

FRANCES

Look at you! Have you been on the cover of *Farm and Fireside* yet?

MARIE

Make all the fun you want, but I've never been happier.

FRANCES

You've never been happier? C'mon, Marie. This is me you're talking to.

MARIE

Well, I'm very upset about the war, of course. This neutrality is bosh. Our boys should be over there fighting the Krauts, and if they were, and if I were a boy, I'd be there, too. But you know me. Something gets me down but I soon pop up again. (Beat) Goodness, you're a sight for sore eyes. I thought maybe you'd forgotten me.

FRANCES

Forget Marie Dressler? Not possible. But it *has* been too long. It's a shame Los Angeles and New York aren't closer together.

MARIE

You mean Los Angeles and Vermont.

FRANCES

Surely you'll be returning to New York soon.

MARIE

I'm not in any hurry. They wanted me for a comic opera in Rochester, but I turned it down.

FRANCES

My goodness! Why?

MARIE

If you must know, I couldn't bear the thought of another show where I bumble around like a nincompoop and everyone laughs at me. I'm an *actress*, not a cartoon.

FRANCES

I always wondered if it bothered you, the type casting.

MARIE

It didn't at first. Heck, I built my career on being the ugly duckling who makes people laugh. But I thought by now they'd realize I'm more than that.

FRANCES

They should, of course, but... I worry that if you take yourself out of circulation for long enough... You know there's a rumor going around that you're hard to work with.

MARIE

Such baloney! Is it wrong to insist on my own costumes instead of the ones their inept costumers patch together? Is it wrong to require approval rights on casting?

FRANCES

Yes! It *is* wrong. You're handing them the excuses they need to cut you off. Grit your teeth and act agreeable! That's what I do. (SONG: PLAYING THE GAME – FRANCES AND MARIE)

(SKIP SONG)

FRANCES

I wish you'd just move to Hollywood. I'm sure I could get you some parts.

MARIE

I will *never* move to that hateful place. My one experience there was a disaster and I got a hideous sunburn to boot.

FRANCES

Marie, Marie, Marie... I'm just so worried about you.

(Frances touches Marie's cheek in a comforting manner.)

MARIE

It means a lot that you worry about me, Frances.

FRANCES

Of course I worry about you. You're important to me.

MARIE

And you're important to me. Perhaps more important than you realize.

(Marie suddenly draws Frances to her and kisses her on the lips. Frances pulls away, shocked.)

MARIE

I'm sorry. I thought... I thought...

FRANCES

I do love you, Marie. But not like that. (Beat) Look. I'd best be on my way. I don't want to miss the bus back to Manhattan.