

LOUIS B.

You know, I've always adored that woman, warts and all. She's feisty and she's funny and she even has her own brand of charm. I treasure my stable of lovelies, of course. Greta, Hedy, Norma... But why must an actress be a looker to be a star? Your average housewife is no beauty. The public can relate to Marie. She's warm, she's earthy—

CLAIRE

I think you're preaching to the choir, Mr. Mayer.

LOUIS B.

Of course I am. It's why I asked you here today. I regret to say I have some bad news. Marie has cancer.

(Shocked responses and murmurs from the group.)

CLAIRE

It must be a mistake!

LOUIS B.

I'm afraid not. The tests results leave no doubt.

CLAIRE

Well, what's the treatment?

LOUIS B.

The best we can do is weekly shots that may slow the progression, but they're not a cure.

MAMIE

This news is gonna lay her low, Mr. Mayer. It's gonna undo her.

LOUIS B.

I know, Mamie. But I think I have a way of avoiding that. (SONG: WHAT GOOD WOULD IT DO? – LOUIS B., CLAIRE, RUTH, FRANCES, NELLA)

(SKIP SONG)

LOUIS B.

So we're agreed. Marie is not to know her diagnosis. We want her to continue working and playing and, well ... being Marie, for as long as possible.

CLAIRE

Continue working? I don't know...

LOUIS B.

She's at the top of her game, now, and loving every minute. Finally getting the acclaim she deserves. How can we take that away from her?

CLAIRE

(To Louis B.) Are you sure there isn't a little self-interest involved here? I mean, the more money her movies make, the more money *you* make.

LOUIS B.

I don't deny it. But if Marie retired today, my life style wouldn't change one iota. I'm a rich man with or without Marie.

MAMIE

I do plainly see how she perks up when she's due at the studio.

LOUIS B.

And these weekly injections... They're very important. Tell her she has anemia and the shots are vitamin therapy.

CLAIRE

She doesn't like needles.

LOUIS B.

No one likes needles, but it's a small price to pay if it gives her a bit more time. Claire? Mamie? It's on you to see she doesn't play hooky.

(Claire and Mamie nod in understanding.)

LOUIS B.

That's it, then. We'll leave our dear Marie free to enjoy the time she has. Word of honor, yes?