

Algonquin Nights:
The Invention of Nonsense

Pilot Episode 101
"The Chef and the Showgirl"

Written & Created
by
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"Algonquin Nights: The Invention of Nonsense" - Pilot

EXT. THE CASINO THEATRE, NEW YORK CITY - EVENING - 1924

RAGTIME MUSIC, or perhaps BESSIE SMITH BLUES, sets the era. The theater marquee reads, "The Four Marx Brothers in 'I'll Say She Is.'"

ROBERT BENCHLEY, an affable everyman, stands out front. He checks his watch. DOROTHY PARKER, petite, with dark hair, strolls up. Benchley eyes her quizzically.

DOROTHY PARKER

Don't ask.

Benchley offers his arm, and the two walk in together.

INT. THE CASINO THEATRE - CONTINUING

The house lights flash a final warning as Parker and Benchley skootch past a row of their fellow theatre critics to their seats, past ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT, CHARLES MACARTHUR, GEORGE KAUFMAN, MARC CONNELLY, MARGALO GILLMORE, FRANKLIN PIERCE ADAMS, HAROLD ROSS and JANE GRANT. We'll meet them all again soon enough, along with their proper descriptions.

INT. THE CASINO THEATER - MINUTES LATER

The audience HOWLS at the Marx Brothers performance. GROUCHO is onstage in uniform as Napoleon.

GROUCHO MARX

The Russians are in full retreat,
and I'm right in front of them. So
for now, farewell, fair Josephine.
Caesar had his Brutus, Charles had
Cromwell, and I've got rhythm! Hot
cha, cha!

As Groucho exits offstage, HARPO MARX pops up from behind the sofa. He romantically lunges at Josephine.

Clearly all friends, the row nod and smile at their "discovery" of the Marx Brothers. A few take notes. As the show rolls on, we continue to see their comradery and affection at play. Marc and Margalo are clearly a couple, as are Harold and Jane. Dorothy seems the least engaged, as though preoccupied. MacArthur looks over at her, then away as their eyes meet.

INT. THE CASINO THEATRE - LATER

The audience leap to their feet for a standing ovation.
Dorothy seems now more at ease.

INT. THE CASINO THEATRE - BACKSTAGE

The gang cluster backstage.

ROBERT BENCHLEY
Now that was something!

Dorothy hangs on Benchley's arm at the joy of it all.

GEORGE KAUFMAN
I agree, but what?

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT
The future of Broadway.

Marc Connelly gestures at Kaufman.

MARC CONNELLY
I thought that was us.

They flood into the dressing room. Groucho, who seems to know some of them, looks over.

GROUCHO MARX
Jesus, what is this, a raid?

The room is packed, echoing the stateroom scene in "A Night at the Opera."

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT
Jesus? What would you know about him, you Christ killer?

GROUCHO MARX
Well, I think you just answered your own question, you preposterous windbag.

GEORGE KAUFMAN
He's got you there, Aleck.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT
How rude! A man after my own heart.

Aleck pats Groucho on the back, then offers his hand to Harpo, who puts his leg in it, the old switcheroo. Harpo HONKS his bulb horn in Aleck's face.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CASINO THEATRE - NIGHT - LATER

They're all on the sidewalk now, still reminiscing and hailing cabs. Benchley's pulls up. He opens the rear door for Dorothy.

INT. CAB - NIGHT - MOVING - DOROTHY AND BENCHLEY

DOROTHY PARKER
Eddie would have loved this. Not a single big word in sight.

ROBERT BENCHLEY
Still in Hartford?

DOROTHY PARKER
That's where Mr. Parker is currently parked. So tonight, with all thanks to my so-called spouse, I can thoroughly throw myself into typing my reviews.

They arrive at Dorothy's apartment. She gets out. Then turns to learn in and touch Benchley's arm.

DOROTHY PARKER (CONT'D)
Thank you, Fred.

INT. DOROTHY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - SERIES OF SHOTS

Dorothy is on the phone.

DOROTHY PARKER
Would you be so kind as to send over whatever tonight's special is? Thank you, dear.

Dorothy sits at her typewriter mouthing her review as she types. A bottle of whiskey sits nearby.

DOROTHY PARKER (CONT'D)
And it is my great pleasure to report that at least two of these four Marxes are two of the funniest men on earth.

(MORE)

DOROTHY PARKER (CONT'D)

So, yes, I'm awarding high marks to the Marxes. And if you know me at all, dear reader, then you know that in my book, or magazine in this case, that assessment is against some mighty long odds indeed.

Dorothy stops to refill her glass. She shuffles into the bathroom.

Drunk, she stares into the mirror. She opens the medicine cabinet and shakes out two sleeping tablets. She gets some water from the sink. Then downs two more Veronal. Her absent husband's straight razor sits on the lower shelf.

She returns to the typewriter. Stares at it. Has another generous drink.

Back in the bathroom, she looks at the bottle of pills, then spots the razor. She picks it up and considers it. Dorothy takes a solid whack at her wrist. Blood drips. She falls backwards, out cold.

CUT TO:

OPENING TITLE SEQUENCE:

EXT. MANHATTAN, NEW YORK CITY

HOT JAZZ PLAYS over B&W FOOTAGE of the wild Roaring Twenties, a MONTAGE of Prohibition speakeasy raids, dance contests, WW1 soldiers parading down 5th Avenue, then settling into more somber shots of Depression-era bread lines, soup kitchens, and shabby-clad men with cardboard signs, yearning for work, as cops on horseback keep the peace. We find ourselves outside the:

EXT. ALGONQUIN HOTEL - DAY - 1930

With its swank script-lettered awning and spiral topiary. COLOR FADES BACK IN. The awning is dark green. So is the topiary.

MARGALO GILLMORE (O.S.)

Those were wild times, I'll tell ya.

END OF TITLES, CONTINUING INTO:

INT. ALGONQUIN HOTEL ROSE ROOM RESTAURANT, 1930 - DAY

Margalo Gillmore, 33, blond, upbeat, looks right into the camera. Her clothes and cloche hat confirm it's 1930.

MARGALO GILLMORE

The Jazz age, the Roaring Twenties, they've named it now, the Age of Wonderful Nonsense. But you recall, you were there.

ANOTHER ANGLE reveals that Margalo is speaking to a REPORTER, JAMES THURBER, 35, thick glasses, still a few years before his cartoonist fame, pad and pencil in hand, in the hotel's otherwise empty Rose Room Restaurant. The reporter gestures around the gilded room.

JAMES THURBER

Not here. Not much. Not then.

MARGALO GILLMORE

Well, your boss sure was. Here. Then. But I know, a lot has changed in ten years. Who knew?

JAMES THURBER

That's certainly the truth. That's why I'm here now, since you were here - there - back then.

MARGALO GILLMORE

Thanks to Marc Connelly, initially. Alright, maybe that's one Round Table yarn that's yet to be unraveled. But why not corner Connelly, or Ross, or any of the more famous others?

JAMES THURBER

You're famous.

MARGALO GILLMORE

And you're sweet. But aren't some of them still on your payroll?

JAMES THURBER

Some of them don't wish to speak.

MARGALO GILLMORE

Marc Connelly always wishes to speak.

JAMES THURBER

Sure, we'll get him on the record. Along with Murdock and Toohey. But Dorothy Parker, Robert Benchley, George S. Kaufman, all too busy, or these days, just not interested.

MARGALO GILLMORE

To be fair, with the crash, I reckon it may all seem somewhat frivolous now.

JAMES THURBER

That's why boss Ross wants me to document the shape of things now gone, to write down how it was in the beginning, when you were all still living it up.

MARGALO GILLMORE

A regular Book of Genesis.

JAMES THURBER

Yes! While you were collectively raising Cain! A profile piece on the entire period. You'd think the memory of a good impertinent wisecrack would be needed now more than ever.

Margalo steps to a large round table at the rear of the room, already set for lunch.

MARGALO GILLMORE

No one had any idea then that most of 'em would become such... well, that they'd become "them."

SARAH VICTOR, 63, African-American, wearing a white turban and apron, strolls out through the kitchen door like she owns the place.

SARAH VICTOR

Well, hello darlin's.

Sarah slides over to the reporter, and affectionately touches his shoulder.

SARAH VICTOR (CONT'D)

What mischief are you youngsters up to?

Marge points at Sarah and smiles accusingly.

MARGALO GILLMORE
She's the one.

SARAH VICTOR
The one what?

MARGALO GILLMORE
This was all your fault, Sarah.
Without you, none of this would
have ever happened.

JAMES THURBER
What, the entire decade?

SARAH VICTOR
Child, to what do you refer?

MARGALO GILLMORE
Yes, the complete mad span! If she
wasn't such a seductive pastry
chef...

SARAH VICTOR
Seductive?!

MARGALO GILLMORE
It was so much a giddy time. And I
seriously doubt that any of it
would have, you know, transpired
without her recipe for apple pie.

EXT. MANHATTAN SKYLINE, NEW YORK CITY - DAY - 1919 - EST.

A Model T auto sputters by. Newsies hawk dailies.

EXT. CONDE NAST OFFICES - DAY - 1919

The summer sun shines off the W. 44th Street brick façade.

INT. VANITY FAIR OFFICES - DAY

A crisply-lettered door reads "Vanity Fair." Inside, Dorothy
Parker, 26, Robert Benchley, 29, and all 6'7" of ROBERT
SHERWOOD, 23, thin, cluster around their desks.

DOROTHY PARKER

Mr. Benchley, just because you've been foolishly left in charge is certainly no reason to assume that you can just blurt out your suggestions for how I might best employ my time on the company clock.

ROBERT BENCHLEY

Mrs. Parker, I was already your editor before Crownie ill-advisedly deemed to embark on his summer vacation.

DOROTHY PARKER

My point exactly. And when did I ever listen to you then?

Their sly smiles tip that they're just clowning for the new guy, Sherwood.

DOROTHY PARKER (CONT'D)

Besides, with my Eddie back from the war, I've been pretty fucking busy. Or vise versa.

Sherwood looks shocked.

DOROTHY PARKER (CONT'D)

Oh, dear Mr. Sherwood, don't look so aghast. You were in the army.

ROBERT SHERWOOD

The Canadian Army.

ROBERT BENCHLEY

And I'll bet you looked downright intimidating in your Canadian Highlander kilt.

DOROTHY PARKER

At that elevation, he looks intimidating out of it. I'm surprised the Germans didn't surrender immediately at the mere sight of you.

Benchley waves a list.

ROBERT BENCHLEY
Suggestions, Mrs. Parker. These are
simply my humble proposals
regarding the latest Broadway shows
that you may wish to review.

DOROTHY PARKER
Oh, Fred...

ROBERT SHERWOOD
Fred?

ROBERT BENCHLEY
I know from my own experience, that
you, Mrs. Parker, are capable of
performing an almost unlimited
amount of work, just so long as it
isn't the work that you're supposed
to be doing.

DOROTHY PARKER
But Mr. Benchley, you do so know
how much I abhor being
disappointed.

ROBERT BENCHLEY
Do you, Dottie, terribly, honestly?

DOROTHY PARKER
And how I so value other's opinions
of me.

ROBERT BENCHLEY
Is that a fact?

DOROTHY PARKER
It's important what they think
about what I think.

ROBERT BENCHLEY
Ya think?

DOROTHY PARKER
The only sure way I can imagine to
entirely shun letting them down,
and thus skip penning one of my
charmingly critical reviews, is to
abstain completely from attending
any of those new shows.

ROBERT BENCHLEY
But Mrs. Parker, you've already
reviewed all the old ones. Aren't
you in the least bit curious?

DOROTHY PARKER

For the sake of my own sanity,
 Freddy, no, since we both know full
 well what that characteristic of
 curiosity has already wreaked on at
 least one fearless feline.

ROBERT BENCHLEY

Oh, Mrs. Parker, if you could just
 commit a fraction of the words that
 emerge so fluently from that petite
 maw of yours onto paper, I'd be
 quite content.

DOROTHY PARKER

But what if this June the Great
 White Way is just not making them
 like they used to?

ROBERT SHERWOOD

Like they used to in May?

DOROTHY PARKER

Maybe. Listen, I enjoy losing
 myself in an appreciative audience
 as much as the next schoolgirl, and
 I don't ask for much, generally, do
 I? But what I genuinely treasure is
 when a new play looks hopefully
 other than to last's year's dog-
 eared hits for inspiration and
 royalties.

Benchley hands Dorothy the list.

ROBERT BENCHLEY

Suggestions.

DOROTHY PARKER

(reading)

Hmmm... Dillingham, Belasco, and
 Zeigfeld. Is this some new law
 firm?

ROBERT BENCHLEY

I feel quite confident that you
 are, in fact, already well aware
 that those are the producers of
 this season's most noteworthy and
 anticipated Broadway shows.

DOROTHY PARKER

Anticipated by whom?

ROBERT BENCHLEY

By our advertisers Chuck Dillingham, Dave Belasco, and Flo Ziegfeld, naturally. Mr. Sherwood here, on the other hand, has actually been requesting writing assignments as a way to court some extra cabbage.

DOROTHY PARKER

You didn't say there was a bonus involved.

(to Sherwood)

And I think I liked you better, if you'd like to hear the long and short of it, ten minutes ago, before you started trying... my patience.

Benchley jangles a key.

ROBERT SHERWOOD

What's that, Rob?

ROBERT BENCHLEY

The keys to the kingdom, Rob, the petty cash drawer. The galleys are docked, and I'm just overjoyed to report they're in sore need of some padding.

Benchley picks up a proof and points.

ROBERT BENCHLEY (CONT'D)

Trevor's "Well Dressed Man" article in particular is looking somewhat threadbare. What are your thoughts, do you think, Rob, regarding men's clothing?

DOROTHY PARKER

He's in favor.

ROBERT BENCHLEY

You haven't seen the kilt.

Sherwood takes the page to read it. The door swings open and an OFFICE BOY pushing a mail cart rolls in. He selects a few envelopes, looks to Benchley.

OFFICE BOY

Sorry, I'm new. Are you Mr. Benchley?

DOROTHY PARKER

Well, benvenuto and bon voyage.

ROBERT BENCHLEY

Guilty as charged. Thank you. I'll gratefully receive the general mail for Conde Nast, Vanity Fair and Vogue, as well as those specifically for Mr. Crowninshield.

The boy hands them over. Then produces several envelopes.

OFFICE BOY

And would you be Mrs. Parker?

DOROTHY PARKER

Mea culpa. Do you mind much?

The boy surrenders them, then looks at Sherwood, and back through the mail.

ROBERT BENCHLEY

There's nothing for the leaning tower there. He's new, like you. A mere sapling.

DOROTHY PARKER

Hasn't had time to sprout, or spout enough to annoy anyone yet in print.

ROBERT BENCHLEY

Yet.

DOROTHY PARKER

Only in person.

Sherwood smiles, getting it, as the mail boy rolls on.

ROBERT SHERWOOD

I suppose I just haven't been applying myself. But I'll do my level best.

DOROTHY PARKER

Do your worst.

ROBERT BENCHLEY

That's the stuff.

Dorothy checks the return addresses on her mail, then opens one with a letter opener.

DOROTHY PARKER

Well now, what fresh hell is this?

She unfolds it.

DOROTHY PARKER (CONT'D)

It's an invitation from Murdock Permberton to a luncheon celebrating Alexander Woollcott's return from the war.

(showing it to Benchley)

But they've deliberately misspelled Woollcott's surname five different ways, with the T's and O's and L's flying every which way, and then topped it off by listing Woollcott as the only guest speaker at his own feast. What's that all about, do you suppose? I know Murdock and his Eminence are friends, but surely the only armed conflict Aleck encountered overseas was with his fountain pen.

ROBERT BENCHLEY

To be fair, I'm not sure even Woollcott is clear on how many letters cohabitate in that name. That's certainly a lot of vowel movement there.

ROBERT SHERWOOD

Why would the Hippodrome's publicist throw an event mocking New York's most important drama critic? After you two, of course.

DOROTHY PARKER

Of course.

INT. TIFFANY'S, 5TH AVENUE - DAY

Alexander Woollcott, 32, owlish, portly, with a squeaky voice, strides into the famous jewelry store with Jane Grant, 27, stylish, down to earth. They approach a glass counter staffed by a SALESMAN who (perhaps) looks and acts like a younger John McGiver from "Breakfast at Tiffany's."

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT

I am Alexander Woollcott, and this is Miss Jane Grant, and we wish to buy a wedding ring.

SALESPERSON

Excellent.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT

Aren't you going to say, "Well, you've come to the right place"?

SALESPERSON

We like to think it goes without saying, sir.

The salesperson gestures at the rings. Woollcott eyes them, Jane, and the salesperson.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT

Do you have something with perhaps a bit more sparkling personality?

TIFFANY SALESPERSON

Certainly. I'll be right back.

He leaves. The two chat.

JANE GRANT

Do you think perhaps he thought you meant him? It'd be funny if someone else comes back.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT

Did you hear? With the troops home now, in addition to you gaining a husband, I'm getting a banquet.

JANE GRANT

That may be some indication of both our current stations in life.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT

Stations? Good Lord, it's true.

Woollcott makes the sign of the cross, then extends his arms.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT (CONT'D)

You're falling for the first time, and I'm to be crucified.

She stifles a smile.

JANE GRANT

Why do you say that?

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT
I appreciate the attention and
inevitable accolades, but I can't
help being somewhat suspicious.

JANE GRANT
Suspicious?

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT
What do Murdock and his cohort -
cohost - John Toohey want?

JANE GRANT
What more could anyone possibly
want, Aleck, beyond the pleasure of
your own company, and the honor of
honoring you?

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT
You know this Toohey, correct? He's
one of Harold's poker pals, isn't
he?

JANE GRANT
Yes, if my intended is being
completely honest with me about how
he spends his Saturday nights.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT
Oh, I certainly hope not. A
successful marriage should be
firmly founded on deception.

JANE GRANT
John Peter Toohey, I believe, is
some sort of theatrical press
agent. I can't imagine what he'd
want with you.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT
Or, more likely, from me. I'll ask
Murdock. If this bash is about the
war, I certainly don't wish to be
ambushed. Now, as far as your
little war of the sexes...

Jane gestures around the room.

JANE GRANT
Thank you, Aleck for all your help.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT
It's the least I can do, given your
appalling choice of fiancés.

JANE GRANT

I've only selected the one, Aleck.

The salesperson returns with a tray. They review the options.

TIFFANY SALESMAN

This orange blossom design is au
courant at the moment.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT

It's current currently, is it?

TIFFANY SALESMAN

As you say, sir, oui, very popular.

JANE GRANT

I do like that.

She tries it on.

JANE GRANT (CONT'D)

It almost fits. I'll take that as a
good omen.

She slides it off. The salesman hands her the ring sizer
card. She slips it on. He jots the information.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT

(re: sizer)

Or you could just wear that for the
ceremony.

Jane removes it.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT (CONT'D)

I admire your taste in jewelry,
Jane, at least.

The salesperson looks confused.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT (CONT'D)

We'll take that one, if you'd be so
kind as to have it delivered to The
Times office on West 43rd.

Aleck pulls out his billfold.

TIFFANY SALESMAN

Certainly, sir. Do you wish both
your initials be engraved inside?

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT

No, just the lady's. She may want
to use it again.

INT. TIMES BUILDING - DAY

Aleck holds the door open and Jane walks in. Their desks are fairly adjacent. Alec's is larger and more grand, as suits the newspaper's department head.

JANE GRANT

Harold's taking me to lunch today,
Aleck, you can ask him about Toohey
yourself.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT

The suspense is killing me. Maybe
I'll wait.

Aleck goes to his desk. Notices:

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT (CONT'D)

Who's been using my typewriter?

He scans some typewritten pages. Yells:

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT (CONT'D)

Kaufman!

George Kaufman, 29, sticks his head in sheepishly, as though just arriving.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT (CONT'D)

Kaufman, you fawn's ass! You have
your own typewriter.

George, who is somewhat like a young Woody Allen in appearance and ironic demeanor, takes the pages from Aleck.

GEORGE KAUFMAN

Thanks, boss. I wondered where I
left those.

Aleck puts his hands on his hips.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT

Well?

GEORGE KAUFMAN

Your typewriter works better.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT

Don't I know it, and I'd like to
keep it that way.

Aleck grabs the pages back.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT (CONT'D)
 What's this nonsense anyway? Are
 you writing another play?

GEORGE KAUFMAN
 No... I'm typing it.

Aleck reads the title page.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT
 Marc Connelly? You're collaborating
 with that elf? That's brave of you,
 Kaufman, after the drubbing that
 hack, and your namesake, S. Jay
 Kaufman gave Connelly over his last
 theatrical outing. I'm surprised
 Marcus would have anything to do
 with you, or anyone saddled with
 that unfortunate...

(coughing)
 Kauf-man moniker.

GEORGE KAUFMAN
 Well, then hopefully there's
 strength in numbers, and we've got
 my doppelganger outflanked. We've
 gone all in on Frank's Dulcinea
 character, and are cooking up a
 whole story around her for Lynn
 Fontanne.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT
 Well, I hate to say it, but that
 idea might actually be terrible.

GEORGE KAUFMAN
 Terribly great.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT
 Of course that's what I meant. I
 was being succinct.

GEORGE KAUFMAN
 That's a first.

Jane looks on amused as she settles at her desk.

GEORGE KAUFMAN (CONT'D)
 We only work evenings. Your machine
 makes nicer words.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT

Don't I know it. But then, when -
if - your show opens, I'll have to
review it on the same typewriter
you scoundrels used. That seems
unseemly to me, almost incestuous.

GEORGE KAUFMAN

Well, Aleck, don't fret yet. You
can cross that sibling off when you
cross it.

Harold Ross, 26, with a crew cut and big teeth, walks in.

HAROLD ROSS

Good morning, gents, lady.

Kaufman nods a greeting.

GEORGE KAUFMAN

Ross.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT

Well, well, speaking of inbreeding.

INT. PARKER'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Dorothy Parker, still in her office garb, walks up the stairs to her apartment, and lets herself in. Inside, she picks the mail up from the floor (from the mail slot.) Her pet Scottie scampers over. She pets it. Then fills a water glass at the kitchen sink. She slides into the bedroom. Her husband, EDWIN PARKER, 26, charmingly handsome, is asleep fully clothed on the bed. A bottle of Haig & Haig whiskey sits on the nightstand. Dorothy opens an armoire. Eddie stirs awake.

EDWIN PARKER

Dottie.

DOROTHY PARKER

Darling.

She kisses him. He sits up.

DOROTHY PARKER (CONT'D)

That's marvelous, my love. You're
all rested up. And you taste aged
to perfection.

Dorothy selects an outfit from the cabinet.

DOROTHY PARKER (CONT'D)
Be my escort tonight, dear, won't
you?

EDWIN PARKER
Oh, I don't know.

DOROTHY PARKER
A welcome change of scenery for
you. It's the new Follies. You'll
like it, it has nearly naked
showgirls, and a fully clothed
Eddie Cantor.

Dorothy starts to undress.

EDWIN PARKER
(meaning her)
The show's already started.

DOROTHY PARKER
At least join me at Neysa's?

EDWIN PARKER
Sure thing, baby.

He pours himself another drink. Dorothy holds up her dress.

DOROTHY PARKER
Do you approve, husband?

EDWIN PARKER
It's the cat's PJs. It'll be a
downright honor to be seen out and
about with you.

Dorothy's stripped to her camisole.

DOROTHY PARKER
And it will be my honor to be
obscene with you.

She again kisses Eddie.

DOROTHY PARKER (CONT'D)
No rush on Neysa's.

The two fumble. Dorothy unbuttons his shirt, slides off his
belt. Eddie seems willing enough as the seduction continues,
until, suddenly, he passes out drunk. Snores. Dorothy shakes
her head, goes back to getting dressed.

Finished, she returns to the table, and pours herself one
from Edie's bottle, muttering:

DOROTHY PARKER (CONT'D)
Don Juan is gone.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

Dorothy, smart in her evening ensemble, walks across the hall, opens a door...

INT. NEYSA'S STUDIO - AFTERNOON

And is suddenly in the midst of a cacophonous afternoon soiree. A scrawny PIANO PLAYER pounds out "Alexander's Ragtime Band" on an upright, as DEEMS TAYLOR, 34, glasses, looks on approvingly. Frank Adams, 37, confident, puffs a cigar as he navigates an intense conversation with HEYWOOD BROWN, 30, vaguely disheveled. On the far side of the room, barely noticed, Robert Benchley and Charles MacArther, 24, handsome, rearrange a bookshelf. Everyone seems to know everyone else, as Dorothy nods and smiles, and keeps moving to the next room.

NEYSA MCMEIN, 31, blond, sits in a smudged painter's smock at an easel, sketching in pastels a magazine cover portrait of a self-possessed model perched before her. She continues to work, as her friends congregate, as though it's the most natural thing in the world. Dorothy saddles over, checks out the picture, the model, and back to the portrait.

DOROTHY PARKER
Wish we could get you for our rag,
Neysa, class up the joint.

NEYSA MCMEIN
You're sweet.

DOROTHY PARKER
And you're busy.

Dorothy surveys the room as Neysa works, eyeing those enjoying the stopover before their dinners and theatre. Neysa, still sketching, notices Dorothy's wistfully expression.

NEYSA MCMEIN
A penny for your thoughts, little
one?

DOROTHY PARKER
Ah, just wondering if you should
get a traffic cop in here. It's all
just too perfectly chaotic, don't
you think?

NEYSA MCMEIN

When I'm working, I try not to think.

Dorothy looks at the portrait again, then picks up a black pastel crayon.

DOROTHY PARKER

May I?

Neysa has no idea what she's asking. Playing along:

NEYSA MCMEIN

Sure.

Dorothy walks over to the model and affectionately draws a movie villain mustache on her upper lip.

Dorothy hands the crayon back to Neysa, then walks into the other room. Spots:

DOROTHY PARKER

Frank!

Dorothy walks over to Frank Adams, the older gent with the cigar, still chatting with Heywood Broun.

DOROTHY PARKER (CONT'D)

Frank, Heywood, I'm surprised you two are still talking.

HEYWOOD BROUN

Whatever do you mean, Dorothy?

DOROTHY PARKER

I mean, between the two of you, I'd have thought you'd have already cracked every topic there is to solve.

FRANK ADAMS

Don't say that. There'd be nothing left for our columns.

HEYWOOD BROUN

The world obligingly still provides ample folderol for our musings.

DOROTHY PARKER

Well then, boys, what's all this nonsense about honoring Woollcott, when he's misspent his entire youth trying to at least appear dishonorable?

FRANK ADAMS

Pemberton's luncheon at the
Algonquin? Just fuel to the flame,
I'd imagine.

DOROTHY PARKER

But then where's the fire? It all
makes me very nervous.

FRANK ADAMS

Nervous?

DOROTHY PARKER

Frank, you were in France with
Aleck. Why aren't you being fêted?

Adams takes a drag on his cigar.

FRANK ADAMS

I already glean all the attention I
crave, and then some.

DOROTHY PARKER

Were you invited? Of course you
were.

FRANK ADAMS

And I do think you're accurate,
Dorothy. If Murdock and Toohey are
behind this, you're right to
suspect something's fishy. But
Aleck is whom they're looking to
hook, not me. It'll still be fodder
for my column, however it plays
out. You know the drill, Dottie, if
any of your mob say it, then I'm
just the man to misquote it in
print to the masses.

HEYWOOD BROUN

See that, Dottie? You're the
folderol.

She playfully punches him. The PIANO PLAYER announces:

PIANO PLAYER

Here's a new one, folks, debuting
tonight right down the road. I'm no
Eddie Cantor, but still, whadda you
think?

He launches into:

PIANO PLAYER (CONT'D)
 (singing)
 A pretty girl is like a melody...

Clearly, the piano player is IRVING BERLIN.

EXT. THEATRE - NIGHT

The marquee of "The Comedy Theatre" announces "Up From Nowhere."

INT. THEATRE - NIGHT

It's Margalo (22 in 1919) performing on stage as "Etta."

MARGALO GILLMORE
 Oh, father, don't you know all the
 girls are dressing like this now?

MR. SILVER
 Well, your mother sure isn't.

She's delightful, and the audience seems to love it. We discover Marc Connelly, 28, balding, a big smile on his face. He jots something in his program.

INT. THEATRE, BACKSTAGE

Margalo emerges from the dressing room in street clothes. A STAGEHAND approaches waving a business card.

STAGEHAND
 Supposedly a critic from the
 Morning Telegraph.

Marc, his dome now covered by a straw porkpie hat, stands nearby. Margalo looks over. Marc smiles and leans back against the wall so that his hat tips itself.

INT. TONY'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Cocktails before them, Marc and Margalo chat at a table. Most in the room smoke.

MARC CONNELLY
 How come I don't already know you?

Margalo glances at his business card.

MARGALO GILLMORE
 Marc Connelly? Should I know you?

MARC CONNELLY
 Yes, so that at least we'll never
 have to repeat this conversation.

MARGALO GILLMORE
 I'm fairly new to the boards. Just
 a few shows under my belt.

She runs her hand through her hair.

MARGALO GILLMORE (CONT'D)
 I was an extra for the moving
 pictures at Vitagraph, in Brooklyn,
 you know, last year, for three
 whole days, before this came
 through.

MARC CONNELLY
 Oh! I wrote some scenes for a movie
 serial myself last year. But I
 don't imagine that business is
 going to make either one of us
 millionaires.

The two clink glasses.

MARC CONNELLY (CONT'D)
 Here's mud in your eye.

MARGALO GILLMORE
 Mud in your eye. I never understood
 why that should be lucky.

MARC CONNELLY
 And I never ever even thought about
 it, until right this very moment.
 Hmmmm.

MARGALO GILLMORE
 All I've ever wanted in my eyes are
 the stage lights. I'm so...
 relieved that it seems to be
 starting to happen.

Marc looks smitten. He leans in. Suddenly, JOHN TOOHEY, 39,
 stout, walks in, spots Marc.

JOHN TOOHEY
 Marc!

MARC CONNELLY

He knows me.

John heads over.

JOHN TOOHEY

Marc, I hoped I'd see you around.

MARC CONNELLY

And now your wish is granted.
Margalo, this is John Toohey. He
writes, press releases, mostly.

JOHN TOOHEY

Not for long, unless this Woollcott
gag goes off as planned.

MARGALO GILLMORE

(Everyone knows:)
Woollcott?

JOHN TOOHEY

That's what I wanted to snag you
for, Marc. Murdock's trying to
help, God bless him, but you're
pals with Kaufman, and Kaufman
works with Woollcott, so...

MARC CONNELLY

So, what? What are you two up to
anyway, really?

JOHN TOOHEY

Alec's a big man...

MARC CONNELLY

I'll say.

JOHN TOOHEY

It takes a lot to get his
attention.

Margalo looks intrigued.

MARC CONNELLY

Your celebration? I suspect even
he's suspicious of your true
intentions.

JOHN TOOHEY

Well, of course I want something!
Like you said, it's my job.

MARC CONNELLY

Well, fair enough, but then what do you want from me?

Margalo looks on, curious. Marc looks over and grins, then reassuringly touches her hand.

JOHN TOOHEY

We just want to ensure his highness grants us an audience. This is a lot of trouble if he doesn't show up.

MARC CONNELLY

Audience. Interesting choice of words.

JOHN TOOHEY

It's the exact right choice of words, er, word. Now, listen, Marc...

They all lean in. Dorothy Parker, solo, appears at the door. She scans the room, spots Marc.

MARC CONNELLY

Dorothy!

He waves her over. Margalo looks impressed that he knows:

MARGALO GILLMORE

Well, well, Dorothy Parker.

The men momentarily rise courteously. Dorothy sits.

DOROTHY PARKER

Hello, Marc, John. Who is this divine creature that you've somehow coerced into being seen in public with the likes of you?

MARGALO GILLMORE

Margalo...

DOROTHY PARKER

Margalo Gillmore.

MARC CONNELLY

She's just opened at the Comedy Theatre.

DOROTHY PARKER

And now here you are, up from nowhere.

They all looked impressed that Dorothy knows the name of her show.

MARGALO GILLMORE

I adored your last Vanity Fair. So clever.

DOROTHY PARKER

Sweet girl. Wait'll you see this one.

JOHN TOOHEY

From whence do you hail, Dorothy?

DOROTHY PARKER

The new Follies. An ill wind blew me there.

MARGALO GILLMORE

Oh! How was it?

DOROTHY PARKER

I'm still digesting. Pretty much like Ziegfeld's last outing, only more so. For now let's merely say that I'm just a tiny bit concerned for the entire fate of our nation.

Marc flags a waiter for a drink for Dorothy.

INT. VANITY FAIR OFFICES - THE NEXT DAY

Dorothy reads to Benchley and Sherwood from her own typewritten copy.

DOROTHY PARKER

"This season's Follies are as gorgeous to behold as any of their predecessors. But with Prohibition now looming on the horizon, whereas last year various haughty beauties undulated across the stage barely costumed as Mint Juleps, Martinis and Gin Fizzes, this year they appear respectively as Coca-Cola, Sarsaparilla, and Lemonade. In the past, a lady adorned in bunches of shimmering grapes represented Champagne; This season, she must content herself with impersonating Grape Juice."

Sherwood and Benchley smirk. Dorothy continues.

DOROTHY PARKER (CONT'D)
 "The accompanying songs are penned
 by Irving Berlin, sounding,
 unfortunately, like a medley of his
 past hits. To be fair, however, it
 does take real ingenuity to rhyme
 Sarsaparilla with Rockefeller."

Dorothy proudly hands the pages to Benchley.

DOROTHY PARKER (CONT'D)
 And there you have it, your honor.
 I rest my carcass.

ROBERT BENCHLEY
 You're a bold little giant killer,
 Mrs. Parker. Thank you.

DOROTHY PARKER
 The pleasure, clearly, was all
 yours.

Benchley turns to Sherwood.

ROBERT BENCHLEY
 Now, Rob...

ROBERT SHERWOOD
 Yes, Rob?

ROBERT BENCHLEY
 Do you think you might apply that
 same light touch to fleshing out
 that fashion piece?

ROBERT SHERWOOD
 I'll tell you, I'm inspired now.

DOROTHY PARKER
 Crownie should have quite an array
 of impressive journalism to savor
 on his return from summer camp. But
 is that enough, Fred, truly, do you
 think?

ROBERT BENCHLEY
 Enough what, Mrs. Parker?

DOROTHY PARKER
 Do you still hold the key to that
 bulging cash locker, Mr. Benchley?

ROBERT BENCHLEY
 Perhaps. But, Mrs. Parker, whatever
 do you have in mind?

SERIES OF SHOTS

Benchley unlocks the drawer and extracts a fistful of bills.

The three walk down the avenue into a Woolworth's Five and Dime.

They cruise the aisles, grabbing crepe paper, banners and bunting, and ridiculous clown art prints, holding items up for one another's approval, the stupider the better.

INT. BACK AT THE OFFICE - CONTINUING

Back at work, they set to "decorating" their boss's office.

They survey their accomplishment -- it looks like a circus wagon exploded -- and collapse laughing.

ROBERT BENCHLEY
 Now that's a delightful reason to
 return home!

DOROTHY PARKER
 And to then gleefully quickly flee.

INT. ALGONQUIN HOTEL RESTAURANT - DAY

John Toohey sits with MURDOCK PEMBERTON, 31, at a table set for three. It's just a bit before lunch, and the restaurant is still fairly empty. In the background by the kitchen door, the hotel's manager, FRANK CHASE, 46, self-assured, chats with Sarah Victor (53 in 1919), the pastry chef we met before. Toohey checks his watch.

JOHN TOOHEY
 Was this even a good idea?

MURDOCK PEMBERTON
 We'll find out soon enough. If he
 even shows up.

JOHN TOOHEY
 And if he doesn't?

MURDOCK PEMBERTON
 Then this was your idea.

Woollcott appears, filling the doorway. He dramatically walks over. The two stand.

MURDOCK PEMBERTON (CONT'D)

Aleck...

He waves them off.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT

Yes, yes.

Aleck catches the eye of a WAITER, who clearly knows him. He walks over.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT (CONT'D)

Good morning, Luigi. Might I please be issued a ration of coffee, and with not a moment to spare?

WAITER

Certainly, sir.

He leaves to fetch it.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT

Murdock, John Toohey, what's this all-too-early curtain call about?

The waiter returns, and pours a cup. Aleck holds his finger up like, "Wait." Aleck drains the cup, then watches as it's refilled. He nods and dismisses the waiter, who leaves the carafe. Aleck sips, as...

JOHN TOOHEY

Marc Connelly thought you might appreciate a meeting before our meeting.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT

Marc Connelly! What does that little man have to do with me?

MURDOCK PEMBERTON

Well, of course, he plays cards with Ross, and he is working with Kaufman.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT

That's right, thank you for reminding me! Connelly is the imp that's been occupying my typewriter, by George. I should be charging that runt rent, or royalties, something.

MURDOCK PEMBERTON
 Marc's not the playwright we're
 here to discuss.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT
 Ah, ha! The clouds part.

The waiter returns, and accommodatingly refills cups.

WAITER
 Any lunch for you gents?

John and Murdock look to Aleck. Alex looks towards the
 kitchen. Chase and Sarah are now gone.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT
 I'm stuffed, just had breakfast.
 However, might there be lurking
 about one of Sarah's delightful
 deserts?

WAITER
 I'll check, sir.

As he walks off...

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT
 I couldn't possibly consume another
 bite, but I do so like it when
 people bring me things.

MURDOCK PEMBERTON
 That's an admirable trait, Aleck,
 since John is here to present you
 with his latest play.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT
 And whom are you shilling for, Mr.
 Toohey? And why is Murdock aboard
 helping shovel your load of Ship
 High In Transit?

MURDOCK PEMBERTON
 It's pretty good, Aleck.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT
 What is?

JOHN TOOHEY
 (encouraged)
 The new show opening at the
 Morosco.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT
That you would just love me to
favorably review.

MURDOCK PEMBERTON
Well, attend, at least.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT
What's the title of this
masterpiece?

JOHN TOOHEY
What's important is who the author
is.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT
Well?

JOHN TOOHEY
Eugene O'Neill.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT
Never heard of him.

JOHN TOOHEY
Well, of course, that's the point.
You can be the one to discover him,
and champion him to the world.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT
(messing with them)
Why ever would I wish to do that?

On the other side of a pillar, obscured from their view, sits Frank Adams, last seen at Neysa's gathering, eavesdropping as he picks at his lunch. He unwraps a cigar. Murdock cocks his head, having heard... something. Frank thinks better of lighting it, not wanting to tip his presence. The waiter returns with apple pie for Aleck. Behind him a few lunch customers arrive and are seated. Aleck savors a bite.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT (CONT'D)
Excellent.

MURDOCK PEMBERTON
And so is O'Neill.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT
Wait a minute! Is that what your
banquet is all about? You think
flattering me will get me to sing
the praises of...
(indicating Toohey)
...this nobody's new nobody?

Neither reply. Aleck glares.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT (CONT'D)
That's it, isn't it?

JOHN TOOHEY
Partly.

MURDOCK PEMBERTON
Shut up, John. That's not it.

A fellow journalist, WILLIAM MURRAY, 29, spots them and walks over. He takes a seat like an old friend.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT
Saved by the bell. What the hell, Bill?

WILL MURRAY
As am I also, overjoyed to see you, Aleck. What are you goons cooking up?

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT
Well, whatever it turns out to be, it'll run a poor second to this apple pie.

MURDOCK PEMBERTON
John here was just about to pitch a fascinating story to Aleck about his new client, Gene O'Neill.

Murray's expression indicates he's also never heard the name.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT
Do tell.

Murdock glances encouragingly at Toohey.

JOHN TOOHEY
And so I shall!

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT
I guess I'm your captive audience, at least until I spot the bottom of this pie plate, so get it over with.

JOHN TOOHEY
So this new play from O'Neill, it's entitled "Beyond the Horizon", since that's exactly where the playwright was when he wrote it.

Woollcott cocks his head. Murdock looks pleased that he seems interested.

JOHN TOOHEY (CONT'D)

Turns out Eugene had knocked up his new girlfriend, and when O'Neill's dad got wind of it, he crafted a plan to keep the two apart. He made a deal with the captain of a tramp steamer, then took his son down to a saloon at the docks, met the captain for dinner, and got his boy dead drunk.

WILL MURRAY

Imagine that, a writer who enjoys a drink.

MURDOCK PEMBERTON

Indeed.

JOHN TOOHEY

They hoisted him aboard and set sail. Turns out the joke was on dad, since Eugene had already done right by the girl and married her. And the two are now blissfully reunited, the proud parents nowadays of their own son. But while he was still on his forced exile circling the globe, O'Neill did manage to pen a play partly inspired by his kidnapper captain.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT

Opening, and closing, soon at the Morosco Theatre.

MURDOCK PEMBERTON

Yes, that one. But, Aleck, that's the sort of public interest story your readers might find amusing, yes?

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT

My readers will be amused when I'm sued for libel.

JOHN TOOHEY

You don't have to use his name.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT

Then what's the point for you? Did you even think this through?

MURDOCK PEMBERTON

John imagined it as a sort of get acquainted offer.

Aleck has another bite, and keeps talking.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT

Well, I'm not buying. Bill, what's your verdict on this nonsense?

Murray is about to speak, when Aleck notices ART SAMUELS, blond, 30, enter.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT (CONT'D)

Art! Get over here!

Art walks over, remains standing.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT (CONT'D)

I'll defer to a jury of my peers.

ART SAMUELS

Ah, well, in that case I suppose I should drop anchor.

He sits.

ART SAMUELS (CONT'D)

What's this about? Are you talking about the war?

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT

No. That would be interesting. Oh, really, this isn't even worth repeating. Now, when I was in the theatre of war...

ART SAMUELS

Last month.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT

Yes, last month. What were we even fighting for? Certainly not for the privilege to print the sort of pabulum John Toohey here, yes, remember that name so you can forget it, John Toohey here is trying to force feed me.

Aleck stands. Frank, behind the column, keeps listening.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT (CONT'D)

I thought you were my friend,
Pemberton! Why would you
conspire...

Aleck looks around the room. Every patron leans over to listen, including the manager and their waiter, huddled together.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT (CONT'D)

I'm the one who's been shanghaied,
not your Eugene O'Neill, another
name I shall promptly purge from my
memory, along with any recollection
of how my dear, dear buddy Murdock
could possibly have thought to
corner me over so trivial a
concern. You have some nerve!

He storms towards the door, then returns to finish his last bite.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT (CONT'D)

Both of you!

He stomps out. From his concealed table, Frank pulls a reporter's notebook from his jacket pocket to jot notes.

INT. VANITY FAIR OFFICES - THE NEXT DAY

Benchley reads Frank's column from the morning Tribune to Parker and Sherwood.

ROBERT BENCHLEY

"And I doth made my way to the
stomping grounds of the lodge of
the Algonquin, and there, whilst
trying to consume my own meager
repast, doth overhear the angry
shrieks of A. Woollcott, himself
apparently back on the warpath
after just returning from the
recent unpleasantries overseas. So
it will remain to be seen if next
Saturday eve the tribes still deign
to convene to honor their chief.

DOROTHY PARKER

Well, there you have it, another
Pepys (peeps) out of Frank.

ROBERT BENCHLEY
 "Deign to convene." It rhymes
 better in print.

DOROTHY PARKER
 I'll take your word for it.

They notice that Sherwood again looks confused.

ROBERT BENCHLEY
 The Woollcott dinner? Well,
 clearly, that's not something we
 need concern ourselves with for
 another three days.

Benchley folds the paper.

DOROTHY PARKER
 If ever.

The door swings open and in walks FRANK CROWNINSHIELD, 47,
 dapper, holding the latest Vanity Fair.

ROBERT BENCHLEY
 Greetings boss, welcome home.

Dorothy curtsies. Frank holds up the magazine and shakes his
 head.

DOROTHY PARKER
 We missed you, too.

FRANK CROWNINSHIELD
 Dorothy, Dorothy, Dorothy, I
 suppose that's what we pay you for,
 but would someone please explain to
 me what's happened in the men's
 fashion page? Did Trevor have a
 stroke?

ROBERT BENCHLEY
 A stroke of genius was my aim.

Sherwood looks guilty. Frank scans the article.

FRANK CROWNINSHIELD
 I'm just wondering how these
 particular phrases made their way
 into an article about the coming
 fall fashions?

(MORE)

FRANK CROWNINSHIELD (CONT'D)

"All signs seem to indicate that there is a Renaissance dawning in men's dress precipitated by the merciful lifting of the depressing shadow of the Great War. Soon all fashionable fellows will be clad completely in yellow, with their shoes now made from the same bright fabric as their dinner jackets, and with their vests glittering with cut jade."

Sherwood's eyes sheepishly dart between Dorothy and Benchley.

ROBERT SHERWOOD

Do people read that page?

DOROTHY PARKER

You know what, mister? If you're not just quite as wholly thrilled at the sight of us as we are to spy you, well, I'd like to think we've thought of everything.

Dorothy coyly takes Crownie's hand and leads him to his office. She proudly opens the door. Her boss takes in the ridiculous decorations. Sherwood cranes his neck to catch the reaction. Crownie's jaw drops. He slowly shakes his head, and grins.

INT. ALGONQUIN HOTEL - DAY - 1930

We're back with Margalo, Sarah and Thurber.

JAMES THURBER

Is this where your apple pie figures back in?

Sarah looks to Margalo.

MARGALO GILLMORE

It's not. Yet. Hold your horse... apples.

JAMES THURBER

I see that wise-cracker trait rubs off.

Sarah snickers to herself.

SARAH VICTOR

Ha, "cracker."

MARGALO GILLMORE

They were all too clever by half.
But you already know that, James.
That's what put them on the map in
the first place. But what you don't
know, for the record, I guess, is
what happened next. Of course, Marc
told me.

EXT. HAROLD'S APARTMENT - EST. - NIGHT - 1919

It sounds like something's up in Harold's Greenwich Village apartment.

INT. HAROLD'S APARTMENT - THE POKER GAME - NIGHT

Frank Adams, George Kaufman, Harold Ross and Heywood Broun sit (camera left to right) around two card tables that have been pushed together, having just concluded a round of five card stud. Their jackets hang on chairs or a rack, and their collars and ties have been loosened or removed. Kaufman is the bank, with a tray of chips on a table nearby, along with liquor bottles and plates of sandwiches. Most smoke.

FRANK ADAMS

Well, how would you have played it?

GEORGE KAUFMAN

Under an assumed name.

Broun shuffles the cards. Ross stifles a yawn.

HEYWOOD BROUN

George, would you please prod Ross
to confirm he's still breathing?

Ross stands to fix a drink.

HAROLD ROSS

Just because I haven't said
anything lately doesn't mean I'm
not completely incoherent.

GEORGE KAUFMAN

That's very seldom of you, Ross.

HAROLD ROSS

If by some miracle there ever is a
lull in the conversation, I'll make
sure I leap right in.

Broun keeps shuffling.

GEORGE KAUFMAN
Are you almost done tossing that
salad, Caesar?

Broun cuts the cards, stacks them, shuffles again.

HEYWOOD BROUN
You know what a perfectionist I am.

GEORGE KAUFMAN
I do, that's why I wondered what
was taking so long.

Ross returns to his chair. Marc Connelly walks in.

MARC CONNELLY
Gentlemen.

GEORGE KAUFMAN
Finally. Frank, at least, should be
relieved to see you.

FRANK ADAMS
Why me, specifically?

GEORGE KAUFMAN
Wouldn't you welcome the
opportunity, Franklin, of someone
new to lose to?

FRANK ADAMS
Shut up.

MARC CONNELLY
There's that renowned raconteur.

Connelly settles in next to Broun.

MARC CONNELLY (CONT'D)
Where's Woollcott?

GEORGE KAUFMAN
He has a play tonight. He sends his
regards from Broadway. Better odds
for you.

Connelly looks disappointed.

MARC CONNELLY
We'll see about that.

HEYWOOD BROUN
Who needs chips?

FRANK ADAMS
I need a stack.

GEORGE KAUFMAN
I should say you do.

Adams counts out \$200. Kaufman takes it and slides him his chips. Connelly buys in with his own \$200.

MARC CONNELLY
Hopefully this will buy me more tonight than just your giddy-up comradery.

HEYWOOD BROUN
Thus far the stakes have been fairly modest.

GEORGE KAUFMAN
That's right, tonight it's just been small steaks and baked potatoes.

HAROLD ROSS
Huzzah! But to what the hell do you refer, Connelly?

MARC CONNELLY
It's about Woolcott's party this weekend.

Broun glances at FPA.

HEYWOOD BROUN
It's in all the papers. Anyone else?

Broun eyes Kaufman's mound.

HEYWOOD BROUN (CONT'D)
Not the House of Rockefeller here, obviously. You, Ross?

HAROLD ROSS
I'll ride. Maybe my luck will change.

GEORGE KAUFMAN
Keep your eyes crossed.

HEYWOOD BROUN
Alright, then, ante up.

Each player throws in a chip.

FRANK ADAMS
Pay to play.

HEYWOOD BROUN
First card, down and dirty.

Broun deals a card down to each player, then a second up all around.

HEYWOOD BROUN (CONT'D)
Second card, up and ugly.

Everyone checks their hole card.

HEYWOOD BROUN (CONT'D)
Jack high for Ross. Maybe your luck will change.

GEORGE KAUFMAN
(noticing)
And a deuce low for Connelly. You'd better hope yours does.

MARC CONNELLY
Just getting to spend time with you lads is luck enough for any man.

GEORGE KAUFMAN
Let's see if we can work a bit of that enthusiasm into our play, Marc. If we can fake that level of sincerity, well, we should really have something.

FRANK ADAMS
Truer words were never spoken.

George nods to Frank.

GEORGE KAUFMAN
Say's Dulcinea.

HEYWOOD BROUN
High card bets.

HAROLD ROSS
Thank you, God dammit. I'll wager twenty fins.

Ross slides in his chips.

GEORGE KAUFMAN
Sounds fishy to me.

Broun looks at his cards, then slides in his matching chips.

FRANK ADAMS

Are you in, Marc, or should we
rechristen you Father Christmas?

MARC CONNELLY

Twenty it is.

Frank and George do likewise. Broun deals the next round up.

HEYWOOD BROUN

Another deuce for Marc, a pair of
twos.

GEORGE KAUFMAN

Now Marc can join the ballet.

MARC CONNELLY

Two two's. Ha! I'm laughing, all
the way to my bank.

GEORGE KAUFMAN

Stay on your toes, Marc.

HEYWOOD BROUN

A pair of nines showing for Frank.

GEORGE KAUFMAN

Them's big shoes to fill.

HEYWOOD BROUN

A ten for Kaufman. And a ten for
Ross. Possible straight for
America's sweetheart.

Broun deals himself a six.

HEYWOOD BROUN (CONT'D)

And nothing for me. That's just
fine.

GEORGE KAUFMAN

There goes all that salad tossing
down the drain.

HAROLD ROSS

You're a disgrace to card sharps
everywhere.

HEYWOOD BROUN

Don't you fret, my doctor has
barred me from gambling unless I
win.

GEORGE KAUFMAN

And when have you ever taken your
doctor's advice?

HEYWOOD BROUN

No time like the present.

GEORGE KAUFMAN

Well, be sure to let me know when
you feel that winning streak coming
on, so I can schedule my bathroom
break.

HEYWOOD BROUN

George, if you're in the john,
it'll mark the first time this
evening that any of us will have
any clue what you're holding.

FRANK ADAMS

I wager forty bones.

With Frank's two nines showing, Kaufman, deadpan, slides in
his bet to call.

HEYWOOD BROUN

Kaufman, ever the sphinx.

GEORGE KAUFMAN

Said the sphincter.

HEYWOOD BROUN

Don't be an ass.

Ross rechecks his hole card, stifling an excited grin.

GEORGE KAUFMAN

Anyone who even glances at Ross's
face right now will be thrown out
for cheating.

Ross slides in his bet.

HAROLD ROSS

I'm in, early days.

FRANK ADAMS

And you, Broun?

HEYWOOD BROUN

I'll call, doctor's orders.

HAROLD ROSS

Give it a rest.

GEORGE KAUFMAN

Bed rest?

FRANK ADAMS

Marc?

GEORGE KAUFMAN

Anthony? Are you here to bury
Caesar?

MARC CONNELLY

No, I'm here on the urgent behest
of Murdock Pemberton to get you
mugs to get Aleck to attend his own
party this Saturday.

HAROLD ROSS

Then let's make this interesting.
If you win this hand, then I'll
talk to Aleck. If one of us does,
then all bets are off.

Marc looks from Ross to Adams, then slides in his chips to
call Frank.

EXT. PARKER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The windows glow from Dorothy's apartment.

INT. PARKER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

EDWIN PARKER

But those are your work friends.

DOROTHY PARKER

They're my only friends, Eddie.
Don't you see, when you were
slaving at the front, I was simply
serving at my typewriter? That's
why I want to share something of my
life with you now.

EDWIN PARKER

But being with your friends is like
work - for me.

DOROTHY PARKER

Eddie, you know how proud I am of
what you were doing overseas. I'm
so proud of you I can't find words
for it.

(MORE)

DOROTHY PARKER (CONT'D)
I know you were doing the most important thing in the world there, maybe the only important thing in the world.

EDWIN PARKER
Well, there you have it.

DOROTHY PARKER
Well.

EDWIN PARKER
Well, and now here we are.

DOROTHY PARKER
Here we are, aren't we?

EDWIN PARKER
I should say we are.

DOROTHY PARKER
Yup, I've got everything any woman could possibly want, haven't I?

EDWIN PARKER
Don't do that kind of talk, will you, Dorothy?

DOROTHY PARKER
I'm not doing any kind of talk. I'm trying to tell you something. You think with everything you've just been thorough that you should never hear anything sincere, never anything trivial or tedious. I know, I know, I'm not trying to take anything away from you. But won't you please try to understand how I feel? Won't you at least attempt to comprehend what makes me tick, when sometimes I hate myself even while I'm doing it? Won't you please understand? Darling, won't you, please?

EDWIN PARKER
I can't endure this kind of thing, Dottie, and neither can you.

DOROTHY PARKER
All I asked was if you'd join me this Saturday with my friends at the Algonquin Hotel.

INT. HAROLD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The poker game continues, right where we left it. Franks eyes the growing pot.

MARC CONNELLY
Easy come, easy go.

HAROLD ROSS
Said the girl to the sailor.

FRANK ADAMS
That's right.

Broun deals another round.

HEYWOOD BROUN
A trey for Marc to serve his deuces on, no big deal. Well, well, another nine for Frank.

Ross reaches for a snack.

FRANK ADAMS
Revenge is a dish best served cold.

HAROLD ROSS
So is this sandwich.

HEYWOOD BROUN
Another ten spot for Kaufman. Seven for Mary Pickford, no help there. And one more pathetic card...
(dealing an eight)
...for yours truly.

Broun grabs a bottle and pours each a splash. They look to Frank to bet.

FRANK ADAMS
Forty more bones.

GEORGE KAUFMAN
Frank, that's an entire skeleton. Are you enjoying this, oh, pal o' mine?

MARC CONNELLY
So far, so good.

GEORGE KAUFMAN
As far as it goes. Feel free, Marc, at any point, to come up with your own clichés. I'll call, obviously.

Kaufman adds his bet. They glance over at Ross as he again checks his hole card.

GEORGE KAUFMAN (CONT'D)
Harold? I mean, Mary?

Ross takes forever to weigh his options.

GEORGE KAUFMAN (CONT'D)
That was extremely exciting for a few seconds there.

HAROLD ROSS
I'm out. Not quite tiddlywinks, is it?

GEORGE KAUFMAN
It was a moral victory, at least.

They look to Broun to call.

GEORGE KAUFMAN (CONT'D)
Nothing to report, Heywood?

He slides in his cards.

HEYWOOD BROUN
I'm out.

GEORGE KAUFMAN
A shrewd move, no doubt. You, Marc?

He considers it.

HEYWOOD BROUN
Have you contracted what we like to call Loser's Syndrome?

GEORGE KAUFMAN
Better known as Frank Adams disease.

Frank blows cigar smoke towards George.

MARC CONNELLY
I'll call.

Marc slides in his chips. Broun deals one more card up to each of the three remaining players, announcing:

HEYWOOD BROUN
The moment of truth. Another trey for Marc. Amazing. An ace for Frank.

(MORE)

HEYWOOD BROUN (CONT'D)

And a five for Kaufman's tens.
Frank bets. Pretty breathtaking,
boys.

Frank is loving this. He takes a long drag on his cigar.

FRANK ADAMS

It all evens out. Marc, I'd hate to
deprive you of your victory, or
your cab fare home, so I'll just
wager... ninety dollars. Will you
be seeing me, George?

GEORGE KAUFMAN

I've seen enough. Like the Arabs, I
shall fold my tens and silently
steal away.

FRANK ADAMS

Well said. Marc?

Marc silently slides in his remaining chips.

FRANK ADAMS (CONT'D)

You call?

HEYWOOD BROUN

You do know that three of a kind
beats two pair, correct, Connelly?

MARC CONNELLY

I call.

Adams turns over his hole card, revealing:

FRANK ADAMS

Three nines.

Marc turns his over: another two!

HAROLD ROSS

Full house! Is that what that is? I
have no personal experience of ever
actually having seen one of those
before.

MARC CONNELLY

I guess God loves me.

HAROLD ROSS

Clearly, he hates me. I guess I'm
talking to Woollcott.

GEORGE KAUFMAN

I hope our new play has a full house.

Marc smiles and scoops up his chips. Ross grimaces.

EXT. THE HIPPODROME - DAY

An elaborate circus show, or a bevy of bathing beauties, load into the block-long theatre. Or not.

INT. THE HIPPODROME - CONTINUING

Pemberton and Toohey admire a red felt banner draped over a table. In gold letters: "AWOL - cott. S. Jay Kaufman Post No. 1."

JOHN TOOHEY

Very nice.

MURDOCK PEMBERTON

All in good fun. He'll love it.

JOHN TOOHEY

Jay Kaufman, that's a fine touch.

MURDOCK PEMBERTON

I tried to think which reporter Aleck detests the most.

JOHN TOOHEY

How long did that take? You didn't invite him, did you?

MURDOCK PEMBERTON

No, of course not. That's part of what Aleck will appreciate.

Toohey drums his fingers.

MURDOCK PEMBERTON (CONT'D)

Relax. You don't know Aleck like I do. If all you had to go on is what you saw at the Gonk...

JOHN TOOHEY

And what I read in the papers.

MURDOCK PEMBERTON

Well, you already know what they say about that.

(MORE)

MURDOCK PEMBERTON (CONT'D)

Connelly assured me repeatedly that Harold Ross has got this covered.

Suddenly, Ross appears at the door. He notes the banner.

HAROLD ROSS

God damn it. Well, hopefully you can use that for one of your other shows, the back side.

JOHN TOOHEY

What happened?

HAROLD ROSS

Well, nothing. Aleck informed me that he got a better offer. He claims his college is honoring him this weekend, and he's taking the train upstate in the morning.

MURDOCK PEMBERTON

Well, do you believe that!

HAROLD ROSS

I'm not sure I do. But you know how... contrary Aleck can be.

JOHN TOOHEY

You were just in the army together!

HAROLD ROSS

He said he'd like to forget that.

MURDOCK PEMBERTON

I invited the whole town! Two dozen top newspapermen have already responded! And some wives.

HAROLD ROSS

It's Aleck. They'll understand.

MURDOCK PEMBERTON

They certainly will not! This is my ass now.

JOHN TOOHEY

Asses.

MURDOCK PEMBERTON

Speak for yourself.

HAROLD ROSS

God damn it, men.

MURDOCK PEMBERTON
 Harold, when you're right, you're
 right.

INT. ALGONQUIN HOTEL - 1930

It's Margalo and Sarah and James again, again.

JAMES THURBER
 Now?

SARAH VICTOR
 Oh! I remembers now! Is that what
 got all those peoples here the next
 day?

MARGALO GILLMORE
 Your home cooking.

SARAH VICTOR
 Land o' Goshen! Just 'cause those
 boys, Mr. Pemberton and Mr.
 Toohey...

We SEE this play out as they describe it, all happening in
 these same settings a decade earlier.

SARAH VICTOR (CONT'D)
 They asked Mr. Case, especially
 seeking one of my apple pies. And
 since there wasn't any planned that
 day, he had me bake one up on the
 spot.

We SEE Sarah chopping apples.

SARAH VICTOR (V.O.)
 Well, a dozen, while I was at it,
 but one for Mr. Woollcott
 expressly. They waited, can you
 imagine?

Murdock and Toohey chain smoke their cigarettes and cigars.

SARAH VICTOR
 They left with it, in a pretty
 bakers box, still warm from the
 ovens. I still don't have any
 inkling what happened next.

Margalo smiles.

MARGALO GILLMORE

I do. Murdock walked that delicacy right over to the Times, got Jane Grant to bring it up directly to Aleck, you know, to avoid another scene, along with a hand written note that Murdock later described to Marc as the best press release he ever wrote in his whole stinking life.

Sarah smiles, just now realizing the entire scope.

MARGALO GILLMORE (CONT'D)

Of course, everyone knows what didn't happen next.

THE BIG DAY - SEQUENCE OF SHOTS

INT. PARKER'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Eddie sits, in bathrobe and pajamas, reading the newspaper. He has a sip of cocktail, then sets his highball on the current Vanity Fair, which sits unopened on the table, serving as his coaster. Behind him, Dorothy seems to have just finished getting dressed.

DOROTHY PARKER

Join me for some fresh air, at least, darling?

EDWIN PARKER

Inside the Algonquin?

DOROTHY PARKER

That is where they keep it.

EDWIN PARKER

Oh, you know... no.

DOROTHY PARKER

I suppose the bubbles in your seltzer water will suffice.

She reaches for her hat.

INT. TIMES BUILDING - SATURDAY AFTERNOON

Kaufman sits at Woollcott's typewriter, as Connelly paces, brainstorming about their play.

MARC CONNELLY
 Dulcy, Dulcy, Dulcinea. What would
 our girl say next?

Connelly glances at the clock, almost 3:00, then at Kaufman.

GEORGE KAUFMAN
 I could live without a visit to
 that fat duchess today. If he even
 shows up.

MARC CONNELLY
 Hey! "Fat duchess!" Put that in the
 script.

Kaufman returns to typing.

EXT. ALGONQUIN HOTEL - AFTERNOON

Benchley strolls up the sidewalk. Dorothy appears from across
 the street and joins. Benchley again offers his arm, and the
 two walk in past a uniformed doorman.

INT. ALGONQUIN HOTEL PERGOLA ROOM - AFTERNOON

The two emerge into a private room of about twenty people.
 The red "AWOL-cott" banner hangs on the back wall. Murdock is
 suddenly right there, startling Benchley.

MURDOCK PEMBERTON
 Thank you so much for coming.

DOROTHY PARKER
 And your guest of dishonor?

MURDOCK PEMBERTON
 Still AWOL.

He looks over at Toohey, smoking nervously as he works the
 room.

ROBERT BENCHLEY
 That's true to form, regardless.

They spot Sherwood sticking out like a sore thumb, and wade
 over through the long tables, passing Harold and Jane,
 Heywood Broun, with wife Ruth Hale, Frank Adams, Deems
 Taylor, Art Samuels and William Murray, all whom we've
 previously met. A gent with a crutch, LAURENCE STALLINGS, 25,
 ambles in.

Waiter Luigi drops off plates of popovers and stuffed celery sticks for snacks, as Frank Case supervises, smiling at the assortment of literary talent. Most know each other, and talk shop.

Benchley, Parker and Sherwood chat. Benchley notices Murdock and Toohey frantically conferring about what to do next. He steps forward to address the room.

ROBERT BENCHLEY (CONT'D)

Well, well, as well-seasoned newspaper men...

He acknowledges Dorothy, Jane and Ruth.

ROBERT BENCHLEY (CONT'D)

...and women, I've no doubt you'll all applaud profusely when I make the very obvious observation that here we are, and you're with me so far, aren't you, here we all are at the very epitome of that kind of special event that we so most treasure attending, and by that I mean, and you've guessed it already, haven't you, which is to say, here we all are as asses assembled at yet another obligatory celebratory banquet.

Smirks. Dorothy smiles lovingly at Benchley. Frank Adams, especially, seems to know what he's referring to.

ROBERT BENCHLEY (CONT'D)

Alas, there will be no distribution of engraved fountain pens or commemorative pocket watches for this particular ceremony, but in advance of our own Mr. Woollcott revealing himself to us, or revealing his intention not to, I thought I might simply embark on a short history of the art of the Italian Renaissance, and then possibly we might scramble some eggs, or perhaps mix up a few mixed metaphors.

He's got their attention now. Dorothy and Sherwood look collectively impressed.

ROBERT BENCHLEY (CONT'D)

So we've settled on the fact that this is not a bank banquet, although it yet may prove to be a bunk banquet. And after so many of these, starting when I was still engaged in the halls of higher learning, in grade school, and still in knickers -- last week -- I'd like to flatter myself that in the field of impromptu ramblings, a field in which I am standing out in at this very moment, er, that is, I meant to say outstanding in, well, now I've put my foot in it haven't I, out in that field, I'd like to think, after extensive long minutes of practice, I've become quite inept at the entire enterprise. So, as unaccustomed as I am to public speaking, I'll simply endeavor to string together just a few words about the subject of what is clearly turning into a life sentence.

We learn a lot about everyone's affiliations as we track their reactions throughout.

ROBERT BENCHLEY (CONT'D)

Friends, you roaming about, and countrymen, and women, lend me the rent, it's in arrears. I come not to praise Alexander, but to get him laid to rest, which may be a first. The evil that Alec's done to theatre producers lives on, yes, but the good in that man is oft interred in his bones.

He looks over at Heywood Broun.

ROBERT BENCHLEY (CONT'D)

Brutus, or rather Broun, Heywood Broun, has said that Aleck is ambitious, and Broun is an honorable man.

Everyone grins at the Shakespearean paraphrase.

ROBERT BENCHLEY (CONT'D)

But this was the most unkindest cut of all. I speak not to disprove what Broun spoke -- who dares?

(MORE)

ROBERT BENCHLEY (CONT'D)
 -- but here I am to speak what I do
 know. You all did love Aleck once,
 not without cause, so what cause
 might withhold us now?

Suddenly, Woollcott, clad in an opera cape and top hat,
 storms in and up to the front.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT
 I'll take it from here, traitor.

ROBERT BENCHLEY
 That's fortunate, because that's
 all I know.

He hands his cape to Benchley, who obligingly hangs it on a
 rack. Woollcott remove his top hat, collapsed it, and sails
 it to Murdock like a frisbee, as everyone applauds Alec's
 arrival. Murdock catches it, pops it open, and puts it on,
 gratefully cheering.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT
 I couldn't stomach the thought of
 you all having to amuse yourselves
 without me. Also, the matinee I was
 attending was dreadful.

Harold and Jane smile, their mission accomplished.

HAROLD ROSS
 So no alma mater accolades?

Woollcott pointedly ignores him.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT
 I am not unaware of our host's oh-
 so-obvious ulterior motive in
 holding you all here hostage.

Murdock looks at Toohey, where's this going?

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT (CONT'D)
 But if my flag waving collaborators
 Harold Ross and Frank Adams have
 decided to fall in today, then it
 would seem downright unpatriotic of
 me not to join up for a few
 reminiscences. Frank, maybe you can
 inaugurate the proceedings with
 some impromptu stanzas regarding my
 bravery on the front lines.

ART SAMUELS
 The lines you typed, Aleck?

FRANK ADAMS

That would be my pleasure, Aleck.

Frank collects his thoughts over a drag on his cigar.

FRANK ADAMS (CONT'D)

Sargent Woollcott: He couldn't fight, and he couldn't shoot, but boy, our man could sure salute.

HAROLD ROSS

You mean, man, our boy could sure salute.

They raise their drinks.

ALL

Salute!

To the man on a crutch:

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT

Larry, you were there, you know how it was.

LAURENCE STALLINGS

Sure, but I was a fighting soldier, not one of those writing soldiers.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT

Well, that was a sneak attack. You're dismissed. Now, when I was in the theatre of war...

WILL MURRAY

Aleck, if you were reporting from the theatre of war, it was from the back row.

ART SAMUELS

Yes, and on the aisle!

More knowing smirks.

HAROLD ROSS

To be fair, he did manage to get an inspiring article in a least once a week.

WILL MURRAY

From a Paris café.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT

Thank you, Harold.

HEYWOOD BROUN

A true newspaper man; Give him a deadline and he'll dazzle you with punctuality and punctuation.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT

I'll admit, as a civilian with nothing more adventurous than being a reviewer of plays, by the simple process of holding up my arm, and then getting that arm jabbed with typhoid vaccine, I did draw a reserved seat at the war. So, yes, Bill, it was my patriotic privilege to print the praises of the American infantry. Our doughboys bore the greatest burden, suffered the greatest hardship, and it was our boys that won the war.

His sincerity is unexpected, looks like.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT (CONT'D)

So, as a first hand witness to the Yankee soldiers summoned for the third and final phase of the Argonne drive, I will remember that camaraderie all the days of my life. But the memory that will lie always closest to my heart and will color most the stories that I will continue to tell in years to come...

HAROLD ROSS

No doubt.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT

...is not the memory of their pursuit of the enemy, which was heroic, nor of their speed, which was beyond all words exhausting. It is, rather, the recollection of the fraternity of the scores of communities reclaimed in the path, all the little, long-lost fragmented towns of France.

Some look impressed and interested.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT (CONT'D)

From that misty September morning when the First Army struck its initial blow near Verdun, to that murky November morning when the order "Cease Firing" sounded from Switzerland to the sea, more than 150 towns and villages were won back by force of American arms. A full half of these were amazingly little battered by the war, and in all of them, decimated or not, a half-incredulous, altogether jubilant, population stood waiting with outstretched hands, waiting, with laughter and tears and songs and coffee and kisses, the advent of their deliverance.

All look on, now entranced. Dorothy glances at Benchley, then around the room at her "friends." Woollcott is loving the attention.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT (CONT'D)

Sometimes they went out into the fields, the women and the old men and the children, there to wave sheets as white flags of friendliness and appeal.

We continue to pan from face to face.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT (CONT'D)

Sometimes they went fearfully into their cellars and stayed there till they heard the uproarious and unmistakably American voices calling down to them, "The Germans have parted, the Boches are gone." In most of these towns, when dawn came that following triumphant Monday morning, there could be heard the jingling of harnesses on the frosty morning air, the rumpus of the mules, the growing chorus of curses and laughter, the music of an American regimen waking up. It was that same morning that the great news came.

(MORE)

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT (CONT'D)

Surely bells rang forth the tidings
from Rome to San Francisco, but
there are some of us who will
always believe that, in all the
chimes which sounded across the
world that morning of November 11,
the sweetest notes of all came from
the liberated belfries of France.

An impressed silence. No wisecracks now.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT (CONT'D)

Or some such merde.

Reaction shots all around. As RETRO JAZZ SWELLS, the group
mingle and chat.

EXT. ALGONQUIN HOTEL - AFTERNOON

The afternoon sun is just beginning to consider setting.
Parker, Benchley and Sherwood emerge from the lobby, followed
by Murdock and Toohey.

ROBERT BENCHLEY

Well, that was certainly no worse
than a bad head cold.

Toohey beams.

JOHN TOOHEY

We should do this again.

Dorothy looks like she approves.

ROBERT BENCHLEY

Don't be daft.

Benchley approaches a gent in uniform.

ROBERT BENCHLEY (CONT'D)

Pardon me, sir, but might you be
persuaded to hail us a cab?

MAN IN UNIFORM

Pardon me, sir, but I'm no doorman.
I'm an Admiral in the United States
Navy.

ROBERT SHERWOOD

He's sorry.

ROBERT BENCHLEY

Indeed I am. In that case, would
you please get us a battleship?

They all crack up as the officer harrumphs off.

DOROTHY PARKER

Well, I can't top that.

Suddenly, Eddie, still in his pajamas, gallops up from around the corner on a police horse, bathrobe flying. In the distance, a cop runs up after. Eddie leans down towards Dorothy and offers his hand.

EDWIN PARKER

Need a lift, doll?

The horse WHINNIES. The approaching cop blows his WHISTLE.

CUT TO:

INT. ALGONQUIN HOTEL ROSE ROOM RESTAURANT, 1930

Without uttering another word, Margalo, Sarah and Thurber exchange looks. Thurber makes a gesture like, "Yes, and then?" Frank Case appears from the lobby. Their eyes all settle on the empty round table.

FADE OUT:

END OF SHOW