

LET'S HAVE A PARTY

by Honoria Mary Robertson Dick

A MELODRAMA

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CAST

Lavinia Pink Pigglington

Imogene Pink Pigglington

Percival Pink Pigglington

Lisette Armande

Primula Sweet Blossoming

Elizabeth Top-Drawington

Vanessa High Kicking-Up

Big Daddy aka Julian

Shorty

Scar Face

Waiter

Valentine Sweet Blossoming

Gerald One-Uppington

Percy's Pals

Setting: 1920s England and America

At Rise: Mother and daughter at home in aristocratic England

LAV

Imogene! Imogene! Oh there you are my pet. I'm so happy to see you. Improving your mind? There is nothing like the study of literature to broaden one's horizons.

IMO

Oh! Yes Mummy.

LAV

What are you studying my love?

IMO

It's – I'm – well – actually- I suppose one could say that I'm studying the art of modern literature.

Display the book "The Sheik"

LAV

Modern literature! I hope you are not referring to a romance.

IMO

Yes Mummy, I am.

LAV

Well, I suppose one must keep abreast of the latest trends. In fact, one of my dearest maxims is always to keep up with the Joneses. I have no objection at all to the novels of Mr Dickens. Read aloud to me darling.

IMO

I really don't think you would care for this book Mummy – it's terribly boring.

LAV

Come! Come! Imogene, it cannot be so terribly boring. You were studying it most assiduously when I came into the room. Let me see the book. Imogene! Give me that book.

IMO

Oh Mummy please don't take it away. Everyone's reading it, it's the absolute rage.

LAV

Oh, my innocent child – my baby. That you should be exposed to the violent passions of this purple peril. Last week it was Elinor Glyn's "Love's Hour", and now this sink of sensuous sin – "The Sheik"!

IMO

How do you know it is about sensuous sin, Mummy?

LAV

I read the book reviews.

□ □ □

IMO

Mummy – I'm not a child any longer – I'm eighteen – I'm a woman. The world is changing and I want to be part of the jazz and razzle-dazzle of the Twenties. I want to be the emancipated woman and wear black silk underwear and recline on leopard-skin rugs and ...

LAV

Stop! I don't know what the world is coming to. Black silk underwear! Really? No! No! Imogene, you have been seeing too many moving pictures. These yearnings must stop immediately, and no arguments please. Razzle-dazzle indeed!

IMO

You are too old to remember how you felt at eighteen. You've had your flaming youth.

LAV

Precisely! And that is why your flames are being dampened down! (ASIDE: Even the embers of a dying fire can be fanned into flame by a favourable breeze) I may be as old as time, but I can still tick. Time! Oh dear! The clock stands at three, it is time for tea. Your friends will be arriving at any moment.

This book will remain in my possession and I shall speak to you about it later. For the present, it is of the utmost importance that Percival makes a good impression on the gals. You know how sweet and innocent your dear brother is, but so unworldly.

IMO

Why must Percy make a good impression on the gals?

LAV

Because, Imogene, we are over our hocks in hock. We are practically destitute. All that is left of our estate is this dower-house and the farms. Percival must marry money. That is why I had you invite Elizabeth Top-Drawerington and Vanessa High Kicking-Up to tea. They are the wealthiest heiresses in the land.

IMO

Yes! Both Elizabeth and Vanessa are rolling in money and absolutely bursting to marry a man with a title, but we don't need money, we can never be destitute while we have the family jewels.

LAV

I have no time to go into that now. You must trust me Imogene. You were bang-on when you said that both gals would trade their wealth for a title and our title is one of the oldest in the realm. Since the first Percy came over with the Conqueror, Pink Pigglingtons have been propagated all over the land. But alas! Times are hard. Even swill commands an astronomical price these days. Percy is our last hope. Our future depends on Percy. But he must not know of my intentions, he is too innocent to stoop to any skullduggery. He knows that it is his duty to marry to preserve our name and all I am doing is giving him a gentle push in the right direction.

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PER

Hello there! Morning mother! Anyone for tennis? I've had a ripping game – lobbed one of my balls right over the town hall clock.

LAV

Oh Percy, you are so impetuous.

IMO

Really Percy, all you think about it huntin, shootin and fishin, and all your prized piggies. I am expecting some of my gal friends for tea and I do want you to be nice to them.

LAV

Percy darling, you must meet them, such dear gals (ASIDE: and so rich!)

PER

Oh I say! Hard cheese! I've got some of my varsity chums coming to throw a few blinders down the pitch.

IMO

Blinders?

PER

Cricket old gal – “There’s a breathless hush in the close tonight, ten to make and a match to win. A bumping pitch, a blinding light, an hour to play and the last man’s in...”

IMO AND LAV

Percy!

PER

“And it’s not for the sake of a ribboned coat, nor the selfish hope of a season’s fame; But his Captain’s hand on his shoulder smote”.

IMO AND LAV

Percy!

PER

“Play up! Play up! And play the game.”

SCENE 2

PRIM

Dear Aunt Lisette, how cleverly you have contrived to create this dress from scraps of dear Mummy’s old gowns. I don’t mind being poor but I don’t want to embarrass dear Imogene by appearing in rags, especially as this is the first time I have met Lady Lavinia Pink Pigglington or her son, Lord Percival Pink Pigglington.

LIS

Ah! Cherie, your beauty needs no adornment. How I wish your dear parents

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could have seen you as you look now, so sweet. Ever since you and Valentine became orphans, it has been my mission in life to look after you, and I have no doubt that both of you will make a brilliant marriage and restore our fortune.

PRIM

No No Aunt Lisette – such mercenary thoughts shall never enter my mind - I shall marry only for love.

LIS

Oui, but one must be practical. If you do not appear in society you cannot meet young men, and if you do not meet young men, how can you make a suitable marriage?

PRIM

Oh Darling!. You know I'm not a success with young men. I don't know how to attract them, I just get tongue-tied and confused.

LIS

Not know how to attract the attention of young men? Cherie, this is terrible! Believe me, all you have to do is to smile and lift up your finger.

PRIM

Lift up my finger?

LIS

Oui – you just lift up your finger and...

SONG: Lift Up Your Finger and Say Tweet-Tweet

PRIM

Oh Aunt Lisette forgive me for being so selfish. I will try to find a way to help us out of our financial difficulties. You and my dear brother Valentine have sacrificed so much for me. It was for my sake that Valentine emigrated to America. And you, dear Aunt Lisette, have given me the best years of your life...

LIS

(ASIDE: Not quite the best years, the rarest wine matures with age!)

PRIM

If only Valentine would write to us from America. My darling brother sold everything we had to pay for my education. He went to America to make his fortune and to send home enough money to launch me into society. But alas, the small sums he has sent barely keep us in food and lodging. It is now several months since he left for California and during all this time we have not received a letter or money from him.

LIS

If we do not receive help very soon, we shall be in dire straits. There is nothing left for us to sell. But do not despair, ma petite, all is not lost. Who knows what fate has in store for you! Hurry Cherie, you will be late. Come, smile, go and meet your friends, and be happy.

SCENE 3

IMO

Hurry up Percy, the guests are at the door. I'll bring them out onto the terrace Mummy.

Mummy, these are my friends, Elizabeth Top-Drawington and Vanessa High Kicking-Up.

PER

What charming fillies.

LAV

Dear Elizabeth, dear Vanessa; so sweet of you to visit us. This is my son Percival, Lord Pink-Pigglington. Percival, I am sure you will enjoy taking care of the gals.

PER

Rather! I've just bought an absolutely spiffing tin-lizzie, a real racer, I can get her up to twelve miles an hour and I shall enjoy taking you for a spin. Or we can knock a ball around the tennis court if you prefer, and if the weather turns out wet, we can cut-a-rug in the gym, I've got some ripping records we can play on the gramophone.

PERCY'S PALS

- (a) Dear Lady Lavinia! Jolly weather we're having.
- (b) Absolutely top-hole!
- (c) I say Percy old chappie, we can't toddle off to play cricket and leave these sweet gals alone.

ELI

(ASIDE to Vanessa) These chappies are varsity boys and I haven't yet had an invitation to the Varsity Ball.

VAN

I'll take the dark one, he's a real sheik. Title or no title, I want to attend that Ball.

ELI AND VAN

Do introduce us, Imogene.

PERCY'S PALS

Come on Percy old boy, introduce us to the gals.

IMO

(ASIDE: Oh dear! Here's Primula and I quite forgot to tell Mummy I had invited her)..Oh Mummy, here's Primula Sweet Blossoming, you haven't met her before but she was Head Gal when I was in lower fourth. We met last week at the school reunion so I was able to invite her to come today. (ASIDE: Sorry Mummy, I had forgotten to tell you).

LAV

How do you do. (ASIDE: No competition there. Thank goodness she hasn't inherited her mother's Latin beauty nor that fatal French charm.)

IMO

And this is my brother, Percival.

PER

Stunning! I mean absolutely stunning to meet you – it's a ripping day isn't it. Perfect weather for...

LAV

Percival! Can't you find something with which to amuse the young ladies. (ASIDE: Oh perfidious Percy – that gal hasn't a bean).

PER

Really mother – I'm not a dab-hand with gals, how shall I entertain them?

LAV

That's simple – you don't have to do anything but stay with them... While I am arranging afternoon tea, Percy and the boys can take care of Elizabeth and Vanessa, while Imogene takes Primula to see the new pink-piglets over at the farm (ASIDE: ten miles away).

IMO

I'm not taking a ten mile walk. Let's all go into the gym and play some rag.

ALL

A Varsity Rag!

SONG: The Varsity Rag

IMO

I say old thing. I didn't know you had it in you to give such a performance.

ELI AND VAN

Oh Percy, you were ripping!

PER

Well, one must put up some kind of a show, don't you know.

PRIM

(ASIDE: Who would have thought that this would be the day on which I would meet my fate, my own true love, the only man I shall ever love, so sweet, so innocent)

PER

(ASIDE: She must be mine – the one for whom I have yearned, Primula – Primula, the name of the first spring rose and the first flower to spring into my innocent heart.)

IMO

Percy, Mummy said you were to look after Elizabeth and Vanessa.

PER

They shall see my coronet, I am sure they would enjoy that. It is in the armory, safely locked away from burglars with the rest of the family jewels, but I will give you the key and you have my permission to expose them for the delectation of

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the gals.

IMO

I'm sure the gals would prefer you to show them the family jewels.

PER

(ASIDE: Be a sport Imogene, let me take care of Primula and you look after the gals.)

IMO

Oh Percy, you mustn't fall in love with Primula, it would be fatal. Oh dear, what shall I do? Mummy will be so cross with me, but when Percy is in one of his stubborn moods it is hopeless to try to reason with him.

PER

Chin chin gals, see you at tea. Oh Primula, I think you are absolutely smashing...I'm bowled over completely. I cannot contain myself any longer, I must speak. The moment I saw you smile, I lost my heart to you, everything I have is yours.

PRIM

Oh Percy, my heart was yours from the first moment that we met, it is dancing in a perfect melody of love.

PER

Oh Primula!

PRIM

Oh Percy!

PER

Oh Primula!

PRIM

Oh Percy!

VOICE OFF STAGE

Oh give over!

PER

I must find mother and tell her of my love for you then tomorrow, my Primula, I shall pop the question to you. Until then...

PRIM

Darling Percy, adieu! Adieu! Parting is such sweet sorrow, but I shall meet you dear, tomorrow.

PER

Pip pip old bean!

SCENE 4

LIS

Ah! You are home, and you look so happy.

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PRIM

Oh Aunty! Aunty! I'm in love, love, love. From the first moment that I saw him, I loved him, so sweet and innocent is he.

LIS

How romantic, is he rich?

PRIM

I don't really know, I only know I love him.

LIS

Cherie, you are not making any sense at all, who is this man? And what is his name?

PRIM

His name is Percy, Lord Pink-Piglington, he is an Earl and he has stud farms. He breeds pink piglets. The Pink-Piglingtons have been the mainstay of Britain since the first Percy came over with the Conqueror. Every home has profited by their products, their name is a household word so I suppose they must be rich, but I love him for his purity and innocence. I would live with him and be happy in the meanest cottage.

LIS

But has he proposed to you Cherie?

PRIM

He is going to pop the question, but must first tell his Mama of his feelings for me. He said he would come tomorrow.

LIS

Then our troubles are over. Ah! Your eyes are dancing, you are truly in love.

PRIM

Oh yes! My heart, my whole being is dancing.

LIS

Then you must go early to bed and get your beauty sleep.

PRIM

I shall go to bed, but how can I sleep?

SONG: Dancing on the Ceiling

LIS

En evant! To bed!

SCENE 5

LAV

Percy! Percy! You cannot marry Primula Sweet-Blossoming, she is absolutely penniless and we shall be ruined. We shall be cast out onto the streets.

PER

Steady on mother! You said you thought Primula was a perfect peach so why

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should my marrying her mean that you would be cast out?

LAV

Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! That I should be the one to shatter your innocent dreams.

PER

I can't make head nor tail of this tarradiddle. Our profits aren't large but our finances are perfectly sound, we have the dower-house and the pig farms which we have re-stocked, and above all, we have a fortune in the family jewels as security for all our mortgages.

IMO

Mummy, calm yourself. Why are you so upset? Primula is a darling girl and of impeccable lineage.

LAV

Oh! How can I tell of you my deceit? I was thinking only of you, my children.

PER AND LAV

(In unison) Cut out the dramatics mother, in plain language, what is wrong?

LAV

In short, we are done-down, shattered, flat broke, penniless. All we have is the mortgaged dower-house and the pig farms and the little money that is in the bank.

PER AND LAV

She's crazy.

LAV

I was never more sane. Percy, Imogene, you thought your father had sold the castle and so much of our land because he preferred to concentrate on the stud farms around the dower-house. The truth is, he needed the money.

PER AND LAV

But we still have the family jewels.

LAV

No! The family jewels are fake, all paste, sold years before your father died to pay the death duties of his father.

PER

Oh! Cruel fate! Oh anguish! My Primula is lost to me, what now can I offer her?

IMO

Oh anguish! How can I get to parties if I can't have new dresses?

LAV

I wanted only your security, my darlings. Oh Percy, if you could bring yourself to marry Elizabeth or Vanessa we could be pulled out of Dunterterritory. Oh Percy, I beg you to save your aged mother and innocent sister from a fate worse than death.

PER

Never! Never! Never shall I love anyone but my Primula. I must renounce her for her own sake, but I shall never marry another.

LAV

Oh Percy, my comfort and my joy, can you save us?

PER

Don't take on so, old gal. You shall not be deserted in your old age, nor shall my little sister be cast to the wolves. I shall renounce Primula (ASIDE: Oh! My shattered heart!) and we must contrive ways and means to pull ourselves out of the depths of adversity.

LAV

Oh my noble son Percy. All our future hopes are with you.

SCENE 6

LIS

No more tears my little cabbage, you must forget this Percy person. It is almost six months since you met him and not one word have you had from him since that time. He is a ...

PRIM

No! No! You shall not say one word against him. He has betrayed me but I shall always love him. Oh Auntie! I am so unhappy, I have lost Percy and my brother, Valentine, has not written. We have little money left and we must do something or starve.

LIS

Primula, remember your illustrious ancestors, they did not bow down to adversity and neither shall we.

Through the use of her quick wits, one of our ancestresses cheated the guillotine and lived to marry your English ancestor. Like her, we shall stand four square against the winds of adversity. If the Countess de la Verde – Rouge Noir – Blanc had the courage to leave the country of her birth with nothing but her own ability to make her fortune, then we can do the same. How much money do we have? Is it enough to pay our fares to America?

PRIM

America?

LIS

Yes America! We shall go to America to find Valentine. This is a new era, there is ample opportunity in the New World. We can get money by working for it.

PRIM

We can sell Mama's pearl ring, it is all that we have left and it is our last resource, so think well before you sell it.

LIS

I can cook and sew and ...do many things, but Cherie, what can you do?

PRIM

My only marketable asset is being able to sing a little, but I can learn to wait at table or be a receptionist or something. We will go to the same address in Chicago to which Valentine first went and we can perhaps trace his whereabouts from there. We know he intended to go to California but he did not tell us the name of the place he was going to.

LIS

Oh Cherie! How exciting. Your Great Grandmere was once in America, she tell me about it but I had never thought to go there. Oh ze jazz, ze jollity, ooh la la! I feel like a young girl again.

PRIM

America here we come! Aunt Lisette, from now on, I renounce Percy and all my tears. I'm going to get "IT".

LIS

It?

PRIM

Yes, you've got to have "IT" to succeed in America. Clara Bow has "IT" and I'm going to say goodbye to prim little Primula and be an "IT" girl.

LIS

En evant!

SCENE 7

PER

It is almost six months since I left my estate at Pork Choppington. I have followed my dear mother's instructions and bought land. Thousands of acres of land in a place called Texas. I am going there to survey my land for water. Then I shall build a farm and introduce Pink-Pigglington porkers to the Americans and make enough money to save my mother and my little sister from a fate worse than death. Oh Primula, my love, where are you now? I must not think of her or my courage will fail me. Stiff upper lip old chap, on you go to Texas.

LAV

It is almost six months since my sweet, innocent Percy left us. I wonder how he is faring in the wilderness?

IMO

Hello Mummy, still in the doldrums?

LAV

Oh Imogene, I feel so guilty, so wretchedly unhappy. Our sweet, innocent Percy all alone on that big continent across the sea, sacrificing himself for us and thinking Primula knows why he left her. If he knew I had destroyed his letter he would never forgive me but I thought I better that she should forget him.

IMO

I feel so sad for Percy and Primula but I'm sorry for myself too. I do love parties and balls and frivolity.

SONG: Too Many Parties

IMO

Oh Mummy, forgive me for being so selfish and thinking only of myself.

LAV

You once said that I was too old to remember what it was like to be eighteen, but you are so wrong. I remember all too well. When I was a young gal, in my flaming youth, I loved parties and gaiety and flirting, but I flirted once too often. I had met, and fallen in love, with a handsome young officer of the household cavalry. Oh how dashing he looked in his regimentals! The thought of him still causes my heart to flutter. But alas! He was the youngest of ten sons, they believed in large families then, and he had no money at all. Your father met me at a ball, I flirted with him, as I did with all young men, and he fell in love with me. He asked my Papa for my hand in marriage and Papa accepted for me, You see, my Papa had grown feeble and my Mama had gone to heaven and I had twelve brothers to be educated and provided for. Your father was very wealthy at that time and my marriage to him would solve all our problems. Papa showed me that it was my duty to make a wealthy marriage and that I had given your father reason to believe I was not indifferent to him. Indeed I had not intended to trifle with his affections. And so we were married and your father never knew that I loved another.

IMO

Oh Mummy! It's just like a melodrama. What happened to the young officer?

LAV

My Papa gave me permission to see him just once more, to say goodbye, forever.

IMO

I can hardly bear the pathos of it all.

LAV

On the night of the Regimental Ball, I told him how my folly had parted us forever. He stood tall and handsome in his regimentals and said, "My heart is broken old gal, but I couldn't lose you to a better man". Then he covered my face with kisses and turned and walked away. Through the curtain of my tears, I saw him turn as he reached the door, and with a stiff upper lip he said, "Chin up old gal don't let the side down".

He resigned from his regiment, took off for parts unknown, and he has never been seen or heard of since that night.

IMO

I don't think I have ever heard a sadder story. What a noble character, British to his bootstraps. Who was he?

LAV

Gerald Marmaduke St.John Effingham Fitzfizz Tiddlypop One-Uppington, but to me he was just my own Gerry. I have told you this story of my part so that you will realise that I too can be foolish, I too have had my dancing years.

IMO

Oh how I wish we could do something to help Percy then perhaps he and Primula could... but there isn't anything we can do.

LAV

We can, we can, of course we can. You love parties and dancing, so do I, why shouldn't we do the thing that gives us pleasure to help us to earn money? We are not trained for any sort of work but we can dance.

IMO

Mother! You cannot be serious. Pink-Pigglingtons on the London stage – unthinkable! We should be ostracized from all society.

LAV

Not the London stage you silly gal. We must go where there is a demand for our talents, and that is America. This is the 20s, the whole world is jumping to American jazz. America is full of dance-restaurants I'm told. I could be a hostess, I'm used to arranging dinner parties and balls and Americans are so snobby they would be prepared to pay well to have a titled English blue-blood to arrange their social soirees.

IMO

Oh how smashing! I could be a chorus girl.

LAV

Certainly not! A hat-check girl behind a counter, but not a chorus girl, they reveal their legs. And no arguments or you stay right here.

IMO

It's a bargain. This is the dawn of a new age. This is the 20s and I want to be a part of it. Oh Mummy! Just to be in the same country where the flickers are made. I'm sure I could be another Theda Bara.

LAV

Imogene! Black silk underwear and red hot passions are not for young gals. If you must let your imagination run riot, concentrate on Pearl White or, better still, take as your model the world's sweetheart, Mary Pickford. Everyone approves of her and Douglas Fairbanks is such a clean-cut young man just like our dear, sweet, innocent Percy.

IMO

Oh rapture! To be saved from a fate worse than death by someone like Douglas Fairbanks! Hurry up Mummy, opportunity is knocking at the door and I can't wait to open it. America! Jazz! Razzamatazz! The Silver Screen! Open up your pearly gates, open up your pearly gates, open up your pearly gates for me, Hallelujah. 'lu jah!

INTERVAL

SCENE 8: GERRY'S GIN MILL (AMERICA)

PRIM

Tante Lisette!

LIS

Here I am Cherie. How do you like my costume? Is it not chic? It makes me feel very daring.

PRIM

You look absolutely ripping. Where did you get all those diamonds?

LIS

Diamonds – non non non – these jewels are paste. They belonged to your Great Grandmere, the one who came to America. She was not at all *comme il faut*, how do you say, proper? Not wicked, but very gay and a little bit naughty. She sang *chansonnettes* in a club on the Barbary Coast. It was there she met Slippery Sam. He was a sharpener of cards but he was very kind to her.

PRIM

You mean a card sharp? You mean he cheated?

LIS

Oui. He owned the club and gave her a job until she had enough money to return to France where she met, and married, your Great Grandpere. Of course Slippery Sam cheated once too often and because of her association with him, your Great Grandmere was wanted by the police as a witness against him – her picture actually appeared on a police gazette. I am to be in attendance in the Diamond Lil Casino. Do you think that this costume will accord with the *décor*?

PRIM

I'd say you've got "IT".

LIS

So have you, my darling.

PRIM

No I haven't! Mummy had "IT", so have you, and Valentine. I've tried to acquire "IT" but "IT" is something you are born with. I'm just plain, ordinary Primula.

LIS

Plain! Never! You are as sweet and lovely as springtime. You see these diamonds? Look how they glitter and catch the eye! But there are jewels equally precious that shed a softer lustre. You are such a jewel, a pearl of great price, my Primula.

PRIM

You know, I'm rather enjoying this adventure even though this is not the kind of life I want to live. If only I could forget my Percy I would be happy. I shall never love anyone but my sweet, innocent Percy, so romance is a forgotten dream.

■ ■■ ■

Why do you look so sad, dear Aunt?

LIS

I am sad for you. You were made for love and romance. I have always imagined for you a handsome cavalier bringing flowers and gifts, making pretty speeches, kissing your hand.

PRIM

Romance – ha! I'm finished with romance.

LIS

You may have decided to finish with romance but I doubt that romance has finished with you. Only when you are as old as I, when you have lost your powers of attraction will you be able to say that you have nothing to offer and that romance is a forgotten dream.

PRIM

Oh my darling Aunt, I will look after you in your old age.

LIS

Well it is still a little way off and in the meantime I intend to make diamonds my big romance.

SONG: Diamonds are a girl's best friend

PRIM

I'd give all the diamonds in the world to be with Percy but I'll act the part of a frivolous flapper. Only you will know that the true Primula, the same innocent Primula that Percy fell in love with, still exists under the mask. Also, in a place like this, it is better to appear sophisticated. It is a form of protection.

LIS

You are a brave girl – be careful, someone is coming. I must adjust my head-dress but I will be back tout de suite.

VAL

(Off stage) Can you direct me to – ah! there she is – Primula darling!

IMO

(ASIDE: He never even noticed me. Why, that's Primula Sweet Blossoming. Where did she come from? I will hide behind this door.)

PRIM

Valentine – my brother.

VAL

Primula, my dear. Thank goodness I have found you. My old landlady told me you were here. Oh my dear, what prompted you to come to America?

PRIM

We had run out of money and oh Valentine, you are all I have in the world. I wanted to be near you.

IMO

(ASIDE: Oh my poor sweet innocent brother Percy.)

PRIM

Tante Lisette and I are working here so we no longer have to worry about the rent. But you – what are you doing in these clothes?

VAL

After months of working at any job I could get, I went to California and while I was there, I went to a place called Hollywood. They make motion pictures there.

PRIM

Motion picture, Oh Valentine, did you see Clara Bow?

VAL

Yes I did, but listen Primula. They were casting for a picture called “Blood and Sand”, a Spanish type thing. They wanted some latin looking chappie who could dance a tango. I got the job, Primula. I came back to pay some small debts and to send money to you and Aunt Lisette. That’s how I found out you were here. I must have been a success with the tango because I’ve just had a telegram telling me to return to Hollywood.

LIS

Valentine! My little cabbage, why are you dressed like a gigolo?

VAL

Tante Lisette, my angel, your hair is like silk, your eyes pools of mystery, your ruby lips send me wild ...

LIS

Stop, stop you naughty boy, behave yourself. But if I were a little younger!

PRIM

Valentine has been where they make the flicks, he’s actually danced the tango in one of them.

LIS

You – dance a tango – I don’t believe it.

VAL

Come here my fiery passion flower.

DANCE: La Composita (tango) – Valentine and Lisette

IMO

Oh! I think I am going to swoon, he’s so – so – sexy!

VAL

I must go my dears, but I shall be back as soon as I can. Look after Primula.

PRIM

Wait Valentine, I will go with you to the door.

VAL

Cheerio, chin chin my glamorous Aunt.

■ ■■ ■

LIS

Who is this young lady?

IMO

Oh thank you for helping me. Oh Primula, how could you?

LIS

You know Primula?

IMO

Oh yes! I'm Imogene Pink-Pigglington and ...oh! My poor Percy!

LIS

Percy? You are his sister – and in America – I don't understand this.

IMO

We are in financial trouble. Percy came here to buy land, but Mummy decided we should all be together and we are working here until Percy returns from Texas. It was because we are short of money that Percy had to desert Primula.

LIS

How I have wronged Lord Percy.

IMO

Percy left a letter explaining everything to Primula but Mummy destroyed it because she thought it would be better for Primula to forget Percy. And now I find that Primula is so fickle she couldn't be faithful to Percy for even a few short months – I saw her canoodling with that handsome Valentine.

LIS

Valentine is her brother, not her lover!

IMO

Oh! How wonderful! Oh! Oh! Oh! He never even noticed me.

LIS

Valentine? Ooh la la! So that is it. Let me look at you. You will find Primula and tell her all that you have told me. I promise that Valentine will notice you next time you meet. I have a wonderful plan – what you need to make Valentine notice you is "IT".

At this point the lights flash on and the gangsters appear from three points in the audience. Lisette clutches Imogene then they react to the gangsters, Lisette and Imogene slip away.

SCENE 8 – GANGSTERS

BD

OK. Everybody, reach for the ceiling and freeze. Now if you all do as you're told, nobody is going to get hurt. This is a nice, legitimate stick up. Shorty, you cover the ladies – and ladies, this little guy pulls the fastest trigger in the States so just don't make any false moves.

▣ ▣▣ ▣

SHOR

Yeah, he's sayin' the truth. Now just lower your hands nice and easy 'cos the first one of you to make a false move will be filled so full of holes, you'll look like a pepper pot.

BD

Scar Face, you frisk the guys for any armory. If any of them is carrying a gat, and they don't hand it over, we'll fit him with a nice concrete overcoat and take him for a swim.

SCAR

OK Big Daddy. Will do.

SHOR

Oh boy! Oh Boy! Just get a load of all those sparklers. Here's a nice little pigeon just waiting to be plucked.

BD

We ain't after sparklers, you bum, so just keep your dirty paws off the ladies. 'Your pardon ladies.

SHOR

If we ain't after the sparklers, what are we here for?

BD

For the same thing they're here for.

SHOR

What's that?

BD

The gin and the dollies Shorty.

SHOR

You take the gin. I'll take the dollies.

SCAR

Oh shut up, half-pint.

BD

Hey waiter, roll out the hooch. We know you got it hidden here some place.

SHOR

(To audience) Yeah, you do like he says or I'll graze your chin with me brass knuckles.

ALL

Shut up, you bum.

SHOR

Hallelujah I'm a bum.

BD

Hallelujah bum again.

ALL

Hallelujah give us a hand-out to revive us again.

SONG: Hallelujah I'm a Bum

BD

OK, OK boys. Let's find the hooch and have a party. (To audience) You gents just keep your hands on the table where we can see 'em and your sweet little dollies ain't got nothing to fear from us guys.

SHOR

Hey Big Daddy, if this aint a stick up, whatta we doin here?

BD

Well Shorty, it's like this see – It's fashionable to give a bit of excitement to the patrons of a gin mill and my boss is Gerry who owns this classy lay-out. He likes to do things right and give his customers a bit of a thrill. I manage the joint for him but if we didn't provide our own protection, some of the bad gangsters would try to muscle in on us – see?

SCAR

Yeah, yeah, I got it Big Daddy.

SHOR

You're too dumb to get anything.

SCAR

Button your lip half-pint And stop thinking, it'll give you a headache.

SHOR

I may be shorty by name but I ain't short of nothing. Me – I've got what it takes – brains!

BD

Cool it boys – no fighting.

SHOR

What I can't forgive is you being in charge of dames. You never look at 'em. All you ever get excited about is food.

BD

That aint true, there's one dolly who really gets me whirling.

SCAR

Did you ever see him even glance at a dame?

SONG: The Girl on the Police Gazette

BD

If I could find a girl like that I'd never give her up.

SCAR

Is she the only birdie you ever fancied?

BD

No! She ain't the only birdie I ever fancied. There was one birdie I met up with in

■ ■■ ■

France in my youth – oh what memories I have of her. She was the plumpest, tenderest, most delectable creature imaginable. The perfumes she exuded were aromatic of all the spices in Arabia. I was filled with desire to have her all to myself. We shared a bottle of marsala wine, and even though we had so little thyme, it was a perfect moment. The tender curve of her breast and the plump voluptuousness of her thighs were truly worthy of the bay leaf crown. When at last she was brought to me – oh rapture, oh ecstasy, oh bliss – it almost broke my heart to plunge the knife into her.

GANGSTERS

You didn't, you couldn't, you murderer!

SHOR

You dumb cluck – he's pulling your leg. Aint' ya?

BD

Yeah – that birdie was a Poulet en Cocotte. She sure was a tasty dish – a little French bird cooked in a casserole with wine and herbs and mushrooms – luscious.

SCAR

You mean he's been raving on about a stewed chicken?

SHOR

Yeah you half grown mutt.

SCAR

Well I'll be a cross-eyed cook.

BD

OK fellas! Scatter and keep the entrances checked for bona fide customers. You all know tonight's password?

GANGSTERS

Yeah! It's "Let's Have a Party"

BD

Right! I have to audition the chorus girls. See you later on.

BD

Well! How do you like this line-up of desirable dollies? (*To audience*) Keep your hands off the merchandise fellas. They sure are real ritzy dames. Come on sweeties, how about another song just for Big Daddy?

SONG: My Heart Belongs to Daddy

BD

Every one a real kewpie doll.

She's here! My Fifi Bon Bon! – the girls of my dreams, the girl on the police gazette. Don't go, don't leave me.

LIS

Who? Me?

■ ■■ ■

BD

Of course you couldn't possibly be Fifi Bon Bon, but you are her double.

LIS

Fifi Bon Bon (ASIDE: Ah! My naughty grandmere). No! I am Lisette Armande, the new singer and dancer. My niece, Primula Sweet-Blossoming, is also in your chorus. I am with her as her chaperone.

BD

You can't be old enough to have a grown up niece.

LIS

Oh monsieur, I think you are flirting with me, and I do not flirt. (ASIDE: A man of discernment!)

BD

Flirt! No no. I beg you to believe that I wish to pay court to you in the most time honoured fashion. Can we meet for a champagne supper after the show?

LIS

Champagne! Please, not made in a bath tub.

BD

Only the genuine article for you sweet lady.

LIS

(ASIDE: Who would have thought that I'd pop my cork for a gangster. I must be mad). I accept your invitation – au revoir!

BD

Until trysting time my lovely one. (To audience)Whew! I have an important announcement to make but I need to cool down first. I'll be back quick as a wink folks.

VAL

Only two more miles to Hollywood. What if this telegram is a hoax? No, it couldn't be. It's signed by the greatest director in the motion picture industry. I'm full of hidden talent, all I need is the opportunity to display it. If only I can make a success on flickers, I can earn enough money to look after Primy and Lisette. How I wish I could find a girl just like dear Primula. I'll take another look at the telegram:

"TELEGRAM: Your tango a howling success <STOP> We need a man for a shriek! And if you can ride a horse you'll clear every hurdle <STOP> Come at once <STOP>"

Shriek! (shrieks) Hollywood here I come!

PER

Oh mother! Mother! I'm scratched and bleeding and my water bottle is almost empty. I've plodded over every foot of this vast territory searching for water! Without water I can't breed my pink piglets. No matter where I search, all I find at my feet is a puddle of dirty water. Water! Water! Water! Am I going mad? I keep hearing my darling Primula's voice calling to me.

PRIM

Percy – Percy – come back to me – come back – I love you – love you – love you.

PER

Water! Without water I shall perish. Here, alone, in the middle of nowhere I shall be a bleeding perisher. What is this mirage in the puddle of dirty water at my feet? It is Primula's face shining up at me. Primula, I shall survive for you. Shall it be said that the playing fields of Eton produced a failure? Never! Am I not Percival Pink-Pigglington and does not the survival of our house depend on me? Stiff upper lip and all that. Buck up Percy and try, try, try again.

BD

Now that my temperature has returned to normal Ladies and Gentlemen, I have an important announcement to make. (Drum-roll) Gerry's Gin Mill has paid a king's ransom in order to bring to you a star of inexpressible magnitude. A performer whose versatility and beauty will leave you searching for superlatives. I have the honour to present for your pleasure the fabulous, fantastic, frenetic queen of the shimmy strippers – La Donna Divesta!

DANCE: The Striptease

LIS

To think that after all these years I would find romance and in America. I am bubbling inside just like champagne. Diamonds are no substitute for true love. I reject them. Oh what a man is Big Daddy – he's the Daddy of them all. Now I must find Primula and see if Imogene has told her about Lord Percy. She will be so happy to know that Percy really loved her.

VAL

(sings) "Lonely as the desert breeze, I may wander where I please."
(Sneaks up behind a woman) Ah – surprise surprise my little passion flower. This isn't Lisette?

IMO

Valentino Ovaltino! I'm going to swoon.

VAL

Surprise indeed! The biter-bit! The capturer captivated. Be still my fluttering heart. This is "IT".

IMO

Where am I? oh! Why do you pierce me with those burning eyes?

VAL

(sings) "My desert is waiting, dear come there with me. I'm longing to teach you love's sweet melody."
I want to gallop away with you to my oasis.

IMO

(ASIDE: That's a new line!) No! No! No! I'm a good little girl.

VAL

Little girl! You are a woman, a most desirable woman. You've got "IT".

LAV

Valentino Ovaltino! Oh rapture! That's my child, my baby. Unhand her you vile seducer.

VAL

Madame, she shall be the one alone to be my own, I alone to know her caresses.

LAV

Get back into the covers of your book, you Sheik.

VAL

Madame, my intentions are most honourable towards this little flower. "One flower blooms alone in my garden."

IMO

You're not Valentino Ovaltino, You're Valentine Sweet-Blossoming.

VAL

I am both Valentino Ovaltino and Valentine Sweet-Blossoming. You too shall be a Sweet-Blossoming, my lovely one.

LAV

Imogene I am your mother and ...

IMO

Oh mummy, stop being so English – so horsey.

LAV

Me, horsey? Nay! I just knew that fatal Latin charm would cause trouble. I told you that showing your legs would lead to disaster. Oh where is my wandering boy?

LIS

Primula I have – Imogene! And Valentine! (ASIDE: Ah, my plan has worked, Valentine has certainly noticed Imogene this time). Lady Lavinia, this is Primula's brother, Valentine.

LAV

You mean he isn't a gigolo?

VAL

Gigolo – certainly not madame, I'm English to my bootstraps. But as Valentino Ovaltino, I am famous and will soon be rich. Madame, I beg your daughter's hand in marriage and I shall love her "till the sands of the desert grow cold."

PRIM

Valentine! Imogene!

LIS

They will not hear you Cherie. They have fallen in love and are to be married.

VAL

Give me your blessing Primmy. I've found another girl as sweet and innocent as you.

PRIM

I'm so happy for you both.

LAV

Primula, I am going to be your brother's Mama-in-law so you will have to forgive me for destroying Percy's letter – I thought you would forget him.

PRIM

Forget Percy? Never! Valentine is not yet rich, but he will take care of you, and when Percy comes back I shall work to help him pay off the mortgage and we shall be married. I don't mind being poor so long as Percy and I are together.

BD

I found this young man wandering about in the foyer.

PER

Mother! Primula! You're here, in America. And in your underwear!

PRIM AND LAV

Sweet, innocent Percy, not our underwear, our dancing costumes.

IMO

Did you find water, Percy?

PER

Oh Primula, it was your voice that led me on, and so, I survived. But no, I did not find fresh water. Everywhere I went, all I found at my feet were puddles of dirty water.

LIS

Oh Big Daddy, this is the end of our plans. I will not leave Primula to face poverty, alone.

BD

Oh! My little French poodle, you cannot leave me, I've only just found you.

PRIM

Dear, dear Tante Lisette, how wonderful that you have met your handsome cavalier. I shall have Percy to look after me. We are both young and healthy and will work hard to pay our way. Just so long as we are together, everything will be perfect.

GERALD

Ah, there you are Julian.

EVERYONE

Julian!

BD

That's my real name. I was Major Gerald's Sergeant Major. I came with him to

□ □□ □

America when he left England many years ago, after the girl he loved married another.

LAV

It's him – I'd know him anywhere even without his regimentals.

GER

It is her – I'd know her anywhere. Oh, am I to be tormented all over again. Lady Pink ...

LAV

Correction – the dowager Lady Pink-Pigglington.

GER

Dowager? You mean! Oh Lavy!

LAV

Oh Gerry, reunited at last.

SHORT

Hey buddy! You left this in the foyer. (*holds bottle of oil*)

PER

It's mine. I knew no-one would believe that all I found was puddles of dirty water so I brought a sample with me. See!

PRIM

Sweet, innocent Percy – this isn't dirty water – it's OIL!

ALL

Oil! Oil! Oil! Oil!

SONG: We're in the Money

IMO

Now I can go happily to Hollywood with Valentine.

VAL

"Blue heaven and you and I and sand kissing a moonlit sky".

GER

I will give Gerry's Gin Mill to Big Daddy for a wedding present. I am already a millionaire, and my darling Lavinia and I still have some dancing years ahead of us.

LAV

Did I feel a gentle breeze wafting past me? Now is the time to reclaim our flaming youth. Oh Gerald, now that Primula is to be the new Lady Pink-Pigglington, I shall be so proud to be just plain Mr Gerald Marmaduke St. John, Effingham, Fitzfizz, Tiddlypop One-Uppington.

LIS

There is romance for everyone here. Open you arms my cher ami. I will spend the rest of my life creating new recipes just for you.

BD

With Lisette as mine, I shall live on truffles and spice and all things nice.

PER

Now that I don't have to worry about my dear old aged mother or my young sister, there are just the two of us, together, Primula. But, even though I'm now rich, I'm a simple sort of chappie really. Could you be content to live at Pork-Choppington with me?

PRIM

My sweet, innocent Percy, I shall be content anywhere as long as I am with you. We shall always be happy, just breeding pink piglets together.

FINALE SONG: The Party's Over

EXIT to The Stein Song