

(It is perhaps unnecessary to remark that this sketch derives its entire value from the fact that it is played in forthright and manly fashion. In other words, the actors must not imitate the voices of women.)

IF MEN PLAYED CARDS AS WOMEN DO

Characters: ~~John, Bob, Marc, and George~~ *Doc, Willie, Bill, and Marc*

Scene: ~~John's~~ *Doc's* home - the living room. There are two doors, one leading to an outside hall, the other to the other rooms of the house. A card table has been set up in the middle of the room, with four chairs around it, and above it is another table on which are piled the necessary adjuncts for a poker game - a fancy cover for the table, cards, chips, a humidior. For the rest, you have only to imagine an average and good-looking room.

As the curtain rises, John enters from another room, then turns and calls back through the open door, as though he had forgotten something . . .

John - *Doc* And don't forget, I want things served very nicely. Use the best china and the filigree doilies. (He starts to close the door - remembers another instruction) And at eleven o'clock just put the cigars and drinks right on the table and we'll stop playing. (He closes the door and advances into the room. He looks the place over; rubs a suspecting finger along the table top in a quest for dust. He moves one chair a fraction of an inch and seems to think that that makes a difference in the appearance of the room. Then there comes a knock on the outer door. John darts to the mirror and takes a quick look at himself; adjusts his tie.) Come in! (Bob enters.) Hello, *Willie*.

Bob *Willie* Hello, *Doc*! I thought I'd run over early to see if I could help you with the lunch.

John *Doc* Thanks - everything is ready. I baked a cake. Oh, say! *Handley* That's a new hat, isn't it?

Bob *Willie* Why, no - don't you remember? It's the one I got at *Knox's* in the Spring. Then when they began wearing the bands higher, I said to myself, why should I buy a new hat when I can have a man in and get him to put on another band for me, just as easily as not? Do you like it?

John *Doc* Very attractive. I wonder how it would look on me? (Takes it, starts to try it on, then smooths his hair before he finally puts it on. He looks at himself in the mirror, turns.) What do you think?

Bob *Willie* Lovely! *Makes your* Makes your face look thinner. (Looks at ~~the~~ *the* card table.) Who's playing tonight?

John *Doc* *Marc* and *Bill* George and Marc.

Bob *Willie* Really? (He takes his seat.) Tell me - don't you think George is looking older these days? How are he and ~~ether~~ *ether* getting along? Any better?

*Ruthie*

John *Doc* Not as good.

Bob *Wille* Funny what she saw in him. (There is a knock on the door.)

~~John~~ *Doc* Come in! (*George* enters.)

George *Mark* (Greatly surprised, as though they were the last people he had expected to see.) Hello, boys!

John *Doc* Hello, ~~George~~ *Mark*! Well, well, well!

Bob *Wille* (Rises) Hello, ~~George~~ *Mark*! Never saw you look so young!

George *Mark* (In great excitement) Say, I just met ~~Ed Jennings~~ *Eddie Friedman* down the street and what do you think? He says ~~Jim Perkins~~ told him that ~~Will Harper's~~ *Wife* ~~may leave him!~~ wife may leave him!

~~Bob~~ *Wille* You don't say so! (*Sits Again*) *Jerry Lowenstein*

George *Mark* what do you think of that? (His excitement dies a little; he looks around.) The room looks lovely, ~~John~~. You've changed things around, haven't you? Awfully nice. But if you don't mind just a little suggestion - I'm not sure that I like that table up there where you've got it. (Another critical look) And if you had these chairs re-upholstered in blue - - *Hy Cohen*

John *Doc* well, what do you think of plain chintz?

George *Mark* That would be nice. Oh, say! I've got a T. L. for you, ~~Bob~~ *Wille*.

Bob *Wille* Oh, good! What is it?

George *Mark* well you owe me one first.

Bob *Wille* Oh, tell me mine! don't be mean!

George *Mark* Well all right, ~~Frank Williams~~ *Hy Weiss* said you looked lovely in your dinner coat.

Bob *Wille* That is nice.

John *Doc* How's the baby, ~~George~~ *Mark*?

George *Mark* Awfully cranky lately. He's teething. I left him with the nurse tonight - first chance I've had to get out. (takes seat at the table.) who else is coming?

John *Doc* Just ~~Marc~~ *Bill Durbuff* ~~and~~ *the* AULTA -- KUCKER

George *Mark* (With meaning) Oh, is he? I want to speak to you boys about ~~here~~ *here*. Don't you think he's ~~been~~ seeing a lot of that ~~young-woman~~ lately?

Bob *Wille* He certainly has. He was at the ~~Baltimore~~ *Glass Bar* having tea with her yesterday - I know because a ~~cousin~~ *friend* of ~~Tom Hennessey's~~ *Sam Breening* saw him.

*Bill*

John <sup>brother</sup> Which cousin is that?

Bob <sup>Will</sup> I don't know whether you know him - Ralph Wilson. He married that Aaron ~~girl~~ <sup>MUS. SOGARNER from Akron</sup> - they have two children.

George <sup>port</sup> You remember - one of them is backward.

John <sup>Doc</sup> Oh, yes! I heard that. (Another knock on the door) Come in! (Marc enters)

Bill <sup>Doc</sup> HELLO EVERYBODY

John )  
George } Hello, ~~Bill!~~  
Bob )

Marc <sup>Bill</sup> I'm sorry to be the last, but we have a new maid, and you know what that means. <sup>How do</sup> ~~everything~~ -- (the next day) she doesn't show up. <sup>And after you explain</sup>

John <sup>Doc</sup> That's all right. Say, I like the cut of that vest, Marc. Look boys! Don't you like that vest? <sup>It's a ma-KI A</sup>

Marc <sup>Bill</sup> It ~~is~~ nice, isn't it?

George <sup>port</sup> Oh, lovely! Turn around and let's see the back. (George and John both get up and examine his clothes, pull down his trousers, etc.)

Marc <sup>Bill</sup> I had it made right in the house - I have a little tailor that comes in. Four dollars a day.

George <sup>Mark</sup> Excuse me - there's a little spot - (He moistens a finger and rubs Marc's lapel.) <sup>(Touches material and turns head away)</sup>  
<sup>(Lashes a piece of HUS-A-RYE)</sup>

John <sup>Doc</sup> Well, shall we play a little poker?

Marc <sup>Bill</sup> (Sitting) Yes, sure. Oh, ~~John~~ <sup>Doc</sup> May I trouble you for a glass of water?

John <sup>Doc</sup> Why, of course, Marc. (George and Bob sit again.)

Marc <sup>Bill</sup> I'll get it myself if you'll tell me where.

John <sup>Doc</sup> Oh, no - that's all right. (He goes out. A pause. The men look at each other, meaningly. Their heads come together.)

Marc <sup>Bill</sup> John doesn't look well, does he?

Bob <sup>Will</sup> No, did you notice those lines? He can't hide them much longer. <sup>and His chest has slipped below his belt.</sup>

Marc <sup>Bill</sup> He was very good-looking as a boy.

George <sup>Mark</sup> Isn't this room the most terrible thing you ever saw? (Marc goes to the table up stage; picks up a cigar and shows it to the others. They are scornful.)

*Bill* Marc Hun! Ten cents. (Pause.) I really wanted to get that water myself. I'd like to see his kitchen. . . (John re-enters with the water.) Oh, thanks, John. (Marc drinks.) *Doc*

*Doc* John Is it cold enough, Marc?

*Bill* Marc (Indicating that it isn't) Oh, yes. Of course, I *usually* generally put ice in myself. (Sits)

*Mont* George Say, we had the lovelies new dessert tonight!

*Wille* Bob On what was it? It's awfully hard to find a new dessert.

*Bill* Marc (With Emphasis) Is it? *Fantastico*

*Mont* George Well, it was a ~~sweet~~ of prune whip. You make it out of just nothing at all. And then, if company comes when you don't expect them - -

*Wille* Bob I want the recipe

*Bill* Marc How many eggs?

*Doc* (John up at the rear table. Turns on this speech.)

*Doc* John Does it take much butter?

*Mont* George Oh, no-very little. I'll bring you the recipe Tuesday afternoon!

*Bill* (Marc feels a rough place on his chin. Rubs it, then takes a good-sized mirror out of his pocket and stands it on the table. Examines his chin. Then takes out a safety razor and starts to shave. After that he takes out two military brushes and combs his hair. The others pay no attention to this. John is at the rear table, with his back to the audience; Bob is seated fooling with the cards; George is seated, calmly smoking. After Marc has put everything away, Bob breaks the silence.)

*Wille* Bob Are we ready?

*Doc* John No! Wait just a minute. (He brings down the fancy table cover, which he spreads on the table.) There we are!

*Bill* Marc (Feeling it) That's nice, John. Where'd you get it?

*Doc* John Why I bought a yard of this plain sateen down at *John's* *John's*

*Mont* George Really? How Much was it?

*Doc* John A dollar sixty-three. It was reduced. Then I had this edging in the house.

*Wille* Bob Awfully nice!

*Bill* Marc Oh say! Walter Sharp just got back from Paris - -  
*Mont* George He did? *Habsburg*

Marc *Bill* Yes. And he says they're wearing trousers longer <sup>down</sup> over there.

George *Mark* Really? (There is quite a fuss about it.)

John *Doc* (Brings chips and takes his seat) What'll we play for?

Bob *Willie* Oh, what's the difference? One cent limit?

George *Mark* Does it matter who deals? (Takes the cards from Bob).

Marc *Bill* say, did you hear about *Miss Parker*?

John *Doc* No

Marc *Bill* Well, it seems he saw these advertisements about how to get this, and he thought he'd try them. You know *John's* taken on a lot of weight since ~~his~~ *he joined Bald* marriage.

George *Mark* Twenty pounds-absolutely.

Marc *Bill* well, they sent him some powders and he began taking them, and what do you think?

George *Mark* Well? (Marc whispers to him.) You don't say so?

John & Bob *Doc & Willie* (Excited) what ~~is~~ was it? What was it? (George whispers to John, who whispers to Bob: - great excitement.)

Marc *Bill* Who has the cards?

George *Mark* Here they are. (Starts to deal - poker ~~is~~ hands.)

*Pause* Marc *Bill* I don't want to play late. I've been shopping all day.

George *Mark* and I have an appointment at the barber's tomorrow. I'm going to try a new way of getting my hair cut. (The deal is completed.)

Bob *Willie* (Picking up a few cards) which is higher - aces or kings?

George *Mark* Now, who bets first?

John *Doc* Are these funny little things clubs?

Marc *Bill* what are chips worth?

John *Doc* Let's have them all worth the same thing.

Bob *Willie* A penny apiece . . . . .

George *Mark* say, *Kleins* Lore & Taylor are having a wonderful sale of nightgowns.

*Pause* Marc *Bill* what do you pay your maid?

Bob *Willie* Sixty-five, but she isn't worth it. (The three start talking at once about maids, and John has a hard time being heard.)

... have! ... to this! Move!

All Well?

John Doc (Excited I knew there was something I wanted to tell you!

All (They must not speak together) What is it?

John Doc Well, now in the first place you must promise not to ~~xxx~~ breathe a word of it to anybody, because I got it in absolute confidence and I promised I wouldn't tell.

George ~~Mark~~ What is it?

Marc Bill Well?

Bob Willie Well?

*Bob Willie*

John Doc It's about Sid Hafflin: Now, you won't tell anybody? At least don't let on you got it from me.

All ~~Not~~ *already*

John Doc Well, I'm told - and I got this pretty straight, mind you - I'm told that he's going to - an - (He puts the message across with his eyes.)

Marc Bill I don't believe it!

Bob Willie what do you mean?

George ~~Mark~~

~~xxxx~~  
John Doc In April!

Marc Bill April! (They count on their fingers, up to four.)

George ~~Mark~~ What do you mean?

John Doc Exactly! They were ~~married late~~ *married* in January! (All thrown down their hands and begin talking at once.)

CURTAIN

Mort → My wife ~~says~~ *says* all we do is gab at card games - you <sup>know</sup> know that isn't true

(Maddie Comes in - Lurch is now being served)