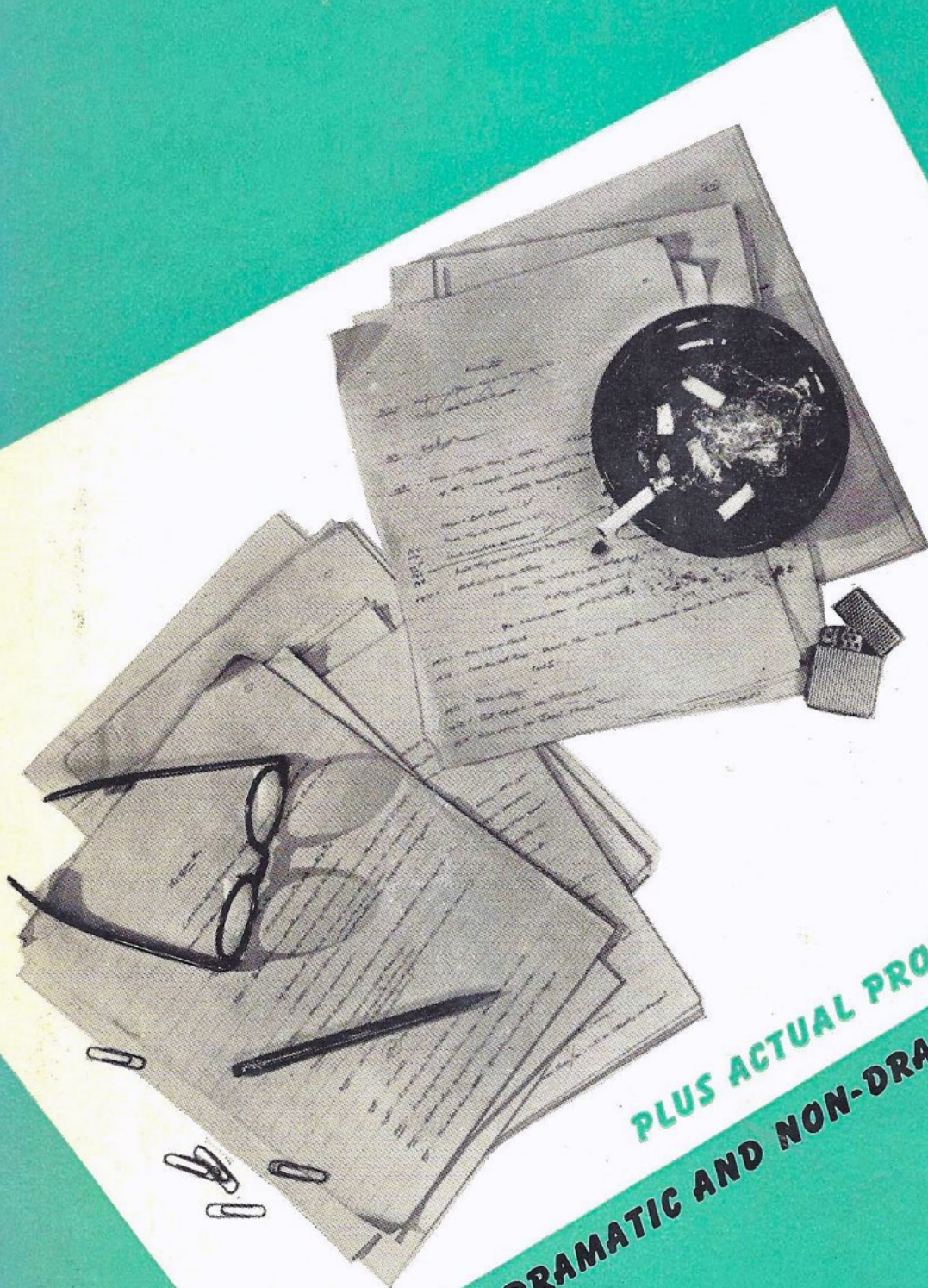


the **TV** writer's guide

A PRACTICAL HANDBOOK WHICH SHOWS WRITERS

- ▶ the basic writing techniques needed for TV
- ▶ how to prepare professional TV scripts
- ▶ how to protect and market TV scripts



**PLUS ACTUAL PRODUCED SCRIPTS
OF DRAMATIC AND NON-DRAMATIC PROGRAMS**

BY MARGARET R. WEISS

The Half-Hour Original: Situation Comedy

In half-hour programming, comedy shares approximately the same percentage of air time as suspense and mystery. Though you will see many single telecasts of situation comedy, most of the networks present it in episodic series. This is the program format for *The Goldbergs*, *Mama*, *Young Mr. Bobbin*, *I Love Lucy*, and *My Friend Irma*—all of which have certain established characters taking part in a different situation each week.

It was as a weekly-episode series that Barbara Boothe developed the format of *The Laytons*, featuring events in the life of the Layton family with the competent guiding hand of their housekeeper Martha very much to the fore. One of the early TV programs of this type, it had about a year's run under continuous sponsorship. But only a writer with Miss Boothe's versatility and capacity for improvisation could have successfully overcome the rigid restrictions of this extremely low-budgeted show. Two cameras (instead of the usual three or even four), one or two sets, and four characters were the maximum allowed for each program. And besides, there was the additional tightrope of an integrated middle commercial—which meant that one of the sets had to serve as a suitable showcase for the sponsor's product!

Essentially, the half-hour comedy episode is a one-act play all too often bisected by a middle commercial. Critics have railed against this interruption of the story at the midway point. They argue that it forces the TV writer to devise what amounts to a "half-act" play, reaching an artificial climax at the most dramatically ill-advised moment. With scarcely enough time to complete character exposition, the writer must start with a one-act structure and split it down the center. The critics stoutly maintain that

this most fragile form of theater simply does not lend itself to being served on the half-shell.

Those who know their theater may decry this practice as a curtailment of both quality and diversity of story material. Sponsors nonetheless will go on wanting to catch the audience when it is waiting to see "what comes next." If you plan to write for many of the sponsored half-hour programs, therefore, you should at least be aware of the prevalence of the middle sales message. Building two climaxes will put an extra burden on you to avoid constructing your story on too contrived a plot and on action for its own sake. And with little opportunity for characterization, every second of it must work overtime for you in order to have your characters come over as real people rather than stereotypes.

Taking the integrated middle commercial in stride, along with the program's physical and financial limitations, the writer of *The Laytons* plotted weekly scripts that played well and convincingly. On every show, Martha the housekeeper appeared with two out of the five members of the family and one of their friends or relatives. A simple story line, fast opening exposition, quick pace, and plenty of stage business served as the basic formula for each script. In the sample we have selected—number eight in the series—you will see how the comedy-episode format works.

Transitions are easily made by using dissolves to link the scenes in normal time sequence. In the last scene, note how the lapse from night to next morning is accomplished by Ginny's entrance in a housecoat and the dialogue between Mrs. Layton and Martha about visiting friends "last night." Throughout the script, stage business and camera usage give the illusion of maximum movement on the two small sets.

THE LAYTONS

(Script #8: UNCLE CHARLIE'S VISIT, or THE MOOSE
HANGS HIGH)

WRITER: BARBARA BOOTHE
PRODUCER: O. GORDON
DIRECTOR: PAT FAY
SPONSOR: BATES FABRICS, INC.
AIR DATE: August 11, 1948
NETWORK: DUMONT

COPYRIGHT, 1952, BY BARBARA W. BOOTHE

SETS: LAYTON LIVING ROOM

GINNY'S BEDROOM

CHARACTERS:

MARTHA
 (THE LAYTONS'
 HOUSEKEEPER)
 GINNY LAYTON
 MRS. LAYTON
 UNCLE CHARLIE

MLS OF GINNY'S BEDROOM.

MARTHA & GINNY MAKING
 BED.

DOLLY IN FOR CLOSE SHOT.

MARTHA

Yessir, it sure is the truth! Neither
 fish nor guests oughta be kept
 around the house longer than
 three days!

(LAUGHS)

DISSOLVE AND SUPERIM-POSE TITLE CARDS:MUSIC: THEME IN ANDUNDER:

#1

#2

#3

MUSIC: THEME UP AND OUT

GINNY

Uh—Martha . . .

MARTHA

Yes, Ginny-baby.

GINNY

Uh—Uncle Charlie is kind of a—a character, isn't he?

MARTHA

Character? How you mean?

GINNY

Well, he acts like he knows everything about everything, and . . . well, how long do you think he's going to stay?

MARTHA

I've known your mother's Uncle Charlie for twenty-five years, off and on, and there's only one thing I know about him—you never know what he'll take it into his head to do next! We hadn't heard a peep outa him for eight years when he showed up at the front door last Thursday . . . and he brought enough baggage to make us a nice long visit. (NOT HAPPY PROSPECT)

GINNY

Oooooh. (GROANS) Has he really done all the things he says he has? I mean like sailing on a tramp steamer, and prospecting for gold and . . . you know . . .

MARTHA (SNICKERS)

Well, nobody's ever been able to prove he hasn't, honey. I only know three things about Mr. Conery for *sure*. One—your mother's his favorite niece. Two—he means

THE TV WRITER'S GUIDE

well. Three—he's been here six days, four hours, and some minutes.

GINNY

It seems like six years. (SIGHS) Honest, he gets in my hair so I could scream sometimes . . . and yet—I kinda feel sorry for him. I—I don't know what to think.

MARTHA

Throw me that pillow, baby. (SIGHS) (AND PLUMPS PILLOW) You got to realize everybody in the world is made outa one part things you like and one part things you don't. Like plain and chocolate batter in a marble cake . . . and you gotta take 'em—or leave 'em—as is.

GINNY

Yes, I suppose you're right, Martha. But it makes life awfully complicated, doesn't it?

MARTHA

Sure it does . . . but it's the complications that make life interesting.

GINNY

Then I guess Mother's life is pretty interesting right now, with Uncle Charlie here.

MARTHA

Well, I *will* say *one* thing. With Mr. Charlie Conery around, things aren't ever *dull*. Everything about him, including his arrival, is unexpected, and stamped with his own — peculiar — personality. (BOTH LAUGH)

(*Dissolve to living room.*)

MRS. LAYTON is looking at living room as though picturing improvements the expected decorator will make. Sound: Doorbell rings.)

CHARLIE: (Off) I'll get that, Ruthie!

MRS. LAYTON: If that's the decorator I'm expecting, Uncle Charlie, show him right in!

(*She takes picture down from over mantel and backs off and surveys wall without it, squinting and biting lips in indecision.* CHARLIE CONERY comes to the door, lugging a stepladder, a tarpaulin, a can of paint, and brush in a pail. He's in his late sixties, not senile, has a winsomeness that takes the curse off his eccentricities. He wears dirty overalls that don't fit. He's having a time getting his paraphernalia through door.)

CHARLIE: (Beaming smile) Give me a hand here, will you please, Ruthie?

MRS. LAYTON: (Going to his assistance, picture in hand) Good heavens, Uncle Charlie! What on earth are you doing?

CHARLIE: This confounded ladder! . . . There! (*Leans ladder against wall but it starts to slide.* MRS. LAYTON grabs it)

MRS. LAYTON: Careful!

CHARLIE: Oh-oh! Just let me get this tarpaulin set down. (*Notices RUTH has picture in hand. Looks at vacant spot over mantel*) Don't blame you a bit, girlie. I never liked that picture!

MRS. LAYTON: Uncle Charlie, what

is the meaning of this? Why the ladder and paintbrushes?

CHARLIE: (*Patting her affectionately*) I'm going to paint the living room for you.

MRS. LAYTON: But—but why?

CHARLIE: (*Starting to spread tarpaulin over chairs*) Why, there's no sense in you putting out good money for a decorator and having the house cluttered up with strangers when I'm here and can do the painting myself.

MRS. LAYTON: (*Dismayed*) That's . . . that's very kind of you, but I wasn't going to have anything painted. I was just going to have the decorator help me select a few things . . . like a new mirror over the fireplace here, and some draperies for the . . .

CHARLIE: (*Overlapping*) Well, it won't hurt to paint up a bit, anyhow. Now—give me a hand with this tarpaulin, will you?

MRS. LAYTON: (*Puts picture down, helps with canvas*) But, Uncle Charlie . . .

CHARLIE: (*Going right on*) Ruthie, in the first place, you don't want a mirror over the fireplace. It just gets all smudged up with soot. You have to clean it all the time. Now—I got just the thing for that space. Add a lot of class to the room, too. Give it real personality. (*Starts to unfold ladder and sets it up in middle of room*)

MRS. LAYTON: (*Laughs half-heartedly*) But—I want the mirror, and I don't mind cleaning it.

CHARLIE: You think so now. But you'll change your mind when you

see what *I* have for you, Ruthie. (*Gently and affectionately*) I wouldn't give it to anyone but you, I think so much of it. But my favorite niece can have anything her Uncle Charlie's got. (*Appealingly*) You're the only relative I have who really cares anything about me—or that I care about.

MRS. LAYTON: Why, what about Aunt Carrie! She's devoted to you.

CHARLIE: (*Stirs paint in pail*) Carrie! Ugh! She's a fine woman and all that, but she can't forget she's my older sister—and she won't let me forget it, either. I stay as far away from her as I can—she's too bossy! Can't be myself around her like I can here with you! Now—for these walls.

MRS. LAYTON: But—we just had them painted about a month ago!

CHARLIE: (*Sweeping gesture of arm*) (*Scornfully*) You call this painted? Why, some dauber was cheating you out of your eyeteeth if you paid for this! They don't do things right any more. These young fellows—just slap the paint on any old way—no pride in workmanship . . .

MRS. LAYTON: (*Looks in bucket for the first time*) Red! Uncle Charlie, that's red paint!

CHARLIE: Course it is, Ruthie! You need something bright in this living room—not this mousy color.

MRS. LAYTON: But—don't you think red is a trifle—unusual?

CHARLIE: Well, you don't have to have red if you don't want it. How about orange then? I got some yellow paint right here, and if you

mix it with the red . . . that'll make orange.

MRS. LAYTON: (*Is getting sicker by the minute*) Oh, no!

CHARLIE: (*Looking at walls*) Then we'll paint the moldings apple-green, and maybe a touch of gold over there on the fireplace . . .

MRS. LAYTON: Uncle Charlie—really—you're terribly kind—but please . . . don't paint the room!

CHARLIE: (*Suddenly aware RUTH is unhappy about this*) Why, of course not, girlie, if you don't want me to. (*Wistful*) I just thought I could sort of help out a little around here . . . earn my salt . . .

MRS. LAYTON: (*Sorry for him. Hugs him impulsively*) Oh, you're a darling to offer, and I do appreciate it. But you see—(*Flounders for excuse*) George . . . well, he's . . . allergic to the smell of paint! I had to have the house painted while he was up at the lake fishing.

CHARLIE: Smell of paint makes him queasy, huh?

MRS. LAYTON: Oh, very! He gets violently ill! And . . . and he breaks out in a rash! . . . (*Starts to fold up tarpaulin*)

CHARLIE: (*Sniffs disdainfully*) And George a doctor, too. Why, all he has to do when that feeling comes on him is to take a little spirits of ammonia in a glass of lemonade—and two drops of oil of turpentine and a pinch of soda . . .

(*Camera pans to MARTHA, who has entered as CHARLIE is talking. Surveys scene in amazement*)

MARTHA: Great day in the morning! What's going on here?

MRS. LAYTON: (*Gestures to indicate MARTHA help her*) Oh, Uncle Charlie very kindly offered to paint the living room for me . . . Orange.

MARTHA: Orange!

CHARLIE: Yep. Make it more cheerful than this—casket gray.

(*MARTHA frowns but doesn't say anything*)

MRS. LAYTON: It's French gray, Uncle Charlie . . . and very smart.

MARTHA: Hasn't that decorator man come yet, Miss Ruth—the one with the mirrors and things?

MRS. LAYTON: (*Looking at watch*) No . . .

CHARLIE: (*On top of her*) Oh—that reminds me! (*Starts out quickly*) (*Calls over shoulder*) I'll be right back! Got a surprise for you, Ruthie!

(*MARTHA and MRS. LAYTON finish folding tarpaulin and put ladder by door*)

MARTHA: Orange!

MRS. LAYTON: Yes—with apple-green moldings. I just barely kept him from it. I was desperate!

MARTHA: Reckon you were! He's a mighty kind man, Miss Ruth—but, like lotsa folks, he wants to help you *his* way, steada yours. (*Flash*) I bet I know what happened to that man with the drapes and things. . . .

MRS. LAYTON: I can't imagine why he hasn't arrived.

MARTHA: I just got a sneaking suspicion that he came all right, and your uncle Charlie . . .

(*Enter CHARLIE beaming blissfully. He's carrying a moose head, mounted on a wooden plaque*)

CHARLIE: There! (*Proudly*) How do you like that!

MARTHA: Huh!

CHARLIE: I shot it myself, up in the Canadian woods, and it's traveled all over the world with me. (*Goes to mantel and starts hanging moose head where picture was*) This noble beast has been my friend and confidant on all my journeys. . . . You'll love him, too, when you get to know him.

(*Camera catches MRS. LAYTON and MARTHA exchanging glances*)

MARTHA: (*Irony*) Oh, Mr. Conery, that's just lovely. What is it?

MRS. LAYTON: (*Dismayed*) It's a—moose! (*Sinks in chair and puts hand to eyes*)

CHARLIE: Just what you need to give the room a little life!

MARTHA: Life! It's dead, ain't it?

CHARLIE: (*Surprised*) Of course it is! I shot it myself, eighteen years ago. (*Starts to reminisce*) (*Dramatizes*) I remember the day so well—there I was with only one shot left in my rifle. Suddenly I heard a thrashing in the bushes. . . . It was a bull moose charging down on me in full cry! It was a moment that called for iron nerves and a steady hand! (*Notices MRS. LAYTON's pose*) (*Sympathetically*) Ruthie—dear! I frightened you!

MRS. LAYTON: (*Forces smile*) I—I guess I just have a headache. . . .

CHARLIE: (*Contritely*) I shouldn't have started such a hair-raising

story. I am sorry, Ruth. I forgot your delicate nerves.

MRS. LAYTON: (*Snapping at him*) There's nothing wrong with my nerves! I just have a headache, that's all.

CHARLIE: I've got just the thing for your headache. Fix you right up! (*Starts off*) It's a special remedy I got from the personal physician of the Maharajah of Majore! (*Exits*)

MRS. LAYTON: Oh, dear.

MARTHA: Miss Ruth—I know what's giving you these headaches. Why don't you do something about it? You never used to have a nerve in your body. And now—I'm awful worried about you.

MRS. LAYTON: Uncle Charlie means so well . . . That moose head.

MARTHA: That's the saddest-looking critter I ever saw! (*Makes long face*)

MRS. LAYTON: (*Smiles at MARTHA'S imitation of moose*) It's his dearest possession and he gave it to me! I can't bear to hurt his feelings. . . .

MARTHA: (*Resolutely takes down moose head, sets it on floor, and hangs picture back up*) You're too soft-hearted for your own good, Miss Ruth. I know it isn't my place to say this—but it breaks my heart to see you so jumpy just because you and Mr. Conery both are so well-meaning.

MRS. LAYTON: Perhaps he'll decide to go in a day or so.

MARTHA: Honest, Miss Ruth—if he doesn't I don't know what'll happen. Miss Ginny's upset 'cause none of her friends will so much as

drop over since that night he told 'em it was bedtime and sent 'em home at nine o'clock. Then, Miss Peggy and Mr. Bill . . .

MRS. LAYTON: (*Torn between two loyalties*) Now, Martha—I think you're imagining things. Peggy and Bill have been very busy lately. (*Proud*) Don't forget, my son is now a city official! They have dozens of public functions to attend . . . dinners and receptions and . . .

MARTHA: Ummmm-hmmmm. Well, why don't you go up and lie down awhile? You'll feel better. I'll warm you up some milk.

CHARLIE: (*Entering with glass*) (*Solicitously*) Here, Ruthie. Just take this and you'll be rid of that headache in *no* time!

MRS. LAYTON: Thank you, Uncle Charlie, but I really—

CHARLIE: (*Firmly*) (*Forces glass into MRS. LAYTON'S reluctant hand as MARTHA looks on grimly*) Here—drink it down.

(*MRS. LAYTON takes sip and gags. MARTHA goes over to MRS. LAYTON and takes glass. She exits, glaring at CHARLIE'S back. Sound: Phone rings.*)

CHARLIE: (*Answers it*) Hello. Oh, hello, George . . . I'll call her. (*To Ruth*) It's George.

MRS. LAYTON: (*Hopefully*) Oh, good! Yes, dear? (*Disappointed*) Not tonight, either? . . . How late do you think you'll be? Oh . . . Well, all right, I won't wait up for you then. . . . (*Sadly*) Good-by, darling.

CHARLIE: Not coming home till late again, eh?

MRS. LAYTON: (*Biting lip*) No.

CHARLIE: Seems mighty funny to me that your husband hasn't been home a single evening since the first night I got here. Not very considerate of him, if you ask me.

MRS. LAYTON: (*Annoyed*) Oh, Uncle Charlie . . . don't be ridiculous. He's a doctor, and he has so many demands on his time!

CHARLIE: Well, if he was *my* husband . . .

MRS. LAYTON: (*Irritably*) Well, he isn't your husband!

CHARLIE: (*Contrite*) (*Pats her hand*) Why, girly . . . I just don't want *anyone* making my Ruthie unhappy. Looks like George'd realize how much you miss him, and try to be home more.

MRS. LAYTON: (*Haggard*) Uncle Charlie—please . . . I'm going upstairs. (*Escapes rather than exits*)

CHARLIE: (*Clucking*) Poor child. Her nerves are shot. Think I'll speak to George about this, myself! (*Notices picture instead of moose head*) (*Jaw drops. Locates moose head by door, takes picture down again as:*) (*Sound: Phone rings.*)

(CHARLIE races to phone. Can't bear to miss anything) Hello? Who's calling? . . . What did you want to talk to Ginny about? . . . (*Outraged*) For shame! I'll advise you to learn some respect for your elders, young man! (*Bangs receiver down*) (*Resumes BIZ of hanging moose head*) Young whippersnapper! Virginia shouldn't have anything to do with a bad-mannered lad like that, anyhow!

(Enter GINNY)

GINNY: Wasn't that for me, Uncle Charlie? I thought Joe would . . . (*Disappointed, seeing phone on cradle*) Oh. (*Sees moose head*) Holy cow!

CHARLIE: No, Virginia . . . that's a *bull* moose.

GINNY: Well—what I mean is—good night—I thought Mother was going to have a mirror put up there.

CHARLIE: She was, but I persuaded her to accept this little gift from me, instead. Anybody can have a mirror, but very few people have a genuine moose head hanging in their living rooms.

GINNY: I should hope not!

CHARLIE: (*Hurt*) You—don't like it?

GINNY: Well, if Mother wants it there—okay. Personally, I think she must have flipped her lid if she likes *that*. (*Sighs*)

CHARLIE: (*Bewildered*) What?

GINNY: I mean our little friend there, Herman, the Moose—the ex-moose, that is—makes it kinda gloomy in here, don't you think?

CHARLIE: (*Vaguely*) Oh—well (*Starts out*), I'll fix that! The room does need brightening, like I told your mother. (*Exits*)

GINNY: (*Shrugs, taps forehead significantly, and stands, arms akimbo, surveying moose and shaking head*) Mother *hasn't* been acting like herself the last few days—and small wonder—but *this*! He looks like a bully—and a bad-tempered so and so!

MARTHA: (*Entering*) You shouldn't talk like that about your uncle, Ginny Layton! (*Sees moose head. Glares at it a moment and starts taking it down*)

GINNY: I wasn't talking about him—I was talking about Herman there—but it could go double.

MARTHA: Honey—Mr. Conery's just a lonely old man. You gotta have patience with old folks. Specially when you're kin to them.

GINNY: (*Flippantly*) Yes—you're stuck when they're relatives. (*Disbelieving*) Uncle Charlie told me Mother wanted Herman up there.

MARTHA: Well, she doesn't.

GINNY: Thank goodness.

MARTHA: (*Late take*) Herman? You mean you call *him* (*Indicates moose*) Herman? I called him Charlie. (*They laugh*)

Dissolve to Commercial.

(*Integrated Commerical for BATES bedspreads and draperies inserted here*)

MUSIC: Bridge.

(*Fade in living room later that afternoon. CHARLIE is setting vases of flowers on every available flat surface, whistling happily. MRS. LAYTON enters. She surveys flowers with growing dismay*)

CHARLIE: (*Beaming*) I thought these flowers would brighten the place up a little.

MRS. LAYTON: (*Almost in disbelief*) Uncle Charlie . . . you didn't cut all my flowers . . . (*Runs to window and looks out. Stifles moan*)

CHARLIE: (*Face falls*) No use

wasting 'em outside when they oughta be in here where you can enjoy 'em.

MRS. LAYTON: (*Crying*) Oh, no!

CHARLIE: Why, Ruthie, dear . . . What's the matter? There's no harm done. . . .

MRS. LAYTON: No harm done!—No harm done! (*Bawls*)

MARTHA: (*Sailing in*) Miss Ruth! What on earth's the matter, honey? (*Sees flowers*) (*Grim, puts arms around Ruth*) (*To CHARLIE*) I suppose *you* cut all Miss Ruth's flowers.

CHARLIE: Why, yes. But that's what flowers are for—to make people happy.

MARTHA: (*Controlled but mad*) Well, these flowers aren't making anybody happy! Miss Ruth was nursing them along like a baby, so the yard would look nice for her Garden Club contest next Friday, and now I bet you didn't leave a single bud in that yard!

MRS. LAYTON: (*Through tears*) Don't blame Uncle Charlie, Martha . . . He didn't know . . . He meant well . . . It isn't his fault . . .

CHARLIE: (*Unhappy*) Well—I guess I'll go upstairs . . . Ruthie, I'm awfully sorry. I only wanted to help. (*Exits, crushed*)

MARTHA: Oh, Miss Ruth! You've got to do something! Ever since Mr. Conery came here, things have gotten out of hand.

MRS. LAYTON: (*Drying eyes*) But Uncle Charlie seems so happy to be here . . . and he really doesn't have any other place to go.

MARTHA: What about your aunt Carrie? He could go and visit her . . . his own sister.

MRS. LAYTON: Poor Uncle Charlie's scared to death of her. He is timid.

MARTHA: Timid! Why, he goes poking his nose into everything! He even comes out and tells me what to cook—and how to cook it.

MRS. LAYTON: Uncle Charlie doesn't mean any harm. He just wants to help!

MARTHA: (*Crescendo of aggravation*) Help! He's helping all right—helping to drive you crazy! You always were so calm till he came, and now you're a bundle of nerves. Dr. George can't stand his long-winded stories, so he never comes home except to sleep. Miss Peggy and Mr. Bill won't answer the door since the first day when he went over there and let little Nancy drink some of his beer! I say, uncle or no uncle, he's got to go before he makes . . .

MRS. LAYTON: (*Sharply*) Martha!

MARTHA: (*Flinches at tone. Bites lip, hurt to the quick. Drops her eyes. Speaks very quietly*) I'm sorry I spoke out of turn, Miss Ruth. Only sometimes . . .

(*Exits*)

MRS. LAYTON, *ashamed of hurting MARTHA, starts after her. Stops. Doesn't know what to do. Starts to lean head on mantelpiece to cry. Notices moose head. In a fury of frustration almost tears it off wall and slams it down—on something that won't injure it so the prop department won't have to pay for repairs. GINNY enters and sees part of this.*

GINNY: Mother! What is it! You're crying! (*Runs and hugs mother*)

MRS. LAYTON: (*Trying to control herself*) Nothing, darling . . . I'm just a little overwrought. . . .

GINNY: Please tell me what you're crying about. I can't bear to see you like this. What's the matter?

MRS. LAYTON: Nothing, dear.

GINNY: Now, Mother, something is the matter, too. What is it?

MRS. LAYTON: (*Tightly*) I said *nothing* is the matter. Now, please stop asking.

GINNY: Uncle Charlie's getting on your nerves, isn't he? . . . Isn't he?

MRS. LAYTON: Ginny, please! I don't want to discuss it. (*Glares almost defiantly at her and dashes out, running up the stairs*)

GINNY: (*Stricken*) Mother! (*Follows her to door*) I just wanted to . . . (*Turns and comes back*)

MARTHA: (*Entering*) Ginny-baby! Try to understand. Your mother's awful upset. She didn't mean to hurt your feelings.

GINNY: (*Going over and fixing vase of flowers*) I know . . . and I know why she's upset, too! And she won't do anything about it! (*Turns suddenly*) Why won't she, Martha?

MARTHA: Honey—sometimes it's mighty hard to take a stand, especially when you know somebody well enough to understand 'em and make allowances. So you keep putting it off, hoping you won't have to.

GINNY: Then, why don't *you* do

something? You're always wonderful at figuring out angles.

MARTHA: (*Smiles gently*) This is one time your old Martha can't do a thing. I'd just be butting in. I did try, well as I could . . . but your mother . . . (*Stops and turns head*)

GINNY: You mean . . . Mother . . . You and she . . .

(MARTHA: *nods*)

GINNY: (*This does it. She's furious*) You mean to tell me that Uncle Charlie's caused you and Mother . . . (*Can't finish sentence, she's so mad*) (*Starts purposefully toward door*)

MARTHA: Now, Ginny-honey . . . Don't go off until you unhitch your horse.

GINNY: (*Comes back*) (*Almost a tirade*) It's not so bad for me, because even if none of my friends will come over here any more, on account of him, I can go out. But you and Mother have him around all the time! Mother made me promise to be nice to him, and I always thought his intentions were good. But it doesn't matter what his intentions are. You and Mother are just as miserable as if his intentions were all bad, and it's results that count! And if nobody else will tell him the trouble he's causing, I *will*! (*Starts out again*) (*Comes back for moose head*) He can get out and take this—this *monster* with him!

MARTHA: Wait a minute, honey! If you hurt his feelings, that'll only make your mother feel worse than she does.

GINNY: But somebody's got to do something.

MARTHA: I know. But maybe there's a way to do it that'll get what you want without upsetting your mother. She's upset enough already . . . I never saw her like this in all my years of working for this family!

GINNY: Well, if there's a way out so everybody's happy—let's find it. But quick!

MARTHA: Now—let me see. There's no chance of his going to visit his sister Carrie. He can't stand her! But—wait a minute! Maybe . . .

GINNY: What're you going to do?

MARTHA: I'm not going to do anything! *You* are!

GINNY: But you told me . . .

MARTHA: (*Stopping her*) But if Mr. Conery decided to leave all by himself . . .

GINNY: (*Face falls*) He won't. He says he's never been as happy as he has been with us.

MARTHA: Yessir, I bet it'll work! (*Laughs*) Miss Ginny. (*Looks around conspiratorially*) This has got to be a secret. Don't even let on to your mother—even afterwards. Here's how we do it! (*Whispers in ear*) (*Laughs*)

GINNY: (*Laughs*) (*Then soberly*) But what if it doesn't work . . . what if I can't put it over! What if . . .

MARTHA: Hush with that, honey! Don't fret. We got plenty of time to figure out something else *then*. (*Listens*) I think that's your uncle Charlie coming now. . . . Do like

I told you! You gotta try—for your mother's sake!

GINNY: Okay—I will!

CHARLIE: (*Comes to door*) (*Stops a moment before entering*) Saaaay . . . you two are cooking up secrets, huh?

GINNY: Why—uh—

MARTHA: (*Quickly*) (*Starting to leave*) Yessir! We got a fine secret . . . Now don't you tell, Miss Ginny! (*Winking so CHARLIE can't see but GINNY will know this is just a buildup for their plans*)

GINNY: (*Finally gets signal*) You don't want me to . . . Oh! (*Gets it*) (*Singsong*) We know a secret. We know a secret.

CHARLIE: What is it?

MARTHA: (*Amused*) Cats aren't all curiosity killed. (*Significantly*) Don't let him dig it out of you, Miss Ginny, while I'm gone! (*Snickers*)

GINNY: You can depend on me, Martha! (*Winks and holds up thumb and forefinger in circle*)

(*Exit MARTHA. GINNY picks up magazine, assuming indifference.*)

CHARLIE: (*Dying of curiosity*) What kind of a secret?

GINNY: (*Beginning to enjoy this*) Oh—just a secret.

CHARLIE: Not a secret from your mother, I hope.

GINNY: Ummm-hmmmm. From everybody.

CHARLIE: (*Sits down in chair pulled over by GINNY. Keeps hitching it closer*) Fiddle-dee-dee! You can tell your uncle Charlie—I won't tell a soul.

GINNY: Oh, that wouldn't be fair, Uncle Charlie! A secret is a—a secret.

CHARLIE: What's it about? Something nice?

GINNY: Oh, yes! You'd be crazy about . . . (*Catches self*)

CHARLIE: Yes, yes . . . go on. . . .

GINNY: No—it wouldn't be fair. Martha'd never forgive me if I told.

CHARLIE: She doesn't need to know you told me.

GINNY: (*Remonstrates, but amused*) Why, Uncle Charlie!

CHARLIE: (*Uncomfortable but curiosity wins*) Well—I wouldn't have you betray a trust, Virginia. You know that. But surely you could give me a little hint.

GINNY: (*Feigning reluctance*) Well—I don't know. . . . Maybe just a little hint. . . .

CHARLIE: Who's the secret about?

GINNY: Welllll . . . I guess maybe it's about you in a way.

CHARLIE: Well, if it's about me. . . !

GINNY: But you've got to promise not to tell Mother. It's really a surprise for her!

CHARLIE: Why, I wouldn't spoil a surprise for Ruthie. You ought to know you can trust me on that score! (*Looks expectant*)

GINNY: Well—all right. Somebody's coming to visit us in the morning. . . !

CHARLIE: Really? We've got a pretty full house now, I'd say!

GINNY: Oh, there's always room

for one more . . . especially a relative.

CHARLIE: Relative! (*Thinks*) On your mother's side or your father's?

GINNY: Mother's.

CHARLIE: On your . . . Why, your mother doesn't have anyone in her family but me and my sister Ca— (*Breaks off*) (*Petrified*) It isn't Carrie!

GINNY: I knew you'd be surprised! Isn't that wonderful! Mother says you two haven't seen each other for years, and I know you're excited.

CHARLIE: (*Leaps up and paces. He's excited all right, but he isn't happy*) Carrie! . . . Here! Oh, my—oh, lord!

GINNY: (*Getting up, pleased at having brought it off*) I knew you'd be tickled, so I told you. But you promise not to tell Mother! Aunt Carrie wants to surprise her. They haven't seen each other for years, either, you know. (*Starts toward door*)

CHARLIE: (*Almost to himself*) Carrie doesn't see *anybody*—if they see her first! (*Pacing, oblivious of GINNY*)

GINNY: Well, remember, you promised not to tell I told you!

CHARLIE: Huh?—Oh. I won't tell! I don't want to be the bearer of ill tidings. . . . You can depend on my keeping mum!

GINNY *exits*. CHARLIE *doesn't notice GINNY's exit, continues pacing a moment. Slumps into chair. Runs hand through hair. Gives pantomime of man in desperate situa-*

tion trying to figure his way out. . . . Gets inspiration. Sees he's alone. Goes to telephone and dials operator, keeping eye on doorway until he gets answer. Then turns with back to doorway when he gets party.

During conversation, GINNY and MARTHA peek around corner of door, congratulate each other.

Music: (Sneak "hurry music" in under gradual crescendo to bridge)

CHARLIE: Operator? Get me Kim Maddigan at the Explorers' Club, in New York City. Hurry! . . . No, I don't know the number! . . . (*Fidgets*) Oh—Hello? Kim Maddigan . . . ! Kim? Charlie Conery! I'm in Fairfield visiting my niece . . . Never mind how I am. I'm terrible! My sister Carrie's arriving here tomorrow . . . Get me outa here! . . . I don't care what you do! Send me a wire . . . anything . . . but get me out of here before my sister comes tomorrow! I haven't any excuse for leaving! . . . Do something! . . . Just imagine you're facing an enraged rhinoceros, and give me your instinctive reaction! . . . Ha! You just don't know my sister Carrie! . . . Oh—you've saved my life! Don't fail me, Kim! It's a matter of life and death! . . . Good boy! . . . (*Hangs up*) Whew! (*Mops forehead*)

CHARLIE *sees moose . . . presumably hangs it up again as camera fades. Actually takes it off stage.*

Music: Time bridge

Dissolve to Layton living room. . . . Following morning. MRS. LAYTON wears house dress. MARTHA is dust-

ing. MRS. LAYTON is opening the mail. (*Moose head is gone*)

MARTHA: I think your visit with the Kings last night did you good, Miss Ruth. You look more pert than I've seen you for days.

MRS. LAYTON: I guess you're right, Martha. I do feel better. I hated to leave Uncle Charlie alone, though . . .

MARTHA: (*Laughs*) Don't ever worry about him! He keeps himself occupied!

MRS. LAYTON: I wonder—you don't suppose anything's happened to Uncle Charlie! He wasn't down for breakfast—but I imagined he was taking a longer walk than usual. . . . (*Worried*) I'd better run upstairs and see if he's ill! (*Exits*)

MARTHA: (*To herself*) Well, he was the sickest-looking man last night! . . .

Enter GINNY. Comes loping in, in housecoat if she hasn't had time to change.

GINNY: She doesn't suspect, does she, Martha?

MARTHA: Well, it worked all right—like I told you! Your mother's gone up to Mr. Conery's room to see if he's sick or something. . . .

GINNY: (*Notices moose is gone. Covers last few words of MARTHA's*) It's gone! The moose!

MARTHA: (*Laughs*) We was robbed!

GINNY: (*Laughs*) Well—thank goodness! I was getting as tired of Herman as I was of Uncle Charlie!

MRS. LAYTON: (*Running downstairs*) (*Starts speech, off, before entering room*) Uncle Charlie's gone! Bag and baggage! (*Enters with telegram and note*) (*Also large parcel*) (*GINNY and MARTHA look at each other, pleased*)

MARTHA: You don't say! Where could he have gone to?

MRS. LAYTON: I don't understand this at all—but he left this note and this telegram. . . . (*GINNY and MARTHA crowd around to see*)

MARTHA: Yeah—he got a telegram last night while you were gone. . . .

GINNY: What does it say?

MRS. LAYTON: The note says, "Ruthie, dear . . . Sorry I couldn't say good-by, but you'll see by this telegram I had to leave immediately by the night plane. No time for good-bys—which I hate."

GINNY: Let's see the telegram (*Takes telegram*) "Al Burke claims he shot bigger moose than yours, claims loving cup. Come immediately and defend your prize! Kim Maddigan, Explorers' Club, New York City."

MRS. LAYTON: (*Notices moose is gone*) He took it with him, all right! (*Looks very pleased*) (*Continues reading note*) Then he goes on to say . . . "Sorry I am Indian giver about the moose head, but I'm leaving you something just as good for the mantelpiece. Love to all . . . your devoted Uncle Charlie." (*Frowns*) That's odd. . . . But he was always a little . . . eccentric. (*GINNY and MARTHA exchange worried looks*)

GINNY: Open up the package.
What's in it?

MARTHA: He says it's just as good
as the moose! Nothing could be
"just as good" as that animal!

GINNY and MARTHA pantomime:
"Do you think she suspects?"
"No . . . it's all right."

MRS. LAYTON: (*Tears off wrapping on package*) I hope it's
something nice. But with Uncle
Charlie you never know what to
expect. . . . (*Pulls out contents of
package*) (*It's a stuffed and
mounted fish*)

BIZ: All react in horror.

MRS. LAYTON: Oh . . . what'll we do
with it?

MARTHA: Wait'll day after tomorrow
and throw it out. . . .

MRS. LAYTON: Day after tomorrow?
. . .

Dolly in for CU of MARTHA.

MARTHA: Yes'm. . . . Just like I al-
ways say . . . Neither relatives nor
fish oughta be kept around the
house longer than three days!
(*Laughs*)

MUSIC: Theme in and hold
under:
Credits

MUSIC: Out.