so, picks up a shot of SAM. SAM glances it on the monitor.)

Cops, there's the boss himself, our production supervisor,  
Sam Fowler!

(The camera zooms into a close-up of SAM. There's a quick cut from the shot of SAM's face, to an extreme close-up of SELMA's face. In the flickering light of the TV set, it is twisted, grotesque and bewildered. The camera cuts back to SAM, who now realizes that he has surely been seen by Selma. He breathlessly mouths her name in shock. There's a cut to a close-up of HARRY WATTS. He, too, realizes what has happened. )

HARRY

(With concern)

Selma!

(The camera cuts back to a wide shot of the studio. SAM turns to rush out. The music comes up and blares loudly as the show is coming to an end. Freddie French can barely be heard talking over the din. SAM blindly rushes through the crowds of teenagers who are pouring off the set. He finally barrels his way out the door. There is a cut to the quartet who sing loudly and distortedly. The picture spins round and round and in and out of focus. This dissolves to a shot of the door to Sam's apartment. SAM bursts in.)

SAM

(Yells, but a bit cautiously at first.)

Selma? Selma!

(He races into the living room. It is empty and quiet. The television set is off.)

Selma!



(He runs to the kitchen)

Selma, where are you?

(He opens the bedroom door.)

Where are you?

(He is startled as the phone rings. He lunges at it.)

Hello, yes, yes, this is Mr. Fowler. She's at . . . at the store! But how could she get there. She can't . . . There's no need for the police. No! She'll quiet down when I get there, Mr. Clay . . . I said she'll . . .

(He looks angrily at the receiver as if to damn the man on the other end, and then not bothering to finish the sentence, he slams it down on the hook. He stands for a moment, stunned with disbelief.)

What have I done! What have I done!

(He heads for the door. There's a dissolve to the exterior of a clothing store. A noisy crowd has formed outside. SAM approaches and fights his way through to the doorway. The store owner, Mr. Clay, spots him.)

CLAY

Fowler, what the devil is your wife trying to do, kill my business? Look at my customers out there. They'll think this is a nut house.

SAM

Where is she?

(An OLD WOMAN grasps at SAM'S sleeve.)

WOMAN

I tried to quiet her down, Sam . . . she didn't remember me. I tried . . .

SAM

(Pulling himself away from her and the crowd.)

Thanks, Mrs. Cooper.

(He pushes his way into the store. The noise from the outside suddenly diminishes. SUELLA is in the rear of the empty store. She supports herself with the counters as she moves across the floor.)

SUELLA

(Screaming plaintively)

Papa! Papa! Where are you? It's Monday . . . You're always here on Monday . . . always, Pa a!

(There is a quick cut to the interior of a taxi cab in which HARRY CARRIS is riding.)

HARRY

(To cabdriver)

She lives one block west of here. Try and stop on it. Please!

CABBIE

How much faster d'ya think t'is buggy can . . .

(HARRY looks out the window and see's the crowd in front of the store.)

HARRY

Wait a minute. Stop here!

CABBIE

Boy, it takes all kinds.

(The brakes screech as they come to a halt. HARRY stuffs a bill over the CABBIE'S shoulder.)

HARRY

Wait here. I may be right back.

(He quickly crosses the street and comes to the edge of the crowd.)

NO IN

Harry!

THANKS

Mrs. Cooper, aunt's happy call

SMILE

Suria's last to. There's something wrong with . . .

(He does not wait to hear the end of the sentence. He rushes his way to the crowd until he is inside the store. Once inside, he stops, stunned by the scene. Then he walks forward slowly until he can hear Gail's voice.)

SMILE

Sam . . . Sam . . . where are you?

(Her smile suddenly gives way to a childish, childlike cry. She goes on to the curtain which leads to the back room. She stands a little way, as if someone behind the curtain were listening. She has turned walking, too stunned to move.)

Sam, he asked me to marry him today . . . to get married. I never thought he would. He's so quiet and timid. But shall I do, Sam? I don't want to leave you alone here. It's so lonely at the house now. It will be so empty for you . . . so empty. He wants to have a new house . . . a house of his own . . . a house and a lawn; he says the city's no place for children to play . . . for will you have the money, the stock? Oh we've always had such fun here, and now, not fun . . . I've never been away from home before. You'll come to visit us, won't you, and I'll come to see you too, on weekends . . . Oh, Sam, could I go? I love you and the more I think of it so very much. Why must it end so suddenly? I love . . . I do love him so.

(She cries softly and covers her face with her palms.)

SMILE

(He has turned slowly toward her, she was standing and now is almost directly behind her.)

And he loves you, Sam.

SARMA

How can I tell what to do? What is right, Papa. You've always told me before.

SAM

You do what you think is right, Sarma. That's the only way to live . . . do what you think is right.

(SAM stands directly behind her now. His reflection is seen in front of her in a full size fitting mirror.)

SARMA

(Her face still buried in her hands.)

He'll try to make me happy. He's so very nice and polite and good to me. I know he'll try.

SAM

He'll always try, Sarma . . . always.

SARMA

(SARMA looks up. The reflection of SAM is standing full size before her. She braces herself on the counter and then lurches forward to the mirror, sobbing as she does so.)

Sam . . . Oh, Sam!

(She crashes into the mirror, clutches her palms against the surface for a moment and then sinks, sobbing to the floor. SAM is too stricken to move. The crowd which has been quietly surging forward to watch, now bursts around them. A screech of a siren is heard in the background. HARRY moves forward and grasps SARMA'S arm. SAM stares dully ahead.)

HARRY

Sam! Sam, how did it happen?

SAM

(He pays no attention to HARRY.  
His voice is numb and monotonous.)

She ran to the mirror . . . to the mirror. I tried to do what  
was right . . . to make her happy. I gave her everything  
she wanted. . . the life she wanted, but when it was over, all  
she had was . . . a reflection. She ran to a reflection.

HARRY

(HARRY shakes SAM, trying to  
make him listen.)

But Sam . . . Sam! Listen to me! Don't you see, she . . .

SAM

(Still in daze)

She ran to a . . .

(Suddenly he awakens, amazed at  
first.)

She ran! She ran, didn't she, Harry?

(He becomes a mixture of grief  
and happiness.)

I saw her . . . with my own two eyes . . . to the mirror!  
To the score . . . to a new life!

HARRY

(Reverently)

She did, Sam . . . Thank God. She did.

(The camera zooms out to a wide  
shot of the scene. SAM and  
HARRY walk to the fallen, softly  
sobbing figure of SELMA. SAM kneels  
beside her. He grasps her gently  
by the shoulders and lifts her  
until she is facing him. She is  
quiet now. Her eyes lowered.  
SAM kisses her softly on the cheek.  
The camera cuts to a closer shot  
of SAM and SELMA. She is still  
weak, but she seems to strengthen  
and even smiles slightly when she  
raises her eyelids and sees her  
husband.)

S.M.

Shall we go home, Mrs. Fowler?

(The camera cuts back to a wide shot. MARY leans over, and together with SAM, they lift SAMMA slowly to her feet. She is shaky for a moment, but then she clasps her arm through SAM'S and seems to steady herself. MARY clasps her by the elbow, and as they slowly start to leave, the crowd parts silently before them.)

THE END

## CHAPTER III

### PROBLEMS AND CONCLUSIONS

In the actual writing of the play, I encountered only a few real obstacles. The first one being that of finding a character whose life the media, presumably television, could dominate. A normal person would not fit this part, since there would be too many other environmental influences on him. Hence the creation of Selma, whose entire world existed right in the boundaries of her own home. But merely giving Selma a life that came out of a television screen would not be enough. This would make her a relatively empty and meaningless entity. So, she was given a past, and in that past she was given the motivation to make her the type of woman that we encounter at the beginning of the play.

After writing the character of Selma, I was a bit chagrined to find that the person I had drawn was not as exaggerated as I had at first imagined. From research that I have since done, I find that Selma possesses many of the characteristics common to women who become wrapped up in "The World of the Daytime Serial."

These women are encouraged to view failures as happening only to other people and are confirmed in their belief that their suffering is caused not by themselves, but by the imperfection and villainy of others.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, if Selma's illness was brought on when Bernice sold her share of the store, then this characteristic

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1Arabian, op. cit., p. 262.



certainly fits.

Herzog, as we pointed out in the first chapter, claimed that through the serials listeners learned how to become resigned to catastrophe. As we saw in the play, Selma was perfectly content to remain in her world.

Because of her deep attachment to Leslie Jennings, Selma certainly identified very closely with her. Identification, states Archibon, generally tends toward a person of moral perfection who is go dhearted, intelligent, virtuous, and physically attractive.<sup>2</sup> This description, of course, perfectly fits Jennings.

Selma too, because of the fondness she holds for her youth, falls into Seldes' description, as noted in Chapter One, of the person who is shocked by the realities of adult life. This person resents adulthood because it does not correspond to the promises made to her. Hence she rejects it and clings to the sensations of youth.

Selma also falls into the pattern described by the psychiatrist, Glynn. She is completely passive in her outlook. It is conceivable, as Glynn suggests, that television has taken over the mother role, and is supplying her with warmth, sound, constancy and availability.

We can understand Selma even more when we read what another psychiatrist, Dr. Eric F. Fromm, states in his book, The Conquest of Loneliness.

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



"Loneliness (which Selma certainly must suffer from) is a disease which results from a basic failure in communication," states Home. "The neurotic or psychotic," he continues, "with their erroneous and unrealistic self-concepts, and their distorted pictures of reality, are so frightened that they would rather suffer in their self-produced loneliness and isolation than communicate with the world and cope with the realities and problems of life."<sup>3</sup>

Another problem I encountered was that of removing the Jennings show from the air. Soap operas, after all, have always seemed to have a strong afternoon audience. I took a chance, when writing the script, of saying that the ratings were poor and that the audience was limited. My fears were relieved, however, when I read in John Crosby's column a few weeks later that, "Soap opera audiences are declining. The main appeal now is to the aged and to school, or pre-school, children, a highly specialized viewing segment."<sup>4</sup>

Not only did the Jennings show have to be taken off the air after ten years of success, but also it had to be taken off despite the sponsor's wishes. The situation which I found and incorporated into the play was inspired by a similar problem which faced "The Voice of Firestone" program this year.

The Firestone Company had been sponsoring "The Voice of Firestone" on The National Broadcasting Company's radio network since

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<sup>3</sup>Eric P. Home, The Concept of Loneliness (New York, Random House, 1957), p. 55.

<sup>4</sup>John Crosby, New York Herald Tribune, August 3, 1955, p. 37.

1928, and on their television network since 1949. In 1954, The National Broadcasting Company took away Firestone's program time. Firestone then took its show to The American Broadcasting Company where it remained until February of 1959, when The American Broadcasting Company took away their time.

Senator Monroney of Oklahoma, felt that this case was an extremely interesting one, especially because of its involvement with the television rating systems. In July of 1959, he spoke before the Senate and it is this portion of his remarks that is of particular interest to us.

Mr. President, the Monday night "Voice" time was preempted by National Broadcasting Company he (a Firestone official) said he understood, because the "Voice" was being clobbered by Arthur Godfrey at 8:30, and it was impossible to sell the following time period despite the fact that not long before National Broadcasting Company had urged continuance of "The Voice of Firestone" on the basis that, although it would never attain high ratings, its quality audience and its loyal audience were good for both Firestone and NBC.<sup>5</sup>

Other aspects of the drama did not pose a great deal of difficulty in their creation. The main characters, such as Sam, the well-meaning husband and protagonist; Harry, the businessman whose position in life was diminished because of the growth of his own company; Bernice, his selfish wife; and Gesler, the hardboiled organization man, all charted

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<sup>5</sup>U.S. Congressional Record, 86th Congress, 1st Session, 1959, Vol. 105, part 128, 13321.

their own destinies with relative ease.

As a television production, the play does not pose any serious obstacles. Only the staging of the rock and roll show would require a great deal of ingenuity and skill in order to bring out all the intended satire.

The only other comment that I, as the author, would like to make regarding the production is that at the very end, the Director should not place too much emphasis on the fact that Selma can now walk. This is not a play in which we are waiting to see if the woman will ever walk again. The important fact here is that her walking is only a symptom, an outward manifestation of her new inner thoughts. The emphasis belongs on the destruction of her hold, distorted reality and the foundation which has been born for a new life.

I have tried to say many things in this play, both about human communication and about broadcasting. Reiterating them now would merely be repetitive, so I shall let the play speak for itself. I would, however, like to reiterate the basic premise upon which the play was based, that premise being: communication often distorts the realities of life, and that in this day and age, when so many messages are being aimed at us, we must be aware of the effect these messages can have.

We cannot lightly pass off shows like "Leslie Jennings" and "The Teenage Turntable," because these are the productions that are being watched daily by thousands of Americans. Hence the values that these shows present often help shape the actions of their listeners.

If the people who are in charge of these productions realize the power that they have and use it to create something of usefulness, then these shows can be of a stimulating and valuable nature. If, on the other hand, they are being created merely as vehicles to sell complexion cream, then they can very conceivably constitute a danger.

Sam created a false world for Selma, and so did Leslie Jennings. We cannot, however, condone Selma's naiveté, for she passively allowed these distortions to take hold of her. The word is not the thing, and we must all, always, remember that.

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