

Sweet ? Sixteen

A Comedy in One Act

By Le Roma Eshbach Greth

STORY OF THE PLAY:

As Jim approaches sixteen he's interested in football, fishing and old jalopies but NOT interested in girls. According to the girls in his class he's a "creep." Mother and sister, Candy, want to give him a birthday party and invite girls. BUT, Jim wants Dad to take him camping for the weekend instead. According to Candy, who's been studying psychology, that's "barbarian." She plots to "uncreep" her brother but he's one jump ahead of her. And, with what results? Plenty of laughs and a surprise ending.

CHARACTERS:

- Jim Stuart*
- Candy Stuart*
- Mother Stuart*
- Dad Stuart*
- Maybelle*
- Terry*
- Sandra*

DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERS:

- *Jim- a very masculine, athletic boy. He's apt to break things around the house and would be sure to step on a girl's feet if he went to dances. He wears dungarees, sweat shirt, jacket, and cap, and is untidy about his appearance.*
- *Candy Stuart- his sister, is the opposite in taste and dress. She wears a full skirt, dainty shoes, tasteful blouse and hair-do. She reads a great deal; likes dancing and parties.*
- *Mother- is more inclined to Candy's tastes. She wears a neat house dress with a pretty apron.*
- *Dad- an easy-going fellow who believes problems have a way of solving themselves. He wears trousers, white shirt with throat open and sleeves rolled up. On his feet are brightly colored socks, but no shoes. His hair may be greyed, if desired.*
- *Maybelle- rather an unpopular, wallflower type, she has formed an attachment for Jim. The colors of her skirt and blouse clash and she wears a large bunch of flowers in her hair. She moves rather awkwardly and is inclined to giggle.*
- *Terry- one of the most popular girls in school; pretty and neat. She wears attractive school clothing.*
- *Sandra- friends with Terry, and fits the same description, although she is a bit more aggressive than Terry.*

SCENE: Living room of the Stuart home, Anywhere, U.S.A.

TIME: The present. Early evening on a late autumn day.

PERSONAL PROPERTIES:

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Ashtray- Mother
Dusting Cloth- Mother
Book- Candy
School books- Jim
Newspaper- Dad
Bandages- Maybelle
Large box- Jim

STAGE PROPERTIES:

-Bookcase, with books and ornaments
-Sofa with cushions
-Easy chair
-Magazine rack, filled
-Curtains for window
-Occasional chair
-Pictures for wall

SCENE

(The curtain rises to reveal the comfortable living room of the Stuart home. It is a bright, cheerful room with filly curtains and gay ornaments. A sofa, with well-used cushions, stands R. C. Behind it in the wall an archway leads into a hall. L. C. is an easy chair with a magazine rack close by. In the L. wall is a window [optional] and a door which leads outside. Another window is in the rear wall. A bookcase stands along the rear wall. An occasional chair stands U. L.)

(At rise, Candy is discovered sitting, very sweet and very dignified, on the sofa, R. C. Her dress is daintily fanned about her and she is reading from a book of poetry which she gracefully holds before her. Mother stands in arch, holding an ash tray which she is absentmindedly wiping with a cloth as she listens approvingly to Candy.)

CANDY: *(Reading softly.)*

"If you but knew
How all my days seem filled with dreams of you,
How sometimes in the silent night
Your eyes thrill through me with their tender light,
How oft I hear your voice when others speak,
How you 'mid other forms I seek-
Oh, Love more real than though such dreams were true
If you but knew."

(Candy gently lowers the book to her lap and sighs dramatically. Mother, deep in dreams, also sighs.)
Don't you just love poetry?

MOTHER: Yes, indeed. . . . And that will make a very nice reading for your dramatic club. Who wrote

it?

CANDY: (*Looking at book.*) It says, "Unknown."

MOTHER: Well, it certainly is beautiful. I'm so glad I have children, gentle and refined enough to appreciate good poetry. . .

(*Suddenly and rudely this delightful poetic interlude is interrupted. Jim literally bursts into the room through the door L. He leaves door ajar, runs to bookcase U. R., where he loudly slams down the school books which he carries. Mother and Candy stare at him, blinking themselves out of their poetic daze.*)

JIM: (*Ripping off jacket and speaking very loudly.*) Yeah, boy! Man-oh-man! Did we ever lick 'em! Did we ever beat the tar out of 'em!

MOTHER: (*Shocked.*) James!

JIM: (*Dropping jacket on floor and flinging his cap into a corner of the room. The eyes of Mother and Candy follow cap, then return to Jim.*) Centerville High Football team won't come knockin' at our door no more! Gee! Almost forgot! (*Dashes madly to door L., and yells at the top of his lungs.*) Hey, stinkweed! Yeooooooooo! Stinke! Don't forget we're gonna work on Horseface's old jalopy after we put on the feedbag! Seven o'clock! (*He turns into the room, banging door shut while Mother and Candy flinch. Still loudly.*) What's for supper, Mom?

MOTHER: (*Firmly.*) James, I am not over at Stinkweed's--I mean John's house and we aren't hard of hearing.

JIM: (*Just a shade lower.*) Okay, Mom! (*Throwing himself into chair L., his head toward floor, his feet up where his head should be.*) Boy, am I beat! That game was cool! Real cool! Man-oh-man!

CANDY: (*Rising.*) Oh, how disgusting. (*She goes to bookcase and replaces book of poetry.*) It's impossible to concentrate on the finer things of life in this house! It's lucky I have a quiet study hour in school before the dramatic club meets. (*Appealing.*) Mother, why do you let him get away with it?

MOTHER: (*Angry.*) James, you pick up your jacket and cap this very minute!

JIM: Aw, Mom. . . .

MOTHER: This very minute! Pick them up and hang them NEATLY in the hall closet!

JIM: (*Sliding to floor and rising.*) Ain't you got no feelings, Mom? Ain't you proud of me for winning the game?

MOTHER: I'd be more proud if you got a better grade in English. (*Pointing.*) Pick them up!

JIM: Okay. Okay. (*Doing so.*) Hey! I'm real starved! Got anything to chew on, Mom?

MOTHER: Really, James. . .

JIM: (*Yelling as he bounds into the hall.*) Yaaa hoo! Forward pass!

MOTHER: (*Coming forward to sit on sofa.*) Oh, that boy! He just exhausts me!

CANDY: (*Moving D. C.*) He's a barbarian! Purely and simply a barbarian!

MOTHER: Yes, he is rather, isn't he?

CANDY: (*Sitting L.*) None of the girls in school will have *anything* to do with him! If he does talk to a girl, he bores her to death talking about fish, and football. . . and old jalopies!

MOTHER: Well, Candy, I didn't mind it until recently. I didn't want him to be interested in girls too soon.

CANDY: Mother! He'll be sixteen tomorrow!

MOTHER: (*Worried.*) Yes, I know.

CANDY: He'll be the most juvenile sixteen-year-old in Goodrich High!

MOTHER: (*Looking on the bright side.*) Well. . . maybe he'll soon begin to take an interest in the finer things of life.

CANDY: That's what you said when he turned fifteen.

MOTHER: (*Rising and moving to bookcase where she places ash tray and does a bit of dusting.*) I don't know what else I can say about it. Your father always says to let him alone and he'll outgrow it.

CANDY: That's positively a prehistoric way of looking at the problem.

MOTHER: (*Smiling.*) Now, Candy! I wouldn't exactly describe your father's ideas as prehistoric.

CANDY: But they are, Mother! They are! It's very old-fashioned to just sit around and wait for things to change. Besides, it's not fair to Jim.

MOTHER: He seems happy.

CANDY: All aborigines are happy. They're too stupid to be anything *but* happy.

MOTHER: Candise! That's an awful thing to say about your brother!

CANDY: (*Rising dramatically.*) Sometimes the truth hurts!

MOTHER: (*Dryly.*) Yes. Well. . . (*moves toward arch.*) I'd better get back to the kitchen. If I don't get those potatoes on, we're not going to have any dinner.

CANDY: (*Crossing to arch.*) But, Mother! We haven't decided what's to be done about Jim.

MOTHER: *(As she exits.)* I doubt if anything can be done about Jim!

CANDY: *(As she exits at arch, R.)* Mother, you're wrong! That's a basically unsound way of approaching the problem. . .

(They exit and a moment later Dad enters through the arch with a newspaper tucked under his arm. He looks offstage as if gazing after them and shakes his head. Then he scratches his head, yawns, and moves to sofa. With a luxurious sigh, he sprawls full length on sofa, his brightly colored stockings facing the audience. He begins peacefully to read his newspaper. A loud crash is heard off R. Jim bounds into the room as Dad starts and lowers his paper.)

DAD: Jim! What on earth was that?

JIM: Jeepers! I was just practicing a football sprint in the hall! . . . I don't see why Mom wanted that old vase anyhow!

(Mother's voice is heard off R. as Jim ducks behind the chair L. C.)

MOTHER: *(Off.)* James! *(There is silence.)* Raymond! Is James in the living room with you?

DAD: Er--I don't see him at the moment, Helen.

MOTHER: *(Off.)* Well, if you see him, tell him I'm looking for him!

JIM: *(Rising and wiping his forehead.)* Phew! Thanks, Pop!

DAD: I'm not sure I should have done it. Why don't you practice your football outside, son?

JIM: Aw--I forgot.

DAD: That vase was our wedding gift from Great Aunt Gertrude. Quite valuable.

JIM: Then why was it sitting in the hall?

DAD: So we wouldn't have to look at the thing when we were sitting in the living room. . . . I mean, that's beside the point, Jim! You'd better remember to tell your Mother that you're sorry.

JIM: Yeah. Do you think she'll be very mad?

DAD: Well. . . I think she can bear up under the loss.

JIM: *(Sprawling on floor at C. stage.)* Hey, Pop! We beat Centerville High this afternoon!

DAD: No kidding? That's a great team you've got, son!

JIM: Yeah. Haven't lost a game this season. Next week we're gonna take on Masonville.

DAD: That game'll be on Saturday, won't it? *(Jim nods.)* I'll have to get a ticket. . . . You don't suppose your mother and Candy would want to go along?

JIM: (*Falsetto and acting girlish.*) Oh, dear me, no! It's such a rough, ungentlemanly game!

DAD: (*Laughing loudly.*) Hey! If that doesn't sound like--(*Stops laughing, glances over his shoulder, and clears throat guiltily.*) Now, Jim! We mustn't make fun of your sister.

JIM: Dad, Candy's gotten to be a real pill lately. She gives me a pain.

DAD: Oh, she'll get over it.

JIM: Ever since she read that book on psychology, she thinks she knows how to run everybody's life. Why, yesterday she told me we should stop calling Stinke Stinkweed. She said we should call him John instead.

DAD: Well. . . maybe she's got a point there.

JIM: But, Pop! John's his name! Why would we want to call a guy by his real name?

DAD: Er--I see your point. . . I think. Anyway, your sister means well, I'm sure.

JIM: Phooey! I bet she'll give me a psychology book for my birthday.

DAD: (*Finding safer ground.*) Oh, yes! Your birthday's tomorrow, isn't it? Sweet sixteen and never--

JIM: (*Embarrassed.*) Pop!

DAD: (*Laying aside paper and sitting up.*) What do you want for your birthday this year? I've been trying to decide what to get you but I can't think of anything.

JIM: (*Shrugs.*) Me neither. I got that set of tools I wanted for Christmas.

DAD: Well, we can't let something like a sixteenth birthday go by without something special.

JIM: Yeah. . . . I've been wondering what I could ask for. And Horseface gave me a swell idea last night!

DAD: Good for Horseface.

JIM: (*Eagerly sitting up.*) There ain't nothing I'd like better than a weekend at the lake, Pop!

DAD: Well now. . .

JIM: It's still warm enough to camp out for one night! The fish are biting too. That's the life, Pop! Just the two of us out on Johnson's Island! We'd eat out of tin cans and really rough it!

DAD: That does sound plenty attractive, at that.

JIM: Sure, it'd be a riot! How about it, Pop?

DAD: (*Enthusiastically.*) We could get up at four o'clock tomorrow morning. . .

JIM: And we'd get back after dark Sunday night!

DAD: (*Rising.*) Son, I think you've got yourself a weekend at the lake! I'll see what kind of chow we can take along.

JIM: (*Also rising; they shake hands, Dad claps him on the back.*) Oh, boy! Wait'll the fellows hear about this! (*The doorbell rings. Jim goes to answer it. Maybelle enters. Jim, groaning.*) Hi, Maybelle.

MAYBELLE: (*Giggling.*) Hi, Jimmy!

JIM: (*Leaving Maybelle standing at the door, he crosses to take Dad's arm.*) Candy's around someplace, Maybelle.

MAYBELLE: But I didn't come to see--

JIM: Excuse us, Maybelle. Come on, Pop! Let's root up some blankets! It gets mighty cold up at the lake.

(*Exit Dad and Jim through arch. Maybelle blinks, shrugs, and enters room, closing the door. Mother enters through the arch.*)

MOTHER: Oh! Good afternoon, Maybelle. I didn't know you were here.

MAYBELLE: I just came.

MOTHER: Candy! Maybelle's here!

MAYBELLE: But I didn't come to see--

(*Candy enters at arch.*)

CANDY: (*Not enthusiastic.*) Oh. Hi, Maybelle.

MAYBELLE: Hi, Candy.

CANDY: I'm pretty busy this afternoon, Maybelle.

MAYBELLE: But I didn't come to see--

MOTHER: Do sit down, Maybelle. Candy's got an idea for a surprise for Jim. Maybe you'll have some suggestions.

MAYBELLE: (*Sitting L.*) I doubt it. I almost never have suggestions.

MOTHER: (*Sitting on sofa.*) Jim's going to be sixteen years old tomorrow.

MAYBELLE: Yes. I--I bought him a present.

MOTHER: Really?

CANDY: Maybelle, why on earth would *you* buy *Jim* a present?

MAYBELLE: (*Defiantly.*) Because I like him!

CANDY: (*Collapsing on sofa.*) Now I've heard everything! A girl really likes Jim!

MOTHER: (*Frowning at Candy.*) I think that's very nice, Maybelle. What did you buy?

MAYBELLE: A can of worms.

MOTHER: A can of WHAT?

MAYBELLE: Worms.

MOTHER: (*Rubbing her ears.*) That's strange! I keep thinking you said, "worms."

MAYBELLE: I *did* say worms.

CANDY: (*Forcing a laugh.*) Surely you're joking.

MAYBELLE: Oh, no. They're the biggest, fattest night crawlers money can buy. I thought he'd appreciate them better than anything else. He loves to go fishing, you know.

MOTHER: You--ah, didn't bring them with you, I hope?

MAYBELLE: No, but I can go get them.

MOTHER: Never mind!

CANDY: Maybelle, Mother and I are planning a surprise for Jim.

MAYBELLE: Oh, I just love surprises!

CANDY: We're going to have a birthday party for him!

MOTHER: (*Doubtfully.*) I'm not sure Jim's going to like this.

CANDY: Mother, the object isn't to please him, but to civilize him.

MAYBELLE: A party? For *Jim*?

CANDY: Yes. There'll be dancing and games. All the trimmings! Cake, fruit punch. . .

MOTHER: And the boys will all be dressed like little gentlemen.

MAYBELLE: Are you sure you're talking about Jim?

MOTHER: Why, certainly.

CANDY: He'll be all right once he gets used to the idea. He might even dance.

MAYBELLE: Gosh, Candy! Of course, I'll come but. . .

MOTHER: (*Anxiously.*) But what, Maybelle?

MAYBELLE: Well. . .(*uncomfortably*) you know how the girls in school feel about Jim. He's--always talking about fish and football. They kinda think he's a creep--if you'll excuse the expression, Mrs. Stuart.

MOTHER: I'll excuse it, Maybelle.

CANDY: Of course he's a creep. What we're trying to do is "uncreep" him!

MAYBELLE: I don't think the girls will come. They'll figure he'll get the guys together and talk about jalopies and fish all evening. He's a bad influence on the other fellows they think.

MOTHER: I don't think you're helping him by giving him worms, Maybelle.

MAYBELLE: Oh, I like him the way he is, Mrs. Stuart. And I sort of take a scientific interest in worms. Did you know that if you cut a worm in half both ends will--

MOTHER: (*Quickly.*) Yes! (*To Candy.*) If only we had more girls like Maybelle. . . who'll take Jim for what he is.

CANDY: We'll have *all* the girls, Mother.

MAYBELLE: (*Doubtfully.*) How are you going to get them here?

CANDY: (*Rising with a superior smile.*) With psychology.

MAYBELLE: (*Brightly.*) You mean you're going to tell them Jim won't be home?

CANDY: Of course not! Maybelle, who are the most popular girls in school?

MAYBELLE: Oh, let's see. . . . Why, Terry and Sandra, of course!

CANDY: Right! They're the leaders of the whole school. If they go someplace, everybody goes, right? What they wear, all the girls wear. Right?

MAYBELLE: Uh huh.

CANDY: I called them on the telephone and asked them to come over this evening. We'll explain the situation to them.

MOTHER: I'm sure they'll cooperate when they find out how much it means to Jim.

MAYBELLE: That's a good idea!

CANDY: (*Moving C.*) Of course! That's psychology. All we have to do is line up the leaders and the others will follow.

MOTHER: Would you like to stay, Maybelle? Perhaps you can help us talk to Terry and Sandra.

MAYBELLE: (*Giggling.*) Okay. This is fun! Sort of like undercover work or something.

CANDY: The party will be tomorrow night at eight, Maybelle.

(*Enter Jim through arch.*)

MOTHER: Shhh!

JIM: Say, Mom! Have you seen my flashlight around here?

MOTHER: I think it's on your desk.

JIM: How'd you expect me to find it with all that junk?

MOTHER: Well, why do you keep so much junk on your desk? (*Rising.*) I'll help you look after dinner. Right now I'd better get back to the kitchen. (*Moves toward arch.*) Come along, Candy.

CANDY: Huh?

MOTHER: Don't you remember? It's your turn to make the salad tonight! (*To Jim.*) And don't think I've forgotten about my broken vase, Jim! As punishment you'll get no allowance for two weeks.

JIM: (*Injured.*) Aw, Mom. . .

CANDY: Mother, why do I--?

MOTHER: Come along, Candy! Or it won't be psychology I'll use on you! You're making the salad. Excuse us, Maybelle.

MAYBELLE: Sure.

CANDY: (*As she and Mother exit R. through arch.*) But, Mother! I don't see why I should have to help with dinner. . .

JIM: (*Slouching on sofa and turning to comic section of newspaper.*) Oh, boy! Is it ever good to see Candy get it for a change.

MAYBELLE: (*Rising and moving closer to sofa.*) She is kinda fresh sometimes, isn't she?

JIM: (*Indifferently.*) If you don't like her, why don't you go home, Maybelle?

MAYBELLE: I didn't come to see--(*Pauses and looks around.*) Candy. I came to see you!

JIM: (*Sitting up.*) Huh?

MAYBELLE: (*Sitting beside him on sofa; Jim moves away from her.*) Don't girls ever come to see you, Jim?

JIM: I hate girls!

MAYBELLE: (*Moving closer to him.*) Why?

JIM: (*Edging away.*) I don't know why! They--they're always dressed up and they don't like old jalopies. They don't want to talk about fishing and--and they're afraid of worms!

MAYBELLE: I'm not afraid of worms! I *love* worms. (*Pause.*) Jimmy, the Football Frolic is next week.

JIM: So what? You know I don't go to dances.

MAYBELLE: (*Shocked.*) But this isn't *just* a dance! It's a testimonial in honor of the team. And you're the star of the team! You've got to go to the Football Frolic!

JIM: I'm still not goin'. If I went I'd have to dance with girls all evening.

MAYBELLE: But you've got to get used to girls, Jim!

JIM: Who says?

MAYBELLE: Well. . .

JIM: I know why you're so worried about it. You ain't got a date for the Football Frolic.

MAYBELLE: That's not true! I mean--I don't have a date yet. . . But I will have! Lots of fellows have said they were going to ask me.

JIM: Name one.

MAYBELLE: Well. . . you wouldn't know them. Anyhow, I'm not the one who's worried about getting you used to girls. It's your mother.

JIM: (*Suspiciously.*) How do you know?

MAYBELLE: I was here when she and Candy were talking about it.

JIM: Ohhhh! That Candy! She gives me a toothache.

MAYBELLE: (*Hitching closer to him.*) She's awful, isn't she?

JIM: (*Sitting on arm of sofa to get away from her.*) She's a pain in the neck. I bet she'll talk Mom into giving me some kind of fancy clothes for my birthday.

MAYBELLE: Oh, no! They're not giving you clothes.

JIM: Hey! You know something! Okay, spill it. What are they going to give me?

MAYBELLE: (*Flattered by his interest.*) Well, it's something big. And Candy said it's going to have all the trimmings.

JIM: Sounds like a turkey.

MAYBELLE: (*Helpfully.*) You'll probably think it's a turkey. Or a lemon.

JIM: I don't get it. How about talking American?

MAYBELLE: (*Leaning closer to him.*) What'll you give me if I tell you?

JIM: (*Falling off arm of sofa.*) Nothing!

MAYBELLE: (*Picking up newspaper and pretending interest.*) Okay. Then I won't tell you.

JIM: (*Doubtfully as he picks himself up.*) What'd you want?

MAYBELLE: There's a good movie at the Embassy next Wednesday!

JIM: Nothin' doin'! I ain't takin' no girl to no movie!

MAYBELLE: (*Sighs.*) Okay.

(*She resumes reading. Very independently Jim moves to door L. and prepares to exit. He pauses with hand on knob, and looks back at her, then resolutely opens door and takes a step forward. Pauses again.*)

JIM: (*Turning.*) That info must be plenty cool if you figure you can get me to take you to the movies with it.

MAYBELLE: It is.

JIM: You're sure it's *worth* a movie?

MAYBELLE: (*Putting paper aside.*) I wouldn't have the nerve to ask if it wasn't.

JIM: (*Closing door and moving C.*) Okay, Maybelle. I know when I'm licked. I'll take you to the movies--just this once!

MAYBELLE: Swell! Thanks for the date, Jimmy!

JIM: Gimme the info.

MAYBELLE: (*Impressively.*) Candy and your mom are giving you a surprise party for your birthday!

JIM: (*As if he's been stuck with a pin.*) WHAT?

MAYBELLE: Tomorrow night at eight! There'll be dancing, and all the girls from our class, and games--

(*With a yell of anguish, Jim dashes out door L. Dad enters at arch.*)

DAD: (*Startled.*) What's wrong? Sounds like somebody's getting killed.

MAYBELLE: (*Sadly.*) Not killed. . . just suffering.

(*Jim enters very quietly and dejectedly, L.*)

JIM: I just decided to join the Marines, but I thought I'd better come back and say goodbye.

DAD: (*Solemnly.*) Goodbye, son.

MAYBELLE: You can't! You've got to take me to the movies Wednesday night.

JIM: (*Collapsing in chair L. C.*) I wish I was dead!

DAD: How did *you* find out about the party so soon? Your mother just told me.

JIM: (*Sadly.*) She did?

MAYBELLE: I told him--but don't tell Mrs. Stuart.

DAD: (*Crossing his heart.*) Word of honor.

JIM: How can Candy do this to me? My own sister. . . How can she *do* it to me?

DAD: They've decided to civilize you, my boy.

JIM: But didn't you tell them about the camping trip?

DAD: (*Sitting on sofa.*) Yep. I told them you wanted a camping trip for your birthday. Unfortunately, they don't approve of eating out of tin cans.

JIM: Gosh, Dad! I----Ohh! What an awful birthday this is going to be!

DAD: No help for it, Jim. I tried every argument I know.

MAYBELLE: (*All sympathy.*) Maybe you'll like it, Jimmy. Parties aren't so bad when--

JIM: Oh, why don't you go home?

DAD: Now, Jim! It's not Maybelle's fault.

MAYBELLE: Gosh, no! I told them you were such a schmoo nobody would come.

DAD: See? That girl's a real friend!

JIM: (*Brightening.*) That's right! The girls won't come! None of them like me!

MAYBELLE: They'll come. Candy's fixed that.

DAD: How?

MAYBELLE: Terry and Sandra are coming over. In fact, they ought to be here any minute. They're even going to help plan the party.

JIM: I get it! If Candy can convince those two goons to come to the party, all the other girls will follow.

MAYBELLE: Uh huh.

DAD: (*Proudly.*) Say, Candy's got a head on her!

JIM: Yeah. . . on her chopping block. And it's *my* head!

DAD: Grin and bear it, boy. Let's try to enjoy the party.

JIM: Hey! Wait a minute! I got an idea!

DAD: If you're thinking about the Marines again, you're not old enough.

JIM: (*Rising.*) If Candy can convince Terry and Sandra to come, the party's on. . . *but* if we could convince them *not* to come, the party would be off.

DAD: That figures.

MAYBELLE: How would you do that?

JIM: Simple! If the three of us get together and tell them that--

MAYBELLE: Three of us? Who said I'd help you?

JIM: But I need your help to convince them I'm a hopeless case, Maybelle! They might not believe Pop and I are telling the truth. You've got to help!

MAYBELLE: Ummm. . . What's in it for me?

JIM: (*Groaning.*) That girl should go far in this world!

DAD: What would you like to have, Maybelle?

JIM: Another movie?

MAYBELLE: (*Shaking her head.*) This is worth more than a movie.

DAD: That's true, son. It is. Your camping trip depends on it.

JIM: (*Resigned.*) Okay, Maybelle. What's the price?

MAYBELLE: The Football Frolic!

JIM: HUH?

MAYBELLE: You take me to the Football Frolic. . . or I won't help fool Terry and Sandra. I *might* even tell Candy and Mrs. Stuart what you're up to if you don't take me.

JIM: (*Unhappily.*) And I've always been such a *good* boy. I don't deserve this.

DAD: I think it's a good idea, son. You're mother's worried about you and it'll make her happy if you take Maybelle to the dance.

JIM: Okay. I know when to quit. I'll take you to the Football Frolic, Maybelle.

MAYBELLE: (*Suddenly aloof.*) I'm not sure I'll go with you. After all, you haven't *asked* me.

JIM: (*Groaning.*) Ohhhh! (*Getting down on his knees.*) Maybelle, will you please go to the Football Frolic with me?

MAYBELLE: Yes, I will, Jimmy--since you insist.

DAD: Now, what do we do when Terry and Sandra come?

JIM: (*Rising.*) We'll just tell them--

(*The doorbell rings.*)

MAYBELLE: (*Rising.*) Jeepers! They must be here already!

JIM: Dad! You entertain them! We'll be right back!

DAD: (*As Jim and Maybelle exit R.*) But what'll I tell them? What'll I say about the. . . (*They've gone, so he shrugs and, rising, goes to door L. and opens it.*) Well! Hello, Terry. . . . And Sandra! Didn't expect to see you around here today.

TERRY: (*As they enter.*) Hi, Mr. Stuart!

SANDRA: Candy asked us to come over.

DAD: She's busy helping with dinner right now. Fixing salad, I believe. How about sitting down for a few minutes?

TERRY: Oh, we don't like to disturb you, Mr. Stuart. We'll just go out to the kitchen. . .

SANDRA: Maybe we can help Candy cut the salad.

DAD: *(Jumping in front of them to block the way to the arch.)* Er--no! Candy and her mother are--much too busy for company.

SANDRA: Shall we come back later?

DAD: *(Taking their arms and leading them to sofa.)* No! No! Just sit down! *(He deposits them rather forcibly on sofa.)*

TERRY: Oh, I get it! They're fixing something for the party tomorrow night and want it to be a surprise.

DAD: Uh--that could be.

SANDRA: I suppose you know about Jim's surprise party, Mr. Stuart?

DAD: *(Sitting L.)* I believe I heard somebody mention it, yes.

TERRY: Do you really think Jim'll go for the idea?

SANDRA: I can't imagine that creep--I mean, that boy at a party.

DAD: I must admit the party will probably be a little--different.

SANDRA: What do you mean--different? *(Enter Maybelle through the arch. She is limping, her arm is in a sling, and there is a bandage on her forehead.)* Maybelle!

TERRY: Gosh! What happened?

DAD: *(Staring for a moment, he recovers himself and rises quickly.)* Oh! Maybelle! Here. . . . Take this chair. *(He gently helps her hobble to chair L. where she sits.)* Now just take it easy. There. . . . Can I get anything for you?

MAYBELLE: No, thank you. It just--feels good to sit down.

TERRY: I didn't know you'd been in an accident, Maybelle!

MAYBELLE: Oh, I haven't been in an accident.

DAD: I'm awfully sorry this had to happen--*(Feel-his way.)* Here?

MAYBELLE: *(Nodding at him.)* Please don't worry, Mr. Stuart. *(Leaning back with sigh of pain.)* I'll be all right.

SANDRA: But what happened to you?

MAYBELLE: (*Sitting up again.*) Oh, didn't you know? I've been practicing with Jim for one of the games we're going to play at the party tomorrow night!

TERRY: You look more as if you were caught in a cement mixer.

MAYBELLE: It's great fun! The more kids playing it, the more fun! Everybody will have to join in.

TERRY: I don't think--

DAD: Now don't worry! We'll have plenty of bandages and Peroxide around! And Jim's mother made sure Dr. Evans will be home that evening in case anybody *really* gets hurt.

SANDRA: Dr. Evans!

DAD: Jim had a party last year, you know, with just some of the relatives. We had to call Dr. Evans so often, he finally just stayed.

MAYBELLE: Only one of them had to go home on a stretcher, though. The rest could walk.

TERRY: (*Half rising.*) Sandy, maybe we'd better--

DAD: (*Moving R. to push her down again.*) Sit down! Candy'll soon be out to tell you more about the party.

(*Jim lets out a blood-curdling yell off R. and bounces on stage. He is streaked with dirt and carries a box under his arm.*)

SANDRA: (*Still trembling from the yell.*) W-what's wrong?

JIM: Nothing! I was just practicing for the party! I hate quiet parties!

TERRY: I thought Candy was planning the party and it was to be a surprise!

JIM: Aw, they decided that since it's my birthday, I ought to have the kind of party I want. Girls, it'll be a *riot!*

MAYBELLE: (*Groaning with pain.*) It sure will.

DAD: (*Retiring U. L. to sit as Jim moves C.*) I hope we won't need all new furniture like last time.

SANDRA: (*Hopefully.*) He's--kidding, isn't he?

JIM: Pop never kids. One thing you can tell the other girls, Sandra and Terry. . . . No dressing up for this party. I'm coming *just* as I am!

TERRY: (*Pointing at him.*) Like that?

JIM: Yep. And all the fellows agreed. Dungarees and sweat shirts. And the girl who dresses the sloppiest gets a prize.

DAD: See? Didn't I tell you it'd be different?

SANDRA: *(Almost speechless.)* Yes. . .

TERRY: But we can't dance dressed like--that!

JIM: Who said anything about dancing? For entertainment, we're going to park Horseface's old jalopy in the driveway and rip down the engine and put it together again.

SANDRA: But we don't know anything about automobile engines. . .

JIM: You'll learn. It'll do you good to get your hands all greasy for a change.

TERRY: *(Sniffing.)* I smell something.

SANDRA: *(Uncomfortably.)* Yes, so do I. . . . But I hated to say anything.

JIM: *(Laughing.)* Oh, that's a prize!

TERRY: Prize?

JIM: I brought it in to show you. *(He opens box and shoves it in front of them.)*

(Terry screams and hugs Sandra.)

SANDRA: It's a dead fish!

JIM: Yep. Mighty good eating too! I figured you gals could clean it and we'd fry it up for the party. *(Moves up to place box on bookcase.)*

TERRY: Oh!

SANDRA: I never heard of such a thing!

MAYBELLE: Oh, he's got a million ideas. . . all *just like that*.

DAD: You girls sure ought to have fun at the party.

SANDRA: Fun!

TERRY: *(Rising.)* Uh--we've got to go. It's time for dinner.

SANDRA: *(Also rising.)* Yes, we really must.

JIM: *(As they edge L. toward the door.)* Must you go? I wasn't finished telling you about the party.

TERRY: I think we've heard enough.

SANDRA: Plenty.

(Candy and Mother enter at arch. Maybelle quickly rips off her bandages and shoves them down into the chair to hide them.)

CANDY: Terry! Sandra! I thought I heard your voices in here.

MOTHER: I'm sorry I had to keep Candy so long.

DAD: *(Rising.)* The girls were just leaving.

TERRY: Yes. . . . Dinner time, you know.

CANDY: But about the--*(She glances at Jim.)*

SANDRA: Party? Oh, Jim has the most wonderful ideas about it! We'll be back after dinner to help you make out the guest list!

TERRY: We were so tired of those run-of-the-mill parties, we had come over to tell you we couldn't come. But we'll come to this one! It'll really be different!

JIM: *Huh?*

MAYBELLE: You're kidding!

SANDRA: We're so glad you asked us! It'll set a new style.

TERRY: I don't know how you got all those wonderful ideas, but I'm so glad you did. Happy birthday, Jim! We'll see you later!

(Exit Terry and Sandra through door L. which Dad opens, then closes behind them.)

DAD: Well, what do you know?

CANDY: What were they talking about?

JIM: *(Throwing himself on sofa.)* Goodbye, lake and camping trip!

MOTHER: Jim! Just what were you telling those girls?

JIM: *(Sitting up.)* Wait a minute! Those girls liked my ideas! Say! This party might be fun!

CANDY: It *will* be, Jim, it *will* be! I've got all the dancing and games arranged and--

JIM: No, you don't! It's my party and Terry and Sandra want it my way!

MOTHER: That's what they said.

JIM: *(Jumping up.)* Wow! What a party!

MAYBELLE: Happy birthday, Jim!

JIM: You said it! Happy birthday! Civilization, here I come! *(He hops up on sofa with his feet and gives an Indian war whoop. Candy and Mother stare as the curtain closes)*

QUICK CURTAIN