

"MR. BLANDINGS BUILDS HIS DREAM HOUSE"

Screenplay by

Melvin Frank
and
Norman Panama

Based on a novel by

Eric Hodgins

SHOOTING DRAFT

THE ISLAND OF MANHATTAN - STOCK

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...

DISSOLVE

VOICE

(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.

DISSOLVE

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.

DISSOLVE

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

A SUBWAY DURING RUSH HOUR - STOCK

DISSOLVE

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

A CROWDED LOWER EAST SIDE STREET - STOCK

Kids playing ball in truck-laden street.

DISSOLVE

VOICE
(OVER DISSOLVE)
For its adults, the peace and privacy
of a day in the sun!

CONEY ISLAND ON ITS MOST CROWDED DAY - STOCK

DISSOLVE

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

A BLINDING, WINDSWEPT NEW YORK BLIZZARD - STOCK

DISSOLVE

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

BUILDING EXCAVATION - DAY

Leaning on a railing looking down into the excavation are a group of sidewalk supervisors. The CAMERA MOVES UP to a HEAD CLOSEUP of one of them. It is Bill Cole (Melvyn 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 himself into hazy consciousness, gropes about on the night table for the clock; it isn't there. He slips out of bed, and rubbing 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 the alarm and yawningly starts back over the same path. We get the feeling that Jim makes this sleepy excursion every waking morning of his life.

Back at his bed, Jim sits down, and, yawning loudly, gropes with his feet for his slippers. Before he can find them, however, he begins to doze off and slowly tilts back toward the pillow, pulling the covers over him. In a moment he is 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, 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, suit 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 down 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 at 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 childrens' 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

Mm.

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 one of 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, 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 the 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, nudges 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 slippers.

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
room in the drawers...

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 where they totter 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 exchanges a look 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 free 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 reacts, 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 now wet 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 that 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 smoothes it out and rolls it up from the bottom. He opens the cabinet and gingerly places the tube on the top shelf. The iodine bottle pops out. He grimly catches it, studies his problem, has a solution. With his right hand he starts slowly to close the mirror door. Just before it closes, he slips the bottle into the cabinet with his left hand, quickly 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 cabinet opening and a crash as the bottle obviously hits the washstand. As Jim winces,

DISSOLVE

INT. THE BLANDINGS' BREAKFAST NOOK - DAY

Narrow and small. The four Blandings are at breakfast, Jim 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, folds it, 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 who 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

(huffy)

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

INSERT THE BACK COVER - 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... ACREAGE

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 hand 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!

DISSOLVE

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."

DISSOLVE

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".

DISSOLVE

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 land is the old Hackett farmhouse. If the roof seems to sway a little and the massive stone chimney to tilt a bit and the overall condition of board and beam to be a trifle unsteady, 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 into 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 at the house with unabashed affection. Jim's arm goes tenderly 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 petticoat..."

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 the 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. Over 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 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.

DISSOLVE

DOOR

Door - on it is printed:

MR. COLE
PRIVATE

DISSOLVE

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 post-script 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:

DISSOLVE

EXT. LANSDALE COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY

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

DISSOLVE

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, and 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 by 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.

FAST 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.

FAST 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 photographs 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 thoughtfully on his pipe as he looks at a photograph of the old Hackett place, an exact duplicate of the shot we saw through the 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-hmmm... 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. As he 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-I... 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 -
(PROCESS
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, the 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
Hmmm.
(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 we

DISSOLVE

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 Simms)

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 sub 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 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 in 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 –
(another 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?

TESANDER

That's good.

JIM

Oh...

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

TESANDER

'Course it might turn out to be sandstone.

JIM

That's bad?

Tesander shakes his head, "No."

JIM

That's good?

Tesander shakes his head, "No."

TESANDER

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

JIM

...I see.

He turns a little helplessly to Muriel and Bill.

BILL

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

MURIEL

(sweetly)

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

TESANDER

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 now 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.

RETCH

(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.
- (7) 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 rough

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.

An efficient clockwise turn of the knob. Pause. An impatient doubletwist of the knob. Pause. A more forceful rattling of the knob, plus a slight kick. A furious rattling, pounding and kicking. The door remains closed.

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

(still 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 there
is a click and the door to the closet swings open. As Jim
turns with a sense of accomplishment, his face falls as he
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 walk 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 the household effects, Gussie and a very uncomfortable Mr. Bill 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 nearing completion. 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 floor. He looks up in complete dismay as he sees his newly varnished 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 catch his attention, indicate the front wall of the house which is 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.

RETCH
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.

DISSOLVE

EXT. THE HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

The moving vans are driving away.

INT. THE FOYER - LATE AFTERNOON

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 painter. In the b.g., 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 unripened 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.

DISSOLVE

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 DISSOLVE

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 into 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 moments Muriel, in her nightgown and overcoat, enters the scene.

MURIEL
Excuse...

She takes her toothbrush and opens the cabinet, Jim automatically moving around back of it in their previously established pattern. As Muriel puts the paste on her brush, replaces the tube, shuts the cabinet and starts to brush her 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 did.

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 takes the pin, looks at it sentimentally. Suddenly she looks 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
people connected with the house and – in addition –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
(concerned)
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.

DISSOLVE

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 the fireplace. 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, feels an 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. BI-

BILL

(weak smile)
Cole. Bill Cole. Friend of the family. 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 the 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 DISSOLVE

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, discloses that 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 difficulty 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 resting 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 smooths 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 at it 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, taking 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.

(looks at Bill, then
at Muriel)

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

(lame)
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.

DISSOLVE

INSERT ADVERTISEMENT IN MAGAZINE - It is a picture of Gussie, smiling, holding a platter with an enormous ham. Under it, the simple caption:

"IF YOU AIN'T EATIN' WHAM, YOU AIN'T EATIN' HAM!"

THE CAMERA ANGLE WIDENS TO DISCLOSE MR. JAMES BLANDINGS

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 Betsy assisting her. Jim reacts with pride and satisfaction as he sets the magazine down, takes a long drink of lemonade and picks up a book which he has been reading. As the CAMERA COMES IN for an EXTREME CLOSE SHOT of Jim we see the title of the book on the jacket cover. It reads:

"MR. BLANDINGS 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