

ROEDER. I'm not really the one you should be talking to.

Von Sochocky. He's the one you should talk to.

MARKLEY'S VOICE. Now, Arthur. You know he won't talk to us.

ROEDER. It was his process.

(Behind him, lights rise slowly on the room in the factory, where IRENE and KATHRYN, two dialpainters, are mixing up paint.)

MARKLEY'S VOICE. Tell me about that process, Arthur.

You used a powder...

ROEDER. We used a powder. The girls mixed it with an adhesive to make the paint. And that business with the brushes—I didn't invent that. They were doing that when I started there.

MARKLEY. But you knew about it.

ROEDER. We all knew about it. We just didn't realize what it meant.

(As lights fade on ROEDER, they rise full on IRENE and KATHRYN, giggling and applying paint to their faces. Enter GRACE.)

GRACE. Irene?

IRENE. In here!

GRACE. Irene? What are you doing?

IRENE. Shut the door.

KATHRYN. Amelia's workin' inspection today.

GRACE. Is that bad?

IRENE. Not for us.

KATHRYN. She's gonna be sittin' in this room all day. By herself, in the dark, checkin' dials.

IRENE. Poor thing.

KATHRYN. Poor thing.

IRENE. So we're gonna give her a little surprise.

KATHRYN. Boo! Like the Cheshire Cat! (*IRENE and KATHRYN laugh.*)

GRACE. Oooh! Won't that make her mad?

KATHRYN. Let her get mad.

IRENE. That's half the fun.

GRACE. I don't want to make her mad.

IRENE. Oh, Grace! Do you have to be that way about everything?

GRACE. What way?

KATHRYN. Your teeth, Grace. Put some on your teeth. (*GRACE consents to be painted.*)

IRENE. Ain't like Amelia don't deserve it. She paints more dials than any girl on the floor. And can't be bothered to talk to nobody either. You say "Amelia! What's new?" She just looks at ya funny.

GRACE. I don't think she can speak much English.

IRENE. It wouldn't kill her to smile, would it? (*Footsteps and voices off.*)

KATHRYN. She's comin'.

IRENE. Get the light!

(KATHRYN turns out the light, and they crouch down giggling as someone enters the room. Then they jump up, their faces glowing like jack-o'-lanterns in the dark. A scream, laughter, and the lights go up again, revealing a stunned MRS. MACNEIL, ROEDER and VON SOCHOCKY. If this effect cannot be achieved, then

MACNEIL and others can walk in on them before KATHRYN gets to the light. In that case the beat continues, if necessary, as follows:

[KATHRYN. Where's the switch?

IRENE (*going for the switch*). For pity's sakes, Kathryn!)]

(Enter ROEDER, VON SOCHOCKY and MACNEIL.)

IRENE. Oops.

GRACE. Mrs. MacNeil!

MACNEIL. Paintin' yer faces. Have ya gone off yer minds?

IRENE. It was just a joke.

MACNEIL. Just a joke? A joke like that can lose a girl her job.

VON SOCHOCKY. Now, now, Mrs. MacNeil. I'm sure that's not necessary.

MACNEIL. I don't tolerate no foolishness, Doctor.

VON SOCHOCKY. Ja, very good. Foolishness, we don't want. Do we? Mr. Roeder. This is the inspection room. All the dials come here that are painted. And here, are some of the girls who should on the floor be working. Girls, this is Mr. Roeder. My new vice president. And your new plant manager.

MACNEIL. And I was just telling Mr. Roeder what a fine bunch of girls we have here. I'm sure now he must think I'm halfway out of my mind.

VON SOCHOCKY. Mr. Roeder. Perhaps you have some words for the girls? Mrs. MacNeil? (*He ushers MRS. MACNEIL out of the room.*)

ROEDER. Well. (*A moment as he regards them.*) Girls. This paint you've been playing with. It's very expensive. You realize this? (*Mumbled acknowledgment.*) It takes several tons of ore to produce a single gram of radium. That's a lot of work—hard work, for the men in the extraction plant. But they do this work gladly. You understand why? Why they work so hard? What we are all working for?

GRACE. The war?

ROEDER. That's right. The war. The dials you paint save lives, girls. Our boys in the field depend on them. To read them in the dark, no mistaking what they see. Otherwise...some of those boys won't be coming home. So, girls. If you play around and don't take the work seriously...well, you're playing into the hands of the Kaiser. And we don't want that, do we?

GIRLS. No sir... Oh, no! Etc.

ROEDER. So let's get back to work now and leave the tomfoolery to home. (*The GIRLS file away, but GRACE lingers.*)

GRACE. Mr. Roeder? I just—I just wanted to say. I—I am sorry. I won't do nothin' like this ever again.

ROEDER. Well, dear. Just keep this in mind: If you do right by us, we'll do right by you.

(*A tableau, then:*)

SCENE 2

(*Enter SOB SISTER and REPORTER as GRACE and ROEDER break.*)