

MARIE

Come here, would you, Jim?

(Jim approaches, perhaps expecting a conciliatory embrace)

MARIE

Closer.

(When they are face to face, Marie slaps Jim, hard. Shocked, he staggers backward, sinks onto couch.)

JIM

What the...?

MARIE

(Holds up letter.) This! This is a letter from Elizabeth. Elizabeth *Dalton*. Your wife! The one you told me you divorced before we married.

JIM

C'mon, honey! You know better than to believe—

MARIE

She sent proof, you cad. Official. Notarized.

JIM

But how did she—

MARIE

Publicity can be dangerous. Even the good kind. Seems she saw an article in – let's see – the Kansas City "Sun" about my war bond work, and there you were in the picture with me, identified as "Marie Dressler's husband, Jim *Walton*." But that pesky typo didn't fool her one little bit! (Beat) So you're not only a drunk, you're a bigamist!

JIM

(Stands) You gotta forgive me, Marie. I did it because I adore you. I did it because--

MARIE

You did it because I was your ticket to hobnobbing with rich and powerful people. I guess your *real* wife didn't offer you that opportunity. I see it so clearly now.

JIM

Whatever I've done, it was out of love.

MARIE

Love of the limelight. Love of champagne. How could I have been so stupid? (Beat) She wants money, of course. To keep quiet.

JIM

That's a laugh. We don't have any.

MARIE

We could be millionaires and she wouldn't get a dime. She can blab all she wants. It's fine with me if the whole world knows what a crook you are—

JIM

I'm not a crook, Marie. I've honestly and truly loved you and stood by you faithfully all these years. I went along with your silly projects even though I knew they would come to nothing. I defended you when they said you were hard to work with.

MARIE

*Me* hard to work with! That's rich! Producers were always pulling me aside, asking me to make you stop ordering them around. (Beat) When people said you were using me, I told them to go to hell. We were the perfect pair, I said. Partners in everything.

JIM

Not everything, Marie. Not everything. And I never complained, did I? (Beat) God, my head feels like it's gonna explode!

MARIE

*You're* gonna explode? Ha! I guess you're too drunk to see I'm the victim here, not you.

(Jim falls to the ground. At first, Marie looks on dispassionately.)

MARIE

You don't really have the acting skills to pull this off, Jim.

(Jim starts to seize)

MARIE

Jim! (Kneels down beside him.) Jim!

(Blackout. End of scene.)