"MR. BLANDINGS BUILDS HIS DREAM HOUSE"

Written by
Melvin Frank and Norman Panama

Based on a novel by
Eric Hodgins

FADE IN:
A very high airplane view of the entire island. Over this, a Voice, authoritative, impressive.

VOICE
In any discussion of contemporary America and how its people live, we must inevitably start with -- Manhattan -- New York City, U.S.A!

NEW YORK CITY SKYLINE - STOCK

VOICE
Manhattan -- glistening, modern giant of concrete and steel reaching to the heavens and holding in its arms seven millions!

NEW YORK CITY - ANOTHER VIEW - STOCK

VOICE
Seven millions -- happy beneficiaries of the advantages and comforts this gracious metropolis has to offer...
(OVER DISSOLVE)
Its fine broad streets and boulevards facilitate the New Yorker's carefree, orderly existence.

BROADWAY AND FORTY-SECOND STREET - STOCK
An enormous traffic jam, horns honking, etc.

DISOLVE

VOICE
(OVER DISSOLVE)
Kindly, courteous public servants ever on hand to offer a word of friendly advice.

TRAFFIC COP AND CAB DRIVER
yelling at each other.

DISOLVE

VOICE
(OVER DISSOLVE)
A transportation system second to none in speed and comfort!

A SUBWAY DURING RUSH HOUR - STOCK

DISOLVE

VOICE
(OVER DISSOLVE)
Modern recreational facilities for its children!

A CROWDED LOWER EAST SIDE STREET - STOCK
Kids playing ball in truck-laden street.

DISOLVE

VOICE
(OVER DISSOLVE)
For its adults, the peace and privacy of a day in the sun!
CONEY ISLAND ON ITS MOST CROWDED DAY - STOCK

DISOLVE

VOICE
(OVER DISOLVE)
It's delightful changes in climate!

A BLINDING, WINDSWEPT NEW YORK BLIZZARD - STOCK

DISOLVE

VOICE
(OVER DISOLVE)
Its great institutions of learning!
Open to all. Free of charge.

BUILDING EXCAVATION - DAY

are a

HEAD

Douglas), a

well-dressed, intelligent, attractive looking young

man.

BILL
I suppose you're wondering what all
this has to do with Mr. Blandings
and his Dream House? Well, I'll tell
you. Jim Blandings is part of the
fabric of this town. Born and raised
right here, he's as typical a New
Yorker as anyone you'll ever meet.
At least he was.
(confidentially)
And if you want to know the real
story, I guess I'm your boy. Cole's
my name, Bill Cole. I'm Jim's lawyer
and quote, best friend, unquote.
Jim's one of those bright young men
from Yale. Advertising business,
lovely wife, two fine kids, makes
almost fifteen thousand a year. Want
to know why? Just look up there.

A BILLBOARD
A billboard -- against a white background is a large ham. In large letters across the ham is printed:

WHAM!
(A WHALE OF A HAM)

And below this in quotes:

"WHEN YOU'VE GOT THE WHIM, SAY 'WHAM!'

BILL'S VOICE
"When you've got the whim, say 'Wham!'"... Jim Blandings wrote that slogan. Seven magic words that shine like a beacon light for the American housewife!
   (impressive; almost reverently)
"When you've got the whim, say 'Wham!'": Jim Blandings' contribution to the American Scene.

EXT. A LARGE NEW YORK APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

As CAMERA MOVES UP it and TOWARD a window:

BILL'S VOICE
For fourteen years Jim and Muriel had been living in their apartment over on East Seventy-fourth Street. It was just another of those wonderful crisp September mornings and the Blandings were still asleep. Just like millions of other people in good old Manhattan -- New York City -- U.S.A.

The CAMERA GOES THROUGH the window and INTO:

INT. THE BLANDINGS' BEDROOM - DAY

Jim (Cary Grant) and Muriel (Myrna Loy) Blandings are asleep in twin beds.

The room, not large to begin with, gives us the impression of being cluttered up and overcrowded because the beds, oversized chest of drawers, dressing table and chaise lounge take up an inordinate amount of space.
SOUND of an alarm clock going off. Jim awakens, yawns into hazy consciousness, gropes about on the night table for the clock; it isn't there. He slips out of bed, and his eyes, blindly moves toward the dresser. The circuitous path, which he accomplishes with sleepy dexterity, entails going around the chaise lounge, just missing the ominously pointed edge of Muriel's dressing table, deftly stepping over the low dressing table chair and finally reaching the chest of drawers upon which is the clock. He turns off alarm and yawningly starts back over the same path. We get the feeling that Jim makes this sleepy excursion every morning of his life.

Back at his bed, Jim sits down, and, yawning loudly, with his feet for his slippers. Before he can find them, however, he begins to doze off and slowly tilts back the pillow, pulling the covers over him. In a moment he sound asleep. Muriel's arm automatically stretches out and shakes Jim into consciousness. As he painfully reawakens and starts to rise, Muriel's arm disappears.

We get the impression that this, too, is a regular part of the Blandings' daily routine.

Jim locates his slippers, reaches around for his bathrobe, can't find it, stumbles his way over to the closet, and opens the door.

INT. THE CLOSET
This is a fairly good-sized closet but it was never intended to be shared by two people, particularly not Jim and Muriel Blandings. Assuming that they had started out on even terms, it is now obviously Muriel, three-to-one. Her dresses, gowns, slips, seem to obscure his occasional pair of slacks, or sports coat. Her shoes neatly line the floor and the shelf above is loaded to the ceiling with her hat boxes, in an orderly but somewhat precarious state of balance.

Groping blindly for a robe, Jim feels around and pulls one out. As he slips into the arms, we see it's much too small for him, obviously Muriel's. In disgust he attempts to put it back. Unable to find a hook he finally jams it in between two silk dresses which fall to the floor. As he bends and gropes for the dresses, he discovers his robe crumpled under them on the floor. He drags the robe out and dons it, leaving the dresses where they fell. With a guilty look Muriel he closes the closet door and starts out of the bedroom and into the narrow hall.

INT. THE HALL

A narrow corridor extending the length of the apartment. Off it are doors leading to the bathroom, the children's room and the foyer.

Jim shuffles down the hall. He stops at the closed bathroom door, listens, hears the shower, knocks.

BETSY'S VOICE
Okay, dad.

JIM
Jim continues down the hall, stops at the closed door of the children's room, knocks. No sound. He opens the door and enters.

**INT. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM**

A small room, crowded and cluttered up with the accoutrements of adolescence. Joan, an eleven-year-old is asleep in the twin beds. Jim automatically pulls the covers clear off Joan's bed. She awakens, cocks an eye at him.

**JOAN**

Okay, dad.

**JIM**

Mm.

As she sleepily stretches and prepares to rise, Jim exits into the hall.

**INT. THE HALL**

CAMERA FOLLOWS Jim through the foyer into the living room, on through the very small combination dining and breakfast nook and into the compact but tiny kitchen. Gussie, the colored cook, greets him heartily.

**GUSSIE**

'Morning, Mr. Blandings!

**JIM**

(a feeble attempt at a smile)

Mm.

Gussie takes a glass of hot water, squeezes in a little lemon, stirs and hands it to Jim who gulps it down, makes a slight face and pats his stomach. Gussie hands Jim a cup of black coffee and he starts back toward the bedroom.
INT. THE HALL

Gingerly balancing the cup and saucer, Jim approaches the door to the children's room. With split-second timing, he pauses as the door flies open and Joan, in her bathrobe, with towel in hand, rushes out and past him down the hall. She disappears into the bathroom. Jim carefully proceeds down the hall and, as he reaches the bathroom, deftly steps to the left as the door bursts open and Betsy flies by on her way back to her bedroom. All this is done with a timing and shifting of hips of which Knute Rockne might have been proud. Jim continues down the hall, enters the bedroom.

INT. THE BLANDINGS' BEDROOM

Muriel is still asleep as Jim enters, walks over to her.

JIM

Muriel.

MURIEL

Mm?

JIM

Coffee.

Muriel awakens, sniffs the fresh coffee, smiles, sits up, takes the cup.

MURIEL

Thank you, dear.

They kiss briefly. Muriel starts to sip the coffee as Jim goes to his chest of drawers. It consists of several rows of small drawers above and large drawers below. Jim ruffles through a couple of small drawers, pulls out a suit of
underwear, continues noisily and with some annoyance to
look through the other drawers.

MURIEL
Looking for something, dear?

JIM
(briefly)
My socks.

MURIEL
Why don't you look in your sock drawer?

JIM
(with restraint)
That's where I found my underwear.

MURIEL
Oh.
(brightly)
Well, try your underwear drawer.

JIM
I'm in my underwear drawer.

He reaches in and holds up one of Muriel's silk slips.

MURIEL
(sipping coffee)
Well, they must be somewhere.
(attempt at morning cheeriness)
Socks just don't get up and walk away by themselves.

JIM
(strained patience)
Muriel, I thought the top two-and-a-half drawers were to be mine! I wish you'd tell Gussie --

MURIEL
The closet! That's where they are.
We put them in the closet.

JIM
Socks? In the closet?

MURIEL
Well, there didn't seem to be any
JIM
And there's so much of it in the closet!

MURIEL
...so Gussie and I decided that from now on we'll keep them in a basket on the shelf.

JIM
Well, thanks a lot!

He strides angrily to the closet, opens the door, reaches up for the basket and pulls it off the shelf. As he does so, all the hat boxes come tumbling down knocking the basket from his hand, the socks spilling on the floor. About to explode, he looks at Muriel.

MURIEL
Jim, I do wish you'd make an effort to be a little less clumsy.

JIM
(barely containing himself)
I'll try, dear.

Jim looks at her barely containing himself, and then puts the hats back in the boxes, jams them back on the shelf they toter precariously. With bated breath he gingerly closes the closet door. Pause. Silence. He picks up a pair of socks and walks cautiously toward the hall door. Suddenly there is a rumble and crash from inside the closet. Jim looks with Muriel, is about to say something, changes his mind, exits into the hall. Muriel looks at the closet, sighs, takes another sip of coffee.

INT. THE HALL
Jim opens the door of the bathroom. There is a scream. He quickly closes the door, scowling with annoyance. A moment later the door opens and Joan emerges, wrapping her robe around her.

**JOAN**

(sharply)
Father, just one morning I wish you'd knock!

**JIM**

(to her back as she walks away)
'Morning, dear.

Joan disappears into her room as Jim enters the bathroom.

**INT. THE BATHROOM**

Very small with a stall shower. Jim takes off his bathrobe, yawns, gets on the scale, looks at the dial, shakes his head. He takes a deep breath, draws in his stomach, looks down, scowls, shrugs, gets off, moves to the mirror. He examines the thinness of his hair, the condition of his tongue, etc. Taking his toothbrush he looks down at the tube he is about to use, frowns.

**WHAT HE SEES - THE TOOTHPASTE TUBE**

WHAT HE SEES - the toothpaste tube. It has been squeezed in the middle, one of Blandings' pet peeves.

**CLOSE SHOT - JIM METICULOUSLY SMOOthes OUT THE TUBE**

CLOSE SHOT - Jim meticulously smoothes out the tube, rolls up the used portion from the bottom. Then placing a small amount on his brush, he caps the tube, and starts vigorously
to brush his teeth. As he does so, he attempts with his hand, to put the tube back in the medicine cabinet which he opens.

CLOSE SHOT - THE MEDICINE CABINET

CLOSE SHOT - the medicine cabinet, loaded to the hilt with medical accumulation of fourteen years of family life.

CLOSE SHOT - JIM

CLOSE SHOT - Jim. As he pushes the tube into the bulging top shelf, a bottle of iodine falls out. Jim makes a desperate one-handed catch, still brushing his teeth. As he pushes the iodine into the second shelf, a small bottle of pills pops out. Jim catches it, pushes it back into the cabinet. A bottle of cough medicine falls out. He catches it, tries to put it back, finds it won't fit. He looks at the bottle, sniffs it, contemplates its value, throws it in the wastebasket. He finishes washing his mouth, admires his teeth, disrobes and steps into the shower, putting on his shower cap. He scowls, takes off the cap and turns it upside down, a full cup of water falling out. He reaches out for a towel, dries the inside of the cap, carefully puts it back on his hair. Then he turns the water on and at the first warm spray Jim Blandings' life takes a sharp turn for the better. He starts to sing, a robust bathroom baritone version of "Home On The Range."

DISSOLVE

JIM
Jim - He stands in front of the washstand lathering his face. Over scene we hear Muriel's voice from the shower. She is singing a lusty chorus of "Home On The Range." Jim picks up his razor and turns to the mirror. He reacts with annoyance, as he discovers it is covered with steam. With weary resignation he takes a towel and starts to rub off the mirror. As he clears one section another clouds up. By the time he gets it all reasonably clear he finds that his lather needs freshening. He grimly relathers his face only to find the mirror is again clouded up. As he turns with exasperation toward the shower we see Muriel turn off the water, reach for a towel, start to dry herself. The mirror cleared off, Jim relathers, starts to shave. During this, Muriel, having dried herself and donned her robe, comes into scene.

MURIEL
(reaching for toothbrush)
Excuse...

She takes her toothbrush and then opens the cabinet to get the paste. Jim, automatically following the mirror, has to squeeze around in a desperately contorted position as he continues shaving.

CLOSE SHOT - MURIEL

CLOSE SHOT - Muriel. She takes the tube from the cabinet and, squeezing the tube in the middle, applies the paste to her brush.

JIM AND MURIEL
Jim and Muriel - Placing the tube on the washstand, Muriel closes the cabinet. Jim, still shaving, moves back to his original position as he follows the mirror.

**JIM**

Excuse...

Muriel nods, steps back, starts to brush her teeth. They both hum "Home On The Range". Her mouth full, Muriel taps Jim on the shoulder. Without stopping his shaving, Jim moves to one side as Muriel rinses her mouth. She examines her face in the mirror.

**JIM**

(impatiently)

If you don't mind, dear.

As he steps back in front of the mirror, Muriel continues to look at her face in the glass, over his shoulder. She decides she needs a little skin lotion.

**MURIEL**

(as she steps in front of him)

Sorry.

She again opens the cabinet. Jim once more follows the mirror around, nicks his face, gives up, stands glaring arms folded. Muriel takes the lotion from the cabinet.

**MURIEL**

Moment, dear.

**JIM**

Take your time. I can spare the blood.

**MURIEL**

(looks up)

Oh... cut yourself?

**JIM**
I cut myself every morning. I kind of look forward to it.

**Muriel**
Why don't you get an electric razor?

**Jim**
(trying to shave)
Don't like them. No close shave.

**Muriel**
Ridiculous! Bill Cole's been using one for years.

**Jim**
He doesn't have my beard!

**Muriel**
That's silly. Bill's beard is just as tough and coarse and --

**Jim**
(irritably)
I'm not interested in discussing the grain and texture of Bill Cole's hair follicles before I've had my orange juice.

**Muriel**
You don't have to carry on so. I only said, why don't you get an electric razor?

**Jim**
Because I prefer the cool, clean sweep of the tempered steel as it glides smoothly --

**Muriel**
Stop writing advertising copy! Hurry up, dear, you'll be late for breakfast.

Muriel exits. Jim sighs, turns back to the mirror and with a few deft strokes finishes shaving. As he reaches for the water faucet, he encounters the tube of toothpaste, squeezed in the middle. Reacting with annoyance, he meticulously smooths it out and rolls it up from the bottom. He
the cabinet and gingerly places the tube on the top shelf. The iodine bottle pops out. He grimly catches it, his problem, has a solution. With his right hand he starts slowly to close the mirror door. Just before it closes, he quickly slips the bottle into the cabinet with his left hand, slamming the mirror door, trapping the bottle. He reacts masterfully at his triumph, picks up his robe and starts for the door. As he reaches it, there is the SOUND of the opening and a crash as the bottle obviously hits the washstand. As Jim winces,

**DISOLVE**

**INT. THE BLANDINGS' BREAKFAST NOOK - DAY**

Narrow and small. The four Blandings are at breakfast, and Muriel each reading his section of the morning paper, Betsy pasting a clipping in her notebook, Joan engrossed in a magazine of popular science. As we come in, Gussie, taking off the orange juice, is squeezing by Jim who accordingly and automatically ducks his head as she passes. Jim uncomfortably turns the newspaper to another page, reacts with pained but controlled exasperation.

**JIM**

...Who did this?

INSERT NEWSPAPER, a section of which has been cut out.

**BACK TO SCENE.**

**BETSY**

(very matter-of-factly)

I did.

She holds out her hand to Joan, who, automatically, and without looking up hands her the salt.
JIM
I have repeatedly told you --
(ducking as Gussie
comes back with coffee)
-- don't cut up the morning paper
until I've had a chance to look at it!

BETSY
I'm sorry, father. It's necessary
research.

She hands the salt back to Joan who automatically
passes it to Muriel.

JIM
(with some sarcasm)
I suppose this is another of Miss
Stellwagon's so-called Progressive
Projects?

MURIEL
(using salt and handing
it to Jim)
Now dear, there just isn't any point
in sending your children to an
expensive school if you're going to
undermine the teacher's authority in
your own dining room.

JIM
I'm not undermining anything. I happen
to be in the advertising business
and keeping abreast of the times is
important to me.

MURIEL
And so is your children's education.

JIM
That's not the point.

MURIEL
It certainly is.

JIM
It certainly is not!

JOAN
(without looking up
from her magazine)
Bicker, bicker, bicker.

**JIM**
You eat your cornflakes!

Jim ducks as Gussie passes back on her way to the kitchen.

**MURIEL**
(handing Joan toast)
Joan, every time your father and I have a lively discussion we aren't necessarily bickering.
(to Betsy; solicitously)
What is it, dear, another English composition?

**BETSY**
(taking toast from Joan)
Miss Stellwagon has assigned each of us to take a want ad and write a human interest theme about it.
(to Jim; passing toast to him)
I found one typical of the disintegration of our present society.

**JIM**
(taking toast, not looking up from his paper)
I wasn't aware of the fact that our society was disintegrating.

**BETSY**
I didn't expect you to be, father. Miss Stellwagon says that middle-class people like us are all too prone to overlook the pressures and tensions which befall the less fortunate members of our community.

Jim puts down the paper, turns to Muriel.

**JIM**
(with great restraint)
Muriel, I know it's asking a lot, but just one morning I would like to sit down and have breakfast without social significance!
Picks up his paper.

**MURIEL**
Jim, you really might take a little more interest in your children's education.

**JOAN**
(without looking up)
You can't squeeze blood from a turnip.

Jim reacts with painful resignation, folds his arms, puts down the paper, turns slowly to Betsy.

**JIM**
All right. All right. I'll listen.

**BETSY**
(picking up her scrapbook)
It's just twenty-four words. But in simple eloquence it mirrors a minor tragedy of our times.

**JIM**
(quietly)
Well?...

**BETSY**
(reading)
"Forced to sell. Farm dwelling, oak grove, apple orchard, trout stream, hay fields, four barns, seclusion, superb view, original beams, paved highway, acreage..."
(with emotion)
Will sacrifice..."

Pause.

**JIM**
Go on.

**BETSY**
(simply)
That's all.

**JIM**
That's all?!
BETSY
You don't see it, do you, father?

JIM
No. Fellow wants to sell a house so he puts an ad in the paper. What did you expect him to do, take it to the United Nations!

MURIEL
There must be more to it than that. (to Betsy)
Isn't there, dear?

BETSY
Certainly, mother. What some people don't see is the whole sordid picture. A poor, honest farmer, pushed to the wall by hardship, soil erosion, mortgages, everybody gobbling, gobbling, gobbling, until finally, in desperation, he is "forced to sell," and stoops to the crass commercialism of newspaper advertising.

JIM
(muttering)
Oh, indeed... crass commercialism... advertising...

JOAN
(nose in her magazine)
Miss Stellwagon says advertising is a basically parasitic profession.

JIM
(with extreme control)
Oh, she does?

JOAN
Miss Stellwagon says that advertising makes people who can't afford it buy things they don't want with money they haven't got.

JIM
(elaborate sarcasm)
Perhaps your Miss Stellwagon is right. Perhaps I ought to get out of this "basically parasitic profession," which at the moment is paying for
her very fancy tuition, those extra French lessons, her progressive summer camp and for that matter, the very braces on your teeth!

**MURIEL**
I wish you wouldn't discuss money in front of the children.

**JIM**
Why not, they spend enough of it!

**JOAN**
Bicker, bicker, bicker.

As Jim gives her a look and buries himself in his paper, the downstairs buzzer rings. Gussie enters, squeezes by Jim automatically ducks, goes to the phone in b.g.

**GUSSIE**
Hello. Who?
(calls)
Miss Blandings, there's a Mr. Funkhauser wants to see you.

**MURIEL**
Funkhauser?
(remembers)
Oh, Mr. Funkhauser!

**GUSSIE**
That's what he says.

Muriel looks nervously at Jim who is preoccupied, reading his paper. Then she turns back to Gussie.

**MURIEL**
Uh -- better ask him to come up.

**GUSSIE**
(into phone)
Says to come up.

Gussie hangs up, squeezes by Jim, exits into the kitchen.

Pause.

**MURIEL**
(tentatively)
Oh -- uh -- darling, Mr. Funkhauser's here.

JIM
(looking up)
...Who?

MURIEL
You remember, Bunny Funkhauser, that clever young interior decorator we met at the Collins' cocktail party?

JIM
(distastefully)
What's he doing here?

MURIEL
(nervously)
Well, I imagine he's brought the -- uh -- estimates.

JIM
(blankly)
...Estimates?

MURIEL
(rapidly; to conceal a feeling of guilt)
Darling, you know how long we've said we've got to do something about this apartment, and, well, he called last week, and I had him come over, and he's got some simply wonderful ideas!

JIM
(quietly)
There couldn't be two Bunny Funkhausers, could there?

MURIEL
Why, no, dear.

JIM
Then this is the same clever young man who's responsible for that zebra-striped monstrosity in the Collins' living room?

MURIEL
That couch is terribly functional.
JIM
Phil Collins told me what he paid for all that function!
(angrily)
If you think I'm going to --

SOUND of doorbell ringing.

MURIEL
Darling, please!
(changing subject)
Children, you'll be late to school.
Run along and --

The children rise, pick up their school paraphernalia.

JOAN
Miss Stellwagon says that functionalism in modern furniture --

MURIEL
Never mind, dear.

She hustles Betsy and Joan toward the foyer as Jim rises.

INT. FOYER

Gussie has just admitted Mr. Funkhauser. He is a tall, slender, effete-looking, young man. He is loaded down with sketches, samples of wallpaper, bolts of material. Betsy and Joan brush by him on their way out.

FUNKHAUSER
Good morning.

THE GIRLS
(with a sharp appraising look)
Hi.

As they rush out and the door closes, Jim and Muriel enter scene.

MURIEL
Good morning, Mr. Funkhauser. You remember Mr. Blandings?

FUNKHAUSER
But of course.

He sweeps by them into the living room, taking over completely.

**INT. LIVING ROOM**

**FUNKHAUSER**

You'll have to pardon my bursting in at this dreary hour --
(puts a sketch on a chair)
-- practically the middle of the night --
(puts wallpaper against mantel)
-- but I did so want to catch you in. I've been at it hammer and tongs all week and I'm just a mess --
(drapes bolt of chintz over high-backed chair)
-- but then Muriel and I thought we ought to talk it over with you before we take the plunge...

Funkhauser looks briefly for a high object over which to display his last bolt of chintz, finds none, settles for Jim's shoulder over which he drapes the cloth, the folds flowing down in front. As Jim reacts:

**FUNKHAUSER**

(smoothing out folds on the chintz)
After all, it's your home, too, and it should reflect you. You know, Man's Castle, all that sort of thing.

Jim looks down at the chintz.

**JIM**

(ominously)
Muriel!

**MURIEL**

(quickly)
Jim, just wait till you hear. He's got some wonderful ideas for the foyer.
FUNKHAUSER
Oh, that's out! All out! Changed the whole thing! I just couldn't live with it! I said to myself, "Bunny, what are the Blandings? How shall we do them?" And the answer was perfectly obvious. Very American, very grass roots, very blueberry pie -- that sort of thing.

JIM
(dark look at Muriel)
Mm.
Funkhauser fingers the material of a drape, disdainfully removes his hand.

FUNKHAUSER
Now first, let's dig into this living room of yours, it's really a dreary.

MURIEL
(quickly; to Jim)
We want this room to be very gay, dear. Something in bright reds, yellows and greens.

JIM
(appalled)
Red, yellow and green?!

FUNKHAUSER
Oh, come, Mr. Blandings, let's not run away from color.

JIM
Not running away --
(a lame joke)
-- just backing off a little.

FUNKHAUSER
Uh -- yes.
(brightly)
Now as I see our room, it's definitely Colonial. You know, cobbler's bench, breakfront, pie cooler, student lamp, hooked rug. But everything in good taste. It must not jump out at you and scream: "Look -- see how antique I am!"
JIM
Heaven forbid.

FUNKHAUSER
Of course, these things take imagination. You've simply got to be able to visualize.

JIM
(politely, removing chintz)
If you'll forgive me, Mr. Funkhauser, what I'd like to visualize -- at this dreary hour -- is how much is this all going to cost?

FUNKHAUSER
Well, really, I hesitate to say. After all --
(indicates)
-- by the time this wall is out we may find --

JIM
(reacting)
This wall is -- what?

FUNKHAUSER
Out. Source of light is from the east. Obviously if our room is to have any function at all --

JIM
You're going to tear out the wall?!

MURIEL
Dear, it's a wonderful notion.

FUNKHAUSER
Visualize three feet of leaded panes, the rest --

JIM
Can you give me a figure?

FUNKHAUSER
Well! Costs aren't what they used to be, you know, and --

JIM
Just a figure.
FUNKHAUSER
Materials are impossible, labor has just run wild --

JIM
Just an overall figure.

FUNKHAUSER
Well!... I shouldn't like to be tied down. But I suppose if you must have a figure, I'd say -- mm -- (lightly)
-- somewhere in the neighborhood of seven.

JIM
Mm... Seven.

FUNKHAUSER
(nodding)
Mm.

JIM
That would be seven... thousand?

FUNKHAUSER
Mm.

Jim looks at Muriel, considers.

JIM
(soberly)
We-ll. That seems fair.
(gathering up materials)
After all, we're not running away from color --
(picks up wallpaper)
-- and we are tearing out walls --
(picks up sketches)
Mr. Funkhauser, do you have a card?

MURIEL
Jim, we haven't even discussed the rest of the house.

JIM
We will, dear.
(leads the whole batch on Funkhauser)

FUNKHAUSER
Well, really, I --

JIM
(deftly steering him toward the door)
We'll talk it all out and then we'll get in touch with Bunny.

CAMERA TRUCKS with them to the door.

FUNKHAUSER
Well, really, I mean, I was under the impression we'd come to some decision today.

JIM
I'm sure we will.

FUNKHAUSER
We'll!

JIM
So nice of you to come.
(puts Funkhauser's hat on his head)
Good day.

And Funkhauser is gone. Jim closes the door, turns ominously.

MURIEL
(apprehensively)
Now darling, you -- you just don't go to a man like Funkhauser and ask how much it's going to cost before you even know what he's going to do!

JIM
No, that would be too logical! Seven thousand dollars! Blueberry pie! I wouldn't put seventy-five cents into this broken-down rat trap!

MURIEL
(sentimentally)
It's our home, Jim. Betsy was practically born in this apartment.

JIM
That does not make it a national shrine!
(vehemently)
Seven thousand dollars and not one
word about closets.

MURIEL
Closets! You wouldn't even let him
get to the bathroom!

JIM
I haven't got that kind of money!

MURIEL
The way you talk, Jim Blandings,
you'd think I was some kind of
congenital idiot!

JIM
Sometimes I'm beginning to wonder!

MURIEL
(furious)
You can just get out of here!

JIM
That's not a bad idea!

He angrily jerks open the hall closet door, pulls his
down from the shelf, several hat boxes, some ski boots
tennis racket tumbling down on his head. Jim jams his
onto his head, takes a deep breath and storms out,
the door. Muriel walks over to the closet, is about to
down and pick up a hatbox when all of her pent-up
explode. She kicks the hat box into the closet, slams
door, starts to cry.

DISSOLVE

EXT. RADIO CITY - ESTABLISHING SHOT - (STOCK)

DISSOLVE

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE OF JIM'S OFFICE - DAY
Exiting from the elevator, Jim enters a door marked:

DASCOMB AND BANTON
ADVERTISING

DISSOLVE

INT. JIM'S OFFICE - DAY

On the wall are various framed copies of Jim's handiwork. Most prominent are advertisements for a meat product called "Wham!" "A Whale of a Ham!" There is ample evidence of the fact that Jim's most successful slogan is: "When you've got the Whim - say 'Wham!'"

Jim enters, goes to his desk, sits down, still emotionally upset. He glances at a photograph of Muriel, looks away, then back.

JIM
(to photograph)
Sorry.

His secretary enters.

MARY
Good morning, Mr. Blandings.

JIM
(briefly)
'Morning.

MARY
You wanted to see the color copy from this month's House and Stream.

She hands him a magazine. He looks at it perfunctorily, about to hand it back when his eye is caught by an ad on the back cover.

INSERT THE BACK COVER - A COMMUNITY AND EXTOLLING LIFE IN THE COUNTRY
A community and extolling life in the country, sponsored by a group of realtors, local chamber of commerce etc. Over a pastoral scene of lovely little houses checkering a rolling landscape are the words:

**LIVE IN THE COUNTRY COME TO PEACEFUL CONNECTICUT TRADE CITY SOOT FOR SYLVAN CHARM**

In smaller type:

**CHOOSE YOUR OWN COMMUTING TIME HOUSES OLD AND NEW...**

Over this:

**MARY'S VOICE**

Will that be all?

**JIM - MARY.**

Jim - Mary.

**JIM**

(looking up; blankly)

Hm?

**MARY**

Will that be all?

Without answering he turns back to the ad. The CAMERA COMES IN for a HEAD CLOSEUP as he studies the ad and on the sound track we hear:

**BETSY'S VOICE**

"Forced to sell. Farm dwelling, oak grove, apple orchard, trout stream, hay fields, four barns, original beams --"

As he looks up thoughtfully:

**DISSOLVE**

**INT. JIM'S CAR - DAY - (PROCESS)**
It is a convertible, the top down. Jim is driving through Manhattan.

**BILL'S VOICE**
Well, that's the way it all started. The ad was enough to convince Jim --

**DISSOLVE**

**INT. THE CAR - DAY - (PROCESS)**

Jim and Muriel - They are leaving Manhattan, entering the Merritt Parkway. Muriel, wearing an orchid corsage, looks curiously at Jim. His answering gesture says, "Just wait and see." Over this:

**BILL'S VOICE**
-- But Muriel was a little tougher. I guess the corsage did it.

**DISSOLVE**

**INT. THE CAR - DAY**

Jim, Muriel and Mr. Smith - They are driving through a beautiful Connecticut countryside. Mr. Smith, a local real estate dealer, is of that shrewd Yankee breed which specializes in the understatement, underselling school of salesmanship.

**BILL'S VOICE**
There they are, two little fish from New York -- out in the deep deep waters of Connecticut real estate. That's Smith, the real estate salesman. Mighty shrewd cookie in a quiet sort of way. Never thought he'd get a bite this quick.

Smith looks speculatively at the Blandings.

**BILL'S VOICE**
Now he's sizing up the catch. "Mm.
Let's see. Convertible -- orchids -- must be pretty well fixed. Wonder if they're lookers or buyers?"

Jim takes a deep breath, looks at Muriel as if to say, "Get that air!" Muriel smiles with approval. Jim pats her affectionately. Smith reacts.

**BILL'S VOICE**
They're buyers.
(confidentially)
Yes, sir, Smith, looks like you're finally going to unload the old Hackett place. Now first thing is get 'em a little anxious.

Jim slows down the car as they approach a rather picturesque-looking old Connecticut farmhouse. He and Muriel react with approval, look questioningly at Smith. Smith shakes his head, "no," as though to say, "Not nearly good enough for you."

**BILL'S VOICE**
Th-a-a-t's right!

**DISOLVE**

**INT. THE CAR - DAY**

Jim, Muriel, Mr. Smith - They pass another house. Jim and Muriel appraise it with interest, look at Smith.

**BILL'S VOICE**
Uh-uh, not yet.

Smith firmly shakes his head "no."

**DISOLVE**

**INT. THE CAR - DAY**

Jim, Muriel and Mr. Smith - Another house.

**BILL'S VOICE**
Take it easy, Smith, give 'em a little more line.

Smith shakes his head "no".

INT. THE CAR - DAY

Jim, Muriel and Mr. Smith - The car pulls to a stop.

BILL'S VOICE
Now we're ready to gaff 'em.

SMITH
(proudly)
Well, folks, there she is -- the old Hackett Place.

The Blandings look off, react with interest and approval.

WHAT THEY SEE -- BURROWED INTO THE UPWARD SLOPE

What they see -- Burrowed into the upward slope of the a land is the old Hackett farmhouse. If the roof seems to sway little and the massive stone chimney to tilt a bit and overall condition of board and beam to be a trifle charge it up to age, which will be a hundred and seventy years come next April. However, the overall effect is definitely one of picturesque rustic beauty. In the back are a series of barns and behind them the rolling hills known as Bald Mountain.

SMITH'S VOICE
Fifty mighty pretty little acres...

JIM, MURIEL AND SMITH.

JIM, MURIEL AND SMITH

MURIEL
(involuntarily)
It's simply charming!
Jim's look cautions against her over-enthusiasm.

MURIEL
That is, for an old house.

JIM
(casually)
Of course, you understand, Mr. Smith, we're just window shopping, so to speak. Nothing really definite in mind.

SMITH
Perfectly all right.

JIM
(studies house; with assumed indifference)
Mm. Not a bad-looking place, but it's certainly a lot older than anything we had in mind.

SMITH
She's no spring chicken --
(sagely)
-- but that's just what makes her such a buy.

They look at him curiously. Smith's attitude is matter-of-fact, almost without enthusiasm.

SMITH
This isn't just old timber, or a virgin stand oak grove other side of the trout stream, or a couple of fruit orchards... You're buying a piece of American history.

JIM
(interested in spite of himself)
You don't say! How's that?

SMITH
First year she was built, General Gates stopped right here to water his horses.

JIM
(impressed)
Oh! Old General Gates -- Civil War.

SMITH
Revolutionary War.

JIM
Oh. Oh, that General Gates. Hear that, honey, General Gates!

MURIEL
(with concern)
Wouldn't that make the house over a hundred years old?

SMITH
(proudly)
Hundred and seventy come next April.

The Blandings exchange a doubtful look which Smith catches.

SMITH
Now I'm not trying to sell you anything -- all I'm saying is that one of these days someone with a little vision and imagination's goin' to come along, and just steal this place --

(confidentially)
and I mean steal it.

The Blandings, as one, turn to the house with renewed interest. This is not lost on Smith.

SMITH
Mr. Blandings, I know you can look at that house and just about picture what a couple of coats of paint and a little pointing up here and there can do to it.

JIM
Mm.

The CAMERA MOVES TO a HEAD CLOSEUP of Jim as he begins to visualize

WHAT HE SEES
WHAT HE SEES - The Old Hackett Place suddenly DISSOLVES
the New Blandings' Place -- Jim's version. It is a lovely country house. Massive. Masculine. Jim, in jodhpurs, tweed coat, pipe and accompanied by two large Irish Setters, is proudly surveying his property. He nonchalantly holds a sleek, beautiful shotgun in the most precisely correct position.

CLOSE SHOT - JIM'S FACE.

CLOSE SHOT - Jim's face. His lips don't move but we hear his voice.

JIM'S VOICE
Hm. Wonder what he meant by "steal?"

THREE SHOT.

THREE SHOT.

SMITH
And I guess I don't have to tell you, Mrs. Blandings, what a woman's touch could do to a place like this.

MURIEL
Well --

CAMERA MOVES to a HEAD CLOSEUP of Muriel as she starts to visualize.

WHAT SHE SEES - THE OLD HACKETT PLACE

WHAT SHE SEES - The Old Hackett Place DISSOLVES into a dainty, feminine cottage with criss-cross curtains at the window and a lovely little white rail fence enclosing "her garden." Muriel, in delightful gingham, is in the garden, admiring her latest triumph - the largest rose ever grown in Lansdale County.

CLOSE SHOT - MURIEL'S FACE.
CLOSE SHOT - Muriel's face. Her face is soft. Her lips don't move but we hear:

**MURIEL'S VOICE**
It is a nice old house. It just needs someone to love it, that's all.

THREE SHOT

THREE SHOT

**SMITH**
Yes, sir, you've certainly got to visualize.

CAMERA MOVES to a HEAD CLOSEUP of Smith as he, too, begins to visualize.

WHAT HE SEES - THE OLD HACKETT PLACE.

WHAT HE SEES - The Old Hackett Place. Suddenly superimposed over it in large figures is:

$9,000.00

GROUP SHOT - SMITH LOOKS AT HIM AND MURIEL

GROUP SHOT - Smith looks at Him and Muriel who are looking tenderly at the house with unabashed affection. Jim's arm goes around Muriel's waist. Smith looks back at the house.

WHAT HE SEES - THE OLD HACKETT PLACE.

WHAT HE SEES - The Old Hackett Place. The $9,000.00 is quickly replaced by:

$11,000.00

GROUP SHOT.

GROUP SHOT.

**SMITH**
(brightly)
Shall we go up and take a look at her?

MURIEL
(a little too casual)
Well -- I -- suppose as long as we're here...

JIM
(same)
I guess it doesn't hurt to take a look.

As Smith precedes them up the path toward the house:

MURIEL
(sotto)
It does have possibilities. Do you think we can get it?

JIM
(sotto)
Like taking candy from a baby.

MURIEL
(same)
Now don't lose your head.

JIM
(same)
Shh. Just keep quiet and let me handle this.

As they enter the house:

JIM
Tell me, Smith, what kind of a price is the owner asking for this old place?

DISSOLVE

EXT. THE OLD HACKETT PLACE - ANOTHER ANGLE - DAY

Jim and Muriel precede Smith as they exit from the house. As Jim and Muriel carry on a sotto voce conversation, Smith looks off with some concern in the direction of the road.
MURIEL
It's wonderful, Jim! That master bedroom with those two closets!

JIM
Shh!

MURIEL
Funkhauser could do wonders with this --

JIM
(firmly)
Funkhauser will have nothing to do with this house! Shh!

Smith's face suddenly brightens as a weatherbeaten old car appears, turns up the driveway, stops.

HACKETT
(calling)
Hi, George!

SMITH
Hi, Eph!
(to the Blandings; feigned surprise)
What do you know, it's Eph Hackett, owner of the place!

JIM
(pleased)
Well, you don't say.

Eph Hackett gets out of the car, saunters over. Hackett is a middle-aged, rural-looking, taciturn New Englander

SMITH
Eph, this is Mr. and Mrs. Blandings -- from New York City.

HACKETT
Howdy.

THE BLANDINGS
How do you do?

MURIEL
You certainly have a lovely place here, Mr. Hackett.
HACKETT
(briefly)
Ye-ap.

JIM
(pleasantly)
Mr. Hackett, we've just been talking to Smith here about -- uh -- taking the old place off your hands.

Hackett exchanges the briefest of looks with Smith who almost imperceptibly shakes his head "no."

HACKETT
(firmly)
Ain't for sale!

As the Blandings react with dismay:

SMITH
(smoothly)
Why don't you folks just go out in back and take a look at the orchard?

He gives them a wink which says, "Just leave it to me."

The Blandings exchange a look, turn and walk off.

HACKETT
How'm I doin', George?

SMITH
Nice timin', Eph. Think we got something here.

HACKETT
They the same people you showed it to in nineteen-thirty-eight?

SMITH
They were lookers -- this is the real thing.

HACKETT
If they got five thousand dollars on 'em. don't let 'em get away.

SMITH
They already offered ten.
HACKETT
(mildly)
Y'don't say... What's my asking price?

SMITH

Fifteen...

HACKETT

A mite stiff...

SMITH

I've got 'em measured.
(mellower)
They're gonna take the place for --
(turns, looks back at house)
eleven thousand.

HACKETT

Make it eleven thousand five hundred fifty.

SMITH

Odd kind of figure.

HACKETT

Might as well take the commission out of them instead of me.

As Smith raises a knowing eyebrow:

DISSOLVE

INT. THE BLANDINGS' BREAKFAST NOOK - DAY

Muriel and the two children are having breakfast. Jim enters in high spirits. During this scene we repeat the business of passing, etc. used in the previous breakfast scene.

JIM
(singing gaily to "Home On The Range")
"Home, home in Connecticut With a closet to hang up your petticut..."

MURIEL
(as he seats himself)
...Jim?
JIM
(going on, as he places his napkin in his lap)
"No hustle or fuss No Fifth Avenue bus --"

MURIEL
Uh -- Jim?

JIM
Hm?

MURIEL
I was just wondering, dear. Ten thousand dollars is such an awful lot to offer --

Jim looks suspiciously at her, at the children, then back at her.

MURIEL
That is, for two people who don't know anything at all about real estate, or anything...
(Jim's look darkens)
I mean, don't you think perhaps we should have asked someone's professional advice?

JIM
Like... say... a lawyer?

MURIEL
Well, Bill knows about these things and --

JIM
Muriel, for once in my life I'm going to make one small decision, on my own, without the legalistic machinations of Mr. Bill Cole.

MURIEL
It seems very peculiar that when your very best friend happens to be one of the very cleverest young lawyers in New York City --

JIM
Muriel, I don't want to hear another
word about Bill Cole!
(turns to children)
Well, did your mother tell you about the house?

BETSY

Yes.

JIM

Well?

JOAN

Miss Stellwagon says the current craze for modernizing old farmhouses is a form of totem worship.

JIM
(with great restraint)
Did it ever occur to you two that there may be some remote, intangible subjects upon which your Miss Irma Stellwagon is not the final authority?

JOAN

Why don't we buy a Solaxion house?

JIM

...You know it's just barely conceivable -- What kind of a house?

JOAN

Solaxion. It's built on a mast like a tent and it revolves with the sun.

JIM

Oh, it... revolves... with the sun?

JOAN

That's right.

JIM

Who lives next door -- Buck Rogers?!

JOAN

It's the only practical way to live. When a new model comes out you trade the old one in like a used car.

JIM
(plaintively)

Muriel --
MURIEL
Children, you haven't even seen this house yet.

BETSY
Personally, I'd like a Crane Mobile home. It comes all folded up and all you do is plug it in for electricity and water and --

JIM
Now just a minute!
(to Muriel)
What kind of children are these?
(to girls)
Do you want to spend the rest of your lives in chromium tents and portable merry-go-rounds? This house was built before our country became a nation. It has dignity. It's -- it's --

Gussie enters with a letter.

GUSSIE
(handing it to Jim)
Special delivery, Mr. Blandings.

JIM
(with suppressed; excitement)
From Smith!

As he eagerly opens it and reads, his face falls.

JIM
Mm.

MURIEL
Well?

JIM
(reading)
"I have conveyed your offer of ten thousand dollars to Mr. Hackett and am sorry to say he is not interested. However, I feel..."

MURIEL
Oh, dear. Maybe we should have gone a few dollars higher.
JIM
(stoutly)
He's bluffing. Simple as that.

JOAN
For ten thousand dollars we could get a Rockford Trailer and a Zamboni Power Unit. It's kitchen, bathroom and air conditioning all rolled up into --

Jim gives her a weary look, turns to Muriel.

JIM
(firmly)
Muriel, I'll let him push me to ten thousand, two hundred, but not a penny more!

DISSOLVE

JIM'S COST CHART

INSERT JIM'S COST CHART - Rising diagonally and bisecting the chart is a line graduated in scale starting at $5000 and running up to around $17,000. Resting on the line at exactly $10,000 is a miniature of the old house. Fluttering across the scene from left to right is a letter from Smith on stationery of the Lansdale Realty Co. As we see the letter and hear the voice of Smith, miniature figures of Smith and Hackett appear at the lower side of the house. Their shoulders start pushing the house up the graduated scale. Over this:

SMITH'S VOICE
"Dear Mr. Blandings: While your offer of ten thousand two hundred is still not acceptable to Ephemus Hackett --"

A letter on Danton & Bascomb's stationery flutters across
the screen from right to left. A miniature figure of Jim appears above the house, desperately pushing it back.

This, we hear:

**JIM'S VOICE**
"Dear Mr. Smith: You may inform Mr. Hackett that the very highest I could possibly go --"

As a succession of letters flutter across the screen, first from left to right and then from right to left, and the house is jockeyed back and forth, they are punctuated with the following lines:

**SMITH'S VOICE**
"Dear Friend Blandings --"

**JIM'S VOICE**
"My dear Friend Smith --"

**SMITH'S VOICE**
"Dear Blandings --!"

**JIM'S VOICE**
"Dear Smith - !"

Throughout this Smith's voice remains bland and unperturbed while Jim's has the desperate, frenetic quality of a man being slowly pushed to the wall.

The Special Effect concludes with the house finally and firmly on front at rest on the preordained $11,550. As the antagonists on both sides of the house relax, Smith reaches around in front of the house and shakes hands with Jim. It's a deal!

About halfway through when the going gets tough, Jim beckons Muriel to help in the losing fight. As they now embrace, Smith and Hackett shake hands in mutual congratulation.
DOOR

Door - on it is printed:

MR. COLE
PRIVATE

INT. BILL COLE'S OFFICE - DAY

A successful lawyer's office, the walls crowded with leather-bound books. Jim and Muriel are seated facing the large desk behind which sits Bill Cole. Bill finishes reading a series of papers, the sum total of correspondence between Jim and Mr. Smith. He sets down the papers, leans back thoughtfully. Jim and Muriel look at him with nervous but eager anticipation.

JIM
(not too sure)
What do you think, Bill? Steal, huh?

BILL
(drily)
It certainly is.

Jim looks triumphantly at Muriel.

BILL
Perhaps "steal" is an understatement -- "swindle" might be a little more appropriate.

JIM
(with pride)
Well, it wasn't much, Bill. I just saw a good thing and I --
(take)
What do you mean?

BILL
Every time you get a little tight
you weep on my shoulder about the advertising business and how it forces a sensitive soul like yourself to make a living by bamboozling the American public.

(picks up Smith's correspondence)
I would say that a small part of this victimized group has now redressed the balance.

**JIM**
What are you talking about?

**BILL**
You! You've been taken to the cleaners and you don't even know your pants are off!

**MURIEL**
Dear, I told you. I said we should call Bill --

**JIM**
Never mind, Muriel!
(to Bill; challengingly)
All right, just what's wrong with this deal?

**BILL**
First time around you offered ten thousand dollars for fifty acres, right?

**JIM**
What of it?

**BILL**
That's two hundred dollars an acre. I know that part of Connecticut and one hundred dollars an acre is standard top-gouge price to city slickers. When the natives sell to each other it's around forty or less.

**MURIEL**
Forty dollars an acre!

**JIM**
The man's entitled to a fair profit.

**BILL**
Not two hundred and eighty-four percent.
(Indicates papers)
And besides, you're not getting fifty acres, you're only getting thirty-five, more or less.

**JIM**

Where does it say that?

**BILL**

(picks up letter)
I refer to a rather obscure postscript on the back of the second letter from Friend Smith.

He hands the letter to Muriel.

**MURIEL**

(reading)
"Incidentally, Mr. Hackett has been a little over-optimistic about the acreage. It will probably survey somewhere in the neighborhood of thirty-five acres, more or less, but I feel sure..."

**JIM**

(on the defensive)
All right, so it's thirty-five! What's the difference? Do you know how many tennis courts you can get on thirty-five acres?

**BILL**

You're not spending eleven thousand five hundred dollars for tennis courts!

**JIM**

That's not the point!

**BILL**

(very businesslike)
That's precisely the point. We're going to write this Hackett a strong letter and tell him he can either kick in with those fifteen acres, reduce the price, or find another sucker.

**JIM**
(rising emotion)
We'll do no such thing! I'm not going
to queer this deal over fifteen broken-
down acres!

MURIEL
(to Bill)
We were just going window shopping
and so far it's cost us eleven
thousand five hundred dollars and
they even made us pay the commission!

JIM
You don't understand business.

BILL
You mean extortion.

As Jim turns on Bill and is about to answer him
explosively:

MURIEL
(thoughtfully)
I wonder if we could get another two
year lease on the apartment?

JIM
(heatedly)
Now wait a minute! You can't measure
everything on a slide rule. This
house has certain intangibles.

BILL
Like what, for instance?

JIM
Like antique value, for instance! It
just so happens that General Gates
stopped right there, at that very
house, to water his horses.

BILL
I don't care if General Grant dropped
in for a scotch and soda -- you're
still getting rocked!

JIM
That was a different war!

MURIEL
I think Bill's absolutely right.
JIM
(struggling to contain himself; quietly)
Let me explain something. To both of you. For fifteen years I've been cooped up in a four room cracker box! Just getting shaved in the morning entitles a man to the Congressional Medal for bravery.

BILL
That doesn't make this a good buy.

JIM
Bill -- Muriel and I have found what I am not ashamed to call our Dream House. It's like a fine painting. You buy it with your heart, not your head. You don't ask, how much was the canvas, how much was the paint? You look at it and you say, "It's beautiful... I want it," and if it costs a few pennies more you pay it -- and gladly -- because you love it and you can't measure the things you love in dollars and cents!

Muriel looks at Jim, impressed, her face softening with compassion.

JIM
(emotionally spent)
Well -- that's how I feel about this place. And when I sign those papers Saturday, I can look the world in the face and say, "It's mine! My house! My home! My thirty-five acres!"

MURIEL
(coming over; moved, touched)
Our house. Our home. Our thirty-five acres...

They tenderly kiss.

BILL
...more or less...

On Jim's reaction:
EXT. LANSDALE COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY

Comprehensive Shot showing village green of a small, typical, quaint New England town.

INT. RECORDS ROOM LANSDALE COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY

Old Judge Quarles is reading from the title deed, the proceedings almost over. Jim stands in front of the bench flanked by Muriel and Bill. Mr. Smith and Hackett are the only other people present. As the Judge drones on, Jim and Muriel exchange a smile. Jim squeezes her hand intimately.

JUDGE QUARLES
(reading)
"...thence along said stonewall fence forming the East boundary of said Lansdale Road, N 20° 27' E, 21.84 feet to the end of said stonewall fence, thence along a wire fence, N 16° 31' W, 78.66 feet to a dead twenty-inch chestnut tree, thence westward to said stonewall fence, to a total of thirty-one and a half acres --"

JIM
(reacting)
What was that? How many acres?

Judge Quarles looks up impatiently at the interruption.

BILL
(precisely)
Thirty-one and a half.

JIM
(to Hackett)
I was under the impression your property was thirty-five acres, Mr. Hackett.
HACKETT
It is... more or less.

Bill looks significantly at Jim.

SMITH
You see, Mr. Blandings, when you signed the purchase agreement it was subject to traced map attached. Surveyed to an even thirty-one and a half acres.

Jim turns to Bill for affirmation. Bill soberly nods his head, "yes."

JUDGE QUARLES
Anything wrong?

BILL
It's nothing, Your Honor, just a few less tennis courts.

Jim gives Bill a sour look as the Judge continues:

JUDGE QUARLES
(with ministerial resonance)
"...to have and to hold to him, the said Grantee, his heirs and assigns to his and their own proper use and benefit forever."

During this, and as a shaft of sunlight hits them, a beatific look comes across the faces of Jim and Muriel. For a moment it has become their wedding day. After a momentary pause:

JUDGE QUARLES
(very businesslike)
Subject to a six thousand dollar mortgage held by Ephemus Whittaker Hackett...

As the Blandings are startled back to grim reality:

DISSOLVE

EXT. RURAL COUNTRYSIDE - DAY
LONG SHOT - The Blandings' car. The Blandings and Bill Cole driving along. They approach a fork in the road which leads to a very old covered New England bridge. On the bridge is a sign which reads:

**SHRUNK MILLS**
2 Mi.

They pause, turn, go through the bridge.

INT. THE CAR - (PROCESS)

As they drive through the dark interior of the bridge there is an appropriate rattling and rumbling of the ancient timbers.

EXT. THE OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE BRIDGE

There is another fork in the road. Muriel points to the road to the right. Jim shakes his head, points to the road to the left. Muriel points to the right. Jim emphatically shakes his head, puts the car in gear, drives off on the road to the left.

LONG SHOT - THE CAR

LONG SHOT - the car. It goes up to the top of a hill, stops, starts up, disappears.

DISSOLVE

EXT. A ROAD - DAY

As the car approaches, the CAMERA discloses it is back at the same covered bridge. The car stops.

INT. THE CAR

Jim reacts with annoyance, mops his brow.
BILL
(drily)
Congress ought to pass a law. When a man buys a house in Lansdale County there's a prize -- he gets ten percent off if he can find it.

EXT. THE BRIDGE
Jim backs up and, over Muriel's protestation that they go right, turns the car left.

DISSOLVE

LONG SHOT - THE CAR
LONG SHOT - the car. It drives up an empty road, disappears.

DISSOLVE

EXT. A ROAD - DAY
As the car approaches, the CAMERA reveals it is again back at the old covered bridge. The sign still reads: "SHRUNK MILLS - 2 Mi."

INT. THE CAR - DAY
Jim and Muriel look at each other with disgust and resignation.

JIM
What in the world are "Shrunk Mills?"

BILL
They are probably mills that have shrunk.

MURIEL
Well, you certainly aren't much of a help.

BILL
(wearily)
Look -- you really want to find that house of yours -- it's no problem.
They look at him curiously.

BILL
Just pretend you're one of General Gates' horses and you're thirsty... Now where would you go for a drink of water?

Jim looks at him darkly, drives through the bridge, turns right, as Muriel looks slightly triumphant.

DISSOLVE

EXT. THE OLD HACKETT PLACE – DAY

Jim, Muriel and Bill stand a little distance from the house, looking at it. A vast lilac spreads across it. The Blandings are in quiet rapture, and it is Bill who speaks first.

BILL
(frank and open)
Well, I must admit it's a very beautiful thing.

MURIEL
(misty)
The house and the lilac are just the same age, Bill; if the lilac can live and be so old, so can the house. It just needs someone to love it, that's all.

Three shingles slide from the roof. As Jim and Muriel react:

BILL
It's a good thing there are two of you -- one to love it and one to hold it up.

As Jim gives him a look:

BILL
What'd your engineer say when he checked over the foundation and that roof?
JIM
Who needs engineers? This isn't a train, you know.

BILL
I just saw it move.

JIM
This house has been standing since the second year of the Continental Congress. You take one look at it and shingles start to fall off!

As if on cue, a few more shingles slide off the roof, nearly hitting Jim.

BILL
(solicitously)
Look -- let me do you a favor. I've got a client, crackerjack structural engineer, Joe Apollonio; he practically built the George Washington Bridge single-handed.

JIM
Thanks a lot, but we're not building a bridge.

BILL
He's the fellow who advised the Government not to raise the Normandie -- they didn't listen to him, cost them five million dollars.

JIM
You have my word, if I were raising the Normandie, I wouldn't make a move without Apollonio.

(indicates door)
Now would you like to come inside and look around?

BILL
(a skeptical look at the roof)
No thanks, I'll just stay out in the car and listen to "Life Can Be Beautiful."

As Jim opens the door and disappears, there is a crash,
followed by a series of other crashes. Muriel looks in, turns back to Bill.

MURIEL
I think you'd better contact Mr. Apollonio.

DISSOLVE

EXT. THE OLD HACKETT PLACE - DAY

Near the front entrance. After a moment, the door opens, and the Blandings and Mr. Apollonio emerge. Jim, limping, is aided and abetted by a cane. Apollonio is a stolid, New York construction man, replete with derby, blue serge suit, cigar. A short rule sticks out of a back pocket. As they emerge, the Blandings are hopefully enthusiastic; Apollonio is thoughtfully noncommittal.

MURIEL
It has charm, hasn't it, Mr. Apollonio?

APOLLONIO
(through his cigar)
Uh-huh.

JIM
Of course, any small changes would have to conform with the character of the countryside.

APOLLONIO
(through his cigar)
Mm-hmm.

MURIEL
And yet still be functional.

Apollonio casually walks over to the corner of the house, kicks an exposed beam. It crumbles, apparently rotted
termites. Two shingles fall off. The Blandings watch him anxiously.

APOLLONIO
(gazing upward; oblivious)
Uh-huh.

As he thoughtfully rubs his chin, Jim, followed by Muriel, limps his way over to him.

JIM
Well, uh, what's your professional opinion?

Apollonio looks at the Blandings, at the house, then back at the Blandings. He takes the cigar from his mouth.

APOLLONIO
Tear it down.

JIM
(appalled)
Tear it down??!

APOLLONIO
If your chimney was shot and your sills was okay, I'd say go ahead, fix her up. If your sills was shot and your chimney was okay, again I'd say go ahead, fix her up. But your sills are shot and your chimney is shot.

During this speech Apollonio picks up a wooden frame, squares it with a pocket square, levels it on a fence, and looks through it at the house.

APOLLONIO
(beckoning)
Take a look at the way she sags.

The Blandings step over, look through the frame.

WHAT THEY SEE.
What they see. Outlined against the frame, the house slants, sagging perceptibly.

THREE SHOT AS THE BLANDINGS REACT WITH SOME DISMAY

THREE SHOT as the Blandings react with some dismay.

APOLLONIO

So I say don't throw good money after bad -- tear it down.

JIM

(coolly)

Thanks a lot.

APOLLONIO

It's okay.

He tips his hat, walks out of scene.

JIM

(bitterly)

Bill Cole and his experts!

MURIEL

(bitterly)

Darling, we'll get our own experts.

DISSOLVE

EXT. THE OLD HACKETT HOUSE - DAY

The Blandings have just finished surveying the house with Mr. Simpson, another expert.

BILL'S VOICE

And so they got their own experts.

Mr. Simpson said --

SIMPSON

Tear it down.

The Blandings look at each other.

DISSOLVE

EXT. THE OLD HACKETT HOUSE - DAY
The Blandings have just finished examining the house with Mr. Murphy, another expert.

**BILL'S VOICE**
On the other hand, Mr. Murphy said --

**MURPHY**
I think you'd better tear it down.

The Blandings smile feebly.

**Dissolve**

**Ext. The Old Hackett House - Day**

The Blandings and Jones, another expert.

**BILL'S VOICE**
And then just to be a wee bit different, Mr. Jones said --

**JONES**
(firmly; deep bass voiced)
Tear it down!

The Blandings are now considerably shaken.

**Dissolve**

A Shingle.

A shingle. It reads in neat, conservative lettering:

**HENRY L. SIMMS**
ARCHITECT

**BILL'S VOICE**
And that's how our friend, Mr. Simms, came into it.

**Dissolve**

**Int. Henry L. Simms' Living Room - Day**

Jim, Muriel, Simms. The room is in quiet, good taste, a flagstone fireplace, modern steel casement windows, window
seats, etc. The walls are crammed with books and
of Simms' handiwork. There are a couple of gold medal
citations of his work conspicuously spaced around the
room.

Simms is a tweedy, pipe-smoking, conservative New
Englander, a distinguished-looking local architect. He puffs
on his pipe as he looks at a photograph of the old
place, an exact duplicate of the shot we saw through
window frame.

SIMMS
Of course you could fix up that old
house. You can fix up any structure
that's still standing. The sills and
floors couldn't be worse, I grant
you, and I guess you'd have to jack
up that west corner at least three
feet to make it level. Need new
chimney. New roof. Complete new
plumbing.
(sigh)
Too bad you didn't buy it ten years
ago. Could have fixed it up in jig
time then, and it would have made
some sense.

JIM
(nervously nibbling
at his nails)
Uh-huh... mm-hmm... uh-huh.

SIMMS
Fact is, before you're through, it
would be less expensive to tear the
old place down and build a new one,
same size.

JIM
Mm. New house...
(as the notion sinks
in, becomes attractive)
New house.

MURIEL
(to Simms, with
pleasant incredulity)
You mean... for the same money... we could build a brand new house?

SIMMS
It certainly wouldn't cost any more.

JIM
(soberly)
Hm... New house...

He turns and looks thoughtfully at Muriel who raises an interested eyebrow. Then, to Simms:

JIM
(tentatively)
Just... what sort of thing do you have in mind?

SIMMS
Well, I imagine the type of house you'd want would be something in quiet good taste, two story, frame and brick veneer construction -- modern, but of course fitting in with the architectural traditions of the countryside.

JIM
Well, I -- What do you think, Muriel?

MURIEL
I think it sounds fine.

SIMMS
Perhaps you'd like to see a basic floor plan --
(reaches into file behind him)
-- something like this.

Simms places the basic floor plan on the desk before him, the Blandings moving around, flanking him. They examine the plan with interest.

WHAT THEY SEE -- THE PLAN.

What they see -- the plan. A simple master plan of a two story house, the names of the various rooms indicated.
talks, we see Simms' hand, holding a pencil, point out the various rooms.

SIMMS
First floor. Living room, study, dining room, kitchen, service porch, maid's room -- upstairs three family bedrooms with two adjoining baths.

THREE SHOT. THE BLANDINGS PRAISE THE PLAN

THREE SHOT. The Blandings praise the plan with the uncompromising expertness of two people who have never seen such a plan before in their lives.

MURIEL
It's very nice, I'm sure, but -- uh -- well -- doesn't it seem just a little bit conventional?

JIM
Yes, Simms, if we were going to build a house we want it -- well, you know -- just a little bit different.

SIMMS
—he's heard all this before)
Yes, of course.

JIM
Now, for instance --
(takes Simms' pencil)

THE DRAWING BOARD.

THE DRAWING BOARD. Jim's pencil traces as he talks.

JIM'S VOICE
-- here in the study if we could just push out this wall a little -- and put in a built-in bar we could --

MURIEL'S VOICE
Excuse me, dear --

Her hand takes the pencil from his, starts to trace as she talks. Jim's fingers drum with the beginnings of impatience.
**MURIEL'S VOICE**
These bedrooms. They do seem rather small. And, of course we'd have to have a little dressing room -- and --

As she draws it in, Jim's hand takes the pencil. Muriel's fingers drum nervously.

**JIM'S VOICE**
And closets, Simms, lots of closets.
(traces them in)
If there's one thing this family needs, it's closets.

**SIMMS' VOICE**
(as his hand reaches for the pencil)
If I might make a suggestion --

But Muriel's hand reaches the pencil first.

**MURIEL'S VOICE**
(as she draws them in)
And bathrooms, Mr. Simms. Each bedroom must have at least one bathroom.

**SIMMS' VOICE**
But that would be four bathrooms, Mrs. Blandings --
(his hand reaches for the pencil)
I think I'd better point out to you --

Jim's hand reaches the pencil before Simms. Now Simms' fingers and Muriel's drum in unison.

**JIM'S VOICE**
Just a minute. Do you think --
(tracing)
we might manage a little playroom in the basement, nothing tremendous, you know, something like this --

**SIMMS' VOICE**
(as his hand reaches for the pencil; cautiously)
Well, it's always possible, but at the moment our fundamental problem --
But Muriel's hand has the pencil.

**MURIEL'S VOICE**
(as she traces)
And I've always wanted a little sewing room upstairs --
(Jim's and Simms' fingers drum impatiently)
You know, a little utility room where I can be alone, and sew, or sulk, or on a rainy afternoon...

**JIM'S VOICE**
(as his hand takes pencil)
Pardon me, dear. On that playroom, Simms, not too small. You know, plenty of room for ping-pong, darts, nice big poker table...

**SIMMS' VOICE**
(as his hand reaches for another pencil)
If you don't mind, I --

But Muriel has reached the pencil first. As she and Jim sketch simultaneously and the scene begins to DISSOLVE, we hear:

**MURIEL'S VOICE**
...And off the kitchen, I'd like a little flower sink just to putter around in...

**JIM'S VOICE**
...And a terrace off the study, with an owning and little outdoor fireplace...

**DISSOLVE**

**THE DRAWING BOARD - THE ORIGINAL PLANS**

THE DRAWING BOARD - The original plans are lost in a maze of the Blandings' extensions, alterations and additions.

**THREE SHOT - THE THREE ARE SOMewhat EXHAUSTED**
THREE SHOT - The three are somewhat exhausted, silently looking at the plans. Simms wearily runs his hand through his hair.

SIMMS
(delicately)
We'll... let's just see what we have here. In the first place --

THE DRAWING BOARD - SIMMS'

THE DRAWING BOARD - Simms' pencil indicates as he talks.

SIMMS' VOICE
-- I'm afraid you've got the upstairs about twice as big as the downstairs.

JIM'S VOICE
It's all those bathrooms.

MURIEL'S VOICE
It is not, it's all those closets.

THREE SHOT.

THREE SHOT.

SIMMS
By extending this breakfast room you've eliminated the possibility of any stairs going to the second floor.

JIM
Oh, you can just shove those stairs in anywhere.

SIMMS
(patIENTLY; almost paternally)
And, Mrs. Blandings, on that sewing room, the way you have it now, the chimney stack would come up right through the middle of the room, leaving you with something in the shape of a square doughnut.
(tactfully)
Which, of course, might be very warm in winter, but otherwise of doubtful utility.
MURIEL
You could always move the chimney somewhere else, couldn't you?

SIMMS
We'll...

(rising; resigned to his fate but tactful)
Look, I think I know just about what you two have in mind. Why don't I go ahead with some preliminary plans and --

JIM
(hearty)
You do that, Simms, but remember, we've got to hold it down to ten thousand.

SIMMS
(candid)
That, I can tell you right now, is impossible. Even with a considerable trimming of the things you've indicated, I don't see how we can bring it in for less than twelve or twelve-five.

JIM
Twelve-five!

(looks at Muriel; then)
Well, I guess we're not going to quibble about a few pennies one way or the other.

MURIEL
(can't resist)
No, you'll find Mr. Blandings never quibbles about pennies.

SIMMS
And -- uh -- have you any notions about how you'd like the old place taken down?

JIM
(a rueful joke)
Why don't we just blow on it?

SIMMS
(wry smile)  
There's a good local house wrecker.  
I'll have him contact you.

Jim expansively puts his arm around Simms' shoulders.

JIM  
Fine. You just shoot ahead with those plans, and remember, try to keep it down to ten, ten-five.

SIMMS  
(doubtfully)  
Well -- we'll try.

As the Blandings walk to the door:

JIM  
There's one good thing about getting that old relic down. Those original beams and everything -- this time somebody pays us.

As they go out the door:

DISSOLVE

EXT. ROAD NEAR OLD HACKETT HOUSE - DAY - WINTER -

MATTE SHOT)

Old Hackett house matted to show winter sky, bare trees. In the f.g. bare ground with patches of snow.

Eph Hackett is standing with one of the wreckers. In the b.g. we see the frame of the old house, firmly intact, chimney still standing within it. There are mountains of shingles, splintered boards and other rubbish, piled about. The piles are reasonably neat and sorted.

HACKETT  
Them beams is worth money. You payin' him, or he payin' you?

WRECKER  
He's payin' me.
HACKETT

How much?

WRECKER

(hesitating)
A thousand.

HACKETT

A thousand!

WRECKER

He squawked, but he paid.

HACKETT

(drily)
Hmm. I guess maybe I got a little somethin' comin' too.

As he starts out of scene:

VOICE

Okay, boys, let her go!

Tractors attached to chains and cables start to pull.

MINIATURE SHOT

MINIATURE SHOT – What is left of the house collapses.

EXT. HILL OVERLOOKING THE OLD HACKETT PLACE – PROCESS OF MATTE OR MINIATURE SHOT

Jim and Muriel are standing there, having watched the demolition. As the dust settles:

JIM

(sigh)
Well, so far it's cost us thirteen thousand, three hundred and twenty-nine dollars and forty-five cents.

MURIEL

But we've got the nicest vacant lot in the state of Connecticut.

They exchange a look of mixed emotions.

DISSOLVE
SIMMS' NEW PRELIMINARY PLANS

INSERT SIMMS' NEW PRELIMINARY PLANS - Fresh and workmanlike, a few small sections crossed out where cuts have been indicated.

SIMMS' VOICE
(wearily)
Something will have to give somewhere, that I know.

The CAMERA ANGLE WIDENS to disclose:

INT. THE BLANDINGS' LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jim, Muriel and Simms are going over the preliminary plans. Betsy and Joan are present, Betsy reading the Lansdale Blade and Joan reading a science book.

MURIEL
It's impossible. I don't see how we can cut another inch.

JIM
Honey, you heard Simms. As the house stands now it's over fifteen thousand dollars!

MURIEL
Well, it just doesn't seem possible -- (afterthought) for a house with such small rooms.

SIMMS
(patiently)
Mrs. Blandings, I've already explained. It's not only the size of the rooms so much as it is the number. You see, our primary problem is one of cubage --

JIM
That's right, dear, cubage.

MURIEL
What's that?

JIM
Oh --
(sorry he got into it)
just a figure of speech.

MURIEL
But what does it mean?

JIM
(a little irritably)
Cubage. It's just the number of cubic feet that --
-lost, lamely--
go into a cubic foot. Go on, Simms.

SIMMS
(consulting plans)
Now is it absolutely essential for each of your daughters to have her own room with two closets and a separate bath?

JIM
(a look at the girls; clearing his throat)
Yes. You see, er, my daughters are, er, approaching womanhood, and, er--

SIMMS
(brief look at the girls)
I hadn't realized they were approaching it quite so fast.
(to Jim)
Perhaps what you need is not so much a house as a series of little bungalows.

JIM
Hmm.
(examining plans)
What about that silly flower sink? We could eliminate that.

MURIEL
I beg your pardon.

JIM
Or that sewing room upstairs, that's certainly a waste.

MURIEL
If we're going to eliminate anything, we'll lose that ridiculous play room
in the basement with that great big poker table.

JIM
Honey, I've got to have some relaxation.

MURIEL
We've got thirty-one and a half acres. Go out in the back and do a little gardening.

JIM
Sure, and get poison ivy!

SIMMS
(with dogged patience)
If I may interrupt, I'd like to suggest that none of these are really major eliminations. Now if we could do with one less bathroom on the second floor --

MURIEL
I'm sorry. We couldn't possibly.

SIMMS
Mrs. Blandings, a simple bathroom, eight by ten by eight with grade A fixtures will cost around thirteen hundred dollars.

MURIEL
I refuse to endanger the health of my children in a house with less than four bathrooms.

JIM
For thirteen hundred dollars they can live in a house with three bathrooms and rough it!

SIMMS
Look, perhaps the most practical thing would be --

BETSY
Oh, look, we're in the Lansdale paper! (reading) "Historical Society Blasts Vandalism!"

JIM
Muriel, Simms explained to you. We've just got to cut, cut --
(reacts)
What's that?

**BETSY**
(reading)
"Censure Vote Passed re Destruction of Famed Hackett Edifice."

**JIM**
Well, isn't that just too bad! Let me see that.

He takes the paper, scans it, suddenly bursts into laughter.

**MURIEL**
What's so funny.

**JIM**
(laughing)
Prutty. Mrs. Bildad Prutty. Get a load of this!
(reads)
"The semi-monthly meeting of the Lansdale Historical Society was turned into an uproar last night when its president, Mrs. Bildad Prutty" --
How do you like that, Bildad Prutty? --
"reported the total demolition by its New York buyer of the historic old Hackett house."
laughs
Bildad Prutty! Muriel, I've got to send this to the New Yorker!

**BETSY**
(drily)
Read on, father.

**JIM**
(scans paper)
"Mrs. Prutty," -- Bildad, that is --
"reminded her audience that several years ago the Society started to raise a fund to purchase and restore the old house to its original condition."
(looks up, laughs scornfully)
BETSY
Read on, father.

JIM
(back to paper)
"The project fell through by being seven hundred dollars short of the sum of twenty-six hundred dollars..."
(Jim slows down as the following registers)
"...which Ephemus Hackett testified was the lowest reasonable price he could accept as --"

The paper drops.

JIM
(weakly)
...Twenty-six hundred dollars.

BETSY
And what did we pay, father?

JOAN
Eleven-five, with the commission.

JIM
Muriel, isn't it time for those children to be in bed?

MURIEL
Now girls, I don't want to tell you again.

The front doorbell rings.

MURIEL
Excuse me.

As the CAMERA FOLLOWS Muriel to the door, we hear:

JIM'S VOICE
Twenty-six hundred dollars!

SIMMS' VOICE
(comfortingly)
I wouldn't be too concerned about Mrs. Prutty and her committee. After all, it's your property and if you want to tear it down --
Muriel opens the door, admits an excited Bill Cole.

MURIEL
(surprised)
Why, Bill!

BILL
(briefly)
Hello, Muriel.
(he strides past her waving a telegram;
to Jim)
Well, you've done it again'. Once, just once, why don't you come to me and find out if it's all right, if it's legal, before you go barging off and run yourself smack into another jam!

JIM
What's eating you?

BILL
(ignoring him; to Simms)
And I must say, Simms, I hold you equally responsible!

JIM
(alarmed)
What? What happened?

SIMMS
I'm afraid I don't understand.

BILL
(to Simms; indicating Jim)
Did you let this idiot tear down that house?

JIM
What if he did? What of it?

SIMMS
(to Bill)
Reconstruction was unsound and totally impractical.

BILL
I quite agree. But you're dealing with a man who doesn't think before
he acts, who goes off half-cocked!

JIM
What is it? What did I do?

BILL
(ignoring him; to Simms)
You're an architect! You must have been aware of the legality involved.

JIM
What? What legality?

BILL
(to Simms)
You knew there was a mortgage on that house.

SIMMS
I assumed as much.

JIM
What happened? What are you talking about?

BILL
(ignoring him; to Simms)
And you know the requirements in regard to a mortgage where there's demolition intended!

SIMMS
Certainly. But since you were his lawyer, I naturally assumed --

BILL
With a man like this you can't assume anything!

JIM
(loudly)
Just one minute! I am entitled to know what I did! This is America! A man's guilty until he's proven innocent --

BETSY
It's the other way around, father.

JIM
You go to bed!

MURIEL

Girls!

JIM

Bill, I've had a very trying day. Would you mind telling me in clear, concise English just what crime I've committed -- and why?!

BILL

(with weary resignation)

In clear, concise English, you tore down a house on which another man holds a mortgage without first getting his written permission.

JIM

Well, I -- I did?!

BILL

And in such case, the mortgagee can demand the full payment of said mortgage upon demand --

(waves telegram)

and Mr. Ephemus Hackett so demands! Six thousand clams! And he wants them now!

JIM

(appalled)

Now?!

BILL

You've got ten days.

Jim gulps. Pause.

JOAN

For six thousand dollars we could have had a Solaxion house and a Crane Mobile home.

JIM

Muriel!

MURIEL

(herding the kids toward the door)

Girls, say your good nights and off to bed without another word.
BETSY
(reluctantly)
Good night, Mr. Simms. Uncle Bill.

JOAN
(protesting)
Miss Stellwagon says the problems of the parents should be the problems of the children.

MURIEL
(shooing them out)
You keep that in mind, dear. It'll help prepare you for motherhood.

The children exit. An embarrassed pause.

SIMMS
Perhaps we'd better let the plans go for the time being and --

JIM
(weakly)
No, Simms, I'll work this out. You go ahead with your final plans and let's see some estimates.

MURIEL
And we'll just forget about that extra bathroom.

SIMMS
(preparing to leave)
Very well. You'll hear from me as soon as possible. Good night.

Good nights are exchanged. Muriel takes Simms out of scene toward the door. CAMERA HOLDS on Bill and Jim.

JIM
(defeated)
Six thousand dollars!

Bill looks at Jim with compassion.

BILL
What'll you do for collateral on your building loan?

JIM
I don't know, turn in my insurance policies or something.

MURIEL
(coming into scene)
Now, Jim, you can't do that.

JIM
Why not?

MURIEL
What if something should happen? You can't leave the children unprotected.

JIM
(somewhat irritably)
I'm not dead yet! And if I die, there's plenty left to take care of them.

MURIEL
Not if you cash in your policies.

As Jim reacts with painful resignation:

BILL
I'm sure it won't be necessary. I'll see the boys at the bank. Maybe you can put up your insurance as collateral. If necessary, I'll sign a personal note.

JIM
(wearily)
Thanks, Bill.

BILL
(paternally)
And Jim, do me a little favor. The next time you're going to do anything, or say anything, or buy anything, think it over very carefully, and when you're sure you're right -- forget the whole thing. Good night, Muriel.

He goes to Muriel and kisses her on the cheek. Jim sees it, is annoyed.

MURIEL
Good night, Bill.
CAMERA FOLLOWS Muriel and Bill to the door. He exits. Muriel comes back into the room.

**Muriel**
What a wonderful friend.

**Jim**
(darkly)
What's with this kissing all of a sudden?

**Muriel**
What's that?

**Jim**
Just because a man is helpful in a business way, it doesn't give him extra-curricular privileges with my wife!

**Muriel**
That's a fine thing to say about a friend of fifteen years!

**Jim**
(testy)
Well, I don't like it. Every time he goes out of this house, he shakes my hand and he kisses you.

**Muriel**
(sharply)
Would you prefer it the other way around?!

**Jim**
(irritably)
Well, I don't like it, that's all! Why is he always hanging around? Why doesn't he ever get married -- or something?

**Muriel**
(assumed innocence)
Because he can't find another girl as sweet and pretty and wholesome as I am.

**Jim**
Well -- it -- it doesn't look right.
There are limits to friendship and --

Muriel comes over, puts a sympathetic arm around him.

MURIEL
Darling, let's not be silly about this. It's not Bill, it's the house you're upset about.

JIM
(sigh)
I suppose so.

They kiss.

JIM
Do you think it's worth all this?

MURIEL
Of course, darling. We're not just building a house -- it's a home. A home for ourselves -- and our children -- and maybe our children's children.

JIM
(whimsically)
It's getting awfully crowded with only three bathrooms.

They look at each other, smile and kiss intimately, as

**DISOLVE**

**INT. SIMMS' LIVING ROOM - DAY**

Jim and Muriel are watching Simms, who has just taken a typewritten sheet from his files. Simms looks at the sheet, turns to them a little apprehensively.

SIMMS
Well -- here are the estimates. Before you look at them, I think I'd better explain --

JIM
Don't bother, Simms.
(takes the sheet)
I'm getting to be an old hand at this sort of --
Jim is halfway into his chair as his eye catches the first bid. There is a sharp MUSICAL EFFECT as Jim bounces out of his seat.

**JIM**

Jumping H. Mahogany --!!

The CAMERA GOES IN for a CLOSE SHOT of the column of estimates. As the CAMERA IRISES DOWN ON each sum, there is a dissonant MUSICAL EFFECT.

Antonio Doloroso, Builders $32,117.00
Caries & Plumline $30,500.00
Julius Akimbo & Co. $28,575.00
Zach, Tophet & Payne $24,250.00
John Retch & Son $21,000.00

**THREE SHOT JIM, MURIEL, AND SIMMS**

THREE SHOT - Jim, Muriel, and Simms. Muriel has read the column over Jim's shoulder.

**SIMMS**

Now obviously these bids are way out of line, that is, all except John Retch and Son at twenty-one thousand.

**MURIEL**

(reacting)
Twenty-one thousand!

**SIMMS**

And with some judicious cutting, I think we can pare that down to eighteen.

**MURIEL**

We've only asked for the barest necessities --

**SIMMS**

Frankly, with all the extras you two have --

**JIM**

Never mind.
(hands estimates to
If you'll just send us a bill for your services, I'll see that it's taken care of.

(takes Muriel's hand and starts for door)

Now, if you'll excuse us.

**MURIEL**

Where are we going?

**JIM**

I am going out to get my head examined! Then, if I don't jump off the Brooklyn Bridge, I'm going to find the owner of our building and sign a twenty-year lease!

As they are about to exit, they pause as their eyes are caught by a drawing on an adjacent drawing board.

**WHAT THEY SEE – A BEAUTIFUL PENCIL AND CHARCOAL DRAWING**

What they see - a beautiful pencil and charcoal drawing of their completed prospective house. Under it, in neat letters is printed:

**RESIDENCE OF MR. AND MRS. JAMES H. BLANDINGS**

**JIM, MURIEL, AND SIMMS.**

Jim, Muriel, and Simms. They look at the drawing, then at each other. Jim's face softens. Muriel looks at him appealingly.

**JIM**

(quietly)

What's the name of that contractor?

**DISSOLVE**

INSERT JIM'S COST CHART. The house rests on the diagonal line at the figure of $13,500. As the miniscule Jim and Muriel watch with apprehension, the small figures of Smith and
Hackett are joined by Simms, John W. Retch, and several contractors, who put their collective shoulders to the house and push it past the Blandings and up to $31,000.00

DISSOLVE

EXCAVATION - LOCATION #2 - EARLY SPRING - DAY

A sign on a sawhorse - it reads:

JOHN W. RETCH AND SON

Over scene is the thunderous dissonance of the various SOUNDS that go into preliminary construction. A steam shovel in action, a bulldozer, the sawing of wood, and intermittently the loud, earth-shaking crash of a well-digger's rig.

As the CAMERA PULLS BACK, we see the machines and the workmen at their various tasks. The scene has all the rustic peace of the invasion of Hollandia.

The ANGLE CHANGES, and we see Jim, Muriel, and Bill drive up the improvised driveway very close to the scene of activity.

INT. THE CAR - DAY

Jim and Muriel look at their property with unconcealed pride. Bill is interested but would like it better if there were less noise.

JIM
(shouting over noise)
Well, things are certainly humming.

BILL
(same)
What's that?

JIM
(same)
I said, humming.

BILL
Oh.

As they get out of the car, there is an unusually loud crash from the well-digger's rig.

BILL
(loud)
What's going on over there?

JIM
(same)
That's Mr. Tesander. He's digging our well.

BILL
(same)
Well? What happened to the trout stream, with that pure, clear, cold mountain water?

JIM
(same)
I decided against it --

There is a sudden cessation of the steam shovel and complete silence. Jim, unaware of it, continues to shout.

JIM
The trout stream --
(reacts; quietly)
didn't seem practical.

MURIEL
It wasn't exactly a decision, dear.
(to Bill)
We discovered the trout stream dries up in August and the rest of the year it's polluted.

JIM
(defensively; groping)
Well, anyway, I'd rather have artesian water. It's healthier. Calcium -- vitamins -- artesian --

BILL
(indicating)
What's wrong with that steam shovel?

They look off.

WHAT THEY SEE. A CLUSTER OF WORKMEN

WHAT THEY SEE. A cluster of workmen have gathered around Mr. Zucca, the driver of the steam shovel, who is swearing voluble but undistinguishable Italian.

JIM, MURIEL AND BILL.

Jim, Muriel and Bill.

JIM

Better take a look.

He starts off for the steam shovel, nimbly jumping over a drainage trench. Muriel starts to follow, pauses, unable to negotiate the trench.

MURIEL

Jim!

Jim turns in time to see Bill pick Muriel up and carry her across the trench. As he sets her down:

MURIEL

(sarcastic; to Jim)

Thank you, dear.

Jim frowns, annoyed. They approach the group around the shovel.

JIM

What's the matter, Mr. Zucca? Something wrong?

ZUCCA

How do you lika that? Broka my bucket. Two times this week I broka my bucket?

JIM

What did you do, strike a boulder?

ZUCCA

(darkly)
Atsa no boulder, atsa ledge.

**JIM**
(weakly)
What does that mean?

**ZUCCA**
Meansa we gotta blast!

**JIM**
Blast?

**ZUCCA**
Blast. Witha dynamite.

**JIM**
What do you mean, dynamite?

**MURIEL**
(a little annoyed)
What do you mean, "What do you mean?"
Mr. Zucca just explained. He's going to use dynamite and blast until he gets rid of the rock.

**ZUCCA**
Atsa no rock, atsa ledge.

**BILL**
What Mr. Blandings means is -- what precisely is a ledge?

**ZUCCA**
Ledge. Lika bigga stone, only a-bigger.

**JIM**
Like a boulder?

**ZUCCA**
No, like ledge.

Jim looks at Muriel and Bill.

**BILL**
...Like a ledge.

**ZUCCA**
But you don't gotta worry. Only cost twenty-four cents a cubic foot, plussa dynamite an'a fuse.
JIM
But how far will you have to blast?

ZUCCA
Harda tell. Might be a lilla baby ledge -- mighta run the whole toppa the mountain.

JIM
(appalled)
At twenty-four cents a foot? Do you realize what that means?!

ZUCCA
(simply)
Meansa we gotta blast.

Zucca walks off.

JIM
(with quiet resignation)
Well, anyway, our house will never sink.

MURIEL
(drily)
If it does, we can always get Mr. Apollonio. He raised the Normandie.

There is a crash from the well-digging rig.

BILL
"Come to peaceful Connecticut --
(again crash)
Trade city soot for sylvan charm."

Another crash.

JIM
(irritably)
How long does that go on?

MURIEL
I don't know.
(to Bill)
Three weeks now at four dollars and fifty cents a foot.

JIM
(asserting his authority)
I think I'd better have a little
talk with Mr. Tesander.

He starts off. Muriel and Bill, curious, follow.

**EXT. AT THE WELL RIG**

Tesander, a stolid New England well-digger, the soul of industry and candor, attacks the earth. Jim, followed by Muriel and Bill, walks into scene, stands by, watching him.

After a moment:

**JIM**

Oh -- Mr. Tesander --

The motor is making too much noise.

**JIM**

(louder)

Mr. Tesander!

Tesander looks up, shuts off his motor.

**TESANDER**

Yep?

**JIM**

How's it coming?

**TESANDER**

(considers a moment; then:)

It's comin'.

With a nod he turns on his motor, resumes work. Jim exchanges a look with Muriel and Bill.

**JIM**

No -- no -- I mean --

But he's drowned out by the motor.

**JIM**

(shouts)

Mr. Tesander!

Tesander patiently stops his motor, looks up.

**TESANDER**

Yep?
JIM
What I meant was -- how far down are you?

Tesander looks at his equipment, considers.

TESANDER
Oh -- 'bout a hundred and ninety feet.

JIM
Well -- isn't that pretty deep?

TESANDER
(thinks it over; he's not one for snap judgments; then:)
Yep.

He's about to turn on his motor, but Jim detains him.

JIM
Do you think maybe you'd better try another spot?

TESANDER
Up to you.

JIM
I mean -- well, have you hit anything yet at all?

TESANDER
(thinks it over)
Hit some limestone yesterday.

JIM
Is that good?

TESANDER
That's bad.

Jim looks at Bill who shakes his head with mock commiseration.

TESANDER
And right now it looks like we're coming into some shale.

JIM
That's bad?
That's good.

Oh...

Jim looks at Muriel for comfort which isn't forthcoming.

'T'Course it might turn out to be sandstone.

That's bad?

Tesander shakes his head, "No."

That's good?

Tesander shakes his head, "No."

Can't tell. Might be good. Might be bad. One thing you know -- you got plenty of shale, sandstone and limestone.

...I see.

He turns a little helplessly to Muriel and Bill.

On a hot day there's nothing like a nice cool limestone shower.

(sweetly)
Mr. Tesander, just for the record, of course, what ever happened to water?

Oh, it's there, all right.

(he smiles, nods, tips his hat to Muriel)
Just got to be patient.
He turns on his motor, goes back to work. Jim, Muriel and Bill start to move off.

**BILL**
If you ask me, this project's getting a little out of hand.

**JIM**
(defensively)
Nothing's getting out of hand at all. I've made a chart of the whole operation, and --

(indicates Tesander)
with a few minor deviations, I know exactly what every penny's going to cost.

**MURIEL**
Two pennies.

**JIM**
(coolly)
And just what does that mean?

**BILL**
(drily)
Meansa we gotta blast.

There is a loud dynamite blast o.s. As a shower of dirt and rocks cascade down and they run for cover:

**DISSOLVE**

**JIM'S COST CHART**

INSERT JIM'S COST CHART - Jim stands casually above the house holding the line with one hand. The group pushing from below now consists of Smith, Hackett, Simms, Retch, Tesander, Zucca and assorted sub-contractors and workmen. As the house moves up a thousand dollars, Jim firmly pushes it back. It rests at $33,500.

**DISSOLVE**
INT. JIM'S OFFICE - DAY

Jim and Mary.

JIM
You see, Mary, the average fellow who builds a house doesn't know where he stands from day to day -- but I do things a little differently. With a few minor deviations I know exactly where every penny is going --

There is a knock on the door. It opens and Bill Cole appears, briefcase under his arm.

BILL
Hi.

JIM
Bill! Come in, come in.

BILL
(entering)
Just going over the Knapp contracts with old man Dascomb and I -- uh -- (indicates Mary) Can I talk?

JIM
(a little concerned)
Sure. What's up?

BILL
(obliquely)
While I was in there with Dascomb the conversation kind of got around to you and -- uh --

JIM
(impatiently)
What is it?

BILL
Well, he didn't say in so many words that ever since you started with that house you haven't turned in a decent piece of copy, but --

JIM
But you kind of got the feeling...
BILL
...that if I told you, you'd know that he knew that you knew that he knew... that you knew... or something.

JIM
What's he worrying about? The deadline's three months off. I've always --

The phone rings. Mary answers.

MARY
Hello? Yes. Just a minute.
(hands phone to Jim)
Mrs. Blandings calling from Lensdale.

JIM
Yes, Muriel. What? What's that? Tesander struck water! Say that's wonderful!
(to Bill)
We've finally got our well.

BILL
(drily)
Congratulations.

He extends his hand. Jim absently shakes it, then:

JIM
(listens at phone)
Huh? What's that?
(face falls)
What do you mean we've got two wells?
(listens; then, grimly)
I'll be right out.
(hangs up, rises)
Come on, Bill, we'd better get out to Lansdale.

MARY
Anything wrong?

JIM
(soberly, as he slips into his coat)
Mary, have you ever seriously considered building a house?

MARY
Well, no offense, Mr. Blandings, but my boy friend says that anybody who builds a house today is crazy.

**JIM**
You stick with that boy, he's got a great future.

As he and Bill start for the door:

**DISSOLVE**

**EXT. THE EXCAVATION AT BALD MOUNTAIN - DAY**

Muriel, Jim, Bill, Simms and Retch stand at the edge looking down at the excavation which is partially filled with bubbling water.

**JIM**
You mean you hit a spring, a bubbling spring right here in our cellar?

**SIMMS**
It'll have to be diverted before Retch here can lay his cement.

**REITCH**
(dubiously)
May take a while. Pumps are over in Jersey.

Tesander walks into scene, looks down at the water.

**TESANDER**
Tsk, tsk, tsk.

**JIM**
(mild sarcasm)
Water, Mr. Tesander.

**TESANDER**
Yep.

**JIM**
At six feet!

**TESANDER**
Yep.
JIM
(indicates)
And over there, just thirty-two yards away, you had to go down two hundred and twenty-seven feet to hit the same water.

TESANDER
Yep.

JIM
How do you account for that, Mr. Tesander?

Tesander considers a moment, rubs his chin, then:

TESANDER
We'll, way it seems to me, Mr. Blandings, over here the water's down around six feet and over there it's -- uh --

BILL AND TESANDER
-- down around two hundred and twenty-seven feet.

Jim exchanges a weary look with Muriel.

DISSOLVE

SPECIAL EFFECT: MONTAGE

SPECIAL EFFECT: It consists of a Montage of the following DISSOLVING SHOTS:

(1) The water being pumped out of the excavation.
(2) The cement mixer pouring cement into wheelbarrows.
(3) The pouring of the cement floor, walls and foundations.
(4) Planks, shingles and plumbing equipment begin to arrive and are strewn about the property.
(5) The exterior framing of the house begins to go up.
(6) The sheathing is put on.
The roof is constructed.

**OVER THIS MONTAGE IS SUPERIMPOSED:**

Jim's Cost Chart. - With each successive operation, a new workman is added to the already considerable group of people who are pushing the house inexorably upward, this against the frantic efforts of a slowly weakening Jim Blandings.

**DISSOLVE**

**EXT. THE BLANDINGS' HOUSE - DAY**

The exterior sheathing is completed and, in the roughest of terms, the project begins to resemble a house. Among the workmen's cars we notice the Blandings' convertible.

**DISSOLVE**

**INT. THE INCOMPLETE LIVING ROOM - LOCATION #1 - DAY**

A dozen hammers, saws, trowels, etc. are heard in other parts of the house busily rasping and banging away. Jim and Muriel and Bill appear in the doorway before entering the unfinished interior of what will eventually be the living room.

**BILL**

What's this, another closet?

**JIM**

This happens to be our dining room.

**MURIEL**

Not the dining room, dear, the living room.

(indicates)

There's the fireplace.

**JIM**
Then where's the dining room?

BILL
Maybe it's that little room off the hallway.

JIM
That's the breakfast nook.

MURIEL
It's not the breakfast nook, it's the powder room.

JIM
Oh.

BILL
Do me a favor -- don't ever invite me here for a meal.

Two workmen pass by carrying a few long pieces of lumber.

The workmen don't see the Blandings.

FIRST WORKMAN
I don't figure this Blandings at all. If you gotta build on the windiest hill in Connecticut, why do you have to pick the windiest side of the hill?

BILL
(to workman)
You know these New York millionaires -- they're eccentric.

The workmen pass from view.

JIM
I think I'd like to go outside.

BILL
(gesture to door)
After you, Rockefeller.

As they enter the foyer, a carpenter appears.

CARPENTER
(to Jim)
Just the man I want to see. Would you step over here a second?
JIM
Sure.

BILL
(indicating)
I'll browse around upstairs.

As Bill starts up the stairs, Jim and Muriel follow the carpenter.

CARPENTER
(pointing up)
On them second floor lintels between the lally columns, do you want we should rabbet them or not?

JIM
(lost)
The -- second -- floor -- lallys?

CARPENTER
The second floor lintels, between the lallys.

JIM
Oh. Oh, the lintels between the lallys?

CARPENTER
Yeah. From the blueprints you can't tell. You want they should be rabbeted?

Jim throws a brief look at Muriel who is regarding him skeptically.

JIM
Un -- umm. No, I guess not.

CARPENTER
Okay, you're the doctor.
(calls)
Hey, fellas, you got any of them rabbeted lintels set, rip 'em out!

After the sheerest pause there comes a shriek of nails brutally withdrawn from timber, a loud splintering of wood and then something of the appearance of entrails comes hurtling down end over end landing with a dusty slap at Jim's
feet. The carpenter exits. Muriel gives Jim an accusing look.

**JIM**
(sheepishly)
It sounded less... expensive to say no.

There is another loud screech and more "entrails" come hurtling down, narrowly missing them. Muriel yells in the direction from which they came.

**MURIEL**
Stop it! Stop it!

From upstairs comes a long, shrill whistle. Instantly all sound of activity ceases and a voice is heard.

**VOICE**
Okay, fellas, let's quit!

**JIM**
(to Muriel)
Now look what you've done.

As Muriel turns with apprehension, eighteen workmen come trooping down the stairs.

**JIM**
(conciliatory)
Look, men, Mrs. Blandings didn't mean anything.
(the workmen regard him curiously)
I mean, there's no point in walking off a job just because... a woman makes a silly little remark.

**WORKMAN**
It's Saturday, mister. We quit at twelve o'clock. This ain't a chain gang, you know.

As the workmen exit the Blandings look at each other a little sheepishly, start up the stairs.

**CRANE SHOT** - AS THE BLANDINGS GO UP THE STAIRS
CRANE SHOT - as the Blandings go up the stairs.

MURIEL
I'm just sick. From the outside this house looks like a grain elevator, and on the inside everything's miles too small.

As they reach the second floor landing, we hear, o.s. a steady but muffled pounding.

They stop as they hear the thumping.

MURIEL
What's that?

JIM
What's what?

MURIEL
That noise -- listen.
(again the thumping)
It's coming from the closet!

They rush to the closet, open the heavy oak door. Bill is inside, leaning disgustedly against the wall.

JIM
What happened?

BILL
The door blew shut. I got locked in.

JIM
Impossible. I had this closet built especially for myself. The lock opens from the inside.

BILL
Maybe for Houdini -- not for me.

As Bill starts to step out, Jim detains him.

JIM
Nothing to it. A child could work it. Look, I'll show you.

He steps inside with Bill, firmly closes the door. A moment's pause. The door re-opens.
JIM
(condescendingly)
You see, it just takes a little good old Yankee know-how.

MURIEL
You know, dear, it's just possible the lock worked for you and not for Bill.

JIM
Ridiculous. Even you could do it.

MURIEL
(sarcastic)
Thank you.

JIM
Come on, I'll show you.

He ushers Muriel inside and the door closes on the threesome.

The CAMERA REMAINS on the closed door.

JIM'S VOICE
Go ahead, dear, just open it.

The knob turns, jiggles a little, but the door remains closed.

MURIEL'S VOICE
I don't seem to be able to ---

JIM'S VOICE
Here, let me show you! You just take the knob and turn it clockwise.


INT. THE CLOSET

As Jim turns sheepishly:

BILL
Nothing like that good old Yankee
know-how.

Jim turns back to the door, pounds on it, yelling:

**JIM**

Hey! Hey! Somebody let us out of here!

Silence. Muriel is at the shoulder-high circular frame solid glass window. She looks out.

**MURIEL**

Oh, dear.

Jim and Bill look out.

**WHAT THEY SEE** - THE LAST OF THE WORKMEN'S CARS

**WHAT THEY SEE** - The last of the workmen's cars driving away.

**INT. CLOSET**

**BILL**

(drily)

Leave a call for seven o'clock.

(afterthought)

Monday morning.

Jim gives him a look, turns back to the window, sizing up an escape, starts muttering to himself.

**JIM**

If I could just get over to that scaffolding...

He tests the window frame, finds it solid.

**JIM**

 stil muttering)

Seems a shame but I guess it's the only way...

Jim picks up a piece of tar paper.

**MURIEL**

What are you going to do?

**JIM**

Don't get panicky, I'll get you out
of here.
    (hands tar paper to
     Bill)
Here, hold this over the window.

As Bill somewhat skeptically complies, Jim picks up a
piece
of two-by-four.

    JIM
Stand back, Muriel.

Jim raises the plank, takes a stance.

    JIM
    (to Bill)
    Ready?

    BILL
Roger.

Jim swings; the window shatters. Almost simultaneously
is a click and the door to the closet swings open. As
turns with a sense of accomplishment, his face falls as
and the others see that the erratic door has opened.

    MURIEL
    (sweetly)
    In case of emergency -- break glass.
    Come on, Bill.

As Muriel and Bill precede Jim out of the closet and
down
the stairs, Jim pauses, speculatively toying with the
lock.

    JIM
    (muttering)
    Funny... always worked before. Huh.
    I wonder...

INT. FOYER - STAIRWAY

Muriel and Bill walking down the stairs. From upstairs
comes
a steady sullen pounding from the interior of the
closet. Without a word, they stop, look at each other, turn and
back upstairs.

DISSOLVE

INT. THE BLANDINGS' BREAKFAST NOOK - DAY

Muriel and the children are having breakfast. Jim enters, in fairly high spirits, once again improvising to "Home On The Range."

   JIM
       (as he sits down)
       "Home, home in Connecticut -- Where you have to conform to local traditions, customs, politics and etiquette..."
       (picks up his morning mail, starts to thumb through it)

   JOAN
       Dad, do you suppose I could have a chemistry lab in the basement?

   JIM
       (preoccupied with mail)
       Sure, why not?

   BETSY
       I think it's awful. Smelling up the house with those horrible chemicals.

   MURIEL
       Never mind, Betsy.
       (to Jim)
       Dear, I'm going up to the place this afternoon to see about landscaping. Bill's driving me.

   JIM
       (preoccupied)
       That's nice.
       (looking up; darkly)
       What do you mean, Bill's driving you?

   MURIEL
       (a little annoyed)
Why do you always say, "what do you mean," when you know perfectly well what I mean and what you mean?

**JIM**
I mean that every time I turn my back Bill Cole's driving you some place or something.

**MURIEL**
He's only being helpful.

**JIM**
(annoyed; tears open a letter)
I thought he was a lawyer! Why isn't he out suing somebody?

**JOAN**
Bicker, bicker, bicker.

**MURIEL**
(to Joan)
Another word and you don't get your laboratory.

**BETSY**
Well, that's something!

Jim suddenly explodes, crumpling a letter he has just read.

**JIM**
We'll just see about that!

**MURIEL**
(concerned)
What is it, dear?

Ignoring her, he reaches for the phone, starts to dial.

**MURIEL**
Jim, what's the matter?

**JIM**
(into phone; sharply)
Mr. William Cole, please.
(pause; then with rising emotion)
Hello, Bill? I want you to fight this thing! I know my rights as a citizen! They can't get away with
it!... What do you mean, what am I talking about? The letter, of course. From the owner of this building. They want us to move! It's a thirty day notice!

(listens a moment)

But that's ridiculous. How can I move into a house that isn't even finished?! No windows, no plaster -- or paint, or -- or plumbing!

(listens a moment; then with rising emotion)

Now you listen to me! I have no intention of moving in thirty days! This is not legal! I'm going to fight this thing! And I don't care if it takes every penny I've got!

(listens)

Yeah... Yeah... Yeah... All right!

(hangs up)

MURIEL

(expectantly)

...Well?

JIM

(quietly)

We're moving in thirty days.

On Muriel's reaction:

DISSOLVE

EXT. ROAD AND COVERED BRIDGE - DAY

Two moving vans are approaching the bridge. Behind them is the Blandings' convertible. In it are Jim, Muriel and the children. Behind it and attached is a trailer. After a pause, over this, we hear:

BILL'S VOICE

So-came thirty days -- and they moved.

MED. CLOSE SHOT - ENTRANCE TO BRIDGE.

MED. CLOSE SHOT - Entrance to bridge. As the cavalcade passes
through we see in the rear of the trailer, jammed among household effects, Gussie and a very uncomfortable Mr. Cole.

BILL'S VOICE
I mean -- we moved.

OTHER END OF BRIDGE AND FORK

The moving vans precede the convertible, make the wrong turn. Jim stops the convertible at the fork and honks as he impatiently gestures to the drivers to turn in the opposite direction. Over this:

BILL'S VOICE
(as Jim would say it)
That's the wrong road! Any fool knows that!

Jim starts his car up leading the way.

DISSOLVE

EXT. ROAD AT THE HOUSE - DAY

The moving vans turn up the new gravel driveway. Jim stops his car and they all look off at the house, react with pleasant surprise.

WHAT THEY SEE - LONG SHOT - THE HOUSE IS RAPIDLY NEARING COMPLETION.

WHAT THEY SEE - LONG SHOT - The house is rapidly completing. A half dozen men are finishing the exterior painting, planing down doors, etc. In front, a couple of men from the nursery are working on the landscaping. For the first time we, as well as the Blandings, see the property as a clean, bright and very attractive new house.

BILL'S VOICE
Well, there she is, bright and shining --
and just about complete -- the residence of Mr. and Mrs. James H. Blandings.

**INT. THE CAR – DAY**

MOVING SHOT – Jim and Muriel are visibly affected by the sight of their Dream House. They exchange a warm intimate smile.

**BILL’S VOICE**

Not bad at that.

**EXT. THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE – DAY**

MED. SHOT. The car pulls up, stops.

**BILL’S VOICE**

(efficient scoutmaster)

All right! -- Everybody out.

Everybody piles out of the car. As Jim and Muriel walk toward the house away from us and Bill, Muriel sentimentally reaches out, takes Jim's hand.

**BILL’S VOICE**

Guess you can't blame them for feeling just a little bit proud.

At the door, Jim stops, indicates that he'd like to carry Muriel across the threshold.

**BILL’S VOICE**

(sentimentally)

Look -- he wants to carry his wife across the threshold. Romantic, isn't it?

**JOAN AND BETSY.**

Joan and Betsy. They look on with distinct adolescent disapproval.

**BILL’S VOICE**

Ooops! I guess I meant "corny."

**GROUP SHOT. OVER MURIEL’S PLAYFUL PROTEST**
GROUP SHOT. Over Muriel's playful protest, Jim starts to pick her up.

BILL'S VOICE
Uh-uh. Watch that sacroiliac. Fifteen years since you've done this sort of thing.

Jim manages to lift Muriel.

BILL'S VOICE
Whew! Nice work, Tarzan. Now, let's see if you can make it into the hall.

Jim carries Muriel over the threshold and into the foyer.

BILL'S VOICE
That's right. Go right in. Don't pay any attention to the sign.

The CAMERA PANS TO a LOW SHOT of a sign on the floor of the foyer. It reads:

WET VARNISH

FULL SHOT - FOYER.

FULL SHOT - foyer. In the b.g. is a painter, varnishing the newly varnished floor. He looks up in complete dismay as he sees his floor being violated. After a couple of steps, Jim stops, suddenly aware of the painter. The painter rises, throws down his brush, says something caustic.

BILL'S VOICE
(imitating painter)
Don't mind me, buddy, I just got through varnishing that floor.

Jim reacts, raises a tentative foot, the sticky varnish practically holding it to the floor. Jim says something.

BILL'S VOICE
Whose bright idea was this?
The painter says something, points at Muriel. Jim looks darkly and accusingly at Muriel whose weak smile is an admission of guilt.

BILL'S VOICE
She just wanted everything to be nice and shiny on the day they moved in.

Jim turns and shouts something to the painter.

BILL'S VOICE
Stop painting that floor and put some planks down in here, or some thing!

The painter shouts back.

BILL'S VOICE
Okay, mister, but take it easy. The Republicans ain't in yet, you know.

Jim reacts, turns and walks back out of the foyer, desperately trying to match his clearly outlined incoming footsteps. Each step is outlined by strands of thick sticky varnish.

EXT. THE FRONT DOOR OF THE HOUSE - DAY

As Jim appears, still carrying Muriel, Betsy and Joan, his attention, indicate the front wall of the house complete except for the windows. Jim reacts.

BILL'S VOICE
Oh, fine! A house without windows! We'll just see about that!

Abruptly handing Muriel to Bill he starts off. Ahead of him and unnoticed are a layer of newspapers which have been spread out.

BILL'S VOICE
Look out for those papers!
But Jim has stepped on the papers. They stick to his feet. After a few steps he is aware of it, tries to get rid of them. After a few hectic but futile attempts, he disgustedly disappears around a corner of the house, the newspapers flapping behind him.

**EXT. SIDE OF HOUSE – DAY**

Jim flaps his way up to a workman who is staring at a pile of window casements.

**JIM**

Where's Simms?

**WORKMAN**

Around back trying to figure out what to do about them windows.

**JIM**

What's the problem? You put windows up.

**WORKMAN**

Not these. They don't fit.

**JIM**

(angrily; control going)

Oh, they don't, don't they?

He continues on toward the back of the house, the newspapers flapping beneath him.

**EXT. REAR OF HOUSE – DAY**

Simms and Retch. More window frames are neatly stacked against the wall. Simms and Retch react as they see an angry Jim Blandings flap his way into scene, his varnished shoes having picked up additional paper, shavings, shingles, etc. Retch hands Jim a sheaf of papers.

**RETCHE**
Oh, Mr. Blandings, you'd better look these over.

JIM
What's this about the windows?

SIMMS
(calmly)
I'm afraid there's a little slip-up. These windows seem to belong to a Mr. Landings in Fishkill, New York. I talked to Mr. Landings this morning.

JIM
Well, has he got mine?

SIMMS
No, he seems to have some windows that belong to a Mr. Blandsworth of Peekskill.

JIM
Where are my windows?!

SIMMS
As near as we can figure out they've either been sent to a Mr. Benton in Evanston, Illinois, or a Mr. Bamberger of Phoenix, Arizona.

Bill wanders into scene, looks over Jim's shoulder.

JIM
What are we supposed to do -- live the rest of our lives in a house without windows?

SIMMS
It'll just be a matter of a few days.

BILL
What's a "Zuz-Zuz Water Soft-N-R"?

JIM
How should I know?

BILL
(indicating)
You've got one.

JIM
(reading from bill)
"Furnishing and installing one Zuz-Zuz Water Soft-N-R, two hundred and eighty dollars!"
    (explosively)
I will not have any such piece of equipment in my house!

SIMMS
I'm afraid I authorized that, Mr. Blandings -- to save your boiler and water pipes.

JIM
From what?!

SIMMS
Rust. The plumbing man assures us the water from your well is the most corrosive in his entire experience in the trade.

BILL
Another first!

JIM
    (pursing his lips)
Mm.    (irritably)
Well, if it's necessary, put it in! We're moving in today, you know and --

RETCH
It's in.

JIM
Oh.    (a final show of authority; sharply)
Then get me the bill for it!

BILL
    (indicating bill)
You've got it.

JIM
All right then.

And he stalks off, his papers, shavings, etc. flapping behind him.
The moving vans are driving away.

A general flurry of activity; Gussie and several workmen carrying furniture upstairs, unpacking barrels, etc. Muriel, list and samples in hand, is explaining her color scheme to Mr. PeDelford, a polite, cigar-smoking, noncommittal boss. In the background, casually leaning on the bannister is PeDelford's taciturn and somewhat skeptical-looking assistant.

**MURIEL**
Now I want the living room to be a soft green.
(PeDelford nods)
Not quite as bluish as a robin's egg, but yet not as yellow as daffodil buds.

**PEDELFORD**
Mm.

**MURIEL**
(handing him a sample)
The best sample I could get is a little too yellow, but don't let whoever mixes it go to the other extreme and get it too blue. It should just be sort of a grayish yellow green.

**PEDELFORD**
(making a note)
Mm-hmm.

They turn to the dining room.

**MURIEL**
Now the dining room I'd like yellow. Not just yellow, a very gay yellow.
PEDELFORD
Mm-hmm.

MURIEL
Something bright and sunshiny.
   (sudden inspiration)
I tell you, Mr. PeDelford, if you'll just send one of your workmen to the A&P for a pound of their best butter and match it exactly, you can't go wrong.

PEDELFORD
   (making a note)
Mm.

MURIEL
This is the paper we're going to use here in the foyer.
   (hands sample to him)
It's flowered but I don't want the ceiling to match any of the colors of the flowers. There are some little dots in the background, and it's these dots I want you to match. Not the little greenish dots near the hollyhock leaf, but the little bluish dot between the rosebud and the delphinium blossom. Is that clear?

PeDelford looks carefully at the sample, then:

PEDELFORD
   (making note)
Mm-hmm.

MURIEL
The kitchen's to be white. Not a cold, antiseptic hospital white -- a little warmer but not to suggest any other color but white.

PEDELFORD
   (note)
Mm.

MURIEL
Now for the powder room, I want you to match this thread.
   (hands him thread)
You can see it's practically an apple red. Somewhere between a healthy
Winesap and an un ripened Jonathan.

**PEDELFORD**

(making note)

Mm.

There is a crash from the kitchen.

**MURIEL**

Will you excuse me?

Muriel hastily exits toward the kitchen. PeDelford turns to his assistant.

**PEDELFORD**

Got it, Charlie?

**CHARLIE**

(deadpan; indicating rooms with his thumb)

Green, yellow, blue, white, red.

**PEDELFORD**

Check.

**DISOLVE**

**INT. PANTRY - OFF KITCHEN - DAY**

Joan is on a stepladder helping Gussie put away some dishes. Remains of two broken plates are on the floor below them.

**MURIEL**

Joan, you know father was to take care of the heavy dishes.

**JOAN**

He disappeared. I haven't seen him for an hour.

Betsy flies into the room waving a railroad timetable.

**BETSY**

Where's Uncle Bill? I just checked the timetable -- he's going to miss his train.

**MURIEL**
If they've run off somewhere it certainly isn't very --
(suddenly stops, listens)

From upstairs comes the SOUND of a steady, methodical thumping of a hand on a solid oak door.

**MURIEL**

Heavens!

She rushes for the door.

**QUICK**

**UPSTAIRS LANDING**

Muriel opens the closet door revealing Jim and Bill, who have been locked in the closet for the last hour. Each leans against the wall, arms folded, in an attitude of boredom and disgust. Without a word Jim and Bill exit from the closet. The three start down the stairs.

**JIM**

(darkly)
I thought you were going to take care of it.

**MURIEL**

I thought you were.

**BETSY**

(from below)
You're going to miss your train, Uncle Bill! It leaves Lansdale in twenty-five minutes.

**BILL**

Isn't there a later one?

**BETSY**

Not till the Commuter's Special tomorrow morning at six-fifteen.

**JIM**
You mean seven-fifteen.
BETSY
No, Dad, six-fifteen.

JIM
What about the seven-fifteen I'm supposed to take to the office every morning?!

BETSY
(consulting timetable)
There's a little asterisk. The seven-fifteen only runs Saturdays, Sundays and holidays.

JIM
(taking timetable)
Let me see that!
(scans table, tightlipped)
Muriel!

MURIEL
Oh, dear, don't tell me I read it wrong.

JIM
That's fine! For the rest of my life I'm going to have to get up at five o'clock in the morning to catch the six-fifteen, to get to my office by eight, which doesn't even open until nine -- and which I never get to until ten!

MURIEL
Perhaps if you started earlier you could quit earlier.

JIM
(sharply)
So I could get home earlier to go to bed earlier to get up earlier!

BILL
Maybe you can have the railroad push the train up to four-fifteen -- then you won't have to go to bed at all!

BETSY
Uncle Bill, you're going to miss your train!
MURIEL
Jim, you clean up this mess. I'll drive Bill to the station and pick up some cold cuts for dinner.

Betsy and Joan pick up some boxes and walk into the dining room.

BETSY
You'd better hurry!

BILL
(indicating upstairs closet)
Kind of hate to leave that little place. Just four walls and a couple of mothballs, but to me it'll always be home.

JIM
(preoccupied with timetable)
So long, Bill.

Bill and Muriel exit.

INT. THE DINING ROOM

As Jim drifts in, still preoccupied with timetable:

JOAN
It's certainly going to be fun this summer when Uncle Bill comes up for his vacation.

BETSY
We'll get in a lot of doubles.

JIM
Hmm?
(looks up from timetable)
What are you talking about? Bill's going to Europe.

BETSY
No, he's not. I heard him and mother talking. He's going to move his vacation up and take a place in Lansdale.
JIM
(vaguely annoyed)
Uh-huh... Mm-hm. Mm-hm... Uh-huh.
(then, covering up)
All right, come on, come on. Get busy.

DISSOLVE

INT. THE BLANDINGS' CAR - (PROCESS)

Evening is beginning to fall as Muriel drives Bill into town.

MURIEL
I'll scout around and find you a place in Lansdale.
(quickly)
Now, you're not going to change your mind about coming up?

BILL
Don't worry, I'll be on the job.

MURIEL
It won't be easy. I promise you a Cook's tour of every lamp maker, rug weaver, and antique shop in Lansdale County.

BILL
(philosophically)
When I married you two I suppose I took you for better or for worse.

Muriel smiles warmly, and in a friendly gesture reaches over and pats his hand.

MURIEL
Good old Uncle Bill.

BILL
(drily)
Good old Uncle Bill.

As they exchange an understanding smile:

DISSOLVE
INT. THE BLANDINGS' LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

It is dark outside and getting quite chilly. The children are unpacking a last barrel. They have made a rather unsteady pile of books and boxes, obviously Muriel's personal effects. Jim is in the process of trying to start his first fire in the fireplace. The immediate result is a clouding of the room with smoke. As he backs away, coughing, he bumps the pile which falls to the floor spilling open a box which contains, among other things, Muriel's diary and a lifetime accumulation of sentimental trinkets.

JIM
Now look what you've done!

Betsy coughs her way to the fireplace, turns the flue handle. The smoke immediately goes up the chimney and the room starts to clear.

BETSY
Father, the first principle of lighting a fire is to see if the flue is open. A three-year-old child knows that.

JIM
Next time we want a fire I'll send out for a three-year-old child! (indicates trinkets) Get that stuff cleaned up and go in and help Gussie set the table. It's getting late.

The children start gathering up the debris. Joan picks up some trinkets which have spilled from a cardboard box.

JOAN
Look, Dad, your fraternity pins.

JIM
(busy cleaning the
fireplace)
Pins? I only had one.

JOAN
There are two of them here.

JIM
All right, all right. Just put them away.

JOAN
(examining them)
Funny, this one says W.C. on the back. W.C.?
(brightly)
William Cole! It must be Uncle Bill's!

JIM
Huh?
(reaching for it)
Let me see that.
(examining pin)
Hmmmm.

Betsy has picked up a small leather-bound book. She whistles.

JOAN
What's that?

BETSY
Mother's diary when she was in college. It's slightly torrid.

JOAN
(coming over)
Let's see.

JIM
(sharply)
That's none of your business!

BETSY
(scanning page)
I'd say mother and Uncle Bill were somewhat of an item!

JIM
(taking book from Betsy)
People do not read other people's
diaries! It's not a very nice thing to do!
   (shooting them out)
Now go in there and help Gussie with the table.

**BETSY**
   (indicating debris)
What about --?

**JIM**
I'll take care of that. Now, shoo, shoo.

The children exit. Jim is about to put down the diary when his curiosity gets the better of him. Making sure he's unobserved, he sits down on a box, opens the book, starts to read. As his brows wrinkle with concern:

**DISSOLVE**

**EXT. THE HOUSE - NIGHT**

The wind is howling, the trees swaying. The lights are on in the kitchen. **CAMERA MOVES UP TO THE OPEN KITCHEN WINDOW.**

**INT. THE KITCHEN - NIGHT**

The family, in overcoats, is huddled around the kitchen table finishing dinner. Gussie, in overcoat and muffler, is clearing the dishes away. Jim, a sober look on his face, rises, takes a steaming kettle from the stove.

**MURIEL**
Where are you going?

**JIM**
To shave.

**MURIEL**
Tonight??

**JIM**
While I can still trust myself with
a razor. At six o'clock in the morning
I'd probably cut my throat. Goodnight.

Jim abruptly exits. Muriel looks after him with

concern.

DISSOLVE

INT. THE BLANDINGS' BATHROOM - NIGHT

Jim, in his pajamas and overcoat is shaving. After a
few
the

moments Muriel, in her nightgown and overcoat, enters

scene.

MURIEL

Excuse...

She takes her toothbrush and opens the cabinet, Jim
automatically moving around back of it in their

previously
brush, 

established pattern. As Muriel puts the paste on her
replaces the tube, shuts the cabinet and starts to

brush her

position.

teeth, Jim uncomfortably moves back to his original

position.

MURIEL

Excuse...

JIM

Muriel, do you have to do that now?!

MURIEL

There's no need to be so irritable
just because you have to shave at

night.

JIM

I'm not irritable!

MURIEL

Well, you're certainly something!
You haven't said a civil word all
evening.

JIM

Sometimes a man doesn't feel like
talking.
MURIEL
(solicitously)
What is it, dear? Something down at the office?

JIM
No.

MURIEL
Have you got the new slogan for "Wham"?

JIM
It's not due yet!

MURIEL
Well, it's something. You're certainly upset about something. I can always tell.

JIM
I'm not upset.
 (going back to shaving; with studied unconcern)
It's just that I don't happen to approve of falsehood and deception. Particularly in my own wife.

MURIEL
What are you talking about?

JIM
(same)
Oh, nothing. It's just that I distinctly remember your telling me you gave back Bill's fraternity pin fifteen years ago.

Muriel looks at him, puzzled.

JIM
Well, did you or didn't you?

MURIEL
Did I, or didn't I what?

JIM
Give it back to him.

MURIEL
Of course I did. If I said I did, I
JIM
(suddenly Sam Spade)
Then perhaps you'd have the goodness
to explain how this happened to fall
out of your jewel box?

He takes the pin out of his pocket and hands it to her.

Muriel looks at the pin, looks at it sentimentally. Suddenly she
at Jim and bursts out laughing.

JIM
What's so funny?

MURIEL
You! You're jealous! You're standing
there with your face full of soap
and you're jealous.

JIM
(angrily)
If you were so crazy about the guy,
why didn't you marry him?!

MURIEL
(beginning to be a
little angry)
Because I wasn't in love with him!

JIM
(vindictively)
That's not what you said in your
diary!

MURIEL
(now really angry)
Oh, now you've been reading my diary!

JIM
(a little guilty)
Well -- it happened to fall open
and... I... happened to look at it.
It... just happened.

MURIEL
I'll just bet!

JIM
It's all over the book so why don't
you admit it? You were in love with Bill Cole!

MURIEL
Don't be absurd! Of course I was in love with Bill. In those days I was in love with a new man every week.

JIM
Then why did you marry me?

MURIEL
I'm beginning to wonder!
(exploding)
Maybe it was those big cow eyes of yours or that ridiculous hole in your chin! Maybe I knew that some day you'd bring me out to this thirty-eight thousand dollar icebox with a dried-up trout stream and no windows! Or maybe I just happened to fall in love with you -- but for heaven's sake, don't ask me why!

Muriel stalks out of the bathroom. Jim looks after her, thoughtfully starts to dry his face.

INT. THE BEDROOM

Jim enters. Muriel stands with her back to him angrily winding the clock. Jim noisily clears his throat. No reaction.

JIM
(tentatively)
...Muriel?

No reaction.

JIM
...Honey?

No reaction.

JIM
Would it do any good to say I'm sorry?

MURIEL
I don't know.

Jim gently turns her around facing him.
JIM
Well -- I am. I acted like a schoolboy
and I'm sorry.

Muriel looks at Jim. Finally she smiles.

MURIEL
Oh, Jim!

She goes into his arms and they kiss intimately. As their lips part:

MURIEL
(dreamily)
Why don't you take the soap out of your ears?

JIM
(same)
Why do I love you so much?

Jim again kisses her tenderly, warmly.

MURIEL
(breathless)
Darling, it's awfully late.

Jim kisses her again, a little more ardently.

MURIEL
(same)
Maybe you ought to go down and lock the doors.

JIM
(kissing her ear)
What for? The windows are all open anyway.

MURIEL
(as he starts to kiss her again)
Jim, you have to get up at six o'clock.

JIM
(considers; logic prevails; brief sigh)
Yes, I guess so.

MURIEL
(reluctantly)
Goodnight, dear.

JIM
(same)
Goodnight.

Each gets into his own bed, still wearing the overcoats.

DISSOLVE

INSERT JIM'S COST CHART - The house now wavers at $37,000. As Jim and Muriel still try to stem the tide, the group that is pushing the house ever upward includes all of the previous plumbers, painters, landscape gardeners, etc. Over this, and across the scene flutter more bills, more extras.

BILL'S VOICE
And so the days sped by -- and the bills -- and the extras -- and as the house approached forty thousand dollars, Jim approached his deadline for the new slogan. It was almost a photo finish.

DISSOLVE

EXT. RADIO CITY - NIGHT (STOCK)

It is raining. The lights are on in the buildings.

INT. JIM'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Mary is attending to some detail work as the door opens and Jim enters, disturbed. Mary looks at him questioningly.

JIM
You'd better send out for coffee and sandwiches,... It looks like an all night session.

MARY
What did he say?

JIM
(wearily, seating himself at desk)
Tomorrow morning.

MARY
(sighs)
Well, I guess you'll just have to dream something up -- good or bad.

JIM
I rather got the impression it had better be good.

MARY
(raised eyebrow)
Oh.

He picks up a pencil, nibbles on it thoughtfully. The silence in the room is broken only by the patter of raindrops on the window. It strikes a note in Jim's subconscious. He swivels around in his chair and stares soberly out the window.

JIM
(ruminatively, almost to himself)
Funny how you look forward to the little things. Rain, for instance.

Mary looks at him curiously. He turns to her.

JIM
For a month now, I guess I've been looking forward to the first rainy night at the house.
(looks at Muriel's picture)
Big blazing fire. Muriel knitting. Me in my new smoking jacket... with my pipe and slippers, reading my paper...
(sighs)
Oh, well.

As he starts to work.
INT. THE BLANDINGS' LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Note: The house is painted and almost completely furnished.

A hard rain beats on the windows. There is a blazing fire in it, one of which is a blazing fire. Muriel, in a warm bathrobe, sits near it, comfortably knitting. In fact, the scene is exactly the one Jim has just described, except that the man with slippers, pipe and smoking jacket, reading the paper, is Bill Cole. Near the fire, Bill's rain-drenched jacket, shirt and shoes are hanging up to dry. The cozy tranquillity is broken by a sharp RINGING of the front doorbell.

MURIEL
(with relief)
Thank heavens! The children.

BILL
(rising)
Stay put. You look too comfortable.

The CAMERA FOLLOWS Bill to the front door. He opens it. A man in raincoat and boots stands there in the pouring, driving rain. The man enters as Bill struggles to get the door shut against the wind.

MR. JONES
Whew! What a night! I'm Jones, from down the road. Just came over to tell you your kids are all right, Mr. Blandings.

BILL
Oh, I'm not Mr. Blandings. Cole's the name, Bill Cole.

He sees Jones' doubtful look at the smoking jacket,
explanation is necessary.

BILL
Friend of the family. Wet clothes.
Just came in out of the rain.

Muriel walks into scene. Jones takes in the bathrobe, again
looks skeptically at Bill.

MURIEL
I'm Mrs. Blandings.

JONES
How do. Mrs. Williams just called.
Says your phone's out of order. Wanted
me to tell you the water's rising
and they've got the bridge roped
off. Girls'll spend the night over
at her place.

MURIEL
Thank you. I was beginning to get
concerned. Can I make you a cup of
tea?

JONES
No, thanks. Better be gettin' back
'fore I have to swim for it. 'Night,
Mrs. Blandings.
(to Bill)
'Night, Mr. Bl--

BILL
(weak smile)
Just came in out of the rain.

JONES
(uncertainly)
Well -- 'Night.

MURIEL
Goodnight... and thanks so much.

The door is opened with a terrific swirl of wind and
rain.

Jones exits as Muriel and Bill push the door against
wind, finally getting it shut.

BILL
That's fine. No bridge. How do I get back to Lansdale?

**MURIEL**
(simply)
You'll just have to spend the night right here.

As they start back into the living room:

**BILL**
Muriel, really! With your husband in New York and your children away -- think of my reputation.

**MURIEL**
(smile)
Don't worry, Snow White, you'll be as pure and unsullied in the morning as you were the night before.

**BILL**
(with resignation)
That's the story of my life.

Muriel pokes the dying fire, looks up thoughtfully.

**MURIEL**
Poor Jim, he sounded so worried before. I certainly hope he comes up with something.

**BILL**
Don't worry about the man who gave the world "When you've got the whim, say Wham!"-- This well will never run dry.

**SLOW**

**INT. JIM'S OFFICE - EARLY MORNING**

The CAMERA COMES IN ON a package of cigarettes. A finger impatiently rips open what is left of the package, disclosesthat it is empty. The ANGLE WIDENS to reveal a tired, disheveled Jim. Disgusted, he fishes the most likely butt from a tray littered with them. With considerable
he manages to light it, only to burn his nose.

Impatiently stamping out the butt he rises, stretches, walks to the window, pulls up the shade. Early morning sunlight floods the room. He turns off a standing lamp, looks thoughtfully out the window, suddenly gets an idea. Turning, he snaps his fingers. Mary, who is asleep on the desk, her head on her elbows, raises her head, opens a sleepy eye.

JIM
(selling; a note of desperation in his voice)
"Compare the price, compare the slice,
Take our advice -- Buy Wham!"

Mary critically shakes her head "no", closes her eye. Jim wearily throws himself down on the couch, absently toys with his already loosened tie. He pulls it up over his nose, throwing the balance over the top of his head. Suddenly he reacts, snaps his fingers. Mary opens a sleepy eye.

JIM
"If you'd buy better ham. You'd better buy Wham!"

MARY
It's Boyle Petroleum. "If you'd buy better oil, You'd better buy Boyle."

Her eye closes. Jim sinks back with defeat, his hand dropping over the edge of the couch. It encounters a crumpled piece of paper, earlier work. He smoothes the paper, scans it, kind of likes it. He gets up, comes over, snaps fingers. Mary looks up.

JIM
"This little pig went to market As meek and as mild as a lamb. He smiled in his tracks When they slipped him the axe He knew he'd turn out to be
Wham!"

A long silent look passes between them.

**JIM**
(quietly)
"...knew he'd turn out to be Wham!"

He suddenly and angrily gathers all his papers, slams them into the wastebasket.

**JIM**
(rising panic)
It's gone! I've lost my touch! Maybe I never had a touch! Maybe "Whim Say Wham" was an accident! Who knows? I can't think any more! All I've got on my mind is a house with an eighteen thousand dollar mortgage, and bills, and extras, and antiques, and -- and --
(dejected)
I don't know... I don't know.

Mary looks at him sympathetically, doesn't quite know what to say. As the CAMERA MOVES to a CLOSE SHOT of the emotionally distraught Jim, his eyes go to a large photograph on his desk of Muriel and the children. He picks it up, looks with affection. Suddenly he gets an idea. Rising with determination he puts on his coat and starts for the door.

**MARY**
(startled)
Where are you going?

**JIM**
Home, to get some sleep -- and I'd advise you to do the same.

**MARY**
But -- but you haven't --

**JIM**
Suppose I haven't! This isn't the only job in town!

**MARY**
But -- but -- what'll I tell Mr. Dascomb?

**JIM**

(sharply)
You just tell him to -- to --
(with finality)
You just tell him!

He exits.

**DISSOLVE**

**EXT. THE BLANDINGS' HOME - DAY**

It is an especially beautiful, sunshiny morning. A rural-looking taxi deposits a weary Jim, who pays the driver. As the cab drives off, Jim looks speculatively at Simms' car, which is parked there, yawns, stretches, opens the door and enters. Under this a slightly sour underscoring of "Home On The Range."

**INT. BLANDINGS LIVING ROOM - DAY**

As Jim comes into the foyer, he sees Muriel, in nightgown and robe, talking to Mr. Simms. She holds the rolled-up volume of blueprints that went into building the house.

**JIM**

'Morning, dear.

**MURIEL**

(going to him; solicitously)
Darling, you must be exhausted. How did it go?

**JIM**

Fine. Fine.

They kiss.

**MURIEL**

(obliquely)
Is... everything all right?

   JIM
   (unenthusiastic)
   Everything's fine.
   (still in embrace; looking up)
   Hello, Simms, what brings you out with the morning dew?

   SIMMS
   Just dropped by to check the blueprints. Some extras came in from Retch this morning and there're a couple of things I thought we ought to go over together.

   JIM
   (arms still around Muriel; unconcerned)
   Really. What are they?

   SIMMS
   Well, let's see.
   (thumbing through sheets)
   Few little things here, all right, I guess. "Mortising five butts -- a dollar sixty-eight."

   JIM
   Let's not quibble about that. A man's entitled to mortise a few butts now and then.

   SIMMS
   (next sheet)
   Extra nails and screws -- three dollars, eighty-nine cents.

   JIM
   Petty larceny, but let him get away with it.

   SIMMS
   Now there's one here I frankly don't understand. Ah, here we are.
   (reads)
   "Changes in closet, twelve hundred and forty-seven dollars." Did you authorize that?
**JIM**
Well, we probably told him to --
(reacting)
Twelve hundred and what?!

**SIMMS**
Forty-seven dollars. Changes in closet.
(hands bill to Jim)

**JIM**
(explosively)
Who does he think we are!
(looks at bill; very businesslike)
What's this notation: "Refer to Detail Sheet Number one thirty-five?"

**SIMMS**
(indicating blueprints)
Far as I remember, that would be something in the back of the house.
Let's just take a look.

As he unrolls the blueprints, Jim looks suspiciously at Muriel. She seems a little nervous.

**SIMMS**
Ah, here we are. It isn't a closet at all. It's off the back pantry... Mrs. Blandings' little flower sink.

**JIM**
Oh... Mrs. Blandings' little flower sink.

**SIMMS**
(to Muriel)
You didn't authorize any changes, did you?

**MURIEL**
(defensively)
Well... they certainly weren't changes.

**JIM**
What -- have -- you -- done?

**MURIEL**
(speaking rapidly a little confused)
I haven't done anything! And what I did was... just nothing at all.

JIM
What -- have -- you -- done?!

MURIEL
Well --
(rattling off)
All I did was one day I saw four pieces of flagstone left over from the porch that were just going to be thrown away because nobody wanted them and I asked Mr. Retch if he wouldn't just put them down on the floor of the flower sink and poke a little cement between the cracks and give me a nice stone floor where it might be wet with flowers and things. That was absolutely all I did.

During the above speech Simms sinks into a chair, puts his head in his hands and closes his eyes, a fact that isn't lost on Jim.

JIM
That's all you did?

MURIEL
Absolutely. Just four little pieces of flagstone.

SIMMS
(to Muriel; wearily)
Did you by any chance authorize a drain?

MURIEL
(verge of tears)
Of course I didn't. All I said was I wanted a nice stone floor and Mr. Retch was just as nice as could be and said, "You're the doctor," and that's all anybody ever said to anybody about anything.

Jim takes a deep breath, turns to Simms.

JIM
...Well?
SIMMS
(sigh; plunging in)
All right, I think I can tell you what happened. First, the carpenters had to rip up the flooring that was already laid. Those planks run under the whole width of the pantry, so Retch had to knock the bottom out of the pantry wall to get at them.

JIM AND MURIEL
Jim and Muriel - Jim looks at Muriel as though he were premeditating first-degree murder. She averts his gaze.

Over this:

SIMMS' VOICE
Then he had to chop out the tops of the joists under the flower sink space to make room for a cradle. I guess he bought some iron straps and fastened them to a big pan to give him something to hold the cement. What with that added load on the weakened joists, I'll bet he had to put a lally column down there for support, too.

MURIEL
It was just four little pieces of flagstone, and I only ---

JIM
Quiet!

GROUP SHOT - DURING THE FOLLOWING SPEECH

GROUP SHOT - During the following speech we see Bill Cole, in Jim's pajamas and robe come down the stairs and enter the room. Jim and Muriel are not aware of his presence.

SIMMS
Well, the main soil pipe runs under there on wall brackets, so Retch had to get his plumbing man back to take out a section so he could get that cradle set. I guess that meant he had to change the pitch of the soil
pipe from one end of the house to the other.
   (looks up)
'Morning, Mr. Cole.

BILL
'Morning. Hello, Jim.

JIM
(turning)
Hello, Bill.

Jim turns away, reacts, suddenly turns back to Bill, in the pajamas and robe. A little shocked but unwilling to believe the implication of what he sees, he looks to Muriel for an explanation.

MURIEL
(lamely)
The bridge was roped off and Bill had to stay last night.

JIM
...Oh.

BILL
(cheerily)
Slept like a rock.

JIM
I'm delighted.

Jim looks at Bill, then back at Muriel.

SIMMS
(clearing his throat)
And then, of course, there are hot and cold water pipes hooked to the joists right under that pantry. They go up to the wing bathroom on the second floor, and I'll bet my bottom dollar he had to relocate them.

THREE SHOT - JIM, MURIEL AND BILL.

THREE SHOT - Jim, Muriel and Bill. Jim turns to listen but finds himself looking speculatively at Muriel and Bill.
SIMMS' VOICE
And I guess the electrician had to rip out about sixty feet of armored cable between the main panel and the junction box by the oil burner, including the two hundred twenty volt cable that goes to the stove.

FULL SHOT - GUSSIE APPEARS IN THE DOORWAY
FULL SHOT - Gussie appears in the doorway in raincoat, carrying umbrella.

GUSSIE
'Morning, everybody. Whew! What a night!

JIM
Where have you been?

GUSSIE
Lansdale. Couldn't get back across the bridge.

JIM
You... weren't here last night?

GUSSIE
They weren't letting anybody across that bridge, Mr. Blandings.
(to Muriel)
I passed the girls over at the Williams. They'll be along any minute.

As Jim reacts:

MURIEL
(quickly)
Thank you, Gussie. You'd better get breakfast started.

As Gussie exits, Muriel turns to Simms.

MURIEL
Where were we?

BILL
We were at the two hundred twenty volt cable that goes to the stove.

JIM
Just a minute.
You mean the children weren't here last night either?

MURIEL
How could they be, dear? The bridge was closed.

JIM
I just came across it.

MURIEL
Well, it was closed last night.

JIM
(pointedly)
It's open now!

Embarrassed pause.

BILL
(attempt at breeziness)
If you'll all excuse me -- I -- I think I'll just go up and slip into something a little more comfortable.

Bill exits. Another pause. Simms, aware of the tension, wants to get out of there.

SIMMS
(rapidly)
Well, that's about the size of it --

Through Simms' speech, Jim looks darkly at Muriel.

SIMMS
-- except that Retch had to repair the pantry wall and that meant getting a plasterer back. And of course, he couldn't have broken through that wall --

JIM
All right, Simms, all right. We'll take care of it.

SIMMS
(preparing to exit)
I'll admit it's a little steep. But I'll try to get Retch to knock a
hundred dollars off the bill. If I can't get that, I'll certainly try for seventy-five.

JIM
Fine.

SIMMS
If he doesn't go for seventy-five, I'll take a stab at fifty.

JIM
You do that.

SIMMS
(at the door)
Anyway, I'm almost sure we can get twenty-five.

There is no answer.

SIMMS
(lamely)
Well. Good day.

He leaves. There is a deadly pause.

MURIEL
(carefully)
Now dear, you're upset, you've got a lot of things on your mind --

JIM
(with dangerous calm)
Muriel, there's only one thing on my mind -- This house -- and how fast we can get rid of it!

MURIEL
That's not what you're thinking.

JIM
Maybe it's not. Maybe I'm thinking I was once a happy man!
(the martyr)
I didn't have a closet, I didn't have three bathrooms, but I did have my sanity, a few dollars in the bank, two children who loved me and a wife I could trust!

MURIEL
That's a fine thing to say!

JIM

I also had a job at Danton and Bascomb, something I don't happen to have at the moment!

MURIEL

Jim!

JIM

That's right, I've resigned! We're starting all over again! From scratch! And without this house!

MURIEL

(near tears)
You love this house!

JIM

I hate it!

In the b.g. Mr. Tesander enters, cap in hand, stands there, nervous and embarrassed.

MURIEL

You don't mean that.

JIM

Every word of it! Anybody who builds a house today is crazy! The minute you start, they put you on the list. The All-American Sucker list! Everywhere you turn they've got a hand in your pocket. If you take out their hands, they find more pockets! (explosively)

It's a conspiracy, I tell you, a conspiracy against every man and woman who want a home of their own! Against every boy and girl who were ever in love!

Tesander clears his throat. Jim turns.

JIM

(sharply)
What do you want?!

A slight embarrassed pause. Then:
TESANDER
(shyly)
Well, Mr. Blandings, there's a matter of twelve dollars and eighty-six cents.

JIM
(with a wild gleam)
Twelve dollars and eighty-six cents! Why be a piker, Mr. Tesander?
(emptying pockets)
Take everything I've got! Spread it out among your pals!
(advancing toward the bewildered Tesander)
Wouldn't Retch like a little something? Maybe Zucca could use my new dinner jacket? It's open house, Mr. Tesander! Help yourself! If this isn't enough I'll come over to your place and do some odd chores. Maybe I can mow your lawn or scratch your back!

TESANDER
(simply)
You don't understand, Mr. Blandings. This twelve dollars and eighty-six cents -- you don't owe me, I owe you.

There is a momentary pause.

JIM
...W-what was that?

TESANDER
(taking out money)
Found I overcharged you. Almost three feet.

He hands the money to Jim, who stares at it blankly.

TESANDER
Better count it. I think it's all there.

Jim looks haplessly at Muriel, sheepish, guilty.

MURIEL
Thank you very much, Mr. Tesander.
TESANDER
Well, I guess I'd better be gettin' along.
(looking around)
Sure got a pretty place here.
(at door; pauses; looks back)
I'll tell Mr. Zucca about the dinner jacket.

Jim and Muriel look at each other a little sheepishly.

INT. THE FOYER
As Tesander is about to exit, Bill, dressed, starts down the stairs.

BILL
Oh, Mr. Tesander -- could you give me a lift to town?

TESANDER
Yep.

BILL
Be right with you.

INT. LIVING ROOM

MURIEL
(concerned)
What did you mean before about losing your job? Will we really have to sell the house?

JIM
(miserable)
I don't know, dear... I don't know.

Bill enters.

BILL
In case anyone's interested, I'm leaving for town.
(for Jim's benefit)
If you want to count the silverware, I'll wait.

JIM
(sheepishly)
Bill, be patient with me. Maybe one
of these days I'll grow up.

BILL
(to Muriel)
What happened to him?

MURIEL
Twelve dollars and eighty-six cents.

BILL
Mind if I say something?

Jim and Muriel look at him curiously.

BILL
You know, I've kind of been the voice of doom about this whole project. Every step of the way I was firmly convinced you were getting fleeced, bilked, rooked, flimflammed and generally taken to the cleaners. And maybe you were. Maybe it cost you a whole lot more than you thought it would. Maybe there were times when you wished you'd never started the whole thing. But when I look around and see what you two have here -- I don't know.

(pause)
Maybe there are some things you should buy with your heart and not with your head. Maybe those are the things that really count... See you around.

As Bill turns and leaves, the outer door is heard opening and the kids appear. There is an exchange of "Hi's" as they pass.

BETSY
'Morning, everybody!

JOAN
(surprised)
Hi, Dad! How come you're not at the office?

JIM
(a look at Muriel)
I'm on a... kind of a vacation.
JOAN
You mean you got fired?

JIM
Well, not exactly, I --

MURIEL
We'll discuss it later.

Gussie's head appears from the kitchen.

GUSSIE
(brightly)
Come and get it! Breakfast everybody.

BETSY
Good! I'm starving! What are we having, Gussie?

GUSSIE
Orange juice, scrambled eggs and you-know-what.

JOAN
(making a face)
Ham?

GUSSIE
Not ham -- Wham!
(cheerily)
If you ain't eatin' Wham, you ain't eatin' ham!

Gussie's head disappears.

CLOSE SHOT - JIM.

CLOSE SHOT - Jim.

JIM
What did she say?

He reacts with the sudden exhilaration of Balboa first seeing the Pacific. He snaps his fingers.

JIM
Darling, give Gussie a ten dollar raise!

His eyes light up as he begins to visualize.
DISOLVE

Gussie, smiling, holding a platter with an enormous ham. Under the simple caption:

"IF YOU AIN'T EATIN' WHAM, YOU AIN'T EATIN' HAM!"

THE CAMERA ANGLE WIDENS TO DISCLOSE MR. JAMES BLANDING

THE CAMERA ANGLE WIDENS to disclose Mr. James Blandings reclining in a hammock on the patio of his Dream House.

In the b.g. Muriel is working at her garden, Joan and assisting her. Jim reacts with pride and satisfaction sets the magazine down, takes a long drink of lemonade picks up a book which he has been reading. As the COMES IN for an EXTREME CLOSE SHOT of Jim we see the of the book on the jacket cover. It reads:

"MR. BLANDING BUILDS HIS DREAM HOUSE"

Jim looks up over the top of the book, directly into the camera and winks.

JIM

(with simple sincerity)
Drop in and see us sometime.

As the CAMERA PULLS AWAY to a LONG SHOT tableau of the Blandings and their Dream House, we:

FADE OUT

THE END